

Melbourne Street Photography 2015



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Urbanity Image Review #10

Friday, January 02, 2015

Sometimes, ya gotta get back to basics... one of the first things any composition book will teach is to look for natural frames for your subjects. Frames are not something I think consciously about often enough.

This shot features a frame within the frame, which helps take the composition heightens the interest. The two subjects are evenly balanced on the left and right sides of the frame. The light is hitting them both in an interesting way, but the image probably needs a little adjustment to increase the blacks around them – the image washes out a little bit around the subjects.

The image was taken at Flinders Street Station, which always a great place to get any creative monkeys off your back if you feel your creative spirit has stalled. There is always someone interesting or something happening. Just make sure you keep moving as it is not a very “camera friendly” place! The staff usually can’t be bothered to call you out if you keep on moving...

Is it a bench or street photography?

Sunday, January 18, 2015

Posted this today on Instagram tagged with #streetphotography without even thinking. Interestingly enough, I had a response from a random on Twitter :



I don't pay much attention to a lot of interweb commentary on stuff. It just never seems to end well, and I have considered turning off the comments function a number of times on this site. Debate feels like it drains the energy out of me sometimes that could be better spent elsewhere.

Zac's question got me thinking though, further to my post last year "Does Street Photography Matter?"

Inanimate subjects without people in frame do not appear very often in my images. How I think about street photography continues to evolve, without ever feeling like I have it defined. So, is the image "street photography"?

Having checked out Zac's outstanding portfolio here, I suspect that he would define it as needing human subjects, or at least the suggestion of the presence of human subjects.

Based on my previously mentioned article, I kinda agree with Zac – maybe it isn't street photography? Maybe more urban landscape? Maybe I tagged it a bit mindlessly?

Featuring in so close to the bench also moves it out of the realm of typical street photography – the bench has become more of an abstract subject rather than a street scape perhaps?

Urban landscapes are something I am thinking about having a real crack at – I started by asking Santa for Stephen Shore's book "Uncommon Places" to get me started.



Santa delivered on his promise... Not sure if I want to return to shooting in colour though, for this project? Continuing to develop my Black and White skillz is still engaging my mind and shutter. Although, Mrs MelbourneStreetPhotography would prefer to not have the kitchen sink constantly messed up with reels and developing tanks...

About the image itself, I like the stainless, clinical feel, along with the unusual perspective. I felt in a bit of perspective rut yesterday, so I took a couple of shots from unusual angles to blow out the cobwebs a bit. This was the only one that really worked. It was shot on my little Ricoh GR1V on Kodak Tmax 400 – a great street combo! – or should I say “urban landscape” combo?

I also tried this one on the train, but it didn't quite work...



The floor acts like an horizon line and is just in the wrong place – bisecting the image instead of being in the top or bottom third of the image. Cropping makes it a little better, but doesn't quite make it a winner... but everything does look cool in panoramic format!



Last year, I purposely did not post many images until the Urbanity Exhibition Rob Birze and I held. It was quite liberating not constantly having to feed the social media beast. It feels like it is time to start sharing more though.

Mamiya 7II Rangefinder Review

Sunday, January 18, 2015

Everyone deserves a brand new medium format film camera once in their life. You can still buy these as new “old” stock on Ebay. If you have the means, spoil yourself. Getting one of these babies, in a brand new, unopened carton is a special experience. They ain't making many medium format film cameras any more, so don't miss the opportunity.

The Mamiya 7 is a brilliant camera. I know I say that about all the cameras on this site, but every camera has it's own personality and user experience.



It is a medium format film camera that shoots in a landscape 6×7 format. The negs and trannies are massive! You only get 10 shots per 120 roll. If you can get 220 rolls, 20 shots are yours before having to reload. Only getting 10 frames per roll really increases the importance of the shot choices you make. Pop away like you can on 35mm or digital, and you will end up in the poor house, or spend half your time reloading the camera instead of looking for the next shot.

There is a reasonable range of lenses for the Mamiya 7

- **43mm F4.5** / 21mm 35mm equivalent focal length (requires external viewfinder)
- **50mm F4.5** / 23mm equiv. (requires external viewfinder)
- **65mm F4** / 32mm 35mm equiv.
- **80mm F4** / 39mm 35mm equiv. (the normal kit package lens)
- **150mm F4.5** / 71mm equiv,
- **210mm F8** / 105mm equiv. (requires external viewfinder)

There is an additional noteworthy accessory

- 135mm Panorama Kit – you can shoot panoramic format using 35mm film.

I have used both the 80mm and 150mm lenses. A couple of mates have the 43mm lens, and swear by it. I find the whole idea of having to firstly compose the image through the external viewfinder, then focus through the camera viewfinder, then go back to check the composition through the external viewfinder again just too much hassle. Just typing out the process was enough to give me the shits.

If you have the patience, and love wide angles, the 43mm is a great buy. Whilst not for me, some of the images captured using the 43mm are just outstanding. Check them out on flickr to see.

The 80mm is the most versatile, and best suited to street photography. The 150mm is great for getting in closer on subjects.

The camera has nice and bright framelines for the 65mm, 80mm, and 150mm lenses. The focus spot is bright and is quite large, which helps quick focusing. The rangefinder coupling system is smooth and precise. It is suprisingly easy to turn the focus ring on the lenses, but they are not “loose” or inaccurate. The tension required to turn the focus ring is perfect on the 80mm lens. This is important – if the resistance is too high ie. hard to turn, you need more force which can lead to you moving the ring too far once it starts moving. Too low, and again, you can go past the point.

The 150mm lens is a little stiff, but I bought that lens second hand, so I can't complain.

The lenses use an electronic leaf shutter system which is very quiet. Very, very quiet!

The viewfinder displays shutter speed and over/under exposure. The symbols sometimes choose not to show themselves in bright sunlight, particularly when you are not looking through the viewfinder at precisely the right angle defined by the optical engineers at Mamiya. Overexposure is a real issue for the Mamiya – I have often missed the subtle warning in the viewfinder and ended up with a ghostie shot – stacks of white and some vague outlines. You get used to it after a while, and find yourself double checking for the exposure warning.

The lenses are all a bit on the slow side – the best being F4. But are very sharp and great quality. I am not an expert on optics, but every article I have read on the internet says so, and I have no evidence to the contrary!

The camera is not really much bigger than a standard SLR, and is actually lighter than most. The wonderful reason behind this is that most of the body is shonky plastic. The body, film door, dials, and levers are all plastic. I have nightmares about various bits and pieces breaking off. I recently had a fall and cracked the top cover. You can read about it here. Luckily, Mamiya are still stocking spares!

The body all fits together perfectly, but the plastic has it's issues. The command dial that controls film and shutter speed has the numbers printed on. Some of them are already starting to wear off. This is a camera that needs to be handled carefully. It is an interesting trade off – the camera is super light. One of the lightest in my collection. You can sling it over your shoulder for the whole day without developing one ache or pain. The lenses are all metal, and great quality. Seriously, pick this thing up and it feels light as a feather.

There is no separate back – so once you load up a film, it is there for the whole roll. Make wise choices! Mamiya even recommend on their website that you might need two bodies. Hmmm, of course you do. To change lenses, you have to engage a curtain that winds across to separate the film from daylight. Again, the winder is a cheap piece of plastic, which is almost guaranteed to break someday. I am often tempted to purchase a second body just in case – if I had Bill Gates kind of money, that is.

The shutter is the quietest I have experienced with the exception of the Bessa III, which is a rebadged Fuji GF670. There is only the tiniest “click” as you depress the shutter button. The shutter button is really well designed. It is quite large, and has a minimal amount of travel to fire the shutter. Depressing the shutter button is one of many things that can affect the sharpness of the resulting image. The Mamiya’s is very sensitive, and only needs a very light pressure, which avoids any tilting of the camera. The half press is needed to get the light reading, and I have occasionally mistakenly fired the shutter.

The light meter is generally accurate enough, but feels a bit more spot orientated than a matrix style.

The only significant fail is that the Mamiya lens caps are crap. I ordered Nikon centre pinch caps as soon as I realised you can’t put the Mamiya caps on with the lens hood attached...



Suitability for Street Photography

Pros

- Exceptionally light and relatively small for a medium format camera.
- Easy to carry around for hours on end without any muscle strain.
- High quality lenses.
- 6×7 format produces large negs for scanning.

- Quiet operation.
- Still available “new” in the box.
- Great range of lenses.
- Sensitive shutter button.
- One of the better focus spots for a rangefinder.

Cons

- Plastic body and parts are a bit on the “delicate” side.
- Difficult to see exposure warnings in the viewfinder in bright light.
- Only 10 shots per roll of 120.
- Expensive.
- Lack of extensive second hand options.
- Printed numbers on the command dial will eventually wear off.
- Slow lenses.

The Mamiya 7 II is light and produces great images. I love this camera as I can carry it around all day without any aches or strains. Travelling with the Mamiya 7 is a treat – it doesn’t weigh down your bags like most other medium format cameras. Just treat it gently.

Thanks again to my wife for hand modelling!

Juxtaposition – Cheap Shots!

Monday, January 19, 2015

After feeling a bit “out of the zone” yesterday, juxtapositional compositions came to the rescue. Just find a great sign and wait for the right subject to come into frame.

They are a staple for a lot of street photographers – although it takes a fair bit to add enough to the composition to make it truly interesting. The one below is not quite there. I don't feel I have added enough interest to the composition to “claim” it. Still, it got me back into a good place for the rest of the shoot.

Both images were shot on an old Ricoh GR1v using Kodak Tmax 400.



Selfie Respect

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

The “selfie” generation is well and truly in control of popular culture... But so many of my fave photographers have also explored self portraiture as part of their creative development. I would have to say that Vivian Maier would be my absolute #1 draft pick on this topic. I have purposefully not watched any of the docos on her life and art, preferring to take my own thoughts from her images...

A few months ago, I was laid up with shingles, so I decided to try my hand at some “selfies”. The featured image for the blog post was something I was pretty pleased with – I had been unable to sleep very well due to the pain of the shingles, and ended up in the CBD with a camera at 5am one Saturday morning.

Centre Place was deserted, so setting up a tripod and timer was a cinch. Just a simple shot of me walking towards the camera, with a slow shutter speed to de-emphasize my specific features and shape...

At home, I set up in the hallway with a 50mm MF lens and some slowish Acros iso 100 and popped away. It was interesting to see how others see me.

What did I learn?

By having to “pose” for the camera, I learnt a little more about how to direct subjects when the opportunity arises. I also got to feel more of how intimidating the lens glass can be – particularly as it was very, very close to my face for the images below... There was a little bit of the distortion you would expect with a 50mm MF lens in the second image.

Might be worth some further exploration down the track. Will probably focus more on “selfie street photography” rather than straight portraiture.



Contrasting Time

Friday, January 23, 2015

Having some “go to” locations when you are down on inspiration is a critical tool for any street photographer. Taken in Centre Place – you can read more about the location here – a place I often go to when in need of some easy pickins’... The lens was medium format 80mm, and relatively slow at F4.

The contrasting of the subjects moving on a plane close to the lens vs the relative stability of the guy working in the cafe heightens the interest of the image. There is a real tension between the people motoring along the laneway and the relative stillness of the barista.

There is also some natural framing of the shop front which helps separate the two planes in the image.

The only downside was in loading the film something went haywire! You can see sprocket holes along the top of the image – I would love to say it was a special and unique light that was captured, but I am pretty sure I wasn’t that lucky!

The more time you spend with the image, the more little details that start to appear. I love the guy on the far left, recessed right back into his cafe, but kinda looking out to see what is happening.

I have a couple of ND Filters but don’t experiment with them much. The natural light conditions (which are usually a bit dark in Centre Place) combined with the relatively slow lens to produce the blurry movement over the longer shutter exposure. Maybe something I need to go back and revisit?

One of my favourite self portraits (below) was taken using a similar technique – but had the camera set on a tripod with timer. I just started walking towards it as the timer started beeping! It was taken at about 5.30am before any foot traffic arrived at Centre Place!



How to lead a more interesting life through Street Photography&...

Sunday, January 25, 2015

Things you hear when people are thinking about starting out in street photography...

"What book should I read or class should I do?"

"Where should I go?"

"What is the best camera / bag / lens / etc?"

"What do I do if someone approaches me after taking their photo?"

The most important response to these questions is relatively indirect.

Grab whatever camera you have, catch the train into the CBD or some other well populated area, and take some damn photos...



How Your Brain Delays Achievement.

So many people seem to wait for the right conditions to something interesting with their lives. How many times have you heard or thought these kinds of self delaying phrases :

“I’ll need to find the right gym / runners / clothes before I start exercising.”

“I have a great story but need to do my background research before I write that novel.”

“I love that pattern but I need to find the right colour yarn to knit it out of.”

“I really need a Leica M before to really get into street photography.”

Time passes, and that great story in your head never makes it to paper. People spend hours and hours researching cameras and lenses, and tracking Ebay auctions instead of taking and processing photos.

Being more conscious of the ways your brain can short circuit your path to a more interesting life is the first step to overcoming them.

For me, I had to make a conscious effort to limit the amount of time I spent on the internet salivating over gear and different film gear websites vs the amount of actual time spent with the shutter firing in my hands... A commitment to not spend more time in “camera culture” than actually creating images... Excluding true learning time, of course.

So, put away your computer (not until you finish reading this!), close the Game of Thrones season on your DVR, stop spending hours on playstation / xbox / whatever your time waster is and do something interesting...



Fear of Looking Like a Beginner.

Overcoming your fear of looking like a dick is the second obstacle. There are so many things that people never start because they worry incessantly about how many different ways they might look silly learning a new skill.

When I learnt how to ice skate – I fell over a lot before I could impress girls at Ringwood

Iceland with a fancy parallel skidding stop that sprayed ice particles everywhere.

Focus on how good it is going to feel when you have mastered the basics. If you persist with just about anything new, you will eventually reach a level of mastery you can be proud of.

But accept that you will be a beginner, and at some point, before you get good, you will realise just how bad you are... This is the turning point in most new skills. Becoming “consciously incompetent” is where you finally understand what it is going to take to master the new skill. It is the point at which you are able to truly engage in self-directed learning, because you “know what you don’t know”.

Accept the crappiness of your first images, knowing that the second batch will be slightly better.



Consciously Learn.

The final step to learning a new skill is to consciously develop a learning plan. It doesn't have to be anything super formal. Just make sure at the end of each shoot you curate your images, pick some favourites and think about why they work.

Look at other people's street photos, find ones you like, and think about how they are composed and might have been taken.

Read widely on technique.



Let's Get Back to this being the First Time.

So, grab any camera, get into a busy urban spot, and start taking photos. Don't sweat it too much. Try not to get too far into anyone's face to start with. Keep moving – don't plant in any particular spot too long. If you don't get the shot first or second time, keep moving. Nobody will bother you if they have to catch up.

Take the most important lesson from most of the all time masters. Get out and shoot as much as you can. Every weekend, if you can.

Stop letting things get in the way.

The best camera is the camera you have in your bag.

Today is a great day to start.

Working on Selfie Respect... Street Photography Self Portra...

Sunday, February 01, 2015

Street photography self portraits... I had an interesting morning a few months back at 5am in Centre Place. This unexpected expedition, along with my admiration for Vivian Maier's self portraits, has got me thinking about a project theme.

As per my usual modus operandi, the first step is to look through other people's images that appeal to me and dissect them.

#1 To put the camera in frame or not...

Well, the kids all seem to use selfie sticks these days. The ones that have a bit of an eye manage to keep the stick out of frame. My favourite street photographers are quite deliberate about getting their camera in frame or not. What interest does the camera add to the image?



Vivian Maier with her Rolleiflex



Vivian Maier without...

Two wonderful images created by Vivian Maier, and very similar in style and composition.

The image with the camera states in no uncertain terms what the person is, does, and loves. The viewer can be inspired by the knowing that the photographer is the subject. It is clear that the photographer wants you to see them this way, to learn something about them, maybe a small insight into their mind and thoughts? There is a direct line of communication between the photographer and the viewer. "This is how I want you to see me" or perhaps "this is how I saw myself at this moment".

The image of Maier with her camera speaks to me. I have purposefully not watched any of the documentaries or read too much about her. I prefer to take meaning and understand her through interpreting her images unfettered. She looks isolated, maybe a bit of a loner. Her clothes look a bit conservative, inconspicuous – even for the time. Like she didn't want to be noticed. Is this how she saw herself?

As analogue film is my preferred medium, I have to admit I am always looking at cameras. It is little bit embarrassing to admit, but when I see Duran Duran's "Girls on Film" or Right Said Fred's "I'm Too Sexy" videos pop up on Music Max, I am checking out the pro film cameras from the 80's and 90's in the clips. My wife once came home to our hotel room to find me watching some Playboy shoot "behind the scenes" doco – at first she said "Really, Damian???" as if I was checking out the topless women... but then she realised "you are checking out the camera gear, aren't you???" Yup, I was. And I am sticking to that story.



Right Said Fred video – “I’m Too Sexy” – Love those cameras!!!

Many classic self portraits that have the camera in frame feature classic film cameras that I daydream about. So, if there is a selfie with one present, it is always going to pique my interest! My secret shame is loving to look at film cameras...

The second shot shows a different Maier. The camera is out of frame, and immediately suggests a higher level of confidence. There is a suggestion of a photographer taking the shot – and she is strong willed enough to pose comfortably. In the first selfie, in contrast, she looks very tentative. She is posing as though there is someone directing her posture, and someone else lighting the shot.

It might even be the same dress and the shot taken on the same day, but the two images are very different representations of Maier. Whilst not strictly a street photo, the second image has a strength and sense of confident security that suggests it was taken in her home.

Having the camera in frame seems to give more of a “window into the soul” feel. A more vulnerable and open style of image.

Having the camera out of frame makes it feel more of a facade, like a fashion shoot.

Or you can make the self portrait about the camera, extreme style, and the act of capturing an image like Weegee here...



There is very little of Weegee in the photograph. It feels more like a statement of his artistic intent, and how he went about it – this being the window to his mind?

#2 Shadows

Photographing one's own shadow seems to be a common visual theme. Feels a little bit “meh” to me, unless executed in a spectacular manner.



Again, Vivian Maier nails it. What a unique image – her silhouette on the wall of a neighbourhood apartment building. Imagine her waiting for the light to hit at just the right angle, and finding the high perspective – on a train station above the road? So many elements that make this image just wonderful. At first, the image looks fairly ordinary, until you see her on the wall.

By comparison, Lee Friedlander's image below here, seems far less interesting, and even a bit aggressive, stalkerish, or foreboding.



It is a much loved and commented on image, but is not to my personal taste. It feels like the opening ten seconds of a B grade serial killer movie – if that is the intent, then OK. Just doesn't hold my interest as the viewer – it suffers a bit from the classic artistic criticism "yeah, I could easily do that!". Yep, part of the "art" is to have come up with the concept, but I just don't find the concept very interesting or compelling, and the execution is pretty simple.

By comparison, this self portrait by Friedlander is incredibly interesting with many layers of discovery.



He is silhouetted, and there is some kind of smaller reflected, framed image in the centre of the frame. Both the concept and the execution have me scratching my head on how I could I reach the same heights. There is also a second layer, with the male hatted subject standing next to his car, parallel lines in the building behind and much more.

Shadow and silhouetted images don't seem to bring much of the photographer to the image. The photographer seems to become a prop rather than a subject. Whilst I love the Friedlander shot above, and the Maier image, neither gives me any imagined insight into either of them. They are faceless cardboard cut outs – aesthetically appealing, but it suggests very little about them personally.

Shadows and silhouettes are an aesthetic, rather than a window to the photographer. The viewer can project themselves into the image, similar to Ruckengfigur style images.

#3 Reflections

The first Maier image is a simple, but emotive reflection. There is also an opportunity to combine interesting and dynamic composition to reflected images of the photographer, usually with the camera in frame.



Again, Maier is simply a master at this technique. Combining reflection, framing, and creative compositions, all the images are ones I could ponder for hours at a time. Images I would love to have framed on my walls at home. Most of her reflective images involve framing her face somehow. Even the image without a camera in frame still has the

suggestion that she is the photographer. All images suggest something about her at that moment in time.

The self portrait is fairly obvious, but all have a touch of quiet subtlety. It still takes a couple of seconds to realise (well, for me anyway!) to realise the image is of the photographer herself. Nothing too complex, but it does add an element of gentle surprise and interest.

To achieve results like this, keep an eye out for different planes of reflections – none of them would have immediately popped out to me as an opportunity. Maier seems to be able to identify dynamic opportunities for reflections. The image of the men holding the mirror features Maier with a small, wry smile. I imagine she has asked the men to briefly hold the mirror in place for her. So, the courage to ask people for help would also seem important. What is the worst thing that can happen if you ask someone for something – a “no”... It’s not that bad really, is it? Ask more often and be happy with the answer either way.

So, how about simple, direct reflections? Unless the image is as raw and interesting as this one from Lee Friedlander...



...interest is more likely to be incorporated into the image by using unexpected and unusual reflections.

Maier's images are all framed, and often suggest something about her – many of the images appear to be in a cluttered environment – maybe her home?

Even using a simple, direct reflection self portrait, challenge yourself to add interest. Maier achieves this here with the little girl included in frame. The girl has the same stern look that Maier often has, almost a little defiant. There comparison between the two is quite engaging. I know Maier was a nanny, and I wonder if it was one her charges? Or some random kid that was just interested to see what Maier was doing.



#4 Cross-overs and combinations

Combining different elements can work. Although, things can start to get overly complex or visually cluttered...



Wow – Maier is my real go-to for selfies! All four are Vivian Maier self portraits. All of them hold high interest visually, but are bordering on becoming cluttered, to my eye. Each viewer will make up their own mind though!

This image from Friedlander is a less complex, yet still fascinating self portrait.



There is enough of Friedlander that is recognisable to connect with him as a person. Combined with the three dimensional, angled frames which give a dynamic feel to the

shot. There is the faint outline of the camera, which he is holding up, which makes it clear it is a self portrait.

#5 The Total Self Portrait

Maier again. This is, again, a self portrait – composed and lit in a dramatic fashion. If I wasn't familiar with Maier's work, I would not have expected this to be a self portrait. Identifying an image as a self portrait seems to change the way the viewer interprets the image. Would she be this confident being photographed by another photographer?



Whilst the Maier image above does not really belong in the street photo genre, my image below is a good example of an image which suggests it was taken by a photographer, rather than being a self portrait. The whole inspiration for this post was the way people reacted differently to the photograph when they discovered it was a “selfie” – a rather complex one to execute, but no different to what a million teenagers did today in Australia...



#6 Impressionistic

There is also the highly impressionistic style as demonstrated here by street photographer Alex Coghe (you can find more of his work [here](#)).



Final Thoughts...

- Bringing the camera into the frame identifies the image as a self portrait – and in turn, reveals the intent of the photographer to the viewer. It is how the photographers sees themselves or how the photographer wants others to see them.
- Leaving the camera out of frame can change the feel of the photograph, and alters the viewer's perception. There is a very clear difference in my mind between the solitary and safe act of taking a self portrait compared, to having someone else stick a camera in your face to take a portrait.

- Framing and reflective surfaces are the two main tools for composition.
- Having a clear creative intent in taking a self portrait is an important factor in lifting above the “selfie” genre.

Some places to check out

<http://erickimphotography.com/blog/2013/11/11/street-photography-composition-lesson-9-self-portraits/>

<http://www.alexcoghe.com/street-self-portraiture/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/mar/23/10-best-photographic-self-portraits>

<http://www.theinspiredeye.net/self-portrait-photography/>

<http://www.vivianmaier.com/gallery/self-portraits/>

Compact Cameras – Undiscovered Brilliance

Sunday, February 08, 2015

Until you discover compact film cameras, you will never know what you are missing! I recently went out with a couple of old favourites, the Nikon 35ti and Ricoh GR1v...

You can read more about these cameras here :

Ricoh GR1v

Nikon 35ti

Compact 35mm Cameras

There are plenty of others I would love to try such as the Contax T3 and the Konica Hexar AF, but am doing my best to avoid gear acquisition syndrome!



GR1v Image – Kodak Tmax 400

Out taking some shots over the last month, these little beauties reminded me again of how much fun they are, and the absolute quality of the lenses. You can still buy examples of premium compact 35mm cameras for a good price, but the window will eventually close. Everyone of them seem to have a delicate little film winding motor that is no longer replaceable, I am sure!

You can poke these little babies in any direction without too much notice. And they are light – the GR1v, in particular, is incredibly light and fits easily in a pocket.

Look for one with an aperture of F2.8 to make sure you can get some decent low light

images, and check that you are able to manually set the ISO just in case you want to push some film! Quite a few have only auto ISO setting, so unless can ISO hack (yes, it is possible!), check the specs for manual iso capability.

Compact cameras are sensational tools whether digital or film based. When I first got into photography, I just assumed bigger was better – because the best lenses for my DSLR were massive! The smaller the lens, the crappier it seemed to be. It took a while for me to learn otherwise – rangefinders and compacts really opened my eyes up to options for quality.

So, next time you are considering a new purchase for the street, there are some things to think about :

1. Go for something with a prime lens at least F2.8 or lower.
2. If going for a film model, make sure you get a model with manual iso setting capability.
3. 28mm or 35mm prime lenses are the probably best to consider.
4. Personally, I think you will get better value from a fixed prime lens than a zoom. Use your feet to zoom.
5. Don't be shocked by the price – a top end compact is often more expensive than a consumer DSLR kit if it is any good! The Nikon Coolpix A (a ripping little camera) will set you back over \$700!
6. Think small.



Nikon 35ti Image – Kodak Tmax 400

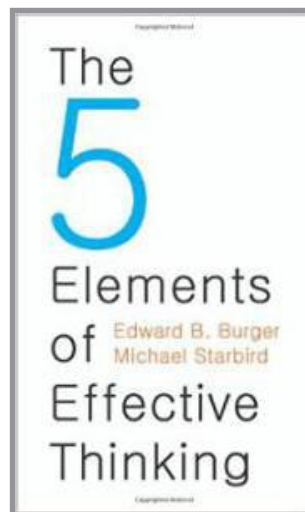
Project : Pablo Picasso's "The Bull" ...

Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Everyone needs to continuously make a commitment to conscious learning, or else the spark inside atrophies rapidly. Too much TV, social media, or gaming can dull anyone's edge. Be more interesting – stop consuming content and start creating it! (although reading this blog is definitely a "continue" and not a "stop"!)

"I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying."

The Shawshank Redemption has become such a popular "favourite film" for people, that it has almost transitioned into the cringe zone. Is there an AFL player who doesn't list it in their PR profile?



The message, distilled, is a one that often guides me – you are either growing or shrinking... In business you are either growing your sales, or dying a slow death... there doesn't seem to be a zone where you can tread water.

I have been listening to an audio book on the way to work called "The 5 Elements of Effective Thinking" – more on that in another post. You can find the book on Amazon here : <http://amzn.com/0691156662>, although I bought it from Audible.com to listen to in the car. There is only so many times you can hear the same classic hits on Gold FM... I know the words to most of their playlist. This is not a good thing.

