



TABLE TOP AND STILL LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY
A WORKSHOP AT CREATIVE LIVE BY DON GIANNATTI



The heart of it all is the table.

Mine is on wheels, and has the most beautiful steel top. It is very heavy and stays in position, although the wheels let me move it around the studio fairly easy.

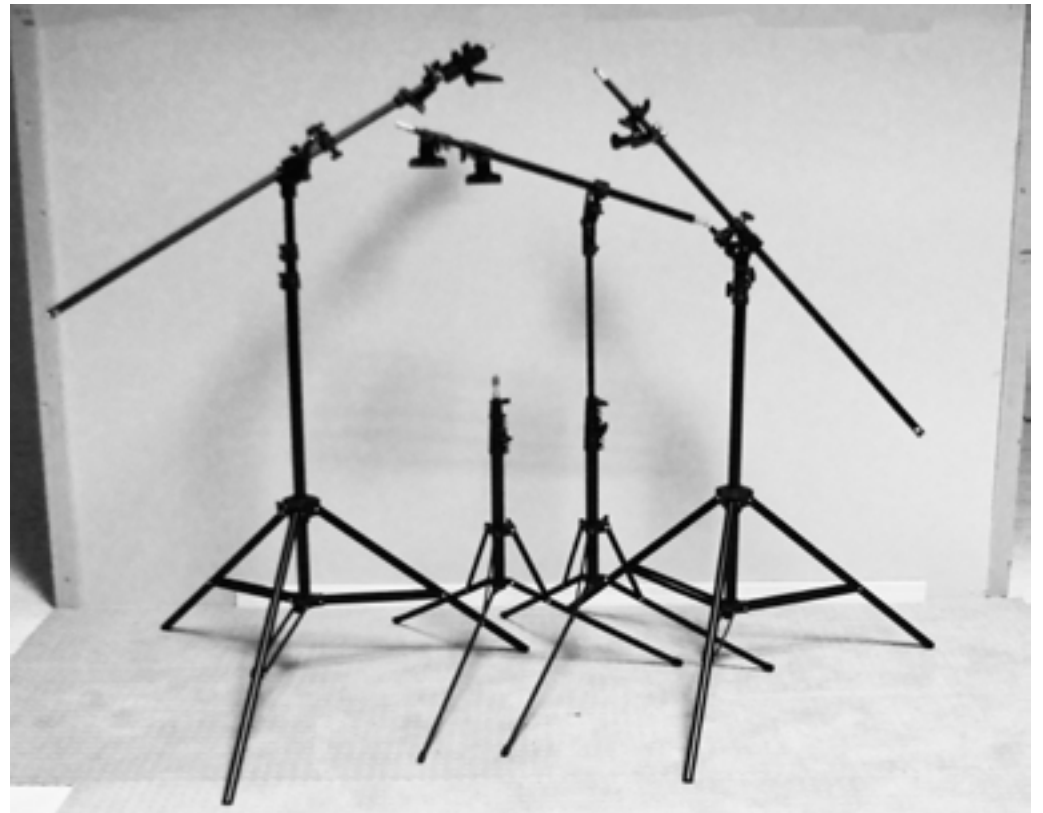
You can never have too many stands. I use stands and booms for every shot, and recommend small booms for lighting instead of stands.

How many stands do you need?

One more than you have... heh.

Start with three or four, and add as needed.

Booms keep the light on the set, with the stands farther out of the way.



I do a lot of location work, and this is one of my staples for working - whether with speedlights or with larger strobe kits. This is a Standbagger "Grab N Go", and it carries two stands, a boom, 3 speedlights, a trigger set, three stand toppers and two shoot thru umbrellas. The whole thing goes over my shoulder and is very easy to carry.



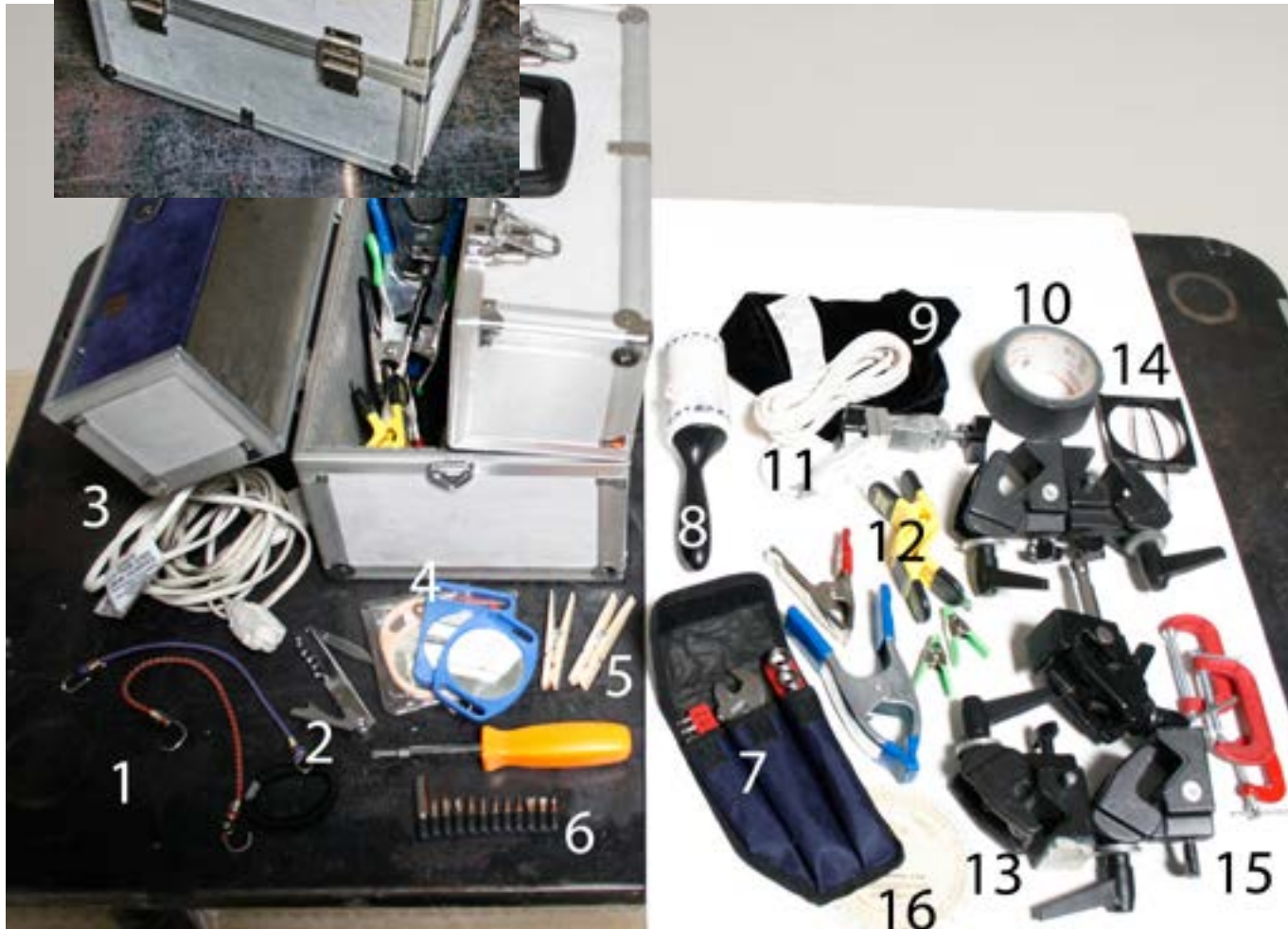
My Location "Standbagger - Grab N Go"



