

Shoot for the Moon

Monthly news and tips from
Landscape Photographer
Gill Moon



January 2021 Vol 13 - Photography Projects

Hello

Happy New Year and welcome to the January edition of 'Shoot for the Moon'

The image above is the cover photograph from my new book - Grounded which is being published in January. The book is the result of a year long photography project to record my connection with the landscape at Hollesley Marshes during the often turbulent times of 2020.

To celebrate this (with a little shameless self promotion!) I thought I would look at the value of a personal photography project in this months newsletter. Hopefully it will inspire you in your own way to get out, aim high and shoot for the moon!

Gill

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

Personal Photography Projects



This image was taken on Hollesley Marshes.

Nikon D850, Nikon 70-200mm lens, F5.6 at 1/400 second, ISO 1250

As we start a new year I thought it would be a great time to discuss the power of a Personal Photography Project.

As we embark on our photography journey many of us feel inspired to get out for days when the mood takes us and we often travel to different places in search of specific images or classic views. There is nothing wrong with this but after a while I feel it limits creativity.

This is where a personal photography project can really help. Thinking of a subject and forcing yourself to search for shots to fill a specific brief is an excellent way to stay motivated as a photographer. It also has an important part to play in the growth of your talent.

Choosing an idea

There are a wealth of opportunities out there for any photographer so at first it might seem a bit daunting to think of an idea for a project.

The best advice is to choose something that inspires you, something that you have a strong connection with and something that you are really interested in. There is no good deciding to do a 365 project (one photo a day) and then find yourself getting bored or short of time as the project develops. It is also worth choosing a subject or location that you can return to easily time and again, so try to pick a local location. This has real advantages as you won't have far to travel, your images can be more spontaneous and you will have a good opportunity to become really familiar with your area.

I have recently been working on two personal projects - 'Grounded' (now complete) focuses on Hollesley Marshes and 'Spirit of the Forest' (working title) which focuses on the oak woodland of Staverton Thicks.

Grounded - the inspiration

I began this project at the beginning of 2020 and had initially intended to record my visits to the marsh throughout the year. I had some images planned and specific shots in mind. When the Covid pandemic hit and lockdown happened in March I decided to rethink my project and it became a much more spontaneous thing. I did away with the planned shots and the tripod and instead recorded the marsh through my morning walks. I had initially intended for all the images to be in colour (because that is how I usually work) but I ultimately felt that they formed a more cohesive body of work if they were presented in black and white.

The project became a visual sketch book of images accompanied by some descriptive text which details the things you can't see in the photographs. Together these words and images detail my connection with a special place. Hollesley marshes is somewhere I have easy access to. It is somewhere that fascinates me, I love the wildlife and the open spaces and the fact that it is not a place that is often photographed. So to me it was the ideal place for a project.

Spirit of the forest - the inspiration

The dark oak forest of Staverton fascinates me. Ever since reading about it in the 'Gossip from the Forest' by Sara Maitland I have been compelled to capture the trees and the relationship between the oaks and the hollies and the creatures that inhabit the wood. It is an enchanting place that belongs in fairytales and this idea has formed the basis for my project.



If you are going to do a landscape project pick a location you have a strong connection with and somewhere that you feel will give you direction and motivation to get out with your camera.

Think about different locations and what each means to you. Do you feel connected with that landscape or do you just feel that it would supply you with exciting images? The best location to choose is one that inspires you on all levels and one that you care about. Don't choose a location just because you think it will make good images. To make a good project you need to care about the landscape you are shooting because if you don't this will show in your images.

Think about the reasons that promote a connection - is the landscape familiar? Does it hold special memories? Is it somewhere you are fascinated by and would like to get to know better? These are all good reasons for choosing a location.

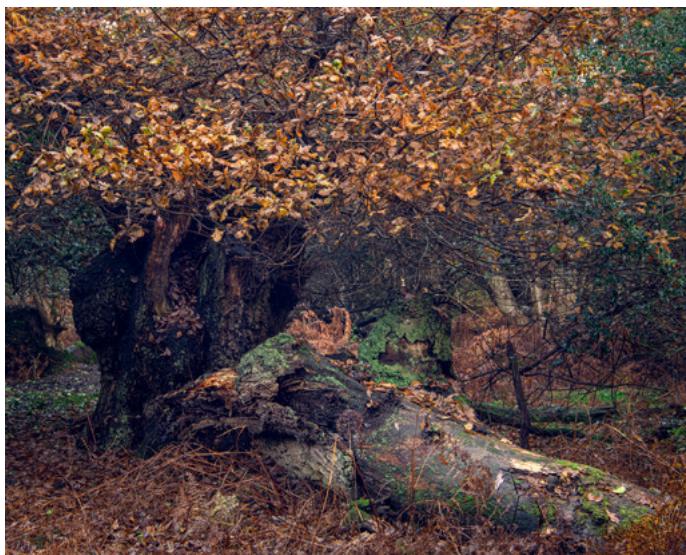
What is your story?

