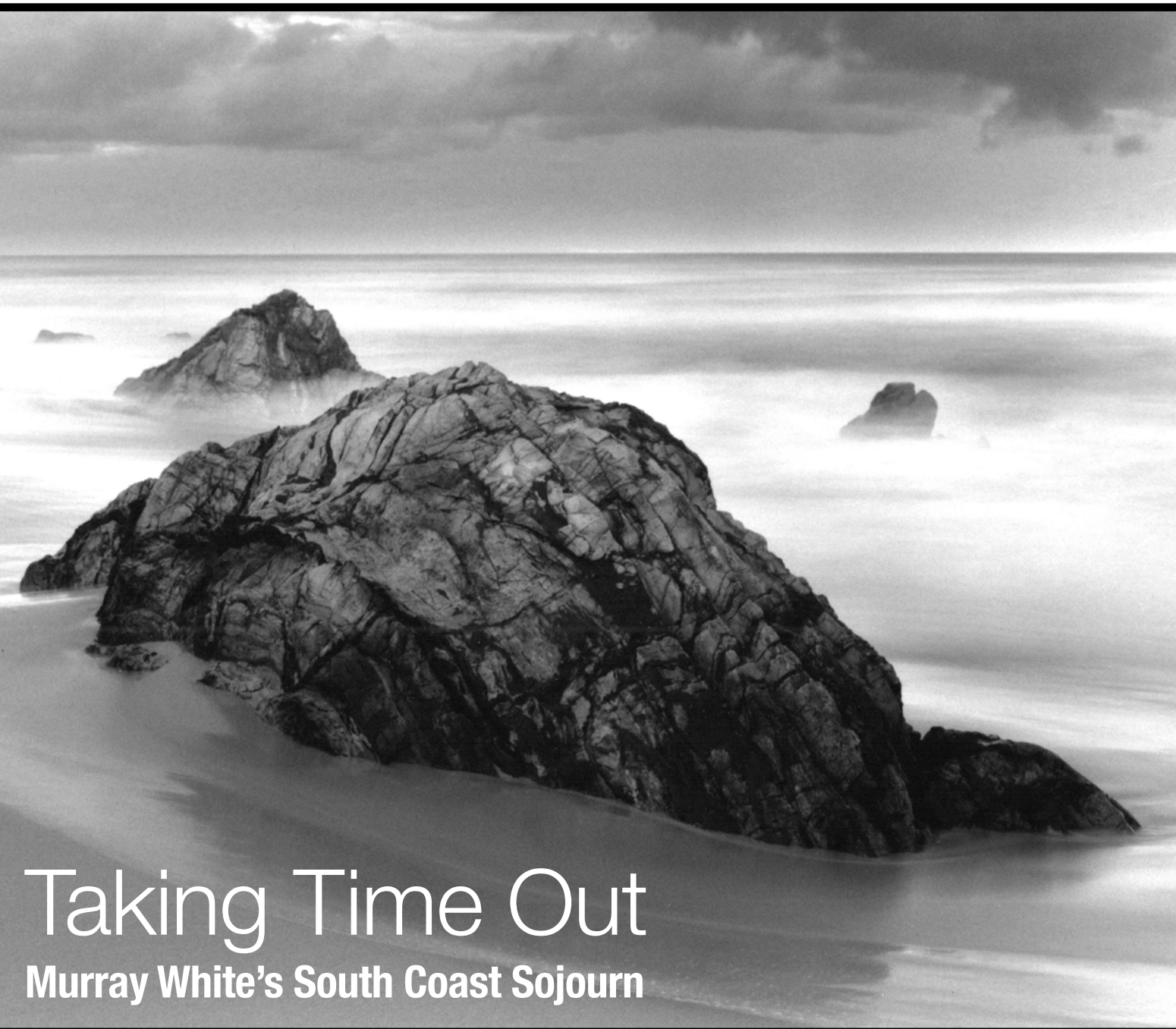


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**ISSUE 117
SPRING 2024**

Better Photography



Taking Time Out

Murray White's South Coast Sojourn

**Clare Oliver in Mongolia • Jackie Ranken's Multiple Exposures
Alison Faigneiz on Composites • Mike Langford's Manscapes**





KEEPERS

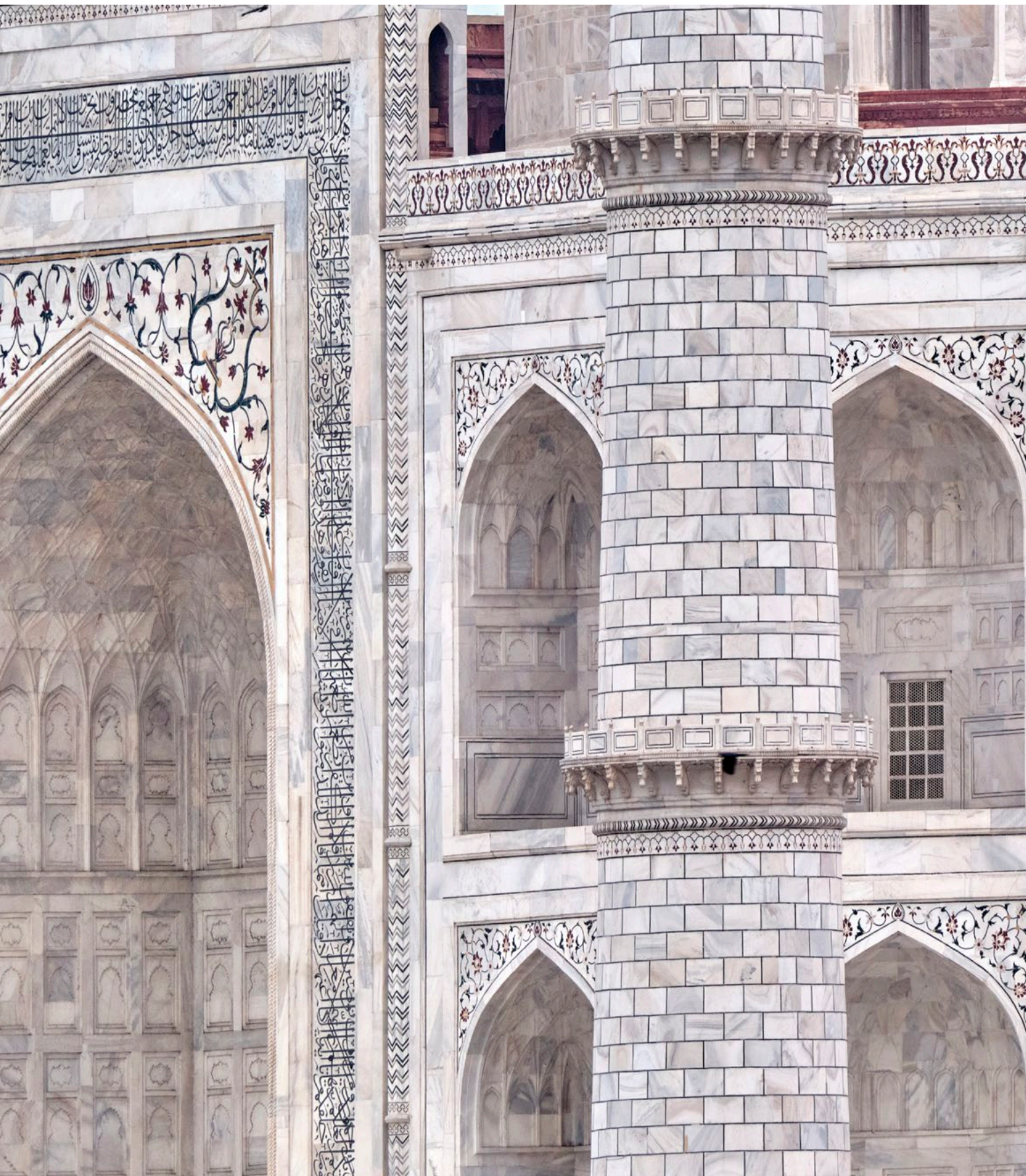
PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

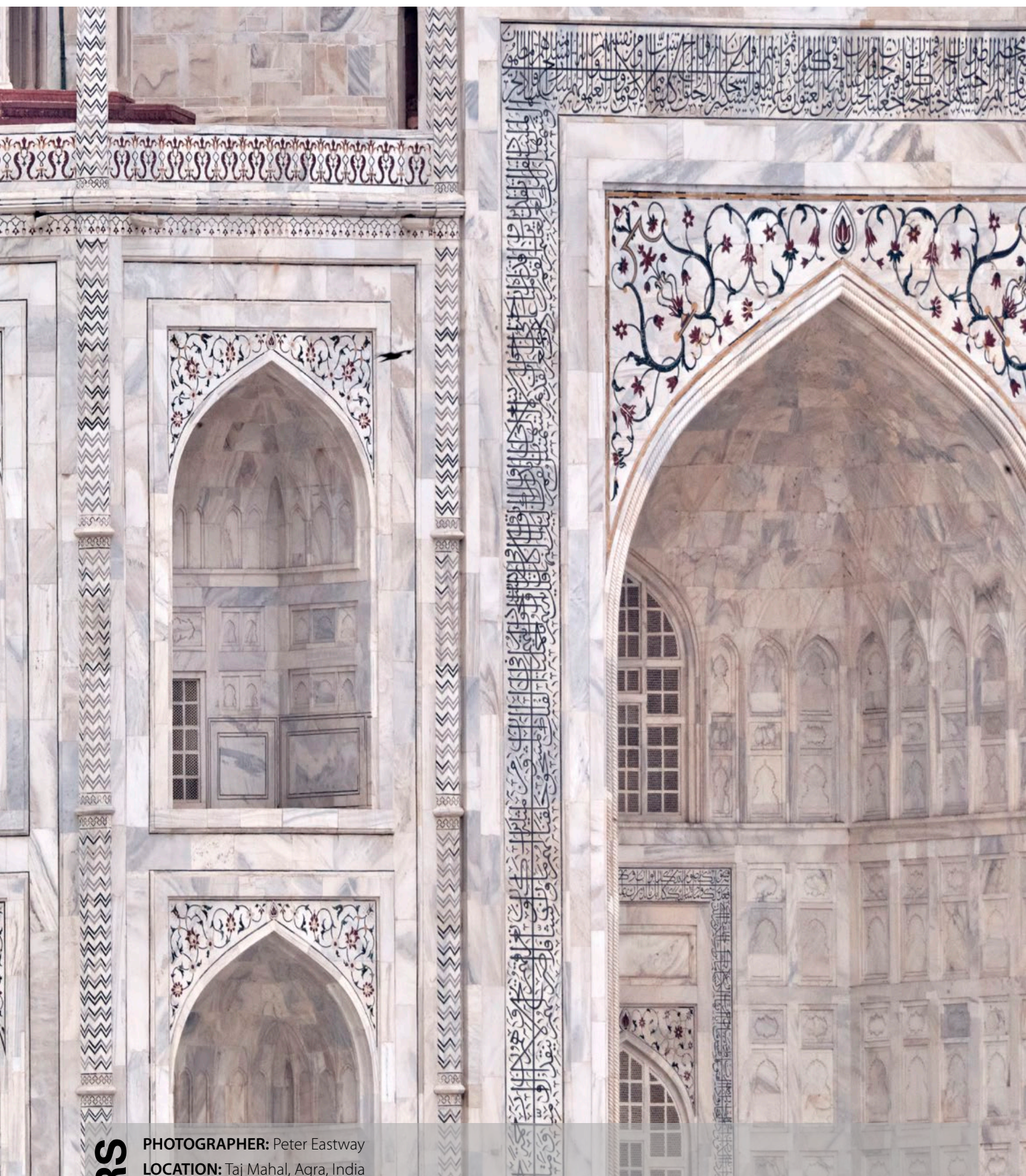
LOCATION: Uganda National Mosque, Kampala

CAMERA: Fujifilm X-H2, 8-16mm Fujinon zoom.

EXPOSURE: 1/15 second @ f3.6, ISO 160

SITUATION: You probably don't expect to see an architectural study like this from the centre of Africa, but the minaret in Kampala gives a great view over the city and is a popular spot for visitors. However, I confess to being more interested in the wonderful interior and the light coming through the windows and being bounced around inside. As another visitor climbed the stairs, I took a series of images with a slightly slow shutter speed to create a little blur and then composited the frames together in Photoshop.





KEEPERS

PHOTOGRAPHER: Peter Eastway

LOCATION: Taj Mahal, Agra, India

CAMERA: Fujifilm X-H2, 150-600mm Fujinon zoom

EXPOSURE: 1/125 second @ f8, ISO 400

SITUATION: How do you photograph an icon like the Taj Mahal differently and is it even possible? I confess to arriving early in the morning to beat the crowds, standing in line with hundreds of others and then running to the reflection pool to grab a spot with the wide-angle. Only to be disappointed! Sure, I have the classic shot, but it was the evening before using a telephoto lens from the other side of the river that provided angles, that for me at least, were more interesting. The Taj Mahal really is a wonderful building and still worth a visit, even if it has been photographed so many times before.



Cover photo by Murray White.
See article on page 58.

Editor:
Peter Eastway

Art Director:
Kathie Baxter Smith

Editorial Assistant:
Janet McGuigan

Contributors:
Michael Langford, Jackie Ranken,
Len Metcalf, Nick Melidonis, Roby
Lazar, Kathleen Baxter, Murray
White, Michael Coyne, Julie Pallant,
Clare Oliver, Alison Faigniez.

Advertising Co-Ordinator:
Kim Valenti

Reader Information Services:
Kim Valenti

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Photo by Michael Coyne. See article on page 48.



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Everyone needs a photography project and Mike Langford's most recent is a book project titled 'Vanishing Manscapes'.

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Len Metcalf challenges us and asks, is there a small sensor advantage?

MASTERPIECES

Clare Oliver: From Family Portraits to the Wilds of Mongolia 28

Clare Oliver refers to herself as GEN-Y, loves references to Lady Gaga and if she were allowed to use emojis, the article would be full of them!

Alison Faigniez: Simplifying The Composite 38

Most photographers enjoy working in a range of disciplines. One minute you're photographing nature, the next it's travel and then, in Alison Faigniez's case at least, it's imaginative composites that are as much art as they are photography.



Photo by Jackie Ranken. See article on page 74.



Photo by Clare Oliver. See article on page 28.

Nikon Z6III

From the days of film, manufacturers have struggled to explain their technological advances without giving too much of the game away to their competitors! So when Nikon states the Z6III is the world's first full-frame mirrorless camera for which a partially-stacked CMOS sensor with numerous high-speed processing circuits stacked above and below the image sensor has been adopted, the more important question becomes, 'What does it do?'

According to Nikon, the high-speed readout enabled by this new 24.5-megapixel sensor, along with the EXPEED 7 high-speed image-processing engine (also adopted in the Z9 and Z8 models), allows for Pre-Release Capture of up to 1 second of recording before the shutter-release button is fully pressed at a maximum speed of 120 fps. If you're shooting wildlife or sport, this feature is incredibly useful and has been available on other cameras, but perhaps not at the same frame rate. Mind you, to achieve 120 fps you're shooting JPGs and a cropped-sensor image size. To get full-frame pre-release captures, you drop down to 60 fps, also for JPG files. Funny to be writing 'drop down' to 60 fps!

Of course, the Z6III is no slouch shooting 14 fps with its mechanical shutter and up to 20 fps with the electronic shutter – and now we're talking about capturing full-size raw files.

Other improvements include a new electronic viewfinder (EVF) that is brighter, has a higher resolution and a wider



colour gamut, plus the Z6III works in tandem with Nikon's new cloud service, Nikon Imaging Cloud, which offers new Imaging Recipes (presets) and automatic transferring of images to various third-party cloud storage services. Furthermore, the low end of the AF detection range has been extended to -10 EV, exceeding that of the Z9 and Z8 and making it easier to focus in dark situations.

Tokina SZ 8mm f2.8 Fisheye

At a RRP \$440, exploring the world using a fisheye lens seems incredibly affordable with Tokina's SZ 8mm f2.8 Fisheye. In some ways, the fisheye lens has faded from the creative photographer's toolbox, probably because there are so many other ways that you can be creative, from intentional camera movement, multiple exposures and interesting presets and styles. In fact, you mightn't have thought about a fisheye lens at all!

Fisheye lenses provide a 180-degree view (measured diagonally across the frame), although to achieve this, straight lines are curved. In other words, the image is not distortion free, but nevertheless, the results can be stunning if you use them thoughtfully. And the main problem in the past is that fisheyes were invariably designed for a full-frame sensor, so although they worked on a cropped sensor, you didn't get the 180-degree angle.

Tokina's lens is specifically designed for cropped frame (APS-C) sensors and we've seen it available for Fujifilm, Sony, Nikon and Canon lenses. It's not a big lens, weighing 280 g and extending only 52 mm from the camera body, plus it comes with a petal-shaped lens hood which, despite good intentions, is always going to struggle to prevent lens flare – if indeed you don't include the sun within the frame anyway!

Interestingly, it's a manual focus lens, not that this will worry you too much because at an aperture like f8, everything



will be in focus due to the incredible depth-of-field. Minimum focusing distance is 10 cm and it has a clickless aperture ring for smooth operation during video capture. However, you won't be able to put a filter on the front (even though it's a physically small lens, the wide-angle means the filter's edge will be visible in the corners) and there is no provision for a filter over the rear lens elements nor built into the lens (as some older film-based fisheye lenses offered).

But then again, it's \$440 and the results will be, if nothing else, very different!

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Thanks to Memento

Readers have probably noticed that Memento's advertising up the front of the magazine is missing this issue and we're sorry to say we have some very sad news. The company was forced to close its doors in April this year and it has left a huge hole in the photography community.

The editor worked closely with Libby Jeffrey and Geoff Hunt for twenty years. And we'd all see them at trade shows and photo awards, always smiling and helpful – and the quality of their printing and binding was second to none.

Memento Pro had the honour to win the Bennys in 2019, considered by the worldwide graphic arts industry to be the highest honour of the print world (and the editor can only agree since it was his *Middlehurst | Middle Earth* book that helped win).

Print 21 reported Geoff saying, "It was with a heavy heart that, after 20 years of printing photos and forming friendships in the ANZ photo community, we closed our doors. Despite every effort to keep the business alive, economic conditions of the last few years sealed our fate.

"While we will no longer be around, our books and albums will stand the test of time and this gives us much comfort. Our parting wish is that you continue to print photos and to support local and small businesses wherever you can."

Which leaves many of us with the question, where will we get our photo books printed in the future? We're still working this out ourselves and there doesn't seem to be a single replacement that can do all the products Memento did. However, Blurb has been around a long time and for more bespoke products you can look at Queensberry in NZ, Brilliant Prints in Queensland and Graphistudio in Italy has a Melbourne office. We'll keep you posted as we test out the options!



Fujifilm GFX100S II

More automation used to mean a lack of manual control, but the latest Fujifilm GFX100S II has made large format photography incredibly accessible for photographers of all skill levels. All you need is the desire to capture super high quality photographs with incredible detail and colour fidelity!

Most of our readers are shooting with a mirrorless or DSLR camera. Did you know that shooting with the latest GFX is exactly the same? Same type of handling. Same options for exposure control. Same range of focusing features. Yet although the camera offers a whopping 102-megapixel sensor, the new large format GFX100S II is physically small and weighs just 883 g (which is lighter than many full-frame mirrorless cameras with their smaller sensors).

So, what's gone missing, especially since the new camera's price has dropped nearly \$4,000 to an RRP AUS \$8699? The short answer is that for still photographers, nothing. In fact, there are improvements over the GFX100S, including a new GFX 102MP CMOS II sensor with a standard sensitivity of ISO 80 that produces less noise and a higher dynamic range. The micro lenses on the new sensor have been tweaked to improve image quality and AF accuracy at the edges of the frame as well.

Now add in a new IBIS (in body image stabilisation) unit which, with its gyro and acceleration sensors, achieves up to 8-stops stabilisation, so you can comfortably shoot most



subjects without needing a tripod – even though you're capturing 102-megapixel files! In fact, it's the addition of IBIS that is making large format photography so easy and accessible because you can hand-hold the camera for practically everything you shoot.

One of the limitations with earlier GFX cameras was their AF performance. While remarkable for a large format sensor, it wasn't quite as good as the smaller X-Series cameras. Well, that's all changed! The new GFX100S II uses an improved predictive algorithm for high-speed tracking and when you attach the new GF500mm F5.6 R LM OIS WR lens, the worlds of both sport and wildlife photography have been changed forever.

Home > Camera Lenses > Mirrorless Lenses > Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 Fisheye MF Sony E Lens

Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 Fisheye MF Sony E Lens



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Tokina

At a glance

- Lightweight (280g) and compact (overall length 52mm) construction.
- Fast f/2.8 lens for compact APS-C sensor mirrorless cameras.
- High quality built and sophisticated exterior design.
- Clickless aperture ring for smooth operation in video shooting.
- Minimum focus distance of 10cm to include close-up objects in front of a wide background.
- Detachable bayonet type hood to use with full-frame mirrorless cameras for achieving circular fisheye effect.

Related Categories

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Your SNS & Vlogging Lens

Concept

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE is a compact and lightweight fast, ultra-wide prime, manual focus, full-frame fisheye lens designed exclusively for APS-C sensor mirrorless cameras. The line-up includes models for Fuji X and Sony E APS-C size camera mounts. Emphasized perspective and unique distortion makes this lens attractive for both still photographers and videographers.

The suggested genres are landscape, nightscape, interior, architecture, street snap and pet photography. An ultra wide angle of view, unique perspective effect and a compact design allows this lens to be used for creating viral images for Social Networks such as Instagram as well as Vlogging.

Compact & Lightweight

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE features lightweight (280g) and compact (overall length 52mm) construction to fit contemporary mirrorless cameras.

Unique perspective effect

An ultra wide angle of view, unique perspective effect and a compact design allows this lens to be used for creating viral images for Social Networks such as Instagram as well as Vlogging.

Fast f/2.8 aperture

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE is a fast f/2.8 lens that incorporates Tokina exclusive multi-coated optical elements for effective light intake and as a result, for increased shutter speed in low light conditions.

Close-up shooting

Minimum focus distance of 10cm to include close-up objects in front of a wide background.

Detachable hood

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE adopts detachable hood to use with full-frame mirrorless cameras for achieving circular fisheye effect.

Clickless aperture

The Tokina SZ 8mm F2.8 FISH-EYE is equipped with clickless aperture ring for smooth operation in video shooting.

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Lumix S9

Is smaller and lighter better? In most cases it is, if only because you could then carry an extra lens! But do you need your camera to process your photos and upload them directly to your smartphone? In most cases, if a camera is going to appeal to the market in general and not old luddites like the editor, it certainly does!

Panasonic's Lumix S9 is not only the smallest and lightest full-frame mirrorless camera in the S-Series, it comes in a choice of colours – jet black, crimson red, dark olive, night blue and dark silver – and so is definitely targeting a wider audience.

Like most cameras these days, the S9 ships with a range of image presets, which they call Real Time LUTs, while the new Lumix Lab app enables users to develop their own unique signature presets (LUT colour files) on their smart devices. No more computer, but importantly, it doesn't take an hour to transfer your images from the camera to your device – Panasonic suggests you can shoot and share to social media in as little as 30 seconds.

The 24.2-megapixel full-frame CMOS sensor is coupled with PDAF (Phase Detection Auto-Focus), which provides precise subject tracking and Active I.S., which significantly reduces blurring from camera shake when shooting hand-held.

Of course, Lumix cameras have also been video producer favourites and the S9 continues this association, introducing



a new recording format, MP4 Lite. Capturing the full sensor height enables flexible framing (Open Gate) recorded in 10 bit 30p/25p. This means producers can capture high quality videos optimised for a smartphone and then easily resize aspect ratios to suit social media with the Lumix Lab app.

A lot of the new cameras are really engaging with social media – and this makes complete sense as there probably isn't a photographer reading this who doesn't have some social media interaction! Price for the S9 body is \$2699.

Canson Somerset

Will the new range of Somerset inkjet papers under the Canson logo become your new favourites?

Just released is a new range of three matt digital fine art papers sourced from the renowned St Cuthberts Mill based in the UK. Somerset is a traditional printmaking paper which has been used by artists for a range of time-honoured techniques such as intaglio, etching, stone lithography, silkscreen, relief printing and letterpress.

The Somerset Enhanced range of papers is based on traditional printmaking papers that are still made by artisan papermakers at the Mill. Using the traditional mould-made papermaking process, the new papers are all 100% cotton rag and do not contain any optical brightening agents (OBAs).

The papers are available in three finishes: satin (smooth),

velvet (soft grain) and watercolour (textured) and have a proprietary inkjet coating, which provides excellent print quality.

Somerset Enhanced Satin White looks and feels as though it is handmade. The smooth satin matt surface has a timeless quality which accentuates all the detail in the final print without any distractions. The natural white base adds colour, depth and vitality while the proprietary inkjet coating guarantees superb image quality and longevity, which is essential for both limited and open edition digital fine art prints.

The Somerset Enhanced Velvet has a fine grain texture which accentuates the detail in the final image along with a natural white base, adds vibrancy and depth to colour, excellent contrast and very deep blacks.