Standbaggers can be found at www.standbagger.com



My location kit box carries a lot of gear that is used for still life and product photography.



In the kit:

1. a selection of bungees.
2. corkscrew
3. extension cord
4. a selection of small mirrors
5. clothes pins
6. a screwdriver with assorted tips
7. small toolkit
8. lint roller
9. small piece of black cloth
10. gaffers tape
11. extension cord
12. assorted clamps
13. super clamps
14. filter holder
15. c-clamps

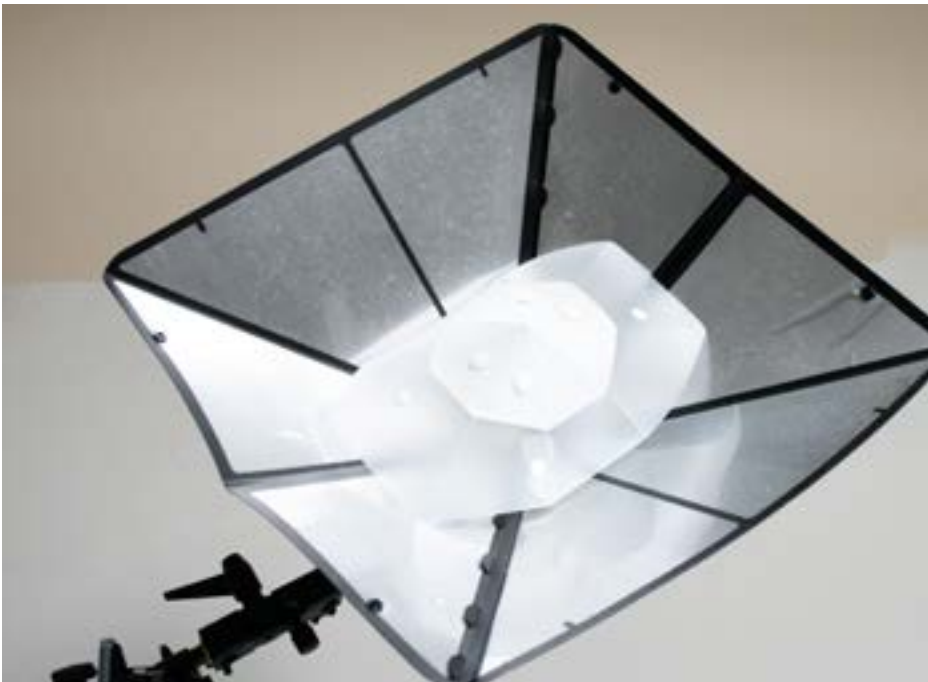
LIGHTING MODIFIERS:

1. GamiLight small softbox
2. Westcott 28 softbox
3. SpeedlightProKit small softbox
4. Gridspots (small)
5. Diffuser for GamiLight
6. Snoot
7. SpeedlightProKit small reflector
8. HONL Grids
9. Grid straps for mounting
10. Large Gridded softbox
11. Flags
12. Foldable Snoot
13. Lumiquest softbox





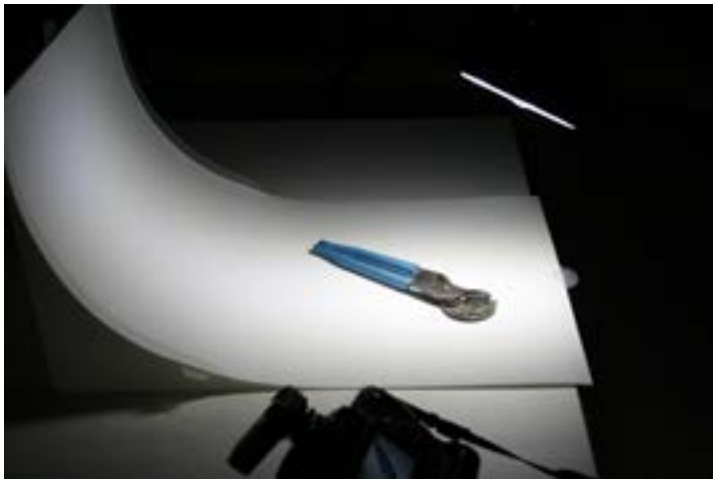
Adjustable stand toppers are a must.



Diffusing the light source

The only difference in these two shots is that the light is coming from the front in the top image and coming from the back in the image below. Same angle to the tool, just one from the front and one from the back.

Back light shows texture, shape and patina.



Two shots of the old wrench using a variation of the backlight. In these shots, the light is passed through the translucent background, creating an interesting shadow pattern and beautiful, texture revealing light.

Light is a "BOLT" LED light (200 Watts)



One of the reasons I love shooting still life is the fun of working with light - in close and with great control. The work is much more focused, and there are not nearly as many distractions as shooting people or fashion can bring.

Usually it is just me, an assistant, an art director and a stylist or food stylist. Working together, the team is concentrated on creating images that will sway a viewer to feel a connection to the product or item we are shooting.

Still life can be very evocative as well as emotional. With light we can bring out textures, show dimension and shape, create mystery and drama, and make compelling images of otherwise simple and uninteresting things.

One of my favorite things to do is to have something ordinary and work to make something interesting from it using only light and camera. Lens choice, lighting choices, angles and points of view all combine with composition and aesthetics to create something unique.

This workbook is a compilation of some of my images and ideas about shooting still life and product and the work of some of my Project 52 PRO alumni.

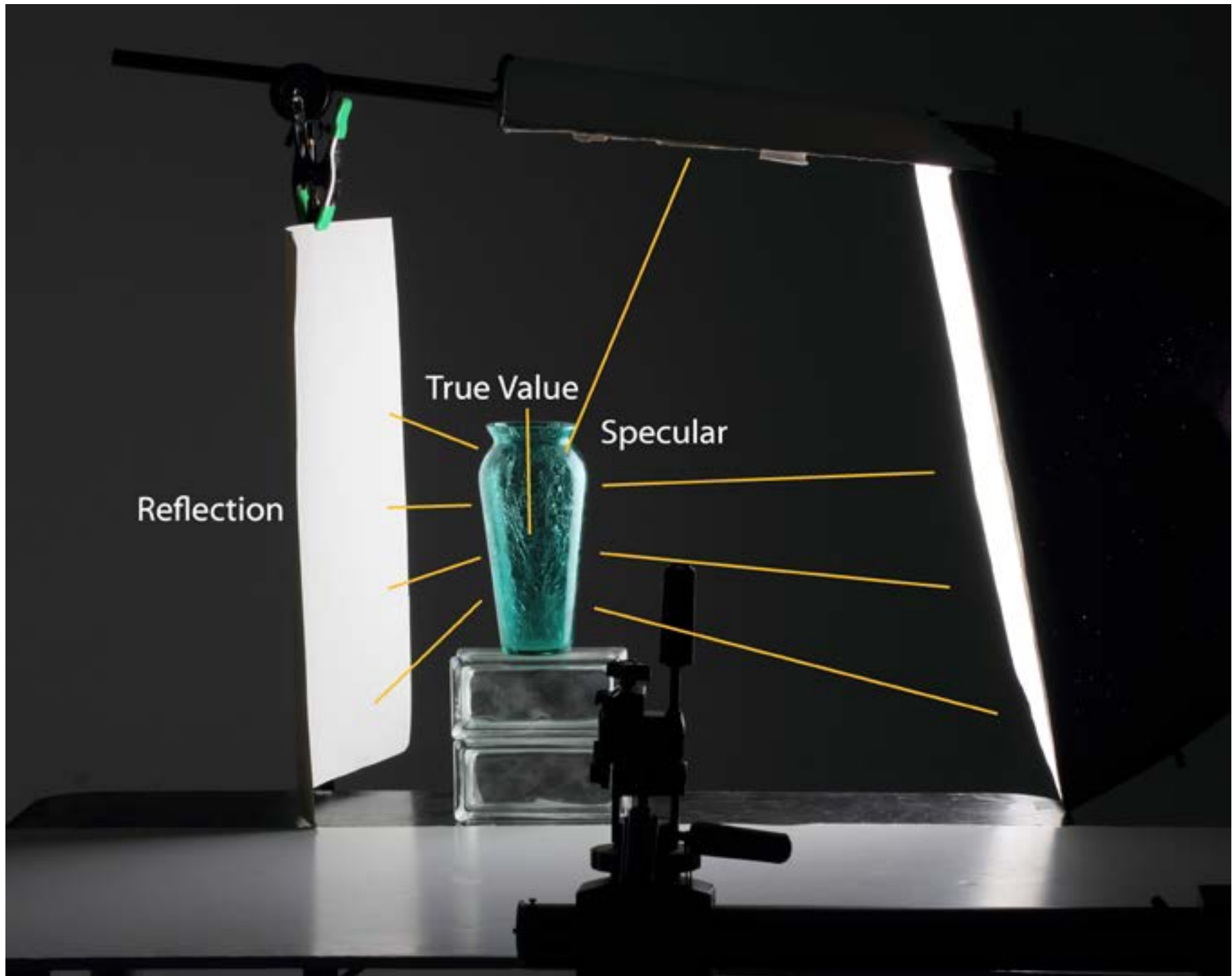
Project 52 is an online workshop that gives photographers an assignment every week. From shooting to layout to creating conceptual images from only a word or piece of music, the photographers never cease to astound me with creativity, wit and excellent images,

On the right is a cover shot for a catalog on fragrances and home decorating items. It was shot on location.

Far right: Needing to add some images to my still life portfolio, I chose to shoot some pool balls and cue sticks from the studio. I love the rich textures and patinas in this image.







True Value

Specular

Reflection

Shooting glassware can be very tricky. Note that in the set up shot on the left we have a white board above the glass vase. It was needed to provide the smooth reflection when the bottle's shape was at an angle to reflect the studio roof.

Being aware of all the angles of incident on your product or subject makes it easier to predict the possible areas where additional light sources will be needed.





The image on the left is the result of several exposures made with various reflectors in place to add shape and texture to the cooking tools. They were then merged in Photoshop for a more interesting and natural looking image.

This image could have been done in camera, but learning to use new techniques can make the imaging more precise.

The photograph to the right was made with one striplight above the bottle of noodles, a fill card in front and below and a 'spray' light very close to the background behind.





Subjects for still life and table top can also be found all around you. The dead flowers on the left are from an ongoing project, while the rusted cup was found in a park in New Jersey,

Being attuned to the way light works all around us can help lead the way when we get into our studios and bring out our lighting.

Making shots like these serve as reminders and inspiration when we get involved with our subject matter.

Light.

Composition.

Angles and POV and more... all to get a photograph of something interesting.







With the bottle in place, you can see how the light changes presentation as it moves from slightly behind and above to absolutely above.

As we move the camera to light angle we get more specular highlights along the edges of the bottle and the background itself.

By changing the angle from a wider angle of incidence to a tighter angle of incidence, the entire feel of the shot changes dramatically.

A rule of thumb is that front light is not very interesting, as all specular highlights are thrown away from the camera. They are then not helpful in creating dynamics, shape, texture and dimension.

Without specular, highlight, and shadow, the images look flat and uninteresting.

Think of having the light come from an arc from 45 degrees of camera and all the way around 180 degree. Side light to back light to side light.

For front light, we use either bounce or reflective or secondary light to present that forward facing section of the product.

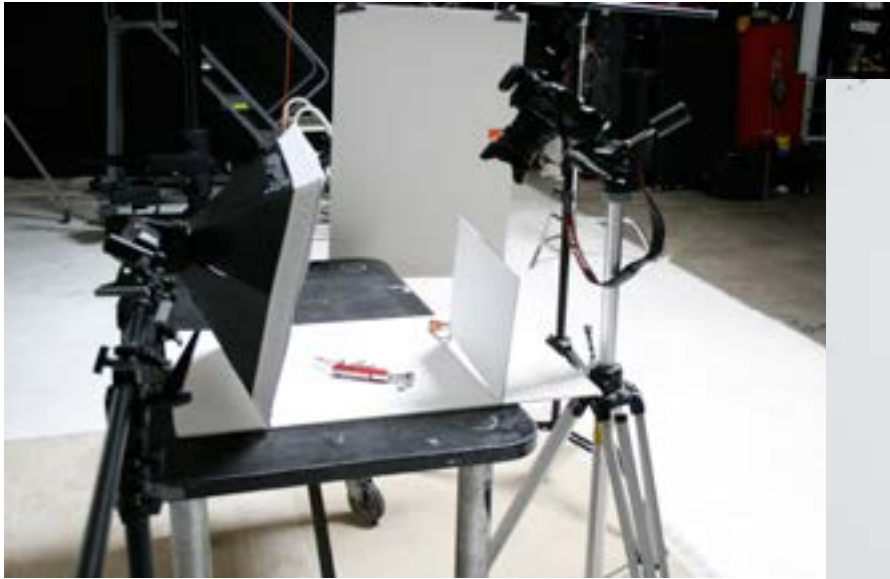




Using a small Gamilight softbox as a 'window' light behind the subject. The close proximity of the small object to the very large (in relationship to the subject) light, creates a soft, wrapping light.

