CONCERNING THE VERITO

The following articles discuss the advantages and manipulation of the Verito Lens, and appeared originally in Camera Craft and Abel's Weekly.

WOLLENSACK OPTICAL COMPANY, Rochester, N. Y.
THE VERITO

BY SIGISMUND BLUMAN

(A reprint of an article which originally appeared in "Camera Craft" magazine)

WITHOUT any intention of excuse or defense, but to give deserved value to what is in this text, I am prepared to attest before a notary that in this, in previous, and in future articles dealing with specific names, of things and of makers of them, I have received no favor or compensation, and hold no desire for either. Furthermore that in several cases I have bought in the open market things for which I had no other use than for the purpose of trying, experimenting and writing upon. That I am independent of the approbation or suspicion of readers and manufacturers and my compensation exists entirely in the pleasure it gives me to say what I wish.

Lest this appear too independent and insolent, let the reader know that a correspondent trying to be smart at the expense of truth, attempted to get into print an accusation that I was an ad-writer. Now as a matter of fact, I am that, but no part of the photographic industry would find what service I could give them worth my price. And they have had the perspicacity and good taste not to try to subsidize me. So, as this gentle soul meant it, I am not an ad-writer.

For years, as a novice, I read of certain abstracts dealt with vaguely. The photographic press, timid of seeming to favor certain firms, dared not name names. Thus we might read of Diffused Focus without at any time learning how we might also muss up our pictures. Writers were not permitted or had not the courage to write of the Verito, the Smith, the Portland, the Struss, but spoke in broad terms of uncorrected or partially corrected lenses.

After twenty years' eleemosynary contributing to annuals and monthlies, where to my surprise and gratification I was permitted to "shoot my mouth off" as unmodified truth and the spirit moved me, it was conveyed to me in many heart-warming letters that quite a number of readers recognized the truth and approved of frankness and sincerity. And I became more daring. Wrote of an Eastman product one time, shall write of a Wollensak product now, and probably of an Ansco product soon. So for the benefit of the skeptic, it is affirmed here and now that my Verito was paid for by myself and this article is for the benefit of the reader, and not the manufacturer.

The underlying principles of diffusing lenses are the same, broadly speaking. The differential factor being mainly one of degree, speed, and price. The excellence of the various makes is known. I speak of the Verito because having a Verito I have studied it, working with it assiduously, and know something about it. It has proven its virtues and a good thing found deserves extolling, though this article shall not deal in praises.

No one has ever written about me except to roast me, and that roast I had to write myself under a Nom de Guerre, as one might say. So having preserved myself, a sort of black beetle in self-made amber, we will proceed to the real matter in hand.

The Wollensak catalogue gives a rosy picture of possibilities when it says, "Working at full aperture, it renders a delightful atmospheric quality of softness, beautifully blending the highlights, half tones, and shadows, and suppressing unessential, wiry detail. Definition is not destroyed, but pleasingly subdued and softened."

Of this I was skeptical, having seen prints made at full aperture that looked smudged all over the paper. After careful test it must be conceded these artists had not only thrown the diaphragm wide open, but had purposely racked out of focus. While at f/4 my negatives were rather broad, there was definition enough to suggest solidity and however soft the general effect, the wonderful atmospheric quality of the high-lights made sometimes prosaic subjects to be quite pictorial. Devoting this portion of the article to negative making, let us accept as essential the Wollensak directions to expose on the full side as to time and develop with from one-quarter to one-half the amount of alkali in dilute Pyro (according to my judgment) or any non-contrast solution. (Some photographers prefer to use their regular development formula.—W. O. Co.)

The rear lens alone gives portraits that are remarkable for roundness and perspective. It did not, in my hands, work so well on landscapes, but odd to say the front combination used singly, although not advised by the manufacturer, produced peculiarly effective pictures in the field. Furthermore reversing the elements, that is screwing the front cell in back and the back in front, an entirely different lens came into existence that served to render newer effects. All in
A soft-focus illustration from the Thomas H. Ince Studio, Culver City, California. They employ this type of picture not only for certain effects in their motion picture productions, but also to advertise these productions to the general public.

all this Verito is the most plastic instrument I own. It shows new possibilities with every whim I put upon it and gives all the pleasure of the limitless and unexpected.

