

Class booklet

**Night
photography**

#1

A FASCINATING & DIDACTIC GENRE

It's a slow photograph. It is often practiced on a tripod, and with long exposures, the photographer is therefore technically and materially slowed down. The subjects of interest are architecture, urban spaces, landscapes of all kinds, and do not require any preconceiving. On the contrary, the photographer will take the time to observe the light and possible compositions.

It's a playful photography. The use of slow exposures gives access to a perception of light and movement specific to the photographic medium. Our brain processes 40 images per second, no less, i. e. it "photographs" at 1/40th of a second. Thanks to the slow poses, the lights and objects will take on unexpected shapes and colours.

It is a pedagogical tool. The photographer will optimize the three exposure factors (sensitivity, aperture, shutter speed) when shooting with the camera on the tripod. For architectural night photography, one will choose the best sensitivity, optimal aperture, a non-distorting focal length, and the shutter speed that brings enough light.

Hand-held shooting will bring the photographer to find a good compromise of sensibility and aperture in order to be able to photograph with a sufficiently fast shutter speed.

#2

THE CRUCIAL SETTINGS TO MAKE YOUR NIGHT IMAGES SUCCESSFUL

The light measurement. Night scenes, because of their strong contrasts, are generally quite difficult to expose correctly; not to underexpose or overexpose certain parts of the image will be almost impossible.

- **The Spot measurement** will be used for an assumed “chiaroscuro” of the urban lights, it will be necessary to aim the measurement on a luminous element.

- **The use of an average measurement** for a contrasted scene (consisting of stretched dark areas and other very bright areas) may result in images with “burnished” extremes (consequence of an attempt by the camera to lighten the dark areas), so the dark light atmosphere will not be respected. Underexposure correction may be required.

Spot measurement



Matrix measurement /
evaluative



Focusing. Obscurity will make the focus quite tedious; the autofocus will skate due to the lack of perception of the subject. Usually the use of AF will be prohibited (except with flash assistance, but with limited range). We will most often use manual focusing, using the liveview and zoom lens, which will allow for precise focusing.



Manual focusing using live view

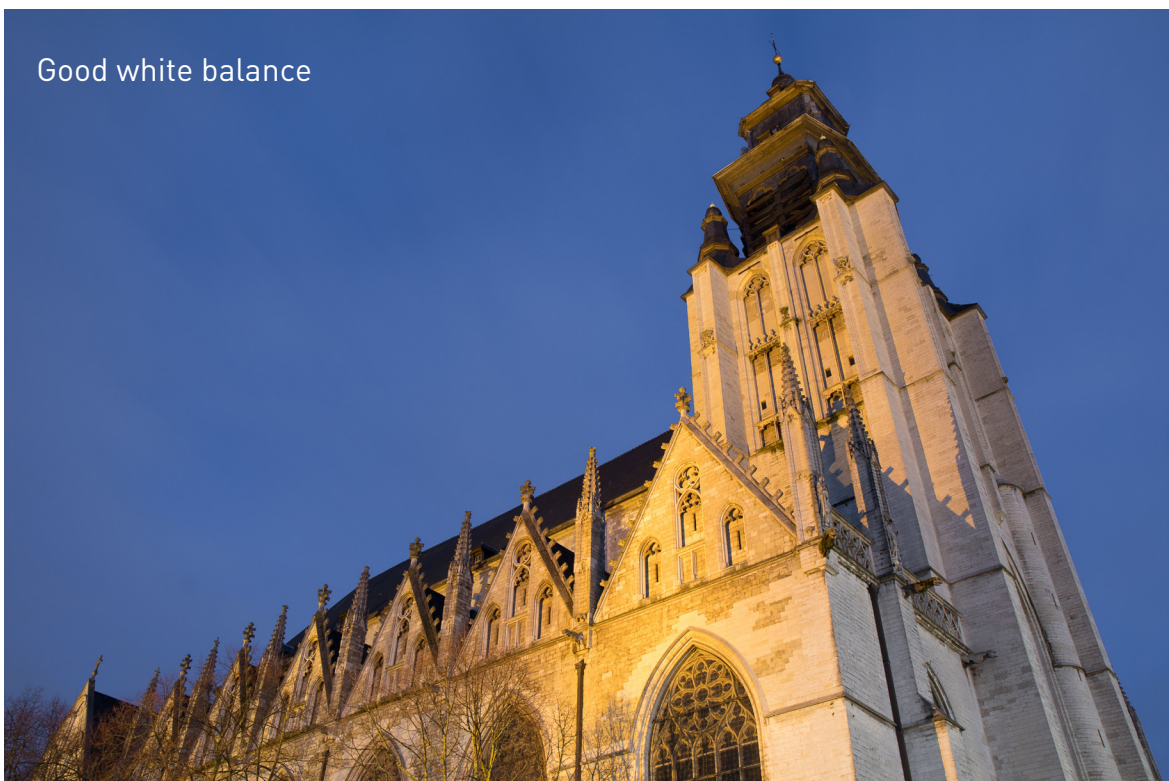
White balance. In automatic white balance, the colour temperature of public lighting (or sifted lamps in a bar) will produce images with predominantly yellow and orange. To solve this problem we will use:

- or the “tungsten” preset.
- or the manual entry of Kelvin degrees.
- or the manual balance, with a neutral reference colour.

Poor white balance



Good white balance



The file format. The RAW will be used (if a retouching background is acquired) because generally a night photograph has extensive shadows and intense light areas. The RAW will allow us, in post-processing, to correct these extremes.

