

## TEN TOP TIPS - CREATIVE \*

*\* a ten point guide for better creative image making:*

*In no particular order, here are my ten main points to keep in mind when trying to make expressive and creative images.*

### 1. NO RULES !

Forget about "rules" in photography, there aren't any ! Don't be confused by artificial constraints that clubs and exhibition committees put on image entries. Many of these are created to placate special interest groups. For instance, when colour image making became popular and accessible, many traditional black and white workers thought they would be disadvantaged in competitions and exhibitions, so they lobbied for a separate category for "colour" and now have the artificial distinction of "Colour" and Monochrome" images. Things become difficult when some image makers want to use a combination of colour and monochrome in their images. The same goes for all of the other categories that have sprung up in camera clubs and exhibitions.

What about the "Rules" of composition, the "Rule of thirds" etc. These are Guidelines, not rules. Know when to use them and when to ignore them.

### 2. REMEMBER WHAT THE STORY IS MEANT TO BE

The single most important idea to keep in mind when creating images is the original image concept or idea that you are trying to communicate to your viewer. Every other decision you make about content, composition and presentation should reflect this purpose.

### 3. USING PHOTOSHOP FILTERS ALONE IS NOT BEING CREATIVE

Taking a perfectly ordinary image and scrolling through a myriad of "artistic" filters in Photoshop is not being creative. Using filters, techniques and the craft of image making *is* creative if they are used to realise the visualised image that you are working towards.

### 4. SUBJECT AND SUBJECT MATTER

Many camera club and exhibition judges fail to see beyond the content of the image - the "Subject Matter" and fail to recognise what the "Subject" is that the photographer is addressing. Without knowing what the subject is, it is impossible to make a proper evaluation of an image. In presenting your images try to make sure you know the difference yourself,. If you don't know what you are trying to say, chances are no one else will either.

### 5. PREPARE YOUR IMAGE IDEAS IN ADVANCE

Creative or conceptual images are like great paintings, they don't just happen. Draw out a rough hand sketch of your ideas before you try to capture the subject matter. Think about the lighting, viewpoint, composition and photographic language you are going to use. Keep this as a guide and try test images and refine your image making as you go.

**6. HAVE A PLAN, BUT BE PREPARED TO CHANGE**

Prepare a sketch or rough draft of your image, or have a clear vision of what you want. But, be prepared to modify or refine your ideas as you go. Just because you have a draft, don't remain locked in to that if you find something else that works better than your original idea.

**7. GET LOTS OF INSPIRATION**

Go to exhibitions, read books and observe what other artists are doing. Look at the great masters and see how they use lighting, composition and colour. Don't confine yourself to photography, look at paintings, sculpture and all art forms. Learn to understand what makes great images - the ones you remember.

Be inspired and try new things. If you are still making the same sorts of images that you did 2, 5 or more years ago, you are either brain dead or need another interest. Be anything but boring !

**8. INTERPRET, DON'T PHOTOCOPY THE WORLD**

There are places and uses for "documentary" images. Great images aren't just a recording of a place, a time or an event, they tell us what it was like - they *interpret* the story. All images are interpretations, the camera is not objective, so make it work to record how you *feel* about something, not just what you *saw*. Your images will then become your personal vision of the world that nobody else can duplicate.

**9. THERE ARE NO NEW SUBJECTS**

There really is nothing in the world that hasn't already been photographed, but there are lots of ways to tell us something about the world that has not been told before. Take a popular icon - say for instance the Sydney Opera House. It has been photographed millions of times. Make it your mission to photograph it in such a way that you are telling us something new about it.

**10. FORGET ABOUT NAMES AND DEFINITIONS, THINK ABOUT IDEAS AND MESSAGES**

Use your personal vision of the world to tell us about how you see things. Forget about definitions like "Nature", "Still life" or "Landscape" concentrate on what you feel about something and how you can communicate it to others

**11. FORGET ABOUT COMPETITIONS**

OK, there are only supposed to be ten, but this is a bonus. Forget about scoring points or getting awards, concentrate on your personal vision and ideas. Competitions are for sports people, photography is about recognition, inspiration and ideas. Don't get them confused.

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