

## Dreaming of Flying

*In our dreams we are able to fly...  
a remembering of how we were meant to be.*

- Madeleine L'Engle

I had one of those flying dreams, the kind that we all have at one point or another. This one though, felt particularly special, and I felt the need to record it somehow. Words would have failed to capture how I felt, so I decided to illustrate it in a photo.



My photo turned out much better than I thought it would. What I thought was going to be an experiment in levitation photography turned out to be one of the best photo projects that I've ever done. (It's also [on Flickr](#))

An old man saw me editing this photo at Starbucks and took great interest in it since he was a pilot, and curious about anything that flew. He pointed to the photo on my screen and said, "May your spirit always soar like that", which made me smile.

## How I Did It

I wasn't going to show anyone the un-edited photos to keep up the story that I was a flying superhero, but I've been asked "How did you do that?" too many times to keep it a secret. So here's everything, step by step.



This weekend I threw a ladder, chair, and some other odds and ends into the car, and went out scouting for a location for the shoot. I found a row of miserable looking warehouses in the industrial part of town, with no one around to bother me. I knew I found the right spot when I saw a wide open space in the back of a warehouse with the perfect grey backdrop to contrast with the yellow dress I was wearing.



Here's the original, un-edited photo. Not so magical, is it? The thing I love about self-portraiture is that you can both direct and model exactly what you have in your head. On the other hand, you're risking out-of-focus and out-of-frame photos, like this one.

I actually left the shoot feeling dejected, because I didn't think I would get anything usable. But I did get just this *one* photo which was surely a stroke of luck, because it was the only photo in the entire batch that could have possibly worked. I tried all kinds of stupid things like jumping on couch cushions and balancing myself on a ladder.



