

# Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery

 SNOWDON: Iconic Images

10 February - 7 May 2007

## Educators Notes

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## Introduction to exhibition

Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery are extremely excited to be exhibiting a selection of over 70 portraits by the leading photographer Lord Snowdon. This exhibition has been made possible due to a collaboration between PCMAG and the National Portrait Gallery, London, and is supported by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

The images feature some of our most celebrated personalities from the worlds of art, literature, film, theatre, and sport, and span four decades from the 1960's to the 1990's.

These notes focus on specific photographs taken from the exhibition, and provide activities that can be carried out when visiting the exhibition, or in the classroom while looking at other portraiture. The activities aim to provide a discussion point for your pupils based on portraiture and Lord Snowdon, and also provide suggestions for improving literacy skills through further investigations into the pictures.

The exhibition is divided into four themed areas:

- **Social Icons**
- **60s Art Scene -**  
Including a display of work by some of the artists represented
- **Writers**
- **Performers and Directors**

## Visiting the gallery

Advance booking is essential for all groups, for both taught sessions and self-directed visits.

Please phone the Learning Team to discuss your needs and to book a visit on 01752 304665. Please have ready:

- a preferred date of your visit and a range of possible alternatives
- the number of pupils and accompanying adults and any special needs or access requirements

**Please note that the use of cameras is not permitted within the exhibition space.**

## Links into the National Curriculum

The most unambiguous link between the national curriculum and the exhibition is within art & design. In addition a variety of less obvious areas of the curriculum can be linked to the portraits. Subjects such as CPSHE and citizenship are made accessible as the photographs have clear links to identity and individualism. The images can also be used to encourage and promote a sense of community both within the school, and in the wider neighbourhood.

- Literacy: creating an imaginative narrative from an image, describing settings and personalities, storytelling with speaking and listening techniques, hot seating and questioning skills, role play and script-writing.
- Art: portraits, self- portraits, photography, digital photography, digital collage, deconstruction of an image, meaning and messages within an image. Use of different media and techniques.
- IT: using a digital camera to copy poses from the photographs, computer editing of images, storage and retrieval of data.
- CPSHE: Communities, cultures and identities. Belonging to and involving yourselves within communities, respecting differences (nationalities, ethnicities, religions and cultures)

Also, see the **Activities** section on page 5.

## Background to Lord Snowdon

Lord Snowdon is both famous for his photographs and for being once married to Princess Margaret! His fame has come about because of his innate ability to reveal the truth and depth of a person's character; he strips away the polished façade.

Snowdon has consciously avoided developing a particular photographic style, but his techniques have made him into an internationally famous photographer. Within his theatre work he ignored the staid traditional style of highly posed scenes and went with a small camera to mingle with the actors whilst they were backstage and relaxed. The results are full of atmosphere and brought out the character of the actors.

Snowdon is now 77 and is still working today. In 2001, Snowdon was given a career retrospective of his photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, "Photographs by Snowdon: A Retrospective". More than 180 of his photographs were displayed in an exhibition that honoured what the museums called "a rounded career with sharp edges".

- Discuss the exhibition as a whole and the general feel of the portraits. Do you agree with the above comments?

## Brief background to Portraiture

The impact on portraiture was huge with the invention of photography. No longer was portraiture the preserve of the rich - in the form of a photograph everybody could afford a portrait of themselves or their family and didn't have to commission an artist to paint a picture!

We often think of photography as incapable of lying, but as modern cameras have developed and are capable of providing almost-instant results, but does this new technology give you a more honest and accurate portrayal in a split second? Is a photograph necessarily an accurate view of the sitter's personality? Early photographs would have needed a tediously long exposure time, which often resulted in a rather stiff portrayal of the sitter or sitters.

Most of us have cameras today and some of us have a camera on our mobile phones – why do we love taking and looking at photographs?

- Think about how you would like to be photographed – what pose would you do and what might you include to symbolise who you are?
- What would be your chosen setting and why?

Indeed, we need to be just as critically aware when looking at photographic portraits as we do when looking at painting, embroidery or sculpture.

## Activities

### Freeze Frame

Freeze frames are still images used to show something that has happened or is happening, very much like in a photograph. In small groups choose a photograph that has two or more people in it, to make into a freeze frame using yourself and your group as the characters. Then make your picture come alive!

### Thought Tracking

This is good for thinking about the private thoughts of characters in a photograph. Choose a photograph and draw a thought bubble in your sketchbook. Write or draw what the person or people in the photograph are thinking. Discuss with a partner or group and ask each other questions to find out more about your character.

