5

Portraits

THE JOURNALISTIC PORTRAIT

The journalistic portrait of a scientist should not look like that of a steelworker. An aggressive personality deserves a different portrait from the shy and retiring type. To tell each person's story, photojournalists shoot both posed and candid portraits. Candid photography can produce honest, believable portraits without a lot of elaborate prompting, staging, or lighting, says Steve Raymer, the longtime staff photographer for *National Geographic* who now teaches at Indiana University. "It's a matter of knowing the subject, using the light, and waiting for the moment," he observes.

Charles Phoenix uses old slides in his theatrical productions. By photographing the artist under his slide table, the photographer conveys the artist's outgoing personality as well as an aspect of his profession. Genaro Molina, *Los Angeles Times*

Even when they arrange elements for a portrait, photojournalists look for honest, candid moments. Nicole Bengiveno, who shoots for *The New York Times*, expresses the sentiment of many of her colleagues. "My favorite pictures are real moments when the subjects have forgotten you are there," she says. Indeed, shooting posed portraits is not a natural activity for many news photographers, whose instincts are to observe—not control.

However, photojournalists often are assigned to shoot posed portraits that reveal both why the person is in the news and something about the person's personality.

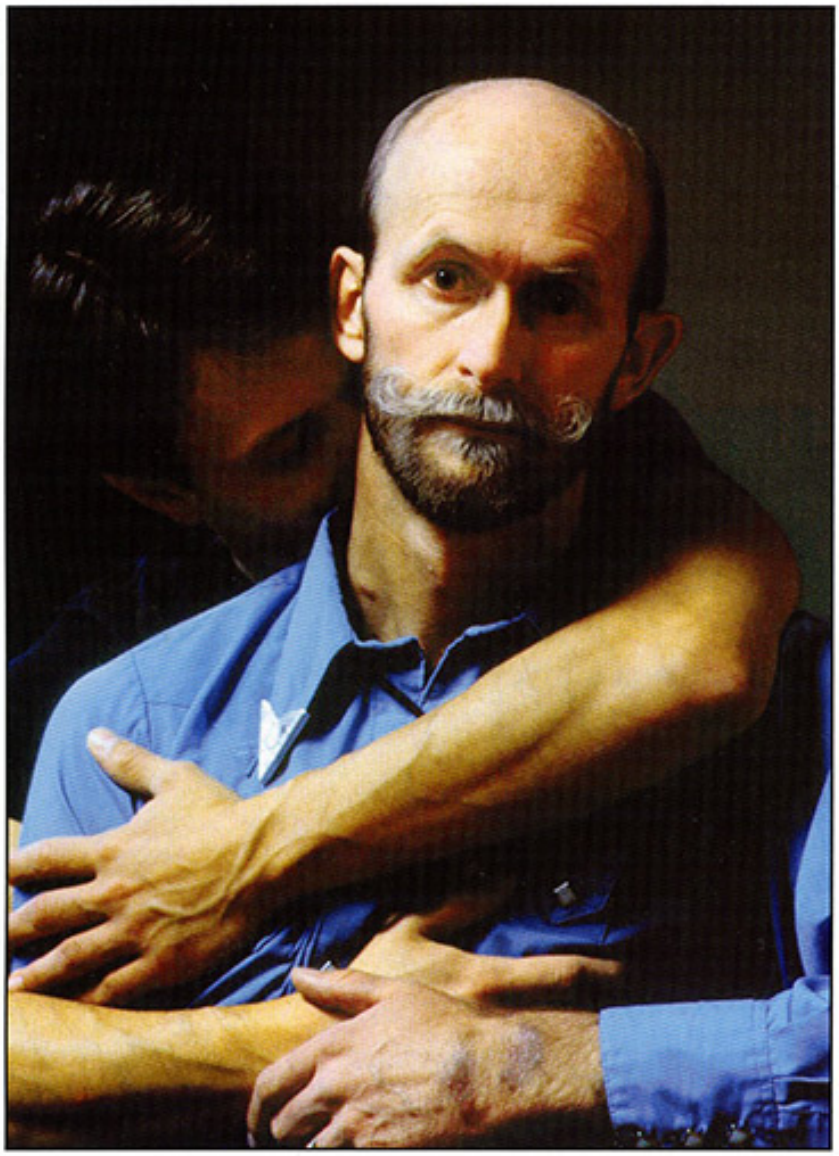
PUTTING YOUR SUBJECT AT EASE

If someone does not feel comfortable in front of the camera, the best photojournalistic techniques in the world will not produce a revealing portrait. When a photographer disappears behind the camera, even if it is a relatively small single-lens-reflex, the shooter loses eye contact with the subject, who is left alone to respond to a piece of coated glass and a black mechanical box—not exactly a situation conducive to stimulating conversation.

Bengiveno of *The New York Times* can relate to people who freeze when faced down by a camera. "All photographers should have a camera pointed at them," she says. "It is a scary feeling."

To understand the mindset of "the subject," Richard Koci Hernandez of the *San Jose Mercury News* photographed himself. "I took a lot of self-portraits so that I would know how uncomfortable it is to have your picture taken," he says.

Photographers develop different techniques to loosen up and relax their subjects. Keep in mind that an approach that works for one photographer might not work for you. Here are some choices to consider.



