

Publisher's Commentary...

You Got to Have Fun

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I was lamenting to the Lovely Donna one morning not long ago about how my photography had fallen into a serious slump. I complained that I couldn't even remember how long it had been since a "memorable image" had appeared on the light box. In an attempt to justify my unproductive efforts, I explained how I'd been trying to avoid bad light, bad exposure, bad backgrounds and bad compositions, but had still managed to bring home nothing but bad nature images.

"Jim," she replied, "sometimes you just have to forget about all of that technical stuff and go out and have some fun."

I gave a lot of thought to what Donna said. Could it be that I had become so entrenched in my approach to photography that I had forgotten how to have fun with it? Like a pilot preparing for take-off, every shot included a long checklist of technical and aesthetic minutia that had to be considered before the shutter button could be pressed – exposure, background, direction of light, shadows, depth of field, shutter speed, fill flash, diffusers and/or reflectors, filters, subject parallel to film, and forget about trying to capture a great image in harsh light. Nature photography is serious business you know, and success is in looking after all of those details and following all of the rules. If I was ever going to have a prayer of bringing home another nature image worth posting, I better get it right.

There in, I believe, lies the part of the problem. The pursuit of the same type of subject, using the same repetitive measure of success, can ultimately lead to the stagnation of artistic intuition and diminish enjoyment of the activity. Before we know it, every shot we take becomes nothing more than a regimented process governed by a mental list of do's and don'ts. While mastery of these techniques and procedures ultimately makes us better photographers, the absence of the "fun factor" will most certainly be evident in our results.

On a clear, blue sky day during my lunch hour, I went to a local art museum that has some interesting exhibits on their grounds with the express purpose of having some photographic fun. The "checklist" and usual array of heavy nature photography gear stayed at home – a Canon 1n, 50mm lens, a polarizing filter, a lightweight Bogen 3001 tripod and an open mind was all that accompanied me. I decided to pursue some images I had been visualizing for a while, but had never gotten around to. Free-style was the name of the game, and I would allow my artistic intuition to call all of the shots.

Before I knew it, the film was rewinding and my lunch hour had long expired.

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