The top of the tool and the blades are all reflecting the light source as a broad, smooth reflection.





With an addition of a small white card in front of the subject, the shadows are diminished and the reflective tool at the front is now beautifully reflective, with a great round shape.







Shooting highly reflective objects with texture means taking extreme care to every part of the subject.

This music player has rounded shapes, bright colors, a textured 'grill' and lots of very shiny, smooth plastic.

Choosing a large light source for the main light provides the initial base for the lighting. From that point on, we concentrate on providing bright white reflecting boards to be seen in the shiny surfaces. In other words, we don't light the product, we light what the product will reflect.



Westcott Apollo 28"
with Speedlight at 1/2 Power

speedlight with
grid spot aimed
at the back of
the camera

speedlight at 1/4 power
and diffuser cap on front

fill for the side of camera

fill for front of camera

fill board to provide
reflection in the front
of the camera lens

my camera on tripod



PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER GREG KINDRED

"I wanted to make a still life that had the look of first light. I wanted a tabletop shot, and I wanted it dark, but with warm light. I also thought I would like a minimal depth of field view of the still life. That meant low power on my strobes. My studio lights produce more light than would allow me to work with a shallow depth of field. I knew I would need to work with my speedlight because of their dial down power.

I shot this with one Speedotron head with a full CTO orange gel camera left. I placed a speedlight in front of the scene camera right, and shot through the blinds. The speedlight was set on 1/16th power. This light had two ¼ CTO filters to keep the warm feeling going. The last speedlight was aimed toward the medium gray background for separation, it was set at 1/32nd power. I used a diffuser gel to soften the spray. To push a little blue in the background I changed my white balance to tungsten.

I wanted the clock to be the focal point of the shot so I worked on the lighting for about 3 hours. Moving lights and trying different angles and adding and removing white bounce cards I added the blinds when I realized I wanted more texture in the light. I think it also helps it look like light coming through a window."

Greg Kindred Photography
www.gregkindredphotography.com

Set up shot number one shows just one light coming from the left. This light has a 10 percent grid and barn doors.

Set up shot number two show the speedlight to the right added, shooting through the blinds.

Set up shot number three is an overhead view to show placement.





Set up shot number four shows the whole scene with camera placement and lights.



FINAL IMAGE:
Greg Kindred

All images copyright
Greg Kindred

PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER DON FADEL

I wanted to create a very graphic, very clean image. I had these black plates, and these white plates, and silverware that came with the black plates that had red handles. I really like the punch of color red added.

The primary challenge was creating a composition that I liked. The lighting - my "go to" product/tabletop lighting setup of a large softbox overhead and angled towards camera - produced the lighting results I was looking for. The black plate helped bring out the edge of the white plate, so no additional cards were needed in the shot.



I was inspired by an image Gary Perweiler created of a woman's sandal. He wanted the image to look "... like a Roman centurion's mask ... "

Taking the theme of modern gladiatorial combat - corporate style - I used a man's wingtip shoe. I really like tone-on-tone images. The challenge was to keep everything in the black tone family while creating enough highlights to give shape and separate out the various elements in the image - the parts of the shoe, the rocks. I also had to hold enough depth of field to keep the detail in the shoe (I was shooting with a macro lens).

I started out where I always start - with a large softbox angled towards the camera, overhead of the table. This created a large reflection of the light source in the shoe when enough light was present to give definition. I did not like the result. I tried using dark field lighting (placing a flag in the middle of the light source, so only the edges showed), but, again, this did not work to my liking. Finally, I flanked the shows with 2 gridded strip boxes, plus the overhead light, all set to f/22 to retain enough depth of field. This produced the result I was looking for.

Don Fadel Photography | www.kidona.com



PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER ROB DAVIDSON
www.robdavidsonphotography.com

The concept for this shot was to showcase a hypothetical new line of clarinet. This new “star” for the company is stepping into the spotlight. I wanted to leave plenty of room for text, as well.

The shot was done in two steps. I knew I would not easily be able to light the clarinet appropriately while maintaining the look I wanted for the background so I went with a two shot composite.

The camera is on a tripod, focused and tethered to a computer. Neither the camera nor the clarinet was touched between the two shots.

The background shot is very simple. The clarinet is sitting on gray seamless paper with a gridded (10 degree grid) strobe coming straight down from above.

The shot of the clarinet is done with one light and an army of white foamcore cards. The strobe is in a 3x4' softbox placed camera left. The softbox is in close to the clarinet and is placed so that the clarinet is toward the back of the softbox, allowing the light to wrap around as much as possible.

There are two foamcore pieces to camera right in close to the clarinet, reaching as far behind and as far in front of the clarinet as possible. These add the highlight to the right side and light up all the silver keys that are away from the light. There are two pieces of foamcore above the clarinet – again reaching as far behind and forward as possible. These light up the mouthpiece and bell. There is a piece of foamcore on the flat part of the seamless to the left of the clarinet to give the bottom of the keys something to reflect other than gray/black.

There is a piece of foamcore behind the clarinet to camera left to catch the backside of the keys and insure the left side does not get lost to the background as the barrel starts to turn back.

There is a final piece of foamcore with a hole cut in the middle in front of the camera with the lens poking through. This opens up the middle of the clarinet a bit. The photoshop work is fairly straightforward, though perhaps a little tedious. The background shot is the main image and then the clarinet shot is placed as a layer on top. I added a layer mask to the clarinet shot and carefully masked away all of the background on the clarinet shot. I touched up the blemishes on the instrument and removed the branding. The starbursts of light here and there are from the background shot with the gridded strobe coming straight down. I decided to leave them in.





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER STEPHEN COLLINS

Toast Broiler

I had just purchased a new toaster broiler oven and not having used it yet, I felt it would be a good subject for a product shot.

I first went to the manufacturer's web site and looked at how they presented their products photographically. I then used Google to view additional images of toaster broiler ovens. From doing that I noticed most non-catalog (shot on white) images used accompanying props, food and have the unit placed on what appears to be a kitchen countertop.

