Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper   September 2023

2023 Annual Potluck Dinner

Photos by Em McLaren

"The potluck was held at the Boat House in Oak Park. Some folks brought photos to be judged by the group. Heide talked about the PSA and Wayne brought his book of judging with PSA rules to share with the group. The food everyone brought was delicious and it seemed like a good time was had by all."

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President's Message
September 2023
By Heide Stover

Our last meeting was a potluck. We met at the Boat House in Oak Grove Park. We had 14 members who came. There was lots of great food. Everyone had a chance to comment on prints that members brought in to share.

There was good conversation all around. At the end of the evening everyone was willing to help clean up.

Thanks to all that joined us. I think it was a wonderful evening.

Heide

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2023 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*
August 30	**Treasure Island, CA**	**Super Moon Rising over the Bay Bridge** doug_flyfisher@yahoo.com
Thursday September 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**September General Meeting Special Subject - Simplicity**
Tuesday October 10	**Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival Art Show**	**Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival Art Show Entries** **https://lodisandhillcrane.org/art-show/call-to-artists/**
Thursday October 19	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**October General Meeting Special Subject - Monochrome**
Thursday November 16	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**November General Meeting Prints Only (No Special Subject)**
Thursday December 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**December General Meeting Special Subject - Glass**

2024 Calendar of Events

January	**Stockton, CA**	**Annual Banquet**
Thursday February 15	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**February General Meeting Special Subject - Domestic Animals**
Thursday March 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**March General Meeting Special Subject - Abandoned**
April	**TBA**	**April Workshop/Photo Opportunity**
Thursday May 16	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**May General Meeting Special Subject - Graveyards**
Thursday June 20	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only**
Thursday July 18	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**July General Meeting Special Subject - Photo Journalism**

Stockton Camera Club
July 2023 Competition Standings
Congratulations to the winner!!!

The July 2023 SCC competition meetings was held in person at the West Lane Bowling Alley.

WINNERS FOR THE PRINTS FOR JULY:
1st Place - "Ready to Boogie" by Ron Wetherell
2nd Place - "St. Martin Church, Lake Bled, Slovenia" by Doug Ridgway
3rd Place - "Pacific Grove Coast #49" by Wayne Carson

WINNERS FOR THE DIGITAL IMAGES FOR JULY:
1st Place - "Female Grizzly Bear And Her 2 Cubs" by Sharon McLemore
2nd Place - "Vegas Reflection" by Dean Taylor
3rd Place - "Jellyfish Descending" by Dean Taylor

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

Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Ron Wetherell	193	155	38	39	39	39	39	37	0	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	178	142	36	36	35	36	38	33	0	0	0	0
Debra Goins	173	139	34	35	32	33	38	35	0	0	0	0
Heide Stover	147	110	37	36	38	37	0	36	0	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	130	98	32	33	33	33	0	31	0	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	65	48	17	33	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
Karleen Gansberg	33	0	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bob Harada	31	23	8	0	0	0	0	31	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reginald Lee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reginald Lee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roger Elkins	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
Wayne Carlson	188	161	27	37	37	37	39	38	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	182	146	36	36	35	38	38	35	0	0	0	0
Em McLaren	182	145	37	37	37	36	38	34	0	0	0	0
Doug Ridgway	180	143	37	37	36	38	34	35	0	0	0	0
Dean Taylor	151	124	27	38	35	0	40	38	0	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	142	107	35	38	34	29	0	24	0	0	0	0

2023 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.

Understanding Simplicity In Photography:
The Essential Guide
by *Adebimitan John*

As a photographer, I have often found myself drawn to the beauty of simplicity. There is something special and refreshing about capturing an image that doesn't need to be overly complicated or boast extravagant amounts of detail. Simplicity in photography can help draw attention to a particular element or create balance between shapes and colors. But what does it mean as an overall concept? Let's explore the idea further and decode exactly what simplicity in photography is all about.

Quick Answer: Simplicity in photography is the art of capturing a scene or subject with minimal elements, often focusing on one main element and eliminating any distractions. It can be used to create powerful images that draw attention to the subject without being overwhelmed by other elements in the frame.

What is simplicity in photography?

Simplicity in photography is a powerful tool that allows us to capture the essence of our subject matter without overwhelming it with unnecessary visual clutter. It's about distilling an image down to its most fundamental elements and crafting a composition that effectively communicates those elements to the viewer.

