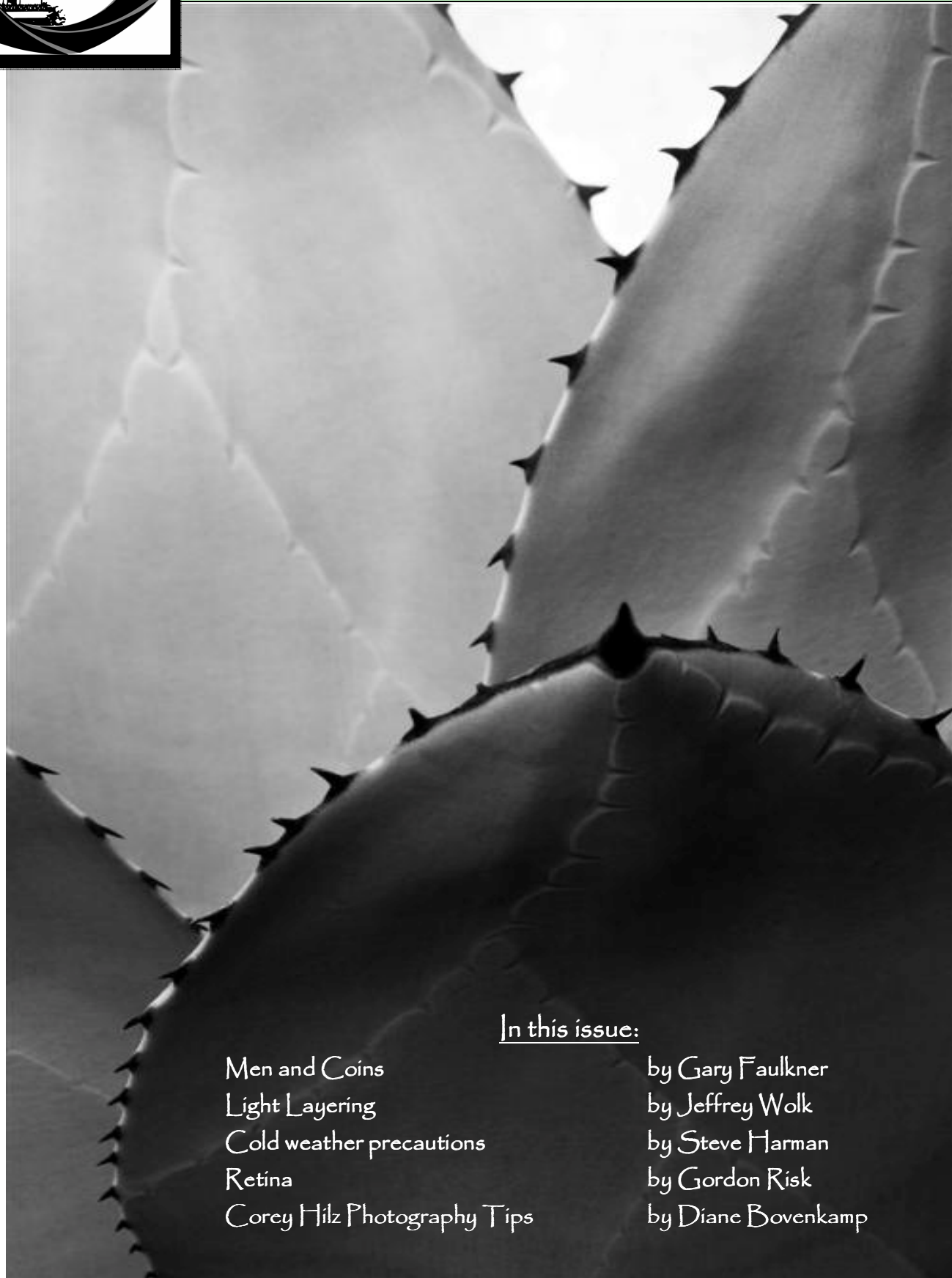




F o c a l P o i n t

March/April 2009



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F o c a l P o i n t

FROM YOUR EDITOR:

Some great member articles this month including techniques and tips for novices and pros from novices and pros. Though Spring has sprung, you'll find a wonderfully informative article on cold weather photography. Too late for last month's issue but, still appropriate -- it's been a cold March!

In this issue you'll find a summary of a recent BCC speaker's presentation. You'll also learn about *Light Layering*, Sir Edmond Hillary's camera and BCC outings. and, of course, pics of members and by members. Enjoy!

