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Richard Young is a professional photographer based in Las Vegas, NV, who specializes in fine-art, fashion, glamour, and portrait photography. His



career has taken him around the country, working on assignment and teaching his methods to other aspiring professionals. Richard's images have appeared in *Maxim* magazine, *USA Today*, *Gaming Today* magazine, and a variety of other print and Internet-based publications. He has also created commercial images for some of the world's most luxurious casinos and resorts—and photographed a variety of celebrities, including Diana Ross and Mary J. Blige. "What it really comes down to, though," he says, "is that I want to help people learn how to take better pictures of nude women. My goal with this book is to educate and inspire." To see more, visit www.theartoferotica.com. You can also e-mail Ric at ric@theartoferotica.com.

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Dedication

It sounds so easy in a poem, but in real life it is honestly harder to take the road less traveled when everyone else is taking the road most traveled.

This book is dedicated to my younger brother Jeffery Randford Young, who died far too young. He supported me, helped me, and gave me direction when I was lost and looking for anything to help me. He never worried about anything but helping other people. Rest in peace.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the countless models who trusted me to create something special. Thanks also go out to the clients who have put money in my pocket and allowed me the freedom to run with their ideas and create something better than they imagined.

I also want to thank my wife, Alice Matthews, who not only deals with me day and night but also deals with the models, which is often like trying to herd cats. I know that most of the time (okay, all of the time) I am more than a handful, but she takes care of me without any concern for herself. She is honestly the greatest woman I know and I love her with all my heart and soul.

Finally I would like to acknowledge my dad, James Young. Without his late-night help proof-reading my high-school English papers, the opportunity to work next to him for hours on end at the family-owned photo lab, and all the unconditional love and understanding, this book would never have been possible.

Preface

Less Is More

Often, I see images and am taken aback by how great they look—the styling and planning that goes into them is just amazing. Complex clothes, exotic locations, and dramatic makeup just make some images look unearthly. Looking at these shots, it's easy to start thinking, “If I only had that model (or wardrobe, or camera, or lighting gear), I could do that!”

I am here to show you that you *can* do that—and the best part is you can do it without bankrupting yourself acquiring all those “if only” items. In fact, you can even start making money by working with nude models.

So, while those complex, costly images are great, in my own work I usually find that less is more. In a way, this book is about that very idea: less clutter, less clothing, less studio space, and less expensive gear. I have always felt that what was really important could be boiled down to three things: a camera, a model, and some light. Many of the best images I have created had nothing to do with fancy lighting gear or exotic locations—in fact, a lot of

Many of the best images I have created had nothing to do with fancy lighting gear or exotic locations . . .



Natural light—nothing but sun! $\frac{1}{320}$ second, $f/8$, ISO 320, 16–35mm lens at 16mm.

them were created in average-looking locations with just a camera and sunlight.

Ironically, even in nude/erotic photography, we often look for items to dress up our images instead of focusing on the art and beauty of the human form or the appeal of the environment around it. We clothe the model in expensive lingerie and cover her with makeup, then we light the shot with expensive strobes and in complex studio locations. I think it's time to change that. In this book, we'll look at how we can move the focus back to clean lighting, simple nude models, and photography.

Who This Book Is For

Because we'll be taking a step back from all the things that can make photography a costly pursuit, this book is perfect both for experienced shooters who want to renew their approach *and* for less accomplished guys who just want to take better pictures of their spouses, girlfriends, or local models. This is for *everyone* who wants to get better at the timeless art of creating fine-art nudes.

About This Book

The images in the book are generally placed according to the subject material we are covering. If we are talking about outdoor nudes, you will see outdoor nudes.

First, we will talk about meeting models and working with them. From there, we will move on to different types of cameras and their pros and cons. Once we have the model and camera covered, we will address the all-important topic of lighting.

With these fundamentals in place, we will continue getting you ready for your session—planning your shoot, handling the paperwork, work-



Sun with a diffusion panel (scrim). $\frac{1}{200}$ second, $f/6.3$, ISO 100, 70–200mm lens at 125mm.

ing with the model during the shoot, and much more. Once the shoot is complete, it is time to evaluate your images and explore some of the most important tools you can use when retouching nude images.

Once you have some great images in your portfolio, we'll look at ways to start making money with your images—one of the best feelings is having someone want your images! Finally, we'll end with a bang, covering quick and simple tips on saving money, so you can preserve all those profits from your sales.

1. Models

Whether you are single or married, working with nude models can be a challenge. Half the time, married guys wish they were single so they could shoot models. Single guys, on the other hand, think it would be easier if they were married, because then they could just photograph their wife. Well, I am here to tell you that your relationship status doesn't matter. As long as you are honest and approach it professionally, you will have few problems finding and working with models.

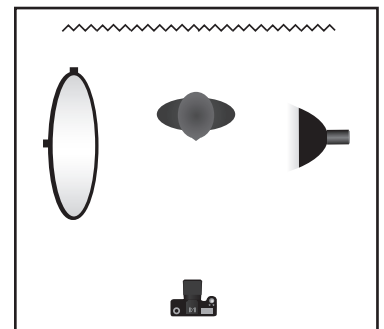
Spouses

I often hear from photographers who they wish they could shoot fine-art nudes, except their spouse will not allow them to do so or has doubts about it. It's understandable that a wife might be uncomfortable when her husband announces that he wants to do a nude shoot. After all, many people think that a shoot consists of a model flirting with a photographer in a dark hotel room downtown. Anyone with experience shooting nude models knows that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Therefore, one of the best ways to overcome this problem is to make your spouse a part of the shoot or let your significant other see what is going on during a session. Maybe start with a few bou-

Make your spouse a part of the shoot or let your significant other see what is going on . . .

Professional images often require very little gear. It is more about using the lighting correctly than having a ton of "stuff." I used a small softbox, sun from behind, and a reflector. $\frac{1}{13}$ second, $f/16$, ISO 250, 24-70mm lens at 24mm.



My wife Alice posing for me.



Don't make her feel left out; let her see that she can have a meaningful role in the creative process.

doir shoots and have your wife help out with picking clothes, or maybe your spouse can help with hair and makeup. Don't make her feel left out; let her see that she can have a meaningful role in the creative process.

If your spouse or girlfriend is willing to pose nude for you, that is a great starting place. There's a big advantage to having a person in your life who is willing to pose nude for you: they are always available. You can take it slower with loved ones because you have the element of time on your side. You can do boudoir

“Art can never exist without
naked beauty displayed.” —William Blake

for a while, then implied nudes, and then bodyscapes. You can work on your skills over time, getting better each step of the way. Even if no one sees these images, it is important to shoot them thoughtfully and to evaluate the final product carefully.

Friends and Co-Workers

We all have friends and most of them do not want nude images of themselves. Most of us don't even like fully clothed pictures of ourselves—and the idea of being naked in front of someone only compounds the resistance. It's fair to ask a friend to pose for you, but if they decline, don't push. Just drop it. Asking again and again will only make them feel strange. It's a quick way to lose a friend.

Co-workers, in my opinion, are off limits (unless you work at a modeling agency or some other rare location). Never ask co-workers to pose nude for you, even if they are really good friends. And if they come to you asking to be photographed nude, turn them down. It's better to be safe than sorry; you have to work with this person.

When photographing someone you are not dating or engaged with in an intimate relationship, it is easy to undervalue how profoundly they are revealing themselves. No matter how explicit or non-explicit the image may be, they are sharing everything with you. Don't betray this trust; make sure friends stay *friends*—and nothing else. If you like a girl, take her out to a nice dinner—don't photograph her. You have to think of nude photography as business. Even if you are not making money or doing it full time, conducting yourself as if you were running a business will help you stay out of trouble. Act like a professional. After all, the last thing you want is a bad reputation among models, because models *do* talk.

Never ask co-workers to pose nude for you, even if they are really good friends.



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE— Sammy is a nude model—but because she is also a friend of mine, it took ten years before we worked together.



Models

Model Mayhem. Model Mayhem (www.modelmayhem.com) is a place for photographers and models to meet online. It may not be the ideal place to meet a new model, but it is a lot better than other places. One of the many things I like about Model Mayhem is that you can easily find various levels of models—from those who are very new to the profession to models who have a great deal of experience. Some are willing to shoot for trade (their time in exchange for your images); however, most models don't want to shoot nude images without payment. One approach is to start working with a model on clothed shoots. Then, after a few sessions working with her, you can talk to her about shooting implied nudes. Not all models are going to be receptive to the idea, but you will eventually find some models who are agreeable. This is a great way to start building a portfolio. If you can get through a few shoots and produce some good images for your portfolio, then more models will be willing to work with you. From there, it's all

I met Kitty, a model I often work with, on Twitter.



downhill (or uphill, depending on how you look at things).

Social Networks. In today's world, we are all interconnected by social networking. If you are good at photography (and a normal person with good interpersonal skills), social networks can also help you find new models. Most social networking sites do not allow you to post topless or nude images, so it is good to develop a portfolio of classy, non-nude glamour images before you begin looking for models on these sites. Keep your eyes open for models who have worked with other photographers and are looking for new work to expand their portfolios. Places like Facebook and Google+ are often rich with people who are looking for new images.

Craigslist. Until recently, Craigslist (www.craigslist.org) was a good place to meet models. It was small and local—underground, in many ways. Over the last few years, however, it has become problematic to find models via Craigslist. While I have not had a problem personally, I've heard horror stories about photographers meeting models on Craigslist and then having their house broken into or finding their wallet missing after the shoot. Therefore, I would be cautious about meeting models on Craigslist.

Respect Your Subjects

Respect is one of the most important values in nude photography. More than in any other field of photography, trust me when I tell that you most nude models would rather make a little money posing for someone they respect than make a lot of money shooting with someone they distrust. Respect comes from the little things a photographer does (or does not do). Let's look at some examples I've learned from my models.

Start with Semi-Nudes

When you talk to a prospective model about nude photography, most of the time her mind will jump to close-up porn shots in a sleazy hotel with dim lights and cheesy '70s music playing in the background. Like it or not, pornography is part of the modern world and we've all seen a lot of it. As a result, moving past the preconception that *all* nude photography is porn is a very hard thing to do. I would love to tell a model, "Hey, I want to shoot nude images of you," and hear her reply, "Great! Maybe something like Venus in the *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli?"—but it hasn't happened yet. So start slowly. Begin by working with models on semi-nude or implied-nude images. It's a great way to show them that this is *not* porn.

Mutual respect is the foundation for trust—a critical element between the model and the photographer.

Privacy. I have heard from my models that they hate it when they have to change in front of the photographer. So, make sure your model has a private place to change—a guest bathroom works just fine. Just because you have seen and photographed her naked doesn't give you the right to see her naked all the time.

Conversation. Keep the discussion of off-topic issues to a bare minimum. Asking about a model's personal life will make her feel uneasy. And, really, it's none of your business who she's dating. A model once told me about a shoot where the photographer kept asking questions about her brothers and sisters—about where



they lived, what they did for a living, and if they would be angry if they saw nude images of her. She got so upset that she started crying in the middle of the shoot. He just got *way* too personal (and scary). There are a million great, non-sexual, non-personal things to talk about, so find them and talk about those.

I should add that it is also bad to avoid talking completely. I'm a naturally shy person. In fact, when I was young, my parents put me in special classes because I would never talk. To be a successful nude photographer, however, you have to communicate. You have break out of your shell. If the model is going to get naked and pose for you, then you need to step up to the plate and be professional by talking to her.

Allow an Escort. If the model wants to, let her to bring a friend to the shoot. Some photographers have “rules” about not allowing escorts—and I can understand some of the logic. However, when working with a less experienced model (especially a new *nude* model), having a friend nearby can make the model feel safer and more relaxed. From my experience, models may show up for the first couple of sessions with a friend. After that, they get comfortable with you and no longer bring the escort.

Be a Professional. There are many things you can do to make a model relax, but a lot of it comes down to acting like a professional. Don't rush things; start slow with some bra-and-panty shoots or boudoir images. Set the mood correctly by cleaning up the shooting area. If she is worried about particular parts of her body, let her know how you can Photoshop the images or delete images she finds objectionable—and then *do it*. Never tell a model you are going to do something and then neglect to do it. Basically, don't act like “just some dude with a camera.” Professionalism will go a long way in helping your model to relax and establishing for yourself a great reputation.

Trust

The result of treating your model with respect is that trust will develop between you. This is the foundation of a great long-term working relationship, which should be your objective. Imagine you find and work with one new nude model a month. If you can keep the past models you have worked with, if they want to keep shooting with you, in a few years you will have over twenty

Things Change

I don't have any models who *never* do nude work or models who *only* do nude work, so I find that it helps to present models with image concepts and see how they feel about a given idea. A model with whom you've mostly done nudes may have new fancy dress that will work for an image you have in mind. Alternately, a model you've never photographed nude before might see an interesting idea for a nude image and decide that she'd like to shoot a sexy Valentine's Day gift for a special man.



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—At first, Aaliyah wasn't sure about shooting in a refrigerator—but after years of working together, she trusted me.



models who want to pose nude for you. After a decade of shooting, you'll have more models than you have time to work with!

To make sure that happens, be respectful and keep your promises. If you tell her that she will have images in a week, make sure she gets them in a week (not a month). If you say, "These images will not go on a web site," don't put them on a web site.

Trust me: models talk to each other and to other photographers. The one time you don't keep a promise, the whole world will hear about it, and that could mean missing out on working with other models. Your reputation is all you really have; protect it.

Minors

I think it should go without saying that nude or topless photography of anyone under eighteen (even with the parents' permission) is a terrible idea. Don't do it.

I would like to expand on this a bit and strongly suggest that you avoid working at events where you might photograph a minor for any reason. I know there is no law against photographing both nudes and minors, but just think about this for a minute.

It should go without saying that nude or topless photography of anyone under eighteen is a terrible idea.

Common (and Not-So-Common) Safety Tips

Talk to the Model. Communicate what you want and accommodate what she wants. Be clear about what you are going to do with the images and what you are not going to do with the images.

Respect the Limits. Ask your model about her limits and then respect them.

Trust Your Intuition. If you have a strange feeling about the model, don't work with her. There will be another one.

Ask for Recent Images. I once met a model whose online images showed her with long blonde hair—but she showed up at the shoot with all of her hair shaved off! Make sure the model's images are recent and reflect what you can expect to see at the session.

Don't Touch. Never touch a model, even with permission. Direct with words.

Meet in Public. First meet new models at a coffee shop or other public location. It makes the model feel safer and more at ease.

Think Like a Model. Imagine yourself going over to another person's house and getting naked (or semi-naked). It could be scary. Try to make her feel at ease and don't rush her.

Require Paperwork. You should never shoot a nude model without a signed release and a copy of her photo ID (showing her name, likeness, and age).

Deliver on Your Promises. If you promise her images, provide them. If they don't turn out, be honest. Tell her, "Look, I'm not happy with these images—here are some, and here is why I don't like them."

Be Especially Careful at Home. If you shoot or work out of your house, make sure there is another female around when meeting with or photographing models. Avoid shooting in the bedroom. It's also prudent to hide any valuables that can be carried away. Finally, for the model's comfort, make sure the rest room is clean.



Before you photograph any model, check her photo ID—and make a copy for your records.

Since I photograph
nude women commercially,
I don't work with minors
for any reason.

You want to be known for your artistic nude photographs, but many people consider *all* nude photography to be pornographic. *You* know it's not porn, but do you want to risk mixing the two?

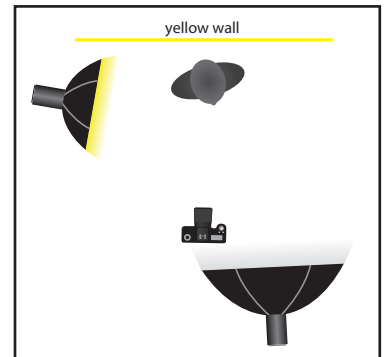
I have been called a worrywart, but I do not work with anyone under eighteen for any reason—and I don't book any job where I would have to photograph a minor. The major ones (here in Las Vegas) are weddings. When I'm asked to photograph weddings, I simply explain that, since I photograph nude women commercially, I don't work with minors for any reason—and weddings generally include minors. So, I opt not to shoot weddings, children's birthday parties, or any other jobs where minors will be present.

Here's the nightmare scenario: I'm at a wedding, taking pictures, and some irate ex-boyfriend calls the police, saying, "That pornographer who took nude pictures of my girlfriend is here taking pictures of little kids!" I know, the police know, and everyone else knows that I did nothing wrong—but I don't want to be anywhere near that situation. For me, there are enough over-eighteen, adults-only jobs to keep me busy.

2. Cameras

Technology is changing so fast today that it seems we can't keep up with it. Over the course of not too many years, we went from expensive, bad-in-low-light, low-resolution digital cameras to today's inexpensive, versatile cameras that work well in low light and have good resolution. Today's cell-phone cameras have

The clean, simple lighting in this image was created using one large softbox and a gelled yellow light. Shooting against a yellow wall made the image very eye-catching. $\frac{1}{200}$ second, $f/8$, ISO 100, 24-70mm lens at 43mm.



The setup here was basically the same as for the previous image, but with a grid light added. *1/200 second, f/10, ISO 125, 24–70mm lens at 28mm.*



Today's cell-phone cameras have better sensors than many digital cameras did just ten years ago.

better sensors than many digital cameras did just ten years ago. Similarly, processes like high dynamic range (HDR) imaging that used to require complex shooting and postproduction techniques can now be done automatically with digital cameras—and done very well. These kinds of advances aren't being seen just in camera technology, of course. We see them occurring in every aspect of photography.

Happily, a lot of these improvements also make it easier on our pockets to create the images we envision. Even lower-end cameras (especially over the last five years) have increased rapidly in terms of their quality. Today's digital cameras have video functions and

“No photographer is as good as the simplest camera.” —Edward Steichen

work well in low light, which is a great advantage for photographers looking to save money.

In the past, when higher ISO settings yielded unacceptable noise levels in your images, working in low light meant using a fast lens (one with a very wide maximum aperture). That could be a costly proposition. Below is an example of what I’m talking about; notice how rapidly the price jumps with each fractional increase in the maximum aperture.

Canon 50mm Lens

f/1.8—\$100

f/1.4—\$350

f/1.2—\$1500

Keep in mind that each of these price increases buys you only about *½ stop more light!* Today, with the improved sensor technology in our digital cameras, you can often increase the ISO sufficiently (without incurring too much noise) and stick with a cheaper lens. And if you can get the results you want without spending thousands of dollars on lenses, why wouldn’t you?

This is a great advantage for photographers looking to save money . . .

Camera Phones

In the past, camera phones took poor, blurry images—but Apple changed the game with the iPhone’s great little camera, which has good focus, useful exposure controls, and even a small flash. Amazing.

Portability. Let’s start with the advantages of using a camera phone. The major advantage is portability and ease of use. If you are out someplace with a camera phone, you can capture images without much hassle. For example, shooting nudes in public can be very risky. If you get caught with a big, professional-looking

FACING PAGE—Each of these images was shot with a cell-phone camera.



digital camera, you can get in trouble. However, if you get caught taking nude photos of a friend or loved one with your little camera phone, you are more likely to be let go with a warning.

Apps and GPS. Another plus is the ability to use apps, which will let you do everything from smoothing the skin to adding crazy effects. Most modern cell phones also tag your images with GPS data. This can be bad if you are shooting someplace you shouldn't be—but if you're an active shooter, GPS data can be *very* helpful for remembering where an image was created. Also, if you are traveling or looking for new locations to shoot around your town, you can hop on a site like Flickr and explore locations by viewing GPS-tagged images. To do this, go to www.flickr.com/map, then browse to the location you want to explore and click “search this map.”

In the future . . . who knows?

Camera phones might easily surpass
point-and-shoot cameras.

Drawbacks. There are a few drawbacks, however, that you should keep in mind when using a camera phone. First, if you shoot video, they currently have bad rolling-shutter issues. More importantly, there is a stigma around shooting with a camera phone. Good or bad, it is what it is. A few shots with a camera phone are okay, but doing a whole photo shoot with a camera phone is a bit laughable—and not really professional at the current time. But in the future . . . who knows? Camera phones might easily surpass point-and-shoot cameras.

An additional problem is that most camera phones can't shoot RAW images—and I love RAW images (we'll talk about this file format lat-

er in the chapter). Finally, there are not many accessories for camera phones. For example, even if you can find different lenses or external flashes for your camera phones, they are not standardized. The devices may well work on one version of the phone but not the next.

Point-and-Shoot Cameras

I have read my fair share of photography books and web sites, but I never see too much about point-and-shoot cameras being used to photograph models. However, I have worked with many photographers who love their point-and-shoot cameras and use them all the time—sometimes for the production of fine-art images.

The fact that point-and-shoot cameras account for over 40 percent of the total sales in the photography market shouldn't come as a big surprise; there are some really great advantages to shooting with them. Point-and-shoot cameras are light, portable, equipped to shoot video, and have a good battery life. All of these things are very important for shooting. There are even point-and-shoot cameras that are waterproof. Underwater nude images are surreal and very artistic, but using a digital SLR camera to create them can be expensive.

There are many point-and-shoot cameras on the market, so you won't have trouble finding one that works perfectly for you. The important things to ask yourself are:

How fast or how slow is the camera?

(Does it focus quickly? What is the burst rate?)

Can I control the exposure settings manually?

Does it shoot video?

Does this camera fit my needs?



The small size of point-and-shoot cameras makes it easier to shoot quickly—and without attracting attention—in public places.

Photographing a model with a point-and-shoot camera. This Canon model has a built-in zoom lens and flash, plus it can shoot video. It is lightweight—and even the extra batteries aren't heavy to carry around.

Speed. In the past, point-and-shoot cameras were really slow; you would push the shutter button and nothing would happen for a few seconds and then you would get a picture. When taking pictures of models, those few seconds can be the difference between a great shot and a bad shot. Luckily, most of the current camera manufacturers have worked on this and now they are fast as lighting. However, if your point-and-shoot is a few years old, you might want to think about buying a new one.

Manual Settings. Manual settings are another thing you'll probably want. Why does this matter? In many cases, it won't; there are a lot of scenes/subjects for which the automatic mode will work just fine. However, there are times when you'll want to override the automatic settings—say, for a very low-light scene or a very bright one where the automatic metering can struggle. Having the ability to change the settings is a nice option.

Your Individual Needs. The final question I listed was this: Does this camera fit my needs? It sounds silly, but it's important. For example, earlier I talked about waterproof cameras. I don't photograph models underwater and I live in Las Vegas, where it rains only once or twice a year. So, for me, investing in a waterproof camera wouldn't be very useful. If I were looking for a new point-and-shoot, I would want to make sure the images looked good, that it shot quickly, that the LCD or viewfinder was really bright, and that it had wireless connectivity and GPS built in to it. Those are the features that are important to *me*—but everyone will have different ideas of what is important to them.

