

Photography

Dublin Photography Mechanics

March 31, 2019 | Charles T. Low, Photographer

Photography for geeks, not tourists

I recently blogged about [Dublin](#), in what amounted to a photo-travelogue.

This time, I would like to review the topic from the point of view of a technical photographer, discussing the minutiae of how that went. If you feel that this might interest you, then read on.

Bear in mind that this blog software chooses its own size for photos; many of them can be viewed at the size I intended on an eponymously-named album on [Flickr](#).



Housekeeping

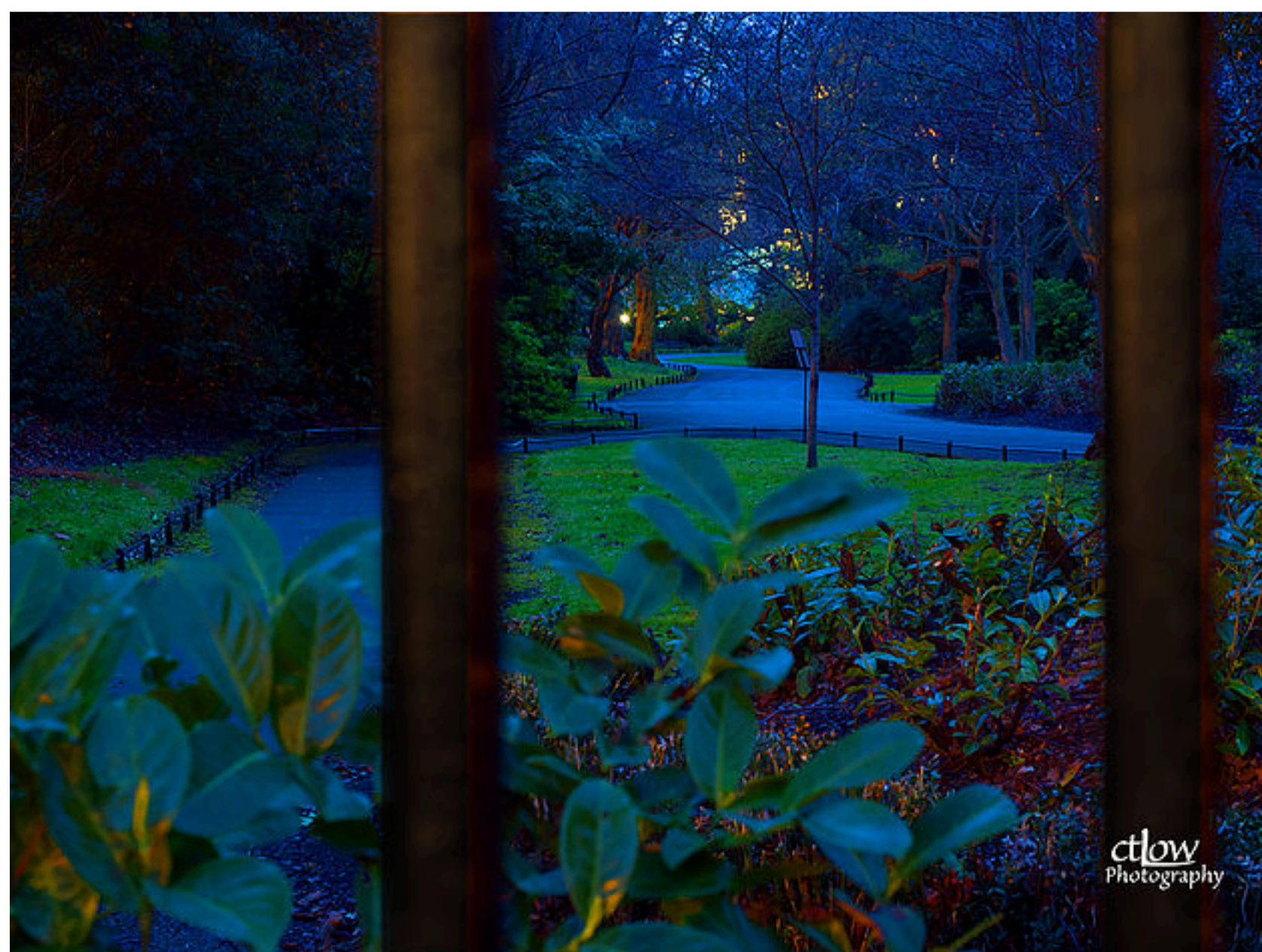
Everything here I made on "aperture-priority" mode, as is my [custom](#). That's not a [rule](#); it just suits me.

