

Wisconsin The Photographer

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June/July 2017

Featured Artist

Jon Allyn



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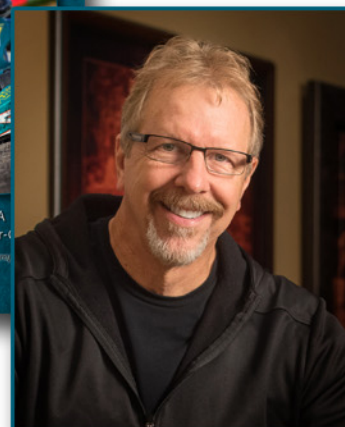
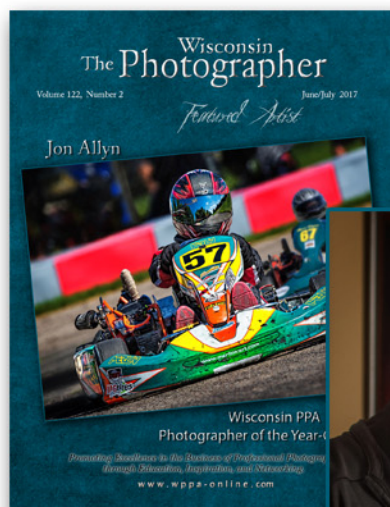
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on the cover...

jon allyn
milwaukee, wi



Jon is the current Executive Director of the American Society of Photographers. He is a past president of the ASP, the Wisconsin Professional Photographers Association, the Southeastern and the South Central Wisconsin Professional Photographers. He is a Master of Photography, Master Artist, Photographic Craftsman,

"Jon Allyn" continued on page 14

from our president...

"The 12 Elements of Your Business"

It's time...time to enter your best images in the International Print Competition. Most of us are familiar with the 12 Elements (We'll list them again at the end of this story), but have you ever considered how these points relate to your business success. I'm not speaking of judging individual images in this way, although it's a good idea, I'm speaking of the way you run your business as a whole.

Impact is the sense one gets upon viewing you, or your marketing, or your business for the first time. You only have one opportunity to make a first impression. Is it a positive one?

Presentation affects an image by giving it a finished look. Are you presenting yourself and your business in the best possible way? Are you displaying large, finished images that show your client what is possible and help them visualize and dream of their portrait in a place of honor in their own home.

Style might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as a particular photographer's work. Does your marketing and studio reflect your style and is it recognizable to your clients?

Composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Is your marketing plan consistent and does it "hold the viewer in"? Are you guiding the viewer so he or she looks back to you and not only wants portraits made, but feels a loss if he or she doesn't?

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Shellie Kappelman, CPP
WPPA President



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Bryan Welsh, Cr. Photog., CPP., API., FP-OR

Lisa Dillon, M. Photog., Cr., CPP., FP-OR

Guest Article

YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY

*Image competition: the difference
between confusion and frustration.*

Image competition and the pursuit of merits and association degrees is a rewarding though sometimes troubled endeavor. It's going to be hard—we all know that—and there are going to be situations that come up that make you want to give up. However, like a lot of things that you are working to achieve, it's what you do once you are knocked down that matters most.

With the hyper connectivity we now enjoy with the Internet, we are able to share details about our disappointments that in the past we would have kept to ourselves or perhaps only shared with a close group of friends. However, with social media, we also now have the opportunity to vent in very public ways. Here are some recent observations about Image Competition venting that might be useful to address.

First, your results may vary. Have you ever had an image receive scores from different judges or even different panels of judges that receive different scores? We hear from many that competitors don't understand how this can happen given that each image is judged on the 12 Elements of a Merit image. They don't understand why the score isn't always the same regardless of the judge or panel. Intellectually we know art is subjective and beauty is in the eye of the beholder but emotionally we want our art to be seen as unique and thus rewarded with glowing reviews. But this is not



always the case, for one very simple reason... the human factor of the process. Each judge filters what they see through their own life experience which is why different panels may score things differently. This variation translates to scores that can sometimes be dramatically different from one panel to the next. One image scored 100 in a recent competition but at another competition it scored in the mid-80s. How can this be, you ask? The answer is quite simple—each panel saw different strengths and some found weaknesses of the image and gave it the score they felt appropriate. As Jeff Dachowski, a PPA approved juror, mentioned online recently, “Which panel got it right? Maybe it was a mid-80s image if it was judged ten times by ten different panels or maybe it would score in the nineties 8 out of 10 times. That’s a hard one to answer. Why do we always assume the panel that scored it higher is better or gave it the correct score? We would argue both got it right. Both panels used the process to come up with their best score for that image on that day. The process is the best we have and nothing is perfect however this process has stood the test of time and we believe one to rely on. Trust the process and while results may vary in the end we contend your images will be scored as they should be with

“Bryan and Lisa” continued on next page

fairness, integrity and care by people who are doing the very best job they can given the fact that its subjective and imperfect."

Some folks will vent on social media, "How can this be that I score great in one competition and don't even merit in another competition with the same image? I'm so confused!" Are you sure you are not just disappointed and frustrated rather than confused? If you take some time to truly understand the process, we believe you can take all the mislabeled confusion out of your mind and find a much better place to spend your energy. Don't get us wrong—it can be frustrating. No one wants to hear that an image they poured their soul into isn't a merit image. It's ok to be frustrated! You have worked so hard to get everything just right and your image didn't get the score you wanted. The important thing to glean from this, in our opinion, is who to be frustrated with. We contend that if you channel the frustration inward and use that energy to increase your skills, you will get better at creating images and your scores will reflect that.

Here is a little secret—the best result you can have from image competition isn't receiving merits or degrees—it's becoming a better image maker. When you are frustrated, it's an opportunity. You have an opportunity for growth and improvement. Unfavorable scores push you to work harder so that eventually you'll be creating images with a level of skill that can only be honed through the fire of disappointment. One juror at District recently expressed that it's ok to feel disappointment but please don't channel that anger toward the judges and blame them. Jurors are always hoping to award a merit! To become a juror takes a lot of time and training and sacrifice. No one enters the juror training program hoping to dash spirits and

ruin lives. Becoming a juror is truly a labor of love—you must be passionate enough about photography and photographic education that you are willing to spend your own hard-earned dollars to acquire the training necessary and then be humble enough to be evaluated by approved jurors over and over until you are approved. And then the evaluations continue! It is through much personal sacrifice and time away from family and their business that jurors are trained and approved. Please understand that when a juror scores your image, they are looking for ways to reward the maker not the other way around.

We hope confusion is not your mindset now that you understand the process. Understand that frustration and disappointment are fleeting and then turn that emotion into determination to excel. One juror recently equated this to the 5 stages of grief.

1. Denial 2. Anger 3. Bargaining 4. Depression and 5. Acceptance. Maybe we should write a book on the 5 stage of Frustration in image competition—there are a lot of similarities and we think it would be a best seller amongst the competition crowd. If you can channel that frustration and use it to your advantage as you create, we believe good will come from it.

