

Dramatic Portrait Digital

The idea behind this style of work is to produce emotion. You are basically telling a story with only one image. There are many different ways to create dramatic emotion, your job is to figure out which techniques will work best for the message and emotion you are trying to get across to your viewers.

Some ideas on how to create drama:

- Lighting
- Camera angles
- Diagonal lines
- Balance

Below are some examples of what you might try to do, there are many other techniques you can try I have just listed a few.

Camera Angel: We are so used to seeing everything at eye-level, which is straight ahead and a few feet from the ground. Most of our shots can end up predictable since we keep shooting images from the same viewpoint that everyone else is so used to seeing. Just by positioning our camera in an uncommon way can be enough to capture more interesting perspectives.



Lines and Balance: Using diagonal lines can be a very effective way of drawing the eye of those viewing an image into it and to the main focal point. The 'lines' need not be actual lines – they could be the shape of a path, a line of trees, a fence, river or any other feature in an image.



Dramatic Object B&W

Shoot an object. Shoot from an interesting angle. Create dramatic lines and interesting perspectives.

Project Schedule

B/W Project

- 12/14: New Project begin research
- 12/15: Shoot day
- 12/16: Edit
- 12/19: Edit
- 12/20: Edit
- 12/21: Critique
- 12/22: Speaker

Digital Project

- 12/14: New Project begin research
- 12/15: Shoot day
- 12/16: Edit
- 12/19: Edit
- 12/20: Edit
- 12/21: Critique
- 12/22: Speaker



Dramatic Portrait Lighting

Just as finding and seeing a subject is challenging, so too is finding lighting conducive to taking dramatic photographs. The Golden Hour is always referenced as a great time to take photos, but its not the only time to take photos with dramatic lighting. Training your eye to see dramatic light and the different variations of it takes some self-training.

Side Lighting: As you might expect Side Lighting is when the lighting is coming from the side. This usually provides a great deal of contrast, can create long shadows and adds depth to the image. This type of lighting can add a dramatic flare to architectural and portraiture photography.



Back lighting: is when light is behind your subject and is directed at you and your camera. This type of lighting creates silhouettes quiet easily. Combined with certain atmospheric conditions such as fog or airborne dust you can get dramatic lighting effects.



Rim Lighting: When light comes in at an acute angle it can create highlights along the edges of your subject. The stark contrast that it provides highlights shape and form. This type of lighting adds impact to macro, wildlife, nature and fine art photography.



Spot Light: Very simply Spot Light is when a focused amount of light highlights a particular section of your subject or scene. This type of lighting can create strong shadows and contrast. Spot light can add dramatic impact to all genres of photography.



Hard light: is quite direct and can often be intense in brightness. This type of lighting creates strong shadows and high contrast. Highlights can be quite intense under Hard lighting conditions so special care should be made with ones exposure. Hard light can be stylistically applied to most any photographic genre, but for many eyes it can be less appealing than other types of lighting.



Utilize a Strong Backlight: Another great use of hard light in photography is to use it as a backlight to make your subjects pop off the background. In the photo of the couple below the photographer used the hard lighting within the scene to create a silhouette of the two people. You can also use hard light as a backlit rim light to create a dramatic portrait. The photo of the woman below can easily be accomplished with a flash triggered from behind the subject.



Show Off Textures in the Skin: Hard light can be used to show off the textures of the skin in a photograph. You can achieve this effect by positioning your hard light source to one the side of your subject, rather than straight on. This positioning causes each ridge and texture in the skin to cast a hard shadow – emphasizing its details. Take a look at the photo of the older person's hand to see how effective this technique can be. Showcasing the texture of the hand really emphasizes the age of this person.

Digital Tips!

Split Toning->Lightroom

Split toning is for photos that have been converted to black and white and you want to add some color to otherwise neutral tones in the image. The hue slider can be used to adjust the hue color in either the highlights or shadows, and the Saturation sliders can be used in conjunction with the Hue slider to apply varying strengths of color.

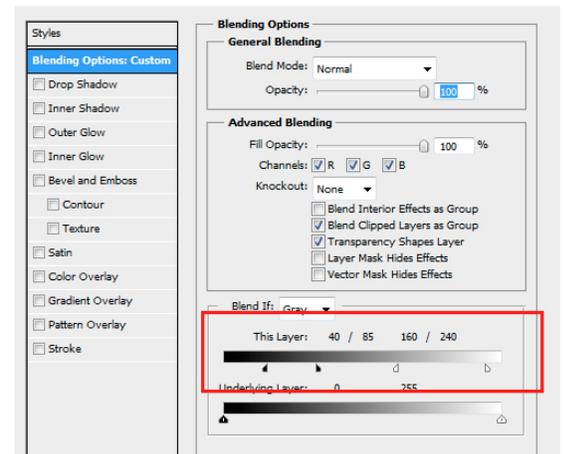
When working in Lightroom:

1. Convert to black and white using the B&W panel controls.
2. Go to the Split Toning panel and use the color picker to select a tone you like.
3. Try using the Balance slider to offset the split tone midpoint.

Note: Split Toning can work with color images also if you want a distorted color look... Experiment and see what works and doesn't work for you.

Split Toning->Photoshop

Create two new gradient maps via Layer → New Adjustment Layer → Gradient Map. You could, for example, create a gradient from dark-blue to beige and another from dark-brown to white. To change a gradient, click on it to open up the “Gradient Editor” dialog box. There, click on your chosen color patches and open up the color picker via the “Color field.” Confirm with “OK,” double-click the layer with the second gradient map and, under “This Layer,” move the right slider to the left. To make the transition a little smoother, click on the slider while holding down the Alt/Option key and move it to the right. Confirm with “OK.”



