THE PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER'S

GUIDE TO POSING

2ND EDITION

BILL HURTER

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About the Author

Bill Hurter started out in photography in 1972 in Washington, DC, where he was a news photographer. He even covered the political scene—including the Watergate hearings. After graduating with a BA in literature from American University in 1972, he completed training at the Brooks Institute of Photography in 1975. Going on to work at *Petersen's PhotoGraphic* magazine, he held practically every job except art director. He has been the owner of his own creative agency, shot stock, and worked assignments (including a year or so with the L.A. Dodgers). He has been directly involved in photography for the last thirty plus years and has seen the revolution in technology. In 1988, Bill was awarded an honorary Master of Science degree from the Brooks Institute. In 2007 he was awarded an honorary Masters of Fine Arts degree from Brooks. He has written close to forty instructional books for professional photographers and is currently the editor of *Rangefinder* and *AfterCapture* magazines.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN JAIRAJ.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY GHIONIS.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK NIXON.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER GEORGE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank all of the incredible photographers who helped me in the preparation of this book. Some of them, like Bill McIntosh, the late Don Blair, and the late Monty Zucker, have been working portrait photographers for close to sixty years. Others, like David Williams and Martin Schembri, are relatively new kids on the block, and yet have managed to make significant contributions to a genre that includes the likes of Michelangelo and DaVinci. Many thanks to the wonderful photographers who contributed both their images and expertise to this book. It would not have been possible without them.

The Nature of Portraiture

Just as the mythological Narcissus peered down into a pool of water and saw an image of himself as a youth whose beauty was dazzling, so the subject of a fine portrait session sees his or her own likeness in a form that is idealized and beyond comparison. Even beyond this likeness, however, the best of portraiture captures characteristics unseen by the eye but experienced

David Williams created this exquisite portrait as a part of a quartet of images about the seasons. This image is obviously *Spring*. Notice some of the subtleties of the posing and composition. The pair are facing each other at 45 degree angles to introduce eye-pleasing diagonals into the composition. The mother appears strong and straight but there is a childlike innocence about her, not unlike her baby boy. Notice, too, how the light almost seems to emanate from the pair, a function of a small hair light placed behind them. The colors are rich and saturated and yet there is a warmth to the image, especially in the faces. Their hair and the leaves on the ground are almost exactly the same color. The lush greenery surrounds and frames the pair almost as if nature is trying to envelop and protect them.

through the emotions. Strength, honesty, vulnerability, and character are each imparted through the photographer's use of lighting, composition, and above all posing.

Lasting Images

Great portraiture has captivated viewers for centuries, stirring our imaginations. Award-winning Australian photographer David Williams articulates his feelings upon seeing a captivating portrait, by nineteenth century French artist Gustav Courtois, of a beautiful young woman in a Chinese dressing gown against a textured gold background. "She seduced me. I could imagine her laughter, her passion. Who was she? What were her thoughts, attitudes, tastes? What life did she have? How long did she live? There were so many questions . . . but then, in the nature of fine portraiture through the ages, there was an imagined rustle of fabric, a sense of perfume—the gentle brush past of a long-departed soul, and she was gone."

Portraits of children are not just for the parents. When the child reaches adulthood, these image offer them an unparalleled look back at their early years. Photograph by David Williams.

Gifted portrait photographers have the ability to create lasting images of people that are enjoyed by generations of viewers. The late Don Blair, a legendary portrait photographer, described his portrait skills as an offshoot of his personality. "To me," he said, "everyone is beautiful. It is my job to bring out that beauty and capture it." He continues, "This pursuit [. . .] has been a lifelong obsession—an endless journey upon which I travel each day." In Blair's carefully crafted portraits, one sees a nearly perfect moment frozen in time in which the person's beauty and character are affectionately revealed.

David Williams takes Don Blair's notion a step farther. "My recent photography of children, done in a documentary style, demonstrates to me the power and duration of portraiture. What I have realized is that I am not making photographs just for the parents of a child. I have come to understand that we also make images for that child when he or she be-

The long wisp of hair and the off-center composition make this image compelling. David Williams made this portrait of his then eighteen-year-old niece, whom he describes as "a fresh beauty with a quiet and trusting innocence." He titled the image *My Flying Heart*. The directness of the pose combines with modern framing to create a timeless image.

comes an adult. When they look back at those images and see themselves as they were, they are looking for their parents when they were young. Such is the power and value of portraiture."

The Evolution of Posing

In the early years of photographic portraiture, posing was an absolute necessity. Extremely slow films, equally slow lenses, and a lack of artificial light sources dictated necessarily long exposures. For these portraits, using a headrest, known as an "immobilizer," allowed photographers to record subjects at long exposure times (several minutes long) without subject movement. However, the resulting poses were stiff and unnatural—and the expressions were grim, at best.

All that has changed by virtue of vastly improved technology, which has allowed photographers to work freely and naturally and to record spontaneity in their portraits. But with the freedom of refined technology there was also a loss. Gone was the almost rigid framework of poses that developed over centuries. The way photographers once carefully sculpted the human form has

given way to a love of naturalness—comfortably posed, softly lit images that sometimes lack the delicate refinements that inspire the viewer's imagination and elevate the portrait to an artistic level.

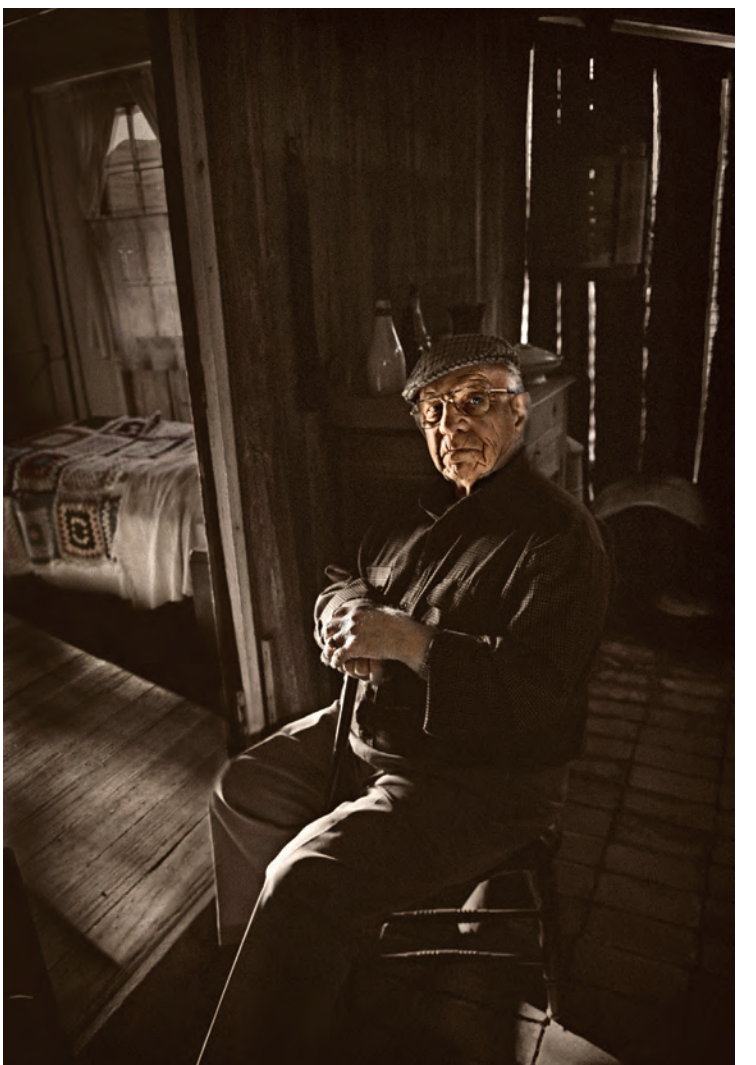
Today's great portrait photographers have not completely lost sight of the posing rules that once existed, of course. The best photographers have found ways to incorporate them into a freer framework of informality. They haven't forgotten the fundamentals of posing but have chosen to interpret those rules less rigidly.

Posing Today

Tim Kelly: A Fine-Art Approach. Renowned portrait photographer Tim Kelly is someone who knows the intricacies of posing inside and out, but he chooses to set a different standard for fine portraiture. He looks for that fleeting moment when you may glimpse the subject "in a totally self-disclosing, semi-posed moment of self-revelation." Kelly does not usually warn his clients that he is ready to begin a session. He says, "I don't believe in faking the spontaneity of the subject's expression. Every session promises something unique and unstructured." Kelly calls this style "the captured moment," not too different from the viewpoint of the wedding photojournalist, for whom spontaneity and genuine emotion are often more important than an elegantly perfect pose. He comments, "An artistic portrait should command attention, make an artistic statement, or trigger an emotional response from the viewer." He adds, "A fine-art portrait transcends time. It goes far beyond the utilitarian uses of the people portrayed."

Tim Kelly know exactly what feature of his subjects to concentrate on. Here, it his subject's beautiful hair. Tim made sure it framed her face and had her play with her hair to make it seem even more textural. "I analyze the face and the hair to determine how I'm going to begin my design," he says. "I'll usually start with a basic two-thirds-view headshot on both sides of the subject. After I get an idea which side of the face I like better, I often spend the rest of my session on that one side. If somebody has a good and bad side (or a good and better side), obviously you're wise to spend your time on the better side. If you can assess that in the first three minutes, why not?"

ABOVE—Hands, arms, feet, legs, expressions—everything in this big group portrait is handled well. The expressions are all quite somber, something that is difficult to choreograph in a large group unless the emotion is genuine. Photograph by Martin Schembri.



LEFT—This old man's face and weathered hands have seen a few miles, but his gaze is crisp and clear. And even though the house is old, it is clean and orderly. Photograph by Martin Schembri.

Martin Schembri: Natural and Uncontrived. Decorated Australian wedding and portrait photographer Martin Schembri uses the *Mona Lisa* as his benchmark of fine portraiture, saying, "It is the essence of the person captured in a single expression." While a Schembri portrait can be made classically or in a very informal style, he demands that the posing of all of his portraits be comfortable and natural (to the viewer) and that the pose not appear contrived. He offers this advice about making each portrait unique: "Ensure that your portraits are as individual as each person you photograph and never treat the exercise as one in which the technicalities rule."

This is a remarkable image created by Yervant Zanazanian. There are stories being told throughout this image and all of the men (note, there are no women pictured) are busy either talking or listening. There are old men telling what may be tall tales to younger men. There are boys listening intently to older men relating some tale of long ago. It's how history and tradition are passed down in many religions and societies. This is an award-winning portrait.

Yervant Zanazanian: Directing a Moment. Austalian Yervant Zanazanian is widely regarded as one of the finest posing technicians alive. However, he prefers not to rely on his classical training in posing. He says, "Even though I know how to pose traditionally, I choose to break all the rules, because if I pose traditionally the couple will be totally bored. I don't want them to be bored, I want them to interact the whole time. So forget about traditional posing. Put them into a position and let them come naturally into the pose. Besides, I want to keep it fun and energetic." He continues, "I pretend they are models in the middle of a very important fashion shoot." Instead of traditional posing, he prefers to direct his subjects, delivering concise guidance with the precision of a skilled film director. He never breaks the mood, but he has definite needs for the pictures and usually his "directions" resemble (more than a little) formal posing instructions.

FACING PAGE—Modern tools, such as battery-powered, lightweight strobes and sophisticated TTL lighting systems, allow the photographer to make studio-quality images on location. Here, Nick Adams recreated a favorite, decades-old glamour pose. Note the tilt of her chin toward her near shoulder, the diagonal line her arm, and the delicate positioning of her hand. All of these elements of portrait composition remain as relevant today as they were fifty years ago.

1. Posing Basics

The rules regarding posing were established over the centuries to provide a means of appealingly rendering the three-dimensional human form in a two-dimensional medium.

In any general discussion of posing subjects for modern portraits, the two most important elements to keep in mind are that the pose appear natural (*i.e.*, that the subject does not look posed), and that the person's features are undistorted. If the pose looks natural and the features are rendered normally, in proper perspective, then you will have achieved a major goal and the por-

If the pose looks natural and the features are rendered normally, you will have achieved a major goal.

Posing should look and feel natural—and keep the subject's features in proper perspective. This fun image was made by Jeff and Julia Woods with a Canon EOS 1Ds Mark II and 24mm lens.

This is a nice example of posing the head and neck to produces diagonal lines within the composition. Another beautiful diagonal line is created by the tilt of the head and resulting diagonal line of the eyes. Photographers Jeffrey and Julia Woods also made sure that there were various triangular shapes included throughout the composition.

Without these elements, the other artistic elements would not be appreciated or even noticed.

trait will generally be considered aesthetically pleasing to both the photographer and the subject. To be sure, there is much more that goes into a great portrait than adequate posing, but without these elements, the other artistic elements would not be appreciated or even noticed.

While every rule of posing could not possibly be followed in every portrait, these rules exist for the purpose of providing a framework for achieving the aforementioned goals, portraying the human form naturally, flatteringly, and without distortion.

The Head and Shoulders

The Shoulders. The first rule of good portraiture is that the subject's shoulders should be turned at an angle to the camera. Posing the subject with their

With women, the head is usually turned and tilted toward the high shoulder. Notice here how the young woman looks along the line of her shoulder for a distant but very pleasant expression. Photograph by Stuart Bebb.

shoulders facing the camera straight-on makes them look wider and stockier than normal. Although this type of straight-on pose is often used in the world of fashion (where models are thin and very well proportioned), you will not often see it when "regular people" are photographed.

Whether the subject is seated or standing, another rule concerns the line of the shoulders. One shoulder should be noticeably higher than the other—which is to say that the line of the shoulders should not be parallel to the ground.

Not only should the shoulders be at an angle, so should each subject's head. These two imaginary lines running through shoulders (shoulder axis) and down the ridge of the nose (head axis) should each exhibit a different plane and angle. The head axis should never be perpendicular to the shoulder axis, and neither the head nor the shoulder axis should be perpendicular to the line of the lens axis (again, this rule is often broken in fashion portraiture). Essentially, rather than perpendicular lines, we are looking to create more interesting and appealing diagonal lines throughout the composition.

The Head Tilt. With the shoulders at an angle to the camera, the head is normally turned or tilted to slant the natural line of the person's eyes. When the face is not tilted, the line of the eyes is parallel to the bottom edge of the photograph, yielding an image that can seem quite static. By tilting the person's face to

the right or left, the implied line becomes diagonal, making the pose more dynamic and interesting to the viewer.

With men, the head is frequently tilted toward the lower shoulder and the head and body are turned in the same direction—often toward the light source, with the body at a 45-degree angle to the camera. In a seated masculine portrait, men are often pictured leaning in toward the camera, which is considered an assertive pose.

With women, the head is usually turned and tilted toward the high shoulder. The body is tipped forward at the waist and leaned slightly in the opposite direction from the way the face is turned. For example, if the subject is looking to her left shoulder, the body leans to the right. In the feminine pose, the body often faces away from the light source, but the face is turned toward the light.

While somewhat a cliché, the masculine tilt of the head provides the impression of strength—a traditional male characteristic. Conversely, the femi-

LEFT—As you can see in this bridal portrait by Kevin Jairaj, the angles of the head and shoulders don't have to be exaggerated to be effective. Gently sloping diagonals make this pose natural and appealing.

BELOW—Brett Florens made this image for his book *The Perfect Weekend*, which featured famous South Africans during their leisure time. Note the dad's head tilted toward the far shoulder, a decidedly masculine pose.

nine tilt of the head creates an impression of mystery and vulnerability—traditionally female traits. As with most posing suggestions, keep in mind that the most natural look is achieved when the tilt of the person's head is slight and not exaggerated.

Whether to tilt the subject's head toward the near shoulder or the far shoulder is a somewhat controversial issue among portrait photographers. These "rules" are frequently disregarded because individual differences and lighting will often determine the appropriate pose for the subject. The strategy is mentioned here so that you can decide for yourself.

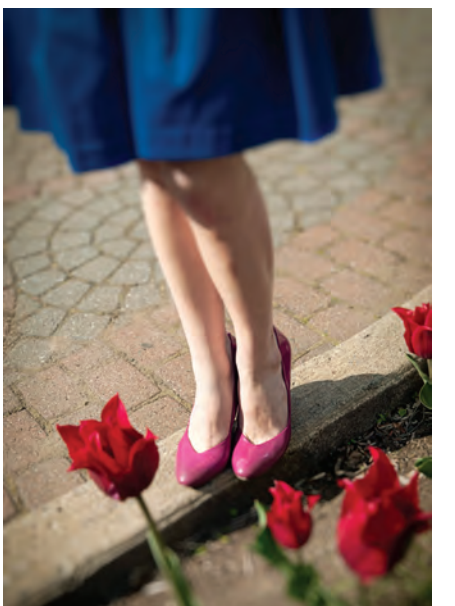
Start with the Feet

To accomplish the correct positioning of the shoulders in a portrait where the subject is standing, you start with the feet. Begin by having the subject stand with their feet at an angle to the camera. In addition to preventing the stumpy look feet get when feet are pointed at the camera, placing the feet at an angle will automatically turn the body so that it is at an angle to the camera.

Next, have the subject bring one foot forward and place their weight on their back leg. This causes the forward knee to bend and the rear shoulder to dip lower than the forward one. With one statement, "Weight on

TOP LEFT—The phrase "start with the feet" means a great deal to the portrait photographer. By having the subject move their feet, you can quickly turn their shoulders away from the lens. From there you can instruct the subject to put their weight on their back foot, creating a bend in the front leg. In this case, that bend gives the front of the dress a nice line. Photograph by Stuart Bebb.

BOTTOM LEFT AND BELOW—Here are two examples by Michael Greenberg in which the "weight on your back foot" guideline applies significantly. In the highly stylized horizontal image, you can see that the bride's extended front leg extends and defines the shape of the wedding dress. In the close-up of the colorful shoes, you can see how that, even though the legs are close together, you are adding a dynamic line to the front leg by having the subject put her weight on her back foot.



ABOVE—Slim, attractive subjects are the best candidates for full-face poses. This senior looks great with her shoulders square to the camera—but it's a pose that wouldn't work for some other portrait subjects. Photograph by TriCoast Photography.

LEFT—South African Brett Florens used the full-face view to design a very direct and intense image of this groom in a casual pose.

your back foot, please," you can introduce a series of dynamic diagonal lines into an otherwise average composition.

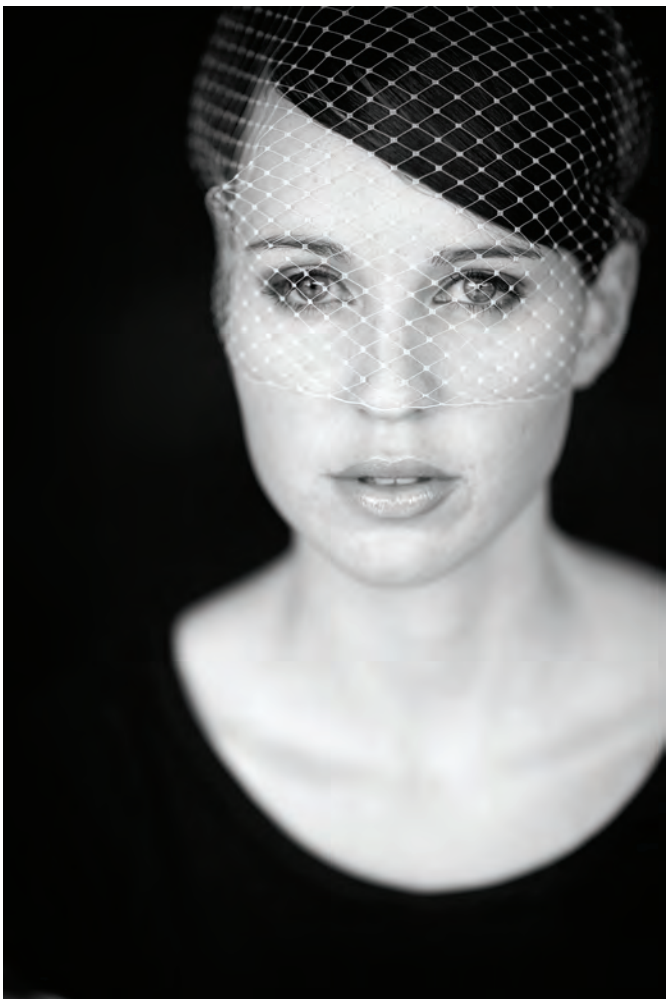
In a seated portrait, simply having the subject lean forward from the waist will create a sloping line across the shoulders (provided that the person is seated at an angle to the camera).

Facial Views

In addition to the vertical angle of the head relative to the shoulders, you must decide on the angle of the face to the camera. There are a few basic facial views in portraiture.

The Full-Face View. A full-face view is created by having the subject point their face directly into the camera. In this view, both sides of the face are seen equally. This look is quite common in fashion photography; it is less frequent-

The seven-eighths view is accomplished when the subject is looking slightly away from the camera. You will see a little more of one side of the face than the other through the viewfinder. Photograph by Brett Florens.



This portrait by Marcus Bell shows a seven-eighths view—and a subject with a facial structure that makes it look wonderful. A wide face rarely looks good in this view.

ly used in portrait photography. A full-face pose looks very assertive and direct. With the right subject, this can produce an attractive, intense portrait.

The Seven-Eighths View. The seven-eighths view is achieved when the subject's face is turned just slightly away from the camera. You will see a little more of one side of the face than the other when looking through the viewfinder. This facial view has much of the directness of the full-face view, but the overall look is slightly softened.

The Three-Quarter View. In the three-quarter view, the far ear is hidden from the camera, and considerably more of one side of the face is visible to the camera. With this type of pose, the far eye will appear smaller because it is farther away from the camera. When posing the sitter in a three-quarter facial view, it is important to position him or her so that the small eye (people always have one eye that is slightly smaller than the other) is closer to the camera. This strategy takes advantage of perspective to make both eyes appear to be the same size in the final photograph.