In science, we look for things to match and be evidence based with repeatable results. Image competition is not science. It's an art. But in the pursuit to give it meaning, we give it a method of order—the PPA 12 Elements of a Merit. We believe it's the best system in the world and one we can rely on. Sometimes you will score well and sometimes you won't. But as long as you are participating, you will get better and become the artist you aspire to be. Just don't get caught in the trap of confusion on why the result may vary and

"Bryan and Lisa" continued from page 4

understand that truly, the value of competition is in the process. The result is but a tiny fraction of the process of competing but because we like accolades, it's the part we focus on the most. Let your focus be broad and the accolades will come. ♦

About the authors...



*Bryan Welsh,
Cr.Photog., CPP, API, FP-OR*

Bryan Welsh, a second-generation photographer, is recognized for his creative stylized journalistic photography to both his clients and peers. Bryan has taught at the Professional Photographers of America national convention IUSA, PPA Super One Days and to State and Local PPA photography affiliates across the country.

He is an approved juror with the Oregon Professional Photographers Association and has taught classes on image competition as well. Bryan takes pride in helping aspiring photographers and enjoys following their successes in competition.

He has received numerous merits and awards in image competitions on both a local and national level that include - PPA Loan Collections, Fuji MASTERPIECE Awards and Kodak Gallery Awards. His images have appeared in Studio Photography and Professional Photographer magazine(s) as well as used in Nikon's National advertising. Bryan's articles have been published in numerous publications in the photographic industry.

Bryan has the Photographic Craftsman Degree from Professional Photographers of America (Cr. Photog.), is a Certified Professional Photographer (CPP), he has the Fellow of Photography Degree from the Oregon Professional Photographers Association and is a member of the American

Society of Photographers (ASP). Bryan also holds the status of an Approved Photographic Instructor (API) from PPA and has over 100 speaking merits.

*Lisa Dillon,
M.Photog., Cr., CPP, FP-OR*



Lisa Dillon is a Master Craftsman Photographer and CPP from Portland Oregon. She is also an ASP member and a Fellow of Photography in Oregon. She is in her 14th year of business and specializes in high school senior and family photography. She is an Affiliate Juror-in-Training, past president of the Professional Photographers of Oregon and currently serves on the board of directors for Oregon Professional Photographers of Oregon and as a PPA Councilor for the state of Oregon. Lisa mentors several young photographers and teaches classes on Image Competition, How to Be an Image Competition Judge and on High School Senior Photography. In her spare time, she likes travel the world, hike in the beautiful Oregon forests, read as many books as possible and cook (and eat!) delicious food, preferably for a crowd of friends and family. She is a mother of one daughter and now a grandmother of one adorable toddler girl.

As a child, Lisa watched her father develop black and white images in his basement darkroom and watched her own fascination with photography develop as well. Lisa continues to stretch herself in photography learning new skills and taking on new challenges. She uses Image Competition as a way to explore new ideas and build on personal projects. She has studied with accomplished instructors such as Hanson Fong, Travis Gugelman, Bill Sorenson, and many others and continues to sharpen her skills and looks for new techniques to explore such as video fusion, polaroid transfer, encaustic/multi-media art and more.

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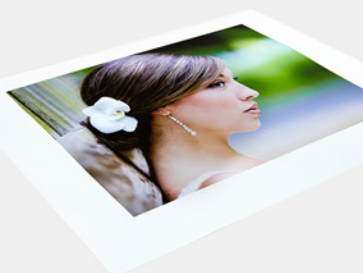
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Shellie Kappelman, CPP

*Wisconsin Professional Photographers Association
"Photographer of the Year-combined" - Runner-Up*

I may be unusual for those featured in this magazine, since I see myself first as a Mom, new grandma, farmer, and then photographer. My husband, Pete, and I milk 450 Holstein and Brown Swiss and run about 1,100 acres. Our three children and one son-in-law now work for us and we are working toward their future ownership. Pete is also very involved in cooperative leadership which has allowed us to travel extensively. I've been fortunate to have such a supportive husband and family. I've had experiences that I never would have dreamed of and look forward to more adventures in the future!

I was born on a dairy farm in Albany, Wisconsin. I had a real heavy involvement in 4-H in both dairy

and photography.

I have won numerous state awards, twice recognized nationally for exhibit, once as the cover of the National 4-H calendar. I started my career and photographed first wedding of a classmate at age 18.

At age 19, trained with Marco Valencia in Janesville. Photographed undergrads and assisted at many weddings. I Married and moved to the Manitowoc area before I shot my first wedding alone.

In 1988, I began working for Bob Welnetz in Manitowoc, photographing weddings. At that time, he had five wedding photographers working most weekends. Eventually, he and I did most weddings and I was photographing 20-30 weddings each

"Shellie Kappelman" continued on the next page



From left- A.J. and Erin Kenneke, Pete and Shellie Kappelman, Mitch Kappelman, Kenny, Bethany, and Greg Gierke.

"Shellie Kappelman" continued from previous page

each year, which worked very well for me as my children were growing up. I appreciate that Bob and Ruth took me under their wing and treated me almost like one of the family. When Bob sold his studio, I worked for two years for the new owner and then went on my own in 2003.



I mainly photographed weddings and families on location until the demand became too great and I decided to build a 28x30 home-based studio in 2010. Since then, my business has grown immensely. I photograph a few schools and a large dance studio, weddings, families, an increasing number of business sessions and around 40 seniors per year. I work alone except for part-time office help in summer.

I became a Certified Professional Photographer in 2009. I knew very little about PPA or any of their programs, but while looking through the PPA magazine, I decided I needed to improve my technical skills and chose to take the Meeks' class at Delta School in Arkansas.

My rationalization was that if I asked a stupid question in Arkansas, at least I wouldn't be embarrassed in front of Wisconsin people! One week before I was scheduled to leave, Gary called me to ask if I was taking the exam. I had no idea what he was talking about, but since I was already spending all this money for the school, I thought, "Why not?" It was tough and I think if I had been closer to home, I might have gotten in the car and left! Thankfully, I passed the first time and later Dan Stoller helped me select images for the critique. Thanks to Dan for all his support of me and WPPA.

With my entries in IPC this summer, I will be eligible for the Master of Photography degree in January. Thanks to Ken Martin for helping me with my competition images!