Mirrorless Cameras and Rangefinders

Over the last few years, there has been a huge leap forward in advanced point-and-shoot cameras, sometimes called rangefinders or mirrorless cameras. A rangefinder has a small optical viewfinder





that doesn't use a mirror to reflect the image. Mirrorless cameras don't have an optical viewfinder, but sometimes a small LCD screen (instead of the optical viewfinder) plus a larger LCD screen on the back of the camera. These cameras offer a great blend of traditional digital camera features but in a smaller package. They have interchangeable lenses, manual control, the ability to shoot videos, and they let you create RAW files—most of the important features that a DSLR has (see next section), but in a small, lightweight body. This class of camera is something to keep an eye on, because if you need more than a point-and-shoot but don't want a full-size digital camera, this option could be perfect.

DSLRs

Most of the images in this book were shot with a digital single-lens reflex (or DSLR) camera, because it gives me the most flexibility when I shoot. Today's digital cameras are much better than those from just a few years ago—and they're getting cheaper and cheaper. Mid-level cameras like the Canon 7D (currently priced around \$1000) are even being used by Hollywood in the creation of multimillion-dollar movies like *The Avengers*, *Black Swan*, *Act of Valor*, and *Red State*.

These images were shot using a Samsung point-and-shoot camera.

These cameras offer a great blend of traditional digital camera features but in a smaller package.



These images were shot using a Canon DSLR.

Think about that. Hollywood often spends *hundreds of thousands of dollars* on cameras and lenses to create movies, yet they are now using the same camera that thousands of regular-guy photographers are using. Isn't that great? For \$1000, you can have the same tool that feature filmmakers are using. The real

question is *why* is Hollywood using this camera? Simple. It produces fantastic video and great images—basically, it works!



One advantage of shooting with a DSLR is that it increases your lighting options.



With a DSLR, the camera body, external flash, batteries, and lenses add up to around 20 pounds of gear in my camera bag.

Some of the best things about using DSLRs are that they open up additional lighting options, allow you to use interchangeable lenses, and give you the ability to shoot RAW images. Let's talk about each of these items a bit.

Lighting. With a DSLR, you can begin to add light to your images in more powerful ways. This could involve the use of small flash units (like Canon Speedlites) or large studio-strobe kits. If you know how to add and control light effectively, this can give you a great deal of freedom. However, many photographers run out and buy expensive strobes, thinking all of their lighting problems will be solved. That's not the case. We'll look at flash and strobe lighting in the next chapter.

Interchangeable Lenses. Switching lenses can change the mood of a shoot—from risky, to boudoir, to artistic. You can capture a whole-body shot, then switch the lens and capture a very intimate fine detail. Having a few different lenses to choose from is nice. My workhorse lens is a 24–70mm zoom, which I push to the limit; I know what it will and will not do. I now have several other lenses in regular use, but for years this was one of only two lenses I owned. I believe in knowing your tools as well as possible; it will help you grow as a photographer.

RAW Files. Being able to shoot RAW files (files that are not processed by the camera's built-in software) is very important. With these files, you are getting the most pure information possible and you have the most potential for finishing the image exactly as you want it. Think of it this way: if you go to a fast-food place, you get the burger the way they make for you. You can maybe change it a little, but you really can't customize it that much. If you want it medium rare, or with green onions and avocados, you're out



What Camera Did I Use?

Two of these images were shot with a high-end Canon DSLR (\$5000). Two of them were shot with a mid-range Canon point-and-shoot (\$500). Can you tell which images were shot with which camera? (Answers appear on the next page.) The DSLR is a very heavy camera that needs an external flash. When we're walking several miles into a shooting area, carrying all that equipment can be an issue. The point-and-shoot, on the other hand, has a built-in flash and fits in your pocket. These are some things to think about when selecting a camera.

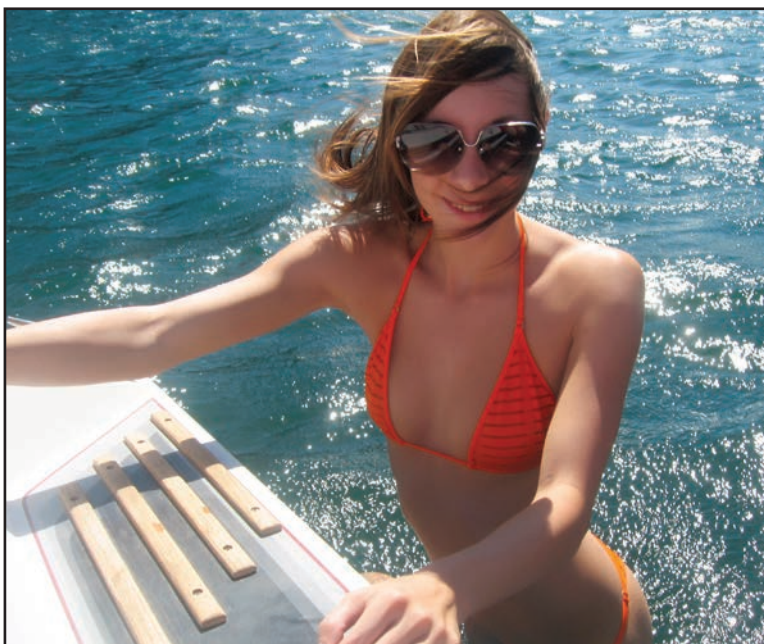


of luck. Imagine, instead, you went to the supermarket and got the raw materials for your sandwich (hamburger, buns, avocados, mayonnaise, etc.). This would let you make that burger any way you wanted. This is akin to shooting RAW images—and, just as with shooting RAW images, the trade-off is that you will have to invest a bit of time in your final product. That’s what it takes to get exactly what you want.

ANSWERS TO QUESTION ON PREVIOUS PAGE—The photos on the left (top and bottom) were created with a point-and-shoot camera. The photos on the right (top and bottom) were created with a DSLR.



The trade-off is that you will have to invest a bit of time in your final product . . .



The top image was created using a DSLR that sells for almost \$5000. The bottom image was created using a point-and-shoot camera that retailed for under \$500. As you can see, the price of your camera isn’t a determining factor in the success of your images.

3. Lighting



Soft lighting from a high angle coordinates well with a model who has a natural look and is shown in a natural setting.

It can be challenging to explain the practice of lighting—*why* a photographer did something . . .

Lighting is the photographer’s most important tool. More than any other single factor, lighting is what makes the difference between a bad photographer and a great photographer. In this chapter, we’ll mainly be looking at light sources and how to use them to create the look you want. First, however, we need to consider why you might pick one look over another, based on the model you’re working with, the purpose of the image, or the mood you want to communicate to your viewers.

Match the Lighting to the Model

While it’s easy to explain the science of light in concrete terms, it can be more challenging to explain the practice of lighting—*why* a photographer did something or *how* the light falls on a model. However, it is also extremely important to consider and discuss these more subjective factors. They will make all the difference in your images.

Often, I see lighting on models that simply doesn’t match. Let me explain. If you have a model who is covered in tattoos, has large breast implants, and sports bright blue hair, does it make any sense to use soft, gossamer lighting on her? Yes, we can probably all imagine some scenario where this would make sense, but generally you wouldn’t do it because it wouldn’t fit her personally. This is one of the major problems many photographers have an issue with—pairing the model and the lighting appropriately.

Think about it: you don’t see supermodels with pink hair and tattoos down their arms, because it doesn’t fit. Similarly, it’s okay for a boxer like Mike Tyson to have a facial tattoo, but it would seem totally out of place on the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. They have different personalities and our minds expect them to look (or not look) certain ways.

Lighting needs to be approached with the same thing in mind: you pick the lighting to match the model. If you select the wrong lighting style for the model, you may get good images, but they will never feel quite right. It will look like something is missing.

Unfortunately, there is no magic trick or formula for picking the right light, but you'll feel it when you see it. Every type of lighting conveys a feeling—it is visceral. As you read through the following sections and review the images throughout this book, take a moment to consider the lighting and how it coordinates with the look of the model.

There is no magic trick or formula for picking the right light.



THIS PAGE AND FACING PAGE—
As seen in the shot to the right, the black & white images below were all created with a strip softbox mounted above the model for simple, clean lighting. One light, one model—simple! *1/250 second, f/13, ISO 50, 16–35mm lens at 16mm.*





Capturing a frame of the model with a color checker chart gives you an easy point of reference for the postproduction color-balance adjustment of all images created with that setup.

Basic Lighting Concepts

Color Balance. Visible light contains wavelengths of three colors: red, green, and blue. When these are in perfect balance, the light appears to be neutral white. When they're not, the light has a color cast that can be recorded in your images. For example, household incandescent light bulbs emit light with a yellow/orange color cast. Fluorescent bulbs, on the other hand, tend to have a green color cast.

The human eye has evolved to neutralize these imbalances (cool, I know) so that colors look consistent no matter what light sources illuminate them. That's why a sheet of white paper looks white to our eyes whether we see it outdoors under sunlight or indoors under an incandescent bulb.

Using white balance adjustments, today's digital cameras can do the same thing—but they're not as good at it. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that it's advantageous to select a camera that lets you shoot RAW files, and dealing with the issue of white balance is one of the reasons. If you shoot in RAW, you can easily fine-tune the white balance of your images during the postproduction process. The cheapest way to do this is to include a sheet of white paper in a test shot. That gives you a known value to which subsequent images (in the same light) can all be balanced. A slightly better, and still budget-friendly, way to do this is to purchase a gray card and use it in the same way. At the upper end of

If you shoot in RAW, you can easily fine-tune the white balance of your images . . .



TOP LEFT—This image shows how the RAW file looked with no color adjustment.

TOP CENTER—Here's what happened when I opened the image in Adobe Camera Raw and simply hit "auto."

TOP RIGHT—It's possible to white balance on a white wall or paper. This works in a pinch but it shouldn't be something that happens often. Objects that may appear to be white to the human eye are not always white to the camera.

RIGHT—This image was white balanced off a Whi-Bal checker, so I know it is free of any color casts from the wall or lights. Printers, monitors, and other output devices can change the color of an image, so starting with the most pure color is important for achieving deep, rich colors that still look natural.



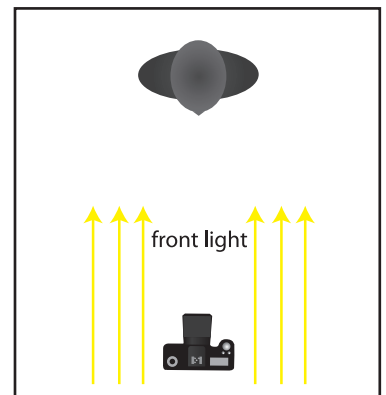
the price scale are devices like the X-Rite ColorChecker Passport; whether you're shooting JPEG or RAW, these devices will help you get a perfect (or near perfect) white balance.

Light Functions. When lighting people, there are two primary light positions to consider—and these remain constant whether you are shooting with sunlight, window light, flash, studio strobes, or any other light source.

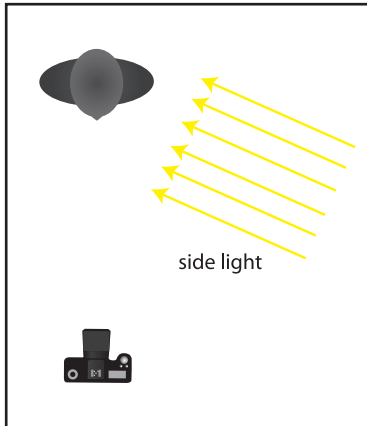
The first light function to consider is the main light (sometimes called the key light). This is the light that creates the visible pattern of highlights and shadows on your subject. The quality of this light source, whether it's hard or soft, and its direction relative to the subject (more on this in the next section) will have a profound impact on the look of your portrait.

Once you have found/placed your main light source, you can consider adding a secondary light source for fill. A fill source is added to reduce the darkness of the shadowing on the model.

A fill source is added to reduce the darkness of the shadowing on the model.



Light from the camera position creates a smooth, even look on the model's skin.



Side lighting creates shape-revealing shadows that are good for emphasizing a model's contours.



The direction of the main light is an important consideration in any scenario.

This creates a softer look and is often required to keep the overall tonal range on the subject within the limits of what can be captured by the camera. We'll look at this in more detail as we proceed through the chapter.

Direction. The direction of the main light is an important consideration in any scenario. How is the light hitting the model? When shooting with natural/available light (as we'll be doing for many of the images in this book), adjusting the model's position in relation to the direction of the light will be our means of controlling how the light falls on her.

Front lighting is often used in glamour photography, but with bright sunlight it can be uncomfortable for a model to look directly into the sun. If the image concept allows, one solution is to have the model wear sunglasses. Another trick I use is to have the model keep her eyes closed and only open them briefly when I am ready to take the shot.

Side lighting skims across the model from an angle—up to 90 degrees from the model. Using this style of lighting is very dramatic. While it doesn't always look good on the face, it usually looks great on the body, creating highlights and shadows that reveal contours.

“You don’t take a photograph, you make it.”

—Ansel Adams

Backlighting can be used in a few different ways. First, it can be used to hide the model’s face (or body) in shadow, giving a sense of mystery to the image. It can also be used to add some lens flare to an image. I use backlighting quite often when I am shooting with window light (covered in detail later in this chapter).

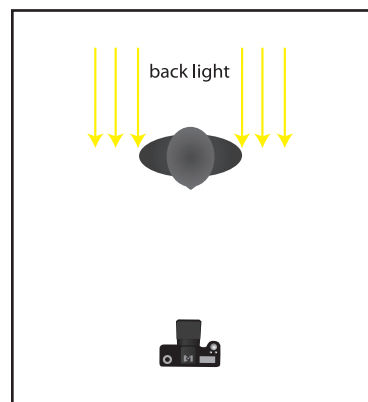
Natural Light

For thousands of years, artists have been using natural light to create art. It is what we are used to seeing, so it makes perfect sense to our minds. Natural light is also free to use, which is great. The sun is in the sky, ready to work, so you don’t have to turn it on or off—and you don’t have to pack it up and take it with you. Especially in nude photography, the sun can be a fantastic tool because most models love to be naked in the sun. It feels good and natural on the skin, which can help set the mood for a shoot. I can’t stress enough the importance of using the light. It is natural, free, available, and waiting for you. Let’s look at some important factors to consider when working with natural light.

Color Temperature. The sunlight can change color based on any number of things. For example, if the sun goes behind a cloud, then the color of the light changes. If the model walks into open shadow (shadow cast by a large object), the color of the light changes. This is important to remember. If you are shooting on a cloudy day (or under other conditions where the light on the model is changing) you might have to use your gray card more than once or twice during the shoot.

Intensity. One of the great things about using the sun as a source of light is that, on a clear, sunny day, the intensity of the light is always about the same. Whether you’re at the top of a mountain or deep in a valley, if the light from the sun is unobstructed, it will be at a consistent intensity. This makes shooting much easier, because the exposure is generally the same.

For thousands of years, artists have been using natural light to create art.



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—Light that strikes the model from behind can produce a partial or complete silhouette, giving the image an intriguing look.





LEFT—Learning to light with only the sun is one of the most important things a photographer can do.

BELOW—Understanding HDR (high dynamic range) imaging can be helpful for natural-light photography. This image is actually a composite of three captures, which let me maintain detail from the deepest shadow to the brightest highlight.



The Simplest of Tools

A few years ago, I started a personal photography project documenting nude models in remote locations using the simplest tools I have: a 30-year-old medium format camera (a few hundred dollars on eBay), a model, and the light from the sun. I have had great success with this project.

Having worked with many of the models on other projects, it's been interesting to see how differently they act and pose when shooting outdoors with natural light and an "old school" camera.

For one thing, the models have to hold each pose more carefully, since the camera is slow (if they move, the image will blur). The feeling of the images I produce using only natural light and an old film camera is very different from when I work with them indoors with a DSLR camera and strobes.

There is something very natural when models work outside under the sun.

Two images from this project are shown on the facing page.



The sun can be a beautiful source of light if you know how to use it effectively.

The intensity is so predictable, in fact, that there's a simple rule to get you to the right camera settings. This is called the Sunny 16 Rule. It states that, when shooting at $f/16$ in bright sunlight, the correct exposure is obtained by setting your shutter speed at the inverse of the ISO setting ($1/\text{ISO number}$). So if you are shooting at $f/16$ and ISO 100, you'll get a good exposure at $1/100$ second—or your camera's closest equivalent, which could be $1/125$ second, for example. If you switch your ISO to 500, you'd need to change your shutter speed to $1/500$ second. (*Note:* You don't have to shoot at $f/16$ for this to work. There is a reciprocal relationship between apertures and shutter speeds. So, if you choose a 1-stop wider aperture, you can compensate with a shutter speed that is 1 stop faster and maintain the same exposure level.) This is a simple and direct approach—and it works.

Time of Day. The time of day is really important when using natural light because it will affect the direction, intensity, and color of the light. When choosing the time of day to shoot, consider the style of lighting you are planning to use. For example, if the sun is high in the sky, it's really hard to create backlit images.



While many photographers avoid shooting at midday, the sunlight from high in the sky *can* be used effectively.



When the sun is high in the sky, the light has deep, dark shadows and very bright highlights. As a result, many photographers will not shoot at this time of day. I don't follow them in their thinking, however. I know what sunlight looks like at noon and I plan certain styles or looks that fit this lighting. Midday lighting can be used to your advantage if you plan carefully.

One of the best times of day to shoot with sunlight is about an hour before sunset and an hour after sunrise (too early for you?). At these times, when the sun is close to the horizon, the light strikes the model from a pleasing angle. It's also warm in color and more diffused because it has to travel through more of the atmosphere before reaching your subject. This makes the light wrap around the model, reducing the contrast for a soft, warm look. It is the most amazing sunlight you can get. For that reason, photographers often call these times of day the "Golden Hours."

When the sun is high in the sky, the light has deep, dark shadows and very bright highlights.

RIGHT—This image was created on-location as we waited for the Golden Hour lighting.



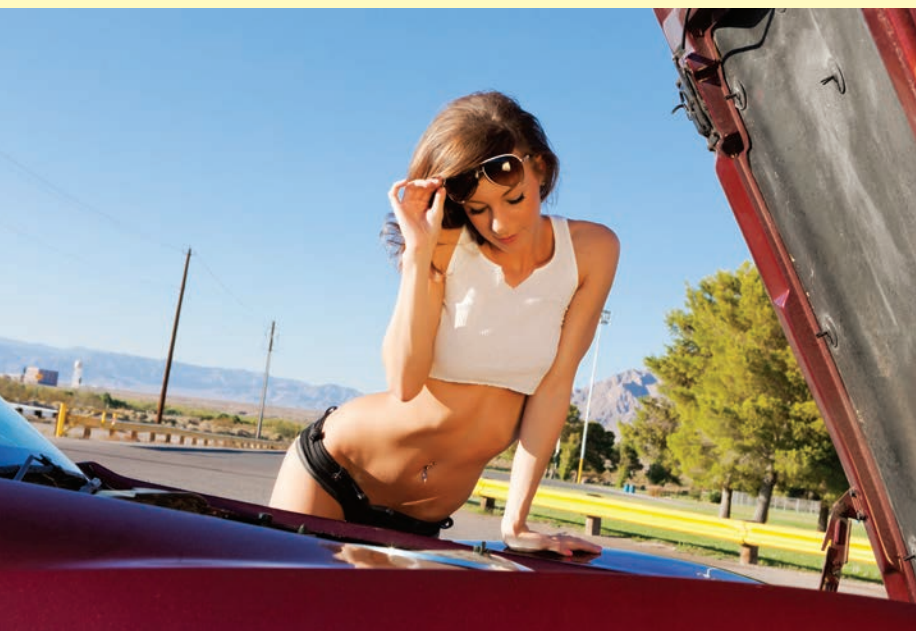
BELOW—Just a little while later, the light was beautiful.





Telling a Story with Natural Light

All of the images in this story-telling sequence were created using only natural light and a reflector. For more details on this shoot, flip ahead to chapter 9 and read the “Gonzo Shooting” section.





Window Light

Window light is great because you have all the benefits of working with sunlight, plus the control and comfort of shooting inside. Simply have a model stand or sit by a window and you will get some really amazing images. These images often convey a very romantic and soft feeling. It's one of the cheapest and greatest light sources you can use for photographing female nudes.

Light Intensity. While window light is natural light, its intensity will be much different than direct sunlight, so you should expect to use longer exposures and to meter frequently. Because the light's intensity drops off rapidly, even small distance changes between the model and the window can make a big difference in the exposure level and overall contrast in the image. For the brightest, most even lighting, place the model as close as you can to the window.

Size of the Window. Large windows or glass doors can be used successfully to capture full-body shots of a model. Smaller

Simply have a model stand or sit by a window and you will get some really amazing images.



Backlighting

Backlighting a subject, limiting the light on the front of her body, will make the model seem like a shadow. Because she is underexposed, you can't see her face—only the shape of her body. Many of my models love this type of lighting and it is very easy to do.

Shooting directly into a window produces a pleasing flare effect.

I love the soft, romantic look that can be achieved with window lighting.



The direction the window faces isn't as important as the time of day you are planning to shoot . . .

windows can be used as a hair lights or sidelights, adding highlights to your image.

Direction of the Window. Painters and photographers often praise north-facing windows for their soft, even lighting, but the direction the window faces isn't as important as the time of day you are planning to shoot and how you plan to use the light.

Some testing will let you know what to expect. For example, I have a glass door that gets direct sun from about 4PM to 7PM. I have shot at least thirty different models in that location, so I know how all different types and styles of models will look in that location and at that time of day. Test the window light. How does a light-skinned model look? How does a dark-skinned model look? How does a blond look? How about a brunette?

Placement of the Model. The position of the model relative to the window will control the direction from which the light falls on her. One option to consider is backlighting. Shooting directly into a brightly lit window will create a nice flare effect. Not only does it hide the identity of the model, it also adds a bit of romance and style to the image.

Window Coverings/Glass. The light from bare or open windows, with no blinds or no shades, is often too hard for glamour photography. However, it can be great for fine-art nude images where you want a strong lighting effect. You can also add a

Test the window light.

How does a light-skinned model look? How does a dark-skinned model look?



Large windows or glass doors can illuminate the length of the model's body.

Collapsible reflectors are inexpensive and easy to store.



reflector (as covered later in this chapter) to capture some really nice bodyscapes.

I love windows with blinds because they cast nice shadows on the body and give depth to the image. If your window has blinds, use them to your advantage. Figure out what time of day the sun directly hits that window and then do some test shooting.

A clean window is not always a good window. If you want more diffused light that wraps around the model, leave the glass dirty. The dirt will scatter the light, making it much softer. If you are shooting into the window, however, it really should be super clean. Wash it the morning of the shoot if you can.

When working with direct sunlight, adding a little smoke in the room (simply lighting a cigarette will do the trick) creates a gossamer look, giving some depth and suspense to the image.

A reflector is a device that you add to a setup to bounce light onto the subject.

Reflectors

When using natural light—especially during the middle of the day or when sun is high in the sky—it is often necessary to reduce the contrast of the images you are creating. If you don't, you will have highlights that are too bright and shadows that are too dark.

One of the cheapest and easiest ways to fix this is by using a reflector. A reflector is a device that you add to a setup to bounce light onto the subject. On Amazon, you can purchase large photographic reflectors for less than \$50. These collapsible models



Direct sunlight was paired with reflected light to illuminate the model evenly.

are particularly easy to pack and carry. You may even find an existing reflector in your environment; a bright white building can act as a reflector, as can white sand, or even buildings that have reflective windows on them. (For another budget-friendly option, see chapter 12.)

