

inFocus

Newsletter of the Westchester Photographic Society

December 2023



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Competition 2A & 2B

"Abandoned" Trip

Wolves



December Again?!

I can't believe it is December again! Another year is coming to an end and our 2023-2024 season is in full swing. We've had so many great programs this year thanks to Serge's hard work booking speakers and there are many more to come in 2024.

The Greenburgh and Ossining exhibitions will close at the end of November. Thanks so much to Arnold, Sylvie, Jerry, Jane and everyone else who helped, as well as all the artists who exhibited their photographs.

The Ossining reception was an opportunity for us to see each other in person, and many of you came, though we missed many of you as well. I hope even more of you will attend future receptions.



Sadly, we still have no plans for in-person meetings as many of you have told us you prefer Zoom. Thankfully Zoom has proven to be an excellent online venue for our meetings, though nothing can really replace talking to someone face to face.

We've had some interesting field trips, which give us a chance to see each other in outdoor settings and take photographs. Do let Jackie know if you have suggestions for places to go. Meanwhile, the upcoming holiday season brings many photo opportunities, like GLOW at the Botanical Garden, the holiday train show, etc.

Winter months will drive some of us to indoor photography. In February I'll give a presentation on indoor macro photography. I hope that will inspire some of you to try it out if you haven't yet. If you have other indoor photography favorites, consider giving a presentation, or writing an article about it for inFocus.

Till next time, may you always see beauty in your viewfinder.

Fuat Baran, *President*

COVER PHOTO

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

By Joe Vitiello

The holiday season is here. The Holiday Lights always remind us of special moments and people in our lives – past and present.

Let's remember to extend warm wishes to those we know and to those who are complete strangers.



inFocus

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Dick Budnik, Web Edition

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Fuat Baran, Kenny Salstrom

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newsletter: infocus@wpsphoto.org
www.wpsphoto.org

Westchester Photographic Society

Meets 12 months a year, on Friday evenings at 7:30 pm (excepting school holidays). Meetings are virtual now until further notice. Start time is 7:30 pm.



Member of



FRIDAY EVENING PROGRAMS

December

- 1 Competition 3A
- 8 Guido van de Water, "Playing with Light"
- 15 Members' Showcases
- 22 No Meeting: Christmas
- 29 No Meeting: New Years

January

- 5 Competition 3B (Theme: Backlit)
- 12 Joel Pollak, "Midjourney AI Generative Fill"
- 19 Process Our Stock Photos
- 26 Competition 4A

February

- 2 Carl Walsh, "A Photojournalist's View of the Natural World"
- 9 Members' Critiques
- 16 Competition 4B (Theme: Frame Within a Frame)
- 23 TBD

March

- 1 Process the same image in Color and B&W
- 8 Competition 5A
- 15 Harvey Stein, "Ways of Seeing"
- 22 TBD
- 29 No Meeting: Easter

April

- 5 Competition 5B (Theme: Wabi-Sabi)
- 12 Sapna Reddy, "Landscape Photography"
- 19 Members' Showcases
- 26 Annual Members Meeting

May

- 3 Competition 6A
- 10 Ken Salstrom, Lewis Bogaty, "Iceland"
- 17 TBD
- 24 TBD
- 31 Competition 6B (Theme: ICM)

Check the WPS website (wpsphoto.org) for recent changes.

Contact Information

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome and should be addressed as follows: If concerning the WPS Newsletter, In Focus, address comments to the editor at infocus@wpsphoto.org. If concerning our website, address comments to our webmaster, Dick Budnik, at webmaster@wpsphoto.org. All other comments should be addressed to our President.

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COMING UP



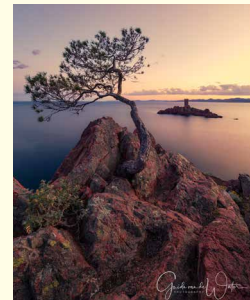
Guido van de Water on December 8

Playing with Light

My session is called Playing with Light and that is for a good reason. Today I want to show you all kinds of different forms of light and how you can use these types to your advantage. Every landscape demands different weather conditions and today I'm telling you how I make my choices and how you can do it yourself. I'm showing how you can create the most stunning colors on the most boring blue sky days. I have lots of example images, stories and enthusiasm prepared for you!

