

# FUJILOVE

ALL THINGS FUJIFILM X AND GFX

54 / September 2020

**When The Past Was Present**  
Jonathan White

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KIRK LOVE  
NEJC TRPIN  
ANJE VAN DALEN  
ANNA NIKAKI  
RICO PFIRSTINGER  
KEVIN MULLINS  
SPENCER WYNN

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**FUJILOVE**  
M A G A Z I N E

ALL THINGS  
FUJIFILM X AND GFX



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# WHEN THE PAST WAS *Present*

Jonathan White

From 1950's American classics on every block, social gatherings taking place outside every front door, to mojito on tap and salsa on vibrant streets till morning, Cuba offered me adventure, deep-seated memories and inspiration for my first photography publication.



X-T3 + XF35mmF1.4 at f/2.8,  
1/7000 sec, ISO 160



*X-T3 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/5, 1/2500 sec, ISO 160*

I arrived in Havana on 10th March 2020, several days before countries around the world began lockdown procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I have travelled to many countries and expected to be swept away by the soul of Cuba, nothing could prepare me for the culture shock and the contradictions – a clash of class and ruin.

Many classic taxi drivers were jostling for position to offer rides into town and considering the time, I accepted the first offer. A beat-up blue Chevrolet Bel Air slowly emerged backfiring as it pulled

up like in the scene in *The Mask* when Jim Carrey turns up at the Coco Bongo club! The boot failed to open to stow my luggage, the smell of gasoline engulfed the car almost to the point of asphyxiation and, despite the soft leather seats, I can honestly say that to date, I have never had such a hard 30-minute ride in a vehicle (although after this, I had many!).

My photography itinerary was fairly simple: classic cars, salsa and general day-to-day life. Usually I plan quite a bit before heading anywhere new, however I realised there was limited information

on the web for this and most shooters just walk the streets and find things on the spot. Things tend to happen on every single corner and present themselves perfectly. As long as you have some comfortable footwear and a comfortable camera bag, you're good to go. I took along with me my X-T3 with the XF23mmF2, XF35mmF1.4 and XF56mmF1.2 lenses alongside my trusty X100F. I use the latter as a lightweight neck camera that can be quickly turned on when opportunities quickly arise.



X-T3 + XF35mmF1.4 at f/4,  
1/1100 sec, ISO 160

Due to the pandemic, many large social gatherings had begun to stop such as salsa nightclubs. I had been really looking forward to taking part and had planned to shoot these extensively. I had wanted to produce a series encapsulating the soul and essence of companionship and passion in vivid colour using the low light capabilities of the XF56mmF1.2. Towards the back end of my final week, most restaurants and bars had begun shutting earlier and earlier, so all hopes of capturing these moments collapsed completely, although there were some

private salsa events on various side streets and private houses where people brought down cassette stereos and made their own parties regardless of COVID!

I did, however, gain luck when it came to shooting inside the largest ballet school in the world, Escuela Nacional De Ballet.

It had never dawned on me to go to a ballet school before I spent two weeks in Cuba. I've seen various documentary photographers go and get some breathtaking results in the past but such is my style for seeking street photography, it

was never my intention to visit one. It was when I was wandering the streets that I noticed just how many young people ventured into grand neoclassical buildings and upon investigating online, I realised Havana is home to many of the world's top ballet schools. I made some enquiries with the owner of the casa I was staying at, who, by luck, had a friend working at one of the best. She messaged her friend, and told me to arrive at 10am the next day and I would be allowed access.

X-T3 + XF23mmF2 at f/2.8, 1/500 sec, ISO 3200



On arrival, no-one had any knowledge of my appointment and, fighting through my terrible broken Spanish with just the name of my contact, I was told to wait. And wait I did; nearly two hours had passed with no sign of the person. Various people were asking me questions and I had absolutely no idea what was going on. I can honestly say that I've never felt so useless at communicating. At the point of almost giving up, a lady appeared with a student acting as a translator granting me 30 minutes before the class finished to photograph the rehearsals.

Walking up to the first floor of a grand staircase, I was greeted to the powerful sound of classical music and a packed studio with at least 150 students in rehearsal. I frantically unpacked all my camera gear and began shooting as if my life depended on it. I was then told swiftly to stay within the bottom left corner of the room so as not get in the way of the teachers. The minutes flew past and I must have taken 600 photos. I tried to capture the small details, silhouettes, partnerships and friendships, all whilst trying to keep to my style of framing and working in a tiny area (which I often strayed from)!

I was totally mesmerised being in this room with such dedicated young professionals, many of whom seemed to have been practising all morning – some to the point of exhaustion and some who were even asleep on the floor through such hard work! The whole experience of waiting, language barriers, nearly giving up and then finally getting my chance in such a short window, being completely rejuvenated amongst the

energy of this room and shooting under pressure is one I will never forget and one I would recommend to any style of photographer. I also highly recommend getting in contact with any of the ballet schools via email or phone prior to arriving as they usually turn you down on the spot without making such arrangements. Some basic understanding of Spanish is also a must, as I learnt the hard way!


*X-T3 + XF23mmF2 at f/2.8,  
1/500 sec, ISO 3200*





Another photographic opportunity not to be missed is the Rafael Trejo boxing club in the old town. Making a detour here early one afternoon I caught the 90-minute class of under 10s children learning the trade and was invited with open arms to come in and make myself at home. You are free to roam the club extensively, from up in the stands, to getting up close for portraiture, and even getting ringside up against the ropes to capture the action during sparring. This can be used to a great advantage for framing your subjects in various ways. You are asked at the end to make a small contribution to the club for funds of new training gear. Given the fact that they were so welcoming, I was more than happy to part with \$20.

*X-T3 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/2,  
1/1500 sec, ISO 160*



If possible, a trip for a two to three days to the stunning Unesco world heritage town of Trinidad is a must. This small colonial old town is famous for its incredible variety of vibrant stone walls on all of the buildings and cobblestone streets – perfect for capturing moving silhouettes and characters passing by in the morning and afternoon sun.



*X-T3 + XF35mmF1.4 at f/5, 1/1400 sec, ISO 160*

I do definitely recommend shooting early in the morning and late afternoon when the light is just incredible to work in. Conserve your energy during the midday sun, try visiting museums and hitting the beach perhaps, and chill with a Mojito (cigar optional!) One of my favourite late afternoon/evening haunts in Havana was the Malecón area; the sunsets are out of this world for shooting moving traffic overlooking the sea and the surrounding streets also are also teeming with life.



*X-T3 + XF56mmF1.2 at  
f/4.5, 1/500 sec, ISO 3200*

Throughout my two weeks, I began to take comfort in the roads with endless potholes, buildings appearing to be collapsing, cars in dire need of suspension – the list goes on. For me, these idiosyncrasies added to the melancholy and charm. I had wanted to travel to Cuba for the last 15 years since

learning about the revolution in school and realised the longer I waited, the more likely Cuba would begin to modernise and lose some of its identity. I can safely say it still has it in absolute abundance. Around every flamboyant corner there is a story of life in visual epiphanies.

*X100F at f/5.6, 1/900 sec, ISO 200*



X-T3 + XF56mmF1.2 at  
f/1.2, 1/500 sec, ISO 3200



This intoxicating Caribbean island with its European architecture and African soul stirs emotions that you will find in no other place. Not much makes sense in Cuba, with the injustice from years of being economically frozen out by other countries, it feels like everything is on the brink of falling apart. It's easy to empathise with the people given the conditions that some live in; they lack basic essentials like hand soap and yet, they are so rich in life through their experiences of sheer determination, spirit and resourcefulness. They don't grumble, they just get on with it, and do

so with endless enthusiasm and a smile. The true sense of community and communication is something we, in our technological world, could learn from immensely. Never once do you feel uncomfortable taking one's picture; the locals are so friendly and engaging, and it is so commonplace to see photographers on the streets that frankly, no-one really cares.

This laidback mentality makes street photography an absolute dream and you have full license to shoot your heart out. I plan to come back time and time again.

Despite the pandemic sweeping the globe, the country was relatively untouched and uninfluenced by other countries, which was only highlighted by the virus. After all, storms do tend to reveal strengths, characters and true colours, all of which are found in Cuba.

If you're interested in the full book of my time in Cuba featuring 90 colour images printed on proline pearl paper, I have a publication on Blurb available [here](#). Similarly, feel free to connect with me via my Instagram profile, [@myvisualmind](#).

*X-T3 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2, 1/500 sec, ISO 200*