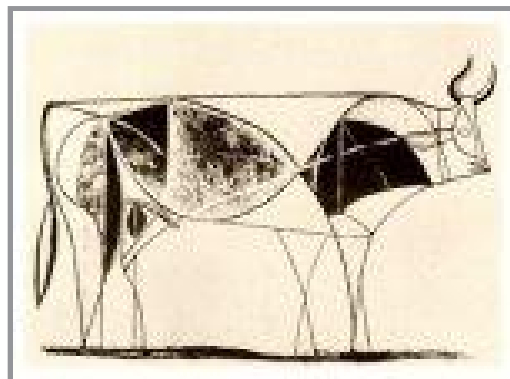
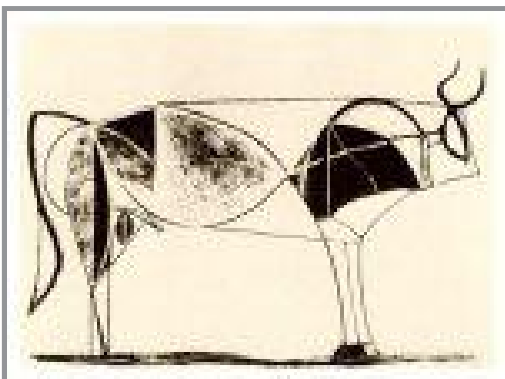
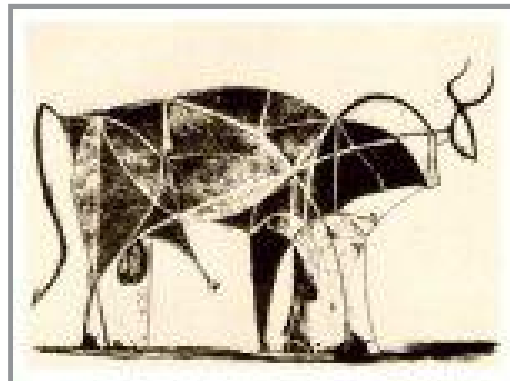
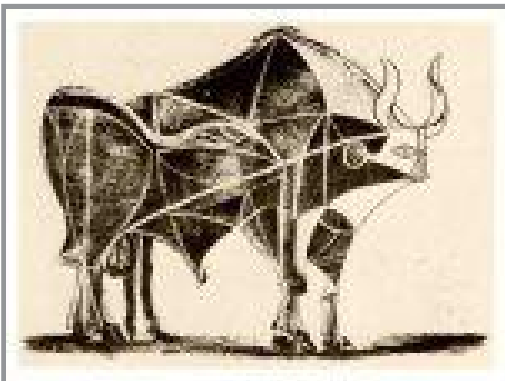
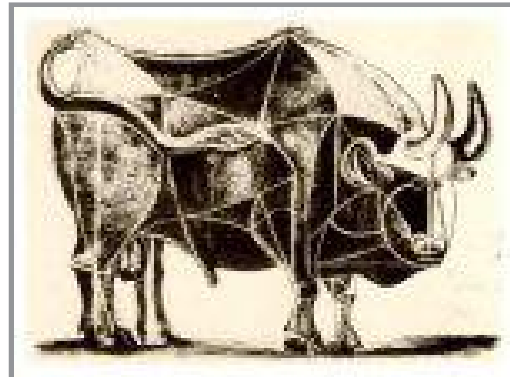
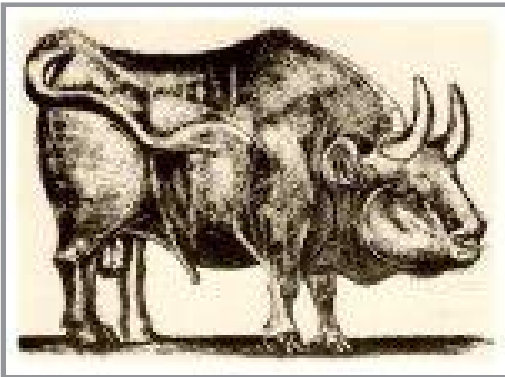
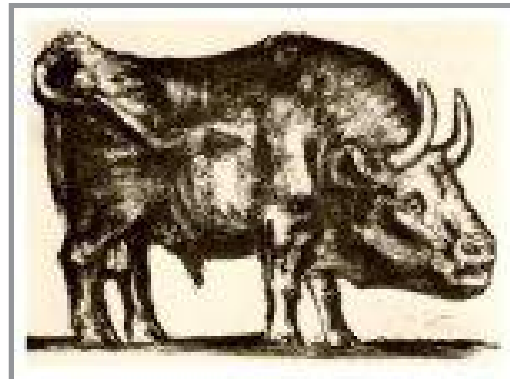
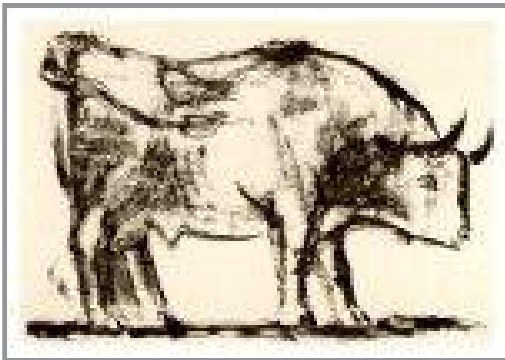
One of the examples of thinking process the authors walk through is Picasso's "The Bull" – a series of lithographs where he gradually deconstructs a bull in a series of images. The final image represents what Picasso believes to be it's absolute core.

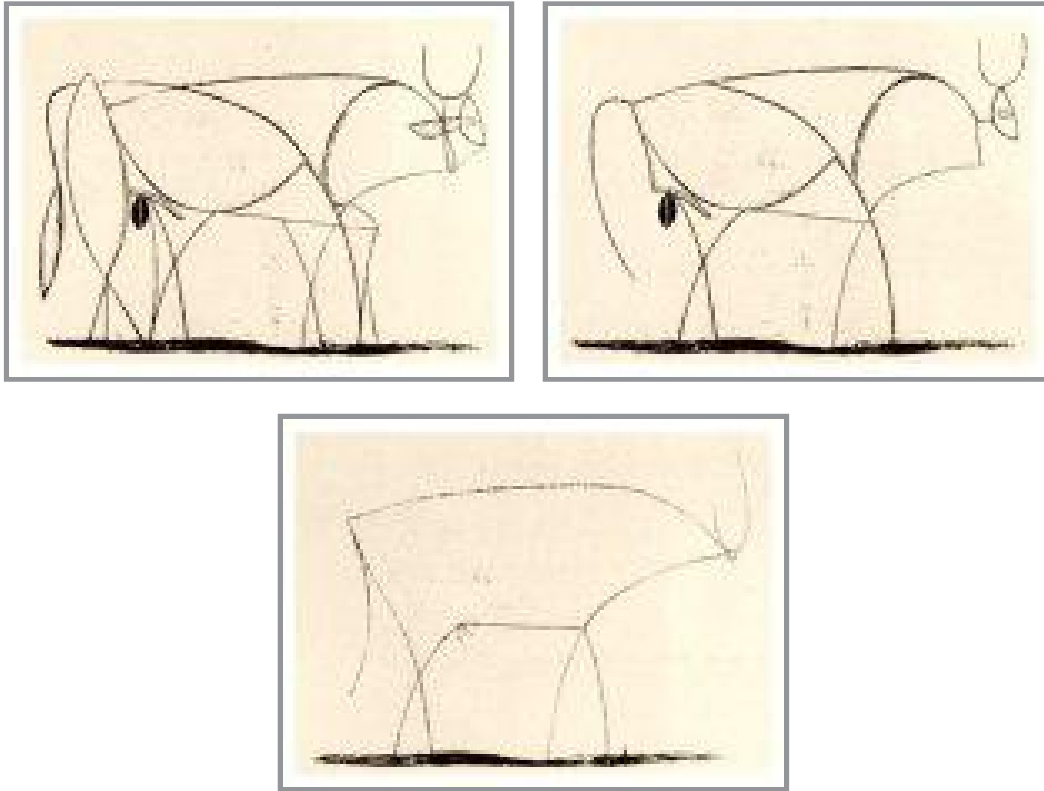
The final image is not one that I find aesthetically pleasing in the slightest. I wouldn't probably even bother to wrap fish and chips in it. The process of deconstruction is fascinating – and inspired me to think about how to apply it to street photography.

There is an excellent website that gives a simple explanation around the process and where Picasso started and finished here. If you are a serious student of art, it probably

will seem a bit vanilla, but I love the way it just gets to the point...

Here are the images in order :





The next stage is to work out how to apply this process of reducing an image to it's core elements via the process of photography.

How?

1. Select a theme or subject relevant to street photography
2. Capture the image realistically
3. Capture the image differently in a series of images, progressively removing anything unnecessary to the theme or subject
4. Finish with an image that captures the essence of the subject or theme without being a literal representation

Something to have a think about over the coming weeks... I am not quite sure yet how this will turn out.

SITHOM Exhibition – An Interview with Andrew Wilson

Friday, February 27, 2015

Andrew's featured image today is "Freedom" – He describes it "I think it shows how peaceful and safe Melbourne can be and how that reflects on how our children can grow without worries that children in other cities around the world have to."

The image is beautifully stripped of any distractions from a colour perspective, enabling the viewer's eye to be drawn across from the left of frame to the subject.



The horizon is placed at one third vertically, making sure it doesn't distract by bisecting the image across the middle... I am still amazed how often I plonk the horizon in the middle of my images still to this day!

The subject's figure to ground ratio is very high – her silhouette contrasts easily with the water, making it the feature of the image. This is supported by two leading lines, the ripples from her movement across the water – which I positively love! They form a natural pointer to the subject, leading the viewer's eye easily. The additional parallel lines in the bottom left corner, created by the waves, assist in creating a dynamic image.

A great example of Andrew's capability.

Talk to me about Street Photography.

"Big important events are recorded by anyone and everyone. Simple life in the street is missed, the interaction between people in the the street is missed, buildings old and new

are ignored. This is where the Street Photographer fills the gap. He records this so that generations not only in the present but also in the future can see how life was during all periods of time.

I love photographing these interactions and changes in the city landscape, I see it as turning everyday life into art. When I walk around a town or city I do not only see what is around me, but I see beautiful art in peoples faces, old buildings, light playing in laneways."

What do you shoot with?

"About 7 years ago i purchased a second hand Canon 5D mark 1. I believe many photographers call it a work horse. I love it. Once dropped approximately 2 meters onto concrete in New York and it soldered on without any problems. I have used it the rain, deserts, hot subways, rainforests and it has never let me down.

Lens i use for Street photography include:

- Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM (used for wide street shots and very personal close ups when subject is friendly)
- Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM (used for very personal close ups when subject is not so friendly or i want to get a more natural look instead of posed)"

MSP : There is a lot of purist talk about wide angle lenses being "true" to street photography, and if your shots are no good, you are not close enough! I love longer focal lengths when out and about – with one of my personal favourites being 135mm in 35mm format. Longer focal lengths get more of the person, less of the street – which is the right formula sometimes.

Your best tip?

"Always have your camera when on the street, my best shots have always come at the most random times. Know the basics but forget most of the technical stuff, Look for life happening on the street, light doing something special between the buildings, and people interacting.

Explore those laneways, car park roofs, city squares, train stations. (Yes ignore the little guy who says "you cannot take photos here sir, its a train station".) Pay the busker you just took a photo of."

MSP : Always pay the busker! They work hard for the money... and I don't think I own a camera without aperture priority shoot mode!

What's your favourite "go to" spot?

"There are many favs in Melbourne. Flinders street, Hosier lane, Degraives lane, Centre place, The Yarra. Curtain House roof top bar. Try to go to all these places at all times of the day and see the differences. My favourite i think would have to be any Melbourne laneway during the winter in rush hour."

MSP : You can often catch me with a pint at Curtain House Roof Top bar!

What is it that keeps you shooting?

“Being able to capture real life moments instead of studio posed lead me to street photography. Old photos showing the people on the street and how cities used to look intrigued me and I loved how they showed what life use to be like. I want someone in 50 - 100 years time to say “wow, check out how they use to look and what Melbourne use to be like”.

What else?

“Other interests include reading on the train, watching people, travelling and playing Lawn Bowls to really chill out.”

MSP : Thanks for your time today, Andrew! Andrew is exhibiting soon – you can check out his work at the exhibition.

“Shot In The Heart Of Melbourne”

Where: Victorian Artists Society
430 Albert Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002

When: Thursday, 19 – Monday, 30 March, 2015
Weekdays: 10am – 4pm Weekends: 1pm – 4pm

Opening Event: 7pm, Friday, 20 March, 2015
Extended viewing hours: 10am to 9pm

His excellent images are also available here :

http://www.redbubble.com/people/andrewwilson?ref=artist_title_name



SITHOM Exhibition – An Interview with Eko Julianto

Saturday, February 28, 2015

Talk to me about street photography.

“Street photography is my visual diary, I use it to connect with people through my camera. It also means I remember the experience a lot more.

I carry my camera wherever I go, even to the office. I remember a lot more and I use street photography to connect with people. Sometimes I asked for their email address and send them a copy of the photo that I took. Never without fail, I would get a reply stating their happiness at receiving my photograph.”

What do you shoot with?

“On special days, I take my Rolleiflex 2.8f with a few films and my pinhole camera.

But day to day, I carry fujifilm x-pro 1 with 18mm, 35mm, 60mm and a CCTV 35mm lens with a converter. I also carry x100s,

Nikon F3 fitted with 50mm f1.2 and a few films. Joby gorilla pod, lens pen, lens cloth, waterbottle, and a little monopod.

For my Travel, I carry fujifilm x100s, lens hood with filter, gorilla pod, lens pen, a few batteries and memory cards.

Whatever camera I use, it is not really important. I find that what makes a good photograph is interesting subject, composition, lighting and smile on your face :)”

MSP : The Nikon F3 is an all time classic – bullet proof manual focus brilliance – it must be an absolute pleasure to shoot with that 50mm f1.2... Eko has a kit I could drool over all day, as a film buff – the Rolleiflex is something I don't have on the shelf and was used by my favourite photographers Fan Ho and Vivian Maier. Eko is right though, whilst we love talking gear, the camera doesn't matter!

Your best tip?

“Never leave home without your camera, smile a lot and pretend to be a tourist helps. Photography is about sharing and interacting with people on the street so get your gear ready to capture that moment. I find that people on the street are more relaxed when I use a small camera Fujifilm X100s than a DSLR.”

MSP : Compact cameras – digital or film are massively under-rated by people for street use.... But those who hit the streets regularly seem to work this out eventually! Cameras like this or maybe like this. Here are some general thoughts on compacts...

Rangefinders can also achieve the same level of non-confrontation!

What's your favourite “go to” spot?

"Have a wander, explore, walk aimlessly in the city looking for interesting subject with a great light and background. My favorite spot is those little lanes in the city. If I make a nice photograph on that day, I feel like I have accomplished something."

MSP : Finding undiscovered places is a real treat!

How did you get into it?

"I Started off by a little curiosity. 3 years ago I was curious on what makes good photography.

Like everybody else, I bought a DSLR, thinking that it would make my images looks awesome. I was very disappointed and thinking that my investment was a waste of money. I watched some youtube tutorials and practiced photographing strangers in the city. The more I practiced, the luckier I've become. It has become my source of happiness. I find that people smile to me when I photograph them which makes me happy.

I am not a purist street photographer. I am just a friendly guy with a camera documenting the life around me."

MSP : Being open to learning and approaching it in an organised way is a fantastic approach. Thanks Eko!



My favourite image of Eko's for SITHOM is the ice cream server. The warmth of the tones reflects the rich sweetness of the ice cream treats being prepared. The subject is naturally framed by the canopy and the customers, along with a light "funnel" highlighting him amongst what would have otherwise a busy foreground.

The light contrast simplifies the image and makes sure the viewer can pick the subject easily and not have to "hunt" despite how busy the image could have been.

The row of customers in the foreground form a plane along the arrow at the front of the image, giving a three dimensional feel to the image. The subject is offset towards the rear of the composition, helping highlight him further.

Eko's wanderings with his camera have paid off here – I suspect he might have been walking for quite some time before coming across this perfect opportunity to capture part of Melbourne culture.

Thanks for your time Eko!

Eko is Exhibiting at SITHOM 2015

SITHOM 2015

Exhibition details

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<http://www.sithom.com.au/welcome-to-shot-in-the-heart-of-melbourne-sithom/>



Compact Obsession Continues...

Saturday, February 28, 2015

Went out to visit my camera buddy Hing Hshen today, at his shop "FilmNeverDie". More on that to come... I am delighted to say I am now the proud owner of a "new in box" Olympus Mju II. This little beauty was hiding in the FilmNeverDie shop on a table, in the box, untouched.

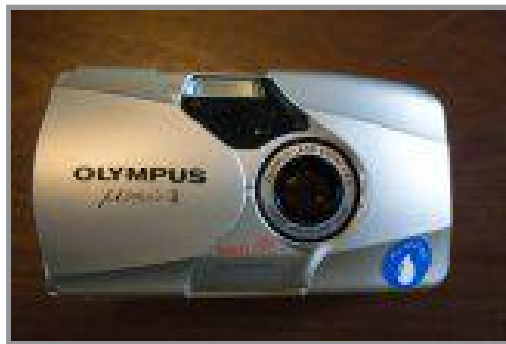
I cracked it with Hing, accusing him of not wanting to sell me something – the Mju was pretty well hidden away. After trying the Mju at a Melbourne Silver Mine meet a few months back, I have been thinking about getting one. To find a new one, was simply a great day!

Popped off a roll there and then, in the store. Results to follow. The little F2.8mm lens is sweet!!!!

You can find the guys at FilmNeverDie at their website. They have a bunch of film, instant film and impossible project stuff, and some very quirky and cool cameras / lenses. The Hexar RF on the table kept whispering my name...

Go and see Hing on a Saturday afternoon – even if you just want to have a chat about film, polaroids, or cameras.

A full interview with Hing will be posted in the next week or so, once I overcome my procrastination! (and a full review of the Mju).



SITHOM Exhibition – An Interview with Lois Romer

Tuesday, March 03, 2015

Why Street Photography?

“The randomness of what I see on the street and the story it conveys, the many characters that make up the city. It matters to capture the feeling of the moment in time.”

What do you shoot with?

“For all my photography I use an Olympus OMD EM5. I usually have either the 12mm lens or the 14-42 lens mounted at the ready. I can't quite let film go yet either! I have some older Olympus film cameras that get used occasionally.”

Your best tip?

“I prefer to capture the candid stuff. If you ask a person if you can photograph them they will pose – better to capture them candid.”

Find a spot in the city that you see a lot of colour and movement. Just stand there and click away!”

What's your favourite “go to” spot?

“My favourite locations are the alleyways where you can find quirky coffee shops. Melbourne is all about coffee culture.”

What got you into Street Photography?

“I grew up in Mildura and moved to Melbourne on my own at the age of twenty.

I noticed the randomness of people in the city and decided to capture some of that vibe. I have always had a camera, but only got serious about 10 years ago. Since then, I have been taking photographs of the city I love.

I was often going shopping in the city or visiting one of the many great coffee shops. From there I noticed there was a street vibe to these places that I wanted to document and be a part of. The camera just seemed like the perfect way to do it.”

Tell us a little more about yourself.

“Since my first trip to Asia at fifteen, I often go back on holidays there or specifically Japan. I love to capture the street vibe there as well.

Also that since moving to Melbourne in 1982 I have seen the city evolve, embrace the quirkiness, and manage to hang on to some of the original buildings – all to become an enjoyable city to live in.”

MSP : What a great image! So, what makes it tick for me? The first thing I love is the

silhouetted subjects. There is no facial detail, bringing an almost rückenfigur quality to the image. The viewer will find it easier to imagine themselves in the scene.



The placement of the subjects along the natural plane of the leading triangle shape leading into the distance draws the viewer's eye from the bottom of the image, and leads it towards the apex. The isolated rectangular building at the top of the pyramid gives a solid stop to the image.



The viewer's eye is then brought straight back down by the frame formed by the roof of the building. The frame is almost mirrored by the shadowing on the pavement in the foreground.



The almost looping nature of the image creates a dynamic feel.

Thanks for taking the time to talk about your photography Lois.

Lois is Exhibiting at SITHOM 2015

Exhibition Link Here.

SITHOM 2015

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SITHOM Exhibition – An Interview with M.Turker Emeklier

Tuesday, March 03, 2015

Why does street photography matter?

“One way of looking at it maybe, like other art forms it does not matter at first. I mean, there was always sound but someone decided to make music. Likewise, maybe, it did not matter at first, then somebody shoots an amazing image at a very random location, time etc. then it became an art form. Although none of the variables is under control, it may still be possible to find something surprising, touching. I refrain from saying “beautiful”, since the intention in street photography is more towards finding something real and raw, rather than a refined, composed studio shot.

On a personal level, it is my curiosity that derives me. I have studied architecture and for me, architecture is all about how people interact with the built form. How do they actually use the spaces, in expected or unexpected ways? Which side of the road do they use? And how would they look if that beam of light reflecting from that building hits them. And so on...”

What’s in your camera bag?

“I have two sets of gear actually. I sometimes take it easy and just take my medium format camera. I have only one lens on it so not much to worry about. Mamiya 645AFD with a film back.



Second set is 35mm film. Canon EOS 3 and 5D with the Sigma Art Lenses 24-105 f:4, 50mm f:1.4, and 70-200 L f:4

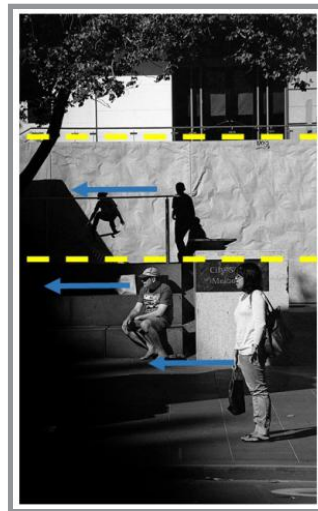
“Depends on the day but I like walking along a body of water, so I might go on a walk on Southbank. There’s always a lot of people and receives good light all day long. When I go shooting it is mostly to walk and listen to music and I might have a camera with me. If I naturally happen to stumble on something that interests me visually and if I do have a camera it suddenly becomes a movie. I edit my vision through a lens and put soundtrack on it via headphones. At that moment the question on my mind is whether it is worth printing. If not, I might walk away from a shot that I might have spent half an hour studying.”

What got you interested in street photography?

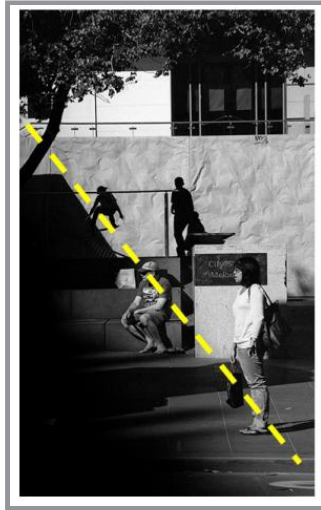
“As I mentioned earlier I studied architecture but before that I studied classical guitar. I suddenly decided to switch majors and in between I thought it would be good to look at some buildings and study them. I would always put people in my shots to portray the scale and the interaction between the people and the built form and there it was. Well looking back, I have always lived in big cities anyways. City has always been my “natural” habitat.”

Muzaffer’s image is another ripper from SITHOM.

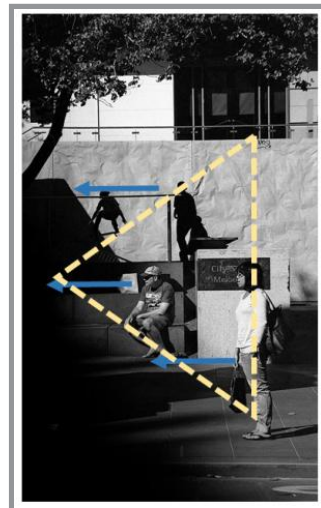
Firstly, the image has three clear planes of texture / contrast which are not evenly divided, but help break up the image.



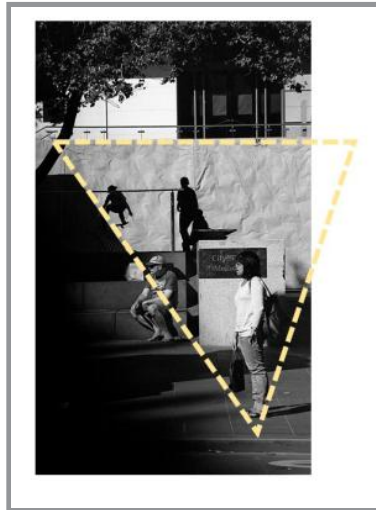
All the subjects in the image are directing their focus to the left of frame, which gives a certain suggested uniformity, or pattern to the image. It reverses the viewers natural entry point on the left and encourages starting at the right of frame, and moving across to left. Very unusual, and works effectively in creating interest in the image. It is almost like swimming against the current, but in such a graceful way that nobody notices how hard you are paddling.



The contrast between the light and dark parts of the image are divided by a subtle diagonal line, which adds to the already dynamic feel of the image. Diagonal lines are fantastic tool to pull out when you are having a “meh” kind of day out shooting. Not only are the light and dark parts of the image divided by this line, but three of the subjects have been placed along it to increase it’s prominence without being overt.



The subjects, along with the natural line of the wall form a triangular shape, again adding to a dynamic feel. The subejcts are also on clearly different planes with the three dimensions of the image, which gives a feeling of depth.



Looking even more closely at the image and spending some time with it, a gestalt triangle appeared, overtaking the more obvious one in the previous image. A gestalt shape is an image where the brain is left to complete the image using imagination... Now, all I see is the gestalt triangle, running outside of the frame. Having to complete the final corner of the triangle using only my imagination creates for a very engaging experience as the viewer.

Thanks for taking the time to talk today, Muzaffer!

Muzaffer's SITHOM page is here.

SITHOM 2015

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Film Never Die – Melbourne's Polaroid Heart

Saturday, March 07, 2015

Film Never Die is a stronghold for instant and film photography, situated in a little Carlton back alley. I met Hing Hshen some years ago at a Melbourne Silver Mine meetup, and loved his Polaroid cameras. Hing is a big part of sharing both the film and polaroid culture throughout Melbourne and the World!



Hing (left) and Mario (right)

To get there, take the 19 Tram from Elizabeth Street and get off at the Levers St / Royal Parade Stop #17.

You can find Film Never Die online [here](#), and on Facebook [here](#). You can work out the rest!

How Did Film Never Die get started?



"It's something that Gary, my business partner and I started. I met Gary back at the Box Hill market about 4 years ago. The Impossible Project had just released their first batch of SX70 film, when I passed by their stall which was being run by Gary.

Gary and I started chatting and realised we had the same interests in film and polaroid, so I just sat down at his table for pretty much the rest of the day!

I helped him sell quite a bit of SX70, so I just asked him if we should start a business together. Back then, I was doing my own project called "Shutter Playground" selling just polaroid cameras and film – similar to what I am doing now, but we thought we should just start something.



Gary (left) and Hing (right)

Gary came up with the name “Film Never Die” which is pretty good!

Film Never Die’s mission is to continue to bring out polaroid and associated film culture in society. Back four years ago, everyone was saying “film is going to die”. When I started uni, I joined a group called Melbourne Silver Mine which made me realise there was still a bunch of film enthusiasts in Melbourne.

We thought “why not?” and started a business to try and bring film and polaroid to new people.



First we started on line, but then realised we wanted customers to come in and experience film. Like when you want to buy a car, you have to drive it first. People need more convincing and assurance that we are not here to “scam you off” – we are here for serious business.

The only thing we need to remind ourselves of is customer service always has to be very good, and the best way to experience this is by having a physical shop to come and visit. We are very friendly and homey – we want to talk about cameras and photography. We love people just dropping in to say “hi”.

We love helping digital photographers try film. We organise multiple photo walks each year for this. This year we have already done six! New Year’s Eve, St Kilda, two in

Malaysia, one in Beijing, and during the White Night back in Melbourne. There are many more on the way, so keep in touch with us on Facebook or the website.”

MSP : The guys at Film Never Die are very patient and knowledgeable around Polaroid and film. If you need someone to help you get started, or get into hardcore old school Polaroids, this is the place to start. Hing and the team genuinely want to help you and this is their absolute priority over trying to sell you something. They are in business for love, not money! I get the feeling the business is more an excuse to hang out with film people than to pay off a mortgage... So get out there!

How Can a Digital Photographer Get Started in Film?

“Come and join a photowalk. Everyone will be carrying different cameras, which is a great chance for people new to film to try all kinds of film cameras and formats within a day or few hours. Sampling them all is a fun experience, and you can work out what you like.



Some people like Mario here (MSP : Mario also works in the shop!) like to shoot on the street and beach photos, for this he needs an SLR or something similar.

For someone who just wants to do street, I would probably get them to try a rangefinder – it is more quiet and more focused. Then you get some that want to try polaroids but not keen to spend \$300 – \$400 yet, so we recommend a Fuji Instax camera to get started.”

MSP : The range of Polaroids in stock is fantastic. They have a wide range, including some hacked ones with fisheye lenses. All of the cameras come with a warranty and have been checked and refurbished where necessary. Hing will take the time to explain each of the cameras to you, and help you make the right choice.

Hing, why do YOU still shoot film?

“For me, the process of shooting film is different. I like to shoot a lot of traditional film and Fuji instant film because when you look at people’s reaction it is totally different to shooting with digital. What they experience is “I didn’t know film cameras still existed anymore” and this starts a conversation. I can start talking about Film Never Die and explain what we do, what film culture is, and let them know there are a lot of film photographers still in Melbourne!



My current project is “Instant Melbourne Story” – it’s about strangers on the street. It is a continuation of “Shutter Playground” from many years ago. I was collecting my own Mamiya Press Universal lenses at the time, and a couple in Elizabeth Street saw me and asked “what camera is that?”.



I just handed my camera over to them and told them to have a look and play with it. I ordered my food and we chatted for half an hour. So, before we finished I said “why don’t you let me take a photo of you two?”. In the back of my mind I started to think it was a pretty good idea.

Every year, I try to have a project to concentrate on, so the idea to have a hashtag **#instantmelbournestory** started here.”

