

Shoot for the Moon

Monthly news and tips from Landscape Photographer
Gill Moon



April 2020 Vol 4 - At home!

Hello

and welcome to the fourth edition of 'Shoot for the Moon'

As we head into April we find ourselves in strange and difficult times. Normal life has been put on hold whilst we all struggle with the problems Corvid 19 has thrown at us. Despite being confined to our homes I wanted to demonstrate that there are many creative opportunities available even in the back garden and photography can still provide a welcome distraction from everyday life even if we can't get out into the countryside and capture our usual landscape shots.

In this issue I will be looking at different ways to get creative in the garden, thinking about different subjects and looking at the use of multiple exposures and other creative techniques.

I hope you will find this interesting and informative. I am always keen to receive feedback so please get in touch if you have anything you would like to share.

Remember to aim high, be inspired and shoot for the moon! Thank you and happy photographing

Gill

If you would like to get in touch please email me at gill@gillmoon.com

Backgarden Photography

Great photography is more about how well you “see” what is around you and less about the location you are in or equipment that you use. Having a vision for what you want to achieve and an eye for an image are probably the two most important factors in creating stunning images. With these mastered it should be possible to create varied, interesting and compelling images without straying miles from home.

Most of us would usually dismiss our garden as uninteresting when planning a photographic outing. Familiar places are often scorned as photographic locations purely because they are well known but if you put your prejudices aside they can be some of the richest environments in which to shoot. As the old adage says familiarity breeds contempt and this is probably why we choose to ignore what is on our doorsteps. We see it every day and have stopped properly looking. We no longer see anything to inspire us, but we should not disregard an environment just because we are bored with it. Familiarity can be an asset where photography is concerned we just have to learn how to use it to our advantage.

The images in this article were all taken in my garden. I am no gardener and my garden is actually a bit of a mess and frequently uninspiring but even this can yield some interesting images if you look for them. The trick is to begin to notice your environment; view it as you did the first day you laid eyes on it and try to find inspiration in more ordinary everyday objects.

The most obvious benefit when shooting where you live is proximity. If the light is right or the weather has produced something amazing or you spot an interesting bird or animal you can be outside with your camera in no time. You do not have to spend hours in the field waiting for these elements to materialise. Your equipment is all to hand and you can be

set up and capturing a shot in no time.

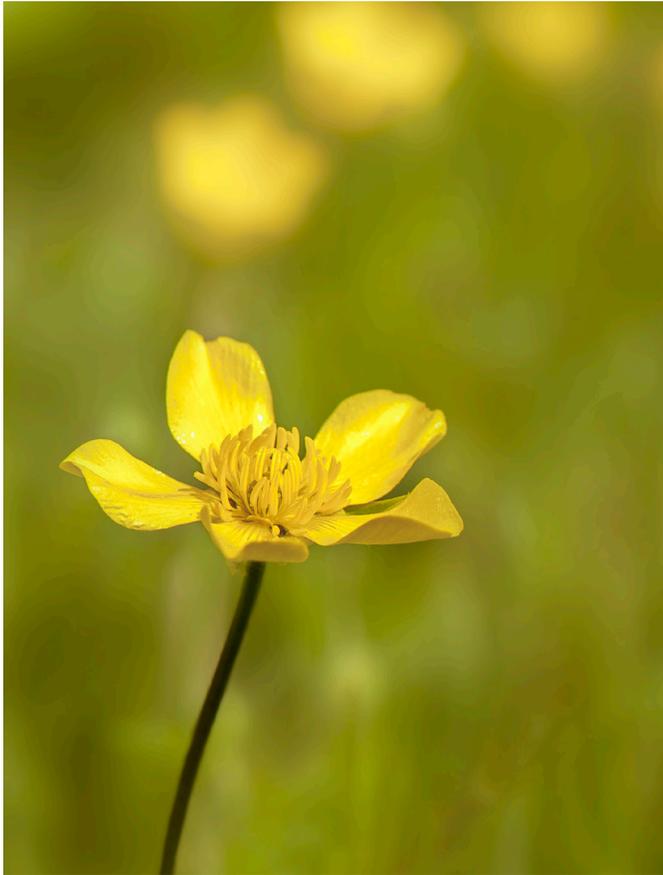
Next time you venture out into the garden begin by taking a good look around. There are hundreds of subjects to photograph if you look hard enough.

