

TABLETOP PHOTOGRAPHY

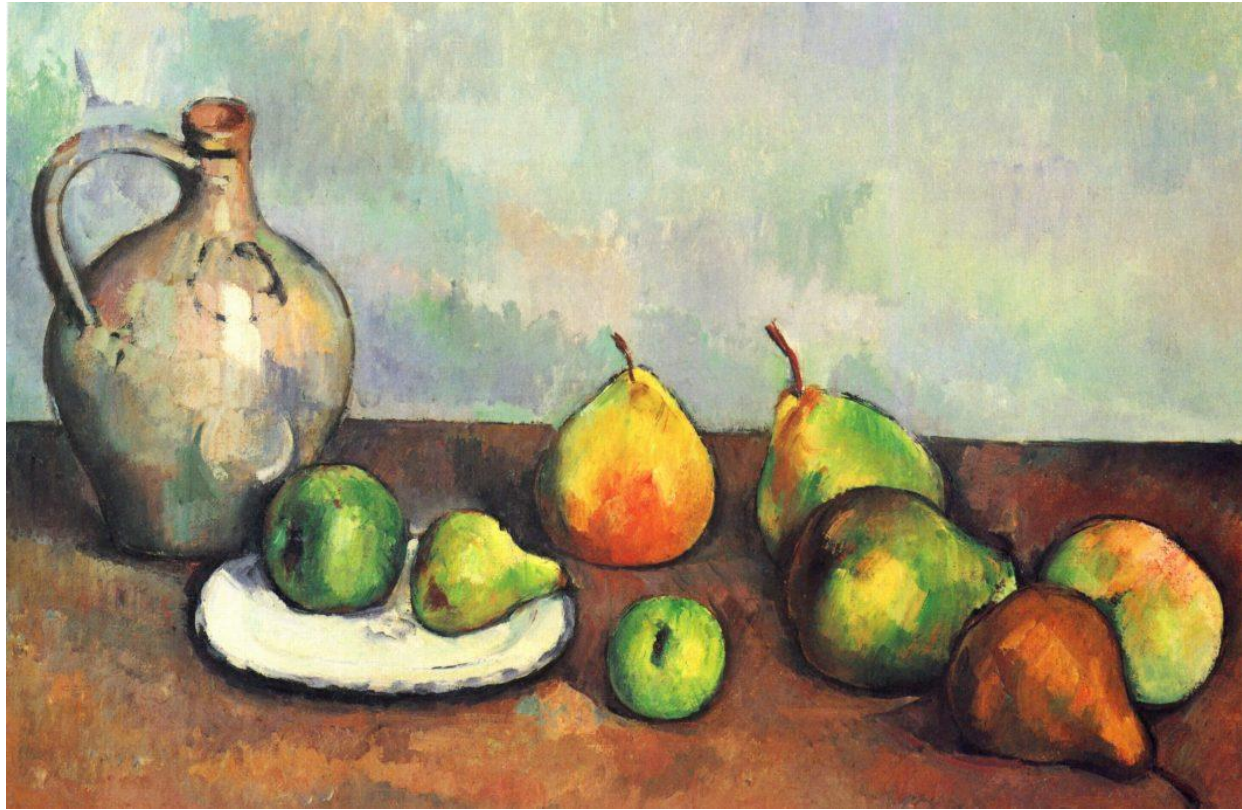
A BASIC GUIDE TO TABLETOP
PHOTOGRAPHY



WHAT IS TABLETOP PHOTOGRAPHY?

Tabletop photography is based on the genre of Still Life art. The depiction of inanimate objects in an appealing arrangement.





