

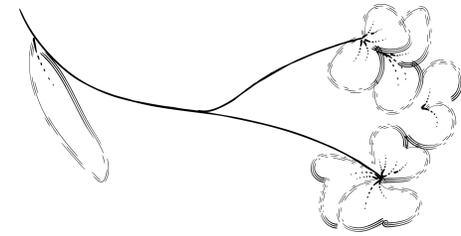


M E L I A M E L I A

The light we see

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## intro

Finding the light is our favourite part of photography, because with light, you can create ALL the magic. Even in the simplest way, once you have a more clear understanding of it. You don't need a fancy camera necessarily, you can just use your eyes and a camera phone if you wish.

What we want you to learn from this e book, is that **light is not a barrier**. The more you can learn to play with it, rather than than avoid certain types, the stronger you will feel about taking the kinds of photographs you always wanted to.

***Finding the light and seeing the light are one in the same thing.*** Light can have such subtleties at times, it can be hard to even notice it or know where it's coming from. That's where we can help you along...

We have designed this book to make **seeing the light and understanding how to use it more available to you**. Here we will open up your possibilities of being able to create more **emotive images with light, add strength and meaning to your work and most of all, enjoy seeing it everywhere**.



welcome

## about us

When it comes down to the bare bones of it , the thing we're really here for and our purpose for doing this, is to show you all kinds of humanity in our photographs, your beautiful vulnerabilities and inner strengths. Whether that is a flicker of hair in the wind, an honest and powerful straight forward portrait or just a wander down the road together. It all tells your story. It's a mix of who you really are, a journey to find who you could be, and a little inspiration muddled in.

In the past few years we have been mentoring students in photography and wanted to create this e book all about light. Time and time again it is the one main element that makes such a difference to your photography once you know how to see and use it to your benefit.

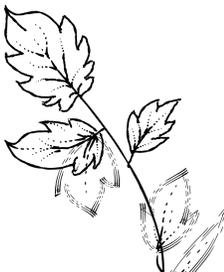
Allow us to take you through a journey of the kinds of light we love to shoot in, and show you how to take some for yourself.



Canon 5d4 50mm / f2.8 - 800 iso

## the light we see

WE LOVE LIGHT. Once you know where you are looking, you will start to see it everywhere! Making dark and striking patterns across streets or dancing with the leaves on your walls at home. Some will become very obvious and others will require a more keen eye and a better understanding. Light can play a huge part in your photography stories, it can add an intriguing variance but also can cause your portfolio to look a bit out of sync. Even if you already feel you understand it, let us explain how we see it, and make it work for all kinds of situations. Here goes -





types of light

flat light



## flat light

Flat, even light. **Cloudy and overcast.**  
The perfect kind of light for shooting most things. Can be a little 'flat' as the description says but.. this makes it easier to take an even picture. Usually no shadows, no panels of light, all good.



Sony A7iii / f2 - 320 iso



Sony A73 35mm f1.6 / iso 200

## flat light

Flat light can be amazing and is **highly underrated**. On days where all you've got is harsh sun, flat overcast light will be very appealing. **This kind can be the light that takes the most flattering portrait** or helps you to chase a wild child, and not have to worry too much about which way the light is coming from or changing your setting drastically.

**It does mean however that you need to be aware of its subtleties!**

**The one thing we would look for with overcast flat light, is which direction the light is coming from.** You can do this just with your hand. Hold your palm up, facing towards you and spin slowly around in a circle, watching carefully for when the light hits your hand. When you notice that it is lighter in a certain spot, that is the direction to put your subject. **It's subtle, but it makes ALL the difference.**



