

The history of photography needs clearing out. It needs something else now. Because photography always acknowledged there were cameras before photography.

David Hockney

I cannot understand why some people try to write a history of photography that is separated from the history of modern art.

Jean-Francois Chevrier

Chapter 1

A brief history of photography (with respect to nudes)

This section is not intended to be a definitive history of the subject, but a basic overview and understanding at sufficient depth necessary for the course, with reference to suggestions where you will find additional information if you wish to find out more.

Exercise

"I have always thought that if I could turn back the pages of history and photograph one man, my choice would be Moses."

Margaret Bourke-White

Who would you choose?

Early nudes

In the early days of photography, the exposure time was a severe restriction with a studio portrait often requiring 5-10 seconds when the person could not move. To overcome this, the model would rest on supports and sometimes had clamps behind their head to make sure it did not move.

But there was a second reason why early photos seemed to look like paintings. Hiring nude models for several days was expensive. But by taking photographs and using them as the basis of a painting significantly reduced costs. It became a very lucrative business for a many photographers.

However, they soon found that they could also sell these images to a wider public, still claiming these were intended for artists, and therefore could not be prosecuted under obscenity laws. Hence sales tended to be under the counter.

Exercise

Review some old pictures and note how the corners are a lot darker than the middle. Why? Are there other signs of technical limitations?





Still image from YouTube video.
Image from the 1870s

Note the very subtle use of a stand
behind her, with only the base
visible on close examination.



Title: *The Source*
Date: 1856
Artist: *Ingres*
(Source: Wikipedia)



Practicalities of early nude photography

The woman in this picture appears to be freestanding. But if you look very carefully, there is a stand behind her in the shadow which helps her maintain her position. (Note that the mask not only provides anonymity, but also offers a simple device to provide the liberating experience without worrying who sees her.)

The stand behind her does not support her, but allows her to rest against it, and minimise any movement during the exposure. Some photographers were using exposure times of less than 3 seconds by the 1870s. But this was in sunlight. In a studio environment, exposures could take more than 5 minutes, at least in the early days.

This type of technique still has a place in the modern photograph where a position may need to be held for some time, such as in low lighting, where a wall may be used for street night photography particularly if a good depth of field is required.

The real value of nude photographs

Photographer: *Man Ray*

Title of photo: *Le Violon d'Ingres*

Date of photo: 1924

“After the photograph was developed, he painted on a print the f-holes of a violin onto her back, and had the print rephotographed, creating the present work of art.” (Source: Wikipedia)

This image sold for \$12.4m in May 2022.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, art is subjective, and whilst in days gone past there was an “emotional value”, today the artistic value seems directly linked to the investment value. Private collectors blur the lines when they buy pieces of “art” (including photographs) and then hide them away for years before selling them for more money.

Exercise

As yourself how much you would pay for a photograph and why. Does it need to be the “original”. What does “original” that means? Is it just the print or does it include the negative?



Photo Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Violon_d%27Ingres

Painting Source: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-auguste-dominique-ingres/the-bather-of-valpin%C3%A7on>



Artist: *JAD Ingres*

Year: 1808



Photographer: *Edward Weston*
Title: *Nude*
Year: *1925*

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edward_Weston,_Nude,_Mexico,_1925.jpg

Early nudes – Moving on

The “Pictorialist” (photographing what is real in a romanticised way) approach of the 19th century was replaced by a series of alternative styles which attempted to reject earlier ones. The Fragmentalists (here illustrated by Weston, but also reflected in the work of Imogen Cunningham as discussed again later) photographed fragments of the body, but not following the fashion of the medical photograph of the 19th century.

These approaches were in part a rejection of the old ways and apparently exhausting their potential, but also a reflection of the new liberalism of a world emerging from a world war (and about to be plunged into depression).

It was also the time when, arguably as a consequence of the war, women were given greater freedom and had greater control over their destiny, including freedom within the artistic world.

Size is not everything

In the early days of photography, one of the biggest limitations of the art was the size of the equipment.

For example, when photographing the Crimea War in 1890, Roger Fenton used glass negatives that were 40 x 30 cms. And of course, the camera was even bigger. Shown here are a woman from the 1890s and a photo of Edward Weston in the early 1930s both with cameras that offered high resolution photos due to the size of the negative, though were cumbersome.

But the good side was that you could print (positive) pictures quickly and easily by simply putting the negative under a glass plate. No enlarger (to make a large print from a small negative) was required.

Exercise

Play detective with some old images you can find, to identify as much about the camera and lighting as possible.



Unknown female photographer, c1890

PHOTO DETECTIVE 2

Close inspection of the lens of the camera in this picture, confirmed by the reflection in the eyes, suggest a large main light source (maybe a window) was to the right from the viewers perspective. In addition, fill-in light, possibly using a reflector, was used on the left.

PHOTO DETECTIVE 1

Note that the background is painted but made to look outdoors. Although probably shot in a studio, it is possible that it was shot outdoors as photographers often carried portable backgrounds. In addition, the lack of shadow except on her dress suggests significant overhead lighting such as available outside on an overcast day.



Edward Weston, c1930

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Weston

The rise of the postcard

A lot of early photographs, not just nudes, were postcards which had on the back a place to put the address, write a note and attach a stamp. They also had the photographers' details.

The advantage of this approach was that the negative could be the same size as the postcard, and it would be possible to site up a production line whereby the original negative was placed in direct contact with the postcards and exposed, develop and fixed in photographic chemicals. There was no need to use the darkroom enlargers that were necessary for smaller format cameras.

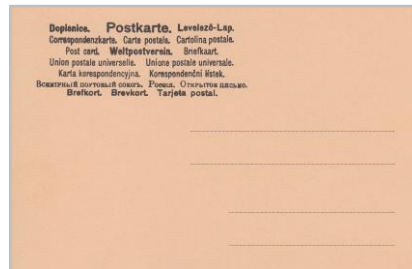
Due to the culture at the time and related obscenity laws, the taking and distribution of nude photographs was limited. Consequently, these postcards were, ironically, never sent as "French postcards" – the name by which they came to be known - but put into envelopes for sending or sold through kiosks "under the counter".



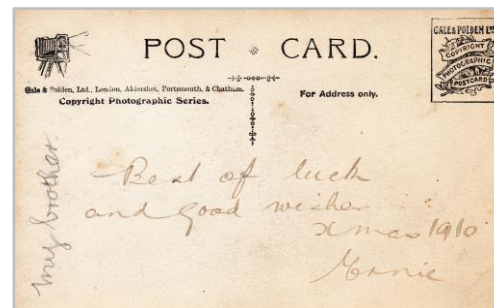
PHOTO DETECTIVE 3

The postcards shown here were purchased specially to illustrate this page. Under the microscope, they appear to be a genuine photogravures (a way to print photographs in the early part of the last century – i.e. not a recent scan and not printed using modern techniques), but the edges of the cards show no sign of wear. The "PC Paris" logo on one of the postcards belonged to Papeteries de Levallois-Clichy, PC referring to their "luxury" brand produced in the 1920s. Despite the postcards appearing to be from different producers, they had identical printing on the back inconsistent with that usually used for PC Paris postcards.

Conjecture: The prints are genuine, though the styles look pre-1920. However, they were probably not printed before 1940.



A reverse side of the French postcards shown here



A reverse side of a genuine postcard (not French) from 1910

Montage

There were many difficulties in trying to make a photos that contained many people. Oscar Rejlander was one of the first to achieve this.

Exposure at this time could take more than 10 seconds for studio photographs, even with the aperture wide open.

Even with more light, the photographer would struggle to have the depth of field such as that required in "Two ways of life". That is, the persons in the back may be in focus, but those at the front will be out of focus.

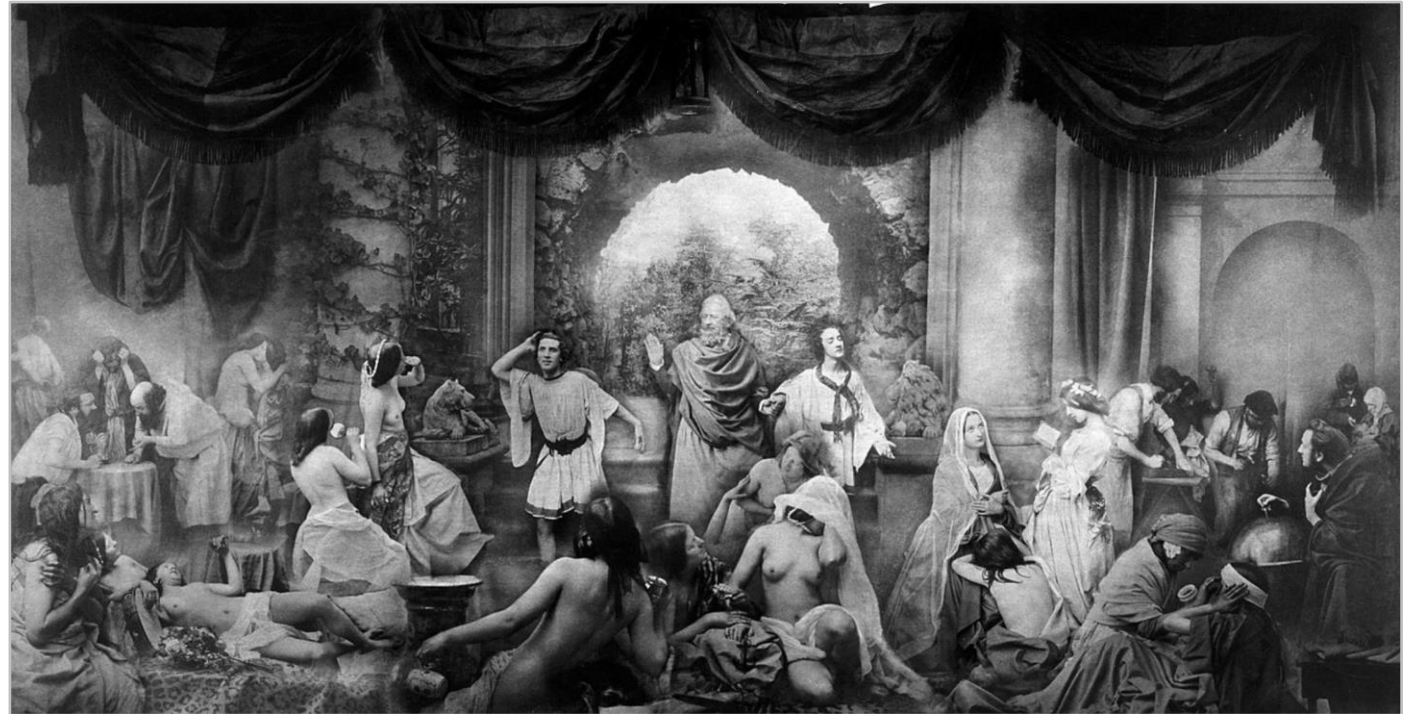
Apparently, this photograph take six weeks to produce.