Paul Cezanne

Vincent Van Gogh





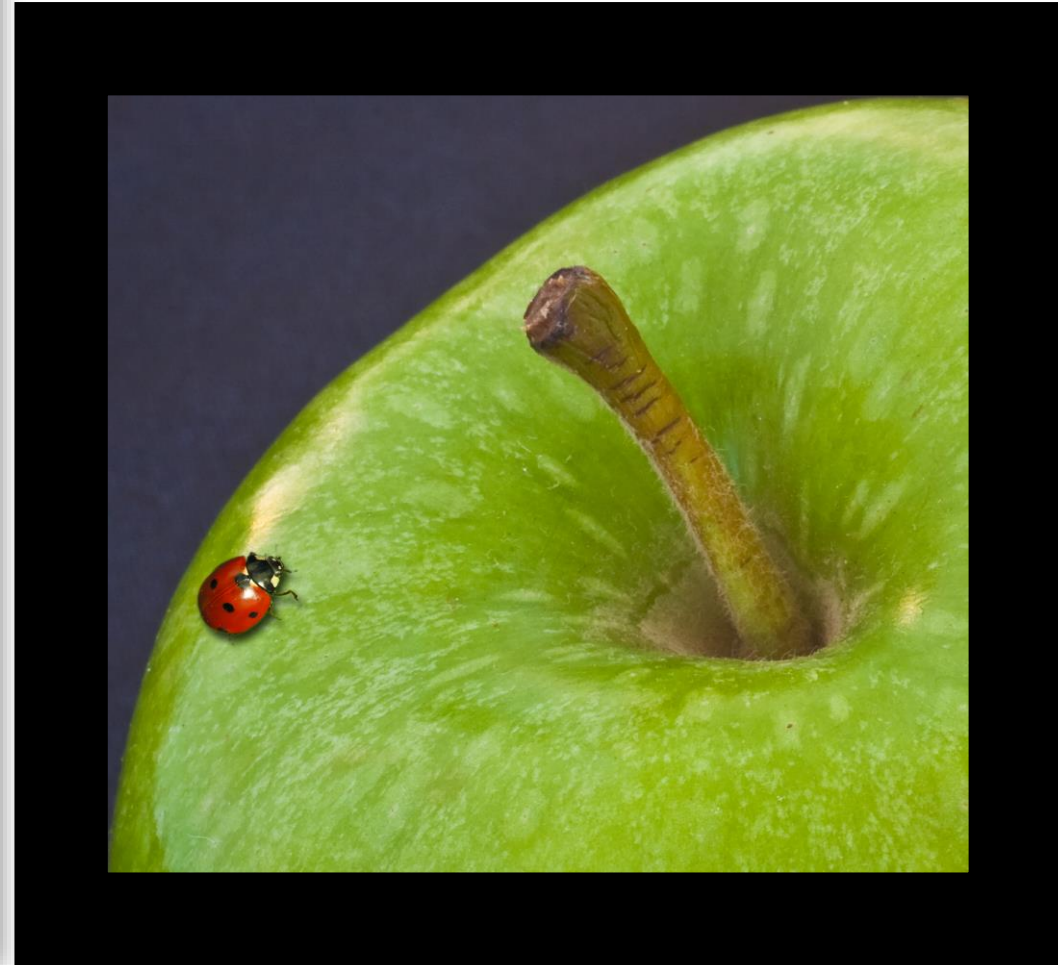
There are different types of tabletop photography:

