

POLAR PHOTOGRAPHY – NORTH & SOUTH

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AUTUMN 2024

Better Photography



BP'S PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR
WINNING PHOTOS

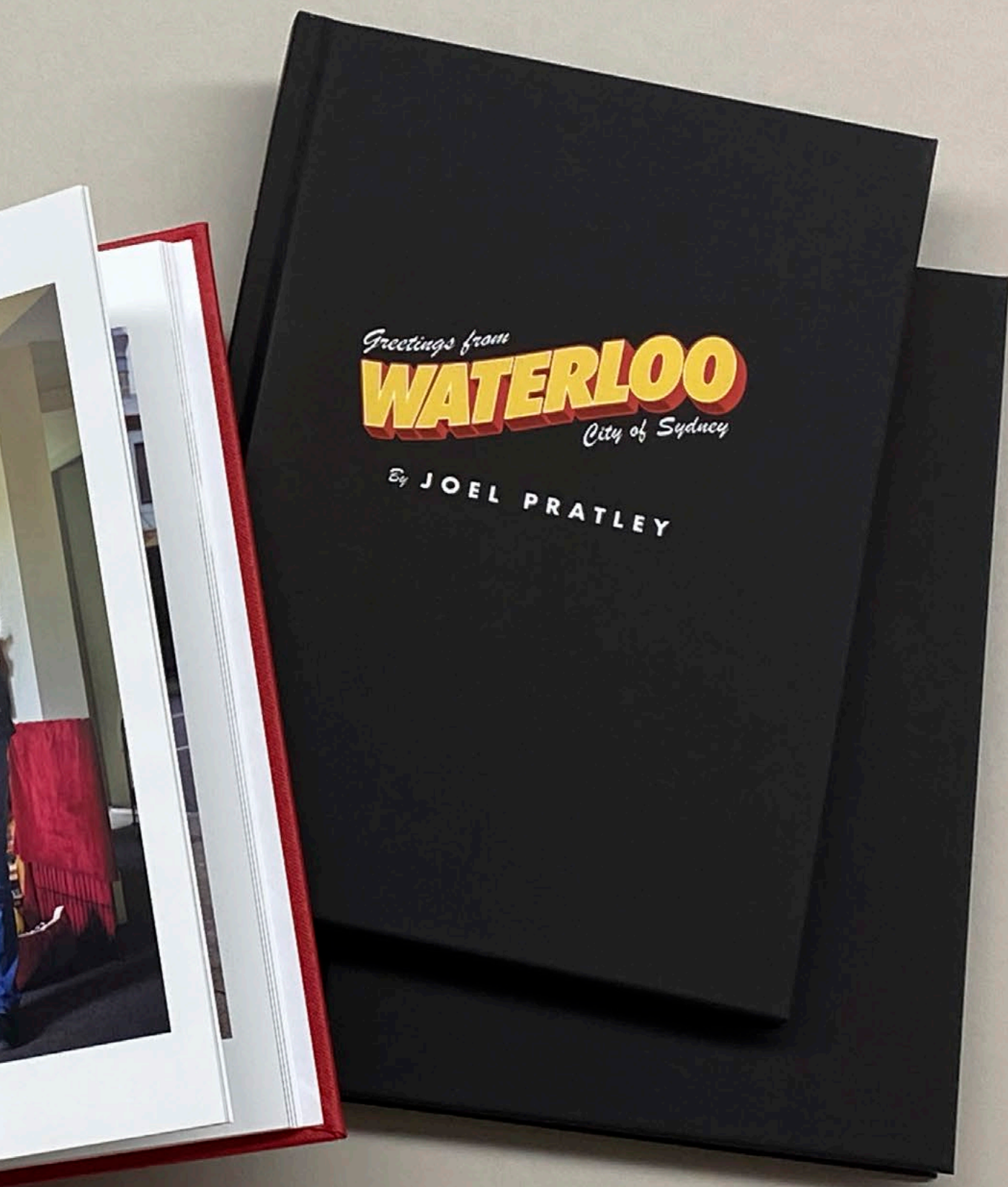
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Cover photo by Preeti and Prashant Chacko, our 2023 comp winners!

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Neema's Frown by Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year, Preeti and Prashant Chacko.



Photo by Mark Tedeschi.



Photo by Len Metcalf.

TECHNIQUES

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Great photographs are often underpinned by interesting ideas that ask more questions than offer answers. Mike Langford explains how this approach can lead to really great photographs!

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Layers and layers and layers of selections are used to create Graeme Gordon’s masterful black and white compositions.



Burj Khalifa by Graeme Gordon.





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Near Middlehurst Station, New Zealand

CAMERA: Phase One XF 150MP with Schneider Krueznach LS 80mm f2.8

EXPOSURE: 1/2000 second @ f4, ISO 200

SITUATION: Have you seen this location before? Maybe! It's Middlehurst and I have flown over this mountain range a couple of dozen times. However, it always seems to be different – the angle, the light, the ground cover, the weather. What attracts me to this image is that it's full of detail. The snow nestles into the cracks and depressions while the wind blows the snow off the ridges, creating that wonderful texture. A touch of colour saturation finishes it off!





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Derby, Western Australia

CAMERA: Phase One XF 150MP with Schneider Krueznach LS 80mm f2.8

EXPOSURE: 1/2000 second @ f4.5, ISO 100

SITUATION: Another aerial, this time of the huge tidal mudflats just outside Derby in Western Australia. Depending on the tide and the depth of the sand bars, the area is a kaleidoscope of shapes and patterns and the water forces its way into the flats, or draws back away. You can fly over the same place sixty minutes later and it will look completely different. The processing trick with images like this is using contrast to enhance the patterns in the sand.

Sigma 14mm f1.4 DG DN Art for Sony

It's a pity the new Sigma 14mm f1.4 DG DN Art lens is only available for the Sony mount at present, although it will soon support the L mount as well. For Canon and Nikon owners, well, just sit back and drool at the specifications offered – a super wide-angle and a super wide maximum aperture, ideal for capturing stunning interiors and grand night sky vistas!

Specialised astro features include a detachable tripod socket, compatible with Arca-Swiss type mounts. As the Sigma 14mm is heavier on the front, attaching the tripod socket helps it mount on a tripod in a more stable way.

The mount shape is designed to prevent interference, even when using a lens heater. Lens heater? Astro photographers will know what that's all about and although one is not supplied, the lens has been designed to accommodate it with a lip at the front, preventing the heater from protruding into the image. And there's a switch to lock the manual focus at a desired position – such as infinity for the stars. It prevents focus shift caused by unintentional operation of the focus ring and is also useful for long time exposure photography when the focus should be fixed. Finally, a rear filter holder is provided for attaching a sheet-



type rear filter – along with a lock mechanism to prevent the filter from falling out.

In addition to functions specifically designed for shooting stars, the Sigma 14mm is equipped with an AFL button to which any function can be assigned and an aperture ring. The body is dust and splash resistant, and the frontmost surface of the lens is coated with a water and oil repellent coating, for shooting outdoors in harsh environments. Price \$2650.

Canson Edition Rag

What do you want your photographs to look like – in the flesh? It's all very well to look at our images on a phone or computer screen, but when you turn the files into a print with paper and ink, what does it need to say?

For photographers wanting an authentic look, sport or wildlife for example, then a gloss or semi-gloss can be an indication of reality. Interestingly, even in the days of film, an 'authentic' look was equated with enhanced colours and contrast. People would say they wanted 'natural' and then promptly picked 'enhanced' because it looked better.

On the other hand, if your approach to photography is a little more interpretative, then a matte paper with its softer contrast and colours is very popular. Sure, there's a slightly smaller gamut, but colour is as much a matter of the other colours that surround it and so you can still create prints that appear to have enhanced colour and contrast, but sit on a matte surface without annoying reflections.

Canson Infinity Edition Etching Rag is a 100% cotton fine art paper with a smooth texture, reminiscent of the original genuine etching and printmaking papers. The paper has the purest white tone available on the market, without any optical brightening agents (OBAs) which deteriorate over time and, if you're printing with archival intent, are not a good choice. Canson Edition Etching Rag offers a high paper shade stability and a resistance to aging by using natural minerals. The museum-grade paper provides deep blacks, excellent



image sharpness, optimum colour gradation and its unique slight grain makes it ideal for printing detailed work, colour photographs and exceptional black and white portraits.

Edition Etching Rag comes in a full range of sheet and roll sizes and is available from Kayell Australia.

Home / Sigma



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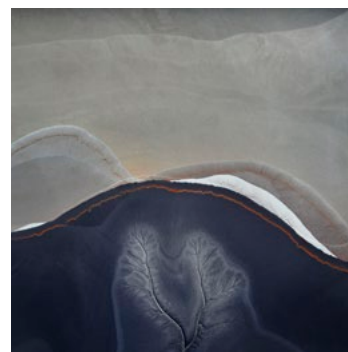
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Tony Hewitt Wins ILPOTY

It was a very tight contest in the tenth International Landscape Photographer of the Year. One of the reasons the competition rewards the Top 101 landscape photographs every year is because, once you reach a certain level of brilliance, is it really possible to definitively say one photograph is better than another? The challenges of determining the overall Photographer of the Year revealed themselves only too clearly last year when the organisers had a dead heat between two portfolios, each receiving two first places and having the same preference votes. Under the rules, the stalemate is resolved by asking the fifth judge (the only judge who hadn't scored one of the two portfolios in first place) to cast the deciding vote.

So congratulations to Tony Hewitt from Australia, our International Landscape Photographer of the Year for 2023, and also to Andrew Mielzynski who proudly sits in a very close second place.

The Award received 4035 entries and the threshold for inclusion in the book (a Top 101 entry) was a score of 85.4%. And there is US \$10,000 in cash prizes for the best Photograph of the Year (single shot, 1st, 2nd, 3rd) and best Photographer of the Year (portfolio of four photographs, 1st, 2nd, 3rd) and five special subject awards which receive a one-metre print from the high-end photo lab and framer, Created For Life. All 11 winners receive a physical copy of the annual Awards book, proudly printed by Memento Pro and the Photographers of the Year receive NiSi Filter packs.



Two of Tony Hewitt's winning images

The 2023 winners were:

Photographer of the Year: Tony Hewitt, Australia

Second Place: Andrew Mielzynski, Canada

Third Place: Matt Meisenheimer, United States

Photograph of the Year: Blake Randall, Canada

Second Place: Peter Meyer, Australia

Third Place: Isabella Tabacchi, Italy

Special Award Winners:

Jim Guerard, United States (Black and White)

Casey McCallister, United States (Aerial)

Thomas Vijayan, Canada (Snow and Ice)

Ciaran Willmore, Ireland (Seascape)

John Seager, United Kingdom (Desert)

Leica M11-P & Content Credentials

Leica has implemented the global Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA) standard in its M11-P camera, so that each image is captured with secure metadata. This means it carries information such as camera make and model, as well as content-specific information including who captured an image and when, and how they did so. Each image captured will receive a digital signature and the authenticity of images can be easily verified by visiting contentcredentials.org/verify or in the Leica FOTOS app.

We all know how well the legendary Leica camera works, but what about Content Credentials? Here's how Leica explains it:

1. Transparency at the point of capture: We believe the chain of authenticity is strongest at the moment a piece of media is created – being able to verify the circumstances of an image's origin is the foundation for knowing whether to trust it.
2. Get credit for your photography work: Content Credentials enable photojournalists and creatives to assert credit for their work, ensuring that wherever one of their images goes, their identity travels indelibly with it.
3. Bring trust to your digital content with a digital nutrition label: Content Credentials are the digital nutrition label and most widely adopted industry standard for content of all kinds and the foundation for increased trust and transparency online.



Adobe co-founded the Content Authenticity Initiative (CAI) in 2019 to help combat the threat of misinformation and help creators get credit for their work. Today, the CAI is a coalition of nearly 2,000 members, including Leica Camera, AFP, the Associated Press, the BBC, Getty Images, Microsoft, Reuters, The Wall Street Journal and more, all working together to add a verifiable layer of transparency and trust to content online – via secure metadata called Content Credentials.

Leica's M11-P camera will be available globally at all Leica Stores, the Leica Online Store and authorised dealers. To learn more, please visit: <https://leica-camera.com/m11-p>.

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Nikkor Z 600mm f6.3 VR S

The Nikkor Z 600mm f6.3 VR S is an S-Line super-telephoto prime lens in a relatively small and portable format, measuring just 278 mm long and weighing approximately 1,390 g. The design intentionally positions the lens's centre of gravity closer to the camera body, meaning it is easier to hold and use. It makes it ideal for panning techniques, for example.

The adoption of a Phase Fresnel (PF) lens element contributes to the smaller size and weight, while chromatic aberration is significantly reduced with the adoption of PF lens and ED glass elements. In addition, the adoption of an SR lens element controls short-wavelength light, the effects of which are difficult to correct, achieving highly precise chromatic aberration compensation. In addition, Nikon's original Nano Crystal Coat has been adopted to reduce unwanted ghost and flare effects.

Do you think 600 mm isn't long enough? By using the Z Teleconverter TC-1.4x or Z Teleconverter TC-2.0x, the focal length can be extended into rare territory indeed for images with incredibly compressed perspectives.

The lens is equipped with Normal VR mode, which provides 5.5-stop stabilisation; as well as a Sport VR mode, which stabilises the viewfinder display with continuous shooting, making it easier to track rapidly moving subjects. And when paired with a compatible body, Synchro VR can be



activated to achieve up to 6.0-stop stabilisation by combining in-camera VR and lens VR.

The adoption of a stepping motor (STM) ensures fast and quiet autofocus, lots of weatherised seals ensure extended dust- and drip-resistant performance, and anti-fouling performance is claimed through the adoption of a fluorine coat.

The lens barrel is equipped with several function buttons that can be assigned a wide variety of functions, plus there's a memory recall function that instantly recalls a focus position stored in advance by pressing the button to which the function has been assigned. Price around \$8000.

Epson SureColor P5360

The latest 17-inch Epson SureColor P5360 professional printer is possibly a bit more than the average reader requires, but if you do a lot of printing and need roll paper output, the new model has lots going for it.

Inside, the new printer has an improved printhead, a new inkset with an extended colour gamut in dark blue hues, plus an advanced print engine for a higher resolution of up to 5760 x 1440 dpi.

The Micro Piezo printhead features Epson's Variable Sized Droplet Technology (VSDT), which ensures the consistent production of prints with smooth tonal transitions, allowing it to reproduce intricate details captured by today's modern high-resolution cameras.

The new 10-colour UltraChrome PRO10 inkset comes in high-capacity 200 ml cartridges (costing RRP AUD\$169 and NZ\$189 each), including violet ink. And (finally) with dedicated channels for photo and matte black inks, there's no ink switching, helping to save time and reduce ink waste. The printer's built-in Carbon Black Mode increases D-max, allowing for rich blacks and exceptional contrast on glossy paper.

The new printer includes a built-in roll feeder, auto cutter and a high-capacity cassette that accommodates up to 100 cut sheets ranging from 8" x 10" (203 x 254 mm) to A2+ (432 x 610 mm) sheets.



Other SureColor P5360 features include a large 4.3-inch colour LCD touchscreen and interface, expanded connectivity (Ethernet, USB and Wi-Fi), and Epson Print Layout software for simple print production.

The Epson SureColor P5360 is expected to have a price tag of \$3,495 in Australia and \$3,895 in New Zealand, maintaining the same price point as its predecessor, the SureColor P5070.

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March	21 - 26	The Catlins
April	9 - 15	North Westland
May	2 - 7	Classic Landscapes
May	14 - 19	Central Otago
June	20 - 25	Mt Cook
July	25 - 30	NE South Island
Oct	10 - 15	South Westland

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WILL YOU BE OUR PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR?

We have four categories to enter and each category offers a \$750 first prize, but to win the \$2000 'Photographer of the Year' Award, we will be judging your top four entries!

This is the only amateur photo competition in the world that is judged each year by the same three Grand Masters of Photography, providing a level of consistency not found anywhere else! Every entry gets a score and a brief judge's comment. Show us your best photographs and you could win a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. Plus there are those four fantastic Category Awards and the prestigious **Better Photography Photographer of the Year 2024** title with a \$2000 cash prize! Visit www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com for more information. Entry is only \$20 per image or 5 entries for just \$80.

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR



Three Grand Master Judges

- Peter Eastway, AIPP Grand Master of Photography
- Tony Hewitt, AIPP Grand Master of Photography
- David Oliver, AIPP Grand Master of Photography

2023 Photographer of the Year: Preeti and Prashant Chacko



\$2000 Cash Prize for First Place

- Four Category Prizes of \$750 each
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2024

Four Categories:

- 1. Emotive Portraits**
- 2. Classic Landscapes**
- 3. Revealing Nature**
- 4. Your Choice Open**

HOW TO ENTER

1. The **Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year 2024 Award** is open to all non-professional photographers. A non-professional photographer does not work full-time as a photographer and has earned less than AUS \$10,000 in the past 12 months from photography.
2. Entrants retain full copyright of their images.
3. You may enter as many times as you wish. Entry is AUS \$20 (approx US \$15) per entry. There is an Early Bird discount of one free entry for every four paid entries, up until one week before the final closing date (28 April 2024) – so blocks of five entries for \$80.
4. There are four categories: Emotive Portraits, Classic Landscapes, Revealing Nature and 'Your Choice Open'. You can enter in one or more categories.
5. The judges are looking for a professional standard of presentation and a highly creative approach or treatment.
6. The images presented for judging must be photographic in origin and any post-production must be the work of the entrant. AI images and AI components are not allowed. We want to see your work!
7. To ensure we have recent work, entries must be from original exposures made on or after 1 January 2024. Please do not remove the EXIF data from your entry files as this may invalidate your entry.

8. Entry is online only at: www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com.
9. To enter online, you will need to register. Competition winners may be asked to prove their non-professional status and provide raw files to show no AI has been used.
10. The judging process is as follows:
 - Each judge will score each Entry out of 100.
 - For each entry, the judges' scores will be totalled, divided by 3 and presented to the Entrant as an average score out of 100.
11. Only one entry is required to win a Category. However, to win the overall Photographer of the Year, an Entrant will need to have entered a minimum of four entries to make a 'Portfolio'. A Portfolio comprises the four highest scoring entries by an Entrant, no matter how many entries an Entrant submitted or how many categories.
12. The 5 Portfolios with the highest aggregates will be judged separately. The judges will vote for the Portfolio that best represents the Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year. This will be a process of consultation and discussion.
13. For each Category, the 5 entries with the highest score will be judged a second time to determine the Category winner. This will also be a process of consultation and discussion and the Photographer of the Year is ineligible to win a category.

14. Prizes: AUS \$2000 for the Photographer of the Year. AUS \$750 for each Category winner. Total prize money: AUS \$5000.
15. By entering this competition, the Entrant (or copyright owner) grants to **Better Photography Magazine** and associated companies (the 'Organisers') the right to reproduce in print and online any image submitted for publicity or educational purposes in Australia and overseas.
16. If necessary, it is the Entrant's responsibility to obtain any and all permissions, including the model releases and/or copyright owner's permission if required, to have the images judged and possibly displayed and published.
17. The Organisers will interpret the application of these rules and make decisions on any questions not specifically covered by them. No correspondence will be entered into regarding any decision.
18. Entries will be accepted online only from 1 March to 5 May 2024.
19. Enquiries concerning the competition can be directed to kim@betterphotography.com.
20. The results will be published online and in **Better Photography Magazine** from 15 June 2024.
21. This is a summary of the rules. The complete rules can be found with the competition entry details at: www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com.

Enter at: www.betterphotographyphotocomp.com

2023 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year

Congratulations to Preeti and Prashant Chacko, the 2023 Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year – or should that be Photographers of the Year!

We had around 450 entries and there's no doubt that over the years, the standard has improved. We used to struggle to hand out Gold Awards and Silvers weren't that common either, but now the number of Silvers actually outnumbered the Bronzes – which is fantastic! It shows that our entrants are producing a very high standard of work.

When entering our competition, there are two processes at work. The first is the standard of the entry – Bronze, Silver or Gold. The judges all have decades of experience in assessing photographs and, in their mind, they know the scores they need to award a Bronze, Silver or Gold. There's no limit to the number of these awards they can deliver – if your entry reaches their standard, that's the score you get. This feedback is incredibly valuable for photographers looking to improve their work.

The second process is a comparative one. When we hand out the five major prizes, the judges are comparing one entry against another. Which landscape photograph is 'the best'? Which portfolio of four entries should win the Photographer of the Year?

Each category winner takes home AUS \$750 and our Photographers of the Year will share \$2000! My thanks to judges Tony Hewitt and David Oliver for their assistance.

THE 2023 CATEGORY WINNERS

Nature: Pedro Jarque Krebs
Landscape: Magnus Jonassen
Portrait: Hardijanto Budiman
Travel: Andrew Dickman

PREETI & PRASHANT CHACKO

Preeti and Prashant Chacko are keen amateur photographers, but a couple of months ago, they've set up a website (www.composingthewild.art) to try and sell their work.

A husband and wife duo from India, they have an interest showcasing animals in the wild, in black and white. "As city kids raised in the crowded cities of India, we had limited awareness about the beauty of Earth's wilderness. As adults, we relocated to South Africa, where we stumbled upon a passion for creating art. Two emotions drove us at this stage. First was the need to give back to the Planet. Second was the desire to spark love and not fear when people learn about the wild from our work. We felt that too many wildlife images showed them as scary and ferocious beasts, imagery that we felt was contrary to the desire we have to protect them.

"All four photographs were taken in the Maasai Mara, Kenya. We moved to Kenya in 2021 and were lucky to have this renowned park just a few hours' drive from home. We made the most of our 18 months there, exploring the varied parks at every opportunity.

"The Maasai Mara was a particular favourite of ours and we visited it in different seasons. It's an amazing place to see the big cats – lions, leopards, cheetahs. We were lucky to capture lions in the rain, backlit by the setting sun in 'Fortitude' and 'Some rain must fall'. Both images were of the same pride caught in the drizzle. Both were given quite different treatments in-camera and post-processing.

"Cats can look quite miserable when they get caught in the rain. We had been trying to capture this expression for a while and finally succeeded in 2022 when we captured the wet cheetah in 'Neema's Frown.'"



Hallelujah



Top: Fortitude
Above: Some Rain Must Fall
Right: Neema's Frown



"Finally, while we do love cats, we absolutely love to take images of any creature big or small in the beautiful Mara landscape. With 'Hallelujah', our main focus was to capture the giraffe mother and child interaction. We were particularly fortunate that the oxpeckers took off at exactly the moment we were photographing the giraffes, almost creating a halo around them, as if in celebration of their reunion.

"We photograph only with Nikon. Preeti has Z9, Z7ii and D610 bodies paired with the 70-200mm f2.8 (Z), 200-500mm f5.6 and 24-85mm variable f-stop lenses, depending on the park or sighting. And Prashant has a D5 and two D500s, paired with the 500mm f4, 70-200mm f2.8 and the 16-35 f4.

"We post-process all our images as we capture exclusively in raw. We use Photoshop (in addition to Lightroom, Nik and Topaz) as it gives us the best control over our processing. Our

photography philosophy is to not share just what we saw, but what we felt while experiencing that wildlife moment.

"We are very particular about what we want our photos to look like and the emotive response we'd like to create in the viewer. Just as we are always looking for exceptional camera gear, locations and guides to improve our work, we also use the best editing tools available. In one of the judge's comments, there was a question raised about the rain in the photo titled 'Fortitude'. While the judge didn't care whether it was real or not, the rain was very much natural, brought out and highlighted in post-processing.

"As a rule, we do not add or take away elements in the photographs. We know how to, as part of our learning journey with Photoshop, but we choose not to. This is a personal ethical standard that we want to hold ourselves to."

2023 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year

Revealing Nature Category Winner

PEDRO JARQUE KREBS



The Scream by Pedro Jarque Krebs, Peru

Writes Pedro Jarque Krebs, "My passion for photography goes back to my youth when I was working with analogue cameras. I was already interested in animal photography and practised with frogs and tadpoles. Then with the advent of digital technology, I was finally able to realise my idea of taking portraits of animals as though in a photographic studio."

"The photo shows a pair of flying foxes that seem surprised and interested in my presence. It was taken at an animal conservation centre in Spain."

"There are two characteristics that clearly distinguish bats from other mammals: they are the only ones that can fly and

they roost hanging upside down. Unlike birds, bats cannot take flight from the ground because their wings are not strong enough, so they hang from trees to facilitate their flight."

Pedro used a Sony a7r4 with a Sony GMaster 100-400mm.

"Most of the animals cannot be photographed in a studio for logistical or ethical reasons, so I darken the background to avoid distractions and to have a more direct and personal contact with them. Also, in this case I decided to flip the photo to show the flying foxes as if they were standing, to better read their facial expressions."

