The making of a portrait

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NVPC Presentation
Fletcher Library Westford, MA
Slide outline
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slide 1 Goals/Focus

The Process of creating portraits from planning through post camera processing

Prepare for March 6 natural light portrait session

slide 2 Key Topics

Approaching the portrait **session (planning)**
Getting ready (before the session)
Getting Started (the day of the session)
Refining your vision (during the session)
The Final Look (After the session)

slide 3   Step 1: Approaching the Portrait Session

- Portrait is an artistic representation of a person
- As an artist, you are responsible for capturing the essence of your subject- persona
- Questions to answer when planning a portrait session
  What is the purpose of the portrait?
  What should the portrait convey?
  How will you portray what is "real "about your subject in the photograph
  What about the subject strikes your interest?
  How will you reveal the subjects individuality?

slide 4 Review your Options
Formal portrait
Subject in the environment
Informal approach
Glamorous look
Larger than life, cartoon like

slide 6 Step 2:Tools to achieve your vision
- Lighting
- Lens selection and camera angle
- Location, background
- Clothing and makeup
- Posing

slide 7 Step 3: Getting Ready
Know your camera (second nature)
- Decide on the approach to best highlight the person's individuality and consistent with the purpose
- Determine background and location/s
- Preliminary lighting choices
- Lens choice/s
- Choice of clothing/costume changes
- Get to know the subject
- Model release

slide 8 What's in The Studio

slide 9 Lighting
Quality of natural window light
Early afternoon light (north window light if you have it)
Correct direct sunlight from a window with a diffuser
Direction

Good lighting should come from above the eye (indirect from sky)

Strongest part of the light should illuminate the face

Distance from window to subject

A few feet from the window will cause subject to be wrapped in light

Less contrast than right at the window

Higher ISO may be needed or tripod at slower shutter speeds

Subject and camera position

Unlike in Studio, light source is not moved, so need to move subject and camera

Position a few feet away, closer to far end of the window

Move camera to change views of the subject

slide 10 Seeing the light

Look for the lighting patterns on the face to achieve the effect you desire

Basic patterns

slide 11 Lens Choice (in 35mm terms)

Telephoto lenses allow reasonable working distances to subject and compress subject and background

Wide lenses expands and distorts (shorter working distance- good for full length/ groups)

Zooms like 50-135mm, 70-200 mm, 70-300 mm and 28-80 mm are useful (full length/ groups)

Head and shoulders: 70-100mm range

¾ length: 50-70 mm range

Full length: 50mm

Groups : 30-50mm range

slide 12 Thoughts on Clothing

When the subject looks great, they feel great and when they feel great, the results will be amazing

Guidelines for non costumes

Keep to simple solid shades

No sleeveless for women

Avoid bright colors or stripes (unless for effect)

slide 13 Choice of Backgrounds

Backgrounds have powerful effect on mood of the portrait- pay close attention to them

Keep distance between subject and background at least 10 feet if want out of focus

Match tonal range/color to subject and mood

Interesting colors and interesting patterns

Scout beforehand if possible at same time of day as sitting

Options are

    Seamless paper

    Canvas

    Fabric (queen sized sheet material is 60"x80")

    Rear projection

    Surroundings

        Building patterns

        Wall patterns

        Door ways

slide 14 Step 3: Getting Started

- Exposure and white balance
- Camera Setup- Depth of field and selective focus
- Seeing the light
- Composition in the viewfinder
- Establish rapport with subject

slide 15 Determine the Exposure

Use a standard like a gray card for exposure- Manual setting on camera

    Match the meter

    Studio lights will not change, but with natural light

conditions that is not necessarily the case.

<div align="center">or</div>

Use spot meter on skin tone + 1 stop

slide 16 White balance

Raw is best option for flexibility

Use standard white/grey reference in the photo for first image

      Final correction in software

For JPEG

      Use custom/manual white balance setting on your camera

      Or preset options (Auto, Daylight, Cloudy, Shade, Flash, tungsten)

slide 17 Examples-
slide 18 Comparison
slide 19 Custom White Balance

Select Custom Balance from preset list

Place white or gray standard in subject light

Point lens filling the frame

Take a reference frame

Check the color of the previewed frame

      White or gray but no color

Press OK to save

Photograph is this light

slide 20 Camera setup- Depth of field and selective focus

Camera with on-camera flash/aux flash for fill

Lens selection or focal length (35mm format)

      Head and shoulders – 75-100 mm

      Full length figure – 50 mm

Groups 35-50mm
Aperture or depth-of-field (F8)
Shutter speed: as needed to get f8 (use tripod if needed)
ISO selection: Lower is usually better but keep shutter speed consistent with lens FL
Tripod: Optional, though good idea for slow speeds
<u>Always focus on the Eyes!</u>

<u>slide 21 Refining Your Vision</u>
- Light modifiers
- Composition
- Posing
  Light Modifiers

<u>slide 22 Composition and camera angle</u>
Vertical vs Horizontal
Crop in camera vs. crop in post processing
    How do you delivery both 5x7, 8x10 formats with good cropping?
Head and shoulder
    Eyelevel is approx 1/3 from top of frame
    Slightly more space in direction of gaze
    Camera at nose level
    Allow enough negative space around the subject to avoid unintended mergers
    Focus on eyes
¾ and full length
    Aim at slightly above the waist
    Focus on eyes

<u>slide 23 Posing (classical)</u>
Shoulder line at slight angle to camera
    Avoid shoulders square to the camera

Weight on foot or seated away from camera
Tilt of head (usual)
　　　Male: toward lower shoulder
　　　Female: toward higher shoulder

slide 24 Our Assignment
We will be photographing models using natural widow light with fill as needed
Room is painted white with windows on all sides
Backgrounds will be provided
Please bring a reflector if you have one
　　　Options include: white poster board (2x3 ft), foam core,
　　　commercial reflectors, others
Bring Fill flash if you wish to use it
Bring a model
Think about how you wish to photograph the model to give the look you want
Change of clothing is ok since there are bathrooms available on site

slide 25 Step 4: The Final Look

slide 26 Digital Workflow
Simple approach to Post Processing
Other Techniques
Simple Digital Workflow
1. File Management
　　　Download to Hard Drive
　　　Save memory card in tact
　　　Or Save to Second Drive or CD (option)
2. Edit (minimize number of images)
　　　Eliminate frames and select frames for further evaluation
Raw Conversion (if needed)

3.) Crop / rotate (minimize number of pixels)

4. Evaluate image for exposure

> Histogram optimization (levels, curves,)

> Capture sharpening (new)

5. Color correction

> Use gray or white reference in photo

6. Spotting using Healing Brush/Layered corrections (if needed)

> Dust spots

> Catch light retouching

> Skin

7. Final sharpening (unsharp)

8. Save as TIFF (or JPEG depending on needs)_new filename and backup (drive or CD/DVD)

Post processing example

slide 26 Wrapup

Know your camera equipment

Select a theme

Select location/s, background, and clothing

Investigate lighting conditions

Establish rapport with subject

Work for expression

Post processing

> Keep it simple by doing it in the camera

slide 27 References

Photos on pages 6, 9 are from "The Portrait" by Eastman Kodak, Professional Techniques and Practices in Portrait Photography", 1993

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The Portrait Photographer information at:

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