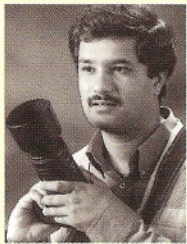


## VIEW FROM THE GALLERY



**MOHAMMED ARFAN ASIF**  
**on the state of portraiture.**

**F**ROM THE EYES THAT REPRESENTED the allied forces in World War II ('Sir Winston Churchill' by the late Yousuf Karsh) to the piercing anger ridden eyes that represents a significant segment of the human populace ('Portraits', Steve McCurry), the emotive power of portraiture continues.

Portraiture has been undoubtedly the most common subject since photography was invented. Millions of portraits are shot every second, whether for identification or to document a time in the history of our lives. The essence of portraiture for art has diversified with various styles and techniques. Many of the portraits we see hanging on the walls of an exhibition these days are not pictorial in the traditional sense of the word, but encompass a different approach that today's generation is exposed to repeatedly.

**"There was something called appropriateness and, for the sake of being different, it no longer has any meaning."**

You would not shoot a subject with a 20mm at four feet and get it hung in a gallery half a century ago. There was something called appropriateness and, for the sake of being different, it no longer has any meaning. Of course, individualism in art should be the aim of every artist. It should be encouraged, honed, chiselled and recognized. One arrives at this state after deep study, dedication and effort.

Digital imaging is a wonderful tool that can contribute towards the final shape of things. The possibilities are many and undoubtedly it is one of the most powerful tools at the disposal of any sensible portraitist.

A few decades ago, magazines wrote only of redeye reduction and the flattering effects of long lenses. Today's portraitists may never care to study the effects of cyan and green filters on monochromatic films. What is talked about, however, is the speed of the stroboscopic light and the ultra saturation of films, and the sharpness of lenses that can count each pore on a face. Interesting. But I fear, what remains for posterity, is the *soul* of the portrait and that is something not to be left in the backwash as the wave of digital technology passes through.

Julia Margaret Cameron's (1815-1879) portraits have stood the test of time for the simple reason that they move you, transcend you to another plane, entangle you in the mystery within the four corners of a frame — and that is what the art of portraiture, in its truest sense, is all about.

■ Send your comments to Mohammed: [maa@itp.net](mailto:maa@itp.net)