A real moment that developed during the shooting session gives intimacy to this portrait of a person with AIDs. Nicole Bengiveno, for *Newsweek*

TALK IT OVER

One of the most enjoyable aspects of photojournalism is meeting different kinds of people. The most successful photojournalists research why their portrait subjects are in the headlines. During a shooting session, the talk usually turns to the person's involvement in the story. When people become engrossed in conversation, they often forget about the camera, which allows those candid moments in otherwise controlled situations.

"Ideally, I will talk to the subjects for 15 to 20 minutes to find out what in their life might relate to the picture assignment," Koci Hernandez says.

He asks subjects where they feel most comfortable. "I take advice if people are willing to give it."

Smiley Pool of the *Houston Chronicle* enlists his subjects as collaborators. "How do you want to have your picture made?" he asks. "It's your picture."

The best ideas often come from his subjects, Pool says. "Other times, you have to dream something up."

LOOK 'EM IN THE EYE

"When we put the camera to our eye it blocks our face," says David Leeson of *The Dallas Morning News*. "It's like staring down a gun barrel. I find it unnerving."

Rather than using the viewfinder for portraits, many photographers use the camera's LCD monitor to frame the picture while still maintaining eye contact.

Alfred Eisenstaedt, an original *Life* magazine staffer, avoided the disruption of picking up and putting down the camera by using a tripod and cable release. He put his camera on a tripod and focused, which freed him to talk directly and keep eye contact with his

subject while taking pictures with the cable release. "For me," he said, "this method often gives the most relaxed pictures."

LET PEOPLE BE THEMSELVES

The secret to posing is to study your subjects, says Sibylla Herbrich. As photographer and photo editor of the *San Francisco Daily Journal*, her job for more than five years was to cajole 15 minutes or so of billable hours from busy attorneys to take their portraits for the legal newspaper.

"From the time you initially meet them and while you are setting up the lights or arranging the background, watch for the subject's natural body language," she says.

How do they hold themselves, erect or relaxed? Do they point with their fingers or make a fist? Which way do they tip their head? When they are relaxed, do they use one hand or two to hold up their head?

"Look to see how comfortable they are with their own body," Herbrich says. "Start by shooting the way they are naturally standing. Then, if they are frozen, hands rigidly at their sides and face pointed straight ahead, remind them of a gesture that you had seen them use earlier." Although you are directing the person, the body position you suggest will be natural, not something you have imagined.

BE A BORE (BUT NOT A BOOR)

When you have time, the boredom technique works well; if you wait long enough, the subject often gets tired of posing, and you can shoot natural-looking photos that result in casual, relaxed portraits.

Arthur Grace, who has been a staffer for both *Time* and *Newsweek* and photographer for the book ***The Comedians***, says, "Once you put people in a location, you just wait, and they will get lost in their own thoughts." Grace just sits there. "Maybe I'll take one frame to make them think that I've started, but I haven't." Eventually, the subjects get so bored they forget they are having their picture taken and they relax. That's when Grace goes to work.

As the photo shoot seems to be coming to an end, the thoughtful photojournalist often looks for one more frame. The *New York Times*'s Bengiveno says that sometimes when people think the picture session is over they let their guard down. "They might put their hand over their head," she says. "Then the real shooting session begins."

LET SOMEONE ELSE DO THE TALKING

Because it's often difficult to work the camera and carry on a meaningful conversation simultaneously, some photographers shoot

This swimmer's career had been damaged because of doping allegations, even though he took a vitamin supplement company to court and won. The photographer used a Nikonos with a 16mm lens and a flash. He had the subject remove the goggles so his eyes would be visible.
Al Schaben, Los Angeles Times

while the subject is being interviewed. If an interviewer does not accompany you on an assignment, take a friend along. When no outsider is available, look for someone on location, like the subject's colleague, to whom he or she might enjoy talking. Involved in conversation, the subject thaws and becomes animated—and the resulting photograph is natural and not contrived.

LIGHT AS A STORYTELLING ELEMENT

Whether soft from the side or streaming in from above, light in all its various incarnations usually determines the picture's mood. When photographers shoot a picture that is lit brightly yet has only a few shadows, the photo is called "high key." They often employ high-key lighting for pictures of brides, for example, because they want the photo to have an upbeat mood.

When a more moody effect is desired, however, photographers often choose lighting that will leave large areas of the picture in shadow. The photo's dominant tones are dark gray and black. At night, a tough police chief might be photographed with the available light of a street lamp. The moody lighting called "low key" will support the story's thrust. For many photographers, the atmosphere created by light in a portrait is more important than any other element.

UNDERSTAND LIGHT

To add depth to a subject's face, arrange the person so that the main light, whether it is from flood, flash, or window, falls toward the side of his or her face. Unlike direct frontal light, side light adds a roundness and three-dimensionality to the portrait. Side light also emphasizes the textural details of the face—a technique especially suited for bringing out the character lines in a person's features.

Saw the hot shoe off your camera was the advice the *Miami Herald*'s Jeffrey Salter gave to *Sporting News* staffer Robert Seale when he was starting out. Portraits are almost always more interesting when the light comes from any angle other than head on.

Alternatively, glamour photographers often light people with a large, flat light located near the camera's lens to eliminate shadows. Shadowless light, sometimes called "butterfly" lighting, tends to eliminate wrinkles, giving a youthful look to the portrait sitter. (See more on lighting in Chapter 9, "Strobe.")

