



# The Backgrounder

News and Information About Turning Backgrounds into Profits!

A publication of Virtual Backgrounds - ©2006

May 2006 Issue

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## 2006 Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Schedule

June 12-13-14  
 July 17-18-19  
 August 14-15-16  
 September 18-19-20  
 October 16-17-18  
 November 13-14-15

Click [here](#) to view our workshop brochure containing valuable information on our Virtual Backgrounds training workshops.

It's time to start to get your prints ready to enter into **VB's Annual Print Competition!** The prizes will be bigger and better than ever this year. Keep an eye out for further information in the June 2006 edition of *The Backgrounder!*

## Why is the Background So Important?

Most photographers have been trained to think that the more plain the background, the better. What could be more plain than canvas or muslin? The problem is that this thinking severely limits photographers in terms of creativity and the products they are able to produce for their customers. On top of that, today's subjects generally reject the old-fashioned studio portrait look.

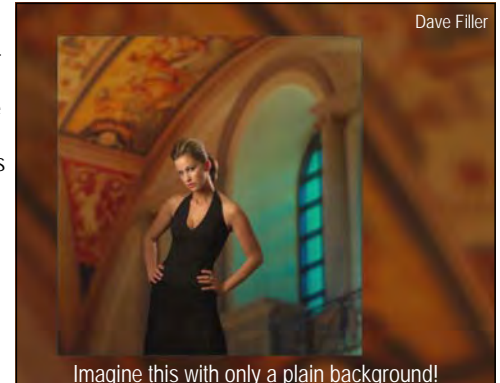
The background is one of four dimensions of studio photography (with the other three being lighting, posing, and expression) that many photographers tend to forget about. However, the background can play a very powerful role in an image. It is the background that actually enables the photographer to do so much more with the lighting, the posing, and the expression while playing an important role in its own right.

A background does not have to be a dramatic scene such as mountains or a spectacular sunset. The background can be anything, including colors and designs that are chosen to harmonize with the subject or the subject's clothing. The beauty of using Virtual Backgrounds is that the photographer can change backgrounds in seconds, switching from one to another, and the photographer can pose the subject accordingly. In

this way, the subject can take on a number of distinctively different "looks" without ever having to leave the studio. It is in the studio where the photographer has total control of not only the background but also the lighting and posing, and where he has a better opportunity to control the expression.

Because so many amateur photographers, armed with their new digital cameras, are trying to take over the role of the professional photographer, the Virtual Backgrounds concept has become more important than ever before. When a professional takes a client out to a park, he is working with the exact same elements that any amateur can also use. However, very few if any amateurs have a Virtual Backgrounds system and cannot produce such a wide array of unique images for their subjects.

It is our philosophy that when photographers have clients in the camera room that they provide the clients with maximum variety in minimum amount of time. This results in not only impressing the client but also giving the client the opportunity to purchase more images. It further helps professional photographers clearly distinguish them-



Imagine this with only a plain background!

selves from the amateur.

As professional photographers face "The Perfect Storm," they need to clearly provide their clients with more "magic." Much of the magic of photography from the past is now everyday stuff for both the amateur and professional. Now, the professional must create new "magic" or perish. A Virtual Backgrounds system is one of the most powerful "magic" tools that studio photographers can use to help them rise above the perfect storm.

Dr. Henry Oles' new book, *The Professional Photographer's Perfect Storm* is now available without charge from Virtual Backgrounds. [Contact us](#) for your copy today!

## Green Screen vs. Optically Projected Backgrounds

Photographers have a choice of using the green screen (also called Chromakey) digital approach to creating backgrounds or the optically projected approach (Virtual Backgrounds). While both methods can be used to create backgrounds, there are some important differences not only in quality but more importantly in practicality.

While quality is always an arguable issue, what is not arguable is the practicality issue. With green screen, the photographer does not see the background in the camera as the image is composed. Posing must be generic with the expectation that an appropriate background will be pasted in later. The

really big issue is the need to paste an image in later. Today's photographers usually take 20, 30 and even more images, but these images cannot be shown to the client until the ugly green background is replaced with an appropriate background. *It can take hours to paste in the backgrounds.* This process also makes it necessary for the photographer to make clients return at a later date to view their images. In today's world of instant gratification, coming back later is not appreciated.