*X-T3 + XF35mmF1.4 at f/1.4,  
1/4400 sec, ISO 160*



JONATHAN WHITE  

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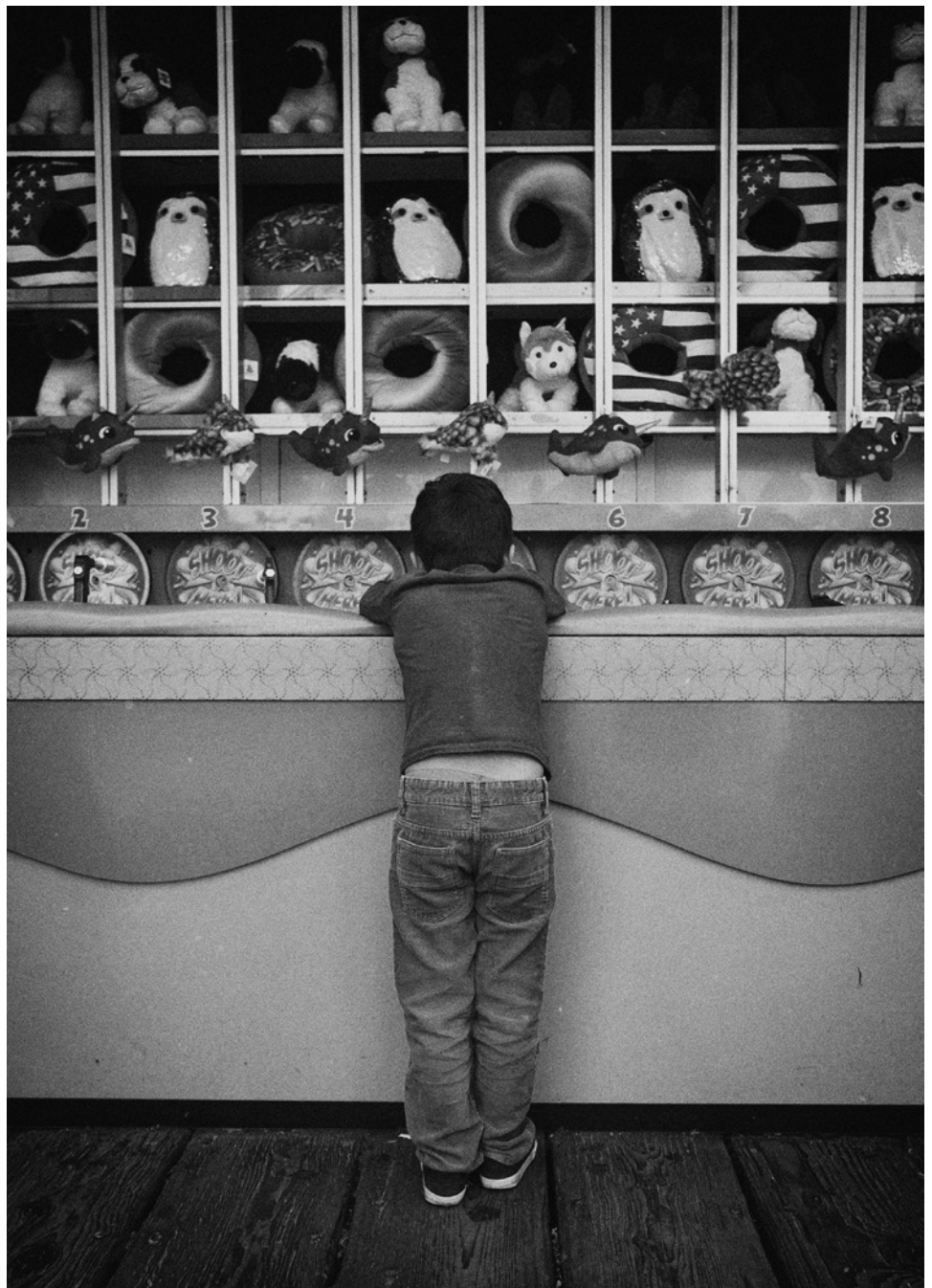
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# I AM *Not* A PHOTOGRAPHER

## Kirk Love

What makes a photographer a photographer? Is it the gear they use? Or is it whether or not they do or don't do it professionally? Is it all just in their head? This is a story about a photographer finding a Fujifilm camera, and discovering he was one all along and just didn't know it.

When I look back as far as I can remember, I've always loved taking pictures. It was just something I've always done. I took pictures – pictures when I travelled, pictures of my family and friends, pictures of places and things. I took lots and lots of pictures. But I never once dared call myself a photographer. That was a term reserved for the greats. The Cartier Bressons. The Meyerowitzs. The Arbuses of the world and so many others whose work I adored. I also felt the word 'photographer' was only for true professionals – the ones who made a living with their cameras in hand and out in the field. That wasn't me. It couldn't be me. My 'day job' is being a creative director where I get to work on design and branding for some wonderful companies. But I am not a photographer. I just take pictures. Or so the story went year after year.



**CARNIVAL GAMER**

*X-Pro2 + XF23mmF2 at f/4,  
1/125 sec, ISO 200*



**NYC STREET SWEEPER**

*X-Pro2 + XF23mmF2 at f/2.8,  
1/240 sec, ISO 400*



**JJ NOODLE**

*X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/4.5, 1/250 sec, ISO 200*

Then things changed.

Back in 2014, a friend handed me his X-Pro1 to try. It just felt different. I fell in love instantly. This solid hunk of metal in the form of a rangefinder style camera just felt perfect in my hands. Its off-center OVF was like throwing open a window into a world that was just waiting there ready to be captured. I'll admit from that moment on I went down a bit of a rabbit hole researching Fujifilm cameras and I came out the other side knowing for certain my next camera was going to be an X-Pro. Luckily for me, the X-Pro2 was just on the horizon in 2015, so I waited (impatiently) for it to come out, then gobbled one up the minute it was available. I've never looked back and have never once regretted my choice. It's been the ideal camera for me.

Since getting my X-Pro2, I don't think there's been more than a day or two I haven't shot with it. And if there is a day where I don't get to shoot, I feel off. Every time I press the shutter, there is this little bit of magic that happens. I feel a tiny pulse of energy course through my finger. People who don't shoot might chuckle at that or feel the description is over the top, but those of you reading this know exactly what I mean. It's that satisfying 'clunk' of the mechanical shutter signalling, "Yeah, you just took a great photo – good on you."



**NORTH FORK**

*X-Pro2 + XF23mmF2 at f/8, 1/15 sec, ISO 3200*

Of course, the truth is we all know that not all our shots come out nearly as great in reality as they do in our minds, but that doesn't matter. What matters is that my X-Pro makes me want to shoot daily – it makes me love the process of taking the photo, and that's something that was just never there for me prior to owning a Fujifilm camera. And from that process of shooting daily, you improve. A lot. Granted, half the time you aren't even aware of that improvement. You're so dialled deep into the process that you don't notice the gains you are

making until you zoom out and really look over years of photos, and then you can even begin to see that arc of improvement.

And sure, we all have that self-doubt that our work is meaningless, derivative or just bad, but we have to push through that, find our own voice and create the work we want to see in the world. There's an old adage: shoot what you love. It's a wonderful piece of advice, but I'll offer an alternative: find a camera that makes you love shooting.



**LEAVING 217**

*X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/2,  
1/60 sec, ISO 200*

NARRAGANSETT

*X-Pro2 + XF23mmF2 at f/5.6,  
1/1500 sec, ISO 400*



It was once I started shooting with my Fuji that it all clicked for me (pardon the pun). Looking through thousands and thousands of images I've taken, I said to myself, "I am a photographer. A good one."

Ok, so armed with that information and new mindset, what do I do now? For me, that was learning. There was (and is) so much I don't know. I wanted to learn everything I could about my camera, post-production and other contemporary photographers. So, I found everything I could online, on YouTube and the like, and devoured it all. It's also where I discovered FujiLove and the amazing community of Fujifilm photographers. I pored over each and every issue of FujiLove, inspired by the work this amazing community across the globe creates.

I, too, wanted to contribute in some small way. So, I set out to embark on a creative project that would pay homage to the legendary photographers I look up to. Near the top of that list of photographers I idolised was Diane

Arbus. Something about her images just feels so pure and unaffected. She shot not only what she found interesting but had this way of capturing beauty in the everyday, odd and offbeat. Plus, she came to photography in kind of a roundabout way as well, so on some very small level I could relate.

There's more that drew me to Arbus' work. For me, as a photographer, I've never been overly concerned with the technical side and specifications of digital cameras. The megapixels race and new feature lists are completely lost on me. In fact, if you look at the bulk of my photography, I actively pull my images in the opposite direction toward the more faded, grainy vintage film looks of the '70s. I manually add scratches, warmth, and ageing in post-production, typically with the help of the fantastic Nik collection. These are the types of images that I'm drawn to when poring through my photo book collections and it's a look I revisit in my own work time and time again.

One of the most amazing benefits of shooting Fujifilm is it affords me a huge head start toward that look with its amazing film simulations. When I first got my X-Pro, I definitely shot a lot of JPEG, partly because I was ignorant to the advantages of RAW, partly because I was a bit lazy and wanted the camera to do the work for me, and partly because Fujifilm's JPEG conversions are that damn good. Still, I ultimately wanted to develop my own process, look, and feel for a very specific project that I had in mind which brings me to The Arbus Box: a project I successfully funded via Kickstarter this past May.



Cover of the ArbusBox



ArbusBox photos

The project revolves around the legendary photographer Diane Arbus and her box of ten photographs that she began work on in 1970. While she had planned to create 50 sets of ten photographs, sadly, by the time of her death in 1971, only four were ever sold. Still, the project became a turning point that ushered in photography as a serious and legitimate form of art. Arbus envisioned her boxes as a form of personal and meaningful sharing of photographs that she herself valued and admired.

Today we are bombarded with images in the media, on the Internet and, of course, across social media. We scroll

past images at staggering rates, often failing to slow down and connect with the art and the artist's intent. Printmaking and print-sharing for the most part are nearly gone. So, inspired by Arbus' project exactly 50 years after its inception, I wanted to recreate that personal experience of hand-selecting and sharing photography one-on-one with the Arbus Box.

The photographs in this project span over a decade and are composed of some of the most cherished images I have taken. These photographs have never been shared broadly prior to this project. They are personal, meaningful and extremely moving to me. Most

importantly, they are genuine and heartfelt. The act of paring down the thousands of images I've taken has been a journey of joy, sadness, reflection and revelation. I was reminded of so many events that I've been grateful to witness and even more grateful that I was able to capture. I make no illusion that my work is on Arbus' level, nor is this project associated at all with her or her work. It merely draws on her remarkable ingenuity to see art in the everyday and photography as a means of not only documenting the often overlooked, but also the power of sharing those images on a personal and meaningful level.



CHINATOWN CARD GAME

X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/5,  
1/60 sec, ISO 200

Each Arbus box was hand assembled and contained 10 printed photographs. And only 10 were ever made. (Although there was also an additional 11th box where the backer was able to pick a theme of their own choosing.)

To me, this project was the culmination and confluence of understanding that I am a photographer, that there truly is this magical feeling when shooting with a Fujifilm camera and the importance of sharing those images with people. It's been a wonderful journey, and I'm grateful for the experience and knowledge it's brought. Here's to all the amazing people out there that call themselves photographers that are doing the same. Happy shooting.

For more information on the Arbus Box click [here](#).



**SANTA MONICA PIER**

*X-Pro2 + XF23mmF2 at f/8,  
1/1000 sec, ISO 200*

KIRK LOVE

[www.kirklove.net](http://www.kirklove.net)

QUARANTINE  
*Adventure*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

Nejc Trpin

A short tale about the living as an adventure outdoor photographer locked in a cubicle during the spread of the virus, as well as the thinking, creativity and execution behind doing something valuable and not thinking about the transformation to the new reality.

