

Camera Clips

September 2011

Bi monthly publication

From the Editor

James Allan

Welcome to the September edition of Camera Clips. I have put this edition out a little early as I wanted to incorporate tips for the disposable camera competition (page 6). If you have not done this before it is a lot of fun, especially the community judging. It's amazing how much photography you can learn from a tiny cardboard box. On the same night as the disposable competition we will also be holding the Annual General Meeting. New members for the committee will be elected, including the club president. Matt Cair has been president for the last 2 years and in my opinion has done a fantastic job. Not only as club president, where the membership has swelled and we have had an innovative program, but has also had time to develop his photography up a notch or two. I have been on many committees in the past and comparatively speaking the camera club committee is a pleasure. I would encourage all of you to take a turn on the committee, it really enhances the experience of being a camera club member.

The banner this week is based on my favourite image from last month's abstract competition. It is a picture of coloured paper taken through a crystal decanter (I believe), by Jim Trice. Chris has compiled a collection of other images from this night on the website. There are many interesting and different approaches to the abstract theme. Actually Jim's decanter image first came to my attention during the December 31 day challenge last year. It is amazing how many good images arose out of the discipline of taking one photo a day for 31 days. My apologies for stretching it a tad to fit the format. Chris Schultz has promised me an article on the nature of abstract photography. He has researched the topic and I look forward to his insights. Likewise John Duckmanton has promised an article, and has a friend in the UK who wants to write for us. Unfortunately as we went to press early this month and you will have to wait for the next edition for these contributions.

I have written an article on colour space. Our visit to Atkins technicolour emphasized the importance of colour space management. The labs go to extraordinary lengths to try and get true colour rendition in their prints. I apologise if this is an over simplistic representation of a complex subject. It was my attempt to understand this complex area. On the radio one morning there was a quote from Henri Cartier-Bresson whose retrospective works are being displayed in an exhibition touring the eastern states. I took the opportunity to create a small photo essay on this important photographer. I have a review of the Darren Siwes presentation and lastly I have included a readers survey. I am interested in your views of what aesthetic values are most important in your photography. Thank you once again. I hope you enjoy this edition.

Colour Space for dummies

By James

I find colour space to be a complex concept that has something important but mystical to do with digital photography. I find myself asking "What is it and can I ignore it?" Well many people do ignore it and seem to do so quite effectively. The problem seems to occur when printing images from your PC. Why is it too dark, or too dull or too blue? It also happens when your digital image is projected onto the wall with a digital projector. Many intuitive people work out these problems with trial and error, an inspired guess or perhaps a few minor tweaks. For instance in photoshop I will change the gamma value to 1.15 before printing any image with a lot of dark areas. I tend to increase the saturation by 10-15% of any image that will be projected. However I believe that understanding colour space will take some of the magic or guesswork out of these problems.

So what is colour space? It's a bit like my wife sending me down to the paint store to get a light blue for the skirting boards. When I return I am frustrated that it is always the wrong shade of blue. There has to be a better way, some way of standardizing colour. If I was clever I would hand her the Dulux paint swatches and she can choose her preferred colour, say Angora Blue. At the paint store the storeman can see that this has the formula P38E1. He gets a tin of white paint and adds the appropriate tint to make Angora Blue.

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If we translate that concept to the computer, we have a series of

Contacting a member from the club; This month Mark & Jenny Pedlar : [mnjpedlar@biqpond.com](mailto:mnpjpedlar@biqpond.com)

Upcoming Events

September 15—AGM & Competition—Single Use Camera—a popular favourite—can you produce an enduring image without the technology and post processing

September 29—Competition—Illusion—the image is not what it seems

October 13—Workshop—to be announced
(Entry Forms for annual Exhibition due)

October 27—Competition—Reflections

November 10—Annual Exhibition—Judging

November 24—Annual Exhibition—Awards

December 3—End of year Picnic

"Photography is like making cheese. It takes a hell of a lot of milk to make a small amount of cheese just like it takes a hell of a lot of photos to get a good one."
Robert Gillis

Photo-essay: Henri Cartier Bresson



*"To take a photograph is to align the head, the eye and the heart. It's a way of life."
Henri Cartier-Bresson*



Cartier-Bresson (Fr 1908 – 2004) exclusively used Leica 35 mm rangefinder cameras equipped with normal 50 mm lenses or occasionally a wide-angle for landscapes. He often wrapped black tape around the camera's chrome body to make it less conspicuous. With fast black and white films and sharp lenses, he was able to photograph almost by stealth to capture the events. Miniature-format cameras gave Cartier-Bresson what he called "the velvet hand [and] the hawk's eye."¹ He never photographed with flash, a practice he saw as "impolite...like coming to a concert with a pistol in your hand."



