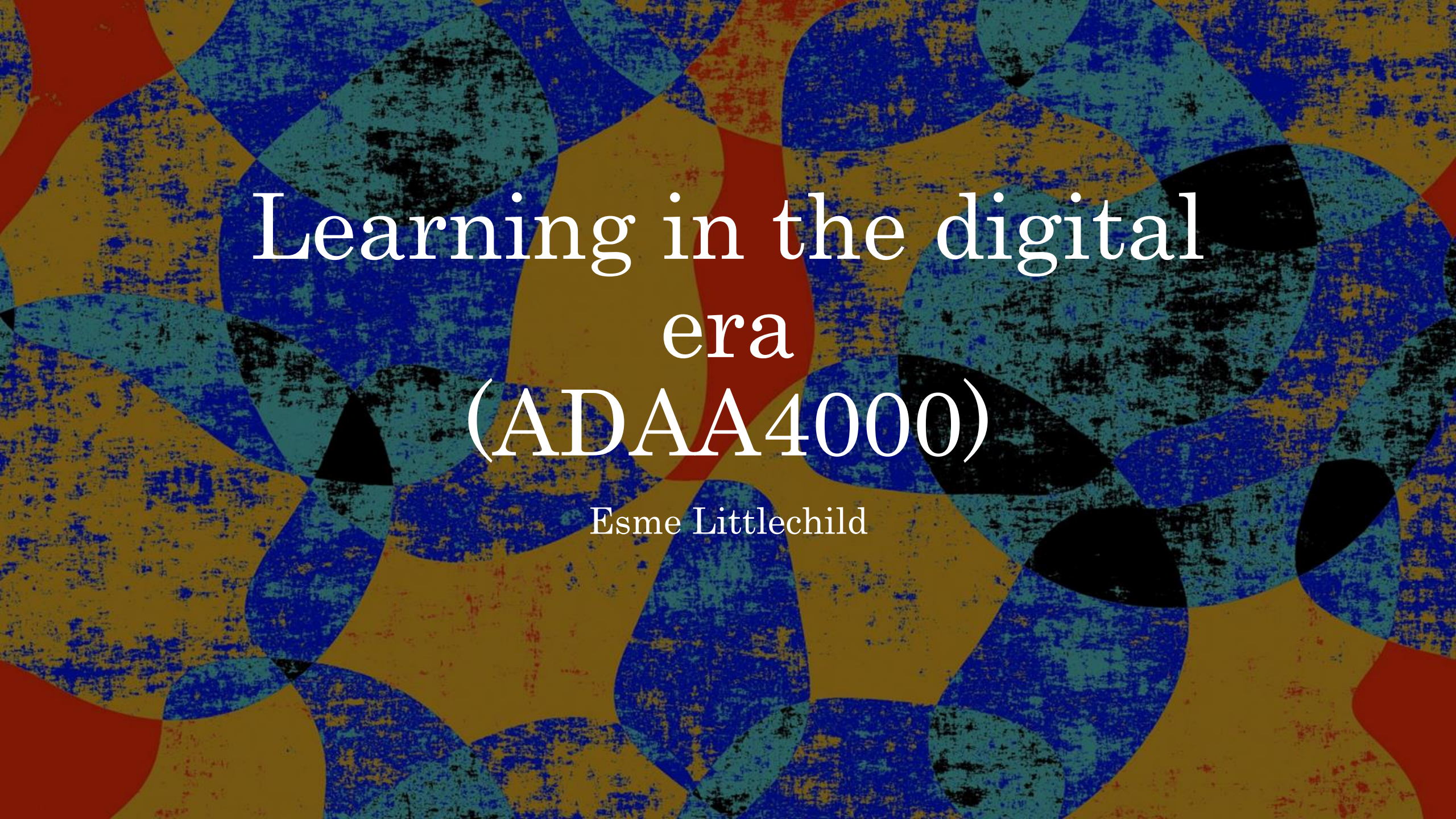




Learning in the digital era (ADAA4000)

Esme Littlechild



Studio portraiture

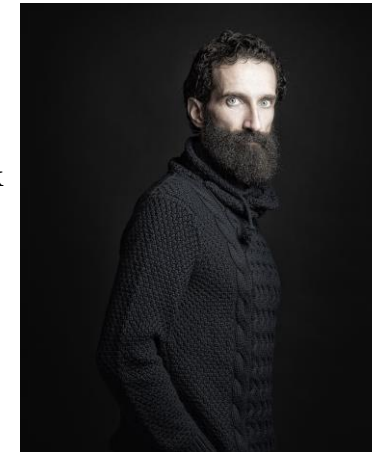
Paul Wilkinson

2018 UK studio photographer of the year, Paul Wilkinson is known for his portrait photography. His portraits are an inspiration to the majority of portrait photographers using studio lighting as he captures sentimental moments and expressions between families and also has the ability to show an individuals personality through the image. Unique to his style he uses a black background in the majority of his images this absorbs the light and creates high contrast and value within the images, It also doesn't distract from the subject and with higher levels of details when using black and white with harsh lighting it creates a range of tones making a dramatic look. From analysis of his images it seems he focus his light on the central of the subject or two from each side to create a fairly balanced contour and highlights on the face depending how the model is posed, additionally there is a highlight that follows the outline of the above image so perhaps a light from behind is used. For my work in the studio I am going to attempt to use a black background to see how it effects my image s and the lighting, I will also experiment with method of how he approached exposure of the lighting to create both soft and harsh tones.



Thomas Lohr

Lohr is highly valued in the consumer market where he works with brands such as Vouge, I-D and Fantastic Man. This editorial work appears on magazine covers, look books, Catalogues and advertisements, here his work reflects the current fashion, marketing and contemporary market. I am particularly inspired by his work with vouge where the professionally lit images are used to advertise sunglasses. As a prop sunglasses are creative in the way that they reflect light and sit on the face, I find that he uses a soft box to reduce harsh reflections of the sunglasses and instead focuses on editing after to create the high quality lit images while also avoiding too much reflection. This comparison to Wilkinson's work is clear as he uses a harsh light to create the drastic contrast from shadows to highlights. The white backdrop is an interesting contrast to Wilkinson's work, you can see the difference here in the detail as skin texture is more prominent with a darker backdrop while a white backdrop creates a smoother texture to the skin. This however follows their practice as Wilkinson relishes detail and contrast in his work while Lohr prefers an airbrushed approach with balance and focus as this is their style and profession, in which their use of lighting is a trademark of their style.



