



Newsletter, July 20, 2017

Photo of the Week: Melanie Halpert



I had a great group yesterday at my iPhone Photography Workshop. Among the participants was Melanie who's been using her iPhone (currently a 7+) as her primary camera for many years.

After a comprehensive tour of the iPhone 7+ camera which all of the students brought, I sent them out into a beautiful courtyard to take some images. I had given them some gentle marching orders, nothing too earth shattering, but they included:

- Get closer to your subject
- Frame using the rule of thirds
- Adjust exposure to avoid highlight burn out
- Use AE/AF Lock
- Fill the frame

Melanie nailed this last directive. She found some Bougainvillea blossoms emerging from their green foliage. The combination of the [complementary colors](#), magenta and green, evokes a positive response. The background tiles are a nice linear texture though I would use Photoshop to darken this making it less intrusive. Here's an edit of Melanie's image to show what I mean:



The only change I made was to the tiles on the patio but it has the net effect of making the green and magentas really pop. Magenta is one of the most difficult colors to photograph in digital photography. The main reason is that magenta is a combination of violet and red and these wavelengths are hard for sensors to render.

Melanie's composition is spot on. There's a wonderful arcing sweep of the magenta blossoms nicely overlaid with the green leaves. The texture of the stems adds a delicate touch. There's also ample room for the leaves and blooms to breathe. If I was hyper-critical, I'd make a case for including the top flower within the frame but as it is, this is a terrific burst of color and it hits all the right buttons. Kudos to Melanie for taking the lesson to heart and finding a beautiful image.

Book of the Week: *Looking at Photographs* by John Szarkowski

John Szarkowski (12/18/25 – 7/7/07) was the Director of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from 1962 until he retired in 1991. To say that he raised awareness of photography as an art form would be a gross understatement. Along with [Beaumont and Nancy Newhall](#), he brought a hitherto rare intellectualism to photography. He

spent many moons overcoming the illustrative pictorialism of the Edward Steichen years that had culminated in the popular but sentimental Family of Man exhibition.

Looking at Photographs is not a new book. In fact, it was published in 1973. But it is a seminal work and is widely considered one of the most influential books of photographic criticism. It showcases 100 photographs taken by the Olympians from photographic history; one to a god, no repeats as someone once mentioned. Each photograph is accompanied by an insightful essay that not only places the photographer in historical context but also speaks to the underpinnings of their image.

My particular gods are well represented: Adams, the Westons, Edward and Brett, Cartier-Bresson, Cunningham, Brassai, and Kertesz. Interestingly, not all of the images for which these photographers are famous are depicted. Szarkowski's choice of [Old Faithful](#) for Ansel Adams struck me initially as a poor example compared to [The Tetons and the Snake River](#) and [Clearing Winter Storm](#). But in hindsight, I realize it was chosen to make a very specific analysis of Adams' approach to photography (see [Szarkowski](#) on YouTube talking about Adams).

This fact is true of all 100 photographs. Szarkowski believed that a heightened intelligence may recognize photographic meaning and quality. This sounds like the leading edge of snobbery but in truth the whole of your life's experience prefaces your ability to "see" a photograph. Moreover, whether or not a photograph moves you depends, he says, on your willingness to accept it as a symbol for the photographer's own reality. And by means of the examples in the book, Szarkowski becomes your tour guide to searching for the metaphors in photographs that give rise to personal response. A weighty tome, indeed, but well worth lifting.

Looking at Photographs is still in print and you can get it on [Amazon](#), or better yet, see if your local bookseller has it. All independent booksellers need to be supported lest they disappear.

That's the short and sweet of it for this week. I have another workshop next Wednesday, so I'll be late to class again. See you on Thursday.

If you'd like to visit my [website](#), my Home page showcases some of my best golf images and my Gallery page features more recent work.