Creative Brief Summer 2014

Welcome to summer everyone! In our past creative briefs we have discussed many topics from tech gadgets to "How To" videos that cover all the ins and outs of uploading and post production. This quarter we want to focus on more of the "Creative" aspect of producing content for the stock industry with the key focus on adding "Faces to Spaces Images". We hope you find a great deal of guidance and motivation to help you get out and create new content for our growing distribution of agencies.

We have seen big growth this past 6 months at Spaces with sales up by over 300% from this time last year. Every month has shown incredible growth this entire year. It has been through a combination of new distributors, and your content that just keeps getting stronger, coupled with the return of a growing economy that makes today a great time to ramp up your production.

If you have been waiting and watching the agency and the economy to know when to jump back in we can say with confidence that today's sales are stronger than they have ever been since we first launched Spaces Images. Our multi-distributional model is showing that selling your content through over 100 agencies produces much stronger sales than working with just one of today's top

resellers.

When taking the time and resources to create strong imagery for the stock industry, it is important to know what subjects will sell as well in the future as they do today. To help you in defining what sells, we're going to look at subjects that have always shown strong returns and we believe will continue to be a main stay of the stock industry for years to come.

So as always, sit back grab a drink and have yourself a good read. Let's talk about what subjects sell well in stock and how to craft a strong story for potential sales. We think everyone will find something of value in this quarter's brief to help you to understand buyer's needs better and how we can all supply them with the content they can't get enough of.

- 5 Elements of Stock Photography -

There are five main components that we feel make a stock image truly rise above all the other images it's in competition with. When you are setting up your next shoot, please take the time to consider all of these elements. We can assure you that if you can create images that have all five of these ingredients your sales will clearly reflect the time and energy you took to create them.

1. The location: This sets the entire mood and story of the shot. Since Spaces is all about location we want all of our content to truly reflect people and the spaces they live, work and play in everyday. Picking the right location for your subject takes careful planning, but with the right planning you can easily make a 5 image shoot pay off more than a twenty image shoot when all the proper pieces are combined.

2. Model/Talent: We cannot promote this topic enough to all creators of stock imagery. When you are casting for you lifestyle shoots the talents look is going to make the difference between a few small sales and an image that continues to sell big for years. It might seem hard to pay someone rather than take a more cost effective approach by using friends and family but in the long run it is your talent that will make or break your image. Please don't disregard friends and family they are some of our favorite to work with just make sure the models you pick add to your image and support the story you are creating for potential buyers. Even if your location is beautiful and your lighting is sublime, your sales will fall short of what they could have been with the right talent.

3. Lighting: The light can not be discussed enough. It is the light that made us all become photographers. Light that makes you stop and take notice, not just in imagery, but in every part of your life. The buyers eye loves beautiful light, but when and where and what light to use can be a tough choice. Trends in lighting come and go at about a 7 year pace. It was only 6 years ago that agencies started to say, "Enough with the sun flares." Now we turn the page and flares are back and selling bigger than ever and agencies are asking once more for sun flares. Keeping up with the lighting styles that are trending can be a slippery slope. You need to keep your images looking fresh, but you also need to know when to use each approach depending on the mood and the

message you want to convey to the market. So when composing your next shot list, please consider the time of day you are shooting especially if relying on natural light. There are very few images that look better in mid afternoon light than they would if shot at dawn's first light, or nearer to sunset. The early and later light offers so much more texture and dimension and keeps your imagery in a category we like to refer to as "Best in Show." Utilizing and capturing that light is what a strong image crafter is all about. We will break down some shots in this brief and discuss why the light helps the image, even makes the image.

4. Emotion: The emotion an image stirs is another big big part of what draws buyers to your work. If we can grab a viewer through emotion, it is there that they start to identify personally with the image. It is through pose and expression that we help support the emotion that you want to convey. This coupled with the other three elements mentioned above are what make a stock image rise far above the rest of the market's images. Please pay close attention to the posture and expression in the images we will discuss.

5. Composition: This is one area that becomes very difficult to educate through a blog or creative brief as it takes years to truly understand strong composition. If you are a Spaces contributor you have already shown that you understand the composition of an image. Now here are a few questions to keep in mind when approaching your next shoot, questions that buyers are asking when they view your imagery. One area buyers are always paying attention to is the physical aspects of your composition.

- Does it allow for copy space?

- Do the colors chosen within the image compliment each other?

- Does the image read quickly and clearly to the viewer?

- Can an image be cropped to work in different applications?

The more you start to pay attention to these kind of questions and the more you start to think like a buyer, the better you will understand why some of your images sell well while others seem to struggle. When you truly start to create content with the end buyer in mind, you will see a dramatic change in your approach to shooting, often shooting less images per shoot and truly focusing on creating the strongest content you can for your end buyers needs.

It took us years to start thinking like buyers, but once we really applied this approach we saw a big growth in our sales and a big change in our workflow. This is a slow learning process. The more you look at imagery (we look at content every day) and start to ask yourself, "why am I drawn to this image" the better understanding you will have when creating your own content for the stock industry. Besides that, what photographer doesn't like to look at photos? Start to dedicate a part of your week to surfing the net for images that inspire you. It's not only fun but it's a great motivator

and educator as well.

- Looking for the Five elements -

We wanted to pick one subject to focus on so as not to get to disjointed with the information we offer in this brief, however, the topic we chose is not as pertinent as the information we share. This information holds true in every topic shot for stock. We will focus on Health and Fitness, but remember, this information can be applied for all of the subjects we are discussing.

- Health and Fitness -

Today's lifestyle is focused more than ever on clean healthy living. Even though this subject is not necessarily new, the way people are accomplishing their fitness goals has taken on many new shapes and sizes. Going to workout at a gym is still a big part of the health industry and we don't want to forget that, but today we are starting to see how staying healthy is a life change that extends way beyond the gym. Here are some images that help to tell the story of staying healthy and fit. Let's dissect them a bit to see what makes them strong.

-City Fit-

Let's start with this image of a middle aged man who looks like he has been running in an urban setting. There are all five of the previously mentioned aspects to this image that make it a well told story.

Location: By choosing an urban location to support the story, you speak to a demographic that buyers are hunting for. Professionals that lead busy lives, but still place their health at the top of their priority list, has become the norm for today's upwardly mobile participants.

Talent: The choice of an older but still fit model is a great choice to hit this high demand demographic. One thing to always remember is that the buyers of your imagery are looking to appeal to a certain demographic, so make sure that your story is supported by the right cast. Even in a t-shirt and shorts there is a style to this model that doesn't say waiter or school teacher. This is more about the urban upwardly mobile business man taking care of himself for tomorrow. Of course much of this story is played out through not only the model, but the location, the pose, and the lighting this is a perfect example of all five aspects melding into one great shot.

Lighting: In this image the use of the flares and the feel of heat jumps off the page. Now take away the lighting that you see and replace it with a basic even balanced light, what is missing? The

lighting has embraced the entire story telling of this image. It is the light and the flares that make us feel his energy. The heat that is lifting up off of the cement while supporting the background just enough to tell the story.

As mentioned earlier, sun flares have once again become big sellers. Capturing them in camera is always fun when the situation lends itself, but today we can also rely on filters and software to help entice the viewer with just a little effort and shooting the image to support the application of filters/software in post production.

This image is a very good example of shooting for applying future filters. By shooting this person with the backlight and the flare on the water, if and when a filter was applied to this image over the model it looks very natural because the background light supports it. We prefer this method to trying to capture a flare in camera as we often end up with the placement of the flares being not in the perfect location or blocking up something important in the image.

By applying the flare filters in post to an image that was shot to support flares the combination makes the final result look very natural. Later in the brief we will look at one of these filter softwares and share how we apply it as well as what we look for when capturing an image we intend to add a post production flare too.

Emotion: In this image the man's pose is such an intricate part of this story. There are other options as well. On-camera eye contact would make the image more about the man himself giving it more of a testimonial approach to an application. A profile would add a sense of strength to the image that would appeal to another buyers needs seeking focus and power.

Here, the man looking up to the sky supports everything else we have mentioned about this image, a business man in an urban setting taking care of his health and reflecting on his accomplishments. Nothing about this shot says weakness, worry or fear. All we see is accomplishment, self esteem, control, peace, hard work and reward. All important key words in our industry's search engines.

Remember, this stock game is about making content that buyers are searching for, and the more we hit that mark the larger and longer our sales will reflect just how well we accomplished our task.

Composition: This image also holds all the keys to strong composition for a stock image.

