

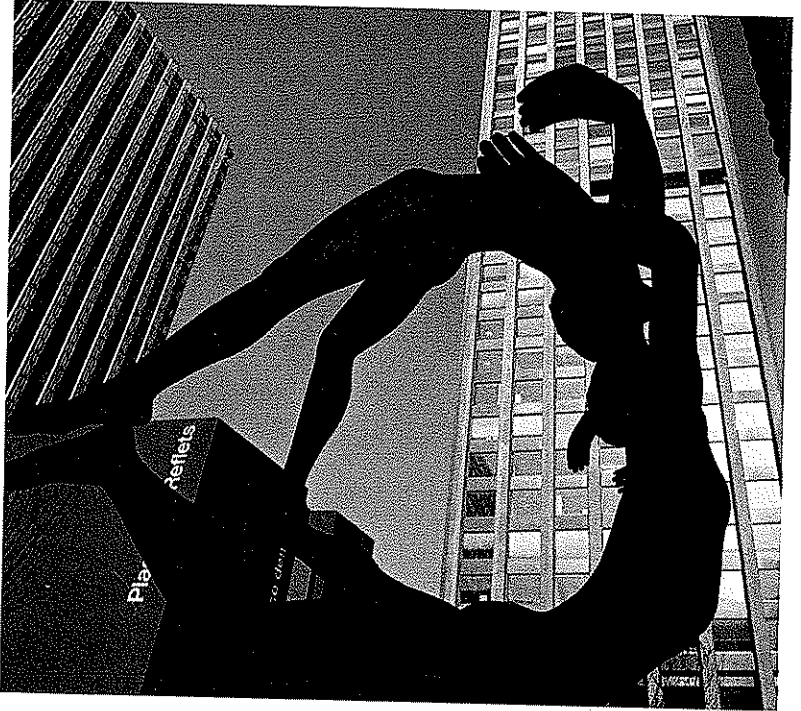
# Silhouettes

When a subject is strongly backlit, the usual rule in photography is to set the exposure for the subject and let the background become overexposed and washed out. But in some situations you might want to reverse this dictum. The effect is especially interesting when simple, distinctive subjects stand out as totally dark silhouettes against a brightly colored natural background, looking almost as if they had been cut out and superimposed. The eye of the viewer is immediately drawn to the subject by the unexpected juxtaposition.

Since the background is important in a silhouette picture, the backlighting that produces the silhouette should not come from a direct source of light unless it is diffused by a translucent screen, as in the photograph at far right below. Instead, look for situations in which light reflects off the background. Water, the sky, and light-colored buildings and cliffs are good sources of reflected light. If the subject takes up only a small part of the scene and is much darker in tone than the background, a normal exposure will usually yield a strong silhouette on film. If the background is closer in tone to the subject, a slight underexposure (see page 36) will help intensify the silhouette.

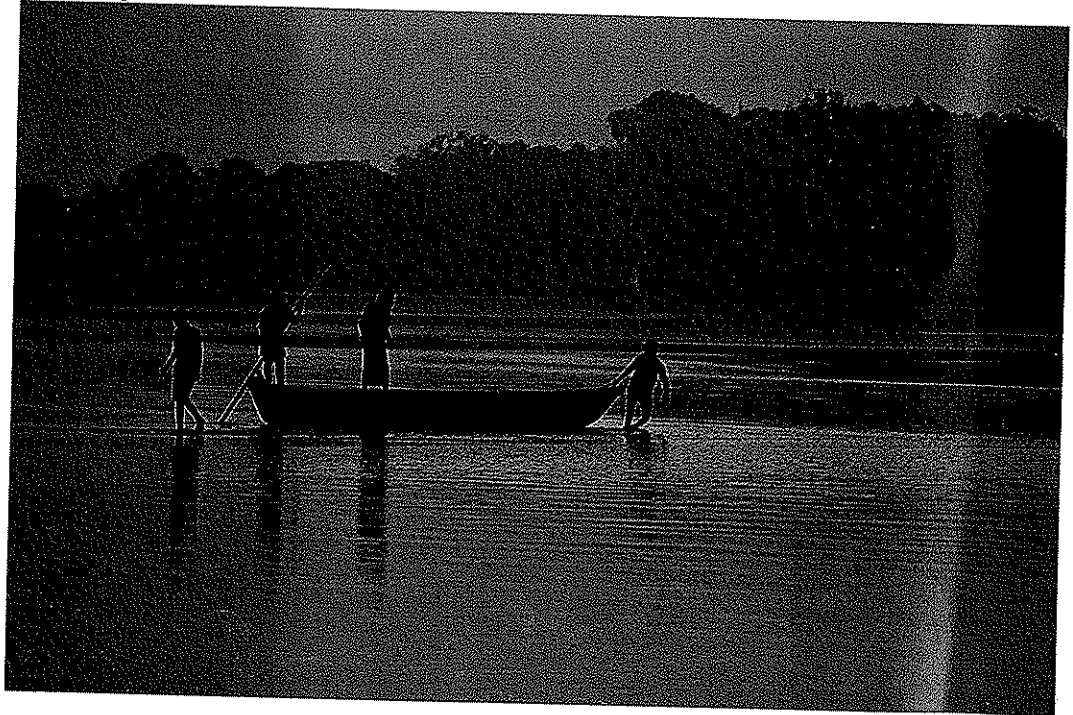
*Twilight is always a good time for silhouettes. But for figures to stand out, they must be isolated against a lighter area, such as the shiny surface of the water in this picture of boatmen on a river in India.*