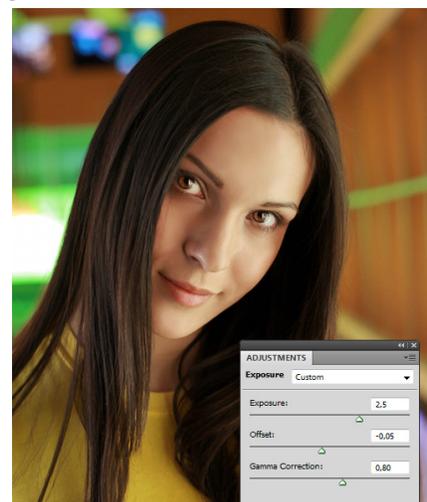
Dodge And Burn Look

Copy the reduced layers to a new layer with Shift + Control/Command + Alt/Option + E, and then set the blending mode to “Vivid Light.” Use Control/Command + I to invert the layer content, and apply Filter → Blur → Surface Blur with a radius of about 70 pixels and a threshold of 40 levels. Press Shift + Control/Command + Alt/Option + E again, delete the layer below, and set the blending mode to “Overlay.” Apply a “Gaussian Blur” to make the contours a little softer, and then click Image → Adjustments → Desaturate.



Bright Eyes

To make eyes appear brilliant, click on New Adjustment Layer → Exposure. Fill the layer mask with black (or invert the mask), and paint with white over the irises and with black over the pupils. Set the blending mode of the adjustment layer to “Luminosity.” Increase the exposure in concert with the gamma value to give the iris structure more contrast. Also, try changing the “Offset slider.”



Portrait Tips

One of the easiest things to do with your camera is take a portrait, and the majority of photos we take are images of ourselves, our loved ones, or complete strangers who have an uniqueness about them that we want to capture, save and show other people. The spontaneous or posed portrait is a mainstay of the photographic canon. However, that means 90% of them are boring, stilted and uninspired. So how do you increase the punch of your portraits? That's what we're going to talk about today, and hopefully you'll improve your simple snapshots after reading this.

Change Perspective

One of the first things to think about when taking photographs is to consider your perspective — most people just take out their camera, hold it up at eye level of the subject(s) and snap away. But this is SO boring... why not drop to one knee, place the camera and subject on the floor or get a higher vantage point.



Use Natural Light The Same as Studio Light

Look for places where you can capture the dramatic directional light of a studio environment without actually being in one. This might be underneath a large tree, where harsh sunlight is diffused through the canopy, or next to a window with blinds that cast symmetric vertical shadows across the wall behind your subject. Details such as these can add another element of interest to your portraits and make them stand out.

However, you might want to employ fill-in flash in such images to avoid overblown highlights and excessive contrast. This can be a significant asset when your subject is backlit because it helps you to capture necessary detail in their face, while your camera is trying to compensate for the bright background.



Create a Candid Look

Another great trick for more interesting portraits is to have the subject look away from the camera. When your subject's eyes don't bore directly down the lens barrel, it creates a more mysterious nature and quality to the subject (you ask yourself as the viewer, "what is he or she looking at?"). The portrait could look more like it was a "candid" photo, if you manipulate your subject this way. Or if you have more than one person in the photo, have them look at each other... this connection jumps off the page.

Use a Reflector

A reflector is one of the most valuable bits of equipment for the portrait photographer. It's essential for getting even exposures, but also great when used as an interactive device. Asking someone to hold it on the shadow side of another gets your subjects involved and engaged with the process. If you don't have one, seek out natural reflectors, such as sand, snow or water, which can also help to light your subjects from below. Just remember, the shinier the surface, the harder the light will be. And the quality of light reflected will match the hue of your reflector (for example, sand will give you a warm tint). So it's worth shelling out for an all-purpose white reflector.

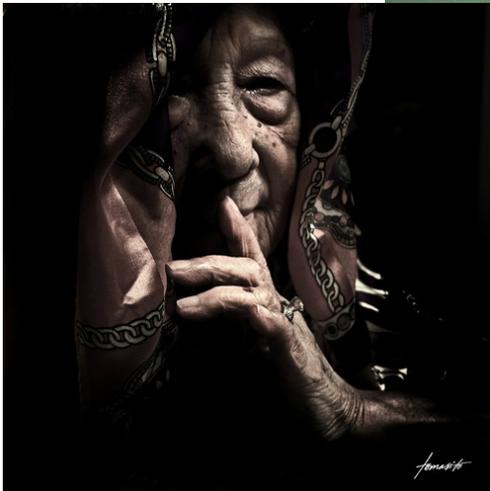
Stop Unwanted Highlights by Changing Position

When working in natural light, it goes without saying that you have less control. A sudden burst of sunshine on a cloudy day can be just as troublesome as an unexpected spell of rain on a sunny one. If unwanted highlights are causing havoc with your exposure, reposition yourself or your subject so that their body blocks the sun out of the frame. If that fails, zoom in to a longer focal length and set a wide aperture, then move in closer to your subject. This will mute the highlights by blurring them.



Use On-Camera Flash

On-camera flash is great in situations where you're moving with the people you're photographing. If you're in a forest or at the beach, try mounting a wide-angle lens and running with your subjects (this works particularly well with kids) and snap with your camera slung down by your feet. On-camera flash will fill in your subject and give a clearer view of this unusual perspective.



Other Suggestions: Use a prop – people love to play with things and it brings out their personality, focus on a body part that's not the subject's face (and therefore exclude the face), use the "burst" mode on your digital camera and you can emulate the photo booth effect. Experiment, experiment, experiment... otherwise, you're not pushing yourself or the ARTFORM!

These are just a few tips and techniques and things to think about when designing your next portrait. Portraits should have a personality to themselves that reveals the photographer and the subject. That's how people will remember your work as your work.