

The Art of Photography

Richard White

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOPS ON LINE GALLERY PHOTOGRAPHY ARTICLES HIGH COUNTRY CALENDAR

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Thanks to all of you who have emailed me in response to the last Newsletter re: the Better Photography – India interview. It was nice to hear your comments.

The newsletter I interrupted so that I could send the last one has been interrupted again mainly because I heard so much information whilst I was in Brisbane recently for the annual judging of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography photographic awards and Photographic Trade Show.

I thought I would relay what I heard so you know what is being said behind closed doors and open ones. As you would expect at a Trade Show all things displayed were big and beautiful and the latest. “Here’s what you can now spend your money on!” It was very impressive and in some areas had that WOW! Factor.

What I did learn was if you are a professional photographer in the Commercial and Advertising areas then digital and computer are definitely the way to go. It just suits that line of work. Those who are still holding out I suspect won't for much longer. If they do they will be unique and in some ways that might be an advantage.

Quite a number of Portrait / Wedding photographers have also made the switch but not as successfully and many are returning to film for capture but still using the computer for output. It seems that most are doing the post production themselves and this is where most of the problems are coming from.

I spoke with two independent large lab owners and both said almost the same thing: that professional quality of photography has declined because photographers are attempting to do all the post production work themselves except the printing. The finished post production work is sent off to a Pro Lab and being printed at about 1/3 the price as in the old days only because all the corrections are being done by the photographer. Consequently colour balance and overall quality are all over the place. They (the photographers) are reluctant to re print as it incurs yet another cost.

In my previous life which ended over 11 years ago, after completing a wedding I would bundle the film off to the lab, they would put it through the VCNA and analyse the film, colour correct any image that required it, print it out and send it back. Ninety nine times out of a hundred the prints were good and we all got on with doing what we do best, photographing.

The almost typical scenario these days is return from a wedding and download the images to the computer the night you get home from the wedding, mainly for security and sometimes to free up the memory card because you have another wedding on the Sunday. After the clients are shown the images via the computer and orders are placed the photographer if he is a sole trader or a partnership will spend the best part of 2 to 3 days in front of the computer playing with the images and then sending them off to the lab for printing. According to the labs most are not getting it right because they have not had their computers calibrated or colour balanced and they haven't learnt how to work their software properly. Hence quality takes a dive. Many who find the digital capture and subsequent post production too difficult are returning to film. Film has more latitude with exposure and the post production is easier and out of their hands.

Of course those who have mastered it are quite happy thank you! Once again it comes down to ability and experience. and the fact that few Wedding / Portrait photographers have had any formal training. It is one of the few occupations that anyone can begin with very little qualifications or training. In my previous life I had some formal training before I started as a pro and once I started working, I attended almost everything I could so that I would learn even more.

It seems this isn't happening as much these days and consequently we are having the problems we are having, according to the labs.

In another area of professional photography, stock libraries, the quality here has declined also. A very good friend of mine who works for Lonely Planet Publications was instrumental in starting their image library. He has said that recently he has noticed that image quality has fallen away a bit now that people are submitting their images digitally. What he has found is, that in the past photographers buying film cameras and lenses would buy the absolute best. Nowadays photographers buying digital cameras with the intention of submitting to image libraries are buying only mid range cameras and lenses mainly because the price is comparable to good film cameras However they are not as good and so neither is the image quality. You

see all digital cameras are not the same! The sensors that capture the image vary quite a lot. Some are better than others and of course this determines how good the picture quality is.

If it was your practice in the past to buy the best equipment then keep doing so. Please don't compromise on image quality. There is currently a digital back for some medium format cameras, but it costs in the vicinity of \$30,000. To me that buys an awful lot of film. I'd be waiting awhile till they are in the realm of a couple of thousand. It has been said by some, probably the 35mm camera manufacturers, that medium format photography is dead in the water. Well this is just not true. Camera sales completely disprove this argument.

Back to the Trade Show in Brisbane. The overall recommendation by labs, film and camera manufacturers and even some digital printer companies was that if you are still photographing with Black and White in mind as an end result, then it is best to stay with film and output via the darkroom. That's not to say that you can't do it digitally, but the best image quality will come via the traditional method. These people did add, knowing that I use 4 x 5" film, "especially for what you do".

I know the decision can be a hard one, but sometimes it will be the correct one. There is a chap who has been coming to a workshop of mine every year for the past 6 or 7 years. He has made the switch to digital photography. On his own admission his darkroom skills were perhaps lacking a little, but I have to say he has certainly got a handle on his digital capture and out put. I have seen a great improvement in his finished work. I would like to think that it is due to my instruction, but I think a lot of it is that he now understands his equipment and how it all fits together. No doubt I have helped in some way, but he has made that commitment to get on top of things.

So in some ways it is back to square one for some. The plain facts are that nowadays not all systems or capture mediums are for all styles of photography. All I can say is think of your end result, buy the absolute best you can and perfect your craft without compromise.

Exhibition of High Country Images

From June 11 to September 5, I am having a small exhibition at Yering Station Gallery in the Yarra Valley in Victoria. This is just to the east of Melbourne near Yarra Glen. The gallery is situated within the winery in the beautiful National Trust building. Admission is free but the wine you have to pay for.

View Camera and Camera Arts Magazine

I have mentioned in the last few newsletters how these magazines are now available for subscription within Australia. I had been subscribing from the US for 7 years, but delivery was a little erratic. Now I am going locally and the delivery is on time and up to date. I think you will find it good value. Try it for a year and see what you think.

Mainline Photographics in Sydney are the distributors. Their web site is www.mainlinephoto.com.au and if you scroll down the main page you will come to the information about both View Camera and Camera Arts magazines. View Camera is obviously for Large Format and Camera Arts is for medium format and 35 mm.

The fifth offering in the Newsletter Darkroom editions is again the photograph I have presented at the head of this newsletter, **Arch & Opera House, 2003.**

The darkroom editions are designed to give you the opportunity to purchase one of my photographs at a highly reduced rate. This will apply **only** to receivers of this electronic mail. **This offer lasts till July 31, 2005.**

Photographs are offered in sizes that I feel are appropriate to the image. This will differ from image to image as some shots, in my opinion, only deserve, or work better in a particular size.

About the image

The image was made whilst I was in Sydney on a scouting trip for a workshop back in 2003. It was made just after sunrise using T-MAX film on my Bronica GS1 medium Format camera. My 4" x 5" had slept in that morning.

This above image will be offered in **8 x 10"** and **11" x 14"**.

The image will be printed on Polymax Fine Art Fibre Base double weight gloss paper. The print will also be selenium toned and washed to archival standards mounted and over matted on museum board ready for framing.

Details relating to the image and print number will appear on the back of the mounted photograph.

Hope you make some nice images over the winter months.

Thanks and cheers till next time,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath it.