

## Photography 1

# Identity and Place



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## Before you start

Welcome to *Photography 1: Identity and Place*.

Since its origins photography has enabled people to make sense of themselves and their environment. In one sense all photography, whether it is directly about the photographer or not, is an exploration of identity and/or place. Throughout history we have used the camera as a tool to appreciate, critique and enrich our knowledge of ourselves and others. How we position ourselves in relation to the world around us continues to be a key concern of photographers working today.

This course gives you the opportunity to discover how photographers have explored this area. You'll consider the diverse ways they have approached their themes and the techniques they have employed to communicate them. You'll be encouraged to reflect upon and critically examine concepts surrounding the genre of portraiture and the representation of place and implement them into your own practical projects in thoughtful and creative ways. A major component of this course will involve developing your confidence and interpersonal skills, including negotiation and collaboration with, and gaining access to, photographic subjects.

Throughout the course you're encouraged to develop independent thought and to engage with your peers in the wider OCA body. The final assignment will be a self-directed study based on themes covered during the course. This is designed to help you make the transition from Level 2 to Level 3 in an experimental and explorative manner and to build upon your creativity.

Your OCA Student Handbook should be able to answer most questions about the basics of this course and all other OCA courses so keep this to hand.

### Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course you'll be able to:

- demonstrate an ability to make technically accomplished photographic work and apply technique purposefully and appropriately
- translate ideas into visual outcomes with confidence and autonomy
- show a developed critical understanding of contemporary practice in relation to historical practice and theory, and the themes explored in this course
- reflect upon your own work and that of others with increasing confidence and critical judgement.

Even if you don't intend to submit your work for assessment, it's useful to take ownership of these outcomes to aid your learning and use as a means of self-assessment. You can check your progress against the learning outcomes in your learning log, when you review your progress against each assignment.

## Your tutor

Your tutor is your main point of contact with the OCA. Before you start work, make sure that you're clear about your tuition arrangements. The OCA system is explained in some detail in your Student Handbook.

If you haven't already done so, please write a paragraph or two about your experience to date. Add background information about anything that you think may be relevant for your tutor to know about you (your profile) – your experience of photography so far, your reasons for starting this course and what you hope to achieve from it.

Email your profile to your tutor as soon as possible. This will help them to understand how best to support you during the course. Arrange with your tutor how you'll deal with any queries that arise between assignments. This will usually be by email or phone.

At the end of each part of the course you'll complete an assignment and send it to your tutor for feedback. Reflect carefully on your tutor feedback and, if appropriate, go back to the assignment and make adjustments to it based on your tutor's comments. If you submit for assessment, making such adjustments demonstrates responsiveness and learning and will help improve your mark. Note down what you've done differently, and why, in your learning log.

You should discuss the form your assignment submissions will take (JPEGs, prints) with your tutor. However, you should aim to submit prints at some stage during the course as this will be important at assessment.

## Studying with OCA

If you haven't already done so, now is a good time to work through the free introductory course 'An Introduction to Studying in HE' on the OCA student website. Don't be tempted to skip this introductory course; it contains valuable advice on study skills (e.g. reading, note-taking), research methods and academic conventions which will stand you in good stead throughout your studies.

The OCA website will be a key resource for you during your studies with OCA so, if you're new to OCA, take some time to familiarise yourself with it. Log onto the OCA student website and go the link below. Watch the video and make notes.

[www.oca-student.com/study-guides/using-website](http://www.oca-student.com/study-guides/using-website)

## Your learning log

Whether you call it a journal, logbook, workbook, notebook or something similar, they are essentially the same thing. The learning log is something you create to record and support your learning and is an integral element of study with the OCA.

Your learning log is where you record your experiences, thoughts, feelings, and reflections on your learning activities. These activities can include courses you went on, exhibitions visited, books read, discussions had, internet sites browsed, TV programmes watched etc. As well as documenting what you've been doing whilst studying this course unit, it's important to add your personal comments, to reflect critically on the work of others as well as your own. You can say what you think about the material you have encountered and how it has helped you with your studies.

If this is your first course unit with the OCA, see the study guide Introducing learning logs on the OCA student website, located in the 'Resources' section, for further guidance on what a learning log is and how to keep one.

## Using an online blog

You're strongly recommended to use an online blog instead of (or in addition to) physical logbooks/notebooks/folders. This will be a requirement for students from 1 August 2017. For more details see this document from the OCA student website - [www.oca-student.com/sites/default/files/oca-content/key-resources/res-files/sg\\_change\\_in\\_photo\\_reqs\\_221216.pdf](http://www.oca-student.com/sites/default/files/oca-content/key-resources/res-files/sg_change_in_photo_reqs_221216.pdf)

A blog is a great way to consolidate and present your course work, as well as providing your tutor and peers with a live view of your learning and reflections. Blogs can be sectioned off into various categories and can make your recorded learning more navigable to these external viewers.

Setting up a blog can be done for free through websites such as Blogger, Tumblr or Wordpress. If this is your first course unit with the OCA, see the study guide Keeping an Online Learning Log on the OCA student website, located in the 'Resources' section. There is also a OCA wordpress blog template in the same section of the OCA student website.

It's also strongly recommended that you keep a separate blog for each of the course units you study, just as you would your coursework, sketchbooks, notebooks and learning logs. However if you insist on keeping the same blog for each course unit, you must separate all entries/posts from one another in order to clearly distinguish what learning was undertaken for a given course unit, otherwise your work could be at risk of being viewed as self plagiarism.

## Planning ahead

This Level 1 course represents 400 hours of learning time. The course should take about a year to complete if you spend around 8 hours each week on it. As with all OCA courses, these course materials are intended to be used flexibly but please keep your tutor fully informed about your progress. You'll need to allow extra time if you decide to have your work formally assessed.