The Two-Thirds View. The two-thirds view is probably the most frequently used facial position and the most versatile angle at which to photograph the human face. In this view, as in the three-quarter view, you see two full planes of the facial mask, providing the most opportunity to show roundness, dimension, and expression. This view

is obtained by turning the subject's head farther than the seven-eighths view, but just short of the profile view. Whether you call it a two-thirds or three-quarter viewpoint (many photographers do not make a distinction between the two), it is important that the eye on the far side of the face appear to be contained within the face by including a small strip of visible skin along the far temple.

The Profile View. In the profile view, the head is turned almost 90 degrees to the camera, so only one eye is visible. When posing your subject in a profile position, have him or her turn their head gradually away from the camera position, just until the far eye and eyelashes disappear from view. In

LEFT—Brett Florens captured his subject in a three-quarter view, in which considerably more of one side of the face is visible to the camera.

BELOW—The two-thirds view is not too much different from the three-quarters view. Here, Michael Greenberg had his bride look away from the camera to produce the aloof but friendly pose. Note, too, that the photographer introduced several strong triangles into the subject's pose in order to have her dominate all that's going on in the right-hand side of the frame.

some cases, especially with women, you will still be able to see the eyelashes of the far eye when the subject is in profile. Instead of turning the head farther to eliminate the eyelashes, retouch them out later.

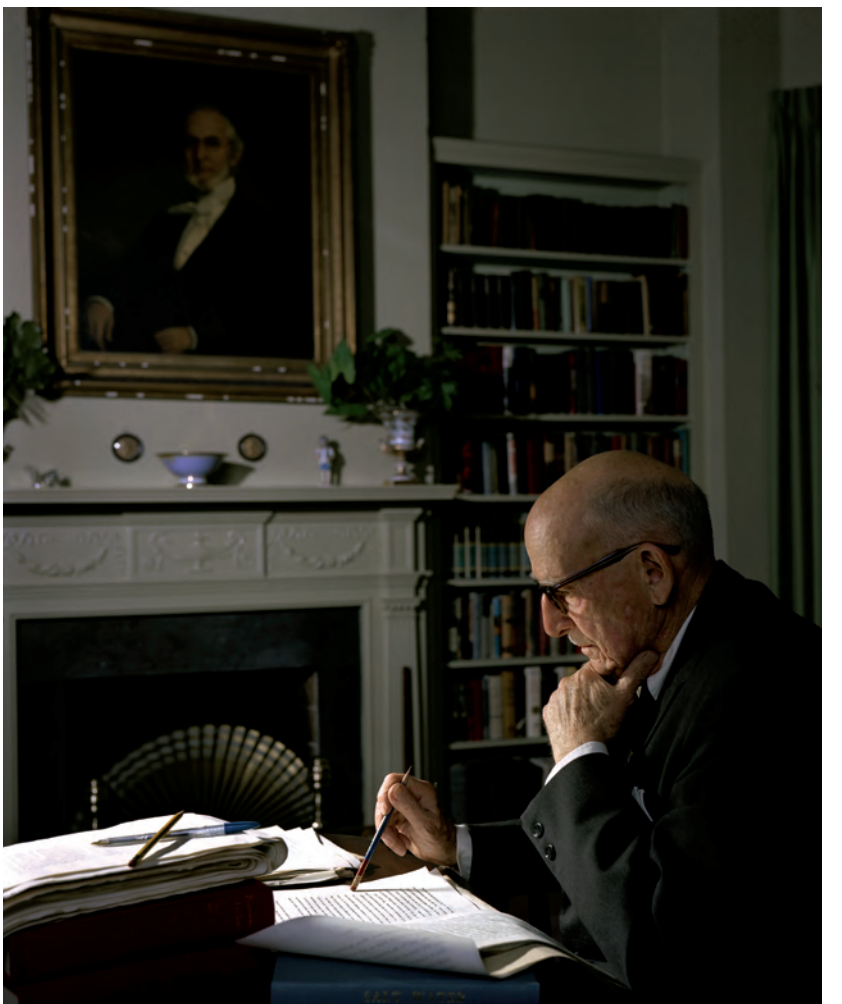
The Body

The Body at an Angle to the Camera. As with the planes of the face, turning the body plane so that it is at an angle to the camera will produce a more dynamic ef-

TOP LEFT—Brett Florens created this humorous profile for his book, *The Perfect Weekend*.

BOTTOM LEFT—When posing profiles, it's important that the subject direct his gaze forward—but not so far forward that all of the color of the iris disappears. If that happens, have him direct his view closer to the camera. Photograph by Michael Greenberg.

BOTTOM RIGHT—This portrait by Bill McIntosh is of Lenoir Chambers, a Virginia writer and 1962 Pulitzer Prize winner. The expression Bill was striving for was intense concentration, which he achieved with the use of a profile pose.



BROAD, SHORT, AND FASHION LIGHTING

There are two basic types of portrait lighting, and these relate closely to posing. Broad lighting means that the main light is illuminating the side of the face that is turned toward the camera (from the camera's perspective, the wider side of the face). This is used less frequently than short lighting because it flattens and de-emphasizes facial contours. Broad lighting is sometimes used to widen a thin or long face—or to light a thin person.

Short lighting means that the main light is used to illuminate the side of the face turned away from the camera (from the camera's perspective, the narrower side of the face). Short lighting emphasizes facial contours, and can be used as a corrective lighting technique to narrow an overly round or wide face. When used with a weak fill light, short lighting produces a dramatic lighting with bold highlights and deep shadows.

This is a good example of broad lighting where the main light illuminates the side of the face closest to the camera. Photograph by Anthony Cava.

This is an example of short lighting, where the main light illuminates the side of the face farther from the camera. Photograph by Tim Kelly.

This is an example of fashion lighting, where the main light is used on-axis with the face. Photograph by Anthony Cava.

Fashion lighting is a variation of conventional portrait lighting. To create it, the main light is placed on-axis with the face. As a result, it is extremely soft and frontal in nature. With fashion lighting, shadows do not model the face; makeup primarily does that.

A good model can be photographed head-on in any outfit without looking large. Here, Anthony Cava photographed this stunning model with side light to bring out the texture of the clothing.

With his model in a loose-fitting billowy outfit, Anthony Cava shifted her into a 45 degree angle pose, which helped the light add texture and detail to the fabric.

fect and will enhance the curves and planes of the body. The only exception is when you want to emphasize the mass of the subject, such as with an athlete, or when the person is very petite—a child or a model, for example. One of the basic requirements of a good working model is that she be thin so that, if need be, she can be photographed head-on without looking larger than average.

Turned Away from the Main Light. Turning the body away from the main light will help to maximize body definition and enhance the detail in clothing, like the subtle beadwork of a bride's wedding dress. If you turn the subject's body plane toward the light source, you risk flattening important detail in both the form of the body and the texture of the clothing.

Posture. Good posture is essential to an effectively rendered body plane. You must be conscious of the subject slouching and be prepared to improve the pose by coaching or placing a hand on the small of the subject's back, which will automatically cause the spine to stretch and elongate.

Portrait Lengths

The more of the body you include in a portrait, the more posing problems you will encounter. When you photograph a person in a three-quarter- or full-length pose, you have arms, legs, feet, hands, and the total image of the body to contend with—not to mention, the all-important expression of the subject.

The more of the body you include in a portrait, the more posing problems you will encounter.

Head-and-Shoulders Portraits. Head-and-shoulders portraits usually show just that—the head and shoulders—but can also include the arms and upper torso, depending on the photographer's preference. This type of image features a larger facial size, so posing the face, head, and shoulders in a flattering way is extremely important.

This pose by Tim Schooler is a bit of a hybrid; by having the senior pull her knee up close to her face, he created an image that is essentially a head-and-shoulders portrait, but which includes some of the lower body, too.

In this lovely three-quarter-length portrait, the subject is seen down to her mid-calf area. Photograph by Nick Adams.

The full-length portrait reveals the dynamic lines of the human body. Here, Jim Garner has captured an excellent full-length bridal. Note the arch in her back and the gentle line of the dress.

Three-Quarter-Length Portraits. A three-quarter-length portrait shows the subject from the head down to a region below the waist—usually mid-calf or mid-thigh. Never compose a portrait with a "break" (the edge of the frame) at a joint (an elbow, a knee, or an ankle, for instance) as this has an unnerving psychological impact on the viewer.

Full-Length Portraits. A full-length portrait shows the subject from head to toe—often with a fair amount of background or environment included. A full-length shot can show the person standing or sitting, but it is important to remember to angle the person to the lens and to create a triangular base (as described later in this chapter). As noted above, you should avoid photographing the person head-on, as this adds mass and weight to the body and minimizes dynamic lines in the pose. Dynamic lines—diagonal lines, triangles, and other asymmetrical shapes—create visual interest within a portrait or grouping and should be an intentional aspect of any full-length pose.

Posing the Arms

Away from the Body. Your subject's arms should generally not be allowed to fall to their sides or dangle loosely. Creating some space between the torso and the arms provides a slimmer view of the waist (if the arms are right next to the torso, they add to the visual width of the subject). Separating the arms from the body also protects subjects from appearing to have flattened, flabby upper arms.

A Triangular Base. Additionally, posing the arms away from the body creates a triangular base for the composition, drawing the viewer's eye up toward the subject's face. The triangle is one of the most pleasing and

In this portrait, Michael O'Neill had the bride lean forward, making her slim and muscular arms a part of the composition. It's a very effective pose for an athletic bride.

dynamic forms in all of photography, providing direction and visual movement in a portrait. Creating triangles and exploiting natural triangles in posing is one of the basic skills of good portrait composition.

A triangular base is commonly achieved by asking the subject to bend their elbows, separating their arms from their torso. In a standing portrait, you can have men place their hands in their pants pockets to produce the triangular base; women can rest one or both hands close to their hips or on their upper thighs.

In a seated portrait, the subject will move their hands closer to their waist, thus producing slightly projecting elbows. Another way to accomplish the triangular base is with a posing table on which the far elbow can be rested. This provides the sloping line of the shoulders and the triangular base that is so vital to good composition. The posing table is usually black and nearly invisible in the final portrait; in fact, it is often cropped from the composition entirely.

Posing The Hands

A person's hands are often a strong indicator of character, just as the mouth and eyes are. Posing the hands properly in a portrait can be difficult because they are closer to the camera than the subject's head, and thus appear larger. One thing that will give hands a more natural perspective is using a longer-

Interlocking hands form the basis of this fine family portrait by Frank Frost. The left hand of the teenage daughter forms a pictorial element in the portrait that lets the viewer know that she is the end of the group on that side, almost like a bookend.

than-normal lens. Although holding the focus of both the hands and the face is more difficult with a longer lens, the size relationship between them will appear more natural. And if the hands are slightly out of focus, it is not as crucial as when the eyes or face are soft.

One basic rule is never to photograph a subject's hands pointing straight into the camera lens; this distorts the size and shape of the hands. Hands should be posed at an angle to the lens. Another basic is to photograph the outer edge of the hand whenever possible. This gives a natural, flowing line to the hand and eliminates the distortion that occurs when the hand is photographed from the top or head-on.

You should always try to bend the wrist slightly so there is a smooth, curving line where the forearm and hand join. Also, you should always try to photograph the fingers with a slight separation in between them. This gives the

When photographing hands, try to get separation between the fingers—as was done here by Anthony Cava. Note, too, how he had his model only lightly grasp her arms, so that it would not look like she was squeezing her arms or that she was cold.

TOP LEFT—One way to introduce a strong triangular base into the composition is to have your male subject thrust his hands into his pockets. Although it's a good idea to hitch the pocket with a thumb, so some of the sleeve shows, the technique seen here works well, too. Photograph by Sal Cincotta.

BOTTOM LEFT—Tero Sade made this romantic, edgy portrait. Of particular interest is the way Tero posed the woman's hands. Notice that the fingers of her right hand are spread apart so that they appear as individual fingers and not a big blob of fingers. Her left hand is also posed to show off the engagement ring.

Graceful hand posing is the hallmark of this wonderful Tero Sade image. Note that the hand posing is authentic to the natural playing of the instrument. Photographing the edge of the hands gives them nice form and direction.

fingers form and definition. When the fingers are closed together, the hand looks like a two-dimensional blob.

Men's Hands *vs.* Women's Hands. As generalizations go, it is important that the hands of a woman have grace, and the hands of a man have strength.

When photographing a man's closed hand, it is recommended to give him something small, like the cap of a pen, to wrap his fingers around. This gives roundness and dimension to the hand so that it doesn't resemble a clenched fist. Having a male subject fold his arms across his chest is also a good strong pose. Remember, however, to have the man turn his hands slightly so the edge of the hand is more prominent than the top of the hand. In such a pose, you should have him lightly grasp his biceps—but not too hard, or it will look like he is cold and trying to keep warm. Also, remember to instruct the man to bring his folded arms out from his body a little bit. This will help to slim down the arms, which would otherwise be flattened against his body. Separate the fingers slightly.

Having a male subject fold his arms across his chest is also a good strong pose.

"When a subject is sleeveless, it's more of a challenge—I can always win, though," Tim Kelly laughs. Here, Tim opted for a square frame. He then posed the arms to create a square, raising her left hand to her face so that your eye keeps turning back to the focus of the image. "Normally, you can't get away with a pose like this, but with a square-in-a-square image, it works," Tim says.

With a standing woman, have her place one hand on her hip and the other at her side for a good standard pose. Don't let the free hand dangle, but rather have her twist the hand so that the edge shows to the camera. Always create a bend in the wrist for a more dynamic line.

Seated Poses

Posing stools and benches are available that allow the subject comfort while providing the proper upright posture. Outdoors, you must find a spot—a patch of grass under a tree or by a fence, for example—that will be comfortable for the duration of the session.

Seated subjects, especially women, should sit forward on a chair or stool that is angled to the camera. Once seated, the subject's weight should be moved forward; sitting on the edge of the seat will always be more graceful than sitting squarely on it. You'll also find that the posture is better and the weight is shifted off of the upper thighs, which often photograph thicker when seated than they are in reality. The subject's weight should be transferred to the far leg (the one farther from the camera), thus slimming the leg and thigh most visible to the camera. The subject's posture should be erect with a slight bend forward at the waist.

When the subject is sitting, a cross-legged pose is desirable. Have the top leg facing at an angle and not directly into the camera lens. With women who are sitting, it is a particularly good idea to have the subject tuck the

In this portrait by Tim Kelly, the subject's body leans sharply toward the main light, but the head remains vertical. "Photographers are always taught head tilts, both masculine and feminine," says Tim. "Those rules do apply if you choose to use them—but there are higher laws. I find that leaning bodies are my best friends in terms of design. With any subject, male or female, if you can keep the head vertically straight, you can put the body in any direction you want. That's a 'rule breaker' that always works for me."

calf of her front leg (closer to the camera) in behind her back leg. This reduces the apparent size of the calves, since the back leg, which is farther from the camera, becomes more important, visually. Whenever possible, showing a slight space between the leg and the chair will slim thighs and calves. This is a pose that women fall into somewhat naturally.

When a man is seated, it is usually necessary to check his clothing. The jacket or suit coat, if he's wearing one, should be unbuttoned to prevent it from looking too tight. He should not be sitting on the bottom of the coat, pulling it up in the front. The clothes, especially formalwear, should look comfortable and form-fitting, but should not be pulled or stretched while sitting. The shirt cuffs should also be pulled down in the jacket arms in order to be visible.

Seated forward on her chair, this little girl's posture is flawless. The flowers are a nice prop but also a natural posing aid, giving the girl something familiar to do with her hands. Photograph by Deanna Urs.

2. The Face

Facial Analysis

The expert portrait photographer should be able to analyze a subject's face with a brief examination. Under flat light, inspect the subject from straight on and gradually move to the right to examine one side of the face from an angle. Then repeat this process on the left side. If you can do this while conversing with the person, and he or she will feel less self-conscious about being observed. In your analysis, you are looking for a number things:

1. **The most flattering angle from which to photograph the person.** It will usually be at the seven-eighths or three-quarters facial view, as opposed to the full-face or profile view.
2. **Any difference in eye size.** Most people's eyes are not perfectly equal in size. However, they can be made to look the same size through thoughtful posing.
3. **Changes in the face's shape and character as you move around to the side.** Watch how the cheekbones become more or less prominent from different angles. High and/or pronounced cheekbones are a flattering feature in both men and women.
4. **Features that change as you observe them from different angles.** A square jaw line may be softened when viewed from one angle; a round face may appear more oval-shaped from a different angle; a slim face may seem healthier when viewed from head-on, and so forth.

This beautiful bridal portrait was taken from slightly above head height and incorporates the veil as a long diagonal line rimming the bride's face. The line of the eyes forms another diagonal line and reveals an elegant beauty. Photograph by Michael O'Neill.

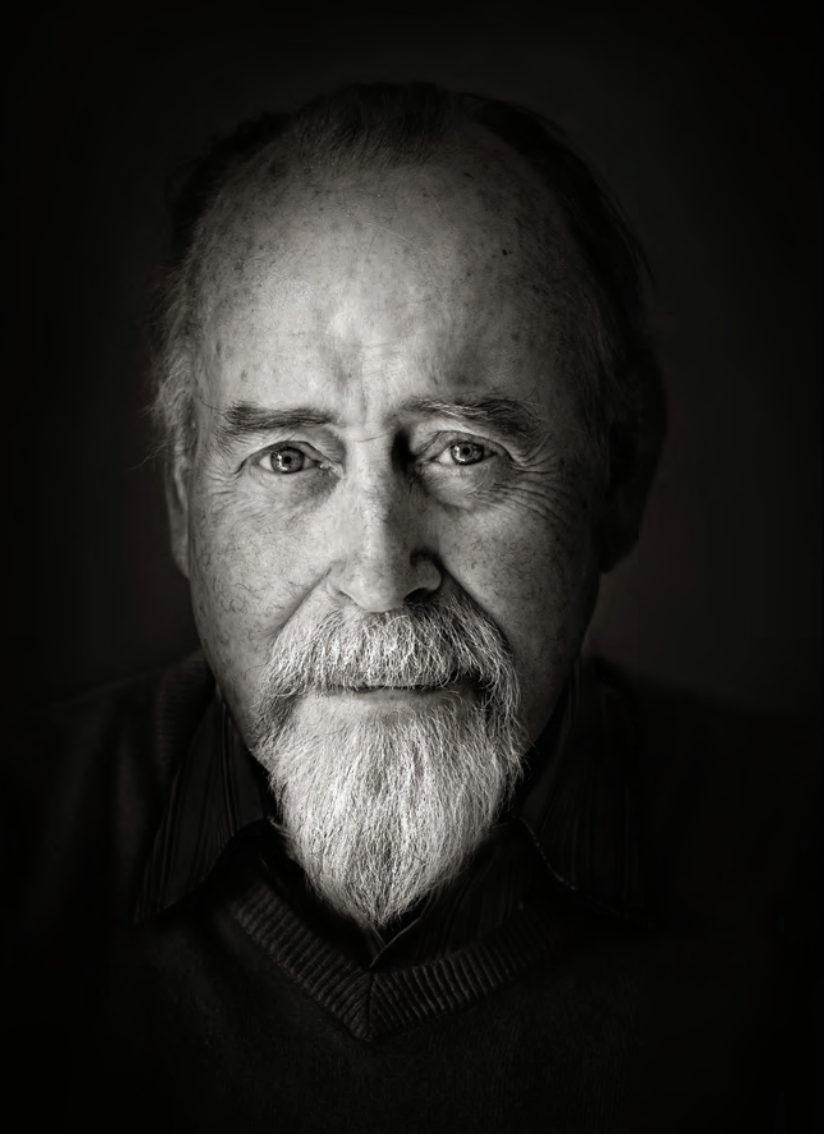
These twins look rather serious, but their eyes are clearly engaged and taking in every aspect of the session. Photograph by Mark Nixon.

5. **The optimal expression for the portrait.** You might choose a smile, a half-smile, or no smile depending on the look that best suits the subject and the intended use of the portrait (a business portrait for a real estate agent, for instance, will require a different expression than a boudoir image for the subject's significant other).

The Eyes

The eyes are the most expressive part of the human face. If the subject is bored or uncomfortable, you will see it in their eyes. It is essential that the subject's eyes look alive; you do not want a "deer in the headlights" pose. The more visible the eyes are in the composition and pose, the more revealing they will be in the portrait. Often, slight changes in the tilt of the subject's head will reveal more of the eyes. This should be evaluated from the camera position.

Active and Alive. The best way to keep the subject's eyes looking active and alive is to engage the person in conversation. Talk with the person while you are setting up and try to find a common point of interest. Everyone loves to talk about themselves, so ask each subject about his or her likes and dislikes, hobbies, family, pets, etc. If the subject does not look at you when you are talking, they are either uncomfortable or shy. In either case, you



Mark Nixon created this wonderful portrait in which the man's triangular beard is echoed in the other triangles throughout the portrait. Take, for example, the shape of the man's face, made triangular by lighting only the front planes of the face. Also, the shirt collar, the open-neck of the shirt, and the line of the V-neck sweater are all triangular.

have to work to relax them and encourage trust. Try a variety of conversational topics until you find one the person warms to, then pursue it. As you gain the subject's interest, you will take their mind off the portrait session. One of the best ways to enliven a subject's eyes is to tell an amusing story. If they enjoy it, their eyes will smile. This is one of the most endearing expressions a human being can make.

Direction of the Gaze. A posing tenet that is largely ignored these days is that, for the most graceful look, the direction of the subject's gaze should follow the line of the nose. Photographers often ignore this rule in favor of adding another dynamic line to the composition—preferring asymmetry to symmetry, which is valid reasoning.

