



Genius Photography Project April - June 2009

INFORMATION PACK

London Launch

12noon Thursday 23rd April 2009 at Holiday Inn, Bloomsbury
Coram Street, London, WC1N 1HT

Newcastle Launch

12noon Friday 24th April 2009 at Jurys Inn, Newcastle upon Tyne
St.James Gate, Scotswood Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE4 7JH

www.lifethrualems.org



Life Thru a Lens Photography Project

Project Background

Life Thru a Lens is a project that aims to show what living with Duchenne is like – told in photographs by those whose lives are directly affected.

The project will enable a group of young men from all over the UK to work with cameras and photography software to produce a unique portfolio of images, documenting the opportunities, challenges and truth of living a life with Duchenne.

Over a 6 week period, photographer Jason Thompson will be working with young men and volunteers to create an exhibition. The photographs will be a personal document of a time, a place and a much misunderstood condition. The images and exhibition aim to raise awareness of Duchenne, and bring the condition to the public eye in a personal and visual way.

Why choose photography?

When a viewer takes in a photograph they don't just see the factual recording of a subject, they bring to it an interpretation based on their experiences and desires. A photograph can represent numerous things including an icon, an idea, a memory, an emotion, a fear, or an aspiration. A photograph offers each viewer a unique experience. Each person bringing a piece of themselves, a result of their unique journey through life, to each image they view.

Of all the visual art forms, photography is probably the most accessible and widely used. With digital photography we all have a very inexpensive and instant way of recording images.

Photography can do two important things:

- 1: Document or record things visually
- 2: Provide an interpretation or viewpoint to provoke thought or discussion

This project is more about the second of these points. All photographs record something visually. But the best photographs go beyond a mere picture, and enter the realm of story, or provoke thoughts or questions.

The photographs in this project are to help those who don't know about

Duchenne find out about what your life is like - how you live with Duchenne and the points of similarity and difference between the viewer and the photographer.

The photographs can be either taken by or directed by the photographer. If operating a camera is not possible or difficult, then your volunteer will be able to assist in the setting up of the shots you want. But you will be the author of those shots, and you will be the photographer - as well as the director - of the images.

“Documentary, as understood here, is about the things as they are, and not about how we would like them to be. It is about making personal records of events that take place in the physical world — for other people to see how the photographer has framed what he has witnessed. It is about telling a story. "Look at what my eyes have allowed me to see," as well as "Look at what I have allowed my eyes to see," such pictures exclaim.” Hans Durrer
<http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/EDITORIAL/oped0706.shtml>

The best photography is telling us as much about the eye behind the lens as the image in front of it.

This project is an opportunity to show others what you want them to know about you and your life.

Developing a Theme

The photographs will show your life. You choose what you make public and what you prefer to keep private. You choose what to show.

The photographs will aim to show aspects of life, and it will be helpful to consider different themes for your photographs.

The themes are to be decided on by the young people involved but needs to be linked with living with Duchenne.

We are looking for powerful, emotive images. These can be both positive and negative, and it really is to be led by the young men and their opinions.

Possible Ideas are:

A day in my life

Photos taken that relate to everyday issues that young men with Duchenne face from physio to feeding tubes.

Living despite Duchenne

Photos representing barriers that young men overcome and relating to their positive experiences in everyday life e.g. attending college, work, going out etc.

Don't stare at me

Photos relating to the misconceptions, barriers and perceptions of society to living with a disability.

Other themes may emerge as the project continues – but there are no limits or pre-defined notions of what is or isn't acceptable.

Part of the process is developing the ideas, and finding all kinds of ways of documenting and expressing yourselves through the medium of photography.

A mixture of images types is desirable - including

- portraits
- where I live
- family and friends
- living life

- out and about
- work and play
- feelings

Each photographer will contribute a portfolio of images to the exhibition. This will probably be between 5 and 10 images. It is expected that each photographer will shortlist from a larger number of images, possibly 30 - 50.

Practical advice on taking photographs

Although it is possible to take some excellent photographs with little or no planning, it's a good idea to think about the photographs a little to get the best chance of a good shot.