Shooting detail can be a really interesting exercise and can often throw up some engaging and compelling images. The most obvious subjects are natural ones; flowers, trees, grasses, insects animals and birds. When looking at detail think about colour, texture, patterns and overall design. Most of all try to be creative with your shots. For nature images a macro lens would be an advantage but not a necessity as I have used a 70 – 300mm zoom lens for many of my detail shots. Stick to a wide aperture to blur out the background and help your subject to stand out from its surroundings. When looking at detail you will find that even the most mundane objects can give rise to a variety of images. A small patch of garden can throw up subjects as diverse as butterflies, flowers, vegetables, fence posts which can produce fantastic texture or even lichens growing on tree trunks which can create amazing patterns. All these elements can be photographed individually to produce interesting images.

Photographing flowers

As I write this the sun is shining and the garden is beginning to bloom. I have also seen bees and butterflies all of which make great subjects for photography.

Flowers are versatile subjects to photograph and can be captured with a telephoto or a macro lens. For best results shoot early in the morning or later in the afternoon when the sun is lower in the sky. My preferred time is just after sunrise when the light is at its softest. Overcast days are also excellent as the defused light will mean you have no distracting shadows or harsh light to deal with.



The three images on the left were all shot with a telephoto lens. I then gave them a softer treatment in Lightroom by reducing the clarity and blurring the backgrounds a little. I also reduced the saturation of the backgrounds to help the subject stand forward.

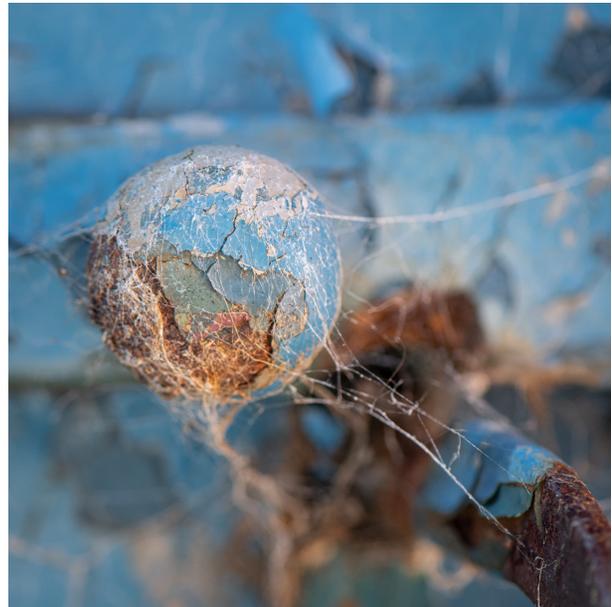
Natural elements like flowers and trees can be photographed in many ways to produce many different images.

For example how many images could you make from a single tree? You could start by using a wide angle lens to shoot the whole tree through the range of seasons or you could concentrate on detail by focusing on the bark, leaves, flowers or fruit. Shooting in varied weather can help add variety too. The same tree covered in hoar frost will create a vastly different image to that produced by autumnal foliage. Backlit shots of leaves can make striking images as can shots on a windy day. Try slowing down the shutter speed to blur the foliage and create a sense of movement and drama. Detailed shots of leaves, fruit or bark can create stunning images in their own right especially if you give plenty of thought to your composition, colour combinations and texture patterns.



Weather conditions can also enhance detail shots. Morning dew is a particular favourite of mine as it can give a truly magical quality to anything it touches. It works especially well with grasses and cobwebs. Backlit images work best as they emphasise the colours and sparkle but exposure can be tricky to get right. Watch out for blown highlights or too much shadow and adjust accordingly.