*Photography 1: Identity and Place* is divided into five parts, each followed by an assignment. The first assignment is a diagnostic assignment designed to help your tutor get to know you and your work and decide how best to help you during the rest of the course. If you decide to go for formal assessment, you'll submit this assignment along with the rest, but it won't count towards your final mark. The final assignment is a self-directed project designed to give you some flexibility in terms of which elements of the course you wish to develop further.

Each part of the course addresses a different issue or topic and is separated into projects designed to tackle the topic in bite-sized chunks. As well as information and advice, each project offers exercises and research tasks that slowly build up and feed into the assignments that you'll send to your tutor.

## Thinking about assessment

Once you've completed and submitted your first assignment, you'll need to decide whether you want to go for formal accreditation at the end of the course, i.e. assessment. Your tutor is there to help you decide. There's a study guide to assessment and how to get qualified on the OCA student website, with more detailed information about assessment and accreditation. For assessment you'll need to submit:

- all five course assignments as submitted to your tutor plus any amended versions (i.e. amended in the light of tutor feedback)
- your tutor reports
- your learning log or blog url.

Only work done during the course should be submitted to your tutor or for formal assessment.

## Assessment criteria

These are central to the assessment process for this course, so if you're going to have your work assessed to gain formal credits, please make sure you take note of these criteria and consider how each of the assignments you complete demonstrates evidence of each criterion. On completion of each assignment, and before you send your assignment to your tutor, test yourself against the criteria – in other words, do a self-assessment and see how you think you would do. Write down your findings for each assignment you've completed in your learning log, noting all your perceived strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the criteria every step of the way. This will be helpful for your tutor to see, as well as helping you prepare for assessment.

## Assessment criteria points

The assessment criteria for this course are as follows:

- **Demonstration of technical and visual skills (40%)** – materials, techniques, observational skills, visual awareness, design and compositional skills.
- **Quality of outcome (20%)** – content, application of knowledge, presentation of work in a coherent manner, discernment, conceptualisation of thoughts, communication of ideas.
- **Demonstration of creativity (20%)** – imagination, experimentation, invention, development of a personal voice.
- **Context (20%)** – reflection, research, critical thinking (including learning logs).

## Reading and resources

The reading list at the end of this course guide will be the starting point for your research into the work of historic and contemporary artists, but you should be prepared to do your own research to find out more about the artists and works that interest you. You'll also find a list of useful websites to use as the basis for your online research.

## Referencing your reading

Whenever you read something that you might want to refer to in your projects and assignments, get into the habit of taking down the full reference to the book, article or website straight away. You must fully reference any other work that you draw on if you plan to go for formal assessment. To do this you should use the Harvard system of referencing – there is a guide to academic referencing on the OCA student website. Getting down the full reference at the time will save you the frustration of having to hunt for the details of a half-remembered reference long after the event – and ensure that you don't inadvertently plagiarise someone else's work.

## OCA website and forums

There are lots of other OCA students currently studying photography. Use the OCA website forums as a place to meet them, share experiences and to learn from one another. The forums are a great place to ask questions of other students, perhaps from those who have already done the course. The OCA student website also contains resource material and links to online archives you'll need to use. You may want to start by logging onto the forums and introducing yourself. Find out who else is on the course and say hello.

# Introduction

## Identity

- a. the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing.
- b. individuality or personality
- c. identification

*The Oxford Encyclopaedic English Dictionary*

*A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self.*

(Giddens, 1991, p.54)

## Who are we?

Identity is, and always has been, a contentious phenomenon. What is considered acceptable or desirable has fluctuated and changed throughout history depending on the culture and society of the time. In the last years of the nineteenth century, Oscar Wilde spent his final years living away from Britain because of his sexuality; same sex marriage is now legal in the UK. Depending on who you are and when and where you were born, your identity could provide you with anything from a powerful platform of influence to a lifetime of discrimination.

There are many different ways to determine identity. Identity cards determine it by physical attributes that remain relatively unchanged over time. Their reliability is based on their 'fixedness', but what happens if someone undergoes dramatic physical change? Does this change who they are? Perhaps so.

Other notions of identity are based on attributes we have little or no control over, for example social status, wealth, class, gender, race, sexuality, religious background, etc. In the past such attributes dictated people's standard of living and social mobility. This form of identity differentiation was quite fixed and, with a few exceptions, people rarely moved outside their 'label'.

In today's culture we have a much more fluid understanding of what defines us as individuals, i.e. what our identity is. People often define themselves according to their career, interests, faith or family values. 'Finding our identity' is often about finding a sense of belonging within a certain 'tribe' – finding people who share and affirm our own sense of identity. Key to the contemporary western understanding of identity is that it is self-diagnosed and self-created and gives more autonomy to the individual. Although there are still people who believe that identity is a fixed phenomenon, this idea is becoming less and less prevalent. Yet perhaps because of this fluidity, identity is a difficult concept to pin down.



### Reflection point

When different understandings of identity come into conflict with each other it can be quite contentious.

*When I moved to a suburban area after living in a student area I was shocked to discover the different expectations now on me to be a good neighbour. In the student area anonymity was the norm but here I was expected to introduce myself and tend to my weeds!*

This example is more about collective identity and expectations. You may wish to think about collective or individual identity. Can you think of some examples from your own experience, or of someone you know, where there was a clash of identity? What happened and can you see how fluctuating notions of identity are still potentially problematic? What does it mean, for you, to be yourself?