### Hot Seating

With a partner choose a character in a photograph and tell each other what the person is like, what they do for a living and become the experts on that person. Ask each other questions about the character.

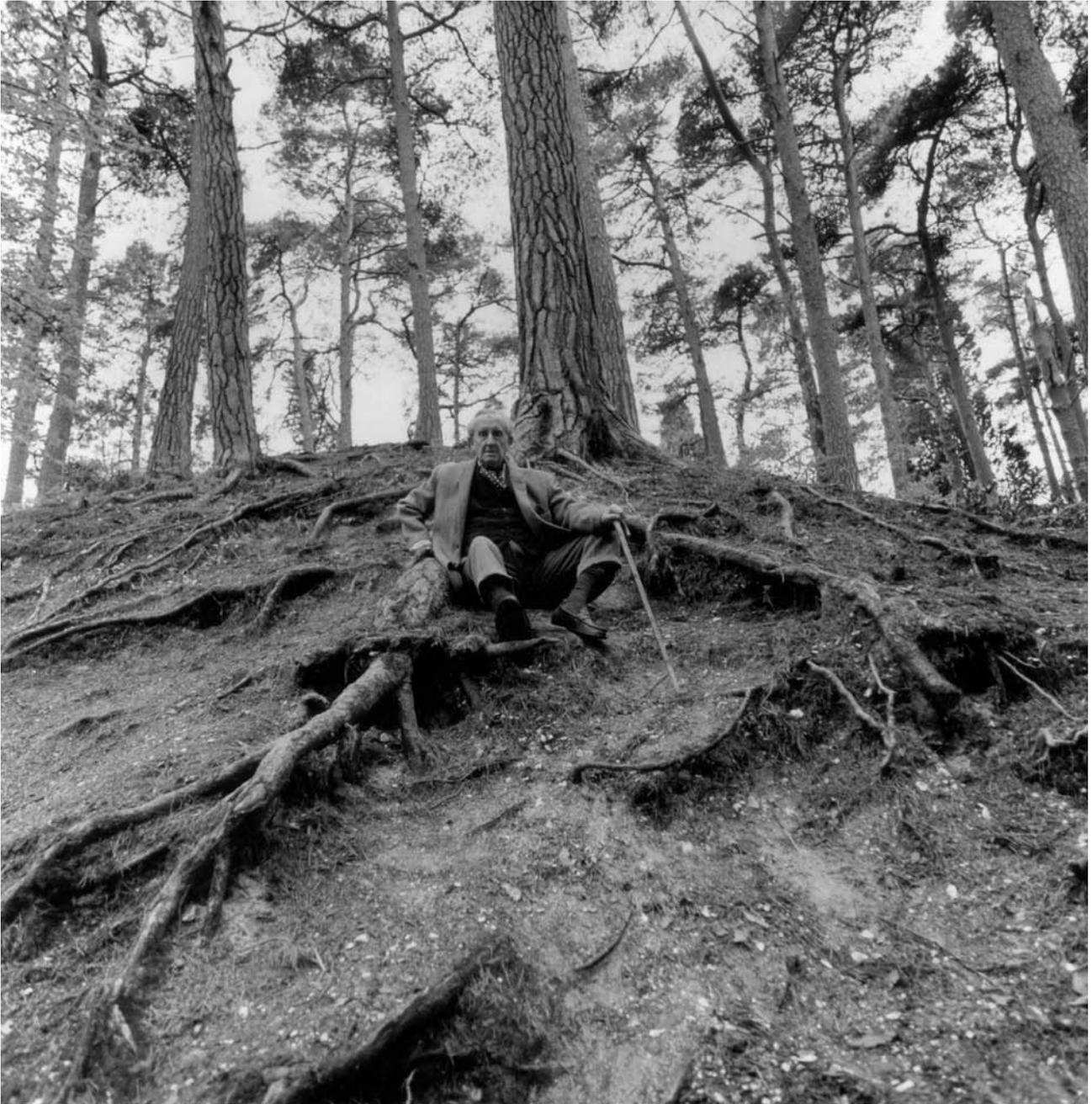
### Telephone Conversations

Take a long, close look at your chosen photograph and then find a partner and pretend to talk to them on the phone. Describe the photograph in detail. Then ask them to go and find it the photograph in the gallery. When they find the photograph, you swap roles and try again.