Thanks to Gary Faulkner, Jeffrey Wolk, Steve Harman, Gordon Risk, Diane Bovenkamp for their contributions.

BCC Gets Out



photo by Steve Dembo

Longwood Gardens

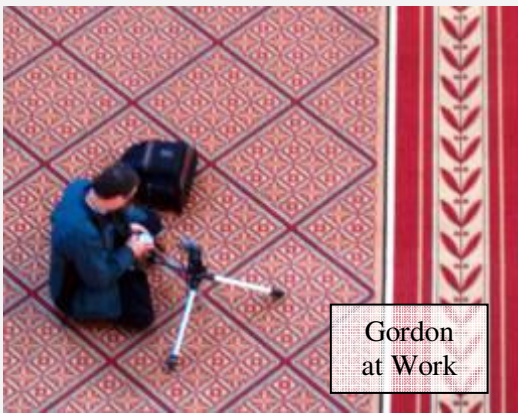


F o c a l P o i n t

Men and Coins

Men and Coins by Gary Faulkner

What do 3 men, tripods and coins have in common? The 3 men, John Davis, Gordon Risk and Gary Faulkner, decided to take a trip to Washington, DC for the day to visit the National Building Museum and take a few photographs. We set out from Gordon's around 9:00am for the Greenbelt Metro station and after deciphering the ticket machines we boarded the green line to the District. Emerging from the Gallery-China Town stop underground it was but a short walk, 1 ½ blocks, to the NBM. This was my first look inside this impressive building; I have a fondness for buildings with character. We quietly went our separate ways to photograph what interested each, Gordon went for a close up of the base of one of the central columns, I went for a reflection on the marble floor of the gold painted columns and John well not sure where he got off to. As we worked our way around in this massive building I headed for the fourth level promenade for a higher perspective. This is really off limits to visitors unless you are in a guided tour and later John and I, now on the third level, were approached by an employee from the Marketing Dept. that informed us that



be used without prior permission. Her name was Johanna and after a short conversation she gave us the OK to continue using our tripods.





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Men and Coins (cont.)

Well now it was getting time for lunch, all that photography can make a guy hungry. After a tasty burger we set off for a walk down the Mall towards the Washington Monument, World War II Memorial and the Vietnam War Memorial. Once at the Reflecting Pool, now empty, we were walking to the Lincoln Memorial and noticed the coins, mostly pennies. Being men of fiscal responsibility thought it prudent to clean them up. Well what do you know here's a nickel, oh look there's a dime, "wow" a quarter soon we were like kids picking up coins as we walk along, my take was \$4.80. The street baggers' that shook their plastic cups at us in the Mall should have been here getting their share of the "stimulus money"! Our day ended with a coffee and cookie at a Star Bucks, thanks to our new found wealth, before boarding the Metro and driving home. So get with a photographer partner and go to a place you find interesting and enjoy your art and friendship.



John is Happy



F o c a l P o i n t

Technique

Light Layering

by Jeffrey Wolk

There was a time when hard lighting (light that produces sharp and distinct shadows) was the norm in studio photography. In the 1930s and 40s very complex lighting setups, with as many as seven or eight lights were used to illuminate models and still life. Light ratios had to be very exact with such large numbers of lights.

Soft light (light that produces no distinct or diffused shadows) is prevalent in most studios today with the use of soft boxes and umbrellas

Hardlight Softlight



“Light Layering” (my term) is a technique that can produce an effect similar to a complex multi-lighting setup, and only requires one light. The concept is to capture six or seven images with the light coming from different angles as each image is captured. Those images are then merged together in Photoshop, thus creating a different layer for each capture.

You will need a good tripod and a free moving light source. A shoe-mount camera flash is a good choice. Since the flash is used from different angles to the subject, a cable from the flash unit to the shoe mount is required. If your camera and flash unit permits remote flash, that works fine. I prefer to use a snoot on my flash unit to give the effect of a spot light (A household flashlight will work fine as is) Honlphoto & LumiQuest make snoots for shoe-mount camera flashes that are under \$30. Use a shutter release cable (or the camera’s self timer if you don’t have a shutter release cable) to trip the shutter. Camera and subject movement is one of the biggest technical issues you will face. How gently you walk near your subject can have an influence.



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Technique (cont.)

Taking the Photos is fairly straight forward. Start with the camera on a sturdy tripod and the subject on a solid and sturdy base. Take six or seven photos while changing the direction of the light. Have at least a few shots with the light far off to the sides to produce a rim lighting effect (GET CREATIVE!).