Somerset Enhanced Watercolour White has a traditional watercolour 'cold pressed' surface finish. The 100% cotton mould-made paper has a soft, refined feel to the touch and the textured surface offers a painterly feel to the final print.



The papers are available in 330 gsm and 225 gsm weight. Rolls are 12 metres in length from 17" up to 60" wide and sheets are available in A4 through to A2. Distributed by Kayell Australia.

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Do We Need to be Buying NEW CAMERAS?

Sony has just released a camera with a Global Shutter.

What does this mean and do you need one? Thoughts by Peter Eastway.



There have been quite a few new cameras hitting the street this year and having just edited Len Metcalf's article in defence of the smaller sensor, I thought it would be interesting to ask ourselves the question: do we need new cameras?

I can't talk for Picasso or da Vinci, but I imagine they weren't particularly worried about the state of the palette on which they mixed their paints. On the other hand, a brush that was losing its bristles could be a problem – and I have no doubt when they moved into a new studio (probably paid for by one of their regal patrons), there was a wry smile and a sense of satisfaction when they started work on their next masterpiece.

Len's arguments for smaller sensors and cameras are

compelling, but he also admits to spending over three decades working with large format film cameras and still loving the process. I also confess to loving cameras that are hardly efficient to use. I have a Cambo view camera with a series of old large format lenses to which I attach my Phase One digital back. I could get photos more easily with other equipment, but using this camera puts me into a different frame of mind and, while it's true a camera is not a creative device in and of itself, the use of a camera does have an influence on my creative output.

What I am trying to rationalise is GAS – gear acquisition syndrome. My mother said that most of our decisions are based on rationalisations and rarely are we truly objective. I



Sony a9 III, front view.



Sony a9 III, back view.



With a 1/80,000 second shutter speed, we should expect to see some super fast subjects rendered like they haven't been before.



Sport and action photographers will appreciate the global shutter, for both distortion free video and the opportunity to freeze the action like never before.

can't argue with my mum! So, I'll just be up front and say I like buying new gear and that's okay. And I like buying new gear especially when it allows me to do something I haven't been able to do before.

Sony's Global Shutter System

Sony's latest a9 III mirrorless camera features the world's first full-frame stacked 24.6 MP CMOS image sensor with a global shutter system. Unlike a rolling shutter sensor that records images sequentially from the top row of pixels to the bottom, the newly-developed Exmor RS image sensor exposes and reads all pixels simultaneously, so the camera can capture fast-moving subjects with absolutely no distortion. Combined with a maximum shutter speed of 1/80,000 second (1/16,000 second during continuous shooting), the a9 III is a game changer.

The preceding paragraph is more or less verbatim from the Sony website. But what does it really mean?

Cameras need (or needed) a shutter mechanism to control the length of the exposure – the shutter speed. The faster the shutter speed, the less movement would be recorded in a subject, so if we're photographing hummingbirds with impossibly fast wing action, a super fast shutter speed is needed to freeze the action. Lots of cameras have 1/8000 second mechanical shutter speeds and they seem to have

captured hummingbirds remarkably well in the past, so do we really need a 1/80,000 second shutter speed?

Possibly not, but I think this is essentially a by-product of the global shutter. But first, let's go back to that mechanical shutter at 1/8000 second.

Mechanical shutters take a certain amount of time to open and close. Simply speaking, a shutter comprises two blinds. The first one opens to start the exposure, the second one closes to finish it.

If it takes the first blind 1/60 second to open and it's opening from left to right, then the left side of the image is going to get more exposure than the right. However, when the second blind starts to close, the left side stops being exposed before the right-hand side and so everything is evened out. For flash photography, this used to be very important because the shutter had to be completely open when the flash was fired, otherwise one of the blinds would be covering up the film or the sensor. The manufacturers worked ways around this by firing multiple flash bursts which allowed flash photography with fast shutter speeds and most of us wouldn't give this another thought as it's all done automatically these days.

But back to the standard exposure. If it takes 1/60 second for the shutter to open, how do we create a 1/8000 second shutter speed? The answer lies in the timing of the second

blind. For a faster shutter speed, it starts closing before the first blind is fullopen, so effectively there's a narrow band or slit of light moving across the sensor, providing the required exposure. And because the shutter speed is so short, any movement in the camera or the subject is inconsequential – we don't see any distortion to talk about.

Rolling Shutters

So, mechanical shutters are under control, but most cameras now have electronic shutters as well, often with even faster shutter speeds like 1/16,000 second. How does this work?

Electronic shutters (up until now) expose one row of pixels after another to build up the required exposure. They are called rolling shutters for this reason. And at fast shutter speeds, there probably isn't a problem with either subject or camera movement. Or is there?

The problem with most electronic shutters is that the process of taking an exposure can take as long as 1/3 second, although on most mirrorless cameras it's much shorter than this. So, while you've set a 1/16,000 second shutter speed, it actually takes the camera 1/3 second or 1/30 second to complete the exposure and, if you move the camera around during that 1/3 second or 1/30 second, or your subject moves, you get image distortion. The classic example is of a racing car flying past with oval shaped wheels – because the image is being exposed sequentially (one row of pixels after the other).

Now, the reason electronic shutters operated like this is beyond my pay grade, but I understand that it comes down to the speed of getting the information off the sensor. This is the processor's job. If you use a mechanical shutter to expose the sensor, after capture the camera sends the information from the sensor to the buffer (and then to the memory card) as quickly as it can, but essentially it is one pixel at a time, or one row of pixels at a time. So the 'speed' of a camera sensor isn't just its sensitivity to light (the ISO), it's also how quickly it can process the information and the faster it can process, the sooner it is ready to take the next shot. And as processor speeds have increased over the years, so have the frame rates our cameras can capture sequentially.

Well, surely it's not too difficult because video cameras have been capturing 30 frames per second since Adam was



a boy? And now with slow motion they are capturing 60 and 120 fps, so how hard can it be?

Generally speaking, video has been at much lower resolutions than still cameras, so there's less data to move around – but let's not talk about video because I'm not expert enough. This article is about the global shutter and why it's better than the old 'rolling' shutter.

Global Shutter Advantages

With Sony's new global shutter, all of the pixels are exposed at the same time. There's no progressive exposure, no matter how quick it might be, the result being no distortion. Is this a big factor? In my experience, it's something you could usually work around, but you had to be mindful of it. Most cameras allowed you to stick with a mechanical shutter up to 1/4000 or 1/8000 second, and then the camera would automatically switch to the electronic shutter to achieve the super fast shutter speeds (when hopefully distortion was going to be less of a problem). But yes, from time to time there would be distortion issues.

Where I've found the rolling shutter a problem is shooting video from a plane, especially doing orbits over patterned water and sands below. The image looks fantastic, but you can see these odd distortion waves flowing over the landscape below which are not what we'd expect. Now, this is fully my fault because of how I've set up the camera and the lesson has been learned, but with the global shutter, I expect this will no longer be a problem

So, congratulations to Sony for yet another great advancement. Of course, the global shutter is currently only working on a 24-megapixel sensor, so doing the same for a higher resolution sensor may still be some time away until the processing power catches up, but it's still a good reason for buying yet another camera!



Sony α9 III, top view.

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Len's Journal

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PHOTOGRAPHER · EDUCATOR · MENTOR · ARTIST · WRITER

2024 Better Photography Magazine's PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

For Elizabeth Storms to become the winner of the 2024 Better Photography Magazine's Photographer of the Year, at least four entries were required – and all four had to be of a very high standard.

In fact, to be in the running for the Photographer of the Year, you needed an average score of 86.7, so while an entrant might have had a Silver Award of just 82, they would also have had a Gold Award of around 92 to keep their average up. Not every photograph in a portfolio has to be the best of the best, rather the judges are looking for a consistently high standard across four images.

This year, we had 676 entries and a very high standard overall. While just 11 entries earned a Gold Award, 40% of entries earned a Silver Award and 54% a Bronze Award. That's a high percentage of awards – and here's why:

When entering our competition, there are two processes at work. The first is the 'standard' of the entry – Bronze, Silver or Gold. The judges have decades of experience assessing photographs and, in their mind, they know the scores they need to award for 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 score feedback is incredibly valuable for photographers looking to improve their work.

If your entry shows skill or imagination in one area, we'll award a Bronze as an acknowledgement you're on the right track. However, to reach Silver, you really have to be doing everything right and a Silver in our photography competition is very likely to receive a Silver in a professional awards as well. And as for Gold Awards – well, we're quite comfortable saying that as judges, we'd like to have taken those photos ourselves!

The second process is a comparative one. When we hand out the five major prizes, the judges are comparing the top five

scoring entries against each other. Which landscape photograph is 'the best'? Which portfolio of four entries should win the Photographer of the Year? To get to this stage, you have to have a top scoring entry, but this gives the judges a second chance to ensure they are in agreement. It's important for all entrants to realise that this second process is as much a matter of personal opinion and bias, no matter how experienced the judges are and how objective they aim to be. And that's why we suggest entrants aim to earn Silvers for all their entries, as this is a truer reflection of their skill than winning a category or the overall prize!

Each category winner takes home AUS \$750 and the Photographer of the Year \$2000! My thanks once again to judges Tony Hewitt and David Oliver for their assistance.

On the following pages, we'll show you the winning images and also an editor's selection of some of the high scoring entries as well.

THE 2024 CATEGORY WINNERS

REVEALING NATURE

Rob Weir – 'White Fronted Tern Wing Touch'

OPEN – YOUR CHOICE

Douwe Dijkstra – 'Three Feet'

CLASSIC LANDSCAPE

Krzysztof Browko – 'Church'

EMOTIVE PORTRAITURE

Natalie Arber – 'Case Unknown'

ELIZABETH STORMS

Our 2024 Better Photography Magazine Photographer of the Year has an interesting background for someone who entered the Revealing Nature category! Writes Elizabeth Storms, "Previously, I was a bone conservator specialising in palaeontological specimens, to excavate, repair, detail and conserve ice-age Columbian mammoths."

Her fascination with proboscideans led her to Tanzania in 2019, to connect with African elephants. "Thereafter, I kept returning to photograph in more African countries and the breadth of additional species. The evolution of my photography has delved into two parallel streams: portraiture which captures the 'je ne sais quoi' of the subjects, with micro expressions and body language; and capturing unexpected or idiosyncratic images of behaviour, intrinsic to the species.

"Black and white images are my preferred choice. Its timeless approach for wildlife is clean and powerful,



Photos by Elizabeth Storms



All photos by Elizabeth Storms

diminishing visual distractions while enhancing light and exposure to their purest form. Moreover, emotions and the subtlest nuances of detail are heightened."

Moving forward, Elizabeth says her goal is to align with organisations for fundraising purposes of specific species, identifying grass roots efforts for localised philanthropy and to explore releases of images to fulfil fundraising efforts.

Writing about one of her winning images, 'Repose', she explains the sighting was in the Mala Mala Game Reserve in South Africa. "The behaviour of vultures, hyenas and jackals indicated the target area and lion tracks led us to the kill site. It was a scene for all senses. The sights, smells and sounds of twenty-four engorged lions was staggering. Close observation of the filtered late afternoon light was critical for side and back lighting. Finding angles and openings amidst the sea of

sleeping lions was crucial to create something compelling.

"Rewardingly, we were able to freely move to where the light was anticipated, along with high potential for the cubs, as my chosen candidates. As often happens, the sightline and lighting for this image was optimal for brief minutes and seconds for when the light was most intense. With an f2.8 setting, the innocence of the cub's face is clearly highlighted amongst the carnage of the giraffe's remains."

Elizabeth used a Sony A1 with the Sony FE 400mm f2.8 GM OSS lens. "Post-production involved reinstating exposure and details for the cub's face, along with bringing out some detail in the shadows. There was an evident Chiaroscuro effect with the backlight hitting the ribs, so some areas of the ribs required dodging or burning for delineation. Exposure and minute vignetting was used on a global level."

2024 Better Photography Magazine's PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

2024 Revealing Nature Winner

ROB WEIR



'White Fronted Tern Wing Touch' by Rob Weir

Rob Weir is a medical officer of health by day, based in Palmerston North, New Zealand. "Photography is a nice release for me. Over the years, my main photographic interests have been both landscape and nature photography. I tend to combine my photographic interest with travel and find I'm increasingly focused on wildlife these days.

"While I often travel a long way for my photographic pursuits, this image was captured about an hour's drive from home in Waikanae, New Zealand, during February this year. The location is great for birdlife and I had been concentrating

on the terns for a few trips before this one was made. I had chosen to visit in the evening for this shot as I knew there would be backlighting opportunities with the location of the terns. As is usual for me, I was looking for images that demonstrate action or behaviour."

Rob's revealing nature photo was captured with a Sony A1, a Sony 600mm prime lens and 1.4x teleconverter.

"The post-production was fairly basic – some limited global tonal adjustments and some very limited local adjustments."

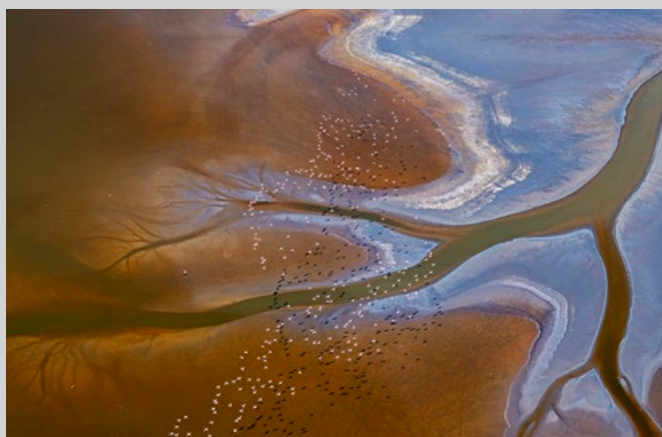
Top 20 Revealing Nature Winners



'Savannah in Black' by Marcello Galleano, Silver Award



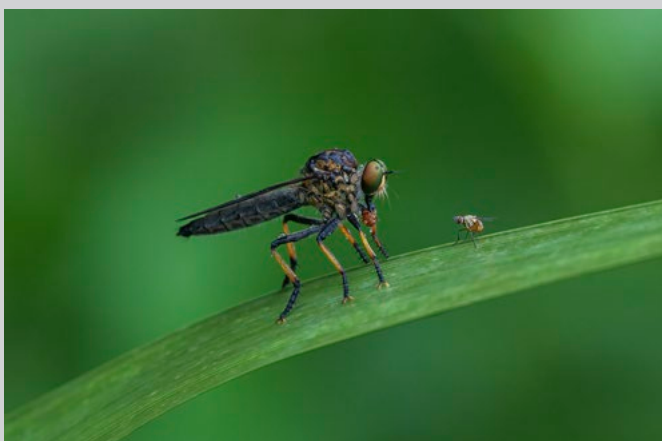
'Escape the Dream' by Thomas De Franzoni, Silver Award



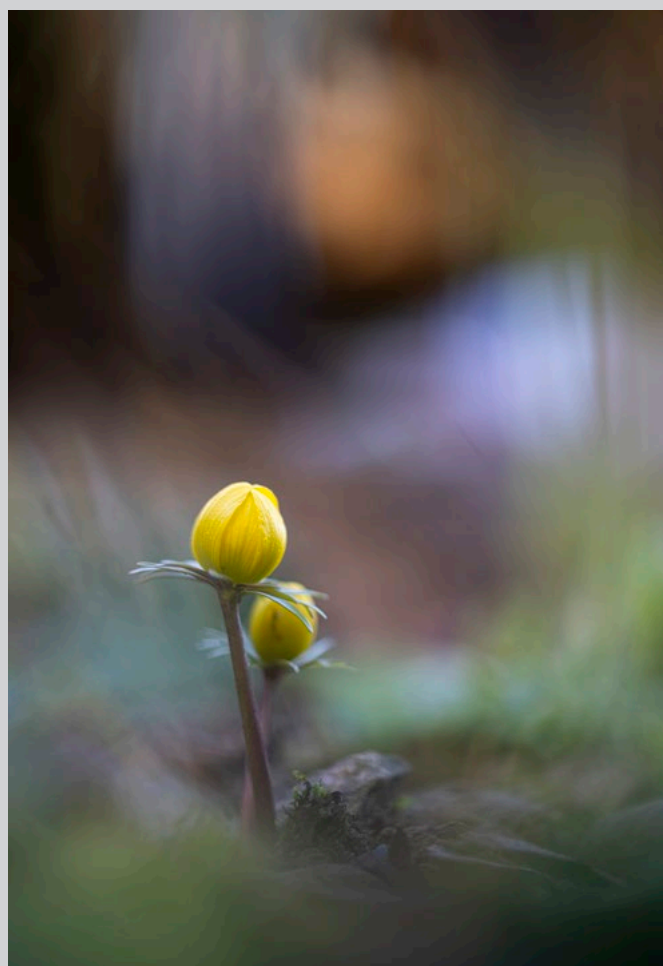
'Birds S Art' by Hira Punjabi, Gold Award



'Fire Stream Scorio' by Avilash Ghosh, Silver Award



'You Chase My Partner' by Maria Mazo, Gold Award



'Mysterious Light' by Bernadette Benz, Gold Award

2024 Better Photography Magazine's PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

2024 Open (Your Choice) Winner

DOUWE DIJKSTRA



'Three Feet' by Douwe Dijkstra

"The photo was taken in Newcastle, New South Wales. After a leisurely coastal walk, I ended up at the Merewether Baths with a beautiful ocean pool and known for its starting blocks with big bold black numbers."

"As a graphic designer, I love typography and wanted to include one of the numbers in my frame. I waited for a local swimmer to make the turn and tried to capture that fleeting moment."

And Douwe did it – with his trusted iPhone!

Douwe is a professional graphic designer who confesses he's a passionate iPhone photographer with a love for black

and white. "I used to shoot a lot of long exposure landscapes and seascapes with my DSLR. However, since the iPhone hit the market some 10 years ago, it quickly became my 'go to' camera. I now carry my camera everywhere I go and don't have to worry about packing my bag with lenses or filters. Long afternoons spent post-processing are now a thing of the past and as a result, street photography has become my main focus."

"I converted this particular image quickly to mono. After that, I used my favourite filter (noir) to add a bit of grain and contrast. All on my iPhone."

Top 20 Open (Your Choice) Winners



'Jonathan' by Grant Galbraith, Gold Award



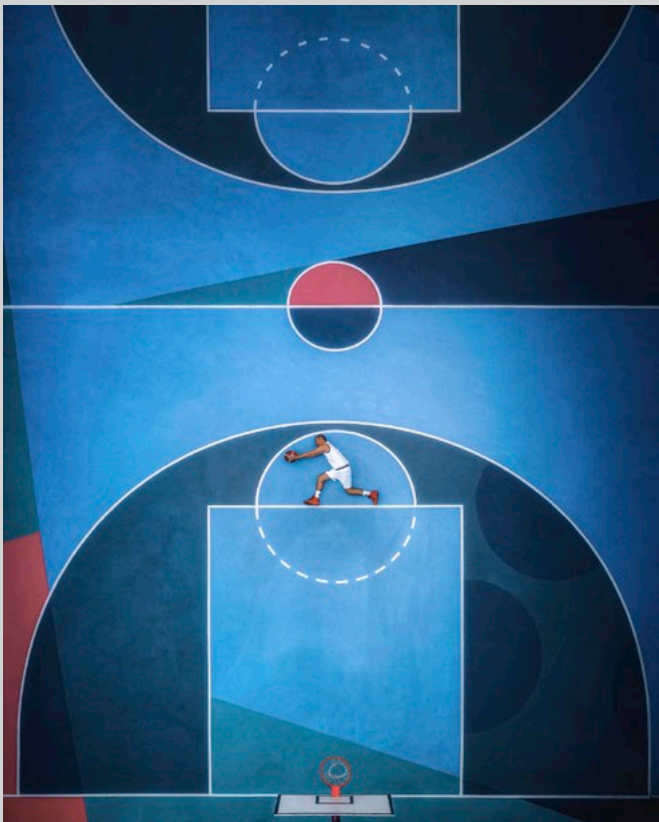
'Morning Meditation' by Stephane Thomas, Silver Award



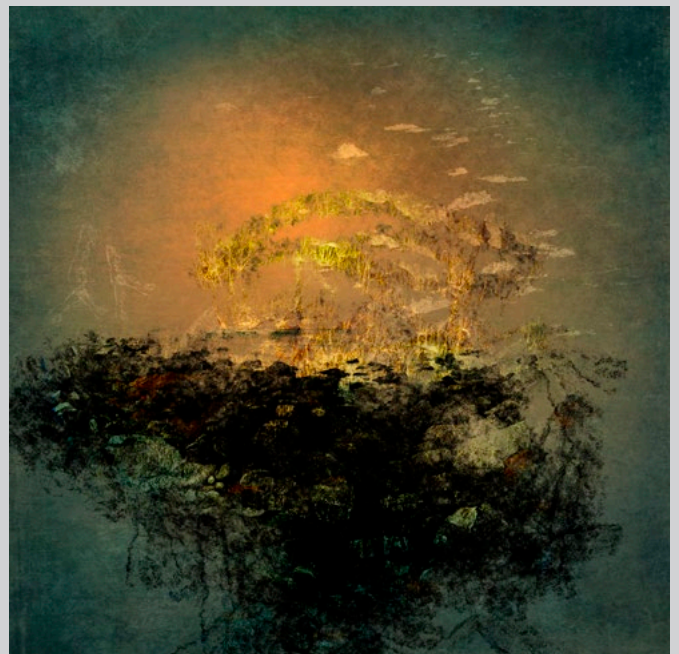
'Untitled' by Graeme Gordon, Gold Award



'Legacy for the Children of Future' by Hardijanto Budiman, Gold Award



Basketglow by Radoslav Sviretsov, Silver Award

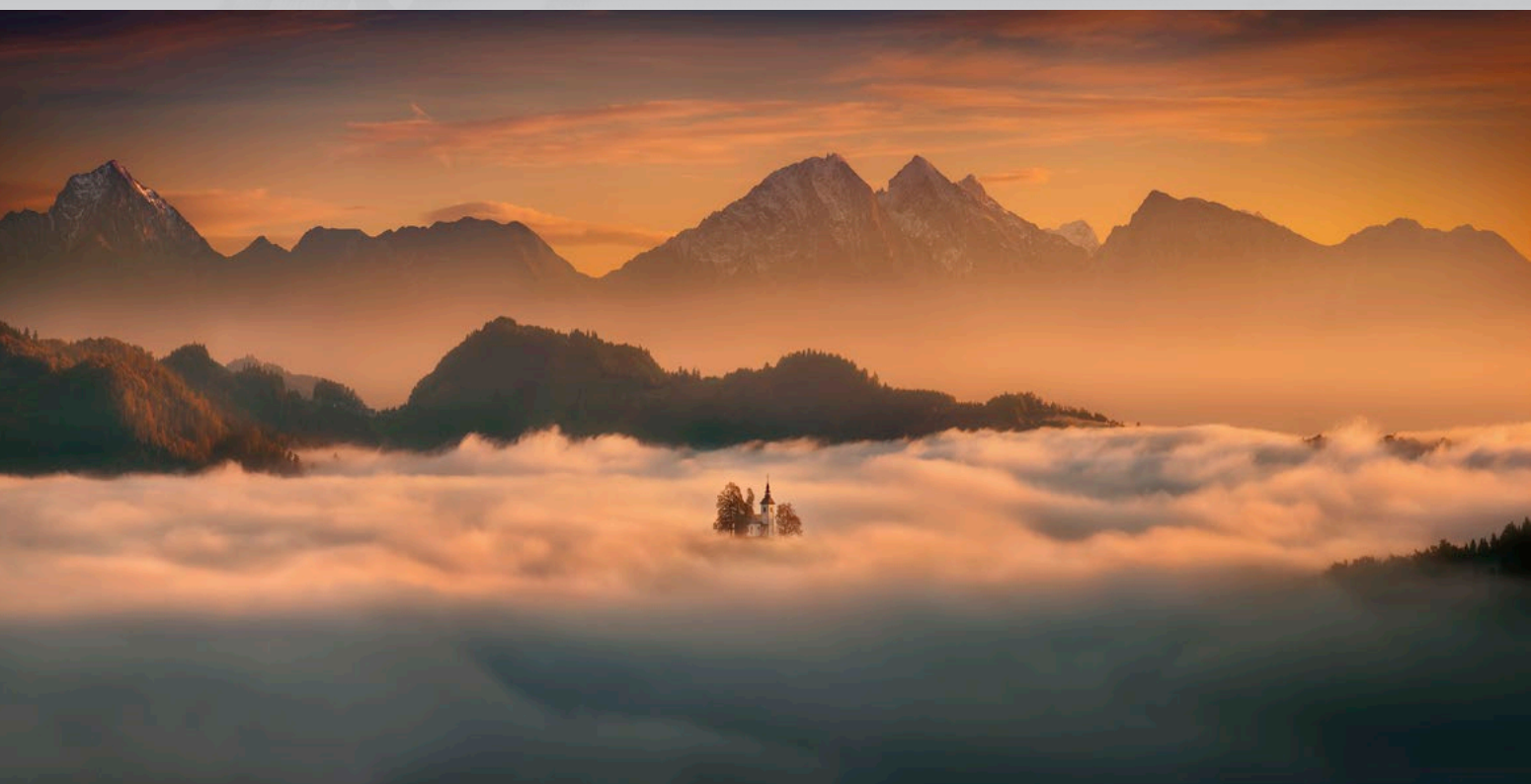


'The Very Sun' by Michael Matthews, Silver Award

2024 Better Photography Magazine's PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

2024 Classic Landscape Winner

KRZYSZTOF BROWKO



'Church' by Krzysztof Browko

"My adventure with photography started in 2005. Photography faced a "cyber era" which accelerated its development and photo web portals were getting more and more popular among photography enthusiasts. At that time, I discovered a simple compact camera and while I was having a lot of fun taking family photos, what motivated me most were top quality photos with perfect compositions from places I'd never had a chance to see. It became clear to me that landscape photography was to be a source of the greatest satisfaction.

