The Newsletter of the Syosset Camera Club

BARRY GOLDSTEIN, EDITOR

the Viewfinder

Special Black & White Issue

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Black & White

Barry Goldstein

When we speak about fine art photography, black and white photography comes to mind. It is somewhat vexing therefore, that during the 2009-10 SCC season, only 7 members in Group A and B combined, entered black and white photogrpahs in 6 or more competitions. When this issue was discussed at our last Board meeting, it was suggested that perhaps the problem is a lack of confidence regarding the process of producing a good black and white print. If that's the case gentle reader, we will take care of that right now.

The inclusion of color in a photograph is a layer of complexity not always necessary or desireable. This is a good example of the "more is less" concept. Ansel Adams, an icon of black and white photography produced thousands of color photographs as well, but he was disattisfied with the level of control over the image as compared with his black and white work. Now, Photoshop and other programs offer an incredible degree of control in black and white. Had Adams lived in the digital age, things may have been different, but he once likened working in color to playing an out-of-tune piano.

President's Message

Linda Volin

The World in Black and White

Today's world is dominated by color, but the creative person can uniquely capture surroundings in black, white and tones of gray.

Goals for creating black and white photographs should be that of obtaining crisp images with much contrast. Through monochromatic images the photographer can present viewers with abstract, interpretive views of the real world. Photographs of serious people in serious situations can be most effective in black and white. Scenes depicting squalor and misery can achieve most attention when presented in monochrome. Photojournalistic undertakings will be quite effective in black and white. If a geographical location is important to the story in the picture, it is necessary to show parts of the area.

It is a good idea to look at black and white photographs in magazines and books. Three black and white photographers of interest could be Ansel Adams for his wonderful landscapes, Don Mc Cullin for his documentary photographs and David Alan Harvey who photographed the Wyeth family for National Geographic.

Hopefully, this issue of *Viewfinder* will inspire you to delve into black and white photographic undertakings. Have fun experimenting in the monochromatic world!

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!

The first thing one must do to become proficient in black and white, is to learn to see monochromatically (witout color). To do that, look at the scene and ask yourself if the colors add to the composition or detract from it. If you have a red filter, try viewing your composition through it. The filter will absorb all colors except red giving you a monochromatic view of the scene. It's not black and white but it is a great help.

> "One sees differently with color photography than black and white...in short, visualization must be modified by the specific nature of the equipment and materials being used"
> –Ansel Adams

For the few purists among us, there exist programs dedicated to Black and White printmaking such as Silver Efex Pro. Whether or not these programs are significantly better or not is a matter of preference. The incredible amount of control that exists in the all purpose programs such as Photoshop leave little to be desired.

Before you even start making black and white prints you should be familiar with rules. Rule 1 is that every print should have at least one area of absolute white and at least one area of absolute black. Rule 2 is that there are no rules. In fact, the lack of deep blacks and absolute white can enhance the mood of some images, and protraits of children and adult females are generally "high key" meaning that their histograms tend toward the right.

When converting a color file to black and white, you will be doing a fair amount of pixel manipulation, so starting with the extra information inherent in the RAW format is a no brainer.

Outlined below are methods of black and white conversion using Picasa, Lightroom, ASDSee and Photoshop. Mac users using Iphoto are on their own; not due to any discrimination on my part, but lack of knowledge.

B&W with Picasa

Photoshop remains the 'gold standard' for B&W conversion, but not everyone can, or is willing to spend that kind of money. While conversion to black and white using Picasa does not have all the 'bells and whistles' of Photoshop, it can be done quite effectively. The main advantages of using Picasa are that it is simple to use and it's free.

To convert a color image to B&W, just open the "Effects" tab and click on "Filtered B&W". The image will immediately change to B&W. You can stop there, but don't. Click on the 'Pick Color' box to expand it. The mouse pointer will turn to a dropper and allow you to choose a filter color from panoply of colors displayed in the box. As you move the dropper, the image on your monitor will change. Stop when you are satisfied with the result.

A live histogram will simultaneously show you the distribution of tones.

B&W with ACDSee

USING THE ACDSEE GRAYSCALE TOOL

Like the simple desaturation methods in other programs, the grayscale tool tends to produce a relatively flat image in the midtones, but here's how to use it.

Click the **Selection Tool** and click the photo.

Click **Adjustments** | **Color** | **Grayscale.** That's it.

USING THE ACDSEE SEPIA TOOL

This method is similar to the Grayscale Tool except that it adds vary amounts of sepia tint. To use it:

Click the **Selection Tool** and click the photo.

Click **Adjustments** | **Color** | **Sepia**.

Click the **Black & White Photo** checkbox.

Drag the Age slider back and forth until you are happy with the effect.

