

Ideas & Inspiration



Ideas to kick start your photography

Hello

Welcome to 'ideas and Inspiration' a new blog feature to help inspire your photography. It is easy to get stuck in a rut sometimes especially with the arrival of summer and blue sky days (which photographers seem to avoid like the plague) and it is easy to lose enthusiasm.

This little publication is designed to give you some ideas, it is easily downloadable so that you can keep it and refer back to it when you are in need of some inspiration. There is no theme, the ideas are fairly random based on what has appealed to me at the time but I hope you will find it interesting.

As always there are workshops and mentoring session which are related to the topics discussed so if you would like to come along and practice your skills then please get in touch.

As American photographer Alfred Stieglitz is credited for saying '*Wherever there is light, one can photograph*'.
'

Inspiration really is everywhere if you choose to look.

Gill

Sketch Book Photo Walks

This month my inspiration comes from the idea of walking with your camera and in particular getting to know a place by 'sketching with your camera' .

I have written a lot of articles and a book about walking with your camera. It is an activity I would encourage you to explore. I also run regular photo walks which are a great way to connect with other photographers whilst also connecting with the landscape you are exploring.

However in this months inspiration I am going to explore the idea of walking with your camera a bit further and I am going to look at capturing the essence of place by 'sketching with your camera' . I will also be looking at how you can turn your sketch book images into art that you might want to display on your wall or in a zine or book.

What do I mean by 'sketching' with your camera?

When we go out into the landscape we often see images that we want to create but we might not know exactly how to go about getting the best composition. How do we tell the best story about the element or scene in front of us? The answer is we experiment.

This is where 'sketching' with your camera comes in. If an artist was approaching the same challenge they would probably try a few different quick sketches from different angles and viewpoints and we can do something very similar with our cameras.

Take lots of images - try different angles, viewpoints, focal lengths, depth of field. Think creatively and experiment. Not only is this activity fun, but it will also teach you to see more creatively and will ultimately help you become a better photographer.



In this example I have applied sketching with my camera to one small scene - the Scallop Shell at Aldeburgh.

I have only included a few images here as examples but there are numerous compositions to be made from this one structure. You can shoot scenes, putting the shell into context with the beach, or you could shoot abstract images that use the lines and patterns to create very geometric images. The possibilities are endless and are only limited by your creativity.

How do we do the same thing to a larger area? Can we use the sketching technique to tell the story about a place rather than a single element?



This grid of images shows my sketch book walk for Woodbridge and it features in my Suffolk Photo Walks book - 25 Walks with your camera.

At the time I felt they gave a really good representation of the scenes that you might find on a Woodbridge walk. They include shots of the river, the boats, the architecture and some details I found on the walk. As a collection they tell a story about the location but maybe the story is too broad? Are the images too random to make a good piece of art?

To explore this idea I decided to go to Covehithe, an area that is renowned for its crumbling cliffs and ruined church.

Instead of shooting random images I decided to focus my image making and chose a theme centred around the Church.

St Andrews church was once a magnificent medieval building but this now lies in ruins and the current church which is much smaller is located inside the ruined walls of the original building.



I decide to focus my image making on some of the smaller features of the buildings and try and tell a story about the passing of time.

The first shot I took was an image of some backlit poppies and I knew that I wanted to incorporate this into my panel somehow.



As I explored I was intrigued by the various doorways, arches and windows that seemed to represent gateways to the past and windows to the future.

I decided that I would focus on these things for my panel. I had recently watched a YouTube video about the use of layering in street photography by shooting scenes through windows so I thought I would try to incorporate this into my collection of images.



All the images were shot on a bright, blue sky day and I knew that when I came to put my panel together I didn't want the vivid colours to be part of it, but I also knew that I wanted to retain some colour otherwise the image with the backlit poppies wouldn't work and I wouldn't be able to use it.

With this in mind I felt straight black and white conversions wouldn't be suitable so I chose to split tone my images and use some blue colour for the shadows and orange for the highlights. The colour images now became split toned black and white images by using the colour grading tool in Lightroom as shown below.



I feel that this conversion has given an antiquated feel to the architectural images which goes with the theme of passing time. It has also allowed me to blend together the colour shots without them looking out of place.

You can see my completed panel on the following page. I made it in Adobe In Design using 5 split toned images and 4 colour images. I adjusted the colour images in Photoshop using the 'selective colour' tool to make them blend better with the split toned images. I also worked on my backlit poppy image as I felt the vibrant greens of the original image didn't work with the rest of the panel images.

