

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper February 2022

2021 Images of the Year



Old Fashion Rose
Image of the Year - Em McLaren

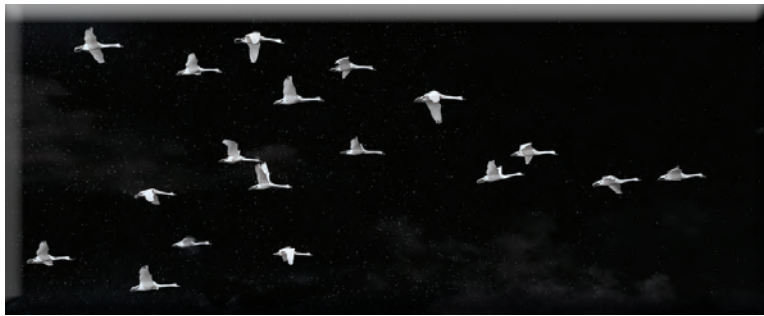
2021 End of the Year Images Monochrome



1st Place
Abandoned Shack on 395
Sharon McLemore



2nd Place
Big Sur
Trey Steinhart



3rd Place – Full Moon Swans
Trey Steinhart



Honorable Mention
Bodie Bar Bottles
Dean Taylor

2021 End of the Year Images Open



1st Place
Old Fashion Rose
Em McLaren



2nd Place
Winter Post
Dean Taylor



3rd Place
Rose Petal Delight
Karleen Gansberg



Honorable Mention
Mormon Row Winter
Dean Taylor

2021 End of the Year Images Special Subject



1st Place

Redwood Eye (Textures)

Ron Wetherell



2nd Place

Tule Fog at Oak Grove Park (Fog)

Wayne Carlson



3rd Place

Thousands of Geese Buried in the Thick Fog (Fog)

Trey Steinhart



Honorable Mention

Textures of Brick (Textures)

Sharon McLemore

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President's Message

January 2022

By Heide Stover

December was our last competition meeting of the year. We are still doing our meetings by zoom at this time. Hopefully with vaccines available and a new pill coming out we can start meeting in person soon. At least with zoom we can keep in touch and still have meetings. It is easier for the judges since some live a good distance away and with zoom they do not need to travel. So, I guess there are benefits both ways.

Susan Bovey was our December judge and she did a good job. I believe her comments were very helpful. Now it is time to get your end of year competition image selection in. We had some wonderful images throughout the year so I hope everyone will be selecting something to enter.

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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2022 Calendar of Events

Every 3rd Thursday (Except April & Aug) 6:30 PM	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover h1stover@aol.com
Sunday February 13	Fresno, CA	SJVCCC Monthly Meeting Contact Dean Taylor ditaylor49@aol.com
Thursday February 17	Zoom Meeting Stockton	February General Meeting Special Subject - Amore/Love
Thursday March 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Intentional Camera Movement
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 19	Zoom Meeting Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Ice
Thursday June 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)
Thursday July 21	Zoom Meeting Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Kids at Play

Stockton Camera Club
December 2021 Competition Standings
Congratulations to the winner!!!

Due to COVID-19 December's meeting was held via Zoom.

DECEMBER DIGITAL IMAGE OF THE MONTH WINNER -
"Great Fountain Geyser"

By Doug Ridgway

Please check out the website <http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com/home.html>

Class A Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Lanny Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Doug Ridgway	340	264	76	38	39	40	36	36	37	39	36	39
Ron Wetherell	325	259	66	38	39	35	35	26	37	40	37	38
Wayne Carlson	322	248	74	34	38	25	34	36	34	37	38	37
Karleen Gansberg	311	258	53	33	37	35	29	29	37	39	32	36
Elizabeth Parrish	305	235	70	33	33	36	31	33	37	37	30	35
Sheldon McCormick	294	225	69	36	35	28	32	30	36	36	29	32
Joan Erreca	233	182	51	33	32	33	32	0	36	37	30	0
Christine Blue	76	58	18	36	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Darrell O'Sullivan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Sharon McLemore	344	268	76	39	38	40	37	35	38	40	40	37
Trey Steinhart	339	269	70	38	39	37	37	37	38	39	38	36
Em McLaren	335	261	74	37	38	37	39	34	39	40	33	38
Dean Taylor	334	258	76	39	39	36	38	33	37	38	36	38
Joanne Sogsti	332	258	74	39	37	36	36	38	40	38	29	39
Heide Stover	113	84	29	38	38	37	0	0	0	0	0	0

2022 Competition Policy

A. GENERAL RULES

1. Only paid-up members may enter club competition.
2. Regular print and digital image competition period: Once each month except January. A competition year is February through December. Current regular meetings are February, March, May, July, September, October and December. The number of meetings may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and approval of the general membership as facilities permit. The Annual Awards Dinner will be held in January.
3. A total of four (4) images (all prints, all digital or a combination of both) may be entered each competition month. A total of three (3) images may be entered in the Open Division and a total of one (1) in the Special Subject Division. The number of entries may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and the approval of the general membership.
4. Each image will be scored from 6 to 10 points. All prints or digital images receiving 9 or 10 points will be classed as an honor image. The title of each print or digital image entered will be read before being evaluated. The name of the maker will be read for 9-point honor winners. Maker's names will be announced for the 10 point images after the Print & Digital Image-of-the-Month winners are chosen.
5. A print or digital image that does not receive an honor score, may be re-entered one more time in the same division.
6. A print or digital image may be entered in all divisions for which it qualifies; i.e., an honor image in Open may also be entered in the Special Subject Division at another competition. A print or digital image that receives an honor score may not be re-entered in the same division.
7. Any print or digital image that appears to be ineligible for competition or not qualified for a specific division could expect to be challenged. The Competition Vice-President shall decide whether or not the image is acceptable.
8. The exhibitor must have exposed each negative, slide or digital image entered. All images submitted for judging must be the work of the photographer/maker including the taking of the images and any digital enhancements and/or manipulation of the image. This does not apply to the processing of film or printing by a commercial processor.
9. The same image should not be entered both as a print and a projected digital image in the same competition.
10. In the event of absence or barring unforeseen circumstances, a member may submit make-up prints or digital images for one competition night per competition year; and whenever possible must submit all make-up prints or digital images at the meeting immediately following the month a member failed or was unable to submit the prints or digital images. Make-ups in the Special Subject Division must be the same subject as the month missed. Also, in case of absence a member may assign the responsibility of submitting his or her prints and/or digital images for competition to another member.
11. A club member who serves as judge cannot enter his or her own prints or digital images in the same competition. The judge's make-up prints or digital images can then be entered in another competition during that competition year. This is in addition to the once-a-year make-up provision already

allowed.

