

At the start of 2013, my middle son travelled through China for 3 months. He would Skype home (still boggles me who pays for that) and tell me all about his trip. During one conversation he mentioned that he had been to see the Terra-cotta Warriors in Lintong, Xian, Shaanxi Province. However when he arrived at the site, they didn't have the impact he expected, they weren't as grand as he had hoped. He said he felt the reason for this was because every street corner, every gift shop, every anything store, that rifled through the pockets of the foreign tourist, had a replica of one out the front of their place. He said that the city was over saturated with them. So when he saw the real thing they didn't impact upon him as they should have.

That got me thinking about photography and how today we are over saturated with imagery. So over saturated, to the point that people don't notice the good pictures any more. I started to let my brain run loose to try and find an answer and it was whilst I was in free fall I realized that I was over it.

I feel I have made a gallant effort to comply and accept the new style of photography, but I now know that I am definitely over it. It seems to be everywhere and it seems to be done to death. If you are wondering what it is I am over then let me pontificate, but hopefully not in a pompous way.

Firstly I have to say that I love digital, I love my digital camera, my X-E1, I also love film and I love the film cameras I have. A Bronica GS1 and an Ebony 45SU. This is not about the capture, its about what happens next. The disease that has crept into the fingers on the hands of many.

I am over the over saturated, over manipulated, over worked, over done vacuous pictures that pass for photography these days. The composite images that fool us without clarification, the jacket that was photographed blue, but changed to red because some geek has squeezed it into some software package that has been designed to deceive us with its clever tricks. I am over all the false colours that appear in images most of the time, because mainly people have been heavy handed with the slider and maybe they are trying to cover up their inadequate image.

I am over all that because I just want to see the real pictures which are sadly missing in a lot of circles in this day and age. They're still there, but they're harder to find. This just doesn't apply only to Australia, it's a world wide issue.

I have belonged to the Australian Institute of Professional Photography since 1984. That's almost 30 years. My goodness. In 2010, because of my contribution to photography over the years, they made me a Fellow of the Institute. I was chuffed. I still am. It's always nice to be recognized for something you put your heart and soul into.

I gained my Associateship and my Master of Photography with that organization when images were real or just about real in some cases. We were all happy black ducks back then, but not now. Too many of us are voicing an opposition to the type of images that represent photography today. Some have quipped that our annual awards, APPA, are now the Australian Professional Photoshop Awards. It's close to it in many cases.

In 2008 when I obtained a gold bar to go with my Master award (sort of like getting a second Masters) I thought I would have a rest from the Awards for a couple of years and then start again in the Portrait category, my other photographic passion. I kept a close eye on the images that were being presented in that category and finally became disillusioned with those as well. The images

that seem to do the best were over worked, over contrived, highly manipulated pictures that I nicknamed 'carnival pictures', because to me that's what they looked like.

A portrait to me is what Arnold Newman and Irving Penn took. Greg Heisler and Bill Brandt. David Bailey, Karsh, Steichen and Cunningham and plenty more. These were real images of real people by photographers who had the ability to see, in real situations. I am over the other stuff, for me it belongs in the circus. I want photographs of people to say something, to suggest who and what the person being photographed represents. I want to be able to see their personality in the image, not camouflaged by multiply layers of other images complete with dancing bears and fireworks. Have I mentioned I am over those types of images? I wish APPA was as well. Gosh I am starting to sound a bit like Jeremy Clarkson.

As I wrote that I am reminded again of the fabulous exhibition that was on at the War Memorial in our nations capital Canberra, in the first part of 2013 and of an exquisite book I bought a few years ago called Hong Kong Yesterday, by Fan Ho. Those two things came to mind because they were captivating and wonderful and they were real.

What is our history going to tell us if we use the over contrived picture as a representation of where we have been, of what we were like in those times? (These times) History will be falsified like it has been before. As George Orwell said, "He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past".

We want photojournalism to be real, but where do we draw the line on photojournalism? As a species can we be trusted? Unfortunately we don't have a very good record in so many areas, that's why we have so many rules and regulations. You see it seems we find it hard to walk a straight line. If the software wasn't there then we would be fine. Perhaps we should blame the software developers. What's there reason for doing this and continually changing it? Boy that's a hard one to work out.