USING THE ACDSEE THRESHOLD TOOL

The Threshold Tool will produce a high contrast "litho" type of image, not a continuous tone image. It is useful only as a special effects method.

Click the **Selection Tool** and double-click the photo.

Click **Adjustments** | **Light** | **Threshold**.

Drag the **Threshold** slider to the left to make more pixels white and to the right to make more pixels black.

B&W with Lightroom

USING GRAYSCALE CONVERSION IN LIGHTROOM

This is the down and dirty method. In the develop module, directly below the histogram, the grayscale conversion button is located in the "*Basic*" view. The grayscale option can be achieved by simply clicking "*Black & White*". Typically, this particular grayscale conversion produces a black and white image with flat mid-tones. You will want to adjust your contrast for more variation.

USING GRAYSCALE MIX IN LIGHTROOM

The Grayscale Mix is found below the "Basic" and "Tone Curve" views.

Click the "B&W" button next to the "HSL" and "Color" buttons. Similar to the Black and white adjustment layer in Photoshop, this control converts the image into grayscale tones, but allows you to adjust each color tone individually. Play around with these adjustments until the tones are most balanced and pleasing.

This is probably your best alternative if you are using Lightroom.

USING SPLIT TONING IN LIGHTROOM

Beneath the "Grayscale Mix" views is the "Split Toning" option. This type of conversion is one of the most involved. Adjust the slider to set your highlight color and saturation level, and then do the same with your shadows. From here, adjust the balance of between highlights or shadows. You will find that at this point, your image is not in black and white, it is in whichever colors you have chosen as your shadows and highlights. From here, you will need to go back to the "Basic" option, where you will adjust the vibrancy and saturation of the overall

image. As you adjust these sliders, your image will become black and white with prevalent tones from your split toning.

Black and White with Photoshop CS5

There are at least a dozen ways to covert a color image to back and white in Photoshop. The most obvious but least effective way is to use the Grayscale Mode to discrard the color information. This method can be effective but when one compares the result to other methods, it is obviously inferior.

THE CHANNEL MIXER

the Channel Mixer can be used to make a fine Black and White print with not much effort. The channel mixer allows you to control how much each of each of the red, green and blue channels contribute to the grayscale brightness. In Photoshop, you open the Channel Mixer by clicking on *Image > Adjustments > Channel Mixer*. Be sure to first click on the Monochrome box, and then adjust each of the red, green and blue sliders to produce an image to your liking.

Theoretically but not mandatory, the sum of the red, green, and blue percentages should equal 100 in order to maintain constant brightness, although overall brightness can also be adjusted by using the "Constant" slider at the bottom. *To mimic the luminosity perceived by the human eye, set: red=30%, green=59% and blue=11%.*

HUE – SATURATION ADJUSTMENT LAYER
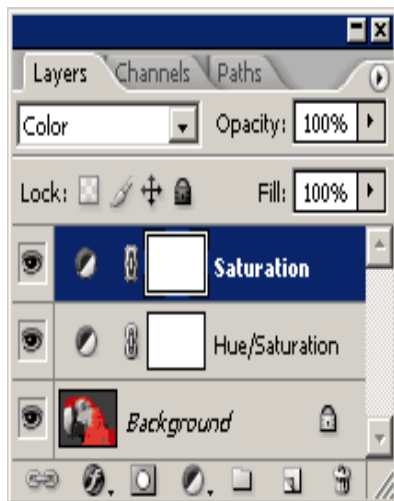
Here is one you may not have tried.

Open the image in Photoshop and create two separate "Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layers" by following the menus: *Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation.*

On the top adjustment layer, set the blending mode to "Color" and the saturation to its minimum of "-100." *Note: the top layer in this illustration has been renamed from Hue/Saturation to Saturation.*

On the bottom adjustment layer, move the "Hue" slider to apply an infinite spectrum of color filters. You will be amazed at the amount of control and ease of use for getting first class results.

Once all adjustments have been made, flatten the layers to make the adjustment final or save it as a .psd for future adjustment.

LIGHTNESS CHANNEL IN LAB MODE

LAB is an acronym for luminance, A (red-green) and B (blue-yellow). This method is Scott Kelby's favorite.

In Photoshop, first convert the image into the LAB color space by clicking on *Image > Mode > Lab*. Open the Channels pallet and view the "Luminance" channel by turning off both the "a" and "b" color channels. This is done by clicking on the "eye" in front of each of them. Once the a and b channels have been turned off, the lightness channel will be the only channel, leaving a black and white image.

You no longer need the a and b channels, so discard them by going to the image menu and selecting the Grayscale mode.

If you want to darken the image, duplicate the layer (ctrl-j) and set the blending mode to multiply. Use the layer opacity slider to get the exact tone that you want. To make it lighter, change the blending mode to Screen and use the opacity slider the same as above.