12. Prints or digital images may be projected/viewed briefly before the judging of each division if the judge indicates he/she would like a preview.

B. PRINT ENTRY RULES

1. Each print entered must have a completed label attached to the back of the print including; name of maker, title, date entered and Division (Open or Special Subject). The writing or printing on the form must be legible. Labels must be attached on the back of the print in the upper left-hand corner for correct viewing of the print.
2. All prints must be matted or mounted with a total size (including mat board) of no larger than 18" X 24" and no smaller than 8" X 10". Exception: One side of a Panorama Print may be no larger than 36". Prints that are smaller than 5" X 7" will not be accepted. The maker's name must not appear on the viewing surface of the image. Framed prints shall not be entered.
3. Prints accompanied by entry forms should be submitted no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the regular monthly meeting.
4. Prints receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Print-of-the-Month honors. Print-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

C. DIGITAL IMAGE ENTRY RULES

1. Digital images must be submitted in a format and by the deadline specified by the Competition Vice-President. Digital images may be submitted by email, mailed (CD) or delivered (CD) to the Competition Vice-President. Definition of Digital Image: An image taken with a digital camera, a negative, slide or print scanned into the computer and processed digitally.
2. Images must be in a format compatible with the projector. The key thing to keep in mind when formatting photos for submission is that the projector we use in the competition has a (maximum) resolution of 1400 x 1050 pixels. This means that any photo that exceeds this size in either dimension, could end-up being cropped by the projector. In other words: the image width cannot be more than 1400 pixels and the image height cannot be more than 1050 pixels. If your image is horizontal, only change the width to 1400, if your image is vertical, only change the height to 1050. Do not change both. Down-sizing the image from the "native" resolution coming out of your camera also significantly reduces the file size. This helps when emailing the files and takes-up less space on our hard-drives.
3. The maker's name, title of image, date entered and division (Open or Special Subject) must be included as the title of the image. When you have finished re-sizing your image save your image with a new title. For example do a Save as: Smith Sunrise Splendor 05-15 O.jpeg. (O-Open or SS-Special Subject). Specify whether you're Beginner, Advanced or Very Advanced.
4. Digital Images receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Digital Image-of-the-Month honors. Digital Image-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

A Review of Winter Travel
What to Prepare for, What You Can Experience
By Joe Brady



Afternoon Light on the Red Rocks, Castle Valley, UT

Thanks for joining me with Today's FotoFriday! We've been spending the past few days relaxing and resetting after two weeks on the road, and I suppose it's time to unpack the suitcases. Everything we do for the next six weeks will be online as our next Workshop starts in Savannah, GA the first week of May. By the way, we have two spots available, so send me a note if you want some more details.

Having had three days to explore the region after the Moab Workshop and during our flight home, I've had some time to think about what it was like traveling out west in January and the photography options available. I'd like to share my thoughts about Winter travel out west.

The Pros & Cons of Winter. Travel Of Course, it depends on where you are going!

For years, I have thought about and visited the best times and places for Landscape Photography. Some choice to me are now obvious (like Durango and Telluride at the end of September) and others have come after several experiences of visiting the same place during different times of the year. Having had some time reviewing the images and video from our week around Moab Utah, and comparing the experience to other trips taken at different times, I have come to the conclusion that Winter is the best time there. Is it perfect? Probably not, not the benefits clearly outweigh the limitations.

Let's first get any negatives out of the way.

Being high desert, Moab doesn't get a lot of precipitation, but it can still be cloudy. Some of the places we photograph are fine in cloudy conditions, but others really work a lot better with blue skies and/or some puffy, white clouds. To be fair, this can happen pretty much anywhere, so that's getting a bit picky.



On the Devil's Garden Trail, Arches NP



Moonrise over The Titan, Fisher Towers, near Moab



A View Thru Mesa Arch, Canyonlands NP

The temperatures we experienced in mid-January were for the most part quite nice, though when it is 20° and in the shade, you really need to have your hands and ears covered. Our afternoons were in the low 40's, and with no wind and lots of sun, it felt very comfortable.

The town of Moab is really trying to make itself a four-season destination, and while there were people out enjoying the parks, the parking lots were mostly empty and many of the shops and restaurants were closed until sometime in March.

I would say that the primary impediment to visiting and photographing Moab in January is getting there, because once you arrive, it is absolutely wonderful. Depending on where you are coming from, connecting through Denver or Chicago or starting out in the northeast this time of year can be a challenge if winter storms are in the area. We made sure to schedule our flights three days early to have some flexibility should there be any delays.



Some green among the red rocks, Monument Valley Tribal Park

We did have our noon flight from Denver cancel and had to take a 3:30pm flight instead, but this turned out to be a gift, as we now had time for a leisurely lunch at our favorite eatery in Denver Airport - Elway's. Upon arriving in Durango, we were able to acclimate to the altitude and spend time in both Silverton, CO and Monument Valley in AZ before the start of the Workshop and were gifted with some amazing photography!

Let's talk about the positives!