Surface. Reflectors come in several different colors, with white, gold, and silver being the most popular. White reflectors are used to create a soft, diffused, and gentle look in the shadows. Silver reflectors provide more bounce light than white ones, but the

White reflectors are used to create a soft, diffused, and gentle look in the shadows.

What level of fill you choose to use depends on the look you want to create.

light is also more focused and harder. A silver reflector will also produce a cooler color on the model's skin. Like silver reflectors, gold reflectors provide more bounce light than white—but they also add a warm coloration that makes the model's skin look more tan.

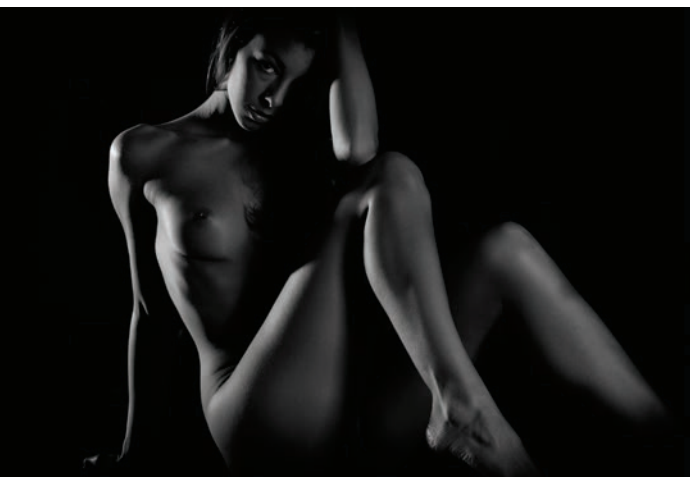
Placement. To add light to the shadow areas (reducing the overall contrast), place the reflector in direct sunlight and near where the shadow of the model falls. As you move it closer to the model, you'll see the level of fill light increase (making the shadows less dark); if you take a few steps back with the reflector, you'll see the level of fill light decrease (making the shadows darker). What level of fill you choose to use depends on the look you want to create.

The one problem with most reflectors is that you need someone to hold them if you are shooting on location. While you can use a

Tonal Problems to Avoid

When the light produces too much contrast, there are two common problems to worry about. If the highlights (the brightest parts of the subject) record as white without detail, the image will look “blown out.” Conversely, it's a problem if the shadow areas of the subject record as black with no detail. This frequently happens with brunette models, whose hair is brown but records as black in the image. Adding fill light or diffusing the light with a scrim (as covered in later in this chapter) can help to remedy these issues.





Using a single light makes for a quick setup. By adding reflectors, you can easily refine the lighting to capture great bodyscapes and fine-art images. Anyone can create images like this. One model, one light, one reflector—great shoot! I photographed these images at my home on my breakfast bar using one light. Refer back to the image on page 49 to see where I placed the reflector.

This reduces the exposure ratio between the highlights and shadows, producing a more balanced image.

Adding a scrim transforms hard, direct sunlight into softer, more flattering light.



stand to hold them when shooting indoors, there is generally too much wind outdoors to mount the reflector on a small stand. I generally recruit my wife, makeup artist, escort, or any other able-bodied person I can find to hold the reflector in position.

Scrim

A scrim is a piece of translucent fabric (usually on a frame) that is placed between the light and the subject. As it passes through the fabric, the light becomes softer. This reduces the exposure ratio between the highlights and shadows, producing a more balanced image. It also causes the light to wrap around the subject more, which gives your images a better sense of depth. As you can see in the accompanying images, positioning a scrim between the model and a too-harsh light source greatly improves the look of the lighting—and it is just as simple and cost-effective as adding a reflector.





This image was created with a mix of strobe and natural light.

On-Camera Flash

Most point-and-shoot cameras (and some DSLRs) have a built-in flash. These flashes aren't super powerful—but they are not meant to be. They are meant to add fill light, not to light the room. If used correctly, these flashes are great. They work, they don't require additional batteries, and you don't have to invest any extra money. Plus, the flash is attached to the camera, so there's nothing extra to carry (or forget to pack).

But what do I mean by “correct use”? When and why should you use built-in flash (or even a small external flash) in photography? That is really the million-dollar question. I often see photographers using flashes instead of studio strobes to save money. Sometimes it works, but more often it produces more problems than it solves. Flashes have a purpose and studio strobes have a purpose (more on strobes in the next section); sometimes they overlap and other times they don't. That is why it's important to select the correct tool from the start.

In the majority of my nude photography, I avoid using small flash units. However, when I'm shooting outdoors (or in places where I don't have access to power), these sources can provide good fill on a subject with strong back-lighting or side lighting. However, I know the limitations—especially in terms of working distance—and I plan my composition so the flash works perfectly.

Studio Strobes

I am a big fan of studio strobes. However, many photographers struggle with them. After learning to use natural light, I think learning to use strobes is the second most important thing you can learn do as a photographer. Let's start our look at studio strobes by covering the gear itself.

Brands. There are countless brand choices in the studio strobe market, but the big decision boils down to this: should you invest in a budget-friendly system (like those from AlienBees) or go all-out on a higher-end system from another company? You will see thousands of great images shot with lower-end lights—and just as many shot with their more expensive counterparts. In my experience, strobes from the lower end of the price spectrum will work well on 80

If you blow your lighting budget on the strobes themselves, you won't be able to invest in good light modifiers.

percent of the jobs you'll encounter. Personally, I upgraded to a higher-end system because I wanted that extra 20 percent.

That said, an inexpensive strobe is better than no strobe. Additionally, if you blow your lighting budget on the strobes themselves, you won't be able to invest in good light modifiers. These devices help you change the light's quality and spread, so they're extremely important tools for taking control of your lighting. We'll look at them in more detail later in this chapter.

Types of Strobe Systems. There are two main classes of studio strobes, and each has advantages and disadvantages.

Monolights are the most popular type of studio strobes for both semiprofessional and professional photographers. These are basically complete lighting units all in one package. Each light has its own power source and controls.

The other option is to use a power-pack system. With this type of system, the individual heads (lights) are each connected to a centralized device that powers and controls them. Each power



A monolight strobe and strip softbox were used to create this image.

pack can support two to eight heads. The advantage to this is that, because they contain fewer electronic components, the individual heads for these systems are less expensive. While these systems used to be the standard for studio photography, today they are slowly dying out and being replaced with monolight systems. There is one exception, though: when a battery-powered lighting system is required, power-pack systems are still the standard.

Lights require power, so if you are someplace without electrical outlets and have only monolights, you're out of luck. Happily, over the last five to ten years there have been many advances in battery-powered strobe systems, which consist of a battery/power pack and one or more heads (usually purchased in a combo deal). These are great when you need power in a remote location and don't have access to electricity. With these systems, you can light a model and create professional-looking images in the middle of nowhere. The main problem is that they don't have a *lot*

The high power output of strobes makes them the system of choice for studio situations.



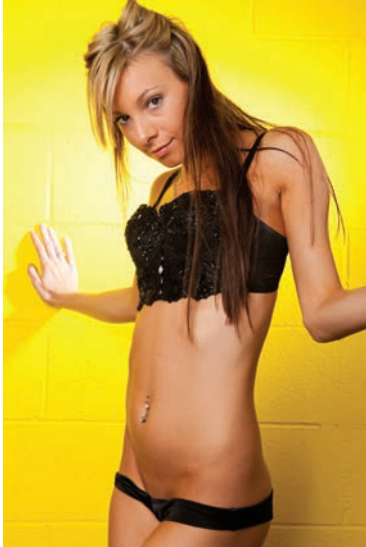
of power. The majority of these packs will give you around two-hundred shots (at full power). If you are going to be out shooting all day in multiple locations, that is not a lot of images.

You're Committing to a System. With studio strobes, you are buying into a system. People understand this with cameras (if I buy a Canon camera I need to buy a Canon lens, or at least a Canon-compatible lens), but they often overlook that the same is true with strobe lighting. Years ago, when I started starting shooting more indoors, I looked at all the different types of lighting. White Lightning products were what I could afford, so I bought one light and a simple diffusion panel, and it worked. Over time, I purchased more lighting equipment (softboxes, reflectors, additional lights, etc.) all of which coordinated with my system.

When my needs outpaced that first system, I purchased Elinchrom lights. Sadly, most of the light modifiers I owned didn't work on the new equipment. In fact, the only thing that *did* work was the diffusion panel, which is just placed in front of the light, rather than being attached to it. Therefore, upgrading required a substantial investment beyond the lights themselves.

Owning that first system was useful in my learning process, but it was also a costly learning experience. If I'd known then what I know now, I would have done it differently. I would have started looking for a used light to buy, but one within the system I eventually want to use. For example, if I wanted to buy into Broncolor lights, instead of looking for brand new, super-expensive lights, I would start looking at lights that were a bit older, cheaper, and maybe not as powerful. Then I would buy into the system and upgrade as needed. This approach will save money over the long run.

Studio lighting offers you a refined level of control to make your image concepts come to life.



Understanding what your lights can do will help you make the most of them in any situation.

One of the challenges with shopping for studio strobes is finding a good way to compare them.



Comparing Systems. One of the challenges with shopping for studio strobes is finding a good way to compare them. The rating term you will see most often is watt seconds (Ws), as a measure of the strobe's power output. Strobe A is listed as 1200Ws, while strobe D is rated at 600Ws, for example. Unfortunately, the watt second is a poor way to compare lights because it has very little to do with the amount of light on a subject. One of the major problems is that some companies will list the strobe as 800Ws—but if you read the fine print, that turns out to be only the *effective* power. The actual power might be more like 320Ws. So when a light is listed as 600Ws, who knows what that really means? It could easily be more powerful than another light listed at 800Ws.

The best way to measure the output of a strobe is by the guide number (GN). This tells you the value of the light (in f-stops) at a certain distance and ISO setting—a more “real life” understanding of a light's power. While this number is often hard to find in manufacturer's marketing materials, it can be calculated using

a simple equation: $GN = \text{distance} \times \text{f-stop}$. Using the specifications from an online shopping site, I did just that for a range of studio strobes that were *all* listed as 300Ws lights. These calculations revealed GNs ranging from 197 down to 165—and, again, that’s for lights listed with identical watt-second ratings.

What does this mean in practice? Well, if I buy a strobe with a GN of 165, and I have a model 10 feet away, I should be able to shoot full power at $f/16.5$ ($165 \div 10 \text{ feet} = f/16.5$). Now, $f/16$ is a lot of light—but adding a softbox reduces the power by a stop (or more). So now you are down to $f/11$. You may want to move the light back some, and you’ll likely turn the power down a bit (shooting at full power means long recycle times). At this point, you are going to be shooting around $f/2.8$ to $f/4$. Maybe that’s just fine . . . but if you’d started with a “300Ws” strobe that actually had a GN of 197 (rather than 165), you’d have more options at this point—if you wanted to stop down a bit, or

move the light back, or add a second baffle on your softbox, that extra output could make all the difference.

Continuous Light

Strobes have been the workhorses of professional photographers for years. Even ten years ago, most professional photographers used only strobe lighting. Today, however, we’re in the midst of a paradigm shift, where some of the more progressive photographers are using continuous lighting.

Continuous lighting refers to any type of light source that emits a constant beam of light (it doesn’t pop or flash like a strobe). There are so many different types of continuous light sources—LED, compact florescent, HMI, tungsten, incandescent—that I would suggest you do

I shot this image using two Kino Flo (four-bank) continuous light kits. $1/160$ second, $f/4.5$, ISO 800, 16–35mm lens at 27mm.



Do some research
into what will work best
for you before investing
in anything.

some research into what will work best for you before investing in anything.

A big advantage of shooting with continuous light is that you see what you are capturing before you shoot. Studio strobes have modeling lights that *simulate* how the strobe light will look, but they're not perfect. With continuous light, you know exactly what you're getting because you see it on the subject.

The second huge advantage of continuous light—and this is what is really spurring the change—is that it can be used to create video. In the past, photographers took pictures and videographers took videos. With all the advances in camera technology, many photographers are now doing double-duty as videographers. And when you shoot video, strobes simply don't work; for continuous video footage, you need continuous lighting sources.

Light Modifiers

Light modifiers (used to soften, focus, direct, or restrict the light) are the key to controlling the light from your strobes and creating the looks you have envisioned for your models. Learning to use light modifiers will help establish your style, defining what makes you different from all of the other photographers.

Standard Reflectors. Reflectors, sometimes called “pans,” are the shiny, bowl-shaped, silver devices that usually come standard with your strobes. Reflectors can be used to create a hard shadow or they can be used to create a narrow beam of light.

Grids. Adding a grid to the standard reflector allows you to narrow (focus) the beam of light, constraining it from spreading out at the edges. Grids act much like snoots (see below) but are still a bit less focused than a snoot. I love using grids, and I don't see a lot of people using them on reflectors for some reason.

Snoots. Snoots take the light from a strobe and push it through a long tube, tightly focusing the light—much like a cheerleader uses a megaphone to direct her voice.

Beauty Dishes. A beauty dish is essentially a modified version of the standard reflector. It is larger in size and features a central reflector that pushes the direct light from the strobe out onto the concave surface of the dish. From that surface, it is reflected onto the subject. This produces light with a directional look, but without the harsh shadows seen with reflectors and grids.



Light modifiers, like the octagonal softbox seen in the background at this shoot, are the key to controlling the light from your strobes.

Umbrellas. Umbrellas were one of the first types of light modifiers I learned to use, and I have a love/hate relationship with them. I love the fact that umbrellas are lightweight, quick to set up, and provide a soft look. However, I don't like that they throw light everywhere (and are often overused by new photographers).

Softboxes. Softboxes are the most common modifiers used in modern photographic light-

ing. They come in a vast assortment of sizes and shapes, but generally consist of a fabric box that is black on the exterior (to prevent unwanted light spill) with a translucent panel on the front. As it passes through this front panel, the light from the strobe is diffused for a soft look. Some softboxes have internal diffusion material, grids, or other specialized features to further adjust the quality of the light.

When working with light modifiers, it is sometimes hard to envision how the light will hit the model. So, let's use water as an example. A standard reflector on a strobe is akin to a garden hose with no attachment—the water is focused but not overly focused. Adding a grid to that reflector is like placing your thumb over the end of the hose; the stream becomes somewhat more focused. If you add a jet water attachment to it, you'll get a very focused stream—pretty much like adding a snoot to your strobe. Working with a beauty dish is more like the shower setting on the garden hose, giving you a gently diffused spray of water. With an umbrella, the effect is similar to rain; water goes everywhere. There is some direction, but not as much as with any of the modifiers noted above. Finally, a softbox is closer to a bucket of water being thrown on the model; the light hits the subject (and the background) in a way that is often more closely targeted than with an umbrella.

Distance of the Light

When we looked at guide numbers (GNs) for strobes, we touched on the fact that the distance of the light to subject has an effect on the intensity of the light on them. However, the distance of the light to the subject will also change how your light modifiers work. A reflector placed a few inches away from a model will create a very focused light that only covers a small part of her body. If you move the same reflector back 10 feet, the light will cover her whole body.

Manufacturer's Modifiers vs. Third-Party Modifiers

For most systems, you have the option to purchase light modifiers made by the strobe's manufacturer or those offered by a third party. Generally, but not always, the manufacturer's equipment will work better because it has been designed, tested, and built to work specifically with that brand of strobe. One advantage, however, of using third-party modifiers is you can switch from one brand of strobe to another and not have to re-buy the whole device; you can just change adapters to use them on your new lights. Additionally, third-party modifiers tend to be less expensive. One of the best ways to tell if something is going to work the way you want it to is to do some research. Talk to working professionals who are using the product you're interested in buying, or read reviews of the product on Amazon to see if you can find real-life examples of other photographers' experiences using the product you are considering.

Try It Out

One of the most important things to do when you begin working with light is to start with something simple. Grab one light and a reflector, take a white-balance shot, then shoot twenty frames. How do they look? Add a reflector, take another white-balance shot, and shoot another twenty frames. How did this change things?

Now, point your light at the wall and bounce it onto the subject at the wall and bounce it onto the subject.

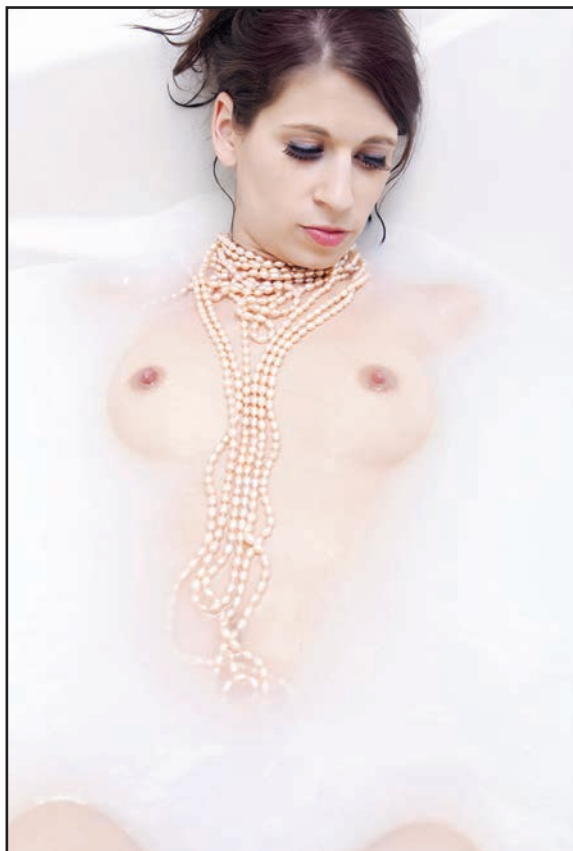
Now, point your light at the wall and bounce it onto the subject. Experiment with moving the model closer to the wall and then further away from the wall. Notice the difference? How does the light wrap around the model?

Once you really master lighting and can control how the light is hitting the model, then you should add another light—but take baby steps. You should be able to produce attractive bodyscapes and some good-looking glamour/fine-art images with just one light and a reflector.

RIGHT—A grid focused the light, creating a natural vignette effect and hard shadows.

BOTTOM LEFT—With bounce light, there are no shadows. The lighting is so soft that it's hard to see where the water meets the model's body.

BOTTOM RIGHT—With a soft-box, the shadows are softer than with the grid, but still well-defined. There is a clean line where the water touches the model.



4. Planning Makes Perfect

As the saying goes, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” In my opinion, there are no truer words in photography. What you do to prepare for a shoot is as important as anything you do during the shoot itself or in the postproduction phase—yet very few people spend enough time on this critical phase of the process. When I was in college, we talked a bit about the planning of a shoot, but most of what I learned about the

What you do to prepare for a shoot is as important as anything you do during the shoot itself . . .



LEFT AND FACING PAGE—Professional results aren’t as much about complex lighting as they are about planning. These images were created using two softboxes (one large, one small). The more important factor, by far, was the concept. Two lights, one model, creative idea—simple! $\frac{1}{200}$ second, $f/7.1$, ISO 50, 70–200mm lens at 70mm.



If everyone is on the same page and understands the goal, the entire situation becomes easier.

pre-shoot phase of photography came from working as an assistant to photographers.

Because shooting nudes can be inherently nerve-wracking for both the model and the photographer, I believe that pre-shoot planning is especially critical. If everyone is on the same page and understands the goal, the entire situation becomes easier and the images will fall into place like magic. You wouldn't go on a cross-country road trip without checking the gas tank and the oil, so why would you embark on a photo shoot without some planning?

Seek Inspiration

It is hard to do a simple Internet search for “nude photography” and locate the kind of creative images most of us want to produce. I usually find more trash than anything else. So, when I have some extra time to research image concepts, I head to www.Flickr.com and look at groups devoted to fine-art nude photography or even medium-format nude photography. I also look around on www.500px.com, identifying things I like.

“Good artists copy. Great artists steal.”

—Pablo Picasso

When I see something that inspires or intrigues me, I take a screen shot of it. I then save it to the “ideas” folder on my hard drive. Models frequently send me creative ideas they want to shoot, and I file these in the same place. At any given time, my “ideas” folder can have anywhere from a few hundred to ten-thousand images in it. To make things easier, I sort these into several different sub-folders. These include ideas for specific models, ideas for specific locations, thematic ideas, concepts from other photographers, posing ideas, and more.

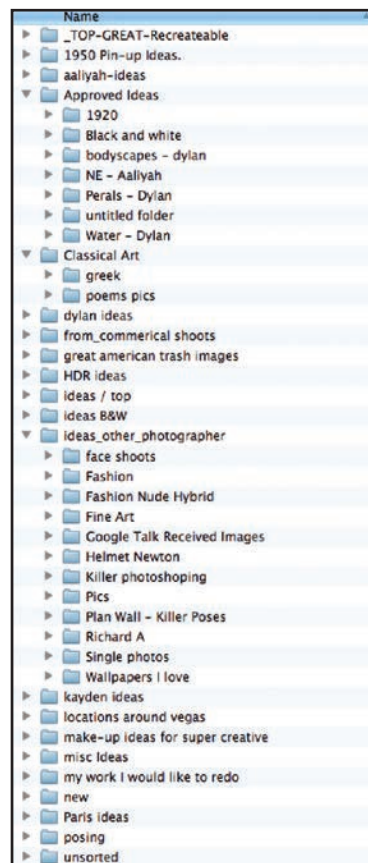
Develop a Plan

I will be the first one to admit that I often do things a bit backwards from other people. As noted, I generally begin my creative process by deciding on an image I want to produce. This is my *first* step, because the hardest part for me is finding an inspirational image I want to re-interpret in my own way.

Once I find that perfect concept, I try to decide if it’s feasible to produce the look I’ve envisioned. I look at the location, for instance, and consider whether this is something I can shoot. For example, I have seen amazing shots created in forests with huge trees—but I happen to live in the middle of a desert, so I can’t easily create images that require those types of settings.

Next, I think about the lighting I want. Looking at my inspiration image(s), I think about how the lighting was designed. Is the light coming from the top or behind the model? Are there dark shadows or light shadows? Is the light natural light or strobe light? How can I re-create or modify these aspects to get the effect I want?

Finally, I consider the model(s). The model is the last part of the puzzle, because I know I will always find the right one eventually—it may not be this month, or even this year, but at some point I will find the perfect model to make my idea come to life.



A screen shot of my ideas file, organized into quite a few subcategories.



This image series centered on the model making a mess while painting.



Shoot with Water

An image concept can be as complex or simple as you like. For example, you might decide to shoot an image using water as a prop. Whether it's a bath tub, a shower, a backyard garden hose, a lake, or the rain, some models feel very relaxed in water and just pose beautifully as they interact with it. Water also offers a great way to hide any part the model doesn't want to show. If she doesn't like her stomach, have her dip it under the tub/lake water; if she loves her butt, have her stick it out of the water. Here's another idea: try using the falling water in a shower to blur or distort the image in interesting ways. The possible image concepts are only as limited as your imagination.

Water was the foundational concept for this image of two models in the shower.



Often, I send some sample or “inspiration” images to a few models and see how they respond.

