

ANGLE OF VIEW



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Sam Abell looks back at his camera.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the picture above, *National Geographic* photographer Sam Abell is doing something he rarely does: physically manipulating the content of one of his pictures. He seems to be angling a life-size cardboard advertising cut-out he came across in Muscatine, Iowa so that there's less glare on its surface. Or is he? Maybe he's really angling the cut-out so that there's *more* glare on it, which creates a sort of bleached-out impression of the figure that is less realistic and relates to the background in a very different way.

Which makes the better photograph? To find out turn to page 10—but you'll have to decide for yourself. Abell won't say. Nor does his new book, which contains this and other pairings in which the same subject is seen differently, pass any judgment. We present several more such pairs in this issue's Mentor profile. The point is that there's more than one way to shoot a subject; sometimes, but not always, one of these ways is better. But subject permitting, any photographer in search of a vision needs to explore those variations.

As you'll see in our Student Portfolios section, Brown University student Kate Owen heeded that lesson when she created the image that won her the Grand Prize in our GoPro photography contest. She "worked" her subject, a friend investigating an abandoned trailer in the Nevada desert, shooting a number of alternate versions. And Owen took those pictures on medium-format film. Now, with the Canon EOS 5D Mark II digital SLR she's just won, she may be shooting as many variations as her heart desires.

Russell Hart, EDITOR

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Submissions: We invite students to submit work for consideration for our Student Portfolios section. Send to Student Portfolios, *American Photo On Campus*, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Digital-image files should be accompanied by reference printouts. Submissions will be handled with reasonable care; however, publisher assumes no responsibility for the safety of unsolicited original artwork, photos, slides, or manuscripts. By submitting your work, you represent that it is your own and publishing it will not violate the rights of any third party. You further agree that we may publish such work and distribute it together with this publication at any time in any current or future media, in special editions, on Websites, and in promotions. For information, call (212) 767-6273 or fax (212) 333-2439. Contents © 2009 Hachette Filipacchi Media U.S., Inc.



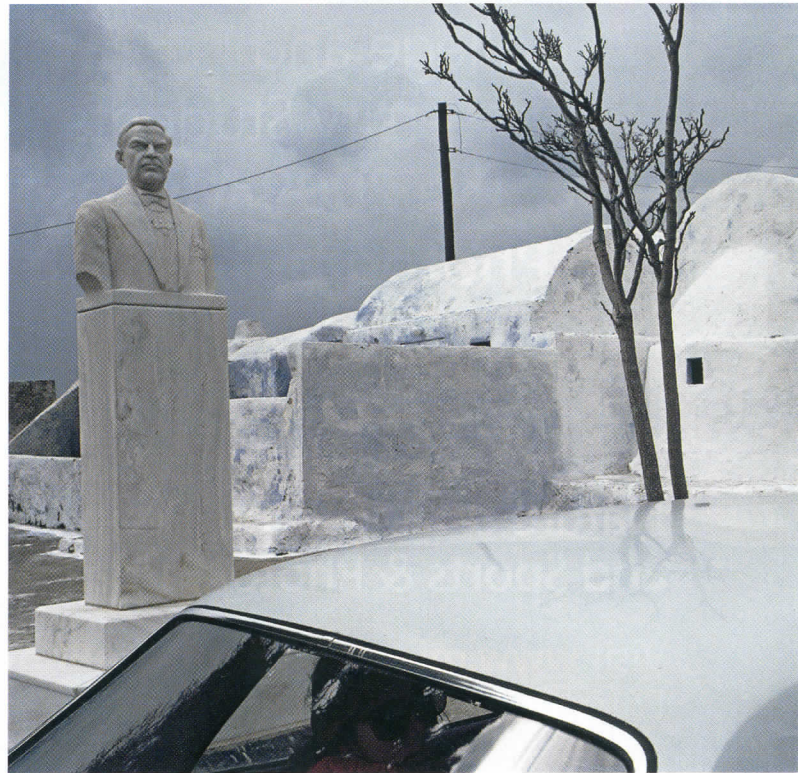
Photographer **Sam Abell** is not one to shoot and run. The *National Geographic* veteran takes time with his subjects, usually photographing them in several different ways. These variations include composition: For this street scene from the

Greek Island of Santorini, Abell first made a picture that included a memorial statue on the left of the frame and the windows of a taxi at the bottom (bottom right). He then moved in closer for a second shot, eliminating the statue and windows (far right).

You only see one variation of a subject in *National Geographic*, but here staff photographer Sam Abell shares pairs from the many he normally shoots. By Russell Hart

A DIFFERENT VIEW

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM ABELL



Two views
of the grain
elevators and
bar, Ulm,
Montana



Two views of
a street scene,
Island of
Santorini, Greece

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Two views of
a fallen tree,
Noatak River
Delta, Alaska





Two views of a vending machine photograph, Hagi, Japan



Two views of Leo Tolstoy's grave, Yasnaya Polyana, Russia



Two views of the Mercedes McKee photograph, Muscatine, Iowa



The result is more abstract and ambiguous, with fewer perspective cues creating a flatter image in which foreground and background seem to merge.

This enlightening pair of images is taken from Abell's new monograph, **The Life of a Photograph** (Focal Point/National Geographic, \$40). A visual master class, the book is full of pairs of images of a single scene that differ in light, season, distance from the subject, the moment itself, and composition. "Sometimes there's more than one finished photograph," says Abell. "As a photographer my intent is to bring the world under my aesthetic control. In its visual chaos the world doesn't ordinarily comply with this. The lighting, structure, and movement of a subject is often

The image pairs differ in light, season, distance, and, of course, composition.

at odds with itself and me." Indeed, Abell offers no specific judgments as to which is the better photograph of a given pair, leaving that up to the reader.

On these pages you'll find other image pairs from Abell's uniquely didactic book. In the pair above, the difference between the two was created by the photographer's own manipulation of the scene, something he rarely does. The two images may be different and equally interesting, or one might be better than the other. You decide.