But its great, pre-eminently first place is as an enlarging objective. As obedient as a brush and color in the painter’s hand. The things I have done with this lens would startle the Wollensak scientists. I have stopped down sharp for part of an exposure and gradually opened to f/4 and have gotten a novel diffusion. I have focussed at f/4 and exposed, gradually reducing the aperture and have gotten an entirely different effect. They told me that it was impossible to get graduated diffusion, and graded planes if they were not in the negative, and I disproved the statement by dodging and varying the aperture for local exposures. My anastigmat refused to descend from its aristocratic place to lend itself to such tricks but the Verito, good fellow, shares every mood and lends itself to every wish. Think, fellow enthusiasts, what it means to dodge in an all too insistent dress and diffuse its lines to your heart’s desire, then through a hole in the cardboard dodge in the face and make it just sharp enough. I have done these stunts with foreground, background, middle distance, trees, clouds, and water. If no Salon prize winners bear my name, it is not the fault of the Verito. It supplies everything but the creative—and that too, it helps to bring. I shall make a picture yet.

The English water-colorists long had a way of rendering a softness to their work that made them famous. They “scumbled” by holding the finished picture after it had dried under a gently flowing tap. Somewhat as old timers used to correct over-contrast by exposing the unfixed print to faint daylight—a procedure known at the time as “sunning.” The largest stop of the Verito serves this purpose; the exposure being made with f/8 or smaller aperture for definition, a last fraction of the total time is given with the scrambling stop. It is as if one learned, first, to enunciate clearly and distinctly and then sought emotional effects by inflection and varying qualities of sound in delivering an oration. The variety of ways in which this use of the rim of the glass may be made to create effects is almost unlimited.

There is the possibility of individuality. To keep one’s fingers on the aperture flange and turn on and off the light, to shoot a little more diffusion into the picture, or even to expose sharply, then dodge all save one part of the picture and put soft lighting just there, is very like creating from raw material, a living, idealistic part of one’s mood. It is handwork, art, if you will permit the dreadful
word. It is conscious expression in terms of beauty, not at all the mere photographic duplication that comes through the camera lens.

For portraiture no better objective is conceivable. It minimizes retouching and enables the photographer to make a negative that will give contact prints that are pictorial. The stops from f/16 to the smallest constitute the Verito virtually an anastigmat.

Whether this be prejudice or according to the rights of the thing, I insist on a lens at least one size larger than the plate with which I work. Long focus lenses were always my hobby.

Carefully studied, the results are mathematical, like a painter’s colors—so much of this yellow with so much of that blue produces just this green. The worker at the enlarging apparatus works with a particular negative, he gives just so long an exposure with, let us say, stop 16 and for a flash or a second with f4 and notes the results. From this he works, varying the ingredients till the finished picture is produced. The artist in photography no less than in painting knows what he wants to say and works till he finds the best way to say it. And Verito offers the possibility.

Let the new owner of one of these instruments of expression be forewarned. It takes a week of real study to get an idea of the uses and ways of using so unique a contrivance. And once understanding the speed of progress depends on the individual, his aptitude and what degree of Divine Gift of artistic perception has been allotted him.

To all of which virtue can be added this—that the Verito is a joy for all seasons. When Nature is propitious one may “hold communion with her visible charms” and capture those charms as no way else through such a glass as this.

THE SOFT-FOCUS LENS IN MODERN PORTRAITURE

Concerning the value, scope, manipulation and permanency of the diffused focus objective in the progressive studio

By M. C. WILLIAMSON, The Wollensak Optical Company, Rochester, N. Y.

(This article appeared originally in "Abel’s Weekly". In its original form the Verito Diffused Focus f4 Lens was not specifically mentioned for obvious reasons. However, in reprinting this we have mentioned the Verito definitely by name wherever we have had this lens in mind).

A GREAT many years ago, when soft focus effects were first coming into the photographic lime-light, there were many skeptics who claimed it was a mere hobby and would soon be doomed to eternal oblivion. Cubist art, hobble skirts and many other passing fancies have all come and gone. The unbelievers who foretold the doom of soft focus photography have, in many instances, passed to the great beyond. Still soft-focus work continues to grow and wax more popular with the profession and with the public at large.

