

Insight + Inspiration Series


Composite Photography



Photo by featured photographer:
LINDSAY ADLER

VOLUME 8

The Insight + Inspiration Series explores the intricacy of Composite Photography. Featuring six photographers from around the globe, we go behind the scenes and learn about the pre-visual, planning and narrative that went behind in creating their final shot. The art of Composite Photography is materialized in the works of these photographers, highlighting the beauty and surrealness that comes with every shot.





A Moment of Magic

by Gilmar Smith

One of the things I am most passionate about is photographing kids. When I work with kids, I try to capture more than their image in a picture; I want to capture their imagination and sense of wonder. My approach is simple. I let them be my Creative Directors. We sit together, come up with a concept, sketch, and then we take pictures.

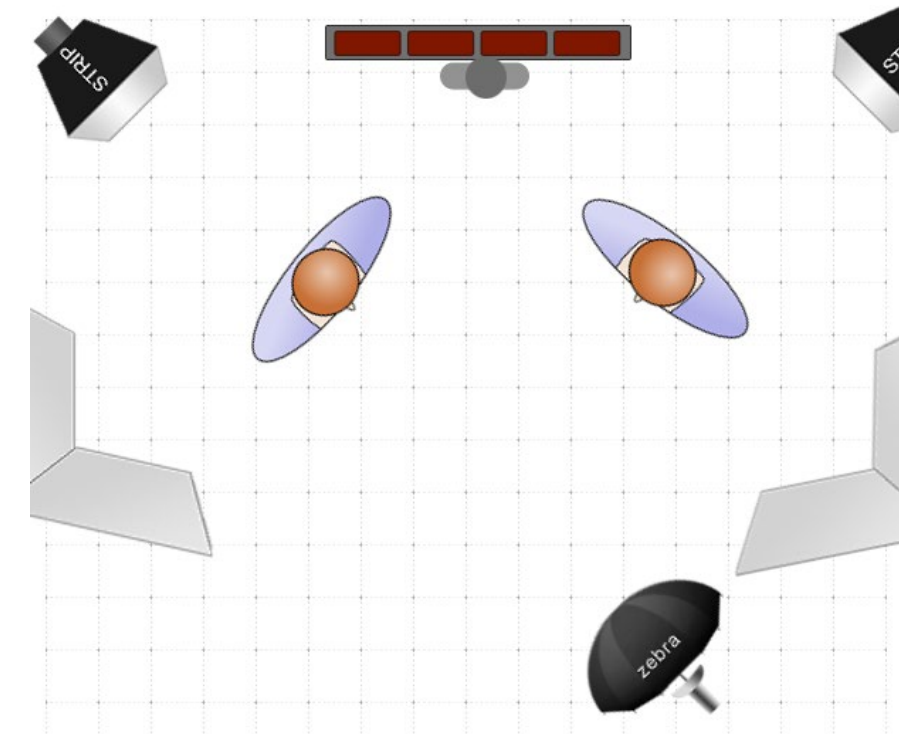
For this image, the concept was Magic. I was walking around Spectacular Themes, a huge props' warehouse I partnered with when I spotted this Magic apparatus. I immediately pointed it to my son and asked if he wanted to have a picture with that, to which he replied, with a big smile, "yes, that's so cool." That night, I called my good friend Winfield Murdock, who is a former Illusionist and now owns a costume company that makes

costumes for Disney, Universal Studios and Broadway shows, and asked him if I could borrow a magician costume for a picture. He not only said yes, but he let us borrow one of the costumes he used to wear for his shows as an Illusionist. The next day I packed my gear, costumes, and we went back to Spectacular Themes. While there, I gathered a few other props, and I built a small set in a corner they had designated for me to do photoshoots.

My kids had mentioned they wanted me to be the one inside the magician box. They also told me they wanted a lot of rabbits and doves in the picture, and at the last minute, my daughter said she wanted to add a baby chick to the image as well. Having all of this in mind, I made sure everybody was positioned where they were supposed to, so I could then add these elements in Photoshop.

In these images, I wanted to portray the fun we have as a family, and most importantly, my kids' personalities; that's why it is so important for me to brainstorm with them before every photo shoot, that way I make sure I honor their ideas.

