

## PHOTOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES

*“When you’re a photographer, you see and you can’t stop seeing.”*

—Annie Leibovitz

### SUBCHAPTERS

- Henri Cartier-Bresson
- Robert Frank
- Richard Avedon
- Jacques Henri Lartigue
- Diane Arbus
- Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O’Keeffe
- Sally Mann
- David Hockney on Photography

### CHAPTER REVIEW

In this chapter, Annie goes through the photography books that are most important to her. “They are very, very important,” she says.

The “fathers of 35mm photography,” Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Frank, were Annie’s models when she was a student. She didn’t look to them for technical guidance. It was about seeing. Cartier-Bresson’s *The Decisive Moment* and Frank’s *The Americans* epitomized personal reportage, although they reflected very different temperaments. Cartier-Bresson is lyrical, joyous. Frank is darker. He was a European intellectual traveling across the American landscape and discovering uncomfortable truths.

Richard Avedon’s ability to reveal depths of personality in simple, straightforward portraits is what drew Annie to him. He was a magazine and fashion photographer who expressed himself most fully in his books. *Observations*, with commentary by Truman Capote, and *Nothing Personal*, which Avedon made in collaboration with James Baldwin, are classics of both book-making and portraiture.

Jacques Henri Lartigue’s *Diary of a Century* was for a long time Annie’s favorite book. It was edited by Avedon and designed by Bea Feitler, who was an important mentor to Annie. They created a narrative through Lartigue’s photographs that reflected a life of grace and charm—his parents in youth and old age, his lovers, his passion for cars and planes. It is an optimistic view of life.

Diane Arbus’s *Magazine Work* was published in 1984, over a decade after her death. The simply composed, intimate, unsettling portraits had a profound influence on Annie’s generation of photographers.

Alfred Stieglitz’s photographs of Georgia O’Keeffe, his wife and muse, are, Annie says, “probably the greatest portraits ever done as far as I’m concerned.” It is the level of trust and intimacy they exhibit that draws Annie to them. Intimacy is also the factor that Annie most admires in Sally Mann’s portraits of her children.

David Hockney is primarily a painter, but in the early 1980s he was obsessed with experiments with a camera. The fragmented photocollages he made then struck Annie as “the closest thing I

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know to how the eye sees.” Hockney broke out of the rectangle of the frame and opened up our concept of vision.

### LEARN MORE

- Annie cites Robert Frank and Henri Cartier-Bresson as great influences on her work and perception of photography. [Learn more](#) about Robert Frank and [hear](#) him speak about one of his most important projects, *The Americans*. Read a short biography of Henri Cartier-Bresson, master of the photo essay, and view some of his photographs [here](#).
- Read [this short biography](#) of Richard Avedon and view some of his work [here](#). Annie admires Avedon for his ability to “psychologically create a portrait out of nothing except the person and himself.” Avedon partnered with American writer, poet, and scholar James Baldwin in 1964 for [a book entitled \*Nothing Personal\*](#). You can read Baldwin’s text for the book [here](#).
- Take a look at Lartigue’s *Diary of a Century* and observe how a narrative was constructed through the arrangement of Lartigue’s photographs.
- Study Diane Arbus’s *Magazine Work*. Read Arthur Lubow’s biography of Arbus (*Diane Arbus: Portrait of a Photographer*, Ecco, 2016). View some of her most well-known photographs [here](#).
- Read about Alfred Stieglitz [here](#), and see some of his works, which shaped the American tradition of photography, [here](#). Learn more about Stieglitz’s portraits of Georgia O’Keeffe [here](#), then listen to [this podcast](#) on the letters the two exchanged, which have recently been compiled in *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O’Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz: Volume One, 1915–1933* (Yale University Press, 2011).

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### ASSIGNMENTS

- Look at *The Decisive Moment*, a meditation on photography and a collection of photos by Henri Cartier-Bresson, and *The World of Henri Cartier-Bresson*. Draw on them to develop your own photo essay. Choose a subject from your daily life (this could be anyone from a group of skateboarders you pass in the street to nannies pushing babies in strollers) and take photos that express the essence of who they are, what they are doing, and where they are doing it.
- Distill your images into a few photographs that tell a story, then share them with your classmates in [The Hub](#). Try to explain the story you were attempting to tell. What were you trying to communicate about the moment? The people?
- Annie suggests the following exercise in this chapter: Work like the painter David Hockney by shooting your subject to the left, shooting to the right, and then digitally putting the images together.