Still, the direction the person is looking is important. Start the portrait session by having the subject look at you. Using a cable release or wireless remote with the camera tripod-mounted forces you to become the host and allows you to physically hold the subject's attention. It is a good idea to shoot a few shots of the person looking directly into the camera, but most people will appreciate some variety. Looking into the lens for too long a time will also bore your subject, as there is no personal contact when looking into a machine. Many photographers don't want to stray too far from the viewfinder, so they will look up from the camera to engage the subject just prior to the moment of exposure.

Regarding the eyes, the late Monte Zucker used to say, "When looking through your lens, check to see if your subject's eyes look completely open. Many times I have my subjects actually looking above the lens when I'm creating their portrait, but in the picture it appears as if they're looking directly into the lens. The only way that you can tell where the subject should be looking is when you, yourself, are looking straight through the lens."

The Iris and Pupil. The colored part of the eye, the iris, should generally border on the eyelids. In other words, there should not be a large white space between the top or bottom of the iris and the eyelid. If there is a space, have the subject lower or raise his or her gaze.

Pupil size is also important. If working under bright lights, the pupil will be small and the subject will look "beady-eyed." To correct this, have them shut their eyes for a moment prior to exposure. This allows the pupil to return to a normal size for the exposure. Just the opposite can happen if you are working in subdued light; the pupil will appear too large, giving the subject a vacant look. In that case, have the subject stare momentarily at the brightest nearby light source to contract the pupil.

Blinking. Some people have a nervous mannerism that causes them to blink almost continuously. To make matters worse, they are often self-conscious of their con-

dition. Try relaxing your subject through music or humor or general conversation, then try to time your exposure just after you observe a blink.

Squinting. Another eye-related issue is people who squint when they smile. They can't help it; the squinting is related to smiling. An effective antidote is to opt for a non-smiling pose or a pose with a half-smile instead of a full smile.

Eyeglasses. Some people just don't feel themselves without their eyeglasses. The most effective way to minimize the problems of glare in portraits with eyeglasses is to have the person borrow a pair of glassless frames from their optometrist (often they will lend them to a good customer).

If you can't arrange for blanks, you will have to photograph the person the old-fashioned way. This can involve careful lighting adjustments, but you can also try having the person slide their glasses down on their nose slightly. Alternately, try turning your subject toward the main light and having them tilt their glasses slightly forward. Both strategies can help to minimize reflections.

When your subject is wearing thick glasses, it is not unusual for the eyes to record as darker than the rest of the face. This is because the thickness of the glass reduces the intensity of the light that is transmitted to the eyes. If this happens, there is nothing you can do about it during the shooting session; the eyeglasses will have to be lightened in postproduction to restore the same density on the eyes as on the rest of the face.

If your subject wears "photo-gray" or any other type of self-adjusting lenses that respond to light, have them keep their glasses in their pocket until you are ready to shoot. This will keep the lenses from going dark from the shooting lights. Of course, once the light strikes them

TOP—The iris of the eye should border the eyelids. It's not a good idea to have a lot of white area above or below the iris. The subject of this image, Olympic boxing coach Sonny Duncan, displays an intense gaze—almost as if the man never blinks! Photograph by Greg Phelps.

BOTTOM—As the late Monte Zucker used to preach, "When looking through your lens, check to see if your subject's eyes look completely open." Here, Greg Phelps not only shows both eyes completely, but also the pupil size is the right blend of dilated and contracted for an aware, engaging pose.

they will darken, so you might want to encourage removing the glasses for the portrait session.

One Smaller Eye. Most people have one eye that is smaller than the other. This should be one of the first things you notice about your subject. If you want both eyes to look the same size in the portrait, pose the subject in a seven-eighths or three-quarters pose and seat the person so that the smaller eye is closest to the camera. Because objects farther from the camera look smaller and nearer objects look larger, this should make both of the eyes appear to be about the same size.

The Mouth

Generally, it is a good idea to shoot a variety of portraits, some smiling and some serious (or at least not smiling). People are often very self-conscious about their teeth and mouths, but if you see that the subject has an attractive smile, get plenty of shots of it.

Natural Smiles. One of the best ways to produce a natural smile is to praise your subjects. Tell them how good they look and be positive. If you simply

Tim Schooler has the Midas touch when it comes to posing his teenage subjects. Notice how the subject's face and mouth are completely relaxed, yielding a half smile that is not only very natural, but very glamorous. Tim dispenses compliments to his clients, mostly girls, who are all worried they won't look beautiful. Tim keeps their confidence high and gives gentle guidance to help ensure the session is a success.

say "Smile!" you will produce a lifeless "say cheese" type of portrait. With sincere confidence-building and flattery, you will get subjects to smile naturally and sincerely, and their eyes will be engaged and lively.

Moistened Lips. Remind the subject to moisten his or her lips periodically. This makes them look healthy in the finished portrait, as the moisture produces tiny specular highlights on the lips.

Tension. People's mouths are nearly as expressive as their eyes. Pay close attention to the mouth to be sure there is no tension in the muscles around it; this will give the portrait an unnatural, posed look. Again, an air of relaxation best relieves tension, so talk to the person to take his or her mind off the session.

Gap Between the Lips. Some people naturally have a slight gap between their lips whenever they are relaxed. Their mouth is neither open nor closed but somewhere in between. If you observe this, let them know about it in a friendly, uncritical way. If they forget, politely say, "Close your mouth, please." While this trait is not disconcerting when actually watching the person in repose, when it is frozen in a portrait, the visibility of the subject's teeth in the space between their lips may not be appealing. If intentional, however, a slight gap between the lips is often used to create a more sultry look in portraits of women. In this relaxed pose, the lips look full and sensual.

Laugh Lines. Problems occasionally arise in the frontal part of the cheek, the part that creases when a person smiles. Some people have pronounced furrows, or laugh lines, that look unnaturally deep when they are photographed while smiling. You should take note of this area of the face. If necessary, you may have to increase the fill-light intensity to avoid creating deep shadows in this area. Alternately, you can adjust your main light to be more frontal in nature. If the lines are severe, avoid a "big smile" type of pose altogether.

This young woman's full and slightly parted lips are so beautiful that the photographer decided to make them the focus of the bridal portrait. Photograph by Yervant.

The Nose

The apparent shape and size of a person's nose can be modified in portraiture—if the photographer is aware of what needs to be corrected. The most obvious thing to avoid is photographing a long or large nose in profile. Long noses can, however, be shortened by photographing them from below (or having the subject slightly lift their chin). Conversely, a short nose can be lengthened by using a higher camera angle (or having the subject slightly drop their chin).

Crooked noses should be photographed with the subject posed in a three-quarters view, so the crookedness is

less visible from the camera position. Another technique for photographing irregularly shaped noses is to use a telephoto lens, which compresses perspective, and photograph the person with their nose pointing directly into the camera. Because of the compressed perspective, the nose takes on less visual prominence.

Chin Height

If the person's chin is too high, he or she may look haughty. If the person's chin is down, he may seem afraid or lacking in confidence. Beyond what this may imply

LEFT—The direct gaze and the flourish of the pose help define the uniqueness of this charismatic subject—something that, as the portrait maker, you need to strive for! This is an award-winning portrait by Mark Nixon.

BELOW—This amazing portrait was made by Jerry Ghionis with the help of a train leaving the station (and a slow shutter speed). The pose completely captures his self-assured subject. Note, in particular, how the elevated chin height contributes to the attitude of the image.

Tero Sade captured well-known Australian photographer Tony Hewitt as God and nature have rendered him, with all the cracks and crevices that time has etched across his face. These features were accentuated by the lighting, but Tony's direct eye contact and full-face pose send an equally clear message: he has nothing to hide.

about the subject's personality, a person's neck can look stretched and elongated if the chin is too high. The opposite is true if the chin is held too low; the person may appear to have a double chin or no neck at all. The solution, as you might expect, is to use a medium chin height. Being aware of the effects of too high or too low a chin height will help you to achieve a good middle ground. When in doubt, ask the sitter if the pose feels natural; this is usually a good indicator of what looks natural.

Expression

The subject's expression is probably the single most important factor in the success of the portrait. Beyond capturing a winning smile, it's important to think of the portrait itself, in its entirety, as an expression—and hopefully one that reflects much more than surface characteristics. A portrait can be an expression of character, moral and intellectual, at its highest levels. This ability to convey so many intangible aspects of a person is what has made portraiture so fascinating to people throughout the ages, and it is what has elevated portraiture to the status of an art form.

Smile or Serious? The experienced portraitist knows that the smile can be the most endearing expression a human being can make, but many people don't look good smiling. In these situations he'll request a more contemplative, serious expression or ask for "a slight suggestion of a smile, not a complete smile"—especially if it appears to be forced. Some patrons, of course, will have a preference and want to be photographed in a serious pose.

When a smiling portrait is called for, most photographers agree that a pleasant expression is more desirable than a big smile. In such a mode, the face is relaxed and people look like themselves. Beware of the "fake smile," which might show up in anticipation of what subjects think you want to see. A real smile is quite different than a fake one because it involves the entire face. A fake smile involves just the mouth.

Above all, encourage people to be themselves. Then, create a full range of smiling and non-smiling poses. Most people appreciate the variety.

Eliciting Expressions. The very best way to get the sitter to display the expression you want is to earn their trust and help them to relax. If you have

A WINNING SMILE

For a winning smile, request that your subjects show you the whole row of upper teeth when they're smiling. Anything less than that usually looks artificial. Some photographers will say, "Smile with your eyes," which gets sitters to forget about their mouths for the most natural expression.

had a pre-session consultation (more on this in the next chapter), the awkwardness of a first meeting will already be past and your subject will be less self-conscious.

For example, legendary portrait photographer Bill McIntosh weaves a web of upbeat conversation with his subjects. Through this, he establishes a rhythm and flow that allows him to record the subject reacting to the give-and-take exchange. Bill says, "When you photograph someone, you are, with your voice and body language, putting your subject in a light state of hypnosis. You make exposures surreptitiously and do your best to take their mind off the fact that they are being photographed."

Legendary portrait photographer Bill McIntosh weaves a web of upbeat conversation with his subjects.

A gentle, happy expression usually looks better on adults than a big, wide grin. In this portrait by Kevin Jairaj, the young woman appears happy and beautiful.

3. Working with Subjects

The process of creating flattering poses and engaging expressions typically begins before the photography session and continues throughout the shoot. As your subject grows more comfortable working with you, and as you continue your consideration of the most flattering way to photograph them, you are building a rapport that will put them more at ease in front of the camera and help you craft the poses and expressions that they are most likely to find appealing.

Pre-Session Consultation

The best way to lay the groundwork for good communication is with a pre-session consultation. Even a short meeting does a lot to put everyone on the same page. The pre-session meeting will also help you to define the client's

A pre-session consultation is critical when planning a family or group portrait. Coordinating the outfits and location, as well as the type of portrait (casual or formal), ensures that everyone is on the same page before the portrait session begins. This is a beautiful family portrait by Drake Busath.

expectations, both pictorially and financially. It's a good opportunity to outline what the basic session fee covers and what the basic cost of prints is. There should be no misunderstanding about session fees or reprint costs.

Psychology

Here are a few tips that will improve communication and the quality of your portraits.

- Avoid long periods of silence, even if you need to concentrate on technical details.
- Reassure the client about any concerns they might have.
- To free the photographer from the burden of the technical details, using an assistant is a great idea. He or she can ready the lights and background per the photographer's request and fine-tune the sitting while the photographer and client interact.
- Be positive about the subject's appearance and clothing.
- Work quickly and keep poses fresh and imaginative.
- Be open to suggestions the subject might propose.

Photographer Jim Garner is exceptionally good with people of all ages. Here, Jim managed to capture the love between three siblings—but more than that, he got them to elicit priceless expressions.

This is a wonderfully whimsical pose by Jim Garner. The young girl seems to be floating through the air as she pops out from behind the metal sculpture.

LEFT—A portrait can be the medium for showing spirituality and love. Here, in a family image made by Jennifer George, the emotion is powerful.

RIGHT—Skip Sroka is a Washington interior designer who practices a design philosophy that emphasizes each client's personal tastes and lifestyle needs. This portrait by Bill McIntosh was made in Sroka's office. Note the erect posture one might expect from a designer as well as the strong, well-posed hands. McIntosh also provided two books for his subject to rest his left hand on, creating a high shoulder and a lower shoulder and producing a space between the subject's left arm and torso.

- Smile a lot so that your subject can see you are enjoying the session—especially after you make an exposure that you think is a good one. Most people react well to a genuine smile.

Flattering the Subject

Flattery can be dangerous; offer too much and you may be perceived as insincere, offer too little and you may seem indifferent or even inhospitable. Sharing some genuine emotion is best. Expressing your own excitement about getting a good photograph is all it will take to reassure most subjects. For instance, saying, "Oh, that was a great one!" after taking an exposure you like will work. Keep in mind that the flavor of the actual portrait session is a big part of the whole portrait experience, and that the underlying goal of most portraits is to make the clients feel good about themselves.

Bill McIntosh, a well-known portrait photographer from Virginia Beach, VA, who photographs many of that city's wealthy and elite, has a way of eliciting timeless ex-

pressions. Essentially, he launches a barrage of over-the-top flattery that is so wildly exaggerated that it verges on comical. His clients love the attention and the humor and he pulls if off with the expertise of an older Southern gentleman—which, of course, he is.

Subject Comfort

A subject who *feels* uncomfortable will likely *look* uncomfortable in their photos. After all, these are normal people, not models who make their living posing professionally. So try to choose a basic pose that feels natural to the

BELOW—Easing this brother and sister into a comfortable pose was effortless, since Bill and Leslie McIntosh photographed them with their horses on the family farm. Bill and Leslie used a recording on their iPhone of a horse whinnying, which got the horses' attention and made them perk up their ears. Note the casual yet formal posing of the hands on the white fence and the enthusiastic expressions of both subjects.

RIGHT—This gorgeous portrait earns its stripes by virtue of how the dark tones are handled. The photographer, Jennifer George, decided the strategy would be to let the highlights tell the story in this portrait of two friends. The poses are pensive, if not serious, but the emotion conveyed by their relationship is powerful.

Simple flower petals from the basket being tossed in the air were enough to entertain and enliven the entire group for their portrait. Sometimes it's the simplest of ideas that have the most impact on a pose. Photograph by Annika Metsla.

subject, like something they do all the time. From there, refinements are your job—the turn of a wrist, weight on the back foot, the angle of the body away from the camera, a lean at the waist—but the pose itself should be representative of the person posing.

Most times, you will be posing your subjects in casual poses, which are basically resting poses. The arms rest on the legs, the head will rest on the hands, etc. Paying attention to how your subject moves, sits, and stands during the consultation and in other casual moments can give you some clues as to how to best pose them.

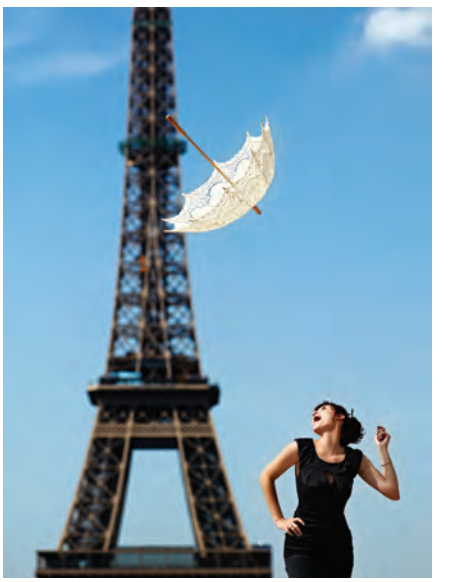
Jerry Ghionis: Prompted Posing

Photographer Jerry Ghionis says, "When I photograph weddings, I believe in making my couples look glamorous but natural at the same time. A consistent comment we hear from our clients is that our photos look too good to be true—too glamorous to be unposed but too natural to be posed. I don't pose my clients. I prompt them. I prompt them into situations that appear natural. I will first choose my lighting, then select my background and foreground. I then prompt and direct my clients in a rough situation (a romantic hug, a casual walk, the bride

adjusting her veil, etc.). The spontaneous moments I always seem to get are directed and evolve during the shoot, depending on what suits the different personalities I am working with."

He continues, "I have what I call the 'Wouldn't it be great?' principle. Whenever I think to myself, 'Wouldn't it be great if the bride cracked up laughing, with her eyes closed, and the groom leaning toward her,' I will ask for it. Some would argue that the shot has been manufactured. I would say that it's no more manufactured than a scene in a movie. Who cares how you got there? The end justifies the means."

Ghionis raises an important point: portrait subjects don't judge photographs by how perfectly their fingers are placed or how lovely the lighting and background are. They judge photographs more comprehensively based on how good they feel they look in them. If you can get the lighting and composition right, make the subject look great, and then freeze a spontaneous moment all at the same time, you will have an image that sells.



LEFT—Jerry Ghionis does not pose his subjects, he "prompts" them. As a result, the spontaneous moments he captures seem to evolve naturally during the shoot and reflect the different personalities with whom he is working.

ABOVE—This is another award-winning image by Jerry Ghionis. In it he combined the great architectural presence of the Eiffel Tower and the playfulness of his subject. His timing had to be spot-on to get both the subject's expression and the umbrella just right.

ABOVE—Australian wedding photographer Yervant is brilliant at inserting his brides into situations and moods that are unfamiliar in modern wedding photography. His skills are not unlike those of a filmmaker. In this image, the bride is transformed into a gritty, grainy reality, where each figure is like a carefully positioned chess piece on a seedy, urban chessboard.

RIGHT—Here Yervant directed the bride and bridesmaids into a swirling ballet and pulled perfect moments from the flowing action. Yervant will often hand the camera to an assistant and demonstrate the pose to his subjects, which produces hilarity on the set.

Active Posing

One of the recent trends in portraiture is what is called active posing, which is a sort of stop-action glamour posing—isolating the pose from within a flowing movement. This type of posing is useful in photographing trained models, but can also be fun to use with younger subjects, who can be coaxed into moving quite well in front of the camera. Playing music often helps to set the mood, as does keeping the energy level of the portrait session high.

Demonstrating The Pose

Showing the subject the pose as you are describing it is a very effective means of communicating with your sub-

jects, as it breaks down barriers of self-consciousness on both sides of the camera. Your natural sense of humor will kick in—particularly if you're trying to demonstrate a pose to the opposite sex. Your vulnerability and willingness to try different poses is a great ice-breaker. As subjects see you do it, the pose becomes less difficult for them to envision.

Tim Kelly: In the Zone

Tim Kelly, one of America's premiere portrait artists, has observed that when you turn your attention to load film or attend to some other chore, you may glimpse your subject in a totally self-disclosing moment. This fleeting and elusive moment became known around Kelly's studio as "the thirteenth frame"—the one that basically got away (referring to the twelve exposures, more or less, afforded by the Hasselblad film magazines). He now pays special attention to the moments during and after breaks in the shooting session.

To his students, he advises, "Watch your subjects before you capture the image. Sometimes the things they do naturally become great artistic poses." Tim Kelly doesn't direct the subject into a pose. Rather, he suggests that you get the subject "into the zone" of the pose by coaching their position, but let them go from there. This allows him to capture a more natural and spontaneous feeling. In fact, Kelly calls his unique style of portraiture "the captured moment," an almost photojournalistic approach to posed portraiture.

This is a huge departure from the portrait photographer who controls every nuance of the pose from beginning to end. It is not unlike the difference between the traditional wedding photographer, who poses 90 percent of the wedding images in customary fashion, and the wedding photojournalist, who relies on fast lenses, film, and reflexes to capture the emotion of the wedding day.

Jennifer George: Quiet Encouragement

Jennifer George, who has established a national reputation for her innovative and heartfelt style, is known for her posing ability. She says, "When I'm photographing a client for the first time, the foremost thing I concentrate on is making them feel comfortable. A simple, welcoming, and excited attitude when they arrive at my home studio actually makes a difference in the finished image. My excitement is apparent from the moment I open the door. I talk about how wonderful it is to have them here.

This Tim Kelly portrait was commissioned by the dancer's grandmother. Says Tim, "Most of the session revolved around ballerina poses, many with the dancer in full costume. I also captured multiple 'action' images. But when I saw the black outfit, which dancers wear for workouts and rehearsals, I was intrigued by its total simplicity. I had to create a simple statement about the dancer." Notice how the right hand clutches the ballet slippers indicating their importance to the dancer. Her fingers are separated, as they should be, and the edge of her hand is prominent for the best perspective. Her smile is also expressed in her eyes. This is an award-winning portrait.

Jennifer George quietly encourages the look and attitude that she wants, demonstrating each pose and then refining it from the camera position.

I show them samples of my previous work and tell them that, with their help, we can create amazing art together.

She continues, "I always begin shooting by briefly describing my lighting setup, the best place to stand, and where the best light is coming from. This allows the subject to know how and where to move. Beyond that, I have found that the most important elements to a successful session are to direct the subject and to quietly encourage the look and attitude that I want. I will physically show my subject where and how to pose. I role-play as the model and have them copy the movements. Once I walk behind the camera, I refine the pose, telling them where to place their hands, etc. I do this quickly but with a calm and quiet voice. Then, to evoke the emotion I am looking for, I tell them who they are portraying or what emotion they are portraying. With a quiet and calm voice, I am able to elicit the certain emotion that I am looking for and produce an artistic expression."

A fellow photographer who has seen Jennifer work described it this way: "I see you elicit emotion from your subjects by connecting with them verbally and with your eyes. You talk very softly to them and ask them to bring up emotions that you are trying to depict in the photo. You keep working with them until they get into their feelings and those feelings come through in their expressions, especially their eyes. You usually like to have music that goes along with the emotions you are going for playing softly in the background. You start with an idea of what you want to see emotionally in your subjects and focus on that with them. You also paint a mental picture for them of what you are trying to achieve. You ask them to use their eyes to tell the story.'"

