



WRAPPING



WRAPPING
1/100s F4.5 ISO200 31MM

OBSERVATIONS

I'm not exactly sure where the inspiration came from for this image. I wanted a shot where the eyes were very dominant and covering Jordan in old Christmas wrapping paper seemed the way to go. I really like his expression which, although only communicated through his eyes, speak volumes. Narrow focus, bright catch lights and good definition around those parts of the face we can see add emphasis to Jordan's expression. Having so little information to read in his face or other parts of the 'story' help make the end result so strong. The jagged rip across Jordan's eyes together with the crinkled paper and Sellotape explain the predicament. A slight tilt to the frame adds some dynamic and the small touch of Jordan's hand helps to humanise the image. These details work well.

Less successful was the very bright reflection off Jordan's shoulder. This is a little distracting. While the dark blue background harmonises with the blue stars, a more contrasting colour would have been bolder. This would help exaggerate the story further.

For my next attempt with an image like this I'd like to ensure Jordan is well separated from the background. This is a question of distance, focus and lighting. More control of lighting when using highly reflective surfaces is another area to improve upon. I'd also like to learn to interpret a variety of poses that would work in this mid length format to ensure the result is not 'anonymous'. I'd like to experiment with other stories; Jordan full length with other 'oddball' presents, being unwrapped by a pretty girl etc.

Undertaking a high concept shoot using a variety of unusual textures, materials, poses, situations and positions would ensure I have the chance to push this story line further.



HOMEWORK



HOMEWORK
1/2s F5.6 ISO200 40MM

OBSERVATIONS

Jordan's bright and angular body create a strong counterpoint to the dominant horizontal and vertical lines in the background. I am very happy with his pose - the diagonal positioning of his arms lead towards his face drawing the viewer in. Both his posture and expression are reflective and this is enhanced by the reflection of his body in the polished table. Combined these create a good sense of Jordan deep in thought. I'm happy with the framing: Jordan is balanced on the right by the decorative pieces to the left and he floats happily just below the mid line of the frame. Natural light from an adjacent window provides the only illumination and this provides depth to his body, texture in his clothes, separation from the background, good detail in his face and a nice fall away to the right of frame.

Less successful is Jordan's reflection on the table. Unfortunately there is a line in the table which bisects his reflected body and face. Unfortunately it was not possible to position Jordan elsewhere during the shoot - and real life is not always possible to avoid - but I do find the line distracting. There is also a very slight curve or tilt to the black horizontal lines in the decorative wall at the rear of the image. These 'measure' as level but don't quite look right. The antlers to the top of frame need a little more space above them. The lighting is perhaps too even - it would be nice to have some deep shadow top right.

I'd like to spend more time working with natural light indoors to learn how it falls across surfaces, casts shadows and disappears into shadow. I tend to regard artificial light as areas of light and areas of 'not light'. I'd like to consider natural light in the same way - particularly where it all ready modified by the position of windows, curtains and so on.

I plan to put away my flashgun as much as I can. All spaces can be shot with natural light. It may mean long exposures and tripods but I'm keen to see how natural light can be used and controlled.



FINGER FRAME



FINGER FRAME
1/125s F10 ISO200 38MM

OBSERVATIONS

Jordan's angular and abstract pose works well in this image. The diagonals formed by his arms and hands are accentuated by strong shadows on his face and clothing. These lines (real and implied) draw the viewer in to Jordan's eyes. The asymmetric pose with one forearm appearing longer than the other is balanced by the framing to give a pleasing result. Strong side lighting accentuates Jordan's shape and muscle tone to add strength, definition and character to his portrait. The side lighting also picks out the texture of his shirt adding depth, but keeping his body clear of the background and his fingers separate from his hair. The background itself is pleasingly neutral. Lighting also adds nice detail to Jordan's hair.

Less successful is the balance of lighting across Jordan's face. The highlights to the right of his nose are a little too strong. While there is good detail to the left I feel the image would be stronger if the viewer were drawn to a bright slash of light right across his face and a little more light in his eyes. I'd also prefer to see all of Jordan's mouth. The position of his lower hand obscures half of it and the colouring of the lips is a little too bland.

To progress I'd like to spend more time experimenting with lighting techniques. For an image like this the exact positioning of the model and highly directionalised lighting are critical. Slight movements can make a real difference so I'd like to experiment further with light modifiers. I'd also like to improve my ability to critically assess results as I shoot. This image is as much about the eyes as it is about the whole image. Yet I don't feel I fully understood that while I was shooting.

