

The Art of Photography Richard White

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOPS ON LINE GALLERY PHOTOGRAPHY ARTICLES HIGH COUNTRY CALENDAR

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Howqua River & Rock Face

How much do you think that you rely on equipment to produce an image? I guess I am no different to anyone else when it comes to buying a new piece. I check to see if it will do what I am hoping to achieve. I consider the price being asked and whether I think it to be value for money spent. If there are two the same, or will do what I require, then the style of the product becomes a factor.

Product A, \$25 cheaper, will do exactly what product B will do, but product B is so groovy. Which one do you think gets the nod? No prize here for getting the right answer.

I mention this because I have just come back from the Photographic Trade Show and the Australian Institute of Professional Photography photographic awards that were held in Brisbane over the weekend of May 30 to June 1. The trade show was, as always, all things modern showcasing the latest from the numerous photographic factories around the world. It was as I expected with many a product enticing the customer with the inference that this IS

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what you need. So while I wandered around looking at all the shiny new products (bit like wandering around the Motor Show - maybe only guys get this similar feeling) I couldn't help thinking about our reliance now on product to produce images that once originated, and in some cases still do, from the heart and the head. I think content has in many cases been replaced by pixels. Talk is, like cars, what's under the bonnet and all the extras rather than the destination that we are hoping it will take us to.

Now with trade shows I have to say that the gadgetry is impressive and enticing and, in many cases not really functional for everyone, but nevertheless looks good anyway. I still maintain that we should consider what we like to photograph and buy accordingly. *If possible, try not to be seduced by the lure of seduction.* Not an easy thing.

I think the real benefit of trade shows is that almost every thing is under one roof and usually it's the latest, not the stock that has to be cleared to make way for the new.

But the new technology has made us insecure. We take a picture and are obsessed by looking at what we have just done. Have we lost confidence in our own ability to know what we have captured? In the "only film days", we had to wait and see and, if in the seeing we screwed up, we would look to see what it was that caused the screw up and make sure it wouldn't happen again the next time. In doing so, we fine tuned our craft and our technical side and we became very proficient in our ability to "read light" and, in some cases, judge exposures. Has this gone by the wayside?

With regard to the photography awards, the flavour seemed to be overworked images that don't seem to have originated from *what is seen*, but rather from *what is possible* in post production. Not really my idea of real photography, but nevertheless a form of it. At the awards, it now seems to be that you have to be a good practitioner in afterthought if you are to achieve.

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My love affair with the darkroom still continues and I actually look forward to getting in there and making prints. For me it is not a means to an end. It is fun, and I think that's what photography should be about. It's fun to go out and capture and it's fun to finish off, whichever way you choose to do it. Having to keep abreast with both styles is time consuming, but can be done as long as we don't try to move too quickly. Practice is the key to most things, as we all know.

I have effectively changed over to printing on Foma paper and couldn't be happier. The tonal range is wonderful and, believe it or not, I don't seem to have to work as hard on some prints as I used to when printing them on Kodak Polymax. I think, at last count, I was down to about 20 sheets of 16 x 20 Polymax paper which I will probably cut down to 8 x 10 and use for contact printing new negatives. Never thought that would happen. My main reason here is to maintain continuity and consistency when printing through the sizes.

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I do the same thing when doing desktop printing. I try to use the same paper on all things so I don't have to mess around with profiles and subtle changes. Sometimes though different papers give different and better results and tend to suit the feel of the picture. It's all about aesthetics of the image and our response to those aesthetics.

For those new to this newsletter FOMA paper is from the Czech Republic and is available only on indent. Chris Reid at Blanco Negro in Sydney and I will make 2 or 3 orders a year, should you like to buy any. Because we need to buy a minimum order each time which is in the thousands, we have a minimum order ourselves of \$100 if you are ordering. If interested please contact me for pricing and shipping times. Chris' preference is for me to handle orders from readers of this newsletter as he has his own clientele.

And while I am on the subject of Foma Paper I feel it is time to answer some people who have been somewhat critical of me of late (and some at the trade show) with the inference that I am pushing Foma paper only for my own ends. The truth is I don't care what people print on, but I care what I print on. I exhibit and I sell work, and people expect a certain high standard when you do this.

In the early 90's I used Oriental Seagull from Japan, at the time considered to be one of the finest papers available and used by some of the most respected photographers and printers on the planet. I then discovered Kodak Polymax and we all know how great a paper that was. During my love affair with Polymax I happened on Forte paper from Hungary and used both for a period. I used Forte's warm tone exclusively and fortunately still have some sheets left. As we all know, Polymax and Forte have gone and after it was announced I set about looking for a replacement. I bought Kentmere, Ilford, Bergger and Foma and spent a day testing the papers to see which I thought was the best (in my opinion). I quickly discarded Kentmere and Ilford. For the way I work I found the former to be a little flat and the latter didn't tone and didn't bleach (and in my opinion and a few others, never has) so obviously they had to go.

I was then left with Bergger and Foma and did more tests and finally settled on Foma. Independently and unknown to me (I didn't even know Chris then, but knew of him) Chris Reid at Blanco Negro was doing a similar thing. We met, in some ways by accident, found we had come to the same conclusions with regard to the papers and so, in the interest of getting some good paper, decided to try and bring it in to the country. I have always had people through this newsletter and through my Better Photography articles ask me for a recommendation about printing papers given the lengths that I go through to satisfy myself, so I have no hesitation in telling others about what I find.

