

How I create a portrait

Environment

I firmly believe that one of the most important things in creating a portrait is the environment in which the portrait is created. I define environment as the immediate close surroundings affecting the image. Careful consideration must be given to matching the desired result to the environment. So for the type of portraiture that I do I need a relaxed somewhat homelike area. I use a living room to do most of my shooting. I have a couple of couches, a table, a straight chair, an easy chair, and a lowboy bench.

Other photographers that I know use totally different setups. Each must create that which will best enhance the individual style. There is no “end all be all.”

Relax customer

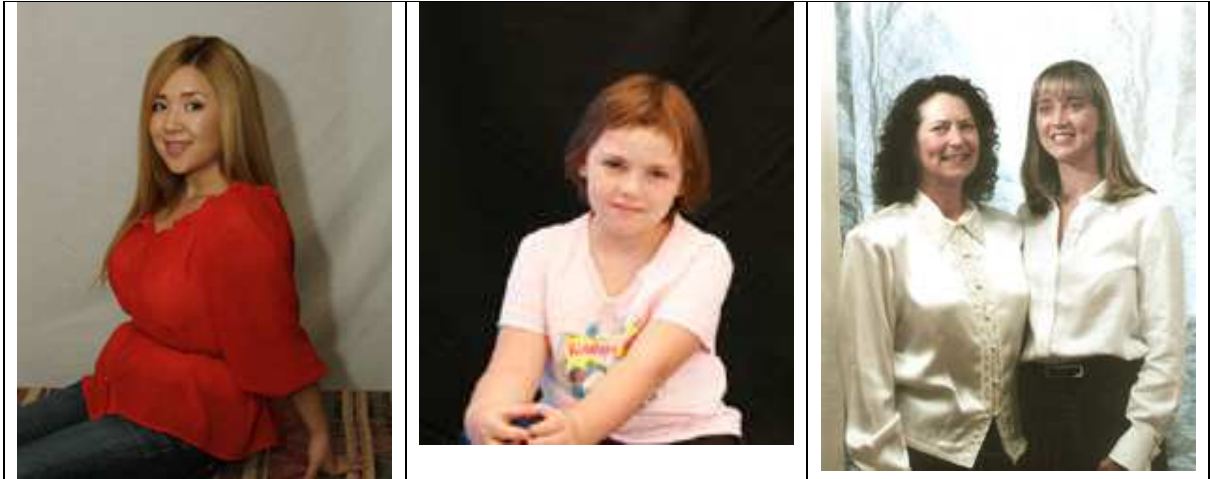
When the customer comes into the studio I greet them and try to help them relax. I usually have them sit in one of the chairs or on the couch while I explain what I am going to do. Many times I will ask them to close their eyes and breathe in and out slowly a few times. I never rush!!! If the customer is in too much of a hurry I will sometimes suggest that perhaps it would be better if we re-scheduled when they are under less pressure. Most of the time this will get them to slow down and we can proceed. It is better to lose a shoot than to rush and mess it up. This approach may not work for everybody but it does for me.

Study face

When the subject has relaxed I then tell them that I need to study their face for a few minutes. I then study their face as to body type, bone structure, blemishes, and particularly to the eye structure. The way the eyes are treated is of paramount importance.

Pose subject = These are images both edited and unedited to demonstrate various poses.

[POSES }



Placing the subject in a viable position requires thought. I use, among other things, chair, couch, stool, wall, window, and floor. I first decide if I am going to create a full, half, torso, or head shot. Then I have the subject assume several positions using the props I selected.. Sometimes I will snapshot these for reference. After I have carefully selected the poses I am going to use I position the subject in the first pose.

Decide on lighting

For the most part I specialize in single light lighting. That is purely a matter of choice. I have used multiple lighting but for the drama I specialize in I prefer a single light strategically placed. I generally use a from shoulder up light for female and a shoulder down for male. This will vary according to circumstance.

Make the image

Now I set the ISO no. Then I take a reading with my Luna pro SBC meter. I use this meter because it gives me offsets to adjust for my Sunpak 365 flash. Now I set the aperture and shutter speed. I now release the shutter and create the image.

Move from CF card to raw folder

Next I move the images from the CF card to a folder labeled raw. From this folder I am able to make my primary adjustments using Digital Photo Professional (DPP).

Open and edit in Digital Photo Professional (DPP.)

Then I save the partially edited image to a folder labeled DPP

I open the edited image from the DPP folder, convert and save it to JPG folder.

I do this to preserve the integrity of the images.

I always keep the RAW and DPP folders so that if I goof I am able to go back and recover my work.

(As point of reference I use photoshop 7)

Open JPG folder

First I crop the image and save it.

Then I extract image

I erase everything in the background that is unnecessary to the portrait that I am creating and save what's left.



Edit:

This is by far the most time consuming part of the process.

Skin

Using various tools such as dodge, burn, sponge, levels, color balance, hue and saturation, to name a few, I massage the skin into the way I want it to look.

Eyes



Magnify the eye area to about 200%
Choose mask function.
Pencil—mode=normal opacity=100% brush size about 3 to 5.
Carefully outline the whites then fill with red color (white part only)

Exit quick mask



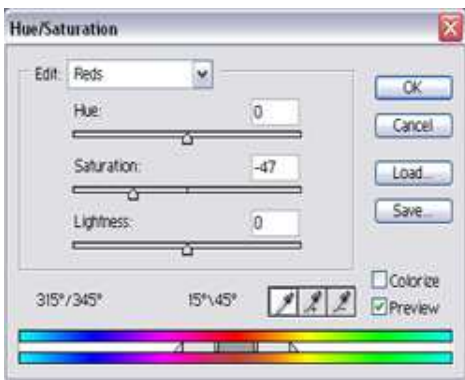
Instead of the red you will see dashes around the masked area.
Go up to select and choose inverse.
The picture should look like this.



Go to image – adjustments – Hue saturation –



Master - lightness = +10



Reds = - 47



Yellows= -34

Press O.K.

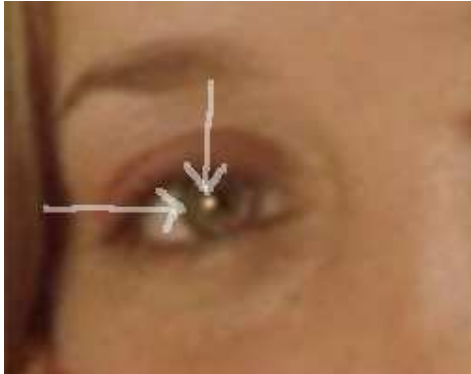


Click on marquee tool, move the cursor to the picture and click.

The Eyes should look like this.



Iris



Use dodge tool at 50%. Size the tool to fit the light area surrounding the pupil. Make one pass only. Then size the tool to fit the catch lights. Go to 100% and click one time only on the catchlights.

Teeth

This is the same procedure as for the eye edit.

Mask



100%

Cover teeth
Exit quick mask



Image – adjustments – Hue saturation – reds -48
Yellows -34
Master - lightness -10
Marquee tool and delete



Lips

Mask



100%

Cover lips
Exit quick mask



Select inverse

Image – adjustments – levels or hue-saturation to taste



Hair

Dodge – highlights – 30% - airbrush soft round



Sponge – saturate – 30% - airbrush soft round

