

Max

How to get it in

Color films today are pretty sophisticated. The grain is finer, the colors more accurate and the saturation more controlled. They offer wide exposure latitude and a broad range of film speeds. And today's cameras offer better controls to manipulate these high-quality films. Nevertheless, even with all these improvements, the final image still depends on the person behind the camera eyepiece. You need to learn how your camera and film interact in order to obtain the maximum color from your images.

Unfortunately the solution isn't as simple as it sounds. Several things can improve or degrade the color of an image. So we looked back through all the film tests we have done for *PHOTOgraphic* and analyzed the various controls we have used to get the maximum color from our images. The images you see on these pages are the results of applying various controls to both past and today's emulsions.

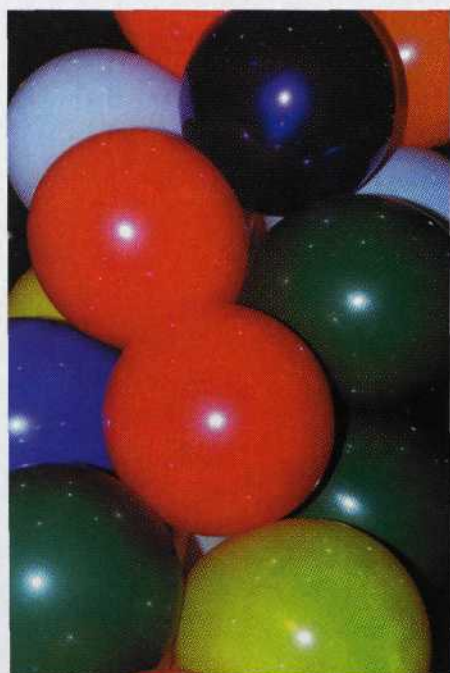
Seeing Color

Before you can capture color, you must be able to see it. You need to train your eye to see subtle tints and hues, not just the vivid colors that knock your socks off.

Contrasting colors can enhance the color in your photos as they seem to create

eye flow from one color to the other. Single colors, or variations of the same color, can also have a very dramatic effect. Often a single color against a neutral background causes the color itself to become the subject. Rainbow and patterned colors can also create exciting color images, so be sure to look for exciting props like beads, candy, toys, or colorful balloons on your next photo expedition.

One of the first lessons in any photography course is composition, and most photo instructors have rules for you to follow. Understanding composition guidelines helps you see color more easily, and it also helps you understand why colors in a photo work well. The problem regarding making rules of composition to follow is that there will always be the non-conforming photographer who creates a dynamite photo just to break the rules. So, just go with what looks and feels right to you.



Above: One way to get maximum color is to use a film noted for its rich colors, such as Fujichrome Velvia used here. A polarizing filter also helped. Left: Move in close to colorful subjects to fill the frame with color. On-camera electronic flash eliminated large shadow areas (which don't show a lot of color) and added specular highlights. Agfa Optima II Prestige 100 color-print film was used for this shot.

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your photos *Text and photos by Jack and Sue Drafa*

