

**AMATEUR**

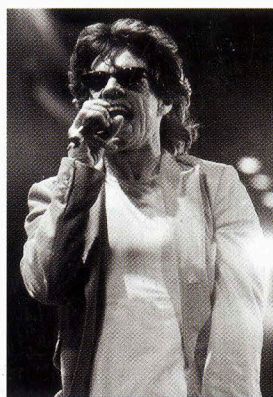
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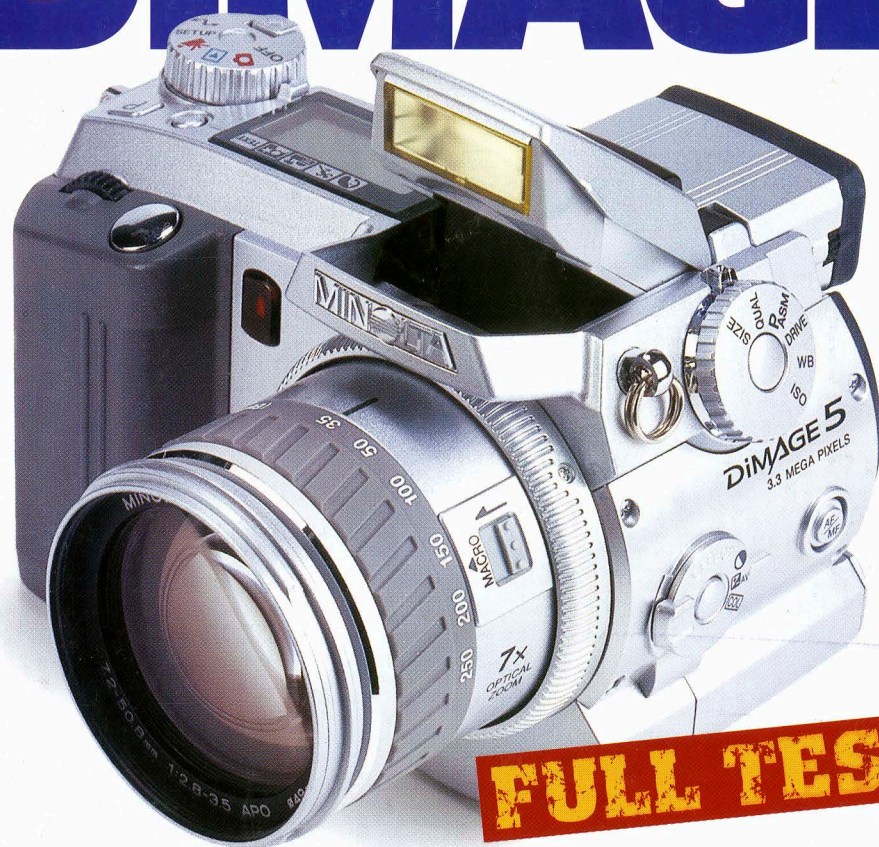
# Photographer

## LEICA ROLLING STONE

Meet the man who works for **Leica** and takes photos of the world's top rock stars



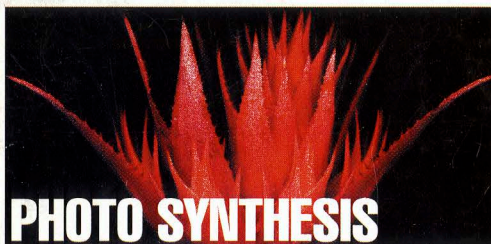
## DIMINUTIVE DIMAGE



**FULL TEST**

## PHOTO SYNTHESIS

Find out how **Harold Feinstein** takes vibrant natural history shots

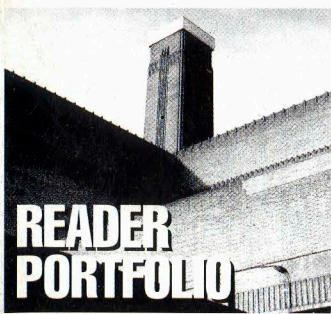


## AWARD WINNERS

We showcase some of the entries from this year's Assistants' Awards



## READER PORTFOLIO



**GROUP TEST**



## A ROOM WITHOUT A VIEW

There's plenty of life left in the darkroom and to prove it we put six enlargers through their paces