Top 20 Revealing Nature Winners



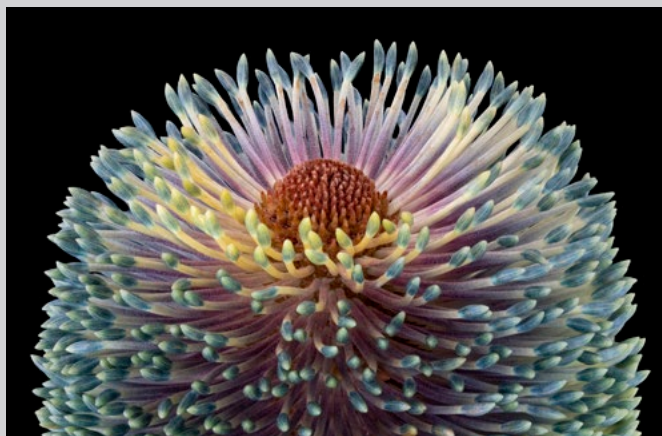
Rainforest In Miniature, Photo by Victoria McDonald



Locked in, Photo by Steven Wyatt



Feather Reflections, Photo by Gail Hinshaw



Banksia Robur, Photo by Jenelle Gavin



Crested terns acrobatic fight, Photo by Ghislaine Arton



Big League, Photo by Jutta Clough

2023 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year

Emotive Portrait Category Winner

HARDIJANTO BUDIMAN



Time To Say Goodbye by Hardijanto Budiman, Indonesia

Known as Hardibudi, Hardijanto Budiman was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. Currently he lives in BSD City, about 40 kilometres west of Jakarta. "I love my neighbourhood. It's quiet and peaceful with a perfect vibe that provides a lot of my ideas and inspiration.

"I'm a self-taught photographer and have been shooting since 2000. Today, my life is spent creating works of art. Since I was a boy, I have really loved drawing, painting and now photography. Art gives me the freedom to create anything I want to, either as fantasy or in reality!

"My ideas and inspirations flow through me like water in a river and for me, photography is the best medium to express my passion for art. My images are just like the journey of my life! It's all about the expression of imagination, emotion and the experiences of my life.

"Besides photography, I also love poetry, so if you take a look at my Instagram feed, there are poems on every single photo that I post! I try to deliver my messages through poems!

"This photograph was taken while visiting a friend's house last year in Cianjur, West Java. My friend had just passed away from a stroke and his wife is crying and hugging their daughter. This photo means a lot to me, one of my precious memories because I'd known him for over three decades."

Hardibudi used a Nikon Z5 with a 24-70mm lens. In terms of post-production, he simply converted to black and white and adjusted the exposure and contrast. The image is all about the emotion.

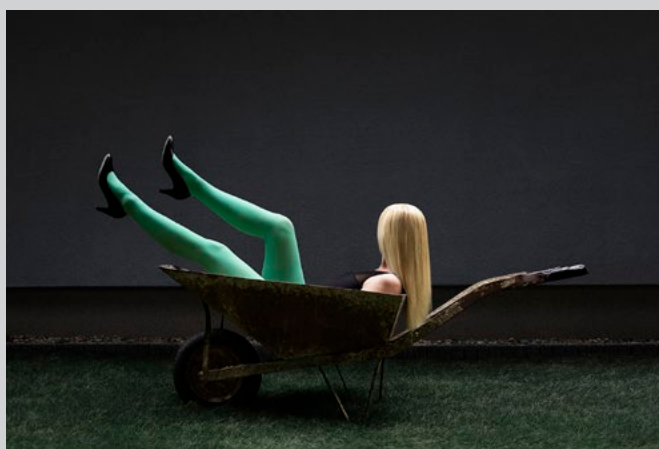
Top 20 Emotive Portrait Winners



Screaming, Photo by Richard Li



Flour War, Photo by Alamsyah Rauf



Madness, Photo by Xeniya Brik



Timeless soul, Photo by Davide Cecchini



Before the concert, Photo by Stephane Thomas

2023 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year

Exotic Travel Category Winner

ANDREW DICKMAN



Tabular iceberg adrift by Andrew Dickman, Australia

Andrew is a keen amateur photographer based in Adelaide, Australia. Starting in his teenage years with traditional film cameras, he is self-taught in most aspects of photography and even built his own darkroom so he could delve into black and white printing and, later, colour printing using the old Cibachrome technology. He has been involved in wedding, street, architecture, infrared and landscape photography.

In 2008 Andrew purchased his first digital camera and so a physical darkroom was no longer necessary. His passion now involves travel and landscape photography, exploring different cultures and geographic environments stretching from Iceland to Antarctica.

"This image was taken at the entrance to the Lemaire Channel on the Antarctic Peninsula whilst on an Antarctic sailing expedition, exploring the frozen continent and surrounds. During the summer season, the pack ice progressively thaws and allows contact with a multitude of

seals, whales (including Orca), leopard seals, penguins and abundant birdlife. Tabular icebergs are huge, predominantly flat chunks of ice, broken away from ice shelves and gradually melting in the warmer ocean currents. As with most icebergs, the ice above the water line normally represents only 10% of its mass, with the remainder below water level.

"We were a long distance from this tabular iceberg, allowing a view that takes in its massive size. The image was captured in the late afternoon with a Nikon D850 and a 70-300mm zoom lens set at 300mm. Taken hand-held from a moving vessel, I used an exposure of 1/8000, f7.1, ISO 320 to ensure I captured all the fine detail.

"The colour of the ice is a natural light blue with some white sections of snow. While processing the image in Photoshop, I darkened the edge of the iceberg, contrasting it against the sunlit mountain backdrop and defining the edges and features of the ice walls."

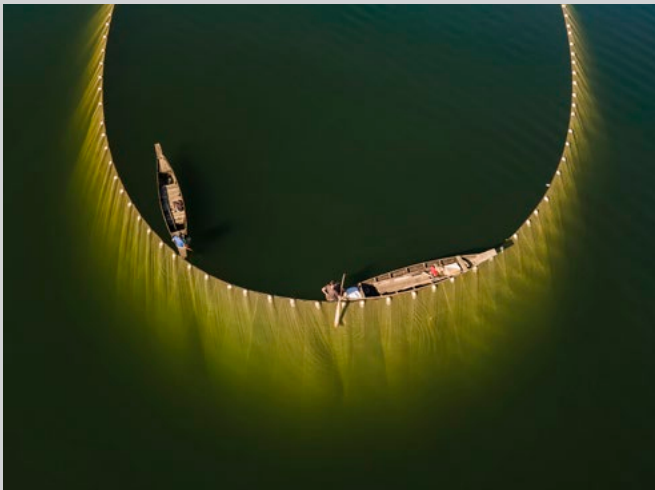
Top 20 Exotic Travel Winners



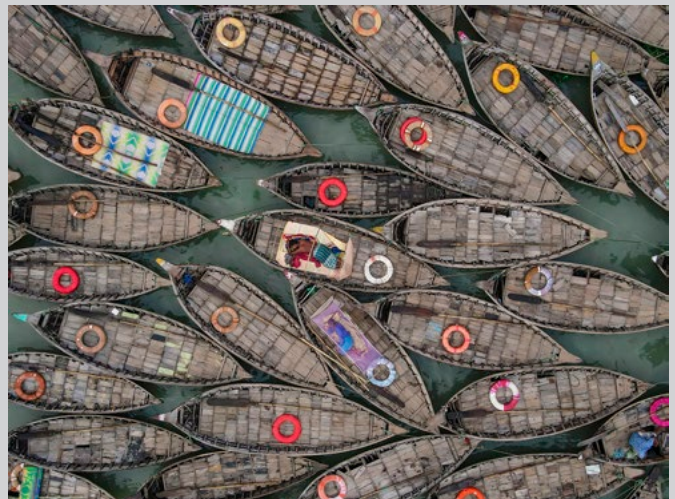
Persecution of the Kings, Photo by Robin Yong



Rice Brothers, Photo by Jodie Taylor



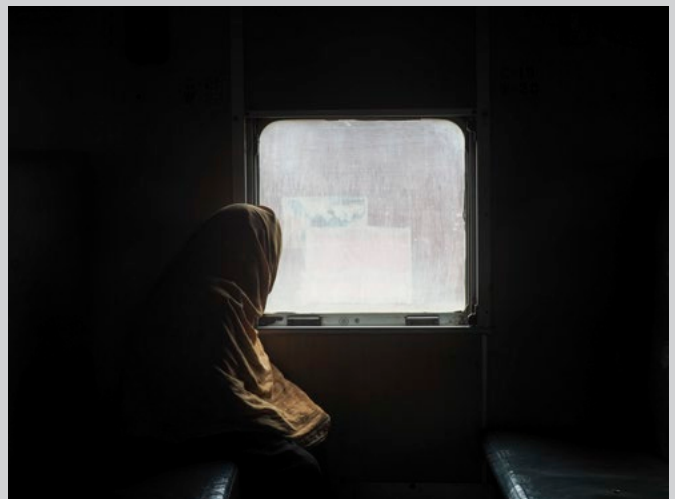
Fishing With Big Nets, Photo by Muhammad Amdad Hossain



Sleep on the boats, Photo by Muhammad Amdad Hossain



Maunsell Forts, Photo by Steven Wyatt



Waiting to Leave, Photo by Jodie Taylor

2023 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year

Classic Landscape Category Winner:

MAGNUS JONASSEN



Smiubelgin by Magnus Jonassen, Norway

Magnus Jonassen is an amateur photographer from Norway.

"I really enjoy a slow image making process, creating as high image quality as I'm able to. I enjoy setting up my tripod and camera and slowly working my way to the image I have in mind.

"In 2022, I went to our mountain cabin with my wife and two daughters. On these journeys I bring my photo gear in case I see something special to shoot and on our drive back to the cabin one afternoon, as we were approaching Rondane National, the mountains were very beautiful and I could see that the sun was about to break through the clouds.

"I stopped and walked 15 minutes into the mountains and set up my tripod with my Hasselblad X1D2 and the 135mm lens on it. I could already see the sky and clouds were turning into something special. I stood there for one hour or so until

the sun had set and was able to shoot different compositions and cloud formations with great light."

"I really enjoy post-production where you can use your eyes and imagination to create something special. I use Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop and maybe Topaz DeNoise if necessary. In Lightroom, I adjust the white balance and make small adjustments to the image before importing it into Photoshop and starting the artistic process. The main adjustment layers I use are curves, levels, colour balance and hue/saturation. For each adjustment layer, I typically use the brush tool to add in the effect selectively. Last, I sharpen the image as required and maybe add a little grain if the atmosphere in the image is improved."

Top 20 Classic Landscape Winners:



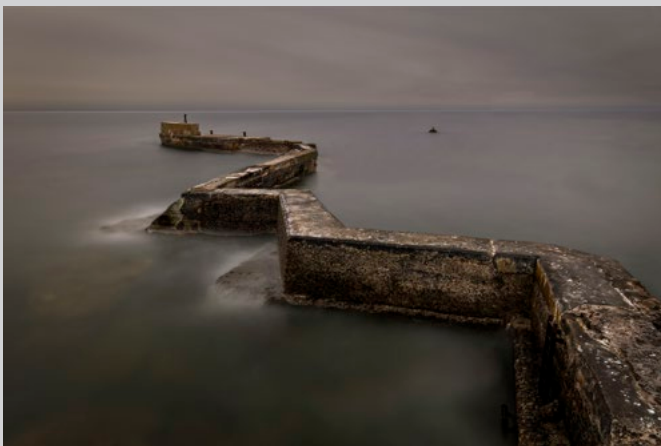
Overflow Pano, Photo by Stephane Milbank



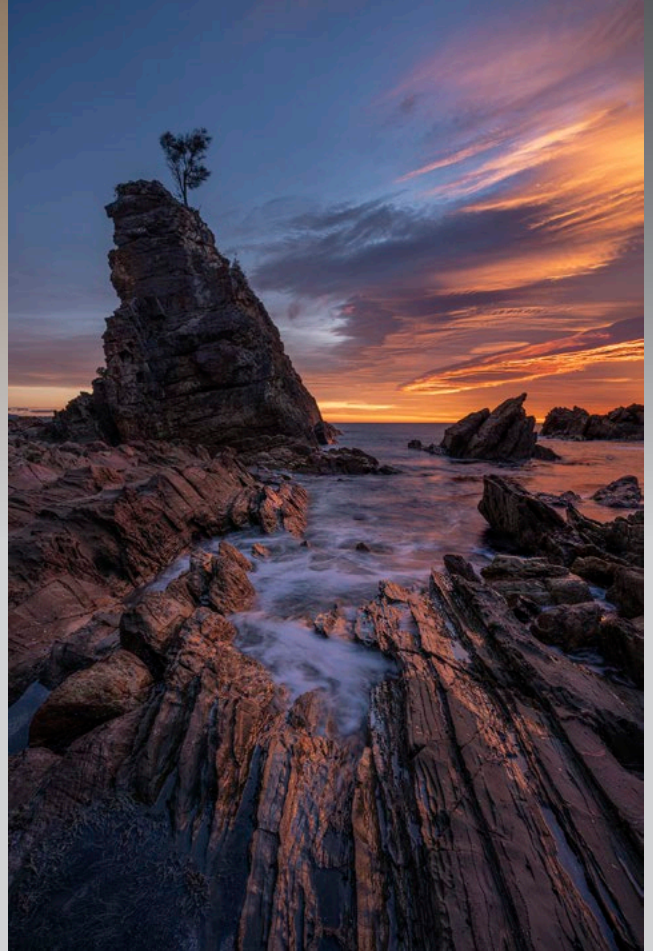
Deadvlei, Photo by Simone Osborne, Classic Landscapes



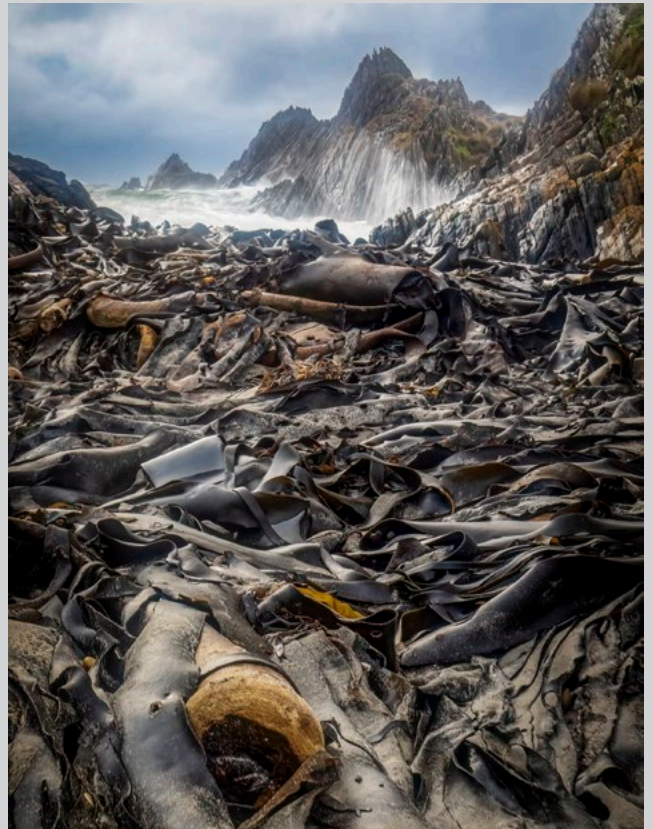
Good Church Bad Weather, Photo by Kathy Wallace



The Breakwater, Photo by Steven Wyatt



One Tree Sunrise, Photo by Simone Osborne



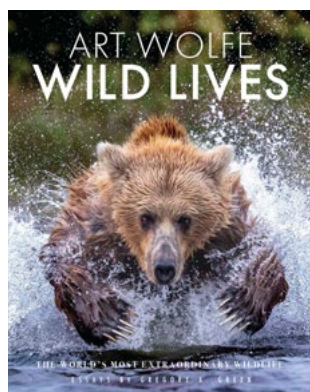
Gifts From An Angry Sea, Photo by Victoria McDonald

| TECHNIQUE

WILD LIVES



THE WORLD'S MOST EXTRAORDINARY WILDLIFE



Art Wolfe is back with
another amazing book full of
incredible wildlife photographs.

So, how does he do it?

By Peter Eastway.

Below: Gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*) and
chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarcticus*).

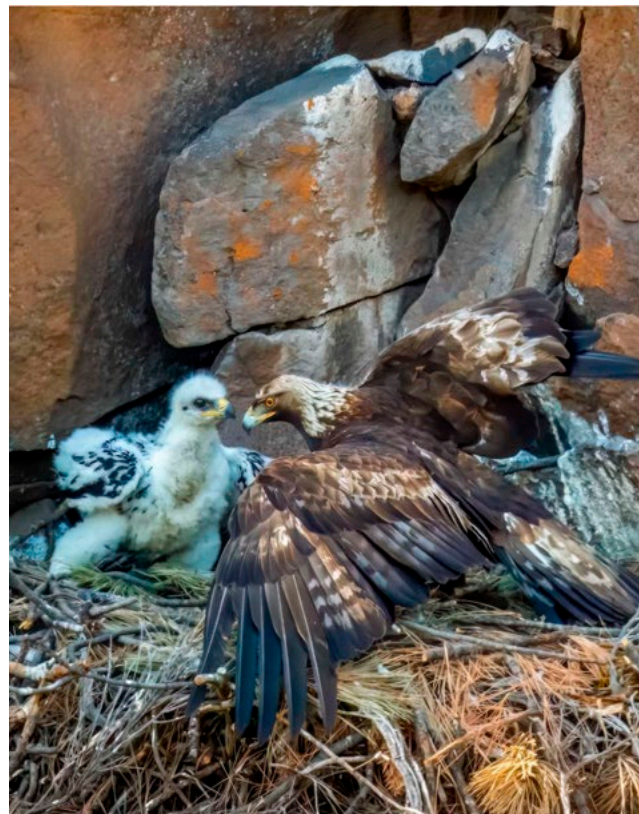




Regular readers may remember in the dim dark recesses of time, that I joined Art Wolfe in the *Tales by Light* television series (which is still running on Netflix, I believe). Art filled two of the six programs in the first series – and rightly so. He is known as one of the world's leading nature photographers. Interestingly, in these days of composites and now artificial intelligence, Art is careful to ensure all his images are 'authentic', in that post-production is minimal and his photographs stand out because of the location, camera technique and timing.

This wasn't always the case. There was a short period maybe 20 years ago when, being at the forefront of technology, Art fully embraced what was possible with digital photography and one of his earlier books includes a number of composites. Art has always been interested in the aesthetic beauty of his subject and perhaps because he was following the art more than the craft, he ventured into brand new arenas of photography. However, his public quickly convinced him that when it comes to nature and photojournalism, truth in storytelling is of paramount importance.

And so it has been ever since for Art and his new book, *Wild Lives* is a salute to the extraordinary diversity of species that inhabit the planet. Some are common, some rare and



Left: Art Wolfe by Parimal Deshpande.

Above: Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Oregon, USA.



Phu Pha Man NP, Tham Khang Khao bat cave, wrinkle-lipped free-tailed bat (*Chaerephon plicatus*).



Gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*), Namib-Naukluft National Park, Hardap and Erongo Regions, Namibia.

many are conservation success stories, species that have been brought back from the edge of extinction.

Over his forty-year career, Art has photographed many species that were once on endangered species lists, but are now flourishing (such as the bald eagle and humpback whale). These recoveries are an uplifting testament to the resilience of life when it is given a chance. From amphibians and reptiles to mammals and birds, *Wild Lives* portrays an earthly aesthetic millions of years in the making.

Art has photographed more than 500 species in 60 countries, not all of which have found their way into his new tome! However, he believes *Wild Lives* forms the most comprehensive, globe-spanning book of wildlife photography he has ever published. Accompanying his photos are essays by biologist, Gregory A. Green, focusing on the why of wildlife conservation and recovery. Gregory discusses the redistribution of animals and their habitats, dating all the way back to the Ice Age. Together, they have crafted a monograph that will not only shed new light on the creatures that surround us, but on humanity as a species as well.

I asked Art a few questions about how he approaches wildlife photography, beginning with how important is it for a nature or wildlife photographer to understand the subject he or she is photographing? How does this knowledge help in capturing photographs?

Answered Art, "It is critical. Being able to anticipate the behaviour of an animal goes a long way in creating the most powerful images. If you go in with no knowledge of behaviour of any animal, you are really limiting yourself. One needs to



Mexico, Quintana Roo, Yucatan Peninsula, Bancho Chinchorro Biosphere Reserve, American crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*).



Guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*), Patagonia, Chile.

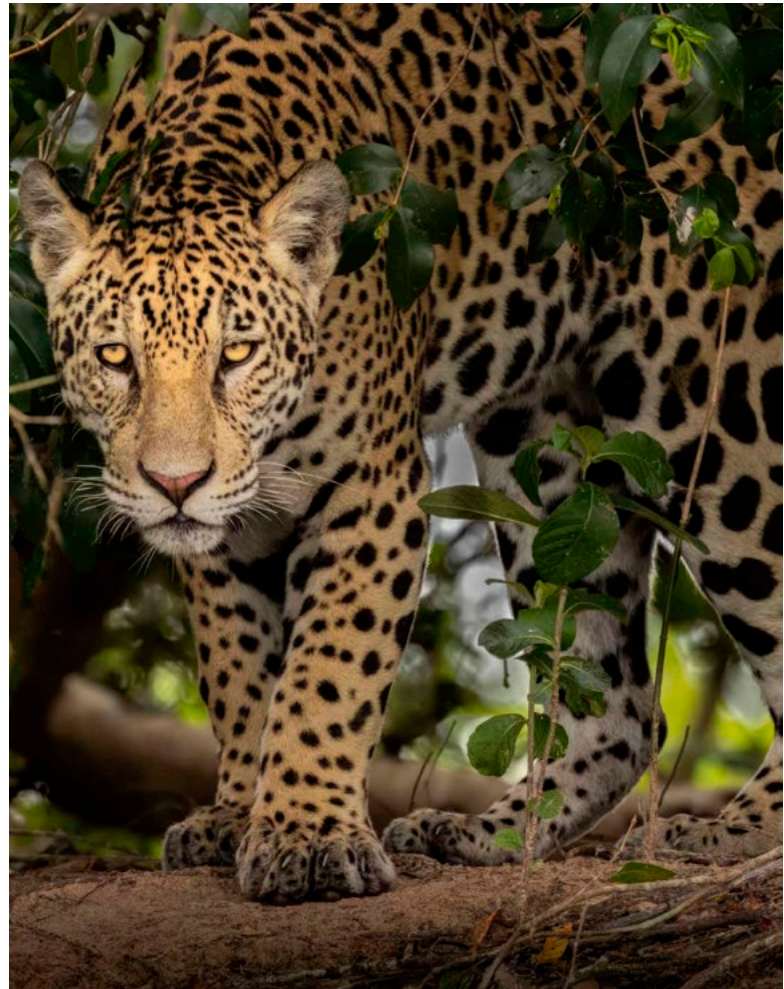
know how to situate oneself, not only to get the best view of the animal, but also the best landscape behind. When I am in the field, once I see the animal, I look ahead to gauge the landscape, then allow the animal to enter the frame. Through time and exposure I have learned about the behaviours of many different animals; I maintain a calm demeanour, move slowly and low to the ground, giving the subject time to adjust to my presence. If you're stressed or anxious about the situation, that can definitely be picked up by the animal."

So, when Art finds a subject, how many shots would he take to get a good one? Does he just sit and press the button a couple of times, or does he take lots of photos on a high frame rate? How long does he wait? And if he thinks he's got the shot, does he pack up or hang around hoping for something even better?

"I am very impatient," answered Art. "That said, it really depends on the subject and what it is doing. I very rarely depress the shutter and hope for the best. I used to have to do this when using film because I couldn't verify if I got the shot until I got the film processed weeks later. Today, I can verify the shot on the spot which is a major advancement, especially with sports and wildlife. Usually, I will take a series of shots, especially when the animal is moving quickly and you can't be sure of the exact body position. This is what I do with behaviour sequences, such as two bears playing. When animals aren't moving that fast, I can be more selective."

And finally, how did he decide on which photos to put in the book? What was more important to him, technical perfection, great light or the pose or nuance of the subject? Why?

"To be perfectly honest, I have a lot of photos to choose from for a book like *Wild Lives*. All merits have to be



Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), Pantanal, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil.



Common wildebeest (Connocchaetes taurinus), Maasai Mara National Reserve, Narok County, Kenya.

considered—light, pose, nuance. You can have great light on an image with slight motion in it and it starts to weaken the image. I’m not talking about intentional blurred motion, I am talking about camera shake.

“Pose is probably the last of the three things, but still striking the best pose in a series is the one I end up grabbing for a project. I love eye contact. And then there are always those photos that are appealing to me because of the experience I had while creating them.

“Finally, one has to take the flow of the book into consideration as well—some photos just fit together and others don’t. Visual storytelling is very important, whether it’s a magazine article or a book.”

The book *Wild Lives* is due for release in Australia on 1 March, 2024 and will be available at all good book stores. Or you can visit Art’s website and purchase one direct, of course! There are also special collection edition books and prints available.

ART WOLFE’S EQUIPMENT LIST

As this is also a book for photographers, Art has listed all the equipment used to take the photos included in the book. It makes interesting reading – at least for the equipment nerds among us!

