

Forest of Galtres Camera Club

12th November

Familiar and Unfamiliar Perspectives in the World of Macro

Paul Gunning

Paul delivered an evening of two halves. During the first half, he explained the various pieces of equipment required for successful macro photography. This ranged from the cobbled together and therefore cheaper option to the kinds of expensive equipment available. His own first forays into macro photography had been with a system held together with elastic bands and sellotape. He had used an old lens, extension rings and a reversing ring. He showed successful images taken this way. Paul often uses a macro focusing rail, a tripod, a shutter release cable or remote shutter release. True macro operates on a 1:1 ratio, creating life size images and therefore images taken at 2:1 show double life size with a much shorter working focal distance.



Having talked about equipment, Paul then shared his thoughts on the practical route to successful macro photography. Using shallow depth of focus is key. Intermediate f numbers help to achieve maximum depth of focus. Lower ISOs are best to defocus background enabling subject to dominate. It is always advisable to move slowly and smoothly when photographing a live subject. If insects are a chosen subject, be aware of their behaviour.

The successful image of an insect is more likely to be achieved if the creature is feeding, mating or emerging from its chrysalis. Breathe slowly when photographing at such close range. Be comfortable. Waiting for the ‘moment’ can take some time. Be aware of your surroundings to avoid harm to yourself and harm to the environment.

He uses RAW so that images can later be processed as necessary. He brackets focusing so that layering can be used if necessary and dust spots on the lens, which will be more apparent in macro images, can be spotted out of the images.



Paul advises to be creative with lighting of inanimate subjects. At the required depth of focus, no one would guess that some of lighting colour was achieved using sweet wrappers. Try monochrome. For living and non-living subjects use a low angle. Top down images, especially with small creatures, rarely has impact. Diagonals lend more energy. All this was demonstrated in the second part of the programme, when Paul shared a wide selection of his own macro photography. From butterflies to a view of a daddy long leg’s head that demands extra respect for this creature. We saw details of insects and other creatures so differently to our everyday perception of them. There was close-up detail of plants. Fascinating to see were the images of inanimate objects. Who would have thought that stressed plastic could produce such incredible colourful abstract patterns.

Paul provided an evening that informed and amazed giving club members inspiration for their own choice of subject. Many thanks to Paul.

Next week, the annual Pat Riggs Open digital Competition entries will be judged.