At some exhibitions, it was censored (i.e. the bottom half of the image was covered). Queen Victoria had a copy.

It is believed only one copy still exists.

Exercise

Try to identity early photos (pre-1920) where it is unclear if the picture is a single image or uses multiple photographs.



Two ways of Life
Oscar G Rejlander - 1857

For a detailed history of Oscar Rejlander
<http://www.historywebsite.co.uk/articles/photos/Rejlander/Rejlander3.htm>

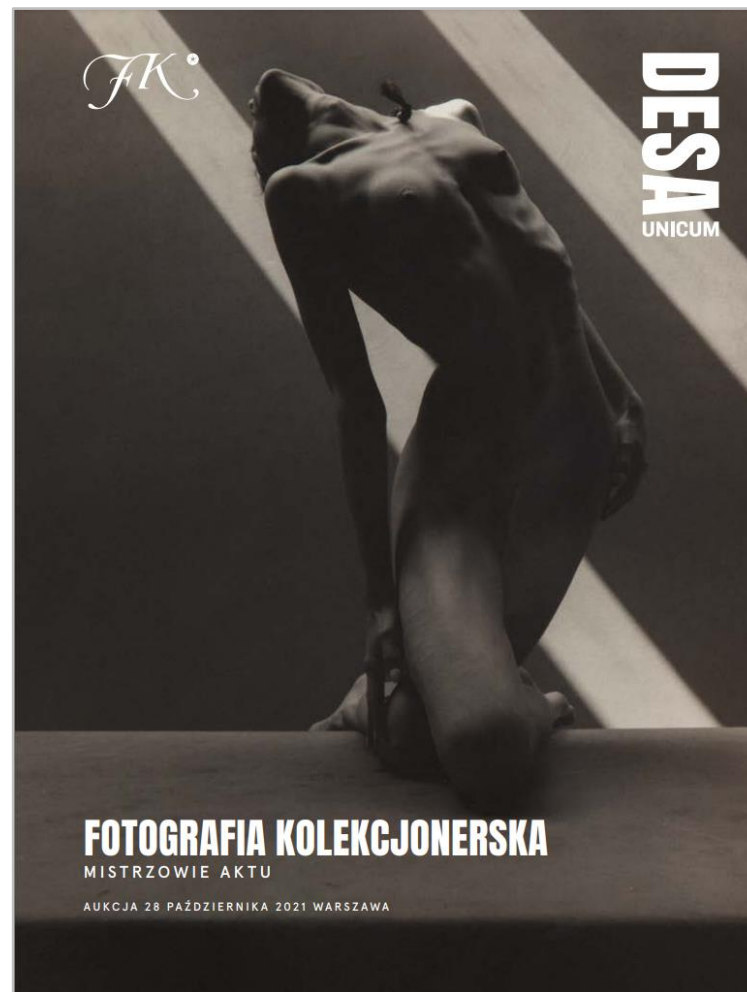


Early Nudes in Poland

Whilst each country has its own photographic traditions and social circles (see for example the f/64 Group in California), any potential "Polish photography movement" with respect to nude photography has not had a significant impact upon the wider audiences outside of Poland.

Although there is no widely available collection of the Polish works in this areas, there is an art auction house in Warsaw that has regular sales of such photography for which they create a catalogue of items, included valuations. Anybody interested in this subject should consult their website, as well as review the catalogue highlighted here using the download link provided.

For a wider discussion of "The history of Polish photography", see <https://culture.pl/en/article/the-history-of-polish-photography>



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:066-_Rudolf_C._Huber,_c._1875.jpg

<https://cdn.desa.pl/pdf/catalogues/fotografia-kolekcjonerska-mistrzowie-aktu-2021.10.28-658655.pdf>

Photography and the early Selfie

It has been argued that the German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker “invented” the genre of nude female self-portraits around 1906-1907.

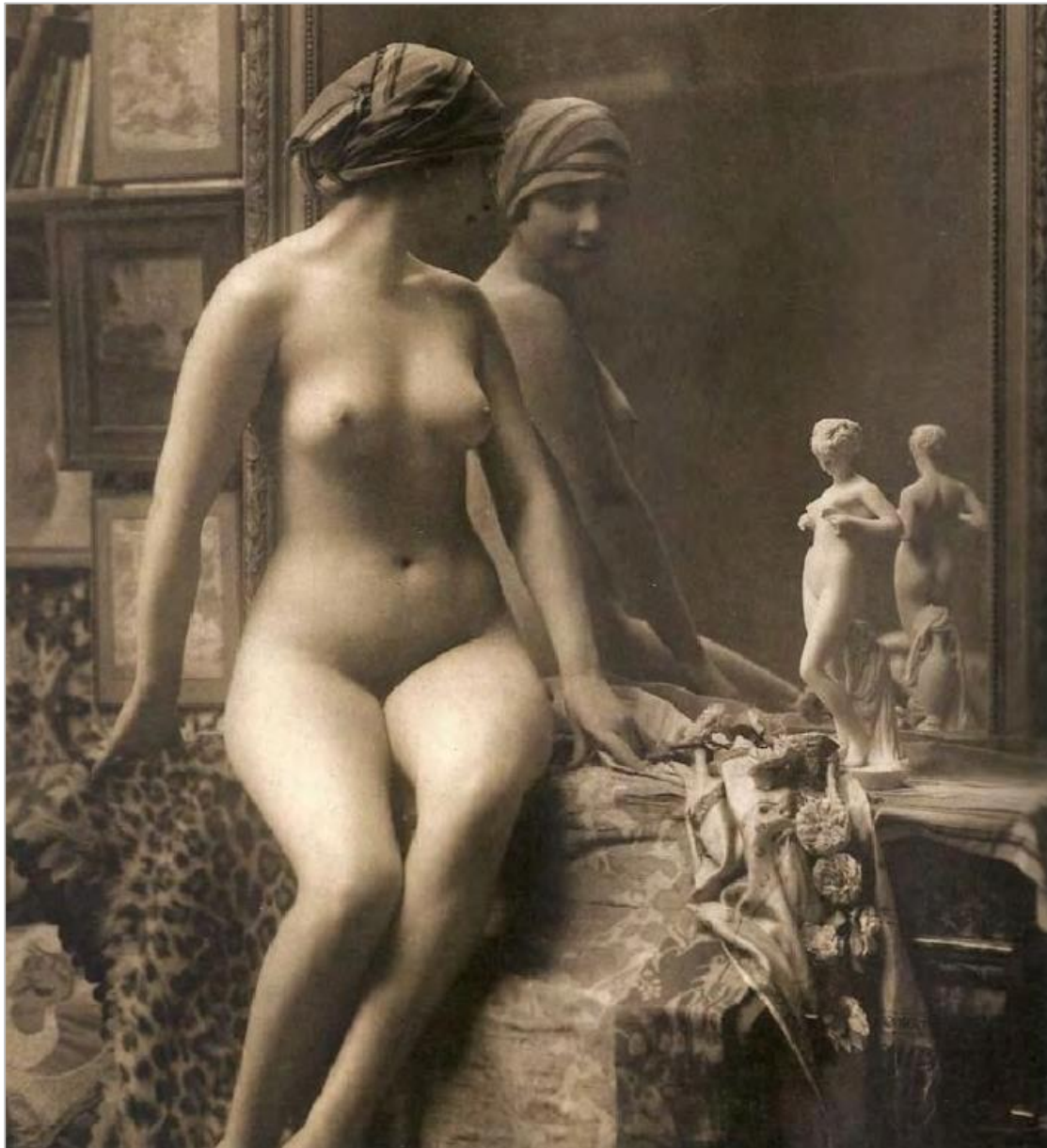
Although there are a few earlier examples in the photography world, it was Anne Brigman who took this to another level from 1908/9.

It would be inappropriate to suggest that the work of Modersohn-Becker inspired Brigham, or led to an easier societal acceptance since there are many other factors including lack of access to other works of art we now take for granted, and the psychological aspect of therapy through art photography. (Brigman had been badly scarred by an accident, and which she does not hide in her photos. Indeed, they may be part of her self-liberation.)

Her artistry would be seen as excellent if taken today. To know that they were shot well before the start of the first World War is amazing on many levels including but not limited to technical and social reasons, and she deserves to be studied by a wider audience.



Title: Sound of the Blasted Pine
Artist: Anne W Brigman
Date: 1908
Size: 15.2 x 20.6 cms (6 x 8 1/8 in.)



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:106-_Anonym,_c._1890.jpg?uselang=fr

Creating classical nudes

Mirrors were often used to show off both sides of the model. Props, such as this small stature shown here, would invite viewers to imagine what is not shown in the photography, making the heightened eroticism in the mind of the viewer, rather than having to defend it in front of a judge under obscenity laws.

Note the construction of the photograph leads the eye of the viewer to wander between the three key areas, in the same way that the painter uses this approach.

In the background on the left, there are paintings reminiscent of those to be found in "The Artists Studio" by Amelie Legrand de Saint-Aubin (1833), amongst others. Note that the main prop is in the style of a classical statue, subtly also showing the rear of the statue in the mirror. She is also partially sitting on an animal skin, again typical of that era.

The headscarf is reminiscent of paintings such as Vermeers' "Girl with the Pearl Earring", keeping the hair in order. Ironically, whilst advantageous to Vermeer, the speed of photography means the scarf is no longer required.

Sites of Potential Interest

Here are ten websites that may be interested in the history and development of photography with particular reference to nudes.