First, it was in the east. Nobody thought it would spread and nobody could have predicted the catastrophic scenario. We got the news at the beginning of the new year about some kind of disease, spreading in a town in China only a few of us had heard of before – a town that, in the following weeks, became the centre of the news. More people, more hospitals, quarantine. “It’s happened before, it will happen again,” we thought. In Europe, nobody was concerned about it. Their problem – they will solve it.

Life was running its normal routine. I had just return from a recent trip when they published the spread in northern Italy. Coming from Slovenia, the border country of Friuli-Veneto, where one of the epicentres was, it was just a matter of time until the first infection showed up. It did. The government sprang into action and soon, we were in lockdown. It was the end of travel, work and the economy. For many, it was the end of dreams for the future.

Instagram is today’s most inspiring media for photography, with people checking it multiple times a day. And when you are in a lockdown, even more

so. I did the same. Thinking about outdoor photography, I was scrolling for inspiration for future times, making a wishlist of locations and athletes that I wanted to photograph. I saw an image for a well-known climbing magazine. The guy was climbing in his kitchen, holding onto the window and kitchen closet, all kitted out with the proper gear. It was one of those photos that maybe didn’t have the best composition and execution, but with a story that makes it memorable.

It was like a splinter in my brain for the next two days. I suddenly realised that I might be able to improve on the idea. It would also be a great way to kill some time, which, in lockdown, I found myself with plenty of. I was going to need two strobes, a reflector, gels, a wide-angle lens, my camera, clean kitchen (maybe the most difficult part!) and climbing gear.

I have to admit, that for most of my outdoor photography, I use natural light, very rarely using strobes or a reflector. When I do, it’s mainly for some commercial shots. So, it also became a kind of a learning process for me for using artificial light in small spaces.

I put the bolts behind the cupboards, set up climbing systems, and hoped that it would hold. I put on some colourful clothing, a backpack and a proper helmet, and with the help of my assistant Leni, I posed myself as if I was climbing the kitchen cupboard, which was not as easy as it looks! The gear I had on was constantly pushing me off balance and

the holds were not the best ones in the world. We made several attempts, changing the position on the strobes and with the last one, I was pretty happy: it was sharp with warm and cold contrast, it had feeling, and the pose was good. I called it a day and published it on social media.

**CLIMBING IN THE KITCHEN WITH ALL THE EQUIPMENT.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/40 sec, ISO 200 (lit with two Godox TT685 strobes)*





**HIKING ON THE LADDER WAS NEVER SO INSPIRING.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/13 sec, ISO 200 (lit with two Godox TT685 strobes)*

Even though images like this were slowly appearing across social media, my image got amazing feedback. I got a message from Rok, one of my climbing friends, asking me if I was thinking of making it into a series. As an outdoorsy person, I had tons of gear and the next few nights were sleepless, my mind mulling over ideas about what else I could do in a tiny apartment. I was not allowed to go outside the borders of the

municipality, so I had plenty of time. The ideas were slowly coming out and after debate with Leni, we started to do one after another.

Hiking during lockdown? No go. Some people were doing stair hikes and runs to keep them in shape in block of flats and I developed an idea around this concept, symbolising the hikes with a ladder and hiking poles.

Ice climbing? It was March, no snow around. First, I wanted to hang from a pipe, but I couldn't get the flashes right, because the hall was too narrow and the background was too disturbing. I almost give up on this idea when Leni had another one. We had a fridge near the window, as well as ice climbing gear. So, we waited for the evening, and

opened the fridge and the freezer. I worked with the orange light in the fridge and I put my LED headlamp in the freezer to get the warm and cold contrast again. The freezer was full of ice and I pretended to hold on with my ice axes. This shot become my favourite of the whole series.



**HOW TO EASILY DEFROST YOUR FREEZER? USE ICE TOOLS.**

*X-T2 + XF18-55mmF2.8-4 at f/4, 1/4 sec, ISO 800 (lit with the headlamp and fridge light)*



Then I went on my balcony where I have gear for all kinds of outdoor sports. The ideas started to come one after another. Snowboarding in the living room? I remembered on an old Photoshop trick of people floating in the air. So I took a shot of the living room illuminated with strobes, then I put the chair in the middle, put on all the snowboarding gear including boots, helmet, goggles and snowboard (it was hot as hell!), and stepped on the chair, posing an indy grab while the shot was taken. In post-processing, I merged the images together, erasing the chair so it looks like I'm jumping from the couch, making a grab in the air.

**INDY GRAB FROM THE COUCH. NOT AN EVERYDAY ROUTINE.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/30 sec, ISO 1600  
(lit with two Godox TT685 strobes)*



**SLACKLINING ON THE WAY TO COFFEE.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/80 sec and ISO 200 (lit with natural light and one Godox TT685 strobe)*

In the morning I set up a slackline between the oven and the fridge. The backlight was nice and I could make a lifestyle image of a slackliner in the kitchen. The slackline was of course not properly installed, and I was standing on a footstool. I used the same technique as described in the previous paragraph. Please, do not try this at home yourself. You might end up breaking all the kitchen dishes.

Skateboarding was my passion when I was a teenager. I still have my last skateboard (and a number of broken ones) so I spent a lot of time taking a photograph of skateboarding in the bedroom, but somehow that is the shot I'm the least satisfied with. The strobes

had drained the batteries and they did not fire every time as I wanted, the natural light was not helping and the couch on which I was doing my crooked grind was very unstable. It took me an hour or two before I managed something, which was somehow working for me.



**CROOKED GRIND TO DISTURB THE NEIGHBOURS.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/13 sec, ISO 200 (lit with two Godox TT685 strobes)*



When I was a young kid, inline skating was kind of in and so, like every 90s kid, I had a pair of skates, which I still use from time to time. But growing up I ended up skateboarding most of the time, so actually I never did a lot of tricks with the inline skates. I spent some time checking online for images of inline skaters doing tricks in the skateparks. Then I set up the strobe in the kitchen

using natural light, wore an 90s hat and sunglasses, sat on the cat scratcher (which was literally the highest thing I could sit on in the kitchen) and posed a grab. Another shot of the empty kitchen and Photoshop helped to remove the scratcher and to make an image where it feels like I am in the air. If I were an inline skater and jumping for real, the neighbours below would kill me!

**GRAB FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE. THE OFFSPRING WOULD BE PROUD OF MY OUTFIT.**

*X-T2 + XF10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/50 sec and ISO 200 (lit with one Godox TT685 strobes and natural light)*

The last in the series was made only with the natural light. Camping in the flat is something very difficult to execute. I got an idea of using the pop-up tent on the bed, with the table full of camping dishes and a stove, where the coffee was being made. I waited for blue hour and used two lights: a camping light and a headlamp. It was a difficult shot to make as the light was low, and the tent and bed were shaking while I was preparing for the pose. Space was limited, too, with it becoming really hot

in the tent. I do not wish to camp in my bedroom ever again!

I wanted to shoot one last image of an SUP (stand-up paddle) in my bath, but the bathroom was simply too small for the SUP to fit and make a decent shot of it, so after several tries, I gave up. There were also ideas to use the main staircase but we decided to wrap it up with the images we had.

When I think back on the project now, I realise it was a fun way to spend quarantine. It was also good from the

aspect of learning because I used the strobes in a new way, sharpened my post-processing skills and, most importantly, I made myself, Leni and other friends laugh. This was the most important thing during lockdown. I feel people had to be distracted from the harsh realities that were happening in the world. The fact that the project made people smile, even for a second, made it a success in my eyes.

#### **CAMPING IN THE BEDROOM. I MISSED THE MILKY WAY.**

*X-T2 + XF 10-24mmF4 at f/5.6, 1/5 sec, ISO 400 (lit with natural light)*



NEJC TRPIN  

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www.nejctrpin.com

FUJILOVE  
INTERVIEW

# Anje Van Dalen

In the first of this month's interviews, Stephanie Baxter is chatting to Anje Van Dalen, a professional photographer shooting under the name Madison & West Lifestyle Division. She describes herself as an enthusiastic human being with a love for people, animals, plants, places and music. Her puns are mostly intended and one day she hopes to make 'lame' cool again.



**Anje, welcome to FujiLove! Can you tell us a little bit about who you are, what you do and what your photography journey has looked like?**

Thank you for the opportunity! I am a creative entrepreneur that specialises in different types of photography, shooting under the name Madison & West Lifestyle Division. I believe God gave me a heart for people, as well as the ability to take photos and He put me in the very fortunate position to serve people with these two attributes.

I adore any lifestyle photography, but my niche lies in portraiture as well as travel photography, and have been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit a few places around the world.

I have been a photographer for six years and counting, and it has been quite a journey as I found healing in photography when I went through a rough time in my life. Photography is absolutely a passion and something I strive to evolve in as I grow as a person.

*X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2,  
1/1000 sec, ISO 100*

X-T30 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95 at  
f/0.95, 1/500 sec, ISO 125





*X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95  
at f/1, 1/400 sec, ISO 100*

**You shoot a few different genres of photography. How would you describe yourself as a photographer to reflect your different interests and passions?**

I believe that your photography says a lot about you as a person. You (the photographer) are actually so exposed to the viewer because what you are drawn to are the things that you photograph and the way you perceive things will be portrayed in the angles from which you take them. So, yes, now back to the question! As we have many

facets of ourselves and our personality, they can all be portrayed in the different genres that we shoot. My genres include maternity and newborns, families, couples and content photography, which portrays the everyday documentation of life as well as assisting others in growing their businesses. Portraiture and fine art photography focuses a bit more on the soul and emotions, giving you a wonderful bouquet of life as we perceive it.

*X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95  
at f/1, 1/8000 sec, ISO 100*



### What inspires you creatively?

Travelling inspires me. It doesn't need to be far, as long as it's someplace new. New smells, sights and sounds immediately make me want to incorporate the essence of the experience in my photography.

I am also fond of iconic photographs

and like to study them when I need some inspiration. Photographers like Peter Lindbergh and Alexey Titarenko (I love the 'City of Shadows' series) inspire me to look at my subjects from a different perspective and to portray something that will make the viewer stop and think about the images.

*X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2,  
1/500 sec, ISO 200*



**What is the most challenging aspect of your work and what is the most rewarding?**

In short, for me the most challenging aspect is shooting for others and the most rewarding is shooting for yourself. In an ideal world it would be great to be the creative genius behind every weird and quirky photograph. But the moment you bring your client into the equation, you are immediately confronted by

their hopes and expectations of what the outcome of the photography session will be, and it's your job to find that perfect balance of bringing those two worlds together in the final product that you present to your client. So, communication with your client is vital as this will help you achieve that. When you have met or exceeded their expectations, that in itself is also very rewarding.

*X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95 at  
f/1, 1/500 sec, ISO 100*



X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95 at  
f/1, 1/100 sec, ISO 100



**Could you explain a little bit about how you came to start using Fujifilm gear and what you think the advantages your Fujifilm gear has over other cameras and lenses you've used?**

I always say that although Canon was my first love, I decided to marry Fujifilm and it's the best decision I have ever made for my photography. In 2016 I had the opportunity to rent a Fujifilm X-T1. A year later, Fujifilm contacted me with the option of renting the X-T2 and the moment I held that camera in my hand and started working with it, the rest, as they say, was history.

The fact that the camera is smaller, the viewfinder shows you exactly what you are photographing and the dials are easily accessible, making it a versatile camera that is so user-friendly. The quality of their lenses is remarkable as well as affordable, so it doesn't just fit your pocket, but your lifestyle too. Lastly, the color of the images is something that caught my attention as it captures vibrant, true-to-colour images right out of the camera. My Fujifilm cameras have cut my shooting and my editing time in half because of this.



*X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95 at f/1, 1/2000 sec, ISO 250*

**What Fujifilm gear do you currently have in your kit and is there anything else that you'd like to add to your line-up?**

I frequently update my kit because I don't want my images to keep looking the same.

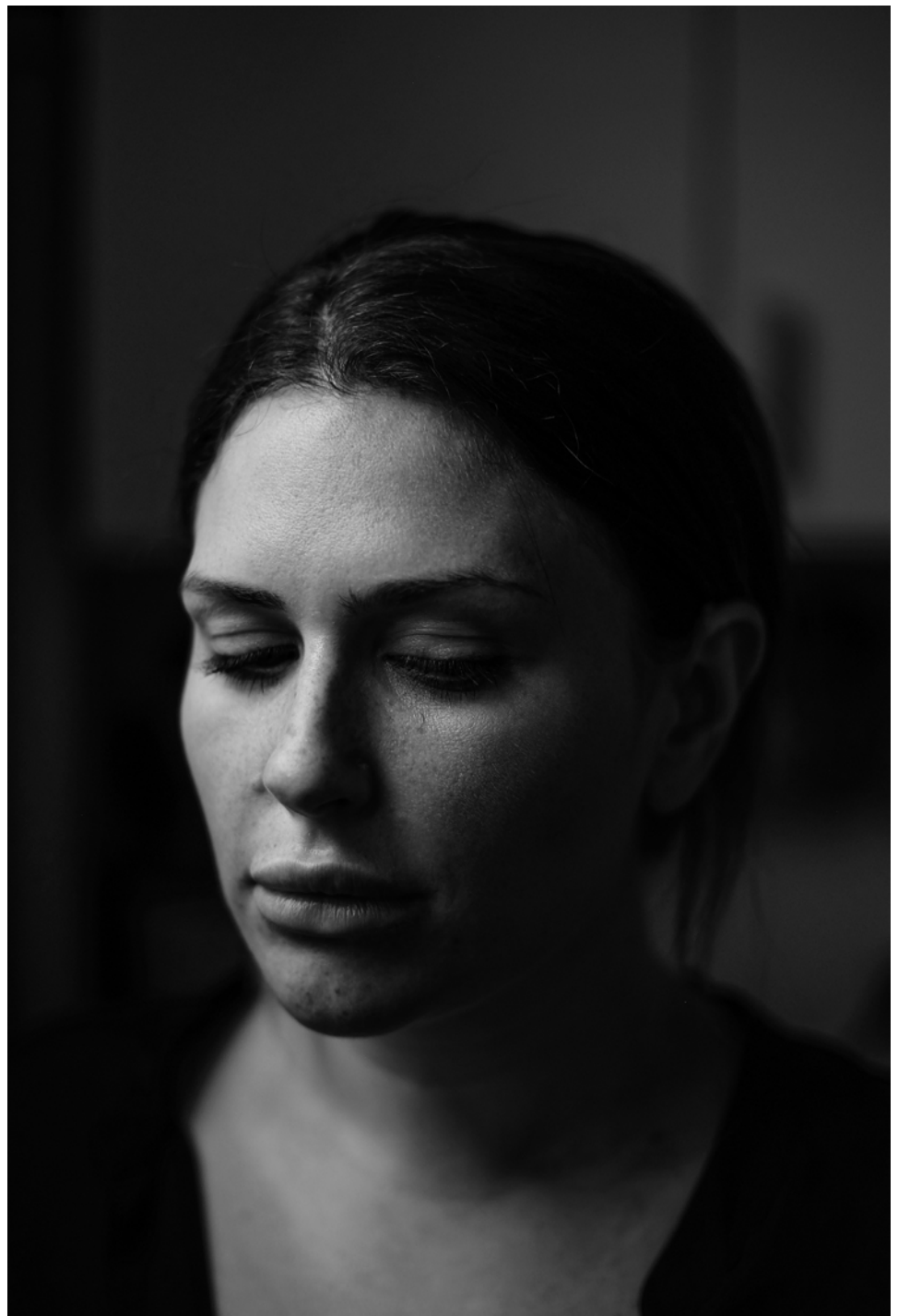
I used to shoot with the XF35mmF1.4, which I eventually replaced with a Mitakon 35mmF0.95 lens. I also used to have the XF10-24mmF4, which I replaced with the XF16mmF1.4

My kit currently consists of the following:

- X-T2
- X-T30
- XF56mmF1.2
- XF16mmF1.4
- Mikaton 35mmF0.95

I would love to update to an X-T4 and then add the the X27mmF2.8 pancake lens for street photography.

The Fujifilm product range has shaped my photography and I am so grateful for that. It fits my lifestyle and it is great to see that more women are being approached to contribute to the Fujifilm community. I'm looking forward to what the future holds!



*X-T2 + Mikaton 35mmF0.95 at f/1, 1/500 sec, ISO 320*

ANJE VAN DALEN

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# FUJILOVE COMMUNITY FROM THE FEED

Welcome to our community feature for FujiLove Magazine! Each month, we're taking you behind the lens of some of the most popular photographs shared on our Instagram feed taken by members of the FujiLove community using #myfujilove.



This photograph was taken on the first day of the year in the southern suburbs of Paris in 'Le Bois de la Solitude' (Solitude Woods), which is about 5km from my home. It was a foggy afternoon, like something out of a fairytale. So, I picked up my camera gear in a hurry, as well as my orange jacket, and took the bus to the closest woods.

Once I arrived, I started to look for the ideal composition by experimenting with lenses of different focal lengths and orientation (landscape vs portrait). The one you see here was the most satisfying to me, finding the XF10-24mmF4 at 24mm ideal for the composition. I tried to keep the ISO as low as possible and used a 10-second timer with the camera mounted to a tripod. Here is the result! I'm happy with it and really like the dramatic feeling of the image. The atmosphere was ideal for such a shot and I was lucky to have been able to find this location at the right time.

*X-T3 + XF10-24mm at 24mm,  
f/5.6, 1/30 sec, ISO 160*

**Temer Mounir**  
**@tmr.mnr11**



I had recently made the switch over to Fujifilm and was excited to make good use of the X-T3 as I arrived in Guangzhou, China for a holiday. One of the subjects I was looking out for in this city was buildings. Guangzhou is one of those cities that just has layers and layers of buildings that make for really good compositions. On the first morning out, just a little way down the road from where we were staying, I saw this alleyway. The buildings, though not the kind of skyscrapers I had in mind, were so full of character. I had mere moments to get the shot as the man on the bicycle was leaving and so while the settings were not ideal, I was happy that I got the shot – a sort of ‘behind the scenes’ of the tourist facade.

*X-T3 + XF35mmF1.4 at f/8,  
1/900 sec, ISO 640*

**Damon O'Reilly**  
@do.oyd

I'm always keeping my trusty X-T2 anywhere I go but this image was taken on my trip to Morocco with my friends. After visiting the busy and crowded city life of Marrakech, we rented a car and took a week to explore the seaside part of the country in the south west. On this trip I only had my body equipped with the Fujinon XF18-55mmF2.8-4.

Searching for a reassuring place from which to enjoy a glass of local wine and the sunset, we found a small beach near Imouran, a very small surf village. In contrast to what we were looking for, we discovered a beach full of locals looking for shells, kids playing football on the wet sand, etc. This beach proved to be one of the most beautiful I've ever seen. All the noise became one with the waves of the ocean, just like a symphony under the sunset. Usually I don't overthink my shots; I'm just trying to capture the moment in a sort of a documentary way but at the same time be expressive in terms of light and shadows, often using the harsh sun light.

*X-T2 + XF18-55mmF2.8-4  
at 18mm, f/5.6, 1/1000  
sec, ISO 100*

**Dorel Gnatiuc**

**@gnatiuc.ro**





While on the streets, I am always looking for interesting colours. For me, colour itself is the sometimes main subject, which you can clearly notice from my body of work. This image was taken in Dubai. It is a football stadium very close to where I live and whenever I pass by this stadium, I always notice the walls and stands painted in red.

While composing for this shot, I wanted to include the stands, as well as the lights and blue sky to create a nice colour palette and composition. I kept looking for the right angle by moving around with the viewfinder glued to my eye and I finally settled for this composition, which is interesting, in my opinion.

The 23mm focal length is ideal on the street – not too tight, not too wide – and it pairs well with the X-Pro3, although my dream lens would be a 23mm with a pancake design, something like the one on the X100 series.