I have been fortunate to capture some images that have been quite remarkable. As in remarkable as I looked at them. So remarkable that I wanted to give them a life. A photographic life. When I have showed those images to people, some have uttered, "Has that one been photoshopped?" You see what's happened. Any image that is considered remarkable has to be born out of software, not someone's vision. Not someone's ability to seek out, find and capture. Have we lost the ability to realize that a great image might have actually come from within the person and not some drop down menu?

I still want to believe that images captured by this medium are real. That they *are* a result of a persons vision. Their decisive moment in so many decisive moments that happen every day. I don't want to be deceived by imagery, I want to be amazed that someone has found something that exists and has made a wonderful picture of it that is breathtaking.

I know some have called todays photography, the stuff I am over, art, and yes it is, but it belongs in its own category or in its own place. It's not what photography is. It needs a name, maybe post production digital imagery, but not photography.

Falsifying or changing colours past the point of no return is misrepresenting nature. Oh yes I know black & white does that as well, but somehow, and I don't know why, we accept that. Perhaps we

accept it because of photography's history. Maybe because, even though the colour is missing, the lineage of the image can still be traced back to the actual thing that was photographed. Form and line play a much bigger part in the photograph and we see it as being recognizable. It's almost tactile because it's real.

Real in a sense that the picture is real. I know that some who play around with black and white go over the top as well. They push the boundaries past the point of believability, past the point of acceptance. I know there will be some who will want to point the finger at heavy darkroom manipulation. Yes that's to be expected and so be it, but again not everyone is doing it and most would present images of vision, not ones that came from deception or software and the dreaded drop down menu.

I am also over people telling me that Hurley manipulated his pictures and made many by composites. Many photographers at that same time, and in the 1900s, didn't do that. They made images that they found. Steiglitz, Weston, Watkins, Atget, Smith, Capa and a list longer than my arm. Their photographs were real. I am also tired of hearing that if Ansel Adams were alive today he would embrace the digital age and photoshop and his "changing" of images would even be more radical. I would like to know when these people who spout such things, last had a conversation with Uncle Ansel or do they claim clairvoyant status? They say this just to justify their own decisions with changing photographs or to give themselves a free rein conscience.

Photography has always been about technique or talk about technique was always hanging around. In the film days it always had a back seat, but it was there, but now the first thirty rows are taken up with the technical, pushed and controlled by those who sell the gear and the back rows are now housing the seeing side of things.

Technical is fine, but nail that one and move on. Move on to vision and to making images that have meaning. Images that represent how you feel about what it is you are photographing. Have an image that works in the camera rather than working on the assumption that you will make something of it later in post production. I am sorry, but that just doesn't work. All it produces most of the time, is carnival pictures and I am so over them.

I am also just about over the number of camera models there are now and how it seems that there is nearly a new model every month. The new and improved slogan has worn out it's use by date. No hang on, many cameras have been improved since the start, in fact in the last few years, but often the changes are quite small and it seems to make very little difference to the picture quality. Of course there will always be exceptions. The plain fact is that the camera you bought 3 years ago will work just as well, and be just as effective today as it was when you bought it. If any of you still have a film camera, then pull it out and put a roll of film through it. Hey, guess what, it still works like it did 30 years ago when it was bought.

It also seems everyone is a photographer these days, but not too many have photographic vision. Such is the pity. The quality of imagery has declined and we are over saturated with banal and meaningless pictures. In most professional circles, wherever you turn, there is an image of something and most of them mean nothing, say nothing, and are basically contrived. I would like to end this article with a quote by Uncle Ansel.

A comment on photography today - by Richard White

“Photography is in a period of development where means and methods sometimes hold unbalanced dominance over creative effort”.

And one by Paul Strand

“The decision as to when to photograph, the actual click of the shutter, is partly controlled from the outside, by the flow of life, but it also comes from the mind and the heart of the artist. The photograph is his vision of the world and expresses, however subtly, his values and convictions.

And finally Ernst Haas

“There is only you and your camera. The limitations in your photography are in yourself, for what we see is what we are”.

And if anyone is offended by my comments in this article, then, I am sorry, but hey, I'm over that too.