Cartier-Bresson was a co-founder of "Magnum Photos" along with Robert Capa, David Seymour, and George Rodger. He spent more than three decades on assignment for *Life* and other journals, travelling without bounds, documenting some of the great upheavals of the 20th century; — the Spanish civil war, the liberation of Paris in 1944, the 1968 student rebellion in Paris, the fall of the Kuomintang in China to the communists, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Berlin Wall, and the deserts of Egypt. However many of his most renowned photographs, are of ordinary daily life, seemingly unimportant moments captured and then gone.



Cartier pioneered the techniques of street photography and was considered to be the father of modern photojournalism. He was an early adopter of 35 mm format, and the master of candid photography. He helped develop the "street photography" or "real life reportage" style that has influenced generations of photographers who followed.



In 1952 Cartier published a collection of 126 of his photographs under the title "The decisive moment", a phrase that came to epitomize his style. He adopted the title from the 17th century [Cardinal de Retz](#): "There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment".

Last Thursday night we were very fortunate to have Daren Siwes present a talk on his art-photography. The image below, a cropped back highlight from one of Daren's photos is borrowed from the Turner Gallery webpage. http://www.turnergalleries.com.au/church_gallery/4exhibit_siwes.php Due to copy write and contractual agreements with the gallery he is unable to share any further images with camera clips. However if you search on google you can find a number of his works including a collection in the Turner galleries and another in the Greenaway gallery as well as pieces in the National Gallery of Australia.

The biography at the Turner Gallery introduces Daren as follows;

"Darren is a young Aboriginal artist based in Adelaide whose photographic work is becoming highly sought after by public and private collectors alike. He has become well known for his nocturnal images of ethereal figures standing in recognisable locations around Adelaide, the UK and now Perth. These ghostly figures, often of Darren and his wife, are created using a method of time-lapse photography. The resulting eerily lit photographs are loaded with meaning, often referencing issues of identity—personal, historical and cultural. A well-dressed Aboriginal man stands in front of a church, a memorial, or a historic building, signifying his integration into a white community and his detachment and alienation from it."



Pre Sense—Darren Siwes—
Ciberchrome, 2003 Turner Galleries

Darren stated early in the evening that he was going to speak mainly about the technical aspects of his work, about his exploration of the photographic medium. He had studied fine arts at Oxford and saw himself primarily as a painter who takes photographs. He explained that most of his work is done on a medium format camera with a single exposure, often without light metering. The works are mostly taken outdoors at night, with architectural elements and people. Darren described spending over an hour of setting up a single shot. Working at night with artificial lighting he gains masterful control of the various elements of his carefully constructed compositions. He described building light towers with banks of bright magnesium lights. He might also use traditional flood lighting with a more yellow colour cast. In his early work his models remain stationary for carefully timed intervals in order to render them semi transparent like ghosts or wraiths.

He relies heavily on classical composition, using the golden ratio and the Fibonacci sequence. He has at times imitated the style of the Baroque painters Caravaggio and Leonardo Davinci, but also referring to contemporary artists like Jeffrey Smart. However his themes are far from traditional. He explores his identity as an aboriginal Australian with great humour and insight. (He often gives titles with double meanings)

One of my favourite series of images has a family of white early Australians in period costume faced with the dilemma of their kids having brown faces. A doctor offers the brown faced kids white milk to render a placebo cure (which he spells placebo). Although he did not speak on the ideology of his work, it was clear that there were many layers of meaning in every image.

The images are printed to a size 90 by 120cms in limited batches for exhibition and sale. He described in detail the care he takes in every aspect of the process from composition, camera, film, handling lens flare, processing, selection of papers, printing, mounting and displaying his works. When asked in question time, Darren said that he was also influenced by the photographic works of Tracey Mophett and Cindy Scherman.

It would certainly be a disappointment if you missed the evening, Darren spoken with a quiet passion and a depth of experience. Few walked away unaffected by his vision.



Caravaggio—La Deposizione di Cristo



Cindy Sherman—Untitled Film Stills

standardized colours or swatches with which to represent the colours of my digital pictures. Although I used a Dulux colour card, I could have handed my wife a Solver or British paints colour card. Similarly on the computer there are several different schemes to choose from. We will call each of these a different colour space. The next question that comes to mind is, “why do we need different colour spaces?” Surely one space is enough.

It all has to do with the way we represent colour.