Set up

Soft box- Using a range of lighting is key in being experimental in creating the lighting you desire. Soft boxes create a subtle light that isn't too harsh this avoids harsh contrasts and balances out the lighting exposure more evenly than a hard light will. In my shoot I used two of these from either side to create balance over the portraiture. Due to the soft shadows it creates the tones can be more warmer.

Camera- for this shoot I used a Canon EOS 5DS R, it is a high rang, professional full frame camera and are praised for being one of the best to use. **“The Canon EOS 5DS and 5DS R are the world's best digital SLRs”** (<https://kenrockwell.com/canon/5ds.htm>) This reinforces the quality of the images as the camera quality is equally as needed with the lighting to create a good image.

Tripod- For studio portraiture its essential to have a tripod to keep balance and stillness in the images. Additionally keeping the camera in one position creates a focal point to work the lighting around and understanding how the position of the camera can also impact how the lighting hits the subject.

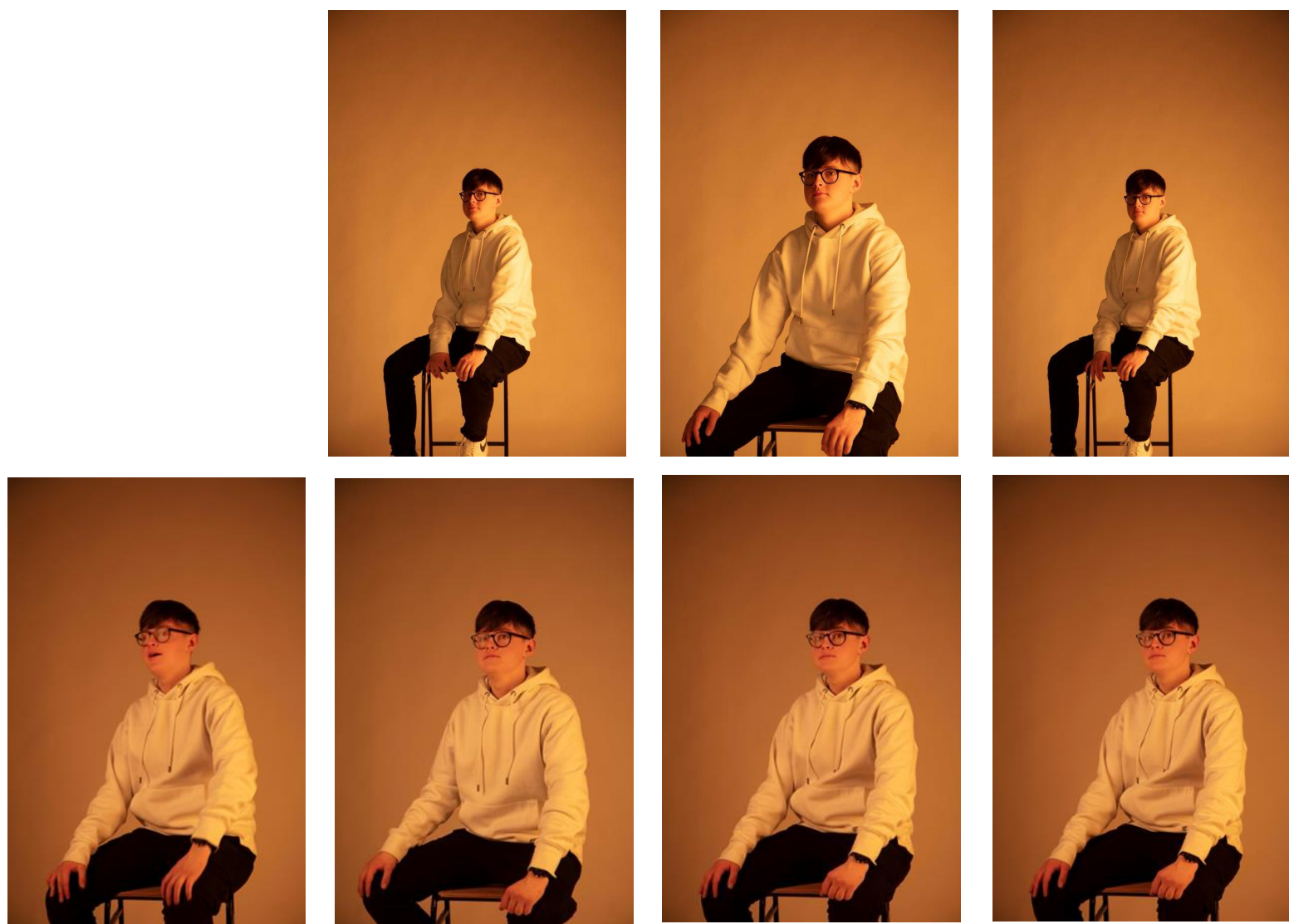


Back drop- Using a backdrop in studios is vital in setting the mood and composition. A messy and chaotic background would draw attention away from the subject so a plain white one reflects the light well and makes it more balanced which is needed in portraiture. Moreover, the backdrop creates a good indicator of the contrast levels and exposure, it also highlights any shadows or areas where lighting needs to be adapted.

Hard light- Hard lighting is often created to make a more dramatic portraits. Its often used in studio lighting to create an abrupt and defined transition from highlights and shadows. They also tend to create more cool tones as the lighting is brighter and exposed.

My Response

This being my first time working in the lighting studio I started by using two soft boxes on either side at the power of 34% on the left side and 75% on the right side. I then realised that it needed to be evened out more as the contrast and shadows on the face were too harsh where the face has been turned. Its also seen in the over exposure of his white jumper from the right side. To fix this I then turned the 75% down to equal the other side, Although I didn't like this effect as much as it removed the contours and dimensions of the face by an equal level of exposure. Curating the positioning of the subject though I found beneficial as it followed Lohrs style and creates an interesting reflection on the glasses and texture in his clothing. Furthermore, the biggest issue with starting this shoot was the warmth of the images, overhead and outer shadows. Understanding how to solve this was beneficial in understanding and experimenting how the smallest things can effect the lighting, here I found the main room light was on and causing the warm tones, although this was obvious its an easy error to make and can create a warmer tones to show in the images. This also created shadows on my backdrop, to combat the shadows I adjusted my ISO to 640 in the bottom images meaning it was more light sensitive and brighter, this was an alternative way to depending on the lighting equipment.



