

## EXERCISE

### *Hands*

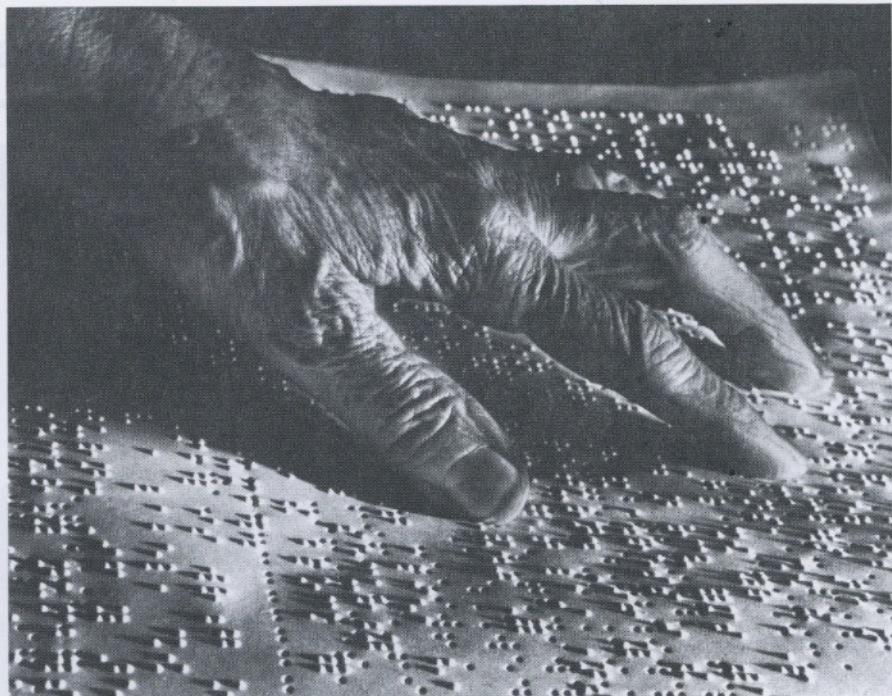
**Assignment:** Photograph hands in expressive postures or engaged in interesting activities.

You may photograph one hand by itself, both hands of one person, or the hands of several people together. Do not include a full face with the hands, though part of a face is acceptable.

**Goal:** Hands have attitudes, moods, habits. Look for hands that say something about a person or what that person is doing, thinking or feeling.

**Tips:** Look for people you know who have a particular gesture that is their "signature." Alternatively, look for the various attitudes of hands (resigned, strong, casual, engaged in some task, at rest, tense) or for their position in relation to the body (behind the back, part way in a pocket, scratching the head, holding up the chin). Look also for how hands relate to their surroundings: hands reaching for something; interacting with someone else's hands; placed on somebody's shoulder; holding a baseball bat, a steering wheel, a chess piece; opening a car door.

In general, unless the context is important, the hands should be large within the frame.