MSP : Check out Hing’s stream on instagram. It is quite inspirational and features some very creative compositions. Here is a wonderful example. I have to get out and shoot with Hing sometime! There is probably a fair bit I could learn from him.



How do you approach people for Instant Melbourne Story?

"My experience is to just walk up to them, making sure you have a good smile and say you want to take a photo for them. Just show them your work first, like your Instagram posts.



A couple of weeks back, there was an American group of street dancers in front of the state library. I walked up to them, told them about Instant Melbourne Story and started taking pictures.

Once I pull out my camera, people stop and say "whoah, what the hell is that?!". They get curious and want to know more. Once you peel off the backing paper on some Fuji Instant, most are amazed at the picture quality. I say they can keep the picture, but just need them to pose again for another one for me. And that's it!

Everyone loves free stuff, so if you give them an instant photo they get a lot of benefits. They have experienced film and realised it is pretty good. For me, it is a blessing to have shared instant film with them."



Hing and his beloved Mamiya

MSP : Hing has shared some great tips. You can read more about asking strangers for portraits here. Don't regret not asking someone for a portrait – what's the worst thing that can happen? They will say "no"... and that isn't so bad, is it? Hing has a really great manner which is polite and friendly. Hmmm, that kind of approach usually works in a whole range of situations!

Where did your love of Instant Photography start?

“Back at Uni, I had a friend called Flanagan – he was the one who introduced me to an SX-70 camera – everybody was just throwing them out as Polaroid had gone bankrupt. No one wanted to buy film anymore, so you could pick up an SX-70 for \$90 or \$100. Six months later, The Impossible Project announced Polaroid was here to stay. I have supported them since then.



The first few batches of film The Impossible Project released were not that great, but now in their fourth year the films are doing very well.”

MSP : I was lucky enough to visit The Impossible Project HQ in New York on a work trip last year. You can read about it more here. The Impossible story is a fantastic example of people having a dream and bringing it to the world.

Favourite Camera?



“At the moment? Weekends, I try to carry my Instant Mamiya Press. The good thing about it, it is big enough that people see the camera instantly. It’s how I can start conversation with them when I am on the street.

If I am on a photowalk I will either carry my Leica M5 or MP, with a 35mm lens. The MP is quieter, and better designed. The M5 is easier to grip, and I always like oddball cameras, so the M5 is the best! I used to shoot with 50mm lenses, but now I love the 35mm F2.

Tell us a little more about yourself.

Monday to Friday, I am a marketing co-ordinator, working on Collins Street. At Uni, I studied marketing and advertising at RMIT. That's where I started my camera passion, working part time during study. My first camera was a Pentax SP. I bought it at Peony Gardens near Melbourne Central.

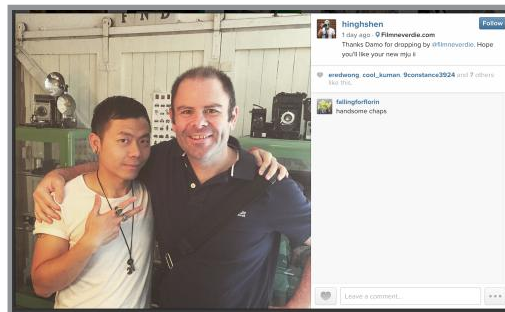
At Film Never Die we love film and love cameras. Come and hang out with us sometime!"

MSP : Hing and the team at Film Never Die have a great little store. Get out of the house and visit them. As well as instant film and polaroids, the guys have some quirky gear for sale as well. I spotted this little gem hiding on the table.



An Olympus Mju II new in box! Woot! There was also a Hexar RF on the table, but I just couldn't quite work out how to justify the purchase... I nearly missed the Mju on the table and accused Hing of hiding the little fellow...

Here we are finishing up my delightful visit...



Mr Xpan – Fotodudenz (Matthew Joseph)

Interview

Saturday, March 14, 2015

Matt is an accomplished wide angle photographer, using some pretty special gear. Here is what I learnt by spending an hour with him at the Spread Eagle Hotel in Richmond whilst his partner attended her weekly “Richmond Knitters” stitch and bitch at the same pub...

How did you get into photography?

It was an accident, a complete accident. I did photography in high school, hated it. Hated it so much! I enjoyed the science behind it, but they didn't really teach us anything about taking photos. It was all about the process. Not looking at other photographers and that sort of stuff. All about loading the film, loading the camera, developing the film, and printing. All the nuts and bolts around process. It was just enough to get you started but not enough to really excite anyone.

So there was nothing on composition?

Absolutely nothing. It was crap. The photography teacher was an “artist”. She didn't really like the idea of “teaching” art, I think? She would teach the fundamentals; how to put the paint on the canvas, but she didn't like the idea of forcing or influencing us into a particular style or genre.

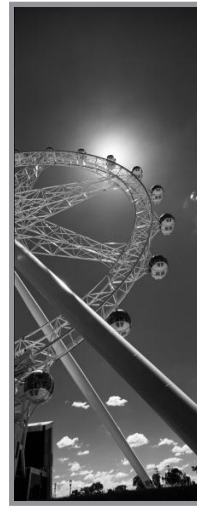
MSP – How disappointing. The teacher not wanting to influence the students and stifle their particular creative direction is admirable, but without understanding how to hammer a nail or cut a piece of wood a carpenter cannot make a masterpiece. A photographer cannot break the rules of composition until they understand them.

There is nothing more rewarding than showing someone with a shiny new interest in photography to go with their kit DSLR the rule of thirds and how to use leading lines in a photograph... It gets them excited about learning more and can lead to a lifetime interest.

What would you do differently in the same position?

I would just give them books, and encourage them to look at a lot of photos. You can learn everything you need to know just by looking at photos. I work in a photolab, and I learn from other peoples mistakes. I see something and think “well, that could be better this way or that way”, and that happens a thousand times a day!

MSP – An approach I have come to love. Deconstructing the work of the masters to understand how they have achieved their results is a worthy pastime of mine. You can read about my adventures in reading photobooks throughout the blog in the “technique” section.



I started working for a Japanese tourism – wedding company. People coming over to Australia from Japan to get married. It was just like any other “add on” package from a travel agent, except this one was a wedding ceremony on the Gold Coast. Go to Dream World, go to Sea World, go to Movie World, then go and get married! I used to be the video guy, doing all the video related stuff. Things had just changed from hi-8 to mini dv.

One day I was going to go up to the hinterlands and video some nice waterfalls or some crap. When I went to the gear room, there were no video cameras available at work. My boss saw me going through the gear and said “just take a still kit”. I took an EOS500, 28 – 80mm, 75 – 30mm, a couple of rolls of Fuji Reala, and a polarising filter for good luck.

Borrowed the kit, took my photos of the random waterfall, and that was it! That was where I “caught it”. The next day, the films went to K-Mart to get printed – \$12 for two rolls complete with prints! I still have the photos – they aren’t too bad. I took a photo of the moon during the day and the lab at K-Mart tried to make it look like night... The 6x4 glossy prints got me hooked.

What was the first camera you bought after this experience?

With my own money? A Canon EOS50 not the “e”, the one with the eye control. Then I thought, like most photographers, I am going to buy one lens, and if I get a decent one I will never have to buy another one ever again. The “forever” lens was a Tamron 28 –

200mm. It's still going. Famous last words those... "never buy another lens..."

Tell me about film.

I have stuck with film because with the Xpan there is no digital alternative.

MSP – Check out Matt's very well visited blog [here](#) and his specialty pages about Xpans [here](#).

But couldn't you just get a super wide for a 35mm digital?

Yeah, I know it will get wide but cropping a 35mm image into panoramic format is just not the same. When I can see through the viewfinder what I am going to get, or close to it, I feel better about it. It feels more normal.

MSP – The panoramic format Matt talks about is a challenge worth having a crack at for any photographer. You can find out more about it [here](#).

Working in the industry I get developing, scanning and printing for next to nothing, so I have that advantage. I don't hate on digital. Film is just for me.

But why do you feel like film "just for you", Matt? We need to know more...

The "why" is so difficult. Film and digital are not two different things. It's the same thing, it's just how you use it. I approach photography differently between the two mediums. I am not using much digital at the moment apart from my phone.

A photo is a photo, but I approach taking one differently when using film. I behave differently. With digital you can just click away, it doesn't matter what you are doing. If you want a black and white shot, you can change it in photoshop – I suppose I just feel lazy. For me, digital takes something away from the process – things like playing with levels, adding a filter, and desaturating in digital just doesn't appeal to me as much. With film, what you shoot is what you get.

When I use film, I know the light hit the film at a particular point in time. It went through the lens, it is captured on the film, I scan it. Very rarely do I do any additional post processing to my film photos. With digital, I am constantly thinking "oh, I can crop it like that, or do this..."

MSP – Matt's purist approach to film is quite inspiring. For many of us who still stick with film, the theme of being more conscious and deliberate in taking each shot is common. To find out what I love about film, check this out.

I suppose there is also a bit of the eternal tension between craft and technology at play. Film just feels more crafty whereas digital (which I also love) is more megapixelly...

Hmmm, thinking more about it, a long time ago, a photography tutor I had at some night courses I did – Tony – said each person in the class had to do an assignment. Mine was "you are tradition's servant, cursed"...

MSP – At this point Amber (Matt's partner) interrupted the interview... talking about what she was going to order for dinner. For the record, I ordered the Eye Fillet from the Spread

Eagle in Richmond and it was delicious!

MSP – It took me a while to understand the brief – until Matt explained further.

You are a servant of a tradition, but cursed at the same time. Someone who is serving a tradition but cursed by it.

I never did the assignment – it sounded like a lot of bullshit at the time. As years went on, my perspective changed, and the words kept coming back to me. I realised the curse applied to me. There is my love of tradition in film. I am it's servant, and I cannot leave it behind – the underlying theme of everything we have been talking about, I suppose.

Tell me about Wide Angle composition, which you are quite well known for... For you, wide angle has been a consistent theme. Everybody remembers “their first time”.

The first shot I really felt I nailed was one called Akaroa Harbour on my Canon EOS 50 with a 24mm Lens, with Agfa Ultra 50, my favourite film! It's kinda when I got into the panorama thing. The guy I worked with grabbed my film and shoved it through the printer, not knowing it was mine. He had the machine in panorama mode. When these big, long prints came out of the machine, I looked at them.



Akaroa Harbour

They were mostly forgettable pictures of a car I had just bought, but then this one came out of the harbour. It was cropped, but on this beautiful wide piece of paper it just looked wonderful.

After that, I was getting conflicting information from different photographers on wide angle photography. Some said “approach your subject” prior to taking the shot – whether it was street or something else. Get in there and interact with the subject.

There is a scientific theory another said that just by observing something, it changes at a molecular level – but that did sound like some BS to me. Like wrapping something in a shiny new box makes it seem different. He used to say “approach the subject”.

Another photographer said “get closer”. So I would be thinking – approach the subject, get closer – then I ended up right in there, and I can only achieve that with a really wide angle lens.

I have also been in situations when I have wanted to take photos of things, but couldn't because there wasn't enough “space” or an obstacle like a main road to my shot which I can only fix by shooting wide.

What was the progression of your gear acquisition?

I started with a 24mm first – and you are going to think I am nuts here – I thought that was too wide, so I went back to 35mm!

One day, working at a camera shop, we had a Voigtlander rangefinder and a 15mm lens second hand set on the shelf. I had never really thought twice about it, but one of my colleagues, Bob, borrowed it for a day.



Voigtlander Bessa L with 12mm Lens

When he brought back his films, I developed them for him. I saw them and thought “oh my god!”. I have to have this camera! So, I borrowed it, and that was that. I soon owned it. I still have one of my Voigtlanders left on the shelf at home.

I was hooked on super and ultra wides. Then I got the 30mm and Xpan. I bought the Xpan online from a guy who wanted to buy a motorbike. (I wonder if he still wishes he had the Xpan!)

The Xpan body I bought online. I had it sent to work, so the thing didn't end up on the doorstep for half a day. Hasselblad love boxes... The Xpan was within a box, within a box, within yet another box! The exterior boxes are grey and nice, and then everything else has it's own little box. Then a sleeve pulls all of these together.

MSP – People think Apple were the first ones to create beautiful packaging for consumer electronics goods! Leica and Hasselblad understood this many years ago...

The 30mm was bought later, separately. I was already familiar with the lens. A prominent New Zealand photographer already had the 30mm, and I was familiar with his work. He came into the shop with the 30mm one day, when I already had Xpan body. I asked him for a look through the viewfinder, and I was gone at that point.

What are your top tips for someone wanting to develop their wide angle images? And don't tell me to get closer...

“But that's #1!!!!”

You gotta get the whole thing in. If you are going to take a photo of something, get right in there. Show some context. Show the surroundings. Nobody wants to see a photo of a rubbish bin, they want to see the context of it. Is it on a road, are there people around it, what's the sky doing?



Voigtlander Bessa L with 12mm Lens

MSP – When I first tried it, I always thought wide angle was about getting further away and getting more into the scene. You can read more about my own wide angle journey [here](#).

I think shooting wide is like being greedy. You are getting more in, whether or not it adds more value depends on the composition.

Get closer.

Bring more context – what is happening around the subject.

The third is to master the concept of hyperfocal distance. Don't worry about focusing, just hyperfocus your lens by setting your infinity marker to your aperture, and just shoot it. Don't worry about the technical stuff. The camera will take care of all that. Obviously, I am making it sound a bit easy – you still need to know your aperture and shutter speed.

What's your favourite film and developer?

I'm not that guy.

I shoot, mostly to the disgust of other film lovers, Kodak BWCN. It uses the C41 developing process – so I don't have to worry about it. BWCN gives consistent results – I know what I am going to get. I used to be obsessed by Agfa Scala, a black and white transparency film. I used to love that stuff! You can't beat looking at transparencies on a lightbox. Can't beat it. There is just less and less of it being manufactured.

Do you worry about the future of film?

When it comes to black and white negative film, there is no reason why it should ever stop being in production.

Cameras are a different story. A few years back, Nikon were convinced they could make a new version of the Nikon F. Someone had looked at the factory line and convinced them that they could get them back into production with minimal changes. So they tried, and launched the new film camera, but they lost a lot of money!

What first steps should someone take when getting into Wide Angle without breaking the budget?

Whatever system you have already got will be fine. Just check out the range of lenses by checking images taken with various focal lengths on your system on Flickr and other places to see what other people are doing with similar gear.

For 35mm photographers, a 21mm focal length lens is a great place to start. It's affordable. A 24mm is also probably going to do the job. Get one and see if you like it by dipping your toes in the water. Some people decide they are not into it, but yeah, see what happens.

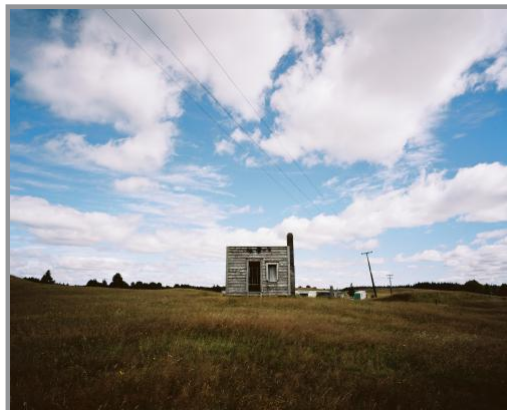
MSP – I am still not sure if I love wide angle or not!

Favourite Camera and Lens setup? XPan with 30mm lens?

Yeah, that's my favourite.

And you also have a Mamiya 7 with a 43mm Lens?

Still shooting it. It's nice to have a foreground in the image vs the Xpan! The 6 x 7 format means I am not missing that top and bottom third of the frame. It is a different way to shoot, but at the same time similar to shooting with the XPan.



Mamiya 7 with 43mm Lens

What's the one image you would like to be remembered for? What about the one I have reviewed previously?

Matt turns the tables – “What do you like it about it, Damian?”

MSP – I like the idea of being more conscious of what is around you. By simply changing the perspective from which you viewed the scene you created a wonderful image. Actively seeing the world in front of you from a different angle.

So, what is the favourite image you have taken, Matt? Pick one that represents your photography.

My favourite.... One I took in Japan – Kyoto train station. People waiting at the station platform, and I am diagonally above them. The tracks are empty and there is people standing waiting to get on the train, but they are waiting where they know the doors are

going to be.



The people are all in distinct groups, waiting for the train to arrive and the doors to open. There are nice lines throughout the image, the train tracks, the powerlines, the pattern of the tiles on the platform, and the orderly positioning of the people.

In the middle of all this predictability are two or three people who don't know where the fuck they are or what they are supposed to be doing. Order and chaos contrast in the image. I shot it on the Xpan with the 30mm.

For someone getting into wide angle film photography, what gear would you recommend?

If you have some money to spend, try a Voigtlander Bessa L, and a 15mm or 21mm Voigtlander lens to match. The viewfinder is external, but if you understand hyperfocal distance, you can jump right in there and just start shooting! Only issue is that you will probably catch the rangefinder bug whilst you are at it!

MSP – More about rangefinders here.

Rangefinders are much smaller and quieter than an SLR. Not many people out there know what they are. Those that do get it, give you a knowing look when you are out and about. You can point them at most people without them minding too much.

The quietness combined with shooting ultrawide and close means people have no idea when they are in frame. They think "oh, he must be way too close and off to the left for me to be in the photo." I will pretend to be looking around a bit and pointing in various directions, focusing on something else, then just casually lower it down and "click".

I had never used a rangefinder until I got the Xpan. It all seemed like a lot of mucking around, manually focusing etc. I thought the format weighed outweighed the "cons" of a rangefinder for me. The panoramic format was just too tempting.

I was a bit intimidated by the rangefinder – I just decided I would keep using it until I had learned to like it. When I got the Xpan, I probably didn't "deserve" it as a photographer. I sorta grew into it. It was a massive investment for a young man. I was 24 at the time. My biggest investments have been firstly my car, then my camera!

I think I grew into the camera.

I was thinking about the questions you sent through this morning to prepare for the interview. I don't think my photos look "wide". I don't feel that way. I look at other people's photos and I can often tell straight away they were taken on a wide angle. If your photo doesn't look like a "wide angle" then you have done something right. A little bit like HDR – if it is noticeable, then you might have used it a little too much!

If you can shoot it, and it doesn't look wide, then you are on the right track.

MSP – Thanks for your time today Matthew.

Conclusions.

Lessons from Matt

1. Get closer.
 2. Surround your subject in context to give more meaning. Show the subject in the environment it exists in.
 3. Avoid making images noticeably “wide” in composition.
- Options for Starting in Wide Angle

1. Check out other people's work on Flickr by searching on lenses that are available for your system.
2. Buy a 21mm or 24mm lens for your existing system

Next Steps

1. Buy a Bessa L and 15mm lens. Learn to love film.
2. Get a job as a QC lawyer / Surgeon / CEO and buy an Xpan and 30mm lens.

Matt is not a “one trick pony” – he is an accomplished artist photographer. However, there is massive benefits to finding a style or genre that you love and pursuing a more narrow but infinitely deep creative path.

The more time you spend with a clear focus, the more nuanced and detailed your skills can become. Try all kinds of photography, but occasionally spend an extended period of time on a particular style, genre, or gear and develop expertise. It could be a combination of subject type and lens. For a few months, all I did was street photography using a 135mm focal length lens and film. The more time I spent with this unusual focal length, the more I understood how to use it for the best result.

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail Preview Video

Sunday, March 15, 2015

You might get a bit of motion sickness watching this, but it is worth it! All the beautiful analogue cameras for sale at Champagne Court in Hong Kong. Over the next week or so, reviews on each of these stores, and others, in the Hong Kong area will be posted. Stay tuned if you love film!

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail Introduction

Friday, March 20, 2015

Searching for an analogue camera, even on the internet, has more of an Indiana Jones feel to it. To find what you want, you have to head off the beaten track, talk to some people who you wouldn't normally be in contact with, possibly watch out for some less than reputable back alley stores, and then check the quality of the gear.

Sometimes you can discover something that you had no idea you wanted!

Shopping for digital cameras can be a bit bland and sterile. Everyone has the same gear – there is no element of scarcity or exploration.

If you want to buy something unique, like a Hasselblad Xpan, or Contax G system, you are going to have hunt the right one down. Balancing out what you can afford against the condition of the item is a challenge. Sometimes, even finding what you want to buy can be part of the fun.

Hong Kong is a great place to shop for second hand analogue gear. If you only have a couple of hours to spare, then the one single place to visit is Champagne Court, 16-20 Kimberley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui. It is an arcade full of great gear that is in generally good condition to mint. The stores can be a bit of a disorganised jumble to look at, and quite cramped, but in each store is someone who is passionate about film photography. Yah, sure, there are a lot of “employees” there too, but if you can find the owner, they are usually great to talk to about gear and can help you find what you want.

Some advice...

Don't expect many bargains. These shops all know what gear is worth and you can expect to pay a fair price for what you want. The advantage of shopping here is the range – there are multiples of most items you could want, so you can select according to your budget and the desired condition you would like.

Buyer beware. Hong Kong is not the kind of place that offers 90 day money back guarantees. If this bothers you, stick to ebay sellers with a return policy. If you are purchasing something on the expensive side, ask to run a roll of C41 through it. With one hour processing at Dot-Well Camera, you can easily check on the item. Most places will not hold the item for you, so if it sells in the hour you are away, too bad!

There are many shops with many items. Don't rush into anything! Visit as many shops as you can and wait for the right item to appear!

Make sure you have the exchange rates on your phone – make sure you check it vs. your local currency. If you have an international data pack on your phone, check the prices on ebay as well.

Take cash. Most shops will avoid taking a card like the plague, particularly if you are not a local.

Some stores will not go out of their way to help you – I am sure they get plenty of “gear tourists”. They seem to be able to spot a “looky loo” (a non-serious shopper) pretty

accurately, but I suspect they think most non-locals are probably just time wasters and tyre kickers. If you are serious, make sure you sound serious when you ask about the gear. Their attitude will change pretty quickly if there might be a sale on the way. It is also a bit of the Hong Kong way to have to ask for help.

It helps to be specific about what you want. Not everything is on display, so if you have a specific item you are chasing, let them know. Most stores are a mess of gear, so you might have missed an item which they will know about.

Sometimes, the stores will be attended by a flunky who doesn't know that much about cameras except the prices. If they don't seem to know a lot about the stock, they probably don't! Just keep asking questions and they usually get on the phone to the more senior person who soon arrives on the scene. Don't give up too easily.

Links to the Store Reviews.

Dot-Well Camera

All Good Friend Camera Company

M&K Kamera

David Chan

Sencery

The Photocrafters

Lee Wai Commercial Building

C9.99 Antique Cameras

Breguet Cameras

M&K Kamera HQ

Filme

Camera Film Photo

Matsuya Camera

Shogun Camera

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Dot Well Camera

Friday, March 20, 2015

Champagne Court is the hub for second hand gear. All the stores are in a little arcade – the entrance on Kimberley Rd looks like this :



Dot Well Camera

Friendly staff and approachable. The shop staff actively engaged with me as I walked in, asking about my Ricoh GR (yes, I was using an antichrist-ing digital for the walk!) and were very helpful.

They have both C41 in an hour and traditional Black and White processing which has a three day turnaround. I toyed with getting all my black and white done prior to leaving, but the three days is just a bit long. If I hadn't brought a bag full of Black and White film, I may have even gone nuts on the Kodak BWCN or Ilford XP2 films which are both C41 process!

I got a couple of C41 rolls processed here to save me the trip when I got back – they looked pretty good, and two rolls developed with low res scans cost \$70HK – A bit over \$10 Aussie dollars...

Dot Well have a very broad range of gear, not really specialising in any particular genre. Like more stores, there are piles of gear everywhere, and the gems are sometimes hidden behind the roughies.

They have an excellent range of film and chemicals. A great place to pick up whatever you need when in town. There was a pretty good range of developers and chems. There doesn't appear to be many rolls of each film in stock, but I suspect there might be more out "the back"...

Overall, a pretty good shop. Probably more for the bargain hunting kind of shopper. The gear was variable in both quality and price, but I think their price expectations are pretty

reasonable. There is not a lot of “minty” gear for sale. If a bit beat up is your thing, then this is a good place to look for a bargain.

Dot Well seemed a pretty friendly place. Another collector who had come in also struck up a conversation with me. Some places are interested in new people, some are just interested in the local crowd, I suppose?

The staff are very knowledgeable. I need some fancy pants L76 batteries (not the wussy little A76 or LR44 ones) – as soon as I mentioned the camera he knew which batteries I needed, and dug them up. I asked for six (I am always super-prepared, which can get a little annoying) and he sold me down to four. He was right, I didn't really need six!

Dot-Well are on the interwebs here.

You can find them here :

Champagne Court, 16-20 Kimberley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong

On the way out, the owner patted me on the shoulder to thank me for coming in – a nice way to start the Camera Trail!



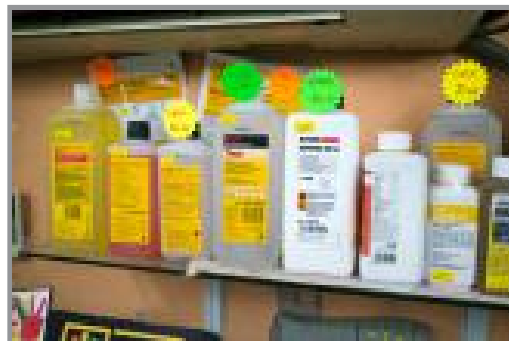
All the stores here are cramped like an episode of “hoarders”



Nice little range of film

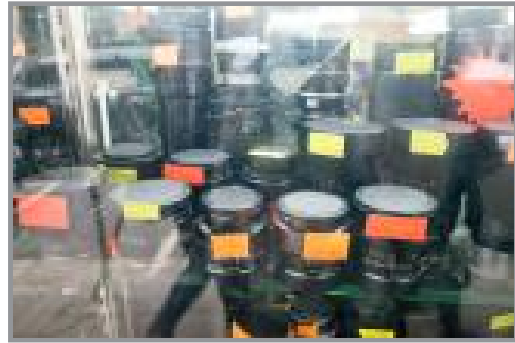


With some stuff you can't find anymore!



Ready for developing!





Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – All Good Friend Camera ...

Saturday, March 21, 2015

All Good Friend Camera Company

AGFCC are spread across a few windows at the start of Champagne Court. If there is a window nearby, without being part of a shop, just head back to the main shop and ask about what you would like to look at. It takes a while to work out which shop owns which window. Don't be afraid to ask though!

These guys have a great collection of minty Leicas, in the little storefront shop. They are all wrapped up in protective plastic, and beautifully presented. The expensive models appear in excellent condition. Droolworthy stuff. They are virtually unmarked. Checking out a couple of M6s, it was pretty obvious that despite the almost uniform ramshackled disorganised messes some of the stores are, the gear is mostly well loved and cared for, depending on the price.

I purchased a 90mm XPan (Fuji branded) lens here on a previous trip and found them pretty negotiable on price. Just make sure you have cash... Nobody likes cards here, and most will not accept them – unless it is a thing about being suss about travellers?

They stock a great range of both Nikon and Canon gear, a few Rollei TLRs and similar stuff. Probably a bit more suited to people looking for quality rather than a bargain. There are a few quirky cameras, some 110 cameras. Just enough to keep it interesting.

The staff here were friendly, but pretty busy. I had to wait a while for him to get out a lens I was interested in. The delay gave me time to have second thoughts about the level of investment, so bad luck for AGFCC! I was responding to my impulse motivators, but they had subsided by the time the lens arrived for me to check out. Close call...

There are a few bargains, and they have a great range of second hand accessories that you can go rooting around for in the boxes – Kinda like the Box Hill Camera Market on steroids?

AGFCC dropped the price of the Xpan Lens I was looking at from \$26,000 HK to and even \$20,000 HK on request, but this is a bit unusual. You need to bargain hard here, and be prepared to walk away from a deal. Don't fall in love with "The Girls on the Avenue" as Richard (not Eric) Clapton said in the 80's. If you are fair dinkum on an item, go in with cash ready to do a deal. The guys at AGFCC and the other stores are pretty cluey when it comes to separating the poseurs and the purchasers...

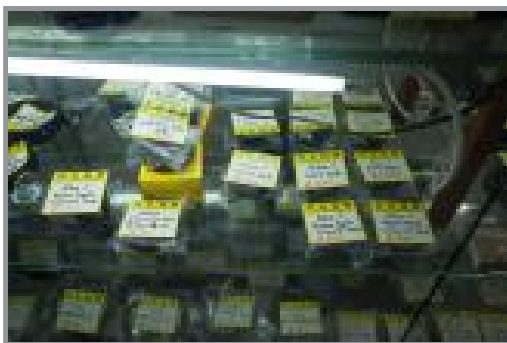
I have a funny feeling the lens might have sold as it is no longer in the window – or maybe he is trying to tempt me back into the store.

