Portrait Photography

April 5, 2023

Overview

➢ Types of Portraits

➢ Equipment

➢ It's all about the Eyes and Lighting (and a million other little things)

➢ Lighting Concepts

➢ Tips for better Portraits

"Perhaps the hardest part of learning portrait photography is finding subjects to practice with"

"With landscape photography God supplies the lighting, with portrait photography the lighting is up to you."

Types of Portraits

- Headshots
  - Usually Head to shoulders
  - Self Portraits
- 1/2 - 3/4 Length
  - Head to Mid thigh
- Full Length
  - Studio or environmental
- Couple and Group
- Why do you Care?
  - Planning
  - Location
  - Lighting

Equipment

- ➢ Any camera will do
  - Smartphone
    - ▪ Mostly available light
    - ▪ Continuous Light (Led lights or even your cellphone flashlight)
    - ▪ Most smartphones have Portrait mode to blur the background
  - ILC Cameras (Interchangeable Lens Camera)
    - ▪ Almost any lens (35-120mm) will work for portraits.
    - ▪ Lens choice mostly controls the amount of background
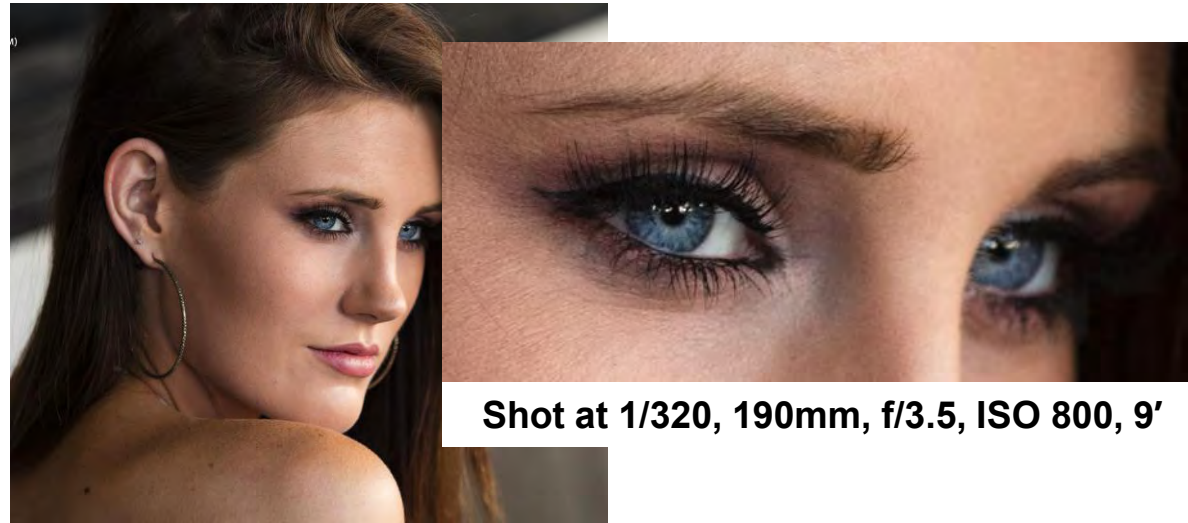
Lighting Equipment

- ➤ Lighting Equipment
  - Available Ambient and Window light (free! You just need to SEE the light)
  - Reflectors – Can be a white(or flat black) cardboard, purchased or even a nearly white wall
  - On camera flash
  - Using a flash off camera requires a wireless trigger or master/slave flash
  - Modifiers – change the shape and size of the light source
  - Studio strobes – Powerful, expensive and not easily portable
- ➤ Portrait Lighting doesn't have to be expensive
  - No flash equipment is required – however a Godox manual flash is only $65
  - A basic, single lighting setup including a flash, off camera wireless trigger, flash stand, and umbrella can be had for $160
  - But like so many things in photography there is almost no limit to how much you can spend!
  - The hardest part of learning portrait photography is finding subjects

It's All About Lighting and Eyes

- If the eyes aren't sharp, it's probably a reject
- Focus on the near eye
  - At 100mm at 10ft, f/2.8 DOF is only 9"
  - At 200mm at 10ft, f/2.8 DOF is only 0.5"

