



All photos were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, and Inon Z330 strobes. Photo 1. (top right) Hammerhead shark—the power of a stark white background. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s @17mm. Photo 2. (above) Lemon shark—high shutter speed with bright natural light. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/80s @10mm.

A Minimalist Approach

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

When I prepare for a day of underwater photography, I generally have an idea planned, in advance, of what I am going to photograph on that given day. For example, I will dive where there are plenty of sharks, mantas, or sea life on the coral reef. On some occasions when I am drift-diving in a heavy current, especially in deep water, I approach my photo shoot in a different way. I take an approach of “minimalism.”

If you look up the word “minimalism,” you will find many different definitions. I personally like the one found in the Meriam-Webster dictionary:

“...of, relating to, or following a style (as in art or design) that is

characterized by simplicity and uses a small number of colors, parts, materials, etc.”

What many underwater photographers do not realize, on any given open water dive, is that they are surrounded by unlimited negative space, which is the perfect minimalist canvas.

I find my negative space early in the dive, searching for a totally uncluttered background. After a few test shots to determine my camera settings, I patiently wait for the right subject to enter this preconceived negative space. I prefer to have a canvas of deep blue, but it is not always available. By playing with shutter speed, ISO and strobes, I can create a homogenous white or black background and highlight a single subject. (See Photo 1 and 2).

On “sporty” days, I like to create my negative space by shooting up. This has a few benefits, particularly the magical swirls, whirls and wave patterns that emphasize the simplicity of one of my favorite effects—the silhouette. In Photo 3, I was able to capture two interacting subjects in silhouette and feature their connectivity. The negative space, the surface above them, is magical. There is so much energy in this photo. You can feel the forces that are drawing them together. The interplay between them is powerful. The viewer cannot resist being drawn into the photograph with a desire to be engulfed by the energy.

Minimalism gives meaning to the concept of “Less is more.” Visit: garyrosephotos.com



Photo 3. Diver and giant manta ray—a Chihuly-inspired surface counters the simplicity of the silhouettes. Exposure: ISO 200 f/9, 1/125s @107mm