Unless otherwise specified, I made them all at ISO 200, my camera's "base" or "native" sensor-sensitivity, to get the best quality image possible, with shutter speed - often on a tripod and using a cable-release - not generally being an issue.

I will give focal lengths in 35 mm camera, or full-frame ("FF") sensor, equivalents. Know also that you have to add two stops to get an equivalent depth-of-field, e.g. my f/8 would look like f/16 on a FF camera (but will expose for f/8, so I will not be converting apertures). I will specify an exposure value ("EV") only if I adjusted it, i.e. over-rode the camera's recommended exposure.

I edit everything. Once in a long while I decide that the best editing is slight-to-none, but in general I i) expand the tonal range, using a [histogram](#) ("Levels" in Photoshop-speak), and ii) bump up the colour saturation, both to taste. I have and often use other tricks, but mainly those two.

Nitty and Gritty



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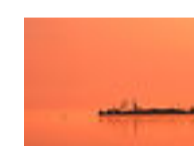
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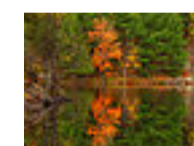
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Archive

March 2019 (2)

St. Stephen's Green

Around sunset, in a locked-for-the-night park with no interior lights, I rotated the tripod to get two legs as close as possible to the bars.

Settings: f/8, shutter speed 15 seconds (yep!), focal length 80 mm, EV -1, i.e. intentionally under-exposed because i) it was dark and I wanted to show that, and ii) it makes colours more vibrant and rich, even before getting to the saturation adjustment.

I have a thing against large areas of unintentional black in photographs. When intentional, that's another matter, but it often just happens by default. I will leave it to you to judge whether the dark areas - if not fully black - in the St. Stephen's Green image work, or not.

I darkened the bars which were much too bright (street-lights) compared with the park interior.



Dublin Alleyway

Just a random find on the way home from lunch, this appealed to me enough at the time to make a quick hand-held photo - keeping things level always requires conscious thought, as if a committed photographer didn't have enough other things to think about - and then I liked it enough later to work it up.

f/5.6, shutter speed 1/60 sec, 52 mm

This image has an extreme contrast range, so i) I edited from a "raw" file to recover highlights and lowlights as well as possible, although you can do this from JPEGs too, much better than the theoretical purists like to recognize, and ii) on some level I decided to live with it. I did "elevate the shadows" a little, but not nearly as much as I could have. They were dark, and I wanted them to show dark. The irregular shaft of sunlight coming in from behind is another matter - it does completely wash out in places, but those places aren't very large.

But another thing about this image is litter. In the original, I at first accepted two noticeable pieces of trash, illustrating that Dublin is clean and litter-free, but not entirely. After a day or so of living with the image, I broke down and cleaned it up.

I did this for both pieces of detritus by copying and pasting nearby areas over the offending articles. I feathered the margins of the pasted areas. If I hadn't told you about the litter, then I sincerely doubt that anyone would have ever noticed the

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remedy.

I leave alone for now the tedious debate over whether this type of editing is honest. I didn't make this photography for legal evidentiary purposes; it's art. (So sue me!) (And apparently I couldn't *completely* leave the debate alone.)



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Teeling Whiskey Distillery

Did you know that whiskey is spelled with an "e" in Ireland and the U.S., but without in Britain and Canada? The U.S. traditionally has been Irish Whiskey's biggest customer; I wonder if that's why they spell it the same.

In general, the photos made inside at Teeling (with permission) used a higher ISO. I will comment on only some of the ones which I showed in the previous blog.



Special Casks

f/5.6, 1/60, 24 mm, ISO 6,400, EV -1

The special casks image represents the rare one which I barely edited. Nothing I tried seemed to improve it, and I like it as it is (or I wouldn't be showing it). Call it luck or skill, it seemed to come out of the camera just about right. Note the high ISO - in the near-prehistoric days of film, such a hand-held photo by available light would have been simply impossible. (Your cell-phone could also have done it, however, I bet.) Note the under-exposure - it was dark (and contrasty), and I wanted the dark bits to look dark. I had a really nice travel-tripod in my carry-bag (who doesn't keep a really nice travel-tripod in their carry-bag?), but wasn't about to break it out during a distillery tour with other patrons nearby and a schedule to keep to.