Canon EOS-1D Mark II	EF16-35mm f/2.8L USM lens	EF400mm f/4 DO IS USM lens	Kodak Brownie Fiesta
Canon EOS-1DS	EF16-35mm f/2.8L II USM lens	EF500mm f/4L IS USM	Nauticam housing
Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II	EF17mm lens	EF600mm lens	Nikon F3
Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III	EF24-70mm f/2.8L IS USM lens	EF600mm f/4L IS III USM lens	Nikon F4
Canon EOS-1D X	EF24-70mm f/4L IS USM lens	EF800mm f/5.6L IS USM lens	Nikon N90S
Canon EOS-1D X Mark II	EF24-105mm f/4L IS USM lens	RF24-70mm F2.8 L IS USM lens	Nikkor 80-200mm f2.8 lens
Canon EOS-1N	EF70-200mm f/2.8 lens	RF100-500mm F4.5-7.1 L IS	Nikkor 200-400mm lens
Canon EOS-1N/RS	EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens	USM lens	Nikkor 300mm f2.8 lens
Canon EOS-1V	EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens	RF1200mm F8 L IS USM lens	Nikkor 500mm f5.6 lens
Canon EOS-3	EF70-200mm f/4L USM lens	TS-E 90mm f/2.8 lens	Nikkor 600mm lens
Canon EOS 5D	EF70-200mm f/4L IS USM lens	Extender EF1.4x	OLYMPUS M.14-42mm
Canon EOS 5D Mark II	EF100mm macro lens	Extender EF1.4x III	F3.5-5.6 EZ
Canon EOS 5D Mark III	EF100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS	Extender EF2x	Fujichrome Astia film
Canon EOS 5D Mark IV	USM lens	Extender EF2x III	Fujichrome Velvia film
Canon EOS 5DS R	EF100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II	Extender RF1.4x	Fujichrome 100 film
Canon EOS R5	USM lens	DJI FC220	Kodachrome 64
EF8-15mm f/4L FISHEYE USM lens	EF200-400mm f/4L IS USM EXT	DJI FC330	
EF11-24mm f/4L USM lens	lens	DJI FC550	

GRAEME GORDON

FINE TONAL

CONTROL

Layers and layers and layers of selections are used to create

Graeme Gordon's masterful black and white compositions.

Interview by Peter Eastway.



Graeme Gordon is quietly spoken. As passionate about photography as he's ever been, he thrills people with his dramatic black and white photographs by employing a full range of capture and post-

production technique to reveal a range of diverse ideas from his imagination. Simple, direct and full of impact, he has mastered an approach to photography that others now try to emulate – not that it will worry Graeme as he is already moving on, refining his technique and taking it to new levels.

Regular readers will have seen Graeme's work feature in our Photographer of the Year competition, either as a winner and regularly in the Top 20s. And as judges, we can be hard on Graeme because he has created an expectation that when we see an image in his style, it really has to be good to stand out against his previous work. Not that this is a problem for him!

So, how does he create these striking monochromatic images? It won't surprise you that there isn't a magic button or a special filter, it's simply plain hard and sometimes laborious work!



Burj Khalifa Raw file



Burj Khalifa

Insight

"People know of me as a black and white architectural photographer, but I shoot seascapes and landscapes more than anything else." A loyal member of the Focus Photographers group, you'll find Graeme on many weekends throughout the year meeting up with small groups of like-minded photographers, somewhere up or down the coast from Sydney.

"It's about the friendship," explained Graeme. "I work all week so I don't have a lot of spare time, but I love these photography meets. Over the years, I've shot Sydney's Northern Beaches to pieces, so now when I go out, I'm looking to shoot it differently. Currently, I'm looking at smaller landscapes – the landscape inside the landscape, so to speak and that's become a new challenge.

"These days, there are groups that do everything. There's never an excuse not to have anything to do, because you can always find a meet-up group somewhere online, whether you're doing pottery or photography! I think Focus Photographers meet-ups are a great opportunity to get out, take some photographs and meet people too."

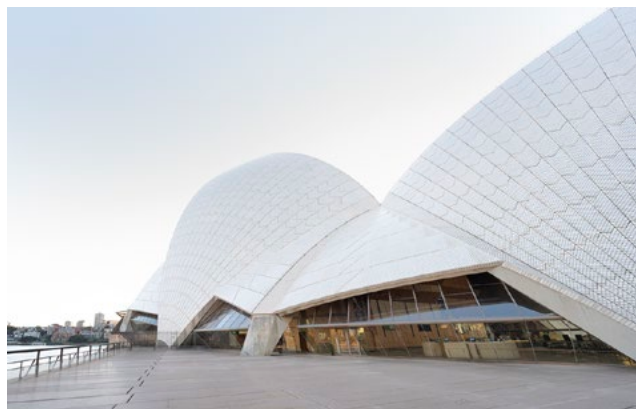
Some years ago, Graeme won the Photographer of the Year in the Focus group and then the following year, Tim Moon won it with some wonderful photos taken of sand dunes near Dubai.

"As it turns out, I had been following a photographer on 1X (Sajin Sasidharan) who came from Dubai, so when my wife and I took a trip there the next year, I got hold of him to see if he was interested in a sunrise shoot.

"He was a really nice guy, so I asked if he'd do a one-on-one workshop with me, explaining his approach to black and white – and this was the beginning for me. I worked on a few images in this style and the following year I was back in the winners' circle and I beat Tim!

"Another photographer who has inspired me is Joel Tjintelaar. What attracted me to Joel's work was his tonal range – and I think this is the key to a good black and white. When processing an image, I try to cover all the zones [referring to Ansel Adams's Zone System that breaks up the possible tones in a photograph into 11 segments].

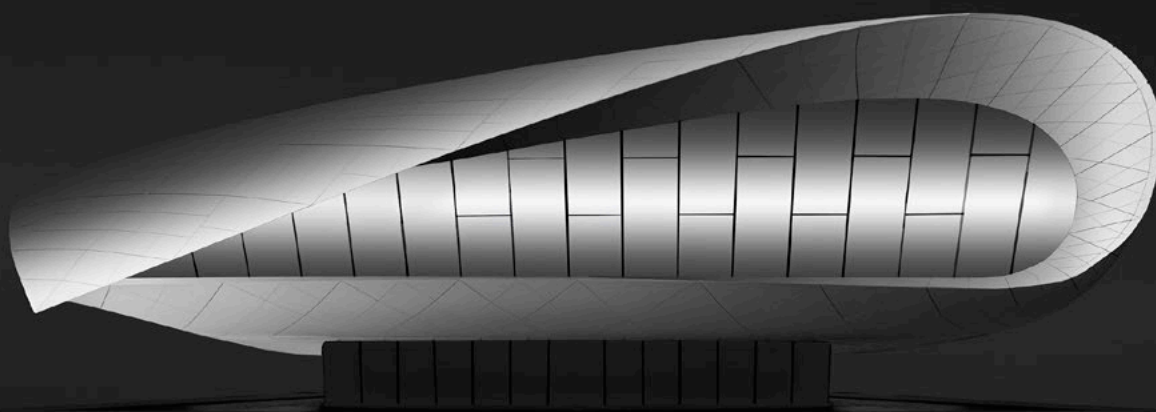
"It's not always possible to cover every zone, depending on the subject, but I try. And I generally keep a little bit of detail in the shadows if possible. I don't want areas to be completely



Opera House – Mirror Image Raw file



Opera House – Mirror Image



Etihad Museum

black. Some black is good, of course, but I like to keep a touch of detail in the shadows."

Graeme says he struggles a bit to find subject matter around Sydney for his technique – certainly along the Northern Beaches. The best subjects are already quite minimalist in structure and while he hasn't been travelling a lot himself (due to his business), he has certainly found some great material in the UAE and NZ.

"We're all inspired by the things we see, one way or another, even if we don't realise it. So, yes, I'm looking for subjects that inspire me and relate to the vision I have in my head – which is simple and minimalist.

"For instance, the Etihad Museum had quite a lot of clutter surrounding it – trees and lamp posts – so it was a little awkward to find an angle where the building looked strong and the background wasn't intrusive. The security guard wouldn't let us in, so it was a matter of shooting over a fence – the whole thing was messy."

Graeme says generally speaking he will replace the sky, so he's already reaching into Photoshop and using multiple layers and masks to achieve his vision. However, his vision isn't necessarily what's in front of the camera. "I shoot what interests me. I'll walk around my subject, looking for the best angles where there's something that attracts the eye. Of course, it might never be the best angle, but it's the best angle I can find on the day."

Graeme shoots with a Nikon Z8 and 10-24mm or 70-300mm, but on a recent trip, a good friend lent him a 24-70mm and he thinks the mid-range zoom works really well.

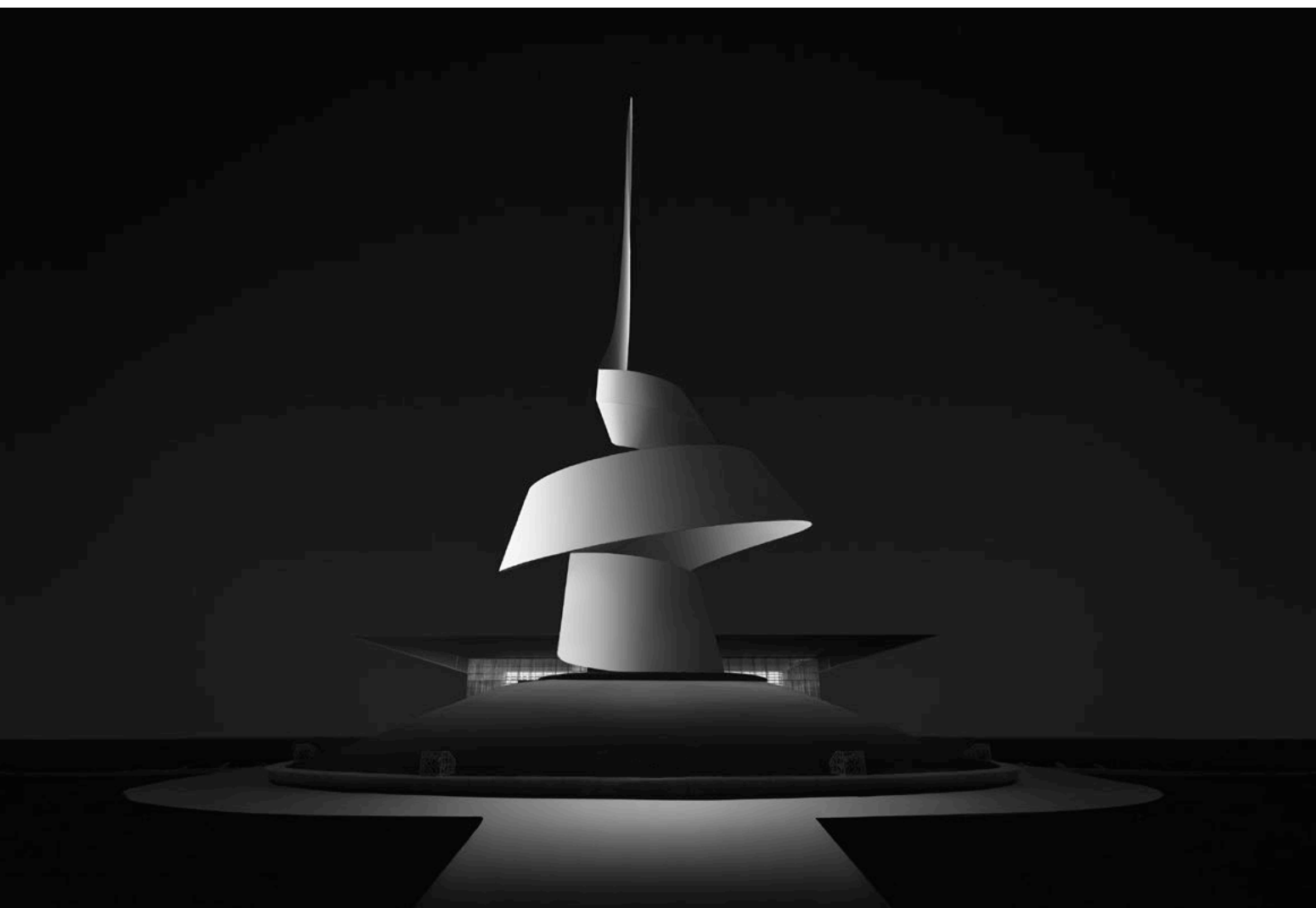


Etihad Museum Raw file

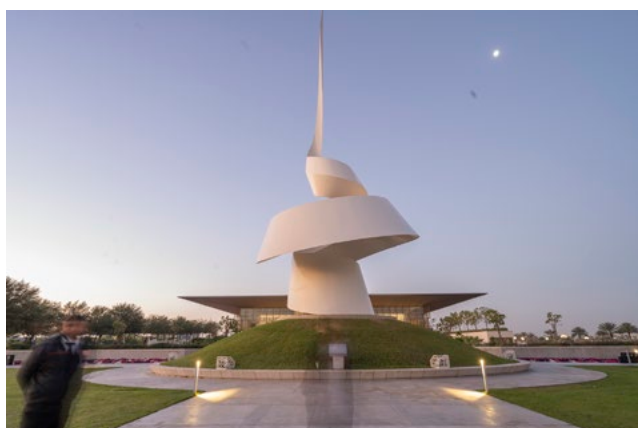
"I don't mind travelling with just one or two lenses because sometimes the limitations force you to shoot a certain way and that isn't always a bad thing."

When he takes the image into post-production, there might be quite a bit of work just cropping the image and adjusting its perspective with the transform tools. Graeme may even extend the canvas to achieve the correct shape.

"After that, it's important to start with a good exposure. I like to have the histogram as far to the right without clipping the exposure [without blowing out the highlights to white]. Depending on the conditions, I will bracket my exposures, but with the cameras being so good these days, it's often not necessary.



House of Wisdom



House of Wisdom Raw file

"I don't usually shoot on sunny days. Rather, I'll get up very early or stay out late for the softer light, or shoot on overcast days. My subjects can have a lot of glass and stainless steel which, when exposed to direct sunlight, can easily be blown out even if you're careful with your exposure and one of the ways to avoid this is to choose a softer, diffuse light."

So, at this stage, Graeme has the bare bones of his subject in Photoshop. His next step is to make lots of selections of

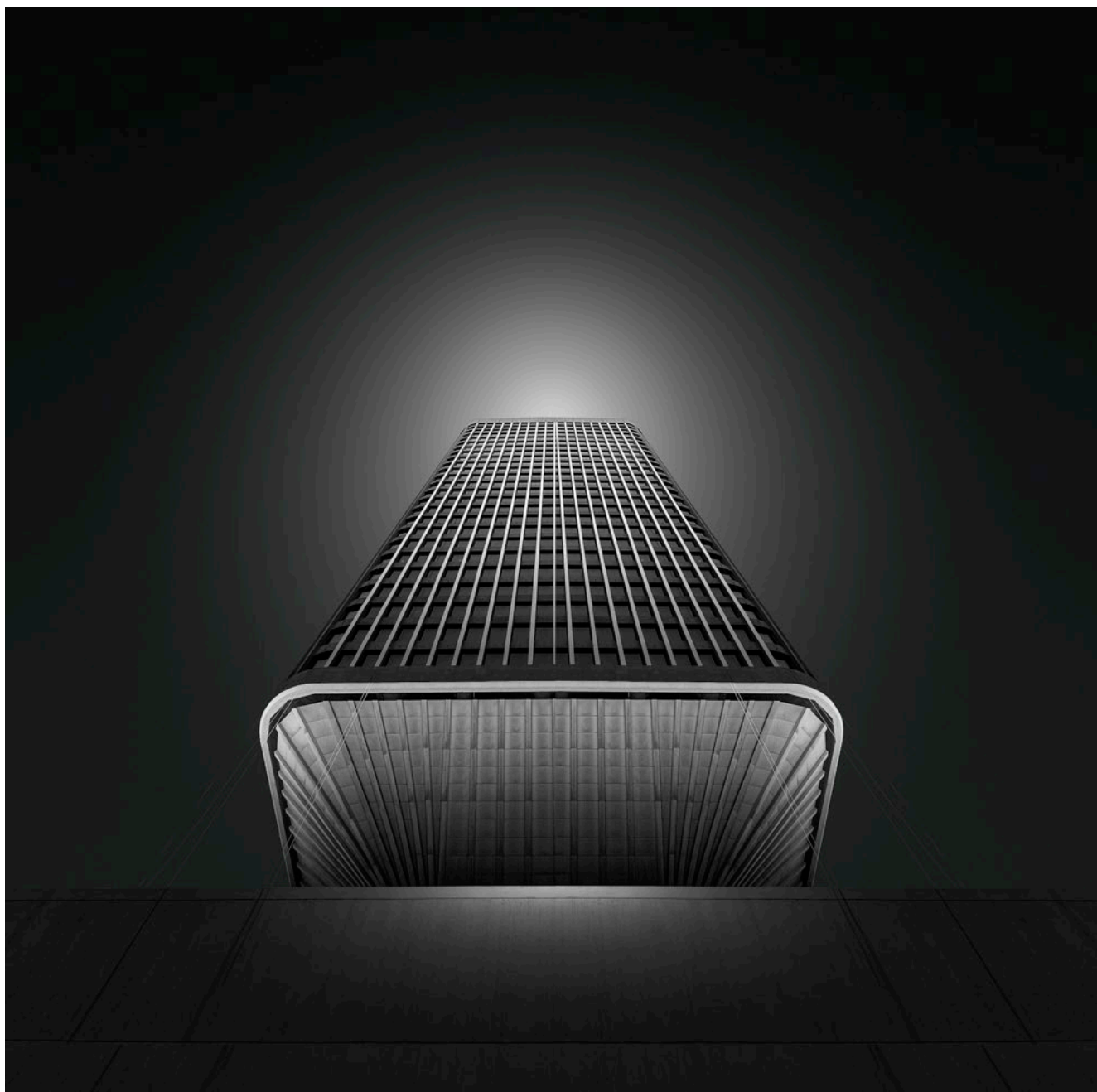
different parts of the scene. He's not just selecting the sky and the foreground, rather his subject might have 10, 20 or 30 separate selections of different areas which he will then set the tone for individually.

"For the sky and the foreground, often a channel selection will work really well, especially if you use curves to adjust the mask. But when it comes to the buildings themselves, often I'm using the pen tool to manually create my selections.

"For instance, with the museum, I have a selection of the building as a whole, but then I have separate selections for each of the windows and for the curved areas of concrete. Windows, as an example, all reflect light differently depending on their angles and especially if they're reflecting clouds in the sky. It's not unusual to individually select each window and then re-tone them one at a time. Also, I'm often dropping in skies taken with a long exposure, so it would look odd to have sharply rendered clouds being reflected in the windows."

What looks straightforward is actually riven with lots of visual challenges that need addressing. "I use a lot of luminosity masking, but there are always situations where making a mask just isn't easy and I find myself constantly fixing little issues bit by bit."

When editing his images, Graeme makes multiple files as the work progresses. He'll get to a point where he has lots of



Sydney Masonic Centre

layers in place, so he'll duplicate the file, flatten the image and continue on in the new file. As long as he's happy with his original handiwork, this works fine, but if he does come to a point where he needs to refine something, then he still has the earlier files to fall back on.

The Anti Graeme Gordon

While Graeme is well known for his impactful black and white architectural studies, it's not all he enjoys shooting. And one of his favourite images is far softer in tonality and quite different to his architectural work – even though it is also architectural. It's titled 'Strangers'.

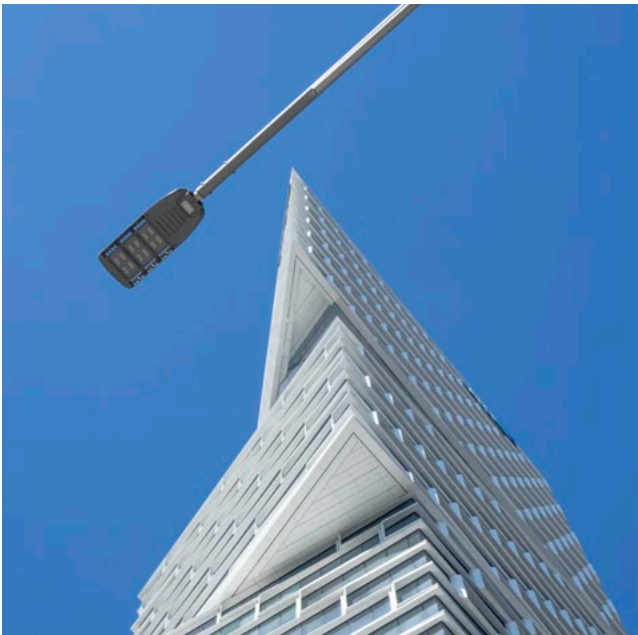
"We're all influenced by the images we see and I had noticed photographs taken of people in the rain from inside a window, so I had the idea of parking my van and shooting through the rain from there. Of course, as soon as I had this



Sydney Masonic Centre Raw file



Methodist Church



Left: AMP Building and Lamp Post
Above: AMP Building and Lamp Post Raw file



Foxton Church

idea, it never rained, but eventually I found myself shooting in a downpour – all I had to do was wait for some people to walk past the van.

“I took lots of photos, but this one image had a woman with an umbrella beautifully juxtaposed by a stronger male figure walking the other way. That aspect was pure luck.

“While editing the photograph, I thought the background was okay, but what else could I do? A few days earlier, I’d been to Darling Harbour and so I dropped in a shot of the skyline to see what happened. When I changed the blend mode around, it didn’t look bad at all.” In fact, it was better than that, winning Graeme the Focus Photography Group’s Image of the Year back in 2018.

“I lucked out with the right characters – the woman with the umbrella and the man with the French beret. Together they evoke some kind of emotion, but I’m not an emotional kind of person. I understand what people are talking about, but I can’t tell you how to add emotion into your photos unless it’s with a kitten or a little dog. Stormy skies perhaps? But I can see that for emotion, you need to start with the right subject and that isn’t necessarily what I shoot. As a photographer, I feel that I am flying blind in that regard.”

Perhaps, but emotion comes in many flavours and there’s no argument that Graeme’s bold style evokes a range of reactions and emotions.

GRAEME GORDON AWARDS

- 2016 Focus Awards Open Top Ten
- 2016 Focus Awards Landscape 2nd place
- 2016 Focus Awards Black and White 3rd place
- 2016 Focus Awards Creative 2nd, 3rd and 5th place
- 2017 Focus Awards Open 1st place
- 2017 Focus Awards Urban Landscape 2nd place
- 2017 Focus Awards Photographer of the Year
- 2019 Focus Awards Photographer of the Year
- 2019 Monochrome Awards Architecture Winner
- 2021 Capture Magazine Emerging Photographer 3rd place
- 2021 Capture Magazine Emerging Photographer Open Category Winner
- 2021 Capture Magazine Emerging Photographer Architecture Winner
- 2021 Capture Magazine Emerging Photographer Architecture Runner-Up
- 2021 Better Photography Exotic Travel Category Winner
- 2022 NZIP Australian Landscape Open Winner
- 2022 Better Photography Classic Landscape Winner
- 2023 Minimalist Photography Awards Photomanipulation Winner



Strangers

Long Exposures

In many of Graeme's photographs, he has used a time exposure on the sky to blur the clouds and create an aura of mystery or difference. "For me, long exposure skies are pretty honest because they're not dropped in, but you have to be careful. If the exposure is too short, the clouds can just look broken up and messy. And even if I haven't taken a long exposure, I'll often blur the skies in post-production to create a similar effect."

This approach to his photography means Graeme is happy to capture a series of exposures, either with the camera locked off on the same subject, or different angles in the same area and then composite them together in Photoshop.

But is Graeme moving away from pure monochrome? One of his recent compositions includes a lamp post with some coloured bulbs!

"I'm not an artist and I can't draw, but I look at a lot of photography and I'm constantly being influenced and inspired. I know I've seen this effect before, where you allow just a little colour to remain in the composition and I like it. The members in the Focus Photographers were very positive about it – perhaps there is a bit of emotion coming through after all!

"I'm not a patient person, but I get a great deal of enjoyment out of photography. I love the process, even when



Opera House Warrior



Coalcliff Pool

it is repetitive and tedious – like when I’m making selections. I can do it, but I can also understand why this approach is not for everyone.”

Coalcliff Pool

Graeme’s pool photographed south of Sydney is one of his favourites, as much for the backstory as the image itself. “It was on a Focus Photographers weekend shoot and when we arrived, it was really bucketing down and blowing a gale. You simply couldn’t get out of the car to shoot because the weather was so bad – it was abysmal.



We can’t suggest you try this at home – or at your beach. Graeme Gordon caught mid wash and we’re sure his camera did need a good clean afterwards.



