

A lens with a view to create images that reflect your abilities

"Change reality! If you don't find it, invent it." Pete Turner

Over the last couple of months I have written many words about the "art of seeing" and analysing thoughts and considerations on "to make photographs".

I propose a small change and do some technie speak/geek again, a few tips could be informative, don't you think?

Tip No 1:

Reflective objects have a nasty habit of reflecting everything in their immediate surroundings, not only immediate; I have seen half of my studio reflected in one of the shiney coffee percolator jobs that I had to photograph.

We all know the solution to that; we build a "white tent" around the reflective objects. (A white tent is a seamless cloth, a translucent contraption that "envelopes" your subject with a hole in it to aim your lens through.) There are commercial white tents available in various sizes and serious prices. If you don't want to spend money to buy one of those, you can build probably an imitation white tent of materials that are available to you, I have used for instance translucent white cloth with great effect.

Tracing paper is another option for smaller objects.

If you can picture a chromium shiny kettle against a white background white tent, and the white background is reflecting on to the kettle, you will probably not see any definition, or the edges of the kettle. White reflects white so you can probably see very little of the edges of the kettle.

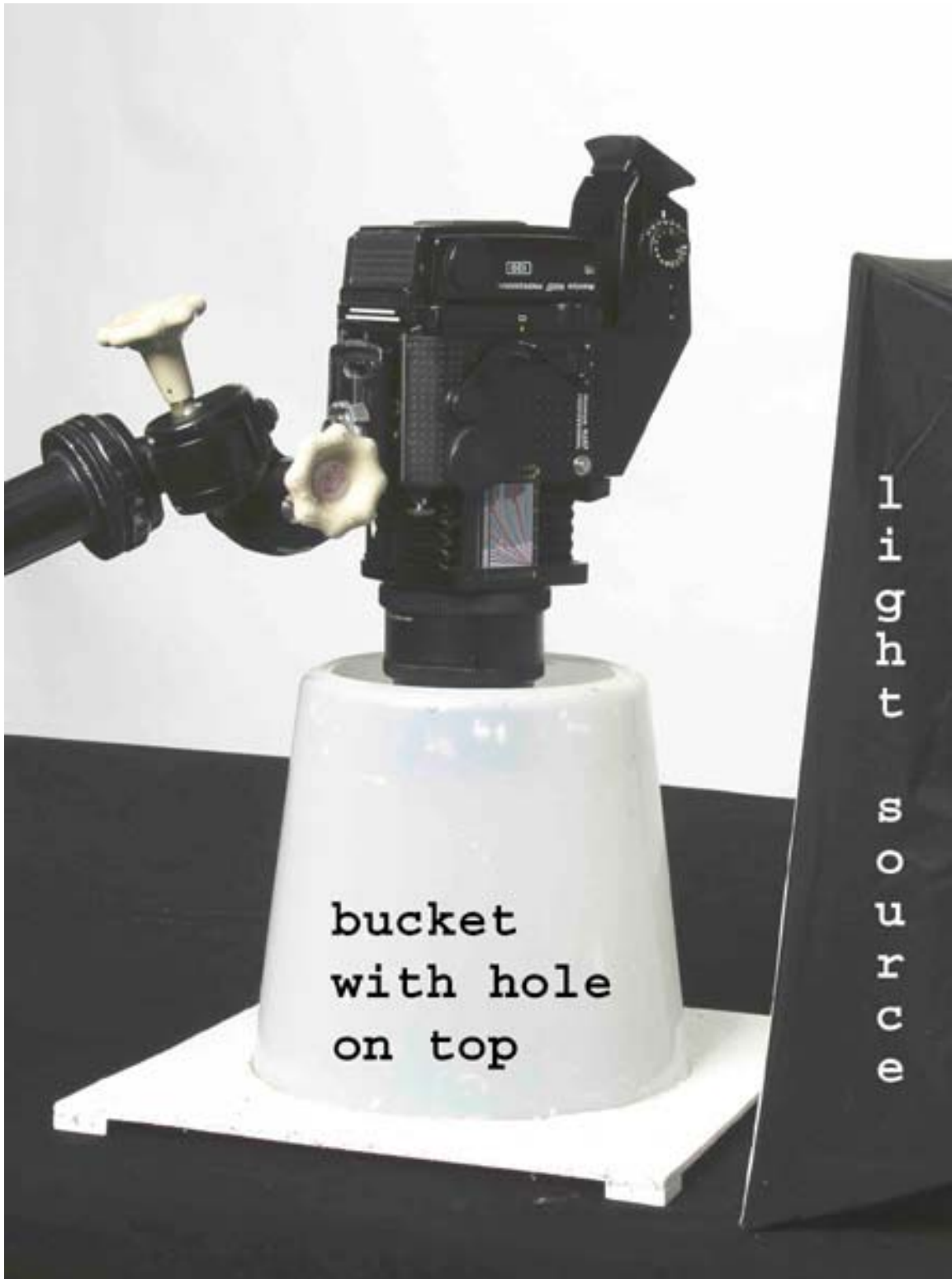
Handy tip No 1: To define the edges of your reflective object into a black edge into the position where it will show the outline of the object you have to reflect something dark, something black. I have used many times the black backing paper of 120 film for this. It is long, it is narrow, and there is plenty of it in the studio after processing my black and white film.