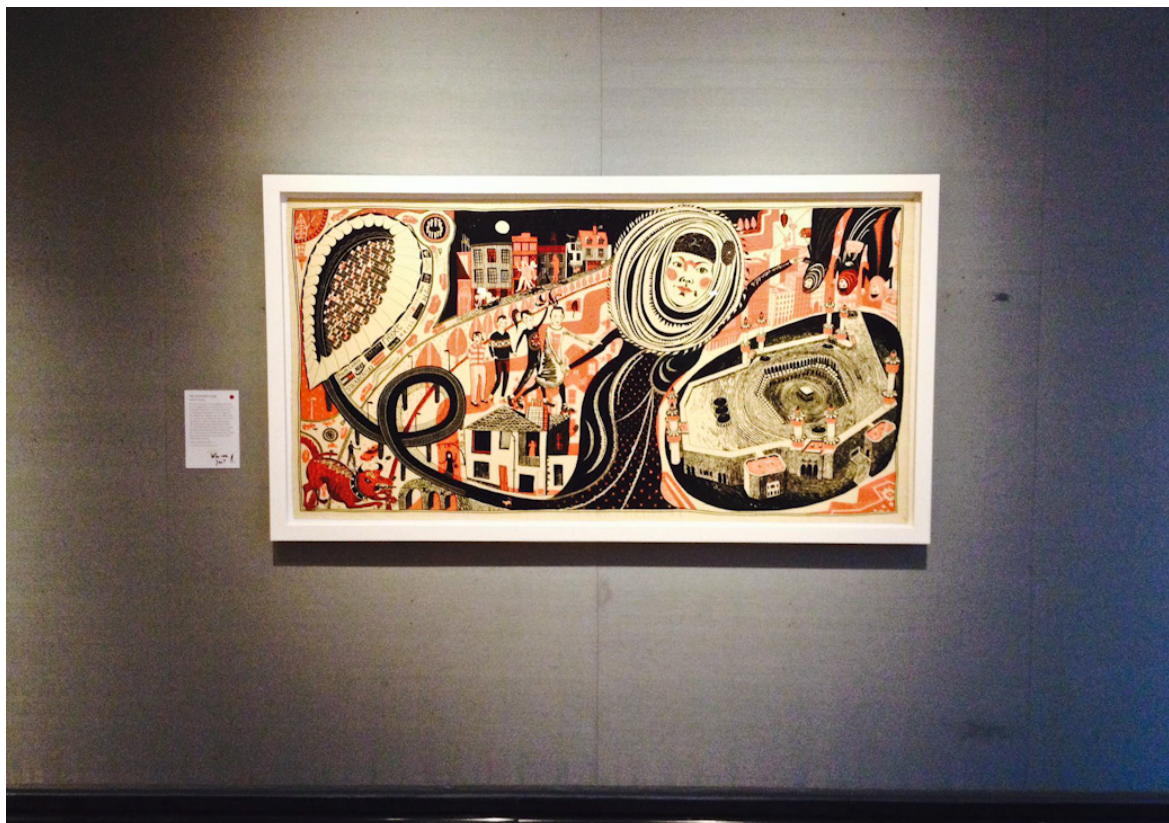
### Photography and identity

Photographs have been used in many different contexts to show identity or an aspect of identity. From the ubiquitous social media profile picture to the police mug shot, photographs can speak of identity in a way that is different from other artistic mediums. This is because a photograph, by its very nature, is inextricably linked to reality. A photograph resembles the likeness of what appeared before the lens. So, in the case of a profile picture, family album or mug shot, identity is based on the repetition of sameness that is evidenced by the image produced by the camera. However, photography can also be used to explore identity beneath the surface of physical attributes. This is what we hope you will find yourself achieving in your photography as you move throughout this course.

## What is a portrait and what makes a portrait artist?

Grayson Perry, in the 2014 Channel 4 series *Who Are You?*,<sup>1</sup> describes a portrait artist as both psychologist and detective. In the series Perry made portraits of ten members of the British public with the aim of understanding and portraying identity more fully. His choice of subject was not arbitrary; he selected his subjects to fit with his vision of challenging idealised notions and readily accepted versions of identity. Often his subjects were, in Perry's words, those living on 'an identity fault line' of sorts: that is, people whose very lives challenge the status quo of accepted identity in modern Britain. Among his subjects were gay parents of a mixed race child, overweight women who had formed a support group to encourage body confidence and strong mental health, a loyalist group in Northern Ireland, a fallen politician and a celebrity persona. Through his carefully considered selection, Perry raised challenging questions about beauty, religion, sexuality, power, race and gender.

As he set about making his portraits, Perry did not simply arrange a meeting to take a picture or make a painting. He got to know his subjects, spent time with them, joined their community, visited their schools, had supper with them, and asked pertinent questions. He took snapshots of objects in their houses, made notes about things that are important to them, and used all of this research and knowledge to build his portraits.



Grayson Perry, *Who Are You?* Installation shot from phone at National Portrait Gallery  
Image by Sharon Boothroyd.

<sup>1</sup> [www.channel4.com/programmes/grayson-perry-who-are-you](http://www.channel4.com/programmes/grayson-perry-who-are-you) [accessed 22.06.15]

This stage of the artistic process is often referred to as the research and development stage (R&D). It is where you are gleaning as much information and inspiration about the subject as you possibly can. When filtered through your artistic vision and technical decisions, this will impact strongly upon the final outcome. In a sense your subjects will recognise themselves and what you, the artist, wants to say by how well the information you've gathered finds its way into the end product.

As a result of Perry's research, his final portraits are powerful statements about each of the ten identities. Seen as a whole, in the National Portrait Gallery, the portraits make up part of a shared comprehension of what identity means to us today. Perry's portraits are not simply reproductions of physical attributes, but intricate, delicate, vulnerable representations, even showing conflicts within themselves. It seems a lot more realistic and honest than the polished veneers we are used to seeing lining the walls of historic houses or on social media.



### **Reflection point**

If you have a social media profile picture, write a paragraph describing the 'you' it portrays. What aspects of yourself remain hidden?

If you were to construct a more 'accurate' portrait of yourself, including various aspects of who you are, what would you choose to include? How might you visualise these things?

Try creating a new, more honest, self-portrait.