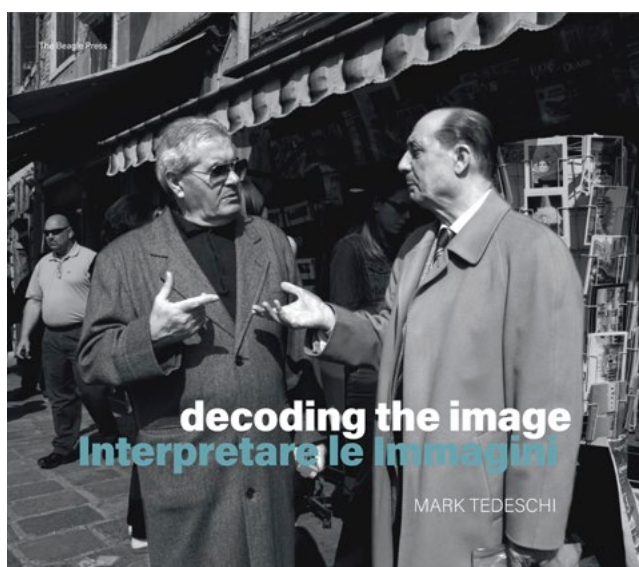
Coalcliff Pool Raw file

“So, we made a call and headed off for an earlier breakfast – just 10 minutes away. But we missed it! As the sun rose, the light went off for three minutes and we weren’t there! However, after breakfast we headed back to give it another go. The waves were coming in strongly and I was bracing my tripod during the long exposures.

“I’d seen a composition like this before and I particularly like this viewpoint, the way all the compositional lines come together and the sky was just right. It was a several minute exposure – but that’s what we do. For these photographs, I get in close. I’m in the water and hoping the camera is sufficiently waterproof – I’ll sweep it under the shower quickly when I get home to get rid of the salt!”

Not that we could recommend this to our readers!

MARK TEDESCHI



Many years ago, *Better Photography* ran a portfolio of Mark Tedeschi's work titled *Femininity and Other Feelings*. It wasn't just about femininity. In fact, it was about how a few words can transform the way photographs communicate. Mark certainly enjoyed introducing his interpretations of what he had captured with his camera and while he freely admitted there could be alternative explanations, his combinations of photographs with words were hard to argue with.

Mind you, knowing Mark's legal background, arguing any point with him is likely to be an exercise in futility, but you won't feel the need as you flip through the pages of his latest book, *Decoding the Image*.

Mark Tedeschi has been photographing people and their environments for more than 30 years. As an Australian of Italian background, he has been particularly drawn to photographing Italians in their public and private places.

Mark was appointed an Italian Cavaliere in 2009 and a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2013. This is his second photography book – the first, *Shooting around Corners*, was a 2012 retrospective of his photography. Mark is also the author of four true-crime books, including one about a woman of Italian birth, Eugenia Falleni, who lived in Sydney as a man for 20 years and in 1920 was charged with the murder of his wife.

Writing about his loves of photography and Italy, Mark explained, "Italy is a country very amenable to such a project. For a start, the locals regularly parade themselves and socialise outside in the streets, much more so than in Australia."



Obsequiousness. Sacristy, Cathedral, Volterra

Obsequiousness, colloquially known as toadying or brown-nosing, is a universal human activity. It is found in the workplace, in politics, amongst friends, even within families – in fact anywhere that someone wishes to win favour with another person who is in a position to dispense benefits. It manifests itself in various forms, including being overtly polite or attentive, or deferential or flattering to another. The object of the exercise is always to manipulate the other person for one's own benefit.

This image was taken in the Sacristy of the Cathedral of Volterra. I was absolutely delighted to get it, because although obsequiousness is relatively common to experience, practise or observe, it is hardly ever witnessed in a way that can be recorded with a camera. One occasionally becomes aware of obsequiousness as a recipient. When one uses it oneself, one is hardly likely to document the occasion. When it is used to out-manoeuvre a perceived rival, obsequiousness is not a victimless crime. ISO 1600, f3.5, 1/10 second (hand-held), 18mm.



Above: Lust. Bar, Piazza della Cisterna, San Gimignano

These two men, one a bar attendant and the other his customer, were suddenly distracted by a passing female in Piazza della Cisterna in San Gimignano, an intact medieval town of great beauty on the top of a Tuscan hill. Unfortunately, in my opinion, San Gimignano has been overly restored and as a result has lost some of its appeal as a real, lived-in town, becoming instead a tourist mecca for visitors.

Volterra, on the other hand, a nearby medieval town that is not quite as intact, has, in my opinion, more integrity as a real, lived-in location, which exists for more than just tourism. I did not see the object of the stares of these two men, but the look on their faces was unmistakable. ISO 200, f4.5, 1/45 second (arms propped on table), 70mm.

Opposite page, below: I love him to death. Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice Lagoon

This image was taken on the Venetian island of San Giorgio, not far from where the mouth of the Grand Canal spills out from the main island of Venice into the Lagoon. The boy and his father were playing a game together using a toy gun as a prop. I captured them just as their play reached a crescendo of sublime joy and love. The intensity of the image is heightened by the juxtaposition of the gun intruding in a way that suggests that it might just be real. ISO 500, f11, 1/500 second, 52mm.

"Secondly, they have had so much tourism in Italy over the years that they are quite used to people pointing cameras in their direction, at unusual and even sensitive moments. There are many other countries in which the pursuit of such emotional moments with a camera would be viewed as a serious invasion of people's personal privacy, resulting in vociferous objections or even physical retribution. In Italy, however, my photographic endeavours were either ignored or met with bemused tolerance."

With this background, Mark's new book *Decoding the Image* is a delightful journey through the streets and hearts of Italy. Many of the images are gaining affection with the patina of age and their telltale history of fashion, but as Mark understands, when it comes to photographing the human condition, the essence of the emotions and the stories remains unchanged.

The book is published by Beagle Press, Australia's premier art book publisher and you can purchase it online or in better book stores around the country.



Above: Spinario. Piazza Navona, Rome

Spinario is the name of a famous, first century AD Roman bronze statue of a young boy pulling a thorn out of the sole of his foot. It is thought to have been based on an earlier Greek version. The name Spinario is from the Latin spina (thorn). It is one of the most influential ancient sculptures of all time, having been copied numerous times over the millennia, even in the modern era. My image is of an elderly man doing the same mundane task as the Spinario in one of the most visually pleasing piazzas in Italy – Piazza Navona in Rome. Piazza Navona is a rectangularly shaped piazza with two magnificent Bernini fountains, flanked by old apartment buildings and the occasional church. Words cannot do it justice. The image conveys the truth that everyday functions of mundane human existence transcend age, place, culture and time. ISO 200, f8, 1/250 second, 27mm.



PHOTOJOURNALISM HAS BEEN POISONED BY THE ART WORLD





Normal life continues after a major typhoon damaged the region and flooded the roads. Rizal, Philippines.



Harvesting olives in Castiglione, Tuscany, Italy. From the book *Village – Hearing the Grass Grow*.

Is this a one-sided argument (given his background), or does Michael Coyne have a point?

"I'm not an artist," said the English photographer, Don McCullin. "I'd rather be known simply as a photographer."

"I've been struggling against that word all my life," McCullin, said in an interview with the *New York Times*. "The American photographers all want to be called artists. I'm a photographer and I stand by it."

In a recent interview with *Le Figaro* magazine, McCullin said, "Photojournalism has been poisoned by the art world. What is shown here in Bayeux is not art. We talk about photojournalism, war and tragedy." The Bayeux Calvados-Normandy Award recognises correspondents working in conflict areas.

I have been present on a number of photography panels where the speakers claim to be working in documentary/ photojournalism, the same genre of photography as Don McCullin. However, some panellists have made comments that seem to position them in a different area of photography from what McCullin and his colleagues were discussing at Bayeux. Comments such as: "If I'm not feeling right on the day, I don't take pictures. I have to be in the zone, I have to be in the mood." These statements seem to be more about the self than about the topic, subject or person being photographed.



Musicians playing at a wedding. Kaiping, Guangdong, China.

In art photography, or any form of art, it is not an uncommon practice to insert yourself into the artworks in one form or another. Van Gogh, Caravaggio, Picasso and Frida Kahlo certainly used themselves as models for their paintings. Also, photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman,



A pack of dogs waiting for the start of a fox hunt. Fethard, Tipperary, Ireland. From the book *Village – Hearing the Grass Grow*.

Man Ray and Andy Warhol often posed and appeared in their own images.

In documentary/photojournalism it is a different matter. According to the Tate Gallery in London: "Documentary photography is a style of photography that provides a straightforward and accurate representation of people, places, objects and events and is often used in reportage. It is not about the self."

I once heard a judge at a photography awards event say, "I didn't accept a number of photographs in the competition because the competitor didn't write enough about the photograph. There was not enough description, thoughts, feeling and backstory about the image."

McCullin, in a *Financial Times* interview, asserts that the art world is "trying to hijack" photography from its original purpose as a means of communication.

In documentary/photojournalism, the practitioner tries to capture the image in the best possible way using content, composition and lighting to tell the story. Words, except for the location, event and person's name, should not be necessary because the picture will tell the story. If the picture can't tell the story, then the photograph has failed and no amount of words will save it.

A great example of using a picture to tell the story is the American photojournalist James Nachtwey's work. Nachtwey's catchcry is, "Let my photographs bear witness."

Because Nachtwey's photographs are perfect in terms of technique and composition with the focal object brought out clearly, they have been described as aesthetically

pleasing works of art. However, in an interview with the *New York Times*, Nachtwey said he doesn't want his photographs to be looked upon as art objects, but as a means of communication.

Sebastiao Salgado manages to amalgamate journalism, art and craft creating images that many critics believe are making poverty pretty. Salgado spends a lot of time with his subjects, sometimes weeks or months in order to capture what some commentators suggest is high art.

But Salgado looks at his images another way. He says, "If you take a picture of a human that does not make him noble, there is no reason to take this picture. That is my way of seeing things." He also said, "I'm not an artist. An artist makes an object. [My photographs are] not an object, I work in history, I'm a storyteller."

Not long after I became a photographer, *Art Forum Magazine* wrote an article about me as one of a new breed of Australian art photographers. As a young photographer, I had experimented with all types of photography and decided that documentary/photojournalism was my preferred direction.

I want to be clear that I am not criticising art photography as such. My point is that it's a genre of photography that some practitioners are trying to assimilate or merge with documentary/photojournalism, even though it is quite different.

I agree with Don McCullin when he said, "I'm quite happy to be called a photographer. All of a sudden, the art world has caught up with photography and they are trying to hijack us".

The McKENZIE COLLECTION

Found in a garage and transferred to another, Louise McKenzie finally brings a collection of historical photos to life. By Peter Eastway.



Like most photographers, Ian McKenzie was a good collector and after his passing, his wife Louise McKenzie discovered in their garage a box of 240 negatives from the 1930s.

Ian was one of Australia's leading commercial and architectural photographers. Based in Melbourne, he was also a president of the Australian Institute of Professional

Photography and a mad-keen car fanatic. No doubt the garage had more than negatives and old photographic equipment to contend with! Certainly, the negatives had been there for at least 20 years and Louise thinks Ian must have purchased them at a garage sale or maybe the Camberwell Markets.

"They were obviously wonderful moments of Melbourne and Victoria," said Louise in an interview with *The Age*. "And the photographer had scratched details on the back of the negative so I could tell where each photo was from."

So, what would you do if you inherited a box of old negatives? Louise took them along to the East Melbourne Library where they were scanned and printed in an effort to determine who the photographer was. She joined forces with some local history lovers and the library staff, spending some three years on the project in an effort to unlock the mystery.

"I wanted to be involved as I didn't want them to end up in the tip," Louise laughed. "When we started to do the scans, it was just so exciting because they were in an era that I could still relate to."

The first negative was of the RMS Orford leaving Station Pier in Port Melbourne, with a cloud of streamers and a big crowd lining the dock. "It was a fascinating time because it was the Melbourne Centenary in 1934 and 1935 and it was also the



Bull, Hugh Jones, 1897-1993



Miss Jessie Anderson



On Christmas morning – Bathing at St Kilda



Richmond v Collingwood – Victoria Park



Shrine and multitude afield at Dedication 1934

Depression and between the wars.

"In pictures that show children, there are often some with shoes and some with bare feet. Contrast that with the marvellous electric lights put up in Melbourne for the Centenary, which were spectacular."

It took a few years, but eventually Louise and the team were able to track down the photographer. Said Louise, "I always thought he would have to be someone involved with the media or the press because of the number of significant events he captured."

On a hunch, Michelle Stillman, *The Age's* librarian, was contacted and she was able to locate a page in the archive that featured three of the photos in the McKenzie collection. As the search continued, more photographs came to light, indicating without doubt that the photographer was *The Age's* first full-time photographer, Hugh Bull.

"Hugh had a job on Fleet Street in London, but the company folded, so he came out to Australia with his wife, children and his camera, and within a few days he got a job at *The Age*." This was in 1927 and apparently he was put on probation for three months. However, this was short-lived and he was quickly promoted to full-time because of how well he covered a race meeting.

Foul Melbourne weather, so the story goes, created quite a challenge for Hugh and a couple of other photographers on the assignment. There probably wasn't enough light for the old



cameras to freeze the action, but Hugh was smart enough to pan with the action and was the only photographer to return to the paper with photographs worth publishing! He worked for the paper for a total of 31 years.

I think we should continue to call it the McKenzie collection, no bull!

All photos courtesy of City of Melbourne Libraries, Heritage Collection, McKenzie Collection of glass plate negatives (SC_MCKENZIE).



RMS Orford departing from Station Pier, Port Melbourne



Naval Tattoo: girl dancers with sailor and naval mascot, Bruce of Woodside.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ADVENTURE

Where the Captures were Great – and so were the Misadventures!

Roby Lazar describes how even a straightforward photographic expedition can have elements of adventure and danger, great talking points for your return back home.

Just as the world was leaving the worst of the COVID lockdowns behind and travel was again on the horizon, my wife and I journeyed to two destinations that are a little off the usual 'must see' locations that many photographers visit: the extensive lavender fields of Provence, France and Skomer Island, Wales, one of the few puffin breeding grounds.

Our first destination was the lavender. We travelled with a small group for ease of transport and a guide to show us the best locations. However, as the trip progressed, the photographic opportunities were to be tempered by various mishaps that, at the time were significant but, in retrospect, made for interesting stories about how not every trip goes to plan.

Provence is the home of extensive lavender farms and a great destination for soft colours, patterned landscapes and the undulating lines of lavender, growing across extensive fields. It is a place with a special quality of even, clear light that

is not only welcomed by photographers, but is sought-after by artists – along with the quiet, relaxing atmosphere away from major cities. Famous paintings have been 'captured on canvas' here by many artists, including Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso.

While we managed to shoot from sunrise to sunset, the travel aspect was more of a stressful adventure than the utopian ideal that the journey itself should be an exciting part of the trip and to be enjoyed as a precursor to the anticipated arrival at the destination.

The Adventure

The flight to the UK was deceptively uneventful, but upon arrival a hint of the problems yet to develop became apparent: my luggage failed to arrive! Fortunately, the luggage was delivered just before flying onto France a couple of days later, but not before I had purchased new clothes and toiletries.



Field of lavender.



Lavender, an alternative view.

In France, the photography sessions involved long days photographing fields of lavender and some of the ancient, picturesque villages in the area. However, while in the middle of a panoramic shoot, my trusty tripod decided to lose an important screw that supported one of the legs.

In the next part of our adventure, our van lost traction and slid off the gravel edging, coming very close to capsizing onto a newly cleared lavender field. Fortunately, a local family arrived on the scene with a 4-wheel drive vehicle and pulled our van back onto the level road.

A short time later, we heard on the news that the airline we were to fly home with was both the subject of a pilot's strike (would we be able to return to the UK?) and was also subject to bankruptcy proceedings (would we get back to Australia?). The threat of reduced and cancelled flights was something we constantly thought about for the remainder of the trip.

And with good reason, of course! When the lavender trip was over, on our way to the airport our flight was cancelled, so our trusty mobile phones suffered finger burn as we attempted to book another flight back to the UK. We managed to check in

online, but naturally at a much higher price than was planned! Then, before returning to Australia, inevitably I had a positive COVID test (even though I was fully vaccinated) after a case of heat stroke that developed on our later trip to Skomer Island – due to an inadequate water supply (one and not two bottles) because I needed the extra room in my bag for an extra lens!

While things could have been worse (and for some unlucky people, they certainly were), I think that cases of travel misadventure have become a normal expectation for today's traveller.

The Photography

We were lucky to have very good conditions for morning and afternoon photography in the lavender fields as the light was soft and even. And there were many old stone farmhouses and shepherd huts in a state of decay that were well positioned for added character. The most notable aspect of the fields of lavender were the soft colours seen in contrast with the green, freshly harvested fields; then the strong yellow of the fields that had just been cleared and the full lavender colour of the



House in a field.



White bridge in field of lavender.

un-harvested rows of plants. At times, this combination of colour and texture was found in fields next to each other.

As there were many hectares under cultivation, there was an endless variety of locations that had fields planted in rows that were straight, curved and also showed a contrast between the green immature lavender plants and the very richly coloured rows of lavender that were waiting to be harvested. Often the fields had been totally harvested and were bathed in the golden colour of the discarded lavender stalks. When we travelled out on a spur and could look down onto the valley of lavender, we saw that many fields provided interesting shapes, colours and textures, as they were not aligned along straight lines of a rectangle or square, but were irregularly positioned



Altered view of Harvest Time.

next to each other, depending on the ownership of each field. It made some really interesting compositions.

From straight lines to rows of curved lavender, I found that there was a variety of positions and angles that took advantage of the generally soft lighting conditions. To add to the variety, there were numerous dips and rises in the farms that gave alternative perspectives as the cultivated fields rolled across the landscape. And sometimes we were able to capture close-ups of the harvesting by farmers who were using a combination of harvesters and tractors.

A tripod was useful for very early morning and late afternoon photography when there wasn't much light, but a hand-held camera was more versatile when the lighting was stronger, allowing me to more quickly choose and vary my shooting positions.

And I admit that with the enhanced technical sophistication of mobile phones, for some locations, I used my phone almost as much as I used my DSLR.

On my return home, I discovered that my captures of the fields of lavender enabled the creation of some interesting composites with seemingly unrelated images, producing new and imaginative landscapes that combined different locations and shooting times.

Skomer Island

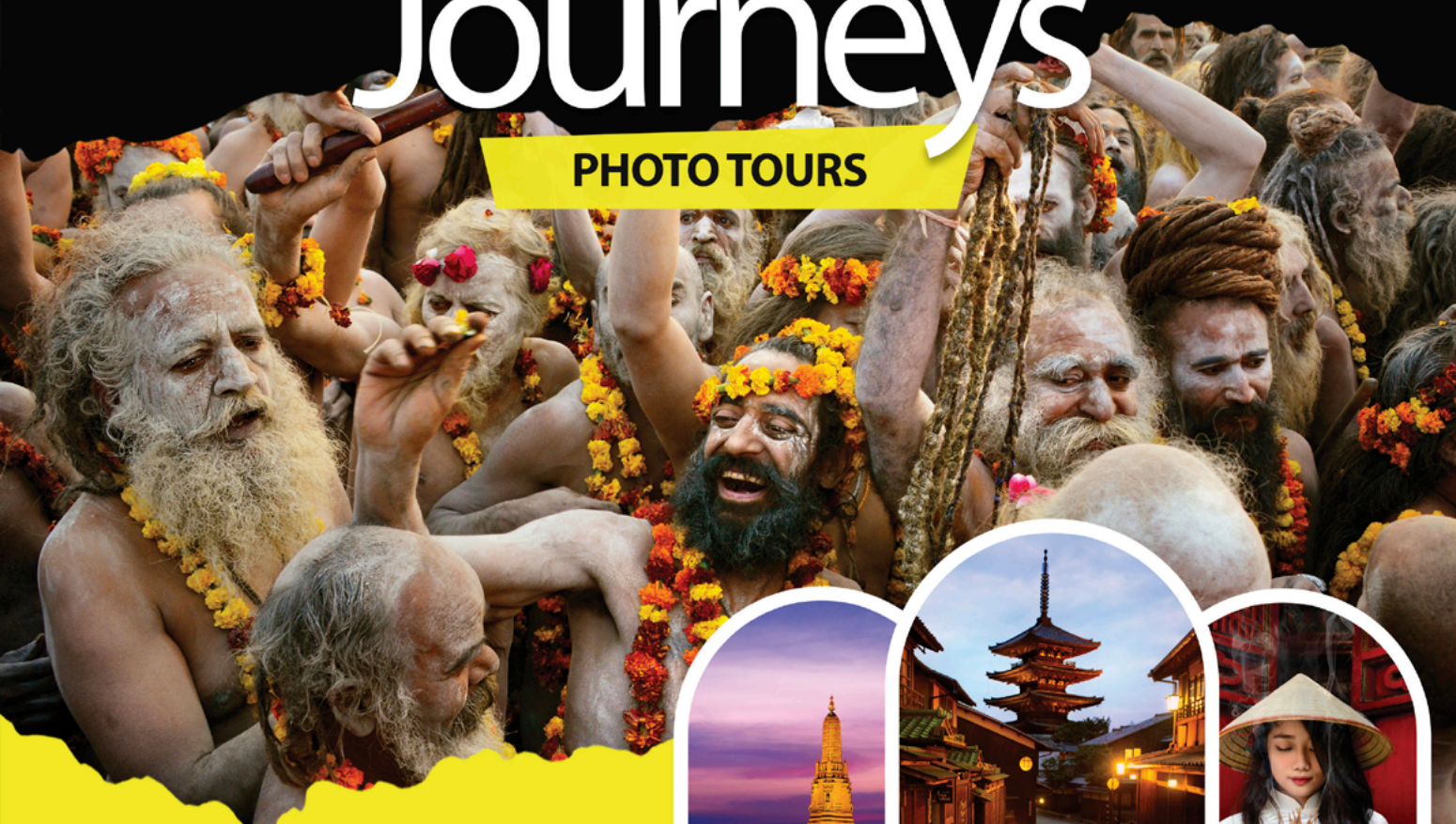
Just 357 kilometres or a four-and-a-half hour drive west of greater London, is the island of Skomer in south west Wales. From the mainland terminal, it is only a 15-minute ferry ride to the island. Skomer is the nesting home to a large variety of birdlife, but it is the diminutive Atlantic Puffin that attracts



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"Everything about the trip was wonderful and exceeded my expectations. David is an amazing tour leader and his excellent organisation meant that we had extraordinary experiences. David's teaching was also valuable. I learned a lot and improved my photography skills considerably." – Ruth Brooks, Australia



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most visitors to the island. Skomer is an important research location for the study of many species of birds that take refuge there. But we were there for the Puffins!

During the breeding season, from April to July the island is alive with Puffins, found from cliff face to small burrows along the inland tracks. Even visiting late in the season, we were able to see and photograph hundreds of Puffins – mainly from the top of the high cliff that slopes to seawards near the Neck. While not breeding at this time of the year, we were still able to enjoy seeing many of these unique birds and to spend some time trying to get the 'shot of the day': birds landing with the iconic 4 or more shiny sand eels in their beak. Of course, as with all nature and bird photography, it takes many visits, time, patience and a good degree of luck to obtain the best images. However, we were still able to enjoy photographing them and at the end of the day, to have some good photos felt like an achievement.

Visiting the island is in itself an adventure. If you are thinking of going by train from London, you would have to be an intrepid traveller indeed. The small villages and comfortable accommodation are spread out in many isolated pockets around the district. And the distances seem extensive as the roads are long and winding, often just a single lane and edged by three-metre-high hedges, with only a few passing bays scattered along them. At one stage, we had to back up a considerable distance to allow a local fire truck to pass, going in the opposite direction. Google Maps for navigation was essential!

Daily visitors to the island are limited and must be booked in advance. You are asked to be at the ferry terminal about an hour prior to departure. If you encounter a slow driver or cars/tractors coming in the opposite direction, you could miss



Puffin fishing.



Puffin landing.

the ferry and there is little opportunity to rebook on the same or next few days. Not knowing this at the time, we actually arrived three minutes before a 10 a.m. departure. Okay, on time, but the ferry captain was not happy when we boarded the vessel. For our 3 p.m. return, we noticed that some people had made the point of being early, not to be left behind. Of course, the ferry was running half an hour late on our return to the mainland!

There is some accommodation on the island if you book well in advance. This is mainly for students and researchers who are there to study the birdlife on the island. The rule of what to take also applies to them.

As there are no bins, what you take there, you will carry home at the end of the day. Also be aware that you will be on the island with no cover or shade for the entire day and the only toilet is a composting type. This facility is located 30-minutes walk from the ferry terminal.

Time is important because your return seat on the ferry is based on a set time, allowing you about a five-hour stay. So when we were told that the path from here to there was a 20-minute return walk, it was often based on a park ranger's quick pace and realistically it would take most people at least 30-minutes each way!

The walking paths are narrow and sometimes they come close to the edge of a cliff face, while inland, the Puffins have burrows next to the path. When you're setting up your camera and tripod, prepared to spend a few hours in order to capture that prize-winning shot, will other visitors be able to pass you easily enough?