Taking the shoot more slowly in future will give time to objectively scrutinise images as they are gathered. This will allow adjustments to be made as necessary.



HEAD & SHOULDERS



HEAD & SHOULDERS
1/125s F6.3 ISO200 60MM

OBSERVATIONS

I particularly like Jordan's cheeky grin in this image. There's a good sense of mischief in his face emphasised by his smile and the rare appearance of his dimples. I'm also pleased with the simple yet balanced composition produced by his casual pose. His slanting shoulders and tilting head add informality while light from over the shoulder adds good hair detail, outlines the body and brings his t-shirt to life. The shadow cast on the wall adds symmetry and balance to the portrait. I'm happy with the neutral background. This image works well on its own and does not need any background detail. Despite the dominant light from the left of frame there's good detail on both sides of Jordan's face, with a sparkle of catch lighting in his eyes.

I'd like to see Jordan's chin dropped a little to remove the hint of double-chin visible. There's also a very slight hint of a dark strip running up his chin, along his nose and into his forehead. The shadow to the right has been boosted in photoshop but I'd like to see it even darker. Jordan is smiling - but I'd like to see it reach his eyes. I'd like less shine on the skin to the left of his nose.

This was difficult: Jordan just wasn't in the mood to pose and I was unable to bring him to life. Although I'm pleased with the result I intend to work on my ability to engage my subject and enhance my skill at not just directing subjects but eliciting from them the moods, state and temperament needed for the image.

Probably the best way to tackle this is through experimentation and practice. Different people respond differently to different stimulus in different situations. I think a good start will be to spend a few minutes with each subject prior to a sitting building rapport, developing a connection and establishing trust.



MARMITE



MARMITE
1/60s FF ISO200 44MM

OBSERVATIONS

I'm pleased with the overall results of this portrait: Jordan has an open, engaged expression and it's easy to read something of his personality from the twinkle in his eyes. The simple square-on pose encourages the viewer to be drawn into the activity (eating). Lighting over Jordan's shoulder defines the shape of his arms, shoulders and head setting him apart from the background whilst adding good detail to his hair.

Less successful is the size of Jordan's hands and right arm. They are just too big compared to his head. This effect was caused by using wide lens (44mm crop format) close to Jordan. This has exaggerated the size and shape of those elements nearest to the lens. I'd also like to see more contrast in Jordan's face. While the light is even and balanced from the front I don't feel there is enough definition or interest. A more directional light in front or to the side would ensure this. Finally, while I love the background colour it's very nondescript, reminiscent of a passport photo booth. I'd prefer to see more context with Jordan placed into a different setting. His bedroom, the kitchen or even at a bus stop would help: this image just needs more background information.

Going forward I want to ensure I'm happy with each portrait set-up before adding the sitter/model. This will allow me to fully and objectively check lighting, camera settings, location, background information and context before engaging the subject. Being more prepared in advance will improve the technical aspects of the image and afford me more time to concentrate on directing the subject.

Setting a clearer brief will be important - for example the inclusion of a suitable background. Better advance preparation will help me achieve this as will practicing lighting set-ups before hand. Being more involved with the subject to elicit a better look or pose is also part of the process.



BED



BED

1/3s F6.3 ISO200 40MM

OBSERVATIONS

There are many aspects of this image I'm pleased with. I particularly like Jordan's relaxed and dreamy pose. I like how the natural light falls obliquely across his face to pick him out of a fairly busy environment. The shadow caused by the depression in the pillow where his head rests helps this. But the light also accentuates the line of Jordan's jaw adding shape to his face, linked by the line of his upper left arm leading in. Light picks out Jordan's headphones and this lifts them out of the shadowed side of his face then feathering away to the top left of frame. I also like the colour combinations which start bright and vivid to the right and then paling to the left.

One could argue that Jordan's hands are a little too large compared to his face. The angle of the shot and focal length contribute to this, but overall I'm not too concerned by it. I would like to see the cable from Jordan's headphones run more clearly to his iPod just to strengthen the story. Dropping Jordan's chin would outline his jawline further. Perhaps slightly warmer skin tones would be nice.

This image took advantage of natural, unmodified light. I'd like to learn more about how this can be used to my advantage. I love playing with flash and modifiers but there's a lot to be said for spending time to really understand how natural light on its own can be used to create superior results. This image showed me what is possible and I'd like to explore this further.

Frank assessment of every photo set-up - and the desired outcome - will help me to determine the best type of lighting to use. Automatically including natural light in my repertoire, and perhaps always shooting a naturally lit version will help me experiment and build the skill set needed.