Shooting tethered not only allows me to see the images clearly, but it also helps me visualize in advance the elements I will be adding to the images in Photoshop.



Tomorrow is Another Day

by Lindsay Adler

I was inspired by the sunset scenes in the movie “Gone with the Wind.” I discovered that the sunsets had been created on a soundstage and I decided to craft a similar vibrant scene indoors with studio lighting.

I wanted the subject to appear as if she were in a movie, looking out on a fiery sunset as the wind whips her hair around. The goal was to create a great deal of color and drama to the shot, but to blur the lines between ‘studio and outdoor’ photography. Fundamentally I would be creating a composite photograph, but completely composited in camera!

The biggest challenge for this shoot was to create cinematic lighting that ‘fit’ the sunset scene while still being flattering to the subject.

Upon deciding upon my concept, I began looking for models with red hair. I wanted an analogous color scheme comprised of reds, oranges and yellows, so that both the hair, skin tone and background would all work together harmoniously. After selecting and downloading the background shot, I printed it as a 4x8ft canvas print on a Canon Pro 4000 printer. This gorgeous large format printer allowed me to create the scenic backgrounds I needed for my new approach to in-camera compositing. I used two C-stand and C-stand arms and A clamps to position the background behind my subject.

This image was created with a Canon 5D Mark IV and a Canon 70-200mm 2.8 lens. This shot included 3 strobes. The first strobe was an XL Umbrella with diffusion, intended to

act as a hair light and background light. This gave overall illumination, but additional shaping light was needed for the face. The second light (the main light) was a medium umbrella and diffusion from the far left of the frame. A CTO (color temperature orange) gel was added to this light source to make it very warm and to emulate the feel of sunset light. Finally, another large white umbrella with diffusion was placed behind the camera. This was used at a low power to subtly fill in the shadows and control the darkness of the shadows on the subject.

During the shoot I was tethered into Capture One using my TetherPro Cable, Tether Table Aero, and TetherBlock. I always (always!) shoot tethered in the studio. This allows my entire team to be able to preview the images so that they can see if we need any changes in hair, makeup or pose. Furthermore, I shoot tethered because I am always adjusting settings including clarity, contrast and white balance to help give me a better visualization of the final result of the shoot. Sometimes I do drastic adjustments in Lightroom or Capture One, allowing me to see just how far a file can be transformed to get me closer to my vision.

My creative team is always essential to the success of the shoot. They help bring the image to life through their artistry and our group communication. In this shoot my creative team was Linh Nguyen for hair and Gilbert Soliz as makeup artist. The model, Taylor Greene, did a great job and channeling the “peace in the face of turbulence” emotion I was going for!



Based in New York City, Fashion Photographer Lindsay Adler has risen to the top of her industry as both a photographer and educator. As a photographic educator, she is one of the most sought-after speakers internationally, teaching on the industry's largest platforms and most prestigious events.

🏠 blog.lindsayadlerphotography.com
📷 [instagram.com/lindsayadler_photo](https://www.instagram.com/lindsayadler_photo)

WATCH THE VIDEO 



Nashville-based photographer Ryan Sims is a photographer and digital artists who specializes in Photoshop composites and Cosplay photographer. In addition, Ryan's portfolio varies from cosplay, seniors, weddings, artists, sports, and modeling.

🏠 ryansimsphotography.com

📷 [instagram.com/ryansimsphotography](https://www.instagram.com/ryansimsphotography)

Into the Spiderverse

by Ryan Sims

I have always been a big superhero nerd. So I wanted to photograph my all-time favorite superhero, Spider-Man! There was a cool comic book cover of the “Spider-Verse” that I wanted to recreate. I thought it would be awesome to create an image of several different Spider-Men and Women swinging into action!

I used a four-light setup with four Einstein E640 Flash Units. Each Einstein had its own CyberSync Transceiver. I used a Cyber Commander to meter the lights and to flash them. For my main light, I used a 64” Soft Silver PLM™ umbrella with a white front diffusion fabric. My fill light was a beauty dish with white diffusion fabric. The two back lights were placed on each side of the background close to the background stands. I put an orange colored gel on both back lights to give a warm highlight to the subject. That helped to add some realism to the shot when I created a fiery background in Photoshop.