The explanation of this tidal wave of popularity for soft-focus photography undoubtedly lies in the ever-increasing appreciation of the general public for work of this character. Of course, it has been a tedious and gradual process to wean them away from wiry photographs. However, it was inevitable that the average individual should grow to appreciate Verito workmanship, for he has seen it artfully thrust before him in every phase of photographic endeavor. Professional photographers of acknowledged leadership have adopted it almost unanimously. The advertising pages of our magazines are illustrated and beautified by soft-focus illustrations. The Verito Lens has even invaded the movies, and the make-up of the players, which formerly was portrayed with distracting, unpleasant sharpness, particularly in “Close-ups,” now is pleasingly subdued and blended so that the projected image is really a thing of beauty.

Let us consider the nature of a soft-focus lens, such as the popular Verito, and of the image that it renders. There are some, particularly those not familiar with photography, who have the impression that a picture that is out of focus and one made with a soft-focus lens are virtually the same. However, this is not the case, for a negative made with a diffused focus lens has no absolutely sharp plane of focus working at full aperture, while a negative with a sharp lens, out of focus, must have a theoretically sharp plane either in front or in back of the plane being photographed.

However, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Verito Lens, built particularly for soft-focus work, lies in the beautiful atmospheric quality of results it produces, a quality not obtainable by any of the dodges or devices often-times employed in securing soft-focus results. The Verito will give a sharp result by stopping down but there is no wily sharp plane at full opening, although there is a plane of least diffusion. While a certain quality of definition is retained, the quality of airiness, breadth and softness that is introduced add immeasurably to the beauty of the finished print.

There are certain practical advantages that the Verito Lens offers to the professional photographer that are worthy of special consideration. First of all, it practically eliminates the necessity of retouching. It so blends the harsh and wiry
lines that not only is the textural quality improved but, in the portraits of elderly people, there is also a more youthful aspect and yet absolute fidelity in the portrayal.

The soft-focus lens offers the photographer an opportunity to express his own individuality in his work, interpreting the subject in his own way and securing any tone or quality he desires. While the sharp focus lens will only make a sharp picture, the diffused focus objective gives an infinite variety of effects from extreme diffusion to absolute sharpness by increasing or diminishing the size of the diaphragm opening.

Of course, the manipulation of a soft-focus lens is radically different from one rendering a sharp image and it is necessary for any one not familiar with this type of lens to experiment for awhile and get acquainted with it before he can expect to secure the best results. In trying out the Verito or any other soft-focus lens, it is well to bear in mind that although you might be a master in the use of an anastigmat, the diffused focus objective is quite a different problem and must be mastered entirely by itself. Accordingly, one should not be discouraged if the results do not at first measure up to expectations. If any difficulty is experienced, it is always well to communicate with the manufacturers of the lens that they might assist you in the solution of your particular problem.

In regard to the use of a soft-focus lens, the following quotation from a letter, which the writer received some time ago from J. E. Mock, may be of interest:

"The old fashioned idea that sharpness is quality dies hard. All good workmen in our profession want diffusion. Why? Because the overwhelming detail the sharper type of lens gives is unnatural and inartistic. The diffusion rendered by a soft-focus lens is sharp enough even with full opening, leaving a charming effect and making over-retouching unnecessary to obtain gradation in the skin texture.

"True enough, a soft-focus lens is not adapted to groups although some soft-focus lenses will produce a more artistic result in group work than the sharp rectilinear and by turning down the diaphragm to about f8, it will be sharp enough and cover well, provided the lens used for, we will say, an 8x10 plate is an 11x14 size.

"I find it advisable to use an 11x14 lens for 5x7 and 8x10. The perspective is better, and the results are more satisfactory. The suggestion of halo or double lines so much admired by good workmen and so much condemned by a minor few are not so pronounced as when a smaller size lens is used.

"No lens can be made to please everybody. Right focusing has a lot to do with results. Too strong lighting and over-timing of plates will naturally cause more or less halo and double lines, because the minor outside image, if we might call it such, shows too strongly and kills the line proper, in which case, the result is not pleasing. Overdeveloping of the plate is another cause. It blocks up the skin texture and gives a flat appearance. All this is generally attributed to the lens, but really it is the man behind the gun who is at fault."

