

Portrait Photography

26 February 2024

Brian Hillier

What comment could you make about these portraits?



What comment could you make about these portraits?



Above is a head and shoulders portrait.

On the right is the whole body, which is much larger and requires a lot more work by the artist and will be more expensive.



What comment could you make about these portraits?



Above is a head and shoulders portrait.

On the right is the whole body, which is much larger and requires a lot more work by the artist and will be more expensive.



“It will cost you an arm and a leg”

This presentation will cover

- Definition of portraiture
- Lighting set-up
- Cameras suitable for Portraiture
- Portraiture techniques – an eight-part course
- Famous portrait photographers and examples of their work
- Conclusion

Definition of Portraiture

“Portrait photography aims to capture a person's essence, personality, identity and attitude by utilising backgrounds, lighting and posing.”

Lighting - Examples

- Split screen
- Loop lighting
- Rembrandt
- Butterfly
- Broad
- Short

Lighting – Split screen



Side lighting splits the face into equal halves.

This half-shadow effect can be dramatic, especially when the light is hard.

It is often used to create moody shots of musicians and artists.

Lighting – Loop Lighting



Loop lighting positions a small shadow from the subject's nose across their cheek. Look at the photo above; see how the nose shadow falls slightly to the right of the nostril?



Lighting – Rembrandt Lighting



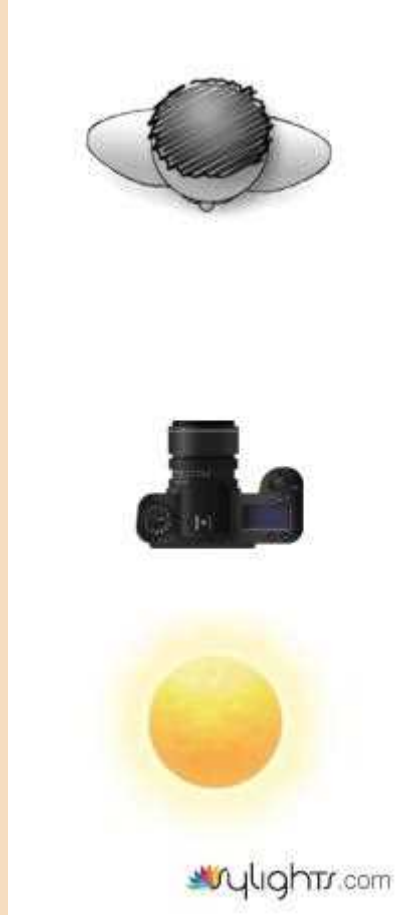
Light is off to the subject's side; ask the subject to turn slightly away from the light.

Light should be above their head so the nose shadow falls down toward the cheek.

Suitable for people with high or prominent cheekbones.

Not for those with a small nose or flat nose bridge.

Lighting – Butterfly



Light above creates a butterfly-shaped shadow under nose.

Result is a *glamorous* photo, with shadows under cheeks, chin.

Used often in fashion magazines and shots of movie stars.

It flatters older subjects, lessens wrinkles, and improves slim faces.

Subjects with round, wide faces look better with loop or split.

Lighting – Broad



Turn the face away from the light source.

Notice how side of face nearer to the camera receives light, while the far side of the face remains in shadow.

Makes face look broader.

Suitable for very slim faces.

Lighting – Short



Short lighting is the opposite of broad lighting.

Side of the face turned toward camera shrouded in shadow, while side of face turned away is brightened.

More of face in shadow, more sculpting, adds 3D quality.

Very slimming and flattering for most people.

Cameras for portrait and general photography



Canon R - 24-105mm - F4
£1111



D7500 - 18-140mm - f/3.5-5.6
£900



Sony A7 - 28-70mm - f/3.5-5.6
£1050

Lenses for DSLRs – 86mm to 105 mm

Subject to be about 2m from camera to fill the frame.
If subject is too close facial features are exaggerated.

Eight tips every portrait photographer should know



Jill Waterman is a photographer, editor, writer, and educator based in New York since 1985.

Jill is a night photography specialist.

“8 Tips every Beginning Portrait Photographer Should Know” – Jill Waterman

1. Background – Pairing with subject



In portrait photography the background can be just as important as the subject.

Busy, distracting backgrounds take attention away from person in your photo.

Neutral, uncluttered backgrounds are usually best.

1. Background – Neutral



Usually, for portraits, use a neutral, uncluttered background.

A neutral background won't distract the viewer from your portrait subject.

1. Background – Context



You don't have to choose a completely plain background.

For instance, an interesting wall or fence could provide a wonderful pop of colour or texture.

1. Background – Include an object for context



Another technique is to include an object in the background to provide added interest or context.

For example, an artist with their easel, a fisherman next to his boat, or a musician with her guitar.

2. Prepare your portrait subject for the shoot.



Being photographed can be an unnatural and, therefore, stressful experience for the subject.

Your job as a photographer is to make the experience simple, fun and stress-free.