IMG\_2582.JPG

IMG\_2599.JPG

IMG\_2607.JPG



IMG\_2660.JPG

IMG\_2671.JPG

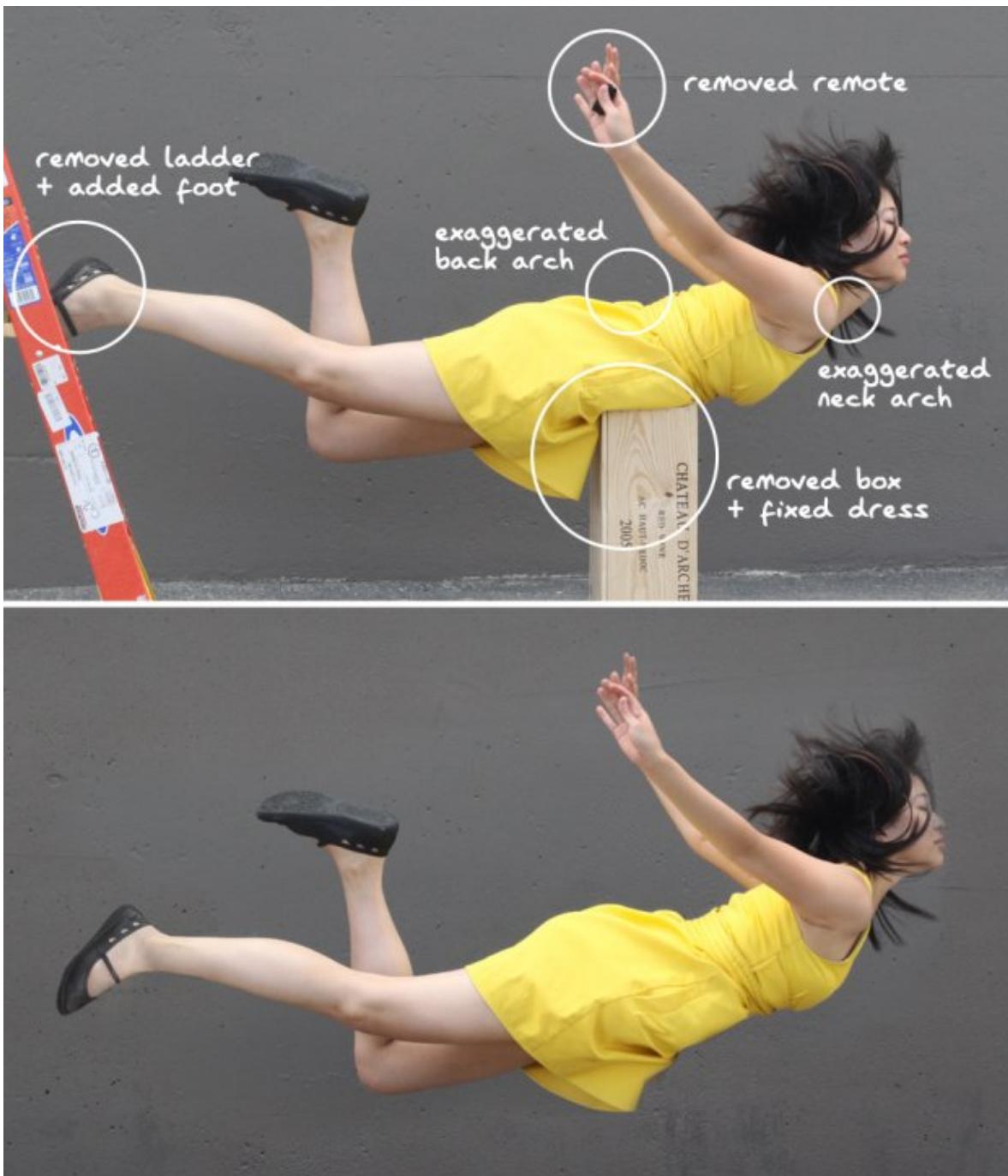
IMG\_2672.JPG

First of all ,jumping on couch cushions is scary as hell, because there's a good chance that you'll either fall on the concrete, or land through the cushion cracks. This probably would have worked out better with a mattress or trampoline.

Second of all, it's really hard to fake movement by balancing on different objects. It also doesn't help that I'm completely out of shape. I ended up balancing myself on a ladder, a chair, and a wine crate, while throwing my head upwards to get some movement in my hair.

And yes, I did look like a complete idiot in the warehouse parking lot.

## Photoshop Trickery



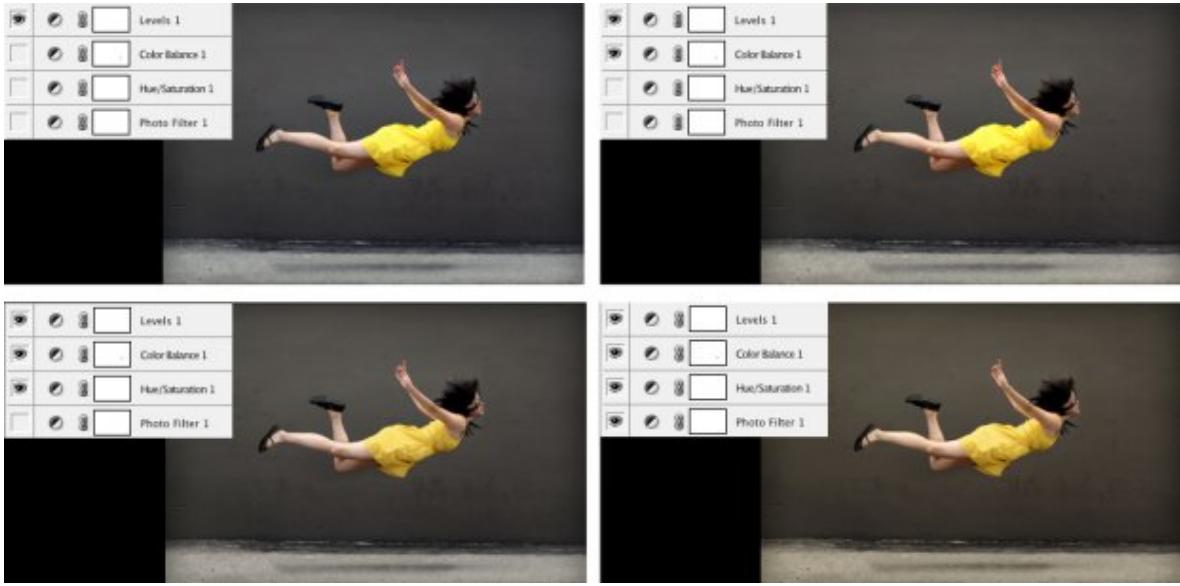
There actually wasn't too much photo trickery involved. Most of it was removing the supports underneath me. The ladder unfortunately covered up my foot, so I had to replace it with a foot from another photo. The dress was flat where I took away the wine crate underneath my stomach, so I adjusted it so that it looked like it was flowing. I removed the remote in my hand that I used to take the picture, and exaggerated the arches in my back and neck to enunciate that "soaring" feeling.

## Composition



then started thinking about composition. How low did I want to be to the ground? Should the ground be tilted or flat? Should I be levitating, flying upwards, or falling? I finally decided to place myself in the middle of the frame, hovering over a flat ground. Simplicity is always best.

## Coloring Processing



And finally, I edited the colors, which made the biggest difference of all. My goal was to alter the photo just enough so that it felt surreal, but didn't feel overedited. I [played with the levels](#) to darken the photo, then [balanced the colors](#) so that I didn't look like a ghost. I then [desaturated the photo](#) since my dress was a screaming yellow, and then applied a[warm photo filter](#) on top of it all to even things out.

## Inspiration and Resources

If you like this photo, you should definitely check out work from [Miss Aniela](#), who is queen of levitation photography and my inspiration. Her photos aren't done with a digital SLR, which really just goes to show that you don't need fancy equipment to express your imagination.

Also check out [Holger Pooten](#), a German photographer who does some great conceptual photography.