

Dear Inge MoutR

First, I want to wish you a happy birthday. Second, and probably beside the point, I'd like to let you know where I stand on the issue of photographs - those we call portraits. Alas, I must quote something I wrote years ago.

"The poser does not want to be discovered as anything other than what he determines. He does not wish to be himself so much as he wishes to be an object, that is, he would rather be judged aesthetically than personally, and the world he would join is the permanent one of art. To look alive, for him, is to look flawed. He has an idea about the way he looks, and he wants it confirmed. So he tries to control the outcome of the picture and to anticipate, as much as he can, what he will look like; but his extreme self-consciousness always results in an image of estrangement - a look of dispassion clouds the eyes, he appears to be elsewhere. His expectations are based on delusive claims that have to do with needs beyond the power of the camera to satisfy... The point is that he wants the camera to be responsive to an image, not to a self."

Again, Happy Birthday and best wishes.

Mark Strand.