

## HEAD IN THE CLOUDS, FEET ON THE GROUND

My inspiration for photography comes from my passion for dynamic weather and the beautiful natural world around us. I am energized by the crisp edges of impressively tall and bright white cumulus clouds, the chaotic branching of a lightning bolt, and the delicate arch of a flower petal. Although a tornado can be very destructive, its motion and form can also be awe-inspiring.

Like many others, I started shooting photos during college, but this self-taught hobby really took on a life of its own upon moving to Colorado to attend graduate school. While earning a Masters Degree in Atmospheric Science, I spent many summer hours driving around the Great Plains chasing after impressive supercell clouds and lightning bolts. I would use my knowledge of weather to forecast the events of the upcoming day or two and seek to capture wild skies on film. At times, it was incredibly rewarding and massive storms would form within reach, but, since we all know how unpredictable weather can be, there were also days of completely blue skies as storms failed to materialize.



Capturing weather in its native state is uniquely challenging. Weather doesn't conform. It doesn't follow a road network. It doesn't file an itinerary. It announces its presence in brilliant displays of light and dark while spinning lightning and wind at anyone observing it. Capturing bees or wildflowers is comparatively simpler though they also live by their own creed. The photographer must make an effort to blend with the scene and avoid imposing themselves on the photograph.

In the end, mother nature rarely fails to impress and humble me with her simultaneous temperament and beauty, especially because her variety is as endless as the infinite number of different snowflakes she sprinkles onto this Earth.

*GREGORY THOMPSON*

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