

HISTORY OF PALO ALTO CAMERA CLUB (1990 to April 2018)

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The Palo Alto Camera Club, now 83 years old, continues to evolve new ways to serve its members and the Palo Alto community, while adapting to changes in photographic technology.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The most significant change has been the introduction of a co-president as well as co-chairpersons for various committees. The overlapping tenures of co-presidents and co-chairs facilitate the smooth transition of leadership positions from one year to the next.

MEMBERSHIP

In 1990 we had about 30 members, some in the club since the early 1960s. With the advent of digital photography in the early 2000s, membership slowly rose to its present level of 135. About 40 members attend meetings regularly, and a smaller but increasing number participate in competitions.

MEETING LOCATIONS

In 1990 our meetings consisted of club competitions held once a month in the large auditorium at the Palo Alto Art Center. The meeting site moved to the smaller Meeting Room at the Palo Alto Art Center and then to the Lucy Evans Nature Center at the Baylands around 2010. When the latter was closed for construction, we moved to the Meeting Room at Rinconada Library, adjacent to the Palo Alto Art Center. This new location provides us with a more central location, convenient parking and built in projection facilities.

OVERVIEW OF MEETINGS

Meetings are held on two to three Wednesday evenings per month. At least one of these meetings consists of a competition with a paid non-member judge. The competitions alternate monthly between digital and print images. Other meetings may include Lightroom or Photoshop tutorials, special lecture programs or member reviews of submitted projected images.

COMPETITIONS

Early Competitions

Media consisted of slides and prints, each divided into the following competition categories: Pictorial, Monochromatic (black and white - prints only), Travel, Journalism (later changed to Photojournalism, abbreviated 'PJ'), Nature, and Contemporary (later changed to 'Creative') – all coinciding with categories of our regional counterpart photographic organizations, listed below. Each category had its own committee chair, who was responsible for tallying entries on paper, recording the winners and issuing ribbons. At that time members accumulated 'points' for various awards, which were tallied and used at the end of the year for 'Best of ..' ribbons or certificates.

Judges were usually sought from experienced members of other clubs who had been trained by the Northern California Council of Camera Clubs (see below). (During the 1990s, the usual judge reimbursement was \$10.)

The best images in each medium and category were transported by a club representative and submitted for further ranking at monthly competitions by the following regional organizations.:

- the **Northern California Council of Camera Clubs (N4C)**, which included clubs in the Bay Area and down the peninsula.
- The **Mid-Peninsula Photographic Association (MPPA)**, which consisted of clubs along the peninsula, from Sunnyvale north to Milbrae

In the 1990's our club and many of its members also belonged to a national organization of camera clubs known as the **Photographic Society of North America (PSA)**, and various members submitted images for judging at regional and annual meetings of this group.

Over the years, our participation in N4C declined because of the burden of transporting slides and prints to their meetings, usually held in the East Bay. MPPA also lost its attraction, and dissolved in the late 2000's. Few if any members now belong to PSA.

Recent Competitions

The change from analog to digital capture in the early 2000's resulted in an expansion of competition categories. These categories include: Open, Architecture, Creative, Fauna, Flora, Natural Landscape, Photojournalism, Portrait, Travel, and Special Theme. Instead of having a separate chair for each category we now have a chair for digital competitions and another chair for print competitions.

PROGRAMS

Programs (lectures on a topic) have long been a tradition in the club. In the past these were presentations by experienced members from both our club and other area clubs. We have recently added lectures given by either a club member or a local photographer. Some of these lectures are followed by field workshops.

Annual Photographic Arts Lectures (2005-2015)

These programs were formal lectures open to the public and sponsored by the club.

- 2005: **Robert Buelteman** (Montara, CA) : 'Photography Beyond Tradition'
- 2006: **Michael Collopy** (Santa Clara U.): 'Carving a Niche in Fine Art Photography'
- 2007: **George Gilbert** (NYC): 'An Eyewitness to Photographic History in the 20th Century'
- 2009: **Bryan Taylor** (San Jose State U.): 'The Art of Getting Lost: Exploring Alternative Photographic Processes'
- 2011: **Charles Cramer**: 'A Fine Art Printer's Photographic Journey'
- 2011: **Julianne Kost** (Adobe): 'An Evening with Julianne Kost'

- 2012: **Lewis Kemper** (Northern CA): 'An Evening with Lewis Kemper: Light, Composition and Color'
- 2012: **Cole Thompson** (Colorado): 'Why Black and White?'
- 2013: **John Paul Caponigro** (Maine): 'Illuminating Creativity'
- 2014: **Darren Gulin** (National Geographic): 'A Passion for Nature and Travel Photography'
- 2015: **Catherine Karnow** (National Geographic): 'National Geographic Traveler Story'

The club has sponsored presentations by other speakers including George Lepp, a noted wildlife photographer.