Sony 35mm f1.4 / iso 800

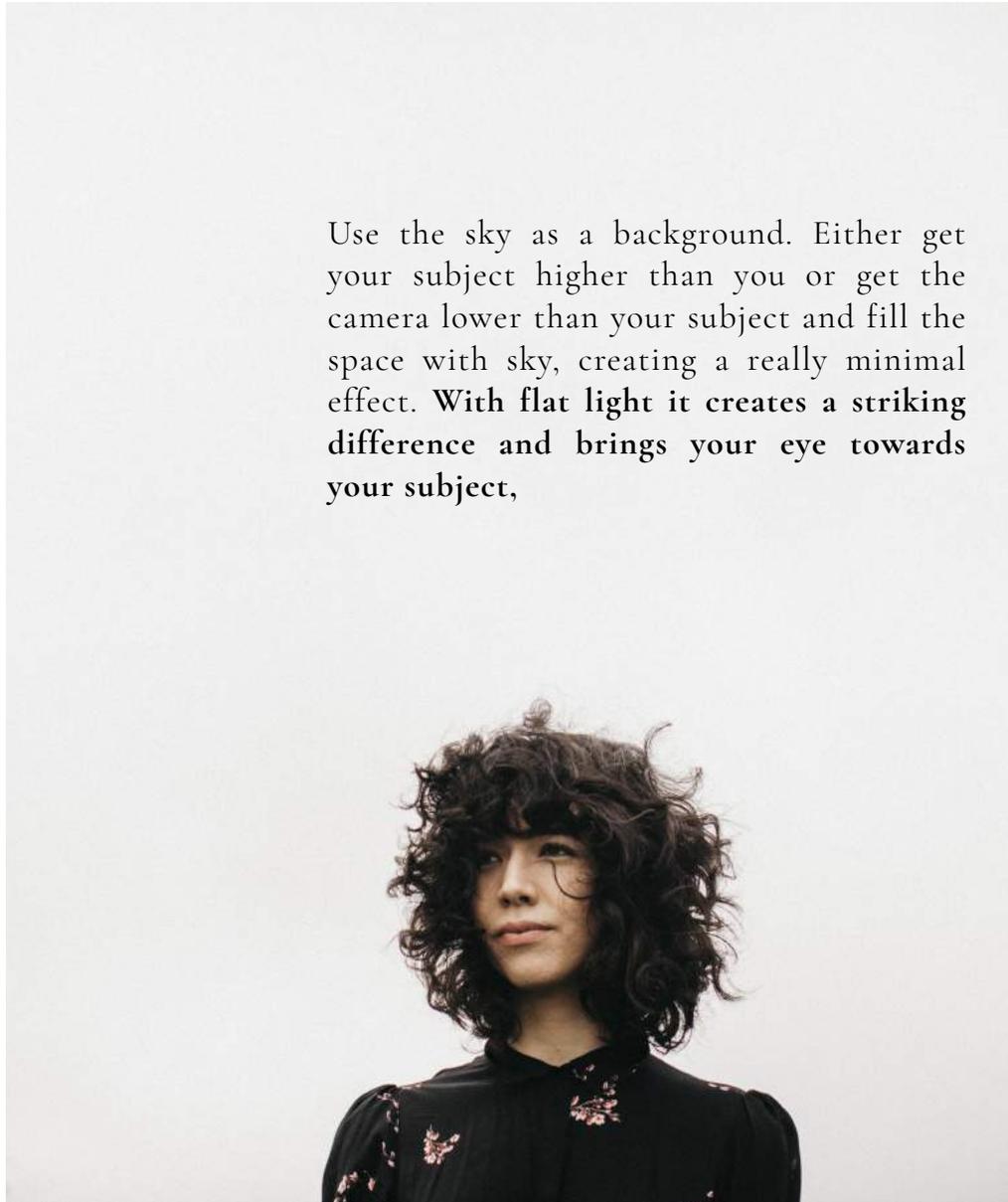


## flat light

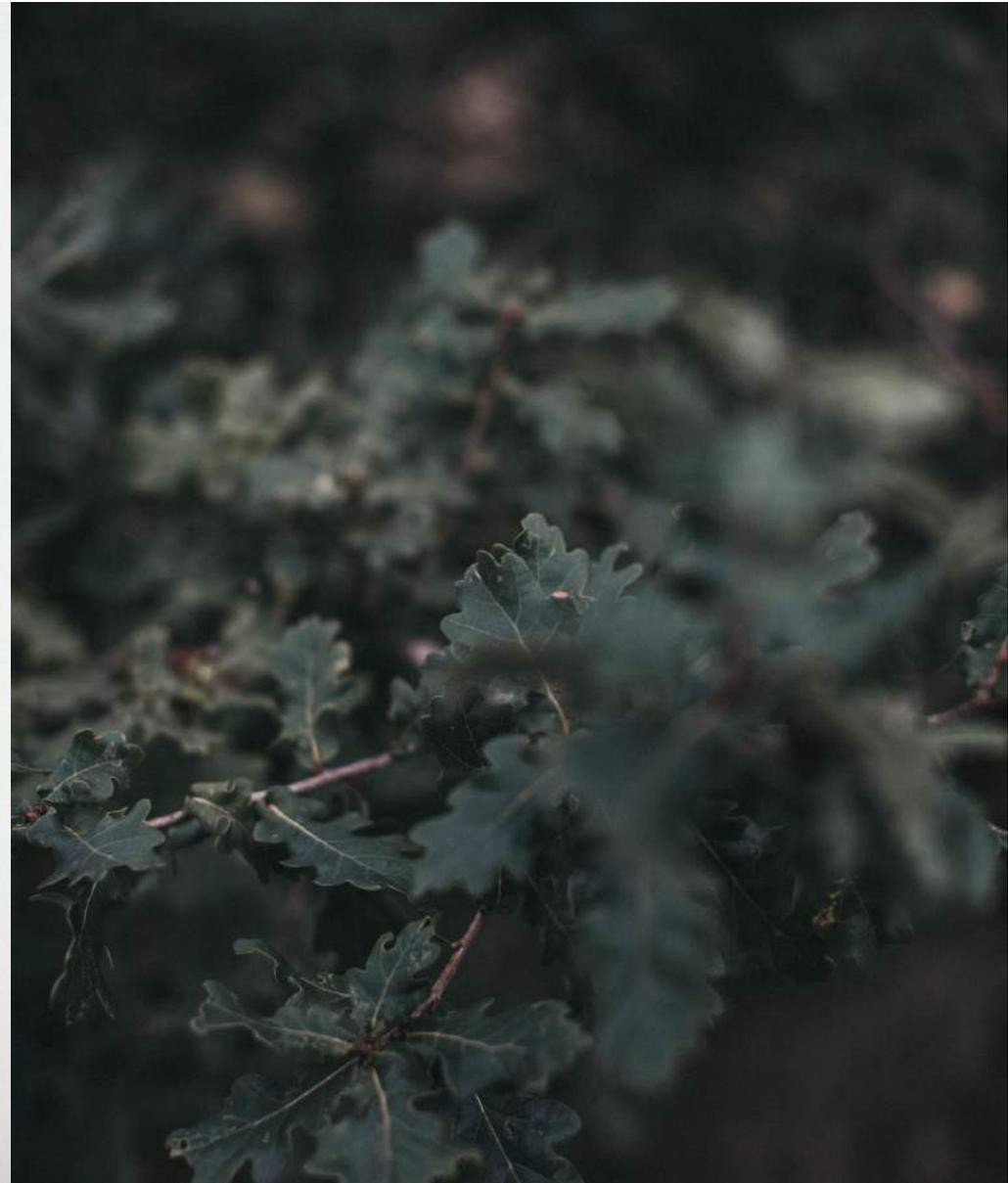
You can also use this light in other ways. **If you stand a subject next to a white wall, it can act as a kind of reflector.** Even though the light is fairly even, you will find that it is brighter the closer you stand your subject to the wall. This goes the same for areas like the beach and snow. Pay attention to where the light could be bouncing from, as you can use it to your advantage.