<u>DESATURATE COLORS</u>

Desaturating the colors in an image is a simple of conversion, but often produces inadequate results. This is because it does not allow for control over how the primary colors combine to produce a given grayscale brightness. Despite this, it is probably the most commonly used way of converting into black and white. In Photoshop, this is accomplished by going from Image > Adjustments > Desaturate.

NB: Any SCC member who uses this method should immediately have his or her membership revoked.

<u>BLACK AND WHITE ADJUSTMENT LAYER</u>

I saved this one for last, fearing that if I used it first, you would not read the rest. If you have CS5 it makes sense to just use this one. It's really quite simple.

Click the new adjustment layer icon on the Layers Pallet and select black and White. You will see a slider for each color although the image on the screen will be black and white. Moving the sliders changes the brightness of each underlying color in shades of gray to produce an incredible range of possibilities. For example to darken a blue sky, just move the blue slider to the left. Watch the image on your monitor closely as you change the default positions of the sliders. Enjoy!

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Ordinarily the best results are achieved when the image has the correct white balance. Removal of color casts means that the colors will be more pure, and so the results of any color filter will be more pronounced. For that reason among others, one should first do levels adjustment to correct the histogram as well as the white balance.

Any black and white conversion which utilizes a significant boost in color saturation may begin to show artifacts, such as increased noise, clipping or loss of texture detail. On the other hand, higher color saturations also mean that each color filter will have a more pronounced effect. Moderation is therefore called for.

Shoot in RAW mode if possible, as 16-bit images allow for the smoothest grayscale tones and the greatest flexibility when using color filters. This also provides the ability to fine-tune the white balance based on the desired black and white look.

The noise levels in each color channel are radically different. The blue channel has the most and Green has the least. Therefore, use the blue channel adjustments with care to avoid excess noise.

Levels and curves can be used in conjunction with black and white conversion to provide further control over tones and contrast. Keep in mind though that some contrast adjustments can only be made by choosing an appropriate color filter, since this adjusts relative contrast *within* and *between* color regions. Care should also be taken when using these because even slight color clipping in any

PFLI Scores for November	
Judges - Joanna Gazzola Dennis Golin Mike DiRenzo	
COLOR PRINTS 'A'	
25 POINTS	
Marty Silverstein 'Ox Bow Bend At Dawn'	
24 POINTS	
Valeri DeBiase 'Execution Rock Lighthouse'	
Dennis Madigan 'Lips Of An Angel'	
23 POINTS	
Ira Scheinerman- -'Scratch Here'	
Ed Starling- -'Takeoff'	
COLOR PRINTS 'B'	
24 POINTS	
Chris Ferrara- -'Secret Paradise'	
BLACK & WHITE 'A'	
25 POINTS	
Dennis Madigan- -'Prison Wedding'	
Ira Scheinerman- -'Daddy'	
23 POINTS	
Alan Agdern- -'Flower Abstract 1'	
BLACK & WHITE 'B'	
23 POINTS	
Peter Metzger- -'Side By Side'	
TOP SCORES DIGITAL 'A'	
23 POINTS	
Marty Silverstein- -'Osprey At Dusk'	

of the individual color channels can become quite apparent in black and white (depending on which channel(s) is/are used for conversion).

Getting it right on the computer is half the battle. This subject is too involved for this article, but understand that printing in pure black and white without color casts (most commonly magenta) can be a challenge unless you have a top notch printer or a printer that has separate inks for color and black and white printing.

Stieglitz, Steichen and Strand
Three great Black and White Photographers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

November 10, 2010–April 10, 2011

This exhibition features three giants of black and white photography whose works are among the Metropolitan's greatest photographic treasures.

Alfred Stieglitz, a photographer of supreme accomplishment as well as a forceful and influential advocate for photography and modern art through his gallery "291" and his sumptuous journal Camera Work, laid the foundation of the Met's collection. He donated twenty-two of his own works in 1928—the first photographs to be acquired by the Museum as works of art—and more than six hundred by other photographers, including Steichen and Strand, in later decades. Featured in the exhibition will be portraits, city views, and cloud studies by Stieglitz, as well as numerous images from his composite portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe (American, 1887–1986), part of a group selected for the collection by O'Keeffe herself.

Stieglitz's protégé and gallery collaborator Edward Steichen was the most talented exemplar of Photo-Secessionist ideas, with works such as his three large variant prints of The Flatiron and his moonlit photographs of Rodin's Balzac purposely rivaling the scale, color, and individuality of painting. By contrast, the final issue of Camera *Work* (1917) was devoted to the young Paul Strand, whose photographs from 1915–1917 treated three principal themes—movement in the city, abstractions, and street portraits—and pioneered a shift from the soft-focus Pictorialist aesthetic to the straight approach and graphic power of an emerging modernism.