## Where are we?

The backgrounds of our lives are not simply brightly-lit backdrops or catwalks to highlight us, the subjects; rather, they inform and direct us – positively or negatively – and become part of the fabric of our lives. Our backgrounds say a lot about who we are and being aware of our environment is important in understanding our identity.

Do you feel at one with the land and belong in the countryside? What does an urban landscape tell us about its inhabitants? How can the spaces between buildings speak of identity? Your 'place' may be more psychological or mental than physical. Perhaps you are an introvert. What does this mean about how you move through physical places? Or perhaps you have a disability. How does this impact your day-to-day life? Does it help or hinder your position in your current environment? These are questions we will think about as we consider the work of many photographers during this course but you might like to reflect upon them now in your learning log.

If you've completed the assignment Square Mile from *Photography 1: Expressing Your Vision*, you might like to think back and reflect on what your 'square mile' means to you. If you haven't, this might be a helpful exercise with which to begin this course, bearing in mind what has been discussed so far about who we are and what our sense of place brings to our identity.

## Exercise The Square Mile

*In our earliest years we know a patch of ground in a detail we will never know anywhere again – site of discovery and putting names to things – people and places – working with difference and similitude – favourite places, places to avoid – neighbours and their habits, gestures and stories – textures, smells – also of play, imagination, experiment – finding the best location for doing things – creating worlds under our own control, fantasy landscapes.*

(Professor Mike Pearson)

Photographers and artists have always found inspiration in their immediate location. There is a concept within Welsh culture called Y Filltir Sgwar (The Square Mile), described above by Professor Mike Pearson. It is the intimate connection between people and their childhood 'home' surroundings.

Make a series of 6–12 photographs in response to this concept. Use this as an opportunity to take a fresh and experimental look at your surroundings. You may wish to re-trace places you know very well, examining how they might have changed; or, particularly if you're in a new environment, you may wish to use photography to explore your new surroundings and meet some of the people around you.

You may wish to explore the concept of Y Filltir Sgwar further, or you may deviate from this. You may want to focus on architecture and landscape, or you may prefer to photograph the people who you think have an interesting connection to the square mile within which you currently find yourself.

You'll probably need to shoot more than 12 photographs then make a final edit. Try to make your final set of photographs 'sit' together as a series to communicate your idea. Give your photographs titles or write short captions if you wish.

However you choose to approach this exercise, it should communicate something about your identity: your interests, motivations, and your ambitions for your photography. There's no 'right' or 'wrong' way to respond to this brief, as long as you try to push yourself out of your comfort zone in terms of subject matter. Try out new approaches rather than sticking to what you think you're most successful at.

Write up to 500 words of reflection on this exercise. If you haven't done any reflective writing before, read the next section before you start.

## Reflective writing

As you develop as a photographer, it's important not only to develop strong technical skills but to use them effectively to promote your ideas and intentions. Your practical work should reflect what you've been learning both in terms of technique and your conceptual intentions.

Self-reflective writing will help you to order your own thoughts but will also help your tutor and course assessors (if you go down this route) to understand your intentions, how you intend to carry them out, and how the result meets, or fails to meet, your intentions. Keep your reflective accounts relevant and concise. Be critical of your own practice – not necessarily negative, but thoughtful and reflective, perhaps with a little distance. Write factually about how your technical decisions, ideas and contextualisation (see below) have come together to create a successful (or, in some cases, not so successful) final outcome. Give reasons as to why you believe the outcome is successful/unsuccessful; this will help you progress next time and will provide a basis for discussion with your tutor. At assessment it will also demonstrate how well you understand your own work, which is very important.

Idea books and diaries can be useful adjuncts to the learning log that records your artistic journey. Get into the habit of making notes as you go about your normal routines; these may prove very useful when you look back on them later.

One thing tutors and assessors will continually refer to is the need for contextualisation and critical analysis. Perhaps it is helpful if we elaborate here on what we mean.

## Contextualisation

In your learning log/blog it is imperative that you demonstrate an ability to contextualise your work within the wider photographic field. Having knowledgeable insight about other photographers and exhibitions, historical and contemporary, that relate to your area of research helps develop your own ideas and hone your critical faculties. This is why in the early stages of Level 1 you're encouraged to broaden the net so you're exposed to as many genres and ways of working as possible. This is still important to continue throughout your studies so that you're continually being inspired and moving outside your comfort zone and because an awareness of different methodologies will help your creativity. Responding to ideas you have for assignments will become a richer and more exciting process the more you're aware of various strategies and ways photographers have worked in the past. Putting your spin on these methods helps you develop your own voice and style. This is a constant and ongoing process so it is always important to do your research and write about it thoroughly.

When you decide upon a genre or subject matter, the research will require a more focused approach. For example, if you've decided upon typology as a method for pursuing a particular theme, it is important that your research in this area covers major practitioners working within typology. You might begin with Karl Blossfeldt's obsessive record-keeping of botanics and move on to Bernd and Hilla Becher's treatment of oil and water towers, for example. Having both a broad and specific knowledge of your subject area will enable you to make informed decisions about the best way to treat your personal project. Comparing the strategies of photographers working in similar themes will help you see what may or may not be useful for your project, and why.

## Critical analysis

The 'why' question is an important one. It is not enough for you to mention, say, the Bechers and their water towers. Critical analysis is about going into detail about the decisions they made, for example the painstaking formulas they adhered to in order to keep their images consistent – size, print distance, the grid presentation, etc. These specific details are what make up the final outcome and it is important that you demonstrate a grasp of all the elements of your project. The more you write about the small decisions you make and the ways in which other photographers challenge you, the more likely you are to produce an informed and coherent body of work. In your written reflections on practitioners, and your reflections on your own work, compare and contrast different ways of working so you can have a better sense of what will work for you.

When you write about books you're reading, including photographers and their ideas, be sure to write about the details of what various writers are saying. In the same way as you would if you were writing about practical work, compare and contrast what the theorists are saying so that you can come to your own conclusion.

