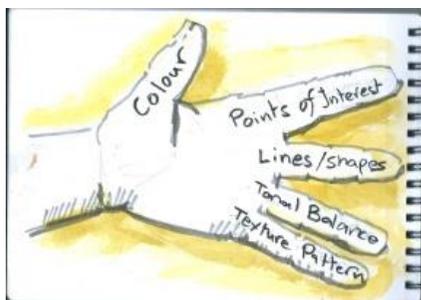


Seeing In Detail

This is the last Jells Park Photowalk and has two focuses. The late afternoon/evening (*Golden Hour*) light and some more **Seeing** exercises. The changing light will bring about a few left brain thinking issues but the seeing exercise will reinforce the more artistic right brain approach and specifically Freeman Patterson's "Relaxed Attentiveness" should bring these two styles (the right and left brain seeing together). Another artist's composition tool "**The 5 Line Landscape**" will also be demonstrated as another potential photographic composition aid.

With a bit of luck we might get decent photos of some of the many birds that visit or live in Jell Park.



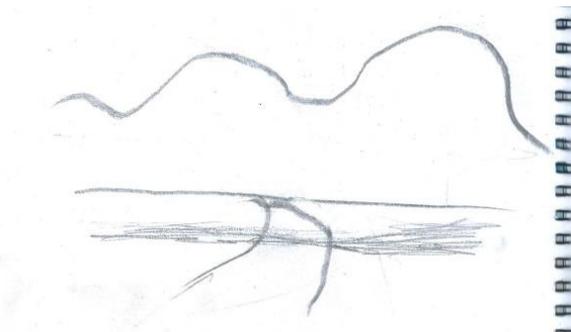
Starting with the artistic hand and the right brain, today we will look at the line & shape aspects. Whilst lines can occur and are common in man-made structures, they don't really exist in nature. What we see as lines are edges. These edges maybe seen as changes in colour or more often in changes in tone. The stronger the difference in tone the clearer the line becomes. Artist like establishing these lines because they help guide the viewers eye towards points of interest in the picture. Lines as contours around shapes also help separate the subject from the background. We have become so used to this contour outline that most of us will draw anything by starting with this outlining. However a camera doesn't work this way but it can differentiate the edges between tones. We will also look at seeing & identifying points of interest, tonal balance and surface detail/pattern/texture and final a little about mood. How you see and then capture photographically,

The Five Line Landscape

This is just a simple way to fix a scene onto a canvas (within the frame of a camera). By actually drawing the lines you force yourself to look at their shape in detail and their relative orientation and position.. You will now also have a rough map of how your eye follows around the scene.

Converging or intersecting lines might lead to points of interest. If they don't perhaps move until they do.

The most obvious edges in this view are the sides of the path. There is a horizon back in the scene and a strong foreground shadow establish the beginning of the avenue of trees. Finally the top of the tree foliage against the sky is another strong edge. This time it is a bumpy curved line.



These five lines are really enough to figure out the best positioning of the view within a frame. An artist now will look for things that help him/her represent the image on

their canvas or page (but the same principles can be applied to framing the photo in your view finder. They will start with the points of interest, then look at angular relationships. Strong lines/edges will lead a viewer's eye across the image and well position acute angles or diagonals will interest viewers. Next the artist is likely to focus on size and tonal relationships because they establish a feel of space knowing that the viewer will have to derive the size and form of the subject from a flat 2D image.

Once you understand the edges you may like to sketch in the basic tonal shapes.

Relaxed Attentiveness

This is an important step. In Freeman Patterson's book this takes a whole chapter and the complete exercises take 3 weeks, so we will tackle just a basic framework of the process on the photowalk.

- 1) First make sure you are comfortable perhaps sit down. Close your eyes for 30 seconds and totally forget about yourself or things you are planning to do, just relax. Open your eyes and look around, what captures your interest? You probably found items you can describe. Like the reeds, the pier, the reflections on the lake, the clouds.... This is your left brain talking, it is time to ignore these symbolic representations, forget the words.
- 2) Close your eyes again, this time just for 20 seconds, forget those words, think of just shapes in your mind. Open your eyes, can you see the shapes? Now half shut your eyes (squint) and you should see the main tones. Think of the 5 tone representation. If you want sketch those tonal shapes/zones in your sketch book.
- 3) Close your eye again this time just 10 seconds. Now look for those 5 landscape lines. Put them on your sketch.
Repeat steps 2 and 3 as required.
- 4) [Optional) Where are the points of interest? Think of where they are and the relationships between the lines and tonal shapes and put a frame around the best picture.

