

WINDOW SILHOUETTES



GOAL

Create a silhouette photograph using backlighting.

SUMMARY

In photography, we often aim to control light or use artificial lighting, make use of the available camera settings and tweak them, so we have enough light to add features to all the elements in a photograph - in short a well exposed image. But, there are times when you can make your subject hidden in the darkness or silhouetted without too many details against a beautiful and brightly lit background and still make a compelling image.



Silhouettes can portray mystery and evoke a lot of emotion in the viewer, depending on the light, location and subject and they can also leave the viewer with a lot of questions and using their imagination. This project focuses on creating a silhouette photograph using window light.



Photo by Irina Murza

Photo by Jerpet Hikmah

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. EXPOSURE



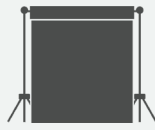
Our focus here is window silhouettes so put your subject in front of a window. For a window silhouette, you need to expose for the background as you do not want it to be blown out (totally white) and have nothing interesting to contribute to the photograph.

4. POSING



Be careful with choosing the pose for the silhouette as the viewer will not see any details. You need an interesting shape, expression or pose. If you don't have a model, you can use figurines with a distinct shape.

2. BACKGROUND



Since you are using the window behind the subject, your window will be the background and so it is preferable to choose a window with an interesting view if possible.

5. TIMING



Golden hour can help with some golden hues. If the sun is setting behind the window, make use of this opportunity to use that light to get beautiful golden light and rim light in your silhouette.

3. PARTIAL SILHOUETTE



If you don't want a full silhouette, you can give the partial silhouette. This can often give a more mysterious mood. For partial silhouettes, try different angles rather than shooting straight on, so you can create details and depth in the images.

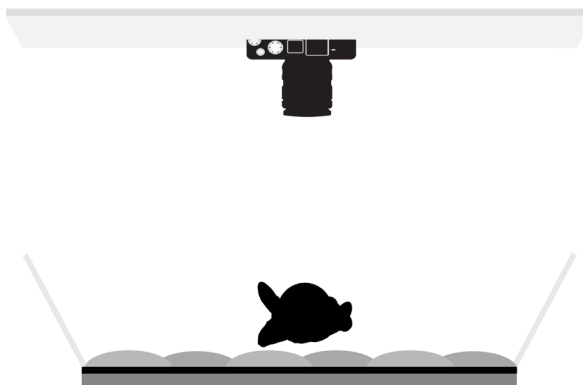
6. PATTERNS



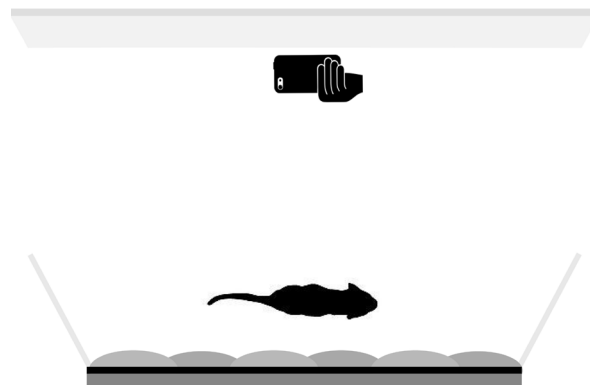
Make use of patterns and reflections to compose your window silhouette if you wish to get more creative. For example, shadows cast by the blinds or netted curtains and window rails can add more mood and drama.

LIGHTING SETUP:

- For silhouette photography, you will need to light the subject from the back. Make sure there are no light sources of greater intensity than the background light (window light in our case) that can illuminate your subject from the front.



- Remember, if you do not have a DSLR or mirrorless camera, you can even use your smartphone for silhouette photography!



ADDITIONAL TRICKS FOR SHOOTING SILHOUETTES:

1. INTENSITY OF LIGHT



Photo by Cassidy Kelley

If the intensity of the light through the window is a bit high, you can use it to your advantage to frame your subject in that light and create a dramatic silhouette. For example the image above is a very good example to show how windows and window lights can be used creatively to create window silhouettes.