Not all light has to come from a strobe or even a window. Jeff Vendsel, working for the *Marin* [California] *Independent Journal* used the light of an overhead projector to illuminate his portrait of two members of a multimedia association (see page 89).

LOOK FOR LIGHT

"I arrive 15 minutes early to a portrait session," says Koci Hernandez of the *San Jose Mercury News*. "I look for a beautiful shaft of light in the hallway. Then I put the subject in it, and hope and pray for a candid moment."

The San Jose photographer goes on to point out, "You can have everything working against you—background, uptight person. But if you have great light, everything will work out."

Like Koci Hernandez, Nicole Bengiveno will use any light she can find. "There have been times I have used the headlight of a car, street lamps, or a table lamp," she says.

To find the right light and to catch her subjects in a more relaxed atmosphere, Bengiveno often will take people for a walk in the streets of New York. This allows her to spend some time with them and watch how they move. "When I walk with someone, I try to keep the session flowing," she says. "All of a sudden I will turn a corner and see some great light."

Bengiveno was assigned to photograph a person who claimed to have memories of being abducted by aliens. She walked the subject around the South of Houston (SoHo) section of New York looking for anything that suggested "otherworldliness."

"We found a loft building with a fire escape," Bengiveno recalls. "The sun was shining down, casting a shadow through the fire escape. The light gave the feeling of something emanating from above."

While the shadows did not prove the existence of aliens, they did help shift the sense

A writer (left) and his subject were on a book tour together. The photographer took the pair to the newspaper's studio and managed to get this lively reaction by kidding around with the subjects during the photo and interview sessions. The portrait's lighting and light background give it a "high-key" feel. *Julie Stupsker, San Francisco Examiner*

Actor Laurence Fishburne's image, dramatically lit, is captured in a mirror. "I told him that I wanted to photograph him holding a mirror in his hand as a symbol that he was taking control of his own fate by directing his first feature film," explains the photographer. Genaro Molina, *Los Angeles Times*

of reality and added a haunting mood to the final picture.

"I love discovering and finding things, being spontaneous," Bengiveno says.

COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS ADD IMPACT

Suppose your editor assigns you to photograph a banker. You size up the situation and decide to show "The Banker as a Stable Person in the Community." You might want to position the person in the middle of the frame, lending balance and therefore dignity to the picture. You have used composition to help tell your story, conveying to the reader the point you wish to make about the banker.

Suppose, on another day, you must photograph the director of the Little Theater, an offbeat dramatic group. You want your picture of the director to be as exciting and tension-producing as a good Stephen King thriller. By placing the theater director on the edge of the frame and leaving the remaining area black, you can produce an off-balanced picture that suggests added visual suspense.

CLOSE-UP VERSUS SCENE-SETTER

The effect of the final picture changes, depending on whether the photographer fills the frame with the sitter's face or stands back for a full-length portrait. An extreme close-up, for instance, appears to bring the subject so near that the viewer is allowed an unusual intimacy with the sitter, such as in the intense close-up of actor/director Laurence Fishburne on page 85.

On the other hand, because body language and clothing help to reveal a sitter's personality characteristics, the photographer sometimes must take a step backward to include in the composition the full length of the subject. Sometimes an overall photo can reveal more than a close-up showing only the face. Genaro Molina's picture of a theatrical artist under his light table explains more than what a simple head shot might reveal (see page 80).

AVOID BUSY BACKGROUNDS

A busy background can easily distract readers from the subject of the photo. You do not want the background to compete with your main subject for the viewer's attention.

Light as well as tone, color, and sharpness help define and separate the subject from the background. The background affects the "readability" of a photograph.

For a background clear of distractions, the photographer shot this rodeo contestant against the plain blue sky. The foreground rope that frames the cowboy helps tell his story.
Dave Kettering, *Telegraph Herald* [Dubuque, Iowa]

A shaft of light helps isolate the subject from a busy, distracting background.
© Ken Kobré

Readability requires that the subject not get lost in the details of the environment.

Dave Kittering of Dubuque, Iowa, found a simple, plain background by shooting a cowboy against a clear sky (opposite). Other shooters find an unadorned wall or bring their own paper or fabric background to the shoot. Josh Meltzer of *The Roanoke Times* also used the sky as a background while directing a strobe to the side of a ball player's face to make a graphic image of the young pitcher and his teammates (see page 186).

Directing some light to the back of a subject's dark hair or using available light can create a highlight that helps visually separate the subject from a dark wall. Alternatively, a shaft of light late in the afternoon can isolate a subject from the crowd, as in the portrait above of a Frenchman watching a game of pétanque (above).

Many still and video journalists use telephoto lenses to shoot portraits. These lenses, when used at wide apertures, help blur the background behind a subject. To achieve this effect, keep the subject as far away from the background as possible. The background will still show up, but it will be soft and partially indistinct. With a blurry background, the viewer's attention will remain on your primary subject.

