PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY
From the Victorians to the present day

Information and Activities for Secondary Teachers of Art and Photography

John French
Lord Snowdon,
vintage bromide print, 1957
NPG P809
© SNOWDON / Camera Press
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Augustus Edwin John; Constantin Brancusi; Frank Owen Dobson
Unknown photographer, bromide press print, 1940s
NPG x20684
Introduction

This resource is for teachers of art and photography A and AS level, and it focuses principally on a selection of the photographic portraits from the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London which contains over a quarter of a million images. This resource aims to investigate the wealth of photographic portraiture and to examine closely the effect of painted portraits on the technique of photography invented in the nineteenth century.

This resource was developed by the Art Resource Developer in the Learning Department in the Gallery, working closely with staff who work with the Photographs Collection to produce a detailed and practical guide for working with these portraits. The material in this resource can be used in the classroom or in conjunction with a visit to the National Portrait Gallery and as follow up material post-visit.

There are two main parts to this teachers’ resource, part one: WIDE ANGLE and part two: ART and PHOTOGRAPHY and a further three in-depth studies of specific aspects of the genre called ZOOM. All four sections can be downloaded separately.

All look at photographic portraits in depth and comprise:

- Reproductions of the portraits
- Contextual information
- Guidance in the understanding of the history of photography and its role in society
- Discussion points for students to examine portraits in detail
- Related activities
- Further related photographic web links

The contextual information provides background material for teachers that can inform the students’ work as required. The discussion points give questions and introduce concepts for the teacher to ask a group or class – it may be necessary to pose additional supplementary questions to achieve the full depth of meaning. Students should pose their own questions, too. It is recommended that these discussions are carried out first when tackling a new portrait or photographic exhibition.

The historical and aesthetic information in this resource relates to the range and content specified in the requirements for the study of Photography at A level. Students should be encouraged to generate their own enquiry topics and make their own photographic portrait studies using the portraits in this resource, as well as attempting the projects suggested here. The activities in this resource provide opportunities to make links between photography and art. In both subjects, the focus is on the key concepts of creativity, cultural understanding and making.

Other activities link critical thinking about identities, how images relate to social, historical and cultural contexts and how ideas, feelings and meanings are conveyed through portrait photography and ultimately how they shape our history. All images are © National Portrait Gallery, London unless otherwise stated.
Questions about a portrait photograph

Use the following questions to help your group appreciate and analyse aspects of portrait photography:

- How big is the image?
- Is it in ‘hard copy’ or on ‘screen’? (analogue or digital?)
- Is it in colour or black and white?
- Work out how the subject was lit; is there any strong directional lighting?
- Where from?
- Is there more than one person in the portrait?
- Is it a portrait showing the sitter’s head, head and shoulders, are they seated or standing?
- Are their hands in view? How do they hold them?
- Does the subject look directly at the viewer or are they turned away or in profile?
- What sort of background is there?
- Is it an interior or exterior view?
- Is it an urban or a country setting?
- When do you think that the photograph was taken?
- Why do you think that the photograph was taken?
- What future purpose might it have?
- Is it worth anything? Financially or sentimentally?
- Could there be any other sorts of values attached to this photograph?
- Do you think that it took much time, money and energy to make?
- Do you think that the photographer needed to be creative to take the portrait?
- Do you like or dislike this portrait photograph? Where was the photographer positioned in relationship to the sitter?
- Focal point: what is the focus of this image? Is there more than one?
ZOOM 1.
The photographic studio

A resource for teachers of A and AS level Photography, focusing on a selection of images of photographic studios from the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

Aims

• Introduce the concept of a photographic studio.
• Discover how the development of photography has changed the type of studio used by professionals.
• Consider the importance of the geographical location of the studio in business terms.

Objectives

• Encourage a critical analysis of historical photographs in order to gain period information.
• Learn more about specific photographic techniques by studying images of studios.
• Gain some insight into the lives of the photographers who worked in these studios.

