

NATIONAL PHOTO- GRAPHIC PORTRAIT PRIZE 2013

National Portrait Gallery
Learning resource



Yhonnie and Indiana 2012

Janelle Low
digital print

**National Photographic
Portrait Prize 2013
Winner**

What is the National Photographic Portrait Prize?

The National Photographic Portrait Prize exhibition is selected from a national field in excess of 1,000 entries that reflect the distinctive vision of Australia's aspiring and professional portrait photographers and the unique nature of their subjects. The National Portrait Gallery offers a prize of \$25,000 for the most outstanding photographic portrait.

Joanna Gilmore, National Photographic Portrait Prize judge and curator, introduces the prize.

Photography's potency as a medium for portraiture has been called into question ever since photographic portraiture first came into existence. Introduced to Australia by a photographer named George Goodman, who opened the country's first photographic studio on the roof of a Sydney hotel in 1842, photography was embraced by prospective portrait subjects for its speed and economy and for the manner in which it enabled people to see themselves in disconcertingly 'true' and

startling detail. Having the likes of George Goodman execute your daguerreotype portrait might have meant a minute or so of uncomfortable, absolute stillness, but sitters agreed that submission to the process was worth the result. The Australian, reporting on Goodman's work in 1843, described in astonished tones the quality of portraits that were vastly more than just likenesses and that instead provided 'in the space of a few seconds, a complete transcript of our outward man'. 'Photographic portraiture', the newspaper opined, 'depicts not merely the exactness of feature so easily attainable by hand – it preserves the life and animation, the delicacy of expression; in fact, so much of the character of the individual as is displayed in his features'. Other accounts of the invention announced that, with a daguerreotype, a sitter could see himself 'as much, as truly, and as fully as he sees himself in the most accurate looking-glass, but with this advantage: that the photographic likeness is the image as if it were removed from the surface of the mirror and made perpetual'. Equal parts sideshow, sorcery and science, photography appealed also for being more affordable and by the 1860s had made portraiture – hitherto the preserve of those with status and means – something available to everyone.

The same characteristics that made photographic portraiture so popular, though, were also seized on by some as its flaws. Photographs were maligned by painters and others for being the result of a chemical, mechanical process rather than an unquantifiable, creative and imaginative one. By this reasoning, photographers found themselves dismissed as untutored or uncouth technicians and their work positioned so as to occupy a servile and undistinguished place in the hierarchy of art forms. Some portrait painters, their livelihoods increasingly undermined by photography, adapted their practices in response to the new technique. Others continued to trade on the supposed superiority of painting and drawing as a method for portraiture, promising their clients 'correct' likenesses that avoided, in the words of one 1850s Sydney portraitist, 'the stiffness which detracts so much from

correctness of expression' in photographs. Rather than resulting in portraits that 'preserved life and animation', photography was declared by its detractors to be better suited to dispassionate and documentary purposes and thus responsible for portraits that amounted to nothing other than tricky, mirror-like renderings of flat, 'unnatural' faces. Photographic portraits were deemed expressionless not just for their depictions of blank-faced sitters discomfited by the physical conditions of the sitting, but for their negation of the process by which a sitter's presence or individuality might be made visible through skill, sensibility and imagination. 2012 marks the 170th anniversary of Goodman's arrival in Sydney and of the first recorded Australian-made photographic portraits. Yet photographic portraiture still struggles to shed its association with sterility and surface and to overcome the assumption that photographic portraits will only ever function as likenesses incapable of capturing something deeper, mysterious or hidden about their subjects. Photography's reputation has suffered further in the present day for being more accessible and available than it ever was and for being practiced in social and technological conditions that dismantle or abolish the distinctions between skill and formula, imagination and instantaneity, creativity and commercialism, permanence and transience. We live in a society saturated with photographic images, many of them relentlessly ubiquitous, shamelessly declamatory or infinitely manipulable. Despite this, photographic portraiture retains traces of the characteristics that so intrigued people on photography's invention close to two centuries ago. It remains the most popular and accessible medium for images of ourselves and those close to us as well as a compelling and resonant 'passport', as photographer Sandy Edwards sees it, to the lives, experiences and mysteries of strangers: the well-known people we admire, desire or revile; and those that most move, inspire and intrigue us. As legendary American photographer Richard Avedon once stated of his portraits: 'They're readings of the surface. I have great faith in surfaces. A good one is full of clues'. Though perhaps merely surfaces and subject to multiple, subjective and divergent readings, the best photographic portraits, as Avedon suggested, hint at what's hidden behind a sitter's face and perhaps have the capacity to guide the viewer to a sense of another person's character and presence. It's these qualities that the National

Portrait Gallery looks for in developing its collection and which are celebrated annually with the National Photographic Portrait Prize: a \$25,000 award instituted in 2007 to support and showcase the strength and inventiveness of photographic portraiture as practiced by Australian photographers today. As has been so for each of its past five iterations, the 2013 Prize attracted in excess of 1,200 entries, from which three judges have selected fifty-three portraits demonstrating varied points on the spectrum of photographic portraiture's possibilities for watchfulness and suggestion. This year's selection encompasses tightly-focussed and finely-realised studies of beautiful and distinctive faces: Melanie Faith Dove's flawless study of a face in profile, for example; Charlie White's examination of the classical beauty of his subject; Louise Whelan's arresting portrait of Kaloti Parmjit; or works such as those by Quentin Jones, Ben Lawrence and Gary Grealy. Others – such as Jeremy Shaw with his portrait of Burt Bacharach, John Tsiavis with his image of Chris Lilley, or Linda Wachtel in her portrait of artist Vincent Fantauzzo – have selected complex compositions employing playfulness, settings, symbols and scenarios. No matter what their method, each of the portraits selected for the 2013 National Photographic Portrait Prize demonstrates that transactions between photographer and subject – far from being ephemeral, random, inane or clinical – can be mindful and collaborative. The sitter, whether with bravery, wit, defiance or selflessness, submits to the camera's scrutiny while the photographer crafts a portrait that offers the possibility of contemplation – and wherein the worth and the wonder of the photographic surface is reaffirmed.