PROPS HELP TELL THE STORY

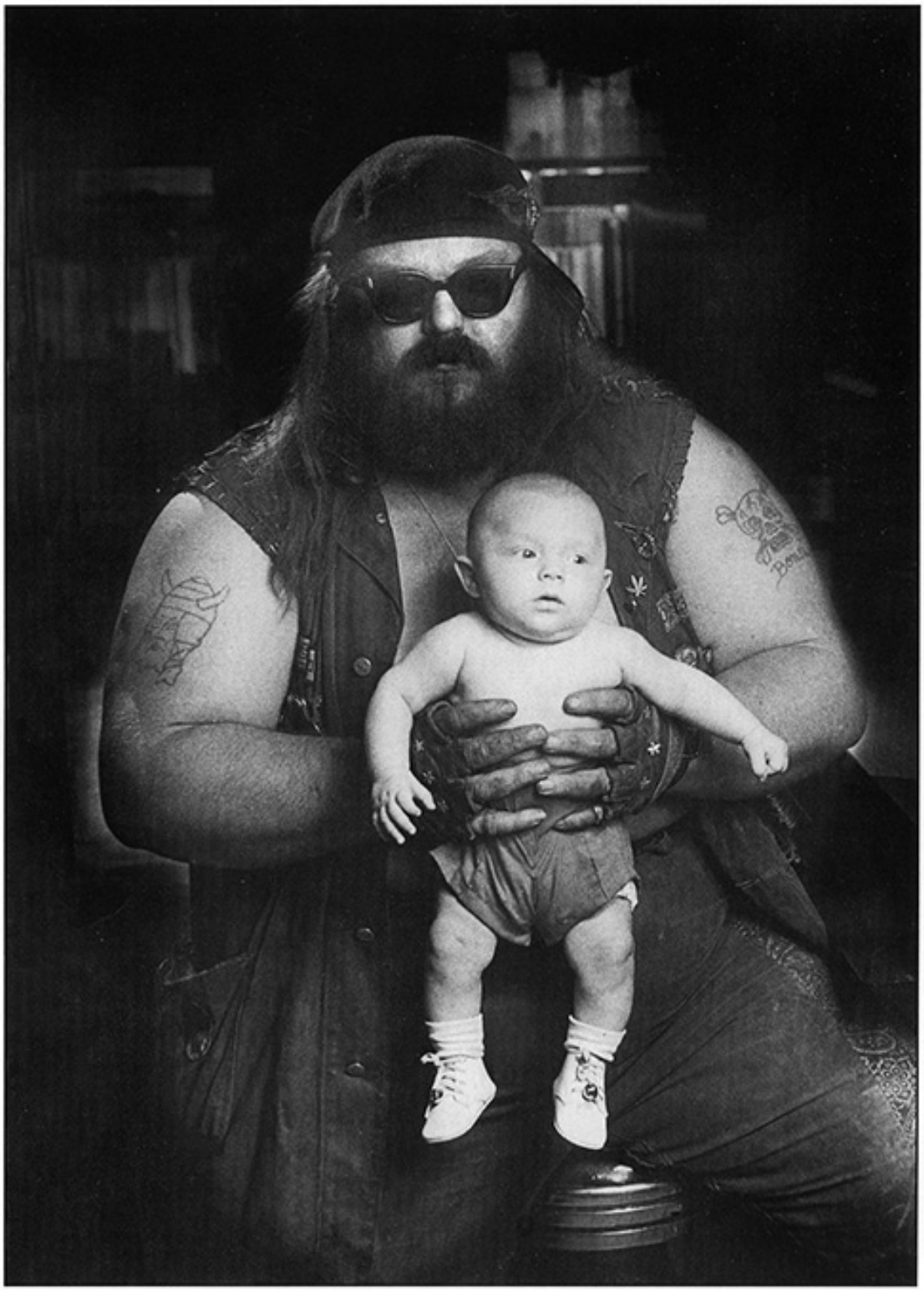
Often an object a person is holding or the uniform he or she is wearing supports the thrust of the story. These props add visual information and help the reader go beyond just the contours of the subject's face. These props often cue the reader to a portrait's news peg. The location of the picture and the props in it tell the viewer something about a subject's profession, hobbies, and interests. A portrait taken in a dark factory, with the worker holding a wrench, says something different about the sitter than a portrait taken in a pristine office with the accountant seated at a computer.

In Rob Goebel's portrait of "Bones" Kah and his son, Harley, big, burley Bones wears his biker outfit, including sunglasses,

sleeveless jacket, and skull-and-crossbones tattoos. He holds up his infant son, Harley. The visual contrast between the huge, rough-looking biker and vulnerable child gives the picture power. The biker details also add storytelling information to the image.

Sometimes photographers ask subjects to hold pictures of a relative who is missing or dead. These pictures often seem artificial or staged without revealing new information. They merely serve as a way to combine two images into one, saving space yet adding little new information. In such cases, the photographer is often wiser to make a strong portrait of the subject using interesting light. A snapshot of the missing or deceased family member could run separately.

Shooting for the *Marin Independent Journal*, Jeff Vendsel used a projected image of a woman looking at a computer to light his



The father-son portrait of "Bones" Kah and his young offspring, Harley Davidson, resulted from a series of self-assignments created by the photographer. This personal assignment was to illustrate the word "contrast."
Rob Goebel, *Indianapolis Star*

subjects, members of a multimedia association. The projected image helped to explain the subjects' relationship to the news event. Of course, the projection also added interest to the final portrait.

In Arnold Newman's portrait of Piet Mondrian, an easel establishes that Mondrian was an artist (see page 92).

In each of these situations, props or clothing suggest why the subject was in the news.

PROVIDE CLUES TO THE "INNER PERSON"

Besides quality of the light, composition, and props, other elements add to the storytelling nature of a portrait.

A subject's face, hands, and body position reflect the psychological state of the sitter. Is the subject smiling or showing a grim face? Are his hands pulling at his beard or resting at his side? Is he standing confidently or shifting awkwardly?

