#35 December 2018 *Cameraderie*
Yousuf Karsh (**1908-2002)**

You have all seen Yousuf Karsh's portraits of famous people, I am quite sure.

Wikipedia article:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yousuf_Karsh

> Yousuf Karsh … was an Armenian-Canadian photographer best known for his portraits of notable individuals. He has been described as one of the greatest portrait photographers of the 20th century.
> An Armenian Genocide survivor, Karsh migrated to Canada as a refugee. By the 1930s he established himself as a significant photographer in Ottawa, where he lived most … of his adult life, though he traveled extensively for work. His iconic 1941 photograph of Winston Churchill was a breakthrough point in his 60-year career, through which he took numerous photos of known political leaders, men and women of arts and sciences. Over 20 photos by Karsh appeared on the cover of Life magazine, until he retired in 1992.
> Karsh's photos were known for their use of dramatic lighting, which became the hallmark of his portrait style.
> The [Churchill] photo, which according to *The Economist* is the "most reproduced portrait in the history of photography," has been described as one of the "most iconic portraits ever shot." USC [University of Southern California] Fisher Museum of Art described it as a "defiant and scowling portrait [which] became an instant icon of Britain's stand against fascism." It appeared on the cover of the May 21, 1945 issue of Life, which bought it for $100.
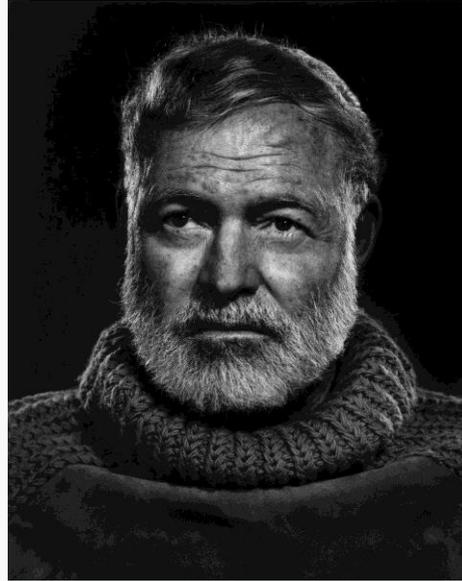
The Karsh website is here, and contains unending portraits, many of which you have probably seen. Please browse through the website. It is like walking through a magical gallery of famous faces. Absolutely everyone is there.
https://karsh.org/

Here are two of Karsh's most famous and iconic portraits.

Winston Churchill   Earnest Hemingway

Who has not seen these famous shots of Churchill and Hemingway? How did Karsh get them to pose so well? Maybe it's just that this is who they are, and Karsh did not interfere with showing it? After all, all his shot of famous people were of—famous people (with lots of talent, skill, and character). Of course, Karsh was a master of lighting, and it shows in every image.

Here are two more that particularly impress me.

Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip   Sir Edmund Hillary

The young Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip appear to be looking out a window, but it might be that Karsh has placed a light there, just out of sight. Notice that Elizabeth is nearer to the camera, more fully illuminated, and dressed in lighter-color clothing, so as to make her more

prominent in the photo, as is appropriate, since she is the Queen and Phillip merely her consort. Next month, I will show you another photographer's approach to the same problem (make a mental note of that sofa behind the couple).

Sir Edmund is certainly in a studio, carefully lit, but with tousled hair and an outdoor garment, he looks just the mountaineer. The lighting is classic portrait lighting: a strong light from one side, a fill light from the other, a light on the backdrop, and perhaps a spot on his hair.

Karsh has done significant work in the field, and here are a couple of samples. Please go to the Karsh website to see more of such work.

Rear Window Ford Motor Plant   Porter at Union Station, DC

No doubt Karsh spotted this Brando-esque auto worker and knew he had a compelling face to shoot in the natural frame of the rear window of a car being built.

We all know Union Station in DC, and it's nice to see Karsh's shot of one of our monuments. Look how he used the night illumination to advantage for a dramatic effect.

I could not resist including this one.

The Marx Brothers [Groucho, Chico, Harpo]

This is a tremendous shot. Aside from getting the brothers to pose perfectly (well, they are actors and can do that, maybe), the lighting work is fantastic. Each brother has advantageous but slightly different lighting on his face. If it was done with a single light, then did Karsh instruct the brothers to "turn this way," "tilt that way?"