

FLAAR Reports

February 2011

Book review

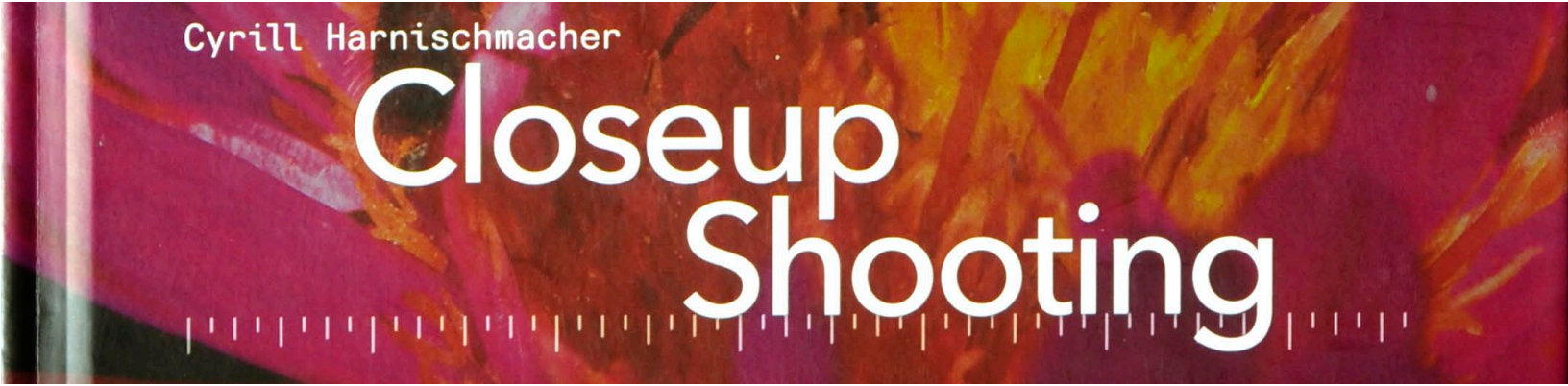
By Nicholas Hellmuth

rockynook



Closeup Shooting

A Guide to closeup, Tabletop,
and macro photography
by Cyril Harnischmacher



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Closeup Shooting

A Guide to closeup, tabletop, and macro photography
by Cyrill Harnischmacher.

Book review by Nicholas Hellmuth

Full title:

Closeup Shooting A Guide to closeup, tabletop, and macro photography

Author(s)

Cyrill HARNISCHMACHER

Publisher:

Rocky Nook, distributed by O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, California.

Stated goal of book:

This is literally a book on closeup photography. The author clearly states his interest is closeup in general and not just macro photography.

Index, yes or no:

None whatsoever.

Glossary, yes or no:

None whatsoever

Bibliography; describe:

None whatsoever: very disappointing. Surely there are books and articles on close-up and macro photography that are worth mentioning (see our own list at end of this evaluation).

Photographs in color or B&W:

Almost all the photographs are in color.

Line drawings:

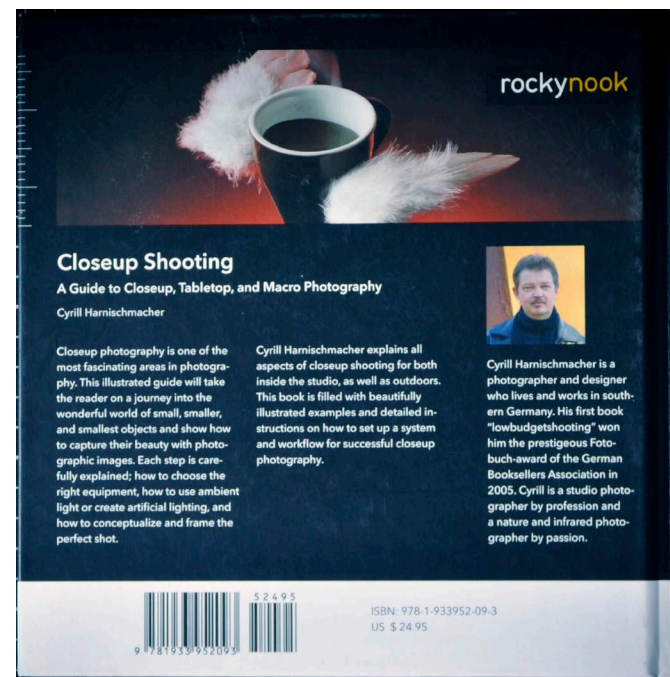
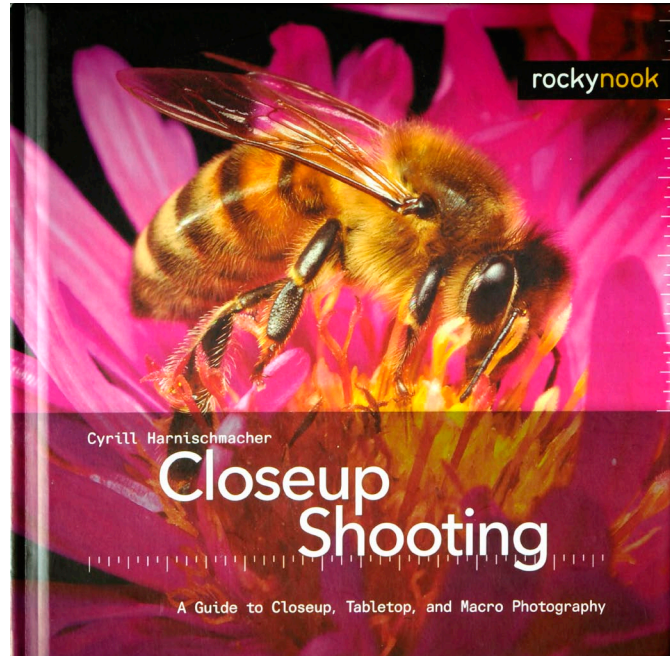
Line drawings are professionally rendered.

