

POSING FOR PORTRAIT AND GLAMOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

JOE FARACE

TECHNIQUES FOR DIGITAL
PHOTOGRAPHERS

Amherst Media®
PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Jay Perskie of Perskie Photographics (www.perskie.com), who started me on this journey. It was Jay who took an amateur photographer, introduced me to the concepts of lighting and posing, and set me out on the path of becoming a professional photographer. Thanks, Jay!

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Acknowledgments

This book is the fourth that I have written for Amherst Media® and the reason for that is simple: they are a great bunch of people who are as passionate about photography as their writers. A big thank you goes out to dynamic publisher Craig Alesse at Amherst Media® for suggesting the concept for a book about posing and giving me a chance to write this book.

A big thank you goes out to Barbara A. Lynch-Johnt for designing the four “before and after” posing sequences (“The Polished Portrait”) that appear in the book. Barbara’s design was implemented by Mary Farace, who directed all of the actual poses during the four different shoots that produced the images that you see. Big thanks also to the wonderful Pam Simpson for posing for these sessions. I merely set up the background and lighting and clicked the shutter; these talented ladies did all the hard work.

I wanted this book to feature some images made by other photographers to show that there’s more than one approach to posing, and I would like to thank the following people who contributed photographs, making this book more comprehensive than it would have otherwise been. This includes my wife, Mary Farace, who not only made some of the portraits in this

book but was kind enough to pose for a few of them as well, and WKH Photography’s (www.wkhphotography.com) Kent Hepburn, whose glamour photography exudes a wholesome sensuality. I would also like to thank Kevin Elliott of DigitalMD (www.digitalmd.net) for bailing me out of technical and creative problems during the time this book was in progress and for his assistance over the many years that I have known him. An especially big thank you goes out to all of the different people who posed for the photographs that appear in this book. Photographing people is a shared endeavor, and I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of them.

Lastly, I would like to again thank my wonderful wife Mary, who is an outstanding people photographer in her own right and who, over the years, has taught me a lot about posing and lighting. Mary is as much responsible for all of the good stuff that’s in this book as anyone, and I’m grateful for her love and support. I alone am responsible for all the mistakes and goofs.

About the Author

Joe Farace's interest in digital imaging combines an engineering education from Johns Hopkins University with photography training he acquired at the Maryland Institute, College of Art. Joe is the author of thirty-three other books about photography, digital imaging, and the business of photography. He is Contributing Writer and Photographer to *Shutterbug* magazine, which publishes his monthly "Digital Innovations" and "Web Profiles" columns. His writing occasionally appears in several other domestic and foreign magazines and blogs. Joe's honors include the

Photographic Craftsman's Award presented by the Professional Photographers of America and Honorary Membership from the Independent Photographers of Colorado for "dedication and service to the photographic community."

Please visit his how-to blog (www.joefaraceblogs.com) where he posts daily, providing a photographic tip, tool, or technique. Joe also hosts an automobile photography site (www.joefaraceshootscars.com). You can also follow Joe on Twitter at www.twitter.com/joefarace or on Facebook.



Ideas for poses can come from many different sources. This photo was made after a birthday dinner in Lafayette, Colorado. It had just stopped raining, and as I walked past this lamppost, I thought of Gene Kelly in *Singing in the Rain* and struck this pose. This image was taken with a Canon Powershot SD10. The EXIF data for the image shows an exposure of $\frac{1}{50}$ second at $f/2.8$ and ISO 400. Nik Software's (www.niksoftware.com) Silver Efex Pro was used to convert the image to black & white in order to downplay the distracting background. ©2012 Mary Farace.

Introduction

“A photographic portrait is a picture of someone who knows he is being photographed.”