List of sites of interest

French Postcards

<http://www.helmut-schmidt-online.de/Boudoir-Cards/bc-french-postcards.html>

Photographs in auctions

<https://www.thecollector.com/nude-photographs-in-art-auctions/>

Famous photographers of nudes

<https://www.thecollector.com/7-famous-photographers-who-captured-nudes/>

History of erotic photography

<https://lapetitemelancolie.net/tag/1000-nudes-a-history-of-erotic-photography-from-1839-1939/>

Pioneers of Nude Photograph

<https://magazine.artland.com/nude-photography-pioneers/>

Nude Photography Pioneers: 10 fine artists whose visionary work was source of scandal

<https://magazine.artland.com/nude-photography-pioneers/>

Erotyczne pocztówki naszych pradziadków.

<https://ciekawostkihistoryczne.pl/2015/11/25/erotyczne-pocztowki-naszyc-pradziadkow-galeria-tylko-dla-doroslych-18/>

A brief history of nude photography (1839-1939)

<https://www.all-about-photo.com/photo-articles/photo-article/607/a-brief-history-of-nude-photography-1839-1939>

Anne Brigman, a pioneering photographer of nude self-portraits

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-anne-brigman-pioneering-photographer-nude-self-portraits>

The history of Polish photography

<https://culture.pl/en/article/the-history-of-polish-photography>

*I am not interested in rules or conventions.
Photography is not a sport.*

Bill Brandt

*There are no rules for good photographers.
There are only good photographs.*

Ansel Adams

Chapter 2

Developing your style

In order to be remembered, there needs to be something distinctive about your work. Without that clear characterisation, why would people come to you? In this chapter, we look at some aspect about style and how to understand your own style.

That said, maybe the one distinction of your style is that every image is different.

A case of style

Style can have many definitions, but one that may be used here is the distinctive characteristics of a photograph that make one be able to say that it may be by X or influenced by Y.

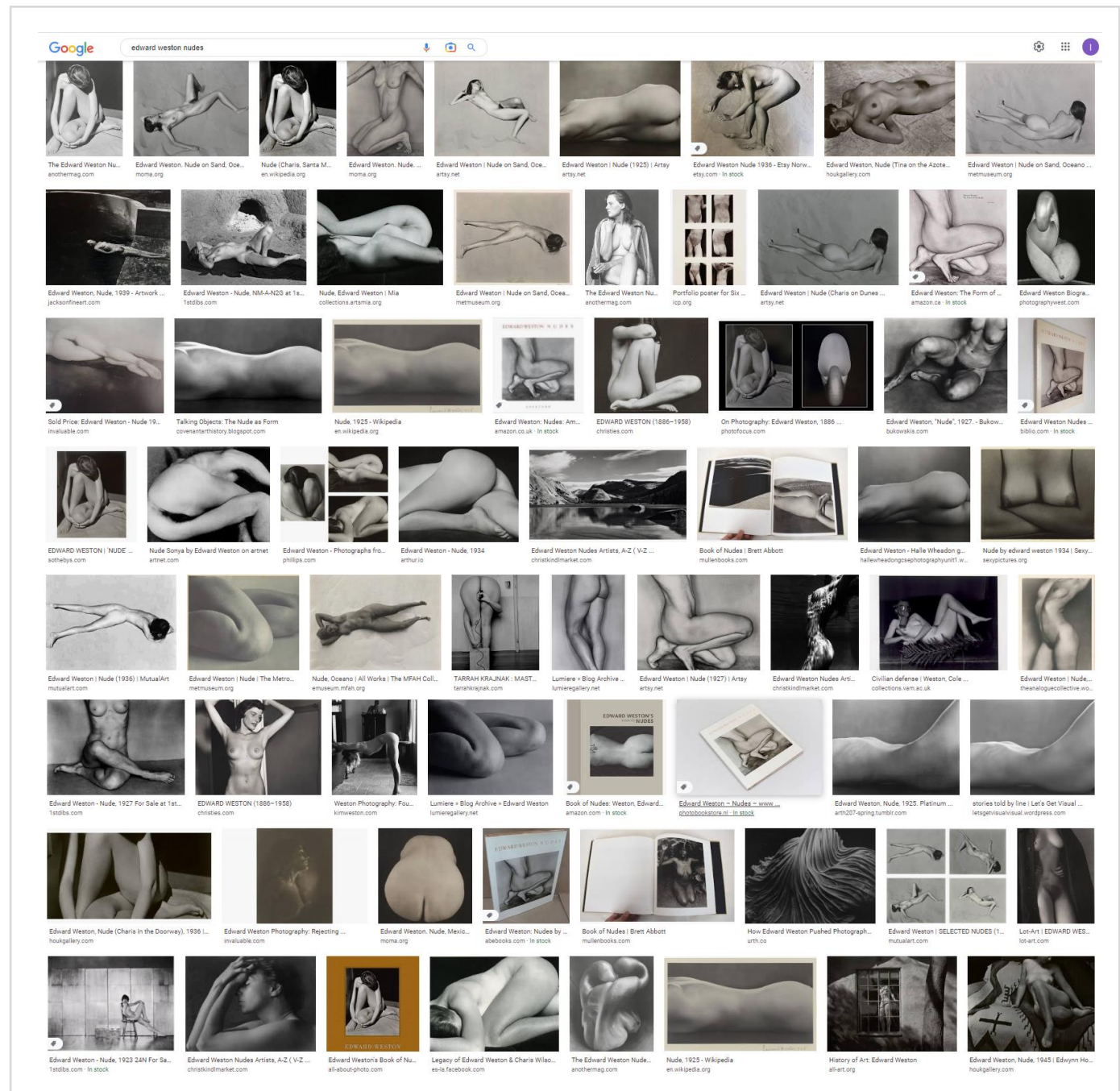
Here are the images that are brought up when a search is submitted for Edward Weston nudes.

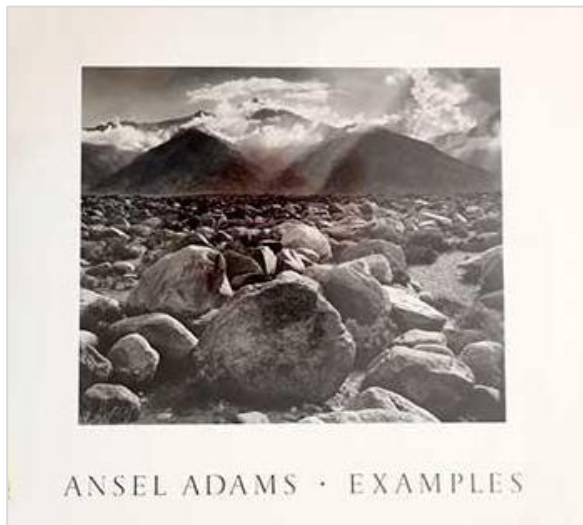
Although it may not be clear what is the (implicit) style (as opposed to genre), there is a pattern. Or maybe there are two patterns, one related to the full body and the second for fragment of it.

Cunningham's style (as shown by a similar process) is less distinctive, possibly due to the dynamic nature of her style development.

Exercise

Do the same exercise for Helmut Newton and try to identify "distinctive characteristics" of his images.





Cover of a calendar of images by Ansel Adams



Title: *Lake Tenaya*
Photographer: *Edward Weston*



Title: *Nude: East Sussex*
Photographer: *Bill Brandt*



Title: *Nude*
Photographer: *Edward Weston*

A note about Ansel Adams

Although Adams was not noted for his photography of nudes, he did have a very good understanding of the use and control of black and white, and all shades of grey.

Interestingly, the Group f/64 that he helped establish in the 1930s did include leaders in the art of nudes of the 1930s, namely Weston, Cunningham and Strand.

It has been noted by art critics that there is a certain similarity between some of the work of Adams, and the grey stone-like texture of some of the bodies portrayed in the nudes of members of that groups as well as others in Europe. It is easy to assume that, at least in the case of the f/64 group in California, they shared their technical, if not artistic, knowledge.

Genres

Genres and Styles comes in many forms, six of which are shown here and another six on the next page. These categories that could be used to group my photographs, though in many cases, any one photograph could be classified under more than one section. For the sake of discussion, here is the intent of each of these clusters.

DYNAMIC

A transient photo, difficult to reproduce though similar shots could be made.

PORTRAIT

The model is naked though not all the body needs to be shown.

ABSTRACT

This image is totally removed from the actual subject matter, decoded by a few moments of imagination.

STORY

The viewer can decide the back-story.

PROPS

Nude model with a single prop.

OTHER

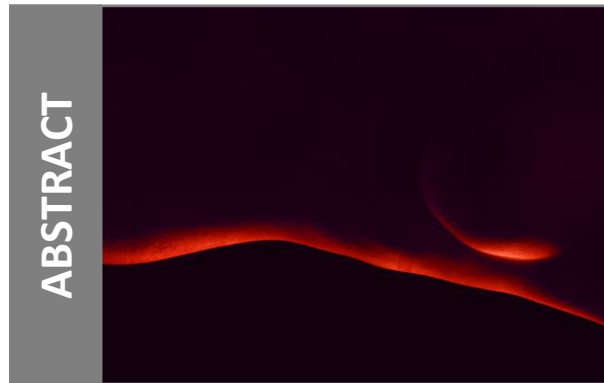
Does not fit in other groups.



