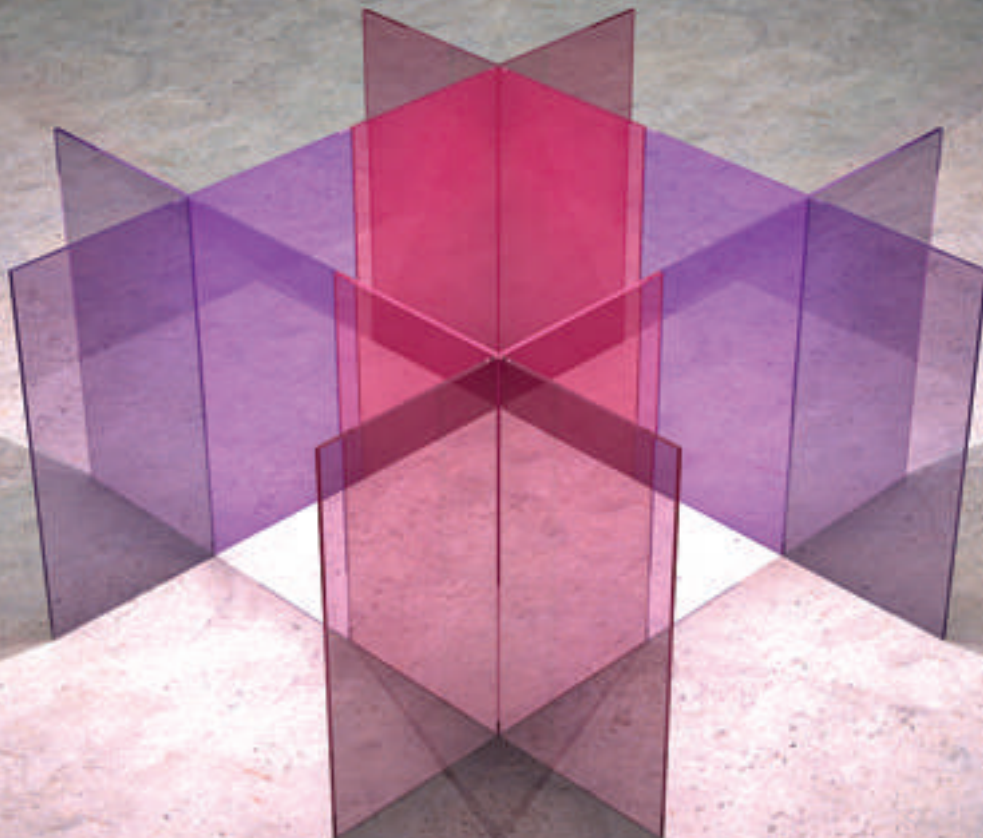


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Home as a School for Life

A Photographic Project by Elizabeth Handy | Words by Charles Handy

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

THREE HOMES - THREE FAMILIES

The home, we believe, is the real schoolroom for life, with the family its teachers. It is in the home that we learn the personal values, attitudes and behaviours that will stand us in good stead throughout our lives, picking them up by watching those around us. Schools can't teach such things too well. Families can and do, often unwittingly, through example.

For this project Elizabeth Handy has entered three very different homes to try to capture, in a set of photographs, the ways these families work, care for each other and share their lives. The implicit learning involved in each situation is clear to see. Families come in all shapes and sizes, some good, others less so, but each family leaves its mark on us. They matter.



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CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

03 I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Elizabeth & Charles Handy for the time and effort they have put into producing this photographic exhibition for Home Renaissance Foundation. First displayed at the charity's International Conference "From House to Home", the exhibition shows how the home acts as a school for life.

Elizabeth has captured on camera the values and attitudes underpinning the lives of three very different families by photographing them in their homes at work, caring for one another and sharing time together. This underlines the vision of Home Renaissance Foundation that the home plays a vital role in shaping the lives and in meeting the fundamental needs of the individual, the family and society as a whole.



