Tom Nochi on Monday Motivation

They say “Don’t work with children or animals!” Well, in that sense I’m a glutton for punishment!

I work with both and I love it. Sure – it’s a challenge. Actually it’s more like a bag of challenges, but the satisfaction I get from achieving the shot I’m after is magnified accordingly.

My name is **Tom Nochi**. I am a London based creative photographer. I try not to limit myself to one niche of photography, rather I take every brief I receive and build my creation around it. At times this can prove a lengthy process as you well know. Planning the lighting, poses, angles and more is not a bad process to have, but sometimes creation takes a rhythm of its own. When I spot the opportunity to capture something I must jump at it before it passes.

You know that feeling you get, when you SEE IT through the lens, what you had in your mind’s eye and trigger the shutter to capture it.

For today’s Monday Motivation, I’d like to talk about those moments. I’d like to talk about capturing the shot you were not planning for.

I find myself making more and more children and pet’s portraits these days, and as a father to three awesome boys I often “use” them to help me setup before the client arrives.

The thing is, as children go they are not always up for being photographed, and that’s where your communications skills and patience have to shine. In this case I was setting up for a

collage shoot I had booked for Father’s Day.

This was in the front room of my home, with a very simple setup. A frame with a black backdrop (I often use it as a curtain to control the levels of ambient light from our French doors, and also VERY handy to have if the client decides they would like a low-key portrait of their child right after you finished the intended shoot!!). In this instance, over the black backdrop, I draped both a light blue fabric and a light blue paper. The light falls differently across fabric and paper and I wanted to try both. I also had a seat for the subject, which in this case was a wicker chest.

For the lighting I set up two strobes. The Key Light had a medium size soft box as the modifier and was positioned to the front right of the subject. Then there was a second spotlight to the left back of the chest lighting the background. I also used a reflector to fill in the shadows to the left.

Now the tricky part. “Guy!!! Come help me set the lights please!!!”, In comes the little man with bags of energy – “I want Loulou too!” (our 8-year-old Springer).

Really!!?

After a failed negotiation to lose the dog and me glancing at the clock, I decided it'll be more in my interest to follow the little man's demands or I won't achieve my aim. This is what you might face shooting children and/or pets. Every time!

Some kids over-pose because that's what they were told to do – "smilllllllle!!!" Others feel very uncomfortable in front of the lens. They have a short-lived patience and get bored really quickly.

On the other hand, there are the pets. Some are beautifully trained and pose to command, and others are timid, boisterous or full on uncontrollable. Put the two together and you've got yourself a real challenge.

This is how I approach these shoots.

1) I always take my time chatting to the child about what they like. Power Rangers? Sure. Cars? No problem. But the thing that always works without fail is, "How would you like it if YOU took my Picture??" Supervised of course, I always allow the child to press the shutter button and see the image after. They *love*it. Then its my turn to take theirs and they can run over to see what they looked like. That's a brilliant Ice breaker and it hasn't failed me yet.

2) I always take a break in the middle, way before I need one and offer lots of praise. Kids love that.

3) Then when they return relaxed I press them a little more to give me what I need pose wise, eyes etc.

But this was not my plan, I just wanted guy to help me with setting the exposure.

In this case, I included myself in the initial shots using the

timer. That allowed me to interact with Guy directly, right before the shutter opened, and make him laugh naturally. After the first shot I returned to have a quick look at the what I captured and that was when **I SAW IT**. That opportunity to make a portrait of Guy, framed by the light-stands and gear around him.

I left the Sigma Art 35mm lens on and kept shooting, initially joining guy to make him laugh again and later on introduced Loulou to the frame.

A few moments later, juggling getting Loulou and Guy’s attention,et voilà! I got a series of portrait shots I hadn’t planned for and probably wouldn’t have created had it not for that moment of realisation.

These moments are common when you work with children and animals. Take your time to do the ground work with them, relax, don’t rush, make it fun, and don’t be afraid to improvise, and then it’ll happen. You’ll SEE IT too!

Thanks Tomer for an awesome dose of Monday Motivation! You can find out more about Tom and Tale Photography on their website, Instagram and Facebook.

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