



Konrad Lars Hastings Titlow  
by David Titlow, 2014 © David Titlow

Very happy to be able to make it to the exhibition of the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize in the National portrait gallery London again this year.

The first prize was won by David Titlow for the portrait of his baby son encountering a dog just as the sun is setting, rendering the scene in chiaroscuro mode reminiscent of a renaissance painting.

After seeing dozens of stunning portraits I find it difficult at first to understand why this photograph should be the one to win first prize. The composition seems snapshot like, with knees, glasses and beer cans sticking out at the lower edge, a hand (supporting the child's back) cut off on the left side, one person's head almost completely hidden behind the dog and the face of the woman sitting to the left is completely in the dark. Is this a portrait? Why did it win first prize?

I see the exhibition alone and long for somebody to help me make sense of this choice. Maybe my understanding of what a portrait is all about is warped. It cannot be completely subjective, otherwise the jury would not have been able to agree on a shortlist, let alone a single winner. But what are the criteria?

I remain puzzled. Is it my preference for 'deadpan' approaches, as one of my tutor's once called it, that lets me unconvinced of this choice? I wander through the exhibition again and choose "my" winners. How infinitely more the three photographs I would have given preference to speak to me. Interestingly, I find out afterwards, all three were taken by women.



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