Before retouching a RAW



After retouching a RAW



The 2-second self-timer. It will give the device (device and tripod) time to stabilize after pressing the release button. Indeed, a wobbly tripod can create a blur of motion over a long exposure time (half a second, 1 second, etc...).



Self-timer 2 seconds

Exposures beyond 30 seconds: In order to extend the exposure time beyond 30 seconds, the shutter will be opened and closed manually. To do this we can use:

- Bulb setting: Keep pressing the release button to keep the shutter open.
- Time setting: Using a remote control, press once to open, press a second time to close the shutter.



#3

SOME REMARKABLE AUTHORS

Brassaï (1899-1984): He was one of the first photographers to take a close interest in the strange character of nocturnal atmospheres. He published in 1932, a collection of images that is a landmark in the history of photography, "Paris de nuit".

Robert Adams (1937): American photographer and leader of the new topography movement. In 1985, he edited "Summer Nights, Walking", a collection of clichés made during a simple night walk, in summer, in his region of Colorado.

Todd Hido (1968): American photographer, known for his large-scale project "homes at night". This series depicts suburban houses, captured at night, and almost systematically cleared from the inside out.

Gilbert Fastenaekens (1955): Belgian photographer, his work focuses on the representation of industrial buildings, which he captures at night on very long exposure times.

Hiroshi Sugimoto (1948): For his project "Theaters", this Japanese artist photographed open-air cinema theaters over very long exposure times. With the help of a large format 4x5 inches camera, he captures the entire scene by exposing the film from his camera for the entire duration of the movie.

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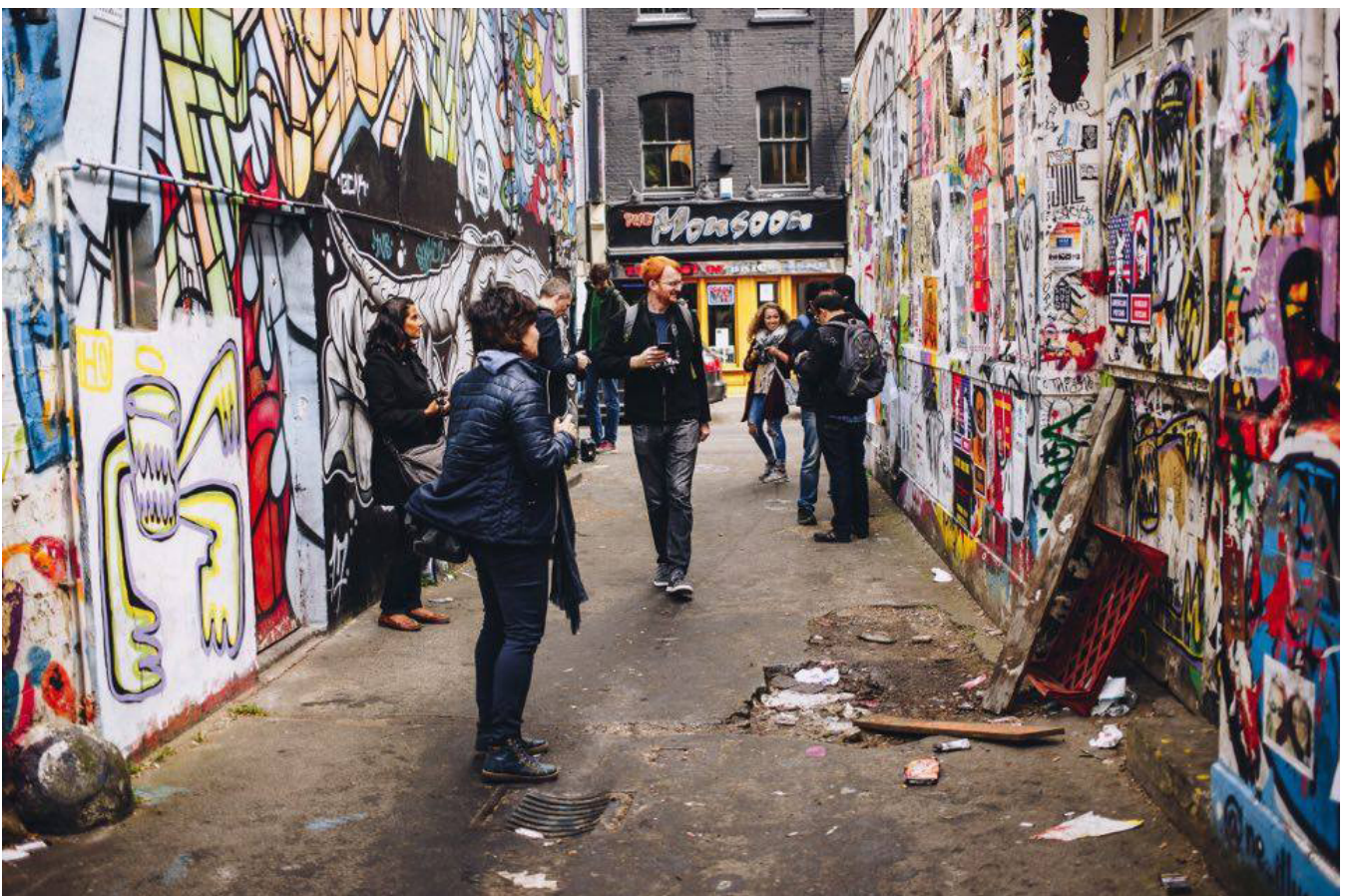
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