- It offer room for copy space

- The color palette does not compete, it only supports

- This image can be cropped for multiple applications and still deliver the same message. You could make this image vertical or horizontal and still tell the same story

- This image reads quickly at any size making this image a 100% success when dealing with composition from the buyers perspective

We wanted to share another version of a runner about the same age and demographic with sun flares and show how different the final message can be. We don't want to spend a long time on this but wanted to show just how much a different pose, lighting, and location can completely tell a different story. Both are excellent images, but both serve very different audiences.

So that is a break down of just one image from a resellers perspective, trying to accommodate what advertisers are always paying attention to. The more we all start to think like buyers when we are creating our content, the more we will see strong growth as stock image providers. Like any business, there is a formula for success. You can't assure yourself that every image you create will be a top seller, but by following these guidelines you will produce the strongest returns from your day's efforts. Let's move onto some more images and discuss their strong points and what they can teach us all.

We are going to have a little fun with this creative brief and recreate this top photo by shooting the location and adding the model in post. With all of Spaces amazing locations available there is no reason why you can't start taking some of your already existing content and by adding a person, turning one image into two will create completely different applications for the end buyer. Later in the brief I will offer a step by step Vimeo and work with some filters to recreate an image similar to the one above.

- Get Out -

Here is a fun way to say health and fitness as well as travel and leisure. Here we have so many key words that could be applied to this image, but once again every part of the five elements we discussed are present.

Location: This environment gives a sense of being out in nature, but also a feeling of being lost. Also, pay attention to the color palette of blues and yellows. They are very complimentary and pop off the page.

Talent: This one was a bit easier but you still needed somewhat healthy active people to make this image work. Wardrobe played a big part in the success of this image by keeping it clean and simple and choosing once again complimentary colors to support the environment.

Lighting: We are always drawn to the light when it comes to great stock imagery and this image is no exception. The light not only creates the dimension to make it jump off the page, but it also tells the entire story by allowing the transmitted light that passes through the map to share the story in great detail. Think about this shot done in midday light, we would have an okay shot that kind of tells a story, but place it next to this one on the page of thumbnails and we assure you that this one will outsell it's half-baked counterpart every time. Remember, the light is what brought you to this party in the first place. It's best to keep dancing with the one that brought you.

Emotion: Here we are, left to our imagination, as emotion is so often shared with the face, but even without the face the body language helps to make this image strong. The position of the woman on camera left shows a sense of tension that reflects a more concerned approach while the

man on camera right has a more relaxed assured feeling offering up a great sense of story telling and team work. Not having a subject's face can actually be the most challenging image to create when trying to share emotion with the viewer, but when done well it shows us just how much we speak with our entire bodies not just our faces. Please consider every part of your talent's pose when telling your story. It's easy to get caught up in just the expression and forget that every part of our bodies has a message to share.

Composition: Once again we see strong use of composition.

- Leaving room for copy space

- The Lighting keeps you contained within the image by making a natural vignette. We have the power to keep the viewers eye locked in our imagery by making the eye stay within the photo. If you look at this image you will see not only the natural vignette but also all the shadows draw the eye back into the viewer this is an excellent example of capturing the viewers eye.

- The "Rule of Thirds" has been followed for both horizon line as well as the talent placement

- The color palette once again is very strong, relying on the friendly match of yellows and blues

- This image can also be cropped for different space and still deliver the message clearly

-Healthy Families-

This image has so many applications. It screams of "Healthy Modern Urban Family." This image is so clean it reads at any size from thumbnail on up which is an area we have spoken of at length. I cannot say enough about the diverse story telling this image offers to its potential buyers. The propping is clean and simple but once again JUMPS out at you.

Location: An urban setting without having to see a building. This says, in city lifestyle, and it's on a rooftop. Stop and look around you and build your shoots with what you have available. If this was your roof, would you consider this shot? Great shots do not have to drain money and time, but they do demand a creative mind and a little pre-planning in order to succeed.

This image could be shot in a home, it could be shot at a beach, there are actually many locations this concept could work in. The one thing we really like about this image is that it speaks to that demographic that has money and lives in city. This is a very powerful demographic we are speaking of because it encompasses so many different sub categories that you might not consider.

When focusing on this urban setting we are opening the door to buyers all across the globe. The use of space or the lack there of, is a growing subject that everyone can identify with. Place this in the front lawn of some American home and you can start to see the limits the image would have compared to this clean and simple urban background. It would still be a strong image in front of the home but the final end users would be a much tighter market.

Talent: Here the talent needed to be very specific, both the need for a baby and a healthy woman to convey the message of "Healthy New Mother Balancing Life" might be a tough find. This is the kind of shoot that you would need access to the right talent to create, but if you know a new mother that is fit and healthy you could easily get an entire day's shoot out of the two of them. Don't forget, we are here to support you and your creative efforts. You signed with us to help you, so please don't hesitate to drop us a line before your next shoot and we can discuss some specifics that

might spark a creative bug. Want help writing a shot list that will sell, drop us a line, or send us some pics of what you are planning and we will work together with you to create the best shoot possible without having to throw money at it.

Lighting: Clean, clean, clean, this image does not need a moody lighting job to sell the feeling. On the contrary the light, clean, airy feeling that the lighting offers only helps to support this image and its message. This image says Fresh and Clean all over it and once again take a moment to see this shot done at mid day…yuck! The gradation of clear sky only helps to resell the feeling of Healthy and Clean.

Emotion: The emotions in this shot are not just that of the mother, but let's start there. The mom is happy, healthy and engaged with her child while she is still able to manage her life. We see it all the time in advertising, the need for people to participate in life as well as raise a family. This is replacing a very old approach to the modern family. What was once a "Can't have it all" attitude is being replaced by a different model of the modern family and it's priorities. This image would also be very strong with a man in the woman's position as we see more and more the standard gender roles evaporate with time. The child's emotions are also at play in this shot. We love the "checked out" look on the baby face. If the baby was having big fun, this image would start to look a bit too staged.

Composition: Are you starting to see a pattern with the composition of these images?

- Color Palette is complimenting every part of the image

- Placement has relied heavily on the Rule of Thirds

- Clean clear image that reads in a second

- Room for copy space with a clean area that will allow for copy to read clearly

- This one is a tough second crop but 4 out of 5 of our elements are there making this image a strong sales candidate

-Senior Fit-

There could not be a stronger area in stock photography to focus on than senior lifestyle. Right now we are seeing the largest number of people entering their later years in an era that includes advertising. Due to the famous "Baby Boom" that ran from 1945 to 1965, we are just starting to see the first of a very large and powerful demographic take hold of our advertising dollars. If we had one word of advice to offer up to any lifestyle shooters it would be, focus on seniors. In the past,

senior models had to always be the perfect senior, the people that looked like they never aged and were born with silver hair. Today we can step away from that model a bit and start to get somewhat more realistic.

- Casting Senior Talent -

We thought since this last image used a senior model for the talent we would share just a few tips about casting this very desirable demographic. One thing about finding seniors for models is they either want to do it or they don't. We would not suggest pushing to hard, as people that have been around a while really have learned to do what they want to and have become very comfortable saying no when they don't want to.

Senior centers, gyms and golf courses are all places where you will find active healthy seniors that feel good about themselves and are often excited to try something new, especially with a friend.

Please make sure that your model fits the bill. If you are shooting seniors being active, please use active seniors. This goes for all of your lifestyle shoots you are casting for. Do not try to make a construction worker play your business man. One reason is, your model will have all the wardrobe you need if you cast them in what they already do in life. The other more obvious reason is so your subject knows their subject. There is nothing worse then creating an image of a golfer only to find out later that they were gripping the club the wrong way. We are creating a pseudo-reality, so we must be very realistic down to the smallest detail when crafting an image for stock.

Location: This was a must for this shot to capture the demographic they are targeting. One of the realities to our world of false reality is that the market is going to cater to those that spend money. That is the entire job of an advertising agency. So with that said they are generally going to be targeting a section of seniors that are financially secure. This location says comfortable but not filthy rich, as does the wardrobe chosen for this shot. This could be any senior that has retired and made a comfortable life for themselves, but place this man in a different location and even his wardrobe could say something completely different. Without this location this image would struggle.

Talent: This model makes this shot work. If not for him this would be a tough sell. Place any other demographic in this location and you will find 100 other images that are available with better light and better styling. This also goes to show that if you find good senior talent, treat them well. You can use the same models over and over. The key is to find really strong talent and keep using them. Better to create strong images from the same two or three models than to spend your time creating content with a weak cast.