Questions for discussion

What is your first impression of this exhibition?

Do you think all of these photographs can be defined as portraits?

What themes do you think emerge from this selection of contemporary portraits? Select two portraits that you find compelling. What are their similarities and differences?

If you were the only judge of this prize who would you choose as the winner? What selection criteria would you use and why?

Education Bulletin

Subscribe to the National Portrait Gallery Education Bulletin for educators at portrait.gov.au/site/subscribe.php

National Portrait Gallery blog

Post your ideas about the National Photographic Portrait Prize or respond to any of the questions in this learning resource at portrait.gov.au/blog

Learning resources

NPPP2009, NPPP2010, NPPP2011 and NPPP2012 learning resources can be downloaded at 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. We welcome any comments or suggestions about this learning resource. Please contact Amanda Andlee Poland, Manager, Learning Programs amanda.poland@npg.gov.au 02 6102 7062

National Photographic Portrait Prize 2013 exhibition venues

National Portrait Gallery
8 March – 19 May 2013
Blue Mountains Regional Gallery
28 June – 11 August 2013
Grafton Regional Gallery
11 December – 29 January 2014
Roma on Bungil Gallery
7 February – 16 March 2014
Caboolture Regional Gallery
30 April – 5 July 2014

National Photographic Portrait Prize 2014

The call for entries for the National Photographic Portrait Prize 2014 will commence in September 2014.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY EXHIBITION

King Edward Terrace Canberra
ACT 2600
Education and group visit enquiries
email_bookings@npg.gov.au or
telephone (02) 6102 7000



Granny's goth 2012

Katherine Bennett
digital print

Artist's statement

Granny Thelma's goth – the ladies are waiting for me to take their 'formal' photo.

Questions

What do you think is going on in this portrait?

What do you think the photographer is hoping we see in this portrait?

What do you like about this portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Photographer

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

My website for personal and commissioned work is sembellysh.com.au

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

The lady in the centre of this photograph is my partner's Granny. So we are almost directly related, and here, as with all photographic work. I am in a state of exchange though I think only directly, with one of the women!

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe. This photograph is very much a candid moment whilst preparing for a constructed photograph.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? Different personalities caught in a shared moment. The ladies are in preparation for their photograph and you can see their different personalities as they each briefly prepare from humour, to gossip, to anxiety and with the one woman staring straight at the camera, just plain openness! It did also make me wonder, which of these women I might be like at that age and how I might be passing the time at that age.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? The photo was taken using a Canon 5D Mark II and using an on-camera speed light, bouncing off the ceiling. The basic RAW file processing was done in Adobe Lightroom, and finishing touches made in Photoshop.

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? I guess this print is now part of an edition. I trialled different photographic papers till I settled on this one! I chose a slightly textured paper. I loved the way this brought out the detail in the photograph, and gave a slightly delicate feel to the overall image, which I thought went well with the subjects.

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

The considerations were very much equal parts around framing, scale and printing. I am fortunate enough to know a great local framer, who was very considerate and helpful with her expertise in framing. I am not a professional framer, and really wanted this to be in the hands of someone who knows their stuff! I did give my opinion too, and we went with a warm mount board and a gallery style frame to keep the focus on the image, and emphasise the warmth in the image. The scale of the image is where the trials came in through studying the impact of size on the detail in the image.

Who would you nominate as your influences? Possibly the biggest influence in my work, is my late uncle, a photographer and incredible people person! When photographing people, our images have been quite different, but I have learnt that it is the overall approach when photographing someone that gives personalities of subjects' room to shine. This image is a great example of this, as it is not one he might have taken (or kept) however the communication between the subjects and myself in the lead up to taking this portrait may have been similar in our

approach. Helping people to be at ease in front of a camera is a skill in itself, one that I believe comes through other life learning. So there are many influences on my work around me, including people who are not photographers.

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? Get to know your photography gear inside out, whatever it is that you have, use it the best you can! Try to be open to new styles and subject matter when possible, as you'll learn something from it. Try to find exactly what it is that you like about photographs that appeal to you. Finally, keep growing your interests in life, as this is what will guide your style and give you the greatest pleasure out of your photography.



McCaughey Street, Turner, 1959 2012
Heather Corrigan
digital print

Artist's statement

McCaughey Street, Turner, 1959 is part of the series 'Searching for the Family'. This work has been developed by reconstructing photographs from my family album dating back to the 1950s. As I explored my family photo album I came across images of family outings and simple snapshots of my family enjoying themselves. Through reconstruction I tried to relate to these moments. 'Searching for the Family' conveys nostalgia for the joyous times represented in my family photographs. My connection with these constructions reveals my strong desire to be there, to have been part of such wonderful and apparently happy moments.

