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Photography

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Mastering

Photography

Gordon Roberts

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Plates

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Introduction

In this age of mass communication with images being scattered world-wide via satellites, the population has become blasé towards image making and reproduction. Maybe it is for this reason that photography no longer holds the esteemed position that it once had.

Photography is the most accessible medium for the creation of artistic works and one which most people can cope with quite easily, it crosses all social and ethnic barriers. Able bodied and disabled people are capable of gaining the same sense of achievement and satisfaction. Even the most handicapped person can participate with the help of a few specially designed aids.

Today the modern automated camera makes taking a photograph as simple as pressing a button. Once the film is finished it is handed over to a high street mini-lab and another automatic process produces colourful prints of one's endeavours. This has led to a misconception by a large majority of people that photography is easy and anyone with a grain of sense can do it. This in turn has led to the acceptance of very inferior imagery under the guise of photography and photographic art.

Within all of us there is an artist trying to get out and for those of us who struggle with pencil and brush, photography is an ideal outlet for the imagination and self-expression. To begin with little thought may be given to artistic interpretation but with progression comes a raising of expectation, requiring an improvement in artistic and technical quality. Imitation is said to be the sincerest form of flattery and maybe this is the easiest route towards improving standards, although trying to emulate some of the great works may result in frustration and demoralisation. It therefore follows that each new goal should be obtainable, stretching one's abilities by just the right amount so that success is assured.

To be successful at anything one needs to have an understanding of the materials and techniques involved. Just as an artist has to be able to use a brush in different ways and understand what happens when various colours are mixed, so the photographer should have a knowledge of camera equipment and the processes that enable images to be recorded. That is what this book aims to do, to bring an understanding of the hardware and software involved, plus an insight into the artistic requirements to make a success of photography.

To begin with photography is a mechanical process which records an instant in time and as such can be achieved with little or no artistic talent. Once a scene has been committed to film it becomes an historic document, providing future generations with an insight into that moment. The vast majority of photographs taken

are for record purposes be they professional or amateur in origin. Holiday snaps are records designed to stimulate the memory in years to come and evoke the pleasure or heartache of the time. They may not be high art but as long as they achieve what they set out to do then they can be considered successful.

Regrettably, as with art, there is an awful lot of snobbery in photographic circles, human nature being what it is this is always likely to be the case. Photographic clubs and societies, large or small, tend to perpetuate this by having an hierarchical structure which makes the newcomer feel uncomfortable. Competition judges and old sages holding court can destroy a beginner's morale by their ill considered comments. Photography is a very personal craft or art and at the end of the day as long as the photographer is happy with the result then that is all that matters. The professional has to satisfy two masters in the client and themselves, often leading to a compromise, but then isn't life about compromise?

Gordon Roberts