NATIONAL PHOTO–GRAPHIC PORTRAIT PRIZE 2010

What is the National Photographic Portrait Prize?

The National Photographic Portrait Prize is an annual exhibition intended to promote the best in contemporary photographic portraiture by both professional and aspiring Australian photographers.

Why does the National Portrait Gallery hold the National Photographic Portrait Prize?

Photography is one of the most pervasive and popular mediums for contemporary portraiture. Through its diverse exhibition, online and outreach programs, the National Portrait Gallery seeks to foster understanding of the Australian people – their identity, history, creativity and culture – through portraiture.

The National Photographic Portrait Prize 2010 was held at the National Portrait Gallery 5 March – 2 May 2010.

The exhibition is touring to four regional venues Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Bathurst Regional Gallery, Wagga Wagga Art Gallery and Mosman Art Gallery. The National Portrait Gallery has a strong interest in photography as a powerful medium for portraiture. Photography is the dominant portrait medium of our time. The National Photographic Portrait Prize is an important aspect of the Gallery's exhibition program that explores highly diverse approaches to portraiture. The exhibition is a compelling reflection of the evolving nature of contemporary portraiture in Australia.

Dr Christopher Chapman, National Photographic Portrait Prize judge and curator, previewed the 2010 Prize in November 2009 and described the judging process

Many of the portraits in the third National Photographic Portrait Prize evoke moments of defining self realisation and powerful self awareness. They depict sitters for whom the unashamed voicing of these statements seem entirely apt: *this is who I am becoming; this is who I am.*

For the 2010 exhibition my fellow judges Ms Joanna Gilmour, Assistant Curator, National Portrait Gallery; and Ms Kim Machan, Director, Multimedia Art Asia Pacific; selected forty-three finalists from 1,000 entries. With the generous support of Visa, the National Portrait Gallery is offering a prize of $25,000 for the most outstanding photographic portrait. We will reconvene in March 2010 to select the portrait to be awarded the prize.

The 2010 exhibition offers a continued opportunity to reflect upon the specific capacities of photographic portraiture: how it communicates with immediacy and subtlety the range of human experience and self identity.

In contemporary Western culture there is an expectation that possessing a distinctive self identity is natural and desirable. Where it was once the case that individual identity was largely imposed by family, social or class roles, in modern society selfhood is something to be explored and performed as singular and unique.

Contemporary expressions of self identity continue to be informed by cultural and social factors. 'Innate dispositions exist,' educational psychologist Jere Brophy wrote recently, however 'many and probably most dispositions are acquired through cultural, social, and experiential mechanisms in which little or no genetic predisposition is involved.' The values of community and family and our internalisation and expression of gender roles influence our formative sense of self identity. From age two we respond to and project gendered identities based on cultural expectations of male and female gender roles.

At adolescence self realisation presents itself with uncompromising intensity. Courage, fear, anxiety, and longing rise with the magnitude and subtlety of ocean tides. A stark awareness of our sameness and difference to others is manifest, complicated by the presence of an emerging emotional vocabulary that struggles to articulate new feelings. The familiar tensions inherent in the need for continued protection and affection, social expectations of conformity, and strong desires for self exploration and individual autonomy were first characterised in 1904 by the American psychologist G Stanley Hall as 'storm and stress'. At adolescence self realisation is a process that makes us aware of the consolidation of our maturing self identity: this is who I am becoming.

Identity is not fixed. We can experience self awareness as something that continues to grow. The cultural frameworks for understanding identity change too. 'As we learn more about contrasting views on self and identity,' Jere Brophy writes, 'we will come to view a synthesis of currently contrasting views, rather than the currently prototypical Western view, as ideal.'

Many of the portraits in the exhibition evoke the power of self awareness. They possess an unembellished frankness and sense of intimacy. The photographers' vision is one of sensitivity and clarity. The portraits evoke diverse experiences and defy conventional stereotypes. Perhaps the affective power of many of the portraits in the exhibition is the result of their communication of authentic lived experience, and importantly, the photographers' respect and tender regard for their subjects.

Questions for discussion

Which photograph would be your choice as the prize winner, if you were the only judge? Why do you think it is the most compelling portrait?

What is portraiture? Are there any photographs in this exhibition that you think do not fit this definition?

How many different types of photographic portrait can you classify in this year's exhibition?

A number of portraits include the whole figure of the subject. How do you think the placement of a subject within an environment contributes to our understanding of the subject?

Select a portrait that you would like to take home. What are the qualities or features of the photograph that attract you?

Does your appreciation of this photograph change with an extended viewing of the work?

There are 43 works in the NPPP 2010. 36 of these works are digital prints, equating to approx 84%. Why do you think this is so?

Adobe Photoshop was used to manipulate several of the focus works identified in this resource. What impact, if any, do you think this has on the final images?

Are there any subjects that you are familiar with or know of in this exhibition? Do you think familiarity of the subject influences your appreciation of the portrait?

Does colour or black and white make a more compelling portrait? Why?

Select a portrait and write a response.

Can you suggest types of photographic portraiture that are not included in this exhibition?

