

**OPEN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PHOTOGRAPHY 3: ADVANCED PHOTOGRAPHY**

**DISARMING THE POSE**

**Reflective account on OCA Photography 3: Advanced Photography**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This document is a reflective account of my learning experiences on the OCA Advanced Photography course. Most of my observations have been drawn from my learning blog, which can be found at [www.photo-graph.org](http://www.photo-graph.org).

In section 2 I outline the scope of my studies and how this developed. Section 3 discusses my learning experiences on an assignment-by-assignment basis, presented in the order in which they were completed. For each assignment I explain my intention, the research I undertook, and any technical learning. I also discuss my tutor's feedback, my own thoughts on how things went and how I plan to present the work. Section 4 sets out how I have sustained my broader interest in photography. Finally in section 5 I draw together my key conclusions about the course and how I have developed as it has progressed.

## 2. THE LEARNING CONTRACT AND OVERALL AIMS

My learning contract proposed six assignments in my selected genre of portraiture. The assignments were linked in that each involved producing a series of portraits.

Early in my progress through the course, however, my interest was sparked this observation by Roland Barthes. (Barthes 1999, pp 13-14):

‘The PORTRAIT-PHOTOGRAPH is a closed field of forces. Four image-repertoires intersect here, oppose and distort each other. In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares).’

What Barthes is suggesting is that because of the conflicting demands of the subject, photographer and viewer, photographic portraits invariably lack authenticity and take on the character of a masquerade.

Barthes’ statements stimulated my interest in the strategies photographers use to minimise self-conscious posing and theatricality by their subjects. I decided to make this the key thrust of my investigation and I revised scope and timing of my work-plan to achieve this. I titled my new theme ‘Disarming the Pose’ (Greenough, 2013a).

### 3. LEARNING PROGRESSION FROM ASSIGNMENT TO ASSIGNMENT

#### 3.1 Assignment One: Museum

'Museum' is a series of candid portraits taken in London's museums. Candid portraiture is an approach which photographers have often used to catch subjects unawares, so this work fitted well into my redefined theme of 'Disarming the Pose'.

There are many examples of this style of portraiture in the history of photography. In the late 1930s Walker Evans (Greenough, 2013b) made portraits of people on the New York subway with a hidden camera. He later said that the subway portraits were '[his] idea of what a portrait ought to be: anonymous and documentary and a straightforward picture of mankind'. (Evans, 1938). Figure 1 shows one of Evans' photographs.



Figure 1: Walker Evans (1938) 'Subway Passengers' [Gelatin silver print]  
Location: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In the 1950s Harry Callaghan produced a series of candid portraits of women walking out on the streets. These photographs are tight headshots taken with a telephoto lens. By shooting this way Callaghan found '...that people were lost in thought and this is what I wanted...' (Danziger Projects, 2005). In more recent times, Philip-Lorca diCorcia (Greenough, 2013c) has produced two series of candid portraits of people on the streets of major cities, 'Streetwork' and 'Heads'. (diCorcia, 2007, pp 46-63).

What impressed me about these three photographers was their systematic approach. Evans developed and used a special hidden camera and diCorcia pre-planned the exact location for his photographs installing remote strobes to make his exposures. It is also clear that persistence and hard work are needed to produce excellent results. diCorcia, for example, photographed 3000 people to get the 17 photographs, which he ultimately exhibited, for his 'Heads' series.

For my own work I decided to use a small 35mm rangefinder camera to blend in with the other museum visitors. I did not use flash because I did not want to draw attention to myself. I shot in black and white to eliminate distracting background colours, and because I felt it would work better with the inherent graininess of the photographs (resulting from the need to use a high ISO setting). Figure 2 shows one of the photographs from the series.



Figure 2: Keith Greenough (2012) 'Metropolitan Museum, New York #7'  
unpublished photograph from the series *Museum*

I received feedback from two tutors on this assignment (I was in the process of transferring to a new tutor at the time). Both felt that the work had potential and they encouraged me to continue to expand the series. They also pointed out that I seemed to be exploring two things: codes of behaviour, e.g. the use of mobile phones, and the interaction between the visitors and the artifacts. Both agreed that the photographs that captured the concentration on the visitors' faces were more interesting. This had in fact been my original intention but I had clearly not been sufficiently focused on this during the editing process - there is a lesson here.