*X-Pro3 + XF23mmF2 at  
f/4, 1/100 sec, ISO 400*

**Preet**

[@visualsbypreet](https://www.instagram.com/visualsbypreet)

FUJILOVE  
INTERVIEW

# *Anna Nikaki*

In the second of this month's interviews, Stephanie Baxter is chatting to Anna Nikaki, a student of architecture and travel photographer from Greece. Born on the island of Crete, she has spent most of her life there, in between travelling to far-flung destinations.



**TAJ MAHAL, AGRA, INDIA**

*X-Pro2 + XF18-55mmF2.8 at f/16,  
1/280 sec, ISO 200*

**Anna, welcome to FujiLove! Can you tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do?**

Thank you so much for this opportunity! I am pursuing a Master's degree in Architecture and am currently in the last year of my studies. Truth be told, I am often trying to find the right balance between my interest in the visual arts and my university work. One thing I do

love about my university course is that they often organise trips abroad for educational purposes, but this has also provided a great opportunity for my photography. In the past couple of years, I have been to Japan, Britain, France and, most recently, to India. Travelling and capturing images is something I am very passionate about.



KAMINARIMON GATE SENSO-JI,  
ASAKUSA, TOKYO, JAPAN  
X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/5.6,  
1/200 sec, ISO 200

**What has your journey with photography looked like and where did your passion of travel photography come from?**

My journey with photography actually began when I was in primary school. My mom would lend me her film camera to have with me on all of our school trips. I would mostly shoot my friends and the places we visited. Waiting for the photos to develop and get them back was something that brought me incredible joy! I then got my first digital camera when I was 12. It was then that I truly started learning about

photography fundamentals and experimenting with different angles, light, themes, etc. I then expanded into DSLR video due to my need to film the step-by-step process in making DIY art and craft tutorials (another one of my hobbies), which I would capture for my blog and YouTube channel. Travelling to Scotland in 2017 was what really got me interested in travel photography, sparked by a great desire to capture the gorgeous Scottish Highlands and the Isle of Skye. Since then, I guess, I got the travel photography 'bug'.



**HORSE RIDING IN  
CRETE, GREECE**

*DJI Mavic Air*

**ASAKUSA TEMPLE,  
TOKYO, JAPAN**

*X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at  
f/16, 1/60 sec, ISO 4000*





**What is your approach to photography while travelling?**

The truth is that I'll do my research before visiting a place, mostly to get a sense of what it looks like but also to search for any hidden attractions nearby. I then go to Google Maps, save the locations and write down any useful tips. I save everything that would help me visualise each place, as well as any information about when is the best time

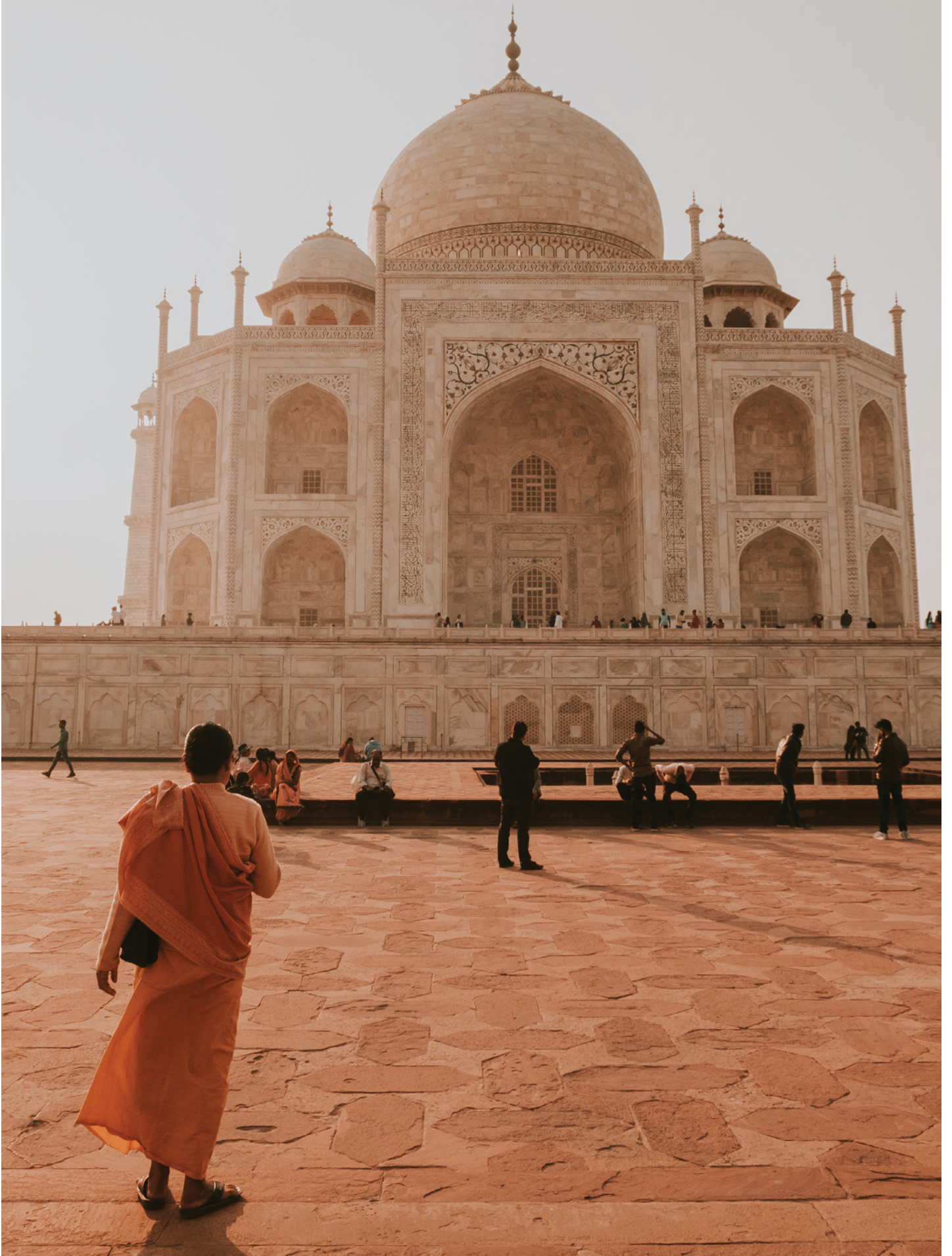
to visit, where are the best places to shoot, etc. Doing research helps me to be prepared, and maybe add some extra locations to my schedule, but it is not what will ultimately get me the shot! That's the reason I always choose to walk around the city, explore the local architecture, and get know the culture and people. You've got to have faith that you will see things that spark your interest.

**DOGS AT YOKOHAMA INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL, JAPAN**

*X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/6.4, 1/420 sec, ISO 200*

**WOMAN IN TAJ MAHAL**

*X-Pro2 + XF18-55mmF2.8-4*



You're lucky enough to live on an absolutely beautiful island. How much of an impact has where you live had an impact on the way that you've been able to develop your skills as a travel photographer?

Thanks! I love living on a Greek

island. Growing up in Crete has always encouraged me to discover its different sceneries while providing me the perfect conditions to go on trips, shoot and film outdoors. My inspiration mostly comes from observing the landscapes around me; when travelling

abroad is not possible, there is no need to go far to photograph. I have access to a wide variety of natural attractions, which is also the reason I got into aerial photography. The Cretan landscape motivates me to travel and document these unique scenes.



**UENO STATION,  
TOKYO, JAPAN**

*iPhone*

**What has been your favourite place to shoot in and why? Are there any places that you haven't been to yet that you'd love to shoot?**

My favourite place to shoot is a beach in southern Crete called Triopetra beach. The name comes from the three massive rocks that are in the water. The reason why I often go there to shoot is that the dry landscape reminds me of an old western film. My favourite time to photograph is when the weather is windy. It's only then when you get the best views to the Libyan Sea.

There are many places in Crete that I haven't been to but that I'd love to photograph. If I had to pick one, it would be Elafonisi, an exotic beach with white sand and turquoise water. Despite it being one of the most famous beaches in Crete, you can get exquisite shots of the overcrowded coast!

**What Fujifilm gear do you currently use and what makes it so good for travelling with?**

I use a Fujifilm X-Pro2, mostly with the Fujinon XF35mmF2 and XF18-55mmF2.8-4. Finding your ultimate travelling gear can be challenging. Since I prefer to travel light, I shot my whole trip to Japan with the XF35mmF2. The sharpness of this lens is incredible! Besides, the size and weight are perfect for walking around and shooting on the go!



**ASAKUSA AT NIGHT, TOKYO, JAPAN**

*X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/2, 1/350 sec, ISO 400*



SHINJUKU, TOKYO, JAPAN

X-Pro2 + XF35mmF2 at f/10, 1/80 sec, ISO 6400

ANNA NIKAKI

[www.instagram.com/bluetraveltales](http://www.instagram.com/bluetraveltales)

# RICO'S QUICK TIPS

Each month, Rico Pfisteringer brings us his quick tips to answer your most-asked questions related to Fujifilm gear.



## MAXIMISING CONTRAST

Most of the time, photographers want to increase dynamic range in order to pack as much highlight and shadow detail into a scene as possible. To make it work, we can employ the DR (Dynamic Range) function or simply expose for the highlights and then apply some tone mapping in an external RAW converter.

Sometimes, however, we want to achieve quite the opposite: decrease dynamic range in order to increase the contrast in a shot and add more 'punch' to otherwise flat and mundane scenes. Since the DR function in our X Series cameras doesn't offer a DR50% setting that would decrease the highlight dynamic range of a shot, we have to use a little backdoor trick: extended ISO L. Here's how it works:

- Select your X camera's base-ISO setting. Current APS-C models with an X-Trans CMOS 4 sensor (like the X-T3, X-T30, X-Pro3, X100V and X-T4) have a base ISO of 160. Older APS-C cameras feature a base ISO of 200, and GFX models use base ISO 100.
- With base ISO set, expose your 'dull' scene as brightly as possible, but

without clipping important highlights. To pull it off, set the camera to manual exposure mode M and activate the RGB histogram, which also displays 'blinkies' to mark overexposed parts of the scene. Make sure that the brightest important parts of the scene (such as the white clouds in a landscape shot) are not blinking. If you are bold, you can then add 1/3 EV of overexposure because there's usually some leeway.