2. Prepare – Break the ice with small talk



If they know you, they may feel shy.

Explain or ask them what kind of shot you or they would like.

With children get down to their level, talk gently, and they will have fun.

Distraction check, uneven buttons, collars, clothes half tucked in, etc.

3. Pose your subject like a professional



Now the subject is ready, comfortable and relaxed, keep them that way throughout the shoot.

Work quickly, but confidently and calmly.

Give them clear instructions as you shoot.

3. Pose – Leaning forward



Have the subject lean slightly towards the camera for a more engaging pose.

Or shoot slightly from above to get the same effect.

3. Pose – Natural or Confrontational look



Have their body and shoulder turned slightly away from the camera for a natural feel.

Or for a confrontational image, have their shoulders square on to the camera.

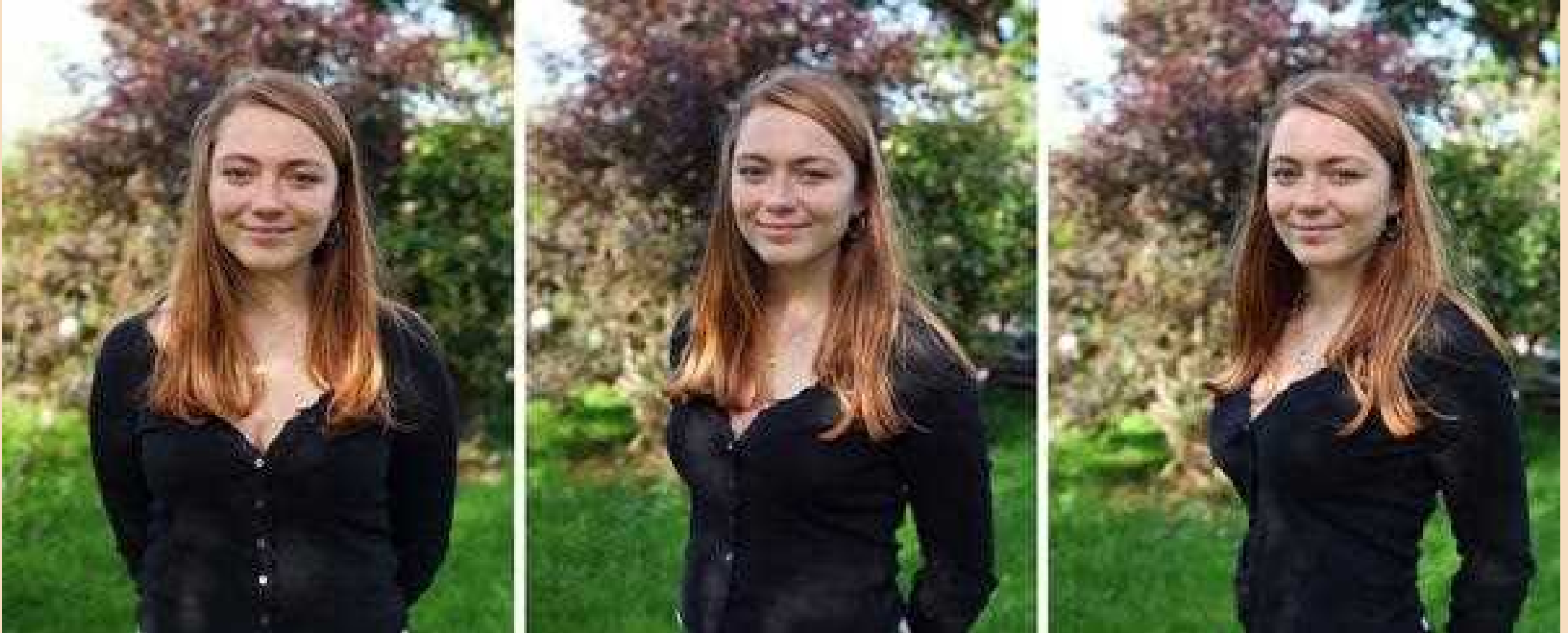
3. Pose – Unusual angle



For something a little different, shoot from an unusual perspective.

Such as very low or very high.

3. Pose – Waists can look slimmer



Waists look slimmer when turned away from the camera.

3. Pose – Props can be useful



Introducing props is a great way to add something special to the shoot.

These could include hats, party glasses, balloons, a pen, a flower or a musical instrument.

4. Ensure subject is well lit – Slightly overcast sky



Generally, natural daylight is the most attractive light source for portrait, especially if you don't have dedicated studio lighting

A slightly overcast day provides a lovely soft light that will be flattering on your subject.

Direct sunlight isn't usually desirable because it creates strong, hard shadows on the subject's face. Better find some shade.

4. Ensure subject is well lit – Backlighting



In strong sunlight, try backlighting, shooting carefully into the sun.

Backlighting can result in a golden glow.

You need to illuminate shadows on the face; a reflector can provide fill light.

4. Ensure subject is well lit – Daylight



Use natural daylight indoors.

