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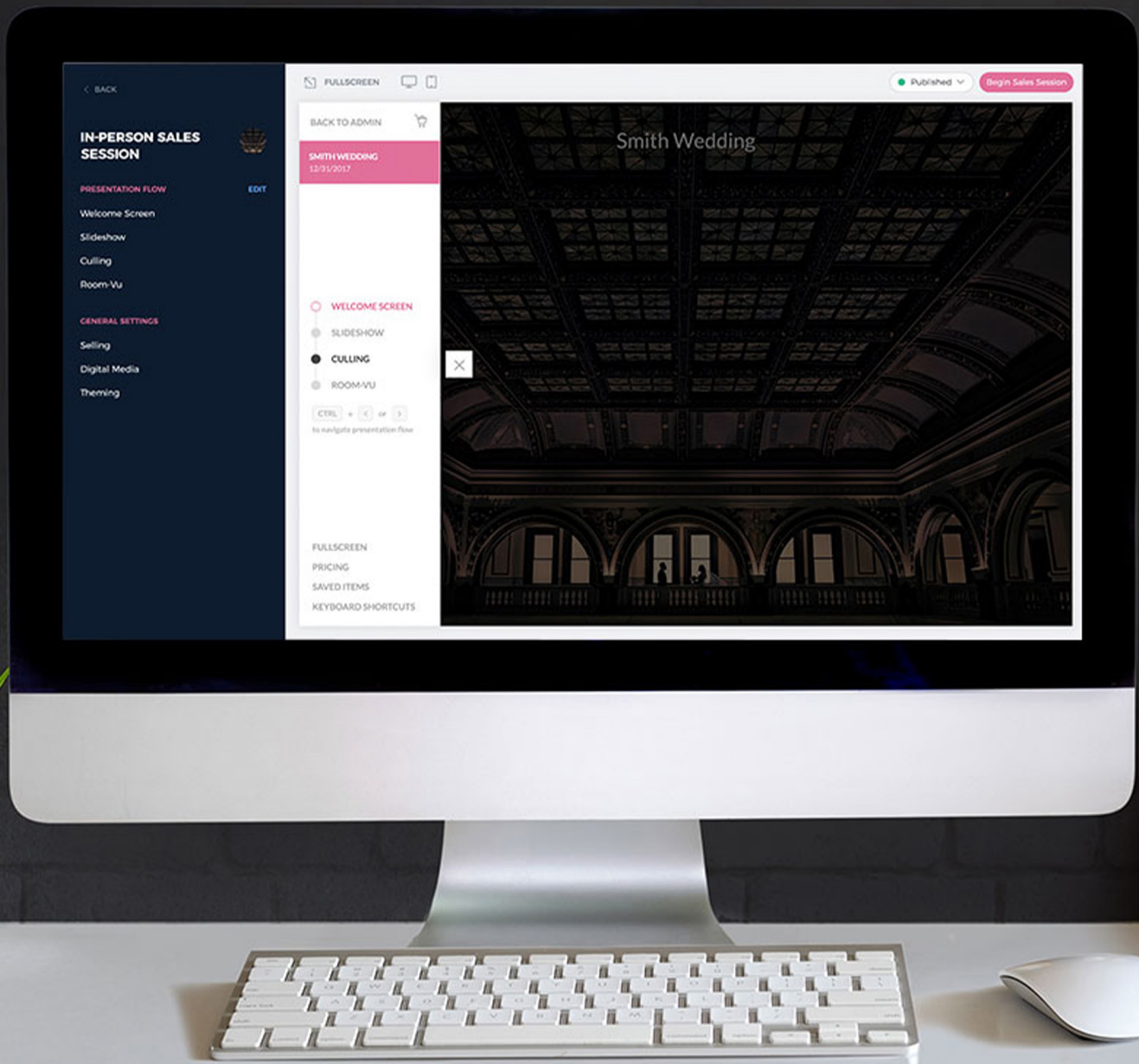
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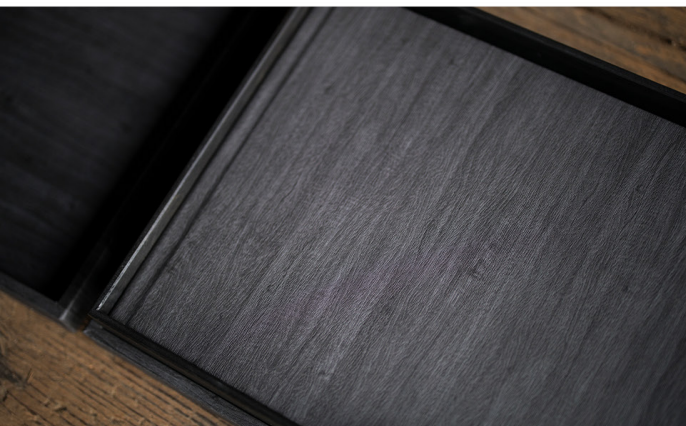
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49 COVER

MATERIAL OPTIONS



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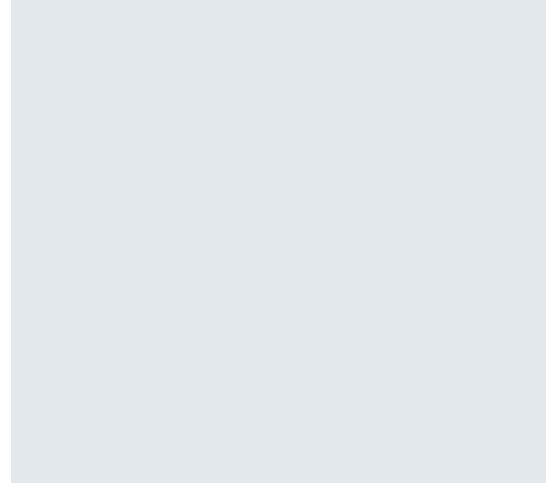
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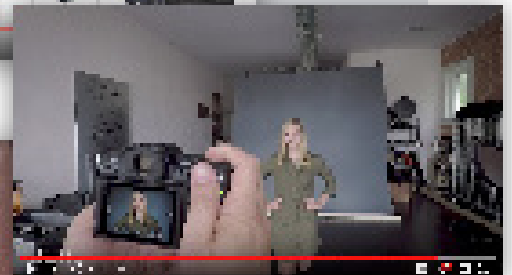
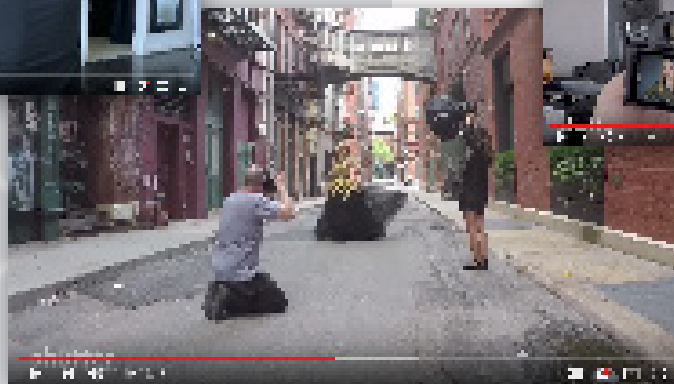
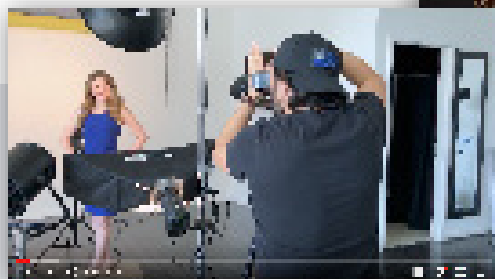
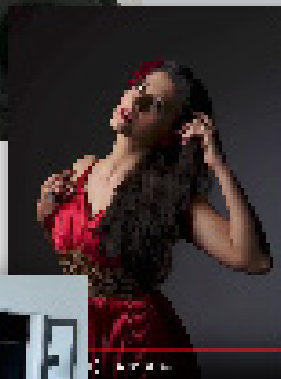
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MISSION STATEMENT

Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience. Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community, and have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

PUBLISHER
Sal Cincotta

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Alissa Cincotta

SENIOR DESIGNER
Ellie Plotkin

COPY EDITOR
Allison Brubaker

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Ashley Boring, Andre Brown, Abbie Gowen, Amber Henry, Angela Marklew
Adam Schwartz, Clay Souza, Dustin Lucas, Ian Spanier, Jen Hargrove, Vanessa Joy



THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Roland Saun | RolandSaun Photography

IMAGE TITLE: Essence of Color

CAMERA: Nikon D810

LENS: 24-70mm 2.8

EXPOSURE: f 8.0, SS 1/200, ISO 100

LIGHTING: 1 Godox AD600 with a grid, 1 Godox AD200 with blue gel, 1 Godox AD200 with yellow gel and grid, 1 Godox AD200 with red gel and grid

ABOUT THE IMAGE: I walked by Faren on my way to my first class and thought what an amazing presence she has. I hate to admit I left my class early because I want to miss the opportunity to speak with her. I knew what lighting concept I wanted to do and am very pleased that it came out exactly the way I envisioned it.

MODEL: Faren Campbell

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After 10 years, Shutter Magazine must continue to evolve and grow with the needs and demands of our growing audiences from around the world.

We started Shutter Magazine with the **goal of providing in-depth no bull content for photographers of all skill levels.** One of the most important facets to the magazine was it needed to be completely visual without the typical constraints of printed publications.

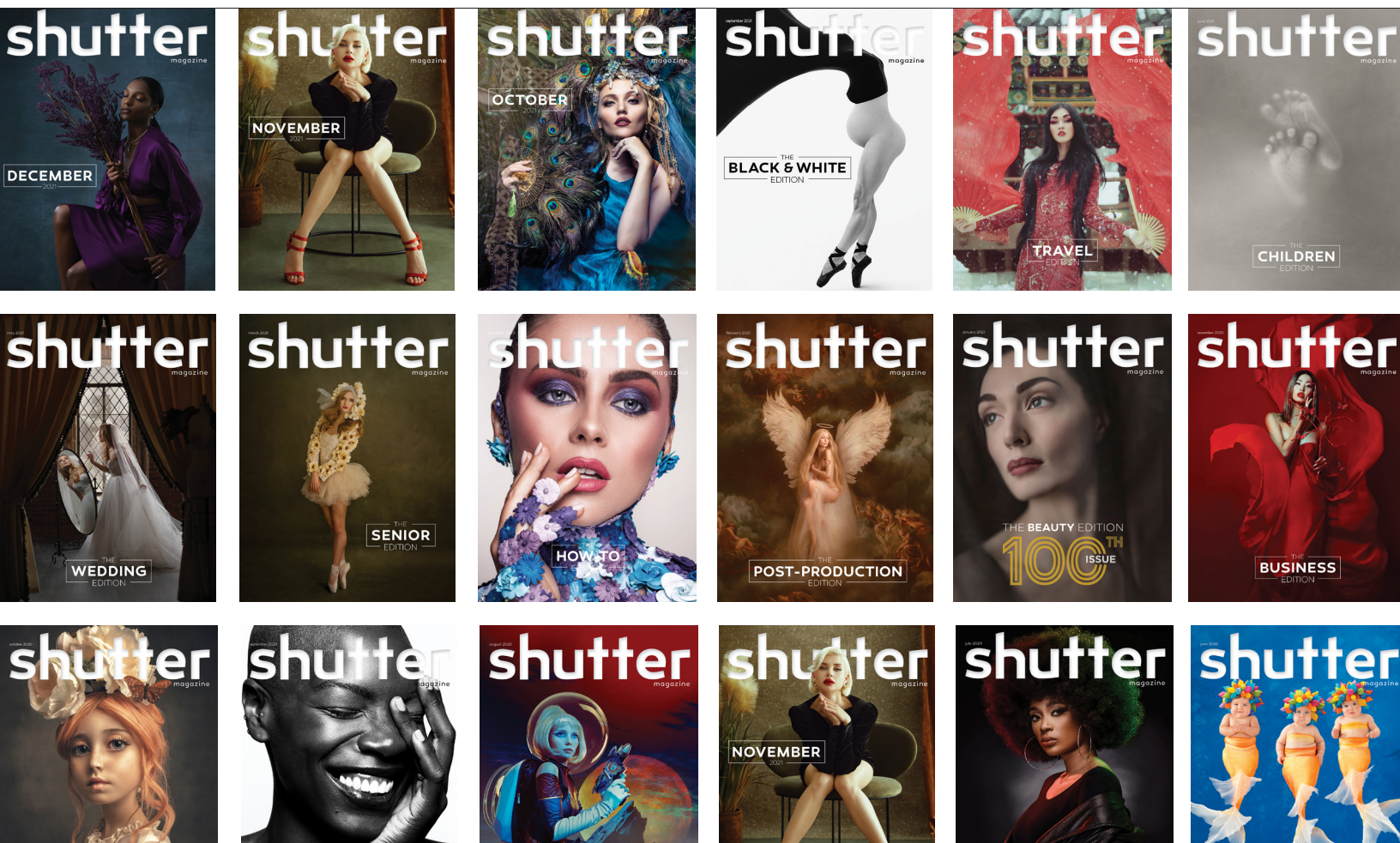
We accomplished more than we could have ever hoped for!

As we look to the future, its becoming clear, that we need to pivot once again to meet the needs of the future. This future includes content provided in a much more interactive and engaging way than before.

Effective August 2022, Shutter Magazine will change its publication and educational content format to better align with these changes. We will no longer produce a formally designed magazine, instead, we will be producing blog and interactive video content to help further photography education and remain a leader of educational content.

We are excited about the future and hope we continue to be a large part of your photography journey.

Publisher,
Sal Cincotta





The Modifier to Take Your Photography Lighting to the Next Level



with **Ashley Boring**

Like many photographers, I'm always trying to find new ways to take my images to the next level. I strive to learn new techniques that allow me to stay relevant in an ever-changing industry. Most recently, there's a light modifier that I've started using that's transformed what I can do with lighting: Westcott's Optical Spot by Lindsay Adler. Very rarely do you find a modifier that completely changes how you approach lighting for an image. It's one modifier that I find myself reaching for again and again.

You may be asking, "What exactly is an optical spot?" An optical spot, also referred to as an optical snoot, is a very unique modifier that is essentially a snoot with a lens attached to the end of it. It's capable of producing a very hard light source that you can refine by focusing or defocusing the beam of light, allowing you to create very defined and controlled light. You can get even more control when you pair an optical spot with gobos that allow you to get very detailed patterns and shapes of light. Gobos, short for go-between optics, go by a few different names, like cookies or cucoloris. They are simply metal disks with a shape or pattern cut out of them. Inserting a gobo in the optical spot allows you to project its pattern of light onto your subject or scene. You can also focus or defocus the pattern for even more creative control.

My favorite thing about the optical spot is the versatility and control it provides. When I first got my hands on this unique modifier, my initial thoughts were that it would be great for creative beauty shots. I quickly found myself using it for much more than that. Here are three shoots where I used the spot for very different reasons.



Image © Ashley Boring

LOOK 1: CREATING LIGHTING PATTERNS ON YOUR SUBJECT OR BACKGROUND FOR CREATIVE PORTRAITS

Creating unique portraits was the main reason why I was excited to get an optical spot. Its ability to create defined shapes of light is what appealed to me the most. It quickly became my go-to tool for creating shapes and patterns on my subject's face and background. Optical spots are also great when you want to emphasize a particular feature of your subject, since you are able to precisely position the light to highlight a subject's features or a product's detail.

For this shot, I wanted to highlight the makeup on my subject, so I thought using the optical spot would be a great way to call attention to that. I ended up using a two-light setup. For my main light, I used a Westcott FJ400 Strobe modified with the optical spot. I positioned the light onto my subject's face and focused the light to create the hard shape. I used a second FJ400 modified by a 53-inch deep umbrella for some fill light and decided to gel it blue so that all of the shadows would become a dark blue tone. Adding in a colored fill light is one of my favorite techniques to help add color and dimension to an image. In this shot, I added it to help complement the blue tones of the makeup on my model.



Behind the scenes





Image © Ashley Boring



LOOK 2: CREATE NATURAL-LOOKING WINDOW LIGHT IN STUDIO

An unexpected use of the optical spot is to simulate window light in the studio. I will often add a simple window gobo to my setup to add a bit more dimension to the background in my photos. It's a great accent light when going for soft, window-lit portraits.

For this shot, I used three FJ400s. My main light was modified by a 24-inch Rapid Box Beauty Dish Switch with white interior. I placed this to the left of my subject, in the same direction that I was mimicking a window, to add some direction to my lighting. I then used a 53-inch deep umbrella overhead as a fill light to help lift some of the shadows on my subject and scene. Finally, I used an optical spot on my third light to add a window pattern to the background.

I did something a bit unique and stacked two different gobos on top of each other. I stacked a window gobo on top of a tree gobo to help break up the lines of the window and make it look like there was dappled light outside of the window. Mimicking a window is one of the techniques that I find myself going to again and again because of how clean and simple the final images can be.



Image © Ashley Boring

The Modifier to Take Your Photography Lighting to the Next Level | Ashley Boring



Behind the scenes



Image © Ashley Boring



LOOK 3: DEFOCUSING HARD LIGHT FOR PRECISE CONTROL

The last look is to use the optical spot defocused. This method is often overlooked but can be very handy. It's great to use in situations where you only want to light certain areas of your background or subject, without getting the spotlight look. This gives you a hard light source and you can control exactly where the light is hitting. For example, I was doing a shoot where I only wanted to light the top portion of my subject and let the rest fall to shadow. I initially thought of using hard reflectors and grids, but found I was still not getting the light tight enough and was still lighting up most of my subject. I switched to using an optical spot, which gave me ultimate control over the light.

For this setup, I used three lights. My main light was an FJ400 with an optical spot to light the top of my subject. I added a fill light modified by a 53-inch deep umbrella with a blue gel. This filled in all the shadows and the background with blue light, giving my image an overall blue tone. Finally, I added a Westcott FJ80 Speedlight with a grid to add a gradient of light to the background. Throughout the shoot I played around with different gels for the backlight to get different looks. This lighting technique is not only great when doing portraits and creative shoots, but also for product photography. Since you have ultimate light control, you are able to add little pockets of light to help highlight the product.



Image © Ashley Boring



Behind the scenes





Image © Ashley Boring

TIPS FOR USING AN OPTICAL SPOT

When first starting out using an optical spot, you might find using it can be a bit tricky. With a bit of trial and error, you'll quickly learn how powerful this light modifier can be. If you are new to using an optical spot, here are some tips that can help you get started.

When setting up your optical spot, it is important to use your modeling lamp. This will not only help you get the light in the position that you want, but also allow you to focus or defocus your light to get your desired look. When using the light on a background, I usually turn the modeling lamp off once I get it into place since the background is not moving. When using it on my subject, I make sure to keep it on. This makes it easier to see when the light is hitting in the right place. When directing your model, it will also help you see when they move in and out of the light. Additionally, when working with the light to highlight an area on my subject's face, I will often have an assistant move the light as my subject moves. That way I can quickly get more poses and variety in my images.

Another tip is to try different lenses. With the Westcott Optical Spot, you are able to change out your lens for different sized lighting patterns. The optical spot comes with a 150mm lens, which is great for lighting your subject's face and small areas. If you want to light larger areas, like a background, you are going to want to use a wider lens. When lighting a background, my go-to lens is a 50mm. This will provide a wider beam angle so I am able to place my light closer to my background and not lose as much light output. With Westcott's Optical Spot, I can use Canon lenses since it has an EF mount type. This was an important feature for me. Since it does not have a proprietary mount type, I can try different lenses to get the look and size I want.



Image © Ashley Boring



Image © Ashley Boring



Image © Ashley Boring

Having a light modifier that gives me the ultimate control over my lighting has completely changed my photography. An optical spot can do things that simply can't be achieved with other modifiers. It truly allows me to create endless lighting possibilities. By far the best thing about this modifier is that it keeps me excited to keep trying new things, which pushes me to be more and more creative with my lighting. ■

Ashley's love for photography started at a young age, and her devotion for photography grew stronger when she pursued her bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University for Visual Communications Technology. She interned at F.J. Westcott, where after completing her degree in 2014, she was hired as their in-house photographer. There she creates all their product photography as well as marketing and educational content to help other photographers build their skills and better understand their lighting equipment.

website: fjwestcott.com **instagram:** [fjwestcott.com](https://www.instagram.com/heyhelloashley/) [instagram.com/heyhelloashley/](https://www.instagram.com/heyhelloashley/)



How To Create Competition-Winning Images For Photographers



with **Andre Brown**

At the start of our photography careers, making money and doing what we love is usually the primary focus. No one is thinking, “I want to become a photographer so that I can win awards.” At least not me anyway. In fact, I remember my first time sitting in on judging for an image competition back in 2017...

The room is dark and filled with people. It’s standing room only. The room is illuminated only by a light box which is surrounded by the judges as this is where they view the prints, and a projector is used to display the images to the onlooking audience. The next image is announced by the proctor as the image handlers place the print in the lightbox. The proctor changes the image on the projector for the audience to see and... BOOM! Myself and a few around me are blown away. This was one of the most amazing images I’d ever seen. I probably exclaimed, “Jeez, that’s insane!” because that sounds like something I’d say in that instance. One by one, the judges move in closer to the print to get a better look at the image. One or two even go back for a second glance. After a few moments of deliberation, all of the judges enter their scores and the proctor reads the overall score of the image... “Image score: 76.”

76! A seventy frickin' six! If you know me, you know I didn't say frickin'. For this particular competition, a 76 is on the low end of what is considered to be "standard practice." This image, which was one of the best I'd seen at the time, was considered to be average at best by the panel of judges. You could only imagine how I felt about my own work in that moment. Needless to say, by the time I'd left that competition, I'd come to terms with the fact that I would never be the kind of photographer that would create work that would win awards. And the truth is, in that moment, I was totally OK with that. I was OK with not winning awards because that was never a goal of mine. I was only concerned with making a nice living for myself.

What I didn't realize at the time was that the score of 76 along with the scores of the other images I'd seen in the competition subconsciously provided a shift in my perspective. We've all experienced something in our lives that at first glance seemed amazing but upon further inspection we realized it wasn't what it seemed. Kind of like the idea of shooting weddings for \$1,000. When we dig deeper we can see the flaws in the concept and see what we can improve. Then those \$1,000 weddings become \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000, then you're well on your way to being a bona fide Cincotta.

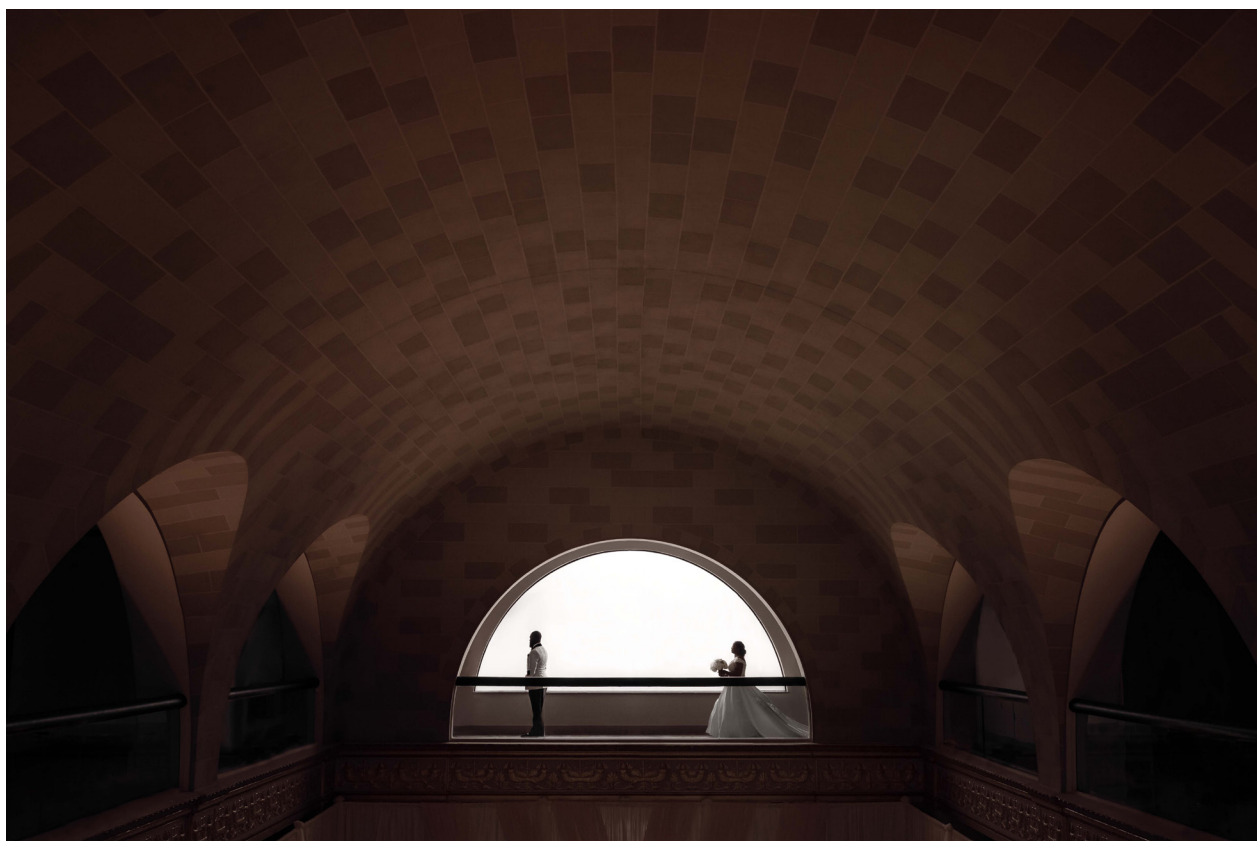


Image © Andre Brown Photography

Much is the same as with that 76. How can an image I held in such high regard be so... “average”? Well, the judges tell you why. Judges take turns giving critiques and insight as to why they scored an image the way that they did. For instance, someone may say, “There could have been more detail in the shadows” or “The highlights are too bright. Next time, burn them down so it doesn’t detract from the subject,” “The composition could be improved by using natural leading lines to direct focus to your subjects,” and so on. Now, this image that in my mind was at least a 90 at first thought, is in fact average at best.