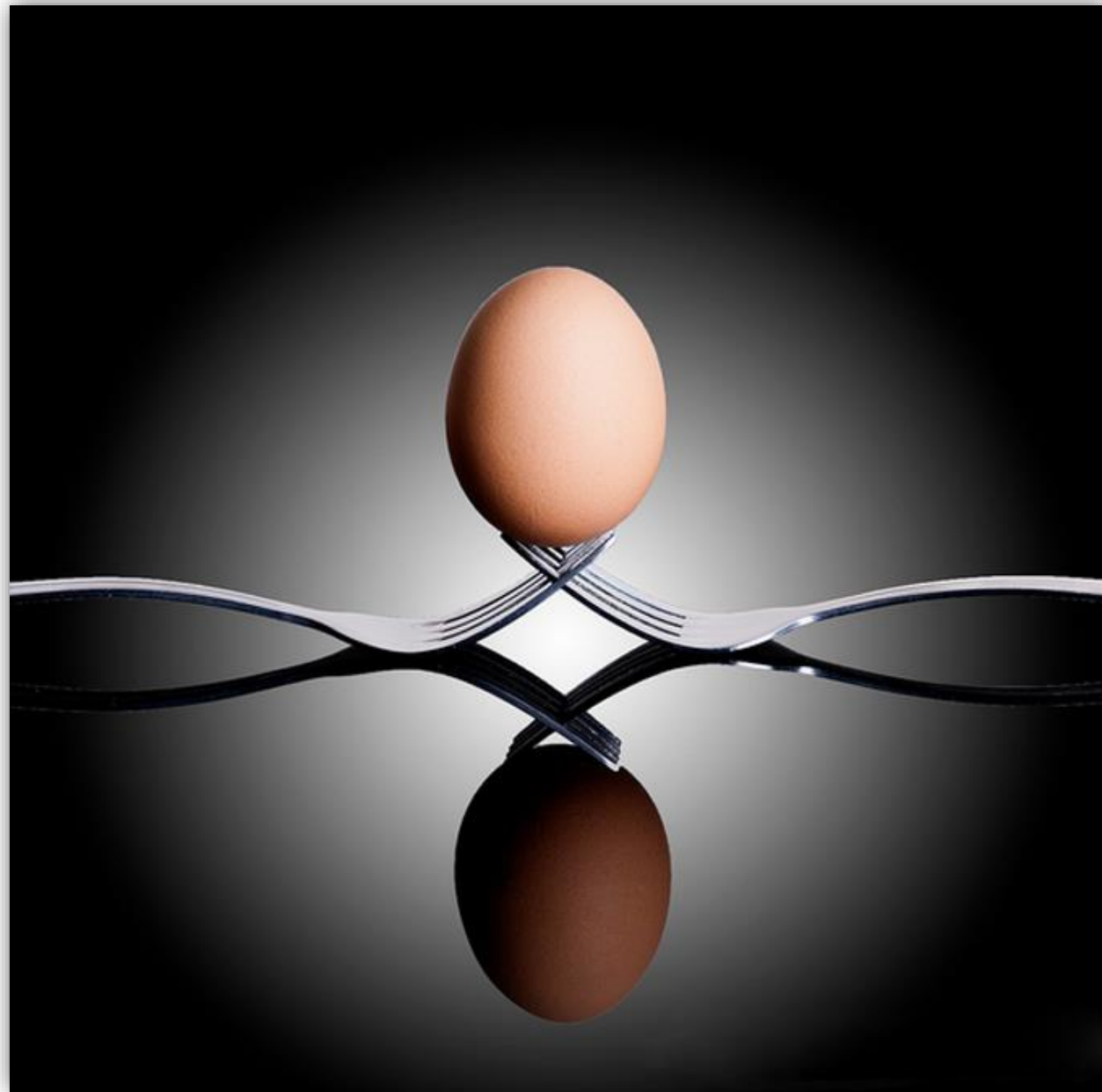
- § Still life arrangements
- § Food photography
- § Product photography
- § Fun depictions
- § Frozen objects

Some examples of different types of tabletop photography.











Using glass under the objects to create a reflection.



Photography of museum objects is another form of tabletop photography, although the objective here is for a sharp, shadowless exact depiction of the object.







**Tell a bit of a story. The photo left is titled
'The Hey Diddle Scandal'**



Have fun with nursery rhymes and stories.
Left: Mary had a little lamb
Above: Little Red Riding Hood and the Big,
Bad Wolf (or Tasmanian Devil in this case).

So, what gear do we need for indoor tabletop photography?

A tabletop or hard surface of some kind.

Camera



Tripod



Remote trigger



A good lens



Lighting

Lighting has the most significant influence on the look, the atmosphere and the success of your image.

Types of lighting:

- Daylight
- Artificial lamps
- Flash
- A combination of all or some of the above

Natural window light



Light cube or tent



Studio light set up



Another lighting set up using flash with a light reflection umbrella



Back drops

- What colour – depends on your subject
- What fabric - preferably a smooth, non-reflective material
- Light cubes usually come with a range of coloured back drops, normally black, blue, red and white
- I tend to make do with what I have with varying results. For the image on the right, I used some unwanted dress fabric which probably has too much texture,



You can make do. This is one of my home set ups using simple lamps and a black velvet material. It is not ideal because of the colour temperature of the lights and the velvet material tends to reflect different shades of colour and also shows up every tiny speck.





This is a still life image I took with my home set up. As you can see, the velvet tends to show varying shades from grey to black.

These two images were taken using the previously shown light set up. I had to do quite a lot of cleaning up of little spots on the velvet.



CAMERA SETTINGS

I use either AV or Manual mode for my still life, and also, macro photography.