The photographs are grainy and many were shot through glass or gaps in the exhibits with a shallow depth of field. One tutor felt that this 'really emphasizes this Freudian idea of a voyeuristic point of view.' This is something I had been aware of but had not consciously articulated.

My accompanying notes for the assignment made no mention of how I might present the 'Museum' series. Looking back this was an oversight. I had by default considered that these photographs would be displayed as prints on a gallery wall. I have subsequently reviewed several possibilities and have decided to present the work as an archival box of photographs hinge-mounted on conservation board as in a museum's photography collection. This would reference the way that the artifacts in a museum are catalogued, but would turn it on its head with the museums themselves and their visitors becoming the catalogued items.

Following the example of the above photographers, I have persisted with the 'Museum' project and have now made over 2000 images out of which I have selected 14 for the archival box.

### 3.2 Assignment Two: Market

My aim with the second assignment was to produce a series of portraits of London's market traders. The work was intended as a brief typological survey. The portraits were conceived as environmental studies with each market trader shown within the context of their stall.

I decided to use colour as I thought that this would show the vibrant nature of the markets. I used a digital 35mm rangefinder camera.

I spent many days touring London's markets. I had no preconceived ideas about what kind of subjects I was looking for. The process of selection was somewhat random and in part reflects how responsive potential subjects were to my request to photograph them, as I always asked for their permission. This lack of clarity over my intentions I now see as a fundamental weakness in the work.

I did not direct my subjects as to how I wanted them to pose. In some instances they chose to engage

directly with the camera/viewer. In other instances they averted their gaze. My aim was to try to capture them at a moment when they are no longer simply putting on a show for a tourist photographer.

August Sander (Greenough, 2013d) is regarded as a seminal figure in typological work and has been cited as an influence by many contemporary photographers. A key characteristic of his work is that 'He exhibits the same photographic respect towards each of his models, including the beggar and the marginal 'last people.' (Betancourt Nunez, 2011). Dignifying my subjects was an aim of my own work and I took inspiration from Sander on this.

A more contemporary reference point is Tom Hunter (Greenough, 2013e). His 'Trading Places' series (Hunter, 2012, pp 155-165) are environmental portraits of local business people in his north London neighborhood of Hackney. The subjects are pictured in their business premises surrounded by their stock and tools of their trade. The photographs were inspired by a nineteenth-century model of a local a butcher's shop in the Bethnal Green Museum.

My tutor's opening remarks in his feedback report reflect my own thoughts looking back on this assignment: 'Another strong body of work submitted although tutor and student agree it is not the strongest piece of work in progress at present – it doesn't feel as tight or methodical as your other work.'

He questioned whether the work represented a true typology, viewing it more as street documentary given its relatively spontaneous nature. On reflection I have to agree with this.

Although I began this work before I had settled on my theme of 'Disarming the Pose', my stated aim of catching my subjects at moments when 'they were no longer putting show' is consistent with this. The problem is that I had not thought through how I was going to achieve this. This stands out clearly when I compare Tom Hunter's work with mine (see Figures 3 and 4). Hunter's subjects engage directly. They appear thoughtful, relaxed and proud to have their portrait made. Many of my subjects on the other hand show indifference or a reluctance to pose.

Hunter explained his approach in an interview with Tim Birch, as follows: 'I use a 5x4 camera...I use a tripod. I use Polaroids in the planning stage. My subjects are made to feel important. All of this pays dividends in the finished article.' (Birch, 2012). Hunter's approach succeeds because of the way he works with his subjects and builds their self-esteem. This is partly about process, i.e. using a large format camera sends out a message that 'this is serious', and partly about relationships and collaboration.



Figure 3: Tom Hunter 'Trading Places – Off License' Available from: <http://www.tomhunter.org/trading-places/>. [Accessed on: 13 March 2013]



Figure 4: Keith Greenough (2010) 'Covent Garden, July 2010' unpublished photograph from the series *Market*

I went into this assignment with an open mind. Looking back I feel that it has helped me to develop my skills as a portrait photographer. I had to overcome my natural reluctance to approach people to ask if I

could make a portrait of them. The outcome was not what I had hoped for and I don't think that I will be taking this work further in this format or submitting it as part of my assessment portfolio. However, I have learned from the experience.