Shooting detail

The images above were all taken with a 105mm macro lens and show various parts of an old shed door. My idea was to take 4 images that could be displayed as one picture. With that in mind I was looking for 4 images that worked well together tonally and would also give a clue to the identity of the object I was photographing.

I chose to concentrate on areas of colour that appealed to me and I particularly liked the combination of blue and rusty orange /

beige. I felt that the hinge, key hole and door handle helped to convey what it was I was photographing.

The images were shot at F5.6 to give a fairly shallow depth of field and an ISO of 800 as I was handholding and the light was quite poor. I didn't feel that the potential noise created by using a high ISO would be a problem as the images were really all about texture and colour.

When arranging the images for the final display I tried to use an order that guided the eye from one image to the next.

Multiple Exposures



In Camera multiple exposure

The three images above were all taken using in camera multiple exposure. Each image is a combination of 3 separate images combined in the camera. Not all cameras give you this option so it is best to check your manual.

I took the shots with a 105mm macro lens using an aperture of F5.6mm. I selected multiple exposure in the camera menu then selected the number of shots that I wanted to use - in this case 3. I then took an initial shot of peeling paint on a shed door. I deliberately over exposed this first shot and then overlaid it with two shots of dried seed heads, one which was over exposed and the last correctly exposed. I was looking for a ghostly ethereal effect with just a hint of colour coming through.

When selecting multiple exposure in the camera menu you have the option to select an overlay mode from add, average, lighten and darken. This dictates how the images are blended together in the following ways:
Add - the resulting image becomes lighter and lighter and you will need to compensate by underexposing.

Average - this compensates for the light and gives an average blend.

Lighten - ideal for night shoots where only the bright areas are registered.

Darken - the darker parts of the image are combined and the lighter parts suppressed.

My images above were all shot using the average option.

My multiple exposures were shot with a Nikon camera which doesn't allow you to see the overlay process as you go along. This means that you are effectively shooting blind, which makes lining up successive shots a process of trial and error. Canon cameras are much better for multiple exposures as they allow you to see the first shot whilst you are lining up and overlaying your second and third shots. This makes the creative process much easier as you can see where all the elements are going to fall within the frame.

I decided that I wanted to display 3 images in a triptych so I processed all the shots in Lightroom with just a few enhancements to bring out the blues. I then adjusted the tones so that all three images looked similar and worked well together as a whole.

Blending multiple exposures in post processing.

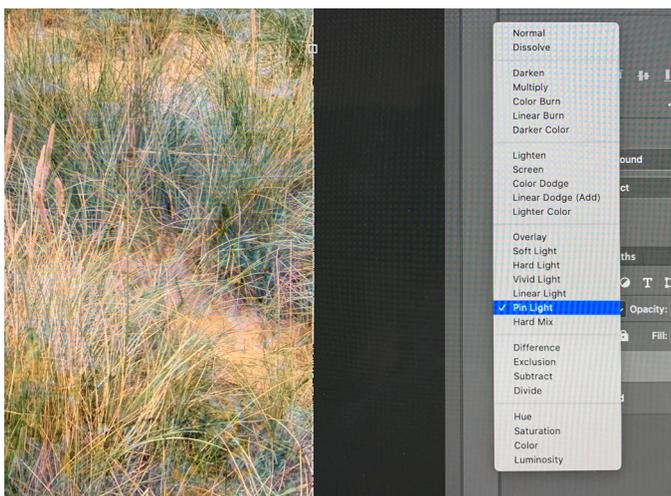


Blending multiple exposures in Photoshop is a great way to explore your creativity and you can work with images that you already have, combining these with texture images that can easily be taken in the garden.

The image above was made using the 3 separate shots shown on the right. These were all combined in Photoshop using different blending modes at different opacities.



To do this open your landscape image in Photoshop then open a texture image as a separate layer. Align the two layers then with your texture layer selected choose a blend mode. This can be found under layers - normal - if you click on this it will open a drop down menu of various blend options. Next to this is the opacity slider where you can choose how obvious you want the effect to be.



