

Wide, Wide, Wide World

(Last Part)

Tilak Hettige, known for his workshop on developing creative vision from within, discovers external "eyes" just as effective in seeing the world in a new way, if we tame them by knowing their strengths and weaknesses.



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HO CHI MINH

On the way from Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, I went through an area of Vietnam called the Dong Thap Province. In the Tan Hung region of this province, I was able to use my new lens again. In one open field I found people drying chili to transport to other areas of the country. The photograph of the chili drying out in the sun was taken at midday and the biggest advantage was that the sky was blue and filled with clouds. This allowed me to have a good tonal range from the sky to the ground.

After arriving in Ho Chi Minh City I had another opportunity to put the lens to good use after the sun had set. At a Hindu Kovil near my hotel, I observed how some statues of Hindu gods had a three-dimensional appearance that made them seem to jump out at the viewer. Usually, we make use of texture, line formation, lighting, and objects around the subject to create a three-dimensional appearance in a two di-

mensional photograph. This time, however, I was able to create drama and three-dimensional depth "automatically" with the fisheye lens alone.

BANGKOK

Finally, I arrived in Bangkok, Thailand. I was disappointed that I didn't have the time to go out to experiment with my lens as I had before, because my work kept me indoors most of the time. I was quite anxious to include some images from Thailand before coming back home. My flight to Manila was from the new Suvarnabhumi Airport (pronounced "Su-Wana-Poom" which means "The Golden Land"). It was newly opened and I felt privileged to see its futuristic style of architecture, and marveled at the innovative design.

One hour before my flight, I entered the boarding gate through the last set of X-ray machines. Right next to the X-ray machines, I noticed a young man doing yoga exercises. Sunlight, which was just in front of me, was filtering through the glass windows, giving a dramatic effect to the structure of the building.

With only a few seconds to react and take the pictures, I quickly assembled the camera that was in my backpack. I respectfully waited for the proper moment before whispering to the man doing yoga, "Is it okay if I take some pictures?" fearing that he might suddenly stop. He replied, "It's okay, I still have another set of exercises to finish." Quickly I went to the passengers sitting next to him and politely asked them to move away as I did not want them in my photograph. (In retrospect, I think it was a very forward move on my part.)

When looking through this lens, photographers will not realize their actual proximity to the subject. While I taking the pictures, I realized that I was incredibly close to the man, but the curved image that the lens created was exactly what I wanted, so I stayed where I was and continued shooting.

Although I had only few minutes before the flight, I waited until the young man finished his exercise routine because I was curious to get to know him. I found out that he was a 24-year-old Nepalian yoga instructor who had given some

yoga lessons in Australia and was on his way back to Kathmandu, Nepal.

After returning home from my trip, I am now completely addicted to this fisheye lens. I know it is not an all-purpose day-to-day lens, but it is a handy thing for me to keep in my bag. When taking images for a book, article, or even an exhibition it is easy to add a few images from this lens to break the rectangular monotony. It is a new way to look at the world.

(Tilak Hettige teaches two classes on developing creativity in photography and another one on shooting flowers in their natural habitat at the Philippine Center for Creative Imaging, which just recently marked its tenth year as the country's first and still only Adobe Certified Training Provider. Tilak has traveled to over thirty-five countries, has published two books and is working on two more. He is a contributing editor to i-Mag Photography.)

ON USING A FISHEYE LENS

- Be careful you don't include your tripod legs or your own feet in the frame. With a field of view nearly 180 degrees wide, it's apt to include more than you bargained for.

- You will have better control and fewer surprises if you set your camera

for spot metering. Camera meters are not optimally equipped to handle a 180-degree view.

- You will be able to take pictures with better contrast range and saturation in shaded areas, indoors, or after sunset.

- Look out for dust and fingerprints, since the protruding half-dome front ele-

ment precludes using filters of any kind, even for protection.

- The lens sees the world in a different way from the rectangular or square formats we are used to seeing. Maximize, but don't overdo it.

- Curved or circular subjects will not exhibit barrel distortion as much as linear

objects.

- The lens creates three-dimensional depth more dramatically than any other wideangle lens.

- When looking through a fisheye lens, it's easy to forget that you may be just inches or a foot from your subject.