### Strike a Pose

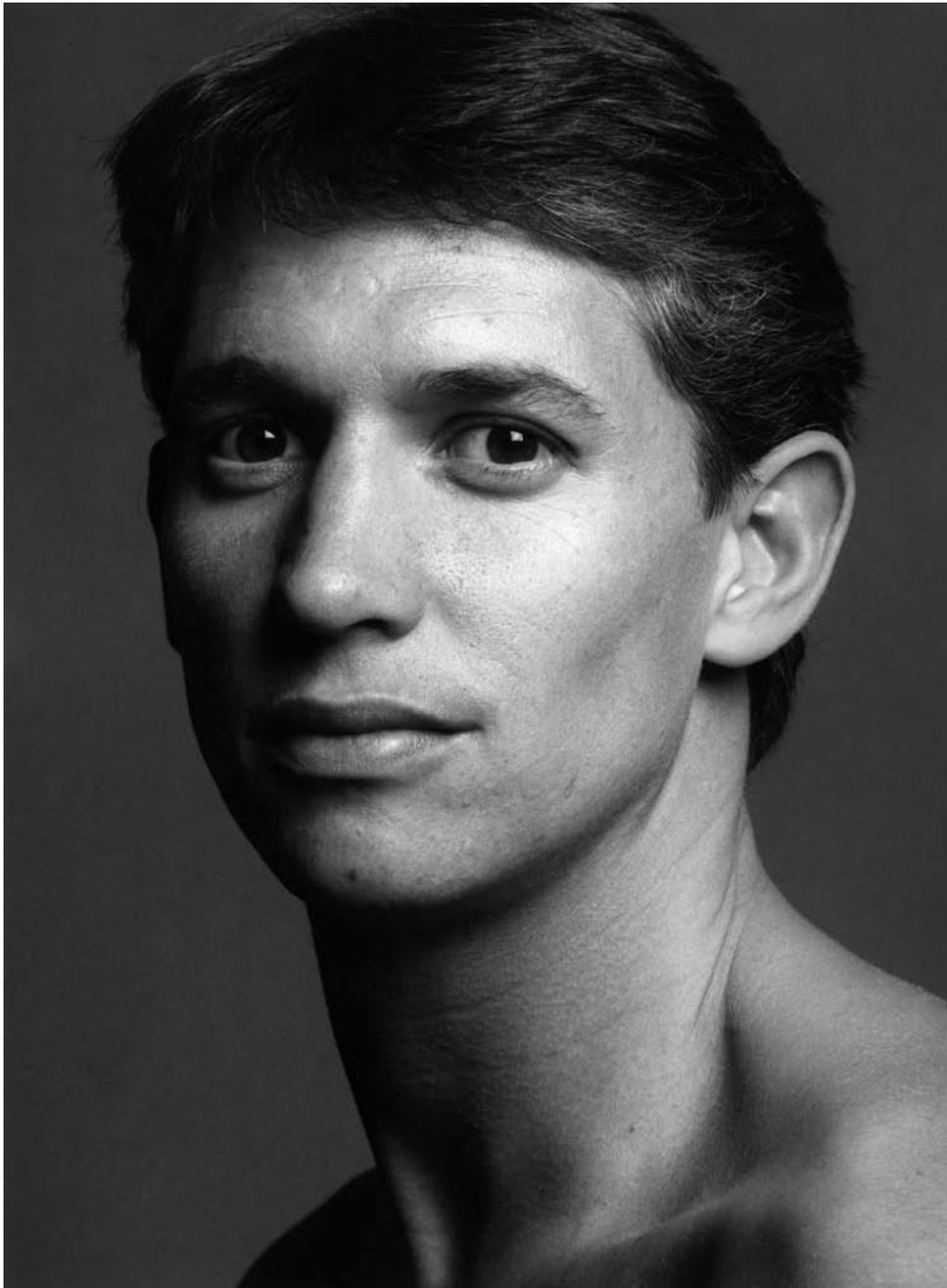
Choose a photograph and copy a pose. Your partner can sketch you and then they can choose a photograph and you can sketch them.

Think about the background – what is the setting in the photograph? Will you draw your own background or copy the one in the photograph?



## JR Tolkien - Writer

- Discuss who Tolkien is – the author of Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit
- Why do you think he was photographed here in the woods – why choose this setting?
- Think about his stories which are all set in wild countryside and underground. Ask - are the trees around him telling us more about him?