Lighting: Not much to say about this lighting except for the fact that it does give you the feeling of early morning and realistic lighting. We don't have to make a Rembrandt out of every model, sometimes simple and clean says it the best. Also very important in this shot, is that the entire set is high key to support the high key lighting. Place a dark couch in this room and you would be better off taking it out completely. If an element doesn't add to your image then remove it. We have a saying around here when we are out shooting. "If in doubt, take it out". Next time you are looking through the view finder and find yourself wondering about something in the frame, ask yourself that question, you might find the answer was there all along.

Emotion: You might look at this photo and think there isn't much to his emotional expression. Look again, there is a great deal being said in his face. He is from an era where men didn't share emotions, so it's a perfect fit for him to be slightly flat in his expression. If he was laughing you would think he was crazy and if he was struggling, it would not exude a sense of well being. Once again this model is the saving grace of this shot.

Composition: This part of the puzzle jumps out at us in every one of the images we have shared. All of these images are clean and read fast and clear.

- They all have a message that is clear and easy to understand

- They all have a strong understanding of color palette and how it can attract the eye when applied properly

- There is nowhere for the eye to roam, they keep you trapped inside the image making your eye return to the subject every time you start to stray

- Cropping options are available for the space the buyer has to fit while still presenting the same

message

- Room for copy space that is clean and clear for the copy to pop of the page

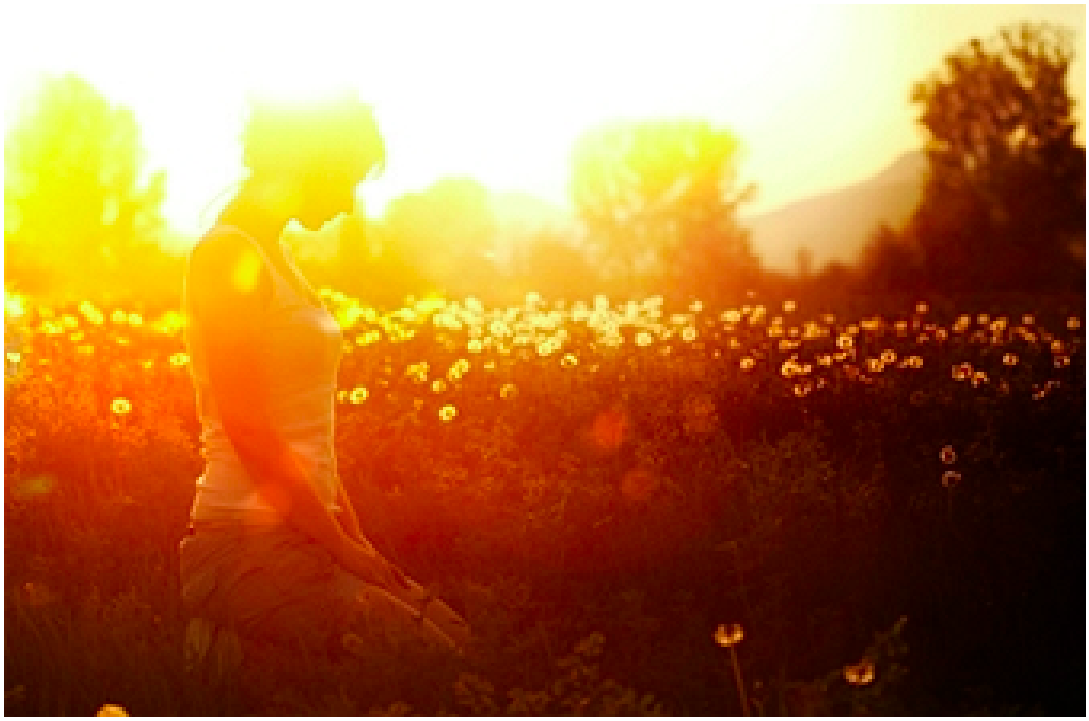
Of the five elements we have been discussing it is evident in all these images that all five exist. However, in some of the images we review you will see that these five elements are much stronger than in others. When they're strong in all five categories the image really takes hold of its viewer.

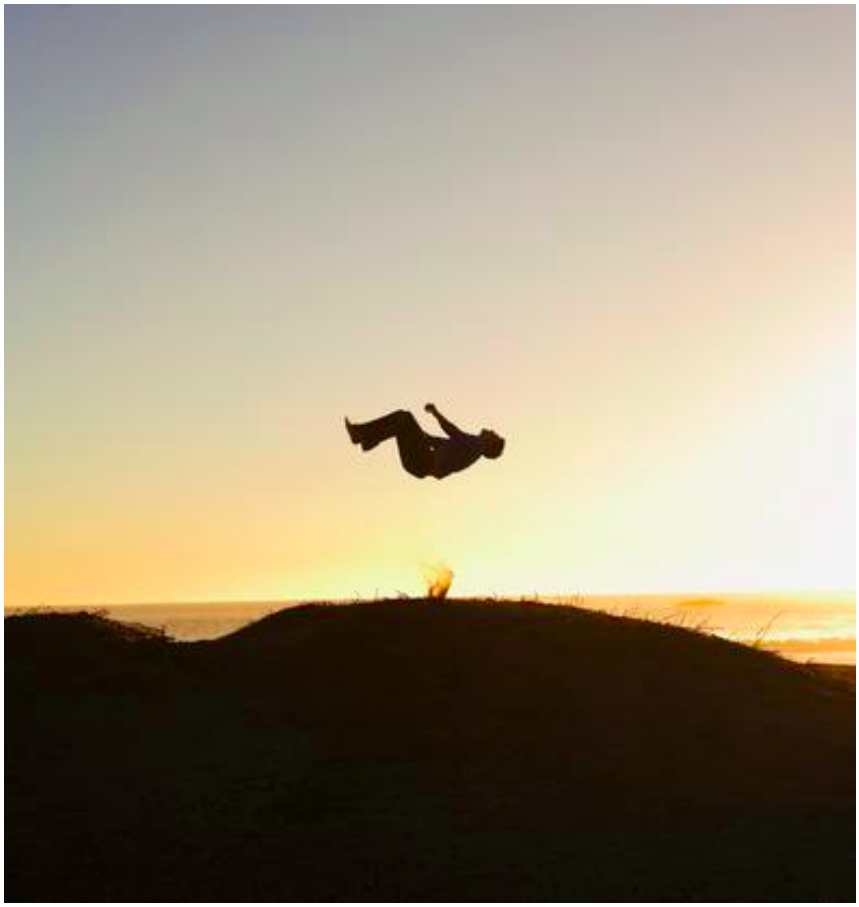
In the image of the senior lifting dumbbells, the photo has okay lighting, it has okay propping and styling, and it has an okay location, but it is the model and the composition that sells this shot. This concept has a great deal of room for improvement, but it just goes to show that if the talent and composition are strong the other elements can struggle and you will still have success. If the model or composition are not the right fit, all the other elements will not save your shot.

- What should I shoot next ? -

We all need a little inspiration to keep ourselves motivated so we thought we would share a gallery of images that we feel hit the mark on all five of the elements we discussed previously. No reading through this part just pretty pictures to make you think and keep you motivated.