Marcus Bell: Taking Your Time

Marcus Bell, an Australian photographer, is never in a rush to take his portraits—whether he's in the studio or at a wedding. He uses rapport and his ability to relate to people and put them at ease to infuse his personality into the session. In this way, he leaves nothing to chance, but also lets his subjects define their own poses. He says, "I want to capture the true individuality and personality of the person. The posing needs to be natural to the person you're photographing and to emulate the person's personality or features and not detract from them. I use several techniques to ensure the posing relates to the subject, but to do this you first need to do your groundwork and include your subject in your preparations."

Bell uses a number of techniques to begin the interaction—like having a coffee or walking with the subject to the shooting location—in order to provide ample opportunity to talk and get the relationship established. "Where possible," he says, "I want to minimize the direction that I'm giving them and to allow them to be themselves. Because of the relationship and trust that we have started, though, I can give them directions to pose in a way that appears to the subject to be more like normal conversation rather than them feeling I'm telling them

TOP—One reason Marcus Bell spends so much time getting to know the subject in advance of the shoot is so they will treat him like a friend rather than a guest or visitor. Here, Marcus has his subject, chef and restaurateur Alaistar McLeod, perfectly relaxed and confident amidst his kitchen and staff. This image is from Bell's book *Faces of Queensland*.

CENTER—Jamie Dunn, a well-known Australian comedian, also works with the puppet Agro on *Agro's Cartoon Connection*. Marcus photographed Jamie with Agro because the two seem synonymous. As Marcus says, he wants to bring out the personality of the person, which is done quite well here.

BOTTOM—Nick is an award-winning novelist from Brisbane, Australia, who writes humorous popular fiction about everyday life. As you can see in this portrait, the subject is completely relaxed and calm having his portrait made on a busy street corner. His repose is no doubt due to Marcus Bell's posing techniques. The image was made for Bell's book *Faces of Queensland*.

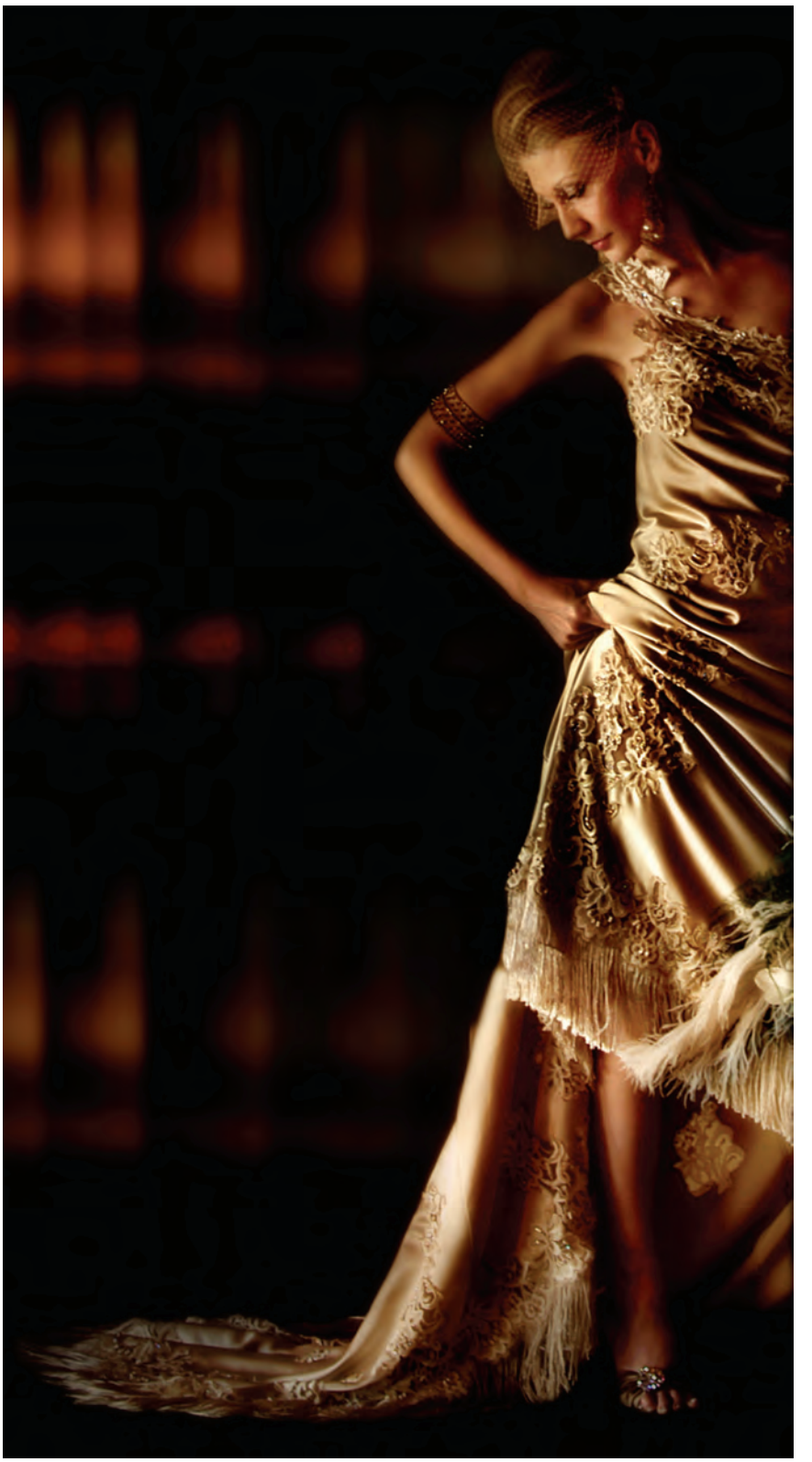
what to do. They also start feeling more involved in the whole process."

Bell first observes the subject, making mental notes of what he'd like to see. Then, if he can't replicate the nuance, he'll ask the subject to repeat what he saw. For instance, he once observed a bride walking with her head down, then looking up and smiling at just the right moment. Marcus tried re-creating the walk a few times, but she didn't look up, so he asked her just to glance up the next time—all without making her self-conscious. He keeps the flow going but is constantly observing the nuances that occur naturally. These are the opportunities that make great pictures.

Bell also uses the large LCD screens of his DSLRs as social and posing prompts, showing his clients what's going on and offering friendly ways to improve on the pose. He often takes an image of the scene to show them how it will look even before the subjects are in place. According to Marcus, "This builds rapport, trust, and unity as you have their cooperation and enthusiasm."

Martin Schembri: A Posing Checklist

Australian photographer Martin Schembri goes through a posing checklist each time he makes a portrait. This guarantees that the posing will at least start in a formal tone. He considers correct posing to be one of the most difficult things to achieve in a portrait. He says, "No matter how correct your lighting and other technicalities may be, if your posing appears contrived, uncomfortable, or unnatural, the photograph loses its



Martin Schembri photographed this beautiful woman and then cropped the image in a daring design move. Yet the portrait still works because of the pose, which uses a formidable triangle shape to draw your eyes to the woman. The pose also serves a purpose; it allows her to hike her dress up so that you can see her shoes and legs.

Martin Schembri photographed this couple with dramatic side lighting that revealed the weathered creases in their faces. There is also a grit and determination in both faces that make this a fascinating portrait. He breaks his traditional posing regimen so that he can reveal more character in his subjects.

essence. Portraiture posing can be exercised in many different styles. These can include formal, relaxed, generic, or fashion. No matter what style your clients require, the basics are always called upon."

In order of importance, Martin first always turns his subject's shoulders away from the camera at about a 30 degree angle. This helps to create shape and is more flattering to the sitter. "Try to avoid square shoulders that are parallel to the lens," he says. He will then turn his subject's head towards the camera.

"Depending upon the shape of the face, ensure that your camera height is at your subject's eye level," he advises. The rule Martin follows to correct nose shapes is to lower the camera height to nose level and ask the sitter to turn their head so that the tip of the nose is pointing directly into the middle of the lens. This will help avoid any profiling and push the nose shape into the sitter's facial area. By using this flattering technique you will help hide any abnormal nose shapes and sizes.

The next important feature is the hands. "Hands are an important feature that will help with the mood of the portrait you are creating. Always keep the subject's hands close to the body and natural in shape. If you prefer a formal feel, ask your sitter to pretend to hold the cap of a pen and raise the hand slightly at the wrist. Turn the hand away from the camera so that the thumb side is facing towards the body. Never point the hands or knees directly into the lens," says Martin.

4. Corrective Posing Techniques

This chapter deals with practical ways to idealize the subject. It is important to realize that people don't see themselves the way others do. Subconsciously, they shorten their own noses, imagine they have more hair than they really do. In short, we all tend to pretend we are better looking than we really are. A good portrait photographer knows this and acts on it the instant a person arrives. It is a matter of procedure; the photographer analyzes the face and body and makes mental notes as to how best to light, pose, and compose the subject to produce a flattering likeness.

It is important to realize that people don't see themselves the way others do.

Be Discreet

There are some problems you may not have thought of when it comes to addressing appearance issues. First, what if the person is proud of the trait you consider a difficulty? Second, what should you do when you encounter more than one problem?

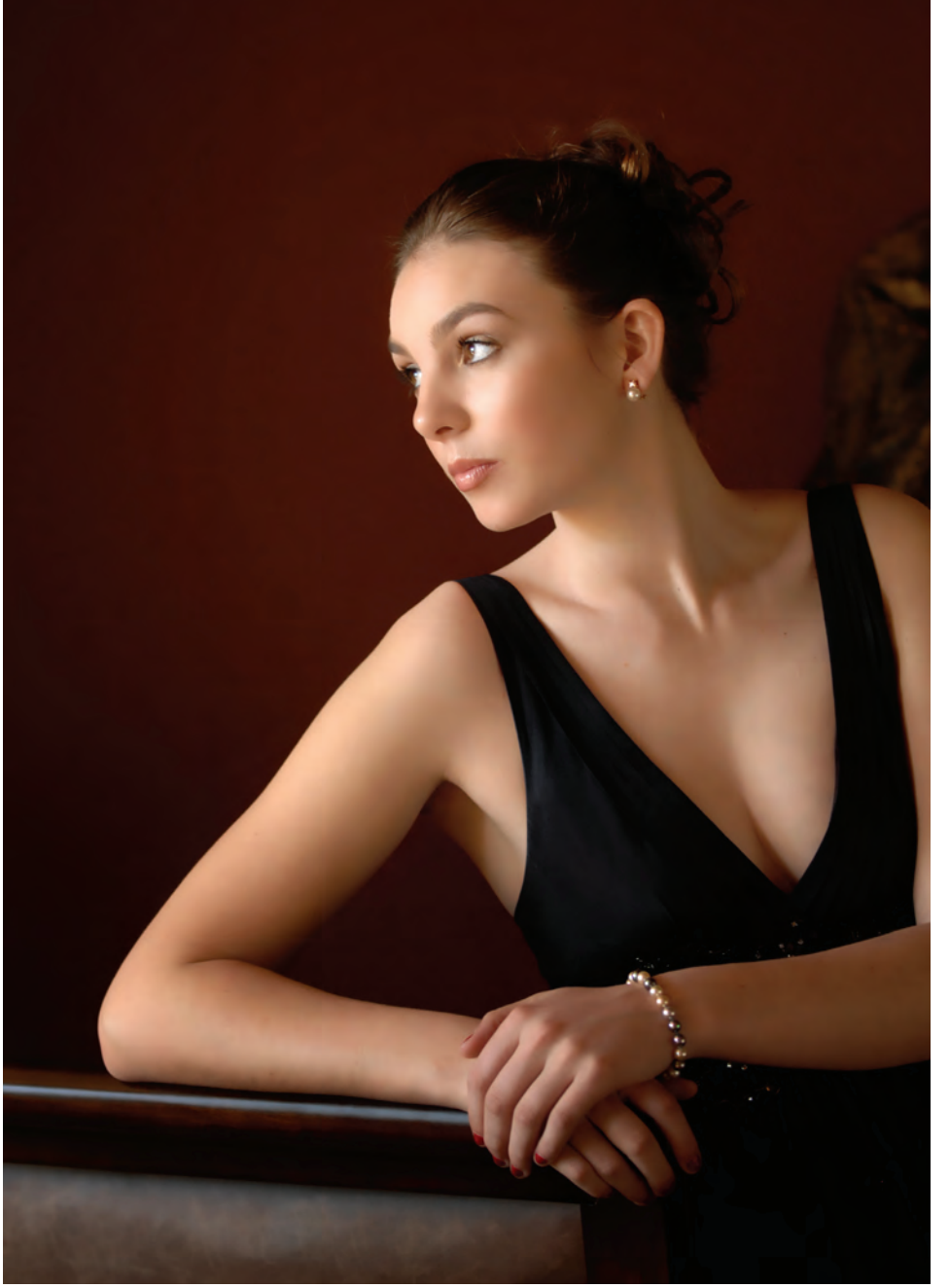
The first question is best settled in a brief conversation with your subject. You can comment on his or her features by saying something like, "You have large, bright eyes, and the line of your nose is quite elegant." If the person is at all self-conscious about the traits you mentioned, he or she will usually say something like, "Oh, my nose is too long. I wish I could change it." Then you know that the person is unhappy with their nose, but happy with his eyes—and you know how to proceed.

The second question is a little more difficult. It takes experience before you can quickly discern which of the appearance issues is the most serious one and most needs correcting. By experimenting with various lighting, poses, and camera angles, however, you should be able to determine the best compromise. This takes experience, so learn the corrective techniques outlined in this chapter, and practice them often so that when you are faced with a real dilemma, your judgment will be sound.

Beyond good lighting, posing, and composition techniques, the successful portrait photographer knows how to deal with the irregularities of the

FACING PAGE—The posing Tim Kelly uses when employing props must feel natural but look refined. "Every digit is taken care of," he says. "Even without props, you have to do this, or it's just going to look sloppy." Notice how each finger is separated and defined, creating a realistic and artistic interpretation of her hands.

RIGHT—Jennifer George left no detail unattended to in this portrait. The hands are expertly posed to reveal detail and separation in the fingers. The pose highlights the subject's athletic demeanor and lean physique. George used triangle-based compositional elements throughout to give the image strong visual appeal.



human face and body. All of the great portrait photographers know that their success lies in being able to take the ordinary in people and transform it into something truly extraordinary.

Overweight Subjects

Having an overweight subject dress in dark clothing will make them appear ten to fifteen pounds slimmer. You can accentuate this slimming effect by using a pose in which the subject is turned at a 30 to 45 degree angle to the camera. Never photograph a larger person head-on or in a seven-eighths view. It is best to have large people standing in the photograph. Seated, the excess weight tends to accumulate around the midsection.

Underweight Subjects

A thin person is easier to photograph than an overweight person. When posing a thin person, have them face the camera more directly to provide a healthy width. A seven-eighths pose is ideal for people who are on the thin side. If the person is extremely thin, do not allow them to wear sleeveless shirts or blouses. For a man, a light-colored sports coat will help fill him out; for a woman, fluffy dresses or blouses will disguise extremely thin arms.

Baldness

If your subject is bald, lower the camera height so less of the top of his head is visible. Use a gobo between the main light and the subject to shield the bald part of his head from light. Another trick is to feather the main light so that the light falls off rapidly on the top and back of his head. The darker in tone the bald area is, the less noticeable it will be. Do not use a hair light, and use a minimal background light. If possible, try to blend the tone of the background with the top of your subject's head.

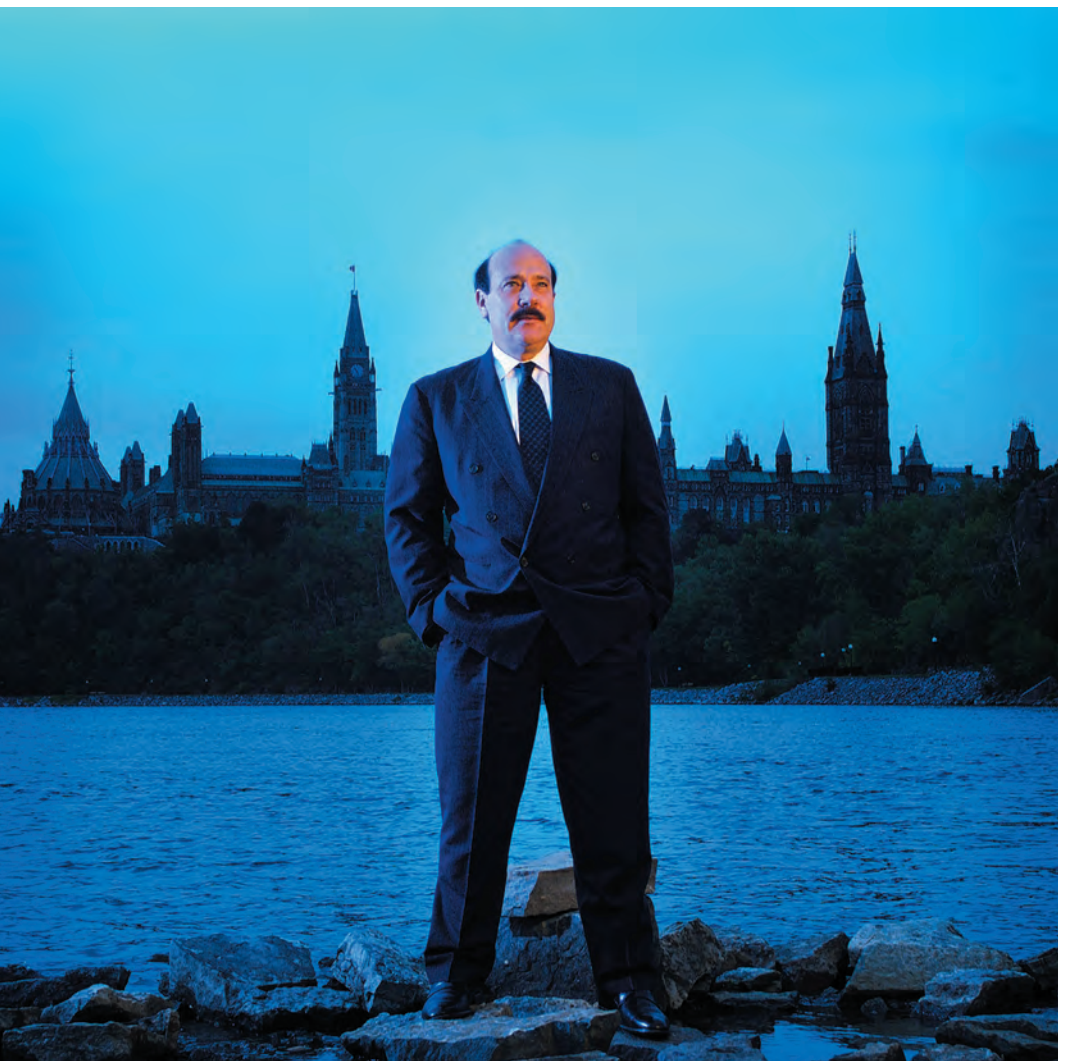
Another trick is to feather the main light so that the light falls off rapidly on the top and back of his head.

Broad Foreheads

To diminish a wide or high forehead, lower the camera height and tilt the person's chin upward slightly. If you find that by lowering the camera and raising the chin the forehead is made only marginally smaller, move the camera in closer and observe the effect again.

Eyes: Deep-Set or Protruding

To correct deep-set eyes, keep the main light low to fill the eye sockets with light. Keep the lighting ratio low so there is as much fill light as possible to lighten the eyes. Raising the chin will also help diminish the look of deep-set eyes. To correct protruding eyes, raise the main light and have the person look downward so that more of the eyelid is showing.



This editorial image of Tony Pollard was created by Christian LaLonde for *Hotelier* magazine. When photographing a bald subject, it is a good idea to drop the camera height (or raise the subject's chin slightly) so that you are showing less of the top of his head.

UNUSUAL ENVIRONMENTS

Posing a subject underwater is a relatively new form of portraiture. For the portraits to work, the pose must be appealing—but it also must be geared towards adequate flotation, otherwise the person starts to sink like a stone. In these two examples, the top one is very heavily Photoshopped to give the image a mythical quality. In the other, the image of the boy, the pose is more realistic and no Photoshop was used. Both photographs are by Larry Peters.

Large Ears

To scale down large ears, the best thing to do is to hide the far ear by placing the person in a three-quarter pose. If possible, place the near ear in shadow using a gobo or by feathering the main light. If the subject's ears are very large, examine the person in a profile pose. A profile pose may totally eliminate the problem.

Mouths: Narrow, Wide, or Uneven

If your subject has an uneven mouth (one side higher than the other, for example) or a crooked smile, turn their head so that the higher side of the mouth is closest to the camera, or tilt the head so that the line of the mouth is basically even. To reduce an overly wide mouth, photograph the person in a three-quarter view and not smiling. For a small or narrow mouth, photograph the person in a more frontal pose and have him or her smile broadly.

One of the tricks of the trade in accentuating a subject's positive features is the use of black. Here, Bill McIntosh had his subjects dress in black velvet drape—the kind of material that absorbs all of the light striking it. The background was also a black velvet so that no light would be reflected. The net effect is that you lose the lines of the shoulders, allowing these pretty faces and gorgeous hair to become the focal points of the composition.

Noses: Long or Short

To correct for a subject with a long nose, lower the camera height and tilt the chin upward slightly. Lower the main light so that there are no deep shadows under the nose. You should use a frontal pose, either a full-face or seven-eighths view, to disguise the length of your subject's nose. For a short nose, raise the camera height to give a longer line to the person's nose. Have the subject look downward slightly and try to place a highlight along the ridge of the nose. The highlight tends to lengthen a short nose even more.