Questions

What do you think the subjects are doing?
Who are they looking at?
With what do you most identify with in this photograph?
Why do you think this view point was chosen?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
I consider myself a portrait photographer above anything else faces intrigue me.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
heathercorrigan.net

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?
The lovely faces in my photograph are that of my best friends. Some I have only known for a couple of months, others for most of my life. For me, recreating a family portrait with individuals I love was supremely important. I was reconstructing a photo of people I cherish with people I adore.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe. My photograph was very much a construction

as it was a recreation of a family photograph from the 1950s found in my family photo album.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? This photograph was part of a series called 'Searching for the Family'. The series looked at nostalgia for a time in my family that I was not a part of, yet held so closely to myself. 'Searching for the Family' are reconstructions of certain photographs found in my family album dating back to the 1950s and 1960s that display the happy and joyous times in my family's past.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? The camera I used was a Nikon D90, 18-105mm lens. The lighting was a mixture of natural and artificial lighting. The only digital imaging processing I used was brightening the faces of the two front figures the rest was all in the camera. I try to avoid using Photoshop as much as possible in my photographs.

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? Printed on semi-gloss photo paper. There will be no edition.

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

I wanted the framing for this series to be as minimal and invisible as possible, so sticking to plain white matte framing and a white matte board allowed the image to be the sole focus. I chose to print my photograph at an intimate size of 420mm x 297 mm, keeping the photograph small allows the audience to approach the work and truly inspect the fine details and momentarily feel part of this family.

Who would you nominate as your influences? My grandfather has been a pivotal influence and inspiration both to me as a developing photography artist and towards my most recent work, 'Searching for the Family'. Having shared passion for photography and his deep love for our family, I would nominate him as my figure of most influence.

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? Any archive, whether it is a family archive or a historical archive, holds such important information about what has been. I would tell them to explore the unknown and discover things in the past. You would be surprised where inspiration can come from.



Face of South Sudan 2012

Melanie Faith Dove
digital print

Artist's statement

Why do photographers create portraits? Is it to capture a famous face or a meaningful moment in time? In this case, it was neither of these things, it was purely aesthetic. I was mesmerised by my subject's extraordinary presence and elegant profile. Beckoning her aside after watching her for nine days, I endeavoured to capture her beauty in just a couple of frames. If it were not for the gold earring you would be forgiven for thinking this was a black and white image. A simple moment, yet a significant memory. Thank you, Agnes.

Questions

Why do you think the photographer chose this angle?

What personal qualities of the subject do you think are revealed?

Consider the subject's gaze, expression and pose. What do these things tell you about the person in this portrait? What else do you see that tells you about this person?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Photographer – documentary, press, editorial and fine art

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

melaniefaithdove.com

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

I spent nine days travelling and commercially documenting Agnes' journey from Perth to Brisbane; she was in Australia learning about the mining industry in order to take this information back to South Sudan to empower their industrial and business practices.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe.

I had

been watching Agnes with intrigue, her face and profile were so mesmerizing. On our final day together I pulled her aside and convinced her that she had such an amazing face that I needed to get a photograph for myself. It was very spontaneous in that I decided quickly how it would best look and shot it in only two frames. It was for no particular purpose but to immortalise her beauty for the both of us.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? The idea really was to focus on the beautiful lines and tones of the profile. I wanted it to be a proud and pleasing portrayal of Agnes using minimal detail. I wanted the viewer to be left asking questions about who she was and her social standing in society. The final size consideration allows the fore mentioned goals to be exaggerated.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? I took only two frames, standing about three metres away from the subject. I used a long 70-200mm lens on my Canon 5D Mark II and used a combination of natural window light with bounced flash off the side wall and ceiling. The image has been slightly desaturated to remove the yellow/brown tinges to the lighting and the highlights have been slightly enhanced but otherwise it remains a fairly straight portrait.

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? It is a Type C print on Gold Silk Fibre paper, printed by Prism Processing a pro-lab in North Melbourne, Victoria. The print will be a limited edition of ten.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait? The enormous size of this image, almost one metre high, means it becomes more surreal and sculptural. I believe it will make a stark impact and have a bold presence. I have decided to frame with white so the head will seem to float in space, accentuating the three dimensional effect.

Who would you nominate as your influences? Painter Rene Magritte because I adore Surrealism and photo artist Samantha Everton for her vibrant imagery and skilful use of moment, colour and lighting. I love photojournalist Meredith O'Shea for her gutsy subject choices and punchy imagery as well as James Nachtwey because he photographs his subjects with sensitivity and finds an inner beauty even

when the subject matter may be horrific. Andrew Chapman has been a massive motivator and inspiration to my image making and career. He is passionate about photography and is an honest and creative image maker.

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? You are entering an extremely competitive industry that is evolving rapidly. There are so many fields within it and you need to find the area you are passionate about. It needs to be your way of life above and beyond a way to make a living or you will never survive. Find mentors and become a part of the broader photographic community. With perseverance continue to learn and refine your style. You will eventually build a clientele and make a name for yourself.



Portrait of Ingvar Kenne 2012

Simon Harsent
digital print

Artist's statement

Photographer Ingvar Kenne relaxes in his hotel room in Canberra just before the opening of the National Portrait Gallery's National Photographic Portrait Prize 2011.

Questions

What do you notice first when you look at this portrait?

The photographer says he 'knew there was a picture to be had'. What do you think he was responding to?

How does the view point contribute to the intent of the photographer in documenting the moment?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your own practice?

I like to think I'm an artist who uses photography as my medium, but I work commercially as a photographer and it's my full time occupation so I guess that defines me as a photographer or maybe a commercial artist?

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

simonharsent.com

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

It can vary from a complete stranger to a close friend. In this case the sitter Ingvar is a friend, colleague and peer.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe.

