

## Apogee Photo Magazine



**Adler Photo Workshops**  
Fashion, Nature, Photoshop & more



# Fashion: Get Inspired!

by Lindsay Adler

Let your senses take over--the sights and sounds around you can get you inspired for your next fashion photo shoot.

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For this image, I worked with a fashion design student at Syracuse University. For her final project, she created a fashion collage inspired by the work of Tim Burton. Using this knowledge (and my familiarity with the movie *A Nightmare Before Christmas*), I came up with this image. The model's "raggedy" clothing mimicked the look of one of the movie's characters, and I used Photoshop to whiten skin and posing (to give the impression of a limp doll) to enhance this vision.

**Technical:** Canon 5D, 50mm & 85mm Lens at f/8 at 1/100, ISO 100. **Studio:** Large strip light to the left, small strip light for back 45 rim light, large fill card.

## *Inspiration*

In fashion photography, creative inspiration can come from almost anywhere, and different artists are inspired by different catalysts. One person may be inspired by a poem or a location, while another is inspired by music or a model. The following are just a few suggestions for gaining inspiration if you feel like you're in a creative rut, although there are certainly endless sources of ideas.

## *Locations*

Scouting out locations is a great means of inspiration. If you look around where you live, you're certain to find special locations that will spawn ideas for shoots. A particular location may have a certain mood to it,

may lend itself to graphic compositions, or may simply induce your creative juices to begin to flow. For example, when I went to the beach (in California), I saw a rock formation that looked really beautiful. It lent itself to great textures and compositions. I used it as the seed of an idea for a shot—a version of a sea-maiden that fit into the curves of the rocks.

### ***Clothing***

Certain items of clothing may inspire a shoot. Many famous photographers shoot models wearing beautiful clothing in front of plain gray backgrounds. They let the clothing (its shapes, colors, textures, movements, style) inform the resulting shots. When clothing inspires me, it either reminds me of something or has great graphic elements. The clothing may look like a certain time period or scene, which then inspires an image. The clothing also might have long lines or maybe abrupt shapes that can be used for striking images.

I have also developed ideas for my photographs from a clothing designer's vision. When designers create a collection or piece of clothing, they often have their own inspirations that can play into your photographs. Contrary to common belief, you don't have to be a famous photographer to work with original pieces. Many universities have fashion design programs whose students are happy to have their work photographed, and their work comes with young, enthusiastic, and creative students who can help inspire you. For example, one designer told me her collection was inspired by Tim Burton and his films. I'm most familiar with *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, and I used those images to reflect a theme.

### ***Props***

A prop or accessory might inspire an entire concept for an image. I often scour eBay for great finds. I look for weird hats, glasses, jewelry, or anything else that might be incorporated into an image. You can do the same at local vintage clothing or costume shops... or even your own basement. In fact, when I was searching online, I found some weird "cyber goggles" for less than \$20. I didn't have a particular use for them, but they just looked really interesting, colorful, and graphic. I bought them and used them to create one of my favorite shots (*red glasses photo*).

### ***Music Videos & Movies***

Movies and music videos can provide endless inspiration. Movies can suggest a tone and style for an image. Likewise, modern music videos

are often well produced, visually pleasing, and sometimes quite artistic. Watching a number of music videos can offer quick snapshots of different styling, locations, or lighting that might look good in an image. For example, I watched the Shakira video for her song "Don't Bother." At the end of the video, she's outside, dancing in front of car headlights that are illuminating fog. It found the result to be a striking visual and did my own version using fog and video lights in an old warehouse.



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**This image was a result of searching on eBay. I wanted to find some new props for a shoot and was searching under "glasses" when I found these "cyber goggles." Seeing the bright color and fascinating patterns, I was inspired to create this striking and graphic image.**

**Technical: Canon 5D, 50mm & 85mm Lens at f/2.8 at 1/100, ISO 100. Studio... beauty dish with fill cards on all sides.**

### ***Poem/Lyrics***

Some poems and lyrics are very descriptive or evoke strong mental images. Each person's interpretation of the image is different, and therefore, can be a great source of ideas. While I was in college, one of our assignments was to select a favorite song, choose part of the lyrics, and create a fashion image that reflected what we heard. This technique may be a great answer if you're searching for a great idea. Listen to some music, select some striking lyrics, and see where the experience takes you.