*Student photograph.*



*Student photograph by Esther Suarez.*

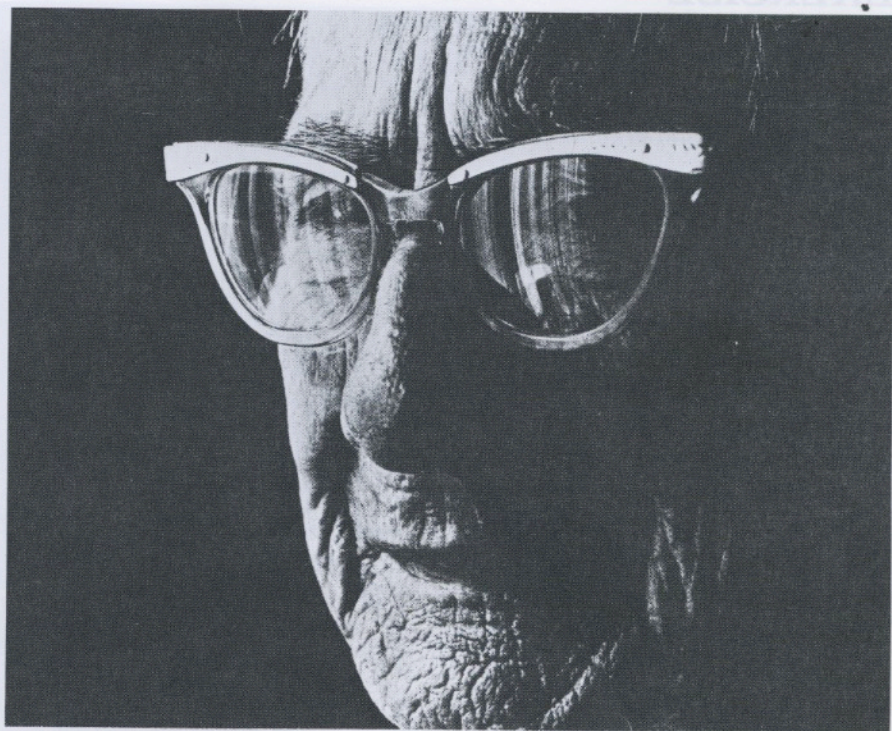
## EXERCISE

### *Elders*

**Assignment:** Do a series of portraits of old people: grandmothers, uncles, aunts, neighbors, etc.

**Goal:** Notice that faces get very expressive as they grow older. You can often tell what kind of life a person has led just by looking at his or her face. Try to capture something of your subject's whole life in your photographs.

**Tips:** With the elderly, it is even more important than usual to get clear permission. Depending on how old and how healthy your subject is, the idea of being photographed may seem fine, strange or unpleasant. Help your subject feel comfortable about being photographed, before you take a single shot. If this doesn't seem possible, go find another subject. Don't just walk up to strangers and start photographing them. It is your job to make the experience pleasant and relaxing. Work at it.



*Student photograph by Kimberly S. Kosiba.*



*Student photograph by Neill Bevill.*

## EXERCISE

### Children

**Assignment:** Photograph children doing things that come naturally to them: playing, talking, sleeping, perhaps reading or daydreaming.

Any child between infancy and about 8 years old qualifies.

**Goal:** Capture particularly childlike qualities, not just a person who happens to be young.

**Tips:** Be aware of how children respond to their surroundings. Where they are, what they're doing, who they're with may be important . . . or may not. You decide.

You'll probably get the best results with children you already know, so they can go about their business without being aware of the camera. Try your younger brothers and sisters, cousins, family friends, neighbors. If none of them is available or willing, look for children out on the street, at school, in parks, etc.

*Never* photograph children without getting permission from a parent. This is especially true if you don't know the child, but it's a good idea even if you do.

The main challenge is to keep the child interested and interesting. If the child is playing a game, encourage him or her to tell you about it. Try to talk to the child while you're shooting, even while you're behind camera. You may want a parent or another child to keep conversation going if it's hard to talk and shoot at same time.



*Student photograph by Charles Stuart Kennedy III.*

## EXERCISE

### *Soft-Light Portrait*

**Assignment:** Do a series of head-and-shoulders photographs in which the light source is behind the subject.

**Goal:** Produce an expressive portrait, with soft light and no shadows on the face.

**Tips:** In bright sunlight, have your subject face away from the sun. The face will thus be in open shadow, with little variation in the lighting. Keep the background out of focus by using a fairly large aperture. (Try  $f/5.6$  at  $1/125$  of a second as a point of departure for this exercise.)

Be careful of "burn out": white areas that are so bright they lose all detail. Though you'll probably do best if your subject does not wear white, with proper exposure this should not be a problem.

Get in close. Frame the subject carefully. Stick to the head and shoulders for the most part, though an expressive hand is a perfectly acceptable addition.