### 3.3 Assignment Three: I am an Ironman - Self Portraits

Ironman triathlon is an endurance sport, which involves swimming, cycling and running. Competitors have 17 hours to complete a course of some 140 miles. For the last 8 years I have actively competed in 'Ironman' races all over the world. Training for Ironman takes a great deal of my time. For this assignment my aim was to document this part of my life through a series of self-portraits.

It was whilst developing the concept for this work I became aware of Barthes' ideas on image-repertoires (Barthes 1999, pp 13-14). This led me to think about ways in which I might be able to stop myself from posing as 'the one I want others to think I am'.

During my research I discovered the photographer Rineke Dijkstra (Greenough, 2013f). Her self-portraiture, made during a period when recovering from injury, became an important reference point for my own work. In a recent interview she explained her thinking: 'First I decided to make portraits of myself and not concern myself with posing, do away with it in fact... So, I thought I'll go swim thirty laps, then I'll stand there, too tired to pose...'. (Dijkstra, 2012, pp 46). Dijkstra was searching for a way to disengage the natural inclination to present a desired self-image through posing. Her self-portrait is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Rineke Dijkstra (1991) 'Self Portrait, Marnixbad, Amsterdam, Netherlands, June 19, 1991' [chromogenic print] In *Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective*. New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, pp 46

Elina Brotherus (Greenough, 2013g) has also used similar approaches in her self-portraiture. She has stated 'It's only possible for me to photograph when something really happens, which makes the images authentic, emotionally genuine.' (Brotherus, 1999). She made several self-portraits, for example at the time when her marriage was breaking up.

I decided to use an approach of distraction when making my own series. I made each of the self-portraits immediately after I had finished a training workout, still dressed in my training kit. By making the portraits when I was tired and eager to get on with other things, I was trying to catch myself unawares. All of the portraits have the same formal structure. I am pictured centre frame, three-quarter length against a



neutral background. The lighting is plain. The whole approach was about minimising theatrical posing and photographic artifice. In total I made 30 portraits. Figure 6 shows three as a triptych.



Figure 6: Keith Greenough (2012) 'I am an Ironman Triptych' unpublished photograph from the series *I am an Ironman - Self Portraits*

The portraits revealed an old, wrinkled slightly overweight person, which did not fit with my vision of myself as a vigorous, sleek, older athlete. This brought to mind Diane Arbus's concept of 'the gap between intention and effect', which she explained as people trying to look one way but coming out looking another, which is the way people actually see them. (Arbus, 1972, pp 1-2). Indeed, this series taught me how impossible it is to pin down identity through surface appearances.

I also envisaged my work as a response to the typical 'heroic' imagery of ironman athletes in the media and on the web. Figure 7, which was taken from a friend's personal website, illustrates this type of photograph. I wanted to show what training for an ironman is really like and not some idealised representation.



Figure 7: Unpublished commercial photograph of 'Ironman' triathletes

The feedback from my tutor was very positive. He felt that the work was strong and rigorous (!) – his exclamation mark - and fairly well resolved. One of my own concerns had been about the inconsistency of the lighting arising from my use of a combination of studio and ambient light. My tutor agreed that it was noticeable but was not a major issue.

My tutor's comments mainly related to presentation. I had put forward the idea of displaying the photographs in three grids of prints on the wall. At this stage in my progress through the course my mind was still very fixed on traditional forms of gallery presentation. He suggested that I experiment with different forms, such as video. This I have done and I have now decided to present the work as a 4-minute video to be played as a loop and a composite portrait created by merging the 30 portraits into a single image.

The video fades slowly and rhythmically from portrait to portrait accompanied by the sound of a slow heartbeat. This emphasises the relentless and repetitive nature of training day after day. The sequence of different facial expressions, poses and gestures also draws attention to the illusive nature of identity as evidenced by surface appearance. This is echoed in the composite image, which is to be shown alongside the video installation. (Figure 8). A single facial expression emerges but the fragments from which it is constructed remain visible.

