



PAWEL LIPSKI

3 STEPS  
TO  
**STUNNING  
PORTRAITS**

SUMMARY



# 3 STEPS TO STUNNING PORTRAITS

## 1 LIGHT



*Colours  
Shadows  
Contrast*



## 2 COMPOSITION



*Focus  
Impact  
Balance*



## 3 EXPRESSION



*Soul*



# TOP 14 MOST POWERFUL TECHNIQUES

# 3 STEPS TO STUNNING PORTRAITS

## 1 LIGHT



### Indirect

Top Shade  
Window  
Door  
Tunnel  
Pillar



### Direct

Front-Side



## 2 COMPOSITION



### Clean Background

Rule of Thirds

Twisted

Fill Frame

Different Angles

## 3 EXPRESSION



### Eye Contact

Face / Head

Hands

Body Pose

Talk To Your Subject

*Posed*

### Become Invisible

Interaction

*Candid*



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# LIGHT

*Colours  
Shadows  
Contrast*







## **Indirect**

Top Shade  
Window  
Door  
Pillar  
Tunnel



## **Direct**

Front-Side



## **Indirect**

Top Shade  
Window  
Door  
Pillar  
Tunnel



Technique 1

# Indirect Light

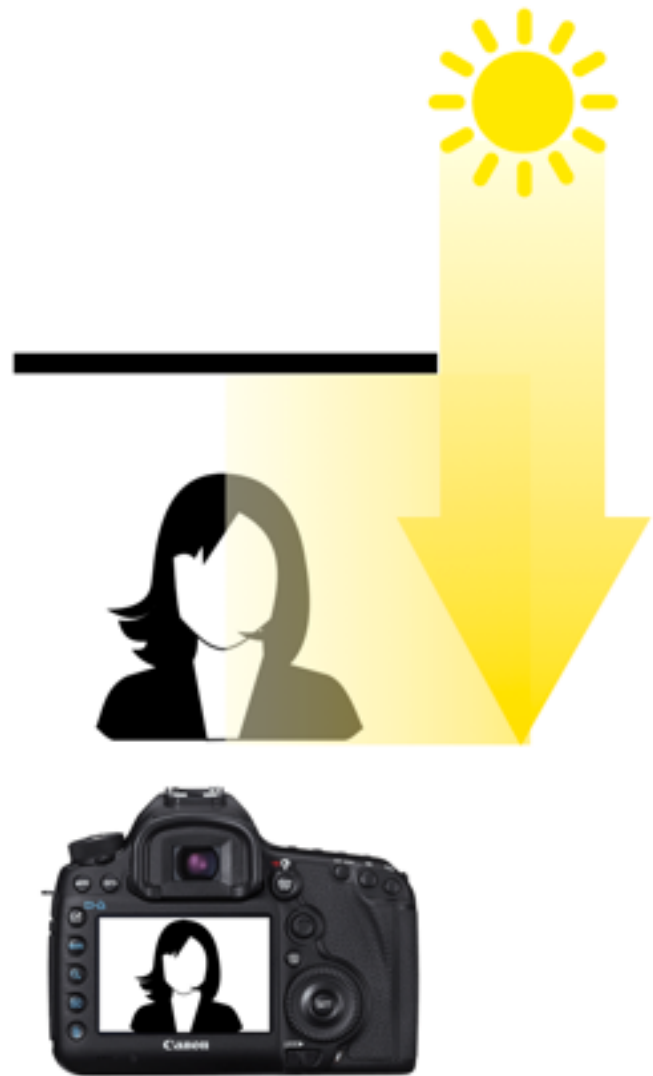




# Indirect Light



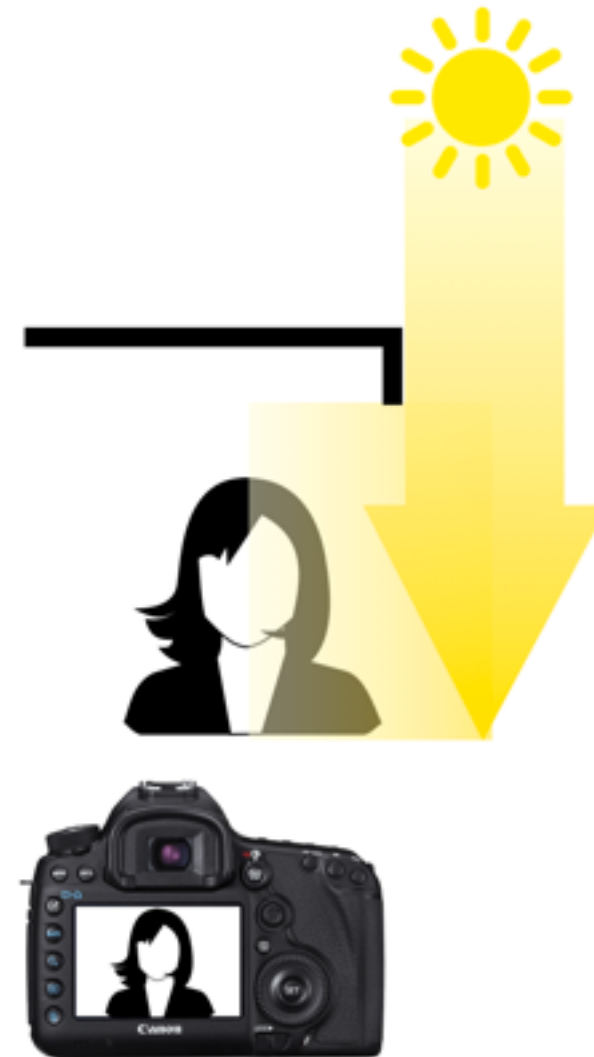
**Top Shade**



**Window**



**Door**



**Pillar**



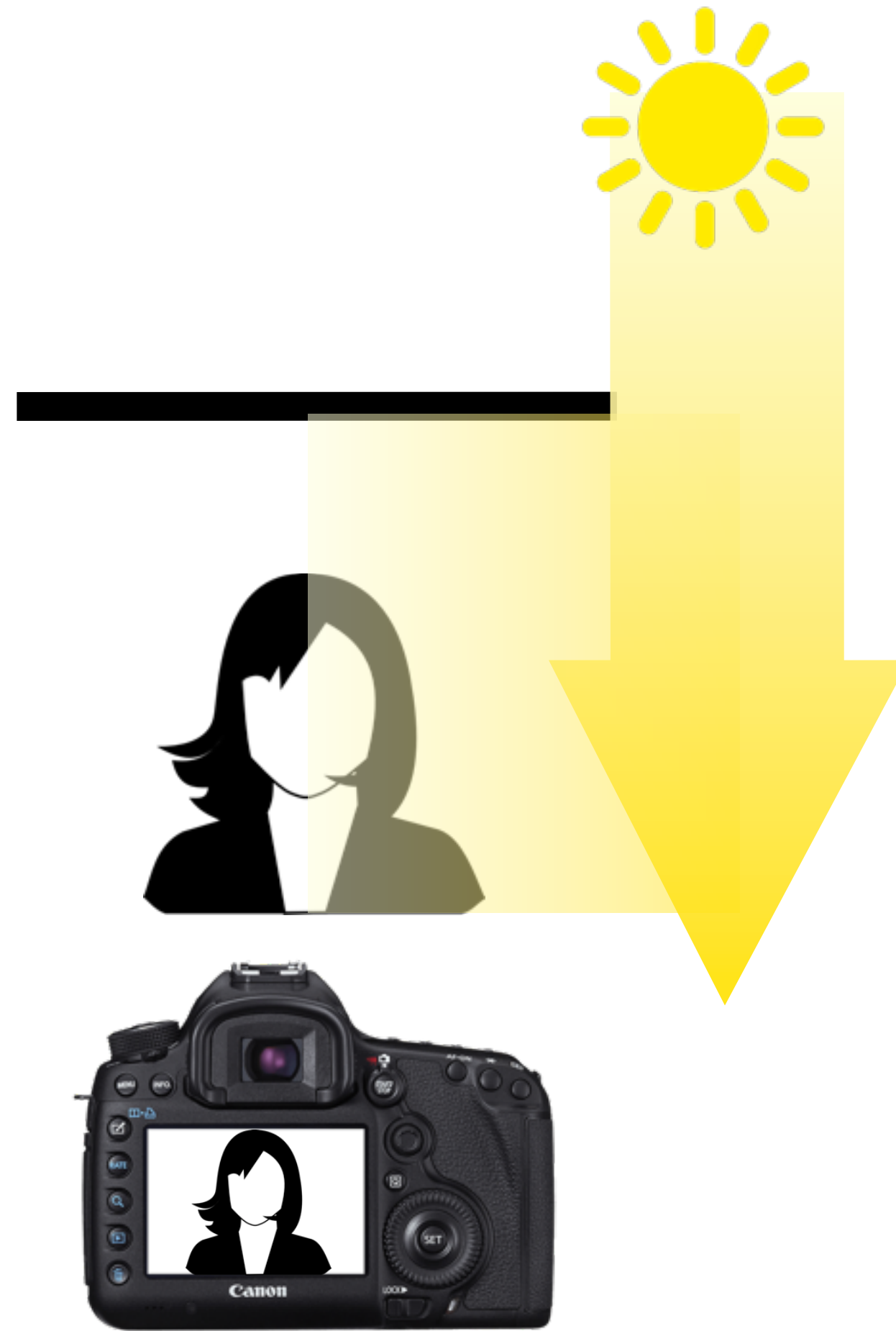
**Tunnel**





# Indirect light

Top Shade







**Indirect light**  
Top Shade

Wide

Low

Background  
with less light

Face towards light,  
at slight angle

8m+ from  
background

1-3m from  
direct light





**Indirect light**

Top Shade

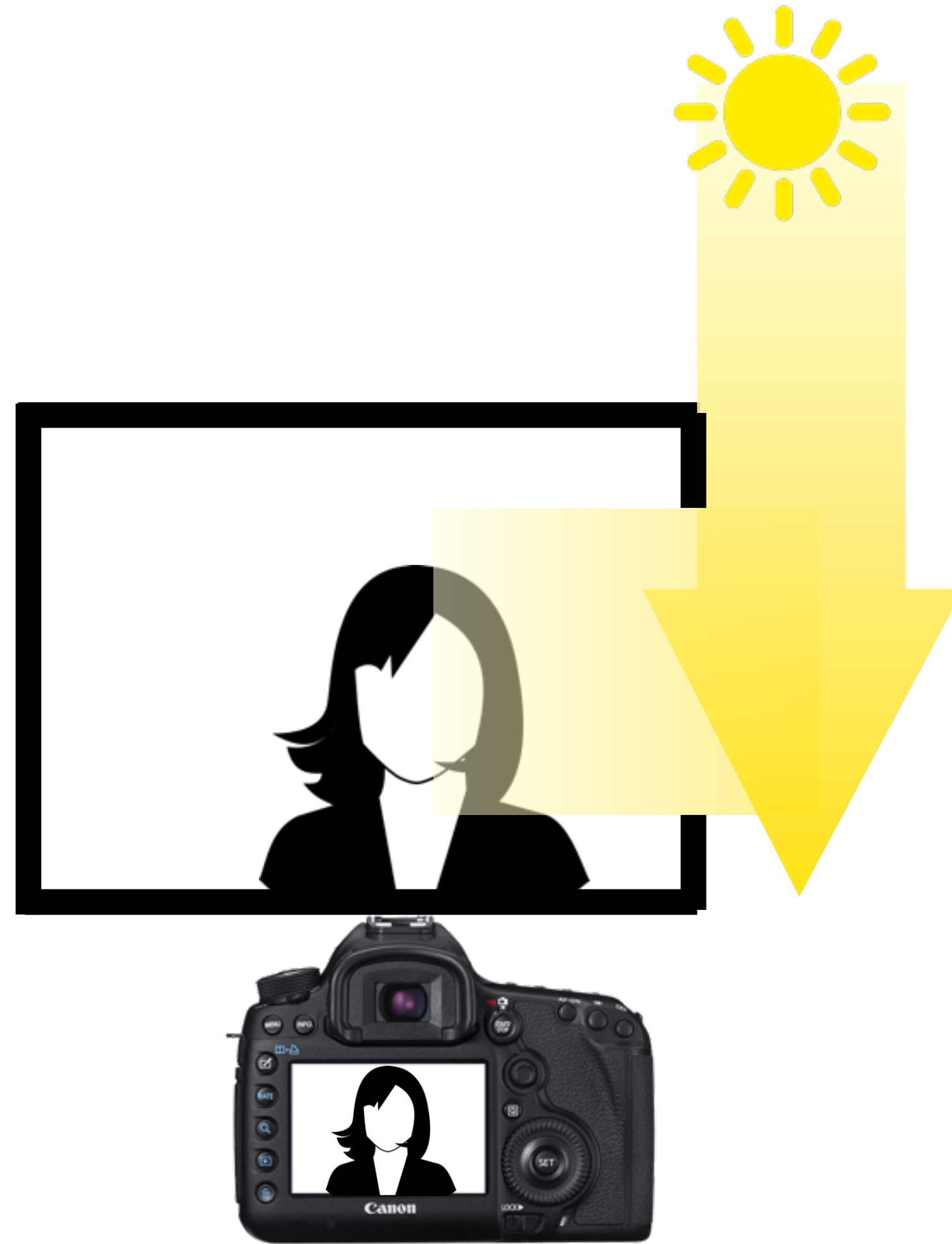
**Travel Portraits:**

- Find interesting people who already are in top shade, or...
- Wait until they get there



# Indirect light

Window



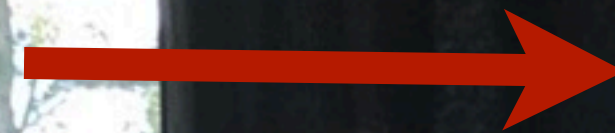


Shooting  
direction





Non-  
transparent  
curtain



Shooting  
direction





- Min. 2-3m between window and background wall
- Non-tinted glass
- Switch off the lights
- Shoot along the window
- Subject must face towards window, at a slight angle