Bio

Hello, I am Guido van de Water, 40 years old, and I'm a landscape / nature photographer, OM System ambassador and YouTuber from the Netherlands. On my YouTube channel I upload two new videos every week all about landscape photography. You've recently seen one from my European road trip at one of your regular meetings. These videos can be on location videos but also tips and tricks videos. My biggest passion is photographing nature with atmospheric conditions. I love moody foggy mornings and I'm always searching for that awesome light. I also give workshops and do lectures like the one I'm doing for you. I am always willing to share my knowledge and thinking process on how I approach a shot. Hopefully, you will find some inspiration and ideas after you have joined me in the live session.



AREA MUSEUMS/GALLERIES

Metropolitan Museum
(www.metmuseum.org)
Met Collection

Museum of Modern Art
(www.moma.org)
New Photography 2023
Before Technicolor
Ongoing

International Center for Photography
(www.icp.org)
Many new exhibitions
through Jan 8, 2024

New York Historical Society
(nyhistory.org)
Many Exhibits

New York Photography Diary
(<https://ny-photography-diary.com/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/>)
Many Exhibits

Museum of the City of New York
(mcity.org)
Many Exhibits

WPS GROUP EXHIBITS

**Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center
Northern Westchester Hospital**
What a Wonderful World! Oh Yeah!
Running through March 2024

WPS FIELD TRIPS

<https://www.wpsphoto.org/members-field-trips>

**More Photo Opportunities
in the Field Trip area.
Stay tuned for more
information on these
upcoming trips!**



SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS

*Please log on to websites
to see the entire schedules.
Many events are available online.
Also see last page.*

Hunts
<https://edu.huntsphoto.com>

B&H
<http://www.bhphotovideo.com/find/EventSpace.jsp>

Adorama
<http://www.adorama.com/alc/events>

SPECIAL INCENTIVES

A MEMBERS-ONLY DEAL!

Susan Magnano has offered special pricing on many of her workshops.

**If you are a WPS member,
click [HERE](#).**

IN MEMORIAM

CARL ZUCKER



It is with great sadness that we announce the untimely passing of Carl Zucker on November 20, 2023. He was a gentle, caring person who captured the world's beauty in his photography. We were privileged to have seen his many inspiring exhibits. Carl participated in all aspects of WPS, including being a board member. His dedication and willingness to further our cause strengthened our membership and the fulfillment of our mission statement. He will be sorely missed.

Photo Ops for the Holidays



NYBG Holiday Train Show



NYBG GLOW



The Competition Corner

By Dennis Thornton



Don't Touch That Button

Well, here we are only at competition 2A and the inevitable has already happened. An image that was created via the combination of photography and AI technologies was submitted in Open Mind. It was challenged and upon acknowledgement from the maker that AI was used in the creation of the final product, the image was disqualified.

It is a beautiful and artistic example of the potential of how AI technologies can be employed in the creative process. Image is included. However, we are a photography club. The photograph is our medium, not computer-generated graphics, no matter how closely the final product may mimic a "photograph."

At the start of this competition year, WPS decided to prohibit the use of AI-assisted technologies, specifically Adobe's "Generative Fill" or any similar AI engine. (See the InFocus September 2023 issue.) I realize that such a ban is like putting a hungry child in a candy store and then telling them, "don't touch."

So, it was inevitable that someone would interpret the Open Mind byline that "anything goes" as including AI technologies. Please note that neither Tony Gerzirjian (WPS founder and creator of Open Mind), nor any of us, could have conceptualized how the digital era and the use of computer AI would so dramatically alter the photography landscape. And who knows what the future will bring.

Let us use this submission as an opportunity to learn from one another and collectively strive to define some general guidelines for what computer-based techniques can and cannot be employed in our competitions. This discussion will sidestep the topic of using other people's artwork. Nor will this be an attempt to define every possible scenario and try to create rules a priori. Rather, the objective is to present some guideposts for reflection and discussion and thereby assist you in preparing images for submission.

Try to keep in mind two guiding principles incorporated into our Guidelines for Competition, which incorporates our stated dos and don'ts (the Rules). The first principle, most relevant to our traditional categories, is that we are allowed to do things that may enhance but not transform the image. The corollary is the construct of the "photographic truth." This phrase has been part of our guidelines for decades. I found

reference to this phrase in the rules sections of The Photographic Society of America, which has many more categories and rules than WPS. My interpretation is that the origin stems from photojournalism, where altering the image was tantamount to violating the accuracy of what was being recorded. PSA extended the construct to their Nature category where, to my understanding, you are not allowed to do anything other than crop the image. No cleaning up debris, removing a branch etc.

