

Creative Portrait

LESSON 3 | LIGHT, LIGHT, SHADOW

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"Will somebody
Let me see the light within the dark trees' shadows and
What's happenin'?
Lookin' through the glass find the wrong within the past knowin'
We are the youth"

Imagine Dragons – Natural

WELCOME

Here is a third lesson and many more creative techniques of photographing portraits come with it. We will be experimenting with light, because, as we all know, there would be no photographs without light! But, where there is light, there is also a shadow and “the darkest place is under the candlestick”, so we will play hide and seek, we will be looking for and finding light and shadow and using both for our unique shots! And don’t be afraid to use also techniques from the previous lessons while you play with light... and have fun! ;-)

BOKEH IN THE FOREGROUND

We already talked about bokeh in the first lesson, but we mainly talked about circles and lights in the background... how about creating bokeh in the foreground? Many people seem to forget that a low depth of field – blurring doesn't apply only to the background, but can affect our foreground just as well. But we all know that, because we have learnt already how to create foggy effect in photographs using “camera obscura” and “shooting through” technique in the second lesson... but to have lights (and bokeh!) in foreground? Yes, that's exactly what we want to try right now!

You can use any lights you want – small, bigger, different shapes and even colorful – the choice is endless, especially before, or even better, just after Christmas (as they are in sale, you can buy them really for cheap and I have a whole collection of them :-)). The ones that you can plug in are fine, but the battery powered ones are even better – you can take them anywhere you need! And then you just need to play with them in front of your lens, or it can be your model doing that and so on. Extra tip – if your model will be wearing glasses, you can get some fantastic light reflections too. The possibilities are endless!

When it's 34 Celsius / 92 Fahrenheit outside and you go to shoot in a hay barn, I can assure you that you and your model will get pretty sweaty! But it was super sunny outside, full harsh light and I wanted a little bit of twilight and a dark background to make the lights stand out even more. I took plug-in lights with me by mistake so it took us a while to figure out what to do. At the end we managed to get an extension cord and plugged it in. Because I wanted a sharp shot and didn't want to crank up my ISO too high, here is a little trick - I used a small side window as an additional source of light - it's well visible on her face, you can see at which side it was (her right), but I didn't disclose that in the resulting photo as I didn't want to. That is how her face is nicely lit, eyes sharp, ISO just fine and it looks like there is no additional source of light! The light coming from the little bulbs was a bit yellow-ish, but only a little bit and because I liked it, I pumped up the saturation of yellow color locally while editing to make them even more yellow.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/400s, -0.67, ISO 640

You can watch a video "Bokeh in the foreground 1" in the materials of Lesson 3.



I photographed Verunka using this technique in an old house during my workshop. Once again, I used additional natural light – she is looking towards a window. She styled her beautiful hair herself, she was wearing a black tutu [be poppy](#) skirt pink corset top with black dots I grabbed in a thrift store for a few cents and I tore a leather tie that she wore around her neck off my leather belt. I am not sure about the headband, but it was something quite ordinary, with a few paper flowers on a wire. She was sitting on a table, IKEA Christmas lights in the foreground.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/800s, +0.33, ISO 500

You can watch a video “Bokeh in the foreground 2” in the materials of Lesson 3.



SHADOW PLAY / GOBOS

From Wikipedia: A gobo is a stencil or template placed inside or in front of a light source to control the shape of the emitted light. It's typically used with stage lighting instruments to manipulate the shape of the light cast over a space or object—for example to produce a pattern of leaves on a stage floor. The term "gobo" can refer to any device that produces patterns of light and shadow. The exact derivation of the word gobo is unclear. It is often cited as "**g**oes **b**efore **o**ptics". An alternative explanation is "**g**raphical **o**ptical **b**lack **o**ut." (Whatever it is, it's for sure a great thing!). Gobos are used to create lighting scenes in theatrical applications and are popular at nightclubs and other musical venues to create moving shapes. Gobos may also be used for architectural lighting, as well as in interior design, as in projecting a company logo on a wall. Gobos are made of various materials - steel, glass, plastic... ok, that's enough. Gobos are, of course, fantastic in photography as well... and especially in the portrait photography!