One approach is to just give every colour a different number and name like in the Dulux catalogue. Pantone is an example of this type of approach. However this is not very useful as it does not describe how the colour is generated or give us tools with which to manipulate colour.

On the computer monitor there are 3 phosphors that glow red green or blue. If all glow together we get white. Accordingly a colour space that adds red green and blue together to make various colours is appropriate. This is called the RGB space of which there are many variants.

When we print a picture we start with a white sheet of paper and put down 3 or 4 inks, Cyan Magenta Yellow and Black pigments on the page which will absorb (remove) colour. When all the pigments are present the page will appear black. Accordingly we could describe the CMYK space, in which colours are removed from white to make black. It also has many variants.

Some graphic designers suggested that the rgb space could be rearranged in a way that is more intuitive. They suggested that all colours could be described in terms of the hue (H), saturation (S) and lightness or value (V). This space is useful in manipulating images and creating new colours in a digital environment. I have already mentioned that it is sometimes desirable to increase the colour saturation of an image.

A final scheme is based around the sensitivity of the three cones and one rod in our retina to detect colour. An example of this scheme would be CIE XYZ. This is perhaps the ultimate standard by which to judge other colour spaces. Neither the phosphors nor the pigments will represent the entire range of colours that our eye can see. However you must also remember that a colour blind person will have a completely different colour space again. So would a parrot, which amazingly has a cone that can detect UV light.

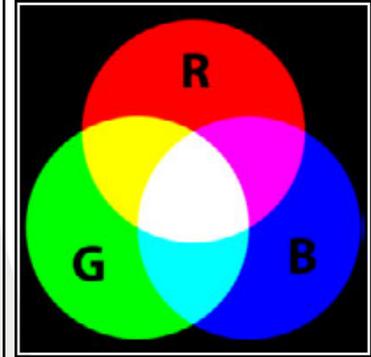
The gamut refers to the number of colours in each of these spaces. It is a bit like counting the number of colour squares on your Dulux colour chart. Essentially it is dependant upon how many ‘bits’ of information you are prepared to use to describe a colour. Jpeg uses 8 bits per channel. That means the number of colours on it’s chart is around 16 million. That is 256 shades of red mixed with 256 shades of blue mixed with 256 shades of green. The human eye cannot distinguish the tones in between 16 million colours. However this does not allow any room for colour manipulation. Heavy editing in jpeg will often leave a sky with horizontal banding as the limits of its gamut are exceeded. Accordingly many people prefer to use 16 or 32 bit images (RAW format) if they are going to edit them.

Now we get to the crux of the problem. When we take a picture on a camera, manipulate it on a computer monitor and then print it onto paper, we are using three or more different colour spaces. We need some way of translating between them that is standardized. If we can achieve a standardised translation, then what we see in the camera is what we see on the screen which is what we see on the colour print. Is this possible? The short answer is no. It is not possible to imitate what the eye sees using reflected light from a print or illuminated light from a monitor. We can only approximate the true situation. However there are schemes to try and make this translation as close as is practical.

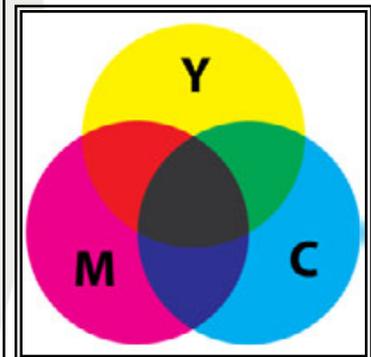
The variables that will alter the situation are numerous. If we start with the camera we must consider the dynamic range of the sensor, the ambient light and the white balance. With the monitor the brand of screen, the lighting of the room, the brightness and contrast settings you selected, even the time of day. With the printer you must consider the type of paper and the characteristics of the ink and even the place where the print is to be viewed. (It is not uncommon for a dark and murky print to suddenly look wonderful when it is placed under a bright light.) In addition to this there are the algorithms or formulas that the computer uses to try and interpret the colour and translate between these spaces. These algorithms are usually imbedded within the operating system and the device drivers and are not readily accessible. There is also a complicated colour management system within Adobe Photoshop. (best to leave it on default unless you can master long and tedious tutorials)



