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The summer heat in Florida is in full swing. So shooting outside during the days is a challenge. Lots of water, a towel, a sweatband, and an umbrella are all at the top of your equipment checklist. But it is also a good time to work on those inside photo projects and that is my focus this month. Fine Art Still Lifes are fun to create. From flowers to food items to antiques and more, all these can be incorporated into a storytelling image.



Behind the Image

"Alien Encounters"

I thought of this concept quite a while ago. The problem with projects like this one is it involves so many people that you hope will donate their time to help you make your imagination a reality. Here was my concept. I wanted to create an image of a car being lifted up by some alien force. I wanted two teenagers hanging out of the windows of the car looking up at the mothership. I have seen this concept before in the movie "Galaxy Quest" 1999. And in the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1977. Where [Richard Dreyfuss](#) stops at the railroad crossing and his truck gets hit with a strong beam of light. It is not really a new concept but I wanted to create one of my own. The project idea came up during one of my photography meetups where a new friend Dave Bardt said he had a 1933 Roadster that may work for me and a neighbor whose daughter is an actor and may want to play the part of the teen. So there it is. The project started to become a reality. I meet up with Dave at his house and took a look at the car. It has suicide doors (Doors that open backward) and that would work out perfect. Then Dave suggested the location of the shoot near his home on a side street that is not used. So then we had to coordinate our

schedules and see if the teen girl was up for the project. She was and offered her boyfriend to also be in the shoot. Now I had all that I needed. A location, the car, and the models. All that was left was to schedule the shoot.

The day of the shoot my friend Dave Wood agreed to come along and assist. You can never have too many helpers. I wanted to shoot about 9:00 PM so that it would be dark outside and I could create the environment for lighting the set. I would be using three-speed lights. Two to light the car and subjects and the third key or main light would be on a pole held over top of the car. Since there would be a strong beam of light added in post-processing I needed to light the subjects' faces as they looked up. Making the lighting believable was a big part of trying to make this look realistic. Now for the problem and you know there are always problems. It is part of the challenge to pull off such a project. It started out fine with Dave Bardt allowing me to do a pre-project shoot in his garage. No problems so far. And that part of the shoot went great. Now it was getting near 9:00 pm and time to go set everything set up on the set. I placed all my lighting and equipment back in my car and headed down the street to the location where we picked to shoot. But as I started setting up Dave's friend came and told me the car would not start. Back to the house, we found Dave had now connected up to the battery to a charger in hopes to get enough charge to start the car. After a few minutes, the car fired up and we headed back to the shoot location. The models show up and they are perfect. Dressed in the 60's period outfits and looking like I had envisioned. The models are Ryan Knieger and Alyssa Kneessi. As I was setting up my lights I found one of the speed-lights battery door was missing. Now I did not have a spare flash and I knew this was not going to work without it. As we all started looking for the batter door Dave told me he did not want to turn off the car as it may not restart and that we had to hurry as the car my overheat running. So now panic started setting in but Dave had a flash unit we could use. Now we are back with three flash units and it is completely dark outside. I always keep a headlamp in my camera bag. The type of flashlight that is on a strap that you can place on your head. It comes in handy in just such cases. A quick setup and my first test shot. Make an educated guess of ISO 400 to give me some latitude in what light was left in the sky. But then realizing that I would not be using the sky from this shot. But as I zoomed in on test shot I could see the models were soft in focus. The second shot was closer to the exposure but still I found the grill of the car was in focus but the subjects were out of focus. Right then Dave informed me I had time for one more shot. No pressure right. And it was completely dark now outside. I told Dave Wood my other assistant to turn the flashlight option on his phone on and shine it at one of the models so that I could set the focus. I knew you had to shoot manual in the dark because the camera autofocus would not be able to find an edge to focus on. I increased my ISO to 500 but changed my Fstop to F8 to get more depth of field. I set the focus and told everyone on the set to be ready. Counting down 3, 2, 1. I took the shot. A quick check on the focus by zooming in on the back of my camera and luck would have it, I nailed it. So

Dave moved the car and I thanked the models and they left. Now I have not moved my camera and it is time now to shoot the background. I increased the ISO to 2000 and opened up the FStop to F4. I used my headlamp to light the road where the car was to give me a way to light under the car when it is cut and composited above the spot where I took the shot. A couple of test shots to check the exposure and I had the final background shot at 1.5 seconds shutter speed. By this time Dave Wood my friend and assistant was the only one left with me. And we both were becoming a feast for the local mosquitos. We generally just tossed everything into the back of my car and took refuge in the cars air conditioner as we went to find a place for dinner. No great shots are ever easy but you get great satisfaction out of completing a project. I looked forward to the next day when I could get to work on the final composite that created the image above.



