



Distinctive Image

featuring...

Dr. Erik Kissa, APSA, MPSA
Wilmington, Delaware



Careful metering avoids blown highlights

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Dr. Erik Kissa, APSA, MPSA**, who resides in Wilmington, Delaware. A very accomplished photographer, Erik shares one of his favorite subjects with us, *Water Lilies*. He has been a member of the Society since 1968 and has over 3000 PSA-recognized acceptances. Interestingly, his very first one was for a water lily color slide in 1966.

Having achieved a Sixth Galaxy in the Color Slide Division (CPID); two Galaxies in the Photo Travel Division (PTD); four stars in Nature; four stars in the Pictorial Print Division (PPD); and a fourth star in Photojournalism (PJD), Erik was awarded his Master Proficiency Distinction (MPSA) in 2011. In *PSA's Who's Who in Photography*, he has been listed frequently in the top North American boxes in Color Slides (CPID), small color prints (where in 2008 he was second worldwide), PTD and more recently PJD.

Dr. Kissa is well known to PSA members as the author of the popular Q&A column (*Questions and Answers: Photographic Equipment and Techniques*), appearing monthly in the *PSA Journal* with questions from readers around the globe. In addition, he has contributed feature articles to the *PSA Journal*: February 2004, *What is Photography?* and January 2005, *Creative Flower Photography*. Erik has also shared his expertise as a consultant on photographic equipment and techniques on the PSA New Members website. (http://psa-newmember.org/consultation_services/equipment.html) He was elected an Associate of the Society (APSA) in 2012.

Erik has contributed to photography on the local level through judging, presenting, and teaching. He has judged numerous PSA-recognized international exhibitions and local camera club competitions, and is also a judge for PSA's judging service for clubs. Through the

years, he has presented slide shows to audiences in Delaware, New York and New Jersey on India, China and Korea. For the Delaware Photographic Society (DPS), he has taught *Cameras and Lenses*, *Close-up Photography*, and *Flower Photography*, and developed a series of photography workshops for fellow club members. In 2004, he received a special DPS commendation “for educating club members in many ways, but especially by answering tough questions with accurate and enlightening answers in his monthly column in *The Reflector*, a ten-year contribution.” And this year, in recognition of his dedicated service and photographic excellence, he was honored with Associate status (ADPS).

He has been active in the Wilmington International Exhibition of Photography as Print Chairman in 1960, General Chairman in 1968, scanner of accepted slides for multi-media digital presentations from 2000 to 2010 and in various other capacities over the years. He was designated a Fellow of the exhibition (FWIEP) in 2009.

Dr. Kissa has had an impressive career in the science of color (theory of color, light fastness of dyes and pigment printing inks), with many patents, books and articles. Two of his books contain photographically related material: *Dispersions*, which discusses the theory and testing of dispersions, including the formation, stability and testing of printing inks and *Fluorinated Surfactants and Repellents* has a chapter concerning how surfactants aid light-sensitive coatings of photographic materials and function as wetting agents, emulsion additives, stabilizers and antistats.

As a United Nations technical expert, he taught theory of color and dyes in China at Shanghai Research Institute and presented a topical lecture at the Shanghai University. In India he taught at the Textile Institute and lectured at the University in Ahmedabad. During one of his three assignments in South Korea, he designed the color-testing laboratory for the Korea Government Research Institute. He has also been a guest lecturer at the University in Tallinn, Estonia.

Erik was born in Estonia, a Nordic country south of Finland. His father was an amateur photographer and the house had a darkroom. After receiving a Zeiss box camera for his tenth birthday, he learned to develop film and make prints. Later he used his father's Zeiss 4x5 view camera with tilts and shifts. Eventually his father gave him a Zeiss Super Ikonta medium format camera. After World War II, Erik studied chemistry in Karlsruhe, Germany. When he graduated, he traded in his Super Ikonta for an Exakta, came to America to work for Du Pont®, and began his 55-year membership in the Delaware Photographic Society (formerly the Delaware Camera Club).



Soft light presents a delicate image



Creative effects are possible

Technique

The three most important conditions for successful water lily photography are a beautifully structured lily, an overcast sky creating soft shadows or none at all, and a windless day. The time of the day is important as well, not only because the quality of light changes during the day, but because the most beautiful water lilies are night flowering and will close in the morning. An early start is essential, especially during hot days.

The equipment needed for photographing water lilies is simple. Any camera will do but I prefer one with interchangeable lenses. It does not make much difference which of my many DSLR cameras I use for photographing water lilies, because everything is controlled manually with the camera on a tripod. Although most of my photography is digital these days, sometimes I still shoot with Velvia film in an SLR. Digital flower pictures do not seem to have the same tonality of photographs originating from film.

Of the fourteen different lenses I use for the various aspects of my photography, my preferred lens for water lilies is a 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 zoom. Occasionally I use a 70-200mm f/2.8 lens. Although this lens is heavy and requires a very sturdy tripod head, the constant f-number and the large aperture can be useful. I use either a large aperture to isolate the flower from the background or a small aperture to keep the leaves in focus as well. The only filter I use is a polarizer to vary the effect of reflections on the leaves and on the water surface.

Automatic exposure control has a tendency to overexpose the lily. Spot metering of the lily and the leaves is necessary to avoid blown highlights.

The lighting conditions I use are experimental. With natural lighting, a reflector is easy to work with because the effect is visible. For flash fill I modify the harsh light from the flash with a softbox. To create unusual effects, I use one or two flashes with red or orange filters.

Although most of the special effects are created in the camera, the computer can also create new color variations.



Reflected clouds add another dimension



The effect of flash is enhanced by the computer



A red filter on the flash changes the blue lily



Some colors do not need enhancement

Photos © Erik Kissa, APSA, MPSA



Water lilies are magnificent subjects for photography

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Erik Kissa, APSA, MPSA



For me photography is a picture hunt and a challenge to make an artful picture of the subject. I am fundamentally a pictorialist seeking to find beauty wherever it can be found. As a photographer my eyes are always looking for picture opportunities and previsualizing a scene. This is why we photographers can see more of the world around us.

I like to photograph landscapes and flowers, but I am less inclined to record nature than to interpret and enhance it. When photographing flowers I am looking for an unusual angle or perspective and use water lilies as beautiful species to experiment with.

The objective of my travel photography is an artful presentation of a scene or local people with my camera, rather than by manipulation in the computer. My pictures show the pleasant side of a country without attempting to balance beauty and realism. I like to photograph people. Although photojournalism has the objective to tell it the way it is, without esthetic improvements, I still seek to present a scene and people in a pleasant way with careful attention to composition and color.

My early years of photography were in black-and-white and I learned to appreciate the importance of lighting to create shadows and highlights. The recent renaissance of B&W photography has been a welcome opportunity to make monochrome prints and projected images, relying on my past experience to visualize a color scene in monochrome.

For me the PSA stars are milestones on the road of exhibitions, not the objectives to work for. With over 3000 international acceptances, I am not seeking more Galaxies but I still send photographs to exhibitions to get the opinions of other photographers, all the while recognizing that judging is subjective and the opinions vary widely.