While WPS expects their members to strive to maintain the "photographic truth" of their competition images we are in no way as draconian as PSA.

So, what are we allowed to do? The "normal digital workflow" incorporates cropping, dodging and burning, altering white balance, establishing white and black points, sharpening, manipulating texture, clarity, dehaze and vibrance sliders, and of course pushing the HSL sliders around. Please keep in mind (my personal opinion), just because you can doesn't mean that you should. While there is an almost universal compulsion to push all the sliders to the extreme, many images have a more pleasing appearance not being over saturated, sharpened, etc.





When it comes to utilizing AI-assisted features we start treading on thinner ice. Commonly, photographers use Adobe's "Content Aware Fill" to clean up an image of distractions. Content Aware Fill (in its current iteration) draws from the surrounding area (what is present in your image) to fill in the gaps. It is NOT generating something that wasn't there. While how you work your image is your choice, just keep in mind that other competitors may not embrace your style and feel that heavily worked images should not be in our "traditional" categories, but more appropriately placed in our Open Mind category.

What's contemporary is normative and what's normative is contemporary. It has become common practice to use "Sky Replacement" for all forms of landscapes. Assuming you have a sky in your original image then one can argue that by substituting one sky for another (yours or provided) you are just enhancing the image. Yes, one can argue that it's not "your" sky, but they can be swapped so seamlessly that trying to enforce a prohibition would be futile. If you have been a parent, you quickly learn the golden rule that you are wise to never make a rule that you cannot and/or are unwilling to enforce. So, sky swapping is allowed.

Commonly, photographers find themselves in accidental predicaments. You're tracking a bird or other moving object and end up not having enough lead space in front of the subject. You can use Photoshop to expand the canvas and give your subject some breathing space. Or, you wait for the bird to move and suddenly it spreads its wings so that the wing tip goes out of the capture frame. Or, just as you depress the shutter, the subject moves and/or you inadvertently jerk the camera and the person's foot or other body part is cut off. Submitting an image, with such an apparent cut off, is a competition kiss of death. Virtually, every judge will ding you for such a flaw. You now can and are allowed to employ a generative expand option. The argument is that the added space in front of the subject, adding tip of the wing or the foot is just fixing the image by including what was intended and implied in your original capture. By having the missing element re-created via AI you are enhancing the image. You are not asking AI to generate some unrelated component nor conjure up completely new subject matter to insert into your image. You are fixing a deficiency in the capture— enhancing the image, not transforming it.

Adobe advertises that Generative Fill "changes everything," and it seems to have the potential to do just that. Generative Fill is drawing upon incredible computing power to create content that wasn't there to begin with. It doesn't matter how "creative or specific" you may be in giving Adobe's Sensei "engine" Generative Fill keywords to create content. The computer, not you, is doing the creating. Refining it to your "creative specifications" (e.g., "I want a car of a specific make, model, color, presentation," etc.) is a rationalization for justifying having the computer do the real work for you. It's not your car, nor was the car there to begin with. So, no matter how many refinements you may request, the car will never be your work. As its name implies, the computer is "generating" the content, not you. The computer AI is transforming the image. That is the distinction and the basic reason why we will not permit its use in our competitions.

Let me reiterate, we are a photography club. We are neither a photo-arts-graphic club nor a photo-illustrator club. If you want to use Adobe's Generative Fill for your own gratification, and then show your production on social media or make a print to hang on your wall please do so and be proud of your creative achievement. But, such creations, either a combination of a base photograph starting point with AI features added, or images that are wholly generated via the use of AI technologies are not admissible in any of our competition categories. Who knows what the future may bring, but for the foreseeable future "the photograph" is the medium we are and will be working with. Embrace it, use the tools available and permitted and be pleased with your creations.

No doubt, there are and will be increasing situations where it will be very difficult if not impossible to discern, with the naked eye, that AI has been used with a given image. That's just life. So, members are asked to adhere to the honor system and not employ such techniques. Collective cooperation will make our competitions less complicated and less contentious. It's a pain to deal with challenges, and no one wants to have images challenged and disqualified, especially if that image is yours. So, your support is requested and appreciated.

Bottom line: **Please, don't touch that (Generative-Fill) button.**

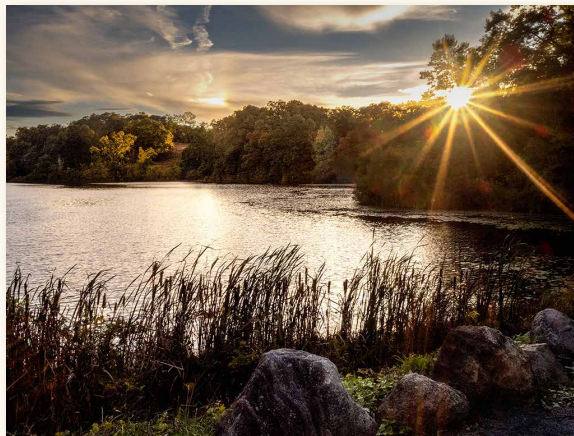
DIGITAL COLOR B



Mitchell Druck, First
Fledgling Green Herons



Julie van Benthuisen, Second
Dancing Dainties



Mitchell Druck, Second
Sunset at Swan Lake

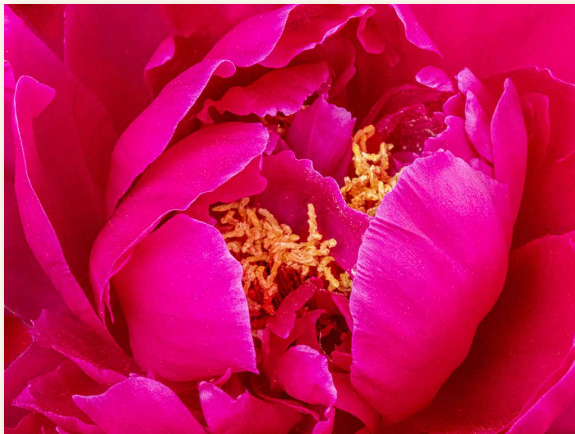
DIGITAL COLOR B



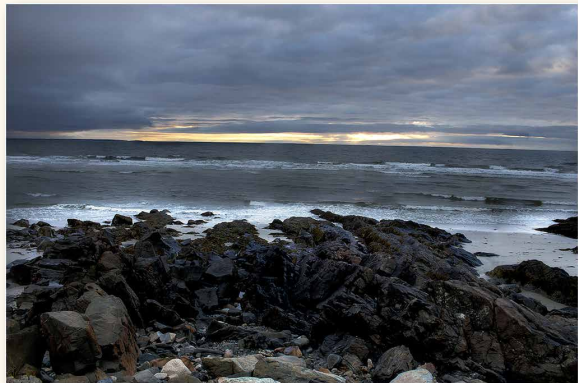
Serge Migdal, Second
Watch Towers



Melanie Rush, Third
Paddle Boats



Barbara Pollack, Third
Sue's Pink Rhododendron

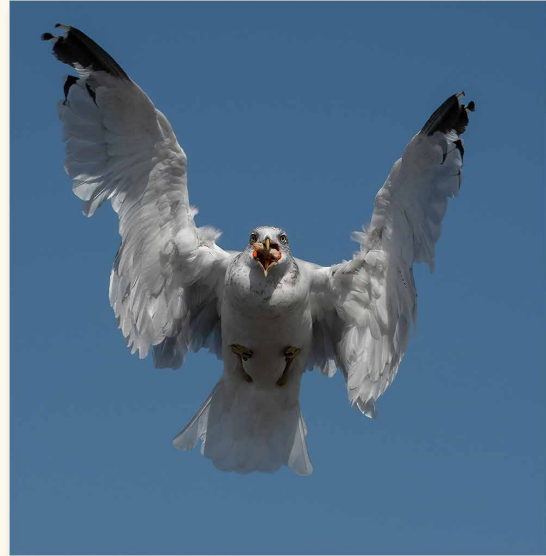


Jim Dwyer, HM
Ocean Sunrise

DIGITAL COLOR A



Betty Leung, First
Siglufjordur Harbor in Iceland



Jackie Ross, Second
Lunch Time



Arnold Breisblatt, Second
Provincetown Harbor at Dusk

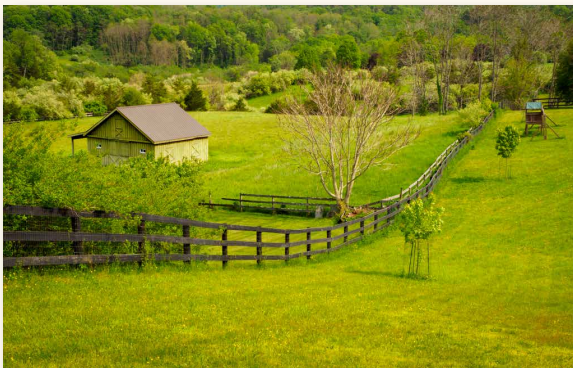
DIGITAL COLOR A



Jackie Ross, Third
Piping Plover Splash



Ron Carran, HM
Arizona Canyon



Ron Carran, HM
Fall Scene



Jennifer Dooley, HM
Food for Two

DIGITAL COLOR SALON



Dennis Thornton, First
Sewing Machine



Barbara Kapetanakes, First
Wolf Glamour

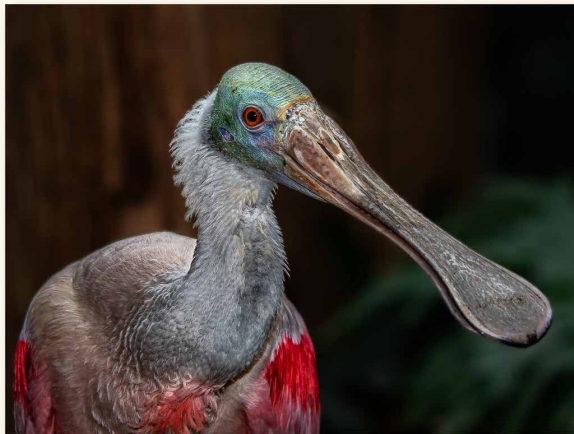


Richard Micklish, Second
White Poppy

DIGITAL COLOR SALON



Richard Micklish, Third
Fly on Azalea

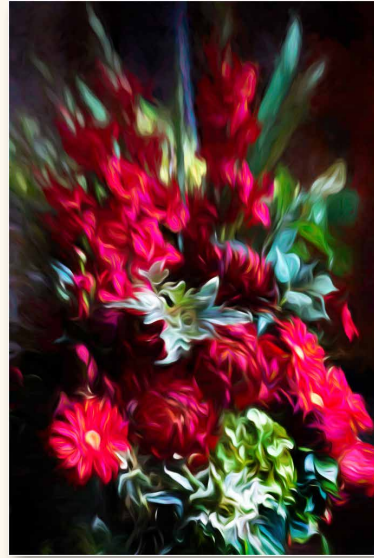


Dennis Thornton, HM
Spoonbill

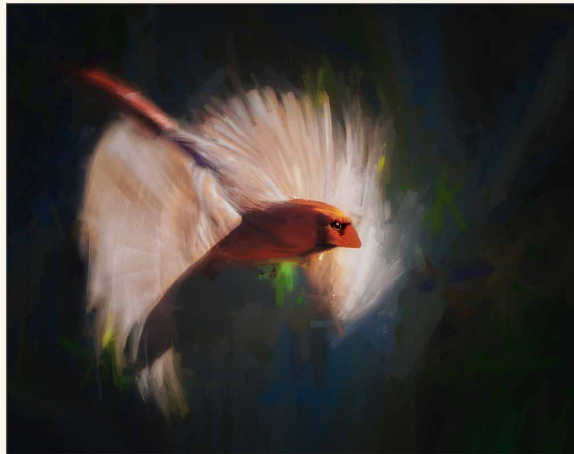
DIGITAL OPEN MIND



Anastasia Tompkins, First
Lounging Lady

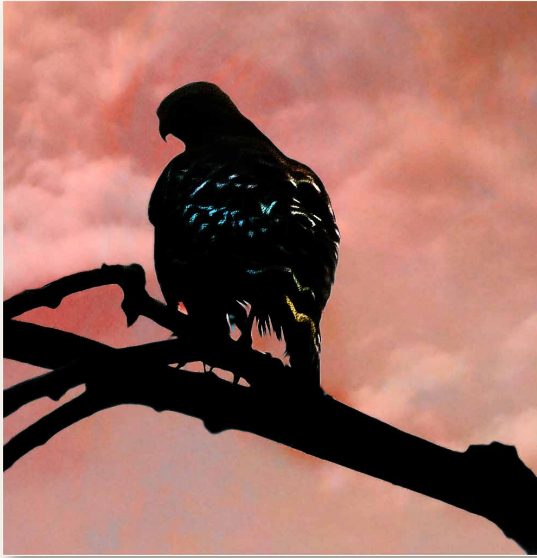


Barbara Kapetanakes, Second
Swooping Flowers

