

Amateur
Photographer
Technique

Photo Insight

TOM MACKIE EXPLAINS HOW HE BALANCED MIXED LIGHTING CONDITIONS TO CREATE THIS SPACE-LIKE IMAGE OF THE CITY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES COMPLEX IN SPAIN

THERE are many interesting angles to take photographs from at the City of Arts and Sciences leisure complex in Valencia, Spain. The complex, which was designed by Santiago Calatrava and Félix Candela, and completed in 2005, consists of several buildings. In AP 1 August I talked about an image I had taken of the El Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia opera house, and this is the same building but photographed from underneath an adjacent bridge. From this angle I could create a dynamic sweeping shape in my image.

During my visit, building work had been completed but the surrounding pools weren't yet filled with water. Fortunately, by the last day of my trip, the construction workers had filled half the pool and I was able to capture the reflections on the water's surface. First thing in the morning or last thing at night is the best time to photograph a scene like this because the wind is usually minimal so you get crisp, pristine reflections on the water.

I took this image as the sun went down. Crossover light or twilight is the time of day when the sun is below the horizon but there is still some colour in the light. The light is very soft and casts a diffuse effect on a scene. I did a recce the night before to work out when the best time would be to take this shot in terms of the amount of available light. After the recce I knew I had to have my camera set up and ready to shoot by 6pm – all I had to do then was wait for the light to drop to a level I was happy with.

I wanted to make sure the opera house was illuminated and the bridge wasn't completely black. The opera house is not lit by external lights – instead, the lights from the bridge cast the soft illuminations you see. There is a

The AP experts

Each week, one of our team of experts of Steve Bloom, David Clapp, Tom Mackie and Clive Nichols will reveal the secrets behind one of their great images. This week it's Tom Mackie

TOM MACKIE Architecture
As an internationally respected architectural photographer, Tom brings a wealth of experience to AP



smooth gradation of light on the surface because the building isn't lit directly.

I took this image using my Canon EOS 5D and a 17-40mm lens. With the advances in digital imaging, it is much easier to capture a balanced exposure in mixed lighting conditions. When using film, you need filters to balance the light, and the limitations of a film's sensitivity mean the window of opportunity for taking pictures is reduced. With digital imaging this isn't the case. When I was taking this image, it was difficult to see detail in the area under the bridge and on the opera house, but the digital sensor was able to pick out detail in even the darkest areas. The high sensitivity of the sensor also meant I could take pictures for a longer period of time.

Using an aperture of f/16, I set up my camera on a tripod so I could use a long exposure of 15secs at ISO 100. To shoot handheld in low light you would need a higher ISO setting.

I took this image at the widest focal length of the lens to capture as much of the scene as possible. Instead of



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featuring the whole opera house, I chose to include only a hint of the building and use the bridge to frame it. I also made sure the building didn't merge with the curve of the bridge by adjusting my shooting position. With architectural photography it is a good idea to also use a spirit level to ensure any lines, and the horizon in particular, are straight.

The buildings at the City of Arts and Sciences complex are quite surreal and at night they look supernatural. By playing around with your shooting position you can find an angle that makes the structures appear more alien-like and unusual. **AP**

To see more images by Tom visit www.tommackie.com

Talking technique

When I'm taking pictures after the sun has gone down, I try to capture the afterglow rather than a completely dark sky. Sometimes changing your white

balance in low-light conditions can create interesting colour effects. I took this image in raw and used auto white balance. Although using auto white balance is great for balancing the light in mixed lighting conditions, try altering your white balance setting and see what effects you can create. When shooting raw you can make

changes to the white balance during post-processing, but if you are working in JPEG try switching your white balance setting at the time of shooting. For example, if you switch to cloudy white balance when taking pictures just after sunset, you can often pick up a pleasant hue from the sky, which warms the scene and gives

a lovely glow to the buildings. Conversely, the tungsten setting will make the overall tone quite blue and cold, so you could try using this setting to bring out the blue tones in a scene. The only drawback is the buildings won't be as warm in colour. Experiment with the settings and see what works best.