- 5) Close your eyes again and open them after another 20 seconds. Now focus on the main subject (point of interest) and look intensively. What is the characteristic texture/pattern on the surface of your subject. Are there a few important edges/lines? How is light reflected? Are you photographing from wrong position/angle?
- 6) Close your eyes again and now look carefully. Is there something in the picture that bothers you? Should I move, can I zoom in or crop it out? Why is it a bother, should you move?
- 7) [Optional] Close you eye again for the final time. Now open them and sense what you feel about the scene, would you like to be in it. Does it feel calming, Is there adventure? ...

Photographing Birds

Birds are a very challenging subject to photograph, but at the same time can be very rewarding. They are often very small, nervous and flighty, they seldom stop and hold a pose and when they fly in at dusk the lighting is very difficult. Here are a few strategies that can help. Firstly ignore those You Tube videos that tell you must have a 400mm f2 lens and use a shutter speed at 1/1000sec or faster, and only photographs birds with the sun behind your back and side on to the birds. These can help you get great shots. However this is expensive and you may not get many such opportunities anyway.



A better approach is to learn and observe bird behaviour, so you can anticipate their actions and personality. This will take time. Think of your photos as a portrait not a field guide ID photo.

Remember the background, unfortunately it is the easiest way to spoil an otherwise great close up. If possible think about pre-composing the image. Here is where understanding tonal balance, contrast and leading lines will help your composition, all that is missing is your subject. Also set up exposure, focus (and Depth of field) before the bird arrives, then all you have to do is choose the right moment to press the shutter.



Because the lighting might be difficult try shooting in RAW and expose for the highlights (ie expose to the right). You will need to have a camera capable of recording RAW format and software to post processing it. However these might allow you to recover an underexposed photo and manipulate tone and/or colour afterwards far more successfully.

Panning, following the flight of the bird can be a real challenge but when it works it is magic. The background will be motion blurred but you must try to keep the bird, particularly its head, in focus and as sharp as possible.

Homework

I strongly recommend you try the full version Freeman's "relaxed attentiveness" exercise. They will need to run over a few weeks to get the full benefit.

Begin by setting aside 3 one-hour periods in the first week in your diary. Also collect your camera gear and have it ready. Finally choose something you would like to photography either in your home, garden or a short walk away.

Begin the hour long exercise in your comfy chair (do not lie down you just need to relax not go to sleep). Relax and start to breath slowly and deeply, and relax your body until it is limp. No need to close your eyes unless that helps you relax. Also free your thought of personal plans or problems, you can deal with that all after the hour.

After 15 to 20 minutes get up from the chair, collect your gear and go out to take photos of the subject you selected. Don't force yourself to take lots of pictures. Perhaps take only a few photos. Don't worry if the photos are good or bad just concentrate of having fun taking the photos, it's all about your spontaneous but relaxed interpretation of the subject. If you need it set an alarm to indicate when the hour has past do it before you start. You should stop immediately when the hour is up and return to your daily routine.

On the second week you should do a shorter relaxation exercise each day. This time find something that you find visual attractive around the home or garden. Sit down in front of your subject and close your eyes, make sure you are not thinking of yourself and daily tasks, that you are relaxed. Wait 30 seconds and open your eyes look at the subject for a moment of two and then half close your eyes (squint). What are the basic tonal shapes, the darkest and lightest aspects? Close your eyes again, perhaps only 20 seconds open them and look for the main edges, are there leading lines or are the lost and found lines. Close your eyes again and now open them and take a good look at the detail, the surface texture. Imagine you are very close and magnify that detail in your mind. What would it feel like? Study the object intently. If you have your sketch book handy, do a very simple notan sketch (composition thumbnail) take a photo or two (not too many). On the first and second day you might want to repeat these three visualization steps. It is important that you are seeing the detail of your subject and understand how to present it visually.

Repeat this exercise for at least 5 times/days in the second week. You can photograph the same or different objects you just need to maintain your interest in the object. You can take as many photos as you like but less is more.

On the third week you should repeat the same steps we did in the photo walk. At least once a day pick a subject and take your camera gear (can be away from your

home) and find that subject you always want(ed) to capture. Start by closing your eyes and then run through the steps we followed on the photowalk (discussed earlier in these notes). Can you now do the steps without closing your eyes first?

References:

Freeman Patterson "Photography and Seeing : A Visual Perception Workshop or Film and Digital Photographers" Firefly Books

Carl Purcell "Your Artist Brain : us the right side of your brain to draw and paint what you see – not what you think you see" North Light Books

Exhibition

As a group project we have been accepted to have an exhibition of our group photos at the Glen Waverly (and probably also Wheelers Hill Libraries) in late July or later (detail still to be confirmed). This will be a great opportunity to have your work seen.