*Student photograph by Vinny Rodziewicz.*



*Student photograph.*



## EXERCISE

### *Side-Lit Portrait*

**Assignment:** Do a series of portraits in which the subject is strongly lit from one side.

**Goal:** Side-lighting tends to be dramatic, and is often harsh, especially in very “contrasty” lighting. However, it can produce a particular mood and can be subtle when either the contrast or the overall light value is low. Control the lighting and exposure to get the effect you want.

**Tips:** For best results, use early morning or late afternoon light. You may want to shoot indoors near a window, so the light comes in a single shaft. You can then place your subject so the light strikes precisely where you want it to. Bracket your exposures to get the effect you want.

You may want the sidelit area to be the highlight of otherwise balanced lighting, or to have the sidelighting be the *only* source. In addition, experiment with placing the subject so the lighted side faces the camera, and so the shaded side does.

Be careful of losing texture in highlighted areas. In the final print, you should be able to see pores on the brightest part of the face. Expose for the highlights.

In rare cases it can be very effective to have the whole face in shadow, *if* the background is adequately lit so features are clear.



*Student photograph by Don Ho Fuller.*



*Student photograph by Kristen McCauley.*

*Student photograph by Michael Collins*

## EXERCISE

### *Prop Portrait*

**Assignment:** Photograph people with “props”—tools, sports equipment, musical instruments or any other object with which they can interact.

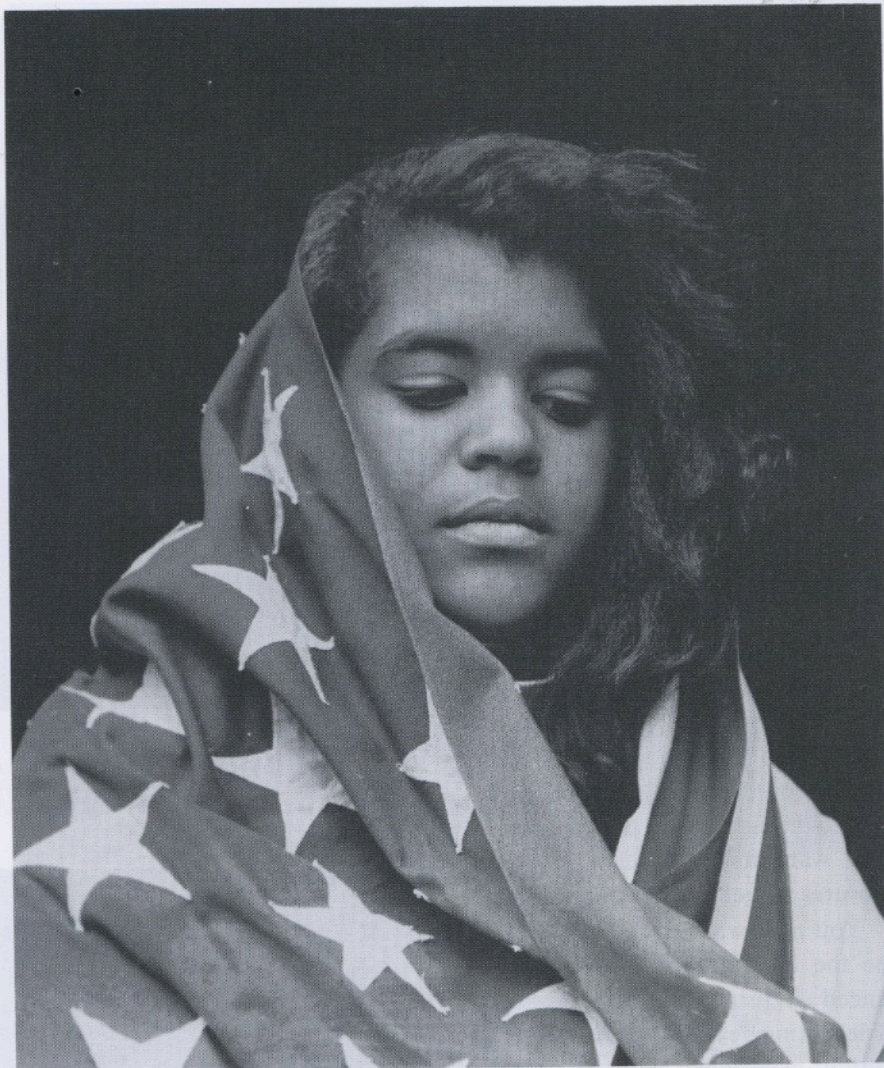
**Goal:** Props have two uses for the photographer. First, they can help a subject relax. Second, they can tell the viewer something about the subject. Try to select props that are useful in both of these ways.

