Lake Macquarie Camera Club
2024 PHOTOGRAPHY CHALLENGE

This exercise is designed to help club members to:
   a) Systematically evaluate their images.
   b) Develop their capture and processing skills by concentrating on a specific area of interest.
   c) Produce a collection of their ten best images on a chosen topic.
   d) Provide constructive feedback to fellow club members.

This free learning opportunity is available to all club members. If you decide to participate in the challenge, you will:

1. Select a topic, theme or style of photography that you will concentrate on for the exercise. [Refer to the "Topic Selection" section for guidance on selecting a topic.]

2. By 25th February, you will select from your archives the ten best images you already have related to your chosen topic. [Refer to the "Initial Image Selection" section for guidance on selecting these images.]

3. At a nominated date early in March, you will participate in a Zoom meeting during which you will:

   ▪ Describe the focus of your challenge by completing this sentence: "My aim is to build a collection of my ten best images of . . . (your chosen topic)."

   ▪ Show a single *overview image* that contains your 10 starting images. [Refer to the "Preparing an Overview Image" section for guidance on what is required here.]

   ▪ Briefly describe what you would like to improve about your capture or processing techniques for images on your chosen topic. This should be based on a prepared list of no more than five points. For example, you might want to improve the composition of your images, or your ability to produce monochrome conversions.

   ▪ Show the two images in your starting collection that you think are the closest to the goal you want to achieve, and the two images that you think will probably be the first to be replaced as you progress through the challenge. These images will be JPG, 1920x1200 pixels maximum (the same as used for club competitions).

   ▪ Receive feedback and suggestions from the other members of the group and the group mentor.

4. Over the following month, you will capture new images on your chosen topic and process them to produce one or two images that you consider to be better than some of your original ten images. *These must be new images* – captured and processed with the deliberate intention of improving some aspect of your original collection of images. For example, if your topic was "indoor portraits in natural light" you might have identified that you need to improve the way you position your subjects relative to the light source. If so, you would experiment with placing the subjects in different positions until you achieved a result that was better than some of the images in your original collection.

5. At the April group meeting, you will:
   ▪ Present one or two new images.
   ▪ Explain why you think those new images are better than the images you are replacing.
   ▪ Show your revised overview image that includes the new images.
   ▪ Seek advice on any issues that you are finding a challenge.
   ▪ Receive feedback from the group and the group mentor.

6. You will repeat the process in steps (4) and (5) for three more cycles - each month you will replace one or two images in your evolving collection.

7. At the July Zoom meeting, you will:

   ▪ Show your original overview image and your final overview image.

   ▪ Describe the main difference that the exercise made to how you now approach capturing and processing images on your chosen topic.

8. At a club training night in August or later you will share your images and experiences. Details of the format of these presentations will be provided closer to the date.

SELECTING A TOPIC

There are no restrictions on the topic you select. It can be any aspect of your photography that you would like to improve. You might start thinking about this with a general topic such as portraits, seascapes, still photography, silhouettes, long exposures, or minimalism. However, before starting the exercise you will be encouraged to narrow your topic so that you have a more defined goal. For example, it would be better to concentrate on improving "monochrome portraits in natural light" rather than just "portraits". The topic could also be a concept such as happiness, tension, or mystery. A narrow topic will make it easier to set specific targets for improving both your capture and processing techniques. If you are having trouble deciding on a topic you can discuss your initial ideas with Roy Killen, and he will help you to refine your topic.

INITIAL IMAGE SELECTION

The ten images you select from your archives are your starting point. They can be images that you think are your best images on your chosen topic or they can be images that illustrate specific things that you would like to be able to improve. Do not be concerned if you do not have very good images or if several of your images are similar. You might need to select some images that are not as closely related to your specific topic as you would like them to be. For example, your topic was "Architecture of Newcastle city" you might initially have to select some images of architecture in other places.

PREPARING AN OVERVIEW IMAGE

To help you keep track of your development, you will be preparing an 'overview image' at the start and then updating it each month as you replace some of the images in your collection. The "overview" is simply a single image that contains thumbnails of your ten images. It will be a JPG, 1920x1200 pixels maximum. For example, if your topic was "Newcastle area seascapes" your starting overview image might be something like this:
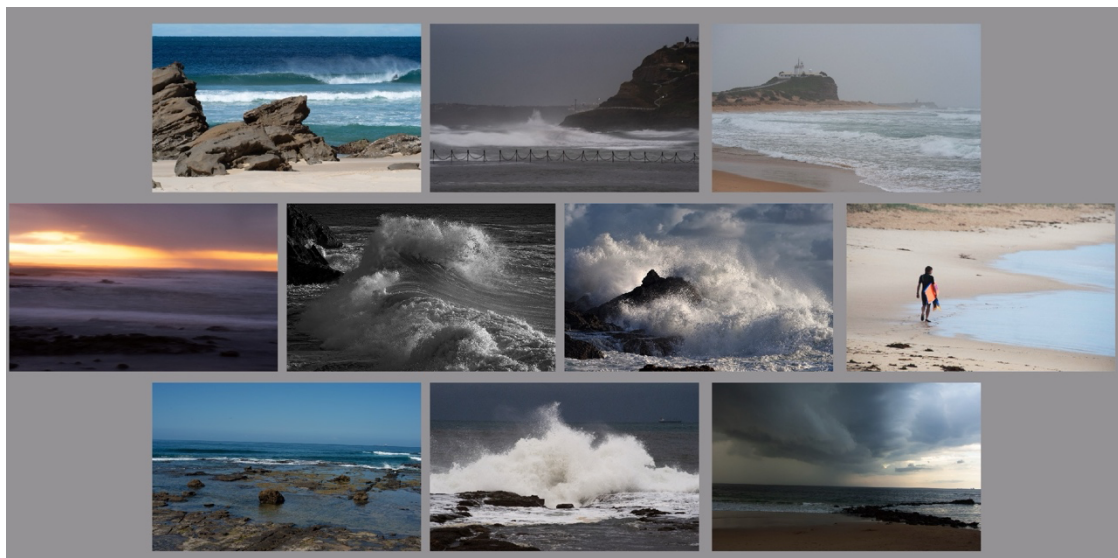
With a starting point such as the above collection, it is easy to see that there is room for improvement in both capture techniques and image processing. It is also clear that the subject matter of the images varies considerably, so restricting the topic (e.g. to "Waves in stormy weather") would make it easier to concentrate on improving a specific area of photography.

From the starting point of your initial collection of images, you will be helped to set specific goals for improvement, and you will receive advice about how to achieve those goals.

Detailed guidelines will be provided to help you prepare your overview image. If necessary, there will be a short training session for those who need further assistance. Don't stress over this, the overview image is simply a convenient way of helping you to keep track of your development and to share your progress at the Zoom meetings.

For this exercise, the participants will be divided into groups of 5-10 members. The group mentors will be Roy Killen and Craig Parker (and others if necessary).

If you are interested in participating in this exercise, please email Roy Killen at roykillen@mac.com before Sunday 25th February and indicate the topic you have chosen and your preferred weeknight for Zoom meetings.

Roy Killen
10th January, 2024