Have you ever seen an image on social media that gets a ton of likes but when it gets to competition it doesn’t score well? That is because most of what looks good to the average consumer falls into that 75-79 range of standard practice. Competition images require much more refinement. Making the best possible decision with every aspect of an image.

So how do you make images that are competition-worthy? In this article, I’m going to give you my two cents as to what it takes. We’ll dive into the anatomy of an image so you can know what to look out for as you start to create your award-winning images or look at your current images and see if any of them are, in fact, award-winning.





Image © Andre Brown Photography

ANATOMY OF AN IMAGE

In its simplest form, an image is composed of four elements: lighting, composition, the subject and impact. It may sound cliché, but individually these things will certainly make a good image, but together they make something special.

Lighting

Lighting seems to be the most mystifying of them all as this is a major pain point for many photographers. I think the most important thing to keep in mind is that you want quality light and to control light as much as possible. Keep in mind that quality light can be hard or soft as long as it produces the desired result. One isn't inherently better than the other. I've awarded with images that have been natural light, LED and off-camera flash. That being said, that negates the idea that judges favor a particular type of lighting over another out of the window.

Grids and feathering are my personal go-tos for light control. V-Flats and flags are great in the studio. When creating, be sure that the light on your subject is the brightest part of the image so the viewer's attention is where it is supposed to be. Tame any light that will compete with where you want to direct your viewer.



Image © Andre Brown Photography



Image © Andre Brown Photography

Composition

The rule of thirds is probably the most commonly known when it comes to composition, yet there are other elements at your disposal to add layers to an image's composition. For instance, imagine an image with the subject placed in the center third. This can be very clean and simple and there is nothing wrong with that. I am sure it is a good image. Now imagine that same image with some sort of leading lines, let's say a row of trees pulling the viewer's focus into the subject that is in the center third. This image just got a little better.

Let's take it a step further and now those leading lines also have a shallow depth of field and now the use of focus is drawing attention into the subject as well. To top it off, now we crop the images into a super-wide pano for even more of a dramatic effect. So instead of using just one of the basic rules of composition, we've used a number of elements and this image has gone from good to great.

Subject

The subject can be a bit tricky. To start, posing people is the bane of most photographers' existence, even more so than lighting. However, if your subject is an animal, you obviously don't need to instruct a dog on how to have ballet toes. But posing is definitely where refinement comes into play. As Tyra would say, pose through the toes. An unrefined pose in a good image is like the series finale of "The Sopranos." It often goes unnoticed that facial expression is part of the pose! A fierce pose and a cheesy smile don't mix. Also be mindful of the connection between multiple subjects in the same shot.

With that being said, environmental portraits have multiple subjects. The landscape or architecture that you are trying to capture as well as the person(s) in the photograph. As a judge, I am looking for both of these elements to work together. A great scene with a weak pose is unacceptable in my opinion. Being considerate of all of these things in relation to your subject will prove to be helpful with scores.



Image © Andre Brown Photography



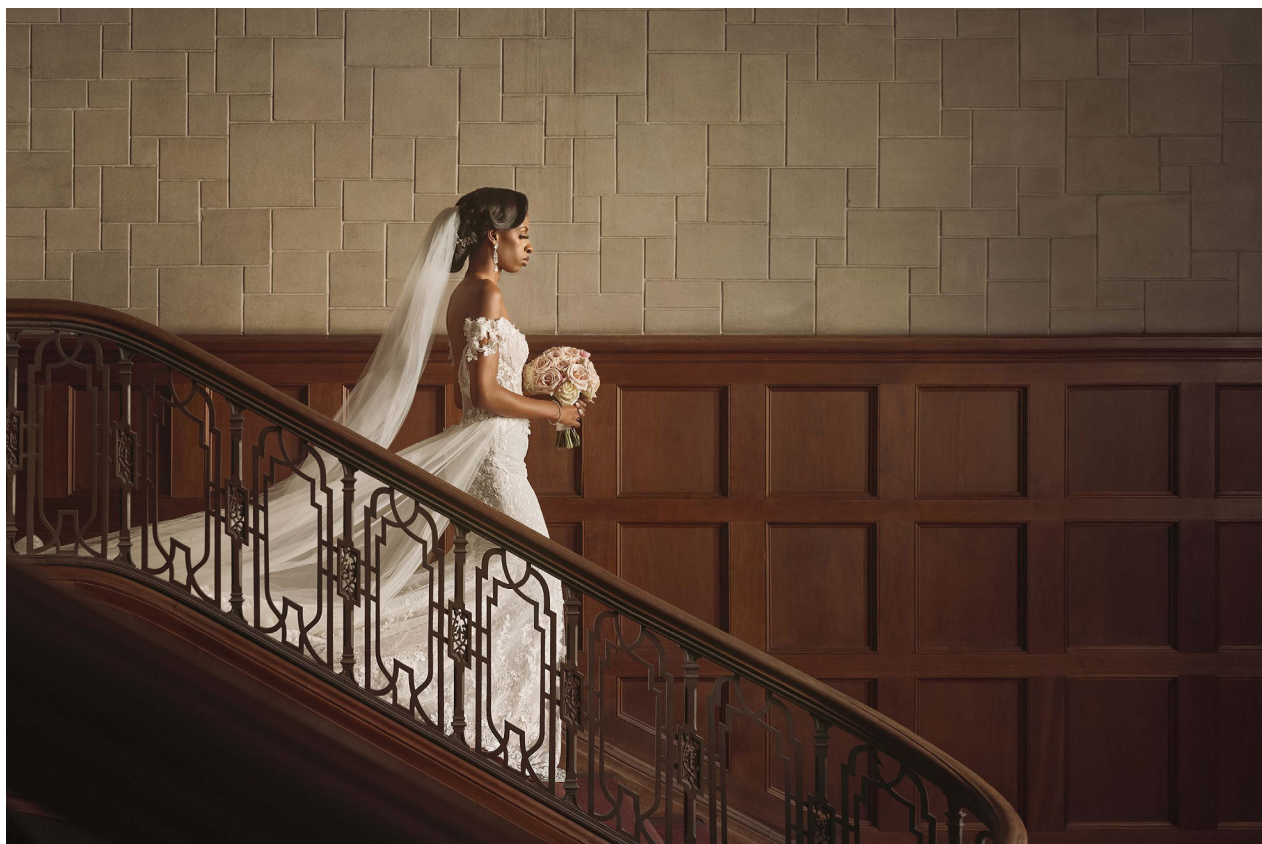
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Impact

Last but definitely not least, we have impact. Impact has the most depth of all of the elements. The moment a viewer sees your image, you want it to be striking. You never get a second chance to make a first impression, right? With this, there are a few things to take into consideration. First is originality. Is this something that no one has ever seen before? Originality will pay dividends as the judges are scoring. If you ain't first, you're last. So be first if you can. That automatically puts you into a higher scoring tier.

Next, emotion. What story is the image emoting to the viewer? Is it heartfelt with joy? Or maybe it induces a sense of sorrow. Either of these can connect with the judges in a different way. I recently saw an image earn a perfect score because it spoke to an experience a judge shared with his mother.

Creativity. Maybe your image isn't one of a kind but you've found a way to reinvent the wheel. I've definitely seen some images that made me wonder, "How'd they do that?" For print competition, this can also mean creativity with the paper choice or how the image is matted.



Images © Andre Brown Photography

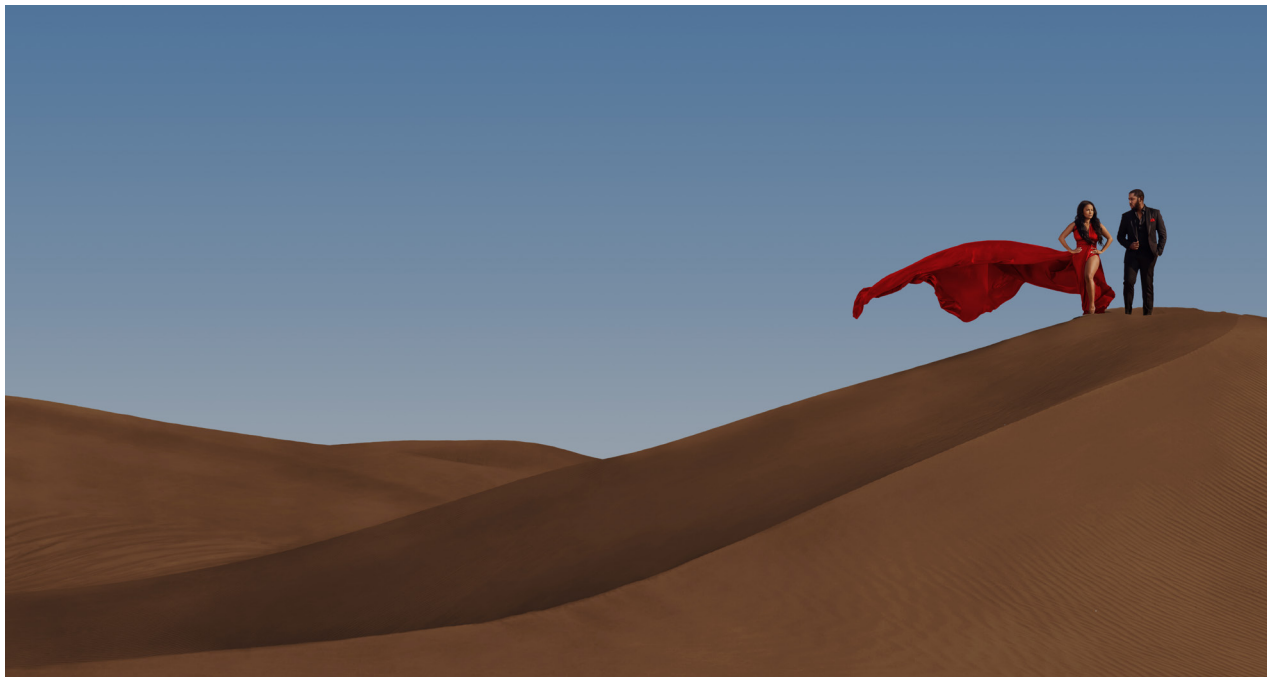


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CONCLUSION

Why do I enter image competition? For the fun of it really. Initially, I thought it would be cool to see how my work would be viewed by an unbiased panel of judges. But it has proven to be really insightful. The best part is that I'd never created anything specifically for image competition until 2022. However, I have used what I've learned via image critiques to refine my skills as a photographer along the way.

Since attending my first image competition in 2017 and entering for the first time in 2019, I've awarded for 14 of the 18 images I've entered. I've also been blessed to have been awarded five Top 3 awards including two first place awards in the 2022 competition. Needless to say, I've come a long way from "I'll never be the type of photographer that wins awards."

If you've never entered image comp, I encourage you to do so. The knowledge you will gain will sharpen your skills and greatly contribute to your growth as a photographer. ■

Andre Brown is an award-winning wedding photographer based in Atlanta, Georgia. His work has been featured in several notable publications and has won awards from prestigious organizations including WPPI. Andre is also a speaker, educator as host of the Embrace Workshop, and brand ambassador for Westcott, MagMod, Light and Motion and Visual Flow Presets.

website: andrebrown.com **Instagram:** [andrebrownphoto/](https://www.instagram.com/andrebrownphoto/)



4 Steps To Becoming a Brand Photographer



with **Abbie Gowen**

Commercial photography has been a long-standing pillar in the industry—encompassing everything from a simple headshot to huge marketing campaigns. With a boom in small businesses opening and the consumer’s desire to see a business take on a personality, the commercial sector has given birth to a new genre: *personal brand photography* (and she’s a beaut!).

Gone are the days of wedding hangovers, body aches from running around for 8+ hours, missing family time on nights and weekends, and the dreaded slow season. Instead, say hello to your new BFF: branding! She works Monday through Friday, doesn’t slow down in the winter, her clients only reach out during business hours, and she has so much room for creativity. Whether you decide to make a complete switch or add brand photography to your list of services, there are a few things you should know before diving in.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRANDING AND PORTRAITS

As a wedding or portrait photographer, you have your own unique editing style. The delivered gallery is a reflection of who you are as an artist. However, our goal with branding is to provide the client a reflection of who THEY are as a business.

This means you shoot and edit to the client's aesthetic, give them permission to alter the photos as needed, deliver without a watermark, and last but not least, you don't require photo credit.

It's nearly the opposite of everything you've learned and if your gut reaction is a little uneasy, I completely understand. We've been conditioned to view our final product as a masterpiece to be protected at all costs and now I'm telling you to hand it over like chopped liver (OK, I'm being a touch dramatic)... but I promise this mindset shift will come back ten-fold into your business.

And with that foundation, it's time to follow the four steps to becoming a brand photographer!



Images © Abbie Gowen

1. CREATE A WOW-WORTHY WORKFLOW

I can't stress this enough... your systems matter before you get portfolio images. Walking a business owner through a frictionless client experience will have them singing your praises! To be clear, you just need the bones of your process written down, so don't overwhelm yourself with a detailed workflow just yet.

Inquiry

Although your first few clients will likely be ones you pitch versus ones who come to you, they can start at the same point in the workflow. Do some research into their current online presence and have image ideas ready. For example, a spa or beauty business could dress up in a robe or use cucumbers over their eyes.

Planning

Schedule a quick planning call to get a better sense of their business and goals. You can send these questions ahead of time or just review during the meeting:

- What do you LOVE about your brand? Is there anything you want to change?
- Where do you plan on using the images?
- Is there anything you want me to highlight about you or your business?
- What props would you like to include? (*Ex: laptop, phone, mug, notebook, pen*)
- Are there any images you must have? (*Ex: they need a new headshot for LinkedIn or a new hero image for their website*)

Eventually, you'll want a more robust questionnaire, but these answers will get you started with how to take the photos! Make a note of the props they want to use then finalize the date, time and location.

A week before the session, send an email reminder with a checklist of the props they chose and on the day of the session, email about your excitement and session details with your cell phone number should they need to contact you quickly.

Session

Bring some extra props, a steamer and scissors. Arrive early to get set up and have your questionnaire results/Pinterest board/any inspiration printed. Take time to connect with them and give ample posing help. Before you part ways, let them know what day they can expect the gallery. Bonus: bring a small gift to show your appreciation!

shoot with

NEGATIVE SPACE

SO THE CLIENT CAN ADD TEXT LIKE THIS



Image © Abbie Gowen

Delivery

A quick gallery turnaround time will help you stand out as a photographer and allow your client to get fresh content on their social media calendar. Provide them with some ideas on how to use the photos as an added value to the experience!



Image © Abbie Gowen

2. FIND CLIENTS AND START BUILDING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Put a finger down if you started your business after you got a camera and you offered free sessions for a while then charged embarrassingly cheap prices for way too long so you could do as many shoots as possible for practice, and then once you mastered your technical skills you realized you needed to drastically raise your prices, and now you've been profitable for so long that the thought of putting on pants for a free shoot just to get a few portfolio images sounds like a massive waste of time. *puts finger down*

I hear you, my friend! If you know basic composition, how to properly expose an image, how to pose your subject, how to use light, etc., go ahead and charge an “introductory rate” to your first handful or less of clients. Or, if free is more your jam (it's how I started!), charge a refundable retainer to assure the clients are taking the session and your time seriously.

Ideally, you'll want to have at least one service-based and one product-based business in your portfolio to start. The more variety in industries, the better! Go with your “low-hanging fruit”:

- Other photographers
- Family and friends
- Businesses you already frequent
- Networking clubs

While you don't need a lot of images to break into branding, you want to assure you get the right images. This might narrow down your list of potential clients, but we're aiming for quality over quantity. When making the pitch, assure the client can commit to a short planning call, bringing the props and outfits you discuss, and a 30- to 60-minute session. Bonus points if they can write a testimonial, provide feedback on the experience, or are willing to send screenshots from their websites both before and after using their new branding images!



Images © Abbie Gowen



3. STRUCTURE YOUR PACKAGES AND PRICING

Use your current prices as a base. What you are charging per hour can translate well while getting started, but remember tacking on a commercial use license is worth more than photographing for personal use, so your prices should be going UP!

The structure of your packages can mirror portraits/weddings, having the options based on hours or number of images delivered. Do market research in your area. Is anyone offering branding or can you ask someone who recently had a session to share their experience? What's working near you may differ, but right now I'm seeing an uptick in 2-hour and 4-hour sessions with images included. Brands are also booking these quarterly to have consistent content throughout the year.

4. MARKET YOUR NEW SERVICES!

Once you have a system of portfolio images to share, it's time to implement branding into your marketing plan. Start by adding massive value to your audience—you don't want to jump straight into asking for the sale! Answer FAQs, show behind the scenes, share testimonials/reviews, show audience insights and case studies, and provide tips/tutorials for using social media or brand images. Establish your expertise and then post about how to book you!

If you're looking to make the switch completely into branding, post one to two times per week about it and slowly ramp that up while you pull back on other services. Mark your calendar for a date to switch over and hype your audience up three to five days before. Have your website finished and ready to publish on the big day! Announce the business change with a fun giveaway (like a basket of local goodies from small businesses) and keep the momentum going with a strategic social media plan to nurture your followers and find new ones who will need your services in the future.



Images © Abbie Gowen



Image © Abbie Gowen



Image © Abbie Gowen

A FEW FINAL THOUGHTS

Brand photography is growing quickly. You may notice there aren't many offering these services in your market, let alone specializing in this niche. Whether you choose to pivot your business or add it as a new service, I know you'll have a blast working with other entrepreneurs and bringing their brands to life! ■

Abbie is an Indianapolis-based personal brand photographer. She began her career in weddings but after 8 years desired more time with her family. That's when she found branding—she was able to be creative, work with incredible business owners, and be home on the weekend! She now enjoys teaching other photographers how to make the leap into this fast-growing niche.

website: abbiegowin.com **instagram:** [instagram.com/abbiegowin.branding/](https://www.instagram.com/abbiegowin.branding/)



10 Steps To Attract and Book Your Perfect Client



with **Amber Henry**

When you daydream of your perfect client, who do you envision? Most people will jump to say “someone who has a lot of money to spend on my photography!” But after 18 years in the business, I can tell you one thing with all certainty: The client with the “most money” is not always ideal. Often those clients come with headaches of their own. You know, the ones who insist on micro-managing not only you, but every email exchange, every product purchased, and barter over every penny spent.

Of course, you don’t want to bring in clients who cannot afford your service either. No. I have found the sweet spot is in the middle: clients who have to save to afford you, but highly value what you offer.

So, where are these perfect people hiding and how do you keep them coming in your door?

1. SEEKING MR. & MRS. RIGHT

Think of your ideal client like going on a dating app and writing out your perfect partner’s characteristics. What are you looking for in a working relationship? Are they educated? Do they have a certain job or level of professional experience? What hobbies do they have and where do they spend their disposable income? Kids? Pets?

Perhaps you are a wedding photographer whose jam is couples who love to travel and want a destination wedding. Perhaps you photograph high school seniors and the ones who spend their afternoons playing sports are your ideal target. Write down the characteristics of your perfect client companion.



Image © Amber Henry Photography



Image © Amber Henry Photography

2. DON'T LEAVE THEM ON “READ”

A good relationship is always thinking about the needs of the other person. The fastest way to figure this out is to put yourself in their shoes. What would you want from your own photographer? Most of us would say we want someone who listens to our ideas, knows us by name, gives us a good product and a fast turnaround time. We want someone who makes us look good and is enjoyable to be around. Above all, we want to feel special and feel that our money was well spent. Are you treating your clients the way you want to be treated? (That’s the golden rule after all.)



Image © Amber Henry Photography

3. LOOKING FOR LOVE

Reading the “partner profile” you made, where would your ideal client be found, both online and offline? There is a rule that says people must come across an advertisement seven times before it stays in their mind. Yup, you’re going to have to get out there and do the leg work. If you want to shoot sports, then get to the fields, purchase real estate on the scoreboards and join in the activities where the coaches hang out.

If you want expecting mothers to sign up their newborn for a session, go speak to midwives. Ask to photograph local childbirth classes and give them photos for social media in return for being able to hand out literature to the mothers. Attend every class for a few weeks until the students know you by name and face. (Are you wearing your clients’ shoes yet?)

4. WOULD YOU SWIPE RIGHT?

Branding is something you've probably heard a lot about. Everyone talks about being a brand, but what does that mean and how do you discover yours? Well, that's a huge discussion (and another article) but I can tell you this: The fastest way to figure out what your brand should be is to do something as simple as take a scroll through your Pinterest boards. What pops up over and over? What colors do you seem to gravitate to? What style is consistent and unwavering? I'm not talking about trends, but what vibes really make you happy and bring you joy? Those are the things that you should strive to include in your brand. When you are authentic, you will naturally attract the right people to you. Compatibility after all is essential in a good relationship.



Image © Amber Henry Photography

5. WILL THEY SWIPE LEFT?

Does your brand draw in your ideal client? For example, does your brand give a free-spirit, bohemian vibe but you actually desire high-end professional types? Are you using a trendy logo that in a year or two will be outdated and considered “old school”? You won’t reel in the prize fish if you aren’t using the right bait. Even the clothing you choose to wear to meetings or during a photo session will encourage or discourage certain clients.



Image © Amber Henry Photography

6. TURN IT INTO A DOUBLE DATE

We hang out with people who are like us. We typically have friends in the same educational levels and same tax bracket, and so do your clients. When you get the good ones, don’t let them run away! Offer referral programs and incentives for them to get their friends in the door. Reward them for their referrals with discounts on sessions, wall art packages or first dibs on special shoots at holiday time. Everyone loves to be a member of the VIP!

7. ARE YOU THE CATFISH?

This is HUGE. How many of us have heard horror stories of someone paying a photographer only to receive images that looked nothing like their Instagram posts, or how a friend recommended them to a great family photographer only to have them cancel twice in a row and then rush them through the session. Dependability and trust should be your calling card. You **MUST** give a great experience from first booking to final delivery, and to every single client. If you haven't yet developed the system management you need to constantly deliver a quality experience, that should be your first goal. No one does business with a person they cannot trust.

Image © Amber Henry Photography



8. WANT BALLER STATUS?

Yikes, right? No one wants to be considered the “cheap photographer,” and yet your perceived value is intrinsically tied to your price tag. When I am talking about value, I mean not only the financial cost to your clients, but also the experience. What do you bring to the table that others don't? Maybe you are willing to go on location and travel. You could have an indoor studio where you offer custom headshots. Maybe your personal branding sessions nail the heart of your client's business in a way no one else local to you can.

Your worth to your clients goes beyond monetary value, and for most of us who have found success in this business, we will be the first to tell you that our clients rarely mention how much they spent. Instead, they constantly talk about the experience they received and sing our praises on social media.



Image © Amber Henry Photography

9. IT'S NOT THEM, IT'S YOU

Are you standing in your own way? A confused mind says no. This is one of my favorite quotes. Are you making it easy for clients to spend money with you or are you wrapping them up in knots of long-winded emails, confusing packages and too many product choices? Are they having difficulty getting you on the phone? Do you even answer your phone calls?

I can't even count the amount of sessions I have booked over the phone where the client said, "You were the first photographer to actually answer my call." Return messages quickly. Make sure your responses are professional and do not use broken sentences and emojis in your first emails. Have business hours and stick to them. Separate your business from your personal life and hold it in high regard. No one else is coming to run your business for you.

Image © Amber Henry Photography



10. NEW PHONE, WHO DIS?

We all know relationships only work if you work on them, and great clients are no exception. It's called the golden rule after all! Reach out to those clients you had that you really enjoyed and who spent their money with you. Ask if there are new events in their lives that need to be documented. In fact, make sure they know you appreciate them outside of work. Like their social media statuses, tell them the photo of their child is adorable, give condolences for sad events in their life. Remember, as anyone who has been happily married for many years would tell you, you must never stop courting your partner.



Image © Amber Henry Photography

I really hope that you implement each one of these steps into your business life. Don't let them overwhelm you. Make small progress as you go, applying one step at a time. I promise you will see such a positive change in your business, your income, and the way your clients treat you that you will never look back.

Don't get bogged down by the mistakes you've made before. It will steal your energy and zap the joy out of this incredible gift you've been given. Embrace change and work towards building the relationships and the business you want, and of course, work with the clients that make you happy! ■

Amber is a professional speaker, teacher and mentor based in Michigan. Amber is a MagMod Ambassador and an Associate of WPPI, and her work has been displayed on magazine covers, wedding guides and billboards. She is proudly a featured Fearless Photographer and member of World's Best Wedding Photos, as well as a Top 20 Rockstar Photographers of SeniorInspire magazine. Most recently, Amber took home first place in the Wedding Photojournalism category at WPPI's 16x20 Print Competition, 2022.

website: amberhenryphotography.com **instagram:** [instagram.com/amberhenryphotography/](https://www.instagram.com/amberhenryphotography/)

What's In the Bag of a Commercial Photographer?



with **Angela Marklew**



If you've ever been curious about what's in the bag of a beauty photographer, look no further. Below are the contents of my camera case. At this point, my camera gear moves around in a Manfrotto rolling suitcase. Make sure that your camera case complies with airline carry-on guidelines—I always advise against checking your camera gear.

As we go on, I'll break down the purpose of everything and why I always have this stuff.

Pictured left are what I call the “essentials,” or my core gear. Even if I didn't have anything else, I could confidently shoot anything from a test to a commercial job with just these things.

My core gear is made up of:



- Canon 5D MK4 body + 100mm macro lens
- Tether cord
- Pocket wizards
- Battery charger + extra batteries
- Hard drive for backups

elf



ésika



Image © angela marklew



NEXT WE HAVE THE BACKUP GEAR:

- A Canon 5D MK3 body
- Memory cards + card reader
- A second battery charger
- A tether cord for the MK3
- A second tether cord for the MK4

I learned the hard way about the importance of having backups when it comes to your camera gear.

I had driven from Los Angeles to San Diego on a Sunday to shoot with a hair stylist friend of mine at her salon. We were about halfway through the shoot when my shutter broke. When I say broke, I mean send-back-to-the-manufacturer kind of broke. No rental houses were open and I didn't have another camera body with me. One very panicked call to my boyfriend and he was on his way to San Diego to bring me his camera so I could finish the shoot. I'm thankful that this happened on a low pressure shoot—no clients were involved, we were all friends, and hanging out for two hours while we waited for the camera was no real hardship.

But I can assure you that since then I have never left for a shoot without having at least a backup camera body.

Although I do primarily shoot tethered, there are two reasons I always have memory cards (and a card reader): The first is if I need to really move around (thus rendering the tether a hindrance), especially when shooting outdoors. The second is that the memory cards are there in case something goes wrong with either my laptop or the tether cable, making it impossible to shoot directly to my computer.

Admittedly, it's a bit cumbersome to have so many tether cords (I'd much prefer to simply have a backup for the MK4), however, Canon decided to change to tether input going from the MK3 to the MK4. So I still need to carry a cord dedicated to the MK3.



- Canon 100mm F2.8 macro
- Canon 70-200mm F4
- Canon 85mm F1.8
- Canon 50mm F1.4



My absolute favorite for shooting beauty is the 100mm. At this point, I would guess that around 95% of my work I've shot with this lens. I tend to gravitate towards prime lenses for two reasons: they are my sharpest lenses, and they don't get too heavy when I'm shooting for long periods. The 85mm and 50mm are generally used for shooting overhead (flat-lay product shots or arm swatches). The simple reason for using these lenses as opposed to the 100mm is that I don't have to raise the overhead rig as high.

The 70-200mm is my go-to when shooting outdoors. I love the background compression and it allows me more freedom to get different crops without constantly having the model move. Its only real downside is the minimum focusing distance is pretty big so I can't get nearly as close as I can with the 100mm.

Now we're getting into my favorite group of items: things you can shoot through! I have a collection of vintage filters. Among them are:

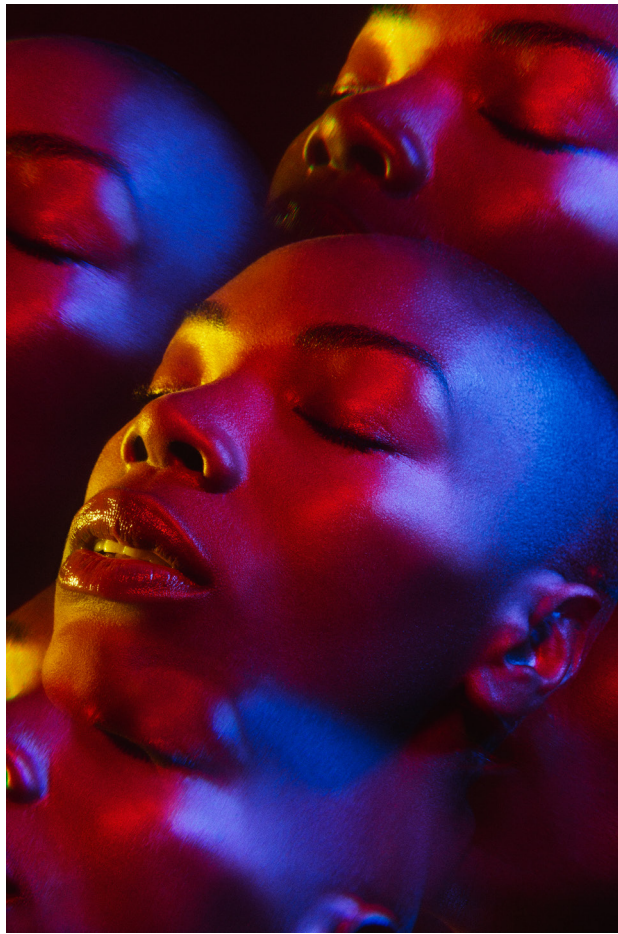
- Star filters
- Prism filters
- Cheap UV filters



Images © angela marklew



Images © angela marklew



If I'm feeling stuck or uninspired during a shoot, I'll typically take out a couple filters and either stack them or use them with lenses they don't fit (which means I simply hold them in front of the lens). I will typically end up ruining the UV filters (which is why I buy cheap ones) by putting Vaseline on them. (If you try this, use it sparingly — a little goes a very long way!)

The other things I carry in my filter pouches are prisms, old chandelier crystals and some vintage convex (magnifying) lenses. I'll use these to either try and refract light into the frame or I'll hold them close to the lens and shoot through them.

Lastly, I also carry a few more “household” items to aid my creativity. Pieces of nylon - which are great for shooting through to give a soft-focus effect. Scraps of iridescent wrapping paper can create foreground interest when crunched up and held really close to the lens, especially if it catches the light. ■

Born and raised in Ontario, Canada, I knew from an early age I wanted to be a scientist. Starting my career in environmental chemistry, I ultimately ended up working with explosives for the Canadian government. I quickly realized I was not built for a 9-to-5 and so I sold my house, packed up my things and moved across the continent to try my hand at photography.

website: angelamarklew.com **instagram:** [instagram.com/angelamarklew/](https://www.instagram.com/angelamarklew/)



The Photographer/Model Relationship: The Cold Hard Truth to Success



with Adam Schwartz

For 16 and a half years I was a TACP, which falls under the Air Force Special Warfare Community. And my favorite saying that I always kept at the forefront of my mind was, “The difference between an amateur and a professional is an amateur practices until they get it right! But a professional practices until they no longer get it wrong.”

When I set out to write this article, my objective was to identify communication gaps, hopefully assist in managing expectations, and potentially offer a little insight from both groups as a way to improve the overall working relationship between the photographer and model to create a more professional industry. So I created two sets of questionnaires, one for models and one for photographers. This was to collect data and ensure that I wasn't allowing my personal experiences to create a bias for this article.

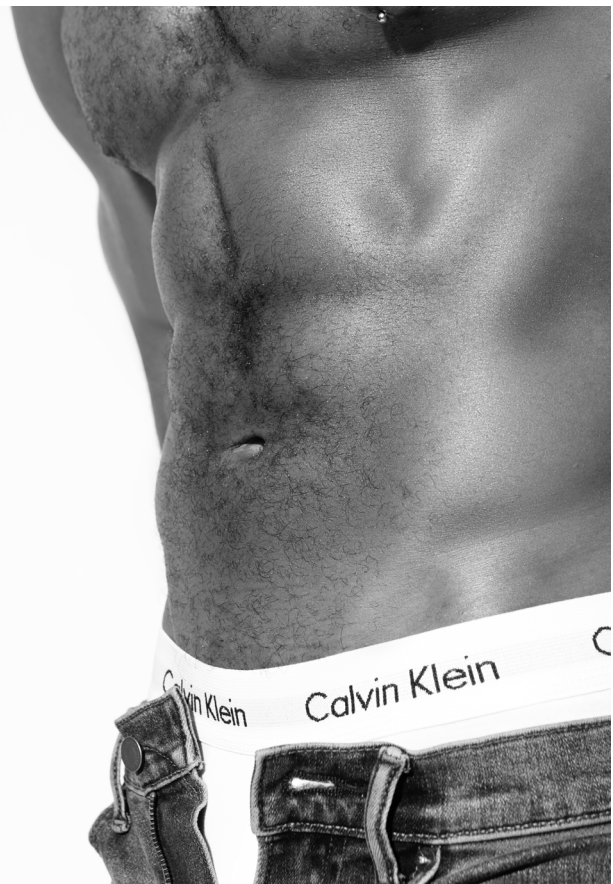
Let me pose two questions to you regarding the relationship between the photographer and the model.

Question 1: Can you be a model or published model without a photographer?

Question 2: Can you be a photographer or a published photographer without a model?

The simple and honest answers to these questions are no and yes, respectively. And here is why...All images of a model require someone to take the time to set the camera up and snap the photo of said model; even if the model is also the person taking the photo (selfie). And because the photographer always legally owns the copyrights to the images (even in shared copyright situations), no digital or print magazine will publish an image without the owner(s) of the copyright(s) agreeing to the terms and submitting the image. However, a Photographer can shoot landscape, photojournalism, sports, product, etc. and get published in a variety of magazines both digital and print. And to clear up a few things before we start. I am currently a photographer! But, I have posed and sat for both photos and artwork that have been shown in galleries and art shows around the nation since the age of five. So I understand both sides of this working dynamic.

The first communication gap is TERMINOLOGY. How can two people communicate effectively when they are using the same words with two different meanings? I think it's imperative that if we want to be professionals we first articulate proper terminology and provide a clear definition for those terms; because words have meanings and we want to make sure everyone is on the same page to remove the communication gap. This is by no means an all-inclusive set of terms and definitions, but I think it sets the framework for us all to improve.



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TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

COMPENSATION: Typically monetary payment, given to an individual in exchange for their services, but can also be the consent of two parties to exchange products or services of perceived equal value for their time.

MUSE: A person of inspiration used to create art; may or may not have formal training or advanced skills in posing. (See Also: sitter/poser, amateur model, professional model).

TRADE FOR PRINT (TFP): This term is used when the muse and photographer both agree that the session will be a benefit to both portfolios and the muse will receive a print as compensation for their time. The photographer will be able to use the image for marketing purposes (model release required).

TRADE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA FILE (TFSMF): This term is used when the muse and photographer both agree that the session will be a benefit to both portfolios and the muse will receive digital file(s) sized for social media as compensation for their time. The photographer will be able to use the image for marketing purposes (model release required).

HOBBYIST PHOTOGRAPHER (HP): Non-professional photographers and can often lack the skills necessary to take professional-level photographs.

SKILLED PHOTOGRAPHER (SP): Non-professional photographers but possess the skills necessary to take professional-level photographs.

HOBBYIST SITTER/POSER (HSP): May be a muse but often work with hobbyists or skilled photographers because they find the idea of getting paid for having their picture taken while posing appealing. Hobbyist sitter/poser often has little concern over the actual quality of the photographs taken during these sessions and typically has no formal model training and requires significant pose direction from the photographer.

SKILLED SITTER/POSER (SSP): May be a muse but often work with hobbyists, skilled and professional photographers because they find the idea of getting paid for having their picture taken while posing appealing. A skilled sitter/poser often has little concern over the actual quality of the photographs taken during these sessions but understands posing and requires little pose direction from the photographer.

AMATEUR MODEL (AM): Belongs to a legitimate model agency. However, unlike the professional model, the Amateur is still new and does not yet have a paid work history through the model agency, nor does the amateur have a name brand developed but does possess formal training in posing. Amateur models are typically required by the agency to hire or visit an approved professional photographer to get headshots and build a quality portfolio. The model will either be required to purchase their first couple of sessions or the agency will deduct their sessions from their salary until the model develops their name brand.

PROFESSIONAL MODEL (PM): Belongs to a legitimate model agency, may have a manager assisting in securing jobs and promoting said model. The model has a paid work history of being selected based on clients' needs, unique look, or overall demand based on name-brand recognition (e.g. Naomi Campbell). The model is paid by the Modeling agency after commercial work is completed and the manager gets a 10%-20% cut of the model's payment.

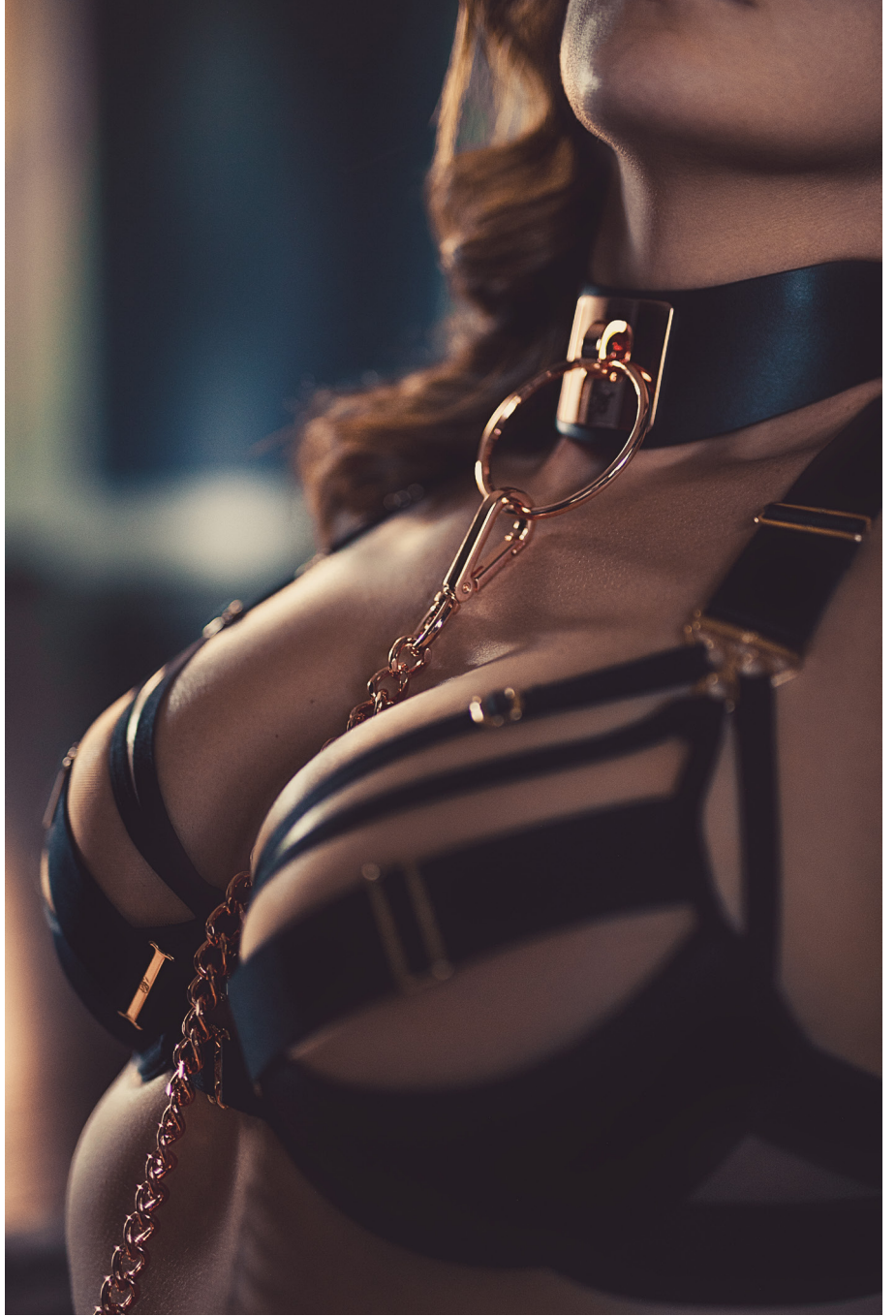
PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS (PP): Skilled and recognized photographers that possess the following four aspects. 1) A website with portfolio(s) displaying the genre(s) of specialization that any client may see, examine and determine the quality of the photographer's work. 2) Business liability insurance and operates using contractual agreements. 3) Possesses one or more of the following accomplishments such as being published in magazines, newspapers, etc; featured in a photographic art show at a gallery; receiving acclaim in a nationwide photo contest; presenting or instructing a photographic workshop or class. 4) Earns 50% or more of his or her annual earned income from photography. (Levie, 2017)

Yes, by the very definition I have provided, I am NOT a professional photographer despite being published several times and winning a national first-place award.

So with our terms defined, let's look at the 12 elements of merit from the Professional Photographers of America (PPA) that make a great image. 1. Impact 2. Technical Excellence 3. Creativity 4. Style 5. Composition 6. Presentation 7. Color Balance 8. Center of Interest 9. Lighting 10. Subject Matter 11. Technique 12. Story Telling. These 12 elements of merit objectively lay out what is being looked at for each photo. Interestingly, the next issue regarding both a communication gap but also an amateur mentality is SUBJECTIVITY.

Subjectivity is the bias that we hold on to, in regards to the undefined and immeasurable. They are our thoughts, feelings, and opinions; regardless of facts, definitions, or merit. Our industry is littered with SUBJECTIVITY. Let's take the simple statement that both photographers and muses love to say; "I know my worth." This is such a subjective statement, and oftentimes said without merit, or objectively critiquing one's self. The objective reality is that you know what you want to be paid. However, your worth from a simply economic standpoint isn't determined by you, but rather by the market and the quality of your product or service.

One muse who filled out my questionnaire stated, "...Many of our models overcharge and underdeliver..." So why do we hear such bold statements from those we can objectively see possess a meager portfolio, lacking several if not all the elements of merit? The answer is simple, the OBJECTIVE reality doesn't stroke their ego like the SUBJECTIVE opinion! It is far easier to call yourself a "model" than it is to invest in yourself and earn that title. Just as it is far easier to call yourself a professional photographer than it is to objectively look at your work and see where you need to improve. The "fake it until you make it" mentality is a ruse. Replace that weak and amateur mentality with, "You learn it, then you earn it." Calling yourself a model and not knowing or even having a pose flow, yet expecting to be paid rates that are equal to or greater than models signed to reputable agencies is unearned. Calling yourself a professional photographer, because you charge a couple of bucks for a "couple" session here and there on weekends but your images show a lack of skill, is unearned. Don't get it twisted. No one is saying you can't become a professional photographer or a model, just that using the term before you have cheapens the meaning, as well as degrades the industry value. And since we are on the subject of VALUE, let's address that next.



We all want to be valued! But it appears that the majority of people don't want to reciprocate by valuing others. Why is that? Many muses (not all) insist on being paid for their time (pay ranging between \$50-\$200 per hour according to the questionnaire responses), as well as expecting digital images from the session, and even some muses feeling it's okay to sell prints (signed or not) to their fans as a way to make extra money; while never paying photographers at all. To put this absurd behavior into perspective; this is like going to a bar and paying the bartender for a "whiskey neat," but before he hands it to you, he drinks half of it. There is no economic transaction that this behavior is ok, yet it runs rampant within our industry. So why does it happen? The simple answer is again AMATEUR MENTALITY.



Image © Silver Foxx Studio



Image © Silver Foxx Studio

And to make matters worse, on the opposite end of that spectrum of value are the hobbyist photographers (again not all) that are so desperate to build their portfolio with young attractive men and/or women, but lack the portfolio or the skills needed to discuss a beneficial TFP/TFSMF and aren't thinking about how to build or run a financially sound, successful business. So they instead try to bypass the journey and experience, by throwing their personal money out there as an incentive to be seen and shot with, regardless of the quality of their images. And let's be honest, if you were a new muse being thrown cash, would you turn it down? I know I wouldn't. But this **AMATEUR MENTALITY** establishes the hobbyist photographer as an individual who pays sitters/posers, (and word will get around quickly that they pay...and their bank account will dwindle even quicker).



Image © Silver Foxx Studio

A business cannot sustain if the money going out is greater than the money coming in. And who would be willing to purchase services or products from them, when the hobbyist photographer not only pays professional rates to shoot mediocrity but also provides the images for free? The photographer-muse relationship is viewed by many photographers as a team of equals. But the cold hard truth is that photographers and muses are not equal in this relationship. And no relationship is ever truly equal. So again let's look back to my original question...Can you be a model or published model without a photographer? If you take a moment and objectively break down the costs and time for both sides, you will see that for a single image, the photographer works longer and spends significantly more money to make that vision become a reality than the muse does. So where is this communication gap of VALUE? Well if I were to Venn diagram that, it lies somewhere between amateur expectations, inconsistent standards between the different levels of photographers, and professional contracts. The simple fix to this is that the Photographers and muses need to have an open dialogue and put all working requirements in a contract. And muses should be reading the entirety of the contract before signing. When we become more professional in our dealings and provide professional expectations, people will generally live up to those standards. Speaking of standards, let's address the STANDARDS for being published.



Image © Silver Foxx Studio

Being published is a tricky topic as we progress deeper into the digital age. As companies are taking aim at going paperless, and more and more individuals are trading in their hard copy reading material for a digital version, our industry as well needs to change or fall by the wayside. So with both print and digital publications, where do we draw the line on if a Muse or Photographer is published? Well, let's start with what should not be considered, any digital or print platform that only showcases images of one Photographer's work, or the same group of select photographers' work, and all their Muses they have shot. This is equivalent to me saying I am published because I established a photography business website. So again in an attempt to define a term for clarity when communicating, I think it's important to remember there are two types of published work; submitted and commissioned. Submitted is what we do to showcase our style, and commissioned is work performed for the hiring company's platform. But to define when a Photographer and Muse have been published, the platform must showcase several different photographers, and the selection process, whether for submission work or commissioned work, should be a smooth submission system with a judiciousness in the quality of images and not the quantity to fill space. This should help to make your work discoverable by other readers, and honor and understand copyrights. This leads me to the last communication gap!



Image © Silver Foxx Studio



Image © Silver Foxx Studio

Who owns the rights to a photo? In the questionnaire, many muses or the muse's guardian assumed they owned the rights to the image, and if they paid for the image they incorrectly thought they owned the rights. Interestingly I never asked a question about ownership of images in my questionnaire. These statements were provided while answering questions related to pay rates, or selling prints to fans. To make this simple and extremely clear for all the readers, "Under U.S. law, copyright in a photograph is the property of the person who presses the shutter on the camera — not the person who owns the camera, and not even the person in the photo." (Wright, 2017) Unless the contract stipulates that the photographer is sharing copyrights with the muse, the muse may not alter, reproduce, or use images for commercial use. These are things that need to be known, especially for muses. Because all too often I see muses eager to just sign contracts without reading. It takes pissing off the wrong photographer to find yourself wrapped up in a lawsuit where the fine for a copyright violation can be as high as \$150,000 plus attorney fees because you wanted to side hustle on Only Fans for \$9.99 a month. Ensure that if you want to use those images, it specifies what the annual licensing fee cost is. Photographers, be a professional and stop writing out contracts and then verbally changing them providing muse's rights to print or sell, you are setting them up for failure!

Images © Silver Foxx Studio



Again the point of this article is to not belittle the work everyone is doing, but rather highlight the areas WE ALL can continue practicing on so we no longer get it wrong, like true professionals! ■

Adam, a retired TACP, is now a Boudoir Photographer and is currently enrolled at Missouri State University with his focus set on a BS in Entrepreneurship and a minor in Photography. When he is not shooting sessions for clients or learning about photography and business, he is at home rocking out with his four little Dick Wolves (AKA Dachshunds) or spending time with his family.

website: silverfoxxstudio.com [instagram.com/silverfoxxstudio/](https://www.instagram.com/silverfoxxstudio/)



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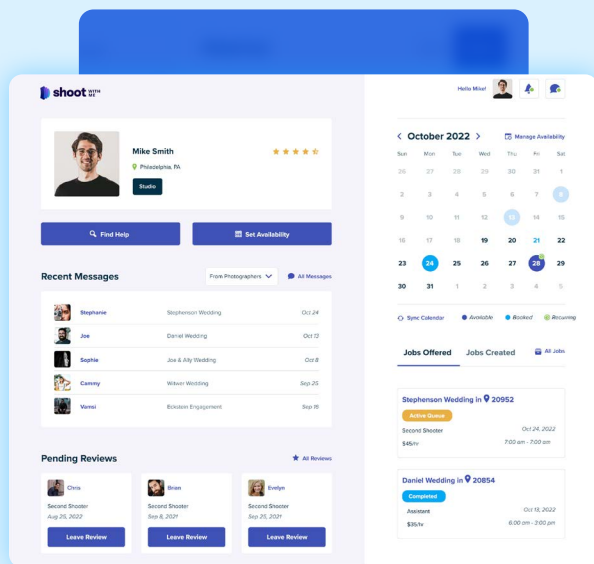


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*Finding a solid second shooter used to be the most stressful area in running a fluent business. Making countless posts in groups, sending endless texts and messages to friends, and just hoping someone was available became exhausting. **ShootWith.Me** has made finding quality second shooters so much easier than I could have ever imagined.*

Matt Gruber

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4 Tips to Creating a Successful Wedding Photography Business



with **Clay Souza**

When we talk about wedding photography, we're always looking for our happily ever after! We read about all the success stories of other photographers and dream of achieving the same. Some of us dream bigger and chase—or want to chase—even bigger successes.

But what we don't really see is all the work that goes into running a successful wedding photography business.

Let me tell you a quick story, a true story like some of us like to say.

At the beginning of my wedding photographer career, I was looking for ways to be a better wedding photographer. I was following the “gods” of wedding photography on every social media platform I could find, and one day I read on Facebook: “Is there anyone available to help me out with a bride and groom portrait in NYC?”

I immediately jumped on it. After all, it was one of the photographers I most admired. This was my chance. The moment I was waiting for. Watching a real pro at work. Even if that meant only assisting, carrying bags or whatever, I had to be a part of it. Well, there was only one problem. I live in North Carolina and it's a good 10-hour drive from origin to destination.

But nothing was stopping me. I privately messaged him and I was in. A mix of excitement and nervousness could be seen when I told my wife the news.

I booked a flight and three days in a hotel. It was a multiple-day shoot, and off I went. This was going to be more fun than a barrel full of monkeys. And I was right, it was!

You are probably thinking, “But Clay, what on earth does it have to do with the business of wedding photography?”

A LOT MORE THAN YOU THINK!

See, if you asked yourself this question, you’re looking at this from one angle. The shooting part or the creativity part. I was there to watch everything!

I was after every single piece of information I could gather that would make me a better wedding photographer. And I saw it. I observed how he conducted himself. I also paid very close attention to how he talked to his clients. How he kept them interested and motivated throughout the entire thing. It was much more than just pretty poses and pictures.

