

**The Art of Abstract Macro Photography**  
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From Wikipedia online encyclopedia: "Abstract art is now generally understood to mean art that does not depict objects in the natural world, but instead uses shapes and colors in a non-representational or subjective way."

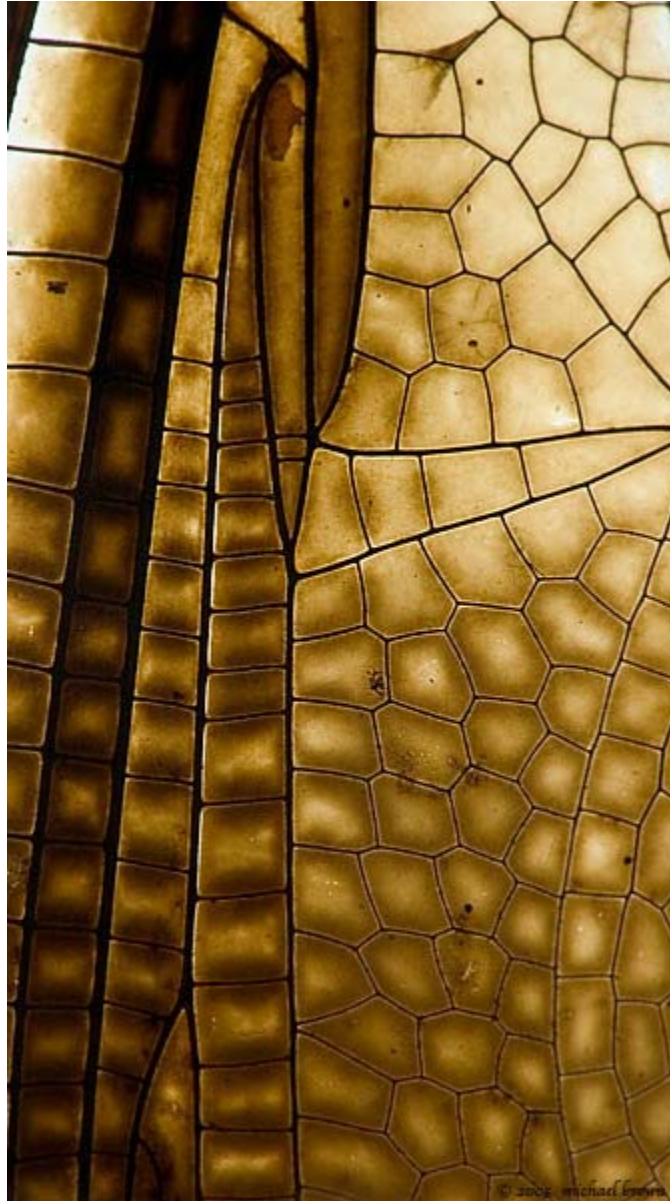
There are days when I am out shooting when nothing seems to work. It may be the light that is failing me or other conditions are not optimal. Or perhaps the subjects are not capturing my attention, or it may be it's just me with a lack of vision or an open mind on this particular day. When all else seems to fail, I take charge of the day by photographing macro abstracts, a style of shooting that has always appealed to me in so many ways, and I find very easy to do.

Macro abstracts open up a whole new world in photography. One macro photography approach is photographing a whole subject with as much detail as possible. But for abstracts, I enjoy taking just a piece of the whole to create something visually appealing to me.



## DEPTH OF FIELD

While shooting macro subjects, I tend to start photographing with the lens wide open, and then make minute adjustments when needed for more depth and detail. I get lost in the process using selective focusing methods, determining the most important parts of my subject and using a shallow depth of field.



## COMPOSING THE IMAGE

My feeling is that composition in abstracts is critical for the image to work visually. I evaluate the different elements: lines, shapes, textures, colors, and light. I seek out a composition that appeals to me, study it, and ask myself how I can further enhance it. There seem to be many different guidelines for creating abstract images, one of which involves lines that flow within the image. I have heard such an image should have dramatic diagonal lines that don't leave the frame. In some cases, I agree. But shooting as I do with the lens wide open has the tendency to render very soft lines and edges, so when one happens to lead out of the frame it does not seem so abrupt. Soft lines and patterns of color and contrast will almost always give me opportunities to capture beautiful abstracts.

One approach I often use is the "Cram It" method. That's right, the "Cram It" method! My favorite subjects for abstracts are flowers. Often, first-time abstract shooters of flowers will shoot the edges or maybe the face of a flower for their abstracts, selecting small areas of that flower for their composition. But I have found wonderful abstracts deep within that flower and towards the throat area, or the center, of the flower. I simply cram the lens down into the flower as far as I can, sometimes using a teleconverter or an extension tube to help with getting in close. Often, I will even use a 50mm Nikkor lens attached in reverse to the macro for the extreme close up abstracts and with a very shallow, narrow depth of field. Moving the lens up and down, side to side, I start composing for my abstract!



## **COLORS**

I have been asked about the vibrant colors achieved in my flower abstracts. My post processing involves just a touch of curves, or contrast, or maybe even a color balance adjustment in Photoshop, but the majority of the time it is only a bit of brightening I use to arrive at my end results.

Flower type can play a big role in obtaining incredibly rich colors. Some contain more moisture within the petals than others. Most lilies, for example, love ample moisture to grow well, but daylilies, in particular “*Hemerocallis*,” love all the moisture they can get, and the flower itself contains large amounts of water. Many daylilies have thick flower petals, and thus plenty of room to hold moisture. Shooting deep within the throat area of a daylily at just about any time of the day, with strong lighting coming from behind or from the side of the flower, will produce almost a neon glow. This is due to the light coming through the water inside the petals, which helps distribute the light inside the flower often quite evenly. On occasion, I may use a reflector or small mirror to light up the inside of the daylily even more.



While shooting abstracts, I try to be mindful of new, unexpected opportunities, something that reveals itself through the viewfinder different from the norm. Could macro abstracts be a new direction for you to explore in your photography?



Mike Brown has an impressive portfolio of images expressing his personal visions in photography, to which he adds on a regular basis. He is a NatureScapes.Net Flora and Macro Gallery Moderator, and attributes part of his growth in photography to learning in online communities. Visit his blog at <http://macroartinnature.blogspot.com> or his NatureScapes.Net member portfolio at <http://michaelbrown.naturescapes.net>.

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