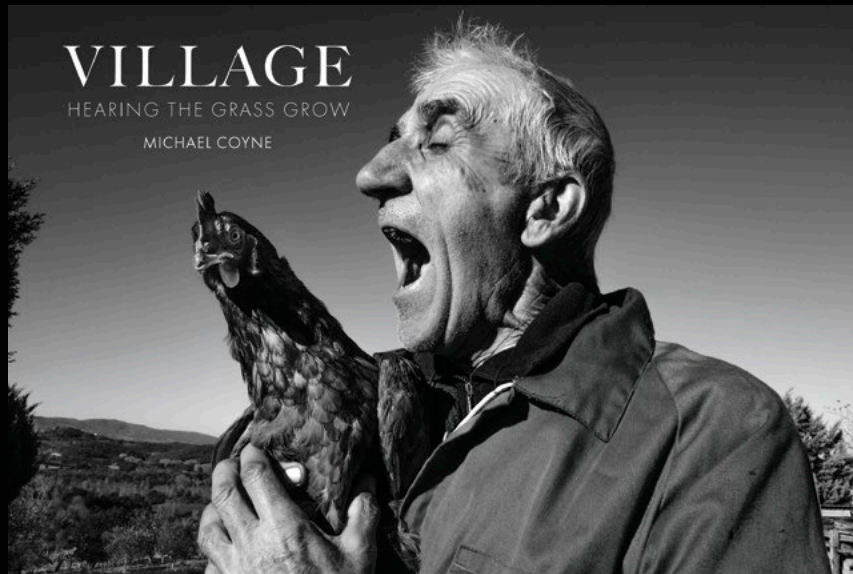
It can be hot, dry and at the end of the day, a seemingly very long walk back to the ferry. The island is hilly, so if you walk up or down in one direction, you will do the opposite on your return journey. We were there at the end of July and I was glad of my trusty umbrella, as I mentioned, a little short on water bottles. Three would have been good.

If you are fortunate, you may capture an exceptional shot of the Puffins. Most probably, like me, your images will be 'good' and you will be happy to have seen and photographed these special, colourful and social birds. Skomer Island and this part of Wales is not the easiest place to navigate for the first timer, but once there, it is worth the journey to see, photograph and enjoy this unique location.

VILLAGE

HEARING THE GRASS GROW

BY MICHAEL COYNE



Around the world traditions are disappearing, languages are being forgotten and cultures washed away.

The main culprit is urbanisation resulting in the wholesale disappearance of villages and village life. It is this that Michael Coyne has made his mission to capture through his probing lens.

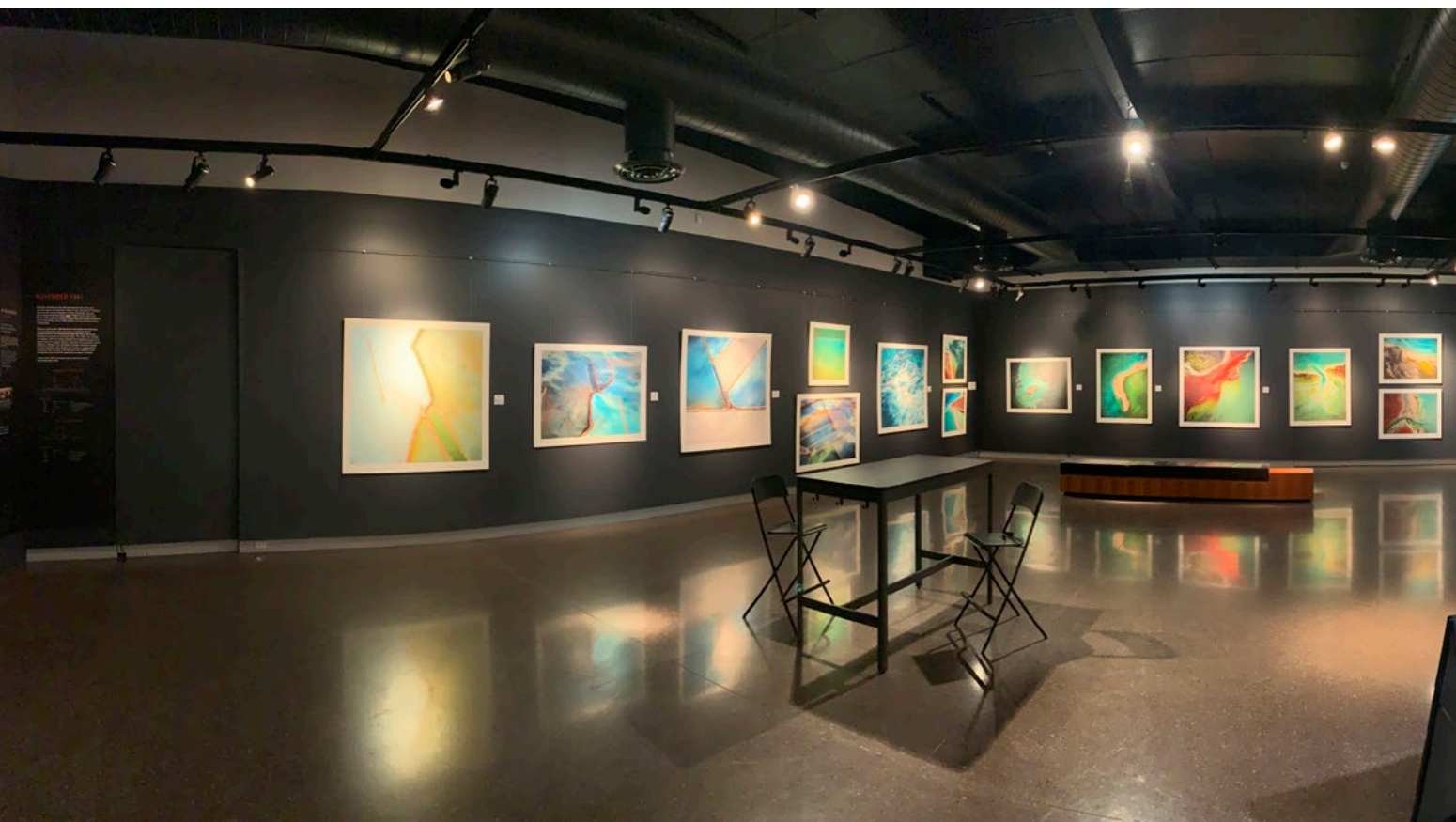
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FRAME IT!

Got a great photograph? Want to do something better than just looking at it on your phone? Then make a print and put it in a frame! By Peter Eastway.

Some photographers say you don't have a photograph until you have a print. And others will say you can't really enjoy a photograph until you put a frame around it and hang it on a wall. Somewhere in there is a germ of truth, but if we framed every photograph we took, we'd quickly run out of wall space!

Our Best Images

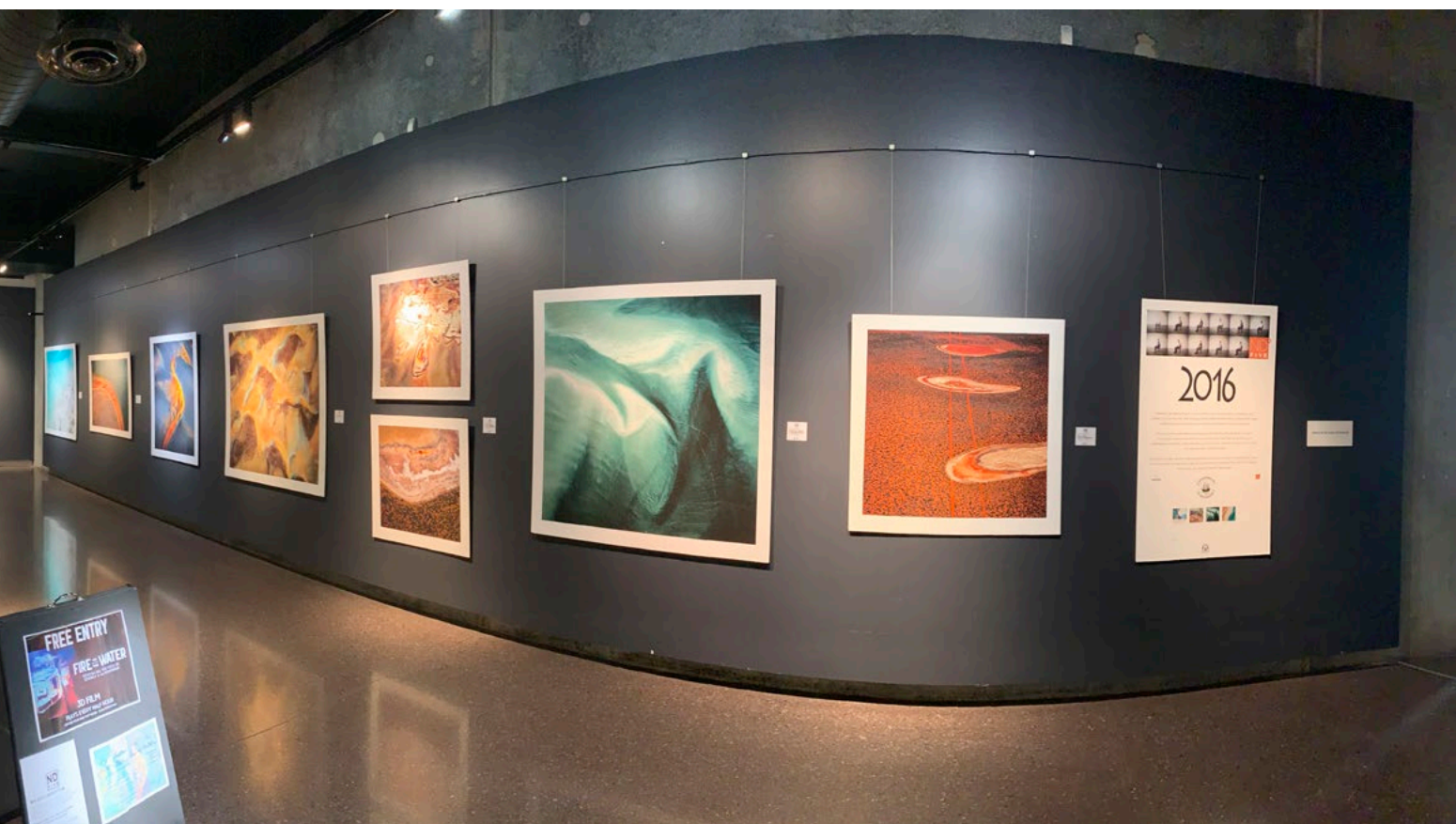
We won't be framing every photograph we take, but we should certainly frame some of our best work. Now, note I said 'some of' our best work because not every photograph is destined for a wall. A really dramatic architectural photo might not suit the decor as nicely as an abstract aerial, but then again, it could be perfect for a real estate office!

So, now that we have satisfactory excuses for not framing all of our photographs, how should you frame the photographs you choose?

Traditionally, a framed photograph looks like a framed painting, but there are lots of different ways you can place your work on a wall.

On the following pages, we talk about several different types of framing, but these are just the most common varieties. For instance, we talk about mounting our photographs onto aluminium, but there is also a process that will print your photographs directly onto aluminium for a really interesting effect (look up ChromaLuxe). We also talk about having your photographs printed on canvas for indoor framing, but there are outdoor materials that can be printed on, as shown by the Head On Photo Festival and its exhibitions tied to the metal railings along the promenade on the edge of Bondi Beach.

So this article is just the beginning of your framing experience. It will contain ideas and truisms, some that might be out of date.



Up at Denham, Shark Bay, in Western Australia, the ND5 Photographers have a semi-permanent exhibition. The print surface is not covered in glass so viewers can interact with the image directly, but over the years the prints do take some damage being in a public area. While often we mount onto aluminium for its super flat surface, GatorBoard is a light, cheaper alternative – and for an exhibition that is put up and down regularly, the lighter weight is of benefit.

Longevity

For instance, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, everyone believed that Cibachrome (which later became Ilfochrome) was one of the longest lasting print processes around. As it turned out, the 100 or 200 years that some people professed ended up being as short as 14 years or so. The specifics I don't remember, but the information we rely on can change over time.

Nevertheless, the one thing that hasn't changed is our desire for our framed print to last a long time. This still comes down to your choice of materials, from the ink and paper you use to the materials in the frame.

As you can imagine, you can buy some very inexpensive frames – are they any good? Dunno! They could be excellent, but there's also a very good chance that a super cheap framing job will not last as long as a more expensive one.

This isn't always the case –sometimes the difference is in the labour cost and a framed print imported to Australia might use the same materials as an Australian supplier. If something sounds too good to be true, perhaps it is!

It's certainly good to purchase in Australia and support the local economy. Then again, most of the materials going into our frames are imported, so you're unlikely to be able to purchase a fully home-grown product.

Hanging Conditions

While you might spend a lot of money on a frame made with all the right 'archival' materials, nothing on this Earth can survive the wrong climatic conditions!

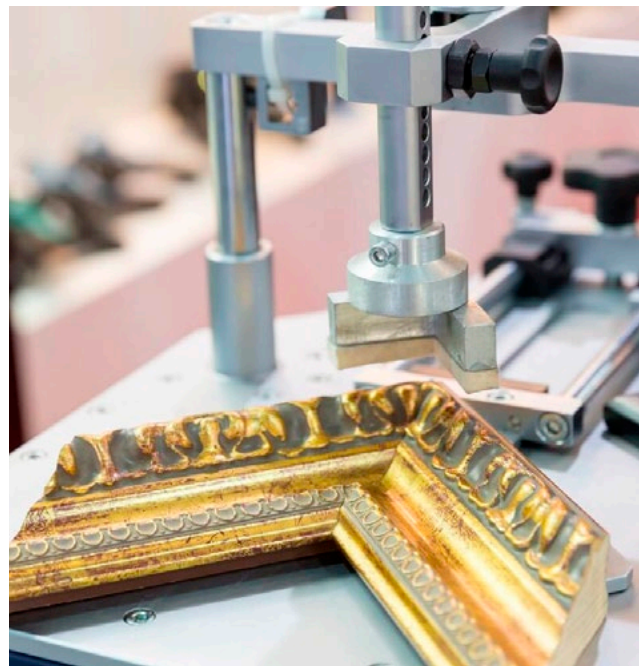
For instance, hang your masterpiece in a window that receives direct sunlight and your print will fade, no matter how much UV protection you throw at it.

Similarly, hang your other masterpiece in the bathroom or above the stove in the kitchen and the moisture and fumes will eat away at your substrate or coat it with a dirty residue!

It's quite amazing how long photographs can last if they are kept in the dark, such as on the pages of an album or in a portfolio box. Light is the killer. Strong sunlight is a quick killer. Humidity is a silent assassin!

And finally, don't forget the impact of SIZE. A framed photograph doesn't have to be big, but when it is, it can have a dramatic impact on its location.

Consider the size of the room and the furniture – a 'large' one-metre wide print might look a little small above a king bed or a three-seater couch. Or maybe you could put two prints there instead? There's a lot to think about with framing!



If you veer away from a classic white matte, make sure it doesn't detract from your photograph. And when it comes to a frame, something super ornate may have people more interested in the molding than your photograph! Simple can be better! Photographs courtesy of Created For Life.

CLASSIC MATTE & FRAME

Depending on your generation, a framed photograph will mean a print sitting on a mount board, a matte on top and the sandwich slipped into a frame behind glass. And if you do it properly, you'll use archival materials.

For a print to last, every element has to be archival. Prints made on Canon and Epson photo printers using pigment inks have a good life, but they can be contaminated if they are framed with inferior products. Similarly, the choice of paper you print on will have an impact on longevity.

Mounts and matte boards are often called 'acid free' if they are archivally stable; if not, the acids and contaminants over time can yellow or fade your print. Glass and acrylic are good bets because they're inert, but some plastic alternatives can 'breathe' damaging gases.

Putting together a framed print is quite a process, but once again, check whether cheaper alternatives are suitable for your needs.

For instance, Ikea makes a range of great looking, contemporary DIY frames. All you need to do is produce a print to the right size and slip it into the frame. Whether the materials are archival or not (I don't know) possibly doesn't matter because a \$20 or \$30 frame with a \$5 print in it can be easily replaced. And given we're unlikely to live with all our photographs for more than a few years (we will improve and want to change our decor, for sure), then having a cheap, replaceable option makes a lot of sense.

As our prints increase in size, we might be expecting a longer life for them and so it's worth looking at custom framing. Custom framing will allow you to choose from a much

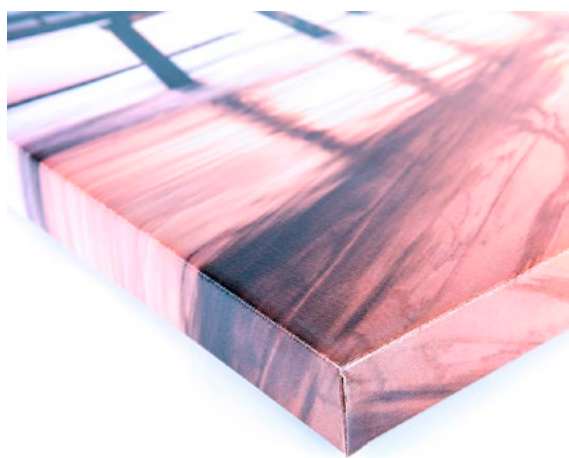
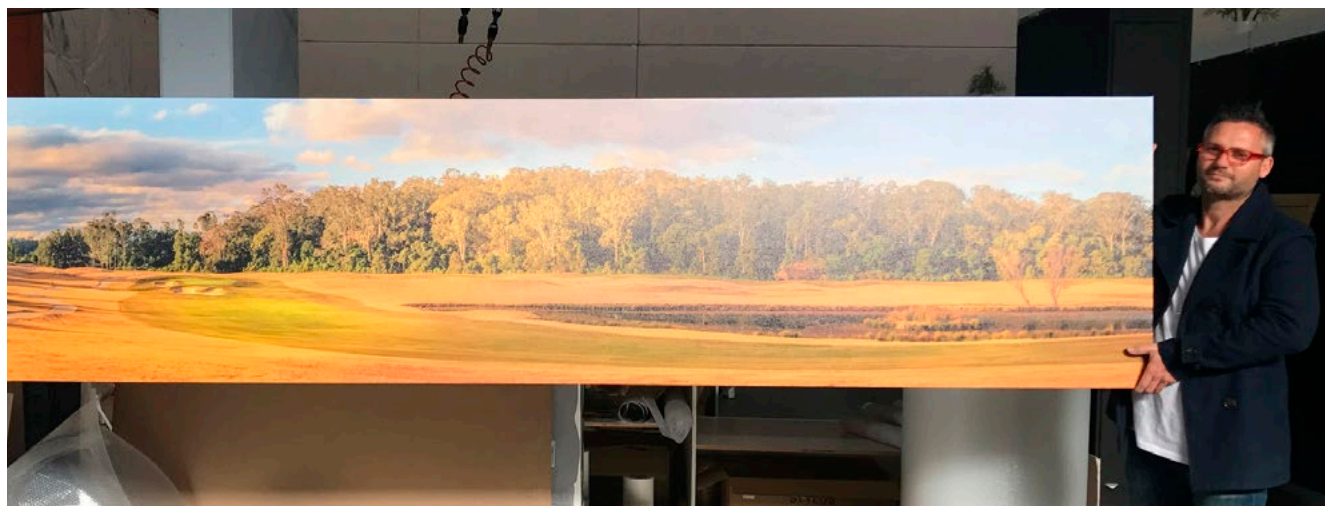
broader range of frames and mattes, rather than being stuck with a choice of two or three in a mass-produced product. It can be tempting to go overboard with an elaborate frame and a highly colourful matte, but keep in mind that the purpose of the frame is to present your photographs, not overpower them. Usually, a simple frame in black, white or wood with a white matte (you can choose from dozens of different whites) is all you'll need.

A matte isn't essential, but it can act as an enforced rest zone for the viewer, sitting between your photograph and the distracting outside world. The width of the matte is up to you and how it looks in the size of the frame. You can also look at double and triple mattes which add an extra 'keyline' around your presentation.

One of the challenges with a classic matte and frame is the glass over the top. Normal glass is highly reflective, not ideal for looking at something behind it. There are also UV protective glasses, but these often have a slight colour tinge which isn't good for either colour or black and white photography. And a lot of framers use acrylic instead of glass as it is inert and won't shatter (not that you're expecting your print to fall off the wall, but it does help for shipping).

If you have more money than Mr Murdoch, you can investigate museum grade non-reflective glass. It's mighty expensive, but it's just like there's no glass at all – wonderful stuff!

There are a number of great framers around the country, including Created for Life in the east and Gallery 360 in the west.



While most online canvas printers offer a range of common sizes, custom shapes and sizes can usually be organised – such as this huge panorama being held up by Created for Life’s owner, Glenn McKimmon. On the left, you can see how the image has been mirrored and then wrapped around the frame, so that when viewed from an angle, the canvas maintains visual integrity. Of course, if you put a frame around your canvas, this doesn’t matter. Photographs courtesy of Created For Life.

POPULAR CANVAS

In the earlier days of digital photography, canvas prints were very popular. The canvas finish made our photographs look like works of art, but perhaps more importantly with our low resolution files, the canvas texture would hide a multitude of sins – meaning we could make a large print from a small file and it would still look really good!

Portrait and wedding photographers really made a killing for a few years with canvas – until the department stores started selling DIY canvas prints for under \$100. Although many of their cheap canvases didn’t last and were of inferior quality, suddenly the value went out of the market and professional photographers at least moved away from the canvas print – because it valued whatever you printed at under \$100!

However, time passes and the ‘cheap’ tarnish need not worry non-professional photographers who are wanting something that looks great on their wall. And, if you want a large print that is light and easy to hang, a canvas is probably one of the least expensive options (but a large one will cost a good deal more than \$100).

Today, it’s probably worth spending a little more (print locally rather than offshore) to ensure you get better quality materials. For instance, you want a genuine inkset that is

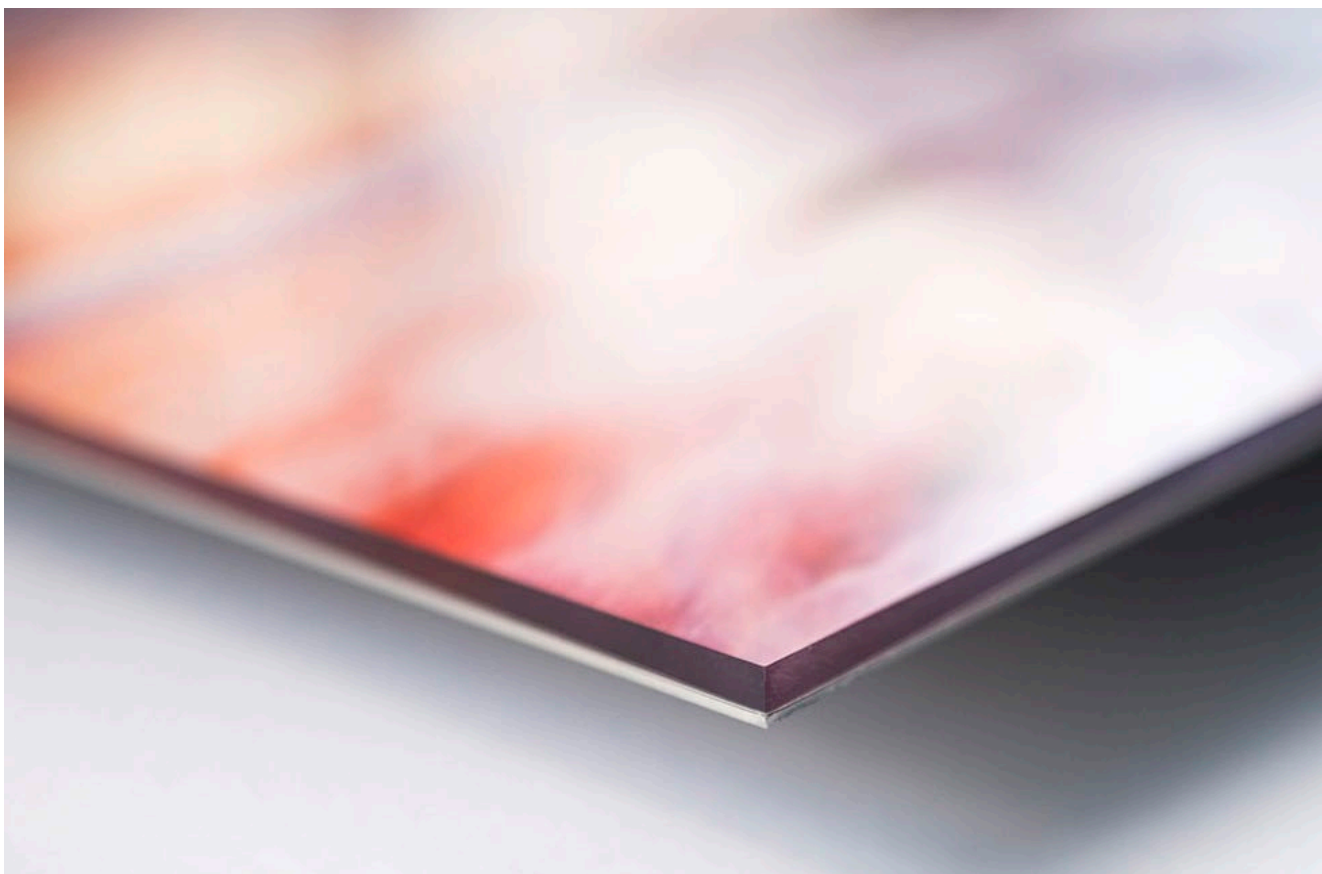
unlikely to fade, a good quality canvas that won’t yellow or stretch over time and a frame that won’t gradually deform under the pressure of the stretched canvas. Brilliant Prints and Created for Life both make great quality products.

