

# PORTRAITURE & LIGHTING

## AN OVERVIEW

### Education & Training Session

Northern Virginia Photographic Society

By Chris Langford

# DEFINING PORTRAITURE

What makes it special

# DEFINING PORTRAITS

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- ▶ Photography of a person or group of people that displays the **expression, personality, and mood** of the subject. The focus of the photograph is usually the **person's face**, although the entire body and the background or context may be included. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)
- ▶ The art of capturing a subject in which the face, facial features as well as facial expressions are made predominant. [www.headshotlondon.co.uk](http://www.headshotlondon.co.uk)

# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE

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- ▶ The following labels are just to provide you context if you read or hear one of these words. In reality, they are not important to taking a good portrait, and they tend to get blur together.
- ▶ Journalistic
  - ▶ Candid images of subjects designed to tell a news story
- ▶ Documentary
  - ▶ Candid images of subjects documenting their lives or common routines that are not considering newsworthy
- ▶ Street
  - ▶ Candid images of subjects going about their lives in public spaces



Migrant mother





# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE

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- ▶ Traditional/Classic

- ▶ Headshot, two third, or full body

- ▶ Glamour

- ▶ Emphasis on sexual or romantic appeal of the subject

- ▶ Fashion

- ▶ Emphasis is on the style and clothing the subject is wearing

- ▶ Environmental

- ▶ Subject/s interacting with and telling a story about their **environment/surroundings** while engaging the camera/photographer (e.g., looking at the camera)

- ▶ Lifestyle

- ▶ Similar to environmental, but the subjects are not engaging the camera/photographer (e.g., candid or semi-candid)

- ▶ Conceptual

- ▶ Abstract



# DOES PORTRAITURE SELL?

- ▶ Portraiture is usually for the subject/client, not for the public for general sell
- ▶ According to 500px the following properties do better for sells when it comes to portraiture
  - ▶ Single subject over group
  - ▶ Candid over posed
  - ▶ Wide shots over close-ups
  - ▶ Looking away instead of facing the camera
  - ▶ Unidentified subjects



vs.



# QUALITY OF LIGHT

How to control it

# LIGHT SOURCES

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## ▶ Continuous

- ▶ Cheaper and is not limited by camera shutter sync speed
  - ▶ The Sun
  - ▶ Lamps/video lights
  - ▶ High Speed Sync for a Speedlite



## ▶ Flash

- ▶ More powerful than continuous, and can freeze action, but limited by your cameras sync shutter speed
  - ▶ Speedlites
    - ▶ Light, mobile, and affordable if you go with third party brands, but they are not as powerful, have a slower refresh rate, and burn through batteries
  - ▶ Strobes
    - ▶ More powerful, higher refresh rates, and designed to be used with modifiers, but they are not as mobile or light as Speedlites





# MAIN TYPES OF LIGHT MODIFIERS

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- ▶ **Umbrellas**
  - ▶ Parabolic Umbrellas
- ▶ **Softboxes**
- ▶ **Octoboxes**
- ▶ **Beauty Dishes**
- ▶ **Reflectors**



# STAYING WITHIN A BUDGET

Tips on saving money



# NATURAL LIGHT – THE MONEY SAVER

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- ▶ Do not feel like you have to buy a ton of gear and lights to create great portraiture!!!
- ▶ Every portraiture setup mentioned later on in this presentation can be done **without** using artificial lights
- ▶ One of the best and softest light source + modifier is sunlight and a window with white curtains or on the inside edge of a tunnel
- ▶ The only item you may want or need is some type of reflector, such as a piece of white foam core board or a 5 in 1 reflector, which cost only \$20 or less
- ▶ Here are two amazing natural light portrait photographers
  - ▶ [Glamour Photographer, Sue Bryce](#)
  - ▶ [Wedding Photographers, Sam Hurd](#)

# AFFORDABLE LIGHT SOURCE BRANDS

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## ▶ **Speedlites**

### ▶ Yongnuo

- ▶ *Their YN-568EX with TTL and HHS for Nikons is only \$101, and if you go manual (i.e., no TTL), their popular YN-560 III is just \$65!!*

