

HPS Newsletter - November, 2024

1954 to 2024
70 YEARS

Website: <https://helderbergphoto.com>

Email: helderbergphoto@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/helderbergphoto/

Member of PSSA: <http://www.pssa.co.za>

United Church: 28 Bright Street, Somerset West, 7130

Meeting: Second Tuesday of Each Month @ 19h15

MONTHLY COMPETITION

Set Subject for Month: Minimalism

External Judges: Nicol & Trudi du Toit

Internal Judges: N/A



First Placed Image: Idyllic Early Morning Paddle

Author: Gavin Whiteford

Digital, Set Subject, 28 Points

 **Kodak Express**
Digital Solutions

SUPERFOTO
PHOTOGRAPHIC

 **SUPERFOTO**

Somerset Mall 021 852 6737



Second Placed Image: The Tank
Author: Peter Dewar
Digital, Open, 28 Points



Third Placed Image: Bathing Huts
Author: Steve Trimby
Digital, Set Subject, 27 Points

FROM THE CHAIR

The year seems to be running away with us – I can't believe how time has flown.

We are looking forward to our special Gala Evening on Tuesday 10th December, at 7.00pm in the United Church Hall, Somerset West. All our members are invited, as well as partners. Quite a few guests are also coming, so I hope everyone will make an effort to see old and new friends.

Our AGM will be held in January 2025, when we will have the year's plans settled.

To start off the year, we will be having an outing to the Stellenbosch Botanical Garden on Friday 10th January ... The Garden opens at 8.00am. In order to catch that early morning light I would recommend arriving there by 9.00am at the latest.

The idea is to photograph the lotus flowers in the pond ... lovely macro potential there.

Plus, reflections, plants and flowers.

The new restaurant will be given a try out!

Hope to see you on the 10th December !!!

Best regards,

Nettie
15 November, 2024



Images from Stellenbosch Botanical Garden by Editor.

SPECIAL NOTE ON 2025 MEETINGS

B&W (or Monochrome) Meetings

It has been decided that, starting 2025, the Black & White Meeting will take place, at the Church Hall, every second month. There will be a single set-subject for each month (which will generally correspond to that of the main HPS Meeting).

For each B&W Meeting, each photographer will be allowed to enter a maximum of two set-subject images, plus two open images. These may either be projected images, entered into Photo Vault, or prints brought to the venue on the night.

FUTURE SET SUBJECTS

Set Subject List for 2025

MONTH (2025)	DATE	MEETING	SET SUBJECT
January	14/1/2025	Competition	The Beach
February	4/2/2025	B&W	The Progress of Time
February	11/2/2025	Competition	The Progress of Time
March	11/3/2025	Competition	Street Photography
April	1/4/2025	B&W	Macro
April	8/4/2025	Competition	Macro
May	13/5/2025	Competition	A South African Landscape
June	3/6/2025	B&W	Abstract
June	10/6/2025	Competition	Abstract
July	8/7/2025	Competition	Humour
August	5/8/2025	B&W	Creatures
August	12/8/2025	Competition	Creatures
September	9/9/2025	Competition	Movement
October	7/10/2025	B&W	Bokeh
October	14/10/2025	Competition	Bokeh
November	11/11/2025	Competition	A Colour, or Colours
December	2/12/2025	B&W	Light and Shade
December	9/12/2025	GALA evening	

FUTURE SET SUBJECTS (CONTINUED)

Set Subject for January, 2025 - The Beach

As is my habit in recent months, I asked ChatGPT to come up with a list of possible images for this Set-Subject. I received the following list of possibly creative beach photography ideas:

Golden Hour Magic. Capture the beach during sunrise or sunset when the light is soft and golden. The long shadows and warm tones create a serene and dreamy atmosphere. You can focus on silhouettes, reflections on the water, or even the waves catching the sunlight.

Reflections in Tidal Pools. Look for pools of water left behind by the receding tide. These can reflect the sky, clouds, or nearby objects, adding an artistic dimension to your photos. Use a low angle to emphasize the reflection.