Necks: Long or Short

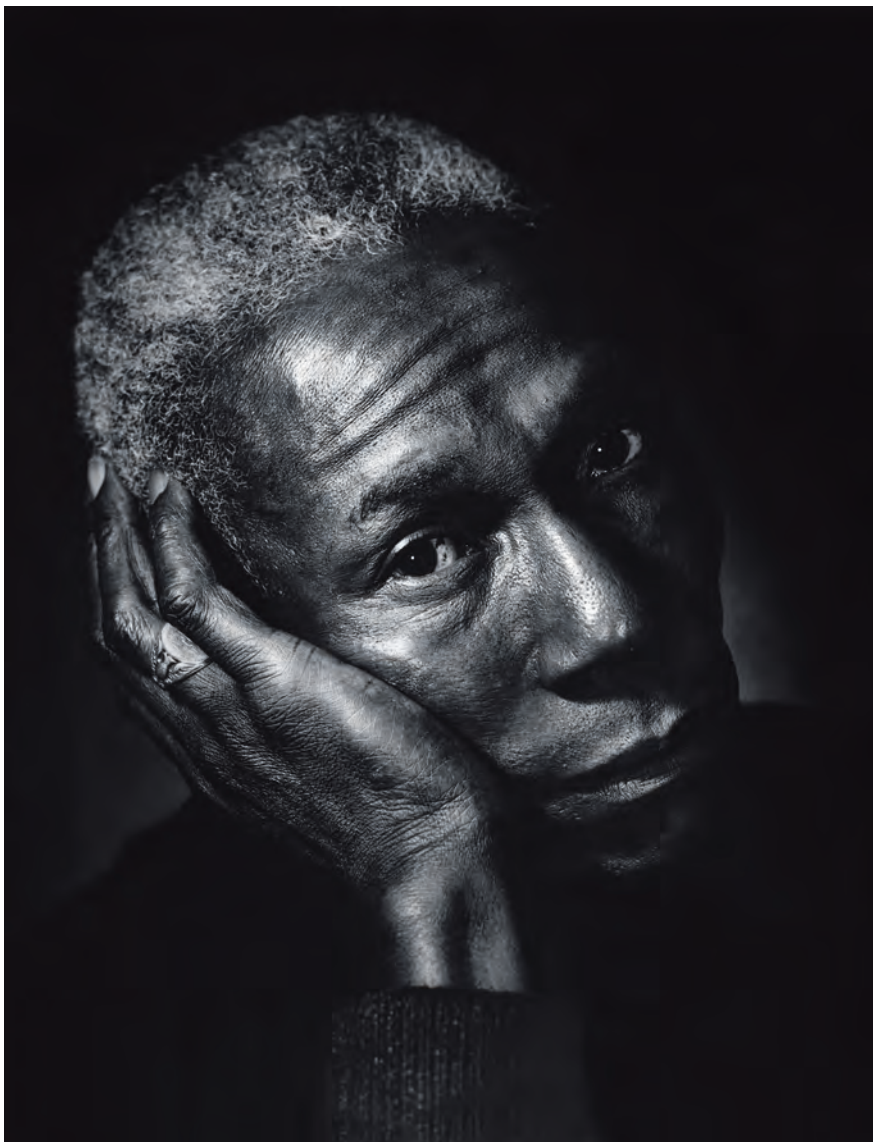
While a long neck can be considered sophisticated, it can also appear unnatural—especially in a head-and-shoulders portrait. By raising the camera height, lowering the head, keeping the neck partially in shadow, and pulling up the shirt or coat-collar, you will shorten an overly long neck. If you see the subject's neck as graceful and elegant, back up and make a three-quarter- or full-length portrait to emphasize the graceful line of the neck in the composition.

For short necks, place light from the main light on the neck. This is accomplished by lowering the main light or feathering it downward. Increase the fill light on the neck so there is more light on the shadow side of the neck. Lowering the camera height and suggesting a V-neck shirt will also lengthen a short neck.

Chins: Double, Long, or Stubby

Even thin people sometimes look like they have a double chin in portraits. If you notice this problem, reduce the view of the area beneath the chin by raising the camera so that area is less prominent. You can also have the subject tilt their chin upward or pull it slightly forward to stretch out the skin under the chin.

For a long chin, choose a higher camera angle and turn the face to the side. For a stubby chin, use a lower camera angle and photograph the person in a frontal pose.



Bill McIntosh created this portrait with the intent of bringing out the marvelous texture in this man's face. Literally every pore on his face and hand is sharp. In character studies such as these, it is important to know what to reveal. In this case, it was the weathered appearance of the man's face.

RETOUCHING

Part of the pleasure of purchasing a fine portrait is the invisible retouching that has been done to the final image. Retouching is expected in a fine portrait and when a customer sees unretouched proofs, they will, of course, recognize that certain aspects of their appearance "need work."

The retouching that is done today is drastically different than what was done in the past. Tim Schooler made the images seen here. He shoots in RAW mode only and processes the RAW files in PhaseOne's CaptureOne, with the default setting in CaptureOne a +7 percent bump to give the colors a little extra vibrancy. Tim then applies the Portraiture filter, a Photoshop and Aperture plug-in from Imagenomic (www.imagenomic.com/pt.aspx). This filter smooths and softens skin tones intelligently and removes imperfections while preserving skin texture and other important details, such as hair, eyebrows and eyelashes.

When an image is selected from the client's proof book, made with John Harman's Quick Proofs (www.prophotohome.com), any blemishes are removed and stray hairs are cleaned up. According to Tim, that's about all the work required to finish the image.

5. Composition Techniques

The rule of thirds grid is superimposed over a fine portrait by Deborah Ferro.

With the overlay, you can see how effectively the golden mean is incorporated into this portrait by Ken Skute.

Subject Placement

Composition in portraiture involves proper subject placement within the frame. There are several schools of thought on proper subject placement, and no one school offers the only answer. Two formulas are given here to help you best determine where to place the main subject in the picture area.

The Rule of Thirds. Many a journeyman photographer doesn't know where to place the subject within the frame. As a result, these less experienced artists usually opt for putting the person in the center of the picture. This is the most static type of portrait you can produce.

The easiest way to improve your compositions is to use the rule of thirds. This is a system that imposes asymmetry into the design of the portrait. According to the rule of thirds, the rectangular frame is cut into four imaginary lines that form a "tic-tac-toe" grid. The point at which any two of these lines intersect is considered an area of dynamic visual interest. The intersecting points are ideal spots at which to position your main point of interest, but you could also opt to place your point of interest anywhere along one of the dividing lines.

This applies to all print orientations. In a vertical print, the head or eyes are usually two-thirds up from the bottom edge of the image. Even in a horizontal composition, the eyes or face are usually in the top one-third of the frame.

The rule of thirds also applies equally to all portrait lengths. In head-and-shoulders portraits the eyes are the point of central interest. Therefore, it is a good idea if they rest on a dividing line or at an intersection of two lines. In a three-quarter- or full-length portrait, the face is the center of interest, so the face should be positioned to fall on an intersection or on a dividing line.

The Golden Mean. The golden mean, a concept first expressed by the ancient Greeks, is a compositional principle similar to the rule of thirds. Put simply, the golden mean identifies the point where the main center of interest should lie; it is an ideal compositional type for portraits. The golden mean is found by drawing a diagonal from one corner of the frame to the other. Then,

draw a line from one (or both) of the remaining corners so that it intersects the first line perpendicularly. By doing this you can determine the proportions of the golden mean for both horizontal and vertical photographs.

Direction

Regardless of which direction the subject is facing in the photograph, there should be slightly more room in front of the person (on the side toward which he is facing). For instance, if the person is looking to the right as you look at the scene through the viewfinder, then there should be more space to the right side of the subject than to the left of the subject in the frame. This gives the image a visual sense of direction. Even if the composition is such that you want to position the person very close to the center of the frame, there should still be slightly more space on the side toward which the subject is turned.

The same compositional principle also applies when the subject is looking directly at the camera. Rather than centering the subject in the frame, you

The photographer, Beth Forester, intentionally left more room in front of the grandmother as a matter of compositional integrity. This also provides a beautiful implied diagonal, tracing the line of her eyes down toward the lower left-hand corner of the photo. Also note that the baby's body forms a diagonal line that is at almost the same angle as the grandmother's gaze, yet in a contrasting direction.

Everything about this portrait by Alycia Alvarez is expertly done—from the pose and expression to the framing and the lighting to the retouching, which involved some image painting in Corel Painter. Notice how the two pairs of clasped hands, locking the children tightly together, fall along the vertical lines of the rule of thirds, making them key focal points in the image.

TOP—This image by Bruce Dorn is intersected by vertical lines in the background, yet they do not cut the image in half or in thirds. Instead, they act as contrasting elements to the diagonal lines spread throughout the background and also the diagonal lines within the bride's veil and dress.

CENTER—Astronaut Charles Conrad was photographed by Mauricio Donelli, who lit his famous subject as the sun would light an object on earth. He is positioned off center in the composition and surrounded by the border of Polaroid positive-negative film.

BOTTOM—Kevin Jairaj photographed this scene at Times Square in New York City. The centered subjects work here because the composition is so symmetrical. The lines in the composition all radiate in toward the subjects, ensuring that they remain the center of attention even in this complex scene.

should leave slightly more room on one side to create a sense of direction within the portrait.

Lines

Mastering composition and posing requires an ability to recognize real and implied lines within the photograph. A real line is one that is obvious—the horizon or a door frame, for example. An implied line is one that is not as obvious, like the line created on the face by the eyes.

Position of Lines. Real lines should not run across the center of the frame. This actually splits the composition into halves. It is better to position real lines at a point one-third of the way into the photograph. This weights the photograph more interestingly.

In this dramatic pose, the subject's body forms almost countless diagonal lines—and a sweeping S curve running vertically through the frame. Notice how everything leads your eye directly to her face. Photograph by Robert Lino.

At the Edge of the Frame. Lines, real or implied, that meet the edge of the photograph should lead the eye into the scene and not out of it. Additionally, they should lead toward the subject. A good example of this is the country road that is widest in the foreground and converges to a point where the subject is walking. These lines lead the eye straight to the subject.

Implied Lines. Implied lines, such as those of the arms and legs of the subject, should not contradict the direction or emphasis of the composition, but should modify it. These lines should feature gentle changes in direction and lead to the main point of interest—either the eyes or the face. There should also be some sort of inherent logic in the arrangement of elements within the image that causes the eye to follow a predetermined path. This is a key element in creating visual interest and staying power.

FRAMING AROUND THE JOINTS

Never frame the portrait so that a joint—an elbow, knee, or ankle, for example—is cut off at the edge of the frame. This sometimes happens when a portrait is cropped. Instead, crop between joints, at mid-thigh or mid-calf, for example. When you break the composition at a joint, it produces a disquieting feeling.

Pleasing Compositional Forms

Lines in compositions provide visual motion. The viewer's eye follows the curves and angles of these forms as it travels logically through them, and consequently, through the photograph. The recognition and creation of compositional lines, often through posing, is a powerful tool for creating a dynamic portrait.

The S-shaped composition is perhaps the most pleasing of all the forms. In images that employ this shape, the center of interest will usually fall on or near one of the intersections established by the rule of thirds or golden mean, but the remainder of the composition will form a gently sloping S shape that leads the viewer's eye to this area of main interest. Another pleasing type of composition is the L shape or inverted L shape. This type of composition is ideal for either reclining or seated subjects. The C and Z shapes are also seen in all types of portraiture and are both visually pleasing.

TOP—If you look at this bride, the tilt of her head begins the shape of the S, which is then carried down through her torso to her legs. The S shape is extended by the line of the veil to the area out in front of the fireplace. Photograph by Bruce Dorn.

BOTTOM—The S curve is one of the most pleasing of all compositional forms. You can see the S shape subtly interwoven into this bride's pose. Photograph by Stuart Bebb.

Shape

Shape is nothing more than a basic geometric shape found within a composition. Shapes are often made up of implied or real lines. For example, a classic way of posing three people is in a triangle or pyramid shape. You might also remember that the basic shape of the body in any well-composed portrait creates a triangular base. Shapes, while more dominant than lines, can be used similarly in unifying and balancing a composition.

The classic pyramid shape is one of the most basic in all art and is dynamic because of its use of diagonals with a strong horizontal base. The straight road receding into the distance is a good example of a found pyramid shape.

Sometimes shapes may also be linked, sharing common elements in both of the groups. For example, a single person in between can link two groups of three people posed in pyramid shapes, a common technique in posing group portraits.

There are an infinite number of possibilities involving shapes and linked shapes and even implied shapes, but the point of this discussion is to be aware that shapes and lines are prevalent in well-composed, well-posed images and that they are vital tools in creating strong visual interest within a portrait.

This beautiful portrait by Bruce Dorn is built on a triangle shape, comprised of the girl's legs, her bag, and the Labrador retriever as a base of the triangle. Her head, body, and arms also form a subtle S curve. A final touch to the portrait was adding a texture to the image resembling painted canvas.

This pyramid shape dominates the image. It is, of course, the St. Louis Arch, the "Gateway to the West." The way photographer Sal Cincotta photographed the scene, the arch's top tails off into the pale blue sky, making an "S" curve at the top of the dominant shape.

Balance occurs when two items, which may be dissimilar in shape or tone, create harmony within the photograph.

Tension and Balance

Just as real and implied lines and real and implied shapes are vital parts of an effectively designed image, so are the "rules" that govern them: the concepts of tension and balance.

Balance occurs when two items, which may be dissimilar in shape or tone, create a harmony within the photograph because they are of more or less

In this image of a diminutive bridesmaid and a large horse we have it all—tension *and* balance. The horse, although huge, is monochromatic and therefore, less dominant visually than say, a palomino or dappled horse might be. The bridesmaid, although much smaller, is more interesting visually, by virtue of her lilac-colored dress and the decorative rope she is holding. Photograph by Salvatore Cincotta.

equal visual strength. Tension, on the other hand, is a state of imbalance in an image; it can be referred to as visual contrast. For example, placing a group of four children on one side of an image and a pony on the other side of the image will produce visual tension. They contrast each other because they are different sizes and they are not at all similar in shape.

Using the same example, these two different groups could be resolved visually if the larger group, the children, were wearing brightly colored clothes and the pony was dark. The eye would then see the two units as equal—one demanding attention by virtue of size, the other gaining attention by virtue of brightness.

Although tension does not have to be resolved in an image, it works together with the concept of balance so that, in any given image, there are ele-

ments that produce visual tension and elements that produce visual balance. This is a vital combination of artistic elements because it creates a sense of heightened visual interest. For this reason, both balance and visual tension are active ingredients in great portraiture.

Subject Tone

The rule of thumb is that light tones advance visually, while dark tones retreat. Therefore, elements in the picture that are lighter in tone than the subject will be distracting. Of course, there are portraits where the subject is the darkest part of the scene—such as in a high-key portrait with a white background. This is really the same principle at work; the eye will go to the region of greatest contrast in a field of white or on a light-colored background. Regardless of whether the subject is light or dark, it should dominate the rest of the photograph either by brightness or by contrast.

A knowledge of the visual emphasis of tone should inform your discussions with portrait subjects about the selection of clothing for the session. For instance, darker clothing helps to blend bodies with the background, so that faces are the most prominent part of the photograph. Dark colors tend to slenderize, while light colors add weight. The color of the clothing should be generally subdued, since bright colors attract attention away from the face.

Why would the photographer include the sign in the background of this composition? The answer is simple: because the eye is drawn to it, yet it is not a dominant element. It's purpose is secondary; it adds assymetry or tension to the image, offsetting the symmetry of the pose. Photograph by Sal Cincotta.

ABOVE—Marcus Bell is an expert at including the bride and groom at a very small size and still creating an effective image. This is a perfect example of the importance of tone. Even in this vast frame, it is the bride's white gown that pops out, drawing your attention to the couple in the distance.

RIGHT—In this portrait, the tones are primarily light. Notice how the darker areas recede from your attention, allowing your eye to concentrate on the bride's subtle pose and lovely expression. Photograph by Marcus Bell.

Prints and patterns, no matter how small, also become a distraction by virtue of their contrast.

The Concepts of Design

The above concepts are not unique to photography, but can be found in all forms of visual expression dating back to ancient Greek civilization. While not all photographers are aware of them, they sometimes inherently use them because they have an innate sense of design. For those of us who do not, these principles can be studied and observed in all forms of visual art. The more you become familiar with the visual rhythms that govern how people perceive images, the more practiced you will become in incorporating these elements into your photographs. Within the principles of design and composition, one will find the means to make any portrait an expressive, compelling image that will keep the viewer staring at the image long after the surface information has been digested.

The lighting on this subject draws attention to him in two ways. First, it establishes him as the lightest element in the frame, giving him visual prominence. Second, it creates subtle gradated highlights on the wall, converging down toward him. This, too, helps draw your eye to the small figure. Photograph by Marcus Bell.

6. Camera Techniques Affecting Posing

Focal Length and Perspective

"Normal" Lenses. When making three-quarter or full-length portraits, it is advisable to use the normal focal-length lens for your camera. This lens will provide normal perspective because you are farther away from your subject than when making a head-and shoulders image. The only problem you may encounter is that the subject may not separate visually from the background with the normal lens. It is desirable to have the background slightly out of focus so that the viewer's attention goes to the subject, rather than to the background. With the normal lens, the depth of field is greater, so that even when working at wide lens apertures, it may be difficult to separate subject from background. This is particularly true when working outdoors, where patches of sunlight or other distracting background elements can easily detract from the subject.

An excellent focal length to use if making three-quarter or full-length portraits is the 50–55mm lens. Michael Costa used the 55mm setting on a 24–70mm lens to capture a fun moment; it was a good choice, as the perspective is excellent.

TOP—For this image, a 46mm lens was used on a Nikon D200, which made the effective focal length 69mm—the equivalent of a medium-length telephoto. Cherie Steinberg Coté photographed this model and her newborn in the studio, but neither mom nor Cherie could predict the lipstick marks on baby's forehead. A medium telephoto is ideal for a small group like this.

BOTTOM—Using a longer lens, like the 105mm lens used on this Nikon D300S, a DX-sensor camera, guarantees good perspective. The longer-than-normal focal length provides a good image size without having to work too close to your subject, which distorts the person's features. Photograph by Cherie Steinberg Coté.

Telephoto Lenses. For closer portraits, short- to medium-length telephotos provide normal perspective without subject distortion. If you used a normal focal-length lens, you would need to move in quite close to the subject to attain an adequate image size. Because it alters the perspective, this close proximity exaggerates the subject's features—noses appear elongated, chins jut out, and the backs of heads may appear smaller than normal. This phenomenon is known as foreshortening. Choosing a short-to-medium telephoto provides a greater working distance between camera and subject, while increasing the image size to ensure normal perspective. In group portraits, choosing a longer lens also helps keep people in the back of the group the same relative size as those in the front of the group.

A popular lens choice among portrait photographers is the 80–200mm f/2.8 (Nikon) or the 70–200mm f/2.8 (Canon and Nikon). These are very fast lenses that offer a wide variety of useful focal lengths for portraits. They are internal focusing, meaning that autofocus is lightning fast. At the shortest range, 80mm, this lens is perfect for creating full- and three-quarter- length portraits. At the long end, the 200mm setting is ideal for tightly cropped head-and-shoulders portraits.

Another popular choice is the 85mm (f/1.2 for Canon; f/1.4 or f/1.8 for Nikon), which is a short telephoto with exceptional sharpness. This lens gets used frequently because of its speed and ability to throw backgrounds out of focus, depending on the subject-to-camera distance.

FACING PAGE—Anthony Cava shot portrait with a 70–200mm lens at the 76mm setting. The medium telephoto setting minimized any potential distortion of this attractive and dynamically posed couple.

ABOVE—This unique senior portrait made by Jennifer George was shot with a 70–200mm lens at the 130mm setting. The telephoto focal length created shallow depth of field even at the taking aperture of f/5.6. The girl in the background is recognizable, but the girl in the foreground is very sharp.

If you have the working room, you can use a much longer lens. A 200mm lens, for instance, is a beautiful portrait lens for the 35mm format because it provides very shallow depth of field and throws the background completely out of focus. This provides a backdrop that won't distract viewers from the subjects. When used at wider apertures, this focal length provides a very shallow band of focus that can be used to accentuate just the eyes, for instance, or just the frontal planes of the faces.

Very long lenses (300mm and longer for 35mm) are ideal for working unobserved but often put you too far from your subject to give posing suggestions without yelling.

Wide-Angle Lenses. Other popular lenses include the range of wide angles, both fixed focal length lenses and wide-angle zooms. Focal lengths from 17mm to 35mm are ideal for capturing the atmosphere as well as for photographing larger groups. These lenses are often fast enough to use by available light with high ISO settings.

It is important to avoid subject distortion whenever possible. With wide-angle lenses, this is best accomplished by keeping your subject in the center of the frame, where distortion is minimally evident (if at all). The closer the subject is to the frame edges, the more he or she will distort. Heads will elon-

Wide-angle lenses are great tools for portraiture, provided you keep your subject away from the frame edges, where the image will distort. Wide-angle lenses make the foreground intimate, and can bring the background into the flow of the composition. Here, a wide-angle portrait by Australian Marcus Bell incorporates a breathtaking scenic background into the scene, melding the composition into one beautiful panoramic.

Wide-angle lenses are ideal for bringing the environment into the portrait for more intimacy. This is true even in the studio. Notice how the background and background light seem right on top of the subject. Photograph by Cherie Steinberg Coté

Working on the deck of a ship puts you in close quarters, so a wide-angle lens may be called for. Cherie Steinberg Coté used a 17mm lens on a D2X—but notice that she kept the group away from the frame edges where their features would distort.

Using a short focal length lens helps link the background and subject. In this photograph, Michael Costa wanted to tie the bride and groom to this beautiful coastline, so Michael Costa used a 24mm setting on a 24–70mm f/2.8 lens.

gate and become misshapen; arms and legs will become unusually long. If you find this happening, your only solution might be to go with an even wider lens that allows you to center your subject in the frame, away from the frame edges.

