

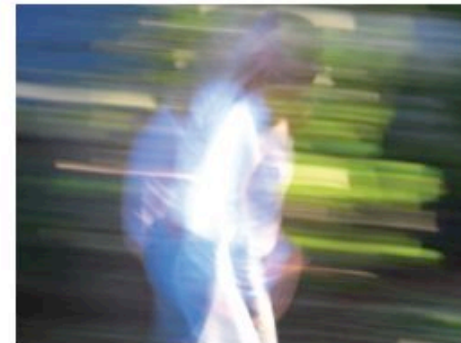
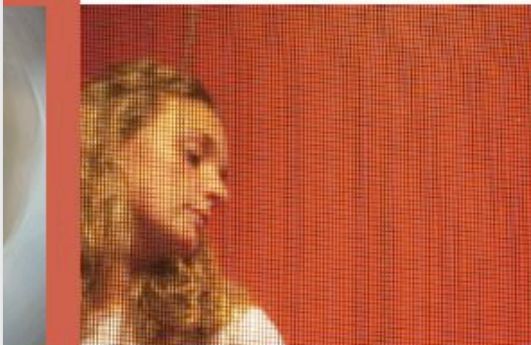
PORTRAITURE

Your goal with this project is to explore what your camera can do and what it can't. Making a beautiful portrait is a secondary objective. In fact, the worse your pictures are, the more likely you are to learn from them. After completing this hands-on adventure, you will know every function on your camera. You will also have expanded your shooting repertoire.

You need two pals for this creative probe. Begin with a friend—someone you know and like and who likes you enough to be your photo slave. The second pal is your camera. Plan on shooting at a location where there are a variety of lighting possibilities.

As you sweet-talk someone into being your subject, be sure to give them the following warnings: You will need at least a full hour of his or her time. He or she should be prepared to hold poses for extended periods of time. Suggest bringing a book or magazine to read while you are busy preparing different setups and fiddling with your camera. This will be a work session, not a gabfest.

There are seven specific challenges. Each explores a particular facet of digital photography that yields big benefits.



Sean-Michael Aaron; Jeff Ertz; Alan Yong Suk Lee; Jeff Ertz

1. OCCULT POINT OF VIEW

Shoot your subject using the most extreme points of view you can find. At least one image should show your subject's full body. You might experiment shooting your subject via a mirrored surface. Try to find a fresh and original viewpoint and note that giving direction to your subject is in itself something you need to experiment with. There's more to it than you might expect!

2. DEPTH OF FIELD

Take shots of your subject that incorporate both the maximum depth of field (where everything is in focus) and the minimum depth of field possible. For the latter, you might ask your subject to stretch out on the floor while you attempt to shoot some parts of the body in focus and some out of focus. Note the differences caused by shooting with the telephoto as opposed to the wide-angle settings on your zoom lens.

3. SILHOUETTE

Without a lighting kit that includes two or three fixtures and a reflecting surface, it is pretty difficult to experiment with the key, fill, rim, and other lighting approaches described in this chapter. However, you should be able to shoot a silhouette by placing your subject against a very bright background. Bracket your exposures with the aim of recording a figure that is totally filled in and shows no contours other than the outside edges.

4. FRAMING AND COMPOSITION

Try an extreme close-up, a medium frame, and a long shot. While composing at least one of the shots, set up your subject so that you are looking through or past something in the foreground (a screen, mesh, a finger, a hair, etc.). Explore the

rule of thirds by shooting one image with the subject in the center. Then shoot a similar image with the subject located at a couple of the four intersecting points created when you divide the viewfinder into three equal horizontal and vertical lines.

5. BLUR

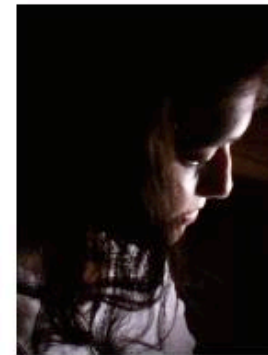
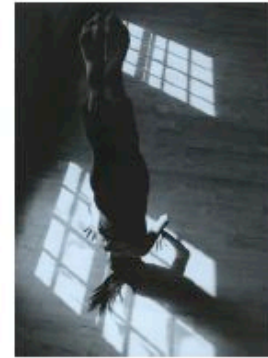
Test your camera's shutter speed by trying to make the most blurry picture possible. Have your subject rapidly swing his or her arms while you shoot with the "fastest" exposure. Then have him or her repeat the gesture, but shoot on the "slowest" shutter speed. To complete this camera test, have your subject repeat the motion a final time, and see what motion blur you get from the camera's automatic setting. Blur is a very creative design element. See if you can paint with a light by intentionally swinging the camera as you press the trigger.

6. LAG

Test the shutter lag in your camera by asking your subject to jump in place. Can you capture an image of your friend at the height of his or her jump? The jumping test will reveal your camera's speed and help you figure out how best to catch decisive moments. Note that camera lag is much less a factor with the current generation of digital cameras than it was with earlier generations.

7. FORESHORTENING AND SIZE CONTRAST

Experiment with compositions that place your subject in different visual relationships with other objects in the camera's frame. For example, position the camera so that your subject's head is tiny compared to another part of his or her body. Vary this idea by having fun with a prop.



Katie Elmore; Lydia Antonini;
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