# PHOTO SYNTHESIS

**Harold Feinstein's** exquisite natural history studies are created in a way you wouldn't expect. **Sarah Jackson** finds out more

**I**MAGINE A COFFEE-TABLE book full of pinsharp, sumptuously coloured images of leaves, fruit and vegetables where you can make out every vein and every bristle – pictures so vibrant that printing in a magazine doesn't do them justice. Welcome to the world of Harold Feinstein, a US photographer who's been in the business for 55 years.

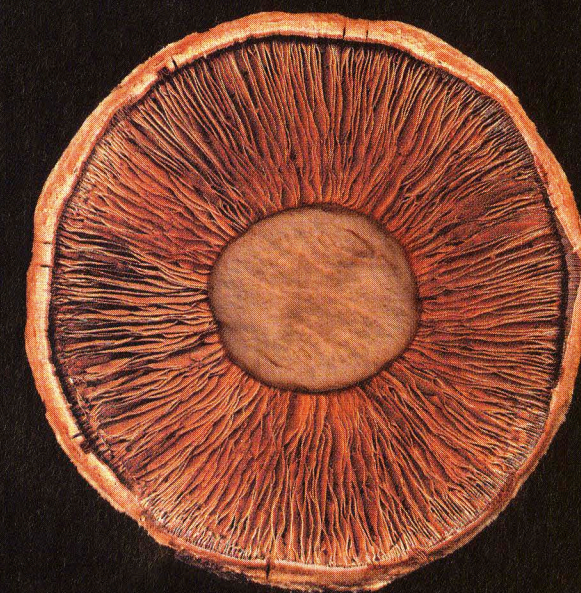
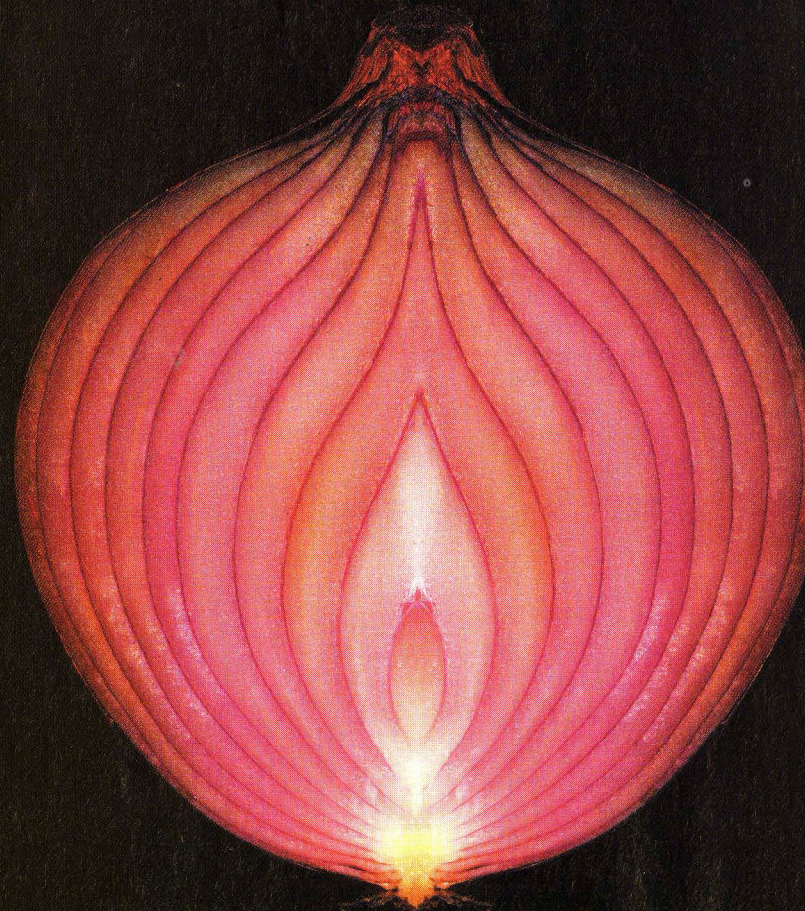
At the age of 15 and already, in his own words, 'a precocious painter', Feinstein happened to look through a neighbour's Rolleiflex. Once he saw the world framed by a viewfinder he was hooked. He recalls: 'My first photography was bearing witness to time,' and he would go out onto the streets of New York, and especially to Coney Island, with his camera. He used black & white film and a variety of cameras over the years, including an old Leica and a Rollei twin-lens reflex similar to his neighbour's. By the time Feinstein was 19 Edward Steichen had bought some of his pictures for New York's Museum of Modern Art, and eventually he was lucky enough to have his pictures noticed by ►