What's in it for me is that we keep a manufacturer going who has a great product. Hopefully this keeps a side of photography going which offers a difference to what is the most popular today. If all the paper manufacturers go under then I will probably shift to desktop printing like everyone else and get on with it. What's in it for Chris at Blanco Negro is that it keeps his business alive and he is able to maintain a standard and quality that he has a name for. So hopefully, end of story.

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At present I still love the darkroom and what it offers (it's just different to ink jet), but will keep my hand in the new technology as I find myself doing more and more as time goes by.

And if you are at all interested in some fine printing out of the darkroom and not really interested in doing it yourself may I suggest contacting Chris at Blanco Negro. It is a small custom lab which processes black & white film and does high quality printing. Chris is an expert B&W printer and chemical guru and prints all things for pro and amateur photographers, exhibitions and galleries. He is highly regarded in his field. With many labs closing down because of the new movement, Chris has become sought after and very busy. Give it some thought if you need someone to get you started. His details follow.

Chris Reid
Blanco Negro
44-54 Botany Road Alexandria NSW 2015
Ph 02 9698 4552
Email: blanconegro@optusnet.com.au www.blanconegro.com.au

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For those of you who made it to the Muse Gallery during April to the exhibition I had there, "Places I've Been", thank you for your comments re the images. They are still available to see via the web site should you so wish.

www.themusegallery.com.au

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NEWSLETTER PRINT OFFER for issue #24 100% guaranteed

Once again the print offered at the head of this newsletter is the special print offer for this issue.

The photographs offered are designed to give you the opportunity to purchase one of my photographs at a reduced rate. This will apply **only** to receivers of this electronic mail.

About the image - Howqua River & Rock Face

The photograph was taken in 1999 using a 4" x 5" Linhof Technika camera and TRI-X film and one that I have re visited recently.

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The image will be printed on Foma paper, mounted to rag museum board and over matted ready for framing. As always only the finest materials are used in the production of the image.

The image size will be 11" x 14" (27 x 35 cm) and will be over matted to an overall size of 40 x 50 cm.

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

Cost of Print

Normally this print would sell for \$350, but the Newsletter Edition Print will be \$275.

The dollar value is the same as the country you live. (Aust. NZ, USA, Canada, UK will be as US \$
i.e. : If you live in Australia A\$275 US\$275 Can\$275 NZ\$275)

The print price is inclusive of post and packing.

This offer lasts till June 30, 2008.

100% Money Back Guarantee

I also understand that buying a photograph from a computer screen can cause some to have heart palpitations, so with that in mind if you do purchase a print and are not completely satisfied I will refund your amount in full, provided you return the photograph within 14 days of receipt in the same condition it arrives. This is a 100% money back guarantee.

If you would like a print, send me a note with a cheque, money order, direct deposit or international bank transfer for the correct amount along with your name and address and contact details. Ordered prints will be hand printed in my darkroom by myself and sent out within 4 weeks.

Workshops remaining for 2008

If you would like a hard copy or a PDF of the brochure then drop me an email along with your address, if necessary, and I will send one out to you or you can download it from my web site.

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The Fine Print (Advanced darkroom practice) #1 June 20 - 23 2008. Workshop Fee & all materials: \$495

The Fine Print (Advanced darkroom practice) #2 July 11 - 14 2008. Workshop Fee & all materials: \$495

Workshop #1 is full. Workshop #2 is now also full.

This workshop will begin Friday evening and ends Monday pm to allow plenty of time to demonstrate all the new techniques you will learn. You will be encouraged to print from one or more of your negatives under my watchful eye where we will look at applying some of the new techniques. This is not a workshop for the newcomer in the darkroom, but someone who has either completed one of my introductory Black and White print workshops or has been actively involved in print making for some time. There will be portfolio reviews as usual and lots more. The workshop fee includes paper and chemicals. Limited to 6.

The Streets of Melbourne, Film & Digital comparisons August 1 - 3 2008 Workshop Fee: \$375

Due to family issues with my co-instructor John Ingham, this workshop has had to be cancelled.

The Landscape of Scotland October 5 to October 11 2008

During this week long workshop I will team up with noted English photographer and nice guy Joe Cornish to lead a group of adventurous people to the Scottish Highlands to photograph in the area around Rannoch Moor. This week long workshop could be part of a longer trip that you plan.

The workshop will take place pretty much in Joe's back yard. He has lived in North Yorkshire since 1994 and has photographed that area and Scotland extensively. The workshop will be rich photographically. Our accommodation will be in the heart of Rannoch Moor and from where we will enjoy and photograph the challenging landscape. I visited the area many years ago and some of the views still sit in my memory.

If you would like to have a look at the general area follow the link to this map of central Scotland.

<http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usmapindexes/westcentral.html>

You can see some of Joe's work at his web site: www.joecornish.com

The workshop fee will be A\$1250 (£530). All food, accommodation and transportation during the workshop will cost an additional A\$950 (£405).