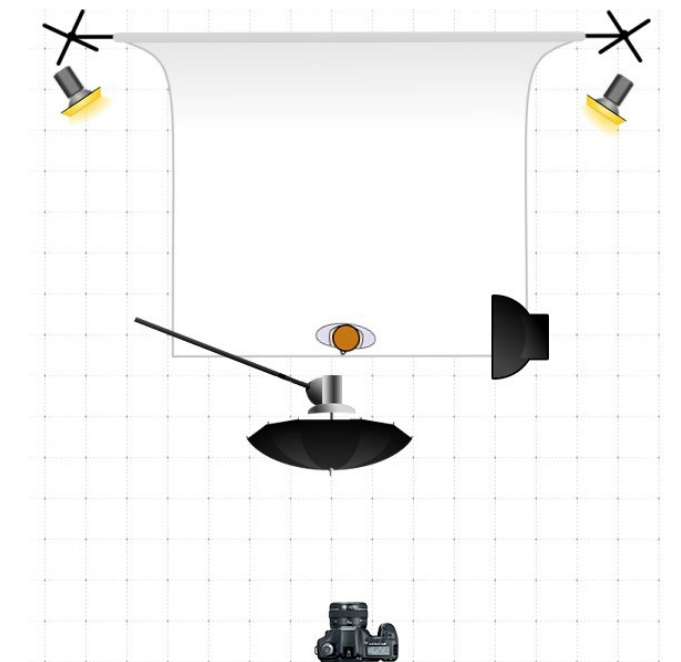
When you are dealing with shots that involve people jumping in the air and doing all kinds of crazy poses, it is extraordinarily helpful being able to instantly see whether you got the shot or not. Shooting tethered makes it so easy to be able to do just that. Plus, it gives the model that instant sense of gratification because they get to see it too.

The biggest challenge for me, especially in a unique concept like this, was posing. Spider-Man is an extremely limber character and can do all kinds of flexible moves that would be considered “unnatural.” The hardest part for me was trying to communicate to the subject how to achieve an unnatural pose and make it look natural. I had to play to the part of director and photographer, but for me, that’s part of the fun! We get to laugh, be silly, and reap the reward of finally nailing the pose after several attempts.

I used Adobe Bridge to quickly narrow down the best images, but the photomanipulation process is entirely done in Adobe Photoshop. It was shot on a grey background. In my experience, I’ve never liked using the Magic Wand tool or any of the “quick” extraction tools to cut out a subject. I want to know exactly what I’m getting each time. To do that, I must zoom in to 1000% (if necessary) and use the pen tool to cut out the subject pixel by pixel. This can take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes or more depending on the content of your subject. Once I’ve cut out the subject, I create a mask of that layer. I normally add just a slight blur to the layer mask, by about 1 or 2 px, so the edge doesn’t seem quite so sharp. This gives the subject a tiny bit of depth and doesn’t make it seem quite so much like it’s a cardboard cutout. I bought an Iron Spider toy online to photograph using the same lighting, removing his golden tentacles in Photoshop, and adding them to my Iron Spider subject. Since the lighting and color already matched, minimal Photoshop work was needed to make it look realistic.

At night, my father-in-law and I made a fire in the backyard and I shot some stock images of fire, sparks, and smoke. He threw some sawdust into the fire to create some fire ember effects. These effects would be added as background and foreground images. Because these images were shot at night with a dark, black background, in Photoshop, I was able to simply change the blending mode of the fire ember layers to “Screen”. Once I do that, the darkness disappears, and all that remains are the embers. This effect gives the image a great cinematic quality, color, and depth.

After this, I made the proper color adjustments, did some dodging and burning, and we had our final image.



“ The power and the versatility of the Einstein™ flash unit allows me to create just the mood I’m looking for! It’s important for me to get my lighting right in camera, as it helps expedite my post-process work when creating my composite images. ”



RYAN SIMS
ryansimsphotography.com



Smart Shooter 4

Powered by Tether Tools

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Solution for Tethered Shooting



KEY FEATURES:

- › High-performance tethering engine
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- › Automatic download and display
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- › Supports RAW and JPG
- › Barcode scanning support
- › Multi-camera support
- › API for custom capture scripting
- › Mac and Windows support



