

# NATIONAL PHOTO- GRAPHIC PORTRAIT PRIZE 2012

National Portrait Gallery  
Learning resource



**Edward John Eyre 1867**

Julia Margaret Cameron  
albumen silver photograph  
Gift of Sir Roy Strong from the estate of  
Julia Trevelyan Oman in tribute to their  
friendship with L Gordon Darling AC CMG  
and Marilyn Darling AC

**What is the National  
Photographic Portrait Prize?**

The National Photographic Portrait Prize exhibition is selected from a national field of entries that reflect the distinctive vision of Australia's aspiring and professional portrait photographers and the unique nature of their subjects. With the generous support of Visa, the National Portrait Gallery offers a prize of \$25,000 for the most outstanding photographic portrait.

**Joanna Gilmour, National  
Photographic Portrait Prize judge  
and curator, introduces the Prize.**

The British artist Julia Margaret Cameron is considered one of the nineteenth century's pre-eminent photographers. A mother of six, Cameron took up photography in her late forties after receiving the gift of a camera in 1863. Largely self-taught, she converted a glassed-in chicken coop into a studio and produced a body of work notable for its beauty and inventiveness. Cameron eschewed what she considered "mere topographic photography" for an exploration of the medium's poetic, allegorical potential and sought to "ennoble

photography and secure for it the character and uses of High Art". But her work was not universally admired. She was accused of being technically slovenly or inexpert, the "daring originality" of her portraits, according to one reviewer in 1865, coming at "the expense of all other photographic qualities".

To see Cameron's portraits now is to understand that her experimentation with focus, composition and lighting and her recognition of photographic portraiture's potential for invention and performance are the characteristics which most distinguish her work from other photographs of the period. Conceived of as those that are "not only from the Life, but to the Life, and startle the eye with wonder and delight", Cameron's portraits, many now pushing 150 years old, demonstrate the potency of a singular vision. They also illustrate the necessity of experimentation, or challenge to prevailing visual custom and convention, in the successful negotiation of what cultural historian Geoffrey Batchen has called the "dilemma at the heart of all photographic portraiture" – that between "the easy mechanical resemblance that a photograph provides and the something-more-than-resemblance that the word portrait seems to promise". Though often-questioned and long since undone, the myth that photographs are able to seize something of a sitter's inner life persists. The line between a mere likeness and the sense of presence in a portrait is fine and often unquantifiable. Yet it continues to inform contemporary portrait photographers and underpins the National Portrait Gallery's approach in collecting and exhibiting their work.

The 2012 National Photographic Portrait Prize attracted in excess of 1,000 entries from which the judges – National Portrait Gallery Director, Louise Doyle; Executive Director of Artspace Sydney, Blair French; and National Portrait Gallery Assistant Curator, Joanna Gilmour – had to select an exhibition demonstrating the enduring appeal and effectiveness of photography as a portrait medium. The 2012 Prize received entries from the wide spectrum of photographic

portraiture as it is practised in Australia today: from baby photos to boudoir shots and encompassing everything from the profound and painful to the saccharine and sentimental; portraits taken by professional and amateur photographers; on film and (predominantly) in quick and manipulable digital formats; images of famous sitters along with those who are obscure; sitters known and loved by those who've captured them and others whose transactions with the photographer were anonymous, momentary or even inconsequential; and photos taken with little ceremony or thought for composition and those that were carefully, sometimes elaborately, staged.

The shortlisting of works for the exhibition was not directed by a desire to sample a cross-section of entries, nor by an intention to create a collective portrait of a community's demographics and cultural diversity. Narrowing down a field of nearly 1500 photographs to 46 was an exacting process facilitated and determined unquestionably by the strong sense of presence in each image and by their success and effectiveness as portraits. The works selected for exhibition demonstrate the varied and innovative ways in which practitioners negotiate photographic portraiture's capacity for capturing mood and, in particular, the manner in which it might offer insights to its subjects. The selected portraits encompass those created in close-up and in classic simplicity of circumstances – a backdrop, a sitter, a pose, a camera; and those that are the result of complex sets, symbolism and role play. Some sitters look away from the camera and others don't. There are figures in studios and in backyards and landscapes. Others are photographed with objects or within settings that signify something of spirits and histories. These portraits exemplify too the medium's predilection for conveying feelings and emotional states: the intensity and painfulness of grief, injustice or illness; warmth, honesty and forthrightness; wit and exuberance; stillness, introspection and contentment. In a society saturated with photographs, often consumed via the slick and pervasive language of magazines or advertising, these are indeed portraits which are distinct in being able to arrest and startle the eye. They are those which activate our deep capacity for inquisitiveness and our fascination with faces and people. They help to show us why it is that photographs can transcend the limits of likeness, gloss and documentary, and remind us instead of portraiture's vivid possibilities.

### Questions for discussion

If you were the judge for the NPPP 2012 which photograph would you select as the prize winner? What criteria would you use to make your decision?

