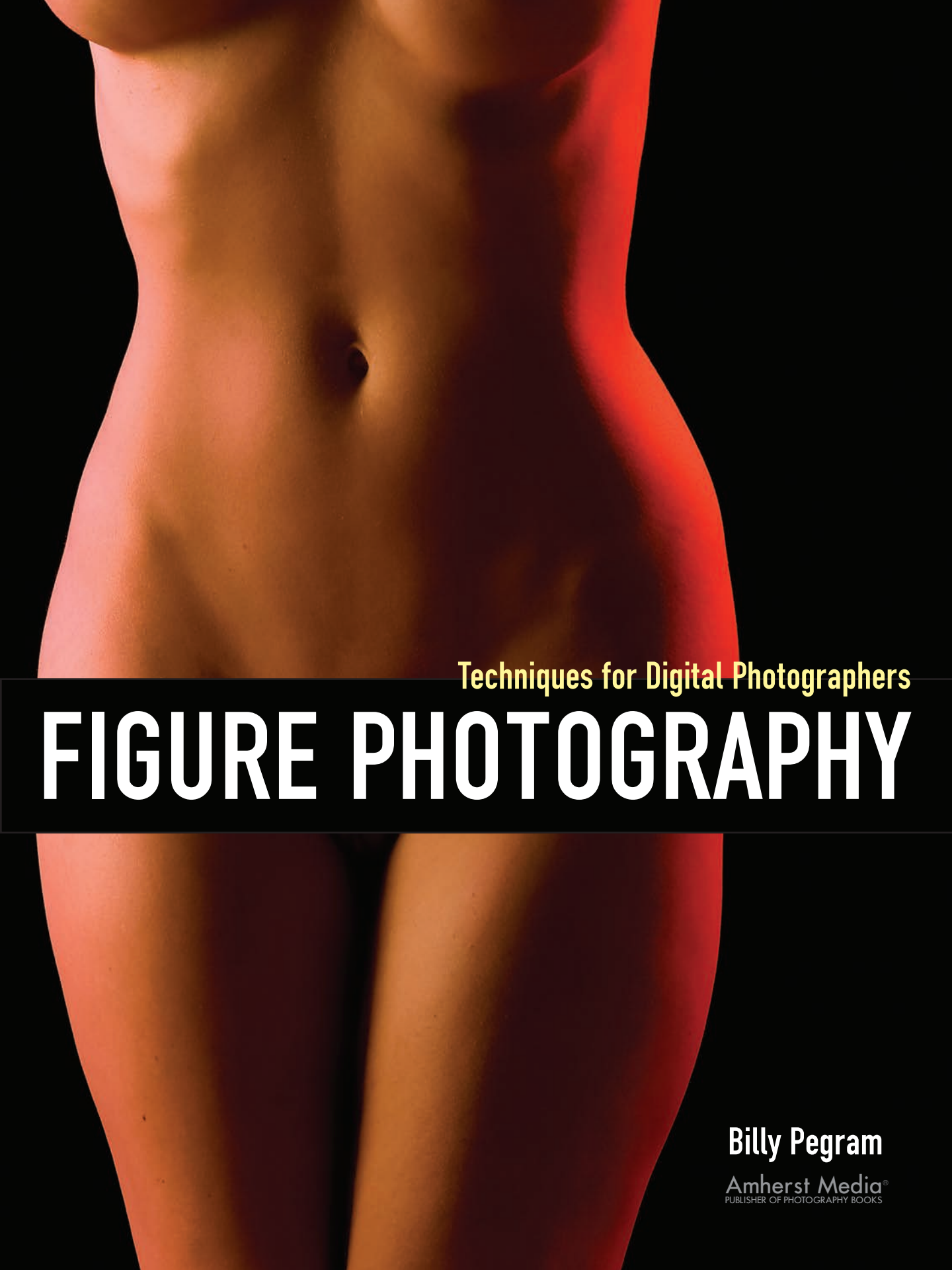




Techniques for Digital Photographers

FIGURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Billy Pegram

Amherst Media®
PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS



About the Author. Billy Pegram has produced cutting-edge fashion photography for clients such as Fila and Swatch. Additionally, he has directed and produced over 100 videos for The American College of Sports Medicine in conjunction with major sponsors such as Reebok, Gatorade, YMCA Corporation, and Stairmaster. Pegram is the author of *Fashion Model Photography: Professional Techniques and Images* (Amherst Media, 1999), *Professional Model Portfolios: A Step-by-Step Guide for Photographers* (Amherst Media, 2004) and *Posing Techniques for Photographing Model Portfolios* (Amherst Media, 2008). He currently resides in Las Vegas, Nevada. To learn more, visit www.RedCometStudios.com or e-mail Billy@RedCometStudios.com.

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Follow Your Passion.

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Introduction

When Amherst Media® asked me to write a book on figure photography, I was initially going to write and illustrate a “nude” book. However, there are many fine books of this genre on the market. The subject has been published by museums, art educators, and in great detail by Amherst Media® in conjunction with many of their great photographers.

I’ve been a commercial fashion photographer for over twenty-five years, so I have worked with

the human figure throughout my whole career, creating everything from highly stylized catalog work to erotic figure studies. Therefore, I decided to approach this book as an informative piece that would show not only the practical aspects of nude photography but also the thought process behind the creation of a photo image. I wanted to emphasize the details that need to be considered when creating an image but also the marketplace for that image. Therefore, this is *not* a book on theory. In fact, I’m sure there are some theorists who will disagree with my comments and suggestions.

Instead, the purpose of this book is to assist photographers to pre-visualize their figure work and create figure images that have a purpose.

Furthermore, the book is structured in such a way that it will allow you to assist models in developing their own style in the modeling world. You’ll see examples of several different categories of figure work and the qualities associated with them. There are endless ways to visually capture the beauty of a model, and I’ve tried to show a wide range of them—as well as the techniques required to create them.

This book contains a great deal of practical information that I have found beneficial when working with models and clients. It is geared to help you, professional and hobbyist photographers alike, to create more pleasing images.



A Short History of Figure Imagery

Since the first caveman used a piece of charcoal to scratch on the walls of his dwelling, man has been fascinated with the depiction of nudity. The nude has been a consistent theme in both religious and secular art throughout history. It is classic, timeless, and universal. In the hands of the artist, the perfection of the human form is glorified.

The earliest known nude art piece is a tiny statuette popularly called the Venus of Willendorf. It depicts a corpulent female and, as is typical of much early art, she is probably a fertility symbol of some kind. Classical art history of the nude, however, begins in Greece—although the nude male and the nude female were treated quite differently. The Greeks used nude male figures of ideal proportions as a way of memorializing both real people, such as champions at the Olympic Games, and to portray their gods and godlike mythical heroes. The female nude didn't appear until around the 4th century BC, when sculptors began to depict the goddess of love, Aphrodite. A double-standard persisted through the Roman era and, to some degree, into modern times.

In approximately the 13th century, depicting the female nude became not only respectable but also a major theme in the visual arts. Over the next several centuries, Italian artists represented female nudes as idealized forms, used

mainly for depicting grand historical scenes of both mythological and religious natures.

Slowly, over time, the classical, idealized nude form gave way to a more frivolous, lighthearted approach. By the Impressionistic period, well into the 19th century, female nudes with glowing sensuousness and in modern settings were very popular.

With the development of photography as an art form, it was only natural that the nude would continue to take center stage and to evolve along with society's changing moral and aesthetic standards. Today, as witnessed by the images in magazines such as *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and others, nude photographs can be sublimely beautiful, delightfully playful, or downright erotic.

Take your pick. In the end, images that make a statement, grab attention, and create an emotional impact are successful. Photographic techniques are secondary to the image and its emotional quality. The final result is a communication between the creator of the image and the audience.

Location Selection

Step off the seamless paper and add dimension to your work. Locations, whether exotic or simple, will add to the message of your images.

Why am I shooting? What are my goals? Who is my viewer? Is this a commercial image or an expression of my art? All these questions must be asked before you can proceed in planning a shoot. That's especially true when dealing with location work, since planning is necessary just to get to the location and be ready to deal with unknown conditions.

If your first answer is, "I just want to get to a great location and see what I can record," that's wonderful. However, to establish yourself as a commercial figure photographer you must become proficient and consistent in your work. You must be experienced enough to adapt and adjust to changes in the backgrounds, lighting, and environmental conditions.







Go With the Flow

When shooting on location, unexpected opportunities often provide interest, special design elements, or events that can help you shape your figurative images. Adept photographers learn to use changes in their environment.

When creating the image above, I was shooting on a dirt road near a dry lake bed. I had my model and reflectors in place when an obnoxious Jeep driver came to see what we were doing and decided to show off.

He began driving in my background and stirring up dust. As the dust flowed past us, we panicked to cover the open makeup and camera lenses. Our first reaction was to pack up and

leave the area. Then, however, the dust started to spread out, giving the background a much more interesting look—so interesting that when a couple of four-wheelers came by, I asked them to kick up some more dust in the background, which they happily did.

Brief the Model

When shooting on location, brief the model on how she should handle any interactions with Joe Public. More than one of my models has bragged that she was “shooting for a client” or “working on a nude shoot in the desert.” This can cause the person she’s addressing to call the authorities—or, conversely, to phone some friends so they can all stay and watch!

Play, Play, Play

When you're first starting out, see how creative you can be. How can you get the most from the model? How is it best to communicate with her about posing? What light works best for your style? How do you develop your style? What do you want as your message?

Keep in mind that the most interesting images are not always technically correct. Go beyond what the meter says is "normal." Experiment with the color balance, exposure, and any other variables you can conceive of during the exposure and in postproduction. Play, play, play!

Perks and Drawbacks

Outdoor locations help models get into the flow of the session. Since you're shooting with available light, she can see the scene around her. She can also feel the wind, or heat, or sand, or water. She becomes part of the whole. There may also be natural props to sit or lie on.

There are also potential problems, like extreme light conditions, weather, lack of privacy and rest-room facilities, or even a workable makeup station. Pre-planning will help avoid many problems—until the jobs or your budget allow you enough assistants to be prepared for anything.



Networking

A good source for shooting locations is camera clubs that share an interest in your style of work. Some photographers have boats or barns or trains or warehouses that they have repeatedly shot at—but these locations are new to you.

When teaching seminars, I have seen photographer's faces light up when I offer to take them to locations I use around Las Vegas. I also loan them equipment (so they don't have to fly it in) and introduce them to models and makeup people. It is all about sharing in the creative process. (*Note:* I have long wanted to establish a network of photographers to share information about locations in their area, as well as talent and rental resources. One of the biggest problems I face is flying to a region without necessary equipment, because of travel restrictions, and not knowing the best areas to shoot or the talent available.)



Figure nudes created on location can be incorporated into commercial images, such as this poster for a gun distributor.





Privacy and Permits

Privacy is essential. Scout for backgrounds that are removed from public view. These might include private gardens, farms, isolated beaches, or secluded woods.

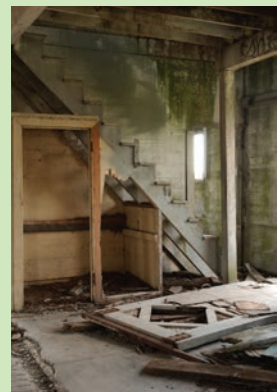
When using public areas, try to shoot on off days. The middle of the week works well. Tuck yourself off the trail or behind a hidden dune. Be careful; if you are seen, you *can* get ticketed.

I know several photographers who have gotten major tickets from rangers who thought they were shooting commercial images. These rangers want to protect the natural beauty from misuse by big advertising firms.

Many times you will find that a quick call and a permit will get you access to areas you didn't know existed. If you are open with the rangers ahead of time, they may set you up in an isolated area where they don't have to worry about Joe Public running into you.

Shoot Reference Images

As you encounter them, document potential new locations for shooting figure photography. These will be helpful resources when planning future shoots.





Pre-Scout

If possible, visit the area before the session to take sample photographs and make notes about the lighting. Note what props are available and what will be needed. Preparing a storyboard for the model and makeup artists will go a long way in helping you achieve your vision—and it will make it easier to communicate your vision to all involved. That small bit of preparation will also show your professionalism to the team.



Add Props

Simple props such as a hat, ribbons, a stool, a chair, or even a rope can add dramatic design elements to your figure photograph. Fabric probably is the most used accessory; it can enhance the model with color or movement. Fabric can even change the mood of the photograph, making it dreamy or romantic.

Props provide interest and continuity in the image. Sometimes, the props become the subject in-and-of themselves, which is okay as long as you, the photo artist, have decided to make the model secondary in the image. If the props don't add to the image, leave them out. Sometimes a simple image with clean lines is superior to a cluttered one.





Change It Up

When working with a model on location, if you find that the background lighting or other factors are influencing the images in a negative way, shoot a few images and then move on. Change the angles or change the lighting; do something to give you a chance to succeed.

Don't ever let the model see your frustration, though. It's best to explain that the lighting has changed negatively or that there are people in the distant background—whatever the case.

In no case should you make the model believe that she is the problem, even if she is. You may have to shift the camera position so her hips look better, but *she* is never the problem.



Model Selection

Many magazines and web sites specialize in a certain look, ethnicity, or style. Look for ones that promote a style you are at ease creating and a genre of models you appreciate. Study your target market's styles; they have often spent years developing their look, and their clients like it. Working within your style and marketing to clients with similar styles will help sell your images in a very competitive market.



Indoor Locations

Indoor locations require more refined lighting skills. However, a few simple techniques (covered in the next section) will go a long way toward capturing the images you desire.

There are many advantages to using a special indoor location—you have better security control, there are no weather issues to worry about, and there are generally convenient areas for makeup and changing (as well as nearby rest

rooms). Additionally, you'll usually have less travel time and the wear and tear on your equipment will be minimized.

Look for windows and doorways; consider using staircases and parking garages. Experiment with poses, lighting, locations, and props as you begin to create your own style and identity.

The erotic indoor image below was used as a billboard promoting a bar in Las Vegas.



Lighting and Exposure

What makes lighting “good”? What is the “correct” exposure? The answers are largely subjective. For example, the automatic exposure mode can give you what the camera’s *software* considers to be a “perfect” exposure—but that may not always be the effect *you* desire. The look you want might be darker and moodier than what the camera chooses or, conversely, lighter and more airy.

Likewise, direct sunlight and diffused sunlight produce two very different looks. Which of

those looks (whether hard, direct light or soft, diffused light) might be right for the image you envision is up to you—at least on shoots where you’re creating images for yourself.

When you’re working for clients, of course, your objective will be to create images that meet that client’s requirements. You must be able to previsualize your images and be able to repeat your results. Additionally, you’ll want the images you deliver to have a creative edge that will stand out enough to get you published.





These two images are the same. The second one was simply darkened in postproduction to give it a more dramatic effect. This is one way to impact the exposure and look of the lighting after the shoot.

Approaches, Part 1

When working with the nude, a photographer can take several approaches to lighting:

1. Use the surrounding backgrounds and lighting that are available at the time of the shoot. Shoot in doorways and shadow areas, or seek out hard light for more dramatic effects.
2. Schedule the shoot to assure the desired type of lighting for the images to be created. Shoot at one of the golden hours (just before the sun goes down in the evening or just as it rises in the morning). Be flexible and shoot on a cloudy day.
3. Take total control of the lighting in the photograph. Use flash to overpower the sunlight. Add reflectors, gobos, or scrims to modify the light. Move the shoot into the studio and add only the light you want.
4. Understand how the image can be altered in postproduction. Learn the endless possibilities of digital manipulation—and how they can impact the exposure and some aspects of the overall lighting effect.

Read the next section for more on each of these approaches—and their impact.

Approaches, Part 2

Each of the aforementioned approaches is valid. What is important is learning how and when to use the methods. This will allow you to reach the maximum potential of any given situation.

Approach 1, using whatever light is available, is a free-flowing way to work—and in many ways the most fun. Understanding how to best use your equipment and take control of situations is a necessity for success with this approach.

Approach 2, scheduling a photo session at one of the golden hours, will give you a great chance to create images with a warm glow and a beautiful effect. I like to start at the morning golden hour and keep shooting until the sun becomes too contrasty for my desired images.

Approach 3, adding to or modifying the light, gives you the most control of your images; your results are predictable and more consistently marketable. However, it requires additional equipment and expertise. In many situations, however, simply adding reflector or fill-in flash can add punch to an otherwise flat image.

Approach 4 involves taking control of the image in postproduction—and you don't have to become a Photoshop expert to reap these advantages. There are many creative, reasonably priced retouchers on the market. It is definitely to your advantage to know what *can* be done, and the difficulty of the work required to achieve an effect. With this knowledge, you can communicate your vision to the retoucher to ensure correct pricing and accurate results.

The bottom line is this: you need to use all the tools and creative methods available to you to create images that will communicate your vision as an artist.







Soft and Hard

Photo 1 shows how soft the lighting becomes when a thick cloud covers the sun. Shooting on a semi-cloudy day can be a frustrating experience. With the clouds moving across the sky, you must be able to constantly adjust for a change in exposure and lighting effects. However, with good timing, you can achieve the lighting effect you desire.