"Unbroken"

We had the pleasure of traveling to South Africa and Rwanda a few years ago and visited project sites with both Land O' Lakes and Heifer International. Land O' Lakes projects revolve around educating farmers and forming cooperatives so that farmers (one cow, usually) can market their milk to provide for their families. Heifer International helps provide training and animals for those who would like to become a farmer. Rwanda is remarkable in that they are able to live together in this very small, poor

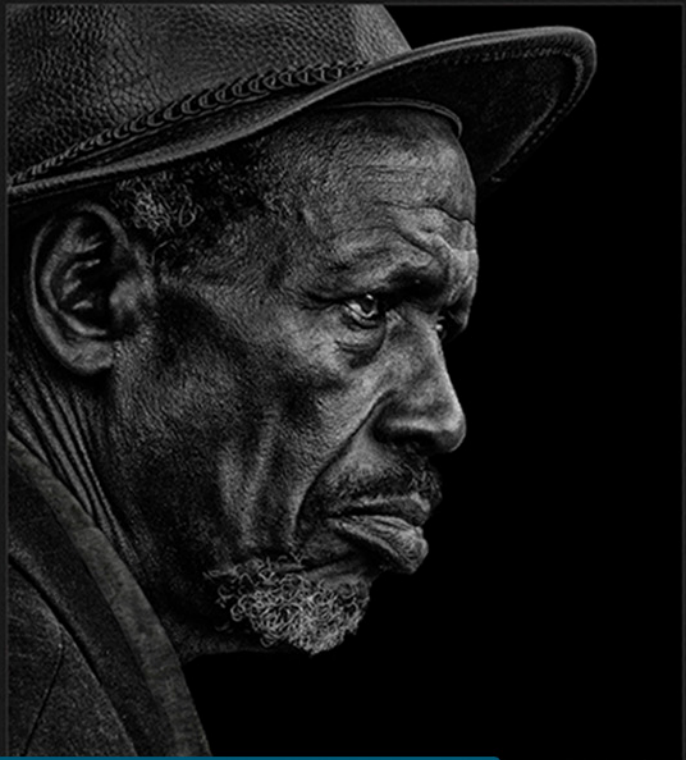
"Shellie Kappelman" continued on page 9

"Shellie Kappelman" continued from page 8

country even though neighbor vs. neighbor genocide happened less than 25 years ago. This man was a board member of the cooperative milk collection station we visited and is lit with north light and light bouncing off the light colored wall behind him. I used my Lumix DMC-FZ1000.

"Unbroken"

by Shellie Kappelman



"Misty Morning"

by Shellie Kappelman

"Misty Morning"

This past February, Pete spoke at a conference in Germany, so we added a week and traveled to Bavaria and Austria. While I had hoped to get a great image of the famous Neuschwanstein castle, the weather did not cooperate at all. We were driving in the valley directly below the castle when I excitedly told Pete to stop immediately. Even though it was a busy highway and nowhere to stop, he humored me and followed me with the flashers blinking. This is St. Coloman near Fussen. Photographed with my Nikon D810.

"Shellie Kappelman" continued on next page

"Shellie Kappelman" continued from previous page

"What Smells?"

I've photographed both of my grandparents on my dad's side. Grandma is in her 90's and was always the "fun" grandma. I was nervous about what she would think and didn't show her the image until after it sealed. She just laughed and asked for a copy for her refrigerator!

"Shellie Kappelman" continued on page 11



"What Smells?" by Shellie Kappelman



“Shellie Kappelman” continued from page 10

“Once Upon A Lifetime”

This was photographed at a Thursday wedding on a slightly misty day in Door County and was my first entry at WPPA and IPC. I had an old Fuji S-3 converted to infrared after doing a class with Scott Dupras at Treehaven. In recent years, I have used the infrared mainly at weddings.

“Shellie Kappelman” continued on next page

"Shellie Kappelman" continued from previous page

I had seen images of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin in the weeks before our trip to Germany and loved the lines of the concrete blocks that make up the memorial. I was careful, however, to be respectful of the people and place. Because it was a very overcast day, I used one speedlight very close to the subject to introduce some directional light. ♦



"Soul Survivor"
by Shellie Kappelman

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A collage of various photo products from Miller's Professional Imaging. It includes a framed photo of a person in a yellow jacket, a photo book titled "Adventure", a photo box with a gold-colored design, a photo of a child holding a teddy bear, a photo of a person in a field, a photo of a person in a field, a photo of a person in a field, and a photo of a person in a field. The collage also features a stylized "M" logo and a green plant.

Message from the Executive Director

Rick Trummer, M.Photog., Cr., CPP, F-WPPA, F-APPI,
F-SCPPA, F-PPANI, F-IPPG, EA-ASP



It's that time of year when we all are starting to get busy. The education, marketing and preparation will all start to pay off from this past off season. I pray that you all find the success that you've worked so hard to achieve, but it takes a lot more than prayer, as you all know. "Hope" and "prayer" are great companions, but when it comes to business, we need to have a whole lot more.

If you're just running out of gas when the plane lands, you didn't do enough planning and set-up to accomplish success. Success is something that must be earned through good planning, scheduling and action. To do one or two of the three won't get you to the finish line. Then, after you plan for success, be ready for it to hit. If you're not ready for success, it can travel past you pretty quickly.

I'm reminded of a customer who reached out to me a few months ago. She had told me that she was going through the planning stages of her marketing plan and filling out an outline page. Her question was, "how would you market for my marketplace?" I'm sure the answer wasn't what she was exactly looking for when I said, "What is your marketplace?" I had no idea who she was trying to market to, so I could understand how to market to them?

I'm sure we all go through this exercise at one time or another in our lives. It doesn't make any sense to market through Kohl's Department Store if we want our customers to shop at Macy's. So "who is your customer?" "What do they purchase?" "What are their buying habits?" "What is their household income?" These are the questions that need to be answered before the marketing gets sent out the studio door. If you don't know who your customer is, how can you market to them?

So, we now understand the planning concept, what happens next. Well, now the scheduling comes into play. Just a little over three years ago, I had a very good friend send out a senior magazine that cost a small fortune to put together, it was BEAUTIFUL! It had answered all the reasons why anyone would want to come and purchase from the studio. They had put it together using John Hartman's approach to marketing. The images were OUTSTANDING, the design was AWESOME and everything looked high class, it was everything you would want from a top of the line marketing piece. He had thought of everything, except, the timing for it to go out. It was sent 2-1/2 months later than when it should have gone out, his response was zero. Can you imagine? Not one customer from the incredible marketing concept. He missed the scheduling part of the equation. A good action plan will always create success and hope and prayer will always lend a hand, God Bless! Be diligent, be prepared and be successful! I wish you all great success over the coming busy months.

Be Good To Each Other!

Rick

Certified Professional Photographer, PPA Councilor, a PPA International Juror, and a Fellow of the American Society of Photographers, WPPA and SCPA. He served on the PPA Photographic Exhibitions Committee from 2004-2010.

Volunteerism has been a way of life for Jon. He has been recognized by SCPA and WPPA with many service awards including special service, outstanding service, meritorious service and the PPA National Award. The American Society of Photographers honored him with the service award and her second PPA National Award. In 2006, he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by SCPA. Jon's 2004 induction into the Wisconsin Professional Photographers Association's Hall of Fame and the Camera Craftsmen of America were both milestones in his continuing quest for excellence.