When you make a canvas print, where does the image stop? At the front edge of the frame, or does it wrap around the edges?

There’s no right or wrong answer, but if the image wraps around the frame, you may be cropping out important elements or changing the aesthetics of the composition, so most people take the image up to the front edge of the frame and then mirror the image around the edges. When you purchase a canvas online, most suppliers will offer you a choice and they will do the mirroring for you.

It is quite usual to send a file to have the canvas printed as part of the package, rather than printing the canvas yourself, rolling it up and taking it to the framer. And if there’s a problem with the framing, you don’t have to supply another print!

One option that can make a canvas print look a little more elegant or special is to have a frame around it and for something even more special, a ‘shadow’ frame has a narrow shadow between the print and the frame – it’s a good look!



Here you can see the print sitting underneath the 4.5 mm acrylic. The result is a high gloss finish and certainly suits landscape and wildlife photographs. Photograph courtesy of Created For Life.

FACE MOUNT ACRYLIC

One of the things Apple has worked out is that a high contrast, shiny and colourful screen will outsell everything else. Although I do my final editing on an Eizo monitor, I enjoy working on location these days with a Macbook Pro. My only criticism is that while the screen looks wonderful, it doesn't match the reality of my prints.

For the majority of people in the world who don't print, a brilliant screen simply isn't an issue, but for photographers who do print, we need to be careful that we're not betrayed.

Or is there another way? If you can't beat them, join them?

A face mount acrylic is a photograph that is mounted onto the back of a clear sheet of acrylic. In other words, you look through the acrylic to the print.

Usually, the print goes right to the edges (there's no margin or matte) and usually there's no frame. And the result is high impact – a shiny, vibrant exhibition piece, mounted to the wall invisibly or with bold metal bolts that give the ensemble a thoroughly modern appeal.

Face mount acrylics are ideal for large, bold landscape and wildlife studies. Although you can face mount any print, it works best with a paper or media that itself has a perfectly smooth surface. In some ways, there's not much point printing on a textured paper if you're then going to place a sheet of

acrylic on top, plus the texture can make the bonding of the print to the acrylic problematic (although it can be done).

For this reason, you'll often find photographers printing on gloss or semigloss papers that use a photo black ink (rather than a matte black ink) which usually has a deeper D-Max, so a richer, bolder presentation to match the acrylic mounting.

Acrylic mounting requires specialised equipment and while you could certainly set it up at home, it's way more economical to have a professional framer organise it for you. The same can be said about most aspects of framing. For most DIY, it's the need for a clean space that is the most difficult aspect.

As an example, Created for Life uses a 4.5 mm optically clear museum grade acrylic which has 100% UV protection and is extremely safe to use, as it is shatter resistant. It is also claimed to have an excellent resistance to sunlight, weather and either high or low temperatures.

Once hung, CFL's print floats approx. 9 to 17 mm off the wall, depending on what type of hangers are chosen, either a split batten or an aluminium pipe hanging system.

For a completely different look, you can have thick blocks of perspex in smaller sizes (e.g., A6 or A4) which are self-standing and look great on a mantelpiece or bookcase.



Aluminium or Gatorboard? At Shark Bay, we used Gatorboard because the exhibition is put up and down from time to time. However, you can see how well the print with a white border works – especially on a wall with a different colour or tone.

NO FRAME GATORBOARD

Everyone is different, but one of the criticisms levelled at classic frames with glass and acrylic face mounting is the reflection off the front surface. If the objective is to display your photograph, why do we make things difficult for our viewers by introducing a highly reflective layer over the top of our work of art?

One of the simplest and most elegant framing options is no frame at all. And no mat. Instead, make a print with a generous white border and flush mount it on Gatorboard or aluminium.

The advantage of Gatorboard is that it's relatively inexpensive and it's light. However, it's also easy to dint along the edges, so care needs to be taken. (Mind you, all prints need to be taken care of.) The result is a beautifully flat finish and, depending how it is mounted, you can have it offset from the wall, thus casting a real shadow around it.

A more expensive and much heavier option is to mount on aluminium. The aluminium is only a couple of millimetres thick, so there's no unsightly edge (like with Gatorboard).

An alternative to straight aluminium is Dibond, an aluminium composite comprising two 0.3 mm thick aluminium cover layers and a polyethylene or mineral core. Like straight aluminium, it is extremely rigid and strong, making it ideal for both indoor and outdoor applications, but it is much lighter. Does the weight matter? Only when you're

hanging your artworks or moving them around. But Dibond is a beautiful option.

I use a professional framer to mount my prints onto aluminium or Gatorboard. Many years ago, I used Jac Sheets, a double-sided adhesive sheet of paper the same size as the print, and carefully applied it manually to sheets of aluminium. I never went much bigger than 20x24", but I also messed up quite a few applications! My advice: get the professionals to do it with equipment designed for the chore – or buy the equipment yourself if you're going to do a lot of it (and have a large garage or workroom to store it when not in use)!

What I like about mounting on aluminium is the surface of the paper is not behind glass or plastic. It may have a protective UV spray, which can darken down your prints (so keep this in mind when printing), but helps with longevity. Then again, there seem to be as many experts using a spray overcoat as don't use a spray overcoat and I must say, a photograph straight off the printer looks great and this appears to be the purest way to present it.

One more option – you can always put a frame around the aluminium or Gatorboard without glass - that also looks very smart. Certainly, a frame around Gatorboard will hide the thickness of the product - the edges are not its most attractive feature!

GESTURAL *and* PAINTERLY



Camera technique is one thing, post-production another, but how do you put them together to create something more, something gestural and painterly? By Len Metcalf.



Monochrome Grasses

Multiple Exposures, eight all layered over each other with an averaging blend mode.

Opposite: Monochrome Trees

Photographed using multiple exposures. These are taken with two exposures. I am shooting towards the bright morning sun, just post-sunrise. I like to have an exposure of about half a second and intentionally blur one of the images more than the other. I am aiming to keep the dark areas suitably exposed and blowing out the sky.

I love creating photographs that look like paintings. I often turn to artists like Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, with his incredible use of light and shadow. Creating chiaroscuro-esque photographs brings me so much joy. Strong directional lighting, lots of contrast and deep rich blacks. But, interestingly, I am not into photo realistic paintings, not photographic feeling ones either. When it comes to painting, I am drawn to gestural works of art, ones that rely on an emotional reading rather than purely a story telling one.

I love expressionistic artworks with big emotions and large, bold brush strokes, full of paint. Imagine Ben Quilty if you are a portrait photographer, or Wolf Kahn and Gustave Klimt if you are into trees and landscapes. Imagine these artists going at their canvas with a stick of oil paint, large brushes or a palette knife. You can feel and see the pigments going onto the canvas in swathes of pure colour. Perspective is so often thrown out the window. Expression and feeling is everything.

I have been looking at returning to drawing, watercolours and printmaking. When I was a young man, I didn't understand the importance of emotion and interpretation. I liked to draw and paint things as they were seen by me. Today, I seem to be more interested in the emotive qualities of an artwork, more so than the story, or the technically perfect. I veer away from a rendering that is so clinical, I am personally left emotionless.

I didn't have many skills in gesture, yet it is something I have been working on actively over the last decade. Work on your weaknesses and the things you avoid, right?

Gesture is everything. The term comes from people describing the paintings of the abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell,



Colour Seascapes and Trees

Using the Live Composite mode in the Olympus OM1. Live Composite isn't just frame averaging, it only takes the bright parts and adds them, keeping the base exposure. This mode is designed for light painting, star trails and light trails. These examples have a ten stop neutral density filter on the lens, providing exposures of around fifteen seconds with camera movement. All photographs were taken in Kiama, NSW during our annual Abstract Photography Workshop. This year's Abstract Photography Workshop will be at Myall Lakes.

to name a few. I suspect the term was borrowed from Kimon Nicolaïdes and the teaching methods described in 'The Natural Way to Draw', as gestural drawing seems to have a longer history than gestural painting. I suspect that Kimon was describing drawing teaching that had been passed down by art teachers for centuries.

What Is Gestural?

So what is gestural painting? It is working quickly, in such a manner which the artist deliberately leaves smudges, smears and incredible three-dimensional paint on the surface. The painting is the marks left by smearing the paint on with hands, palette knife or brush. The painting is the visual and physical record of the hand, arm and body movements of the artist.

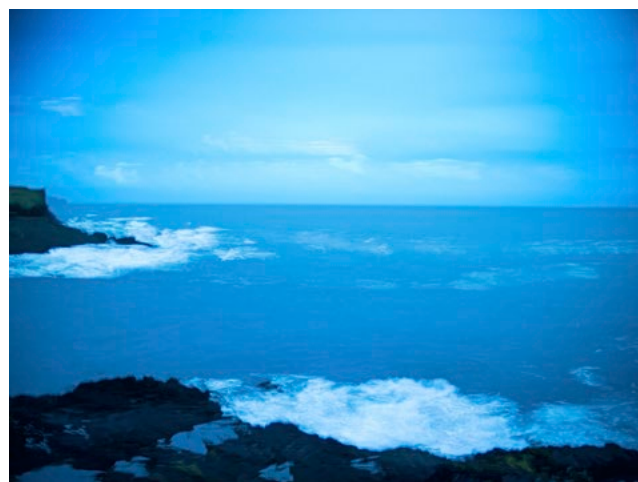
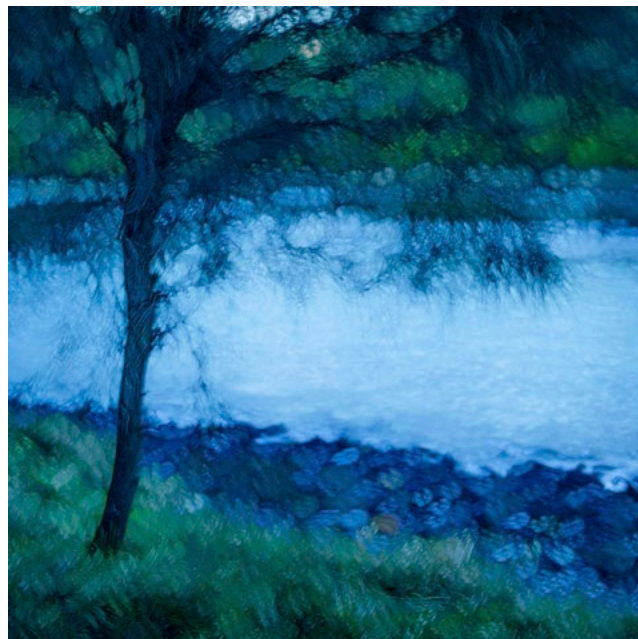
Ben Quilty is undoubtedly one of Australia's most highly regarded contemporary portrait painters. He works in oil paint which is famous for its ability to create the thick impasto technique he uses, without the paint cracking. Ben actually loves to use a cake decorating tool that is notably larger than a traditional painter's palette knife.

Ben's work is interesting for its range of subjects, from portraits to landscapes. He deals with Australian masculinity, national identity and landscape and mortality. He was one of our official war artists in Afghanistan. His work is highly gestural, particularly once you get over the powerful subjects he seems to capture so well. As you move in closer, you see each gesture impressively recorded in paint. The painting becomes the record of each colour and gesture. A map of his movements if you like. My favourite painting of his is his portrait of Margaret Olley which won the Archibald Prize in 2011.

I had better bring this back to photography. Photography can be gestural and painterly. Can you imagine my excitement when I was able to create photographs that had this gestural and painterly feel? My first ones resembled watercolours and had a lovely washed out, transparent look, that was even granular. Recently, I figured out how to make them look more like oils and gouache. Both of these painting mediums are characterised by the opaqueness of the paint. Gouache is opaque watercolours, by the way.

Those who know me well, know that I prefer to do as much in-camera as possible. I know that artworks like this can be created in Photoshop or with AI, but my aversion to spending any more time than is necessary at the computer means I avoid desktop based solutions like the plague.

And there is a beautiful reason I enjoy creating gestural painterly artworks with my camera: the intense satisfaction and surprise that comes when the artwork turns out in unexpected ways. There is joy in not knowing exactly what you are going to get. You sometimes have a reasonably good



idea, but usually there is something random that just shows up which helps the artwork blossom.

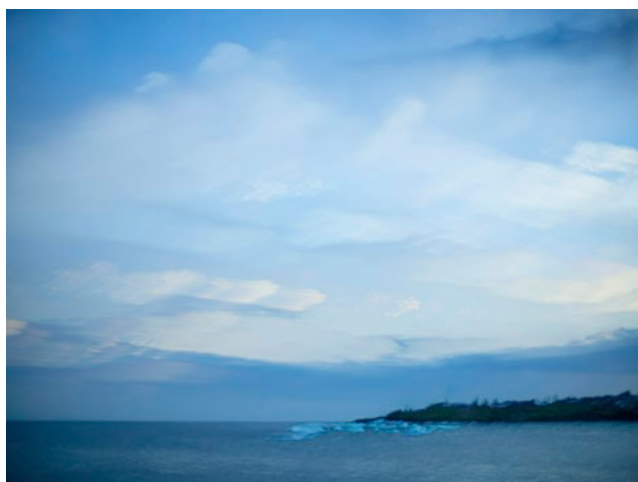
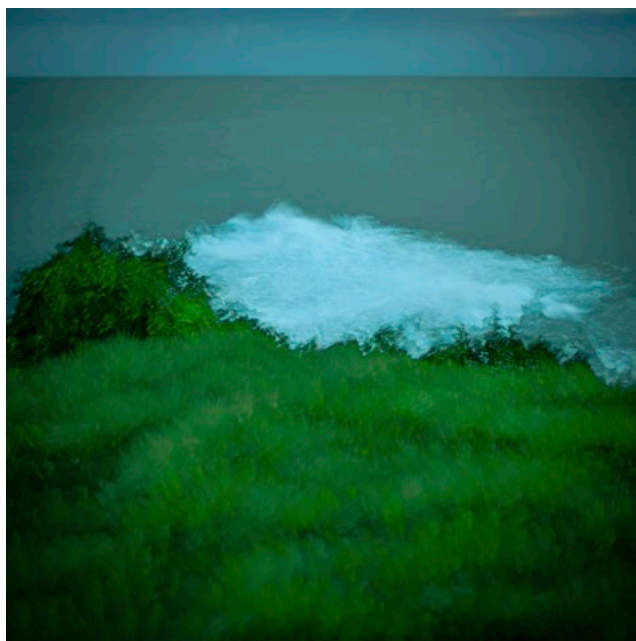
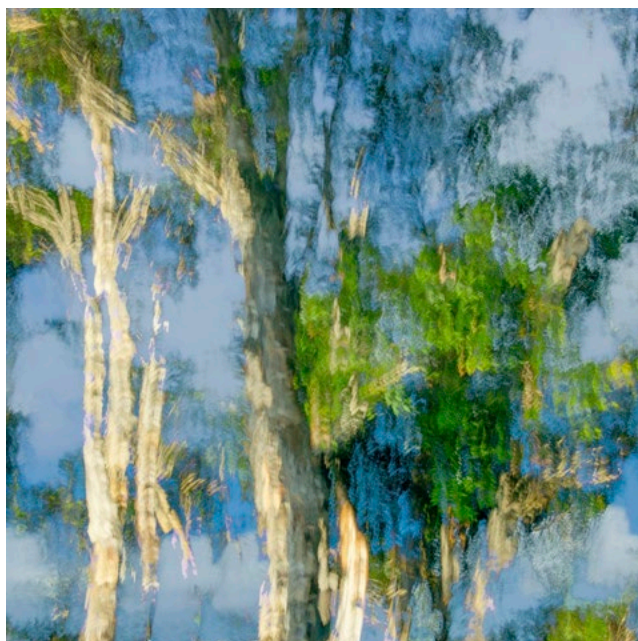
It has been interesting for me to identify that many photographic artists love to use mediums and techniques that allow them to give into this sense of the unknown. Photographers who use infrared cameras and full spectrum cameras love not knowing what they are going to get.

I have said this over and over in my articles, but it is worth repeating over and over again. You need to start with a great composition. Expecting that an abstract approach to your photography will suddenly improve your artworks is problematic. Work on your compositions and your understanding of how composition works before you head down this path.

Tips and Tricks

The big secret to creating gestural and painterly looking artworks is multiple exposures and camera movement, sometimes used independently and at other times used in conjunction with each other.

Honestly, the best way to learn these techniques is to get out there, experiment and see what you can figure out. You



can also join me on one of my workshops or tours, or even one of our specialist abstract workshops or retreats.

The easiest way to create interesting painterly and gestural effects is with multiple exposures. Simply adding a layer or texture to one of your existing images will start to move your image towards this fascinating abstraction. You can either do this in-camera or with software. Many of us probably started multiple exposures when we accidentally double exposed a film. I know that is where I started. Later, I started intentionally creating two negatives and sandwiching them in the enlarger together to print one image.

My first multiple exposures were very contrived. They weren't Jerry Uelsmann's, that is for sure (look up Jerry if you're not already familiar with his work).

My next experiments in multiple exposures were also rather poor. It took me a long while to realise that the two or more images I was sandwiching together were too similar and too equal. My multiple exposures didn't start to shine until I started bringing really different elements together. We need to remember we are able to change virtually every setting. A popular one for people starting out is to try changing the colour temperature between shots.

When someone is trying to understand how two or more images interact, I tell them to start with high contrast scenes, like a backlit tree. Expose it so it goes black and the sky goes white and start adding textures into the blacks with the second exposure.

In fact, the trick for making captivating multiple exposure images seems to be using the blend modes designed to photograph dancers, athletes and bouncing balls by flashing them for each exposure. With lighten or darken blend modes switched on, you can capture each movement if it has a light background (use darken) or a dark background (use lighten). It's easier to see than to explain verbally.

If you're using a Canon, Nikon or Fujifilm, you can try a multiple exposure with brighten or darken blend modes. Olympus cameras only have the choice of auto gain or off, which only affects their exposures and how they merge together.

Most photographic artists creating this type of work seem to be using Canon cameras. Unfortunately, some of the latest Canon cameras only allow the production of JPGs, whereas older models such as the R5 and the 5D Mk 3 and 4 produced raw files when used in multiple exposure modes.



Blue Squares

Multiple exposures with two exposures, each one perpendicular to the other (a ninety-degree rotation between images). This is to keep the square form. Averaging blend mode.

So these cameras have become the workhorses for this type of work. It seems that their latest models use high levels of lens corrections, which they have prioritised over multiple exposures.

Nikons and more recent Fujifilm cameras also make JPGs when making multiple exposures. When using lighten or darken blend modes, you can flatten out areas of texture, simplifying areas of colour and generally flatten out the image by taking away atmospheric (tonal) perspective. An iPhone app called PhotoSplit has lots of different blend modes available, a list that outstrips all other cameras and even rivals Photoshop. This is another great place to explore multiple exposures, because many of us are less invested in our phone photos and therefore take bigger risks.

Long Exposures

Long exposure is a technique that is available to all of us. All we have to do is slow the shutter speed down and move the camera during the exposure. You can feign the look of a multiple exposure by holding your camera in two separate compositions. You can effectively paint with light. It is easy to do this after the sun goes down in the blue hour. I also like to play with this technique in the middle of the day, but this requires a ten stop neutral density filter. Sometimes I use a six stop filter. And occasionally I put them both on.

If you have a camera with image stabilisation, I recommend you turn it off, both on the camera and on the lens if necessary. You want the blur, after all.

Bright whites will often come out as squiggly lines. Be careful with this, as it often breaks a great artwork. I work hard at taking note of where the bright objects are and avoiding

them. For example, I avoid pointing my camera at the sun. Camera movement images are often called ICM (intentional camera movement), an abbreviation I personally dislike with a passion. There is a magazine and many groups dedicated to this one technique. Unfortunately, by pinning yourself down to one technique, you leave the door closed to many others.

A few recent cameras (OM Systems and Olympus) allow you to watch the long exposure as it is being recorded in real time. It's an amazing feature that will undoubtedly find its way into other manufacturers in time. It allows me to paint with my camera, watching what I am doing. Absolutely amazing fun. A bit like watching a print in the developer emerge.

I created some of the images that accompany this article with Olympus's Live Composite mode. This mode keeps adding highlights, much like the brighten blend mode when compositing two images together. I was working with long exposures of around fifteen seconds to paint these artworks in a single exposure. Much of my excitement is figuring out a way to create these, as I have seen others do it with multiple exposures. The beautiful thing about doing it with my OM1 is that I can watch it happen live in the viewfinder and stop the exposure when I think it has had enough.

Mixing Techniques

I find I get some really fascinating artworks when I combine different techniques together. One of my favourites is combining an almost still image with a movement image. I do this a lot with trees. Again, I like to do this with high contrast subjects.

There are also software based solutions – when using Photoshop, Affinity Photo, Nik Effects Analogue, PhotoSplit and SnapSeed. Software makes it easy to duplicate and move layers and then play with the blend modes. A little experimentation will help you understand and learn how the blend modes work. Many great artists in this genre take their captured images into software to further work on colour and the tonal composition. They also often add a final layer of texture, or scratches and scratches.

However you want to create gestural and painterly photographs is up to you, but I can guarantee you it's a lot of fun!

Len Metcalf is from the Blue Mountains and currently resides in Sydney. He sees himself as a lens based artist. Len started teaching photography as a teenager in the school darkroom in 1980. After a lifetime of education, art and photography experience, Len finally gave in and started teaching photography full-time thirteen years ago. In doing so, he finally found a career that suited him. Len is considered the leading creative photography educator in Australia. Creating a career out of photography education has freed him from the financial pressures of being a professional photographer, something that he has now fully abandoned. Len runs tours and workshops throughout Australia. He teaches online courses to people around the world. <http://lensschool.com>.

Len has also developed an online art school for photographers and other artists. <http://theartists.club>.

You can enjoy looking at his work at <http://lenmetcalf.com>.

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A POSITIVE DIMENSION

Murray White challenges us once again: is photography just a matter of pressing the shutter, or are there more important considerations at work that help create great photographs, like dimensionality?



INTO THIN AIR

A unified background has limited the impression of a third dimension here, despite this subject's depth being one of its primary attributes. A time exposure of the drizzle-peppered water has softened the surface and ambiguously allowed it to seamlessly merge with what could be interpreted as air. Although a sense of depth still lingers in its shadow network, I feel this subject's lines and stealthy behaviour are more suggestive of a two-dimensional presence with a simplicity of design that can flow from that.

Participants in competitive sport are often given plenty of conflicting advice, but one universal tip from the coaches is rarely challenged – play to your strengths. While other aspects of our sporting capability may improve with dedicated effort, those gifts that underpin our individual talent are a valuable resource, especially when we find ourselves under pressure.

That same philosophy could apply to many other challenges in life and perhaps photography is no different. If we were to ask an impartial person what do they see as the strengths of photography, we may be told spontaneity, accuracy or longevity of the moment. These traits of our craft are often seen in a positive light, however, there are other aspects of photography that are not typically seen as strengths, despite them being cardinal properties.

What is a Dimension Between Friends?

Perhaps one of the most seemingly unfortunate characteristics for almost all photographic genres, but one seen as especially detrimental to the reality of a landscape capture, is the image's complete lack of a third dimension. Well okay, there is a measurable thickness to a print, but it possesses no substantive or quantifiable depth, only the illusion of that quality. When we look to the outside world with our two eyes, we appreciate its depth; but close one eye and that reality will collapse. However, when we look at a photograph, it matters not whether it is through two eyes or one, the print can reveal no more and only imply a third dimension.

For virtually all landscape photographers, this troubling hallmark has led to wholesale optical, lighting and compositional tactics designed to overcome a major 'deficiency' in our craft. The use of wide-angle lenses to



ISLANDS IN THE SKY

By choosing to deny this image of a foundational reference or even a traditional skyline, it is possible to find considerable uncertainty of setting, or even uncertainty of subject within its plane of focus. Anonymous black reflections contribute to the ambiguity by allowing these elements to be seen as a shape rather than a form, and therefore remove another marker of depth. Graphic representations such as this encourage viewers to assess the reality of its architecture, together with the inevitable comparisons of line versus shape, or detail versus void and in this instance, perhaps even the concept of water versus air.



EXPOSED

Lack of detail (or tone) in large areas of our compositions will concentrate attention on the remaining elements and if those elements seem to share a single plane of capture, so much the better. A tight crop, like here, forces the viewer to look more at the shape and any real or implied interaction, rather than to how this arrangement may fit into a more worldly setting. In this image, a disturbing lack of symmetry and visual balance seems in keeping with the subject's apparently precarious situation – a feeling emphasised by the shallow impression of depth and the uncertainty of its location.

emphasise foregrounds and the strategic application of leading lines or inclusion of shadow play, become routine levers to pull as we seek to bring more authenticity to the two-dimensional image levitated in our viewfinders. In most instances, the desire to tamper with this optical truth does not originate from a malicious sense of deception, but paradoxically, is often done to reinstate the visual honesty of that sweeping vista which captivated us in the first place.

