

Filming your own portrait video for *Reconnection* exhibit – guide sheet

Artist: Kai Reimer-Watts, RLAG *Reconnection* exhibit, Fall 2020

If you're not able to make it to one of the film shoots for Laurier's *Reconnection* exhibit video that are taking place in Waterloo Region, but would like to still share your own video responding to crisis, here's some tips for how best to do that:

1. **What will you say?** Take the time to decide what you want to say, and how you want to say it. Centre on the question: *if there was one message you could share with the world of how best to respond to our current crises, what would that be?* Decide what you'd like to share – remembering that as a nonverbal video portrait, whatever you wish to communicate needs to be done nonverbally and as a still portrait – so signage, whether visual and/or text should be incorporated. For more details, see longer video invite.
2. **How will you say it?** Take the time to turn your message into a visual that you can include in your portrait. This could range from hand-held sign, to a visual arrangement of objects, to a sand drawing – whatever you feel will best get your message across. Consider including text in whatever language you're most comfortable in – it doesn't have to be English. Images are also most welcome, and can communicate in ways that transcends language. Get creative.
3. **The background:** Consider where you want your shoot to take place, with a background location that gives the feel that you want to your video, without distracting too much from you (the main subject) (In a park, in your kitchen, at an intersection, in front of your favorite tree, etc)
 - a. **Tip:** Consider the lighting. No need to overthink this, but lighting can play a big role in the power of a portrait. Do you want even lighting throughout, or more of a spotlight and you and your message? Play around with different lighting set-ups to see what you like best.
4. **The gear:** Ideally, try to find a decent-quality video camera that will do your shot justice. While most phones now have decent cameras, they may not give you the same quality and control over focus, lighting etc as a dedicated camera will. It's important that you can shoot in High Definition (HD), at a minimum of 1280 x 720pixels. A Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera is probably ideal. If you don't have one, see if you can borrow one from a friend and/or rent from a local film rental shop.
 - a. **Tip:** Find a tripod. If you can't find one, set up your phone/camera on a stable surface at the right height.
 - b. **Tip:** If DSLR has face detection autofocus, you can use this to keep your face automatically in focus during the shoot.
 - c. **Tip:** Be sure to switch to the 'video' setting (looks like a film camera) on your DSLR prior to the shoot (usually the default is photography)

- d. **Tip:** Test your gear! This goes without saying, but you want to be comfortable with whatever you're using and at least its basic functions for video recording, so play around & do some tests first.
 - e. For more tips on using a DSLR camera to shoot video see this video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRSgCJGeKNo>
5. **Choose a videographer:** It is possible to shoot a video solo, however it is generally easiest to have a friend take the video for you - someone who can see the framing clearly, help adjust as needed, not distract you, and start / stop the recording.
- a. **Tip:** Set up the shot a few different ways, and do some test portraits to see what you like best, adjust lighting, framing, etc.
 - b. **Tip:** Playback the test videos and adjust if needed. What do you like / not like? Is it in focus? What's the ambient sound like? How's the color?
6. **Get into the right 'frame of mind':** This is a portrait about tough stuff, so it's good to get into the right frame of mind prior to the shoot. This film is about crisis – center on that for a bit, and feel the seriousness of the weight that is right now pushing down on so many of us. Be real with yourself about what it is we are facing, who it's impacting most, and take time to feel it. If you feel the gravity of the situation, this will hopefully also come through in your portrait so the viewer can feel that also. Take a few deep breaths before the shoot, and sit in the emotion you're feeling.
7. **Take your shots!**
- a. **2 minute minimum:** Each film portrait should be minimum 2 minutes. This may feel like a lot, but it's just a couple minutes, so stick with it and time the shot. The point is to sit in your emotion during this time, and to really feel the message you are conveying.
 - b. **Consider eye contact:** Consider whether you want to look right at the camera for direct eye contact with the viewer, to the side, or perhaps not face the camera at all. For consistency between portraits, if facing the camera direct eye contact by looking into the camera is recommended to increase the power of the portrait, but up to you. Test a few options to see what you like.
 - c. **Centre, be in the moment:** Commit to the shoot by centering yourself on why you are there, and the emotion / message you want to convey. If it's helpful, you can ask the videographer to look away when the camera has started recording, so they don't distract you. It's important for you to feel centered & present.
 - d. **Do multiple takes until it feels right:** They are only 2 minute takes (i.e. shots), so it's recommended you do a few takes to really feel centered, ensuring you're capturing your portrait the way you want.
 - e. **Tip:** break up the takes (shots) so that they are each a separate 2 minute (or longer) video, not one continuous video. This will make it easier for you to

sort through and compare, as well as easier to select your top video(s) later to share.

8. **Sort through, choose your best 2-3 takes**
9. **Upload to Google Drive for consideration in the *Reconnection* video here (this will include e-signing a standard video release form):**
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefKHTWCpvNUf4pwimCkfRhEFdFZeDE5LaSvCavNAYky6NwTA/viewform>
 - a. **Note:** if you'd like to submit multiple separate takes for consideration, you will need to do this one at a time (please don't submit more than 3 takes)

Thank you for taking the time to join this shoot and submit your film!! I hope this tip sheet helped. Note that submission of a video does not guarantee it will be part of the final video for the *Reconnection* exhibit - I will be in touch to confirm receipt of your submission, and to share the final video montage. Thank you for everything you do to push for a world *beyond crisis* – if you have any further questions, please reach out.

Sincerely,

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For more of Kai's video work visit:

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