INTRODUCTION BY COLIN BRAZIER

Television presenter and Parenting author

There is no such thing as a typical family. But there are types of family. And in her photographs, Elizabeth Handy succeeds in depicting a unique triptych of modern family life.

Her representations of three very different households remind us that the living spaces we take for granted are always domestic laboratories; where a prescription for perfection cannot be written, but where people have a happy knack of finding what works best for them.

Elizabeth's panoramic technique is to link together images and create a perspective which allows us to see a home from more than one angle and at more than one time. We are reminded that a home performs highly specialised and bespoke functions, according to who uses it and when. The experience of living in a home varies hugely if you are a working mother, a toddler, or a retiree.

As Elizabeth's husband and collaborator Charles points out, "The home...is the real schoolroom for life, with the family members its teachers".

Scores of delegates from many different countries were treated to a display of Elizabeth Handy's photographs at the Home Renaissance Foundation's 2008 conference in London.

They provided an inspirational backdrop for a group of policy-makers, academics and journalists, who came together to seek an answer to the ineffable question: what makes a house a home? In Elizabeth's pictures they were provided with some thought-provoking and life-reaffirming clues.



THE BLACKWELLS AT HOME

Eppie and Mark have seven children. They live in Purley, Surrey. Mark is a psychiatrist. Eppie was a volunteer teaching assistant but is now an art student, when she is not looking after her family.

Four of the children now have jobs and two of them are working abroad. Mary, an engineer, and Jonathan, training to be a doctor, were present that day, as were Joseph and Anna, both still at school.

Theirs is a strong family, with firm principles drawn from their Catholic religion.



SHARING

The parents are planning an extension to the house. This is consultation time, for they see this as a family decision, one to which everyone can and should contribute, although Joseph looks as if he is content to let the others decide the details.

This family clearly enjoys the togetherness and sense of belonging that a large family can bring. All the younger members make sure that they come home regularly, particularly if there is some important celebration.

The family, as they all see it, is something bigger than oneself, something therefore to be treasured and worked at, to keep it vibrant and a continuing source of joy and love.



WORKING

Work is important to this family, whether it be study, as with Eppie and Anna in the background, or researching together on the internet. 'Work hard now', Mark tells his children, 'or you will regret it later'. 'It is the best sort of investment', he says.

This is Mark's study, when he works at home, although it is open to the rest of the family to use it. He hopes that they may absorb the principles that he believes in and tries to practise in his work.

Good work, for this family, combines diligence with a proper consideration for others, and technical competence with imagination and creativity.



CARING

There is a lot of mutual support in this home.

While Joseph cooks the lunch, Jonathan lays the table and Mark tests Anna on her catechism. Meanwhile, Eppie keeps her eye on Joseph's culinary endeavours while at the same time casting a motherly eye over Frances as she prepares for her bike ride.

Cooking, cleaning, listening and coaching, punctuality and patience - these skills of caring, the parents believe, are acquired by practice and example, founded always on a concern for others, and learnt, for the most part, at home.



THE ROBERTS AT HOME

Sarah and Brad live in Norfolk with their children, Morgan (9) and Sylvia (4). Sarah is an architect, working in the nearby town or, occasionally, at home. Brad looks after the children during the week, as well as preparing energy calculations for architects and new houses, which he can do at home.

The children see nothing unusual in the swapping of the traditional gender roles. Families, after all, come in all sorts of sizes and shapes. Children are not to know that one is more usual than the other. Their whole world, for the moment, is defined by the home and the family they know. What they experience there will, they assume, be what is normal in the world outside.



SHARING

Family and friends gather in the garden on a Sunday morning. This family makes sure that they have fun, as well as work and care. Sunday is family time. Brad's family are back in America, where he came from. They visit each year but not on this Sunday. Sarah's mother, however, is there, as she often is on weekends. Sarah's sister comes when she can.