**Indirect light**

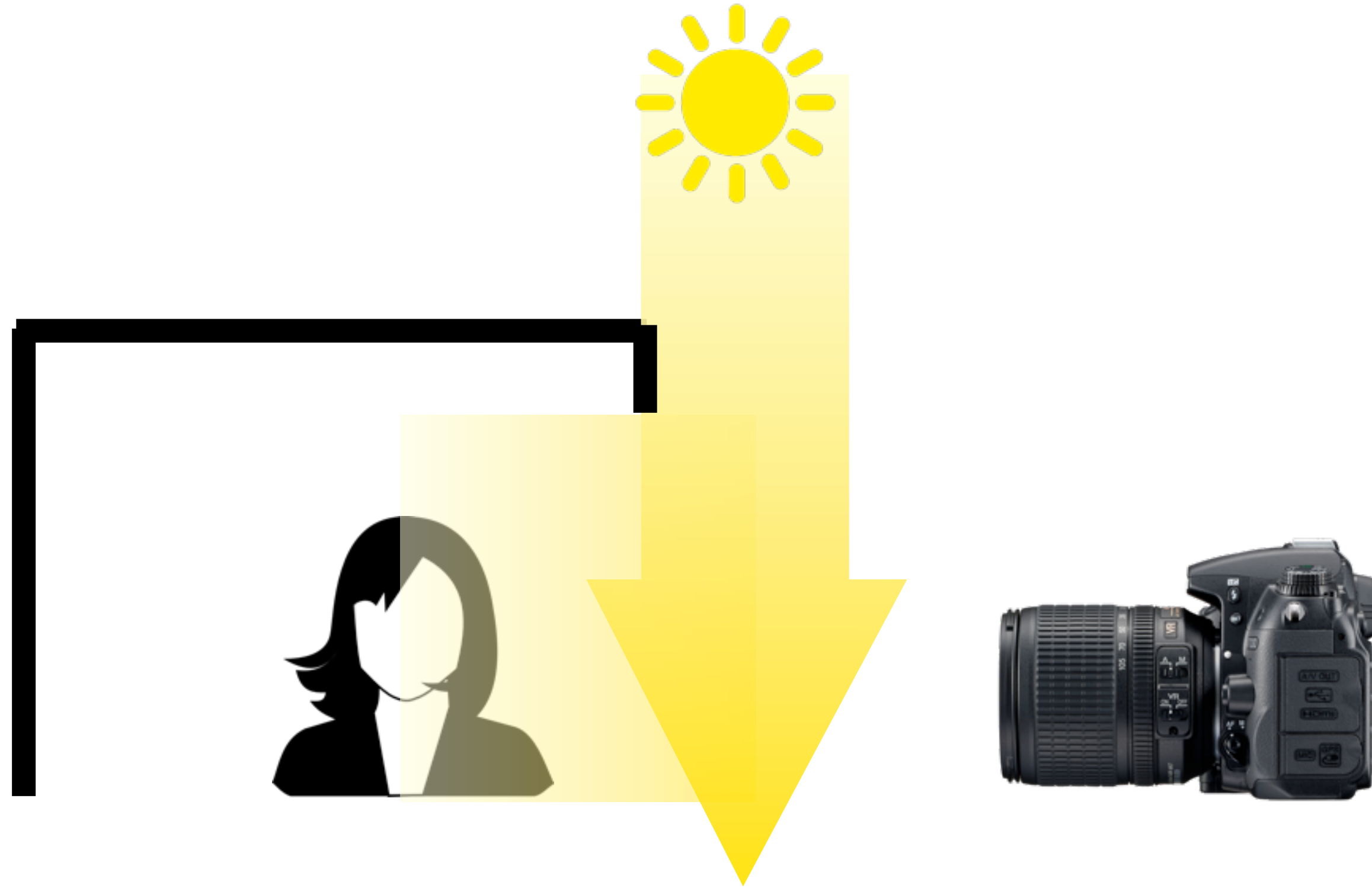
Window





# Indirect light

Door





**Indirect light**

Door

Shadow

Direct  
sunlight





# Indirect light

Door

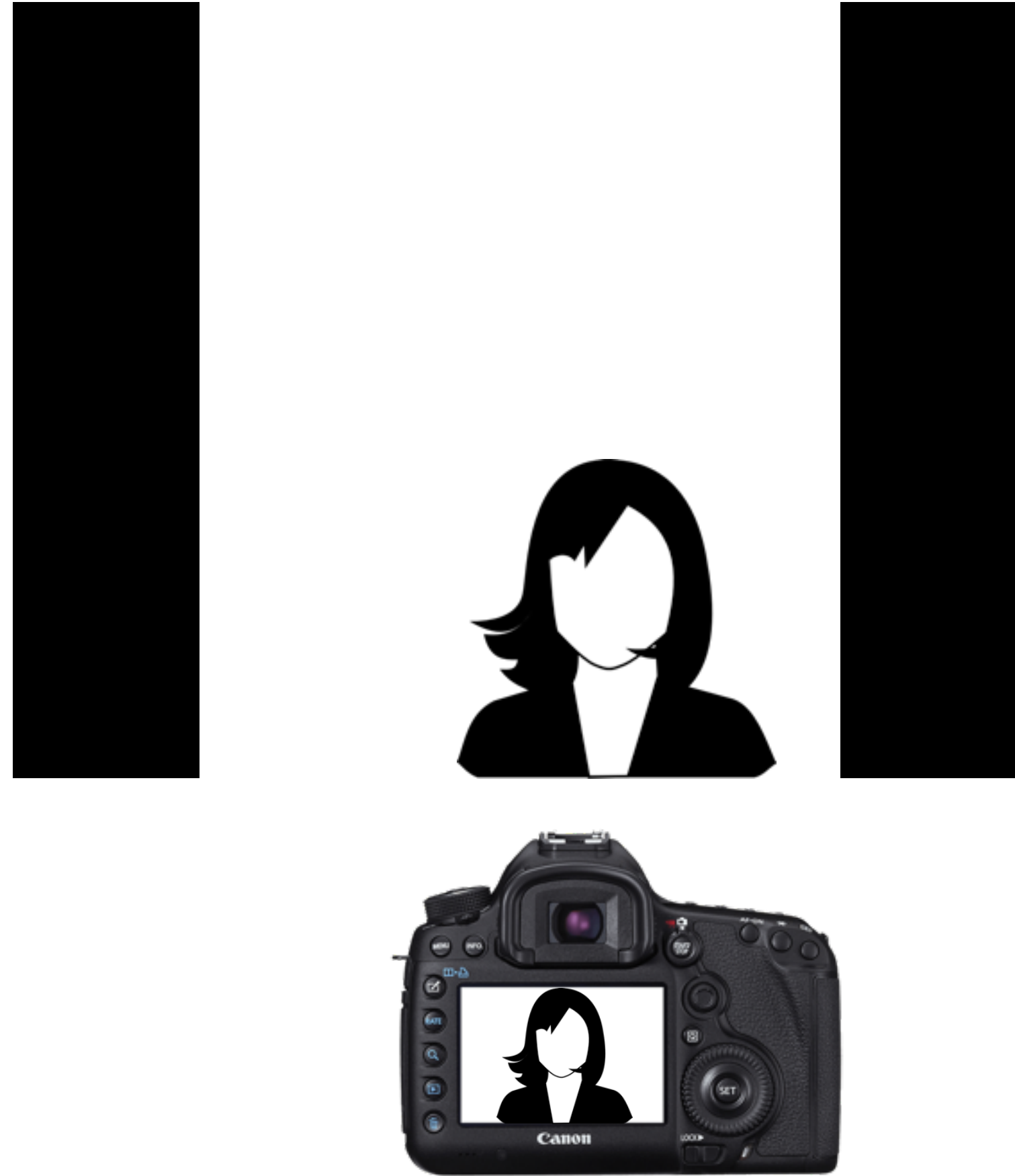


- Subject just inside the door
- Avoid doors with strong colour



# Indirect light

Pillar(s)





