

# HORIZON NEWS #34

IMAGES, THOUGHTS AND NEWS FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

*Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.*

--Erich Fromm--

## STUDENT PHOTOS: CLOSE-UP



Those who've attended any of the workshops led by Horizon Director Steve Gottlieb have heard his mantra: "If you want to improve your photographs, don't pick up the camera so fast." In other words, look carefully and think thoroughly before you lift the camera to your eye. When you look through the viewfinder, there is a strong tendency to quickly lock into what you're seeing, as opposed to "prowling around" the subject to find the best angle...to consider the optimum lens choice...to reflect on other options.

We frequently repeat this simple advice in workshops and newsletters because most people find it is extremely difficult to follow. It cuts against the natural inclination of most amateur photographers; the more pictures they take, the more productive they feel. But in photography, quantity is usually the enemy of quality, not its ally.

Consider these two photos of the same hubcap reflecting some of the students in a Creative Vision workshop. The top photo, by **Bob Hansen**, is excellent...interesting, surprising, fun, properly exposed and well composed. Yet notice the significant differences with **Tom Atkinson's** image below it. First, the bottom photo is composed so as to minimize the reflection of the uninteresting dark grass. Second, a somewhat higher camera position creates an

interesting second reflection above the first. Third, standing farther away from the hubcap and using a long telephoto lens, makes the people appear considerably larger. Our guess is that Tom took more time than Bob.

What if Tom had taken even more time? Perhaps he might have spread the people out in order to define them better...or perhaps done something else to take his shot to the next level. It usually takes time to create your best effort. So, as we say, *don't pick up the camera too fast.*

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

>Over the years we've been frustrated because **Horizonews** has insufficient space to feature many of the exceptional images taken by students during our workshops. There's an obvious solution, though we've been slow to come to it: we're now **posting student pictures on our Facebook page**. We're also posting photos by Horizon Director **Steve Gottlieb** from his upcoming revised book on Washington, D.C. Both student photos and Steve's will be accompanied by "**Photo Tips**" which we hope you'll find useful. Why not friend us on facebook? You'll find us at Horizon Photography Workshops.

>Steve Gottlieb has been leading one-day "field trips" for members of camera clubs and other photography groups, in Chesapeake City, MD and elsewhere. Subjects are Flash Magic, Creative Vision, and The Icons of Washington, D.C. Contact Horizon for details.

## QUICK TIP: PRACTICE YOUR PORTRAITURE



“Practice makes perfect,” goes the old cliché. How do you practice taking portraits so they’re (more) perfect? There’s no better way than to find a friend or relative who’s willing to pose, then put him (or her) in a variety of situations. Things to work on:

- Try out different compositions.
- Move you and your subject around to alter the direction of light.
- Use flash and/or reflector to supplement the ambient light.
- Try different backgrounds and foregrounds; play with f-stops to change what’s in focus.
- Integrate your subject into his/her surroundings.
- Props can add information and give the subject something to hold.
- Consider whether your subject should look at the camera.
- Look for, and encourage, expressions and body language that reveal attitude or personality.

Not surprisingly, students at **Steve Gottlieb’s** workshops frequently use Steve as their practice model. He’s always available and often volunteers to act as guinea pig to help demonstrate portrait tips.

In a recent Creative Vision workshop, three students took very successful portraits of Steve. He was demonstrating to **Carla Maddox** how to use a reflector—in this case the kind you buy at an auto supply store, to which Steve added spots of gold paint to warm up the reflected light. That led to this rather off-beat, humorous head shot. The shot would have been much more effective if Steve’s expression had some energy. (Having a willing model doesn’t mean you have a good one.) If you learn to talk to your subjects while shooting at the same time, that usually generates a more animated look.

Steve wants an unusual author photo for what he hopes will be an updated edition of his book, *Abandoned America*. **Ron Maddox** produced a serious contender. In Ron’s initial shots, the bottom third

of Steve’s face was too dark; that problem was easily solved with a reflector, which Steve is holding with his left hand just inches out of camera view. Then Ron had Steve tilt his head to the left...big improvement. Ron took plenty of shots—which ups the odds of getting that just-right expression.

Steve posed for **Tom Atkinson** behind the bars of abandoned Fort Dupont in Delaware City. Tom asked Steve to put his nose up against the bars and then look to the left. Result: the perfect expression for a prisoner.

These three fine pictures demonstrate portraiture’s infinite creative possibilities.

END FRAME



Light has the capacity to give colors a soft, ethereal quality. This picture by **Valorie Imgarten** feels like a cross between green leaves and a cloud. The red border we use for our “End Frame,” being the complementary color to green, makes the green seem even greener.

Do you ever imagine seeing your pictures in a context other than on a computer screen or photo album? Wouldn’t this make a beautiful cover for one of your music CDs? Or a large print over a couch of a contrasting, or perhaps similar, color. Today’s printers make it easy to do things like this.