

LEARNING IN THE DIGITAL ERA

ADAA4000

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LIGHT WORK

Light is a powerful element, as discussed in the book "Light Science and Magic," the intensity, direction, colour temperature, and quality of light can all be used to manipulate the mood and emotion of a portrait.

The book is aimed at individuals who “want to understand the underlying nature of light and how to employ its key characteristics to the lighting” (Hunter, Biver, and Fuqua, 2015, p.1).

One aspect of the light is its intensity. The intensity of the light plays a role in creating meaning and atmosphere in an image. Hard light creates strong shadows and defined edges, which can add a sense of contrast and drama to the image. Where Soft light, on the other hand, is diffused and creates softer shadows, giving a more gentle and subtle effect.

Another aspect is the mood and key. A photograph with bright High-key lighting has white and light grey tones and can create a positive and more cheerful atmosphere. Making a portrait with high-key lighting gives to the subject a bright, youthful, energetic look. A photograph with Low-key lighting can create a moodier and more shadowy look. In a portrait, there are larger dark areas and a more sombre mood.

The direction of the light is another important aspect of portrait photography. Frontal lighting can create a flat and uninteresting image, while sidelight, can add depth and dimension to the subject. Backlighting can create a halo effect and highlight the edges of the subject, which helps to create a sense of separation from the background.

One way that light can create meaning in an image is with the colour or temperature of the light. Different light sources, such as the sun or a lamp, have a different colours. Warm light, such as that found in the setting sun (golden hour), has a lower colour temperature and appears yellow or orange. The warm light is typically associated with feelings of comfort and relaxation and can create a cosy and intimate atmosphere for a portrait. While cool light, such as that found on a bright day appears blue or white. Cool light can create a more distant and professional atmosphere in a portrait. By using light with different colour temperatures, we can affect the overall mood and atmosphere of an image.

In addition to the characteristics of the light itself, the way that the lights interact with the subject can also create meaning using shadows. Shadows can add depth and dimension to an image, as well as create a sense of mystery and intrigue. By using light to create shadows, we can draw the viewer's attention to specific elements in the image and create a sense of drama and tension.

This quote reflects the complexity of working with light: "Photographing lighting is more than just light. Lighting is a relationship between the light, the subject, and the viewer." (Hunter, Biver, and Fuqua, 2015, p.24).

Taking these portraits, I learned that being able to communicate with people, make them comfortable enough to show themselves, and being able to read the person in front of you is crucial to becoming a good portrait photographer. We need technical knowledge and personal abilities too.

For these tasks, I applied all that I have been learning during these months, the books that I read, the workshops, the other tasks, my classmates, research, and more important the mistakes that I have made.

A LIT PORTRAIT MADE IN THE STUDIO OF ONE OR MORE PEOPLE



Sony. 50mm f/8 1/125 ISO 100

For this Low-Key portrait, in the studio, I used a black background and blackboards on both sides of the subject.

The main light is a large soft box on the high left side of the subject illuminating the visible ear.

A large soft box filler light on the right side fills the shadows.

