

7 TIPS HOW TO SHOOT BETTER MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY

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Why is macro photography frowned upon?

Okay first of all, macro photography gets a bad reputation for only being for “noobs” (newbies). But, I think the secret to staying inspired as a photographer for your entire life is to in fact, be a “noob” (newbie/beginner photographer) for your whole life.

For example, long before I shot street photography, and all I had was my little Canon SD 600 point and shoot digital camera, I loved photographing closeup macro photos of everything – flowers, stuff I found on the ground or details of things I found interesting.

However, as I started to become more experienced in photography, shooting photos of flowers or my food wasn’t “serious” enough. Thus, I stopped.

And when I stopped shooting these childlike, beginner photos – I think a part of my childlike curiosity also died.

The joy of being a beginner photographer

Now, I’m back in full noob photography mode, having fun shooting without barriers. I give myself full freedom to photograph anything I want, however I want to shoot it, regardless of what it is. In fact, I love photographing my food – even though I am sometimes scowled at by other more “serious” photographers.

Find beauty in the small things

Anyways back on the topic of macro photography: shooting close up detail photos of things are fun. It allows us to really pay attention to the beauty in the small things.

I shoot closeup macro photos with my RICOH GR II in “Macro” mode, and use the popup flash. I love it, because I can make interesting photos of anything – the trash I find on the ground, a detail of some texture in the wall, or even my food.

Some ideas and tips to make better macro photos

1. Clean background and edges of your frame

When you’re photographing a closeup macro photo of something, look at the edges of your frame, and try to keep the background simple and clean.

This will allow the viewers eye to be fully focused on your subject.

2. Use a flash

Use the built in flash in your camera, if you have it. If not, use a small flash when shooting closeups.

The fun thing with a flash: it transforms whatever you’re photographing into something else – something more unusual and surreal.

Good inspiration is to see Araki’s closeup macro flash photos of flowers (which he makes look like genitals) and Martin Parr from his “Common sense” Book, when he makes food and other British things look quite disgusting.

3. Don’t seek to make “pretty” photos

To me, I’m more interested in making interesting (non boring) photos than pretty pictures.

That means, often when I photograph closeup macro photos, the subjects actually look pretty gross. The food I photograph looks a bit gross. Also, when I photograph urinals, yes, that looks a bit gross.

Don't shy away from making "ugly" or "gross photos".

4. Stop, pause, and really look at something

For me, the purpose of macro photography is to really just stop, pause, and look at stuff – and examine it, closely. That means, when you look at your coat, just stop and really look at it.

We have become so accustomed to common objects like clothes hangars, light bulbs, and coffee cups, that we don't see the inherent beauty in the shapes and forms of the objects.

So macro photography is a good exercise for us to stop, pause, reflect, and really see.

5. Look for interesting shapes, forms, colors, and textures

Look for circles, triangles, rectangles, squares, and when you shoot, try out different perspectives. Shoot from a high angle, and low angle. Work the scene by tilting your camera to the left and right, and try to make a diagonal composition.

Also, look for interesting colors – what color is the object you're photographing, and what color is the background?

Or do you see any interesting gritty textures you can photograph?

6. Shoot portraits in macro mode

I've done a series of street portraits on the RICOH GR II in Program mode, iso 800, and macro mode with the 28mm lens. It creates a very interesting perspective and look for peoples faces– which I like. The photos feel more intimate, like you're standing right next to them, looking straight into their soul.

So as an experiment, try to shoot portraits of people in macro mode. If you're uncomfortable doing that, maybe do a self portrait series of yourself in macro mode instead.

7. Shoot like a child

Just imagine,

If I were 5 years old, what would I stare at, and find interesting – and thus want to photograph?

Rediscover your inner child, and shoot without hesitation or any barriers.

Conclusion

Macro photography is fun. If you don't have a lens that focuses closely, just use your phone and flash.

Don't take it too seriously. Use macro photography as a way to better appreciate the common objects in your everyday life, and as a way to just shoot more.

There's beauty all around you: everything is interesting, as long as you look closely enough.

JUST SHOOT IT, ERIC