Working With the Model Before the Shoot

In chapter 1, we talked about meeting models, so you may already have a few models in mind. Alternately, you may have a spouse or girlfriend who is willing to pose for the image you've envisioned. Often, however, you'll need to cast a wider net to find the right model for your shoot. Fortunately, at this point you should have a clear idea of what you want to create. That will help in finding the right model, but there's still some work ahead.

So, let's say I identify fifty potential models on ModelMayhem.com. Of those, I will filter out about 20 percent—either because I see something I don't like or I get a strange feeling from their profile. It's a subjective thing, and I know I might be wrong, but I trust my first instinct on this.

Now, I am down to about forty models. I will then explain my project to those forty models in a mass e-mail (“I want to shoot X, Y, Z.”). This will generally cause another ten models or so to drop out, taking me down to thirty models.

Of those, I will select around ten models I want to talk to a bit more and send them my references. If any one of them is inexperienced as a model, I talk to her on the phone; if I get a bad feeling, I simply tell her that she's not quite what I'm looking for and wish her the best of luck. Many models prefer texting—and I prefer it, too, because it leaves us with a nice, clear record of what we talked about.

I try to explain everything about the shoot to the model, being totally honest and open. If I'm



In 2006, I shot an unplanned video of a model cooking soup while I was sick. I thought it was very sexy to see a model taking care of another person and I always had it in mind to do a proper shoot based on this concept.

GOOD PLANNING! (ABOVE AND RIGHT)—
A few years later, I had the chance. With more planning, the results were much better. Contrast these images with the ones below to see what a huge difference good planning made in the outcome.





ABOVE—Is the location safe for everyone (including the model)? Is the model okay with working at this location? These are questions you must answer when planning a shoot.

LEFT—Sometimes, giving the model some sheer fabric to partially conceal her body will help her feel more secure and happy. I have used diffusion material for this purpose—and we have even purchased cheap, second-hand wedding dresses to take apart, using the sheer white fabric to create wraps for photo shoots.

not sure how the images are going to turn out, I tell the model, “Hey, I am trying something new—it may work, it may not work, but I want to try it.” Tell the model straight out if this is a bra-and-panty shoot or a nude shoot. Don’t tread lightly. If she is willing to do nude modeling, she is willing to talk about it.

Because I do such rigorous pre-screening, I have a very low no-show or cancellation rate.

If a model has doubts (or if I feel she is unsure), I will suggest meeting at a coffee shop near her side of town. A model’s discomfort will

always show in the images, so if I have to spend an hour at a coffee shop showing her some sample shots and letting her meet my wife (or assistant), that’s a good investment of my time. In the end, I know it means she will be happier and more relaxed at the shoot, which generally runs at least four hours.

Because I do such rigorous pre-screening, I have a very low no-show or cancellation rate. Most photographers report that 10 to 20 of their nude/figure models fail to show up for scheduled shoots. I have that number down to 3 percent or less. Not only that, the models I select are happy to work with me because I spent a little more time in the planning of the shoot.

Have a Checklist

Planning a shoot is complicated, so it’s helpful to have a checklist—just to ensure you don’t overlook anything. What I’ve provided here is a good starting point, but there may be other things you want or need to add, depending on your own creative process or the image you’re trying to create.

Idea /Concept

- Is this a feasible shoot?
- Is there more than one shooting idea here?
- Do I have everything I need to execute this idea?
- Is this something I want to shoot?
- Can I produce the lighting look that is required?
- What is the purpose of this image?
- Does the model pair well with the idea?

Location Scouting

- Can I gain access to the location?
- Is the location safe for everyone (model/makeup artist/escort)?
- Is the model okay with working at this location?
- Have I checked the weather for an outside shoot?
- What else do I need (props, etc.)?

Model Communications

- Does the model understand what and why I am shooting?
- Does she understand the risks of this shoot (if there are any)?
- Have I answered all of her questions?
- If the location is remote, are we driving together or meeting there?
- Does the model have special dietary needs?
- Have I worked with this model enough?
- How long do I plan the shoot to be?

Gear

- Do I have the gear I need?
- Have I double-checked everything to make sure it’s in working order?
- Do I need more batteries?
- Do I need a longer power cable?
- What is the risk to my gear?
- Do I have a basic backup in case something breaks (even a point-and-shoot)?
- Do I have the model releases and any other paperwork?

5. Paperwork

I want to start this chapter with a disclaimer: *I am not a lawyer*. While I think it is important to cover some of the basics, you are advised to seek legal council specific to the region where you will be working before embarking on any shoot—especially one involving a nude or semi-nude model.

Seek legal council specific to the region where you will be working . . .

Get Photo ID

As noted previously, it is important to establish the age and identity of your model by making a copy of her identification. I require two forms of ID, one of which must be a photo ID (and I

With the paperwork out of the way, you can focus on the session without worries about future problems.



prefer it if both are). A driver's license, passport, or other officially issued document will work. I shoot a RAW image of each of these documents and keep the files in my permanent records.

While requiring ID has always been a good idea, since the passage of 18 US 2257 legislation, designed to protect minors from sexual exploitation, it is a *must*. The law is hazy about where and when 2257 paperwork is specifically required, so I err on the side of caution and have documentation signed by every model I shoot. Even if the images are “just a test shoot” or “just for your boyfriend,” if I am shooting you, you have to sign a 2257 form. This goes for males and females, clothed or unclothed.

For some reason, many photographers don't want to do this. The most common push-back photographers give is, “But this is a trade or free shoot.” Even so, what does it hurt to document the model's age? It takes just a few minutes and can prevent a lot of headaches down the road. For example, what will happen in two years if someone wants to buy those images? Many companies will not even accept submissions for publication without seeing the model's ID first. (And tracking down a model to get her ID two years after the shoot is often difficult.)

Other photographers say, “Oh, it's no big deal. Women here show off their bodies all the time.” I live in Las Vegas, where it's not uncommon to see topless women at the pools and girls walking around in thong bikinis at most hotels or out on the strip. Females show their bodies without much worry. However, people in more conservative areas of the country might not have the same community standards. A topless girl at *their* local pool might get arrested. This is another reason I err on the side of caution and get that 2257 paperwork out of the way.

Because the 2257 law covers the recording of “sexually explicit” images, some photographers say, “I'm not shooting anything sexually explicit.” Well, if the Supreme Court can't define what is or isn't obscene, then you can't either—and you shouldn't even try. Keep in mind that “sexually explicit” has nothing to do with “nude.” If you spend any amount of time on Google, you can find countless sexual fetish sites. On many of them, the models don't get naked—but these are certainly sexually explicit images (at least to someone with that fetish).

If the Supreme Court can't define what is or isn't obscene, then you can't either—and you shouldn't even try.

You would be shocked at the number of experienced nude models who tell me they have never had to sign any paperwork. Why would any photographer take that risk?

Model Releases

If you talk to ten different lawyers you will get twenty different answers about what a model release is and how it should be created.

I created the image. So what does that mean? From the second I click the shutter, I am the copyright holder of that image (unless someone hired and paid me). I own the image and I can do whatever I want with that image. However, if the person in the image I have created is *identifiable* and I publish that image, I can open myself up to civil lawsuits. If the model publishes that image without my permission (as the copyright holder), that opens up her to lawsuits as well.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” —Benjamin Franklin

To be safe and clear, my model release covers just about everything under the sun. The basics of mine are:

1. The model’s name and my name.
2. Statement that I own the copyright.
3. Statement that I can distribute the images however I want.
4. Notice that the model doesn’t have image approval (I have final say over how the images should look).
5. Disclaimer that if the model is hurt by my work, she can’t come after me for damages.
6. Statement that model gives her full consent to freely allow me to do what I want with the images.
7. Statement that the model has or will give me verbal refusal regarding anything she doesn’t want to do.
8. List of other names the model has used (married/maiden names, stage names, etc.).

There are also some other items specific to the area where I live (you should check to see what’s required in your area), but overall that is what my model release covers.

Time for Prints (TFP) Agreement

Time-for-prints (TFP) shoots are common in this industry, allowing photographers and models to create images for their promotional purposes without money changing hands. Accord-

ing to my agreement, we can use the images to promote ourselves as much as we want—but if either of us has an opportunity to sell the images, we must contact the other party first and split the profits upon the completion of the sale.

My TFP agreement form states that I own the copyright (and all other rights) to the images, then lists what I plan to do with the images. It also grants the model a license to use the images for non-commercial purposes, including trade shows cards, business cards, zed cards, printed materials promoting the model, and non-paying photography/modeling web sites. The form also notes how I should be credited and how the model should be credited when images are used for these purposes. (Models often use a different name for nude work, so it’s important to know and use this “stage name.”)

I really don’t know many other photographers who use TFP agreements—but, again, I like having things explained as clearly as possible. It really helps when everyone is on the same page.

Additional Paperwork

When I hire another photographer or videographer to work on a shoot, I have them sign a release that gives me the copyright to all the images created on that job—work they have done for a fee. Additionally, I have a location release in my files. Some of the companies I work with require a property release, stating I have secured the proper permission to use the location that appears in their images.

6. Locations

Location, location, location! It's not just important in real estate, it's one of the million-dollar questions in photography. A good location can transform a so-so image into something amazing; a bad location can often destroy a great shot. In nude photography (unless you are doing close-ups of the body or there is nothing else in the background), the location is especially important.

Unfortunately, a good location can be hard to find. One of the major problems is that when you say the word "nude" people

A good location can transform a so-so image into something amazing . . .



An image created against the wall just outside my kitchen.

think “porn.” The more you try to explain the difference between “nude” and “porn,” the less people seem to understand it. It makes no difference whether you are photographing your wife or photographing a model—when you mix nudity with photography, things just get complex.

At Home

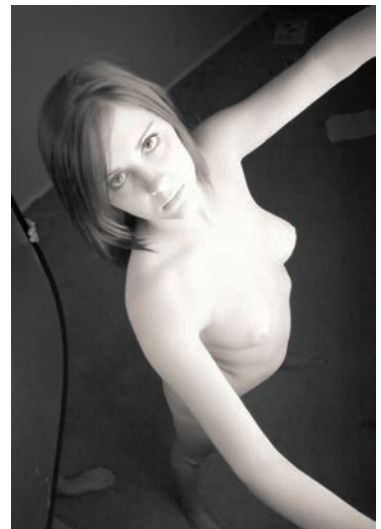
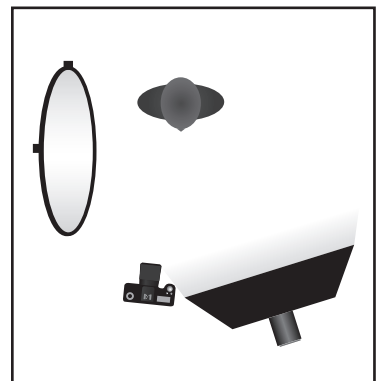
The easiest place to start is in your home. There are many reasons why this can work very well. I have photographed nudes in every home I have ever lived in. It doesn’t matter if the house is older or newer, there is always a location where I can shoot nudes.

Advantages. When you shoot at home, you have ready access to rest rooms, private changing areas, food, and water—things that can be challenging to obtain when shooting in remote loca-

When you mix nudity with photography, things just get complex.



These images were created in my living room. I let the background go dark, so I didn’t need to use a backdrop of any kind. The models were lit with one strip softbox and a reflector for fill. Simple!



No need for rolled paper—the bottom image was shot against an off-white wall with a single softbox. In the wider view (top), you can see what the room looks like.

tions. Even if you rent a studio or go to a hotel for the shoot, though, you increase the chance of forgetting something. Often, it's not even the specialized gear that turns out to be a problem when it's omitted from your kit. When I go out to shoot, I take a case full of extra stuff (pens, clear tape, hair ties, hand cleaner, door stoppers, bandages, etc.) that can honestly make or break the session.

Disadvantages. We don't live in a perfect world, and people are not perfect. When you shoot at home, you are inviting models (people who may be strangers to you) into your private space. While you might have many great experiences with this, eventually you *will* have a problem. All it takes is one bad model to cause real damage. I have heard numerous horror stories about models stealing things or showing up at a photographer's home in the middle of the night because they got kicked out of their place and have nowhere to go. It's also important to see this from the model's perspective: the idea of going to some stranger's house and getting naked in front of a camera can be intimidating.

What You'll Need. A common practice is to convert the home's garage into a small studio. When learning how to shoot nudes, it is important to have someplace where you can shoot repeatedly without much change. Having a controlled environment is extremely important as you're learning. If you can shoot in one location over and over again, constantly challenging yourself to be better, you will quickly learn how to achieve good, consistent results.





To set up a simple home studio, all you need are background stands, seamless paper, a few lights, and possibly some props.

Background stands can be found on Amazon or at your local camera store for \$50 to \$100. Read the reviews (if and when you can), but most background stands are similar in how they work. When it comes to the backdrops themselves, there is some debate over using cloth *vs.* rolled paper. Rolled paper can be expensive (it has to be replaced when it gets dirty). It's also bulky and it takes a bit more time to work with it. Cloth, on the other hand, is a bit easier to work with and you can wash it very easily. However, inexpensive cloth backdrops (such as bed sheets) can be very hard to light correctly. Because they are so thin that light shoots through them, these fabrics generally don't look good in photography. More expensive materials (professional backdrops) don't seem to have this problem.

Overall, for someone setting up a home studio space I would suggest black or white rolled paper and a good stand. I have shot

A bit of cropping can turn an image shot in a home (left) into a professional-looking portrait (right). *1/250 second, f/11, ISO 200, 24-70mm lens at 45mm.*

Inexpensive cloth backdrops (such as bed sheets) can be very hard to light correctly.

thousands of nudes on white, black, and colored rolled paper. It always looks good in the images, it's easy to light properly, and it's fairly inexpensive (especially if you keep it clean). Leave the sheets on the bed.

When I started out, I had a very simple setup: one strobe, a background stand, rolled paper, a reflector, and a light diffuser (a large scrim panel). Currently, such a setup would cost you \$400 to \$600—maybe a bit more, depending on the lights and softboxes you select. Again, this for a “starter” package. If you're serious about studio photography, I would suggest spending whatever your budget will allow on the lights and light modifiers.

Getting Set Up. There are things you can do to make life better when shooting out of your home. First, meet the model at a coffee shop or some other public location before the session. If you (or she) has any doubts, don't proceed. (And, of course, *never* discuss with models the times or dates you will be out of town!)

This portrait was shot outside the master bath.



Shoot Everywhere!

A garage studio is just one place you can shoot at home. There are plenty of locations—I use every square inch of my house! Possible background elements to consider are: doors, windows, walls, couches, televisions, kitchens, beds, hallways, showers and bathtubs, computer desks and office areas, floors, and counter tops. I will cover backyards a bit later in this chapter.

If possible, it's good to have a separate door for the studio part of the house. Try to restrict the shoot to one area. For example, if you have a two-story home, plan to shoot only in the downstairs area.

If you are shooting at night with photographic lights (especially strobe), keep in mind that your whole block will know what you are doing. Those lights are *bright*. If you have a snoopy neighbor, expect that they will look in your windows, peek over the fence into the backyard, and

A door was used to frame the model.





FACING PAGE—This hallway leading to a guest bedroom is a great location for photographing models.

It's always a crapshoot as to whether anyone is going to get in trouble.

Hotel rooms offer numerous shooting areas.

do anything else they can to see what you are up to. If you are shooting nudes, make sure to close off from view as much of your home as possible. If there is any chance someone will see in, don't shoot there—change locations.

Hotels

Legality. It's time for another disclaimer: *Shooting for commercial purposes (even TFP) in a hotel, motel, or other location without the owner's or manager's permission is illegal!* I'm not encouraging you or even suggesting you ever shoot in a hotel without obtaining the correct permission and meeting the insurance requirements.

Despite all of that, it would be unreasonable not to talk about shooting in hotels, since it *is* a relatively common practice. Some hotels don't care; others will send security scurrying to your room if they notice anything that even remotely looks like photographic equipment. I have shot all over the western United States and in other countries—and it's always a crapshoot as to whether anyone is going to get in trouble. I have had relatively few problems with management when shooting in hotels; I have gotten permission sometimes, and other times I have been denied permission.

Cost and Quality. Shooting in a high-end casino or hotel room can often make a model feel at ease and change the mode of the shoot. Conversely, shooting in a sleazy motel room is bound to make the model feel uneasy.





Sometimes, a group of photographers will go in on a room together.

Las Vegas, where I live, has some fantastic hotel rooms with daily rates that can run the gamut from comped (free) to tens of thousands of dollars. Many times, models will have connections on getting rooms (they may work in the hotel or have a friend that does). Sometimes, a group of photographers will go in on a room together. I've even ended up using a room because a visiting friend had to leave town sooner than planned.

I keep a folder of images on my computer, showing the different hotel rooms I have shot in. I believe it is important to have a visual record of how a hotel room looks without models. This is



THIS PAGE AND FACING PAGE— Working with two models, I created these images during a session in a hotel room.



also helpful if you want to advise visiting photographer friends on possible location selections.

If you decide to shoot in a hotel, be smart about it. I know a photographer here in Las Vegas who allowed his model to smoke marijuana in the room (two illegal things at once is really bad). Naturally, someone smelled it and called security—and when security saw the lighting gear, they freaked out and gave him the boot. Another photographer I know had the hotel bring up his photography gear—and they didn't move fast enough for his liking, so he screamed at the bell captain and didn't tip him. Sure enough, an hour later there was a knock at the door. Bye-bye! If you are going to do something

If the hotel's decor isn't attractive, you can blur it by shooting wide open.



Close the Blinds

If you are shooting at night, close the blinds. Trust me, in a huge high-rise hotel it is *really clear* when someone is shooting. A security guard can simply stand on the ground floor and look up at the building. If they see flashes going off, they will be knocking on your door a few minutes later.

that's inherently sneaky, at least try to be friendly and fly under the radar.

Booking the Models. If you plan to spend a day shooting in a hotel room, book more than one model—I would suggest making arrangements with four or five models. If you check in at 4:00PM, plan a model from 5:00–8:00PM, then another model from 8:00–10:00PM. The next day schedule a session from 8:00–10:00AM, and then finally from 10:00AM to noon (or whatever checkout time is). To minimize no-shows, give the models a week or two notice and remind them frequently about the shoot. At the very least, send a reminder to each of the models the night before the shoot.

Running the Sessions. Let's just assume the pre-planning (discussed in chapter 4) is all done. At this point, I have everything I need to shoot and all of the models booked. If I get access to the room at noon, I will get there at noon. I'll then plan on having the makeup artist or female assistant arrive at around 12:30PM. The first model should be booked for 12:30PM or 1:00PM. (Some models consistently show up late, so I will book them for 12:30PM so I'm sure they will get there by 1:00PM.)

When I arrive at the room, I put all my gear in one location near the door. I then walk around the room and look for ideas that catch my eye.



Colorful areas of the hotel room make eye-catching settings for models.

I can simply rotate my lights around 180 degrees and get a completely new look.

What natural light is in the room now? What will the natural light be like at sunset? Does it have large windows or small windows? What elements have bright colors? Where are there neutral colors? How big is the room? I take all these things into account as I begin to plan out a flow of shoots—from location one, to location two, and so on. Planning the right order for the locations means I can simply rotate my lights around 180 degrees and get a completely new look and feel without having to drag my gear all over the room and back again.

Finally, I find a safe location (out of the path of foot traffic) to use as a staging area for my camera gear, lenses, and other items I will need while I work. Anything I don't plan on using during

this shoot (extra camera, my wallet, etc.) gets hidden away in a closet. I then set something in front of the closet door so it can't be opened easily.

Studios

Photographers often rent studios to get better at photography—but sometimes they end up getting even worse at it. A studio can be a really useful tool if you know what you are doing and have the time and money to do it right. When you rent a studio, however, you are often paying by the hour. As a result, many photographers make the fatal mistake of rushing to get as many shots as possible. They don't take the time to set up their lights and gear properly—and what can you expect to learn by taking a thousand poorly lit shots of a model? If you decide to rent a studio, take your time. Set up the lighting and gear carefully, help the model with posing, control the environment as much as you can, and then do your best. A hundred good shots is far better than a thousand lousy ones.

One of the suggestions I would make is to talk to the studio's owner and see if you can work out a trade. Maybe you could assist them at their shoots or provide some Photoshop work in return for the use of their studio. Agreements like this are not uncommon; professional photographers are really busy all the time. If the studio is free, many will let other artists use it if they can figure out how to save themselves some money in the long run.

An additional problem with renting a studio is that most professional studios are not designed for nude photography. Many of the common portrait photography sets look strange with nude models. Additionally, some models don't feel comfortable working nude in a studio when they don't know how clean it is or how many other people have been there.

Ultimately, working in a professional studio is just a more expensive solution to many of the same problems we've already addressed when shooting at hotels and houses. For most of us, there are more cost-effective ways to create our images.

Outdoors: Populated Areas

I see great locations used for weddings or glamor photography that would be perfect for a nude shoot, but I know I'd be the one



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—If you take your time and think about what you're doing, your studio rental dollars can pay off in nice images.

Talk to the studio's owner and see if you can work out a trade.



to get in trouble if I tried it! Each state has different laws about public nudity and how much trouble the photographer or model can get into, but let's assume it is illegal *everywhere*.

Risk vs. Reward. Before using a location, you should do some scouting without the model. If you find a place that you think is good, spend a little time observing the area. How busy is it?

When shooting out in public,
you have to balance
the risk against the reward.

How dangerous is it? Do you need a permit to shoot there (if it is a state park, you just might)? You may also want to try doing a non-nude shoot at the location first. If you don't have any problems, then you can try a nude shoot there.

When shooting out in public, you have to balance the risk against the reward. How great is the image going to be? How much risk is there? For example, I have been asked by many differ-

FACING PAGE—Working quickly can help you escape notice, but there are always risks associated when shooting nude images in public.

ent companies to shoot their model naked in front of the famous "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign (they think it will be good PR, I guess). The sign is a block away from a police station and always busy with tourists, so the risk is *very* high that someone will call the police or complain. The last company to request this location was a jeans designer who wanted me to shoot a topless model wearing their product. For me, the risk wasn't worth the reward, so I had to pass.

Fortunately, there are many locations in my area with *much* lower risk factors (and, in my opinion, they also look much cooler and less cheesy than the Vegas sign!).

If at all possible, I urge you to scout the location carefully before doing a real nude shoot there. If you can't test the location first, set everything up, shoot, and leave—quickly. The longer you are there (setting up, talking, or goofing

Location Scouting: A True Story

My wife and I found a killer location that overlooks the whole Las Vegas valley and is just a few minutes from our house. No one lives too close and it's on a straight road, so I can see anyone coming well before they could get to us. This gave it a lot of potential as a shooting location.

Our plan of action was to start by shooting some cityscapes—just some pretty pictures of Las Vegas. If we had no problems, we'd proceed to photograph a girl in a vintage showgirl costume, overlooking the city. Assuming that went well, the ultimate concept was to create a nude image depicting a crying girl running away from Sin City—as if the sin in the city had completely stripped her.

We drove to the spot and didn't see any no-trespassing signs, so we set up the camera and started shooting panoramics of the city

as the sun was going down. We didn't anticipate any problems; we weren't using any flashes and there were no models with us. However, we were there for no more than fifteen minutes when a security guard from a nearby park drove over and to see what we were doing. He wanted to make sure we didn't have a flat tire or some other car problem—then proceeded to chat with us about the local water shortage for over an hour. The nice, chatty security guard also told me there is always someone around because they are building in the area and part of the contract requires security on the site. You can learn a lot from a chatty security guard; I learned that this location was out of the question for photographing nudes.





