

How to Use Strobe Lighting for Portrait Photography

Successful Studio Lighting for Portraits with Elinchrom Lights.





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How To Use Elinchrom Strobe Lighting

Successful Studio Lighting for Portraits

I EQUIPMENT

- 1 Elinchrom Light set: Style 600S
- 1 Elinchrom Digital 2 power pack
- 2 Westcott medium Soft Boxes
- 1 Westcott masterpiece sheet background: 5781
- 1 Nikon D-70 digital camera
- 1 Nikkor 70mm lens
- 1 light meter: Minolta IV
- 1 Nikon AS-15 adaptor
- 2 Light stands
- 1 Manfrotto Carbon One 441 tripod with a Ball-head
- 1 Westcott 6 in 1 Illuminator Reflector kit



Equipment & Nikon D70 camera



II SETTING THE EQUIPMENT



Westcott masterpiece sheet background, # 5781 Smokey.

1. Set the background with two stands.

NOTE: To avoid wrinkles extend the background at least the night before.

2. Lighting Equipment.

In this case, since we are shooting portraits on a small space, we decided to use the Elinchrom Light set Style 600S and two medium Westcott soft boxes.



Elinchrom Light set: Style 600S



Westcott medium soft box.



1. Set the light on the light stand (firmly holding the light).

2.1 Setting the lights

For this particular session we used two lights: one as a main light and one as a fill light, both of them were set on light stands and connected the following way.



2. Secure it on the light stand, not too tight, some light stands can get damaged, but enough to firmly hold the light.



3. Lift the handle to direct the light.



4. Plug the power cord into the light.



5. Plug the power pack.



6. Plug fill light to power pack.

NOTE: All the equipment must be off before being plugged.

Do not remove protective cap until ready to attach soft box.

Do not touch the light bulbs.



Westcott medium soft box.

2.2 Setting the soft box

We used two medium Westcott soft boxes with silver interiors.



1. Place the 4 metal rods, each on one corner of the soft box.
2. Place the metal rods inside the ring holes.
3. Once ready, place the diffuser cloth (with the velcro).
4. Finally, attach the soft box to the light, and secure by turning the plastic ring.



NOTE: The Westcott umbrella is also a good option.

2.3 Turning on the Equipment

After everything is set, turn the equipment on, the following way:



Turn on the power pack.

The modeling Prop (to check your lighting and correct shades).

Activate the cell (which will allow both, main and fill lights to fire simultaneously).

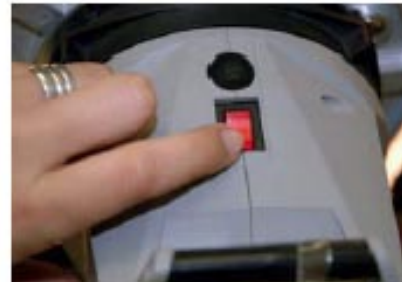
The lights will beep as they fire.



Turn on the main light



Turn on the cell



Turn on the fill light

2.4 Camera

We used a Nikon D70 digital SLR camera, with a 18-70mm Nikkor lens (a focal length of 90 to 105mm is better for portraits), in this case we kept the lens at its maximum range: 70mm

You need a Nikon AS-15 adaptor to shoot with studio lights using this camera and a PC cord to connect the camera to the main light.

NOTE: Place the cables under the background to avoid accidents.



Nikon D70

NOTE: Set the camera at a MANUAL mode, and set the White Balance at Flash Mode.



Nikon AS-15 adaptor, connected to a PC cord which is connected to the main light.

2.5 Placing the Lights

Place the main light at an approximate angle of 45 degrees onto the subject (our model).

Place the fill light at the double amount of distance from the subject than the main light.

Example: Main light 2 feet from the subject.
Fill light 4 feet from the subject.

The idea is to keep a main source of light and to fill shade areas with the fill light, otherwise the picture will look flat.



III. TAKING PICTURES

3.1 Exposure

Use a light meter to get a correct exposure (check the exposure at the LCD as well and the camera histogram).

NOTE: Place it in front of your subject's face, since that is the important area of a portrait.

Exposure for this session: 1/125sec. at F11



Exposure meter being used to get an accurate exposure.

3.2 Posing your Subject

Try to find a comfortable position for your subject to be relaxed during the session, this will help to avoid the stiffness caused by placing the camera in front of it (specially with a non-professional model).

Play with all the elements you have: hands, cloth, accessories, etc.



The first pose must be comfortable, to allow the subject to relax and enjoy the session.

Be alert, sometimes the right expressions appear for a second and the photographer must be ready to capture it.

Play jokes, direct your subject, anything can help.

Keep the face and the body pointing to different directions; this will result on a more interesting pose.

Pay attention to every detail: hair, shoulders, hands, etc.



3.3 Lights

Try different lights, pay attention at the highlights and shadows on your subjects face. Then adjust them to what you are seeking.

Two Lights



One Light



Black & White always creates a more dramatic look.



Less drama if you use a soft filter.

One Light and Reflector



Sometimes the light of a reflector bouncing from the main light results on a nicer warm way to illuminate the shadow areas.



Reframe

Photoshop is a great tool to make a simple picture a more attractive one.



Reframe your photographs, sometimes a dull picture can be saved.



Comments

It is never easy when you work with people; you need to give your subject some time to relax. Before a session test all your equipment, pay attention to the colors, sometimes the background competes with the clothing or the skin tones.

Acknowledgements

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Model: Michelle Moran, used to be one of the specialists who read and gathered information from the Survey Forms people fill out from all FLAAR websites.

Assistant: Eduardo Sacayon, Biologist and Manager of the Photography Lab at FLAAR Mesoamerica and has experience with a lot of the professional photography equipment.

Photographer: Martha Martinez, an independent photographer who has worked as Teaching Assistant for Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth's courses on digital photography at the University of Malta (in Europe) and at Universidad Francisco Marroquín, for several summers. You can contact Martha at photomarts@yahoo.com. She does architectural, product, fashion, and portrait photography and is bilingual (English, Spanish).

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Elinchrom products are distributed by Bogen Imaging in the US

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If you wish to contact your local distributor visit

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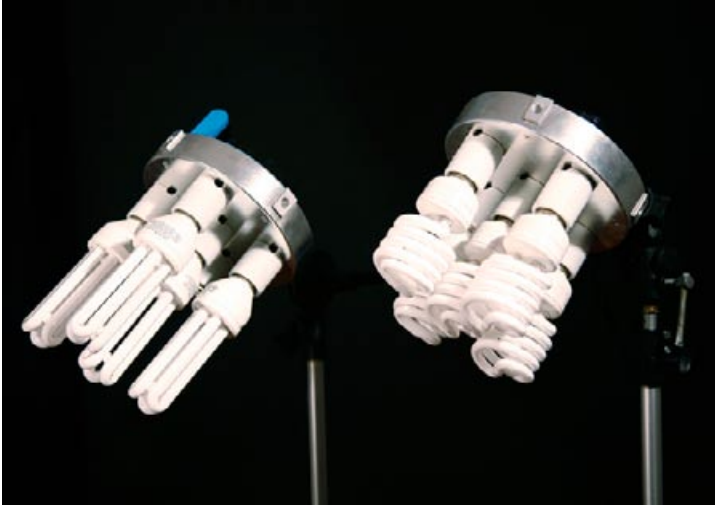
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Westcott: Spiderlite lights, Soft boxes and Reflectors.



Elinchrom: Style 600S and Digital SE Strobe lights.



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