Camera- Canon EOS 5DS R
F-stop- f/5.6
Exposure time- 1/30
ISO- 500



Now that the warm tones have been removed from external artificial lighting I started taking images again and found the tones were a lot cooler however the background was distracting with the high contrasted shadows. To fix this I re arranged the lights and added two hard lights in the centre at the power of 5.0, as well as this I moved my tripod closer to the subject to gather more detail as Wilkinson does when gathering head shots. Here I also wanted to explore more with the effect of reflections so I used a pair of sunglasses as a prop, they were kaleidoscope meaning it distorts the vision and mad a multicoloured reflection which I felt would be interesting to experiment with in studio lighting. I was inspired by Lohn to use a contemporary way to making my portraits more creative and I felt this created a nice contrast to bring both Wilkinson's practice and lohns together. Furthermore I feel like it relates to the subjects age group and is representative of their personality, I then went on to asking my subject to face both left and right to see which side of the lighting works best on the sunglasses.



Due to their still being shadows on the backdrop I decided to use a black back drop, inspired by Wilkinson as I felt it would remove the unwanted shadows. From the fourth image in I also turned my ISO to 800 and my f- stop to 8, this seemed to balance out the composition and create more natural tones to the skin by softening the highlights. I also found that my backdrop has marks on that disrupted my composition, next time I want to use a plain black background to avoid this, furthermore I further adjusted myself and the subject to resemble that of Lohns work as I feel his angles allow the light to hit the face well and I enjoy to contours that are shown rather than a face on image as this tends to show imbalance in lighting and precision is needed to keep dimension in the face and not lose it to exposure and brightness.

How camera adjustments effect the images



F- stop: f/22
Exposure time-1/20
ISO- 3200



F- stop: f/8
Exposure time: 1/20
ISO: 800



F- stop: f/5.6
Exposure time: 1/30
ISO: 500

Final images



Through the progression of this shoot its clear to see the quality of the images and lighting improve as I have become more familiar with the equipment through the session and the effect studio lighting has on portraits. These last images I find are a combination of both Wilkinson's and Lohrs inspiration with a dark background I feel that more detail has been added within the portrait and avoided over exposure, it also allowed the reflection on the sunglasses to be more defined and prominent as the highlights and contours on the face stay fairly balanced and even toned. Also, the angle of the face being towards the light as used in Lohrs work has meant the light mainly focuses on the glasses and doesn't cause too many harsh shadows.



Location image- Artificial light

Peter Britton

Nights, Lights, Love, Lyrics is an iPhone project that explores a sense of freedom. Here Britton experiments with landscape and nature by shining artificial light through it to present its structure in the dark. Using his iPhone camera and head torch he created a series of these images over a period of time when every night he would go on a run. He also uses this project to show technological progression which is clear as our phones have the ability to use artificial lighting to this level. Furthermore these images were shot in Newton and Merthyr Mawr dunes, in South Wales. These locations being so close to where I study have inspired me to be more intuitive of my environment find inspiration from the more mundane. Lighting these images shows how he's been selective in where he places his iphone and head torch, he tends to have it on the ground facing up into the trees structure. I find this creates a beautiful composition where the sky is also lit and due to the complex structure of the tree shadows and highlights create themselves. Moreover, the middle images lighting particularly inspires me as he places the light behind the tree, this creates a large shadow of the trunk up to the camera and rays of light divided between the branches, I enjoy how the dramatic lighting is harsh and creates a strong transition from light to dark, the light around the tree also creates a halo and biblical effect.



Ryan Beatty

“With all my LEDs set up, I can, at a mere touch of a few buttons, overhaul a scene.”(Beatty, 2020)

Beatty uses LEDs in his work to experiment with colour and vibrancy. Some benefits that also intrigue me with LEDs that he speaks about are their thinness and adjustability mean they are easily moveable to create a range of different images where light can be explored over the portrait. Here the LEDs add depth to his portraits and the use of colour creates colourful highlights that visual make an artificial and animated look to the portrait. Her also uses a soft box and other lighting in combination with the LEDs to balance out the colour and contours, in this image its clear that the LEDDs are coming in from the left while a soft box is used on the right as warmer tones can be seen rather than a drastic transition into darker shadows. I'm inspired by his work as he uses artificial lighting in a vibrant playful way that can really be experimented with in portraiture, additionally the positioning of the model and how the light is distributed over the face is interesting as its almost equally split down the face, it seems as if he has control over the light this is something I want to experiment with.