Angus McBean
Angus McBean, bromide postcard print, 1965
NPG x125283
© estate of Angus McBean
### Zoom 1. The photographic studio

#### Camille Silvy

View of four workers in the processing back yard of Camille Silvy’s photographic studio, 38 Porchester Terrace, daybook number 9140

Camille Silvy, albumen print, c.1862
NPG Ax58962

The same image reproduced on page 244 of Silvy Daybrook, Vol.7. These ‘daybooks’ were large books with numbered reference images stuck into them

Camille Silvy
C.1862
NPG Ax58962-Ax56965

Previously a junior diplomat in Paris, Camille Silvy established himself as one of the leading portrait photographers in Victorian London. He moved to London in 1859 and bought Caldesi and Montecchi’s studio on Porchester Terrace, Bayswater, a smart building with substantial outhouses for processing photographs. As you can see from the images, the processing of the photographic plates (in those days negatives were created onto glass) was done outside using natural light. The house had originally been built in 1829/30 for the painter John Linnell (1792-1882).
Silvy improved the accommodation and it became renowned for its tasteful furnishings and elaborately painted backgrounds. Except for Queen Victoria, he photographed all of the royal family of the time and most of the British aristocracy. In 1864, when he was twenty-six years old, he had forty employees. He kept daybooks; visual records of portrait sittings, with details of each sitter, the date the portrait was taken, and a sample file print stuck into the book (see image). Some of these albums are now in the National Portrait Gallery’s archives. In 1868 he retired due to ill health, thought to have been provoked by the toxic photographic chemicals he worked with, he consequently returned to France.
Activity

Discussion points

Think about the logistics of running a large studio. Discuss what might be the difficulties and advantages of running such a business.

Silvy’s studio was in Porchester Terrace in west London. Discuss the type of location that you would choose were you to be running a photographic portrait studio today.

Projects

Try and find pictures of other Victorian photographic studios to compare with that of Silvy.

Make your own ‘day book’ and fill in details of five sitters, as well as pasting in a reference image of them. You could make these fictitious.
Camille Silvy

View of the back of the house, with seven people on the balcony, and around twelve outside at the back in the printing area.
Camille Silvy, albumen print, c.1862
NPG Ax58945

Detail of outside showing prints drying on racks and workers in their shirt sleeves.
Camille Silvy, albumen print, c.1862
NPG Ax58964

Silvy employed forty workers in his factory-style studio. It was described like this: ‘One room is found to be full of clerks keeping the books, for at the West End credit must be given; in another scores of employees are printing from the same negative. A large building has been erected for the purpose in the back garden. In a third room are all the chemicals for preparing the plates; and again in another we see a heap of crucibles glittering with silver. All the clippings of the photographs are here reduced by fire, and the silver upon them is thus recovered. One large apartment is appropriated to baths in which the cartes de visite are immersed, and a feminine clatter of tongues directs us to the room in which the portraits are finally corded and packed up. Each portrait taken is posted in a book and numbered consecutively’.
A. Wynter, ‘Cartes de visite’, Once a Week, 25 Jan 1862, p137
This image taken on the Isle of Wight was created by Signor Caldesi and it seems ironic that Silvy should have taken over the Caldesi & Montecchi studio premises, as unlike them, he was never to have the honour of photographing Queen Victoria. The photograph exists in both the NPG(P26) and the Royal Collection where the following text accompanies the picture online:

Following the birth of Princess Beatrice on 14 April 1857, Queen Victoria went to Osborne on the Isle of Wight to recuperate with her family. On 23 May Signor Caldesi, of Caldesi and Montecchi, was summoned from London to make a series of photographs of the royal children. Caldesi’s account for these photographs reveals that in the following month the photographer was also called to Buckingham Palace several times to make a further series of photographs. Some of these were part of the flurry of photographic activity that preceded the wedding of the Princess Royal; others were intended as birthday presents for Prince Albert. This is one of the few photographs which show Queen Victoria and Prince Albert with all their nine children. It was taken two days after the Queen’s birthday. A month later, in June 1857, Prince Albert was given the official title of Prince Consort. See http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/
Lallie Charles

Lallie Charles (1869-1919) was inspired by the success of another photographer, Alice Hughes. Charlotte (‘Lallie’) Charles opened her first photographic studio in 1896, at The Nook in Regent’s Park, London. Lallie and her sister Rita became the most commercially successful women portraitists of the first decade of the 1900s.