It was

constructed as I asked Ingvar to sit in the chair at the end of the bed, but it wasn't preconceived, so I feel it was a captured moment. We had both just driven to Canberra for the opening night of the National Photographic Portrait Prize 2012. Both Ingvar and I had been selected as finalists and we decided to road trip to Canberra. I had wanted to stay in a slightly more upmarket accommodation but Ingvar was keen to do something cheaper so I had booked this hotel online. When we got to the place we walked in to one of the rooms where there was a single bed by the window and bunk beds opposite. I instantly loved the feeling of the room and the texture, I instantly knew there was a picture to be had. We sat in the room together and I decided to get the camera out and shoot a portrait of Ingvar to document the moment. He was at first sitting on the bunk beds opposite but I liked the light that was coming through the window so I asked him to move into the chair, he just slouched in the chair and put his feet up. I think it helped that Ingvar is an incredible portrait photographer himself he knew straight away what I was trying to get, which really was nothing more than to document the moment. I joked with him at the time that it would be my entry for this year's prize, and as it turns out it was and is a finalist, funny how these things work out.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

No real idea as such apart from as I mentioned wanting to document the moment. Sometimes for me a portrait is just as simple as that, it is a record of a person, a time and a place, so I guess you could say it is more historical than anything.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph?

I used, as I do for all my work, a Canon digital SLR. I think this one was shot with the 10x III and I think it was shot with the 35mm prime lens. The lighting for this image was all natural, although I do use artificial light a lot in my other work. I don't have a strict way of working. I just tend to see what is around me and how I can work with it or if I need to light it. The image has been slightly colour graded in Photoshop. I don't like to use Photoshop as a retouching tool for personal work. I use it just to control the colour and density much the same way I would if I was printing in the darkroom.

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

The final print is an ink jet print printed on Canson paper

with a large format printer. The print is an open edition.

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

The framing is incredibly important it must enhance the photograph and not overpower it, when framing I'll look at a lot of different possibilities before deciding on the final frame but it boils down to a gut feeling. Like the creation of the picture, it needs to be intuitive. I tend to like simple frames that don't fight with the picture. It's the same with the size of the print normally it's just what feels right. I might try it at lots of different sizes before I make the final print but I think you also have to take into consideration the context and environment of how and where it will be seen.

Who would you nominate as your influences?

I draw my influences from all over but for portraits I would have to say my main inspiration over the years has been Renaissance painters, especially Rembrandt. I prefer to draw inspiration from painters rather than other photographers, not to say that I don't get inspired by other photographers, I do. I find if I'm embarking on a project I try as hard as possible not to look at how other photographers might have approached a similar topic. I find if you do it can have quite a dramatic effect on what you do or don't do with your own work. I saw an interview with Gilbert and George once and they said they had stopped going to exhibitions because sometimes they would attend a show and the person had produced work of an idea that they were also working on and it would stop them from perusing the idea. I feel the same way. It's tough to continue on a project if you feel someone else has done it already. For me it's almost like you have to keep the blinkers on and ignore what has previously been done. For landscapes most of my inspiration for composition, space and colour comes from Rothko paintings.

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

Do what you love, shoot what you love. If you are really shooting what you love then you can't fail. Try everything you want to. Don't be constrained by boundaries or opinions and remember not to be afraid to make lots and lots of mistakes! I saw a poster on the wall of a high school gym in the basketball locker room. It read 'you miss 100% of the shots you don't take'. Don't give your work away for free; value your art and your

ability as an artist. Most of all be in love with photography not in love with the idea of being a photographer.



The uncertain recovery 2012

Arianne McNaught
digital print

Artist's statement

This image was part of a mini series of work based on a very short period within my family's life. My Mother, Leanne McNaught, has recently undergone surgery to remove tumours from her eye and hand. I focussed on the recovery process and the uncertainty of not knowing if these tumours could prove to be cancerous. I was really focussing on the fear of her possible absence and further illness.

Questions

What do you think is happening in this portrait? Could this portrait be read in different ways?

In what ways does this photograph challenge assumptions about what a portrait should be?

What ideas do you think the photographer is conveying through this portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

I am an aspiring photojournalist.

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

No

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

Intimate. The subjects are my immediate family my mother, my sister and my father.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe. Candid. I think the most important thing in capturing candid shots is to never take the photo when people are expecting you to press the shutter. The more poignant moments are not the stock standard images of people looking at the camera smiling but after or

before when they are really interacting with each other. In the case of this photograph my family are so used to me taking pictures of them they don't take much notice of me anymore. I saw them all in bed on a Sunday afternoon and quickly got my camera. I think it is important to always be looking and observing no matter if you have a camera or not but always to be thinking about images and observing moments.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? I think the main issue is the fragility of life. I think this experience in my own life really made me realise what is important. It's not camera equipment or even materialistic things that add to my contentment. The relationships I have with my family and the people whom I love are so vital to my happiness. A small lump can have the potential to really change someone's life and it doesn't just affect them but all of the people that love them. I think the main thing is not to take people for granted because the line between life and death is fine and even the line between health and illness is the same.