### ▶ Nissin

### ▶ Phottix

## ▶ **Strobes**

### ▶ **Paul C. Buff**

- ▶ AlienBees – e.g., B400 \$225

### ▶ **Amazon.com**

- ▶ Cowboy Studio – e.g., Cowboystudio 400W \$140
- ▶ Neewer

### ▶ **B&H**

- ▶ Impact – e.g., Impact Digital 300W \$239

# AFFORDABLE LIGHT MODIFIERS BRANDS

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## ▶ Amazon.com

- ▶ Cowboy Studio
- ▶ Fotodiox – e.g., EZ-Pro 48" Octagon \$109
- ▶ Neewer

## ▶ B&H

- ▶ Impact

## ▶ Paul C. Buff

**Before you buy a modifier, make sure it will work with your light source!!**

Most modifiers allow you to change the “speed ring,” which is an adaptor so it will work with your light source

# NOTE ON LIGHT MODIFIERS

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- ▶ **Softboxes and especially octaboxes can be extremely difficult to assemble!**
  - ▶ If you're looking for a softbox or octabox, get the ones that fold up like an umbrella, such as Fotodiox **EZ-Pro** models or Paul C. Buff brands

# WHAT IS IN CHRIS'S BAG & WHY?

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- ▶ Given I do professional paid work, namely headshots, I have gear that allows me to setup almost anywhere to achieve a consistent look when dealing with more than one person without having to worry about ambient lighting and weather
- ▶ Below highlights my main lighting gear, which I bought over time through trial and error
  - ▶ **Backdrops**
    - ▶ [StudioPRO 5' x 7' Portable Black/White Backdrop](#) ~\$55
      - ▶ *Design for one person*
    - ▶ [Two Prism 10x20' Backdrops](#) ~\$150
      - ▶ *Design groups or full (whole body) portraits*
  - ▶ **Stands**
    - ▶ [Impact Turtle Base C-Stand Kit](#) ~\$145
      - ▶ *Used to hold a light and modifier above a subject safely*
    - ▶ [Light stands Pro Heavy 7'6"](#) ~\$61
      - ▶ *Stronger than your typically light stands*
    - ▶ [Ankle Weight for Sand Bags](#) ~\$37
      - ▶ *Weight for stands are critical!! I forgot these as you noticed during my presentation. ;)*
    - ▶ [LimoStudio Photography Kit](#) ~\$50
      - ▶ *Great started kit that I still use that comes with 2 stands, 4 umbrellas, and 2 Speedlite shoe mounts*
    - ▶ [LimoStudio Photo Studio Lighting Reflector Arm](#) ~\$25
      - ▶ *Design to hold a reflector for clamshell lighting*

# WHAT IS IN CHRIS'S BAG & WHY?

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## ▶ Modifiers

- ▶ [NEEWER 32-Inch 5 in 1 Reflector](#) ~\$12
  - ▶ One of the best modifiers for natural light and outdoor shoots, but it requires an assistant (a person to hold it)
- ▶ [PCB White High Output Beauty Dish](#) ~\$80
  - ▶ Great for butterfly or clamshell lighting; design to prevent hot spots on your subject
- ▶ [PCB Soft Silver PLM™ Umbrellas](#) ~\$50

## ▶ Lights

- ▶ [PCB Einstein E640](#) ~\$500
  - ▶ One of the best strobes for the price that has a wide range from 2.5Ws to 640Ws and with amazing freezing action ability. AlienBees are cheaper and really good too!
- ▶ [Yongnuo YN-568EX TTL Speedlite for Nikon Bodies](#) ~\$100
  - ▶ Great for event on-camera photography, but TTL is not needed for studio portrait work. You can save a ton by going with manual Speedlites like the YN-560 III.
- ▶ [Yongnuo YN-662N radio triggers](#) ~\$40
  - ▶ I own 3 of these, and use them to trigger my strobes using a 3.5mm PC sync cable. Designed to transfer my TTL data from my body to my YN-568 when using off-camera. If you go with YN-560 III, you can use a YN-560TX to control them remotely.
- ▶ [Yongnuo YN-662N-TX master radio triggers](#) ~\$45
  - ▶ Allows me to easily control other YN-662N triggers when in a studio type environment



# LIGHTING SETUP

The direction of lighting is critical

# LIGHTING TERMS

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- ▶ **Key**

- ▶ Main light you use to light your subject

- ▶ **Hair**

- ▶ Add lighting the hair, especially if it's dark

- ▶ **Fill**

- ▶ Used to reduce contrasts/fill in shadows

- ▶ **Backlight**

- ▶ Used to create separation between your subject and the background
- ▶ Light can be shined on the background or back of subject, or both