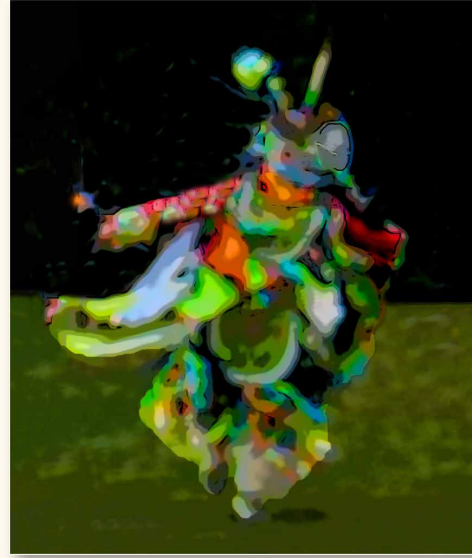


Anastasia Tompkins, Third'
Painted Cardinal

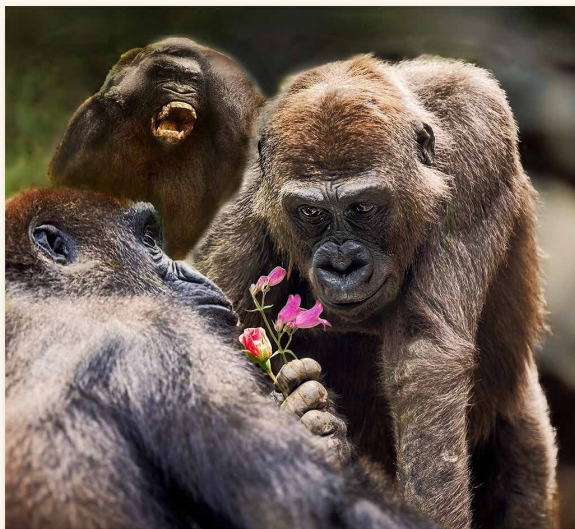
DIGITAL OPEN MIND



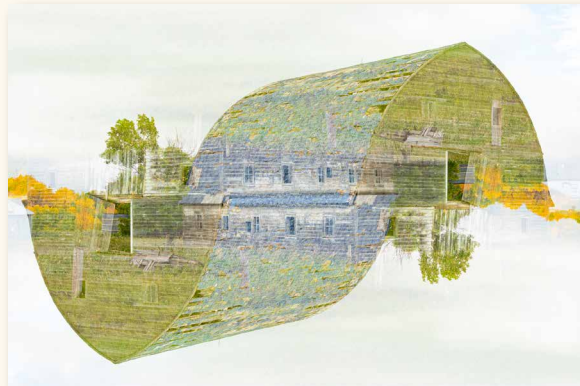
Barbara Kapetanakes, HM
Hawk



Arnold Breisblatt, HM
Indian Dancer in Costume

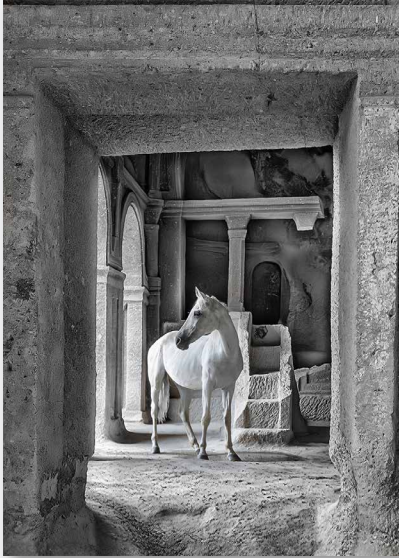


Mitchell Druck, HM
Oy Vey

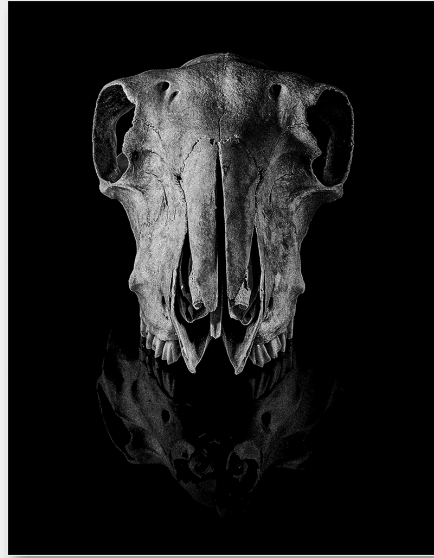


Jennifer Dooley, HM
Topsy Turvey Barn

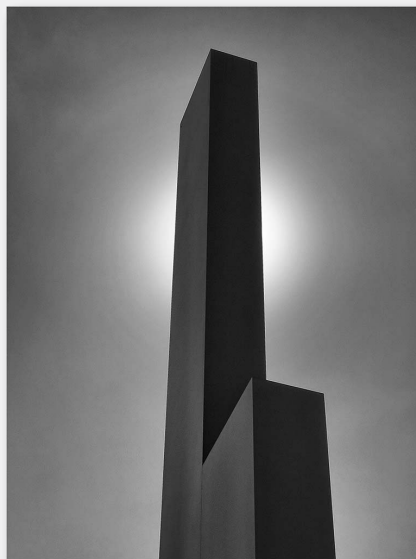
DIGITAL B&W



Carlotta Grenier, First
Horse in Church in Cappadocia



Dennis Thornton, Second
Goat Head Reflection



Carolyn Colella, Third
Grey and Black

DIGITAL B&W



Anastasia Tompkins, HM
Itchy Parrot

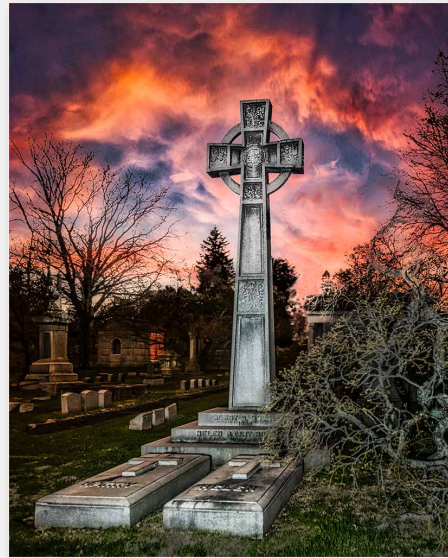


Mitchell Druck, HM
Snowy Bridge

THEME: NECROPOLIS—CEMETERIES



Arnold Breisblatt, First
WW2 Memorial with Lincoln Memorial



Dennis Thornton, Second
Celtic Cross Ablaze



Jackie Ross, Second
Gate to Heaven or Hell?

THEME: NECROPOLIS—CEMETERIES



Carolyn Colella, Third
Memorial Day



Barbara Kapetanakes, HM
Lantern Tour



Possessed With Exploring The Past

By Dennis Thornton

In August 2023, WPS hosted a talk by Matthew Christopher, who is the founder of Abandoned America. Matthew has a passion for the past and discovering buildings that have been forsaken by history. He works hard to gain granted access to buildings that have been closed, abandoned and left to deteriorate. The images and stories he shared told about the previous heyday