These images were shot in my backyard using one strobe.

off), the greater the chance that you will get into trouble. It's also a good idea to station friends nearby as lookouts (and they can be called in to do double-duty holding a reflector). On a shoot in Mexico, we hired the hotel security guards to look out for the local beach police. We paid them \$10 or \$20 for a few hours of work and they got to see naked girls. It worked great!

Outdoors: Your Place

In Las Vegas, the houses are right on top of each other. However, I still love shooting in my own backyard or in friends' backyards. The following are some things to consider.

Can Anyone See the Shoot? It doesn't matter whether or not it is your right to be naked in your backyard, if someone can see you, I wouldn't do it. If your neighbors (or your

neighbor's *kids*) can see you, they are going to complain. And, let's face it, photographing naked models in your backyard is a bit different than occasionally hanging out nude in your hot tub. Don't push your luck.

Consider All the Options. If you have a private backyard, use it to full effect. If you need to, buy some 100-foot power cords and drag a light with a softbox a few hundred feet away from you house. Shoot on your knees. Shoot up at the sky. Place a model in front of a tree (most trees look great with a nude model in front of them). Outdoor images, to me, look much less contrived than indoor ones—and these shoots tend to be a lot of fun for the model.

No Pool? No Worries. None of my houses have had a pool or fancy landscaping. In fact, showing expensive landscaping in the back-

Private backyards are ideal for shooting nude photography.

Often, it is the simpler, more natural backgrounds that work best.



ground can make your work look more like high-end glamour portraits than fine-art nudes. Often, it is the simpler, more natural backgrounds that work best, so don't worry if your backyard isn't perfect. Just shoot at different times of the day and see how the light hits the landscape, the trees, the plants, the models, etc.



Whether or not the risks are too high at a given location is something you and your model will have to determine for yourselves.

Outdoors: Parks and Public Lands

Again, shooting nudes in public is almost always illegal. It doesn't matter if it is just a topless picture of your wife or some great landscape with a professional model overlooking the Grand Canyon—it's illegal.

The only legal way to shoot nudes at a park is to get a license and to be honest about what you

will be photographing (nude photography). You must also carry the required insurance.

Clothing-Optional Areas. Some parks have designated clothing-optional areas at hot springs, beaches, or other remote areas. Does that mean you can shoot nude images? Most likely not. You can still get hassled by police or park rangers, so I generally try to stay away from those areas.

Be Prepared. If people see you shooting nude models in a public area, they will generally assume you are creating pornography—even if the girl isn't completely naked or doing anything sexually suggestive. In some cases, they will watch for a minute and then walk away and tell no one. In other cases, they will come over and say hello. Sometimes, though, they will leave and notify the authorities.

If you get busted, you can face thousands of dollars in fines and possibly lose some of your gear (park rangers can confiscate your camera and/or memory cards). The model can also get into trouble for her role in the shoot, so make sure she knows what she's getting into *before* you head out for the session. Everyone has their own idea of what constitutes an acceptable risk. Whether or not those risks are too high at a given location is just something you and your model will have to determine for yourselves.

How to Shoot. Let's assume you find some safe, private place—something a short walk away from where you parked. You and the model feel it's safe to shoot. How do you do it?

Once I find a location and lighting I like, I get everything in order, making sure the model is ready. For the shoot, I request the model wear loose-fitting clothing that can be taken on and off quickly and won't leave indentations on her body (such as from bra straps or snug waistbands).

When shooting outdoors in public areas, choose your location wisely and work quickly. This is me photographing Puma Swede on a beach in Mexico for a magazine. Notice that I added no lights or reflectors—it was just a camera and a model. To see one of the final images from this session, turn to page 40.







ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—
Make sure the model understands the risks and rewards of an outdoor shoot.

With the model still clothed,
I do a few test shots,
making sure my
exposure is right . . .

With the model still clothed, I do a few test shots, making sure my exposure is right and that the person working the reflector (and providing an extra set of eyes as a lookout) is in the correct position. Then, if needed, I go over some basic poses with the model.

Finally, I will have the model remove her clothing and tuck it in a safe place for her (put a rock on her garments or place them in your camera bag). Then, I start shooting as quickly as I feel is possible. I will remind everyone to be on the lookout for people and to remind me when five or ten minutes has passed. (When I shoot, I lose track of time very easily because I am focused on the light and the model, so it helps when another person keeps track of the time for me.)

As I shoot, I try to look at the LCD only one or two times; constantly checking it will only slow down the shoot. When I feel I have captured some images I like (or if we sense that people are getting too close), I have the model get dressed and we move on to the next location.

7. Shooting

The day of the shoot, your heart might beat faster and you might be nervous—but don't fear. Often the model will be just as nervous as you are. Just remember you are both human and that you are both there with a common goal.

Ask the Model to Come Prepared

It is important for the model to come to the session as neat and clean as possible—especially when you'll be shooting nudes. What this means is different for every model and every photographer. In a perfect world, the model would arrive

fresh out of the shower with dry hair, but that doesn't always happen.

Waxing. If the model wants to get her brows, lips, or bikini area waxed, keep in mind that many women get very red right after waxing. This irritation can last from a few hours to a few days, so I suggest the model not do anything too major right before her shoot. As a general rule, if the model hasn't waxed before or doesn't wax often, I tell her to get waxed three to four days before the shoot.

Nails. Some models have never worn false nails; others haven't had real nails for years. If a model has natural nails, I simply ask her to arrive with them clean. Models with false nails should have them filled if they are too grown out.

Clothing. As noted in the previous section, loose-fitting clothing is important to eliminate indentations on the model's body. If at all possible, the model should change into something loose-fitting before leaving her house for the session. Indentations from bra straps and waistbands often require some time to disappear.

Baby Wipes. *Sensitive subject alert!* Like the rest of us, models generally use toilet paper to wipe after using the toilet. Unfortunately, some toilet paper will leave behind tiny white specks. This can be hard to notice with the eye—but when you look at the images in postproduction it will be very distracting. Most professional

Focus on One Element

It may help to show the model how you can control light and focus it on a certain part of her body, leaving the rest in shadow. This often helps models feel better about posing. Show her examples of what you are trying to create. If your model has a great stomach or wonderful legs, show her how you can focus on that aspect of her appearance she feels most confident about.





Asking the model to change into loose clothing well before the session will ensure her skin looks its best.

When the model arrives, making her feel at home is important.

models know to use moist towelettes (baby wipes) before the shoot, but new models may not be aware of the issue. As uncomfortable as it might seem, it is important to be honest with the model and tell her, “You have a bit of toilet paper down there,” or request that she use towelettes before the shoot.

Start Slowly

When the model arrives, making her feel at home is important. Don't jump right in and start shooting. The first time I shoot with a model at my house or at the studio, I introduce her to my wife and our animals (our dogs Lola and Butters, and our cat Lucy). We spend a few minutes talking about the animals and getting to know each other. Then, I show her around the place, making sure to point out her changing area and to show her where

Do This . . .

- DO** make sure the house/studio is clean and smells good.
- DO** make sure your own appearance is clean and professional.
- DO** maintain an enthusiastic and positive demeanor.
- DO** use her first name.
- DO** find some shared interest or topic to help you and the model relate.
- DO** provide a place for the model to prepare and get undressed in private.
- DO** give gentle suggestions about posing in a positive, educational way. (Saying, “Twisting to your side a bit will make you look more elegant,” rather than, “Turn to the side because it will make you look less fat.”)
- DO** compliment her on things she’s doing right (but don’t make it sound lewd or sexual).
- DO** take a break. Sometimes just ten minutes is all a person needs to recharge. Many models smoke and will be in need of a cigarette break after a few hours of shooting.

. . . Not That

- DO NOT** make sexual comments.
- DO NOT** touch the model.
- DO NOT** rush the model. Let her set the pace and find her place.
- DO NOT** force your ideas on the model if they are not working. If she wants to sit because that is where she is happy, try it.
- DO NOT** offer drugs to the model.
- DO NOT** try to impress her with fancy photography terms.
- DO NOT** belittle her ideas.
- DO NOT** change the plans at the last minute.
- DO NOT** stare.
- DO NOT** ask her to try a more explicit pose unless it has been discussed first.

the rest room is. From there (assuming she is wearing loose-fitting clothes so we don’t have to worry about allowing time for any indentations to disappear), I spend a few minutes showing her some sample images. I really listen to her feedback and try to see what she likes and what she doesn’t comment on. Then, I cover the plan of action and the paperwork. I ask her to read through everything and let me know if she has any questions.

Generally, I already have the lights set up at this point, so I show the model where we are going to start shooting, then ask her to change or finish getting ready. When she finishes, she can find me in the shooting area. And if she needs help in the meantime, she can ask for my wife (or a female assistant).

Begin Shooting

When the model, now partially or completely naked, arrives at the first shooting area, I ask her what type of music she likes. If she has a favorite Pandora station (most of the models do), I have her find it and the music begins as we start shooting. The reason I do this right before we start shooting is because it requires the model to think and talk a little bit about a non-photography subject. It’s a good way to put her a little more at ease.

Test Shots and Tweaking. Start by taking a few initial shots of the model and checking that the lighting is the way you want it. If it’s not, fix it. Don’t assume you can just fix it in post-production. It is important to get it correct in the camera. Explain to the model, “Hey—I am

FACING PAGE—Making your model feel comfortable is critical to the success of the shoot.



Show the Shoulders

In the 1997 film *The Devil's Advocate*, the John Milton character says, "A woman's shoulders are the front lines of her mystique, and her neck, if she's alive, has all the mystery of a border town. A no-man's land in that battle between the mind and the body." When I photograph a model with her shoulders exposed, I always think of that quote. Shoulders can be very sexy. Consider a rear view of the model, from her head (maybe partially cropped out) down to where her bottom just begins to curve. While a very sensual shot like this can actually be nude, it doesn't show anything private.

I created this image in a formal dining room that was converted to a small shooting area. While the shot is nude and very sensual, it doesn't reveal anything more than a backless gown.



crazy about getting the light perfect, so I am going to adjust this or that." She will understand.

When you have a few shots looking good, ask the model if she wants to see them. If so, bring the camera to her to see the LCD screen. As she reviews the images, explain what she's seeing and what you might tweak in postproduction. It's helpful if she has a general idea of what you are trying to create.

Concentrate. Once you've established these elements, try not to look at the LCD—focus your attention on the model. I have often heard complaints from models about photographers who ruin the pace of the shoot by constantly checking the LCD. Unless there are major changes on the set, playing with the camera only slows things down and makes you look like you don't quite know what you're doing.

Directing the Model. Everyone has a different idea of how much directing is too much (or too little). I have worked with Hollywood directors who feel that everything that can be controlled. Others feel that a more hands-off philosophy is better.

Even models have their own level of comfort with taking direction. I try to gauge this and keep my shoot flowing, so there is no hard stopping point and no hard starting point—there are just tips that I offer along the way. If the model wants to start in a certain pose, I suggest ways to make that pose look better, then I keep suggesting refinements until I get what I want. Sometimes it works, sometimes not so much. However, I was never the type of person to micromanage anything. If a model doesn't

FACING PAGE—Once you get the lighting and model(s) in place, don't worry about your LCD screen. Focus on the model(s).



want to listen to me, one of two things will happen: 1) I will just stop shooting this set, or 2) she will see the images and know I was right.

I have told models, clear as day, to do something (“turn your head,” or “raise your hands”) and been flat-out ignored. Later, when they see the images, they often comment, “I didn’t think it would look good if I did that—I should have listened to you.” I find I often need to explain to the model that a *strange-feeling* pose doesn’t equate to a *strange-looking* pose.



Veto Power

The model always has veto power. At any time, she can say, “Nope. I am not doing that.” What a lot of photographers don’t understand is that they have veto power, too. Sometimes (maybe even *often*) it is my idea to try something—but when we get started on it, I don’t like it and know it won’t work out as I had hoped. When that happens, I will just tell the model, “Sorry. I’m not feeling this. Let’s try something different.”

With nude modeling, there are fewer rules than with other types of posing





Embrace your model's posing ideas—this is a collaborative process.

Together, you can figure out what works and what doesn't.



You will have to find what level of direction *you* like and how much your models need or want. With nude modeling, there are fewer rules than with other types of posing, so one of the best things to do is shoot more than you planned and go over the images after the shoot with the model. Together, you can figure out what works and what doesn't.

Props and Posing

Posing can be one of the biggest challenges in nude photography. Even if you have a clear idea in your head, getting the model into the correct pose is often harder than it sounds. However, a great pose can make an image come alive and stand out from every other image in the world. In my experience, one of the best ways to approach posing is through the use of props. This is especially true if the model is inexperienced.

Small Props. Giving the model a small prop to keep in her hands and move around with gives her some direction and helps her relax. When I give such a prop to a model, I begin by letting her move around freely with it. When I see something I love, I tell her, “Remember this

pose—you look great in this pose.” I will also try to remember this pose, so that (even if I remove the prop) she can go back to that position. Here are ideas for small, hand-held props that models can play with:

- Unloaded gun or rifle
- Whip or paddle
- Flower
- Pearls
- Panties, bra, or other clothing
- Tulle or sheer material
- Broom or cleaning materials
- Knife or old-school razor
- Hat
- Cigarette
- Eyeglasses or sunglasses

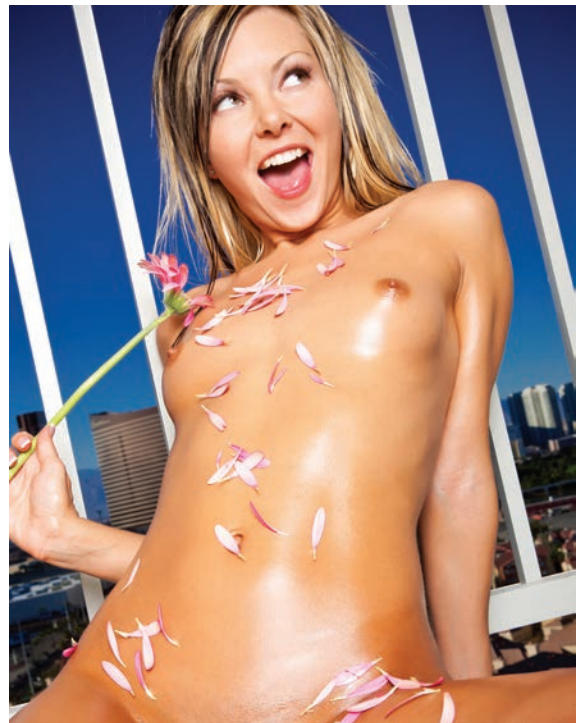


Tough is sexy, as these images show.



ABOVE—Roller skates and a girlish pose create an intriguing juxtaposition with the nude model.
BELOW—Eyeglasses and sunglasses are simple props that can add to the mood of the image.





THIS PAGE—Countless posing variations can be inspired by a simple prop.

FACING PAGE—Food and drinks can be used as props to create a variety of looks.





A garden hose offers many possibilities for outdoor images.

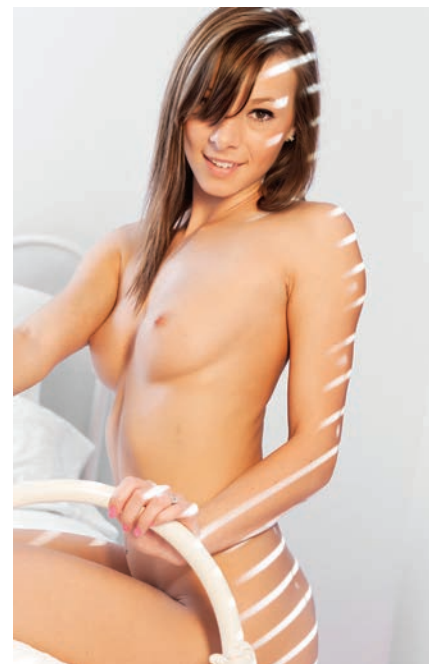
wouldn't. Familiar props, things that people are comfortable with from being around on a daily basis, can help make posing natural.

- Chair
- Sofa
- Pillow
- Car
- Desk
- Bed

A Happy Model Means a Good Shoot

The most important thing is to make sure the shoot goes as smoothly as possible and that the model leaves as happy as possible. If a model is happy when she leaves the session, I know I will work with her more in the future. Best of all, the more I work with a model, the better the images get. With each session, the images improve because the model learns what poses look good and I learn what lighting looks best on her. I can clearly see the images get better each time—and so can she.

Large Props. Another option is to add a larger prop—something the model can move her entire body around. These props give the model something to interact with and can encourage her to move her body in ways she otherwise



Letting the model work around a large, familiar prop can facilitate good posing.

8. Critiquing Your Images

Don't Rely on Friends or Social Networks

Evaluating your results is just as important as planning your shoot. One of the major problems today is that we live in a social world. As a result, we don't often get objective, professional critiques of our work.

If you shoot a nude image of model and she shows it to her husband or boyfriend, nine out of ten times he will say it's a great image—even if it's not. As someone who cares about the model, he's focused on the subject rather than the photography, lighting, or other technical elements that photographers consider when

For objective image assessments, you can't rely on the model, her significant other, or your own friends. You need professional input.



evaluating the success of an image. It is the same on social networks (those that allow nude photography). When you post an image, people will love it because they love the subject matter, not the lighting or the photography. These reactions don't provide an accurate assessment of your work or help you grow as an artist.

Seek Professional Assessments

So where do you find other professional photographers who can look at your work, tell you what you did right, and help you correct what you did wrong?

Photography Boards. One option is the photography boards and networking sites that seem to be growing every day. However, you can encounter a lot of conflicting opinions on these boards. People who shoot glamour feel the image is too dark, while people who shoot landscapes feel the image doesn't show enough of the environment—and so on and so on.

Professional Photographers. The most successful and useful critiques I have received have come from other professionals who specialize in nude photography. My approach has to be to identify some people whose work I think is *really* great—I mean the *top* of the *top*. Then, I try to find their information and contact them. If you e-mail ten of them, only one or two of them might reply—but just explain that you are looking for help creating better images and would value their feedback. If you keep at it, you will find a person whose work you admire and who is willing to help you.

Portfolio Reviews. Another great resource is Canon Professional Services. At certain events, they offer portfolio reviews that can be very



Evaluate every aspect of your image. Is it what you wanted to create? What could you improve?

helpful, especially if they have a glamour or nude photographer doing the review. Local camera clubs and photography groups frequently offer similar reviews. Those offer the added potential to meet a fine-art photographer in your area who may be able to review your work.

The Self-Critique Process

Read through the following steps, then try to self-critique some of your images using this approach. You'll likely find it a valuable exercise—



Compare your actual results to the objectives you set out for the shoot. Did you achieve what you had envisioned?

and you'll probably come up with some ideas for improving the results of your next shoot.

Describe the Objective. If you have done your pre-shooting homework, this part should be is easy. What did you intend to create during this shoot? For example, you might say, "I planned to shoot a nude bodyscape showing the model's breast and stomach, letting everything else fall into shadow."

Identify What You See. Looking at a few images from the session, compare them to your pre-shoot ideas. What do you have in front of you? Is the lighting similar to what you envisioned? Does

Looking at a few images from the session, compare them to your pre-shoot ideas.



When you are looking at your work, ask yourself: What could have made this shot better?

it align with what you discussed with the model? Is the mood correct? Is the pose correct? What feeling do you get from this image—is it too sexy or suggestive? Is it not sexy enough?

Evaluate the Outcome. Now that you have described your objectives and identified what elements of those goals are reflected in your images, it's time to study your work more subjectively—and look for ways to improve upon it.



“Interpretation is the revenge of the intellectual upon art.” —Susan Sontag

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you evaluate your images from a shoot:

Is the lighting what you had in mind?

If not, what could you do to improve it?

Is the posing the way you wanted it?

If not, what would have made it better?

Did you choose the right model?

If not, what features/appearance should you have looked for?

Did the location work as you had hoped?

If not, what would have been a better background choice?

Was the pace of the session comfortable and productive?

If not, how could you fine-tune your approach or adjust your scheduling?

Does the model's expression reflect the mood you intended?

If not, could you communicate with her better about your objectives?

In addition to the creative aspects of the image, it's important to consider the technical quality of the shot.

Technical Evaluation

In addition to the creative aspects of the image, it's important to consider the technical quality of the shot. Even with the magic of postproduction, technical errors can spell the death of an otherwise good image. When making technical evaluations, it is important to look at the RAW image; once you start editing the image, everything is changed.

Focus. Focus is one of the most important things to evaluate when looking at your images. Remember: it is easy to make an image soft in postproduction, but it's hard to make a soft image tack sharp. If the image simply isn't in focus, it is difficult (and

maybe even pointless) to judge the lighting and other technical aspects. So if you intended for the focus to be on the eyes, check them. Are the eyes tack sharp or is the focus a little off (making the nose or the ears sharp and leaving the eyes a bit soft)?

Exposure. Did you get the correct amount of light on the subject? In Camera Raw, you can adjust the exposure, but you shouldn't have to adjust it by more than $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ stop. If you regularly need to make significant exposure adjustments in postproduction, you need to look at your metering techniques and work toward minimizing this technical error in your work.

Lighting Control. Did you control the light properly? Check to see if there is any unwanted flare. Check to see that the critical areas of the image are lit properly. For example, if the model's eyes are important, make sure they have the right light and are not in shadow relative to the rest of the face.

Next, look at the lighting ratio—the relationship between the darkest shadows and brightest highlights. Do these fall within a printable range? Did you lose important highlight or shadow detail? Or is the image too flat (lacking contrast)?

A more subjective thing to consider at this point is the feeling of the light. If the light doesn't match up with the model, the background, or the intended “feel” of the photograph, this amounts to a technical error in the photograph. We've all seen green-screen pictures where the subject and background just don't look right together—and usually it's because of a lighting problem. Errors like that happen all the time and are something to watch out for.

Excessive Noise. Excessive noise is becoming less of a problem as digital cameras improve, but it's important to know where your camera's



Controlling the light is a critical skill to master as a photographer.

