

Super Wide Angle Lenses

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Super wide angle photography

Super wide angle lenses are quite fun to use. Mostly I used them for scenery and architectural shots. Occasionally I used them for portrait. They are best used for depicting scenery with plenty of details, emphasizing of foreground and for creating dramatic shot of building and architecture. They are the lenses to use for tight interior documentation.

My first experience with a super wide angle lens was the Prakticar PB mount multi-coated 20/2.8 Flektogon. A very good value for money lens. The lens design is typical German, with very big front element. There is a M42 version. Their external appearances are very much like the Zeiss 18/4 Distagon.

Iowa USA. Taken with Praktica BX20s, Carl Zeiss Jena MC 20/2.8, Ektapress 100.

The Flektogon has very good distortion control. The weakness is the corners where there are some lack of sharpness at large aperture setting. When adequately stopped down to f5.6 this lens gives very good results.

The Zeiss 18/4 Distagon is of course very good in performance. I have both the Rolleiflex QBM HFT version and the Contax T* version. While I always find the HFT multi-coating much nicer than the T*, for the 18/4 when put side by side the glass elements look very much the same for the HFT version and the T* version.

Medan Deli-River, Indonesia. Taken by Rolleiflex SL2000F, 18/4 HFT Distagon at f8 1/125. Kodak Ektapress 100.

Old Forge at Adirondack USA national park. Taken with Rolleiflex SL2000F, Kodak VC160, 18/4 HFT Distagon at f8 1/125.

The light falls off of the 18/4 is quite apparent. Distortion control is good but need to be careful for certain shots because of the S-shape distortion curve. Very good contrast and sharpness right to the corners even at f4. Lens shade is a problem as the lens does not has filter threads and a special 70mm slip on adaptor for 86mm filter need to be purchased for use with this lens. So you can either put on a 86mm filter or use the adaptor as a lens shade. For me I do not like the idea of exposing the front element of the lens so I have a 86mm slim UV filter put on. Note that even with the dedicated 70mm slip on adaptor you cannot use normal filter as it will vignett.

World Trade Centre Twin Towers, New York USA, taken with Rolleiflex SL2000F, 18/4 HFT Distagon at f8, 1/250.

My latest addition to the super wide angle lenses is the newly designed Zeiss 21/2.8 ZM lens for my Leica M mount Rollei 35RF range finder. For the first time I have f2.8 available to me but using external finder is not a easy task for a long time SLR user like me. The problems for using 21mm on range finder are when taking picture with people or taking subjects at close distance.

Rainy day, taken with Rollei 35RF, 21/2.8 Biogon ZM, hand held at f2.8. Kodak VC160.