Your project will work much better if you have a goal or an objective in mind. This will help you establish your story and will consolidate your images into a cohesive body of work. So for my Grounded project my story was my interaction with the landscape through the turmoil of 2020 and the Covid pandemic. For my Staverton project the story is still evolving but it is essentially about the relationships between the various elements within the wood.

Once you have a story idea you can plan out what images you would like to include within your project. Try to give your story a beginning, middle and an end and work out how the pictures relate to that plan. Think about the timing and whether you are looking at a seasonal approach or something more abstract.

For my Grounded project I have laid the book out in seasons because I felt this made sense with the story of the year. For the 'Spirit of

'the forest' I haven't yet made a decision on the presentation but feel that I might choose a colour pallet rather than a seasonal approach.



The images of Staverton on the left are all seasonal but I think they will form a more cohesive project if they are laid out based on the colours and lighting. With this in mind I have tailored my processing to enhance the mood of the seasons. So for winter I have photographed on dull rainy days and have processed my images accordingly. For the spring shots I have picked sunny days which emphasise the lightness of the forest with its spring growth.

The key is to think of your images as a body of work not as a collection of individual shots.

For my Grounded project I wanted to convey the idea that I had captured a moment in time rather than a landscape image. I decided that I would convert all my images to black and white which gave the project a cohesive feel and I also felt emphasised the sketchbook nature of the work.

Make your project personal.

A photography project will work much better if you make it personal. Think about what the landscape means to you and try and weave a personal angle into your story.

With Grounded the story is all about my connection with the landscape captured through images taken on a morning walk.

Individually each image captures a moment in time but collectively they form a sketchbook of a treasured place. I have also added words to my project to make the whole thing more personal.

To sum up

Think of a project idea that you feel connected with and inspired by.

Work out what you care about and what you feel a connection with.

If you are picking a location do it based on what you care about rather than whether you think the landscape looks attractive or will produce good images.

Choose a location you can return to time and again.

Plan your story - think about what you want your images to say and try to be creative with your planning, composition and shooting.

Tell a story - every image should have something about it, it should speak to the viewer and combined your project should tell a story. Make sure you have an opening shot that sets the scene.

Set yourself a goal or objective.

Do something that is out of your photographic comfort zone as this is likely to increase your creativity.

Make your project personal.

The images below are from Grounded - a year of nature connection on Hollesley Marshes.



January's challenge

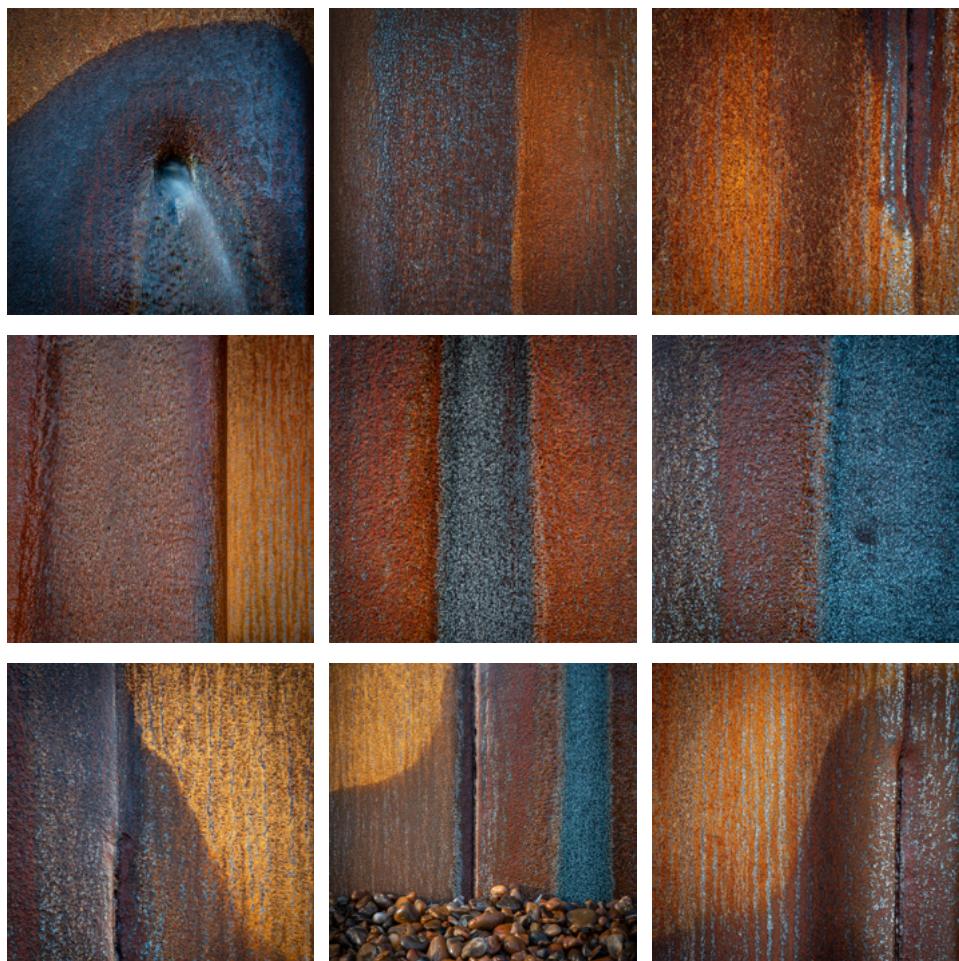
This months challenge is all about capturing a body of work. You don't have to embark on a full blown project to do this. The challenge is to produce 9 images that work well together to tell a story.