MARKETING 101

From my students that want to go pro, they are always asking for marketing advice. How do I start a successful photography business? How can I make money at photography? So I wanted to add a marketing tip to each monthly newsletter. These tips come from my past of owning and operating a number of successful businesses and I hope you find value in them to help you.

This month marketing tip is being prepared. Time slips upon us and before we know it, it's too late. This happens a lot in business and without good planning, you will fail. And this is not an expensive or hard practice to put into place. You start with a calendar. If you are computer savvy I recommend, Google Calendar but a good desk calendar that you can get at Walmart will do. Now you mark every holiday in the calendar. That was simple right. No, hold on, there is more to it. Timing is everything. Now go back 30 days prior to the holiday and mark that Holiday Campaign Prep Starts today. Now, you start working on your marketing plan for your campaign on that day. You have five days to get it completed. Now mark your calendar Holiday Campaign Start Date. This is the date you start releasing your campaign. You hit social media, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. You use MailChimp to send out emails or notices about your holiday specials and you are taking bookings now. You have three weeks before the holiday to get your

bookings done. For example, if you were going to run a Thanksgiving Family Portrait Special you would start preping that campaign October 28th. Then for the next five days, you do the prep work. Decide on the packages, the specials you are going to offer. You get your samples together. You create your add graphics for social media and emails. You get everything ready to release. Then on the first week of November, you release the campaign. Each year your campaigns are easier to put together as you have to build them the year before and have a lot of materials ready. Again if you are computer savvy then put together a folder on your computer for your campaign and start a notebook where you can keep notes about the campaign for this year and future dates. If you do this right you will find you will be running campaigns all year long. You will have one running while preparing another and booking the current running campaign. It all starts with a calendar. And as always, if you want help on how to get started with building campaigns or want help with marketing contact me for a marketing coaching session.



TIPS

Stuff that helps.

This section is short tips to help you get the work done more efficiently. Like any craft the more you understand about the tools the more creative you can be.

In Photoshop there are lots of keyboard shortcuts that help me quickly get work done. Most of the shortcuts are easy to find. For example, if you select one of the menu items on the menu bar you will notice in the dropdown menu the shortcut keys listed to the right of the menu item. You may want to write down a few and practice using the keyboard shortcut instead of using the menu next time. The more you use these keys the faster you become. Also on the toolbar, each tool has a shortcut key associated with the tool. For example, if I want to switch to the brush tool I just press the B key on my keyboard. And if I want to switch then to the Eraser Brush I simply press E on my keyboard. Its that simple and must faster than searching for the tools or menu items. You can find all the default keyboard shortcuts by pressing the following keyboard key combination.

- *Alt + Shift + Control + K (Windows)*
- *Alt + Shift + Command + K (macOS)*



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With over forty years of experiences in photography and business, I can help you avoid some of the mistakes that I have made along the way and help steer you in the right direction as you navigate you in your own photography journey. I have helped hundreds of photographers both beginners and pro, resolve issues, and learn techniques. And I am available to help you. No matter if you are a beginner or a seasoned pro, we all need a bit of guidance and help from time to time. And like you, I am also always taking training courses. Learning new things and finding ways to help my students. And there is a lot of training out there. Some free and some very expensive. However, I offer one thing others do not. It is my one-on-one training that my students find most helpful. Everyone learns differently. And an experienced coach is invaluable. You can ask questions, focus on weak areas, and have someone just to confide in. So if you have never had one of my iHelp session email me today and we can set up a session designed just for you. Your goals, your pace, and your help.

Contact me by email at mike@mikeadkins.info



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