"Can't Catch Me Now"

by Jon Allyn



This image chronicles the 2014 championship season for this young driver. The story is told in the visor reflection as he edges out his nemesis. In order to have sufficient depth of field to include the sponsor logos, f/8 was used to compensate for the shallow depth of field seen at 560mm.

Details – Canon EOS-1DX, Canon EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM internal Extender 1.4x
ISO 800, f/8, 1/2500 sec, 560mm

Action sports photography is deceptively complex. It begins with researching each sport to gain an understanding of where and when the decisive moment is likely to occur. The next step is to become familiar with the plethora of situations that are possible within that moment. It becomes a game of probability. What is most likely going to happen? If that doesn't happen, what's most likely to occur? In many sports, Plan A is the easiest. It is the most likely action for a given situation and you're prepared. But what happens when you go to Plan B? Will you be in the best vantage point? Will you have the right gear? Will the split second you make your exposure be the best one?



"Stop Drop and Roll"

by Jon Allyn

"Stop, Drop and Roll" is the quintessential battle of man versus beast. The horse seems to employ this unique strategy to rid himself of the rider during the 2012 Cheyenne Frontier Days Rodeo. One consideration when photographing saddle bronc is the vast area covered in just 8 seconds. Where bulls tend to stay within 20 feet of the chute, horses often use the entire arena. Stopping down to f/4.5 guaranteed the depth of field to hold focus while isolating the subject. The fast shutter speed produced a "frozen in time" feeling.

Details – Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS
ISO 400, f/4.5, 1/4000 sec, 130mm

"Jon Allyn" continued on next page

“Jon Allyn” continued from previous page

“Breaking Free” was a Plan B moment during the 2010 Division 1 State Football Championship game between the Wolverines and the Panthers. The likely call on third down and short was another run up the middle. A broken play created the Plan B – a quarterback run around left end for a 77-yard touchdown.

Details – Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS
ISO 3200, f/2.8, 1/800 sec, 125mm

“Breaking Free”

by Jon Allyn



“True Grit”

by Jon Allyn

“True Grit” was photographed at the 2013 Girls National Rugby Tournament. Knowing that the “converting kick” is attempted in line with where the “try” is scored, (the point where the ball actually touches the ground “in-goal”), made it likely that the ball carrier would be running directly toward me with a vantage point centered behind the in-goal area.

Details – Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS II, Canon Extender EF 1.4x III
ISO 125, f/4.0, 1/1000 sec, 420mm

Although these images were created in daylight or well-lit stadiums, equipment and creative choices were major factors to their success. Indoor sports such as swimming, basketball, volleyball, wrestling and gymnastics bring on even more challenges.

Purpose, preparation and (perfect) practice will yield the best results. Perfect practice requires critique. It doesn't matter how much you practice if you're making the same mistake each time. If a pianist is playing in the key of F major and continually strikes a B instead of B \flat , it won't matter how many hours he practices, it still won't be correct. Hire someone knowledgeable that you respect who will tell you straight. It will save you time, money and frustration. Then, get out there and give it your best to catch lightning in a bottle. ♦

Center of Interest is the point or points where the maker wants the viewer to stop. Are you effectively marketing for your specialty or to the clientele? When a client sees your website or other marketing, does he or she stop searching? It's a great thing to be diversified, but there is also merit in the idea of being a specialist and the best at what you do.

Color Balance supplies harmony in which the tones work together. Of course, we're speaking of color here, but do the "tones" of your business and marketing work together?

Story Telling refers to the photographer's ability to evoke imagination. When you meet or speak with the client before the session, have you learned about the subject and brainstormed about the session. When you are excited about the possibilities and can convey it to them, they 'll be primed for a successful session.

Creativity is the original, fresh, and external expression of your imagination. Are you creating those "wow" images that your competition just can't? Are you getting out and learning techniques that will serve as a base so that you can run with your best ideas. Are you studying art or participating in forums?

Technique is the approach used to create the image. How is your demeanor with your clients or potential clients? Are the clients having fun and getting excited at the possibility of having their portraits displayed? Are they letting all their friends know about it? Are you marketing the "experience"?

Lighting —the use and control of light— goes back to being the best photographer you can be. Learn to use various types of light so that you use the proper equipment and technique to evoke the mood.

Technical excellence is the quality of the images you produce. Have you trained and learned to make your images as technically correct as possible? At WPPA, we're here to help. Please let us know your ideas for learning opportunities that will help you gain the skills you need most.

Subject Matter should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image. It may sound a bit cynical, but, to me, the best subject matter is a paying client. Make sure you excel at providing him or her with an experience and images that will have them recommending you to everyone they know.

Good luck to all of those who enter IPC and best wishes for a busy and productive summer! We'll see you in September. ♦

Shellie





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Inspiration Guides by WHCC feature photographic products in real home settings. Inspire your clients to see their images in ways they never thought possible, while illustrating to them the value of investing in photographic art. They're more than just catalogs; Inspiration Guides include free resources to help you sell products and an unbranded webpage for your clients to access. Available in four editions: Family, Wedding, High School Senior, and Baby.

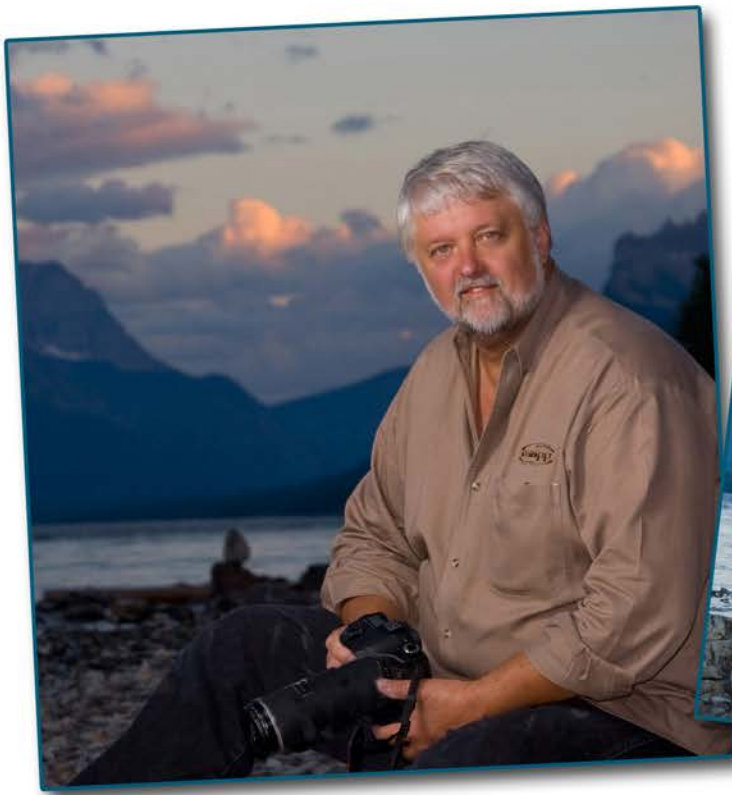
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Doug Box, M.Photog.,CR.,CPP

September One Day Program



Doug has taught at seminars and conventions in all 50 states in the U.S. plus Canada, Mexico, Scotland, Wales, England, China, Ireland, Denmark and on 5 cruise ships. He was chosen to teach at the International Wedding Institute and has taught at 18 different PPA Affiliate week-long schools. He is one of only five people in the history of PPA to earn over 1,000 PPA Merits and is an invited member of the prestigious CameraCraftsmen group, one of only 40 in the world.