The AGFCC are online here.

They are located in the Champagne Court, 16-20 Kimberley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong.

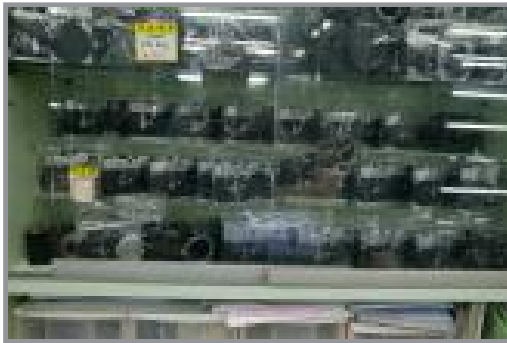


Plenty of Plaubels in HK – Wish I knew what they were!





All the stores look like this inside...



AGCFCC personal leica...



Everyone loves an XA



SITHOM Exhibition – An Interview with Zoë Mongey

Saturday, March 21, 2015

Why Street Photography?

"I love that Street photography captures a moment in time that will never happen again. An expression, an emotion, a moment in history. We don't think of our lives day to day being history but that's what street photography captures – a moment in history..."

What do you shoot with?

"I use Nikon. I have a D800e and a D7000. My go to lens for street photography is my 24-70mm Nikkor lens. It's a great lens and its light and unobtrusive. I also use a 20mm Nikkor lens for wide angle captures and rarely but occasionally a 50mm Nikkor lens."



Your best tip?

"You do have to be very careful when you have buildings in your shot if you're using a wide angle lens or a telephoto lens because it can create distortion of straight lines. So zooming out to wide on your telephoto or using my wide angle lens can have its challenges. In those cases I try to move myself rather than zoom out – but that's not always possible."

What's your favourite "go to" spot?

"I love Melbourne's lanes, Degrafs and Hosier Lane in particular. "

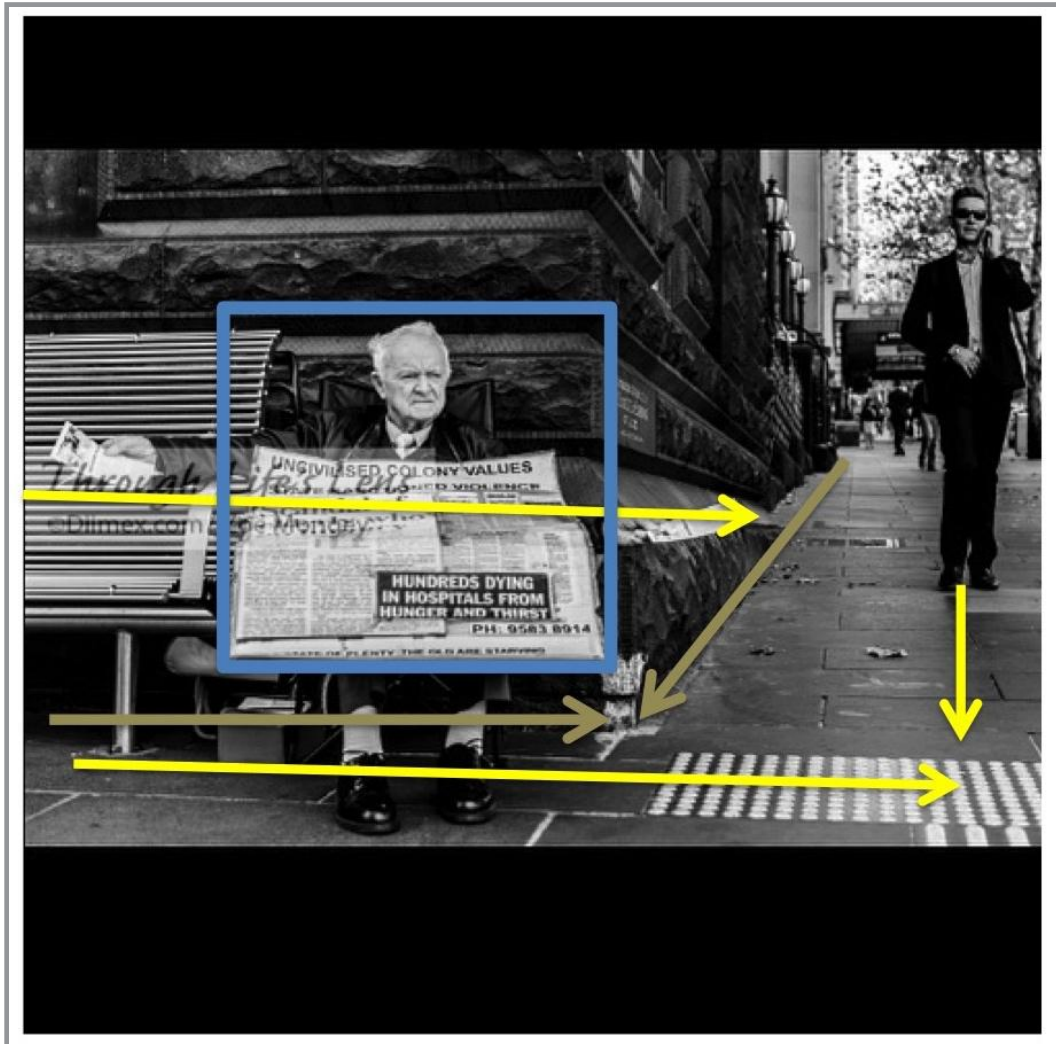


What got you into Street Photography?

"I consider myself to be a visual story teller so I love telling people's story like in my image of The 'Modern Day Robin Hood' John Murray. "



MSP : This image from Zoë is a pearler. Firstly, I love the fact that she has really gone out on a limb to take the image, fearlessly. Too often, street photographers are too tentative to take a shot like this. Get in there, take the shot, and get out. Be quick. If you are using a rangefinder, pre-focus. If you have an autofocus, make sure you know exactly where you want the focus point to be in frame. Check your light. Then go for it. Take two or three shots in rapid succession, then immediately turn and move away. I have not had anyone come after me. Things happen so quickly, that your photography doesn't even really register to the subject. And they find it difficult to respond quickly if you move off. Don't linger.



The contrast of the main subject handing out his tracts, looking slightly “loose” and the young guy wandering along looking very in control brings some real interest to the image. There are some very nice natural lines to lead the viewer’s eye. The corner of the building really anchors the action. The direction the young guy is walking on naturally forms a second intersection that only occurs in your imagination.

The main subject has a strong figure to ground ratio – the dark wall provides an excellent contrast to his face and the tracts he has in his hands. His arms also provide a final parallel line in the image.

Thanks for taking the time to talk about your photography Zoë.

Zoë is Exhibiting at SITHOM 2015

Exhibition Link Here.

SITHOM 2015

Exhibition details

Where: Victorian Artists Society

430 Albert Street, East Melbourne VIC 3002

When: Thursday, 19 – Monday, 30 March, 2015

Weekdays: 10am – 4pm Weekends: 1pm – 4pm

Opening Event: 7pm, Friday, 20 March, 2015

Extended viewing hours: 10am to 9pm

<http://www.sithom.com.au/welcome-to-shot-in-the-heart-of-melbourne-sithom/>



Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – M&K Kamera & amp...

Sunday, March 22, 2015

M&K Kamera – Champagne Court

All high end gear, in fantastic nick, and staff that clearly love to help people with their camera passions! Very much for Leica collectors who like quality second hand gear. M&K also have a great range of Leica accessories such as flashes, hoods, caps and viewfinders. A great place to find that piece you are missing, although you will only get it at a fair price – but unlike Ebay, at least you can check the condition prior to purchase.

There was a short range of film and chemicals, including a C41 kit which was very tempting! If only I could guarantee I could get it on the plane home...

Some interesting and unusual things, like the pancake Leica lenses which I had not seen before firsthand.

Vincent, who was managing the shop, was extremely helpful and loved to talk cameras in general. He even got out his Leica for me to have a look at, and to admire the Cura Strap he had on it.

Sometimes, the stores seem to be minded by casual staff who don't know much about cameras except the price. They jump on the phone if a serious buyer comes in and the guy who knows soon arrives. This happened to me quite a bit... So, if the shop attendant isn't super helpful, or doesn't seem to know much – they probably don't. Just ask some more questions and wait for the more senior person to arrive!

I tried one of the Cura Straps and fell in love with it straight away. When I mentioned I would put it on my camera later, Vincent said he would do it and proceeded to change the straps over there and then! My lobster hands welcomed his help... I have a hankering for one of the hand woven Cura straps, but they are \$HK750 each – I will see if I can resist the impulse for the week.

They also sell the Cura branded lens cleaner and wipes – which were demonstrated to me by the owner of Camera Film Photo and are just plain fantastic! More about this combination later...

M&K have two branches – these pictures are all from the Champagne Court, 16-20 Kimberley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong store. The other branch will be reviewed separately. I was interested in picking up a flash – but the ones they had at the Champagne Court branch came without a box, manual, or diffuser. The manual for the flash is one I was unable to find on the internet to download. I asked Vincent about it and he advised me their second store had one, which I eventually picked up. The lesson is – if you don't see what you want, ask the question...

And perhaps I am crappy negotiator, but the prices listed and the prices they are going to charge you here. Otherwise they advise you to go onto Ebay if you want it cheaper!

They are online here.



Interesting stuff....



Vincent holding his pride and joy!





Changing straps...



The most comfortable strap yet!





Watching the passers by



Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – David Chan

— ...

Monday, March 23, 2015

David Chan Camera

David Chan is the Mac Daddy of analogue cameras in Hong Kong. I am pretty sure there is nothing he doesn't know about photography gear. Mention a camera and he will say two things, in this order.

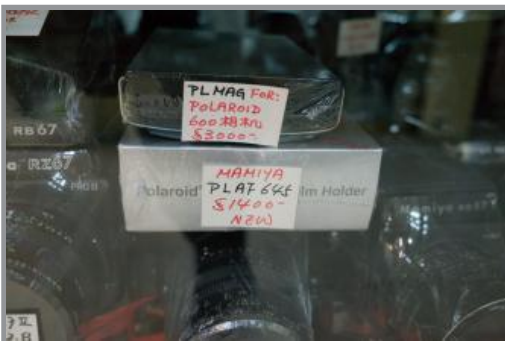
1. That he loves that particular camera.
2. Come over here and check out my stock of that particular camera!

David believes he has the largest range of second hand gear in the world. Yes, the world. I am not sure that I can argue with him on this point... He has quite a few storefronts in Champagne Court – everyone of which is full from ceiling to floor with gear.

Beware – this post has heaps of photos – so, keep scrolling!

DCC has just about everything I have ever seen. They love Nikon gear – ranging from the S series rangefinders limited editions, F series, through to all kinds of weird and wonderful stuff. He is your best bet to find you something. The range of second lenses and cameras is stunning. David has a great selection of mid range medium format systems, Mamiya RB series and Bronicas, for example, and some large format goodies. All the good stuff is wrapped in plastic to help protect and keep it in as good as nick as possible.















If you are after a big sports tele, they have quite a few in stock, in varying condition.

I spied a great range of Pentacon Sixes at the back of a shelf. They all looked to be in good condition. The Pentacon Six is a great way to get into medium format – affordable and they take great shots! There was also a decent selection of lenses.

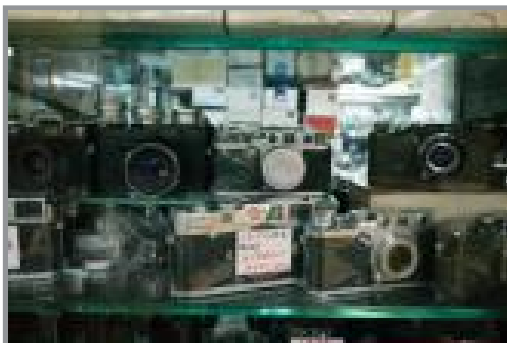
Reasonably friendly, although keep an eye out for David, in particular, as nothing is too much trouble for him. David came out to see me as I was poking around the various display windows of his store. He was very friendly and interested in my gear and photography.

They have some groovy stuff like the Fuji 645 series cameras which are pretty cool. I spotted a Widelux in the window which was also appeared to be in excellent condition, almost brand new! David stocks a wide range of Contax G series rangefinders and lenses, which are close to my heart as well.

There is a lot of older non-current gear, like Minoltas, and a fair bit of more generic branded stuff like Tamron lenses etc. The store is just choc a block with extra goodies like flashes, flash connectors, eye pieces, and view finders.

Some quirky stuff as well – there was a random Chinese TLR which just fascinated me. I couldn't quite work out what brand it was, but it looked new in box! Very tempting...

I have been to Champagne Court a couple of times, and couldn't quite work out who owned the Hasselblad and Leica shop that always seemed to be closed. I asked David who owned it – and, of course, it turned out to be part of his store. The store is literally set up like a massive tetris game of Hasselblad, Leica, and Rollei gear.





He invited me in to have a look – just getting through the door required some twists, turns, and other ballet moves to get to the good stuff. We got to talking Leicas and he opened a cupboard full of leica bodies stashed away. I am not sure what any single man or person can do with so many awesome cameras, but he is the man to turn to when Camerageddon is finally upon us...

Most of the Leica crowd love their M6s – I prefer aperture priority a little too much to buy one of these babies – and David has rows of them. All wrapped up in protective plastic and looking minty and delicious. The prices reflect the condition. Out of my price range!

David Chan is located at Champagne Court, 16-20 Kimberley Rd, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong.

And online here...

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Sencery – Cha...

Tuesday, March 24, 2015

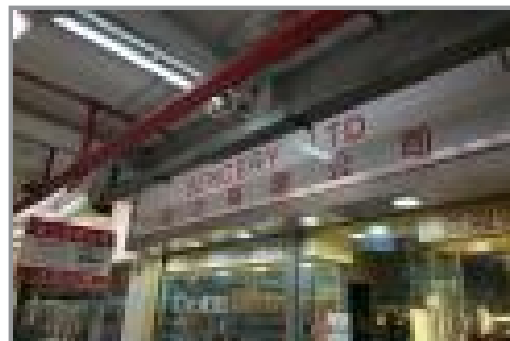
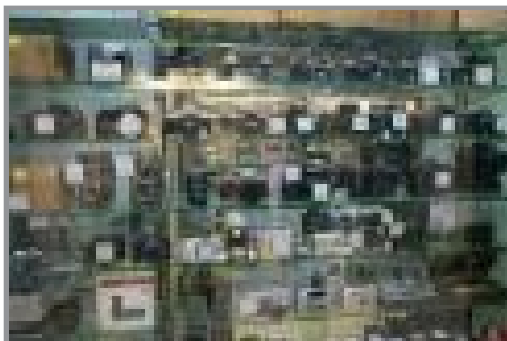
Sencery

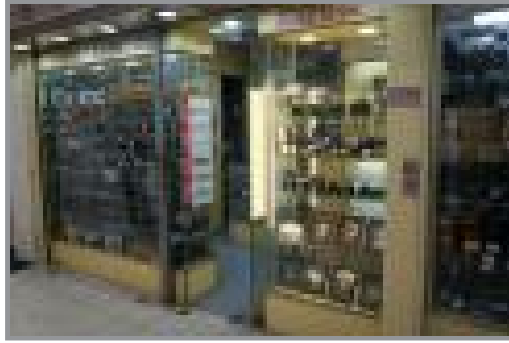
An unexpected experience. The stock in the window as a little sparse and underwhelming, but there were some hidden treasures inside. Sencery has stock of new in box Rollei compact point and shoots, and some similar Ricohs as well. It was nice to see something a little bit different.

There were some other nice compacts such as an Olympus XA, Contax TVS, Rollei 35, and a few other great pocketable gems. He has a nice little range for sale. If you are keen on compacts, give them a look. Stock was in pretty good condition. Very friendly and happy to open up the boxes to have a look.



Some nice little Compacts





Trent Parke – The Black Rose Exhibition Visit –...

Thursday, March 26, 2015

Some photographic exhibitions can be stingy and sparing in sharing the work of the artist. “The Black Rose” is a lush and luxurious experience of Trent Parke’s extensive body of work. As part of Adelaide Festival, the exhibition is described on the website.

“Experience an immersive exhibition by Adelaide based Magnum photographer Trent Parke. Parke’s extraordinary images—at times poetic and harsh—present a visual narrative in which small seemingly inconsequential moments of life take on a greater significance and symbolic meaning. The culmination of seven years’ work, *The Black Rose* is a meditation on life journeys, reflecting on the way in which the past infiltrates the present, and in turn can influence the future.”

You can visit them on the web [here](#).

Parke’s work has a distinctive style. Mostly black and white, utilising high contrast images, often shot in low light or at night to enhance this effect. I have talked about one of my favourite Parke images back [here](#).

Some of the things that I learnt spending time with Parke’s images :

1. Don’t be afraid of high contrast. There are significant portions of Parke’s images that have very little shadow detail. Parke often uses the negative space to direct the eye of the viewer to the feature, which is often bright and well lit.



In the image of the slide, the detail is lost in the darkest spots of the image, in favour of the highlight at the top of the slide. This a recurring technique throughout the exhibition.

2. Get to know and love your flash. Many of the images used flash judiciously to deliver

contrast in the image. Some of my favourite images leveraged the use of the artificial shadows produced by the flash which I so often try to avoid. Parke often uses his flash to throw shadows purposefully and to produce edge lit images. Many of his images of the beach end up looking like lunar landscapes rather than earth.



This image of ghost crabs instantly changed the way I feel about the flash kits I have. Parke's image has me itching to get out tonight on Glenelg beach to see how I can use the flash I brought with me. Sorry about the quality of the image – it is a crappy iphone capture of one of the postcards I purchased.

Unfortunately, the flash will have to mount onto the camera – I didn't bring the grouse radio remotes Tom bought me for a gift some time ago – but this is what the weather looked like at 5.30pm and it has only gotten worse!

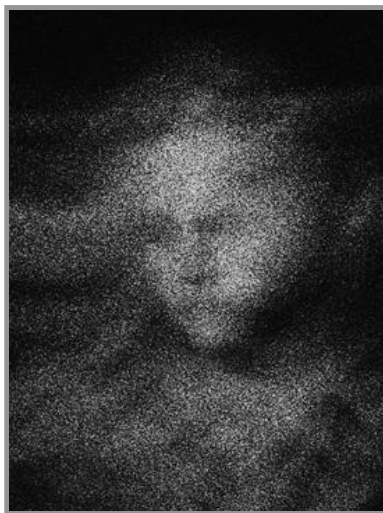


3. Threatening clouds are often used to dramatic effect. Combined with high contrast, they produce a recognisable style.



In this image of an obelisk, the sky provides dramatic context. I have to have a look at getting some dark red filters for my black and white photography.

3. Don't fear the grain. So many of Parke's images have an ethereal appearance through his embrace of the natural graininess of film, combined with what I would expect to be quite slow shutter speeds. He takes this to the extreme with some of his abstract portraits.



Whilst these are not to my personal aesthetic taste, they are the natural conclusion to exploration of grain. I probably worry too much too often about sharpness, focus, and smoothness of grain. Seeing Parke's work today reminded me why I like this image I snapped a few years ago...



There is a lack of sharpness due to the slow lens, combined with the movement of the girl. The image is still dynamic and commands attention. Whilst I have removed a fair bit of the grain in post, there is still a bit of a Parke feel about it. Something to think more about?

4. Images belong on photographic paper, not on your computer screen or slick digitally printed photobook... Make the time to go to exhibitions. Print your work on beautiful photographic paper at a professional lab, not K-mart. Enjoy the images. I have been to a few exhibitions of note over the last six months featuring my photographic crushes. Vivian Maier, Ho Fan, and now Trent Parke. I saw many famous images at the Kodak Exhibition in Bendigo a few years ago. Real prints, framed. I even saw a print of Robert Capa's iconic D-Day image which inspired the tone for "Saving Private Ryan" (below).



Seeing the printed images completely changes the experience for me. Visiting a gallery to see images helps me be "present" and get the most from them.

One of the best (and worst parts) of the exhibition was a kind of scrapbook of Parke's printed photos with his matching prose. There were two copies on a table in the dim light, for anyone to gently and respectfully leaf through. The printed photos were excellent reproductions and combined with the heavy weight paper, appealed to my analogue tendencies.

What was the worst part? Next to each of the two copies of the hand made scrapbook was a manky pair of cotton gloves that you were expected to put on to turn the pages of the book. There were a considerable number of equally manky South Australian teenage schoolkids who had been dragged along to the exhibition. I have no idea where their hands might have been since they were last washed, and I prefer not to know...

I have decided to do the same thing at home – print some roughly 8 x 10 prints and mount them using the right archive stuff to a big book. If you want to have a look, I guarantee you will get your own new, clean pair of cotton gloves to take home and keep as a souvenir.

5. Keep Being Inspired by Other Photographers. I did acquire some very moderately priced Trent Parke loot from the exhibition. (“loot” being a turn of phrase indicating of high value rather than having a five fingered discount applied – of course I paid for the items!). The exhibition catalogue is a handsome, hard back book with most of the images inside – I haven’t yet had time to check for all my faves. \$49.95 felt like pretty good value.



I am also a sucka for anything packaged in a finicky manner, so I also impulse purchased the box of twelve greeting cards – a bit more expensive, relatively speaking at \$24.95. Being able to pull out the cards, sort through them, dog ear them, and love them is just too tempting for me to be able to say “no”.

There are several books of my favourite photographers under the coffee table at home that are still in mint, untouched condition, despite them arriving on Santa’s sleigh a few months back. Whenever the well runs dry, I pull one out and find something I love. Thinking about the image or style of the photographer usually gets things going again. Deconstructing an image excites and inspires me once again to pick up the camera and get out shooting. There is a bit on how I go about it here, if you are interested...

Without books, prints, and visiting exhibitions I cannot learn anything new or be inspired by others.

The Exhibition runs from Sat 14 Mar – Sun 10 May, 10am-5pm daily. Get to it, if you can. Despite it being in Radelaide!

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Shogun Camera –...

Saturday, March 28, 2015

Shogun Camera

Shogun Camera was full of local film buffs when I visited. A whole bunch of Leica fanboys comparing gear and pawing at all the beautiful lenses and bodies. Their range of second hand Leica lenses was extensive and looked to be in great condition. More targeted at the collector or person looking for quality – there are not a whole bunch of bargains here, but that is a consistent theme across the board in Hong Kong. You get what you pay for...

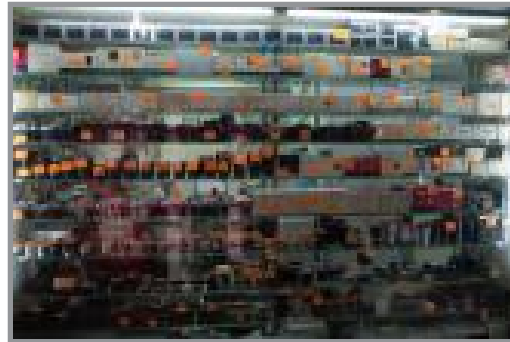
All the lenses looked to be in great condition. They are a great place to go for accessory bits and pieces. They have external viewfinders, hoods, lens caps etc. Shogun is one of your best bets to get that one piece of gear that is missing from your camera that annoys the heck out of you every time you notice! There was some Voigtlander stock as well.

Shogun has a fair range of Leica R series gear – not something I know much about, but it all looks lovely. It looked as though they had some fairly new in box Leica CLs in the store – I didn't get them to pull them out, but if you are after one, it might be a good place to start. They also had some of the more recently manufactured Rolleiflex cameras in boxes, and some older models. Nikon S rangefinders were relatively plentiful here as well.

Shogun is online here.











Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Matsuya Camera R...

Sunday, March 29, 2015

Matsuya Camera



In the same building as Shogun, Matsuya is also worth a look. Matsuya Camera has a very extensive range of Nikon lenses – probably one of the better ranges outside of David Chan's store for both Nikon bodies and lenses.

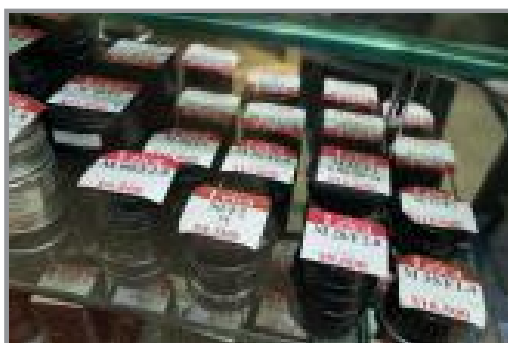
They have some beautiful examples of Nikon F, FA, FM2, FM3as and other collectable and useable cameras. The prices were pretty reasonable – a Nikon F3T was going for about \$3680 HK which seemed OK to me. There was a great collection of F3 bodies – one of my favourite all time cameras.

Contax G systems were a feature of their stock – maybe I just notice them more as one of my dream cameras! So, if you are after a Contax G system, Matsuya is a great place to start, particularly if you need a body. Some medium format gear, but not enough to suggest a specialty in one particular system.

One of the things I loved about Matsuya Camera is all the stock was clearly priced – to at least give you a starting point for negotiations and to make sure you are not wasting anyone's time. Some of the stores in HK do not mark everything, and it can be a little annoying if you are used to having a price tag to kick things off...

Matsuya had some interesting cameras like a Contax TVS, Contax T2, and a good range of half frame Olympus PENs. It was a little hard to find – I had to ask the guys at Shogun where to find the store!

Just look for the entrance to the interior mall on Tsim Sha Tsui Mansion – or ask the guys at Shogun...





Minox 35GT

Sunday, March 29, 2015



Film speed selector



MacGuvering the battery!



Lens open



Lens closed



The winder is a little delicate



The camera is quite small



The tradeoff for small size is fiddly lens controls

What a great time to be into film photography. Cameras that take film are rapidly declining in price, but still available in great condition. Film is still ready to buy in a reasonable range of flavours on ebay, and scanners like the Epson V700 relatively affordable.

It's not going to last, but it is a golden age for analogue!

In the spirit of making the most of this window in the technology timeline, I recently picked up a Minox 35GT from Ebay's dodgy brother in law, Gumtree. Minox traditionally made compact and "spy" cameras.

The body is moulded plastic but extremely well made, as you would expect a german made item to be. The camera that arrived was a little bit sticky when moving the parts for the first time – it has probably been sitting in a drawer for at least 15 years. The camera switches on when the front is folded down into the open position. The light meter then starts working out the shutter speed based on the aperture automatically, with a shutter speed needle in the viewfinder.

The lens has a fixed focal length of 35mm which is cool for street photography. The aperture works as a continuous twist on the lens from f2.8 to f16. The f2.8 is a real plus for such a compact camera. Pop some iso400 film in there, and you are pretty much covered for most occasions!

The film speed is selected manually with a dial rather than using the DX coding bar. Compact film cameras have been gradually becoming of more interest to me over the last few months. A number of them, particularly some of the higher end cameras, only had auto DX code ISO.

The focus is manual – in order to get the best out of the camera, you need to be up and running with hyperfocal distance, unless you have eyes that double as laser rangefinders. Check out how to calculate hyperfocal distance [here](#). This is NOT a rangefinder, nor is there a prism to help focus. You either have to use hyperfocal distance or take a punt on how far you are away from your subject, turn the dial, and cross your fingers. There is nothing in the viewfinder to indicate you have it right...

The Minox 35GT takes an old mercury based battery, the PX27. Hmmm, not a very easy thing to acquire. Channeling my inner MacGyver, I taped up four LR44 batteries with

some electrical tape. Worked perfectly! I was actually fairly impressed with my handy skillz.

So, enough preamble. How did the camera perform in the CBD this morning?

The shutter speeds struggled occasionally from a range perspective – the fastest speed is 500, and with 400 film in, it can hit the ceiling pretty quickly. Nothing a quick dial down of aperture couldn't fix, but a bit challenging. There is also a button to compensate for backlighting, which might help this, but it is all a bit too much of a hassle for me.

The flip down panel keeps the lens nice and clean, and only takes a second to prep for a shot. The camera is quite tiny, and very inconspicuous. It literally fits in the palm of your hand. Combined with the almost forced use of hyperfocal distance focusing, the size is great for taking quick shots without even looking through the bright viewfinder.

The size of the camera is completely inoffensive. It looks like less than a toy, and nobody really gave me a second look when I pointed it in their direction. Minox sure make stealthy cameras! The shutter is extremely quiet, almost silent. Winding on the film can be a bit hit and miss. The lever is very small, and hard to get your thumb under, and it takes two winds to get to the next frame. First world problem, but you are not going to be able to rapidly go for a second shot easily.