Lallie Charles
Lallie Charles,
bromide contact print, early 1910
NPG x68950

Rita Martin
Lallie Charles,
sepia-toned matt postcard print, 1900s
NPG x125451
Zoom 1. The photographic studio

Lallie Charles

Beaulah (‘Bea’) Martin, assistant to and sister of photographer Lallie Charles (née Charlotte Elizabeth Martin), and Rita Martin
Lallie Charles, whole-plate glass negative, c.1899
NPG x68949

Activity

Discussion points

Discuss how photographic processes have changed since Victorian times and how this factor has had an effect on the photographic studio space today.

How difficult do you think life would have been as a professional female photographer in the 1890s?
Discuss the potential trials for a woman photographer before the turn of the century.

Projects

Research and list in order of priority the most essential aspects of a photographic studio today.

Look at the image of Lallie Charles’s studio (NPG x68949) and analyse the photograph. Comment on the composition, tonal values, lighting and positioning of the sitters. Reconstruct the work using your friends as models.
Dorothy Wilding (1893-1976) began her photographic career as an apprentice to Bond Street photographer Marian Neilson. Wilding was the first woman to be appointed as the Official Royal Photographer for the 1937 Coronation and opened a second studio in New York in the same year. She is best known for her brightly lit linear compositions photographed in high key lighting against a white background.

Her autobiography *In Pursuit of Perfection* was published in 1958. Her surviving archives were presented to the National Portrait Gallery by her sister Mrs Susan Morton in 1976 and formed the basis of a major National Portrait Gallery retrospective exhibition and catalogue in 1991, also entitled *The Pursuit of Perfection*. 

**Dorothy Wilding’s assistant retouching a photograph of the Queen Mother**
Dorothy Wilding, 1930s
NPG RN43735
© William Hustler and Georgina Hustler/National Portrait Gallery, London

**Dorothy Wilding**
Dorothy Wilding, contact print from half-plate negative, 1956
NPG x35930
© William Hustler and Georgina Hustler/National Portrait Gallery, London
The studio of Dorothy Wilding
Dorothy Wilding,
glossy bromide print, 1930s
NPG x27408
© William Hustler and Georgina Hustler/National Portrait Gallery, London

Notice the mosaic around the wood burning stove, the wooden designer surround, and the semi-circular sunburst mirror with dynamic sculpture in front. These, together with the chic matching wooden desk and parquet floors give the reception area a fashionable refined atmosphere.
Zoom 1. The photographic studio

Dorothy Wilding

Activity

Discussion points

Discuss the different aspects of a commercial studio space, where the client is greeted (see p.45) and where some of the work is done. Think of ways that the photographer can make their client feel relaxed.

Think about the psychology of the sitter when they arrive to have their photograph taken, discuss the reasons they may have for being in different mental states. For example, the photograph might be commissioned for a magazine spread or perhaps a record of a special personal occasion.

Projects

List five reasons for special décor in the reception spaces. Invent some different interior looks that could reflect the studio ethos.

Using pictures from interior design magazines, make a collage of a perfect reception room for a fashionable contemporary portrait photographer. Decide in advance if this studio is to appeal to a young or old market or if it should do both.
Madame Yevonde (1893-1975) was a pioneer in photographic techniques, experimenting with solarisation and associated particularly with the development of the now-defunct Vivex colour printing process.
Madame Yevonde

Discussion points

- Discuss why you think that photographers have fresh flowers in their studios. Discuss further the purpose and symbolism of flowers, what they can mean and why we buy them.

- Think and talk about reasons for Madame Yevonde to record herself looking so fashionable and glamorous in her self-portrait.

Projects

- Take two self-portrait photographs and for each of them choose specific clothes to wear. Make sure that your choice reflects two different moods or aspects of your personality. Give reasons for your choices.

