

Photographer Lorenzo Morandi: "I always seek inspiration beyond the realm of photography"

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Lorenzo Morandi is a professional photographer and founder of YourStory, a production studio and platform dedicated to capturing the narratives of talented individuals from the world of art, music, food and sport.

He chats with us about his diverse range of influences, what happens behind the scenes on a typical shoot and how Affinity's seamless integration between apps enables him to retouch and present his images with ease.

Lorenzo, please tell us a bit about yourself and your creative background.

I live with my family in Alessandria, a city in Piedmont, equidistant from Milan, Turin, and Genoa. Born in 1985, I graduated in Civil Engineering and Architecture. Like many students, I initially approached architectural photography as a tool for studying and exploring design projects.

What made you want to start a career in photography?

After several years of working as a designer and project manager, I turned to professional photography in 2016. The catalyst for this decision was the discovery of portrait photography, where, for the first time, I contemplated the relationship between individuals and space. A realm of infinite possibilities unfolded.

Who or what is your biggest inspiration as a photographer?

I always seek inspiration beyond the realm of photography. I believe that a defining aspect of those studying design and architecture is an interest in innovators who provide fresh perspectives on the discipline, often by blending and breaking traditional moulds. I'm fascinated by those who, in photography, employ contemporary language and creatively interpret classical references. My influences range from classical portrait painting—for the poses of my subjects, to the painters of the 20th century. I draw inspiration from the use of light by Caravaggio and Rembrandt, and I admire the way Francis Bacon interprets subjects, placing them in relation to geometric figures. I am fascinated by the abstraction of Manlio Rho, whose forms and tones provide ample material for the decomposition and recomposition of the image, and Rothko, for his ability to express himself through subtle colour gradients. Among modern photographers, my references include Irving Penn and René Burri, extending to the contemporary artist Nadav Kander. I realise my references are diverse, drawing also from contemporary films and TV series like "The Man on The High Castle" and "Peaky Blinders," creating a vast reservoir of inspiration for my photography.

Tell us a bit about YourStory and how it came about.

YourStory was born in 2016. I distinctly remember the moment: in the car with my wife, expecting our first child, discussing photography. I had just begun capturing people through sequences that, in a way, told a story, and I thought to myself, why not make this approach a coherent project? Not yet a photographer, I decided to publish my photos under this name as printed volumes, produced in limited quantities. Quickly evolving into an enterprise and studio, YourStory garnered assignments from local and, within a couple of years, national and international entities. Today, YourStory is essentially the editorial project tied to my professional activity, continually gathering, and publishing photographic stories featuring talented individuals, creatives, designers, artists—whose personal stories intertwine inseparably with their work. My wife, Sara, is also a photographer and serves as a reference point, offering a critical and sincere perspective on my work.

Can you give us some 'behind the scenes' insights on a typical photoshoot with you?

My photo shoots typically unfold in the subjects' working environments—real spaces where I utilise natural light and integrate artificial lighting. Each situation is unique, requiring experimentation and testing to find the best setup and lighting. In the studio, I have no predetermined schemes, experimenting with natural and artificial light based on the subject's features and my desired outcome. In both cases, the best photo results come from the subject's relaxed state. Building a trusting relationship, often established through dialogue and my genuine interest in the person in front of the lens, is crucial.

How did you discover the Affinity suite, and how do you use it for your photography work?

I am a fan of digital minimalism and efficient workflows. I appreciate sleek and performance-oriented apps that fulfil my needs. Discovering Affinity in the App Store struck me with its product philosophy, multiplatform capability, and real innovation in an Adobe-dominated sector. I use Capture One for managing projects with numerous RAW files, finding excellent integration with Affinity Photo. After the selection, cataloguing, and RAW development phase, I use Affinity Photo for all photo retouching. I appreciate the ease with which I can apply frequency separation, rapidly enhancing skin tones in portraits, along with correction tools (patch, clone brush, etc.). Occasionally, I use the "Liquify Persona" module for precise deformations.

What I also value across the Affinity suite is the seamless integration between apps; Affinity Publisher is my choice for presenting work. I've created templates for directly laying out photos and exporting them as PDF previews for clients or in various formats for Instagram—stories, reels, posts. All the apps I use daily follow a non-subscription model, a crucial consideration in choosing Affinity.

When creating an image, particularly a portrait, I let instinct guide me, especially during the capture. I never seek specific poses; I want to photograph the subject with a serious and spontaneous expression, as if in a suspended

moment. Sometimes, I seek the subject's gaze; other times, I intentionally avoid it.

Regardless of intentions, what makes a portrait work is how light sculpts the face. Therefore, I believe applying a universal lighting scheme is limiting, and I search for the best light for each individual face. I greatly enjoy the post-production phase, dedicating many hours to it. I'm not interested in correcting flaws to make the subject beautiful; instead, I work on tones, contrasts, and colour dominants to create a compelling image.

Do you have a favourite photo out of all the ones you've taken? Could you tell us about it?

My favourite photograph is part of the "Geometrie" series. It's neither a portrait nor an architectural photo, although the subject is architectural. I took this photo in 2013 when I didn't even know the basics of photography and was guided purely by instinct. The photo has slight colour manipulation but relies entirely on the graphic strength of a three-dimensional space compressed into two dimensions. It was in the pre-Instagram era and gained widespread attention and was being shared, published, and used for posters in various parts of the world. It reminds me of my starting point and how technique is a fundamental component that always comes after the idea and intuition.

What do you enjoy most about your work on YourStory?

What I love most about YourStory is that it's a project driven by a genuine need and desire—to connect and create relationships through photography. I can say that YourStory is a subset of my photography, an evolving project that can be pursued without compromise, expressing my vision. Thanks to this project, I've met incredibly interesting individuals, leading to the birth of other projects, collaborations, and assignments. Humanly, it has fuelled my creativity over the past decade. I believe YourStory is also a way to explore common denominators among those in creative professions: doubts, the fear of taking risks, the need to shape and communicate one's identity, and self-imposed limits when defining a personal style. It's an extraordinary situation of instability in which I probably see a reflection of myself.

What achievement are you most proud of in your photography career and why?

I am extremely happy that this project has allowed me to collaborate with internationally acclaimed artists, with works published and exhibited in museums that would otherwise have been inaccessible to me. Among all, the relationship with contemporary artist Eugenio Tibaldi is undoubtedly the most significant. Each year, it enables me to engage with current themes and profound perspectives on the world and human condition, using photography and continually questioning it.