- Silhouettes Sell -

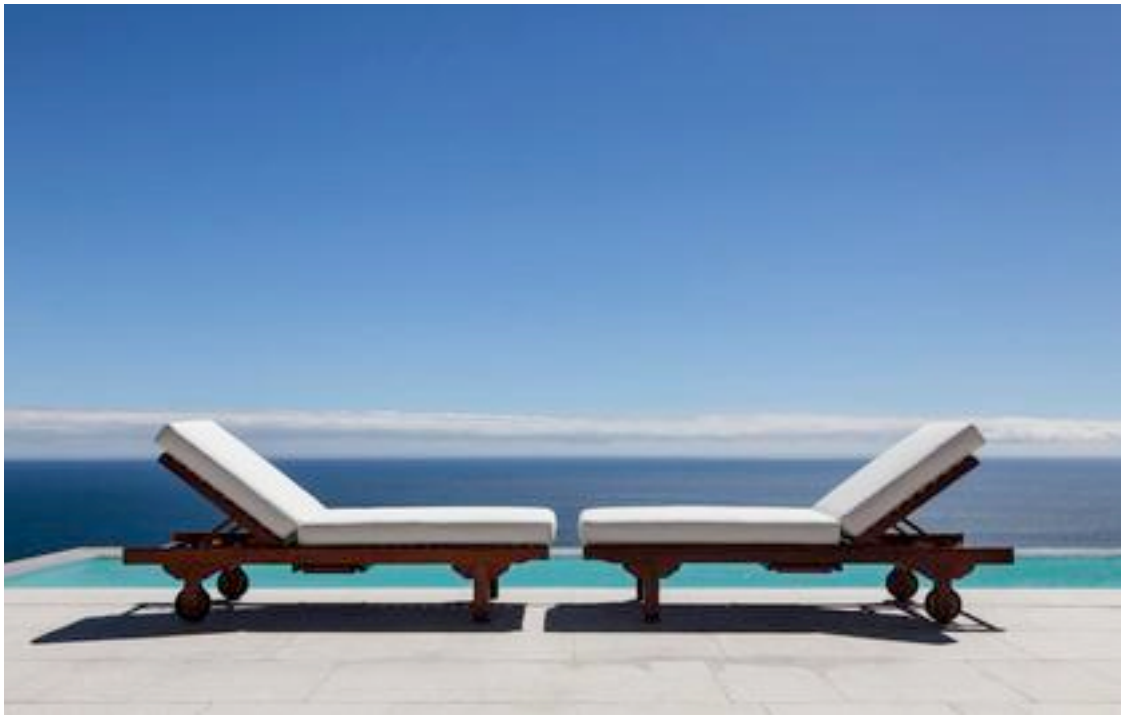




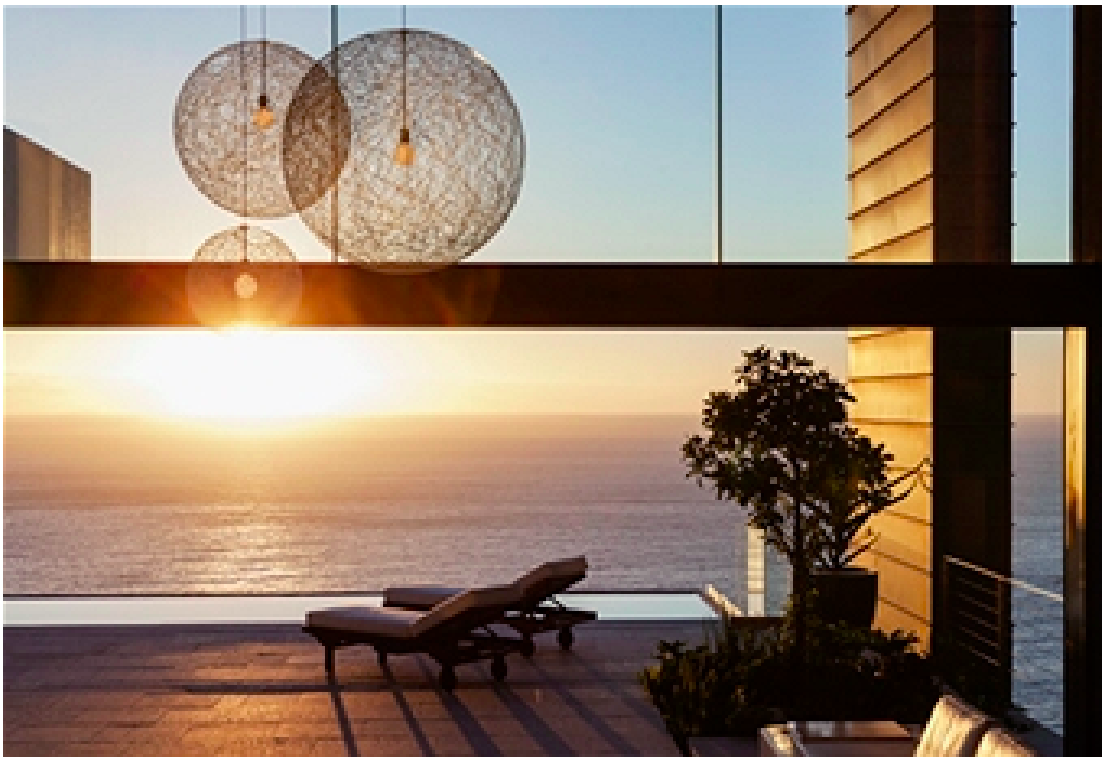
- How do you say Summer ? -

Summer is rocking right now, so we thought we would add a few images that we hope will inspire you to start seeing the light. Once again we are choosing images that we feel meet all five of the elements previously discussed. With this category we have chosen a selection of imagery from both "Lifestyle" and "Classic Spaces" content to help keep you all thinking about your next summertime production.

- Summer Still Life -



SURF
SWIM



We added two different ice cream trucks…Why? We went searching for ice cream trucks online and there is barely anything out there. These were the two best we could find. Nothing says summer

like ice cream, so if you have access or want a creative concept to hunt, this would be an excellent place to start. Drop us a line if you want to talk ice cream, we have an entire shot list of ideas for you to choose from.

Below is another concept we know will sell if it is produced and styled well. We want a shot of a suitcase on a bed like the top image but we want it packed like the bottom image. This concept can offer up several different options.

- Perfectly packed suitcase with vacation accessories (male and female version)

- Perfectly packed suitcase for business (male and female version)

- Child's bag packed for vacation (needs to be in a child's room)

- All of the above, but a completely messy version that looks like it won't close

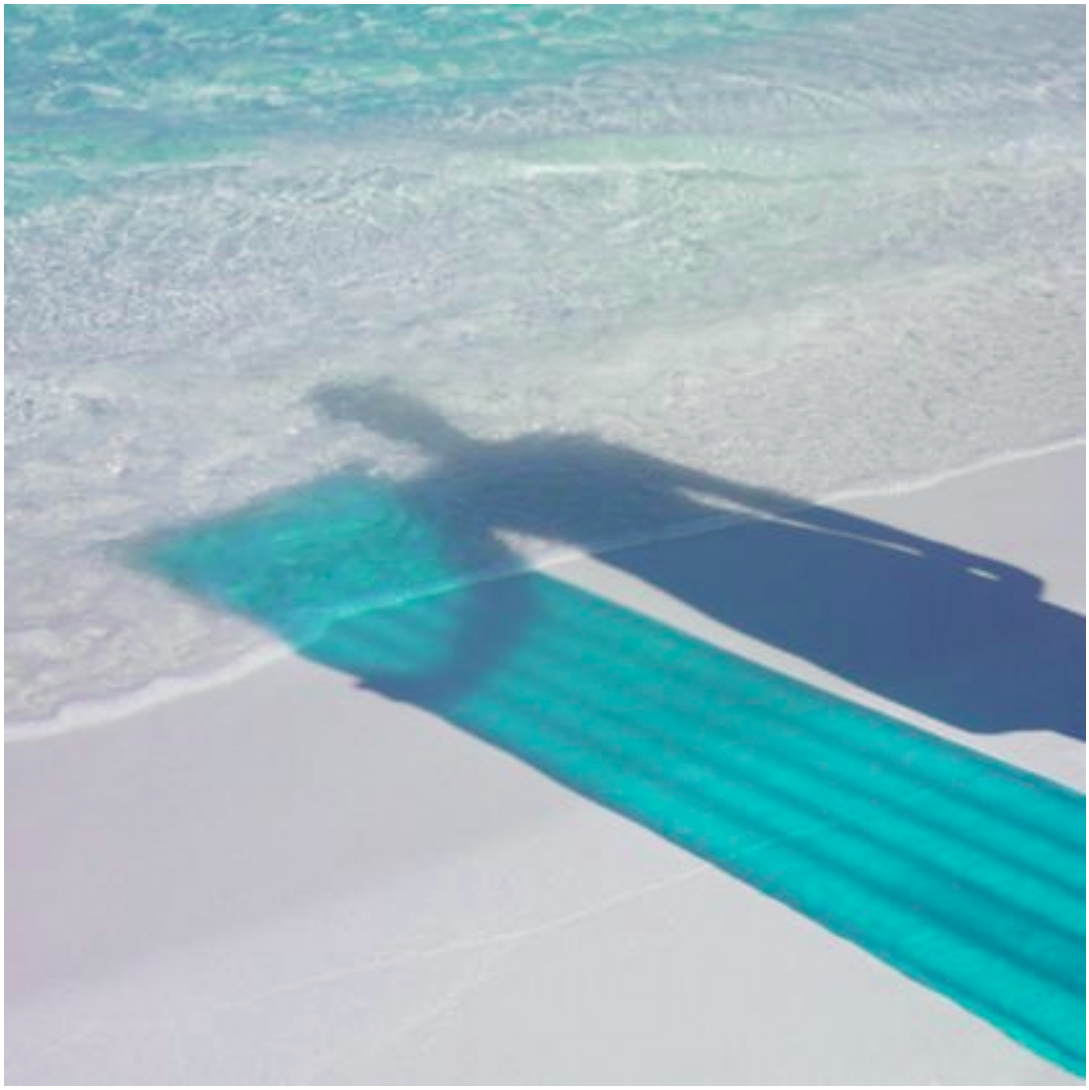
Don't take this shot to lightly, the styling will make or break this image. Be very precise about the story you are telling to the viewer, it is going to have to read quickly. Even the messy version will need to be styled properly. Consider all the items that you might take on vacation or on business and do not forget the five elements when creating this image.