Gilmour describes the work of Julia Margaret Cameron as “notable for its beauty and inventiveness”. Which portraits in this year's exhibition would you describe in these terms? Why?

Can you identify any recurring themes in the 46 portraits shortlisted for the Prize? How have individual photographers chosen to approach these themes?

### Education Bulletin

Subscribe to the National Portrait Gallery Education Bulletin for educators at [portrait.gov.au/site/subscribe.php](http://portrait.gov.au/site/subscribe.php)

### Blog

Post your ideas about the National Photographic Portrait Prize or respond to any of the questions in this learning resource on the National Portrait Gallery Blog. [portrait.gov.au/blog](http://portrait.gov.au/blog)

### Learning resources

NPPP2009, NPPP2010, NPPP 2011 and NPPP 2011 learning resources can be downloaded at [portrait.gov.au/site/education\\_downloads.php](http://portrait.gov.au/site/education_downloads.php)

### Tell us what you think

The National Portrait Gallery is committed to providing opportunities for all audiences to access exhibitions and the collection and we welcome any comments or suggestions about this learning resource. Please contact Amanda Andlee Poland, Education Manager 02 6102 7062 [amanda.poland@npg.gov.au](mailto:amanda.poland@npg.gov.au)

### National Photographic Portrait Prize 2012 exhibition venues

National Portrait Gallery  
20 March – 20 May 2012  
Moree Regional Gallery  
29 June – 12 August 2012  
Glasshouse Gallery, Port Macquarie  
14 September – 14 November 2012  
Flinders University Art Museum  
7 December 2012 – 14 February 2013  
Griffith Regional Gallery  
7 March – 7 April 2013

### National Photographic Portrait Prize 2013

The call for entries for the National Photographic Portrait Prize 2013 will commence in August 2012.

# NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY EXHIBITION

King Edward Terrace Canberra  
ACT 2600  
Education and group visit enquiries  
[email bookings@npg.gov.au](mailto:email bookings@npg.gov.au) or  
telephone (02) 6102 7000



**Frog hunter, Damien Wurrkidj** 2011  
Matthew Abbott  
type c photograph

### Artist's statement

I have spent the last three years photographing in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. Late one afternoon on a walk around Injalak billabong at Gunbalanya, I came across Damien with his friends hunting frogs. They had ingeniously contrived a blowpipe and darts from a hose and other bits and pieces. According to Damien, frogs make the best bait for catching catfish. I like this portrait because it exemplifies the independence Aboriginal kids have and their skill at hunting using whatever's at hand.

### Questions

What do you learn about Damien through the location of this portrait?  
How would you describe the expression captured in Abbott's portrait of Damien?  
How does the portrait represent "the independence Aboriginal kids have" as expressed by the photographer in his artist statement.

### The photographer and the portrait – an interview

#### How do you define your practice?

Documentary photographer.

#### Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?

[abbott-reportage.com](http://abbott-reportage.com)

#### What is your relationship to the subject?

When you first start a long term project there is always distance between you and the subject. On this project I have spent years building relationships and trust that result in insightful pictures – just like photographing your friends.

#### Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?

I generally avoid taking portraits, mainly because I have an issue with any construction. This image of Damien was taken as he was walking towards me one

afternoon. I took a few others as he played with friends but this was the best image.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph.** I use a Leica camera with a 35mm lens and Kodak Portra film. The image has been hand printed. I try and avoid digital, but sometimes it's more economical.

#### How was the final print made?

The print is a type c photograph, hand printed by Sandyprints in Sydney. She is a very talented printer.

#### Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.

Printing, mounting and framing is very expensive. I went for a size that was just large enough to make an impact. With framing and mounting I generally leave it to the experts. It's generally best to avoid anything that may take away from the image – best to keep it simple.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** I have many influences and am always viewing new work. In Australia Trent Parke and Stephen Dupont are exceptional.

**Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers (eg. students)?** Always photograph what you are interested in – weddings, wars or cats – it doesn't matter. Passion is the only thing that will keep you going. Never sell out. Otherwise choose another profession that pays better.





**The vigil** 2011  
Anthony Anderton  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

Before the deluge – with flood waters rising rapidly in the inner-city Brisbane suburb of New Farm – a handful of local residents decided to hang on and wait out the flood peak forecast for early the following morning. In this photograph it was Michael Dwyer, aged 94, refusing to leave his home of 60 years and move to safe ground, with his granddaughter, Gabrielle Dwyer, waiting it out beside him.

**Questions**

What does this double portrait tell you about the relationship between the subjects? How is this conveyed in the portrait?

If this photograph was reproduced in a newspaper article, what caption would you write to accompany the image?

How does the title of the portrait influence your reading of the image?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your practice?**

My practice is continually changing and it is difficult to categorise definitively – it sometimes includes aspects of photojournalism, portraiture, student workshops, and even commercial work – so ‘photographer’ would be the best description. Currently I have a range of work, including commercial work for publications, ongoing documentary projects from Australia and the Asia-Pacific, and lots of personal work. It’s a balancing act between survival and art!

