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Dear Dr. Porter:

If you have a moment, I have two questions--one of some significance, the other probably not.

The first is, how do you react to having your photos cropped in reproduction? I'd bet you're not for it (except perhaps in cases of electronically triggered bird photos, or some other case where you didn't work out an exact composition laboriously). What I'm really asking is, how far do you feel an editor/designers prerogatives should rightly go? In effect, to crop is to re-see and re-photograph, which I suppose is all right from several standpoints. But do you feel the photographer should resist allowing someone else's tastes and sensibilities to remake his work?

(I have nothing specific in mind for my own work. Rather I've seen an awful lot of published work that looked pretty awful as a direct result of what simply seems to be a passion for meddling with images without any apparent reason on the parts of several editors. I recall reading of Stieglitz urging you to "de-wooly" your early work. I think I have some idea what he meant, and if I understand correctly what was meant by the difference between a "wooly" photo and one that is not, it brings again the question of taking pieces--that may of themselves appear "wooly"--out of photos that, taken as a whole, are not)

One specific example that struck me the instant I picked it up was your Appalachian Spring, wherein most, if not all the horizontals had been scizzored and fattened. I do know how much work can sometimes be involved in getting a certain photo, exactly as you want it--and I'm afraid I'd be inclined to explode.

The second question is more a puzzlement. Do you have some reason for using a Repro-Claron lens? Reproclarons were the first lenses I bought, reasoning they were light, and I didn't need high speed. Since then I have tried, bought and used dozens of lenses for my 4x5, and the sharpness of the Reproclarons has steadily diminished in my estimation. (I am assuming you do use one or more Reproclarons--I read it in Modern photo, and several of the photos in both the Galapagos and Baja books had what I can only describe as a 'reproclaron' look.) Which I suppose is my question, really. I found the Reproclarons did give an unusual rendition, a kind of soft, vibrant color, traceable as far as I know to slight blue absorption in the lens and outrageous amounts of longitudinal chromatic aberration. Is something of this unusual rendition what appeals to you? Or do you use the lens because it's very light? Or have you hand-picked one that seemed particularly good?

You might guess, I'm sort of a lens nut. Currently I'm ecstatic over two new Goerz Red Dot Artars, seemingly the finest lenses I've ever used, if also the hardest to see through. Both on film and on an optical bench, they seem close to flawless. But I have been stung often enough to believe each lens has to be looked at individually, so my curiosity remains, about you/ Reproclaron. Is there a special reason for it?

As always, my very best to you.

Most sincerely,

