

A lens with a view to please vol 3

"You know...that a blank wall is an appalling thing to look at. The wall of a museum -- a canvas -- a piece of film -- or a guy sitting in front of a typewriter. Then, you start out to do something -- that vague thing called creation. The beginning strikes awe within you." - Edward Steichen

When I was reading last month article again, I was surprised how technical and boring it was. "The important thing is not to stop questioning." says Albert Einstein... I am questioning my writing style and content, but none of my faithful readers have yet complained, am I too critical?

To those of you who have been able to read to the last lines, congratulations. I wonder how much of it actually made sense to you; it was definitely not easy reading.

This time I have included more photographs, easier?

I've been rambling on about the benefits of reflected light readings, the ones that you can easily do with the light meter **inside** your SLR camera.

I believe a light meter inside the camera is rather limiting in producing exacting results. A handheld meter, the one that you can point to easily at regions of different contrast and light intensities will produce better and more professional results.

From the beginning in my career, I have used a Gossen light meter. Possibly, at that time Gossen was the only manufacturer in Europe of light meters only. This put faith in me, if a manufacturer can survive on the production of 1 line of products, they must be good.

My first light meter was a needle job, and I definitely was not a professional photographer then either, but even then I recognized that in order to create better looking results I needed a light meter that was more reliable and easier to use than that needle in my viewfinder. It just was not accurate enough in critical applications. You may have gathered from this that I'm a little bit like a control freak. That's why I do not photograph weddings, I am not in control of other people's emotions and unforeseen happenings, I prefer to work in my studio. I can control everything in my studio, music, and light, even what I photograph. And how I photograph it is under my control.

To illustrate critical metering I will use a handheld meter, the Sixtomat, and the top of the range, the Starlite model. Both are excellent, it is just a matter of money I guess, but my Starlite offers so much more, like the Zone system. See photo of the two meters.

Sixtomat on left, Starlite model on right



Last month I pointed out that incident light meter readings will give you one reference point, that of an average grey behind the light meter.
This time I have selected a different situation where an incident light meter reading will definitely not help you, on the contrary it will stuff things up very nicely.
Look at my image with the torch, if I had my [incident mode] light meter in front



of the torch I would not have a clue if the light bulb in the torch was glowing or not glowing. See photograph No. 1, the light bulb is not glowing, but in photo 2 the light bulb is glowing.



What do we have to do in order to establish the fact that we can see the light bulb glowing? Okay, here we go.

I have used the Starlite model for this, it offers spot readings. It is not easy for you to see, but just above my thumb there is the eyepiece that you can look through and see the light bulb glowing inside the torch [reflected mode].



This is exactly the same way the light meter works in your camera, you look at things through the viewfinder like here. I have selected a one degree viewing area, this way I can only see the light bulb. The light bulb, when it is glowing, will give me a reflected spot reading off 125th at f F16. The light reading in incident mode, with the diffuser in the middle of the light meter, see Photograph

No. 1 or 2 is different, it should show me 125th at F 8.03. Somehow I must have taken a reading when more lights were switched on....mea culpa, sorry.

In the reflected spot meter mode of the light bulb it measures 1/125th at F16. If I take the photograph with this setting, the light bulb is grey, not a bright white bulb. To make the filament show brightly, I have to overexpose it. If I do this by 2 aperture stops it will show as an almost white. Choosing an aperture of F8 with a shutter speed of 1/125th will just do that.

Thus, I adjusted the output of my flash unit to fall on the torch and the white background to be 125th at F8. In comparison, the light emitted by the light bulb is two stops brighter, remember it read in reflected mode F16. If I did not measure both situations, I would have never been able to show you this.

In conclusion, if you want to show anything that emits light, or is highly reflective, and you want to know how bright it is in comparison to the light that falls on it, you have to take two different readings. In a reflected mode, looking through the eyepiece of the light meter at the bright light emitting object or very shiny reflective surface, you establish that light level reading. Just write this down.

Then you'll take a light meter reading off the light that falls on to the object you just have measured. If the light that falls on your object is brighter than your first reading, it may not show, or show a little.

If the light that falls onto the torch in this case is less (F8) than the light the light bulb produces (F16), the light bulb will show. It depends on the contrast/difference/light levels between the incident and reflective light meter readings what you will see.

If you only had an incident light meter, but one that has the ability to move the white dome sideways to reveal the "lens" behind the white dome, you could take a reflected light meter reading, if you get close enough to the light bulb. See Photograph No. 5.

You have to be so close, otherwise it measures the reflections of the silver reflector AND the lightbulb. The viewing angle of the lens in your lightmeter is between 30 and fifty degrees.



Photo no 5

Viewing you next month with more encounters of the light kind (and some tips!).
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