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

anthonyanderton.com

I have had a website in some form right from the outset. Having a website or some electronic platform for your work is very

important for a photographer. However, it is essential to constantly update and refresh site content, and direct as much traffic as possible to your website.

**What is your relationship to the subject?** I had never met the subject of my portrait before so I tried to build rapport and a sense of trust under challenging circumstances!

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

The photograph is the result of an unplanned, candid encounter – although I set out over a series of days to visit and photograph specific parts of Brisbane that were being affected by the January 2011 floods. I visited this area twice during the floods and decided that I would have to wade out through the flooded streets to get as close as possible to the people experiencing the floods. My portraits are often the outcome of this combination of a planned visit or structured project and unexpected or unplanned encounters. I first started taking general photographs of the flooded street, then moved closer to a house and struck up a conversation with the occupants. For images like this I think it is important to establish some level of personal rapport and to talk about why I am taking photographs (especially in circumstances that are sensitive or distressing). For this photograph I spent some time talking about the impact of the flood before I asked if I could take the portrait.

**What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

I wanted to document the reality of the flood as it happened – and where possible capture how the flood was affecting people. This image tries to combine the massive and devastating impact of the 2011 Brisbane flood with one individual’s determined response to it. This goal influenced my decisions on how I constructed the framing and composition of the image – hopefully successfully.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph.** The image was taken hand held using available natural light, and I would not use flash for images like this. The camera was a Nikon D700 digital SLR fitted with a 17-35mm F2.8 lens. The image has not been enhanced or manipulated beyond minor cropping at the edges and basic adjustments needed for printing and exhibition.

**How was the final print made?  
Is this print one of an edition?**

The exhibition print was produced by a professional printer from a digital master file (the final version of the print file needs to be saved). I always edition my exhibition prints. The size of the edition varies but I usually use editions of 50. I retain the first and last in the edition.

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I wanted to present the print as simply and directly as possible so I selected plain framing and mounting materials. The framing was done by a reputable framer who I have worked with for a number of years. The print size was chosen to balance the technical constraints of enlarging from a 35mm format and the scale needed for exhibition and gallery viewing.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** Too many to list all (and I can only aspire to get anywhere close to their work) – but include Ernst Haas, Harry Callahan, Walker Evans, Hiroji Kubota, Stephen Shore, Eve Arnold, Steve McCurry, Eugene Smith and David Moore – and many, many more.

**Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (e.g. students)?** The most rewarding and creative opportunities are right in front of you, things that lie in the everyday, in your personal interests and passions, literally in your backyard. The challenge and the exhilaration of photography is striving to capture the ordinary and the overlooked in a way that brings it to life and makes someone turn and look again. And you do not need state of the art, expensive and often intimidating equipment to make this happen.



**Stockyards** 2011  
Adrian Brown  
type c photograph

#### Artist's statement

Zane has lived on the land his entire life - he knows no other way. He now works the yards and the labyrinth of passageways like a well-trodden path that he was destined for. The cattle move through the stockyards with great ease, it shouldn't be this easy but Zane just makes it happen. There is no fuss and, unlike other handlers, there is no yelling. Zane and the cattle move with an unspoken knowledge of what is supposed to be.

#### Questions

Why do you think the photographer chose to photograph his subject from this viewpoint?

How does the composition of the portrait influence your understanding of the subject?

Adrian Brown describes himself as a 'cinematographer'. What story is being told through his portrait of Zane?

#### The photographer and the portrait – an interview

**How do you define your own practice?** In the past I have used the term 'photojournalistic advertising photographer', however I am now also directing TV ads, so I think I will be using the term 'cinematographer'.

#### Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?

[brownbox.com.au](http://brownbox.com.au)

#### What is your relationship to the subject?

For the time I am with them they are all that matters. I have no other thoughts or concerns other than how can I be a safe and caring part of their internal dialogue. I seem to have an instinct for what people might be thinking at any point in time and will interact accordingly.

#### Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?

The image was candid in that Zane and I had chatted prior and I let him know that I was there to photograph him and others and their every day working life. As is the case with this shot, most of the time people get so used to me or forget I am there.

#### What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

I like the idea of showing how calm and respectful Indigenous cattlemen are. I also wanted to show that it was their job at this yard to move herds of cattle from pen to pen in what is in fact a maze of pens – yet they do it as easily as breathing.

#### Describe the technical aspects of your photograph.

*Stockyards* was captured on a Fuji rangefinder camera that shoots 220 film. Film speed was 400 ISO and only available light was used. There was no digital manipulation other than a subtle colour correction.

#### How was the final print made?

**Is it part of an edition?** Durst Lambda Print on Fuji Pearl paper. It is an edition of 5.

#### Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.