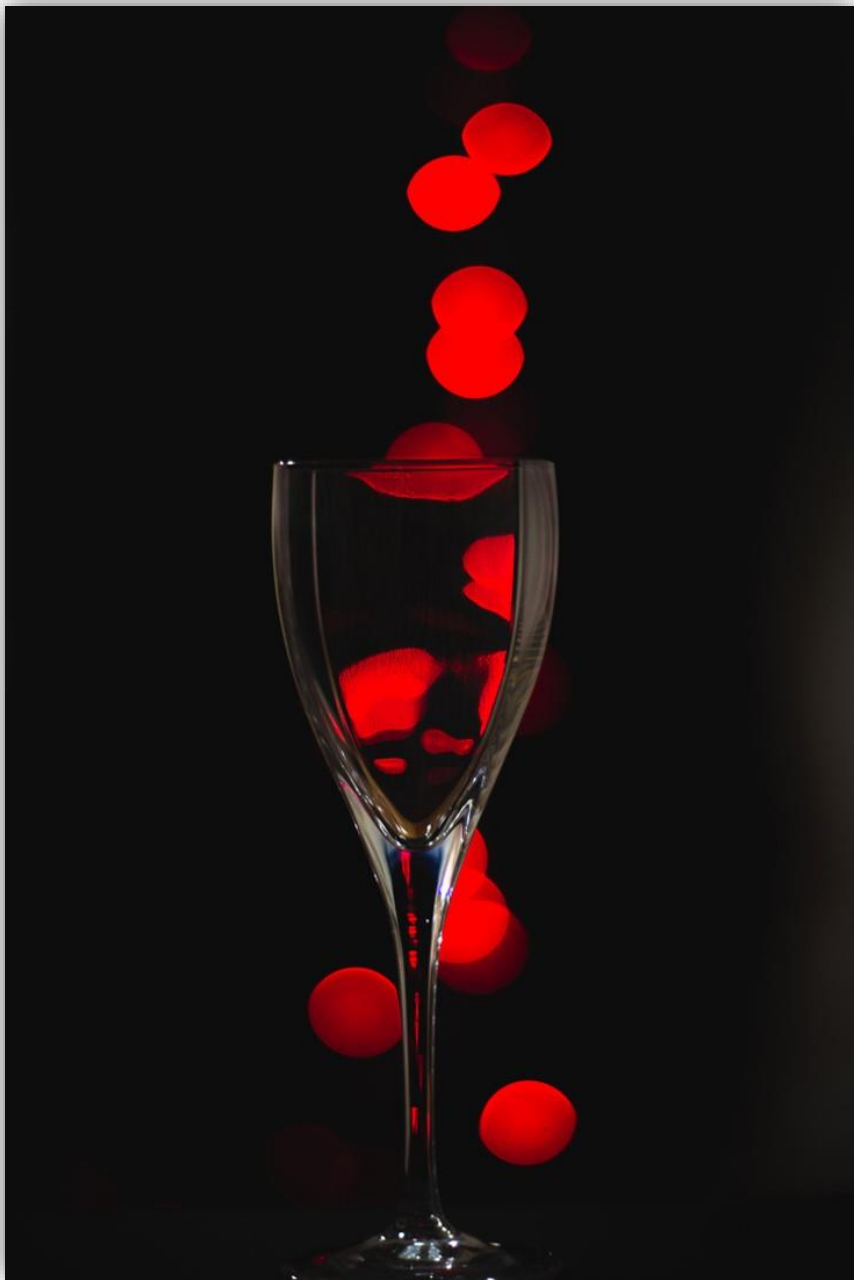
- **ISO: 200 – 400, usually 200 to minimise any noise.**
- **Aperture: Good depth of field is needed and as you are close to your subject, I recommend between f/18 and f/24.**
- **Focus: either manual or spot focus, remember you know what you want in sharp focus, your camera doesn't.**
- **I like to use my 105 mm macro lens, for sharpness but any good lens with a short minimum focus distance is fine.**
- **As the shutter speed is often quite long, I set my camera to mirror lock up and use a remote triggering device to avoid any camera shake. I always use a tripod for this type of photography.**

Difficult objects to photograph:

- Shiny surfaces
- Round shiny surfaces
- The worst!! Black, round shiny surfaces!

The image on the right is an example of everything going wrong. Reflections on the bottles and specks on the surface.





However,
here is a great
Still Life image
of a shiny,
round
subject!



Another great example of a perfect capture of round shiny objects.



Texture overlay and frozen flower photography is becoming very popular as a form of 'Still Life' photography. Here are some examples.



stock photo

DY
www.alamy







The great thing about tabletop or still life imaging is that the subject is not moving, so you have all the time you need to experiment with lighting and arrangement. It just needs your imagination.

There are so many links on-line, to still life and tabletop photography, that I am not going to attempt to show them here.

Thanks for watching this presentation.

I hope all our club members will be able to meet, in person, soon.

Best wishes, stay well..

Robin Pitcher