- Looking at the photographs of the studio reception fittings and light sources in Madame Yevonde’s studio and compare and contrast them with those in Dorothy Wilding’s space. Decide which studio you would prefer to visit in order to have your portrait taken.
The firm of Elliott & Fry, founded in 1863 and active until 1963, was one of the most important in the history of studio portraiture in London. Opened by Joseph John Elliott and Clarence Edmund Fry, their first premises were a series of studios at 55 Baker Street, London. H. Baden Pritchard in his 1882 book, *The Photographic Studios of Europe*, records his tour of their extensive galleries, where the predominant decoration consisted of important contemporary art works, which relaxed his sitters before their actual photographs were taken. Posed in the naturally lit ‘glass-room’, they could choose from a selection of fifteen painted backgrounds. Sittings were charged at a guinea (equivalent to £90 in contemporary money), which entitled the sitter to eighteen cartes-de-visite (visiting card size) or six of the larger ‘cabinet portrait’ photographs. This was twice the sum for the best theatre seats and was deemed by many followers of fashion as ‘an amusement a la mode.’

These pictures show the location of the Elliott & Fry photographic studio in Baker Street, they occupied these premises until 1919.

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**Elliott & Fry premises**
Elliott & Fry,
whole-plate glass negative,
3 August 1956
NPG x100941 (left)
NPG x100942 (right)

**Albumen carte-de-visite**
Elliott & Fry,
albumen carte-de-visite, late 1880s or after
NPG x128799
The studio Elliott & Fry
(reception room)
Elliott & Fry,
whole-plate glass negative,
3 August 1956
NPG x100940

This is where the client would be photographed, notice the lighting systems and the different curtain backdrop options. Imagine how you would pose in a similar studio situation and how you would pose your sitter if you were the photographer.
Zoom  1. The photographic studio

Elliott & Fry

Activity

Discussion points

The images show the building and the reception room for clients visiting the Elliott & Fry studio. Notice how both here and at the Wilding Studio, the portraits are displayed. Notice also the amount of white surrounding the portraits and how they are exhibited in the spaces. Discuss this in terms of marketing the ‘brand’ of Elliott & Fry.

Discuss the idea of the professional makeover studio portrait. Do these photographs reflect the ‘real inner person trying to get out’ or are they just constructs that fuel fantasies of being a celebrity?

Projects

Follow this link to learn more about the Elliott & Fry studio which was destroyed in the war. See http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/display/2007/victorian-photographs-by-elliott-and-fry.php List the equipment and other office material that you might have to save if you knew the working studio was suddenly in peril.

Design a carte-de-visite that advertises an imaginary photographic studio from the 1880s. Design a second business card that advertises a contemporary photographic studio.
Zoom 2. The photographic studio

Digital self-portraits

Vogue studio assistants
(Roy Walwood; Gordon Bishop; Jane Felstead; Yvonne Rabbets)

Gordon Bishop,
resin print, 1953
NPG x126324

Activity

Discussion points

Notice how the shadows of the group fall onto the backdrop, the shutter release is held (by Bishop), the size of the camera, and the huge tripod on which it sits. Do you think that this is a mirror reflection or that somebody else took the picture? Discuss the dynamics of a group portrait, the hierarchies and the overall shape that the sitters make in space. Could this be considered as a self-portrait?

Projects

It is interesting to compare this Gordon Bishop photograph to the other photographs of studios. Both are working for commercial purposes, but whilst the others were operating in order to receive paying customers, the Vogue studios invited individuals to sit for their portrait to order, as illustration for one publication. Discuss the relative difficulties of making portraits to order in both circumstances.


Look at the work of these photographers and create some images that imitate their particular brand of image-making. Pay attention to composition, lighting and any specific idiosyncrasies and characteristics that you can identify.
A resource for teachers of A and AS level Photography, focusing on a selection of images that reveal contemporary photographic techniques from the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

**Aims**

- Introduce four contemporary methods of producing photographs.
- Consider the positive and negative aspects of the different procedures.
- Discuss the ways that the techniques influence the resultant works.

**Objectives**

- Consider a variety of ways of communication via symbolism and composition.
- Discuss the use of the title in portrait photography.
- Encourage students to use their aesthetic judgement.
- Think about the importance, effects and function of colour in photography.