**Try - On the next grey day go out and hunt for some large surfaces that will bounce light off. They could be the side of a house or building. The beach is always a good one and when the light is bouncing up from the ground it fills in all the shadows from below, creating a softer more flattering portrait.**

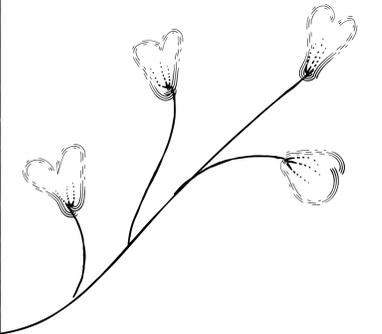
Use the sky as a background. Either get your subject higher than you or get the camera lower than your subject and fill the space with sky, creating a really minimal effect. **With flat light it creates a striking difference and brings your eye towards your subject,**



Canon 5d4 50mm f2 / iso 400



Sony A73 50mm f1.4 / iso 320



Pentax 67ii Kodak T-max 400



## flat light

Can be on a day when it's overcast and the clouds are covering the sun. When it's a bit grey outside it's described as flat because it adds no texture. **By using the environment around you, like a bright building or the shade of leaves, it helps create that texture and also gives you even more manageable light. Something you can control and play with.**





## flat light

Try - When there seems to be nothing interesting going on with the light, try working with objects, nature, glass, leaves, fabric, anything to add extra texture to your image. You can do this by placing a little bit of something in front of a part of the lens, or if it's delicate, try completely covering the lens and see what happens. You could try some sheer tights, netting, even a leaf covering a corner of the lens. Flat light allows you to play more, create more and have fun with your subjects without the worry that things will change. You are in control of the changes!



For each of the different kinds of  
light, there are ways of shooting with  
them. Don't be fearful, they can all tell  
a story, just remember what **your story**  
**is.**



magic hour



Sony A73 35mm f1.4 / iso 320

A young boy with dark hair is shown in profile, looking towards the right. He is wearing a dark blue t-shirt with a light-colored strap over his shoulder. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape during sunset or sunrise, with warm golden light and silhouettes of trees. The lighting is dramatic, with the boy's face partially in shadow.

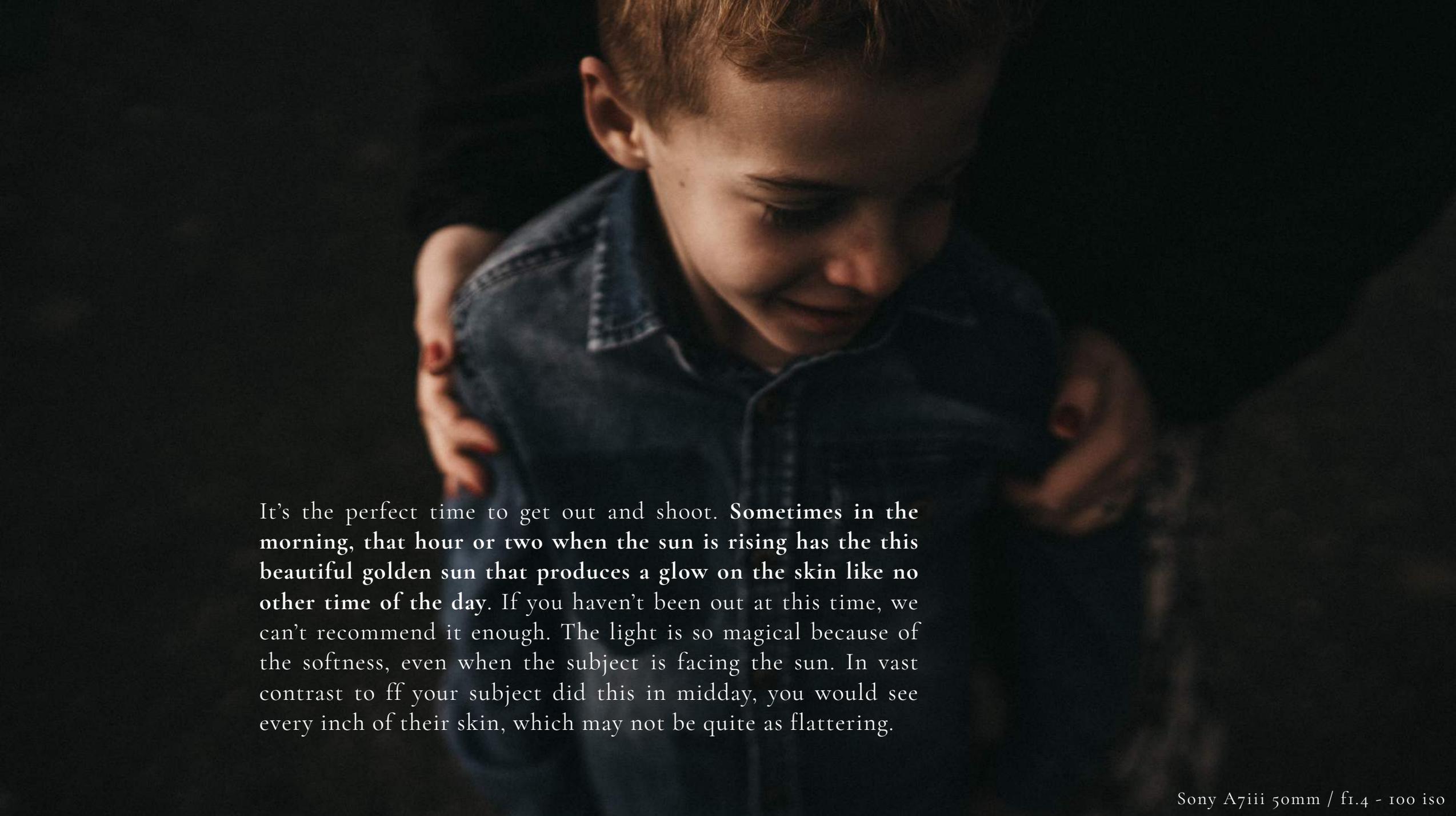
Magic hour happens twice a day, the first hour as  
the sun rises and the last hour before the sun sets.