Life magazine, which started publishing his work. Feinstein recalls: 'I would photograph wherever I lived and when I was in the country I would photograph landscapes.' However, he continued painting and in the late 1970s, in his backyard in Vermont he took some photographs of weeds, originally intending the shots to be reference images for his paintings, but he realised that the photographs had an appeal of their own. Feinstein began working in colour in 1976, and when he found himself falling in love with the natural world he used colour more and more. He then started making dye-transfer prints of flowers, some of which appeared in *Life*, and he made Cibachrome prints of the same subjects.

Since then Feinstein has continued to experiment in his photography of the natural world. He says: 'The wonderful thing about photography is that it gets you focused in a particular area. Once you're there, suddenly it pops up wherever you look.' In any case, he reckons he only has to walk a mile in any direction to find a whole bookful of subjects. These days material for his lens comes from neighbours or from local greengrocers and supermarkets. Feinstein is quite



used to asking the checkout assistant not to crush the prime example of, say, star anise he has just spent ages selecting.

In 1995 Feinstein embarked on a change in approach – he bought a Mac computer and switched to digital photography. Initially he had intended to use the computer to catalogue his black & white archive, but the

move also had financial benefits. Printing up slides into Cibachromes was costly, so he had only been doing it when he planned to sell the resulting prints, but he wanted to retain prints for personal use. Now, using an Epson 1280 or 2000 printer, he has found a much more cost-effective way of creating as many inkjet prints as he wants. He says: 'The quality of the prints I get now is as good as or even better than the best I got from Cibachrome. The quality amazes me.'

There's another benefit, too, according to Feinstein, and that's not having to spend hours in the darkroom. 'I don't miss washing trays or mixing chemicals,' he says. The computer allows him to make a duplicate and carry out changes which he can undo if he's not happy with them. He doesn't mind spending hours working on an image – it's just that nowadays he'll be in front ▶

**'Even horticulturalists see things they hadn't noticed before'**







of his computer screen. Indeed, so enthusiastic is he that he'll often get up in the morning and immediately continue working on a picture.

Feinstein uses a powerful Mac G3 computer (which will soon be upgraded to a G4) and manipulation of the prints is carried out in Photoshop, the easily obtainable, industry-standard software package used by many designers and digital photographers.

According to Feinstein, though, it's not necessary to be a computer whizzkid to get great results. He says: 'I can't read an instruction book to save my life. Books on digital photography seem to be written by Martians, and every third word is a three-letter abbreviation.' Although he's proficient at certain operations in Photoshop, he claims that other elements of the software program are a closed book to him, and that he's happy for accidents to occur on computer as they are 'an essential element of creativity.'

Feinstein, who also teaches photography, has now virtually given up using film-based cameras. He has been using an Olympus Camedia camera for his digital work, but all the pictures shown here were created on an unusual combination of equipment – a 10x8in large-format camera with a prototype digital back that could be plugged directly into his computer, to produce immediately a 10x8in image on the screen.