The price for that high ISO is image quality. So: how does it look to you? I can only tell you that if you look at the original, unedited file, magnified, then the "grain" in the image is clearly visible. However, i) this was the only way to get the image, and ii) **we're not looking at it magnified.** (Sheesh!)



Special Casks Detail

This is absolutely not how anyone would or should view the previous image (fragment of), but it does show lack of definition in fine details - a type of mottling typical of digital technology. That however is sometimes a purposeful effect used in certain art-photos, an intentional de-tuning, so: apparently, I'm actually a genius!



Teeling Logo

If anyone wishes to complain to me about the quality-degradation from the high ISO, then we need to talk. This is not an image which benefits from "pixel-peeping." (Although, when Teeling commissions me to do a formal shoot, then the tripod will come out and things will be different.)
f/4, 1/60, 46 mm, ISO 3,200



Trinity College Library

I am absolutely nowhere near the first person to have photographed this library from this vantage. Hand-held, camera as high above my head as I could hold it (no tripods or flashes allowed!), it was so dark that I shot wide-open just to get *something* at that high ISO.

f/2.8, 1/30, 24mm, ISO 6,400



Sightseers

The previous photo worked although perforce it removed all of the busts, which are at people-height.



Library Detail

Looking for *something* a little less conventional, I zoomed in a bit on a library detail, thereby limiting the range of acceptable shutter speeds I could use, despite the impressive stabilization provided by modern cameras. But in this image, I felt able to let the exposure darken a little and still retain adequate detail, so could keep the shutter speed one stop faster.

f/2.8, 1/60, 80 mm, ISO 6,400, EV -1

My in-house critic/advisor likes that the books aren't completely evenly arranged on the shelves.

Department of Taoiseach



The Prime Minister's Offices

This looked pretty cool to the eye, as we emerged from dinner at the wonderful [Cellar Bar](#), and found everything wet. I crouched down as low as my aged limbs would allow, held the camera lower, adjusted for just the composition I wanted, waited for the traffic to clear, and snapped. I had my fisheye lens on, and it seemed suitable for this shot.