I rapidly clicked through a roll of fuji pro400h. A couple of times I needed to quickly spin the aperture ring around to get the exposure right – the small size of the camera leads to inevitable compromises. Getting my mitts on the ring and controlling the aperture was very difficult whilst still looking through the viewfinder. Adjusting the focus ring is also advisable, so setting up the camera for both focus and aperture prior to the shot is the go. It was a great challenge for my spidey sense on exposure and focus to get this right.

I will post the images from the first roll once they are developed and scanned. Images from other users on Flickr look pretty good!

First thoughts on the Minox 35GT are very positive. It is an easy to use, unobtrusive street camera. If the rolls come back looking good, I might even have a look at getting a more minty edition from Ebay. The Minox fits in a pocket, is safe in there without a case, and has a great focal length and an f2.8 lens.



Polaroid Resurrection – Exhibition Review

Friday, April 03, 2015

Polaroid photography warms my heart. A technology that was thought to be naff and “yesterday” that has been completely renewed.

The team at Film Never Die have a mission – to promote the whole Instant Photography culture, and to introduce as many people to what could become a lifelong passion. Gary and Hing are fantastic blokes, and have done a great job to get this exhibition up.

So, what did I see at opening night?

There was an impressive range of images. Each polaroid original has been scanned and been printed large, and framed. both the original polaroid and the print are available.



Instant photography is analogue taken to another level. Each image costs about \$2, and appears through some witchcraft in a few minutes. Every image has to be “right” – there is a lot of skin in the game when you take an instant photo...

The exhibition opening was energising and fun. Whilst I am not into instant in a big way for myself, it was inspiring to see what the photographers had done with their instant moments.

A lot of the cool kids were there too – I met Jake, the master restorer of ye olden styling Weegee cameras, and Sebastian from Sebastemulsion. Thanks to Jake for taking my portrait.



Both of these guys has some massive skillz working with their hands. Jake's cameras are sweet (I can feel a purchase coming on...) and Sebastian makes his film from scratch by hand! I haven't tried it yet, but there will definitely be a purchase to try it soon. And the guys from Film Never Die are always good to chat to – I finally met Gary tonight!

More from these guys soon on the blog.

And James, if you read this, I hope you love your XPan2 – if not, let me know. It would seem I influenced our young friend at a flickr meet... I would happily take the 2 off your hands and sell my 1!

The opening was an experience. I had to buy a copy of the catalogue, it was a beautiful reminder of the images. Gary from FND was also taking a polaroid of anyone who purchased a catalogue to put in the inside cover of the catalogue – awesome! Sonia (Mrs Melbourne Street Photography) was quite jealous when I got home and showed her.

If you ever want to astound people at a party, take a Fuji Instax, take photos of people and blu tac them to the wall throughout the night... The party goers will be mesmerised by the photos with the white borders they thought was just a filter on their phones!







Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Camera Film Photo

Saturday, April 04, 2015

Vish from Camera Film Photo is a guy who gave up a career in IT to promote analogue photography, and to try and make a living doing it! He is one of the most passionate film photographers I have ever met. Throughout this post, you can see some of his work.



Vish and his Leica!

<https://camerafilmphoto.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/camerafilmphoto>



Goodwood

Vish is exceptionally knowledgeable about film and is proactively learning as much as he

can – both for his personal passion and to help his business. Vish has plans to set up a lab and maybe a darkroom. He spent some time explaining the differences between different black and white films that I had no idea about. I learnt a few new tricks for sure! Vish made some great recommendations on developers to match different films to get the best results.

Vish takes very personally learning everything he can about analogue photography – almost duty bound to keep the knowledge and art alive. He has spent a lot of time learning how to create silver gelatin prints, for example. He knows that to be successful in the film business, he needs to know the answers to every question, but you get the distinct impression that he loves what he does.



Holiday Japan

He also introduced me properly to the Cura range of straps and clearing gear. I have ended up with quite a few new Cura straps in my bag for the trip back home! They are very comfortable – like air padding on your neck. They also make a lovely hand woven silk strap, but I like the wider straps for comfort's sake...

<https://camerafilmphoto.com/all-products/cura-ccs-100-comfort-strap/>



The very fancy silk straps are here :

<https://camerafilmphoto.com/all-products/cura-css-100120-sanada-strap/>



Vish is actually the wholesaler for Cura and Rollei films in Asia, but sells retail through his website. He was happy enough for me to drop in for a chat though, and pick up whatever I needed.



LKF After Dark

On this trip, I have tried to open up a bit more to opportunities to meet new photographers – I scored an invite to go out for a shoot with Vish and Bellamy from Japan Camera Hunter, but already had dinner booked at one of HK's best restaurants. What a conflict to have! Bellamy was in town and is a mate of Vish's.

Vish is an inspiring photographer. He seems to be fearless and talented. He showed me a few of his framed prints which really got me thinking about my own work. Vish gets out with his Leica at night, when Hong Kong seems to come alive. At the moment, he is working on a project shot in Lan Kwai Fong after dark. His creative objective is to show how out of control the place can get after dark. He shared with me some of the series, and they were memorable, confronting, and captured the feel of the place accurately.

Vish uses his flash on the Leica expertly – shooting a lot of nightclub scenes that are high energy, showing individual moments of movement. Vish also shoots on a Rolleiflex.

Meeting him, and seeing his beautiful prints as really inspired me to reconsider my own photography. Challenged me to aspire to yet another level of both technically and artistically. I had been a little flat and same same with my HK photos. Even though they are still sitting in undeveloped rolls, I could already see in my mind's eye that they were very similar to what I had done in the past.



My HK portfolio is a good one, but what is the point of taking the same shot over and

over?

Part of his portfolio also includes self portraits done in the style of Vivian Maier – where he is subtly visible as a reflection with a frame within the story of the image. He spends a considerable amount of time talking to his subjects for these shots and putting them at ease to achieve the impact he is chasing.



My Reflection

I love photographers who have a clear plan or set of projects... here is Vish's list!

Projects

- Chinese Invasion – *How the people from China affect the people in Hong Kong*
- Rainpressions – *Capturing facial express of people during monsoon season in Hong Kong.*
- LFK After Dark or After Midnight(I have yet to finalise the title) – *Capturing the craziness that goes on in the clubs and streets of Lan Kwai Fong.*
- Holidays – *This project is mainly shot in Color, the photos include holiday destination that I travel to with my family. This is a very special project for myself.*
- Another day at Goodwood – *Photographing the goodwood revival event that takes place once a year.*
- My Reflection – *capturing my reflection and putting myself in a scene without one noticing.*

Vish was happy to spend some time with me – he is extremely generous with his time and was interesting and able to share his hard won knowledge easily with me. The business, Camera Film Photo is a passion for him, so I am sure I will be ordering some more Rollei film from him in the near future to be shipped out to Australia! Vish convinced me to try the Rollei RPX 400 whilst I am here, and to develop it with some Rodinal.

It is specifically designed for the developer. So, I bought some rolls and have shot them – only time will tell how well they come out! Vish is the Asia Pacific distributor for the Rollei range of films.



<https://camerafilmphoto.com/product-category/brand/rollei/>

I have discovered an awesome new lens cleaner through Camera Film Photo from Cura as well. Whilst all the packaging is in Japanese, the demo that Vish gave me left me in no doubt that it was some good stuff!

<https://camerafilmphoto.com/all-products/cura-lens-cleaner-bundle/>



He was also quite knowledgeable about where to shop in Hong Kong and helped guide me along the Analogue Camera Trail a little further! As a parting gift, he left me with a signed print which I was completely blown away by, and cannot wait to frame when I get back to Australia.



For the record, Camera Film Photo also distribute

1. Rollei Films, Chemistry and Paper (Asia)
2. Cinestill Films (Asia)
3. Fomapan (Hong Kong)
4. Bergger (Asia, excluding China)
5. Tetenal (Hong Kong)
6. Cura(Asia, excluding Japan) – Lens cleaning products and camera straps.
7. Heliopan Light Filter (Hong Kong) – These are one of the best filters and are made in Germany and they only use Schott Glass.
8. Japan Camera Hunter Cases (Hong Kong)



Rainpressions

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Filme

Saturday, April 04, 2015

Filme is very much a passion shop, where the owner is an accountant by day and film photographer by night! Sounds kinda like some sort of super hero. CC runs her accounting business out of the shop which helps keep her dream alive. Ya gotta make sure the bills get paid after all.

<http://www.thefilme.com/>

A small shop, but packed with goodies that are well worth the visit. There is some “hard to find” gear here, specially sourced for the Hong Kong hipster set. CC (Cecilia Chow) travels to Japan regularly to source items for her shop. She believes the stock is much better looked after – and she is completely transparent about the condition of each and every camera in the store. Anything that might be a little risky, she was quick to flag.



Filme are very knowledgeable around the cameras, and able to help make a recommendation or tell you a bit about the history of the camera model, or even the particular camera on the shelf. They all feel like CC's puppies which she knows she must, eventually, reluctantly, adopt out. She was very helpful with her thoughts on the ups and downs of various compacts as a specialty. It was fun talking to her about my own compact camera obsessions...

There is a great, small range of compacts. She highly recommended the Fuji Klasse compact – and I must say, it did look nice. Some Rolleiflexes. There were some extraordinarily nice F series Nikons – I nearly bought home an F3T she had on the shelf... The whisper in my ear was “it looks new in box, Damo – buy, buy, buy”, but I silenced that voice with some responsibility...

She also had a Nikon F6 – which appear to have suddenly dropped in price as a camera, finally. I am not sure how many shutter actuations most of them would have, as not many would have been used professionally, I suspect. Something to keep an eye on. But then, if I need rapid autofocus and all the action packed features, I am probably going to pull out my digital SLR anyway. Film is like slow cooking – the process is supposed to be a bit of a hassle to enjoy it!

Most of the gear came with the original boxes, which I find adds to my enjoyment of the purchase. A completely unnecessary thing, I know, but so is taking photos with film! It also helps the resale value – except I never seem to sell any of my gear...

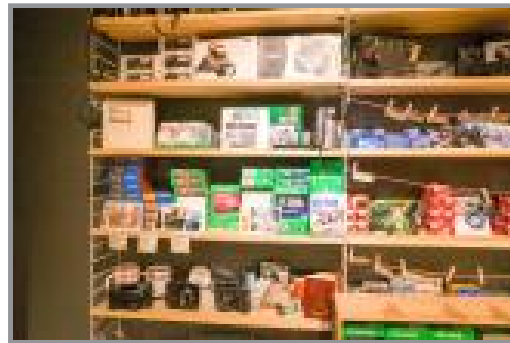
There is a good range of film here, and CC is a great believer in tranny film. It's just a shame that E6 film production and processing is evaporating at such a rapid rate in Australia, and I suppose, worldwide. We will miss it when it is gone...



Polaroid is the passion here though. The whole philosophy here, and the set up reminded me of Film Never Die in Melbourne. Filme were lucky enough to be invited to the launch of the new Mint Camera launch. It sounds like these guys have something new up their sleeve for instant photography... Let's hope it is a new production run of something!

Filme is a great place for people to get started in film or particularly instant photography. CC's world revolves around analogue photography.

Filme is another passionate base for film. Making a purchase from Filme and other dedicated sellers helps keep analogue photography ticking along.





Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Lee Wai Commercial Buil...

Sunday, April 05, 2015

Lee Wai Commercial Building.

Overcoming your fear of being kidnapped – and being used for transplant organs or sold to slave traders to make iPhones in China – is a key fundamental for successful navigation of the Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail. The Lee Wai Commercial Building is a classic example. There are three wonderful camera stores in this building, but you would never think so if your experience of retail is based on Elizabeth Street.

Hong Kong is tight on space, so the premium traffic areas on the street are rented by high turnover food and small item retailers. Towering above these, on virtually every street are shopping plazas, apartments, and “commercial buildings”. The commercial buildings are basically apartment sized rooms where people run all kinds of businesses, from nail and beauty salons, to my favourite camera stores like Filme.

Finding the entrance can be difficult – there is usually only limited numbering and signage. Just look out for doorway openings in the general vicinity of where you think it should be, and check the tenancy board inside the door. If there is a doorman, ask. If he doesn't speak english, just make sure you have a camera around your neck and he or she will point you in the right direction!

Most of them are pretty dingy and poorly lit, giving the impression they are a set from CSI – but Hong Kong is not renowned for spending money frivolously on trappings that don't matter. Most of the stores are nicely appointed inside. The same goes for people's apartments – from the outside the buildings look mostly like Soviet worker blocks straight out of “1984”, but once you set foot inside someone's home, the transformation can be amazing.

The dealer shops in the Lee Wai Commercial Building are all nicely fitted out and remind me almost of a whisky lounge – dark wood colours, mood lighting, and leather chairs. Once you get past the front door, of course!

Like a lot of places, there is likely to be an “attendant” who will pull out any stock you wish to have a look at, but they usually have fairly limited knowledge, and ability to negotiate. If you are a serious buyer, signal to the attendant. They will often call in the “big kahuna” who will arrive after five or ten minutes to help you make a selection.

The Lee Wai building contains a number of analogue camera gems ;

Breguet Camera

C9.99 Antique Cameras

M&K Kamera HQ

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – Breguet Camera

Sunday, April 05, 2015

Breguet Camera

Mostly high end stuff, targeted at fanboys and collectors. The range is mainly Rolleiflexes and Leicas, with a few odds and ends thrown in. Their range of Rolleiflexes are all pretty high end, and they have some of the new in box recently manufactured models still available – if you have \$5 or \$6k aussie to throw around! There are no bargains to be had here – you might get a 10% discount, but they know what stuff is worth. And so do you.

There were some eclectic cameras that you just don't see very often in Australia. I have purchased a Nikon FM3a here on eBay previously, and was very satisfied with the condition vs the price. Fair, and I got what I paid for.

If you are after a serious Leica or Rolleiflex and have the money to spend, Breguet would be at the top of my list.







Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – C9.99

Antique Cameras

Sunday, April 05, 2015

C9.99 Antique Cameras

Quite limited stock – but what they had was very good. The cameras and lenses were all in pretty good condition. Sorry there are not too many photos – the “attendant” couldn’t quite make up her mind whether it was a good or bad idea for me to get a comprehensive set of stock photos. She landed on the side of caution, so I mostly only have the wide, broad shots!

A good range of accessories here – baseplates, lens caps, lens hoods, etc.

One thing that got my attention was a medium format Alpa in pristine condition. My resistance started to falter somewhat, so I asked about the item, thinking about how I might justify to my wife... and already building my background “story”. Alas, it was not for sale. It was the absent owner’s “personal” camera. With the temptation removed, I felt quite relieved, although a little disappointed by the false promise behind the display glass. It was an aesthetically beautiful camera which did truly belong in my bag...

Funnily enough, like a few of the camera stores, they had a short range of watches as well. I spotted an Omega Speedmaster and asked about it, just in case I felt I needed one. That’s when I got a little grumpy... It was also the owner’s and “on display” and “not for sale”. Maybe I somehow offended the attendant? I dunno. They sure didn’t want me to buy anything!

If you are in the building to visit Breguet, it is worth the trip.



Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – M&K Kamera Lee ...

Sunday, April 05, 2015

M&K Kamera

Very similar style of range to their Champagne Court branch, just a little more extensive. A great range of Leica lenses, bodies and accessories. I was particularly interested in their flashes. I had looked at an S20 at their Champagne Court store, but it came without the box, diffuser, or manual. Try looking for an S20 Flash manual online – damn near impossible to find, unlike most other things. I searched for about half an hour one night, as I was VERY keen on the flash.

I finally picked up an old thread on the rangefinder forum where some guys were talking about it about 5 years ago. There was a link, but it was broken. Taking a 100-1 shot, I emailed the guy and he actually emailed it back to me – Thanks Frances from francescofragomeni.com for taking the time to help me. I owe you one buddy!

As their range is a fair bit better, they had two or three of the S20s – one of which met my premium requirements of coming with a box, manual, diffuser, flash stand, and the little bag to put it in. They pulled it out for me, popped a couple CR123s in it and let me check it. It fired perfectly and they had a sale! Again, no discounts though, even though this was the third purchase I had made from M&K. They stuck to their guns and I paid the price happily. They wouldn't even chuck in a \$AU10 bottle of Cura lens cleaner or the batteries.

Well, I suppose nobody ever paid their rent and fed the kids by giving stuff away in their business? It was marginally cheaper on eBay, but it was nice to be able to inspect and try the unit prior to purchase. Probably made up for the \$AU30 – \$50 premium after taking shipping into consideration?

Their range of Leica bodies is not as extensive as some other retailers, so you might need to shop more broadly for your M6 street cred, but the range of lenses is excellent.

They also have a small range of compacts such as the Rollei 35. Also in store are the Cura microwipes and cleaning fluid.

I am posting a link here to the manual for anyone in the future who needs it – it was quite a hassle to find it!

Leica SF-20 User Manual

The range at the Lee Wai building is more extensive and well worth a visit if you are a bit of a Leica person.





Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – The Photocrafters

Monday, April 06, 2015

Like a lot of these places, this one was on an upper level of a very seedy looking building. When I walked up the entrance stairs to the lift, I was greeted by some stern looking HK Police Officers arguing with the door person – who seemed to be pushing back pretty assertively... Something had been going on, but as long as I couldn't see any body bags or "police line" tape anywhere, I was going on up!

The Photocrafters is a film and print studio with a mission to continue to develop traditional film photography in Hong Kong. It is the home of Simon Wan Chi-Chung, who wasn't present, but his assistant let me have a look around. They sell a bit of film and developing chems, but I would probably head to Dot Well if you are after some supplies. It was heartening to see a bank of enlargers and full dark room facilities. Everything you need to produce wet prints.



Simon is a firm and passionate exponent of film, and had a great range of Holga prints on display as well. They sell a range of Fomapan Papers, Films, and Chems.

Photocrafters run a series of workshops, helping people develop both their film techniques and skills, and furthering their creative vision. I was disappointed to miss a workshop that was about "Exploring a Place Through Photography" only by a few weeks!

<http://www.thephotocrafters.org/courses-workshops/exploring-a-place/>

The workshops looked great – introduction to developing both black and white and C41. Self developing C41 feels like a viable option to help keep colour negative film alive – regardless of what happens to E6.

Simon sounded like an interesting fellow whom I would have like to have met. He spent some time hiking through the mountains with a Holga and film to produce a stunning series of images. He also produced a hand printed 30ft long image of the mountains, which wasn't on display, but sounded pretty darn cool!

Photocrafters is the kind of place to visit when there is an event, or maybe contact Simon prior to visiting if you want to have a chat. Without something being on, it was a bit lifeless – but it looked as though it would get humming with some people doing some printing, or a workshop. Next time, I will time my trip with one of the workshops and see what

happens!

Photocrafters 3/F Hang Fat Building, 140 Wing Lok Street, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

<http://www.thephotocrafters.org/>

Hong Kong Analogue Camera Trail – A Final Word

Monday, April 06, 2015

After a few weeks of madly posting, it is all finally coming to an end!

Here is a link to the store locations on Google Maps :

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=zsPGby-DHcLs.kuF50TFrSpAU>



So, you would still prefer the thrill of hunting for a bargain? There are a few markets where you might find something to fill this gap in your life... Maybe Apley Street Markets? I cannot quite remember. On a previous trip, I had visions of picking up an old Rolleiflex in great condition for a few hundred dollars, maybe?

Pipe dreams.

All the gear at these bargain markets has already been picked over, probably before it even gets to the vendor's table. Anything of value has already been identified. Since eBay came along, it only takes a few seconds to get an idea of how much something is worth, so the days of picking up a Leica (or even lesser known brands) for a song at the Hong Kong equivalent of Savers are long gone.

My experience of the markets is that they are mostly junk. Film photography seems to attract a lot of peeps who love to pick up an old "beater" for \$AU30 – if this is you, then some of the markets are the go. But the gear is often quite poor condition and feels like you are buying trouble... Most vendors have a bunch of cheap plastic SLR bodies and 3rd party lenses. All full of dust and other nastiness.

If I haven't talked about a particular place, shoot me a message and I will let you know if I have visited it. There are a few places that have not made the short list... If they didn't have enough gear to warrant a trip, I have left them out. And if you don't have something nice to say about a store...

I wouldn't bother too much with digital gear in Hong Kong, unless you have a very specific idea on what you want. Ebay is probably a better bet. It is not that cheap and the guys selling the new gear are pretty sharp. Better to buy local and get the consumer protection you are used to!

Just a reminder, that I never promised cheap gear – if anything, you will pay a slight premium in Hong Kong for analogue gear, but at least you can inspect and try it out prior to purchase here.

Whilst in Hong Kong, I was lucky enough to visit a Ho Fan exhibition as part of the Chai Wan Mei Arts Festival. Seeing some original prints made by Ho Fan back thirty or so years ago was inspiring. I met his agent and biggest fan Sarah Greene from Blue Lotus Gallery. If you have a hankering for a Ho Fan print, she is the right person to talk to!



Bonus – In Hong Kong I can highly recommend popping along to the Fringe Club 2 Lower Albert Rd, Central, for all your art – beer – food requirements! Check it...



Exhibition Review – SITHOM 2015

Friday, April 10, 2015

I am talking to Alan Thexton, one of the featured photographers participating in the annual SITHOM exhibition.



Can you walk me through your images, Alan?

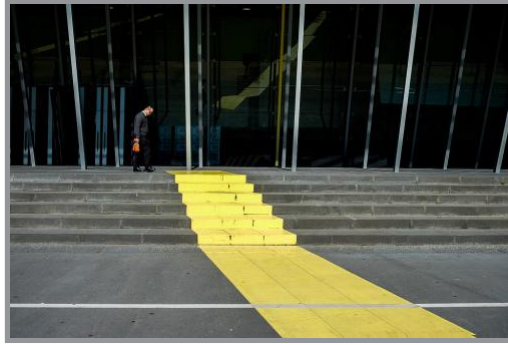
I have a Fuji Xpro 1 and I was out with a group of photographers from SITHOM one afternoon. One of the guys lent me his 18mm lens to try. It was the first time I had used the lens, and the image was one of the first I had taken with the lens.

So it sucked you straight in?

Yeah, yeah... No, it took a little while. It was a fantastic deal when I bought it. Fuji had a cash back deal and it only ended up costing me \$130 after a \$200 “cash back” deal.

Sweet!

I love the image as it reminds me of a little Leunig figure.



How did you adapt to the wider angle lens? Most of your images look quite wide, so tell me a bit about what you have learned over the journey.

I originally had the kit zoom lens. I thought to myself that I could try out a few different focal lengths on the zoom lens. My approach was to set it to, say, 35mm and start wandering around town, taking a few shots, knowing that when I needed to, I could change it for a particular situation.

So, after trying out a range of lengths, I went back and looked through my photographs to see each focal length I had used. Most were under 35mm, with the majority being 18mm – 25mm. This focal length felt comfortable and natural for me.

Clever. I hadn't considered using a kit zoom before to work out which prime lens to buy!

The Fuji kit zoom is a pretty good quality lens, 18 – 55mm. It is sharp. So that's the way went about it.

The next images are black and whites. I love the use of shadows in these images. I think I have an image using that wall too! Where was it?

Collins Street. It was one of those situations where I really liked the background. I just hid in the tramstop and just shot people as they came past. The shadows, squares, and lines all work together.



The second is a bit more opportunistic. I was just walking past and saw the shot. It is down the bottom of Flinders Street underneath the railway line that goes out to South Melbourne. I had taken a few shots that I wasn't really happy with, but then turned around and spotted him walking away from me. It was just "click".



What is your favourite “go to” spot when you need some inspiration?

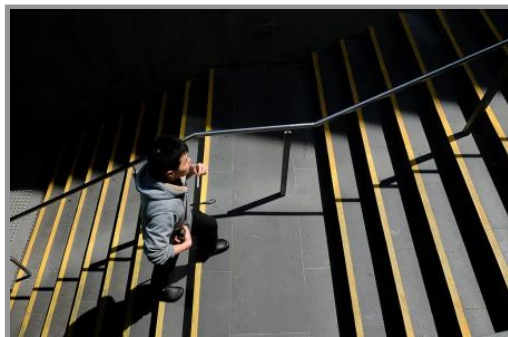
I don't have one. I have more spots *I don't go to* rather than go to! Places like Fed Square, Bourke Street, the National Gallery.

So you have a quarantine zone?

Well, I do go to them, but I prefer to be away from them. What I love is single individuals contrasted against a landscape.



In the places I mentioned, there tends to be a lot of people around. If you go to Fed Square, every second person has a camera, and the photos that you see from there always seem to have the same backgrounds, same kind of people, all similar shots. I have found by stepping away, going a block or two back and walking somewhere else, you can often find unusual things happening.



For someone starting to explore street photography, what's the one big thing you could

share that helped you along?

What made a big difference for me was another street photographer who dragged me out and he took me to the May Day Rally. At rallies and protest marches, people want to be photographed. So it's easier for you to get over your fear of sticking your camera in front of somebody. Going to a big event like that is the perfect place to start learning.

Find a protest march or something like that and mingle in. Start building your confidence there.

Tell me more about what you like about another photographer's images here today.

Yiannis Yiasaris. To my way of thinking, using a longer focal length lens leads you to looking at a subject. With a wide angle lens, the viewer becomes part of the subject. You can feel like you are in amongst it. Yiannis successfully brings the viewer in to be part of the subject, but maintains an objective standpoint at the same time.

Tell us a little more about SITHOM.

This is the fourth year, and I have been a part of it from the start. After each year's exhibition I feel like going home and throwing the prints out! I find that I get to dislike them after a while. The second year of SITHOM, I submitted ten prints and I shouldn't have done it. I think it is very hard to get ten good prints every year, so after that I decided I will only go with five. It is hard enough to get five great prints in a year.

One of the great things about SITHOM is that it gives the opportunity to exhibit to people who may not have in the past. Anyone can come and put some images up. In our first year, I would guess over 90% of us hadn't exhibited before. It is a wonderful opportunity for people to just "get something up and seen."

<http://www.sithom.com.au/>

MSP Review

The SITHOM exhibition was an exceptionally interesting and of a high standard. The best work could be shown anywhere...

I toyed with also submitting some images, but only found out a little too late. Shortlisting and selecting final images in only a few weeks is just too stressful to do well!

Based on what I experienced at the gallery, I would love to be a part of it next year.

My only disappointment was not being able to purchase a catalogue with the images all inside. Maybe next year? Although, organising it would be like herding cats, I suspect...



Project : Applying “The Bull” Concept to Hong Kong

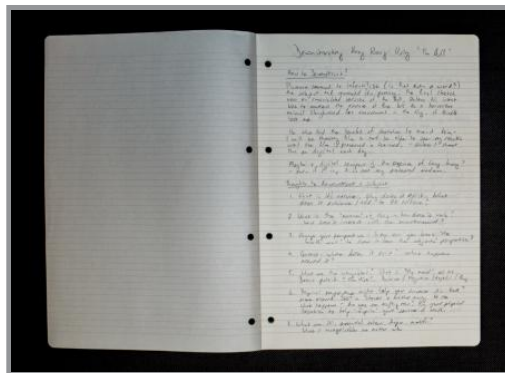
Saturday, April 11, 2015

Whilst in Hong Kong, the notebooks got a fair workout, trying to find a way to apply Picasso's “The Bull” concept to my visit.

Picasso started with a very detailed, and aesthetically pleasing sketch of a bull and stripped away parts of until he felt he had uncovered the essence of the subject.

What is the essence of Hong Kong for me, and how could I capture it?

What follows is an edited version of the content from my trip notebook. It will give an insight into how the thought process developed into a kinda semi-final idea.



I started by building on a previous exploration.

Please take it easy on the curating the following photos – they are strictly a fairly unedited first cut from my trip pulled out to help demonstrate my meandering thinking... And this is not supposed to be a comprehensive “lesson” on the deconstruction idea I am working on. I just wanted to share how my brain works!

Ideas and Options for Identifying Subjects – Getting Started

1. Pick a single subject and shoot a roll every day, gradually decomposing what it is – bit by bit. Was it a physical object or could it be a “theme”? became a question that needed answering. For example, could the subject be different street “spruikers” or sales people?
2. Every day, at the completion of the day, think about the images captured throughout the day and contemplate if there were any potential subjects. Plan a follow up shoot for the following day based on this.
3. Every day select a single subject in advance (or on the fly as they revealed themselves throughout the day) and focus in on it. Shoot at least a roll with frequent breaks to stop and think more consciously about the subject. Each night, review the subject explored and shortlist for a “last day” detailed exploration.
4. Just “find it” each day, and pause to explore.

Thinking more about the “what” represents Hong Kong? What is my experience of Hong Kong? I did some free word association to try and dig a bit deeper...

