

Digital Photo--- Light

This week for your photo assignment.

Assignment: 1. Begin taking photos of yourself and/or another for the Portrait/Self-Portrait assignment. Use the highest resolution setting your camera will allow. This first week you should be experimenting with different types of light. Turn off the flash. Have at least 5 images in each of these: morning light, mid-day full sun, evening light, inside fill light, inside direct light, inside light from a window, overcast outside light. Make sure you are keeping notes as to each lighting situation.
2. read articles on self portrait and see examples on Blackboard in "Portrait" folder.

Have at least 5 images in each of these: morning light, mid-day full sun, evening light, inside fill light, inside direct light, inside light from a window, overcast outside light. Make sure you are keeping notes as to each lighting situation.

Read this first...

Seeing with Light
edited from Light and Lens: Photography in the Digital Age, Robert Hirsh

NATURAL LIGHT--Physics shows us that light is ambiguous and paradoxical, possessing the qualities of both particles and waves. Light's changing physical properties demonstrate that everything is in flux and nothing is as it appears to be, signifying the numerous ways any subject may be viewed and interpreted.

THE Thingness of Light-- Every photograph is about light. Light is a plastic medium that is the key ingredient shared by every photograph and determines the look of every photograph you make. Light's authority defines the essence of a subject. Light is the glue that holds your image together. Light makes known the emotional and physical contents within your visual space and activates vision and meaning. Every image provides a different set of conditions in which we can experience light. If the light does not reveal the perceived nature of the subject, the picture will not communicate the content you wish to transmit to a viewer. In that sense, pictures are about what others are able to see in them.

An awareness and knowledge of natural light is the first step toward the smart

use of its substitute: artificial light. The possibilities of natural light are infinite and self-renewing. To study photography is to study light by emphasizing your visual results rather than the means of containing them. The type of equipment one uses is not important. What matters is learning to use your gear so it becomes an extension of your own vision. Begin to recognize what light artist and creator of *Roden Crater* James Turrell calls the 'thingness' of light, the characteristics and qualities that natural light possess throughout the day, and learn to follow and incorporate them into your composition for a complete visual statement.

Good Light—the definition of 'good light' is solely dependent on a photographer's intent. There is no time of day or year when the sunlight is photographically better than another. However, it might be more suitable for a particular subject. At various times of day and in different seasons, light takes on a range of unique physical attributes, each with its own emotional and tactile qualities. Have you ever encountered a scene that you thought would make a good photograph, yet the results were disappointing? There is a strong probability that it was photographed at a time of day at which the light did not reveal the fundamental aspects of the subject that were important and attracted you to the scene in the first place.

The Camera and Light—your ability to function as a creative photographer depends on your knowledge of how to make your equipment work for you. A camera is a recording device, and it will not reproduce a scene or an experience without your guidance. The camera can isolate a scene; it can reduce it to two dimensions; capture a slice of time; and set it into a frame. What it does not do is record the sequence of events that led up to the moment you pressed the shutter button or registered your private emotional response to what was happening that sparked the urge to make the picture. The camera does not discriminate in what it sees and records, but you can, and must, make such distinctions to create successful images. **Keep in mind that the camera, lens, software, and paper have but a single purpose: to capture and present light.**

Cycles of light—notice how light changes throughout the day. Here are a few phases of light that will affect your images:

Before Sunrise—light is cool, shadowless and colors are muted.

Morning—warmer colors, shadows can look blue. As the sun rises, the color of light becomes warmer (red-orange). By midmorning, the light begins to lose its warm color and starts to appear clear and white.

Midday—greater contrast between colors. At noon the light is white and colors stand out strongly. Shadows are deep and black. At noon the light may be too harsh, stark or crisp for many subjects.

Afternoon—as the sun begins to drop to the horizon, the light begins to warm up again. This is a gradual process and must be carefully observed. An increasing amount of detail is revealed as the level of the sun lowers.

Twilight/Evening—after sunset there is still a lot of light in the sky. Often sunset colors are reflected from the clouds. Light is soft, and contrast and shadows are at a minimum. After sunset and throughout twilight, notice the warm colors in the landscape.

Night—after the sun has set the world is seen by artificial light and reflected light from the moon. The light is generally harsh, and contrast is extreme. Combinations of artificial light and long exposure can create a surreal atmosphere. Photographing under these conditions requires long exposures at a high ISO setting in combination with a tripod, brace or very steady hand.

Other things that affect light and must be experimented with are: the seasons, snow, dust, heat and fire, the beach and desert.

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

Add a Light—once you understand the cycle of natural light, you might want to consider additional possibilities of controlling the light in your images. The simplest way is to begin working with a single artificial light with a bowl-shaped reflector on an adjustable stand having three folding legs and a center pole that can be raised and lowered. Professional photographers use many different types of lighting because different lights produce different colors and intensities. A simple indoor light (Tungsten) has a cool tint.

Whatever type of artificial light you use the direction of the light and degree of its diffusion will determine whether you produce a hard-edged or soft effect. The larger the light source in relationship to the subject, the softer the quality of light. The farther back you place a light, the smaller it will be relative to your subject and the harder the shadows will appear. The closer you set the same light to your subject, the broader the light will be, thus making it more diffused and softer in appearance. If you want dark and sharply defined shadows, use a directional light that is relatively far from the subject. If you want a soft and shadowless look, use a broad diffused light source close to the subject. Also, the position of the light and its distance from the subject will determine the amount of texture and volume (the amount of viewable space) in your image.

The size of your light, known as key light, will control and define shadow and texture. A small light will produce hard shadows and emphasize skin texture. While this can be excellent for bringing out facial character, it is at the expense of conventional standards of beauty. Large lights produce soft shadows, reduce skin texture and make facial irregularities less noticeable.

Placement of light will determine where the highlights and shadows will fall and how sharply they will be defined. Bear in mind that creating a three-dimensional illusion of the space in a two-dimensional photography requires highlight and shadow areas.

Basic Lighting Methods:

1. Front Light—
2. Side Light—
3. High Side Light—
4. Low Side Light—
5. Top Light—
6. Back Light—
7. Under Light--