



Francis Rose

Intimate Portraits

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Portrait photography captures the likeness, mood and personality of a person. The subject's face is usually the dominant element, but the entire body may be included. Since a portrait photograph is a composed or "staged" image of a person in a fixed position, it may take some practice to capture the "essence" of the subject. A successful portrait photographer needs to be proficient at studying an individual's unique mannerisms, body language and expressions. Find a topic of interest to the model and engage in light, casual conversation. Once the person is relaxed and natural looking it is time to capture their personality. Keep in mind, a good portrait photo will allow the viewer to understand

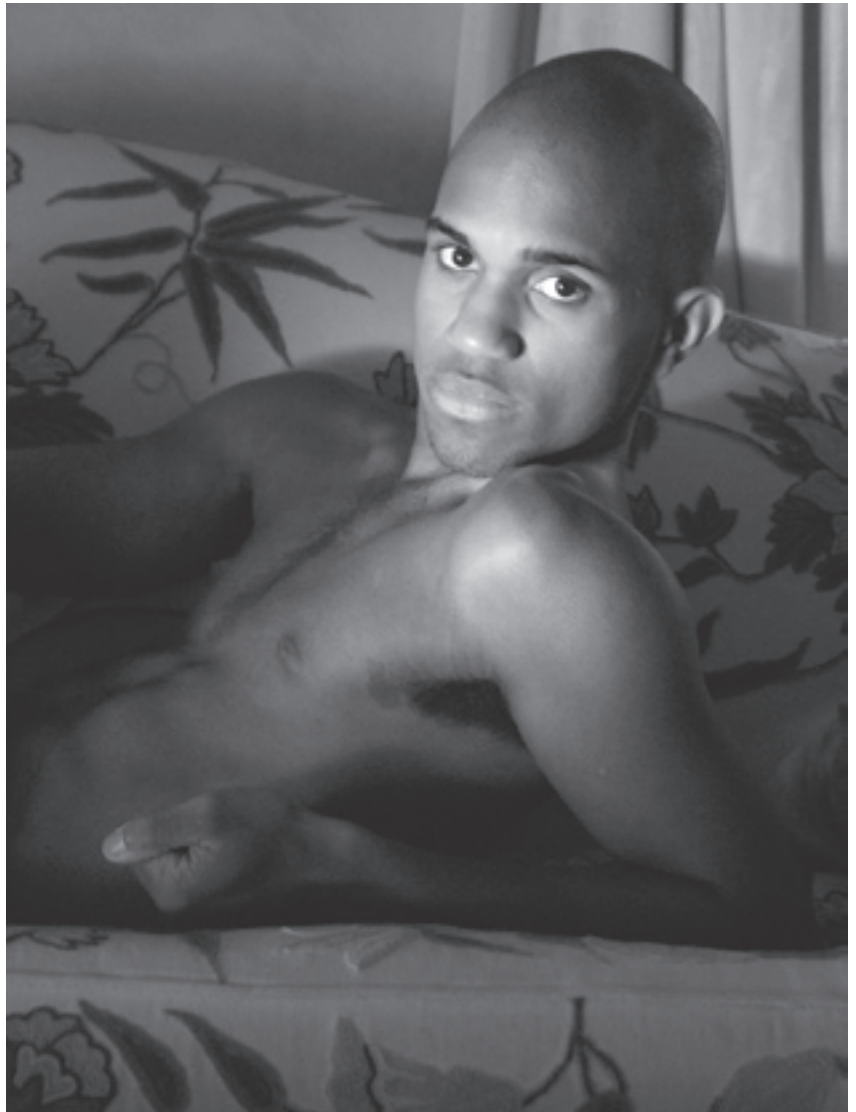
the subject's character, mood and unique personality.

This author recently attended a portrait workshop in Rockport, Maine, instructed by Joyce Tenneson, hailed as one of the leading photographers of her generation. The workshop consisted of fifteen students and five models, one male and four females. The models were very diverse in appearance and personalities, which made photographing them delightful as well as challenging. The students were divided into five groups. Each student was encouraged to tell a story and find an "intimate style" when photographing a particular model.

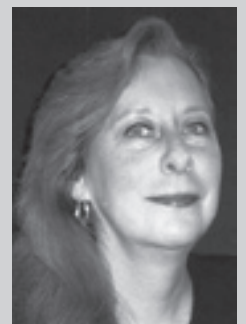
The first assignment was to shoot a self-

Michael

portrait. The student had to capture his or her own unique personality by using particular backdrops, props, lighting and composition. An assistant would capture and bounce the light with a portable reflector and take the shot when the student felt that he or she had achieved their “intimate style” and personality. By reversing the situation, it enabled the student to gain a better understanding of what it is like to face the lens: not as easy as it appears. Being courteous and understanding when posing and photographing models makes for a more relaxed and responsive shoot. For the next assignment each group had one hour with their assigned model. Before a photograph could be taken, however, a “perfect 10” backdrop had to be selected. The beautiful Maine landscape and natural light were used as a backdrop for the shoots. Models were then composed to complement or interact with the selected backdrops which included colorful foliage; towering trees with roots covered in moss, lakes, waterfalls as well as old stone, wood and brick dwellings with lots of charm and character. Each student had a twenty-minute time frame in which to select a background, arrange a prop, compose the model and shoot the portrait. Some of the models brought props and materials such as silk and lace as



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Claudine

well as hats and scarves to use in their shoots. The rules for shooting included not using any flash or artificial lighting techniques, only ambient light could be used. A partner assisted by holding a portable reflector, directing and bouncing the light, filling in shadow areas and making sure to capture the “catch lights” in the subject’s eyes. Indoor portraits were also shot using only available light.

The equipment used was the Nikon® D300 with a Tamron® 28-300 zoom lens as well as the Nikon 60mm lens. The exposures were from



Claudine #2

ISO 250-800. The camera was hand-held using only available light. A reversible multidisc reflector was used to capture and bounce the light. The white side was used to reflect light with natural looking results while the gold side would increase specular highlights adding more contrast to the image while giving a natural golden fill. The black side was often used as a backdrop. It absorbs light rather than reflects it, perfect for creating “negative fill.” Silver reflects a harsh bright light great for filling in dark shadows.

The weeklong workshop was very intense. Critiques were given in the morning on the previous day’s shoot. Lectures on Photoshop® and Lightroom® as well as lighting demonstrations followed. The students then spent all afternoon on location. The evenings were spent editing the photos for the following morning.

If given the opportunity to participate in a workshop, it will offer a unique opportunity to meet new people, exchange ideas, explore ones creativity, while inspiring vision and improving skills. ■

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