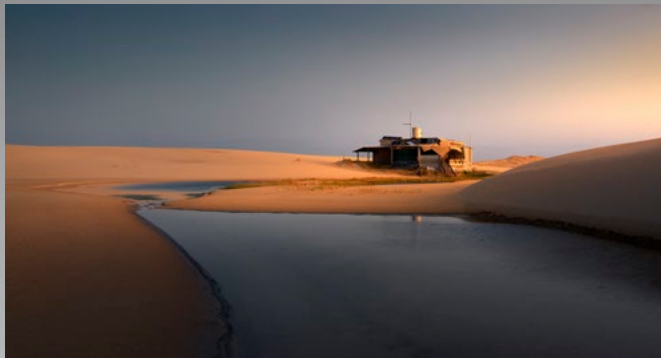
"Today, travelling across the world's roadless tracts with my camera and tripod, I feel like a hunter who aims at capturing interesting parts of reality. What's more, dependence

on weather conditions and light keeps it interesting and challenging.

"I'm 51 and I live in Opole, Poland. I make my living as an IT specialist. Landscape photography is my passion which helps me not only to break away from the daily routine, but also to stop and notice things that we sometimes miss in our everyday lives."

The winning photo titled 'Church' was created during an autumn trip to Slovenia. St. Thomas Church, which is the main subject, emerged from the morning mists at the right moment. This is a panorama from three frames, shot with a Nikon D810 and an 80-400mm zoom.

Top 20 Classic Landscape Winners



'Stockton Beach' by Greg Jacobs, Silver Award



'The Last Dance' by Thomas De Franzoni, Silver Award



'St Bathans Reflection' by Barry Shaw, Silver Award



'Total Lunar Eclipse' by Gail Hinshaw, Silver Award



'Pakistan's Karakoram Region' by Steven Wyatt, Silver Award



'Shelter On Soames' by Cushla Monk, Silver Award

2024 Better Photography Magazine's PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

2024 Emotive Portrait Winner

NATALIE ARBER



'Cause Unknown' by Natalie Arber

"'Cause Unknown' is a self-portrait, captured after I was released from hospital following an allergic reaction to an unknown cause, something that had been occurring frequently since December of last year. For me, photography is an expressive outlet and a way for me to gain a sense of control when anxiety is high, so portraits like this are spontaneous and opportunistic, if you will. In this instance, I was in the bathroom about to peel off the electrode stickers before getting in the shower and I just saw the photo in the mirror and had to take it."

"Ever since I was a child, I've had an interest in photography, but it really took off during the Melbourne lockdowns when in a bid to alleviate boredom, I invested in photography gear and converted my garage into a studio where I made portraits with my family. Once the world opened up, my photography

evolved. I focused on landscapes and macro for a while (which I still love) and fine art portraits, but I have found my groove with candid/reportage style or lightly staged black and white portraiture."

Natalie used a Leica Q2, which was resting on a shelf in the bathroom cabinet so she didn't need a tripod. "The Q2 has a fast prime lens, a 28mm f1.7 Summilux. It's an atypical portrait focal length, but I enjoy things being atypical! Self-portraits can be tricky to capture, but I was able to use the Leica Fotos app to set the focus and timer.

"The post-production involved a black and white conversion in Lightroom and I used Photoshop to get rid of minor distractions and dust spots and for some further dodging and burning."

Top 20 Emotive Portrait Winners



'Style of Communication' by Sanjoy Bhattacharya, Silver Award



'Untitled' by Steven Wyatt, Silver Award



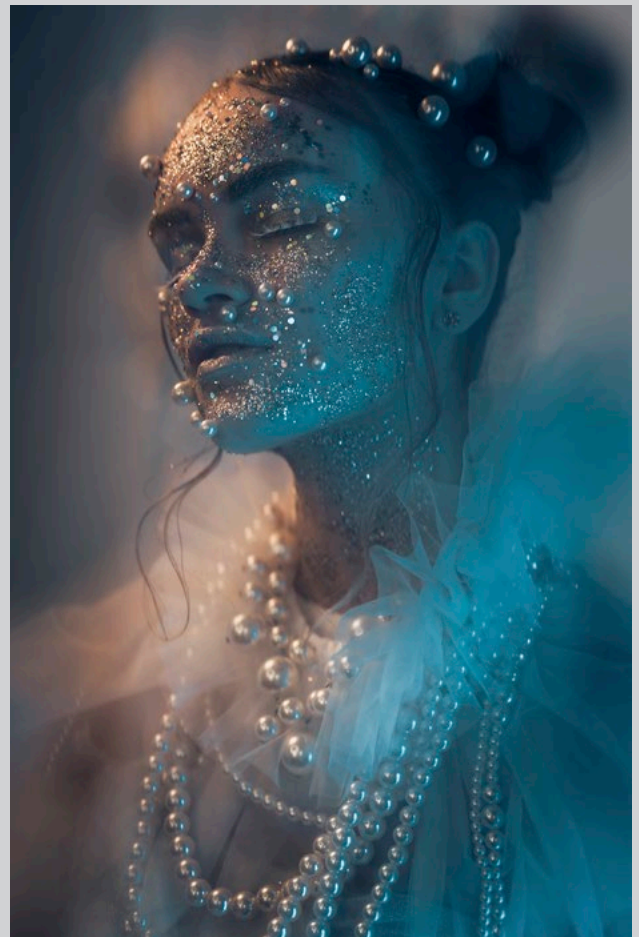
'Paintingman' by Marcel Van Balken, Silver Award



'Red Riding Hood' by Simone Osborne, Silver Award



'Sad And Yet Still Resilient' by Mark Mortensen, Silver Award



'Pearl Dream' by Sonka Skerik, Silver Award



Clare Oliver
FROM FAMILY
PORTRAITS



Mongolian eagle hunters.

TO THE WILDS OF MONGOLIA



Approaching storm, Hunter Valley, NSW.

Clare Oliver refers to herself as GEN-Y, loves references to Lady Gaga and if she were allowed to use emojis, this article would be full of them!



A family portrait with a difference. Ethiopia.

The good thing about me being a photographer (or perhaps it's a bad thing, I haven't figured that out yet) is I'm an over-the-top people pleaser. But I guess being a family portrait photographer, I guess it's a good trait. So when I'm taking a portrait, I'm always trying to make my subject look and feel happy.

"Many people can be extremely worried about having their photo taken, or perhaps they're nervous they will look terrible and it will show in their photo. When taking their portrait, really I am coercing them to be comfortable so they can feel and look themselves for the photo. You'd think this would be simple enough, but no way!

"Everything about a shoot has to be a good experience because if they haven't enjoyed the process, even if it's the best portrait you've ever taken, if the memory of the experience is tarnished, then so is the image.

"I have taken some of the most amazing portraits of people and while they may like the image, they don't enjoy it because it reminds them about how they felt at the time – perhaps tired, overwhelmed or not themselves."

One of the best tricks Clare has learned is that if she is prepared, quick, reliable and empathetic and she listens to what her clients want in the portrait, most of the hard work is done.

Insight

"I'm a photographer. I love capturing the world and its people, their lives, relationships and emotions. My camera could turn its lens toward a little child running and laughing, a bride



Cloudscape and yacht.



Another great character. Ethiopia.

wiping a tear off her mother's cheek on her wedding day, corporates in their office smartly suited with their shoulders back and chin up, hoping the image I take will get them that next amazing sale or invitation to a table.

"Life is pretty amazing and I find myself extremely privileged to be able to capture and show the best parts with my camera.

"I hope my photography makes people happy. See, I'm back to my trait of being a people pleaser! With portraiture, I hope I've taken a person's portrait and they had no idea they could look so beautiful, or a family photo which shows such love for their children it brings a tear to their eyes. But I feel the same way with any subject. It could simply be a pretty landscape scene I captured and framed for a client's wall that gives him some heartwarming escapism every time he sees it!"

Clare says she's a photographer because (quoting pop queen Lady Gaga), "I was born this way" and literally she was. "I was born into photography by having one of the best photographers in the world as my dad, David Oliver (you can insert a smiley face, love heart and emoji here).

"Dad taught me from a very young age how to see and follow natural light across a scene or portrait and the patience and skill to wait for the 'decisive moment'. (Since Henri Cartier-Bresson is his favourite photographer, I had to pop in a reference to the decisive moment!)

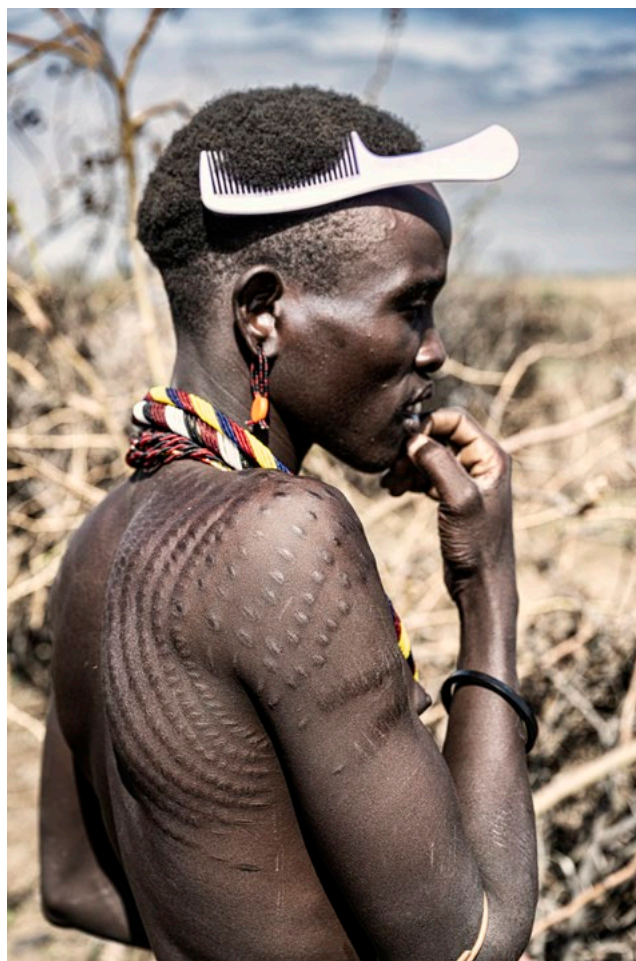
"Dad taught me to capture a moment in the simplest of ways, not overcomplicating my photography with too much equipment, technology or even with a preconceived sketch of a photo in my head. He taught me how to see and capture. True photojournalism is that simple!

"Now I find myself lucky enough to be travelling the world, teaching alongside Dad and sharing these sometimes lost techniques of keeping your photography pure. We show photographers how to watch the light, observe how a scene evolves and being patient enough to wait for that moment before you press the shutter."

In fact, over her lifetime, Clare has met and benefited from the experience shared by many of Australia's best photographers. "I definitely wouldn't have the confidence, discipline or knowledge to do what I do without their guidance and inspiration. The list is long; the great family from the AIPP, the friends from the Nikon Ambassadorship and my clever mates at Epson."

Technically

Like her dad, Clare shoots with Nikon – but perhaps less like her dad, she is enjoying the mirrorless revolution. "The Nikon Z6 is my everyday body and Nikon's 85mm f1.2 is my go to lens that's mounted 90% of the time. I need speed, a massive dynamic range and shallow depth-of-field, so my camera settings usually float around f1.2 to f4. I don't think my camera would know what f11 or f22 are!"



Portrait, Ethiopia.



Ethiopian boys on stilts.



Mongolian eagle hunter.



Mongolian eagle hunters.

For post-production, Clare says she likes to use as little editing as possible, preferring to capture as much as she can in-camera. “Lucky for me I started my career shooting film, so there was little room for error and your mistakes cost a lot (between film processing and proofing, every time you pressed the button, it cost \$2 or \$3).

“However, I confess to having fallen into the digital trap of shooting a lot more than I did on film, but this also has its benefits. For instance, back in the 1980s, you would always see group photos at weddings or of footy teams and someone would have their eyes shut. This doesn’t happen now because I shoot lots of frames and do head swaps in post-production.

“Of course, now I find myself doing a lot more editing, between shooting corporate headshots, events and family photos, so it’s important I keep my camera technique spot on and my post-production very minimal – for time’s sake. Getting behind on production is a photographer’s worst nightmare! Shoot well, don’t fuss over production and always give your clients the option of further edits if they need. Ninety per cent of the time they don’t.

Mongolia

Travel, discovery and photography is every photographer’s dream and luckily for Clare, her friend Glenn McKimmin made it possible by convincing David and her to teach and co-host some workshops for him last year.

“I taught in Ethiopia and Mongolia, while next year we will be hosting workshops locally in NSW and overseas in Bhutan and Mongolia.

“I have always loved teaching (again the people pleaser in me) and I love seeing a fellow photographer learn a new technique. I’ve realised that something I might do everyday on location and take for granted can be really helpful for a fellow photographer. I love it when I show a skill to a fellow photographer, they take an image, look at the result on the



Mongolian eagle hunter.



Above: Mongolian eagle hunters. Opposite: A Mongolian John Wayne.

back of their camera and they're in shock. They say, 'Wow, did I just take that?' and then you may even help them edit and print that photo for the wall.

"Now that's magic, seeing the joy of photography spread from me to them and sharing that experience in an awesome place like Mongolia is pretty cool!"

Mongolian Cowboy

"I never leave my camera in my camera bag when I'm on location, what good is it there?"



Clare and David Oliver posing with a Mongolian eagle hunter.

"We had just pulled up at a village and got out of the car. About 10 metres away, a Mongolian cowboy was sitting in front of a farmhouse, leaning on an old TV having a smoke. The whole scene was so marvellous, I could have wet myself. [Clare, I don't have an emoji for that... Ed.]

"I checked my settings were okay, but I did not lift my camera to my eye. I stayed cool. I walked over until I was about five metres away. I slightly smiled and nodded at him and pointed at my camera (I don't speak Mongolian, so body language and signals are best in this situation). After I pointed at my camera insinuating I wanted to take a photo, he nodded back. I popped my camera up to my eye, took a few shots, gave him a smile and a thumbs up and walked away.

"He was not bothered, did not change position or expression, maybe took a drag of his cigarette. It was quick, subtle, understated, no direction. I probably could have shot him for 10 minutes, but he mightn't have liked that and I didn't want to ruin the moment.

"And if he had put his hand up and signalled no to a photo, I wouldn't have taken it. It is not my right to photograph an unwilling subject. However, this guy was so cool, a Mongolian version of John Wayne!"

For more of Clare's work and to find out more about her upcoming photo tours, visit her website or follow her on social media.

www.clareoliverphotographer.com

instagram: @clareoliverphotographer

facebook: @clareoliverphotographer



ALISON FAIGNIEZ

SIMPLIFYING COMPOSITES

Most photographers enjoy working in a range of disciplines. One minute you're photographing nature, the next it's travel and then, in Alison Faigniez's case at least, it's imaginative composites that are as much art as they are photography.

And it seems relatively easy to switch from one discipline to the next. There's no rule that says your photography needs to follow a single path. We can be multi-dimensional, multi-disciplined.



Robert. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.

Insight

"Am I an artist or a photographer?" began Alison. "I think both and so I describe myself as a Photo-Artist."

Alison's interest in photo-artistry began when she won a subscription to Sebastian Michael's *My Photo-Artistic Life* program at an APS conference. "I was hooked on creating fine art works from my photographs. It also helped solve the dilemma facing many photographers: what to do with the thousands of images we take when travelling or in the studio."

Of course, it's one thing to have a hard drive full of images, but what can you do with them? Where do you start?

"My works usually arise from a topic that affects me emotionally, something that I want to illustrate and share with others. For instance, following my travels across Africa, I decided to use my images to explore the often conflicting survival challenges facing the environment, the wildlife and the people. This resulted in an exhibition titled *Survival* in 2020, comprising 36 works in a gallery space shared with Gabi Sturman, a ceramic artist.

"I concentrated on environmental stories, adding to my African photos extra elements such as texture layers, existing photos of rusty iron, wood and water, together with digital grunge brushes. The aim was to encourage the viewer to think about the survival challenges posed in each piece, the negative consequences of environmental destruction and how we can all contribute to addressing climate change.

"It gives me great pleasure to see gallery visitors standing in front of a piece, stepping forwards to look more closely at a texture or standing back to enjoy the complexity and overall realism. I love being asked, 'Were those monkeys really sitting on a rock in the ocean?' (see *When The Icecaps Melt*), or 'How did you fit the suit of armour on your dog?' (see *Sir Wally*).

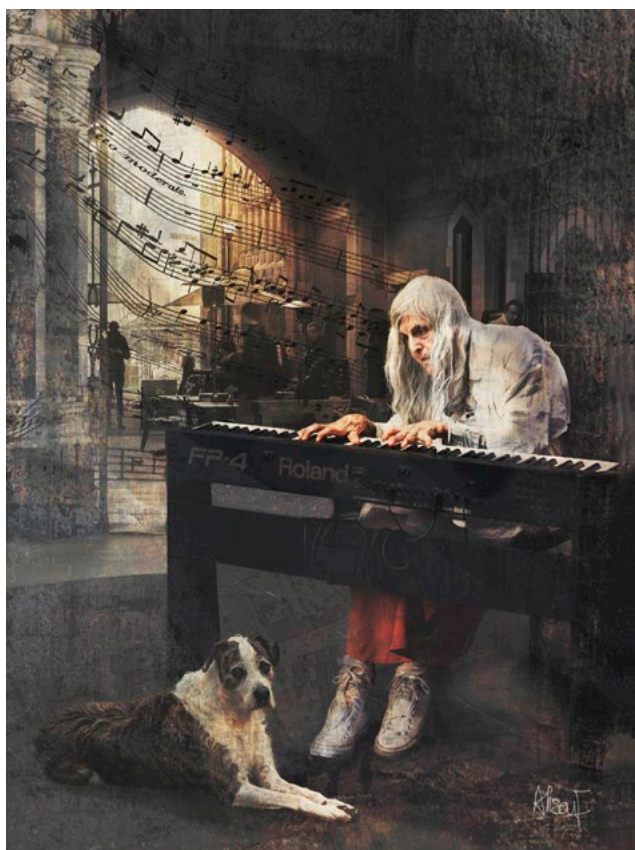
"I have also been inspired by the detailed, realistic and surreal, works of Laurent Chehere in his *Flying Houses* series and have created my own works such as 'Granada', which looks



Grenada. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



The Bird Book. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



at how we are at risk of losing old buildings and cultures in our rush for development.

"Much of my work takes on a surreal appearance. I enjoy using metaphor when developing the concept, such as the recent series where I explored doorways and arches as boundaries between the real and the imaginary (see *Don Quixote and the Law*).

"Thinking about it, I get much of my inspiration during early morning walks with the dogs, when I envisage one of my photographs and pose the question 'What if?' 'What if Don Quixote came galloping through the arch into the modern world?' Or, 'What if we could see how fungi link underground with trees and each other?' (see *Symbiosis*).

"My fine art works are primarily created for exhibiting in local galleries and it always thrills me to think that people want to have my works in their houses."

Mechanics

Alison says that while taking photographs for themselves, whether in her studio or when travelling, she's always looking for textures and detail images that could also be used in a composite work. "I pride myself in using my own images in creating fine art

Left: The Pianist. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.

Opposite: Don Quixote and the Law. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.

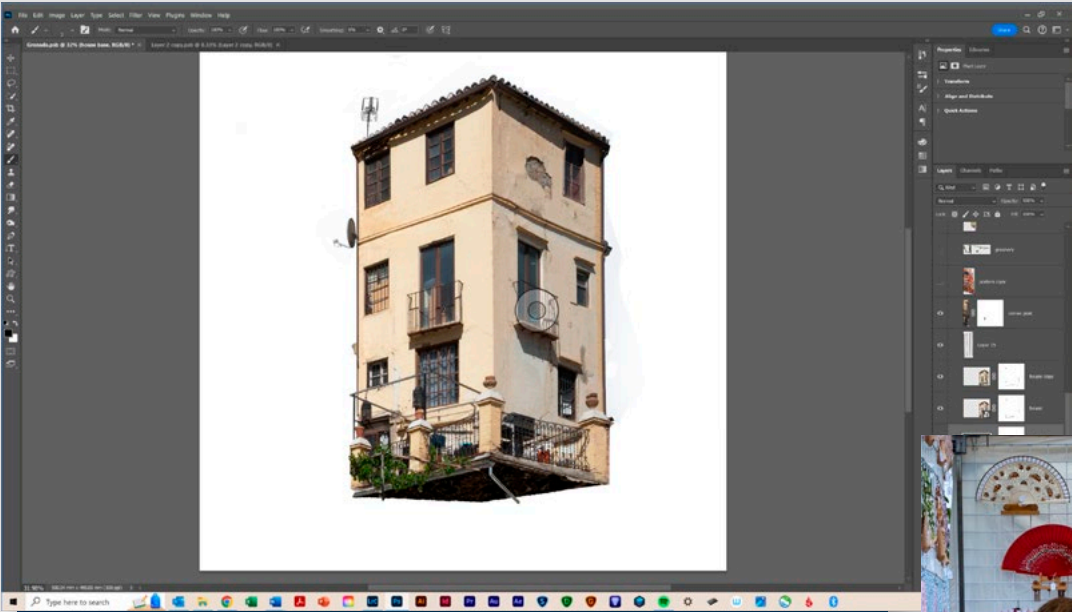


GRANADA



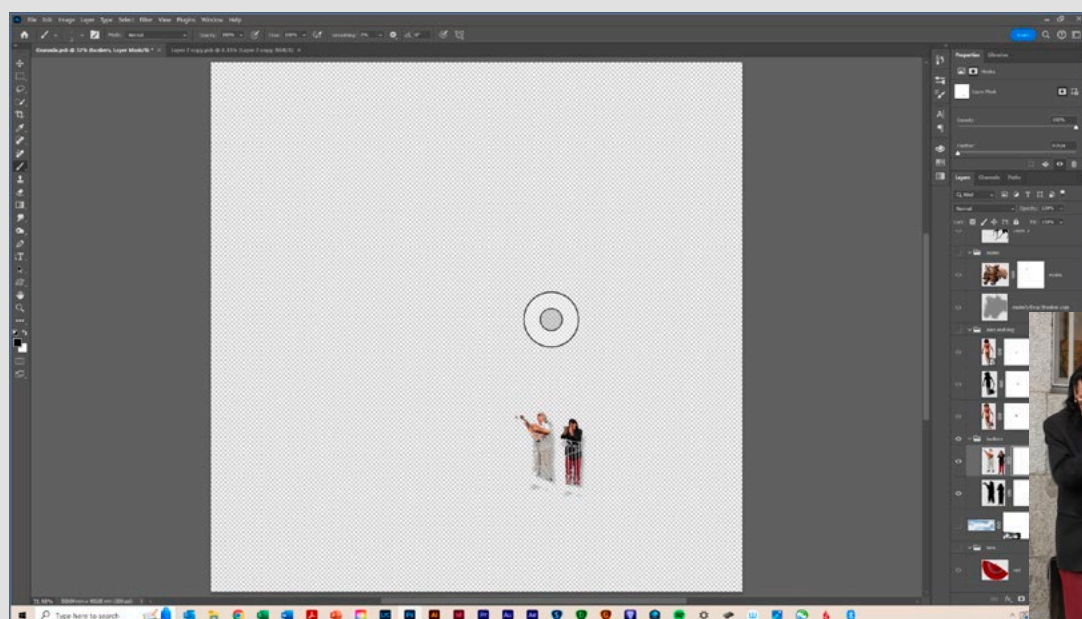
'Granada' was created using 49 layers in Photoshop, half of them images, the rest adjustment layers, shadows and lighting effects.

Left: Final screen in Photoshop showing the grouped layers and their names.