Pillar





Wrong  
spot



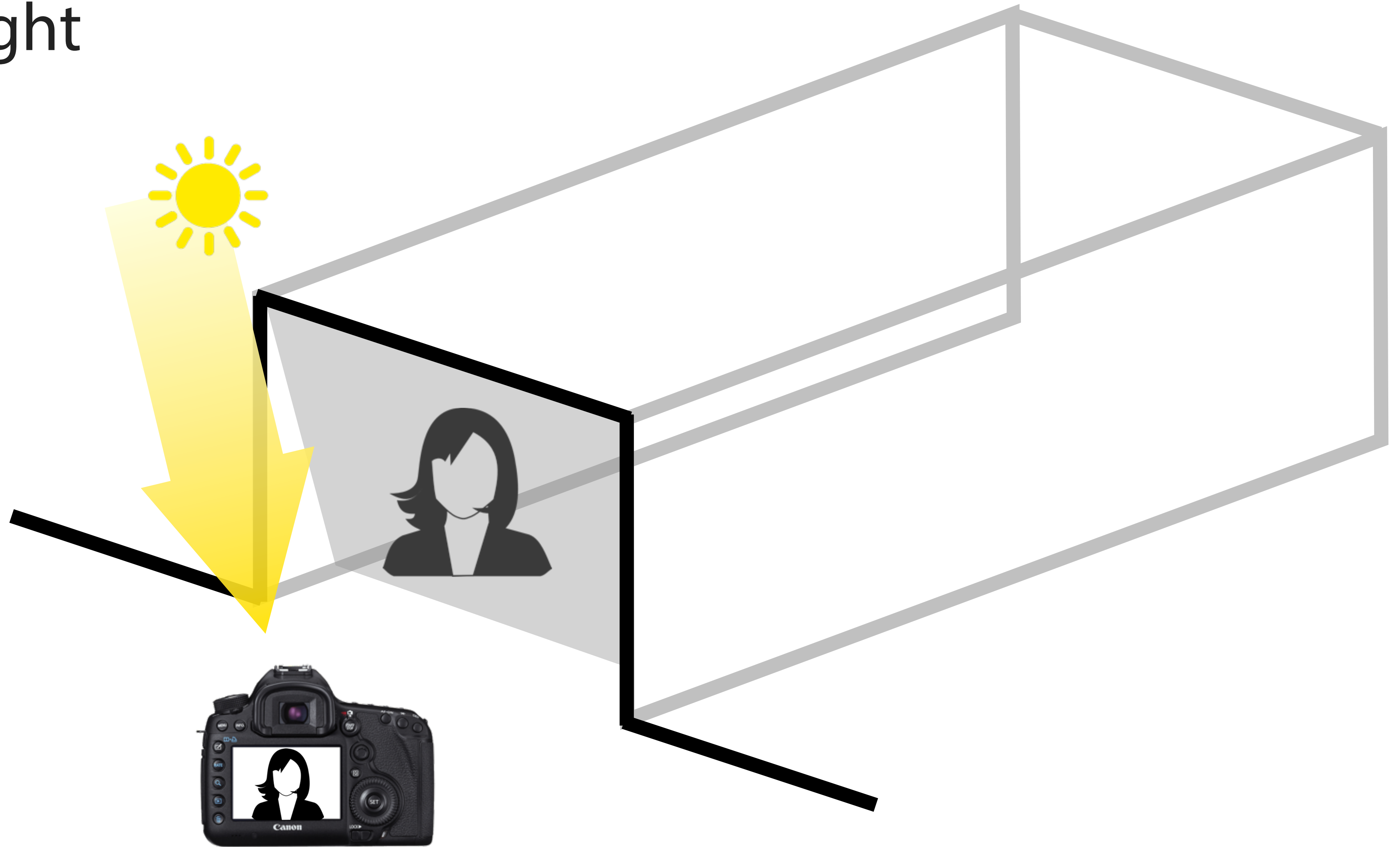
Right spot





# Indirect light

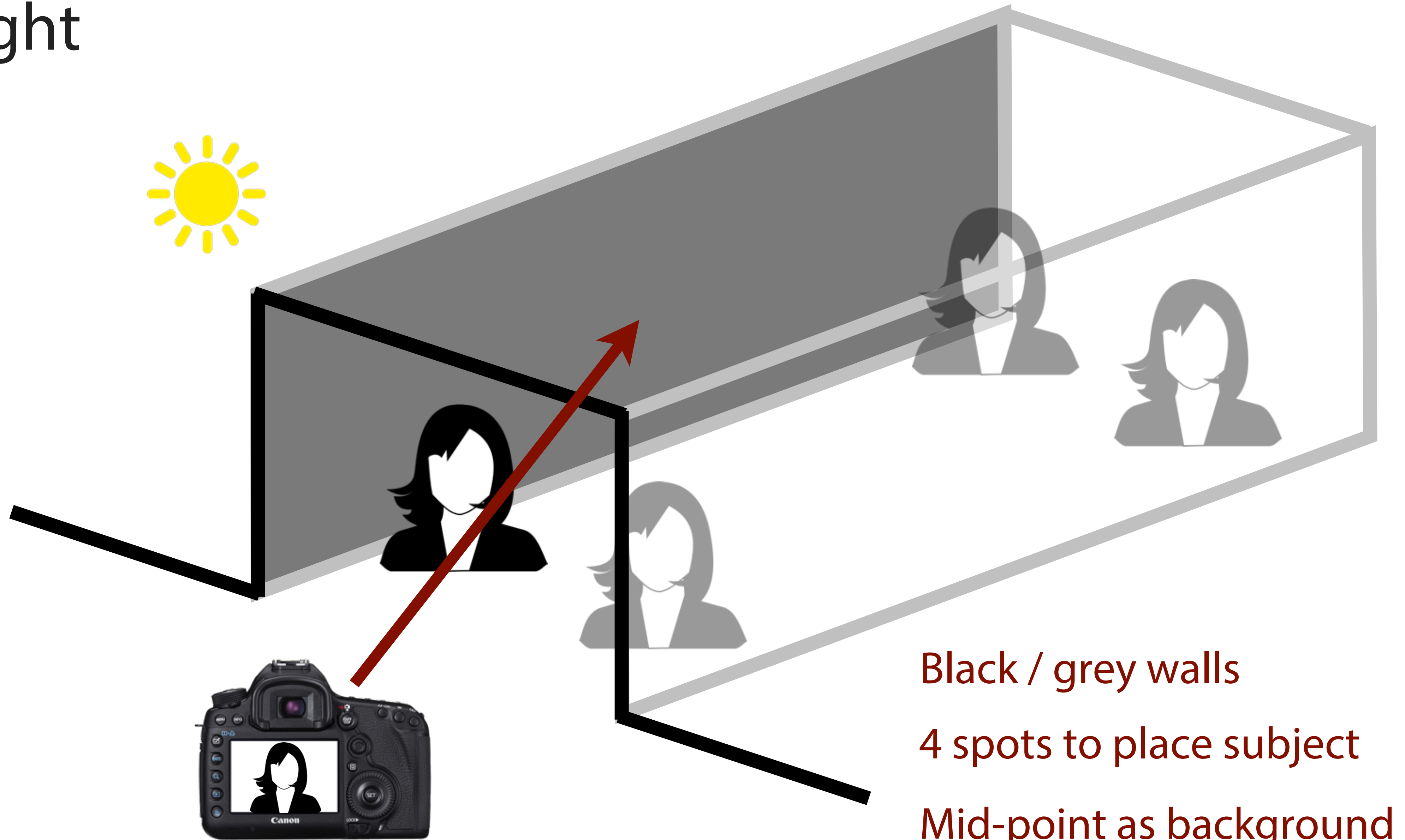
Tunnel  
or  
Carpark  
Entrance





# Indirect light

Tunnel





**Indirect light**

Tunnel







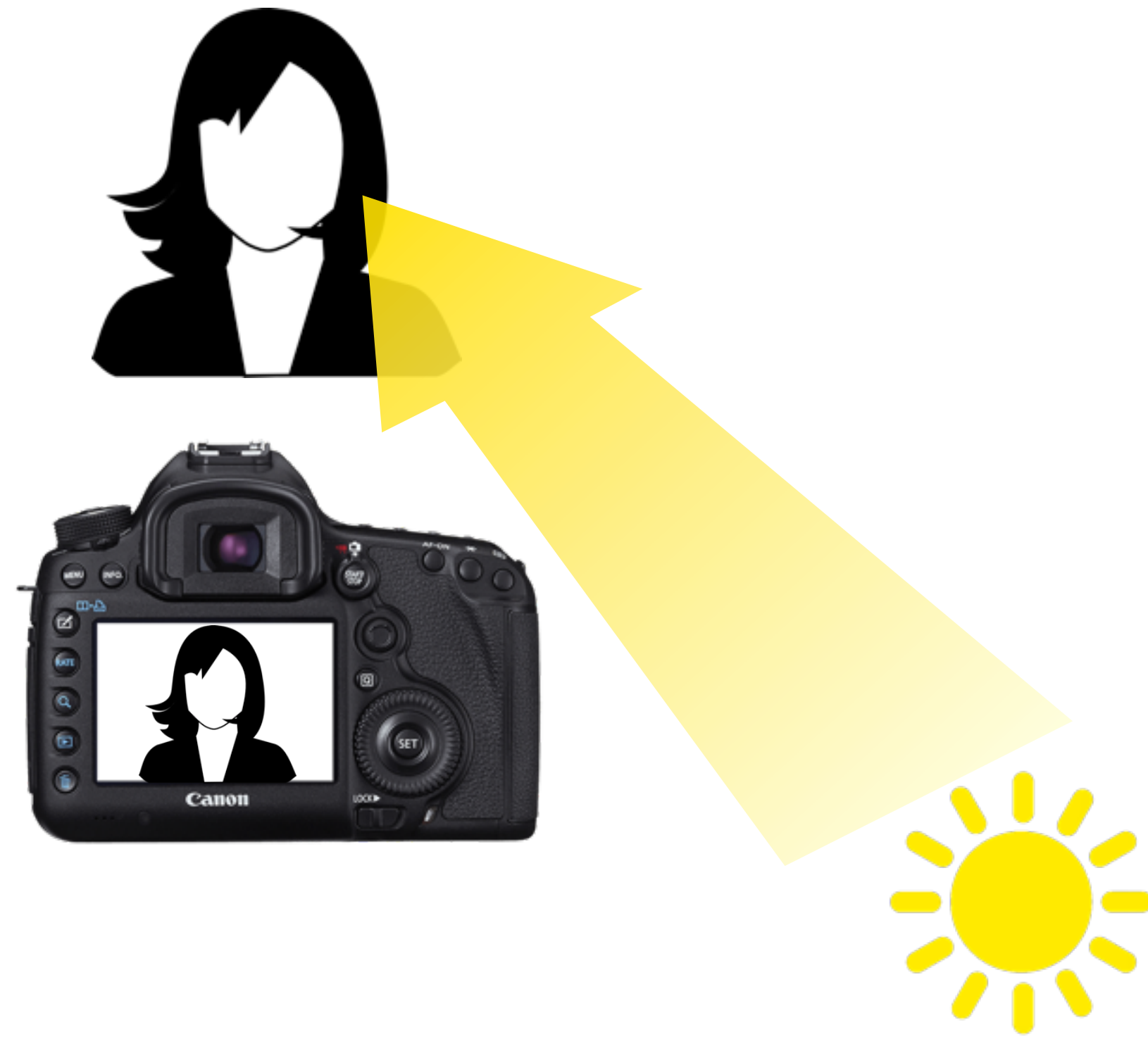
Technique 2

# **Direct Front-Side Light**



# Direct light

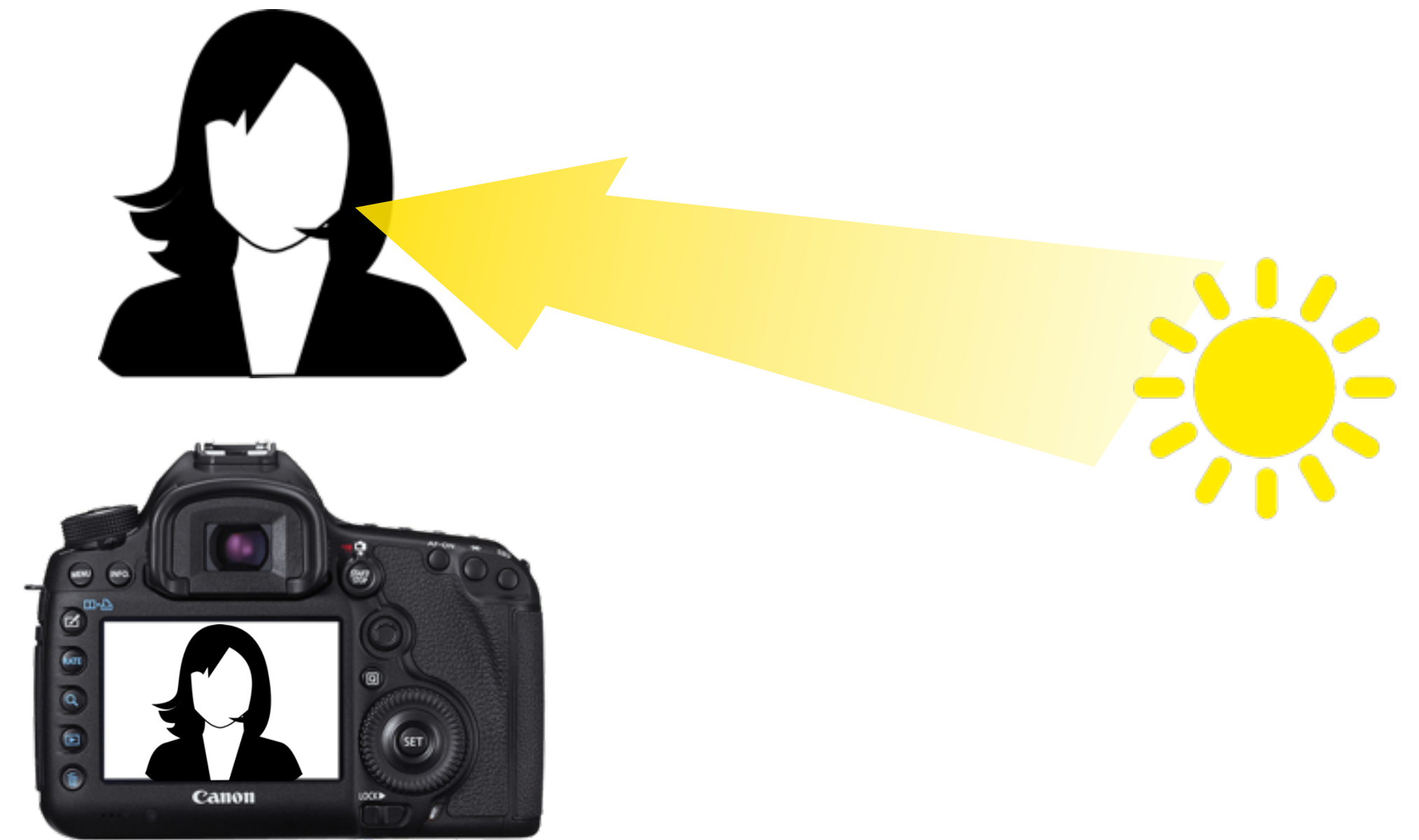
## Front-Side



**Angle 20-30 degrees**

Softer light

*Women*