Doug has written six books on photography with Amherst Publishing. He is one of the most fun and easiest to learn from instructors you will ever encounter



Sunday, September 11th, 2017

10:00am - 4:00pm

“Easy Outdoor, On Location, and In-Home Portraits, using Available Light and Off-Camera Flash”

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On Sunday, you will learn the techniques with lecture and demonstration. On Monday, for those who would like to, we will do an optional Hands-On class where you will have the opportunity to practice your new lighting skills and get critiques of your images.

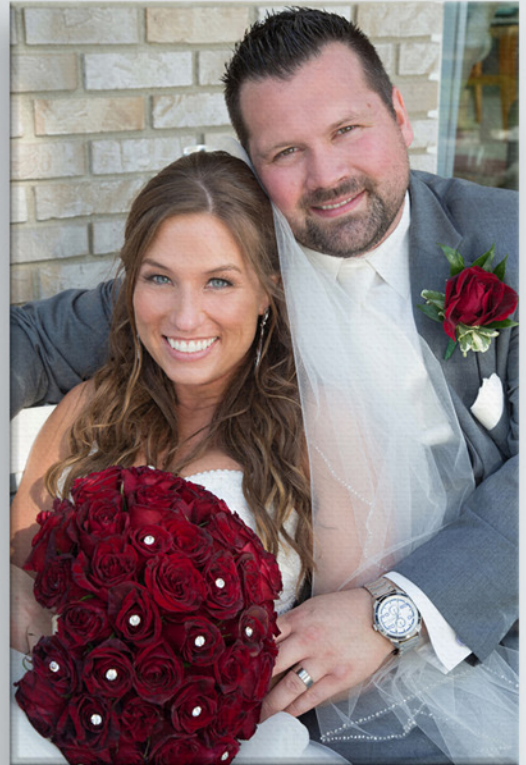
We will go deep into Off-Camera flash techniques for creating dramatic portraits in nature and learn how you can combine flash and sunsets for stunning portraits. If you want to learn the technique, practice yourself and get feed back on your images, attend both days.



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How to Find THE Light

By Fuzzy Duenkel

Have you heard the expression “find the light”? It means looking for existing, portrait-worthy light. Well, this article will be about choosing the right light modifier. Sometimes photographers choose to use a strobe or speedlight without a modifier for hard light, but more often they want a softer light quality. This is done by turning a small light into a large light.

The **ONLY** way to make soft flash light is by making it larger relative to the subject. That’s done by a small light illuminating a surface that’s much larger than the bare light, and keeping that surface close to the subject.

Note that bare bulbs and speedlight adapters like the Stoffen Omni-bounce and Gary Fong Lightsphere don’t create soft light. Any soft light they produce only happens because of light bouncing off of nearby large, lighted-toned surfaces like walls or a ceiling. Because of this, using such a device outside is a waste of flash energy. They don’t make soft light by themselves!

SOFTBOXES

While umbrellas, large studio dish reflectors, and beauty dishes are devices that produce softer light, most photographers prefer to use a softbox for controllable soft light. Softboxes come in many designs, and the criteria to choose which one depends on what you need... ease of assembly, weight, durability, depth, front screen size, or lighting performance. For on-location use, we want to be able to transport and set-up the device quickly. For use in the studio, ease of assembly and weight aren’t important. Some softboxes require assembly with separate parts, mostly the rods to hold the material. Those are fine for studio use, but I’ll skip those and discuss portable devices more suitable for on-location work.

ROUND OR SQUARE?

Until fairly recently, most softboxes were either square or rectangular. Today the more popular selling portable softboxes are the octagonal collapsible types that open like an umbrella. This type, called “octobox”, is among the easiest and fastest to set up. There are many brands, shapes, sizes, and variations. Chinese manufacturers have copied previously engineered designs, and as a result, prices are even more affordable.

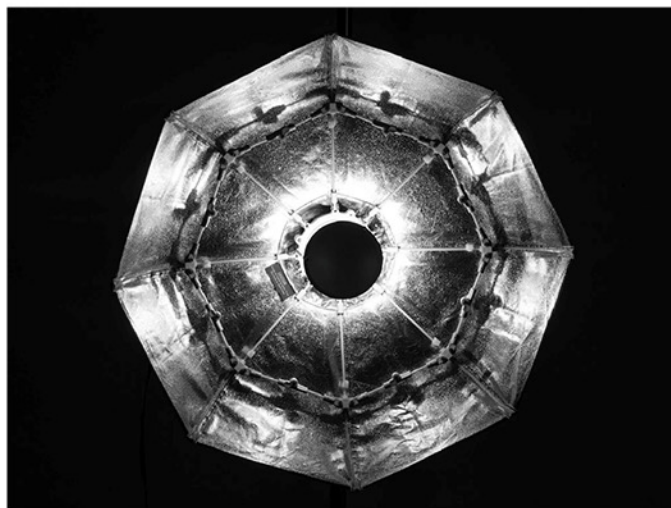
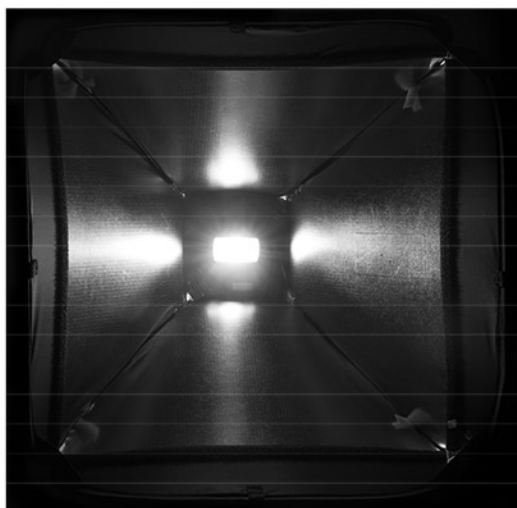
While some photographers like the almost round catch light octoboxes produce, to me that’s a minor attribute. What I like about having eight sides is how they have the potential to fill the softbox with more even light. I say “potential” because that depends on some other de-

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sign factors, such as the depth of the softbox and the shape of the softbox walls. The sides of a shallow softbox aren't the best angle to reflect light from a speedlight forward.