Shot at 1/320, 190mm, f/3.5, ISO 800, 9'

Lighting concepts

- ## Cameras light meter is based on reflected light
  - Measurement in most camera and smartphones usually use evaluative metering
  - Strength of the light is measured at the camera and the color of the subject can adversely affect the exposure. For example: the camera will recommend under exposing a brides white dress or over exposing a black tuxedo by about 1 f/stop. Luckily a shoot with both should be ok

- ## Incident meters measure light falling on the subject
  - It is measured at the subject and requires an Incident/Flash meter.
  - Incident meter readings are generally considered to be more accurate. The exposure recommended is not affected by the color or brightness of the subject

Lighting concepts

➤ Incident vs Reflective (in camera evaluative metering)

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Incident

1/100 sec, ISO 400, at f/5.0

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Reflective

1/100 sec, ISO 400, at f/8.0 camera suggested
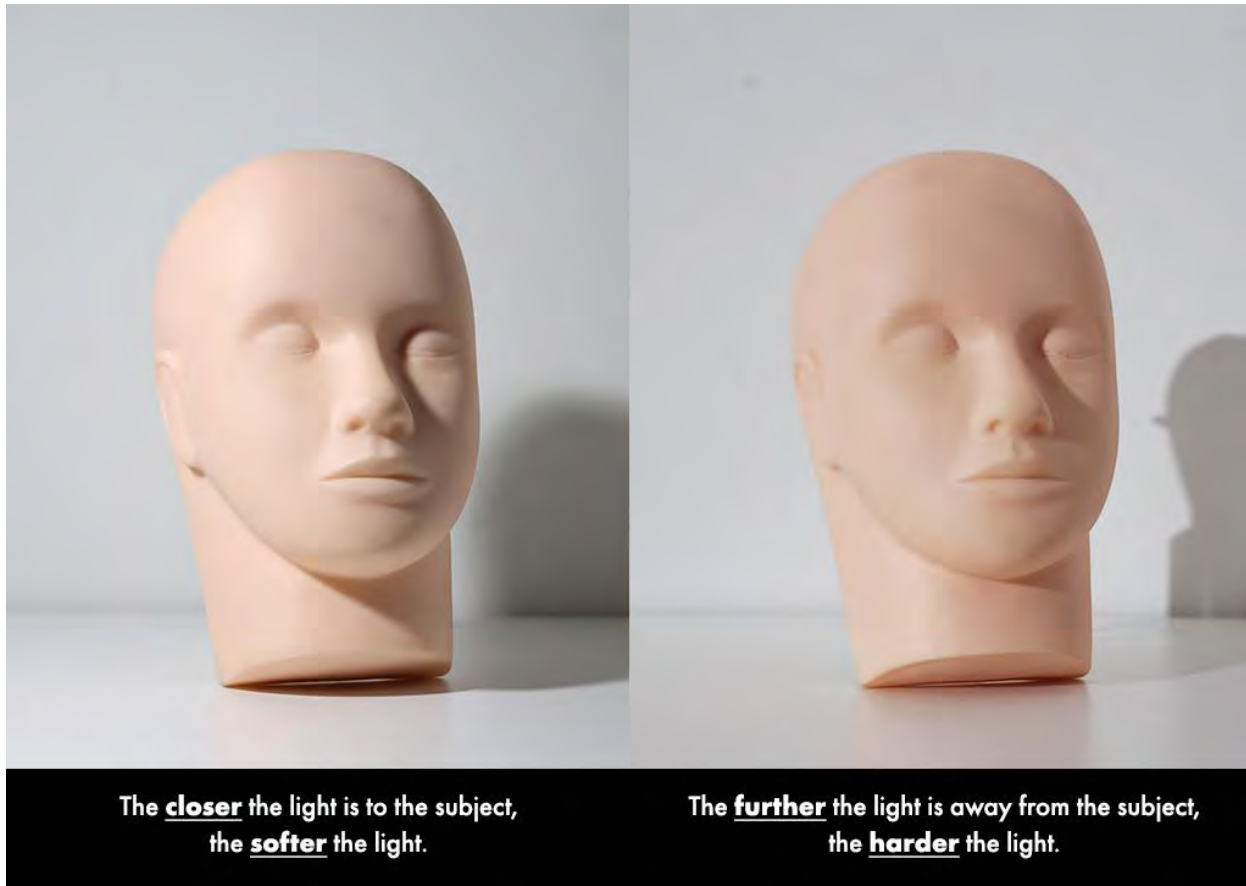

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Lighting concepts

➤ The bigger the light source in relation to the subject the softer the light

Lighting concepts

➤ The closer the light source to the subject the softer the light

The **closer** the light is to the subject, the **softer** the light.