Intentional Camera Movement



Intentional Camera Movement or ICM

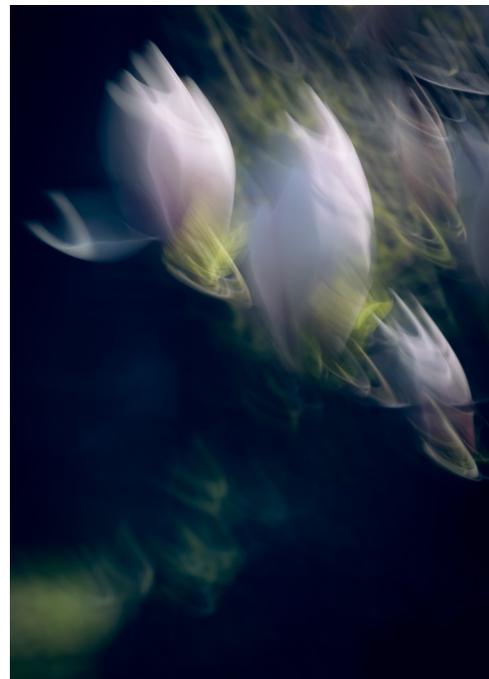
The three images above were all taken using ICM. This is a technique where you select a slow shutter speed and then move the camera whilst the shutter is open giving a blurred impressionistic effect.

The images above were taken using the dogwoods in my garden. I loved the red and green colours of their stems and felt that these would combine nicely to form a series of images that was all about colour and texture. ICM works best with shutter speeds from 1/4 of a second to 5 seconds depending upon the effect you are after. I used a 1/4 of a second exposure time for the images above and moved the camera in an upward direction whilst the shutter was open. I used a polariser to slow my shutter speed down, you can also use ND filters. My images were taken with a 70 - 200mm lens. I feel that telephoto lenses work best for this technique.

ICM is a very hit and miss technique and you will find that you throw away more images than you keep. Sometimes not much movement is required. As you practice you will find a technique that works for you.

Movement can be horizontal, vertical, circular or a combination of all these. Sometimes small vigorous shakes are all that are required to give compelling images.

ICM works best on simple scenes which can be identifiable even when they are blurred. The image below was taken using a circular motion. I then emphasised the shadows in post production to draw all the attention to the pink flowers.



Inspiration

There are numerous photographers out there producing amazing work using some of the creative techniques discussed. Here are some of my favourites:

Valda Bailey

Valda Bailey is a freelance photographer living in Sussex who first became passionate about photography when she was 14. Her approach to photography is greatly informed by her background in painting and her influences come as much from artists as photographers. She runs impressionistic photography workshops all over the world with Doug Chinnery.

www.valdabailey.com

www.baileychinnery.com

Doug Chinnery

Inspired by painters, particularly the abstract impressionists, Doug attempts to represent the world using abstraction and impressionism. He has become known for his work in abstract photography, making multiple exposure and intentional camera movement photographs. His first book, 'Abstract Mindedness', was published by Kozu Books and contains images

and poetry made during twelve months of mental illness following a breakdown. He runs workshops in various parts of the world with Valda Bailey.

www.dougchinnery.com

Glenys Garnett

Glenys is one of my favourite photographers. She is based in Wakefield, has a first Class BA (Hons) Degree in Graphic Communication at Leeds Metropolitan University and Batley School of Art & Design and is a full time freelance Photographer, Artist and Graphic Designer working exclusively in the digital medium. Her creative images are inspiring and she offers workshops and courses.