- Now change your ISO from base ISO to Extended ISO L. If your camera's base ISO is 160, ISO should now be set to ISO L (80). If it is 200, change it to ISO L (100), and if you use a GFX, change it from ISO 100 to ISO L (50). However, do NOT change your aperture or shutter speed settings, only adjust the ISO setting. Since you are in manual exposure mode M, that's an easy thing to do because there is no auto exposure (AE) mode working against you.
- Take your shot(s) with the ISO L and exposure settings that were determined in the previous steps. ISO L works just like the missing DR50% setting of your camera: it takes away one stop of highlight dynamic range. This means that the brightest, almost overexposed

highlights of your image will remain as bright as if they were taken with the camera's base-ISO setting, while the remaining parts will turn out one stop darker due to the switch from base ISO down to ISO L.

A little background: ISO L is a 'fake ISO' setting that doesn't really exist. For example, if you set your X-T3 to ISO L (80), the image will actually be recorded one stop brighter with base ISO 160. To create the ISO L (80) JPEG, the RAW converter simply pulls the RAW data down one stop. This pull operation subtracts one stop of highlight dynamic range, thus increasing the contrast in the resulting JPEG. It's a backdoor to the missing DR50% setting.

After taking the shot, you can still add more contrast to your JPEGs with the camera's built-in RAW converter, either directly or remotely with the free FUJIFILM X RAW STUDIO software for macOS and Windows. For example, you can alter the TONE CURVE (HIGHLIGHT TONE and SHADOW TONE settings), apply additional PULL operations or add CLARITY.



**A**



**B**



**C**

**Fig. 1:** This practical example with three straight-out-of-camera (SOOC) JPEGs illustrates how we can create a 'punchy' JPEG image from a rather flat and mundane-looking scene. All this can be done in-camera, without any external processing.

Using an X-T4 with an XF16-80mmF4 lens, I started with base ISO 160 and exposed for the highlights of the scene (image **A**). Since the scene didn't offer as much contrast as I felt it should, my 'perfect' exposure looks pretty bright and overexposed, but it is optimal from a technical viewpoint, because it catches as many photons as possible without blowing critical highlights. The exposure sits right at the limit where critical highlights would be clipped, which is important for the next step shown in image **B**.

Image **B** presents our scene with exactly the same shutter speed and aperture settings as before, but now with ISO L (80). As you'd expect, almost everything looks one stop darker, except for the brightest highlights, which look as bright as in image **A**. This contrast gain (darker shadows and midtones, but bright highlights that remain as bright as before) is the result of using the 'fake' Extended ISO L (80) setting. In the X-T4, ISO L (80) is derived from the camera's base ISO 160 setting and offers one stop less highlight dynamic range than regular ISO settings. Less dynamic range means more contrast, but the effect is only visible if you pick a base-ISO exposure that puts the brightest important highlights at the brink of overexposure, which is exactly what we did in image **A**.

Image **C** is based on image **B**, but with additional in-camera adjustments that were made with the X-T4's built-in RAW converter. This JPEG is the result I had in mind when I composed and exposed the shot with image **A** showing in my live view. Please keep in mind that image **C** is still a SOOC JPEG without any external adjustments.

**Image A:** X-T4 + XF16-80mmF4 at f/9, 1/250 sec, ISO 160; SOOC JPEG with factory settings

**Image B:** X-T4 + XF16-80mmF4 at f/9, 1/250 sec, ISO L (80); SOOC JPEG with factory settings

**Image C:** X-T4 + XF16-80mmF4 at f/9, 1/250 sec, ISO L (80); SOOC JPEG with factory settings plus ACROS+RED filter, PULL -1 EV, MONOCHROME COLOR WC: -2 MG: -2, WHITE BALANCE 4900K, HIGHLIGHT TONE +4, SHADOW TONE +3.5, NOISE REDUCTION -4, CLARITY +5

You can read more about the ACROS film simulation and how to unlock its unique noise shaping feature in the August 2020 edition of FujiLove Gear Talk.

**QUICK TIP 2** **MISSING DOF SCALE**

A frequent complaint in forums states that the distance and depth-of-field scale in the live view has suddenly disappeared. How is that possible?

- Let's start with the obvious. In order to show in the live view in AF and MF mode, checkboxes have to be selected next to AF DISTANCE INDICATOR and MF DISTANCE INDICATOR in the SET UP

> SCREEN SET-UP > DISP. CUSTOM SETTING menu. Unchecking these options hides the distance scale.

- If both options are checked but the distance/DOF scale still doesn't appear in the EVF and/or LCD, it's probably because you have set LARGE INDICATORS MODE to ON for the EVF and/or the LCD screen. LARGE INDICATORS MODE can be found in the SET UP > SCREEN SET-

UP menu along with the LARGE INDICATORS DISP. SETTING configuration page which, sadly, doesn't offer you an option to display the distance and DOF scale. So, you have to choose between larger screen symbols and the distance/DOF scale – you can't have both at the same time.

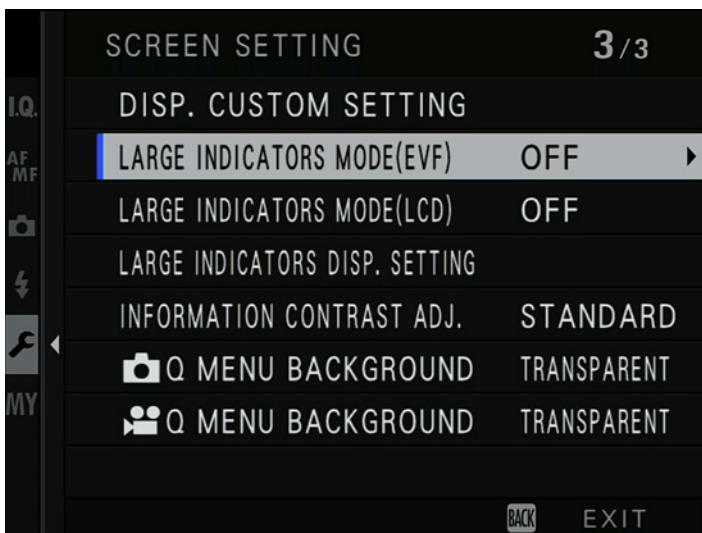
[www.fuji-x-secrets.net](http://www.fuji-x-secrets.net)



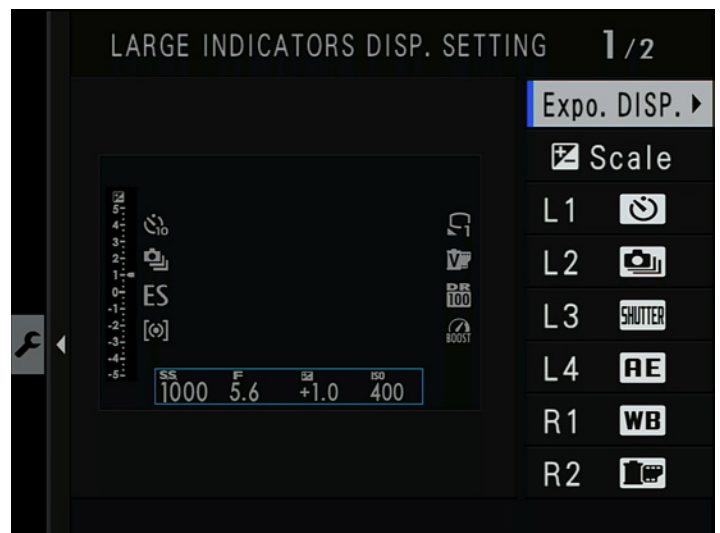
A



B



C



D

**Fig. 2:** Now you see it (A), now you don't (B): Engaging LARGE INDICATORS MODE is usually the culprit when the distance/DOF scale goes missing in the live view. To avoid this effect, make sure that LARGE INDICATORS MODE is set to OFF for both the electronic viewfinder (EVF) and the LCD screen (C). While there is a rather comprehensive configuration page for LARGE INDICATORS MODE, it doesn't contain options to display the distance scale (D).

# BEING CANDID PART 3: *Composition*

Welcome to part three of a six-month series on the topic of candid photography. I will be investigating the area of candid shooting in the realms of weddings, street, family as well as commercial and social photography. Last month, we discussed light, so don't forget to check that out if you haven't already.

If you have read this series from the start, you will know that there are three core elements to any great photograph:

- Light
- Composition
- Moment

It doesn't matter what you are shooting, from a product to people, landscapes to star trails. Understanding those three parameters will make your photographs stronger.

However, this series is all about candid photography. If you've been paying attention (you have read the previous articles, right?), you'll know that candid photographs are totally uncontrived and entirely natural.

And therein lies our problem. How can you be sure that a candid photograph has a great moment, great composition and great light?

The answer is that you can't guarantee these things. However, you can give yourself a fighting chance by considering them when shooting.

In today's article, I'll discuss elements such as the rules of composition and when they can be broken, and we'll also take an interesting look at how you instantly identify if the balance is right, or not.

First of all, I want to encourage you to understand that a photograph doesn't have to be *good*, it just needs to be *important*. This means that even if your pictures don't conform to these rules, they can still be amazing pictures. We've all got snapshots of the family that wouldn't win awards, but we love them more than any other image.

We'll talk more about that next month when we talk about the *moment*.