Flour Power



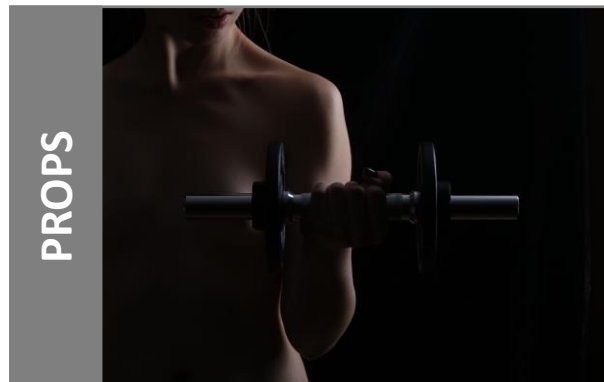
Simply wicked



Moon rise



Grabbing attention

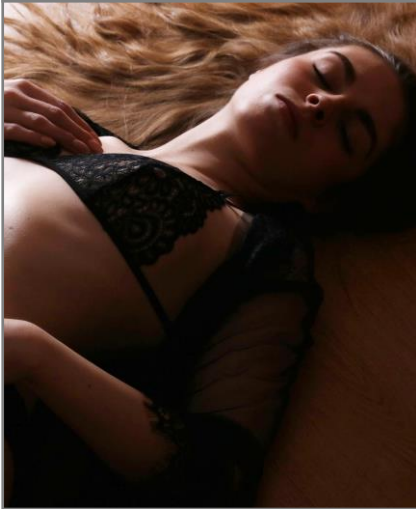


Work it out



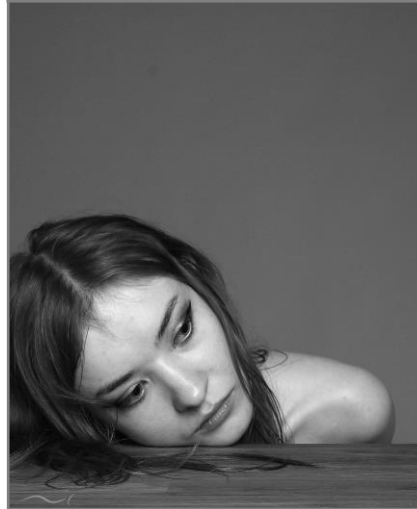
The Cat

BOUDOIR



Imagination

CLASSIC



Homage to Kiki

STREET



Street Life

OUTDOOR



Autumnal dreams

OUT OF THIS WORLD



Zombie 2

EDGY



Time and tied waits for no man

Genres 2

These six extend the range, but still ignore many areas including collage, manipulation and reportage, as well as “Water”, “Nature and many others reported elsewhere.

BOUDOIR

As the name suggests, it is in the bedroom, and can be nude or partial nude.

CLASSIC

Something embedded in art history, in this case a tribute to Man Ray and Kiki.

STREET

This refers to urban outdoors. However, surveillance cameras make this more problematic than in the past.

OUTDOOR

Either outside, usually rural, or in this case studio-based to look outdoors.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Something that shows off the human form, but not in a natural manner.

EDGY

This can include any nude designed to make the viewer slightly uncomfortable.

Abstract - Bodyscape

It may be argued that within each genre, there are sub-genres, which tend to be designated by the viewer rather than the artist. Shown here are six examples of what may be classified as “Bodyscape”, which for the purposes here may be classified as follows:

Bodyscape

Presentation of the body form in a manner that may deceive the viewer into thinking that they are looking at a landscape, but may also be extended to other views designed to question what is the scene and to re-evaluate how they perceive the human body.

These six all belong to this genre, though another photographer could take the same subject and execute it in a very different way. Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest this is “my style” within this (sub) genre.

Exercise

What titles would you suggest for these photographs? And what would you say is the name for the “style”?



Moon rise



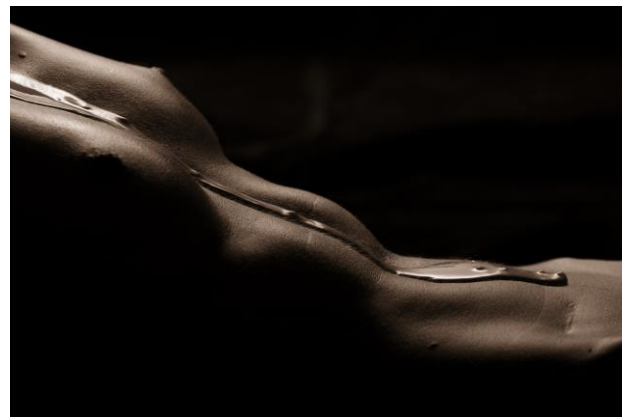
Saharan winds



Desert wind



High winds



River of molten metal



E-scape

Reflections on my style

In developing what has become "my style" (or should that be plural?), I did not formally attempt to copy any person or art movement. Instead, I just did what I wanted, and noticed much later that there was consistency across (some) images, and it did not appear to emulate others. However, human nature leads us to want to classify things. We need to look for patterns and trends in order to make sense of the world.

From the cognitive psychology perspective, this is fundamental to the process of retaining memories, where key characteristics are registered in what has been described as a mental map, rather than a "pixel by pixel" approach. Thus, you retain a "rough idea" of my photographs rather than maintain a photographic library.

The same process happens with art critics and art historians. With hindsight they noticed that after the First World War there was a shift from the copying of painters such as Ingres, where the nude is surrounded by tableau and numerous props, to the nude being a subject in itself. Edward Western and Imogen Cunningham are notable example. However, in their case, as previously noted, you cannot ignore that they both belonged to the Californian f/64 club, and therefore must have been aware of each other's work at a personal level.

Was it due to their attempt to shake off the hazy, unfocused earlier style of the pictorialists who were hampered by technical consideration (such as film size and film speed) or did they just wanted to do it that way.

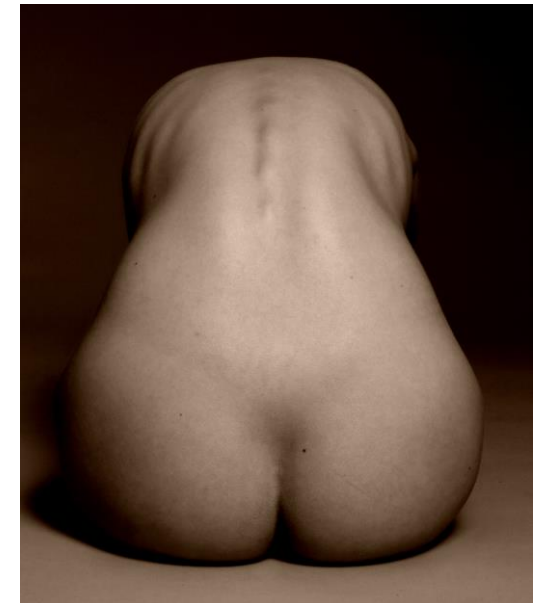
It is this Fragment style, characterised by presentation of only part of the body, often without the head, that rose in the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, maybe this is why my "style" tends to include a slight sepia effect. Is the colouration because this artist is trying to gain acceptance into this group? Or is it just that the aesthetics is better? This group (the Fragmentalists) that arguably is where my photography could be most closely associate with, which was only realised when asked to write about my style!

But in the end, I shall leave it for others to decide. These deliberations have no impact on my photography, and at best it amuses rather than interests me.

What is my style?

I do not think it is for me to say if I have a certain style or not, particularly since most of the photographs in this book are by me, and it would be problematic to put them under one genre.

And whilst the viewer may wish to log an image within a certain group that they are familiar with, frankly, I find it no more than an intellectual curiosity.



Title: *Homage to Edward Weston*
Photographer: *The author*
Year: 2022

Different genre, same style?

Compare and contrast the images shown here with those on the previous pages. Are they by the same photographer? The answer is yes. Are they in the same style? That is debatable. At one level they are all colour (and would not work in black and white). They have a clear focus, and the subject is obvious. Therefore, arguably, they are not the same style. However, they are all simple structures focusing on a single “object” in a calm, uncluttered manner. So, there is some commonality between the two style of this one photographer.

These styles are very different. But so is the subject matter. There is no reason why a photographer could not have two very different styles for nudes such as one similar to Helmut Newton while the other is more like that of Judy Dater.

Exercise

Note that these images, some of which appear anthropomorphic, are untitled. What titles would you use?





Title: *Sand dunes*
Create abstraction



Title: *Droplets*
Create intrigue



Title: *The fox*
Create provocative titles



Title: *Neck line*
Do not be restricted to the aspect ratio of the camera



Title: *Moon*
Create dark as well as light



Title: *Thank You*
Break the rules of thirds

Breaking the rules

Breaking the rules does not mean breaking your style. Here are a number of photographs that all exhibit the same style but overcome the boredom factor in the work of many photographers.

Whilst you may seek to create one (or two) styles, remember that the viewer may soon become bored and not only move on to other photographers, but also believe you are very limited in your outlook and your portfolio has become static.

Of course, it can be good to know the name and know what is coming.

Ask yourself if repetition of the same or very similar subjects can be called art, or just practicing ones' craft, maybe just for the sake of the craftsman.

Originality and creativity

Whilst researching this section, I came across a photograph by Edward Weston – “Dunes Oceano”. It reminded me of my own “Sand dunes” image taken in 2016.

Had I seen it before? Not that I recall.

Did I copy it? Definitely not.

Was my final image in my mind when I took the photograph? No

So, if I talk about planning and visualization of a photography, how can I provide these answers? In the shoot, we were playing with the light and I noticed how it made “nice lines”. But she was standing up. The top line is her arm and the other lines are created by the muscles in her back. It was only when looking through the images a few years later that the idea of rotating it and adding it to the “landscapes” collection that this image came to be noticed.

To be clear, *Oceano Dunes Natural Preserve* is a recreational space with sand dunes, in California.



Title: *Sand dunes*
Photographer: *Ian Smythe*
Date: *2016*



Title: *Dunes, Oceano*
Photographer: *Edward Weston*
Date: *1936*

Chapter 3

Studio versus Location

A studio session ... provides the greatest chance for control. Even though there is total freedom, I still dislike studio photography and the contrived images that usually stem from this genre.

Eve Arnold

I always prefer to work in the studio. It isolates people from their environment. They become in a sense... symbolic of themselves. I often feel that people come to me to be photographed as they would go to a doctor or a fortune teller - to find out how they are.

Richard Avedon

Although this book is mainly about studio-based photography, it is important to consider alternative when making informed decisions.

In this section we shall review studio versus location, and put them into the context of real-life situations.

This is not a definitive checklist nor an attempt to help you make decisions that really only you can make.

Note that Eve Arnold did few nudes (with the exception of Marilyn Monroe) whereas Richard Avedon is famed for his studio nudes.

Making choices

As previously mentioned, this is not intended to be a “how to make decisions” book, in this section with respect to studio or location for the photography. Instead, it attempts to show you some of the considerations that may have been behind a given shot, series of shots or style.

