

ArtsPhotography



Alison Jackson's best shot 'Some people think my lookalikes are easy jokes but they do take a bit of thought'

This model was really good. He has full lips, and George Bush has very slim ones, so he had to really work his mouth to make it look right. Bush is perceived as being not very intelligent, so the intention here was to have a lookalike trying to operate a Rubik's cube – and, of course, he's totally in a mess.

Most people want to shoot perfect pictures, but I'm always trying to shoot shit to mimic phone and paparazzi photography. Among other things, I use a Samsung mobile phone, a very bad quality video camera, and an old Olympus with extremely bad Sigma lenses. I don't like any lighting at all, but I do carry a couple of lights with me just in case. I can't say any more, because there is a very special way of doing this, and I don't want to give away my secrets.

A lot of people who look at my photographs think it is an easy joke, but it does take a bit of thinking about. For a start, I have a genius casting director, who is great at spotting faces by stripping away the hair, because hair influences how you register recognition.

We took the picture in the East End of

London, in Ironmongers' Hall, which is quite dark, whereas the White House is quite light, or at least we think it is. When I was shooting, I did think: "My God, this is not quite my ideal location." So I blasted light at all the windows and I hope it looks a bit like the White House with the flag.

I like the simplicity of this picture.

Everything is stripped away, and we are just looking at the iconic celebrity, in this case Bush. I try to construct imagery so that it is very accessible, but if you choose to look beyond, I think you can read more about how we know things through media imagery. Photography seduces us into thinking we can believe photographs, whereas we can't really believe that a picture can tell us any kind of truth at all.

Interview by Leo Benedictus.
Alison Jackson Confidential is published by Taschen.



Curriculum vitae

Born: Portsmouth, 1960

Studied: Fine art photography at the Royal College of Art, London

Inspirations: Andy Warhol's Marilyn, Mario Testino's pictures of Diana, Alberto Korda's Che Guevara

High: "It was fabulous to do the Doubletake TV series."

Low: "Filming for Channel 4, when the police tried to arrest me and one of my writers as I was driving along the road. They put me under the surveillance of the anti-terrorist squad for a whole year. I really thought I was going to be taken to Paddington Green and feared for what they might do to me."

Pet hate: "The only people I really hate are parking attendants."

Dream subject: "I'd like to take more pictures of real celebrities. It would be fabulous to photograph Brad Pitt. He's so good-looking and just such a star."

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