Quality of photographs:

Professional quality as you would expect of a publisher dedicated to books on photography.

Quality of paper used in the book:

High quality without being over-reflective.





▲ *Heliconius hecale*. 1/200 sec at f/3.5; ISO 200; 105mm digital bridge camera. Thanks to an image stabilizer you may still be able to take pictures without a tripod even under poor lighting conditions. Of course, a motionless subject is still required. Photograph: Tobias Hornschmacher

▲ *Dryas jula*. 1/500 sec at f/4.8; 115mm macro lens; ISO 800. If the subject is in motion and you cannot or do not want to use flash, the only alternative is to use a high ISO value so you can use very short shutter speeds.

▲ 1/125 sec at f/4; 115mm macro lens; ISO 1600. This photograph was only possible because of the large aperture and the high ISO value. The result is an extremely shallow depth of field that can be used creatively in the composition.

▲ 1/160 sec at f/9.5; 115mm macro lens; ISO 200. To reach an acceptable depth of field in this portrait, a flash with softbox was used. All pictures in these examples were taken at the butterfly house on the island of Malinau.

Good print quality, colors are bright and very illustrative examples.



▲ *Coenagrion puella* mating. To photograph dragonflies, filling the frame with a magnification of 1:3 is completely sufficient and is possible with most modern telephoto zoom lenses

and/or bridge cameras. A tripod or an image stabilizer is important. 1/500 sec at f/13; 300mm telephoto macro lens; tripod; fill-in flash.

▲ *Libellula quadrimaculata*. You can get quite close to this type of dragonfly because its tolerance for human presence is high.

1/500 sec at f/9.5; 300 mm telephoto macro lens; tripod; fill-in flash.

The image quality is impressive.

Comments:

Trying to squeeze in a discussion of tabletop photography, pp. 88ff (product photography) into a book on closeup photography somehow does not fit with macro photography. It would have been more appropriate to have a chapter on medical photography, or forensic photography rather than product photography (which needs an entire book of its own).

I admire anyone who uses film in the year 2011. But this is like using a horse and buggy to get to work, or sending a message with smoke signals or using a carrier pigeon. Sorry, Kodachrome is no longer made and can't even be manufactured any more. There are only one or two brands of professional film scanners still being manufactured so there is no way to use your analog image these days: are you going to get a Kodak Carousel slide projector and give a slide show? I did this for decades: wowed audiences.

And with a medium format image in a Rollei or Hasselblad projector you can impact an audience in a way no digital projector can dream of doing today. Still, I have not used film since the late 1990s and would not encourage people to think there is much future in film any more.

Scanning leaves so many artifacts: dust, film grain. Yuck. Not a good idea.

Has a page on teleconverters but does not show any resulting images on this page (p. 23). The author covers how to reverse a lens (and appropriately suggests the advantages of a Novoflex adapter ring). But he makes only incidental mention of using an enlarging lens (p. 30) or any other tricks of this nature.

Plus the book seems to totally forget to mention and illustrate stacked focus techniques. So the Canon MP-E 65mm extreme macro lens is only mentioned, but not pictured (suggesting the author does not have one). I guess it is not realistic to expect every photographer to have a complete set of Canon equipment if you already are a Nikon photographer. But the audience for you book is not just Nikonians. Plus the Canon MP-E 65mm f2.8 USM is considered the best of its kind (Nikon offers nothing remotely similar; nor does or did Leica).

