

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

What is your immediate reaction to this photograph?

In one or two sentences, how would you describe this work?

Can you look at this photograph objectively in terms of composition, light and shade, etc... without thinking about Roy Keane? Please give reasons for your answer.

If you didn't know Roy Keane, would you still find this photograph interesting? Why?

There is no evidence in the photograph that we are looking at a soccer player. What aspects of the man do you think the photographer is interested in? What comes across about Roy Keane?

How would you describe the expression on Keane's face?

The skull is from a raven (the photographer said it smelled very bad) what do you associate with that bird?

A physical connection has been set up in the image between Keane and the raven, why does this make us feel they are connected in some other way? How else might they be connected?

What words can you find to describe the mood of the image? What part does the composition have in creating this mood?

Is an art gallery somewhere that you might expect to see a photograph of Roy Keane? Would you be less surprised if it was a painting 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 think that there are qualities that a photographer can bring to a portrait that a painter cannot? What are these qualities?

HANDS ON

Do this test to see how sophisticated you are at reading peoples' expressions: Write a list of feelings or emotions such as 'concerned,' 'overjoyed', 'unsure' 'annoyed'. (Make up new categories as necessary.) On sheets of A2 paper stick down headshots from magazines or newspapers that fit the profile. Do this in groups of 2 or 3 and see if you agree on the words and their corresponding images.

Using the same list as above, look at your expressions in the mirror as you try out each emotion, jot down words relating how your face changes. Choose one emotion to express and, without exaggerating your expression, draw a self-portrait in charcoal. Look especially at the eyes, eyebrows, the curve of the lips and the tilt of the head, share drawings and see if you can read the expressions.

Using the school camera, work with another person to take close-up portraits: Set up a simple dark background and chose one object that you feel will work to provoke your questions or promote an understanding. Experiment with and use whatever lights you can to sculpt form and to create atmosphere, first you compose and ask your friend to take the shot, then swap around.