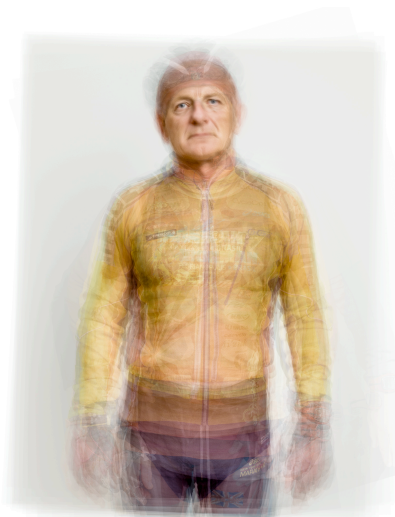


Figure 8: Keith Greenough (2012) 'I am an Ironman'  
[composite digital image] unpublished photograph from  
the series *I am an Ironman – Self Portrait*

### 3.4 Assignment Five: Urban Artists at Work

My original idea for this assignment was to produce a series of conventional portraits of a small group of artists called 'The Cretin Collective'. However, as my involvement with the group progressed I found that I was getting a much more interesting images when photographing them whilst they were working. The concept of exploring artists absorbed in their work would also enable me to investigate another dimension in my broader enquiry into 'Disarming the Pose'. I decided to redirect my work to address this and began to research other photographers who had completed similar projects.

I found three photographers who have made work that is particularly relevant: Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin (Greenough, 2013h), Lee Friedlander (Greenough, 2013i) and Paul Graham (Greenough, 2013j).

*Trust* (Broomberg & Chanarin, 2000) is a series of portraits of subjects immersed in different activities, e.g. at an amusement arcade, at the gym and so on (Figure 9). The portraits are frontal headshots and give no clue as to what the person is doing. The photographers noted that 'the fact that they have agreed to be photographed but then are unable to compose themselves for the camera indicates the level of absence, the loss of self control, the vulnerability of the subject.' (Broomberg & Chanarin, 2000, introductory essay).



Friedlander's *At Work* is a compilation of six separate projects completed over a 17-year period, between 1979 and 1995. It moves from industrial scenes through to telemarketers. (Friedlander, 2002). Here again the subjects are pictured concentrating on what they are doing but in this case they appear resigned rather than animated. Work clearly has a sobering influence on people!

Paul Graham's 'Television Portraits' is an open-ended series of portraits of his friends watching television. (Graham, 1996, pp 126-127). Whilst they were aware of Graham with his camera they are totally focussed on the TV. They appear present and yet absent at the same time. It is this feeling that the subject is both present yet absent that I wanted to capture with my own work.



Figure 9: Broomberg & Chanarin (2000) 'Trust' In *Trust* London:  
Westzone Publishing

I made portraits of over 50 artists. Some I have photographed on several occasions. In every case I obtained the artist's agreement beforehand. The photographs were made in colour using a digital SLR. All were made on location, some inside, and others outside. Figure 10 shows one of the portraits.

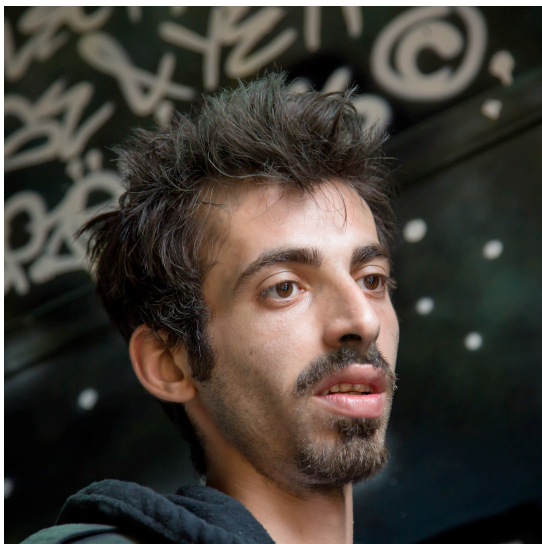


Figure 10: Keith Greenough (2012) 'Loch Ness'  
unpublished photograph from the series *Urban Artists at Work*

The artists are all totally immersed in what they are doing. They do not address the camera/viewer directly or even acknowledge their presence. Because the artists do not make eye contact, the viewer

should feel free to scrutinise them at length without fear of confrontation. For many people, the idea of the 'artist' is fascinating and in a modernist sense, heroic. Indeed a particular question that these portraits may prompt is 'what makes an artist, artistic?'

My tutor liked the concept but thought that I needed to reexamine my edit of the photographs to ensure that a high level of quality is maintained throughout. He also felt that the images where one could see the intensity of their gaze were the most effective.

On reflection I can see that I allowed myself to be caught between two conflicting goals: to present my work as part of my course portfolio and to present the work to the artists themselves in the form of a book. I have subsequently re-edited the work focusing on my portfolio.

