

All pictures © Alan Henriksen



60-second exposure

Alan Henriksen



Regularly encountering stinky seaweed and chilly winter weather, **Alan Henriksen** braves the elements to create striking natural studies. Here he talks to **B+W** about rubber bands, sand fleas and pesky pixels. Edited by Tracy Hallett

What is your favourite photographic book?

Edward Weston: The Flame of Recognition (published by Aperture). It includes a sampling of Weston's finest photographic achievements, and excerpts from his daybooks, chronicling both his work and his evolving ideas on photography.

What is your worst photographic habit?

I occasionally forget to check the camera settings before making an exposure. Typical errors include leaving the focus mode set to manual, using an f-stop that's too large for the required depth of field, and setting a shutter speed too slow for hand-held work.

Which piece of kit could you not be without?

For my current work, which involves taking close-up shots of seaweed, I find a LensBand indispensable. This tailor-made piece of rubber straddles the front and rear portions of the lens barrel, preventing it from extending under its own weight – something that can be a problem when the camera is pointing downward.

Tell us your favourite photographic quote.

'...the me of universal rhythms'. Edward Weston (American photographer).

In 1958, at the age of just nine, Alan Henriksen made his first exposures using a Kodak Brownie and Verichrome Pan film. The following year he received a basic darkroom kit as a Christmas present. His interest in fine art photography intensified after studying the work of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston (he was a student at the 1970 Ansel Adams Yosemite Workshop). Before taking retirement in 2010, Alan worked as a software engineer. He lives in Smithtown, Long Island, New York.



TOP Rock Detail, Point Lobos, 1998 ABOVE Trees, Hoyt Farm Park, Hauppauge, NY, 2003

What is the worst photographic mistake you've ever made? During a two week trip to the coast of Maine I decided to use a new

changing bag so that I could reload my 4x5in sheet film in the field. When I came to develop the film back in New York, I discovered that the bag

had a hole in it. All of the shots were lost because I failed to inspect the bag before using it.

Who would join you in your ultimate camera club (dead or alive)? Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Brett Weston, Harry Callahan, Ansel Adams, Paul Caponigro and William Clift. Their outstanding achievements never fail to inspire me.

What is your greatest photographic achievement to date?

An ongoing series of seaweed images. Work from this assignment has been published in various magazines. This coverage, together with a place in the International Photography Awards 2012, has enabled me to obtain representation at the Alan Klotz Gallery in New York (klotzgallery.com).

Why does black & white appeal to you?

After more than half a century as a photographer, I still feel like I've barely scratched the surface when it comes to exploring the expressive potential of black & white.

What is the worst thing about being a professional photographer? Nearly all of my photography takes place outside, so I'd have to say spells

of nasty wet weather. Also, when I'm shooting seaweed, I have to walk, crouch or kneel in the stuff, which is full of sand fleas and spiders – it doesn't smell so good either!

What single thing would improve your photography?