As I mentioned, Moab is high desert. For example, Dead Horse Point State Park (one of our Workshop stops) gets only 10" of precipitation a year. What turned out to be a wonderful benefit was that the snow that had fallen stays around - at least in the shadow areas. The combination of that white frosting against the deep orange of the desert soil and rocks, and the deep green on the junipers made for a wonderful color palette.

The light this time of year is beautiful, with deep blue skies and most of the days took turns sharing some white clouds with solid blue. The days are fairly short, with sunrise around 7:30am and sunset around 5:30pm, but with the travel and hiking involved, we were all ready to call it a day and relax back in town after a full day of shooting.



The shot everyone wants! Mesa Arch at Sunrise, Canyonlands NP

With two exceptions - Mesa Arch in Canyonlands at sunrise, and the North and South Windows in Arches during the afternoon - the parking lots were almost empty. We had unimpeded views of everywhere we went, and since everyone cooperated at Mesa Arch (as shown by the image above), everyone got the shot of the sunrise sunburst under the arch.



West Mitten View, Monument Valley Tribal Park

When we visited Dead Horse Point and Goblin Valley, there were no cars at Dead Horse, and just two cars at Goblin Valley. One place we wanted to visit but couldn't was the famous Delicate Arch in Arches. While it was possible to do, after talking to the Park Rangers about the need for ice crampons to navigate part of the trail at top, we elected to give that a pass during this trip.

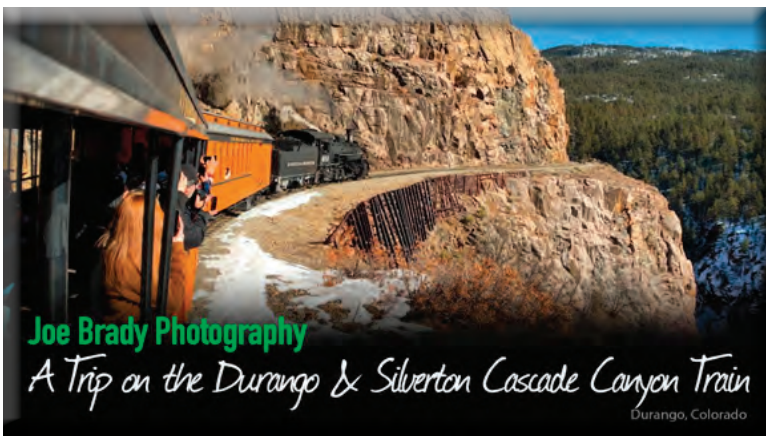


Tree with a View, Canyonlands, NP

Back in town, while there were many places closed, we had no problem eating at a different restaurant each night, though we did eat at the Moab Diner for breakfast and lunch 3 or 4 times. That however was by design, and we have done that on every trip here.

The bottom line was that the photography was simply amazing everywhere we went. On the one afternoon that turned cloudy, we returned to Mesa Arch for a very different feel of the place. We basically had the place to ourselves, but the pastel-like light and colors was still quite beautiful. Take a closer look below at this amazing tree in Canyonlands and how its roots found a place to grow. This was during our one cloudy afternoon, and the painterly feel is quite beautiful.

After the Workshop, Diane and I headed down to spend a couple of days first at Monument Valley, and then on to Durango. Turns out that Monument Valley in January is also spectacular. We typically go there in November or March (which is basically the same conditions with somewhat warmer temperatures), but we found ourselves just wearing sweatshirts as the temperatures got close to 50°. When in Durango, we headed north into the mountains for a complete change of scenery, with snowy mountains topping 14,000 feet and green pines everywhere.



As an added treat, we were able to get tickets on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad for a winter trip up to Cascade Canyon. This is about halfway to Silverton - where the Spring thru Fall trains run, but again, the snow on the mountains and alongside the tracks was beautiful. We splurged a bit and got seats on the special car with an all-glass panoramic roof (called the "Knight Sky" car on their website) - and it was worth it!

If it isn't obvious yet, we will be scheduling this trip again for next January and will also see about fitting a second trip in earlier in the travel season. There is simply so much to see in the region, that you can keep going back, yet have a different experience each time.

I've prepared a 3-minute video of the Cascade Canyon Winter Train Journey - [Click here to watch this fun video!](#)

We hope you will be able to join us!

About Joe Brady and this Website

I've spent most of the last twenty years full-time in the photography business and exclusively as a photographer for the past five. I'm a writer, workshop leader, video producer and passionate about my photography, both portrait and landscape. While this site is dedicated to Landscape Photography, I will be adding a site for portrait work as well.



I'm getting feedback that many of my Newsletter readers like to hear about photo and travel gear. I am frequently introduced to great gear, tools and accessories that I know my fellow photographers would love, so the ability to purchase from this website is now easy to do!

There are changes brewing for the website and as soon as my travel schedule lightens up, I'll be back to you with a major update.

Please sign up for my newsletter and keep an eye out for new Blog posts (also something new for you!). My presence on social media will increase and I have many new projects in mind including a new web series on capturing better photographs.

Please sign up for the [FotoFriday Newsletter](#) if you aren't already a reader! There are blog posts, photo and event news, books, travel and gear. Thanks for reading and for visiting with me