For best results, put the subject near a window, with the subject facing slightly towards the light.

Shadows on parts of your subject can add depth and drama to the image.

If shadows are too dark, use a reflector to bounce some of the window light back onto these shadowy areas.

5. Use Flattering Focal Length – 50 mm is standard



How do you know which focal length to use? There's no right and wrong here, but the following information may help.

A 50mm focal length will give you the most accurate representation of your subject because it creates no distortion of their face.

This photo was shot with a 50mm prime lens.

5. Use Flattering Focal Length – Below 50mm – Umm?



Below 50mm you'll start to see some undesirable facial distortions.

Subject's forehead, nose and nearest cheek are exaggerated, other features like ears, chin and hair reduce in size. It can produce amusing results, but not usually desirable.

You need to get closer to your subject to fill the frame, which may be too uncomfortable for you and your subject!

5. Use Flattering Focal Length – 80 mm or 100 mm



Over 50mm can make your subject's facial features appear flattened.

In moderation, it is quite flattering. Extremes make face very wide or fat.

80mm is popular, 100mm also popular.

To fill the frame, the camera has to be farther from the subject, OK for comfort, but the room may not be big enough.

6. Blur the background – Depth of Field



You can control the depth of field on your camera by adjusting the lens aperture.

The aperture is the opening inside your lens, allowing the light to travel through from the front of the lens to the camera's sensor.

Your lens will have a minimum and maximum aperture range.

6. Blur the background – F4 provides depth of Field



Generally, choose the largest aperture of your lens.

F/4 is a go-to aperture for portraits as it should provide enough depth of field to have all subject in focus.

Ensure your shooting mode is Aperture Priority or AV Mode.

6. Blur the background – Aperture and Distance



Experiment with smaller and larger aperture sizes

Golden rule, make sure your subject's eyes and tip of nose are in focus.

If background doesn't look blurred enough, try moving the subject further away from the background.

7. Expose for Subject's face



In portrait photography the most important part of the scene is the subject's face.

So, make sure that the face is correctly exposed – not too dark (under-exposed) and not too bright (overexposed).

7. Expose for Subject's face



For portrait photography it is better to have a background that's too dark or too bright than to have a face which is under or over lit.

7. Expose for Subject's face – Spot/Centre metering



Alternatively, set your camera's metering mode to spot-metering or Centre-weighted metering.

This tells the camera to ignore overly light or dark regions around the edge of the scene which might trick it into under or overexposing the shot.

8. Focus on the eyes



Portrait photos look best if the eyes are in sharp focus.

This improves the sense of eye contact between the subject and viewer, creating a powerful and engaging photo.

So, when shooting portraits, especially with a shallow depth of field, make sure you set your focus point carefully.

8. Focus on the eyes – AF spot metering



Select a central AutoFocus (AF) point positioned on one of the subject's eyes.

Now half-press the camera's shutter button to lock focus.

If necessary, move the camera to recompose the shot for the best composition, then take the shot.

If recomposing, keep the same distance from the subject; otherwise, the eye will no longer be in focus.

8. Focus on the eyes – Eyes have ‘catch lights’



Ensure your light source is reflecting in your subject's eyes.

These reflections called “catch lights” are extremely effective at turning a boring portrait into something really special.

For maximum effect, have only one catch light per eye and aim to have them nearer the top of the eye.

Portraiture Summary

Eight tips to help you take stunning portrait photographs.

1. Take the time to find a good backdrop.
2. Ensure the lighting is adequate to illuminate your subject.
3. Make your subject feel at ease and try out different poses.
4. Try adding some props to add visual interest and context.
5. A small F-Stop gives shallow depth of field with beautiful blurry background.
6. Correctly expose for the subject's face.
7. Choose a suitable focal length to ensure the subject's features aren't distorted.
8. The most effective focus point is usually on the subject's eyes.

Famous Portrait Photographers

Many photographers will develop a style and choose to specialise in a particular type of photography, for example:

- Different cultures
- Situational photography
- Royalty
- Celebrities
- Fashion
- Occasions, e.g. Wedding photography
- Families and babies

