

The Art of Photography

Richard White

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOPS
CALENDAR

ON LINE GALLERY

PHOTOGRAPHY ARTICLES

HIGH COUNTRY

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Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco 2003

In March this year I applied to the Arts Council of Victoria for a personal development grant to attend two courses in the USA. They accepted my proposal and I returned from the US a few days ago after a 5 week journey. The courses I attended had instructors of the calibre of John Sexton, Bruce Barnbaum, Ray McSavaney and Jay Dusard. All highly regarded in their field and photographers I have admired for a great number of years.

I know the picture I have offered will no doubt freak a few people out because it is in colour. The story behind the photograph is quite simple. I had just picked up a car from San Francisco Airport and was heading up highway 101. I had the idea for the photo as I was caught up in traffic trying to find the next sign which said 101. You actually have to drive through the downtown area at one point and hope you can see all the signs that point you in the direction you want to go.

My idea was to get some symmetry with the main structure of the bridge. The two columns on the side worked perfectly. I got lucky with the other main column fitting perfectly in the gap of the first one. The picture was taken with what I call my dinky toy (a point and shoot shirt pocket camera) as I was driving on the “wrong side” of the road whilst steering with my knees. Anyone need a lift?

You know, there are always things to learn and I found the workshops I attended very useful. It has convinced me as well that just about everything you are supposed to be able to do via Photoshop can be done the good old original way and producing a far superior print, quality wise.

In fact now that I have mentioned that, it reminds me of something that happened just before I headed off to the US. I subscribe or accept receipt of a newsletter that comes out of New Zealand called Grinz. Standing for Great Remarkable Images makers of NZ. I can never remember exactly, but that doesn't matter and I'm sure someone will enlighten/correct me.

I had been reading for quite some time, via this newsletter, about the wonderful merits of digital imagery, of which, I agree there are many. In fact I don't think that I have ever read any negative statements - or maybe only one or two. Anyway I was tiring of reading over a period of time how good or equal to the real thing a black and white print from a computer printer was, which of course is absurd so I sent an email to the editor saying I know which I would rather have hanging on my wall, a silver rich fibre base print rather than an ink on top of paper poster print.

Now there are a few sensitive digital users (touchy would be better to describe them), out there. The abusive emails I received were incredible. Many telling me that content was all that mattered and a number of other things that shouldn't be repeated. I then had to point out that I was only comparing the fabric - silk as opposed to cotton - real leather as opposed to that imitation stuff that was getting around a number of years back.

I came to the conclusion, that there was perhaps a lot of internal justification going on for those who had committed themselves to spending an obscene amount of money to replace what they already had and maybe were still coming to terms with it. I could be wrong in some cases, but not all I suspect.

My thoughts were that I think traditional fibre base prints ooze much more life and luminosity and seem to convey a much more tactile quality than the other. I am not alone in this thinking of course so I cannot be dismissed as a heretic. You might say that the many of us that feel this way are wrong and that's fair enough. But still the question has to be asked. Are we?

There was some good discussion on this subject in the US and some were far more adamant than I was and it is needs to be said that these were notable people who were in the know. Again opinions of a few people, but well respected people nevertheless.

The only way of course is to decide for your self by doing a print in the darkroom and one from the inkjet or pigment jet and then comparing. After all, you're the person who has to be happy.

New film emulsion?

Almost everyone who uses Kodak black and white films will be aware that earlier this year they shifted the emulsion coating facility to another building in order to improve the quality of the finished product. In doing so development times for all (except T-MAX 400) changed, although I have read conflicting reports on this. Some say make no change, some say reduce by 15 to 20%. The best thing and I would recommend is do a test yourself. I have found that new times are necessary and my personal reduced time for TRI-X was about 20%. If you don't want to test just look at the high values on your negs and if they are looking to dense then a reduced development time is in order. If you also use the TRI-X and HC 110 combination you may find that your development times will be too short. This has been my experience and even when I have diluted HC 110 even further it doesn't give me a lot of room to move so I am about to embark on a test of TRI-X and D 76. The other option could be XTOL which can be mixed at room temperature and that seems to be its best advantage.

I know testing is a bore, but once it's done you should be set for just about life or until you change to Pixies. Then you will have to deal with the war against the gnomes at the bottom of the garden! Anyway I'll let you know how I get on in the next newsletter.

2004 High Country Calendar

In the last newsletter I said I would try and tantalize anyone interested with a good price for my calendar. The calendar measures 495 x 340mm with separate dated boxes allowing plenty of room to write entries and it retails for \$27.50. I would be happy to sell them to Newsletter receivers for \$24.50 which includes postage. If you would like one send a cheque or postal order to the above address and don't forget to include your return address. (It has happened)

End of year celebrations

These will occur in a darkroom near you where a print will emerge from the developer and bring great joy to the photographer. He will wonder why he hasn't been discovered when he can produce such a fine image. He is unaware that he is competing with millions of others who have similar thoughts.

Enjoy the pictures you make for it is this alone that keeps us doing what we do.

Happy festive season. Cheers till next time,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel". The signature is written in black ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.