There are different types of “good photographer”. Usually, one thinks of creativity as the main criteria. But the ability to make the most of what one has is also a prized quality. The booking for a photo session where there is a power cut should not stop creativity. Using the great outdoors, windows and doors all offer opportunities. Simplified backgrounds just need simple fabric and a support, and privacy can be in a secluded outdoor location, possibly with some form of tent.

The photographer may start out with an idea but needs to be able to be both flexible and opportunistic. And whilst lights and background are in the control of the photographer, the most important factor is the comfort of the model whose list of important factors usually begin and end with privacy.

A few considerations

The greater the budget, the more the potential restrictions can be overcome. But big budgets do not create memorable photographs.

Where	Studio	Location - Inside	Location - Outside
Assumptions	Private studio with ready access.	A hired location such as a private apartment.	In a forest somewhere.
Lighting	Easy to control	Should be easy to control. Equipment needs to be transported.	Power requirements needs to be considered. Can mix multiple sources including natural, continuous (artificial) and flash.
Temperature	Predictable and controllable. The model will be comfortable.	This should be controllable, but some form of bathroom may be useful for a shower after the shoot.	Weather dependent. More problematic in winter. Contingencies required especially for rain.
Privacy and security	No security issues.	No problems if this is not within a public space.	Public access needs control. Permissions may be required.
Time management	Time management should be easy, especially if a timeframe for each "stage" of the shoot is available.	Easy to time manage, except possibly the time to get to the location.	Many uncontrollable variables can cause everything to take a long time.
Refreshments	Easy to make tea and coffee.	Easy to make tea and coffee.	Nothing is impossible if compromises are made.
Comfort breaks	Civilised	Should not a problem, though spare towels and toilet paper may be advisable.	Can be problematic, especially for those not used to working outdoors.
Backgrounds	Limited but that may suit the desired style	Prior visits will confirm the diversity.	Great diversity. Best with scouting ahead of time.
Post shooting	Post photography washing and showering should not be a problem.	Showers may be an option	Showers are unlikely and may affect shooting options. Plenty of water should be made available.
Creative control	Planned studio shoots rarely offer the unexpected	Depends on the location and familiarity of what is available.	Can lead to opportunistic creative outcomes.



Portrait of D outside



Portrait of Y outside

Not outside

By choice, I do not do outside nudes

Why?

Because I have limited time and nobody pays me to find secure locations.

From experience, models prefer the controlled warmth of the studio.

Lighting is easy to control.

My current style does not require a diversity of backgrounds that outdoors can offer.

I prefer total control over the background.

But who knows what the future may bring?

On location - Or is it? (1)

With nothing more than the black and white photograph itself, it would be impossible to suggest if this photograph was studio based or on location.

The reality is that not only was she on location in a public place (a stairwell) but also she was fully dressed.

The second image provides more clues. The stairwell is a common area in a building. This was semi-private, not seen by people in passing, but still open to the residents.

The subtle inclusion of a small piece of fabric in the bottom right corner provide a hint that she may not be naked and allows the model to make it clear to others that her modesty was intact. This same principle can be used for all the body, so the apparent nude is not actually nude.

Note also the smile, suggesting she was very comfortable with this approach. If you want to include the face, make sure everything is discussed with the model first, and try to show her the results throughout the shoot.



Sometimes the off-guard moment can produce better results than the staged photographs.



Original



Ready for Work

On location - Or is it? (2)

What constitutes “on location”? Rather than get into a debate, let’s consider this photograph.

In reality, this was photographed in an apartment rented for 24 hours. One wall had bare bricks, as shown here. The apartment was chosen because of the potential of this textured wall. Although possible to build in a studio, this apartment ensured a look of authenticity.

Studio lighting was used, and this had to be taken on location. It was mains powered flash lights with large softboxes to emulate window lighting. The jacket was selected prior to the shoot and taken to the location, along with other clothing.

The model was hired knowing she would not be appearing nude. However, she was very happy for the jacket to be used as shown here. The “twist” in this photo (the “added extra”) is that if you look carefully, you will see that she is not wearing trousers. Create your own storyline!

On location - Or is it?

In some cases, it is the image you have in your head that creates the decision about where the shoot can take place.

The pose shown here suggests influence from the likes of Helmut Newton. To try to create such an image in the studio would, at best, be problematic since the wall creates the feeling of “posed reality”.

It is for the viewer to ponder if this was taken using natural window light, or a flash light with a large diffuser was used.

Exercise

What do you think could be the backstory created in the mind of the viewer for this photograph?



Getting ready for work

In the studio

Man Ray
1890 - 1976

Ruth Bernhard
1905 - 2006

Horst P Horst
1906 - 1999

Helmut Newton
1920 - 2004

Richard Avedon
1923 - 2004

David Bailey
1938 - Present

Albert Watson
1942 - Present

Robert Mapplethorpe
1946 - 1989

On location

Anne Brigman
1869 - 1950

Imogen Cunningham
1883 - 1976

Edward Weston
1886 - 1958

Bill Brandt
1904 - 1983

Judy Dater
1941 - Present

John Swannell
1946 - Present

Annie Liebovitz
1949 - Present

Herb Ritts
1952 - 2002

Famous photographers - Studio or Location

Photographers often shoot both studio and location photography but can have a preference for one of the other.

The lists of well-known photographers shown here use a simple criterion – when their names are put into Google, which type of photographs are the most common, location or studio.

The photographs of many of these individuals are still under copyright. Therefore, they cannot be displayed here. However, the reader is invited to consult Google, to see the diversity of images, and at the same time reflect on their similarities.

Note that Helmut Newton appears in the “Studio” column as that is the most prevalent in Google. However, he is also famed for his nudes outdoors, particular in cities. Lee Millar, one time assistant to Man Ray, was also a prolific photographer of nudes, both indoors and outdoors.

Almost all their photos are in black and white, preferring form over colour.

Helmut Newton - Studio and location

Helmut Newton was a prolific photographer in the 1960's and 1970's. Some suggest he revolutionised the portrayal of women in fashion. There is little doubt that he brought an added dimension to both fashion and nude photography, often combining the two, thanks in part to the big budgets that publications like Vogue could offer.

A simple search on Google will simply demonstrate that it can be difficult to categorise his work, since he regularly used both studio and location. But do not be fooled into thinking some of his street photographs were casual. There would have been a team there to help including but not limited to a stylists (to ensure hair, skin and clothing was optimized), assistants (handling camera and film control as well as lighting and security) and possibly a creative director.

This does not mean they are all required, particularly now that we have digital photography, compact battery powered lights and the potential to shoot in low lighting conditions.



Very few males have the confidence to appear vulnerable.

Sally Mann

When you go to take someone's picture, the first thing they say is, what do you want me to do? Everybody is very awkward.

Annie Liebovitz

Man's naked form ... belongs to no particular moment in history; it is eternal and can be looked upon with joy by people of all ages.

Auguste Rodin

Chapter 4

About models

The characteristics of a model can make the difference between an enjoyable experience and a nightmare, a superb image or something only suitable for the bin.

Some of those discussed here are to help you understand the diversity of issues that should be considered.

If you are new to this genre, be prepared to make mistakes, hopefully not on the technical side. It is the communication skills that are key to getting the best out of a model, particularly when they are appearing nude.

Choosing models

There are two main approaches to “model choice”:

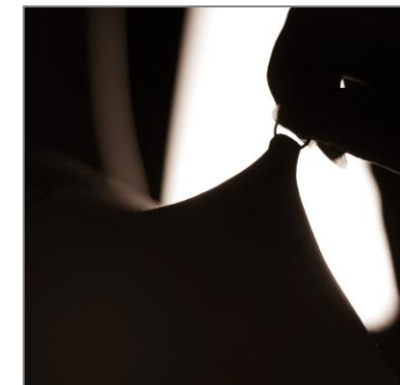
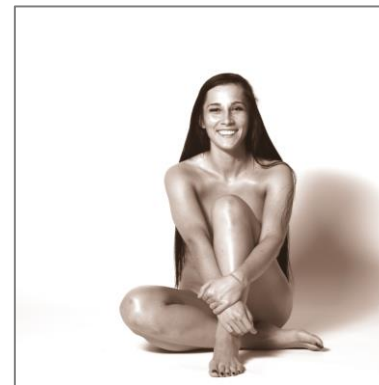
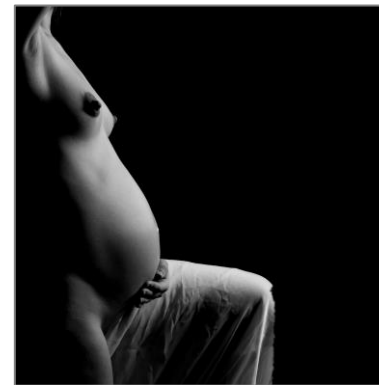
- 1) You have a concept and you seek a model to help create it, and
- 2) You have a model and you need to shoot concepts in line with what is available.

Apart from the usual concerns (cost, location and availability for example), temperament and the ability to add to what should be a fun session can often be as important as the physical characteristics of the model, particularly if more than one session is intended.

For all these photographs, there was a discussion with the models before the shoot to ensure they were comfortable.

After each set of photos, the model was shown the results in camera, so they felt they were part of the process.

Sometimes it is only possible to know what can be done once you meet the model. That is why it is important to have plans but be prepared to change them at the last minute.



Note that these images have been cropped to suit this page

Body Shape	Not critical	Body Shape	Not critical	Body Shape	Critical
Sense of fun	Critical	Sense of fun	Not available	Sense of fun	Not critical
Invited again	Yes	Invited again	No	Invited again	Yes
Body Shape	Not critical	Body Shape	Yes!	Body Shape	Important
Sense of fun	Central	Sense of fun	Not critical	Sense of fun	Not critical
Invited again	Yes	Invited again	No!	Invited again	Yes
Body Shape	Critical	Body Shape	Not critical	Body Shape	Not critical
Sense of fun	Yes	Sense of fun	Yes	Sense of fun	Yes
Invited again	Not available	Invited again	Yes	Invited again	Yes

Characteristics of models for images on the previous page.

Choosing models Characteristics

A photograph, and the relationship between the photographer and the model, can work (or fail) for many reasons. For each of the nine photographs, three criteria have been highlighted, and indicated how they affect the final image.

A) BODY SHAPE

This is not to suggest that the body shape is important in all shots. It is simply to say its relevance within a particular photograph. It is for the photographer to decide they use to chose a model.