Firstly think about a location and about specific features or elements within that landscape. Next think about what you want to say and how you are going to present your images once you have taken them.

Below is a set of 9 images shot on the beach at Bawdsey on a really wet day. The ground behind the steel sheet piling on the beach was

wet and the water was running through the holes and forming colourful patterns in the steel. The 9 images were shot of the patterns with the first image featuring the running water and the bottom image in the middle locating the images to the shingle beach.

I am really happy to offer feedback and would love to see your images so please get in touch
gill@gillmoon.com



PATTERNS IN STEEL
Bawdsey

Inspiration

There are a number of photography projects that I have been inspired by over the years and I have listed some below to help with inspiration when thinking about your own projects.

Mystical by Neil Burnell

A project depicting Wistmans Wood in Devon shot over a period of 4 years. The gnarled trees, moss covered stones and foggy conditions help to convey the woods fairytale-like atmosphere.
www.neilburnell.com/gallery#/mysticalalone



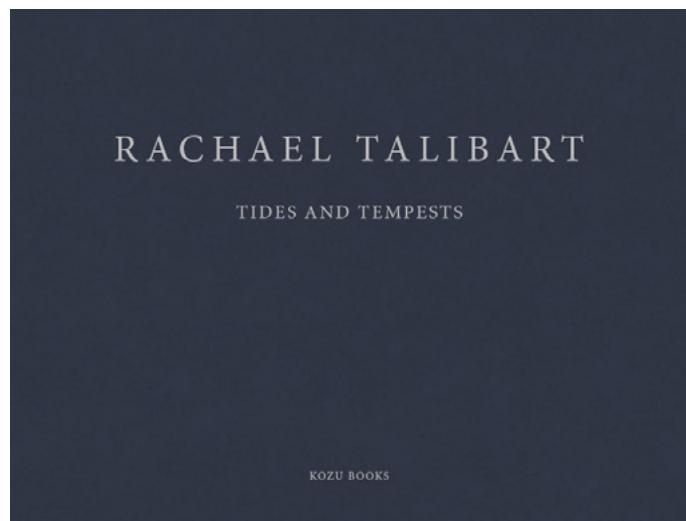
Beara by Norman McCloskey

A project exploring the magnificent landscape of the Beara peninsula in South West Ireland.
www.normanmccloskey.com/books/beara



Tides and Tempests by Rachael Talibart

The rhythm of the tides, tethered to the waxing and waning of the moon, shapes our very sense of time. It also, literally, carves the wild edges of the land on which we live. This book brings together some of Rachael's images of the sea.
www.rachaeltalibart.com/books



Photography Workshops for 2021

Part of the landscape - Connecting with the natural world through photography.

Adventures in seeing and connecting with the landscape. The aim of the course is to improve your photography skills whilst developing an understanding and connection with the landscape. These workshops come with a self study workbook which looks at a more immersive form of landscape photography. Part of the Landscape group workshops in the following locations:

Staverton Thicks

Hollesley Marshes

East Lane, Bawdsey

There will be more locations added to this series throughout 2021

www.landscapelandscapephotographytuition.co.uk

If you would like further information about any of these workshops please don't hesitate to get in touch

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**'AN EARLY MORNING WALK
IS A BLESSING FOR THE
WHOLE DAY'**

Henry David Thoreau



Grounded

A year of nature connections on Hollesley Marshes captured during 2020.

The images portray fleeting moments observed during a morning walk. They were not pre planned, were shot without a tripod or filters and represent my reaction to a scene at a particular moment in time. They are accompanied by text and are intended to be viewed as a visual sketchbook of a special place.

Grounded will be published in January as a limited run of 100 editions, all numbered and signed.

Pre Orders now available £28

www.gillmoon.com/projects/grounded-book