CDIA Introduction to Lighting Theory, Its a wrap!

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This week we wrapped up another great photography course at CDIA, Introduction to Lighting Theory DP114.

> This module will explore and demonstrate the use of light so that students of light will be able to recognize the physical properties of light: direction and quality; hard vs. soft; and that they be able to modify light to suit the needs of their photography. Students will also learn how to identify and work with varying color temperatures.

Of most practical value to me was learning how to use a light meter to measure incident light (the actual light hitting a subject), whereas the camera's TTL metering measures reflected light (the brightness of light reflected off a subject). We also learned how to use light glass and metal and work with their reflective properties using diffusion screens, reflector discs, or gobos, and either natural ambient lighting or photoflood (constant) lighting indoors. Before moving on to indoor settings with artificial lighting, we initially honed our skills with portrait shooting outdoors using ambient lighting combined with the tools mentioned earlier. My favorite part of the course was learning how to do Black Line and White Line Photography with glass, also known as Bright Field and Dark Field.

The strength of the class was the actual instruction of lighting theory, lessons which I found highly valuable. The weakness was we were expected to peform all our shooting in groups of 3 or 4 during short bursts of time in class when we'd have to set up tables and lighting and later break them down, and I felt unable to achieve a satisfactory level of quality in my photography because I felt rushed.

Halfway through the course I realized I needed to set up a home studio where I could spend longer periods of time and have the freedom to play around and test various lighting scenarios. To that end, I spent a day running errands to Home Depot for clamps and extension cords, to JoAnn Fabrics for inexpensive black cloth to line the walls and velvet to shoot small objects on, to Staples for black and white foam boards, and finally to Hunts Photo and Video in Melrose to purchase a Smith-Victor 4 Light Photoflood Kit. Total cost for the whole basement studio was close to $600, not including the ping pong table already in the basement.

Next week we refine our lighting skills and learn to use strobe lighting or flash in course DP111 Introduction to the Studio.

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