Canon 5d3 35mm / f1.4 - 640 iso



Canon 5d4 50mm f2 / iso 100

Ooh that low sun goodness! If you haven't heard of golden hour or magic hour, it's when the sun is low in the sky. It creates a wonderful warm glow to your images. Perfect for shooting things in 'Back light' too.

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a blue denim shirt, is looking down. His hands are being held by two larger hands, one on each shoulder, suggesting he is being supported or comforted. The background is dark, and the lighting is soft, highlighting the boy's face and the texture of his shirt.

It's the perfect time to get out and shoot. Sometimes in the morning, that hour or two when the sun is rising has the this beautiful golden sun that produces a glow on the skin like no other time of the day. If you haven't been out at this time, we can't recommend it enough. The light is so magical because of the softness, even when the subject is facing the sun. In vast contrast to ff your subject did this in midday, you would see every inch of their skin, which may not be quite as flattering.

## magic hour

Choosing to photograph at magic hour can be really special for any subject, using the natural golden light to highlight areas can be incredibly powerful.

**This photograph was taken in front of a hedge with the light falling low behind it before sun set. The dappled light turns soft when your lens is set at a lower F stop such as F2.**



Pentax 645 105mm f2.4 / portra 400

magic hour



PenLeica Q 28mm / f1.7 - 400 iso

Use your surroundings to create more shadows and texture. We like to use a lot organic textures because we love adding the natural element into our images. Or you could find an interesting floor to really set the scene.

A close-up, profile shot of a woman with reddish-brown hair and bangs, looking out a window. A young child with curly hair is visible behind her, also looking out the window. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window on the right. The woman is wearing a red top. The child is pointing towards the window with their right hand.

“Photographs open doors into the  
past, but they also allow a look  
into the future.”

