



PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE LANDSCAPE

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The New Zealand Landscape has always provided a challenge for both the photographer and the artist. The earliest chronicler of the NZ landscape was Joseph Banks, **Captain Cook's** botanist. He was interested in recording the Flora and the Topography of NZ for an expectant public in the old world. The interpretation of the NZ landscape was at first influenced by the romantic paintings of the great Galleries of Europe.

A small number of intrepid explorers who wanted to show to a wider world what NZ really looked like. It is worth seeking out works by the earliest NZ painters to see how they handled their new challenge. Buchanan, Hoyt, Gully, William Wilson, and later van der Velden and even Woollaston, all brought with them a perspective which has helped the way we interpret today's landscape.

In the mid 1800's the earliest NZ photographers were illustrating the growth of the new Colony. These photographers were recording the indigenous people, the new growing communities, and as well, some of the dramatic NZ landscape of Southern NZ. The Burton Brothers, Muir and Mudie, Dr Barker of Canterbury and others, were recording this new land, and should all be studied to see how they applied their craft. These early NZ Landscape Photographers all had one thing in common, they were recording NZ as best they could, and all of them had a motive for making a picture. This then is the first and most important lesson to be learned in photographing the NZ Landscape. There has to be a *reason* for making the picture.

The next group of photographers I should mention was the Pictorialists; whose influence was so strong that we still are using their 'romantic' principals in today's Camera Clubs. (The most notable of these photographers would have to have been George Chance FRPS, whose pictures are today being sought after as Collectible Art.) Sadly many of these photographers were just intent on making pictures with a timeless quality, pretty pictures, with little motive; rather than having the interpretive qualities of Chance, or indeed his mastery of light, composition, and printing techniques.

Regardless of whether you work in Colour or Monochrome, make prints, slides, or digital files, there are some basic principles, which we must follow in photographing the Landscape. The success of our efforts will be demonstrated by how we interpret the subject, so that what we feel at the time of making the picture is communicated to our audience to understand, and appreciate.

This page is worth keeping in your camera bag and has been created to be printed separately. This page is well worth putting into your camera bag!

Remember - We should always ask ourselves - *why* are we making this picture?

The camera position

Choose the camera position carefully, always look at the whole scene, move around to include only the elements that you want to have in your composition. Eliminate, by altering your perspective: go higher or lower to emphasize a point. If you have a choice of lenses consider whether the perspective can be improved by using a 'tele', and moving back, or would it be best to use a wide-angle lens and get in close, using the foreground detail to add texture and perspective to the shot.

Composition

The arrangement or composition of a landscape photograph is really important, as the elements or subjects that we are photographing should be arranged so the eye of the viewer is lead through the elements easily and without being challenged. Think of the subject matter like the furniture in a room. You wouldn't put the sofa across the door so that you could not get in to the room! You would arrange the pieces so that you could easily move to the most comfortable chair and enjoy the pleasure of being there. Use natural lines like shadows, fences or streams to lead the eye to the subject.

The lighting

Study the lighting; is it suitable, does it give texture to the picture; does it highlight the area of greatest interest? Are the shadows manageable or will they be just too dark. Is the light "right" at that moment or should we wait till it is! Remember that the light in a landscape picture is all-important. Photograph when the light is low, early or late in the day. Keep away from the middle of the day when the sun is overhead and shadows are hardest and shortest, unless the light is really soft. Pictures in the bush are best with no sunlight, and after rain or when there is a soft misty quality. Never stop shooting because of the rain, as often the light and colour saturation will be at it's best then.

The correct moment to expose

We should ask ourselves is this the very best moment to make the exposure, or by waiting is the light going to be better. Always be ready for the transient patch of light, or that special moment when everything comes right. Look at the clouds, at that patch of mist that is just evaporating and use it to add magic to the composition.

The exposure

Try to take your exposure reading from the subject that you are photographing. Remember that you can highlight or play down parts of the picture by subtle exposure control. Correct exposure is pivotal to making successful pictures in any medium, so read up all you can from the many available sources. Books magazines and even this series of fact sheets.

Move around, take plenty of shots, but remember, take time to observe what is actually going on in front of you.

Many photographers when making landscape photographs seem to think that the only place to stand to make the exposure is where they happen to be at that moment. I would

urge landscape photographers to move around, view the subject from all angles shoot lots of pictures, and learn from each exposure. Don't charge up to a subject and start to photograph (unless the light is fickle!), take time to consider what you want to get from the subject, and how best to accomplish it.

Edit the result and choose dispassionately.

Once you have your pictures on the monitor, or your slides on the light box or as a proof sheet, examine them carefully. You should be able to see from the results just how your creative senses were working when you were in the field. The pictures should show an orderly progression of the distillation of your thought processes. Usually ending up with the simplest and most telling images at the end of the session. Edit your pictures ruthlessly and never show your bad ones to anybody!

The NZ landscape is one of the most difficult subjects to photograph; it is also one of the greatest challenges. When done well there is nothing more satisfying. Try hard and always ask yourself "Is this the very best that I can do, or could I really do it better?"

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2009