Julia Margaret Cameron – 1815-1879



Julia Cameron in 1850-1852
Painted by George Fredric Watts

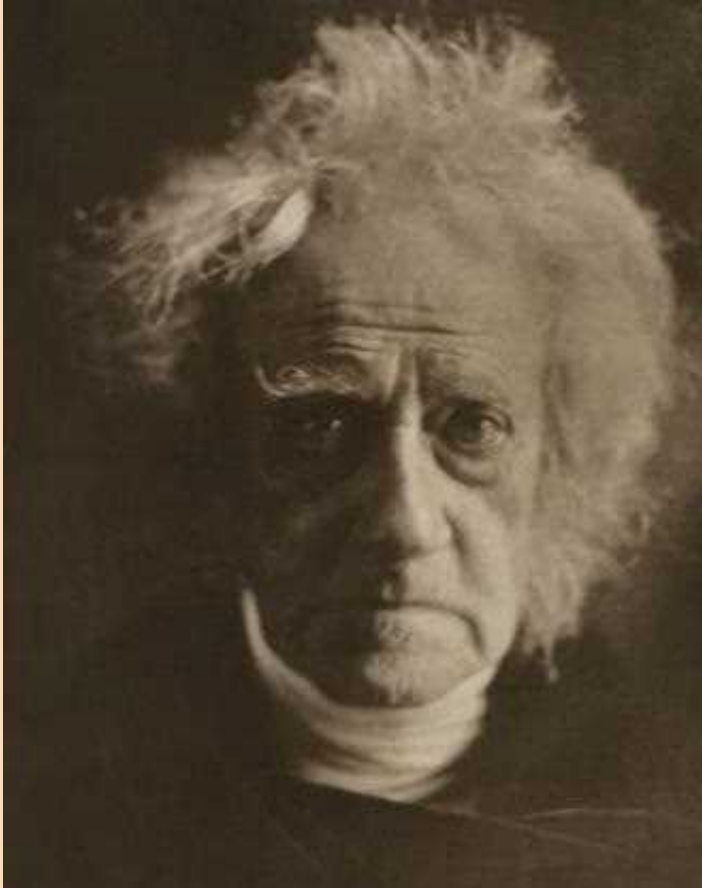
She was 48, her daughter gave her a gift,
the camera equipment of Roger Fenton.

She knew many eminent Victorians.

Her photos were of many literary themes.

Read of her fascinating life at https://metmuseum.org/toad/hd/camr/hd_camr.htm

Julia Margaret Cameron



Sir John Herschel -
Astronomer



Sappho - Lesbos
Greek poet



Vivien and Merlin

Yousuf Karsh – 23 December 1908 to 13 July 2002

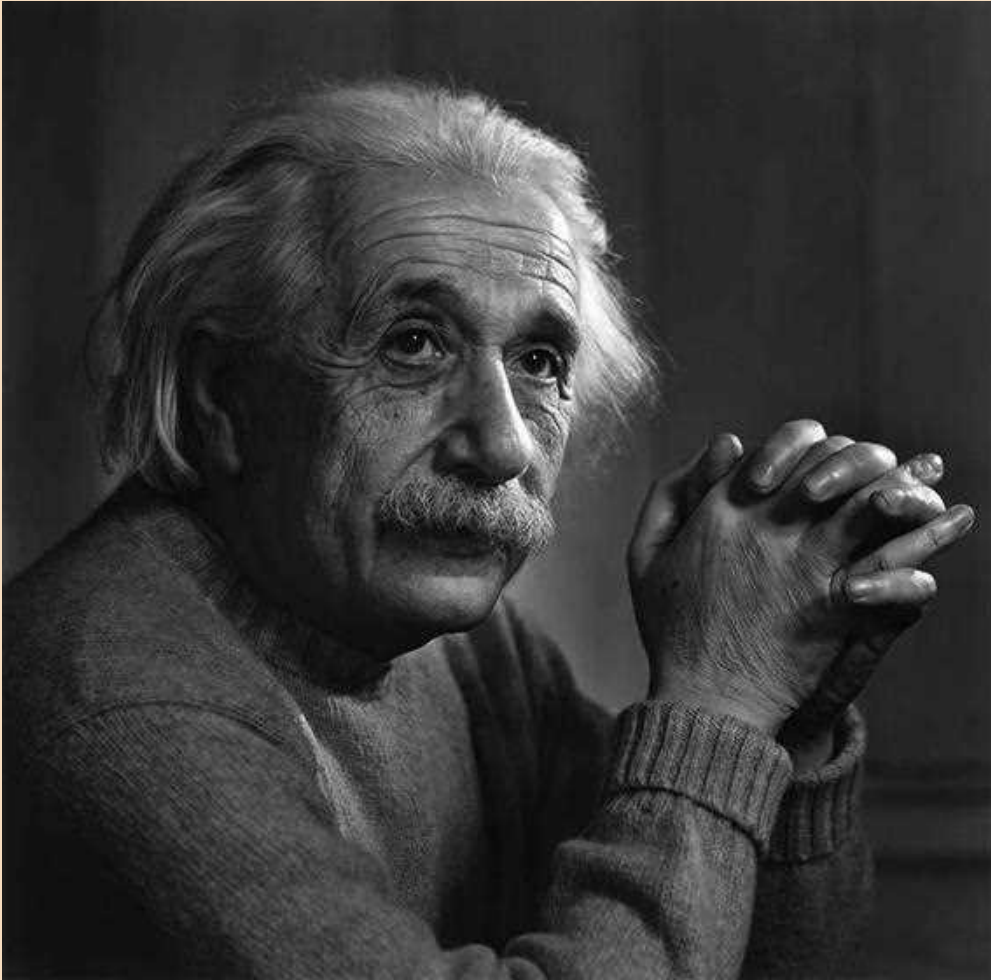


Yousuf Karsh, was an Armenian refugee who migrated to Canada. He has been described as one of the greatest portrait photographers of the 20th century.

