

109 PORTRAIT PICTURE...OR

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> BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER - DIFFERENT PEOPLE FIND DIFFERENT THINGS BEAUTIFUL AND THE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION DOESN'T MATTER GREATLY...

We all have different opinions about photographs and they may differ immensely – images are very subjective to viewers, and individual responses are very personal. What one person likes, another may dismiss out of hand.

We've tried to illustrate the differences using practical advice and explanation without implying any undue reader ignorance. It should also allow for differing experience levels, as many readers may be new to the pleasures of underwater photography.

SO WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PORTRAIT AND A PICTURE?

A picture is a direct image of what the photographer sees through the viewfinder – what you see is what you get. Anyone with a camera can take a picture and they share the same basic photographic values as portraits – it is the manner in which they are applied that makes the difference. The main aspects we should consider at all times are composition, framing and lighting. We're often carried away with the euphoria of the situation and neglect to check our settings and results, and blissfully continue to fire away without the all-important review stage - review, review!

Portraits, on the other hand, reflect the personality of the creature, the setting or habitat in which it lives and a photographer's ability to communicate it's best attributes and touch the emotions of the viewer.

"..TOUCH THE EMOTIONS OF THE VIEWER.."

Seahorses can always raise emotions but difficult subject to get the right pose. In this instance the slight turn to the side just gave the right composition to the frame. Use of high f stop helps to lift the subject from the background
Nikon D200, 105mm lens +4T diopter, 1/125:
f/22 : ISO 125



"..VISUAL CONNECTION.."

Getting the right composition, eye contact, and focus on the eyes were important to make this feel like a portrait. It took several tries until this fish was comfortable with us. A fast-focusing long lens like a 105mm is important for a shot like this. A contrasting background colour to the subject is also important as they can lift and isolate the subject but these are not usually under your control.
Nikon D90, 150mm lens, F9.5, 1/200th

"..COMMUNICATE SOMETHING POWERFUL.."

This jawfish image was part of a series which showed a mouthful of eggs, and because they're very protective, it faced the camera often to see my position. The boldness of the face and protruding eyes was a perfect opportunity to capture the structure surrounding the eyes.
Nikon D200, 105mm lens +2T diopter, 1/160: f/14 : ISO 125

PROTRAITIARTYOP PICTURE...OR



"..STUDY YOUR SUBJECT.."

Frogfish give the photographer ample time to assess opportunities to create a portrait as they are static just as a model would be in a studio. Providing they are in a good location you can experiment quite easily and have time to review your compositional skills.
Nikon D200, 60mm lens, 1/60 : f/6.3 : ISO 100

A creative photographer slowly develops their own style from which many can be recognised. They spend time with the subject looking for the best composition possible, just the same as taking a subject on land – although this is somewhat easier if you're shooting models as they can be positioned by simply talking to them, not so easy for the photographer shooting wildlife.

A portrait photographer tries to convey a greater visual dimension to the image and to communicate something powerful that the photographer identifies with and focuses on. This could be the brightness of an eye, the texture of the skin, an unusual expression. In fact all these factors are personal to each photographer. Creating portraits is a practised art that requires talent, expertise, vision and creativity – but then so do pictures...

The setting is critical to a good picture or portrait as it should blend into the background in an effort to make the subject the pivotal point of the image.

Pictures are necessary to photography as a recording medium but they can and should be creative. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and that you should never tire of looking at a good portrait, but then portraits can also be seen as too creative and lose perspective becoming more a work of art.

If you're new to photography or a seasoned campaigner, we can all get personal satisfaction from our images as we set ourselves obtainable standards. Your images may not always produce the results you're looking for (ours certainly do not) but we should always look to push the boundaries.

Look and learn from your contemporaries, but enjoy overall the freedom of self expression we all apply in our pursuit of the best picture ever – or did we mean portrait?



"..GREATER VISUAL DIMENSION.."

Anemonefish are great subjects for portrait work that need patience but they usually return to the same place as they check you out. The object to attain this portrait was to set the focal point using rule of thirds and capture the eye with slightly more light from below-right giving more depth to the composition.

Nikon D200, 60mm lens, 1/100: f/14 : ISO 125

"..LOOK TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES.."

We have many nudibranch images as do most photographers but few we could call a true portrait – something that could hang on the wall. This makes a portrait in it's creative angles from shooting upward and turning the camera angle until the desired diagonal effect was achieved.

Nikon D200, 60mm lens, 1/200: f/22 : ISO 100

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