In showing the work I was keen to find a mode of presentation that references the subject matter, which is about filling walls with artwork. I eventually settled on the idea of a video that could be projected large onto a gallery wall. The video moves slowly from artist to artist. The accompanying music is intended to create a 'trancelike' mood emphasising the quiet concentration of the artists and the sense of absence in the portraits.

This was the second video I had produced. Clearly video production was becoming a significant element of my work. I decided that I needed to upgrade my technical skills in this area. My tutor had suggested that Apple's Final Cut Pro was regarded as a professional standard for video work. I bought this software and attended a one-day introductory course. I used Final Cut Pro to produce the video for 'Urban Artists at Work' and have subsequently reproduced the video for 'I am an Ironman – Self Portraits' using the software.

### **3.5 Assignment Six: Ironman Family**

Over the last 8 years whilst competing in Ironman triathlon I have made many friends in the sport. What has always struck me about these people is just how diverse they are. They do not conform to a stereotypical image of a super-fit athlete. I wanted to capture this through my work and my next assignment became a series of portraits of these friends – my extended 'Ironman Family'.

The way in which people normally behave when being photographed by a friend is usually conditioned by social conventions. People feel that they should smile, embrace one another and perhaps clown around. This is not what I wanted for 'Ironman Family'. I wanted the portraits to appear natural, unmediated and capable of convincing the viewer that they are seeing the subjects as they really are. I needed an approach to achieve this.

My broad strategy was to disrupt my subjects' 'normal' expectations of how they should present themselves when being photographed by a friend by adopting a highly formalized approach.

I constructed a portable studio with a background, lights and camera mounted on a tripod. This not only enabled me to produce high quality photographs but also demonstrated to my friends that the portrait sitting was a serious undertaking. The process of setting up was slow. This added to the sense of gravitas. I gave my subjects little direction simply asking them not to smile and to look into the lens of the camera. No longer able to 'put on the usual act', all were uncertain about how to present themselves and had to concentrate hard on their pose.

Beforehand, I had asked each of them to wear something that signifies 'Ironman' for them. This could be anything from race kit to a simple finisher's bracelet. This signalled that the portrait was about them as an Ironman. Figure 11 shows one of the portraits from the series.



Figure 11: Keith Greenough (2012) 'Chris, 12 'Ironman' finishes'  
unpublished photograph from the series *Ironman Family*

When designing this process I was greatly influenced by the working methods of Rineke Dijkstra (Greenough, 2013f) and Albrecht Tubke. Both of these photographers adopt strategies of distraction as means of disrupting their subject's efforts at self-presentation.

I have discussed Dijkstra's approach to self-portraiture earlier (see Section 3.3). The main thrust of her work however is an exploration of people in transition – women who have just given birth, young people who have joined the Israeli army, young adolescents and such like. She is interested in how people in transition change. She explores this through series of portraits, each made to a consistent formal structure. Dijkstra uses a large format camera, which in itself operates as a form of distraction. She believes that, because of the time it takes to set up, using this camera 'demands great concentration from both the photographer and the person being photographed'. (Dijkstra 2012, pp 47). She provides her subjects with little direction and undoubtedly whilst waiting for her to get ready, their uncertainty about how to present themselves mounts.

Albrecht Tubke has made a number of portrait series. He too uses a consistent formal structure for each series. His subjects are most often pictured centrally at full length and facing the viewer. His portraits are quiet and understated. Speaking about how he works, Tubke said in an interview: 'the first thing I would tell them is not to smile.... the situation of photographing the people changed immediately. People become aware that this is not a simple photograph, that this is something more.' (Burbridge, 2010, pp10). Tubke demonstrates that methods of distracting the portrait subject can be very subtle. Figure 11 is an example of his work from his 'Citizens' series. (Tubke, 2006, pp 9-48).



Figure 11: Albrecht Tubke (2006) 'Citizens' 'In *Albrecht Tubke: Portraits* Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, pp 29

My series is typological in nature and as I indicated earlier, August Sander is a seminal figure in this genre (see section 3.2). Sander's work is seen as highly objective. Much of this can be attributed to the way he avoided overt photographic artifice. He used the camera simply as a recording device. I also decided to use a fairly 'deadpan' style for my own work as a means of accentuating its objectivity.

I made the portraits in a variety of locations (both in the UK and overseas). These included my own home, hotel rooms, a shop floor and the living rooms at friends' houses. Putting together the portable studio proved challenging. I had to discard several of my early portraits, as I had subsequently changed the format.