Photo 2 shows how turning the image black & white simplifies the shot and adds to its graphic presentation. Eliminating the color brings the image to a simpler form. I once heard a museum curator say that the reason most fine-art work is shot in black & white is that black & white doesn't exist in the real world; therefore, the image is broken into a more visual message.

Photo 3 illustrates how dramatic hard, direct sunlight can be. Notice how the shadows from the building—and even the water—have a sharp edge that adds drama to a simple image.

Quality of Light

The quality of light is generally defined as how hard or soft it is. Hard light is very bright and creates deep, crisp shadows while soft light is diffused, with gentle shadows that give a better range of details.

Direct sunlight, for example, is considered hard because it creates harsh shadows. Especially at midday it should be avoided in shooting people; it causes the eyes to appear dark and lifeless, and also puts harsh shadows under the nose. Additionally, models tend to squint uncontrollably at this time of day, creating more problems. Hard light can also accentuate concerns like large noses, scars, and wrinkles. Conversely, hard light—especially if it is from the side—can help contour a model's body with well-defined shadows. If it is exposed correctly, it can add punch and saturation to an image—but, again, be careful when using hard light on a model's face. (One solution, as seen on the facing page, is to turn the model's face toward the sun to minimize the hard shadows on it.)

Soft light, with its gentle shadows, is normally best for beauty shots. This is because it tends to have a smoothing effect on the skin, minimizing any flaws. For example, I particularly like to shoot when there is a light cloud cover. A light covering of clouds effectively diffuses the hard sun, resulting in soft light. Basically, the clouds turn the sun into one huge softbox. As a result, colors are more vibrant, shadows recede, and the contrast ratio between the shadows and highlights becomes much lower. This light can be beautiful and highly flattering to a model's face and figure.

The Golden Hours

As the sun sinks on the horizon (or rises from it), the rays become warmer in color due to the increased atmosphere blocking the shorter rays and allowing only the warmer, red rays to penetrate. These two times of day are called the golden hours, because of the way these warmer rays beautify the subject's face.

Unfortunately, these golden hours pass very quickly, so the photographer must plan ahead and work efficiently to take advantage of this magnificent light.

This image shows the beauty of golden hour lighting. The body painting was the same as in the previous images.





To illuminate my model against the last bit of light from the setting sun, I added a softbox to camera right.

Adding Light

Out of choice or necessity, photographers often supply additional light to the scene. This can be any light source that is not normally in the scene such as strobes, tungsten, or even car headlights.

What light is added, and how it's added, is largely a matter of taste and individual style. Some photographers love to add lots of light to a scene, using colored gels, spotlights, and other modifiers to produce creative effects. Others strive to create a natural look, as though the great lighting in their image was actually the result of ambient light.

Happily, the variety of lighting tools and effects at our disposal make it possible to achieve

just about any effect you can imagine—and to satisfy the needs of your clients effectively.

Lighting techniques are important and varied, so they are something we'll be looking at throughout this book.

Gobos

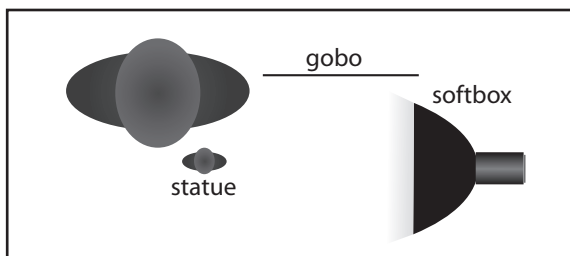
"Gobo" is an abbreviation for "go between." It describes a light-blocking device used between the light and the subject (or between the light and the camera lens). Using gobos will help you control the light that reaches your subject and is very helpful in preventing flare in situations where a light source is directed toward the lens.



1

Placing a Single Source

Sometimes, a single well-placed light is all you need to add. In the first image (1), a Photoflex half-dome softbox was placed to camera right. The model was screened from most of this light by a gobo. Notice how the statue is well sculptured, with ample highlights and shadows. This is because it was lit from the side. The softness of the shadows is the result of using a large light modifier (the softbox). Next (2), the statue was moved slightly more toward the softbox. The light is still soft but the statue has less detail. For the final image (3), the lighting stayed the same on the statue but the model moved back into the gobo effect, so very little light reaches her body. By understanding the position of your light in relation to the subject you can control the relative contrast and shaping you achieve.



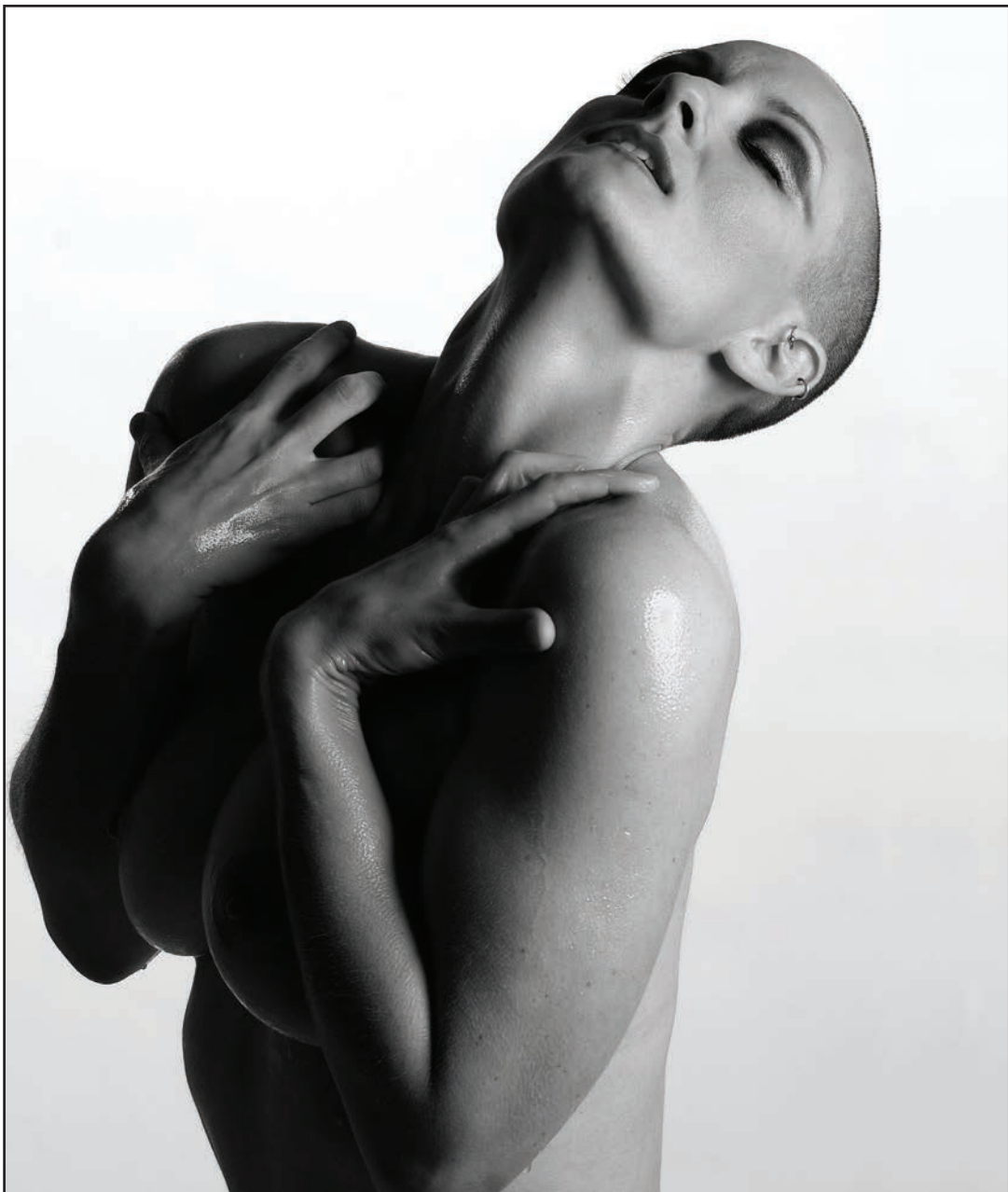
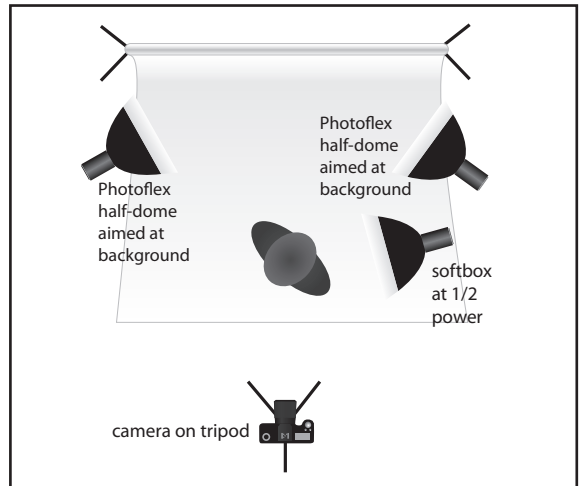
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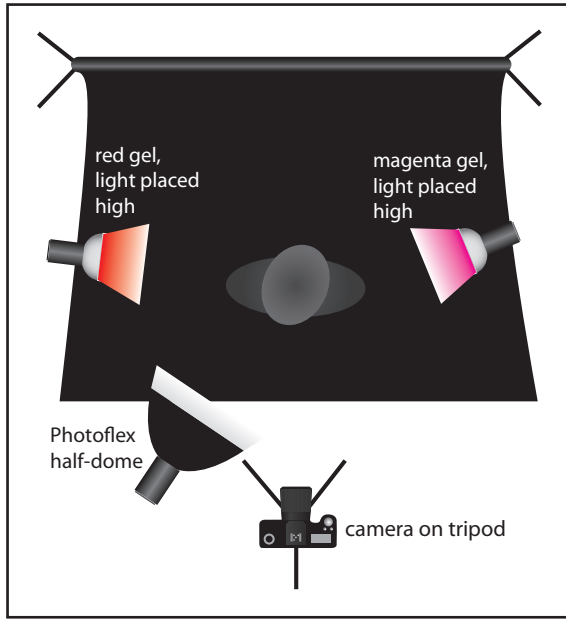


3

White Background

For a white background, start with some type of white surface (preferably smooth and flat), such as seamless paper. The exposure on this surface needs to be at least 1 stop brighter than the subject; some photographers prefer a 2- or 3-stop value over the subject for a high key effect. Explore your own preferences—but don't go too bright. Excessive light bouncing onto your subject from the white background will reduce sharpness, color saturation, and contrast.





Black Background

To create a black background you need some type of black surface, such as black velvet or velour. To keep it pure black, the exposure on the background needs to be 3 stops lower than the exposure on the subject.

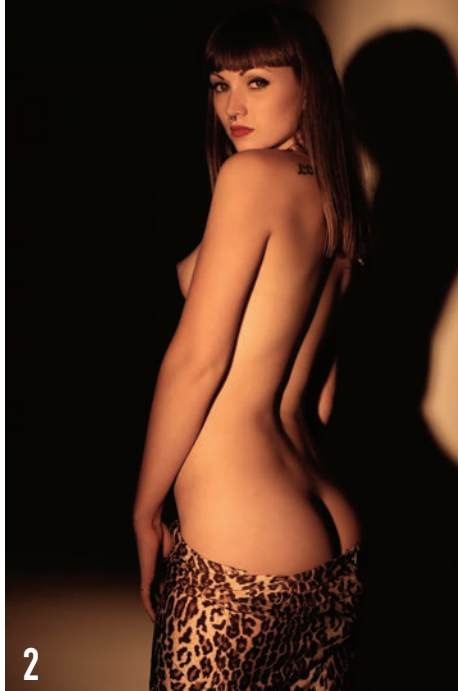
The lighting for these two images was set up in exactly the same way. The only difference was that the flash output on the main Photoflex half-dome was cut in the second exposure (2), making it 2 stops darker than the first shot (1). A red gel to camera left and a magenta gel to camera right, both placed high and angled down toward the model, added color on the edges of the model's body.

Light defines the form, features, and texture. Color enhances (or diminishes) the mood.





1



2



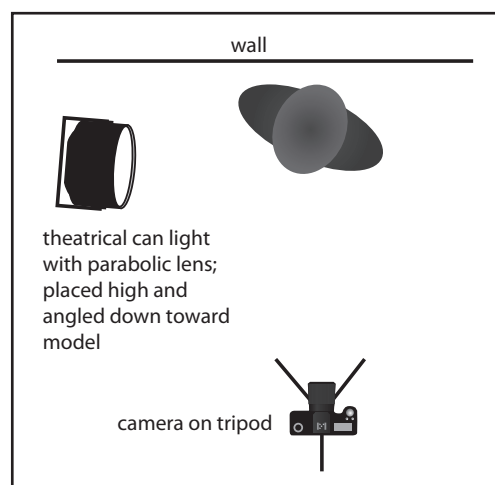
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4

Simple Variations

All four images were shot with the same lighting setup: a tungsten theatrical can. For the first image (1), the camera was set to a daylight white balance. For the next version (2), a black & white mask was used in Photoshop to drop out some of the red tone. Finally (3), grain was added for contrast. For a different look (4), the camera was set to match the tungsten light of the theatrical can. In all images, the model was posed close to the wall to enhance the shadow formation on it.



Window Light, Part 1

With a small, well-placed reflector, window light can be as effective as a major light set-up. Using a pose to enhance the light as it streams through the window can make the shot. In the top image, pillows were placed under the model's hips so the light could spill more on her buttocks and not just backlight her.

An advantage of using window light is that you can see exactly what you are going to get—assuming you expose correctly (or according to your lighting preferences). By using reflectors you can visually adjust the light to create your idea of the photograph. Window light is what the old master painters had and they were masters with it.





Window Light, Part 2

The setting for this series was a small warehouse, used as a simple weekend studio. The glass blocks didn't extend all the way to the floor, so I moved in a soft bench for the model to stand on. This allowed me to create a full-length shot with the glass blocks as both the light source and the background.

The secondary light source for this image was a theatrical can light (seen to the left in the photo below). This light, which is easily adjustable and moveable, was used for fill light on the model.

This series of images is a perfect illustration of the fact that you don't need a complex setup to create high-quality images. With just two lights, plus the camera's built-in controls and filters, you can create some dynamic photographs.

Simple Lighting, Dynamic Pose

When the lighting is simple, as in this window-light portrait, I suggest trying to use more interesting poses. This will help to better engage the viewer in the portrait.





Choose the Right Light for Your Objectives

There's no one answer when it comes to the right lighting. What makes the light "right" is that it achieves your creative goals for the image. Let's look at two examples.

For the image below, the goal was to create an image that looked as though the owl lamp was the only source of light. To do this, I placed a very small softbox (with a grid attached) overhead and close to the model. The light was barely out of the viewfinder, in fact. The shutter was dragged to allow the low light level from the owl lamp to register in the image.

In postproduction, I converted the image to black & white, then added a brown tone to give it the warmth I had envisioned.

Now, look at the image on the facing page. Here, I was wanted a simple shot of the model's long, beautiful legs—something that would work well in her portfolio. To get the look I wanted, we worked with the late afternoon sun. I had her face the sun, to fill her face with even lighting. Her body is turned slightly away from the sun, which creates some shadowing to reveal the shape of her figure. Placing her on a small rise so I was shooting up at her helped visually to lengthen her body.





Capturing Movement

Movement during the making of photographs can be a nightmare or a gem. Learning to control motion—or, better yet, learning how to *use* movement creatively—will add another tool to set your images apart.

There are three basic ways to control motion in your images. First, and most commonly used, is shutter speed. Second is the duration that a potential image is exposed to light (*i.e.*, the flash duration). Third is using postproduction.

Shutter Speed: Slow

Controlling the shutter speed is one of the basic exposure controls used in creating a photograph and is, therefore, a necessity in everyday pho-

tography. Now, though, let's talk about using it as a unique tool in your creative figure work. Normally, photographers choose a shutter speed that is fast enough to freeze any motion in a scene. However, if the shutter speed is set slow enough and the model is asked to move during the exposure, unique images will be created.

In these photos, the model was asked to hold still and move only one element of her body during the long exposure ($\frac{1}{2}$ second shutter speed at f/16). In the first shot, she swept her right arm in a circle. In the second and third images, she moved her head from front to back. For these images, the model was lit with a single tungsten light source.







Shutter Speed: Fast

High shutter speed can be used to sharply freeze action—but it takes good timing. Pick a point and pre-focus, then have your model begin her action. Be prepared for some trial and error until you capture the movement at its zenith.

The faster the action, the faster your shutter speed needs to be to freeze it. In this case the model was frozen in flight with a shutter speed of $\frac{1}{160}$ second (f/8, 105mm, ISO 200).

Practice Shooting Action

Practice shooting sports to learn how to capture at the peak of action. Let me tell you a story.