Computer manipulation was used to clean up the image, replacing traditional 'spotting' methods, rather

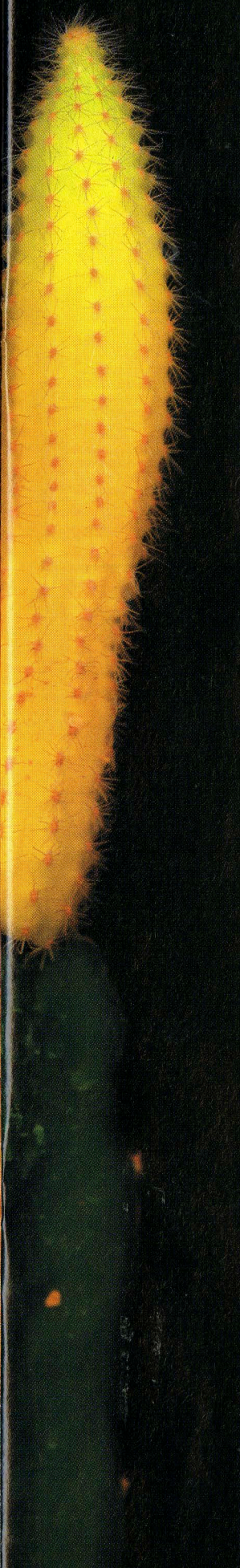
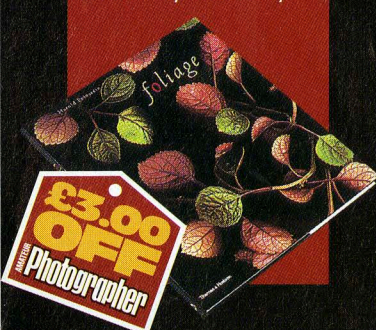
than to change the original image completely. Hence the black backgrounds were not added on-screen. They were there from the start, in the shape of card sprayed with matt black paint or sometimes black foam core. Lighting was tungsten and Feinstein says he used long exposures (typically 30 seconds, sometimes up to one minute) to achieve a 3D effect. To reflect more light into the image, he would angle two mirrors near the subject. The aim was to transform a piece of fruit or a leaf into something more sculptural.

Feinstein feels his book highlights elements of plants that are normally overlooked. 'Even horticulturalists see things they hadn't noticed before,' he says. He remains enthralled by the whole process of growth, finding it miraculous the way a blade of grass will push through a tiny crack in cement to reach the light. Given his sumptuous images of flowers and foliage, I wondered if he's green fingered. 'Am I a keen gardener? No,' he laughs. He's happy to leave that to his wife. **AP**

**'The quality of prints I get now is as good as or even better than the best I got from Cibachrome. The quality amazes me'**