By the 1930s, he was established as a significant photographer in Ottawa, where he lived for most of his life.

After his iconic 1941 photograph of Winston Churchill, Karsh went on to photograph many political and scientific people in his 60-year career.

Yousuf Karsh

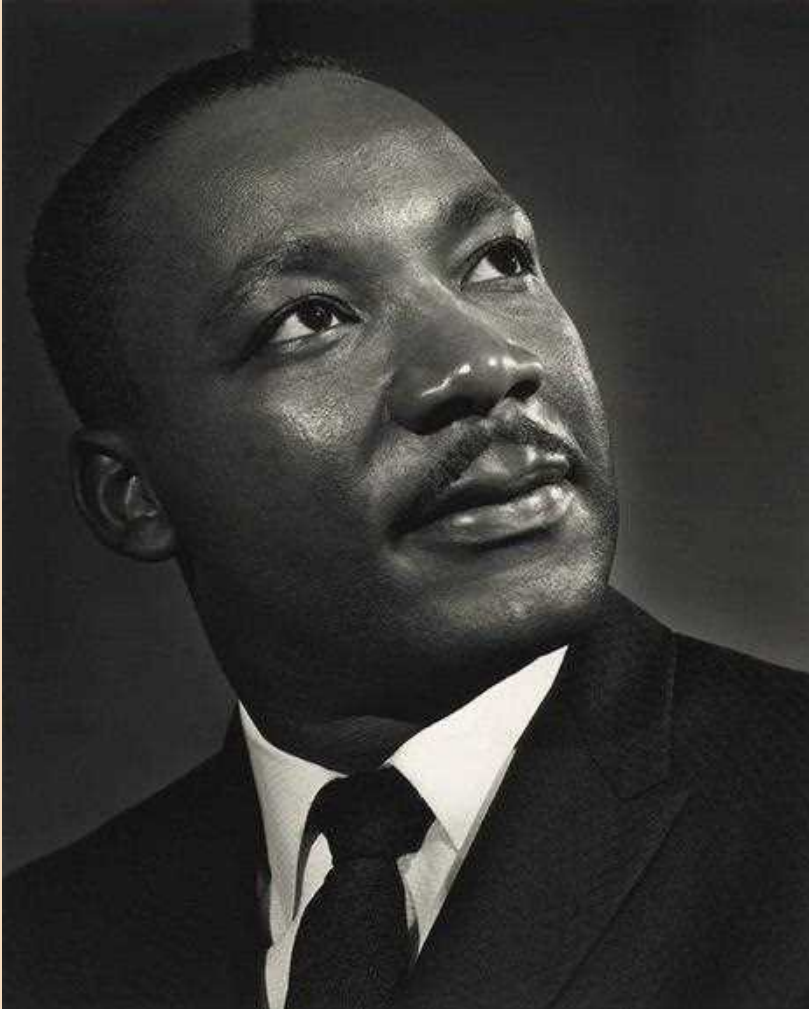


Albert Einstein

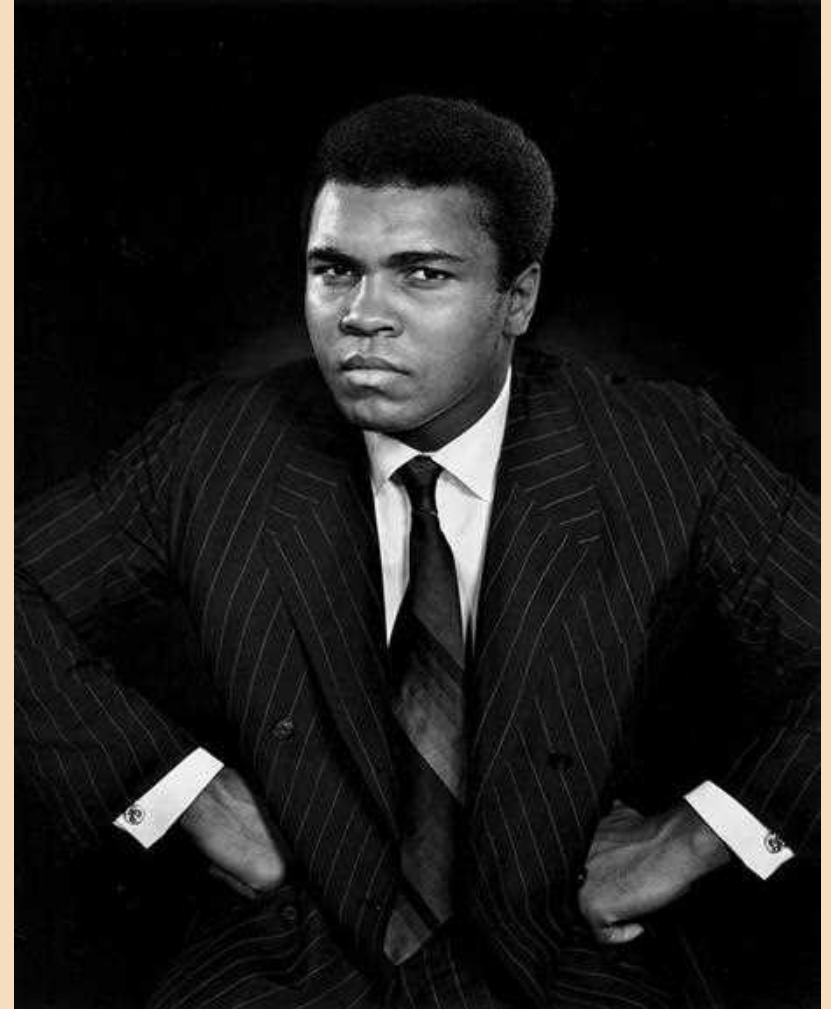


Winston Churchill

Yousuf Karsh



Martin Luther King



Mohammed Ali

Yousuf Karsh



Princess Elizabeth

Karsh's official portrait of Princess Elizabeth was taken at Clarence House in London on July 30, 1951. It shows the young Princess happy and relaxed.