- Summer Lifestyle -

We have already discussed in detail some of the main elements that need to be considered when creating your stock content, so now let's look at some images that not only share the feeling of summer, but also have a fresh creative approach to a subject that, although in high demand, is always looking for a new way to say SUMMER.

When the summertime hits, we stock photographers need to spend all our time and effort capturing the summer life while it is still around. During the off season, when we come up with a good idea for a summer shot, we add it to our summer shot list just as we do with all of our seasonal image lists.

With Spaces just starting to offer our buyers Lifestyle content we want to support our contributors with as much motivation to get you excited about the possibilities of adding lifestyle to your portfolio. To get you started we chose a group of images that once again do not need model releases. We offer this approach for some of our contributors that have never shot lifestyle before. Remember we are not looking for grip and grin shots of business people, we are after real life moments, just remember that we don't have to see the whites of their eyes to create a big seller.



- Capture a Real Smile -

One subject that might seem easy to produce that has always been and will always be a strong revenue source in stock production is, capturing a "Real Smile." This actually takes a great amount of talent from the photographer to get it every time. Finding talent that are comfortable sharing their emotions without feeling self conscious is 80% of the battle. If your talent is not comfortable with themselves it makes it very hard to evoke the emotion you are trying to capture, so make sure before you head off with shots in mind, that the talent you are working with can deliver the goods.

Once you find the talent that can truly let go of themselves in front of the camera, you want to make that model very happy as you will want to use them over and over again. Make sure when you find that golden smile that you change location, wardrobe and lighting to get the most out of your day's efforts. You can also add the horizontal/vertical version, but the buyer will be happier if you deliver them a square that crops both ways, just saying.

There are two approaches to the smile:

The first one being an "on camera smile" with the eyes connecting with the viewer. This brings the viewer directly into contact with the image and offers many applications in the industry. Direct eye contact with the camera brings the final viewer into the image as a participant rather than watching

the action from outside.

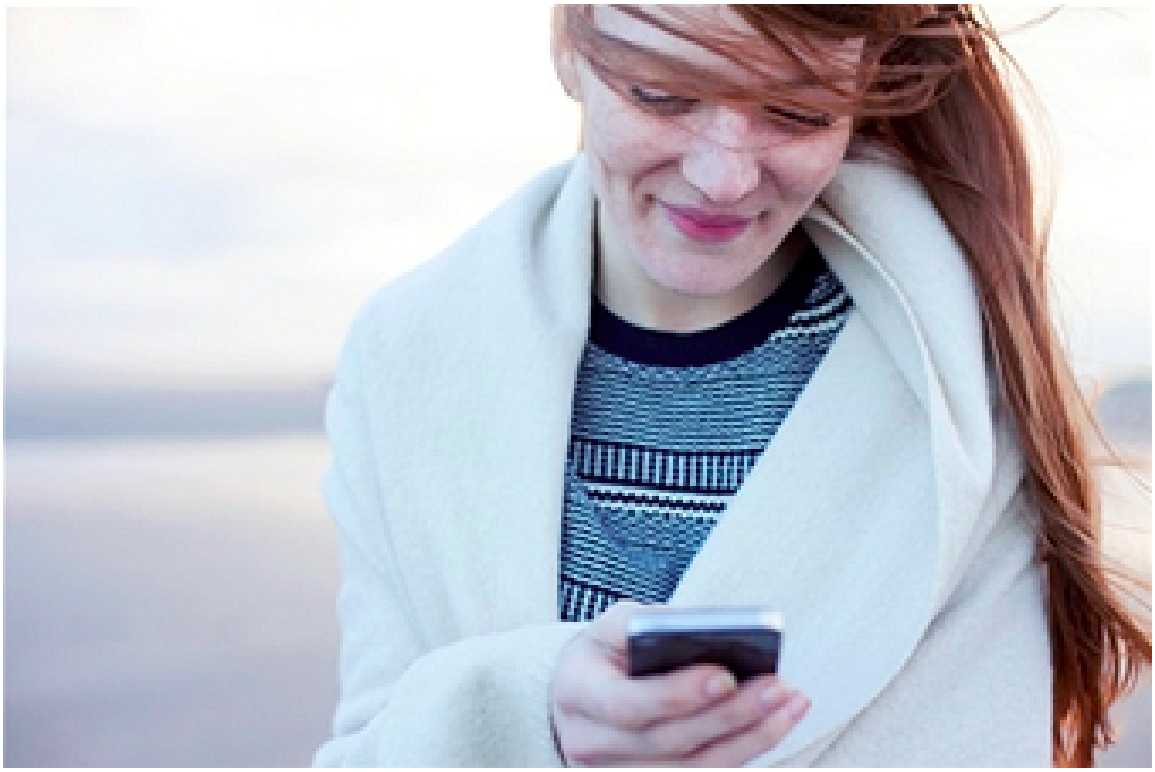
The other being the "off camera smile" where the viewer becomes more of an observer of the moment rather than directly involved. We often refer to this as a voyeur approach as we are more like a fly on the wall watching a moment take place than actually participating. Both of these approaches to lifestyle can be huge sellers but the trick is making it real.

We have chosen a selection of images that we feel grab ahold of the viewer and offer up honest portrayals of real smiles. One trick you might consider when trying to create this content is working with people you know and love. Great talent can produce the appearance of true emotions, but when it comes to street casting and working with non pros, the better you know them the better chance you have of making them smile from the heart.

- On Camera Smiles-

- Off Camera Smiles-

The "off camera smile" is a very big part of our stock industry. It allows for the viewer to take on a voyeurs approach to the image. We feel more like we are watching rather than participating, allowing us to feel as if we are seeing a very private moment that we are privileged to partake in. Here are a small collection of off camera smiles that allow us to feel a part of someone else's personal life experience.



- Small Business and their People -

One subject that you would think Spaces Images would be full of is small businesses. They are in everyone's neighborhood. We all know someone that runs a small business and they are the first to want to do a trade out for some strong photos at no cost. Unfortunately Spaces does not have a strong collection of small business, we actually have very little of it.

If you are trying to come up with ways to create content for Spaces and you want to keep the expense to just your time, then there is nothing we would love more than for you to start chatting up your local shops and calling friends that operate their own small business. It can be such a wonderful win-win opportunity. We have worked with small business for close to 90% of all our location business stock shoots and it has never once cost a single penny in location fees. On top of that, we have made a lot of great connections and friends in the process.

We know you are all very skilled at capturing the environment, so we wanted to share some images that capture not only the environment but also the people that make these businesses what they are. We hope you find inspiration in this small collection of images. Next time you are considering a small business location for a shoot, drop us a line and we'll brainstorm an awesome shot list together.

