

## **A Short Philosophy of Picture Taking by John Royle (with some help from EE, AE, HCB, AA, WB)**

There are five aspects to creating a good photograph; eye, lighting, composition, technical knowledge, equipment.

Having an **eye** for a picture is the start. It may happen as you travel the World, or be some detail on your doorstep, but it involves being alert, looking, thinking pictures - and a lot of intuition. It may be where the main talent lies.

The type of **lighting** makes the picture interesting, exciting, dramatic, charming, whatever, something that holds the viewer and makes them want to look again and again.

**Composition** can be taught. There are rules. Often it is as much about what to leave out as to what to include. It is about arranging the objects or shapes in your picture in a pleasing or striking way.

**Technical knowledge.** Modern "auto-everything" cameras have diminished the importance of this but it can broaden the creative possibilities. Beware, however, of it getting in the way; you don't want endless possibilities running through your mind at that vital creative moment, nor so much gear you can't get around!

Last and least; **equipment.** We all have our favourites but nothing will get that great photograph for you. Care about quality but try to keep light and simple; we all started with one camera and lens - it didn't stop us did it?

And do the "greats" agree?

### **Looking for pictures . . . . .**

*Nothing happens when you sit at home. I always make it a point to carry a camera with me at all times...I just shoot at what interests me at that moment. You can find pictures anywhere. . . It's just seeing - at least the photography I care about. You either see or you don't see. The rest is academic. Anyone can learn how to develop. It's how you organize what you see into a picture. - Elliott Erwitt*

### **The right light . . . .**

*I wait for the right season, the right weather., and the right time of day or night, to get the picture I know is there - Bill Brandt*

### **The composition . . . . .**

*What reinforces the content of a photograph is the sense of rhythm – the relationship between shapes and values. -Henri Cartier Bresson*

*To take photographs is to hold one's breath when all faculties converge in the face of fleeing reality. It is at that moment that mastering an image becomes a great physical and intellectual joy. -Henri Cartier-Bresson*

**If you are playing too much on Photoshop or lusting after yet another gadget to litter your bag. .**

*The picture is good or not from the moment it was caught in the camera. -Henri Cartier-Bresson*

*Photography has not changed since its origin except in its technical aspects which for me are not a major concern. -Henri Cartier-Bresson*

*Photography appears to be an easy activity; in fact it is a varied and ambiguous process in which the only common denominator among its practitioners is in the instrument. Henri Cartier-Bresson*

*"The term accessories has come to include a host of photographic gadgets of questionable value..." Ansel Adams*

*"I am always surprised when I see several cameras, a gaggle of lenses, filters, meters, et cetera, rattling around in a soft bag with a complement of refuse and dust. Sometimes the professional is the worst offender!" Ansel Adams*

**"Eise" had it right, especially on photographing people. . . . .**

*My style hasn't changed much in all these sixty years. I still use, most of the time, existing light and try not to push people around. I have to be as much a diplomat as a photographer. People often don't take me seriously because I carry so little equipment and make so little fuss. When I married in 1949, my wife asked me, "But where are your real cameras?" I never carried a lot of equipment. My motto has always been, "Keep it simple." Alfred Eisenstaedt*

**And HCB backs him up . . . .**

*Avoid making a commotion, just as you wouldn't stir up the water before fishing. Don't use a flash out of respect for the natural lighting, even when there isn't any. If these rules aren't followed, the photographer becomes unbearably obtrusive. -Henri Cartier-Bresson*

**Keep shooting, remember how elusive that really good picture is . . . . .**

*"Twelve significant photographs in any one year is a good crop" Ansel Adams*

**. . . and remember this one when you think someone's competition entry is weird. . . .**

*Photography is not a sport. No rules determine how a photographer should make an image." Bill Brandt*

Happy shooting,

John Royle.

## A Year In Photography by AJR

My photography this last year or so has, in the sense of the hardware, gone in two different directions. First I achieved an almost lifelong ambition by becoming a Leica M owner but I also bought a digital camera.

The cynic would say the Leica is nearly fifty years out of date and indeed the differences between my M6 and the 1954 M3 are very small, but Leica have kept at the forefront of lens performance with unbeatable standards in prime lenses delivering top quality at full aperture. The M6 is small, discrete, tough, beautifully made, a joy to use, quiet, superb in low light, it makes you take care and I have been delighted with the results.

The digital I bought was the Nikon Coolpix 800. I am keen on using images in my teaching and felt that the digital camera now provided a really slick way of producing them. With the advent of the 2megapixel models quality is at least as good as a good compact camera and high street processing. I expected to use it for routine image making but it was a revelation. It can focus to within an inch or so without the need for any attachments, takes tolerable hand-held shots down to 1/15<sup>th</sup> second with ease and I can have pictures onto paper within 4 minutes of taking! The time it saves me - in the old days I would often photograph a school event with my Olympus OM1 and then spend an evening in the darkroom before presenting the results, but now! Recently I had a picture of a special school assembly up on display before the event had finished! OK, OK but is it real photography? Well there is no way I am parting with the Leica but I would invite sceptics to consider digital again; results can be viewed instantly, the appearance of your image on a screen I think aids composition and you can shoot more frames because instant editing is possible - and film is free!

I think in these two cameras I have the best of both worlds. The high optical quality, history and joy of total control with the rangefinder and the facility and unbounded simple fun with the digital. These two cameras have increased my enjoyment of photography enormously in the last two years. So indeed has my joining the Crewe Photographic Society and the company of its members, their knowledge, an excellent season of talks and demos and taking part in the slide and print competitions. I wish this could all have happened 41 years ago when I bought my first camera!

John Royle