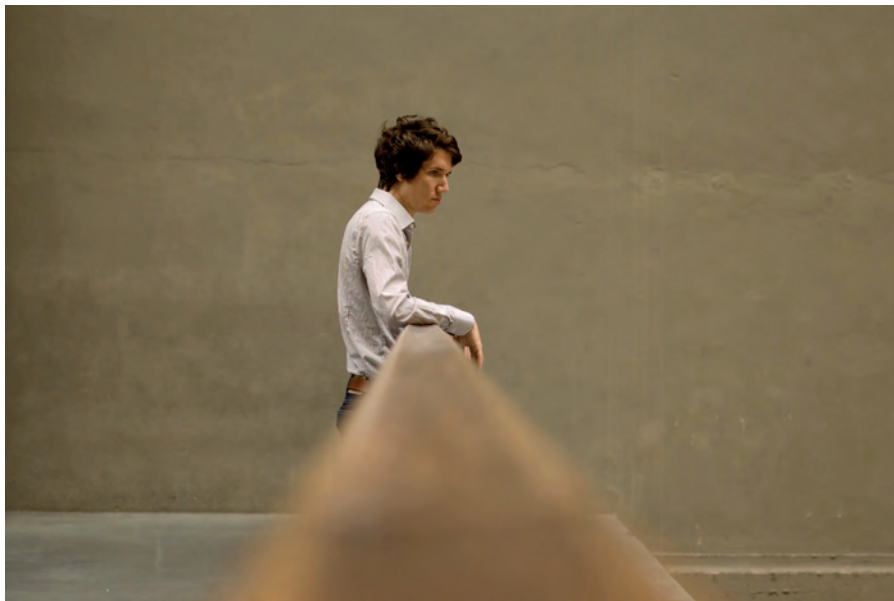
Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? I have realised in the last year after upgrading my equipment that it really doesn't matter what camera you use. I used my old Canon 500D. I used a slightly longer exposure to blur the movement of my little sister's head. I did this deliberately to make it a key element of the photograph. I used natural light there was a window just above the bed. I think something that every photographer needs to develop is being able to use the environment and become more observant of what light and weather is adding to the intended meaning of the work or detracting from the meaning. Light is important!

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? It is a single print. I printed it at Live Image which is a studio affiliated with Griffith University Queensland.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait? For the last two years I have worked with Peter Nobel and he is a very experienced framer. It really is important to find a great framer that will listen to you and your concerns and Peter is the best framer I have ever met! My main concern was staying within the requirements of the gallery. I think the framing should be minimal in style so it doesn't detract from the photograph.

Who would you nominate as your influences? Annie Leibovitz, Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Steve McCurry, Jack Picone, Heather Fulkner, Steven Dupont, Margaret Waller, Tracey Moffatt, David Dare Parker, Stephanie Sinclair and so many more. I think it is really important to look at the work of others it really does inform your work. I love looking at the work of others because it inspires me to push myself to make more compelling work. Also I think I just love to appreciate the work of others.

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? I'm a second year photography student and I am still a young photographer. I think the main thing to keep in mind is to have faith that you will develop and become a better photographer with time. Also remember why you take photos no matter what critical people may say. If you love photography and you have a passion for it then that is all that matters, not what others think of your work. Also, don't get caught up in photography equipment; the most practical equipment won't be found in your camera bag, but in your brain!



James 2012
Myles Nelson
digital print

Artist's statement

I am fascinated by the ways people interact in art galleries and how these spaces can provide possibilities for human contact. James Maxwell embodies such a moment as he waits for his date and his patience fades.

Questions

What do you like about this portrait?
How do the formal elements of this photograph contribute to a reading of this portrait?

The photographer's intent was to create a sense of solitude. To what extent has this been achieved and how?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
Photographer.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
mylesnelson.com

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

Our relationship was based on only the briefest of encounters. Of paramount importance was that the subject was relaxed and left to be alone with his thoughts until the image came together.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? It was definitely a candid encounter as was the expression on the face. It was constructed insofar as the image was deliberately taken from a

distance so as to minimize intrusion and to magnify the effect of the image.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? Solitude and what it looks like to be alone with one's thoughts. I had often questioned the disproportionate representation of artists as subjects in portrait photography and went out of my way to photograph non artists in an art space. I found that these spaces bring out emotions and social interactions that are often stymied in other environments.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? The available light was lovely so no further enhancement was required. A wider aperture was used to shorten the depth of field to further isolate the subject. A rudimentary Nikon DSLR was the only device on hand that day.

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? I love heavily textured paper but luster was chosen to match the feel of the image. I am forever amazed at the difference made by going to different printers so I get full size samples from different locations and then make a choice.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait? The theme of isolation is important to the narrative so an unobtrusive frame was needed. I always need expert help with the exact tone of the mounting but a white that matched the shirt was important in this case. I love large images but in this instance the subject is intended to be slightly smaller. A large image would work against the theme of the image.

Who would you nominate as your influences? Photographers: Richard Avedon, James Natchwey, Frank Meadow Sutcliffe, Peter Beard, Dario Mitidieri, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Sebastiao Salgado, Wolfgang Tillmans, Annie Leibovitz's photos of the Rolling Stones and Anton Corbijn. Film directors: Wong Kar-Wai, David Lynch, Wes Anderson, Jean-Luc Godard and Jim Jarmusch. Other artists: Caravaggio, Tamara de Lempicka, Steve Cross, Alex Noble and Steve Perry

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? Master the principles of light and what it can do for you. Accumulate photos

and watch films that resonate with you to provide inspiration. Never decline an opportunity to take photos for people when you are starting out. It's all valuable experience. Know what you want before you start shooting. Good kit that you are comfortable with is better than a lot of kit.



Untitled #1 2012
Ahmad Sabra
gelatin silver photograph

Artist's statement

Mohammed is 9 years old and from Gaza, Palestine. He has lived in an orphanage since his father was killed in Gaza after an Israeli air strike in 2008.