Having a black glass table top (from IKEA \$130), I also needed to build a back-splash. Using 8 vinyl tiles and a 2'x4'x1/4" plywood panel, I fashioned my back-splash. During that time, I first placed a 20 degree gridded speedlight, camera right, aimed at the three control knobs, eventually set 1/2 stop above the main lights to give the three knob panel a little extra pop, see Setup Image #1.

I then added two AB800's into PCB medium softboxes, camera left and right, see Setup image #2. Producing a slight fall off from right to left, the right AB was set 1/3 stop above the left AB. This also helped pick up the vents on the side of the unit, something I noticed from looking at the manufacturer's web site.

I included two finished shots, one with the utensil bucket and one without as I felt the addition of the utensils were too much and caused distraction. I prefer image without the utensils because in my mind it better presents the product and I like that angle better.

Stephen Collins Photography
www.sjcphotos.com





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER DANIEL FENWICK

The concept of this shoot was to make an under \$10.00 watch from a major retailer look like a really nice watch. I believe this was successful.

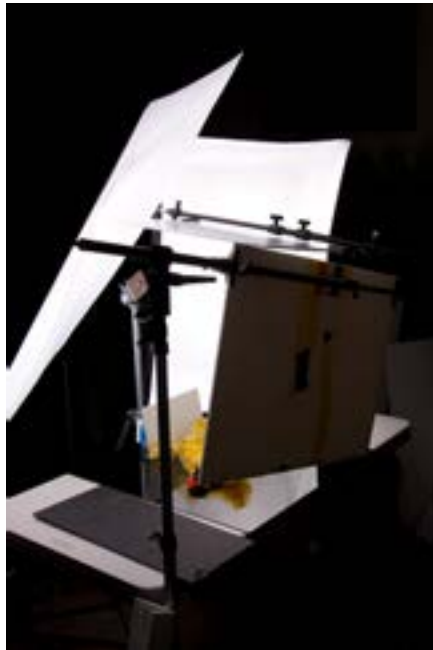
The initial setup had the watch on a white card with a large softbox behind. To get a good flat view of the watch face the final camera position was high shooting down at a steep angle keeping the field of view perpendicular to the face of the watch. The softbox behind the watch, opposite the camera, left way too much of the watch overly bright. The second setup had the softbox overhead which gave the same results. I then moved the softbox in front and liked the look, so I put a softbox each side of the camera. To get a nice reflection back on the watch I added a white card behind the watch. This gave very smooth even reflections on the watch band but wasn't interesting so I added a couple of strips of gold mylar to the white card then played with the angle of the card to get a little gold on the watchband but not turn it all gold. Once I was happy with the reflection on the watch band I went on to work at filling in the other reflections on the watch.

Filling the remaining black reflections on the watch required a white card over the top of the watch and a small one in front, between the watch and the camera. The watch was setting in a cut down holder out of the box it came from the store in. Now I had a very bland looking image of a watch with no interest. I now added a piece of black acrylic under the watch. This gave a better look but still wasn't interesting.

To add some interest to the image I cut some pieces of the gold mylar and wadded them up. I then placed them around the watch and weighted them down with A clamps. Over the black acrylic this gave a really nice texture and added a great deal of interest without overpowering the watch. However it also made a really bad reflection on the bottom edge of the face of the watch. To correct this I took an image with the mylar all around and another where I removed the piece of mylar that was at the bottom of the face of the watch and took another image.

To make the final image I placed both images of the watch in Photoshop and moved the one with the gold mylar in the foreground as a layer on top of the image without. I then masked off all but the bottom and band of the upper layer so that I had a good clean watch face and the interest of the mylar and it's reflections all around the watch. Final cleanup required retouching a few scratches in the watch and darkening the numbers and marks on the face of the watch. There is also a curves layer over the face of the watch to increase the contrast just a bit. The final image was flattened and sharpened.

Daniel Fenwick Photography
www.dfenwickphotography.com



Top Row: Behind Camera Position

Above:
Behind Camera Position showing top fill card



Above Left:
Top Part of Watch Used



Above Right:
Lower Part lit to use



Right:
The bottom part of watch
that was used for composite.



A View of the Mylar Background



PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER KATHY JAN GERSON

Normally a food shooter, I have been doing some personal work lately based on my love of everything beach. Sand, water, surf, sun, and shells. I had been to the beach and picked up some new shells to add to my collection and decided to try some still life with them.

I was working the shoot using my 100mm macro and natural light - morning light diffused through a very sheer white curtain. I tried positioning the shell in various poses to see where the light was falling best, but there were still too many dark areas with just the filtered sunlight.

I saw a box of white thank you cards on the desk where I was working and thought - how perfect. Folded over backwards to just the white sides and they stand up all by themselves! I placed one on each side of the shell to reflect light back across the of the shell. Better, but there was still something missing. It needed more backlight to glow through the back of the shell.

Hey G! (That's my hubby) Got a tiny flashlight? (of course he had a tiny flashlight - he collects them and there must be 100's of them scattered throughout the house, the garage, the cars, the motorcycle bags... but I digress). I tried a conventional small flashlight with a yellowish light. Not pretty. Then I took possession of his mini mag with a very bright bluish light - more like sunlight - yes, this is better.

The first few shots were just too bright and the beam too focused. OK, what can I do to diffuse it? Being the food shooter that I am, parchment paper immediately came to mind. So I covered the end of the flashlight with parchment paper and finally got the look I was after. It had a bright spot in the background and cast a very defined shadow in the front.

The finished shot reminds me of spotting a shell glowing in the morning sun and it makes me happy.



Kathy Jan Photography
www.kathyjan.com/



PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER PETE HUDECK

Basic Lighting Setup:

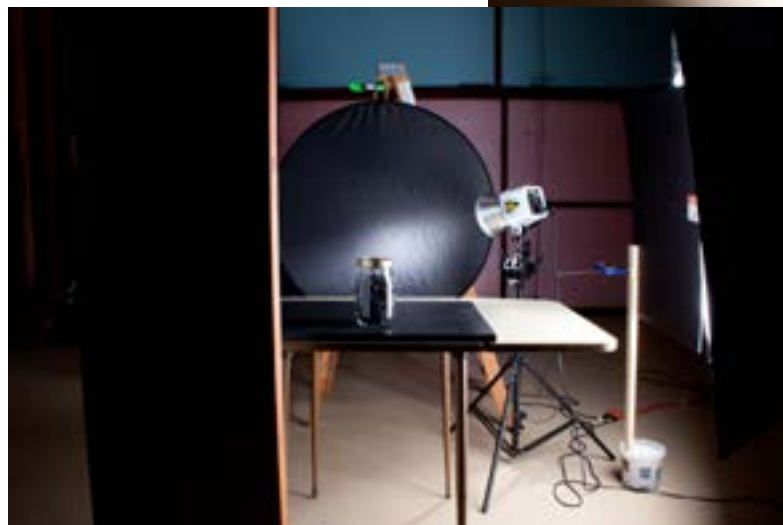
There is an AB800 in a softbox to camera right. This light is the main light that you see on the right of the jar. This light is flagged to not let all of the light reach the background and it also reduces the width of the specular on the jar. On the background there is a 2nd AB800 with a 10 degree grid. This adds the spray light on the background. There is also a large reflector camera left. This is a closet door with the inside painted white. This provided some fill and shape to the left side of the jar.

