

Photography... real life or models

Introduction

Photography is playing with light, in such way that it reveals the subject matter to its best advantage, on sensitive photographic film or digital imaging.

Camera lens, digital or traditional can only resolve a certain light latitude compared to our own eyes which have a far greater range in the light spectrum.

In South Africa our sunlight is extremely harsh and we need to balance the shadow areas with the bright South African sun. In summer months, especially early morning until 10 am and then again in the afternoon after 3 pm until after sunset. The midday sun in South Africa is a big no no for photography! It's flat and very uninteresting. This applies to buildings, loco's, rolling stock, scenery etc. (anything outside in sunlight).

Balancing Contrast

A reflector or fill-in-flash is always a good idea when capturing subjects. A portable hammerhead flash is powerful enough to throw extra light underneath locos and rolling stock to show the extra detail that normally bombs out into a black blob on the photo!

A white material; paper; polystyrene; cardboard reflector can do great wonders in softening the harshness of our natural sunlight. Remember if it's not white but cream or yellow it will give a different colour cast to your image, sometimes desirable to "warm" up the image.

Normally the reflector is positioned on the opposite side to the direction of the light source (i.e. the sun) and by adjusting the distance of the reflector to the subject / model one can see the contrast is reduced significantly. Don't overdo it, experiment with different distances to get the balance right.

When experimenting in photography always write down how you did it, even take a picture of your set-up for future reference.

When one gets the "perfect shot" one would like to do it again and maybe improve on it. Otherwise it's hit or miss every time and invariably it will be a "miss" again.

Type of Camera used for modelling photography requires you to be able to control the depth of field (i.e. adjustable apertures / F. stops). A wide-angle lens would help even more because it has a greater depth of field of focus and can photograph a larger area in a given space. Try to have the point of interest in focus so the eye will be attracted to the subject first. The eye looks for bright/light objects first in a photo and then the eye surveys the rest of the image.

Composition

It may be very cliché but it always works so stick to it: Where the imaginary lines meet in your horizontal or vertical formats, is the point of interest in your photo. (Try one of the four dots) not slap bang in the middle!!

In the final picture, you have achieved realism!!

Therefore, if it's not good enough to photograph then the model needs more work on it. Be critical, look out for bad joins in models, burrs not been cleaned off,

shadows under buildings shows it has been dropped in and not embedded in the layout. Shining plastic glaring at the camera is a big no no. No unnecessary clutter should be in the background - it must not be there!

Optics

The law of optics states that you focus on the subject 1/3 deep into your photo not in front or halfway in. Either way your image will not be as sharp. Measure from front to back and divide the distance into three. At the first 1/3 distance is your key focus area. Everything else will follow obviously. The smaller the lens aperture on your camera setting the greater depth of field you will achieve.

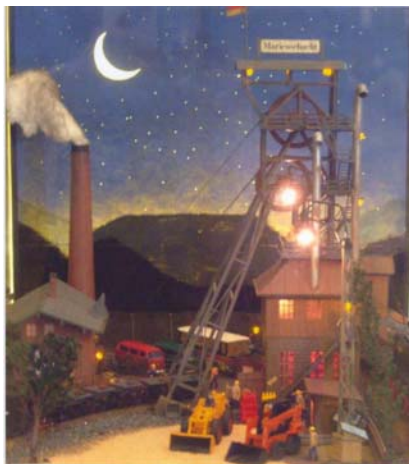
Flash Photography

Remember that shutter speed is dependent on your available light (ambient light) and your aperture is dependent on the strength of flash you use. So even a small flash can work by popping the flash several times to build up the light intensity. Obviously your camera needs to be on a very rigid tripod with cable release and camera shutter speed set on "B".

Backgrounds

If a backdrop is used such as a large photo placed behind the model, then your lighting on the model must coincide with the lighting on the backdrop photo i.e. if the sun is from left side then your master light on the model must be the same. Otherwise it confuses the viewer.

Remember, write down your experiment and if you have any difficulties you can give me a call at my studio during office hours at Exposure 2000 Photography +27 (0)12 664-5319.



Night Shift
Johan Leeflang

An award winning photograph
of a HO Faller Mine Kit



Bemo HOm locomotive photographed
using a poster as background

Pretoria, 2004 Johan Leeflang Email: exposure2k@telkomsa.net

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