

1



In this article, let's take a look at how I created this image of Hillary Turple (see Image 001), who after a few months of really intense training, entered her first bodybuilding competition. To immortalise her hard-won physique, Hillary came to my studio for a photo-shoot. Unfortunately, due to our schedules the shoot happened three weeks after the competition while she was taking a break from training and so was not as 'ripped' as she was for the competition. No worries, I knew that my favourite dramatic B&W high-contrast lighting technique could visually win back some of that ripped look while adding lots of drama and grit. It is a simple formula: the back-lighting pushes shadows forward towards the camera while providing lots of 'punchy' (bright) form-enhancing shine. In simple terms, I create a dark dramatic shape, then sculpt it with specular highlights.

Before jumping into this lighting 'How-To,' I'd like to get nerdy for a minute to define what is 'High Contrast Lighting'. When we use the words 'Contrast' or 'Contrasty,' we are comparing something to a constant – in portraiture that constant is usually the fully lit flesh-tone. Contrast in any type of lighting is the brightness difference between the subject's fully illuminated surfaces and the under-illuminated surfaces (Shadows), as well as the difference between the brightness of the shine (Specular Highlight) relative to the surface it sits upon. So then, it is not all just about shadow when considering lighting contrast, both 'Shadow Contrast' and 'Specular Contrast' should be considered. What is really cool about these two types of contrast is that they can be controlled independently of one another; you can actually create high-contrast shadows while having low-contrast specular highlights (shine) and vice versa.

- To control Shadow Contrast: increase or decrease light striking the shadow side from your fill source.
- To control Specular Contrast: increase or decrease size and/or distance of light source. You can also alter surface efficiency, eg adding oil to flesh for shine or matte make-up for opposite).

For a deeper understanding of Shadow Contrast you need to fully understand what a shadow is; a shadow is an area of an object or subject that receives absolutely no direct illumination from the key-light or main-light. However, it may receive some light from another, weaker source, such as stray light from the main-light bouncing off a fill reflector, wall/floor/ceiling or from a light-producing origin such as a studio strobe, speed-light, room-light, sun, etc.

When we say that the shadow(s) are contrasty looking this means they are darker looking. For instance, the flesh of the subject's face is pretty much made up of a single tone, or at least close to. When captured with a correct exposure, the facial mask of light created by the main-light should appear as we perceive it in real life; obviously the shadow side will appear darker. The contrast, or you could say difference, between the two sides is Shadow Contrast – High Shadow Contrast is when the difference is greater and Low Shadow Contrast is when that difference is less, so more dark and less dark respectively. How dark you make your shadows is subjective, that's your business, your art, unless you have a client making the artistic decisions – a scary thought!

The light pattern created on Hillary is 'Hatchet Lighting' which is usually used with the subject facing straight on to the camera. Hatchet Lighting places two lights behind the subject – one to the right, the other to the left so that the subject is 'cut in two'. The shadow running down the centre is the 'cut' of the 'hatchet'. Very violent terminology if you ask me! Someone was not taking their meds when they coined that term. I chose these lighting positions for my image of Hillary because backlighting would project shadows forward and across her body accentuating her musculature and curves. On top of this, due to the back angle, you get a

lot of specular build-up on the edges of the muscles and curves, making the subject mostly shadow and specular; these opposites automatically contrast each other beautifully!

Wanting to bring out more of Hillary's face, I decided to wrap the back lighting around her a little more. If I did this by moving the right rim-light around from 120° to 90° I would also wrap the light further around the rest of her body. This would diminish the overall dark dramatic effect, so instead I left the rim-light at 120° position and added a small gridded octa-box to her side at 90°. This light was pointed upwards at her face and off her chest to keep her torso dark while wrapping a little more light further around her face. Dark and dramatic saved! I did, however, want some detail in all those dark high-contrast shadows, so yet another light was added; this soft-box light source was set so that the its brightness effect on the shadows was just enough to push these dark zones from printing as pure black to printing as black with detail, in other words, I lowered the shadow contrast slightly (made the shadows slightly brighter).