There are several considerations including:

Light

Natural light or flash? It is tempting to use flash if there is little light on a subject, but try without too, and you may get a better result. The problem with flash is that it can really bleach the subject whilst making the background look dark - especially indoors. Also light from the front is usually unflattering and can look like a 'snap' rather than an artistic 'photograph'.

Think about the direction of the light - is it coming from behind the subject - if so, especially outdoors, flash can be useful as a fill light.

If you are taking photographs indoors without flash, use a tripod if possible, or be aware of possible camera shake. In lower light the camera's shutter stays open longer to get more light in, and whilst open, if the camera moves, then the image may appear blurred. Some cameras have image stabilisation to reduce the possibility of blurring as the camera moves on a long exposure.

Highlights and shadows - you may deliberately want areas of your photograph to show shadow or highlight for a particular effect - for example to show a darkened room, or bright light streaming through a window.

Exposure for effect - sometimes a longer exposure and blurring is desirable - for example to show motion in a photograph. Imagine a scene of a moving car, where the car in the shot is blurred to show motion against a clear background.

Composition

Get in closer if you want to show a subject - the closer you are the more personal the picture. Unless you want to show the environment or surroundings, and that's an important part of the composition then get the actual subject of the shot as large in the frame as possible.

Try to avoid the subject being at the very centre of the shot. Try placing the subject off centre to make the composition a bit more interesting.

Watch out for including too much headroom above the subject.

Be aware of the background - if you need to move to get a better background, then try a few different locations - even a small move can make the subject appear in a better place in relation to a background.

Introduce depth to your picture - foreground and background are as important as the main subject area. Try to get something of interest in your whole frame where possible.

Focus and attention

Use the focus on your camera to choose the part of the shot that you want the viewer to concentrate on most. If that's in sharp focus, then the shot will draw the eye to it. If there is a good distance between this subject and the background, then the background may appear blurred, which further separates the subject from the background, giving a pleasing effect to the shot. (This is easier with a wide aperture (low F number) if you have control over aperture on your camera.)

The story in the picture

Not every picture tells a story, but look for opportunities to show things happening in your photographs, or relationships between people. If you are photographing someone, as well as taking a static portrait, try photographing them doing something they enjoy or do well.

You may wish to take some photographs which are set up - the people in the shot aware that the photograph is being taken, and even arranged within the frame to your liking. But also try some photographs which are not set up - or candid. Showing things just happening as they do, with no preparation or arrangement.

Point of view

It is very tempting to take photographs consistently from your eyeline - but some of the best images use a different point of view to make the viewer see something in a slightly different way. Try using the camera low to the floor or high up as well as at eye level.

Details

As well as people and scenes, try showing some close up details that are important to you - objects, parts of things, small features or whatever is interesting to you. Textures of clothing, your home, even people - hands or

faces - can be an interesting take on something otherwise quite ordinary.

Colour

Think about the colours in the shot. If the colour isn't important to the photograph, then we might see how it looks in black and white. If the colour is important, then try organising the composition to maximise the impact of that colour. For example, you may wish to remove things from the shot that don't go well with a certain colour, or get in close to maximise the impact. Choosing backgrounds for portraits is one way of introducing colour to a shot - a painted wall, blue sky, or natural green landscape are examples.

Take lots of photographs!

Even a great photographer doesn't get every shot right, and more than half of the shots taken may be discarded, or be duplicates of ones that are finally chosen.

Take enough shots of a scene or subject so that you think you have something from that session that you might be happy with. The more you take, the better the choice later on, and the more the chance of getting something you're proud of - but planning the shot also helps save a lot of time.

There are no mistakes...

It's important to enjoy this process, and understand that your photographs aren't going to be assessed or marked in any way. It's your personal account of your own life. That's something no-one in the world knows more about than you do, and no-one is better placed to show it than you are.

Whilst it is desirable to attain the best possible image quality, so that the images may be used in large format in exhibition, the subject matter of the photographs is far more important than the technique used to create the photograph.

