

A brief extract from

The Photolearn Glamour tutorial

A couple of other important points –

1. Makeup is very important in any type of glamour photography and unless your models use matt foundation, reflections (or burnout) will always appear on the face. Our models have not used foundation because it is much easier to see exactly where lights have been positioned without it.
2. Modern glamour photography usually involves heavy use of computer retouching too. No retouching has been used in our example photos because seeing retouched photos wouldn't help you.

Technique -v- creativity

There has always been a great 'debate' in photography about technique -v- creativity, with people arguing about which is more important. My own answer is that each is equally important - after all, there is no point in producing a technically-perfect photo that nobody wants to look at, nor is there any point in producing a creative masterpiece that has serious technical shortcomings or that, even if 'perfect', can't be replicated because you don't know how you got the good result in the first place! Because of this, you should understand the technical ingredients and learn to work within the limitations imposed by your equipment. Only then should you start to concentrate on the creative elements of good photography.

Cameras, lenses & filters.

The ideal camera for any type of glamour photography is a single lens reflex fitted with a mild telephoto lens; say about 85mm on a 35mm camera, or equivalent on a medium format camera. This is the generally-acceptance guidance, but it is not carved in stone and glamour shots can be produced on any type of camera, using any type of lens.

The shutter speeds and aperture must be capable of being set manually. Zoom lenses are a convenience but by no means essential. A good lens hood *is* essential. A PC flash socket is useful, although most studio photographers prefer to use radio or infra red to trigger their flash, and anyway cameras fitted with a hot shoe can be fitted with a simple adapter that allows studio lights to be plugged in.

Because of space restrictions, a standard-length lens may also be needed, especially for full-length shots.

Please see our separate tutorial for detailed info on cameras and filters etc.

Light Meter

A good flash meter is essential, not only for measuring the overall exposure, but also for measuring the ratio between the various lights used. You won't go far wrong with either

Minolta or Sekonic, but cheaper makes, although perhaps less heavily built and less easy to use, will normally produce very similar results.

Many people believe that light meters are unnecessary when digital cameras are used, but they are wrong! An experienced studio photographer, viewing a digital image on a large computer monitor, can manage without a meter – but meters are essential if the image is being viewed on a tiny LCD camera screen. Digital histograms are a great help but they don't replace meters.

Lighting

Lighting is the essence of all good photography. After all, the word 'photography' means drawing with light - but this does NOT mean that we need to spend a lot of money on expensive studio lighting.

The essentials are lights which

- a. Can be adjusted for power
- b. Can be adjusted for height
- c. Can be fitted with modifiers, to make the light harsher or softer

The lights must be adjustable for power so that you can get the right balance between the key light and any other lights you may be using.

Moving a light further away in order to reduce its power, as often recommended in photography magazines, is not an option, because by doing so you will make the light smaller in relation to your subject, and so the light will become much harsher.

The lights must be adjustable for height. No lighting stand ever does this job as well as it should, and you may need very low lighting stands sometimes.

Don't buy cheap, flimsy stands - if the stand falls over with your expensive light on it you'll wish you had spent a bit more on the stand! If you have a permanent studio you should consider stands that have wheels fitted to them - they are far less likely to fall over if someone walks into them or trips over a power lead. Another good safety measure is to put sandbags on the leg struts, to lower the centre of gravity and improve stability.

Modifiers are any attachment that goes in front of the light to change its effect. **Softboxes** and **shoot-through brollies** (umbrellas) soften the light by increasing the size of the light source. The closer the light is to the subject, the softer the result will be. Once a softbox or brolly has been moved to about twice its diagonal away from the subject, the light starts to become harsh.

Neutral density lighting gels can be used on lights to reduce their power, allowing them to be used very close to the subject, and neutral density filters can also be fitted to the camera lens, although of course this effectively reduces the power of all the lights used.

How many lights?

So how many lights should you use and where should you position them? Well, there's no simple answer to that one, but for most subjects a good starting point is to use just 1 light and to position it in a natural position, where the sun might be in relation to the subject - perhaps fairly high and coming from behind the camera and a bit off centre, perhaps quite a lot off centre. Shades of Rembrandt perhaps? Well, that's pretty simple lighting, but there's nothing wrong with simplicity and if I was as good with my cameras as Rembrandt was with his paintbrushes.... but this can sometimes be a bit over-simplistic, because Rembrandt could 'adjust' the natural shadows to get the effect he wanted, and if we want to do the same then we have to use extra lighting, or to fill in the shadows to make them less obvious.

One way of doing this is to place a second light set at less power. If we overdo the power there will be no shadows at all, which can make the lighting very flat and boring or, even

worse, we can create a second set of shadows, which makes it look very unnatural - 2 suns!

If you only want to lighten the shadows to a limited extent you can use a reflector board instead of a light, but there is a lot of light loss when you use a reflector because the light from your key light reaches the subject first, goes past it to hit the reflector, bounces off the reflector losing power in the process and then loses more power travelling back to the 'dark side' of your subject, so if you want to use a fairly strong fill light to lighten shadows a lot you will probably need to use a second light.

So you need to have 2 lights? Well, 3 would be a lot better, because with many of the best pictures you have backlight or sidelight as well as front lighting, and you may need lighting on the background as well, so having more lights available does help - but don't get carried away and don't just don't use them all just because they're there!

Rembrandt wasn't the only painter to use a single light source, and many very good photographers only use a single light too, especially for head shots.

Because some of my shots are fairly complex I often use quite a lot of lighting, but there are many shots on which I have used only one light.



Some quite similar shots, all taken using a single spotlight.

Top: Fully nude, but the leg position does much the same job as the dressing gown in the shot below. A spotlight with a louvered gobo was used, and the shadows also prevent the shot from being explicit.

Next: Use of the blue dressing gown adds colour and prevents what would otherwise be a fairly explicit pose.



If you don't have a spotlight you can get roughly similar results with a snoot, fitted to the reflector, and if you don't have a gobo you can use a genuine venetian blind, fairly close to your subject and with the lamp a long way behind it, to cast crisp shadows.



Next: The position of the leg prevent this shot from showing too much. Below: A very similar shot, but the bed has introduced a sexual element

Bottom: A similar shot, relying heavily on contrasty lighting with deep shadows, but the use of the bed introduces a sexual element. This very harsh lighting is not normally recognised as 'glamour' lighting but look at the way it brings out the texture of the body.



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