I like to allow for plenty of breathing space around the image which is why I have 12cm borders on three sides and a 17cm border at the base. For me the image is a study of a person and a moment, so I like the idea of box framing and offsetting it within the frame as it feels a little more observational and scientific, but still remains an art piece.

#### Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers (e.g. students)?

Start as soon as you can and find a happy balance between commercial and personal work. Allow yourself to move through many different ways of shooting but also allow yourself to gravitate to the style you find that you love the most.







**The chess player** 2011  
Andrew Campbell  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

Dr Hassan Rahim was a preeminent dental surgeon in Uganda in the 1970s. When Idi Amin came to power, he dreamt that the Asians held the country's wealth. He evicted most of the Asian community overnight, many at gunpoint. Hassan and his wife fled the country with what few possessions they could carry, including the tiny figurines depicted in this portrait. A keen chess player and a true gentleman, Hassan now resides in Australia with his family. The intent of this portrait was to capture the sense of dignified sadness and isolation caused by his forced relocation from his past in Uganda.

**Questions**

What do the objects and furnishings in the portrait tell you about the subject of the portrait?

How would you describe the pose and expression of Dr Rahim in Campbell's portrait?

Dr Rahim would 'only wear a suit' for his portrait sitting with Campbell. How important is the subject's attire in your interpretation of the portrait?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your own practice?** Portrait photographer with own business and studio in Collins St, Melbourne.

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

It's a family business and we have two websites: generationsphotography.com.au for our family portraits and headshot.com.au for the corporate headshot business.

**What is your relationship to the subject?**

The subject, Dr. Rahim, is the father of our client Fem Hunter. We met during the Hunter's family portrait session. We got on very well and have enormous respect for one another!

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

A week prior to each family portrait session, we meet with a representative of the family to discuss preferred image styles, wardrobe, possible props etc. so we can create a truly meaningful experience with images tailored for each family.

When Fem Hunter told me her father's life story, and that he would "only wear a suit" I knew that we had the potential to create something extraordinary.

For this portrait, I wanted to create an old Gentlemen's clubroom feel, using a classic armchair and a couple of art deco tables with cold, bluish natural light streaming in. This cold coloured light imbues a sense of loneliness, and the small man in a big chair adds to the sense of diminished scale.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?** Photograph was captured on a Nikon D700, 28-70 mm F2.8 lens, 1/30th sec at f5.6, using a combination of natural light with a soft tungsten fill. The RAW file underwent significant Photoshop treatment to yield the final result – some 21 different Photoshop layers are used to create the desired look and feel of this image.

**How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition?**

Printed on inkjet printer by Brilliant Prints on Fine Art Inkjet Paper. At present there are only two prints made. The stock used is Breathing Colour Optica One Velvet Cotton Rag - 300gsm (acid and linen free fine art guild trade approved).

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I was looking to create a classic, elegant feel, but not to dominate the content – so the choice of timber was important.

**Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?**

Typically I like to keep my post production to a minimum, although in this case I thought the black and white treatment would suit the image. Essentially I took the colour file and reproduced it in black and white then spent some time working very broadly on contrast and sharpening to achieve a result I was happy with.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** Norman Parkinson, Sir Cecil Beaton, Nick Knight, Annie Leibovitz.

**Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (eg. students)?**

Get to know your subject and their story before you pick up the camera. Work on your people skills so you can gain their trust and then get the most from your subject.



**The 70- year-old jetty jumper** 2011

Alex Frayne  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

Trevor Murphy spends endless days in summer jumping from the jetty at Glenelg, South Australia. He says it keeps him young and fit and he's unphased by his age in comparison to the other divers. A baker by trade, he starts the working day early which leaves ample time to don the bathers and head out to 'the zone'. As a photographer, I find the atmosphere on the jetty to be electric. Male competitiveness, performance and swagger rule the realm and I am reminded of a kind of Hellenic sporting tradition.

**Questions**

What image of masculinity and Australian culture is represented in Frayne's portrait of Trevor Murphy?

What role do the anonymous figures in the background play in the photographer's framing of the portrait?

Frayne advises younger photographers to focus on emotional impact and not 'megapixels'. How would you describe the emotional impact of this portrait?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your own practice?** Artist.

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

redbubble.com

**What is your relationship to the subject?** No prior knowledge or friendship with subject.

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

Candid.

**What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

Masculinity, summer, Australian notions of pastimes and jetties.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?** Shot on Nikon FE2 SLR, 28mm lens, Fuji slide film 100ASA.

**How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition?**

Digital print. Print is one of an edition (1/1). Printed from 300 dpi tif file.

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I wanted A2 as it suits the perspective of the jetty and involves the viewer, without overwhelming the viewer.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** David Lynch and Robert MacFarlane.

**Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)?**

Stop being obsessed about gear. Stop talking about megapixels and start talking about emotional impact.