Westonbirt Arboretum-Enchanted Christmas



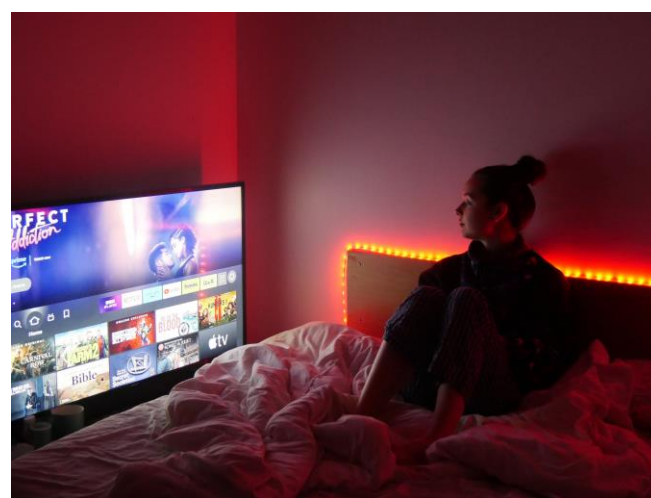
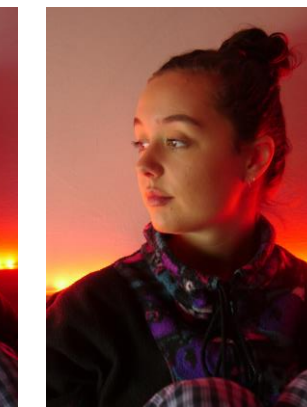
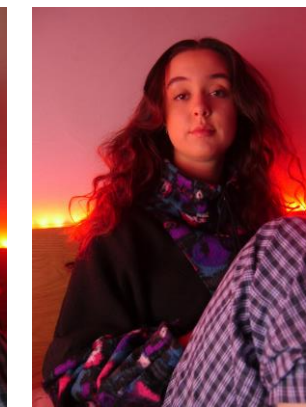
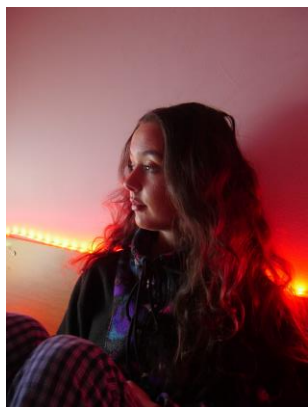
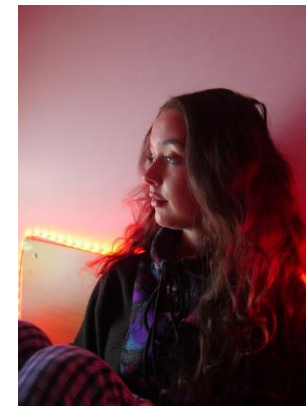
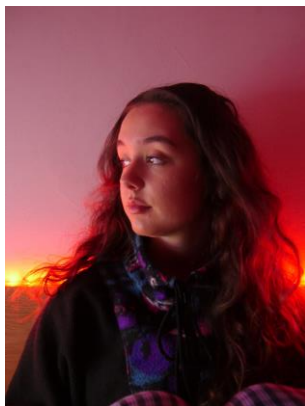
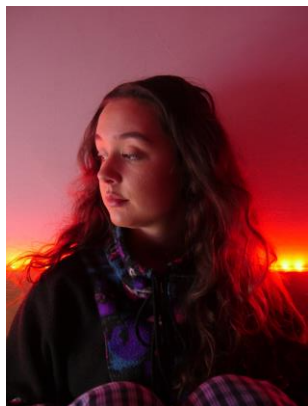
Attending the enchanted forest display at Westonbirt Arboretum was a beneficial to see how artificial lighting and LEDs can be used in creative ways. Here I really enjoyed the playfulness of how they used artificial light against nature, this is almost ironic as artificial light and energy is what is causing harm to nature so having it reflected onto them could be a political statement for climate change. Furthermore, the range of colours used creates a vibrant atmosphere, where due to the lighting being lit from below the branches and leaves are brightly exposed and defined this makes the trees structures more enhanced. Seeing the use of how LEDs are used here and the importance of their placement in creating the desired effect I will take this inspiration into my portraiture and experiment with LEDs myself. Britton's work shows a similar resemblance to these but combined with Beatty's use of color, this interlinking of the artists work that inspired me, as seeing both their methods and style in person has allowed me to think of my response.

First shoot

Camera- Panasonic
DMC- GH4
F number- f/3.7
Exposure time- 1/8

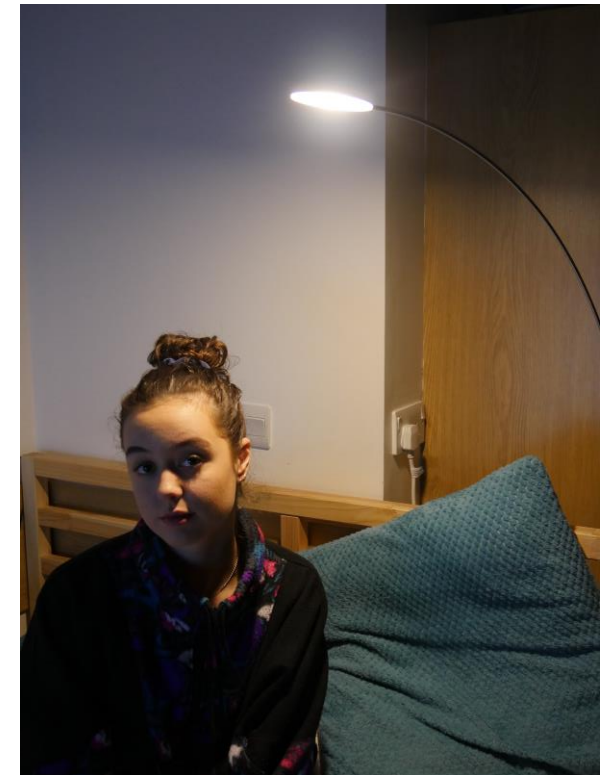
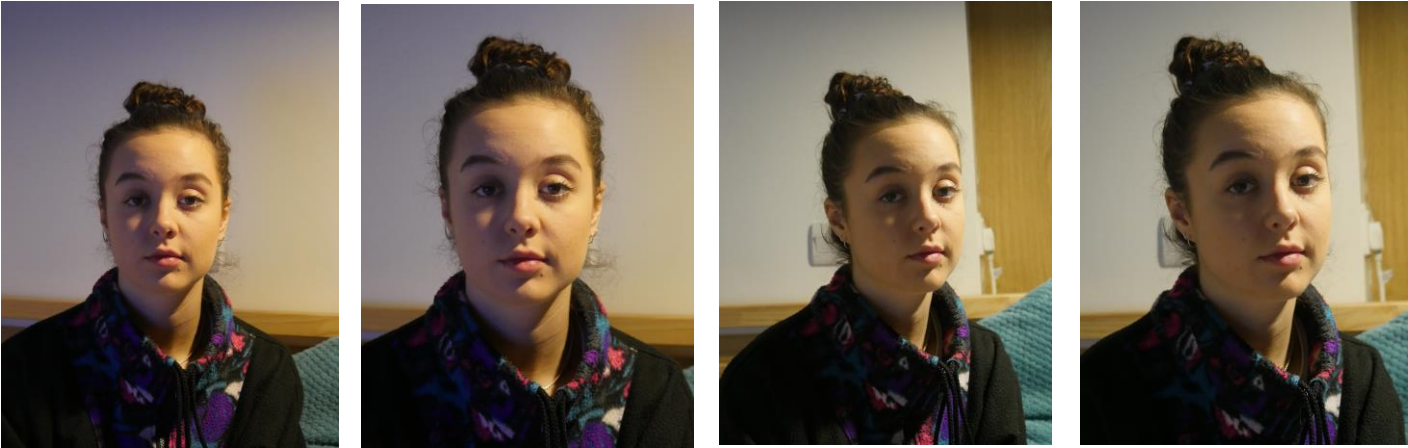


I decided on the color red as I found from my visit to Westonbirt that this colour gave a dramatic effect and captures the attention of the viewer, also it is nostalgic of the dark room where red light is used to prevent light exposure on images, this can be metaphorical to how artificial images often are used to expose images and disrupt the balance of the image with colour. Here I was inspired by Britton and Westonbirt to aim my lighting from below, I found this created a harsh shadow and highlight transition over the image, however I enjoyed trying different angles and positions to see how the shadows move around the face and the tones of red that were created in the highlights and contours I found it really enhanced the structure of the face, similarly to how it was used to enhance the structure of trees.