Having shot sports in high school, I thought I was prepared when I was hired for my first professional job: photographing horse racing at The Fairgrounds in New Orleans. My employer suggested I practice for a few days before I started the job. He was so right. On my first full day of shooting, a large portion of the images showed nothing but horsetails! I was not used to picking up the horse in the viewfinder and tracking it through the photo as I released the shutter. (Learning this technique later came in handy when I was hired to shoot car racing for a sponsor!)

Short Light Duration

The second method for controlling motion is the duration the subject is exposed to light. This is normally where flash photography comes in.

These images were all exposed at shutter speeds from $\frac{1}{60}$ to $\frac{1}{125}$ second. Usually, this would result in motion blur. However, because the subject was lit only for the flash duration ($\frac{1}{1500}$ second), that is all that registered in the capture. As long as your shutter speed is slow enough to allow the flash to fire, you will get the results needed.

Freezing motion can be fun and rewarding. In fashion and catalog work, this is an important technique because you normally want the clothing to be as sharp and free from blur as possible. Therefore, this technique can let you have fun with movement in the skirt or blowing up the dress—or even blowing the hair. With a short flash duration, you will create interest and fun movement in the image *without* sacrificing sharpness.







Postproduction Enhancement

The third method for creating/controlling motion is postproduction—using a digital processing program to manipulate the image and create the desired motion effect.

In this image, I used a slow shutter speed to blur the background as I was panning the camera to follow the model. I also fired the on-camera flash to freeze her against the blurred background.

However, the ambient light was very bright, so I couldn't use a slow enough shutter speed to totally blur the background as I desired. I would have preferred to use $f/11$ or $f/16$, allowing me to use a very slow shutter speed—but the flash output was limited to $f/6.3$ so the fastest available shutter speed was $1/125$ second. As a result, I didn't get the total blur effect I wanted.

Fortunately, I had played with the motion blur filters in Photoshop before, so I knew that I was going to be able to tweak my results in postproduction. Adding a little additional digital blur in the background finally gave me the look I was after.

Makeup and Styling

I was raised with a sister who had four brothers—so a “girly girl” she was not. As a result, once I felt comfortable enough in my photographic ability to photograph models, I encountered another roadblock: I couldn’t communicate with the makeup artist.

Did I want heavier eyeliner? The inside of the eyes lined? How much concealer? Smoky eyes? The look of the nose narrowed? The questions were endless—and I was lost. Finally, I walked into a hair salon and asked the owner where I could learn the basics of applying makeup. As it turned out, that was a win-win situation. Not only did I get trained in makeup, but I met a client who helped me get started in fashion work.

In this section of the book, we are going to look at the basic steps needed to apply makeup

properly. The lesson will be in two parts. First, we’ll look at the application of makeup for simple, clean headshots. Then we’ll study techniques for creating a much more dramatic look for evening.

The makeup is being applied by my fabulous photo stylist and makeup artist, Wendalynn Nelson. Wendalynn is not only an incredible technician but also amazingly creative. We have what we call “play days,” where the objective is simply to create something fun and interesting. You would be surprised at how many “play day” images have resulted in commercial jobs!

Before shooting for any project, the photographer must decide on the important concepts of the shoot and what style the images are to portray. For this lesson, we wanted to create

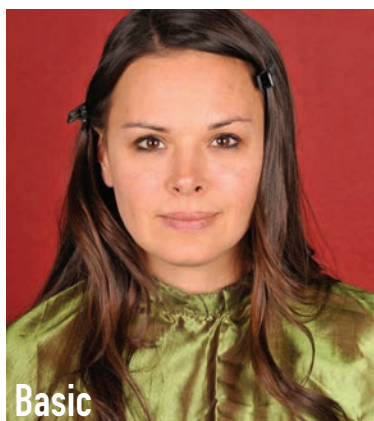
Building Your Team

If you want to succeed in photography, it takes a team—a group of individuals with diverse talents that each advance the project as a whole. Typically, that includes a second photographer or an assistant, a wardrobe stylist, a good makeup artist, and a good hair specialist. In large commercial shoots, you can add to that list an art director and the client. For most applications (including test shoots), one person can be doing several jobs. Usually, the makeup artist is also the hairstylist—and if there are a small number of models, the same person may do the wardrobe styling, too.

As a beginning photographer, you will improve your chances of creating great images by building your own team. Surround yourself with the best people around—people who do their jobs well and are dedicated to the quality of the final image. You also have to take responsibility for communicating your vision of the image to everyone involved. Until you understand lighting, composition, and posing well enough to communicate your needs clearly to your team, you can’t expect to excel at the added challenges of directing a fashion model in a major shoot or infusing each shot with your personal style.

final images that would show the details in the makeup application. Therefore, flat lighting was required. Additionally, the lighting had to be structured so that the makeup artist could work around the model without obstructing the even

lighting on the model. To do this, we placed the model on a stool with two 6-foot Photoflex softboxes on either side of her. A small Photoflex softbox was added directly overhead to capture the detail in her hair.



Basic

Clip back the hair so you can easily access the model's entire face.



Tweeze any stray hairs along the eyebrows.



Apply a moisturizer to the entire face and a silicone primer to the under-eye area and smile lines.



Eyeshadow and Liner

Apply foundation on the forehead and eyelid. Add highlight shadow (here, shimmery cream) over the entire lid.



In the outer corner of eye, apply medium brown in a V shape pointing away from eye corner. With a soft brush, blend the darker shade into lighter shade over the brow bone.



Apply pencil liner to the top and bottom of lids and blend with matching powder on an eyeliner brush.



Eye Touches

Using a brown matte powder and a thin angular brush, apply to the eyebrows.



Start on the inner corner of the eye and follow brow bone along the natural arch.

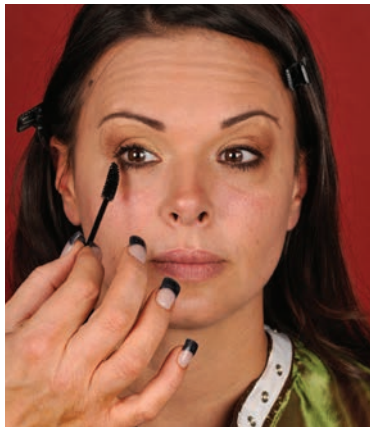


With a soft brush, blend any areas that look harsh.



Mascara

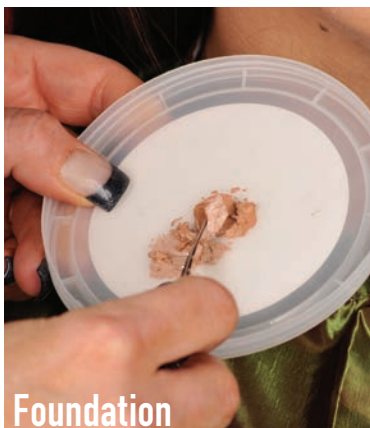
Lifting the lid softly to prevent blinking, have the model look forward and apply mascara evenly to the top lashes.



Have the model look forward and slightly up to apply mascara evenly to the bottom lashes.

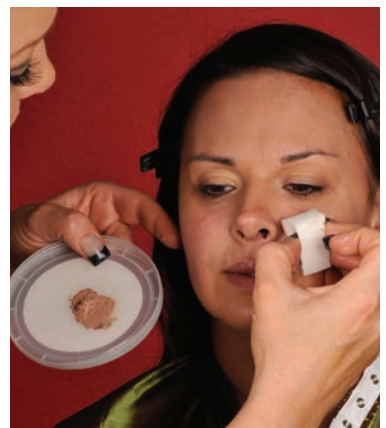


After all shadow blending and mascara is finished, use a makeup remover pad to remove loose powder under the eyes.



Foundation

Using a spatula, mix lighter and darker foundation shades into your neutral color to get an exact color match. On one side of the palette, save a lighter shade to use as under-eye concealer.





Face Shaping 1

After cleaning the under-eye area, apply concealer (two shades lighter than selected foundation) under the eyes and in the corners of the eyes.



Apply selected foundation to face and neck, blending well with existing foundation. Under the eyes, blend for a close color match but leave the area slightly lighter.



Using a sponge or brush, cover and seal the foundation with powder in a color that is slightly lighter than the foundation.



Face Shaping 2

Apply a soft neutral shade of powder blush under the cheekbones and blend.



Blend the blush up softly over the apples of the cheeks.



Line the hairline and jaw line with blush to contour and give separation from the hairline and neck.



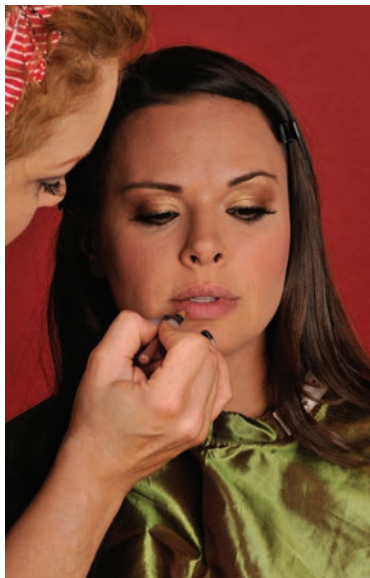
Carefully remove the eyelashes from plastic form without ripping them. Remove any extra adhesive from the strip. Then, apply a small amount of latex lash adhesive to the strip area only and let dry for 20 seconds.



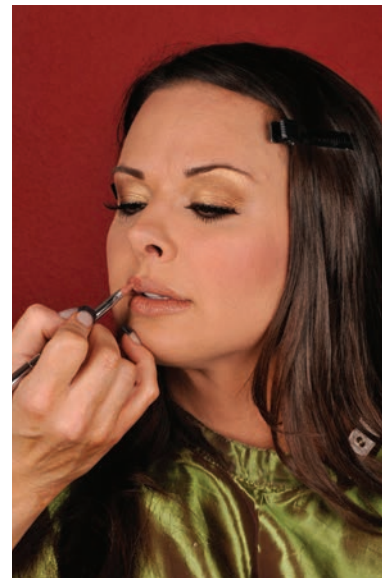
Place the strip on the model's eyelid at the lash line, gently pressing the false eyelashes down to where the natural lashes meet the lid. This results in a more natural look. Finally, curl the false lashes up and together with natural lashes.



Clean any foundation off the lips and apply lip moisturizer.



Line the lips with neutral shade along the outer raised line of the lip. This helps to make lips look fuller but not overdrawn.



Using a lip brush, fill in and over the lines with lipstick. Use neutral colors for a commercial or natural look; darker or brighter shades for dramatic shots.

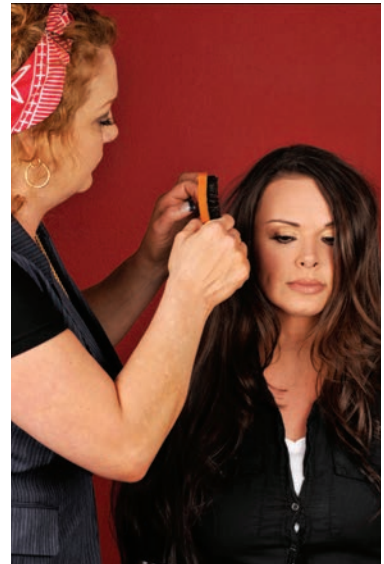


Final Touches

Check the makeup application and adjust anything that is not blended or looks harsh.



Apply extra contour anywhere it's needed, usually under the jaw line and cheekbones.



Tousle and beautify the hair.

Completion of the makeup application for a simple, clean headshot.





Glamourizing



Top Left—For a more glamorous look, apply darker brown and black to the outer corners of the eyes as well as underneath the bottom lashes.

Top Right—Next, pump up the cheeks with a brighter color under the cheek bone.

Left—Finally, apply a darker shade on the lips to coordinate with the bolder look.

Facing Page—Completion of the makeup application for a more glamorous look.





Test Shoots

Testing is extremely important in establishing mutual trust, respect, and confidence between you, the model, and your team. The first test will give you and the model time to feel out whether you will be able to work together in a figure/nude environment.

All figure models must have a test shoot before booking a detailed professional shoot. This

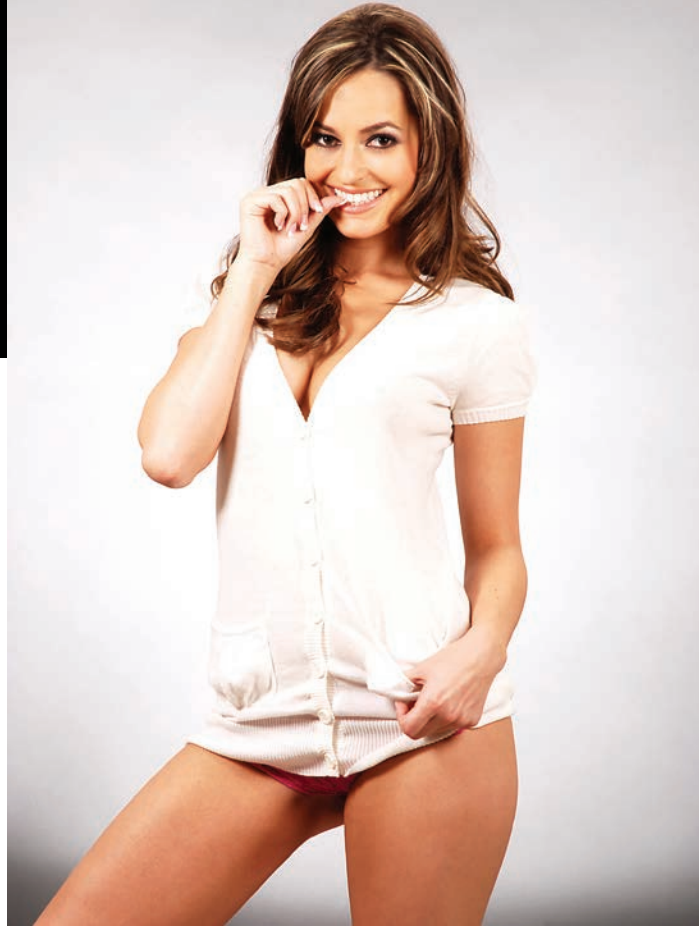
Get a Release

Don't shoot anything without a release. When I first started out, I was approached by a model who wanted images to submit to *Playboy* and similar magazines. I was excited to find a model with *Playboy* potential—and it was an opportunity for those publications to see my work. After booking a makeup artist and hairdresser, having the model's eyebrows and nails done, plus supplying props, wardrobe, film, and processing, I had spent hundreds of dollars on this shoot. The shoot went fantastically and we were all proud of the images we were going to send off to *Playboy*. More money was spent on the printing and image presentation. After everything was all but packaged to ship, the model called to say her boyfriend didn't want her to submit the images to anyone—plus he wanted the images. That didn't happen and he had no recourse when I didn't give them to him. I offered to sell them the images at cost (plus time to the model), but they refused. As a result of this experience, I have made it my policy to have a model release signed *before* every shoot (unless the shoot is specifically for the model herself). I will not even place images on my web site without a release. These releases include a description of the shoot and the potential image usage, ensuring we all go into the process with the same expectations.

test shoot should involve simple lighting and no makeup artist. It's just to see how the model will move and if she really is comfortable with nudity. She then can view her body in the images and decide to go further or not. Either way, the photographer is not losing a great deal of time or money and the model will gain confidence in how any future shoot will go. In my experience, many models are encouraged by how good they look in their test-shoot images.

I never recommend a model to a client if I haven't had at least one test shoot with her beforehand. There are just too many variables. How will the model work in the desert environment—with the heat and blowing sand of Las Vegas? Can I count on her to be up and ready before the 4:30AM sunrise? Will she be pleasant to be with—polite to the client and crew? The model is very important to the whole process, not just a pretty face. Be prepared and educate yourself to choose the right one. I personally prefer to work with “unknown” models—but ones with whom I have worked previously and established a good professional bond.

The images shown on the facing page are from a test shoot. The model styled her own hair and makeup. Simple lighting was used—and no postproduction enhancements were used, so we can see how she *really* looks in photographs.







This test shoot was a pleasant surprise. The model was very comfortable in her skin and showed she had a wide range of emotions and movement.



Postproduction

Perfection before the shot is no longer a requirement. Pre-planning and pre-visualization are just as important as always, but postproduction has given the photographer the added tools of a painter. Being able to create an endless variety of visual effects allows the photographer to create and convey a multitude of messages from the same image.

This image was exposed normally, then processed to smooth the skin. To darken the blinds and create highlights on the model's skin, I created a black layer in Photoshop, right above the model layer. I reduced its opacity down so it just darkened the overall image. The black layer was selectively erased to create the look I wanted.



Basic Retouching

Many images require retouching to give them flair, drama, impact, or just simply a boost in contrast. That's no different than in the pre-digital age. In the past, however, photographers, art directors, and magazine editors had to spend a lot of money and man-hours on lab technicians to get each image just right. Today, most photographers can do at least simple retouching on their own. With some study and practice, the creative control you can attain through programs like Adobe Photoshop is boundless—limited only by the retoucher's imagination.