## COMPOSITIONAL AIDS

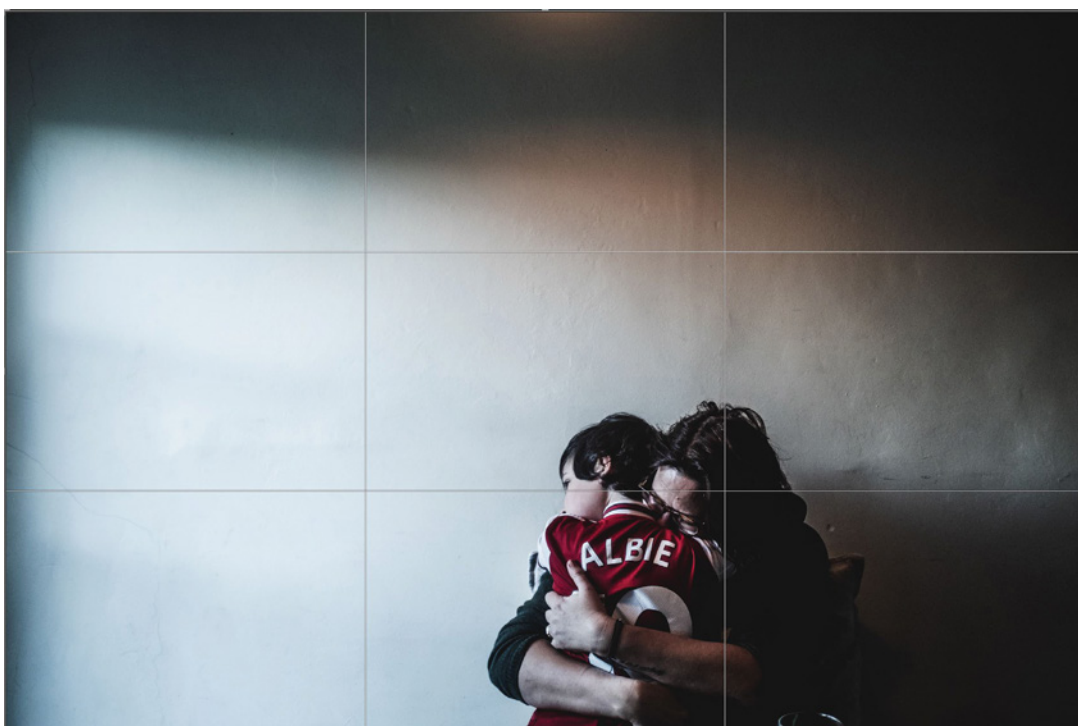
### The Rule of Thirds

You may have come across the term the rule of thirds. According to Wikipedia, the rule of thirds is “a ‘rule of thumb’ or guideline that applies to the process of composing visual images such as designs, films, paintings, and photographs. The guidance proposes that an image should be imagined as divided into nine equal parts by two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines, and those critical compositional elements should be placed along these lines or their intersections. Proponents of the technique claim that aligning a subject with these points creates more tension, energy and interest in the composition than simply centring the subject.”

You can see here the Rule of Thirds compositional aids in Lightroom. These guides will be available in most photo editing tools, and you can also display

them in your EVF/LCD on most Fujifilm Cameras (head to Display Custom Settings to switch it on). As you can see, the main part of the image dissects the bottom third segments and, regardless of content, would be considered a strong composition.

What also aids a photograph like this is the negative space. Negative space is a part of the image that is contextual but doesn't hold the central area of interest. Even though this image is a candid moment (it was taken during the first few days of the COVID-19 lockdown), I still considered the composition when shooting it. For me, as the photographer, I decided to use the negative space element to add to the drama of the moment. I feel that if the photograph were a close up of my wife and son embracing, it would not have been so intimate and show the vulnerability that I felt was crucial for the photograph.



## THE GOLDEN SPIRAL OR FIBONACCI SPIRAL

The Golden Spiral is based on the Fibonacci principle, which is a mathematical formula that can appear in natural objects such as waves, and the spirals of rose petals. Some believe the Fibonacci numbers lend themselves, in nature, to the things we associate as beautiful.

That's why I think it's an excellent overlay to use in Lightroom and is my preferred one when cropping images. The core message of this crop overlay is that your eye will drift along the arc and rest upon the main subject.

***Tip:** To see the Golden Spiral, when in the crop tool, press the 'O' key (this means Overlay). You can also change the orientation by pressing Shift+O.*

You can see in this photograph of a gambler reading his paper at The Cheltenham Festival that I've cropped the image in post-processing to help form the Golden Spiral. Unfortunately, we don't have this overlay in our Fujifilm cameras, though I've lobbied for it for many years. I hope one day we will see it. However, when you are shooting candidly, it is worth trying to remember the composition where possible, and if you can bear the Golden Spiral in mind, I think it will help you.





### SEEING UPSIDE DOWN

I mentioned earlier a simple trick to identify if an image is well composed and constructed. And it is incredibly simple, but not easy to implement when shooting.

What I will often do when selecting an image for print, competition or portfolio is view the photograph upside down.

You can do this very easily in Lightroom by flipping the image, or in any photo viewing application. You can, of course, do this with any photograph, not just your own. Take any book on your shelf with photos in it and turn the book upside down.

Your brain will initially be confused as to what it's seeing, so it will often draw the eye to the brightest or darkest area.

In an ideal world, what you want to happen is for your eye to be immediately drawn to the main subject of the photograph. If it's not, then technically the composition is not perfect.

If you think back to cameras of old, many of them didn't have mirrors, so the viewfinder displayed the images upside down. This would have aided the photographer in the composition because they could immediately see the areas of confusion in the photograph.

Let's take this photograph as an example. It's a charming photograph of two sisters playing. This photograph has been used for marketing campaigns by large corporations. But is it perfect? No. We can tell, very quickly, by flipping it upside down.

*GFX 50S + GF45mmF2.8 at f/2.8, 1/250 sec, ISO 640*



Some things you may notice now the photograph is upside down that perhaps you wouldn't have seen previously:

- The vertical lines of the window frame behind are not straight.
- The lightest areas are the out-of-focus foliage beyond the window and, more crucially, the white top of the smaller girl in the photograph.
- The balance isn't quite right.

You possibly wouldn't see this unless you viewed the photograph upside down. These are easy fixes to make in post-processing – straighten and perhaps lighten the faces slightly, while bringing the highlights on the vest down.



*X-T3 + XF23mmF1.4 at  
f/1.4, 1/240, ISO 160*

Now, of course, I'm in no way suggesting you should do this for every one of your photographs. My word, if I looked at all my images upside down, I'd perhaps find 3% that I feel would pass the test! However, the point is, when we are thinking about composition in candid imagery, it's very easy to get distracted by the snapshot moment, and not overthink about the light and composition.

Remember, though, as I've said throughout this series, it is challenging to capture a photo when you are shooting candidly that does have great

light, great composition and a great moment, so please don't beat yourself up about it. I don't. This is merely a technical exercise that may help with the curation of your images.

Remember, candid means without intervention, but we can help ourselves with our seeing.

For example, in this image, the light is excellent, the moment is right for the story it's telling, but annoyingly the fingers of the bride are cut off, so the composition fails slightly. It is hard when you are thinking quickly in a fast-moving environment.

## THE EDGES

When I do portfolio reviews for other photographers, we always spend time talking about the edges of the frame. This is a critical element.

When we shoot, we are often looking centrally, or at least at the main area of interest. We rarely check the edges of the frame when shooting candidly, because often, we just don't have the time.

Take a look at this image. What do you notice now that we discussed the chopped off fingers in the previous

photograph? Of course, the foot in this case.

Believe me, when I'm shooting weddings candidly, these are fast-moving environments and with over 500 documentary weddings under my belt, even I will not get it right all the time. To get a perfect photograph is extremely rare.

*X-T3 + XF23mmF.4 at f/1.4, 1/3500, ISO 160*





Your homework this week is to shoot as many candid images as you can, remembering what we spoke about last month in terms of light and this month in terms of composition. If you only remember one thing, remember the edges of the frame. If you look at the edges of your frame when shooting, you

will make better pictures.

Next month, we will discuss in detail the concept of moment. I hope you are finding the series exciting and if you have any questions about them, please don't hesitate to contact me via my [website](#) or through my [Instagram](#) account.

*X-Pro3 + XF23mmF2 at  
f/2, 1/500 sec, ISO 640*



This image is a composite made up of different layers of images. For the sky, 11 images of the sky were aligned and stacked for noise reduction in Starry LandscapeStacker. These images were shot with the X-Pro2 and a 12mm Rokinon lens at f/2.8, 20 secs, ISO 5000. For the silos and foreground, I layered 18 images. Each exposure was a different area lit by my flashlight. The images were stacked in layers in Photoshop and each layer was adjusted to keep the lighting balanced. These images were shot with the X-Pro2 and a 12mm Rokinon lens at f/5.6, 40 secs, ISO 640. The sky was then masked into the foreground image for a composite.

## EMBRACING THE *Darkness*

*Under a canopy of stars, the land and sky reveal themselves*

*"I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream."*

— Vincent van Gogh



Image composite

My well-worn notebook is filled with notes and observations about future locations I wish to shoot. That notebook constantly taunts me. Often at the end of the day, the last thing I want to do is to go out into the night and drive sometimes for hours to one of those noted locations.

But, during this time of COVID, I often find I have nothing but time – time to visit some of those locations in my notebook, to learn new skills, to try different ways of shooting and sharpen old skills.

Living in Toronto, we are very close to the US/Canada border crossing at Niagara. One location I have noted is

very close to Niagara and catches my attention every time I drive in the area. Seen just above the trees growing on the shore of Lake Ontario, old wooden ships' masts can be seen. How can a tall ship be stranded there in such shallow water? It turns out it was a failed attempt to draw in-bound tourists to a ship-themed restaurant.

The restaurant concept didn't float (excuse the pun) – it closed but the ship still remains, a little worse for wear. About 30m from shore, the ship is in a great location that is easy to park, set up a tripod, relax in a folding camp chair and shoot the stars in comfort. I set the in-camera intervalometer to make star trail images.

This is the point where things begin to be a bit detailed! For all my night shooting, I stack multiple images for noise reduction. I do not activate the in-camera noise reduction. I choose to shoot multiple images of the same scene at ISO levels between 1600 and 6400. By stacking many images, the noise all but disappears. This is because the random noise on one layer will be cancelled out by random dark areas on other layers below and above.