B) SENSE OF FUN

This is a personal reflection on these models. If they did not have a sense of fun, then these photographs could not have been produced. That fun does not have to appear in the photograph, but it does significantly impact upon the enjoyment of the photo session.

C) INVITED AGAIN

Many factor influence whether a model will be invited to return. Clearly it is more than the sum of body shape and a sense of fun. Be sure that you know why you are inviting them before you book a session.

Setting the Model Session Guide

The nature of the model guide (sometimes know as a Brief) will depend on whether the subject is paid for by the photographer or paid by a client.

Here are some of the considerations when setting the brief. Where possible, this should be shared prior to the session.

For nudes where the subject is the client, one has to understand the purpose. These may include a) a Valentine, birthday or Christmas present for a loved one, b) a “before I get too old” series of photos, c) peer pressure and d) “it seemed like a good idea at the time”. This needs to be considered when attempting to draw up the Model Session Guide.

An additional checklist is provided in Chapter 8 – Legals etc.

Model as subject

The Brief and Artistic Overview

The photographer should set the agenda for an overview of what is intended during the shoot. Where practical, the model should be shown images of something similar, to ensure they are happy to perform what is required. It may be assumed that the model will do anything that is in their portfolio. But always check.

Location and Travel

The studio shoots are easiest. Outdoors is possible but permissions may be required.

Shooting Crew

Confirm with the model who will be present. An assistant is always recommended. Remember, some models may not have appeared nude in front of the camera before.

Styling / hair / make-up

This can add significantly to the cost of a self-funded shoot. Natural looks are usually best.

Usage

This session is paid for by the photographer. But the photograph usage should be covered by a Model Release Form (see the Legals section).

Miscellaneous

The amount of post-production work (retouching) is dependent upon the photographer. A good photograph should require little additional work.

Client as subject

The Brief and Artistic Overview

The photographer usually has to guide the Client as to what will be achieved, including a real understanding of the purpose. This includes, for example, if they are happy doing covered nudes (e.g. naked but with a hand covering breasts), suggested nude whereby an object hides that they are actually wearing something, or unrestricted.

Location and Travel

The studio is easiest. Doing it at their home has logistical problems. An assistant can be useful for transporting equipment as well as supplying personal security.

Shooting Crew

Confirm if an assistant (always recommended) and a stylist will be present, plus any others.

Styling / hair / make-up

Ask the client if they are happy to do their own styling, or wish to pay extra to have Stylist.

Usage

Due to copyright laws, ownership can be ambiguous. Assume the work belongs to the client unless written permission of usage has been given

Miscellaneous

Agree post-production work, such as retouching to change personal characteristics or physical imperfections as there may be significant cost.

The Artists' Model



With artists models that you pay, you choose the brief and the execution. Be sure to agree what is possible before the shoot.

The Paying Client



With paying clients, they choose the brief, but you choose the execution. If you are fortunate, they have come to you because they know what you can do for them. In this case, it is a moment in time that is being captured. The result can be shown to family and friends without reservation.

Who pays what?

Money should not buy nor dampen creativity. But many artists in the past have only been able to survive by taking money to create images (usually paintings) to satisfy their paymaster, even though they feel it will compromise their artistic integrity.

If the session is paid for, you will need to fulfil certain criteria, including what the client sees as “social obligations”. They may say they do not know what they want, but you may still have to at some level follow convention. It is for the photographer to decide if the client has an all-inclusive price, or there are options. One example is that the cost could include a stylist (e.g. for hair and make-up), in which case the photographer pays, or they are given options.

Anecdote

I once shot six rolls of film (72 shots on a Hasselblad, pre-digital) in line with client's expectation. I then moved onto my own “creations”. They loved my images and totally forgot that they never saw those first six rolls, because they were never developed.

Preparing models: Hair and make-up

Sometimes it is the hair that suggests (or dictates) the photograph, and the model may be chosen because of their hair. Therefore, it is important to prepare the hair, and ensure it remains in the right condition throughout the shoot.

Be sure to create a clear list of the photographs and the order in which they should be shot. Some may need careful styling, others may require just a quick brush. Some may need a shower after. And some may need drying after.

It does not matter what order you actually do them in. But be sure to understand the consequences.

For most artistic nudes, little make-up is required, except for hiding tattoos if necessary.



Minimal styling required.
No other shots possible until after a shower.



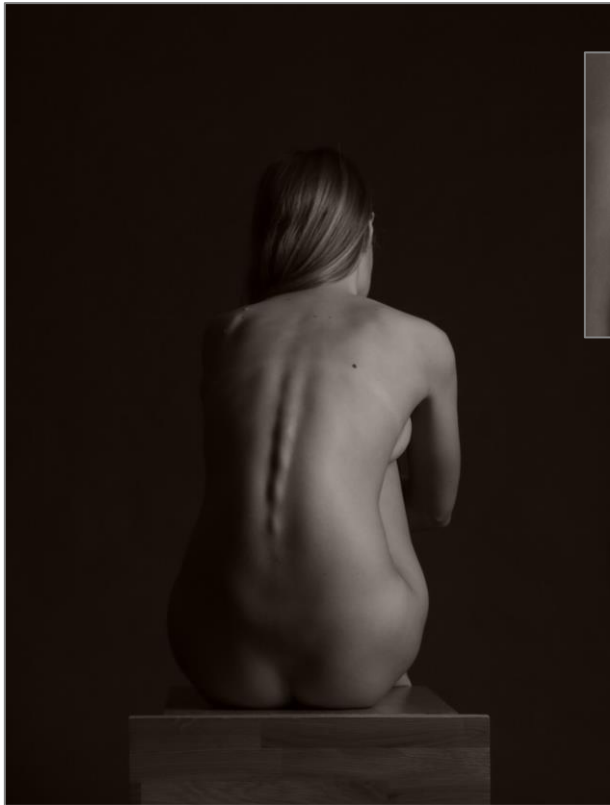
Hair preparation may be required, but too perfect can look unnatural.
No impact on subsequent shots



Minimal (but not zero) styling required.
No impact on subsequent shots



In the shower.
A hair dryer will be needed if subsequent photos are required.

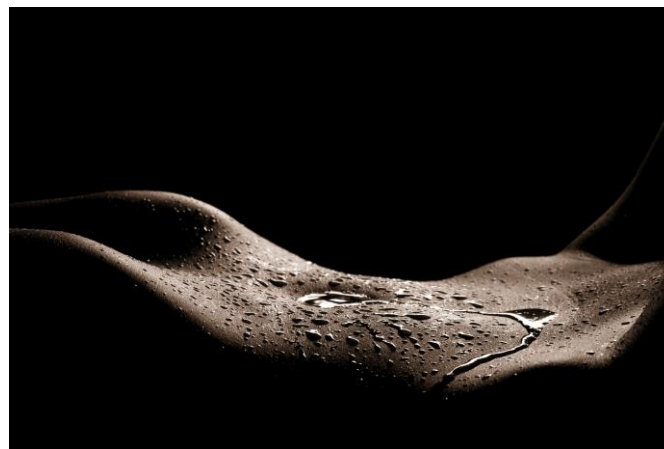


Nude on a pedestal



Faint bra mark

Rivers and lakes.



A careful review of this image will reveal a thin line beneath the model's belly button. But does it really matter?

Preparing models: Imperfections

It is important to be aware of any markings such as bra straps and sunbathing marks.

It is not a problem that they exist, but you need to understand their impact, and you need to see their existence before somebody else tells you.

It is possible to use body make-up if you prefer not to see these marks, either covering them up or blending the two shades. There is specialist make-up that can also hide tattoos. Where possible, try to minimise post-production work.

To remove clothing marks, a gentle massage of the skin can often help. It may be advisable to ask the model to wear loose fitting or no underwear when travelling to the photoshoot if this is important in the image, especially if the session will be short.

Preparing models: Using oils

Oil can make a significant difference to the way the light shine on, and is reflected by, the skin.

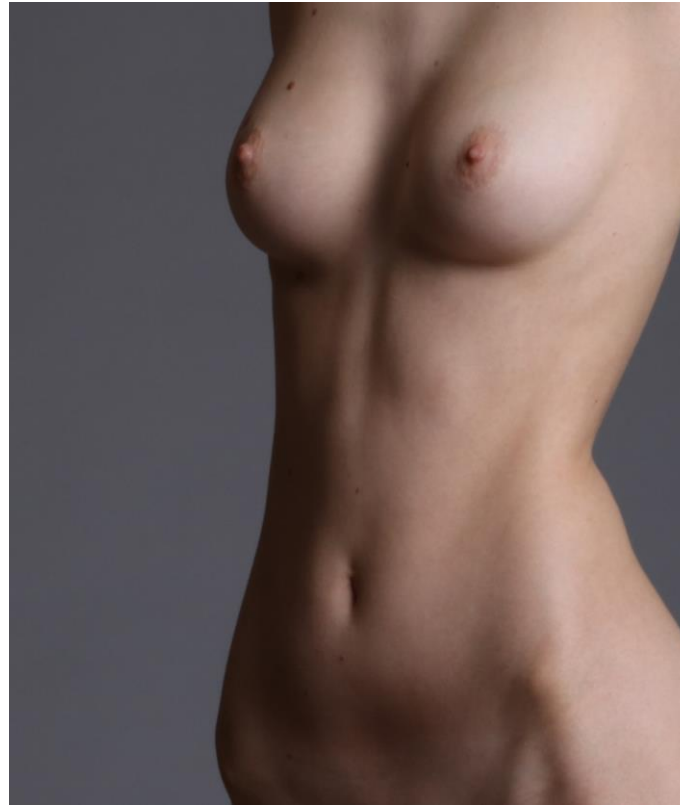
Every photographer has their own ideas about what is best, but a simple baby oil is usually a good starting point as it is cheap, widely available and rarely causes an allergic reaction.

The model will normally be expected to apply it themselves, though some areas such as between the shoulder blades can be problematic. If the photographer or their assistant takes responsibility for this, there must be very clear lines agreed of what touching can be done.