Later, Karsh photographed the Royal Family on three other occasions.

Brock Elbank



Born in Warwickshire, worked in Sydney and is now in London.

Brock began shooting women's fashion and worked for many corporations.

2012 to 2016 – **"Freckles"** series
6,500 applications, selected and
photographed 160 in 35 countries.

Also, known for his project **"Beards"**.

Brock Elbank – Camera



Hasselblad H6D-100

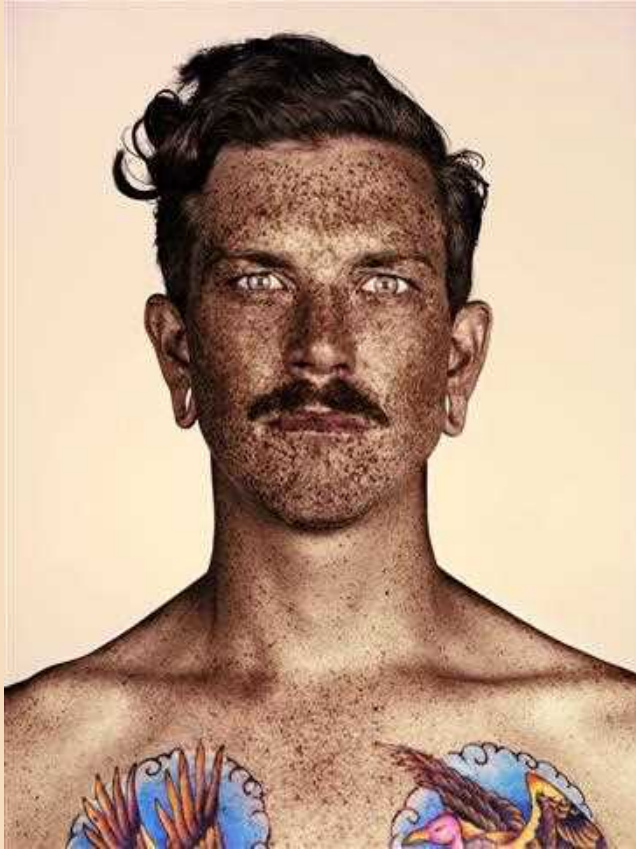
50 MB or 100 MB Sensor size 53.4 x 40.0 mm – ISO 64 to 12,800

Brock Elbank – Freckles (2012 to 2016)



Daisy Trinder

Brock Elbank – Freckles (selection of portraits)