The next step is to merge the images in Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. Choose the darkest photo that you took as you first photo to open. Every photo you add as a layer will lighten the photo over all, and since you cannot change the opacity or blend mode of the “Background Layer”, it’s best to start with a dark image and work your way up from there.

Open a second photo from the set and use the “Move Tool” (Pictured on the right), and drag the photo you just opened over the first opened image. Holding down the Shift key while dragging the image and keeping it down before you un-click the mouse, will cause the two images to align in register. To check the alignment you can zoom in to the photo at a screen view of 100 % and turn the eye (the visibility icon) on the top layer, on and off to see if anything moves. If you do see movement it means something moved when you were taking the photos. This is the time to fix any misalignment with the “Move Tool” if needed.



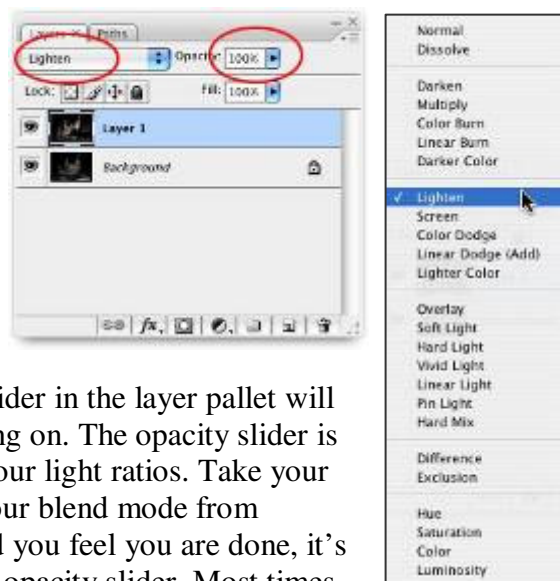


F o c a l P o i n t

Technique (cont.)

Remember to turn the top layer's visibility back on after you are finished inspecting the alignment!

In the “Layers Panel” choose either “Lighten” or “Screen” as the blend mode for the new layer (“Layer 1” in the example to the right”). The “Screen Mode” is the more aggressive of the two, and blends the two images together like a double exposure. This blend mode will brighten your image very quickly and works best with under exposed images. The “Lighten Mode” (The one that you will most likely use most), only shows the brightest pixels of the two layers and tends to build a little slower. If the two layers blend together too brightly still, you can lower the opacity of the layer you are working on to bring thing back into balance. The opacity slider in the layer pallet will work like a dimmer switch on the selected layer you are working on. The opacity slider is the most creative and intuitive tool you have for working out your light ratios. Take your time and see what effect the opacity slider has if you change your blend mode from “Lighten” to “Screen”. After you have six or seven images, and you feel you are done, it’s a good Idea to go back and click on each layer and readjust the opacity slider. Most times you will find nuances in the image that you did not see during building process.



Example of an image done using a flashlight instead of a flash-unit.



F o c a l P o i n t

Cold weather precautions

(or my anxieties on the Hill)

We had a very successful club outing this past Saturday. Despite the lackluster sunrise display that resulted from the lack of clouds in the sky, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. It was a bitter cold morning and everyone was anxious to finish out the morning with a warm place for breakfast. I was hungry and ready for that cup of hot coffee as everyone else but as I was putting away my gear, my anxiety rose with the sight of many cameras with lenses being carried right into the Dunkin Donuts without any preparation beforehand. It brought up less fortunate memories of my first telephoto lens.

When I first started my photography hobby (back in the film days), I didn't have a lot of money to spend on equipment and I saved up for weeks to buy my first telephoto lens to photograph waterfowl in winter. It was a Vivitar 400mm f/5.6 lens and I made several long drives to the wildlife refuges in Delaware to capture what I hoped would be Audubon Magazine quality images. Well the mediocre images captured cost me more than gas money, they cost me the price of the lens. I had to learn a tough lesson about camera equipment and the temperate climate we live in here in Maryland. Within three weeks of receiving the lens, I started noticing tiny spider webs and cloudiness on the inside lens elements. Over the next couple weeks, the webs and cloudiness almost completely covered the lens element surface on the inside.

By **Steve Harman**

Fungus had started to grow on the inner lens elements and it was impossible to reach without a complete disassembly of the lens. A year later, the acids produced by the fungus had etched the glass. While the lens would still operate, I noticed the great reduction of sharpness and contrast in the images taken with this lens. I had to consider it a total loss as the disassembly, cleaning, and shipping would have been as much as the original cost of this lens.