**Chrissie Hynde; Jill Furmanovsky**
Jill Furmanovsky, colour archival art inkjet print, 1993
NPG x125363
© Jill Furmanovsky
Digital self-portraits

Ian Breakwell
‘Parasite and Host’
Ian Breakwell,
digital print, 2005
NPG P1291
© estate of Ian Breakwell

Self-portrait with
Fried Eggs
Sarah Lucas,
iris print, 1996
NPG P884(5)
©Sarah Lucas

In these digital prints, both artists use visual symbols on their bodies, almost like badges. Both artists give their portrait a descriptive and dramatic title.

Breakwell’s (1943-2005) cancer is evoked by an invented collage combining flower form and crablike claws. His emaciated body, defensively clasped arms and direct stare confront us with the reality of his situation; his impending death by the no-longer controllable growth of the cancer that has invaded his body.

Lucas (1962- ), with a similarly confrontational stare, sits laconically in a chair, legs apart, challenging us to stare at her fake breasts; two real fried eggs almost slipping from her flat chest. They parody her bosom and refer in an oblique way to the way that the woman’s body has been the subject of much debate within art history, particularly since the 1970s.

Breakwell bares his chest, whilst Lucas’s torn jeans signify male working clothes.
Zoom 2. Contemporary photographic techniques

Digital self-portraits

Activity

Discussion points

- Compare the ways that these portraits have been constructed, on the one hand the computer manipulated ‘growth’ in the Breakwell, and in the Lucas; the ‘real life’ collage of fried eggs.

- Discuss the merits of the different backgrounds; the plain, dramatic and perhaps funerial black in the Breakwell and the chequered floor (possibly a reference to those represented in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings) and the domestic interior in the Lucas.

Projects

- Find out about the different types of digital prints that can be made from computer files. Experiment with three of these to make a self-portrait.

- Construct using Photoshop (or similar programme) an image that represents what is happening to you in your life at the moment. Embed your invented (or found) image into your self-portrait.
Stuart Hall (1932-), a cultural theorist and Professor of Sociology at the Open University (1979-98), was photographed at the National Portrait Gallery, during a short residency by the photographer Dawoud Bey in 1988. The diptych consists of unique Polacolor photographs created with a 20”x 24” Polaroid camera, one of only five ever made.

For information about Dawoud Bey see: [http://www.dawoudbey.net](http://www.dawoudbey.net) where you can see his other portraits made with the 20 x 24 inch large format instant film camera.

The Polaroid process is becoming obsolete, but some photographers are trying to save the technology. See this article: [http://www.wallpaper.com/technology/the-rebirth-of-polaroid/3040](http://www.wallpaper.com/technology/the-rebirth-of-polaroid/3040)
Activity

Discussion points

Discuss or debate the difference between the words ‘collusion’ and ‘collaboration’, in the creation of the portrait photograph. What is the relationship between artist and sitter?

Discuss whether you think that a photographic portrait is a truthful portrait? Discuss the words ‘honest’ and ‘truthful’ in this context.

Projects

Make a diptych portrait in the manner of Dawoud Bey, where the head fills the space of the lens. On one side of the portrait the sitter must look directly at the camera lens, and on the other, away from it suggesting a public and a private dynamic to the portrait interpretation.

Using Photoshop or a similar programme, change the flat colour of the background three times. Notice what effect the different colours make. Choose the one that ‘suits’ the sitter best. The one in which you feel that the colour adds to the portrait and perhaps reflects the personality of the sitter.
Iconic colour photograph

Annie Leibovitz worked for *Rolling Stone* magazine in the early 1970s, when she became famous for her images of rock stars and other celebrities. Her reputation grew with original, unusual and sometimes startling portrayals of public figures. For the magazine *Vanity Fair* she became celebrated for her complex photographs of groups of people united by their fame and profession.

The following discussion questions and activities relate to the famous double portrait she took of John Lennon (1940-80) and Yoko Ono (b.1933).

