



Gear used for all photos: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. Photo 1. (left) Tiger shark, captured while shooting straight down with a wide-angle lens, demonstrates isolation and size. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s; Photo 2. (right) Great white shark, with deep blue negative space, demonstrates dramatic movement and depth. Exposure: ISO 320, f/11, 1/125s; Photo 3. (top right) Great hammerhead shark. The “sfumato” effect emphasizes the solitary subject. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s; Photo 4. (top center) Diver and sandbar shark. Color, contrast, perspective and lighting combine to enhance a haunting beauty. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/125s



## Why Epic?

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

The word “epic,” as a noun, refers to “a long poem, typically one derived from ancient oral tradition... or the history of a nation.” As an adjective in underwater photography, “epic” refers to shooting to the extreme and using techniques that emphasize the subject—such as wide-angle, extreme perspective, sfumato and isolation. My definition of an epic photo is one that evokes strong emotion upon viewing, and then lingers in the mind for hours or days. These are some of my favorite techniques to use for creating dramatic photos, which are the images that I often exhibit in galleries and shows.

Sharks are my favorite subjects for epic photographs. Just the very subject—sharks—inspires me to create.

The tiger shark is easily recognized (by most viewers) by its gorgeous markings and inherently huge size. Photo 1 demonstrates isolation and size. Viewers always ask me, “How did you get this photo?” Well, I used a very wide-angle lens and literally shot straight down between my legs as they straddled her in the frame. If my legs were not stretched to the max, you would be able to see my diving fins. It is Epic.

Photo 2 is a close-up of a great white shark, taken at an angle that emphasizes size, strength and movement. Most viewers are used to only seeing photos of great whites from cages or on the surface of the sea. The beauty of this photo is that it was not from within a cage (implying hidden danger), but in open water, against a salutary deep blue negative space, which highlights the magnificent coloring of the great white shark. When I display this photo,

I cut it into a triptyc (in homage to Damien Hirst), which further emphasizes dramatic movement and depth—Epic.

I love great hammerhead sharks. I get excited every time I see them and photograph them. They are unusual and exceptionally photogenic. As demonstrated in Photo 3, I used an Italian Renaissance technique called “sfumato.” As you can easily see, the lighting is very soft, and all is out of focus except for the subject—the great hammerhead. This is also an extremely close-up wide-angle photo, which enhances the beauty of the sfumato effect. This is one of my favorite photos and is prominently displayed in my home.

Photo 3 appeared in my article on minimalist photography in issue #117. In the minimalist version, the stark white background produces tension, creating an effect where the great hammerhead appears to nearly pop

right out of the photo. In contrast, as an epic photo in full color, using sfumato, the lighting is very soft and out of focus, except for the subject, engendering a feeling of peace and calm.

The color, lighting and unusual perspective of Photo 4, as well as the subject of an encounter between diver and shark, propel this photo into the realm of Epic. The contrast of dark and light, with the shark at the transition, emphasizes the ageless story of human-animal encounters. The cathedral lighting also enhances the symbolism of this encounter. I consider this encounter as a hauntingly beautiful epic.

Photo 4 previously appeared in my

article featuring black-and-white photography in issue #110. As a black-and-white photo, the emphasis was on the play of light—the sunburst and corona encircling the shark. In contrast, as an epic photo in full color, it draws the viewer’s attention to the subject—the extraordinary encounter of diver and shark.

Whenever I look at my raw photos, I try to “feel” what I am seeing. I shift from left brain to right brain, or hover in the middle. Then, the magic happens. Visit: [garyrosephotos.com](http://garyrosephotos.com)