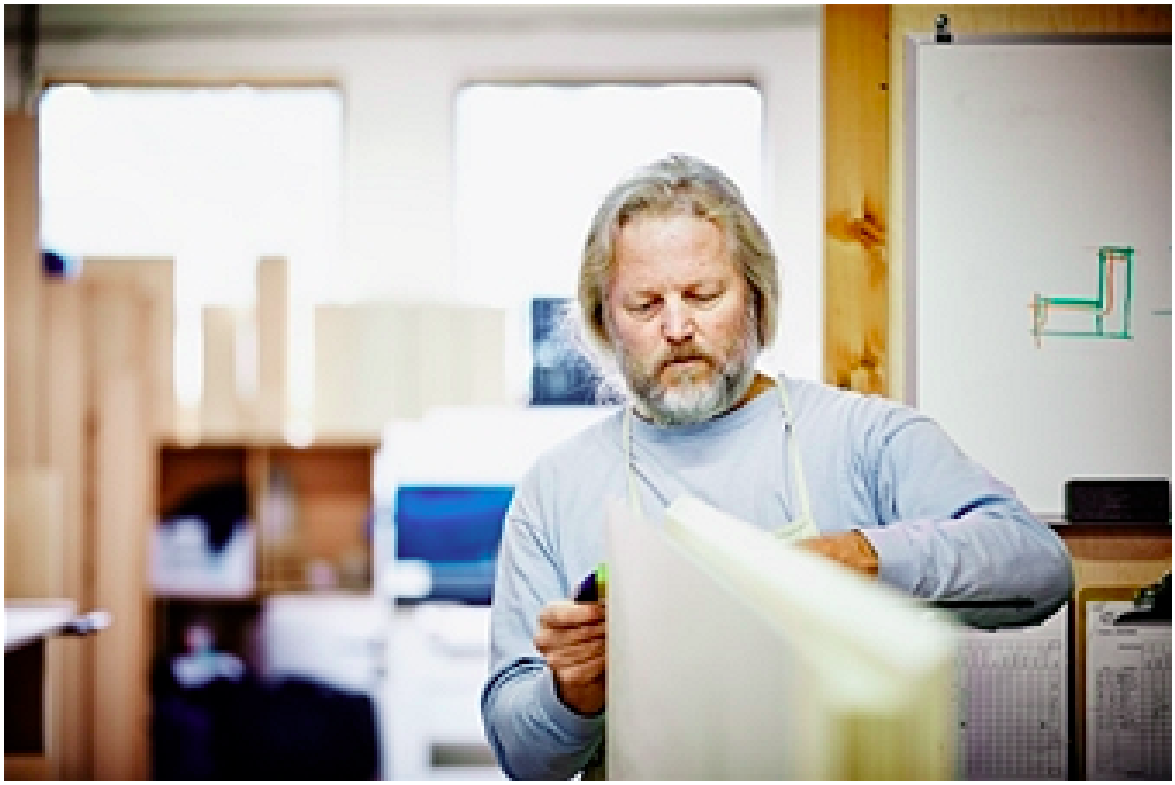
- On Camera -

WE'RE
OPEN!

- Off Camera -

Just like we mentioned in our "off camera smile" when the talent doesn't connect with the viewer through eye contact we are given the feeling of seeing life from a "fly on the wall" perspective. It truly allows the viewer to feel privileged to be witnessing a moment in life, that through the five elements we have discussed, create a very personal experience for the viewer. Here is another great selection of images that we feel tell a great story and invite us all into the private worlds of these small business people.

COFFEE



- Tech Talk -

- Add some Flare to your Photos -

Once again, flares in photography have become incredibly popular. This style tends to come and go. We have seen it now four times in the past 18 years and the style stays around for about 3-4 years in stock before it disappears only to resurface again. These days it has become so much easier to add your flares in post rather than spend countless attempts with an in camera flare, only to see the final result be WAY to much or NO sign of the flare at all. Couple this with trying to get your best expression from your model and the variables for failure increase considerably.

We have purchased a new software that we have only just started to play with, but we feel offers a much easier and more precise approach to adding flares to your stock imagery. We aren't going to go into a detailed explanation in this brief about shooting against chroma-key backgrounds, we are saving that for the Fall, but for now we wanted to show you our very first attempt at adding flares and a model to a composite photo.

One little tip we will share for now is the need to photograph your backgrounds so they support the use of a flare. You might want to start to build yourself a little library of strong backgrounds that lend themselves to future in-house flare post production. They are easy to find and always helpful to have stashed away on your hard drive.

The software we are referring to is Knoll Light Factory. HERE is the link to check it out. We purchased it a while back and played with one image for a few minutes (we'll share that image as well) but it wasn't until this past week that we actually took it for a proper test drive. The options are off the hook. From adding headlights to a vehicle to making your own Light Sabers. This time we are only going to focus on recreating sun flares in post production, but once you get ahold of this powerful tool you might find yourself shooting just to apply some of the fun features this software offers.

I am not sure where to start, except by saying this is an amazingly powerful software that is incredibly intuitive. Within 20 minutes we are up and running adding flares everywhere. You will see by our example that a lighter touch would probably create a more realistic version (we got a bit carried away) but for 30 minutes of playing we are very happy with our first results right out of the box.

Whenever we make a location composite image, it is very important to choose our background first. It's our background that dictates the style of light we will need to apply to our model to make them fit their environment seamlessly.

First we photographed the water outside the house. We decided to use two files for the water. One to create the large flare on the water (this image had to be shot earlier in the evening to get a broader flare across the water).

- The first was taken earlier in the day to produce the large flare on the water

- The second file was of the same view point over the water but this one was shot just before sunset to offer the warm tones to the color palette and a natural flare from the sun behind our models placement.

- The third frame we shot a fence down at the park near our house

- Last, we shot the cheapest talent we could find against a green screen, also known as a chroma-key background so we could easily strip me out of the image

We took these four elements, added a few layers of lens flare and…Voila'

Here is the final version of the image. We will share with you each layer needed to create the final in a short Vimeo below as well. You might be surprised just how easy it was to produce. More than anything we want to share information with all of our contributors to give your work a more polished feel while hopefully at the same time educating you about the options available to all of us.

This is a wonderful software, probably our favorite addition since our NIK suite. It is not as cheap as we would like, but the applications are amazing. We used it with one other image when we first opened the box months ago and then put it away as life got busy. Please take a look at this image that also had the Knoll Light Factory applied to create a dreamy cast over the cloud bank and a sun that had already set. Once again the color palette to the image and the direction of light supported the use of the software, so it's important to realize this isn't going to work for every image. Next time you are struggling to capture the perfect lens flare in camera you might want to consider changing over your flares to part of your post work.

Here is one last example of Knoll Light Factory in action. We shot this in New York just a couple of weeks ago. The sun had already set, but that wasn't a problem. We just added one back to the shot and along with it a beautiful amber glow on the buildings.

To get a better idea of what the flares look like here is a 100% section of the top photo. If you would like to see a better example, feel free to e-mail us and we will send you a file to look at. We

can guarantee that this software produces realistic effects even with our first attempts. We can only imagine how proficient we could become with a little time.

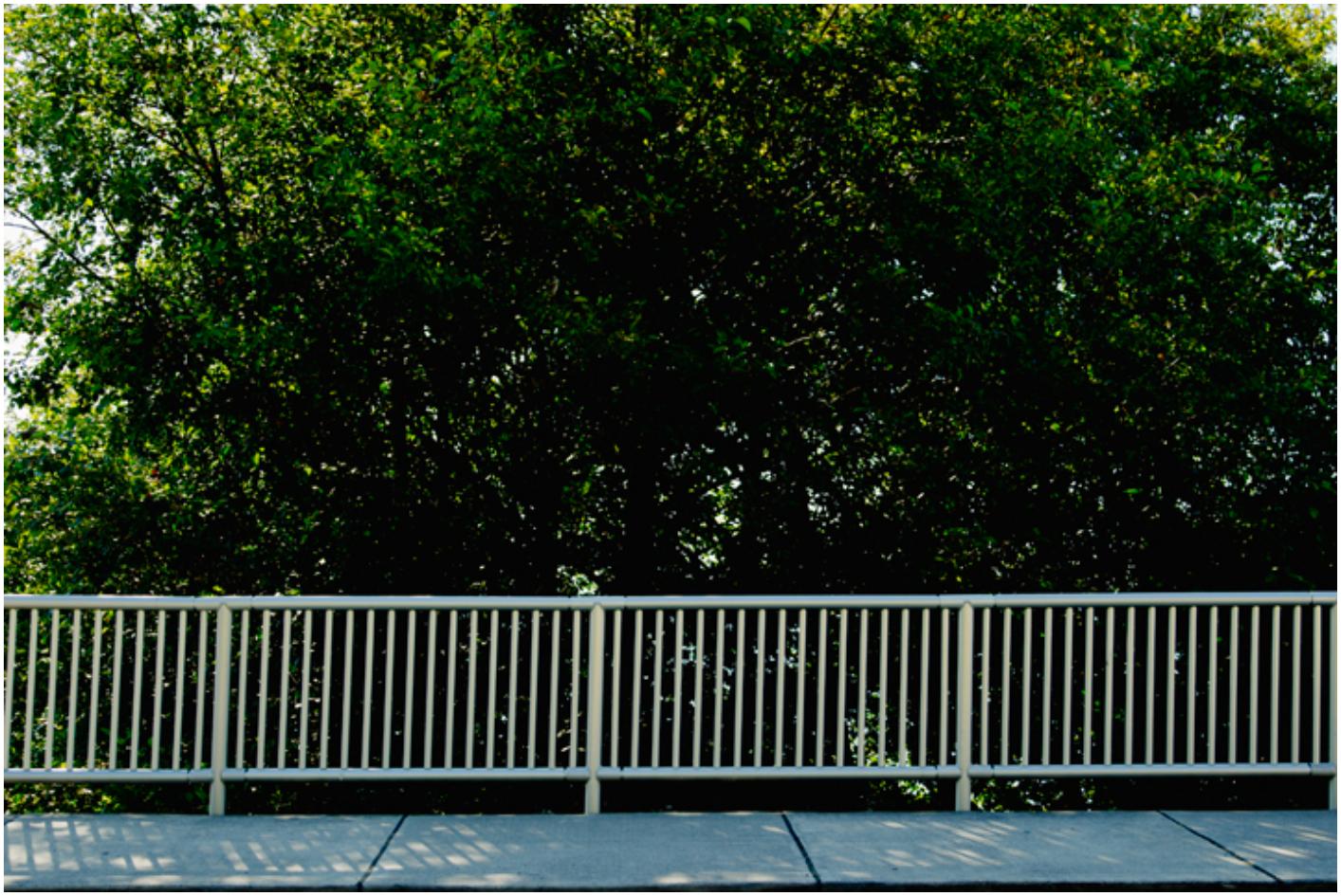
We hope you find this presentation motivational, it's not an exact tutorial, so to help you to understand some of the in-between steps, we are going to rely on a few YouTube links to get you started. So here ya go, a quick run through from start to finish, on how we made the above image all from pieces rather than waiting for the perfect moment to present itself. Now, if we could just find some good talent.

