



Tips and Tricks

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Passion For Fashion

Digital Diva
HELENE DELILLO
Makes Her
Images Sing

MODEL: TARA D, ZOLI NYC
MAKEUP BY DEANNA

TEXT BY DAN HAVLIK • IMAGES BY HELENE DELILLO

To most people she is Helene DeLillo, mild-mannered president of Dancing Icon Inc., a successful Tribeca-based digital imaging and consulting firm. To those with questions about the workings of the latest digital imaging software, the intricacies of web design or a variety of other computer-related issues, she is “Dr. Helene,” columnist for *Digital Imaging* magazine, *SP&D*’s sister publication.

And for those with a “passion for fashion,” as DeLillo whimsically describes herself, she is the “Digital Diva,” a cutting-edge fashion photographer whose images have appeared in the pages of *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Time Digital*, to mention a few.

“I love fashion photography. I enjoy everything about it,” DeLillo says.

“I love the challenge of having to catch that moment of beauty before it’s gone. I love working with models, makeup artists, and stylists. The whole project is fun and I enjoy connecting with people’s hearts.”

DeLillo also has a knack for connecting with people’s faces. Her tight, uniquely seductive shots of models—some elaborately made up, some barely embellished—suggest DeLillo is someone who has spent a long time studying the human face. That assumption is not far from the mark.

As a digital consultant and retoucher to some of the top photographers in the world, DeLillo has used her

retouching magic on many of the world's most famous faces — removing wrinkles, whitening the whites of eyes, smoothing out bikini lines and, ultimately, making beautiful supermodels appear even more beautiful. Her high profile clients include some of the most demanding in the cosmetic, fashion, and entertainment industries.

THE RIGHT CHEMISTRY

Along with the steady diet of fashion and beauty magazines she consumed while growing up in Hawaii and the long hours she spent immersed in the darkroom during her college years, DeLillo credits the digital work she has provided for renowned fashion and beauty shooters such as Marco Glaviano, with helping to shape her as a photographer. "Being around the masters in the fashion and beauty world, has been great for me as a photographer," she says.

The experience has given DeLillo an ease with models and a willingness to be flexible, which results in fresh looks from her talent and arresting images from her cameras. She credits Marco with a technique

for gaining a model's trust. "Simply put, I won't use any image taken that the model doesn't like," she explains.

Choosing which model to use is as important to DeLillo as choosing which camera to use, how the lighting should be arranged, or what the wardrobe will be. She says she gets some of her best advice for selecting models from her husband, John. "We do it on an intuitive level. He may have an idea about a model whom I may not be drawn to immediately. He'll say to me: 'Look, I know she isn't your number one pick, but you're going to get something that you really love from her. My most recent favorite

shot happened this way."

For DeLillo, who has field-tested just about every digital camera on the market, the advent of digital technology and the continued improvements in resolution, clarity, and increased file sizes in cameras and backs, has made her job that much easier. Especially



MODEL: DANA, ZOLI NYC. MAKEUP BY DEANNA



MODEL: DJ HAWTHORNE, CMD LA/NYC
MAKEUP BY NANCY ARRUDA



MODEL: JAMIE @ KATHY MULLER AGENCY, HAWAII.
MAKEUP BY CATHY CHUN

DELILLO'S DIGITAL TIPS

DeLillo's experience as a digital consultant for many of the major camera companies has made her a wellspring of knowledge for professional photographers interested in "going digital."

"Make a list of the features you need and a list of assignments you expect to use a digital camera for. Then do some product research," she advises. "You must test the cameras before purchasing, so contact your local reseller. In New York City, resellers, such as Fotocare, have been in the professional photography industry for over 20 years. They understand your digital needs and rent digital cameras."

"The digital camera backs have different user interfaces. You need to decide which one best suits your needs. Some cameras only work with removable storage, some cameras only shoot directly to your hard drive on your computer, some cameras are too slow for fashion while others have more detail than needed for certain assignments. Many resellers, including Fotocare, rent professional digital cameras and if you decide to purchase, the rental fee is applied toward the price of your new camera! You can't lose."

Adds DeLillo: "Look at the financial investment so it makes good business sense. Many of the pros I know are making more money because they have added digital imaging services. There are more line items on the invoices, things like scanning, retouching, CMYK separations, proofs, etc. Digital has created a whole new market."