Questions

What can you tell about this child's life from viewing this portrait closely?
How does the background in this photograph contribute to your understanding of the portrait?
What impact does black and white silver gelatin photo have in this portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
Portrait photographer

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
My personal website issabrainmagery.com.au and lahza.com.au

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s? I would describe myself as an observer or visitor. Growing up in the Middle East I remember the Palestinian refugee camps and I'm sympathetic to their hardship.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe. We were in Gaza shooting a documentary and we had heard about the orphanages and wanted to visit and document some of the children who had lost parents during the wars in

Gaza. Nearly all orphanages in the Gaza strip rely on foreign donors and we wanted to try and raise some awareness or money. We were taken on a tour of the orphanage and introduced to a few of the children. We were shown their room and given background stories of some of the boys. Each room contained four beds and the window caught my eye and I'm OCD about lines in symmetry. I asked Mohammed to stand at the foot of his bed and took his photo.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

Mohammed is a son of a martyr (shaheed). His father died fighting for his country. The word shaheed gives me goose bumps when I hear it. We're brought up believing that one of the most honourable ways to die is to die as a shaheed. In general the family of the shaheed will get congratulated for the martyrs sacrifice and conceal their grief and only show pride. 'Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive finding their sustenance from their Lord.' (Quran 3:169)

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph? I used a Rolleiflex SL66 medium format camera for this portrait. I used some natural light and an LED light panel to light up Mohammed.

How was the final print made? Is this print one of an edition? Silver gelatin print on Ilford FB warm tone paper. I have only made two prints.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait? I usually like to print 10 inch by 10 inch prints but for this portrait I wanted the viewer to see the details in Mohammed's face so I chose to make the print larger.

Who would you nominate as your influences? Larry Fink

Do you have any advice for young photographers (eg. students)? Shoot film, shoot lots and stress less about your gear.



Peter, Silverton, NSW 2012

Krystal Seigerman
digital print

Artist's statement

Peter Peterson, a member of the Barkindji Nation, at Silverton, New South Wales. Peter's many roles include that of artist, Koori Cultural Officer in schools and adviser for the Victorian Koori Court. He is well known and respected in his community of Mildura, in North-Western Victoria.

Questions

Looking at this portrait closely, what words would you use to describe this person?

How does the landscape contribute to this portrait?

How does the photographer's view point influence your understanding of this portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Photographer, mainly documentary and portraiture photography.

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

krystalseigerman.com.au
mapgroup.org.au

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

Peter and I were both employed to help run an American exchange program through La Trobe University. Peter as the cultural officer and myself as a photography teacher.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe.

The photograph was a brief, candid moment, which unfolded into a portrait. Peter and

I were in Silverton, NSW, chatting as our students explored the town. The weak afternoon light suddenly became dramatic and defined, so I asked Peter if I could take his portrait. Other than asking him to stand in the middle of the dirt road facing me, there was very little direction.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

As Peter's portrait was spontaneous, I didn't have any conscious ideas or themes in mind. In these situations, taking the photograph becomes automatic and it is only later that themes might emerge. When I look at it now, I see Peter's warmth and strength, which enable him to be a role model for many, including the American exchange students he has worked with for over a decade. I hope this comes through in my photograph.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph?

I used a Canon 5D to take my portrait, with a telephoto lens and a wide aperture to blur the background so that Peter was the focus. I shot from a slightly low angle so that he stood out from the horizon. I used available, natural light, which was coming from the side, one of my favourite types of portrait lighting. Having shot in RAW, I processed my image in Photoshop, only doing basic corrections (colour, contrast density etc) to achieve the final result.

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

I printed Peter's portrait myself, on a large format digital inkjet printer. I used an archival lustre paper to retain richness and depth of colours and tones. I find matte fine art papers flatten out photographs too much for my liking. This print is not part of an edition so I may print further copies in the future.

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

While I would love to have printed the photograph larger, there were practical considerations, such as the expense as well as the limitations of the file size. The final, finished size of approximately 65cm x 50cm was a compromise between these factors. I chose a slightly off white mount as 'pure' white can be too stark and I chose a simple, dark brown, wooden frame to tie in with the earthy colours of the photograph.

Who would you nominate as your influences?

My colleagues in MAP group, an independent association of documentary photographers. My

mentor Andrew Chapman has over the years instilled a love of documentary photography within me. While I can't necessarily see their influences within my work, long term favourite photographers include National Geographic photographer William Albert Allard, the photographers of the Farm Security Administration who documented the Great Depression, particularly Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans, and more recently, Alec Soth.

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

Keep taking photos, as it is the best way to learn. Pay attention to light and how it changes. Read lots of photography books and look at lots of photographs. Ask if you can do work experience with a few photographers to clarify if you would like to pursue photography as a career. If you genuinely love photography, never give up. It's a difficult industry to break into, but remember, there are many different entry points and paths that you can take.



The living room 2012

Janet Tavener
digital print

Artist's statement

My 16-year-old daughter, Tess Tavener Hanks, is passionate about making weird and wonderful garments. This garment is inspired by a Victorian lounge room and is being modelled by her sister, Mikala Tavener Hanks.

Questions

What ideas do you think the portrait is exploring?

The photographer has used. Are there any elements you suspect may have been manipulated in Photoshop?

Does your interpretation of this portrait change when you discover the relationship between the subject and the photographer?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Artist.

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

I don't have my own website but by work can be seen on numerous sites of the exhibitions and publications that I have been in. I have exhibited in several group shows at the Brenda May Gallery in Danks street Waterloo and I have some of my photographs in their stock room.

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s?

Mikala is the eldest of my three daughters. I have photographed her on many an occasion. Needless to say we are both extremely at home with the practice.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe.