of massive factories, once beautiful theaters, churches, or once active schools and hotels are some of the interesting structures Matthew has photographed. Sometimes, the stories are more poignant, as with his pictures of state hospitals and other institutions.

Everyone has their own photographic interests. Venturing into abandoned places may not be on everyone's bucket list. Sometimes the spaces are a bit dirty, smelly and depending upon circumstances the footing might be challenging. Not only does Matthew arrange for legal entry into these places, he is very responsible when it comes to safety issues. And, having scouted out the venue in advance, Matthew provides relevant instructions and will direct you to the locations where you can capture the most interesting shots.

If you like history, learning about places that once hummed with activity and influenced the lives of the people there, or if you are up for an adventure and like exploring unique places then signing on for one of Matthew's workshops may be just the unique photographic opportunity you are looking for.

I have been on several of Matthew's workshops. When he presented to us in August, he was preparing for a "leap of faith" workshop. Normally, Matthew tells you about the venue in advance. Occasionally, he conducts a leap of faith shoot where you are only told the general location and then receive specifics upon paying the sign up fee. It's in part to enhance

the mystery and trust that he will deliver. Keeping the location under wraps can also be important in order to preserve the structure. All too often, an abandoned location is posted on social media and quickly the vandals show up. Walls are spray-painted, furniture, windows, fixtures are broken and eventually someone will set the place on fire. Then, it's ruined for everyone. Those of us who used to visit Elda Castle, in Ossining (the old Abercrombie mansion) witnessed first hand this process of destruction. Now, it's a burnt-out shell, boarded up and of no use to anyone.

The leap of faith venue that Matthew arranged for in September was a *Shining* example of one of the many defunct mega summer resorts in the Catskills. While it wasn't the *Overlook Hotel*, the Friar Tuck Resort was massive. Upon learning the location, you could find several YouTube videos of urban explore touring the place as well as ghost hunters looking for the spirit of *Jack Torrance*, in the lobby, typing away "*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*" or wanting to catch a glimpse of the twin girls wandering the hallways. I didn't feel the presence of any evil spirits. But I felt frozen in time and hopelessly lost in the labyrinth of hallways. I did see some writing on the wall in room 237 but no women in the bath. I also discovered the outline of a dead body, on the roof. Doesn't that count for something, in the way of supernatural experiences?