FACE

Of all the elements in a photo, the face still carries a disproportionate amount of psychological weight. Studies show that children, almost from birth, recognize the basic elements of a face, including the eyes, nose, and mouth. Whether true or not, people assume that the face is the "mirror of the soul."

If the face is the soul's reflection, then the soul is multidimensional. Even the most sedate face reflects a surprising number of variations. Shoot 20 pictures of one person's face as she talks about her favorite topic. Note the number of distinctly different expressions the person exhibits. Is one frame of those 20 true to the nature of the person? Have the others missed the essence of the person's underlying character?

The great portraitist Arnold Newman says in his book ***One Mind's Eye***, "I'm convinced that any photographic attempt to show the complete man is nonsense. We can only show what the man reveals."

The photojournalist usually selects an image of the subject talking, laughing, or frowning, an action coinciding with the thrust of the news story. When a recently appointed city manager expresses fear about his new job, the photo might show him with his hand massaging his wrinkled brow.

A year later, a story in which the city manager talks about his accomplishments might show him talking and smiling. The photojournalist's portrait does not reveal a person's "true inner nature" as much as it reflects the subject's immediate response to the current situation.

The respected magazine portrait photographer Mary Ellen Mark never asks her

By placing his subjects carefully, the photographer highlighted two members of a multimedia association with a strip of white light from a digitally projected image. In a darkened room, the exposure was 1/15 sec.
Jeff Vendsel, *Marin* [California] *Independent Journal*

subjects to smile for the camera. A smile, she says, can be a person's defense mechanism against the discomfort of being the focus of a camera's lens. On the other hand, she does not hesitate to photograph a person's spontaneous laughter or glee.

EYES

Where should the subject look? Early journalism portraits taken around the turn of the century showed the sitter staring into the camera's lens during the prolonged time exposures.

During the Depression, Farm Security Administration subjects seemed always to gaze into space (see page 440). Portraits taken during the 1960s and 1970s often showed subjects looking as if they were in action, never noticing the camera's presence. Later, portraits tended to return to the direct gaze.

Photographers often feel that the viewer will be most involved with a portrait's subject when the two make eye contact. David Leeson of the *Dallas Morning News* continues to ask the subject to look into the camera. "I don't want any doubt in the reader's mind that this is a portrait," he says, echoing the sentiment of many photojournalists.

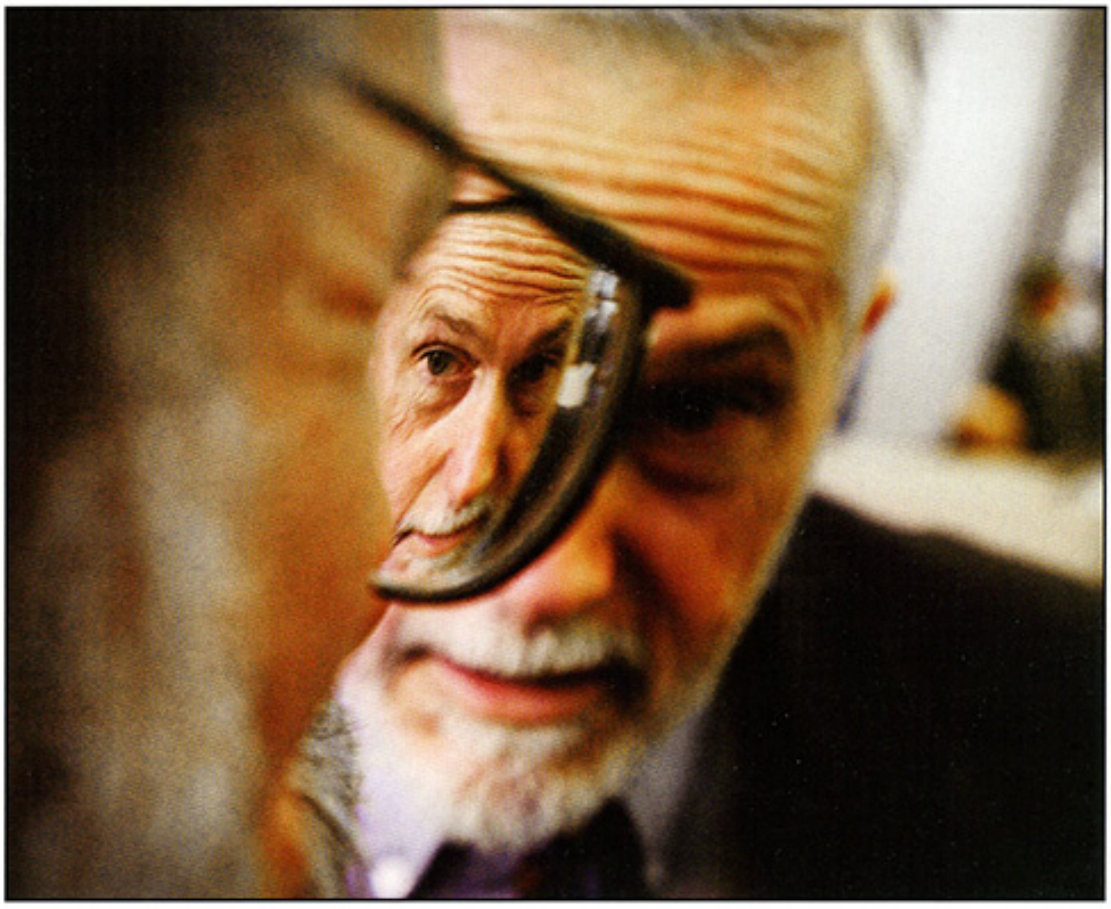
This convention—subject looking directly into the lens—is in the process of yielding to another. Confronted with so many subjects staring into the lens, some photographers in the late 1990s began returning to the Depression-era approach in which the subject looks away from the camera into the distance. "Sometimes I have the subjects looking away," says Bengiveno of the *New York Times*. "Sometimes I have them looking over their shoulder. It depends on what feeling I want."