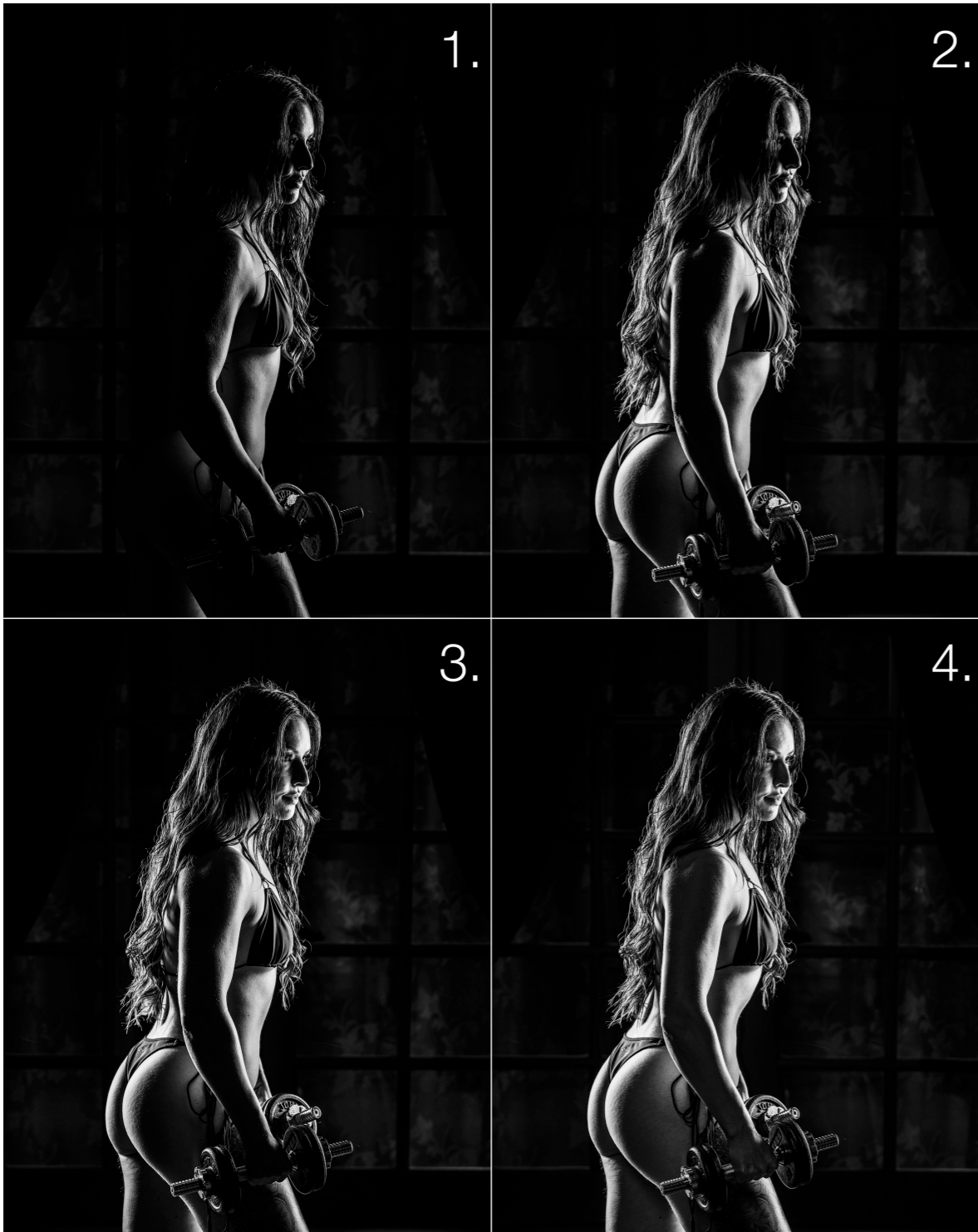
If you read through the Lighting Set-up Specifications, you will notice that all the lights are set to under-expose the subject's actual flesh-tone, so really this image of Hillary is not a correct exposure. How crazy is that! Obviously premeditated crazy – I created a dark canvas of under-exposure then painted out her form with brilliant shine (high-contrast specular highlights).

Bio

Dave Montizambert lectures internationally on lighting, digital photography and Adobe Photoshop. He is also a published author having written two books on lighting and digital photography (www.montizambert.com) plus numerous magazine articles on these topics in North America, Europe, Russia and Asia. Dave also creates lighting and Photoshop tutorial DVDs for www.software-cinema.com & www.PhotoshopCAFE.com/video and authors 'Dave On Demand' (www.montizambert.com) lighting tutorial based photo-training. Dave is available for lectures and workshops in your area and can be reached through www.montizambert.com.

