

# HORIZON NEWS #31

NEWS, THOUGHTS AND IMAGES FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

*Never take photographic advice from someone who tells you there is only one way to do something.*

Anonymous

## STUDENT PHOTOS: CLOSE-UP



Successful photos rivet the viewer's eyes to the subject matter that's important to the photographer. One of many ways to accomplish this goal is using contrasting colors. There are simple and obvious ways to accomplish this: choose a green background for a red flower; put a flesh tone face against a brown wall. The two photos at left demonstrate thoughtful, less common, ways to achieve this result.

**Linda Read** (top photo) placed her subject in warm, direct late-day sun. Most of the background possibilities had the identical light, but one section of the ice-filled C&D canal was in shade—cast by a nearby building—giving it a blue color cast. (Reason: The background was not lit by direct sun but by the blue sky.) The bonus of using this shaded background is it reduces the light level about three full stops from direct sunlight, which creates contrast between subject and background.



We don't know what technique **Ben Dupont** used to make the background blue, but through "reverse engineering" we consider two possibilities. First, set the camera's white balance on "tungsten," which renders the subject's face fairly normal, since it was lit by the bar's tungsten lights. A white balance setting

gives the background a blue cast if it were primarily lit by window light. Alternatively, you get somewhat the same result by using daylight white balance, which gives a face a very warm cast (from the tungsten light); then light the background with a blue-gelled flash off-camera (assuming there's not much daylight on the wall).

The most visually pleasing color contrasts are generally those from opposite ends of the color spectrum: blue and yellow or red and green, for example, but not red and pink or yellow and green. But remember Horizon's mantra: be wary of rules. Choose your contrasting colors using the "feels good in the gut" test.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- >Horizon's 2010 workshop schedule is complete. You can now print a calendar for the entire year. On the Home Page drop down menu select Search "By Date"; on that page you'll see a link to the pdf.
- >Reminder of our new offerings: 1. **Video Using SLRs and Video Camcorders** with **Tom Sullivan** (why not give your video capable SLR a tryout?) 2. Four workshops with **Lou Manna** in and around his NYC studio: **Studio Lighting; Food; Events;** and **NYC: Landmarks & Street Scenes.**
- >The early registration discount for **Steve Gottlieb's** May Arizona Adventure closes on Feb. 10th.

## QUICK TIP: DON'T THINK STRAIGHT



Do diagonal lines in a picture have more visual energy than vertical and horizontal ones? Generally, we think so. We're not sure exactly why this is, but here are a few thoughts. Straight V & H lines feel stable, predictable, even static. These lines usually create a sense that things are set firmly, even rigidly, in their place, comfortably contained within the picture frame. V & H lines suit many subjects well, but in many cases they lack that energized feel we like.

Diagonals, in contrast, are less visually static and stable. (We say "visual stable" because in physical construction, triangles are more structurally stable than rectangles.) Diagonals seem to generate a tension with the invisible vertical and horizontal lines that form the picture's outside dimension; they can appear to want to burst beyond the confines of the frame and continue off into the distance. And of course, diagonals have variety; they can be at any angle but 90 and 180 degrees.

We don't need to understand the power of diagonals to take advantage of it. Here are two tips: First, compose your shot deliberately to take advantage of an existing diagonal...or turn the camera off its normal axis to turn a V/H line into a diagonal. Whichever way **Annette Thompson** used to get her shot (taken from atop Chesapeake City's bridge), it works. Second, use a wide angle lens when you want to emphasize "diagonalness," as student **Paul Freedman** did with his fine shot of a bridge's underside in Fair Hill Park. Bottom line: V & H is way overused. Don't get trapped in a V & H box.

END FRAME



The day is humid and overcast. The light is flat and boring. Great conditions for shooting people, but there're no people around, and that's not what suits your mood, anyway. A good time for a simple technique: breathe on the lens...and the whole world changes. After you breathe, watch the fog "lift" in the viewfinder; click when it feels right. Student **Elizabeth McDaniel** chose just the right moment—and an ideal subject—for this effect. Her shot would make a fine cover for a murder mystery, yes?