

DRAMATIC PHOTOGRAPHY

BLUEPRINT

Drama by definition means an emotional or unexpected series of events. We as photographers often use drama in our visual language as a way to enhance our storytelling. Common visual elements of drama in photography are shadows, strong contrast, bold colors and unusual compositions.



Lighting is extremely important in creating dramatic mood - you need to master it! Dramatic lighting makes the image stand out by creating contrast, interest, and mood.

Dramatic light usually has one of these **three main features**:

- It's hard
- It's patterned
- It's full of contrast

Examples of dramatic photographs



1 HARD LIGHT

Hard light has a little transition between highlight and shadow. The abrupt change tends to feel more dramatic than soft light and it can be used very effectively in portraiture or product photography.



Hard light is typically created from small or distant light sources. Most artificial light sources are small - strobe lights, continuous lights, and flash heads are tiny and they can easily create hard light.

TIP:

A window with the sun directly outside will also create hard light - make sure to experiment with it!

2 PATTERNED LIGHT

Creating light that's only on a small area of the image adds more drama to a photograph. Using a lighting modifier can help create a patterned light.



Typical light modifiers you can use to create this kind of lighting are grids, snoots and barn doors. They will allow you to make a narrow beam of brightness that's closer to a spotlight. You can use these modifiers to draw attention to a specific part of the image.

TIP:

If you want to create light with a limited spread, but still want some softness, you should try a beauty dish modifier.

THE 3 ESSENTIALS

3 CONTRAST

Contrast refers to the difference between the darkest and lightest areas of the image. You can use hard light and a modifier to prevent the light from hitting the background. This helps to create contrast.



You can also deepen the shadows by using a negative fill. Placing a black reflector on the shadow side of a portrait will increase the shadows.

TIP:

You can increase contrast in post-processing too. Brightening the highlights and darkening the shadows will create more contrast.