f/5.6, 1/60, 8 mm, ISO 2,500, EV -1

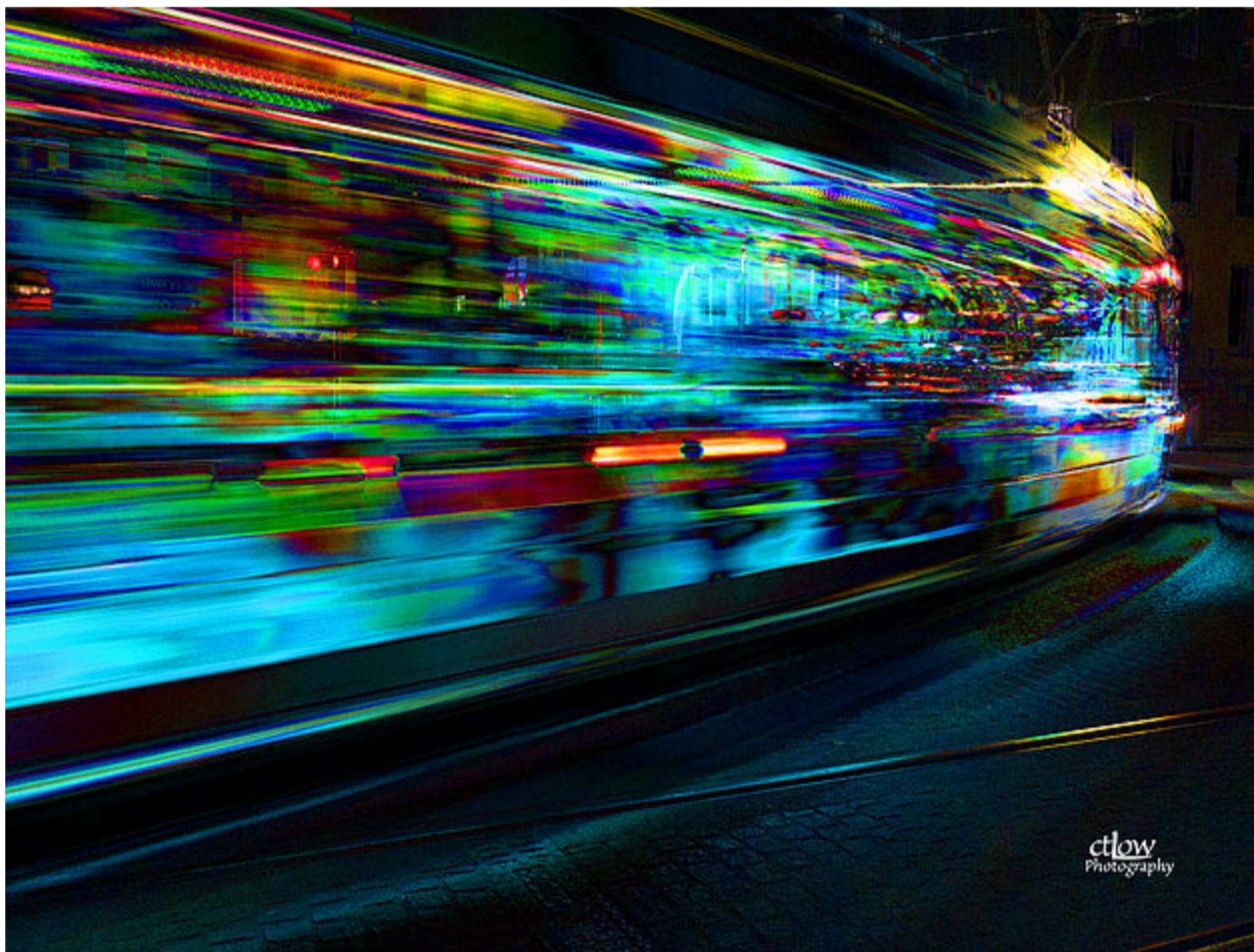
Again, just accepting the camera's exposure recommendation made this look like a mid-day photograph (not shown). It was dusk and I wanted it to look like dusk. To the two people on the planet who haven't yet heard me say this: even if you do everything else on "Auto", **learn how to adjust your EV!!!**

Dublin at Night



Luas

This light-rail train ("Luas" in Dublin) rolled by while my tripod-mounted camera, set at ISO 200, recommended a slow shutter speed (obviously). Interestingly, one can see fairly well through the moving succession of windows - an unexpected but pleasing effect.
f/8, 4 sec, 24mm



Sandwich

I made this image, just down the street from the previous, as the train rolled by, and just kept making exposure after exposure until it had vanished. Later, in editing, I liked one particular area on the right, where playful reflections produced unexpected effects, varying from frame to frame. So, I set to work on that, combining two images, then three, and ultimately ... eight, using Photoshop's new-to-me "Difference" mode.

I think that may be the most overtly dramatic image I have ever made.
f/5.6, 1 sec, 32mm, ISO 800



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It started out as this single image, which itself I find pretty cool.

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Geek Civilization

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So, for those few who have read this far: welcome to photographic geekdom. Feel about that how you will: doesn't change the fact. **I'm talking to you.**

May I remind you at this time of two important truths: understanding and practising all of the technicalities (including but not limited to all of the foregoing), matters immensely if you wish to photograph well, *and doesn't matter one whit*. **Both**. Only your artistic sensibility matters. **Figure it out.**

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While you're here:

Remember that I make photographs and that I sell photographs.

Most of the photographs which you see on this web site are for sale. Prices at the time of writing, for example, for an 11x14" fine-art print with a generous white border would start at about \$50, and you can go up or down from there. Check the [rates](#) page. More importantly, check out my [gallery](#). I would love to provide you with a work of fine-art photography, or to discuss a commission.

Book a portrait-sitting - the right frequency with which to commission formal [portraits](#) is a bit more often.

Remember also to leave a comment, or to [contact](#) me. Note that on the main blog page you can sign up for new-blog notifications. Recommendations to potential new subscribers appreciated. I am very careful(!) and respectful with your privacy.

Thank you so much for reading.



Charles T. Low
Photographer

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