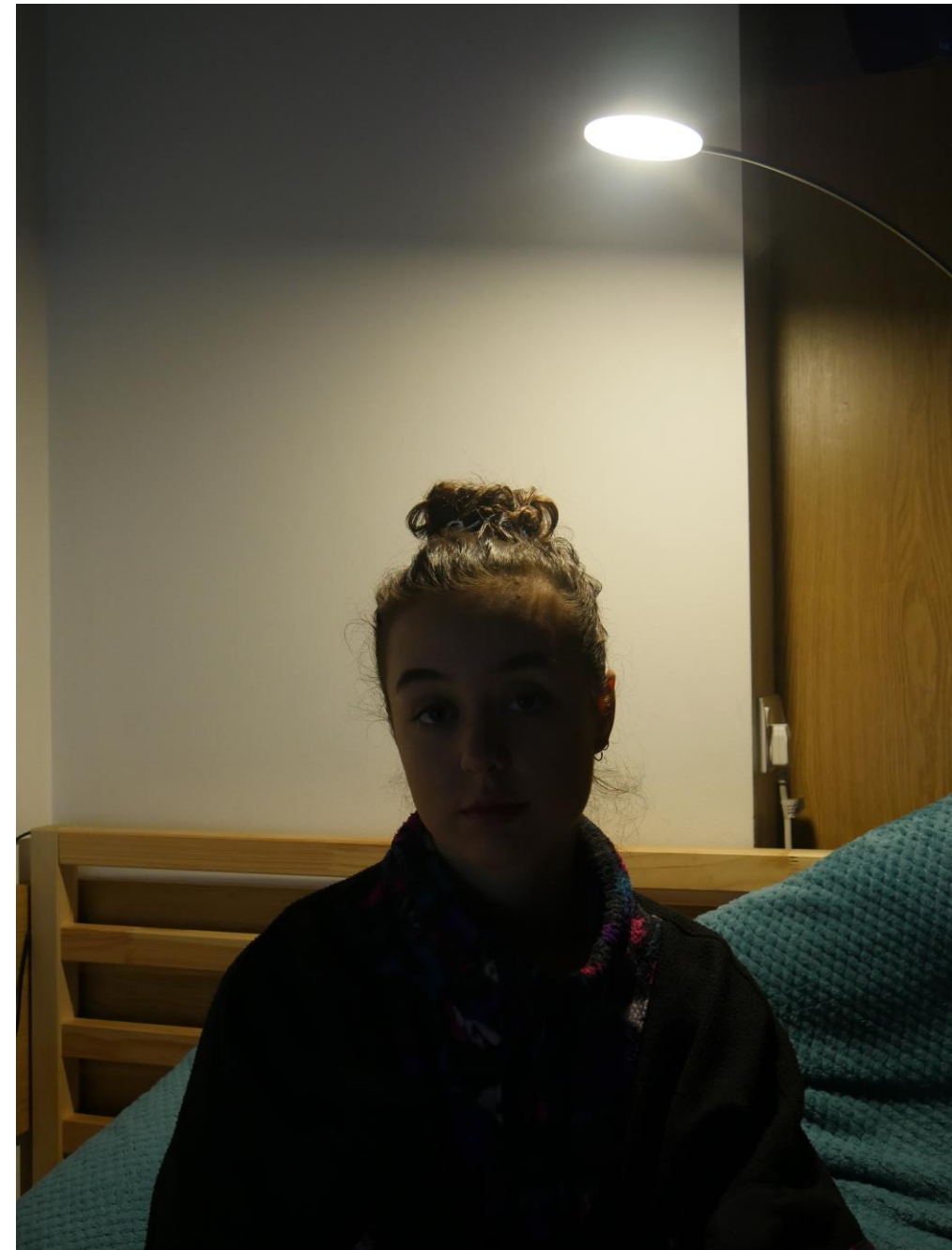
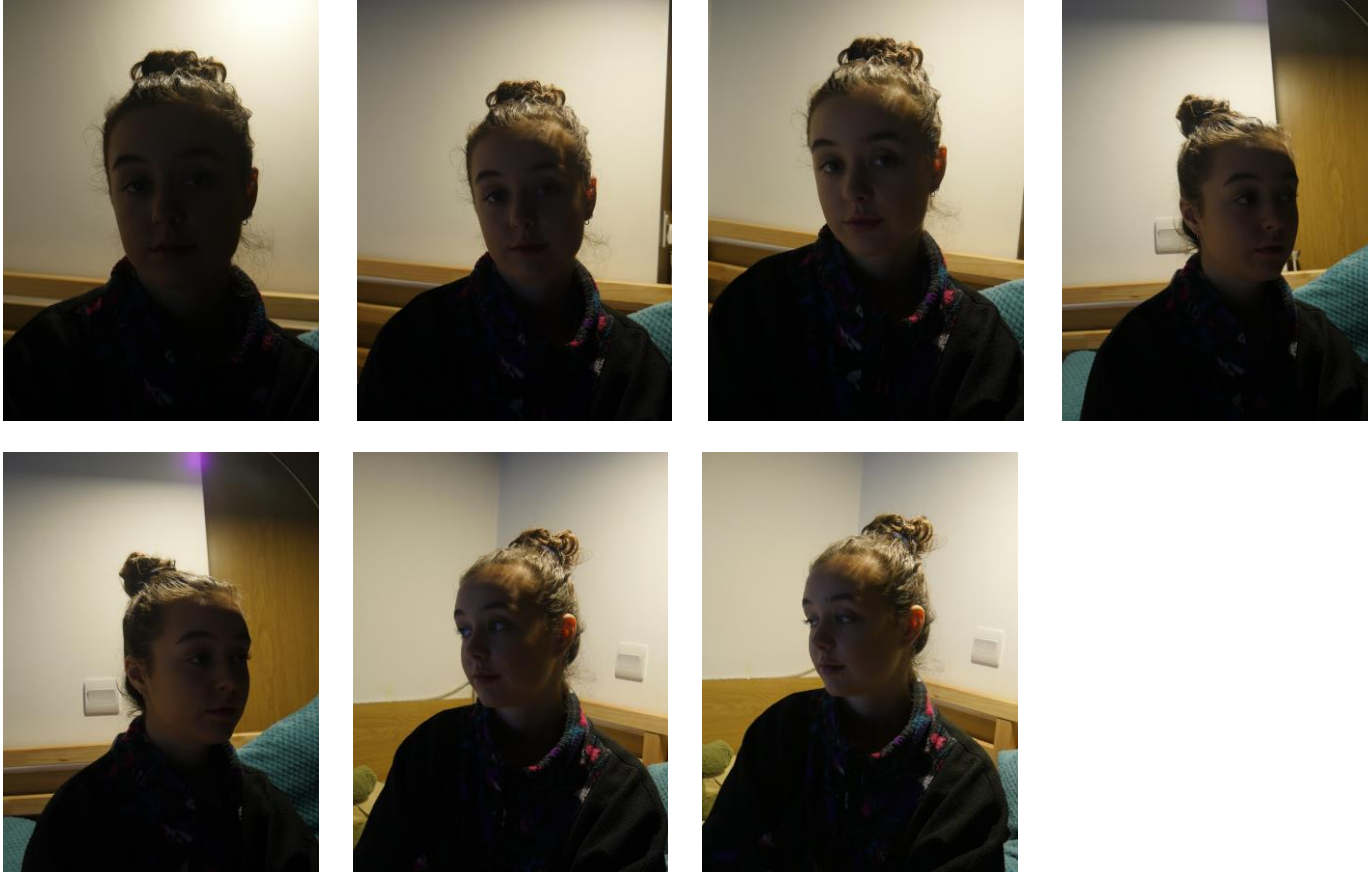
Here I attempted more of Beattys approach to the portrait by adding another artificial light as shown in the bottom images. Now that the tv produced a hard light onto the subject it diluted the harshness of the red and was now used to highlight the face. Facing the subject towards the Tv I found was effective as it balanced out the shadows and the red is more of a heugh to the image and less overpowering, I find these images resemble Beattys work, but next time I would try have my subject face towards the natural light to experiment how the Tv light would contrast with the red, this will create more colour over the face and have the LEDs as the focal tone rather than the brighter hard light.