Like other stylistic variables that contribute to this kind of picture, this new convention is likely to change as well.

BODY LANGUAGE

Hands help tell a story in a nonverbal way. A news photographer covering a speech will not even bother to click the shutter until the lecturer raises a hand to make a point. When shooting a portrait, watch the individual's hands as she toys with her hair, touches her chin, or pushes up her cheek. A person chewing his fingernails reveals a certain tension about the situation in which he finds himself.

Desmond Morris's excellent book, ***Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behavior,*** is a terrific guide for improving your observational skills. Morris documented various types of gestures and signals that people use to express inner feelings. The way an individual stands, whether as straight as a



While you cannot really see the world through someone else's eyes, this picture allows you to see it through one person's glasses. The photographer used the glasses as a compositional device to direct the viewer's attention. John Burgess, [Santa Rosa, California] *Press Democrat*

West Point cadet or as bowlegged as a cowboy, provides clues about the subject's mood, way of life, or even upbringing. Studying ways people communicate nonverbally can sensitize you to good picture possibilities in portrait sessions and beyond.

PRECONCEIVING THE PHOTO

When assigned to shoot a portrait, many photojournalists go to great lengths to imagine how a picture might look before they ever arrive on the scene.

Koci Hernandez of the *Mercury News* says he almost always has some kind of preconceived notion when he approaches a portrait. "Sometimes you have to illustrate a point," he says. "If a scientist has invented a new baseball bat, I know I am going to need the bat in the picture."

To stay fresh, Koci Hernandez maintains an idea book. "I clip out portraits from magazine and newspapers," he explains. "I keep the pictures in a binder and flip through the book before I go into a portrait session."

Paolo Vescia's assignment was to take a portrait of Moshe Cohen, a member of "Clowns Without Borders." The group aims to bring comic relief to war-ravaged and underdeveloped countries.

Cohen arrived with the humor, but Vescia came up with the idea of integrating clown and world in one photo. Vescia bought several blowup plastic globes and after setting up the lights, asked his subject to juggle. The preconceived picture captures the spirit of clowning while differentiating this jester's story from any other.

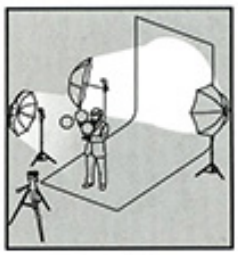
The *Los Angeles Times* assigned Genaro Molina to photograph Laurence Fishburne after the actor directed his first movie.

Molina preconceived a picture. "I told him that I wanted to photograph him holding a mirror in his hand as a symbol that he was taking control of his own fate by directing his first feature film," Molina says.

The portrait of the actor goes past a record of his face and implies something about why Fishburne was in the news at the time (see page 85).

Even if you have a great idea for a picture, do not hesitate to throw it away if something better comes along. Be flexible. Your preconceived idea/location/pose for a shoot may be great, but it helps to be open to new ideas presented by the subject or the setting.

"You might get to a location and find a great window, or a great architectural detail, or a great colored wall, or sky that you can build a great photo out of. Do not be afraid to chuck your original idea and go with something that your environment provides," advises Robert Seale, who spends



The mission of "Clowns Without Borders" is to bring comic relief to war-ravaged and developing countries. The photographer conceived the idea of the performer juggling the world and brought the inflatable globes to the photo session. The photographer "blew out" the background with two strobes bounced into umbrellas that he aimed at the white seamless paper. A third strobe/umbrella lit the juggler and also caught all three balls in the air. For more on lighting, see Chapter 9, "Strobe."
Paolo Vescia, *SF Weekly* (San Francisco)

approximately 40 percent of his time at the *Sporting News* shooting portraits.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETAILS TELL THE STORY

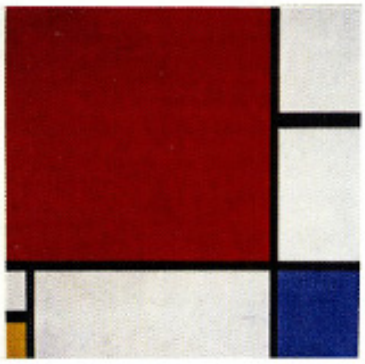
From a studio portrait or even a photograph of someone engaged in animated conversation, the viewer cannot tell a banker from a bandit, a president from a prisoner. The wrinkles of a brow or the set of the eyes reveal little about a subject's past, profession, or newsworthiness.

An environmental portrait, however, supplies enough details with props, choice of dress, and choice of background to let the reader know something about the lifestyle of the sitter.