The photograph was a constructed image with a touch of fabrication. Tess, my sixteen-year-old daughter, made the garment for the Apex Teenage Fashion Awards and the photograph is a true representation of it. The pug painting, carpet, lamp and table were all part of the original image but the background was added in Photoshop.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

My portrait titled *The living room* is not part of a series but a one-off image. My aim was to document my daughter wearing this amazing garment that was inspired by the Victorian lounge room. Her legs were positioned to look like the stand of a lampshade, steady and strong while at the same time she stabilises the fragile and heavy headdress.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph?

The portrait was made with a Sony A77 DSLR which is a 24 mega pixel camera using the RAW mode. I used two Elinchrom Flash Heads with umbrellas to create soft, modelled light and a large white reflector to bounce light into the darker areas. The image was then processed in Adobe cs6 Camera RAW using a combination of formulas and Photoshop techniques.

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

I printed the final image on an Epson 9600 printer using Ilford Gold Fibre Silk digital paper. I used the manufacturer's paper profile and colour proofed extensively before I was completely happy with the result. The image is part of an edition of five.

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

I selected a traditional wooden frame with a small decorative component to suit the ornate quality of the photograph. The dark wood echoed the colours in the furniture and the soft creamy pink mount to mirror the colour of the model's skin. I like working in a larger format and in this case I believe it allows the viewer to see the detail and textures within the print.

Who would you nominate as your influences?

In 1978 I was introduced to the work of Diane Arbus. I thought her photographs were the most amazing images I have ever seen. I'm not sure that I

would describe her as an influence but she is certainly my favourite photographer. I believe I am influenced by events or issues rather than other photographers.

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

Be true to yourself.



Kaloti Parmjit 2012
Louise Whelan
digital print

Artist's statement

This is a portrait of Kaloti Parmjit taken on the stairs leading to the temple at the Australian Sikh Association in Glenwood, New South Wales. The association is the largest registered body of the Sikhs in the Southern Hemisphere. I have photographed the Sikh community as part of a social documentary project for the State Library of New South Wales. The Sikhs' ideals are based on equality, sharing, and the oneness of all humankind. The Sikh people I have met are generous, warm and honest; they treat me like an old friend. The serenity of the temple and its people is most inviting.

Questions

How does the direct gaze of this subject contribute to the photographer's idea for this portrait?

The photographer says 'light to a photographer is the equivalent to paint for a painter'. What effect does this light have on this portrait?

What question would you like to ask Kaloti?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Photographer is the best description as I work with many different photographic disciplines.

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

louisewhelan.com.au
australiansall.photoshelter.com

How would you describe your relationship to the subject/s? I met Kaloti Parmjit the day I took the photo. I first visited the Sikh temple in the suburb of Glenwood to take photos as part of a social documentary project I'm undertaking for the State Library of NSW. It is the documentation of the various ethnic communities living in NSW. This process of documenting intends to demonstrate the richness and diversity of ethnic communities

in Australia. Australia is now one of the world's great multicultural countries with one in four Australians being born overseas. My images of both refugees and migrants now calling Australia home bear witness to our country's democratic values, by practicing traditions, religious choices, and languages within the law and free from discrimination. This photo was taken on one of my subsequent visits to the temple.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe. Primarily this photograph was candid. I contacted the General Secretary of the Australian Sikh Association to request to photograph some of the youth who dress in traditional clothing to practice Gatk, a type of martial arts. Fifteen or so boys in practice and their siblings greeted me at the temple. Everyone was so keen to be photographed. Being familiar with the temple and its beautiful natural filtered light that flooded the leading stairs, I positioned myself there and the young boys and their siblings lined up for a portrait. Kaloti waited with patience as many were photographed before her, as her turn arrived she took her position, she had a quiet disposition not saying much. I asked her to look straight at the camera after a few shots Kaloti's friend approached her to reposition her scarf. I continued to photograph her honest almost uninhibited expression. I was grateful for her trust and honesty.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? This portrait is part of the work I am undertaking as a social documentary photographer for the State and National Libraries in Australia. This image is a representation of what Australia is today. My photos are a personal documentation of the ordinary aspects of everyday life in Australia; from migrants who may have been living here for 40 plus years to newly arrived refugee families. In relation to migration in Australia the images in this collection are a stark contrast to the recent mainstream fear-based media portrayal of border protection imagery. During my photographic journey there is much to witness in terms of cultural identity and assimilation. When working as a photographer it's important for me to honour the person I am photographing not just take something from them in terms of an image. I think people sense this and a trust is developed, without the trust there is no photograph. My work is driven by my inquisitiveness for other cultures, my need to expand myself by looking at how others live, what their beliefs are.

Whilst documenting the various ethnic communities living in Australia, I have found myself in many different churches, mosques, temples, and cemeteries and have taken part in various spiritual rituals and religious ceremonies. More often than not the language is not of my own, from an address by the Dalai Lama to the Tibetan community of Australia to a Hmong New Year ritual, being unfamiliar with the cultural protocol of the various ethnicities; I work with a respect and natural reverence.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph?

This is a digital image shot on the Canon EOS 1DS Mark III. The lens is a Canon 70-200mm the focal length for this shot was 125mm. ISO 250 exposure 1/250 at f3.5. I photographed with natural filtered light through a large window at about 9.30am on a cloudy day. There was minimal retouching, just a very slight sharpening.

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

I printed this work on Fuji Flex paper, which is an ultra-gloss. I choose it for maximum impact as some of the gloss effect can get lost behind the Perspex. The work was printed on a Lambda printer, which is ideal for skin tones. This print is the artist proof. There will be 12 prints in this edition.