Using spotlight lighting

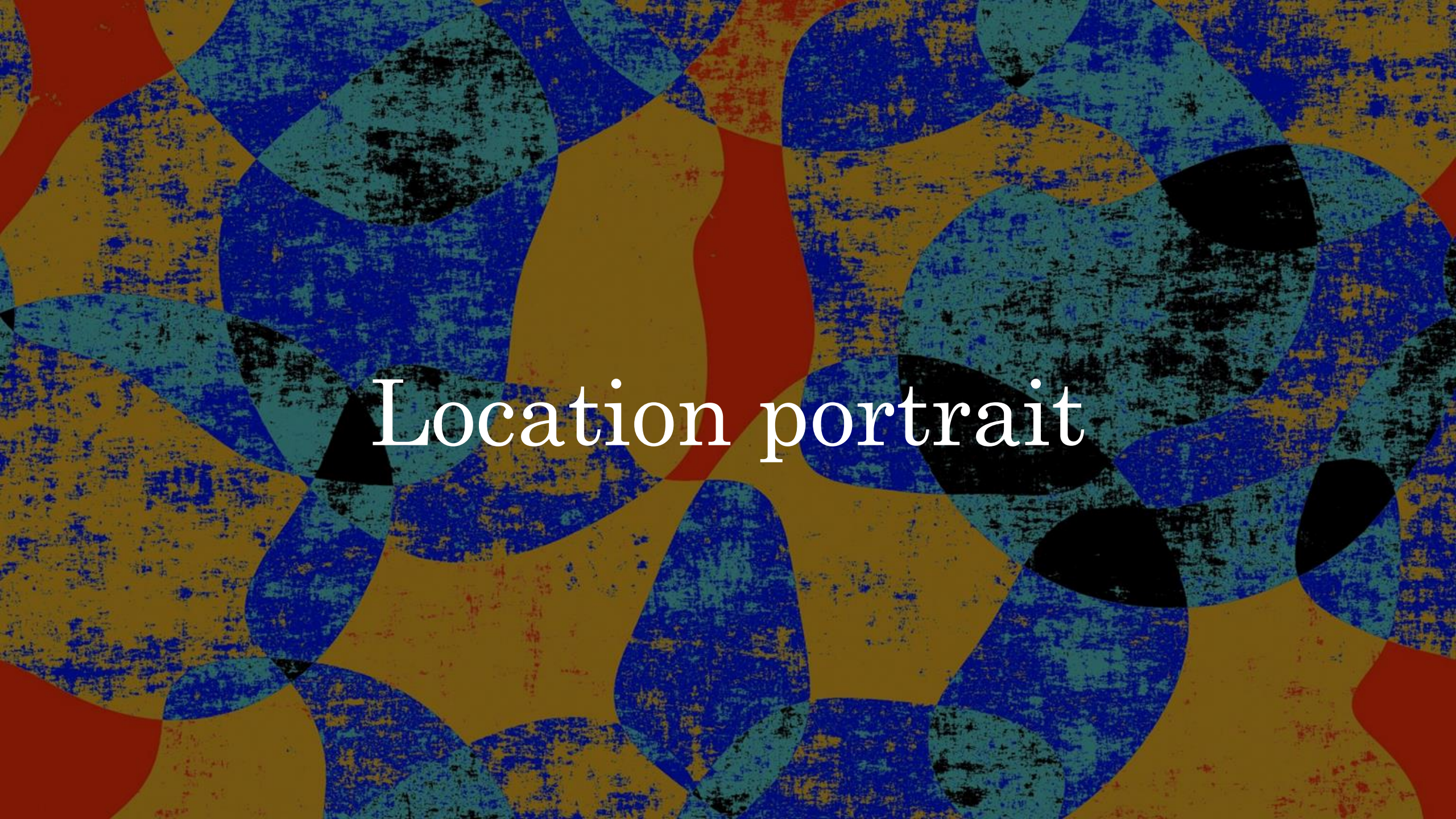


Using an adjustable light from above the subject I wanted to explore how the shadows move around the face and what angles create highlights and contours in certain areas. Starting with the light directly above I found it created an equal divide down the face where the harsh lighting means there is a strong contrast from highlight to shadow. I then rotated my subjects head this created a more balance in depth of the contours compared to my previous ones as the other side of the face is still visible and well lit, however there is a bright over exposed mark that comes with this where the light originally hits the face. Then I tried a central image, these reminded me of Beattys work but without colour.