Knowing how to do your own retouching will also save you time and money. Additionally, it lets you approach photo sessions differently. For example, I have shot with a household outlet in an image or power lines in a landscape all because I knew they would be simple to remove in Photoshop. Likewise, lighting can be enhanced or changed, perspective can be corrected, and a stray hair or a pimple can be quickly eliminated.

As a photographer, you need to embrace Photoshop. It has become the standard of the business and it gives you so much potential to work with your images. Commercial clients no longer want you to submit “plain” photos; they all want them retouched to a certain degree before you turn them over to their in-house graphics people.

Black & White

Who shoots in black & white any more? Images can be converted too easily to worry about it. What is correct? Who knows and who cares? Digital technology has allowed photographers extra control when creating their images—and the option to present a single color capture in three ways: color, black & white, or a combination of the two.



Color + Sepia/Black & White

The effect seen in this image is widely used in fashion and commercial work to draw attention to the product. The image was shot in color. In Photoshop, a duplicate layer was converted to black & white and given a sepia-tone look. The brown-toned image layer was then erased in selected areas to allow the colored layer beneath it to show through.



SPLASH

The Pool Party of the Year

Casino

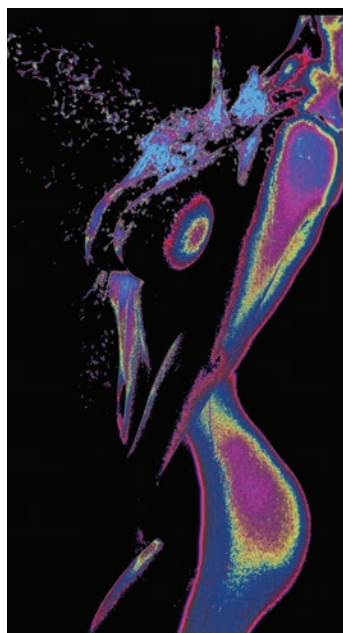
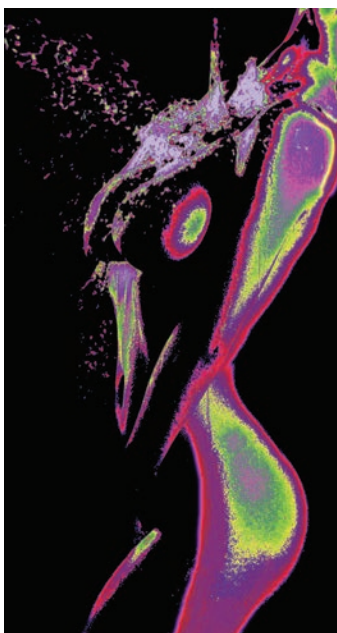
A Graphic Look

Many times, images that are suggestive and artsy—images in which the model is not identifiable—are more marketable than straight beauty images. These clients are looking for an image that will draw attention, but they don't want the message of the advertisement to be upstaged by the model.

This image was originally shot using a blue-gelled light on the model's right side. A small strobe, high and behind the model, was aimed where the water was going to be poured. The light was coned down so as not to spill over into the model's front.

In Photoshop, the contrast was boosted to get a strong black and multiple shades of blue—a graphic look. The model's nipple was also removed.

Working on a duplicate layer, the curves were then adjusted (as seen below) to create numerous different variations. You could then change the contrast of one of the images and start all over again to get even more results.





Fire

The concept for this image was to create fire surrounding the model. The image was shot with a warming gel over the main light to give her skin a warm glow—as if it were lit by firelight. A fan was added for movement in her hair. A red mosquito net was also placed behind the model and backlit.

In postproduction, the image was retouched as normal and a little more warming filtration was added. To make the fire, I simply Googled “making fire with Photoshop” and many good tutorials came up. I tried several, but I liked the flames I achieve here the most. I added multiple layers of flames to make the image even more dramatic.

When you have a look in mind, don’t quit experimenting until you have explored a variety of possibilities.

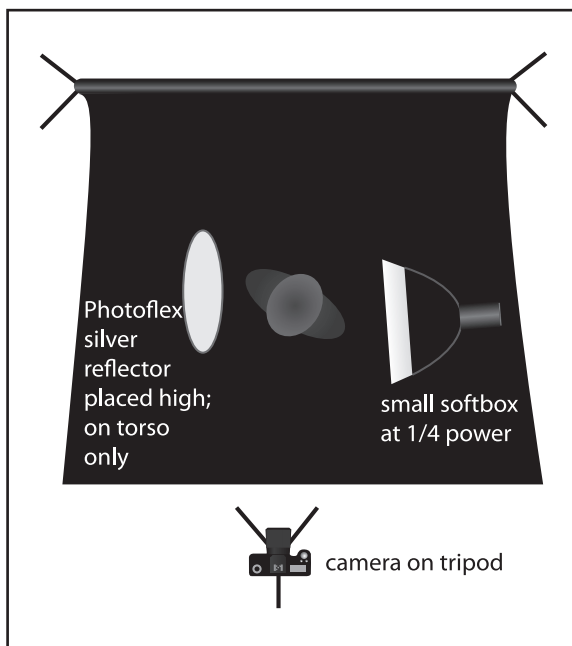


Intense Color

This image was shot using a single strobe (with no filter or gel) to camera left. Part of the blue tone I envisioned came from setting the camera’s white balance to tungsten. The contrast was boosted to the maximum in Photoshop. Using the color filter sliders, the blues were then maximized.

The Photoshop Trap

Don’t get caught in the “fix it in Photoshop” trap. If you are shooting with a specific Photoshop effect in mind and you still have control of the image you are creating, that’s great. However, Photoshop is not a replacement for paying careful attention to composition, posing, styling, exposure, and all the other technical aspects of imaging that result in a professional-quality photograph.



Photoshop Is Just Another Tool

When working with a figure model, play, create, and experiment—both during the shoot and when exploring your postproduction options.

Unless your images require realism for a client or a specific product, an unusual image will often get you noticed. A creative image will make a statement about your art and your unique artistic perspective.

The female figure is probably the most drawn, sculpted, painted and photographed image of all time. It has already been illustrated in so many spectacular ways—so be creative, show something unique, and represent the beauty it is.



Commercial

Figure photography is often requested by commercial clients—photography buyers who need sensual images for their advertising campaigns, displays, or other business-related purposes. In this section, we'll look at how these images can be created to satisfy a variety of clients and provide maximum versatility.

Interior Design

The photograph below was created for an interior designer who had just sold the chair to an art collector. When I asked the designer how she wanted the chair photographed, she said, “Make it artsy. Maybe fine art—use a nude model.” I

decided to have the model's head down so she didn't have a identity that would upstage the chair. The lighting was from a simple theatrical can with a parabolic reflector. I didn't have to worry about color balance of the can because the image was to be in black & white.

Jewelry Design

The image on the facing page was for a jewelry designer. It was shot color, then converted to black & white with a slight brown tone. The model's eyes were closed to force the viewer's gaze to the jewelry. The elegant hand posing added to the grace of the jewelry.

For this dramatic image, I placed a theatrical can, with a parabolic lens, high above the model and aimed it down toward her figure from camera left.

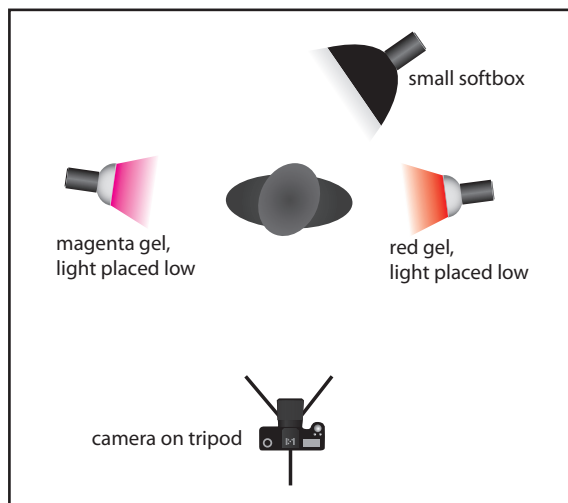






Jeans-Wear Design

For the ad campaign above, we used a fashion/figure model—although nudity was not required by this designer, who loves a “rock” feel. In the image on the left, notice how your attention can be drawn away from the logo by the model’s eye contact with the camera. The photo on the right was the client’s favorite—especially after the background lights were added in Photoshop. These lights were pasted in from a runway show I shot earlier in the year.



Skip the Shirt

When photographing jeans, having the model topless (as on the facing page) is a good idea for two reasons. First, bare skin will never conflict with the garment. I learned the second reason after shooting for a jeans manufacturer years ago. For the shoot, the model wore the designer’s jeans and a nondescript white shirt. The client loved the images—for about three months. Then he called me and said, “Why did we put that shirt on the model? All my clients want to buy the *shirt*. We don’t make shirts!”

The photograph below was also created to sell the jeans. I added a small reflector to kick the sunlight back on the jeans, highlighting the model's shape and the logos. I chose this loca-

tion because the rugged archway provided great contrast with the texture of the jeans and the model's skin. In Photoshop, some of the wrinkles were removed to smooth out the fabric.





Gentlemen's Club

A gentlemen's club wanted something sexy and edgy (but not nude) for a billboard. I used a hard light source near the model and placed her close to a wall for a large, dramatic shadow. Also, I needed the model to represent *many* beautiful women, so I had her cover most of her face. If she had looked into the camera, the viewer would have identified her as an individual.

Watch Design

The image below, shot for a prospective client, shows a pinup style image with a modern watch. The image was shot at ISO 800 in black & white using only window light. A Photoflex reflector on the floor kicked light from a skylight onto the model. A second Photoflex reflector was added to highlight her face.



Fashion Design

The clothing designer who commissioned these images has a fun personality and markets to a specific clientele. The designer wanted to create images that were fun but sexy. These types of jobs allow the most creativity for the photographer. Still, it's always best to get assurance from the client as you go through the session, making sure the whole photographic team is working toward the desired results.

These images were all shot against a gray background so we could ensure separation on the white gloves and the gun handle. The backgrounds were later removed so the images could be used on a wide range of backgrounds.

The image with the gun went on to be used in multiple promotions—including being painted on a wall to promote a restaurant/bar!





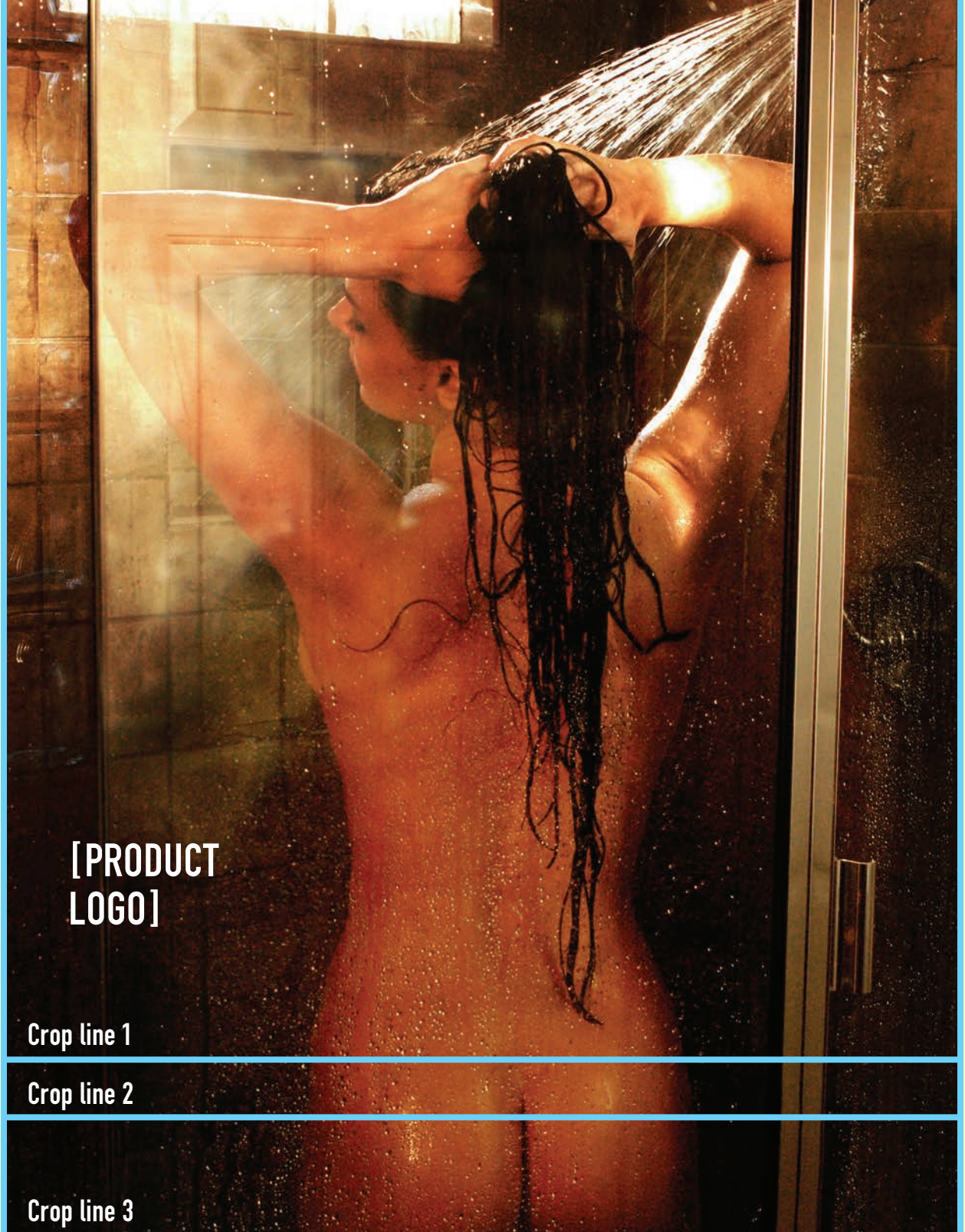
Food Packaging Design

The above series of images was used to promote a soy milk product. The lighting was from a simple theatrical can with a parabolic reflector. No fill light was used, as I wanted to show the figure in its simplest form: the silhouette. The layout was designed to wrap around the can, sold in health and fitness stores.

Lingerie Design

The image to the left was a conceptual image to show a potential client how we could highlight their underwear designs in a sexy, contemporary way. It was shot at ISO 800 in black & white using only window light. A rectangular mirror was used to direct the window light back onto the model, highlighting the “Candi Wrappers” logo on the waistband of the underwear.





[PRODUCT
LOGO]

Crop line 1

Crop line 2

Crop line 3

Keep the Options Open

This image is a sample of a multi-usage photograph; it can be cropped many ways for a client's specific needs. When shooting images for stock or specific sales potential, you need to overshoot and include many possible croppings. Include horizontal images with your selections. Often, a client will need negative space to run ad copy. Reshooting is an expensive proposition, so overshoot—and overshoot some more.

Editorial



Editorial photographs are created under specific guidelines to illustrate a story within the context of a magazine, newspaper, or other media format. These stories are usually assigned to a writer and then to a photographer by the publisher.

Topics for these assignments can include anything from health-related stories (below) to feature stories about fashion trends and designers (left and facing page).

What “Category” Is It?

Things do become pretty fuzzy when you’re trying to determine what is “glamour,” what is “fashion,” and what is “editorial.” All of these styles and purposes involve figure work at some point. Here’s how I suggest you think of it:

Glamour sells the beauty of the model.

Fashion sells a garment or product.

Editorial sells a story.



Shoulder to shoulder against Cancer



Fashion

The fashion figure model must know how to pose and create a story with her body—that's how these images sell a garment, a product, or even a concept.

In fashion photography, figure models are often called upon to model lingerie lines, skimpy swimwear, transparent clothing, and even personal body products. In addition, models seeking work in this genre must fit the clothing.

These models are the backbone of the fashion industry—and the demands on them as professionals are high. In fact, many fashion models spend more time preparing for a shoot than the photographer does!





Drama

Here, the look is dramatic but the emphasis remains on the product, not the model. A theater-style spotlight with a parabolic reflector was used with the model close to a white wall. This created a distinctive lighting pattern with defined shadows. A thin layer of diffusion material softened the light, but it still retained the spotlight

effect. If distance is not a restraining variable, you can adjust the model's distance to the background to control the shadow size and intensity. Try this in black & white (or correct the color balance to your desired effect). A tripod is very valuable here; the lower output of the theatrical spotlight yields slower shutter speeds.

Fashion Nudity

Nudity in fashion works to create stunning images that can help draw attention to the product being sold. It also adds femininity to the image and may create shock value.

Since the goal of a fashion image is to sell something, you must be especially aware of how

the viewers' eye will flow, and make sure you're not distracting them from what is being sold in your images. This is why "arm bras" (hands clasped over breasts) became so popular in ads for jeans manufacturers; they isolate the garments while adding sex appeal.

American fashion photography, while heavy on sexuality, features less nudity than European fashion photography. Most of the top models in Europe do nudity. In America, on the other hand, nudity is the subject in and of itself, not an accessory for the clothing.



Make It Pay

Professional high-fashion figure work requires a good makeup artist and hair team, plus a garment stylist. Possible sources of revenue from these images are European fashion magazines, some more progressive American fashion magazines, hair clients, and art photo magazines.