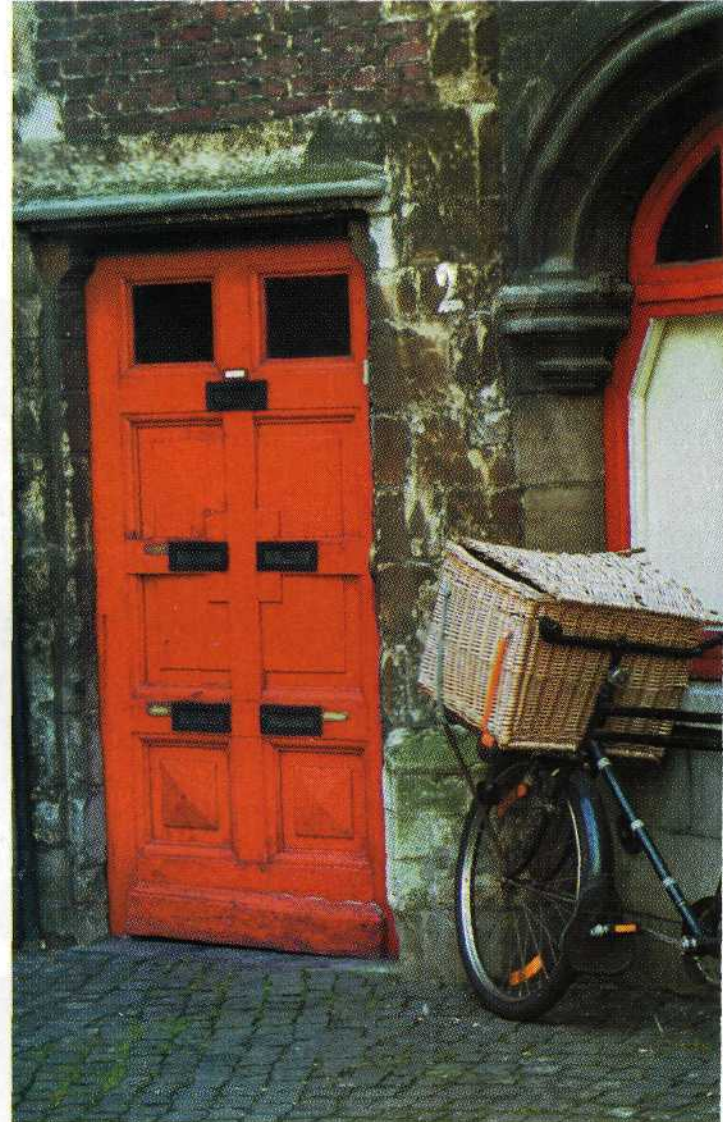
One of the easiest ways to see color in a photo situation is to move in for a close-up shot. Don't be afraid to fill the frame with your subject. Not only will you see more detail, but magically the image will be full of color. Try different angles, and if it is really a great shot, be sure to bracket, and then bracket some more. The ol' adage "film is cheap" still holds true.

One of the best ways we learn to see color is by appreciating all the great professional photographers in the world. We collect tabletop books, instruction manuals, how-to books, and a variety of magazine articles. We look at each color shot, analyze how and why it works, and decide how to apply it to our own photo situations. Each time we shoot a scene, we critique it, learn from our mistakes, and strive for a better image next time.

Film Choices

Not every film records color the same. So, it is important for the photographer to try to understand what each film does. Read the tech sheets and test reports, and run your own tests to truly understand just how a specific film is going to work for you. Record the same colorful scene with

Right: Splashes of color against a neutral background can be very effective. Soft lighting (courtesy of a thin overcast) also helps, by eliminating glare that desaturates colors. *Below:* Likewise, a monochromatic subject against a colorful background makes for a striking image. Both of these photos were made on Kodak Gold color-print films.



different films and pick the film that gives you the tonal response you are looking for. Most films are designed for general usage, but some are for portraits and others have increased color saturation. Each film is designed for a target subject, so the key is to match the film to your specific shooting interests.

Camera Meters

The metering systems in cameras today are extremely accurate and can adjust for most any situation. A good working knowledge of your metering system will improve your image color considerably. Understand how your matrix, spot or center-weighted meter works and know when to use each. When we find a great subject, we use at least two metering methods to insure a good exposure. When using the spot meter, we meter the back of our hands, green grass,

or a blue sky at a 90° angle from the sun for a good exposure. Be sure to use the meter lock when you have spot-metered important areas. Even using all these methods, the camera meter can be fooled, so we often use the camera's automatic bracketing function to insure a good exposure.

Exposure

The biggest control you have over the color of an image is exposure. The best color from any film is achieved from the correct exposure. The closer you are to it, the better the film will perform. We hear tales from many professionals who proclaim that a little less exposure on slides improves the color saturation. All we have found is that it underexposes the slide and when you underexpose slide film you tend to lose shadow detail. When you overexpose it, your image starts to burn out the colors, so it pays to be accurate.