**Tips:** People who are uncomfortable just standing and looking at a camera, even if you get them talking, tend to relax quite a bit if you give them something to hold or look at. Similarly, you can often produce a very revealing portrait by placing your subject in a familiar environment: in his or her own room, with personal possessions around, at a desk or workplace, in the locker room or gym, etc.

While it is often helpful if the subject can actually be using the prop in some way, be aware of how that affects the face. If it's obscured, you may have to get the subject to look up when you actually click the shutter. You may, of course, be able to position the subject (or yourself) so this isn't necessary.

Anything familiar to the subject is acceptable: a scarf, telephone, guitar, book or baseball bat. Something as simple as a chair may do the trick. Use your imagination, and don't forget to ask your subject for ideas.

(Note: Try to think of more creative props than cameras. One or two shots of someone holding a camera are fine, but no more.)



*Simple elements, potent image — a fine example of “less is more.” What does this photograph say to you? What is it about? (Student photograph by Christina Faiella.)*

## EXERCISE

### *Detail Portrait*

**Assignment:** Do a series of “portraits” in which the subject’s face is not shown. Instead, crop in on expressive details of objects that relate in some way to the subject. (Part of the face may be shown, but not all of it.)

**Goal:** As in the prop portrait assignments, you will be using objects to help convey a person’s character. The only rule is that you must not include the full face.

You’ll probably want to photograph an object the subject is either wearing or holding. This is not required, however.

**Tips:** Crop in on something that typifies the person you’re photographing: patches on a favorite pair of jeans, a piece of jewelry, glasses, track shoes slung over a shoulder, a purse or handbag, a baseball, a book.

Keep in mind that an empty pair of shoes, for example, or a notebook by itself, or a wallet, or a coffee mug are all perfectly acceptable. The subject does not have to be in the photograph at all.



*Student photograph.*

## EXERCISE

### *Mood Portrait*

**Assignment:** Produce a series of portraits that clearly express moods.

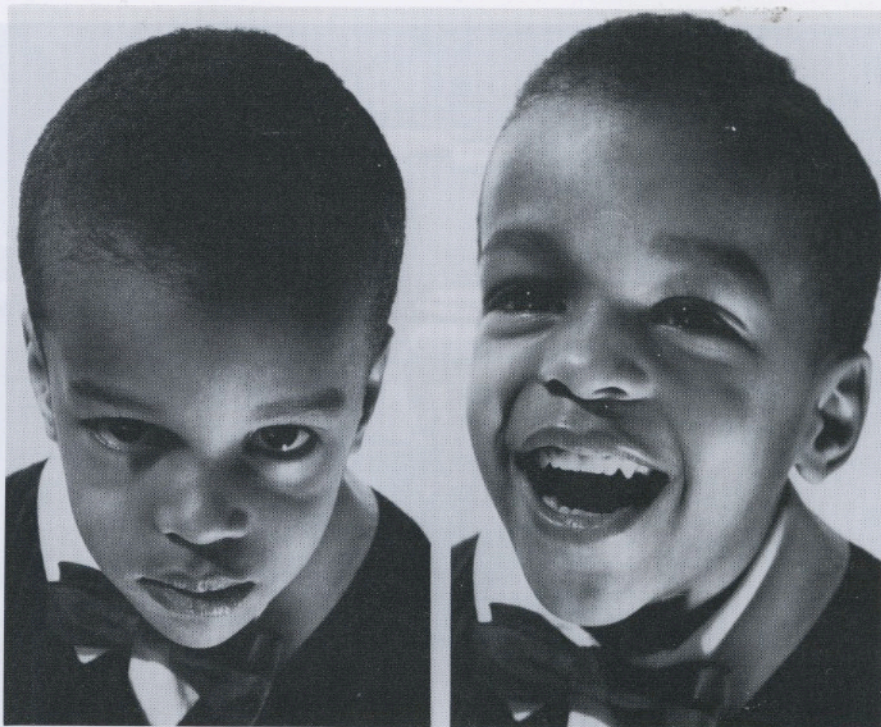
**Goal:** Get more than just a picture of somebody. Capture a particular facial expression or posture to convey something of what your subject is feeling. Try to make the viewer feel the same way.