In what ways do you think this exhibition contributes to your appreciation of photography as a contemporary medium for portraiture?

Try to create a portrait in the style of one of the portraits. Consider the costuming, lighting, pose, composition, use of colour and expression.

Education e-news

Subscribe to the National Portrait Gallery Education e-news bulletin for educators at portrait.gov.au/site/subscribe.php

Blog

The National Portrait Gallery website provides the latest information on our education programs, projects and initiatives. You can post your thoughts about the National Photographic Portrait Prize or respond to any of the questions in this learning resource on the Education Blog. Visit portrait.gov.au/site/blog.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

National Photographic Portrait Prize 2010 exhibition venues

National Portrait Gallery
5 March – 2 May 2010
Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery
12 May 2010 – 27 June 2010
Bathurst Regional Gallery
27 August 2010 – 10 October 2010
Wagga Wagga Art Gallery
5 November 2010 – 16 January 2011
Mosman Art Gallery
5 February 2011 – 20 March 2011

National Photographic Portrait Prize 2011

The call for entries for the National Photographic Portrait Prize 2011 will commence in August 2010.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY EXHIBITION

The Duots: a family portrait 2009
Lee Grant
digital type C photograph

Artist's statement
The Duot Family (from left to right: Aleer, Maliet, Chut, Nyakoor and Duot), pose for a family portrait outside their suburban home. Dressed in their Sunday best, they are a long way from their homeland of Sudan, but for the Duots, life in Australia has been good.

Questions
Why do you think the photographer chose the Duot family as the subject for the portrait?
This is a group portrait. How is their sense of group conveyed to us?
Does one person attract your eye more than the others? If so, why?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview
How do you define your practice?
I would say that my practice is documentary based but not strictly in the traditional sense. I do try to reveal something about those I photograph but I think in the end, my images probably reveal more about me. I'm a humanist at heart and I find people to be interesting, so portraiture and the way people choose to live their lives (from their domestic space to the hobbies they pursue) is an obvious focus for me. It also suits my interest and studies in anthropology. I like to think of my work as visual poetry – a way for me to express my own perspective of, and curiosity in the world around me.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website? Yes. leegrant.net is my website showcasing my own work. I also have a blog, the link for which is on this site.

lightjourneys.net.au is a website that I founded and co-curate with Ursula Frederick. It is aimed at supporting and exhibiting the work of Australian women working in photography. unitedgalleries.com.au I currently have some work in their stockroom.

What is your relationship to the subjects? Other than that of photographer and subject, we are pretty much strangers, though the Duots do live in the suburb next to me. Our meeting was purely a chance encounter, one where I was able to create an image that I had in mind but also something I was able to give them in return, that is a family portrait.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
Actually, both. I met Nyakoor at her friend's house when returning with some photos of a group of kids I'd taken a few weeks earlier. I mentioned that I was looking for a Sudanese family to photograph in the Belconnen area and she immediately volunteered. So the encounter was unplanned but the actual sitting was quite formal, in that we pre-arranged the time. I also like to photograph people at home as they generally feel more comfortable. Domestic environments can also reflect a little of whom a person/family is and I find this a particularly interesting part of making portraits.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? This image is part of a series about where I live. It's changed quite dramatically over the years and there are a lot of new migrants, particularly from Africa and Sudan more specifically. I wanted to photograph a family who'd been living here for a while to show how they'd achieved a sense of place in a new community and culture.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. There aren't many really as I find this aspect of photography the least interesting – though having said this it is important to master the techniques to best convey what it is that you want to photograph, as you may not get the images you want! Otherwise, I'm not hi-tech at all, therefore it's camera, film, fill-flash (or portable flash kit if required) and a congenial outlook. It's more important to connect with the people you photograph, than to sweat the technical stuff. The latter you can learn if you work at it.

What type of camera did you use?
I use a Hasselblad medium-format camera and film – old school and analogue all the way.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? Both.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
Other than basic post-production in Photoshop (such as dust-spotting and colour correction), no. Digital post-processing has replaced the wet darkroom mainly due to convenience, as I can work from home and whilst my kids are asleep! It's also a lot less toxic!

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? The final print is a pigment print and is from an edition of 10 + 2 Artist Proofs.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait. Scale for this work is pre-determined to some extent as it matches other work in the same series. I've shown some of the work in this series in other shows and I find it's nice to have them bigger but not so big that they become overwhelming. There's something to be said about the size of a work being intimate but also big enough to reveal all the details. So my images from this series are 60x60cms but framed at 80x80cms.

Who are your influences? Too many to cite here, but some major photographic influences would be Diane Arbus, William Eggleston and Alec Soth (lots of Americans). I do keep an eye on contemporary work that comes out of Europe and the US but I am finding that there is a lot of exciting work being made here in Australia. Our light here is also very special and I'd say that this has been very influential in the way I use light and colour in my work.
I also love reading books and song lyrics, so literature and music is pretty important. More recently I've been looking at other mediums in art, especially painting, printmaking and drawing.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? It sounds corny but I wish I'd received this advice when I was younger! Just trust your own instinct... it is very rarely wrong. Persist with your endeavours, work really hard and believe that you can achieve your goals, no matter what obstacles lay before you.