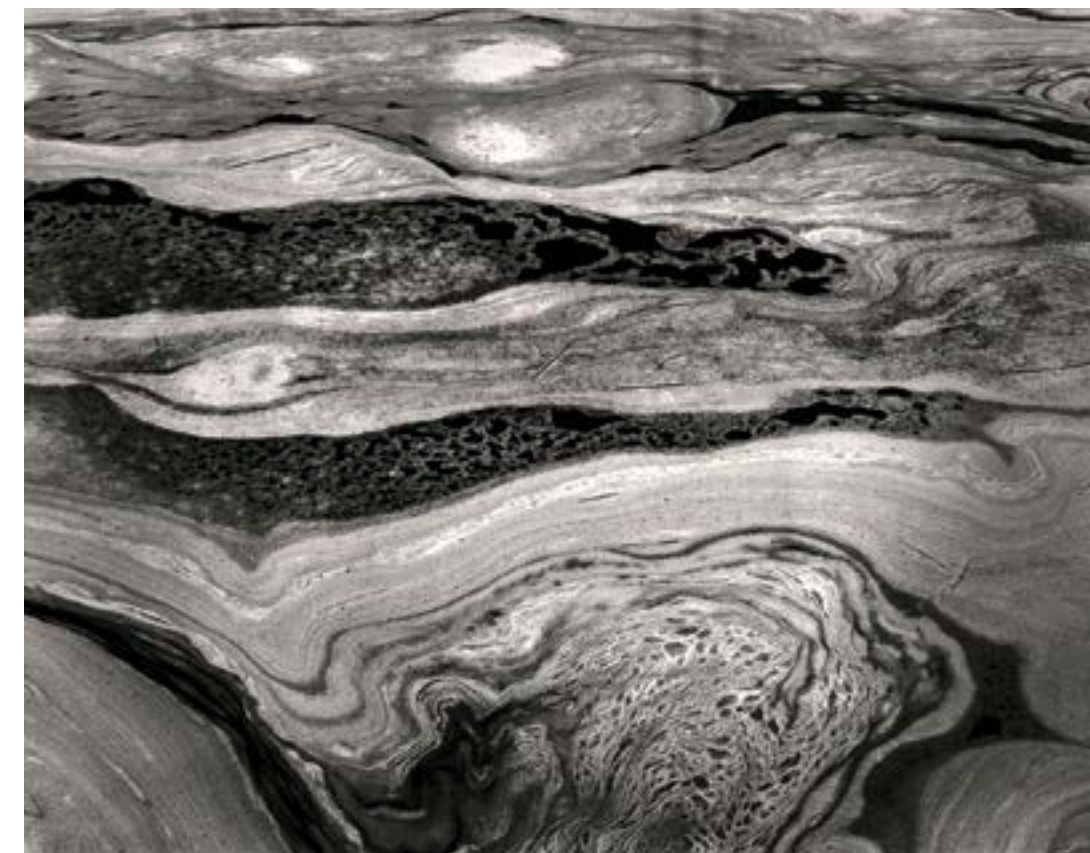
I'm hoping to purchase an Eizo computer monitor soon. Cheaper screens have an annoying characteristic in which the apparent lightness and darkness of each pixel varies depending on the height from which it's viewed. To compensate for the differences in luminance, I have to perform extra image editing prior to printing. The Eizo LCD monitor does not suffer from this limitation.

What would you say to your younger self?

I would give myself a lecture on the two modes of thinking required to make a successful photograph. The first is wilful thinking, which is responsible for decision making and focusing our attention on the project in hand. The second is automatic thinking, which is unaffected by will and allows us to recognise an expressive composition. To make a picture these modes must collaborate in a kind of dance – the trick is to keep them from stepping on each other's toes!



ABOVE Seaweed 254, Seawall, Maine, 2011 BELOW Pond Foam, Somesville, Maine, 2000



Describe your photographic style in three words. Ideas of order.

What has been your most embarrassing moment as a photographer to date?

I once drove from my home in Long Island to Harriman Park in New York State during winter. When I opened the back door of the car I realised that I'd forgotten my coat. The day proved to be cold, unproductive and embarrassing.

What has been the most pressure you have been under as a photographer?

During my seaweed project there have been times when I have found myself within a metre of the water's edge as the tide is coming in. In these instances I have to work fast before the subject becomes submerged.

If you could assist one (living) photographer who would it be?

I've been contemplating printing some of my photographs using Mike Ware's platinum/palladium method. For this reason, I would choose my friend Beth Moon (bethmoon.com) who has mastered both the expressive and technical aspects of this process.

Which photographic website do you visit most often?

The Association of International Photography Art Dealers (aipad.com). The AIPAD website features a list of galleries from around the world. I use it as a kind of hub from which to access other sites, which helps me to stay current.

Which is more important, good technique or a natural eye?

The making of a creative photograph requires both technical competence and a good eye. But it's the photographer's vision, communicated via the photograph, which provides the reason for viewing it. Technical expertise plays a supporting role by enabling the photographer's vision to be realised, and setting the boundaries of what can be expressed.

What was the last piece of photographic kit you bought?

I recently purchased a Manfrotto 190XB tripod. It has a centre column that can be positioned horizontally, which is ideal for framing seaweed subjects.

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