Photographers looking for one-on-one consultation can catch up with DeLillo at one of the photography/technology trade shows such as MacWorld, Seybold and PhotoPlus Expo. She is a member of Adobe Photoshop's "Dream Team" and will be doing a Live Fashion Shoot at Photoshop World in Los Angeles April 27-29. For more information, visit www.photoshopworld.com. As a judge for the world's largest online photography contest (www.photoworkshop.com), DeLillo recommends that photographers show their work as much as possible.

Her company, Dancing Icon Inc., consults photographers and studios on the latest and greatest technology for photographers. Dancing Icon was recently hired by Sotheby's to design their Digital Photography Studios, photographing and uploading 14,000 images in a few short weeks. For more information check out <http://asbn.apple.com/stories/delillo/>. She can be reached at her studio in New York City at 212-334-6705 or at helene@dancingicon.com for technical advice.



MODEL: DJ HAWTHORNE, CMD LA/NYC. MAKEUP BY NANCY ARRUDA FOR BOBBIE BROWN COSMETICS

when things don't go as planned.

"You can plan everything out, set it all up, and then you get up there and shoot, and you don't like it," she says with a sigh. "The nice thing about digital is that you can change it right away and see the results immediately. Instant gratification."

SA Y YOU WANT SOME RESOLUTION?

To make her point about digital photography versus traditional, DeLillo relates an anecdote about a recent film shoot she did in Hawaii. After finishing the shoot, word came from the mainland that a snowstorm was about to hit the East Coast, which meant delays. Then, while the rolls were still being transported in special X-ray proof bags, she unexpectedly had to leave town



MODEL: KAMAKOA @ MORE AGENCY, HAWAII
MAKEUP BY CATHY CHUN

on a business trip. The film would have to wait until she returned.

"By the time I got the film back from the lab with clip tests, several months had passed. I hadn't even scanned it at that point. With the money I spent on the job and my time, I could have bought another digital camera," she chuckles.

"It was a testament, to me, as someone who loves the texture and smell of film. I'm not saying film is dead. I'm just saying I've got 50 rolls of film from Hawaii (shot at Christmas time) that still need to be edited, scanned, and printed. On the other hand, the digital captures are complete."

"One of the things with digital, ironically, is that sometimes there's too much resolution. I'm finding that my makeup artists have to be retrained on the set to deal with digital cameras. The resolution with digital capture allows you to see every little detail. For example, I shot the 'Golden Girl' image (on the cover) digitally and on film. With the digital shot you could see every pore and hair on her face, whereas the film shot was much more forgiving. The makeup artist Deanna, whom I work with regularly in New York City, has an amazing way of applying foundation (as seen in the opening shot of model Tara). This is essential in digital photography."

While it doesn't take much to get DeLillo to rhapsodize about the virtues of megapixels and expanded file sizes, perhaps what makes her most excited about the latest technology is what it has done for her as an artist.

"Digital's really cool because it transforms the creative process—we get immediate feedback, the models get to see themselves, the makeup artists get to check their work. Less retouching is needed and the art director can change their mind, saving everyone time and money. But my favorite part of the whole digital process is that we know when we have the shot. Then we can experiment with other creative concepts. The creative process is part of the moment." ❖

HELENE DELILLO'S GEAR BOX

DIGITAL CAMERAS

Leaf Cantare back with Mamiya RZ67 Pro II
Kodak DCS Pro Back with Hasselblad 555ELD
Kodak DCS 4800
Sinarback with Hasselblad 555ELD
Phase One LightPhase with Hasselblad 555ELD

LIGHTING

Broncolor A2 & A4 graphite packs
Various Broncolor heads & reflectors

COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

Mac G4s, various configurations, dual processors with minimum of 1 gig RAM of Kingston Memory
Iomega built-in zip drives
Lexar CompactFlash Cards
VST/Smart Disk FireWire Drives
QPS FireWire 16x Writable CD
DVD Writer
Wacom 9x12 Intous USB Tablets
Intous Airbrush & 5 button Mouse
Wacom 4x5 USB Graphire for G4 Titanium
Epson 1280, 2000P & 7500 printers

SOFTWARE

Adobe Photoshop 6.0
Image Ready, Illustrator, and GoLive
Photoshop plug ins:
NIK Sharpener Pro & Color Efex
Test Strip Pro 3.0 (Metamorphosis)
Eye Candy 4000
KPT Power Tools 5 & 6
PhotoRetouch Pro & ColorPro by Binuscan
Altamira Genuine Fractals
Studio Artist
Painter 6.0

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