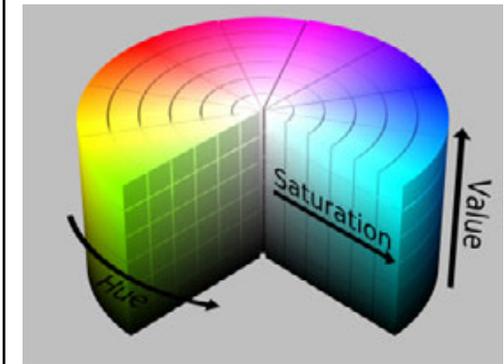
Pantone colour space



RGB colour space—additive colour (eg monitor)



CMYK colour space—subtractive colour (eg printer)

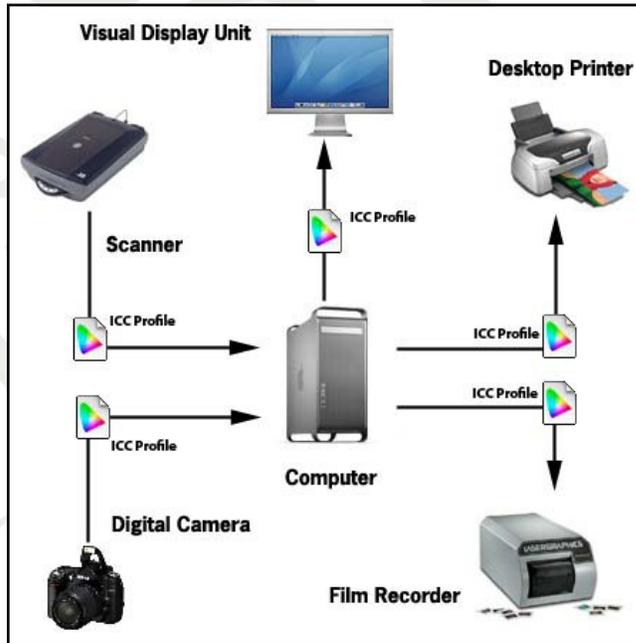


HSV colour space—(a variation of RGB)

So if you have a colour space problem, how do you go about correcting it? This is my understanding of what you should do:

Firstly calibrate your monitor. You always start with the monitor. This is like your eyes through which you view and manipulate your images. Make sure that your monitor has warmed up (20-30 mins) and is away from direct light. Try to use the factory settings for contrast and brightness unless you have a good reason not to. Make sure you have the correct driver installed. Check that your windows colour settings are correct (32 bit colour). If your images still do not look right you might have to create a colour space profile. This is a set of instructions to tell the computer how to compensate for the monitors shortcomings. There are a variety of software programs that will allow you to create a profile.

The simplest approach is to print an image and then adjust the screen (brightness / contrast / colour) until the colours look the same as your print. Of course this eyeballing assumes that your printer is correct. At a previous meeting to Hutt street photos we were all given a test print that they had produced by which to adjust our screens. Eric quite correctly pointed out that in order to see the print you will have to shine a light on it that will then mess with the image quality of the screen. (This eyeballing technique is not very accurate. It's better using software to do the job).



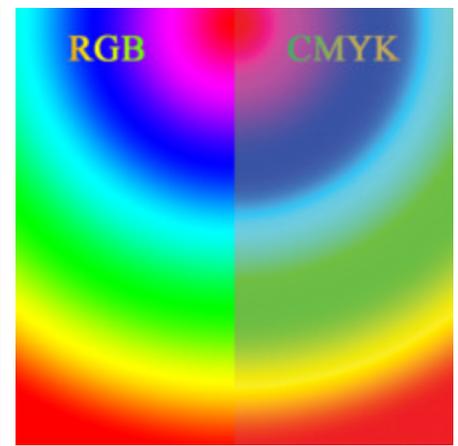
The simplest programs that I have used displays a series of boxes on the screen and asks you to adjust a slider until all of the boxes are distinct one from the other. This is repeated in each of the colour channels. Quick gamma (freeware) or Adobe gamma (shipped with photoshop) use similar techniques.

Another approach is to use an electronic device that reads colour values put out by the screen. Several members of the club have purchased the "Colour Vision Monitor Spyder", a weird attachment that you drape over your monitor and attaches to the PC by a USB cable. This makes the job very simple. You run its software and it creates a profile for the monitor that will load each time you go through start-up.