Erotic

Erotic photography is an artistic style of figure photography that is intended to evoke sexual arousal or appreciation. It makes an artistic statement, but it doesn't cross over into mainstream pornography. Erotic photography doesn't even have to be nude photography. It may be a suggestive expression, pose, or attitude that makes the image erotic—not necessarily the amount of skin showing. Many erotic photographers' work crosses over into fine art or fetish styles.

Bra-Strap Marks

Brassiere straps and bands can leave indentations and redness on the skin. Obviously, this doesn't look good when photographed. Therefore, if a model is to be photographed topless, it is best if she remove her bra well before the shoot so there will be no remaining marks on her skin.









Composition

In the image on the facing page, the empty space of the wall and the stairs leaves room for copy. Plus, the stairs add movement.

Probably the most important compositional element, though, is the beauty in the hands and feet. Our eyes enter the image at the lower left, so the hands lead us right up the body. Likewise, the stairs draw your eyes down to her torso. Essentially, every line in the image draws you toward its erotic center.

The mirror adds another element, giving the shot a sensual edge without being vulgar.

Expression

As you can see in the above photo, what makes an image feel erotic can be as simple as a beautiful model with a teasing expression on her face.

Erotic photography makes a statement, or tells a story, or causes the viewer's mind to write its own story. It is always provocative and stimulating, with a sexual message. For this reason, there is a great demand for erotic images in today's men's magazines—and on web sites for both genders.

Alternative



With the popularity of tattoos in mainstream America, some figure-photography clients are starting to request models that are considered “alternative.” From commercial to sensual or erotic web sites, many avenues have opened up for these models. There are also many successful web sites where the alternative models are the sole focus of the site.

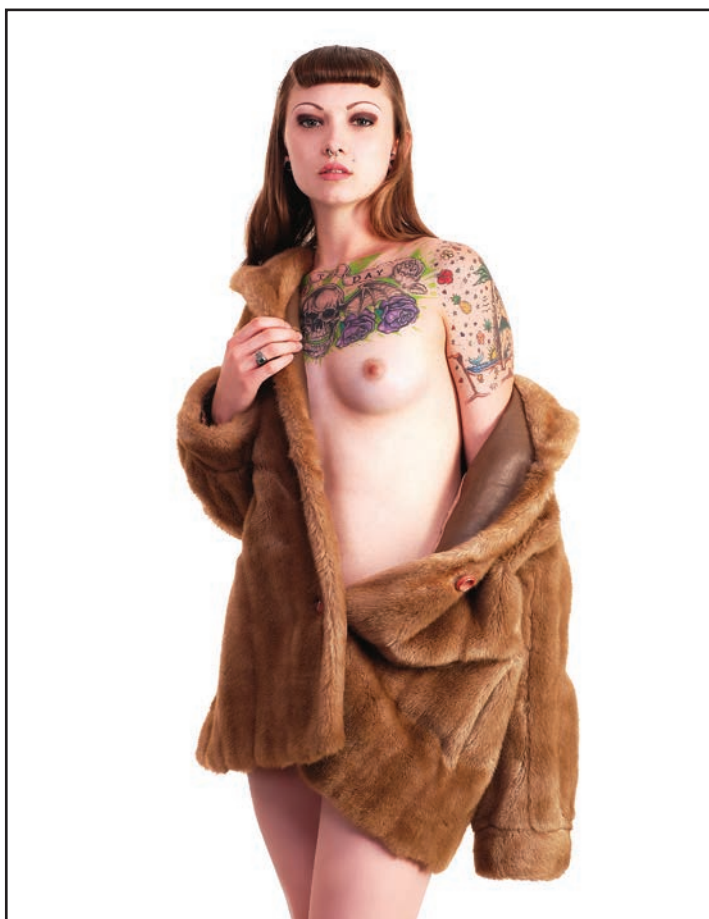
Elevate the Model

Whenever possible, elevate your model so that you can shoot straight at her body. Not only does this aid in your comfort as a photographer but also it helps to keep the model in one place. There is something about the elevation that helps get the model in a shooting mode. If you want a low camera angle, it also allows you to drop to your knees and get that perspective (one we all desire sometimes) without lying on your stomach and getting a cramp in your neck. I have built permanent elevation platforms in all my studios, but you can also construct a temporary one. For the photo to the left (see detail below) I made a stage of crates and an old board that was in the room.



Alternative modeling is a unique subset of the modeling business that features models who do not conform to mainstream ideals of beauty. The models often have a personal style that represents Goth, or tattooed, or burlesque.

Alternative modeling can be nude, semi-nude, or clothed. Commercial assignments and portfolio images for these subjects sometimes promote the model's personality and non-conformist attitude in addition to her unique physical appearance.



Glamour





Glamour photography is a style of photography in which the subjects, usually female, are photographed in a romantic or sexually alluring way. The models may be fully nude or semi-nude, but (unlike erotic photography) glamour photography stops short of deliberately arousing the viewer.

Glamour photography often uses professional models, and the photographs are normally intended for commercial use in calendars, pinup posters, and for men's magazines.

Amateur models are also frequently used, in which case the photographs are sometimes intended for private and personal use only.

Styling Team

You'll call on an extensive array of styling, beauty lighting, and Photoshop techniques to idealize every aspect of the subject's allure. Therefore, a team is of the utmost importance when shooting glamour. Whether it's a small team (you and your makeup and hair stylist) or the extensive team you might find at some large studios (makeup and hair stylist, wardrobe stylist, photo stylist, travel agent, casting director, photo assistants, creative directors, set builders, and studio manager), your team will be critical to your success. A great team can add glamour—even when the model is just wearing a simple shirt.



A Romantic Look

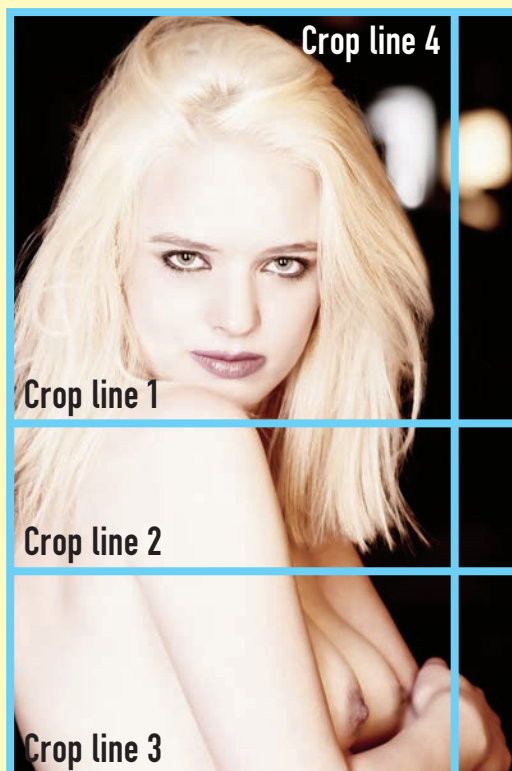
As seen above, glamour photography has a gentle, soft mood—a sensual feel with a dreamy quality that is based on the idealized beauty of a model. Soft, muted colors, late afternoon light, and soft clothing all contribute to the marketability of glamour work. Realism can also play a part in today’s glamour work but realism usually has sharp focus images and bright colors.

Headshots

For the headshot on the facing page (shot with a large Photoflex softbox behind me) the model’s makeup was darker than normal because I planned to overexpose for that glamorous look created by pale skin tones. This model has beautiful skin, so no retouching was needed.

Multiple Usages

Notice that this image can be cropped for multiple usages, depending on the need.







Clothing and Props

The model's clothing is very important in setting the mood of the image. Textured materials contrast well with the smoothness of a woman's skin—so look for a big fuzzy sweater draping off the shoulder, lacy (matching) bras and underwear, or even a rough-looking pair of jeans (top left). Any of these will add warmth, depth, and texture to the figure.

Props and accessories also play an important role in creating a mood especially that of a romantic style. Swap meets, second-hand stores, and discount centers are all great places to find props and costume jewelry (as well as garments) for glamour photography. You can ask the model to bring any garment/prop options she owns that might work, but the studio should also have a selection of these items on hand.

Additionally, it's good to stock some fabric pieces, such as chiffon and silks. These can be used in a vast number of ways. In the image on the facing page, for example, the subject was photographed through a piece of lace fabric.

Don't overlook unexpected options when thinking about props for your images. The bottom-left beauty shot was created during a "playday" session—and the candy props certainly make it very playful. We wanted a shot with clean beauty makeup and soft curls in the hair for the model to use in her portfolio. We then added the candy for color and impact. This photo was later purchased as a cover for an international beauty magazine.







For many photographers who want to shoot figure/nude models, the ultimate style is glamour. It's a genre of figure photography that can be rewarding both financially and artistically.



Playboy Style

Playboy magazine has done more for liberating us from conservative concepts and values than anyone or thing in the past sixty years. The Playboy Corporation has brought the visual depictions of beautiful, nude and semi-nude women into the mainstream, opening the door for

many other magazines to follow in their footsteps and benefit from the newfound popularity of mainstream nudity. Other magazines were then free to redefine their own image of beauty and push the envelope of what mainstream America would accept. Before these magazines became mainstream, nudity was found only in underground publications, fine-art museum shows, and a few camera magazines.

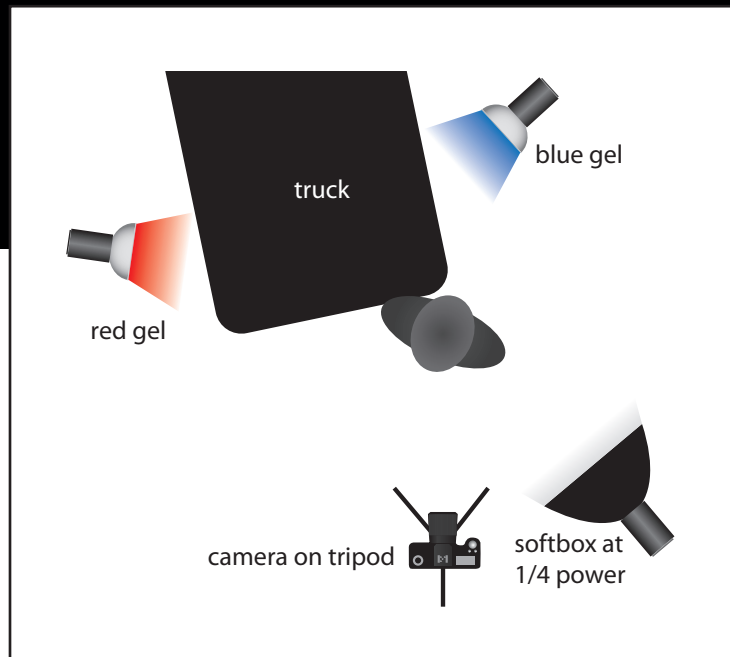
A Standard of Excellence

Playboy magazine also set a standard of photographic excellence that the other magazines had to attain to be competitive. Their level of quality control is something very few publications have matched—and they have consistently maintained it throughout their history. They are very controlling as to the usage of their images and selective about who their photographers are. From the models' poses, to the light, to the postproduction, *Playboy* magazine always maintains the best quality in their images.

Disclaimer

None of these images have been published by *Playboy*. I have a very successful record in assisting models to be selected by *Playboy* and other magazines. The images in this section have were chosen as examples of what is needed to present a model to these magazines.







Lighting

Achieving the style of lighting that has become a hallmark of the Playboy look requires using multiple light setups to accentuate every aspect of the subject's beauty—hair lights, background lights, accent lights, and more will often be needed. Additionally, the overall look of the lighting should have a warm and romantic feel.

For the Playboy-style lighting in the image above (left), I placed a beauty dish to the model's left. The model was leaning against a warm golden wall, so the reflected light from the wall added a soft glow. For the background, I used



a tungsten light bounced off the wall. This had barndoors to narrow its beam, creating a gradient on the wall. A few imperfections on the model's skin were cleaned up in Photoshop.

Hair

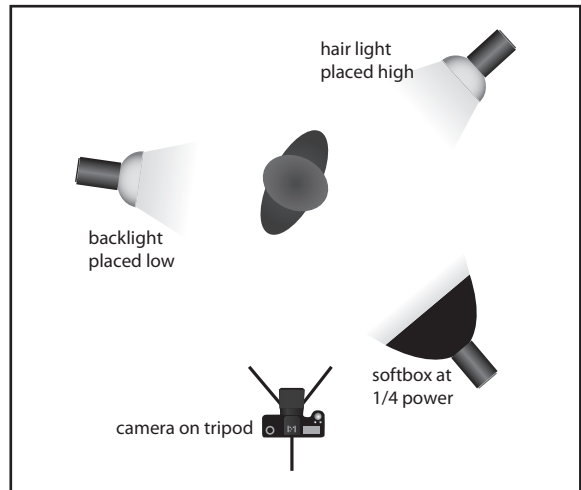
The right hairstyle can bring dynamic movement in the shot or add sex appeal. You can also

Keep It Classy

Classy wardrobes, exotic locations, and high-end accessories characterize the Playboy style. They devote a lot of attention to making their images elegant and as beautiful as possible.

use the hair to conceal a problem area (like a lazy eye) or create a sense of feeling and movement when the model is not projecting an emotion. Hair can also be used to break up a predominate forehead, giving the face a more pleasing shape.

Many times, it is easier to create a sexy, messy look than it is to have each hair in perfect placement—as long as it adds to your image and doesn't distract from the message. Tilting the head *and* the camera helps the hair to frame the face and forces the viewer to look into the model's eyes.



Playboy Style on Location

The three images in this set were all taken in a matter of minutes. The first (below) was shot without a flash just as the sun was rising at 6:40AM. I wanted a beautiful silhouette against the sunrise. To meter, I turned the camera toward the sky without the sun

in the viewfinder and set the exposure to manual. I shot several images and bracketed multiple times. Postproduction can also enhance this effect.

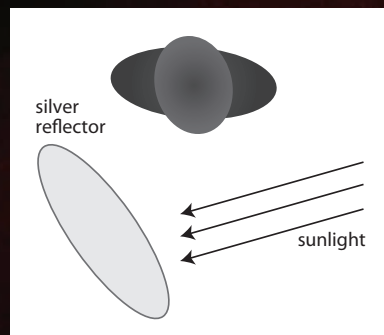
The second image (top right) was shot just a couple minutes later using fill in flash at 06:42AM.

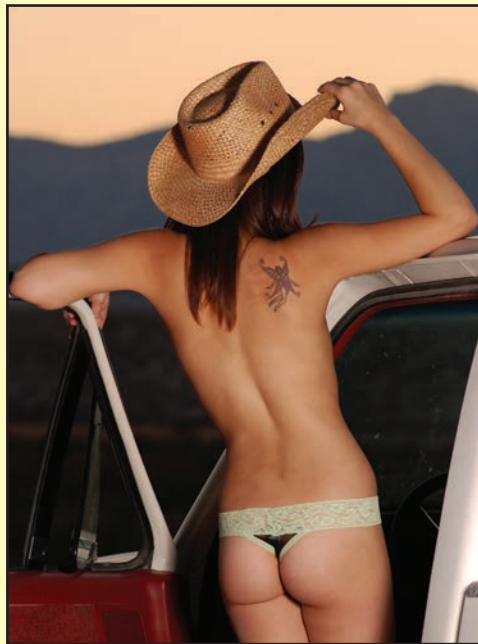


6:40AM

The third image (bottom right) was shot a few minutes after the sun came up, during the golden hour. The model was lit by the beautiful early morning sunlight. Notice the long shadows at 06:59AM—that's a side benefit of the low angle of the sun.







Understand What Publishers Need

When looking for new publishing opportunities, study your potential clients' profiles and pay attention to their preferred lighting styles. Some web sites and magazines *don't want* the highly polished

look that typifies the Playboy style. Instead, they prefer a girl-next-door, "snapshot" look that captures the natural beauty of the model. Knowing a clients' preferences will help you market your work to them more effectively.

This image was created as a dramatic two-page spread to introduce the model shown above and on the facing page.



Pinup

The height of the pinup art scene was during the 1940s, but pinup work has been documented back to the 1890s and images in this style continue to have a wide popular appeal.

Calendars

Pinup continues to be very popular for calendar work. As you might expect, though, the standards are culturally biased and today's "pinup" category crosses over into many genres.

The photographs that are shown below and on the facing page were all created for a commercial calendar that featured pinup-style images throughout.

Models and Cars

If the model is the main subject in a car image, move her away from the vehicle so the car adds to the background but does not overpower her. Also, using a low camera angle will give her a more imposing look.

Products as Props

Like traditional pinup imagery, contemporary pinup work may revolve around products—cars, boats, planes, beer, and even vacuum cleaners. Pinup images like the ones on the facing page are a mainstay of today's advertising.