## BOOK OFFER

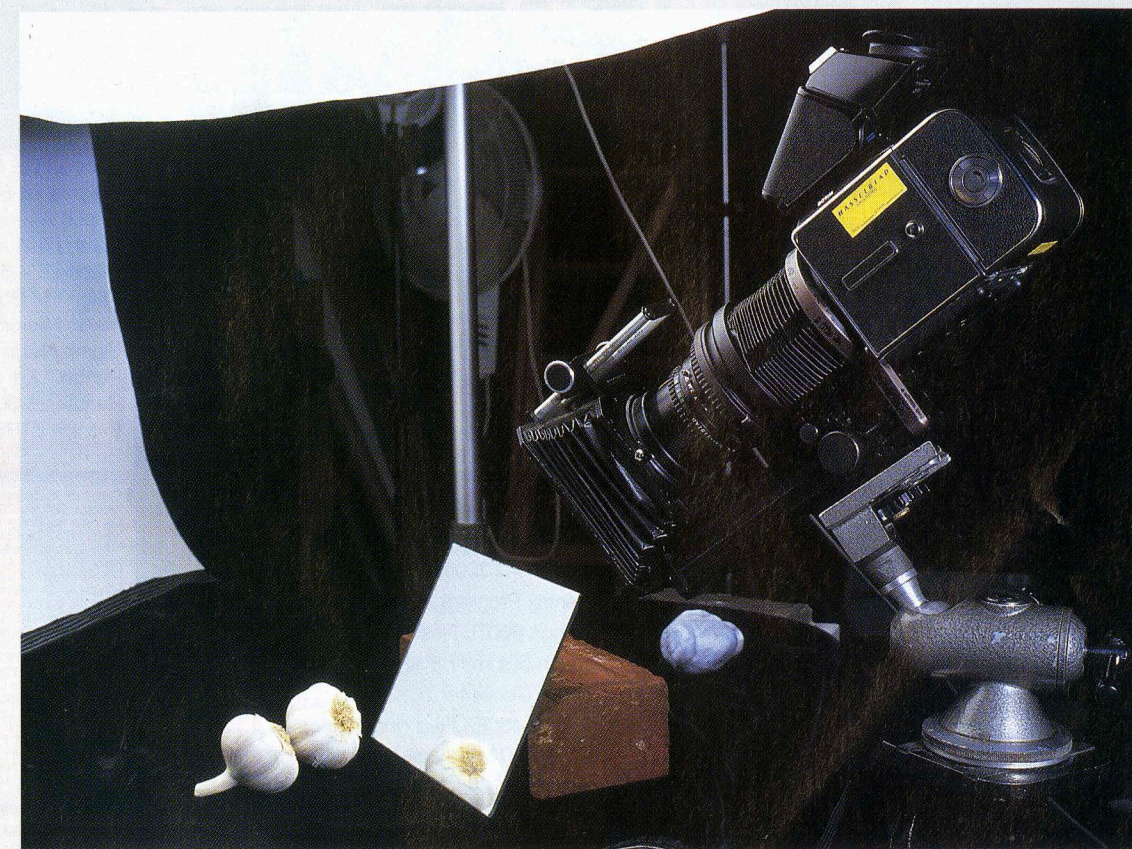
**Foliage** is published by Thames & Hudson at £29.95. AP readers can obtain it for £26.95, including p&p, by ringing 01326 565828. Please allow 28 days for delivery.



ALL PICS BY HAROLD FEINSTEIN UNLESS STATED

# HOW TO DO IT

There are several ways of photographing natural objects. AP shows you a cheap and simple method



**M**ost of the shots on the previous four pages were top-lit. This lighting is simple to create and is excellent for revealing detail and shape. You wouldn't want to use it for a portrait (unless you weren't interested in flattering the sitter), but it's great for graphic shots of nature's harvest. You can get away with one light – flash or tungsten – which should be softened to avoid creating deep shadows. You can do this by fitting a softbox (shown at the top of the above pic) or an umbrella to the light, or shining it through diffuse material such as tracing paper.

The best material for a truly black background is black velvet, which reflects the least light. If you need a little extra light, angle white card or a mirror (as shown above) onto the subject so it reflects a little light back onto it.

One of the most important elements of this type of shot is your choice of subject. Look for interesting textures. Every flaw will show up so choose your item with care and, if necessary, trim off imperfect stems and leaves or close in so you only show the best part.

## WHAT YOU NEED

- Manual camera
- Slide film
- Close-up equipment – macro lens, extension tubes or bellows
- Off-camera flash or tungsten lighting
- Diffuser – softbox, umbrella or bounce light off white card
- Black velvet
- Tripod
- Natural items like fruit or leaves

## TIPS

- Raising your subject off the background slightly avoids the problem of light shining onto the background and creating grey areas when you want black
- Ringflash is great for this type of shot
- Depth of field is very limited at such close distances so set the smallest aperture you can, such as f/22, and bracket exposures by altering the shutter speed
- Use a slide film which gives bright, saturated colours like Fuji Velvia or Kodak Elitechrome
- A flash with a modelling light gives you an idea of what the final shot will look like.

