

SCENIC WILD PHOTOGRAPHY

- JANUARY, 2004 -

Another month has passed, a season ended, and another began. As I write, a Pacific storm is slowly making its way in from the Great Basin, its howling winds shaking the last of the dead leaves off the elm trees in my yard. Clouds are fast drifting past the moon, and a faint glow is reflected off the snow covered mountains in the distance. Thinking back to similar nights in other times and other places makes me feel both sad and fortunate. The timeless magic and mystery of a night at the edge of a storm are undeniable.



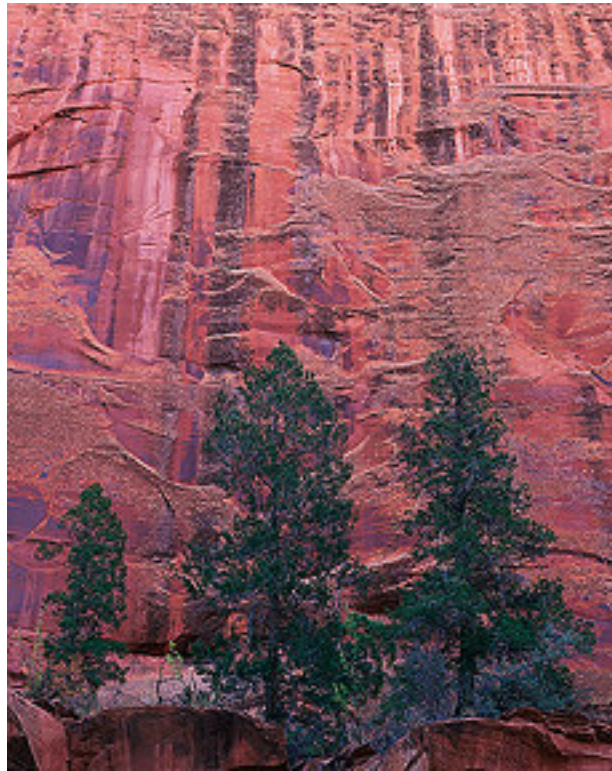
As new projects are taking more of my bandwidth, I reluctantly decided to change the newsletter schedule. I will publish the newsletter in its current format of articles and tips once per quarter instead of every month. I will, however, continue to send out email updates regarding workshop schedules, exhibits, etc. as they become available.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank a few friends out there who have made the last few weeks memorable. Friends who invited me into their homes, shared their insights and inspirations (not to mention their excellent brownie recipe), and new friends who gave me much to think about and be thankful for. You know who you are – you have my deepest gratitude and admiration.

Guy

Workshop Schedule

Michael Gordon and I have tentatively set Sunday, May 2, 2004 as the start date for our upcoming Canyons of the Escalante workshop. Other than hands-on instruction in the field, we will lead participants on day hikes to various parts of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and the adjacent Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Nights will be spent around a campfire, sharing stories, soaking in the clear desert air, and sleeping under the stars.



Michael and I will be spending the upcoming Christmas vacation on location, making final plans and arrangements. We hope to finalize and announce our pricing and various logistics by January. To insure a valuable experience, and to minimize impact to the places we visit, we want to keep the group small so, if interested, please let us know as early as possible.

