

HORIZON NEWS #24

NEWS, THOUGHTS AND IMAGES FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

*In the West, the past is very close. In many places,
it still believes it's the present.*

John Masters

STUDENT PHOTOS: CLOSE-UP



Some 2008 student photos have us revisiting a subject discussed in one of Horizon's first newsletters: photographing historic re-enactments. Whether it's battlefields, colonial farms, wild west towns--or whatever--re-enactments present a smorgasbord of photo opportunities. You're guaranteed to find photogenic and animated faces...period costumes and props...and activities that engage your "models," people with one foot proudly planted in the past. Photographers are always welcome--a boon to those who are bashful about photographing strangers--and you can get up-close to the action. Be prepared for requests for images...bring a pen to jot down email addresses.



In our county (Cecil), history comes alive at Elk Landing in Elkton, MD, the venue for an annual War of 1812 battlefield recreation as well as a series of baseball games played with traditional outfits using 1850s rules. (Catch the ball on one bounce and 'yer out!) Here are three Elk Landing photos we like. Jenn Bergman's takes a different perspective on this "portrait" of a ballplayer. In the background, Jenn caught the action at just the right moment. Sharon Hannan's take on marching soldiers was beautifully timed to capture the young boy reacting to flintlocks firing. Sharon's juxtaposition of picket fence and period costume gives a timeless look to the hatted woman. Generally, viewers prefer images of moving people to be moving toward the center of the frame, but here we like the feeling generated by having the woman walking out of the frame...as if retreating back into the past.



Two ideas you can try at re-enactments: 1. Soft-focus...using either a soft-focus filter or its digital equivalent. This can add a dreamy, out-of-the-past look; then again, it might look corny and contrived. 2. Convert to a sepia toned B&W, which can give your images the 19th century look of such masters as Mathew Brady, Edward Curtis, and William Henry Jackson. Photoshop and plug-ins make toning easy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2008 Workshops: **Nature: Blackwater** – Nov 6 (wait list); **Camera Basics** – Nov 7; **Documentary** – Nov 7-9; **Creative Vision** – Nov 8-9 (wait list); **Canon Experience** – Nov 13-16 (2 spaces left); **Weddings** – Nov 13-16 (2 spaces left); **Flash** – Nov 22-23; **Editing Your Images** – Dec 6

2009 Workshops: We have begun posting 2009 dates on our website.

QUICK TIP: TO CROP OR NOT TO CROP



The crop tool is surely the most commonly used tool in the digital toolbox. The simplest effort can have a big impact on your pictures. So when do you crop? How tightly? Should you always shoot a bit “wide” to give yourself the freedom to crop afterward? There are no answers, no rules. Follow your gut: crop to maximize image impact. Don’t be surprised if on one day you prefer one crop and the next day you prefer a different one, so save the entire digital file before you crop so you can go back to the original. It’s a good idea to do all your digital manipulation *before* you crop...otherwise you might crop to one size, say 8 x 10, and then decide to print to a different size, say 5 x 7, that has a different aspect ratio. You don’t want to have to redo your Photoshop work because you’ve added a little more image area.

Two examples from a “People & Portraits on Location” workshop: Adam Kolodczak’s shot works well in full frame; it gives a sense that the man is in a natural environment, not a studio, and the lime green background creates a vibrant color contrast with his ruddy complexion. But a tight crop also works well by keeping your eye riveted to the whiskers and the expression.

For the portrait of “Nick the Stained Glass Maker” by “Ron Ross the Photographer” (“Joe the Plumber” has obviously had his impact), Ron’s square crop gives a sense of Nick’s environment. An even tighter crop, as with Adam’s shot, keeps the viewer’s eyes focused entirely on the face.

So...should you always shoot “wide” so you can crop later? It’s a matter of personal choice. Our thoughts: Why waste pixels on stuff that you’ll definitely crop? But when in doubt, why not shoot wide? Cameras these days have plenty of megapixels, so throwing some away won’t hurt your 8 x 10s.

END FRAME



Joe Edelman, the instructor for “Nudes: The Female Form” and “Beauty & Glamour,” can make magic happen on a shoestring budget. For example, these two shots by Eberhard Fitzner took advantage of Joe’s \$3.00 drop cloth...and the breeze from a small fan. Students produced an astonishing variety of different shots using this simple prop. Why not try drop cloths, or screens, or levelor blinds, or other such see-through props for portraits...or other subjects?