**Monkey business** 2011

Alina Gozin'a  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

Luke Doolan, Oscar-nominated film director and co-founder of Blue-Tongue Films, is shown here in his natural creative habitat. Doolan likes the Infinite Monkey Theorem, which suggests that monkeys randomly banging on typewriters for an infinite amount of time would eventually produce the works of Shakespeare or Hollywood (as also famously tested by Mr Burns in 'The Simpsons'). In this photograph, the same idea is applied for the Australian film industry – which meant only one monkey was afforded and at mates rates! Special thanks to Toby & Pete, Debbie Muller, Emma Woods and Pascale Roux de Bezieux.

**Questions**

How would you describe the atmosphere created by Gozin'a in her portrait of Luke Doolan?

While some elements of the portrait are digitally manipulated, the image was mostly created 'in camera, all in one frame'. How does this information change the way you look at the portrait?

Gozin'a nominates film as one of the influences on her work. What elements of filmmaking can you identify in this portrait?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your own practice?** Portrait photographer.

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

[alinagozina.com.au](http://alinagozina.com.au)

**What is your relationship to the subjects?**

It's great to have an interest in and/or a connection with the person I am photographing. On the shoot things get very technical so it's usually precise and short. The connection is established prior to the shoot or, if you just meet the person at the shoot, you have a few minutes to make the connection. These few minutes are crucial as they can either make or break

the shoot. I don't worry about what people think and want. I am so concentrated on what I need to get done that I don't get overwhelmed by a person standing in front of me. Maybe that is what saves me every time.

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

None of my encounters are candid – they are all fabricated and constructed, that's how I like it. On the shoot, I let the shoot itself take charge and this allows me to deviate in an organic way from the constriction of the vision I had in mind. Wonderful things always happen on the shoot once I let go of the mad desire to recreate exactly what is in my head.

**What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

I am fascinated by humanity, what moves us and why love comes harder to some people than to others.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?** The camera I used

was a Canon 5D Mark II, 50 mm L series, f 1.2. The lighting was artificial. Through digital imaging we dropped in a NY view in the window and smoke for the monkey's pipe (the monkey was actually holding the pipe in her mouth on the shoot as it is shown in the photo – that part is real). We also intensified the smoke coming out of Luke's smoking pipe. And that is it. The rest was all in camera, all in one frame! I tried to avoid using Photoshop and digitising aspects of the image as much as I could. I appreciate the old school of photography which, to me, is the only school there is and should be.

**How was the final print made?**

**Is this print one of an edition?** Printed on metallic photo paper. There will be a few in the edition.

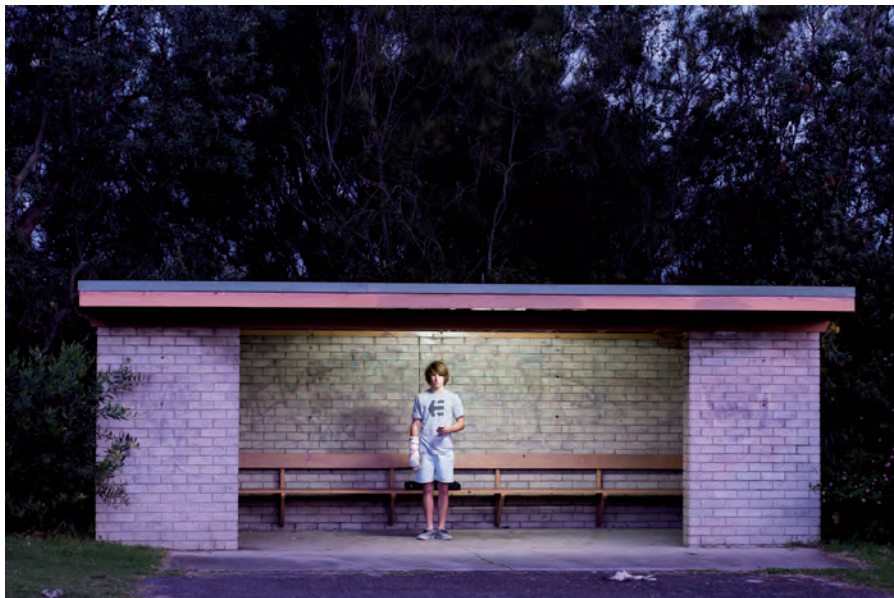
**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I hate mounting and framing so I give it very little consideration. I go for the most durable and simplest presentation and something which is timeless. I need to change this bad habit.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** Many wonderful films and, of course, photography as well.

**Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (eg. students)?**

Identify which genre you like and then copy what has been done before to perfection on all levels. Once you master the technical side of the “old masters”, then you can create your own original work.



**At the bus stop** 2011  
Brenton McGeachie  
digital print

### Artist's statement

My son, Liam McGeachie, was going through some of the rites of passage from the comfort of childhood through adolescence towards being an adult. Some of the issues are symbolised by this image. Through it all, of course, the main necessity is always the latest mobile phone.