Leibovitz (b.1949) took this double portrait of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in their apartment in the Dakota building near Central Park in New York on 8 December 1980. Five hours later, Lennon was shot dead by Mark David Chapman just outside the building. Because it was the last photograph ever taken of this very famous singer, composer and ex-Beatle, it has become celebrated in a very special way.
The photograph is unusual in a number of ways. In a reversal of roles, he is the naked partner, whilst Ono wears the trousers (Lennon was known for being a proud father and ‘house-husband’). He appears foetus-like, eyes closed, kissing her tenderly with his arms in an elegant embrace framing her head. It is a poetic stance, not without some tension provided by the balancing toe and the inclusion of the edge of the bed where we see Lennon’s discarded jeans. It is the ‘uncropped’ bed that gives us the clue to the ruse of this work. We know that they are lying on the carpet, but we want to imagine that they are somehow standing upright - the photograph is presented in this way. Ono’s clothing is simple; blue jeans, black sweater and plain earrings. Her magnificent hair spreads out in a voluptuous mane, a halo cascading about the pair. Her hair and clothes are dark in contrast to his pale freckled body and the light tones of the bed and carpet.

This photograph has a resonance beyond its initial high quality as a remarkably creative double portrait of an intensely talented and artistic couple. The circumstances of history have turned it into an iconic work; elegant, passionate, private and simultaneously public; an affirmation of commitment that echoes the politics of their young love. When recently married in 1969, they honeymooned in a peace protest ‘bed-in happening’ in the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel. Footage of this can be seen on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBxIIsirkis

Leibovitz has created a powerful photograph in collaboration with her sitters. The image below by Tom Blau is also a collaboration as it shows the couple just about to kiss. The focus is on their heads and the shape made by their almost joined profiles. It is one of three from a series in the collection, their closed eyes and the inclusion of Lennon’s hand in relation to Yoko’s face evokes a similar intimacy to that of the later portrait by Leibovitz.
Iconic colour photograph

Activity

Discussion points

What is an iconic picture? Find out about this expression and seek out works that are considered to be ‘iconic’. Choose three that you like and analyse these pictures. Do they have anything in common? Is it the person portrayed that makes an iconic photograph, or is it the way in which they have been photographed?

Do you think that you can isolate the parts of the photograph that make up the ingredients for a great shot? Do you think that collaboration with artists would be easier than with, for example, people in the world of business?

Projects

Look at portraits by Leibovitz that seem to have been made in active collaboration with a sitter. Think about how difficult this must be when dealing with certain celebrities. How do you think she persuades them to do some things? Imagine you have been commissioned to photograph the Beckhams. How would you work with them? Do you think that John and Yoko had much input into the way that they were represented?

Decide on a special concept for your photograph using Leibovitz’s work as inspiration. Ask a friend to collaborate with you. Take the photograph and discuss with your colleagues how successful these portraits have been. On plain paper, draw the outline of the shapes made by the figures in the Lennon/Ono portrait and then those made by your own.
Contemporary photographic techniques

New technology and portraiture

Zaha Mohammad Hadid (left)
Michael Craig-Martin, commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery with the support of J.P.M organis through the Fund for New Commissions, wall mounted LCD screen with integrated software, 2008 NPG 6840

Julian Opie, 'Julian in a T-shirt' (right)
Julian Opie, LCD screen with integrated software, 2005 NPG 6830 © Julian Opie / DACS; courtesy Lisson Gallery

As technology develops, so do the means whereby artists use it to produce new forms of portraiture. However, if you look at photographic portraits made in the nineteenth century, one can see that the basic format of contemporary portraits is traditional – often a head and shoulders view.

Artists are consistently inventive and new technologies allow their creativity to flourish. The National Portrait Gallery has a number of innovative portraits that incorporate computer software and this portrait is an example of a marriage of techniques producing a result that falls somewhere between photography, drawing, pop art and film. Michael Craig-Martin’s portrait of Iraqi-born Hadid relies on colour to give it zest and a contemporary style. Originally a conceptual artist, this commission marks a new departure into the realm of portraiture for him. Although the linear portrait is fixed, the colours are controlled by computer software that makes constantly randomised choices. The work slowly changes over time in infinite combinations. These colour combinations could be seen to reflect the many aspects of the sitter’s personality. Known for her signature building design, Hadid is not an architect of modest and demure constructions, like the highly pitched hues of the portrait her work grab our attention whether we like it or not and in this way this portrait could be seen to reflect her personality. Opie’s self-portrait is a computer animation, on an LCD screen. Because of this, it also needs to be seen live, in order for the viewer to appreciate the artful wit of the work. The figure appears to be breathing and from time to time, he blinks both eyes. This ensures our attention and engagement in a different way to the portrait of Hadid.
Zoom 2. Contemporary photographic techniques