Below are photos of the insides of a square softbox and octobox without the front screens. This shows how the device is being illuminated by the light source. With an octobox there are eight surfaces for the light to bounce at the front screen versus four. It should be apparent that this particular octobox will produce a more even light on the front screen... with less need to resort to a light-robbing internal baffle.

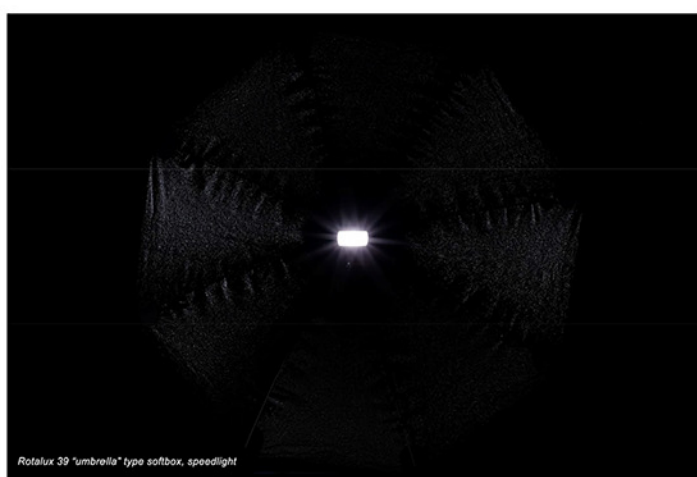


That said, I prefer a square or rectangular softbox because for any given height or width there is more area of illumination. A 30 inch square gives me a larger light area (900 sq. in.) and thus softness, than a 30 inch round (707 sq. in.).

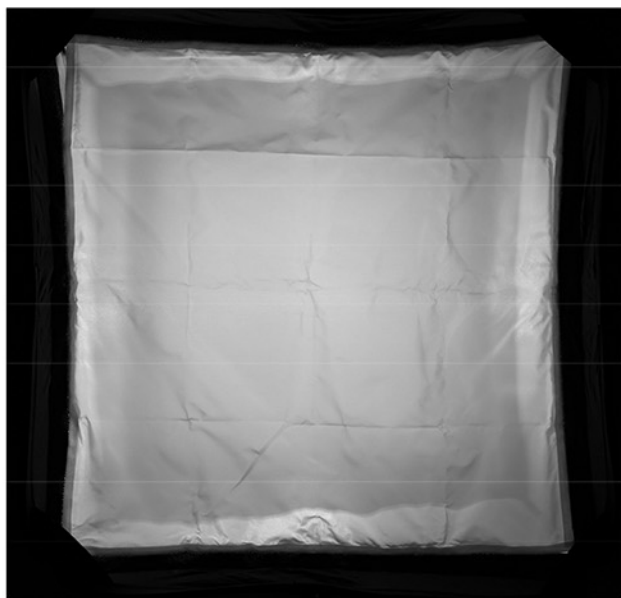
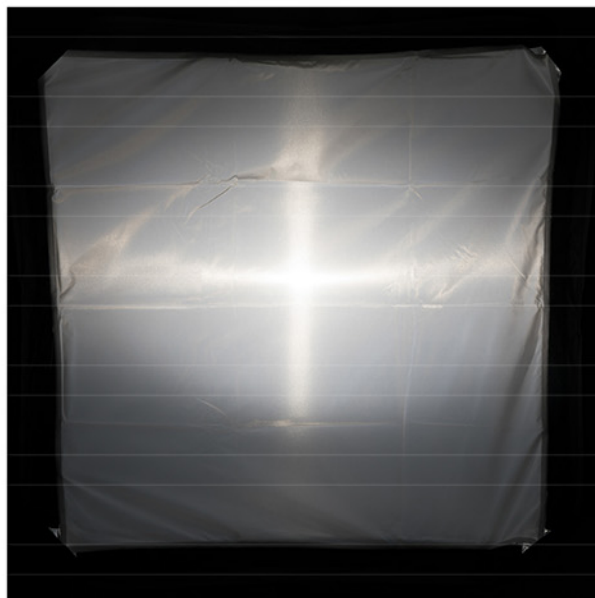
BARE BULB or SPEEDLIGHT?

The type of flash you use to light a softbox determines its effectiveness. If you're using a bare bulb type of strobe (meaning the flash tube sticks out) the softbox will likely be lit just fine. A bare bulb always works better than a straight-on speedlight... as long the strobe bulb protrudes far enough into the softbox to do that. Some strobe tubes are too short to work well.

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If the sides of a softbox aren't reflecting light forward, then they aren't contributing as much to soften the light from the flash tube. A front screen does reflect light back to the insides to bounce around, then exit out the front again, but that's not as desirable as having the softbox sides do that. In the photos above, you can see that the bare bulb on the left does a far better job of lighting the insides of this octobox than on the right using a speedlight. So if you plan to use a speedlight to light your softbox (as I do) then the softbox needs to be built or modified for that. The internal baffle supplied with many softboxes is very effective in distributing the light from either a bare bulb or speedlight to fill the front screen with even light. In the photos below, the one on the left has no internal baffle, and the one on the right does.

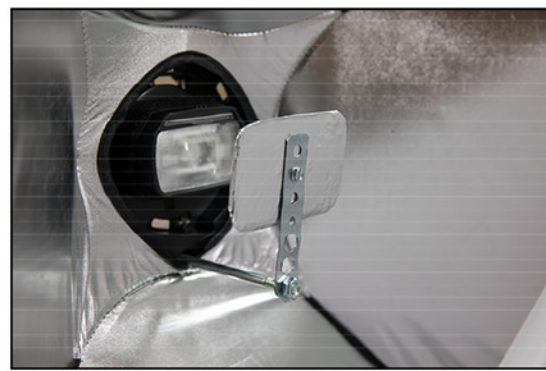
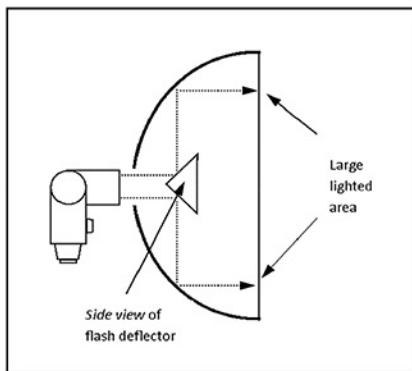