Shooting in the Dead Zone

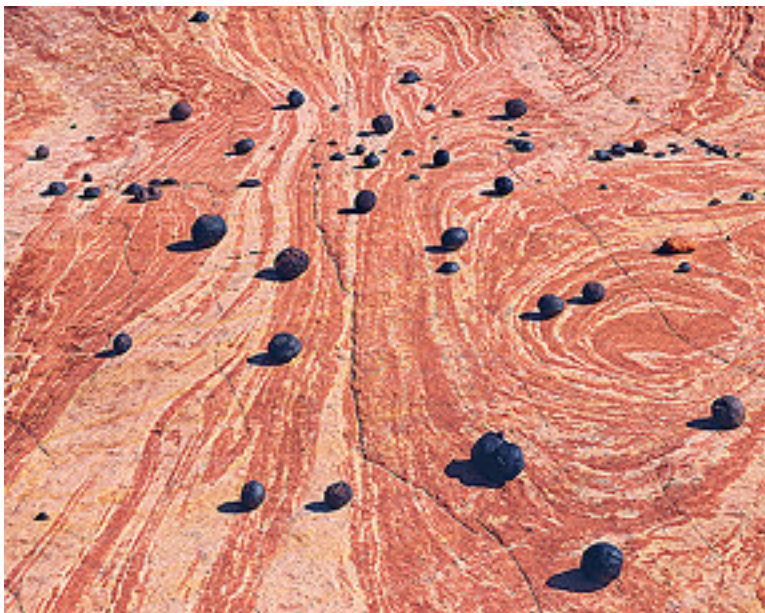
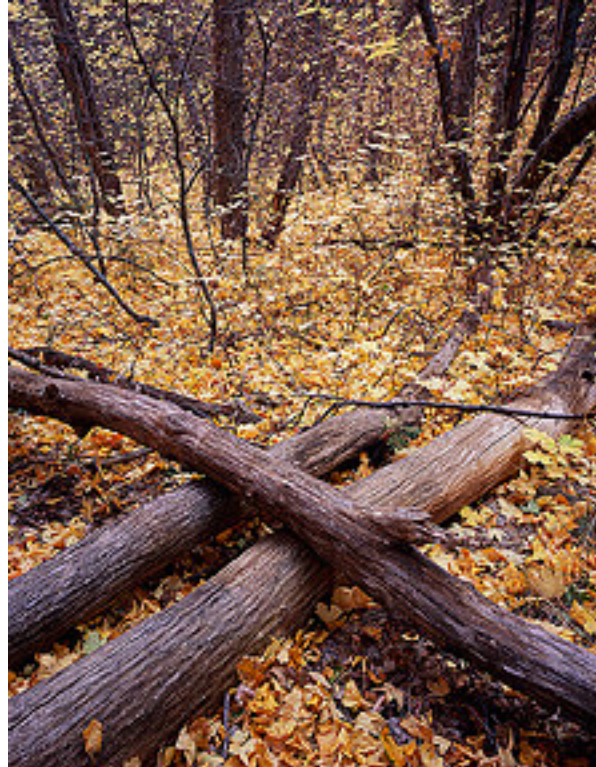
Few will dispute the magic of sunrise and sunset light. As photographers we pursue it like crazed moths – the pastels of Earth shadow at the edge of dawn or a prelude to darkness, the fiery solar warmth reflecting off clouds, igniting distant peaks or mere blades of grass, the borderline between the kingdoms of day and night, a portal from one parallel universe into another. Mystery and beauty combine to produce a visual impact like no other. So much is well known, but what about the hours in between? Limited (for the most part) by available light, what is a landscape photographer to do?

Not all is lost. The hours between the solar light shows can still be used productively. Recognizing one's handicap is key to making the most of what's available - do not attempt the same images you might otherwise prefer in golden light. When you come upon such scenes, make a mental note to return when the light is right. Instead, seek those things that work in the available light.

Even Light - even, diffused light can be found in shaded areas, under trees, in deep canyons, or under cloud cover.

While at first glance color may appear drab, consider the up side - a controlled contrast range. Even light allows capturing detailed images and intimate landscapes where bright light can be a detriment. Under such conditions even films of the narrowest latitudes will retain subtle shadow detail while still keeping highlights in check.

This is the time to break out the saturated emulsions (Fuji Velvia, Kodak Ektachrome 100VS, etc.), screw on the warming filters (or, with a digital camera, set the white balance to compensate for the high color temperature), and leave the sky out of the frame.



High Contrast - usually a detriment yet when used effectively, high contrast can result in striking images. Finding scenes that work in high contrast is sure to be a challenge - look for intricate lines and shapes accented and enhanced by dark shadows, rather than ones where large shadow areas may block up and distract

from your subjects. When the suitable scene is found - make it a point to carefully manage the highlights, especially when using transparency film or digital cameras. Blocked up shadows may be distracting, but blown highlights will often make an image completely unusable. A low-contrast film like Fuji Astia or Agfa RSX may help ensure highlights are not lost.