Seascapes and Horizons. Play with the horizon line, placing it higher or lower in the frame to create different effects. Combine the vastness of the sky with the textures of the sea and sand. Experiment with long exposures to create smooth, misty water effects.

Textures in Sand. Zoom in on the intricate patterns created by the wind or water on the sand. Footprints, ripples, and even seaweed can offer interesting texture-focused compositions.

Action Shots of Water Sports. Capture people surfing, paddle-boarding, or jet skiing. Freezing the motion of the waves or a surfer in mid-air can add dynamic energy to your shots.

Wildlife and Birds. Beaches often attract seabirds, crabs, and other wildlife. Focus on these subjects for a natural, wildlife photography vibe. Birds in flight, or crabs scurrying across the sand, make for engaging shots.

Beach Minimalism. Use minimalist compositions, like a lone umbrella or a piece of driftwood on an empty stretch of sand. This approach can create powerful, peaceful images with lots of negative space.

Candid Moments. Capture spontaneous moments of people enjoying the beach, like kids playing in the sand, couples walking hand-in-hand, or people relaxing under an umbrella.

Underwater Photography. If you have waterproof gear, try taking underwater shots of swimmers, marine life, or the ocean floor. These can offer a unique perspective, blending land and sea.

Night Beach Photography. Photograph the beach at night, using the moonlight, stars, or artificial light sources like bonfires or lamps. Long exposure shots can capture star trails or glowing waves, adding a mystical quality to the scene.

AUDIO VISUALS

The final HPS AV Meeting of 2024 had to be cancelled, due to the majority of members being unable to attend. However, there is still one 2024 activity that might be of interest, and that is the presentation of the results of the AV Makers South Africa Reflections Salon. The following message was received from Jeff.

We will be presenting the results of our Reflections salon on the 30th of November at 11:00 South Africa time.

I am taking the opportunity to 'reflect' on the past 14 years of AV Makers as part of the show.

Here is the link we will use: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89491651448?pwd=undBAKOTkIOJGEjf4pTKfdseHmFm6X.1>

All welcome !

Jeff Morris AV-AFIAP DPSSA - Chairman
AV Makers South Africa
082 840 5459



EDITOR'S COMMENT

Banned For Life!