Sally Mann

window light



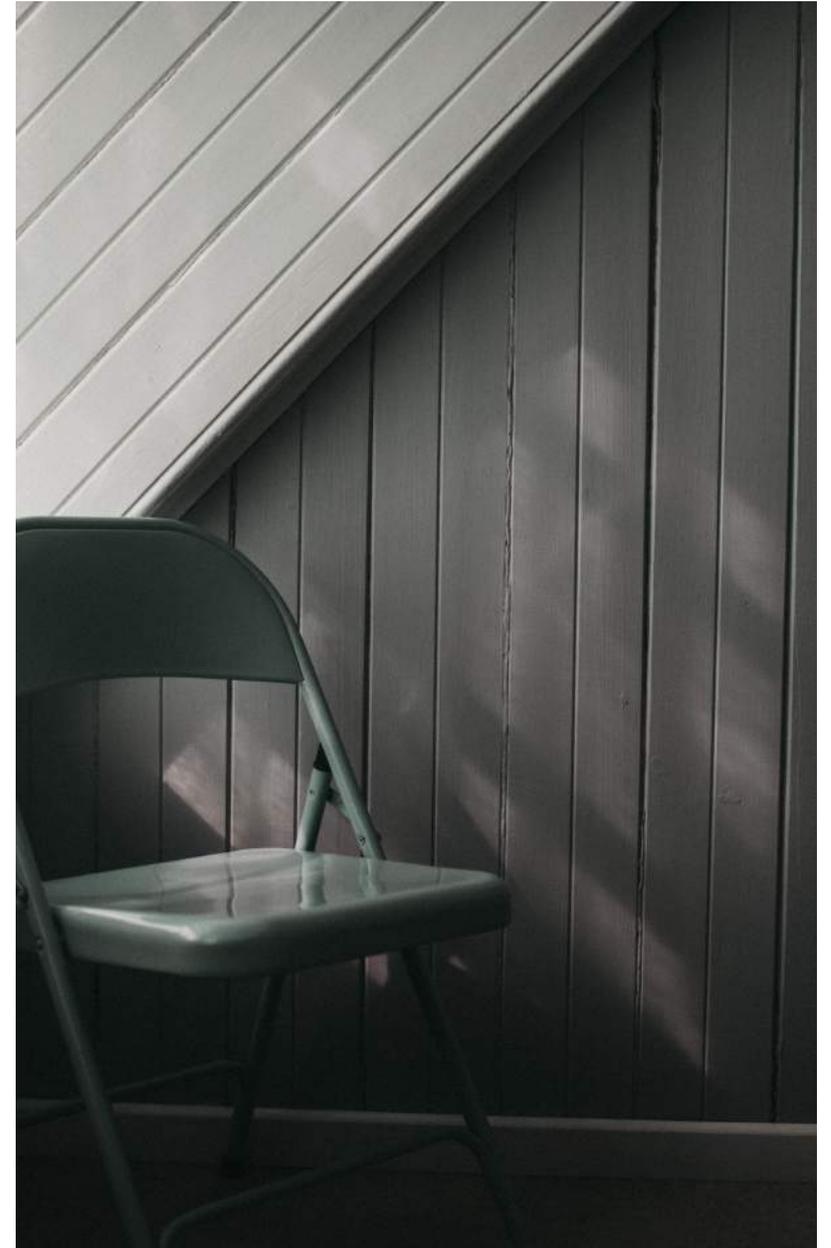


Sony A73 35mm f2 / iso 800

## window light

Window light is exactly that. It can tell such wonderful stories. If you are able, place your subject close to the window and watch how everything changes with the slightest movement. This kind of light can be used to highlight someones face in a soft way, or can be used from the side to create much more drama and interest. **If you're feeling more creative you can put your subject in the window, with the light right behind them and create a silhouette effect too by exposing for the window rather than your subject.**

It is so much more directional and can be used in a variety of ways.



Canon 5d4 50mm / f2 - 320 iso



## window light

Try standing a subject facing outwards towards the light in the window. See how the light illuminates certain areas of your subject and has a kind of gentle spot light effect.

Sony A7iii 35mm / f1.8 - 800 iso



## window light

Try facing your subject directly towards you, watch how the light almost splits the subject into two different looks, illuminated and dark and shadowy. This can be really effective if you like a more dramatic feel to your images.