## A final word

In this course guide you'll find many projects discussed in some detail. We've aimed to give you a starting point for your research but it's up to you to delve further, to find out more about the projects summarised here and to find out about further projects that aren't covered in this course guide. Of course, some projects will interest and appeal to you more than others, so you'll do more research in some areas than others. Be aware, though, that what you read here is simply a starting point and provides an opportunity for you to do more reading and discovery.

You should now start working through Part One of *Photography 1: Identity and Place*.



## Photography 1

### Part one

# Origins of photographic portraiture



Nadar, *Portrait of Gustave Eiffel*

Use the grid below to keep track of your progress throughout Part One.

| Project                             | Page | Complete |
|-------------------------------------|------|----------|
| 1 Historic photographic portraiture | 22   |          |
| 2 Typologies                        | 25   |          |
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| Exercise                            |      |          |
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| 1.2 Background as context           | 26   |          |
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| 1.4 Archival intervention           | 34   |          |

# Introduction

## *From today, painting is dead !*

This exclamation was made in a Paris street around 1837 by the French portrait painter Paul Delaroche, upon seeing the first photographic image by Louis Daguerre, the 'daguerreotype'. Of course Delaroche was wrong. As is so often the case when a new technology is introduced, it is not as simple as just replacing the old with the new, but involves a period of 'settling' or a redress of balance. The same might be said of the digital revolution and the impact this has had upon the analogue processes that preceded it. Many people still use film and find experimentation with the different processes a more attractive option than the homogenous results achieved through the robotic pressing of CTRL 'P'. However, industries that rely upon imagery in a commercial sense would not now be able to turn back the clock to the halcyon days of chemical odours and darkened rooms.

The practice of photographic portraiture grew rapidly within a couple of decades of Delaroche's dramatic exclamation, as materials and technologies progressed, until there was a portrait photographer using either the daguerreotype or Fox Talbot's calotype in every town and city. Daguerreotype portrait studios struggled to produce more than a few thousand plates per year, so it wasn't until the wet-collodion process arrived (with its use of glass negatives) that the new appetite for photographic portraiture was temporarily satisfied. But what do these early portraits tell us about the society that produced them? And how can contemporary photographers draw on this early work to develop their own artistic ideas?

The first project in Part One looks at what we can get from an examination of early photographic portraiture – as observers looking at them as part of the 'historic' record and as practitioners drawing on what has gone before to drive new artistic expression. Project 2 examines how later photographers have drawn on the early typological work of Emil Otto Hoppé and August Sander, while Project 3 considers how contemporary artists can make use of the wealth of archive portraiture now available.

## Project 1 Historic photographic portraiture

*The portrait is a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity.*

(Tagg, 1988, p.37)

Think about Tagg's comment. What is the difference between the 'description of an individual' and 'the inscription of social identity'?

In the early days of photography, most people were neither described as individuals nor inscribed in terms of their social identity. That's because commercial photographic portraiture during the early years of photography, as with portrait painting, represented only a certain aspect of the community it came from, i.e. those who could afford to pay for it (see Nadar's portrait). That is why it is important to keep a close eye on the term 'history' when discussing photographic portraiture. The past and history are two very different things and can be interpreted differently depending upon who is reading them – geographers, sociologists, artists, economists, etc.



Nadar, Édouard-René Laboulaye, c. 1874-78

*We should distinguish between the two by calling 'the past' everything that has happened before and calling 'historiography' everything that has been written about the past.*

(Jenkins, 1991, p.7)

We can only account for a fraction of what has occurred in the past; most of it has never been recorded, so we need to be careful about reading photographic portraits as a true representation of the past. As Jenkins puts it, history in the sense of writing about the past is inevitably a personal construct, a manifestation of the historian's perspective as 'narrator'. Many sectors of society have literally been written out of history; women, for example, have spent decades trying to write themselves back in. It is no different with photography. Early photography tells us much that is useful and interesting, but it doesn't show us 'the past'.

This is why the invention of the Photomaton by Anatol Marco Josepho in 1926 was such an important, if sometimes overlooked, development in the history of photographic portraiture. The Photomaton automated the process of photographic portraiture and offered immediate results; by cutting out the need for an actual photographer, it had a profound effect in the decades to come. With the democratisation of flying and the arrival of the package holiday, the automated portrait quickly replaced the high street studio portrait photographer as a means of obtaining an inexpensive passport 'identity' portrait.

*... having your portrait 'done' was a symbolic act by people from the rising classes, making their ascent visible to both themselves and to others. The portrait therefore was a public affirmation of significance.*

(Clarke, 1992, p. 84)

Historic photographic portraiture, a source of much interest to academics and historians alike, has informed many contemporary practitioners, providing them with subject matter and a frame of reference for further creative output. Consider the portraiture of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–79) for instance. One of the first female portraitists, Cameron created works using religious compositions and literary scenes as the basis for her creative expression. Through her social position, Cameron had access to many of the household names of Victorian England (Tennyson, Herschel, Darwin, Millais, Browning, etc.) and subsequently went about making portraits of them at her home on the Isle of Wight. Cameron can be considered unique, not just because she was female – in a field which was still considered science, not art, and thus dominated by men – but also because she created her own niche within this field. She disassociated herself from being called either a professional or an amateur by carving her own vocation as 'artistic photographer', concerning herself with a 'deep seated love of the beautiful'.