For Sale

Hoodman H-RAV right angle finder with fitted case containing 4 adapters for Canon 18mm and 22 mm eyepieces and Nikon 22 mm rectangular and 22 mm round eyepieces. New condition. The finder can be switched between 1x and 2.5x for critical focusing and allows you to use your SLR at low angles without bending. $65. Contact barry.goldstein@yahoo.com.

December
9th   Competition- judged by Ken Bausert
16th   Baby and Portrait Photography- Danielle LeMay
23rd   "Focus Modes" – Gerald Woulfin
January
13th   Competition- judged by Dick Hunt
20th   "Travel Photography" - Ivan Rothman
27th   "Camera Modes" - Doreen Rose
February
10th Competition- judged by Joe Senzatimore
17th   Scenic Spots on Long Island- Jane Leek
24th   "HDR: - Valerie DeBiase
March
10th   Competition judged by Andrew Kirchey
17th   "Portraiture" - Gerald Appel
24th   "Light & White Balance" - Alan Agdern
April
14th   Photojournalism Theme Competition- judged by Leon Hertzon
28th   "Flash Photography" Marty Silverstein and Critique
May
12th   EOY Competition judged by Ed Sambolin, JoAnn Gazzola,
19th   "Macro Photography" - Harvey Augerbraun
June
End of Year Dinner

PFLI Scores for October

BLACK & WHITE A

Alan Ross	Copenhagen Wind Mills	21
Jules Weisler	Indian Maiden	21
Barry Goldstein	The Window	21
Valeri DeBiase	Got Wood	22
Ira Scheinerman	Hooter 1	23
Alan Agdern	Pa Falls 72	22

BLACK & WHITE B

Frank Kirshenbaum	Desert Scene	21
Peter Metzger	Foggy Day	24

COLOR A

Alan Agdern	Falls 54	21
Alan Agdern	Light Before The Storm	22
Ed Starling	Ocean Beach Sunrise	23
Marty Silverstein	The Royal Family	24
Ed Starling	911 Tribute Lights	24
Ramesh Patwah	Elephants	19
Alan Ross	Santa Margareta Strip	21
Ira Scheinerman	Red Sales	22
Valeri DeBiase	Two Bits	23
Peter Metzger	Peggy's Cove	24

COLOR B

Jules Weisler	Puma At Rest	19
Linda Volin	Mountain To Mountain	20
Al Herbst	Lighthouse Reflections	21
Chris Ferrara	Farmhouse 1	22
Sunhil Chhatpar	Butterfly Rising	23
Alice Langholz	Reflection In Red	21

PROJECTION A

Gerald Woulfin	My Babies	21
Gerald Harrison	Waiting And Watching 5404	21
Marty Silverstein	Oyster Catcher Express	23
Carol Goldstein*	Dogs Nose	23
Jules Weisler	Butterfly 1	23
Ramesh Patwah	Sunset	21
Peter Newman	Splash	22
Barry Goldstein	Women In A Crowd	22
Ira Scheinerman	Olivia	23
Aileen Harrison	1861 Death Valley	23

PROJECTION B

Fred Stermann	Winter Pattern	21
Fred Stermann	Out	21
Scott Katz	blacksmith	21

SCC Scores October

B&W PRINTS -AA

Silverstein, Marty	10 POM

B&W PRINTS - A

Scheinerman, Ira	10 POM
DeBiase, Valerie	9
Volin, Linda	8
Weisler, Jules	8
Herbst, Al	7

B&W PRINTS- B

Metzger, Peter	10 POM
Ettinger, Burton	7

COLOR PRINTS- AA

Silverstein, Marty	10 POM

COLOR PRINTS- A

DeBiase, Valerie	10 POM
Patwa, Ramesh	9
Starling, Edward	9
Madigan, Dennis	8
Metzger, Peter	8
Scheinerman, Ira	8
Markewitz, Moshe	7

COLOR PRINTS- B

Langholz, Alice	10 POM
Ferrara, Chris	9
Ettinger, Burton	8
Monahan, Maylan	8
Weisler, Jules	8
Flagg, John	7
Volin Linda	7

Projection-AA

Silverstein, Marty	10 POM

PROJECTION- A

Goldstein, Barry	10 POM
Harrison, Gerald	9
Weisler, Jules	9
Ferrara, Chris	8
Goldstein, Carol	8
Harrison, Aileen	8
Markewitz, Moshe	8
Newman, Peter	8
Patwa, Ramesh	8
Woulfin, Gerald	8
Bowie, Bill	7

PROJECTION- B

Sterman, Fred	9 POM
Volin, Linda	8
Rose, Doreen	7