**Tips:** There are a lot of moods to choose from. Here are a few: happiness, sadness, curiosity, contemplation, boredom, excitement, friendliness, hostility, arrogance, delight, fear, satisfaction, anticipation, anger, patience, concentration, uncertainty, frustration.

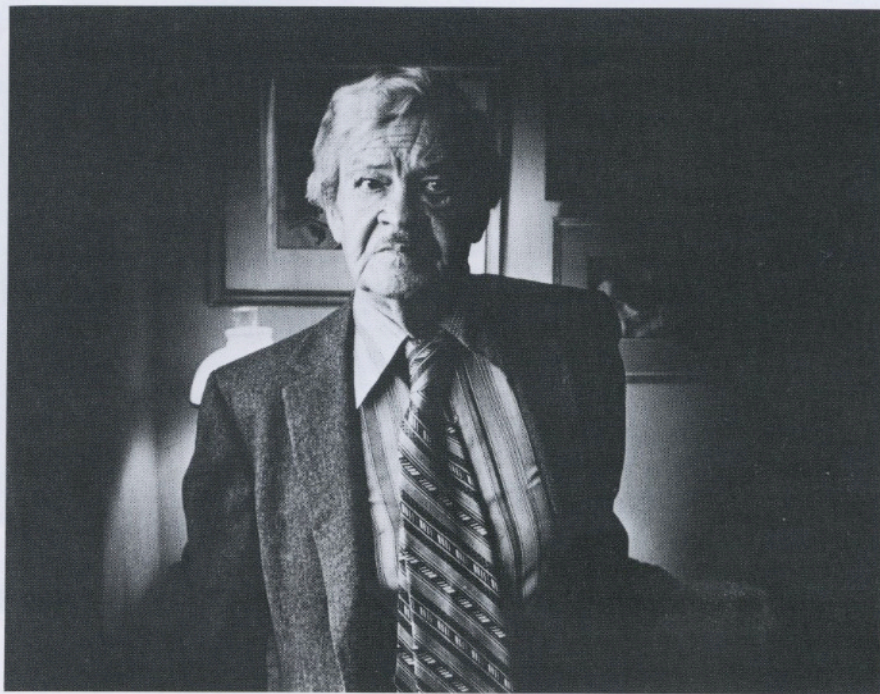
Most of us have certain expressions or gestures that are unique, some particular way of saying who we are. If you think of someone as being jolly, how do you express that? What about solemn? Frazzled? Calm? Excited?

You might try getting several people to interact together. Or go someplace where they're likely to do that on their own, such as a football game. People in groups often don't react the same way at the same time, so you may get several moods in one shot. Alternatively, you might crop in on one person in the group and let the viewer imagine the rest of the scene.

Be selective. Surroundings may be helpful or distracting. Often, just a subject's face will be enough. However, part of the subject's body may also be expressing the mood. If that helps make a better photograph, put it in. If it doesn't, leave it out.



*Student photograph by John Shearer.*



*Student photograph.*