When we embrace simplicity in photography, we are able to create images that are both elegant and impactful. By removing extraneous details from our shots, we can give viewers a clear focal point for their attention, allowing them to fully engage with the subject matter on display. This approach also forces us as photographers to be more intentional about how we compose our shots, taking care not only to include what is essential but also leaving out anything that might detract from the narrative or emotional impact of the image.

Of course, achieving simplicity in photography isn't always easy – it requires practice and discipline to develop an eye for detail and learn when less is truly more. However, by embracing this approach and working deliberately toward creating simpler compositions, we can elevate our photography beyond mere documentation into something truly breathtaking – something that resonates deeply with viewers long after they've seen it. So next time you're behind your camera lens or editing your photographs, remember: sometimes all it takes is stripping away everything but what matters most.

The Role of Composition in Creating Simplicity

When it comes to creating simplicity, composition plays a crucial role. Composition refers to the arrangement of visual elements within a photograph or image. It involves considering factors like balance, perspective, and positioning to create an aesthetically pleasing and harmonious final product. In essence, composition is all about making deliberate decisions that help guide the viewer's eye towards certain parts of the image while minimizing distractions.

One key aspect of composition that contributes to simplicity is negative *space*. *Negative space* refers to areas in an image where there is no subject or *object* present. By intentionally leaving empty spaces in your photographs, you can draw more attention to your main subject and give them room to breathe. This helps create a sense of clarity and minimalism in your images without sacrificing interest or detail. Additionally, using simple shapes and lines can also aid in creating simplicity through strong compositions that are easy on the eyes.

Another technique used in composition for creating simplicity is symmetry. Symmetry involves balancing objects or subjects evenly on either side of an imaginary line down the middle of an image (or another axis). This creates a sense of orderliness and harmony that can be visually appealing while still keeping things straightforward and streamlined for viewers who may not have time for busy visuals with lots going on at once – especially when it comes to marketing materials like advertisements or brochures! Overall, by paying close attention to how you compose your images through employing techniques such as negative space and symmetry when appropriate you can make sure they communicate their message simply yet effectively every single time!

The Significance of Negative Space in Photography

Negative space in photography is an essential aspect that goes unnoticed by many. It is the area surrounding the main subject, which could either be empty or filled with minimal elements. The negative space plays a crucial role in enhancing the visual appeal of a photograph by creating balance and highlighting the subject's significance. A lack of negative space can result in

cluttered images, causing distractions from the intended focal point.

Negative space provides breathing room for a photo by allowing viewers to focus solely on the primary subject without any visual competition. This technique enables photographers to create visually striking images that convey powerful messages through simplicity and subtlety. Negative space also allows photographers to experiment with composition, leading lines and *framing* techniques, resulting in more engaging visuals.

In conclusion, incorporating negative spaces into photographs highlights unique details about subjects that would otherwise go unnoticed. As such, it is important for photographers to consider this element when capturing their subjects as they strive to create meaningful pieces of art beyond mere documentation of what was before them; all while working towards maintaining a balance within their imagery – both visually speaking as well as conceptually speaking too!

Simplicity and Minimalism in photography: Understanding the Difference

When it comes to photography, we often hear the terms simplicity and minimalism thrown around interchangeably. However, they are two distinct concepts that can greatly impact the final result of an image. Simplicity refers to the idea of having a clear and uncluttered composition, where every element in the frame serves a purpose and adds value to the overall scene. On the other hand, minimalism is about stripping down a subject or scene until only its essential elements remain; it's all about conveying more with less.

To achieve simplicity in your photographs, focus on creating a clean and unobstructed composition that tells a story without any distractions. This includes paying attention to things like color balance, *contrast* levels, lines and shapes within your frame. Think carefully about what you want your viewer's eye to be drawn towards – this could be something as simple as using negative space strategically or positioning your main subject off-center. In general, simpler compositions tend to have stronger visual impact as they allow for easier interpretation by viewers' brains.

When aiming for minimalism in photography though you need even more discipline when composing an image because every single element matters – there's no room for error! The key here is distilling everything within your shot into only its most necessary components – think of how few brushstrokes Picasso would use at times or how Hemingway had almost zero adjectives used throughout his novels but still managed convey so much emotion through his precise choice of words alone! You should aim for photographic equivalents: avoid having anything surplus or unnecessary present within each shot otherwise it dilutes impact considerably (in comparison with simplicity). Achieving minimalism sounds easy but is one of those skills which needs practice– remember 'less' doesn't mean boring either- try playing around with different combinations experimenting til you find something unique that really resonates strongly visually while remaining stripped back & essential!

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Simplicity in Photography:
Why Simple Photos Are Usually Best
by Jaymes Dempsey

Simplicity is beautiful. It helps focus the viewer. And generally speaking, the simpler the composition, the better.

In my view, simplicity is the most essential element of *great compositions*. It's also a key compositional element that beginners fail to take into account. Capturing messy, chaotic images is easy, but producing carefully constructed, minimalistic shots is much harder.

That's why, in this article, I'm going to share with you everything you need to know about simplicity in photography, including a handful of top tips to take your compositions to the next level.

And here's my guarantee: With my tips combined with a bit of practice, you'll be creating gorgeous (and simple!) photos in no time at all.

Simplicity in Photography:

- *What Is Simplicity in Photography?*
- *Why Should You Create Simple Photos?*
- *Techniques for Creating Simple Images*
- *Go Create Simple Compositions!*

What Is Simplicity in Photography?

In the most basic sense, a simple photograph is one that includes only a few compositional shapes and only a few colors. Here's an example of a simple photo:

Note that simple photos tend to only have a single subject, and they also tend to guide the viewer in a very clear direction. There are no distractions, no hiccups, and no tangents.

For this reason, simple photos are very easy to appreciate. They're also very compelling as I discuss in the next section.

Why Should You Create Simple Photos?

Simpler photos tend to look really, really good. Here's why:

First, the simpler the photo, the easier it is for the viewer to focus. When you have ten subjects and all of them are competing for attention, the viewer often becomes overwhelmed and moves on; when you have a single subject with a non-distracting background, the viewer knows exactly where to look and is able to fully appreciate the shot.

Second, simpler photos tend to be much clearer in their message. A simple photo can easily tell different stories, as well as different moods. For instance, this shot tells a story of sadness:

Simpler photos are also more impactful because the subject matter just hits you in the face. There are no additional elements that the viewer has to consider. Instead, the viewer sees the photo and is immediately struck by the content.

Of course, not all simple photos are good. You still have to arrange your compositions carefully by following guidelines such as the *rule of thirds,* the rule of space, the *rule of odds*, and the *golden ratio*.

But if you already have a good handle on these techniques, then aiming for simpler photos is going to make a big difference. In fact, here's an exercise that you can do to wrap your mind around the value of simplicity:

Head into your photo archives, and find a group of photos that you're proud of. Open up the photos, and ask yourself: Is there a way to make these photos more simple? Did I include enough negative space? Did I eliminate all distractions?

And envision how the photos would look if slightly simplified. That way, you can get a sense of how simplicity will affect your images – how it can take a good image and turn it into a great image.

Techniques for Creating Simple Images

Knowing the value of simplicity is all well and good, but it's also important to understand how you can apply it in your photography. In this next section, I share my best techniques for producing simple, powerful shots.

1. Include a Clear Main Subject

Whenever your goal is to make a simple photo, I recommend starting with a clear main subject.

In other words, find something in the scene that stands out. Then compose the rest of the shot around that element.

Think of this main subject as a sort of compositional anchor point. Without the main subject, your composition will seem aimless, and the viewer just won't know how to handle it. But once you add the subject to your composition, the viewer will know exactly where to look.

A main subject can also help you prioritize different aspects of your composition. Once you have your main subject, you know what matters and what doesn't; you should then compose the rest of your shot in service to that subject. If you include lines, they should lead toward the main subject (or thereabouts). If you include a *frame within a frame*, the main subject should be given the best placement in that frame.

2. Remove Background Distractions

If your image features a main subject, then you're off to a great start. You already have a compositional focal point, but you then need to ensure that the focal point remains strong. You don't want the viewer's eye to wander away toward various distractions!

So as you're creating your composition, look all around your main subject. Try to find anything that stands out and draws the viewer's eye. The goal here is to remove all distractions from the scene.

(Distractions can be anything, from rocks on a beach to a sign behind a person's head. It all depends on the type of photo you're creating.)

Note: I don't necessarily mean that you must remove distractions physically. You can also eliminate distractions by changing your composition (walking a few steps to the right or the left can work wonders!), moving closer to your subject, cropping the image after the fact, or adjusting your perspective.

By the way, if you're creating a composition and you notice lots of distractions that can't easily be removed, that's a sign that you'd be better off completely changing your shot. Even if your main subject is deeply interesting, the image won't work if it's surrounded by eye-catching objects.

3. Use a Wide Aperture

A simple way to get rid of background distractions is to open up your lens's aperture to its widest setting.

You see, the wider the lens's aperture, the narrower your depth of field. And a narrow depth of field will give a blurry background effect:

In other words, the wide aperture blurs the distractions into oblivion, and you can take a shot that emphasizes your main subject.

You do have to be careful when using a wide aperture, though, for a couple of reasons. First, wider apertures tend to be optically inferior to narrower apertures. So if you widen your lens to f/2.8, you'll get an image that has a pleasing blur effect, but you'll also get less sharpness in the areas that are meant to be sharp.

Second, it's easy to accidentally end up with a partially blurry shot. That's because a *wide aperture* can give an ultra-narrow *depth of field*, which in turn makes it difficult to ensure that you're actually getting your whole subject in focus.

So feel free to use a wide aperture to simplify, but make sure that you're careful to keep everything you want in sharp focus.

4. Include Lots of Negative Space

Sufficient negative space is key to pretty much any photograph – but it's especially important in simple photos.

Negative space refers to areas that are full of emptiness, such as a dark expanse of water or a cloudy sky:

Now, negative space serves to emphasize the subject while also providing space to breathe. In fact, because negative space includes nothing at all, the simplest photos are often shot in a minimalistic style and are brimming with negative space, like this:

That's the power of negative space. Bottom line: Don't be afraid to really let emptiness fill your image!

5. Fill the Frame

Another basic way to simplify your compositions is to *fill the frame* with your subject.

Photographers often have a tendency to frame very loosely in an effort to include everything of value in the shot. But remember: When you're creating simple photos, you have to remove each and every distraction.

That's where filling the frame comes in. It ensures you get rid of all distractions, no matter how small.
Plus, frame-filling compositions tend to be very powerful and intense, which can make for a very cool effect, like this:

Note that you can fill the frame in a few ways. For instance, you can get closer to your subject, which is often the best way to really fill up the composition – but you can also use a longer lens, or you can crop the shot tighter in post-processing.

6. Keep the Number of Colors to a Minimum
Photographers often forget that colors are compositional elements. And the more colors you have, the more chaotic your photos become.

That's why you have to pay careful attention to all the *colors in your photos* – and work as hard as possible to keep the number to a minimum.

In other words, don't include five, six, or seven main colors. Instead, I recommend using four noticeable colors at a maximum (and two or three colors are even better). That way, your viewer won't get overwhelmed by a barrage of hues and can instead focus on the few colors that matter.

7. Convert to Black and White

When you're trying to create simple images, don't be afraid to convert to black and white.

As I mentioned above, you should limit the number of colors in your scene. But there are times when you're not going to be able to carefully manage the colors. (After all, some scenes are just intrinsically colorful!) When that happens, black and white is a great option.

With the removal of color, images are instantly simplified. This can also look really, really stunning, especially if you're willing to carefully capture light and shadow and tonal range.

Plus, it's not difficult to convert your images to black and white. So if you're ever wondering if the colors in a photo are a bit too complex, just import the file into your favorite post-processing program and do a quick conversion. See what you think. You might be very pleased by the results!

Go Create Simple Compositions!

Now you know all about the importance of simplicity in photography, and you're well-equipped to enhance your compositions.

So keep these tips for simplifying your images in mind. And the next time you're out with your camera, try putting them into practice!

Simplicity in Photography FAQ

Why is simplicity in photography important?

Simplicity allows the viewer to really focus on the main subject without being distracted by other elements such as background objects.

How can you simplify photos?

Make sure you only have a single main subject and take steps to keep the background free of all distractions. You can also add negative (empty) space into the composition; more negative space often translates to increased simplicity.

Are simple photos always better than more complex photos?

That depends. Simplicity is generally better than complexity in photography, but there are some stunning photos that are highly complex! It just takes a lot of skill to create a beautiful yet complex composition.

