

Reflections

by the late J. G. Archibald.

(This is a reprise of an article that appeared in an OPCC Photo News in 1996. Archibald was noted for his black and white photography and taught courses in it for many years. One of his students is our own Jim Martin, who is presenting his black and white prints at the club.)

To explain light is a many-handed challenge. First-hand light comes directly from the source, such as the sun or a light bulb. Second-hand light is reflected light, which we use in photography to create the latent image on the film. There are times when light is more than second-hand—it may be third-, fourth-, or even fifth hand. At any of these latter stages, if the light retains a picture image, it is normally called reflection.

This exploration requires us to look for reflected light. See if you can capture interesting forms and designs. If you view the superimposed reflections of a fireplace on a window, the scene you see through the window will appear to be on fire,

Most smooth or shiny surfaces can produce a third-hand reflected light. Mirrors produce the most precise reflections. When photographing mirrors, be sure to focus on the image and not on the mirror surface. When figuring your f-stop with a portable light source, be sure to include the distance to the mirror and back to your subject, not just to the mirror image. Angle your flash to prevent a direct reflection of light back to the camera.

Shiny dark surfaces such as some grand pianos or pieces of black plastic reflect forms as only light and dark, not color. Windows, on the other hand, cast reflections on several planes, producing many interesting results.

Water, one of nature's sources of reflection, creates designs and patterns with its movement. The surface of a pond, a lake, or a river can create ever changing forms, which have been recorded by photographers since the beginning of photography. Puddles, one of the smallest water reflectors, can combine both reflections and shadows. For a good effect, concentric circles drop a pebble into the pool you are photographing.

A Project: With film, try to photograph interesting reflections. Watch for a transparent quality that looks like a double exposure.

Evaluation:

- If the reflection has movement, did you take the photograph at the intended moment?
- Did changing the shutter speed change the results?
- Did the objects on the reflecting surface create a new feeling of space?