**Angle 40-80 degrees**

More dramatic, more wrinkles

*Men, Older people*



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# COMPOSITION

*Focus*  
*Impact*  
*Balance*







Technique 3

# Clean Background

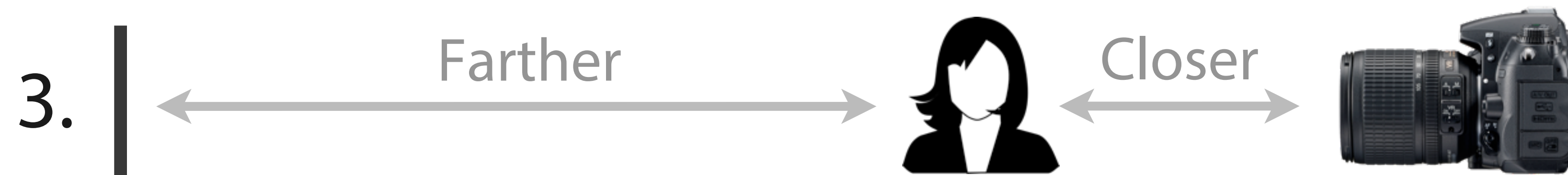


# Clean Background

## 1. Find **uncluttered** background (move left or right)

- One colour
- Contrasting with subject
- Ideally darker than subject
- Leave distractions outside frame or behind subject