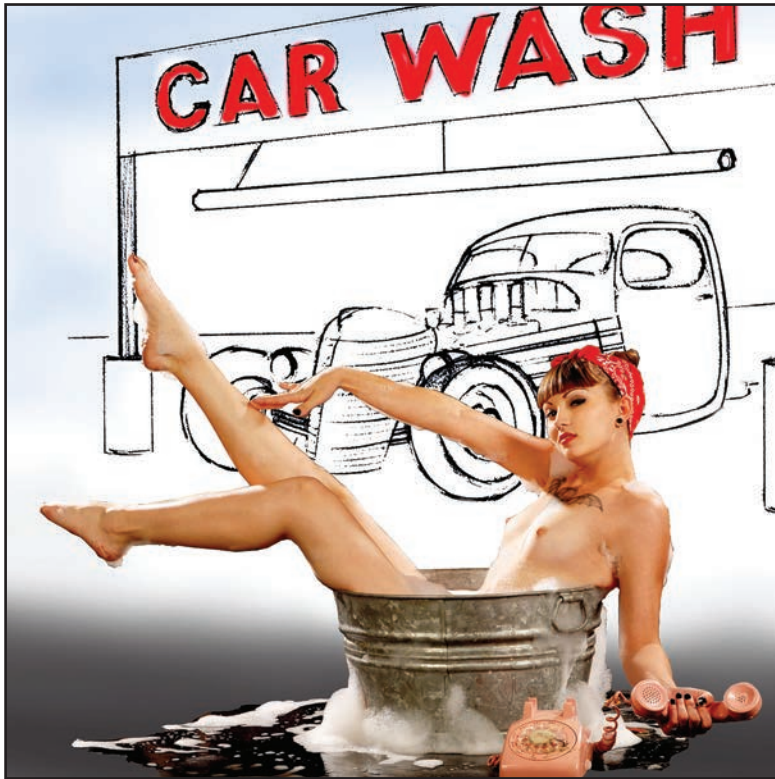




Models

Many of the 1940s pinup models were actresses—the sex symbols of their day. The current pinup model is a sexually attractive woman, often with a playful and erotic innocence. This is especially true for retro pinup images, which tend to have a playful feel.





Here, I combined an image of a model with some illustrated artwork in the background. For a more family-friendly image (maybe for a conservative client), I could have easily covered this model with soapsuds or illustrated a swimwear top.

Expression

In order to achieve pinup work that will be fun with over-the-top expressions, you must hire models who are uninhibited—models who embrace fun, goofy facial expressions and creative

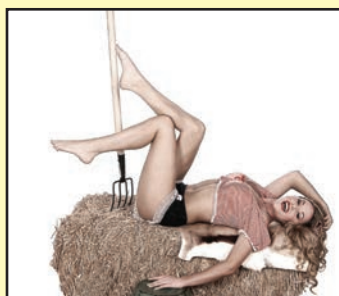
poses. You must also add as much energy into the shoot as you expect the model to reflect back.





Classic Looks, Modern Options

The digital technology of today allows photographers to re-create any visual effect of the past. Here, we have three choices—from the beautiful, rich colors of today (above), to the muted colors popular in the 1960s and 1970s (right), to the black & white of the past (far right). Each has a purpose and can help the photographer create the mood of the time period expressed in his image.



Fine Art

When I decided to become a professional photographer, I wanted to be a fine art shooter, selling my work at galleries. I had worked as an advanced amateur for many years; I had won a few awards and had several small shows in galleries and coffee houses, so I thought I was ready. With my fine art portfolio in hand, I decided to walk into a local gallery I admired and get a show.

The director was very nice and had praise for my technical ability but turned me down flat. She was kind enough to elaborate, “Your work is too commercial. I love your use of color but I can see your work with a Kodak logo on it—or on an album cover, or in major advertising campaigns. Fine art must stand alone or be part

of a series that stands alone without the need of outside influence.”

After I left, I felt discouraged as a fine artist but encouraged as a commercial photographer. Her comments have served me well as a commercial photographer.

Fine art makes a non-commercial statement. In its purest form, it may be a simple message showing, for example, the intrinsic beauty of the female form. The fine art photographer must create images that have a message; images that make the viewer *think* and *feel*—even if the image is so simple and plain that the viewer has to look at the simplicity as the message, or look past the simplicity to determine how it relates to the viewer’s world.



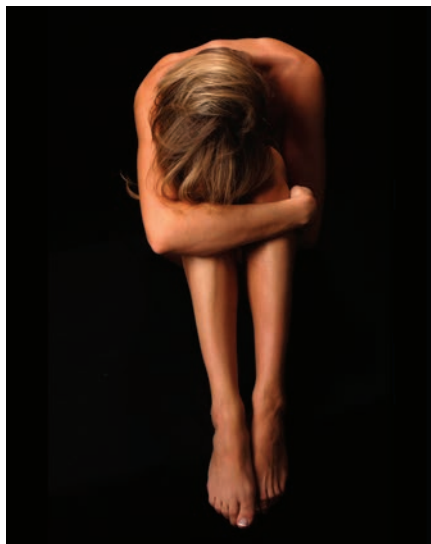
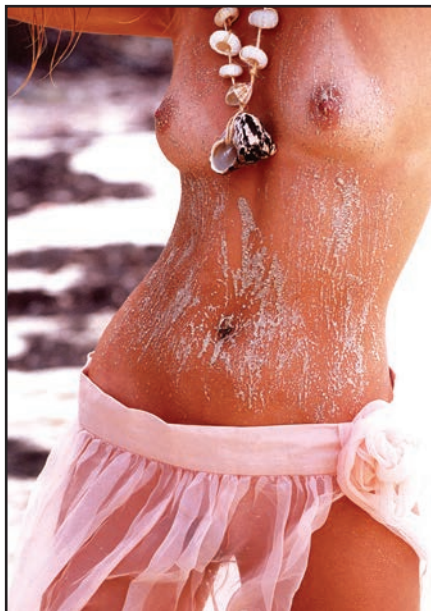


Universal Appeal

Why is the nude so popular in all photography—and especially in fine art work? I think the answer might be that, besides basic bodily func-

tions, the human body is the only totally universal thing that all of mankind has shared.





Sexy or Sexual?

Many fine art pieces are non-sexual, showing the simple and elegantly beautiful lines of the human form. On the other hand, there is a large body of fine art figure photography work that is so sexually graphic that its shock value has landed it on the walls of major galleries and mu-

seums. This figure work is often so graphic that it even loses its sense of “sexiness” but becomes a visual statement of wonder. Images like this cause viewers to ask questions. What was that person experiencing? What is next?



Share Your Vision

The term “fine art” refers to artwork that is created by the artist to illustrate his or her creative vision. It is work created solely for its aesthetic value.

Photography has been valued as fine art more than ever in recent years. In fact, many older photographs have been re-classified as more than the editorial images of their time, but as true works of *art*. Contemporary fashion photography has recently also been identified as crossing over into the realm of fine art photography—especially in the editorial categories.

Be creative, show your vision, experiment, and play. Seek inspiration from artists you admire. For example, artists like Warhol and Liechtenstein used simple elements and color to bring fantasy to their work. That’s an approach to try in your photography, too.

Strive to create images that will grab attention. Create art that appeals to you and communicates your vision.



Model Selection

It takes a special model to bring to life a concept such as the one we were creating here: primitive images that represent the concepts of fire, ice, and coal.

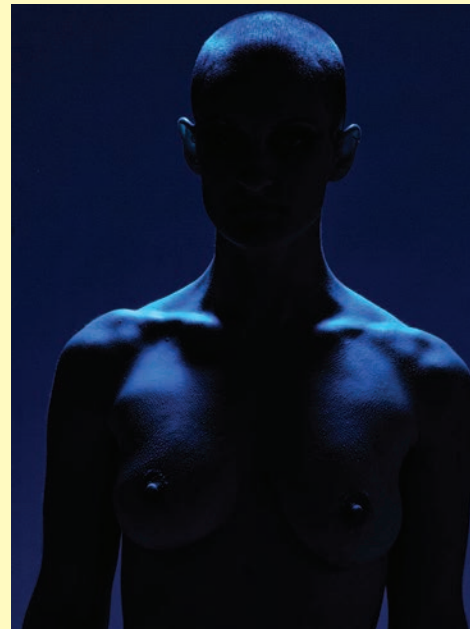
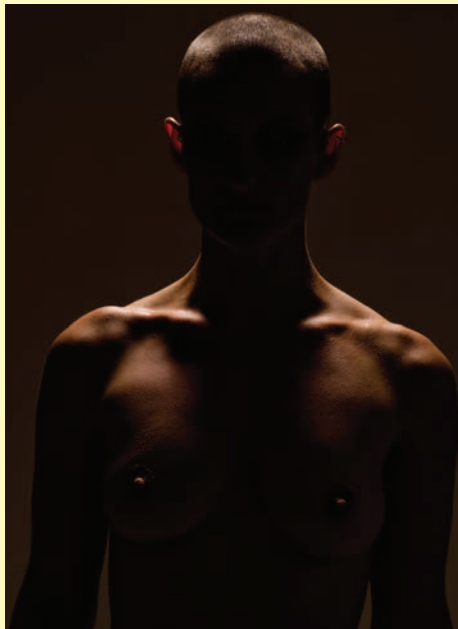
In this case, my model had to be able to bring emotion—even though she was covered with pounds of wet clay. For a shoot like this, it is nearly impossible to work with a model who is not a figure model. Even though her body was covered in most of the images, she had to be comfortable with nudity being included because there were no guidelines or limits as to the posing or cropping of the images.

Work with creative people and they will add life to your images.



Mood

From left to right, electronic flash was used to shoot for black & white, daylight color balance, and tungsten color balance. Is one of these “correct”? Who cares? As an artist, the real question to ask yourself is this: Do the lighting and the mood communicate my message to the viewer?



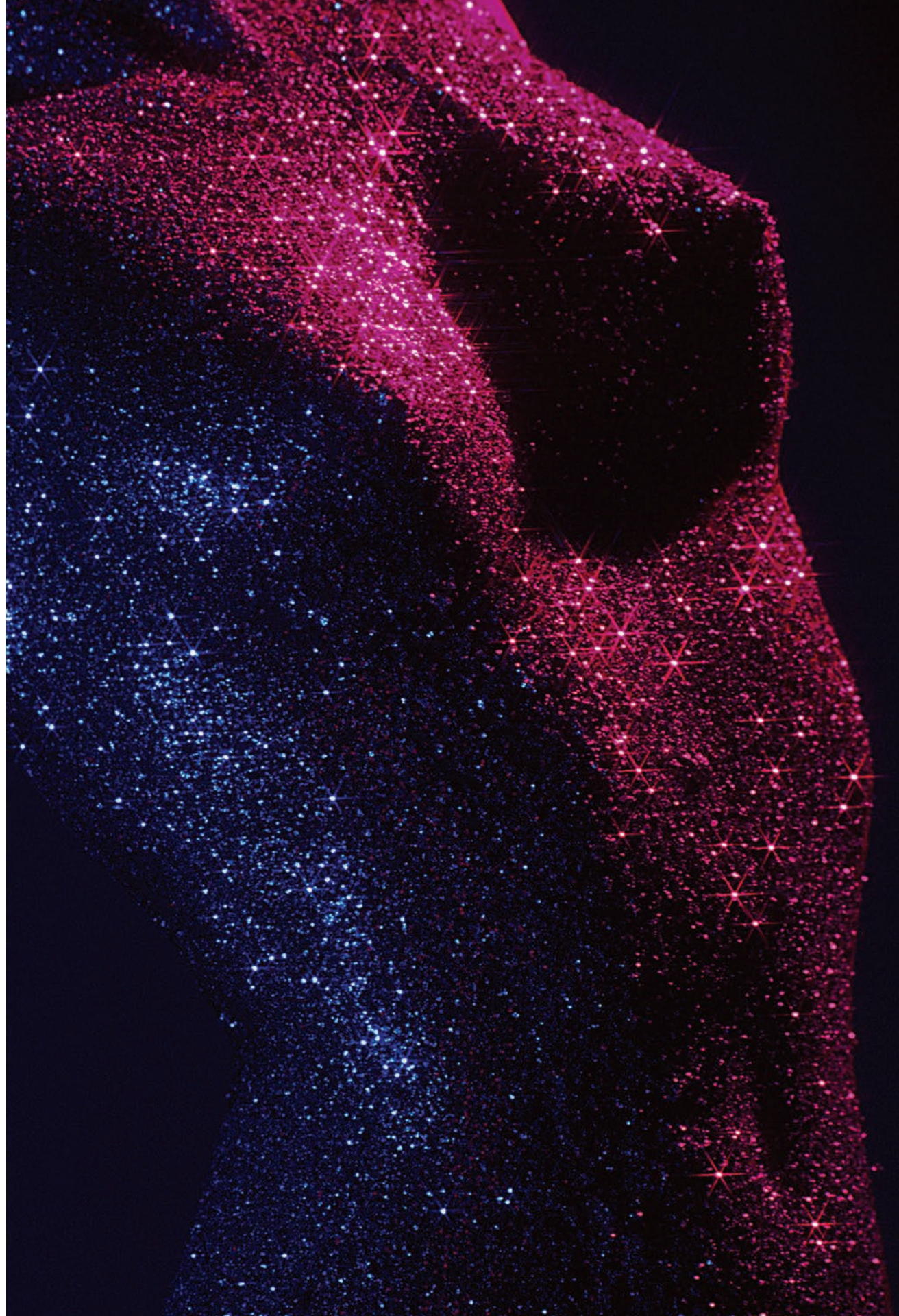


Find Inspiration

When I was a kid I, watched an artist friend of mine create beautiful figure work from a sack of clay. This mesmerized me so much that I wanted to honor him when I got into the arts. I created a sixteen-piece set of photographs of figure models covered in clay. These images were later displayed in a gallery show.

Creating these images required the models to remain still for hours as a team of assistants covered their bodies in clay. (For the image to the left, the model's upper torso was "broken off" in-camera using black paper taped to the film rails; today I would do this in Photoshop.)

After the clay images, I looked for other materials to cover the female form. The model on the facing page was covered with syrup and silver glitter. Gelled lights to the left (placed low) and right (placed high) added color. This was probably my fastest photo session ever. As the syrup heated up, the glitter began to run down her body! The session was over in fifteen minutes with only ten images shot.





Find a Cause

These images are from an ongoing breast cancer project in which the models are asked to bring their personality into a topless shot. The shots aren't about the model's identity, so the faces are cropped out. The lighting is very simple to let the personal statements shine through. The model shown to the left is studying to be a chef, while the model below loves chocolate in all its forms.





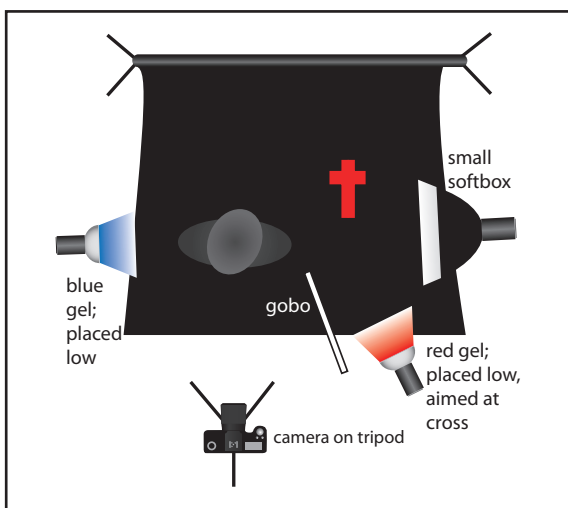
Watch the Eyes

When working in the fine art figure genre, be careful that the model's eyes don't upstage the message of the image. We, as viewers, will first read a model's eyes to get the message of the image.

If your message is about more than the model herself, you may want to crop out the eyes, have

the model close her eyes, look down, turn her face away from the camera, or even mask the face, as seen in the image below.

In the images above, notice how you see more detail in the face and hands when the model's eyes don't draw your gaze away from other aspects of the image.





Simplicity

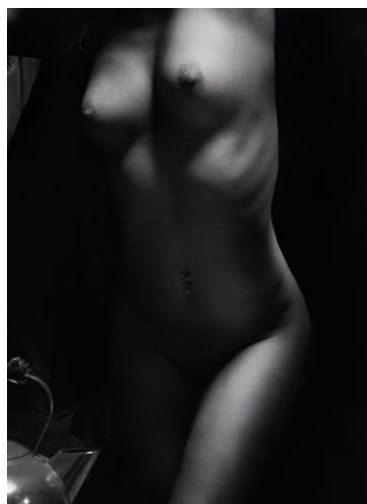
Sometimes the best approach to fine art photography is to keep it simple, shooting with one light or just available light.



For the images above, the lighting was simply soft window light passing through multiple layers of sheer fabric. I find that photographing individual body parts (something that's not normally equated with figure modeling) can be just as rewarding as full-body photography—and the simplicity is beautiful.

The top pair of photos to the left were created with one soft light and a simple background. This streamlined technique allowed all the focus of the image to remain on the emotions the model was expressing.

Often the best results are recorded with available light. In the bottom left photo, shooting in the rain with heavy cloud cover led to a portrait with a moody look. The bottom right image employed the light streaming in from a skylight above the cabin stove. The kettle was placed to lead the viewer's eye to the subject.



