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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #56 – May 2017

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This newsletter goes out to many photographers in New Zealand and overseas - and to anybody who asks to go onto the mailing list. If you know anybody who would like to be on the mailing list, please get them to email me. It's free and they can unsubscribe at any time, of course.



1. RULES & RULES

There's no harm in knowing the "rules of composition" and the "rules of photography", but should you follow them? If you're just starting out and uncertain what to do and/or if you don't have much of an artistic eye, then sure, they can help you get going.

But what about when you're up and running with your photography? Should you still follow the "rule of thirds" and all the other "rules"? If you do, is there not a real danger that your photos will look kinda like everyone else's? And do you really want that?

Don't get trapped by "the rules" – the way many photographers and even some camera clubs do. Break free. Be you! Create vibrant, unique, fresh images that capture the essence, the soul, of the subject or place, whether they follow the rules or not. The ones that make you – and others – go "Wow!" Then your photos will be more powerful than the ones that simply follow the rules.

Here's what four of the world's very best photographers had say about rules:

- "There are no rules for good photographs, there are only good photographs." Ansel Adams.
- "I am not interested in rules or conventions. Photography is not a sport." Bill Brandt
- "To consult the rules of composition before making a picture is a little like consulting the law of gravitation before going for a walk." Edward Weston
- "Rules are foolish, arbitrary, mindless things that raise you quickly to a level of acceptable mediocrity, then prevent you from progressing further. Several of the most well-known rules—the rule of thirds, the rule of avoiding a horizon in the center of an image, the rule of having an image read from left to right, the rule of not placing the center of interest in the center of the image, and so many others—are undesirable constraints with no validity. (Just look at Ansel Adams's "Moonrise over Hernandez" to see how many rules are broken.) Again, heed Edward Weston's words that "Good composition is the strongest way of seeing." If your composition happens to adhere to rules, fine! If it happens to break rules, fine! Forget the rules; just make always strong images." Bruce Barnbaum

The accompanying photos [none of them taken by me] break many of "the rules" but they are all fresh, unique visions of nature. They are also all winners or highly placed in recent years in the world's largest and most prestigious nature photography competition, the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year.

"Arrangement of swans"
Specially commended 2011
Animal Portraits
Stefano Unterthiner, Italy



“In the flick of a tail”
Specially commended 2011
Nature in Black & White
Also cover photo of 2011 edition of the Wildlife
Photographer of the Year annual portfolio.
David Lloyd, New Zealand



“Snow pounce”
Commended 2012
Behaviour: Mammals
Richard Peters, UK

“Predatory steps”
Winner 2010
Animal Portraits
Eirik Grønningsæter, Norway



2. PHOTO COMPETITIONS – TIPS FOR WINNING

Here’s some great advice from one of the best. Jim Richardson has been one of National Geographic magazine’s most prolific shooters for over 30 years, and a much sought-after judge of photo competitions.

What is it that makes a particular photo stand out during judging? “First, I always try to do a scan and go through all of the photos pretty quickly to see if there are things that really just pop out — photos that give you a rush of recognition the instant you see them. Those pictures, whatever their technical qualities,

whatever their shortcomings, you give weight. If you have a reaction to the picture, something visceral and emotional, then you have to think that there's something going on there, even if it breaks all the rules. That's what a picture is supposed to do, to cause a reaction, to get to us."

What mistakes do people make with photos they're entering in contests? "One of the greatest sins that you see in photo contests is the overuse of things like the saturation slider. You see that over and over again, people turning up the volume too high. And it doesn't have to be just saturation, either. It can be sharpness, or extreme focal lengths, all kinds of things. They assume that if some saturation is good then more is better, if a wide-angle lens is interesting then a fisheye lens would be even more interesting."

Do you have any advice to photographers that want to win a contest? "Pictures can't be just about pictures; pictures have to be about life. If they are really and truly about life and beauty and understanding and our souls, then they have a pretty good chance in a contest. If they are simply about photography and about the contest, then they're probably be going to be pretty shallow and transparent. Take pictures of your passions, pursue your love of photography, and the contest prizes will soon follow."