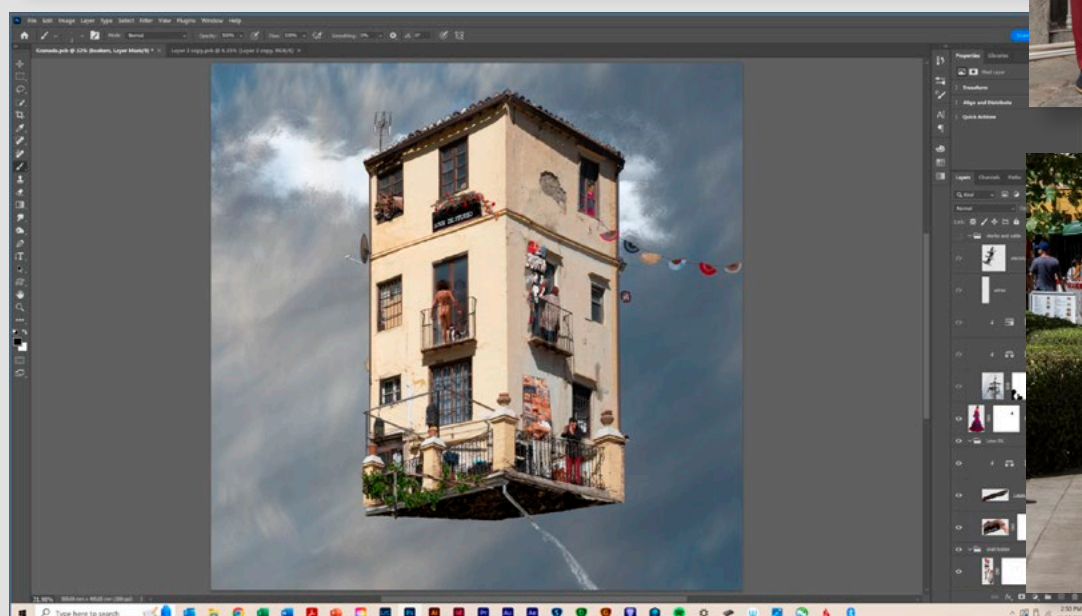


Left and below: The house and some of the elements used to create it. The base was a critical feature in creating the right perspective, while adding the aerial, drain pipe and satellite dish added to the interest.

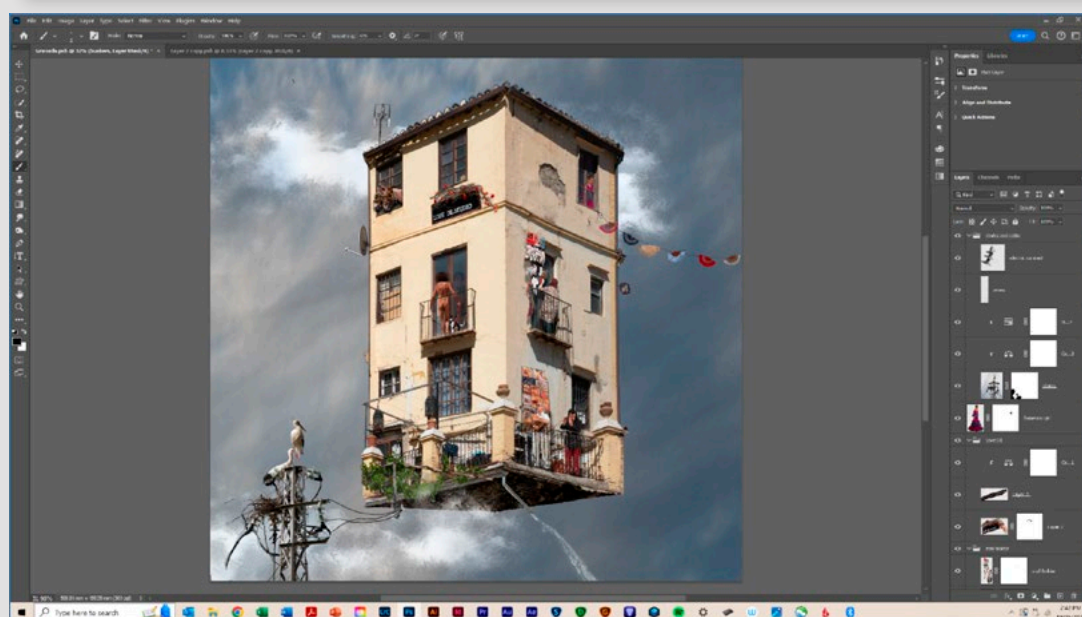




Some layers require precision and careful masking to preserve detail, such as the house railings in front of the buskers. Creating shadows behind figures adds to the realism of the finished work.



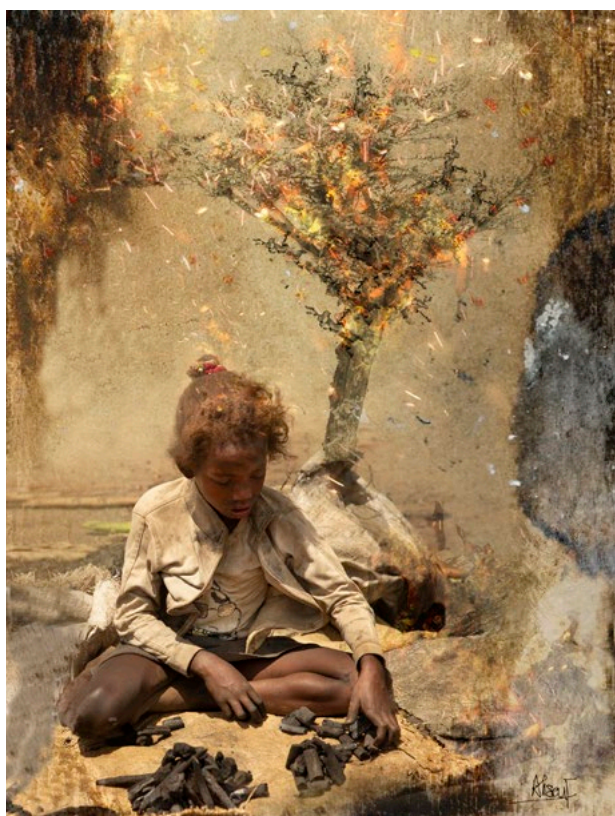
Above: And yes, the professor apparently walks with his dog to the university every morning, but without a stitch on. I just had to use him in this piece!



Left: Adding the foreground cloud, stork nest and power pole provided balance and depth to the composition.



When The Icecaps Melt. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



works. The only stock images I use are some textures and grunge effects to finish and grade a work. For instance, the building used in 'Granada' would not normally have drawn my attention, but I saw that it could be cut and used in a flying house work. I then kept my eyes open for people, artefacts and animals that could be incorporated into the work and represent 'old Spain', as well as looking out for quirky and comedic possibilities."

Alison uses a desktop computer with a BenQ 27" screen, the larger screen helping her work on the details. "I need high quality resolution and graphics, as well as fast operating speeds. My Wacom Pro tablet and pen are essential for accurate working, particularly when making selections and using brushstrokes in Photoshop. Being left-handed, I find a mouse clunky and frustrating to use.

"My images are first worked in Lightroom Classic and given a colour tag, indicating if they are a possibility for inclusion in a work. I may use Topaz Sharpen or Gigapixel to ensure images are of compatible quality in the final work.

"Moving across to Photoshop, the fun begins by building the layers that will form the finished art work.

"I first create a new A2 size page over which the various elements will be laid. I then bring in the main image – a landscape, texture or image to fill the page. Next I sit down to

Left: The Charcoal Burner's Daughter.



Symbiosis. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



The First Soccerroos.



Rainforest Remnants. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.

enjoy trying out different components, aiming to produce a pleasing and interesting composition.

"Blending modes and colour grading are important tools to help the composite look realistic. Light direction and shadows can be created to bed down subjects into the scene. At first,



Gelada. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



The Shower. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.



Sir Wally. Photographic composite by Alison Faigniez.

I add layers on top of each other, but as the work develops, layers are inserted to add pieces in front of or behind others to create depth in the work. One thing I learnt early on was the value in naming all the layers and putting them into groups. When working with up to 100 layers and making adjustments, it helps to find a segment quickly and easily."

Alison admits that one of the biggest challenges is knowing when to stop. "Fortunately, the workflow is non-destructive so what looked good one day may need changing when reviewing it the next.

"I leave a creative work on the screen for a few days to see if it works, whatever the time of day or my mood. I am grateful to my group of artist and photographer friends for their support and thoughts on works in progress, though I will always be true to myself and strive to retain my original vision.

"Constructive critiques and research into a subject are never wasted during the development of a piece or series, even if it means starting afresh or abandoning a piece that doesn't work."



Juerguistas en un baile de solteros y solteronas. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY IS MORE THAN WAR, DEATH & DESTRUCTION

In recent times we have seen great documentary images and series from conflict zones like the Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan. There's also been a lot of visual focus on refugees and the COVID virus. These are important issues and must be documented and seen but documentary photography is wider than conflict and health emergencies. It is also about the significant, relevant and mundane events and issues for people, creatures and the environment. This style of photography also focuses on the arts, daily life and events that bring joy, understanding and satisfaction to the viewer.

W. Eugene Smith, the doyen of documentary photography, produced a number of brilliant documentaries including his ground-breaking 1948 *LIFE Magazine* photo essay, *Country Doctor*. This series was an instant success and established Smith's reputation as one of the most passionate and influential documentarians of the 20th century.

Another of Smith's projects was the acclaimed book *The Jazz Loft Project* which came from a collection of 40,000 images and 4000 hours of audio tape that Smith produced of

jazz musicians performing jam sessions night after night in a New York Sixth Avenue loft. The book includes photographs of the musicians, interiors, visitors, details of the rooms and



Un vaquero empieza a trabajar en una mañana helada. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.



Shaun con sus adornos navideños. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.

some wonderful images of street scenes that were taken through the windows. According to the Guardian critic Sean O'Hagan [*The Jazz Loft Project*] is a riveting work of social archaeology, and extraordinary testament to artists whose music caught all the tumult and excitement of a fast-changing America."

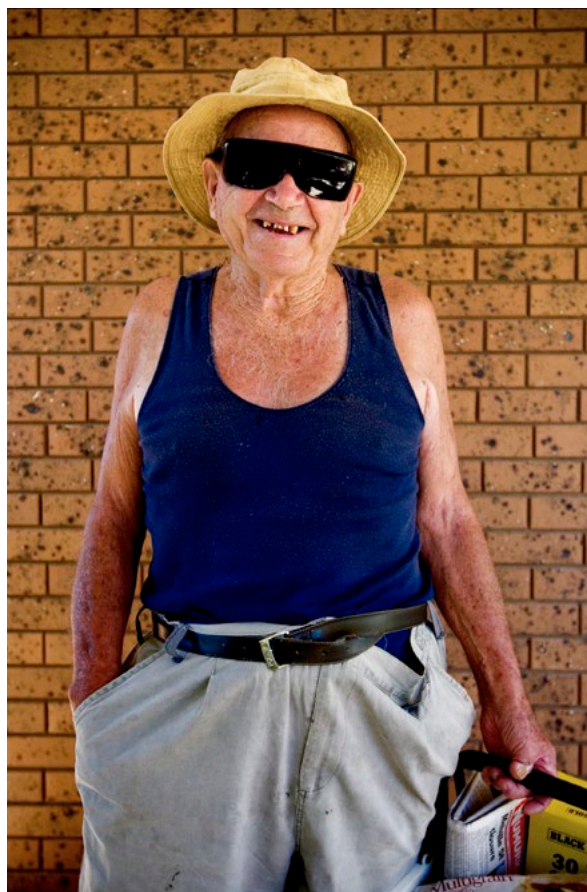
Smith obsessively immersed himself in whatever assignment he was working on at the time but none more so than the *Pittsburgh Dream Street* project. He was commissioned to spend three weeks on this assignment and produce 100 photographs. Instead, Smith worked for over two years producing 13,000 images that he considered "the finest set of photographs I have ever produced." Smith also considered the project a failure because until recently, no magazine would publish such a huge body of work. The series has recently been published in a book titled *Dream Street: W. Eugene Smith's Pittsburgh Project*.

Cristina Garcia Rodero spent 15 years working on her book *España Oculta* trying to visually capture the essence of Spanish traditions and religious practices that were starting to fade away. Rodero said she discovered hidden traditions and by documenting them she made sure they didn't get lost to history.

There are many books of documentary photography which capture our changing lifestyles and environment. One of the greatest of these is *Genesis* by the Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado.

On his many trips over eight years Salgado photographed indigenous peoples, animals and beautiful landscapes which are reproduced in a collection of haunting black and white images. Salgado calls *Genesis* "...my love letter to the planet."

Jean Gaumy took four long sea voyages so he could experience



Un señor mayor regresa de un viaje de compras. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.



Una anciana sentada entre su colección de muñecas. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.

the life of commercial fishermen for his book *Men at Sea*.

Gaumy wanted to document the fishermen up close so he endured the high seas and rough weather on open-decked trawlers capturing gritty, rainswept scenes of men working under extraordinary conditions.

Documentary photography involves being close, sharing the challenges, conditions and lifestyles of the people, creatures or environment you are photographing.

I shared the lives of villagers when I spent time documenting Numurkah, a small country town in northern Victoria. The documentation resulted in a book *Numurkah*

Lakes & Roses, which has been called amusing, insightful and whimsical.

The very first time I went to Numurkah, I noticed as we drove into town, a man standing on the lawn in front of his house, drinking a can of beer. The garden around him was resplendent with Christmas lights, decorations and cut-out animals. Dressed in tee shirt, shorts and cap he looked entirely incongruous and yet somehow just right in this setting. We stopped and I asked if I could take his picture. He happily posed amongst the reindeer, and then invited me to return the following year when he assured me he would have an even better display.



Los clientes del Telegraph Hotel disfrutan del entretenimiento nocturno. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.



El novio y el padrino se ponen sus trajes de boda. Libro *Numurkah Lagos y Rosas*.



Las mujeres jóvenes esperan ser presentadas en un baile de debutantes. Libro Numurkah Lagos y Rosas.

When I was in Numurkah I stayed at the local pub and had a room above the bar with a view down onto the lane where amorous couples would meet and young men would brawl after a night of drinking.

On a Friday night it was impossible to sleep because of the noise coming from the bar so I would go down and join the townsfolk as they celebrated the end of a working week. One night I was leaning on the bar chatting to a farmer about some photographs I had taken of his family. At one point in the conversation, he looked up and said, "Excuse me." He walked round to the other side of the bar and punched a man hard enough to make him fall over. He then came back to continue

our conversation.

True documentary photography is a reflection of the people, time and place and when completed the project becomes an historical document.

And if you're looking for conflict, destruction and excitement, try the local pub on Main Street, Friday night.

[Editor's Note: Dear Reader. Michael and I are both good at practical jokes. After I left a message on his phone in schoolboy German, he replied with an email in Japanese. I responded in Italian (non molto buono) and the response from Michael was to provide the captions for his Numurkah photos in Spanish. He thinks I'm going to change them.]



A una novia le pintan las uñas como preparación para su boda. Libro Numurkah Lagos y Rosas.



Los participantes toman una copa en una despedida de soltera. Libro Numurkah Lagos y Rosas.

A SENSE OF REALITY

Roby Lazar looks at the nature of reality and how we can transform an everyday setting into an abstracted reality that maintains our sense of what is real and what is fantasy.

The Silk Road and the tales of a 1001 Nights are exotic stories of mystery and adventure. They are based on a romantic reality that has been embellished to bypass the real conditions of physical and mental hardship.

The mystique of these adventures has become instilled into our literature, the creative arts and the world of cinema. This same exotic flow has encouraged me to think outside the everyday cube and create my own exotic worlds that reach beyond the realities of my local environment.

Like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole into an upside down, inside out world that mirrored parts of her own reality, I have based my own journey through a looking glass of imagination via my camera and spending time exploring my backyard.

My aim was to create an extended reality and have these seemingly ordinary images come alive by turning an everyday setting into an imaginative visual reconstruction.

The Process

To begin, I selected a number of viewing points from which to photograph the backyard at different times of the day. My camera was my mobile phone which I found to be versatile in sometimes difficult shooting and lighting conditions.

I then photographed many of the smaller objects that we often overlook, but which could contribute something extra to my compositions. I felt that everyday objects such as taps, ceramic pots and even the coach light by the front door had characters of their own which could alter the direction of an image towards the unusual, unpredictable or even eccentric.

After photographing these everyday objects, I created new worlds through post-processing. Using composites, I could position seemingly unrelated objects in unexpected positions, altering static, uneventful scenes into images that question the viewer's perception of what is real and yet not real. This reconfigured view with out-of-place objects waiting in unusual places is like seeing things through a looking glass with a rippled, twisted, coiled and intrinsically convoluted surface. Reality captured is frozen and then blended into a new reality in the same image.

Photography can show alternative realities in the same way literature and film can transport us to strange, exciting and different worlds.

I like to start with a base image of a large location e.g., the backyard. My aim is to keep the overall integrity of the location, so that in post-processing, I can compose a new world that is

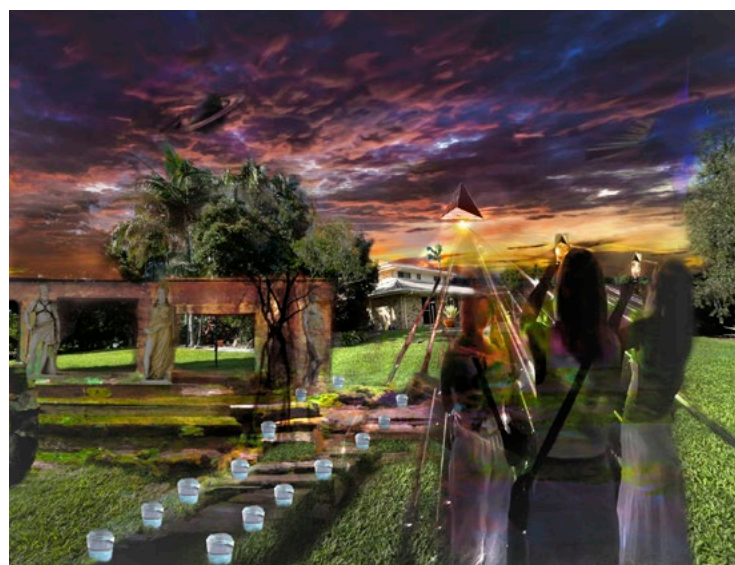




relatively close to the original image. Effectively, the idea of time and space is altered, but the viewer is still able to perceive where the modified reality came from. And by including a combination of objects that really do exist in the backyard, but in a different way, the present laws of gravity, time and space are deconstructed and then reassembled – to be placed into an image where I believe Alice would be at home as she travels through her altered, time-shifted landscape.

You can alter, twist and reverse the ‘rules of photography’ without an expectation they will ‘conform’ to what is thought to be ‘acceptable’. The expectations of the ‘IMO’ school of thought (in my opinion) becomes reconstituted into a form of what you think works. Creative subjectivity allows your ‘brush-strokes’ to be seen and not hidden, just as the positioning of objects are not subject to an idea of what is photographically acceptable. There is no need for a pixel by pixel analysis as the image is your expression.

I am exploring different ways of viewing and understanding both a concrete and a creative reconstruction of a setting. However, I cannot help but wonder that there could be a connection with the developments in AI image creation, where a new composition can be an alternative way of looking at and understanding that which is still familiar to us today. Can this be seen as being a reinterpretation of the thoughts of Descartes in our technologically advancing world? Can this new visual world transform from being an ‘I Exist’ in a physical form to becoming an ‘I am’?



Approach

When assembling images for my composites, I photograph from either a low or a high camera angle, in order to capture a wide-angled view of the backyard. This will later give me a wide canvas onto which I can superimpose a variety of lesser objects. Sometimes I will select two parts of the backyard and overlap them to give an even greater sense of depth and the more unrelated the objects are to the original location, the more impact they will have. It is also important to leave some

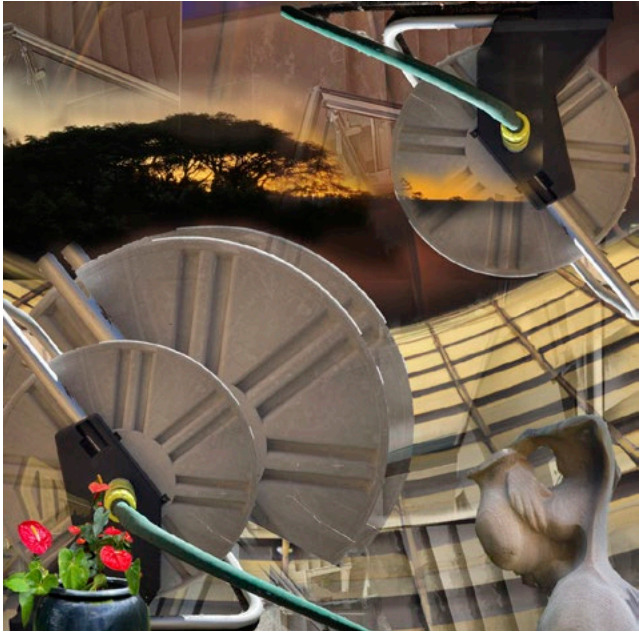


areas less busy or empty, to give the viewer space to rest as they explore and interpret the more unexpected or unusual areas in the image.

My composites are influenced by the works of the DaDa, Surrealist and Pop art styles, so I don't feel restricted by the relative size and scale of the different items in the image. Size, proportion and positioning only depend on the effect you want the final composition to communicate to the viewer. I like to use repetition of objects. In one composition, I used repeating images of air compressors positioned on both sides of a path, that then diminished in size as they receded into the distance. You can also experiment by reversing or turning objects upside down or back-to-front.

On occasion, I like to import sections of file images I have taken in the past in order to enhance a particular area. For instance, if I wanted to reference the narrative of Alice in a photo, I could position one or two flamingos next to the Queen of Hearts. These objects are not usually found in my backyard – and hence the need for a stock library to help!

On occasions, you will want to show some figures or

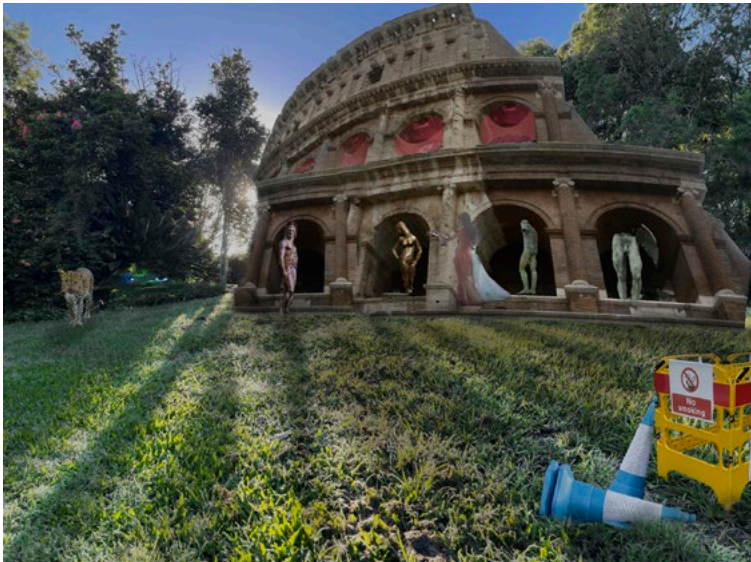


objects that will be cut off by the photo frame, seen as entering or leaving your image. Such a placement of a figure or a shape can show the viewer that there is the possibility of a real or imagined world beyond the photo's frame.

Processing Tricks

One tool I use when overlaying or blending images is the opacity slider (I use Photoshop extensively in my work). As you are positioning objects on top of your base image, opacity gives you the freedom to alter the strength of the element or completely remove unwanted parts of it. I may use, say, 30% opacity to achieve a subtle merge in one part and then progress to 70% – 100% for other sections of the composition. I also vary the hardness of the brush tool (for a soft or hard edge effect) when creating the masks, so objects can blend seamlessly into the base.

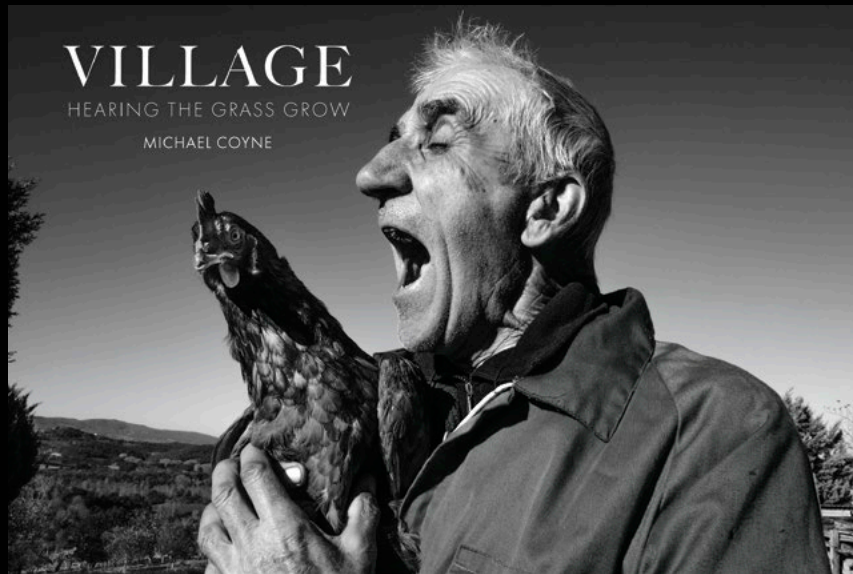
I like to entertain the idea of incorporating a folly in some part of my image. If you incorporate an unexpected 'playful' object in your work, then you are following a compositional device that was popular during the Renaissance and later



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.

