

Let there be light

as photo subject



Did you know there's a photographic subject of great potential that is often ignored, frequently taken for granted and yet used without exception in every photograph we take?

MONTE NAGLER What I'm referring to is plain, old-fashioned, all-important light. Isn't it time we gave it more respect?

Obviously, light is used to illuminate all our photographic subjects, but now let's turn the tables and use light as the subject itself. If you do, you can produce dramatic and exciting pictures.

To begin with, those beautiful sunset/sunrise photographs we all shoot showing the sun as a brilliant fireball surrounded by a rainbow of clouds are in reality photographs of light as the subject. We've all been shooting sunsets for years but didn't realize we're photographing light itself.

In a backstage subject showing a striking silhouette, the lighting is the direct cause of the silhouette and is therefore indirectly the subject. The photograph shown here is just such an example. The "rim lighting" gives this photograph important impact.

What about lens flare, the usually unacceptable reflections of sunlight bouncing off the glass elements in the lens?

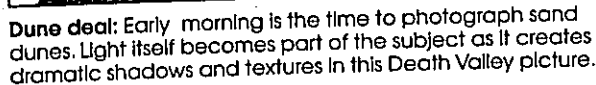
Of course, in most of your shots, you

want to eliminate lens flare by preventing the sun from entering your camera's lens. But how about deliberately allowing some lens flare in order to add an unusual and exciting effect to your picture? In doing so, the flare, or light itself, becomes your subject.

Here's an idea to help make "light" of your subject. With slow-speed film and a strong foreground subject such as an old gnarled tree, shoot pictures with the sun directly in the viewfinder. But instead of heeding the meter, use the camera's smallest aperture and fastest shutter speed. In other words, underexpose your shot. And, for safety's sake, don't look at the sun through the viewfinder – look alongside the sun. This "underexposing" procedure will produce sensational photographs showing the sun as a "star," the foreground subject as a dramatic silhouette, and depending on the lens used and the time of day, some exciting lens flare. What have you really done here? You've made light your subject.

So, begin to think in terms of using light itself as the subject. It's a fine opportunity to acquire a better understanding and appreciation of light. After all, as oils are to the painter, light is to the photographer.

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.

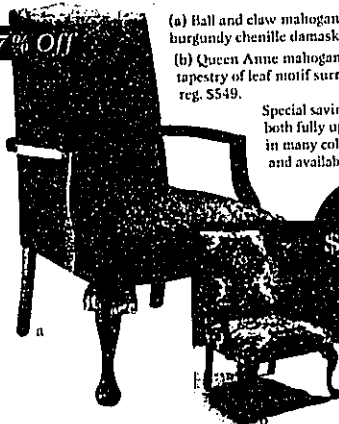


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