

## STUDIO VS. LOCATION

*"I'm an observer. I like to be somewhere. I like to see something unfold. I love the light changing. The studio doesn't give me any of that. I don't have enough to grab onto. I miss the story-telling aspect."*

—Annie Leibovitz

### SUBCHAPTERS

- The Studio
- Simple Spaces and Compositions
- On Location
- Case Study: Gloria Steinem

### CHAPTER REVIEW

When Annie had a studio, she made portraits that seemed to her to depend on composition more than personality. She didn't feel comfortable in the studio as a portraitist. She missed being in a place that had something to do with the person she was photographing.

The shoot with the painter Agnes Martin in Martin's studio in Taos, New Mexico, resulted in one of Annie's favorite portraits. Martin hadn't agreed to be photographed by the time Annie arrived, but after they had had lunch, she asked Annie to come to the place she worked every day. There were two rooms with a small bed and a chair. Annie asked Martin what she did there and she replied that she sat and waited to be inspired. That was the portrait that Annie made. The artist waiting for inspiration. It couldn't have been taken anywhere else.

When Annie photographed Gloria Steinem, the plan was to use a location in Central Park where Steinem went to think and meditate. There was a rock that meant something to her. After the shoot, back in Steinem's apartment, Annie realized that it was there, at her desk, that Steinem was most herself, surrounded by books and papers and the atmosphere of the busy activist she is.

Both the Martin and Steinem portraits are true, but Annie doesn't think of them as definitive. "We are so complicated as human beings," she says. "I can't get it in one photograph."

### ASSIGNMENTS

- Explore the differences between studio and location photography by photographing the same subject in both places.
- Location: Explore how you can use a setting. When Annie shot portraits of Gloria Steinem, that place was her writing desk. For Agnes Martin, it was her bed. Try photographing someone in an intimate place in his or her life. Ask them about the spaces where they spend the most time. When photographing your subject in their space, use this information and these feelings, and translate them visually.

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### ASSIGNMENTS CONT.

- Studio: Create a studio space in your home to experiment in. Choose a room with a bare wall, and set up your camera so that the floor works as a horizon line. Photograph your subject there in a way that best captures his or her way of life, profession, or ethos.
- After you have completed your shoots, review the photographs with your subject. Which do you feel best captures your subject—the location or the studio shot? Look at expression, background, clothing. What do you see when you first look at the photograph? What do you start to notice or see after 30 seconds? If the photograph has “layers,” it will continue to reward you with more information. Look at portraits by your favorite artists and analyze whether they are revealing details after 30 seconds.

# PHOTO INDEX

## 10. STUDIO VS. LOCATION



Tony Oursler  
*New York City, 2000*



Robert De Niro  
*New York City, 2000*



Al Pacino  
*New York City, 2000*



Chuck Close  
*New York City, 2000*



Lucinda Childs  
*New York City, 1999*



LeBron James  
*Akron, Ohio, 2009*



Gloria Steinem  
*New York City, 2015*