When you photograph watches, you photograph two different types of reflective material. One is glass, the other is the reflective metal. Plastic watches are not my style.

Before you start shooting your watches you set the hands of the watch to approx. ten past ten. Often I am asked why the position of the hands is like this. The answer is quite simple. In most cases you can now easily read the manufacturers name and other relevant details (see photo).



If you place the hands of the watch in a position like 20 past ten it looks too much like a straight line, it does not look very interesting. Anyway ten past ten for me is coffee time, and it is a good time! Perhaps it has even hidden psychological meanings? I am digressing again sorry. It is very awkward to build a white tent just around a small watch. There is a very easy way to achieve an optimum result, reflection free photography (see photo)



of a singular watch goes like this:

You may have heard of the song "*there is a hole in my bucket dear Henry dear Henry there is a hole in my bucket*"? Purchase a bucket that is made of translucent, or almost translucent or very thin white plastic. They are very cheap buckets, because the material is so thin. Your procedure is as follows; you cut a hole in the bottom of your

bucket slightly wider than your lens diameter. You place the bucket upside-down over the watch and position your camera and lens over the hole you made in the bottom of the bucket. It is probably easiest to do this when your camera is connected to a tripod. (see photo 3). To provide light for your watch you place a couple, in most cases two lights will be sufficient some distance away from the bucket. Position one light closer (or a higher intensity setting) to the bucket than the other one to provide a small differentiation in the amount of light reflected by the watch. This will make the watch look slightly darker on one side than the other side. Of course if you want a total even effect, place both lights the same distance away from the bucket with the same intensity flash settings. To introduce an illusion of reality, sometimes a small hint of dark reflection on the watch accentuates the profile or contours of the metal, you use your famous black backing paper of the 120 film strip on the inside of the bucket. I suggest that you cut your filmstrip in half so it is only about 3 cm wide, instead of 6 cm. Otherwise the width of your black reflection will be disproportional to the size of the watch. It is easy to "blue-tack" your backing paper against the plastic of your bucket. Rotate your bucket until the black reflection of your backing filmstrip is in the correct reflective position for maximum effect. (See the reflection of the strip on one of the sides of the watch strap – photo)



Final tip: place your watch on a supportive background that fits inside the bucket, this way you avoid the bottom edges of the bucket to reflect on to your watch.

For accuracy take a reflected light reading of a grey card, or if your grey card is too big to fits inside the bucket, cut off a little bit off your grey card and take a reflected spot reading of the little grey card. Then check with a spotmeter reading of the white inside watch f it is not reflecting more than 2.5 stops to preserve detail in the whites. The

highly specular highlights of the wristband will blow out to 4 stops easily, check it out so you know your contrast range.

PS: the black below the watch should read minus 3 stops below your aperture set on camera.

But wait... there is more... Bonus tip:

How to create the nice "frosty refreshing condensation look" on a bottle:

Most photographers have their own secrets/methods to photograph bottles that look fresh with sparkling little drops on the surface of the bottle.

Here is one that I remember from a long time ago, it is not mine, no I am not yet giving my method away... smear a fine film of petroleum jelly over the glass or plastic bottle surface. Then spray on top of a mixture of water with glycerin in it. One part of glycerin to one part of water, use a very fine spray for small droplets. Apparently the petroleum jelly gives the crispy frosty appearance, and the glycerin shows the droplets of condensation.

I should try it some time, you get at times really stuck in your habits... What is your recipe? Car wax instead of petroleum jelly?

Keep cool, illuminate your pixels with care, anyone want some digital oriented musings?

Feedback and E-xpressions are appreciated at hotshot@ihug.co.nz

Viewing you in reflective mode, cheers Robert

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