



Morning Sunrise Over Lake Michigan in January 2021

Sometimes, when you see a shot, you need to get your camera and shoot, and think about it later. Living in a condo overlooking Lake Michigan, there are many mornings and evenings when the lake presents us with spectacles – beautiful sunrises and sunsets, changing hues of the lake, and clouds with distinctive shapes and sizes. We planted a pine tree on the terrace early after we moved in, and now 15 years later, it's grown into a major presence on the deck, despite yearly pruning and shaping by my husband, Terry.

On this early morning, one of the first of the new year, I looked out and saw an incredible sight. The clouds in the sky caught the sunrise which rendered beautiful shades of purple and gold. The pine tree was shadowed from the sunrise, and the back-lighting of the sunrise played with the needles through the tree. The purplish tone of Lake Michigan in the morning light was repeated in the color of the scattered clouds above the lake. I didn't know how long the impression would last because the appearance of the sun could change the colors in an instant, so I ran for my camera.

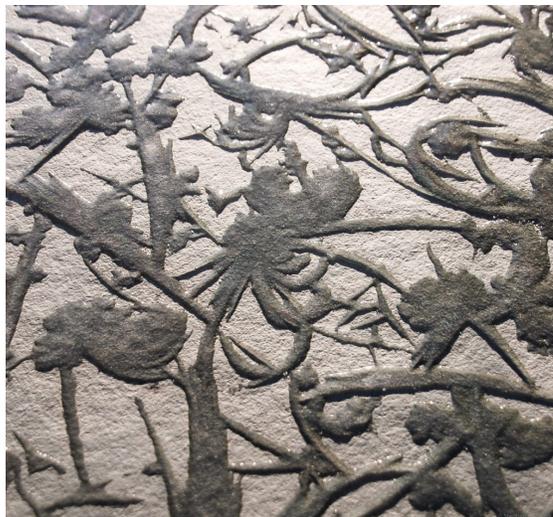
I'm getting better at immediately following my instincts when I think a shot is worth capturing and getting the camera. More times than not, I am wrong, the shot is less than I anticipated, or the image in my mind fell short of the one captured in the camera. But every now and then . . . and what is the cost of a false start? A non-memorable photo, a little time, and along the way, added experience to recognize when an image is worth pursuing.



The Original Photo and the Same Image after Adjustments

The real fun of this shot came in the editing room. It can be tempting to go for brilliant colors by manipulating the exposure, contrast and coloring, but we have all become more sophisticated in a world of Photoshop tools and creative imaging. The balance is to push the colors to take advantage of the coloring of the scene and finding the drama without going so overboard that it causes disbelief.

There are other examples where a fun photo shows itself briefly and then it's gone. On a late fall morning, frost collected on the terrace, and unusual shapes were formed on a slate table that remained outdoors during the winter season. Images of "jack frost" came alive in front of my eyes. Capturing these images were fun, and for a later photo project, I used these as a background pattern for a photo album.



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1. Shoot first. Think later. If you are not sure if a shot is worth it, get the shot. Even if it doesn't pan out, you'll gain valuable experience.
2. Keep extra batteries on hand and charged. There is nothing worse than being in the presence of a great shot and finding your equipment is not ready to go.