How to use Hard Mix Layer Blending mode in Photoshop

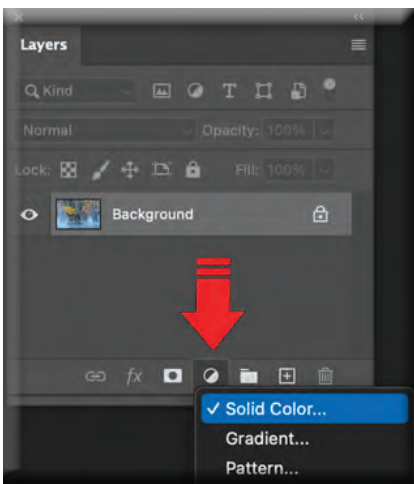
By William Yu

www.williamyuphotoworkshops.com/utah-badlands



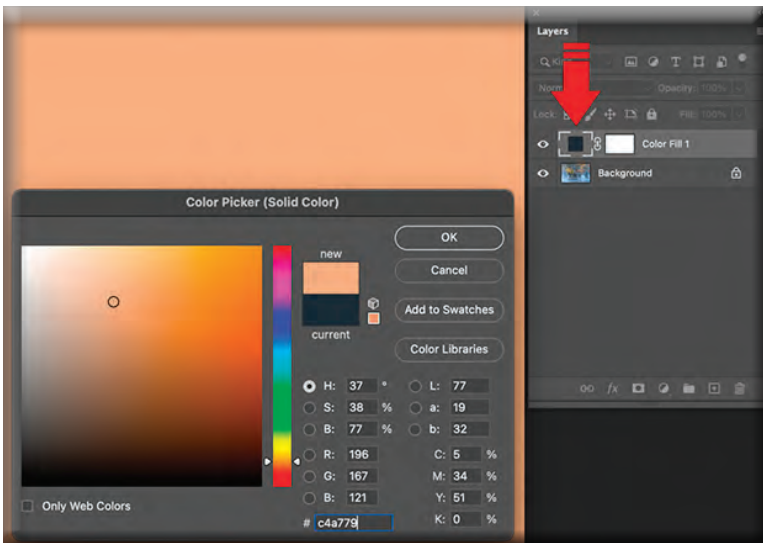
If you process your photos in Adobe Photoshop, most likely you have used layer blending mode like Soft Light, Overlay or Multiply. However, few people know how to properly use Hard Mix blending mode. Here I will show you a good way to use it.

The photo below was shot in a cold autumn morning in the southern swamp a month ago, fogs/mist were rising from the water surface. Overall, the image is a bit too cool/blueish to my taste, I would like to warm up the fogs and the colorful foliage, but keep the shadows (dark trunks) cool. The resulting warm highlight vs cool shadow color contrast will certainly enhance the visual appeal of this image. I will use the Hard Mix layer blending mode to achieve the result.



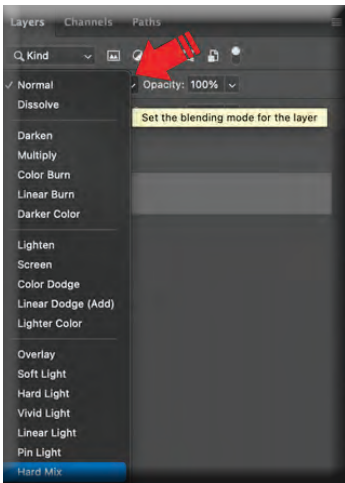
STEP 1

Open the image in Photoshop. At the bottom of the Layers panel, click the adjustment layers icon to open the dropdown menu, select the first item, which is "Solid Color Fill" adjustment layer (follow red arrow).



STEP 2

Double click the Color Fill adjustment layer icon (follow red arrow), to open the "Color Picker" window, select a warm bright color like light orange or similar. Click "OK".



STEP 3

With "Color Fill" layer selected, click the "layer blending mode" dropdown menu (follow red arrow), scroll down until you find "Hard Mix", and click it.



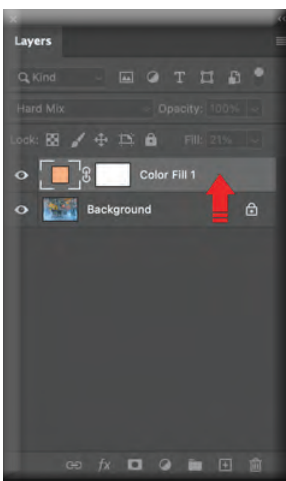
STEP 4

The image will immediately turn into a horrible mess of blotch, super contrasty saturated colors. This is why very few people use this blending mode by default, the result is always an unsightly mess. But wait, it's not finished yet...



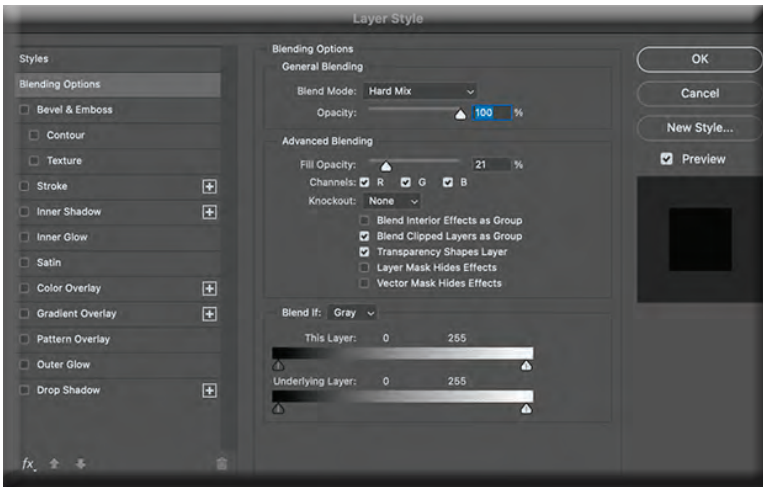
STEP 5

The secret to successfully use "Hard Mix" blending mode is: After you selected Hard Mix layer mode, adjust the "Fill" from 100% to somewhere like "10%-30%" based on your taste. In most other layer blending modes like Soft Light, we adjust "Opacity" to apply the effect, but with Hard Mix, we have to adjust "Fill", NOT "Opacity" to apply the effect to the image on the layer below. In my image here, I change "Fill" to 21%, it warms up the whole image to my liking.



