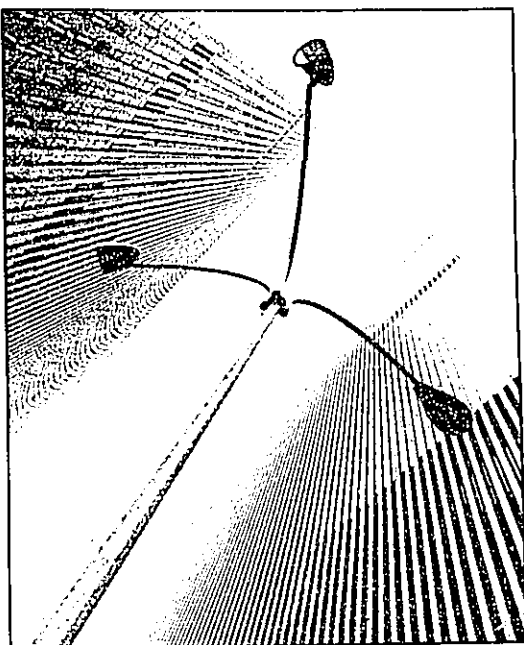


FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Distortion: This view of skyscrapers adds to the impact of Nagler's photo. He used a 17mm lens.



Distortion can increase impact of a photograph



MONTE NAGLER

I think distortion gets a bad rap in photography. We usually try to eliminate it from our photographs. We want buildings straight, horizons level and faces looking normal. But there are times when some distortion can actually add strength and impact to a picture. Distortion can be an attention-grabber and can add an "artful" touch to your shot.

The best way to obtain distortion is to use a wide angle lens. The wider the angle, the more distortion you'll get. Any 35mm camera, even with a normal lens, gives minor distortion when looking up at a building. Rather than appearing vertical, the sides of the building will lean in toward each other. Use an extremely wide angle lens and the sides will dramatically lean.

I prefer lenses in the 15mm to 20mm range. Not only can you get distortion, but the depth-of-field is so great with these lenses that everything in the viewfinder from front to back will be sharp and in focus. Wide angle lenses will distort foreground objects so that they will appear exaggerated in size relative to background subjects. A grouping of flowers or a pile of boulders can be used very effectively in this manner. Dominant and bold in the foreground, they will serve as an excellent founda-

tion to a picture.

Interesting portraits can be done this way, too. Philippe Halsman's famous shot of Louis Armstrong is made with a wide angle lens looking down into Armstrong's trumpet. The horn appears large and impressively distorted in the finished photo, but after all, the horn was what "Satchmo" was known for.

Similarly, Art Kane's noted portrait of Joe Louis was taken with a wide angle lens. Placed just inches from Louis' large hands, the lens made the fists look massive compared with the rest of the "Brown Bomber's" body.

"Fun" portraits can be similarly obtained by moving in close to a friend's face with a wide angle lens. Noses will appear large, ears will look funny and the overall shape of the head will be distorted.

Distortion can also be applied to horizons. A wide angle lens on your camera tipped up or down will cause the horizon line to curve upward or downward. A surrealistic effect will be obtained that no other kind of manipulation will achieve.

So get distorted with your camera. Put a little distortion in your photographs.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave him a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then his mailbox number, 1873. His fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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