

Flowers and Light

On page 90, I wrote about “the botany of desire,” and covered some of the things that make flowers a special subject matter to so many photographers. Viewed another way, as Gertrude Stein put it, “a rose is a rose is a rose”; to me meaning it’s just another object to be photographed. As with anything you photograph, when seen this way, the key issue is lighting and how it interacts with the flower.

Flowers can be successfully photographed indoors, where you can control the lighting. Also, in a studio you don’t have to worry about movement from the wind spoiling long exposures. When I first started photographing flowers, I was hesitant to bring my flower close-up work indoors

- ▶ I cut a bunch of these poppies, *Papaver rhoeas*, from my garden and arranged them on a fluorescent light box to best show off the beautiful translucent reds of these petals. The trick to this kind of studio flower photo lies in arranging the flowers in a pleasing way. You should also overexpose the image, because brighter photos appear more transparent.

85mm perspective-correcting macro, 8 seconds at f/51 and ISO 100, tripod mounted

- ▼ It rained overnight. In the first light of the morning sun, I photographed the translucent petals of this Rose (*Rosa ‘Rio Samba’*), lush and drooping from the weight of the water. A moment later the sun had moved on and was no longer hitting the water drops.

200mm macro, 1/80 of a second at f/40 and ISO 200, tripod mounted



