

Review: Mufty's Underwater Photography Workshop

On January 19, a group of IACC members gathered at Mathewson's lovely Jasper Ave. condo to participate in Mufty's Underwater Flower Workshop. Anyone who has taken a workshop with Mufty knows how organized she is. The physical environment, as well as her warm welcome and presentation, instructions, and materials are always prepared and in place ahead of time, which keeps the session humming along on schedule.

Mufty started the workshop with an enjoyable slideshow that included samples of her underwater flower photography and a discussion about equipment, favourable conditions, and the different types of flowers she has found work best for this type of photography. She made some practical recommendations about where to find reasonably priced materials.

After the presentation, Mufty invited us to begin either working at stations set up in her living room before our arrival or assembling underwater floral arrangements in the kitchen. I enjoyed the experience of filling vessels and submerging properly anchored flowers and greenery in water. Creating an interesting underwater photography subject is not as easy as one might think. It is necessary to have a good quality glass vessel, the right kind of plant (some seem too fragile to stay intact underwater), something to anchor the plant with, and room in the water to allow bubbles - arguably the main attraction - to form.

Despite Mufty mentioning these things during her presentation, the real learning came from experimentation and I appreciate that she is the type of educator to allow it. Though she is highly skilled at providing guidance and instruction, Mufty is particularly good at making one feel welcome to move around and explore the environment, including other rooms and subjects, at will. It is freeing to feel equipped with information but welcome to venture outside the day's subject area. (It was sometimes difficult to focus on capturing bubbles forming on a tender apricot rose submerged in water while knowing that beyond the living room curtains was a gorgeous spread of landscape including a vast swath of the river valley and a south-facing view of the skyline!)

This workshop was not only an educational but relaxing way to spend a Sunday afternoon. In between moving around the room and adjusting our tripods and camera settings to take photos of submerged roses, Gerbera daisies, lilies, pussy willows, and other plants and greenery, several of us took the opportunity to look through Mufty's personal photography memoir books and hear her stories about their inspiration. This was a delightful afternoon spent amongst mentors and fellow students.

To put the experience of being a newly educated underwater flower photographer into perspective: a landscape photographer might consult [The Photographer's Ephemeris](#) for the right time and place to set up his or her tripod in order to snap a great shot of a sunrise, then wait with coffee and patience for the morning sun to light up a (hopefully dramatic) sky; a street photographer might stand on a corner of a busy market waiting for the precise moment to capture a random stranger stepping into the scene with a natural expression that is eye-catching; meanwhile, an underwater flower photographer fills a glass vessel, anchors an interesting flower to the bottom of it, chooses a background and lighting that will enhance the subject, adjusts his or her tripod and camera settings while checking for glare and distortion, and then waits for (hopefully dramatic) bubbles. Inspired by Mufty's workshop, I feel well

equipped to pursue this type of photography in my own dining room. A big thanks to her for educating and empowering us to feel excited about underwater photography

- Corinne Overwater