With the optically projected Virtual Backgrounds system, the photographer sees both the subject and the background in the camera's viewfinder. The

photographer poses the subject to the background and adjusts the background to the subject. Then, when the image is captured, it's done, and the image can be instantly shown to the client.

Green screen is a good choice for what we call fun photography such as when a photo is taken of a subject about to be bitten by a giant crocodile or shark. If the same background is pasted in to every image, the process is very quick and dramatic. But, when the goal is producing a quality portrait image, then the optically projected Virtual Backgrounds process is by far the best choice.

Share Your Knowledge about VB

We are looking for photographers who are successfully using Virtual Backgrounds who would like to share their knowledge and experience with other photographers, not only in their own location but elsewhere as well. We've often said that Virtual Backgrounds is one of the best kept secrets in the industry. Virtual Backgrounds is seldom the subject matter of articles or platform presentations for photographers. *It's time to change that!* Change can only happen if you come forward and tell other photographers about your experiences in using Virtual Backgrounds in your own studio.



**Want help in getting started?**  
 Contact us at Virtual Backgrounds and we'll help you to start the ball rolling.

VB People Spotlight:  
 Bea Contreras

In this month's VB People Spotlight we highlight a very important individual to our company. **Bea Contreras** is in charge of all of the accounting for Virtual Backgrounds. In addition to her accounting duties, Bea also helps a great deal in production with sewing Blackscreen and helping to keep production organized. Bea has worked with Dr. Henry Oles on and off for the better part of 30 years. Additional duties include being property manager and accountant for the Old Mill, the business park owned by the Oles Family and the location where Virtual Backgrounds and other companies call home. Bea is always ready and willing to go the extra mile for the company, and you will frequently see her in her office or on the grounds during the nights and weekends. Bea is a true team player and a great asset to Virtual Backgrounds! Keep up the great work!



Hints on How to Advertise Your Virtual Backgrounds

One thing you don't want to do is run ads that say, "ABC Studios Now Has Virtual Backgrounds." That means nothing to most viewers. The very best way to advertise Virtual Backgrounds is to show the results in window and wall displays in the studio, at the local mall, in brochures, in public presentations and anywhere else you can spread the word. It is important, however, that you promote Virtual Backgrounds, that you tell viewers that all photographs were taken in the studio utilizing your special technology. You can advertise that it is no longer necessary for subjects to wait for the right weather to traipse around a park. You need to show and talk about how ABC Studios is so different from other studios and from photographs that

the do-it-yourself shutterbug might capture.

We suggest avoiding the expensive yellow page ads. Keep them to a minimum. Instead use the yellow pages and other means to drive prospects to your internet site where you can really tell your story. Spending money on a really professional and powerful internet web site is much more valuable than spending it on a big yellow page ad. You have to find ways to drive prospects to your site. *That's the key!*

Another novel idea is to purchase a short ad to be run in the advertising sequence that precedes the showing of movies at your local theatre. In just a matter of 15 to 30 seconds, you can tell

your story as to why you are able to deliver phenomenal photographs without all the fuss and bother of the past. You can also have subjects clamoring to be photographed by you so they can be in the advertisement.

Another idea is advertising on locally produced talk shows, especially those that are listened to primarily by women. You can invite the talk show hosts to your studio to experience what you can offer and then structure your ad as if it were a conversation between hosts or between the host and you.

Virtual Backgrounds should become one of your most powerful tools for advertising and marketing your studio. Take full advantage. Your bottom line will glow!

Virtual Backgrounds are Exploding with Popularity!

Although the Virtual Backgrounds concept has been available to professional photographers for many years, it is now seeing an explosion of interest. The new growth is a result of a number of factors. Included in this are major technical innovations in the design of the equipment and the projection screen as well as photographers switching to digital cameras.

As a result, Virtual Backgrounds systems are significantly easier to use today. In the past, the photographers had to very carefully control lighting in order to avoid washout of the background image. Today's new systems do not require any significant change in the photographer's

lighting procedures.

