

Home(made) Portrait Lighting Workshop

Lighting has been absolutely key to painters and photographers for centuries. Not only has it been used to create beautifully atmospheric paintings, it is also used to convey emotions and power. It is important to how leaders of the world are perceived, how we interpret a scene and situation, and how we relate and understand a scenario.

In my work, I have taken inspiration from the lighting used by Caravaggio (and many other painters) in his paintings to create a subtle reference to the old master. Caravaggio uses a heavy contrast lighting technique called 'Chiaroscuro' lighting - mostly candle or moon-lit scenarios. I never used Professional Lighting kits in my work. I like to reference this artist in my work through lighting because of his apparent homosexuality, which is important to my concept. In this workshop, I will show you how to use home(made) lighting techniques to create beautifully-lit images.



Saint Jerome Writing, Caravaggio (circa 1605-06)



Head, Dafydd Williams (2019)

Equipment Required

- Candles (not essential)
- Table and/or Free-standing Lamps
- Card/Cardboard
- Kitchen Foil
- DSLR Camera, SLR, Snapshot Camera or Mobile Phone.
- Tripod or something to set your camera on (table, shelf, etc)

Rembrandt Lighting

A lighting technique named after the painter Rembrandt due to the lighting being largely used in his work. This technique provides light to one side of the face while the other is in shadow, except for a small triangle of light on the cheek. To achieve this, the light source is held just short of 90 degrees to the front of the subjects face.



(Lamp at 45 degrees to the subject)



(With Kitchen Foil Reflector)

Split Lighting

This technique provides a strong contrast on the face of a subject. one half lit whilst the other half of the face in complete shadow. Similar to Rembrandt, but with the light source at a full 90 degree angle to the face of the subject to avoid that triangle of light on the subjects cheek.



(Lamp at 90 degrees to the subject)



(Blocking light with cardboard)

Butterfly Lighting

If you place your light source above and behind you camera (or phone depending on what you are using!) you will achieve a butterfly wing-shaped shadow under the nose. you may achieve other shadows on the cheeks or the eye-sockets depending on your subjects bone structure and the height of your light source.



(Lamp held above and behind the camera)



(Notice wing-effect under nose)

Loop Lighting

This is where a reflector is fundamental! Place your light source at roughly 45 degrees from the back of your subject, and place a reflector on the opposite side facing the light source. You can cover a piece of cardboard in foil to create a reflector! The reflector will bounce light on to the subjects face.



(Lamp at 45 degrees to the back-side of subject with kitchen foil reflector opposite)

Putting Techniques into Practice & Experimentation



Freestanding lamp with kitchen foil reflector.



Mobile Phone torch with kitchen foil reflector.



3 tea-light candles with kitchen foil reflector.

TIPS:

- Choose a dark/dim space to take your photographs so that the only light in play is your chosen light source. Perhaps also photograph in the evening when it is dark (great for autumn & winter!)
- Don't think that you must adhere strictly to these lighting techniques, try experimenting with them and adjusting them to suit your needs or goals! Lighting should be playful and experimental as any other practice. The aforementioned lighting techniques are simply a guideline!
- Make and experiment with a few reflectors of different sizes and shapes. A reflector can provide the light which really provides the detail to a beautiful photograph.
- As well as these lighting techniques, experiment yourself! It may be good to try out Rembrandt Lighting etc so that you can understand how lighting works, and when you master these you should experiment with your own ideas.
- Tea-lights would be the safest form of candle to use, if using at all. Using several tea-lights (3 or 4) would allow you to control the intensity of that light by blowing out a candle as and if required.