SMART SHOOTER
POWERED BY TETHER TOOLS

EQUIPMENT USED

Einstein™ E640 Flash Units
Vagabond Mini™ Lithium
CyberSync™ Cyber Commander™
CyberSync™ Transceivers
13' Heavy Duty Combination Boom Stand
LiteMod™ Unit Mainframes w/ Orange Gels

64" Soft Silver PLM™ Umbrella
64" White Front Diffusion Fabric
22" Silver High Output Beauty Dish
w/ Triple-layer diffusion sock
and direct light blocker



FINAL COMPOSITE IMAGE



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Simplify Your Workflow

Christmas is What You Make It

by Karen Alsop

The Heart Project, a volunteer organisation dedicated to improving families lives through creativity, staged a series of events around the world that captured out-of-this-world Christmas portraits of over 200 children stuck in the hospital during 'the most wonderful time of the year.' The idea has always been to bring a little joy and Christmas cheer to families that may be unable to leave the hospital ward at Christmas time.



Karen Alsop is an award-winning Australian, Melbourne based photographic digital artist. Expanding on two decades of photographic and graphic design experience, Karen brings photography and art together to create stunning artworks that tell a story and take the viewer into another world.

storyart.com.au

[instagram.com/storyartaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/storyartaustralia)

The Magic of Christmas is what our shoot was all about. We photographed the children with Santa against a Green Screen and then composited the children into magical Christmas scenes that lit up their imagination when they saw the finished image.

In 2016, we visited the Monash Children's Hospital in Melbourne. After a very full day, 30 families received a photo with Santa that transformed them into the wonderland of Christmas. Using the magic of Adobe Photoshop these sick kids became part of wintery snow scenes, magical lands and dreamy nightscapes. Accompanied by Santa to deliver each one, there were tears of joy, sighs of disbelief and so many smiles as they were presented with their photos. These will remain a treasured memory of hope and love during very tough times.

A huge part of the process was ensuring that the finished Christmas artworks would be available to families early December. A talented team of Photoshop Compositors joined in volunteering and edited the green screen photos into magical wonderlands as they were photographed and uploaded on the opposite side of the world. We had Photoshop artists working 24/7 across the globe.

WATCH THE VIDEO





Rite of Passage

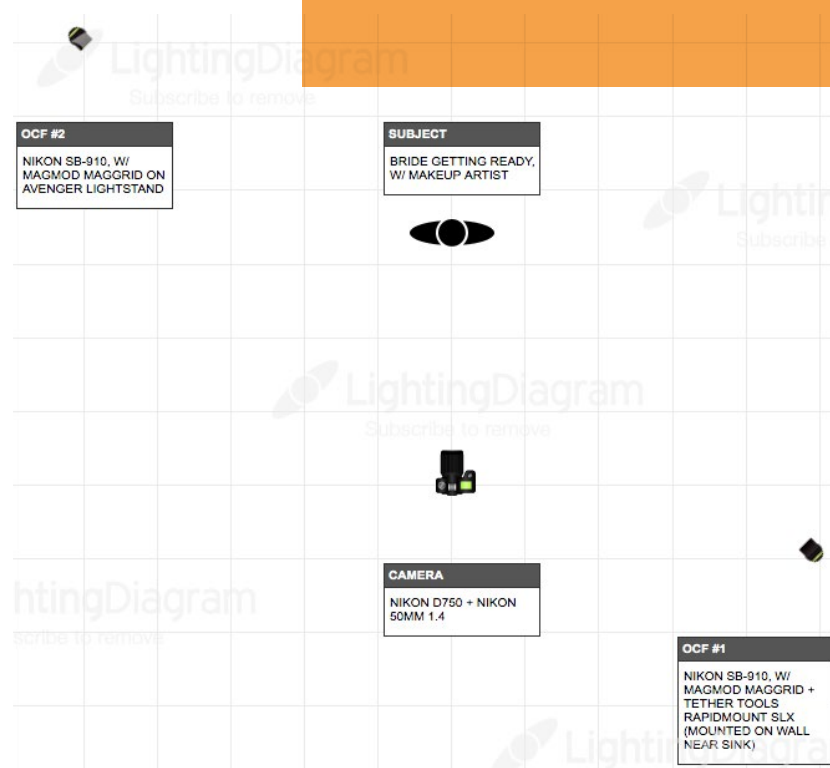
by Amii & Andy Kauth

We love to tell stories with our photography, highlighting important moments for our clients in artistic ways. Without a doubt, composites are some of our favorite ways to do this (and in-camera double exposures in particular). This photograph shows a contemplative bride, not just getting her makeup done but thinking about life, love, and the most important day of her life (so far).