But I wonder whether we have overshot our trainer's brief here, by attempting to massage more conventional performance from an entity that is blessed with alternative traits? Have we focused (if you'll pardon the pun) on improving a weakness, without considering that we could also treat this unique quality as a strength? Is it possible that two dimensions, played well, can visually defeat an artificially enhanced third dimension?

More Complete?

I guess that the answer is 'no' in absolute terms, as the attribution of a comparative 'score' between unrelated images, especially singular captures, is a meaningless pursuit (I am sure that many others will disagree)! However, there certainly are times when a landscape is more readily appreciated as a two-dimensional representation, rather than as a three-dimensional reality. There is little doubt that the complexity



SEAMS LIKE THE SAME

Careful framing will pay dividends at any time when we are behind a camera, but deliberate actions are essential when trying to limit those perceptions of depth that may negatively impact the narrative of our images. Although not obvious to the viewer, this print has been framed to exclude cavities in the main rock wall and a low viewpoint was chosen to eliminate an undercut opening that would complicate an otherwise simple juxtaposition of these subjects. By creating a perception of unity, we may facilitate a stronger visual connection between elements where shape gives purpose to line and dark emphasises the light.



INTO THE FOLD

An abrupt transition between overlapping features is one way of limiting the impression of depth. It is commonly achieved with the aid of a telephoto lens, although in the case of this image, it was done with the equivalent of a 90mm focal length (the longest lens in my limited kit)! Further visual isolation was created by framing the image without perimeter edge distraction, allowing these cascading bands of tone and further repetition within the rock architecture itself, to define this image. In images such as this, good depth-of-field is necessary to foster the illusion of a single plane of capture.

of an entire multi-strata setting can sometimes muffle the subject's underlying message and that for some images, it is their framework alone that can speak with more clarity.

Of course, the reverse can also be true when that sense of depth brings with it a more complete understanding of our subject and how it may fit in with other elements of the setting. That awareness of community in the form of a perceived connection (or separation) between elements, helps us to appreciate something of the truth in our capture. We can visualise the proximity of various players in their locations and how they may interact with each other. Indeed, a photograph that is made using a well constructed sense of depth allows us to visually enter the landscape and become a witness to its reality, almost as if we were there.

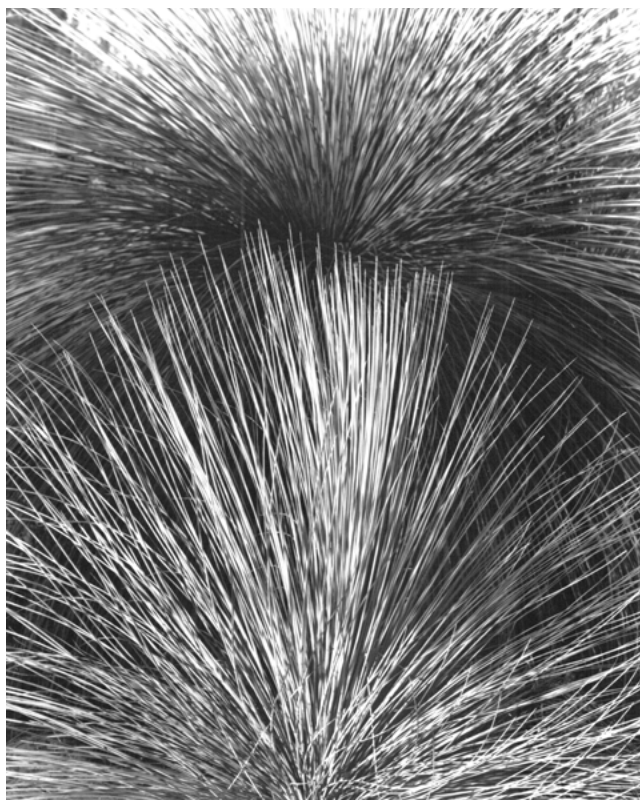
Two dimensions, on the other hand, often preclude this holistic interpretation, locking us into a seemingly superficial experience, where shape or line and colour or tone remain the only visual properties capable of imparting information. For many, the absence of depth seems certain to compromise full disclosure; to draw a curtain of selective opacity over what we expect a landscape to portray. Under these circumstances, there are fewer clues that enlighten us as to how the elements of an image are spatially arranged, or even to what identity they may hold.

Liberating the Real World

Yet because these remaining vectors of visual information are liberated from their 'real world' connection to other elements of the composition, they may now express a more fluid identity than we typically expect of them. They may even offer an alternative insight into our composition and the creative vision driving it. Without the impression of depth to lure our eye further into the image, we must take stock of what it is that we do see and allow our minds to extrapolate from that base. That third dimension, therefore, tends to morph into a concept or visual template rather than simply provide a strengthened evidence of place.

Just how this process develops depends upon our ability as a photographer to present our composition, together with a potential viewer's capacity to explore an image beyond its subject material alone. I believe the latter factor is far less problematic than may be expected, as all of us are capable of some interpretation given a sufficiently ambiguous image. (And perhaps that potential for interpretation remains viable in response to other more realistic images, even those dripping with three-dimensional qualities).

However, I believe that a two-dimensional image is often more likely to promote subject analysis on a level beyond just its apparent visual identity. Without the limitations of form locking us into a particular understanding, we perhaps have more



LINE DANCE

Flat frontal lighting has emphasised the symmetry of these grass trees. Tight framing and good depth-of-field has implied a common plane of existence and helped reveal visual similarities, even suggestive of a single structure. By eliminating a sense of depth, we push our viewer into questioning the relationship between remaining visual elements and help them gain a greater understanding of what it is that is presented – especially those characteristics that may have escaped scrutiny.

mobility of context in our examination of the scene. There can be more options to consider, more possibilities for interpretation; indeed, multiple responses to what may be an apparently simple composition. As photographers, we can use this ambiguity as a deliberate mechanism to promote conjecture, or alternatively, attempt to narrow its scope by adopting a selective approach to the subject and its most effective portrayal.

To capitalise on a photograph's lack of depth, we can consider a range of strategies that not only emphasise this intrinsic quality, but introduce more novel and location specific techniques. We might limit the use of shadows that imply depth by looking for flat frontal lighting. We can avoid dissecting an image into a sequence of progressive strata by not including a foreground and background and looking for a naturally flat plane of capture, or adopt a viewpoint that deliberately merges disparate elements.

Is 2D Better?

It is not essential for such a plane to be grounded in reality – we can imply a limitation in depth by stopping down our apertures to maintain sufficient depth-of-field throughout the image. My old-school view camera can also achieve a unified plane of focus with lens tilt and I am sure that contemporary focus stacking methods are even more capable in this respect. Optical gymnastics of this type are a very effective method of bringing spatially segregated elements into direct comparison.



PIECES OF EIGHT

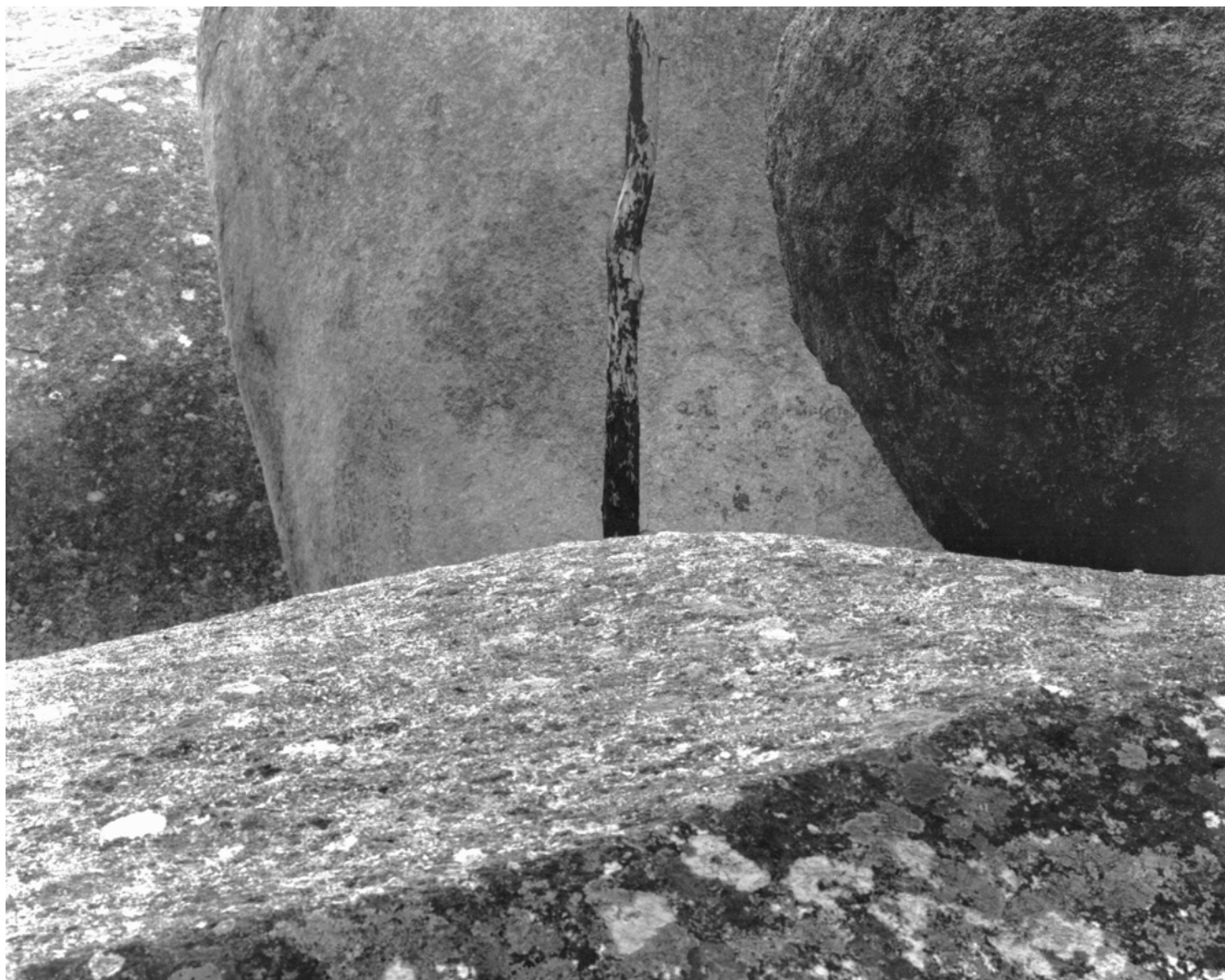
Consistently sharp focus throughout an image helps to imply a single plane of capture, even though these stones are spread out and rely on considerable depth-of-field to achieve that end. Minimal shadows from the relatively flat pebbles also assist to limit the sense of depth by reducing a marker that we instinctively see as a consequence of three dimensions, allowing a viewer to concentrate on those visual values that remain and how that relationship may fit in a broader context.

Telephoto lenses (even those at the shorter end of the spectrum) also help by compressing subjects into one another, allowing viewers to examine and question what may be an unexpected pictorial relationship.

Overlapping subjects can be especially ambiguous if we can shift our position to avoid creating or including any shadow and allow the elements to merge as if occupying the same plane. Juxtapositions such as this can offer multiple possibilities to a viewer, requiring interpretation to become a necessary feature of your image. I find the interactive demands of an obscure visual relationship to be especially rewarding in an intellectual sense and often even in an aesthetic sense as well. When otherwise foreign entities are unified by mechanisms unknown to the viewer, we tend to question both the reason for that connection and its visual manifestation.

Further Limitations

Careful cropping at either the shooting or editing stage is also key to the suppression of apparent depth, by paring away any suggestion that there is an alternative context to be found outside the composition's brief. What we can aim for is a more limited range of basic elements, but an intensity of strength within their possible connections. The often quoted adage of 'less is more' holds true for many photographic genres, but is particularly apt when we arrange non-related entities on an apparently common plane of connection.



THE INSIDER

The concept of multiple elements making up this image is primarily achieved by only presenting segments of their tonal variations, rather than providing a comprehensive understanding of what is actually included. A combination of flat lighting, precise viewpoint and clinical framing has sliced a veneer from our landscape that neither fully reveals the reality of its spatial relationship, nor precludes the possibility of various interpretations. This fundamentally two-dimensional capture encourages the viewer to look deeper into the setting for clues that will help them formulate an understanding of this subject in a world where depth may be just one aspect of its reality. By examining an ambiguous composition for possible relationships, we raise more questions than answers and in turn realise that perhaps understanding may always be an interpretation.

If an inappropriate background cannot be avoided in your composition, try to limit its influence by unifying its selective inclusion. Unlike three-dimensional images, large toneless areas often work quite well in a depth deprived capture, allowing negative space to emphasise shape, uncertain scale or even a subtle concept. In this setting, conspicuous blocks of white or black space become inert visual players, where distracting clouds or other textured intrusions are absorbed by tactical decisions of exposure, or eliminated entirely by the magic of post-production.

Of course, many more strategies can be enlisted to help maintain that sense of two-dimensional clarity that a photograph can so exquisitely reveal. It remains somewhat ironic that at least a partial sense of depth will filter through without conscious intent in most images that we capture. In many cases we should look to maintain that implied connection with reality and indeed, where appropriate, to strengthen it. But in those moments when we take a step back and choose to actually look directly at an image rather than weave our way through it, perhaps we can all appreciate one of photography's most underrated strengths – not only in its simplicity without depth, but in the depth of that simplicity.



RESISTANCE

Images that use the sky and a single plane of foreground may not be two-dimensional to our eye by virtue of historical experience, but nor do they realistically quantify the spatial difference. By limiting the foreground to just line and shape, we can replicate or introduce a contrast with similar features in the sky and perhaps elevate the significance of what is often seen as a relatively minor player in our compositions. Although complex in content, this image is simple in elemental structure.

Implied Subjects

Great photographs are often underpinned by interesting ideas that ask more questions than offer answers. Mike Langford explains how this approach can lead to really great photographs!

We read most photographs very quickly, spending just a few seconds with a single glance. It takes something more interesting or challenging in the photograph before we take a second, more meaningful look.

And then it takes an unanswered question to keep us viewing the image even longer and with greater intent.

What Is Your Response?

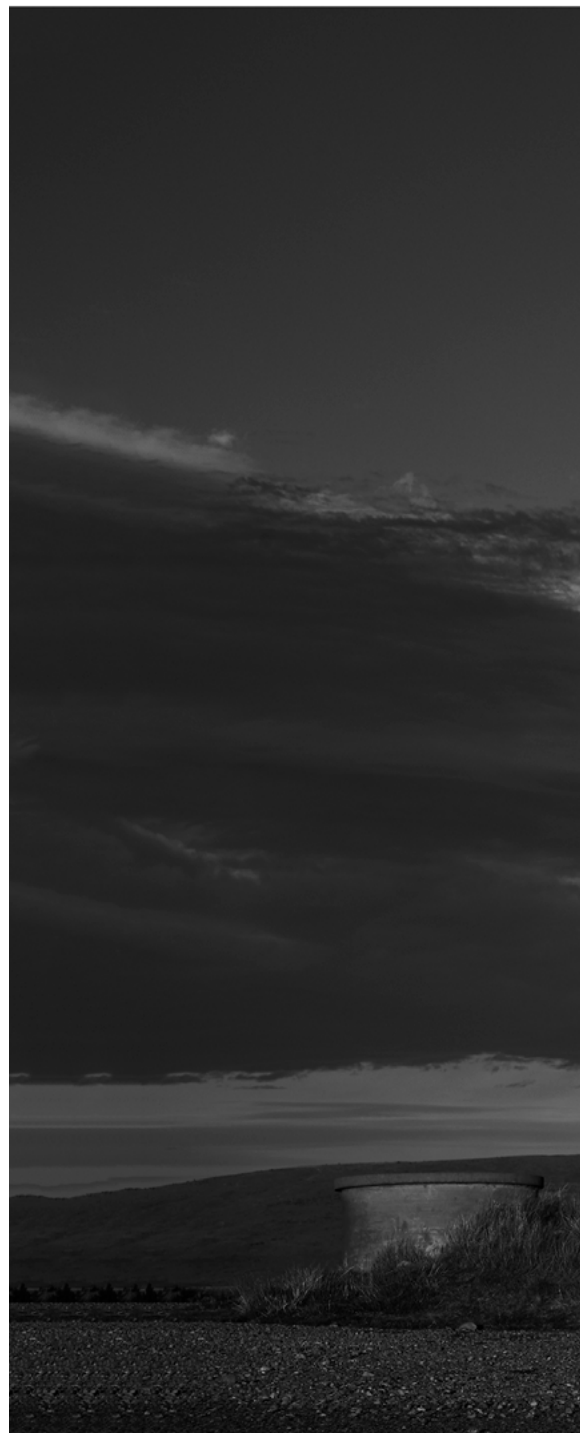
Photographs that stand the test of time, photographs we refer to as 'great', generally offer intrigue, mystery, an idea you haven't seen before, or perhaps a visualised social perception that is outside our normal ways of seeing. It is unusual or even unique.

Photographs that allow you the opportunity to consider your own reaction to them are the ones you want to spend more time looking at. They ask you, the viewer, how you feel about them, what is your take on them, what is your response?

Without this sort of interaction, it suggests the image has little meaning, is empty and without much value. It is worth what it gets – which is mostly just a fleeting glance that is then lost from memory.

Photographs that invite you into them, to walk around a corner that isn't visible, but implied, these are the images you want to look at longer. These are the ones you return to over and over again, looking for answers to the questions you have. A recent photograph I took in Japan is a good example of this way of thinking, where the focus is fully on the old wooden wall, but then off to the left there is an alleyway that leads the eye and the imagination to another place that is implied, but not realised.

It can be something simple like a landscape, a scene that shows you just enough to create intrigue, one that invites you to explore and ask questions that haven't been answered by the photographer. These are the images we remember and ones we want to revisit.



Pukaki Toilets, 2018. *f/11, 1/160 second, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 IS II USM @ 56mm.*



Maybe it's a simple device or technique, like not showing all the building in your image, as in this photograph I took of a lighthouse. What hasn't been shown in the image is still there in your imagination, even though you can't see it. It has been implied through the viewer's knowledge of what a lighthouse looks like. By not showing all of it, you have asked the viewer to become part of the conversation and to mentally fill in the gaps.

Ask More Questions

Something I like to do, is to 'make a photograph' that asks more questions of the viewer than it provides answers for. This lets the viewer become part of that image, exploring the spaces that haven't yet been fully defined. This in turn allows the viewer the space to walk and think beyond what has been offered and to find answers to the questions they have.

Alluding to spaces and subjects without fully defining them is something I find both intriguing to make as well as to view. This was the case with the aircraft cockpit that just sits in the landscape all by itself. We know nothing more about it, other than it is an aircraft cockpit. It has no wings, body, tail or any visible relationship to the landscape where it sits.

It's a similar story with the two silver toilets. They are only

defined by light. That's it – there is no more story and so you, as a viewer, are asked to fill in the blanks. It's here that the conversation between the image and the viewer begins. You spend time asking, "What the hell?" rather than just understanding what it is that you are looking at.

The church in the snow is another image that has a story that could be read in many ways. Is it a wedding? Maybe it's a funeral? Or maybe just a church service that's about to start? You are told nothing more than what is visually available. Beyond that, you are left to your own imagination and to create your own story. As a result, you stay with the image longer and it can grow on you through your own imagination.

Extended captions can kill an image by providing the viewer with all the answers to the questions the image asks, leaving nothing to the viewer's imagination. Other times, the extended captions tell you everything the image failed to deliver and talk about everything the image isn't about, the things the photographer wasn't able to show in the photograph.

Introducing Ambiguity

Sometimes, making photographs that are visually ambiguous can draw the viewer into a conversation. For instance, making an image where initially you think the scale is one thing, only

Tekapo Church, 2020. *f/8, 1/800 second, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 L IS II USM @ 400mm.*





Aircraft Fuselage 2017. *f/11, 1/200 second, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 IS II USM @ 105mm.*



Hida Village Detail, 2024. *f/16, 1/15 second, ISO 800, Canon R5, Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM @ 42mm.*

to later discover some small element that you didn't notice on the first viewing that makes you think something else.

This is the case with my image of the man standing at the edge of the Taklimakan Desert, looking off into the distance. At first, you think the distant shapes are clouds and that the view is vast and expansive, until you notice that the shapes are sand dunes and that they are covered with footprints that suggest a whole different scale in your mind.

Even our choice of exposure for an image can allow for visual intrigue, if this is a consideration in the making of an image. Exposures where detail in either the blacks or whites isn't shown, is a way of asking more questions than providing answers. Do we really need to see the detail in the blacks? When we can, then everything is explained and the imagination can play no part in the exploration of the dark visual space. Blacks are part of the imagination, spaces that are unknown, areas that can offer questions, areas that are implied and not fully stated. The same applies to the whites in an image. Detail only really needs to exist in the subject of the image, which in some cases is only in a small part of the frame. Depth-of-field – or the lack of it – is another way to capture the viewer's attention. Out-of-focus elements can allude to subjects without fully identifying them, making them visually

ambiguous and more interesting. In the autumn photograph taken recently in Japan, at the start you are fully focused on the sharp leaves in the foreground, but then as you look beyond them, you are left with some very out-of-focus shapes that could be buildings, a path, a river or even people. None of these fully visualised, but just implied and left up to the viewer's imagination. For me, it is these elements that make the image more interesting.

I often shoot in-camera JPEGs, where either the highlights or the shadows have no detail. My main reason for doing this is so I can concentrate on 'the subject of the image' and not be distracted by detail in areas that are of no interest to me. Showing detail everywhere, such as in HDR captures, reveals everything in a single glance and leaves nothing to the imagination – and therefore requires little time to fully understand what is shown.

Implied photographs require more attention and in so doing, can provide greater intrigue. They ask questions in your mind that are both interesting and challenging. Sometimes these questions are left unresolved which is exactly what you want, because it extends the conversation the viewer is having with the image, requiring the viewer to return to the image over and over again.

Cape Campbell Light House, 2023. *f/11, 1/640 second, ISO 320, Canon R5, Canon EF-5 10-22mm f/4L IS USM @ 10mm.*





Taklimakan Desert, 2016. *f/9, 1/800 second, ISO 320, Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 L IS II USM @ 400mm.*



Nanzenji Temple Grounds, 2023. *f/13, 1/60 second, ISO 320, Canon R5, Canon RF 100-500mm f/4.5-7.1 L IS USM @ 450mm.*

POLAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Whether travelling to the north or the south, here are some tips and tricks to help you get better polar photographs and enjoy the experience as well!

BY PETER EASTWAY

The Poles are bucket list destinations for many photographers, but whether you're travelling way down south or up to the far north, both polar regions are incredibly photogenic. You will take the photos of your life!

Usually, the first question photographers wonder about is how their cameras will survive the cold temperatures. The good news is that most voyages to the polar regions stay on the water and near the coast, so the temperatures don't get down too far – maybe -10°C .

It's only when you travel inland or up to higher altitudes that the seriously cold temperatures have a significant impact on our gear.

Several years ago, Nikon Ambassador and irregular contributor to *Better Photography* magazine Mark Watson, worked out from first-hand experience that his Nikon cameras worked pretty well down to -28°C , after which some erratic camera behaviour could be observed from time to time! There was probably some erratic behaviour from Mark as well!

However, it is unusual for polar adventurers on an expedition ship to experience such low temperatures and if it did get that cold, you'd only have to survive for a few hours on a shore walk or Zodiac cruise. After that, you're back in a warm cabin having a hot chocolate.

Rest assured, your digital camera will handle life in the polar regions, at least most of the time.

However, keep a spare battery in a warm pocket because batteries tend to run out of 'oomph' more quickly when it's cold, but they also recover some of their charge if you warm them up. Hence the idea is to swap batteries if you're out in the field for extended periods.

You also want to keep your camera out of the water – don't drop it overboard as it will sink! You also need to be aware of airborne sea spray and water splashes, so wipe your camera down after your trips outside with a damp cloth. Simple care of your cameras will keep them working longer.

On the following pages, we'll talk in detail about keeping your cameras safe on the trips between the ship and the shore, look at what equipment you should take on a polar adventure, discuss exposure and shutter speeds and lots of tips and suggestions to ensure you come home with a portfolio of amazing photographs!



While we think snow scenes are predominantly white, there are many different shades of white – plus blues, greens and oranges! Most camera metering systems will have no trouble getting the exposure correct for a scene like this, but if in doubt, check your histogram and shoot again if necessary.



KEEPING YOUR CAMERA SAFE

No one plans on getting their camera gear seriously wet, but in the polar environments, it can happen if you're not prepared!

When Does Your Gear Get Wet?

Polar photography is generally outdoors, although you can get great shots from your cabin as well. And while it's not likely to rain, snow and sleet can quickly turn to water and give your gear a good soaking.

Mind you, precipitation isn't a big problem because the water is fresh. The more hazardous challenges come from salt water: breaking waves, water splashes and sea spray.

Salt water is relatively easy to manage when you're on the ship itself. Most of the time as you walk around the decks, there simply aren't any issues to deal with – it's photography as normal.