DEFLECTOR

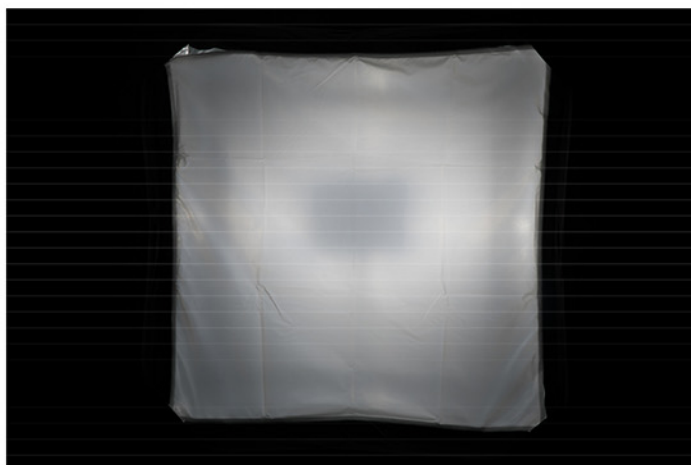
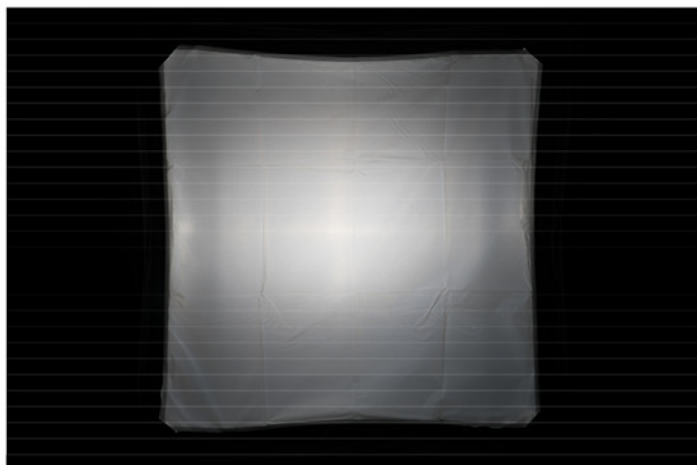
Additionally, you can make an internal deflector in a cone or pyramid shape to redirect the light going straight out from the speedlight to the sides of the softbox. This is a "do-it-yourself" device, and you'll need to be somewhat handy in fabricating it. I made mine from a block of wood, aluminum tape, and pipe strap. You can mount a deflector with a long bolt in

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the umbrella shaft hole, or directly to the speedlight mount with long bolts. I have found the optimal distance from the speedlight to be about 1.5".



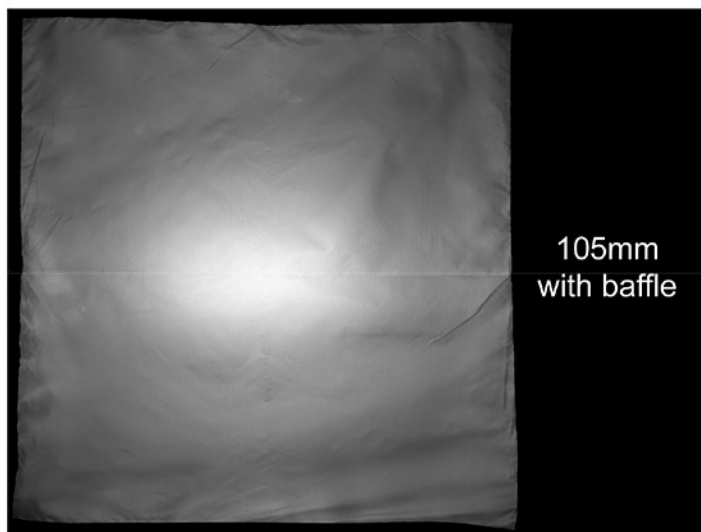
Why bother with a deflector? Below is a comparison of only using the internal baffle versus a deflector and the internal baffle. The photo on the left is just with the baffle. The photo on



the right is using the deflector and the baffle. Squint your eyes to see how the hot spot doesn't use the entire surface. The deflector cuts the hot spot in the center, resulting in a larger apparent light to the subject... making it slightly softer. Anything in the path of the light will affect rob some light, but usually less than 1/2 stop. However, if you'd rather not lose any power from the already relatively weak speedlight, a deflector isn't absolutely necessary.

ZOOM ZOOM

Now let's turn to a very important and easy way to keep the light as large as possible in your softbox. Use the widest zoom setting on your flash! The first photo in the following examples shows a flash with it's zoom set at 105mm. Even with the internal baffle in place, there's a hot spot in the center. That isn't using the entire size of your device to its best advantage. Why buy a large softbox, only to use a third of it? The second photo shows the same setup but this time with the flash set to its widest zoom position. There's no power penalty using widest zoom position, but you get more softness because it's bigger!



Speedlights also come with a pull-out wider angle disperser. While those are very effective at further spreading the light more than the 20mm zoom position, they are VERY inefficient and rob as much as two stops of light inside the softbox. The photos below show the advantage of the 14mm disperser, but IMHO it's not worth losing 1.5 to 2 stops of light.



DEEP DISH or THIN?

Some softboxes feature a deep rather than shallow front to back design. Deeper softboxes will show less fall-off from center to sides for two reasons:

- 1) There is less relative difference from the center to the edges of the front screen.
- 2) The sides are less angled which causes better reflectance of the strobe's light to the front.

Obviously, a thin softbox takes up less space if that's a concern for handling or transportation.



Deep dish softboxes can be used without the front screen for a steeper light fall-off to the sides, and some have the option of varying the back-to-forth position of the light within the device to best find the best parabolic position. By the way, these are among the most expensive softboxes. One particularly huge model costs \$8000! Smaller ones cost a few hundred.

For on-location work, the softbox must withstand the occasional, but inevitable crash. When it's windy, I stake my light stand down or use a sandbag. Sometimes an unexpected gust happens, and over it goes. That's one of the reasons I prefer the twist-flex design originated by Lastolite. It's flexible sides easily absorb a crash, and will never scratch the client's property. There are many Chinese clones at a lower cost (under a variety of brand names), but they are made of lesser quality materials.

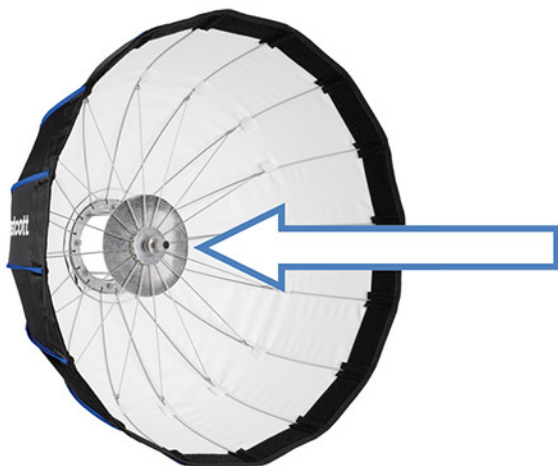


A few manufacturers make very inexpensive softboxes that are an umbrella type designed for a flash that fits inside. This has two drawbacks. First, the flash is less accessible to make changes to it. Second, the box can't be tipped very far up or down for aiming the light.



