

Focal Point

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www.jwjohnton.com

News of the Greater Binghamton photo world, creative and technical information, insights, inspiration and, yes, blatant & shameless self-promotion. If you have topics or news to share, send them to jwjfoto@aol.com.

The NEW Issue

I'm unveiling all kinds of things with this newsletter: NEW workshops, a NEW website and, of course, a NEW name for the Newsletter. Somehow "**Focal Point**" seems to work better than "**Newsletter**." When the name finally came to me, I immediately thought, "How brilliant! And original!" Then I went to Google and found that "Focal Point" is the name of photo studios (surprise, surprise), photo software (another shocker), an architectural lighting manufacturer, a dance studio, an arts center, a radio ministry and a short-lived hardcore punk band from California. So it's hardly original but I don't know of another small photo newsletter with the same name. So for now, **Focal Point** it is. What else is **NEW**? Read on.

The NEW Workshops

THE ART OF COMPOSITION is a NEW in-depth, **one-day** workshop on **Saturday, June 11**. The class emphasizes the elements and principles of design, contemplation and common sense. It's all designed to help you grow, refine and tap into your own idea of what's beautiful and compelling anywhere, in the natural landscape and anywhere else. [This workshop is coming up VERY soon.](#)

MACRO AND CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY is another **NEW** one-day workshop on **Saturday, August 6**. And you don't need to own a pricey Macro lens to take this class. All kinds of wonderful close-up work can be done with your existing lenses. Of course if you do have a macro, by all means join us.

WEEKEND WORKSHOP INTENSIVE – This year it runs **Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, July 22-24**. As the name implies, it lasts all weekend. You will wake up very early Saturday and Sunday. You will be sleep-deprived, bleary-eyed and – at the end - satisfied with the portfolio-worthy images your hard work has produced. This offering is not **NEW**, but the workshop routinely gets high praise from those intrepid enough to endure it. Limited enrollment.

To get an information and registration form pdf go to www.jwjohnton.com. Click on the INFO menu and select **Workshops**.

The NEW Website

I'm also proud to unveil the NEW www.jwjohnton.com. There are plenty of portfolios with my latest work, an extensive INFO menu, slideshow capability, Image Info, which provides basic or extensive information about any image. It's a very sleek design, one of the dozens of templates available from **liveBooks.com**. There is plenty of refining and expanding ahead as the site grows to achieve its potential. But I'll be able to do the work whenever I want and do it quickly and easily. The software that comes with the package is very intuitive. I'm a bit of a technophobe but making changes or additions is, dare I say, fun. The liveBooks support team has done a great job providing "how-to" advice and making requested changes on their end usually within 24 hours. There is also an extensive library of tutorials and webinars for photographers. And no, liveBooks.com has NOT paid me to say all this. I'm just happy with the whole experience.

A NEW Exhibition

The opening reception for the Joyce K. L. Smith Environmental Photography Show and Competition took place Wednesday, May 11 at the Broome County Public Library 2nd floor exhibit gallery. This is the event's 15th year. Anyone who is a photographer of the natural and man-made landscape will enjoy the award-winning images. Almost 300 images were submitted to the judges by more than one-hundred amateur photographers this year. The show will be up through June 30, during library hours. The library is located at 185 Court Street, downtown Binghamton.

SUMMER PHOTO CLASSES AT BCC CONTINUING EDUCATION

Digital Photography for Beginners (SLR Cameras) with Dave Williams
3 Wednesdays July 27 – August 10 (6:30 to 9:00pm)

Photography Basics and Beyond (both SLR and Compact cameras)
w/ JW Johnston
4 Wednesdays June 1-22 (6:00-8:30pm)

Photographing the Natural Landscape (both SLR and Compact cameras)
w/ JW Johnston
4 Wednesdays June 29 – July 27 (6-8:30pm) No class July 6.

For more information www.sunybroome.edu/ce or call 778-5012

Book Recommendation

Learning to See Creatively, Revised Edition by Bryan Peterson.

As da Vinci said, “Where spirit does not work with the hand, there is no art.” You can have all the technical expertise in the world, possess intimate knowledge of every possible selection in your SLRs menus, have all kinds gadgets, bells and whistles available and still be unable to take a photograph that pleases you. One problem might be that you are so tethered to the technology that you’re simply not seeing. This book can help you master the other half of successful photography. Yes, this is the same Bryan Peterson who wrote the very good **Understanding Exposure** and other how-to photography books. An entire book devoted to This one might not be available in bookstores. I ordered it from BN.com for a good price. (isbn – 9780817441814)

Using That Polarizer

If you are often disappointed by a lack of vivid, rich colors in your images, chances are you are not using a polarizing filter or to be more precise, a circular polarizing filter. Almost all landscape photographers in almost all circumstances use one. By reducing or eliminating glare or reflection on water, leaves or wet rocks, the filter lets colors emerge. The polarizer also helps give you saturated blue skies and white clouds that seem to “pop”. The polarizer works best when you’re at a 90-degree angle from the sun.

Here are some caveats. First, if you’re using a very wide angle lens with a polarizer, you might end up with some vignetting...too dark areas of blue in the sky or shadows in the corners of your image. Second, you can overdo it. Sometimes the blue sky is just too blue. If that happens you can back off a bit. Adjust the rotating ring until you see a more acceptable blue. Third, sometimes a little bit of sheen or glare adds to the atmosphere or mood you’re trying to capture. If you’ve rotated the ring to eliminate all glare, try rotating the ring a bit and see what happens. You might like a bit of reflection. Whenever in doubt, try several versions and decide later. It doesn’t cost a dime.

Words to see by...

If you ignore beauty you will soon find yourself without it...but if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life.

-Frank Lloyd Wright

Your thoughts, comments and ideas

This newsletter is a work in progress. If you have any ideas for topics, questions, or news to share by all means let me know at jwjfoto@aol.com. If you no longer want to receive this newsletter, tell me, and I’ll take you off the list. May you continue to find joy in photography.

The Gallery



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Window Treatment #13

from the Window Treatment Series

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I used to insist that the natural landscape be the subject of any photograph I produce. I exercised zero tolerance of any sign of human interaction. I described myself, in typical long-winded fashion, as a “fine art photographer of the natural landscape.” I thought that any sign of man would tarnish the ethereal, the infinite, the agenda-free. Clearly that was, pardon the pun, short-sighted. It was self-deprivation in the extreme. Remove the blinders and we can experience the simple and mysterious interaction between man and nature.

When we look back on our lives, our friends, places or events, what we remember can be surprising. Quite often what remains are details...the fraying hem on the dress that your mom wore around the house, a pattern in the wallpaper in your grandparents’ living room, the way a wisp of hair haphazardly caressed the left cheek of your first girlfriend’s face or how the early sun played with the windows and curtains in your bedroom. Sometimes we’re just too busy or distracted to be receptive to the everyday beauty that’s all around us. We don’t have to drive to the park, climb to the mountaintop or walk into our backyards to make contact with the beautiful. Quite often it’s the first thing we see in the morning; light and shadow on our curtains as the earth rolls along. When we notice such things, we really are in touch with the mysterious, the ethereal, the infinite. This is the stuff that keeps us going whether or not we’re aware of it at the time.