When making group portraits, you are often forced to use a wide-angle lens. In this case, the distortion problems noted above can be even more pronounced. Additionally, the subjects in the front row of a large group will appear larger than those in the back of the group, especially if you get too close. Still, a wide-angle is often the only way you can fit the group into the shot and maintain a decent working distance. Raising the camera height, thus placing all subjects at the same relative distance from the lens, can minimize this effect. For this reason, many

Marcus Bell often uses a 35mm f/1.4 lens to create amazing portraits at dusk. Several different light sources were combined here, including tungsten and daylight. His white balance was set to daylight so the tungsten lights would record with warmth. Perched on the top step, he had to use good camera technique to record a handheld exposure at $^{1}/_{15}$ second. He had the groom lean into the railing and the bride lean into him, which reduced any possible subject movement during the long exposure.

BREAKING THE RULES

While the phrase "rules are made to be broken" is refreshing in most instances, fine portraitists know which rules can be broken without distorting the human form. For instance, what photographer has not fallen in love with the viewpoint and effects of the wide-angle lens? The foreground spreads out before you in panoramic fashion, the horizon line bows, the sky naturally vignettes at the corners of the frame. Yet, the wide-angle lens, when used in portraiture, creates a number of difficulties. If the subject is not dead center in the frame, for example, either the head or the feet of the subject will distort. And if used close-up in a head-and-shoulders portrait, the nose will project toward the camera like a missile, while the eyes and forehead will recede with unflattering abruptness. Still, in the hands of an experienced professional, the wide-angle lens can be an amazingly efficient portrait lens, revealing both the character of the subject and the intimacy of his or her surroundings.

group photographers carry a stepladder or scope out the location in advance to find a high vantage point. Also, the closer to the center of the frame the people are, the less distorted they will appear.

Depth of Field

Beyond the aperture setting, there are two important factors to keep in mind when it comes to depth of field. First, shorter lenses have much greater inherent depth of field than telephotos. This is why so much attention is paid to focusing telephoto lenses accurately in portraiture. Second, the closer you are to your subject, the less depth of field you will have. When you are shooting a tight face shot, be sure that you have enough depth of field at your working lens aperture to hold the focus fully on the subject's face.

Depth of field can be critical in portraiture and it is important for you to know how much or how little depth of field exists in your image. While most DSLRs still include a depth-of-field preview control, larger LCD view screens with better resolution, navigation, and enlargement capabilities make it easy to critically inspect the depth of field. It's also important to note that with smaller APS-C chips, depth of field does not equate the same way. There will be substantially more depth of field with the smaller sized imager than there will be with a full-frame (24x36mm) chip. The depth of field with a full-sized chip will be the equivalent of using a full-frame 35mm camera.

Focusing

Head-and-Shoulders Portraits. The most difficult type of portrait to focus precisely is a head-and-shoulders portrait. In this type of image, it is especially important that the eyes and frontal planes of the face be tack-sharp. Often, it is desirable for the ears to be sharp, as well.

When working at wide lens apertures where depth of field is reduced, you must focus carefully to hold these critical areas. This is where a good knowledge of your lenses comes in handy. Some lenses have the majority of their depth of field behind the focus point; others have

FAST LENSES

Fast lenses (f/2.8, f/2, f/1.8, f/1.4, f/1.2, etc.) will get lots of work, as they afford many more "available light" opportunities indoors than slower speed lenses. Marcus Bell, an award-winning photographer from Australia, calls his Canon 35mm f/1.4L USM lens his favorite. Shooting at dusk, with a high ISO setting, he can shoot wide open and mix lighting sources for unparalleled results. Another favorite lens is the high-speed telephoto—the 400mm f/2.8 or 300mm f/4.0 (Nikon) and the 300mm and 400mm f/2.8L (Canon) lenses. These lenses are ideal for working unobserved and can isolate some wonderful moments, particularly when working spontaneously. Even more than the 80–200mm lens, the 300mm or 400mm lenses throw backgrounds beautifully out of focus and, when used wide open, provide a sumptuously thin band of focus, which is ideal for isolating image details. On the negative side, these lenses are heavy and expensive. If using one for the bulk of the day, a monopod is advised.

TOP—Working in low-light situations requires that you adjust your working distance to control critical areas of the image with the available limits of dept of field. Here, the light level was low and therefore the photographer, Anthony Cava, moved back just so that he could hold focus on the face and bodice of the wedding gown. The region of focus extends from the tip of the bride's nose to her shoulder line.

BOTTOM—Knowing how your lenses divide depth of focus is critical in a portrait like this. Jennifer George focused on the boy's far eye, leaving enough depth of field in front of the point of focus to keep the boy sharp and the majority of depth of field behind the point of focus, allowing the mom to be in sharp focus. Shots like these are a tight-rope act, wherein determining the point of focus is critical.

the majority of their depth of field in front of the point of focus. In most cases, the depth of field is split evenly; half in front of and half behind the point of focus.

Assuming that your depth of field lies half in front and half behind the point of focus, it is best to focus on the subject's eyes in a head-and-shoulders

When the purpose of the shot is to capture the full detail of a person or object, then depth of field must be carefully monitored and executed. Here, Dan Doke captured the bride's gloved hands and the ornate silver chignon holder used to secure her hair/veil. They are perfectly sharp so that every detail is revealed.

portrait. This will generally keep the full face and the eyes, the main center of interest, in sharp focus. The eyes are a good point to focus on because they are the region of greatest contrast in the face, and thus make focusing simple. This is particularly true for autofocus cameras that often seek areas of contrast on which to focus.

Three-Quarter- and Full-Length Portraits. Focusing a three-quarter- or full-length portrait is a little easier because you are farther from the subject, where depth of field is greater. Again, you should split your focus, halfway between the closest and farthest points that you want sharp. And again, be-

cause of background problems, it is a good idea to work at wide-open or nearly wide-open apertures to keep your background somewhat diffused.

Camera Height and Perspective

When photographing people with average features, there are a few general rules that govern the camera height needed to produce a normal perspective.

Head-and-Shoulders Portraits. For these portraits, the rule of thumb is that the camera should be placed at the same height as the tip of the subject's nose or slightly higher. When the front of the subject's face remains parallel to the film plane (or the digital image sensor), the camera will record the image from its best vantage point, in terms of perspective.

Three-Quarter- and Full-Length Portraits. For three-quarter-length portraits, the camera should be at a height midway between the subject's waist and neck. In full-length portraits, the camera should be the same height as the subject's waist in order to achieve the most realistic perspective.

RIGHT—Forced perspective is a situation in which the photographer intentionally introduces disparate foreground and background elements, allowing the viewer to leap from foreground to background. In this portrait by Marcus Bell, the leap is made even more enjoyable by framing the mom and bride in the breakfast nook. The gentleman in the foreground exudes a priceless expression, indifferent to the background scene, that adds a beautiful bit of visual irony.

BELOW—Cherie Steinberg Coté wanted to capture the entire veil and lovely face of the model in sharp focus so she shot at f/11 with a 28–105mm f/3.5–4.5 lens at 50mm, providing plenty of depth of field to keep everything in the frame sharp.

FACING PAGE—Moving subjects and depth of field can be a nightmarish situation. Add in the patches of direct sunlight that you have in this image by Peter Ellis and the image is further complicated. The photographer knew he had to make the image once the trio cleared the last block of direct sunshine coming into the frame from camera right. The priceless expression was one of those bonus items that happen when you are a skilled photographer—luck seems to find its way to you!

ABOVE—Although the closer your subject is to the camera, the more distortion you introduce into the photograph, there are times when it is advantageous to move in close for a detailed portrait. Here, Peter Ellis isolated the bride's beautiful smile and unusual eye color. All else about her, except the veil, is eliminated from the image.

RIGHT—The best perspective is obtained by choosing a camera height that is pretty much dead center in the vertical area, dividing the subject in an equidistant manner. Here, Brett Florens chose a camera height that is at chin height, which divides the frame evenly. Notice the point of focus skims the shoulder and keeps the near eye and veil sharp.

Raising and Lowering the Camera. In each of the cases described above, the camera is at a height that divides the visible area of the subject into two equal halves in the viewfinder. This is so that the features above and below the lens–subject axis are equidistant to the lens, and thus recede equally for "normal" perspective. As the camera is raised or lowered, the perspective (the size relationship between parts of the photo) changes. By controlling perspective, you can alter the physical appearance of your subject.

By elevating the camera height in a three-quarter- or full-length portrait, you enlarge the head and shoulders of the subject, but slim the hips and legs. Conversely, if you lower the camera, you reduce the size of the head, and enlarge the size of the legs and thighs. Tilting the camera down when raising the camera (or up when lowering it) increases these effects.

When you raise or lower the camera in a head-and-shoulders portrait the effects are even more dramatic. Therefore, adjustments in camera height, positioning the camera either above or below nose height, are a primary means of correcting facial irregularities. Raising the camera height lengthens the nose, narrows the chin and jaw lines, and broadens the forehead. Lowering the camera height shortens the nose, de-emphasizes the forehead, and widens the jaw while accentuating the chin.

Distance to the Subject. The closer the camera is to the subject, the more pronounced the changes in camera perspective are. If, after making a camera-height adjustment, the desired effect is not sufficiently acheived, move the camera in closer to the subject and observe the effect again.

Even when photographing little ones, the full-length portrait carries the same guidelines about camera height and perspective. Here, Brett Florens shot from a waist-high vantage point for a distortion-free full-length portrait.

This is an amazing portrait made by David Beckstead. The architectural components look like womens' high-heel shoes lined up in a row. The red dress and beautiful woman would have been enough of an eye-stopper, but Beckstead decided to introduce a very long, chiffon fabric as a lead-in line that makes the composition priceless. The wide-angle lens (16–35mm f/2.8) made it appear as if there was way more depth of field than was actually available at the taking aperture of f/2.8.

Apertures

When you have a choice, optics experts say to choose an aperture that is 1½ to 2 full stops smaller than the lens's maximum aperture. For instance, the optimum lens aperture of an f/2.8 lens would be around f/4. Many portrait photographers who use the 80–200m f/2.8 lens, or the 70–200mm f/2.8 lens, shoot at f/4. This optimal aperture delivers the sharpest image and is ideally free of aberrations. It also masks slight autofocusing errors as it does provide some minimal depth of field

The optimum aperture, however, may not always be small enough to provide adequate depth of field for a head-and-shoulders portrait, so it is often necessary to stop down. Smaller aperture settings will increase the depth of field in the image and may pull the background into focus. Smaller apertures may also lengthen your shutter speeds to unacceptable levels, thus forcing you to increase the ISO setting. Note that the use of optimum lens apertures is dependent on the overall light level and the ISO speed you are using.

A technique that has been perfected by sports photographers and other photojournalists is to use the fastest possible shutter speed and widest possible

lens aperture. The technique does two things. First, it quells all possible subject and camera movement. Second, depending on the camera-to-subject distance, it allows the background to fall completely out of focus. When using telephoto lenses and working close to the subject, the effects are even more exaggerated, creating razor-thin planes of focus on the face, with clear lines of defocus visible. It is a stylized effect that has gained much popularity of late.

Subjects in Motion

When shooting candid portraits—or when your subject is moving—choose a shutter speed that is fast enough to still subject movement. If you have any question as to which speed to use, always use the next fastest speed to ensure sharp images. It's more important to freeze the subject's movement than it is to have great depth of field for such a shot. If you are using a tripod, 1/30 to 1/60 second should be adequate to stop average subject movement in a portrait.

LEFT—Michael O'Neill wanted to hold three specific areas in focus: the lips, the sleeve of the gown, and, of course, the ring. He was also dealing with low light and so had to select a fast enough shutter speed that would quell subject movement at such camera magnification as was necessary to make the ring life-size. His lens was an AF-S VR Micro Nikkor 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED and his chosen exposure settings were 1/500 second at f/3.2, both of which seemed to do the trick.

FACING PAGE, TOP—Jerry D shot this virtually noiseless image in a very dimly lit club at ISO 6400 with a Nikon D700 and 24–70mm f/2.8 lens. The exposure was 1/50 second at f/2.8. The shutter speed was just fast enough to stop the subject motion.

FACING PAGE, BOTTOM—Even when depth of field is plentiful, as it is here in this studio strobe shot, the discipline of focusing on the eyes is still a valid strategy. Note that the photographer, Vicki Taufer, placed the girls' eyes in the same plane to guarantee that their beautiful green eyes would be the sharpest and most dominant elements in the photograph.

7. Styling the Portrait

Hair Style and Makeup

There is no doubt that a fine portrait is enhanced with appropriate hairstyling and makeup. For women, jewelry is an important part of the equation, as well.

Bill McIntosh, who does most of his elegant portraits in his clients' homes, pays a visit before the shoot. In addition to determining which room and which props and furnishings will be employed, he uses this time to discuss clothing, jewelry, hair style, and makeup with the client. A detailed discussion will help to prevent surprises on the day of the sitting.

Makeup. For women, many photography sessions begin with the application of photographic makeup by a trained artist. Indeed, many studios employ full- or part-time makeup artists and hairstylists, feeling that their skills are integral to the success of the portrait session. The amount and color of the makeup that will be applied for a session depends on the type of portrait and the outfits selected. Trained experts can add professional touches, such as improving bone structure or the apparent size of a girl's eyes, for example.

Makeup can also be used to conceal problem areas. For example, blemishes can be easily handled with ordinary cover-up. A small dab applied to noticeable blemishes will usually make them invisible to the camera. If foundation is applied to the face, smoothing the overall complexion, it should be blended carefully over the jaw line and onto the neck. An abrupt color change between the face and neck should be avoided.

The benefits of styling your portrait are evident in this Hernan Rodriguez portrait. Hair and makeup are flawless; no doubt enhanced by a professional makeup and styling team. Many studios, especially those catering to seniors, are now offering hair and makeup as part of the sitting fee. It helps create a more finished and idealized image and adds to the overally uniqueness of the photography session.

Robert Lino is one of America's top specialists in the Quinceañera. The image shown here was made in Lino's studio in Miami. Notice the separation between the young lady's fingers and the subtle, curved break of her wrists. Also, notice how carefully the gown was arranged behind the subject.

The eyeshadow should also be blended, with no sharp demarcation lines between colors.

The eyeshadow should also be blended, with no sharp demarcation lines between colors. It should define the eyes but not call attention to the color of the eyelids. Only a minimal amount of eyeliner is recommended; too much makes the eyes look smaller. Mascara is almost essential; even women who feel that they don't usually want makeup should be photographed with at least a minimum of mascara. A gloss lipstick is also important.

Once the makeup is complete, finish it off with a matte powder, which reduces shininess and specular reflections.

Hair Styles. If you will be working indoors and outside, the selected hair styles should be designed to endure a number of climactic changes. The hair

should not look frozen with hair spray, but should have a certain "give" and bounce. However, the hair style should not fall apart the minute the subject walks out into a breeze.

Advise your clients not to have their hair cut too close to the portrait session. Hair should have a few days to "relax" after a trip to the beauty salon or stylist.

Clothing

Darker clothing helps to blend bodies with the background, so that faces are the most prominent part of the photograph. Dark colors tend to slenderize, while light colors add weight. The color of the clothing should be generally subdued. Bright colors attract attention away from the face. Prints and patterns, no matter how small, become a distraction.

Casual outfits are best kept to solid colors. Denim, white, black, and solid earth tones always look good. Things to avoid are stripes, bold patterns and prints that distract, neon colors, and clothing with any wording on the front.

Group Portraits. Sometimes the group composition will be dictated by what the people are wearing. For example, it is often best to divide the group into subgroups—family units, for instance—and have them coordinate with each other. A family in khaki pants and yellow sweaters could be placed next to a family in jeans and red sweaters.

Bill McIntosh is a master of the coordinated environment. Here's what he has to say about planning: "No matter how good your artistic and photographic skills are, there is one more element required to make a great portrait: color harmony."

In McIntosh's portraits the style and color of the clothing all coordinate. He says, "I have ensured these suit both the subjects and the environment chosen." Bill makes sure everything matches. "Time is well spent before the sitting discussing the style of clothing—formal or

Everyone in the family is wearing jeans and a black shirt—a popular group portrait outfit. Notice how nature provided a small triangle of logs to contain the group, thus helping organize the composition. Photograph by Frank Frost.

The colors of sunset are pastel and warm. So are the colors of this family group. Note that they don't all match, but because the outfits are subtle and moderately toned and none of the patterns are bold, they all seem to go together. Photograph by Frank Frost.

casual—and then advising clients of particular colors that they feel happy with and which will also create a harmonious portrait," he says.

White is a photographers' favorite, provided the subjects are of average weight or on the slender side. If your group is on the large side, all that white will make their necks and torsos look much larger than they really are. The general rule of thumb is wear white or pastels, gain ten pounds; wear dark or medium shades, lose ten pounds.

Solid-colored clothes, in cool or neutral shades and with long sleeves, always look good. Cool colors like blue and green recede; warm colors like red, orange, and yellow advance. Cool colors or neutrals (like black, white, and gray) will emphasize the faces and make them appear warmer and more pleasing in the photographs.

Bill McIntosh's family portraits are well coordinated clothing-wise. Here, he had the mom and kids dress in white shirts and white jeans. He shot at twilight because he loves the pastel colors that occur at that time of the day. He lucked out when a huge wave broke, producing a white background. Everything in the image is tinted a peach-color because of the twilight.

Your groups' garments should also blend. For example, all of the family-group members should wear informal or formal outfits. It's easy when photographing a wedding party, since everyone is already dressed identically and formally. Half your battle is won. It is difficult to pose a group when some people are wearing suits and ties and others are wearing jeans and polo shirts.

Shoes

In full-length portraits, the shoes will be seen. Unfortunately, there is nothing that dates a portrait faster than shoes. This is particularly true in senior/teens portraits and women's portraits. Styles change and even an untrained eye can tell the shoes pictured in the portrait are no longer in style. If this is a concern, it is often a good idea to crop or pose the person so that the shoes do not become an issue. If the shoes will be shown, the shoe style and color should blend with the rest of a person's attire. Remember, dark outfits call for dark shoes and socks.

8. Posing Group Portraits

Posing groups, both small and large, is more a question of design and technical problem solving than it is a pure posing exercise. There are a number of ways to look at designing groups.

The first consideration is technical. You should design a group so that those posed in the back are as close as possible to those in the front. This ensures that your plane of focus will cover the front row as well as the back row, making it easy to hold the focus from front to back.

The second consideration in designing groups are the aesthetic concerns. You are building a design when creating a group portrait. Some photographers liken designing a group portrait to a florist arranging flowers; sometimes you want a tight bouquet of faces, other times you might want to arrange your subjects so that there is more space between the group members.

When posing large groups, getting the front of the group and the back of the group in the same relative plane of focus can be difficult. Here, Dennis Orchard found a balcony from which to shoot. From it, he could bark out some minor posing instructions. It is important to tell the participants that, to be seen in the photo, they must be able to see the camera with both eyes. Otherwise they will be partially obscured.

Posing Hierarchy

Should you pose by age, importance, or size? This is a question of considerable debate among group portrait photographers. Some say to concentrate on organizing large family groups into logical subgroups of nuclear families. Some feel that the family is more cohesively arranged if organized by age (grandparents in the middle, with their children adjacent, and the grandchildren and their families in the outer realms of the group). In either case, one can then arrange the individual subjects by size within each subgroup for the most pleasing composition.

Many photographers feel that posing by size and shape creates the most interesting and attractively posed group. This is certainly true for weddings, where groups, formal or informal, can be arranged in any number of ways, as long as the bride and groom remain in the center. This method also affords the photographer the most flexibility to flatter the individual members of the group.

TOP—What I like most about this Frank Frost portrait, aside from its great spontaneity, is the varying head heights, which resemble musical notes dancing across a score. I also like the great emotion and the way that the photographer seems to be completely invisible to the subjects.

BOTTOM—Head height should be controlled as much as possible. Here, Stephen Pugh posed the tallest members toward the back of the group and the little ones in front, paying attention to consistent posing hierarchy. Notice how Stephen had them all peek around a barn door. Stephen split the focus by focusing between 1/3 and 1/2 into the scene in order to split his depth of field half in front of and half behind the point of focus.

Head Levels

No two heads should ever be on the same level when next to each other. Nor should two heads be directly on top of each other. (As a rule, this type of posing is only acceptable in team photos.) In a group of five people, for example, you should have each of the five faces on a different level—one seated, one standing to the left or right, one seated on the arm of the chair, one kneeling on the other side of the chair, and one kneeling down in front. Thinking in terms of multiple levels will make any group portrait more pleasing to look at.

Head Proximity

Proximity is often related to warmth and distance to elegance. If you open the group up you have a lot more freedom to introduce flowing lines and shapes within the composition. A tightly arranged group, where members are touching, implies warmth and closeness.

Whatever distance you choose, be consistent. Don't have two heads close together and two far apart. There should be a more or less equal distance between each of the heads. If you have a situation where one person is seated, one standing, and a third seated on the arm of the chair (placing the heads of the two seated subjects in close proximity), then back up and make the portrait a full-length. This minimizes the effect of the standing subject's head being so far from the others.

In this beautiful hand-colored portrait by Deanna Urs, the girl in the front of the image is supine, leaning on her elbows. The effect is quite elegant; she forms a horizontal base for the portrait. The sisters' heads are positioned very close to one another but at different heights and different tilts, so that the lines are dynamic and intimate within the portrait.

The Group Posing Dialogue

Showing each person how you want them to pose is much easier than describing what you want and takes less time. Once they are in the pose you want, wait for the special moment when they forget all about having their picture taken. Then it's show time. Be positive and always be in charge. Once you lose control of a large group it's difficult or impossible to regain it. Talk to your subjects and tell them how good they look and that you can feel their special emotion (or whatever comment seems most appropriate). Let them know that you appreciate them as unique individuals, and so on. If closeness is what you are after, talk them into it. It sounds hokey, but if it does nothing more than relax your subjects, you have done a good thing.

