

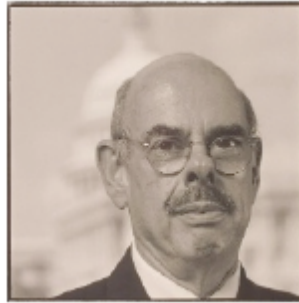
4-Week Short Course: Portrait Photography Lighting on Location and in the Studio with John H. Siskin

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Lesson #3: Portraiture at Work and Shooting Hands

Welcome to Lesson 3.

There are different kinds of portraits that we take at work. We take portraits that tell us who are involved with a company; or perhaps a politician associated with a charity...



Congressman Waxman #2
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David Goldstein
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or the president of a company.

We also take photographs of people at work that tell stories about the kind of work they do.

Then there are others, including photographs that record special

moments in the history of a company.

Many of these photographs have one thing in common: the photographer must work fast.

If you are shooting the board of directors of a bank it is important to consider what the total value of the time of the directors is. Generally, the CEO of the bank is thinking about what it is costing to have the board personnel sitting around waiting for the photographer.



Anita Painting

I used a long shutter speed to capture the movement of painting.

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In order to work quickly, first establish the goal of the photograph. Use gear you can set-up and take down quickly. Make a plan for the shot that you know will work. I generally use two large umbrellas with the centers positioned just above the subjects' heads.

I have one client who has me shoot at a lot of banks. He values speed before quality. If I can do a shot that is 20% quicker for him, though it would be better if I spent an extra half hour on the shot, he would rather I always shoot it quicker. His time management controls the event process. Unfortunately, I can't use any of these shots in this class - no releases!



Anita Painting #5

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Anita is a professional painter. I wanted to shoot her because of her use of color. She even uses daring color in her hair, it is pink and blue! The most important existing source of light in the room is the overhead skylights. I used two lights, both Norman 200Bs, battery strobes with 200 watt-seconds. I like these lights for location work; they are quick to set-up.

I used a small shoot through umbrella on one of the lights. This is not usually my favorite type of light modifier, but it worked well here. The skylights and the color both made me choose this umbrella. The skylight was flat light and I wanted more contrast on the painting. Since the small shoot-through umbrella functions as a fairly small light source, 30 inches across, it gives me back some of the contrast I wanted. This light does two other things: it spreads light all over the room, and it matches the color of the light from the skylight.

The first strobe used the full 200 watt-seconds. The second light I used had a homemade snoot on it. I pointed this light at the painting to further feature it.

I used only 50 watt-seconds with this light. This featured the painting without changing the perception of the painting by over lighting any one part of it. This next shot shows the way the lights were placed.

The snoot is a long tube that you attach to your strobe in order to keep the light focused on just one part of the subject. It provides a round pattern.



Norman Stove Pipe Snoot
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Since I had all this daylight to work with, I was able to try one of my favorite tricks. If you have a balanced source of continuous light, you can mix strobe and continuous light. In such a situation, things that don't move look normal, and moving items have a diffused look and a hard look at the same time. For example, check out Anita's hand in this shot.



Anita Painting Set-up
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Anita Painting
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The way to do this is to lower the shutter speed until you get the look you want. When you let in a lot more light, you may need to adjust your aperture. The basic exposure here was 1/45th of a second at an aperture of f6.7. The moving shots were made at 1/8th of a second at f8. 1 The difference in time gives a wonderful opportunity to display movement in the shot.

I really like this shot. It has a "long, hot day at work" written all over it. This is a pressroom with two six-color offset

presses. Once again, I am mixing daylight with strobe, in this case a Norman 200B on a bracket above the camera. The light has a glass-diffusing dome over the strobe tube.



Pressman #2

Running a six color offset press is a hot and difficult job!

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Norman 200B rig

I use this set-up for outdoor flash among other things.

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In addition to this, almost the entire south wall of the pressroom is opened up for shipping, which gives me a lot of extra light. As a consequence, I am able to make this second shot in which the continuous light made a sort of line around the subject.

This is caused by camera shake that affects the continuous light part of the exposure. I really like this technique. It can make the subject really pop off the page. The problem is that you will always get a lot of bad exposures when you try this, so shoot a lot. Another characteristic of this sort of lighting is a pronounced specular highlight in the eye. I like this also because it draws attention to the eye in the shot. If it became too much of a good thing I would edit it in Photoshop.

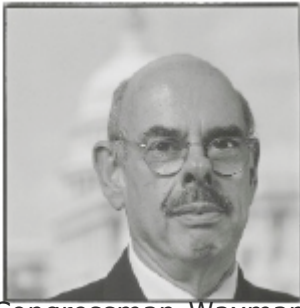


Sam the Pressman

A slightly longer shutter speed creates a separation from the background.

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Congressman Waxman

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This shot was much more complex - Congressman Waxman at work in his office at the U.S. Capitol.

This shot required considerable planning: what to take and how to minimize the time in the Congressman's office. In addition to this, and as I entered his office, I realized he had a great view of the capitol dome. I definitely wanted to capture that in my picture.