—Richard Avedon

The above quote shows that the late Richard Avedon was not only a genius behind a camera but was unusually perceptive about his photographs and what they represented. The truth is, a portrait seldom represents reality. Instead, it's a snapshot of a point in time and, with retouching and posing, presents an idealized version of someone who knows they are being photographed. The point of any pose is not just to look natural (that's a lofty objective) but to tell a story—and there are many ways you can pursue that goal. Some like to keep their posing subtle (that's my preferred way of working), while others are not so restrained. Yousef Karsh's

famous portrait of Winston Churchill was made during a two-minute session in which Karsh gently and politely removed the ever-present cigar from Churchill's mouth to produce the determined look you see in the photograph. No matter how you achieve the pose, it all starts with observation, communication, and experience.

Here's a quick introduction to two of my favorite posing tips: (1) If there's something that your subject can lean on, have them do it. It gives them something to do with their hands. In this case, the subject angled her body, making the pose more dynamic than it would have been if she were standing straight. (2) When shooting a glamour-style image, I sometimes ask the subject to act as if she's ripping her clothes off. I'm never more specific than that. I let the model interpret the suggestion in her own way and almost always refine the pose that she comes up with in subsequent shots. Here, that wasn't necessary. This image was made with a Canon EOS 50D camera and an EF 28-105mm lens. The program mode exposure was $\frac{1}{60}$ second at f/5 and ISO 200. A 550EX Speedlite provided fill.



I can help you with the first two, but the third is up to you because, as the punchline to an old joke says, the best way to get to Carnegie Hall is “practice, man, practice.”

In my book *Studio Lighting Anywhere* (Amherst Media®), I quoted Richard Avedon who said, “I think all art is about control—the encounter between control and the uncontrollable.” That’s what a dedicated studio, no matter what size it may be or where it may be located, provides a photographer. Your own shooting space becomes a safe haven from the real world where, like the *Outer Limits* voice says, you can control the lighting, background, and subject. When working in this kind of environment, I control everything—from the subject’s pose to the clothing and makeup—and the resulting photographs tend to be as much a portrait of me as they are of my subjects. What often emerges from all that control is a style.

Photographic style is not something I’m always conscious about when shooting, but the truth is that over time we all develop a signature way of shooting. The danger, of course, is that we keep shooting that same way or create different versions of the same shot for the rest of our lives. Any style you develop must grow and change as you learn.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book is divided into three parts: Part 1 is called “The Basics” because it deals with the basics of body, hand, and head posing, including corrective posing. We’ll also take a look at how lenses affect posing and the final look of the portrait. Part 2 is called “Working in the Studio” because for the average shooter or aspiring pro, photographing a model means positioning her in front of a seamless background and clicking

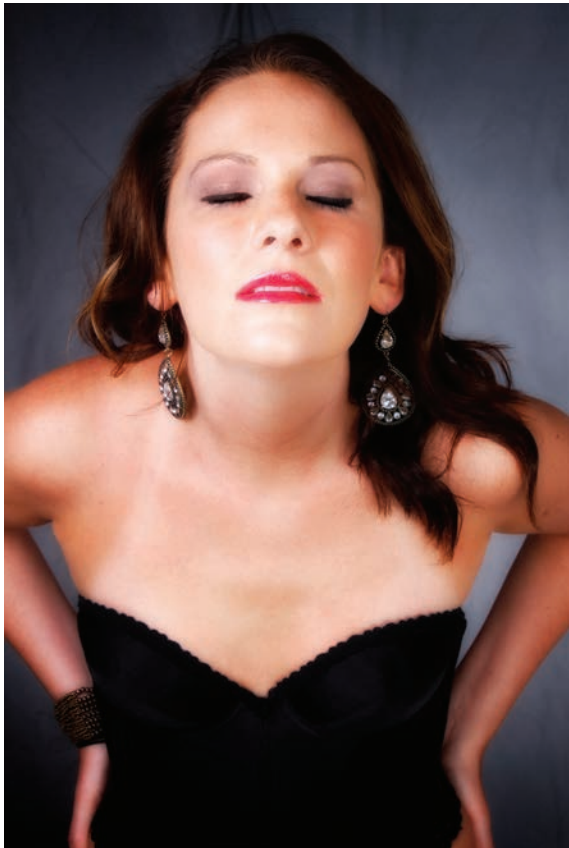
the shutter. In fact, there’s an entire chapter on seamless posing. In Part 3, “Shooting on Location,” we’ll look at how you can improve a pose by using elements of your environment. Next, look into some of the opportunities that shooting in your own home might afford. I’ll give you a Martha Stewart-style tour of images made in my own home that will inspire you to shoot in yours. Finally, you’ll find out why I think outdoor portraiture is easier than shooting in a studio—especially where posing is concerned.

