

Shooting Assignment: Detail Portrait



Assignment: Do a series of portraits in which the subject is not the face of the person being photographed. Instead, crop in on the expressive details of the objects that relate in some way to the subject. Part of the face may be shown, but it should not be a headshot. Use the body or objects to help convey a person's character or interest. The only rule is that you cannot include the whole face.

Think of the hands of a farmer, a pianist, a baker. Or the feet of a ballet dancer, a long distance runner, a place kicker. Perhaps the belly of a pregnant woman, the bicep of a weight lifter. Hair caressing a pillow, fingers clutched in prayer, a peering eye. The details of the human body make great photographic subjects, either as expressions of ideas or emotions, as graphic shots, or as a way to say something about an individual. Whenever you are photographing someone, try to think of details of their body or dress that would get your message across in an indirect way.



Are there particular parts of their body or items of what they wear that are important to what they do for a living or a hobby? Does some part of them really stand out? Can you find a way to abstract what you want to say about the person by using one of these elements?

The point is to use your eyes and your imagination, whether you want to use detail and abstraction to say something about an individual or about the beauty of the human body. If you are making photographs of details of the human body, you will be working intimately with people and will have to direct them, tell them where to pose, and how.