I am not convinced that image stabilization can really replace using a tripod, though for sure IS in your lens is better than no IS.

In the one page in infrared photography he should have mentioned the nice Rocky Nook book on infrared photography.



What would I have added if I had written a book on this subject?

I find it is okay to write the word close-up as one word closeup, but I would tend to make it two words, close-up. Also, Microsoft Word spelling corrector tags closeup as incorrect spelling. But English is relatively flexible and most Americans write informally nowadays anyway.

On page 14 the author talks about "digital bridge cameras. I have been a photographer my entire life (including with credits with National Geographic). I have no earthly idea whatsoever what a digital bridge camera is. He names no brands and the example pictured in miniscule image is unidentified (and unidentifiable). Even though I am completely bilingual: German and English, I can't figure out what in the world he is trying to talk about on this one column.

He suggests mailing a CD back home to keep from losing your images if there is an accident with your camera or memory (p. 83). He should have mentioned FTP to an FTP server. This is a good backup, though many hotels block FTP transmissions because they use a lot of bandwidth.

What do I like about this book?


The author provides lots of examples. The most helpful are comparative examples, such as the nine photos on page 8.

He mentions and illustrates the Macroscope of Dr Zoerk. But there are zero examples of the benefits of a Canon MP-E 65mm macro lens.

The author correctly points out that a slight overcast is better for flower photography (p. 46) than full sun.

The author is clearly a fan of using flash, so he covers all aspects of this well.

The pages on studio lighting are excellent: uses a diagram to show the placement of the lights, and shows on result of such an arrangement.



Digital Bridge Cameras
A niche product during analog times, digital bridge cameras have now become more popular for good reasons. Handling is similar to an SLR camera, they fit well into your hand, and generally, the focal length and focus can be manually modified with an adjustment dial on the lens. Most models offer a high to very high resolution, and many include a standard image stabilizer, as well as displays that

p. 14 Digital bridge cameras



p. 83 CD back home



p. 8 Comparative examples

What did I learn from this book?

Having done macro photography (and close-up photography) for years, I was still able to learn a few tips. For example, I had never known about a Nikon AF Macro 70-180mm lens. Downside is its f stop 4.5 to 5.6 which means you would need a tripod, or flash, or high ISO.

He also mentions a "beanbag tripod." You can buy these commercially, or just fill a cloth bag with dried common beans. Since beans are one of the most common foods in Guatemala, I need to try this again. I must admit that I have not used my beanbag camera support for several decades. I also like his idea for making a flash reflector card yourself but simply cutting a piece of white cardboard.



Here is a situation where a beanbag tripod would help, especially one where you can vary the height (so have several sizes with you). Here I am trying to photograph leaf-carrying ants during the few days a year that they cut and carry flowers instead of leaves.

Summary:

I am glad that I took the time to read this book. I will definitely try out his suggestions on flash equipment.

Author(s) familiarity with the subject:

The author clearly knows what he is talking about, but like any other human today, he has his topics that he is interested in (and knows about) and does not go much outside that. I would like to have seen more examples of tele-macro.

For scholar/scientist, lay person, general public?

Usable by the general public.

Suitable as a course book?

Would be an informative reference for any course on digital photography (but is not intended to be a textbook per se).

Number of pages:

122

Page size:

8.5"X8.5"

Number of maps:

Maps are not needed to provide coverage of close-up photography.

Number of charts, tabulations, graphics:

The author provides plenty of charts, tabulations, and comparisons.

Binding, hardbound or softbound, or both:

The edition I have is hardbound.

Number of maps:

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26 West Mission Street
Suite 3
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Publisher's fax:

1-805-687-2204

Publisher's book order telephone:

1-805-687-8727 / toll-free 1-866-687-1118

Comparison with other books on the subject:

Author	Year	Book	Publisher	Price
Adrian Davies	2009	Close-up and Macro Photography	Focal Press	\$18
Paul Harcourt Davies	2002	The Complete Guide to Close Up & Macro Photography	Sterling	\$31.13
Harold Davis	2009	Creative Close-ups: Digital Photography Tips and Techniques	Wiley	\$19.59
Alan L. Detrick	2008	Macro Photography for Gardeners and Nature Lovers: The Essential Guide to Digital Techniques	Timber Press	\$16.30
Tim Fitzharris	2008	Close-up Photography in Nature	Firefly Books	\$13.57
John Gerlach	2007	Digital Nature Photography	Focal Press	\$16.30
Ross Hoddinott	2008	Digital Macro Photography	Photographers'	\$9.76
Bryan Peterson	2009	Understanding Close-up Photography: Creative Close Encounters with or without a Macro lens	Amphoto Books	\$17.13