Relax. Enjoy this experience. Don't be too self-critical...

Image Editing - the story continues

Once the photographs have been taken, that's not the end of the process. There are many things that can be done in image editing software that may improve or even radically change a photograph.

We'll be using Adobe Contribute to optimise the photos that you take.

There will be a session showing you how to do each of the following:

Lighting adjustments

Colour adjustments

Cropping and resizing - altering the composition

Focus and attention

Retouching - erasing and perfecting

Getting to know your camera

You might need a session just exploring what your camera can do – this will depend a bit on what type of camera you own or have been provided with.

The Project Manager will help to explain everything you need to know to be confident about taking the photographs, and set the cameras up so that they are at the highest quality, and suitable settings have been made.

The Life Thru a Lens Exhibition

The photographs taken are to be used in an exhibition so will be professionally produced and mounted.

We would like to see exhibitions take place throughout the country and especially local to where the young men live. It is hoped that an exhibition can be put in the Tate youth gallery and the houses of

Parliament. Selected photographs could also be used to produce a calendar that can be sold to raise funds, or postcards that can be produced and sold to raise funds. We would also like to display the photos at our lobbies in June.

Life Thru a Lens Web Site

Throughout the project, the web site www.lifethrualems.org will be available as a resource. Project Information Packs will be available from there, as well as press releases, images of the project, biographies and contact details of participants and other useful information.

Once the project is completed, the web site will serve as an online gallery of the images used in the exhibition, as well as background information, and other images not used in the exhibition.

Printed Materials

The exhibition will have a brochure, bringing together the best images from each photographer, as well as background information on the project, Action Duchenne, and the key participants.

Other Resources

Amongst other initiatives online, a FaceBook Group will be set up for all participants and stakeholders to use whilst the project is running.

All participants are encouraged to use FaceBook where possible.

Project Organisation

Management of the project

Jason Thompson is a photographer and multimedia developer with 15 years experience of working on creative projects, including web site, CD-ROM and community arts projects.

Jason will be responsible for

- Developing the project over the 8 weeks.
- Setting the budget with the Genius project manager.
- Working with the young men and the student volunteers.
- Develop a short teaching programme enabling young men to learn the basics of taking a good photograph and producing it.
- Organising exhibitions of the photographs.
- Sourcing materials and equipment needed.

The photographer has a full CRB check

Volunteer Recruitment

Action Duchenne will be responsible for recruiting the volunteers onto the project. We will contact the young men who we already have registered with us, it will be advertised in the forthcoming Genius newsletter, and can be advertised through muscle clinics, hospices, website and our face book group. Advocates will be expected to assist in the recruitment of young men and volunteers.

All current genius volunteers will be contacted. Once we have the young men on board advocates, with the support of the Genius project manager, can then contact colleges/universities that are local to the young men in order to recruit photography students.

Timescales and key dates

Launch Events: 23rd and 24th April 2009

Photography and Visits: April 23rd – 10th June 2009

Workshop Sessions: To be confirmed

Regional Visits: To be confirmed

Exhibition (Houses of Parliament) 16th June (TBC)

Exhibition (Young Tate) To be confirmed

Other opportunities to be researched during the project

Working with the volunteers

We would look to get the young people involved together at the start of the project to meet the photographer and each other. This will be in a place central to everyone, it may not be possible to get all the young men there but video link ups and conference calls can be arranged.

It may be necessary for the photographer to travel and meet with the young men as and when required, although a lot of communication can be done by email and video calls.

Genius

Action Duchenne set up the Genius project in 2008. Funded by Vinolved the project aims to increase volunteer opportunities for young people within the charity and to increase opportunities for young men with duchenne to be involved in events and campaigns. Whilst doing this it increases the charities fundraising capacity. Through the project we can raise awareness of Duchenne amongst young volunteers, schools colleges and universities.

Starlight Duchenne

This project can be linked into a project run by one of our volunteers Stu Wickinson.

Media Coverage

Action Duchenne will work with PR Artistry on media coverage for the project and the exhibitions.

Key Contacts

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