This stunning collection guides us through a disappearing way of life at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries.

"MICHAEL COYNE'S MOST RECENT BOOK IS A MASTERPIECE OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY."

-PETER EASTWAY, BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

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periods of art when painters included small references to in-jokes that the viewer of that time would appreciate.

A light-hearted or personalised in-joke can make an image more interesting, perhaps by placing incongruous objects, such as a row of fashionable taps or perhaps a diminishing row of front-load washing machines. This can be unconventional, but it may surprise you when it works and impresses the unsuspecting viewer.

From one Reality to the Next

How is this concept different from what we think of as 'altered reality' photography? Both processes rely on post-processing. Both use abstraction, but for me, the difference is that I am using my present real life experience, combined with a range of everyday objects that are also a part of my local daily environment. This rearranged view of objects and locations is still recognisable to me, but it is now seen from a new, many sided, alternative visual perspective.

It is the enjoyment of experimentation that our photography is all about: to go beyond familiar horizons to follow an exploration of alternative subject matter and just maybe, the opportunity to transcend the constraints of the normal.

To see and create beyond the Cube.





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For more information, email Kim Valenti (kim@betterphotography.com) or Peter Eastway (eastway@betterphotography.com).

CONFESSIONS FROM THE SOUTH COAST

It's what all photographers should do from time to time – take a photographic sojourn! Murray White reports from the NSW South Coast.



I recently spent a month visually rearranging sand, rocks and sea in my viewfinder. Well, perhaps that description of touring the South Coast of NSW with a camera is a little simplistic, but nonetheless these key structures became my photographic building blocks of choice. It was a decision based not on any aesthetic inherent to these elements or my environmental preferences more generally; on the contrary, it was dictated purely by their dominance in my daily travels. In essence, these generic segments of the landscape forced my vision to adapt to their domain.

This visual restriction is not a new challenge for me, as my wife and I regularly spend sometimes lengthy periods travelling to other areas of Australia, each with their own unique and seemingly repetitive facades. In many cases, these indigenous features become so familiar that even subtle variations in their presentation are readily observed. Travel through the endless swathe of mulga scrub in outback Australia for example, is peppered with countless photographic opportunities for those who choose to view the sea of khaki as a dynamic entity, not a monotonous wasteland.

HERE ONE MINUTE

Those of us who regularly photograph predominantly static subjects often overlook the fact that we are still capturing a moment in time. Now that moment for a granite cliff face may well in human terms translate into an eternity; but transition it inevitably will. At the other end of the longevity spectrum, wave action seems to cease almost as it begins, but there will be a measurable time for its expression. I pointed my camera toward this nexus at Mystery Bay one morning, hoping to reveal something of the relationship in the high contrast lighting.



SWEPT ASHORE

One of the highlights for me on this trip was undertaking many rather aimless beach walks where I could consider in some depth how landscape and its photography fit into my visual agenda. A pleasant by-product of these journeys (both on foot and in mind) was the intermittent presence of potential subject matter. That predictable combination of sand, rocks and sea (and sometimes sky) seemed to be ever present, but in my time on the coast I can't remember ever wishing for anything more.

Personal Contact

Our month on the South Coast reinforced much of what I had learned in the past, but time spent walking these unremarkable yet inspiring beaches in contemplation, perhaps clarified an even deeper understanding of how and why I interpret landscape as I do. This stretch of coastline from Kiama to Eden is far from remote or uninhabited, yet there were welcome periods of solitude where I could still feel that sense of connection to Nature that only personal contact with wilderness can bring.

Looking into a prism of only its foundational elements has for me, underpinned the relevance of considering what it is that environmental photography means to me; and how I might try to understand and better express its evolving presence in my life. I believe it is through a regular and thorough appraisal of why we approach landscape as we do, that can help us all advance our artistic intent.

It is important to stress that what motivates me may not necessarily drive your agenda, so in terms of planning a trip to develop your photographic vision, I can only illustrate what I have found to be effective. My wife and other travelling

companions are not photographic enthusiasts, but kindly allow me to indulge my passion with just a few restrictions. What this means in practice is early morning and late afternoon sessions of generally solo camera walks, mixed with more typically group recreational activities during the course of the day.

With some exceptions, I find this window of limitation not only workable, but entirely desirable. The quiet light just before dawn is a particularly rewarding time for me and as my ability to think and photographically respond to landscape is sometimes demanding, I need to recharge my own batteries regularly. This does not mean that I down cameras and begin a period of visual fasting – far from it; I enjoy the natural landscape and study its structure and communal relationships with considerable interest throughout the day. I don't necessarily feel the urge to capture its every manifestation, especially those broader captures that speak more of a setting's outward attributes, rather than its underlying character.

More Fully Developed

For me, looking beyond the visual urgency of a purely scenic location has in a photographic sense, become a learned



BRICKS AND MORTAR

More than living up to its title, Pretty Beach was packed with compelling subjects, even though access to some was (to adopt a political phrase) rather challenging. I set my camera up here one morning to focus on the randomness of Nature, overlaid by a metaphorical template of order. For me, the juxtaposition of what could be seen as a deliberate creation housed in a chaotic backdrop, questions the concept of just how random things really are; given that physical structures of a comparable constitution will behave consistently if subject to the same influences. Can a quantifiable force acting on a specific structure at a particular time really be seen to produce a random outcome?

behaviour, because over many years I have often been disappointed by the inadequacy of its pictorial representation. Yes, the capture may have illustrated something of what I saw, but only rarely did it also convey in any meaningful way that all-encompassing involvement of sights, sounds and feel of the original experience. Yet despite this mismatch of the actual encounter and its rebirth as an image, I still believe that there are countless opportunities for us to focus on a specific aspect of the environment, where its character can be more fully developed in a photograph.

This sentiment was brought home to me on an otherwise routine morning walk in Mimosa Rocks National Park. With the unexpected confluence of low tide, suggestive rocky outcrops, diffused light and a beautifully evolving cloud bank, the choice of compelling and to my mind, eloquent subjects, was vast; so abundant in fact that I had to walk past many potential compositions for fear that I may run out of film before the trip's end. Now, I understand that digital capture does not easily fall victim to this same restriction,

but my rationale and solution to this problem may have underlying benefits even to those for whom heroic data retention is worn as a badge of honour.

My response was a decision not to trip the shutter unless two questions could be answered with clarity: What will I be capturing and what will I be saying? The first question was relatively easy to answer and rejected potential subjects that may have been framed because I saw a combination of elements that initially 'looked good', but on closer observation had fallen apart through a less than cohesive composition strategy – typically I had tried to include too much detail and the subject as a defining entity lacked conviction.

The second question was harder to answer because I needed to invest time and initiate a more intellectual response to satisfy my own judgement of what an image may be saying. I think it's easy to fall into the trap of treating landscape as if it were some type of environmental Rubik's Cube. We twist and turn and shape the puzzle to achieve an aesthetic outcome, without always allowing our subjects to voice their purpose. What will a viewer learn, indeed what will we as the photographer learn of a location, if the result of its visual interrogation does not communicate at least some reality, or even possibility, from the subject's perspective?

CONVERGED

Early morning walks for me are the most productive times with my camera. The sharp yet diffused quality of that pre-dawn light is something to behold, but more importantly, I find that inspiration of a more subtle flavour seems to shadow my every move. My understanding of the connection between creativity and the gradual transition to sunlight is far from certain, but I am convinced that the much talked of impact and direction of those first probing rays play only a very minor role in the link. Of more significance I think, is the silence and subliminal recognition of a greater power as the new day begins, promoting a deeper bond between landscape and photographer (we are in this together) and perhaps this shared journey heightens our awareness and capacity to interpret the moment.





STRIPPED TO THE BONE

Even a short telephoto lens on my camera could not fully isolate me from the effects of rhythmic wave activity here and it took several reframes of this subject before sunlight, surf action and sand firmness simultaneously played the game. A predictable absence of other early morning visitors and the sweep of an overnight high tide across Hobart Beach had gifted a lack of footprints in the sand and indeed purged the site of every other vestige of recent visitor impact. For me, the absence of all visibly identifiable human inputs helps to instil a sense of timelessness to a subject and sometimes prompts a feeling of privileged participation, both at the time of capture and even on subsequent viewings of the final print.

By determining what it is that we, in concert with the subject, are saying, we can fine-tune our composition to more effectively convey that message or question. We should not underestimate the impact of our interpretation on a scene and how our choices of viewpoint, decisions of crop and subsequent post-processing all influence the dynamics and viewer understanding of a subject. Perhaps we could consider our well intentioned pictorial design as a little like the wrapping on a gift – it provides for an immediate response together with a sense of anticipation, but in my view, it is the content inside that is more visually substantive in the longer term.

Interestingly, many of my most memorable photographs from this trip were made on those anonymous beaches and headlands that without promotion are often passed by. We chose to walk a number of these coastal access sections, mostly inspired from the rather aimless, almost fatalistic view that time and the weather and the urge had all coincided at this particular location. These were the best walks. To set off not knowing or caring what lay ahead other than a yet to be determined turn around point reduces expectations to a level

that even the most modest, perhaps least significant feature of the walk, assumes a larger than life persona.

Without Human Impact

From a curious visitor's view (and even a curious photographer's view), I found these opportunities to really study some subjects without information boards or preconceived ideas filtering my vision, allowed for a more authentic transaction with Nature. Sometimes if the Gods Of Aestheticism had preceded my visit, I would get out my camera and capture a slice of this privileged encounter. And then we would move on, uncertain of the next exchange, but content to observe that which evolves of chance.

And in fact our travels more broadly along the South Coast often involved photography that was born of a chance encounter. Okay, yes we did choose to visit mostly scenery rich national parks and actively sought the quieter autumn months when cloudy skies and diffused lighting were more likely, but there was no overall strategic spreadsheet detailing every photographic combination of resources. I enjoy the flexibility

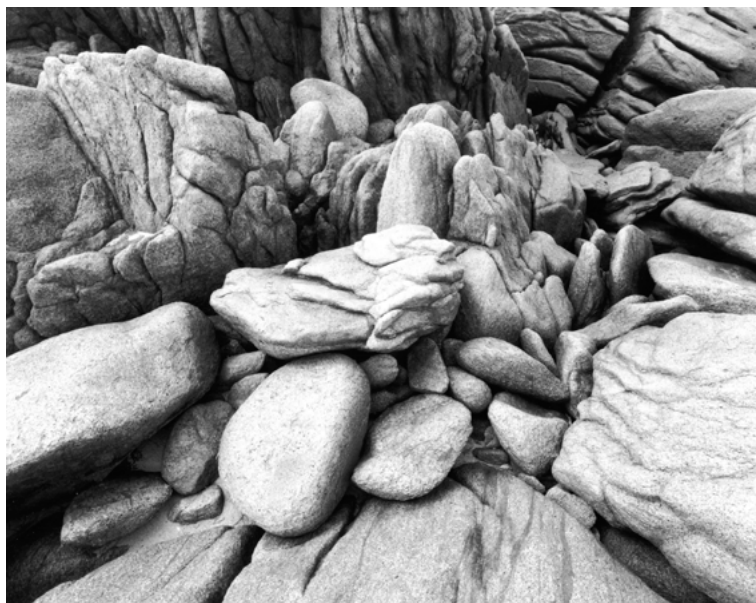


NO ESCAPE

I often wonder why we are drawn to one tree and not another, one section of river and not the next, or even one moment of light and not what preceded. Perhaps it is the availability of other options that forces us to choose between them; to make a value judgement based on an aesthetic understanding that is unique to us. In this instance at Aragunna Camp, I had plenty of other clumps of seaweed to ponder, but for some reason it was this subject that warranted my camera's attention. I could say that I was attracted by this subject's 'tail', or by the etched sand lines, or more accurately by the conceptual juxtaposition of the two observations (all of which is true), but in the first instance, perhaps our visual instinct is really the greater power of all.

and challenge of an agenda free approach to landscape photography. However, one aspect that underpins all of my decision making is a desire to only capture that part of Nature reflective of its own processes, or at least those views and aspects that don't explicitly suggest human influences.

Of course, human impacts are part of Nature as we define it and photographs that reveal how our environment is responding to a force that has proven capable of considerable change, are powerful corroborators and I respect the makers of such images. However, I would like to look at the natural world,



EXPULSION

For me, the Eurobodalla area was one of the highlights of the NSW South Coast. Intriguing outcrops of rock were never far away from the numerous access points and in many cases these captivating subjects seemed to lead into other compositions of even greater interest. I think that sometimes our aesthetic way of seeing is fuelled by the setting we find ourselves in and our immediate creativity can be drawn into an ever increasing spiral as our heightened sense of awareness becomes further engaged. In my experience, the harnessing of that initial artistic spark helps me to find more adventurous visual possibilities in subsequent subjects, so long as I remain 'in the zone'.

perhaps as it has been evolving for the overwhelming majority of its existence, when seismic, volcanic and weather related influences were the sole architects of its visual being. Now I admit that I cannot always identify all impacts attributable to humankind, or even recognise some of the introduced plants that may be present, but I try as much as possible to limit their significance in my images.

So for example, Bombo Quarry near Kiama is for me a no-go zone. Yes, the coastal spires and curious geological remnants of human endeavour are photogenic subjects (and I appreciate other interpretations of them as such), it is just that I choose not to capture our landscape knowing that its aesthetic existence is directly attributable to actions not of a more 'natural' origin. Now without doubt, a case could be made that cleared land regrowth, the damming of previously open valleys and countless other wilderness incursions are equally valid reasons and locations to apply that same visual standard and in many cases I do. However, my view is that in our contemporary environment where human impact is never far away, I can't always avoid its influence,

MAGNETIC FLUX

Sometimes the two-dimensionality of photography can suggest an interaction between elements that does not exist in reality. Like many others, I used to look for leading lines, shadow play and tonal progression to introduce a sense of depth in my photographs and in some instances I still do, but in other cases I prefer the ambiguity of its absence. So with sea water lapping at the top of my walking boots, I framed this foreground rock to visually merge with the background wall at Honeysuckle Bay. While the wall itself offers an interesting wave structure and tonal contrast, to me the dominant angular rock in the corner has amplified that pattern with an implied relationship, perhaps even a causal link.



MORSE CODE

I usually avoid including sky in my photography, generally because I think a closed landscape is more likely to reveal a message of greater intimacy. However, this morning's walk along Bunga Beach was accompanied by such an expressive cloud bank that I felt it would be impolite to the occasion (if not the entity) not to give it purpose. Traditional mechanisms of landscape treatment like foreground interest, leading lines, tonal contrast, reflection and a receding strata of pictorial elements, remain effective influences on composition right along the South Coast; we just need to be in the right place at the right time and for those of us on a self-imposed visual diet, perhaps in a negotiable and sympathetic frame of mind to enjoy their company!

but I wish to at least minimise its visibility.

What is certain, irrespective of our individual approaches to landscape, is that few photographers will be able to resist the magnetism and relative solitude of the South Coast attractions and for some, that chance to also consider just what motivates their own landscape deliberations. Yes, sand, rocks and sea are

there (and in wholesale quantities), but these terms are merely descriptors for an infinite combination of unique elements and ideas. My take on it will be different to yours and in turn, yours will be unlike the next person's.

Perhaps the only visual consistency is the complete lack of it?

THE FUTURE IS NOW

MAKING THE MOST OF AI

We all have a choice about whether or not to use AI, but don't make that choice without understanding it. Julie Pallant gives us a brief overview of the current state of play.

In this article, Julie Pallant addresses the impact of AI on photography, exploring both the potential downsides and the many benefits it offers. It includes extracts from Julie's book "Creating images with AI: A step-by-step guide to Midjourney" in which she explores the various uses of AI-generated images for photographers, artists and other creatives.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming industries worldwide and photography is no exception. While some professional photographers view AI as a threat to their livelihood, others see it as an opportunity to enhance their skills and streamline their workflow.

Impact of AI on the photographic industry

Over the past two years the quality of the images produced by AI image generators such as Midjourney, has improved dramatically. This is particularly evident in the photo-realistic images that we are now seeing produced. The fact that anyone can potentially generate good quality images reduces the work available to traditional photographers. This has already impacted many commercial photographers, particularly those working in advertising, food, product and stock photography.

In preparing material for my book, I interviewed a number of photographers around the world about their views on AI and how they have incorporated it into their creative tool-kit. Here is what Damien Bredberg, a successful Australian commercial photographer, had to say:

"I'm scared by it. And if I don't learn it, I'm going to get forgotten. And if I stick my head in the sand, like many people are doing, if I don't adapt, clients will not want me. I'm not going to be relevant anymore. And I think that's going to happen really, really, really, quickly. So, for me, I've jumped in to learn everything about it that I can."

Damien was an early adopter of AI and for the past two years he has been using AI image generators, such as Midjourney, to create his own backgrounds and elements that are blended with traditional photography to create artworks for his clients. I have included a few examples of Damien's composite images here.

One of the primary concerns among professional photographers is the fear of job losses due to AI advancements. These tools can generate images from text prompts, producing results that are often indistinguishable from those taken by a professional photographer. This capability has led to concerns that clients might opt for AI-generated images over hiring a photographer, potentially reducing the demand for traditional photography services. I asked Damien about his experience concerning the impact of AI on commercial photography:

"I have seen that advertising agency clients of mine are producing artwork and billboard images made completely with AI. Prior to that, they would need a photographer. So, although I'm busy in some aspects of my work, other work has disappeared."

Some areas of the photographic industry have been affected more than others. The areas that Damien feels have



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been more seriously impacted are product photography, lifestyle images and catalogue work, including both the high-end and the low-end segments of the industry. He singled out ecommerce photography as most vulnerable to change.

"The whole commerce world for photographers is going to fall over very, very quickly. During COVID, online businesses went through the roof and this created a lot of work for photographers producing images for ecommerce and fashion brands. They were one of the biggest employers of photographers because they needed weekly content. That's going to disappear really quickly!"

I asked Damien if there was anything he would like to share with other photographers about the AI revolution we are facing. His comment was: "I don't know what to prepare them for, other than just to embrace it, get on board and don't fear it!"

Damien's advice is consistent with the comments in a recent article in PetaPixel:

"Photographers may have to embrace AI, whether they want to or not... while many resist AI, photographers who are adding AI image creation to their armoury may find themselves in a very privileged position – having the ability to offer clients a mix of photos and synthetic photo-style art could prove lucrative." (Growcoot, 2023)

One of the effects of the so-called AI 'revolution' is the blurring of the boundaries between the different creative disciplines. By necessity, many forward-thinking photographers are diversifying their skills base to become "image creators" by including AI image generation, digital art and graphic design techniques in their toolbox.

In the next section I take a look at the different types of AI tools that you might find useful to have in your repertoire, whether you are a professional photographer or an enthusiastic amateur.

AI tools

There is a wide variety of applications of artificial intelligence, but for this article I have chosen to focus on the image-editing and image-generating programs that are most relevant to photographers and other creatives. I have grouped these into two categories, depending on their purpose.

AI-Assisted

Whether you realise it or not, you are probably already using AI-assisted tools when you edit your photographs. Many editing programs available on your phone or computer (e.g., Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop, Capture One, Skylum)

have AI tools embedded to help enhance your images and to remove unwanted distractions or elements.

AI tools can help streamline many aspects of the photography workflow, saving you time and effort. In Adobe Lightroom, AI-powered features such as Auto in the Basic panel can speed up the initial processing of raw files. The masking tools introduced in Lightroom in 2023 make it much faster and easier to create selections for targeted adjustments. The program can easily (and reasonably reliably) select subjects, backgrounds and skies. For more detailed edits, it can identify and mask facial elements such as teeth, lips and eyes of one or more people in the image. A step-by-step guide to using these tools was provided in Issue 112 of *Better Photography* (Winter 2023).

The Remove tool, recently introduced into Lightroom, allows you to brush over an object or distraction to remove it and to replace the area with AI-generated pixels to match the surrounding area. Another new AI-assisted tool is Lens Blur which identifies the subject in an image and applies an adjustable blur to the background, taking into account the depth-of-field in the image.

In Photoshop, the range of Neural Filters which are based on AI technology, do a great job with such tasks as skin smoothing, matching colours between layers, applying depth blur, restoring old photographs and modifying facial expressions. If you haven't experimented with these features, I recommend that you have a play!

Generative-AI

While the assistive tools discussed in the previous section utilise the pixels that you capture with your camera or phone, AI image generators go a step further, creating completely new images, or parts of an image, based on descriptions that you provide.

Last year, Photoshop added a number of generative AI tools that allow you to change the pixels in the image by removing, replacing or adding objects or elements. These tools include Generative Fill, Generative Expand, Generate Background and Reference Image. These generative tools in Photoshop are powered by Firefly, Adobe's AI-image generator, which can also be used as a standalone tool.

Although the quality and realism of the images created by Firefly have improved over the past year, I would recommend that you consider using the Midjourney program if you are serious about producing high quality images. It is considered the best currently available, which is why my book "Creating images with AI: A step-by-step guide to Midjourney" focuses on this particular AI-image generator. In the next section, I share some of the examples from my book of potential uses of AI-generated images for photographers and other image creators.

Creative uses for AI-image generation

AI-image generators are capable of producing an immense range of styles, mediums and formats, just by describing what you want. Here I will focus on how AI images can be used by photographers working in the areas of advertising, food, product, fashion and portrait photography to save you time, improve your workflow and produce more creative images. For those readers who are not professional photographers,

but are looking for an additional creative outlet, you might like to experiment with the possibilities that AI-image generators provide. Many entrepreneurial AI artists are using images generated in programs such as Midjourney to create products (e.g. cards, phone cases, T-shirts, prints) that are apparently earning them thousands of dollars in passive income. They use print-on-demand services (e.g. Printify, Printful, Gelato) which create the product featuring the Midjourney image and send it directly to the customer.

Until recently, images used in advertising, social media and the web required an ‘expert’ to produce them – an experienced photographer, graphic artist or illustrator. The development of programs such as Midjourney has made image creation possible just by typing a few descriptive words on the computer.

Using AI is obviously a much cheaper option for businesses wanting content for their websites and advertising material. For example, to create the image of a picnic in the outdoors (shown here) using traditional techniques would have required a photographer, food stylist, hire of a venue, cost of the food and wine, props and flowers. Instead, I was able to create it by typing a description of the scene (referred to as a prompt) in Midjourney.



The added advantage of using AI is that with just a few modifications to the prompt, an alternative image can be produced – no additional costly shoot fees. The prompt used to generate images can be adapted to suit the season, location or mood of the image. In the example below, I modified the prompt to create a beachside vibe. The ability to generate images such as this for a client is a powerful tool for a photographer intending to future proof themselves by becoming an ‘image creator’.



Even at this early stage of its development, Midjourney does a pretty good job of producing images of food suitable for use online and in advertising. It is quicker, simpler (and less messy) to produce these AI images than it is to hire a photographer, food stylist, venue and equipment.

During a traditional food photography shoot, if props are needed or specific food is not available (e.g., fruit that is out of season), AI images can be composited into photographs for creative effect. Having both photographic expertise and the ability to produce appropriate AI images, is a useful combination of skills to have in your toolkit.



For product photographers, backgrounds and props can be custom designed in Midjourney and quickly and easily adapted to suit the needs of the shot.



Family, maternity and newborn portraits are some of the genres of photography where AI-image generators can be used very effectively. Uses include preparation of mood boards and shot lists, creation of digital backdrops and the production of room mock-ups to display the final images.

In preparing for a shoot, images of possible locations, sets, poses and props can be produced to share with the client and to guide the shoot. These can be fully customised to suit the characteristics and needs of the client (e.g., age, ethnicity, family structure, desired atmosphere, occasion), rather than relying on images from Pinterest or the web.

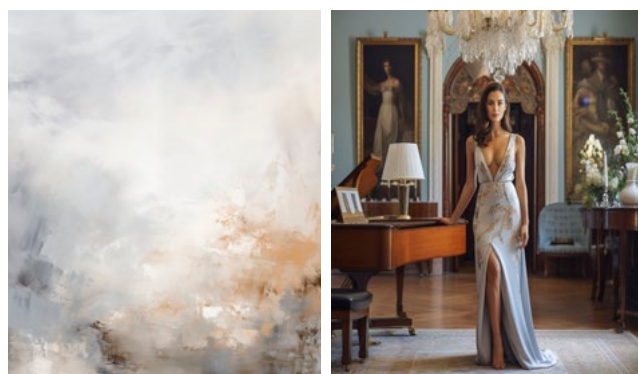
Instead of purchasing multiple studio backdrops in different colours and patterns, you can ask Midjourney to generate them for you, customising them to suit your needs and preferences. The client can be photographed against a



white or grey background and then Photoshop can be used to remove the background and replace it with the Midjourney image. This process is becoming easier in Photoshop with the AI-assisted tools now available.



