

All about Self-Portraits

5 Benefits of a Self-Portrait Project

A Post By: [Anna Gay](#)

With the New Year here, many of us are making resolutions and setting goals for the coming year. As photographers, we are always striving to hone our skills and learn more about our craft, and the start of a new year is the perfect time to take on a photography project.



Photo by Cara Farnell

Now, there are multitudes of daily, weekly and even monthly projects to choose from, but a popular choice is a self-portrait project. Whether you commit to a daily 365 project, or a 52 weeks project, let's look at the benefits and possible challenges of a self-portrait project for 2012:

1) With self-portraiture, you have the luxury of being able to work at your own pace, in a safe environment. You are exploring self-portraiture for you, and only you, which gives you the freedom to experiment with lighting, posing, post-processing and so much more, without the pressures of needing to please a client.

2) Whether you are a portrait, landscape or nature photographer, **creativity** and **originality** play an important role in your work. If you are not used to being in front of the lens, exploring self-portraiture can open your mind to new creative possibilities. Each of us has our own unique form of creativity, but the more we stretch our creativity, the more we grow as photographers. We can easily fall into a creative rut, but sometimes, trying something new, like self-portraiture, can help us avoid that dreaded rut, especially if you stretch yourself on a regular basis.

3) If you specialize in portraiture, experimenting with self-portraits will give you new ideas that you may then want to apply when you are photographing another person. Practicing self-portraits on a regular basis will help you narrow down what type of posing, lighting and composition will work in a given situation. That way, when you photograph another person,

you will spend more time photographing them and interacting with them, rather than scrambling to set up the technical aspects of your shoot.



Photo by Dina MacLeod

4) If you commit to a 365 project, good for you! You are in for an extremely rewarding experience. But, let's be honest here – a lot of us are too flooded with work, family and life to make that sort of leap. If you do not see yourself undertaking a 365 project, then you may want to consider a 52 weeks project. There are just as many photographers who have completed the 52 weeks as the 365 project, and at the end of the journey, they have come just as far as the people in the 365 camp.



Photo by Lee Jeffryes

5) Finally, self-portrait projects offer you a regular dose of self-expression and exploration. With a creative medium such as photography, even if you do not regularly take self-portraits, each of your photos is a reflection of how you see the world. It is nearly impossible to explore self-portraiture without growth on a personal level, and personal growth, as photographers, almost always equals new creative horizons.

18 Stunning Self Portraits

A Post By: [Anna Gay](#)

This post is by Anna Gay – creator of our eBook – [The Art of Self Portraiture](#).



by Ali Uher

For thousands of years, artists have used self-portraiture as a means of perfecting their technique. From ancient cavemen, to the classical masters, to Salvador Dali in the 20th century, artists have looked to self-portraiture not only to discover new aspects of their art form, but also as a means of self-discovery.

Today, photographers world-wide are stepping out from behind the camera, and placing themselves in front of the lens. Thanks to photo-sharing websites that display thousands of beautiful and unique self-portraits, many photographers are finding that not only is self-portraiture a wonderful, exhilarating way to *practice composition and lighting* – amongst many other skills which are valuable to portrait photographers – it is an honest expression of self, and a way to share their experiences with other photographers.