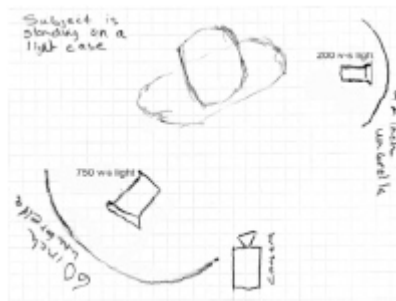
That meant that I had to keep the reflections of my lights off the window. I had an assistant helping me with this shot. (When I work out of town, I always try to get a local assistant.) In addition to helping with the shot, the assistant knew where the local resources were; a tremendous help and time saver.

The equipment I used to make this shot was limited by what I could get efficiently through airport security. The camera was a Mamiya C330, a camera that shoots 6X6cm film. This format needs more light than my current digital camera so I had need of my Calumet 750 Travelite monolight and a pair of the Norman 200B strobes. Additionally I had a tripod, light stands and light diffusers.

Let me point out that when traveling by airline, pack as if any one case is lost, you can still conduct and complete the shoot. Don't put all your lights in one case. Another point about packing your gear: buy cases you can stand on. The congressman is rather "height impaired". In the shot, he is standing on one of my light cases.

There are a couple of critical issues in the way this shot is set. Congressman Waxman is shot from below and with his chin up. Both of these posing choices make his chin stronger and make his nose look better.

Another problem that had to be solved was support lighting reflection on the window. I had to critically adjust the lights. I did this by having my assistant stand in for Congressman Waxman. This enabled me to get everything set-up while not getting in the way of the Congressman. I used the capitol dome in the shot as an important element, helping to define who Congressman Waxman is.



Congressman Waxman

Diagram

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Congress Waxman #1

The trick here is to get the capitol in the background through the window.

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I actually had the Congressman in the set for just over 5 minutes. I was very nervous till I had the film processed. I should point out that I made a lot of Polaroid proofs of my assistant before the Congressman came into the shoot, so I knew everything would work. I can't imagine doing this kind of work without a proof, either Polaroid or digital!

Feature Hands in a Shot

Strangely enough this next company, Who's Brownies, is in the same building as the printer, Master Graphics. Same ownership. If you want to contact Who's

Brownies, and see my tasty pictures on their website, visit www.WhosBrownies.com. I love working with these people; I get to eat the rejects. This series of images was made to feature the handmade nature of their products; so I had to shoot hand shots.

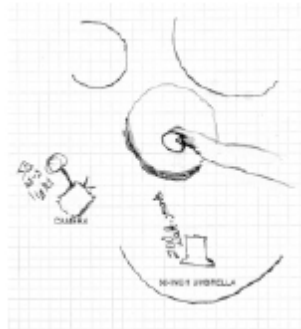


Breaking Eggs at Who's Brownies

This is like a pour shot; it's tough to get right. Kelly really knows how to crack an egg.

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Cracking Egg

Diagram

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The lighting was pretty simple. I utilized a 60-inch umbrella with a Norman 200B, set at 200 watt-seconds. By now I'm sure you understand that I really like these lights on location. The main reason is that I don't have to plug them in, thus they are easy to move around. In addition to this I used another 200B on camera at 50 watt-seconds. This light had the glass diffusion dome over the bulb.

Any job that includes eating cheesecake brownies is a good job in my book!



Cheesecake Brownies!

What a great product.

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I think hand shots can be every bit as expressive as a face image. In these shots I am working with a friend of mine named Bonnie Hunt (see picture below). She has unique hands! They tell you more about who she is than her face does. In a good hand shot, you learn about who the subject is and what they do.



Bonnie's Hands

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Bonnie Hunt

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I used a piece of metal slag for the background in this shot. I think the texture of the metal works well with the textures of her hands. This shot was made with a light panel and an umbrella, there was no light reflected from the other side of the shot. The light is pointed at the umbrella and then comes back through the light panel. This creates an incredibly big smooth light source.

I used a Norman 1250 watt-second powerpack with the light on 1250 for the Black and White shots taken with the Speed Graphic. I used only 500 watt-seconds for the color images taken with

my digital camera. I used this same light source for all the shots I did of Bonnie that day. This light is softer on the face than a smaller light source.

Of course, what the hands are doing is also critical to a photograph. Here Bonnie is clapping.



Bonnie's Hands Clapping
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This is one of my favorite shots because it tells you more about what this guy does than a shot of his face would.



Title: Conductor
Shot in studio with Norman
strobes. Subject was the
client.
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Lighting Tools

There are basically two types of lighting accessories that fit on studio lights. The function of these accessories is to either broaden the size of the light source or to reduce the spread of a light.

The purpose of broadening a light source is to soften the shadows. If light comes from a large source the light actually comes from several directions, this softens highlights and lightens the shadows. The most common accessories used to broaden the light source are umbrellas, softboxes and light panels. In general, the bigger the tool you use to broaden light, whether it is an umbrella, softbox or light panel, the more it will soften the shadows and diffuse the highlights.