In Midjourney you can make the backgrounds as creative as you like. They can be a single colour, textures, or themed (e.g., Christmas). They can feature background elements such as curtains, rooms, staircases, gardens, waterfalls, office environment or any customised setting you want. You are only limited by your imagination.



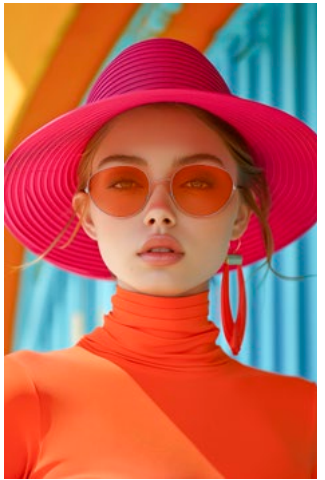
When creating backdrops, you don't have to limit yourself to just portrait or product photography. I use abstract, painted backgrounds generated in Midjourney to enhance (real) photographs that I take of birds. I produce and sell a range of



my bird images on canvas where I swap out the background for something a bit artier than the twigs and branches that birds usually hang out in.

In the example above you can see the original photograph of a macaw taken at a zoo, the background generated in Midjourney and the final image where I have merged the two images in Photoshop.

For presenting portrait images to clients, room mock-ups can be created in Midjourney, customised to suit the colour of the client's own house. The portrait images can then be inserted into the frames using Photoshop.



Another area of photography where AI-image generators have proved particularly popular is fashion. Programs like Midjourney can be used to stimulate creativity, experiment with different ideas, create digital backgrounds and props. It can create mood boards and shot lists for shoot planning and discussion with clients.

Fashion themed AI images are so popular that there is now an AI Fashion Week event in New York and Milan each year featuring the work of emerging AI fashion designers.

The winning designs are then produced by an industry partner and made available for sale.

You can check out the designs at <https://fashionweek.ai/>.





Midjourney is also a useful tool when planning editorial or documentary type shoots (stills or video) that tell a story. I used it last year when planning a documentary series highlighting the problem of loneliness among our elderly citizens. Other images from this documentary are featured in Issue 116 of *Better Photography*.



AI-image generators are powerful tools for exploring concepts and brainstorming ideas for visual storytelling. By generating multiple variations, AI can help in conceptualising images that communicate specific messages or evoke particular emotions. These AI images can then be used as they are, edited in Photoshop to suit a specific purpose or act as a guide when planning a real-world photoshoot.

AI-Image generators

There is a wide range of AI-image generators available, with more coming onto the scene every week. While there are many free programs that you can have a play with (e.g., Meta AI, DALL-E-3, Leonardo AI), if you want to obtain better quality images, I recommend you consider using Midjourney. Midjourney's overall package of features, ease of use and consistently high-quality results makes it the best program currently available. According to Donelli (2024), "Midjourney is unparalleled in terms of quality of results and continues to set the bar high." This is a subscription-based program with different plans starting at US\$10 per month.

The quality and suitability of the images that you obtain from Midjourney will depend in a large part on the prompt that you

write and the way that you describe what you want. Crafting clear, specific and well-defined prompts is crucial as the quality of the input prompt directly affects the output image. Prompt writing is one of the key skills that I teach in my book – for more information click on the link in the Resources section below.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore how photographers can make the most of the advances in AI tools that are available, both to assist in editing photographic images and to generate images from scratch. I encourage you to consider how you might incorporate this new technology into your toolkit to streamline your editing workflow and to enhance your creativity.

If you are working professionally as a photographer, staying updated with the latest AI advancements can help you remain competitive in this rapidly evolving industry. For those of you who use photography as a creative outlet, the availability of AI-assisted tools means you can edit images quickly and easily by taking advantage of the many new features now available in Lightroom and Photoshop. If you haven't already had a play with creating AI-generated images give it a go – be warned though that it can be addictive!

Resources

For more information on my book 'Creating images with AI: a step-by-step guide to Midjourney' go to <https://linktr.ee/juliepallant>. I am also in the process of preparing training videos showing how to use the Midjourney program to generate good quality, creative images.

To see more of Damien Bredberg's work go to his website: <https://www.damienbredberg.com.au/>

If you are interested in the use of AI images in the fashion world you might like to read:

Key, A. (2024, May 10). *Creativity in code: How AI is reshaping fashion*. <https://thefashionography.com/generative-ai/ai-generated-fashion-photography/>

The article by Donelli (2024) listed in the references below also has a very detailed analysis of AI in fashion.

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VANISHING MANSCAPES

Everyone needs a photography project and Mike Langford's most recent is a book project titled 'Vanishing Manscapes'.

Having written articles in this magazine about 'Vanishing Landscapes' (Issue 97) and 'Manscapes' (Issue 98), it is no wonder that I have finally published a book titled, 'Vanishing Manscapes'.

In 2020 during the COVID 19 pandemic, when I had the time to sift through the collection of images I had made since returning from Australia in 2004 to live in New Zealand, I became aware that I had been regularly making photographs of man-made objects in the landscape without really being aware of it.

Southern Manscapes

The outcome was my first manscape book project titled, 'Southern Manscapes' which was first published in late 2021. It was a small 22x21 cm, soft bound, digitally printed book, containing 28 photographs. I printed 200 copies over two editions, most of which I gave away, (which is what happens to most of us who wish to share our photographs in a book form)!

The requirement for this book was that the photographs had to be made in the South of the South Island of New Zealand since 2004, with the main subject being something that was man-made sitting within a rural environment.

I decided very early on that the photos would be reproduced in the book as monochrome images, as I felt this medium described the subject matter in the most appropriate manner. Most of the photographs were of subjects that were highly reflective and made of hard metallic or concrete surfaces. They were very discordant to the landscape within which they sat.

I felt it was important that the book should be quite singular in its purpose and should represent all the subjects in the same manner, adding to the book's visual strength.

Each photograph was positioned on the right-hand page with an extended caption on the left-hand page, describing where the photo was made. I also decided to include some



Book 3: 'Vanishing Manscapes'. A larger book, still square in format and back to the extended captions.

of the camera's metadata, so that those who were interested could see the shutter speed, aperture and ISO that were used, as well as the focal length of the lens.

Using a digital press, I could print as few copies as I felt practical, so I only printed one hundred copies at a time, meaning I never had a garage full of books that needed to be sold to make room for the car.

That edition eventually sold out and so it became time to do a reprint. In the interim, I had found many more images in my collection that fitted my selection criteria, so I decided to add more photographs to the ones already included in the first edition, placing like-minded images opposite one another, creating visual conversations between them. This meant that the caption was now placed underneath each photograph.

Pukaki road marker

It was around 5.00pm on a warm summer's evening when this phenomenal light – referred to as anti-circuscular rays – started to light up the sky to the east. I first photographed it without a foreground, which meant the sky was the subject. Unfortunately this wasn't interesting enough for me, so I quickly looked around for something to place in the foreground to create a visual depth as well as a point of foreground interest.

This road marker was all that was available, so I lay down on the road and placed it in the middle of the shot, making sure that the bright light was just above the top of the marker. As the light source was behind me, it illuminated the road marker which increased its importance and the image was now complete.



811, 100mm, ISO 500 – Canon M5, Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM @ 24mm – 2020

13

12

Upper Mariototo barn

Looking like a building with an open wound, this old barn in the upper Mariototo looks closer to death every time I see it.

The photograph was made in contrary light conditions, which amplified the roughest texture of the outside cladding. This high contrast also created a dark space against which a few arched looking fragments of roughcast could seemingly float, making for an unusual series of shapes and textures.

Deliberately framed the shot so that the window on the opposite wall also appeared through the window frame.



871, 100mm, ISO 100 – Canon EOS 5D Mark II, Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM @ 42mm – 2009

14

15

Pisa Range snow fence

I love the graphic shapes and shadows that are created by the snow fence that was once part of a Ski Park up on the Pisa Range. The park no longer exists, so I guess the fences have also disappeared. Keeping square to the fence when shooting has added to the graphic feel of the structure, but it is the patterns of the shadow on the snow and the high contrast this provides that really makes this shot for me.



876, 100mm, ISO 200 – Canon 5D, Canon RF 70-200mm f/2.8 L IS USM @ 70mm – 2007

16

17

Waimangaroa WOF

The first time I saw this WOF (Warrant of Fitness) sign in Waimangaroa, I just had to stop and make this photograph as it was such a classic piece of Kiwiana associated with garages and petrol stations in rural areas around the country.

What made this sign even more impressive was the shadow it cast on the pavement in front of me. I hadn't noticed it at first, but when I had fully circumnavigated the building searching for the best angle to photograph from, it was the obvious foreground. Sadly, the sign has now disappeared from this rural landscape.



822, 100mm, ISO 100 – Canon M5, Canon RF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM @ 28mm – 2022

112

113



**Book 1: 'Southern Manscapes'.
A single photo with an extended
caption opposite.**



The second edition was produced under the same title, but now with twice as many photographs in it and resulted in another one hundred copies being printed, this time with a wrap-around cover.

By the end of 2022, this print run had also sold out and so it was once again time to either do a third reprint or to create a new book that communicated a little more soul, but still keeping with the theme of 'manscapes'.

Number Three

I figured out that, because there weren't many landscape photographers out there shooting this type of subject matter, I was good to continue with my manscape theme. As a very good landscape photographer friend of mine said to me on viewing my books, 'You have photographed all the things in the landscape I try to avoid!', which is probably the case with most landscape photographers!

On reflection, the first two books didn't offer many of the things that were really important to me. Things like explaining why I took the photos in the first place, what I was feeling and thinking at the time of making the image, telling people more about where the photographs were taken and why I used the camera setting I used.

I wanted the book to transcend just being a collection of photographs that looked nice bound together and enclosed in a book. I wanted the book to express my photographic vision and to communicate to the viewer what that was.

In 2023, I started my new book, the third in the series and decided to move away from the smaller book size to something a little larger at 24x21 cm. I felt I needed more space and for the photographs to be bigger on the page.

The book now contained 63 monochrome full-frame photographs that continued with the same ethos, only now

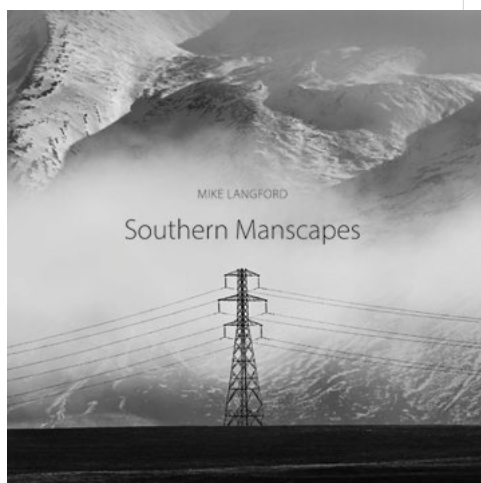
each photograph was supported by a page of script that shared my photographic intent as well as the photographic details of not just how, but also why.

The basic photographic selection criteria were like that of the first books, in that they had to be of something man-made and in the landscape. As it happened, I had so many images that filled that criteria that I felt the need to define it even more tightly. So, I decided that the photos also needed to be of subjects that could only be seen in special circumstances – things I had never seen before making this one image, things that included extreme angles of light, unusual atmospherics, subjects that I have photographed that have since disappeared or that have changed so extensively that they are no longer like they once were when I first photographed them. It is a combination of these things that morphed the book into 'Vanishing Manscapes'.

To aid in the viewing process, I decided to break the book into chapters of the areas I covered, explaining what differentiates each area from one another. This helped with the flow of the book and gave some logic to the sequencing. Without this decision, it was just a book of like-minded photographs, with no direction in the narrative.

To support this idea further, I also included a map at the back of the book showing where each photograph was made, referencing the page number. (I have always loved the idea of having maps showing where photographs were made. If I had a bigger budget, I would have included this on a fold-out flap at the back of the book so you could see where it was taken while looking at the photograph.)

At the bottom of each text page, I continued to include the basic metadata for each photograph, knowing that many people who are interested in photography learn by looking at the ISO, aperture and shutter speed used, as well



**Book 2: 'Southern Manscapes':
The increased number of photographs
meant shorter captions.**



Twizel Sub Station
Late light flatters off the substation's highly reflective towers,
contrasting against a dark and brooding sky to the west.

87% 1/100sec, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark II, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 L IS USM @ 100mm, 2010



Clyde Power Station
Industrial forms are accentuated by a bright light, with power houses
behind the Clyde Dam looking almost banal with its stark, bold, geometric shapes.

87% 1/100sec, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark II, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 L IS USM @ 100mm, 2010



Waikawa Church
A late afternoon light against a darkening sky adds to the interesting
graphics and varied textures of the roof and awning.

87% 1/100sec, ISO 100, Canon 5D, Canon EF 24-105mm f/4 L IS USM @ 100mm, 2011



Nevis Cemetery
Sun highlights a headstone for a gold miner in the lower Nevis Valley.

10% 1/100sec, ISO 100, Canon 5D Mark II, Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8 L IS II USM @ 100mm, 2011

as the focal length. For my own benefit, I also put what camera model, lens and year I made the photo, so I can remember what I was using back then. Hence the book is also somewhat historical for me!

Production Process

Proofing and proof-reading should never happen towards the end of the book production, but should happen at almost every step of the process. To do this, I needed to solicit people who were prepared to ask why and even criticise what I had done, especially if it didn't make sense to them!

I chose people who were my potential target audience, as they would review it from their viewpoint and not mine. As a result, I changed the print size up several points after a proofing round so it could be read more easily by some older people with failing eyesight. Some images were also discarded after a good solid proofing, as they were seen as being outside of the book's theme, something I hadn't picked up on.

Most importantly, I took my time and gave every step of the way due diligence. After all, I hadn't given myself a deadline and it was only going to be ready when I felt it was. You can never proof enough as even when you think you have got everything right, you can always find at least one more change you feel should be made. I don't think there has ever been a book published that hasn't had something wrong with it, (at least this is true in my own case)!

When it came to printing, I also needed to take my time. Luckily, I had a printer who was also a good friend who believed in the project. I had several proofs done before committing to print, so I could live with them for a while and see what worked, but more importantly, what didn't work.

I also had several spreads printed on different paper stock,

including different weights, so I could see and feel how the ink sat on them and if the blacks were what I wanted. I tried matt, satin and high gloss – all in coated and uncoated stocks. Then there was the question of which white – a cold white or something a little warmer. There are more paper stocks than you ever wish to know!

I needed to take my time over these decisions and I spent several weeks comparing them all, finally committing to a Silk, matt 150gm coated paper.

Black and white printing needs to have a good black. The thinner papers didn't work for me as I could see the writing on the back of the page through the photographs – which wasn't what I was after. I also sat with the final proof on the chosen paper for several days to make sure that the colour balance was right, as I was printing on a CMYK digital ink printer, which meant that the colour of the blacks would change according to which light source I was under. I also tried just doing a black ink printing without the colour channels, but the tonal range just disappeared and the grain was horrendous. Spending more money would have seen me print on an Indigo printer, but I stayed with what I could afford and got it right for daylight.

Finally, you get to a point when enough is enough and you are prepared to push the button to print and live with how it is.

This process is always much longer and more involved than you think, but the more often you do it, the better the final product will be. Every page, every sentence and every word, every pixel (not really but you get the idea), needs to be rationalised. Only then can you truly say you gave it your best.

Finishing a book doesn't mean you have fully finished with that subject, especially if it's something you really enjoy photographing. There should always be something more!

MAKING A SERIES OF MULTIPLE EXPOSURES

Jackie Ranken has made quite a name for herself with arresting and impactful in-camera multiple exposures. She shares a recent project based on this technique and her mum's baking tray!

I teach students the importance of practice. At the start of each photography session, I encourage them to slow down and mindfully work through the photography techniques that they have in their toolbox, as well as to experiment with new techniques.

Over time, continued practice helps these techniques become more intuitive and faster to implement. This benefits both students and more experienced photographers, allowing them to respond to a subject in a more personal and authentic way.

The Baking Tray

In this article, I will share a recent experience of making in-camera multiple exposures, where I took my mother's baking tray along for inspiration while travelling through the centre of New Zealand's South Island during our annual Otago Workshop.

Using my mother's baking tray was a difficult task and many of the results were too hard to read. The texture from the tin was either too dominant or obtuse, but I like challenges and I soldiered on, making over sixty different multiple exposures over the four days of the workshop. From these I have selected five images for you to learn from.

Generally, I am not concerned with depicting a landscape as the eye sees it. I am more interested in making images that make me feel good and excited. I enjoy the process of creating images that evolve over time. That's where my Canon EOS R5's multiple exposure options come in. I can select any raw image on my camera card and use it to make a new multiple exposure with another capture. An unresolved image made yesterday can be resolved by combining it with an image made today or some other time in the future.

It also means I can build up a feeling of a place by using texture layers from that place and layer them onto any subject. Some may ask why not do it with a computer? I say, "Do what you like."

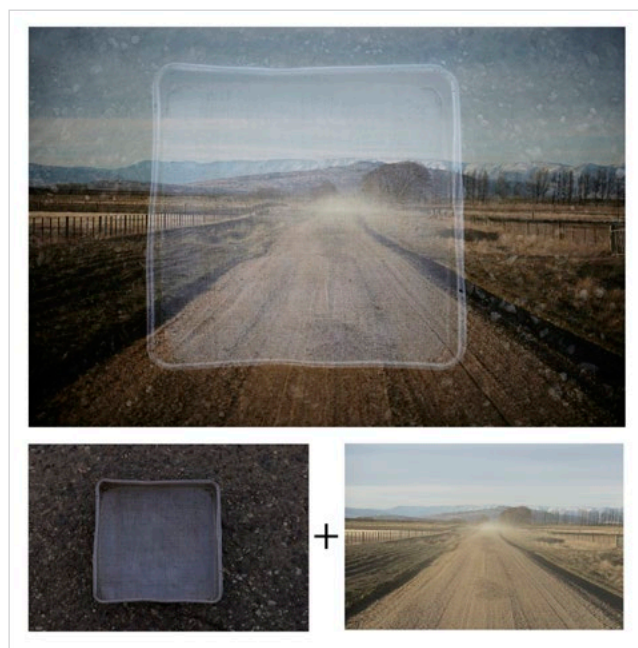
For me, I can't replicate what I do in the camera with a computer. I have tried and it's different. The other factor is that when I am making these multi-layered images in the field, I can make compositional and exposure adjustments as I go. This live performance also allows for the unplanned or unexpected image to be made, as sometimes I find myself being sidetracked along the way.

Wonderful Baker

My mother was a wonderful baker. Whenever I visited her in Australia, there was always fresh baking to enjoy. Over the years, she made hundreds of coconut slices and Anzac biscuits and the baking tray she used is now in my camera bag. The baking tin has cut marks where she used to cut up the warm slice, leaving it with a crosshatch texture of scratches.

My idea was that the marks would create a texture layer and the square shape of the tin the frame for my subject. Now that my mother has passed away, I cherish this tin along with the portraits I made of her throughout her life. Mum's life force from her baking now merges with mine through my lens. My photography is an integral part of my life and life experiences flow from it.

To create a series, something needs to connect the images together. In this instance, I have used Mum's baking tray. Kitchen implements have always interested me—not for cooking, but as subjects in my landscapes, you can glean from another series of multiple exposures called '#Rankencloud' on my website <https://jackieranken.co.nz/> or Instagram.



Before You Leave Home

When you start in-camera multiple exposures, don't rush. Take each step carefully to create a mind map in your brain. With repetition, the process will become quicker and more intuitive.

Learn how to access the multiple exposure features on your camera. Go through your menu and create a shortcut to the Multiple Exposure mode. (Canon cameras have a Green Star menu where I have set up quick access to my favourite camera modes.) Some cameras have the multiple exposure

Maniototo Road

- **Canon EOS R5, f5, 1/2000 second, 320 ISO**
- **RF 24-105mm f4 L IS USM @ 39mm focal length**
- **Aperture Priority EV 0**
- **The Texture Layer EV-1.3**

I made the texture layer comprising the tin and the gravel on the road when we stopped to photograph another subject. After we left, a car passed us on the road, creating an interesting dust trail. I liked the feeling of mystery that was being created by the dust and the distant horizon and felt that the baking dish on the gravel road suited this, so I photographed this as my second exposure through the window of the car, overlaying it on the baking tray at the time. I usually travel with my camera in my lap, ready to go for such occasions. I was able to quickly access my multiple exposure mode through Canon's Green Star Quick Menu, which takes me straight to the correct page of the menu that I need.

The sequence is:

Enable Multiple Exposure ON: Func/Ctrl

Select: Average

Select: the number of exposures 2

Select: Save all source images

Select: Continue Mult-exp –Continuously

Then finally, if I am using a RAW file that is already on my card:

Select: Choose an image for the multiple exposure

I used Aperture Priority (AV mode) @ f5, which created a fast shutter speed that stopped any camera movement as we moved along.

feature buried deep down, so take the time to locate it. Next, learn how to select images that are available on your camera and how to change the multiple exposure modes.

Take some practice shots. While sitting in your lounge room, turn your camera's shooting mode to Aperture Priority, turn on the multiple exposure mode, choose Average and select to make two exposures.

Then, make your first exposure looking straight towards a window – the window will be bright and the walls will be dark.



+



Next, go to the window, set the exposure compensation to EV -2, and make a second exposure.

Bang – you have made your first multiple exposure. Notice how the bright areas within the frame dominate; that's why each exposure needs to be considered and controlled by either changing the exposure in Manual mode or using the Exposure Compensation control dial. There is no right or wrong, as it all depends on the look you want to achieve.

However, you need to know the basic theory first. Generally, the second image will be visible in the dark areas of your first frame.

Falls Dam Crib

- Canon EOS R5 f11, 1/640 second, 320 ISO
- RF 24-105mm f4 L IS USM @ 105mm focal length
- Aperture Priority EV -1
- The Texture Layer EV-1
- Average Multiple Exposure Mode

I photographed every building on this site, all with a very similar focal length and square to the subject. This photograph was the odd one out, shooting from the side and it ended up being one of my favourites because the texture layer that I had just made suited the image much better than a previous background file made with the baking tin on the grass. The baking tin sitting against a wooden wall of one of the buildings worked because the wooden boards filled in the dark areas. There was a synergy. I also had to photograph the baking tin in soft/shaded light, otherwise the side of the tin would create an awkward shadow.

For the Canon, the ISO and Picture style will be locked on the first image.

As I go through the actions of making a multiple exposure, I respond to each photograph I make and then make changes where necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Multiple exposures rarely just happen, you need to make them with intent. Start by making some images that you intend to use for multiple exposure experiments. Keep things simple and be aware that light tones come out of dark areas. If there are no dark spaces in the first exposure, then your multiple exposure can be difficult to decipher.

In the beginning, self-criticism can stymie the learning curve, but it is important to make lots of experiments and to practise each time you pick up the camera, otherwise you may not crest the wave.

The best learning often comes from making what may seem like mistakes, but it is from evaluating your results that



you develop an intuitive understanding of what works for you.

In the final edit on the computer, I clean up distracting elements and colour grade the file to suit my taste. If the work is part of a series, then I would colour grade each image so that it looks like they have all come out of the same pot.

Different Cameras Have Different Menus

Not all cameras have the same multiple exposure features, it depends on the level of camera and the brand. Some cameras only allow the photographer to make consecutive multiple

The Schoolmaster's House

- Canon EOS R5 f16, 1/250 second, 320 ISO
- RF 24-105mm f4 L IS USM @ 30mm focal length
- Manual EV 0
- The Texture Layer EV-1
- Average Multiple Exposure Mode

I had photographed this building many times before, so it was good to approach it with a new idea. I already had a photograph of the baking tin with a wooden background, so I selected that to layer with the wooden house.

exposure frames. In this case, you will need to make your two frames before the camera goes back to sleep.

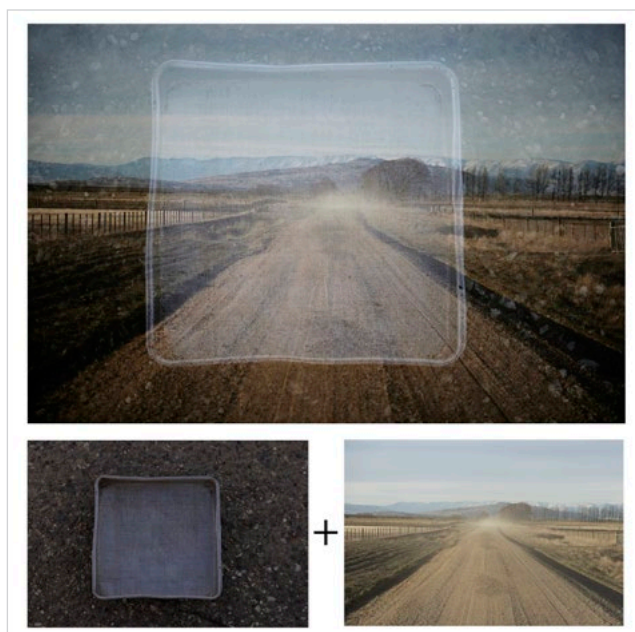
The Olympus OM system allows the photographer to add multiple exposures together consecutively or from the image overlay feature. (Images can be lightened and darkened at this stage too.) Nikon has two ways of combining exposures. One is through the Shooting menu where images taken consecutively are combined together. The second is through the Image Overlay menu (found in the Retouch menu), where any images on the card can be blended together to make a new file.

Canon has one easy to use menu where you can make consecutive combined frames, or you can choose any image on your card, including other multiple exposure frames that you have already made.

Fujifilm has a basic consecutive multiple exposure option. Sony doesn't have a multiple exposure function at all.

Different Modes:

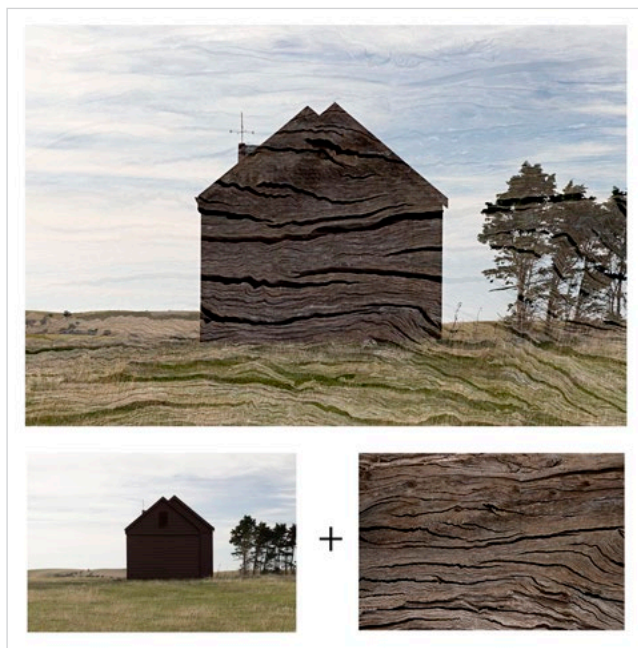
When you combine two images together as a multiple exposure, how are they going to work together? It's just a simple mathematical equation, but the results can be quite different.



Matanaka Farm 1843

- Canon EOS R5 f4, 1/1250 second, 320 ISO
- RF 24-105mm f4 L IS USM
@ 47mm focal length
- Aperture Priority EV -1
- The Texture Layer EV-1
- Average Multiple Exposure Mode

This farm has the oldest surviving farm buildings in their original position in New Zealand. I had just been photographing Mum's baking tin on the abstract textures found in some old eucalyptus logs out front of the buildings and decided to position the tin to the right of the frame. Eucalyptus trees are not native to New Zealand, so when you see them, they stand out like aliens. The man who built this settlement came from Sydney, so I am guessing that he brought some seeds with him to make him feel more at home. The combination of the wood texture and Mum's baking tin somehow comes together to create a narrative even if it is quite subtle. When creating my multiple exposures, I experiment with different exposures and sometimes choose the additive mode if both images are dark, because two dark images will make a multiple brighter. Notice the difference between Average mode (top) and Additive mode (bottom) of the Matanaka Farm.



Average Mode: The exposure of each image is blended together, a light tone over a dark tone will make a mid tone.

Additive Mode: The exposures of each image are added together. Two exposures at Exposure Value (EV) zero will make an exposure of Plus 1 (EV1). Using this mode can create very interesting high key results.

Dark Mode: Dark tones take priority and will sit on top of other tones. (The dark tones need to be the subject.)

Bright/Light Mode: Light tones will take priority and will sit on top of other tones. (The light tones need to be the subject.)

The Abstract Texture

Canon EOS R5 f14, 1/25 second, 320 ISO

RF 24-105mm f4 L IS USM

Aperture Priority EV -1

The Texture Layer EV-1

Additive Multiple Exposure Mode

For this project, I did have my blinkers on, trying to make the baking tin work for as many images that I could. But that didn't stop me from making the occasional classic multiple exposure that entails shooting a texture inside a silhouette. Perhaps this is the best image of the lot?

When I am setting up a background image, I take a series with different exposures.

EV-0, EV-1, EV-2 and sometimes EV-3. I can then select the best image to start with, depending on two main factors: How dominant do I want this background to be, and if I am using the additive mode, where the exposures are added together?

It can be difficult to bust out of your comfortable box, that place where you know what you like and how you like it. It takes a certain degree of 'self-belief' not to worry about what others will say of your multiple exposures. Your friends may ask, what does it all mean? I suggest you tell them that you are free to do whatever you like in your photography.

They can come along on the ride with you or get off the train if they prefer. It's not that serious and you are still the friend that they know! It's just you exploring new ways to use and play with your camera while you wait for the light on that great new 'best photograph' to appear in front of you.

For each of the images, Jackie has provided some helpful notes to give you a head start on your own explorations.

ALL ABOUT THE PRIZE

The story of the Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize,
where it is from and where it is going. Compiled by Roger Skinner.



Anne Papalardo's 'When the Son Becomes a Father'. Emergent Design Award 2019

This image explores the relationship between my husband, a first generation Australian and his Sicilian father who cut cane to support his family on arrival in Australia in the 1960s. The cane knife and its placement on my husband's shoulders symbolises that while their life experiences are vastly different, their struggles in their roles as fathers, breadwinners, heads-of-the-house, moral compasses and problem-solvers for their children, are common between them.



Deb Gartland's 'Self-Reflection' 30x30 cm. Winner Australian Conceptual Photography Prize 2019

Ocean photography is exhilarating at any time of the day. Pre-dawn, early mornings, long exposures and close-ups. Sunsets, night skies and winter storms. Playful and experimental shutter speeds, water and atypical results see deliberate manipulations that calm the Great Southern Ocean's turbulence. Encaustic and mixed media additions consciously highlight individual components while softening others, creating a truly individual environment of texture, fluidity and vastness. 'Self-Reflection' encourages the viewers to immerse themselves in the sometimes tempestuous and uncontrolled, while the ocean soothes the soul and brings a contemplation of life and our place in it.

The Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize had its beginning when the Management Team of the Australian Photographic Society and President Peter Kealey, approached Brian Rope with a view to setting up an acquisitive prize hosted by the APS. Brian readily accepted and began organising the event, choosing adjudicators and arranging sponsorships which came from near and far. Entries surged in, based largely in Melbourne.

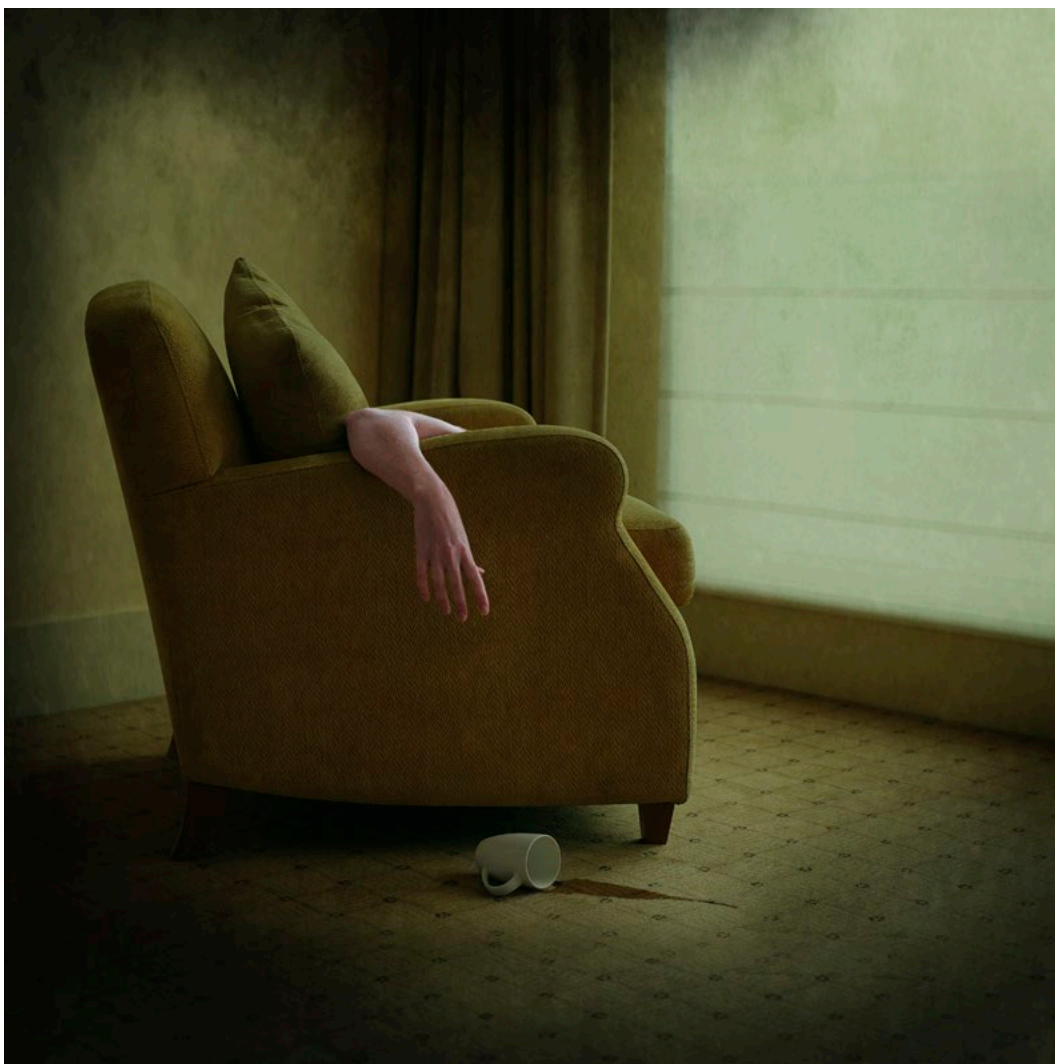
The adjudicators were a mixture of art academics and practising artists. They were Denise Ferris, Head of the School of Art & Design at the ANU, Roger Skinner, the founder of the Contemporary Group within the Australian Photographic Society and Annie O'Heir, a Curator of Photography at the National Gallery of Australia. From a field of 196 entrants, 30 finalists were chosen and then exhibited at Magnet Gallery in Melbourne as the Australian Conceptual Photography Prize. That year, the winner was Deb Gartland (an APS Member) with her work "Self-Reflection". The work was a photograph heavily layered in encaustic and mixed media, which is broadly

described as a form of painting that involves a heated wax medium to which coloured pigments have been added. The first prize became the property of Magnet Gallery as the award was acquisitive (in this case \$10,000).

2020

Back in 2009, Barbara Mullins provided the APS with a bequest in memory of her husband, the late Doug Mullins, President of the Society 1964-1966. This bequest was part of the proceeds from the sale of Mullins Gallery, the former headquarters of the South Australian Photographic Federation of which Doug had been Patron. At that time, the bequest was intended to support the regular publication of an APS book of members' work. In 2011, the first edition of APS Gallery was published. In 2012, the APS celebrated its 50th anniversary and a second book was published. No further books were created and the balance of the bequest continued to grow with interest earned.

Seeking to ensure the long-term future of its new Australian Conceptual Photography Prize, the Society



Louise Martin, 'The Beige Chair'. Winner Emergent Design Award 2020

"'Beige Chair' is about not wanting to be seen. Times when you just want to hide. In a world where we all feel the need and the pressure to be visible and accountable, there is little room to hide. This image was made in honour of the artist's father who loathed the colour beige. He believed people start to wear beige as they get older, as if the colour was running out of them."

approached the Mullins family with a new proposal that would also satisfy the intent of honouring both Doug's and Barbara's significant contributions to the APS. There was much synergy in the proposal by including the style of Doug's own exhibition photography in the Prize, and in Doug and Barbara's generous support of the arts and the Art Gallery of SA.

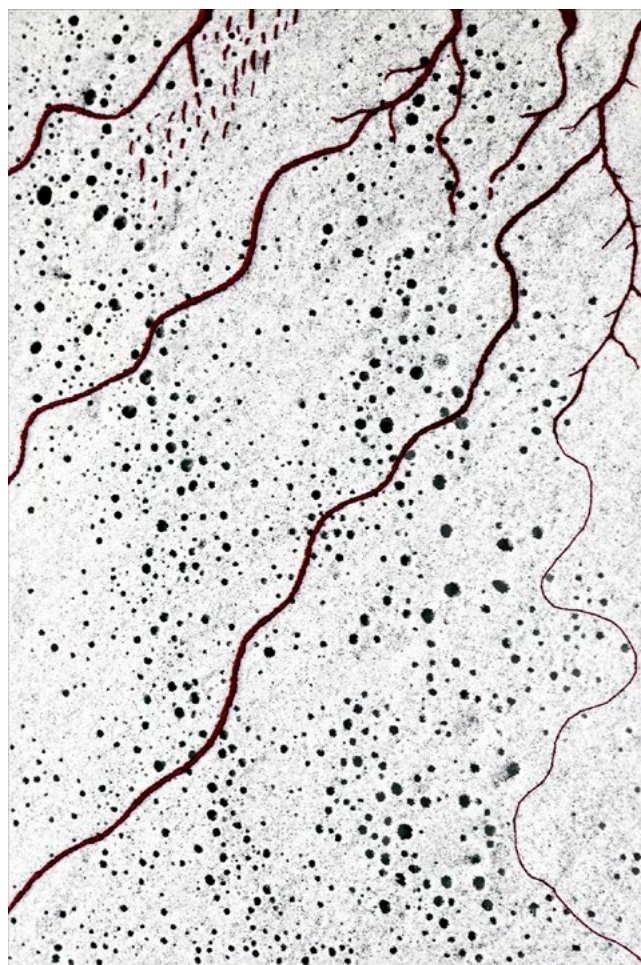
In early December 2019, approval was received to apply the balance of the bequest funds to the Prize. The Prize was renamed as the Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize (MCP), making it a permanent reminder of Barbara and Doug Mullins. Also, during this time Roger Skinner offered to assist with the running of the Prize and he joined Brian on the MCP management team.

In 2020, the Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize management team appointed Judith Nangala Crispin, Jacqui Dean and Julie William as adjudicators. As in the previous year, the adjudication was accomplished by reviewing electronic submissions of 188 works. There were 35 entries selected for the final exhibition. By then, COVID was raging across the nation, lockdowns were put in place, lifted and then reasserted! Due to the on-again-off-again life we were living, the exhibition

at Magnet was not actually opened to the public, but with its huge glass shopfront, images were displayed and rotated in the windows as a compromise. Fortunately, the approach gave the winning work by Judy Parker (another APS member whose work was titled 'Dumpster Sketchbook Waterside') some wonderful airplay and Magnet Gallery also acquired this second winner. A virtual gallery was created by Magnet in order to get the images out to the public, but of course there's nothing like being there at a physical exhibition.

The chequered nature of the Magnet exhibits, ongoing COVID problems in Melbourne and the associated cost to the APS for staging the show, prompted Roger to suggest it might be worthwhile shifting the prize to the Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre. MRAC had begun collecting photography in 1987 via the Muswellbrook Photographic Award. Although it was included in their charter, after 2014 when sponsors pulled out and left the Hunter Valley, the process of collecting via an acquisitive prize had ceased.

Following through, Roger first approached Elissa Emerson from the MRAC and her response was immediate and positive,



**Anne O'Connor, 'The Price of Water'.
Winner the Memento Pro Award 2020**

"Rainwater is free, but if it declines, the rivers dry up and the earth suffers. A cost far beyond water ensues as hope dwindles, waiting for the life-giving gift of water. We all need it, this blood of the land running through the veins of the entire planetary system. It is priceless. The black spots on the patterned background are created by raindrops on sand. The hand stitching represents the blood of both humanity and the land in their struggle for survival, as the planet beneath them without rain, in this time of drought."

so Roger began assembling arguments behind the move to present to the APS.

Becoming aligned with the MRAC involved changes to some of the terms and conditions as one would expect, but more significantly, it also opened up the field to the type of artists that the APS Management Team and MRAC were trying to attract and the types of works that could be exhibited.

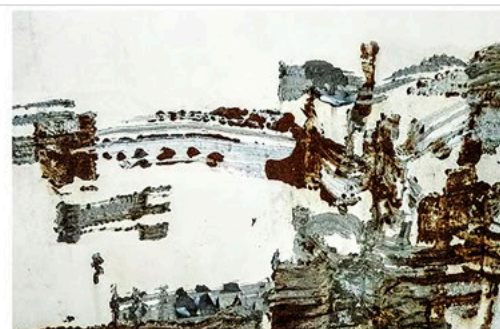
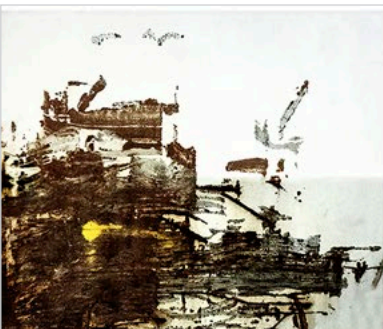
Roger meanwhile spoke at a Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce breakfast, beginning by saying that, "History is being made and the collection of photography is returning to Muswellbrook" and that all the businesses at the meeting would be approached by him for sponsorship prizes. At the close of the breakfast, Bengalla Mining, the Central Arcade and MACH Energy all approached him, indicating a positive response to the idea. Roger had also been negotiating with Ilford about sponsorship and they happily came on board as well.

2021

Because the adjudicators (nor anyone else for that matter) had not been able to attend the opening of the previous Award, the management team decided to use the same adjudicators for a second year with the expectation a grand opening could be held. Finally, they would have their chance to attend and meet the artists.

Julie Williams had had a number of phone conversations with Roger as to whether it would be possible to select the finalists and then come to Muswellbrook and do the final adjudication of the works on the wall. This required the physical attendance of the adjudicators in town for a couple of days. Roger said it was a logical step, in much the same way as the Muswellbrook Art Prize was judged and so another change was implemented. COVID of course had other plans and as the finalists' works began arriving, so did COVID. Neither Jacqui nor Julie were able to attend due to lockdowns. Judith, however, living away from a major urban area, slipped up the back way through Hill End to arrive at Muswellbrook.

Muswellbrook Shire Council closed down all events and so the opening was only attended by Judith, MRAC staff and the MCPP management team. Never have I seen such dedication to the cause! Judith readily accepted the challenge and spent



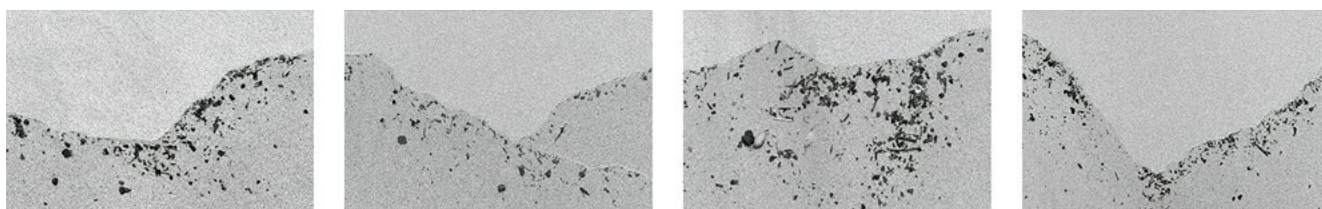
Judy Parker, 'Dumpster Sketchbook Waterside' 30x40 cm. Winner Australian Conceptual Photography Prize 2020

"Recently, I took a series of photographs of the side panels of a large open container at a local recycling centre. The markings had a wonderfully strong graphic quality – red rust lines on a silver painted surface, a calligraphy of wear and tear. When I processed the images, I was intrigued by the way sections of the random patterns suggested a series of semi-abstract coastal landscapes, each quite different. I modified three of these to reinforce the reference and combined them into a triptych. Our minds are not limited to the literal. They can re-identify and re-imagine."



Ian Terry, 'A Night on the Tiers'. Winner Emergent Design Award 2021

"This image is part of an ongoing project responding to the journeys of George Augustus Robinson who, assisted by Palawa (Indigenous Tasmanian) guides, walked through Van Diemen's Land in the 1830s to persuade Palawa still on Country to give up their resistance to the European invasion of their island. In following Robinson with his journal in hand, I am seeking to connect the historical with the contemporary, to make sense of my existence in this island of dreams which was stolen violently from its first people. This fractured landscape is where Robinson spent his first night on one conciliation expedition."



Ian Skinner, 'Ashscapes' 40x100cm. Winner Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize 2021

"The catastrophic fires in south-eastern Australia in 2019/2020 were shortly followed by torrential rain. The rivers and creeks disgorged vast quantities of debris from the conflagration into the ocean, so that the waves turned grey with ash and convulsed with charred remnants. Where the gentler waves reached their zenith on the beaches, small flecks of carbonised vegetation rested in ephemeral patterns suggesting the hills, ridges and valleys of their living selves."



Anne Pappaladro, 'A New Place To Stay'. Winner Memento Pro Award 2021

"For 50 years, Mum and Dad had Christmas holidays at the Tallebudgera Caravan Park on the Gold Coast, Queensland. This place was where our most cherished family memories were made. Age meant they reluctantly, but bravely sold their vintage caravan and booked a spectacular high-rise beachfront apartment nearby at Burleigh, with high hopes for this journey toward a new tradition. It rained torrentially and constantly for their two-week stay and I took these images to reflect the gloom of our spirits and my parents' remorse at the disappointing beginning to this 'fabulous' new holiday ritual."

an hour and a half talking to Jacqui and Julie with her phone via Face Time Video, examining in real life the final choices.

With the fantastic support of local businesses Bengalla Mining, The Central Arcade, Ilford and MACH Energy, it was Ian Skinner's (another APS Member) work titled "Ashscapes" that was awarded the \$10,000 acquisitive first prize. Brian had also approached Magnet to ask if they would donate the two previous winners to the MRAC, which they very graciously did and so those two works 'Self Reflection' and 'Dumpster Sketchbook Waterside' entered the Muswellbrook Shire Collection. The opening was live streamed on Facebook and Zoom. Such a different world.

2022

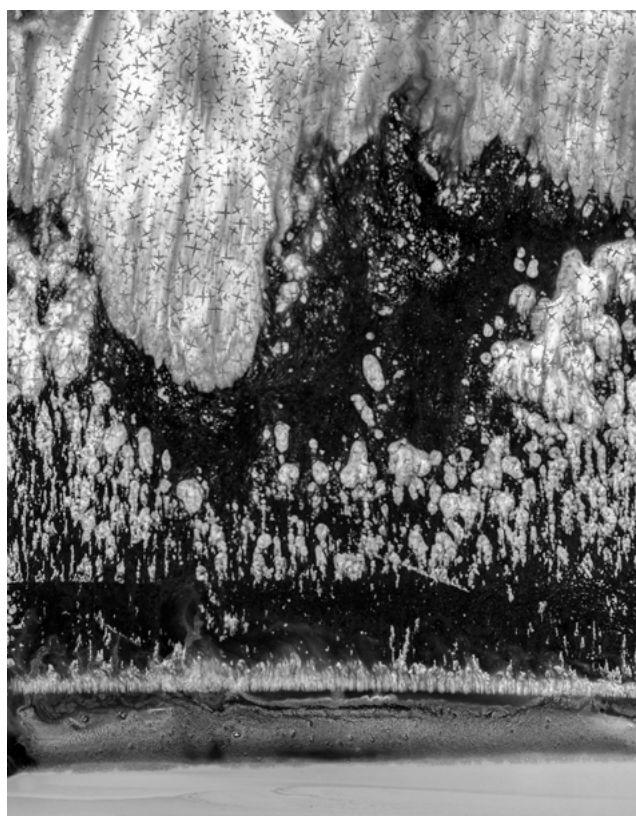
2022 brought about other changes. The name of the exhibition was shortened to the Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize and with the security of increased funding, Brian and Roger decided to increase the first prize for 2022 to \$15,000, thanks in part to Bengalla Mining, Ilford and MACH Energy. This incredible level of support from local businesses was rewarding to see and their commitment to the arts community is gratifying.

The selection of judges was also altered, asking the previous judges to choose the following year's judges. This removed the management team from the selection process, keeping things at arm's length.



Chris Bowes, 'Sunkissed #1 #2 #3 #4'. Winner 2023 Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize

"'Sunkissed' is a series of experimental photographs created using a hand-made camera that, rather than capturing a representational image, instead captures the colour of light. They are presented in pairs, each pair containing an imprint of the light at sunrise and sunset over the course of several days. As such, the work's aim is to reduce landscape photography to its most basic form, imbuing photographic film with an impression of the sun rather than capturing it washing over the environment."



Sammy Hawker, 'Mount Gulaga'. Winner 2022 Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize

"This work was captured on 4x5 film looking out towards Mount Gulaga from the Wallaga Lake headland. I processed the negative with ocean water collected from site. When processing film with salt water, the corrosive properties lift the silver emulsion and the representational image is rendered vague. However, an essence of the site is introduced to the frame as the vibrant matter paints its way onto the negative. A ghost of Gulaga looms behind the abstraction – felt rather than seen."

From 266 entries, the judging team of Bill Bachman, Heidi Romano and Alex Wisser selected 30 works for exhibition. Unfortunately, Heidi was unable to attend, but Bill and Alex included her in their discussions via their mobile devices.