Sony A7iii 35mm / f1.8 - 800 iso



Sony A7iii 50mm f.1.4 800 iso

## window light

Window light can also be used to light up a table. **If you are struggling for natural light, try moving a table or chair closer to the window.** Once it is in place and you are happy with your subject, stand in a place where you will not shadow your subject and shoot from there. This light is usually soft and will add life to any table set up.

back light

back light

## back light

This is where the main light source is coming from behind the subject you are working with. It can give you a halo effect and if you can move the sun by moving yourself around the subject, you can find a really great flare.



5d4 50mm / f2 - 800 iso



Pentax 645 f2.4 / Kodak Portra 400

## back light

Back light adds that **ethereal feel to photographs**. It can be all the difference between a fairly average scene and something that wows.

Back light and golden hour can be a beautiful combination. There are always ways to shoot with different kinds of light, **you just need to build them into your light toolkit**.

**Try - Sometimes when the sun is low it can be hard to focus with your camera. Try hiding the sun behind the subjects head, focus on the eyes and then move the camera so that the sun is just over the shoulder. You will get that incredible lens flare. This is something we do try for, as it adds texture and wonder to any image.**







Canon 50mm / f2.8 - 200 iso

back light



Canon 35mm / f2 - 800 iso

Try -

**Making a conscious effort to search for good times to shoot in back light. Often it's best to plan this in as best you can. Back light works best in golden hours when the sun is low enough in the sky to capture it behind your subjects. So choose your shooting time with intent, plan ahead and watch the magic unfold.**

high sun





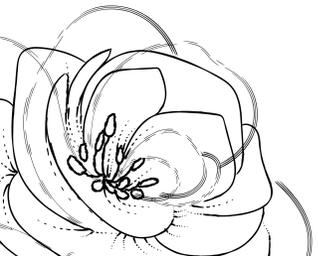
Pentax 645 f2.4 / Kodak Tri-x 400



Bronica Etrs f2.8 / Kodak Tri-x 400

This light can be a bit tricky to work with for some. High sun is what it says it is on the tin, it's when the sun is high above you in the sky and usually makes everything look **harsh and contrasty** and also adds shadows to things. A lot of people shy away from it, but you can really play around with it for some good effects.

High sun can play havoc on faces, casting shadows under eyes, noses and chins and in general not exactly showing people's best parts. However, **if you learn to move your subject so that their head is directed up towards to the sun, so that shadows cannot be seen, the light becomes a kind of spot light.** Go ahead and try it out!





Canon iv 35mm / Kodak Gold 400

### TRY:

Those harsh shadows and panels of light can be fun to work along with. Try popping your subject right into one panel of light and expose your camera for the highlights. This way, your subject will be perfectly exposed and everything else will be turned to darkness. Another incredibly powerful way to use light to your advantage.



# METERING

Once you have started to notice the light more, you need to start using your camera and its settings to capture the light in the best way.

For this we need to go back to the start and look at which settings you would like to use.

There are a few different ways that working with the light will change the way your camera 'sees' it. As with all the settings inside your camera, you also need to **tell it where you would like to meter it from** so that you can **control how the image looks**.

**We've found over the years that** a lot of people at the beginning of their photography journey don't have the chance to look at metering along with all the other elements. We use **SPOT METERING** so that when we **focus on a particular area and half press the shutter**, the camera will meter and **allow you to ADJUST the way your image looks before you shoot it**.



Dji Mavic Drone



metering for the shadows

Canon 54d 35mm f1.4 320 iso



metering for the highlights

Sony A7iii 50mm f2 iso 800

If you would very much like that **bright and breezy** look, you can actually **meter for the shadows** (the darkest part of the image) which will allow you to brighten your image and bring with it lots of light.

If you would prefer a more **moody, darker** look you can **meter for the highlights** (the lightest part of the image) and this will in turn allow you to darken the rest of your image down to really showcase the detail in the lightest part of your image.



now this is your chance to go and play with the light.

#thelightwesee



MELIA MELIA



Thanks from both of us.  
& come and share your images with us

[@meliamelia.co](https://www.instagram.com/meliamelia.co)

James &  
Jo Melia

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