

Member Showcase: Wendy Royer Learning Through Collections

by Heather Kuchma, IACC Program Chair

On Thursday, February 12, 2015, when Wendy shared her showcase of four collections from a trip to Cuba, her goal was to emphasize how viewing a group of images is far more interesting and provides a much stronger educational opportunity to the photographer. In her words, "We often hear it said that 'a picture is worth a thousand words,' but unless you have been there, how many people can tell where an image is from? It is not worth a thousand words—a short sentence at best. Some images do stand by themselves, but most often a group of images will tell the story better than a single image."

Wendy described her first collection of images as a series of "snapshots of images that caught my eye while in Cuba." Each image had appeal and context to Wendy, but the viewer wouldn't have that to build on—so there is no emotional connection. To the viewer, some images were political, of

transportation, of the rural situation and of the disintegrating buildings, but for Wendy the people were vibrant and this created some discord for her.



Wendy's second collection, *Street Scenes*, focuses on shooting Cuban people in context. The images ranged from people standing on the streets (often outside of their homes and at times talking with others or simply observing their surroundings), children playing, people using

and fixing various modes of transportation, and people buying and selling food. The idea was that by sharing several images, the context of "neighbourhood" would be better captured and the viewer would get a much stronger picture of Havana. Wendy's concluding comment for this section was that, "because the streets are busy, having focus and simplifying the image, whenever possible, are important."



"In street photography you can't often retake the shot, so watching becomes critical." (left photo)

"I tried to shoot the Cuban people where they lived, played and earned their living." (right photo)

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"I noted that people often stood behind bars and were watching. At first I was perturbed by this, but I began to recognize that I also had to watch closely, wait for the moment, and then I would see their joy, so I was able to get better images; for example, framing the face with the bars."
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"Sometimes it was simply the uniqueness of the individual that I wanted to capture."
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Wendy starting off her third collection, *Street Portraits*, by saying that, "Although the streets were extremely interesting for me, I constantly saw images I liked, and what worked well was that the people were willing to be photographed. I am interested in people." While capturing the individuals, Wendy also took the time to consider the other elements to help make a stronger image, such as the use of colour and lines to frame an individual, lighting and backgrounds. Through this experience, Wendy also learned the value of engaging with the individuals before taking the shot, as the connection enhanced the strength of the images.

The final collection was *Personal Portrayal*. Wendy illustrated how a photographer can narrow the focus even further and allow great opportunity for the character of an individual to be captured and reflected upon.

Wendy concluded her presentation with the following three points: 1) it is a good idea to have one or more ongoing projects because this allows for purposeful shooting; 2) shooting anything a number of times allows you to compare and self-reflect; 3) there is strength of impact from multiple images with a common thread.



"Street Portraits: The faces, the lighting, and the setting—there were times it all came together."
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