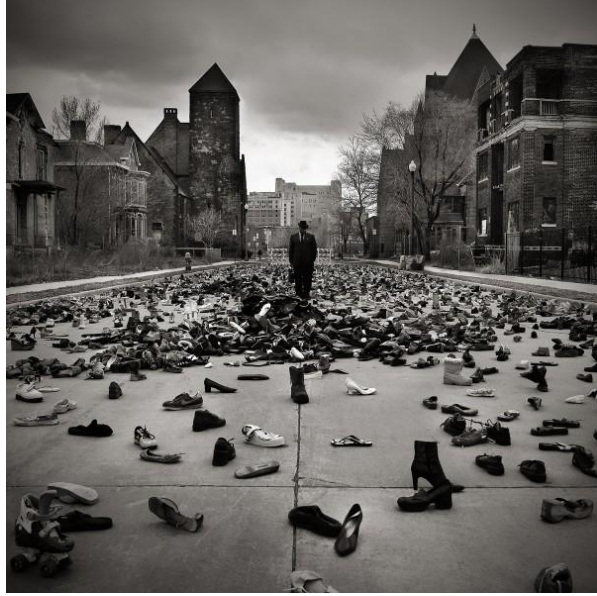
Each of the photographers whose work is featured in this post has their own unique way of expressing themselves in front of the camera. Some use natural light, while others use studio lighting. Some take a more natural approach to post-processing, whereas others take a more conceptual route. Whether you consider yourself an amateur, or a full-blown artistic self-portrait photographer, these self-portraits are sure to inspire you to step in front of the lens.



by Lila Limited



by Kelly Kardos



by Brian Day



by Boy_Wonder



by Miguel da Silva



by Bunny Spice



by ICT_Photo



by Zack Ahern



by Misha



by Viva Deva



by Steve Pontbriand



by *iNiNa*



by Zee Anna!



by FaceNorth



by sparkleplenty_fotos



by Lucem

Self Portrait Photography Tips

By: Nathan Marx

Self-portraits are tough for a number of reasons; you can't see yourself to know how you look until after the fact (tip don't forget to suck that gut in). Setup can be more time consuming due to the running back and forth setting timers. Focus is difficult because again you can't see where that focus point is resting and if you are using a timer mode there is a chance you weren't in the frame when the camera found something to focus on.



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

On the other hand, shooting self-portraits can be invaluable because you learn how to direct people for better portraits. What? I mean, that as you walk yourself through a portrait (of yourself) you gain insight in how to explain to people how to pose (you learn how to pose). The best way to direct people is to show them what you want and if you can do it for a self-portrait, you can show your subject how to pose for you.

Another benefit is you can move your lights, angle you camera, and just do plain crazy things a subject such as friends, family or a client might not have the patience for (unless you pay them well).

So what to do? Well here are some ideas (tried and tested) to increase your chances for getting that self-portrait to look like what you had planned in your mind (or close to it). Of course everything might not apply to you, but there are sure to be a few tips that you could apply and benefit from, and no matter how well you prepare there is always room for improvement.

Equipment:

The DPS crowd seems to be a group of DSLR owners for the most part so I will assume you are using a DSLR, but everything discussed is applicable to other digital cameras (and some of the discussion can be applied to film).

Pick up a tripod. Nearly any tripod will do so I won't go into much detail, but the tripod is essential as it gives a flexible yet sturdy mount for the camera.

Pick up a remote; if you are using a Nikon or Canon camera there are wireless remotes available for the less expensive DSLR's that cost about \$20. These things are a real time saver and make it easier to fine tune your self-portrait without looking all sweaty by photo number 20.

Shoot tethered; most digital cameras have a mini video if not a HD video out. I borrowed my son's DVD player (the one he watches movies in the car with) on multiple occasions for the sole purpose of shooting self-portraits. This is where the remote comes in great; you can fine tune the composition by watching that little monitor, without having to run back and forth. If you have a newer DSLR with an HD out then you could hook up your laptop or HD monitor.

Lighting, a single flash can do wonders for your portraits. I won't go into any lighting details, but photography is about capturing light. You don't need to buy a flash, I first started learning lighting using work lights. You can pick up a small but powerful work light from home depot for around ~\$15.

Coming up with ideas:

Time to talk about technique. I think where most people get stuck on self-portraits is the coming up with ideas (I know I struggle here). What really got me going was thinking about what I own and how I could use it in a photo. Now I am not just talking about props, but I am talking about features also. One of my prominent features is my bald head. So could I work that to my advantage?



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Just thinking about my hobbies and past times, inspired all sorts of photo themes. In fact when I sat down and listed items, I quickly had more self-portrait ideas than I could shoot in a single month (shooting a theme a day).



