

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

“Your picture depends on what is in it, which has nothing to do with technology. That is the last thing you should worry about.”

—Annie Leibovitz

SUBCHAPTERS

- Objectivity: Where Is the Line?
- Historical Context
- “Capturing” the Person
- What Makes a Great Photograph?

CHAPTER REVIEW

A portrait has many elements. What might not be obvious is that it can contain elements of photojournalism, which on the surface seems to be the polar opposite of portraiture. Annie started out as a photojournalist. In this chapter, she discusses why she accepted her role as a portraitist and why she doesn’t feel limited by it.

It is accepted that a portraitist has a point of view. But any photographer has a point of view, including those who work as journalists. In practice, objectivity is relative. As one of the students says in a class conducted by Annie at the San Francisco Art Institute, “Where is the line?” Most of the students prefer personal work, but Annie is a big fan of photojournalism. She admires what appears on the front page of the *New York Times* every morning.

Annie has been working steadily for decades and has accumulated a body of work that is a record of the culture of our time. She has worked with some of her subjects at many different points in their lives over the years. Arnold Schwarzenegger, for instance, moved from the once outré world of bodybuilding to being a movie star and then the governor of California. His trajectory colored the way we look at the early portraits now. Historical context affects the meaning of pictures. The portraits of Caitlyn Jenner taken for *Vanity Fair* when she was announcing her transition to a woman record a very specific personal and cultural moment. The portraits of Zaha Hadid took on a different weight after she died.

The idea that one photograph can “capture” a person is, Annie says, baloney. She often runs more than one portrait, or even a series, which gives a better sense of the range of identities within one person. She says that she threw out the concept of the decisive moment some time ago.

LEARN MORE

- Check out the [NYT Lens blog](#).

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ASSIGNMENT

- If you look at hard copies of newspapers like the *New York Times*, cut out photos you find particularly striking or inspirational. Pin them to the walls of your workspace, file them away in a folder of materials to look back on, or paste them in your journal.

PHOTO INDEX

2. THE EVOLUTION OF A PHOTOGRAPHER

San Francisco Art Institute, 1969-1971



Rolling Stone, early 1970s



Annie Leibovitz

Jann Wenner and Annie Leibovitz

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4. PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Arnold Schwarzenegger
Pretoria, South Africa, 1975



Arnold Schwarzenegger
Sun Valley, Idaho, 1997
Vanity Fair June 1997 Cover



Caitlyn Jenner
Malibu, California, 2015



Zaha Hadid
New York City, 2003

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4. PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Alexandra Fuller
Kelly, Wyoming, 2016



Sally Mann
Lexington, Virginia, 2015



David Hockney
Bridlington, East Yorkshire, England, 2013



David Hockney and John
Fitzherbert
Bridlington, East Yorkshire, England, 2013

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4. PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Akke Alma
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Akke Alma
Stardust Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Narelle Brennan and her daughters,
Sarah and Briana
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Narelle Brennan
Stardust Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Linda Green
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Linda Green
Bally's Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Susan McNamara
Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995



Susan McNamara
Bally's Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1995

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4. PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Agnes Martin
Taos, New Mexico, 1999



Sarajevo
1993