

**What was the first recorded photographed self-portrait?**

**In 1839, a year after** [**the first photo containing a human being**](http://www.petapixel.com/2010/10/27/first-ever-photograph-of-a-human-being/) **was made, photography pioneer** [**Robert Cornelius**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Cornelius) **made the first ever portrait of a human being. The Daily published** [**an interesting piece**](http://www.thedaily.com/page/2011/07/17/071711-opinions-history-cornelius-lichter-marck-1-3/) **on Cornelius’ story:**

**On a sunny day in October, Robert Cornelius set up his camera in the back of his father’s gas lamp-importing business on Chestnut Street in Center City, Philadelphia. After removing the lens cap, he sprinted into the frame, where he sat for more than a minute before covering up the lens. The picture he produced that day was the first photographic self-portrait. It is also widely considered the first successful photographic portrait of a human being.**

**The words written on the back of the self-portrait, in Cornelius’ own hand, said it all: “The first light picture ever taken. 1839.”**

**Teacher Resources**

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**Theme: Magnum Photographers**

1.6

Photographer – Background Information:

[Bruce Gilden, USA](http://www.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=MAGO31_10_VForm&ERID=24KL53ZS6V)

[Bruce Gilden is one of the most renowned street photographers in the world. Most of his long-term projects have been self-assigned and have led to the publication of ten books. Gilden is the recipient of numerous grants and awards and his work has been exhibited widely in museums and galleries. His most recent commission in London for The Archive of Modern Conflict was featured last November, at Mois de la Photo in Paris.](http://www.magnumphotos.com/C.aspx?VP3=CMS3&VF=MAGO31_10_VForm&ERID=24KL53ZS6V)

(click the link above to take you to the Magnum Photos site for further information on the photographer’s career)

Level of Engagement:

Single Curriculum

Portraits



Employees at Alcatel. 2013.

Bruce Gilden

Bruce Gilden on working on *Open for Business*:

"Since I'm used to working on commissions, I can adapt quickly to new environments, work very hard and very fast.

To work on this project where I have to realize a number of images in a short period of time, I decided to do colour digital photography. This way I can see the pictures when I'm taking them which is very important. My approach is to combine portraits of workers with surreal abstract photographs of the environment in order to bring my personal vision of the place, add another dimension to the traditional setting, and give a new life to customary objects.”

**Portraits**

This activity is ………….   
an opportunity to understand personal style and recording the people that are involved in an enterprise both from *Open for Business* and as a class group It allows pupils to explore different framing techniques and to explore and build personal preferences about how people are represented. It allows pupils to develop their understanding of key photography terms.

Before the first lesson……….  
Select a range of portrait images from *Open for Business* which are interesting and varied these can be from either the Magnum photographers or the images taken by their assistants.

Start by……….  
Learning about portraiture, introducing different styles from across the exhibition or from other sources. Consider using a mix of photographic and other media, such as paint, digital, pencil / pastel.

Next ……….

Each pupil can choose their favourite portrait and study it in more detail:

* Are there any clues that the photographer is trying to give (eg – how does the subject feel? / what is their job?)
* How relevant is the background?
* What media / colour is used?

Next……….

Group discussion – circulate the images and give pupils time to look in depth at the range of styles – encourage questioning, such as:

* How was the image made
* When was it created
* What does it say about the Photographer
* What does it say about the person in the portrait (the subject)

Finally……….  
Enable the pupils to spend time creating their own portraits, inspired by the style of their chosen image – they may chose to recreate the atmosphere / grouping / technique, or they may change tactic, using their own ideas. Give pupils access to cameras / ask them to use their own phones or mobile devices.

Options for Delivery / Timescale:

This activity can be completed in two lessons and can also be extended for completion over 4 – 6 lessons.

You could set up the first lesson by giving a 15 minute introduction to *Open for Business*, information about the photographer and showing some images from the exhibition.

Curriculum Links:

Use this exercise as a curriculum focus in whichever area you are covering with KS3 pupils – below are examples of links to certain subjects but you can adapt as necessary to give the learning a different focus.

This can be used as a general introduction to a project, or more specifically to a specific subject learning aim – this example is relevant to Art and Design but you could adapt it as necessary to your subject area. For instance if you are a Science teacher, you may be teaching KS3 pupils about the human eye – use this to photograph pupils’ eyes – develop photographic diagrams for labelling or add content from the natural world curriculum and use portraiture for animals. You could create stunning exhibition pieces in class and run identification activities.

Learning outcomes and curriculum links………

* thinking and decision making
* investigating and imagining
* interpreting information
* working with others and developing social skills
* valuing others opinions
* discipline
* developing questioning skills and exploring how they can be used to elicit important information
* research skills

Art and design

* deeper understanding of contemporary photography as an art form and the ability to critically analyse it and to communicate ideas
* using own ideas and making decisions to create photographs for a purpose

English

* questioning
* group discussion
* speaking and listening
* recording information

Extension Activities:

Encourage pupils to create further portraits in a range of styles, they can choose any (willing) subjects – it may be friends / teachers / parents / family members. Reflect on the learning by sharing finished portraits – what did they learn, why is it important to record people in certain contexts, how have they captured something about the subject to convey to the viewer?

* You could ask pupils to find and share portraits from their family / members of their family in their work environment
* You could visit a local history archive and invite a local history society to share portraits they have
* You could extend this into a community project, asking local people for copies of portraits they would like to share
* Pupils might be able to visit a local business or manufacturer to create their own Bruce Gilden inspired collection of portraits.