Believe me, there were plenty of things to photograph. Each of the 500 hotel rooms was in various states of disorder. There were multiple pools, indoors and out. The resort had once held a variety of activities with exercise rooms, sauna, ballroom, bar, and kitchens equipped to feed an army (up to 2,000) guests.

Admittedly, exploring abandoned places may not be everyone's cup of tea. There was a dank musty smell, in the bow-



els of the building, and many of us wore respirators a lot of the time. Windows had been broken and subsequent storms caused flooding, leaving a slick mud residue on many floors. The power had long been cut off, so in the downstairs and basement rooms you were in a pitch-black environment. Having several flashlights is prudent when engaging in this type of urban spelunking. But, these factors only added to the mystery and excitement when *shining* your light into the abyss and wondering what mysteries would be revealed.

That being said, no light means you control all the lighting in the scene. This can provide you with opportunities to create dramatic contrasts and shadows, as I did in a bathroom I found. I also went to the bar room hoping to find Jack Torrance and Grady in order to get some pointers on how to “correct” uncooperative family members. But, all I encountered was another photographer who had brought along a model who he illuminated with a portable Godox strobe. I then found a bank of dirty/encrusted cash registers that I photographed for quite a long time. The resort had been partially repurposed and oversized outdoor light figures were stored in various rooms and courtyards.

To some, it may just be an old dirty abandoned place that they wouldn't want to step into. For others, it's an opportunity to go on an adventure to explore the past. You can use your photographic skills to tell stories about what life might have been like when that venue was operational. There are stories everywhere, if you are willing to look for them.

If you think you might be interested in exploring and photographing places that have seen better days and have taken on the appearance of quasi-antiquity then consider going onto <https://www.abandonedamerica.us> website and see examples of previous workshops and what offering Matthew may be planning. Matthew is very affable and will freely share information about potential opportunities with you.

I don't know when I'll be going on my next adventure to an abandoned venue, but I'm sure that when I arrive and begin to experience the growing excitement of exploring a new dilapidated structure I'll stick my head through the door and cry out “*Here's Johnny.*”

WOLVES

Our field trip to the Wolf Center in South Salem did not disappoint us. We had many photo opportunities with the wolves! The staff was very helpful giving us lots of information. The red wolf and Mexican gray wolf are two of the rarest mammals in North America. Both species at one time were completely extinct in the wild. Next time I go hopefully there will be lots of snow on the ground!! *Jackie Ross*



Jackie Ross



Serge Migdal



Julie Serenson



Linda Austrian

More shots of the Ossining Exhibit Reception

Julie Serenson



WHAT TO SERVE FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER

by Jane Castorina Gordon

I made turkey & stuffing and hot mashed potatoes,
Yams and a ham and some fried green tomatoes...
But I had forgot ...
What my friends could have & have not.
Arnold could not have cheddar ... cuz it clashes with his meds
Joe's on a low carb diet ... couldn't sample any bread.
Suzie could not have onions ... cuz they fill her up with gas,
Barbara could not have eggnog ... cuz it knocks her on her A-s.

I made Martha Stewarts tarts ... sweet and high falutin'
Which 6 people couldn't eat ... because it contained gluten.
Warren could not have shellfish ... or he would asphyxiate
There wasn't one damn item ... that could stay on Carol's plate.

My soufflé was a masterpiece ... It was so light and airy,
But my guests couldn't eat it ... no one could eat dairy.
I broke down and wept ...
"If you're vegan then why'd you accept?"

Linda got on her podium ... On and on and on she went
About the evils of sodium ... plus how she's lactose intolerant.
Richard was prone to bloating ... couldn't eat the broccoli.
Diane gets acid reflux ... every time she looks at me.

When I put the turkey down ... Sarah put on a frown.
Ever since the world began ... I can't eat no tryptophan.
Every one at the table ... getting up in years, you see
Skipped the meal altogether ... talked about their surgeries.

So I said "pass the beano ... and pour me some vino,"
I can't do this again ...
I'm pooped,...
Amen."

inFocus

The Newsletter of the
Westchester Photographic Society

Ron Carran, editor

P.O. Box 405, Ossining, NY 10562

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