In the past, the photographer didn't see the background unless he took the time to make a Polaroid test print. As such, many photographers were disappointed when they got their results because of things that could have been corrected in seconds if they had only known changes needed to be made. With digital cameras, the photographer instantly sees results after every exposure making it possible to tweak the settings and the pose.

Another reason for the growth is the public's demand for more contemporary photography. Gone are the days when a photographer could

satisfy a client with one or two painted canvas backgrounds. Customers today want contemporary images with maximum variety. They want something different!

Taken by some of the world's leading professional photographers such as Joseph and Louise Simone, Larry Peters, Rick and Deborah Ferro, Trevon Baker, Warren Gordon and many others, photographers are seeing a dramatic variety of images created using Virtual Backgrounds

It is only a matter of time before the majority of all professional photographers begin to utilize the many benefits of Virtual Backgrounds.



### -Upstaging Amateurs- Digital Imaging Boxes



One of the best ways to upstage amateur photographers with their fancy new digital cameras is to

have equipment that they do not. An great idea is owning on of these Digital Imaging Boxes available at [Web Photo Supply](#). Digital Imaging Boxes are great for small commercial photography, especially when you are selling these items in catalogs, in online auctions such as eBay, or on your own website. Digital Imaging Boxes give you total control over your lighting and reduce unwanted shadows. Click [here](#) for more information.

### Make Your Own Custom Backgrounds

Create your own backgrounds easily and inexpensively with Virtual Backgrounds. Simply send us your digital files and we can turn them into money making backgrounds for you!

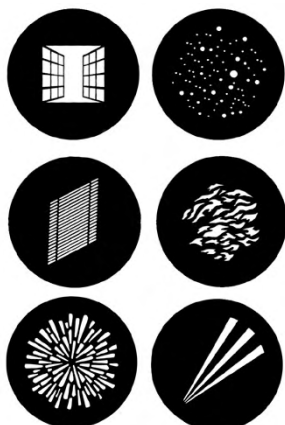
Every slide is glass-mounted on square super slides. If you wish to have a 35mm slide instead of the perfect square, simply create a square canvas, insert your 35mm image, and fill in the remaining area with the color black. It's that easy! Slides are priced at \$10 each with a minimum \$50 order.

It is recommended that files are sent as .jpg images with pixel dimensions of 1800 x 1800. Click [here](#) for suggestions on how to set up digital files. Mail us a CD of your images or try uploading your files on our [FTP transfer page](#) located in the "Background Libraries" section of the website.

If you have questions or need help setting up your digital files, contact your [VB Consultant](#) or our background library manager, [Jen LaGrange](#).

*We're here to help you succeed!*

## An Economical Way to Unlimited Backgrounds



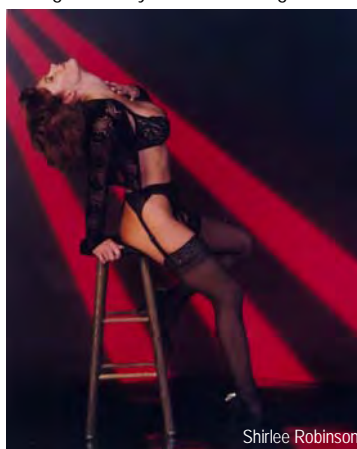
Some people think that the only way to create a background is with a scenic transparency slide. Not so! The fact is, ANYTHING that influences the passage of light can potentially be a background.

**Designer Disks** are perfect examples. Commonly called "gobos" these thin pieces of stainless steel have patterns cut into them. The Designer Disk is used in place of a slide on a special magnetic holder that enables the photographer to project the disk in focus or exceptionally out of focus. It is even possible to tilt a disk so that one part is

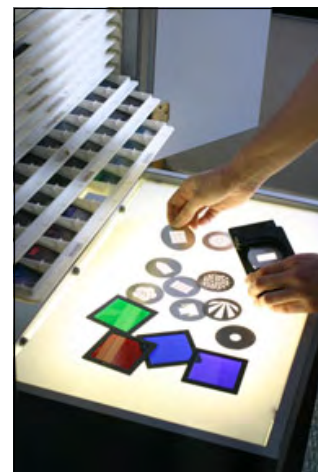
in focus and another part is way out of focus.