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Environment, sometimes environment can inspire the image. For instance one night of January was extremely foggy.



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Another environment I used was my previously extremely pregnant wife.



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Creating a theme:

Two items make a photo, **the subject** and **backdrop**, and I think that they are equally important. This is where your lens choice comes into play. A long lens allows you to send the back ground out of focus and narrow down the amount of background in the photo. A wide lens keeps the background in focus and allows it to be a key part of the image. Either way the background is playing a big factor by being a key element or by not distracting from the subject.

Background is key:



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Neutral background:



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Dress the part:

In fact the clothing was a big part of my inspiration for any particular image, so you could say my clothing was what set the theme and I just had to act the part (and I mean really act). Two simple articles of clothing I found very useful were an old brimmed hat and my leather work gloves. Though the items were small and pretty common, the items were great for creating a theme.



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

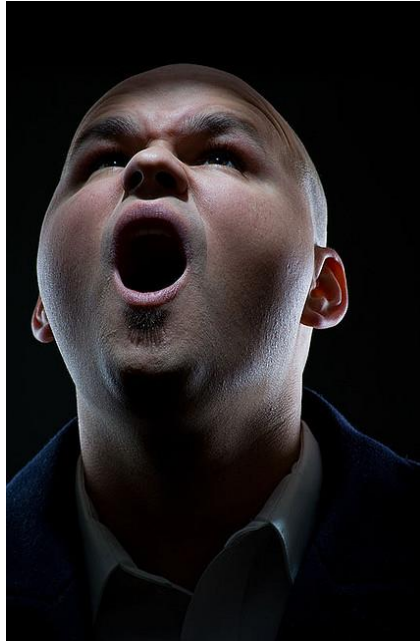
Portray emotion:

Want your photos to look boring, then act bored. The facial and body expressions you make are huge in setting the tone of the photo. This is where having a tethered setup can really help (you will be able to see results and nail it down). Aim for over the top, I mean really go crazy. The more emotion you show the better the photo will turn out.



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

If you are trying to act angry, think of the guy who cut you off on the freeway and let out your pent up rage. If you want to look like you are happy then think of the guy YOU cut off on the freeway and laugh out loud (DPS does not condone cutting people off on the freeway).



By www.nathanmarxphotos.blogspot.com

Look at your photos:

When you are done look through the photos and see what worked and what didn't. Make notes about what you liked and didn't like. Enjoy looking through the photos. If certain photos didn't turn out then do them again. If you do it right you're going to love it!

Self Portraits – 7 Tips for Going Beyond the Basics

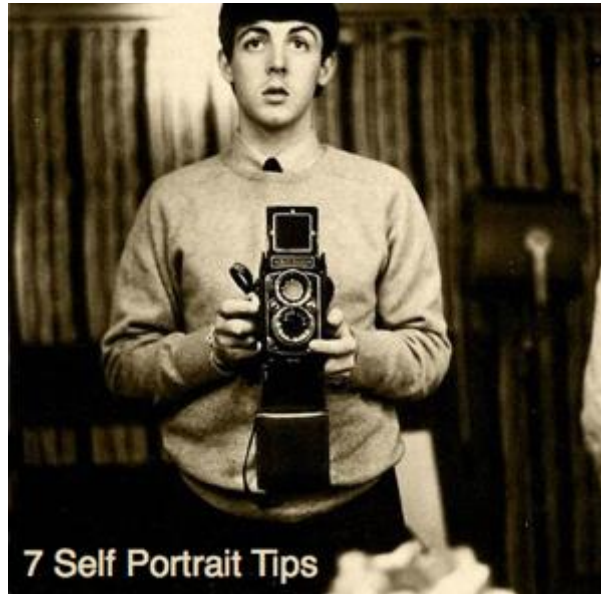


Image by John McNab

A lot of photographers have said that while they love to hold the camera and take beautiful photos, they aren't as fond of the idea of being on the other side of the lens. On the other hand, there's an enormous group of people who not only enjoy having their photo taken, they actually love to take self-portraits.