Small Groups

Couples. The simplest of groups is two people. Whether the group is a bride and groom, brother and sister, or grandma and grandpa, the basic building blocks call for one person to be slightly higher than the other. Generally speaking, the mouth height of the lower subject should

LEFT—Although the bride is looking directly at the camera, the groom's gaze down toward her gives the image an intimate feel. Notice the diamond shape created by their two faces and her arm, bent up to his chest. Your eyes follow along it, always leading back on the faces. Photograph by David Williams.

RIGHT—This is the kind of portrait in which you will have the brothers' undivided cooperation. Jim Garner had the two leap over him off a sand dune while he fired a flash to freeze their ascent. It's the kind of pose in which no one knows how it will turn out, so keep shooting until they get tired.

ABOVE—It's hard to imagine Dennis Orchard being unnoticeable in a field of flowers, but this couple seems completely unaware of him. Yet, that may be because he said or did the right thing to make them forget he was there. These are the moments you look for when photographing any couple—father and son, bride and groom, brother and sister—it's a moment of complete relaxation and total absorption in the other person.

RIGHT—When Ken Sklute was learning his trade back on Long Island, he shot up to two hundred weddings a year. Doing so, he learned the value of using an armchair, or in this case two, for group portraits. Here, both armchairs support two people at different heights, thus preserving the symmetry of the group and creating two different levels within the group structure.

be at the forehead height of the higher subject. Many photographers recommend "mouth to eyes" as the ideal starting point.

Although the two subjects can be posed parallel to each other—each with their shoulders and heads turned the same direction (as one might do with twins, for example)—a more interesting dynamic can be achieved by having the pair pose at 45-degree angles to each other, so their shoulders face in toward one another. With this pose you can create a number of variations by moving them closer or farther apart. Another intimate pose for two is to have two profiles facing each other. One should still be higher than the other to allow you to create an implied diagonal line between their eyes, giving the portrait direction. Also, since this type of image will be fairly close up, you will want to make sure that the frontal planes of their faces are roughly parallel so that you can hold the focus on both faces.

Using an armchair allows you to seat one person, usually the man, and position the other person close and on the arm of the chair, leaning on the far armrest. This puts their faces in close proximity but at different heights. A variation of this is to have the woman seated and the man standing. However, when their heads are so far apart, you should pull back and make it a full-length portrait. Also, when you seat the woman in an armchair, her hands should be in her lap, thus slimming the waist, thighs, and hips. She should be seated at an angle, and the leg farther from the camera should have the

Here, Dawn Shields used the out-of-focus husband's gaze down onto his wife as a very strong compositional element. The focus is on the bride, but the emotion and even her reaction to it are because of the husband's dominant role in the image. Also, think of how much less impact this image would have if the husband and wife's faces were on the same level.

Adding a third person allows you to create a triangular shape within the composition. In this case, by turning the sisters in toward the middle sister, photographer Brian Shindle was able to display the intimacy and love between them.

This is a fairly standard group shot one might take at a wedding, but the subtleties make it special. Dennis Orchard had the angle of the poses just right, then had the bridesmaids look away to either side of him, putting the heads and necks at different angles. Notice, too, the hand posing and how delicately the flowers are being held. There is also nice separation between the arms and torsos, thus making the ladies look fit and creating the proper perspective.

foot "hooked" behind the front leg—a pose that women seem to fall into naturally.

Adding a Third Person. A group portrait of three individuals is still small and intimate. It lends itself well to a pyramid-shaped composition or to an inverted triangle, both of which are pleasing to the eye. Don't simply adjust the height of the faces so that each is at a different level, use the turn of the shoulders of those at either end of the group as a means of looping the group together.

Once you add a third person, you will begin to notice the interplay of lines and shapes inherent in good group design. As a visual exercise, plot the implied line that goes through the shoulders or faces of the three people in the group. If the line is sharp or jagged, try adjusting the composition so that the line is more flowing, with gentler edges. A simple maneuver like turning the last or lowest person in the group inward toward the group can have a positive effect.

Look at the beautiful job Alycia Alvarez did with this group of four. Her idea was to compose them in an attractive visual form, in this case, a C shape. The posing is not at all contrived; it appears beautifully natural. With everyone leaning in toward the mom, it is an intimate and charming portrait.

This beautiful portrait is expertly composed. The photographer, Deanna Urs, used a triangular composition to display this beautiful family. She used elegant fabric to drape the mother and children and muted the details of the studio setting by painting in soft details and adding diffusion to those areas.

Try different configurations. For example, create a single diagonal line with the faces at different heights and all people in the group touching. It's a simple yet very pleasing design. The power and serenity of a well-defined diagonal line in a composition can compel the viewer to keep staring at the portrait long after the visual information has been interpreted. How about a bird's-eye view? Cluster the group of three together, grab a stepladder or other high vantage point, and you've got a lovely variation on the three-person group.

When you add a third person to the group, the sheer number of hands and legs starts to become a problem. One solution is to show only one arm and leg per person. This is especially effective when the members of the group are similarly dressed. When too many hands are showing, it's not always clear which hand belongs to which person. Generally, the outer hand (that closest to the camera) should be visible; the inner hand, compositionally, can be easily hidden.

Groups of three and more allow the photographer to draw on more of the available elements of design. Accordingly, the accomplished group photographer will incorporate architectural components—or elements like trees, gates, and furniture.—into these portraits.

Adding a Fourth Person. This is when things get really interesting. As you photograph more group portraits, you'll find that even-numbered groups of people are harder to pose than odd-numbered groups. Three, five, seven, or nine people are much easier to pose than similarly sized even-numbered groups. The reason is that the eye and brain tend to accept the disorder of odd-numbered objects more readily than even-numbered objects.

With four people, you can simply add a person to the existing poses of three described previously—but with the following caveat: Be sure to keep the eye height of the fourth person different from any of the others in the group. Also, be aware that you are now forming shapes within your composition. Think in terms of pyramids, inverted triangles, diamonds, and curved lines. Note that the visual paths created by various body parts (for instance, the line up one arm, through the shoulders of several people, and down the arm of the person on the far side of the group) form implied lines that are just as important as the shapes you define with the subjects' faces.

An excellent pose for four people is the sweeping curve of three people with the fourth person added below and between the first and second person in the group. The fourth person, if not dressed the same as the others (this happens often) can also be positioned slightly outside the group for accent, without necessarily disrupting the color harmony of the rest of the group.

When two of the four are children, they can be "draped" to either side of the adults to form a pleasing triangle shape. For example, if children are positioned close to the adults but still on the outside of the group, they can lean in close so that their shapes become part of the larger composition.

For this portrait of four, Mark Nixon posed the bride and bridesmaids in a line—but the difference in head heights creates a softly sweeping curve across the frame. The bold color and great expressions make it a memorable image.

LEFT—The balance in this delightful portrait of five was achieved in two ways. First, the bride is large in relation to the children, so you have a balance when weighing the two halves of the group. Second, both the bride and the little girl on the far right are looking in toward the center of the frame, bookending the image. Photograph by David Beckstead.

BELOW—You've reached the heights of good group photography when, as here, you can discern five distinct personalities from five different people in a photograph. Photograph by Mark Nixon.

Five and More. As groups grow in size, the use of different levels creates a sense of visual interest and lets the viewer's eye "ping-pong" from one face to another (as long as there is a logical and pleasing flow to the arrangement). The placement of faces, not bodies, dictates how pleasing and effective the composition will be. A composition will always look better if the base is wider than the top, so the fifth person should be positioned to elongate the bottom of the group.

Remember, too, that each implied line and shape in the photograph should be designed by you and should be intentional. If it isn't logical (*i.e.*, the line or shape does not make sense visually), then move people around and start again. The viewer's eye should not just meander through the image, it should be guided by the lines and shapes you create within the composition.

Try to coax S shapes and Z shapes out of your compositions. They form the most pleasing shapes and will help

ABOVE—This is a good example of the "bouquet of people" group portrait. Taken from directly overhead, the group has only to stand close together and look up for a great portrait. You can often use a wide-angle lens for this kind of shot, placing the group in the center of the frame and away from the edges. Photograph by Dennis Orchard.

TOP RIGHT—This little brother is the apple of his five sisters' eyes. You can see that by the look of affection on each of their faces. You can also see he is the focal point of the composition because the photographer, Mark Nixon, chose to make him the lightest figure in the composition. What is also at work is a beautiful pyramid shape in which the sisters are arranged.

BOTTOM RIGHT—Frank Frost is a wizard in defining his portrait compositions through simple shapes—in this case, the triangle. See how many you can find. These forms create subliminal visual interest that makes the viewer explore the photograph.

to hold a viewer's eye within the borders of the print. Also, remember that the diagonal line has great visual power in an image and is one of the most potent design tools at a photographer's disposal.

When working with groups of six or more, you should also start to link shapes within the composition. For example, a group of seven could be posed as two side-by-side diamonds with the central person being a member of both diamonds, thus linking them. What makes combined shapes like these work best is turning everyone slightly in toward the center of the frame.

When adding a sixth or an eighth person to the group, the composition should look asymmetrical for best effect. This is best accomplished by elongating sweeping lines and using the increased space to slot in extra people.

TIPS FOR FOCUSING

1. Keep the Camera Back Parallel to the Subject. With large groups, raising the camera height (angling the camera downward so that the film plane is more parallel to the plane of the group) optimizes the plane of focus to accommodate the depth of the group. This makes it possible to get the front and back rows in focus at the same time. The easiest way to achieve this angle is to shoot from a stepladder, which should be a permanent tool in your arsenal if you shoot a lot of big groups. Be sure to have someone strong hold onto the ladder in case you lean the wrong way. Safety first!

2. Shift the Focus Field. Lenses characteristically focus objects in a more or less straight line—but not completely straight. If you line your subjects up in a straight line and back up so that you are far away from the group, all the subjects will be rendered sharply at almost any aperture. At a distance, however, the subjects are small in the frame. For a better image, you must move closer to the group, making those at the ends of the group proportionately farther away from the lens than those in the middle of the lineup. Those farthest from the lens will be difficult to keep in focus. The solution is to bend the group, having the middle of the group step back and the ends of the group step forward so that all of the people in the group are the same relative distance from the camera. To the camera, the group looks like a straight line, but you have actually distorted the plane of sharpness to accommodate the group.

3. Put the Faces on the Same Plane. To put the faces into a narrower plane (in terms of their distance to the camera) have the subjects in the back of the group lean forward slightly and subjects at the front of the group lean backward slightly. For really big groups it is a good idea to have the subjects stand close together—touching. This minimizes the space between people, allowing you to get a larger head size for each person in the group.

Big Groups

Once a group exceeds nine people, the complexities of posing and lighting are greatly expanded—and if you don't stay in control, chaos will reign. It is critical to have a game plan in mind with these big groups.

Posing bigger groups often requires you to combine standing poses with sitting and kneeling poses. Those standing should be turned to at least a 20 degree angle to the camera so that their shoulders are not parallel to the film plane. (The exception is with small children who gain visual prominence when their shoulders are square to the camera.)

It is important that the poses you put your subjects in are natural and comfortable. Even experienced group photographers working with assistants will take ten minutes or so to set up a group of twenty or more. This makes it especially important that your subjects be posed comfortably. Natural poses, ones that your subjects might fall into without prompting, are best and can be held indefinitely.

It is important that the group remains alert and in tune with what you are doing. Here is where it is important to stay in charge of the posing. The loudest voice—the one that people are listening to—should be yours, although by no means should you be yelling at your group. Instead, be assertive and positive and act in control.

With natural poses, have your antennae up for errant thumbs and hands. Do a perimeter check, dissecting the group along the vertical and horizontal planes to make sure there is nothing unexpected in the posing.

Posing Hands in Group Portraits

Hands can be a problem in group portraits. Despite their small size, they attract attention to themselves—particularly against dark clothing. They can be especially problematic in seated groups, where at first glance you might think there are more hands than there should be.

A general rule of thumb is to either show all of the hand or none of it. Don't allow a thumb or half a hand or a few fingers to show. Hide as many hands as you can behind flowers, hats, or other people. Be aware of these

TOP—Very large groups are Dennis Orchard's specialty. He nearly always tries to procure a high vantage point so that he can control his depth of field. From above, the zone of sharpness at any given aperture is wider than if photographed from ground height. In this image, Dennis' problems were compounded by bright sunlight and shade. He optimized his exposure by underexposing by one stop to bring down the highlight values, realizing he could save the shadow values in postproduction. The image was made with a Canon EOS 5D and 17mm lens. You can see that because he could not get any higher off the ground, some of the people are uncomfortably close to the frame edges and are beginning to distort.

BOTTOM—Posing hands in groups is something that has to be deliberately done. In this beautiful group portrait made by Frank Frost, at least one hand from each person is accounted for and placed logically. Hands placed in pockets should be hitched with the thumb out so you can see the hand and not a stump. Other hands should be hidden from view to simplify the process. By double-checking the perimeter of your subjects before you make your exposure, you will eliminate hand problems.

potentially distracting elements and look for them as part of your visual inspection of the frame before you make the exposure.

One trick for men is to have them put their hands in their pockets, leaving the cuff showing (if there is one). A variation is for them to "hitch" their thumb outside the pocket, which forms a nice triangle shape in the bent arm and makes it apparent to the viewer that the hand is in a pocket. For women, try to hide their hands in their laps or by using other people in the group.

Michael Greenberg is a genius at creating these panoramic groups. They are composed and photographed as individual groups and then stitched together in Photoshop, where any of the seams between scenes are cleaned up. Germane to this discussion is the combination of shapes and lines that form different subgroups within the photograph. They all seem to work together in the end, as the eye playfully moves from one well-composed group to the next.

Helpful Posing Tools

Armchairs, Love Seats, and Sofas. As you begin adding people to a group, one of your most important props will be the stuffed armchair, small sofa, or love seat. Its wide arms, and often attractively upholstered surface, is ideal for supporting additional group members.

The armchair should usually be positioned at about a 30 to 45 degree angle to the camera. For a group of two, seat one person and either stand the second person facing the chair (for a full-length picture) or seat the second person on the arm of the chair, turning them in toward the seated person. The body of the person seated on the arm should be slightly behind the person seated in the chair, with their arm coming straight down behind the person seated slightly in front of them.

When adding a third person to the group, you can either seat the person on the other chair arm or stand them. If standing, that person should have their weight on their back foot, lowering the back shoulder. All three heads should be equidistant. A fourth person can then easily be added in a standing position, facing toward the center of the group.

From there on, it's just a question of adding faces where they need to be to continue the flow of the composition. You can fit someone squatted down in the middle of the group, covering a lot of legs. You can have people kneel down on either side of the group (or seated on the ground) to complete the pyramid composition. This

GROUP EXPRESSIONS

One of the best ways to create natural smiles is to praise your subjects. Tell them how good they look and how much you like a certain feature of theirs. By sincere confidence-building and flattery you will get the group to smile naturally and sincerely, and their eyes will be engaged. This photograph is by Dennis Orchard.

little group can easily become a group of fourteen. Just follow the rhythm throughout the group. Look for the triangles between heads, diagonal lines, and equal spacing between all of the faces.

Steps, Stairs, and Slopes. What about outdoors or on location, like at a reception? You must find a spot—a hillside, steps, or staircase—that will be relatively comfortable for the session. These allow you to achieve the same objective as the chair: placing the heads of the subjects at different heights throughout the frame.

A Final Check

One of the biggest flaws a photographer can make in a group portrait is to include a background element that seems to sprout from one of the subjects. While this is mostly an amateur mistake, even top professionals still make this same mistake from time to time. The problem is that the photographer fails to do a final perimeter check. That's where you scan the group's silhouette, making sure there's nothing in the background that you missed. Pay particular attention to strong verticals, like light-colored posts or columns, and also diagonals. Even though these elements may be out of focus, if they are tonally dominant they will disrupt and often ruin an otherwise beautiful composition.

One way to control your background more effectively is to scout the locations you want to use before you show up to make the portrait. Check the light at the right time of day and be prepared for what the changing light might do to your background an hour or two later.

In this image, Michael Greenberg chose to silhouette the subjects, exposing for the brightly lit wall. What he saw was how the heads, all at different heights and looking at different angles, resembled notes on a score. This is an award-winning image.

9. Posing Children's Portraits

The posing procedures used for adults simply don't apply when working with kids. Even if a two-year-old could achieve a proper head-and-neck axis, the likelihood of him or her holding it for more than a nanosecond is slim. Additionally, since little ones are mostly non-verbal, posing instructions are completely ineffective. So then, how does one pose children—particularly small children?

Meeting the Child for the First Time

Never approach a child and start talking to them without first talking with the parent. Small children take their cue from their mothers, looking to Mom to see if she sees the person as a friend or a threat. Experts also suggest not trying to be "friends" with the child. It puts too much pressure on them. Instead, show them some toys and let the child know that these things are there for them to play with.

Do What Comes Naturally

It is important to let children do what comes naturally. Amuse them, be silly, offer them a toy or something that attracts their attention, but do so with a minimum of direction. Kids will become uncooperative if they feel they are being manipulated. Make a game out of it so that the child is as natural and comfortable as possible. Generate a smile, but don't ask them to smile (if you do, you will probably not get what you want).

Also put Mom or Dad to work. Infants will sometimes stay put, but other times they will crawl off and have to be brought back. Having a parent close at hand makes things much easier, giving the baby some reassurance in a strange environment. It also helps the photographer evoke special emotions and expressions. The photographer can say to the child, "Look at Daddy, isn't he silly?" This is Dad's cue to act goofy or in some way amuse the child.

Touching

Sometimes, no matter how simply you explain what you want the child to do, he or she just won't understand your instructions. The best way to remedy the situation is to gently touch the child and move the errant curl or slide them over just a bit on the posing block—whatever the needed correction happens to be. Be advised that touching can be intimidating to children, particularly since you are a stranger. Always ask first and then be gentle and explain what you are doing. If the child is shy, have Mom or Dad move the child per your directions.

Posing the Face

Facial View and Head Tilt. The head poses described in chapter 1 are easily accomplished even with small children; just divert their attention to get them to look in the desired direction. You can often redirect the line of the child's head by having your assistant hold up something

FACING PAGE—Sometimes Mom or Dad has to be enlisted to do something silly. Other times, the photographer will volunteer to be silly all on his own—like Jim Garner must have done here.

interesting (like a feather) within eyesight of the child, then move it in the direction that turns the child's head slightly.

Achieving a tilt of the head is more physically complex. You can have your assistant tilt his or her head slightly and ask the child, "Can you do this?" but you will usually get an exaggerated version of the pose.

The Eyes. The best way to keep the child's eyes active and alive is to engage him or her in conversation or a game of some type. If the child does not look at you when you are talking, he or she is either uncomfortable or shy. In extreme cases you should let Mom do all of the enticing. Her voice is soothing to the child and will elicit a positive expression.

Expressions. Kids will usually mimic your mood. If you want a soft, sweet expression, get it by speaking in soft, quiet tones. If you want a big smile, bring the enthusiasm level up a few notches.

Never tell children to smile. Instead, ask them to repeat a funny word or ask them their favorite flavor of ice cream. And don't be afraid to create a more serious portrait—the best expressions aren't just the big smiles. A mix of portraits, a few with smiles and some showing the child's gentler side, is usually appealing to parents.

The Arms and Hands

A child's hands are delicate and beautiful and should be included whenever possible. While it is basically impossible to pose children's hands—other than by giving them something to hold—you can gain some control by vary-

TOP—Jennifer George has a quiet and low-key way of refining a pose from behind the camera. Even with kids, this technique can be employed—although less stringently than when working with older subjects. Note the great hand posing and the beautiful tilt of the head and neck.

BOTTOM—Jennifer George is excellent for young children to work with. She gets their attention and never loses that glow in their eyes that signifies they are enjoying the experience. Here Jennifer captured the exotic blue of this blond beauty's eyes and managed to keep the color scheme of the photo on track.

This little one's face is posed at an angle to the camera. Clearly, something very amusing was going on over there to inspire this cute smile and gesture. Photograph by Frances Litman.

Using a slightly longer-than-normal focal length sacrifices the intimacy of working close to the child, but corrects the perspective.

ing the subject distance and focal length. If using a short focal length lens, for example, hands will be close to the camera and appear larger than normal. Using a slightly longer-than-normal focal length sacrifices the intimacy of working close to the child, but corrects the perspective.

When the child is standing, posing the hands can become a real problem. If you are photographing a boy, have him stuff his hands in his pockets—it's

Sometimes a simple prop, like this flower, will be enough to fascinate children into becoming absorbed in the moment. Photograph by Kersti Malvre.

Entitled *To the Nines,* this Tim Kelly portrait shows to what lengths a children's portrait can go in the way of extravagance. But it also shows some very simple basics, like the way in which the hands are posed. They have roundness and there is separation between the fingers. Sometimes it is advantageous to give the child something safe to hold in their hands so that the hand takes on some of the roundness of the held object. Notice, too, the priceless expression.

an endearing pose. You can also have him fold his arms, although children sometimes adopt a defiant stance in this pose. With a little girl, have her put one hand on her hip, making sure you can see her fingers. Full-size chairs make ideal props for standing children because the child's hands can easily be posed on the arm of the chair or along the chair back.

The Legs and Feet in Seated Poses

When a small child is sitting, have them curl one leg under the other. This makes them into a human tripod—very stable and upright. Children are comfortable in this pose and have the full use of both hands so that they can hold or play with any toy or a prop you may have given them. Best of all, they usually don't wander off from this pose unless they're very active.

Posing Tips by Age

Newborns. Newborns are usually not very alert at any time during the day. They sleep and barely eat for the first few days, sometimes weeks, after birth. Ideally, a session should be scheduled to begin about the same time as a scheduled feeding. It's a good idea for Mom to feed the baby at the studio just prior to the session beginning.