Challenges:

There were two challenges that had to be met. The first one was lighting the black screws in the jar without getting a large specular in the front of the jar. The solution to this was the angle of the softbox to the jar. By opening up the softbox, to the jar it allowed more light to rake across the front of the jar and to light the screws.

The second challenge that I came across was the pink insulation was being seen by the edge of the jars. The first thing I tried was to flag that off but I did not have flags that were large enough. The final solution was to move the background closer to the jar. This increased the size of the background relative to jar.

Pete Hudeck Photo
www.petehudeckphoto.com





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER GREG PASTUZYN

Tech Specs:

Camera: Canon 7D

Lens: Canon 85mm 1.8

Shot at 1/13 sec @ f4.0

Lighting: Natural

The Shot

I was looking to create an image of the old milk bottle that would show the age, the thickness of the glass and the type etched into the bottle. I wanted to use the window as a backdrop with the trees out of focus. I thought it would look cool. Initially I tried to sidelight the bottle with a day-light balance fluorescent shop lamp.

The bottle is so pitted that the light blew out any detail in the etched type. The backlight from the window made the type show nicely. I added black cards to the sides to give some additional dimension to the sides even though the glass was beat up enough to perhaps not need it. A silver card was placed over the top to add some fill to the top of the bottle and the granite.

This was a pretty easy setup, not very involved, except for waiting for the right time of day to get the light at the window. But truth be told, I started out trying to balance the light on the bottle and the light through the window. After experimentation with different angles on the light the resulting shot was done with just the backlight from the window.

Greg Pastuzyn Photography
www.gregpastuzyn.com





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER VIRGINIA SMITH

I wanted to set up a studio room and reliable table top photography workspace within my studio room. I have a folding table with a piece of melamine board that can be used right up against the diffused window light as well as with the octabox with 4 continuous day-light balanced fluorescent bulbs when there is no natural light available. I use 4x8 Styro-foam sheets white duct taped together like hinges to use on two sides of my tabletop set-up opposite the light source to reflect the light and I use smaller pieces of foam core and card stock for highlights and as reflectors next to smaller items. I also use small mirrors to brighten up areas such as with the antique painting which is painted on wood and slightly warped. Using the mirror brightened it nicely so the detail of the artwork shows up.

I keep in the closet of my studio all the things I need such as pine shiplap boards leftover from a boat building project, burlap and assorted vintage fabrics and large sheets of colored papers.

I collect vintage items as props as well as photograph them for appraisal and sale. I find that toys show up nicely on the colored paper, I use extra lens caps to stand them off the surface of the table or papers. I also built a foamcore box so that the light gets reflected better on smaller items right next to a light source. Having a variety like this makes it so easy to set up and shoot what I need to like using the quilt with the antique bowl for the eggs and whisk.

The antique clock proved to be a challenge. It is very reflective so I had to cut a hole in a piece of foam core so that my reflection did not show up in the metal and use a piece of cardstock folded at the base so that only light would be reflected onto the base of the clock.

I photographed the dried flowers from my garden as a botanical arrangement as well as with an old doves nest to use as thank you cards for my business. I have a problem with my images looking flat sometimes and the lack of patina on the new pine shiplap boards made that problem worse so I used textures I made from antique paintings and dirt to "age" the images in post processing and give them depth along with using CURVES!

Having the regular assignments on Project 52 is teaching me to be a reliable, consistent photographer and that meant having the set up necessary to create a variety of images easily in my style. My little studio room (about 11' x 12') is now set up so I can get work reliably, easily and consistently with everything I need.

Virginia Smith
www.vintagemodernphotography.com





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER BRET DOSS

Set Up

My “ready” set-up for still life and small product is shown to right. I have a table with a white plexi surface, black or white interchangeable backdrops, a strobe/softbox, and an adjacent north-facing window. I can use just strobe, just natural window light, or a combination of the two. Close at hand is an assortment of various shapes and sizes of Styrofoam blocks salvaged from packing material, white/black cards, etc.

Different horizontal surfaces can be placed on the table frame to change the look, texture, or tone. This basic set up also allows for moving the camera around to the left, and shooting on the table with window light from behind the subject.

The set-up photos show a small chocolate, so I have included the chocolate image here for reference (shot with only the strobes as light-source).

Star Fruit

The star fruit was an “improv” session: inspired by Don’s example, I periodically take an object or objects and shoot as many different ways as I can within about an hour. I like this approach, as I get to shoot fast, and I have to keep coming up with variations in order to shoot the same object for an hour. Try it, you’ll like it.

The first shot used the same basic lighting set up as the chocolate: main (key) light is the overhead strobe, with background lit by the small strobe off to the side, and assorted reflectors. This light reveals the textures and waxy nature of the skin of the fruit, and has a slightly energetic mood.

The second shot (right) shows the same fruit, same set up, but now using only the window light from camera right and white reflectors. The character of the light and the subject really changes. Overall it is much softer, more peaceful, and with a much quieter mood.

Note that as a part of the improv process, I was also changing lenses, dof, etc. so the differences between the images are not solely as a result of lighting changes.





Calla Lily

And I used this same window light set up for the calla lilies, changing the backdrop from white to black foam core in some shots:

Technical details:

Chocolate: D7000, ISO 100, 105mm macro, f16, 1/200

Star fruit w/Strobe: D7000, ISO 100, 35mm 1.4 manual focus lens, f11, 1/200

Star fruit w/Available Light: D7000, ISO 400, 35mm 1.4 manual focus lens, f2.8, 1/125

Calla w/Available Light (light b/g): D7000, ISO 100, 35mm 1.4 manual focus lens, f2, 1/250

Calla w/Available Light (black b/g): D7000, ISO 800, 35mm 1.4 manual focus lens, f8, 1/200

Strobes: Quantum Qflash and Lumipro 160 speed light

PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER MACIEJ BLASZCZUK

I used one light in all shots, grid-
ded speedlight, with one fill light
bounced off fill card. I wanted to
create moody, dark Images with
focused light on the subject.

