

Distinctive Image

featuring...

Tony Potter, PPSA

Cumbria, United Kingdom



Battered bowler

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Tony Potter, PPSA**. After joining the Society in 2006, Tony began attending annual conferences and conference attendees will know Tony as the popular gentleman from “across the pond.” Tony uses photography to speak about life as it is lived today in our world, “not always ‘nice’ but invariably interesting,” and in this *PSA Journal* feature, his images portray a *Slice of Life*.

A resident of Workington, in Cumbria in the United Kingdom, Tony was the first PSA Region Director for the UK and presently holds the post of Chairman of International Affairs. He has referred 38 members to the Society and has 2 membership stars.

A prolific exhibitor, Tony has earned a Galaxy

One in the Color Projected Image Division (CPID); and 5 stars in the Divisions of Nature, Electronic Imaging and Photo Travel. The diversity of his stars speaks to the depth and breadth of his photography. Mr. Potter earned his Proficiency Distinction (PPSA) in 2008, and in addition to his Society distinction he has also earned an EFIAP/b, the bronze excellence level of the *Federation Internationale de l'Art Photographique*; an ARPS, Associate of the *Royal Photographic Society* and DPAGB, a Distinction of the *Photographic Alliance of Great Britain*.

Mr. Potter is on the *Photographic Alliance of Great Britain* list of international judges and a member of the *Lieceniet Panel of the Royal Photographic Society* (RPS) and as such, he



Georgian lady

lectures and judges throughout the UK. For his service efforts, Tony was awarded an APAGB, which is awarded for meritorious service by the *Photographic Alliance of Great Britain*. He is one of the founding members of the West Cumbria Photo Group, (which notes that it very carefully avoids the designation *camera club*). A great proponent of prints, Tony is the founder and chairman of the Great British Small Print Circuit and the Solway Salon for large prints. As a service to the community, the West Cumbria Photo Group has about 400 pictures exhibited in local hospitals,

and this PSAer is the group chairman of this activity.

Tony tells us that he has “been a keen photographer since my teenage years and I am still taking pictures and enjoying it. Now retired, I worked as an executive director in the National Health Service in the UK. I still enjoy making prints, particularly in monochrome. I have lots of photographic friends and via international exhibiting and now my membership in PSA, this circle of friends has grown even wider. My photographic interests are varied but I enjoy travel and photographing people in their environment.”



After the shopping



Whitby Bells

Morning
devotions



ARTIST'S STATEMENT



My aim, if at all possible, is to make the picture mine, to try and have my signature on it, to allow my approach and style to come through in the finished picture. This can be difficult if one of my aims is to do well in competitions or international exhibitions. My first priority must always be to take what I wish to express in the way I see it and if others (judges) appreciate it, that's fine, if not so be it. Sending pictures away to international exhibitions is a great way to see how photographic styles and how approaches vary country to country. I

do most of my picture taking alone as I need that space to interact with whatever it is I am photographing; be that a place, an object or a person. Photo groups have never been my scene. An interesting debate has taken place over this last year between some photographic friends and myself as to how much the photographer should alter what he or she sees in the camera lens. I do not mean the deliberate creation of pictures by use of ones imagination and Photoshop®: that I see as wholly legitimate, creative and exciting. No, rather how much should we see everything we see as a *studio* and move elements around to give us the picture we want to see and not just sensitively record what is there? I am of the latter type and feel that a picture should be more *warts and all*, than that the right element is on the right "third." Where to next? It does not matter if it is a new country to see, new people to photograph, or a new photographic technique to try—so long as it is fun. Keep taking the pictures.



Better days



Me and my girl



Mobile shop

Technique

An old, now long passed, photographic friend of mine once gave me a tip that has served me well. Tony, he said, "The number of good pictures you take is inversely proportionate to the amount of equipment you carry." How true this is and how fortunate we now are to have such versatile cameras and lenses that only a few years ago, we could only have dreamt about. When I travel the equipment I take is a good reliable SLR digital camera, normally a full frame digital SLR so that I can use wide angle properly as wide angle. For lenses I bring a wide-angle 24mm and medium zoom 28-200mm. And also important these days are taking along downloading and storage equipment, so I never travel without my laptop computer. Because now my SLR digital camera can handle low light to a fantastic degree my lens' speed is now not as important as it once was; even my slower zoom lenses are useful for travel photography. My little compact digital camera also produces some first-rate pictures and just slips into my pocket and is always at hand. (How long will it be when all I need to take is my mobile phone?) Being aware of all that is around us is an integral part of the photographer's craft. Being ready to capture the moment that reveals life being lived out in front of our lens is what we must always be at the ready for. Thank goodness the days of that Never Ready Case are gone!

The craft that we as photographers have to learn is that of being aware of what is going on around us and the photographic opportunities this presents. The aware approach has always to be matched with sensitivity and respect for the people and situations in which we are photographing. This is not some human safari, armed with the longest lens we can carry; out to bag our prey whether they like it or not. If we are aware that our photographing is causing offence then we should stop. Spending time, to get to know a situation and the people, is important and a few words to extend a greeting and say hello is always beneficial. Going away from the usual tourist routes can be a challenge and care needs to be taken when in strange and less visited areas. But often this is where the pictures are and real people live. On the whole most people are kind and welcoming and ready to assist when situations get problematical. A couple of years ago while photographing away from the main streets in an east European city a young man with a knife requested my camera. Backing away and a loud shout brought the locals to my aid who chased the man away, looked after me well and paid for a taxi back to my hotel. Not an experience one seeks or enjoys, and it has only happened to me once in 20 years of my off street wanderings.



Patience