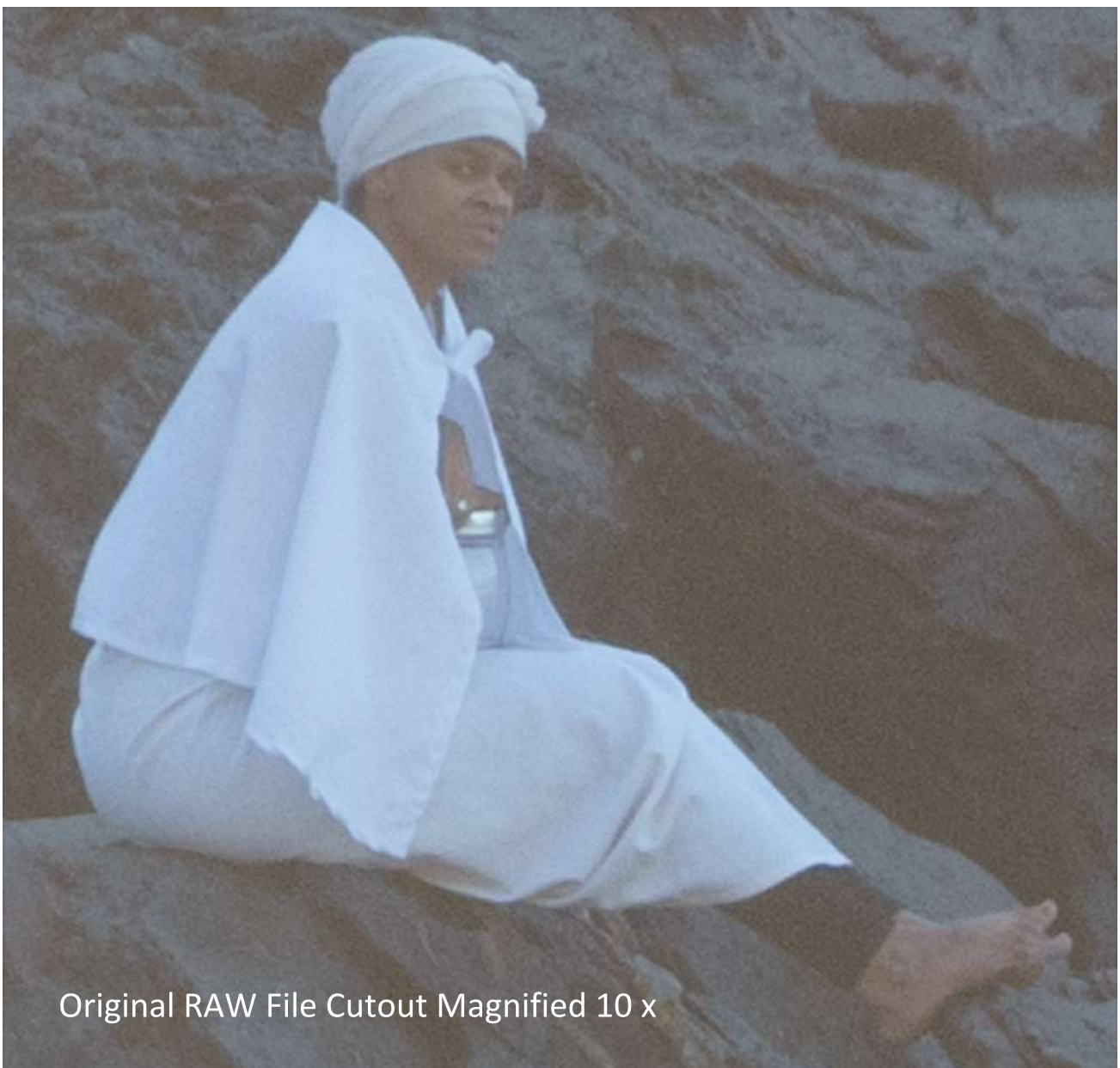


EDITOR'S COMMENT (CONTINUED)

I recently submitted the above image ("Quiet Time") at an HPS Meeting in the set-subject category of Minimalism. However, after I had completed the editing process, [a message from the Western Cape Photographic News was delivered \(Monday 28 October, 2024\)](#), which made me realize that, I may be Banned For Life!

[At the time, I didn't know that Nicol and Trudi would be our judges last week. So, on the night, I artfully forgot to mention any details of the crime.]

Anyway, we were in Victoria Bay a few months back, looking for possible images. Across the bay I noticed this rather forlorn looking African lady dressed in white. She was offset against dark rocks, and it immediately occurred to me that this might make a good B&W image of the minimalist sort. So, I took a few shots. In most of the images she was staring down at the water; but for the last image she noticed me, and then glanced in my direction. That's the shot, I said to myself. *(See cutout from raw file below.)*



Original RAW File Cutout Magnified 10 x

EDITOR'S COMMENT (CONTINUED)

A few weeks back, I got around to editing this image. In the raw version, her clothing is a tad on the blue side. This was not really important, since my vision was of a B&W image, but I did a white balance correction in Lightroom in any case. That turned the dark rocks a lighter yellow colour, which was dead against my original vision. So, I reversed that, and loaded the raw file straight into Photoshop.

My camera was state of the art about ten years ago. By modern standards, the raw files tend to be a bit noisy. So, my normal standard is to apply Topaz Sharpen AI, and then Topaz DeNoise AI, at the start of most of my edits. Although both of these old versions of Topaz are AI in name, I would not really consider them as being proper AI in reality. They may do some intelligent masking internally, but that's about all.

