

## TAKING PICTURES OF PEOPLE AS A FASCINATING STUDY OF HUMANITY

When you think of photographing people, you may think of your family reunion or the Christmas party at work. These types of pictures of people are records of fun events with nice memories. Let's take a look at another idea for taking pictures of people, with an entirely different slant.

Much as anthropologists study the diversity of characteristics of people in cultural, ethnic and environmental contexts, some photographers record these aspects of people in their pictures. If you've never thought of photography in this way, you may find this a fascinating new genre to explore.

Alfred Stieglitz was an early 20th century photographer whose life's work was instrumental in popularizing pictures of people in their daily lives. His great talent was in capturing the emotions and humanity of people, such that the photograph draws the viewer into the subject's experience at that moment in time.

Taking pictures of people with this goal in mind makes the photographer and the viewer grow in the understanding of human nature. For example, a photograph of a young man trying to hitch a ride in the rain can speak volumes about the experience. His poncho sparkles with the raindrops flowing in a steady stream to the ground. The lights of passing traffic highlight the contrast between the warm, dry drivers, heedless of his misery. In the same vein, a picture of a child curled up for a nap on a bench at a busy train station can capture the innocence of childhood contrasted with a bustling world of hurried grown-ups.

If you'd like to experiment with this form of photographs of people, look for ordinary people in contrasting environments or contexts. Children and the elderly pose extraordinary possibilities. The lined faces of the aged often make great subjects, reflecting character and wisdom. People are such interesting subjects. Facial expressions can convey a thousand moods and feelings.

Candid shots of family members is a good place to start. Instead of the usual snapshot of Dad posed at the barbecue, try getting a shot of his thoughtful expression as he samples his latest salsa creation, unsure that it's quite right. Catch a shot of Grandma napping in a lounge chair with the baby.

Taking pictures of people with an eye to the feel and magic of the moment will make you a better and more enthusiastic photographer. You may find yourself so taken with this new experience, you'll be wanting a darkroom and all the trimmings to pursue this hobby in a serious way. Photographing people is an artful endeavor. Take the leap!

