BCC Meeting

Speaker Event – Justin Minns FRPS

On Monday 20th October our meeting took a slightly different format with our speaker presenting to us over Teams. It's a great way to access speakers for whom the distance prohibits them travelling all the way to Berkshire. We had the best of both worlds with a chance to socialise before the start time and during the tea break rather than connecting from home with very little social interaction.

Our speaker for the night was award winning photographer, Justin Minns FRPS. Justin talked about his year long project commissioned by the National Trust, when he was asked to photograph the East Anglian Coast.

Justin explained that since the 1960s the NT has acquired parts of the coast to preserve the landscape and protect it from developments. Much of our sand dunes and cliff tops have been invaded by caravan parks and golf courses. The campaign was called the Neptune Coastline Campaign and in the 60 years since the launch the NT has purchased 890 miles of coastline. Justin carried out the project 10 years ago as part of their 50th year celebrations.

Justin took us on a tour of 12 of the coastal locations along the East Anglian Coast from Northey Island in the south and around the coast to Brancaster in the north. Justin was given a clear brief by the National Trust to capture images of the locations at different times of the year, celebrating the seasonal changes.

The project took a fair bit of planning. Justin touched on some of his planning tools which included Ordinance Survey maps to identify footpaths and elevations to find view points in what is actually very flat countryside. He used SunCalc to work out the direction of the sun at different times of the year. He used tide timetables and he used Street View in Google maps to build up a picture of the lay of the land before going there. He had to carryout some research on the wildflowers and

when they might bloom based.

Justin talked about the challenges. There were occasions when inspiration failed him. On those occasions he would put his camera away and wait until he got a sense of the feel of the place. He recognised that the flat landscapes of Suffolk and Norfolk need big skies. He would create images which were 50:50 land to sky. So often we have heard judges criticise open skies in images but in these landscapes they emphasise the flat terrain, a wide angle lens exaggerating the sense of space and distance. He found that using three different focal lengths enabled him to capture the character of a place going from epic landscapes to intimate landscapes and then the finer details.

Over and over again he showed the power of a leading line to draw you into the scene, whether it was a path, a shoreline, tidal dunes, or a channel through the salt marsh. In his epic landscapes he ensured he included a clear focal point to hold your attention.

What we saw last night was the value of a project because it gives the photographer a clear intent which shows in each of his images. He captured a real sense of being there through the seasons. We felt the chilly frozen landscapes of the winter with hard frost on the ground and the cries of wintering geese filling the skies. We felt the warmth of the sun through the vibrant colours of spring and summer as flowers bloomed along the cliff tops and soft heather filled the flat landscapes with a warm rosey hue. Then in autumn, as the landscape turned to rich ochre and bronze we smelt that earthy scent as the vegetation goes dormant.

I think we saw for ourselves, it was mission accomplished.

It was a shame there was not more time for questions and answers but one question I can answer on Justin's behalf was what he did for his FRPS Fellowship. I think you will agree that it is truly outstanding landscape photography demonstrating the character of the land. Have a look at his Flickr page (Justin Minns) and you will see many

inspirational images from far beyond the shores of East Anglia.

You can purchase a copy of Justin's book Photographing East Anglia from Fotovue using the 20% discount code JUSTIN.

For more information on workshops checkout Justin Minns's website.