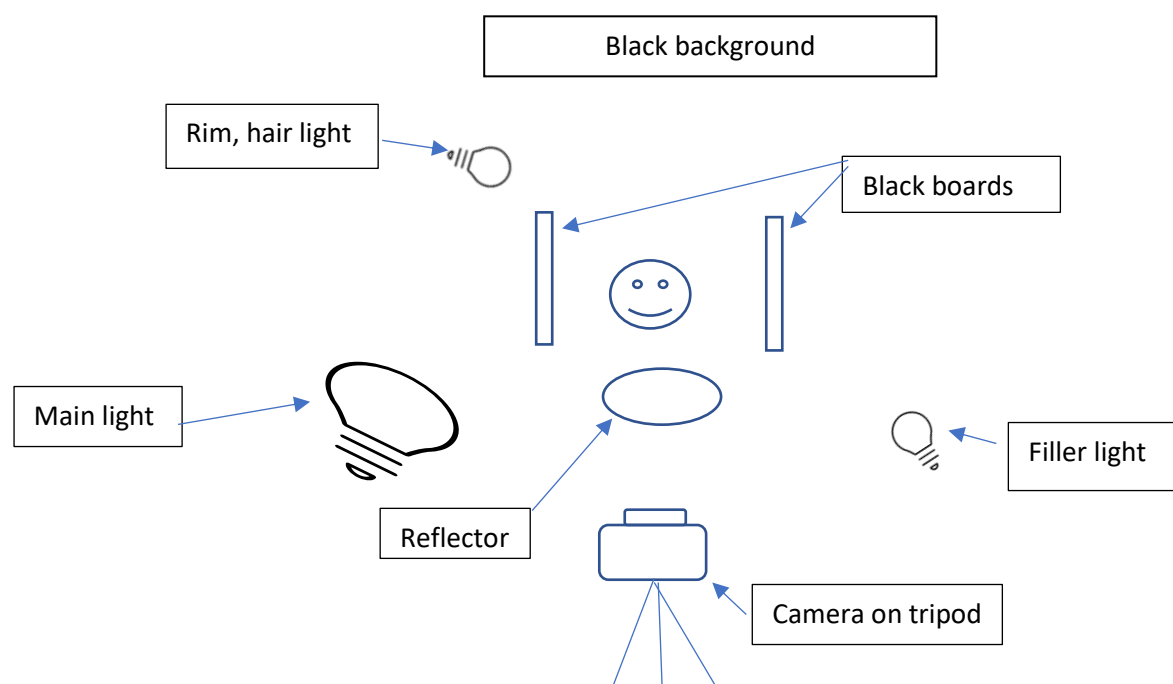
I used a rim light on the back left side to try to separate her head from the black background.

I used a reflector under the subject to fill the shadow under the nose and the chin.

I chose to do a low-key portrait instead of a high key because I thought it could be more in accord with the subject. If you do not feel comfortable when someone takes you a photo, it is better to start with a more formal portrait, easier to relax.

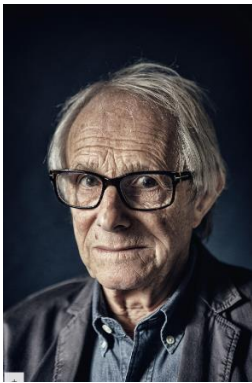
The use of the equipment in the Studio was not straightforward forward but all the notes from the workshops that we had, help us to light the studio. We were three of us and we learn from each other. We went back to days the studio and tried different settings. We even experiment with coloured gels and some props. Finally, I decided to use one image from the first session, because the low-key I think works better with the subject.

We tried different poses, and I found that when she turned her shoulders her position was more natural, making it more interesting.



Visual References:

- [Antonio Olmos](#) and his colour low-key studio portraits. This low-key portrait gives some majesty to the subject, without being distant. It is a low-key photograph with a large main light and some filler lighting. They use backlighting creating a halo that separates the subject from the background. In this case, the cloth and the background are too similar, so the halo is more pronounced on the cloth than on his white hair. His shoulders are turned giving him a more approachable presence.



Ken Loach, 2019. Antonio Olmos.

- [Rembrandt](#) and his use of dark and lights. Rembrandt and his knowledge use of light create some magical portraits. This portrait shows how a low-key image can bring out the majestic beauty of a subject.



Hendrickje Stoffels, 1650.

A LOCATION IMAGE LIT WITH ARTIFICIAL LIGHT (FLASH OR CONTINUOUS), IN EITHER COMBINATION WITH AMBIENT LIGHT, OR CANCELLING THE AMBIENT OUT.



Sony. 50mm f/1.8 1/60 ISO 500

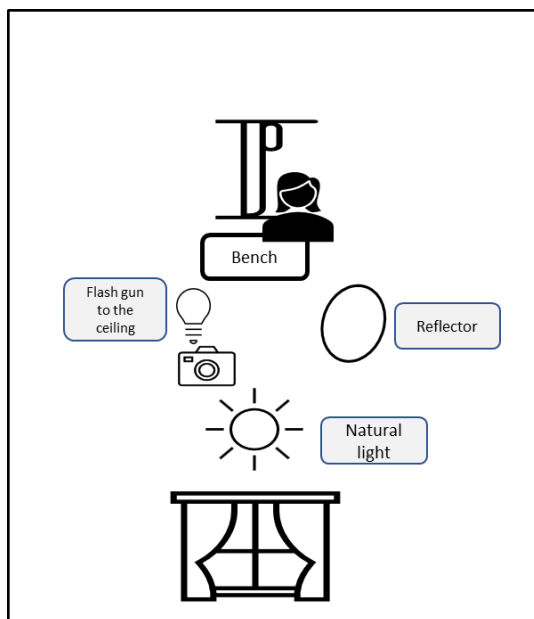
For this portrait in location, I decided on a High Key portrait.

Her choice of cloth, hairstyles, and makeup worked well with lighting that make a bright and energetic portrait. Besides, after a long conversation (narrative portrait) she was more confident about the shooting. Something good is that we did not have a strict schedule, so both were more relaxed.

The location was her election, a bedroom in her own house with dark green paper. Her yellow dress complements the green background.

The main light was the natural light from the front window. The light from the window alone was not enough and result in a flat portrait. I used a silver reflector to fill the shadows, I placed it in different parts of the room trying to bounce the light correctly, but it was not enough. Finally, I used the hot-shoe flash from the camera to the ceiling to bounce the light, using it as a filling light. And the reflector on the right side to avoid unflattering shadows.

Something that applied in this soothing was what I learn during the making of the cinematic image project. The use of a flash. During that project, I found it almost impossible to use a flash appropriately and the photos were a complete failure. But thanks to that I started to learn about the use of external lights in location. Still not enough to go out and make wonders at night. But enough to allow me to act during this shooting and use it more successfully.



Visual References:

- [Mike Macgregor](#), I have been checking his work and I like that the variety of the portraits. Colour, black and white, shows the environment. He adapts to the person in front of him and the task.



- [Karen Robinson](#) and her colourful portraits speak about the person photographed. Her portraits are in general full of colour, in different locations, with different props. You can see how she has been learning about the subject. Seeing her work is easy to imagine that she has good personal skills and enjoys learning and hearing the subject in front of her.

In this portrait, the location of choice must be a place important to the subject, a real place with a story. The use of the reflections on the mirrors. How the subject is situated, her natural position says about her. She has used the lighting of the location for her work.



Kathy Burkner, 2005. Karen Robinson.

A LOCATION PORTRAIT USING AVAILABLE LIGHT ONLY, CREATIVELY



Cannon. 70mm f/2.8 1/60 ISO 1000

For this portrait, I used the ceiling light as the main light and the Christmas light as the filling light.

I wanted to create a warm, homey, cosy mood. To make the viewer feel as if it were there.

The lights are the house ceiling lights are warm and the filling lights are the cold lights of the Christmas tree. This mix is interesting.

The focus on the subject is soft adding softness to the mood of the photograph.

I have been practicing taking portraits of my family and friends using available light only. Some of those portraits are made in the right lighting conditions. This time I wanted something that I do not usually do. In this case, was the mix of warm and cold lights to light the same subject.

The portrait of Lisa Louis Fratani by Alessio Albi has elements in its composition as something is happening. I wanted to play with the idea and with the people around I shoot trying to show part of other people moving around. Something is happening but the subject is looking at the camera, her main interaction is with the viewer.

Visual references:

- [J. Flynn](#) a London-based photographer. His portraits seem natural, and the focus is soft. This portrait is high-key, it could be using natural light from a window on her left, a reflector on her right side, or some filling light. It could be using a flash and bouncing the light from the ceiling. The look the photographer has achieved is natural, and casual, as if a friend took a photo with a mobile in her room, or making a video call. However, the lighting is beautifully done, as is the posture, and the blurred background. Everything has been meticulously decided.



Ambar Driscoll. J. Flynn

- [Alessio Albi](#), an Italian portrait photographer. He makes location shots that show deep action. There is a special portrait of [Lisa Louis Fratani](#) that made me try this composition. In one [interview](#) By Sarah Ann Loreth, in 2015. Alessio Albi speaks about the importance of lighting realistically “Lately I'm starting to explore the big world of artificial lighting, to be completely free to decide if I prefer natural light to artificial.” That is a knowledge that gives freedom to any photographer



Lisa Louis Fratani, 2021. Alessio Albi

REFERENCES:

- Hunter F., Biver S., & Fuqua P. (2015) *Light: Science & Magic*. 5th ed. Burlington: Focal Press