Simply put, when shooting portraits, gobo is anything that you place between the source of light and the face of the photographed person, in order to achieve some sort of pattern on their face – for example a hat, a roller blind, a curtain, knitted textile/top/t-shirt, sackcloth, perforated cloth or cardboard, netting, kitchen strainer... look around you and look for anything that could be used as a great “gobo”! And what else do you need except for gobos, a model and a camera? A source of light of course! Don't try to shoot these shots in an open shade, in the contrary; this is a good opportunity to use direct light, which is usually and seemingly not great for shooting portraits. And a small note – the closer is the gobo placed to the photographed face, the sharper the shadows will be.

It's possible that I will become famous for dressing models in thick sweaters when it's 34°C (about 95° F) outside – just like in this case. However, this beautiful lady L. was quite happy to lay down and pose for these shots, in which we played with light and shadows – I don't remember anymore how we achieved that strong light on her face in the black and white photograph, but it most likely wasn't an intention, my "assistant" Patrik probably just stood like that while getting the curtain ready and I liked it. In the color version (which I add in a smaller format as it's also a cover photo of this lesson), I used an off-cut of a curtain that I got for a few cents in a store... and a different angle as well. As I mentioned earlier, L. lays on the ground while I was shooting from above and was lucky to have Patrik (my husband and also fellow photographer and instructor... have I told you that already? :)) to be my assistant. Following my instructions, he was trying to move the curtain so that it would create the most interesting pattern on the model's face. When you do it yourself, notice what is the pattern doing to the face, whether the shadows start and finish where you wanted them – sometimes it may not look great when they meet at the corner of an eye or the nose root and so on. It might also be difficult to get the exposure right and it's possible that you will have to underexpose a bit so that there isn't too much light (highlights) on the lit parts of the face, because you could then lose some details.

Also, you should be considerate of your models – the sun/light can be really too strong and unpleasant for eyes with this type of shooting, while you are trying to set everything up on the camera and curtains ;-), let them have their eyes closed and make sure that they are comfortable. The photograph was shot at about 3 pm in August in the middle of a hot day and the model lies in a direct sun. It took us about 10 takes before I got the exposition and curtain position/shadows right, the model's eyes were closed during this time of course and only when we had everything ready, we tried a few shots with her eyes opened.

By the way, it's exactly the same leftover piece of curtain, which I used in Lesson 2, I am sure you will remember (see the "Behind the scenes" materials).

Both photos:

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/1250s, -0.33, ISO 250





This is one of my favorite shots, with a girl called Liana, who was very shy during the photo shoot and didn't want to be photographed. She was accompanied by her mom, they were very late and a morning photo shoot became practically a mid-day photo shoot, so I was looking for some open shade, where we could hide from the harsh sun – an old wooden barn that we discovered, served us well. This is one of the last shots that I made there, when little Lily was practically leaving and exactly at the moment when she crossed the threshold of the barn and the sun (which was already quite high), shined through the hat and created a beautiful pattern on her adorable little nose.

I was lucky to be right there and quick enough to take the shot. The contrast between fully lit scene in the foreground and the darkness inside of the barn in the background created practically black background – I think that in this way, her face and the play of light and shadow really stand out!

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/2.2, 1/1600s, +0.33, ISO 160



In this case - believe it or not - a wooden grid from a bee hive served me as a “gobo” (see “Behind the scenes” materials of Lesson 3). The boy is standing in a door to an old shed without windows and as I expose to the lit bright parts of his face, the dark background got recorded as black. Just for this great contrast I chose a transition into black and white.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/2.0, 1/3200s, +0.33, ISO 200



Shot through a piece of ordinary cardboard, into which I was patiently making little holes with a screwdriver during our nine hours car journey. I must have looked quite weird when doing this; fortunately, (almost) nobody could see me ;-). During the photo shoot we had to learn to work a bit with the cardboard piece – as in certain moments (when the light dots were all over her face) it looked as if Kristynka had chickenpox ;-).