It was only after a little research that I realized I could have saved myself lots of money if I had only spent two or three dollars on two common items, garbage bags and silica gel packs.



Photo by Steve Dembo



F o c a l P o i n t

Cold weather precautions (cont.)

Cold air has very little water vapor but the air inside the warm heated places we live in, have lots of moisture. Anyone who wears eyeglasses in winter or has taken a cold glass of ice tea outside in summer has experienced the effects of condensation of water vapor. Several varieties of fungus love the environment of dust from lens manufacture and our camera bags in combination with that water that condensates upon entering warm humid rooms. The condensation that forms may also affect the performance of the electronics as well.

So if you go out shooting in the cold, wrap your camera or camera bag in a plastic bag before bringing it into a warm room to prevent moisture from accumulating inside your camera or lenses. I put my camera bag or camera inside a close kitchen

garbage bag outside house and immediately take it to the coolest place in the house. I let the bag sit for at least an hour or two before opening the bag. You can remove the storage card and put this in a pocket prior to entering the house so you can download images on the computer while your gear slowly warms up. If you don't have a garbage bag with you, at a minimum put your gear in your camera bag with the lens covers on and zip up the bag. Silica gel packs can be

placed in the bottom of your bag to absorb moisture. After the equipment warms up to room temperature, it is best to remove the camera, lenses, and silica packs to air dry the bag interior, especially if the bag got wet from condensation or wetness in the field during the shoot. Carrying a supply of bags (clear kitchen or Ziploc) in your car trunk and camera bag is a good way to keep your equipment away from the hazards of rain, condensation and bad memories!



Photo by Steve Dembo



Photo by Steve Dembo



F o c a l P o i n t

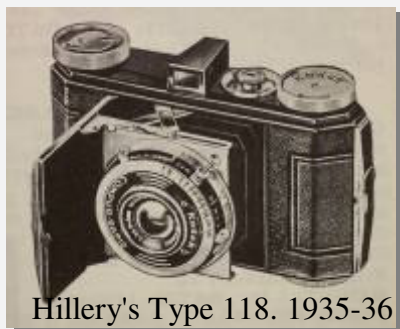
Collector's Corner

RETINA

BY GORDON RISK

A series of 35mm cameras made in Germany by Kodak A. G. from 1934 to 1969.

The history of the Kodak Retina camera begins with the purchase of Dr. August Nagel Camerawerk in Stuttgart by Kodak A. AG. On December 1, 1931. Dr. August Nagel remained in control of the plant and personally worked on the development of the Retina camera. The first Retina (Type 117) was introduced in the summer of 1934 and was the first camera to use the then new 35mm film Daylight Loading Cartridge (DLC). This first Retina camera and the DLC are historically important because they made possible the explosive growth of 35mm photography in the late 1930's due to the relatively low price of this quality 35mm camera and the ease of use of the 35mm Daylight Loading Cartridge.



Hillery's Type 118. 1935-36

The only famous picture that I could find that was shot with a Retina is the one of Sherpa Tensing Norgay, taken by Sir Edmond Hillary when they

summitted Mount Everest on May 29, 1953. There are no shots of Sir Edmond because he did not want to show Tensing how to work the Retina in such a rarified atmosphere and limited time. He felt they should not linger. His Retina was a 1936 model 118, a family camera he brought with him.



Tensing Norgay

He looked around for signs of George Mallory and Sandy Irvine, who had gone to the mountain thirty years before and who, some people believe, had reached the summit. They found no sign of them.

It is known that Mallory took a Kodak vest pocket camera on his ascent, but it was not with the belongings when his body was found in May 1999. The assumption is that Irvine had the camera, but his body has not been found.

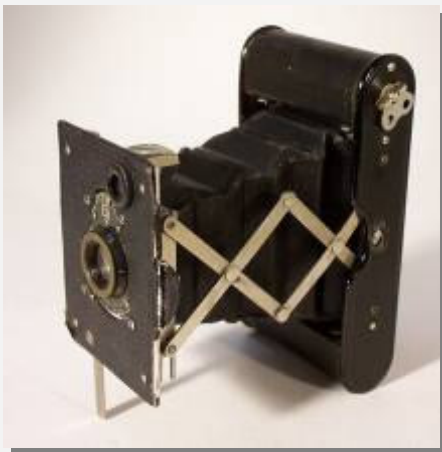
Hillary and Tensing only stayed fifteen minutes. After a small snack, Tensing dug a hole and placed food in it as a gift to the Gods and Hillary added a small cross. Then they made their way down the mountain.