*When I have such men before my camera, my whole soul has endeavoured to do my duty towards them, in recording faithfully the greatness of the inner, as well as the features of the outer man.*

Julia Margaret Cameron <sup>2</sup>



Nicky Bird, *Tracing Echoes*, 2001

Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

<sup>2</sup> (<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O72861/john-frederick-herschel-photograph-cameron-julia-margaret>)

Edinburgh-based artist Nicky Bird's project *Tracing Echoes* (2001) draws on work created by Cameron at Dimbola Lodge in Freshwater Bay (Isle of Wight) during the 1860-70s. Having spent time herself as artist in residence at Dimbola Lodge, Bird set about photographically mapping the old house and tracing the descendants of Cameron's original sitters. The project thus became part-archaeological and part-genealogical, attempting to create a dialogue with the past and explore the different conditions surrounding 'then' and 'now'. *Tracing Echoes* proposes another way to view Cameron's collection, as it combines facts with speculation. It is not a conventional way of adding to the Cameron archive, but it has now become inextricably linked with it. See [Link 1](#). (You'll find a list of links at the end of this course guide. They are listed separately like this for ease of updating. You can also find them on the student site: [www.oca-student.com/resource-type/ph4iap-course-links](http://www.oca-student.com/resource-type/ph4iap-course-links))

*The portrait photographer's primary purpose has been to reveal the individual before the camera, to transfer the living quality of that individual to the final print.*

(Hoppé, 1945, p. 137)

Much historical portraiture has only come to light relatively recently. During the early part of the twentieth century, the London-based society portrait photographer Emil Otto Hoppé (1878–1972) was a prominent figure in portrait photography, photographing King George V and Thomas Hardy, to name but two. The more widely-known portrait photographer of the 1940s, Cecil Beaton (1904–80), referred to him as 'the Master' but Hoppé is not that well-known today. That's because Hoppé's archive was obscured from the historian's view for almost half a century, as a result of being catalogued by subject matter rather than author; it was sold to the Mansell Collection in 1954 and thus became lost within millions of other 'stock' images. The work was eventually repatriated during the early 1990s by the American curator Graham Howe, who considers Hoppé to be as significant to London, in photographic terms, as Eugène Atget (1857–1927) was to Paris. Hoppé systematically used typology within his portraiture (see Project 2), through both costume and the now largely discredited pseudo-sciences phrenology and physiognomy. See *Occam's Razor* by Bill Jay, Paso Robles, CA: Nazraeli Press (1994) for a short essay on Hoppé.

### Exercise 1.1 Historic portrait

Do some research into historic photographic portraiture.

Select one portrait to really study in depth. Write a maximum of 500 words about this portrait, but don't merely 'describe' what you see. The idea behind this exercise is to encourage you to be more reflective in your written work (see Introduction), which means trying to elaborate upon the feelings and emotions generated whilst viewing an image.

The portrait can be any of your choice, but try to choose a historic practitioner of note. This will make your research much easier, as the practitioner's works will have been collected internationally by galleries and museums and written about extensively.

Read what has already been written about your chosen practitioner's archive, paying particular attention to what historians and other academics have highlighted in their texts.

Post your thought in your learning log or blog.

## Project 2 Typologies

In his 1972 essay 'The Blue Guide', Roland Barthes claimed that in order to *read* the individual human being:

*We find again here this disease of thinking in essences, which is at the bottom of every bourgeois mythology of man.*

(Barthes, 1972, p. 75)

For 'The Blue Guide', men only exist as 'types', with the different regions almost confirming stereotypes of the people who inhabit them.

### Typology, n

1. The systematic classification of types or study of types.
2. The doctrine or study of types or prefigurative symbols, especially in scriptural literature.

(Oxford English Dictionary)

A typology is a conceptual system that partitions a specified field of entities (e.g. Bernd and Hilla Becher's water towers) into a comprehensive set of mutually exclusive types according to criteria dictated by the purpose of the typologist. A typology may be assembled through observation, collection, naming and grouping. Typology can often seem to show more about difference than similarity but, by bringing together the members of a similar class, the photographer implies, and seeks to identify, a common essence (as Barthes suggested). Typology is therefore an act of attribution as opposed to classification, which is simply a process of definition.

German photographer August Sander (1876–1964) is a very important figure within the history of photographic portraiture. He was active during the Weimar Republic between the two World Wars and attempted the classification of the entire German social system through portraiture, based upon the hierarchical medieval guild system. His *People of the 20th Century* was divided into seven sections – The Farmer, The Skilled Tradesman, Woman, etc. A group of 60 portraits from this collection or 'typology' was published in 1929 as *Antlitz der Zeit (Face of Our Time)*. An ambitious project, it was perhaps doomed to fail. In terms of its historic significance however, Sander refused to bow to the pressures being applied relating to the promotion of propaganda materials and fell out of favour with the German authorities. In 1934 the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts ordered that the publisher's printing blocks for *Antlitz der Zeit* be destroyed and all available copies seized.

## Exercise 1.2 Background as context

Study Sander's portraits in very close detail, making notes as you go.

Look at how his subjects are positioned in relation to each other or their environment. Are they facing the camera or looking away? What, if any, props does Sander use? Do these props seem relevant or are they strange? What physical stance does the subject adopt?

Detail was extremely important to August Sander and the background in his portraits was never left to chance. Study the backgrounds of Sander's portraits very closely and reflect upon what you see. Where does the subject sit in relation to the background? If location-based, does the head sit above or below the horizon? Has the background been deliberately blurred through the use of a wider aperture and therefore shorter depth of field? Does the background offer any meaning or context to the portrait?

Make a portrait of someone you know, paying very close attention to what is happening in the background of the shot. Be very particular about how you pose the subject and what you choose to include in the photograph. Ideally, the background should tell the viewer something about the subject being photographed.

Reflect upon how successful this project was in your learning log or blog.



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Ken and Tyler*, 1985 (gelatin silver print)

The portraits of Diane Arbus (1923–71) and Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–89) deal explicitly with identity. Arbus was particularly interested in the relationship between the subject of the portrait and the photographer, whilst trying to investigate the nature of 'identity'. Her subjects tended to be people operating within the margins of society, people that might be considered 'different' or 'unique', or in her words 'singular'. Her work was informed by that of Sander before her and she likened her approach to photography to 'gathering a butterfly collection'. Mapplethorpe's portraits span from celebrity culture through to underground bondage and the sadomasochistic scene in New York during the late 1960s to 1970s. Some of his portraiture and still-life work was considered extremely homoerotic and, at the time, controversial.



