

Capturing the light

This lesson will take you from the basic facts you learnt about exposure on pp.30-31. In the following pages you will discover how you can take control and use exposure in an imaginative way.

When we take a photograph we are basically trying to reproduce our subject onto the film or digital sensor by means of translating light into an image. Louis Daguerre, after making his first photographic image in the 1830s, reportedly exclaimed, 'Eureka! I have seized the light. I have arrested its flight. The sun itself in future shall draw my pictures!'

It's said that Daguerre's discovery was an accidental one that resulted from leaving an exposed glass plate in a cupboard where there were split drops of mercury which gave off vapour. No one today would recommend some of the more hazardous dabbling with chemicals the pioneers of photography

indulged in during their attempts to find ways of advancing the techniques of this new medium, but the principle remains the same: the photographic image stems from the capturing of light.

Creative exposure

After framing the subject and focusing the lens to provide a sharp image, the photographer – or the automatic mode on the camera – then sets the combination of the aperture and shutter to control the amount of light reaching the film or sensor to obtain a correct exposure.

However, this exposure is defined by what the equipment manufacturers believe will

give the maximum amount of colour and tonal reproduction that is faithful to the subject. In fact, as you will discover in this lesson, the correct exposure is a highly subjective matter.

Exposure is not merely a technical equation – it is one of the most creative decisions you can make when you are taking a photograph. While a basic average exposure may record how the subject appears to the eye, it may not express how you as a person responded to the subject at the time. Perhaps a darker or lighter image would better capture the mood you were feeling when you took the picture.

The personal response in spite of the incredible sophistication that manufacturers have built into the modern camera, they have not yet managed to incorporate a human heart, aesthetic taste or sense of humour into their machines. That is still down to the photographer's

Seeing the big picture

The double-page picture on pp.40-41 is a high-key portrait achieved by using soft front light and a red filter over the lens. I gave it + $\frac{1}{2}$ exposure compensation because I wanted to produce a thick (dark) negative from which it is easier to make a light print. Once I had developed and fixed the print I gave it a one-minute immersion in selenium toner to give it a sparkle and warm tone. JG



input – but to be able to express your creative feelings you need to understand what the camera is doing, and how to use all this amazing technology to help you take more imaginative pictures. This lesson will help you to explore the possibilities that are open to you and encourage you to depart from what the technology tells you.



The snow was lit by early-morning sunlight and the blue sky filled in the shadows. I needed to keep the snow light but retain the texture. I added +1 stop exposure compensation to the normal exposure. GH



This was an exercise in 'Old Master' lighting – a diffused window without a reflector. I wanted to keep the image low key and moody. I took a spot reading off the highlight areas and shot at f/11 for a good depth of field. GH