Lighting from behind



Experimenting with the placement of the lighting from behind the subject was to explore both Britton and Wilkinson techniques. Wilkinson uses a light from behind in one of his images that creates a highlight round the subject, I feel if u used a black background and lowered the light this effect would take place. Additionally, Britton uses a similar technique behind his trees to show the structure in a range of ways, I found that my light was too high to create a halo effect, however I did enjoy the lack of highlight and brightness as the under exposure and over the face is something I tend to fear from and the bright highlight at the top of the head makes the hair the focal point of the composition which could be effective.



Location portrait

Francesco Marcolini

"I took this picture of my wife's reflection in the window of an old Routemaster bus, one of the last few still running in London." (Marcolini, 2019)

Marcolini's practice explores human interaction with technology and the meeting of organic and inorganic matter. One of his images inspire me greatly as the use of natural lighting against a bus window creates a bold portrait where she is looking into her own reflection. This creates a composition that has a depth of meaning and can hold narrative. Black and white emphasises the opacity of the reflection creating a almost ghost like reflection due to the wide depth of field capturing a image almost as detailed as her face. Additionally, the lighting on the metal frames and her sunglasses create impactful highlights within the image and contrast well to the darker shadows where a monochrome effect is given. The images breadth of value creates the idea of a mirror being used.



Photo shoot 1

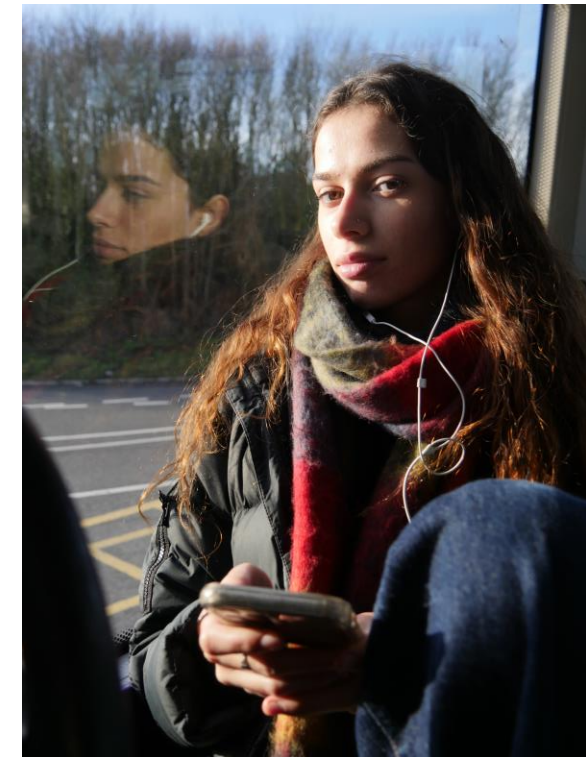
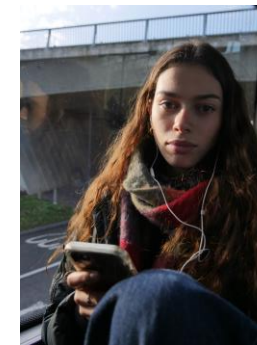
Before changing the settings on the camera to see there effect on the lighting I wanted to try the natural effects that lighting has to offer and how angles and the position of the model effects the contrast and shadows shown on the face. I found using glass and reflections that natural light can impose on portraits an interesting way to experiment. These images were taken on a bus where the large scale of the windows means there's more space for the light to reflect and create interesting compositions within the portraiture, using an internal location also allows me to see the contrast to how the lighting can be changed when compared to external lighting. Most importantly, the effect this image creates of two portraits being conveyed through a reflective surface is powerful as portrays the whole face from a different perspective in one image. Moreover, the brightness of the sun creates a strong contrast over the face from over exposed to strong contrast and shadows showing the depth in value. Inspired by Marcolini I used my sister in my image as he also uses a personal relation to his model, I feel that due to the proximity of the image I have created a similar composition and atmosperar of the subject being someone I know. However, next time I will evolve more on creating a more candid approach by not having my subject looking into the lens but outside the window as I feel this creates a whole new narrative to the image.

Camera- Panasonic, DMc-GH4

F-stop- f/3.7

Exposure time- 1/400 sec

ISO speed- 200



Editing

I took my image into photoshop in an attempt to match the portrait of Marcolinis, I found that a lot of the focus in achieving the same effect was in the brightness of the image, turning down the brightness made a harsher contrast of value when turned black and white and I found that this was needed to create a similar image. Furthermore, the reflections off the metal and sunglasses create a more balanced composition in Macolonis image compared to mine where the shadows and contrast get lost within the clothing, to improve my image next time I will explore more by adding further reflective objects this will create a deeper depth of field and balance the tones out.



Photoshoot 2

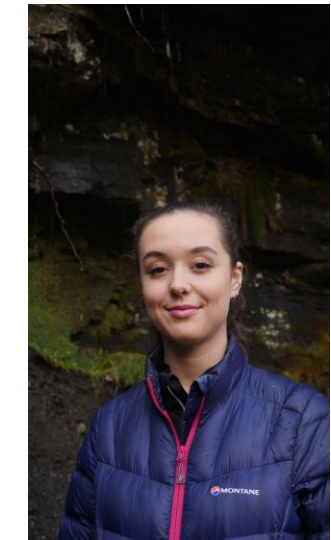
Carrying on with my experimental use of using natural light I explored how an external environment played a role on my lighting. Taking into consideration the impact that the background and where my model is stood has shown the consideration needed in analysing where the sun is and how water for examples reflects light while dark rock absorb it are all crucial in the outcome of the image.