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/2000s, +0.33, ISO 100



I love when a shadow play is created by nature, I call it a “natural tattoo” and was resisting it for a long time while photographing portraits, because I always “played it safe” in an open shade and was avoiding harsh sun and contrast... it’s true that it doesn’t always work and it can sometimes look too busy on the photo, but since a certain time I always like trying it, because you never know if you wouldn’t get something interesting! In this case, the shadows are mainly on her body, rather than her face, but I don’t think that matters and I like the pattern that the nature tattooed. The main “gobo” role is played by tree branches and leaves.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.6, 1/500s, -0.33, ISO 1250



STRONG SHADOWS / CONTRAST

Strong shadows, transitions between lit and unlit parts, contrast – these are issues that I was trying to avoid for a long time. That’s a bad light, it makes the photo busy, this is not the way to photograph... does it sound familiar? I heard it often and I am sure you did too. Somewhat defiantly I started to actively look for such “bad” light, sharp shadows, transitions, contrast... places where I wouldn’t have even thought of shooting before – the divide between harsh light and total shade. (I think it all started with the black and white photograph of lady L. from the chapter above about gobos with the really strong light on part of her cheek and eye, while the rest of her face fell into shade and I really liked that.) And in what surprising conclusion this leads to? You can do great portraits with bad light! Or, better said – there is NO such a thing as bad light, there is just a soft light and harsh light, easy light and difficult light... And even though it’s often an exposure challenge, it’s also a great fun.

I photographed my friend Bara in a big room, you saw her picture in the first lesson in the chapter about reflections and you will meet her once more in this lesson. It was mainly overcast outside, but I noticed that when occasionally the sun comes out, it creates this long stripe of light on the concrete column, while the rest of the space is shaded. Exactly to that spot I positioned Bara and asked her to look into the light / sun for a moment. It beautifully highlighted her blue eyes, which went well with the print on her dress.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.6, 1/1600s, -0.33, ISO 250



I could write an almost identical annotation to this photograph as to the previous one of Bara and so I will save a little bit of space and won't do it. In this case I felt the black-and-white transition fitted well and I really like the fact that half of his face is totally black and the other half is lit, but you can still see the reflection on the rim of his sunglasses, which frames the face.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.6, 1/1600s, -0.33, ISO 250



I will be honest to admit that this was not my idea, or respectively, I had an idea to go to the lamp and try to use it somehow as a light source, but it was Patrik who told me that my model should look directly “into it”. I immediately liked the effect and we made a few shots. The photograph might as well be in the low-key portraits section, but I put it here, because I thought the sharp shade and the contrast between the lit and dark part of her face are the most striking features of this image.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.4, 1/60s, -1.67, ISO 200



HIGH KEY

The other of the two of us described once this technique in one of our workshops like this: “You take a key, any key, like this... And then you raise your hands with the key really, really high, as high as you can.... And that’s a high key”. (Well, some silly things can be learned in our workshops too).

The theory about the “high key” says that the tones of a photograph are very light, the colors are pale, low saturated, we can find very few shadows and very little - if any - contrast. If you saw a histogram of such shot, everything will be shifted to the right – that means that the shot has only the light parts and the dark parts are (almost) missing. That’s normal for a “high key” shot.

So how to achieve it? It will help considerably to think about it and prepare for it. Build on a light background, it doesn’t have to be white, but it can, of course. It’s better to have light “background” on the sides as well to model and reflect the light back onto the subject nicely, but again, it’s not necessary. Choose a bright styling, soft, pale, pastel colors. Simply put, you won’t be able to make a “high key” from a model in a dark blue dress on a black background, keep that look for lightpainting! A lot of light is desirable and it’s good to slightly overexpose the shot to achieve even lighter and airier feel. We recommend to shoot into a RAW format (of course – what else!) and not to overexpose too wildly – you still need to keep the details even on the overexposed parts, that you would otherwise lose in a .JPEG format. And then you just play with it a bit while editing, you can add brightness, reduce contrast and shadows... and voilà, your own “high key” was born! I like high key portraits, so that’s why there are more examples below.