The full interview is here: <http://rising.blackstar.com/national-geographics-jim-richardson-how-i-judge-photo-contests.html>

3. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES – ANTIPODES ISLANDS



From my field diaries:

February 27 - left Dunedin, passage. 2 films

February 28 – passage to Antipodes, fresh gale, force 8, albatrosses, arrived evening. 2 films

March 1 – bad day – strong winds, low cloud, rough sea, 3 wet hours at Hut Cove. 2 films

It's very rare that I call any day on an expedition a bad day. Only two films per day was unusual too. The curious thing is that February 28 and March 1 were in fact great days, photographically – I just didn't know it at the time. On February 28 I took the photo of a great albatross [a royal or wandering albatross] soaring over restless seas in the golden dusk on page 1 of this newsletter, and that photo earned me a return flight to London to pick up First Prize in the Wild Places section of the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year

competition. And the “bad day” yielded one of my best photos ever from the subantarctic islands. The previous year I’d spent three wonderful weeks on Campbell Island, southernmost of New Zealand five subantarctic island groups and over the following year had given a number of illustrated presentations [slide shows we used to call them]. And though I felt it was a “pretty good” presentation I knew that something significant was missing. The overall impression of the slide show was more like “Kim’s pleasant holiday on an island somewhere with albatrosses and penguins” rather than “brave adventurer fearlessly venturing through the Roaring Forties and Furious Fifties, making landfall on bleak remote island”.



It’s all in the photos, and the photos of three weeks of cool but benign weather gave no indication of how cold and windy Campbell Island really is: Rain days per year – 325. Snow days per year – 42. Hail days per year – 69. Average wind speed – 31 knots [a gale]. Average air temperature – 7°C. What I really needed was even just one “Quintessential Subantarctic” photo: bleak, steep rocky coastline, stormy & inhospitable, and preferably with wildlife. A remarkably elusive photo.



On day one of our five at the Antipodes Islands] I’d only got three hours ashore [via helicopter – it was far too rough for a boat landing] and during that time I’d got wet, muddy, frustrated, taken hardly any photos and my camera stopped working until it got dried out back on the ship. But one of the photos taken in the cold drizzle before the camera packed a sad turned out to be the “Quintessential Subantarctic” photo that I needed. It’s the one on the previous page. The tone is sombre, the vista bleak, the colours muted, the cliffs vertical, the sea rough, the penguins huddled against steep rocky hillside - for them, just another day.

I was there for the wildlife, especially the albatrosses and penguins, for the wilderness experience, and for the diving [hopefully – the Navy was less than keen]. What were the following days like? I’ll tell you in the next newsletter.



4. 2017 PROGRAMME

MAY

- **Sunday 21st May. “Composition” workshop.** Full day. **DETAILS BELOW**

JUNE

- Tuesday 6th June. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Saturday 10th June. “Turning your Photos into Art” workshop.** Half day. **DETAILS BELOW**
- **Saturday 24th June. “Slow & Smooth – Blurred Motion” workshop.** Full day.

JULY

- Tuesday 4th July. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Sunday 16th July. “Photo Impressionism” workshop.** Full day.

AUGUST

- Tuesday 1st August. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Saturday 5th August. “People Photography” workshop.** Full day.
- **Saturday 26th August. “Making your photos look great in Lightroom or Photoshop”.** Half day.

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 5th September. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Sunday 10th September. “Good photos, great photos – anytime, anywhere”** workshop. Full day.

OCTOBER

- Tuesday 3rd October. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Saturday-Sunday 14-15 October. “Great Photography Weekend” workshop.** Weekend plus follow-up.
- **Saturday 28 October. “Photography 101” workshop.** Half day.

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday 7th November. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.
- **Saturday 18 November. “Close-up Magic – with or without a macro lens” workshop.** Full day.

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 5th December. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free. Details below.

Half-day workshops 9.00am – 1.00pm

Full day & two day workshops 9.00am – 5.00pm

COST: Course fees **include tuition, detailed hand-outs & yummy catering, plus assignment and follow-up evenings** for full day and two day workshops.