- ▶ **Kicker/Rim**

- ▶ Opposite of your key to strike a glancing blow on the subject
- ▶ Used to define facial or body features, as well as add drama

# KICKER EXAMPLE

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► Key vs. Key + Kicker



# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Clamshell Lighting

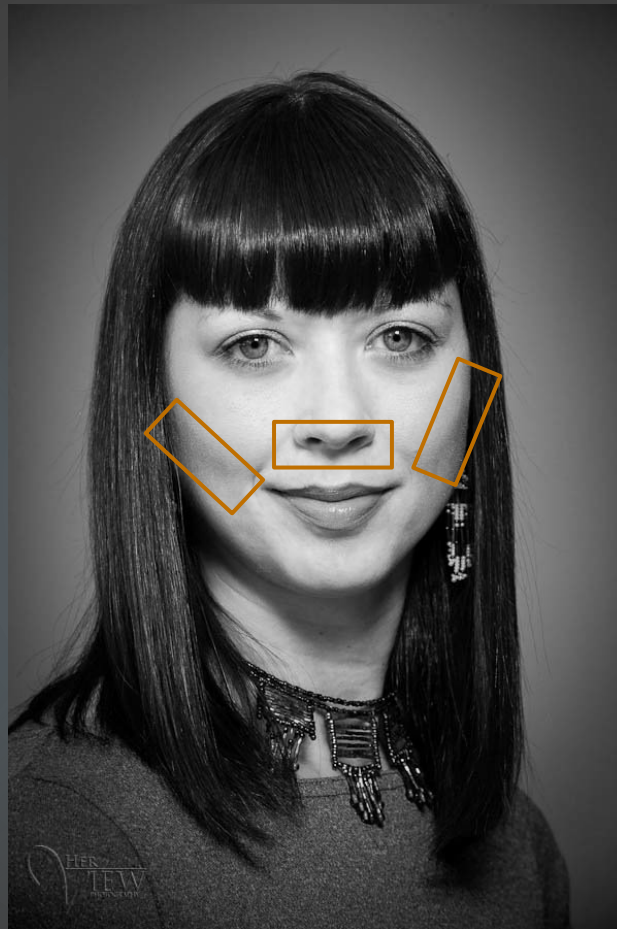


- Fills in shadows to reduce wrinkles, and popular for women since it eliminates shadows around the nose
- It does not have a slimming effect though
- A reflector (white usually best) can replace using a bottom/under light
- Usually a one stop different between the top and bottom light (i.e., your key light should be the top light)
- Hard to achieve; usually requires a boom arm to get the light above the subject

# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Butterfly Lighting



- Similar to Clamshell lighting but uses less or no under lighting creating a more dramatic look with darker shadows under the chin
- Sometimes called Paramount lighting since it was popular by the motion picture industry in the 1930s
- Can really help emphasize subjects with strong cheekbones



# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Split Lighting



- Very dramatic look
- Tends to be used more for men to emphasize a masculine look
- Usually need some fill on the opposite side of your key so shadows are not totally dark



# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Broad Lighting

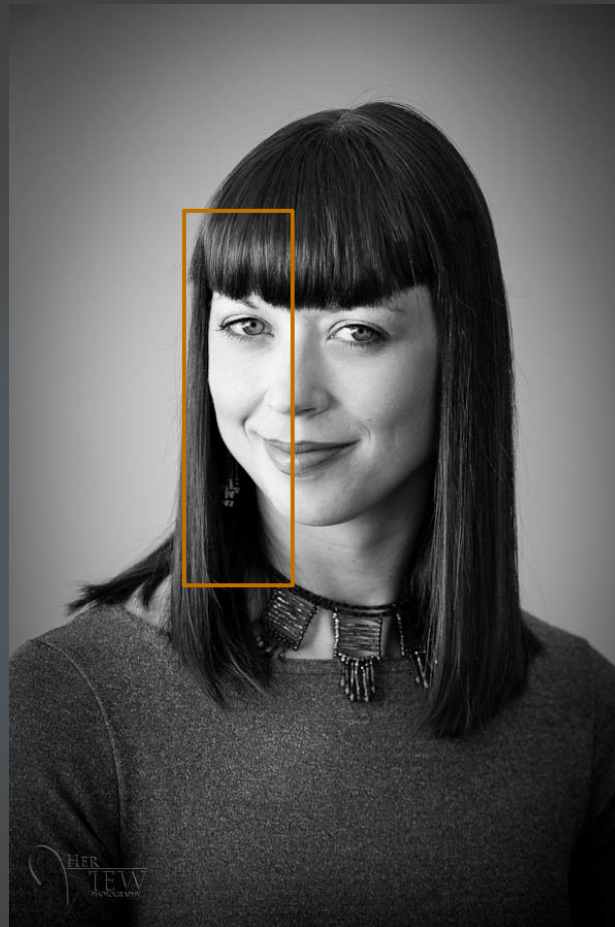


- Used more for men to emphasize a masculine look
- Widens/broadens the face

# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Short Lighting



- You light the side of the face not facing the camera
- One of the most commonly used and flattening lighting options next to clamshell
- Very similar to loop lighting since short lighting will usually always create the loop shadow on the nose
- Has a slimming effect on the subject, and gives a more feminine feel

# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Rembrandt Lighting



- Similar to short lighting and loop lighting, but you angle the light to create a triangle of light underneath the eye facing the camera
- Gives a moody and dramatic feel than causal (e.g., fine art or fashion)

# TYPES OF PORTRAITURE LIGHTING

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## ► Loop Lighting



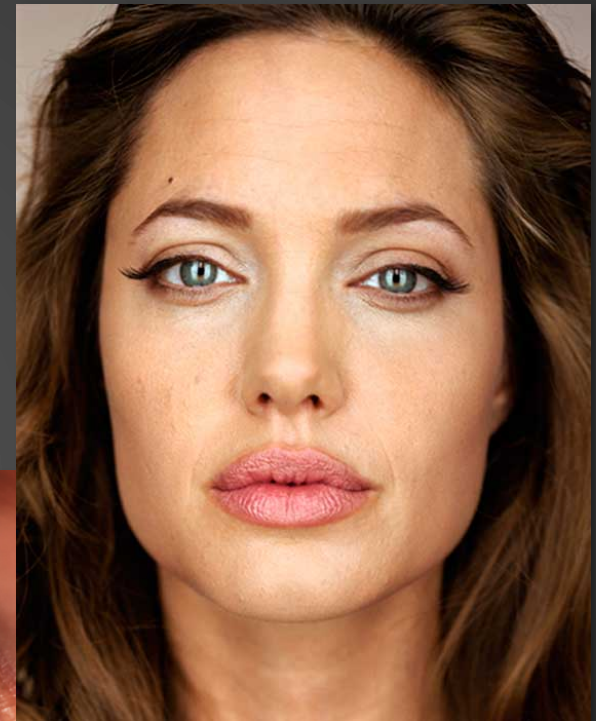
- Very similar to short lighting; defined by the loop shadow created on the nose
- Most commonly used lighting, and easy to achieve



# THE CATCHLIGHT SECRET

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- ▶ The catchlight will show you how the portraiture was lit