New technology and portraiture

Activity

Discussion points

Are these works cartoons? Discuss the notion of an artist’s ‘signature style’. Notice the impact of the black lines set against the bright colour and simplification of the facial features.

Do you think that these portraits would function well as identification tools? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a portrait that moves? Notice how the colours affect the portraits. How long is the time between changes in the portraits? How many colours have the artists used?

Projects

Investigate and research Julian Opie’s artistic style by visiting his website. Compare his way of creating portraits to that of Craig-Martin. View and compare their works on their websites: [http://www.julianopie.com](http://www.julianopie.com) and [http://www.michaelcraigmartin.co.uk/](http://www.michaelcraigmartin.co.uk/)

Ask someone to take a three quarter-length digital portrait photograph of you and print it out. Using a thick felt tip pen, outline your figure and mark up the facial features. With another colour, square up the image and then transfer it onto a larger piece of similarly shaped paper. Now select vibrant colours and use them to bring your portrait to life. You could also animate the portrait using a programme such as Photoshop or by making a flipbook. Look at this: [http://www.designandtech.com/photoshop/tutorials/julianopie/julian_opie_tutorial.htm](http://www.designandtech.com/photoshop/tutorials/julianopie/julian_opie_tutorial.htm)
Six pairs of photographic self-portraits

A resource for teachers of A and AS level Photography, focusing on six pairs of photographic self-portraits from the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery.

Aims

• Introduce the history of photographic portraiture via the self-portrait.
• Introduce different types of photographic processes.
• Consider the difference between collage and Photoshop (or similar program) in analogue and digital photography.
• Discuss collaboration in making photographs, including performance, providing examples for comparative analysis.

Objectives

• Think about the function of the mirror in self-portraiture and within the camera itself.
• Familiarise students with some of the great names in portrait photography such as Cecil Beaton, Camille Silvy and Dorothy Wilding.
• Encourage an adventurous mindset regarding the use of self-presentation in photography.
• Think about the importance of the identity photograph in our world today, at work, for travel, and also the use of surveillance cameras and police records.

Baron Adolph de Meyer (1868-1946)
Baron Adolph de Meyer, gelatin silver print, 1920s
NPG P1367
**Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits**

## Pair 01

**Camille Silvy (1834-1910)**
Camille Silvy, albumen print, May 1860  
NPG Ax50058

**Madame Yevonde (1893-1975)**
Madame Yevonde, colour dye transfer print, 1940s  
NPG P620  
© Yevonde Portrait Archive

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### Activity

#### Discussion points

- Both photographers rely on props to enhance their self-portraits. Think about and discuss the types of objects that you could use to relay messages about yourself to viewers of your photograph.

- Discuss why you think Madame Yevonde has framed herself and what Camille Silvy is telling us about himself in his image?

#### Projects

- Describe what is going on in these pictures by listing and describing what you see, and analysing the elements of the self-portraits.

- Find out what an albumen print and a colour dye transfer print are. Describe how these prints differ from contemporary inkjet prints. Try and find some old prints to look at to help with your descriptions.
Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits

Pair 02

Dorothy Wilding (1893-1976)
Dorothy Wilding, cream-toned bromide print on tissue and card, mid 1920s
NPG P870(13)
© William Hustler and Georgina Hustler/National Portrait Gallery, London

Cecil Beaton (1904-1980)
Cecil Beaton, bromide print, 1927
NPG P219

Activity

Discussion points

- List the different ways that photographs are kept and presented. Discuss family albums and wedding photographs, why are these important to people?

- Notice how these two images are mounted and signed. Discuss what effect this has on how we respond to the portraits.

