

Fear of Failure

By Martin Edge



We all have a tendency to resist to change! I know I do. To accept change for ourselves is to concede that our previous held beliefs and ways of doing things were wrong. In underwater photography resistance to change encourages us to proceed along a familiar road and the more we travel that same road the more comfortable we become with it. In our everyday lives we embrace routine and are often reluctant to challenge our routine and the comfortable, secure lifestyle that many of us lead.

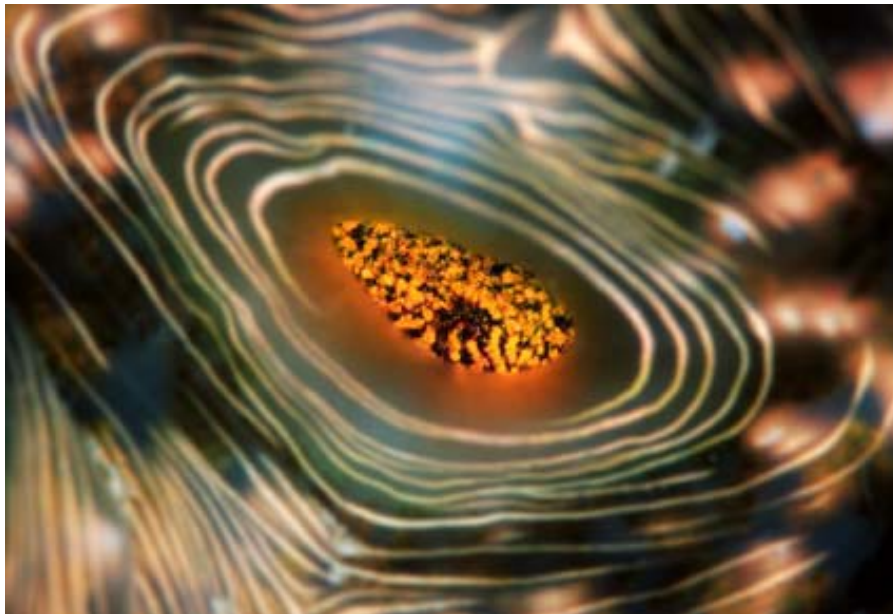
We resist and fight the slightest notion of failure and this fear of failure impacts on our underwater photography. We see and photograph underwater subjects already approved as photogenic in diving magazines and books.

In the past I was guilty of repeating a photographic success again and again. I would go and repeat images and ideas I had achieved on previous photo trips. Not in order to practice my skills or develop my potential but simply to avoid the chance of a failed attempt at a brand new idea. I found myself repeating the same technique on the same subject using the same composition and the same lighting angle. The only difference was the location, which could have been thousands of miles away from the

A couple of days before I shot this picture I had visited the cinema to see the movie 'Perfect Storm' starring George Clooney. The animated wave action from the movie really inspired me. I began to look towards the under surface of the sea for interesting patterns, shape, and movement as waves broke against the harbour wall in Bonaire. I liked the colours and texture of this particular shot. I scanned it into Photoshop V and stretched it into a panoramic format using Edit – Transform – Scale. I prefer it to be viewed upside down, which is the way it is printed on this page. Nikon 16mm fisheye and natural light. F11 or 16 @ 125th or 250th second. Elite Chrome 100



Everyone is trying slow shutter speeds and rear curtain sync these days, which is good! When I took this it wasn't so new. I was inspired by a book called 'Rhythms from the Wild' by natural history photographer Art Wolf. I recommend this book to all underwater photographers. Nikon 20mm lens, half second @ F8. Sea & Sea 120ys flash on TTL. Elite Chrome 100



What is the first rule of composition? Answer! To place the centre of interest off centre on the thirds intersection. I make a habit of breaking a rule of composition at least once a day! It's another method of 'seeing' an image in a different way. I shot this clam with the swirls in several positions within the frame. In my opinion the middle of the frame worked well. Nikon F90x Subal housing with a 105mm macro lens and ring flash. (Only way to light inside a clam). Mabul, Malaysia



Beneath Bonaire's Town Pier at night you can easily find these corals as long as 3 –4 inches. They stand out supreme and I know of no other place in the world where they are so intact and easily photographed. This was a last minute idea using the top off a black bleach bottle as a snoot to give me a beam of flashlight no wider than a 50 pence piece. I lit the background with a second flash on manual power at a distance from the corals to underexpose it. Nikon F90x Subal housing with a 105mm macro lens.

previous. I gave myself a 'pat-on-the-back' and silent encouragement for achieving an almost identical picture for the second time around.

I could not purge myself of this attitude, particularly with my wide-angle work no matter how hard I tried. I would get into the water with camera in hand determined to break all the rules but my mind would go blank which triggered a peculiar kind of anxiety deep inside me. I was losing my confidence and doubting my ability. I became very creative at making excuses to my self to take the same old stuff and stick to what I knew and forget my desire to obtain some creative images until another day!

I looked at my behaviour and with the help of a colleague, began to understand that I was not developing my full potential as an underwater photographer because of the 'Fear of Failure'. I was working in an uw photographic rut or comfort zone! I had this misguided belief that I had to produce a competent roll of 36 pictures with some 'keepers' in order to satisfy everyone. I had the notion that I had to produce results that my peers and my students would accept as successful.

Our entire culture disapproves and looks down on failure. Most of all, none of us want to be thought of as a failure. So we repeat our successful shots time over and over. Rather than experiment with ideas and exposure we tend to opt for an easy way that will be acceptable to others.

Does the fear of failure enter into your underwater photography?

Do you find yourself repeating the same successful shot on other photo-trips?

If the answer is yes, there is a solution!

Free Your Mind and dare to photograph underwater in a way that others may consider to be bizarre.

Take pride in your failures; show your failures to others. They will not reject your efforts but will admire



Those who have visited Capt Don's Habitat on Bonaire may recognise the tree, which is situated alongside dive manager, Jack Chalk's office. I shot this picture whilst wallowing about in a couple of feet of water beneath the wall. The camera was fully submerged and the circle of vision is 'snell's widow' Jack saw the picture and to his knowledge the tree has never featured in an underwater photograph that he has seen! I found that hard to believe. To me it was an irresistible subject. The shot is printed upside down. Flip it to see how it looked in the viewfinder. 16mm fisheye, natural light. Elite Chrome 100

I have written numerous articles on the subject of working close to the 'under-surface'. It was this picture and idea, which inspired the 'surface' theme for me. It began one calm afternoon in Sipadan when I was messing about experimenting, shooting through the under-surface of the water. I was working just off the beach at a depth of no more than a metre. I spotted two clouds side by side and began to shoot them with my Nikon F90x in a Subal housing and a 16mm Fisheye lens in natural light. The glass calm surface complemented by first, the reef reflection, secondly, the deep blue of the horizon and thirdly, the shingled sea bed, illuminated by the rays of the afternoon light seem to draw the eye of the viewer towards the patterns in the sky. This idea works with a multitude of subjects, which are earth bound.



your passion, creativity and willingness to experiment and shake loose of familiarity. Failure means you are developing, learning, visualising and imagining.

Experimentation without fear of failure indicates that you are thinking and seeking to perform at that mystical stage where co-

ordination between hand and eye meets and compliments heart and soul.

So what if..... a shot does not work or someone thinks your idea's are crazy. What do you suffer? The loss of a frame of film, nothing more!

Remember, its okay to feel

apprehensive when you experiment. However, It is not okay to remain apprehensive, or allow your apprehension to stop you from developing your skills as a photographer!

Martin Edge

Martin.Edge@btinternet.com