As a tabletop, i used old aluminum
case that I carry my equipment in.
It worked perfect, due to texture on
the case.

No special post process. I used
Topaz Detail to enhance texture
and Color Effex 4 pro to add some
cross process effect, some warmth
and saturation.

Maciej Baszczuk
www.blaszczuk.com.pl/





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER TUCKER JOENZ

1. Concept: I wanted to shoot something more like product photography. I got my inspiration from another photographer out of Atlanta, doing Miller Lite shots. So I took my stab with some unconventional product shots of playing Quarters and Edward 40 Hands.

2. Challenges: How to get a dramatic feel with my light and to get that glow I was seeing in the photos the other photographer was posting up. I did some research on what others have done for the glow and found what works for me, by cutting a hole in the backdrop and having a speedlight shoot through and placing the product exactly in the spot between the hole and the camera's POV. Then I added my key light and some fill with bounce. This wasn't enough and decided to have a speedlight with a grid splash some light on the backdrop. Now...the splash was 4 shots Photoshopped together. As I took parts of the splash I felt worked for this.

3: How did I do: I am very pleased with these. What I saw in my head and what I've seen in similar shots is what I accomplished.

Tucker Joenz Photography
www.tuckerjoenz.com





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER MICHELE DRUMM

What I did: I did a still life/product shot of a cocktail shaker set, cocktail strainer, double jigger along with a martini glass with ice cubes. The background is a piece of tin and the surface of the table is a black glass table top which I used to capture the reflections of the items.

What challenges I met and how I solved them: I met several challenges - the first of which was deciding what to photograph. I am primarily a food shooter and I like to do some still-life photos. Lately I have been shooting calla lilies. Coming up with a concept for this shoot took some time and several tries before I found an object that I wanted to work with. A second challenge was the stainless steel and the black glass with reflections. I knew that my lights and everything around me, including me, could be potentially seen in the reflections so eliminating those was of a concern.

When I first started shooting I was wearing a white shirt which promptly showed in the cocktail shaker - after I changed into a black shirt, the reflection was gone. I had to eliminate all sources of light from the studio. I used the modeling lights on the AB's to help with the composition and seeing where the light would hit my subjects. The third challenge was making the entire scene so it didn't look flat.

Originally, I had a plain black background for my photo but my photography partner told me it looked too flat and he suggested I use the tin background and add a rim light (AB1600 in a reflector with a 10 degree grid) to add a little bit of light across the top/back of the glass and shaker. Doing both of those made the difference in my photo.

Michele Drumm Photography
(Drum/Collins Photography)
www.sjcphotos.com/





PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER ERIC MUERTTITIES

These images were all shot as part of a test shoot for a jelly bean manufacturer.

I did not take a picture of the BTS for the coconut shot setup, but it is very similar.

The concept was to produce a series images that really spoke of the natural ingredients used in various flavors in an inviting way. The series other than the coconut image were shot using various colored gels using a light table and a speed-light feeding light into the table. That produces color only on the bottom of the fruit as a unique highlight from below.

Thank you Don for taking me from someone who never shot much of a still life, other than wedding rings, and in a year and a half having me loving doing product work.

Eric Muetterties Photography
Studio 52
www.ericmuetterties.com





USING PHOTOSHOP TO ADD HIGHLIGHTS AND EDGE REFLECTIONS WITH ONLY ONE LIGHT.

Base shot of Mamiya RB67

Small Gamilite 28" above and to camera right of the subject. Just out of camera view and at a slight angle from the back.

This white board creates a reflection, along the lens and the edge of the lens board. It also puts a nice reflection on the front of the lens focusing wheel.

Moving the white card toward the back of the camera adds a reflection for the Polaroid back and the back of the camera body.



The last image adds a reflection along the top of the Prism finder and the edge of the Finder mount. For the final image we simply blend those areas from these into one by using Photoshop. Since the image has not moved, we make the selections of the various parts we have lit, and - while holding the shift key down - we drag those parts over to the base image. A little blend with layer masking may be needed to blend. Quick and easy.





The Brushes

I love to photograph musical instruments. Being so in tune to music, and playing an instrument or two myself, the tools and gear make interesting subjects.

I needed to have something for the silver snare drum to reflect so I used a shower curtain to sweep over the top of the drum and actually down behind the camera. I wanted the feeling of chrome to come through so I left a small gap. This caused the dark line that comes across the top of the drum. It is a visual clue that tells the viewer that the surface is very shiny and reflective.

The setup is for the far right photograph.

Add the two speedlights to the back of the drum with the grid spot on the brushes, and the image has more life to it.





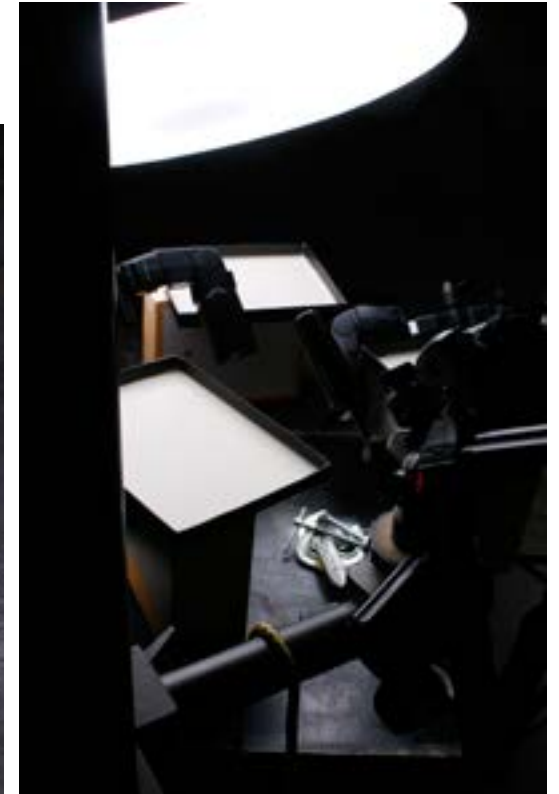


You can see the progression of lighting in these shots. I started with only the round softbox from above (1), then added two gridded speedlights (2). I felt the grid spots were too far down on the shoe, so I moved them up a bit higher for a better coverage of the shoe and its texture(3).

I added a background light in number four, but it is too high, leaving a darker edge at the bottom of the image(4). In finished image (5), there is a better feeling to the overall lighting. We have a contemporary feel to a cheap womens shoe. In the final presentation there were some Photoshop refinements.







The clamps shot was done specifically for this workbook.