3. ROAD TRIP SHOTS



Photo by Gatis Murnieks

You do not have to just stick to photographing silhouettes through a window in your house. You can get creative by photographing while travelling too. Use a train window, car, bus, tram windows, airplane windows, etc. Many windows can make for a great window silhouette!

2. CREATIVE APPROACH



Photo by Denys Argyriou

You can also shoot from the other side of the window or place your subject on the other side of the window to create mysterious and abstract kinds of silhouettes where you can incorporate reflections on window glass or textures on frosted glass. See the example above!

4. INTERESTING PROPS

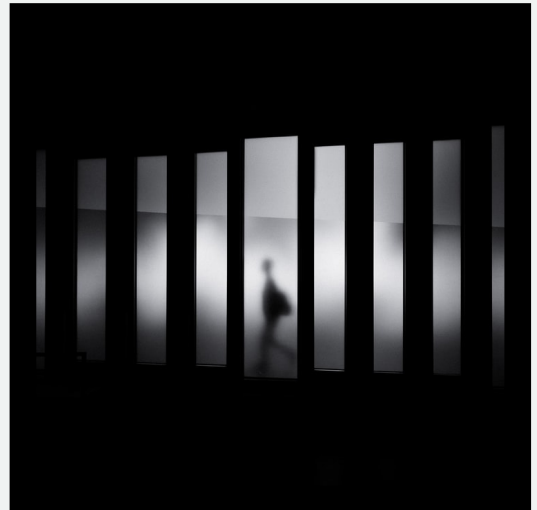


Photo by David Werbrouck

Use props to create unique shapes and poses in your silhouette image. If you are using humans as the subject, you can make them pose with props that can help make the image more compelling and engaging. With silhouettes, importance needs to be given to the shapes you are photographing.

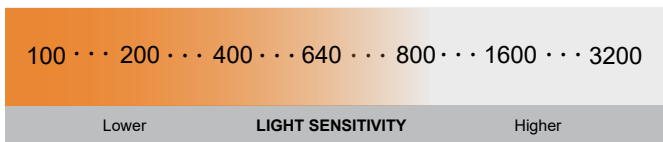
CAMERA SETTINGS:



Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

- Depending on the distance between your subject and the window/background, choose the aperture value while considering depth of field. In many scenarios, you will need to go for narrow aperture values from f/7 or more to get a crisp silhouette against a detailed background.



- Use the lowest ISO possible to avoid noise. Since you are shooting indoors at narrow aperture values, you may have to use ISO values between 100 and 800.



- Choose shutter speed wisely so that you avoid blur from camera shake. It is better to have shutter speed greater than 1/250 sec, or (1/focal length) taking into account the crop factor.



Photo by Flora Westbrook

Focal Length	Shutter Speed (Steady Hands)	Shutter Speed (Shaky Hands)
28mm	1/30s	1/60s
50mm	1/60s	1/125s
100mm	1/125s	1/250s
200mm	1/250s	1/500s
500mm	1/500s	1/1000s

Shutter speed 1/focal length rule

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

1.

Since the window will usually cover a large area of the photograph, you can use matrix metering to meter for the light. Expose correctly for the background, so you get the window view details correctly and your subject silhouetted.