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Lighting Set-up Specifications

Camera: f5.6, $\frac{1}{125}$, at 100 ISO. Full frame mirrorless with 70–200mm lens set to 114 mm mounted on tripod placed 15 feet (4.6 metres) from subject and was 5 feet (1.5 metres) from floor to centre of imaging sensor. The camera was tethered to a MacBook Pro using a Tether Tools rig.

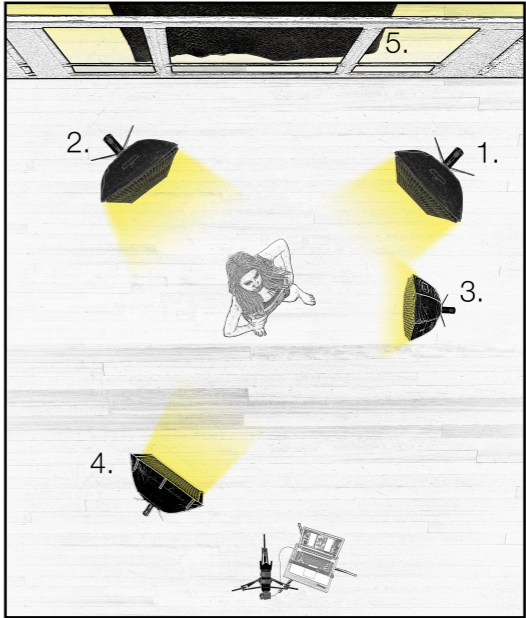
1. Right Rim-light (Main-Light): a studio strobe fitted with a 27x70 inch or 70x180 cm strip-light-bank and 20/50° soft-grid was placed 8 feet (2.4 metres) behind subject at 120° off camera/subject axis. Height of this light source from floor to strobe tube measured 5 feet (1.5 metres) and was positioned 120° from camera/subject axis. Exposure via incident meter read f4 $\frac{1}{10}$ ths putting this light at $\frac{1}{10}$ ths below camera setting on camera-right edge of subject – a minus $\frac{1}{10}$ ths Incident ratio.

2. Left Rim-light: a studio strobe fitted with a 27x70 inch or 70x180 cm strip-light-bank and 20/50° soft-grid was placed 9 feet (2.7 metres) from subject. Height of this light source from floor to strobe tube measured 5 feet (1.5 metres) and was positioned -135° from camera/subject axis. Exposure via incident meter read f4 $\frac{1}{10}$ ths putting this light at $\frac{1}{10}$ ths below camera setting on camera-left edge of the subject – a minus $\frac{1}{10}$ ths incident lighting ratio.

3. Face Accent Light: a studio strobe fitted with a 2 foot or 61 cm octa-box with 30° soft-grid was placed 4.5 feet (1.4 metres) from the subject. It was positioned 90° from camera/subject axis. Height of this light source from floor to strobe tube measured 3 feet (1 metre) and was tilted up at the subject on a 45° angle. Exposure via incident meter read f2.8 $\frac{1}{10}$ ths to f2.8 putting this light's brightness (at subject) at 1.5 to 2 stops under the camera exposure setting – a minus 1 $\frac{3}{10}$ ths to minus 2 incident lighting ratio.

4. Fill-Light: a studio strobe fitted with a 2x3 foot or 60x90 cm soft-box and 40° soft-grid was placed 10 feet (3 metres) from subject. It was positioned -20° from camera/subject axis. Height of this light source from floor to strobe tube measured 8.5 feet (2.6 metres) and was tilted down at the subject on a 55° angle. Exposure via incident meter read f 1.4 putting this light's brightness (at subject) 4 stops under camera exposure setting – a minus 4 incident lighting ratio.

5. Background: french doors were 10 feet (3 metres) behind subject. Mid-grey toned curtains were placed 1 foot (30 cm) beyond the French doors. These curtains were side-lit by an over-cast sky. The curtains read f 2.0 to f 2.0 $\frac{1}{10}$ ths reflective meter reading making them a minus 3 to minus 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ dark grey.



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