Does negative space simplify photos?

Yes! By including negative space in your photos, you'll immediately end up with simpler, more powerful compositions.

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About the Author

Jaymes Dempsey
Jaymes Dempsey is a professional macro and nature photographer from Ann Arbor, Michigan; his work is published across the web, from Digital Photography School to PetaPixel. You can connect with Jaymes on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *LinkedIn*.

An In-Depth Guide to Lens Filters:
How they Work and Do you Need Them?
by *Keenan Hursh*

There are countless ways to alter the look and feel of an image. Whether it's a change in composition, lighting, camera settings, or really anything else you can capture an infinite number of unique photographs of the same subject. This notion both excites me and simultaneously causes a sense of anxiety. There are unlimited creative possibilities but if that's the case how can I ensure I'm photographing a subject in the best way possible?

In short, this is impossible to know, and at the end of the day the term "best" is incredibly subjective and will be different for everyone. What you can do however is choose how you'd like to photograph a subject or scene in your own unique perspective. Photography is an art form and a method of self-expression, so the creative decisions are ultimately up to you.

To circle back to the opening statement, there are countless ways to alter the look and feel of an image. In today's article, we're going to discuss one of these methods; A specific type of tool that can greatly alter the way light enters your camera and thus the images you can capture. Today, we're going to take a deep dive into the world of lens filters, how they work, specific scenarios in which you may want to use them, and whether or not you need them at all.

Let's get into it!

What are Lens Filters?

Lens filters are often considered essential components of a photographer's toolkit. Quite simply, a lens filter is an optical device that attaches to your camera's lens and alters the way light enters your camera. These attachments, typically made from high-quality glass or optical resin, are meticulously designed to alter the properties of incoming light before it reaches the camera's sensor. This modification of light serves various purposes, ranging from correcting color imbalances and accounting for changes in environmental light to achieving artistic effects that can elevate the visual impact of photographs.

And this technology has been around for quite some time. The inception of lens filters can be traced back to the early days of photography when cameras were bulky and film technology was in its infancy. In the 19th century, when photographers used large-format cameras with glass plates, the necessity to control light and its properties became apparent. And as photography continued to advance, the use of filters gained prominence. In the early 20th century, the introduction of color photography further fueled the need for filters to manipulate and enhance color rendition.

With the transition from film to digital photography, the role of lens filters has evolved to accommodate new challenges and opportunities. Modern lens filters are meticulously crafted using advanced materials, precision engineering, and multi-coating technologies. These enhancements ensure minimal impact on image quality while achieving specific desired effects.

Today, photographers have a wide array of filters at their disposal, each tailored to address particular scenarios and creative aspirations. From subtle adjustments to bold transformations, lens filters offer a world of creative opportunities.

Lens filters are an excellent way to gain greater creative control over the images you're capturing and can offer an additional line of protection to the front element of your lens. Whether you're trying to create a dramatic visual effect or simply compensate for some aspect of environmental lighting a lens filter might be just the right tool for the job.

Different Types of Lens Filters

Let's take a look at different types of lens filters and the specific benefits or effects they provide. There are countless options currently available for purchase these days, which is great, but for today's article, we're going to focus on the most popular and common filters used in photography specifically.

UV Filters

UV filters were quite popular in the past when film photography was dominant. These filters were primarily used to block ultraviolet light, which could cause a bluish haze in certain outdoor shots. However, UV filters are still widely used in today's world of digital and mirrorless cameras. Because these filters don't affect the light entering your camera's sensor, they are primarily used to protect your lens's front element without noticeably compromising image quality. If you drop your lens or something hits it, I'd rather have a $100 filter break than the lens itself. Some photographers argue that there is a minute difference in quality and refuse to use these filters in normal shooting conditions but I have yet to observe this for myself. That being said, spending a bit of extra money to purchase higher-quality glass is never a bad idea.

Circular Polarizers

Circular polarizing filters (CPLs) are immensely popular among photographers, especially in the world of landscapes. They are designed to reduce reflections from non-metallic surfaces like water and glass. If you're capturing a landscape image and find that the glare from the sunlight reflecting off the water is distracting or overpowering your scene, a CPL will likely fix this issue. By rotating the filter, photographers can control the polarization effect, deepening blue skies, increasing color saturation, reducing glare and reflections, and improving overall image contrast. I almost always bring a circular polarizing filter with me whenever I go out.