Most importantly take all criticism with a pinch of salt but also with dignity. You never know what you might learn about yourself or your practice by listening. And finally... work really hard. People do get lazy now with the convenience of digital... Photography is as much a craft as it is an art.

Sisters baking 2009
Hamish Gregory
digital print

Artists' statement
Sisters Phoebe and Lucy Williams sunbake in their backyard.

Questions
What do we know about Phoebe and Lucy from this portrait?
What does this portrait tell us about the relationships between the two?
What do you think the relationship of the subjects is to the photographer?
What are the clues in the portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview
How do you define your practice?
I shoot a range of photographic subjects but people and portraiture is the subject I most enjoy capturing. I prefer to shoot images that capture natural moments in time that are non-artificial in their construction. Since graduating from art school in 2000, I have travelled extensively across the globe and lived in a variety of cultures which have enabled me to capture candid images of people in their home environments – from hunter-gatherer tribes in the deserts of Ethiopia to migrants in the cities of China, and always returning home to capture images of quintessential Australians in their own backyard.

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

What is your relationship to the subjects? The subjects are my wife, Phoebe, on the left and her sister, Lucy on the right.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter? The photo was a candid encounter.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? I thought this picture captured a quintessential Australian backyard environment. Phoebe (my wife) and I had just arrived home from living in the UK for 12 months and were to get married in 1 week. Phoebe was conscious of her 'pastey' UK skin against that of her tanned Aussie mates, so she undertook a pre-wedding baking session in the backyard under the strict instruction of her brown-skinned sister Lucy! So much of the story can be seen in the image – Lucy was studying for a University assignment (which explains the highlighter and unread readings) and Phoebe's dog was very excited to have her home and spent every moment by her side.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. I wanted to try and encompass the entirety of the scene and knew I only had one chance to click the shutter before the candidness of the moment would be lost when the sitters heard me shooting. I leaned out of an upper-level window to shoot them from above and simply used the guide numbers on the lens to judge focus, as I could only catch the picture through stretching the camera with my arms and as such couldn't look through the viewfinder with my eyes. For exposure measurements, I used an external light meter exposing for the direct sunlight, so a contrast image would be created with the shadows.

What type of camera did you use? Canon 5D.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? Natural lighting only.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image? No, the image is as shot.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? Digital print on photographic paper. All my prints are produced as a limited series of seven.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.
There is so much going on in this image, telling the story of a moment in time that I decided to do a large scale print to draw people's attention to the different elements in the scene. Mounting and framing were chosen to complement and not distract from the print.

Who are your influences? I have a range of influences: from the highly-constructed images of Gregory Crewdson to the candid, carefully composed moments of William Eggleston. I also read widely on Annie Leibovitz's work and often flick through the pages of the original members of Magnum whose documentary images are a constant source of inspiration.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? I recently taught a photography lecture series to a class in Oxford, England for the summer. One of the students emailed me last week and told me the main messages he took home from my course were:
1. Good photographers never stop taking photos!;
2. Use your age to your advantage;
3. Do a strong edit; and
4. Photograph what you know.

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch 2009
Richard Kendall
digital print

Artist's statement

From a family considered one of the most powerful in the world and widely admired for her commitment to philanthropic work, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch lives her life to help others. In 2009 Dame Elisabeth reached the age of 100, another milestone in the life of a remarkable woman.

Questions

The artist's statement describes the subject 'from a family considered one of the most powerful in the world'. Is this evident from the portrait? Why? Consider which elements the artist controlled when composing the portrait. What can you tell about the person in this portrait? How is this revealed?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
I work as a multi-disciplinary photographic artist specialising in conceptual documentary and multimedia reportage Photography. I prejudice work on various topics; I look at identity, displacement and the human condition. I also work as a photojournalist, documentary filmmaker and freelance commercial and scientific photographer.

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

What is your relationship to the subject? Dame Elisabeth Murdoch is a very powerful and wealthy woman. She has given so much back to society with her philanthropy and I admire all the work and charity she has done over her 100 years.

She is a very humble and caring person. I had not actually met her in person before I had the opportunity to take her portrait.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
It's a constructed image in the sense that I asked her to sit for me, and she is directly engaged with the camera.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? At its essence it's a pictorial image, a realistic portal. I wanted to show a genuine person, by photographing her at home in this vernacular way. It shows her real domain, in an aim to express her humble and down-to-earth character, as opposed to the expected preconceptions of high-society and wealth some may expect. She almost appears that she could be anyone's grandmother.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. A fairly basic technical approach, I used a digital SLR camera on a tripod and one location. Bowens studio light was bounced off the wall to one side. I also let some of the window and ambient light into the exposure. I had about 30 minutes to set up my lighting, find my angle and build a rapport. I took maybe a dozen exposures to try and get the most fitting expression and pose. A few of the images had her holding a rose but in the end I decided to go with the simplest image.