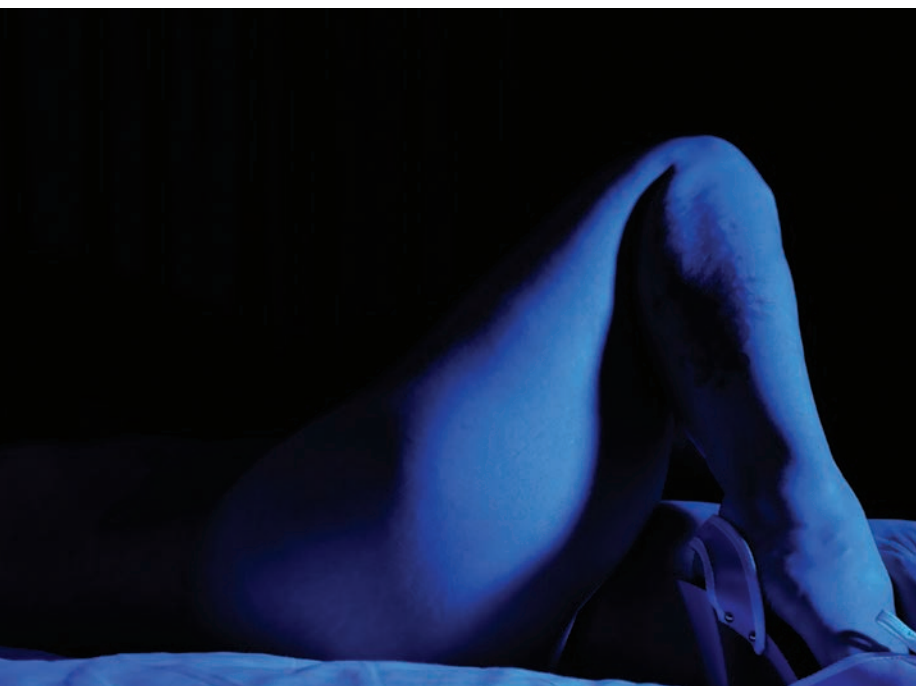
sweet spot falls. You may be able to shoot from ISO 200 to ISO 1600 and see no appreciable difference in noise—however your total dynamic range (the range from darkest black to brightest white) might be significantly impacted as you move up the ISO scale. There are sites on the Internet that can help you predict the dynamic range of your gear, but the best way to know what to expect is to do some tests on your own.

Timing vs. Controlling the Shoot

In my mind, there are two approaches to photography: timing-based and control-based. It is



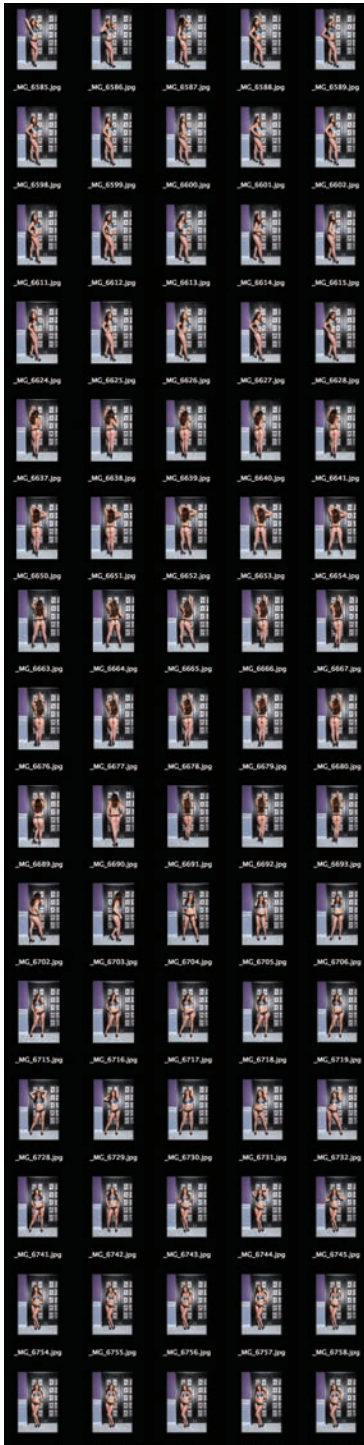
Does the light have the feeling you wanted? This is something to consider when evaluating your images.



important to understand the difference. You will want to shoot accordingly—and evaluate your images differently, based on your objectives.

Timing-Based Shots. Sports, photojournalism, wedding, and nature photography are what I consider timing-based photography. For these images, capturing the peak moment of action or emotion is more important than capturing a technically flawless image. I'm not saying that lighting, focus, and exposure aren't

Sports, photojournalism, wedding, and nature photography are what I consider timing-based photography.



With control-based photography, you can shoot until you get precisely what you want.

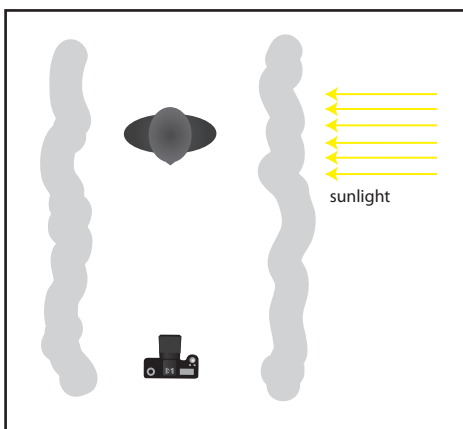
important, but they tend to take a back seat to the emotion and action captured in the frame.

Control-Based Shots. The opposite of timing-based photography is control-based photography, where the photographer determines the lighting, focus, ratio, lens, camera, the look of the model, and the feel of the shoot. This approach is used for most studio shoots, where you have time to keep shooting and controlling the results. You can take as many shoots as you need until every single aspect of the image comes together perfectly in one frame.

Nude Photography. Nude photography is generally a control-based situation. For example, a few months ago, a client contacted me to shoot background images for a new web site. They needed just *two* images of a model, so I set the light up, metered, focused, and got everything in control. We then captured over *two-thousand* frames. These were all very similar, but we needed to get the *perfect* shot—so we shot a lot, and then we shot more just to be safe. Since everything was controlled, the shoot was a huge success.

With control-based shooting, getting all the elements in place (the background; the lighting; the camera settings; the model's styling, pose, and expression; any props) is the part that takes a lot of time and effort. Once those are established, you can just shoot until you are totally sure that you have what you want. Unless you are working in a space that's rented by the hour, the difference between shooting a hundred pictures and a thousand pictures is insubstantial compared to all the other work required to make the shoot happen.

Of course, there are some circumstances where the timing-based approach comes into play in nude photography. For example, imagine you're photographing a nude model in the rain. The rain isn't going to last forever, so you have to get the technical stuff as close as possible, then start shooting. Because you don't have all the time in the world to get everything perfect, you'll be looking for the action and emotion you capture in the image to give it some impact with the viewer. The same skills can come into play when photographing a model as the sun is dropping quickly at the end of the day, or when photographing nude models in public places.



Kayden in the desert. This image was created using only the available natural light—I didn't even add a reflector. I shot it with a 30-year-old film camera that doesn't even have a working light meter. If results like this are possible with *that* camera, imagine what is possible with a modern digital one! $\frac{1}{60}$ second, $f/4$, ISO 400 black & white film, processed in Tmax developer.

9. Putting It All Together

How does everything come together? For this chapter, I decided to compile some of my favorite nude images and walk you through the process—the story behind each one and the techniques I used.

Soft, Natural Light

Kayden (the model), Alice (the makeup artist and my wife), and I wanted to create some images of Kayden in soft sand with roses—with various hues of red and very natural poses.

As we were walking to the location we had in mind, I saw this location (facing page) and decided to do a quick test shoot for my special “less is more” nude erotic project (see page 41 for more on this). We started shooting about three hours before sunset, and there were some clouds in the sky, making the light really soft and non-directional.

This image shown here was shot with black & white film in a medium-format TLR (twin lens reflex) camera. I shot both digital and film at this location, but the film images turned out the best. They had the most feeling. Film has a certain look that can't be duplicated with digital—plus the film camera is small and light compared to my digital camera, so I can put more of my attention on the model.

Octobox as a Flag

On a hot August day, Kayden came over to the house to do some shooting. After we worked for a few hours inside, we wanted to change it up and start shooting outside.

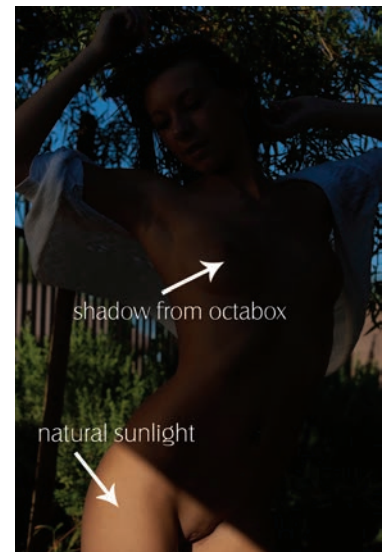
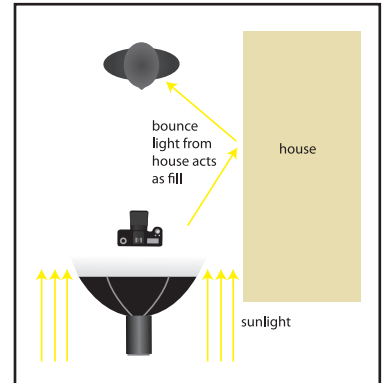
Shooting outside in the intense desert heat can cause a few problems. One is that the brightness of the sun means models can't open their eyes without squinting—and that's definitely not

I shot both digital and film at this location, but the film images turned out the best.

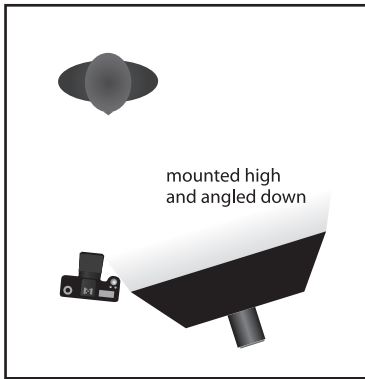
a flattering look. Another is that the heat will just destroy the model's makeup.

To overcome the problem of direct sun in her eyes, I set up a light box as a flag to block the sun. I got everything ready and tested the setup while Kayden changed inside—I knew that we wouldn't have a lot of time before her makeup started to run. (Kayden doesn't wear much, but *any* makeup will run in 115 degree heat!)

I set up a light box as a flag to block the sun.



Kayden in the backyard. $\frac{1}{250}$ second, $f/9$, ISO 50.



Dylan Ryder in a milk bath.
*1/200 second, f/5.6, ISO 400,
24–70mm lens at 48mm.*

Since I had never worked
with the model before,
I wasn't sure
how much to plan.



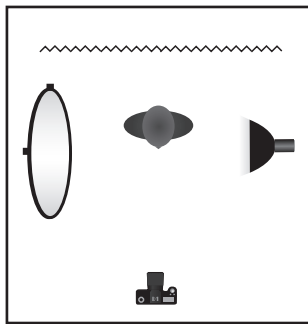
Milk Bath

When I find something I love, I use it, and use it, and use it. In 2012, I was on a milk-bath photography kick. In a few years, I'm sure I will never want to shoot this concept again—but, for now, all the models I work with love it! (If you decide to try this kind of shoot, here's an important tip: keep the water temperature tepid. If the water is too hot, the model's skin will get very pink and blotchy.)

With Dylan. The image above was created on my first session with Dylan Ryder and, honestly, I was a bit nervous because it was a very last-minute shoot. Since I had never worked with the model before, I also wasn't sure how much to plan. The milk bath, created with powdered milk, was a great option because it requires no clothes (no worrying about sizes), it can be done at the end of the shoot (to wash off the makeup), and it hides any body issues. (Dylan has a perfect body, but you never know until you have worked with a model!) Also, Alice can prepare the milk

bath while I am shooting at another set or location (see the next image in this section). Then, when I am ready, I just walk over to the tub and shoot.

Most models, especially Dylan, have happy shoots—images where they are smiling and enjoying life. This is the bulk of my work. However, I also love doing images that convey another side of the model. In this case, I picked an image with a more subdued expression. She is not sad or unhappy; rather, she is looking for something, wanting something. There is mystery in her eyes. I cropped this image from the full im-



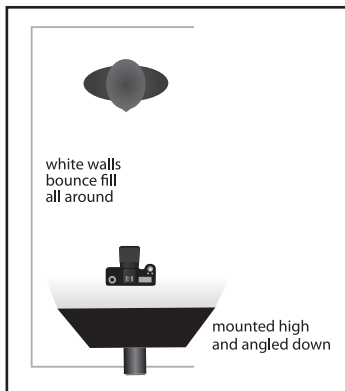
As Dylan and I waited for the milk bath to fill, we created this image using one light and one reflector. $\frac{1}{125}$ second, $f/16$, ISO 50, 24–70mm lens at 32mm.

age because I loved her facial expression. Adding a blue tone in postproduction also enhanced this more serious, intimate mood.

The shot below is one of the images we created as we waited for the bath to fill with water. Because I already had the lighting in place for the bath shot, I was limited to one light, one reflector, and natural sunlight for this image. The main light was a bit off to camera right to create some shadowing. The reflector was positioned as close as possible to camera left. As we worked on poses, I saw the catchlights in her eyes and fell in love with this image, which is sexual but not coarse or explicit. I shot a lot of these images at $f/16$, because I wanted to make sure everything was tack sharp.

With Kayden. One of the issues with nude photography is that you can't always use the images on places like Facebook or Google+. So Kayden (facing page) and I are always looking for image concepts that can go from nude to non-nude or back to nude and in a few seconds.





For these milk-bath images, I placed a strip softbox directly over the model. One light, one model—simple!

*1/160 second,
f/7.1, ISO 100,
16–35mm lens
at 35mm.*

her. I couldn't position it directly over her (water + electronics = bad idea), so it was a few feet away. However, since the tub and everything else in the room was white, there was plenty of reflected light.

The milk bath is just that. Kayden can submerge her body and be non-nude, or she can move her body above water and be nude.

Since this was shot in my home bathtub, so there wasn't a ton of room—which is why I used such a wide-angle lens. To shoot, I stood on the very edge of the bathtub, praying that I would not fall in. I mounted the main light as high as I could (10 feet in the air) and pointed it down at

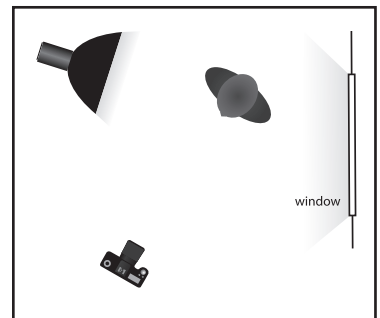


An Angelic Effect

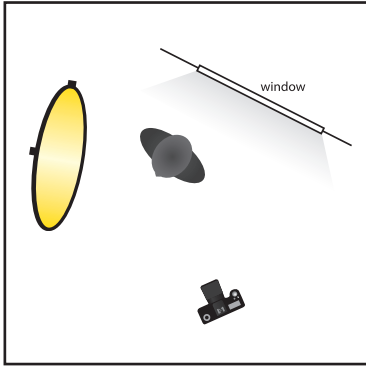
I met this model online. After we talked for a while, she decided she wanted to shoot some nude pinup-style art. During the session, she got up to change outfits and the sunlight hit her face. I wanted to capture that look. I always figured if I ever saw an angel, she would have glowing light around her—pretty much like this. Because I shot this as a RAW file, I could have used Camera Raw's Recovery slider to restore more of the highlights (see chapter 10 for more on this), but I preferred this blown-out look; to me, it adds to the angelic quality.

We had a strobe set up for the pin-up style shoot, so when she moved away from that bed setting to a position closer to the window, the light from the strobe fell off and allowed me to blow out the sunlight. Some adjustments were made to compensate.

I always figured if I ever saw an angel, she would have glowing light around her . . .



The blown-out highlights give this image a beautiful glow. *1/100 second, f/3.5, ISO 400, 70-200mm lens at 185mm.*



Window Light

This shot is something anyone can capture. As we were getting ready for a big shoot, I noticed the sunlight coming in through the window and I really wanted to shoot there. I asked the model to stop getting ready (at the time she was putting on her makeup and doing her hair). Then, I moved the chair so the light would hit mostly her back and arm. I had my wife Alice hold a huge gold reflector on the other side of the model for fill light. That's it! No clothes, no strobe or flash—just a chair, a model, and a reflector.

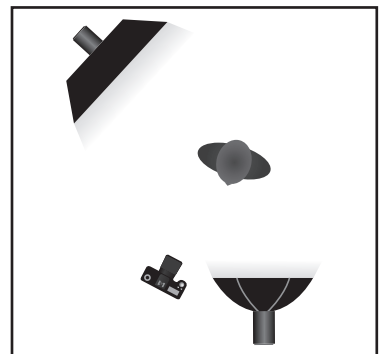
Spotting some great light led to this impromptu shot. $\frac{1}{125}$ second, $f/3.5$, ISO 400, 24–70mm lens at 46mm.





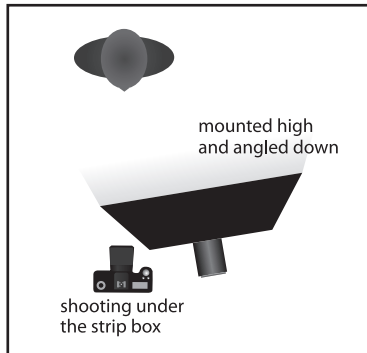
Fine Art in the Kitchen

With Kayden. The image above is one of my favorite shots of Kayden. I love the posing and the lighting. No fancy New York fashion studio was needed; I shot it on the kitchen counter in my house. I used two lights to create the look. The first light was a strip softbox with all of the diffusion material removed. This was placed about 10 feet behind and to the side of the model for harder accents on the side of her body. Notice how this light doesn't wrap around her body as much as the main light. Right in front of her, I added a medium octabox with all of the diffusion material in place, creating a gentle transition between the highlights and shadows. This is a great example of the type of art that can be created in a house. About half the time, I shoot with one light



As this image shows, you don't need a fancy studio to produce fine-art nude images. *1/200 second, f/8, ISO 125, 16-35mm lens at 27mm.*

Another shoot on my kitchen counter, with Aaliyah as my model. $\frac{1}{250}$ second, $f/13$, ISO 50, 16–35mm lens at 27mm.



and reflector; the rest of my home sessions are generally done with two lights and no reflector.

With Aaliyah. Working again in the kitchen, but this time with Aaliyah, I was able to create more great images, as seen below. This was one of those shoots where everything falls into place perfectly. I tried a few different types of lighting, adding and removing reflectors and fill lights. Still, most of the images I love were created with Aaliyah on the counter top and lit by one medium strip softbox. The light was placed as high as I could get it and pointed down at the model. (I have 10-foot ceilings in the house, and the light housing was touching the ceiling. The counter top is about 4 feet off the ground.) I was shooting almost directly at the model.

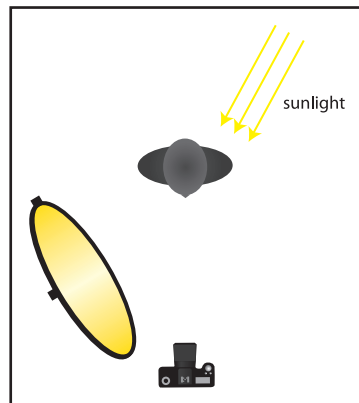




Gonzo Shooting

The next two images were both shot in semi-public locations, working gonzo style with just a reflector and my camera.

A Natural Setting. When I shoot nudes in semi-public locations, I love using a reflector. It's highly portable and easy to use, but it can also help cover up the model when she is nude or changing clothes. Also, there's no waiting around for your strobe or flash to charge. When shooting with a reflector and a model I



When shooting in semi-public locations, working quickly is critical. $\frac{1}{125}$ second, $f/4.5$, ISO 125, 70–200mm lens at 170mm.

have worked with a few times (one I know how to pose really quickly), we can get one- to two-hundred shots in under fifteen minutes. I work with her dressed, getting the lighting and metering set, then have her start undressing and watch for poses. When I see one I like, I have her stop and work in variations of that pose for a minute or so. This was one of those poses I noticed in the viewfinder and really liked.

When I shot the image to the left, the sun was starting to set. It was also passing in and out of the clouds, so the lighting was all over the place. As a result, the totally nude images were not as nice as this topless shot. Plus, the purple of the panties and the green from the trees add a bit of color and spark to the image.

By the Roadside. Kayden and I wanted to create a story about a sexy girl who has car troubles and can't hitch a ride—even as she keeps taking off her clothes (some other images from this shoot appeared in chapter 4).

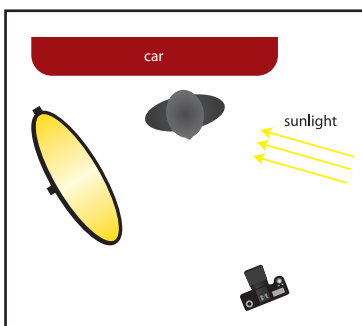
We found a little side street and started shooting, planning to have her get dressed if we saw a car coming. I was a bit nervous because we had six or seven people on the set, but it turned out to be a good thing, because we had lots of lookouts. This is important when shooting gonzo-style, nude images on a semi-public roadway.

Luckily, we didn't see a single car during the thirty minutes she was topless or nude.

We started simply with a reflector (held by my wife) and the model in the car, shooting as much as we could while she was still dressed. Once she started getting topless, we made sure the lookouts were in place and just went for it.

If you look carefully at the reflection on the car, you will see a person holding a reflector. This was an ongoing issue, so I had to work on posing Kayden away from the car or in different places that would allow me to crop out the unwanted reflections.

Once she started getting topless, we made sure the lookouts were in place and just went for it.



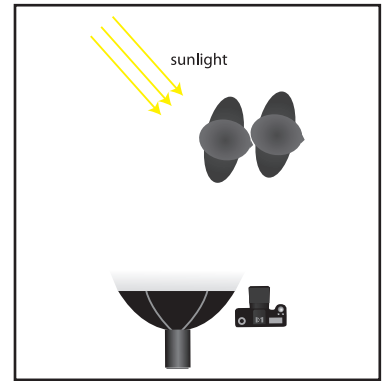
Having some extra people on hand to serve as lookouts was helpful for this shoot on a side road. $\frac{1}{500}$ second, $f/11$, ISO 400, 24–70mm lens at 32mm.



The Budget-Friendly Backyard

Working outside in my backyard is easy and I get great images. The best thing about working outside is that the clouds, plants, and trees all give your images a natural feel—but you still have all the benefits of the house (food, drink, power, rest room, extra gear). On location shoots for movies, they have a few full-size trucks packed with extra gear. I don't have that type of budget, so I often work out of my house on my back patio.

This image was shot with one main light that provided light from the front. The sun was almost directly overhead. The sun was a bit strong (notice how it's almost blown out on Kayden's back), but this intensity is what provided the nice detail in Re-anna's dark hair.

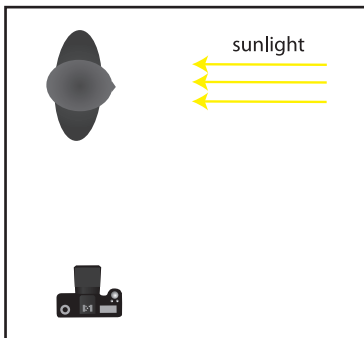


Backyard images can be great—and they're easy on the budget! $\frac{1}{250}$ second, f/9, ISO 50, 24–70mm lens at 60mm.





Nude-Erotica.com
© Robert Evans



This image was shot as I worked out some concepts for my Nude-Erotica project.

Learn and Grow

For my Nude-Erotica project, I decided that I wanted to photograph models with Kate-Moss looks in locations that Ansel Adams would have chosen. It took me a long time to figure that out, however, and I shot a lot of different ideas as I worked toward that final concept. This was one of the ideas.

I created this image with a local Las Vegas model, photographing her at one of the many outdoor locations in the area. We had planned on shooting in the red sand, but I also saw this nice background and the little flat area for the model—it just all worked.

