

Camera tip

Darken a blue sky without affecting the tonal qualities of the foreground by using a red-graduate filter. An overall red filter can darken the foreground too much and this filter type avoids that problem. Meter for the scene before slipping the red graduate into position and use the camera's depth-of-field preview feature to check it is in the correct place.



Concept

I am working on a personal project on deserted farmhouses in Iceland. This farmhouse was one of many that I photographed on this day. I wanted the sky to be dark and the clouds to be bold in the background.

Composition

The important thing was that I wanted the farmhouse to stand out strongly against the sky. I moved around for the best composition so that the building was placed against an area of white sky making it prominent in the image. Doing this also placed the farmhouse on one of the rule of thirds, which resulted in an attractive composition.

Technique

It was taken at noon, so the light was not very good, and the sky was almost clear. I knew without any filter the grass would come out light-toned and the sky too bland. Because I wanted the house to stand out I added a red filter. This has darkened the sky and grass but made the clouds and the house stand out.

After fitting the filter, I metered from the green grass in the foreground. This ensured plenty of detail in the shadows.

▲ Fact file 2 | Mario Abbatepaolo | There was little time to think comfortably when I was taking this because every element in the scene was changing quickly. I immediately metered, composed and shot a few frames knowing that I could do the rest in the darkroom. The darkroom work completed the pre-visualised photograph, but it took me many test prints to achieve that goal.

black&white camera craft
william cheung



Fact file 1: Marconi Beach

Photographer: Mario Abbatepaolo

Camera: Pentax 67 on a tripod, lens: 55mm wide angle, film: Agfa Agfapan 100 rated at ISO 100, filter: polariser, developer: Agfa Rodinal, paper: Ilford Multigrade IV fibre-based, grade 2.5



Concept

This is an image from a long-term project I am working on called 'Where the Sea Lands' (see page 76) featuring images that represent the relationship and the interactive dynamics between sea, earth and sky. The low angle and the direction of the lighting helped bring out the strength of the patterns and this has helped the composition.

Composition

The combination of a low camera viewpoint and aiming the wide-angle lens down has helped to make the foreground dominant. The lines of side-lit sand and the gentle shapes draw the viewer into the scene. The lines of sand visible under the shallow water are very important to the composition so the use of a polariser to cut out any reflections was important to the image's success.

using filters the polariser



◀ **Fact file 2 | Mario Abbatepaolo | Provincetown** | I like to accentuate the grain in minimalist images like this one. I do this by under-exposing and over-developing the negative and this increases grain as well as contrast. At the time of shooting I knew that in the final print I would like the central part of the sky lighter and the edges darker to preserve the sense of space and dimension.



Technique

There is nothing technically complicated about the image. I try to previsualise the final print and this enables me to make immediate choices about the technique, processes and materials that I use. I used a hand-held spot meter to take an exposure reading and then added a polariser filter to enable me to bring out delicate details of the sand through the shallow water. The exposure was increased to take into account the filter. The polariser also helped to darken the early morning sky without affecting any tonal relationships.

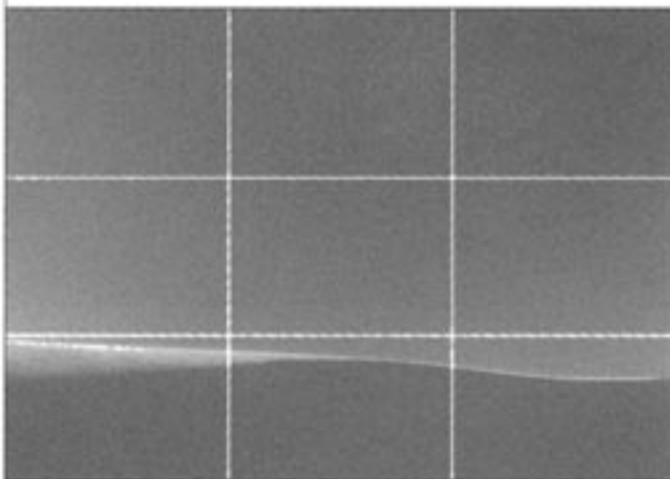
Camera tip

While the polariser filter is best known for its usefulness in colour photography, it works for black-and-white photography too. It will eliminate reflections (at the right angle) off water, glass and painted surfaces and darken skies, giving an effect similar to that of a plain yellow filter. However, make sure you use the correct type of polariser to suit your SLR camera. For autofocus and spot metering SLR cameras you will need a circular polariser while a linear model is fine for manual focus models.

better composition use lines



◀ **Fact file 2 | Mario Abbatepaolo | Flying Point Beach | I wanted this picture to show the quietness and silence of the place. It is part of a project I am working on called 'Where the Sea Lands' (see pages 68-69). The images present the relationship and the interactive dynamics between the earth, sea and sky. The sweeping curve is wonderful and it leads the viewer straight to the only other bold line in the composition; the horizon.**



▶ **Fact file 3 | Nana Sousa Dias | Dune | Complex patterns of lines can be very successful in a composition but keeping it simple also works. The keyline here is the sunlit ridge on the dune. I fitted a red filter to darken the sky but I underexposed slightly to make sure it came out the way I wanted. In the darkroom, I did give extra exposure to the lower section of the dune to lose any detail there.**