Color negative film is a different story. When you underexpose color negative film, the resulting prints become grainy and very flat with very pastel colors. Overexposed negatives have increased contrast and more saturated colors. Again the best solution for maximum color is achieving the correct exposure.

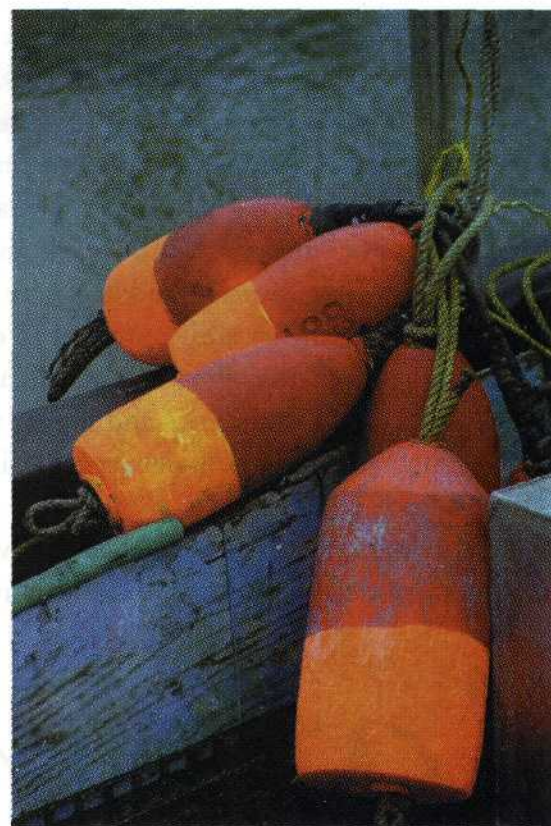
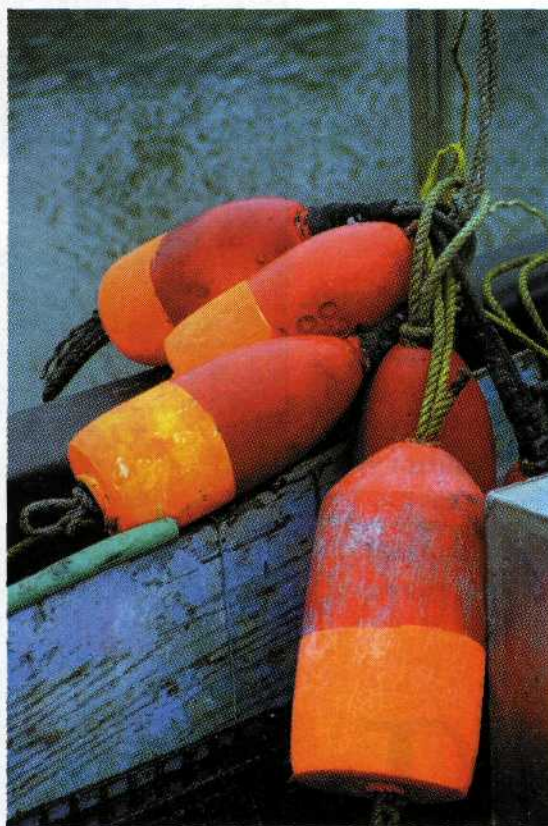
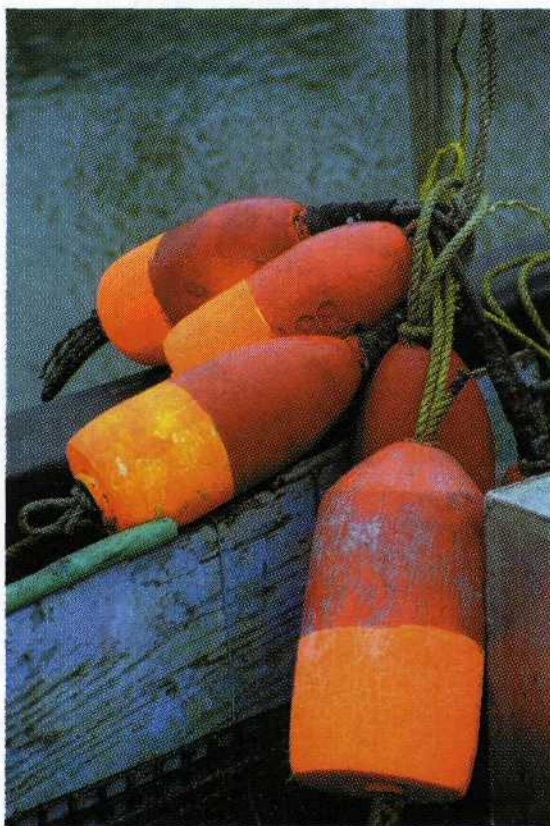
Scene Contrast