Projects

- Find an old analogue (non-digital) portrait photograph. Gather together different papers to mount it onto and select two kinds of backdrop for your image.

- Consider the difference that colours and textures make to how we view the image and also how the size of the margins affects this. Think about the ‘objectness’ of the photograph when it is presented in this way.
Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits

Pair 03

Notice how Wilding holds the cable release in her right hand and the assisted self-portrait shows Lucas with his No 3 Kodak Portrait Camera which had a 12 x 10in back adapted to take 10 x 8in film plates. The camera was first introduced in 1933 and was used by Lucas to take most of his portrait photographs whilst working in the film industry.

Dorothy Wilding (1893-1976)
Dorothy Wilding, chlorobromide print, 1930s
NPG x27403
© William Hustler and Georgina Hustler/National Portrait Gallery, London

Cornel Lucas (b.1920)
Cornel Lucas, resin print, 1952
NPG x127031
© Cornel Lucas
### Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits

#### Pair 04

(Mary) Olive Edis (Mrs Galsworthy), (1876-1975)
Olive Edis, sepia-toned matt print on photographer’s card, 1918
NPG x7960

Ida Kar (1908-1974)
Ida Kar, modern bromide print from a 2¼ inch square film negative, 1960s
NPG x88688

### Activity

#### Discussion points

Research different types of cameras, how big and small cameras can be, old cameras tend to be rather cumbersome. Discuss how the size of the camera could influence not only the way that the photographer could take the picture on location, but the circumstances of the shoot regarding the relationship of the sitter to the photographer.

Research the size of lenses on cameras that the paparazzi use today. Brainstorm a list of ways in which photography is part of our everyday lives.

#### Projects

Try and find some very old cameras to look at, notice the way that they are constructed. What do they have in common with digital cameras? Investigate the difference between analogue and digital cameras. Look for pictures of old cameras on the web.

Take portraits of friends in an interior setting with both analogue and digital cameras. Make notes of the process of setting up and taking the portrait photographs. How did the different equipment influence the final outcomes?
**Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits**

**Pair 05**

Cornel Lucas (b.1920)
photographing
Yyonne De Carlo
Cornel Lucas,
resin print, 1954
NPG x127032
© Cornel Lucas

Angus McBean (1904-1990)
Angus McBean,
bromide print, 1953
NPG x39305
© estate of Angus McBean

**Activity**

**Discussion points**

- Look at the studio set up in the Cornel Lucas photograph, discuss how artificial this scenario is. Research nineteenth-century portrait photographs and notice their (often painted) backgrounds.

- Now consider the photographs of Angus McBean, look carefully and research how many images of himself he has created. How do you think he has done this? (Remember this is not a digital photograph and was made before computers were commonly used). Why do you think the picture of him in the camera is upside down?

**Projects**

- Paint a backdrop that depicts an outdoor view, now use this as the background to your self-portrait. Make a collage self-portrait in the manner of Angus McBean but using a computer and digital photography.

- Experiment with composition, cropping and narrative in a series of five images.
Zoom 3. Six pairs of photographic self-portraits

Pair 06

Helen Chadwick (1953-1996) ‘Vanitas II’
Helen Chadwick, cibachrome print, 1986
NPG P874
© estate of Helen Chadwick/Henry Moore Foundation

NPG P884(8)
© Sarah Lucas

Activity

Discussion points

Think about the shape of the photographs here, how do they complement the poses of the artists? Both of these self-portraits have titles that refer to the transience of life, does giving a picture a title help us to understand the artist’s intentions?

Study the clothing and props used in both images, discuss how these evoke different ‘atmospheres’ — perhaps these could be described as ‘feminine grace as opposed to practical confrontation’.

Projects

Create a self-portrait that incorporates a mirror. Give your work a suitably evocative title. Research ‘memento mori’, and investigate particularly Dutch seventeenth-century painting. Use what you discover to help you to create a ‘memento mori’ image of your own.

In Zoom 3, find out how old each of the artists was when they made their self-portrait (sometimes this will be approximate). Most of them are dead now - work out how old they were at the time of death.