



Creative Portraits: Digital Photography Tips and Techniques

By Harold Davis



Creative Portraits: Digital Photography Tips and Techniques By Harold Davis

Go beyond the basic rules of photography to capture stunning portraits

Portrait photography is a vital topic for photographers of every level of experience, from amateur to professional. Written by renowned photographer Harold Davis, this inspirational book encourages you to define our own photographic style and capture stunning, creative, and unique portraits.

You'll discover tips and techniques for "breaking the rules" of basic digital photography so that you can go beyond the fundamentals such as composition, lighting, and exposure in order to create memorable and incomparable portraits.

- Explores the most common subject of most photographers-people-and explains when, why, and how to forgo the fundamentals to capture memorable portraits
- Encourages you to define your own unique photographic style and offers information and inspiration to help you do so
- Delves into a variety of creative techniques that you can use when exploring ways to take lively and stunning portraits

Illustrated with Harold Davis's striking portrait photography, *Creative Portraits* will both inform and inspire you.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Product Description

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The Psychology of Portraiture

Amazon-exclusive letter from author Harold Davis



Dear Amazon Reader: As I began writing *Creative Portraits: Digital Photography Tips & Techniques*, I realized that the art of portraiture is radically different from other kinds of photography. Photographic technique describes the tools available to accomplish the photographer's goals, in other words, *how* the photo

is made. Technique matters in portraiture—as it does with every kind of photography. But in portraiture, the *why* becomes the driving force behind the photograph. *How* the photo is made is still important, but without clarity about goals, the results will not satisfy. When I am photographing a flower, I don't need to consider the feelings of the flower. But making a portrait involves two people: the photographer and the subject. The attitude, psychology, and intentions of both parties are crucial to a successful photo. Creative portraiture is driven by goals, and understanding those goals is a complex issue. For any given portrait session, a complete understanding of the psychology needs to take into account the goals of the photographer and why the portrait is being made. These may not be the same goals as those of the portrait subject who may want anything ranging from a glamour rendition to a headshot, or may not even have initiated the portrait session at all. Furthermore, these potentially competing goals have to be resolved within the framework of the personal interaction between photographer and subject. Truly creative portrait photography is a partnership between subject and photographer in which neither can be quite sure what will happen, but both must trust the other to obtain good results. The psychology of this partnership walks a thin line between daring to tell the truth and remaking the subject as more attractive than they really are. Because psychology is so important, I start *Creative Portraits* with an analysis of why people sit for portraits, and why photographers choose to shoot them. Along these lines, I take a look at capturing character—and discuss how appearance can, and cannot, reveal who someone really is. The bottom line: you can't really photograph people well unless you understand them and their emotions. Understanding your subjects and their attitudes towards being photographed is the first hurdle. But without an arsenal of techniques it would be hard to achieve truly effective portraits. In *Creative Portraits* I show you the techniques you need to photograph people in every environment, and how to light them at home and in the studio. Ultimately, *Creative Portraits* like the other books in the *Creative* series is an idea book. I hope you take the ideas I present back to your own work and use them to create striking and interesting portraits of your friends, family, professional models, and perfect strangers—in short, everyone! Best wishes in photography, **Harold Davis**

Portrait Examples from the Author



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Hurrell Lighting George Hurrell was a glamour photographer working in Hollywood from the 1930s on. Many of Hurrell's most famous photos were created using uncoated lenses that would be considered flawed by modern standards. Hurrell used lighting equipment that created harsh light—and required his models to hold still for long periods of time—these were hot lights, not strobes. In this shot, I used studio strobes to simulate the Hurrell effect—updated with more softness than you would see in the early Hurrell portraits. The main ingredient was to use a key light positioned above and pointed down at the model's face. This

generated a “butterfly” shadow—so named because the shadow is shaped like a butterfly—beneath the model’s nose. Hurrell made contact prints directly from 8 x 10 film shot in a view camera, typically at long shutter speeds (so the models had to be posed to keep still during the exposure process). Uncoated lenses produced halo effects, and the film stock added halation—increased glow on the highlights. The film was underexposed and overdeveloped, leading to dramatic high contrasts between lights and darks. To partially recreate this effect, I underexposed by about 2 f-stops when I made this portrait.



Since Hurrell’s work was monochromatic—and made using equipment and chemistry from a specific historical era that led to the anomalies I’ve described—I wanted to convert this photo to black and white and give it a look closer to something that Hurrell might have done. In Photoshop, I simulated Hurrell’s black and white tones and contrast by combining a High Contrast Red preset Black & White adjustment layer with the Nik Silver Efex Antique Plate 1 filter. 100mm, 1/160 of a second at f/16 and ISO 100, hand held **Katie Rose** If you’ve ever photographed a toddler, you’ll know that they are constantly in motion—except when they are asleep. My daughter Katie Rose is no exception to this rule. If you don’t want to end up with photos that appear out of focus because of motion blur when shooting small kids, you have to chart a strategy that deals with their propensity for staying in motion.



One idea is to boost the ISO so you can use a fast shutter speed. This is the best approach for location and

environmental photography of toddlers. Another tactic is to use strobe equipment in the studio. If you are using a studio setup, you need to be prepared to track your pint-sized subjects and snap the photo on their time—not yours. In this photo, Katie wandered around the studio, off and on the seamless paper background. I lit the white, seamless background with an 800 watt strobe modified using a soft box, and a friend followed Katie's motion with a smaller strobe unit, hand held on the side opposite the soft box. Getting down to Katie's level, I tracked her motion with my camera, and waited for an ideal moment to capture her in this high-key portrait. I intentionally post-processed the resulting capture to make the background seem slightly overexposed and even whiter than it would look normally. 52mm, 1/160 of a second at f/13 and ISO 100, hand held. **Model Bride** I photographed this bride in a dark underpass, positioned so that a shaft of light illuminated her in contrast to the surrounding shadows. I wasn't worried about getting a great deal of depth-of-field. All I wanted was to get the bride's face in focus. At the same time, I wanted to make sure that the background shadows seemed rich and black, and cloaked the details of the tunnel. The point was to contrast the dark background with the radiant white dress, the expression on the bride's face, and the bridal bouquet. So I chose as fast a shutter speed as possible with the lens I was using (1/250 of a second) and focused precisely on the bride's face. As she smiled, I snapped the photo. 50mm, 1/250 of a second at f/4.8 and ISO 200, hand held

Review

**"Harold Davis's Creative Photography series is a great way to start a photography library"---
PhotoFidelity**

expert guide to the essential tips and tricks for taking better portrait images. It's easy to pick through at leisure. (Digital Camera Essentials, October 2010).

From the Back Cover

Taking portraits of men, women, and children is a passionate undertaking. By capturing a person through a photo, you can explore the subject's character.

This book aims squarely at the heart and soul of portrait photography and shows you how to create meaningful and compelling images. Each photo is taken from Davis's personal collection and is accompanied by an explanation of how and why he made it. Composition, lighting, exposure, and camera technique are all discussed, taking you beyond the basics.

Still, the best way to craft memorable, lively, and stunning portraits is sometimes to break the rules. Davis also demonstrates how to do this in a way that is both informative and inspiring. He encourages you to define and develop your own photographic style by shooting creative, unique images. You'll be moved to try new techniques, empowering you to truly define someone with a photograph.

- Capture emotion to create a compelling image
- Learn about clothing, hair, and make-up
- Choose the right lens and shutter speed
- Utilize the best lighting techniques
- Have fun photographing kids
- Retouch your images and add special effects

Users Review

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