

Interview with Malick Sidibé

Posted At : April 2, 2009 10:31 AM | Posted By : Melanie McWhorter

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“ Your studio portraits...

As a rule, when I was working in the studio, I did a lot of the positioning. As I have a background in drawing, I was able to set up certain positions in my portraits. I didn't want my subjects to look like mummies. I would give them positions that brought something alive in them.

When you look at my photos, you are seeing a photo that seems to move before your eyes. Those are the sort of poses I gave them. Not poses that were inert or lifeless. No. People who have life need to be positioned that way.

In '57, there was a young lady who wanted to be photographed. One day she came in and I placed her in front of the camera. I had a Semflex. I positioned her and said, "Right, let's take your photo."

Read more of the interview at [lens culture](#). The interview was transcribed from the video produced by Jerome Sother for Gwinzegal. Recorded in Rouen, 2008.