What type of camera did you use?
Canon 5D, full frame digital.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? I used natural light in balance with studio lighting.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
In Adobe Photoshop I used levels and curves. I dodged and burned certain areas of the image, much in the same way as printing in a traditional black and white darkroom in order to get the tonal characteristics and colour I was after.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? The final print is a pigment inkjet print on fine art archival rag paper. I haven't really decided on making it an edition, but as a standard practice with my own work I try to make editions of ten images.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait. I have decided to keep the image to a smaller scale that will help to reflect my ideas of it being about a humble character. I have used the simplest of framing so that the image can stand for itself.

Who are your influences? I'm inspired by peers in the industry but particularly the emotive images by Carl De Keyzer and Trent Parke for the compelling way they use light to tell their stories; Steven Dupont for his ability to capture moments of beauty and devastation in life, and photographer Jerry Galea who was my photography lecture at RMIT. I also think Roger Ballen is ace.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? Explore as much as you can in the arts. The more influences and techniques you expose yourself to the better, for it is these tools and influences you will draw from later when you least expect it. Most importantly, always question why you are making an image.

My father the artist 2009
Jason McCarthy
digital print

Artist's statement

This is a portrait of my father Ken McCarthy (1930–2009), watercolour artist of Australian birdlife and my hero. He reluctantly agreed to me taking his portrait in his living room in front of the screen that he had painted for my mother. When I showed him the final print he said he loved the colours. One month after this portrait sitting he passed away.

Questions

What do you immediately notice about this portrait?
How do you think the pose, background and gaze add to the personality conveyed in this portrait?
To what extent is this a formal portrait?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
My primary interest in photography is with portraiture and people-based images.

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

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? The subject was the artist and as such I wanted to suggest that personal connection between the artist and his work.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. The image is not one that could be described as overly sophisticated. The room was rearranged to take advantage of the window light, with the painted screen acting as the background. The subject was positioned as such to provide adequate modelling to the face, yet looking out of frame to suggest contemplative thought. I used a tilt-shift lens to alter the vertical plane of focus, creating the ethereal focal softening toward the left and right of frame. This gently channels the viewer's attention toward the subject as the eye naturally gravitates toward areas of sharpness and detail. The image was slightly under-exposed to emphasise the colours of the screen.

What type of camera did you use?
Although I still like to use film for certain applications, this particular image was taken digitally. I used a Canon EOS 5D, a digital SLR with a full-frame 35mm sensor. Even though the modern digital SLR is a very sophisticated piece of equipment boasting many automatic features, for an image such as this one I tend to break the camera down to its most basic form – that of a box housing a light recording medium. It is treated as though it were a basic analogue camera on which you manually set shutter speed and aperture based on the measurements taken from a hand-held light-meter. This way the camera is not an invasive instrument being thrust toward someone and rattling off dozens of frames in quick succession. It sits silently in the background and allows an open dialogue between photographer and subject to unfold, building up to the creation of the image.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? The room in which the portrait sitting took place had lovely afternoon sunlight coming in through the windows. Even though I had brought along a location lighting kit, the window light was all I needed.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
As I was shooting digitally in RAW format there is automatically a degree of post-capture digital processing that occurs – albeit kept to a minimum. Basic corrections such as neutralising any colour bias, some tonal adjustment and removal of any sensor dust artefacts are generally the extent of manipulation I'll apply – although exceptions do occur depending on the nature of the image or concept. Some selective sharpening may also occur in certain areas of the image, but again this should be kept to a bare minimum and applied with a light touch.
Although digital photography generates enormous possibilities with regard to image manipulation (or correction in some cases) there exists a temptation for some to apply these measures with a heavy hand.

The rendering of stylised treatments can overshadow the content of the photograph and before you know it the image ceases being a photograph and starts becoming a graphic illustration. These digital processes should assist or support the presentation of the image only when needed – not the other way round.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? The final print was made on Kodak Endura matte media, printed on a Durst Lambda laser printer (RA4 chemistry). It is not part of an edition.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait. The file resolution dictated to an extent the size of the final image as I was conscious of image degradation associated with enlarging a digital file. Having said that however, the size of the image also influences how it is read by the viewer and in this case I wanted the portrait to be large enough to be viewed comfortably, but not too large as to imply any ostentation or ego about the sitter. The print was surrounded with a window mount of white matte-board – a presentation that I find hard to deviate from, and contained by a simple wooden frame that compliments the case-work of the painted screen in the photograph.

Who are your influences? The photographers whose work I enjoy and admire are too numerous to mention. However, the portraitists whose work I tend to gravitate to, and therefore those that most likely influence my own work, are names such as Arnold Newman, Irving Penn and Yousuf Karsh. My more contemporary influences might arrive from the portraits of Yann Arthus-Bertrand, Gregory Heisler and the constructed tableaux of Philip-Lorca diCorcia to name but a few.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? My advice would be to understand conventions, but don't be afraid explore alternate approaches. Always listen to what others have to say, but don't feel obliged to take on the advice. Draw your own conclusions and remember that photography is an infinite journey. Don't be too concerned with what brand of camera the guy next to you is using. Photography is not defined by a particular manufacturer – it is the person that creates the photograph.