In fact, if you peruse Flickr you can find a great deal of self-portrait groups, including 365Days, a place where you can showcase – you guessed it – one self-portrait a day for a full year.

The problem is, many people consider a self-portrait to mean holding the camera firmly in your hand, stretching your arm out, and trying to get your face at a good angle in front of the lens. While that has its place from time to time, a self-portrait can be thought out just as much as a portrait you take of someone else.

Thus, here are seven tips for going beyond basics in self-portraits:

1. Use the timer, or better yet, get a remote.

Most cameras now come with a ten-second timer. While this isn't a lot of time, it can be enough to maneuver yourself accordingly. Just be sure to either use a stand-in or to focus on something at the proper distance or you'll be fuzzy! What beats a timer is a wireless remote that will allow you to position yourself and then take the picture when you're ready. Timers are a lot of fun for things like jumping shots!



Image by craigmdennis

2. Change your focus.

While you might normally assume a good self-portrait must focus on your face to count, you can make an ordinary shot far more interesting if you place the primary focus elsewhere.



Image by laszlo-photo

3. Try a silhouette.

A good silhouette tells a story and leaves no doubt in anyone's mind as to what it is. A dark, featureless shape against a setting sun won't interest anyone, but if viewers can see it's a person they'll be intrigued. It makes people wonder who that is, raises questions, and makes them want to know more.



Image by zachd1_618

4. Treat your shot like you would for someone else.

Pretend it's not a self-portrait for a second. Look around your surroundings and picture what you'd do if you wanted to take a portrait of a friend. I took my children to the park one day as the sun was dipping low and the light was incredible. I nearly called them over to sit in the

grass so I could lie down and take a shot of them from a low vantage point. Instead I decided to take a self-portrait – which is when tip number 1 comes back into play. My remote was very handy that day!



Image by sherina

5. Get Inspired!

You can use all kind of fun things to inspire yourself beyond the stereotypical self-portrait. Listen to music and if a line in a song stands out, try to take a self-portrait that reflects it. Re-enact a moment from a movie. Browse Flickr or try one of the numerous inspiration groups that give daily or weekly self-portrait challenges. It can end up being serious or silly, but you might be amazed at what comes to mind when you set out with a purpose.



Image by It's Holly

6. Keep your face out of it!

This is one of those arguments that, much like Mac vs. PC, gets people up in arms: Is it a real self-portrait if your face isn't in the picture? I firmly believe that it can indeed be a self-portrait even if you're simply showing your hand or your foot or what have you. If you don't feel like having your face in front of the camera, show people something else!



Image by It's Holly

7. Bring the emotion.

I know that I just told you that a self-portrait can be more than just your face, but remember too that the face – and especially the eyes – hold a great deal of emotion and that can make such an incredible impact on a self-portrait.

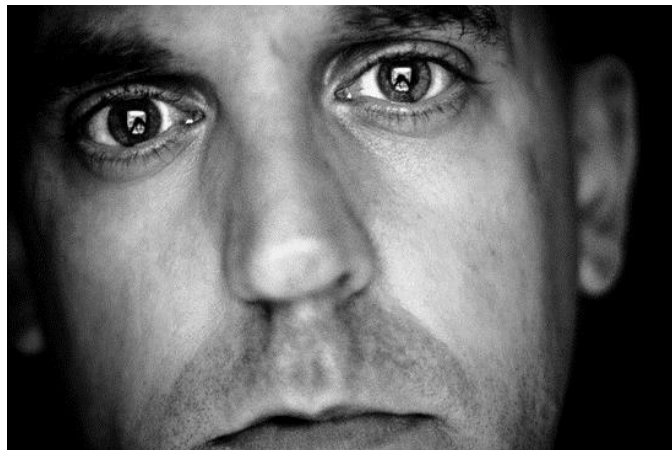


Image by Nerboo

Interview with Rosie Hardy

A Post By: [Darren Rowse](#)

Today I'd like to introduce you to the photography of [Rosie Hardy](#). A 19 year old photographer I stumbled across at Flickr (on the recommendation of some of our readers on Facebook). You can see her [Flickr stream here](#). Rosie agreed to answer a few questions about her photography – I hope you enjoy this short interview and accompanying image.



