

PHOTOGRAPHY VOCABULARY SUPPORT



Henri Cartier Bresson is considered a pioneer of photojournalism and street photography. This image, 'Derrière la Gare Saint-Lazare' is a great demonstration of what Bresson called 'the decisive moment' – when, whether by construction or good fortune all the ingredients fall into place.

Shooting in daylight, into the light (evident through the silhouette and reflection) his trusty 35mm Leica would have required a fast shutter speed to capture the figure mid-air.

The composition has some lovely echoes within it: the figure with his reflection and also the poster in the background; the ladder suggestive of the railway named on the sign. The second figure also contributes to the diagonal reading of this image.



This image is taken from Richard Billingham's series, 'Ray's a Laugh' which focuses on his life at home with his alcoholic father, Ray. This image depicts his mother completing a jigsaw puzzle.

The combination of jigsaw pieces, tattoos, and garish dress give the image a textural quality that is 'busy' on the eye. The square blue cigarette packet is echoed on the cushion. The jigsaw box blends with the dress, as if it is an empty frame, and this sense of patterned 'negative space' is also repeated upon the table top.

The 'snapshot aesthetic' and overly saturated colour reminds me of the work of Martin Parr.



Nan Goldin's work adopts a 'snapshot aesthetic'. Her images from the late 1970's /early 80's New York gay scene and post-punk subcultures have an autobiographical feel. Her work is often presented grouped as slideshows at creative gatherings. 'The Ballad of Sexual Dependency' — a title taken from a song in Bertolt Brecht's Threepenny Opera is an example of this. Most of her Ballad subjects were dead by the 1990s, lost either to drug overdose or AIDS. This one image titled 'The Hug' has both an intimacy and a tension - a reoccurring conflict within her work.

The use of flash creates immediacy and a suggestion of a grabbed, voyeuristic moment. The concealed faces contribute to the secrecy.



Gillian Wearing's 'Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say (1992–3)' was produced by approaching people on London streets, asking them to write something on a card and then photographing them as they displayed it.

I consider that the 'value' in this work lies in our (the viewers) interpretations of the relationships between text and figure. These two aspects combined lure us in to reflect on bigger questions, and not just those relating to those pictured. What would I write? What preconceptions we may hold based on appearances.