Portraiture

About This Project

This assignment is intended to develop skills in making portraits and understanding how various types of light will affect the portrait. The simplest definition of portraiture is the two dimensional rendering of the three dimensional face or figure of a person. However, the idea of a portrait also implies other qualities such as likeness and the revelation of character or personality.

The nature of the social contract between the subject and the photographer may vary. The commercial portrait photographer and the subject are usually interested in creating an attractive, flattering likeness. The mother who photographs her child attempts to defeat time. Friends or lovers may photograph each other to define or examine their relationship. Celebrities have their portraits made in order to provide a public image for mass reproduction. The motivations for making a portrait or for being the subject of a portrait are varied and often complex.

Another aspect of the assignment is concerned with examining the descriptive, formal and affective qualities of light. The choice of lighting defines and modifies the appearance of a person in a portrait.

**Direct light** - creates strong, hard edged shadows  
*example* - outdoors in direct sunlight

**Diffuse light** - little or no shadows, less texture defined, flatter dimension  
*example* - open shade, heavily overcast day, fog

**Directional Diffuse light** - shadows are generally softer and texture is less defined than direct light. No hard edged shadows.  
*example* - such as sky light from a large window, subject posed next to the window  
(be careful not to put the subject’s back to the window or you may end up with a silhouette.)

Note: The name Directional Diffuse may be confusing. Think about the idea that Directional Diffuse light is diffuse light coming from one direction. Try turning on a single soft light (not a spot light) in a darkened room.  
Position your subject with their side to the light and face them with your camera.

**Turn in:** (in an envelope)

- Exposure records  
  (optional unless I have specified you to do so)
- Negatives
- Proof sheet
- 3 - 6x9 or 8x10 inch spotted prints (one of each type of light)
- One print to be either dry mounted or over matted.
- Self evaluation form