Neutral Density (ND) Filters

ND filters are essential tools for controlling exposure in bright daylight conditions. Sure, you can reduce your shutter speed, ISO, and aperture but what if you want to capture a relatively long exposure image in broad daylight? Enter the ND filter. These devices uniformly reduce the amount of light entering the lens, allowing photographers to use longer shutter speeds or wider apertures even in bright daylight. This is particularly useful for achieving smooth, silky water effects in waterfalls or blurring motion in crowded places. I love using ND filters to capture a sense of motion or to portray the passing of time.

Graduated Neutral Density (GND) Filters

GND filters are a variation of ND filters but come with a graduated density across the filter's surface. This means that the darkness of the filter or the amount of light it lets through gradually changes as you move across the surface of the filter. They are used in scenarios where there is a significant difference in exposure between parts of a composition such as the sky and the foreground. A great example of this is capturing either the sunrise or sunset where the sky is often quite bright, and the land can be quite dark as the sunlight hasn't hit it yet. By positioning the filter correctly, photographers can balance the exposure and retain detail in both areas of the image.

Do You Actually Need Filters?

This all begs the question: Do you actually need filters for your photography? Of course, there is no clean-cut black-and-white answer to this question as photography is a subjective art form. I know many photographers who hardly ever use filters, many who use them all the time, and many, like myself, who fall somewhere in the middle only using them for specific situations.

I can of course provide some insights into my own use of filters, but this is simply how I chose to use them, and you'll have to make these decisions for yourself and the situations you find yourself in. I hardly ever use filters when shooting wildlife. This is because I'm not trying to alter the light as it enters my lens. The only exception to this would be using a UV filter as a form of protection in certain scenarios or perhaps using a circular polarizer if I'm shooting birds on water or other marine animals where there could be significant glare and light reflections. Now, when I do find myself using filters quite often is when I'm shooting landscapes. I absolutely love portraying motion and the passage of time with neutral density filters and find myself using polarizing filters frequently either to change the appearance of the sky or the water or to control the reflection of light.

Of course, no photographer needs filters to capture stunning images, and with great post-processing software available, such as Adobe Lightroom, you can oftentimes create similar effects without the use of filters. That being said, I try to get as close to my final image as possible in camera before I start any editing and filters are a great way to do this. You'll have to experiment with them for yourself but if you've never used lens filters before I would highly recommend experimenting with them and learning how they can expand your creative control in the field.

Conclusion

Lens filters are valuable tools that have been used in photography for decades. While advancements in post-processing technology have expanded creative possibilities, lens filters continue to be essential accessories for photographers seeking convenience, protection, greater creative control, and unique artistic effects. Whether you are a professional or an enthusiast, experimenting with different types of filters can add depth and diversity to your photography, enabling you to capture extraordinary moments with exceptional visual impact. Remember to invest in high-quality filters and choose the ones that suit your photography style and objectives best. With a well-chosen set of lens filters in your kit, you'll be better equipped to push the boundaries of your photography and create striking images that leave a lasting impression on your audience.

I hope this article has been informative and has inspired you to get out there and experiment with lens filters on your next shoot. Until next time!

Keenan Hursh

Keenan is an avid photographer, digital creator, and lover of the outdoors currently based out of Bozeman, Montana. He is originally from Boulder, Colorado where he developed a deep passion for getting outside and pursuing outdoor activities including skiing, cycling, hiking, rafting, backpacking and more. Recently he has developed new passions for paragliding as well as designing and sewing outdoor adventure gear for cyclists and hikers.

At a very young age, Keenan started bringing a camera along on his excursions and immediately fell in love with the art of photography. He started out with his parent's cheap point and shoot and has continuously improved his craft and gear refining his shooting style and producing more compelling and intriguing images. He pursues a wide range of photography styles primarily shooting landscapes, wildlife, adventure photography, and enjoys shooting analog on 35mm film every now and then.

Since graduating from the University of Denver with a degree in Emergent Digital Practices, Keenan has pursued a professional career in digital marketing, graphic design, and content creation. He has benefitted a wide range of companies and organizations from small start-ups to well known agencies and brands.

You can view Keenan's photography and graphic design work on his website at *www.keenanhurshmedia.com*