

Light Painting Still Life / Table Top Photography



18 sec
F8
ISO 200

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT:

- a DSLR, or camera with **manual settings that include “Bulb”**
- a camera that shoots **RAW format images** (not mandatory but highly suggested)
- a **sturdy tripod**
- an **electric cable release or remote trigger**
- a **lens hood** or shade for your lens
- a **digital watch or timer** (or remote that has a timer)
- a **flashlight like a Maglite** (See link at bottom for Harold Ross' instructions on using a 300 lumen flashlight and diffuser.)

CAMERA SETTINGS AND SETTING UP

- **Dark Set:** To avoid ambient light from registering in your shot a totally dark room is required.
- **Set up your camera on tripod** with remote attached or set up to fire the camera.
- **File format** – shoot raw.
- **Turn off any image stabilization** (IS or VR) on your lens.
- **Turn OFF “long exposure noise reduction”** unless you have a lot of patience. What it does it takes a second exposure of equal length of just black, then merges it with your shot to get rid of the noise. But if you're doing a 2 minute exposure, you have to wait another 2 minutes to review your image and be able shoot again. You will be using a low ISO, so noise shouldn't be a big factor.
- **White balance** – Auto White Balance
- **Shutter Speed:** will be determined by you and how long you think it will take to make your light painting. Or **BULB Mode** – For exposures longer than 30 seconds.
- **ISO** –Choose the lowest ISO possible. Ideally 100 or 200.
- **Aperture Priority:** Set the aperture anywhere in between f/4 and f/8 to achieve maximum sharpness. Deeper apertures of f/16, etc., will help your sharpness factor but will take longer to expose.
- **Focus** – Initially focus using auto when the lights are on. Then switch to manual so your camera isn't hunting for something to focus on when the lights are out.
- **There are few things to remember here.** The longer your flashlight shines, the light will accumulate and therefore increase the overall exposure. This is why you should run test shots and paint carefully. It's not an exact science to start with, but after a few test shots, your accuracy can be high, especially if you take notes—whether mental or written—to help you orchestrate the final image.

HOW TO DO IT

Set your camera on Bulb, open the shutter using your locking release / remote and walk into your scene and start lighting the objects in the camera view using your flashlight. It sounds simple but can be quite tricky to get just the right amount of light in different places, and still get a good overall exposure. Here are a few tips or starting points, then you just need to experiment and adjust as you go.

- **Always make sure the flashlight is aimed at the subject.**
- **Don't aim the flashlight back towards the camera**, unless you want what is called "light bugs". Sometimes you can use that technique on purpose to create streaks of light and outline your subject, and that can work well also.
- **Keep the light moving the whole time** so as not to create any harsh lines or bright spots.
- **Apply less light on light objects and more on dark.**
- **Hold your flashlight 2" to 8" away from object** depending on the size of object, and the intensity of light that you want.

The things you want to look for in your first image are:

- **How did you do with your flashlight painting?** If it was too bright in one area and not bright enough in another, just be conscious of how much time you spend on one spot and adjust accordingly.
- **If it is overall too dark or light**, you may need to adjust your exposure time or your aperture.
- If the flashlight isn't showing up well enough **you might need a longer exposure time** (just go from 30 seconds to 60 and try again) to allow you to paint slower and cover more areas better.
- **If you want the light more even**, back up and use a wider beam.
- **If you want it more focused** and like outlines, get closer.
- **Did you get any light bugs** you didn't want?
- **Did you get a ghost of yourself** or a body part?
- **Generally look for any problems** or areas you want to correct. Take note and do it again, and again, and again – until you're happy with it.
- **Be prepared to take a multitude of photos** before you get one that you're happy with.

Websites to visit:

<http://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/beginner-light-painting-photography/>

<https://haroldrossfineart.wordpress.com/video-tips-and-techniques/>

<https://haroldrossfineart.wordpress.com/light-painting-tools-and-resources/>