The first image was shot at about 5 p.m. to capture a broad flare off of the water. We are only going

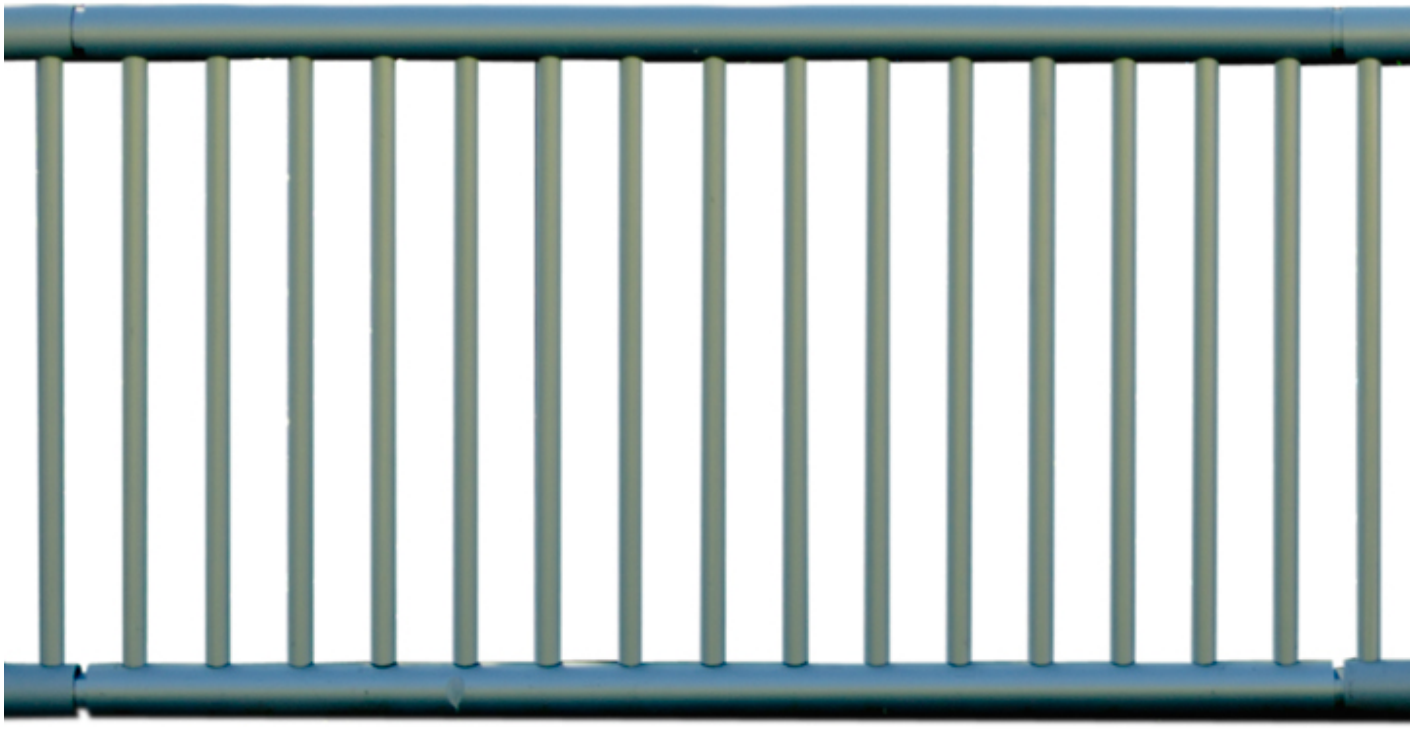
to use the water from this shot with an easy crop right along the shore line.

The second image was shot at about 8:30 p.m. just before sunset to get the color palette we wanted to work with and the big sun flare for right behind the image of ME. It didn't offer a wide spread flare on the water that we wanted that is why we shot the background in two piece and just melded them in Photoshop to create our final background.

Now we wanted to add some separation from our background and our talent so we shot a railing just down the street from our house. Here is the original image that we took the rail from.



We only had to strip one piece of the railing then just clone it over until we had enough length for our final use. Here is the section cut out and ready to apply.



The last shot was to shoot myself against a chroma-key, also referred to as a "green screen" background to make the stripping a breeze. To get you started we have found a couple of good YouTube tutorials to help explain how to shoot against chroma-key backgrounds. We will be offering a follow up on our next creative brief with more detailed information about shooting against a chroma-key background for the absolute best results.

Click HERE for video 1

Click HERE for video 2

If you want to get a jump on it, please drop us a line and we will send you all the information you need to get started tomorrow, shooting talent against a chroma-key background. For now, click through on these links to get you started.

One thing that you need to consider when lighting your talent is, what lighting scheme will I need to make the talent match when I drop them into the background I have chosen? This is why we always shoot our location first. By shooting the location first you have a clear map as to what lighting scheme will be needed to match our talent's lighting to the environment's light.

Here we used two soft boxes on each side of the talent (we use that word talent very loosely on this shoot) to offer a wrap around lighting that helps to support the back light of the image we are using for the background. One other light was used on a spot to bounce off of a white card above the talent's face to help illuminate the face just a bit more. Here is the final before stripping it from the chroma-key background.

Now, a quick strip and we are ready to add me and add our railing to our sunny backdrop. This entire shoot and retouching took me just under 2 hours, so the amount of time needed is not as

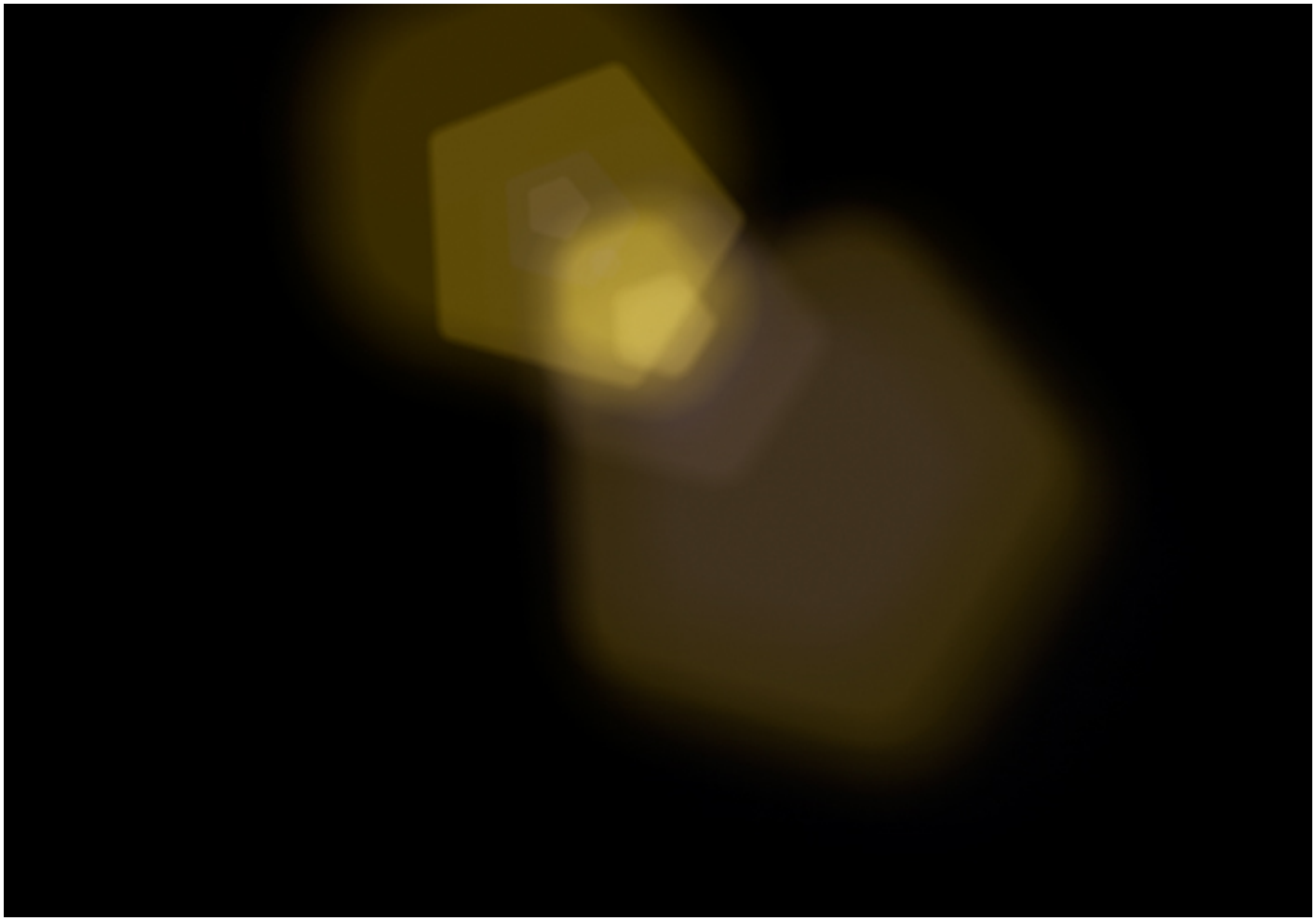
much as you would expect. If we were shooting talent for composite, we would have all of our backgrounds picked out and then we would spend a few hours photographing our talent propped and styled to go with each of our chosen backgrounds. If you approach composite work by working on several images at once you will cut down on your production time considerably.