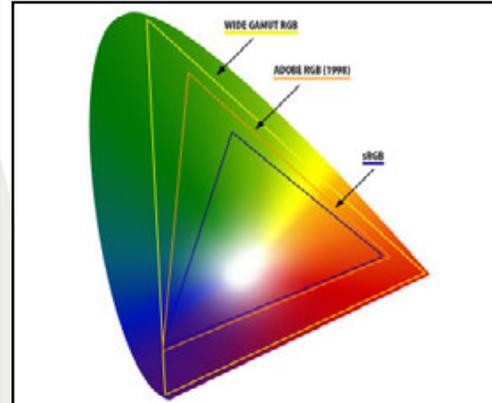
Once the monitor is calibrated you should be able to surf the net and get good picture quality. If you take an electronic image file to a professional lab they will be able to produce a good print. Once calibrated the monitor will be good for quite a while. However over time the brightness of the monitor drops off and it will need to be recalibrated. Some people advise re-calibrating every 2 to 4 weeks. Personally I can't be bothered doing it so frequently. If you are working from a laptop, you might find that the screen needs a different calibration in each room of the house. (The ambient light has a big impact on image quality). In this case try to remember to work on your photos in a fairly constant and colour neutral environment.

Next you need to look at the printer. This is especially so if the home printer gives markedly different results to the professional printers. Make sure that the correct drivers are installed. Use the correct dyes (not the cheap refills). Make sure that the correct paper settings are used when you print (eg glossy). If you still have a problem, consider making a printer profile in the same way as you made a monitor profile. I personally have not had this problem and found that the Epson printer works pretty well. The Colour Vision Spyder people have made another device that can easily create a printer profile for you.

Well hopefully that is enough to get you started. Best of luck.



A comparison of RGB and CMYK color models. This image demonstrates the difference between how colors will look on a computer monitor (RGB) compared to how they will reproduce in a CMYK print process



A comparison of 3 different RGB colour spaces (computer code) compared to CIE XYZ (the human retina). sRGB is used by jpeg and most monitors. Adobe RSB and wide gamut RSB offer a wider range of discernable colours (although they cannot be distinguished on the screen, it will make a difference when you print the image.).



Spyder 3 express—screen calibration to make a screen profile.

This Thursday we will have a competition using the Fujicolour quicksnap Superior disposable camera. What sort of images can you expect from such a camera? Are there any tips? Last year Chris Schultz kindly looked up the specifications of the camera. The camera has 27 exposures through a plastic lens—32mm f10 fixed focus. The shutter speed is 1/140th second and the ISO 800.

The focus distance is usually set at around 4 meters. The wide angle lens along with small aperture create an impressive depth of field that extends from 1 meter to infinity. This will give reasonable focus for most situations. The image may be a bit grainy and undersaturated especially in low light

Take a look at the images on the right. I discovered these images on a quick google search with the search criteria “disposable camera”. These were the images that I thought had greatest interest. (Yes I quite like the lens flare in the second image) They also give an idea of the performance of this camera in a range of light conditions. The camera probably works best in daylight pointing away from the sun, however it pays to experiment. Try to be creative with angles and compositions. Go out of your way to find interesting subjects. Try including people. Best of luck.

Aesthetic Choices—a readers survey

I have often noticed that people will have a range of aesthetic values that they apply when judging the quality of their images. If an image is lacking in one quality, say sharpness, often it may still be acceptable if it is strong in other qualities, like colour saturation or a sense of movement. This summing up of an image is an intuitive process and can be understood as the impact of an image. Of course there is a wide range of individual tastes. However it is surprising how a large group of people will often choose the same images, albeit for different reasons.

With this in mind I am interested to discover what aesthetic values guide our choices. It is quite obvious that there is considerable discussion after our competitions and dissent from the choices of the judges. Sometimes this is merely the frustration of not achieving the scores that we feel reflects the merit of our own works. Some of it could be a schism between the values of the members and the judges. Whatever the case, it would be nice to understand what aspects of our photos we rate most highly.

I am interested to do a survey of the club members. Below I have listed 10 different criteria or values that can be applied to a photograph. All I ask is that you number the list from 1 to 10 in order of how important you consider each of the criteria. Also I would like you to add one criteria to the list. Cut and paste the numbered list into an e-mail and return it to me at jandf@lan@intemode.on.net Of course there is no correct answer. I hope to publish the results in future editions of Camera clips, so that you can see how your choice compare with that of your peers.

- atmosphere – unusual weather or time of day clearly evident / moody
- depth – looks 3 dimensional / perspective / recession
- dynamic - movement is captured or suggested by the photograph
- Exposure and colour – good range of tones and/or evocative hues
- focus – sharpness of the image / depth of field / bokeh
- narrative – The picture tells a story
- patterns - strong lines or curves – symmetry - reflections
- people in the image – giving a sense of how an image relates to us
- subject of interest – something you don't see everyday – (or the familiar shown in an unusual way)
- textures pleasing – surface that you can almost feel
- Your criteria _____

Thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