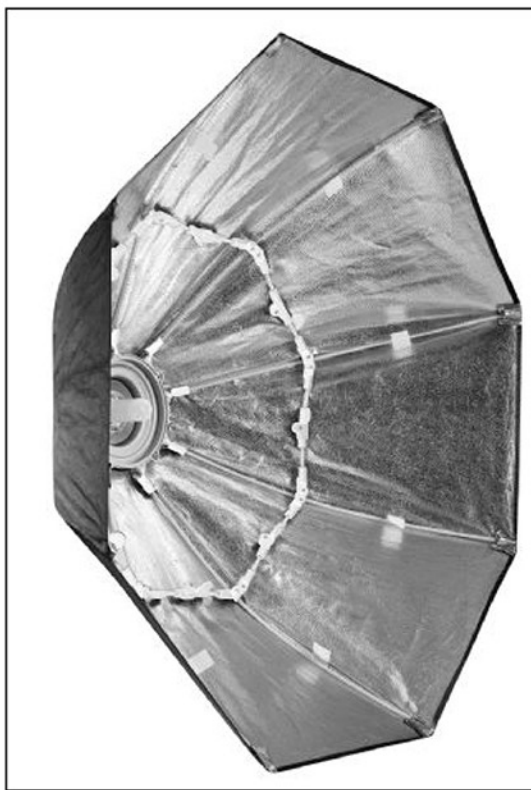
"How to Find the Light" continued on next page

Some umbrellas have a center shaft and hardware that is directly in front of the flash tube. That's not a problem if you use a bare bulb type strobe. But if it's a speedlight... that hardware blocks light coming from the flash. So then you'll need a deflector to reflect the flash's light to the sides. Some brands come with or have an optional dish deflector.



Note that the deflector must face toward the flash. Turning it the other way simply reflects the light back to the flash.

The models shown below are like an umbrella in that the sides collapse, but they use fiberglass spreaders connected to the ribs rather than a center shaft and associated hardware. Consequently, there's nothing to block light. This is especially well-suited to a speedlight.



The drawback to most octagons is durability. They rely on ribs to create the large shape, but those can break or bend when (not if) it falls over. But with all the inexpensive clones available, it's not a big financial loss.

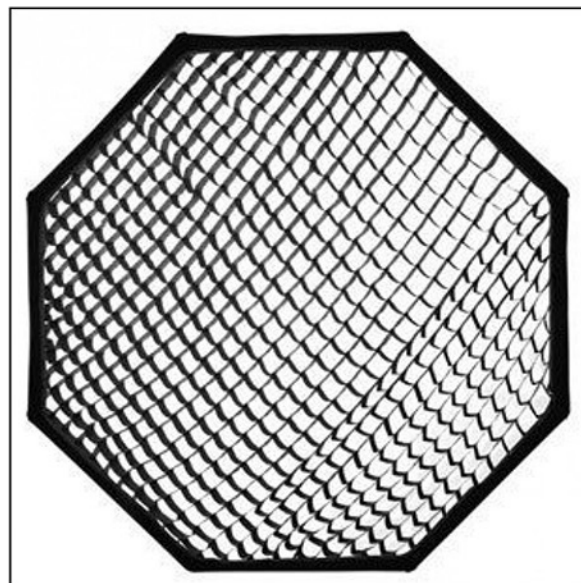
BARN DOORS

The flat front surface of a softbox permits a fair amount of "feathering" to direct more light to a particular direction. You can also even the light from side to side or top to bottom of your subject. If the front screen is recessed, its extended sides act like "barn doors" allowing you even more control of side spill.



GRIDS

Grids produce a tighter beam of light with a steeper, more dramatic fall-off. They are available for many softboxes, square or octagon. Grids allow the light from a softbox to remain soft in the center of its beam, and they also keep light off of wherever you don't want it.



COST

When each manufacturer had a corner on the market for their particular design, the costs were appropriate to the R&D required, but significantly more than today. Due to increased competition and Chinese copying, prices have fallen dramatically. High quality, original designer models can run several hundreds of dollars. Clones and less unique types run under one hundred dollars. In any case, this is not a great expense!

HOW MUCH DO YOU LOSE?

Efficiency will vary, but most softboxes will lose at least two stops of light. This isn't a big concern with powerful strobes, but it is with speedlights. I use my softboxes as close as I can to the subject without being seen in the portrait image, and I usually shoot from f2.8 to f5.6.

High speed sync robs another stop of light power. So a speedlight in a softbox in daytime bright light will likely not provide enough power. In that case, you'll definitely need a powerful strobe. However, in the evening or in shade... a speedlight supplies sufficient power for the wider f-stops used in most portraiture.

SUMMARY

In the 1980s, I attended a seminar where the speaker used a small softbox to light the subjects. When the flash fired, I could see that only a small portion of the front surface was illuminated. It seemed to me that the softbox wasn't taking full advantage of its entire front surface, so I began to study why that happened and how to rectify it. Manufacturers have since developed a myriad of designs that address that issue, and now offer a multitude of softbox choices to fit our particular needs.

You'll need to choose your main factors to keep in mind when looking for a softbox. In the studio you'll have different requirements than on-location. I've chosen to equip my studio with all Larson softboxes. They are all constructed of the same high quality materials, so the light color is uniform. Color uniformity in the studio is important.

On-location my main considerations are durability and physical flexibility... to be able to stuff it in my minivan without the need to collapse and re-assemble it each time.

Light evenness is also important, and I've taken measures for my speedlight to evenly light the front screen surface of the softbox. This reduces specularity. Specularity makes the subject look sweaty... not usually desirable.

I prefer the Lastolite twist-flex design for my smaller on-location softbox, and a Phottix 32x47 for a larger on-location softbox. Other models or types would probably suffice as well. It's just what I chose at the time.

The main point is that we want to use a softbox to its best advantage... and be sure to get all the light and inches we paid for! ♦

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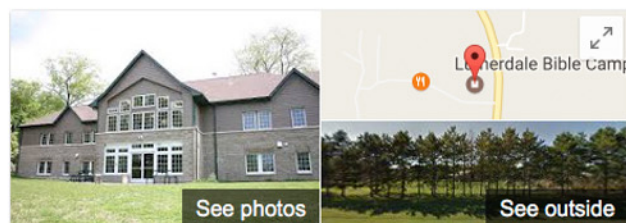
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TBA



Indianhead

www.indianheadphotographers.org

Regional Director: Tom Giles

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Michael Knapstein - "A Photographers Journey to Fine Art Landscape Photography"

August 6th, 2017 - Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Hosted by Paul & Jenny Hafermann

October 9th, 2017 - Colby, WI
Image Competition -
No Program Scheduled

November 13th, 2017 - Colby, WI
Image Competition for Pre-State/
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Regional Director: Krystal Stankowski

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Abbie Thomas - "Selling Photographic Art"

October 23rd, 2017 - Fitchburg, WI
Twig and Olive -
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November 27th, 2017 - Fitchburg, WI
Brandy Pemper - "Art and Inspiration"



South Eastern

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