Then, I made a mask of the lady, saved the mask as a Channel, and cut those pixels from the image. Photoshop's (CS6) content-aware-fill was now used to place a rocky background where the lady had previously been. This enables one to edit the background separately from the lady. As usual, some manual cloning of the new-found rock was necessary to improve matters.

Next, I applied three different Nik Silver Efex Pro B&W conversions to the lady-less background, and combined bits of these to suit my vision. I do not normally use the various adjustments available within Silver Efex Pro, but instead take copies of the standard preset-derived versions into Photoshop, and blend them there using layer masks and blending modes as needed.

After doing the B&W conversion of the background, I considered that the image needed more detail. So what I ended up doing, was to generate a Bas Relief layer, set the blend mode to Overlay, and hand paint the layer mask to get the effect that I thought I was looking for. Basically I added detail to the rocks and water, but partially brushed out the areas of foam.

[Towards the end of the editing process, I changed my mind, and decided that the amount of detail in the background was tending to detract from the lady, who is obviously the centre of interest. I suppose that I could have gone back and removed the Bas Relief layer, but instead I decided to add a Buzsim layer over the total image, and use its mask to blur out the details somewhat. Of course, the lady was completely masked out of the Buzsim layer, so that she has absolutely no blur applied.]

By the way, Buzsim was a very old piece of software available in the early years of digital imaging. The company went out of business many years ago. Later on, the process was adopted as part of the Topaz Simplify Photoshop plugin. I use the Topaz version. The basic effect is to turn an image into something like a cartoon. A blend of this is often useful for getting rid of the finest detail, whilst retaining the overall feeling of a scene.]

EDITOR'S COMMENT (CONTINUED)



Anyway, after completing the background, it had become obvious that my initial Topaz AI works had had the affect of messing up the lady's face (as can be seen in the B&W cutout above). Now, I was faced with having to go back and edit the lady by some other method.

[I should point out that, if this image was to be shown as a print, the above would probably not matter too much. However, the overall dimensions of the image do not correspond to one of my preferred print sizes (determined by the sizes of my collection of mounting boards), so I had already decided that this image must be a digital entry. And from experience, I know that most external judges tend to pixel-peep, and would certainly mark the image down when they viewed the lady's face at high magnification.]

But, I then remembered that, when I originally experimented with the free version of the Krea AI system (see April 2024 Newsletter), it did a reasonable job on peoples faces. So, I took this cutout and fed it into Krea.

EDITOR'S COMMENT (CONTINUED)



The KREA AI improved version is shown above. The face and clothing are much improved here, although her feet do look a bit strange. The latter problem was fixed by cloning some of the existing rock over her feet. Also, the original mask did not quite fit the new lady, so a new mask was called for.

So, I added the new lady, and lightened her face slightly. I then flipped the whole image horizontally, to improve the composition (in my opinion). Job done!

[During the club judging process, Trudi came up with a couple of thought-worthy comments. She suggested that it may have been better if the lady had been looking down at the rock peeping out of the water in front of her. True! I had not even thought of that, although I have raw files that show just this. Trudi also suggested that some of the spot highlights in the water could have been toned down. Looking again, those spots do not stand out on my (calibrated) editing screen, but they did certainly show up on the (too bright) club screen!]

ODDS & ENDS

Camera Clubs and AI

Earlier, above, I mentioned the [email sent out by Nicol](#) on the subject of banning some uses of AI in the photographic world. It is unlikely that there will be any long term solutions to these problems. Many cellphone cameras are already using various AI techniques, and conventional cameras will follow. Back in the early 2000's, HDR was banned as not being an acceptable editing technique in certain genres; until cameras started to have HDR built into them, and it could no longer be excluded! The same thing will happen with AI.