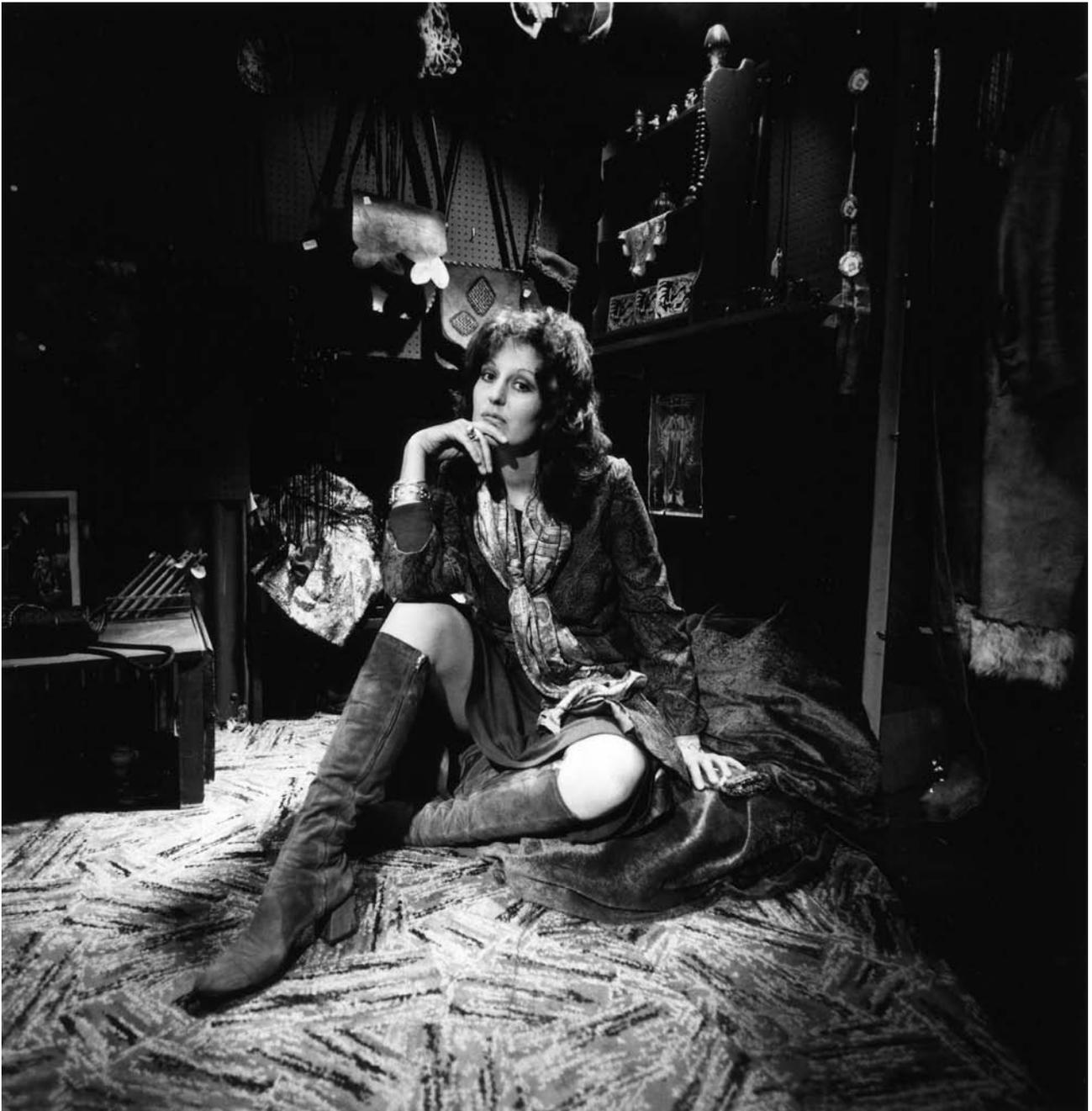
Gary Lineker – Footballer and Television Presenter

- Do you recognise him? What is he famous for?
- Does the background give you any clues to his work or character?
- Would you know he was a sports person? What kind of person is he – describe his character.
- Once you have established that he was a footballer, ask what setting they would have him in – not just a football pitch, think imaginatively!