### Questions

McGeachie identifies the subject of his portrait as his son, Liam. Does the relationship between the photographer and subject influence your reading of the image? How?

The figure of Liam inhabits only a small area within the frame. Why do you think the photographer chose to compose the portrait this way?

The title of the portrait refers to the location, 'at the bus stop'. Create an alternative title for the portrait that reflects the ideas and themes identified by the photographer.

### The photographer and the portrait – an interview

**How do you define your own practice?** Photographer

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

I have been taking photos of my son all his life. Almost all have been 'constructed' in one way or another – even if they were the typical things that kids did growing up – as this was the simplest way to create an image that I liked. I did take the odd birthday photo that was candid.

**What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

My son had been going through the usual things for many 17 year olds – leaving school, beginning an apprenticeship, getting his license and a car and there is some reflection of this in the image. His arm is bandaged due to an accident at work, he is in a bus stop as he used to use buses all the time before getting his car, he is near the beach where he lives. He also lives his entire life on the phone.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?** The image was taken with a Nikon D7000. I like the play of different light sources within an image, or of shooting to an 'incorrect' light source. Sometimes that may involve using my own artificial light, however, in this case I have used the light source of the bus stop as the 'main' light. The lighting ratio was achieved by shooting at a time when the ambient light matched the light from the bus stop i.e. I chose the time to shoot that suited what I wanted. The only processing was to adjust the file slightly so that the print matched my original perception of the scene.

**How was the final print made?**

**Is this print one of an edition?** I had originally intended to print this on a gloss paper, however, I preferred the texture of the darker elements on matte and so used that instead. It is a one off.

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I have printed it to just smaller than A3 as I felt that that size suited the image. It is mounted simply with a white acid free board and I have chosen a wooden frame that I think will hold the image in and complement it, without overwhelming the image.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?**

I do not know if anyone in particular has influenced me, however, I have liked the work of Irving Penn, Robert Frank, Sebastiao Salgado and Ernst Haas, among many others, as I felt that they were all original, creative and had a consistently high quality of work – especially the printed output.

**Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (eg. students)?** Take lots of photos, look at them, think about them and enjoy what you do.







**Eden** 2011  
Arianne McNaught  
digital print

### **Artist's statement**

Beauty comes in many different forms and is just as subjective as photography. I love my little sister's face because it is dusted with freckles. I really wanted to capture her when she forgets that I have a camera in front of her face. I wanted that moment just after a smile, when the expression reveals the authentic self. I think the magic of portraits is being able to take a photograph as if the photographer is completely absent.

### **Questions**

How does the use of black and white influence your interpretation of the portrait?

Eden's face fills the frame of McNaught's portrait. Why do you think the photographer has chosen to compose the portrait of her sister this way? How are the ideas and themes of the photographer conveyed in the portrait of Eden?

### **The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

#### **How do you define your own practice?**

I would probably say I am a photojournalist but I really don't know what the future holds for me yet. How I would define my practice as a photographer is that I am really passionate about capturing my subjects as authentically as possible. My personal ethics really attracted me to study photojournalism. I was in a lecture debating whether or not to study photojournalism and I was fortunate to attend Heather Faulkner's lecture that introduced photojournalism. She said something to the effect of photojournalism is all about asking questions and mainly just one and that is 'what does it mean to be human?' What I have come to learn in a very short period of time is that everyone is vastly different

but there are two fundamental similarities: that everyone is important and that everyone is seeking validation in some form or other. Whenever I have the privilege to photograph anyone I always keep this in mind and try to create a relationship with the individual or, if I am on the street, I always try to observe those around me to understand human behaviour before just instantly taking a photo. Jack Picone's famous saying that he would constantly tell his students to find Henri Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment and slow down! I agree with him. What are two hundred useless shots when you could have just slowed down and thought about it and have two really great frames? That is something I really had to learn at first and am still learning to do.

#### **What is your relationship to the subject?**

In the case of the portrait it is my sister. Knowing someone so well makes it easy to select photos and photograph them. However, when I take photos of complete strangers I think it is really important to develop a rapport with people. To always go back and show a genuine interest in them. I love that about photography – it allows me to meet all kinds of people. My university lecturer taught me about the importance of contacts. She is my inspiration when it comes to having a relationship with subjects, and people in general, and will do absolutely anything to retain and gain contacts. I think she is the most courageous person I have ever met because she will approach anyone and I have seen her do this. I hope that I will become like her one day.

#### **Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

The photograph was definitely a candid encounter. I was taking photos for my university assignment which was a series of constructed images so I had been shooting for about an hour and a half. I had the images I needed for my assignment but I knew Eden was getting a bit over being photographed and the light was perfect! It was a real spur of the moment. I had seen that expression on her face before. It is a habit I have got into by really noticing things around me, even when I don't have a camera and I mentally think of when I would press the shutter. I sat her down and waited for the expression I had seen. I took some frames just to get Eden comfortable with the camera and I was talking to her. I think that is the key to getting a good portrait. I can't emphasise this enough. I saw the moment and I took the photo. It was the last

shot of the day. Often that happens to me where the last frame is the best because I become so focused the more I shoot and the subject becomes less aware of the camera.

### **What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

I guess Eden's age is the main theme that can be taken from the image. Eden was 13 at the time the photograph was shot. I think there is a brilliancy being a youth, especially the age between 11–13. I think these years are the most challenging years because everything seems to change both physically and emotionally. I think there is an innocence that is still retained but I found that those years I was searching and wondering who I would be. Eden is five years younger than I am and it is really interesting listening to her point of view of starting high school when I have just finished.

### **Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?**

I wish I could write Canon 5D Mark II, but I can't. I shoot on a Canon 500D. I love working with natural light. Mainly ambient light is my favourite light to work with especially for portraits because it doesn't cast harsh shadows over the face. Reading light is extremely important and learning to recognise how it works and where it is.

"Light makes photography. Embrace light. Admire it. Love it. But above all, know light. Know it for all you are worth, and you will know the key to photography." George Eastman

When it came to the digital imaging process I used two programs: Adobe Bridge and Photoshop. I found that the printing stage was easier to evaluate, to experiment and improve the digital processing.

### **How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition?**

I printed my photograph at LiveImage which is affiliated with Griffith University. The print is a single edition. Printing is such a process of experimentation. I did a series of small test prints and adjusted the way I edited the photo to make sure that I preserved as much detail as possible. It is refreshing and exciting seeing a physical photo and then examining it and how to improve it rather than just staring at a computer screen. I ended up using a really high quality thick paper which is called Photo Rag Pearl. I also used an Epson inkjet printer.

### **Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

I guess my main concern was staying within the requirements of the Gallery. I really wanted to have something that was simple. I did want the photograph to be big but not too overbearing. With mounting, I wanted an off white mat because I found the pure white took away from the photograph. I guess it was like the printing process – a series of trials and errors. Also I was able to find an experienced framer that I was really fortunate to work with.

### **Who would you nominate as your influences?**

Tamara Dean Steve McCurry; Narelle Autio; Olivia Arthur; Robert Capa; Henri Cartier; Bresson; Tracey Moffat; Trent Parke; Heather Faulkner; Jack Picone; Charles Page; Margret Waller; David Dare Parker; Helen Levitt; Matt Carr; Ruth Harriet Louise. I have so many more photographers I could list that have influenced me. I think it is really important to immerse yourself by going to exhibitions and looking at photographs of others.

### **Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (eg. students)?**

I guess I am a young aspiring photographer. I think my main advice is something Audrey Hepburn said "Nothing is impossible; the word itself says I'm possible." For a first year photography student that works at Foodworks, the National Photographic Portrait Prize was an impossibility. I laughed and thought there was some kind of mistake when I found out I was a finalist. If you have a dream and work really hard and have goals you will eventually gain success. Another thing that has influenced me is "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." (Sir Winston Churchill). I know there have been times where I have been disheartened and wondered if I will ever be good enough but persistence is the key. Learning something new is always challenging and photography is no exception. It seems like a deceptively easy discipline but it really takes time to refine and master. Education is essential and I am endeavouring to absorb everything I can while I am studying. However, any form of education or experience is never wasted so seek opportunities that will develop you as a photographer.



**Portrait of Margaret Olley in her Paddington studio** 2011

John McRae  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

I had the great pleasure of photographing Margaret in her Paddington studio, a place well known for its colourful clutter and referred to by some friends as "The Doll's House". In my portrait, Margaret is seated in her painting chair, confronting the lens with her particular sense of candour and an uncommon frailty. As far as I know, this may well be the last photo taken of her before her death the following month. Christine France – art critic, author of *Margaret Olley* (1990), commented, "It is a wonderful photo in that it captures both the vulnerability and sense of enquiry which entered her face in the last months of her life".

**Questions**

What do you first notice when you look at this portrait of Margaret Olley? Why? Margaret Olley (1923–2011) was a well-known Australian artist. What does this studio portrait tell you about Olley as an artist?

McRae created his portrait of Olley as a triptych. How does this presentation of the image influence your reading of the subject?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your own practice?** Photographer.

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

I have two web addresses – one for my commercial work and another for my art projects for exhibition:  
johnmrae.com  
projects.johnmrae.com

**What is your relationship to the subject?**

I was an acquaintance of Margaret and a great admirer of her long and rich career. I had begun to photograph her work for the exhibition she was working on before she died. In fact, I produced a giclee print of one of her images for commercial release through her print

gallery, Berkeley Editions. So it was through my work as a photographer and printer that I had the immense pleasure of meeting this noble lady.