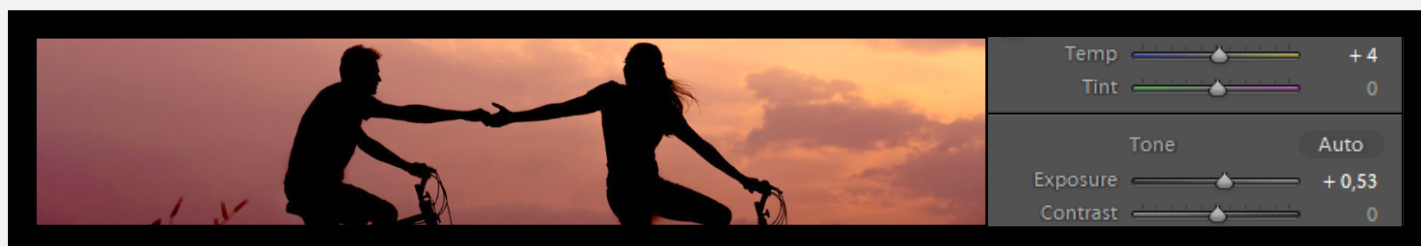
2.

If you are shooting a partial silhouette, expose like you would for the full silhouette and add exposure compensation of +2 or whichever value suits depending on the available light. Also, do not use flash for silhouette photographs!

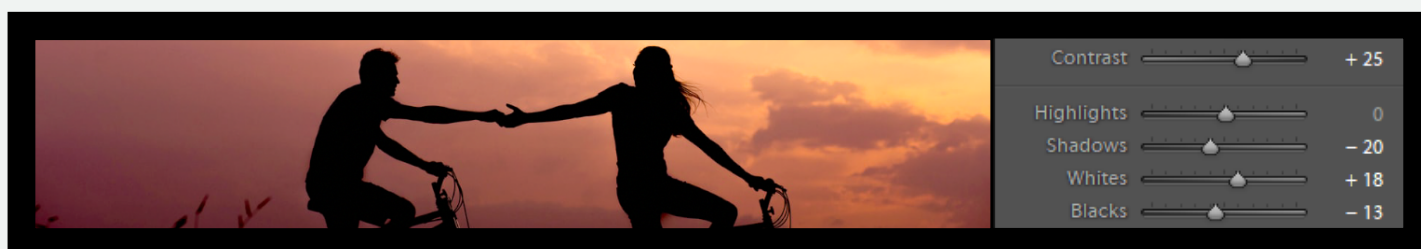
EDITING:

Once you have finished shooting, import the photos into your post processing application.

1. Adjust the white balance if necessary and crop the image to get the desired composition. Make adjustments to exposure, if necessary. Do not expose the silhouetted subject in this case and if it is a partial silhouette, do not expose all the details.



2. Increase the contrast to make the silhouette stand out more. Make adjustments to highlights if there are blown out or overexposed bright areas in the image. When working with the shadows slider, be very careful not to pull out details in the silhouette. Make adjustments to black and white sliders if necessary.



3. Make use of the clarity slider along with the dehaze tool to get best results. Finally, if you think that your image still lacks some pop, increase the vibrance a bit.

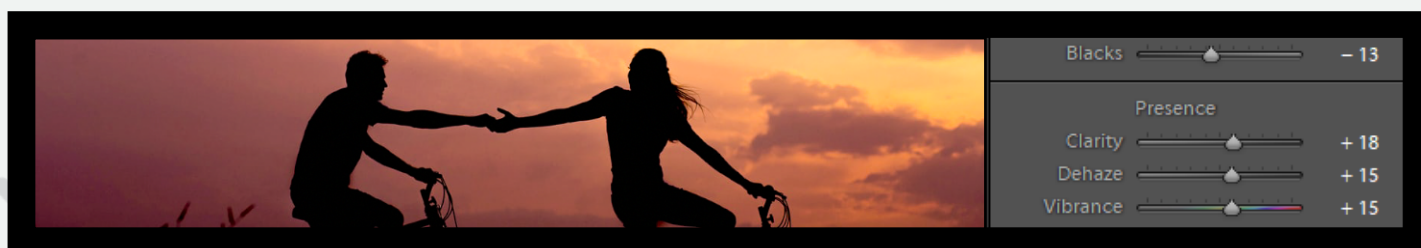


Photo by Everton Vila



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