- Bustle
- Busy
- Crowded
- Commerce
- Less Rules
- Access All Areas

Developing Thinking Around Deconstruction

Picasso seemed to infantilize (not sure that is even a word?) the subject and removed it's potency. The final sketch was an emasculated version of the bull – to my eyes. Unless his intent was to amplify the Spanish essence of the bull as a harmless animal being led to slaughter for amusement in the ring? The final image kinda lost me...

He also had the benefit of sketches to assist him – shooting film removes the ability to instantaneously see the results until it is processed and scanned. Perhaps this is a digital project? Maybe a digital compact is the right way to capture Hong Kong – even it is, it is not my preferred medium.

Building Up the Technique

1. What is it's nature. Why does it exist? What does it achieve / add to the local culture?
2. What is the “essence” of this answer – how does it work? How does it interact with the environment.
3. Change perspective – break through the “fourth wall” to show the subject from a unique and unusual perspective.
4. Context – where does it exist? What happens around it?
5. What are the intangibles? What is the “mood”? Positive, negative, hopeful, busy?
6. Physical perspective might help you discover it's truth? Move around the full 360 degrees, move closer and further away to see how perspective changes. What happens? Do you see anything new or different now? Use physical location changes to help inspire and find a source of the subject's “truth”.
7. What is it's essential colour, shape, and motifs? What is recognisable about the subject, no matter how small a fragment?

From this point, I developed a daily routine of considering and briefing a new potential subject each day. But I was stuck. I spent some more time thinking and writing in my notebook.

- Getting closer. Moving in closer to subjects was delivering more interesting images. Even though I couldn't see the images yet (film was still in canisters!) I could see many of them in my imagination. On a number of occasions I could have literally reached out and touched them. Muting my inhibitions to get close was critical in getting the images I wanted so badly.





- Going down the path less travelled. I didn't "find" my Hong Kong inspiration on this trip until I went down the back laneways and alleys that support the teeming life on the front streets. Near Dot-Well I spotted a guy with a film camera ducking down an alley and decided to follow him. I came across him finishing up a couple of shots of the alley. I realised then and there that I needed to get off the main streets to see something new and different about the place. I copied with pride to get me started again.
- Going back to the same places as previous visits was just delivering the same shots. It is like returning to a failed or forgotten friendship – it seems like a good idea, and initially there is some intimacy, but the source is based on the past and soon dries up. Unless you can create something new... See the same places in a new way? But I wasn't – I was just taking the same shots I had taken on previous visits. I needed a fresh point of view.

Starting on the Brief Again

My time in Hong Kong was coming to an end, but I still hadn't a single solid idea for a "bull" deconstruction. Some more open thinking was required on potential themes. What is different about Hong Kong?

- People making the most of busy and cramped spaces.
- The hidden life on the laneways – "backstage".
- "Finding Space" – in terms of all dimensions including time and space.
- "Stolen Spaces and Moments"
- "Small Spaces"
- Creating an Oasis – making space in the here and now, wherever, whenever.

These building themes brought me closer to an idea.

The laneways behind the shops and markets in the back alleys are the heartbeat of the Hong Kong. Even the shops in the tiny alleys have a "rear" spot where the owner can take a brief respite, or some dinner.



Deconstructing the laneways could be a suitable subject for a “bull” project. But I had only discovered this idea in the last few days... The lanes are the minor, tiny arteries supplying the last drops of blood to the city – not as critical as the major arteries, but you know it if they stop working, little by little.

What is the essence of the laneways? They are *MY* place (from the POV of the shop keepers and other service people), a private place where few people venture. Away from the masses of people, where I can take a moment.

“I don’t have much, but I have this space”. Everything in Hong Kong is tight and crammed in. Everyone has to eke out a space wherever and whenever they can.

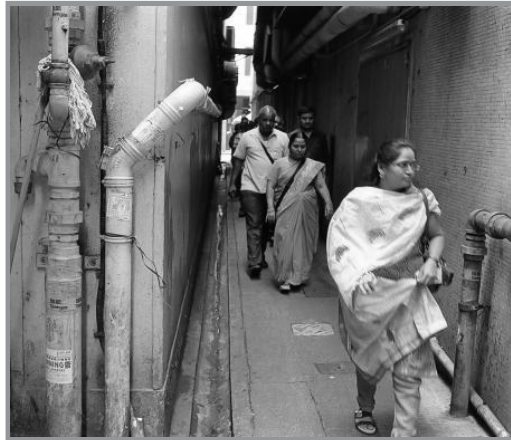


People have to make do. Every place is crowded, so you have to find a way to create space both physically and mentally.

I started to explore the laneways and small space theme, and a number of images got me thinking.

– The indian family walking down a random lane. Whilst I missed most of it as I was

changing rolls, it was quite a “find”.



– The waitress asleep on a table where I would often drop in for dumplings. Although I like the first composition at the top of the post a bit better?



– Seeing and shooting people “out back”

Perhaps the brief is “finding space” and being OK with it? Show people living and working in tight spaces to contrast with the wide open spaces of Australia. Now, how to deconstruct it further!





Conclusion

That is as far as I got before jetting back to Australia. At least I have a clear idea of what I would like to shoot next time I visit Hong Kong. I still managed to get some great images,

and was able to shoot enough test shots to know the theme is a strong one for my next visit.

The whole post has been a bit of a ramble, but I hope it has demonstrated some of the thinking process I go through when coming up with an idea for a theme, and how to build on an idea or inspiration from another creative person's projects.

Selfie Respect – Part Two

Sunday, April 12, 2015

After exploring self portraiture some months back, I had a short crack at it again on recent visits to Hong Kong and Radelaide. I didn't agonise over it, just popped the camera on a selfie stick or on a flat surface and chucked the timer on. Or, looked for my reflection somewhere...

Here is the original post on some famous photographers and how they went about selfies.

It is harder than it looks. There is the vanity attraction of seeing images of yourself, but there wasn't much else I found interesting in the images. Being a good subject or model is difficult. There is also the lack of being able to "see" most compositions prior to developing the film. The level of difficulty is multiplied for me.



The first images explored simply recording me in a place I liked... The first image is outside the gallery where the Ho Fan exhibition was being held. It was a random studio on a lonely floor of a relatively isolated industrial building. I had ventured a long way out of my normal comfort zone to get there. I set the camera to the minimum aperture (F22 or F16?) to extend the exposure and blur me a little in contrast to the background. Wanting to get some sense of movement into the shot, I kept flicking through my notebook during the exposure.

The second is a blog post style shot that simply provides a momento of my visit, with the Ho Fan images framed behind me, whilst talking to Sarah, his agent. To provide some interest, I made sure to stay as steady as possible whilst other subjects kept moving. It is

an interesting contrast – one which might be worth exploring further.

The final image of the set uses Champagne Court as the location. Almost qualifies as a tourist selfie or brag shot. “Here I was!” kind of thing. I have no idea what expression or pose to take, nor what to do with my hands. I look very stern and apart from the location, there is not a lot happening.



The left image is a standard selfie stick shot. It was difficult to frame the shot using a film camera... No chimping possible to adjust the angle and re-shoot! Again, I don't have a creative purpose in mind, and the image reflects this.

The image on the right was a “rest it on the table” and set the timer shot. A lot like the first three, but cropped in closer. I was also able to frame the shot prior to taking it, so I had a rough idea of how it might work.



The next image was a simple exploration of reflections in an elevator, whilst in SA. The first image I took (not shown) was sharp and motionless. For the second, I moved the camera during the exposure to give it some motion. It is OK, but feels a bit gimmicky? Again, it was more an exploration of a technique rather than a conscious creative project.



The next morning in adelaide I went out before dawn to try my hand and some Trent Parke style edge lit flash shots. Whilst none of them really turned out the way I wanted, I had a crack at another reflection selfie. The image looks ok once it is cropped in close, and works much better in square format. The flash worked nicely, giving it an ET's heart kind of thing.



The final two were an exploration of silhouettes. The left shot works well from a strict composition perspective – there are plenty of diagonals, triangles, and three human shapes in a line – but the image kinda lacks a bit of soul. Technically, it is a little bit clever in the composition, but doesn't interest me as much as I would have hoped when I spotted the composition frame around the IFC building in Hong Kong.

The image on the right was composed using the timer and a flat surface. Struggled again to work out what to do in the image, but figured an outward looking ruckenfigur was as good as anything. The light is funnelling in from the street into the poorly lit alley. There is a question around what the subject (me) is going to do next – the image has a feeling of suspense around it, and a reasonably assertive stance. There are some great colours and textured lines on the wall behind. This is the image I am happiest with.

What did I learn?

- I have a new found respect for photographers who can consistently produce interesting selfies.
- Selfies still need a creative objective. It is not enough to simply take photos of yourself, without any kind of theme or message to hold the composition together.
- Not being able to look through the viewfinder at the moment the film is exposed forces you to consider the composition of the image more proactively and consciously.

The time is probably right now to revisit the post around selfies again and keep exploring in order to create a final brief. The image below is still my favourite...



A nice write up in Matt's XPan series.

Thursday, April 16, 2015

<http://fototheque.com/xpanphotographers/damian-young/>

Some serious XPan loving...

Matt Joseph is doing a series of interviews with photographers who use XPan cameras. Interesting insight into the very different world of panoramarama!

Trying New Things : Adelaide Road Trip

Saturday, April 18, 2015

I recently took a trip to see the Trent Parke exhibition in Adelaide. The trip itself was to act as a bit of a “reset” button. After focalising (one of my French bosses created this word!) on black and white street photography since November 2013, it was time to just stretch the legs again. Some coloured C41 Portra 400 in 120 and 35mm soon arrived from B&H Photo, ready for the trip.

If you can't get to see the exhibition, you can read about it here :

<http://melbournestreetphotography.com.au/2015/03/26/trent-parke-the-black-rose-exhibition-visit/>

It was also time to just make sure I wasn't becoming a one-trick pony. Adelaide has some great street locations but there were quarantined for the duration of the visit. New city, new situations. Urban landscapes were on the agenda.

Staying in Glenelg offered plenty of opportunities for beachy shots. Some classify them as “street” but as soon as there is more sand or water than concrete and asphalt in an image, it falls outside the definition for me!



The first shot I am fairly happy with was taken mid morning, just after the sun had lost it's golden pallor again until sunset. It was taken on a medium format camera. The composition is pretty cool, but the colour has washed out, and with the overcast sky, looks a bit grey for me. The lack of colour and my ability to fix it due to some colour issues in my manky eyeballs, is a bit frustrating. It just served as a reminder why black and white always ends up back in my cameras!

The eye follows the path of that the schoolkids are running. Running in two directions adds a dynamic feel to the image, and the approach of the kids to the viewer's position creates some tension.

Without the rich colours of the beach – sandy and blues – the image loses a bit. Perhaps if there was a more threatening sky?

Maybe it would have worked better on BW film? Let's have a look :



The next thing to explore was a theme of insignificance, delivered by perspective and distance.



Light and shadows have not hit the top of my shoot list for some time, driven mainly by the time of day I tend to be able and get out with the camera. I was sitting up in my room, after being out shooting earlier in the morning, as the sun rose. The light came streaming through the buildings, leaving massive cookie cutter shadows on the beach.

Channeling some inner patience, I saw this person coming, walking their dog, and set up for the shot. Scanning the beach, I spotted the light box in the image, and quickly worked out the subject was heading straight for it.

I managed to get the shot at the right moment, although it would have been better if the dog hadn't have exited it so quickly!



There is also this option of the same couple... Not sure which one will make the final cut yet

Up next is some more beach shots. I am not much for “natural” landscapes. Whilst I admire great landscapes as a viewer, they hold little interest for me as a photographer. These are the beachy “urban landscapes”...



It has been so long since the last colour scans went through the V700 that I appear to have lost any ability to retouch colour. The compositions are OK. Over the course of a few days, I visited these volleyball nets a number of times to try and see something different each time. The one of the left is a nice detail shot and leads the viewer's eye straight in, and is supported by the parallel shadows on the sand. The right image has an aesthetically pleasing horizon and cloud formations contrasting with the light feel of the beach.

A rental car was an invaluable tool whilst visiting. I managed to clock up quite a few kays looking for opportunities like a mini Stephen Shore... Road tripping the heck out of Adelaide! Whilst plenty of urban exploration adventures were had – there are many abandoned and derelict buildings easily accessible – a lack of experience and inspiration led to a lot of ordinary shots being committed to film. The only one that even vaguely makes the cut is this abstract composition (which has been x-processed in lightroom to add interest)



There is an idea bubbling away – to use street lighting as abstract UFO images... but I haven't quite got it right yet. This is the closest to an attractive composition. The subjects form a rough gestalt triangle in the frame, and leaves the top third of frame as pleasing empty space.

The only other Urban Landscape that worked was this image featuring an aesthetically pleasing group of three subjects in a triangle, combined with some movement in the strips of fabric.



There is a dramatic sky. The perspective is interesting, with the point of view being much lower than head height.

What did I learn?

1. Be careful about obsessing over one particular genre of photography. Other learnt skills will atrophy and make it hard to pick it back up. I have had some success in the past with Urban Landscapes. After a long hiatus, it was very difficult to have a "win".
2. My ability to judge anything on colour film sucks. I will probably have quite a few rolls of Portra 400 available for sale soon! The whole exercise has reinforced why black and white is my pal.
3. It's time to focalise (again, a "franglish" word) on light and shadows again. Over the last eighteen months it has drifted to pure composition. Timing shoots for the golden hours, when the sun is casting long shadows will be a priority.

4. Buy a red filter. Improve the drama and tension of black and white film photography...

The Camera You Have With You.

Saturday, April 18, 2015

Have a very busy weekend planned with Mrs MelbourneStreetPhotography's birthday happening today! Despite this, I managed to squeeze the little Ricoh GR into my bag for a trip into the city.

There was no plan to shoot anything, but whenever I am going into the city for whatever reason, a camera usually accompanies me. The classic question "what is the best camera for the shot?" has a simple answer – "the one you have with you"...

All the street photographers I admire seem to have been prolific shooters – often and regularly getting out with a camera. The great, memorable, masterpiece image is not going to present itself whilst I am sitting on the couch watching the footy.

I suppose it is a numbers game. Create more opportunities for your camera. Get off the couch and get out there.



Dealing with (Infrequent) Confrontation – Don't...

Saturday, April 25, 2015

One of my instant pals, Jake, recently posted about his experience with a rather assertive member of the public, asking for people's thoughts. Don't let the rare run in with the public put you off getting out with your camera. Let's spend a few minutes thinking through it.

Let's start with the facts.

<http://www.artslaw.com.au/info-sheets/info-sheet/street-photographers-rights/>

Read the Arts Law website and download the info sheet. According to The Arts Law Centre of Australia, there are very few restrictions on what you can photograph in normal "street" situations. Their website also states that you can shoot people and things on private land from public land. Familiarise yourself with this advice so that you can be confident about what you can and can't do.

But there is more to it than simply being "right". There is no point in being "right" if someone is about to smash your camera on a misconception...

Some guiding principles to help you navigate a confrontation.

Principle 1 : Nobody ever "wins" an argument.

Mostly, what happens, is each side hardens their position and belief in their position. Try arguing politics or football teams with me someday. I try to steer clear of arguments as nobody ever changes their mind about something. If someone confronts you bleating on about some imaginary right to privacy, you are not going to be able to convince them otherwise.

Principle 2 : Normal people avoid conflict.

Someone who is prepared to confront you is probably not going to "let it go" easily. Most people avoid interpersonal conflict, even to the point of being completely disadvantaged by not "making a big deal." These kinds of people can vary from just plain assertive to quite aggressive. They will continue to push their case as long as you engage with them. These people often have an imagined idea of the law gleaned from a few episodes of CSI or Law & Order, which they cannot let go of.

Principle 3 : "Won't somebody think of the children?"

The kind of person who may confront you is often a shrill defender of some kind of imagined human right and believe monsters are hiding in plain sight everywhere. The usual subjects on their hit list is anyone under 18. Look, I generally avoid obviously photographing individual children as parents are, quite rightly, very protective. But a large group of teenage schoolkids is another affair. Usually the person confronting is not directly related to your subject but feel they have to take it up. These are not people you can reason with.

Principle 4 : The Mall Cop.

In this group are security guards and other workers who are vaguely responsible for a venue or similar. They are often over-officious and quite bored. Questioning you helps kill the time and makes them feel important. They will often threaten to call the police and other authorities. Generally speaking, they are not likely to really do much except get a bit excited. The only exception are bouncers – these are not people to annoy or question. Why would you argue with someone who chooses a job where they have to fight people?

Your Action Plan.

Knowing how you are going to respond to different types of confrontation in advance gives you confidence and the power to not let it overcome you. Most people are sheep and follow orders if given – unless they are prepared to question authority.

I usually wear earphones whilst out, listening to music or the footy, quietly. It is important to still be aware of noises around you, but having earphones in gives you an excuse to ignore people at the first instance.

Rule #1 : Don't Look Dodgy in the First Place.

There are some very specific thoughts here on “Inconspicuousity” – the art of remaining unnoticed.

<http://melbournestreetphotography.com.au/2014/05/02/inconspicuousity-tip-1-gear/>

<http://melbournestreetphotography.com.au/2014/05/18/inconspicuousity-tip-2-angles/>

Sometimes, the more you try to hide, the more noticeable you become. Always keep moving. Don't hide your camera. Just point, shoot, and move on. Don't give people time to think about what you are doing. Don't linger too long on a shot.

If you try to hide your camera, you may as well get a Pedo-Bear t-shirt to go with it. I have never had a need to hide my camera, and only very occasionally take a “hip shot” – just pointing the camera in the general direction and hitting the shutter button without putting the camera up to your face.

Rule #2 : Keep Moving

If someone does confront you, the easiest thing is to just avoid the situation entirely. Firstly, I don't even acknowledge the person if I have my headphones on. If the person persists, I make a point of pulling them out and asking what I can do for them. A little bit of time can often reduce their initial courage. But I keep moving. They are interrupting me, without my permission, so I don't have to engage with them.

Normally there is an escalation process that goes something like this.

What are you taking photos of?

“I am a fine art street photographer” and smile.

I don't answer anything else really. All other questions from people bent on confrontation are “why” based or “you can't do that” statements. As I disengage and walk off, I always say “it is perfectly legal for me to take photographs in a public place” – with confidence.

But I am always disengaging.

Rule #3 : ABCD – Always be constantly disengaging.

There is simply no point in engaging at all. There is no spot or opportunity that is worth stopping and getting into a slanging match over. You can always come back later in the day. Confrontation is just an energy vampire. Such a drag. Let it go. There is nothing to be gained by proving you are “right”.

Disengaging is the least hassle. You are not going to “win” an argument and change the other person’s mind. The situation is just going to escalate.

Rule #4 : Judo works.

Take a fluid approach – if you know your rights, you don’t have to worry too much about anything serious. If someone threatens to call the police, agree with them, mentioning that they will confirm what you have already said.

Don’t participate in their fantasy. Don’t assent to them inspecting your gear, memory card, or film. It will just embolden them further. Disengage and move on... A repetitive mantra that works!

Rule #5 : Don’t get punched for being a smart ass.

Despite being in the “right”, do not get sucked into arguments. You can never be sure how stable a stranger actually is, or their propensity for aggression. And think carefully about what you shoot. Some situations you might spot as “potentials” for street photography are highly charged. A police arrest. A bouncer arguing with a patron. Someone who has been physically hurt. Photographing these kinds of situations borders on photojournalism and comes with a high level of risk. People are not thinking straight and are likely to lash out at the nearest target.

Being “right” is no consolation if you have a black eye and broken camera. Don’t escalate the situation by arguing.

Disengaging is always the best path – you may not realise the position you are in sometimes. One of the very few times I have been confronted, I found completely confounding. I was on a corner of Spencer Street, looking onto a park. It was only later, when I did a google map search that I realised I was out the front of the Melbourne Remand Centre with a big bertha medium format camera. No wonder I was not welcome, and I was quite glad I disengaged and moved on instead of arguing my “right” to be there...

But don’t sweat it.

I have been pursuing an interest in street photography now for ten years plus. Over this journey, I have been confronted less than ten times. If you worry about it too much, you will start to give off a creepy, stalker feel. Be happy, confident, and friendly. It is often something that new photographers lose sleep over unnecessarily.

If you are being confronted often, then you probably need to get out with another photographer to observe your technique. You might be throwing off a suss vibe to the

public without realising it, or taking photos of the wrong things.

Don't let your fear of conflict keep you on the couch. Manage it with confidence, and keep shooting!

Curating and Critiquing – Use Real Prints

Sunday, April 26, 2015

The single thing I enjoyed most at the Trent Parke exhibition was the simple, hand pasted photo albums. Real prints, just stuck in a beautiful yet uncomplicated album, along with some prose and other writings by Parke. It was yet another reminder that prints are by far the most compelling medium for images. The exhibition inspired me to do the same.

Being a bit of a stationary freak, I started at the premium end with a visit to Bookbinders Design on Elizabeth St. The stuff in the shop is just “so” – perfect and finicky. Just like stationary should be! They have some great raw DIY materials for photo albums, on the expensive side... But just so nice! You can check them out here <https://bookbindersdesign.com.au/>



A largish binder, combined with heavy weight sheets made for a great feel. Bookbinders also have some great little self adhesive photo corners. They are perfect for mounting photos quickly and easily.

After my recent unsuccessful attempt to shoot colour again in South Australia, black and white is exclusively on the menu. Bond Imaging in Richmond are my “go to” guys to print “true black and white” prints. Matt, who normally looks after me, is a great photographer in his own right and is always ready to help. The first set of prints were ready on Friday for me to mount in the album.

Anyway, enough with the shopping documentary...

The prints are mounted with plenty of room for me to add some commentary around why the image works, and how it could have been improved. Having the prints makes you want to look at the images more deeply, and spend more time with them. I respond differently to a print vs a computer screen. Can't quite explain, but it is more involving. Turning the pages is a pleasure, with their heavy weight.



The written commentary is short, to the point, and only about the most important aspects of the image. Just the key lessons from the image to try and retain in my brain for the next trip out!

Consciously making the effort to continue learning requires an investment in time, but the rewards will come. Pick some of your best images, and get them printed. Even if it is just down at Officeworks, and stick them in a scrapbook.

Meeting Other Photographers

Saturday, May 02, 2015

To meet or not to meet? There are plenty of photographers getting together every weekend around Melbourne. Should you join in? Here are some thoughts around photography and camera meetups...



Why Go?

It's easy to meet new people when you have something in common. There are very few gaps in the conversation when you share a passion. Photography meets often lead to new friendships that are comfortable and develop naturally based on a mutual interest.

If you are new in town, going to a couple of meets can help you make some new contacts outside of work and your family. Or you might feel like spreading your wings a little in your hometown!



Try and select a group that is consistent with your personal interests – landscapes, street, film, instant etc. The more specialised it is, the easier the conversation will come.

Introductions to new photographers can also result in introductions to new techniques, styles, and gear. It was only after attending a Melbourne Silver Mine Meet that I realised how many options were out there for film photography, and purchased my first medium format film camera.

Only recently, I attended an instant / polaroid meet hosted by the FilmNeverDie guys, and

ended up ordering a fancy refurbished polaroid camera from The Instant Camera Guy. Spending time with a bunch of instant peeps gave me a greater appreciation of polaroids.

I tend to stick to analogue and street photography groups – I have never been to a traditional camera club meet.



Where Can I Find Them?

The internet? Most groups have a facebook page. Try there!

What To Do When You Get There.

So you turn up and don't know anyone. Remember some golden rules...



1. They don't know you either.

You have to take personal responsibility to introduce yourself and make small talk. A number of the people at the meet are likely to already know each other, so they don't

really need to talk to you. That doesn't mean they won't or don't want to – except almost everyone is a little shy to some degree. It is easier for them to talk to the people they already know.

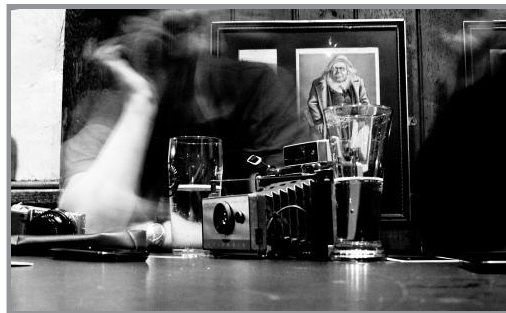
Start by simply introducing yourself. They once turned up not knowing anyone either. Be confident, and join the conversation somehow. Ask about their camera. Ask about their bag. Ask about anything to do with photography as it is the common area of interest you have. Get them talking. People love talking about themselves. Don't be fooled by people talking about Dale Carnegie's book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" with disdain – His advice is still completely sound.

Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

- Don't criticize, condemn, or complain.
- Give honest and sincere appreciation.
- Arouse in the other person an eager want.

Six Ways to Make People Like You

- Become genuinely interested in other people.
- Smile.
- Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
- Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
- Talk in terms of the other person's interest.
- Make the other person feel important – and do it sincerely.



This is just a sample of his advice – buy the book if you think it will help you.

If you sit there and don't say anything, nobody is going to talk to you. Personal responsibility...

2. Be a source of joy for others.

Steer clear of dodgy subjects like politics and religion, and do not be a know-it-all, or critique other people's gear, images, or technique. Ask open ended questions – these start with words like how, why, what, who, when – anything that doesn't elicit a "yes" or "no" response. The best way to be interesting is to be interested in others.

3. Move Around

Don't just plonk yourself down and stay in one spot or stick with the first person who says something to you. Move around, and talk to different people.

Now is the time for honesty, rather than a dusted sugar coating... People don't like being obligated. Don't lumber the first person who talks to you with the responsibility of "looking after" you by just sticking close to them. And if you don't move around and talk to different people, you could be missing meeting your "perfect match" at the meet.

If everyone is at a table, try and sit as close the middle as possible – if you get stuck on the ends, your choices for conversation buddies can be limited. If you are in the middle, you can look left, right, and forward towards different conversations until you find the right one.



Distracted by the Faces

Monday, May 11, 2015

Walking around the city at 6.30am on a Saturday morning is always going to encourage creative epiphanies. Combining a spartan-like early start and caffeine led to the inevitable questions of creative growth and purpose. Have my images been improving?

People are my favourite subject for street photography. Capturing a single moment of people's lives as they wander the pavements and laneways of Melbourne keeps me getting out of bed and grabbing my camera.

Photographing people who look interesting, or who are doing interesting things makes things easy. My recent trip to Radelaide reinforced a realisation that perhaps I had become a bit lazy when it comes to composition, relying on the quality of the subject to do the heavy creative lifting.

A few years back, a Ron Mueck exhibition came through Melbourne. So many photographers took some incredibly striking images at the exhibition – but anyone could do it, providing they had a tiny bit of talent. The sculptures lent themselves to easy composition. Most of the images I observed on most of my contacts' feeds were just reproductions of Mueck's work, without the photographer adding enough additional interest to the composition. That is not to say many of the images were wonderful, I just didn't feel as though the photographer had added enough to frame to "claim" the image creatively.

Maybe I have fallen into the same trap? One of my photography buddies often talks about photographers having access to "cool" subjects in their group of friends and acquaintances, which can often make up for gaps in their creative chops. Older, dorkier guys like me tend to have older, dorkier friends – so I need to search for the right subjects whilst out walking Melbourne.

I had a clear mission for Saturday morning's shoot. Focus on backgrounds, textures, framing, and textures was the short-lived plan. As soon as I jumped off the train, I started to search for people to shoot. The ingrained behaviour proved very resistant to change... I had to stop myself and reset very consciously to avoid going back into "people spotting" mode.

Here are the first few shots I excitedly took...





A couple of nice enough images, but it was not what I had planned, just people spotting...

The first step was to slow down – pulling out the Joby Gorillapod helped this. Seriously, a Gorillapod is so much more useful than any tripod I own. Light, dependable, and infinitely adaptable. Get one if you don't have one!



Buy this! (the Gorillapod, not the crappy camera!)

And then I took these photos at Flinders St to start with.



Mounting the Gorillapod on the hand rail offered some interesting prospects. I was incredibly lucky when the guy sweeping just ignored the camera and kept working. The motion in the second image is also a great use of the available light to create an image with a dynamic feel.

I moved on to Degraives St next, and set up again with the Gorillapod. The images started to flow a lot easier, and I had become more conscious of what I was doing rather than just constantly scanning for the next face to photograph.



After half an hour or so, enjoying the early morning light, I moved on. Staying put and taking my time seemed to make me more conscious of image opportunities around me. Here are some of the shots taken next...



Whilst there are no absolute belters in there, I was able to see compositions more easily and change things up a little.

Flinders Street Station

Sunday, May 17, 2015

The most obvious spot in Melbourne, and I haven't covered it off in any detail!

What a great place to start a walk in Melbourne. Just catch any train into Melbourne's central station, Flinders Street. There are plenty of opportunities just waiting there for you...

