

## **Photographing Flowers**

**Jeffrey Sward 2024 v10.0**

### **Aesthetic Issues**

Since the triumph of the Jolly Yellow Giant (Eastman Kodak) over one hundred years ago, casual photography has been available to millions of people. The digital era has expanded the number, availability, and means of making photographs even more. Yet the range of photographic subjects remains surprisingly small.

There is no significant difference between professional and amateur photographic subjects, except perhaps by frequency distribution. The subject overlap between professional and amateur photographers is significant considering the differences in motivation, the former being commercial and the latter being personal expression and/or memory preservation. From this orgy of human activity clichés develop. A cliché in photography is anything that is overly obvious, lacks originality of idea, and has been seen in a similar shape or form countless times.

Flowers figure prominently as photographic cliché subjects. Today flowers are much lower on photography cliché lists, often after such subjects as sunrises, sunsets, and selfies. Whenever a cliché subject is approached, it is often important to begin with a point of view and objectives.

- Babies and children (multiple lists),
- Birds (fine art lists)
- Empty landscapes (fine art lists)
- Flowers (fine art lists)
- Hands (fine art lists)
- HDR (multiple lists)
- Pets, particularly Cats and Dogs (multiple lists) (fine art lists)
- Railroad tracks (multiple lists)
- Selective coloring (multiple lists)
- Staircases (fine art lists)
- Sunsets and Sunrises (probably now #1)(multiple lists)

It is helpful for the photographer to consciously select a flower subject strategy before principal photography begins. Strategies for cliché treatment range from avoidance to disregard to intentional utilization.

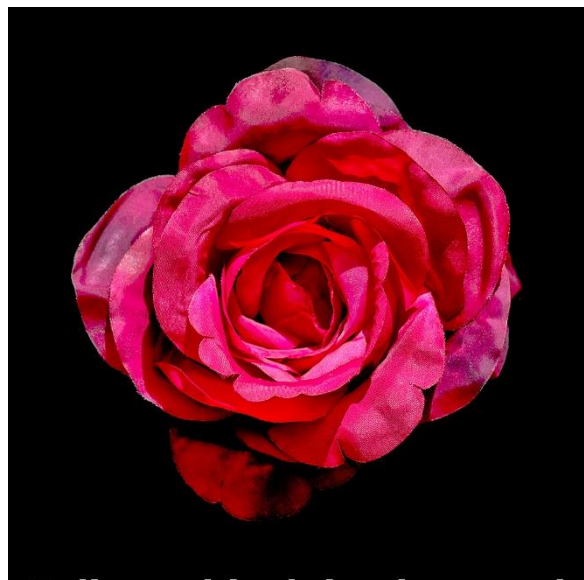
### **Technical Issues Photographing Flowers**

## Image Backgrounds

- ❖ Murphy's Law stipulates that the background for any flower photograph will be busier than the flower itself, making a distracting final image
- ❖ Need a background strategy
  - Strategy #1: throw the background out of focus
  - Strategy #2: Obtain black velvet. Black velvet absorbs the maximum amount of light possible, making a pure black background. Flowers will automatically pop with a black background. Best practice is to glue the velvet to foam core or other rigid substrate. Cut matching notches into two pieces of foam core. The stem of the flower is placed inside the combined notches. Have your assistant hold the black velvet boards behind the flower. Premium black velvet from a cloth store will be darker than self-adhesive black velvet.
  - Strategy #3: your own brilliant idea