Shutter Speed

When shooting available light images, watch your shutter speed. Shoot from a tripod if it drops below $\frac{1}{125}$ second.

Gear Isn't Artistry

As you explore figure photography, start with the basic equipment and experiment. Explore the capabilities of each piece of equipment in your arsenal, working with each one until you know exactly what it can do and how you can adapt it to fit any situation.

Keep in mind that, without the artist's eye, the tools of photography are simply record-keeping devices. Do not become a slave to every new gadget—the so-called latest and greatest.

I don't mean to imply that I am opposed to new equipment. The digital era has brought a

multitude of new artists into our field with new and fresh ideas.

Twenty-five years ago, I became a photographer because I couldn't draw. Now, with the transformations possible with Photoshop and similar products, many images are no longer photographs; they are better classified as a new genre: digital art.

It's important to use the tools that are available to you—but, at the same time, not get so caught up in them that you lose track of your vision, your artistry.



Body Painting





Body painting has become a fun and artistic style of expression that may work well in your figure photography. Many models who would not normally consent to do “nude” photography love being photographed with body paint. Additionally, commercial clients are now using this technique in some of their advertising campaigns. Finding a good body-painting artist to add to your team will give you added creativity in your figure images.

Schedule Play Days

Play! Play! Play! Never stop planning personal assignments and setting goals for yourself.

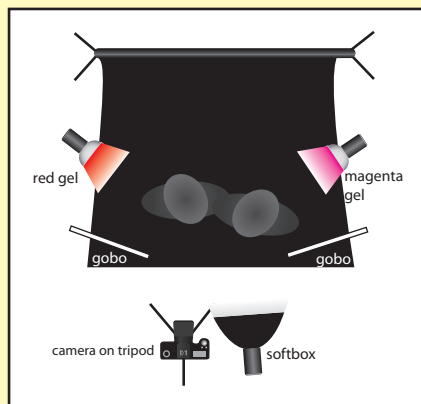
I like to plan regular play days, opportunities for my team to work through the whole creative process at a more leisurely pace than when we’re working on an assignment. This helps build team cohesion, ensuring that everyone can work together effectively in pursuit of a common vision. These sessions can also be used to develop new models, giving you a chance to learn their strengths and address any weaknesses.

During these sessions, watch for ideas and concepts you can use on future assignments. It’s very helpful to have a range of working ideas you can present to prospective clients. As non-photographers, it can be challenging for them to pre-visualize the style of image you want to create for their product.

Experiment and Explore

Working with a body-painting artist can be educational and visually rewarding. When I was approached to work with a new artist, I jumped at the chance. She was testing a new paint so we set up a play day. The objective was simple: cover the model's body from head to toe—front and back—and shoot the whole day to see how pliable and durable the paint would be. The product, which was new to the artist, claimed to be durable and breathable.

We began with images in the studio, but even as the photo session continued outdoors, the paint performed as promised. It didn't wear off even when driving to a new location with the model wearing a bathrobe. The model said she felt comfortable—except for a feeling of being totally dressed (something that was funny to the crew). We had no problem with the paint for the entire 5-hour session. The only place the paint wore off was on the bottoms of her feet as she walked through the desert!



The lighting for the studio shots was very simple. A Photoflex half-dome was placed directly toward the model and two lights (one on each side) were directed toward the model from the rear. These were gelled red and magenta. In front of the model on both sides, gobos were added to prevent lens flare. The backlights were 1 stop brighter than the main lights.





Try Different Locations

For this late-night fun session, we worked with body paint and a smoke machine—in a pool. To light the shot, I used a small on-camera flash to trigger slaves in Photoflex flash units with reflectors and gels taped to the front (blue to camera left, red to camera right and on the water di-

rectly behind the model). The smoke machine added a nice haze to reflect more light back to the camera. I used a flashlight to help with focusing in the very low light. The saturation of the final image was boosted in Photoshop.



Body Parts

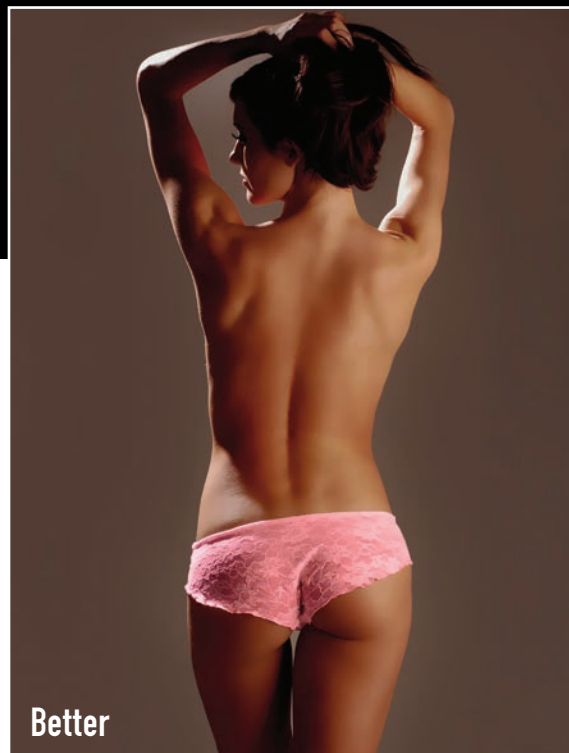
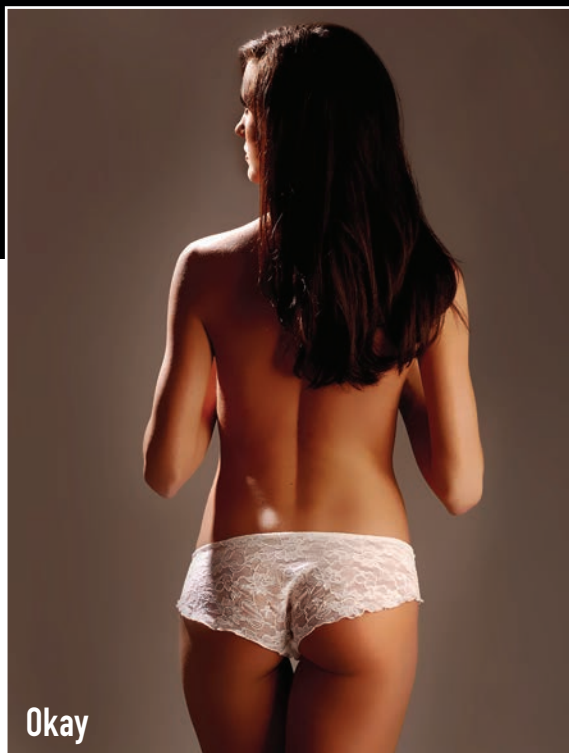
Photographing body parts is not a new concept in figure photography. Images of legs, lips, eyes, hands, and more have all been used to promote salable products—from lipstick to pantyhose.

These shots can also be very useful in model portfolios. If you are working with a model who has exceptional legs (or other features), body-

parts images in her portfolio can help her market herself to the appropriate clients. You may also create additional income from other models who need these specialized services.

Study the poses and lighting used by major advertisers so you can create images that look current. Also, practice shooting products where figure models are often used in marketing.





Lingerie Hangtag

This image would be appropriate for a lingerie hangtag. Notice how the postproduction helps keep your eyes on the product—plus there's room around the model for text and a logo.

Keep the Image Use in Mind

The original shot (top left) was for the model's portfolio—she wanted a shot to illustrate her bottom, showing her marketability for lingerie and even swimwear or jeans advertising. By adjusting the pose (top right) we were able to create a much better body profile. Having her lift her hair and raise her arms made her waist and bottom look even better.

There are advantages to both options, though; the first photo has the advantage of also showing the length and quality of her hair. It just goes to show the value of overshooting!

While shooting the figure model, keep aware of the marketing potential of the images you are creating. Give yourself cropping room (for hangtags or product information) and shoot for maximum variety.



Book Cover

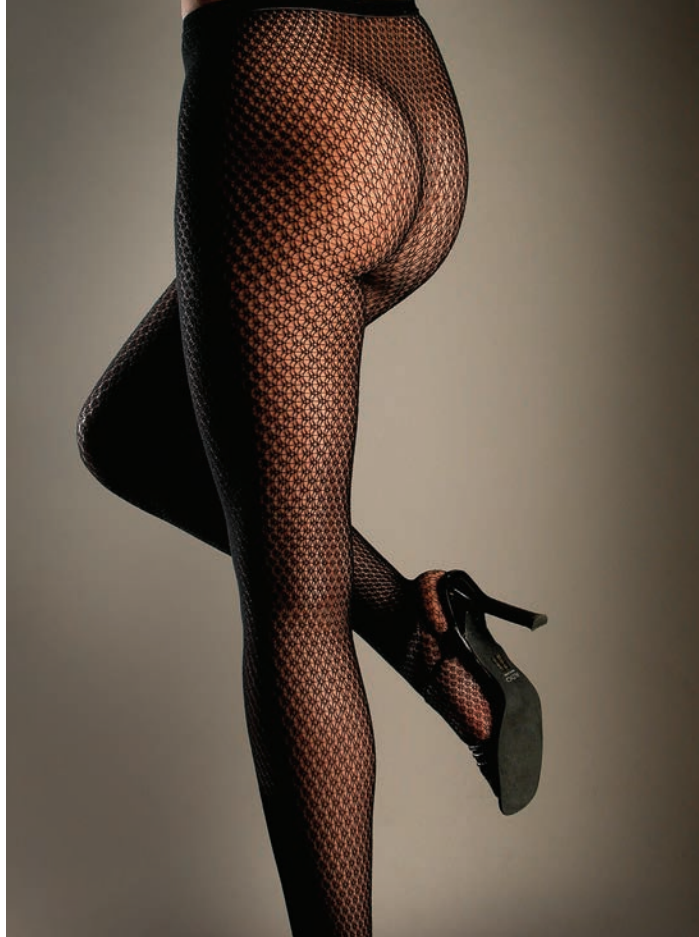
The image above was designed as a cover for a book about breast cancer. I chose a red rose as a symbol of love—but I didn't want to settle for showing a pretty woman holding a rose. I wanted to create something with more visual impact.

This image demonstrates a partial-color technique that is frequently used by photographers. To create it, the original is shot in color. In Photoshop, you duplicate the background layer and convert it to black & white (or in this case, sepia) using whatever method you prefer. Then, carefully erase the top layer where you want the color to show through.

Lighting

For the image on the facing page, a hard, directional light source was set to camera left, producing the sharp, intense highlights on her figure and the wing. To camera right, I added a small softbox; notice the more gentle quality this adds on the side of her left breast. I wanted to show two different qualities of light and how they shape the body. The exposure was set for the camera-left light, which was 2 stops brighter than the camera-right side of her body. Normally, this would be unappealing, but in this case (since we have detail in the feathers and skin), I think it works.





Consider Specializing

As a figure photographer, you have to use your creativity to capture body-part images that have a high market value. You may even want to spe-

cialize—creating feet and leg images (facing page) for shoe designers or tight glamour shots of lips for cosmetic companies (below).



Drama

Dramatic images comprise a limited, very specialized market in the genre of figure photography. These images depict actors in dramatic scenes, letting them illustrate their creative ability for casting directors and talent agents. Some actors create a portfolio of various roles (and looks) they want to be considered for future projects. An actor will often be given greater

consideration at auditions if her portfolio illustrates a wide range of roles—especially if one of the depictions matches the qualities the director is looking for to fill a role in a given production.

One place you can start is by re-creating scenes from old films (westerns, horror films, romances, etc.). This will allow you to show the actor's comfort in a diversity of roles. That feeling is often amplified when the images involve nudity.

Working with an actress to help her build her portfolio can be very challenging—and a lot of creative fun—but it's not necessarily lucrative.

For this image, part of a lengthy series, I used a single light with diffusion gel on the left and the same on the right. A warming gel was placed on the right-hand light. The model/actress was asked to hide under the kitchen counter and go through a range of emotions.





Shaving Cream

Makeup artist Wendalynn Nelson (www.itsWendalynn.com) and I get together at least once a month for a play day. The play-day rules are very simple:

1. Experiment by doing something we have not done before.
2. Be creative
3. Create an image with visual impact.
4. No matter what the model is wearing—whether it is feathers or chocolate or shaving cream—she is still beautiful.



In this case, I had two personal objectives to add to that list. First, I wanted to design a colorful image so I could see how the new red wall in my studio would photograph. Second, I wanted to experiment with the new lighting system I just received from Photoflex.

Concept

Wendalynn and I had experimented with using cake icing to cover a model's face—with colored sprinkles to add the look of blush, eye shadow, and lipstick. However, we'd never been able to keep the icing from melting while on the model. This time, we tried shaving cream instead.

As we were setting up, I took a test few images, slightly overexposing for the model's skin tone (1). Unfortunately, the shaving cream was so reflective that it had virtually no detail in it. I realized that I needed to break-up the solid feel of the shaving cream to get the look I was after. Initially, we tried for a romantic image with flowers, but the flowers wouldn't stay in the shaving cream so we needed another approach.

Wendalynn, as a total professional, always comes to play-day sessions with an assortment of items she has collected over the past few weeks. When I saw the small dolls, I realized they would break up the solid shaving cream, plus give the model, Michele, an element of fun to play off of with her expressions (2).

Lighting

I used a basic glamour light setup (3) to produce beautiful, shadowless lighting. I had two Photoflex Starfish softboxes (one on each side of the camera) aimed slightly down; no matter which way the model turns, she is bathed in soft light from these boxes. (Normally I also use a hair light in this setup, but here it would have exacerbated the problem with the white shaving cream.)

After shooting several test images, I lowered a gobo directly in front of the model, just out of the camera view, to reduce the exposure value on the dolls and shaving cream by 1 stop.

The secret to the “beauty” part of this lighting is the reflective material that was placed on the table just below the model’s chest. This reflected light filled in any shadows under the eyes and chin, giving the model a glow. You can use a warming reflector or even gels on this surface for a rosy glow. There are also products on the market designed specifically for this approach,



some of which let you control the angle of the reflected light.

To add a little more fun, I asked the makeup artist to add small kiss marks on the model’s face. I have found the best images are created when the team continually experiments throughout the shoot by constantly changing variables.



Strawberries



For the Makeup Artist

Be sure to include some shots that will benefit the makeup artist in her training and serve as a reference for future projects. Wendalynn always wants a shot with the model's eyes closed so she can refer back to what she did.

While we still had everything set up from the shaving cream shot (see previous section), Wendalynn and I decided to try an additional shot. We had planned to use strawberries in the shaving cream, but they kept sinking into it.

For this sequence, we used Chelsea (my photo assistant for the day) as the model—because Michele's hair was a mess.

The lighting setup was the same as in the shaving cream image, except that I used a hair light to emphasize the strawberries. I opted for a 300mm lens on these headshots to get a beautiful perspective when shooting at the model's eye level.

For extra sparkle, we added glitter to Chelsea's lips and the lower strawberry. Bobby pins were used to place the strawberries in her hair. In our initial images, Chelsea's hands were overpowering the fruit she held, so we added a toothpick at the bottom of the strawberry. This was removed in Photoshop. The contrast and vibrance were also boosted in postproduction.

When experimenting, make sure the model understands the motive behind the shoot and can bring the right energy level for what you envision. As a photographer, you must learn how to communicate your vision to the model (and to the whole team for that matter), and she needs to have the beauty and skill to pull off the challenge you set before her.



Pink Hair

The opportunity to create images without expectations is rewarding and challenging. These are the dream jobs that all photographers covet. It takes a lot of trust from the client to invest in this type of shoot.

Because the goals will evolve throughout the shoot, the team's communication is of the utmost importance. Together, you will organize each participant's contribution into a single winning image. Even though she may be new to the team, the model is a vital component and must be treated as such. She must be included in the vision and especially the feel of the image. After all, that is her job: to interpret the story or feeling of the image.

The object of this shoot was to create promotional images for a hair stylist. These were my objectives going into the shoot: have fun, showcase a pink hairstyle, use clear strips of plastic for a "recycled chic" look, and use pink shades in the makeup.

We didn't know how we were going to crop or even light the image. Also, the client couldn't openly use nudity—but that didn't mean the model was going to be clothed during the entire shoot. Therefore, I hired a model I knew would put feeling into her work and be comfortable with any style of fashion shoot. Having worked with her often, I also know she makes the sessions fun for all.





Textured Clay

As your photographic skills improve and your confidence improves, start using the best models and team you can assemble. As a photographer alone, you can only take the images to a certain level without other professionals adding their expertise. It is fun to practice, but a professional model makes all the difference in the work—especially if you want to sell the images. This is a very competitive business; unless you're shooting for fun, you need to produce exciting and unique images.

When your images look professional and you have great presentation, start approaching some of the masters in their fields. Creative people all

love to be part of the process of creating works of art.

I've had the opportunity to work with many master hair stylists on different projects—and I could never sufficiently express my gratitude to them for the rewarding experiences. These projects will always remain highlights in my career.

