

“Seeing” In Black & White

July 1, 2019

Mike Schaffner

The Nature of Black and White Photography

- “To see in color is a delight for the eye but to see in black and white is a delight for the soul.” – Andri Cauldwell
- "When you photograph people in color, you photograph their clothes. But when you photograph people in black and white, you photograph their souls!"— Ted Grant
- “Color is pretty, so you get pretty shots, in black and white, you have to have a subject.” Fred R. Conrad NY Times Staff Photographer, 1983

Jamie and Heather Jamie Schneider (Folk Photography) our club speakers in February discussing why they choose B&W for portraits

WHY BLACK AND WHITE?

- CLASSIC AND TIMELESS
- PULLS YOU IN AND MAKES YOU NOTICE SMALL DETAILS
- HONEST AND DISTRACTION FREE
- LOOKS GOOD IN ANY HOME WITH ANY DECOR

A Few Basic Question To Begin With . . .

- Have you taken photos that look better in Color than B&W?
- Have you taken photos that look better in B&W than Color?
- Have you taken photos that look good in both Color and B&W?
 - Do the both versions look good for the same reason?
- What makes a good Color or B&W photo and how do we learn to see those attributes?

An Experiment in “Seeing”

- Close your eyes and keep them closed until instructed to open them
- Relax your eyes
- Do not fall asleep
- If you do fall asleep please don’t snore
- If you do snore the person next to you has permission to smack you
- Upon opening your eyes what are the attributes that immediately grab your attention.
 - Describe what attributes you see
 - Examples: color, tone, texture, mood, emotion, light & shadow, contrasts
 - Describe the attributes, not the subject
 - Don’t overthink this – give your immediate reaction – if it takes more than a few seconds to see an attribute you’re overthinking it.

Practice Make Perfect

- The next time you go out – try the “seeing” experiment to determine if the scene would make a good B&W image
- After a while you won’t have to do the experiment you will just automatically “see”

“The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.”

- Dorthea Lange

Ok great, I understand how to see the attributes. But why do I need to see the B&W attributes *before* I take the picture?