

KICKSTART YOUR CREATIVITY

with a Self-Assignment

BY RAYMOND KLASS

All too often, winter becomes that time of year when camera bags head for their long nap in the closet. The excuses start – “It’s too cold out...” or “All the good subjects will be back in the spring...”, as a photography instructor, I’ve heard more than I can count.

It’s true, winter can be a pretty drab season at times, especially if you don’t like the snow and ice. But there are some techniques to stay motivated and keep that camera from its long snooze on some shelf.

To be a better photographer one really needs to practice between photo-trips or workshops. These are the times when you re-enforce the new skills you’ve learned, develop your creative eye, and discover where some improvement might benefit your process.

I’ve found that a simple self-assignment can help me stay motivated when I don’t have the luxury of photographing loons on the open lakes of Minnesota or rainbows in Hawaii. Part of creativity is being able to find subjects where you might not think to look.



This image to the bottom left was created outside with mylar, but it just as easily could have been created inside with cut or fake flowers.

Mylar isn’t something that I normally use in my photography, so I decided one day to make it my goal to produce an image using only the mylar flowers, and glycerin for those robust water-drops. It may not be a “Blue-Ribbon” image, but that wasn’t the point. It got my camera out of the closet, and me thinking in terms of form and composition.



The above image is part of an antique grain mill I had lying around. The assignment that I often give myself is to find a simple object, and then work with form and light to make the ordinary into something unrecognizable.

Another way to make these self-assignments rewarding is to try one with a fellow photographer. Perhaps each person spends a week with the same object, and afterward you compare the results. Remember, the goal is to practice your creative problem solving as a photographer. There is no right or wrong solution, the process is what’s important.