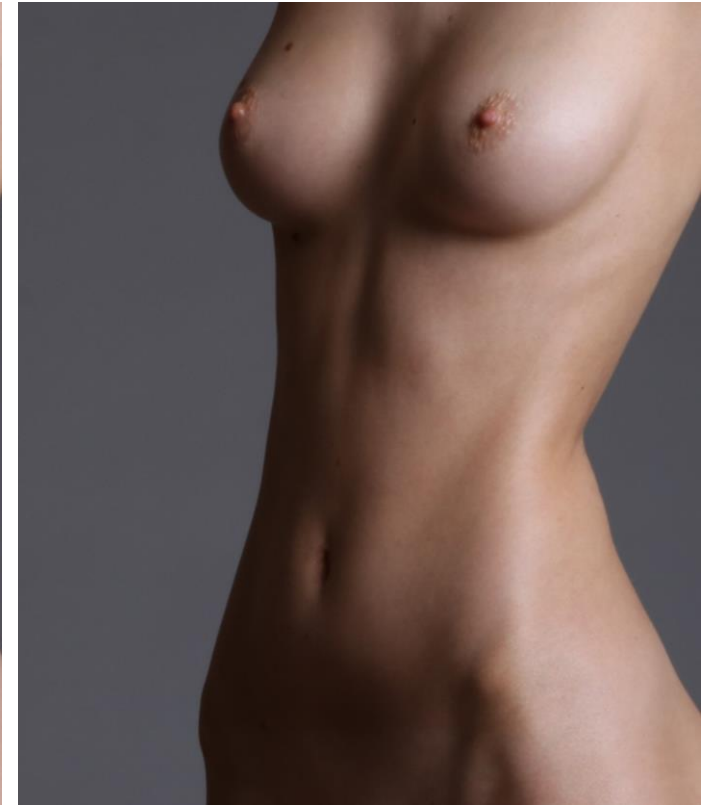
Many people suggest you should never touch a model. However, a more pragmatic approach is to never touch the model until explicit permission is given before each touch.

The most difficult part is to ensure the oil is evenly spread. Due care and attention should be given, and it may require a cloth to remove excess oil as well as blur any hand marks.

Same model, same day



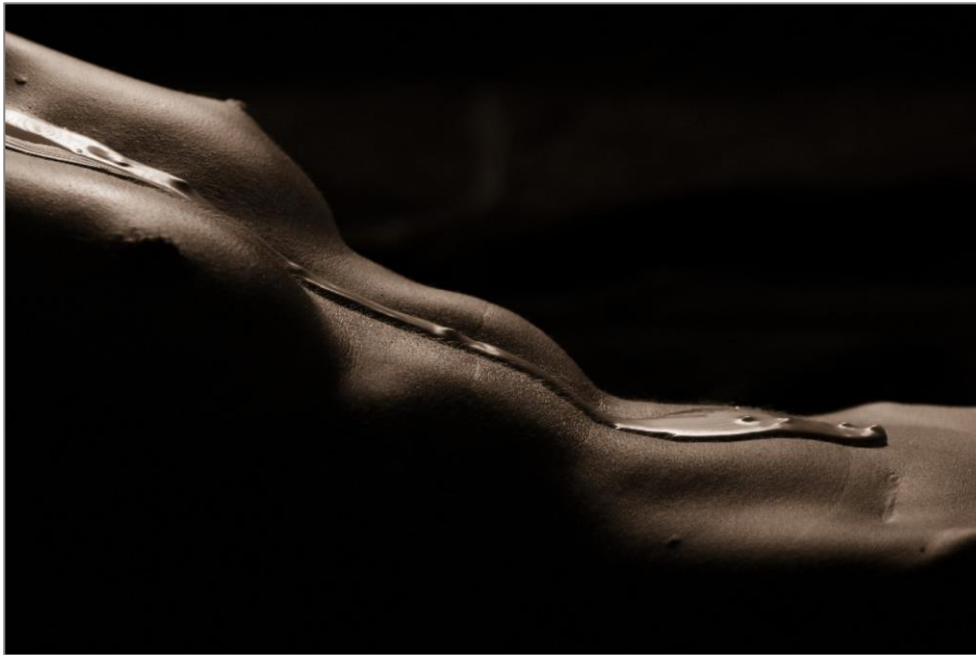
Without oil
Smooth skin, probably with beauty oils before arriving at the shoot.



With oil
Baby oil added in the studio to give a more "shiny" body. Subtle. Not too strong.



Excessive oil



Molten gold



Molten metal

Using liquids

Liquids may be used on certain parts of the body, and the liquid itself will need to be lit if the intention is to show separation.

Usually, the reflective glossy properties of a liquid will distinguish it from the silk or matt finish of the body.

When doing photographs similar to these shown here, ensure that after each shot, the model is wiped clean as anything, since even water, can show marks where it has previously been used.

Also, when applying anything other than water, ensure there is plenty of time for a shower.

Tip: *Always make sure liquids are warm for the model. However, this may make them more runny. If you must use cold liquids, make sure you have plenty of paper towels and a warm bathrobe near by.*

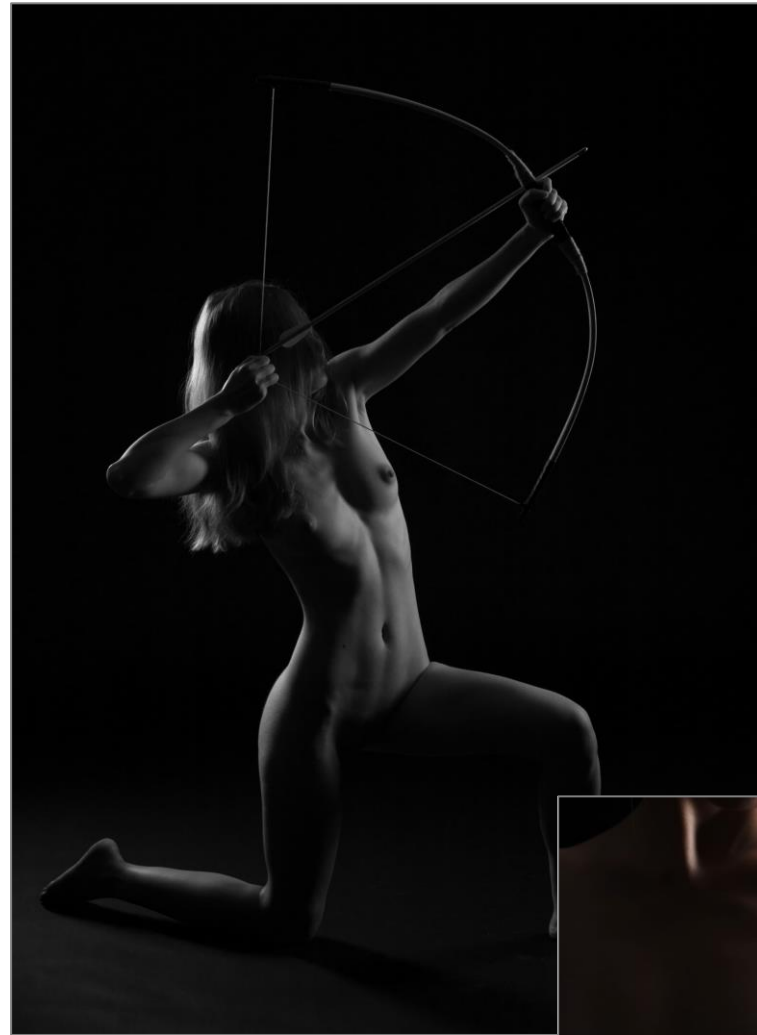
Using props

There are many ways that props can be used with nudes, including the classical way of emulating old paintings.

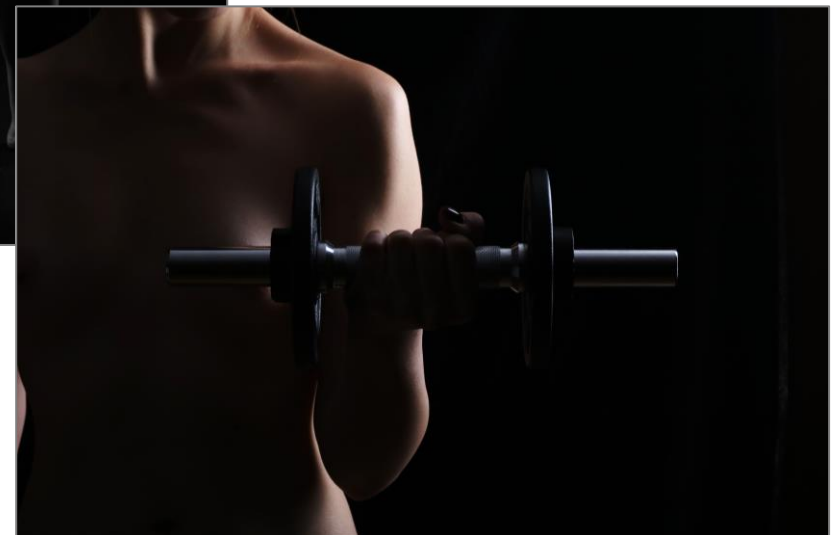
However, this raises the question of what is the real subject of the photograph – is it the model or the props.

In the two examples here, the model and the prop work together, each enhancing the other. It can be a challenge to find the lighting that ensures each element is appropriately lit. But the result can be worth the extra effort.

Although it is possible to return to the prop shots of the 19th century, which involved multiple items, there are clear advantage when limiting oneself to just one or two items.



Cupid



The bar belle



Untitled

Multiple models

You can produce some amazing photographs with one model, but the addition of a second model can bring a whole new set of possibilities, both in terms of the “shape” of the photo as well as the story it may tell within it.

Interestingly, the interpretation of the image may be different for the viewer to that intended by the photographer.

Note that the title can significantly alter the perceptions of the viewer, and everybody has their own ideas.

To test this, ask yourself if the viewer response would be the same for each of these four titles:

1. Nudes, 2019
2. Lesbian love
3. Nails
4. Four hands

Multiple models – Levels of intimacy

When planning photographs with more than one model, you need to be very respectful of the personal side and the touching required. This is not just about what happens in the studio and is especially true if the faces are shown. It may also be about the perceptions and interpretation that others have when they see the photos.

In the images shown here, the models were good friends, and the images are no more than “created fiction”. Both loved the images.

