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Module: Research in Context

Question - From the Lens based image making research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement or selection of artists that critically assess primary themes, key writers and relevant practitioners: relate to your practice or interests, and construct a 2,500- word essay:

How has Portraiture Photography evolved over-time?:

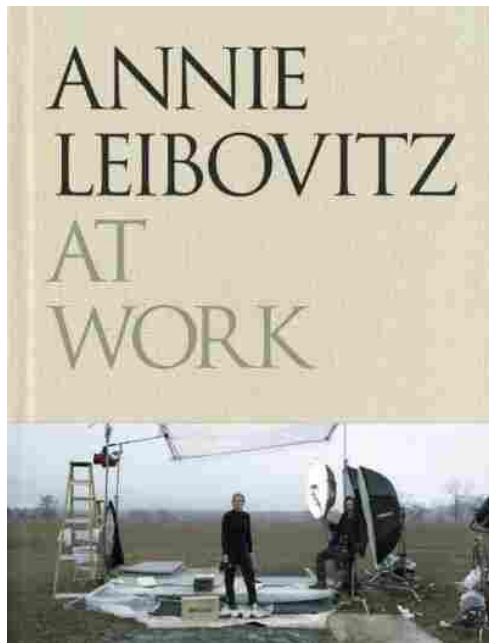
In this essay I will be discussing how portraiture photography has evolved over-time and from how it began, I will also be talking through how it began and how certain techniques have changed the photography environment.



Captain Henry Duberly, paymaster of the 8th Hussars, with his wife Frances Isabella during the Crimean war, 1855. Photograph: Roger Fenton/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Portraiture photography dates way back to the beginning of the 19th century. People had started to explore photography as a way to capture memories in a more personal and artistic way. Over time, things have improved with advancements within photography. A photographer's work who's work I connect with a lot is Annie Leibovitz. She is an American photographer mostly known for her 'engaging portraits mainly of celebrities'. Her work caught my eye as it is not much like any modern day portraiture but instead comes across as a modern take on the older portraiture consisting of calm facial expressions and neutral colours. In her bibliography (1991) she says 'I no longer believe in such thing as objectivity' this suggesting that it is important that we get feedback for our work as it gives off an idea of other people's perspectives. Leibovitz (1991) states 'Everyone has a point of view some people call it style' (*At Work – 2008*) This is a good perspective to look at this theme of work as everyone has a different perspective in photography but it's what makes everyone's work different and unique. The point of view in photography is what makes it personal to you because it is what you have seen as an artist and you are giving your perspective of what you're photographing to other people and artists. Her work is inspiring to me as her work is down the route of the photography style, I look into working with and her points in photography are also quite intelligent and inspiring to me when working on images. Further in her career she had published a book titled 'Annie Leibovitz at work' (2008) in the book she discusses how her most iconic images had been made to be and the retrospective of her works. She discusses how books inspire photography. I agree with this statement as I feel they cause a lot of inspiration to very famous images as literature in general holds a lot of meaning which is important to images in photography. This is also backed up by other

artists 'What you're looking for in books is inspiration, and inspiration can be a really driving force (*Masters of Photography, May 2021*) – Albert Watson' This suggests how important books are even when creating art. Literature is one of the best ways of getting a wide variety of people to relate to one thing whilst also taking their own perspective of the art. People all have a different perspective whilst looking at something differently which is how the same thing can be captured different ways which is why I love the point of view in photography as we are able to see and connect how the photographer has seen this particular object or scenery. Its not about copying or stealing from artists but more taking inspiration in their work finding the same views you have on the topic or subject. Books are important to my practice whether I be taking images or writing about my images. The literature is an important part of my images I found in recent times how often I use it for my images as inspiration and how it also makes my work even more relatable. I like to use poetry and music for my images as they feel the most relatable and meaningful short pieces of text for me but I have used books in the past and shortened the text down to one or two words.



Annie Leibovitz, 'At Work' book published (2008)

Furthermore, Photography has evolved over time coming a long way. Photography was introduced during the 1800s as 'The early Victorians were the first to see themselves through a camera lens'. This was introduced when Louis Daguerre discovered ways to create imagery through processing images with paper. (1850) Although he was well known for his contributions to photography overtime he generally was an artistic individual being a painter and designer. It is known that the more artistic individuals are better with the whole photography process but good images can be created by anyone who spends enough time looking into it. The whole idea behind photography was to create 'the possibility of making the exact reproduction of visual experience' People wanted to capture what was happening in the moment almost like taking screenshots of what you can see yourself. It was an idea of physically creating and saving memories to look back on and something you can also share with others who may not have seen the same thing. To this day photography has become a way to capture moments and

share them as a physical copy or online. For me, I use photography to tell stories and capture aesthetically pleasing images to share online as my art. I also like to capture candid and personal images which are kept separate from my professional imagery. Taking photos has become a big part of my daily life and I find so much inspiration from other artists, books and even music. Literature is such a big inspiration to photography as, at least to me words have a lot of meaning and it makes it even more valuable to an individual if you can relate to a piece of literature whether it be from a poem or a song. However, on the other hand whilst it still being personal to me it could also be something others can relate to which is why I think photography is so important. Photography is a way in which people can express their artistic abilities as an individual whilst it also being extremely inspiring to other artists. In photography it is important that you 'trust your point of view' as that's the most important step to taking successful images. If you don't trust yourself in taking images how could you expect anyone else to think that you are taking good images. It is also important in experimenting with what you see within an image as everyone views potential objects differently to others.



Louis Daguerres, First Photograph of a person, (1837)

Zachary Sutton is another photographer who works within the modern photography industry. Such as my own work he is mainly known for portraiture photography. He works mainly around advertising and beauty based images. Sutton mainly publishes his images on Instagram which has become one of the main streaming platforms to gain most engagement. Photography has evolved a lot over time considering it started with processing images. Photography had evolved from film to digital when digital cameras were firstly introduced (1980). Photography had also started improving rapidly because no later (1990) the first version of Adobe Photoshop was introduced. This meant that people were now able to manipulate and improve their imagery. This was a big step from film cameras and changed how people worked with images and meant that photography had become less time-consuming.

Joseph Nicephore Niepce had created the earliest surviving photograph (1826). He had used a portable camera obscura to take his famous image known as 'View from the window Le Gras'. Approximately 150 years after his photograph digital cameras were introduced. This was a major step in the photography world as it had evolved from something that required much skill and experience to something that anyone could do anywhere with little equipment.

Arguably the biggest impact on photography was when picture sharing was introduced in the early 2000's (2007). During 2007 Apple introduced their first ever iPhone. By this point smartphones had become ubiquitous along with social media platforms such as

Facebook, twitter and Instagram. All these platforms allowed anyone to upload images online sharing them with the world. Photographers are now using these platforms to their advantage and sharing their professional imagery to the platforms gaining engagement and followers. This is an advantage to those with businesses as it helps to boost them and can be seen by more people. More people are aware of other images in contrast to when photography was mainly through film cameras and processing our images.

Henri Cartier Bresson famously known for his candid photography, worked in an era from film to digital photography. He captured big events that had taken place publishing them across the world. He had written a book 'The Decisive Moment' (1952). The book withholds the idea behind telling a story in your imagery. This was photography's biggest purpose of this time whereas now people use photography in their everyday lives to document memories. This book is to this day known as one of the most famous photography books in history documenting all Bresson most famous work. The point is to publish the idea of timing and framing as they are the most important aspects in taking successful candid images. Bresson's work is still inspiring modern photographers nowadays who also purchase the book to help them educate themselves in photography. Most people take candid images daily using their phones although some hold it as a profession.

However, some could argue that film photography is making a comeback after all these years with a rise in population. Digital photography has seen a rise in population as it is a quick easy form of creating images in contrast to film photography which requires a lot of time with chemicals and processing. Film cameras seem to have gained

more popularity in recent years as they are starting to make a comeback. It is mostly popular with photography students, however there are still people using film cameras at home. As most things are turning digital cameras and Photoshop have evolved to help artists create the 'film look' in their images. However, this doesn't create the original look produced by a film camera. Most would result in editing their images to look like they were taken on a film camera as it is a much quicker process than the chemical processing in the dark rooms. Some argue that although creating film images is pricey and time consuming it gives you the time to think about what you photograph and why. They also argue that film images look and feel different to the digital copies being created which is more beneficial to your photography practice.



Henry Cartier-Bresson, 'The Decisive Moment' book, (1952)

Dan Rubin is a photographer still using film cameras for his work. He is one of the most high-profile photographers using film even currently. He states, 'film never went away commercially, there are pretty well-known photographers who still use film, and never strayed away from it' This suggests that film is still popular amongst many photographers, and some prefer the look of the film images in comparison to digitally produced images. He also suggests that he thinks there is a future for

film photography 'it shows how much potential is there' which I think is interesting as we can keep the original history of photography without completely modernizing it and forgetting about the beginning of photography.