Another technical consideration was that I wanted to make very large prints. To achieve this I decided to use a medium format camera with a digital back. I was new to both the format and the digital back and it took some time to perfect my technique.

In practice, my subjects were highly cooperative and thoughtful. Most seemed uncertain, perhaps even nervous. Others were more confident and focused. With a few I was unable to distract them from a pre-determined pose. I decided not to use these portraits for my final selection.

My tutor felt that my work was a 'very well researched and resolved body of work'. His main comments were about how I might draw attention to the obsessive nature of the athletes, which is certainly the case. I have now decided to put the number of Ironman events each has completed in title of the photograph. As several have finished more than 10, this should make the point about obsession!

I had visualised the photographs from the outset as large exhibition prints (close to life size) to be viewed 'on the wall'. This approach is intended to encourage viewers to relate to the subjects as people and to spend time considering the small nuances of expression, posture, and dress. The series represents a particular group, i.e. my Ironman friends, but it also invites viewers to speculate about the general nature of people who take part in such events and why people challenge themselves in this way.

Whilst my photographic references for this work were similar to that for my 'Market' series, I believe that I was much more thoughtful in my approach this time. I defined a clear methodology and I followed this through. I believe this shows through in the quality of the work.

### 3.6 Assignment Four: *45 Seconds...*

In 'A Short History of Photography' Walter Benjamin made this statement about early portrait photography (Benjamin & Bond, 2011, location 220 of 415):

'The procedure itself caused the subject to focus his whole life in the moment rather than hurrying on past it: during the considerable period of the exposure the subject as it were grew into the picture, in the sharpest contrast with appearances in a snapshot...'

Benjamin was commenting on his perception of the effect on the subject's expression of the long exposures needed for early Calotype portraits.

This gave me the idea of carrying out my own investigation into what happens when the portrait subject holds a pose for a long time. Examining this concept fitted well with my broader enquiry into ways of 'Disarming the Pose'.

After researching several alternatives I decided to approach this investigation by making a series of diptychs each made up of two portraits of the same subject. I asked my subjects to assume a pose and to hold this for 45 seconds. I made one photograph at the start and one at the end of this time period. 45 seconds is a typical time exposure for an early photograph made with the calotype process. (University of Glasgow 2013). My subjects were volunteers from my friends and neighbours and do not represent any particular group in society. My intention was to investigate how people generally respond when asked to hold a pose for a portrait.

I was very conscious that what I was doing referenced early photography. I decided to use a 5x4 view camera and black and white film to emphasise this link. I also constructed a headrest similar to ones that would have been used in the 1800s.

Another consideration was the framing of the portraits. I decided on a frontal headshot placing emphasis on the subject's eyes and mouth - the features we use the most for communication. I called the series *45 Seconds...* Figure 12 shows one of the diptychs.



Figure 12: Keith Greenough (2013) 'Simon #1 & #2' unpublished photographs from the series *45 Seconds...*

My subjects found the process quite stressful and this can be seen in the resulting portraits. The relaxed expressions at the start become much more strained after 45 seconds. In many cases the subject's eyes seem to have glazed over as happens when their mind started to wander.

Benjamin's ideas were my starting point but in terms of process and aesthetics I have been more influenced by contemporary artist/photographers Bettina von Zwehl (Greenough, 2013k), Roni Horn (Greenough, 2013l), Luc Delahaye and Chuck Close (Greenough, 2013m).

Throughout her work, von Zwehl has 'developed strategies and rituals to distract the sitters from posing,

none of which are revealed to the viewer immediately.’ (von Zwehl 2007, pp71). She has photographed subjects who have just been exercising vigorously (my own ‘I am an Ironman’ series echoes this), who have just been woken up from sleep and so on. I was particularly influenced by her work *Atemwege 2009-2010* (Bettina von Zwehl 2013). This is a series in which she presents two portraits of each subject, one breathing in and the second breathing out. (See Figure 13).



Figure 13: Bettina von Zwehl (2009-10) ‘Atemwege 2009-2010’ ‘Available from: <http://www.bettinavonzwehl.com/main.html> [Accessed on 19 March 2013].

The differences between the two portraits are small but discernable and more evident in some diptychs than others. Indeed, discovering the difference in one pair made me look again more closely at the others. This is the nature of the response I hope my own photographs will trigger.