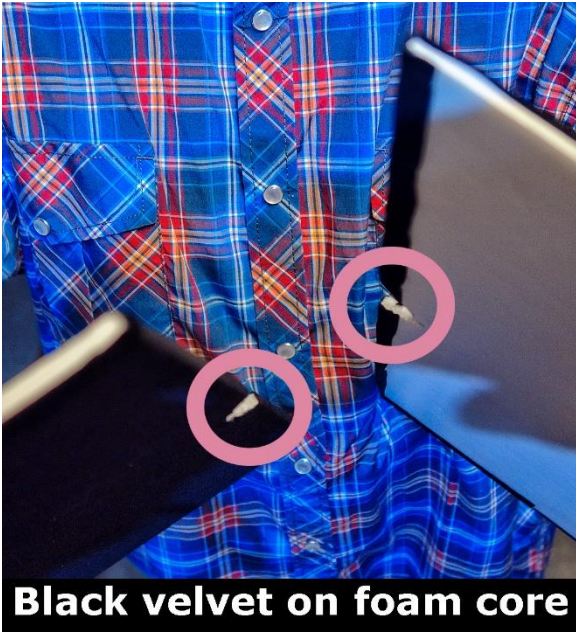


**Full sun busy background**



**Full sun black background**

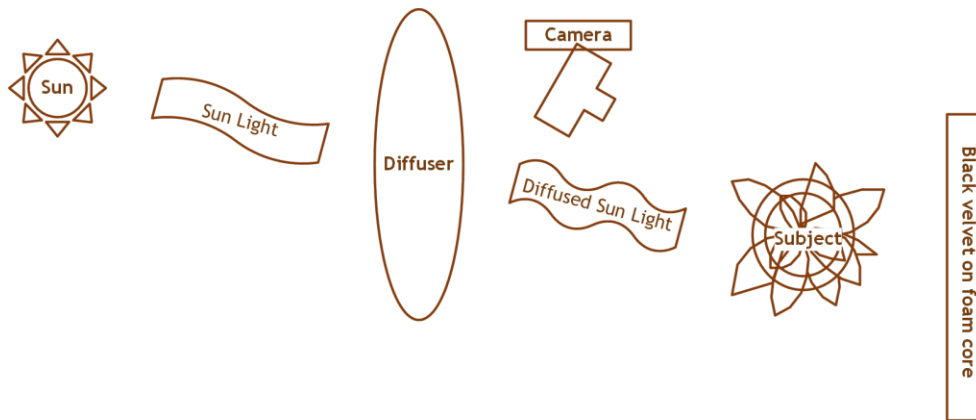
## Image Backgrounds (continued)



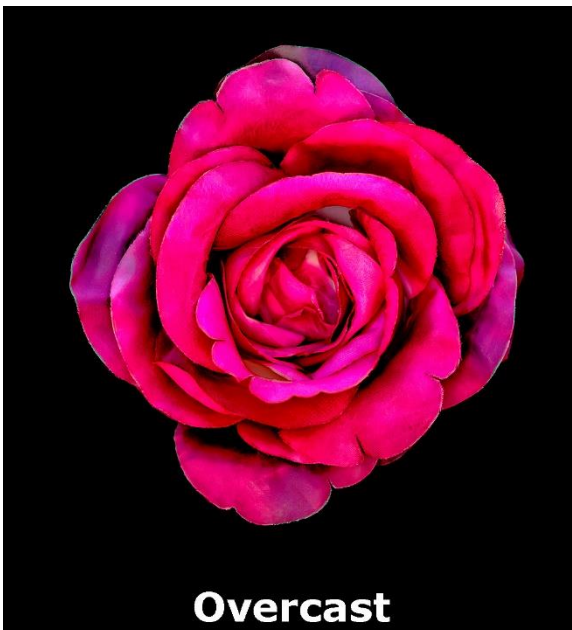
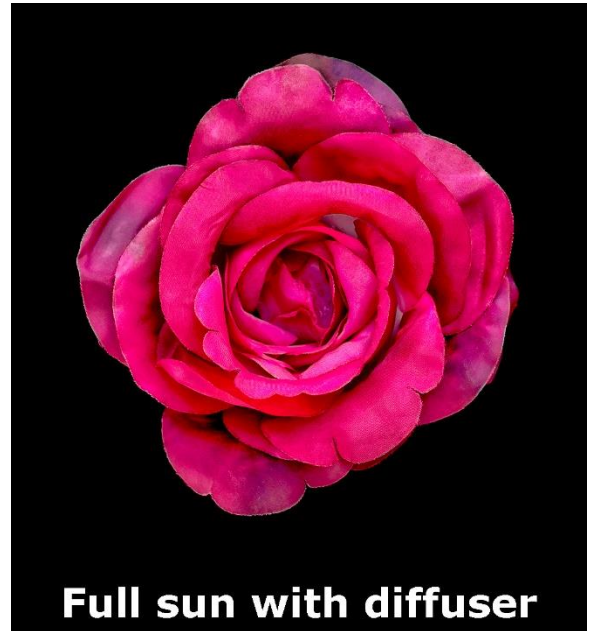
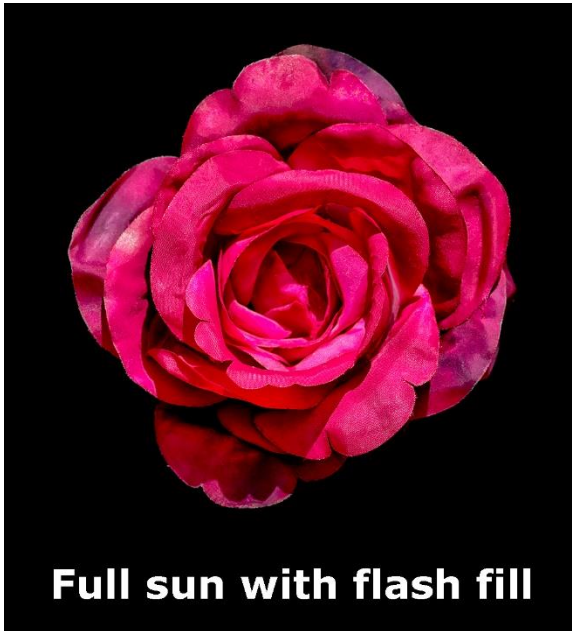
## Lighting