Kodak Pathé

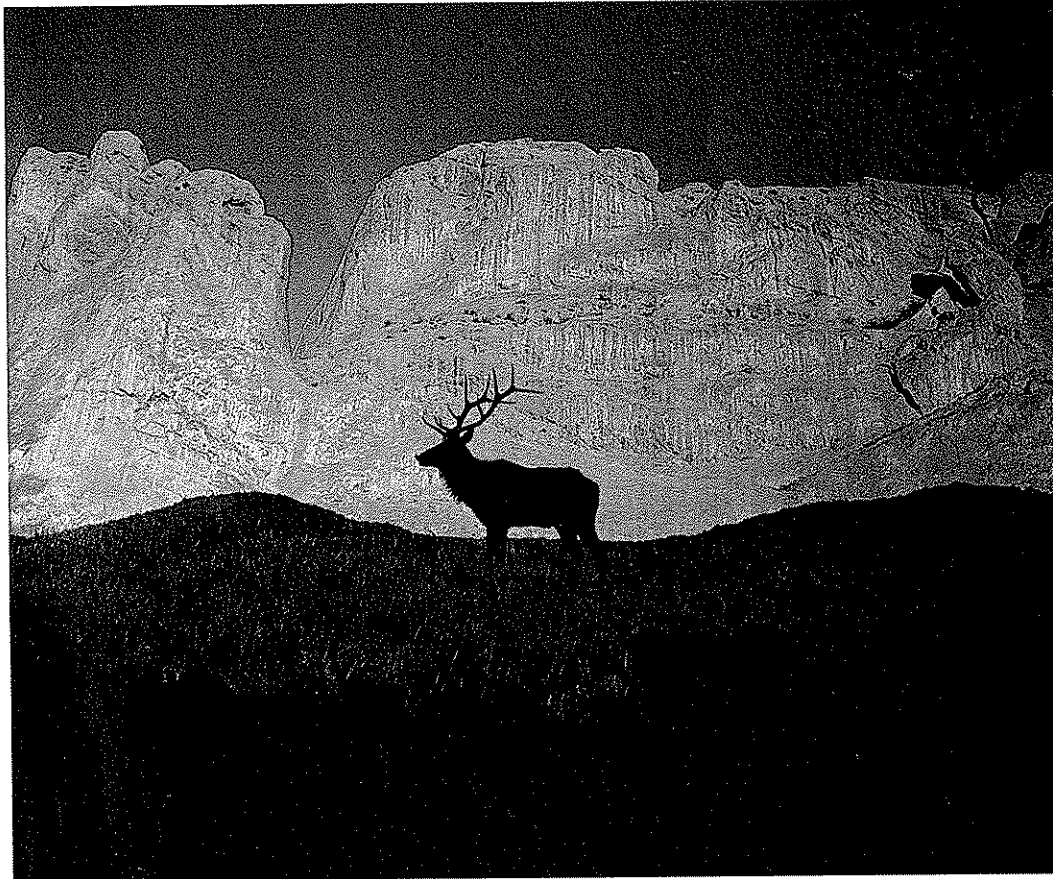


*The striking contrast between the curving, fluid forms of a statue and the sharp rectilinear design of a skyscraper was heightened by silhouetting the statue.*

Ric Ergenbright



David William Hamilton



*In this photograph by David Hamilton, the silhouette of an elk stands proudly amidst a landscape of intensely rich hues.*

*A hot air balloon provides a gigantic translucent backdrop that silhouettes the figures of its crew. In silhouette, the shapes of people can be revealing, especially if they are caught, as here, in profile.*

Martin Folb