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

The size of the print was determined by the quality of the file. The print looked good and held together at a large scale. I printed with the intention of the final artwork including the frame to be around one metre in height. The image looks impressive at this scale. I like to keep my framing simple for these stronger portraits.

Who would you nominate as your influences?

My influences are broad being both visual and literary. I love the visual notion of poetry, with the likes of William Blake, D.H Lawrence, Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath and Walt Whitman. Film Directors, Luc Besson, Alfred Hitchcock, and Terrence Malick, photographers Walker Evans, Cecil Beaton, Max Dupain, Sebastiao Salgado, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Julia Margaret Cameron and Mary Ellen Mark.

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

Firstly learn all the rules and the technical aspects of your craft. Be a quiet observer,

anticipate situations, understand light for light to a photographer is the equivalent to paint for a painter, and don't be afraid to ask. Immerse yourself into all aspects of photography; find your visual voice.



David Stratton 2012

Sharon Zwi
digital print

Artist's statement

This composite portrait shows David Stratton, former director of the Sydney Film Festival, film critic and presenter of 'At the Movies', on ABC TV. In this work, I explore the idea of a portrait as a life diary, using multiple images of David over his lifetime, going from one instant to a whole-of-life portrait, trying to evoke traces of memory, history, place and mood. I have incorporated time in my portraits, showing the development from babyhood through childhood into adulthood and to the present, mostly through full-face photos, but also including some photos with people he has worked with. Most of the photos were scanned and then worked on from David's photographs. I took the last image in the grid.

Questions

In what way does this portrait show us 'something of the person', as the artist intended?

To what extent do you think this portrait makes David Stratton like any of us?

Do you think that this or any other portrait can represent a whole life?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

Photographer and printmaker. I take photographs and also use a computer and Photoshop to manipulate some images, more so with my printmaking, but also with my composite photo grid portraits and sometimes also with straight photographs.

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

No I don't, but I intend creating one as I think is a useful thing to have. I am represented for my printmaking in the Sydney Printmakers website.

How would you describe your relationship to the subject? I know of David Stratton from his TV program with Margaret Pomeranz, and as a public figure who ran the Sydney Film Festival when I first came to live in Australia in 1982. I thought he chose interesting films which made

people think; not mainstream stuff that would come to the suburban cinemas. He appeared to be offering Film Festival goes a wide range of wonderful, experimental and often challenging films from all over the world, and not a preview of what would come to local cinemas anyway. I met him in person recently, through a mutual friend, to borrow his photographs for my project, and to take the last photo in the composite photo portrait I made of him. He struck me as being a bit shyer than the public figure I saw on TV, but very engaging and interested in everything.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed, fabricated or candid encounter? Please describe.

The composite photo grid is the result of a constructed work. I began with the grid and then scanned the images to the required size. After that I adjusted and manipulated the images to make them 'match' one another visually. I then sent them to David to check the chronological order I had put them in, and to ask if he was happy with the overall image. In selecting the photographs to use I had a large choice of images of David with a lot of famous actors, directors and producers, other people involved in film making and film festivals. I asked him if there were any particular photographs he wanted me to use, or any people he wanted me to make sure I included. He said that the choice was mine, so I selected them.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

I wanted to make a 'whole life' portrait of David Stratton, showing him from babyhood to childhood, adulthood to the present. The idea was to use a range of photographs to show aspects of David's past and present. In using multiple images I show how a person grows, matures and becomes the person they are now. I try to show something of the person – what they do or did, what they like, and of course, what they looked like at different times. The grid itself allows me to have some order and unity in the image. It is, very intentional and also refers to proof sheets, which were so much a part of my analogue photographic work in the past. David's portrait is one of about 60 photographs that I have been working on which will be included in my planned exhibition; people from a wide range of backgrounds, ethnicities and countries, which make up Australian society today. I want the viewer, in looking at the photos, to be able to identify with the subject, to interpret the photos, and to react to what they see. I want to show things all people

have in common and also those things that make them individuals.

Please describe the technical aspects of your photograph?

I have scanned the photographs of my subjects and adjusted them to fit into the 5 x 5 grid I use. Using Photoshop I have adjusted and 'repaired' many images. In the last space I have put a photograph, which I have taken of the person with my Canon 5D Mark II. Some of the other photographs taken by me were with my analogue Canon FTB camera, made in about 1974.

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

I made the final image on my computer and saved it on a USB which I took to a COFA's Digital Photo Lab to have the final image printed onto archival paper using archival inks. This print is one in an edition of 15 prints available at this size.

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

For this competition and exhibition I decided to make the image about 100 cm x 83 cm. This is the biggest I have so far printed such an image. I chose to print it large, as I thought that it would look best this size. I had done one A1 size (59.4 x 84cm) and wanted to see if it would stand enlarging to AO size (84 x 119 cm). I wanted it to be read as a collection of individual photographs of the person, to be looked at separately. I didn't want it to be read as a group of small photos – a proof sheet. I have chosen a simple white frame around the image, which has a white border so that it would not detract from the rather busy image itself.

Who would you nominate as your influences?

The photographers August Sander and Yousuf Karsh, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Elli Weinberg, Peter Magubane, David Goldblatt and artist and printmaker Richard Hamilton (*My Marilyn* 1965) are my influences in this work.

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

Look at lots and lots and LOTS of what other photographers have done before you. Take lots and lots of photographs. Try and work out what it is you want to say with your photographs. Then see if they are read the way you intend them to be read.