

A NATURAL IMPRESSIONIST

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By Michael Erlewine (Michael@Erlewine.net)

I could tell you how my day went, but nothing too interesting there. Instead I will tell you something about what I AM interested in, although it will be narrowing the field of interest to those readers who like photography.

We all have directions embedded in our mind, which we try to follow. They are not the directions north, east, south, or west, but rather some itch inside us that wants to be scratched. When other interests fade away, these itches still are present. They last.

For me such an itch happens with photography, which is more than just a hobby for me. Since I (without meaning to) mixed photography with mind training many years ago, the two practices, photography and mind training, are almost hopelessly mixed with one another. It is the mind training that brings clarity to the photography, but as mentioned the two are intermingled. They are mixed so that one is the other and vice versa.

Actually, I have been able to separate my mind training from my photography and turn its clarity elsewhere in other things that I do. My mind training is separate from photography, except when I do photography. Then they are somehow interdependent and inseparable. So much for that; now back to the photography.

I started doing close-up photography in 1956 when my dad gave me a Kodak Retina 2a, a light meter, and some close-up lenses. Over the years, but more particularly in recent years, I have been on a little Odyssey to find sharp lenses. I mentioned earlier that I can separate the clarity of the mind in doing photography from the sharpness of the lenses, but not entirely.

I have written many articles about this, so I am not going to repeat that here. Those of you who might like to read some of that will find it here:

http://dharmagrooves.com/pdf/e-books/Close-Up_Macro_2012.pdf

I use Nikon cameras for the most part. I just like them. My quest for sharp lenses led me gradually through some of Nikon's finest lenses and finally beyond Nikon into Leica, Voigtlander, Zeiss, and other brands of lenses. In the end I found that sharpness was not simply what I thought sharpness was, but rather that it depended on how well the lens was corrected for a variety of things, but particularly for color.

When color comes through a lens, each of the main colors (red, green, and blue) focus in the plane of the camera's sensor at a very slightly different depth. In other words, they don't land on the same plane (sensor), and this discrepancy causes what is called chromatic aberration and other anomalies. This shows up in our photos in what is called

color fringing, little red-green and blue-yellow fringing on sharp edges. Well of course we photographers hate this, but are also kind of used to it.

Now this color fringing was generally not associated with sharpness, although by definition it absolutely made the resulting photos less sharp – fringed. It is possible to create lenses that manage to bring the red, green, and blue colors to focus on the same plane, the sensor, thus removing chromatic aberration. Such corrected lenses are called APO or apochromatic lenses. But this process is very expensive and so are the resulting APO lenses.

Most manufacturers of lenses don't go to the trouble (and the resulting expense) of offering APO lenses, but some do. Gradually I realized that these APO lenses produced what I call sharper images, because the lenses themselves are more highly corrected, and so on.

I have been using (mainly) APO lenses for some years and that is why some of my work is sharp. Another thing I do is what is called focus stacking, which is nothing more than taking a series of photos, each in sharp focus, from the front of a still object (like a flower) to the rear, and then combining these photo layers to make a single image that is in focus from front to back. So those are the two techniques I mainly use, focus stacking and APO lenses. And now let's talk about the "artist" in me.

I don't just want a photograph to be a mirror image of what I see outside in nature, but rather I want my photographs to be a mirror image of how my mind sees this beauty. So, by definition, I am an impressionist. I want to see for myself (and share with others) my impression of the beauty and awe I find in the natural world.

And as a naturalist since I was six-years old, I am also some percentage a scientist. I want something in a photograph to be in high focus, but not everything. I don't just want a "snapshot," but rather a painting in light of what impresses my mind. So I try to get one part of a photo in clear focus and then paint with a broad light-brush the background as if it were a painting by the great French Impressionists that we all know and love.

At heart, my work says to me: "Look how real this dream of life we are living appears."

[Photo taken yesterday that shows how I like to combine clarity and dreams.]



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