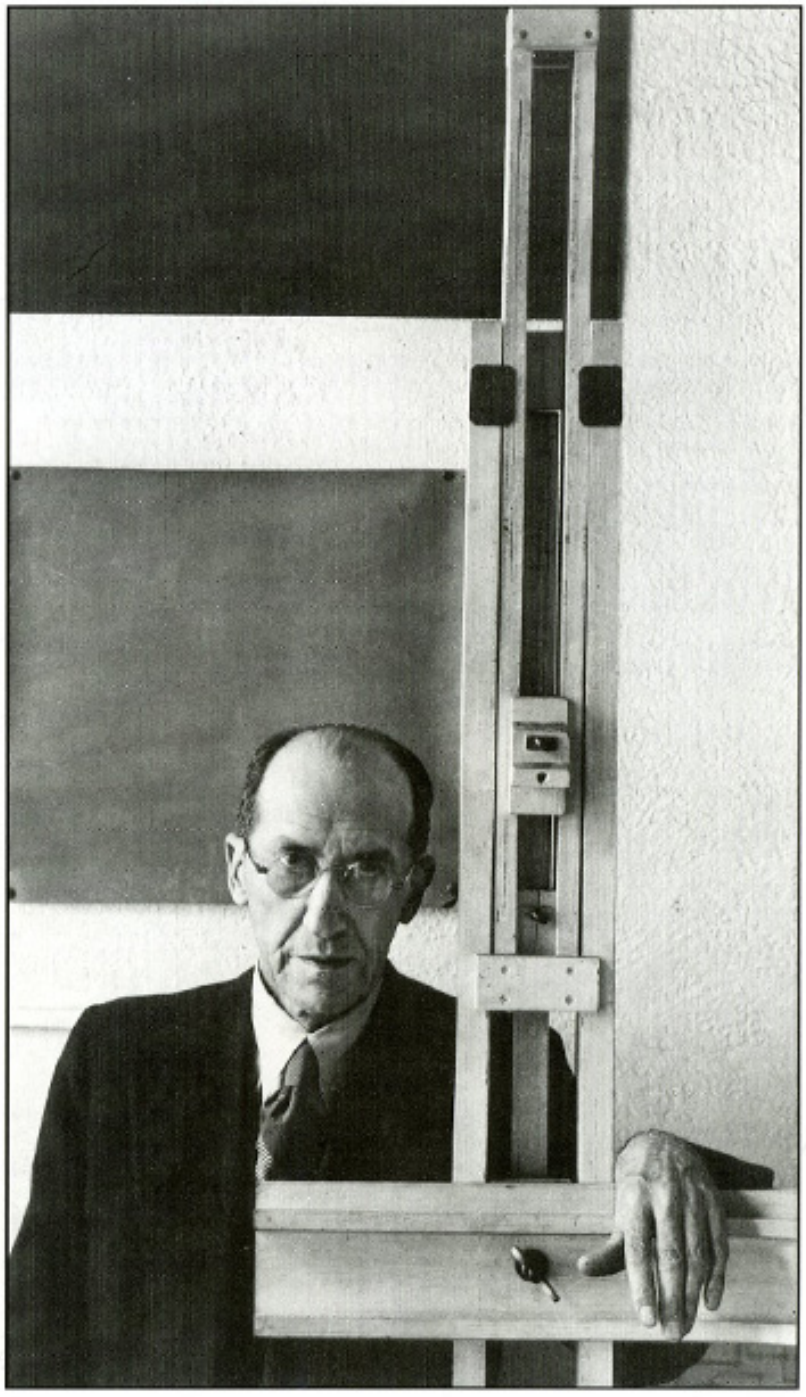
Alfred Eisenstaedt wrote, "By now I've learned that the most important thing to do when you photograph somebody in a room or outside is not to look at the subject but at the background."

Background details help report the story. A sharecropper's rundown shack relates the farmer's problems. The plush office of a new corporate executive suggests one of the job's perks.

In an environmental portrait, the subject is photographed at home, at the office, or on location, the place that best reflects the



This piece by Piet Mondrian, "Composition," shows the distinctive lines and rectangular blocks the painter used to compose his paintings. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection



For this portrait of Piet Mondrian, the photographer used sheets of paper and a painter's easel to reflect the artist's painting style. A comparison of the artist's work (ABOVE) shows the inspiration for the photographic portrait. © Arnold Newman

story's theme. As in a traditional studio portrait, the subject typically looks directly into the camera. But rather than sitting before a plain seamless paper background, the subject of an environmental portrait is seen amid the everyday objects of his or her life.

Technically, the environmental portrait does not differ from other portraits. The photographer can use a normal or, if necessary, a wide-angle lens. To record the environmental background sharply, maximum depth of field is necessary.

You can increase the depth of field by stopping down the aperture to a smaller opening. This requires a longer shutter speed. Using the camera on a tripod ensures freedom to use longer exposures—if the subject can hold still.

Arnold Newman, a master of the environmental portrait who has taken the official photographs of U.S. presidents, legendary artists, and corporate executives, often arranges his portraits so the background dominates. The subject in the foreground is relatively small.

In fact, a famous portrait of Professor Walter Rosenblith of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shows him wearing headphones with an oscilloscope in the foreground and a mazelike baffle system in the background. His face takes up a small part of the image with the lines of the experimental chamber occupying the rest of the frame.

Newman says the subject's image is important, "but alone it is not enough. We must also show the subject's relationship to the world."