And here’s what I want you to understand: The business of wedding photography is much more than pretty pictures, prices, prints and albums.

All right, let’s skip to the good part! Here is what I’ve learned in the last four years as a wedding photographer.



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1. STOP THINKING LIKE A PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes, I said it! Stop thinking like a photographer. You're a business person who sells memories. Did you notice I used the word "memories" and not "photos"?

Our business didn't take off until I understood that. Plain and simple. You're in the business of selling memories, not photos. Walmart sells photos, you sell memories.



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2. IT ISN'T ABOUT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Sorry to break your heart, but it isn't. Let me put it this way. Your client has a problem, and you have the solution. They need their memories documented and you know how to beautifully document them.

Don't get me wrong, you need a decent body of work to attract people. I'm not saying your photos are not important, but they are not the most important element here. Think about this. What's the point of creating amazing images if you can't sell them?

As business people, we need to understand what we're selling. If you think you're selling photos and are struggling, that might be the reason. You are selling memories. Make sure you communicate that in your consultations.

Image © Photos by Clay



3. SHOOT WITH A PURPOSE

Hold on, sir! Didn't you say it isn't about my photography? Yes, I did, and it is not. Let me explain.

What I mean is when you're shooting you should be thinking about your IPS session. How am I going to upsell album spreads? Do I have good images that make great wall art for my clients?

This is how it works: Understand HARD vs. SOFT money. Hard money is cash that comes out of your pocket, whereas soft money can be things like your time, things that take you away from the office, things that take you away from working on your business, and you're really not paying for them with cash.

How do we make it work for us? Every wedding collection we offer comes with an album. These albums have 10 spreads. All my sample albums (because you have samples, right?) have 20 spreads. Since I started printing 20-spread sample albums, I haven't sold a 10-spread one. Why is this important? By purchasing extra spreads, clients are actually helping to pay for the cost of the album. This way, I'm not spending a lot of hard money to order the album. Just soft money, which is the time to do the IPS session. Got it?

If you don't shoot with a purpose, you won't have enough good images that will motivate your client to purchase extra spreads. So, stop taking 20 pictures of the same thing. All you need is a couple horizontal and a couple vertical for flexibility when creating the album. Besides, when you show only 20-spread albums, they don't even know what a 10-spread album looks like, and people don't buy what they don't see.





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4. HAVE A YEARLY GOAL

I'm one of those people who makes new year's resolutions. You may think they're silly, but they work for me. My resolutions have nothing to do with losing weight or being a better person. They are business resolutions.

Let me explain.

One year, I looked closely at how I was delivering my products. I wasn't happy, and my new year's resolution was to improve that. And I did. Today I hand-wrap all my wall art (by the way, I'm really good at paper wrapping... LOL).

And every year I find something I can improve upon and I act on it. This year my resolution is to improve the design of my album covers. This one is tough, but I'm getting there.

Here are some ideas for yearly resolutions if you can't wrap to save your life:

- Get fancier business cards
- Determine a realistic number of weddings you will shoot next year
- Revamp your portfolio
- Have a close look at your website
- Be more active on social media

Let me expand on this one: determining a realistic number of weddings you will shoot next year. I still do this. It helps to keep me focused and hungry. Even if I'm already over my goal for 2022 and halfway to my goal for 2023, I'll still keep doing it because it works for me.

These are simple actions that will help your business to succeed.

In closing, I want you to keep one thing in mind: There isn't a single action that will take your wedding photography business to the next level. There's no silver bullet or magic app that will keep you booked all year round.

It's hard and consistent work. It's about implementing changes and measuring results, keeping what is working and adjusting what isn't working. Nobody knows your business better than you do.

I'm always going back to the drawing board. I'm constantly changing, evolving and experimenting.

Stop looking at your business with your heart. Look at your business as a business person. A person who will do whatever it takes to be successful. Success isn't an accident. Success is the result of hard work and dedication, and your wedding photography business isn't any different.

If you're not booking, have a real, frank and raw conversation with yourself. Stop making excuses. Stop saying "it isn't my client." Stop trying to convince yourself that you're not booking because the market is saturated. Deep inside, you know these are not the real reasons. These are excuses to not get stuff done.



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Image © Photos by Clay

I want to help you further and I'm going to propose a challenge: Come up with up to three action items you're going to implement right now that you think will take your business to the next level. Also, think about how long it will take you to implement them.

Now, DM me on Instagram @claysouzaofficial what the item(s) are and the time frame. I'll mark it on my calendar and will keep you accountable. Don't worry, I won't be a pest, but I will check in with you once in a while on the progress.

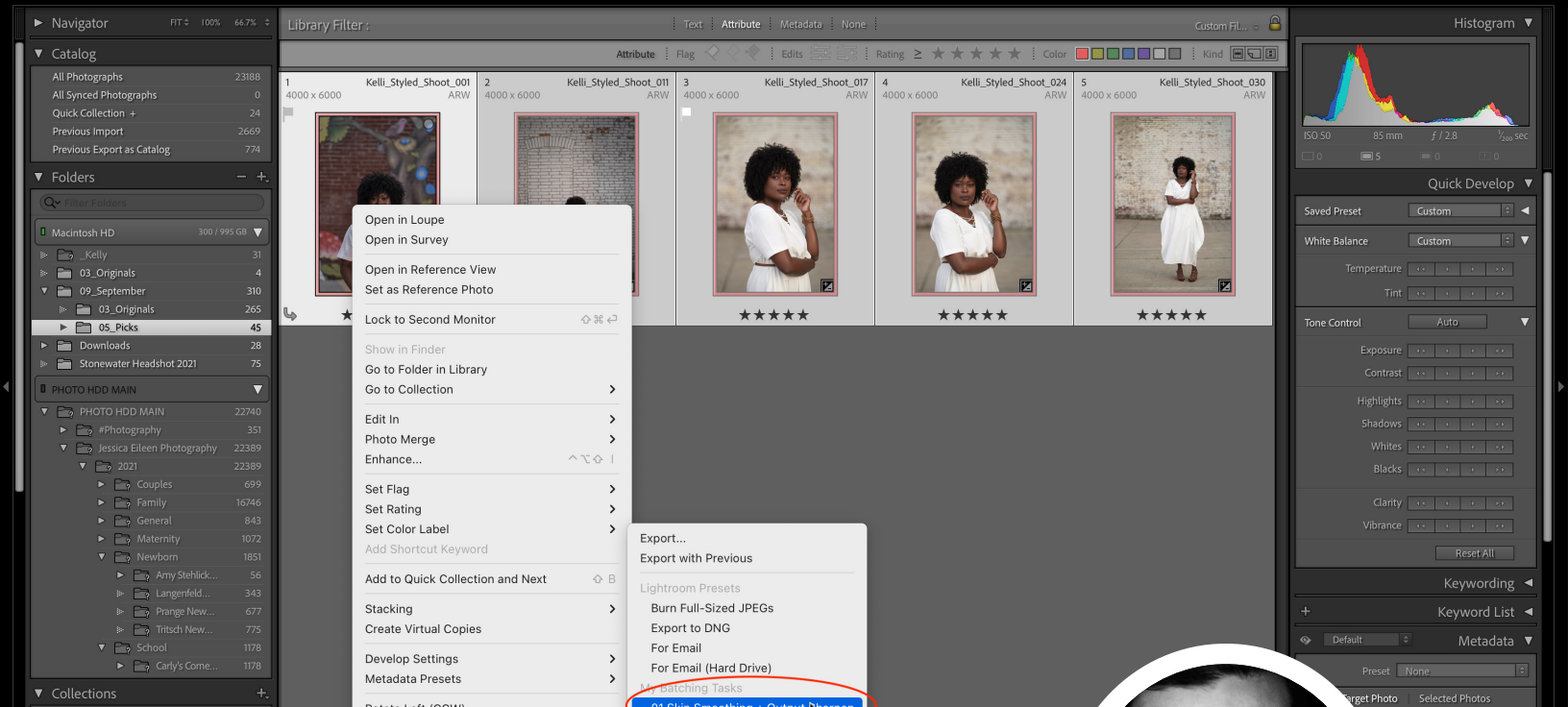
Do we have a deal? I want to hear from you.

That's all for now, folks. ■

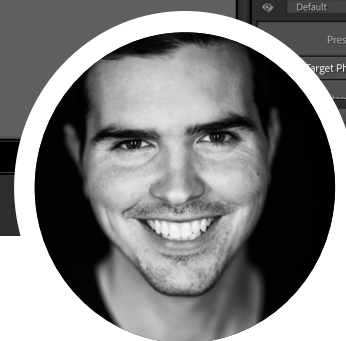


Clay Souza has been a wedding and portrait photographer for 7 years, located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He has photographed weddings all across the United States and in other countries. Even with his busy schedule, he still finds time to help photographers on his Instagram profile where he posts daily about lighting, composition, posing and the business of photography.

website: photosbyclay.com **instagram:** [instagram.com/claysouzaofficial/](https://www.instagram.com/claysouzaofficial/)



3 Steps To Automate Your Editing Workflow | Lightroom + Photoshop



with **Dustin Lucas**

Wedding season is rolling in as hot as the weather, and we are all stretching out the clock with time spent at the computer. It's game time and you need automation to get your life back. When it comes to Lightroom and Photoshop, there are plenty of ways to speed up your workflow, like running building actions, running batch processes and with AI becoming more accurate, it's time to revisit your workflow. In this article, I am going to show you how you can export hundreds of images from Lightroom, automatically apply a Photoshop action, flatten as a JPEG, take a lunch and when you come back, everything is ready to post.

The first step is to create an action or combine multiple pre-built actions and apply them by building droplets for Lightroom. The second step is building Lightroom export presets and linking our droplets. The third step is all about testing and adjusting our automation tasks. You always want to run this on a single image first before you make 800+ mistakes. Let's dive into Photoshop to get started on creating actions and droplets.

STEP 1: CREATE A PHOTOSHOP ACTION AND DROPLET

If you already have actions in Photoshop, this is half the battle. For those of you who don't, here is a quick way to make one. If you aren't sure what an action is, that's OK too. Think automation. An action applies a set number of layer adjustments and settings, and is completely customizable, applied with a click of a mouse or tablet. Applying the same action is perfect for anyone using skin-softening actions or creative toning. Think of the time saved to batch apply this to hundreds of images while you take a lunch or move to another task. This can be a game-changer for newer photographers and ones not as well-versed in Photoshop.

To save a new action, we have to open the action panel from the top menu bar in Window and select Actions. (Fig. 1)

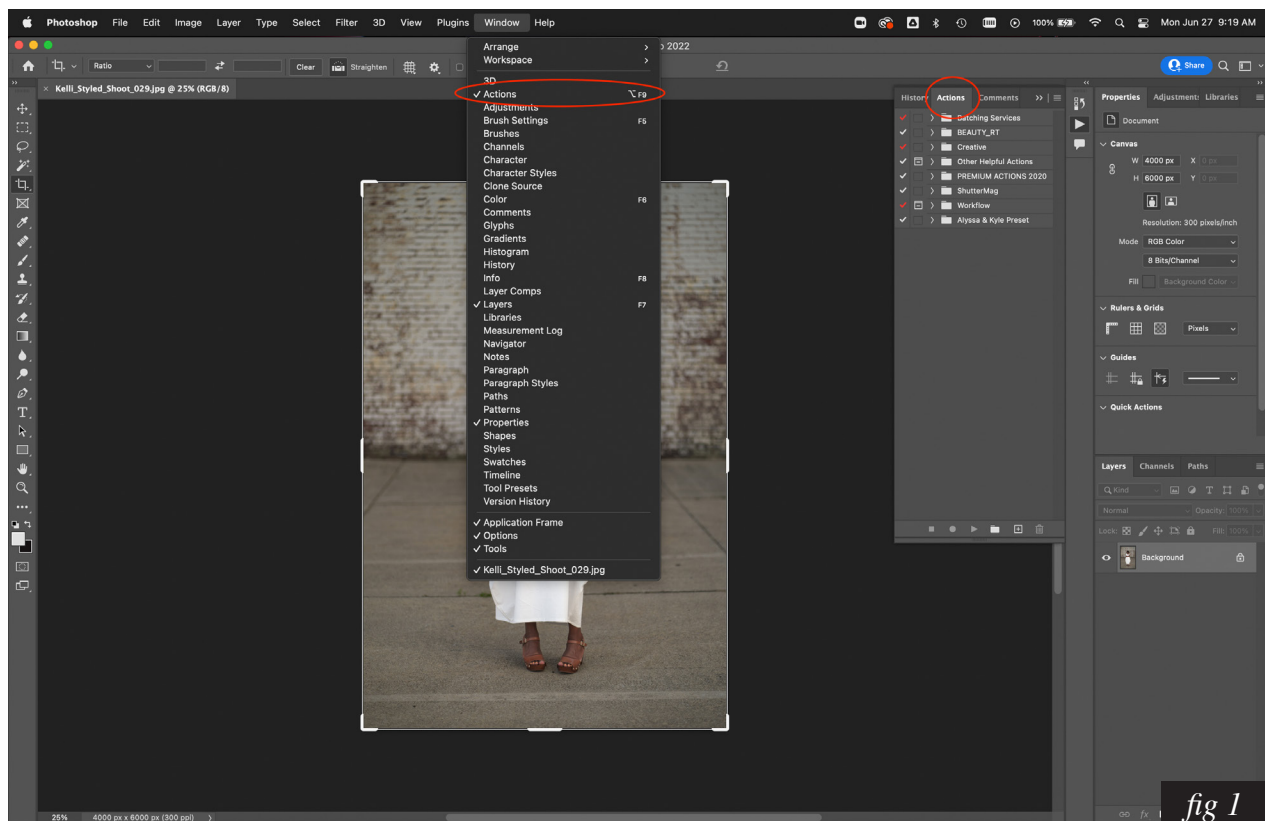


fig 1

This opens up the Action panel and at the bottom we can click the Create A New Set button. (Fig. 2) I like to organize my actions into sets for different purposes. This one I would name My Batching Tasks. (Fig. 3) Then you can click the Create New Action button. (Fig. 4) This allows you to name the action and add to your custom set to store it in to better organize. I name the action based on the processes I run. For example, I am applying Skin Smoothing and Output Sharpening so I named it 01 Skin Smoothing + Output Sharpen. You can even assign a function or f-key to quickly apply it to a single image later. (Fig. 5) Once I click Record, I start my normal editing process, duplicating the background layer and applying adjustments. (Fig. 6)

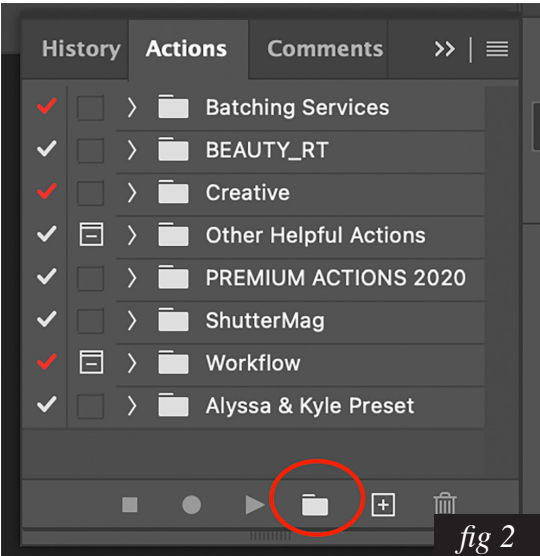


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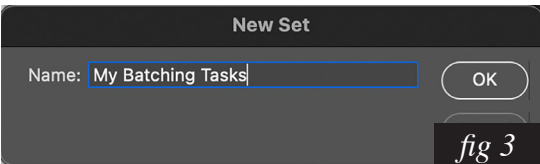


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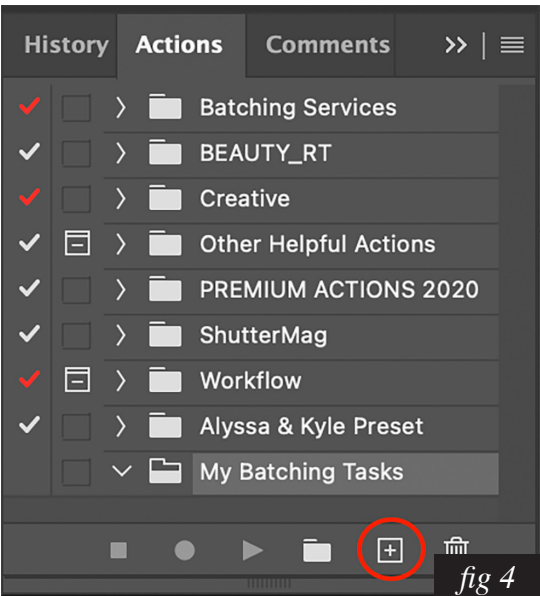


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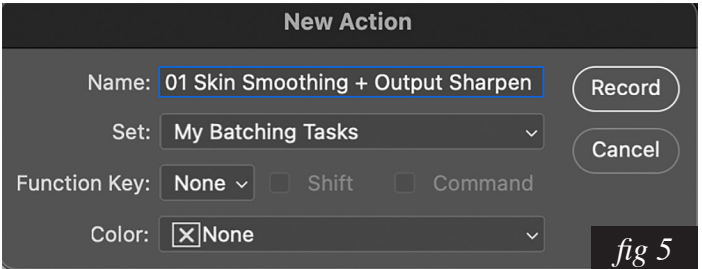


fig 5

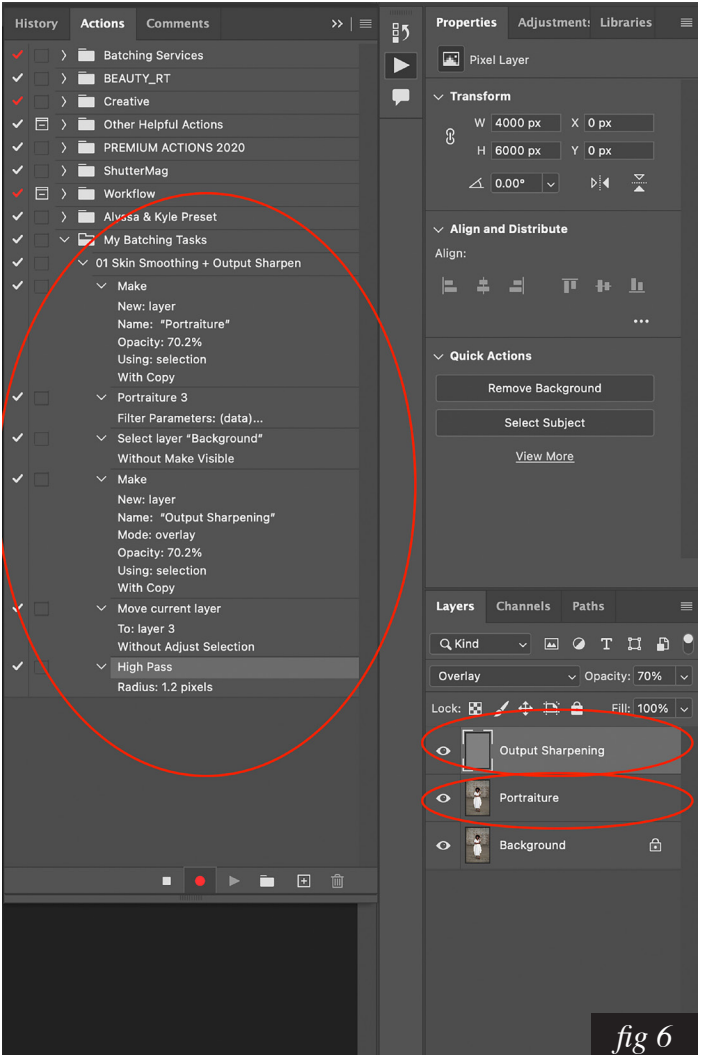


fig 6

Once I am done applying layers, I flatten, save as a JPG and close the image out. (Fig. 7ab) The reason why is I want this to be saved in the action versus relying on Photoshop to do it—just my personal preference and from my experience it reduces errors. To complete the recording process, I have to re-open the image and click the Stop Playing/Recording button. Then I need to remove the Open Image step and we are done! (Fig. 8) If I need to test this or make sure my layers' opacities are right we can uncheck the following steps: flatten image, save and close. (Fig. 9) This allows me to dissect the action as well. If you want a pop dialog box to finesse the settings like in my Output Sharpening step, you can toggle the dialog on and off. (Fig. 10)

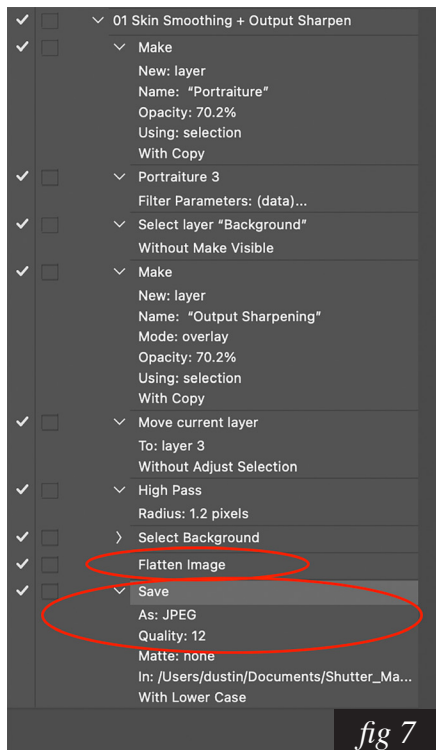


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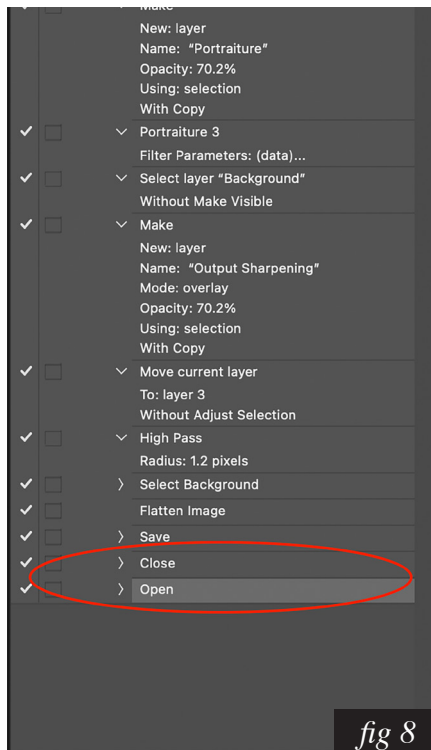


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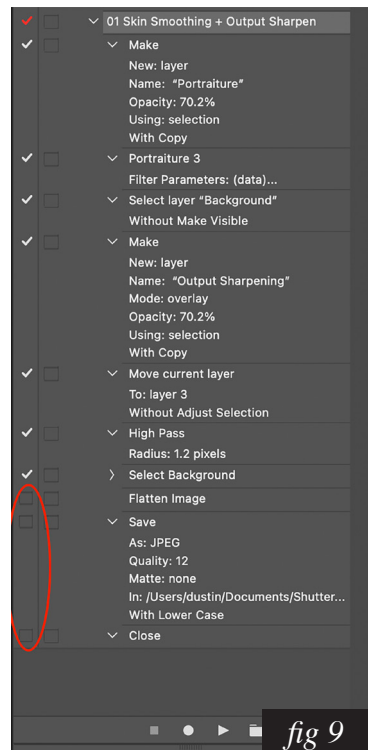


