

Closeup Shooting

Cyrill Harnischmacher

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A Guide to Closeup, Tabletop, and Macro Photography

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▲ Moss. 1/125 sec at f/13; 50mm
macro lens with 2x converter;
off-camera flash with softbox.
The moss was sprayed with water
shortly before this image was taken.

Insights into New Worlds

One of the most fascinating areas of photography is closeup photography. Each step taken further into its depths is a step into a new world. Crystal clear globes may appear to hang weightless in space and seem to defy the laws of physics; we meet bizarre creatures that appear as though they came from other planets; and we discover master achievements in architecture which any engineer or architect would envy. This world lies directly before our eyes, yet it is so small and frequently so fleeting we cannot perceive it solely with our senses. Thus, closeup photography can be a journey into the unknown where new discoveries are constantly made, even after years of exploration. By using light, aperture, and creativity combined with the imagination of the photographer, new visual worlds can be created. Even common, everyday objects can be depicted in an exclusively unique way. Macro photography is defined as: "The making of photographs in which the object is either unmagnified or slightly magnified up to a limit often of about 10:1". Also, "Macro photography is defined as any photo in which the subject has at least a 1:1 ratio with the photo negative, meaning that the image on the negative of the subject is exactly the same size or larger than the real life subject". Closeup photography is defined as: "A photograph taken at close range". There is no pre-defined demarcation of exactly where the closeup range ends and where macro photography begins. The term "closeup" encompasses not only closeup

photography, but macro and tabletop photography as well. Therefore, in the interest of consistency, the term "closeup" will be used in lieu of alternating between "closeup", "tabletop", and "macro". Closeup and tabletop photography also differ from macro photography in that the attraction of closeup and tabletop photography is more about designing, whereas macro photography is more about discovery. The image of a butterfly, which fills the picture format, will be considered by most people macro, even when the magnification is 1:3. A box of matches shown at the same ratio would more likely be considered a closeup image. The size of the objects being photographed, in conjunction with our habits of seeing, shape our perceptions too extensively to allow for a firm delineation between the two. The reason for this is based on our knowledge of the size of the box of matches. We can compare it to our learned notion of its size, whereas butterflies exist in many different sizes. However, my intention is not to elaborate on standard sizes in this book, but rather to focus on the opportunities available in the creative handling of modern technology in closeup photography.

In addition to covering the photographic and technical basics, a special emphasis is placed on how to handle lighting. Sometimes very minor lighting changes are necessary to make the leap from simply taking pictures to consciously creating great photographs.

Cyrrill Harnischmacher



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