If you want to focus light on a small part of a shot, you need one of several tools: **snoot** (introduced earlier in this lesson), **barn doors**, and **grid spot**. All of these allow you to place light into your shot with varying levels of control. One of the key things to think about with these light tools is that the light you place into the

shot will be harsh. So if you light a face with a snoot, the face will have hard shadows and bright highlights. This is not very flattering.

A great thing to do with harsh light is to put it *on top of* diffused light. For instance, you can put a grid spot in front of a light panel. This will add hard highlights to a shot while maintaining the reduced shadows of a large light source. In the studio I often use a small strobe (usually a Norman 200B) on the camera while using light panels for most of the light.



Collin

Using the broad light source and the Norman 200B to create more shape in the face.

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Bob #1

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I want to show you some samples of how these light tools affect the light. We start by looking at a single light focused on a black bowling ball. Not really an interesting shot.

We can see a very harsh shadow, with a quick transition from white to black. Look also at the column the ball is on.

There also is a tight reflection on the bowling ball. This is called a **specular highlight**. I have to thank Bob for this

shot. Bob has helped me to teach lighting for many years.

My favorite tool for broadening light is the **umbrella**. Umbrellas are inexpensive and very easy to set up. I have a shot of Michael Pratt, a Los Angeles actor, which shows the light from a single umbrella. This is not the best light for most people, but it does let you do a quick set-up and get a decent shot.



Michael J. Pratt Set-Up #

1

Umbrella from the subject's right side and above.

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Bob #3
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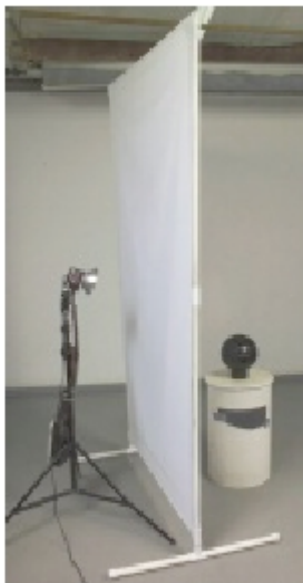


Bob Set-up #3
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Softboxes do not spread light as broadly as an umbrella. Consequently, if you want to light something as big as a person you need a large softbox.

Large softboxes are expensive and very annoying to assemble. I have a picture of Bob with a softbox.

Product shots are one of the most important uses of a softbox, since softboxes have a more natural reflection than an umbrella.



Bob Set-up #4
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Bob #4
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The next tool is the light panel. This is a very simple tool: a frame with a piece of cotton or nylon. You can also use it as a reflector with a white, gold

or silver cover. The light from this can be more or less even depending on whether the light is further or closer to the panel.

You control the light spilling off the side of the panel by making additional panels covered by black cloth or by using a set of barn doors on the light. This can be a really great large light source. The problem is that there is usually a bright spot from the light in the center of the reflection so the light from the panel is not all that even. These photos of Bob give you an idea of how this works.



**Michael J. Pratt
Set-Up #3**

Umbrella and large diffuser, on subject's right side.

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Michael J. Pratt #3

Umbrella and large diffuser, on subject's right side.

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Bob Set-up #5

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Bob #5

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I wanted a more even light panel for a long time. I tried using three of the

panels attached into a triangle with the strobe in the center. This worked but was a pain to set-up and adjust.

I finally tried using an umbrella and then the light panel. This works extremely well for me. I use this for both product shots and portraits. It provides a large even light perfect for all applications. An advantage is that you can move the umbrella into different places, changing the light on your background. The light on Bob or Mike is even and has a beautiful transition from the lit area to the shadow. The only problem with this light is that it requires a lot of strobe power to make it work. This is why I suggest strobes with more power.



Norman Barndoors
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I think that the best tool for reducing the spread of a light is the **barn doors**. A four bladed barn door will enable you to have more control than either of the other tools for reducing the spread of light, snoots and grid spots. In addition to the barn doors I often use the cine foil, **black aluminum foil**.



Norman Grid Spot
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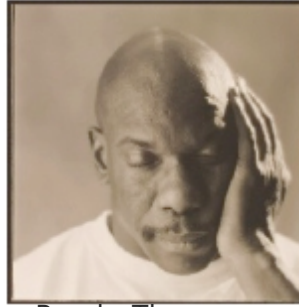
Christine

Using light from the grid spot to highlight the face.

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The grid spot provides a very small spot. This makes it probably more useful than the snoot. I like these for putting a touch of light on a face that is brighter than most of the light on the face.

The combination of the tools enables us to create portraits that express more deeply the essence of a person.



Randy Thompson
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Next week, we'll talk about *Controlling Light*.

Your Assignment: Photos at Work

I would like to see pictures of people doing work they are paid to do. I know that taking care of family is work, but it would be great to see pictures of people working in a commercial kitchen or welding, etc. I would really like to see you challenge yourself to photograph in an unfamiliar environment - a work environment that is a more physical job. It's difficult to work with strangers, but this time you can blame it on your photo teacher.

One of the three shots should feature the subject's hands. These are images you might do as business portraits with strobes or more in the way you would capture an event with an on camera strobe. Take some risks to tell the story of somebody's work with your camera.

Thanks!

John

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