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### ***Other Art/Photographers***

Another great activity to try if you're in an artistic rut is to visit a good art museum. When you're surrounded by so many visuals, something is bound to inspire you whether it's a composition, particular subject matter, or just the

**While looking at other photographers' work, I saw an image of a girl holding balloons beside a lake. I felt that the image was extremely weak: the model looked unnatural, the styling didn't fit the tone of the image, and the concept was falling a bit flat. This image, however, inspired me to take the balloon idea a bit further to this image. I found the model, rented the balloons, and a windy day provided the final push of inspiration for the surreally floating balloons.**

**Technical: Canon 5D, 50mm Lens at f/5.0 at 1/500, ISO 100. Natural light (sunlight bouncing off of sand) and large silver reflector.**

founders and timeless masters of fashion photography are still very useful for inspiration, no matter how old their photographs are. If you're interested in seeing the images of these legends of the business, you might want to research some of the follow names: Blumenfeld, Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Herb Ritts, Albert Watson, and many more.

Artist representatives' websites contain the best work of the photographers they represent. Therefore, if you look at the websites of the "best" reps, you'll see some of the newest and (sometimes) most exciting work out there. The images may inspire you or at least give you a feel of what other people are doing so you can determine how to make yourself stand out from the crowd. Some really great fashion photography artist reps include Art + Commerce, Art Partner, Art Department, Creative Exchange, Jed Rood, and more. Just search online and you will find hundreds of websites and photographers.

Of course, while you may let other artists or photographers inspire you, you shouldn't just copy an image or the concept behind the image. If you're merely recreating an image, you can't claim it as your own. You need to add another dimension.

Remember, the images that inspire you don't have to be created by famous photographers or even be "good." When I was looking online, I found a fashion image of a girl with black balloons. I liked the image concept, but thought that it was poorly executed on a number of levels (weak composition, poor styling of model, boring shape of balloons, etc.). However, I worked with the concept to create something more exciting and aesthetically pleasing. While the resulting image was inspired by the first image, it was also completely different.

### ***Models/Muse***

Fashion  
photographers often

tone of an image. Many great paintings have inspired photographs and many famous photographers first began as painters.

In addition, you can readily find the work of many great fashion photographers—from the fashion giants to the leaders of the contemporary industry--online. Many of the

find “muses” for their work--such as a model whose look inspires them. Many photographers may even use a model again and again because her look sets off so many different visual images in their minds. If you’re doing a regular “beauty shot” (focusing on the look of the model), a great model may be all you need to make the shot. Many masters of photography have found muses that they use over and over both to express themselves and to test the versatility of their skills and the skills of the model.

Finally, you can discover a vast assortment of sources of inspiration in addition to the ones we’ve mentioned. Dreams, television shows, current events, and much more may inspire ideas, concepts, and visions. Take the challenge to explore the possibilities.

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*Lindsay Adler is a professional photographer and photo lecturer living in New York and London. She teaches workshops and classes through her business, Adler Photo Workshops ([www.adlerphotoworkshops.com](http://www.adlerphotoworkshops.com)). She enjoys all types of photography, including fashion, travel, nature, and photojournalism.*

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**This image was inspired by music videos. At the end of the video “Don’t Bother” by Shakira, the singer dances in the fog in front of car headlights. This was my interpretation of the visual. This image was photographed using a fog machine in an abandoned warehouse with movie lighting as backlights.**

**Technical: Canon 5D, 35mm at f/2.8 at 1/60, ISO 400. Fog machine in an abandoned warehouse, constant movie lighting for backlight.**