

Flower Photography Workshop - by Arik Gorban

Topics

- Creative seeing and image making
- Subject selection and image design (perspective, composition, focus)
- Equipment
- Evaluating and modifying the ambient light (diffusers, reflectors, light blocking)
- Using on-camera and off-camera flash
- Light modifiers (diffuser dome and Puffer, Spin 360, bounce reflector, large reflector, umbrella)

Tips for Flower Photography

- Soft light works best for most flower photography. Avoid direct sunlight.
- Use a large diffuser to soften direct sunlight.
- Use an umbrella or a large reflector to diffuse / soften flash light.
- Get a macro lens or close up filter.
- Set your camera to low ISO (100-200).
- When choosing your vantage point, consider:
 - Creative composition (foreground, middleground, background)
 - Direction of light
 - Aligning the areas that you want in focus in the same plane (same distance from the lens)
- Use selective focus to isolate your subject and blur the background.
- Avoid a background that is lighter than the subject or has bright colors.
- Choose the best specimen for your photo.
- Use a tripod or a monopod.
- Knee protectors are useful for shooting from low vantage points.
- Avoid shooting flower close ups when it's windy.

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Before you take the picture

Look at the subject and try to visualize the final image. Think of the type of image you want to create and its intended use. For example, the following approaches may be considered for flower photography depending on how we intend to use the picture:

- Documentary / nature photograph - accurate, evenly illuminated, sharp picture from an angle that shows the flower in the most natural perspective and with minimal distortion. Close up or macro techniques may be used to show fine details.
- Decoration - creatively composed and lit image that presents the flower in a unique and non-traditional angle, lighting, and exposure and uses special technical and compositional effects to make the image your art.
- Abstract - use of the flower's colors, shapes, and textures to create an abstract presentation. Shallow depth of field, subject or camera motion, and close up techniques are often used for abstracts.

Move around the subject and look at it from different angles. Most often, vantage points that are lower or higher than your normal eye level produce more interesting images.

Look at the direction and quality of the light and see if you need to modify it.

Take more than one picture. Experiment with your subject.

Ask yourself:

- Is the subject defined and will it be clear to the viewer?
- Evaluate the foreground, middleground, and the background
 - Do they support the subject?
 - Are there distracting elements
 - Are there bright spots that will grab the attention from the subject?
 - Is the subject too dark?
 - Is there enough contrast for the subject to stand out?
- Composition
 - Are you close enough to the subject?
 - Consider rule of thirds
 - Consider leading lines, curves, straight lines and sharp angles
 - Consider edges/transitions
 - Portrait or landscape orientation?
 - Is the framing tight enough or too tight?
- Are the borders clean? (check with small aperture if possible)
- Where to focus?
- How much Depth of Field (DOF)?
- What shutter speed (freeze action or motion blur)
- Is there not enough or too much light?
- Should I use a filter?
- Should I use a flash and/or a light modifier?

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Equipment

- 90mm or 105mm F2.8 Macro lens
- Close-up lenses
- Flash + Dome
- Bounce flash reflector
- Homemade cardboard reflector
- Gary Fong Puffer
- Flash extension cord
- Westcott 5-in-1 40.5" reflector
- White umbrella
- Spin 360 modifier
- Knee protectors
- Tripod / Monopod

Instructor

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