Shadows – shadows can be every bit as powerful an element in a composition as the objects casting them. In seeking interesting elements we often tend to ignore shadows, possibly treating them as a necessary evil, yet shadows can produce fantastic effects as leading lines, or as accents to interesting curves. Take some time to study shadows and you may be surprised to discover a new world of creative options to incorporate into your composition.



Keep in mind that shadows are transparent. Be sure to pay attention to how you want the shadows rendered – with careful exposure you can block them completely or leave any amount of detail visible, either approach may enhance or detract from your final image.



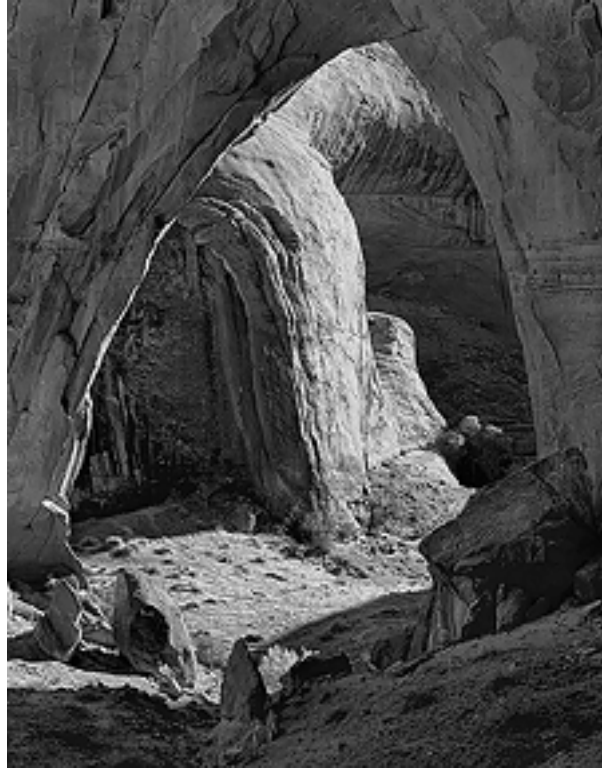
Use the Sun – perhaps most difficult of all is to use the mid-day sun itself as an element in an image – difficult, but not impossible.

By placing the sun behind tree trunks or other elements, starburst or halo effects can be achieved, resulting in unusual and powerful images.

For me, this is one of few situations in which I will bracket to make sure my exposure is correct. I would strongly advise against attempting to point your spot meter directly at the sun...

Also be sure to watch for flare by shading the lens' front element while studying the viewfinder.

Black and White – when color is washed out, and/or when it is more distracting than contributing to the success of an image (as in images made primarily of strong lines, interesting tonal transitions, patterns, or textures), consider eliminating color altogether. Using black and white film has the added advantage of a much wider exposure latitude, and finer grain than most color emulsions, allowing exquisite shadow and highlight detail in situations where color film would lose one or the other (or both).



Unlike color film which tends to be more prone to losing bright highlights, when exposing black and white film, pay more attention to the shadow areas as they tend to block more easily.

These are just some tips to keep in mind when the light is less than magical. There are many more opportunities to making images outside of the "golden hours". All it takes is consciousness of the limitations and an open, creative mind.

Get 'em While they Last

As some of you may already know, Scenic Wild's pricing for large prints (20x30, 30x40, etc.) for the past year have been quite competitive. The idea was to get more of our prints out there. These prices will remain in effect for the remainder of 2003, but as we continue to pursue more gallery venues our prices will rise accordingly as to not undercut the market or alienate gallery owners (who normally charge a percentage of sales).

While I can no longer guarantee Christmas delivery, I will make every effort to expedite these orders.

For a list of current prices, please check our web site:

<http://www.scenicwild.com/sw/buy/index.jsp>