- **Half day workshops:** \$135 – or \$115 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$70.
- **One day workshops:** \$295 – or \$245 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$150.
- **Weekend workshops:** \$475 [\$425 Early Bird]. Fulltime students with ID \$235.

5. SOME OF YOU – AT RECENT WORKSHOPS





6. "COMPOSITION" WORKSHOP – Sunday 21 May

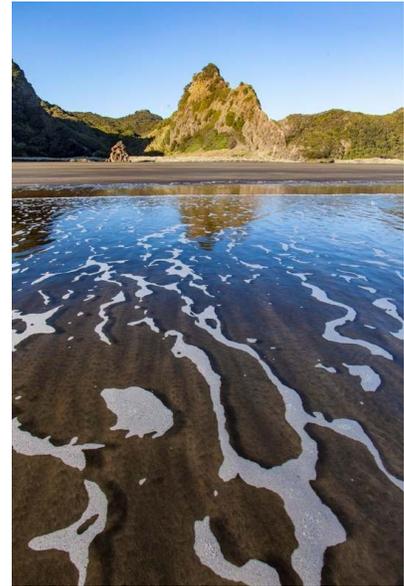
How to make your photos sing! For good photos you need good composition. For great photos you need great composition.

Your camera is good at getting many of the technical things right, such as exposure and focus, but YOU are needed for the creative input: where to stand, where to point the camera, which lens, and – perhaps most important of all – “seeing” the photo and then composing it.

There’s many things that you can correct in Photoshop/Lightroom if you didn’t get them quite right at the time, but composition is not one of them. You’ve got to get it pretty much right when you press the shutter. A photo whose composition is fundamentally flawed usually cannot be rescued, even by diligent use of Photoshop or Lightroom.

It’s a big and somewhat complex subject, though some “rules” [guidelines] have evolved to help get you going: the “rule of thirds”, leading lines, the “rule of odd





numbers” etc. We’ll look at these rules and guidelines and then move past them, into “the new you” where great compositions and real creativity can flourish.

It’s a four-part workshop:

1. Sunday morning and early afternoon – the theory. The principles, the guidelines and “rules” & when to break the rules. Kim’s “One Rule To Rule Them All”. A great mix of theory and practical exercises. Many finer points and tips.
2. Later Sunday afternoon – the practice. A field trip with Kim, photographing a variety of subjects with the emphasis on getting your composition looking good.
3. Assignment. You will then have 2-3 weeks to put what you’ve learned into practise. Kim will give you a series of assignments that will help consolidate what you’ve learned. Photographers report that this is really useful.
4. We meet again [at a time that suits everybody, probably a weekday evening] to look at and evaluate your assignment photos. This evaluation can be done by email if you’re from out of town.



Sunday 21st May. 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Venue: Kim’s comfortable workshop studio [18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga] plus field trip TBA

Cost: Full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-outs, Vivienne’s yummy catering, assignment and follow-up] **\$295** - or **\$245** for Early Birds [if you register before 14th May]. Fulltime students with ID **\$145**.



7. "TURNING YOUR PHOTOS INTO ART" WORKSHOP – Saturday 10th June

A short-and-sweet half-day workshop. Normally I help you make your photos look great, but keeping them "real". This workshop steps over that "line in the sand" and we turn your photos into "art". The results are often absolutely amazing but ... the good news is that many of these results are EASY to obtain. Some of the techniques use Photoshop/Lightroom and others use either free programs or need-to-purchase programs. You will surprise yourself. Look at the accompanying images I've created with the techniques & programs I'll show you in this workshop. After four hours, YOU will have the knowledge and techniques to get photos just like them. Or better!

Saturday 10th June. 9.00am – 1.00pm.

Venue: Kim's comfortable workshop studio at 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga

Cost: Full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-out, Vivienne's yummy morning tea] **\$135 – or \$115**

for Early Birds [if you register before 31st May]. Fulltime students with ID **\$65.**

The four rose images below are all variations of a photo taken by Melissa Hayes





8. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

To me, photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I've found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them.

