

STUDENT ESSAY: PERSUASION

Leibovitz Revealed **By Yarrow Allen-Hickey**

I have always been drawn to photography. I love how it captures raw emotions and single moments in time. It documents inner personalities that people are not usually comfortable showing the world, along with showing different sides of people. Photographs linger in people's minds long after the image is taken and captures people and events that the general public is not usually exposed to. One of my favorite photographers is Annie Leibovitz. I think that it is her portrayal of the human form and people's public and private selves that makes her unparalleled in the field of photography.

Annie Leibovitz breaks the boundaries of social norms with her photography subjects. In one famous photograph she has John Lennon completely naked, wrapped around his wife Yoko Ono who is fully dressed. In a society where men are never physically exposed, having a male role model stripped in the same way women usually are, is a shock to the beliefs of social codes. Another photograph shows a very pregnant Demi Moore posing nude. In American society, women who are not of the desirable skinny body type are usually kept out of pictures. To have a pregnant woman appearing on the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine demonstrating confidence and love for her body is bold. I think that Annie Leibovitz addresses many of these stereotypes as well as other issues through the human form. She is able to do this by drawing attention to social norms and issues that are not ordinarily addressed in mainstream media.

In her photographs, Annie Leibovitz captures both the subject's inner self as well as the self that the outside world sees. I believe that she emphasizes an aspect of a subject's

public persona while at the same time portraying that subject in a personal way. She has a series of photographs that show Vegas Showgirls in their costumes. Next to each picture is another one in which the same woman is not made up and is in her street clothes. The fantasy vs. reality of their two personas is startling and makes each woman seem more human. In her exhibits there are also pictures of domestic abuse victims next to beauty queens and one is faced with the different levels of society. She uses both famous and non-famous people to create art that makes a statement about the world and the people in it. It is this ability to capitalize on different aspects of society that sets Leibovitz apart from other photographers.

Annie Leibovitz is also very well regarded in the photography world and is the first woman to have had her work exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in New York City. At twenty-two she was the youngest photographer to become chief photographer for the magazine *Rolling Stone* and concert tour photographer for the Rolling Stones. She is often compared to portrait photographer Arnold Newman and people say that it is her bold and creative use of the human form that pushes her ahead.

Annie Leibovitz's photographs are different from her fellow artists because she is able to take the human form and use it to convey her message. She portrays the woman underneath of Vegas Showgirls, she undresses the man and leaves the woman fully dressed, and she brings the pregnant woman's form out into the open. She expands society's beliefs on social codes by enabling people to see different views. She is recognized throughout the art world and her photographs are displayed at very prestigious locations. I think that for these reasons Annie Leibovitz is set apart from her contemporaries and is a wonderful photographer.