Jason Evans, from *Strictly*, *i-D* magazine, 1991  
Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

In 1991, Jason Evans shot a series of tightly choreographed portraits for *i-D* magazine with stylist Simon Foxton, entitled *Strictly*. These portraits, which have now been collected by the V&A in London, depict young black men placed in very suburban settings, dressed as 'Urban Dandies'. The plain frontal stance of the subjects is reminiscent of Sander's portraits taken some 50 years earlier. Evans' portraiture has been regarded by many as the first to foreground fashion portraiture within a discourse about both race and sexuality. Evans himself states:

*I'd been reading about the history of the dandies, and at that time there was also a big raga thing going on .... A lot of sportswear, a lot of conspicuous consumption labels. Things that white people just wouldn't wear ... the syntax was completely upside down .... It was a new vision of Britain. We were trying to break stereotypes.*

(Jason Evans in Bright, 2007, p.22)

Part Four looks at the use of image and caption. In preparation for this, take a close look at the 1972 work by Douglas Huebler entitled *Variable Piece #101*. Huebler took 10 portraits of the photographer Bernd Becher (himself a noted typologist) showing a sequence of deliberate poses Becher was asked to perform (priest, criminal, lover, old man, policeman, artist, Bernd Becher, philosopher, spy, nice guy). A few months after the portraits had been taken, Huebler forwarded them to Becher and asked him to make the correct associations. The two different sequences are then presented to the viewer, the captions determined first by the photographer (Huebler) and second by the subject (Becher). Where these images are presented will determine what order they will be seen in. This typology of the typologist (Becher) therefore uses the photographic caption (normally used in a supportive role) deliberately to create confusion when reading the work.

### Exercise 1.3 Portraiture typology

In response to Sander's work, try to create a photographic portraiture typology which attempts to bring together a collection of types. Think carefully about how you wish to classify these images; don't make the series too literal and obvious.

Once complete, post these portraits on your blog or in your learning log, with a written statement contextualising the work (see the Introduction).

## Project 3 Portraiture and the archive

*The portrait studio flourished on the high street, giving, yet again, opportunities to carve out careers based around local interests and demands. Dorothy Bohm's 'Studio Alexander' attracted Mancunian academe, as well as brides and babies, while Tony Walker's 'Belle Vue Studio' in Bradford catered for recent immigrants to Britain, providing photographs that would make their tenuous foothold in the mother country seem stronger and more permanent.*

(Williams & Bright, 2007, p. 107)

Most cities within the UK will have contained many resident commercial studio portrait photographers working over several decades. Much of this work still exists in archives looked after by various local authorities and agencies. On occasions, an archive will be extensive, complete and well conserved. Such archives provide an insight both into the technological developments in photography and the social history of an area. Liverpool holds two important portrait archives: the Edward Chambré Hardman (1898–1988) Archive in the Liverpool City Library and the Keith Medley (1915–2004) Archive at Liverpool John Moores University.



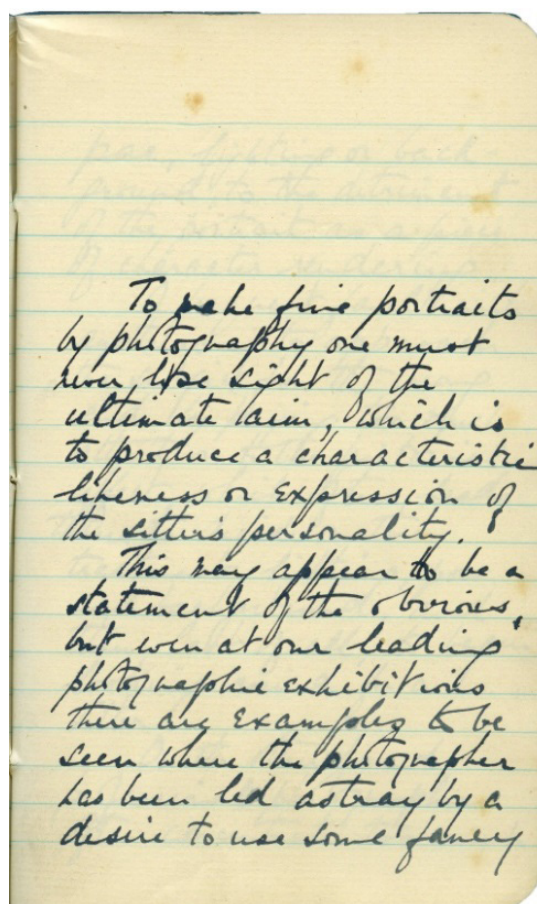
Keith Medley Archive, Liverpool John Moores University

Reproduced by kind permission of Liverpool John Moores University.

Mark Durden and Ken Grant from the University of Wales (Newport) used the Medley archive as the basis of their 2013 exhibition *Double Take*. Medley's portraits were made between 1965–68 and consisted of twin-exposed 5x4 glass plates, mainly depicting portraits for identity purposes. In the plate shown here, the left-hand portrait has been 'killed', with the emulsion literally being scratched off the glass to render the image useless.

(The term 'killed' was coined to describe the actions of Roy Stryker, chief of the Historical Section at the Farm Security Administration (FSA) from 1935–43, who was responsible for commissioning photographers such as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee to record the effects of the Great Depression in the US during the 1930s. Stryker ruthlessly punched holes through negatives that didn't meet his editorial objectives. A similar method has been used with the Bellocq *Storyville* portraits (see below).)