Mikey A. Hamer

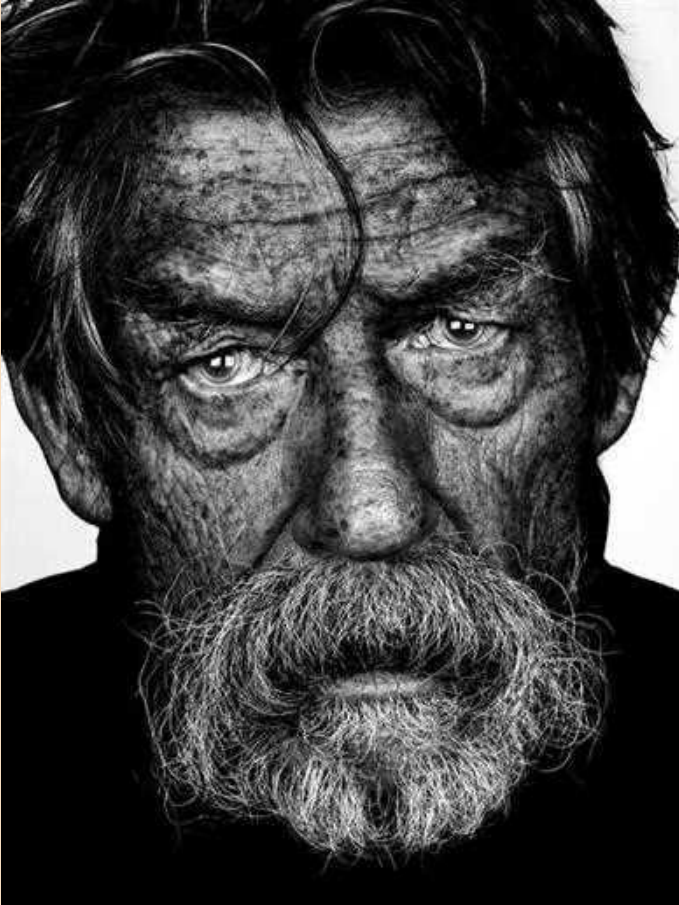


Sean Conway



Josh Hardwick

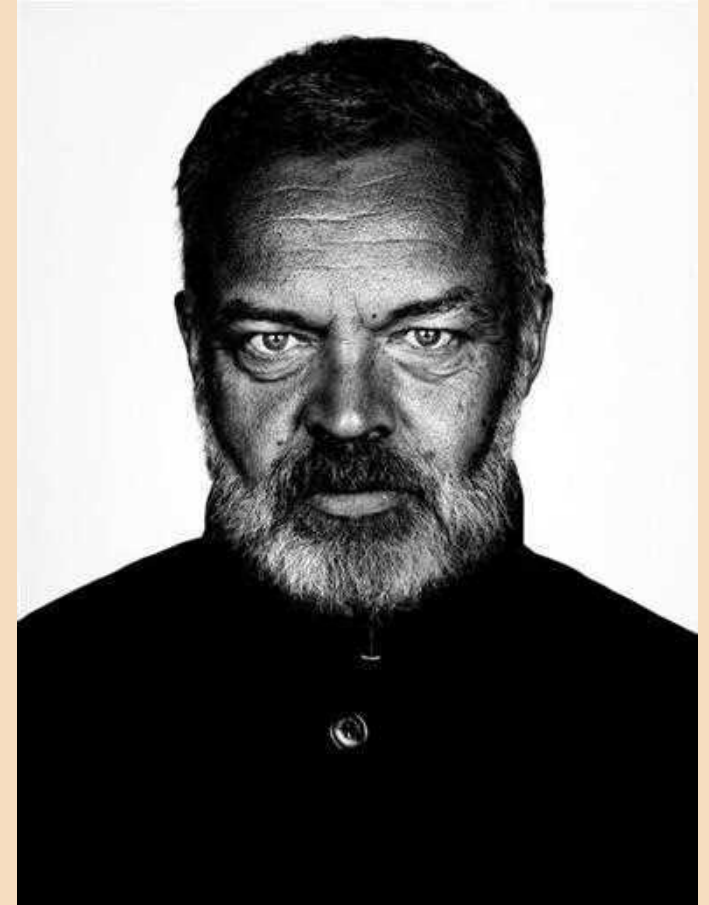
Brock Elbank – Beards



Sir John Hurt

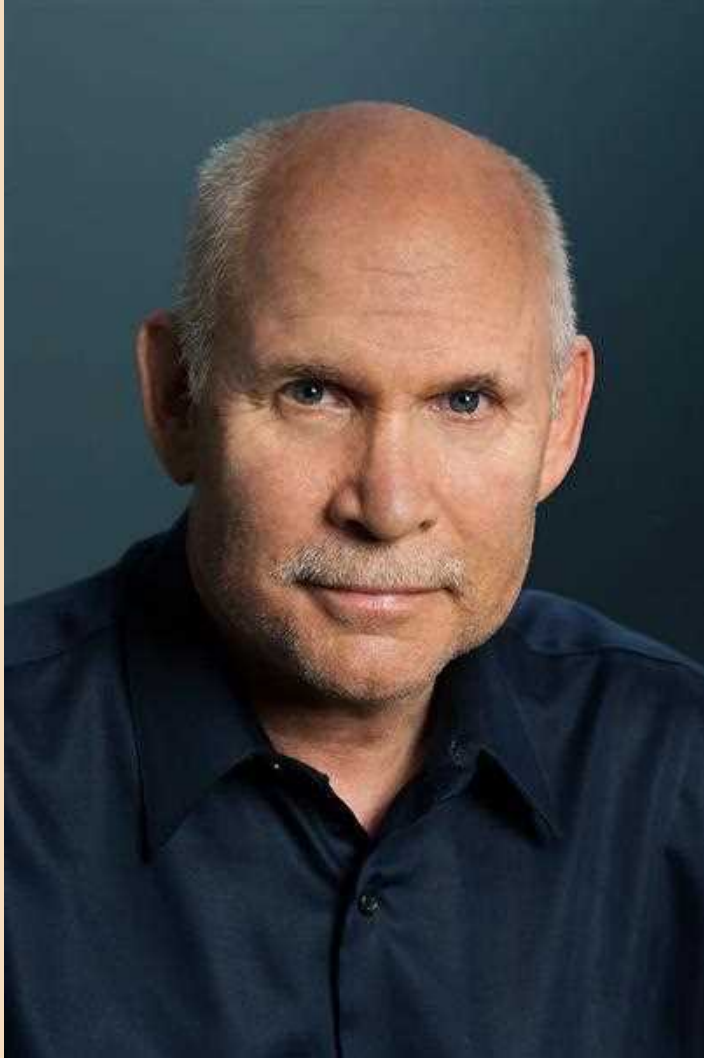


Harnaam Kaur



Graham Norton

Steve McCurry – Cultures, Conflicts, Society



Steve McCurry (born April 23, 1950) is an American photographer, freelancer, and photojournalist.

Steve has photographed many assignments for National Geographic Magazine and has been a member of Magnum Photos since 1986.

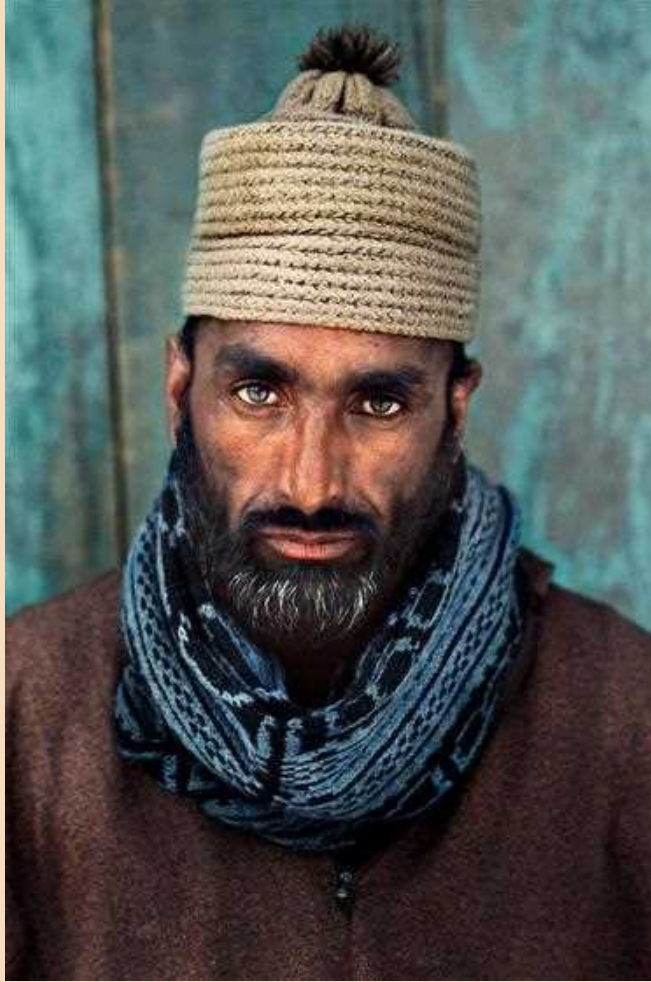
His photo 'Afghan Girl' of a girl with piercing green eyes, has appeared on the cover of National Geographic Magazine. The 'Afghan Girl' photo started a campaign to help Afghan refugees.

It is said that in recognition and gratitude for Steve's efforts Afghan taxi drivers do not charge Steve for his journeys.

Steve McCurry – Cultures, Conflicts, Society



Afghan Girl, Refugee in
Pakistan 1984



Gulmarg, Kashmir, 1999



Los Angeles, California,
USA, 1991

Steve McCurry – Portrait from “*Sensational Umbria*”



Umbria, Italy, 2012

Perhaps, time for a surprise

Some photographs taken in the 1960s

by a then-unknown photographer

using a Rolleiflex T

1965 - New photographer appears on the London scene



Photographed:

- Portraits
- Weddings
- Stage

Most famous portrait:

- Arnold Ridley (known for his role as “Godfrey” in “Dads’ Army” and wrote the play “The Ghost Train”)

Brian came into prominence in 2008 by joining “Field End Photographic Society”

Brian Hillier – Rolleiflex T - 6 x 6 cm (and accessories)



Camera & Case



Film Crank



ISO Indicator



Scene – ISO - F Stop-
Shutter speed

Plate Back – 4 Slides



Western V Exposure meter



Light Cells

Brian Hillier – Studio photos – 300 watt spotlight



Eileen aged 16 – One of the beehive generation of the 1960's

Brian Hillier – Studio photos – 300 watt spotlight



The photographs of Eileen are light in tone (high key)

Portraiture in conclusion

- We have reviewed some of the technical aspects of portraiture.
- We have seen examples of famous photographers and their work.
- On the internet one can find many good photographers.
- Studying these photographers will certainly be interesting.
- It might even help us to take appealing photographs.

I hope you enjoyed this presentation
and found it interesting.

Thank you for watching.

The End