Hotel rooms always present a challenge, due to different layouts, how the light enters the room, mirrors, etc. Being prepared with OCF and a variety of clamps, mounts, and stands is very necessary.

For this photograph we used two Nikon SB-910 speedlights. We mounted one camera left and slightly behind the subject on a light stand. We mounted the other on a Tether Tools RapidMount SLX (camera right and in front of the subject). Lighting placement is key for this type of photograph: one side of the face should be lit in one photograph, and the other side of the face should be lit in the other photograph of the composite.

We use our own preset and edit our own photographs. Our double (and sometimes triple) exposures are always done in-camera (Nikon D750).



Amii & Andy Kauth (Sunshine & Reign Photography) are a wife and husband team of rad destination wedding photographers. Their work (articles and images) have been featured on numerous blogs and in print magazines as well. As authors for SLR Lounge, Amii & Andy are always stoked to share their experience and knowledge with others.

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**TETHER
TOOLS**



Living in a Virtual World

by Vance Boo

The idea/concept for the shoot was first conceived when I saw many aspiring photographers on Instagram trying to achieve the cyberpunk look in their work through color grading. I then see the trend catch on in the industry with many brands using the same color palette in their advertising assets and I thought to myself, why not do something of my own? It has to be futuristic, in an urban/industrial setting with advertising value yet not too over the edge.

I first analyzed the potential buyers of this concept. After spotting brands like Adidas and Nike using cyberpunk-themed images, I decided that it would be a scenic shot with the potential of selling footwear and apparel. I wanted to capture a scene where a futuristic cyborg lady is looking for her next adventure.

The biggest challenge for me as always, was the production of the shoot. As this was a test shoot, I have to double up as my own producer. After shooting out some mails and texts, I finally

secured the location, which was a motorcycle workshop. I chose the location because of the matching black paint on the wall with red lines and their red/black workbench.

For the final image I knew that I wanted to get the right colors in-camera as much as possible. For that, I used 4 RGB LED Tubes. Two were set in the background (red and blue), which I left in shot, acted as the rim light as well as lighting up the background. Two were on camera left (purple) and right (teal) to act as fill light and to cast the colors. I also used a Profoto B1X with RFI 1x4 Softbox on camera left to act as the key light to anchor the whole image down with white light. An additional Profoto B10 Plus with honeycomb grid and a quarter CTB was placed behind the model to act as hair light. A fog machine was also used to help create the mood I wanted.

I always shoot tethered as much as possible, into Capture One Pro. It allows me to tweak images real-time to what I need, so

that every shot I take looks just like what I envisioned. The bigger screen also allows me to spot for any mistakes or imperfection that I have to make. It also makes communication to my talents and makeup artist way easier as they can see what I am seeing. My clients or creatives working on set could also see if we are getting what we want in the final Key Visual(s). This makes communication and synergy between everybody on set so much easier.

For this particular image, my model's expression and posture was very important. It is difficult enough to get the right expression with the right eye/fingers/leg position or postures. To get the smoke move where I want in camera

with the right expressions from the talent in one shot, was an arduous process. To save myself the time on set, I shot the talent and the smoke separately and I meshed them together in post, in Photoshop. I also took parts of other stock images such as neon signs, metal pipes, computer screens and cables to add flavors and mood to the scene.

The final image was an image comprising of 2 images that I shot, and 12 other stock images which I blended in. The most important tip for blending a stock image is to use the right adjustment layers until the exposure and colors look the same as your base image.



Based in Singapore, Vance Boo is a product and still life photographer having worked with brands such as Skechers, Irwins Salted Egg, Himalaya, Boldr, Titan Digital Media, and also a pool of recurring clients as their trusted photographer of choice. Vance loves creating immersive and stunning visuals of inanimate objects that tells everyone more than what they would usually see in them.

vanceboo.com

[instagram.com/vanceboophotography](https://www.instagram.com/vanceboophotography)

