

# NIGHT REFLECTIONS

By Kent DuFault



<https://unsplash.com/photos/NKUEACkOhbk>

*Pierpaolo Lanfrancotti – Sony ILCE-7S, 28mm lens, f/4, 1/45<sup>th</sup>, ISO 3200*

The above photo is a common conception of what a nighttime shot with reflections might encompass.

It's true. When you include a body of water in front of a nightscape, it will add color, possibly texture, and most certainly more visual interest.

However, there are many other ways to creatively use reflections at night. In this Creativity Prompt, we will also explore some of those more obscure techniques.

Let's start with a simple one.



## Assignment:

Go out at night, find a body of water with plenty of lighting on the opposite side, and experiment with capturing this common use of reflections. In your experimentation, try different shutter speeds. Go from the fastest one that you can use all the way down to 30 seconds. How does the shutter speed change the effect? Now try different white balance settings. Use all of them and even create a custom setting to learn how this camera function changes the effect. (Don't forget to bring a flashlight!)



<https://unsplash.com/photos/oVMjj1ub5kw>

Filip Mroz – Canon EOS 5D Mark III, 35mm lens, f/1.4, 1/100<sup>th</sup>, ISO 400

The second most common type of nighttime reflection picture is taken during or after rain. This is a great time to shoot because reflections are everywhere. You aren't limited by the set location of a body of water.

However, I want you to use this tried and true method in a manner that isn't used as often. This will make your resulting photos stand out.

Look at the example photo (above). The first thing I noticed was that it was shot at eye level. The photographer was standing there and created the picture. By doing so, he didn't take full advantage of the reflections that he was trying to compose with.

The upper one-third of the picture is utterly meaningless background.

In photography, we all have mentors or more experienced photographers that we look up to.

My mentor was a highly skilled commercial photographer who I worked with regularly for nearly fifteen years.

He gave me a piece of advice that I never forgot: don't create your photos at eye level. Doing so has already relegated it to a mundane and repetitious view. "Get the camera low or get it high," that's what he always said and what he always did.

Imagine if this photographer had gotten low and much closer to the food stand. It would be a much more dramatic image!



### Assignment:

Go out at night after or during rain and use reflections to enhance your images. Do not take a single shot at eye level. Discover the power of even the most minor change in perspective from eye level. Use this technique to highlight subjects or tell photo stories.





<https://unsplash.com/photos/Qq7A85iCzhQ>

*Yeshi Kangrang – Nikon D3200, 12mm lens, f/4, 1/15<sup>th</sup>, ISO 100*

Metallic objects will also reflect the lights of nighttime.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/time-lapse-photography-of-cars-on-road-during-night-time-3881036/>

*Kehn Hermano – Sony ILCE-7M2, 50mm camera, f/5.6, 10 seconds, ISO 50*

Here is another inspiration photo on how you might use metal to reflect light at night.



#### Assignment:

Go out on a nighttime photo shoot and only use metal objects to reflect the surrounding lights. Did you notice that the photographer got their camera down low in the shot of the manhole cover?





<https://www.pexels.com/photo/architectural-photography-of-building-421129/>

*Nicolas Postiglioni – No EXIF*

This is a fact of lighting that many photographers are not aware of.

Suppose an utterly dark area is flooded with colored light and no white, full-spectrum light is introduced into the scene. In that case, the entire scene will reflect the color. It's true!

Think about when you go to a concert or a theatrical play. When the lighting director turns on a colored spotlight to illuminate the set, suddenly everything on the stage becomes that color.

But when the show is over and the house lights go up, everything goes back to normal color!

You can use this in your nighttime photography – reflected colored light.



### Assignment:

With this Creativity Prompt, you will hone your location scouting skills. Find some areas that are very dark at night, except for one colored light source. Think of the example photo. You can often find places like this in restaurant and entertainment districts. You can also find them in industrial zones. Try and take advantage of the light source to 'decorate' your entire scene with color.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/person-holding-a-glass-ball-3588602/>

*Kehn Hermano – Sony ILCE-7M2, no lens EXIF, 1/25<sup>th</sup>, ISO 1000*

Glass is also an exciting reflective prop for this Creativity Prompt.

Glass photo balls can be purchased in many locations. On Amazon, they range from \$15 to \$35 USD. I don't currently own one. However, it is on my birthday wish list.

I use glass frequently in my nighttime reflection shots. Most often, I use windows or glass objects found in flea markets.



### Assignment:

Create nighttime reflective pictures using a glass ball or other scavenged glass objects.





<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-sidewalk-during-snow-3333991/>

Josh Hild – Sony ILCE-6500, no lens EXIF, no aperture EXIF, 125<sup>th</sup>, ISO 800

If you have read any of my writing on the topic of photography, you likely know that I am a big fan of what I call 'breaking up the pattern.'

This shot is a perfect example of using a nighttime reflection and breaking up the pattern.

Weather can play a crucial role in your nighttime reflection pictures. Honestly, the worse the weather is, the more likely it will assist you in creating dramatic nighttime reflection photos.



### Assignment:

Put on your foul weather gear and go out in the weather to create some dramatic nighttime reflection shots. Keep in mind everything we've discussed in these Creativity Prompts. Watch out for camera shake. Keep an eye on black holes. Emphasize color and reflections. Include multiple light sources when possible or use a single source to create a mood. Try using some gels or filters to alter the color and increase your story value for your pictures. Combine this Creativity Prompt with light painting for an even greater artistic challenge.