## 2. **Blur it** with large aperture



## 4. Use **telephoto** lens



# Clean Background



**Zoom in**  
to leave distractions outside



**Shoot upwards**  
from lower angle



**Make background black**  
with more light on subject



Technique 4

# Rule of Thirds







Technique 5

**Twisted**



# WHAT IT DOES



**More Relaxed**  
(lean back)



**More Imposing**  
(lean forward)



**More Dynamic**  
(diagonal lines)



# 4 Ways To Twist Your Camera

Approx. 20-30 degrees





Technique 6

# Fill the Frame





# FRAMING PORTRAITS



**Face**



**Upper Body**



**Full Body**



# FRAMING PORTRAITS



## **Amplify:**

- Interesting face
- Great expression
- Eye contact

**Fill the Frame**



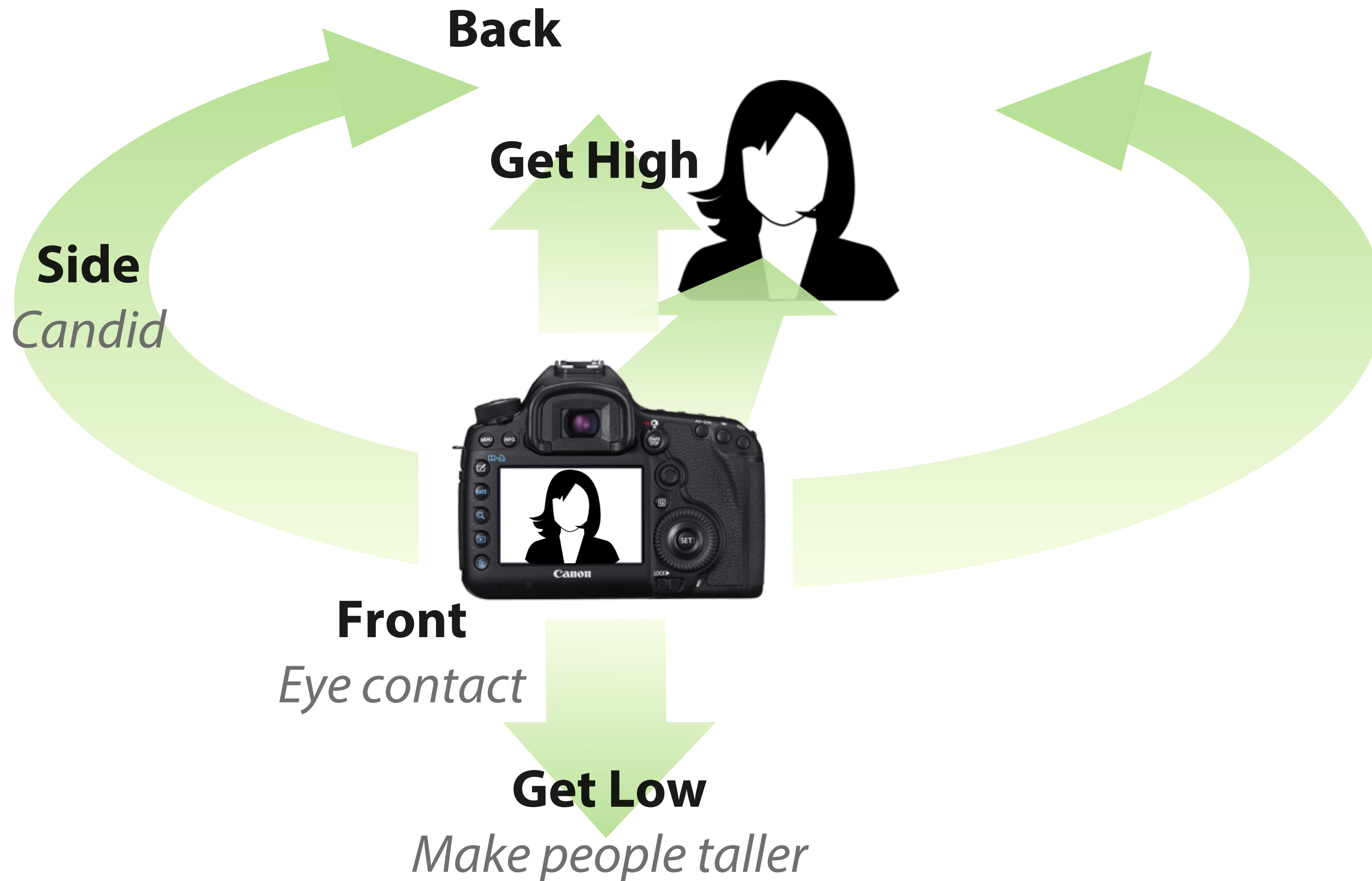
Technique 7

# Different Angles





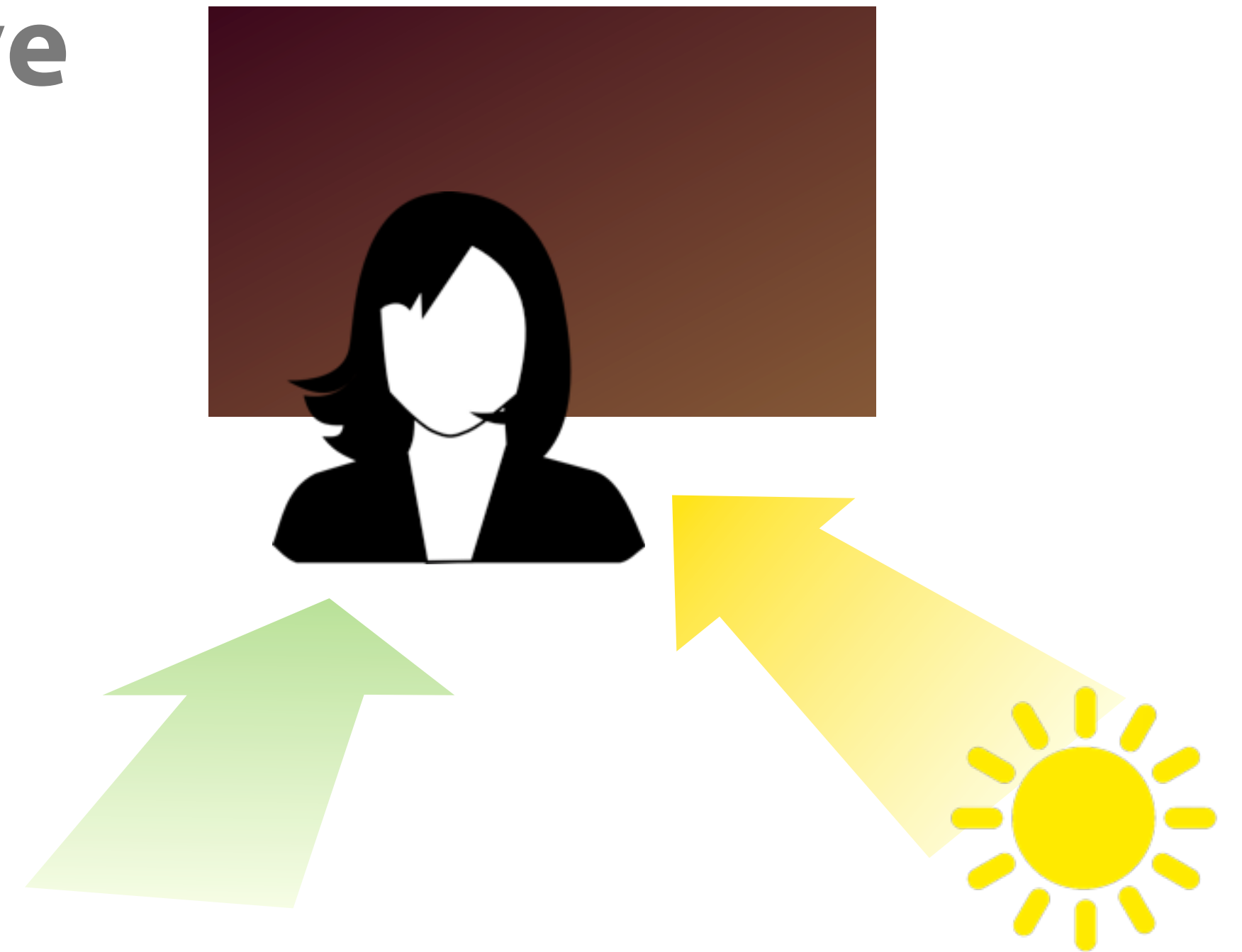
# Different Angles





# Best Angle depends on:

- **Most unique & surprising perspective**
- Best Direction of Light
- Clean Background





