

Lewis Morley

Video Interview Transcript for the Portrait Explorer in the IT Gallery

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**Did the Arne Jacobsen chair have any fame or notoriety before the Christine Keeler photographs?**

I don't think one can say that I'd like to be remembered for this photograph because unfortunately I am being remembered for one photograph in particular, which had nothing to do with me except the fact that I took it, and that's the Christine Keeler photograph. And that came about because of the circumstances, right place, right time if you like, we did some 'pin-me up' photographs of her with clothes on and then they wanted her to be naked and she objected, I said 'look, lets do it this way' - I got rid of everybody from the studio including the film people, naturally the photos were done for film stills - so I got rid of everybody, even my assistant and I said 'look get behind that chair, take your clothes off, get behind that chair, you won't be seen but you'll be fulfilling what they wanted - a picture of you in the nude' and that's how it all happened.

**Why did you photograph Joe Orton without his clothes on?**

It was Joe's idea of being photographed showing his body because he considered himself to be the fittest and strongest playwright in Great Britain or the world so he thought. So he had these so called nude ... they weren't nude funnily enough in fact he wore a pair of underpants and I almost felt like saying 'hey, leave your socks on', you know, it was a little bit sordid I felt. But I had these photographs of Joe sort of flexing his muscles and they're mostly sort of Joe showing you how fit he was and that was his idea. I took one frame of him sitting in the chair, and he saw the chair, and he said 'I'll use the chair for a pose, I'm not sitting, but standing up with one leg on the chair', then he just sat in the chair and I took one frame and that was it, and so for all the session there was only one frame of Joe Orton on the chair.

**Where were the Beyond the Fringe photographs taken?**

Beyond the Fringe, the group of Beyond the Fringe were taken outside the theatre because I wanted them to be unconventional because the whole play was unconventional. It was the first time I think that satire really hit hard. But it's so British really because the people who used to come to the show every night were the people who were being satirised, so you'd get Macmillan sitting in the audience enjoying himself, being sort of lampooned. These shots were taken, some of them were taken in Brighton, some were taken in London Zoo. The one standing on, underneath the pier was taken in Brighton, on Brighton beach; there was Dudley Moore, Peter Cook, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller. They all made their separate ways after a while and became successful.

**Where was the Lindsay Anderson photograph taken?**

This photograph of Lindsay Anderson was taken on the stage of the production of Billy Liar. Lindsay had seen some photographs I had taken of the Sunday night play reading at the Royal Court and was impressed. Gave me a run through from photographs to do with a play being produced, Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, and he told me that the photographs for the Front of House had already been allocated to a photographer called Tony Armstrong-Jones but he said try your hand at these photographs and I photographed the rehearsal pictures which actually appeared in the programme and he liked my work and said 'My next play is yours' and it was Billy Liar, and I was really thrown straight in the deep end - my first play I photographed was a West End production.

**Are you particularly proud of any portrait photograph you have taken?**

With portraits, there are two or three portraits which I find ... that I still think ... not that I'm proud of, but I'm pleased with. There's one of Cecil Beaton, I met him at a wedding reception, the girl who was being married asked me to take some photographs of her. And she introduced me to Cecil Beaton and I said 'Can I take your photograph?' and he said 'Yes'. And I took, I think I took two frames and it was the end of the film and I was so nervous I said 'Thank you' and he said 'Is that all? I said 'Yes', 'Don't you want some more?' and I said 'No, no that's all right thank you'. I just didn't dare hold up the scene while I put a new film in my camera so I just got a couple of frames of Beaton and one of them turned out to be quite nice I think, just silhouetted against the windows of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea.