

# Portrait

## MR. KENNEY'S THREE KINDS OF PORTRAITS

### 1. Personality Portrait

- Shows your subject's personality through emotion/expression
- Often a tight face shot/emphasis is on the face/hands
- In most cases, the environment is not important – keep foreground/background clean

### 2. Environmental Portrait

- Just like the personality portrait, the environmental portrait shows your subject's personality through expression/emotion
- Shows some part of your subject's environment
- Environment could include a sense of place to show where your subject lives and/or what he/she does

### 3. Sears Portrait Studio Portrait

- We've all had one made of ourselves and we rarely like them
- Shows what subject looks like but tells no story/shows no real emotion
- The only thing that separates this head and shoulders picture from a police mug shot is the crime. Avoid these portraits like the plague...

## IMPORTANT TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PORTRAITS

- Talk with your subject before you begin taking pictures. This will help “break the ice” in getting to know your subject and for your subject to get to know you. Establishing a trust relationship with your subject will be critical to making a meaningful, storytelling portrait. Talking with your subject will also enable you to gather information for your caption and give you ideas for where and how to make the best portrait. As always, listen to your subject – his/her insight will be invaluable in your decision-making process.
- Great light is *the* key to making a great portrait (okay, great light is *the* key to making ANY great picture...). Use your light to contribute to the mood and to the storytelling quality of the picture. Try to fit the quality of light to the mood you are trying to establish – use hard light (big difference between highlights and shadows) if you want to introduce a mysterious or dramatic quality to your portrait and soft light (a more subtle difference between highlights and shadows) if you want to establish a quieter mood. Direction of the light is also critical – remember that front light is flat and boring in most instances, so use light coming from the side (window light is best – but avoid or at least diffuse direct sunlight coming through the window) to create a highlight and shadow on the face. This will also show texture and form in the face and suggest depth.
- Avoid centering your subject. Use rule of thirds and other compositional techniques to add impact to your portrait.
- Should you set up a portrait or shoot it unposed (candid)? The best answer is – it depends. Sometimes an unposed portrait will produce the most natural expression, but a set-up portrait gives you more control over issues such as lighting and location. The best thing to do if you can is to shoot both, then choose which one best fits your story.
- The hands are one of the most expressive parts of the body, so use them to add emotion. Be aware of body language and how that can compliment storytelling facial expression.
- If you are posing your subject, in most cases it is best to get him/her to sit down. People are more relaxed and natural in a sitting position and they can do something with their hands (like rest their head on them). Also, avoid having your subject facing straight on to the camera lens. This looks too much like a mug shot. Have your subject turn his/her body at an angle then turn his/her head into the lens
- As with many photographs, using fewer elements simplifies the picture, lending more clarity as well as impact. Shoot tight – show only what you absolutely need to tell your story. Shoot part instead of the whole. For example, if you photograph someone who plays the tuba, show just part of the tuba – it will be more interesting that way.
- Don't let anyone tell you that a portrait doesn't need a moment. Waiting for just the right moment to push the shutter button – capturing that unexpected expression or unusual body language – can make the difference between an average portrait and a great one.