



Hailing from beautiful Norway, Unni Brekke is the current holder of the Societies' Macro Photographer of the Year award. An accomplished photographer and digital artist, Unni took some time out from creating images to tell *Professional Image*maker about her current projects.

CONVENTION  
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Profile



Unni was interviewed  
by Charlotte Moss

'Life would be a duller place without Photoshop,' Unni proclaims when I ask her what tools she could not do without. 'It really is my toy and it has endless creative possibilities. When I did an introductory course years ago I felt I had finally found the tool that would enable me to make the pictures I had longed for.' Of course Unni does not create her images entirely with Photoshop. Most of her images originate from her own photography but Photoshop is the one tool that she could not do without.

'I have digital albums filled with images of flowers, textures, backgrounds, details of all sorts of things which I have taken in the past.' Unni's digital artwork relies heavily on compositing images together to create new and often impossible scenes. 'Having a digital library means I can sometimes just sit down in front of my computer wanting to make a new image and I will already have what I need to accomplish the picture I am thinking of. You can never have enough images though, of course, so my digital libraries just keep filling up!'

Inspiration is something that all artists need and Unni is no exception. 'I get my inspiration from other photographers or digital artists,



as well as painters. I find just looking at other people's images very inspiring, wondering to myself how they create certain aspects of the picture and aspiring to achieve similar effects.' Along with many others, Unni also enjoys competing in order to push her to keep creating new work. 'Competing makes me stretch myself to always improve my work and get better. That is inspiration in itself!' Can Unni repeat her Macro Photographer of the Year award at this year's Convention? We will have to wait and see!

Unni has been entering images from her most recent project into the SWPP monthly competitions where several have gained either gold or highly commended awards. 'I have been photographing snails recently, of all things! It all started last year when I bought a macro lens to photograph flowers for my digital artwork. By chance I brought a snail in on one of the flowers I was shooting and I got hooked!' It's always a happy event when you discover new subjects to shoot, however, most people don't end up living with the fascinating creatures they photograph. Unni has even ended up keeping a collection of snails at home and ready to star in her shots at a moment's notice!

Long-term projects like this aren't for everyone, but Unni believes that they can be a great way to exercise your creativity. I asked Unni what her

advice was for those considering working on such a project and she told me that you should first start by exploring if your idea has been done before and then consider how you can make yours different. Unni also says that it's best to give yourself plenty of time: 'A good friend of mine, Terje Bergesen, published a book with beautiful images of trees. He spent 20 years photographing them before I helped him put the book together.' Proof that there is no need to hurry good work and letting the project tell you when it's finished is more effective than setting yourself fixed timescales. 'You just need patience and originality. My snail project is only 18 months old now and I have no idea when it will finish.'

Taking years to complete a project is no problem when you've enjoyed photography for a long time. 'I bought my first camera when I had my daughter 35 years ago. I'd always had an interest in photography but that was the first time I could afford a camera.' Within a couple of years Unni had joined the local camera club and was already entering competitions. 'I've always been a part of camera clubs, it's where I have learned and developed my skills through critiques and workshops.' Unni also used to develop her own black and white films so moving to digital when it was available seemed only natural to her. 'I'm quite impatient, so being able to see the results from the digital darkroom immediately was fantastic!'



## Adjustment layers – yes you can!

At the Societies' Convention 2014 Unni will be leading a Masterclass covering one of the most basic but most useful features of Photoshop – adjustment layers. When we know how to use them we don't even have to think about how they can help us develop an image, but to others they can be a daunting source of frustration. 'I'd like participants to go away feeling that I have opened a door to endless possibilities in adjusting images' Unni tells me. 'And with my tutorial in hand, they should feel confident enough to accomplish things they couldn't do before.' Adjustment layers really are the foundations that you have to use to build more advanced and creative images, so getting to grips with them is essential for anyone considering having a go at digital artwork.

It will be the first time that Unni has hosted a Masterclass at the Societies' Convention but teaching others is something that Unni truly enjoys. 'I simply love showing people how exciting Photoshop is and what creative tools are available to them.' Simplicity is the key when it comes to her teaching methods as well; 'I base my classes on step-by-step tutorials, which even a novice should be able to follow. When I'm told that people want me back because they have actually learned something, I feel like I have achieved my goal.'

If you would like to learn how to use Photoshop to improve your images then there will be plenty of places to start at the Convention, but Unni's Masterclass promises to demystify what is one of the hardest features to understand for many photographers.

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