Roni Horn is another artist/photographer who makes frequent use of multiple images of her subjects. She does this to explore questions of personal identity and to challenge the viewer’s process of looking. In *You are the Weather* (Horn, 1997) her installation presents 100 photographs (Figure 14). Each is a headshot of the same young woman submerged up to her neck in an Icelandic hot spring. We are invited to link her expression to changes in the weather.

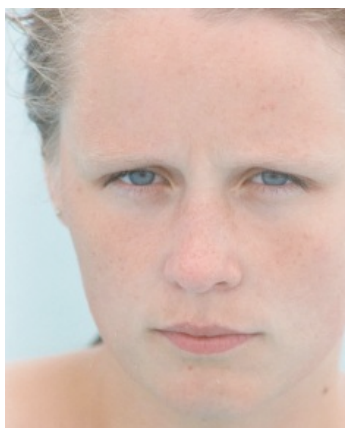


Figure 14: Roni Horn (1997) ‘You are the Weather’ [chromogenic print] Available from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/roni-horn-aka-roni-horn> [Accessed on 19 March 2013]

My idea of using the frontal headshot was influenced by Luc Delahaye’s ‘L’Autre’ (Baudrillard & Delahaye 1999) and Chuck Close’s ‘A Couple of Ways of Doing Something’ (Close & Holman 2006). This style of



presentation is unforgiving and alludes to the use of photography in systems of control, e.g. photographs of criminals. When talking about his portrait subjects Close commented that 'Each one of these people who lent me their image with no control over how it's going to come out, in this act of incredible generosity, had to put away whatever self-image they had of how they looked and accept this other image as being them. That goes beyond generosity.' (Close & Holman, 2006, pp { v.}). I must say that I feel that the subjects for the *45 seconds...* have been similarly generous by allowing me to capture them 'warts and all'. The cover of Close's book is shown in Figure 15.

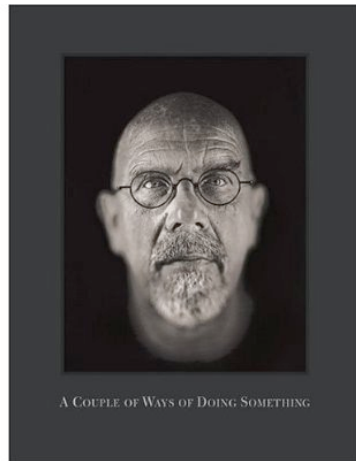


Figure 15: Chuck Close (2006) 'A Couple of Ways of Doing Something' New York: Aperture, cover

My decision to use a 5x4 camera was also prompted by my interest in find out how using such a camera influences the relationship between photographer and subjects. What I experienced reaffirmed the comments made by Tom Hunter and Rineke Dijkstra (see sections 3.2 and 3.5). Using this type of camera is a much more collaborative process. Subjects need to be patient and to keep still. I found myself explaining the process to them carefully as I was making the photographs.

I have attended two workshops to learn how to use a view camera. I also took a short course in film development. I wanted to speed up the turnaround of processing and to exert greater control over quality. I scanned the negatives and processed and printed the negatives digitally. My learning curve was a steep one and I have documented my thoughts on this in my blog. (Greenough, 2012n) and (Greenough, 2012o).

All along I had envisaged the final photographs being shown as printed diptychs. I also considered using video but found through a test that this medium reveals the differences between the portraits too obviously and shortcuts the interaction between the viewer and the photographs.

The photographs are presented as large prints to grab the attention of viewers and to invite them to survey the surface of the faces (as they might do for a landscape). My aim is to engage an instant reaction of 'why am I looking at two identical portraits?'. On closer inspection this will be shown not to be the case, challenging viewers to think about their process of looking and their personal response to photographic portraits. The work shows how subtle changes of expression can significantly alter our perception of a portrait subject, raising questions about what, if anything, surface appearances can reveal about identity. The diptychs explicitly mark the passage of time. This coupled with the fact that most of the subjects are relatively elderly may prompt viewers to reflect on mortality.

My tutor was very positive about the work and suggested that I make it clear in my artist's statement that the work is intended as a general investigation of the nature of the portrait pose rather than a document illustrating a particular group of people. He also thought that I should think more about how I want to present the work and perhaps make a mock-up of a possible gallery installation. I have subsequently drawn up a maquette using 3D design software called SketchUp. (Greenough, 2013p).