To convert my poppy image I selected the poppies using the object tool in Lightroom. I then duplicated and inverted the selection mask, highlighting all the background. I desaturated this and pained back in some of the foreground, but with only a fraction of its original saturation. This has given me the finished result.



Choosing the images to make up my panel was quite difficult. I had several shots that I liked but which didn't fit the flow of the panel. In the end I went with a wide shot of the church to begin the sequence and followed this with some of the more geometric images of doors and windows which I felt contributed more to the story I was trying to tell.

I placed all my images on an off white background using a colour picked from one of the split toned images. I placed all my colour window shots in a diagonal from top right to bottom left and finished with the colour shot of the backlit poppies.

I added some text in Copperplate font which I felt complimented the theme.



TIME PASSAGES - COVEHITHE

Panels allow us to photograph the diversity of a place - we can capture the whole story and all the variations of a location using different images which we can then combine artistically to create one image. This can often be more powerful than the sum of its parts.

As I said earlier I use Adobe In Design to make my panels. This is a program I use all the time for book publishing and to design my calendars so the cost makes sense for me. (It is £19.97 a month) but you could also use Affinity Publisher which is much cheaper with a one off fee of £49.99.

Alternatively you can make a panel of images in Photoshop or you can use one of the grid making apps on your phone or tablet - just search photo collage maker in the app store to reveal numerous alternatives.

Tips for walking with your camera.

If it is a new location that you have never visited before learn as much about it as you can before you go. If it is somewhere familiar think about a theme for your image making - this will really help you focus your mind during your walk.

Take only what you need. Try limiting yourself to one lens - I usually take my 70-200mm lens if I am going on a photo walk as I find it is more versatile.

Be an observer - practice your observational skills and really look at what is around you.

Experiment and take lots of images.

If you are shooting with a theme in mind make sure you explore it fully - give it some thought before you go and then really explore the subject when you are out in the field.

Photograph ideas - things that start off in your head and translate into images.

If you are going to display your images as a grid afterwards think about your aspect ratio and image orientation before you start

shooting.

To tie in with this theme I will be running a series of sketch book walks throughout the autumn and again next year. These walks will include some quieter locations that I don't use often for individual landscape images. The walks will start in September and the first ones will be in Blythburgh and Dunwich.

The aim of the walk is to produce a panel of 9 images that have a theme. Before the walk I will give you some information about the location which you can use to set your theme. There will be discussion at the end of the walk about putting your panel together and I can help with this if required. At the end of the series of walks you are invited to put your finished panels forward for a zine project all about Sketchbook Photography.

**“Instructions for
living a life.**

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.”

Mary Oliver

Random Inspiration

If you would like some more inspiration on this theme check out Niall Benvie's website in particular the panels section from the index.
<https://niallbenvie.photoshelter.com>

I particularly like some of Niall's tree bark panels but he also has panels made entirely of individual leaves, pebbles and architectural elements like doors.

For interest this website is an artist based site that is all about sketching whilst walking. It is not photography related but the concepts are similar and it might give you a few ideas.
<https://thewalkingsketchbook.co.uk>

Podcasts and You Tube

If you are inspired by Niall Benvie's work you might want to check out the **View Finders Photography Podcast** - discussing the art, craft and profession of photography. The podcast is hosted by Graham Dargie and this episode features Niall talking about his work.
<https://viewfinderslive.com/podcast/niall-benvie>

Another podcast that I am enjoying at the moment is **Kim Grant's Photographic Connections**.
www.photographicconnections.com

Photographic Connections is an online community created to inspire you to connect more deeply with yourself, nature and others through the art of photography.

Kim hosts a weekly podcast and runs monthly photography challenges. She also hosts her own YouTube channel - **Visualising Scotland**
www.youtube.com/c/VisualisingScotland

If you like YouTube video about photography then here are a couple of recommendations for channels you might not be familiar with.

Michael Shainblum

Michael is a photographer/filmmaker based

in San Francisco California. I find his videos interesting and informative and you can find him at www.youtube.com/@MichaelShainblum

The Photographic Eye

Not a landscape specific channel but never the less it has some really interesting videos about photography in general. Presented by Alex Kilbee the channel presents some creative ideas that you can use to see photography from a different perspective.

Get out and About - Up and coming photo walks.

If you would like to check out my new sketchbook photo walks I have the following sessions scheduled:

Blythburgh - Saturday 12th August
6pm - 8.30pm

Southwold Harbour - Friday 1st September
9am - 11.30am

Dunwich - Saturday 2nd September
9am - 11.30am

Please visit my website to find out more
www.landscapephotographytuition.co.uk/photo-walks