1. The Platforms

Full of interesting people and there is not a lot of over officious Metro employees policing photographers – just be a little discreet, maybe take a compact or at least only point the camera occasionally? Start with the platforms and then explore the whole place, bit by bit.



2. Subways

There is an old subway connecting all the platforms – you can find the entrance in the middle of most of the platforms. Go down and have a look – keeping in mind how travelling down the stairs gives you opportunities for interesting perspectives both high and low.

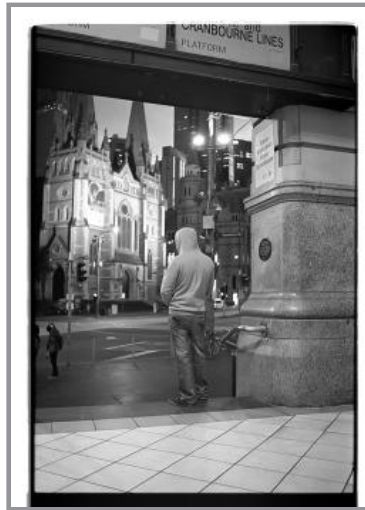


The subway also connects to the Degraves Street Subway running under Flinders Street itself. You can read about it [here](#).

3. The “Clocks” Entrance

Any search on Flinders Street is going to come up with “The Clocks”, which are a feature of the main entrance on the corner of Swanston and Flinders Streets. There are always plenty of interesting people doing interesting things, waiting on the stairs. I personally prefer the foyer of the entrance which has nice expanses of tiled floor. There is also a flower stall there that is always good to shoot something to get going...





4. Inside the Gates of the Main Entrance

Again, some fantastic aesthetics – keep an eye out for the massive advertising walls that provide an interesting background fairly easily.



5. The Ramps at the Elizabeth Street End

Watch for late afternoon and early morning light breaking through the gaps in the roof for some pretty special results here. The walls are pretty much as they were at least 50 years ago, complete with the “Do not spit” signs.



Just make sure you take the time to explore the whole station. There are so many little things to discover. Start here, then move on to the Degraves St Subway for a few hours of sublime street photography!

Square , Landscape, and Storytelling...

Sunday, May 24, 2015

I am wrestling on which way to go with this image – square or regular landscape format? Normally, I try to keep cropping to a minimum to ensure I consider composition more actively at the time of taking the shot, rather than just mindlessly popping away, knowing I can crop everything later. Composing with the camera frame rather than the computer is more rewarding for me.

Square format is something that doesn't really exist anymore in our brave new world of digital. The same way panoramic format has not survived the current cost per square metre of digital sensors, square format seems to have also disappeared. Two camera systems come to mind when thinking about square format – Hasselblad ended up going down the 6 x 4.5 format, and Rollei just died a quiet death on the camera scene.

Apart from some Holga action, the gear cupboard at home is pretty sparse when it comes to square format. The format continues to fascinate me though – photographers like Vivian Maier and Fan Ho continuously tempt me to pull out the Paypal password and buy a classic...

On a recent trip to the Melbourne CBD, I decided to go “minimalist” – no gear bag – and only took what could fit in my pocket. The digital Ricoh GR is a great compact street option. Here is the original image snapped at the GPO.



It was a quick capture – as I was walking along Elizabeth Street, I spotted the opportunity, quickly got the shot and kept moving. It is a pretty good image straight out of the camera.

I have virtually given up on colour photography – being quite badly red-green colour blind, retouching in colour just doesn't work for me at all. The sky always ends up purple... So, the first step is to convert the image to B&W.

There were two areas I have been trying to explore from a learning perspective. First, going back to consider square composition. The second, bringing some more storytelling into the images. Marie Laigneau is a current street photographer who I have been following. She has an excellent free download here of her street photography experience for you to learn from. Her constant focus on storytelling has inspired me somewhat to move from just aesthetically pleasing images to trying to bring something more into my images.

2. Cropping to a Landscape Format



To improve the image, the edges needed to be cropped in a little. The 28mm lens on the Ricoh had captured a little more than I really wanted.

The landscape composition seems to incorporate more parallel lines, shadows, and light shafts. These elements all draw the eye to the older subject in the image – but potentially at a cost of reducing the emphasis on the younger subject? The older subject is nicely framed by the edge of the wall and she is fully in frame – not as cramped as the square image.

Whilst there are more lines adding interest behind the younger subject, they don't seem to add anything significant for me to the image's composition. It just feels like ticking a compositional "box". Still, the parallel lines of the stairs provide a natural entry point for the viewer.

In both formats, there is an aesthetically pleasing contrast of light to dark across the image.

3. Cropping to Square Format



Square format brings more tension to the image by “cramping” the older subject. She is intensely focused on her smartphone in complete contrast to the easy, relaxed nature of the younger subject. The square crop seems to increase the feeling of balance between the two subjects’ faces. The subjects balance out the left and right sides of the image naturally.

The square crop brings more focus to expression of each of the subjects, rather than the drawing attention to the wider aesthetics of the scene. The umbrella seems more prominent as the light is more concentrated and localised in the square crop.

3. Storytelling

The first step in becoming a better photographer is to focus on learning composition, aesthetics, and how to see light. These can be mastered simply by taking pictures of them. One of my most important stages of development was just going out and shooting interesting light hitting anywhere.

Laigneau consistently talks about having a story to tell in a single frame. During a recent exploration of Street Photography being about an instant and single point in time, I have been attempting to bring more of a “backstory” into images.

So, what are the things that suggest a “backstory” to me?

1. The contrast of relaxed and intense facial expressions.
2. The younger subject has a feel of curiosity, whereas the older subject is much more internally focused on her own world – represented by her phone.
3. Each of the two subjects has a very different background light – a brighter light on the right transitioning into dark on the left of frame.
4. There is a classical intergenerational contrast between the two. The frivolous “Hello Kitty” umbrella vs the very conservative clothes and accessories of the older subject.

Final Thoughts

My preferred crop for this image is square as it brings

- more focus to the faces
- increases the “cramped” & hurried intenseness of the older subject by tightening the space in which she exists within the frame vs the relaxed outward focus of the younger subject
- square cropping has removed the visual clutter of the lines on the left of the frame, whilst maintaining some minimal leading lines that help emphasize the transition from light to dark backgrounds

There is more to this image than pure aesthetics. I think it is an OK starting point for adding “storytelling” to images.

Everything is About Light

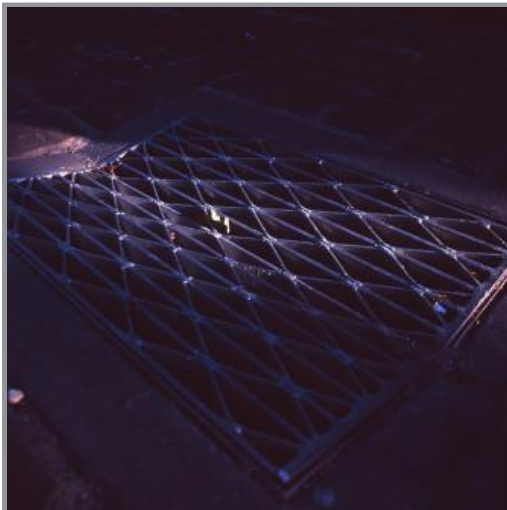
Sunday, May 24, 2015

Back around the end of 2007, I started to truly understand how much other photographers used light to create an image. Andrew Cosgriff was a local Melbourne photography contact whose work I just didn't quite "get" at first. "Cos" is pretty good at spotting light falling on subjects in an interesting way. I had a fairly unsophisticated appreciation of photography back then, and am still developing!

Reading a lot about photography really helped, along with talking to different photographers at Melbourne Silver Mine meets. I had to understand light better if my images were going to take another step forward.

All I did for a few months was go out in the golden hour in the evening and look for light falling on anything, and photographing it. It was summer, and my Hasselblad 500CM had not completely shit itself yet... Aaah, they were good days...







Consciously looking for light to photograph will heighten your awareness and ability to spot great light. The more photos you take of light, the more you will understand it, and be able to use it.

Get out there on a sunny day, towards the end of the day or early in the morning, and photograph light. Think about where the sun is positioned, and for different light experiences.

Where it is being “funnelled” or restricted by objects to just shining through in spots?

Does it hit only certain points of your subject to add highlights?

Is the sun going to poke through the clouds to provide isolated spots?

What surfaces does it reflect off in a way that is aesthetically pleasing?

Investing in learning how to see light effectively resulted directly in this image, which is one of my all time favourites. It is shot on Flinders Lane of people walking around the Centre Place / Degraives St transition point. The light fall was being restricted by the tall buildings either side of the lane, hitting the subjects in as little highlights here and there.



The Ruckengfigur subjects are contrasted with the couple on the far right who are facing

the camera. Their facial expressions are quite dramatic and add significant interest.

The light in the image is what makes it though. I imagine if it was just a nice, evenly lit image, it would not have anywhere near the impact.

For those interested, it was shot on a Nikon FM3A – possibly the most stylish camera ever made – using a Nikkor 85mm f1.4D lens, the kind with an aperture ring... I really miss the aperture ring on new lenses.

Book Review – Akadamie X : Lessons in Art + Life

Thursday, May 28, 2015

Picked up this book as something to read on the plane back home from Hong Kong. I love Phaidon as a publisher – they continue to get new arty and design focus books onto the shelves of the ever diminishing range of bookshops around the world. Phaidon are often prepared to take risks – so you are never quite sure how great your purchase is going to be until you get some of the way through it!

At first glance, the book caught my eye as being a challenge to my way of thinking as a photographer. It is always interesting to hear about how artists approach their work to see what, if anything, I can learn. Think about Picasso's "The Bull" concept.

There are 36 lessons from 36 different art teachers.



Hearing from people who teach in broad artistic subject matter sounded pretty good. Until I read the first 9 "lessons" – the point at which I have put the book back down into the "maybe later" pile. I can sum up the advice from these probably pretty wonderful art teachers into the following points about why the book wasn't much help...

1. Some of the advice is super esoteric and abstract. One lesson is simply a "how to" for a New York scavenger hunt with virtually no explanation around what you might learn from it, or why the different items for the list were selected. Quite a few almost reach a metaphysical level of discussion without offering any practical use. The average reader of this book is probably not a third year fine art student – the only possible target market that is both equipped and interested in this level.

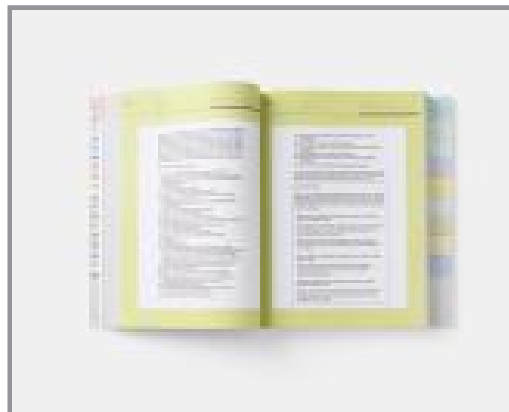
I was looking for more simplistic and practical challenges to the way in which I see the world and approach photography as an art form.

2. The second type of advice was "art is a shitty career – the sooner you let go of worrying about making a living, the sooner you will enjoy it." That is not really that helpful and pretty obvious to everyone except the oblivious who walk amongst us.

3. I understand the natural pull of politics to art – and the role that art can play in changing society. The constant theme of art as a tool of "social justice" or change just gets boring and trite after a time. If your mission is to change an aspect of the world, then

consider becoming a politician, teacher, missionary, whatever. It often feels like having a politically conservative view of the world and participating in an artistic pursuit are held to be mutually exclusive by many.

4. Becoming an artist requires sacrifice – here is a list of my sacrifices. Again, mildly interesting, but hardly a lesson in art. More a “life lesson” for people wanting to pursue art full time?



Anyway, I have been very hard on the book. Sorry, Phaidon. The high level of disappointment has been amplified by a great concept that the book didn't deliver on. Unless I missed the point of the book? I suppose it does quote on the back “how to live a creative life”. Anyway, make up your own mind at the website [here](#).

One of biggest influencers on the way I write was a short article by Kurt Vonnegut, author of *Slaughterhouse Five*. I was expecting a whole bunch of these...

How to Write With Style

by Kurt Vonnegut

Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to readers. We call these revelations, accidental and intentional, elements of style.

These revelations tell us as readers what sort of person it is with whom we are spending

time. Does the writer sound ignorant or informed, stupid or bright, crooked or honest, humorless or playful — ? And on and on.

Why should you examine your writing style with the idea of improving it? Do so as a mark of respect for your readers, whatever you're writing. If you scribble your thoughts any which way, your readers will surely feel that you care nothing about them. They will mark you down as an egomaniac or a chowderhead — or, worse, they will stop reading you.

The most damning revelation you can make about yourself is that you do not know what is interesting and what is not. Don't you yourself like or dislike writers mainly for what they choose to show you or make you think about? Did you ever admire an emptyheaded writer for his or her mastery of the language? No.

So your own winning style must begin with ideas in your head.

1. Find a subject you care about

Find a subject you care about and which you in your heart feel others should care about. It is this genuine caring, and not your games with language, which will be the most compelling and seductive element in your style.

I am not urging you to write a novel, by the way — although I would not be sorry if you wrote one, provided you genuinely cared about something. A petition to the mayor about a pothole in front of your house or a love letter to the girl next door will do.

2. Do not ramble, though

I won't ramble on about that.

3. Keep it simple

As for your use of language: Remember that two great masters of language, William Shakespeare and James Joyce, wrote sentences which were almost childlike when their subjects were most profound. "To be or not to be?" asks Shakespeare's Hamlet. The longest word is three letters long. Joyce, when he was frisky, could put together a sentence as intricate and as glittering as a necklace for Cleopatra, but my favorite sentence in his short story "Eveline" is this one: "She was tired." At that point in the story, no other words could break the heart of a reader as those three words do.

Simplicity of language is not only reputable, but perhaps even sacred. The *Bible* opens with a sentence well within the writing skills of a lively fourteen-year-old: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

4. Have guts to cut

It may be that you, too, are capable of making necklaces for Cleopatra, so to speak. But your eloquence should be the servant of the ideas in your head. Your rule might be this: If a sentence, no matter how excellent, does not illuminate your subject in some new and useful way, scratch it out.

5. Sound like yourself

The writing style which is most natural for you is bound to echo the speech you heard when a child. English was Conrad's third language, and much that seems piquant in his use of English was no doubt colored by his first language, which was Polish. And lucky indeed is the writer who has grown up in Ireland, for the English spoken there is so amusing and musical. I myself grew up in Indianapolis, where common speech sounds like a band saw cutting galvanized tin, and employs a vocabulary as unornamental as a monkey wrench.

In some of the more remote hollows of Appalachia, children still grow up hearing songs and locutions of Elizabethan times. Yes, and many Americans grow up hearing a language other than English, or an English dialect a majority of Americans cannot understand.

All these varieties of speech are beautiful, just as the varieties of butterflies are beautiful. No matter what your first language, you should treasure it all your life. If it happens to not be standard English, and if it shows itself when you write standard English, the result is usually delightful, like a very pretty girl with one eye that is green and one that is blue.

I myself find that I trust my own writing most, and others seem to trust it most, too, when I sound most like a person from Indianapolis, which is what I am. What alternatives do I have? The one most vehemently recommended by teachers has no doubt been pressed on you, as well: to write like cultivated Englishmen of a century or more ago.

6. Say what you mean

I used to be exasperated by such teachers, but am no more. I understand now that all those antique essays and stories with which I was to compare my own work were not magnificent for their datedness or foreignness, but for saying precisely what their authors meant them to say. My teachers wished me to write accurately, always selecting the most effective words, and relating the words to one another unambiguously, rigidly, like parts of a machine. The teachers did not want to turn me into an Englishman after all. They hoped that I would become understandable — and therefore understood. And there went my dream of doing with words what Pablo Picasso did with paint or what any number of jazz idols did with music. If I broke all the rules of punctuation, had words mean whatever I wanted them to mean, and strung them together higgledy-piggledy, I would simply not be understood. So you, too, had better avoid Picasso-style or jazz-style writing, if you have something worth saying and wish to be understood.

Readers want our pages to look very much like pages they have seen before. Why? This is because they themselves have a tough job to do, and they need all the help they can get from us.

7. Pity the readers

They have to identify thousands of little marks on paper, and make sense of them immediately. They have to *read*, an art so difficult that most people don't really master it even after having studied it all through grade school and high school — twelve long years.

So this discussion must finally acknowledge that our stylistic options as writers are neither numerous nor glamorous, since our readers are bound to be such imperfect artists. Our audience requires us to be sympathetic and patient readers, ever willing to

simplify and clarify — whereas we would rather soar high above the crowd, singing like nightingales.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we Americans are governed under a unique Constitution, which allows us to write whatever we please without fear of punishment. So the most meaningful aspect of our styles, which is what we choose to write about, is utterly unlimited.

8. For really detailed advice

For a discussion of literary style in a narrower sense, in a more technical sense, I recommend to your attention *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White. E.B. White is, of course, one of the most admirable literary stylists this country has so far produced.

You should realize, too, that no one would care how well or badly Mr. White expressed himself, if he did not have perfectly enchanting things to say.

In Sum:

1. Find a subject you care about
2. Do not ramble, though
3. Keep it simple
4. Have guts to cut
5. Sound like yourself
6. Say what you mean
7. Pity the readers

from: *How to Use the Power of the Printed Word*, Doubleday

Working on Story Telling

Sunday, May 31, 2015

What does “story telling” mean in street photography? Defining “story telling” in a way that is relevant to street photography is not completely obvious to me yet – it will take me some time to develop a clear style or techniques to help.

The first few steps seem to be about bringing multiple planes of subjects into the image. “Layers” of a scene, rather than a single two dimensional “slice”. Many of the images I take seem to be a single “slice” of an aesthetically pleasing scene and can sometimes feel a bit flat.

On the last couple of shoots out in the CBD, I have been focusing on trying to find scenes with a complexity of layers. Not just a single subject or scene. Contrasting different subjects in a single frame.

Image One :



This is the image that seems to have achieved the most, shot on medium format using a 50mm lens. Moving in close to the seagull with wide angle lens allowed a broader scene into the frame.

The couple are close and affectionate with each other. The seagull provides some additional interest into the image and is on a different plane in the image to the couple. The bird is kinda playing the role of “witness” or “watcher” and brings a further sense of peace in a busy city, being calm and quiet.

From a technical perspective, there is probably a little too much contrasty shadow action in the image, distracting from the subjects.

Image Two :



I only rarely shoot people who are focused on their phones. At first, it seems to be like “shooting fish in a barrel” for street photographers, until you realise that you end up with the same image every time. The lack of engagement people on their phones seem to have with the world around them usually translates the same for me in the end images – they lack the ability to evoke interest from the viewer.

I thought this image worked as a broader story, though. The kid facing away from the camera is the focus subject. You wonder and want to imagine what he is doing. The kids are clearly a friendship group, comfortable together but not feeling the need to interact with each other.

The main subject seems to be very relaxed and appears to have adopted a classic “slacker” pose on the train – slouching as much as is humanly possible. This contrasts with the two subjects facing the camera on their phones. There is not as much interest as Image One, but at least there are two layers to the image, so it was a step forward.

Image Three :



A third attempt at bringing story telling into images!

The story tries to come from the juxtaposition of the “Big Issue” seller vs the guy handing out info on a Islamophobia demonstration. There is an interesting contrast between the “big issue” for the relatively well dressed and probably well educated Islam guy vs the more gritty “big issues” the paper seller faces on a daily basis.

There is a suggestion that both of them are relatively invisible to the pedestrian traffic

around them – what is important to each of the subjects is not having much of an impact on the world around them in the moment that the image was taken.

There is a nice balance of visual weight between the two focus subjects – they are mostly evenly weighted, slightly in favour of the LHS subject. There is a clear entry point on the left of the frame, which tails off to the RHS subject.

The image has a mirror image / reflection feel where both subjects are facing “inwards”.

The shadows in the image continue the journey of the eye from left to right by offering parallel lines to draw the eye. An increase in the dark weight of the “big issue” logo on the seller’s safety jacket would help the clarity of the story. I was shooting with a red filter that particular day, so this may have impacted the strength of the red logo.

Overall, the image is an OK step in the right direction. There are multiple planes creating interest but it is not a particularly compelling step forward. The image feels quite a bit cliched or overt perhaps?

Conclusion :

I don’t see what other people see. Additional layers of meaning and story don’t always appear to me from a scene as they do to some other photographers. Knowing this is a bit of a blind spot for me, concentrating on simply spotting images with multiple layers to create a more complex image for the viewer to explore is probably the best path forward. Fake it till you make it!

Planning for a Trip – Tripomatic

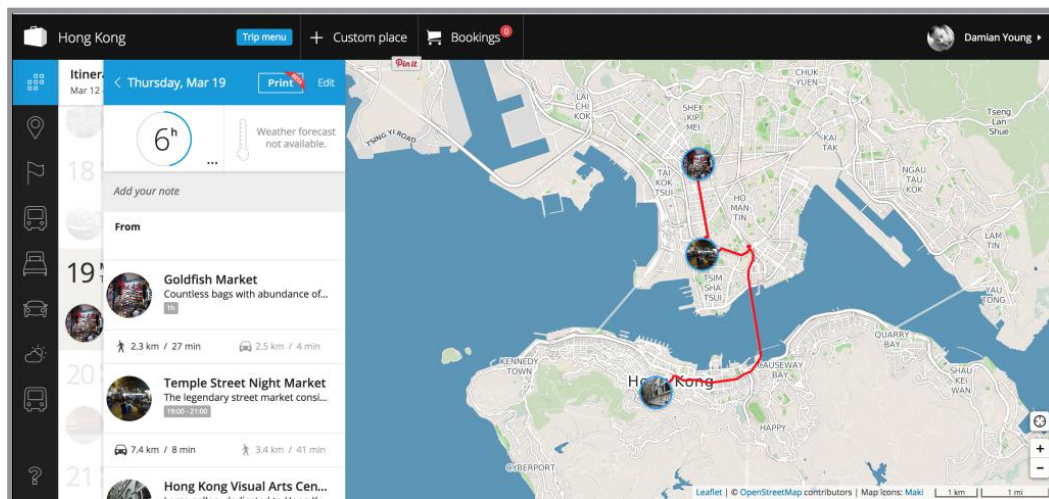
Saturday, June 13, 2015

Need something better than just Google Maps for planning a photography jaunt to a new city? Try Tripomatic – it is a fantastic app / web based itinerary planner. It is a great tool for planning a day by day, even hour by hour itinerary for your photographic safaris.

It is free to use the basic version – which is 99% fine for most people. Just jump on, pick where you want to go and pin them for each day. The great thing with Tripomatic is that you can export your daily itinerary to a PDF. I am not quite sure why I still like doing this in the age of digital, but it sure makes sense as a back up for your phone battery.

On the Apple App, you can track your day, and open up each location in whatever GPS map function you prefer for the last few directions to get you there.

The only downside is that not all the places you want to go will pre-exist in the app. In this case, just import the GPS co-ordinates from google maps and create a custom place. For each location you can add notes, links, and whatever else you need. Here is an example of a day I had planned out for my last trip to Hong Kong.



You can download the whole PDF of my trip [here.hong-kong](#)

National Gallery Victoria Water Wall

Saturday, June 13, 2015

Every street photographer in Melbourne has this shot – and most of them are better than any of mine! I just never seem to quite nail this location. The water wall is a very popular spot for visitors at the entrance of the gallery, and is free to get in to. The gallery is a great spot to visit if you are in town.

I recommend taking the shot from the inside of the gallery looking out – which seems to be the way most people shoot it. Wait for people to start peering through the water wall at each other...

National Gallery of Victoria
180 St Kilda Rd
Melbourne VIC 3006

Overcoming the Low Points of the Creative Cycle

Sunday, July 05, 2015

Sometimes everything looks great in the viewfinder, sometimes things don't go so well... I have just finished developing some rolls from a weekend in Bendigo with Mrs Streetphotography. They are pretty disappointing. I have been working a bit on urban landscapes, and thought an afternoon walking the mean streets of Bendigo might yield some decent opportunities.

I am sure there were plenty there, but I just couldn't see them.

One of the most important lessons I have received over the last eighteen months is that creative inertia is only overcome by changing something.

I had been shooting mostly people with an emphasis on faces and mostly waist up in terms of composition, using mostly longer focal lengths 85mm and above. But everything was starting to look the same.

To change, I swapped to wide angles – 35mm focal length max, forcing a change in perspective. I even tried a 12mm Voigtlander Lens at one point (with mixed results!).



12mm is VERY wide!

For the last month, I have been “stuck” again though. Nothing coming off the scanner gets me excited. At least I seem to be getting more fussy with my self-curation...

Here are the rest of the shots from Bendigo. Nothing terrible, nothing great. Just five rolls

of “meh”.



So, time to change again. After acquiring a minty new toy and primo lens last year, I have

probably been a little too monogamous with my gear choices...

Maybe order some E6? (even though my colour perception sucks when scanning). Mind you, I will need to get a second job to pay for the processing!

Shoot a cross section of both close in and some wider stuff with a 105mm Macro lens? At least using a macro on a 35mm film body will force me to do something different.

Get out more at night? Maybe focus on actually learning how to use my flashes properly?

Go to new places?

I still have a few books that Santa delivered, still in their minty plastic wrappers, untouched and as yet untapped. Spending some time with one of the greats and then emulating and interpreting some of their most impactful techniques works for me.

Overcoming Low Points in the Creative Cycle : First Try

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Pulling negatives off the developing reels, squeegeeing, drying, and then scanning. The best part of the week is when the image that appears on the monitor is one you love. The images on my monitor have not been particularly inspiring for me lately.

When things seem the same each and every week, then you have to force the change. Smash some things together (metaphorically when you are talking prime lenses and irreplaceable film cameras!) and get lost in order to tread new paths.

Until last weekend, I kinda forgot that the trains go in two directions from Richmond – into the city and out to the suburbs. I had lunch plans in Glenferrie, and decided to grab a camera on the way out to catch the train in a new direction – outwards!

Instead of reaching for my current favourite camera, I purposefully went in a different direction. Medium format was the decision, and shooting at ISO 1600 on a rather darkish day.

I felt lighter in spirit and rather excited to be

- Going to a new location – Glenferrie Station
- With a camera I hadn't used for a long time
- Shooting at an unusual ISO setting for me

As soon as I stepped off the train, things got a little more exciting than they have been for a while. Stopping and spending time at each potential spot worked out – composing the frame and then waiting for the right moment.



I stood at this location for quite some time, playing with my phone so I didn't look too dodgy before the right subject entered the frame.

Whilst none of the images are worthy of printing, it felt like a step in the right direction. More to come on dealing with low points... Here are the rest – which will also form part of a general post on Glenferrie Station as a location.





Glenferrie Station

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Glenferrie Station is a surprising location, nestled amongst our quieter, inner city. A short train ride from the CBD, it's various nooks and alleys are complex and worth exploring. The entire station can be scouted and shot in less than a half hour if you are keen to pop the shutter and then enjoy one of the cafes on Glenferrie Rd.





The station proper itself exudes ye olde worlde charm. The station itself is well above street level, offering some great opportunities to change perspective travelling up and down the ramps to the platform. Also keep an eye out for the downward shooting opportunities (no, I didn't successfully one of these to show you!) through the platform gaps to the pedestrian subways below.

The people at Glenferrie Station were pretty non-chalant about being photographed as well – probably due to it being being a meeting point for a lot of student types and less aggressive inner suburban types.





Once you have explored the upper platform, take the time to walk through and around each of the access points to the station. Each side of the station has it's own network of pedestrian walkways and arcades. The images above were the ones I was happy enough to put my name to.



These two are not so good, but give you an idea of what other kinds of cool stuff you can discover within the vicinity of the station. The hole in the wall coffee shop has great potential, but I couldn't quite get the shot – the 80mm medium format lens was not loving the space. Like most business people that predominantly deal in cash, I got the “can I help you?” call from the guy making coffees. I find the only places I ever get any minor grief are locations where people deal in cash only to do deals. Guilty consciences? Dunno. The same thing tends to happen at markets...

I just walked over and asked him for a short black. When he asked me again what I was doing with the camera, just answered honestly and had no further issues – “I take street photos as a hobby and your shop looks really cool”...



After you have explored the station, it is probably time to head back on the train. Whilst Glenferrie has a nice neighbourhood feel about it, there is not a lot happening. Maybe the only thing going on worth photographing is the various butchers duking it out every Saturday with their sample BBQs out the front. The day I went, it was raining goats and sheep – making it hard to get a good shot.