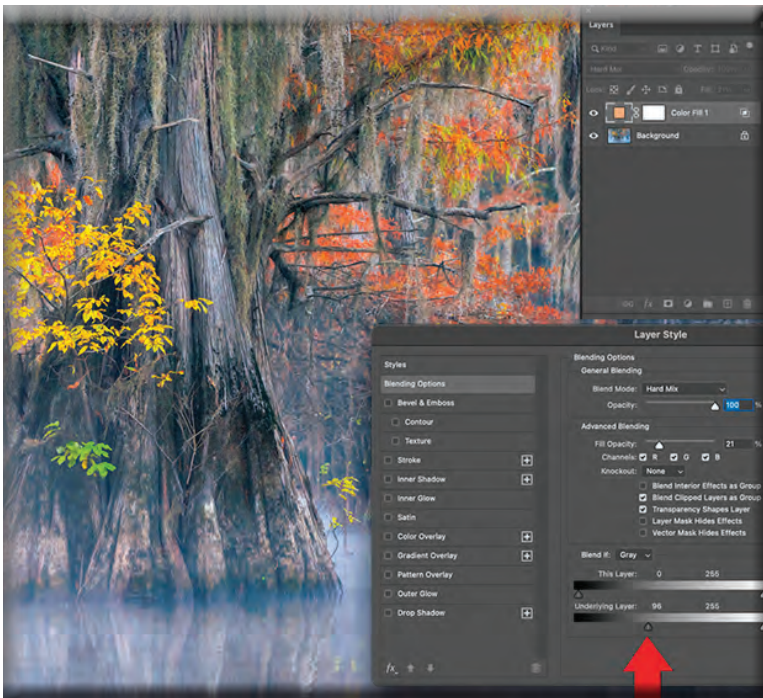
STEP 6

However, I don't like the warmth applied to the shadows like dark tree trunks, which should be staying cool. To remove the warmth effect from the shadow, I will make adjustment of "Layer Style" of Color Fill layer, by double click the empty part of "Color Fill" layer (follow red arrow), "Layer Style" window will open.



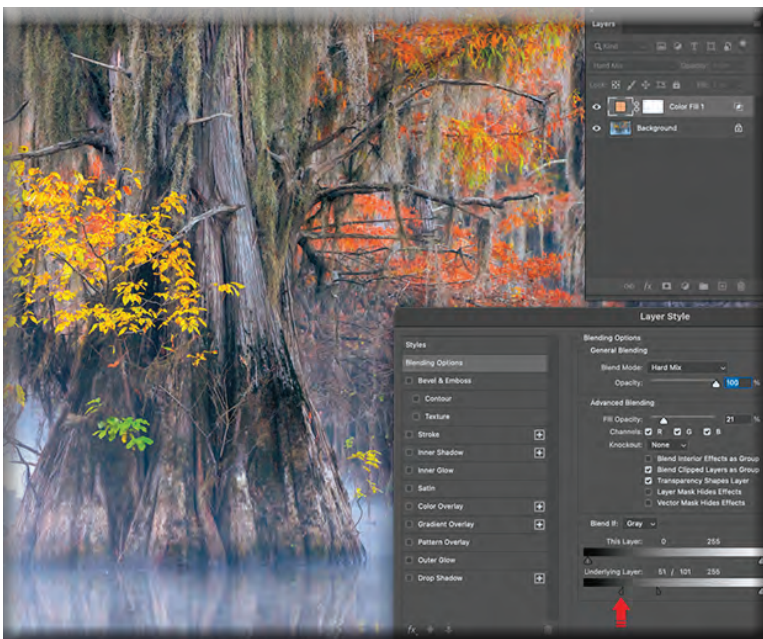
STEP 7

In "Blend If" section of Layer Style window, locate the "Underlying Layer" Bar at bottom, move the the little triangular slider from the left, towards the middle (follow red arrow), which means, the hard mix warmth effect we just applied to the whole image, will be excluded from the shadow(dark parts) of the image, so the shadow will be staying cool without any warming applied.



STEP 8

If the transition from the warmth to coolness is a bit too abrupt, we can split the "Blend If" slider to ease (feather) the transition. Hold down "option" key on Mac or "Alt" key on Windows, click the left part of the slider and drag left(follow red arrow), this will split the triangular slider into two parts, the portion between the two half sliders will have gradual transition from warmth to coolness in this image. I understand it's hard to understand if you are new to this technique, but if you keep learning and practicing, you will get it.



Here is the final image after the edit, Warmth/Vibrance added to fogs and foliage, while shadows staying cool.



Water Droplet Photography: A Unique Way to View a Common Subject

By Dale E. A. Lewis

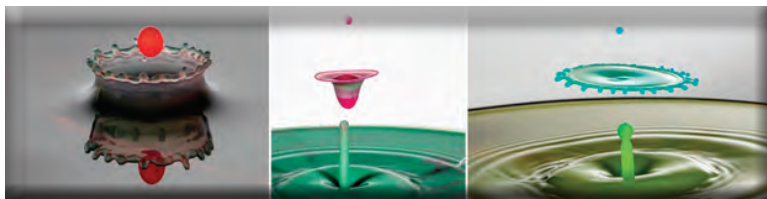


Water droplet © Dale E. A. Lewis

Next to the sun, water is probably the most photographed subject in nature. It can convey power and strength as a magnificent crashing wave or serenity and calmness as a gentle babbling brook. With a fast shutter speed, you can freeze it in time to see every detail or use a slow shutter speed to render it as an ethereal mist. Of course, let's not forget its beautiful reflective properties. No wonder that water is a fascinating subject to photograph! In fact, it's so fascinating that even a solitary droplet can elicit feelings of awe and wonder. And that takes us to water droplet photography, a specialized type of photography that takes a lot of trial and error to successfully accomplish. The stunning results make it well worth the effort.

From the Editor: In the middle of winter, in the middle of a pandemic, many photographers find themselves at home, looking for creative outlets for their photography. In this article, Dale E. A. Lewis describes how he does water droplet photography, a challenging but rewarding art form that can be done at home with a relatively small investment. It's not exactly nature photography, but it can scratch that creative itch and, who knows, next time you're out in the field you might just have an entirely

different approach to droplets of ice melting, spring rain, the dripping condensation from a plant on a foggy morning. After a couple of hours shooting water droplets inside I don't think I'll ever again dismiss the exciting artistic potential of the mundane, quotidian water drop.



