

In this portrait photograph, we see a young woman, looking longingly to the top right of the frame. As with most of my work, it is black and white. The lighter tones of her smooth skin and her wavy hair, reaching past her shoulders, are offset by a deep black background and her dark top.

She is angled slightly to the left, with her head looking the opposite way over her shoulder. She has full, dark eyebrows and plump lips, and while her left eye, on our right-hand side, stares confidently into the middle distance, the other eye is missing.

The image is a symphony of light and shade, vying for supremacy. The lightest areas are on her face, the tip of her nose, and on her exposed shoulder, slightly right of centre. Her dark top and her neck, unreached by light, are almost as dark in shade as the black backdrop.

My name is Ian Treherne. I am both blind and deaf, having been born with RP Type 2 Usher Syndrome, and I took this photograph of disability model Olivia Deane using the Canon 7D camera and a 17mm – 40mm lens.

I always loved the feeling of seeing an image, especially in black and white, because there's something about the monochrome tones that give a feeling of timelessness.

When I was 15, doctors told me I was losing my eyesight, which had a monumental impact on me. I was overcome by both fear and urgency, and felt the need to see and do as much as possible. Through my persistence, courage, and dogged determination, I pursued my dream of being a photographer. I learned by trial and error, teaching myself and learning from the great photographic artists of the century, like Nadar.

Being blind is a precarious road to walk, literally and figuratively. I feel vulnerable and I have to work harder than others to fulfil my role as a human being, to participate in life and society.

I see and feel the world differently through my narrow sight, experiencing reality through darkness and using my senses to guide me through life's challenges.

My photography is incredibly important to me as it enables me to build a bridge to connect with people. My understanding of the world, and the struggles of being blind, is channelled through the lens to bring out the best in the sitter, and to create a sincere portrait of someone with authentic feeling.

My approach to black-and-white photography stems from watching silent films in my childhood. Born profoundly deaf, I was drawn to films without words, focusing on the moving pictures and the imagery.

My love of film grew and grew, leading me to watching noir films from iconic directors like Orson Welles, Carol Reed and David Lean. In turn, I would then fall in love with the work of modern greats like Stanley Kubrick, Martin Scorsese, and Wes Craven, studying their camera work and cinematography.

I'm also colourblind, but I'd still be drawn to black-and-white photography even if I wasn't. It lets you cut out the noise of colour, and focus on the contrast, mid tones and highlights that form the shapes and ideas of an image.

In portrait photography, the force of their personality conveys the character of the subject, turning the ordinary into something extraordinary. I hope that's what you experience with Olivia's portrait.

She is a new mother to a baby boy called Kaito, and lost her right eye to a cancer called retinoblastoma when she was 14. The disease is usually diagnosed in children under five, making her the oldest ever person to be diagnosed with this rare illness.

Olivia told me that her missing eye is the thing she loves most about herself. "It has pushed me to do all the things I have achieved in recent years," she said. "It has put me in the happiest place I've ever been."

I named this image "Future" because of who Olivia is and what she wants to achieve. She talked about how she wants to inspire and encourage people with disabilities to embrace their differences and challenges. In effect, to modernise the society we live in, creating a future the next generation will be proud of.

Like Olivia, I embrace my disability, making it an instrumental part of my work. I call myself the Blind Photographer, not just to inspire, but to challenge society to rethink how they perceive blind people in general.

I knew that it would bend the minds of society, as it doesn't fit the norm and that perceptions would be challenged. I want to show and inspire other blind people who may have thought about picking up the camera, but were afraid they weren't "allowed" to pursue their creativity in fear of stereotypes and perceptions.

Blindness is a spectrum. The common stereotype is based on a small percentage, often being queried, questioned and judged by what they do by society.

As a blind person you are constantly being put into boxes. In the same way Olivia has harnessed her disability, my rebellious nature has always rejected being fenced in by other people's perceptions.

I can't deny that being blind is hard, but I find inspiration everywhere. Not only from photographers, but from Para-athletes too. The thing we have in common is that they use a different mindset to change the rules and break old-hat stereotypes that lurk in society.