Gurkirat 2009
Rod McNicol
digital print

Artist's statement

From a new series titled A portrait: Visitors to my village, this image of Gurkirat continues my life-long preoccupation with portraiture involving a full-frontal gaze to the camera. The genesis of this particular genre dates from the beginning of photography itself. That self-conscious stare back to the photographer, so evident in early photography, has always held a fascination for me. In this series of portraits of young visitors from overseas that are here to study, I have used a purposefully stark mise-en-scene and a judicious sense of colour in an attempt to pare these portraits back to this very conscious essence.

Questions

What can we tell about this person from this photograph? What contributes to this meaning?
What impresses you about this photograph? Would the impression of this image be the same if its scale was the size of a postage stamp or large enough to occupy a whole wall?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?

I have been quietly pursuing my art photography for a little more than three decades now. My work is represented in many major collections.

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

Represented on the Place Gallery website placegallery.com.au

What is your relationship to the subject?

I approached Gurkirat as a stranger and asked him if I could take a portrait of him in my studio. He agreed to come by a couple of days later and my entry is the resulting portrait.

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

Mine is a studio portrait and studio portraits are, by their very nature, quite constructed images. For this portrait I have used a simple, very direct mise-en-scene and have sought a quite considered – almost theatrical – use of colour.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait?

I continue to explore my fascination with that conscious stare back to the camera that lies at the heart of very direct photographic portraiture.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph.

This image was made on a medium format camera (6x9) using transparency film that was then scanned at high resolution to become a digital file. The image was then printed digitally using pigment inks on a fibre paper.

What type of camera did you use?

A Horseman (6x9).

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting?

Artificial light.

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

The image was worked in Adobe Photoshop (quite minimally) and then digitally printed using pigment inks.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition?

(See above) … I usually make an edition of six.

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

For this work I wanted a fairly large print, mounted and framed to give the subject a certain singular 'majesty'.

Who are your influences?

Too many and varied to mention … most of them from the 19th Century … although August Sander and Richard Avedon from the 20th Century should get a mention.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers?

Love what you do absolutely … then earn money however you can.

Gori, Bougainville 2009
Stuart Miller
digital print

Artist's statement
The name of this man is Gori and at thirty-five years of age he is an active environmentalist and youth leader among his own Hako community in north Bougainville. When Gori stood for this portrait on the beachfront of the Buka passage a storm had just begun and I was struck by his confidence. Gori and the youth living in Bougainville are an incredibly resilient group of people, which is remarkable considering their hardship living in a post-conflict and troubled environment.

Questions
Why has the photographer chosen to represent the subject in this way? How does the space and the environment contribute to your understanding of this work?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview
How do you define your practice?
My artistic practice is defined by powerful, dramatic and stylised portraits. Commercially I like to bring those elements into my work in advertising and fashion.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
Yes, see stuartmillerphotography.com.au

What is your relationship to the subject? Gregory Tagu or 'Gori' for short is from my cousin's village in Kohea on Buka Island, where we spent most of our time as a base for shooting the photo series called 'Tribe'. Gori and I didn't speak much because of language difficulties but he was always there throughout our travels as a protector. While Gori is a strong man he has remarkable sensitivity about safe guarding the threatened coastal regions of Bougainville and the issue of the Carteret Islanders, many of whom are facing relocation due to rising sea levels.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
This is a constructed portrait in the sense that I wanted to take Gori's portrait, however it was candid in nature, as I initially did not have this particular location in mind. On the day I was struck by a sudden tropical storm which created the inspiration to photograph him there and then.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? Gori is an active environmentalist and youth leader among his own Hako community in north Bougainville. When Gori stood for his portrait on the beachfront of the Buka passage a storm had just begun and I was struck by his confidence. Gori and Bougainvillian youth are an incredibly resilient group of people, which is remarkable considering their hardship living in a post-conflict and troubled environment.

What type of camera did you use?
Canon 1DS Mark III

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? Both. The photograph is a mix between natural and artificial light. The subject is lit with battery packed location lighting (protected by plastic bags in the pouring rain) while the background is natural light.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
Yes, work was done on the tone and saturation of the image.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? This digital print is part of a larger series called 'Tribe' 2009.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait. The framing and final size dimensions are still to be considered, however I intend to print this image on a large scale.

Who are your influences? NYC based fashion photographer Sean Kennedy Santos has been a mentor and inspiration to me and my developing practice over the past few years.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? Being an emerging photographer myself, my advice to other young photographers would be to spend time exploring your own unique style.

Louise 2009
Jacqueline Mitelman
digital print

Artist's statement
Louise O'Dwyer is a performer, actor, and musician.

Questions
What do you consider to be the major strength of this photograph?
What personal qualities of the subject do you think are conveyed in this portrait? How is this achieved?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
I have worked as a photographer since studying at Prahran College in the mid seventies, under the tutelage of Athol Shmith, Paul Cox, and John Cato. My commissioned and non-commissioned work has had a variety of subject-matter, as has my exhibited work, but it has been mainly portraiture of one sort or another. A range of private commissions has resulted in a considerable collection of portraits of culturally significant Australians. My works represented in public institutions are mostly portraits. I have a large, bare studio with wonderful natural light and within these givens I have a lot of freedom for exploration and spontaneity when I am taking a portrait.