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Collector's Corner (cont.)

My own Retina Iia. 1951-54



Mallory's vest pocket camera. 1920



Retina IIIC (Type 028) - 1957-1960.



F o c a l P o i n t

Photography Tips

Photography Tips From Corey Hilz: You've Found The Subject, Now What?

by Diane Bovenkamp

On March 12th, Corey Hilz stood in front of the Baltimore Camera Club and wowed us with his passion for photography, offering us a long list of tips for use in our own photographic practices. For those of you who were not able to attend this meeting, or for those who are not familiar with Mr. Hilz, the following are excerpts from his website biography (www.coreyhilz.com):

"Corey Hilz focuses his photography on the natural world. ... From mountains and flowers to water and wildlife, Corey approaches his subjects with an artistic eye looking for rhythm, texture and pattern. He goes beyond the documentary image to show a unique perspective using color, shape and line. He strives to share the beauty of a destination you've never seen and provide a new perspective of a place you know well. ... Corey has a passion for teaching photography. He lectures, leads workshops and provides private instruction for those looking to focus their learning. ... Corey is recognized as a Lensbaby Guru."

I've briefly listed below my impressions of Corey's teachings. Many are suggestions that might enable you to come back satisfied from camera runs when the lighting or other conditions may not be optimal. Consider this to be a resource for enhancing your own photographic style.

- 1. Work The Subject.** Don't stop after taking one picture of a subject: change the perspective, go vertical vs. horizontal, change the type of lens, or go for a tighter or wider shot. Keep in mind that a wide angle shot might not be the most effective representation of what originally drew you to the subject.
- 2. Observation.** Where are you? Notice the relationship between different subjects. For example, fit a moon into a nook or cranny of a canyon landscape. Play with different lighting conditions at night by "light painting" objects with flashlights of different color temperatures instead of taking a "stark" camera flash shot.
- 3. Be Ready.** Things that you don't expect could be "happy accidents." For example, an ant crawls into your leaf or a dragonfly lands on your flower.
- 4. Lemons To Lemonade.** If you're traveling and can't wait for the perfect light, make use of what you have. For example, an overcast day can provide a clean backdrop for windmills or other architecture. If you're in a forest at high noon with high contrast, focus on form and shape and look for subtle bits of light. Above-all, keep an open mind -- sometimes the shot that's last on your list ends up being the best.



F o c a l P o i n t

Photography Tips (cont.)

- 5. Timing.** This comes down to shutter speed and shutter release. For example, for snow falling, you can create streaks with slow speed or create frozen dots with fast speed. For shots of flying birds, leaving the aperture open longer and/or panning can create blurred wings.
- 6. Explore The Details.** Macro Photography: capture what you initially visualized and then go for more. Look at the subject with 'live view,' since it can give you a different perspective from your eyes looking through the viewfinder. Look for light caught on petals or specular highlights from dew drops.
- 7. Create Your Own "Good Conditions."** If you don't find what you want, 'make it so.' Use a spray bottle on flowers if there's no dew. Use a reflector to direct light inside of a drooping flower.
- 8. Getting What You Want.** Always the goal. Be creative. Be prepared. For example, bring a background card to place behind flowers, leaves or other subjects. Backlit leaves are an option if the sun is high in the sky. Look for colorful reflections in water.
- 9. Shake It Up.** Your photos don't always have to be in focus. Do long-exposure zooms, sweeping the camera in different directions. Play with shape, design and color.
- 10. The Little Things.** Explore a detail that draws your attention. For example, red is a dominant color, so use it strategically. Place the subject in a different relation to the background/foreground. Get closer. Rotate it.
- 11. Make It Your Way.** Experiment. Change your camera's white balance. For example, if you use the tungsten setting, gray goes to blue. Graduated neutral density filter makes clouds more ominous.
- 12. Watch The Light.** Light is in continual flux. Look for a rainbow in a fountain's spray. Turn around and take a shot - the light conditions may be completely different. Look for specular highlights.
- 13. Perspective.** Play with "fun" viewpoints. Get down low and shoot upwards. Get up high and shoot downwards. Change-it-up.

Perhaps one of the ideas above will encourage you to approach future field shoots in a different way. I'll leave you to ponder the following mantra from Corey Hilz's website: **"Explore. Create. Learn."**



F o c a l P o i n t

Parting Shot



Photo by Steve Dembo

Believe