Find Unique Angle





A close-up portrait of a young girl with dark hair and gold face paint, holding a green leaf to her mouth. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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**EXPRESSION**

*Soul*



# Posed



## Connection

### LIMITATIONS:

People don't like being photographed  
Artificial expression / silly faces

# Candid



## Natural expression

### LIMITATIONS:

Need telephoto lens  
Avoid being seen

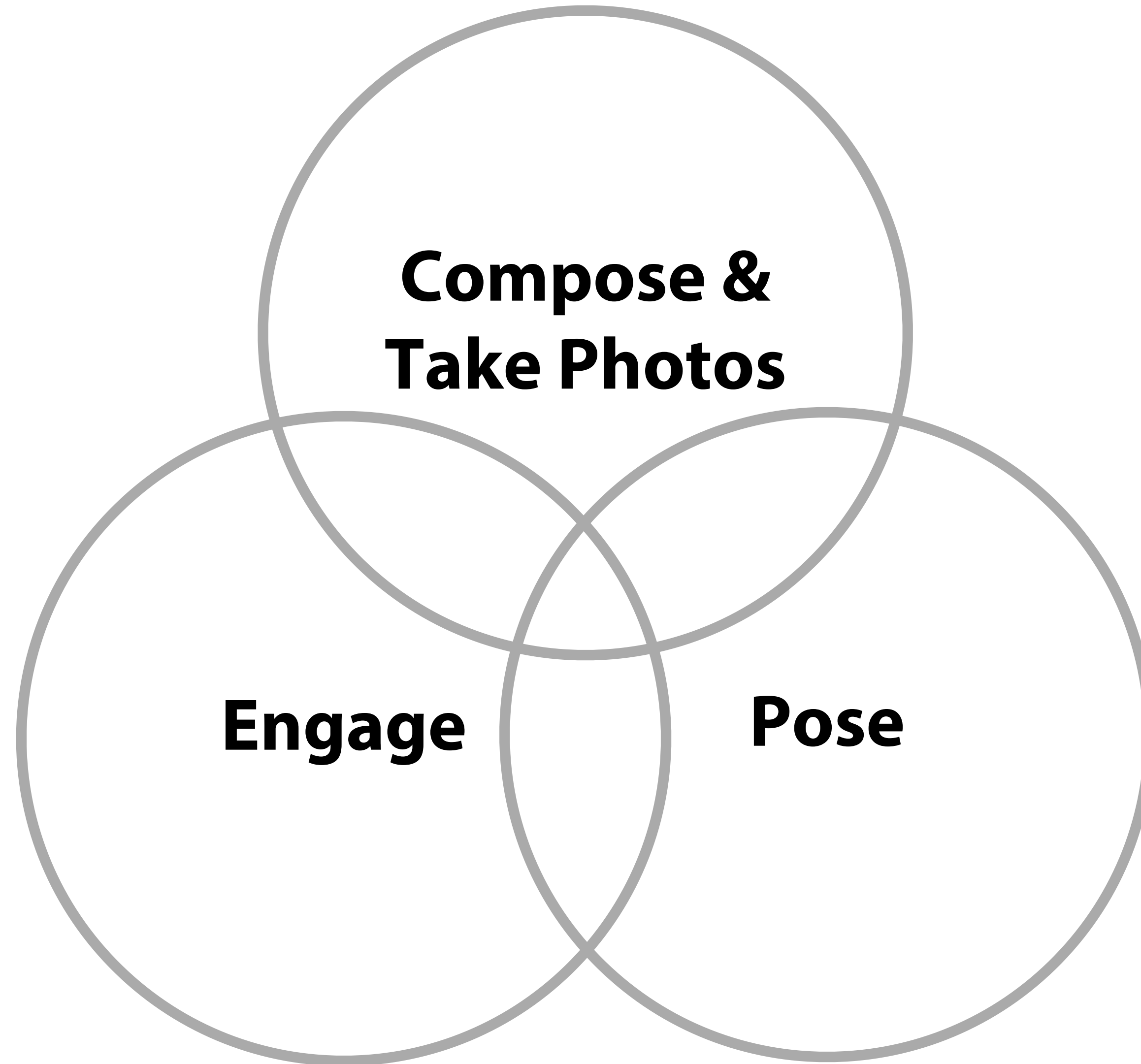




**POSED**



# DIRECTING YOUR SUBJECT



## Natural Expressions

Make your subject  
Relaxed  
Comfortable  
Natural

## Interesting Poses

Tell your subject what  
to do with their body



A close-up portrait of a young Indigenous Australian child with traditional body paint and a necklace, looking directly at the camera. The child has dark, curly hair and is wearing a necklace with a red and black bead. The background is blurred, showing another person's face.