The Hardman commercial portraiture archive consists of over 100,000 individual sheet negatives shot between 1923 and 1963. This archive has sat mainly untouched since it was sold to Liverpool Library in 1976 for the sum of £2,000. It consists mainly of half-plate cellulose nitrate sheet negatives, with 400 stored in glassine sleeves, contained in each of the 300 large metal biscuit tins. Accompanying these negatives are 11 studio registers, which contain the names and titles of Hardman's sitters over his 40-year active period. These registers have now been digitised, creating a map to the archive and allowing the portraits to be viewed in ways they were never originally intended to be. For instance, the two portraits on the next page depict the same sitter with a 10-year gap between each portrait: the portrait on the left was taken in 1939 at the start of World War II and the portrait on the right was taken post-war in 1949. Presentation of portraiture in this manner has been called 'chronotype'. It resembles Durden and Grant's *Double Take* project but depicts a much longer passage of time.



Notes taken from Edward Chambré  
Hardman's Lecture on Portraiture



The Edward Chambré Hardman Collection

Hardman wrote:

*To make fine portraits by photography one must never lose sight of the ultimate aim, which is to produce a characteristic likeness or expression of the sitter's personality.*

For Hardman's serviceman chronotypes, see: [Link 2](#)

E. J. Bellocq was a commercial photographer working for a shipping firm in New Orleans during the 1910s and 20s. A body of 89 glass plate negatives was found after his death, discovered in a hidden panel within his desk after it had been sold to an antiques dealer named Larry Borenstein. The sitters within these portraits were identified as prostitutes working within the Storyville area of the city; all remain anonymous. Bellocq appears to have had a warm relationship with his sitters, who seem relaxed and willing subjects, but some of the portraits have been 'killed'. All 89 negatives were sold to the American photographer Lee Friedlander. Friedlander printed them all out but first had to learn an old technique using 'POP' (Printing Out Paper). He subsequently exhibited them at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) New York in 1970.



E. J. Bellocq, *Untitled*, 1912, from the series *Storyville Portraits*

### Exercise 1.4 Archival intervention

Look through your own family archive and try to discover a series of portraits (four or five) that have existed within this archive, but have never been placed together before. The portraits can contain individuals or even couples; they may span generations, or just be of the same person throughout the years (chronotype). Whichever way you wish to tackle this exercise, there must be a reason or justification for your choices. What message are you trying to get across about these portraits?

Through doing this exercise, you are physically bringing together portraits that have never been viewed as a series prior to your intervention. Therefore, you need to think really clearly about what your choices are and who you decide to select.

You can either make physical copies of the originals and work with these in your learning log, or re-photograph them digitally (or scan) and post them on your blog. Either way, your thoughts about these portraits will be the key to this exercise. Try to articulate what is happening when you bring these images together for the first time. Apart from the obvious – the subject, perhaps – is there anything else that links the imagery together? The location? Dates? Activities?

Write 500–800 words reflecting on this exercise and include it in your learning log or blog.

## Assignment one

### The non-familiar

Your first assignment is to make five portraits of five different people from your local area who were previously unknown to you.

You will almost certainly find it challenging to make photographs of people you don't know; it's often much easier to photograph somebody you're already familiar with. This could be referred to as the 'comfort zone' – and for the purposes of this assignment you will be specifically required to leave it!

Leaving technical photographic considerations aside, there are a whole range of issues to deal with in making a portrait of somebody you don't know. This additional skill set should arguably be in every photographer's kitbag, regardless of what genre of photography they end up working in. The ability to concentrate on technical and aesthetic considerations whilst engaging with a complete stranger brings a plethora of difficulties. Added to the fact that most people aren't that comfortable with having their photograph taken anyway, then you can see why this could become a minefield!

Just as you learn the techniques behind how your photographic equipment works, there are techniques you can learn about how to photograph people you've never met before. Many historical and contemporary portrait photographers have written about this and one piece of advice stands out:

***If it is at all possible, spend time with your subject, getting to know them and triggering a dialogue with them, prior to even showing them your camera.***

Alvin Langdon Coburn writes:

***A portrait by photography needs more collaboration between the sitter and the artist than a painted portrait. To make satisfactory portraits of persons it is necessary for me to like them, to admire them, or at least to be interested in them. It is rather curious and difficult to explain exactly, but if I dislike my subject it is sure to come out in the resulting portrait. The camera is all recording and very sensitive to the slightest gradation of expression of the personality before it. Also the impression that I make on my sitter is as important as the effect he has on me. I make friends quickly and am interested in the mental alertness of the people I meet. You can know an artist or an author, to a certain extent, from his pictures or books before you meet him in the flesh, and I always try to acquire as much of this previous information as possible before venturing in the quest of great ones.***

Who you photograph is entirely your choice but don't give in to the temptation to photograph people you know!

Approaching strangers can be daunting at the best of times, let alone with a camera in your hands. But it doesn't have to be. If you are really terrified, consider asking a friend or relative to be your assistant.

Read about OCA tutors' experiences photographing strangers: [Link 3](#)

You may want to explore the idea of types, thus sticking to a theme. Or the sitters could be very disparate, linked only by the fact that they come from your local area. Give consideration to this and also how and where you photograph your sitters. Bearing in mind the strategies and techniques discussed in Part One, keep your set of images consistent and choose a technique that complements your conceptual approach. For example, do you want a series of location-based portraits? Do you want the portraits to be situated inside? If so, drawing on your experience in Exercise 1.2, how will you select your backgrounds in order to give context?

## **Reflection**

Before you send your work to your tutor, check it against the assessment criteria listed in the introduction to this course guide and make sure it meets all the criteria. Make your evaluation available to your tutor.

Your tutor may take a while to get back to you. Carry on with the course while you are waiting, but please don't attempt the next assignment until you've received your tutor's feedback on this one.

## **Reworking your assignment**

Following feedback from your tutor, you may wish to rework some of your assignment, especially if you plan to submit your work for formal assessment. If you do this, make sure you reflect on what you've done, and why, in your learning log.