Various effects possible with water droplet photography
© Dale E. A. Lewis

Amazing Water Droplets

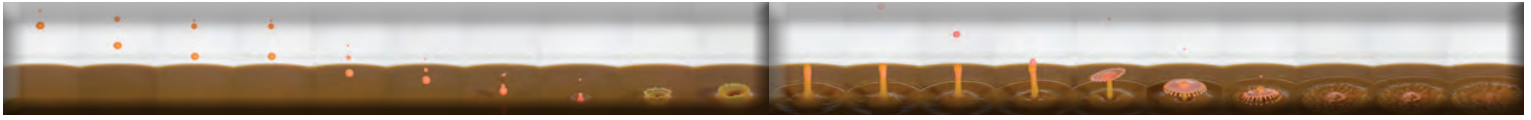
Water droplet photography involves capturing the movement of water droplets, or the freezing of the collision of two or more droplets in mid-air. It's classified as "high-speed photography," but not in the traditional sense. When most people think of high-speed photography, they probably think of using a fast shutter speed to freeze the motion of fast-moving subjects. Water droplets might not be one of the first subjects that come to mind. This is

because water droplets are frozen, not by a fast shutter speed, but by a flash. For best results, the ambient light should be reduced as much as possible so that the flash is your only light source to illuminate the droplets. If done correctly, you should be able to capture some truly unique liquid sculptures. Below are typical examples of this type of photography.

Water Droplets Cycle

Materials

It is important to understand the process of creating water droplet sculptures. This requires the release of two droplets from an eyedropper, almost simultaneously. The first droplet is released and falls into the receiving liquid in a catch tray directly below, forming a cavity (or crown splash) as it descends below the surface. The surrounding areas of the cavity collapse and shoot a jet (Worthington Jet) of water upward. (The Worthington Jet was named after [Arthur Worthington](#), who first described the phenomena in 1882.) The second water droplet, released a few milliseconds later, collides with the upward-rising jet, creating an amazing sculpture. The mystery and excitement of water droplets photography is much like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates: "You never know what you're gonna get!" Each droplet is as different as a snowflake. The photo sequences below illustrate this process. In this article, I will discuss the materials and techniques that I use to create these images. Other photographers may use different equipment and/or set-ups, but the results are basically the same.

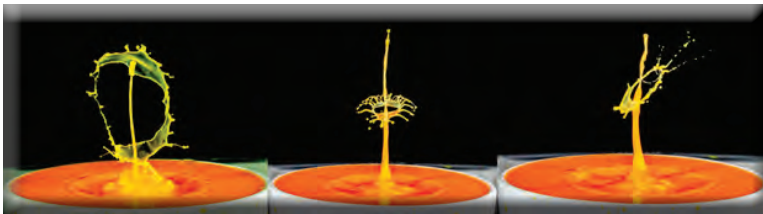


The first droplet falls (left) and creates a crown splash (right).
© Dale E. A. Lewis

The second sequence shows the Worthington Jet forming (left), the second drop falling, a liquid sculpture forming and then collapsing. © Dale E. A. Lewis

Liquids

Obviously, water is needed. However, the density of plain water is too thin and will cause the droplets to spread out too far – yielding inconsistent and unsatisfactory results. Substances such as glycerin, corn starch syrup or xanthan gum may be added to the water to increase its density and to make the droplets a little more cohesive. These substances are easily obtained from most supermarkets and drug stores at a reasonable price. Most photographers prefer to use xanthan gum since it produces the best results. It comes in powder form, and it must first be dissolved in water. Add about 1 gram (0.04 ounce) of xanthan gum to 1.5 – 2 liters (0.4 – 0.53 gallon) of lukewarm water. then mix it in a blender. If you add too much xanthan gum, the mixture will be too thick and clumpy – requiring the solution to be strained to remove the undissolved bits. The next step is to dilute it before it can be used in an eyedropper. Combine equal amounts of the solution with water and milk. Adding milk helps to get a better-formed droplet. Also, since milk is opaque, it helps reflect light from the flash – illuminating the milky droplet. If the solution is too thick to fall easily out of the dropper, simply adjust the ratio of the xanthan gum solution to the water/milk solution. For better effects, you can also add a few drops of Nature Clean All-Purpose cleaning lotion to the liquid in the dropper. This lowers the surface tension of the water – creating unique structures in the resulting splash. The effect of this technique can be seen in the photos below.

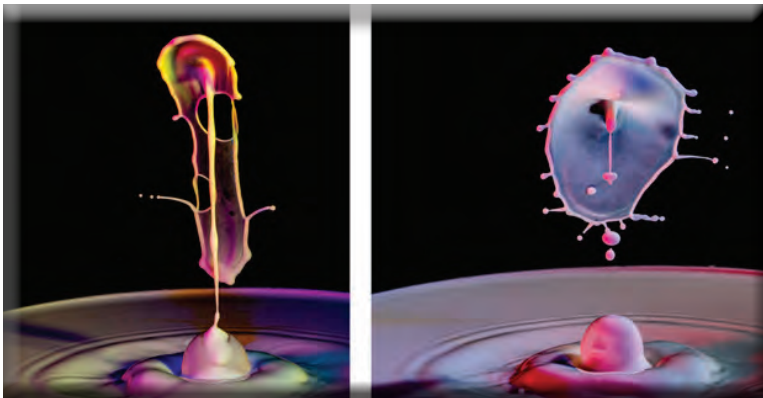


Droplets with Nature Clean All-Purpose cleaning lotion in the dropper. © Dale E. A. Lewis

The disadvantage of using the lotion is that it will generate bubbles in the tray. I use a long stick to remove them, but they can also be removed in post-editing of the photos.