One area that you have little control over is the scene contrast. From sunrise to sunset you may

Left: Close-ups of colorful subjects make for great max-color photos. High-saturation Fujichrome Velvia also helps.

Below: For different color, try Kodak Ektachrome Infrared EIR. It's a false-color slide film that produces odd effects when exposed without a filter or through yellow, orange or red filters. (This shot was made without a filter.)





Above: With color-negative film (Kodak Gold, here), normal exposure (left) yields nice colors, overexposure (center) yields more-saturated colors (and more contrast, which makes colors seem brighter), and underexposure (right) results in photos with reduced color saturation and contrast. Try out the tips given in this article, and see what they'll do for your color photos.

encounter a variety of lighting situations from full sunlight to extremely flat lighting in heavy overcast or deep shade. One misconception by beginning photographers is that the maximum color is achieved in full sunlight. Generally subjects in full sunlight will have a variety of color intensities depending on the curvature of the subject. A round red ball, for example, will have a very light color at the reflection point and get darker as the curve moves from sunlight into shade. The same red ball will have even lighting all around when photographed under overcast skies. The key is to get exposures that don't burn out the highlight and still capture as much color in the shadow areas as possible. If you are using color negative film, there are films, such as portrait films, which have a broader exposure latitude to capture that extended tonal range.

One way to control your scene contrast is to use an electronic flash to add light in the shadow areas. If you are shooting small macro subjects, you can add a second flash to create a lighting ratio. Many professional photographers use multiple light sources to elicit maximum color from a scene.

Filters

There are several different types of filters you can use to enhance your photo's color rendition. The first is the polarizer filter that will reduce reflections in a subject and increase the color saturation in the scene.

The second type is the color correction filter. These filters allow you to photograph under tungsten or fluorescent lights and maintain the color balance. These filters help increase the color saturation of all the colors in the scene.

Overcast situations, where the sun is blocked, make great photo situations providing excellent color saturation. If the sun is out with blue skies and you are photographing your subjects in the shade, the resulting images will be very flat and blue. Using special warming filters, such as the 81A, B, C, D or EF, will

balance the color and improve the color saturation considerably.

Processing

One trick many pros use is to underexpose slide film by $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 stop and increase the processing time to compensate. This is especially handy when shooting in very flat lighting situations. The film may record a full range of color, but will lack in contrast. This push-processing technique for slide films improves the contrast.

Color negative film should not be pushed to change color saturation. Usually you can get different saturation levels by bracketing your exposures by one stop and processing normally. The one-stop over frame will have increased color saturation and the one-stop under frame will have lower saturation.

Scan It

Today you have the option of correcting color mistakes even after the film is processed. If your exposure was slightly off, the processing was not exactly right, or the film you chose did not give the results you wanted, you can still fix it. By scanning the images into the computer, you can use a variety of digital controls to correct exposure, increase contrast, and improve the overall image color saturation. Make corrections slowly, and save the edited file as a new file name. In the computer world, hard-disk space is becoming as cheap as film, so don't hesitate to use it. Once the image is printed and you are happy with the results, then archive the digital file.

Final Words

Stop, look and discover color in all shapes and sizes. Start looking for color and design, as they seem to hang together. Have fun shooting color film. If you find a great shot, shoot a frame and then see if you can do better the next frame. Learn from your mistakes, and don't be afraid to get critiques from your friends. Go get the maximum color from your photos! ■