

PORTRAITS – How to Take Your Photographs

I usually try to have a meeting before the class to brief people on photographs that really work easily for this class. Because I have many people coming from a long distance I thought it might be easier to write it instead.

There is almost no portrait photograph that cannot be made if it is big enough to trace around, and if you have the right fabrics.

You can make it much easier for yourself to achieve a great result by taking a photograph that gives you a full range of values – from black or almost black to parts that are almost white even though they go through flesh colours in between.

Photographs of babies facing the camera and taken with flash are really difficult. You get a very subtle range of colour that will almost never match the fabrics we can buy. Sharp lines where colours change look really bad on a baby face unless it is taken in strong sidelight where you have strong shadowing.

To take the best photographs put your subject near a window, turn off the flash on the camera, and pose them so they are not looking full face towards you – though their eyes can look at you. Take several images and choose a few to blow up to A4 size for class.

Otherwise – take the image outside with low sun – morning or latish in the afternoon. Try for strong shadows to model the features so the nose is clear against the face.

Easy images to turn into fabric



Lots of tonal variation, and even the child's face is well defined by the light

Difficult images to turn into fabric



Faces with very little colour value change to model the shapes are very hard to work with - especially the young girl in the head scarf

Email me with images if you want me to check them before the class:

jenny.bowker@gmail.com