PS: I used to think that I like high key portraits a lot more than low key portraits, but by and by it became a rather unsure thing ;-).

This picture is from 2010... my very first high key photo ever and in fact one of the first portraits when I started photographing them. It just has a new edit, the old one wasn't worth a dime. The shot was taken outside, the girl was sitting on the ground, in grass, there were no special preparations or even the intention to shoot a high key, but as she had blond hair and light pink dress with a tutu skirt, the whole frame of the photograph was filled only with this soft pastel color and black and white transition with a slight overexposure made for a really nice high key.

NIKON D90, Nikkor 50mm, f/2.2, 1/800s, +0.33, ISO 400



Peekaboo! A wonderful photo shoot with a mother and two daughters in the fantastic space of a completely white studio with white windows, walls, chandeliers and accessories and with white or pastel furniture... this space actually asked for high key photographs! I dressed all three of them in rose-pink, with light-grey here and there. The top part of this little princess's dress was studded with sequins and I like the way they sparkle softly (creating some bokeh) in the photo.

All the white around worked as a reflector and the light was really subtle, soft and mild... and evenly spread across the whole face. Then I just needed to follow her around (running, as two years old do ;-)) with my camera while trying to catch her attention, which proved to be not as easy as it may sound, but I managed to make her look up to me for a second and I photographed her like this, from above. Of course, I overexposed, during the shooting as well as during editing and slightly reduced the color everywhere except her eyes to make them stand out.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/800s, +1, ISO 640



This girl has beautiful blond hair and even more beautiful blue eyes (so I have to show it to you twice, to really enjoy it ;-)). In our FB photo group there was once a photograph of a little girl in a beautiful golden, as if “brocade”, princess dress. I started to correspond with the author of the picture and learnt that she bought the dress in a second-hand store, it originally came from a Walt Disney shop as a replica of a Beauty and the Beast dress. From my experience, such dress usually feels really tacky and cheap (as that’s what they are), so I was surprised to see that this dress seemed perfect – real and not at all kitsch. Since then I had an idea in my head about a photo styling of a little girl in this dress, an opportunity came two years later during one of my workshops focused on photographing children and families.

The little girl was brought to the photo shoot by her mom, we shot at the chateau in Brandys nad Labem and fortunately, the owner of the dress still had it, was willing to lend it to us and she even trusted me to send it through post just like that. Everything fell into place while I was watching a video clip by Taylor Swift – Love Story, I immediately knew that this is THE hair style and look, which I want! I bought a crown for her hair at Claire’s and the real cherry on the cake was the hair that was done by hair stylist Masa from Hairdresser MK Brandys nad Labem and was simply absolutely PERFECT. The little girl was very shy, but at

one moment, when we were just standing in the courtyard, she raised her head and smiled softly – and that’s when this shot was taken. I helped the high key effect during the editing process later as well.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.4, 1/2500s, +0.33, ISO 200





A small advice for you, what could help you to achieve a high key shot – it works great to make some white fog using a sandwich bag from the Lesson 2! That's exactly how this photograph was made – I arranged the bag in such way that it would create a strong white-fog effect on the edges of the photograph so that there would be practically only her face left in the picture and by doing it I got rid of not so attractive surroundings / background as well... (See the shot from behind the scene in the materials of the Lesson 3) and finally I overexposed and softened it during the edit. At the end, it came out as if it was pencil-drawn and I don't know how about you, but I like it ;-).