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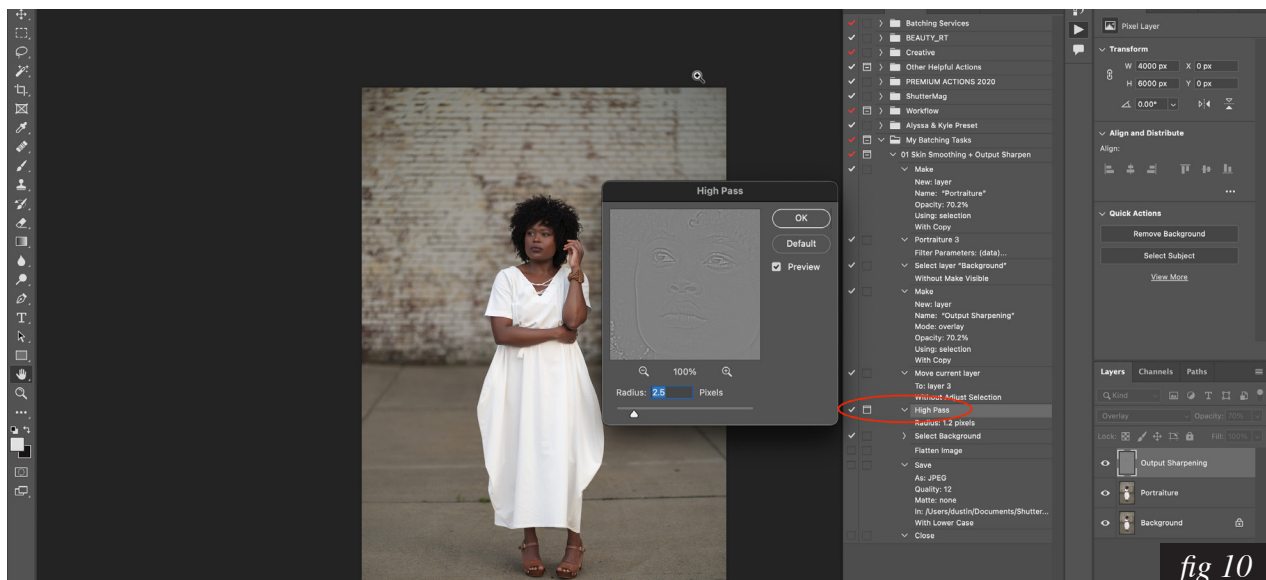
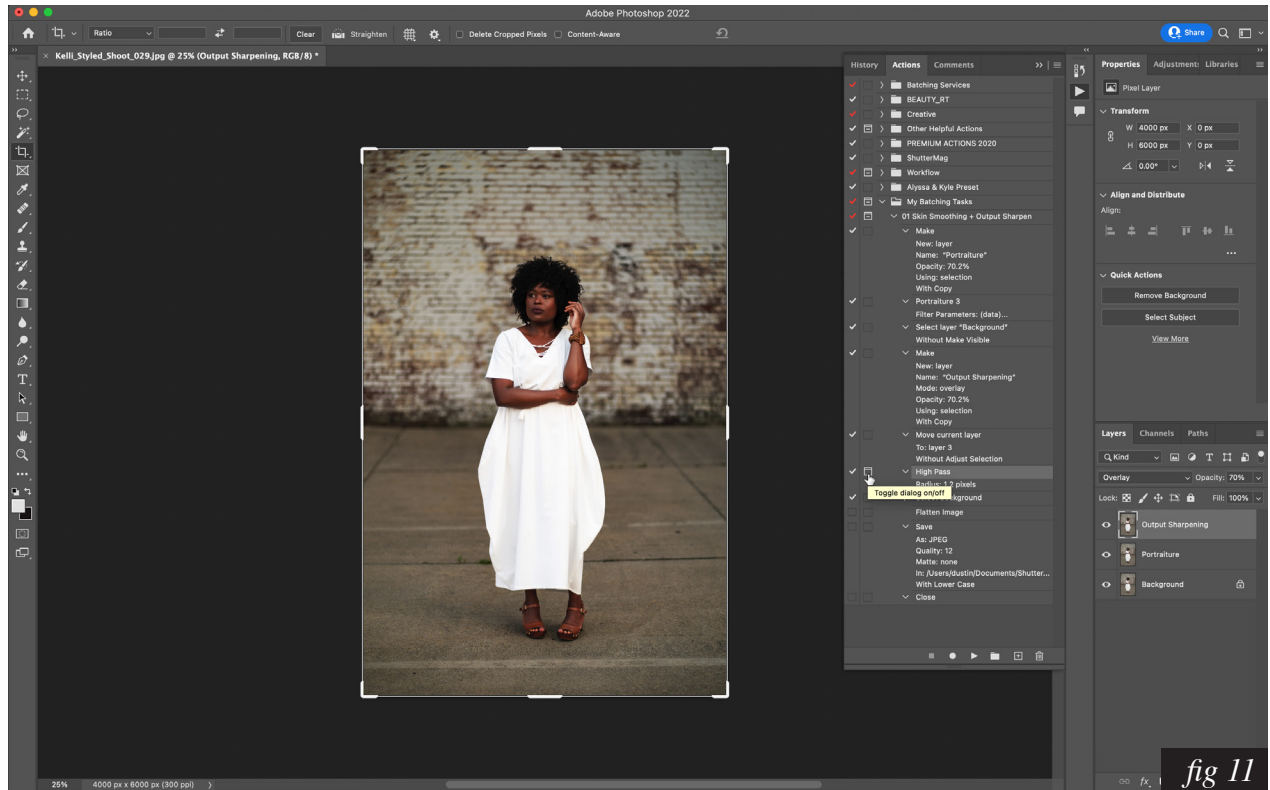


fig 10

Do not turn this on if this is an automated action you apply to hundreds of images because it will ask you what settings to apply for every image. That defeats the purpose of automation. (Fig. 11)



Now we are ready to save a droplet in Photoshop so when we export images in Lightroom, the action will automatically apply after this is done. In Photoshop, go to the top menu bar to select File>Automate>Create Droplet. (Fig. 12) Now we can save the droplet on the computer and name it the same as the action, 01 Skin Smoothing + Output Sharpen. (Fig. 13) Then we need to choose the proper action and set the action under the Play section. As a tip, the Destination section would only be necessary if you wanted the files to open in Photoshop or save and close. Remember we saved this in our action so we can leave it as the default None setting and click OK. (Fig. 14) Now we are ready to jump back into Lightroom to set up the export preset.

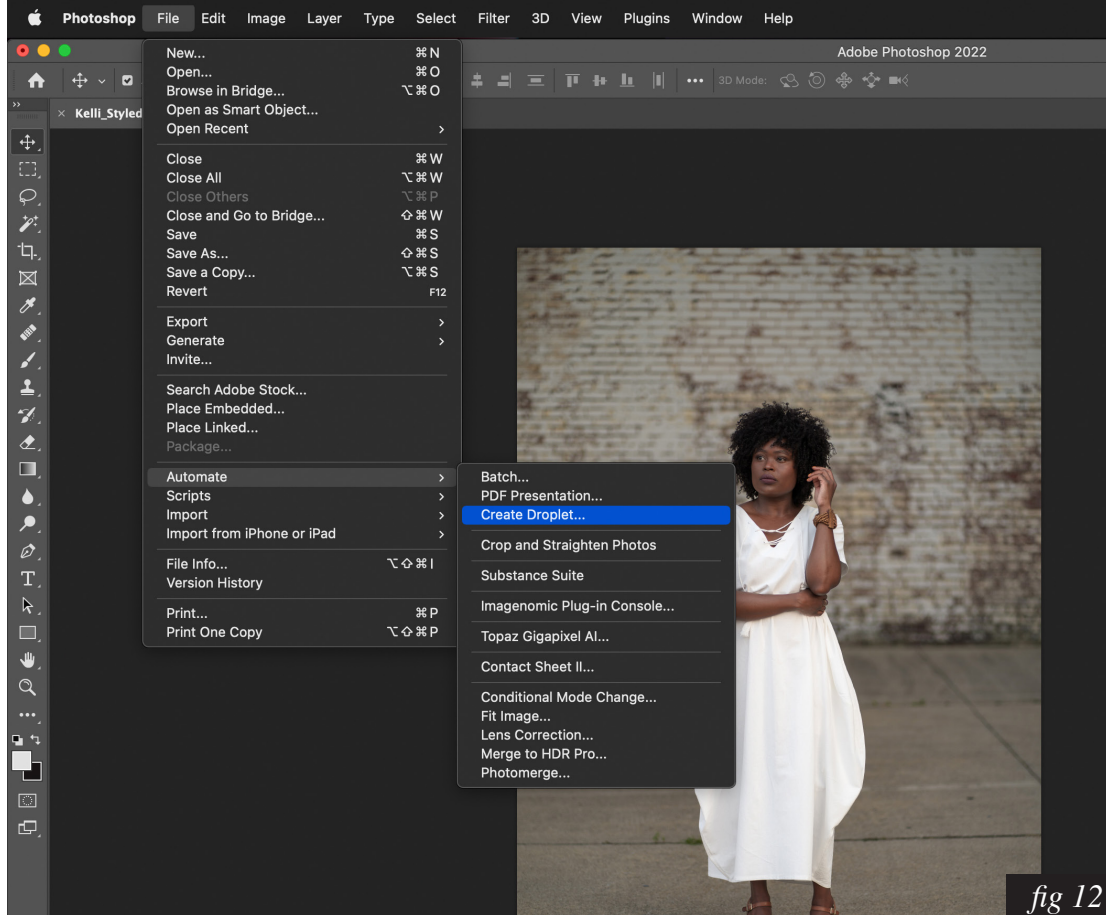


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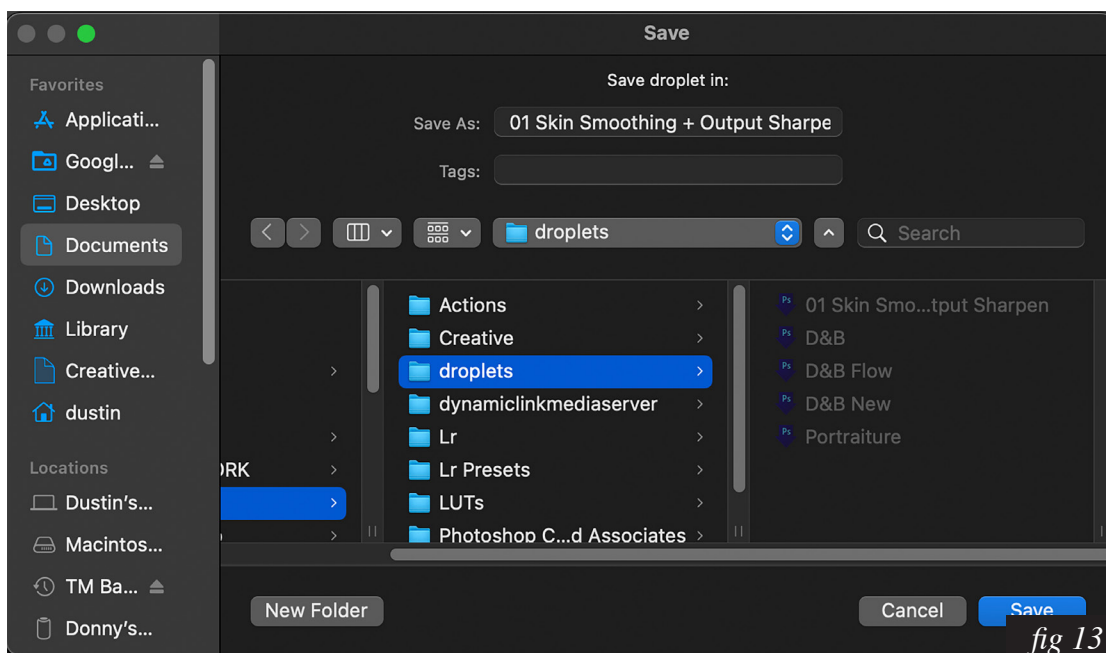


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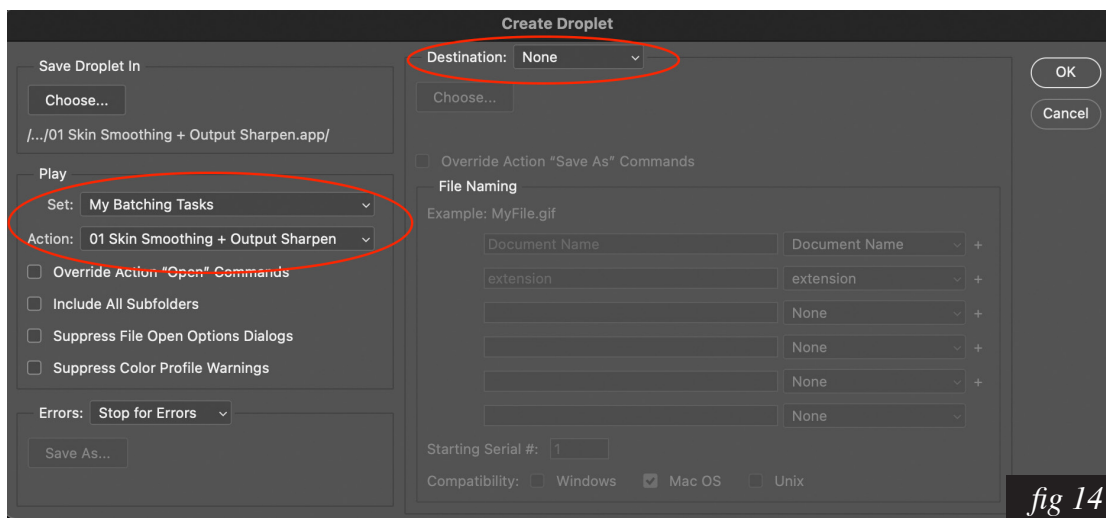
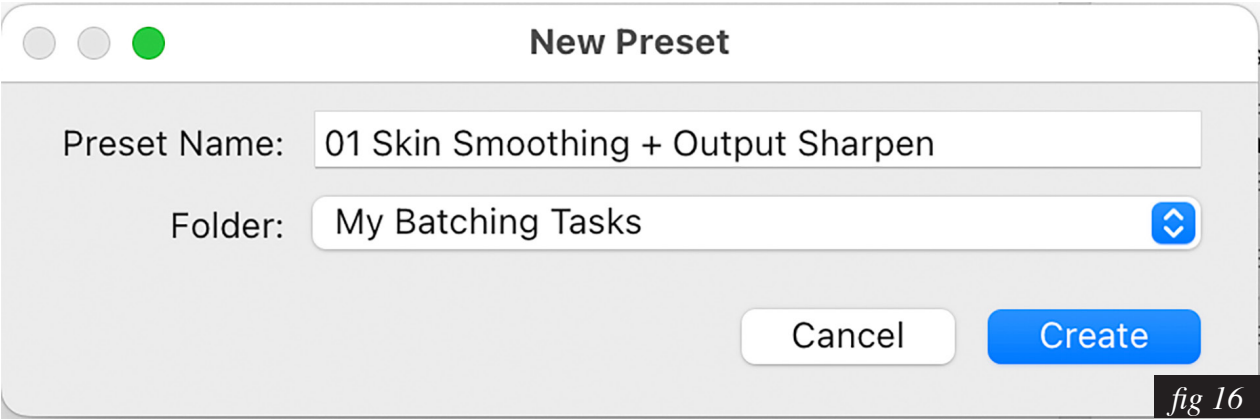
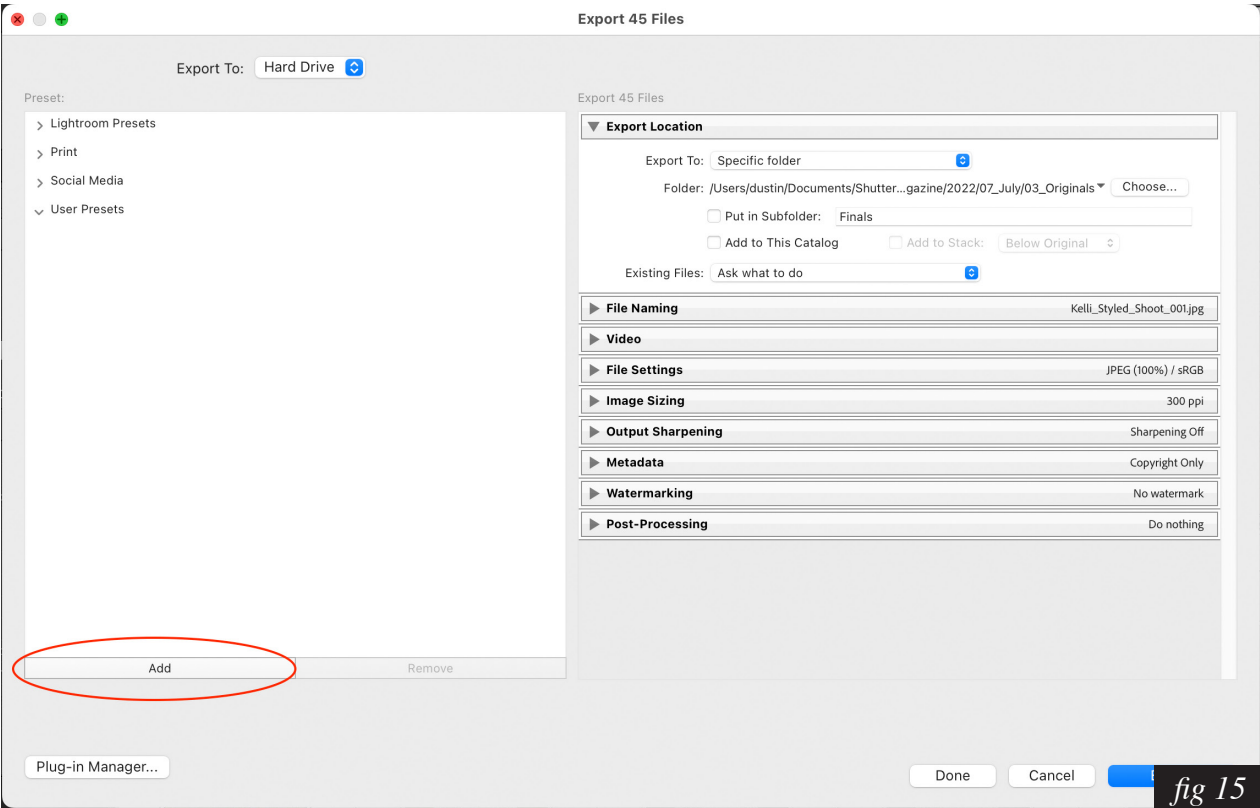


fig 14

STEP: 2: BUILD LIGHTROOM EXPORT PRESETS

Once the catalog is opened with our images selected in Library mode, we are ready to export. In the export module we can build a preset to recall later. In the lower left corner, click the Add button. (Fig. 15) Copy and paste the action name as the preset name, 01 Skin Smoothing + Output Sharpen. Same goes for creating a folder and naming it My Batching Tasks. Organization is your friend and when it comes to automated tasks you don't want to be guessing which Photoshop action applies from the multiple Lightroom export presets you create. (Fig. 16) Now we can set up all of the export settings.



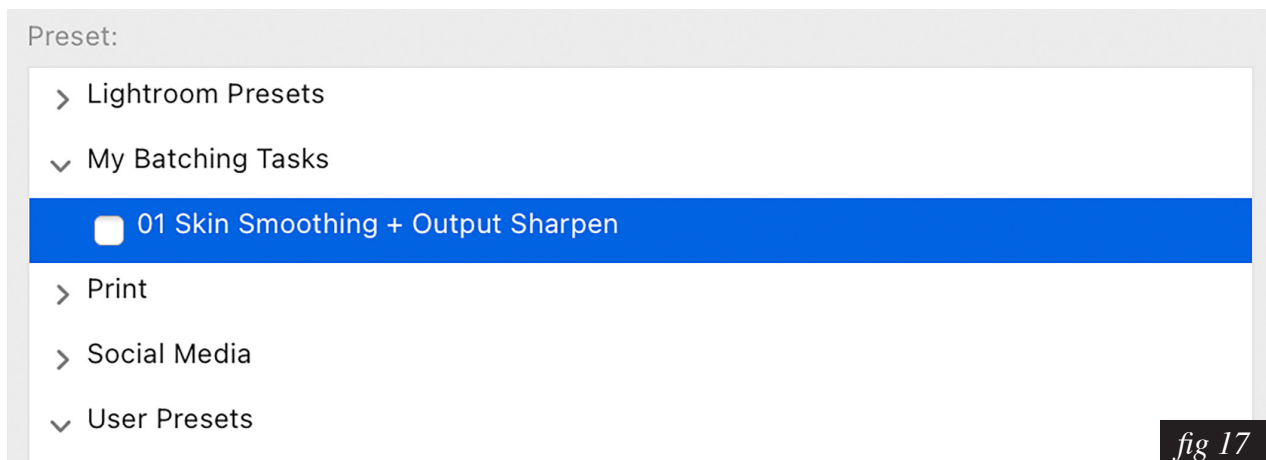


fig 17

Export location is pretty straightforward in that you can choose where your files save. I have a particular folder structure to keep my files organized so I generally select this per export. (Fig. 17) You could have this save to the same place and into a subfolder called Today's Export if you wanted to quickly run this from Library without opening the export module. Moving down to File Naming, this is when I rename files so the client has a more professional experience when previewing their files. I have a naming convention saved as a preset: date_event_lastname-0001. For every export, I would custom name these accordingly. (Fig. 18)

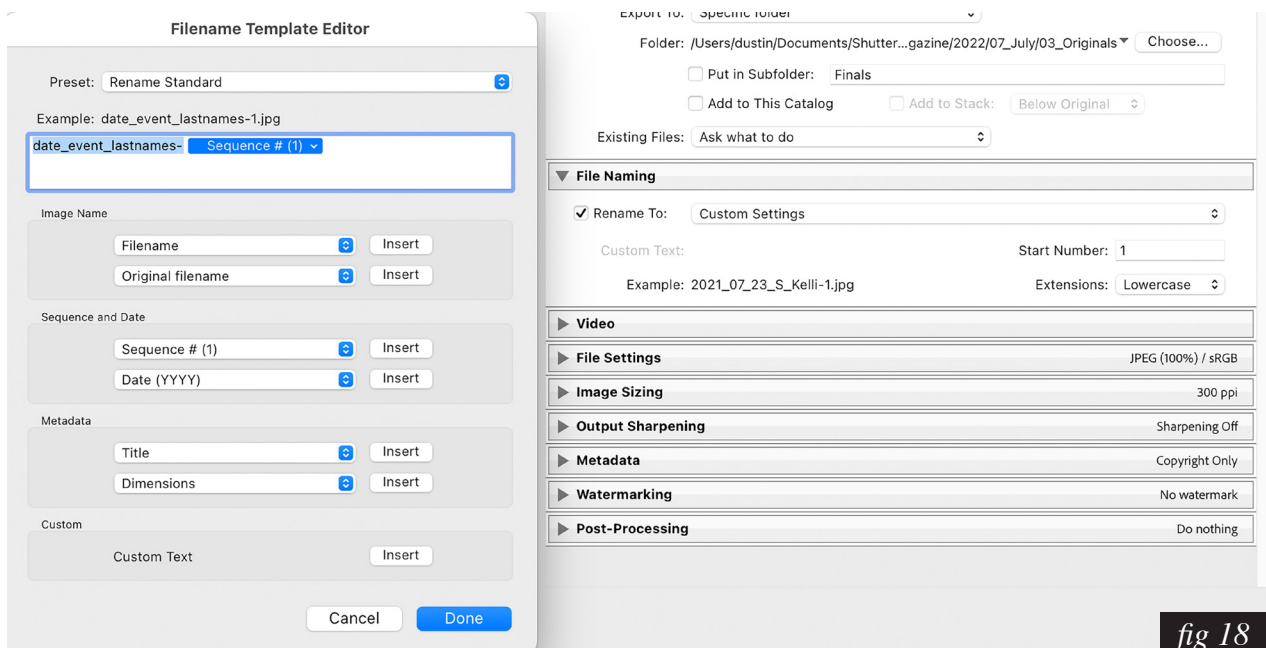
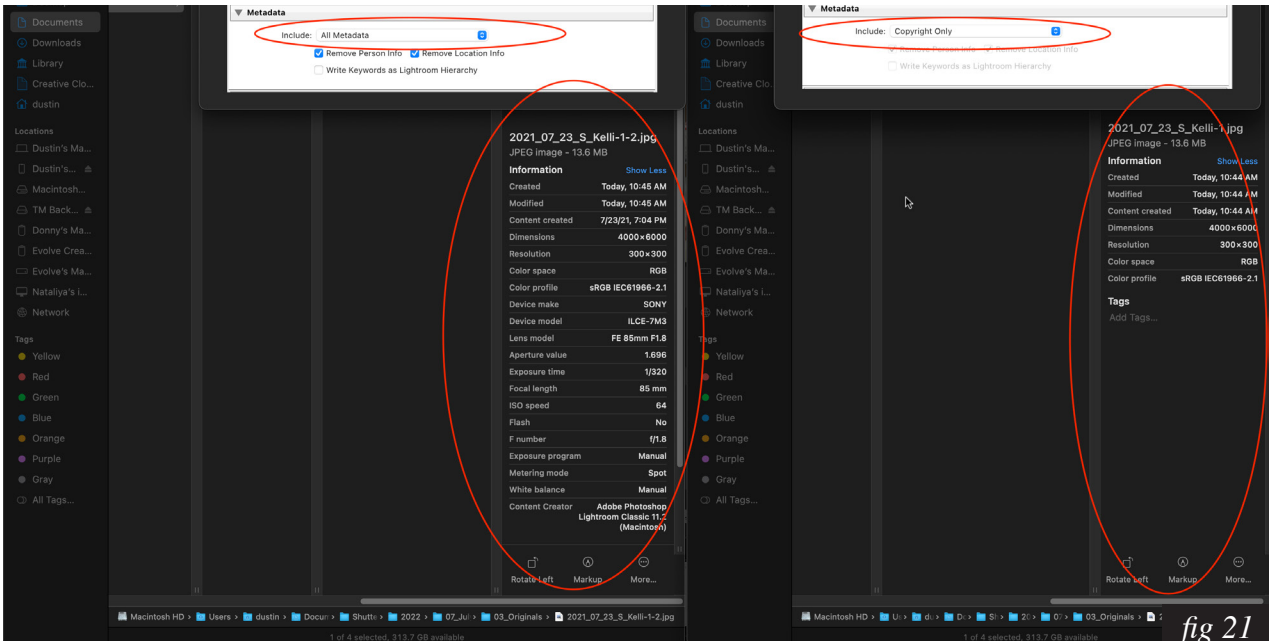
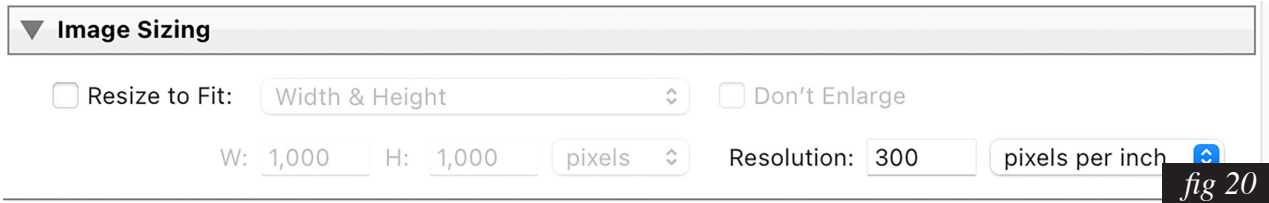
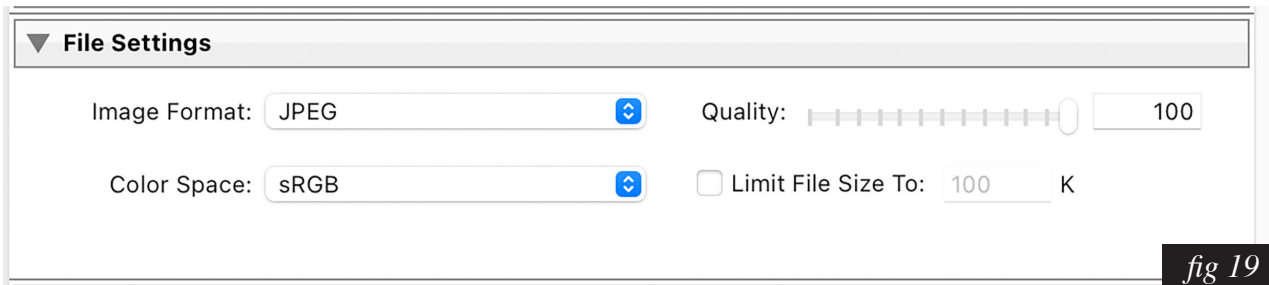


fig 18

In File Settings, I choose Image Format: JPEG, Quality: 100 and Color Space: sRGB. (Fig. 19) This is intended for the client preview so I am not worried about layers or color space to further edit these images at this point. I want them to be previewed in a browser well. Image sizing is important if you want to limit to 2,000 pixels on the long edge for high-resolution download later. That's pretty standard, keeping Resolution at 300. (Fig. 20) Since I am running an action, I would keep the images full size and resize them later based on what the customer buys: high-resolution digitals, full-resolution print, low-resolution web images, etc. Output sharpening is always off as I want Photoshop to handle this adjustment. For Metadata I personally choose Copyright Only because I don't want all my equipment and shooting data out there for customers to see. Here is the difference if you choose this setting or the default All Metadata. (Fig. 21ab)

Now we need to adjust the Post-Processing section to apply our droplet. Click the dropdown menu for After Export and choose Open in Other Application. (Fig. 22) Then click the Choose button to select the droplet we built. (Fig. 23) Once this is done we need to right-click on the preset and choose Update with Current Settings. (Fig. 23) Now you are ready to run this on the whole batch, however, I highly recommend testing first!