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

I would have to say the photograph was pretty much a candid encounter. I was visiting Margaret to deliver back one of the paintings I had photographed. I bought my camera with me as I thought I would like to get a couple of shots of the fabulous interior of Margaret's studio. So I asked Margaret if I could take a few shots while I was there. In the process of capturing the interior I thought it would be silly not to ask her if I could also get a portrait shot. Margaret, of course, agreed and I shot only a few frames just at the end of my stay. That was all that was required. I got the shot in the first instance.

**What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?**

The main theme of this portrait is the sitter's relationship to her surroundings. That is why I included the vignettes of the surrounding studio as a triptych. Margaret's studio was a colourful, magical universe which reflected her own joy and love of humanity. She told me that friends referred to her studio as "The Doll's House", a telling statement that affirms the fact that she never lost contact with the child within. It is also a powerful statement from a gentle soul in the last few weeks of her life.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?**

I used a Canon 5D Mark II DSLR to capture this image. I used available light. The key light is the available light, filtering through a large window, near where she would spend her days painting, behind and to the left side of the photographer. The rest of the studio was lit similarly by available light from window sources on either side of the room. These light sources helped to fill in some of the shadows on the sitter. Apart from a contrast and colour balance adjustment, no other digital processes were performed on the photographs, other than to place the three photographs into one file. I wanted to keep the shot as natural and as raw as possible.

**How was the final print made?** The final print is a pigment based inkjet print (giclee print) on Hahnemuhle cotton rag paper. It is an artist proof and there is no edition of the work at this stage.

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?** It is my preference to work larger than smaller with my photographic prints as a rule and this print is no exception. I chose a simple box frame so as not to compete with the work itself. I decided to format the three images together into one work with a relatively large black border. I felt this was more practical and perhaps has more impact than to frame the photographs separately and hang them as three distinct works, plus it cements Margaret in the context of her studio.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?** Well I'm a big fan of Annie Leibovitz for a start. Other influences on my work are Joel Peter Witkin, Guy Bourdin, Cindy Sherman, Helmut Newton, Cartier Bresson, Robert Mapplethorpe, and the painter Francis Bacon, to mention a few.

**Do you have any advice for a beginning photographer (eg. students)?** The only advice I would have is simply to follow your passion, let it lead you, and don't give up... keep going, even if it hurts!



**Lucky Day** 2011  
Nikki Toole  
digital print

**Artist's statement**

Lucky Day is a roller girl from the Victorian Roller Derby League. She is part of a new series of derby girls, inspired by 19th-century military portraits. The sitter places themselves within the realm of the roller girl ready for battle. The war portrait does not only represent the sitter, but is also a historical marker of dress, culture and body armour from that era. The girls were photographed in natural daylight to replicate the conditions of a 19th century painting.

**Questions**

Describe the impact of Toole's 'strong sense of colour' on your interpretation of the portrait.

The photographer identifies the 19th century war portrait as 'a historical marker of dress, culture and body armour'. What 'historical markers' are represented by Toole in her portrait of Lucky Day?

What do you imagine Lucky Day is thinking about? What clues are there in the portrait that make you think this?

**The photographer and the portrait – an interview**

**How do you define your own practice?** Photographer.

**Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?**

I have a personal website; [nikkitoole.com](http://nikkitoole.com) and a website for the *Roller Girl* project from which the image of Lucky Day was taken: [iseestars.com.au](http://iseestars.com.au)

**What is your relationship to the subject?** Many of the Derby girls know about the project and contact me through the website.

**Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?**

The photograph is constructed in as far as

I explain my vision and the Derby girl reacts in their own way. This makes it a collaborative effort, which I enjoy.

**Describe the technical aspects of your photograph?** For this project I used a Canon 5D Mark II and a 50mm lens. I used natural lighting and the girls are shot in my courtyard. The image of Lucky Day did not require any retouching as I like the colour and skin textures to look natural.

**How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition?**

The final print is a Chromira print. *The Roller Girls* are in editions of 8.

**Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait?**

The image of Lucky Day had such a strong sense of colour that I decided to maximise that impact by using a white frame. I enjoy printing these portraits a metre high to allow the viewer to study the detail.

**Who would you nominate as your influences?**

I have a range of influences or artists that inspire me. My steadfast ones are David Lynch, Pedro Almodovar and Douglas Sirk for their use of colour and Ken Loach, Alfred Hitchcock and Ingmar Bergman for the way they study the human condition. Sirk and Almodovar inspired me to use colour in a different way from my previous projects. The sitters in early American Civil War photographs and First World War military paintings were a huge inspiration for the conceptual focus of the work.

**Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)?**

Watch early movies, lots of them. When you choose a project to develop take your time. There is no rush to complete a personal project. I have discovered that it often takes time to get into the groove of a new series of images and making contacts that will work for your ideas can take time. The main thing is work with what you have. Don't drop an idea because you are too afraid to approach people. Work around your insecurities and you will develop confidence as the project grows. Eventually sitters will approach you if they like your ideas. If you are happy with your work, it is always a bonus if others appreciate it, if not you will still end up as happy as you were in the beginning.

