

Monte Nagler used a viewing mask to focus on just a small section of this Mexican Cycad at the University of Michigan Botanical Gardens. This photo has more impact than one that included more of the plant.



photography
Monte Nagler

Mask helps find focal point

In the past, I've written on the value of viewing masks and how they can help to improve your photography.

Their use is so important that I believe it is worthwhile to review them again. After all, a photograph should be much more than a random snapshot. It should represent a calculated effort to express your feelings and share your photographic vision.

A viewing mask is a simple device to help you achieve this. It costs pennies, can easily be made in minutes, stores in your camera case and is an invaluable aid in helping you to "see" through the viewfinder.

A viewing mask is nothing more than a "window" cut out of a piece of cardboard in the proportions of your negative size. Sound simple? It is. And you'll be amazed at its benefits.

For 35mm users, cut a 2 1/2 inch rectangle out of a piece of thick cardboard. Overall, a section of board about 6x8 will suffice. When viewing your potential subject through your "window," you'll see that extraneous, nonimportant items are

eliminated and that you'll find you can zero right in and isolate your subject.

That pattern of cracks in the sidewalk or the exciting arrangement of tree branches will now "pop out" at you, whereas in looking at the whole, they may not be noticeable. Familiar things around your home will appear in a new light and you'll find yourself seeing things you never saw before.

Remember, simplicity in your pictures leads to greater impact. Previsualization is enhanced and you will find it much easier to select a lens with the proper focal length.

To the left of the "window," place a scale listing distances from your eye in inches and corresponding focal length lenses in millimeters. For 35mm users, the scale would be as follows:

distance from eye	focal length
1 1/2 inches	24mm
3 1/4 inches	50mm
9 inches	135mm
13 inches	200mm

When you have desired composition using your viewing mask, a quick glance at the scale will indicate the lens required to produce the visual image on film.

For example, if your desired composition is attained with the mask nine inches from your eye, use a 135mm lens.

At first, it may seem a little difficult to judge distances from your eye to the viewing mask, but with practice you'll be amazed at your accuracy.

So don't hide yourself and your photography behind a mask — unless, of course, it's a viewing mask!

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Short shots

Monte Nagler will conduct a photography seminar this Saturday in the Marquette Room of the Southfield Public Library in the Civic Center Complex, Evergreen between 10 and 11 Mile roads, Southfield.

The fee is \$18. Register at the door at 1 p.m.

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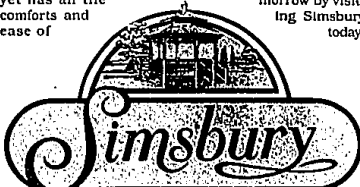
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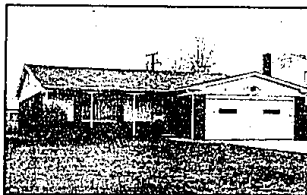
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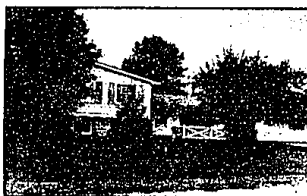
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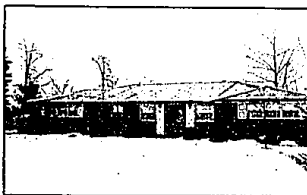
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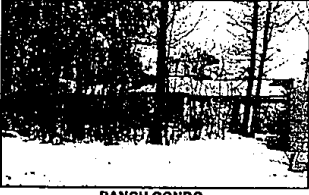
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