



Tutor Report Form

Student name:	Robert Burton
Student number:	498099
Course/Module title:	Digital Photographic Practice
Assignment number:	Five

Overall Comments

You have gone about this Assignment in your usual through manner. I feel you have a natural flair for portraiture but those taken on holiday have rather let the standard drop. Perhaps you should replace them with others in more controlled lighting conditions. I used to undertake engagement portraits to get to know the couple prior to the wedding. Taking them to a good outside location in the early evening enabled me to get them used to posing together and separately, so that on the big day they naturally adopted good poses.

Before finally submitting your Assessment I feel you need to check the typing errors on your web site, although nothing to do with photography it is to do with presentation and good marks on this aspect go a long way to getting a good mark.

Feedback on assignment

Photo 1.

This is a lovely image to start this Assignment, I expect she is pleased. I like the way you have produced this image from the starting image, it helps no end if you have this in mind when taking the shot. I just have 2 ideas to improve the shot, one is personal preference, the other a tip you can use for ever more.

There are highlights over her left eye and on the cheek, I have toned these down a bit using the healing brush which may not have been available to you if you were no longer able to use CS5, as I said this is a personal preference which may not suit you and I doubt if the model would notice it.

Unless the models teeth are bad (I doubt it) then a hint of a smile showing some teeth look better. How is this achieved? Don't ask them to say 'cheese' because this distorts the mouth, ask her to say 'strawberries' after you saying 1.2.3. people always laugh, wait till the smile has started to fade then shoot, I have used this technique for over 40 years it always works, I don't know why, but who cares.

Tutors Amended

Original Image



Student Comment: You can see how the highlight over the leading eye is less distracting.

Photo 2,

This shot reminds me of the current advert advertising a local broadband, the actor walks past a policeman struggling with a villain, who stop struggling and smile at the actor. Now I am not saying they are not genuinely fond of one another but the hands dominate and the pose is a little aggressive, it needs softening a little. With the current trend of taking 100's of photos at a wedding then it is OK but if you were using just 6 rolls of film then a little care is needed. It is far better to have the sisters with the foreheads touching so they are leaning towards one another, rather than one appearing to be grabbing the other to her.

Never, never, never crop fingers off in a portrait, you would still have to clone out a bit of a digit top left. Although not in the picture hands appearing around the waist on the right should be avoided. I am not aware at what stage in the ceremony it took place but if after the wedding a good time to bring the bride's left hand into play to show the rings.

Photo 3.

Great image, a lot of your problem could have been solved earlier by working out an ideal place for taking this photograph, starting with ushers, groom and best man and the finishing with the groom. Select a place with good lighting conditions away from guests arriving. I agree with all you have done, BUT those key lights in the eyes, they are not the same. Select a white spot somewhere on the original photo, reduce the opacity to a low level. Place it in one eye and when it looks correct, copy it onto the other eye, then it is the same intensity.

Photo 4.

A very good portrait, which could be improved even more by getting rid of the papers etc in his left hand, the eye is dragged down to them from the subject matter. A key light in his left eye to match the right and the use of the burn tool on highlights to reduce the highlight in the trees on left. I have also removed some of the flare in his glasses (left eye). Well done.

Tutor Version



Original Image



Student Comment: Again I can see exactly what the Tutor is indicating and I agree with the comments entirely.

Photo 5.

As a specialist portrait photographer I look at your photographs with a view as if I had taken them and what alterations I would have done, so please consider my comments as fine tuning as your portraiture is good and can only get better the more that you do. Young adults can be a problem but you have succeeded in getting a good portrait in a difficult situation. There are 2 points I wish to raise, 1. the strength of key light in the eyes, having mentioned it before I am sure you will always look at this aspect in future. Fill in flash is difficult to handle especially if you are using flash on camera. I suggest that several layers of tissue over it held in place by an elastic band will reduce the intensity, the object is to make the viewer unaware that it has been used. 2. The hard sunlight has caused a highlight on the nose, making it look broader than it is, almost like a boxer, perhaps a slight turn of the head would have solved this problem.

Photo 6.

Pleasant portrait, good expression, slightly straight on, and oh those key lights!

Photo 7.

This is probably the weakest photo of the set, it's a very happy grab shot and as such succeeds but it is not particularly attractive because the laugh causes lines around the eyes and chin. The hands and the card are the brightest point and the eye is pulled down to them. The hands themselves are not in a good position and there is another finger coming into the picture. In the amended photo I have cropped this out. I have also removed the handbag strap to make the picture as simple as possible. The main problem is that it is not sharp anywhere.

Tutor Version



Original Image



Student Comment: Agreed with to comments and I can see how the removal of all the awkward hands and card has made a dramatic difference. The handbag strap being removed makes the image simpler and emphasizes her character far more.

Photo 8

A very professional portrait, only comment I can make is that it appears slightly soft. Pleased to see that you kept the nose inside the cheek, a common failure in portraiture which you have avoided. I have burned in the highlight on his forehead and sharpened the image.

Tutor Version



Original Image



Student Comment: The highlight being burnt in and the sharpness of the image in the Tutors version shows me where I must really concentrate to polish off submissions.

Photo 9

One thing I learned early on was that sunlight was a killer for portraits, far more care has to be taken with regard to the lighting. This was especially true at weddings', wherever possible I put people in the shade and tried to avoid specular highlights coming through the trees. In these circumstances people did not screw up their eyes, they did not get hot, problems with bald heads were avoided and with the use of fill in flash off camera details was in the faces and there were highlights in the eyes.

A pleasant photo of the young girl, but as is usual there is a T shirt with a logo, which again draws the eye as it is the brightest point in the picture. In my amended image I have cropped it out which improves the photo even if it is a severe crop. The other point that concerns me is that the hair appears to have been over sharpened, so I have blurred it a little so it is not so obvious. I have also burned in the highlights on the lower right of the photo. I think this set of photographs on holiday have not been as successful as those at the weddings purely because of the strong lighting conditions.

Tutor Version



Original Image



Student Comment: I agree again and can see the immediate improvement in the Tutor Version. I will try in future to improve on these areas, including over doing the hair. I had thought that the hair was a feature to bring back in to sharpness, but now I can see to 'do it to taste' rather than making things hard and fast rules.

Photo 10.

One of the hardest things to undertake is photographs of the family, they know you too well and it is difficult to get the best expressions. Bare shoulders are a problem, they are usually nearer the camera, therefore look larger and it is a large amount of skin. With ladies with long hair it is best to drape it over the shoulder. For more formal portraits I always kept a black lace shawl. In this photo I have used to dodge tool to darken the shoulder, but basically there is too much sunlight.

Tutor Version

Original Image



Student Comments: Agreed with the Tutor comments, this is a tricky situation and the family does feel awkward in light of the thousands of pictures I take. The bare shoulder drape or long hair is a good idea for more formal portraits.

Suggested reading/viewing

My mentor was Karsh. His book “Karsh a fifty-year retrospective” is the book every budding portrait photographer should have. Famous for his picture of Churchill, his black and white portraits are brilliant. Available from Amazon.

Lord Snowdon a very under rated portrait photographer. “Stills 1984-1987 and Public Appearances 1987-1991” are worth getting from the library, they are inspirational.

Tutor name:	David Sherwill
Date	13 th . October 2011
Next assignment due	Completed