## Technique 8

# Eye Contact

HOW:

- Intensity
- Get Closer
- Reflection in the eyes





**Eye Contact**



**Look Away**



# Technique 9

# Head





# Face / Head



**Facing v Looking**



**Chin Down / Up**



**Tilt Head**



# Technique 10

# Hands





# Hands



**Support Head**



**Touch Hair**



**Hand on Hip**



# Hands



**Crossed Arms**



**Hands in Pockets**



# Hands



# Motion



# Technique 11

## Body





# Body



**Stand**



**Lean**



**Sit Down**



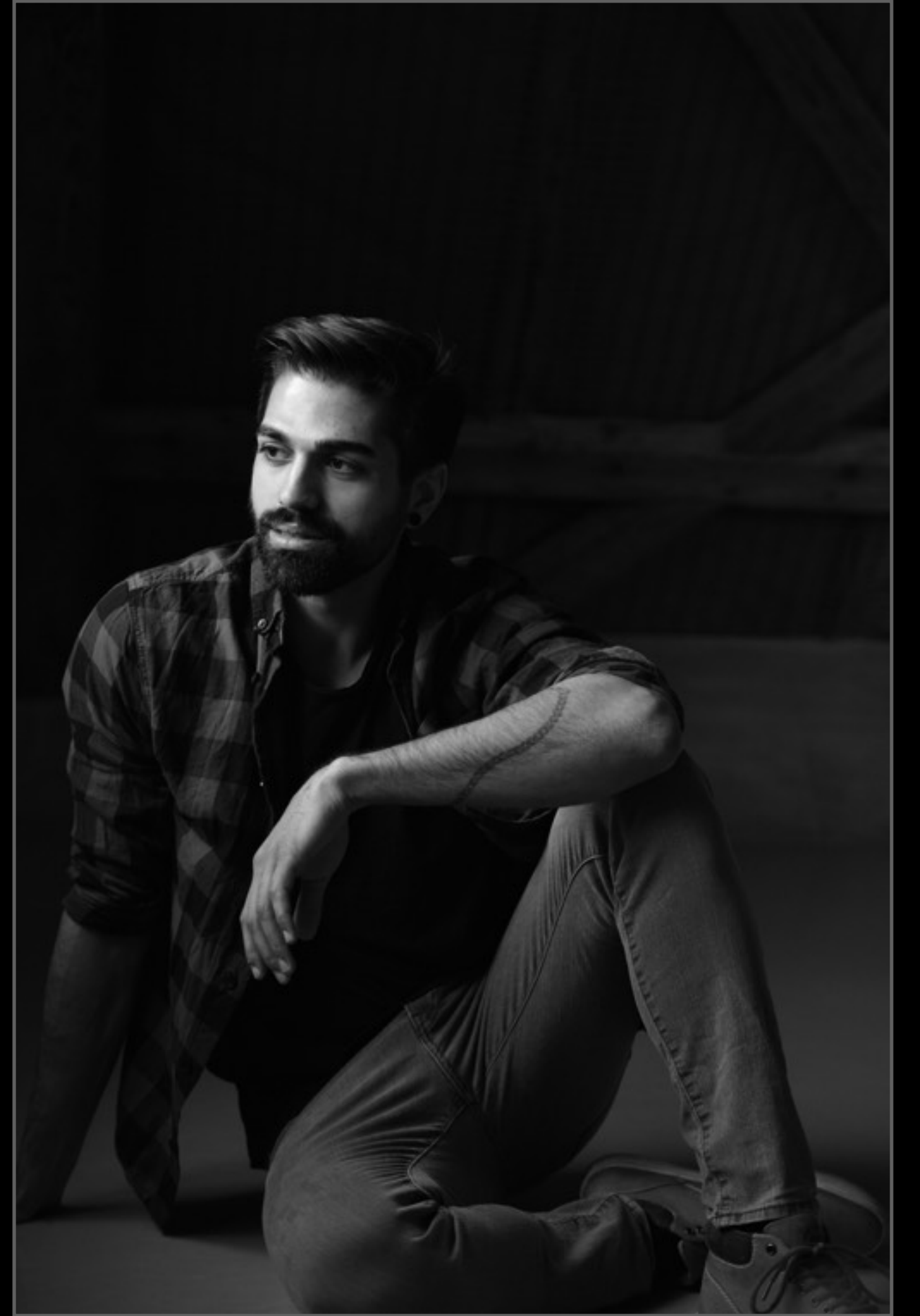
# Body



**Stand**



**Lean**



**Sit Down**



A close-up portrait of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a bright red, textured top. Her hand is visible near her chin, with purple nail polish. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of dark and light tones.

# Technique 12

# **Engage**



# 8 INTERACTION COMMANDMENTS

## DO:

- **Put them at ease.** Compliment. Music
- **Be very specific** what you want them to do
- **Ask them to change position** / expression frequently
- Keep **showing them the pictures**
- **Talk to them**

## DON'T:

- **Don't ask to smile**
- **Don't tell them to hold/freeze**
- **Don't criticise.** Always turn it into a positive



# TALK TO YOUR SUBJECT

- Ask **what they love** & talk about that - kids? pets?
- **Favorite food** / restaurant?
- Last / next **vacation**?
- What are their **dreams**?
- Their **passions**?
- Make a fool of yourself





**CANDID**



A young girl with dark hair and white face paint is sitting against a large, golden, cylindrical pillar. She is wearing a bright orange short-sleeved shirt and a floral skirt with red, white, and green patterns. She has a lei of orange flowers around her neck and is resting her chin on her hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

Technique 13

# Become Invisible



# 10 TIPS FOR DISCREET PORTRAITS

- From a distance, with a **telephoto lens**
- From an **angle**, not in front of your subject
- Hide **behind something**
- Hide **behind your companion**
- Move to a **shadow**
- **Sit down**
- When your subject is **talking to someone**
- **Pretend** to take picture of your companion
- Use **flip-screen** to avoid pointing camera at your subject
- Don't hold your camera up forever



# Technique 14

## **Interaction**





# Interaction

- People are more expressive when they interact with others
- And they are less likely to see you





# **CAMERA SETTINGS**



# Camera Settings 1

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Lens(es): **50-150mm**

Mode: **A**

Aperture: **4**

ISO: **400**

Exposure Compens.: **-1.7**

Shutter: **1/100s+**

White Balance: **Auto**

Shooting: **Continuous**





# Camera Settings 2

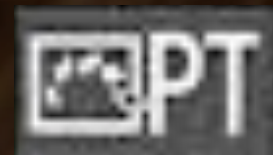
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Metering: **Full-Frame**

Focus Mode: **AF-C**  
**Manual Point Selection**

File Type: **JPEG**

Picture Style:





# **CLOSING COMMENTS**



# GREAT PHOTOS STRAIGHT FROM CAMERA

- Find great **Light**
- Get correct **Colour** (White Balance)
- Get correct **Exposure**
- **Clean Background**
- *Keep checking your pictures as you shoot*



# GETTING SHARP PHOTOS

- **Shutter Speed** 2x focal length
- **Select focus point manually**
- **Continuous shooting**
- **Half-press the shutter** until the camera focuses



# SELECT

**START**

**1,000**

**STEP 1**

**100-200**

- **Select genuine Top 10 contenders** (+ versions)
- Go backwards from the end



**STEP 2**

**30-50**

- **Select best versions of similar shots**
- **Eliminate unsharp images**



Wait a few days

**STEP 3**

**~10**

- **Select superstars**





# ASSESS

## ARTISTIC

- Light & Shadows
- Composition
- Expression

## TECHNICAL

- Sharpness
- Exposure
- Colour

**GOOD:**

**IMPROVE:**