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Bang on a Can performing at the 2003 Summer Music Festival held at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts / Photo: Katherine Myers

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Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
at the 2005 Hay-on-Wye festival
Photo by Justin Williams



7 Untitled 1985 painting (oil on linen) by Terry Winters



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ALSO INSIDE

From the foreword to *Writers*, by Nancy Crampton

Many of us while reading a book will check the author photograph several times in hopes of discovering some connection between what we see there and what we are experiencing as readers. It is as if the face were the door to the dark room of the imagination, which may be why we find photographs of writers and artists more intriguing than photographs of other people. And yet we never find what we are looking for, nor do we know if what we are looking for really exists or if we could recognize it if it did. Wild hair, taut lips, sunken cheeks, a penetrating gaze could belong to anyone. Still, we continue to search. But so far, no face has ever illuminated a text, nor has a text ever told us that it came into existence because of a face.

Nancy Crampton's photographs of writers are more varied than the typical head shot one sees on book jackets. There is a certain guilelessness about them, an open, responsive interest in the subject whether it is a face at its most opaque and masklike or one at its most vulnerable and inviting. We may be looking at the photo of a face, but what we feel is the presence of Crampton's attention. The issue of discovering a connection between the photographs of authors and what we have experienced in one or many of their books is put aside. Certainly, Crampton is not burdened with connecting the two. There is more to her photographs than just the face of an author. The positioning of the body, the angle of the head, the sudden or gradual fall of light—all play a part in creating pictures that magically combine

the immediacy of a snapshot and the premeditated calm of a formal portrait. None of this would be possible without the willing participation of the subjects themselves, but it is Nancy Crampton's directness—her naturalness and lack of theatricality—that is the foundation of their willingness.

On the pages that face the photographs are short statements by the writers, having to do with what they hope their writing will accomplish, or how they go about it, or what it is about. The statements have been gathered from interviews, lectures, and essays, and they vary widely. The visual and the

verbal side by side do not shed light on each other so much as form a conjoining of presences, one drawn from within, the other from without. What the camera could not do, the author has done, and what the author could not do Nancy Crampton has done. The result is an incomparably interesting collection of visions and insights.

Mark Strand



Photo: Thomas Kruse

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The Cochabamba water war in Bolivia
(February–April 2000)



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A brief conversation with
Hanan al-Shaykh