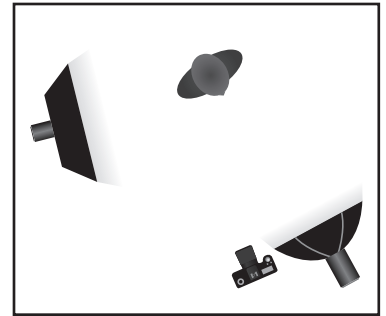
In chapter 8, we looked at approaches to critiquing your images. On that note, I wish I had added a bit more fill and gotten a better exposure in this image. There are times when I overexpose a bit on purpose, but this was not one of those times. The red rocks created some natural fill, but it was not quite enough to create the look I was hoping for.

A Bright Background

Living in Las Vegas, everything is neon lights and super-bright colors. This was just a wall that was painted yellow, but I fell in love with it immediately. The original idea for this shoot was to capture some images for an American Apparel contest. We had the model in a black bra and black panty-hose—and against the yellow, the two colors really screamed, “Look at me!” Those images are really good, but for some reason I have always preferred this one. Her pose is reminds me of a classical Greek statue; it’s timeless. The image was shot with one octabox to camera right and one small strip softbox to camera left.



This was just a wall that was painted yellow, but I fell in love with it immediately.



A bright background can make your image demand attention. *1/200 second, f/8, ISO 100, 24–70mm lens at 46mm.*

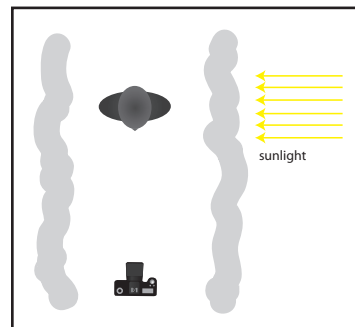


High Dynamic Range (HDR)

High dynamic range (HDR) photography has long been used to create landscape images with a broad dynamic range and bright colors. I started using HDR to create nude art several years ago—just to see what some of the pros and cons would be. The process involves combining two or more shots of the identical scene, each shot at a different exposure setting. While shooting two identical frames of something that doesn't move (like a landscape) is no problem, using the technique to photograph *people* creates a whole new set of problems.

This HDR image was shot in a canyon (in the same location where I shot the black &

white image on page 116. For this session, however, the sun was directly overhead and cast hard shadows on everything in the canyon. The rocks added some fill, but not enough—so I used an HDR process to capture more of the complete tonal range of the actual scene.



Using HDR let me capture all the detail in this high-contrast scene.
*1/500 second,
f/11, ISO 400,
24–70mm lens
at 32mm.*

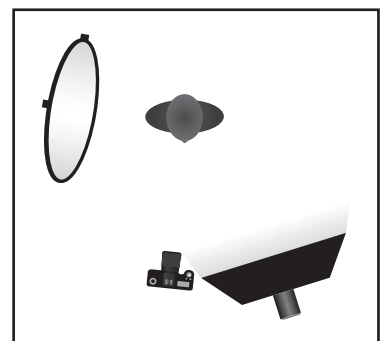
New Gear

Once in a while, friends or companies will give me cool camera gear to test. In this case, I was given the chance to use a few Zeiss lenses that were designed to fit a Nikon camera, so I had to get an adapter to make them fit the Canon system. (Today, Zeiss makes lenses that will directly fit the Canon mount.)

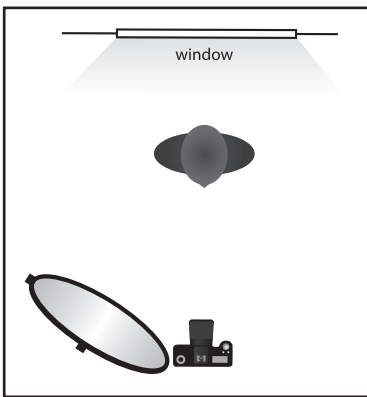
Because I was using a cross-brand adapter, I had to manually meter each shot (which I do most of the time anyway), manually focus, then stop down my aperture to something like f/8, and start shooting. When the lens is closed down to f/8, it is really hard to see the model when using strobes. There is not a lot of light coming in the viewfinder, so you have to basically look at the model and shoot what you see in front of you, rather than relying on the viewfinder.

The setup for this image was simple. I placed one strip softbox close to the model, then added a reflector behind her.

I placed one strip softbox close to the model, then added a reflector behind her.



A strip box and reflector were used to light this model as I tested a new lens from Zeiss.



Sometimes, trendy looks (like lens flare) can be used to great effect. $\frac{1}{80}$ second, $f/3.2$, ISO 800, 24–70mm lens at 62mm.

I want my work to stand the test of time, not just be popular for a few years . . .



Lens Flare (A Trendy Look)

I want my work to stand the test of time, not just be popular for a few years and then die off, so I try not to chase trends in most of my images. Right now, many images are shot with lens flare (or have flare added in postproduction). I shot this with natural flare to partially obscure the model in a glow that adds a bit of mystery to the image. I also shot it at ISO 800; on the camera I was shooting with at the time, this was where the look of grain just started to kick in and the dynamic range started to compress some (the shadows start going solid black and the highlights blow out more easily). To my eye, this gives it more of a modern look.

10. Postproduction

When I was a kid learning photography, my dad owned a photo lab and let me come to work with him in the summers. That's where I learned how to manually process black & white and color film. I also learned how important the

Getting it right in the camera is critical; postproduction should be a time for refinements, not rescuing images from technical errors.



post-shoot processing of an image is to its success—something that, at the time, many photographers overlooked.

Pros and Cons

In our current state of technology, photographers are required to learn more, do more, and be more than ever before. It's no longer enough to take great pictures and drop the film off at the lab—that would be too easy. Today, we have to offer extensive, high-quality retouching and production, plus different output for galleries, commercial print clients, and web-based outlets. We are being pulled in so many directions that it is easy to get lost. While it all expands our knowledge of the industry, I honestly feel it isn't the best for us. Think of it this way: a CEO understands his *whole* business—but while he knows the value and importance of each job, that doesn't mean he will personally *do* each job. He entrusts those tasks to other professionals. As a photographer, trying to do *everything* can turn you into a Jack-of-all-trades . . . and, in many cases, a master of none. I believe photographers should master one thing: photography. We should try to do that one thing better than anyone else. If you are going to do something, I think you should do it as well and as close to perfection as you possibly can. So, while I am going to cover basic postproduction techniques,

I urge you to remember that there are a ton of great professional retouchers and postproduction experts out there. If it makes sense to do so, consider being more like the CEO and outsourcing some tasks.

Software

Adobe Photoshop. Adobe Photoshop is the industry-standard software for photographers—and for good reason. It is the flagship of the Adobe line and has changed photography. Photoshop also happens to be expensive; a single-user license will currently set you back \$699. For most people, that’s a lot of money. Adobe also upgrades Photoshop at about 18-month intervals, and you’ll have to pay those upgrade costs each time if you want to keep your software up to date.

Fortunately, there are some new options. Recently, Adobe has introduced month-to-month and annual rental plans that will fit into most budgets. The current month-to-month cost for Adobe Photoshop is \$29.99, with no long-term commitment (you can cancel anytime). At about \$7 per week, this is a very cost-effective way to pay for Photoshop. You’ll can also opt to pay \$240 up front for a year-long rental. This will save you \$120 over the course of the year (compared to the month-by-month rental price).

If this is still more than you want to invest in postproduction software, consider looking into non-Adobe options.

Canon and Nikon Camera Software. If you shoot with a Canon or Nikon camera, your camera probably came with image-editing software. Photographers often overlook this software—and, frankly, in the past it wasn’t very good. In recent years, though, the Canon and Nikon postproduction software has improved dramati-

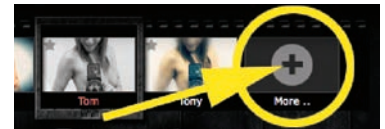
Free From Adobe

Adobe has a site (www.labs.adobe.com) where you can download time-limited developer/test versions of their software for free. This is often a great place to get software to use for a few months and learn about it for free.

cally. It still doesn’t have all the features that Photoshop has, but it can do about 80 percent of what Photoshop can do—and can do it for free.

Online Software (Free or Cheap). Once you have a clean JPEG image, there are lots of free, online resources to make it more eye-catching. When using online services in processing your nude photography, be aware that some sites may find it objectionable. Recently, I was testing a new web-hosting company—and out of the clear blue sky they deleted my test layout. I e-mailed them to ask why and was told that the images were considered unsuitable for their “family-safe workplace.” These were *not* nude images (just models in bras and panties), but their policy excluded anything past PG-13. Every company has a different policy, and it can take a while to figure out which ones are “adult friendly.”

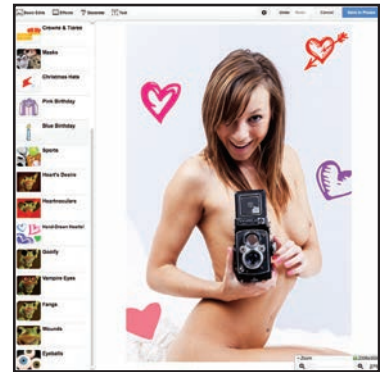
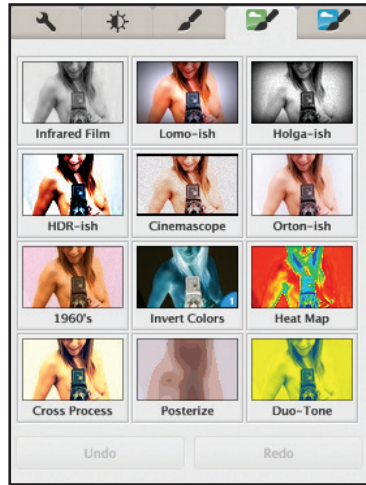
Pixlr.com. Pixlr.com allows you to add effects to your images, working via their web site or apps for the Google Chrome browser, iPhone, or Android. I am not a big fan of making your images look all crazy, but out of all the stylizing programs, I think that Pixlr is the best one. It is easy to use, it is fast, and it can create great-looking images. Best of all, it’s free. (When it comes to styling, keep in mind that looks are seasonal; what is cool or trendy now will be old and outdated soon. I prefer to keep my images as simple



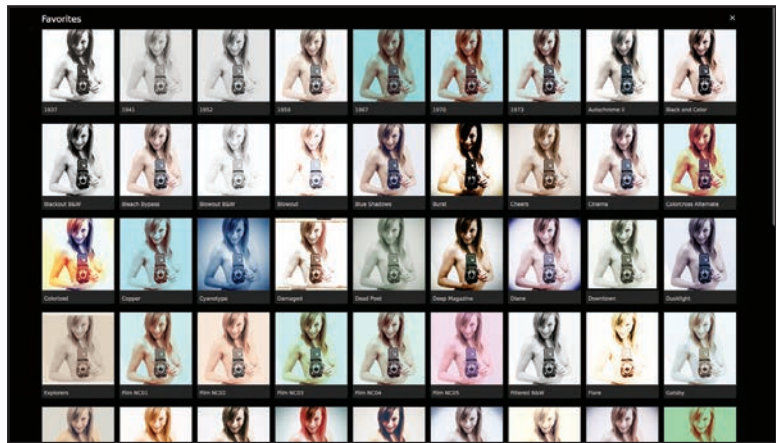
as possible, but some models really like stylized images, so it's an important service to offer.) Of the three editors they offer, Pixlr-o-matic is my favorite.

Picasa.Google.com. Picasa offers a web interface and a desktop application that you can run on Mac OS X or Microsoft Windows computers. This is nice if you don't have Photoshop—or don't have it installed on every computer you use. For example, I use Picasa on my laptop because I don't do much heavy editing on that machine. Both the desktop and the web versions of Picasa can

Working with Pixlr, it's a snap (and free!) to add some good-looking effects to your images.



To do some basic image editing, Picasa is a good option. It also provides some stylizing options.



Camera Bag is inexpensive, but so efficient and easy to use that we rely on it for many day-to-day processing tasks.



do basic edits like cropping and color correction. Picasa also has some stylizing effects you can try.

Camera Bag. Camera Bag (<http://nevercenter.com/camera-bag/desktop/>) is a stand-alone program that just does effects, but there are a couple of reasons I love it. First, Camera Bag works on either a Mac or a PC. I work on a Mac and my wife works on a PC, so having a cross-platform program is important to us. Second, it runs locally, so I can batch-process a large number of images at one time. (Pixlr, in contrast, is great for one or two images—but if you have fifty images, it is almost impossible to upload,

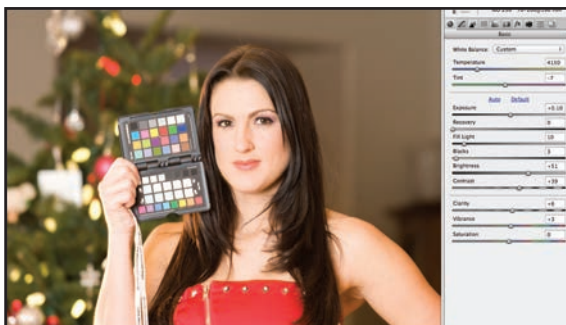
process, and download them all.) Camera Bag also processes images faster than any other program I have tested and works with really large files (I have tested 18MP images and it worked just fine). This is an area where many other editors fall short. It is also a really simple program to work with. There are a couple of YouTube videos that show you how to work the program, and that's all you need—no *War and Peace*-sized instruction manual. The controls in the program feel natural and simple. Best of all, you get all this for the very fair price of \$29.

Photoshop Operations

As noted, Adobe Photoshop is the industry standard for postproduction. So, when it comes to discussing techniques, it's the closest thing we have to a common denominator. If you choose to use an image-editing program other than Photoshop, you will probably be able to do many of the same operations, but they might have different names. I don't want to dwell on postproduction too much, but the following are the most common things I do in postproduction using Photoshop.

Adjustments in Camera Raw. Camera Raw is the program within Photoshop that converts your RAW images into JPG or DNG images that

Adjusting the temperature and tint according to the color checker.



The Fill Light slider helps restore detail in the shadow areas.

can be shared and edited. While you can make an astounding number of adjustments in Camera Raw, don't be fooled into thinking it can make up for shooting poor-quality files to begin with. (As the saying goes, "Garbage in, garbage out.") The main settings I usually nudge are as follows.

Temperature and Tint. I use a Whi-Bal or X-Rite Passport Color Checker to make sure my colors start off perfect. Occasionally I will warm up the images, but normally I do that after I am done processing the RAW files.

Exposure. If you're careful with your exposures, you shouldn't need to adjust this setting by more than a small fraction of a stop. It's important to learn how to nail the exposure in-camera, but sometimes lights change, models move, and life happens, so it's good to have this tool at your disposal.

Fill Light. A very common problem I see is the lack of proper fill light levels, resulting in blacks and dark browns with no detail. With insufficient

fill, a dark-haired model can look like she's wearing a large, dark blob on her head. With proper lighting and post-processing, the hair should retain detail or highlights; it should look shiny and movable. In Camera Raw, the Fill Light setting lightens the darkest areas of your images, helping to restore any lost detail.

Recovery. The Recovery slider is something I use less frequently, but it allows you (to some degree) to recover lost detail in the highlights. With high-contrast images (like those shot outside or in window light with no fill), this can help recover details in the brightest areas of the image.

Blacks. The Blacks setting adjusts the point at which more black is added to the shadows. This reduces detail but increases contrast. I try to keep the Black slider between 0 and 5, then set Fill Light slider at two to three times the amount of black (so, between 1 and 15).

Clarity. The Clarity slider works well to boost the local and midtone contrast in one operation. The Contrast slider, on the other hand, works best on overall contrast. I know it sounds complex, but if I need to increase the contrast of an image, I will go to the Clarity slider first.

Vibrance. What the heck is the difference between the Vibrance and Saturation sliders? The Saturation slider changes everything blindly—all the tones get shinier and more intense. Unfortunately, this means the tones that were already bright and saturated can get *too* shiny and lose detail. The Vibrance slider, on the other hand, adjusts the lower-saturation tones in the image first. This can give any muddy areas some pop without affecting the brighter areas of an image that are already perfect. Also, the Vibrance adjustment is designed to protect the skin tones from excessive saturation increases. An excessive

Conversion to Black & White

Photographers often ask me why don't I shoot in black & white from the camera or convert the image to black & white in Camera Raw. The answer is there are better ways to make an image black & white. I feel it is always better to capture as much data as possible (by shooting RAW files) and then process the images to black & white after exporting them from Camera Raw to Photoshop.

boost in the skin-tone saturation will make them look orange (like an Oompa Loompa from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*).

Other Common Adjustments. Some of the other important settings are Tone Curve, Sharpening, Lens Correction, Camera Calibration, and Presets/Snapshots. These operations are covered in Photoshop books or you can learn them easily by playing with the settings.

Puppet Warp/Liquify. No one—not even models—likes everything about their body, and the appearance of the body can change dramatically (for the better or worse) when shooting at different angles and in different poses. There are two tools in Photoshop that can make all the difference in the world.

I use the Puppet Warp tool in Photoshop to move large areas of the body (the arms, legs, chin) as well as to pull in the model's stomach (when she didn't suck her breath in all the way). When you use Puppet Warp you lock down control points that will remain in place and add control points that will move, allowing you to implement the needed adjustments. Simple.

The Liquify filter, which lets you manually push and pull (or expand and contract) discrete

areas of the image, is best reserved for adjustments to smaller areas. I use the Liquify filter to enlarge the hair, eyes, and lips; to enlarge or reduce the breasts (or areolae); to slim the waist; to tuck in the chin area (removing any hint of a double chin); and to reshape the body in general. (I've listed these from most-common to least-common operations.)

I *do not*, however, tell the model, “Hey, I’m going to make your hair, eyes, lips, and breasts bigger—and take 10 pounds of fat off you!” The model would freak out! Instead, I create the image I think looks the best, then send it to the model. I have never had even one model tell me, “Oh my God—my lips (eyes, hair, breasts) are too big!” Never once.

Even if you are good at Liquify, there is no need to do it all the time. However, for images that are going to be displayed publicly or require your best production value, you should spend some time and make them perfect. Whether your subject is a professional model or an everyday housewife, a bit of Liquify will make the image look a million times better. Just remember not to go overboard.

Spot Healing Brush. The next tool I use is the Spot Healing Brush, which makes it easy to remove tattoos, moles, and other small imperfections. Using it, you can easily remove crow’s feet, stretch marks, and smile lines (deep nasal-labial lines). Again, try

I create the image I think looks the best, then send it to the model.

Before (left) and after (right) with Puppet Warp. The subtle slimming gives the model a better look.





Using the Liquify tool, I slightly slimmed the stomach area and enhanced the model's breasts. I also boosted the volume of her hair, lifted her bottom, and slimmed her right thigh.



Marks on the skin are easy to remove with the Spot Healing Brush.

not to overdo it; you are aiming for a natural look. Every photographer should know how to use this tool.

Actions. Actions are the unsung heroes of Photoshop—even in Photoshop books it is hard to find good information about them,

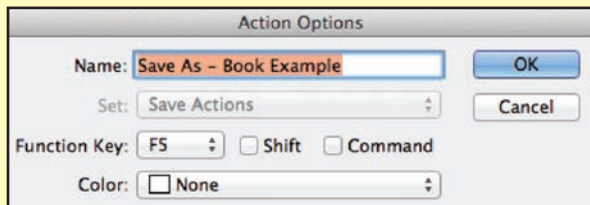
yet I use them all the time. Actions let you automate many of the repetitive tasks you already do in Photoshop so you can do these operations automatically.

Let me give you a great example. When I complete work on an image, I always need to flatten it and convert it to the desired color space. I also

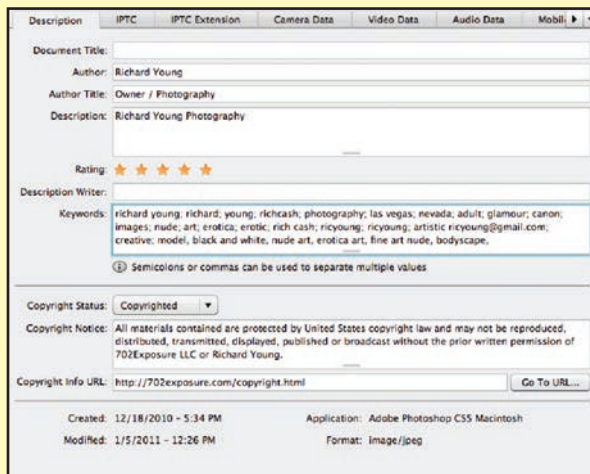
like to add my contact information to the EXIF data (the automatically recorded info the camera attaches to each file, telling how and when it was shot). To do those three steps in a flash, I created an action and assigned it a hot key (a one-key shortcut to trigger it). Now, all I have to do is push f/5 and—boom!—the file is flattened, converted to the correct color space, amended with my contact information and saved. All with just one keystroke!

Create an Action

To create an action, open an image file. Then, go to View>Actions. From the top-right of the palette, select “New Action.” In the pop-up window, name it and (if you wish) assign it a function key. Then, hit Record. From this point, Photoshop will record what you do. Let’s create an action that will add information to the EXIF data, then save and close the file. First, go to File>File Information and add whatever information you like. When you’re done, hit OK. To finish, go to File>Save and then File>Close. At this, hit the stop button (the black square) at the bottom of the Actions menu. Now, you can run this action at any time simply by hitting the function key you assigned! It’s a way to work smarter, not harder.



Naming the action and assigning a function key.



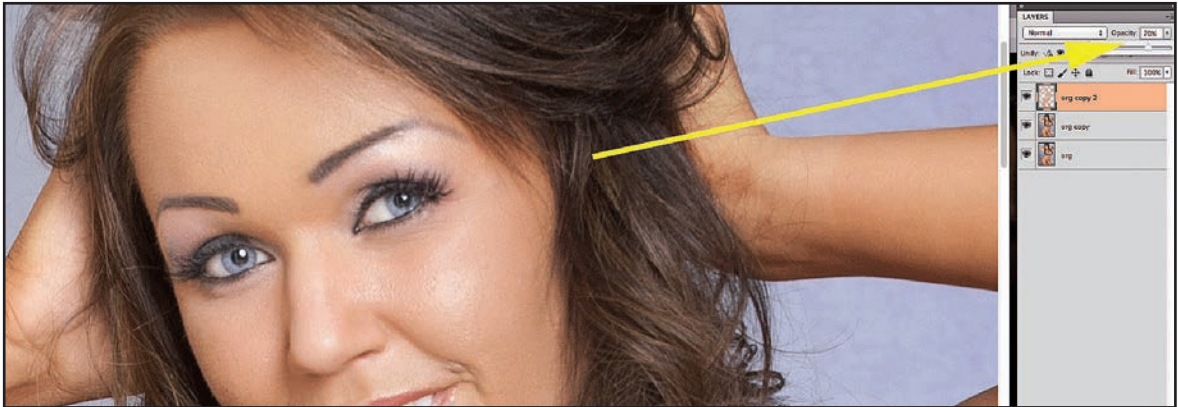
Recording additions to the EXIF data.