The adjudicators for the 2022 award all liked the eventual winner but, when seen in the flesh as it were, its compelling presence made the decision easier: they awarded Sammy Hawker First Prize for her work titled "Mount Gulaga".

2023

So it rolled on to the 2023 iteration of the prize and another team of adjudicators was selected: Cooper+Spowart, Eloise Maree and Len Metcalf. They sorted through 405 entries and delivered a show of thirty works to be displayed at the arts centre. The chosen works constituted a step change in that four works were what I call 'earth interaction works', whereby elements of the earth have been used in the production of the artwork – via the burial of negatives or film in the earth, submerged during flooding, reliant on roadkill or using treated papers exposed under rain light for 50 hours!

Another major change was that artists actually submitted a concept, rather than the illustration of a concept, via the use of three-dimensional display devices. So, the entire concept was on show at the arts centre.

The judging process was also different where each judge chose ten works with a decision made to get together and discuss their differences of opinion. Interestingly, all three judges chose different works. Yet when it came to the final judging on site in the arts centre, they wandered around the space and arrived at the same conclusion! An amazing set of circumstances came together to present a unified choice of the winner: Chris Bowes, 'Sunkissed #1 #2 #3 #4'.

As you read this, the 2024 prize may have been judged or will be very soon! Check out the results on the web – or wait for the next issue where we hope to publish a selection of the exhibited works.

THE ENIGMATIC KINGDOM OF



Above: Monks are very accommodating for photographers, but we usually ask our guides to set things up.

BHUTAN

**Visiting the Land of the Thunder Dragon
is like walking onto a movie set – except
it is very real! Peter Eastway shares
his love for this wonderful country.**

From deep inside the massive white-washed walls of the ancient Paro Dzong, rhythmic chanting punctuated by cymbals, horns and drums echo around the stone quadrangles, each bordered by facades of ornately decorated wooden verandas and steep stairs to reach the higher floors. Sunshine breaks past the central temple roof to the ceremonial square below where a lone monk, dressed in the traditional crimson robes of Tibetan Buddhism, stands silently with his back to the warmth.

I wait patiently for him to assume a more suitable pose, something that matches (in my mind) the antiquity and reverence of the location we're in. His position is perfect, the light wonderful, the shadowed background just right.



Right: It is unusual to be given permission to photograph inside temples when the monks are at prayer or ceremony, but on this occasion, cameras were allowed in a teaching monastery above our guide's home village.



The Watch Tower above Paro Dzong is now a museum and well worth a visit. Dzongs and buildings like this punctuate the landscape in Bhutan.

I have a 56mm f1.2 lens (around 80mm equivalent on a full-frame sensor), the slight telephoto angle-of-view removing extraneous details from the scene that would unnecessarily complicate the composition.

I think back to other photographs I have taken in this same quadrangle: a small monk standing behind a shallow pool of water after fresh rain, the dzong's temple towering behind him; local townspeople dressed in their best clothing, watching a festival performance where the monks, dressed in vibrant costumes and frightening masks, dance in unison to the beat of the drums; to a small monk running down the steep, worn stairs, his red robes flowing and the orange wall behind contrasting with the white walls and stonework.

So, why am I waiting for this monk to move? Why indeed, but just because I feel like I've stepped a century back in time when I visit Bhutan, doesn't mean the locals do. Bhutan is an unremarkably modern country that is embracing the



A monk descending the steep stairs that are characteristic of Bhutanese architecture.



A few seconds earlier, this monk in Paro Dzong was looking intently at the screen of his mobile device. Timing is everything!

future while bridging its heritage. In some ways, what I am doing is insensitive. I am waiting for the monk to put away his mobile phone so I can pretend that I am indeed taking this photograph 100 years ago.

Insight

When I first visited Bhutan in 2012, communication around Bhutan was severely limited by ageing telephone lines and massive mountain ranges. A few people had mobile phones, but generally if there were a big storm, communities could be cut off for weeks. Two years later, around 80 per cent of the population seemed to have mobile phones. Today, it must be everyone who wants a mobile phone has one and this extends to the older generation (who still rely on their grandchildren to set things up) and the monastic orders. Young monks play video games as well as any Westerner!



Monks deep in conversation after an official ceremony in Punakha Dzong's main temple. This temple is a marvel to behold, but as shoes are off, cameras are put away – hence the outside photos instead.

It's interesting in our Western culture how we love visiting countries that remind us of the past. Many countries don't have the same investment opportunities we do at home, so when we see their way of life, we think back to our own histories and romanticise their situation – simple living and hard work. How wonderfully 'authentic' it is! And then our guide drives us back to our plush hotel and we have a pre-dinner drink!

I am very much guilty of this approach. Although objectively I try not to confuse access to wealth with technological advancement, subjectively I love the experiences when I feel like I am stepping backwards in time. And in Bhutan, their government actively encourages me to do so. A large chunk of the Bhutanese economy is based on tourism, so much so the population is actively encouraged to wear traditional dress. While in the larger towns you'll see plenty of Bhutanese in regular Western clothes, the school children are invariably in ghos and kiras, there are always crimson robed monks walking around and to visit the dzongs and temples, traditional dress is essentially a requirement for everyone (except tourists, of course).

So, when I write that visiting Bhutan is very much like walking onto a movie set, with authentic actors and locations, I think I'm being quite accurate. And I don't feel like a rich colonialist because my hosts encourage me to accept their hospitality in return for what is really a very modest investment.

With eight tours through Bhutan under my belt, I have probably not written enough about one of the most amazing destinations you can photograph. If you can't join David Oliver or me on one of our workshops, but you'd still like to go, get in touch with our guide and mention my name. Namgay from Illuminating Tours is a keen photographer himself and knows what your camera needs to see!

Festivals

One of the highlights of a trip to Bhutan is a religious festival. Held in different towns at different times of the year, you can usually find at least one festival in a two-week trip.

Hosted by a local temple or dzong (a dzong is a fortified monastery), the incumbent monks perform a series of dances



Monks having a conversation in the cloisters behind the main temple, Punakha Dzong.



Recently renovated, Pele La chorten lhakhang (temple) sits under low clouds.



Kids will be kids, everywhere. It's surprising how many toy guns can be found at the festivals.

that tell stories and explain Buddhist teachings to the lay people. And the locals really dress up for the occasion. Festivals held inside the dzongs are incredibly crowded, while other dzongs use outside quadrangles for their performances, often with towering mountains as the backdrop.

Festivals are all day affairs, sometimes several days, so I don't think you need to be there for the entire event. The program can vary and there are often delays as the performers struggle into their next costume. Sometimes the villagers will dance in-between the monks' performances. However, to photograph the monks in their wonderful costumes can be a challenge. Generally, the background is full of other spectators (although usually you can find an angle that excludes other foreigners) and so it is incredibly busy – not the best backdrop. Sometimes in the dzongs you can get a position from the first or second floor above the quadrangle, so you're looking down with a simple background. Or you drag the shutter (use long shutter speeds) to produce an image that is more emotive than a direct rendition of the monks in costume.

However, as interesting as the performances are, it's the people and the behind-the-scenes photos I like the most. Walking around the quadrangle you'll find all sorts of people and activities to photograph. At some festivals, access to the dressing areas is possible, but generally speaking photographers cannot go behind the scenes.

In fact, there's an unwritten rule that says if you're taking your shoes off to walk into a temple, then you should also put the lens cap on your camera. I have memories of some of the most incredible locations, but no photographs and in many ways, I think this has added to the overall experience.

Outside the festival area you'll find a ramshackle collection of temporary shops and bars. It's like going to an old Easter Show with lots of stuff to buy, eat and drink. Some Bhutanese are also very keen on gambling, enjoying the spinning wheel in particular. You'll find a lot of these stalls in the back areas with a host of people gathered around, hoping to make their fortune.

In terms of portraiture and documentary photography, festivals are a gold mine of activity, but it's amazing how day to day life can be just as rewarding.



Intent on watching the dance performances, this ancient gentlemen was oblivious to my lens.



Early morning mists in the Phobjikha Valley enshroud a row of chortens and a stand of prayer flag poles.



A monument at Dochu La (mountain pass) has 108 stupas on a rounded knoll. Low cloud adds to the atmosphere.

Local Experiences

On most of my trips I have found myself in a private home, either having a cup of tea or watching a religious ceremony. Bhutanese homes have a highly decorated temple room with an altar, statues and ceremonial paraphernalia, so while on the one hand we see Bhutan racing towards modernism, there is another side that remains true to their Buddhist origins. This is no movie set you're visiting, no performance for the cameras, it's what Bhutanese around the country practise. It's very real.

I imagine a lot of the travel companies in Bhutan are similar to Namgay's. Yes, there are some big operations, but it seems more common to find small travel companies being run by an entrepreneurial individual who employs his extended family and friends. So, if we have half a dozen guides and drivers, there's a really good chance someone in their extended family has something interesting happening at home. It could be a religious ceremony in the family temple, they could be harvesting the rice or ploughing the

fields for the coming season. They all make great fodder for photography.

On our first tours, we visited the key destinations because that's what people are looking for when they read the travel brochures. However, these days we place equal emphasis on small, local villages who are less used to seeing a group of photographers, but are nonetheless willing to be photographed. All of Bhutan is in on the game: they know tourists come to see their way of life and they're (generally) more than happy to accept a few cameras pointing their way.

This is also where you'll have an 'authentic' experience, whatever that really means. You'll watch the village wake in the morning, step aside as a local farmer herds her cows to higher pastures, smile at a couple in their bright blue Wellington boots as they heft their hoes onto their shoulders ready for a day's toil in the paddocks.

Many of my favourite photographs have come from unplanned experiences and as long as your guide is happy to vary the itinerary, it's hard not to really enjoy a photography tour through Bhutan.



Our guides can do anything, even fly! Here you can see the traditional gho that Bhutanese men wear. Great sleeves!



Himalayan Langur. Normally, monkeys (and langurs) are here one moment, gone the next, but this troop stuck around for some intimate portraits.

Getting Around

Bhutan is reported to be very expensive, with tourists paying a US\$200 visa fee. Don't let this put you off as Bhutan is not all that expensive because this fee can also include accommodation, food and travel. Generally speaking, you'll be spending more than \$200 a day anyway – as you would be anywhere else in the world.

A 12-day Bhutan photo tour that costs US\$9,000 is \$750 per day and that includes the Bhutan visa fee (being mindful your cost covers the expenses of a photography guide as well).

To travel to Bhutan, you need a Bhutanese travel agent. A local travel agent in your country will need to deal with a Bhutanese travel agent to make it happen. In our case, we deal directly with Namgay in Bhutan, but in the past we went through an Australian travel agent.



The dzong at Gasa, a new destination for us this year.



It's the chance meetings along the road that I love the most. This forester was bemused to have her photo taken!

Namgay organises the visas and also the flights into Bhutan. There are only half a dozen jets that service Bhutan (it is said the approach to Paro airport is the most spectacular landing in the world) and they fly from just a few locations, including Delhi, Bangkok and Singapore.

Once you arrive in Bhutan, your Bhutanese guide is responsible for looking after everything. In our case, Namgay uses a series of cars (rather than a bus) and drivers to ferry us around.

With a group of 8 photographers, we'd have four cars, four drivers and four guides (Namyay, David, Peter and another local guide). You switch cars every day so you get to learn about different things from different drivers and guides – who all speak English.

The guides are dressed traditionally, although you'll notice at the end of the day they change into more standard Western clothes for their free time. And nothing is too much trouble. They open doors, provide drinks (water, tea, cookies) and will offer to carry your camera equipment.

The advantage of four cars is we can be modular. Sometimes a location might involve a steep walk (such as the famous Taktsang Monastery or Tiger's Nest), so if you're not up to it, a different itinerary without a walk can be arranged (we drove to Haa this year).

The hotels are 'individual' (as opposed to a standard hotel chain) and clean. There are 'tourist friendly' restaurants all around the country and the cuisine is fresh, healthy and very tasty! There are even a few cafes opening up with great coffee, so while we're stepping back in time in some ways, it's hard to hide from the worldwide coffee culture.

In short, a trip to Bhutan is very comfortable. It's not particularly high and usually you're sleeping below 2000



Formal portraits like these can be organised by your guide, but you should take control over the location as much as possible. This was photographed inside the family's home using light from a small, sliding window in the wall.

metres. Temperatures vary as you'd expect in the mountains, but it's very manageable.

While I'd love you to consider a photo tour with David and me (we have one in the works for April in 2026), I'd be just as

pleased to see you support Namgay and his travel business on your own! Look him up at Illuminating Tours (<https://www.illuminatingtoursbhutan.com/>)

If you haven't already, Bhutan should be on your bucket list!

IN PRAISE OF SMALL SENSORS

Len Metcalf challenges us and asks, is there a small sensor advantage?

There is no shortage of articles, influencers, photography educators, sales people and marketing that bemoans smaller sensor cameras over the advantages of larger sensor models. The list of advantages is seemingly endless. Lower noise is usually the first, more details, sharper images, larger pixels and higher bit-depth all equal better images. All of this at what appears not much extra cost.

I have fallen into the marketing and gear hype myself many times. Actually, I am a huge sucker for new technology and new cameras. And I am often caught up in this idea that bigger is better, yet in so many cases after a few years of using them, I return to my small sensor cameras in frustration.

Some of the digital cameras I have extensively used over the past few years, searching for better images are the Canon EOS 5DsR, Fuji GFX 50s, Panasonic S1R and S5iix, Leica SL2s, Leica M 10 monochrome, Leica M 11 and the incredible Leica M 11 monochrome.



There is one thing that virtually no one talks about and that is simply that small sensor cameras are inevitably easier to use. Significantly easier to use. In this article, I will explain why I keep returning to smaller sensor cameras.

Did Someone Say Easier To Use?

Without a doubt they are easier to use. They are so much easier to get to work. The larger the camera, the more work you need to put into each photograph to make it work.

I flew to New York to purchase my first large format camera and the shop assistant talked me down from an 8x10 inch view camera to a 4x5 inch one. The main argument was one of weight and size, because I was keen to take it into the wilderness. What they didn't talk about was how much easier the smaller one was to use. Quicker to set up. Less size in the wind to photograph with. I could get away with a smaller tripod and a smaller camera bag to keep it in. And most importantly, being a quarter of the size, film was roughly a quarter of the price and a quarter of the processing price.

Eventually I did end up buying a couple of 8x10 view cameras and still love using them. Slow and methodical. Tripods and contemplative photography. I do miss composing my images upside down and back to front. Any camera manufacturers reading this, please take note. It would be a very simple bit of programming to implement for us aficionados.

Aperture Advantages

But there was another advantage with the smaller format, besides the larger choice of modern lenses: the smaller format has an aperture advantage. Granted, large format cameras can make up for shallower depth-of-field by using tilts and swings to bring out-of-focus areas into planes of focus – and in fact



The Tarkine is one of my favourite locations to photograph. With its two to three metres of rainfall each year, mist and lush green forests are my focus, although I am equally keen to spend more time on the rugged wilderness coast. These images are all taken with an OM System's OM-1 and my trusty Voitlander 25mm f0.95 lens. When it's pouring rain, I swap lenses for my Olympus 25mm f1.2 as it loves a bit of water to make it shine. Last year, my Panasonic S1r got some rain on the day before our tour started and it died with the water damage. Treating one camera brand like you treat another is always fraught with danger. Thinking the weather sealing would be as good as Olympus / OM Systems meant the loss of a whole camera. Weather sealing is incredibly important to me and wins out over megapixels. I am running another tour to the Tarkine next year, if you'd like to join me.



All photos: The Tarkine

this for me was the main point of spending thirty years with these cameras.

However, as you progressively travel down the sizes of the image capture area, depth-of-field increases for any given aperture. This is often cited as a disadvantage, not an advantage. Once we get down to small sensor cameras, like the Micro Four-Thirds ones that I love so passionately, we start seeing huge advantages in depth-of-field. I have been spoiled by this for the past fifteen years. With my favourite lens, I only need to stop down to f2.8 to get nearly everything in focus in one of my typical landscapes and if I push it to f5.6 I can easily get almost everything in focus. With my full-frame cameras, I am always struggling to keep things in focus. I had to shoot on a tripod to get a usable aperture and I ended up resorting to focus stacking.

Getting things in focus is the most asked question in my photography classes, not how to get things out-of-focus, though to be honest that does come up a lot in our abstract photography workshops.

The advantage of depth-of-field is rarely talked about and even more rarely lamented. When I have two systems going, like I do at the moment, when I am using my full-frame camera I often find myself wishing I was using the smaller system. This happens so often that usually I end up selling my full-frame or medium format cameras, and going back full-time with my Micro Four-Thirds cameras.

Hand-held and Computational Advantages

I have been so amazed by image stabilisation and these small cameras lead the way. My current camera claims 8 stops of image stabilisation. Having a tiny sensor means that there is less mass and size to stabilise. For engineers, it is way easier to get the sensor to remain still as the camera moves. Subject movement is now the limiting factor and I find myself using the tripod rarely. In fact, I used it for a week with Peter Eastway on our Narooma Workshop for the first time in ages, so I could

take my exposures well past the few seconds I have been able to shoot hand-held.

One computational feature, which was designed to make up for the shortfall of smaller sensor cameras, is a multiple shot high resolution mode. Some cameras take eight or more images and then stack them together. The speed and ability of this has now been extended to being able to shoot them hand-held. One of the benefits of this and not often talked about, is the increase in dynamic range and reductions in noise. We are seeing a two or three stop advantage. This puts the dynamic range well past most if not all current full-frame cameras. While not perfect for photography of moving subjects, it works exceptionally well for still ones.

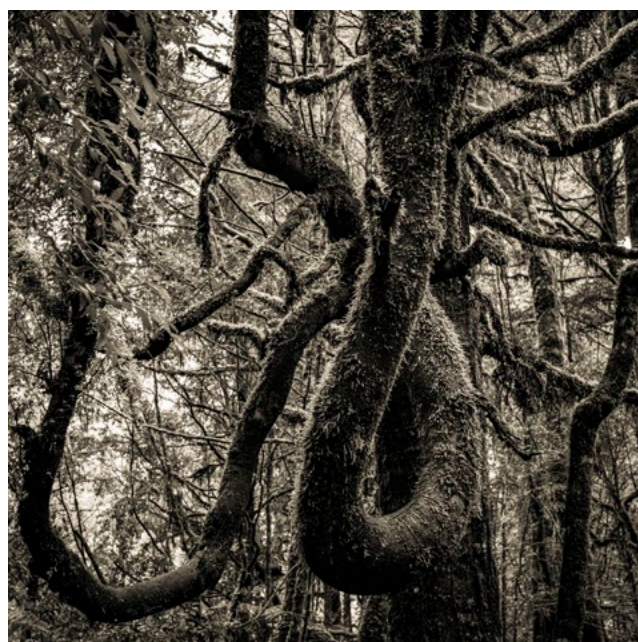
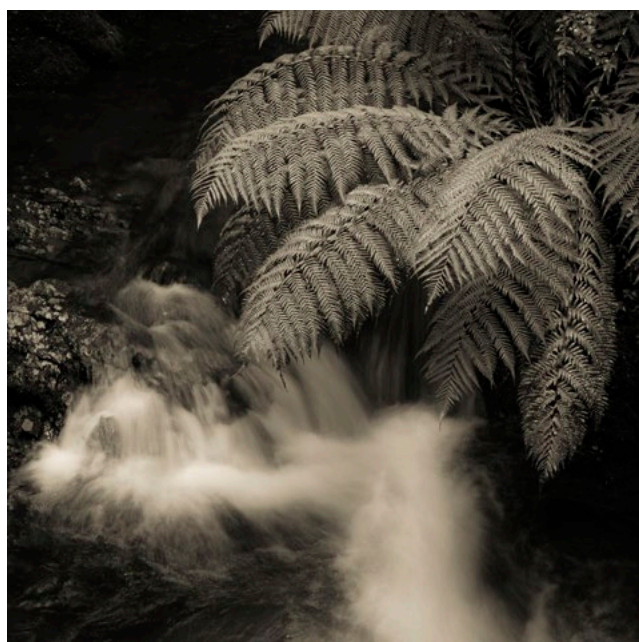
I have been able to extend my exposures with computational photography too. Using the hand-held high resolution mode, I have been able to combine eight half- to two-second exposures in-camera to get some beautiful soft water in streams and creeks. You do need a fair bit of static material in the scene for this to work. I have included them to illustrate this article.

Lots of development has gone into smaller cameras. On my Olympus, one of my absolute favourites is being able to watch your image develop (so to speak) with long exposures. I can watch and see what is happening as I am exposing. This gives me the ability to stop the exposure whenever I decide it has had enough light. This is also a huge advantage when painting with light and making my abstract artworks, with long exposures and camera movement. I can actually see what I am doing.

Cameras are now routinely giving us computational neutral density filters and recently this has even extended to digital graduated neutral density filters. These are also very effective at reducing noise and increasing dynamic range.

And What About the Weight?

The weight of the overall system was for a long time one of the biggest advantages of the smaller systems. This has



been slowly eroded away by full-frame and medium format manufacturers building smaller and smaller systems. I am not sure that there is much advantage these days. Except for some telephoto lens.

It is still possible to create a very light, weather sealed system. I have this for when I go on week-long bushwalks. I pare my system down, pick my lightest body and lightest lens. I generally use a wrist strap for photography and can carry my small camera and a light lens in my hand for hours. As the size, weight and uncomfortableness increases, this time drops and drops.

Some cameras give me hand cramps after about twenty minutes of use. It is usually the weight and how they are held.

Comfort is so important to me.

And the cost? When considering the cost of your system, you need to consider the total cost of lenses and camera bodies. It is easy to get swayed into thinking the price differences aren't that much for all those extra pixels and larger pixel sizes.

Myth Making

The biggest myth is that a better camera equals better photographs. It is important to remind you that the emotion is in the image, not in the camera. I keep rediscovering this over and over, unfortunately.

I regularly produce some of my iPhone photographs as fine art prints. I believe it's because I captured them, because I had the camera with me in some cases, but most importantly, I was able to relax without the pressure of performance. This means I was able to work with my intuitive and emotional self, rather than the logical one that seems to take over when I use more 'professional' or specialised cameras.

Print size is the most reasonable reason to use a larger camera. This can't be underestimated. I remember for many years proclaiming that a ten megapixel camera was sufficient for the prints I was making. I must admit, I do have a long held fantasy of a huge exhibition of my work with very, very large

prints. So for most of my life, I have worked with the largest camera that I could carry. Advice given by Sir Ansel, I believe. The best camera is the heaviest one you are prepared to carry. But realistically, I rarely sell a one by one metre print. I have sold two in my whole life. I have sold probably a hundred or more A2 prints that are 16 inches x 16 inches. And thousands of A3 prints with 10 x 10 inch images on them. So, am I hanging onto a dream or should I ground myself in some reality about my work?

Today, we can easily resize our work with computational applications that use AI to enlarge. Yet, I have some incredible prints that are one metre in size that are from my ten megapixel small sensor camera, which no one has ever questioned the quality of.

Do I hang onto my dream of large prints? I think that when the day comes, when I have that opportunity, I will be absolutely fine. And people won't be wandering around comparing or even questioning what camera I used. They will be enamoured with the emotional content.

Why do we photographers spend so much time worrying about things that the overwhelming majority of viewers don't even notice?

Waiting for Files to Load

Lastly, to round off this article and to complete my argument, what about the time we spend working with our files? When I am processing or even just looking at my mega-huge files from the larger cameras I have been fortunate to play with, I get upset at the time it takes for each file to load. I find myself thinking I should go back to my ten megapixel camera and enjoy a quicker experience.

This is obviously hardly an issue for most photographers with fast computers, but for some reason it niggles at me. I want my photograph now, thank you. Mind you, this has nothing to do with sensor size, does it? It's actually about how many pixels there are. So let's just scrap this as an argument for smaller sensor cameras.



These images were taken with a variety of cameras. Can you pick each camera just from the photographs? A puzzle I often lay out on a table at camera clubs is a set of A2 images taken with a wide variety of cameras. I remember one day selling the noisiest, softest image, taken with a phone. It's amazing how often my phone photographs sell. It's not the camera that matters, but if it meets your needs, is a joy to use (though I am sure some of you enjoy the most difficult cameras to use, for I know I did for thirty years), and that it suits the way you work.

What I love about all of these computational technologies is they just make photography easier and more enjoyable. The best thing about small sensor cameras is that I can use them without so much thought. With much more intuition. After years of chasing the perfect large format print captured on film, today I am finding more freedom and joy in my small sensor system.

This article was inspired by the incessant hate from some internet warriors who continue to degrade small sensor size systems like the ones I use.

One writer in particular takes a dig at OM Systems and Panasonic at every opportunity. I think it's worth considering

what camera system you are using very carefully and make sure salesmen don't up-sell you to a camera that's harder to use.

Len Metcalf is a professional art educator who specialises in teaching monochrome, abstract, landscape and flower photography. He teaches a year-long Master Class online, which started his photography school. Len has just finished a 'Learn to See' course that uses drawing to teach photographers better observation skills. Please sign up to Lens' newsletter and see his array of offerings at <http://lensschool.com>



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