The power of Newman's photos lies in his choice of symbolic environmental details that show the the style of the sitter's work as well as the person's profession. For example, Newman photographed the modern artist Piet Mondrian at his easel. The artist is known for his exploration of pure shape and color. By juxtaposing the vertical bar of the easel against rectangular shapes on the wall, Newman's portrait of Mondrian echoes the artist's own style.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAITS

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ: BUILDING A PORTRAIT

For portraits of actors like Tom Cruise or Meg Ryan, the reader has a frame of reference. The famous face has been on television, in the movies, and on magazine covers. By the time Annie Leibovitz, who has shot many covers for *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair*, photographs a celebrity, the viewer probably has seen the person in hundreds of other places.

Leibovitz tries to go past a topographic map of the face. Her pictures ask the questions: What makes this person famous? What is the psychological factor that separates this individual from others in the field?

Leibovitz is not interested in showing the viewer details of the subject's life or lifestyle. She does not depend on found items in a celebrity's house or office on which to build the picture like Arnold Newman. She is not waiting and watching for a candid moment in the style of Cartier-Bresson. Rather, she imagines what the picture ought to look like. Then she creates that look.

The photographer had the child paint a six-foot-long backdrop to go with art on her easel. The child's serious expression and hand-on-hip pose add to the picture's arresting quality.
Jeremy Portje, *Telegraph Herald*
Dubuque, Iowa

For example, Leibovitz photographed Dennis Connor, captain of the winning America's Cup racing team, wearing a red, white, and blue shirt, wading in a pond, sailing a toy boat. Although the America's Cup challenge represents millions of dollars in investments and winnings, the picture caught Connor's little-boy spirit. Leibovitz did not happen upon Connor wading one afternoon in the pond. She and her stylist bought the props, selected the clothes, and located the perfect pond.

Leibovitz builds rather than takes a picture. In conjunction with the subject, she dreams up a visually startling way to portray that individual. She photographed the African-American comic Whoopi Goldberg in a white bathtub filled with milk. She persuaded John Lennon to lie, nude, curled in a fetal position around his wife, Yoko Ono.

Leibovitz's pictures lie somewhere between psychological portraits and photo illustrations. Her stylized approach has influenced many photojournalists.

GROUP PORTRAITS

SHOW ALL THE FACES

A prime requirement of a formal group portrait is that it shows, as clearly as possible, each person's face. This takes careful planning.

Arranging subjects shoulder-to-shoulder might work, but with more than a few people, the line becomes excessively long. Each person's face will be quite small in the final image.

Instead, arrange people in rows, one row behind the other. Typically, you want to have the short people in the front and the taller ones in back. With an extremely large group like a band or a football team, you have little choice but to arrange them, military style, at different levels but in a fixed formation.

SOFT LIGHT IS BEST

For group portraits, soft light that creates the minimum of shadows is usually the most effective. If you can, avoid lighting that creates strong, well-defined shadows typical of a bright, sunny day. When you must take a

In this daring and stylistically original portrait of the Beatles's John Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono, the photographer explored the couple's intense psychological relationship. Annie Leibovitz, for *Rolling Stone*

large group portrait on a perfectly clear day, look for the open shade of a tree or large building to provide even lighting.

ADD ZEST TO SMALL-GROUP PORTRAITS

Try different levels. When the assembly is limited to between three and eight members, creativity is possible. Try to keep each person's head on a different level. With a combination of kneeling, sitting, and standing, you usually can arrange an attractive juxtaposition of heads so that each is spatially located on a different elevation. The closeness of the bodies holds the picture together as a unit; the staggered arrangement adds visual interest.

Dress them alike. A group of clowns in costume lightens up a graduation picture at the Ringling Brothers Clown School.

Hand 'em props. A cooking class holding spatulas and saucepans serves up a picture of their activities.

Watch the background. Women welders posed in front of a foundry reinforce the viewer's understanding of their profession.

Pose to carry information. A group of teenagers slouching in front of a low-slung car tells a different story than the same group posed sitting in classroom chairs.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Henri Cartier-Bresson told this story to Russell Miller for Miller's book ***Magnum: The Story of the Legendary Photo Agency***. Cartier-Bresson had been asked to photograph Simone de Beauvoir, the French writer, philosopher, and author of ***The Second Sex***.

"She wanted me to take the photo, and she said to me, 'I am rather in a hurry, how long will you be?' And I said just what came into my head: 'A bit longer than a dentist, but not as long as a psychoanalyst.'"

Apparently, that was the wrong amount of time for a portrait because Cartier-Bresson never got the picture.

Knowing the location of the door is as important as knowing the location of the shutter. With a few frames left on your memory card, pack your gear before you wear out your welcome. Photographers have a bad reputation for asking for just one more picture.

Leave in good standing with your subjects because you never know when they will be in the news again and you will need to make a new portrait.

("Shooting Stars at Cannes," on the enclosed DVD, follows two photographers on assignment, Larry Laszlo, for *Entertainment Weekly*, and Al Seib, a *Los Angeles Times* staffer, as they photograph press conferences, photo calls, and private portrait sessions at the international film festival.) ■

In a group portrait, try to stagger the placement of heads to allow each to occupy a different level. This arrangement maximizes the size of each face.
Vincent S. D'Addario, Springfield [Massachusetts] Newspapers

Nearly thirty of his classmates shaved their heads in support of their classmate who has bone cancer and is losing his hair due to chemotherapy.
Josh Meltzer, *The Roanoke Times*