

Lynne Spencer is becoming one of Vancouver's most sought after portrait photographers. She has photographed people such as Pianist, Wen Wen Du, Actor, Kerry Sandomirsky and, Painter, Charles Forsberg and talk show host George Stroumboulopoulos of "The Hour". She is well known for the clarity with which she portrays her subjects and her innate ability to capture their essence. Lynne has often said that 'photography is a language... that needs no translation.'



I met with Lynne at her contemporary Yaletown apartment, overlooking False Creek.

TH: When did you discover your passion for photography?

LS: I first discovered photography while studying Film Theory at the University of Toronto. I volunteered as a Production Manager at one of the campus newspapers and often wrote articles for the Arts section. I discovered that a great photograph really helped make a story better, and in fact, sometimes said it all.

I began to apply the theories I was learning, in the film program (moving pictures), to my stills photography. I started using lighting, camera angles and depth of field to give layered meaning to the subjects. The images were starting to speak... I had discovered a real passion and joy in capturing "the defining moment". Then... my camera was stolen. (laugh)

TH: How do you come up with some of your more... conceptual ideas?

LS: The images usually appear in my mind as though a light bulb has been turned on. It is usually quite detailed and the final composition is often quite close to that first vision.

TH: You mean it just happens...

LS: Not exactly. I do quite a bit of research on each subject and sometimes use a technique called word association. I also spend a lot of time at the library. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly what triggers the light bulb. Sometimes it happens right away and sometimes it takes a long time but it always feels like magic.

TH: Who did you enjoy photographing the most?

LS: Charles Forsberg, the painter. He was great for a few reasons. He knows quite a bit about photography and appreciates it. He was keen to try different conceptual ideas and experiment with different lighting techniques. One of his portraits is done with painted light which takes quite a long time for each exposure and he had to sit very, very still. It really helps when your subject enjoys the process. It can have a very positive effect on the image.

TH: Is there anything you would like to explore that you haven't yet?

LS: I'd like to shoot a photo essay that is completely conceptualized and stylized. A story. Much like a silent film but sexier and in colour.

Above and right, Charles Forsberg in his studio
Photography by Lynne Spencer