How did you first get into photography?

I first got into photography when I was around 16 years old (I'm now 19). I would always flickr through magazines and wonder why pictures I took never looked like they did, I was slightly confused and intrigued by it all. Like any teenager, I wanted to feel pretty, so I started taking random snaps of myself and playing around with them in Photoshop and posting them to my old myspace.

After a while, I joined flickr, and I was around 17 when I decided to take up the 365days Project (1 self-portrait every day for a year) to really improve my photography and post processing skills. I didn't start taking it seriously until a few months in, and I saw how passionate about it that I was. I started shooting in new locations, with props and lighting, and then moved onto shooting with models and clients. Self-portraits are something which are nice for me to do occasionally, but they really gave me that first initial leg up into the world of photography.

What do you know now that you wish you knew when you started?

I wish I'd known how important it is to have patience with yourself and keep going. I think with the internet in all its glory it can be easy to get disheartened, especially when you get negative feedback, but what is important to keep in mind is that every amazing photographer was once a horrible photographer who took awful photos. We all start somewhere, I look back on my early work and cringe! And I'm sure next year I'll look back on the stuff I've yet to do and cringe at that, too! Point is, I wish I'd not been put off by all the other talented photographers out there.

You don't need to worry about what you have to offer if you enjoy what you are doing – I'm still not entirely sure what I want to say with my photography, but I know eventually I want to say something, and I'm happy working with what I enjoy until I figure that out.

What type of camera do you use most?

I use the [Canon 5d Mark II](#) right now, but for the first year and 1/2 I used a Canon 400D, so very basic with no other equipment but the kit lens and a tripod.

What is your favorite lens?

I LOVE the [70-200mm 2.8 IS lens](#), and I'm saving up for an [85mm 1.2 lens](#). I also recommend the [50mm 1.4/50mm 1.2](#) lens, and the [24-70mm 2.8](#) has served me well.

Could you share a favorite recent image and tell us a little of the back story behind it

This image (above) was done a few weeks ago at Stoke on Trent University studio. My boyfriend and I had recently broken up, and I was powering through the split, but still feeling an overwhelming feeling of sadness at the loss of a friend and a whole part of myself – I had moved over to America to be with him (I am from Manchester, UK) and I had to leave everything behind, including the incredible time I'd had over there.

I found these butterfly stickers in a shop one day, and wanted to portray this concept of all the butterflies you get when you love someone quietly fluttering away from you. It was heart wrenching when it happened. I wasn't 100% sure I even wanted to let them go.

A while after the shoot, I actually saw that it could have a different meaning – that all the butterflies were coming to me to comfort me and surround me like something of a defense. I start to pick myself up and realize that life goes on and love will come again, and that there will always be butterflies and without trying to sound too sappy and melodramatic,

sometimes you have to let them go. Photography is great for me like that, it's like a little outlet I have to express myself and release any sadness/emotion that I might have.

Do you have a tip for beginner to intermediate photographers that will help them improve their photography?

Practice every day! I would definitely recommend taking up the 365 days project – even though it's self-portraiture, you learn how to direct yourself and pose yourself (and then you can pose models a lot easier) and you get used to being on both sides of the camera.

Shooting every single day sped up my improvement by miles, and it also was nice to document my year and see how much my style has changed. Also – take every opportunity you get, however dull or small, because it opens up SO many new jobs and opportunities! I've had such an amazing 2 years and I wouldn't give up photography for the world.

Connect with Rosie and see more of her work at [her site](#) and on [her Flickr account](#).