To add color, the photographer can insert a colored gel to give the pattern created by the disk a color which harmonizes with the subject. The photographer may take a cue on color from the outfit the customer is wearing, their school color, or anything else that makes sense and compliments the subject.

One single disk can take on a whole variety of looks by varying the color, the size, and the focus. A complete Virtual Backgrounds system can be a good



Shirlee Robinson

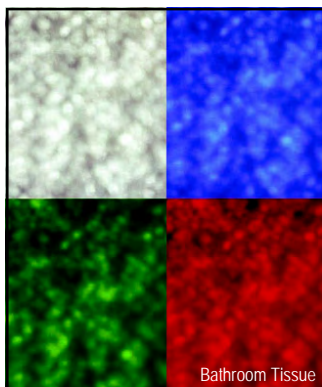


in-

vestment even if the photographer never projects anything besides some Designer Disks and color gels.

Click [here](#) to see the complete array of Designer Disks. Disks are sold separately or in combination with the "Designer Disk Starter Set" which included 6 disks, 25 color gels, and a three level magnetic holder. With Designer Disks, you can continually come up with highly creative and successful new backgrounds.

## Bathroom Tissue, Bubble Wrap, Arm Hair, and Snakeskin



Bathroom Tissue

When using a Virtual Backgrounds system, almost anything can be a background. For example, if you cut a small piece of thin bathroom tissue and place it in your Virtual Backgrounds projector, just like a slide, it will project. It will be highly magnified. A 2x2 inch piece of toilet paper can be projected to fill an 8x8 foot screen! The texture of the weave can be shown clearly or it can be thrown out of focus. Then the addition of a color gel adds color.

A small piece of packing bubble wrap can be used instead of a slide. It also throws a very interesting pattern on the screen which can be combined with color gels.

An Ohio photographer photographed a small patch of the hair on his forearm. He overexposed the hairs so that much of the hair was blond at the ends and dark near the roots. He then projected this new slide on his background screen, throwing it greatly out of focus and adding various colors to harmonize with the subject's clothing. It was one of his high school seniors' favorite backgrounds. He never told anyone that it was his own arm hair. It was his best kept secret!

One of VB's employees recently visited the San Antonio Zoo and was inspired by the colorful snake exhibit and captured several images. She then went into PhotoShop and created what is now called the **Snakeskin** slide set. Project these colorful slides, throw them out of focus, and the subject wouldn't even know that it's a snake. The patterns

make for great backgrounds!

These examples simply show the ultimate versatility of a Virtual Backgrounds system. Backgrounds are everywhere and can be anything that your creative mind desires! Part of the fun of using the system is discovering unique back-



Snakeskin Slide Set

**FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: Warren Gordon, Gordon Photographic**

**Success—Right From the Start!**



Cape Breton Island (Canada) is known as one of the most beautiful islands in the world and Warren Gordon, MPA photographs it all. Visit any bookstore/tourist shop on the island and you'll see his work. He has sold over 200,000 hard cover "coffee table" photo books about his island and tons of picturesque calen-

dars. For 30 years he has operated a full service studio. Warren first heard about Virtual Backgrounds some years ago, thought it was a great idea, but didn't acquire a system because he heard that some photographers had trouble.

In April 2005, Warren attended the Professional Photographers of Canada (PPOC) National Convention in Calgary and watched Trevon Baker get great results with a Scene Machine even though he was working in a very small trade show booth. He also attended Joseph and Louise Simone's PPOC presentation and decided the time had come for him to acquire a system.

He started using the system in January 2006. Warren reports, "I was expecting to have to spend at least several days learning to use it, but I

was very pleasantly surprised that my very first exposures were salable. I didn't think it would be so easy, and I didn't expect the impressive results I was getting." From that point on, he has continued to use the system for every studio photograph he captures.

