

ROY KEANE WITH RAVEN'S HEAD Murdo Macleod (Born 1963)

Murdo Macleod was born on the Scottish Isle of Lewis, leaving the island for the first time to go to college in Edinburgh. As a boy he had a great interest in stories and pictures. He saved up for a mail-order russian camera and taught himself to process film from a library book. He now works as a freelance photographer for the Observer, Guardian and other newspapers and publishes his work in magazines and online. One of his most powerful series of photographs documented the Foot and Mouth outbreak in the UK.



Cork's own Roy Keane is portrayed here holding the skull of that most nightmarish of birds, the raven. Murdo Macleod was aware of Roy Keane's reputed 'dark side' and took the opportunity to use the skull. The portrait sets up an interesting dynamic. Roy Keane looks straight ahead, one eye seen through the beak of the dead bird, we, the viewers look straight back, but are drawn also to the empty eye socket of the bird. It is though we are all held, suspended in this triangle of looking and trying to see.

DISCUSSION

Who is the man in this photograph?

Can you look at this portrait and see it as a man holding a skull, or do you have to see it as Roy Keane holding a skull? Try not to know who it is, is it possible?

Why do you think there are no soccer boots or jerseys to tell us who he is? What does this portrait want to tell us about Roy Keane?

The skull in the image is of a raven, what do you know about the raven? How would you describe the personality of the raven?

Roy Keane is looking directly at us but his eye is framed by the beak of the bird, how does this affect the way we look at Keane? Or even how he looks at us?

The background of this portrait is black and empty, so we focus on the two heads. Are there any colours or shapes that connect the heads? What do you see?

What do you think about when you look at a skull? Is it possible to look at a skull and not have any thoughts or associations about it? Why?

How does Roy Keane look? Can you tell a lot by the expression on his face? What do you think his expression could mean?

One of the reasons people have their portraits painted or photographed is to tell the world about themselves in some way, perhaps about their lives and interests or to show the things that they love. What do you think Roy Keane is telling us about himself here?

What do you think of this image of Roy Keane with the skull of a raven? Is it funny, scary... how does it make you feel?

The photographer Murdo Macleod said he photographed Roy Keane with the skull because he knew that Keane had a 'dark side'. Do you think the skull gets this across? What else in the photograph gives this impression?

Is an art gallery somewhere that you might expect to see a photograph of Roy Keane?



COMPARE AND CONTRAST

This picture shows a very different kind of portrait. It is a painting is called *Portrait of James Joyce* by Louis le Brocqy.

Do you get a sense of James Joyces' personality from this portrait? What can you tell?

How is a painted portrait different to a photographic portrait?

HANDS ON

Think of a friend of someone in your family with very strong characteristics; maybe they are very serious or funny or unusual in some way. Think of an object, toy or even animal that has in some way the same characteristic. Sketch a few possible ways of composing a picture using both of them as a subject. If possible, photograph your best composition, or perhaps you can use a photograph of the person and make a photo-collage with other images.

Share a disposable camera between your classmates and draw names to chose pairs. The photographer gets to choose the pose and props used. (Be kind!) Plan the composition, lighting and theme for your photograph. Take turns.