

Camera Clubs



Q&A:

Aperture Woolwich PS

We ask Marshall Pinsent and Stu Mayhew about Aperture's remarkable turnaround

■ **MK: Tell us about Aperture Woolwich.**

■ **MP:** We concentrate mainly on digital photography and are very much open to new ideas. We do the usual club things too like competitions, talks and field trips etc. We run technical and creative workshops, covering the basics of using a camera, digital image editing, studio portraiture and table-top photography. The social aspect is very important too, people meet friends and form relationships through the club - it's about developing 'the seeing eye', enjoying photography and getting more out of life!

■ **MK: The club has gone from strength to strength. How have you managed it?**

■ **MP:** When affordable digital cameras appeared, film seemed to disappear virtually overnight. We dropped to eight members

The remarkable story of Aperture Woolwich is one that is great to keep in mind even if times get tough for clubs. If Aperture's experiences are anything to go by, modernisation is the key. If your club has had an amazing reversal of fortune, get in touch with us at cameraclubs@dslruser.co.uk

by that time, and as devout converts to the new church of pixels we pledged to fight on rather than go under, so we had a serious rethink about how we did things.

As a graphic designer I know a bit about rebranding and marketing and so I set about changing our public profile, creating a new identity for the club, hooking us up to the world with a new website, a blog, a Flickr group and via social networking sites. Although not ignoring film we consciously focused on projecting the club as a hub of creative digital photography open to everyone. We built it and the people came!

■ **MK: What inspired you both to enter your images to Take a View?**

■ **MP:** Charlie Waite's work has been a huge inspiration to me and my photography, and although I'd been following Take A View since its inception I'd never got around to entering it. But last year Stu and I went to one of Charlie's talks on landscapes at the NFT and we decided we'd enter this year.

■ **SM:** Actually Marshall suggested I enter some shots, as there are a wide variety of categories beyond the traditional landscape! There are some very good landscape photographers at Aperture, but I don't consider myself one of them. My shot had had a good reaction within the club so I thought I'd enter to see what happened.

■ **MK: How do you feel, having been recognised like this?**

■ **SM:** When I received an email saying I had made it as far as the final selection I was stunned! I have been to the exhibition every year it has been running (as well as buying all the books) so was well aware of the high standard of work entered. Then, a month or so later I got the email saying I had been selected with a commendation, and I was really amazed.

■ **MP:** It came as a huge surprise back in July to learn that we had been shortlisted, but then to discover I'd won the runner-up prize in such a highly competitive category simple blew my socks off!

■ **MK: Do you think the recognition will help boost the club?**

■ **MP:** I think it will. We have some terrific photographers at AWPS and this will hopefully give more of us the confidence to show our work to a wider audience.

■ **SM:** I think it will give massive encouragement to existing Aperture members as much as anything else. This is my fourth year at the club. I have learnt so much from people there and my photography has improved no end. I am a genuine example of, 'If I can do it, then anyone can' - I'm the least technical photographer you are ever likely to meet! We always welcome new members and if our images in the exhibition encourage people to come along it would be fantastic.

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