

Arthur Meyerson: Q & A

From Nikon World Summer 2008

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Arthur Meyerson is a Nikon Legend Behind the Lens

I don't know about you, but I would have lowered my camera and walked away. But Arthur Meyerson took the picture. "I was in Central Park, scouting locations for a job for Coca Cola," Arthur says. "I looked up and saw this beautiful juxtaposition—the trees, branches, the light and then the grid pattern formed by the construction netting behind the trees. It was like a tapestry."



It's likely most of us would have felt that the background construction ruined the picture, but Arthur knew better. He had the benefit of years of experience as a top advertising, corporate and editorial photographer, and he had the advice of his mentor, master color photographer Ernst Haas, whose inventive use of color and design set new imaging standards. "Ernst would always say a

graphic image, just a pure pattern kind of image, gives an immediate 'wow' reaction," Arthur says, "but if there's not more to the picture, once viewers discover the pattern they quickly move on. He said you should be looking to take a strong, patterned graphic, but you also want to enhance it with something that goes against the graphic elements, something that's a counterpoint. It can be a color, a person, a shadow... anything that breaks the pattern or adds a bit of mystery to the image. Photographs with questions are often a lot more interesting than those with answers."

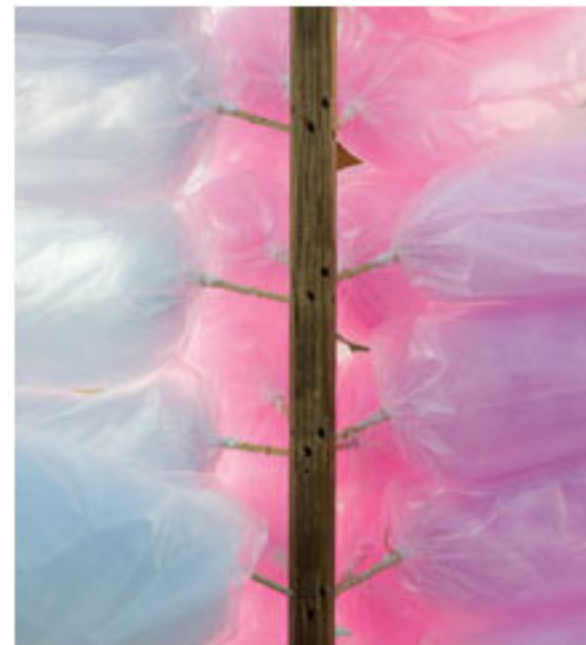
The first step in capturing a compelling image is recognizing that there's one to capture. When he's teaching at photography workshops, Arthur has a favorite technique that encourages that kind of recognition. "I'll take the students to a self-contained place—a small town, a movie set—any place that's a level playing field where everyone has the same opportunity. I tell them that as photographers we all see things differently, and that their assignment for the day allows them to interpret the place, to make choices about what to photograph. Then they're free to discover their own visual fingerprints."

And they do just that. "It's evident the next day when we do an edit and critique," Arthur says. "Somebody keys to one thing that's totally different from someone else. Two people may have been shooting side by side, but what they've chosen to show, the way the images are framed, what they left out and what they included, that's where their ability to observe and their individual vision shows itself." Then Arthur is likely to pass along something else he learned from Ernst Haas. "He said, 'You don't take a picture; you're taken by a picture.'" Which is why he captured that tapestry in Central Park.

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"Cotton candy is a typical subject found throughout Mexico. I wanted to shoot it as simply as possible and chose to make it a graphic... [Read More](#)



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Q & A Technical Terms

Less is more. "I find that the less I carry, the more pictures I take," Arthur says. "If I'm walking around with a backpack or a shoulder bag stuffed with gear, I'm liable to be concentrating more on the weight of the pack or bag than I am on what's in front of me. Too much gear is a distraction. Cartier-Bresson walked around with one camera and a 50mm lens—look what he saw; look what he showed us. I've always tried to keep things simple so I could concentrate on what there is to see."

Arthur admits that "simple" on a commercial job can be "pretty near the whole toolkit," but when he's exploring on his own, these days he'll be carrying only a D3 and a few lenses. "The D3 is amazing—it gives me opportunities I never had before, particularly for low-light photography. I like to use it with the 50 [AF NIKKOR 50mm f/1.4D]—it's maybe the most overlooked and underrated lens in the arsenal. And I might carry a zoom, like the 24-70 [AF-S NIKKOR 24-70mm f/2.8G ED]. I like the size and speed of those two, and the smaller the camera-lens combination, the less likely you are to attract attention in street shooting situations."

Most of the time Arthur's D3 is set for Matrix metering and aperture preferred operation, the former for its overall accuracy, the latter because he wants to control what the viewer's attention will be drawn to, and he does that not only with color and composition but also with depth-of-field.

Sometimes the subject is not the main attraction. "There are times when I try to forget about the specific subject and just look at what I'm seeing in terms of light. I'll be thinking, wow, great light! Or, I wonder what great light will do here? Now, do I wait around for that light, or do I return another time, another day? On a commercial job, when I might have been sent halfway around the world to get pictures of, say, a new building...well, the last thing the client wants to hear is why I didn't get the picture. So a lot of times I don't have the luxury of coming back when the light might be better, and I do whatever it takes to get a picture right then and there. The difference between commercial and personal can sometimes be called the difference between the necessary and the preferred."

Explore the range of Arthur Meyerson's vision and learn about his upcoming workshops at his website, www.arthurmeyerson.com.

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"In a Mexico city street market I was taken by the backlight color and design of the hanging candy. The clothespins were a bonus, a... [Read More](#)



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