

Behind The Shot: Pencils and Water

Sam Coppard October 11, 2016 October 14, 2016 Behind The Shot



The Story

A couple of years ago I got interested in how water can bend shapes and how you can capture a subject in a water drop (this is called refraction). It's amazing to see what colourful visual treats you can produce within just a few droplets of water!

I started with a single drop to practice the technique of focusing. I followed some classes and tutorials that I found online and so I refined my technique. Then I moved on to capturing a subject in water drops held on a glass plate. This, I think, is a bit trickier, but in my opinion the effect is even more spectacular.

For this photo I wanted to create a certain colour flow in the drops. I tried out several different materials and ended up using this wheel of coloured pencils. As you can see in the picture, the colour flows from orange/pink at the top to blue/green at the bottom of the image. This was the effect I was looking for.

The Technique

What you need:

- An SLR camera that allows manual focus
- A true macro lens capable of 1:1 reproduction
- A solid tripod and head
- A glass plate
- Rain-X (glass water repellent)
- Colour pencils

And here's the setup, broken down into an easy recipe:

- Make a circle of the pencils, in whatever colour combination you like, on a white piece of paper. Put that on the ground, or on a low table.
 - Rub a clean glass plate (20x30cm) with Rain-X and find a way to hold the glass 10-15cm above the pencils.
 - Fix the camera onto the tripod and position it directly above the glass.
 - Use a syringe to create the drops on the glass plate. It's best for all your water drops to be about the same size or it won't be possible to keep them all in focus – 1:1 macro generally gives a very small depth of field! You should use manual focus for the same reason.
 - You can keep moving the paper and pencils around and search for the best effect until you find something you like the look of.
 - To make things even more interesting, you could try experimenting with off-camera flash. In that case, make sure you aim the flash directly onto the pencils, not on the water droplets.
 - If you are familiar with focus-stacking, keep in mind that you can't stack too many images with this kind of drop photography. (At least I wasn't satisfied with the results when I tried.)
- The Gear

Camera body: [Canon 6D](#)

Lens: [Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L USM Macro](#)

The Settings

Focal length: 100mm

Shutter speed: 1/5s

Aperture: f/10

Sensitivity: ISO 200