One of my recent projects was working with Steven Christian—a true creative genius. The series we created, called “Fire, Ice & Coal,” was introduced earlier in this book (refer back to the fine art section). This gallery of images, showing textured hair, mud, and creative coloring, takes us back to a primitive time.







We created the series over the course of a three-day shoot. Most of the first two sessions was spent experimenting with techniques to produce the textured effects we desired and exploring lighting possibilities for each hair design. It's important not to quit experimenting during a session. Don't settle for the first shot. Even if it was successful, push yourself to create additional variations. This is important for your own learning process.

Our model, Karrin Rachelle, was a pleasure to work with—despite sitting covered in cold, wet clay for all three sessions. This is another reminder that using professionals is important.

Take Care of the Team

Give the members of your team images to promote themselves. The biggest complaint I hear from makeup artists is that they never receive images from photographers.





Balloons

Ask Yourself

Why are we shooting? Who is the client? What is the message of this image? What is the final end product I (or the client) intend to produce? Will the image have potential usages in multiple markets? Will I get an adequate return on the time and money I invest in this shoot? Is this shoot primarily a learning experience? All of these questions need to be considered before the shoot begins.

During the shoot, there are plenty of questions to ask yourself, too. How can I make the

lighting reflect the mood I want? How can I communicate the pose and expression I desire to the model? What refinements or adjustments can I use to increase the variety of images from the session? How many ways can I crop these images to get maximum marketing potential? (Providing your client with multiple cropping options is especially important when shooting on location or when creating images for magazine editorials).







Lighting

On the facing page (1), you see a three-light set-up for flat light—a simple lighting approach that works well to surround the subject in a consistent level of light from all sides. Two softboxes were placed at 45 degree angles flanking the model. An additional small softbox was placed high and directly in front of the model, angled down toward her. With even lighting like this, the model can move in any direction without having heavy shadows fall in unwanted places. This is a great setup for doing the test shoots described on pages 48 to 51.

In the second image on the facing page (2), note the additional light in the photograph. This was a Photoflex Starlite—a constant light source. Many digital cameras have a hard time focusing in low light, and this can slow down the session. Adding a constant light source to elevate the ambient light on the subject allows the camera to focus more quickly. Additionally, it keeps the model's pupil slightly constricted, so you'll see more of the iris (the colored part of the eye) in your images. Be reasonable with the level of this light; you don't want her to squint.

Setup

For this setup, the model was elevated on milk crates covered by plywood and seamless paper. As you can see in the top image on the facing page, the paper was lowered behind her to eliminate showing the hard edge of the floor. Elevating the model gives the photographer a better working condition and a better perspective.

Variations

For another look, the model's undergarments were covered with shaving cream and she posed eating an ice-cream cone.



Feathers

A chicken coop, feathers, a model, a light, and a creative makeup artist—who needs more?

A lot of things came together unexpectedly to create this shoot. First, a chicken coop was left in the studio parking lot (apparently, someone missed the dumpster). Second, my makeup artist had recently found a bag of feathers at a swap meet. Finally, a model walked into the studio wanting to shoot. She said she wanted to be an actress—so we put her to the test.

Bobby pins were used to hold the feathers in place in the model's hair, while rubber bands

were employed to attach them to her arms. A piece of rabbit fur from another project covered the model's underwear. With that, we were ready to shoot!

What makes this series interesting is the lighting. A single theatrical can was used with a parabolic lens. The can gives the light a dramatic feel, because it produces abundant shadows. In front of the light, diffusion material was used to soften the hard edge a bit and spread out the light more evenly. Color correction was done in the camera.

A Toned-Down Version

The model didn't mind being topless but she needed a toned down photo, too. The photo on the left shows her beauty and that she is comfortable in her skin without the blatant message of the photo on the right. Photoshop was used to make the image more discrete by cloning feathers. In the image on the right, notice how the whole mood changes when the model's eyes are cropped out.





Smoke

Smoke can add drama and take us back to the romantic times of Hollywood glamour. The smoke is easily shot by backlighting it against a dark background. Color can be added to the

backlight to enhance the smoke. This image was created while the model was waiting for the lighting to be completed.





Eggshell

During this session, we were creating a dynamic new art piece for Steven Christian. The concept originated when I found emu eggs being sold at a local farmers' market. The vendor was kind enough to give me a few that were cracked, so I decided to (digitally) place a model in the eggshell to focus on her face and hair.

Setup

Below (1) you see an overview of the studio before setup. The building is a hundred years

old and includes a hair cutting chair and salon sink—plus a shower for messy photo sessions.

I moved a 4x8-foot elevated platform into position (2) and spread out heavy black felt to use as background. This material also functions as a privacy divider when other photographers are using the studio's other shooting areas.

Next, I covered the platform with a canvas (3) and then newspaper to absorb some of the liquid mess from the hair gel and water spray bottle we'd be using.





Finally, I suspended a mosquito net from the ceiling (4). The model stepped into the net and pulled it over her body. Then, gel and feathers were applied. Two ropes suspended the net, because the original concept involved having part of the net draped over the eggshell. The color of the net was chosen to resemble emu eggshells.

Lighting

As seen above (5), the main light was a simple reflector with a grid (to control the spread of light). This was fitted with a diffusion gel and a warming gel. The backlight was a grid with a blue gel over it to intensify the color on the hair.

I also used a small Photoflex softbox with warming gels taped inside. Putting the gels *in* the box let me vary the color of the light from different parts of the softbox. This only works when the light is extremely close to the subject, though.

The warming gels on the main light and softbox let me control the light that was hitting the model, keeping it from going too blue. The



softbox spread the light evenly over the model's body. (I didn't know how much of the body was going to show above the eggshell.) Placing this light to the extreme side caused it to highlight the texture of the feathers.

Because I wanted dramatic blue coloration on the skin and hair to match the egg's coloring, I set the camera's white balance to tungsten lighting (6). Notice how the window light in the background has shifted to a dramatic blue.

The final image in this setup sequence (7) was shot to show the overall design of the set in the studio while the lights fired. Again, the white balance was set for tungsten.



The stylist added the final touches to the gel and feather application. The model did her own makeup before she arrived on the set, and her hair was completed during lighting setup. The detail shots to the right give you a sense of the level of detail that went into the styling.

Compositing the Final Shot

Once we had created our images of the model, I had to select some of my favorites (seen below) to take to the composite stage. At this point,

they were combined with an image of the emu egg. For continuity, the image was shot under the same lighting as the model.





Tips from a Model

Photographers often fail to consider things from the other side of the camera—from where the model stands. What we do wouldn't be possible without them, so I interviewed model Karrin Rachelle to see what she had to say about photographers. She also provides some good insight into all the work *she* does to make each session a success.

Billy Pegram: As a successfully model how do you determine what jobs you take—especially ones involving figure work?

Karrin Rachelle: I first look at who the client is. What are the pictures for and where will they be used? Then, I look at the photographer's portfolio. Do I like his or her style? Will the images benefit me with future jobs? Then, I decide if I will work with their budget.

BP: What do you look for in their portfolios?

KR: Do I like the pictures? Is it a style I like? Will this photographer make me look good? Is it fun or artsy?

BP: What do you mean by “artsy”?

KR: Are the shots about my body parts—my boobs or crotch—or are they pictures where my body adds to the scene as part of the message, mood, or statement? I like shoots with meaning and depth.

BP: What about commercial figure work?

KR: That's different. Those shots can't be too explicit anyway—and, besides, the client is paying me well.

BP: How do the rates differ between figure and commercial jobs?

KR: My agent works with the client's budget, but nude and semi-nude work is usually twice as much as non-nude. However, my agent is really picky about usage and rights.

BP: What about non-commercial photo rates—say for a fine art photographer?

KR: I discuss the project with the photographer and if I am interested in the project, we will discuss the budget. But I don't shoot for no or low budget.

BP: Are there special photographers with whom you have established a relationship—or whom you enjoy shooting with? Is it all about the money?

KR: I have a very select few that I enjoy working with. Most of them helped me out when I was first starting as a model. We became friends and I enjoy their art.

So, no, it is not always about the money—but I do feel that a client who is using my image, nude or not, to promote their product or work should pay.



BP: What are your limitations for figure work?

KR: Depends on the usage of the photos, but my normal comfort level is Playboy-style nudes.

BP: What suggestions do you have for photographers just starting to work with figure models?

KR: Don't be a creeper! My favorite photographers always have water and sodas available—and if it's a full day shoot, then a food break. I prefer light conversation and humor more than tense and uptight people. Please always be respectful. I prefer a closed set or only the production people—no guests! I also prefer a photographer who explains their vision and allows me to work with that vision.

BP: What do you think is a model's responsibility during a shoot?

KR: At our original meeting, when the concepts of the shoot are explained, I make a list of what accessories I have that will make the shoot worthwhile—shoes, clothes, makeup, and anything I have that we can use to make the images successful. On set, I try to bring feeling and the right emotion into the shot and give the photographer a variety of poses.

BP: Speaking of posing, who is responsible for the poses?

KR: A mixture of me and the photographer. I try to feel the pose—but he can actually *see* it and help me make small changes to fit the feeling he wants.

BP: What grooming do you do before a shoot?

KR: That's an embarrassing question. Well, I trim my pubic hair to the length we discussed at

the pre-shoot meeting. I make sure my armpits and legs are shaved, and that my fingernails and toenails are trimmed and painted. I also have my eyebrows done. Then, I have to have clean skin and hair for the makeup artist and hairdresser.

BP: That sounds like a lot of time and cost.

KR: Yes, it is very expensive. Add to that travel costs, and I can no longer do trade for print like I did at the beginning of my career. It takes me hours to get ready and it's expensive—so it really annoys me when I get no-shows or last-minute cancellations.

BP: What are your limitations with props and animals?

KR: I don't do bondage or fetish work. I love working with animals as long as it is not a dangerous situation.

BP: How do you handle photographers who hit on you?

KR: That is a stupid thing to do. Because of the Internet, there's a lot of communication among models—so I don't know why anyone would try. Also, I am there to work and I only work with photographers who are professionals. No GWCs.

BP: GWCs?

KR: "Guys With Cameras"—men who are not photographers but posers who are trying to date the models. Yuck!

Pages 149 and 151: Images of model Karrin Rachelle.



Tips from a Casting Agent

An integral part of figure photography is finding the right model for the images you want to create. When working with new models, photographers also may want to direct them in how to take the next step in their career. That's where casting agents come into play. To get some insight into the job of the casting agent, I spoke with Julie Green of Nevada Casting Group, Inc.

Billy Pegram: What is the difference between a model/talent agency and a casting agency?

Julie Green: Model/talent agencies represent models and talent, taking a percentage of what the talent or models make for each job. They market the talent to casting agencies and clients.



Julie
Green of
Nevada
Casting
Group,
Inc.

A casting agency works for the client directly and is paid by the client; the casting agency then pays the talent agency, which pays the talent (less the agency's percentage).

A casting agency will contact all the model/talent agencies until they find the right person for the client. Casting agencies are paid a fee for their services and don't take a percentage from talent.

BP: What type of jobs do you get?

JG: We do print jobs for major companies. Let's say a department store is doing a catalog and they want a certain theme—or, in Nevada, we do whole campaigns for casinos.

Casting companies are usually credited for their work in the movie or video business, but casting companies are also used for commercials, Webinars, training films, and short films—everything from 30-second television commercials to full-length movies.

We can spend days looking for the one person that a director wants.

BP: How do you handle a project that involves nudity? Do you?

JG: There is so much nudity in today's work that we do deal with it. The nude girl in the shower for a shampoo ad. The love scene in a movie or lingerie commercial.

BP: How do you qualify the jobs that you take?

JG: We have a screening process that we use for all clients. We check out their background, meet with them face to face, and discuss the specific projects—determining what is actually expected with the talent, permits, etc. Have we worked with them before? Our interview process is quite extensive, especially the first time, but not really difficult. You can tell if a project is legitimate or if someone is just shopping for his or her own pleasure.

BP: What about a new photographer?

JG: It's the same process. He or she just has to understand that this is a business and not a dating service. They need to show respect for the model/talent at all times. We also ask for a list of all the people who will be on the set. Is this a closed set? And, especially, where will the work be distributed? Can a model have a copy for their portfolio?

BP: How about the video/movie requirements?

JG: Well, we screen the same way whether it is a figure movie or a Disney film. Is the project union SAG or AFTRA? What is the budget? How much nudity is required? Is there a hold harmless agreement? Liability insurance? Plus, I read the script. I also require a deposit for the talent up front. I want to see the storyboards

to see how the film will be shot and from what angles. I want specific answers for the credits.

BP: What about body-parts models?

JG: Nothing different. I require all the same answers to the questions for print or movie/video.

BP: How do you find the talent?

JG: I get talent from all the regional agencies, plus photographers and directors I have worked with. Then I screen the talent to find out what their comfort level is and if they can act. I have them submit images that I can show the client or producers—or we actually hold a casting session for the client. We will either record this or have the client in the room for the auditions.

BP: One last question: Can local photographers submit models or actors for your consideration?

JG: Sure—as long as the images are respectful to the model and talent, and they are of good enough quality that I can show the work to clients. I prefer if the talent is listed with an agency, but sometimes we are scouring the cities looking for the right model.

Directing a Model

It is the photographer's responsibility to create a positive dialog with the model throughout the photo session.

The Photographer's Role

Most models require direction from the photographer and it is not sufficient to simply tell the model to "pose." Rather, the photographer must instruct the model as to the overall aim of the shoot and give her suggestions for a starting pose. Then, the photographer must gently guide her through a series of movements that

will flow smoothly so that the quality of the images required may be attained.

With New Models

The photographer must maintain a positive environment, especially when working with less experienced models. If a model feels tension, she will assume that she is the cause and will have difficulty maintaining a constant flow of beautiful, graceful movements. A positive environment can be created by continually voicing encouraging comments.

If the session is not going well for whatever reason, the photographer must accept total responsibility for the lack of success. The best solution in this situation is not to acknowledge the lack of success but to suggest a different path. One might say, "Well done—great shots. Now let's try this."

If the model lacks the posing skills you desire, there are several options to try. Demonstrate the pose and feeling you are seeking. Yes, this usually makes the models laugh, but that sometimes will break the tension and create a more positive, relaxed mood. Have examples of photos you are trying to emulate or show the model a playback of what photos you have taken and explain what changes are needed. Again, keep the conversation positive and take the responsibility for the photography. Use the following types





of statements: “Notice how the light falls across your body,” or “What I would like to achieve is . . .” and “See how this photo shows the curve of the torso? That’s what I’m after.”

If a model doubts her beauty in the image, she will become anxious and stiffen, thereby losing the rhythm and flow. This, in turn, stifles creativity. She may also become defensive and/or moody. This is when the photographer must know how to precisely direct the model as clearly and eloquently as possible—all the while bolstering the model’s self-confidence. Knowing when to give direction and when to be silent is also a valuable skill.

I love working with beginning models, even though they require a greater depth of communication and patience. It is gratifying to see their self-confidence grow and their skills develop. It also gives the team a sense of accomplishment. It is possible, through patient direction, to teach an inexperienced model how to move on camera in a way that insures a successful photo shoot.

With Experienced Models

When shooting an experienced model, I may give directions at first until I see the model’s skill level. Sometimes, directing a model is as simple as communicating your vision, helping the model to get into character, then stepping back and letting her work. She may need a few

suggestions if she seems to be running out of ideas or if you wish to change the look or feel of the image, but it is a joy to work with such a model. Many experienced models tell me that they enjoy my photographer–model communication and complain that most photographers don’t give any direction at all. They simply say, “Show me something” or “Do your thing.” Lack of communication can be a death knell for great images.

The Results Are Worth the Effort

Above all, remember that the success of the shoot is the responsibility of the photographer. It is the photographer’s role to encourage the model, enhance creativity, bolster the team, and otherwise do whatever is necessary to achieve the desired images. This can be exhausting and sometimes laughable, but the end results are generally worth the effort.

Follow Your Passion

Some photographers become so concerned with theory and technical knowledge that they lose the passion in the photograph. Unfortunately, unless you are doing a line catalog, there must be passion in the images.

Passion for your work is a necessary ingredient for all photographers. You must love what you do and you must do it for the work itself. Lack of passion for the work will show in your photography. For example, if you don't like women, that dislike will come across in your images of female subjects.

Photographers should not allow themselves to be trapped in a field that they consider mundane or boring. If you are not enjoying what you are doing, it becomes just another job rather than an exciting, creative career.

Happily, the many categories of figure photography will allow you to choose the styles you feel passion about.

Don't be afraid to experiment and to stray from the norm!



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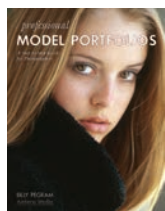
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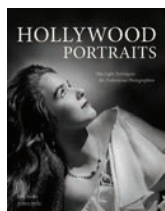
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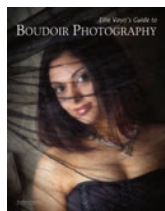
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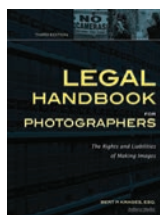
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