

# ArtsPhotography



## Chris Levine's best shot 'I asked her to rest between shots - it was a moment of stillness that just happened'

I was commissioned to make a holographic portrait of the Queen in 2004, as part of Jersey's celebrations of its 800-year-old relationship with the monarchy. She was tickled by the idea of having a hologram done. I assumed there would be layers of bureaucracy when it came to telling her what to do - but the truth is, if she wants to be involved, it goes straight on to her desk. She is in control, there's no question about that.

I also assumed there would be committees dealing with what had to be put into the image: props, or iconography, or costumes. But they asked me what I wanted her to wear, so I got the opportunity to style the Queen. I looked at the crown jewels, and picked out a clean, simple crown with a cross. It was quite a thrilling moment when she walked in the door, wearing exactly what I'd asked her to.

During the shoot, there was a lot of bright light, noise, and each exposure took eight

seconds, which is a long time to have to sit still. I wanted the Queen to feel peaceful, so I asked her to rest between shots; this was a moment of stillness that just happened.

Meditation was having a profound impact on my life at the time. I told her about how I'd go off on 10-day silent retreats, and she was very interested. I timed the exposures around her breathing - it seemed a way of tuning into her. Later, this image really stood out - it has such an aura about it, a power.

The challenge was to make an image that was modern, and to convey the Queen's relationship with the new millennium. It didn't have to be an oil painting or a conventional photograph. Why not have her eyes shut? We all close our eyes: this picture takes us into the Queen's mind, her inner realm.

*Interview by Andrew Pulver*

### Curriculum vitae

**Born:** Ontario, Canada, 1972.

**Studied:** "I did graphics at Chelsea. I don't consider myself a photographer - I'm an artist who works with light and who uses photography in his projects."

**Inspirations:** "I'm fascinated at the moment with [the artist] Takis, because he's using a lot of magnetic forces in his work. Björk, too."

**Pet hates:** "Numbing out. We're so saturated with image-making that's diluted and soulless. You see a lot of work out there that's so processed - not original, basically."