In order to make diffused focus portraiture a profitable and successful phase of your studio business, it is by all means advisable to handle the finished prints in a distinctive and different manner. A soft-focus print should be mounted on a high grade mount in order to better convey the idea of quality, beauty and artistry that distinguishes this class of workmanship from the sharp, wiry kind. Mounting a diffused portrait in a cheap and shoddy mount, would probably prove as practical as mounting a diamond in a brass ring, and would find about as ready a sale. Some photographers, in order to differentiate their soft-focus portraits from the sharp kind, term them by special names such as "Veritographs," "Artprints," etc.

A whole lot might be said about the proper
method of presenting soft-focus portraits to your trade, for undoubtedly there is a certain merchandising angle to be taken into consideration as with any other product with which the buyer is unfamiliar. The most natural object that a photographer could have in securing a soft-focus lens, is to turn out better work and to secure better prices for that work. Accordingly, it is well for him to impress his trade at once with the fact that soft-focus pictures are in a class by themselves; that they are something distinctively different from a standpoint of art and beauty; that they are not to be compared with pictures that portray every detail with unpleasant wistiness.

It is very important that the photographer charge more for the diffused focus portraits than for sharp pictures. This is only fair in view of the better mount being employed and the greater skill necessary in working the soft-focus lens. However, the most important reason for asking a higher price is the psychological reaction of the customer. If diffused focus portraits are offered on the same basis of price as sharp ones, the customer will very often select the wiry picture. On the other hand, if the soft-focus picture is properly presented to him, if he is made to see and appreciate the rare beauty of this style of picture, he will in most cases select the style of picture made with the soft-focus lens.

In introducing diffused portraits in a community that is not familiar with them, it is often well to secure pictures of leaders in the community in order to help popularize that class of work. In most cases, however, it is not difficult to make an instant success of soft-focus portraits, in view of the extensive use of this style of picture in the "movies" and advertising illustrations of the day.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the experience of a certain photographer who questioned the advantages of a soft-focus lens in his small town. However, he was willing to be shown and so he ordered a Verito Lens to be sent him on trial. When the lens arrived he invited about a dozen acquaintances to come to his studio, explaining to them that he had something new that he wanted to try out. After making their portraits, he explained that he would show them proofs and if they wanted prints, he would be glad to make them up at a certain price and if they did not want them, there would be absolutely no obligation. A short time afterwards, he wrote the Wollensak Optical Company and said that the orders received from those experimental negatives were worth than paid for the lens. Surely this is evidence of the possibilities of this type of work if properly presented to one's customers.

There are some who imagine that soft-focus portraits are distinctly a class proposition; that it is easy to sell them to a certain high-priced trade in the metropolis but difficult to market them in a small town. This impression is without justification and there are undoubtedly as many Verito Lenses in use in small communities as there are in use in the big cities. The experience related in the preceding paragraph of one photographer in a small community is evidence of what can be accomplished.

Penn Yan is a small town several miles from Rochester. A photographer by the name of Burnell has a studio there. While he has a small town trade, he is giving them a beautiful soft-focus quality of portraiture that has met with exceptional popularity. Not only do they come from his own town to be photographed but from neighboring towns as well for this character of workmanship is the kind that brings reputation. Wherever motion pictures are exhibited, wherever magazines are read, wherever folks are interested in the more beautiful and finer things of life, there is an active market for soft-focus portraits.

The Verito Diffused Focus f/4 Lens is an inevitable part of the equipment of the modern studio. Discriminating patrons frequently request soft-focus portraits, a thing unheard of five years ago. Aside from this a diffused focus objective is an investment—an investment that will pay for itself many times over in the saving it effects in retouching and in the better prices that it brings for portraits.

THE VERITO FOR GRAFLEX USE

The Verito is available in sizes to fit almost every Graflex and reflecting type of camera. Hundreds of Verito-equipped Graflexes are in use and their owners find that this versatile soft-focus lens greatly multiplies the enjoyment they derive from their photographic work.

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<td>3A Autographic</td>
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<td>&quot;R. B. Junior&quot;</td>
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<td>Auto 3½x4½</td>
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<td>Compact 3½x4½</td>
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<td>Telesopic 3½x4½</td>
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* When ordering Veritos for these types, please specify cameras as special threads are required.

† Although the No. 1 Verito is classed as a 3⅓ x 4⅝ size, it will adequately cover a 4 x 5 plate.

Whether the subject be a landscape, still life, portrait, even commercial work, the Verito adds a pictorial quality that results in a picture, rather than merely a photograph.

The following table shows the sizes of Verito that can be fitted to the various Graflex cameras:

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