Close friends are also part of their extended family. Sharon lives nearby and the two families are intertwined. Small families can become claustrophobic. Extending them to include friends and neighbours adds to the number of role models for the younger members. It also adds to the fun.

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WORKING

Space is tight in their country cottage, particularly when they are all working at the same time. Brad is pictured here in his little office, but it leaves very little room for Morgan to do her homework.

Because Sarah also has an office in town, her workplace gets the lowest priority in the home and she has to make do with the kitchen table.

But because it is, in effect, a rudimentary open plan office, the importance of work, and the disciplines involved in doing it, cannot go unnoticed in this family, even though they might all hanker after a room of their own.



CARING

Caring and cooking is Brad's responsibility during the week. He it is who takes the kids to school, who does the shopping and even sits on the committee of the Toddlers Group in the village.

Grandparents are an important part of family life, but at times they, too, need to be cared for. Here Sarah is tending to her mother, Ann, who often visits for the weekend.

They may not know it, but, as they watch their parents, the two girls are learning how adults care for those in their charge, and how they can enjoy their responsibilities. It is a lesson one hopes that they will remember as they grow up.



THE WAYLAND GRAHAM SAPANIS AT HOME

Fiona is a single parent living in North London, having recently separated from her husband. She is a self-employed social entrepreneur specializing in projects that seek to educate through entertainment and the arts. She is also a midwife and healer, using skills and methods from Thailand where she was born.

Money is scarce and Fiona struggles to make ends meet, but her children, Saeng-Fa, Blu and Emerald seem unconcerned. Saeng-Fa, the eldest, plays a full part in the work and care of the home. Fiona works hard to make sure that they all enjoy the rich pleasures of family life, and see their father regularly.



SHARING

This family believes that life is there to be enjoyed, preferably together. Each of them here is doing their own thing, having their own fun but in a shared space. That way the enjoyment is infectious. This is a happy family at play.

Families are small communities and in communities that work well the whole is more than the sum of the parts. The trick is to be both separate and together, to be individuals but also a family.

In this picture Fiona appears to have achieved this.



WORKING

Fiona runs a highly organized home in which the kitchen is the hub. The children each has their own list pinned up, with tasks to be done for school or home. Each, too, has a separate space for their belongings. They are learning about self-discipline and organization, even if they are unaware of it.

While Fiona busies herself with some business matters, Seang-Fa prepares the lunch. It is remarkable how Fiona has combined cooking, eating, study and business into one small space. Every surface and space has been put to use. Life, Fiona feels, has to be well organized if we are to make the most of it. It is a message that will not be lost on the children who are growing up with it ringing in their ears.



CARING

It is bath time in North London. For Blu it's also playtime, while Fiona cares for Emerald. Three children place big demands on a single mother, but Saeng-Fa, here seen dealing with the laundry, is a big help.

Because one parent cannot do everything, everyone has to help out where they can. Children then assume responsibilities earlier than they might have otherwise. They then learn the importance, and the satisfaction, of caring for others, not just for themselves. Fiona has cleverly turned her difficult situation into a learning opportunity for her children.

29 WHAT I HAVE LEARNT

By Elizabeth Handy

We photographed three very different families, but each in their own way lived out their values in the way they organized the home, so that the home was a school for life for their children. We put each family in context by showing the homes they live in and three different tableaus that showed the ways each family care, share and work together.

I have been asked to briefly write what I learnt from doing this project.

1. I learnt what hard work it can be for parents to be both their own selves while also managing a family and a home. It is easy to lose oneself in the chores of family life, yet the children need to know you as a person as well as a parent. I think that the adults in our portraits managed that and I admire them.

2. I learnt that by describing photographically how different families share, care and work, I found a way to explain how they managed the home. I like to think that it also helped them to understand how their families worked, and why they, on the whole, worked so well.

3. I learnt that it helped each family to know each other better by articulating how they work together. I also believe that seeing themselves and their home portrayed and exhibited gave them a real feeling of confidence, even of pride, in what they had achieved with their family. Sometimes we need outsiders to help us see ourselves in our true light.