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/1.4, 1/2500s, +0.33, ISO 200



And the last high key to show, although it's perhaps only a half high key – this shows that clothes play an important role when you want to shoot HK – a dark jacket will remain a dark contrasting jacket even if you lighten up the rest. I feel a bit sorry now, because I like his receding and re-appearing locks of hair and distinct eyes and I think that the jacket feels a bit hard, but it was a normal photo shoot and a HK was not really planned... despite that, his face seemed to be a good one for this technique, I believe the jacket is not a big problem and his strong gaze and super sharp eyes draw viewer's attention even more.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/2.5, 1/1000s, +0.33, ISO 500



LOW KEY

Low key is the opposite to high key, right?

Low key shot is dark, in dark tones and colors. A low key shot also creates a certain mood and feelings, but while high key is airy, subtle and light, low key shot is usually dramatic, maybe sometimes even a bit gloomy and full of mystery. When shooting low key shots, we are trying to use the exact opposite to high key – while with high key we reduce contrast and add light, with low key we reduce light and add shadows and contrast.

For shooting a low-key shot, you should find a darker corner and use dark clothes and – what is most important – you usually need only one source of light. It's good to photograph low-key shots in a studio with a dark background and a spot light, but don't worry, even without that you can make really great low-key shots, you just need to think about it a bit and look for a suitable place and a light source. When setting up your camera, try to keep ISO as low as possible, even though you will be photographing at low-light conditions, a tripod is usually a good idea too. And very often you will need to under-expose. One source of light is sufficient and it doesn't matter whether it's a lamp, a torch or a beam of natural light from a door, it's important to work with its direction and intensity. What you

should remember when working with light and photographing low-key – the light should not lit your background, ideally, only your object (unless it is your specific desire to add something else to your photograph by disclosing the background, a texture for example) – in most cases though, by disclosing the background, the “emersion” of the object from the darkness is lost as well as the intimate atmosphere that we were after in the low-key. The more I photograph low-key, the more enchanted I am – the opportunity to manipulate the light and the variability of results that you can achieve with just a small change of direction, intensity or source of light is simply exciting!

Bonnie – a black Labrador on a black background. Bonnie was “our” dog for a year and a half – we were fostering family for her when she was a puppy and when old enough, she went back to “Guide Dog Association” school to become a guiding dog for a visually impaired person. As a source of light we used – believe it or not – a window (so called “French window” – all the way down to the floor), something behind it caught Bonnie’s attention so she looked in that direction interestedly. I read that people are not interested in black pets, because it’s difficult to photograph them and it doesn’t look good on social media. What did the world come to... They are beautiful! I like the way the light produces a thin line or 'rim' of light, outline her head and set it apart from the background (black fleece fabric) and lit up her eye. This is the only pet photograph in this course, but I couldn’t leave it out, I simply really really really love it and it brings me back some nice memories with her.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 105mm, f/3.5, 1/125s, ISO 320



In a big black sweatshirt (mine), standing in a dark shed without windows, a natural light coming from half-closed door as a source of light.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/2.0, 1/640s, -1.67, ISO 200



Ondro is standing in a long dark corridor of a co-working space, with doors leading to individual offices... the corridor itself was dark, but we switched the lights off as well, so he was standing in a near-darkness. As a light source I used a small external light, which fits into a palm and is called a video light – see the picture below. There are lots of them on the market, mine is really small, but great and handy as a source of light and I really like using it for my experiments. It's quite a strong source of light, you need to work it, move it as necessary. You also need to work with the exposure, in this case I really considerably underexposed the whole shot (see my settings). A video light can be attached to a camera at the same place as a flash, or you can hold it in your hand and move it freely as you need and like (no cord, it is battery powered). And of course, you can create a beautiful intimate portrait of a boy in a dark corridor with it ;-).

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/250s, -2.67, ISO 800

You can watch a video “Behind the scenes – Video light” in the materials of Lesson 3.





The corridor of an old house in Provence was really dark, but when we opened the door to one of the rooms, a beam of light came inside – and that’s exactly what I thought was a fantastic place to pose my subject. This is an example of using a natural light for a lowkey portrait – if you can find it, direct it correctly and use it!