The **further** the light is away from the subject, the **harder** the light.

Lighting concepts

➤ Distance from the camera to the subject does not affect the exposure of the <u>subject</u>

  ➤ However, the surrounding areas may affect the exposure recommendation given by the camera's meter

1/100 sec, ISO 400, at f/5.0 at **8 ft**

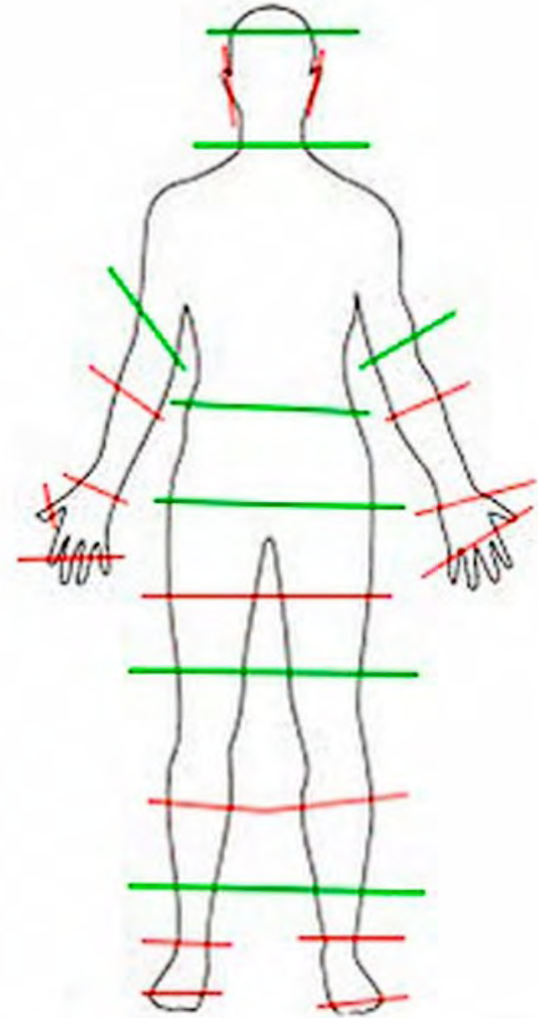1/100 sec, ISO 400, at f/5.0 at **30 ft**

Tips for better Portraits

➤ Slow Down

➤ Shoot from the subject's eye level, especially with kids

➤ Be aware of the lighting and environment

➤ Watch the dynamics of your camera and lens

  ➤ Consider the effect of f/stop and lens choice

  ➤ What is the depth of field?

  ➤ Is the environment/background portrayed the way you want

➤ Talk with the subject and share the experience

Tips for better Portraits

➤ Cropping guidelines
- • Green yes Red no

➤ For best results shoot in Raw Format .

▪ Light temperature (K – Kelvin) is very important. Getting skin tones right in portraits is critical. With raw photos color temperature can be fully adjusted in post processing.

▪ The tone controls found in most post processing applications are frequently needed and adjusted.

Tips for better Portraits

➢ Don't forget about the classic Black & White look

Additional Resources

- The Beginners Guide to Classic Portraits (free course)
  - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyrKONqDZzIwpWXdWBYdYJUK0iXI-ByBh

- The following Photographers offer classes on Portrait Photography
  - Lindsey Adler – New York Fashion Photographer
  - David Hobby – the Strobist.com – best free source of lighting education
  - Jerry Ghionis – Award winning Wedding Photographer
  - Peter Hurley – Headshot specialist – former actor
  - Sue Bryce – Educator and author of "The Portrait System"