What is your relationship to the subject? I had been taking publicity portraits for Louise, and when I finished, I asked her if I could take some for me (it is curious to reflect on what that difference is, the same primary elements, but a change in the mode of interpretation, from one that seeks to modify any eccentricities of the face, to one which can give play to them!) Louise had an unusual face, capable of expressing a range of intense energy.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? I suspect the subconscious registers shapes, resonances, a gestalt, long before they become conscious awareness. Sometimes it takes years to recognise the resonances that give a particular image power for one. Louise's position against the shape of the curtain, the colours, her expressions, were all visually really exciting to me, before I could articulate why! I found the image I chose was not only an idiosyncratic portrait of Louise, but also evoked for me, so many different images from the historical portraiture oeuvre.

What type of camera did you use? I use a Nikon digital camera and I always use natural light for portraits.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image? I have used Adobe Photoshop for minor fiddling.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? My final print will be either Lambda or inkjet, not yet decided.

Who are your influences? My early influences were August Sander, Jacques-Henri Lartigue and Julia Margaret Cameron.

Moonbird boy 2009
Matthew Newton
digital print

Artist's statement

Indigenous Tasmanian poet Errol West wrote the poem *The Moon Birds of Big Dog Island* in the 1970s:

Like dust blown across the plain are the people of the Moon Bird.
And yet there is no one to teach me the songs
That bring the Moon Bird, the fish
Or any other thing that makes me what I am.

Mutton birds, also known as moon birds, have been harvested by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people for hundreds of years. It is a time for the Aboriginal community to come together and connect with country. This portrait shows Shay Maynard carrying birds toward the processing hut on Big Dig Island in the Furneaux Group, Bass Strait.

Questions

What do we know about Shay Maynard from this portrait?
What do you think the artist intends by this portrait?
How does the portrait relate to the Errol West poem, *The Moon Birds of Big Dog Island*?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
Throughout my practice I strive to produce images that offer the future a view of the past and to search for defining moments in ordinary life.
For over a hundred years, documentary photographers have been recording events without the sanction of governments and away from mainstream media. Many documentary photographers, as do I, maintain a faith in the force of our collective acts of empathy and witness.

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

What is your relationship to the subject? I have no specific relationship to the subject.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter? The portrait was the result of a candid encounter.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? A number of years ago I came across the poem below by Errol West. The words of this poem stayed with me. So when I had the opportunity to travel to Big Dog Island I was hoping to find an image or series of images that could illustrate these powerful words. This portrait is a continuation of my wider work looking at a sense of place in Tasmania.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. The images were shot on a bright overcast day – very good conditions for photography. As a result, the technical aspects were very simple. This image is more the outcome of trying to capture a moment than technical aspects of photography.

What type of camera did you use? Nikon D3 digital SLR.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? Natural light.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image? The final image was converted to black and white and tinted in Adobe Photoshop.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? The final print is simply an archival inkjet print.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait. Scale of prints is extremely important. Generally speaking for exhibitions in large spaces such as the National Portrait Gallery, bigger is better.

Who are your influences? David Allen Harvey, Alex Webb and many more.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? Making good photographs is extremely difficult. You need to work at it for a long time, find your own voice and pursue your dreams despite the difficulties.
Follow your heart. Seek out other great photographers to learn from – the web is full of them. Look at their work; ask them for advice. You will find most photographers are very generous with their time and knowledge.
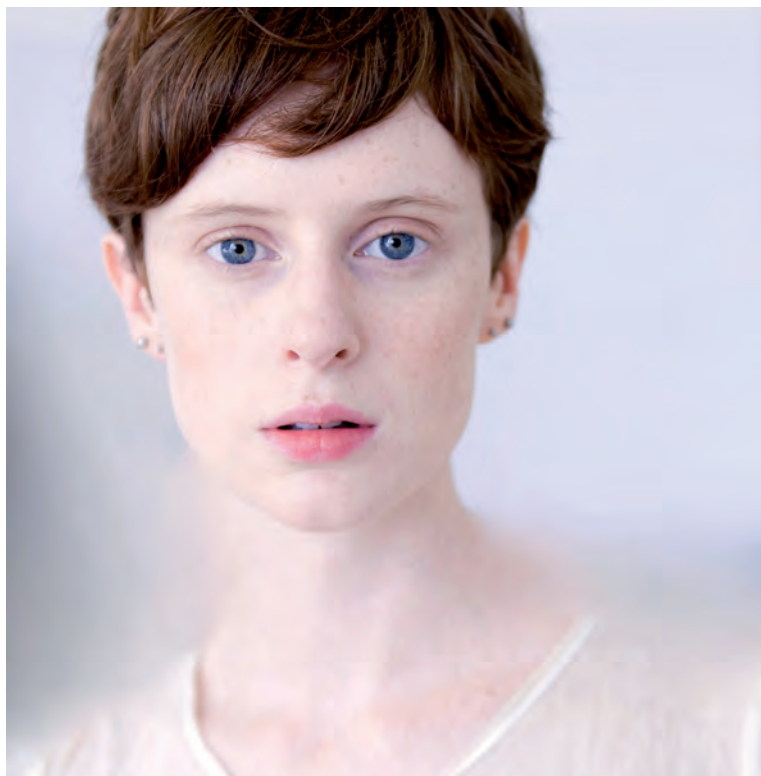
Lisa 2009
by Zorica Purlija
digital print

Artist's statement
I commissioned Lisa Belden to sit for a portrait for me. I was captivated by her ethereal beauty.