However, in windy conditions when the light looks fantastic and you simply have to stand out in the elements, your camera can be quickly coated in sea spray and mists. This is really just a minor inconvenience and is easily fixed back in your cabin with a damp towel and a good wipe down. After all, our modern cameras are all weather-sealed, so you should feel comfortable about photography from the ship's deck.

However, when you leave the ship to go ashore, or take a Zodiac cruise in-between the icebergs, things can be different. It might be a beautiful day with clear skies and not a breath

of wind when you leave, but for how long? One thing that makes the polar regions so exciting is the changeable weather and within a matter of minutes, you can find yourself in strong winds and choppy waters.

Off Ship

It's nothing to be alarmed about in terms of personal safety, but you may find your cameras are exposed to airborne spray and wave swells with water splashing over you and into the Zodiac. Water can also collect in the bottom of the Zodiac.

While it's rare to get seriously wet, you should plan on at least one Zodiac excursion where sea spray and wave splashes will wet your cameras and camera bags.

Personally, a little water won't worry you because you'll be wearing Wellington boots and warm, water-shedding clothing, but cloth camera bags can soak up salt water, which is not great for the bag or the cameras and lenses inside.

It is very, very unlikely you will fall into the water with your cameras, but you could slip on the rocks when clambering ashore. So, given it is unlikely that your cameras will ever be dropped into the water, do you need a fully waterproof camera bag, or can you get by with a solution that will handle the elements and just shed the water?

For me, what we're really protecting ourselves against are splashes, spray and the camera bag soaking up salt water.

So, what are the options?



USING YOUR EXISTING BAG?

Most readers will have more than one camera bag and probably a particular favourite. It is already kitted out to hold all your equipment. Can you use it in the polar regions?

Special Polar Issues

You can certainly use an existing camera bag, but here are a few thoughts that might change your mind.

First, taking all your gear on a shore landing or in a Zodiac cruise might not be necessary or advisable. Often our camera bags are full of little accessories and tools that we rarely use, or extra lenses that might not be used very often. To make your photography more enjoyable, I recommend you pack lightly and just take the essentials with you. So this probably means you're going to have to rearrange your existing camera bag anyway.

Holding Your Bag

Second, will you be able to put your camera bag down on the ground to change lenses? Sometimes the weather is so foul that you won't want to open your camera bag! And putting your bag on the ground means it could be inundated with snow.

Cleaning Your Bag

There are also restrictions from time to time when you're not allowed to sit, kneel or place anything on the ground (e.g., the Avian Flu protocols in 2023 and 2024). If you have a backpack

design bag, can you swing it around and access your camera gear without putting it on the ground?

Third, how old is your camera bag? Actually, that's not the right question: how dirty is your camera bag? There are strict environmental protocols in place all around the polar regions and you will be asked to clean your camera bags to make sure there are no seeds or plant material. If you've taken your camera bag around Australia's great outdoors, for instance, getting rid of all those tiny grass seeds can be a long and laborious job – and don't think close enough will be good enough if you're going to South Georgia because they are so serious about biosecurity that too many problems with dirty bags (and clothing) may mean everyone on your ship is banned from landing.

Would it be easier to take a new, perfectly clean bag instead?

Keeping Dry

Assuming you will use your existing bag, how do you keep it dry (if it is not already weatherproofed)?

A large plastic rubbish bag will do the trick, but make sure it is never lost overboard or let go in strong winds. Another option is the inner lining bags for backpacks. They are made of thin, but stronger plastic and while they can be fully waterproof, you really only need them to keep your bag dry. The inner bag becomes an outer cover for your camera bag, but there are easier solutions.



HARD WATERPROOF CASES

Yet another option is a Pelican (or similar) waterproof hard case.

The advantage of a hard case becomes apparent when you're shooting in the Zodiac. Access to the case is quick and easy, good for inclement days when you're taking out and putting away your cameras regularly to avoid the weather or rough water. I remove most of the dividers and store two cameras with lenses attached. And there's room for a spare lens (if it's safe to change lenses), batteries, memory cards and so on.

Quick Access

In tricky situations, the advantage of a hard case is that it is very quick to put your cameras away (if the weather changes or the Zodiac driver has to get a move on) and there's no worry about water on the floor of the Zodiac soaking into the case because it's made of plastic.

Unfortunately, there wouldn't be room in the Zodiac for everyone to have a hard case. This would be a very unusual situation, but if you have 10 people and a driver in the Zodiac, there's possibly only room for three or four hard cases – so if you bring a hard case, also bring an alternative.

However, you will discover the downside of the hard case design when you get ashore because it is a pain to cart around. Who wants to carry a suitcase on a walk? A backpack or shoulder bag is much more sensible!

And in any event, at some locations you're not allowed to

put your camera bag on the ground, so a case is not a good solution for shore explorations.

MultiBag Design

Yet a further option is a Pelican or similar hard case with a backpack inside. SKG in the USA makes such a combination. When doing a Zodiac cruise (no landing), just the hard case can be used.

However, when doing a shore landing, the backpack with cameras goes inside the hard case for the ship-to-shore transfer, and once on shore, the backpack comes out and the hard case stays behind with the shore equipment – until the return journey.

This works and doesn't work. At some locations, you're not allowed to put anything on the ground, so this is no longer possible. And on other occasions, especially in the Arctic, you may do a walk from one location to another, so you can't leave the case behind.

I use the SKG hard case still, but it's only one of my solutions (I also have a simple dry bag). I still like the hard case for the Zodiac cruises, even if I can't always use it on shore. However, I have a very expensive medium format camera outfit which might make me a little more sensitive to camera safety.

So, in summary, a hard case is probably not the best solution. What is?



DRY BAG BACKPACKS

My current thinking is that the best solution for the polar regions is a dry bag backpack. No, the backpack doesn't need to be fully waterproof (because we've already decided we're not going to fall overboard, or if we did, the last thing we will worry about is our camera bag). We only need a bag that will protect our gear from spray and splashes, plus it needs to be comfortable to wear/carry.

The problem with these bags for photographers is that they are normally just one big compartment with no padding either on the outside or the inside.

There are exceptions to this design rule, like LowePro's Dry Zone bags which in theory are fully waterproof, even if there's a zipper right around the bag. I have one of these bags and they will certainly do the job for some photographers, but I struggle to fit in my camera with a telephoto lens attached. I also found the zipper very stiff and slow to operate – it probably needs to be stiff to be fully waterproof, but I need quick access to my gear and so I'm back to the simpler dry bag design where you just roll the top of the bag over itself to make the seal.

So, how do you keep your cameras and lenses safe inside these bags? How do you stop them from knocking against each other, or from knocking against the side of the ship as you jump back on board from the Zodiac?

One solution will be found on board in your cabin: bathroom towels! Another is to use the dividers from your

normal camera case – the velcro often lets you cobble together an improvised protection system. Or you can purchase some small padded bags or cases to put inside.

The Aurora ship shop sells a suitable dry bag for US\$99 (the price may have gone up). It is a tough rubberised bag with a couple of outside pockets for a water bottle and big enough to take my Fujifilm X-H2 with a 150-600mm lens attached. I also throw in one of my Phase One cameras with a wide-angle lens.

In the bottom of the bag, I place a small towel. I put the Phase One camera into a padded structure made of internal camera bag dividers (but I'm looking to upgrade this to a padded pouch). Plus another towel for extra padding.

The first time I used this system, I didn't have a choice because the rules for taking bags ashore had changed, but I actually found it very serviceable.

One use for your tripod is when you go ashore, you can hang your backpack onto the tripod and get access to what's inside.

Of course, this now means you have to carry a tripod, so perhaps it's easier to turn to a friend and ask them to hold your bag while you get your cameras out or put them away.

Camera straps for your cameras are essential.



CONDENSATION & OTHER THINGS

Condensation can occur when coming from a cold environment into a warm one – moist warm air settles on cold cameras and lenses and condenses, forming a film of water over all surfaces. How does this impact photographers on a ship?

Naturally enough, inside the ship it's warm, so taking your warm camera out into the cold is not going to create condensation.

On the other hand, if you've been out for a shore walk or a Zodiac cruise, your camera gear could have cooled down quite a bit. When you come back into your cabin, condensation could form on your cameras, so the solution is to leave the camera equipment in its camera bag and allow its temperature to gradually equalise (or the condensation to evaporate).

On very cold days, it's a good idea to leave your cameras in the bag for 30 minutes to an hour, allowing everything to warm up. This should prevent condensation forming.

So, what happens if condensation does occur? It depends on where it forms.

If on the lens, no big problem, but your photos will look very foggy unless you wipe it off the front! Use a lens wipe!

On the outside of the camera, no dramas, give it a wipe as well! But on the inside of the camera, it could short the camera's circuits and prevent it from operating – in which case, turn the camera off and give it an hour to acclimatise.

One of the challenges will be when you return to the ship, walk into your cabin and look out the window, only to

see something amazing that you just have to photograph!

So, your camera comes out, condensation forms and you start taking photos... actually, in my experience this rarely happens. If it does, just wipe the condensation off the lens and keep shooting – you'll know if there's a problem because the viewfinder image will look a little misty!

Temperatures

So, how cold does it get on a polar excursion? While The Poles can be the coldest places on earth, where we visit we're on a ship and along the coast – where it is relatively warm. Yes, it's cold, but you'll get used to it in a few days. Temperatures might reach -5°C regularly and with wind chill, maybe -10°C to -15°C . But in the middle of the day, often the temperature is $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$ and regularly warmer.

The coldest I've had was around -20°C and that was deep in a fjord in Greenland, so quite some distance from the coast and the warmer ocean waters.

Rain Cover

When it's snowing, a rain cover for your camera can be useful as the snow will eventually melt and wet the camera. However, it's rare that it will rain (but it can happen).

As we're usually only out for a few hours at a time and our cameras are weatherproofed, I don't worry about a camera rain cover, but I do keep one in my camera bag.



YOUR CLOTHING

Most polar cruises will include a warm jacket as part of the travel package. I'm not sure exactly why, whether it's because all the other tour companies do it or if it's just safer to ensure your guests will be warm by providing them with a jacket that is guaranteed to work. It's true that a lot of people travelling to The Poles have never experienced really cold weather before, so their idea of a warm jacket might not be warm enough.

Water & Wind Proof

Generally speaking the jacket is either two or three layers. The outer layer is Gortex or a similar water-resistant material. While it probably won't rain, snow will settle and melt on you while outdoors and then there's the inevitable sea spray and wave splashes. The outer layer keeps you dry and doubles up as a windbreak too.

Underneath, the jacket may have one or two layers of warmth. The basic premise for polar dressing is layers. It can be really cold, but it can also be pretty warm and so dressing with layers allows you to modify the level of warmth you need for a particular day or location.

Underneath the jacket and its layers, you can have as many extra layers as you want. I take two thermal singlets, one short sleeve, one long sleeve. I can wear one or both. Then I have a shirt or a light fleece. As you can get dressed and undressed two or three times a day, I've given up on shirts with buttons and now use a fleece with a front zip.

Then you can have one or two heavier fleeces or jumpers, depending on how cold you get. I always wear more than I think I will need because you can always take gear off, but if you haven't got an extra layer with you, it can be a cold ride back to the ship!

Footwear

Keen walkers will probably want to take their favourite walking shoes, but depending on the season (and how much snow is underfoot), this might not be the best approach. But everyone's needs are different, so this advice might not suit you.

I wear the Wellington boots – also called muck boots – that are supplied by the ship. They are just under knee-high rubber boots and you need them to get off the Zodiac because you're invariably landing in shallow water with a few small waves washing through. They are not the best for ankle support, nor the most comfortable, but they work very well. Two pairs of sock, one knee high, and you're in business.

Gloves are necessary and there are lots to choose from. I use undergloves from The Heat Company most of the time. There are fingerless gloves and mittens which will make using the camera easier while keeping your fingers warm.

Add in a warm beanie, sunglasses, lip balm and you're almost there. You probably won't need ski goggles out in the Zodiac (although some of the drivers use them) and the ship shop will usually sell you what you've forgotten!



Peter Eastway in Svalbard. Photo James Anderson.

WHAT EQUIPMENT?

If you're reading this, you'll be taking a DSLR or mirrorless camera. Interchangeable lenses are highly recommended as they give you a range of perspectives and the potential to capture images that are different from the regular passengers' smartphones!

If you have medium format, bring it! There is a ton of detail to capture and the extra bit depth is put to work capturing the subtle shades and tones of the snow and ice.

Lenses

You probably have all the lenses you really need and the decision might be which lenses to leave at home. However, before lightening your camera bag too much, think a little about how you will be working.

To begin, you'll have a cabin where you can leave all your equipment in safety for the duration of the voyage, so if you're not sure about a lens or a piece of equipment and you're not exceeding your luggage limits for travelling, bring it anyway.

A lot of your photography will be from the decks of the ship, so a wide-angle is great for capturing the weather while a telephoto will bring in distant landscapes and wildlife. Changing lenses is as easy as returning to your cabin if you're not carrying your camera bag around with you.

When you go ashore or on a Zodiac cruise, you'll probably limit your equipment to two lenses – and possibly two cameras.

Changing lenses in inclement weather can be challenging, so if you have two camera bodies each with a lens attached, so much the better. And it also means you have a backup camera.

A wide-angle zoom is useful for atmospherics and icebergs. The Zodiac is a wonderful camera platform and you can be literally centimetres away from icebergs as you cruise around. On shore, a wide-angle can make the most of a stony or icy foreground with a magnificent landscape behind. Wide-angles are great!

At the other end, a 100-400mm telephoto zoom gives you a lot of opportunities with both wildlife and landscapes. You'll probably see one or two photographers with 500mm or 600mm lenses on board and while wonderful lenses to own and use, they are relatively heavy and unwieldy. And when the ship or Zodiac is moving around, it can be difficult to keep your subject within the frame if the telephoto effect is too strong – hence a 100-400mm (35mm full-frame equivalent) focal range seems to be a great balance.

Having said that, there's a new generation of 100-500mm and 150-600mm zooms which are incredibly sharp and much lighter than the prime super-telephotos. While I love the shallow depth-of-field I can achieve with a 300mm or 400mm f2.8, I've decided I'd prefer to have a 150-600mm zoom as it provides greater versatility (and if I really want a softer background, I can do it in post-production).



On different days, you may wish to use different equipment, so make sure you can customise your bag easily. This is the author's backpack in a waterproof case outfit, which as explained, can't always be used these days with new landing conditions.

Many photographers already have 28mm to 200mm focal lengths and these are undoubtedly usable, but they don't necessarily give you a viewpoint with a difference. Similarly, prime lenses with wide apertures (like a 50mm f1.4) are great to bring along, but you may not use them very often. It's generally the really wide and really long lenses you'll use the most.

Tripods and Filters

There's not much point using a tripod on board ship, unless it's just holding your camera up while you're waiting for polar bears to approach! However, when you go ashore there can be opportunities for long exposures and spending time with the wildlife. (Be aware that from time to time, visiting restrictions may mean you can't use your tripod. Your expedition team will tell you when.)

Similarly, ND filters for long exposures aren't going to work until you get ashore, in which case both the tripod and ND filters can be wonderful to use.

A polarising filter is worth bringing along, allowing you to look beneath the surface of the water into the rich aqua blues and greens under the icebergs. And a UV filter on the front of your lens won't go astray as there's likely to be plenty of UV on sunny days.

And don't forget plenty of memory cards and spare batteries. Batteries will run down more quickly in the cold, so a spare battery kept in a warm pocket becomes a part of your daily uniform. And you should probably have another two

batteries back in your cabin on the charger as the days can be very full.

Video Too

You should also consider taking a video camera as this can expand your enjoyment of the experience and, in turn, allow you to share more of what you found upon your return. Most DSLR and mirrorless cameras have video built in, so it's just a matter of remembering to use it.

Small point-of-view video cameras like GoPros and the Osmo Pocket 3 are also worth investigating. Or of course, you can just use your smartphone – the results can really be quite stunning. There are lots of ways you can incorporate video into your presentations when you get home.

Post-Production

One of the joys of ship travel is having time to open your laptop and process your photographs on board. It's true that you can also check your equipment is working and your sensor is clean, but editing your work as you travel from one destination to the next with a drink or snack by your side is an enjoyable luxury!

Before getting on the ship, make sure your copies of Lightroom or Photoshop will open and operate without needing internet connection, and it's worthwhile making sure you have the latest versions as well.

Ensure you bring one or two backup drives as you're very likely to fill up your computer's hard drive!



CORRECT EXPOSURE IN THE SNOW

In the good old days, getting the exposure right for snow scenes was a problem. These days, it's relatively easy, especially if you can keep an eye on your camera's histogram.

Exposure Basics

Cameras use a light meter to determine the correct exposure. Simplistically, it averages all the tonal values in a scene (all the whites, blacks and greys) and sets them to a 'middle grey' tone average. Of course, some parts of the scene will be lighter, others darker, but as an average, it works pretty well.

Modern cameras have far more sophisticated metering techniques, including face, subject and scene recognition, so you're much more likely to get a correct exposure.

So what's the problem? Imagine if you were photographing a plain, grey wall. Your camera's meter would give you an exposure that shows the wall as a middle grey. Perfect! However, now imagine you were photographing a pure white wall. What tone would it end up? The answer is not white, but grey, because the meter averages all the tones to grey.

Modern Approach

So, in theory, your camera might underexpose a snow scene in the polar regions, because it is fooled by all the whites. However, when you open that file in Lightroom, ACR or Capture One, etc., you can easily adjust the exposure so the snow looks white again.

Of course, not all your polar photos are going to be of just snow and ice. Generally speaking, there will be sky, sea, rocks and animals as well.

However, there's one approach you can take that will ensure every photo is correctly exposed, every time.

Use the Histogram

The histogram is a graph that shows all the tonal values in your photograph. The trick is to ensure that the graph doesn't touch the right side of the histogram box.

The right side represents pure white and if any tonal values are recorded as pure white, they can be difficult to rescue when you edit them. Yes, you can make white areas a light grey, but you can't bring back the detail and texture. If you take a photo and the histogram is in the middle of the graph, you have a good exposure and you can adjust how light or dark the image is later in post-production.

On the other hand, if the histogram is touching the right side of the graph area, then you should use the exposure compensation control to give less exposure (try -2.0 EV).

Of course, if the histogram is way down to the left, this indicates the image is underexposed (too dark) and so you would add exposure compensation (+2.0 EV).

As long as you keep that histogram under control, you will always be able to produce photographs with correct exposure and detail in the ice and snow.



KEEP AN EYE ON SHUTTER SPEEDS

Many subjects in the polar regions are relatively still – floating icebergs, nesting penguins, mountain scenes. However, if you're photographing from a moving ship or a Zodiac, you're constantly moving, not just in one direction, but often up and down with the waves and swell as well.

Blur can occur because the subject or the camera moves during the exposure. Normally, we don't want blur!

To understand the effect of shutter speeds on blur, let's start with two extremes.

At 1/2000 second, the shutter is open for such a short period of time that a flying bird will be recorded clearly. In comparison, a shutter speed of one full second would record the bird as an elongated blur.

Of course, the bird will still move during the 1/2000 second shutter speed, but the amount of movement is so small that the human eye doesn't perceive it under normal situations. In other words, a small amount of blur isn't a problem. Even quite a lot of blur can be hidden in a small reproduction (say an Instagram post), but blur becomes more evident as the reproduction size gets bigger (such as a poster print).

Moving Subjects

Exactly how short or long a shutter speed needs to be in order to freeze the action and record a moving object clearly depends on many factors: how fast is the subject moving, is the subject moving towards or away from the camera

(in which case the subject's relative size and position in the viewfinder isn't changing much), or is the subject moving across the field-of-view (in which case the position of the subject is changing within the viewfinder), how close are you to the action and how still is the camera during the exposure?

On a ship or a Zodiac, we are rarely able to hold the camera completely still. So, there's movement all the time and we need to be aware of it, even if it's not a problem.

Many cameras and/or lenses have optical image stabilising features which detect camera movement and introduce an opposite movement in the lens or the sensor to counteract the blur. The result can be a significant improvement in the 'hand holdability' of your camera.

However, don't be fooled by the advertising hype that says you can take sharp photos with image stabilisation up to five or six stops/EVs. This maybe the case when standing still on solid land, but on a moving ship or Zodiac, things are a little different! It will help, but maybe not that much.

For most moving subjects, a shutter speed of 1/500 or 1/1000 second will freeze the action nicely. Birds in flight will need 1/2000 second because they move so quickly.

Shutter speeds from 1/30 down to 1/2 second are in the danger zone: danger from camera shake and danger from subject movement. Your best advice is to change your camera's settings (increase the ISO or select a wider aperture) so you are shooting with a faster shutter speed.



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW?

Above is not the best photo technically, is it? But if you were the person standing in the Zodiac taking a photo with her phone, you'd be pretty happy with this record of the event. I know I am, because I'm the bloke standing behind her, holding my DJI Pocket and videoing the experience!

When you go to one of The Poles, there are multiple approaches for creating a body of photographs. One question to think about is, what are you going to show your friends and family when you get home?

I see a lot of people creating photo books with literally hundreds of photographs crammed within the pages. This is a fantastic keepsake and something you will enjoy reviewing for many years to come, but is it something everyone will want to see? Will they spend the time?

When I return from Antarctica and see the family, I reckon I have approximately three minutes in which I can share a few photos or videos – and after that, it's back to family life as normal. I've learnt that the 100 photos I have painstakingly edited while on the ship are not going to be reviewed by my family with the same gusto! Rather, I need to tightly edit a compact selection that shares the experience quickly.

Once you have your initial short edit ready for the family, what are you going to do with all your photos? There are two, maybe three approaches I take.

The first is the 'art photography' approach. This is where you run through your files and choose your best 20 to 100 images which can be turned into a book or an audio visual.

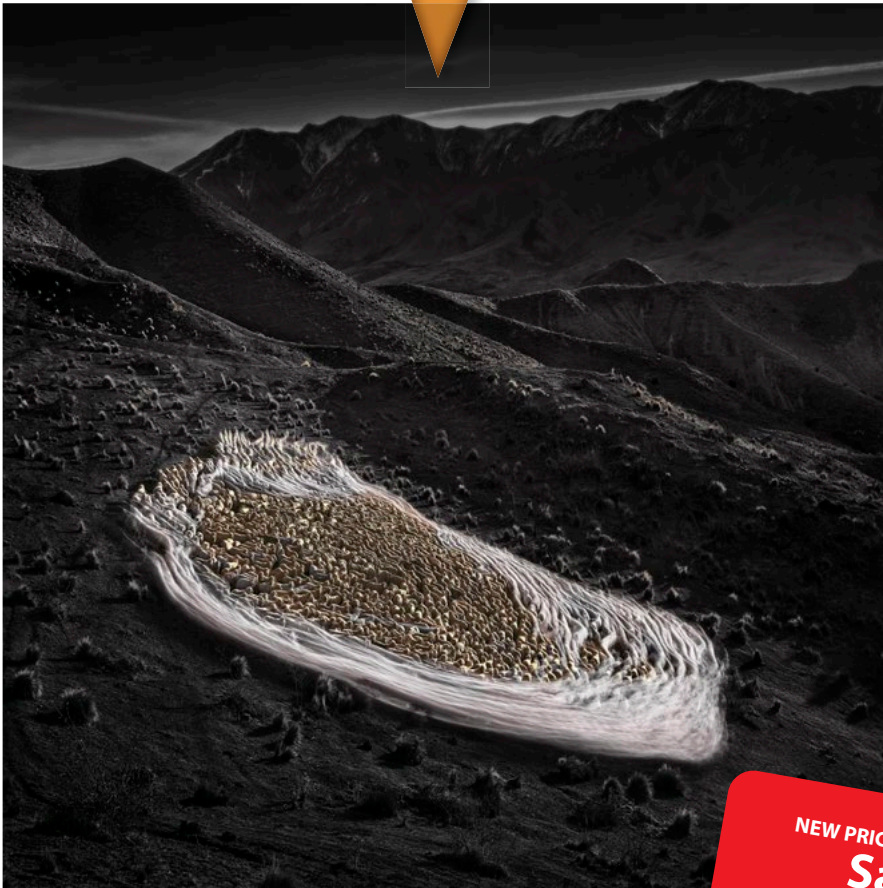
All the photographs are suitable for a competition or an exhibition and they are carefully framed and processed. However, to produce this body of work may take several months after returning home, so only a dozen or so might be ready for the initial sharing when I get back – and that's just fine because I only have three minutes!

The second approach is storytelling. Instead of worrying about artistic perfection, photographs are chosen to share the experience. What's it like standing in your cabin and watching icebergs float by? How cool is it motoring flat out towards shore on a Zodiac? How magnificent are the thousands of penguins standing on the beach (even if you can't share their pungent odours)? The book will have photos of life aboard the ship, perhaps the BBQ on the deck and some idiots doing the polar plunge! It's a documentary, not an artistic statement.

Both these approaches can be turned into books or audio visuals for sharing.

A third approach is video. There are many situations in the polar regions that are better recorded and shared with moving pictures. And there's nothing to stop you from combining stills with video in a short movie. Add a sound track or even a voice-over if you're confident.

And finally, no matter how much gear you have or how keen you are to get great photos, at least once a day, put your camera down and just spend a few minutes in quiet contemplation. Acknowledge where you are.



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