#### 4. BROADER PHOTOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT

I have followed many photographic interests outside of the immediate scope of my studies. These include visits to exhibitions, research into photographers I have discovered, reading, personal photographic projects and other courses. I have documented these in my blog.

I have been to many exhibitions of work by individual photographers including Gillian Wearing, Zahra Bhimji, Thomas Struth, Man Ray, Irving Penn, Taryn Simon, Rineke Dijkstra, William Klein, Daido Moriyama and Tom Hunter. I have also visited several collective exhibitions/festivals: Taylor Wessing Portrait Award, Brighton Biennial, Format Festival, Seduced by Art and Fotografie Total (Frankfurt). These provided much food for thought.

Beyond the photographers immediately referenced in my assignments I have also studied the work of Richard Avedon, Valerie Belin, Bernhard Fuchs, Luigi Gariglio, Joel Sternfeld, Thomas Ruff and Alec Soth.

In my reading on contemporary photographic practice, I found Susan Bright's 'Auto Focus' (Bright, 2010) particularly useful when reviewing ideas for my own self-portraiture work. It opened my eyes to the wide range of conceptual possibilities in this genre. William Ewing's 'Face' was another very influential source. (Ewing, 2006). This book showed me that the potential of photographic portraiture goes far beyond simply the faithful representation of likeness and can be used to raise questions about major issues in society. After visiting Gillian Wearing's exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery I followed up on her interest in Erving Goffman's 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'. (Goffman, 1990). His analysis provides a very useful insight into how portrait subjects represent themselves.

I extended my reading to look at the history of portraiture in painting. The 'Seduced by Art' exhibition prompted me to do this. I found Richard Brilliant's book extremely informative. (Brilliant, 2013). Shearer West's survey of portraiture was also an excellent overview. (West, 2004).

I have also pursued several personal photographic projects, some of which may develop into further work for my next course, Your Own Portfolio. These include work in London's East End where I have a developing interest in exploring the changing nature of its population through a portrait series. As a means of practising my technique with the large format camera I made a series of portraits of members of my local Rotary Club in the style of David Octavius Hill's Calotype portraits from the mid 1800s. I have also started work on a series of portraits of landscape photographers, pictured against a landscape that he/she had just photographed. This work is about the relationship between portrait subject and the portrait background.

Finally I should note that early in the course I decided to expand my knowledge of critical theory and its implications for photography. I enrolled on the OCA's Understanding Visual Culture course and I am close to completing this. I did this for the learning not for the points towards my degree as I have already sufficient credits at levels one and two.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND KEY LEARNING POINTS

Looking at the course as a whole I have learned that at the outset of a major photographic undertaking, one's thinking is unlikely to be fully resolved. It is only by pressing ahead and experimenting that one can clarify one's intentions. It is important to keep an open mind and remain flexible. I have also learned that it is vital to think through one's approach to a project on a broad footing, from the concept, through the process, to the detail of how one will interact with the subjects and ultimately to how one will present the work.

My interest in 'Disarming the Pose' has proved to be a real catalyst for driving my work forward. I have investigated a wide range of approaches including candid portraiture, making portraits of the absorbed subject, and finding ways to distract the subject.

My aim throughout has been to make portraits in which the subjects are not consciously posing as 'the one I want others to think I am'. However even when a subject is not consciously posing, their expression, gestures and posture will represent him/her in a particular way. These 'unconscious' poses are often ambiguous making the experience of a portrait a more fascinating and imaginative process for the viewer.

When I started the course I perhaps naively felt that photographic portraiture is about the 'realistic' representation of particular individuals. I have learned that it is so much more. Whilst a portrait does represent an individual, it can also be framed to represent broader groups in society, as is the case in typological series. Portraits can also raise questions about our changing social and technological environment, dealing with issues of identity, race, gender and 'reality'.

At the outset I subscribed to the view that the psychological portrait could reveal the 'inner self'. I now see this is a hollow claim. Nuances of expression, gesture, pose coupled with photographic artifice, accessories, and background context can be used to represent the same subject as many different 'characters'. My studies have reinforced my understanding of how the context and form in which a portrait is viewed influence how it is read and how portraits can be used to challenge the viewer to analyse his/her own process of looking at images of people.

I came into the course with a very narrow frame of reference for my portraiture. I leave with my mind greatly opened and a wealth of ideas to stimulate my work for the future. The course has been an excellent learning opportunity.

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