Coloring Water Droplets

To maximize the “wow” factor, try coloring the droplets. You can have one color in the eyedropper and a different color in the catch tray. Also, if you combine primary colors, the color of the resulting splash will be a totally new color! Remember, red and yellow create orange, red and blue create purple and blue and yellow create green. So, for example, if you color the liquid in the dropper red and the liquid in the tray yellow, the splash will be a mixture of red, yellow, and orange. Try experimenting with many different colors (see photos below). To color the liquids, you can use food color dyes, printer inks or acrylic/tempera paints. However, it may be more difficult to get a homogeneous solution with paints. I use a small blender to mix the paint with water or xanthan gum, and it works fine. You can also use colored flash gels to color the droplets



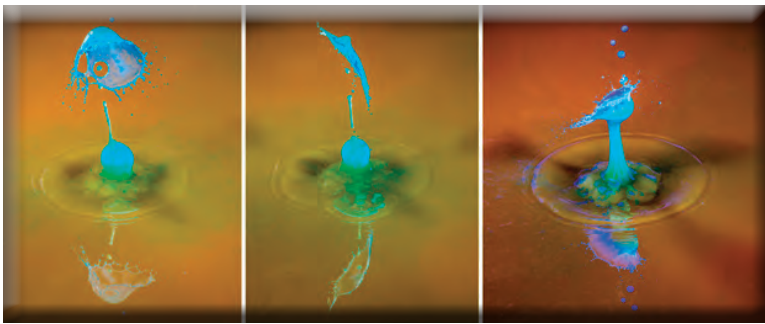
White droplets colored by red, yellow, and blue color flash gels.
© Dale E. A. Lewis



Water droplet in a glass (left) and water droplet in a teacup (right).
© Dale E. A. Lewis

Containers

Whether you use a drinking glass, a cup, or a bowl as your catch tray, it’s important to fill it to the top and let the extra liquid overflow the lip (see photos below). This will give you a better view of the action, as opposed to having to shoot down into the “well” of the container. To avoid a mess, place an overflow tray underneath the catch tray to catch any spills.



Examples of images with reflections. © Dale E. A. Lewis

Also, if the liquid is clear, and you want to capture the reflection of the splash, you need to use a tray large enough to do so without getting the edge of the tray in the shot (see images below). In addition, you should use a circular polarizing filter (CPL) on your lens. To maximize your ability to see the reflection of the water droplet, you should use a focusing aid as above and rotate the ring of the CPL to see the reflection of the focusing aid in the water – then, remove the aid.

Backdrop

Your backdrop should suit your creative vision. I typically use a black, white, blue, or red vinyl material. You should place it about 24 inches (61 centimeters) away from the drop zone. This will protect it from getting splashed and removing all the spots would create a lot more work in post-editing.

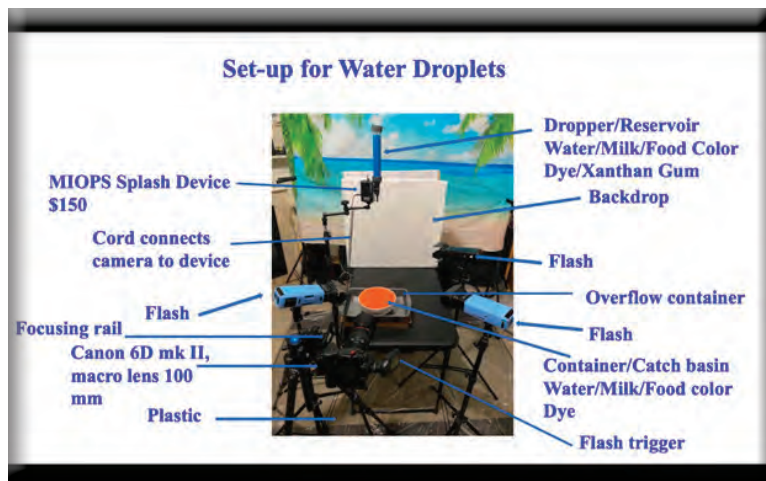


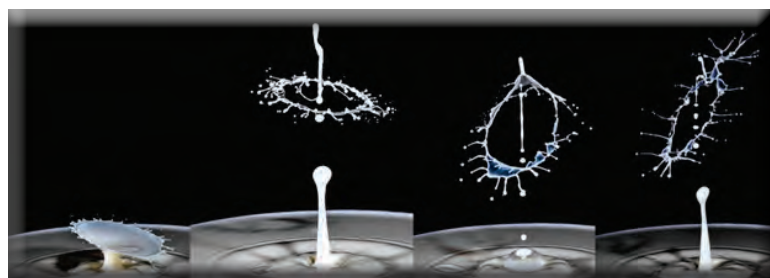
Diagram of water droplet photography setup. © Dale E. A. Lewis

Camera Setup

Whether you use a full frame or crop sensor camera, it must be able to be set to bulb mode (I'll explain why shortly). Use a lens with a focal length of about 100 mm and focus manually. To get the sharpest possible images, use mirror lockup to prevent camera shake as the mirror rises and falls during the exposure. Your aperture should be around f/16, and your ISO should be set between 200-400. A sturdy tripod is a must because your shutter speed will be generally slow, at around 1/10 sec. I prefer to use a vertical composition (camera vertical) because I never know how high the droplet will rise. You will need at least 2 flashes on light stands positioned to either side of the droplet. Their outputs should be considerably reduced to avoid overexposing the droplet (1/64). I generally use three Godox AP 200 Pro flashes with a Flashpoint R2 Mark II transmitter. These flashes have four magnetic color gels, which attach directly to the flash head. Diffusers can also be used to soften and dilute the light.

