

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Move in close for the big picture



MONTÉ NAGLER

Moving in close is one of the most important guidelines in helping to improve your photography. But most 35mm cameras can only bring you to within 24 inches of your subject. Being able to move in extra close — even to only one or two inches — will

open up whole new horizons for you.

With closeup photography, you can take the ordinary and transform it into something beautiful. A single drop of morning dew clinging to the underside of a blade of grass, the delicate intimacy of a flower or leaf, a detail of peeling paint on the siding of a deserted barn — all can become magnificent portrayals of mood and sensitivity.

Shooting closeups is fun and easy and can be achieved with a minimal investment. There are four types of closeup accessories from which to choose that can make your 35mm a closeup camera.

• **Closeup filters** — These are the least expensive means of taking closeups and usually come in sets of three. They act exactly like magnifying glasses when screwed onto the front of your lens. A No. 1 filter will allow you to focus to within 16 inches, a No. 2 to about 10 inches and a No. 3 to about six inches. Combining two or all three will enable you to focus down extremely close to your subject.

• **Closeup rings** — Also called extension tubes, these rings are sold in sets of three. The idea is to attach one or a combination of the hollow tubes between the lens and the camera body. The farther the lens is away from the body, the greater the degree of magnification.

• **Extension bellows** — Here, a flexible bellows is placed between the lens and camera body similar to extension

tubes. The advantages of bellows are that you have infinite latitude of focus to subject distances, and you can achieve greater degrees of magnification than either closeup filters or extension tubes.

• **Macro lenses** — A macro lens is a closeup lens in itself. Macro lenses can be carried on your camera as a normal lens, and then can quickly be converted to a closeup lens without stopping to add accessories. Many of today's popular zoom lenses have a macro mode, which is fine but may not move you in as close as a pure macro lens.

Remember that any exposure increase with closeup equipment is adjusted for automatically on cameras with through-the-lens metering.

Depth-of-field is one of the most important factors to consider in closeup photography. As you know, the closer you are to your subject, the less depth-of-field you get at a given aperture. By the time you are very close to the subject, depth-of-field may be a mere fraction of an inch. Focusing thus becomes very critical and often a small aperture is a must. In addition, it follows that when an image is magnified, the slightest camera movement will be exaggerated in the finished print. Therefore, a tripod is a necessity when shooting closeups.

When you move in close, details are magnified and surfaces can lose their texture unless you light them in a way that accents their miniature topography. Therefore, aim for side or back-lighting to bring out and enhance pattern and texture. Usually, shooting in the early morning or late afternoon will do the trick.

Closeup photography can be a fascinating experience. It will sharpen your vision, improve your knowledge and reward you with truly exciting photographs.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills.

Up close:

One of Monte Nagler's top students, Laura Little, moved in close to obtain this striking and unusual photograph of mannequins.



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