

News Release

Tuesday 31 October 2017

NIGEL SHAFRAN ASKS THE QUESTIONS AS NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY DISPLAYS VIDEO PORTRAIT OF BBC RADIO 4'S *TODAY* PRESENTERS



Today Everyday (from left: **Mishal Husain, John Humphrys**) by Nigel Shafran, 2017 © Nigel Shafran

A video portrait of the five presenters of BBC Radio 4's *Today* Programme goes on display at the National Portrait Gallery today to mark the programme's sixtieth anniversary, it was announced today, Tuesday 31 October 2017.

Filmed by in and around the *Today* studio over three days in July 2017, John Humphrys, Sarah Montague, Mishal Husain, Nick Robinson and Justin Webb were questioned by artist Nigel Shafran about their daily lives, domestic habits, shopping lists, conversations and memories.

Their recollections are interspersed with scenes of empty studios and office spaces. The audio content of the new portrait, *Today Everyday*, provides a change of context for the presenters' voices, which for *Today* listeners are normally heard discussing world affairs.



Today Everyday (left to right: **Justin Webb, Sarah Montague, Nick Robinson**) by Nigel Shafran, 2017 © Nigel Shafran

For this project it was felt an audiovisual portrait might be more fitting than a single photograph and the audio element had particular importance, as the public know the sitters primarily through their voices.

The 14-minute film has a simple narrative beginning with the presenters' early morning. In this opening section Sarah Montague talks about looking at her children sleeping with the light from her mobile phone. It then leads on to breakfast habits, coffee, everyday chores. Technology is discussed in-terms of how it assists tasks; how it can provide connections between people. There are panning shots of the studio, which are dark and quiet apart from screens flashing the never-ending news. The film ends with Humphrys' touching recollection of his earliest memory, the death of his sister.

Nigel Shafran's photographic work is celebrated for a perception of moments, figures and objects that appear incidental, but can be revealing, significant, and sometimes humorous and often tender. He says: "My thoughts were concerned with how the *Today* presenters bring world events into our homes, but what is of interest to me are the details of people's lives, the day-to-day domestic, the personal, non-events often overlooked, which include details such as eating habits, shopping lists, relatives talked to, memories.'

BBC Radio 4's flagship news and current affairs programme *Today* is broadcast Monday to Saturday mornings and is the most popular programme on Radio 4 with over seven and a half million listeners a week. Launched on the BBC Home Service on 28 October 1957, *Today*, now edited by Sarah Sands, celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this year.

Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'We are delighted to be marking the *Today Programme's* sixtieth anniversary by displaying this important portrait showing the five presenters sharing their thoughts with us as they take a break from the studio.'

Phillip Prodger, Head of Photographs, National Portrait Gallery, London, says: 'The arc of the film moves from seemingly mundane insights into the everyday lives of the presenters, moving to reflections on technology and communication, and concluding with explorations of family and loss. It portrays the announcers sympathetically, providing a window on their personalities, whilst at the same time offering a touchstone to bigger issues about how the *Today* programme itself, and broadcast media, affects us all. All of which is achieved with humour, insight, and seriousness of purpose.'

John Humphrys (b.1943), is the longest serving presenter on the current staff; he joined the programme in 1987. During his career with the BBC he has also worked as a foreign correspondent in America and Africa, a diplomatic correspondent and presenter of the *Nine O'Clock News*. He has presented *Panorama* and presents *Mastermind* on BBC Two.

Mishal Husain (b.1973) began her career in news and journalism at Bloomberg television before joining the BBC in 1998, soon becoming a presenter on various news programmes. She was BBC's Washington correspondent during the invasion of Iraq. Husain presents the weekend news on BBC One and became the second regular female presenter in the current line-up in 2013.

Sarah Montague (b.1966) began her career in journalist with Channel television in 1991. She joined the BBC in 1997, presenting *Newsnight*, *BBC Breakfast* and various news programmes. She joined the *Today* Programme in 2002.

Nick Robinson (b.1963) began his career in broadcasting on Piccadilly Radio, before becoming a political correspondent in 1986. After working for ITV News he returned to the BBC in 1996 as political editor, a role he kept for ten years. He joined the *Today* programme, taking over from James Naughtie in 2015.

Justin Webb (b.1961) is a journalist that has worked at the BBC since 1984. As a foreign correspondent he reported on the Gulf War, the war in Bosnia and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He presented BBC One's *Breakfast News* and *The World Tonight* before becoming the channel's Europe Correspondent, Washington Correspondent and the North American editor. He joined *Today* in 2009.

Nigel Shafran's (b.1964) observation-led vision began to influence contemporary fashion photography in the late 1980s appearing in magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D*. He is best known for his independent work, which makes subtle narratives from everyday life. His books includes *Ruthbook*, *Dad's Office*, *Flowers for _____*, *Ruth on the phone*, *Teenage Precinct Shoppers* and *Dark Rooms* (2016). Shafran has exhibited internationally and his photographs have been collected by the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Arts Council amongst others.

This is the first portrait of Mishal Husain, Sarah Montague, Nick Robinson and Justin Webb to enter the Gallery's Collection though John Humphrys is represented in the Gallery's Photographs Collection by a digital colour print by Dafydd Bland from 2008, commissioned jointly with Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales.

***Today Everyday* by Nigel Shafran**

Room 32, National Portrait Gallery, London, from 31 October 2017. Admission free.

IMAGE CAPTION *Today Everyday* (Mishal Husain, John Humphrys, Sarah Montague, Nick Robinson, Justin Webb) by Nigel Shafran, 2017 © Nigel Shafran

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National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place WC2H 0HE, opening hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday: 10am – 6pm (Gallery closure commences at 5.50pm) **Late Opening:** Thursday, Friday: 10am – 9pm (Gallery closure commences at 8.50pm) **Nearest Underground:** Leicester Square/Charing Cross **General information:** 0207 306 0055 **Recorded information:** 020 7312 2463 **Website/Tickets:** www.npg.org.uk