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/3.2, 1/400s, -0.33, ISO 800



And one more portrait, which will wrap up this chapter – this corner was really dark, lit only by a weak light from two lamps, which I decided to disclose in the shot. Underexposed, his contemplative expression and a transition into toned “BW” emphasized even more what already was a “somber atmosphere of a bar”.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/1600s, -1, ISO 1000



SILHOUETTES

Let's start with a definition of a silhouette – the image of a person, animal, object or scene represented as a solid shape of a single color, usually black, with its edges matching the outline of the subject. (Wikipedia). Some might argue that a silhouette is not a portrait (in case of a silhouette of a person or an animal, of course), but I say it is! Do you remember those tiny pictures in pendants in old times? Cutting out portraits, usually side faces, from thick black paper was popular in mid 18th century, and the tradition lived long after. It was a cheaper alternative to portrait miniatures. The term silhouette gradually became to describe a subject that is lit from behind and therefore seems dark (black) on a light background. Our ancestors clearly weren't stupid – they knew that a good silhouette needs to have clearly defined contours and shapes – that's why the portraits were made as side views (profiles).

What you need for a silhouette is a strong back light, whether it's a sun, a lit window / door or a soft box in a studio... and an subject that can be recognized – what it is, what it's doing. When photographing silhouettes, the exposure is aimed at the background to make it exposed correctly – the subject in front of it will be underexposed (black). At least one example, but I have several more ideas to try in my mind... I believe that you do, too! A small window served as a source of the back light.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 85mm, f/2.2, 1/500s, -2, ISO 2500



UNUSUAL SOURCE OF LIGHT

Who knows me, will know – I have always loved natural light and till recently I wouldn't use anything else. I was never too fond of photo studios, soft boxes and flash lights... but preparing the course made me try something different and ssh, just between us – I am fascinated! No, no, I am still not fond of photo studios, soft boxes and flash lights... but using available sources of artificial light in different locations absolutely thrilled me! Whether it's different types of lamps, bulbs, tubes, anything you can find on the spot – it fascinates me that each source of light has a different color, it behaves differently and gives you absolutely unexpected results!

This is Eric (you know him already), we shot a lot of photographs together for this course and I really enjoyed it. I was lucky with great locations too – we photographed in one co-working place called WorkLounge in Prague. This particular shot was taken at the entrance, in fact it's something like a small reception – some sort of working counter, rough grey wall, but I really loved these great lamps, so I wanted to try using them as sources of light. To be honest – I was so surprised by the result... and thrilled, I didn't expect anything like that at all, neither the way the lamps are blueish in the photograph, nor the yellow tone on the walls, or just how dramatic and cool the light on Eric's face is. And the fact that just a moment before the shoot we chose to dress him in this mustard-yellow sweatshirt... that was just a lucky coincidence and a cherry on the cake!

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/2000s, -2.33, ISO 500



Bara is standing inside, in a place that we rented for the photo shoot, and I am standing outside, in a corridor, shooting through a glass wall. I liked these magnificent lamps, hanging really low (people kept banging their heads against them ;-)) and so I wanted to incorporate them in the shot. With all the reflections, her red dress and pilot sunglasses - to me it looks like a scene from a movie. Houston, do you copy?

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/640s, -0.33, ISO 800



This film or theatre reflector was used as a lamp in a big room, so I thought it would be a good idea to use it as a light source for a profile portrait, when Ondra would look into the reflector so that his face would be lit directly. At the same time, some other lamps and lights created a great bokeh in the background. And for a bit more drama I thought I should transfer it to a contrasting black&white. In the glow of reflectors!

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/250s, -0.33, ISO 400



The source of light in this photograph was an advertising banner. I absolutely loved the fluorescent lines – reflections in the glasses and the model even has catchlights in her eyes in the shape of lines.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.4, 1/1600s, -0.33, ISO 1000





Just walk with the model aimlessly and use any source of light that you happen to see.