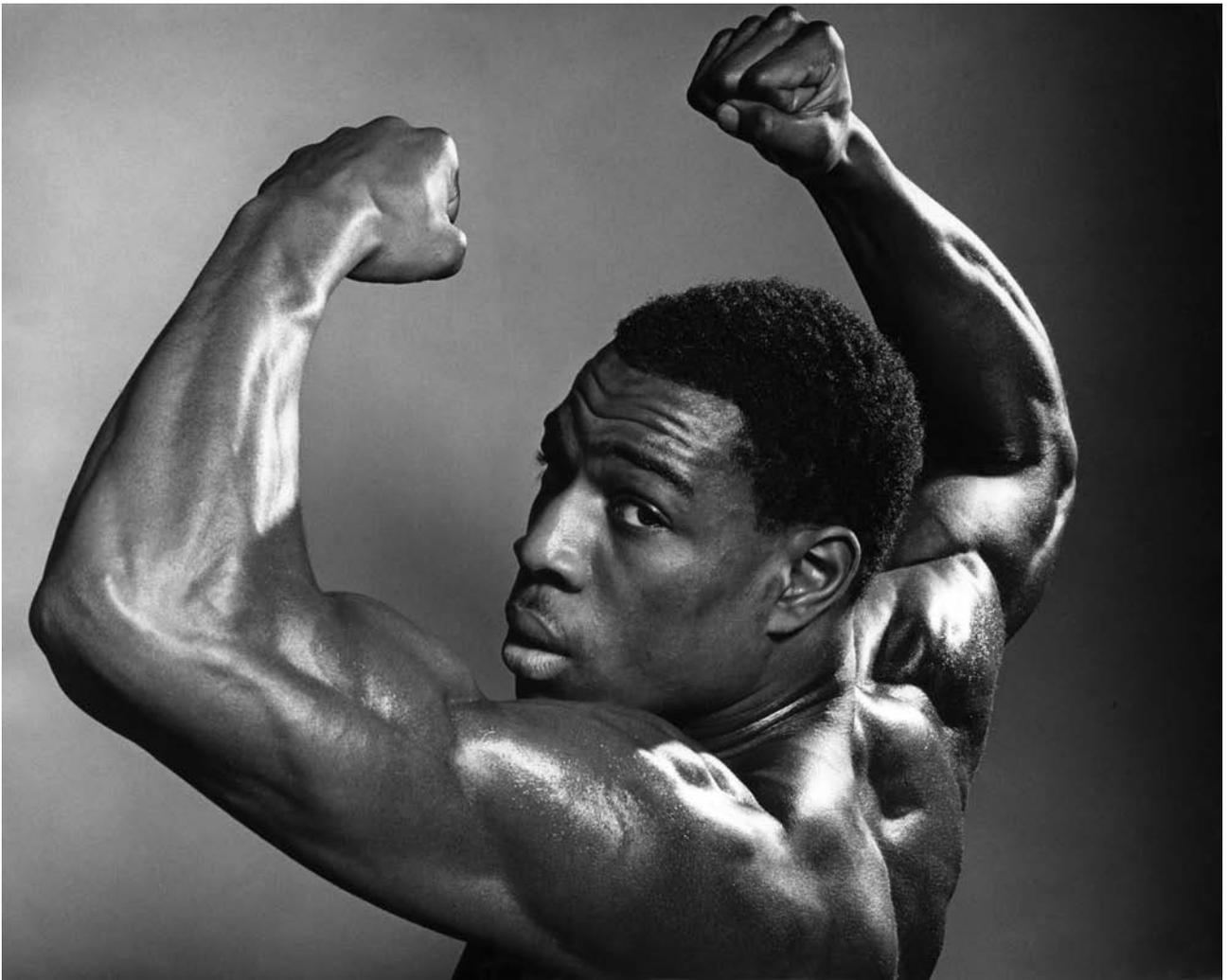
## Kenneth Armitage - Sculptor

- With this photograph children can describe the background – what clues can you see? Look at his clothes – any more clues to what he does?
- Describe his pose – what is he thinking? What happens next? Draw a picture of what sculpture he might be making.



## Germaine Greer – Journalist, writer (& feminist)

- Ask children to describe the setting – look at all her belongings and the atmosphere of the picture.
- Does the setting give clues to her character? Look closely at her expression - what is she thinking?



## Frank Bruno – Boxer

- His pose will give far more clues to his profession compared to the background!
- Children copy the pose and ask what they are thinking – what is Frank Bruno thinking?
- What kind of setting would you place him in to tell us more about him as a character?
- Did you know that even though he was a brilliant boxer he also loved being in pantomimes – would you have guessed that from the photograph?!

# Plymouth City & museum artgallery

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