1. a single round softbox (beauty dish with a sock) was positioned over the clamps and nearly directly over top.
2. Moving the light forward, and diminishing exposure by a full stop gave me a more 'moody' image, but took some of the chrome brightness away.
3. Adding in a couple of speedlights with grids on them gives me a much more interesting image, brings back the shine and adds some highlights to the overall shot. Shooting ambient a stop underexposed and bringing in some lights for the subject is something many people shooters are well aware of.





To make the final shot, I positioned shoe box lids in and around the image to help create a more 'mottled' look to the light. While they did not affect the grid spots, they did darken the areas around the clamps.

The image to the right is the final image that I will be using.



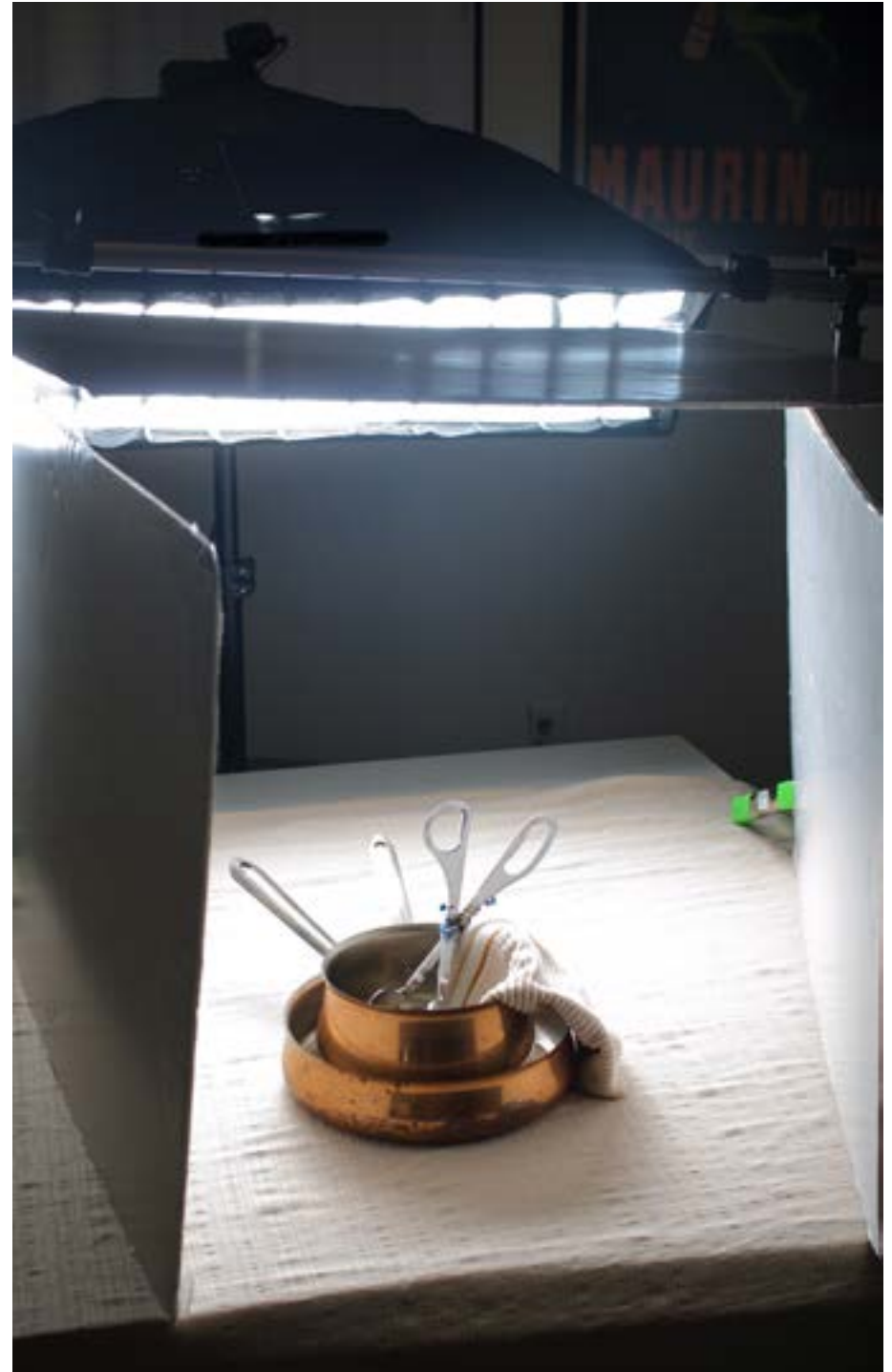
PROJECT 52 PHOTOGRAPHER CHARLES TIBBS

What a challenge this was to shoot, you look at still life shots that others have done and it seems so simple and it's quite the contrary. I set out on this shoot to push myself beyond my normal people and food photography that I do and really embraced this challenge and racked my brains and trashed many photos to get my final results which I like very much. After several brain warping attempts I had to break down and call a good buddy of mine and all around awesome photographer/teacher/mentor, Don, to help me get through my photography block that I was having. I went to a thrift store just looking for something that jumped out at me and these rusty old salad tongs did just that, I loved that they showed much more personality than a new set and the beads wrapped around them by the previous owner was an excellent touch. I already had the old rusty copper pot and pan and I knew this would fit right in with them and had to figure out a way to make it work which was the hard part.

First I shot it on white after about eighty-five shots (I shot tethered to my computer) and did not like any of them no matter how much tweaking I did to the lights and fill cards so I switched to shooting on black and ended up with the same results. I was getting more and more frustrated then I noticed this old table cloth and a wash cloth that somehow matched it and I was in business. For me personally when I shoot food or still life I like to back light with one light and fill with white cards to get the desired look and I did so on this shot as well, I set up one studio light at F/10 shooting into a 12"x36" strip soft box with an egg crate grid. From there I tweaked with the angle of the light so that it was high enough and just skimming across the pot and pan and placed fill cards on both sides on top and in front, this took at least ten shots to get the desired lighting and shot several at different F stops in case I need to merge them together in Photoshop.

The biggest challenge was getting the composition right so that is was pleasing yet not ordinary, this took quite awhile until I found just what I wanted and did not touch anything from that point forward except moving fill cards. I did learn a big lesson which I am going to apply to all my shoots going forward, sometimes you just need to walk away for awhile and then it will come to you once you look at it from a distance.

Charles Tibbs Photography
www.charlestibbs.com







The images used in this workbook are shared with the permissions of their creators. Images are all copyrighted to the creators of the images.

Presented as a part of the creativeLIVE workshop by Don Giannatti at creativeLIVE studios. June 21, 22, 23, 24, 2012.

Special thanks to Craig Swanson, Kenna Klosterman, Celeste Olds and Kate Hailey for helping me on this project. And to the creativeLIVE crew who simply are the best I have ever worked with - thanks.