www.ggcreativeimages.co.uk

Cheryl Hamer

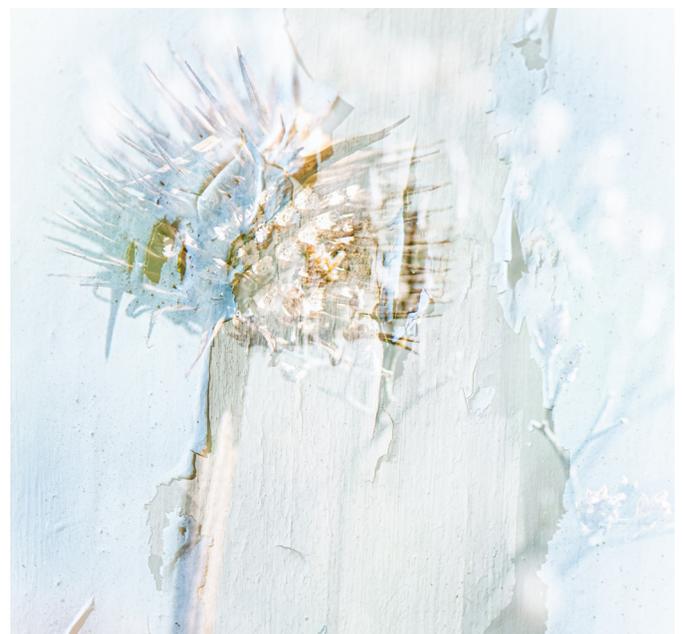
I first met Cheryl about 5 years ago when I attended one of her workshops. She is a photographer based in Anglesey and specialises in Photographic Impressionism. She runs workshops in Wales, the UK and abroad.

www.cherylhamer.com

April back garden challenge

Step out into your back garden and see how many interesting images you can make.

1. Capture some detail, whether that is natural or man made and work towards a series of 4 images that visually work well together.
2. Take a series of 3 images to display as a triptych using either in camera multiple exposure or Intentional Camera Movement.
3. Make a blended image in Photoshop using a landscape photograph and some textures captured in the garden.



How I got the shot



Balnakeil Bay, Sutherland

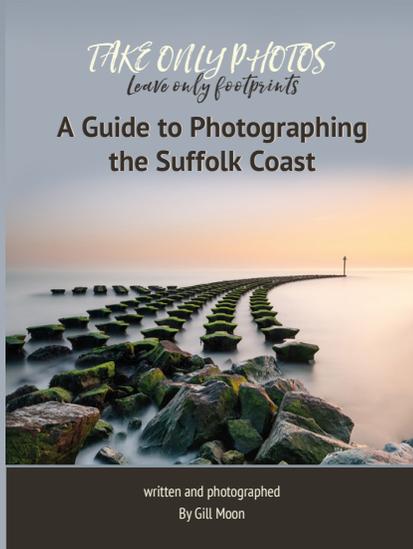
Nikon 24 - 70mm lens, F16 at 1/2 second exposure, 24mm. 0.6 ND grad

This image was taken during my recent photographic trip to Scotland. It shows Balnakeil Bay in Sutherland - a beautiful beach backed by really impressive sand dunes. This shot was taken at dawn facing away from the rising sun as the beach faces west - so not the best location for a sunrise shot. The day dawned frosty and cold and the sand was frozen beneath my feet. I climbed the largest of the dunes to get a birds eye view of the beach and the bay beyond. The image was taken using a 24 - 70mm lens at F16 and a 1/2 second exposure. I used a 0.6 ND grad filter and a tripod.

This image forms part of a series taken on a tour around the North Coast 500. It will be featured in a new book that I am writing which will hopefully be published later in the year.

Plan your visit to Suffolk

New Area Guide Price £8



A comprehensive guide to visiting and photographing the Suffolk Coast by local landscape photographer Gill Moon

- Spiral bound
- 126 pages
- 28 areas
- 50 different locations
- over 200 colour photos
- location details with creative notes and technical information
- photography tips
- Useful information for each area including travel, accessibility, food and drink.

This guide has been funded by the Amenity and Accessibility Fund
Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

GILLMOON
PHOTOGRAPHY
www.gillmoon.com

GILLMOON
PHOTOGRAPHY
www.gillmoon.com