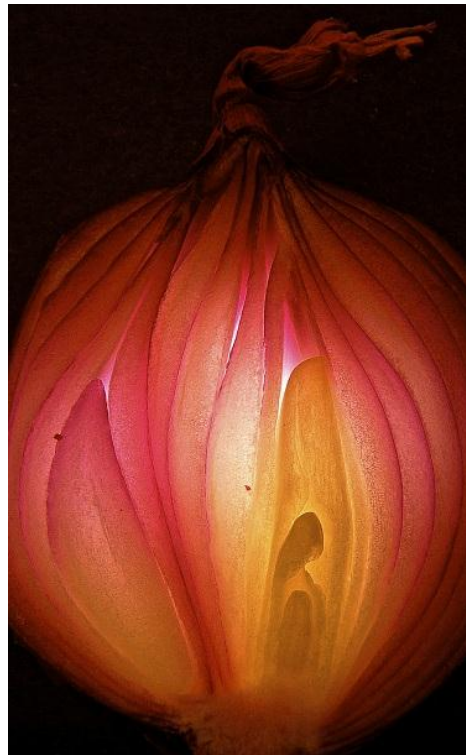


Topic 34

Lighting for photography

Transmitted & Reflected light

Transmitted light photography is the technique of photographing a translucent subject (such as flowers, feathers, and leaves) from light that passes through it, rather than photographing the subject with light that is reflected or emitted from the front surface, as we normally see a subject. This type of lighting enhances the dramatic mode of subject, produces a soft ethereal glow from apparent interior lighting, and provides a visual perception of extended depth-of-field. Using colored filters show exciting internal features of your subjects.



Backlighting is a well-known photographic technique for creating exciting and unusual images, such as silhouettes, rim-lighted, and transmitted light photographs. Some photographers, however, avoid backlighting because they were told early in their careers that the lighting source should always face the subject. For backlighting, the light source and the photographer face each other with the subject in between.

Transmitted lighting is not a new or unique phenomenon; we view it almost daily through leaves and other translucent subjects' backlit by the sun. However, many photographers are unaware of transmitted light's potential to produce unusual and radiant images.

The major difference between transmitted and reflected lighting is that transmitted light passes through the entire subject's cross section, whereas reflected lighting penetrates only a short distance into a subject's sub-surface. Many photographers assume the directional differences between transmitted and reflected light will not have any consequence on the appearance of a photograph. But, as I will show, it is just this difference in penetration depth that explains the effects produced in transmitted light photographs.



Some photographers who show examples of transparent backlit subjects report their images have strong photographic appeal because of the backlighting, but don't speculate on the reasons for the enhancement. Moreover, most backlit photographs are taken with a combination of lighting, both transmitted and reflected; and, as I will suggest, the reflected component dilutes the effect. However, for transmitted light photography, the backlighting source and its arrangement are critical for achieving optimum results. That doesn't mean the process has to be complicated though: transmitted light photography requires no expensive equipment, can be conducted with minimum space requirements, and can involve a number of my subjects.