4. I learnt that in order to achieve this model they do need help from their wider family, their friends, their neighbours and their community. Families cannot do this in isolation.

ELIZABETH HANDY

Elizabeth Handy has been creating photographic portraits for over twenty years. Working with her writer husband, Charles Handy, she has published five books of portraits, including *Reinvented Lives: Women at Sixty* and *The New Philanthropists*. Elizabeth has exhibited her work in a dozen different countries, has used her photography in courses for leadership and undertaken many private commissions.

In her books she has developed her 'joiner portraits' in which she captures, in one composite picture, the three main roles that her subjects occupy in life. In other projects, such as this book, she photographs each individual separately and then crafts a composite portrait of the whole group. In this way she seeks, as she says, to 'get behind the face' of her subjects. Her own self-portrait is an example of the joiner portrait.





CHARLES HANDY

Charles Handy is a writer, broadcaster and lecturer. His books on the changing shape of work and its effects on our lives and organizations have sold two million copies around the world. His latest books, include ³² his memoir *'Myself and Other More Important Matters'* and *'The New Philanthropists: Making a Difference'* with photographs by his wife, a professional photographer. This is a sequel to their earlier book *'The new Alchemists'* profiling successful entrepreneurs in all walks of life. He has, in his career, been an oil executive with Shell, a business economist, Professor at the London Business School, the Warden of St. George's House in Windsor Castle (a study centre for social and ethical issues) and the Chairman of the Royal Society of Arts. He is also known in Britain for his *Thoughts for Today* on the BBC radio breakfast show 'Today'. He is Irish and grew up in Kildare, but now lives in London.

ABOUT HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION



HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION

RENEWING THE CULTURE OF THE HOME

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Anthropologists, sociologists, doctors, economists and educationalists tell us that what we eat, basic hygiene and health care, the quality of our home surroundings, our space and the way we use our time at home are all fundamental to our overall development and the fulfillment of our individual potential.

Home Renaissance Foundation exists to bring about a change in public perception of the value of the work in the home and acknowledgement of how profoundly the work of homemaking affects us personally and shapes society as a whole.

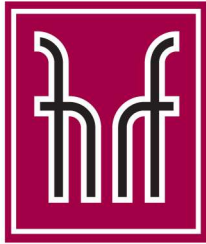
Home Renaissance Foundation is committed to promoting, developing and using all multidisciplinary scientific knowledge which contributes to a better understanding and management of social change in accordance with the universal values, deeply rooted in Christianity, of justice, freedom and human dignity.

Home Renaissance Foundation acts as a catalyst for change by developing links with organisations and the media in order to influence policy by:

- Encouraging interdisciplinary research (economic; educational; medical; vocational training; legal etc) relating to the home and care of the family and the individuals who make up families;
- Promoting excellence in training in home-related skills, e.g. home economics, purchasing and preparation of meals, hygiene, health and safety;
- Improving the expertise and skills within families that create a healthy and congenial home environment.

We believe that these skills form the root of the all-round health, development and well-being of individuals and, by extension, of a stable and economically sound society. They apply as much to people living alone as to families. The future of society will be determined by excellence in the home. Domestic work is not just a collection of services – laundry, cleaning, food etc., but a system of values in which science, art, psychology, culture, skills, a capacity for management all play a part and which takes into account the individual in his or her own very personal and intimate environment and supports the workings of their own family.

The physical and emotional development of the people who live in the house depends, in part, on the care and attention they receive at home. This is relevant whether they are children, old people, adolescents, or men and women with demanding, stress-inducing professions, all of whom rely very much on the affection and respect expressed through domestic care and attention.



HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION
RENEWING THE CULTURE OF THE HOME

Home Renaissance Foundation
29 Pembridge Square London W2 4DS
www.homerenaissancefoundation.org
info@homerenaissancefoundation.org
+44 (0)20 7229 2351