"I already had a collection of backgrounds on a motorized roller system. I have a lot of different canvas backgrounds, muslins, and even imitation book case backgrounds. But now, I am putting these old backgrounds up for sale because I don't need them anymore."

However, because some customers want exactly the same backgrounds they had in photographs taken years earlier, Warren is photographing his old backgrounds and turning them into background slides before he

sells them. Warren explains, "Sometimes a family has an array of photographs on the wall of each child's graduation and they all have the same background. So now, I will just project the old background along with new ones that I will also use, but I won't have all those different backgrounds cluttering up my studio."

Warren has been using a spare D70 camera on the system but now is going to permanently mount a new D200. Warren's wife, Katheryn was the featured speaker for the 2006 PPOC Halifax convention in May. Katheryn, PPOC Atlantic Photographer of the Year '04 & '05, is also an accomplished artist and will be creating a variety of art backgrounds for use with the Scene Machine. Both Gordon and Kathryn's work can be seen at [www.gordonphoto.com](http://www.gordonphoto.com).

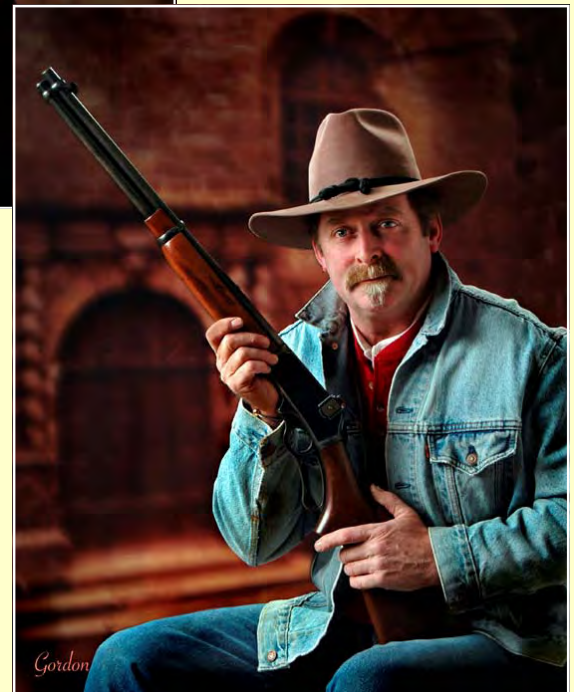


**I set up the machine and used a "borrowed head" from a neighboring beauty college to calibrate everything. I arranged to do several test sittings and expected to have a lengthy learning session. To my amazement, I was able to get good results from the first exposure!**

**Warren Gordon  
Gordon Photographic**

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER: Warren Gordon, Gordon Photographic

## Success—Right From the Start!



I recently had a young girl come in with a costume made in Greece by her Great Grandmother. The costume has become a family tradition because her mother also wore it for photographs many years before. This was a perfect application for the Scene Machine. I found a Simone background that could represent Greece and I grabbed a vase that had been a decorative piece and created a whole array of photographs in minutes. The customer absolutely loved the results.

Warren Gordon  
Gordon Photographic

## Upcoming Schools & Conventions

Are you interested in seeing the Virtual Backgrounds system up close and personal but can't come to San Marcos to attend a workshop? Check us out at one of the below events. Chances are we'll be coming to a town near you!

**For more information click on the title of the event!**

**Power Marketing Super Conference**  
w/ Greg Stangl & Larry Peters  
June 4-7, 2006  
(Mt. Hood, Oregon) **(SEE AD BELOW!)**

**Houston—Simone Seminar**  
July 11, 2006  
(Houston, Texas)

**Florida State Convention**  
August 27-28, 2006  
(Florida)

**Kerrville Summer Seminar**  
June 25-28, 2006  
(Kerrville, Texas)

**BC—Canada School**  
July 16-20, 2006

**Photokina**  
September 26-October 1, 2006  
(Germany)

**Terry Deglau in Tampa**  
August 8, 2006  
(Tampa, Florida)

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Power Marketing Super Conference was created to provide professional photographers the opportunity to gather once a year and immerse themselves in quality sales and marketing education in a relaxing atmosphere.