Camera- Panasonic, DMC-GH4
F-stop- f/3.7
Exposure time- 1/400
Iso- 200



These two rows of images show the drastic change with the first ones having a dark, solid and textured background of a cave that slightly towered over ahead as well as the model facing towards the sun, this created higher contrast, darker shadows and under exposure. I then moved my model 90 degrees clockwise to change the background and location of the lighting. I found that the water reflected a lot of the light making a over exposed background that made a more narrow depth of field where details of the background are less clear. Additionally, now out of the cave the lighting came from above making harsh shadows under her features, over exaggerating the contours and highlights of the face while over exposing the top of the head. This effect can be used to enhance the facial structure when edited. Overall all these images are taken in a fairly sheltered location with cooler tones due to their surroundings.



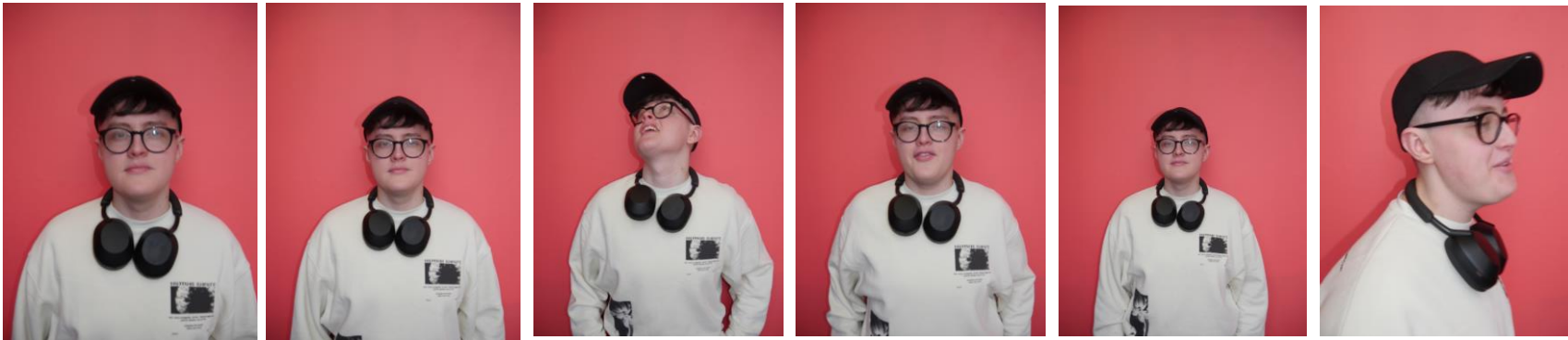


Changing the environment from dark rocks and water to the woods has created a warmer tone due to the more open exposure and the warmer toned environment of wood. Warmer tones has meant that the portraits hold more colour in the face and don't wash out the colour even when the lighting intensity can cause an over exposed effect. Additionally the more neutral tones means shadows and contrast isn't as intense, its more soft and can be more of a subtle and natural transition over the face.



Throughout this shoot I feel I have experiment with natural lighting and how different environments can effect your image. I found cooler tones can be seen in more sheltered, darker back ground areas where the light gets absorbed, these images I find lack detail and are too dark in terms of contrast that it washes out the subject this can be fixed in editing however. These final portraits I feel are reflective of how I observed the way light was making my portraits quality look not as clear. These final images are in a ore open space where I feel the lighting correctly highlighted and contrasted her face in a balanced and high quality way.

Experimenting with camera settings (natural and artificial)

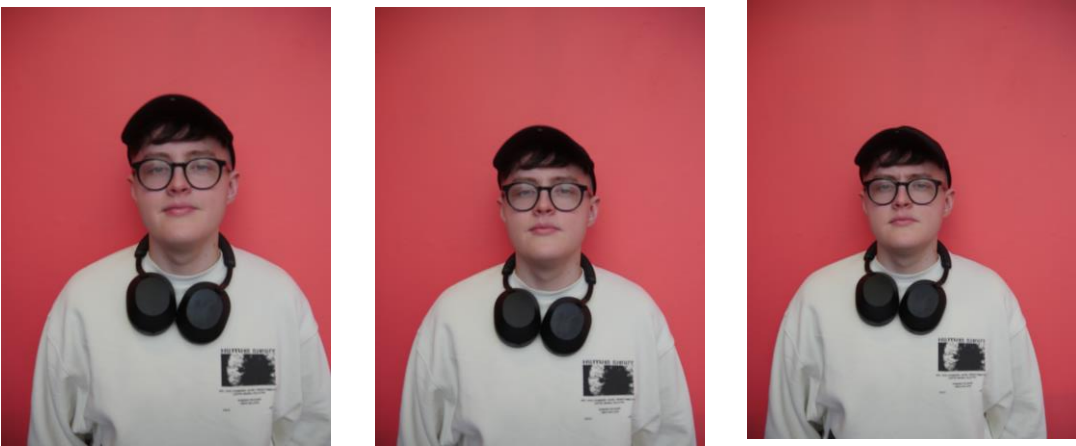


FLASH



Here I wanted to experiment with flash and natural lighting together, I enjoyed the vibrancy of the red in my artificial lighting and decided it would make a good background drop for this shoot due to the fact he was also wearing white and black I was worried he would blend into the background too much. With a large window behind me the subject was positioned to face out, I then asked him to rotate to capture different angles I found this was experimental as usually I keep the subject still and more around them, this allowed for shadows to be created behind him. I additionally found that by making him move him to face different directions it also effected the reflections in his glasses, when facing forward the flash leaves highlights in the glasses, when turned to the side this is avoided this is perhaps how Lohr took his images.

NATURAL LIGHING



Natural lighting used here without the flash is show to compare to with the use of flash. Instantly the exposure and contrast of the image is reduced, and less detail is picked up. To fix this reducing my iso and raising my aperture will balance this out, due to my high iso and low aperture I also have a narrower depth of field which means a lot of detail is lost and a blurrier effect is created. Additionally, the flash evened out the contrast to highlight ratio of the face as well as his shadow behind him.

Camera- Panasonic
DMC-GH4
F- stop- f/3.5
Exposure time: 1/80



F-stop: f3/5
Exposure time: 1/1000

Turning down the ISO helped remove the harsh shadows of the background, however it created a very washed-out image with little contrast and shadows, this reduces the dimensions of the face in the image. Additionally, the narrow depth of field has meant that the image comes across grainier and blurrier. This shows how importance balance is between aperture, iso and shutter speed. Even the background has lost its vibrancy, cooler tones have replaced the warmer once and the detail in his clothing is lost as its too bright.