

Natural Shadow Pattern with Bare-Bulb Hard Light

This setup is a great example of how you can create a strong editorial look with **one hard light, one simple reflector, and a foreground object**. The artificial leaves aren't just a prop — they're being used as a lighting tool to create the shadow pattern on the backdrop.



Light 1 — Key Light

Position: Camera Left

Light: Nanlite FC-120C

Modifier: Bare bulb / no modifier

Purpose

The FC-120C is used completely bare to create a **hard, directional light**.

Unlike a large softbox, the bare source gives defined shadows and stronger contrast. This is what gives the images their more dramatic, editorial character. The light is positioned so that it illuminates both the model and the background.



Shadow Pattern

Position: Artificial leaves placed directly in front of the key light.

Purpose

This is the interesting part of the setup.

The leaves are placed between the light and the background, allowing the hard light to project their shape onto the backdrop.

Because the source is relatively hard, the leaf shadows remain defined enough to create a natural-looking pattern.

The leaves aren't lighting the scene. They're modifying the light.

This is essentially a very simple form of **gobo lighting**.

You can replace the leaves with:

- Real branches
- Window frames
- Blinds
- Lace
- Fabric
- Glass
- Any object with an interesting shape



Fill Light

Position: Camera Right

Modifier: White Thermocol Reflector

Purpose

The reflector bounces some of the key light back onto the shadow side of the model.

This prevents the hard key light from creating overly deep shadows on the face while still maintaining the contrast created by the main light.

It's a passive fill, so there is **no second light source required**.



Gear & Camera Settings

Camera: Canon R6 Mark II

Lens: Canon RF 24-105mm f/4

Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec

Aperture: f/4

ISO: 500



Camera: Canon R6 m2
Lens: 24-105mm f/4
Shutter: 1/160
Aperture: f/4
ISO: 500



 [setmylight.com](https://www.setmylight.com)

Why This Setup Works

The setup is simple, but every element has a specific job:

Bare bulb → creates hard directional light

Artificial leaves → create the shadow pattern

White thermocol → controls contrast on the model

Dark green backdrop → gives the shadows a strong surface to appear on

The result is a look that feels more elaborate than the actual lighting setup.



The Bigger Lesson

You don't always need more lights to make a frame more interesting. Sometimes you need to **put something between the light and the subject/background.**

A hard source gives you the ability to create shapes, patterns and shadows. Once you start thinking of everyday objects as light modifiers, a simple one-light setup becomes much more versatile.