EDUCATION

In the early 2000's, with the advent of digital cameras and photo editing applications there was a rapid transition away from film-based photography toward digital. During this time there was a great need, especially among new members, for help in learning how to edit their digital images. The club responded, offering both individual and formal tutorial sessions. Also, in the early days, there was great resistance among long-time members to the use of digital editing to enhance an image, arguing that it was not 'true'. Eventually this was resolved, allowing members to employ post-processing to improve an image, except in certain categories such as Nature and Photojournalism.

Instruction on digital editing software (Lightroom and Photoshop) is presented at meetings dedicated to that purpose. In addition, an online Lightroom tutorial developed by a member is available for download from the website.

A formal mentoring program was set up and remains in place but is now utilized informally.

ANNUAL COMPETITION

Over the years the format has changed but we continue to offer recognition for the single best digital and print images in various categories. These awards are presented at an annual awards night, usually held in January of each year.

Anne MacKenzie Award –This award was created to honor member Anne MacKenzie who passed away in February 2008. It is given to the club photographer whose print in the annual competition best illustrates originality and a creative vision. During Anne's 15 plus years in the club she was an unwavering advocate for photography that conveyed these attributes. She had a very positive influence on the work of many of the club members, which contributed greatly to the club's reputation for high artistic quality.

FIELD TRIPS

In the past these were mainly to local sites within an hour or so drive from Palo Alto. More recently these have expanded to a wider area including Yosemite, the Eastern Sierras, Point

Reyes Peninsula and Point Lobos. Overnight lodging is also offered for some of the more distant sites.

EXHIBITS

The club organizes exhibits of members' work. These have been held at various locations, including:

- Keeble and Shuchat Photography (upstairs gallery)
- Pacific Art League
- Community School of Music and the Arts (Mountain View)
- Palo Alto City Hall
- The Los Altos Hills Town Hall
- The Rinconada Library next the Palo Alto Art Center
- Avenue 25 Gallery (San Mateo)
- Avenidas (Mountain View)

COMMUNICATION

Green Sheet Newsletter

Until the early 2000's, competition results were shared with one of our members, who cut and pasted them onto a monthly green newsletter known as "The Green Sheet", which was mailed to the membership. [Earlier issues of the PACC newsletter were named "The Bulletin" (1949), "News and Views" (1963) and finally the "Green Sheet" (1972).]

Website

In 2001 it was decided to develop a club website. At that time there were no comparable websites in the Bay Area, and few among clubs in the Photographic Society of North America. The club website served as a central repository of information about meetings, competition results, etc., and was well received. Around 2010 the website was converted to a more automated format. Later it incorporated an automated image upload function for competitions, and also a gallery to showcase member images. A Facebook group was also created around 2016.

Group Email

To facilitate communication with and among members, the club set up a Yahoo PACamera group (password required), which enabled sending messages by group email, and commentary by members. The Yahoo group has recently been replaced by an Io group.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

It has long been a tradition of our club to take on a number of photography projects to aid the local community.

Among these are:

- A photo series by 10 club members documenting the 50th anniversary year (2005) of **The Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford**. This is a residential retreat in the hills above Stanford, and attracts scholars in the behavioral sciences to pursue or complete their research or write books, while

informally gathering with each other. The program led to an exhibit open to the public, a DVD of images, and a photo calendar.

- **Cultural Kaleidoscope** - members helped document Palo Alto Art Center sponsored **art programs in two local schools** (in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto).
- **Photo Shoots** at opening reception events held at the Palo Alto Art Center.
- **'Art in Public Spaces'**– In 2010, club members photographed art currently on public display throughout the city, to supplant the city's existing database and to publicize its existence by an exhibit at Palo Alto City Hall.
- **Exhibits at local retirement homes** such as Stevenson house in Palo Alto. The first of these was an oral history project in 2010-2011. Other members followed with exhibits of their own work, accompanied by presentations at opening receptions.
- **A course on nature photography** offered by the City of Palo Alto and taught by members of the club.
- **Phot Shoot at the Cubberly Artists Studio Program**

ANNUAL AUCTION-POTLUCK (1990-2013)

The Annual Auction-Potluck was held in late summer or early fall at a member's home. In addition to its social benefits, this event enabled members to donate used equipment (including darkroom gear and supplies) for purchase by others, with the proceeds used to bolster the club's treasury. Annual net revenue from this auction rose from around \$300 in the early 2000s to \$2,469 at the last event in 2013. The success of this effort depended on the work of many club members, including those involved in setting up the online website for displaying items for auction.