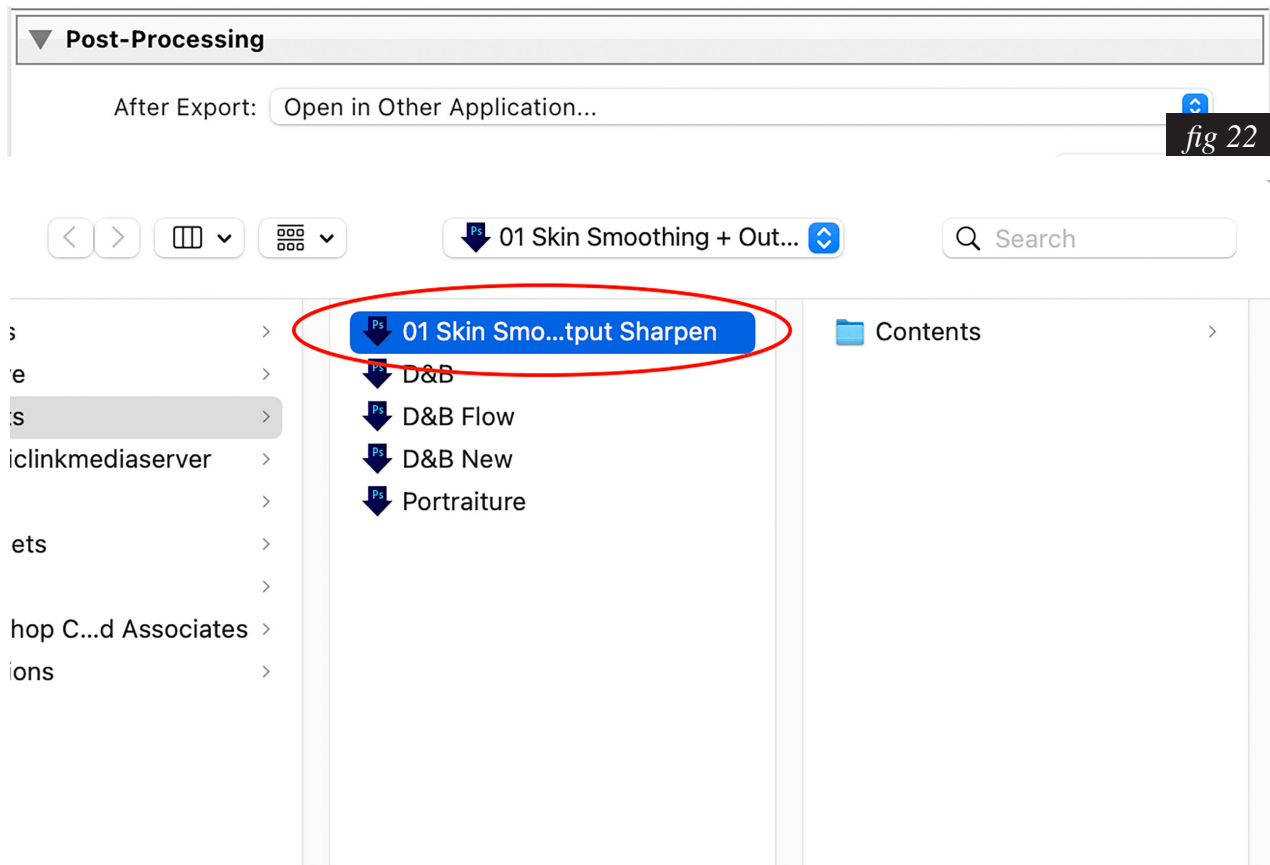


fig 22

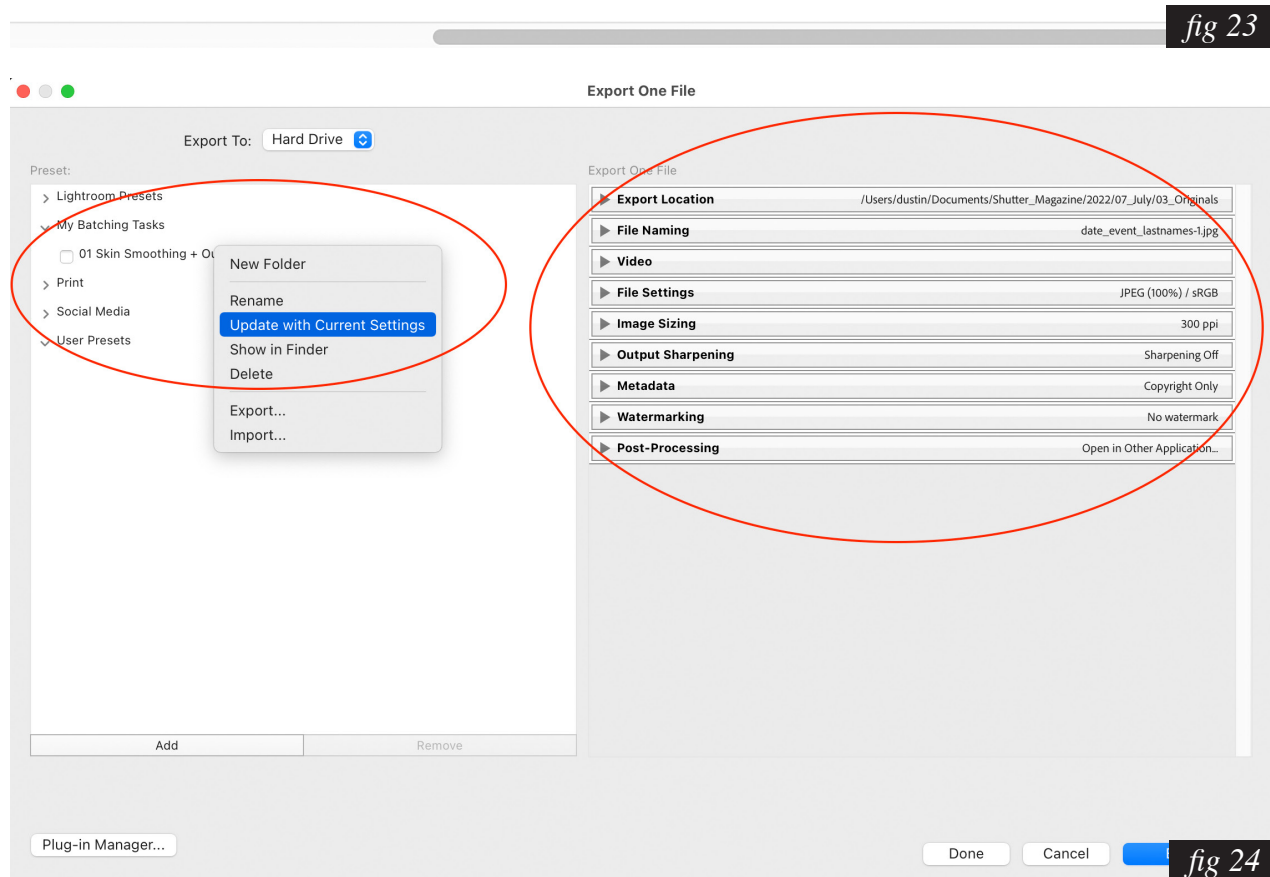


fig 23

fig 24

STEP 3: TEST AND ADJUST AUTOMATION TASKS

Unfortunately, anything automatic will need some level of babysitting because you want to make sure you don't waste time in the long run. This is why I test one to five images when exporting with droplets out of Lightroom. The multitude of things that can go wrong—like updating Photoshop, Lightroom, apps and the settings—went back to default and we won't know until the full process is done or an error pops up after export corrupting. So let's test to make sure our files meet the following requirements: file size, actions apply, no errors and files saved to the right location.

I generally pick the first five files to run the test and export them after I choose location and any custom settings. (Fig. 24) As I am watching the files closely in Photoshop, I make sure the layers apply properly for the action check. (Fig. 25) Then I look at the file size in Finder to make sure it's not under 5MB. If your files are significantly smaller it's likely tied to Photoshop's default settings when it saves the JPG files. (Fig. 26) To check these settings, open any JPG in Photoshop, Save As and look at the quality number. It is set to 8, and this is the problem. We need to move this to 12. Once you save, it will remember this. (Fig. 27ab) Another reason I save to JPG in the action is we can control this every time. As you can see in the action, it stores the JPG quality to 12 automatically. (Fig. 28)

Since no errors popped up in Photoshop, we are golden! Boom—that's it!

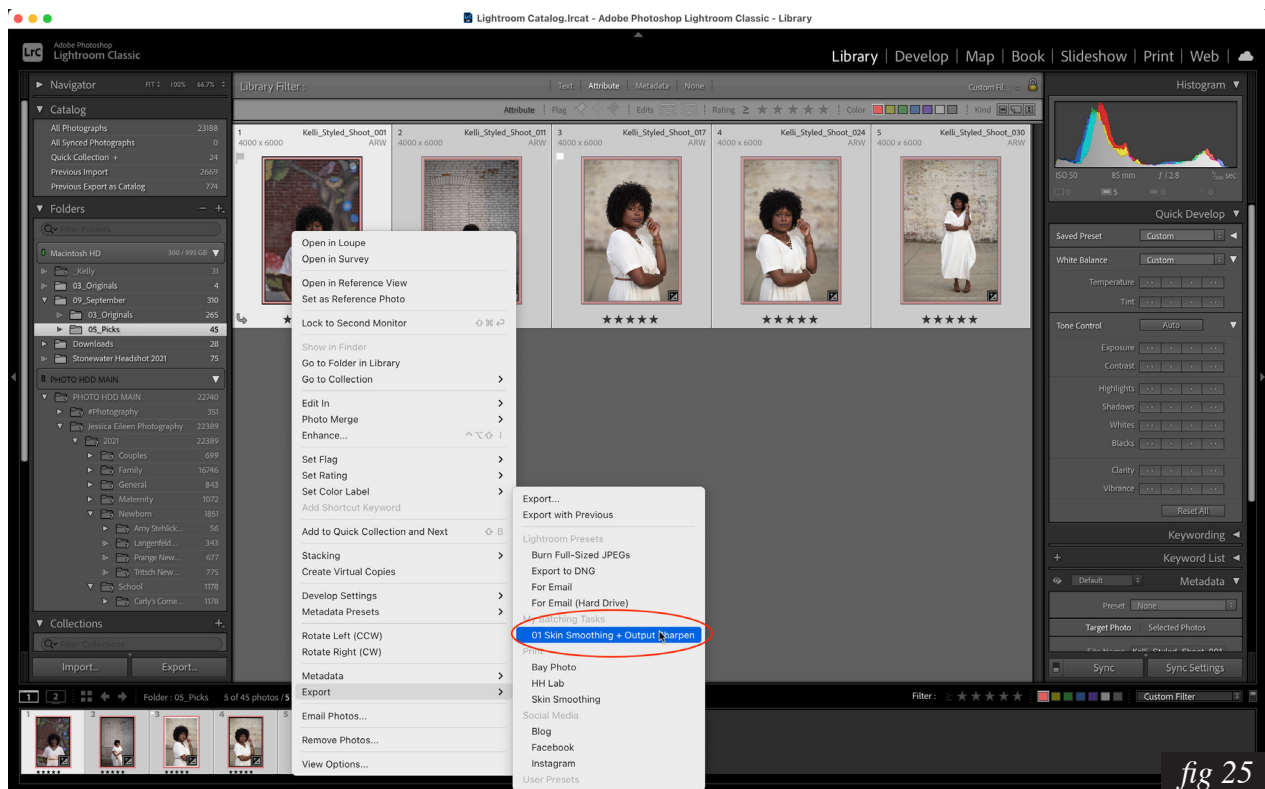


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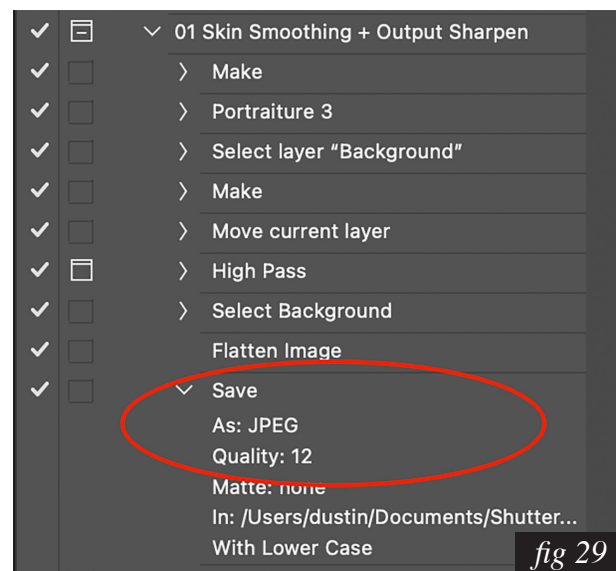
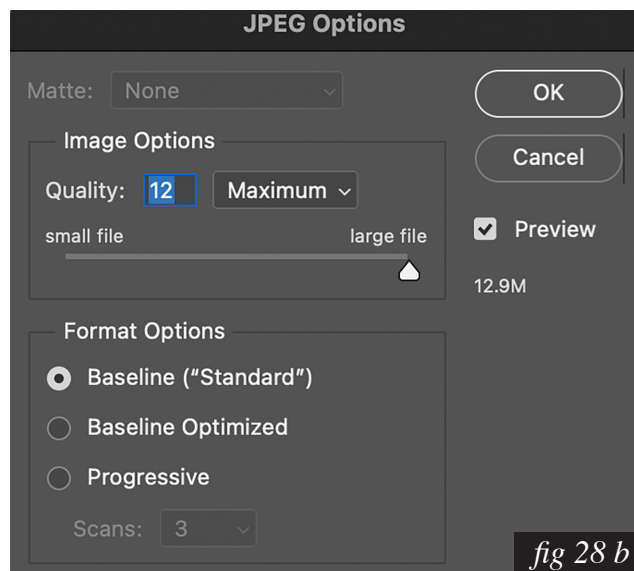
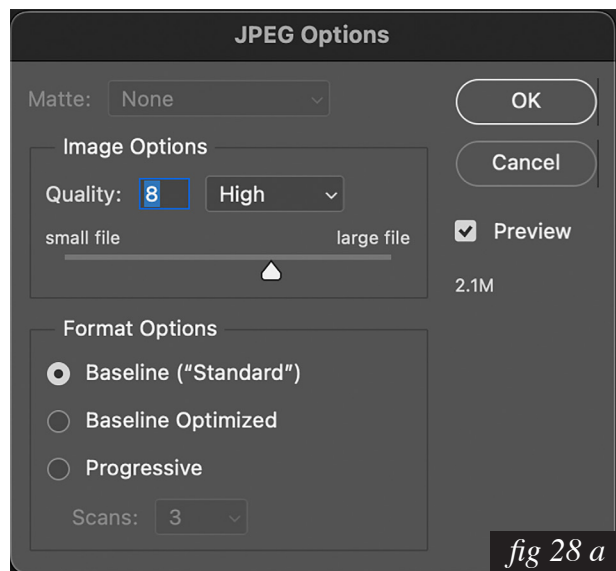
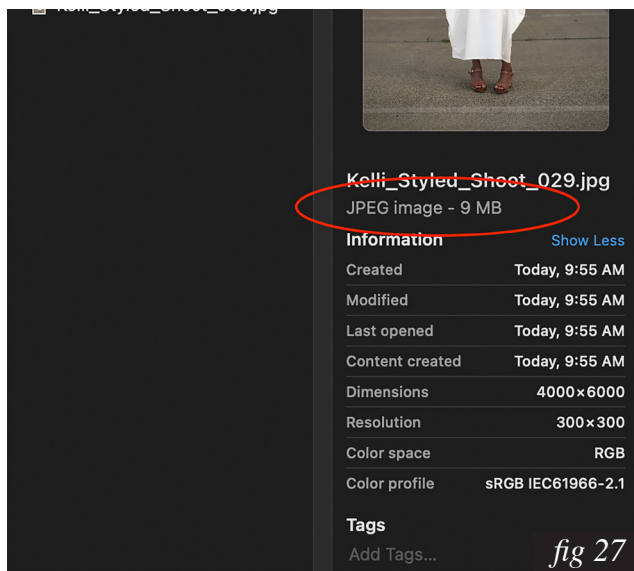
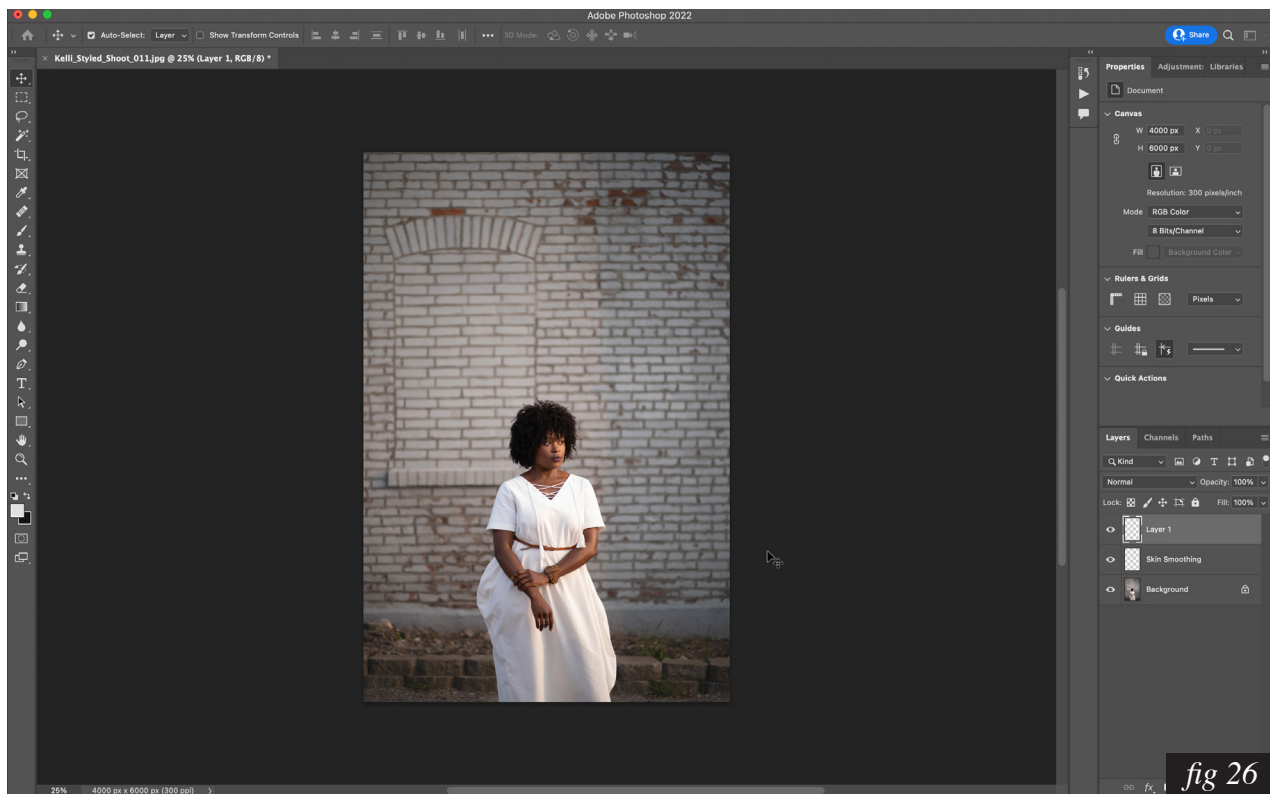


Image © Jessica Lucas



THE RESULTS

I cannot reiterate this enough: If you want to save time you gotta automate processes. You can't simply outsource. In my opinion, you could outsource this with your editing partner if they accept raw files, just ask! When you automate a task it's worth doing a sample test first to make sure all the bugs are worked out. Like I said, a simple update can throw off this entire process. Start in Photoshop with creating actions and droplets, save a Lightroom export preset including the droplet and test your automation flows. Boom—now you are ready to let the computer do the work while you focus on the more important things during this busy season. ■

[CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE VIDEO!](#)

Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his Master of Fine Arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.

website: evolveedits.com instagram.com/evolveimaging/



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Lighting Tips For Portraits



with **Ian Spanier**

Light and story. These are the two most important factors in making great portraits. Not your camera, and although I get asked a lot, it's not the focal length. Sure, a great camera and a great lens make a difference, but consider how even these days great pictures can be made with our phones. It's the driver, not the car.

Light makes an image. Photography literally does not exist without it. The story, well, that is either one you are telling or you are narrating—we'll get into that. But first, the most important: Let there be light!

When it comes to great portrait lighting (if I am creating the light in studio or on location), I always like to think simple. What is the least amount of equipment I need to get the job done? This begins with where light comes from. Where does the original light come from? Yes indeed, that big giant fireball in the sky we know of as the sun! What is the sun but one light! So, I always think “one” first. Can I do the shoot with just one light? If not, the use of multiple lights also can be kept simple. It is basically a combination of one or more of the same techniques we see from the natural world. We are just making it artificially.

Straight up, diffused, reflected, refracted, bounced, warmed-up, cooled-off, direct, indirect, specular, dull—these are all the words racing through my mind when I think about the light. If you really think about it, this is what happens in the natural world all the time! All we are really doing is recreating what we see in the natural world artificially, whether that is with a continuous light source like an LED, a speed light or powerful strobes. It is all about recreating the feel of light from the natural world.

The tools we have at our disposal are a multitude of modifiers, many of which we will cover here. Now, if natural light is your thing, then your job is to understand how natural light works. Natural light is all of those adjectives I used above... You just need to train your brain to see it in all these conditions. We can learn all we need about lighting from nature. Applying it artificially is just about the technical application of what has been provided. I trained my brain to see this all the time. I am always making mental notes of natural conditions and thinking about how I can convey that with artificial light, equating the modifiers with the variety of light conditions, which allows me to see the light, even inside a blank studio.

Story should NEVER be overlooked when it comes to portraits. It goes hand-in-hand with lighting. What is the story you are telling with your portrait? This is the question to ask yourself each and every time. Is it a thoughtful image? A hard-core, in-your-face portrait? A poppy and fun portrayal? A dark and moody mysterious capture? And so on. Light has a feel, it's what we see day in and day out in television and movies. The great directors all use light to push the narrative of the story they are telling—so why shouldn't you? You are the director of your shoot after all!

When I have assignment, I ask this very question of my client: “What is the story behind this portrait?” When it's a self-assignment, or personal work, I am asking myself a similar query: “What is the story I am trying to tell, and how will my modification of light help drive this story to the viewer?” To paraphrase the great quote on the topic, “a great photograph needs no words.” If we assume we are not always there to tell the story behind the image, then it needs to tell a story to the viewer all on its own. The best way to accomplish this is through great lighting.

How, you may ask: SIMPLE! Thoughtful? That means soft light, perhaps warm as well. Hard core? That means punchy, specular, likely with some highlights if not just one hard-light source. Fun and poppy? Not too different from hard core, but perhaps a bit softer, still with punch, maybe some bright color. Dark and mysterious? Well, that's almost self-explanatory. Bottom line is that the translation is always interpretable, and yet, simple. Convey the words into light, that is the formula.

Let's take a look into some examples of all this. I've pulled some examples of portraits with natural light, one light, and multiple lights. In all, I cannot stress enough the importance of a light meter. It is the only TRUE way to know what your light is doing. Don't be intimidated—the meter is your friend!



For my shoot with actor Lyriq Bent, we shot mostly inside with strobe lights. My client asked for some shots outside, but it was near 100 degrees that day, so instead I opted for this blown-out daylight feel, indoors. In it, I exposed for Lyriq's shadow side, thus blowing out the background which was mostly sky. Using a 5-in-1 reflector, I added a little light back into his shadow side.



Home locations can be challenging, but with an overcast day or when the desired shoot space is in open shade, my subject can be beautifully lit by the diffused light bouncing off the atmosphere. Using a V-Flat World V-Flat and a simple painter's drop cloth, I created this portrait of actor/musician Nina Berman—the same technique was used outside an LA studio for actor Tom Payne. Standing just in the shadow of a building, the bright sun bounces off the cement behind me to light up his face. Same idea with tattoo artist Tommy Helm. Right out of the notebook of Richard Avedon, white seamless with my subject facing opposite of the sun. This is a great trick to break out when the sun is in an unfriendly position and you want or need to shoot outside.



