

The Art of Photography

Richard White

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOPS ON LINE GALLERY PHOTOGRAPHY ARTICLES HIGH COUNTRY CALENDAR

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Inlet, Squeaky Beach, Wilsons Promontory 2005

Just over a month ago I returned home after teaching a 10 day workshop in the South Island of New Zealand. Once again I had a nice and interesting bunch of people and needless to say we had a heck of a lot of fun, the weather was very kind to us and we even received a couple of bonuses.

On the trip 4 people were photographing with digital cameras and 6 with film based cameras. Over the duration of the workshop, as I looked through each persons view finder, what capture medium they were using was the furthest thing from my mind. I was more interested in the composition of their vision, in a sense in the art of their photography. (A good name for a workshop program). I was interested to understand why they were photographing what they were and what was their intent with regard to the image.

As happens quite often when several people point their cameras at a similar subject the different compositions never cease to amaze. When we stopped at Thunder Creek Falls on the road to Wanaka most of us had our cameras pointed at the very picturesque falls. I managed to get to look at about seven different compositions of this subject. Each was different and I recall each had merit. The different choices were obtained by several factors. Viewing perspective, choice of lens focal length, height of camera position, aperture choice and whether the decision was to photograph in colour or black & white. Even with digital capture I think it is a good idea to attempt to make that decision before you make the shot as you will have a better understanding of what you are looking at.

With colour you will look for colour harmony and balance and with black & white you will look for tones, shape and form. Each has to work and each has to be appealing as a final image. Making this decision can sometimes be relatively easy and sometimes very difficult. Many a time I have set up my camera, composed, corrected, taken meter readings and even placed a filter on the lens only to abandon the shot altogether. Something at the point of (almost) commitment stops me as perhaps I realize that the photograph to be is really pretty ordinary and I don't need the practice after all.

If you know what the final output is then I think it is helpful to make decisions with regard to the image at the capture point. This can determine how you go about making the photograph.

Field workshops, especially like the trip to NZ, tend to be more based on the art side of photography: on what you see and what you choose to put into an image, and sometimes more importantly, what you choose to leave out. It becomes your interpretation of what is before you. In some ways the capture medium is irrelevant.

The next stage of image making is the output and this is where the craft side of photography comes in and probably where the biggest differences are between inkjet machine prints and darkroom produced photographs such as Cibachromes / Ilfochromes and black & white.

If we look at the dictionary term for Craft it says:

- a profession or activity involving the skillful making of decorative or practical objects by hand
- something produced skillfully by hand, especially in a traditional manner
- skill in making or doing things, especially by hand
- a profession or activity that requires skill and training, or experience, or specialized knowledge

and the verb of craft suggests:

- to produce or create something with skill and care
- to make something skillfully by hand

So I guess we could argue that there is more of a difference between digital and analogue than meets the eye especially when it comes to output. The final content of the photograph will of course be the determining factor of whether or not the photograph works. And if it is yours then how you capture and finish off is a decision that only you can make.

If you are capturing on film and scanning the film remember that there are scans and there are scans. Over the last 8 years of producing a black & white calendar and using drum scans of my images, sometimes the difference is quite staggering. Flat bed scans do not give as good a result as the dedicated upright film scanners. Some may argue and say “well they’re pretty good” but that usually means they could be better. If in the past you printed your own photographs, colour or B&W, or you had a lab do the prints for you, then you wouldn’t have, or expected the labs to, do your prints through a cheap sub-standard enlarging lens. So poor quality scans can be in the same category. Drum scans are undoubtedly the best and for the best reproduction, then you should always insist on these.

Maybe, as I reported in the last newsletter, this is one of the reasons that the quality of professional photography has declined over the past few years.

If you are into photography for the craft aspect and you like that more hands on approach, then I guess you have only one option, but if not then perhaps you have a choice. I can only encourage you to do the absolute best you can without compromise. Remember most photographs are a part of ourselves so this is what you are conveying to others.

Polymax Paper - A thing of the past.

With Kodak pulling the plug on, in my opinion, one of the best printing papers that was currently available the search for me will be on in the new year to find a replacement. Most of you who have been receiving this newsletter for the past 3 years will know that whilst I was an avid Kodak Polymax user I occasionally flirted with Forte paper from Hungary. This will probably end up being my choice. It is one of those things I plan to do in the first part of the new year. For those of you who are still interested in printing in a darkroom I will keep you posted on my findings.

And just for the record, a question that I repeatedly get asked (three times just recently) is, “Why do you still make black and white prints in a darkroom?” And I always give the same answer. “Because I enjoy printing. I enjoy the process of making a print. I love what it delivers. It excites me”. For me this is the best reason to do anything. If I was to produce via the computer I think it would then just be a process. A means to an end. I fear and know I would get bored and so go open a bakery where I know (are you ready for this) there is plenty of dough.

High Country Calendar 2006

Once again, actually for the eighth time, I have produced the High Country Calendar for 2006. The calendar retails for \$29.50 and can be found at most good book stores and some newsagents. If you would like a copy send a cheque or postal order along with your name and address P.O.Box 425 Mansfield Vic 3722 and I will post a copy back to you. If you would like it personalized just ask.

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. 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.

NEWSLETTER DARKROOM EDITIONS #6 100% guaranteed

The sixth offering in the Newsletter Darkroom editions is again the photograph I have presented at the head of this newsletter, **Inlet, Squeaky Beach, Wilsons Promontory 2005.**

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 December 21, 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 earlier this year when I was at Wilsons Promontory. It was made about mid morning on TRI-X 4 x 5 film on my Linhof Technika 4 x 5 camera.

This above image will be offered in an image size of 275 mm x 350 mm (**11" x 14"**). Overall matted size will be 407 mm x 508 mm.

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. As always only the finest materials are used in the production of the images.

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

<p><u>Workshops for 2006.</u> The brochure is currently at the printers and will be sent out about the second or third week of December. Contact me if you would like a copy mailed to you and you are not already on the mailing list.</p>

We have another exciting group of workshops planned for 2006.

I am also happy to announce that well known and noted American photographer, Bruce Barnbaum, will join me here in Australia for an exciting workshop to be conducted in Tasmania. Bruce and I have been planning this for some time and finally we nailed down a date. See details further in this newsletter.

If you would prefer a fully illustrated brochure listing with a more detailed account of all the workshops, please drop me a line with your name and address and I'll post you a copy.

Please note that Workshop Fee does not include accommodation, food or travel.

Well that's it for 2005. I wish you all a great festive season.

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