It seems that, one of the major objections to the use of AI is the ethics; that it has been trained on someone else's artwork (whether photographic, or painted). And, it is not just a question of copyright. Adobe has recently incorporated AI into its offerings, providing content generation. With this software, the basis of the AI's training has been the use of Adobe's huge collection of license-free images, and not any unlicensed images. But, the problem remains, that the original work was not that of the photographer editing his own images.

In many AI systems (e.g. Magnific) one gives the programme your own image, and it converts it into a selection of improved versions. You can suggest further improvements, and a revised set of variants will be provided. Whose work is this? Is AI doing the creative thinking, or is the human editor responsible? Currently, I'd say the human driver is coming up with the vision, but that too is likely to change with time.

Another problem; often I see an image (be it a photo or a painting) that appeals to me. Based on that, I capture a photograph, and edit it in such a way so as to mimic the style that I have viewed. Whose work is that? I consider it mine, but the original artist may beg to differ (if he ever finds out about the incident, of course).

How does all this AI stuff affect me? I do what I do because I enjoy the hobby of photographing and editing images. It provides peace to the soul. Do I need an audience? Yes. A long time ago I realized that an audience is an essential part of the enjoyment. Do I need to be measured against others? No. Sure, I like to measure myself against others, but that is based on my own internal standards and feelings. I do not need, or want, any external measurement system, where I end up trying to please the system, rather than pleasing myself. So as far as AI is concerned, I will use whatever AI tools are available that I consider useful, and reasonably ethical. Should I be banned from showing my work to fellow club members, I would be forced to find an alternative outlet for my work.

Along with the news from Nicol, came this [document from PSSA](#), which you may wish to peruse. It covers what "manipulation you can and cannot do".

Personally, I have always resisted entering salons, and seeking PSSA honours; mainly because of the myriad of rules that one is expected to comply with.

ODDS & ENDS (CONTINUED)

PSSA Congress - Struisbaai

In the July 2024 HPS Newsletter, it was stated that a Cape Photographers Congress was planned to be held in Struisbaai in August 2025. Since then, it has been decided that this will be the annual PSSA Congress, rather than a combined congress (has cost implications for loyal Cape Photographers who are not PSSA Members).

Unfortunately, the dates conflict with the HPS Competition Meeting of that month.



WHERE TO NEXT?

The dates 11 to 15 August 2025, for the next PSSA Congress in Struisbaai, have been chosen to ensure that you will have great photo opportunities with the canola fields in bloom, stormy skies over the sea and you can enjoy the antics of the whales that should be active off the coast.

- 11 Expert presenters – with special guest Freeman Patterson
- Organised community portrait photoshoot plus "harders trek" photoshoot
- Outings to the Shipwreck Museum and to Elim Missionary town
- Wide variety of photo opportunities - canola fields, wheat fields, sea scapes (hopefully whales and dolphins), 'the Cauldron' at Waenhuiskrans, the L'Agulhas lighthouse, Struisbaai harbour, Kassiesbaai fishing community, Hotagterklip national monument houses, and so the list continues.

ODDS & ENDS (CONTINUED)



Freeman Patterson Hon FPSSA, the globally acclaimed Canadian photographer who has made South Africa his "second home" over the past 50 years will be joining us and sharing his love of Namaqualand with us - The Flora and Ecology of Namaqualand. His second presentation will be The Vital Distinction between Art and Craft.



The impressive list of expert presenters ensures that a wide variety of topics and genres will be covered – Fallacies of Club Judging - Dance – Nature – Portraiture – Landscapes – Coastal – Food Photography ensuring that there will be something of interest for everybody.



ODDS & ENDS (CONTINUED)

THE CHAIRMAN
of the
HELDERBERG
PHOTOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY
takes pleasure in inviting you to our

70th
Anniversary Celebrations

United Church Hall,
Bright Street, Somerset West
*
Tuesday 10 December
*
7.00pm
*
Dress smart casual
*
Gourmet snacks and refreshments
will be served

RSVP: Nettie Warncke
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by Monday 25 November 2024



HELDERBERG
Photographic Society

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