NIKON Z100 or 85mm, f/1.4, 1/160s, -1.67, ISO 200

PORTRAITS BY CANDLELIGHT

Portraits by candlelight are in fact also portraits with an unusual source of light – we don't shoot them every day... I will start with a small, but necessary warning – be careful when doing this and be especially mindful with the models. Burning candles are hot, there can be wax running off etc., it may not be easy for the model to hold them in hands for example... or look into them or put them close to their face. Be kind and careful! It's always good if the candle is inside something or placed in a candle holder and so on.

The color of a candle light is naturally warm (yellow – orange) and that's desirable in the photographs, but sometimes it can be “too much” (it depends on personal taste) – you can work with it using the white balance setting (Auto or Sun, because Cloudy would add even more yellow – warm tone) and also during the editing, when you can simply reduce the yellow / orange color.

You will be tackling a lack of light when photographing by candlelight, at least in most cases – I recommend using a tripod and a higher ISO. There are also other methods how to work with having or not having enough light – the intensity of light depends also on the number of candles (and not all of them have to be visible in the shot) and you can also use a small trick (I've mentioned already when talking about foreground bokeh and shooting with Christmas lights) – use an additional source of light, which you may perhaps not disclose in the shot, but of course you can if you want (like me the window in the example below).

I like the “eeriness”, that a candlelight gives to portraits and I boosted it a bit more in this photograph by the old window and the hood over her head. This is the case when the light from the window helped me add more light to the shot and I think that everything works together nicely despite the overexposed part in the window panes.

NIKON D810, Nikkor 50mm, f/1.8, 1/320s, -0.33, ISO 1000



LIGHTPAINTING

One of the creative things that will definitely attract attention is interesting light and using some unusual sources of light. The lightpainting technique is usually used for anything else and everything else but portraits... and that's why we have this chapter here, as we are talking about creative portraits, aren't we? This technique would just as well fit in Lesson 4, where we will discuss colors, since colors play a big role and believe me, nobody will mind that the skin of your object is green, it's sometimes even desirable ;-), but as the title of this technique includes the word "light", I think it's appropriate to include it here, at the end of a lesson about light.

We will be photographing in a dark room in complete darkness, with a bit longer time, than you are used to when shooting portraits and we will be using different sources of light as our "painting brush"! Let's talk a bit more about technical settings though, since the amount of light for the photo shoot will be very limited. First of all, you have to use a tripod without any excuses – it simply isn't possible without it. You also need a complete darkness, without any use of natural light and thirdly – find a truly co-operating model (i.e. adult), who will try not to move. Ideally, the model should sit on a chair for example and

lean against the backrest or against a wall, simply, try to think about the pose so that the photographed person is stable. And then, while the shutter is open, you just "paint" with different sources of light (a torch, bulbs, led lamps, colorful Christmas lights etc.) and lit the subject! To focus, you will need to have some light first before you turn it off. Trick that may help – trace eyes with the light only once, that is how you can get them sharp. True experts are able to shoot breath-taking portraits with this technique, I have here for you an ordinary, exemplary one.



YOUR ASSIGNMENT:

Easy, of course ;-)- try to shoot as much as possible this week and experiment! There is a lot to choose from – a bokeh in the foreground, some play with light and shadow, high key or low key portrait, silhouettes, unusual source of light, portrait by candlelight or lightpainting... or a combination of more, it's up to you, there are really many options this week and I do understand that some of them are not easy to organize, but you will be awarded for your efforts by gaining new skills and experiences and, no doubt, fantastic shots as well! The only condition is, once again, that a different method is used in each of two assignment photographs.

You are of course welcome to share more images in QA forum if you want.

IN THE NEXT LESSON:

LESSON 4 | COLORS EVERYWHERE

- ☆ Portraits and colors
- ☆ Make-up and hair
- ☆ Make a mess
- ☆ Blush!
- ☆ Color smoke bomb
- ☆ Colorful source of light / color foils
- ☆ Monochromatic portraits