

SHARED BY:	Chris Francis
TITLE / KEY THEME:	Political portraits: Are you for real?
SUITABLE FOR:	KS4/5 Students (have delivered this with year 10)

OVERVIEW / SUMMARY:

This series of lessons explores political portraiture and aims to:

- Encourage students to be more questioning and analytical of photography and how it might be planned, constructed, controlled, manipulated and subverted.
- Encourage students to reflect on, and respond to, current political issues
- Enable students to collaborate on portrait based practical activities using lighting and composition techniques



Year 10 student responses

KEY OBJECTIVES:

To question and analyse a range of portraits considering:

- The objectivity of the camera – does it always present us with the ‘truth’?
- How the person in a photo -or the photographer themselves- might influence our interpretation of their portrait
- The impact of VISUAL and TECHNICAL decisions (e.g. use of colour, viewpoint, lighting, composition)

OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES / SEQUENCE OF LEARNING:

- Consider [selected portraits](#), and discuss in groups
- Playfully manipulate portraits with marker pens – add personal analysis, key compositional lines, notes, thoughts / speech bubbles relating to politicians policies or personal interpretations of them.
- Stage own portraits - exploring expression, gesture, use of symbols and lighting techniques.

Potential approaches to this:

- *In groups, students form their own political parties, delegating a leader for their campaign*
- *Students randomly draw key words/prompts to form the basis for their portrait responses e.g. hopeful, revolutionary, conservative, liberal, empathetic...*

KEY ARTISTS / REFERENCES / PROMPTS:

- Roland Barthes essay [‘Photography and Electoral Appeal’](#)
- [Pinterest board for project](#) – a variety of political portraits and wider ‘political’ images



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Exploring image manipulation and contemporary responses, such as Jon Gotto’s [New World Circus](#), and Kennard/Phillipps [Photo Op](#)
- Exploring the social documentary work of [Walker Evans](#) and [August Sander](#) could influence students’ understanding of politically influenced fieldwork, as could the work of [Paul Graham](#).