Image © Ian Spanier Photography

MAXIMIZING LIGHT

Whenever I shoot natural light, I plan to be shooting at the best light of the day. This doesn't always coincide with the client's schedule, the weather or a dozen other variables. Having solutions to all these challenges is key to success. This all comes from understanding light. Recognize the quality of light you are dealing with directly, and what you can do to manipulate that with your camera settings, position into, across and/or with the direction of light.



Image © Ian Spanier Photography

Examples of maximizing the light: My shoot with actor Clifton Collins Jr. began just a little past the best light of the morning. While sitting the makeup chair, I had Collins Jr. lift his face into the light to catch the tail end of the lower angled sunlight. Moving on from there, the same backlight technique described earlier, and then a dramatic portrait, playing with the “bad” light. For model Cassie Dzienny, I intentionally started the shoot before the sun began to set, using that blown-out backlight to get warmed up, then taking full advantage for the sunset, and even post-sunset using the very last bit of light bouncing in the sky to make a soft light portrait.



Images © Ian Spanier Photography



ONE LIGHT

One of the biggest misconceptions out there is this idea that a grip-truck full of lights is needed to get the job done. Of course there are occasions the client wants a “big show,” so lugging out a bunch of lights gives the optics a big ol’ checkmark. For me, I would always rather keep it simple. Get in, get out. This is something I have always used as a mentality for success. With today’s tremendous shot lists, where content is king, being able to do a lot with a little, and with a small footprint no less, it’s a win-win. During the height of the pandemic this worked wonders, as often I was working alone with talent and not even a client on set. No assistants, no time for big, complicated lighting schemes, but ALWAYS a need for high quality... and that quantity.

Now you have the power to control the quality of the light, unlike when working with natural light. I’d argue that you don’t ever need to sacrifice quality when it comes to one-light solutions. Here, the application of light to drive the story really comes together. YOU have the power to create the mood—the feel I harp on as so integral to successful portraits, because now YOU are not relying on the sun, the weather, or if you’re like me and prefer portable lights, you don’t even rely on a plug-in on set.

Choosing the right modification for your light travels back to my earlier mention of the question you should always ask your client or yourself. What is the feel of this portrait? This goes to my other MO: Whenever you can, go in with a plan. For even if that plan fails, you have now eliminated one option and can move forward. To do as such, you need to understand there is not just one way. Building an understanding of light in all its many forms will make you a go-to problem solver. Or as I like to see it, one who sees challenges, not problems, and has solutions to those challenges. No fear for what gets thrown at you before or during the shoot.



One of the easiest one-light solutions that has been a go-to for me are Westcott Umbrellas. With a variety of options from white or silver interiors, diffusion and shoot-through in a variety of sizes, I have found these to be spot on with my “look.” By this I mean a style that I have been cultivating for years to (hopefully) get to a place where people can recognize my portraits by the style I shoot. Much of this is based in how I light.

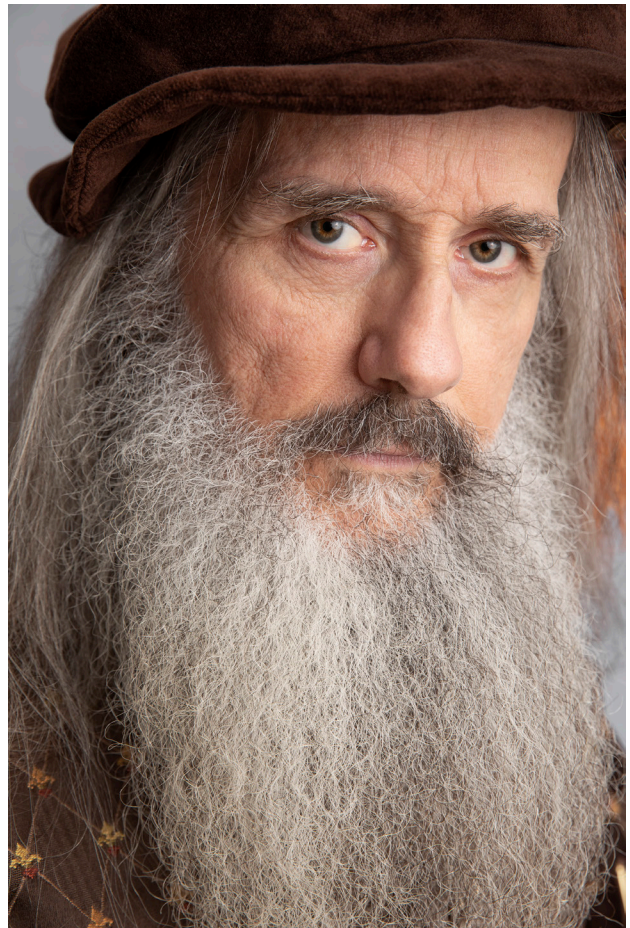
Sharing how I do what I do is never an issue because I am comfortable that how it’s all put together is still a package along with who I am, how I put a shoot together and what I deliver. Anyone can do what I do technically with a bit of training and practice, but that’s not the formula to success. You have to put a whole package together. But I digress!

My other favorite “go-to” is the Westcott Rapid Box Beauty Dish. With diffusion, no diffusion and a grid option, this is very versatile modifier, which allows me to create numerous looks with just one product. The built-in speed ring makes for an easy connection to my Westcott FJ400 and FJ200 strobes.

Bare strobes are also a great solution. Sometimes you just need a bit more light in a room, when combining with natural light or other strobes.

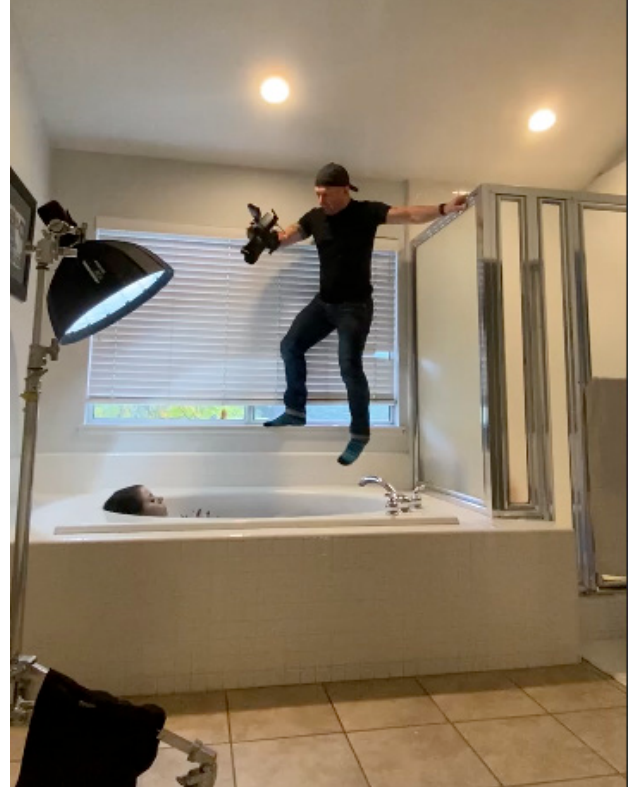


Working in smaller locations, I am not afraid to break out a BIG LIGHT. Westcott's 7' Shoot-Through Umbrella creates a beautiful soft window feel, even in a small dark space. For this portrait of Artist Robert Lamarche, I wanted to create the feel of an Irving Penn studio portrait for his Papua New Guinea costume, which also worked for his Copernicus character as well. The background is Westcott's X-Drop.





The Westcott RapidBox beauty dish offers a great variety of looks. From soft to hard light, always with a quality of light that makes subjects look amazing. Models Tara LaValley and Liberty Netuschil can attest to it! I carry my beauty dish on almost every shoot.



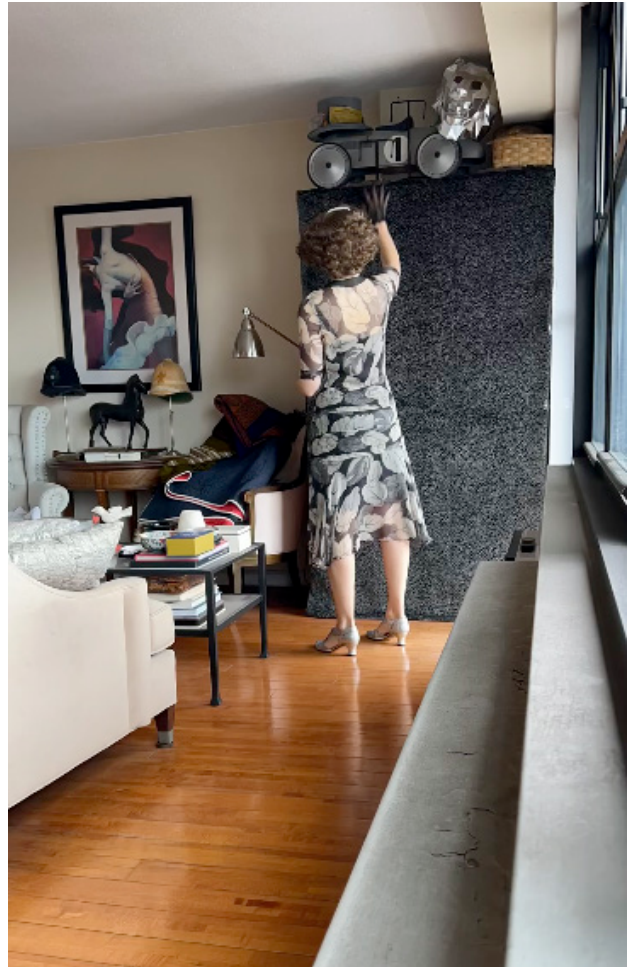
Images © Ian Spanier Photography



A big source like the Westcott 7' Silver Umbrella with diffusion is another favorite setup. Much like a big soft window or overcast sky. Adding to it a pair of Westcott X-Drops and I pay homage to Irving Penn's famous corner series. Here I am setting this up in the lobby of an apartment building with actor Harvey Guillen. With this simple setup, all the focus can be on the subject. Simple, beautiful light which allows my subject to play. The advantage of the small footprint means few variables. When outdoors, the same simplicity applies. Now you have more control. When outside, I will almost always read my background first, then my added key light (there's always exceptions).



Images © Ian Spanier Photography



Bare bulbs can be used in many scenarios. One of my favorites is a case when I have a key light but may need a little extra room light. That key light can be natural light or a strobe. Here I simply position the light into a white wall or ceiling and direct it toward my subject or away from them, depending on what I am going for. For this simple portrait of makeup artist and vintage enthusiast Michelle Coursey, I am using a Westcott FJ200 with a reflector to just add a kiss of fill to the window-lit portrait.



MULTIPLE LIGHTS

When you have a handle on what you can do with one light, adding more lights just increases your options. As I outlined, I love to keep things simple, so I tend not to go crazy with a lot of lights, but on white sets or if I have a large group and/or simply need a ton of light for a high f-stop, then bring on the more complex sets! This is where I like to combine the variety of lights that I use. From stacking umbrellas, affectionately known as the “Spanier Stack” (courtesy of my photographer friend Andy French), to using my Rapid Box beauty dish with an umbrella to shape the light and have a completely controlled fill light. Here is where I really stress the use of a meter. I always measure my lights individually AND together. It’s all with intention. Again, start from the back of your set and work forward.

The “Spanier Stack” is a regular light scenario I break out. I love the feel of it and how it changes when I use a 7’ umbrella versus two 43” deep silver umbrellas. From Actor Jeff Bridges to “Stranger Things” Director Shawn Levy, the quality of light I would consider like a window with some nice punch. Soft but punchy—totally my style.





Image © Ian Spanier Photography



Combining a Westcott Solix 2 LED and a Westcott 43" Deep Silver with an FJ400 strobe. The LED is more of a place holder- but give the sense on an old movie set after a little Photoshop magic. Not shown is a bare reflector on a Westcott FJ200 behind the right side of the backdrop to create the highlight along model/movie writer and director Annika Pampel's hair.



Images © Ian Spanier Photography



Image © Ian Spanier Photography

For my personal series MoTo, all about motorcycle riders here in LA, I wanted more depth of field than I normally tend to shoot with. Combining on Westcott FJ400s, a Rapid Box beauty dish with a 7' shoot-through umbrella along with a pair of umbrellas on the white background, this four-light setup is a lot for a small living room. Add to it, the series was shot during quarantine—it became a great training ground to how working during the pandemic would be. I took a Covid Compliance course and we worked in a safe environment once we knew what we would be dealing with.

The use of a small source and a key, along with the big umbrella as a fill, I could create a shaped light, but not an overly dramatic and shadowed portrait, thanks to using a ratio between the lights. Adding the black background for some of the portraits only added to the dramatic portrait. Note that I am intentionally using the V-Flat World V-Flats with the black sides in as negative fill to make for better separation on the white background. This is also something you should understand with lighting: how small changes make big differences. ■

Ian Spanier began taking photographs at six years old when his parents gave him his first point and shoot camera. After majoring in photography in college, Spanier worked in publishing as an editor, but making pictures never left him. Having only known 35mm, he taught himself medium and large format as well as lighting. Ian is a Westcott Lighting “Top Pro,” as well as a Brand Ambassador for Spider Holster, CamRanger, ThinkTank, Hoodman USA, Naroo Global and True Classics. His added affiliations with V-Flat World and Sekonic bolster his reputation as an expert in his field. He lectures regularly for Canon, B&H Photo, and PPA.

website: ianspanier.com **instagram:** [instagram.com/ianspanier/](https://www.instagram.com/ianspanier/)



Editing Workflow For Painterly-Style Portraits



with **Jen Hargrove**

When it comes to creating my painterly-style images, I wouldn't really say I have a crystal ball. I generally have no clear vision of what a finished product will look like exactly when I'm done with it—an idea, yes, but a clear vision? No. The finished image could be an award-winner, or it could be a train wreck. Some artists, like my mentor in this style, Richard Sturdevant, visualize their finished product, or they diagram the process or even create a flowchart to map out their progress towards a finished image. My style, by contrast, is a bit of a Zen journey, much like an unscripted road trip—I know I'm there when I get there. If this sounds familiar to you, perhaps this painterly style of editing is for you.



Image © Jen Hargrove Photography

1. THE SETUP

I begin my painterly images before I press the shutter button. The subject matter of my images varies widely, from the cute and cuddly to the old and grizzly (literally...although, I guess, technically, she was a brown bear). I photograph animals, children, teens, and eclectic subjects like firemen and sailors. With each image, posing at the moment of capture is critical. I look for the details that will set the image apart. I light my subjects with purpose and intentionality. Since we tend to view images from left to right, at least in the Western world where my work is generally viewed, I light my scenes in that fashion—left to right. None of the capture is an accident.

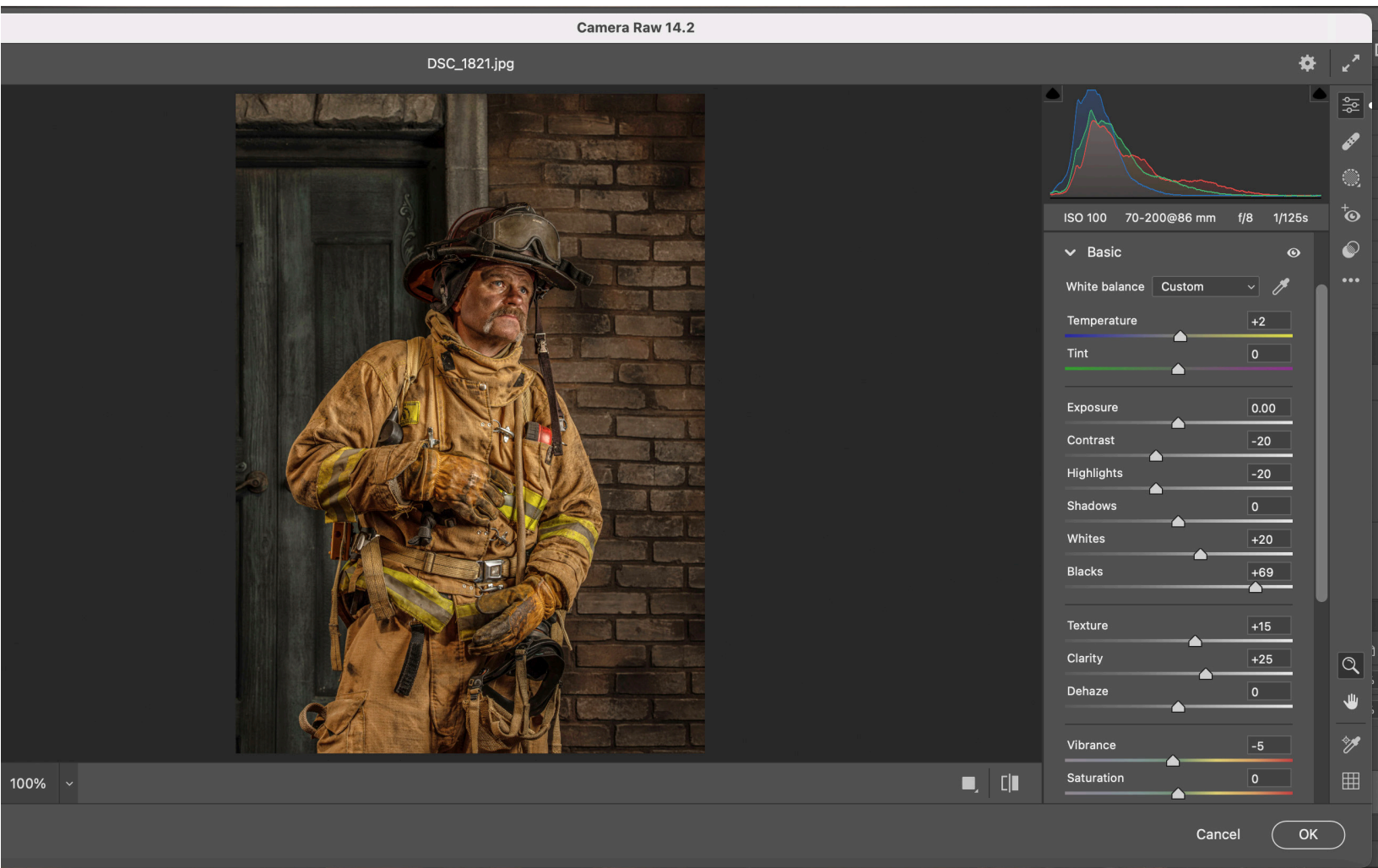
In camera, I create my photographs as JPEG images, as opposed to RAW images because I tend to photograph dark, exposing for the shadows in my subjects. Darker, slightly underexposed images allow me to make an image without losing detail in the highlights while keeping enough detail in the shadows that I'm able to begin my painterly workflow, bringing out the details even more as I go.



2. THE PRE-PAINTING PROCESS

With a photograph or series of photographs now captured, I start the initial, pre-painting editing process in Photoshop. I start with the basic cropping and straightening, if necessary, and then begin to eliminate any obvious distractions in the image. My method for getting an image ready for fine tuning begins on a duplicate layer of the background image. I change the blend mode of the duplicate layer to “Screen” in my Layers Palette, and then use the Eraser Tool on the duplicate layer to revert to the background layer if the “Screen” mode has made the image overly bright. Since I’m working on a duplicate layer, I’m not bothered by the fact the Eraser Tool is destructive—I still have the original background layer if I need it. I use the Eraser Tool at this stage primarily to eliminate distractions, to brush light back away from the skin and hair and from any other spot that draws the viewer’s eye away from the subject.

Once the light is right on the duplicate layer, I combine the two layers. I rarely work with more than three layers open on my palette at a time.



3. CAMERA RAW FILTER

Next, I create another new layer and change the Blend Mode to Screen, and do it again another time. Creating these additional screen layers brings in additional highlights into my dark images without clipping them. I combine these additional layers into one, and rename it “Extraction.” It’ll come into play shortly.

Even though I don’t shoot in RAW, I rely heavily on Adobe’s Camera Raw filter to create my painterly images. Camera Raw has become my favorite tool in the toolbox I have available to create my pieces. The powerful processing filter, which was once only available as a plug-in to Photoshop, now gives an artist a vast amount of control over a wide array of details in a digital image. By manipulating the pixels in an image using the sliders in Camera Raw, my post processing starts to emerge, and I begin to see quickly what my image will become.

The next step in the process is to create another new copy of the background layer. This is the layer where the Camera Raw Filter effects will be added. At this point, I turn off the visibility of the top Extraction layer, and work on the middle background copy layer.

I open the Camera Raw Filter from the Filter menu. Once there, it becomes a “season to taste” kind of exercise, but in general, my settings are:

Blacks – from 20 to 100 depending on the image (every image is different)

Contrast – around -20

Highlights – I move down to about equal with my Contrast setting

Whites – go up about the same amount

Vibrance – I move down just a touch, around -5

Temperature – depends on the image, but I’ll generally move up or down +2 to -2

Clarity – is used to make an image look “gritty,” so that slider usually goes to around +25, according to the subject and taste

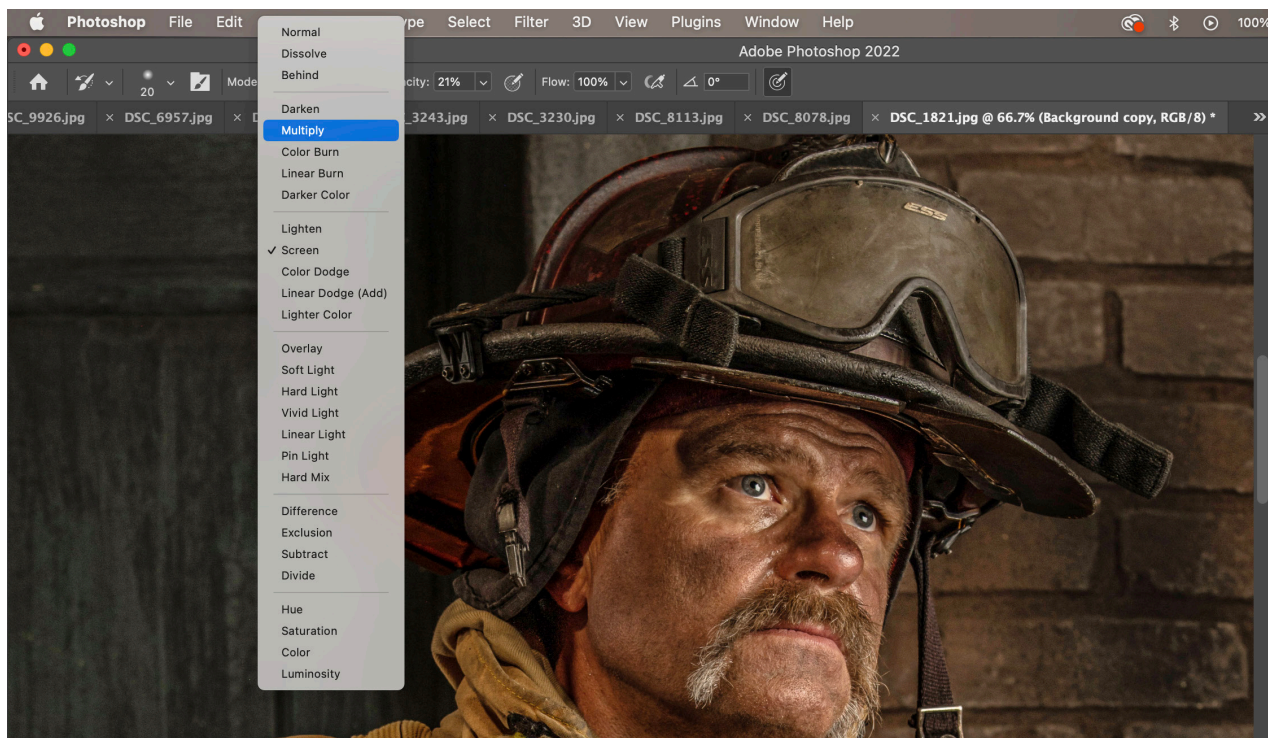
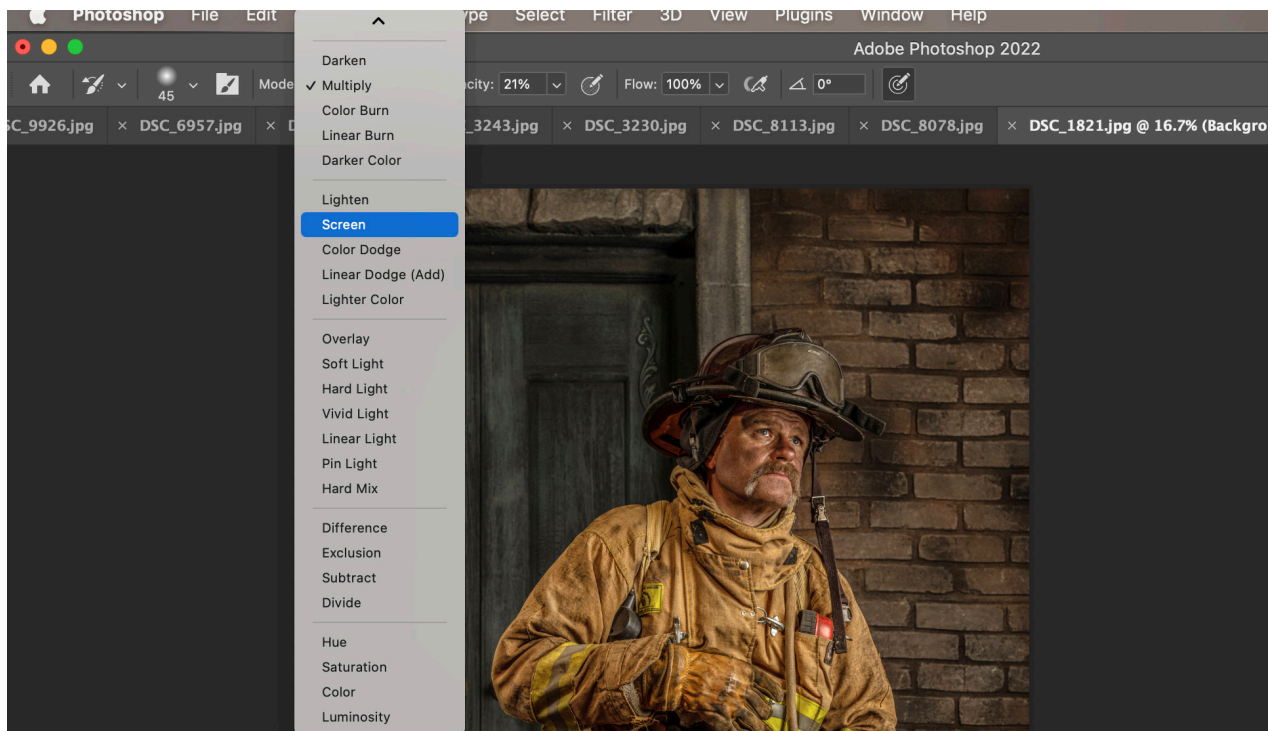
Texture – goes to about a +10, which may be a little too sharp, but I’m setting the image up for painterly blending later



4. PAINTING

Next, I go back to the Extraction Layer, turn its visibility back on, and open the Properties window and click on “Remove Background.” This will mask out the background of the Extraction Layer. I drag the mask to the middle layer and turn off the visibility of the Extraction Layer. Now, working on the image in the middle background copy (not the mask), this is where the painting comes in. I select the History Brush from the Tools palette (making sure it’s the History Brush and not the Art History Brush), then go to the History panel and check the last visible action.