Elliott Erwitt

9. MENTORING

“Mentoring” is a bit hard to define exactly, but it's **the ongoing process of inspiring, advising, guiding, teaching, critiquing** ... whatever is needed for the ongoing development of a photographer. It's one-on-one, so it's different for each person, as every photographer's needs are different. One month it may be about equipment or Photoshop, next month it may be “I just want my photos to have more ‘Wow’ in them”, the following month it may be about exhibitions or “Should I go pro?”



Photos of Kim by Malcolm Macfarlane & Tony Whitehead

Being mentored is possibly the fastest and most rewarding way of progressing rapidly. It's at your pace and at your level. And I try hard to be as supportive and positive as possible. I've designed it to be both affordable and flexible, so to begin with I'm offering “Mentoring by Kim” as a monthly subscription - you can try it and see if it's what you want. If it is, we continue, fine-tuning as needed. If not, then you pull out at the end of the first month. Every month you have a one-on-one meeting with me, discussing whatever you want. My 30+ years' experience as a professional photographer & writer is there, ready to help and [hopefully] inspire you. Your questions are answered, options are discussed, photography techniques or approaches are taught, your photos critiqued, new ideas suggested. This is either in person or by phone.

Who is mentoring for? Anybody. Currently I'm mentoring both established professional photographers and amateurs.

I'm offering three levels of “Mentoring by Kim”:

1. Everything listed above, with at least 90 minutes [probably more] of my time every month. \$115/month.
2. Everything listed above, with at least 3 hours of my time [probably more] every month. \$165/ month.
3. Everything listed above, with at least 4 hours of my time [probably more] every month. \$200/ month.

Your mentor [me, Kim]:

- Over 30 years as a professional photographer
- Five First Prizes in the BBC “Wildlife Photographer of the Year” competition, the Olympics [or Oscars] of nature photography worldwide.
- 18 books published – written and photographed by me. Five are currently “in print”.
- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**

10. PHOTOGRAPHING ARTWORKS, PHOTOSHOPPING, PHOTO RESTORATION

As well as teaching photography and mentoring a number of photographers, I also offer photo restoration, Photoshopping, and “Photographing your Artworks” services. I’m currently photographing the artworks of some professional artists, both 2-D and 3-D artworks [some several metres across] and making them look as good as possible for entry into art competitions and for website use. Here’s what Papamoa artist Alex Miln [winner of the Miles Supreme Art Award 2016] said after I’d photographed some of his 3-D artworks: “These do have the WOW factor. As usual, you have weaved your magic on them. I just love what I see. Just love it. You have weaved your magic over the paintings, just like last time, and the time before that.”

11. INVITATION TO ALL CAMERA CLUBS & GROUPS

If your club or group might be interested in hosting one of my presentations - or workshops - or “Field Trip + Photo Critique” days, please get in touch.

Email: kimsworkshops@gmail.com

Phone 07-578-5138

12. KIM’S PHOTOS & COFFEE EVENINGS

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month [every month of the year except January], chat informally about photography, and view some of the recent photos we’ve taken. It’s **free [no charge], supper is served**, and there’s no obligation of any kind. **Please email me if you’d like to come** [it’s not a big room so I need to keep an eye on numbers]. These evenings are always fun and friendly - there’s usually many smiles and laughs. It’s a great way of meeting up with like-minded people, **being inspired by the creativity of our group of photographers, and coming away with news ideas and tips**. There’s a wide range of interests and abilities – so for those of you who have not been before, you’re very unlikely to feel out of your depth. There’s also a small “library” of photo magazines you are welcome to borrow from. Bring photos if you wish, but there’s no obligation to bring any. Some people do, some don’t.

The next one will be on Tuesday 6th June, starting 7.00pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

13. PRIVATE TUITION

Yes, like you I’m usually busy doing “other stuff” too, but I can nearly always fit private tuition in, and am very happy to do so [I enjoy teaching and mentoring]. So – if you’d like some tuition, give me a yell. First 2 hours: \$80 per hour, after that \$70 per hour. If you come again, it’s \$70 per hour right from the first hour.

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