As each scenario was created, the models were shown the images, and therefore were able to feel they were part of the process.



Distractions



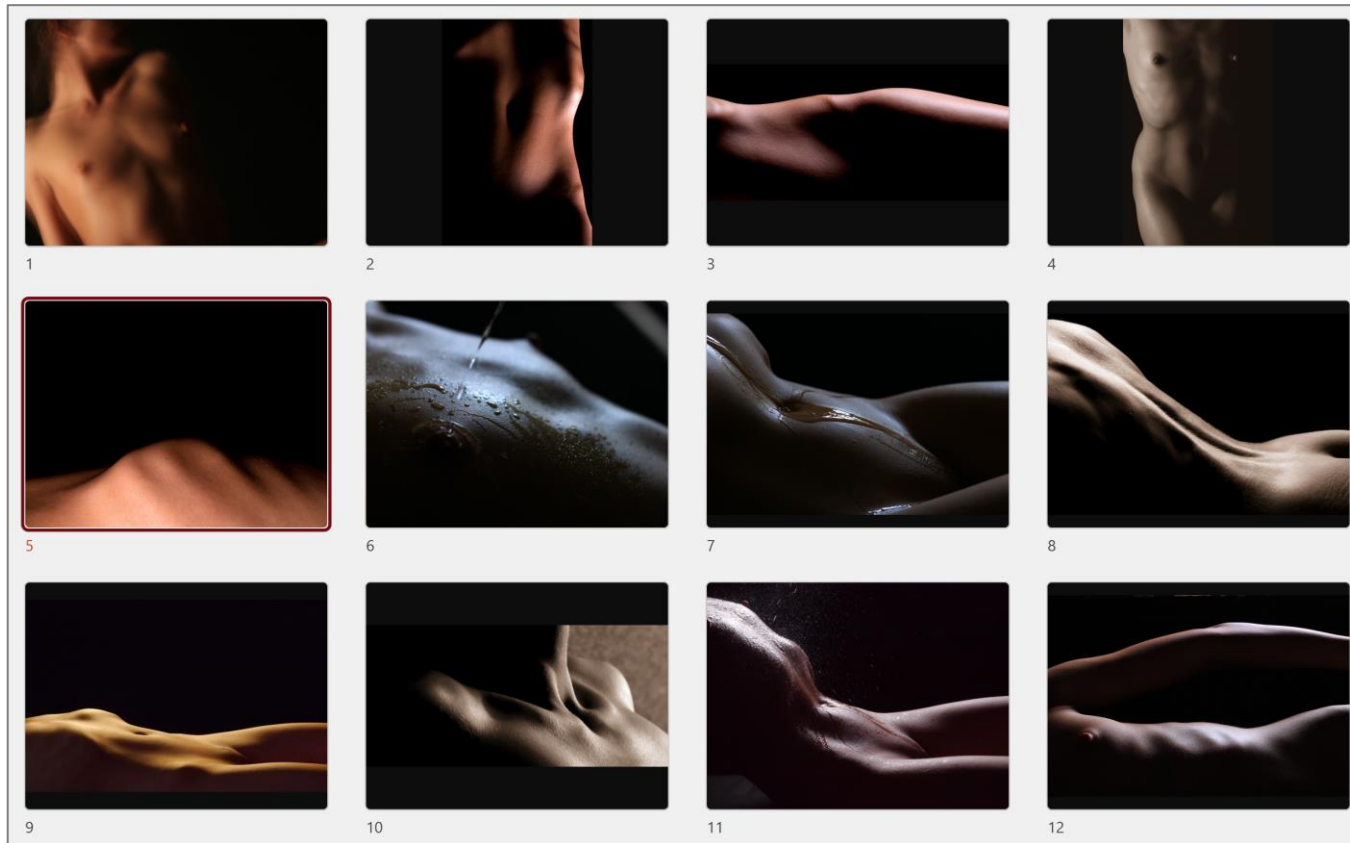
Dust clouds

How many photos in one shoot?

As a rule, with the right preparations I would normally expect about five usable photos from one session. Sometimes one can be spoilt for choice, as in this one.

The model provided (at least) twelve very usable shots during one four-hour session, each distinctly different. Thus it would be easy to create something like a calendar from this one shoot.

Note that these photos are a screenshot from PowerPoint. This can be a useful way to catalogue and sort images.



A good day at the office.

How many photos? Less can be more

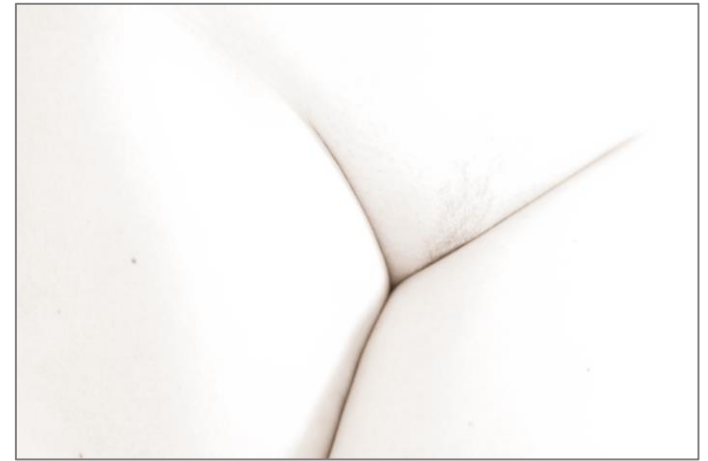
Sometimes a shoot can appear to be not very successful in terms of the intended (planned) outcomes and the number of photographs produced. However, pleasant surprises are possible.

Two of the images here were planned ahead ahead of time. Two were not. They cannot be called surprises, since they were seen and photographed. Opportunistic would also be inappropriate. Perhaps a good description could be that they were pleasant, though unexpected, outcomes.

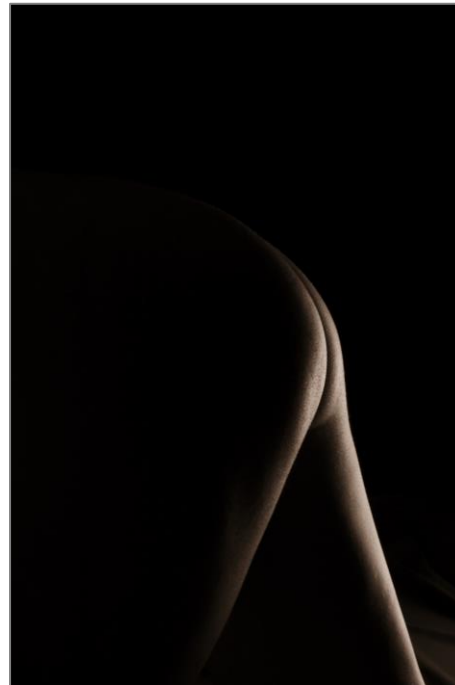
The secret is to always have a mindset that allows you to conjure up something, even if little is offered. Consider it to be the “back-up plan”, not too dissimilar to having alternative in mind when an outdoor shoot is planned, but it is raining, or a studio session is interrupted by a power cut. A good photographer will always find a solution to ensure a fruitful session.



Gol 01



Gol 01



Gol 01



Gol 04



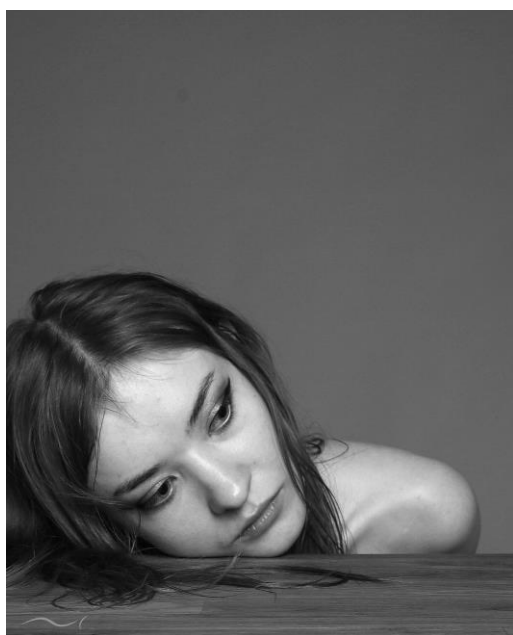
Homage to a photograph by Dora Maar, "muse" of Picasso.



Homage to a Charis Wilson, "muse" of photographer Edward Weston.



Homage to a sculpture by Camille Claudet, "muse" of Auguste Rodin.



Homage to Kiki, the "muse" of photographer Man Ray.

The images shown here are made with the help of "creative collaborators". They would not like to be referred to as "muses". Note that the three at the top were taken before a "muse version" was identified. The one to the left was taken with a specific photograph in mind. All were inspired by the work of muses.

Model as Creative Contributor

Models can inspire and contribute to the photographers' output. The word used by many, though rarely by the photographer during the early days of a working relationship, is "muse".

However, the most noted of model-artist collaboration developed into more than the artistic creativity. Examples include Picasso, Steiglitz, Man Ray, Dali, Rodin and Warhol. As a consequence of this public perception, rather than a dictionary definition of what is a muse, the term should be avoided. (Note that there are relatively few male muses.) At the very least, it is recommended that the term "muse" is avoided until after at least three sessions, during which the relationship and its creative potential becomes clear.

You should also be aware in a creative partnership of the copyright laws and intellectual property ownership, which rarely become an issue until money appears. This is another reason to ensure a good contract is in place from the start.

Clothing

Although the focus here is on the nude, there are many instances where the addition of an item of clothing can add to the allure of the image, example of which are shown here.

If you remove clothing from the equation, there is no need to be distracted by issues such as

- Is the styling dated?
- Does the style suit this photo?
- Does it clash with other items?
- Is the colour suitable?
- Does the item look perfect?

These can be managed if the photographer is sourcing the items.

If the items are supplied by a client of the model, be prepared to “adapt” them. This may include removing loose threads, stressing the clothing (cutting and ripping) and ironing.

Observation

The viewer is often more engaged with a photograph when they are left to ponder what is not shown.



Voyeurism – suggestive but covered



Voyeurism – the viewer is seen watching



Voyeurism – suggestive, uncertain



Voyeurism – the viewer is not acknowledged