

PHOTOGRAPHING FUNGI — 6

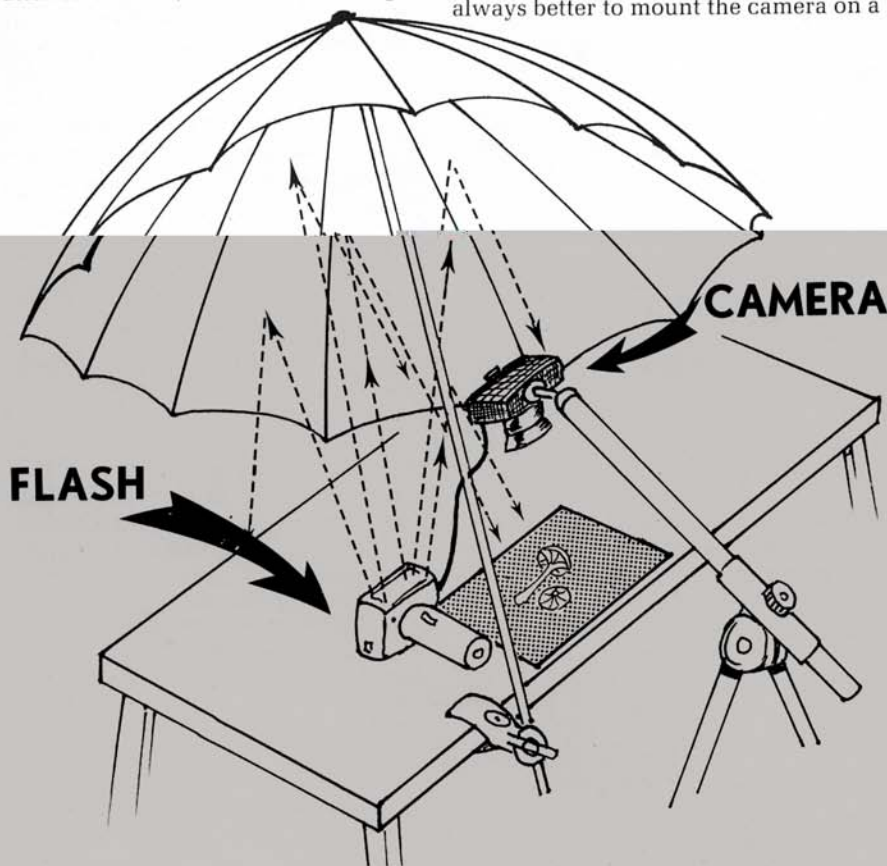
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STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

Of the problems which beset the field photographer the variability of natural light, both in quantity and quality, is among the most important. In the 'studio' the lighting conditions can be reproduced time and again without variation so once you have the set-up then photography becomes a matter of routine.

Whilst ordinary household electricity bulbs can be used — or even fluorescent lighting — it must be remembered that these differ widely from any kind of daylight. Electronic flash on the other hand is absolutely constant even if the batteries are low; if the indicator light

comes on the first flash is the same as the last. On the other hand direct flash is the most unkind light of all and we have already eschewed it in the field. The answer is to 'bounce' the flash and so obtain an even illumination. Fortunately there is available, quite cheaply, a special opaque white umbrella called simply a 'flash umbrella' which can be used as shown in the illustration. The flash is either attached to the shaft of the umbrella or, more simply, laid on its back on the table. Alternatively a large white card can be held above the subject in the position occupied by the umbrella in the diagram. In my opinion it is always better to mount the camera on a





The left-hand picture shows the high contrast of direct flash and the right-hand the softer illumination of 'bounce' flash.

tripod as this gives you time to adjust and arrange the specimens to best advantage; it also leaves you with a free hand to hold the umbrella (or white card), though if you prefer it is possible to buy a gadget which clips to the side of the table and clamps to the umbrella handle (and costs more than the umbrella). The flash should be so arranged that it does not shine directly into the camera lens but should be displaced to one side. If necessary either raise the flash on a box or place a piece of card so as to prevent this.

If your camera has a 'dedicated flash' there is nothing more to do except to press the trigger. There is no fear of shaking the camera during the exposure but most people prefer to use a cable release so as to avoid nudging the camera out of position. If you do not have dedicated flash a little experiment is necessary; very small apertures are not as necessary as the background is flat, but I would not suggest anything larger than f11, and I would prefer f16. Quite a lot of light is lost in the bounce and

very small flash units are not suitable. With a larger flash make several trial exposures at f32, f22, f16 and f11. If you have only a small flash do not forget that as both the subject and the camera are immobile you can use two or three flashes in succession if one is not enough. One of these trials is almost bound to be correct and can be used on all subsequent occasions unless a marked change of magnification is to be used; if the image size is to be changed from photographing a large *Boletus* specimen to a small *Discomycete* it will be necessary to open up the iris by one or two stops (this assumes that the flash position remains unchanged).

Finally, whilst it is tempting to use backgrounds of complementary colours, it is much more logical to use the same background all the time and I strongly suggest the use of a 'Kodak Grey Card'. This not only provides a background, which can be purchased anywhere, but it helps the camera's meter to give the correct exposure when in the automatic mode.