Babies. Tummy shots are a favorite for babies, and you can buy U-shaped baby posers (at any retail baby stores) to help them hold their heads up in this pose. Place the baby face forward with his feet dropped down lower than his

Most of the time babies who are approaching six or seven months of age are just learning to support themselves and can stay seated without falling over. This is one of the best ages to photograph little children as they are responsive but can't yet scoot around the room without a lot of effort. Jim Garner captured this little beauty intently studying whatever was going on behind the camera.

Kids in the two-year-old stage like to be photographed around their own possessions—like this little girl who was photographed in her bedroom with her hobbyhorse. Photograph by Amber Holtritz.

Bothers and sisters, if close in age, will hug and touch all the time. These interactions often make for good poses, as in this priceless portrait by Jim Garner.

head. Position your camera lower than the baby's head. This way the baby does not need to lift his head as much to see you, preventing fatigue.

If the infant does not react well to separation from Mom, you can make some beautiful close-up portraits of the baby without her ever having to hand the child over. For example, you can have Mom lie down on the floor with the baby next to her. There is no feeling of detachment since Mom is nearby (just position the mother slightly out of frame). Most moms can rest the baby on one hip, then lean away to give you a clear vantage point.

Six- to Eleven-Month-Olds. Parents usually choose the six-month date to have baby's first formal picture done. If possible, arrange to do it at the end of the sixth month—more like the seventh month. Babies at this age are getting the hang of things. They are social and happy and not fully mobile, making your job easier. Most are happy to sit and play without wanting to crawl away, making the session a breeze.

Two-Year-Olds. Don't compose an overly tight set in which to photograph the child; two-year-olds will do whatever they want. With greater mobility and the beginnings of speech, two-year-olds are experiencing their first taste of independence, so a loosely structured set in which they have some mobility (or better yet, an outdoor scene where they have a lot of mobility) is recommended. You can, of course, with good communication and patience, direct the head-strong two-year-old—but not for long.

Older Children. With older children, the best way to elicit a natural pose is simply to talk to them. Many kids are uninhibited and will talk to you about anything under the sun. Good topics involve your surroundings, especially if you are working outdoors. Or you can talk about them—their interests, brothers and sisters, pets, and so on. While it is not necessary to talk all the

Activity-based poses—like chasing a girl around a tree—are always fun and the opportunity for great images will last for as long as the kids have an ounce of energy. Photograph by Dan Doke.

Close-ups like this often stand the test of time among the family's favorite photos. Photograph by Jim Garner.

time, be aware that silence can be a mood killer and may lead to self-consciousness. Try to pace the conversation so that you are both engaging and yet free to set up the technical details of the photo.

Kids also like being treated as equals. They don't like being talked down to and they value the truth. Be honest about what you expect of the child and get them involved in the process of making the picture. You might even try asking them how they would like to be photographed; kids like to be asked their opinion and they might just come up with a great idea.

Posing Aids

Posing Steps. Many children's photographers maintain sets of portable posing steps or blocks. These provide good support and are safe for toddlers to crawl on. They also work well for photographing more than one child at a time because they instantly get the subjects' faces on different levels—which is a must for good composition.

Chairs. Small children may often do better when "contained." For this reason, little chairs make great posing devices. Place a tiny pillow in the chair and then have Mom place the child in the chair. When all is set, cue Mom to call the child by name.

Activity-Centered Poses

Where little ones are concerned, posing really means maneuvering the child into a position in which he or she appears normal and natural. Little children react most positively to activity-centered portraits. In a typical shooting session, the assistant gets down on the ground with the child, just out of view of the camera. A full complement of props is on hand, including a bubble bottle and wand, a long feather, a squeaker, and a storybook or two. When the photographer decides the lighting and other technical details are right, the assistant will begin to coax and entertain the child. A long feather is a big hit and a great icebreaker. The feather provides both visual and tactile stimulation. Most children are fascinated and their expressions might range from curiosity to glee.

Most children's photographers have a collection of props and toys for kids to play with. Mothers will probably bring a few of the child's favorite things, too—a stuffed animal or a rattle or some other prized possession—and these can be used to attract and distract.

Usually it takes more than a prop to engage a child for the length of the photo session, however. In this case, playing "make believe" is a good option. Kids have a natural inquisitiveness that is easily tapped. Just start a sentence, "Imagine you're a . . ." Fill in the blank and you'll immediately see their imagination kick in!

Sometimes you just need to be silly with kids. Talk about your pet rhinoceros, or your other car, which is pink and yellow with purple seats. One photographer I know likes to ask kids, "Are you married?" which always gets a good chuckle. Playing peek-a-boo is another favorite—hide behind the camera and peek out from either side. The child will burst into laughter!

FACING PAGE—Tamara Lackey infuses her children's portraits with an air of sophistication. In this strikingly simple portrait, the soft tones and subtle expression totally engage the viewer and reveal something of the little girl's personality.

Conclusion

David Williams, who is as articulate about the art of portraiture as he is a gifted portrait artist, recently summed up what great portraiture is all about. He said, "Our photography is about life. Is there a life force in the image? The life force is the overpowering effect of portraiture that keeps 'the affected' coming back for more. In great portraiture, we rediscover what it is that makes us feel alive and great, both individually and collectively. We also rediscover what it is that makes us all human and vulnerable and what it is that makes us laugh and cry and feel connected to one another."

The greatest examples of fine portraiture exhibit a sense of simplicity of design and an orderliness that has come from generations of perfecting the craft. Above all, the pervasiveness of portraiture, whether it is a contemporary photograph or an ancient cave painting, demonstrates that we never cease redefining how we see ourselves. The portrait will always be a relevant contemporary art form. Like Narcissus, we never grow tired of seeing our own endless reflections.

LEFT—Portraiture has always had the ability to transcend the literal, becoming works of art. Such is the case with this image by David Williams titled *Deiter—Russia—1943*. The subject represents a once-proud World War II German Wermacht soldier after the collapse of the Russian campaign. His clothing indicates he's now living "very rough." The items in his hands suggest a return to the basic necessities of staying alive. Williams loves to re-create historic moments in modern-day portraiture in order to rekindle the lessons learned during harsher times.

FACING PAGE—David Williams has the ability to draw the theatrical into his historical portraits—like this one, titled *So You're the New Boy, Eh?* Says David, "This character represents a rather formidable and malevolent Dickensian clerk. I tried to imagine being the small undernourished and maltreated boy coming along for the job."


Spiggot Pope & Spiggot

The Photographers

Nick Adams. Nick is a Utah-based photographer who works with his wife, stylist Signe Adams. Nick was a musician before he earned a degree in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. From there he became a photojournalist at a Utah newspaper. Signe worked as a costume designer in Southern California and has a keen interest in fashion. In 2004 Nick and Signe combined their talents, opening a studio in St. George, UT.

Alycia Alvarez. Alycia Alvarez has always had a passion for photography. After becoming a mother, she realized how quickly her own children were changing right before her eyes. She began to document their lives, capturing true and genuine personalities. Alycia is an award winner at WPPI and her work is achieving national recognition. Her studio is in Riverview, FL, and her website is www.alycia alvarezphotography.com.

Stuart Bebb. Stuart Bebb is a Craftsman of the Guild of Photographers UK and has twice been awarded Wedding Photographer of the Year. In 2001 Stuart won Cosmopolitan Bride Wedding Photographer of the Year. He was also a finalist in the Fuji wedding photographer of the Year. Stuart has been capturing stunning wedding images for over twenty years and works with his wife Jan, who designs and creates all the albums.

David Beckstead. David Beckstead has lived in a small town in Arizona for twenty-two years. With help from the Internet, forums, digital cameras, seminars, WPPI, Pictage and his artistic background, his passion has grown into a national and international wedding photography business. He refers to his style of wedding photography as "artistic photojournalism."

Marcus Bell. Marcus Bell's creative vision, fluid natural style and sensitivity have made him one of Australia's most revered photographers. It's this talent combined with his natural ability to make people feel at ease in front of the lens that attracts so many of his clients. Marcus' work has been published in numerous magazines in Australia and overseas including *Black White, Capture, Portfolio Bride*, and countless other bridal magazines.

Drake Busath (*Master Photographer, Craftsman*). Drake Busath is a second-generation professional photographer who has spoken all over the world and has been featured in a wide variety of professional magazines. Drake also runs a popular photography workshop series in Northern Italy.

Anthony Cava *(BA, MPA, APPO)*. Anthony owns Photolux Studio with his brother, Frank. At thirty years old, he became the youngest Master of Photographic Arts in Canada. Anthony also won WPPI's Grand Award with the first print he ever entered in competition.

Salvatore Cincotta. Salvatore Cincotta is an award-winning photographer born and raised in New York City. He works in the St. Louis metro area and his clients are couples "looking to have fun on their day and do something different." Salvatore is the author of *Behind the Shutter: The Digital Wedding Photographer's Guide to Financial Success,* also from Amherst Media.

Michael Costa. Michael Costa graduated with honors from the world-renowned Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, CA, receiving the coveted Departmental Award in the Still Photography program. He started his successful business with his wife, Anna during his last year at Brooks.

Jerry D. Jerry D owns Enchanted Memories, a portrait and wedding studio in Upland, CA. Jerry has had several careers in his lifetime, from licensed cosmetologist to black belt martial arts instructor. Jerry is a highly decorated photographer by WPPI and has achieved many national awards since joining the organization.

Daniel Doke. Daniel has a drive for perfection, abundant creativity, and a special eye for light and form. He is a modern photographer with traditional skills, who draws on his experience in commercial, fashion, and portrait photography to create memorable wedding images.

Mauricio Donelli. Mauricio Donelli is a world-famous wedding photographer from Miami, FL. His work is a combination of styles, consisting of traditional photojournalism with a twist of fashion and art. His weddings are

photographed in what he calls, "real time." His photographs have been published in *Vogue, Town & Country,* and many national and international magazines. He has photographed weddings around the world.

Bruce Hamilton Dorn. Bruce Hamilton Dorn of iDC Photography has twenty years of Hollywood filmmaking experience, which shaped his cinematic style of wedding photography. As a member of the Director's Guild of America, Bruce's commercial clients included McDonalds, Sony, Budweiser, and Ford. Bruce, with his artistic partner and wife Maura Dutra, now offers this award-winning expertise to a select group of artistically-inclined wedding clients.

Peter Ellis. Peter Ellis is an internationally acclaimed photographer with a unique style. His images have been recognized by all the major photographic organizations in the U.S. and his native Britain. He has been awarded Great Britain's highest achievement for a professional photographer, a Fellowship in wedding photography. Visit his web site at www.ellisphotography.com.

Deborah Lynn Ferro. A professional photographer since 1996, Deborah calls upon her background as a watercolor artist. She is a popular instructor and the author of *Artistic Techniques with Adobe Photoshop and Corel Painter,* from Amherst Media.

Brett Florens. Having started his career as a photojournalist, Brett Florens has become a renowned wedding photographer, traveling from his home in South Africa to Europe, Australia, and the U.S. for the discerning bridal couple requiring the ultimate in professionalism and creativity. His exceptional albums are fast making him the "must have" photographer around the globe.

Beth Forester. Beth Forester is owner and operator of Forester Photography in Madison, WV. She is a board member for the Professional Photographers of West Virginia and was named Mid-East States Photographer of the Year in 2006 and in 2007. Beth has also earned numerous Kodak Gallery and Fuji Masterpiece Awards.

Frank A. Frost, Jr. *(PPA Certified, M.Photog.,Cr., APM, AOPA, AEPA, AHPA).* Frank Frost has been creating his classic portraiture in Albuquerque, NM, for almost twenty years. Along the way, he has earned numerous awards from WPPI and PPA. His photographic ability stems from an instinctive flair for posing, composition, and lighting.

Jim and Katarina Garner. Jim and Katarina Garner started photographing weddings in 1999. By fusing editorial fashion photography with a more relaxed, candid approach, Jim and Katarina provide each couple with an amazing collection of images, all while allowing the bride and groom to truly enjoy their wedding celebration.

Jennifer George. Jennifer George runs her studio out of her home in Del Mar, CA. She has won the California Photographer of the Year and received the People's Choice Award 2001 at the Professional Photographers of California convention. She is also the author of *The Digital Photographer's Guide to Natural-Light Family Portraits* (Amherst Media). Visit www.jwalkerphotography.com.

Jerry Ghionis. Jerry Ghionis of XSiGHT Photography and Video is one of Australia's leading photographers. In 1999, he was honored with the AIPP (Australian Institute of Professional Photography) award for best new talent in Victoria. In 2002, he won the AIPP's Victorian Wedding Album of the Year; a year later, he won the Grand Award in WPPI's album competition.

Michael Greenberg. Michael Greenberg, of Phototerra Studios in Toronto, is self-taught as a wedding photographer. In other lives, he's been a doctor and a programmer—but he loves the sheer joy of shooting weddings. In 2008, Michael was awarded first place in the photojournalism category and twenty-three of his images were honored with Awards of Excellence by WPPI. Visit Michael at www.weddingpicture.info.

Amber and Nathan Holritz. Amber and Nathan Holritz operate a high-end, contemporary studio in Chattanooga, TN. Amber has produced a number of photographer profiles for *Rangefinder* magazine and is a frequent speaker on the topic of lifestyle baby sessions.

Kevin Jairaj. Kevin is a fashion photographer turned wedding and portrait photographer whose creative eye has earned him a stellar reputation in the Dallas/Fort Worth, TX area. His web site is www.kjimages.com.

Tim Kelly *(M.Photog.).* Tim Kelly is an award-winning photographer and the owner of a studio in Lake Mary, FL. Since 1988, he has developed educational programs and delivered them to professional portrait photographers worldwide. Tim was named Florida's Portrait Photographer of the Year in 2001 and has earned numerous Kodak Awards of Excellence and Gallery Awards.

Tamara Lackey. Tamara Lackey owns a photography studio in North Carolina. Her portraits can be seen on the covers of *Premier Baby, Carolina Parent,* and *Adoptive Families Magazine*. Her real weddings are featured in *The Knot Magazine, Weddings Unveiled,* and *The Bride's Book*. She is also the author of *The Art of Children's Portrait Photography* (Amherst Media).

Christian LaLonde. Chris is a native of Ottawa, Ontario, who operates the commercial division of Photolux Studios. He concentrates on corporate, architectural, food, product, and editorial jobs. In 2002 and 2003 he was awarded the prestigious Canadian Commercial Photographer of the Year.

Robert Lino *(M. Photo., Cr., PPA Cert., APM, AOPM, AEPA, FDPE, FSA)*. Robert Lino of Miami, FL, specializes in fine portraiture and social events. His style is formal and elegant, capturing feeling and emotion in every image. Lino is a highly decorated photographer and a regular on the workshop and seminar circuit.

Frances Litman. Frances is an award-winning photographer from Victoria, BC, who has been featured in publications by Kodak Canada and in FujiFilm advertising. She has also been honored with the prestigious Kodak Gallery Award and named Photographer of the Year by the Professional Photographers Association of BC.

Kersti Malvre. Kersti Malvre is well-known for her unique, sensitive approach to portraiture. Her extraordinary artistic vision merges black & white photography with oil painting. Kersti's delicate, yet rich, use of color and her attention to detail gives her work a classical, enduring quality.

William S. McIntosh *(M.Photog.,Cr., F-ASP)*. Bill McIntosh photographs executives and their families all over the U.S. and travels to England frequently on special assignments. He has lectured all over the world and is the author of *Classic Portrait Photography,* from Amherst Media.

Annika Metsla. Photographer Annika Metsla lives in Estonia, a small country in Eastern Europe between Latvia and Russia, bordering the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Finland. An active member of WPPI, Annika operates a thriving photography and wedding planning business, and has recently won a number of awards in WPPI competitions. Visit her at www.annikametsla.com.

Mark Nixon. Mark, who runs The Portrait Studio in Clontarf, Ireland, was named Irish Professional Photographer of the Year in 2006. Mark has also won both Kodak Wedding Photographer of the Year and Fuji Wedding Photographer of the Year, and he is a past Premier Photographer of the Year for WPPI. His web site is www.marknixon.com.

Michael O'Neill. As an advertising and editorial photographer, Michael O'Neill has worked with clients including Nikon USA, The New York Jets, Calvin Klein, and Avis. He specialize in editorial-style portraits—not only for large corporate concerns, but for a discriminating retail market as well.

Dennis Orchard. Dennis Orchard is an award-winning photographer from Great Britain. He is a member of the British Guild of portrait and wedding photographers, and has been a speaker and an award-winner at numerous WPPI conventions. His unique wedding photography has earned him many awards, including WPPI's Accolade of Lifetime Photographic Excellence.

Larry Peters. Larry is one of the most successful and award-winning senior-portrait photographers in the nation. His popular web site is loaded with good information about seniors: www.petersphotography.com.

Greg Phelps. An award-winning photographer, Gregory James Phelps has been bringing his vision and skill to images created for Fortune 500 companies for twenty-five years. His portrait commissions have included astronauts, CEOs, congressmen, and numerous other dignitaries. He can be reached at greg@gjphelps.com.

Stephen Pugh. Stephen Pugh is an award-winning photographer from Great Britain. He is a competing member of both WPPI and the British Guild and has won numerous awards in international print competitions.

Hernan Rodriguez. Hernan is an award-winning professional photographer specializing in commercial photography and portraiture. His unique style is a fusion between art and photography, which has earned him more than 25 major awards in professional photography, including the Black and White Spider Award for photographic excellence in fashion photography. Some of his accounts include Guess, Playboy, Corona, EMI and Sony Records.

Tero Sade. Tero Sade is one of Australia's leading portrait photographers. In 2003, Tero sold his successful Brisbane business to return to Tasmania, where he donates every sitting fee to Make-a-Wish Foundation. To see more of Tero's work, visit www.tero.com.au.

Martin Schembri *(M.Photog. AIPP)*. Martin Schembri has been winning national awards in his native Australia for twenty years. He has achieved a Double Master of Photography with the AIPP. He is an internationally recognized portrait, wedding, and commercial photographer and has conducted seminars on his unique style of creative photography all over the world.

Tim Schooler. Tim is an award-winning photographer specializing in high-school senior portraits with a cutting edge. Tim's work has been published internationally in magazines and books. His studio is located in Lafayette, LA. Visit his website: www.timschooler.com.

Dawn Shields. Dawn Shields began requesting subscriptions to *Shutterbug* and *Popular Photography* when she was eight years old. After the birth of her second child, she decided to pursue her dream of photography. She founded Dawn Shields Photography six years ago and it has quickly become one of Missouri's top wedding and portrait photography studios.

Brian and Judith Shindle. Brian and Judith Shindle own Creative Moments in Westerville, OH. This studio is home to three enterprises under one umbrella: a working photography studio, an art gallery, and a full-blown event-planning business. Brian's work has received numerous awards from WPPI in international competition.

Kenneth Sklute. Kenneth began his career in Long Island, and now operates a thriving studio in Arizona. He has been named Long Island Wedding Photographer of The Year (fourteen times!), PPA Photographer of the Year, and APPA Wedding Photographer of the Year. He has also earned numerous Fuji Masterpiece Awards and Kodak Gallery Awards.

Cherie Steinberg Coté. Cherie Steinberg Coté began her photography career as a photojournalist at the *Toronto Sun,* where she had the distinction of being the first female freelance photographer. She currently lives in Los Angeles and has recently been published in the *L.A. Times, Los Angeles Magazine,* and *Town & Country.*

Vicki and Jed Taufer. Vicki Taufer and Jed Taufer are the owners of V Gallery, a prestigious portrait studio in Morton, IL. Vicki has received national recognition for her portraits and is a WPPI award winner. Jed is the head of the imaging department at V Gallery. Visit them at www.vgallery.net

TriCoast Photography. This group of artists, authors, and all-around crazy internationally award-winning photographers (consisting of Mike Fulton, Cody Clinton, Jordan Chan, Suzy Roberts, and Cindy Williams) have gained popularity with their effective wireless flash techniques, editorial fashion style, and one-of-a-kind attitude. Former Eastman Kodak's World Wide Photographers to Watch, TriCoast has built a business based on loving life.

Deanna Urs. Deanna Urs lives in Parker, CO, where she has turned her love for the camera into a portrait business and developed a national and international following. Deanna uses natural light and prefers subtle expressions, producing soulful portraits that will be viewed as art and become heirlooms. Visit Deanna's website at www.deannaursphotography.com.

David Anthony Williams *(M.Photog. FRPS)*. Williams operates a studio in Ashburton, Victoria, Australia. In 1992, he was awarded Associateship and Fellowship of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain (FRPS). In 2000, he was awarded the Accolade of Outstanding Photographic Achievement from WPPI.

Jeffrey and Julia Woods. Jeffrey and Julia Woods are award-winning wedding and portrait photographers who work as a team. They were awarded WPPI's Best Wedding Album of the Year for 2002 and 2003, two Fuji Masterpiece awards, and a Kodak Gallery Award. See more of their images at www.jwweddinglife.com.

Yervant Zanazanian *(M. Photog. AIPP, F.AIPP)*. Yervant was born in Ethiopia (East Africa), where he worked after school at his father's photography business (his father was photographer to the Emperor Hailé Silassé of Ethiopia). Yervant owns one of the most prestigious photography studios of Australia and services clients both nationally and internationally.

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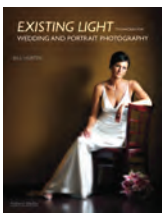

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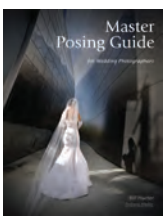

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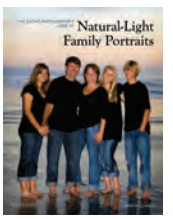

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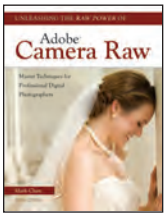

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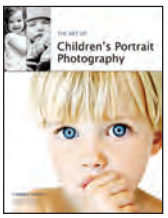

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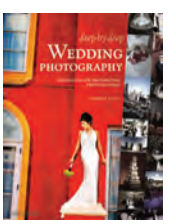

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