



President's Message
February 15, 2009

Photographer's Block & Setting Time for You

If you are a serious amateur photographer or even a new and upcoming star you have to share your time with so many of the other life's tasks. Family, work, household chores, church, kids, spouses and friends all are begging for your time. With all of this you may have a tendency to push off your joy of photography. And when you do get time you may get photographer's block. So, how do you juggle all of this and still keep your sanity and your family together?

Time management is one key to making time for yourself. Set priorities and set aside time to focus on your love of photography. We all know how much time it takes to be involved with your hobby. There is the time to take to photograph new material or works of art. Then there is the time in front of your computer meticulously working in your digital darkroom. After that the shopping for materials to print and mat the work and the time for club meetings and activities. This all can seem daunting when you find that it is 11:00pm the night before the meeting and you are scrambling around trying to put together that winning entry.

So how do you get back to the joy of photography and the creative juices flowing again?

1. Get Organized. Find a space in your home that is yours for your hobby. Be it a garage, an extra bedroom, an area in the living room, a work area. With most of us space is a real issue. So go to the bookstore or to a home center and look through space saving books. These books will help provide the motivation to help you find space in your home to devote to your hobby. This can be as little as a desk area or a closet area or even a room depending on your space.
 - Digital Darkroom – Your computer station. Organize your files and create a backup system that works for you. Keep a folder for competitions. Make a folder for each month so you can put raw or working jpeg files in it that fits the theme. That way when it comes time to put together prints for competition you can quickly get them prepared and printed.

- Space for your camera. Find a space where you keep your camera. This space should have a place to plug in and keep the batteries charged. That way if an opportunity comes up for a photo session you are ready to go. Knowing where your camera equipment is and that it is ready to grab and run is an important time savings technique.
- Printing. If you print your own work then this also takes organization. Get your paper stock in some form of organization. Know what you have in stock is important for that last minute preparation for a contest. If a stock is running low then replenish. This not only saves you time but instead of sacrificing an entry to a type of paper that does not fit the photographic work it will make a difference in how well the print will be judged.

If you use a printing house to do your work then you need to plan ahead. Set up a schedule with deadlines when you have to get your works uploaded to the printing house. Then leave time to have them prepared for competition. This will help reduce last minute stress.

- Matting and Framing. If you are one of the lucky few who have ventured into doing your own matting and framing then you need to have this area of your hobby also organized. This not only saves you time but money. Matting your own work is very rewarding part of the photographic process and can end up saving you countless dollars. Just like printing your own work you need to know what mat inventory you have on hand. You also need to have spare backup matting materials such as a fresh set of cutters, matting tape, matt spray and even little things like pencils and a calculator. All of this makes the time preparing your work for competition a joy.

2. Keeping Motivated. It is far too easy to put your camera in a closet and stop taking pictures. We all need to find ways to keep motivated in creating great photographic works. If you are a professional photographer then the motivation is making enough from your craft to keep the doors open and the lights on while taking care of yourself and your family. The problem with photography as a hobby is it gets pushed to the back burner. Your creative juices need to be motivated and here are a few tricks.

- Get Involved with the Camera Club. The old adage says “The more you put into something the more you get out of it”. That is very true with the camera club. Not only is the camera club a great place to meet and make new friends with the same interest in photography that you have but it is also a great place to learn and share your photographic work. But another purpose of the camera club is to help keep its members motivated in taking pictures. If you get involved by working on committees or putting on programs you get far more out of it than you put into it. Your photographic motivation moves to new heights.