Filters and Plug-Ins. I have a love/hate relationship with filters. I would be lost without some of the filters I use daily in Photoshop. However, sometimes filters can make things more complex, expensive, and time-consuming. Therefore, I’m only going to cover the products I use the most.

Imagenomic: Portraiture. The first few times I used Portraiture, I have to confess: I hated it. It made everything look fake, plastic, and unreal. After some research and practice, however, I’ve found that I can easily fade the effect to get a more realistic look. I simply have the filter generate a new layer, then reduce that layer’s opacity. It works like a dream and makes the skin look amazing.

Imagenomic provides a free trial of this software. If you choose to buy it, the cost is \$199.95. The manufacturer also offers great training videos to help you learn to use the software. Additionally, you have access to some downloadable actions.

Alien Skin: Exposure. In my opinion, digital images straight out of the camera lack something that makes them look real. My parents owned a photo lab, so I grew up with film and remember going every week to drop off my film and then pick up my slides or prints. I want my digital images to have the same feel and look as those



Processing an image with Imagenomic's Portraiture filter.



From the original image (left), Alien Skin's Exposure filter helped me get the color right where I wanted it (center). Adding some softening with Imagenomic's Portraiture filter completed the image (right).

images I remember as a kid. Today's digital files may have the "correct" and "mathematically perfect" color balance, but that doesn't mean it's the most pleasing *looking* color in the world. This is where Alien Skin comes in: I use it to mimic the look of film—in my case, Kodachrome film and black & white film.

I also use Alien Skin to convert from color (top right) to black & white (bottom right). Again, Imagenomic's Portraiture filter was used to complete the image (below).



11. Making Money

Making some money with your erotic photography can give you the budget you need to do a little more on each shoot. I thank God every day that I am fortunate enough to do what I love and make a living at it. However, starting to earn an income with your photography can be challenging. I am frequently approached by photographers who say, “I have photographed this girl and we would both like to make some money—but she doesn’t want to do porn.” What’s the answer?

Getting Hired to Photograph Nudes

Getting hired to create fine-art nude images for an individual (or by a non-adult company) is next to impossible. People who want fine-art nudes often have a hard time going from *wanting* nude images to *hiring* someone to create them. Often, they will ask a friend and get less-than-perfect results. Luckily, I have carved out a niche market of wealthy socialites who want very high-end, fine-art nude bodyscapes or similar images. Since I have shot so many of these, my name gets passed around by word of mouth and I get hired that way. For me (and other photographers I talk to) word of mouth works. Getting hired to photograph nude images via Model-Mayhem, Facebook, Google+, or other sites just doesn’t seem to happen.

Selling Your Work

Print Sales. Selling nude photographic prints is harder than selling prints in most other areas of photography. Few people or companies want to hang fine-art nudes on their walls. It is becoming more common, but it’s still pretty rare. I’m not saying it can’t be done, of course—I sell a good amount of work as 30x40-inch prints—but it has only been in the last five years or so

If a model is nervous about shooting nude, look for concepts that will allow you to shoot inventive nude images that are not overly sexual.





I have carved out a niche among clients who want fine-art nude images.

Get Inspired

Coming up with new shooting ideas can be difficult. A few years ago, I discovered Zivity's contest site (www.zivity.com/prize). The contest ideas are designed mostly by fans and artists—and some of them are really great. The concepts give me and my models something interesting to create. (And you don't have to enter the contest to shoot some images based on the concept presented.)

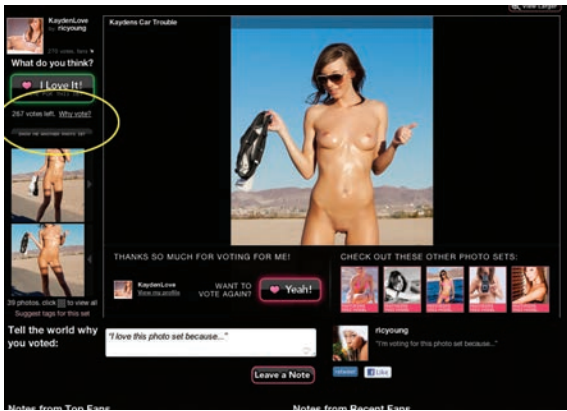
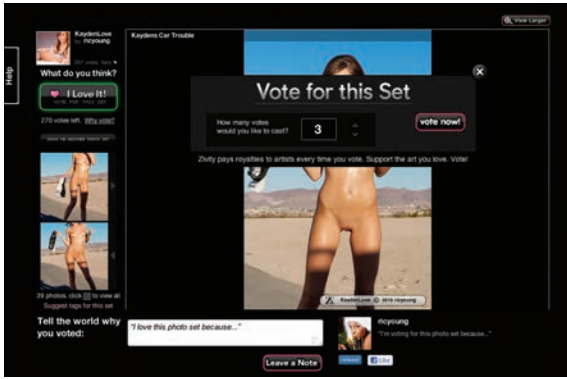
that print sales contributed any real percentage to my income.

Adult Image Sites. Another possible way to make money is to submit images to adult sites. While not all adult sites have porn, or even want nudity, there are a lot of sites that want artistic nude images. The only problem with this is that you will often lose all your rights to the images. If shooting for adult sites is something you think you can do, e-mail the site, submit some samples of your work, and see what they think. Some companies are willing to front half of the money for a shoot (so you can hire a model) then pay the balance when the images are uploaded.

Zivity. If you are a strong photographer, you can likely make some money on Zivity.com (which allows creative nude photography but not pornographic images). Zivity subscribers get a handful of votes, each worth a dollar, then vote on photo sets they like. The photographer and model each get a share of the dollar the vote is worth. In theory, this is a great idea—however, viewers don't have to pay to play. Often, people just look at your content without voting, so your hard work doesn't get rewarded.

Another issue with Zivity is that you can't control the payout. Often, I work out different deals with different models, depending on the project and its cost to everyone. The Zivity payout model was originally set up so the photographer would only get 20 percent of each vote and the model would get 60 percent (the rest went to Zivity itself). Recently, they have changed the payout so photographer gets 30 percent and the model gets 55 percent (again, the remainder goes to Zivity).

The sad reality, though, is that the bulk of photographers and models only make a few dollars—a hundred at best. Zivity has turned out



Voting for an image set on Zivity.

to be more of a social network than a real way to make money. My current average for Zivity is 34 votes (netting me roughly \$10) per set. My highest set earned 857 votes and my lowest received none!

Diverxity. What if there was a more modern and fair way to share the wealth? Well, that is what the folks at Diverxity.com set out to create in 2011. They have figured out how to more fairly distribute the earnings from photography and other forms of adult entertainment. Diverxity created a really cool payout model, which is awesome (despite its being a bit more complex). The money coming in from Diverxity subscribers is distributed in the following way: 67 percent of the money goes to the content creators

(like you), 8 percent goes to whoever referred the subscriber, and 25 percent goes to Diverxity. The amount paid to the content folks is based on the time subscribers spent looking at your content, how they rated it, and whom the subscriber “follows” (their favorite models or photographers). This hybrid system promises to share the wealth fairly with everyone who works hard to create content.

Additionally, you can control the earnings split with your models. If I agree to pay a model 70 percent of our earnings, then I am free to do so. If we agree she gets 30 percent, so be it. I am all for more freedom and transparency in publishing my art and getting income from it! (Oh, and even folks who don’t create content can make money by referring their friends.)

Get Your Work Out There

If you have talked to your models and confirmed that it’s okay to show off the work you created with them, where can you put it? If it is nude, then Facebook and Google+ aren’t going to allow you to place it on there. Some places to show off single images (or small groups of images) are:

- Flickr.com** You can get a free account.
- 500px.com** You can get a free account.
- Tumblr.com** You can set up a basic blog at no charge.
- Twitter.com** With a free account, you can blast your nudes to the world.

12. Saving Money

There are a ton of ways to save money and shoot better. Some can be very useful; others are hardly ever called for. I am going to try to cover just a few that have helped me over and over again when photographing nude models. These are things I use, but there are usually simi-

Great backgrounds can often be found—at no cost—in your own backyard.



lar products available (I use the Amazon Price Check App, for example, but there are other apps that do the same thing—I just happen to like and use the Amazon one). None of these companies pay me, and I don't own stock in any of them. I am just a normal customer and think they should be supported.

Use Bounce Light

Who needs fancy softboxes? If you have neutral-colored walls, you can bounce two lights (in standard reflectors) off the corners of the wall. This is a cheap way to get a nice, soft light source. While I was saving up for a larger softbox, this is exactly what I did. Even now that I own a large softbox, I still turn to this type of lighting as a quick and easy way to light a model. I even tend to choose bounce light over umbrellas because I prefer the look it produces.

When you're shooting in a smaller room, you may not even have room for a softbox. In this case, bouncing two lights into the corner or even off part of the back wall will give you a large light source (the whole wall).

Keep in mind that the light will pick up any color you have on the walls, so you should plan on photographing a white/gray card in your set before you start shooting. This gives you a good point of reference to adjust your RAW files in postproduction, ensuring you'll get great color.

Use Cheap Gray Cards

White paper, my old gray card from the 1960s—they all work. Don't get me wrong, I love professional white balancing tools, but they are expensive. The Whi-Bal is priced around \$30, and the Passport ColorChecker is around \$100. As a one-time investment, this isn't a huge cost—but I have also lost a few of these on location shoots. On those occasions, I balanced to some plain white printer paper and it worked out fine. Between a professional white balance tool and a plain sheet of paper, there is only small white balance discrepancy—and most monitors are off by more than that, anyway.

Dropcanvas

Imagine you shoot five-hundred 15MP images of a model. Even if you edit down to a hundred shots, you're still going to have too much data to share via e-mail. Dropcanvas.com is a file-sharing site that can solve that problem, helping you get images to your models without having to purchase or maintain your own server.

One of the main reasons I like Dropcanvas is because it's clean and easy to use. There is no password protection and no hassle. You simply upload the images, get a link to send to the model, and let her download the files. Of course, anyone else who has the link can also download the images, so I don't keep images on Dropcanvas for more than a few days.

Canon Loyalty Program

If you own a Canon camera, you can upgrade to a new Canon camera and get a 20 percent (or more) discount. You can get refurbished cameras for even less.

The company offers this to the owners of any Canon camera, so I tracked down a Canon Owl



You don't have to go broke to create compelling images.

point-and-shoot camera (a film model) at a local thrift store for \$1. I bought it and called Canon. They asked me what type camera I wanted, and I told them a 7D, which they had in stock. Then, they asked me about my old camera. I told them it was a Canon point-and-shoot and provided them with the serial number. Everything was good! They asked for my credit-card information and in a few days I had my Canon 7D.

The retail price of the camera I purchased is \$1699.00. Refurbished, it was \$1,359.00. With the Canon Loyalty Program, however, I paid

just \$1,087.20. So for a \$1 investment, I saved between \$270 and \$600 dollars (depending on how you look at it). Plus, I ordered the camera directly from Canon.

These discounts are good for DSLRs, point-and-shoot cameras, video cameras, lenses, printers, and much more. You can reach Canon at 1 (866) 443-8002. I would highly recommend this to people looking to buy their first DSLR or when making a substantial upgrade. You can pick up some good cameras for *killer* prices.

Cheap Camera Batteries

For most things, I recommend buying from the manufacturer; they know how to make it better. Batteries are no different; when I buy batteries from the manufacturer, they are generally better and last longer—but they are *so much more expensive*, that they're not worth it.

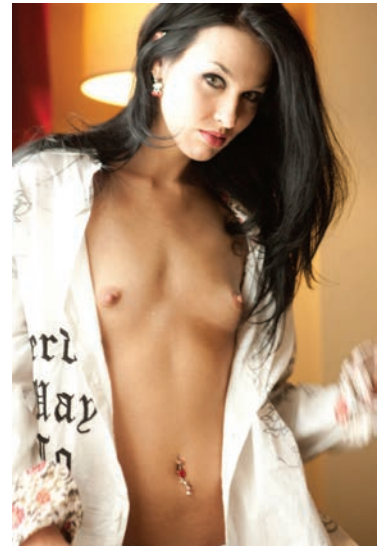
For the Canon 7D, a new Canon battery costs \$100 directly from Canon—and I can find it a bit cheaper (around \$70) on the Internet. A cheap knock-off battery for the same camera costs \$33, meaning I can buy two to three off-brand batteries for the cost of just one real Canon battery. Is the real Canon battery better? Yes. Is it two to three times better? No.

The more expensive the camera, the worse it gets. For the Canon 1D, a new battery from Canon is \$170, but I can find a good knock-off battery for \$35—and really cheap version for \$15. At that price, I can buy *five* knock-off batteries for the cost of *one* Canon battery.

From my testing, the knock-off batteries are 80 to 90 percent as good as the real Canon ones. I have bought cheap knock-off batteries for all my DSLRs, point-and-shoots, video cameras, and my flashes. They work great and they are *a lot* cheaper.

Sun Shades as Reflectors

Reflectors aren't the most expensive tools, but they are among the most handy—and, hey, money is money! To save quite a few bucks, head down to your local auto store and buy a sun shade. These are priced at \$5 most places. If the shade alone isn't rigid enough, duct tape it to a piece of cardboard or foam-core board. Now you have a reflector! You can use a push pin to attach it to a wall or have a friend hold it. Either way, it will work great.



Using window light is a great money-saving approach—just add a reflector for fill.

From my testing, the knock-off batteries are 80 to 90 percent as good as the real Canon ones.

Trade Shows/Demo Days

Although trade shows usually limit attendance to professionals in the field, many now like to boost their attendance numbers by offering a day that is open to the public (usually at the end of the show). You can get free tickets and see all the exhibitors. This is a great way to learn about what's new and play with some different types of gear. Trade shows are also another good place to save money. On the last day of the trade show, exhibitors sometimes sell their show samples at a substantial discount.

Read Reviews

Amazon.com is a killer place to find reviews by actual users of the products. A really neat feature is that Amazon allows you to search the comments. Recently, I was looking for lighter tripod and was unsure what make or model to buy. After looking around on Amazon, I found one with over three-hundred reviews and a four-star rating. Best of all, it was much cheaper than I expected. I'm happy to report that the tripod works great. For me, reading reviews isn't only about seeing if *that* product is great; I also like that it can point me toward related products—brands, models, and devices I'd never thought of using.

Dpreview.com is another site that I go to for reviews and news. I have a hard time trusting most review sites (they pay their bills by selling ads for the companies they review, after all). However, Dpreview does a good job of giving you all the nerdy stuff you want to know about a new camera or lens—plus some real-life examples. They also have a photography news area, which I like to check weekly to learn about new technologies.

Amazon Price Check App

I hate to continue evangelizing for Amazon, but I honestly use this product all the time. Basically, it's a sweet little app (for Android and iPhone) that lets you scan a bar code and search for the product online to see if it's cheaper.

If I'm buying a product for more than \$100, I'll always scan it to see if I can get it for less—or if the store I'm at will match the online price. Many stores would rather do this than lose the sale. For example, I recently bought a hard drive from Fry's Electronics. The one on the shelf was just under \$180—but with a click and scan, I saw that Amazon had it for \$139. Fry's matched the price, so I saved myself \$40 for one minute of my time.

The stores that offer price matching change all the time, but many major retailers do offer the service. As of this writing, these include: Fry's Electronics, Sears (and sometimes they will give you 10 percent more than the matched price), Staples, Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, and Nordstroms' (for model clothes).

Use Coupons

When you're buying online, do a Google search for coupon codes (for the product or the vendor) before you check out. Often, these coupons will take a few minutes to find, but the savings

Photodough

We have all heard of Groupon, Woot, and other online sites that offer one special deal each day. Wouldn't it be great if there was a site just like that for photography? Your wish has been granted: check out www.photodough.com.



All your hard work can come to nothing if you fail to back up your image files.

can be substantial—from free shipping, to percentage discounts, to dollars-off deals, to free months of subscription-based services.

I recently searched for Backblaze coupons (an online backup service we'll cover in the next section). I started with a Google search for Backblaze Coupon and got 188,000 results. Refining my search to Backblaze Coupon Code narrowed the results down to 8,410. The results were much better when I added quotes, telling Google I wanted to find all of those words together. A Google search for "Backblaze Coupon" yielded 1,380—and the first ten of them were recent posts containing coupon codes. In this case, the best one gave me 10 percent off, which is not a huge savings—but it all helps.

Back Up with Backblaze

Remember your mom telling you to wear clean underwear because you never know what might happen? I am here to second that: you never can tell what will happen, so remember to *back*

up, back up, back up. Back up all of the information on your computer. Back up all of your images (both RAW and processed). I can't stress enough how important this is. I have often had a model contact me years later, looking for pictures I created of her—images she can't find or lost when her computer crashed. As a photographer, it's your job to keep the images, safe, secure, and accessible. All of the pre-planning, shooting, working with the model, processing images, and retouching—all of your hard work can be flushed right down the toilet when you fail to back up your images.

I understand the current problems with backing up anything on your computer—I really do. It costs money and it takes time. The more you have to back up, the more time and money is involved. Backblaze has changed all of that.

Why do I love Backblaze? Unlimited backups (I currently have 19TB of data with them) cost just \$5 per month! It's that simple. There are no long-term contracts, and there's no complex

I think a \$5 monthly investment in your peace of mind is worth every penny.

In addition to your own time spent practicing, there are countless free learning tools available to help you master your craft.



software. Just sign up for a month-to-month plan, install their amazing software, and Backblaze starts to upload all of your pictures and videos to their servers. You can save even more if you buy a year at a time—but I think a \$5 monthly investment in your peace of mind is worth every penny. I used to be a computer engineer, so I have done all of my homework and trust that Backblaze is 100 percent safe. The employees can't even *see* your files, so they never know what you're uploading to their server. (*Note:* Backblaze will *not* back up your software or applications, but this is not a problem if you have licensed software.)

Once I have shot, processed, and edited my images, I organize all the files (RAW, edited, re-sized, etc.) in a folder that I copy to an external hard drive. I then burn the images to a BluRay disc. Finally, everything uploads to Backblaze. (*Note:* Backblaze supports backups from external USB drives, something many other companies don't offer.) This gives me at least three copies of every file I work on.

In my opinion, this is one the best deals on the Internet. You just can't go wrong with Backblaze.

Free Photography Magazines

I have never paid for a photography magazine subscription, yet each month I get more magazines than I have time to read. The more readers a magazine has, the more they can charge their advertisers—so they want you to read them. If you spend fifteen minutes on Google looking around for free photography magazines, you will come up with a huge list of companies that want to send you stuff.

Canon Digital Learning Center

Canon has really stepped up to the plate with their free video and training content (www.learn.usa.canon.com). They feature Canon gear, but a lot of the techniques will work with any camera. You can use these resources to learn about many different subjects—using flashes, shooting weddings, lighting, camera operation, and so much more. There are new videos all the time and even cheat-sheets with information on how to use your camera. It is a great site for photographers of all skill levels (even if you're using a Nikon).

Nikon Learn & Explore

Nikon also has a great site about learning photography and getting to know your camera better. They don't have as many videos as the Canon web site, but they do have more detailed information on how something was shot, which I really like. Some pages feature a group of five to ten pictures accompanied by text telling you how the images were created and offering some tips. It is a great tool for learning new techniques.

iTunes

Podcasts. If you have iTunes, you have access to a ton of free educational podcasts and videos. I often listen to these as I'm retouching images. In the iTunes store, try searching for "learning photography." In the search results, click "see all" under the Podcasts section. This will give you a long list of some great (and some not-so great) instructional podcasts. Most of them are free, so I just watch them and learn. If I like what I hear/see, then I

I often listen to these as I'm retouching images.

Find a concept that inspires you—then run with it. Who could fail to get excited about this incredible body painting?



can subscribe. Some of my favorite podcasts are as follows:

Adobe Creative Suite Videos Podcast. This is a selection of educational videos from Adobe.

The Art of Photography. Each show covers a different photography subject. Most of them are only ten to twenty minutes long, so you can watch them while you are in between projects.

American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP). ASMP has two podcasts. While neither has been updated in a while, they are still really valuable and educational. Check out the “Copyright Symposium” and “Strictly Business.”

The Grid. Digital-imaging guru Scott Kelby and his team started this podcast. Because it’s sponsored by a variety of companies, you’ll have to sit through some ads—but once you get in to the meat of the material, they are great. The podcasts are updated weekly and generally run about an hour long. I suggest watching them in the morning with nice cup of coffee. Just sit back and learn.

Thoughts on Photography. This isn’t really an educational podcast, it’s more of a talk-radio style interview show—like NPR meets photography. It’s updated about once a month, and the episodes range anywhere from five minutes to an hour long. I enjoy this show because I can listen to it while I’m doing other things. Plus, it is great to hear stories from other photographers.

Fabian Pulido PHOTOGRAPHER. His videos don’t have any words or talking that I have seen, however he does show you (in Photoshop) how to retouch lingerie images. There are also behind-the-scenes videos of nude shoots. Watching these, you can easily see how he sets up his lights and uses reflectors.

iTunes U. In addition to the podcast listings, be sure to check out iTunes U, where colleges

offer online content to the world. I don’t use iTunes U as much for learning photography technique as I do for studying art theory and history. Here are some collections I recommend:

Art 101: Introduction to Visual Studies
(Pennsylvania State University)

Art, Design, Media (RMIT University)

Digital Photography (Utah Electronic
High School)

Lectures: BFA Fine Arts (School of Visual
Arts)

Lectures: BFA Photography (School of
Visual Arts)

Masters of Photography (National
Geographic)

Go to the Library

If you live in an area with a good public library system, you may be surprised to discover they have a large selection of new books on cameras, photography, Photoshop—and about a million other photography-related subjects. Most modern libraries also have much more than just books. They have DVDs, online e-books, and every other type of other media you can think of. If you see some training DVD being sold online, check the library before buying. Most libraries have an online search feature, so just type in what you want, click search, and see if they have it. Even if you spend just a few hours a month at a library looking at work by other photographers, it’s a great source of free knowledge.

Conclusion

The main idea I want you to take away from this book is that you can shoot nude or erotic photography without investing a ton of money. Often, photographers and models get too caught up in the financial aspects of this pursuit—and, honestly that is the *last* thing you should worry about when trying to create art.

Some of my best images were created with the least amount of complexity. I have always felt that the more “stuff” you have on set, the more you are moving away from the art and leaning toward the commercial aspect of photography. Also the more “stuff” you have on set, the more it gets in the way of the model truly expressing herself. Every extra item adds something the model has to think about.

Be sure to have fun and behave like a gentleman (or a lady). You will be better off in the long run if you conduct yourself as a professional. Over many years of shooting, I have travelled, had a lot of fun, and made great friends because I have treated people with respect and honesty.

Finally, I urge you to simply do what you love. A close friend of mine went to one of the best photography colleges in the world. After he graduated, he knew how to light and shoot anything—but they never taught him to shoot what he has a *passion* for. It took him many years to find his true voice in photography, because he lost track of why he wanted to be a photogra-



Every item on a set adds something for the model to think about. Keeping it simple generally enhances the expression of her personality.

pher in the first place. If you stay true to your heart and do what you truly love, the money *will* follow.

—Richard Young, www.theartoferotica.com

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“I would highly recommend this book to anyone who loves photographing nude images.”

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