For other situations I also use a star tracking mount to shoot images of stars with very long exposures. A tracker moves the camera at the same speed as the stars, allowing you to set a lower ISO, stopping down the aperture to shoot clean images over longer times while keeping the stars pin-point sharp.

For the star trails in the previous image, I set my X-Pro2 to shoot four-minute exposures with a two-second pause to safely write the image to the card. If you shoot with longer pauses you will begin to see gaps between the images of short streaking stars. For this photo, I made 20 images of the sky, of four minutes each, at ISO 400 and exposed only for the sky. I was not at all

interested in the actual ship at this point.

With the star trails enhanced, the selected images were exported into Photoshop from Lightroom (right-click on the selected images > Edit in > Open as layers in Photoshop) as a stack. The exporting of the images will take time! With the exported images in a stack, select them all and change the blend mode from Normal to Lighten. Instantly, all the short star trail images connect into much longer trails with no tiny gaps between the segments. Once I was happy with the sky, the file was flattened and saved. This is something I do a lot and it never ceases to make me smile – it's a bit magical!

The image of the ship was photographed separately for exposure, aperture change and refocusing. When combined on different layers with the composite sky image, final adjustments and layer masking can be done before finally flattening the image. Admittedly, there are several steps to go through to achieve the final result but the process, at least for me, is very enjoyable and the results always have a bit of a wow-factor.

**MEADOW WITH RED LIGHT  
IN THE DISTANCE**

Image composite

At ISO 6400 and a shutter speed of 20 seconds, the stars above the meadow are crisp and sharp. Even with the high ISO, the 12 images of the sky were exported as 8-bit TIFFs, aligned and layered in Starry Landscape Stacker to remove noise. The field, which was basically black on this moonless night, had multiple exposures of (if memory serves) four minutes at ISO 1600. The distant red collision avoidance light on top of a water tower was a bonus that I did not see the night I was making these images!

Starry Landscape Stacker for Mac only (PC equivalent is Sequator) is brilliant at stacking and aligning layers (since the stars shift from one exposure to the next). Once you have masked the sky, the file is exported as a TIFF. Combined in a

stack in Photoshop, the masked sky image can now combine with the flattened meadow image to become a final composite.

The stacking and layering steps outlined above make up pretty much all my night photography work. Each session and location differs, but the above steps take care of most of my night work. The steps are, at times, involved and are deserving of an entire article in itself, but this should at least whet your appetite next time you can't sleep!

In addition to the layering, stacking, masking and long/short exposures is the addition of artificial light to paint a subject. Here is where you can begin to get really creative.



**RED PUMP**

Image composite

This image of an irrigation pump comes to life at night, painted with lights of different colours. During the day, the pump looks pretty ordinary and not worth a second look. The night I photographed the pump had a full moon, so I knew I was not going to have too many stars appearing in the image. Again, I made several exposures of the sky, and combined and aligned them in Starry Landscape Stacker.

Those images were shot at ISO 1600 at 30 seconds. This also took care of the landscape, too. To light paint the pump, I kept the shutter speed the same but closed down the aperture to f/5.6 and lowered the ISO to 640. This meant everything went dark but at 30 seconds, I had plenty of time to carefully paint different parts of the machinery from the left and right, bringing out texture and shadows.

The flashlights I use are narrow but adjustable beam LED lights which naturally are very blue in colour. I tape over the ends of the flashlights with coloured gels for different effects. You can see the warmer colour on the grass which also enhanced the red paint of the pump. You can also see a purple light coming in from the right.

The processing of these sorts of images are slight variations of the processes outlined earlier.

**OLD-FASHIONED CARRIAGE ON THE GRASS**

Image composite





**WHITE TANKS**

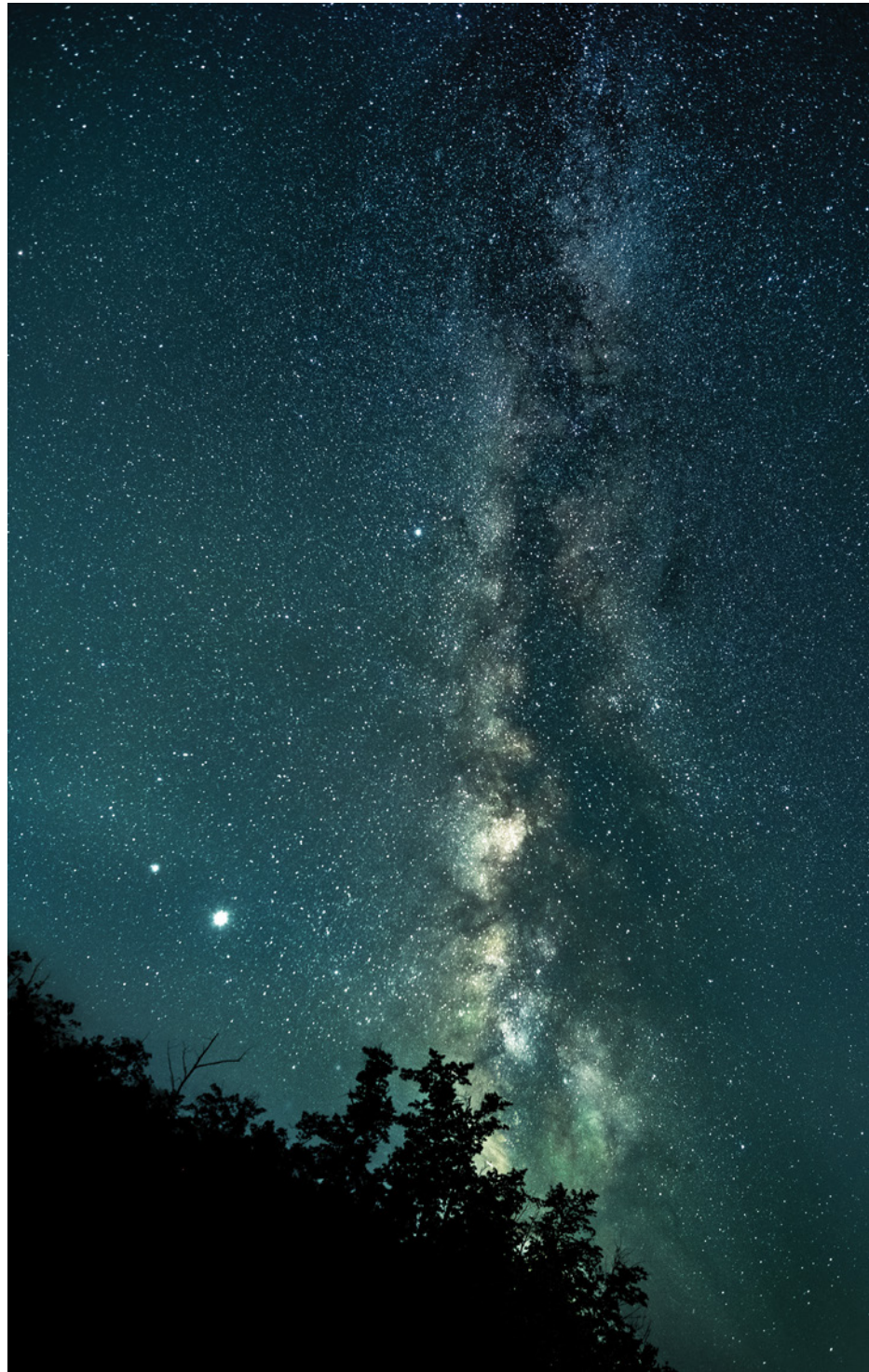
Image composite

The same techniques were used in this image with the two white tanks. Both the pump and the tanks images had between eight and twelve different lighting positions with each frame being triggered with a hand-held remote.

Since all the images are being stacked, I can adjust the intensity of the light for each layer to make a more subtle scene without it being too bright. Often my flashlight appears in some layers, but can be easily masked out without harming the layers below, which will continue to show through.

The galactic core of this Milky Way image was made using my camera attached to my star tracker, the Sky-Watcher Star Adventurer. The sky was a stack of five two-minute exposures at ISO 1250. The stacking eliminated all the digital noise and since the stars were being tracked, they were also sharp.

Since the sky was being tracked, the trees blurred. To fix this issue, one exposure for the trees was made and then combined with the stacked sky composite and masked into the sky shot.



**MILKY WAY ABOVE THE TREES**

Image composite

**RED BARN**

Single image

*X-Pro2 + Rokinon 50mm lens at f/5.6, 50 sec, ISO 800*

One need not go to such extremes to achieve beautiful images at night. For instance, the red barn image was a single 50-second exposure at ISO 800 and f/5.6. The stars moved a little, but in this image, the stars are quite subtle to begin with.

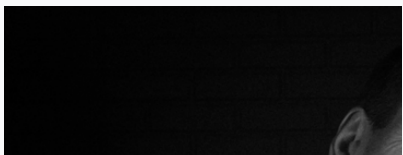


Every semester I organise a voluntary shooting trip at night with my first-year college students who have never shot the night sky. It is so much fun to hear their delighted “oohs” and “ahhs” in the darkness. The night is one of my favourite times to shoot.

If you think you want to go out and try your hand at night photography, ask a friend to go with you for the first few times for company. After a while, you will be hooked and, as I am most of the time, sleep deprived!

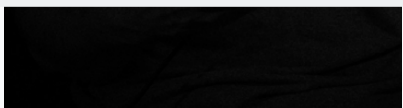


*X-Pro2 + XF16mmF1.4 at f/6.4, 30 sec, ISO 800*



# READERS' GALLERY "PHONES" ASSIGNMENT

HAVE A LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE PHOTOGRAPHS





WINNER  
Jim LaSala  
X100F

The winner will be featured on the FujiLove website in the upcoming weeks.



Martin Šimun  
X-T3 + XF35mm f/1.4



Pietro Raimondi  
X-T1 + Samyang 12mm f/2



Thomas Hamill  
X-T3 + XF56mm f/1.2



Patrick Reilly  
X-Pro2 + XF35mm f/1.4



Alex Wang  
X-T20 + XF18mm f/2



Avenson Navalta  
X-Pro1 + XF35mm f/1.4



Ian Montgomery  
X-Pro3 + XF23mm f/2

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