- Read Photographic Books. I just finished reading Anna Leibovitz book – At Work (http://www.amazon.com/Annie-Leibovitz-at-Work/dp/0375505105/ref=pd_bbs_3?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1234631348&sr=8-3P) and I can tell you it changes why I look at photography. This book is a great motivator. But read all you can. Spend time at a local book store browsing through the photo book section. Also you can find hundreds of photographic books on line at <http://www.google.com/books>. The Google books section allows you to read the book on line. You can not download or save the book but you can bookmark pages and return to them as reference.
 - Stock Photography. You have heard me mention Stock Photography before. Stock photography is where photographers upload works that they believe would be suitable for use by advertisers, graphics companies or individuals who enjoy photography and wish to collect other photographer's works. I use www.istockphoto.com. This is the Internet premiere stock photography site and has millions of photographic works on line. You can search by category or subject and spend hours looking at fantastic photographic works. This is a great motivator. If you are having trouble coming up with ideas for a competition theme then go to this site and enter the theme subject. I am sure you will find this as inspiring as I do.
3. Share your work. A great way of getting something back and keeping motivated is by sharing your work. Support of family and friends is the ultimate motivator. Also fellow photographers who you share your work will help keep you shooting. We all have slumps in our creative juices and there is nothing better than family and friends to get you back in the saddle. Here are some ideas of how to share your work.
- Frame and Hang Your Work. Decorate with your photography throughout your home and your family's homes. There is nothing like having your works of photographic art on the walls to motivate you to shoot more. One thing that I do is use metal frames and standard sizes so that I can change the photos easily. You can even take it one step further and create gallery cards to place on the wall beside your prints. A gallery card has information about the photo that you want to remember or share with others. Gallery cards can be printed on your printer and then spray mounted to a piece of matt board. Then you can use Gallery Stick (available at craft stores) to affix the card to the wall. When you change the print you can simply pull of the gallery card from the wall and replace it. Gallery Stick leaves no residue and will not harm the wall in any way.
 - Create an On Line Gallery. Placing your work on line is not only easy but is a great way of getting feedback and keeping you shooting. Sharing your work on line is easy with sites such as Flickr. (www.flickr.com) If you keep your works fresh you will gain a great number of viewers who will

look daily to check out your latest creation. This is also a great way to make new friends.

- Calendars and Personal Photo Books. Recently I purchased two calendars from an Internet friend that I have in California who every year prints a calendar. He plans a shoot every month of the year. A theme is shot for that month and then at the end of the year he creates a calendar of the series. This is a great motivator that I plan to start working on. A monthly theme for the calendar. You will find it very popular for Christmas Gifts. I also have found creating my own Christmas cards and holiday cards have become incredibly popular among my friends. My Christmas and Valentines shot of my cat is in its third printing as more and more friends want cards as collector items. Here are my three card shots:

Ace Christmas Shot

http://mikesphotography.my-expressions.com/archives/7253_1117464754/316895

Ace Valentines Shot 1

http://mikesphotography.my-expressions.com/archives/7253_1117464754/321907

Ace Valentines Shot 2

http://mikesphotography.my-expressions.com/archives/7253_1117464754/321906

- Books. Tabletop books have become very popular and are more affordable than ever. Self-publishing is now highly popular and has allowed anyone to become an author. To create the book you simply download a program from the printing house and you can drag and drop photos on the pages in your book. Most book printing companies charge by the page. You can then add text and move things around as you like. The books are high quality and wonderful gifts. The one that I like is called My Photo Book by Mpix. www.mpix.com
4. Ten Ways to Break Photographer's Block. This is a story that I ran across on the Internet. To read the original story the link is <http://photocritic.org/break-photographers-block/> But I will just give you the short version below.
- 100 Step Challenge. Take a walk and count your steps. Every hundred steps stop and take a picture.

- Recreate a photo you love. Find a photo on the Internet or in a book you like and work to recreate it. Then make a few changes to make it your own.
- Learn from the Gents. Find photographers who you like their style. Follow them and learn from them. Many photographers' today blog or share there methods and works. From photo blogs to iPod Pod Cast there is a wealth of information on the internet.
- Self Portrait. The only model that is always available.
- Rapid Fire. Take 120 photos in 120 minutes.
- Play the Random Game. Randomly pick a word every day and then try to take a photo that fits that name.
- Flickr's Interestingness. Go to Flickr's interesting in the last 7 days.
- Try Something New. I am constantly trying new photographic styles.
- Don't take any photos. Spend the time researching new photo ideas.
- Stop Procrastinating. Get out and do it.
- Help you fellow photographers. Get involved with your camera club.

So I hope some of this helps you get inspired and find more time to create great photographic works of art.

Michael Adkins
President
Ohio Valley Camera Club