Questions
Do you think this image has been manipulated? If so, how and why? Do you think the artist has realised her vision of ethereal beauty?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
Fine art portraiture.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website? I am aiming to have one up soon. I am also represented by Sara Roney Gallery, Sydney. sararoneygallery.com.au

What is your relationship to the subject? Observer.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
The image is constructed. I commissioned Lisa to model for me. I was struck by her ethereal beauty.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? Truth, beauty, love and eternity.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph.
I wanted depth of field and narrow focus, using a 24-70mm lens. Beautiful, natural light in a huge white room flooded in from a window. I used Adobe Photoshop in post-production to immerse the portrait into the background, as if emerging from timelessness.

What type of camera did you use?
Nikon D200.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? For this portrait natural, occasionally flash depending on my needs.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
Yes, it is part of the overall effect I wanted.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? No, however it is part of an ongoing collection of portraits which inspire me.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.
I wanted Lisa to engulf the room with her soft, floating presence, so I did want to print it large. It is 41 inches wide, the frame is white and unobtrusive.

Who are your influences? Beginning with Cindy Sherman, Diane Arbus, Brassai, Bill Henson to more recently, a fellow country-woman from Montenegro and Serbia, Marina Abramovic.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? Yes, do not be afraid, do not be too critical of yourself and follow your passion.

Lipstick 2009
John Sones
digital print

Artist's statement

Julia Zemiro: quite a woman! An actor, comedian, presenter and writer. In her spare time she sews; she meditates. I shot this picture one afternoon at Julia's home in Melbourne. I feel it shows a fragility; a vulnerability perhaps previously unseen to those familiar with her bold and engaging TV personality image.

Questions

What do you first notice about this portrait?
What information does the photographer give us to read this portrait?
How could you change the 'feel' of this portrait?
This person has a public identity – how does this influence your appreciation of the photograph?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
In my heart I am a documentary photographer. I love to photograph the diversity of the world and the people who live in it.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
I run a business with my partner Tamsin Sharp called Singing Bowl Media at singingbowl.com.au
The name of our business reflects our interest in cross cultural communities and works with photography and the moving image, which I also love shooting. My travel photography is also represented by Lonely Planet at lonelyplanetimages.com

What is your relationship to the subject? I met Julia a few years ago when I was shooting the front cover of the Melbourne Fringe Festival's program guide. She was an ambassador for the Fringe Festival at the time and certainly made my job of shooting a 200 plus group shot a memorable and enjoyable day.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
We planned to shoot a number of documentary style stills throughout the day at her home. However, the idea for *Lipstick* was thought out and orchestrated after a glass of French red wine.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? Julia is seen all over TV nowadays – from Question Time to the Eurovision Song Contest. But many would say they know her from her hosting role on RocKwiz. This tends to show Julia wearing her famous red lipstick, and as a confident and charismatic woman. I'm certainly not saying Julia isn't these things, but there is also a very humble and gentle side to her. So this is why we decided to paint only her bottom lip, leaving the top lip naked – symbolizing a side to Julia many do not see.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. During the afternoon shoot we had umbrella lights, however I found this shot needed nothing more than natural light. Shooting Julia on her balcony, I set the aperture to f2.8 for depth, shutter speed to 1/160 as I was shooting handheld, and had to throw the ISO up to 500 as it was a very cloudy and overcast day.

What type of camera did you use?
I shot this on a Canon EOS 5D Mark II with a 24-70mm f/2.8 L series lens.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? For this shot, natural.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
Due to Julia being known for her bold red lips and my reason for shooting the photograph as stated above, I decided to desaturate the final image slightly, reinforcing the notion that there is more to Julia than her famous red lips.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.
I want the presentation to be as simple as possible, and therefore I will only be framing the shot with a white border. I will, however, ensure that the print is on matte paper.

Who are your influences? Sebastiao Salgado – an exemplar of the tradition of the 'concerned photographer', who has raised awareness of issues in many less developed nations through his documentary photographic style. Kazuyoshi Nomachi, a photographer who captures the fundamental essence of the daily lives of people from all over the globe. And Dan Winters, who understands how light falls fully, yet creates images that do not over indulge in its use.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? There are many different streams of photography. Try experimenting with more than one or two. Talk to other photographers. Get a portfolio or website together and ask friends, family or those in the industry to provide feedback. Take this feedback onboard, but remain true to yourself, and never forget to treat others with dignity, cordiality and respect.