Personally, I use digital cameras for my work whilst producing digital images. This is the best format for me as I like to work mainly on portraiture and studio work. Joe Puxley is a digital studio photographer who creates portraits. His work is based off of using a digital camera in a studio. Puxley's work is based in the studio, mainly working with light and colours. This is like my area of work which is what makes his work inspiring to me. Puxley's work wouldn't fit the media of film, which is why I think it is useful that photography has evolved and keeps evolving so much as it allows a wider variety of artists to create work that is best for them. Although I think film photography should continue to stay popular as it is the original form of photography, I think that it is also important we have other forms of photography allowing us to create more art for the public eye.



'The Daguerretype process', (1850) , Diagram,

online source

As a result of photography being discovered with the Daguerrotype process (1839) Photography has not always been so affordable for most with the result of needing chemicals and equipment for the process which was very costly. As a result, photography has become accessible to those of wealth. However, with great evolution we can have witness some major transformations within photography Over-time. During the 19th century, people witnessed a significant shift in portrait photography, and the Pictorialism movement was introduced. This was a way people and artists could express themselves through images. Being led by people such as Henry Peach Robinson and Julia Margaret Cameron, the movement had introduced new techniques that formed outside of realism in portraiture. It allowed artists to focus more on the aesthetic of their photos. Over time, photography has switched from more traditional portraits to portraits that portray an ethereal atmosphere more related to paintings. The Pictorialists believed that photographers should not focus on the subject's physical appearance but more on their inner selves. This way, artists can get more emotion into a photograph whilst it also holds mood and artistic expression.

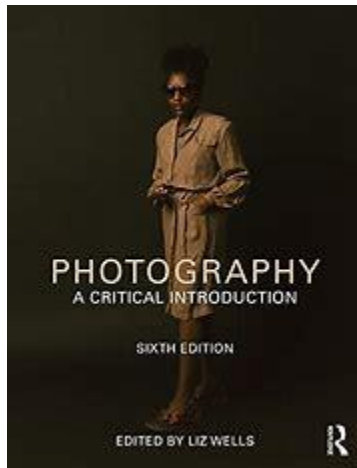
With the creation of the handheld camera by George Eastman (1888) photography had taken a significant turning point. It allowed the photographers to capture more natural and different poses to before. This led to photography being easier for everyone whilst also being easier to capture things at a further distance. It also allowed photographers to explore and experiment with photography further than the studios whilst also having quicker photo sessions with the exposure not being so long anymore.

Furthermore, Fashion and beauty influences a lot of portraits that have been created within the industry. It has also had an impact on the styles of photography used in portraiture. During the early 20th century, photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz gained inspiration from the fashion industry, meaning he created much more professional and advanced images. Following with the latest fashion trends Stieglitz experimented by using dramatic lighting in his images. This was he created a vast contrast in his images whilst emphasizing smaller details in them. This was a new way of creating trends but in the photography, industry exploring new artistic realms. The aim of portrait photography was to capture each subject's unique characteristics and to embrace what society might see as imperfections.

The rise in social media platforms such as Instagram has revolutionised how we all perceive ourselves. It has drawn attention to imperfections and has created body image issues for many people across the world. However, these platforms have given everyone access to a camera with a great form of self-expression. Photography has empowered many individuals to explore their creativity and share snippets of their lives on the internet.

Another book which covers the themes of photography is 'Liz Wells Photography, a critical introduction' (2015). Moholy-Nagy (1920) stated (*Photography a critical introduction- 2015*) 'he could hardly have anticipated the extent to which photographic imagery would come to permeate contemporary communication'. He foresaw the importance of

‘camera literacy’ (*chapter 1*) . This book generally covers all aspects including historical from my interests within photography.



Liz Wells, 'Photography a critical Introduction' book, (January 2015)



(Robert Cornelius, 1839)

Robert Cornelius, an amateur chemist (1839) had taken the first ever self-portrait using Daguerres method (1787). He had created this image just months after Daguerres announced his invention. He had taken this image outside his family store requiring him to stand still for 10-15 seconds. Although Daguerres invention was announced before this image was taken Carnillius' image is generally accepted as the oldest portrait of a person. After years of experimenting with different materials Cornillius had shared his invention with a scientific society

(1839) Which then led to them cutting off a local market where they open a studio (1840) where they were able to experiment with imagery much more. This presents how far we have come within photography but also how far technology has advanced, speeding up the process of taking an image. Although the argument remains to who took the first photo of a person, Louis Deguerres or Robert Cornelius.

Whereas before photography used to capture memories, it became a society mainly based off fashion and beauty standards. It is a way of expressing individuality and creativity through images. Therefore, it has become a form of self-expression through portraits. Although it has evolved a lot of overtime it has helped many express themselves and share their creativity to society.

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