Focusing Aid

The distance between the nozzle of the dropper and the catch tray should be somewhere between 8 inches (20 centimeters) and 30 inches (76 centimeters). Keep in mind that the bigger the distance, the higher the height of the droplet, and the higher the force of the droplet. As I mentioned earlier, you need to focus manually. You can release a droplet from the dropper to get an idea of the drop zone, but for more accurate result, you need to use some sort of focusing aid. If you have an assistant, you can have him/her hold a pencil or stick in the drop zone for which to focus on. If you don't have an assistant, you will have to use some sort of free-standing device, such as an extension socket wrench. Once the focus is set, do not move the camera or the catch tray, else you will have to repeat the focusing procedure.

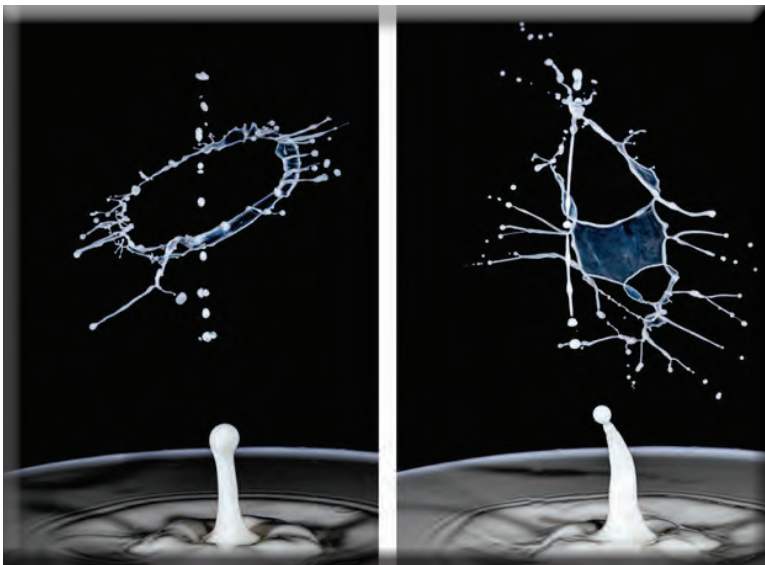


Control image (left) and examples of increasing the size of the first drop. © Dale E. A. Lewis

MIOPS Splash Water Drop Kit

The most important piece of equipment you will need is a device to trigger the water droplets. There are many different devices on the market, but I use a MIOPS Splash Water Drop Kit. Retailing for about \$150, it connects to your camera by a cable. The reason you need to set your camera to the bulb setting is because this device will control the shutter speed. Actually, it controls the entire operation – including the precise moment when your camera will fire. After downloading the device's app to your phone, you will also be able to control the size of the first and second drops and the delay between them. I created the images below by adjusting only one value at a time while keeping the other two values constant.

created the images below by adjusting only one value at a time while keeping the other two values constant.



Examples of changing the delay between 1st and 2nd drops.

© Dale E. A. Lewis



Examples of creating water droplet sculptures within a bubble. © Dale E. A. Lewis

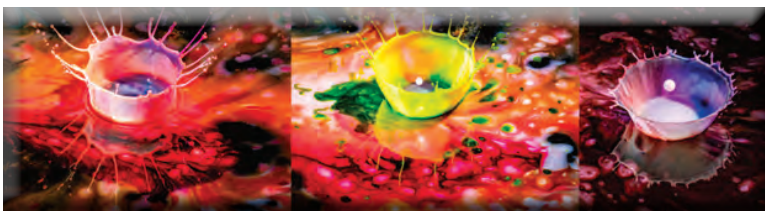
Water Droplets Within a Bubble

It is fun to see children blowing bubbles in the playground. Similarly, it is exciting to blow a large bubble over the container and create a droplet inside the bubble. Glycerin is added to the solution to help strengthen the bubble. However, creating the bubble is not exactly child's play. I have to hold the bubble wand at the base of the bowl and carefully blow at a specific angle. Initially, it takes a lot of attempts to get a perfectly shaped bubble over the top of the container, but it does get easier with practice. What's most amazing about this technique is that the bubble

doesn't immediately pop as the water droplets fall through it. I'm usually able to get three or four truly unique images before it finally bursts.

Splash Art

Splash art is another method for creating amazing, colorful effects. This is done by releasing the water droplet mixture from a dropper onto black plexiglass containing a mixture of paint, milk, and ink. The black color is the perfect background to highlight the vibrant colors of the splash. You will be amazed at the different colors and patterns that result.



Examples of splash art. © Dale E. A. Lewis

Now you are ready to have some fun. By adjusting any number of the variables I've mentioned, you will be able to create some amazing water droplet sculptures. I am still learning and improving my techniques. It takes a lot of patience, but the end results are truly amazing! If you're interested in learning more about this type of photography, *The Ultimate Guide to Water Drop Photography*, by Corrine White is an excellent resource.

Clearly, you can't use all of these techniques in the field. However, you can incorporate a lot of them as you're out in the natural environment with your camera. Regular water won't give you as consistent and as richly structured results, but can still provide pleasing photos. Instead of flash, you can use a constant light source, whether that's a reflector or flashlight or small light, such as a Lume Cube, with or without a gel. And you can use a piece of black or colored cardboard or foam core as a backdrop. The possibilities are endless.



Dale E. A. Lewis has been a member of the NIH Camera Club since 2015, when he joined the group in the advanced category. He's won several awards in the NIH In-Focus Photo Contest from 2011 – 2015 and was awarded "people choice awards" at Mid Atlantic Photo Expo (formally, Nature Visions Photo Expo). Many of his photos were selected by the Expo for display. He has photographed weddings, wedding showers, engagements, anniversary celebrations, banquets, baby showers, graduations, funerals, sporting events, and scientific conferences. Lewis enjoys night, long-exposure, nature, macro and high-speed photography. "I am often asked when I started taking photos. I have owned cameras for a long time, but it was not until my sons were born that I put more effort in photography to capture images of them daily," he says.