With the History Brush selected, I set the hardness of the brush to about 10% and the opacity of the brush to about 5%. I always ensure the Shape Dynamics is selected in the Brush Settings Panel. To work in the highlights of the image, I set the Mode of the History Brush to Screen; conversely, to work in the shadows, I set the Mode to Multiply. I begin with the highlights and paint in passes over the highlight areas of the image until I start to see something I like. I’ll switch to Multiply and work with successive passes over the shadow areas of the image, again, until I see what I’m looking for. I paint in very light strokes to eventually tell the story that I want to tell with the image. The crystal ball vision starts to become clearer with each successive brush stroke.



This technique is especially well-suited for character portraits. I could use a traditional “dodge and burn” technique in a variety of ways, but this painterly technique achieves the effect without adding digital noise and artifacts in the shadows. It works really well on hair, on men’s beards, the fur on animals, clothes, and uniforms. It’s great for adding detail and interest in areas of images that may otherwise be overlooked. This technique does tend to be a repetitive process, so patience is a plus.





Image © Jen Hargrove Photography

5. FINISHING TOUCHES

If the image needs additional fine-tuning, frequency separation, especially on softer images can help with smoothing and blending, which I will do after a version of the image has been flattened and saved. This technique is not ideal for very heavily painted portraits or for heavily painted landscapes and scenic images. For those images, I use a Mixer Brush and blend, blend, blend.



Image © Jen Hargrove Photography



Image © Jen Hargrove Photography

The results I've achieved with this technique speak for themselves. I may not have known where I was going to begin with, but awards, accolades, happy clients, and occasionally a few internal butterflies, told me I was there when I got there. ■

Jen Hargrove is an award winning portrait and fine art photographer and Miller's Professional Imaging Speaker Team Member based out of Big Piney, Wyoming. Jen is a PPA Master of Photography, Photographic Craftsman and a WPPI Associate. She is known for her classic, painterly style, fine art pet, child and character portraits as well as waterscapes and abstract pieces.

website: jenhargrovephotography.com [instagram.com/jenhargrovephotography/](https://www.instagram.com/jenhargrovephotography/)



A woman with teal hair and a black jacket is holding a glowing red and black object. The background is a solid red color.

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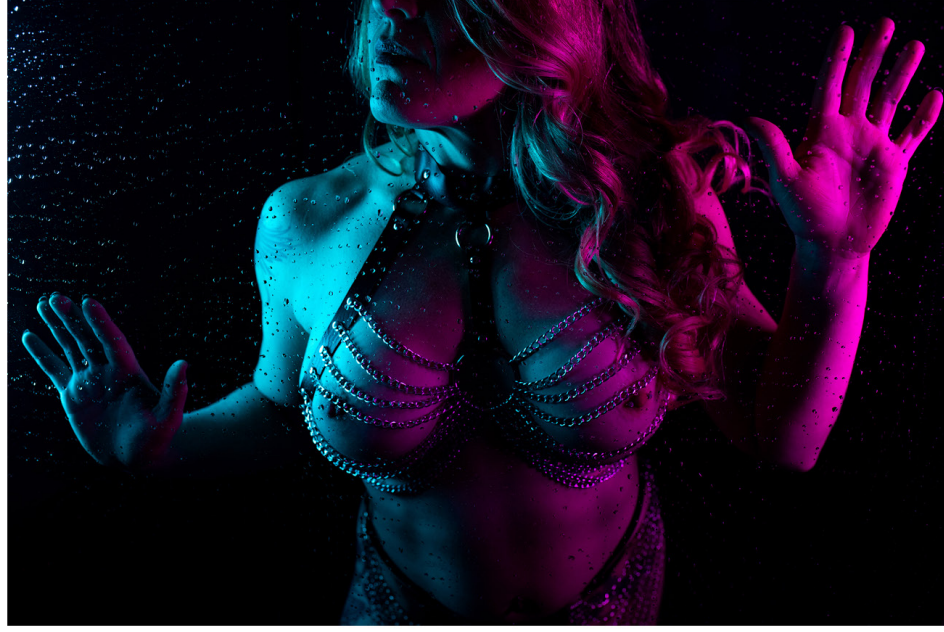


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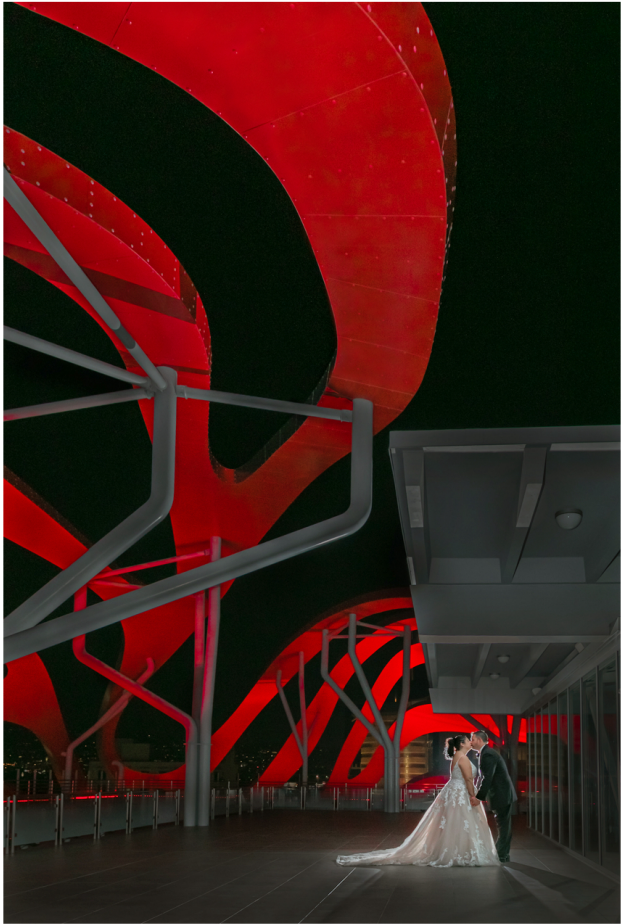






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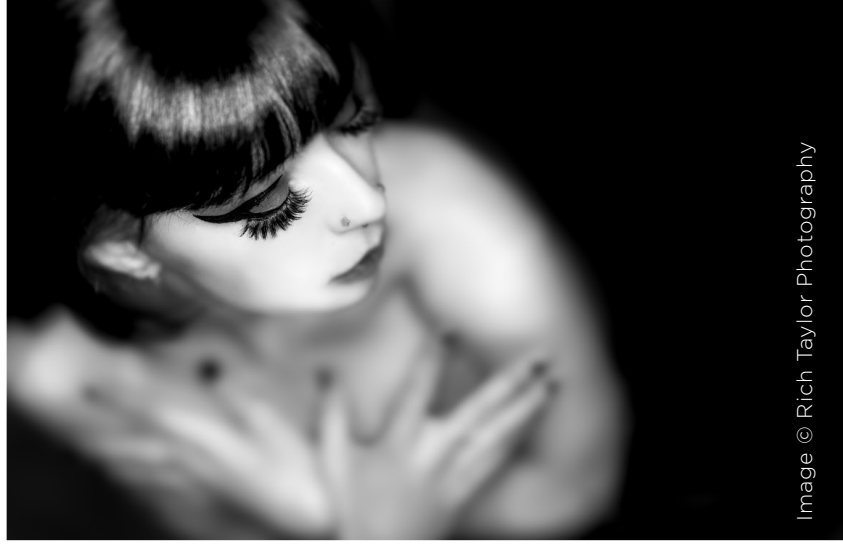


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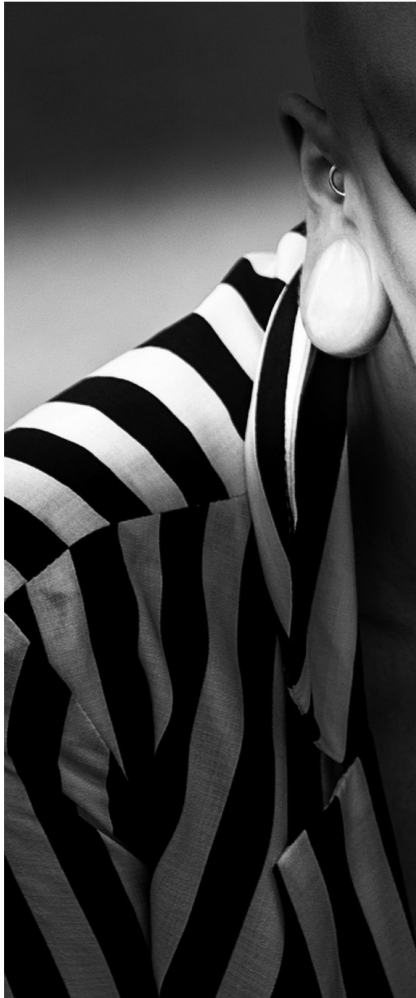
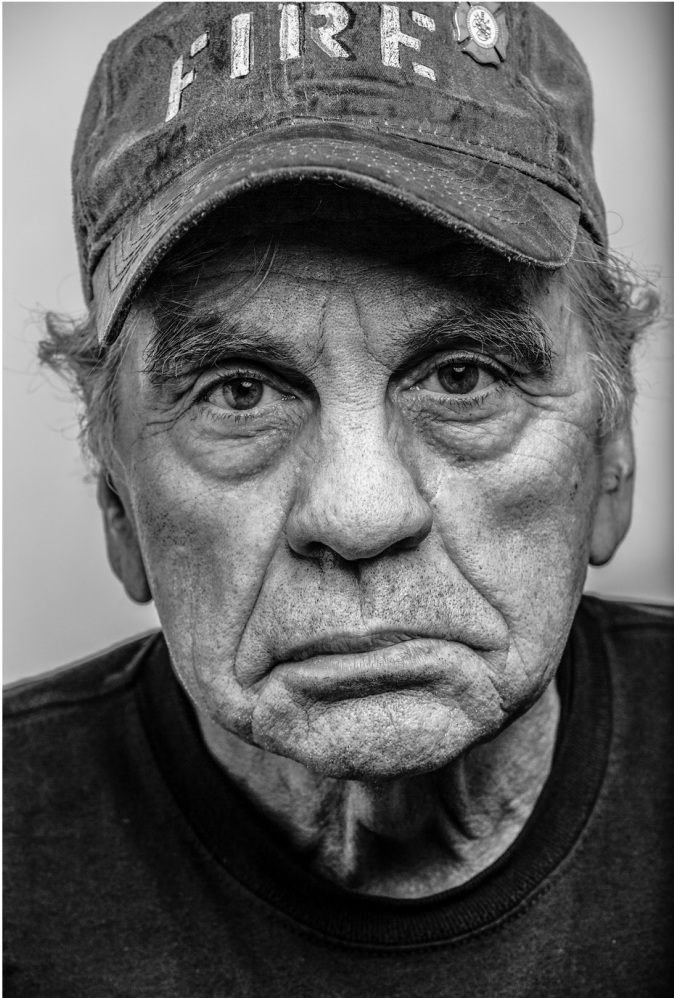




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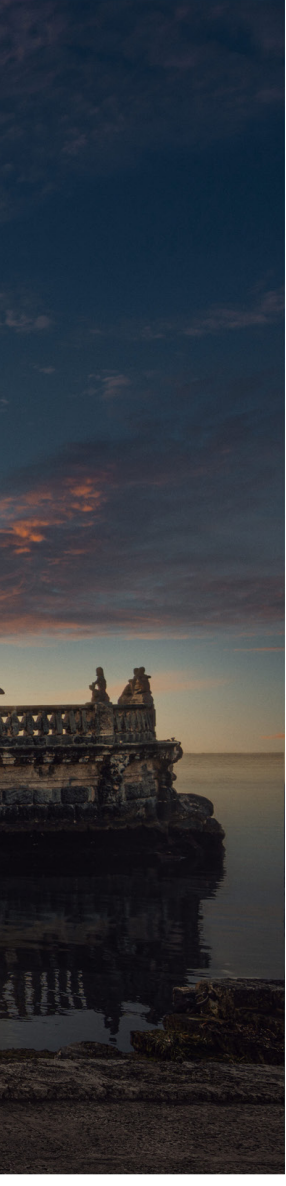


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Photography Styles: Natural Light and Airy vs Dark and Moody



with **Vanessa Joy**

If you've been in the photography business for a while, you already know that mood is a huge component of any picture you take. Do you want your photo to be bright and airy? Do you want a dark and moody vibe? Knowing how to create the right kind of atmosphere around a portrait or candid shot is an important skill if you want to keep your clients coming back for more.

In this post, I'm going to give you some tips on how you can make your photos light and airy or dark and moody—all in the same location! I've used the techniques discussed below in my business for years, and trust me, they really work. Let's start with how to achieve that light and airy style.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR PHOTOS LIGHT AND AIRY

The first step you can take to give your photos that light and airy look is to shoot directly into the light. Use a reflector to shine the natural light of your background cleanly onto your subject's face. The effect will be light coming from both behind and in front of your subject, literally surrounding them. If you snap a photo in a bright outdoor environment with this setup, you may not even need a super high shutter speed or ISO to get the result you want; I've taken photos with a 1/125 shutter speed, an ISO of 400, and an aperture setting of f/2.2 and gotten great pictures!



What if you don't have a big, bright window as a backdrop? If you can find a natural light source that's bright enough for side lighting of your subject, you can position your reflector on the opposite side to fill in the shadow, and shoot your photos in the same way. You may want to adjust your shutter speed a little bit (for instance, go to 1/200), but as long as you're taking a frontal picture with a fairly light background, you should be able to achieve that "airy" style you're looking for.



TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR PHOTOS DARK AND MOODY

As you may have already guessed, one of the first steps I take when I'm looking for a "dark and moody" style photo is to find a dark background for my subject. Shocker, right? But the next step may surprise you: I actually bring my subject closer to the light source for my photo. Here's the reason why: When your subject is closer to the light, you'll get a much greater contrast between the light and the shadow, which tends to create a moodier effect. (That's why when you're taking light and airy photos, you want your subject to be fairly distant from the window or other light source you're using.)

You typically won't need to fill your subject's shadow side when you're aiming for that darker style. Instead, you'll probably want to create "negative fill." You can use the dark side of your reflector, or even open up a black umbrella to create more of a shadow on your subject's shadow side. Also, be sure to angle your shots more toward that shadow side instead of into the lighting.

One thing to keep in mind is that your subject may start to "fade" into the darker background without any extra setup. For instance, if your subject has dark hair, it may be hard to see where the hair ends and the background begins. One way you can fix that issue is by using your reflector as a "hair light." You're not trying to fill in the shadows, but just provide some extra contrast for the subject's hair versus the background.

Here again, you can play around with your camera settings, but you'll probably be able to use a lower ISO (maybe between 200 to 400). I've taken great "dark and moody" photos with a shutter speed of 1/200 and an aperture of f/2.5.

What if you don't want a natural light source for your picture, or want a slightly different vibe in your darker-styled photos? You can look for a "hard" light source (in other words, a small light source like a lamp, preferably in isolation). A hard light source can make the contrast between your subject's two sides even more pronounced; and if you need to, you can block out any ambient light from the frame by using the dark side of your reflector to screen your subject's shadow side.

Hard light sources can often give photos a warmer tone, but they are still great catalysts for that dark and moody vibe you're going for. One way to eliminate any extra warmth is to take manual control of your camera's white balance. Of course, your moodier photos don't have to contain hard shadows to create the desired effect (in fact, they may be almost as "soft" as your light and airy pictures).





EDITING YOUR PHOTOS IN LIGHTROOM

Whichever style you're shooting for, you can always touch up your photos in Lightroom to get the perfect final product. When editing my light-and-airy-style photos, I use a couple of presets: (1) my Joyfully Simple preset, and (2) my Light and Airy preset. Go figure, right? If you want to grab these presets for yourself, feel free to get them at presets.breathetheyourpassion.com.



When it comes to the dark and moody style, your original photos may not be quite as forgiving on your subject's skin as the light and airy pics. So what I usually do is go over these photos with a local adjustment brush preset that I use to soften skin. Then I move on to brightening the subject's eyes and making their colors stand out more vividly. Plus, you may need to make the whites of their eyes a little whiter.

Finally (and in my opinion, this is the most important thing), I do something called "punching the lashes." Since our eyes naturally go to points of contrast in a photo, I enjoy darkening the subject's eyelashes and eyebrows so that they really "pop" in the image. If you compare pictures that have been edited this way in Lightroom to their originals, I'm sure you'll be able to tell the difference!



So there you have it! The most important key to achieving a “light and airy” or “dark and moody” look, or even both in the same location, is understanding how light affects your subject, and playing around with it until you get the desired effect. The editing that happens later is just the icing on the cake! If you’d like to learn more about how to get the lighting you want, check out my other videos and articles at breatheyourpassion.com. ■

CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE VIDEO!

Vanessa Joy has been a professional wedding photographer since 2002, and an influencer in the photographic community for years. She has taught photographers around the globe at almost every major platform in the industry (LearnPhotoVideo.com). Vanessa has been recognized for her talent and business sense at the renowned industry events CreativeLIVE, Clickin’ Moms, WPPI and ShutterFest. Her peers love her informative, open-book style of teaching.

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- **Westcott FJ200 + Westcott X2m Universal Trigger + Westcott Rapid Box Switch Octa-M** for winning photographer
- **Multi-Spread feature in Shutter Magazine** for model & photographer
- **Fully Stylized Portfolio Shoot** (5 outfits & looks) with Sal Cincotta for winning model
- **Lifestyle shoot with Sal Cincotta** for winning photographer
- **Cover of Shutter Magazine** for winning model (shot by Sal Cincotta)

23K
images submitted

400+
photographers entered

200
models competed

GRAPHER:
SCOTT

MODEL:
FAREN CAMPBELL



GET TO KNOW THE WINNERS





model winner faren aimeé

@farenaimee @modelfarenaimee



TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF

My name is Faren Campbell, aka Faren Aimeé! I'm from Raleigh, North Carolina and currently reside in Washington, DC.

I received my Bachelors of Allied Science from Florida A&M University and obtained a Masters in Operations and Project Management from Southern New Hampshire University.

My background in modeling started when I was a mannequin model for Limited Too in the 90s, and took off from there being internationally published and a runway model.

I also have a history in pageants, and was the title holder as Miss DC for America 2021. My platform was "Thrive DC" as a community service advocate, providing food and sanitary needs to our DC community in need.

Not only serving my community, I serve our nation. I am an active duty officer in the United States Army where I continue to promote health and wellness for soldiers and civilians.

TIPS YOU HAVE FOR MODELS STARTING OUT?

I have four key tips:

1. Find your look: It may be confusing to the industry if a new model shows up looking different every time. They booked you because of your look on your composite card or how they met you. Ironically, in my backstory, I actually cut my hair because I started swimming more! However, it worked for modeling and in came the influx of bookings. I had to get all new headshots, but now it is me, and I truly enjoy leaning in to what makes me different and a stronger model.
2. Invest: Take time for professional shoots and knowing your measurements. You may have an agent to advocate for you, but it is up to you to market yourself. You are your brand!
3. Practice: Know your posing! That is one thing I love about modeling. We can all do the same pose, but our personal touch makes it different! Every model has that signature angle, that move, that emotion that is theirs. Know what is the most flattering to your look and continuously practice your posing and walk!
4. Be grateful: Always thank your team. Your name precedes you, and a reputation of gratitude will carry you farther in the industry.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOST DIFFICULT PHOTO SHOOT

I have had a few difficult shoots that involved snow/sub-temperature weather, to blaring sun! The difficulty is not showing the discomfort in your face and desire to go home!

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS AS A MODEL AND HOW DO YOU WORK TO OVERCOME IT?

I would not view it as a “weakness,” but I am overly aware that I carry a lot of muscle for a female model due to my bodybuilding and athletics. Therefore, I have had to learn how to soften my look as necessary given the client’s vision.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF MODELING?

Outside of modeling I am a community advocate for the surrounding homeless, I travel, and I stay active in multi-sport endurance activities! I enjoy the outdoors and pushing my athleticism to the limits.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH AS A MODEL?

I would say my greatest strength is bringing emotion, action, and really bringing the concept to life! I like to have fun on set and make sure that everyone is comfortable, laughing and having a good time. We are a family at that point, and it really makes the day go by!

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS AS A MODEL?

Personally I would love an opportunity to walk internationally.

I also make it a point to help upcoming models and share the lessons I have learned in the industry. I started my posing business "Poised Different," providing one-on-one Poise and Pose coaching. This is an evolving community where we have to stay two steps ahead and know how to confidently stand out!

HOW DO YOU STAY MOTIVATED AS A MODEL?

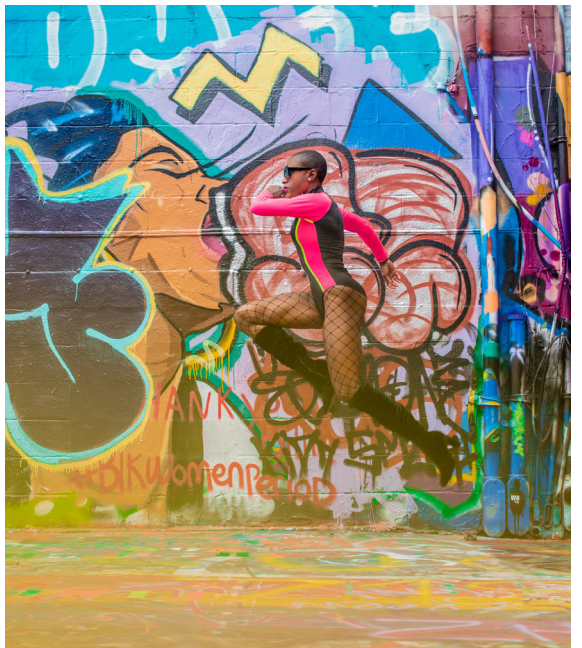
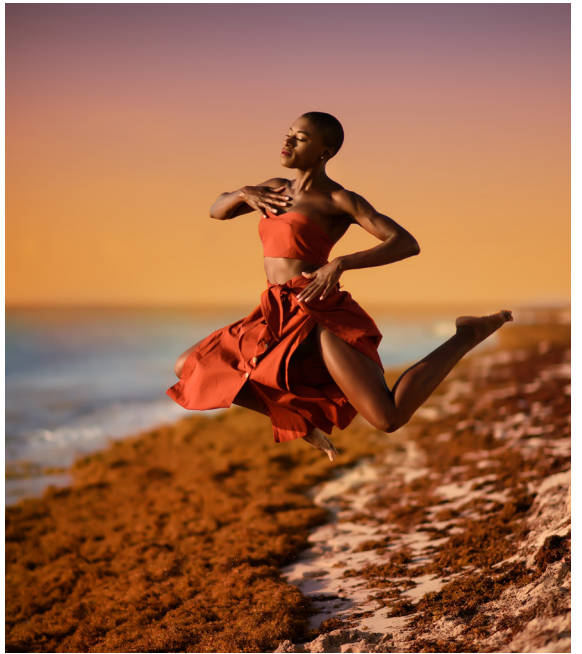
I look for work that will expand my modeling portfolio. Having invested interest in trying something new, I am excited to create and we are sure to get THE shot!

TELL ME SOMETHING I WOULDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, FROM LOOKING AT YOUR PORTFOLIO

I am a Triathlete/Ironman, Ultra trail marathon runner, and Bodybuilder! I am not afraid of adventure and have shot some active concepts that were extremely challenging, but also fun!

WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO IN THE MODELING INDUSTRY?

Grace Jones! She brought the edge; a pioneer for models of darker complexion, and the feminine androgynous genre, which I incorporate in my modeling as well.



model winner

Faren Aimeé // @farenaimée @modelfarenaimée





Faren Aimeé // @farenaimee @modelfarenaimee

final inspiration

photographer | alissa cincotta
website | behindtheshutter.com



image title	momma z
exposure	f4 @ ISO 50, 1/200th
lighting	natural light
gear	canon eos r5, canon rf 50mm F1.2 l usm
makeup artist	brandi patton of refine beauty



Cut

WHAT'S YOUR FLAVOR?

CREASED

VS CUT

Creased