# THREE LIGHT SETUP EXAMPLE

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## ▶ **Key**

- ▶ Speedlite in large softbox; camera right

## ▶ **Fill**

- ▶ Mid size white reflector; camera left

## ▶ **Backlight**

- ▶ Gridded speedlite behind head pointed to backdrop



Camera Settings

1/200

f/5.6

ISO 100



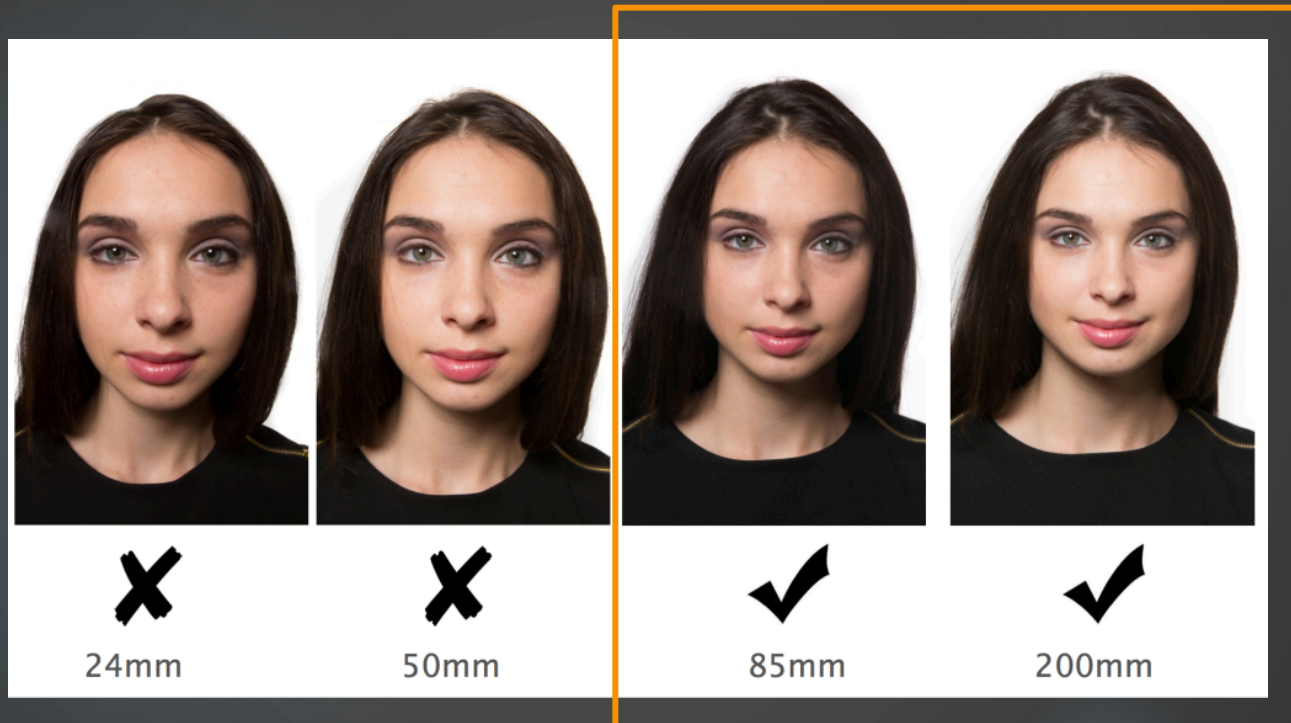
# GLASS MATTERS

## Lens Recommendations

# FOCAL LENGTH

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- ▶ The ideal focal length is 85mm to 200mm
  - ▶ However, you **can use a wider focal length if you put distance from you and the subject**



# APERTURE

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- ▶ Wide (f/1.2 to f/2.8) = blur background, clothing, and features
- ▶ Narrow (f/5.6 to f/11) = ensures subject is in focus



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PORTRAITS

It's all in your head

# TIPS TO CONSIDER

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## ▶ **Trust is important**

- ▶ You want your subjects to feel like they can trust you with their images
- ▶ The more trust, the more they will be willing to take direct and roleplay

## ▶ **Stay positive**

- ▶ Never critique your subject or give off a negative expression
- ▶ Give a genuine praise (clothing, hair color, eyes, cheek bones, etc.)

## ▶ **Engage your subject**

- ▶ If you want a certain look, you have to engage you client with words, expressions, and examples.

## ▶ **Loosen them up**

- ▶ Get them to talk about themselves
- ▶ Tell a funny story
- ▶ Uses phrases, like “don’t look so miserable”

## ▶ **Stay professional**

- ▶ Avoid words like “babe,” “honey,” “sexy,” or “good looking”
  - ▶ Even if your subject is attractive, avoid bring up that fact because 9 out of 10 you're going to make them uncomfortable
- ▶ Your focus should be on taking a great portraiture, not some alternative agenda



# POSING YOUR SUBJECT

The Key to Great Portraiture

# TIPS TO CONSIDER

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- ▶ **Never ever say “cheese” or “smile”!!**
  - ▶ Looks forced and unnatural due to years of bad forum, which for most people creates a “cheese” facial muscle memory that is hard to break;
- ▶ **Get that forehead out (i.e., turtling)**
  - ▶ Get your forehead, and chin slightly down to makes the neck look longer, tightens skin around the jaw, and **reduce a double a chin look**
- ▶ **Eyes are key**
  - ▶ Avoid deer in the headlight look
  - ▶ Eyes should always be in focus (at least that is nearest the camera)
- ▶ **Drop that front shoulder**
  - ▶ Makes the neck look longer (sliming effect) and gives a more relax feel
- ▶ **Lean forward**
  - ▶ Puts you face closer the camera to create a slimming effect
- ▶ **Have good posture**
  - ▶ Creates a slimming effect
- ▶ **Put that weight on the back leg**
  - ▶ Creates a slimming effect

CONTACT ME IF YOU  
HAVE QUESTIONS

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