WHAT’S IN THE BOOK?

It was my goal in writing this book to make it more than a posing guide with pose one, followed by pose two, et cetera, et cetera. I opted to present a real-world look at posing for portraits that is sprinkled with tips that relate to other aspects of photographing people, with an emphasis on improving your total approach to portraiture. I’ve tried to keep all of the methods used to make the images in this book as transparent as possible. Nothing was held back. You don’t have to attend a seminar or buy a DVD to learn any of my secrets. All of the portrait posing “secrets” that I’ve learned over the years are right here on these pages for you to see and absorb. Unless otherwise noted in the caption information, all of the photographs are ©2012 Joe Farace, All Rights Reserved.

I will also show you some failed poses. Most of these images fall into the “What was I thinking?” category. In most situations, I eventually came up with something better and maybe completely different—and in many cases, I’ll show you the improved photos too. I’ll also call myself out when a pose is not quite what I wanted.

The subjects who appeared in front of my camera for this book’s photographs represent



LEFT—I made this shot from a high angle and used a relatively wide-angle lens—an EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 II at 55mm. The pose was simple. I asked the subject to place her hands on her hips, lean back, and look up. I was standing on a step stool and shooting down on her with a Canon EOS T3. The exposure was $\frac{1}{125}$ second at f/14 and ISO 100. **RIGHT**—I had a beautiful subject, a beautiful background, and I made just one image. What was I thinking? One of the things I often ask subjects to do is to run their fingers through their hair, and that’s what this subject did. I didn’t refine the pose, I didn’t try something else because I was more concerned about the lighting than the portrait and changed locations. (You can see the final shot made in a different spot in chapter 2.) *Tip:* When you find a great location, don’t let concerns for technical details distract you from making a great portrait. I should have shot more images at this location and then tried something new. My bad.

many different looks and ethnicities and range in age from 18 to late 40s. I’ve tried to use their photographs to enhance the ideas and concepts explained in each chapter, not just to show you a cool photo, although I hope that’s part of the deal. No images were made during workshops conducted by other photographers, but some were made at group shoots or events sponsored

by regional photographer/model associations. Some were made for commercial shoots for clients, but all of the photographs were captured when working one-on-one with the subject and never when there was somebody else setting up the shot. All of the shots, as successful or unsuccessful as they may be, are strictly the result of collaboration between the subject and me. If

REAL PEOPLE

Occasionally, people ask me why I use my wife so much as a model for lighting tests in *Shutterbug* magazine and indeed in my series of Amherst Media® books. One photographer went so far as to criticize me for doing so. Recently, however, a lighting equipment manufacturer specifically wanted me to use Mary as a model when reviewing their equipment for *Shutterbug*. He said, “It’s better to have a real person than a model who might distract from the point. And it’s real people the readers are usually shooting.” That is really the point of this book. A few—not many—of the subjects in this book are full-time models (can you spot which ones?) and some are aspiring models, while others are “real people.” I often use Mary for test shots before a model arrives to make sure my exposure is correct. Occasionally, I like the test shots so much I submit them for publication, as is sometimes the case here.



The exposure of this portrait of Mary was $1/100$ second at $f/16$ and ISO 100. Lighting was from the two Elinchrom (www.manfrottdistribution.com) BX500Ri monolights with 25.5-inch square Portalite lightbanks mounted. The main light was close by at camera right. The fill light was placed as far to camera left as my small camera room would allow. The fill flash was set at minimum power.