



## THE GARCIN CHALLENGE

A few of us went to see an exhibition by Gilbert Garcin in London earlier this year. It really was both inspiring and unusual. Garcin took up photography aged 65 when he retired! His approach is to take self portraits, cut them out literally and create scenes that are often comical or absurd with him in them in which he explores the human condition. He does this by having a box with sand in and sometimes objects and projects the background with a slide and then places his cut out self in the scene and photographs it - a very low tech style. His photos are all titled and the title is part of the intrigue.

**The challenge is this - create a garcin-esque photo and bring it to the Ealing LIP photography meeting on Tues February 3. It needs to be printed black and white and titled. The photo should in some way explore the human condition.**

Obviously you could create a similar kind of scene using photoshop which is fine though I think Garcin's technique will be more fun!

Gilbert Garcin's web site is [www.gilbert-garcin.com](http://www.gilbert-garcin.com). If you click on one of the years you can scroll through loads of his photos which will give you a ton of ideas to work from. The attached sheet has a few examples. This is an exert from the interview on the web site by Barbara Oudiz where he describes how he creates his work

*Can you tell us about how you work?*

I have an atelier at my country house in La Ciotat, because if my wife found me dragging bags of sand into our apartment in Marseille...!!! It's just a small room, with a table and a film screen in the back. First I make a drawing of the way I want the photograph to look. Then I go out on the terrace of my apartment in Marseille and strike up a pose – my neighbours always look at

me funny when I do this... (chuckles). I photograph myself with a 24x36 Reflex and develop it so that I am about 15 cm tall, and cut out this picture of myself. I cover my table with the sand that I get from the beach nearby. I glue the cut-out character onto a thin wire that I stick in the sand on the table, so that it's standing. (He picks up the photo *Etre maître de soi* (Controlling Oneself) and points to the sky, in the background). This is the film screen onto which I project a slide showing clouds or other things. Then all I have to do is take the picture! It's a little naïve as systems go; people always think I use all sorts of sophisticated technology. Not at all. It's so simple that no one does it, or almost no one. It doesn't appear "serious", I suppose.

*What advantages does this technique offer?*

First of all, it requires very little material. And because it's not a collage, there is a real depth of field into which I can introduce real objects,

such as stones or mud. These objects cast real shadows. It's also possible to vary the light on the objects. In fact, it's a bit as if I were in the shoes of a theatre director; I have to think about where to place my characters on the stage and what kind of lighting I'm going to use.