



Distinctive Image

featuring...

Samuel G. Shaw, FPSA, PPSA

Turlock, California



Five leaves in ice

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist, **Sam Shaw, FPSA, PPSA**, who developed a style of photography, which he labels *Digital PhotoMontage*. Sam explains his method of photography as “the integration of several images using Photoshop layers, which results in my own new creation.”

Sam Shaw joined PSA in 1993 and has been an avid exhibitor since 1995, earning 4 stars in the Color Projected Imaging Division (CPID); 5 stars in the Nature Division (ND); 3 stars in the Photo Travel Division (PTD); 4 stars in the Photojournalism Division (PJD) and 2 stars in the Electronic Imaging Division (EID). He earned his Proficiency distinction (PPSA) in 2002. Sam has won numerous medals; among them a PSA Gold Medal for the 2007 CPID Photo Essay Contest.

Mentioned frequently in PSA's *Who's Who in Photography*, he was one of the top exhibitors in North America for Photo Travel in 2008. In 2007, he took first place in the Chapter's Showcase. Locally, he has actively competed in the Fotoclave (a four council annual competition) and competitions offered by the San Joaquin Council of Camera Clubs, the Modesto Camera Club, the Merced Camera Club, and the Stanislaus County Fair. Since 1997, Sam has been a very dedicated judge on the council, camera club and international exhibitions level.

This PSAer's passion for photography has led him to create programs and slide shows on various aspects of photography and Photoshop® techniques, which he has shared at camera clubs, councils, chapters, regional and PSA International Conferences. On the local level, Sam has

contributed his programs to senior citizen groups, the local library and community assemblies. Two of his digital programs, called *From Real to Imaginary* and *To Compute or Not To Compute? That Is the Question*, reveal his passion for his subject of *Digital PhotoMontage*.

Mr. Shaw has a distinguished record when it comes to volunteering. For PSA, beginning with the Nature Division (ND), Sam has served as the ND Exhibitions Standards Chairman, the Chairman of the ND, and the PSA International Exhibition Chairman for Nature in 2000 and again in 2005. He was the PSA International Exhibition General Chairman in 2000. He has served on the PSA Society Recognition Awards Committee for five years, three years as chairman. Currently he is on the Progress Awards Committee. In recognition of his years of service, Sam was elected an Associate (APSA) in 2000 and a Fellow (FPSA) in 2005. He is currently the Treasurer for the Gold Rush Chapter and the Fresno International Exhibition.

Locally, Sam has used his photography for the benefit of the community: he has displayed pictures for the Turlock's Art Commission Walking Gallery; sold note cards and calendars for the benefit of the Modesto Camera Club; worked with the Turlock Irrigation District, taking pictures of work situations and the environment; and assisted in photographing historic sites for a book produced by the Landmark Preservation Commission of Modesto. Sam is the official photographer of the Turlock Rural Fire Department and has



Statue and wings in sky



Butterflies and flowers

entered burning buildings to photograph from the inside. The fire department uses his photos to review and improve their techniques, training and investigation. For the fire department's 40th anniversary, Sam created a T-shirt logo, which was sold as a fundraiser. He has responded to more than 100 fire calls.

Except for time spent in the Navy, Sam Shaw has spent his whole life in California. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree, majoring in mathematics and a minor in physics, and has earned his Master's Degree in Mathematics with emphasis on Computer Science. His main work background has dealt with computers, programming (having written thousands of programs in 10-12 computer languages) and systems design. His interest in photography has been a passion since high school. Sam uses Canon equipment and equally enjoys photography and the digital darkroom where he spends time creating his *Digital PhotoMontages*.

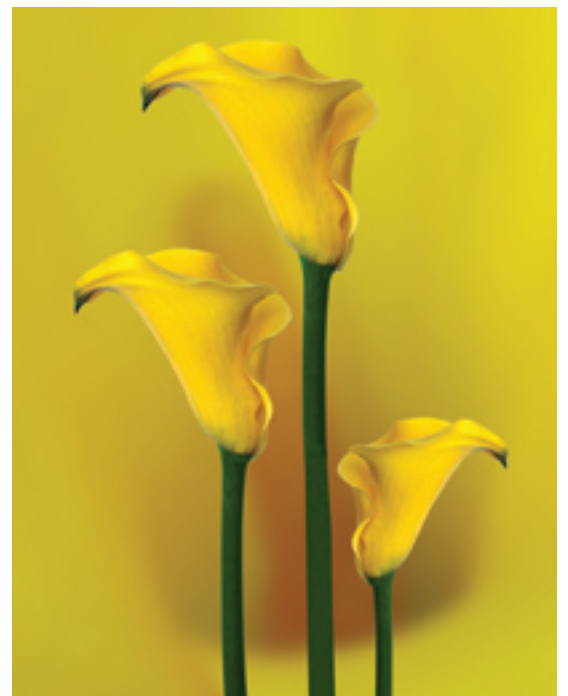
Photos ©
Sam Shaw, FPSA, PPSA



Mother Creator



Sin City biker



Three yellow Cala lilies



Mask and crossed swords

TECHNIQUE

When the creative juices start to flow and I start out to make a Digital PhotoMontage I need an idea, some place where I want to end up. This is needed even if the final image looks nothing like what was pictured at the beginning.

People ask where I get my ideas; the answer is everywhere, ideas come from looking at other people's work at camera club, council, chapter meetings and at the PSA conference. Ideas come from looking through exhibition catalogs, searching sites on the Internet, looking at the world; they also come from dreams, both at night and daydreams.

Once I have an idea of what to create I start to assemble the images that have the pieces needed. If the idea or image is a coyote howling in front of the moon, I need the coyote, a moon, a night background and probably something else in the foreground. If any of these items have ever been used in another image they have been saved in a collection file, if it is a new item then it needs to be pulled out of its setting, added to my collection file and also placed in the Digital PhotoMontage.

Using Photoshop®, the background goes in first because it is the lowest layer and everything else is built on top of it. Next the individual pieces have to be brought in. If I need a coyote and I don't already have one in my collection file then I have to isolate a howling coyote from the original image. There are many ways to do this, I prefer to use layer masking. Once I have each part of the image the construction starts. Everything is put on a separate layer so it can be moved around, the opacity changed if needed, the blending mode changed if needed.

Once done, the image is saved with all the layers still intact, put aside for a few days and then opened up again to see if any adjustments are needed. The final image rarely looks like what was in my mind when I started.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

To me photography is a very personal act. When I go out photographing I put all of me into the act, and part of me comes out with each image captured. While photographing Nature, whether it is in the mountains, desert, or at the sea, or photographing plants or animals, I feel a part of that natural world, something I don't feel if I am there without my camera. When photographing people I feel like I know them better, like now I have part of them with me.

And this feeling just intensifies when I am at my computer with my digital files, creating an image that only I see in my mind. That image is truly a part of me no matter where the bits and pieces come from. So, photography truly is personal, my image will always be just a little different than yours because it has a piece of me in it.

Sam Shaw, FPSA, PPSA