Julia Zemiro described the experience of having her photograph taken by John Sones. I always find photo shoots challenging when I am the subject, mainly because I am still puzzled by the process and wish I could do more to help.
But of course it's not about 'doing'.
More about 'being'.
Easier said than done.
John Sones the photographer and his partner Tamsin Sharp have an aura about them that helps you relax and be bold-er.
I was interested in the idea behind the mask: Red Lipstick in this case.
There is no doubt in my mind that lipstick helps me get into the role of hosting RocKwiz.
John photographing my lips half made up, close up, felt revealing. Now it's in the eye of the beholder. You.

Karina 2009
Nikki Toole
digital print

Artist's statement

This image of Karina Espinoza is part of an ongoing project exploring skater culture. Many skaters speak of a solitary mindset when skating, and I asked the skaters to zone into this meditative space. Karina was part of an all female skater group I shot in California and her graceful quiet nature was reflected in her unconscious expression and stance.

Questions

What feelings do you think the photographer wished to convey in this portrait? What pictorial devices are used to express the feelings? What other photographs does this image remind you of?

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
I would say that I use photography as a way of satisfying my curiosity. I am drawn to my subjects by something that I cannot define easily. I am attracted to an expression or a simple unconscious movement and want to capture that person in a still image.

Do you have a website or are you represented on a website?
My website is nikkitoole.com.

What is your relationship to the subject? I met Karina briefly while travelling around the West Coast of America photographing skaters for my new project.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
In many ways it was both. I briefly explain the idea behind my project and the subject chooses to react to that in any way they please. My only requirement is that they stand face on to the camera while they do it. I shoot 5 frames of each subject.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? I am interested in the unconscious expression of the skater as they zone into a solitary place where their mindset is not engaged in any other form of interaction. I ask them to put their mind into this place for a brief moment.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. The image making itself is very simple. I like a shallow depth of field to focus the attention on the subject. I want the viewer to be drawn to their expression.

What type of camera did you use?
This was my first experience using digital. I used a Canon 5D with a 50mm lens for this shot. I usually shoot on a Pentax 6x7.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? I used natural daylight.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image? I used Adobe Photoshop to crop and resize the image for print.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? The skater prints are part of an edition of 8. The final print is a digital print.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.
I test the image at a few different sizes and choose the final size based upon a gut feeling. I prefer to mount the image into a white frame and have the image dry mounted before framing. I leave a white edging on the print to draw the eye to the image.

Who are your influences? I am influenced by artists who are drawn to the human condition and psyche, such as David Lynch, Alfred Hitchcock, Jane Campion and Ingmar Bergman. Although I appreciate the work of other photographers, I find that the work of an inspirational filmmaker leaves a lasting impression on me. When I am inspired by another artist it makes me want to produce better work for myself.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers? I would say do not try to anticipate what others will like, but follow your own inspiration and ideas. If you can express your own thoughts and capture the things that you want to look at again and again you will enjoy the practice of photography forever. Learn the technical aspects of your equipment, but only in order to express yourself to the fullest. Try not to become obsessed with the technical aspects too much, as it is often the errors and experimental aspects to photography that produce the most interesting work. Try to make an image that can be appreciated without the need for any explanation. The artist's information regarding their concept or idea should enhance the experience, but not define it. It is important to enjoy an image in the same way that you can enjoy music without being able to read it.

The steam apprentice 2009
Gary Steer
digital print

Artist's statement

I believe that portrait photography can go beyond mere physical depiction of the subject. If I can capture a portrait that 'speaks' to the viewer, not just visually but with other layers that tell more of the person, then I believe I'm succeeding. Most people surround themselves with familiar 'things' they are knowledgeable about, skilful with, or cherish. In this photograph of Ryan-Jay Luke the atmosphere of the location approaches other sensory dimensions: the sounds of machinery, leaking steam and the smell of oil. In this context, the photograph tells more of the person and his work. It was taken at the outdoor museum of Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, where Ryan-Jay works on boilers and steam engines.

Questions

What do you immediately notice about this portrait?
Is this a portrait of a person or an occupation? Explain.

The photographer and the portrait – an interview

How do you define your practice?
Primarily my work in still photography is landscape/nature but I am also diverting to narrative photography of history/ heritage themes.

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

What is your relationship to the subject? First time we had met – at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, where Ryan-Jay Luke works in the boiler/steam engine rooms of the replica mining town.

Was the photograph a result of a constructed or candid encounter?
Candid encounter.

What are the ideas or themes underpinning your portrait? I was taking photographs to illustrate the lifestyles of people living in gold mining towns of Australia in the 19th century.

Describe the technical aspects of your photograph. 1/60 sec, f/11, 320 ISO.

What type of camera did you use?
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, EF 20-35mm lens.

Did you work with natural or artificial lighting? Natural.

Did you employ any digital imaging processes to create your final image?
Yes, saturation, contrast, burning-in, cropping.

How was the final print made? Is it part of an edition? Inkjet printing on enhanced matte paper. Not part of an edition.

Describe your consideration of scale, mounting and framing in the presentation of your portrait.
Dimension selected was the approximate size of what is normally shown in regional art galleries. Since the subject is fairly dark, white matte-board would be too stark in comparison. I choose a warm grey for the mount.

Who are your influences? In candid portraits, Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers?
Never give up.