- ❖ Direct Sunlight
  - Harsh
  - Modify harsh sunlight with a diffuser in a frame. Your assistant should hold the diffuser between the light source and the subject
  - Harsh lighting can also be modified using fill flash
- ❖ Open shade or overcast
  - Diffuse
- ❖ Diffuse with addition of ring light
  - Hybrid

### Diffuser v1.0

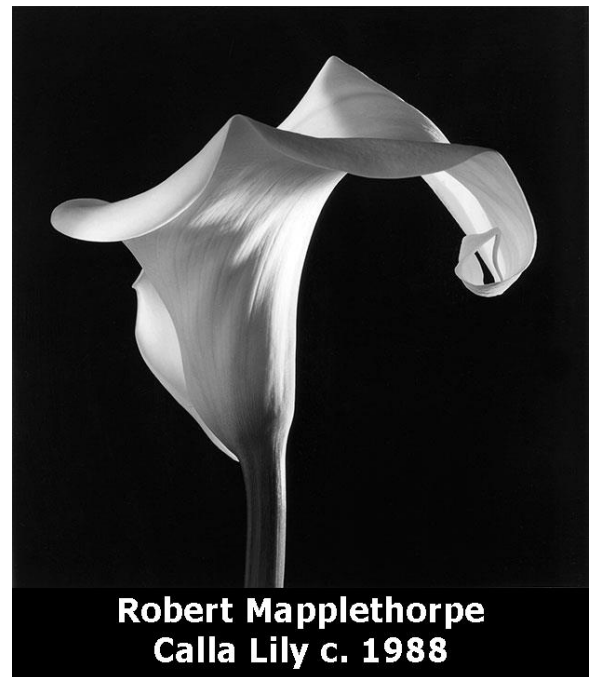


## Examples of effects of lighting



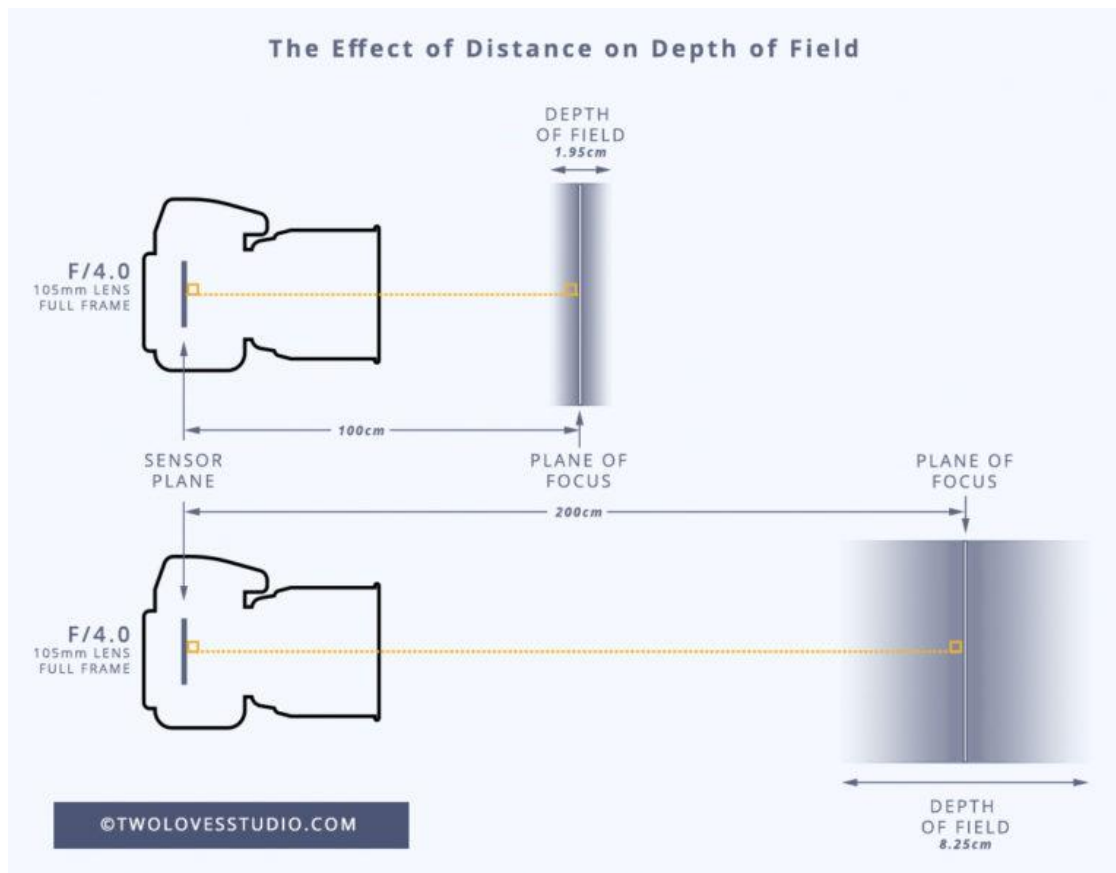
## Color

- ❖ Flower color is central to the subject and hence audience appreciation
  - Reference work of Imogen Cunningham and Robert Mapplethorpe
- ❖ Process original raw file with maximum detail and ordinary color.
- ❖ Save raw file to a lossless format such as tiff or psd.
- ❖ Color saturation and contrast are best applied in post-processing use photoshop or lightroom.



## Depth of Field

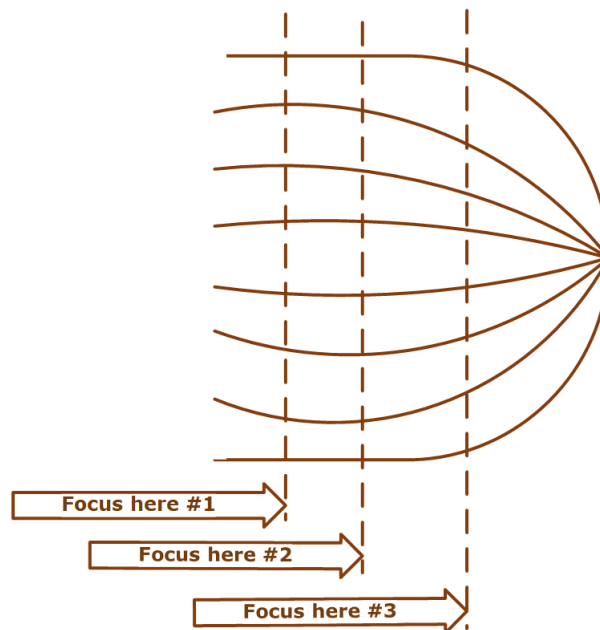
- ❖ The closer the camera is to the subject the shallower the depth of field using the same aperture
- ❖ Because the camera is relatively close to flower subjects, the depth of field is narrow.
- ❖ <https://www.dofmaster.com/dofmaster.html>



## Focus Stacking

- ❖ Most flowers are small, requiring a macro lens both for close focus distance and filling the frame
- ❖ Macro lenses longer than 100mm (35mm equivalent) result in longer working distances, which can be helpful with small subjects.
- ❖ Determine focus strategy such as focus stacking or strategic selective focus
- ❖ Shallow depth of field can be overcome with focus stacking
  - Use a tripod
  - Create multiple images, each with a different plane of focus
  - Combine images with focus stacking feature of Photoshop or Lightroom
  - Focus stack article <https://www.photoshopesentials.com/photo-editing/focus-stack-images-photoshop/>

### Focus Stacking v1.0



## Summary

A wide range of aesthetic and technical issues surround flower photography. Each issue has a range of solutions. Create a strategy by selecting the individual point solutions which fit your own objectives.