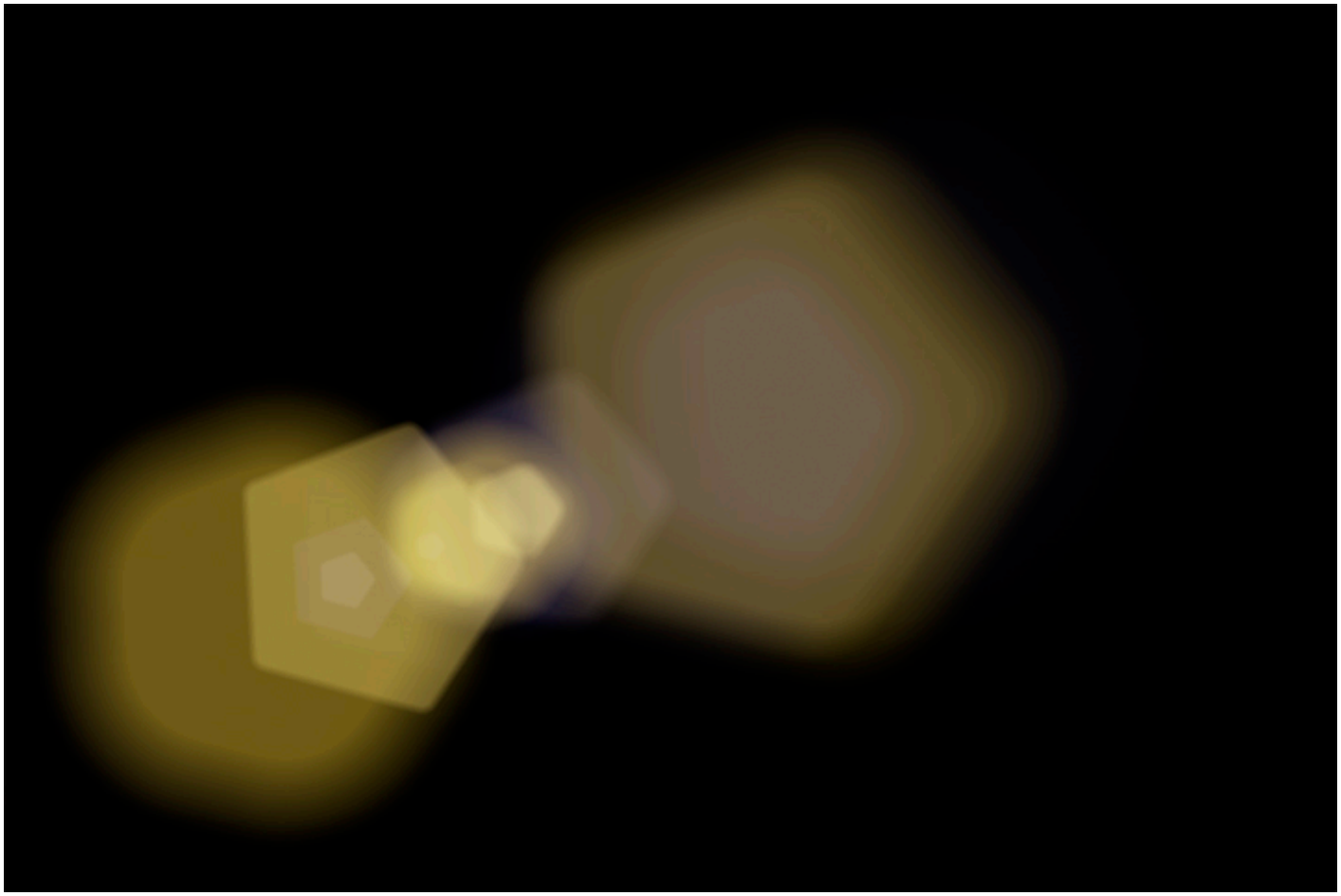
We now have all the pieces completed to create our final image. Let's look at a few files I made of some flares and you will start to see how they came together. One little tip you will need to know when working with flares is you want to keep them isolated to a separate layer.

Every flare we add we place on an individual layer so we can move them and tweak them until we find just the right spot and feel. For this to occur, you first need to make a layer and fill it with black. This gives your flares somewhere to live. Without some density on the layer the software would not recognize the layer.

Now you have your black layer to add your flares to. Once you add a flare, go to the top menu bar in your layers palette and change the black layer with the flares to "Screen Mode." Once you have changed this black layer to "Screen" you will see that all the dark has disappeared and only the flares are left for you to see. Below you will see two examples of flare layers used to create this composite. There were a total of 3 flare layers added to create the final effect. These flare layers can also be manipulated after they have been created. You can change their shape and size in transform, or you can gaussian blur them to take away the sharp edges and you can even erase parts of each flare layer and only use a portion. Once you start to play, you will see just how easy this application is and how dramatic your final image can become. As you can see by one of our first attempts, it takes time to learn when to say when, we have't quite mastered that part as we got a bit flare happy with our final.

Here are a couple of the flare layers used to complete this composite.





The final image was quite simple and took no time to look finished because we followed a formula that works.

-Shooting your background first so you understand the light you will need on your talent

- Capturing the talent with a lighting scheme that supports the background you chose

- Adding your flares to individual layers of black then setting to "screen" to enable you to move the flares exactly where you want them.

We will discuss more composite workflow in our next brief, but for now you might want to start shooting some great backgrounds so you are ready to play when you have the right model available.

We are here for everyone if you are interested in learning some new tricks to keep your game at it's sharpest, we want to help. Please contact us with any questions related to your photographic endeavors, we relish the opportunity to help whenever we can. We love to help educate and share

ideas with our team.

Just so you can get a basic idea of this software, I am going to share a quick Vimeo on how we add these kinds of Flares using Knoll Light Factory. We hope you will see that this is not rocket science, just another tool to help craft our images and make our workflow just a bit easier.

- Closing Notes -

We have covered some super fun stuff in this quarters creative brief. From what makes an image strong; focusing on the "Five Elements," to strong image making. Some feedback on the incredible growth in revenue we have witnessed at Spaces over these past two quarters, all the way to new software to make your images pop just a bit more than the other players on the field. We hope you find some inspiration to add to your own perspiration in creating your next ABSOLUTE FAVORITE image. It is the passion that we all share as image creators that keeps us coming back and trying to make our next image even better than the last.

We also mentioned in our last creative brief that we would be presenting some very cool stuff about the newest POV with our purchase of the Movi 5 and the Freefly Heavylift Octocopter. As always, time moves more quickly than we anticipated. Our copter has just arrived this week and is being built by one of our team members. The Movi is being picked up next week and we will begin testing what camera will be the best match for our video and still needs. Hang in there, we plan on offering up lots of detailed information on our latest learning curve and we are super excited to start applying it to our future stock productions.

We are very fortunate to have such an amazing team of contributors to keep us all extremely motivated on this end and we hope we can keep your fires as stoked as you do ours. Have a wonderful summer everyone and we will see you back here in the fall for the next Spaces Images Creative Brief. Until then don't forget the sunscreen.