Running Around the Witch's Hats... Zone Focus

Sunday, July 19, 2015

I fondly remember wet, cold, and muddy Tuesday and Thursday nights at footy training as a teenager. I was never much good at the game, but loved getting out and having a kick around the park. After the Sherrins, the next thing that would come out each night were the red-orange witch's hats. So, what do these have to do with street photography?

My "go to" cameras and lenses lean towards manual focus beauties. Using manual focus lenses sounds kinda silly though, particularly in this golden age of technology. Vish at Camerafilmphoto sums it up for me – "enjoy the process"...

Zone focusing and hyperfocal distance are two concepts that anyone using a manual focus lens needs to understand for street photography.

You can read all about it here – the guys at Street Hunters do a much better job explaining it than I could!

Zone focus uses the markings on your lens barrel to "pre-focus" for a given distance, with a minimum and maximum range for what will be in focus. The hard part for me, is getting a strong feel for the distance just by looking.

For example :

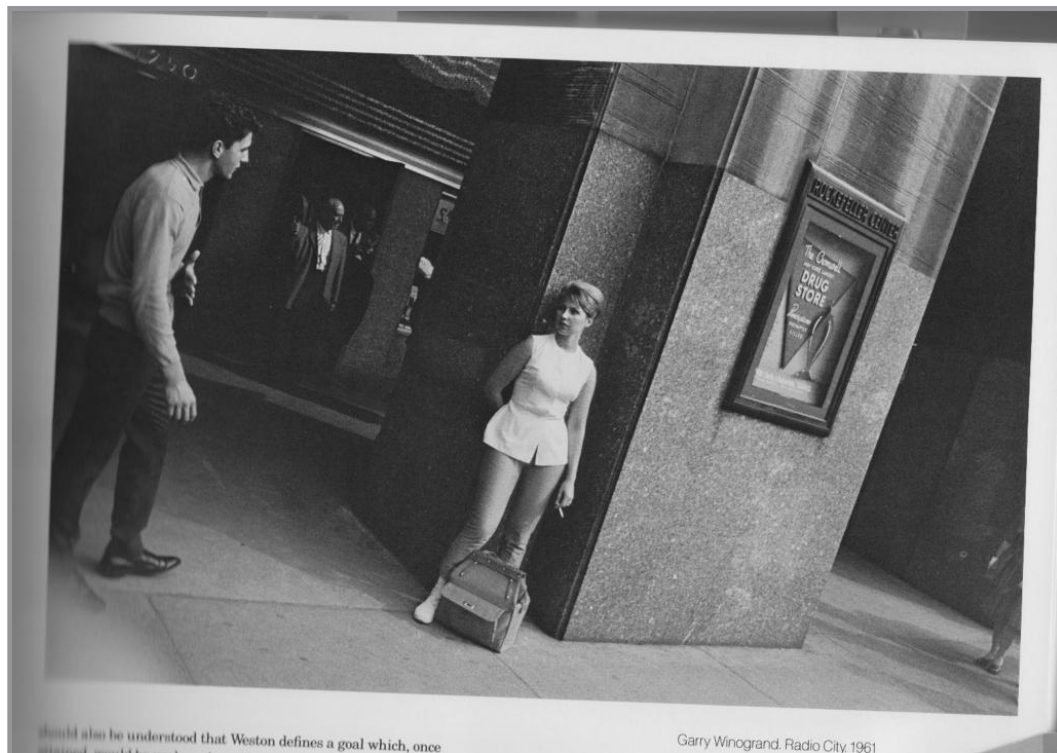
One of my medium format cameras has an 80mm manual focus lens. Let's play it out... I often shoot iso400 film at 1600 to make sure the shutter speeds are quick. The lens is a bit slow, with f4 being the maximum aperture, so pushing the film really helps. Shooting at iso1600 also makes smaller f stops usable in good light. f16 potentially gives a very wide focus range of 2 – 5 metres using zone focusing.

Up until recently, I had not been super confident estimating distances to subjects. Until I ordered a bunch of little mini-witch's hats from Ebay... Setting them up in our hallway at one metre increments has been a great reminder every day of how far different distances are. Suddenly, the whole 2 – 5 metre zone looks a lot bigger!

Garry Winogrand – Ideas and Inspiration Part One

Sunday, July 19, 2015

Santa tracked down a copy of Garry Winogrand's "Figments from the Real World" for me last Christmas, and managed to fit in my stocking! As part of trying to get going creatively again, I pulled out the book for the first time as a creative kickstarter. So what did I learn from spending some time with Garry?



1. Tilt the Camera to Create a More Dynamic Feel

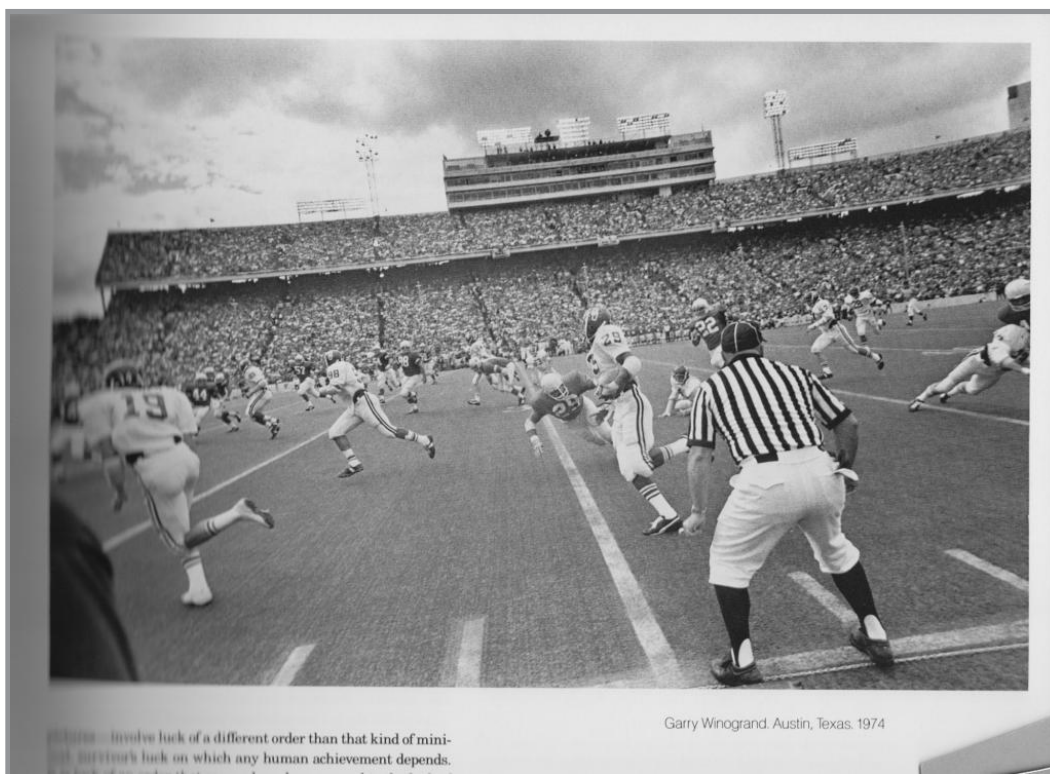
Early in my exploration of photography, my wife would often pick up my camera and crack a couple of shots quickly that always seemed to look fantastic. She is a graphic designer by trade, and is very creatively gifted. She would often use very simple techniques to instantly make her images pop. An easy, early thing I picked up from her was to tilt the camera to make the perspective a bit more interesting and unexpected.

I have posted before about avoiding shooting from 5ft 9in – head height – to make images more interesting. You see the world from somewhere around this mark. Showing things from a new angle can help.

The first thing that struck me in Winogrand's book was the number of images that were shot with a tilt. A quick review of my most recent images revealed I had completely forgotten about this technique. Even though the header image on the Inconspicuousity – Melbourne Street Photography facebook page features this exact thing!



In the next image, Winogrand massively increases the dynamic feel by tilting the frame again. The movement throughout the image is highlighted and magnified by the angle. In both images, the tilt is very much defined by vertical lines. In the top image, the girl forms a vertical line with the building pillar. The football image has both the vertical lines on the ground and the imposing horizontal line of the stadium stand. The combination of the two sets of lines ensures the tilt is pronounced and very obvious. It almost brings a feeling of being on ship rocking on a rough ocean?



2. Don't Fear the Crop

I guess I worry about stuff too much. Making sure the frame is level, making sure nothing crops out... The next image uses both an angle and crops the subject unexpectedly, bringing a halting feeling to bear. Bringing a new perspective to scene that the viewer might not normally see can make an image more interesting.



One of my favourite images from my recent trip to Hong Kong had an accidental crop that I ended up pretty happy with.



3. Don't Always Sweat the Focus



This post is starting to become about me chilling the heck out on focusing on technical stuff. The next one is remembering that focus can be over-rated! In the image above, Winogrand uses the lack of focus to create a feel of looking into a new world.

I am not sure if he is using a reflection or shooting through a window or similar?

Anyway, more to come from Winogrand soon!

Structuring a Weekend Session

Monday, July 27, 2015

No matter how “arty” an interest is, disciplined regular practice is the best path to enjoyment. Developing and getting progressively better at something is rewarding – whether it be gardening, knitting or something like photography! There are plenty of people who take lots of photos – and happy to get the same results time and time again.

I try and structure my weekend shoots, loosely, to make sure I learn something or try something new. Here is a rough idea of what I did last weekend...

1. Identify a new technique or style to explore.

This month’s “teacher” for me is Garry Winogrand, which you can read about [here](#). The key techniques were :

- Tilt the Camera
- Don’t Fear the Crop
- Don’t Always Sweat the Focus

If you don’t write something down, you aren’t really learning it. I use both this blog, and good old fashion analogue notebooks to write down what I learn. I take out a summary in a Field Notes notebook in my camera bag, and refer to it often during the day.

I was also interested in really cracking on to hyperfocal distance and zone focusing which I cover off [here](#).

2. Review your results critically.

Self curation is a critical element of learning. Unless you are cashed up and doing a photography degree (which probably means you are doing it for a job, which is nowhere near as much fun!) you are going to have to learn a lot on your own. The first thing is to both enjoy your photos, but also to be very critical of them without crushing your spirit!

So, here are my photos along with some curation critique.



I had a very wide angle 43mm lens on a medium format body. I set the ISO at 1600 (pushed up two stops from ISO 400 to ensure the shutter speed was as quick as possible. 1/125 is the minimum to target for anything reasonably sharp. The 43mm lens had a great minimum focus distance when set to f8. About a metre or so? The only downside was the light wasn't always bright enough during the day.

I saw these missionaries setting up in the city for the day and just walked up and shot just as the girl looked up – a little surprised by me, I think, but I just smiled and moved on immediately before she could think about it too much. The zone focus on f8 worked pretty well in this shot.



Another zone focus experience. I found the spot first, an entrance to Melbourne Central, where the light was perfect. It was then just a wait until the right subject came along. The camera was set prior to the shot – both the framing and the focus – all I had to do was pull the camera up to my eye and shoot. There were three or four shots that worked here, but this subject's slightly "unco" feet make the composition interesting.



Zone focusing again here – but the shot opportunity was also quite driven by another previous session I had done on storytelling. The kid and dad waiting for a haircut here was pretty cool, although the shot is a bit over complex which makes it a little hard to see at first.



I was also thinking about storytelling here, along with making the most of the wide angle lens. Getting more into the shot adds to the story a bit. Although it may have also been interesting to shoot him right up close using the wide angle and contrasting him against the window?



This subject was just a little close – less than a metre – but I have included it as it is still aesthetically pleasing. A reminder that you don't always have to sweat the focus. The subject was actually quite short and I was able to shoot downwards on to her, making for an interesting angle.



Just a nice shot which resulted from finding the frame first and then waiting for the right

subject.



Winogrand often used a downward perspective to create interest. This spot I have used before – the corner of the GPO building standing up on the ledge. Last time I was there, I used an 80mm lens on the same camera. This time, with the wide angle, more of the wider scene comes into the frame, and creates a broader feel of the street. The angles of the textured footpaths feel a little more prominent.



Story telling again. This time it is a guy looking into a tobacco store window. I love the idea of this image, but it is poorly executed. Either I stuffed the focus distance or the shutter was just too slow to give a sharpish result. A polarising filter to remove the window reflections would have also helped to really highlight what the guy was looking at. A quick photo opportunity, and then I continued moving.



Zone focus, on the train this time. Didn't quite get it right for the female subject, but it still works nicely as an image. I love people who still read books. I don't generally shoot anyone who is focused on their phone, but people reading books are some of my favourite people!



A final image – I tried quite a few camera tilts but not many worked. This was probably the best one, but I would have liked a bit more sharpness in the stationary backgrounds. It seems to be just a slow shutter speed causing the lack of sharpness rather than a plan. The movement in the subjects would be more meaningful with a sharp background...

I need to spend a bit more time on this particular technique.

Conclusion

I hope this gives some kind of insight into my personal approach to learning. I have posted ten images here from a total of nine rolls. There were a possible ninety images to shortlist from. I only focus on a short list for learning. There are only two that I would shortlist as possibles for an exhibition or book – the first two. Or maybe none of them? One or two ripper images a month is a pretty good scorecard.

Sometimes, I go places!

Saturday, August 01, 2015

Hong Kong is one of my favourite places to photograph. The whole place is crammed with people everywhere you go. Odds are, a few of them are going to be interesting, right? Let's find out.

Looking through other people's feeds lately has reminded me that unless an image is shared with others, it doesn't really have a purpose. I think I will start posting my favourite images more often, along with a bit of commentary to help explain the "why". So let's start with an image from a trip earlier in the year to Hong Kong.

I had been thinking more and more about framing and "planes" with a frame – ie foregrounds and backgrounds. And being more aware and quick in seeing potential images.

I was walking down a bustling street and one of the ubiquitous public transport minibuses pulled up and opened up right in front of me. It was shot using a 35mm lens on a rangefinder using HP5 shot at iso 400.

The door of the bus provided an instant frame, and the backlight silhouetted the woman perfectly. It was a solitary moment in a city where people have to find space wherever they can. She is almost enjoying her bus ride – the bus is not teeming with people like the rest of the city. It is a nice moment of quiet.

The opportunity only lasted a few seconds, as the bus doors closed and it moved off to the next stop. Ya gotta be quick sometimes!

New York Museum of Natural History Moment

Saturday, August 01, 2015

Just another quiet moment for an ordinary person in a busy city. I was hulking around a big ass medium format camera on this day, loaded up with Kodak tri-x 400. I was shooting on a standard 80mm lens for this particular image.

The natural framing of the subject at the visual exit point of the image works here. You first have to wander past the visual excitement of the displays to get to the guy. He is not the least bit interested in the displays, no matter how remarkable they are – they are just an everyday part of his workplace. Like we all do, from time to time, he is just looking out the window, maybe wishing his shift was over so he can go home to his family.

There is a wonderfully subtle shadow reflection on the polished floor which finishes off the image beautifully. Not the most exciting image from NYC trip, but one I am constantly drawn to because of the quiet nature of the image. The mirror slap when I took the shot rang out pretty loud in this cloistered environment and ended up disturbing the subject and he moved on, back to his job.

SOHO at night

Sunday, August 02, 2015

Shot on medium format at night on Kodak trix 400. Was experimenting with low light photography and tripods... This dodgy looking door is actually a neighbourhood Synagogue rather and not anything more notorious! Using a 150mm lens on a medium format camera got the right framing for the shot from across the street.

Photographer Stories Podcasty Stuff

Sunday, August 09, 2015

I was recently approached by a mate to be interviewed as part of his ongoing series of podcasts featuring different photographers talking about their work, gear, and how they go about it. You might like to listen to it [here](#).

I hate the sound of my own voice and suspect I come across as a bit of a doofus on the interview, so I will probably never listen to it! It was fun to talk photography for an hour or so with Matt. I enjoyed the talking bit a lot!

Creative Exercise – Learn to See More

Sunday, August 09, 2015

First of all, make sure it is an interesting day! Secondly, this is not about you but taking the time to see more of the world that exists around you every single day.

Now that I have more of an interesting intro for the Facebook leader post, let's start from the start.

I was recently interviewed by Photographer Stories and was asked a question about how I got started. Without boring you to the point of insanity, one of the most formative exercises I did was take a Holga plastic toy camera and a bunch of film with me to work one day. I shot what I saw all day, from the early morning commute from San Francisco to Oakland where I worked, until I returned through the front door of our apartment building.

I think it was this one single day that really defined the genre of photography that I have pursued to this day – Street Photography. I had a nice new Nikon D80, which was a ripping camera, but had been dabbling in film with the Holga. I quickly found that the dreamy plastic lens and vignetting on the Holga seemed to be perfectly suited to transforming street scenes into something wonderful.

At the start of the morning (back in 2007!), I thought I was documenting a day in my own life. By the time mid morning had come around, I realised it was not about me. It was about seeing more of the world that passes me by every day, and recognising the beauty of the everyday.





Here are four of my favourite images from the day. The image featuring the car, and the image of the bat signal are two of my favourite framed prints at home!

This one day, spent with a camera on me all day, was the final step in deciding to pursue street photography. Enough of the story, what did I do and what did I learn?

The How

Commit to carrying a camera around with you for a full day. Make sure you are going to be doing something suitable. Driving on freeway to and from an office in the outer suburbs is probably not going to deliver enough opportunities. Think about a day when you are going somewhere for the better part of a day. Maybe going to a sport game on the train and having lunch beforehand? Or it could be something as simple as a shopping trip into the CBD for the day.

Whatever it is that you do, make sure that you are covering a lot of ground, preferably on foot and public transport.

Commit to a schedule where you are compelled to take a shot at regular intervals. Force the issue with a timer on your phone or stopwatch. That doesn't mean you cannot take more, it is about setting a minimum. I recommend every ten minutes.

Every ten minutes find a subject and shoot it. Every. Ten. Minutes. Without fail. Or maybe every 30 minutes – what ever suits you best. Just make sure it is often enough to bother you a little bit...

It may only be for particular periods of your day. For example, if was to replicate the exercise used here, I would have only taken shots on the way to work, at lunch, and on the way home.

Use a film camera, if you have one. The day exercise is targeted at taking single, great shots, one at a time. A film camera is perfectly suited to this. I would recommend getting a cheap Holga and some C41 film for this exercise if you can afford it.

If you only shoot digital, switch off your LCD screen. Commit to only taking single shots –

no multiple tries and chimping. Just take the shot and move on. Do not review the results until the end of the day.

What You Might Experience and Learn

1. Learn to See the World.

Forcing an image every ten minutes compels you to find something in proximity no matter how ordinary the environment may seem. You will quickly learn to “see” things as potential subjects when you are forced to. There are images everywhere. The ten minute rule forces you to look harder...

2. See the Next Shot.

Delaying gratification will help you spend more time looking for images rather than your LCD screen. The constant “chimping” – checking your LCD screen after every shot can be a useful feedback tool for technique, but can distract you from the next shot. This exercise is all about “the next shot” – so do your best to resist the need to chimp and, instead, start looking for the next image opportunity. After all, the clock is ticking!

3. Becoming more impulsive.

There is always a reason not to take the shot. Am I in the best spot? Will I get the camera up in time in terms of timing? And so on. By the time you have had the internal debate the opportunity has evaporated. The potential person has moved out of range. The scene has changed. The tram has moved forward. Learn to be more spontaneous and have a bias for action. Never miss another shot.

4. You can only use the camera you have on you.

Learn to keep a camera with you more often. And learn to keep it ready to fire – rather than tucked away in a bag with the lens cap on. Keep it in your pocket or around your neck.

The Results

The day started with me thinking I was going to document my life. When I received the images from the lab, I realised that the best images resulted from when I was in transit – moving from one place to another. On the way to work, in the morning. Going for lunch. And travelling home.

The images from when I was stationary – like the early morning shot of the bed the moment I had gotten up – were the weakest and least interesting.

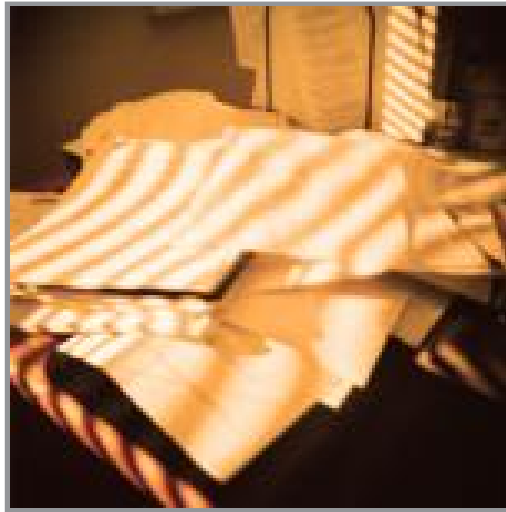
Here is the whole set for you to make up your own mind as to which images work best.

















Contax G2 Review – Autofocusing Rangefinder Brilliance!

Saturday, August 29, 2015

I wish Contax was still making cameras. Every one that I have had a chance to handle was a pure joy. The Contax G2 is a fascinating little unit – an autofocusing rangefinder! The word “unique” gets bandied around a lot by people who have a limited grasp of it’s definition :

unique

ju:’ni:k/Submit

adjective

1. being the only one of its kind; unlike anything else.

The only one of it’s kind... The G2 (yeah, ok, I am including the first model G1 here too!) is a one of a kind goody.

Autofocusing

The G2 is a rangefinder. You can read more about rangefinders here. Being a rangefinder, it is compact without compromising the quality of the images. Unlike Leicas, Voigtlanders etc it has no focus patch in the viewfinder. The G2 autofocuses using some serious gadgety systems – a focus infrared light supported with a passive system. Don’t ask me to explain it any further than that... Way too techy for me.

All you need to know is that the autofocus is pretty quick and precise. There is a school of thought on the interwebs that the G2 is a bit slow on the focus – I have never missed a shot waiting for the focus, but it can occasionally “hunt” a little bit. The first generation G1 body apparently was quite slow to focus, but I have never had the chance to try one out.

The only downside is the focus point is not moveable – and it is dead centre in the viewfinder. You can recompose whilst keeping focus by holding the shutter button down, but it can be a little annoying. There are three focus modes :



Continuous (CAF) : works pretty well on slow moving targets like pedestrians but is nowhere near what you get on a modern DSLR body. If you are in continuous mode, the camera will refocus automatically as the camera moves. You can depress a second button that is part of the focus mode select to over-ride the refocus in continuous mode,

but I just find it one thing too many to think about when out shooting.

Single (SAF) : the lens focuses once and will keep the focus as long as you keep the shutter button depressed – this is the mode to be in for simple recomposing.

Manual (MF) : bizarre system utilising a dial on the front of the camera and led indicators in the viewfinder. Don't bother. If you want to zone focus or use hyperfocal distance then just get a Leica or Voigtlander body. The Contax G2 is all about autofocus – I am at a loss as to why the designers thought it would be a good idea to add the bits and pieces to be able to manual focus this camera?



Manual Focus Dial



Yeah, on the front of the camera!

One of the things I love about using a traditional manual focus rangefinder is setting up for zone focus or hyperfocal distance. If you get it right, you just virtually point and shoot. The downside is having to use higher aperture settings to maximise the zone in focus, often f8 or f11 – meaning you need some decent light to get the shot.



The G2 has a superb range of Zeiss lenses that mostly have f2 or f2.8 as a maximum aperture. In lower light conditions, the autofocus combines with the large apertures to enable fast shutter speeds for sharper results. I find that manual focus rangefinders can be a bit of a struggle in low light conditions – it takes a couple of seconds to manually focus which can cost you a passing opportunity at times.

There was a Contax G1 body also manufactured prior to the G2. This body has a reputation for hunting when on autofocus and very slow. I am unable to comment, as I have never used one.

I find the G2's autofocus perfect for lower light daylight conditions. Wandering deep into the light challenged Hong Kong's back alleys and laneways, the G2 delivered great results. Setting the lens to f2 and being confident of the results enabled me to concentrate on the images, and not my settings.



Viewfinder

Unique again. Contax made the G2 very different to a Leica. When you lock in a lens, the viewfinder optically zooms to the correct view rather than bringing up framelines. So whatever you see in the viewfinder is pretty much what is going to end up on the film. I probably still like a traditional viewfinder with framelines, as you can see what is happening just outside of the frame.



As a result of having an optical zoom, the G2 is the only rangefinder I am aware of that can effectively use a zoom lens. There is a 35-70mm zoom lens in the range – as you zoom the lens, the optics in the viewfinder zoom to match.

The viewfinder is fairly good, although it can be a little darkish compared to a Leica. It is

set in a raised block on the rear of the body which helps to avoid smooshing your nose too much against the body. There is a diopter adjuster for those who need it. The bright LED indicators in viewfinder contribute to the darkish feel of the viewfinder, but the indicators are easily read.

Lenses

All metal, all glass, all Zeiss!

Hologon 16mm f8 – Needs an external viewfinder

Biogon 21mm f2.8 – Another lens needing an external viewfinder

Biogon 28mm f2.8

Planar 35mm f2

Planar 45mm f2

Sonnar 90mm f2.8

Vario-Sonnar 35mm–70mm f3.5–f5.6



I have used the 28, 35, 45, and 90mm. My favourite is probably the 35mm, more due to the focal length than anything else. The 90mm is a great lens for getting people's faces and expressions. There is a fair bit of discussion on the interwebs about which lens is the best, but frankly, I can't pull them apart on quality.

If you are buying one, just make sure it hasn't been converted to use on a mirrorless camera, which is not uncommon.

Bits and Pieces

The G2 has a self timer and a continuous shoot mode. It also has the standard stuff like film ISO override. The best mode I find to shoot in is "auto" which is aperture priority. There is no shutter priority mode. The only issue with "auto" is that the aperture setting is not visible in the viewfinder. You just have to be mindful of where you are at on the

aperture ring and use the shutter speed indicator as a guide as to the aperture.



Build

The Contax is a solid hunk of metal. Everything is manufactured to be great. Every dial and switch is metally goodness. The G2 came in a champagne kind of colour, and a limited edition black. Both models had matching lenses. The black G2s are usually priced at quite a premium, but do look pretty cool.

The G2 feels perfect in your hands. It is compact and discreet, but feels completely bullet proof. The shutter button has a precise feel about it, and all the controls click into place reassuringly.



For some reason, the G2 has an LCD indicator on the top of the body for the shot counter instead of a mechanical one. Over the years, many of the LCDs have bled, not affecting the usability of the camera, just the aesthetics.

This is a quality camera, built to be loved over a long lifetime. The downside? Everything is motorised or electric. Everything from the winder to the focus are motorised. One day, those motors are going to wear out and are no longer being manufactured... Leaving you with some beautiful but completely useless lenses. At this point, the lenses are probably still valuable as potential conversions to mirrorless cameras. If you love this camera, I would recommend buying a second, less minty body that you can afford and keep it as a spare. There are still plenty of G2s on the market, so I suspect getting a replacement body will not be an issue for quite a few years.

Street Photography

Overall, the G2 with any of the lenses is a great buy for street photography. Compact and bullet proof.

The good.

1. Size matters. The Contax G2 is compact and about the same size as a decent point and shoot, but will deliver images of SLR quality.
2. Size matters part two. The compact nature of any rangefinder doesn't freak anyone out on the street. People tend not to fret when you point it at them.
3. The build quality is full metal jacket. You can chuck this thing into any bag and travel the streets without worrying too much about damaging either the lens or body. It is not a delicate petal...



4. Build quality part two. They just don't seem to make cameras like this any more. Maybe Leica still do? The heft in your hand just makes you want to take it out and take some pictures. The design is perfectly balanced and is aesthetically wonderful. People love using beautiful things. Steve Jobs sums it up for me.

"I cannot believe that in the 21st century people still think there's a clear distinction between style and substance, between appeal and functionality...if something is more aesthetically appealing of course more people are going to want to continue to use it, explore it deeper and find a need for it ...and in turn the product becomes more functional on its own"

5. Autofocus. Being able to set the lens to f2 and then rely on the autofocus unlike all other rangefinders is a real positive. Low light specialist!

6. Lenses. Zeiss. Listening to the camera nerds, apparently these lenses are pretty darn good!





7. There is a little TLA 200 flash unit that goes with the G2 and works perfectly for low light street.



The Bad

1. Everything is motorised. Whilst I am sure all the moving parts are pretty tight, every motor is something that is eventually going to break down... And Contax no longer make spares. They don't even really exist anymore!
2. The champagne colour is quite unobtrusive, but not quite as stylish as the black bodies and lenses. The black units come at a serious price premium though. Not really worth it. Buy the champagne!
3. Ye olden thymes autofocus. Yes, it works pretty well, but is still not as quick as a brand new Nikon D something or other.
4. Led film counter – most bodies will already have a leaking led screen. Doesn't affect

the camera much, but is just a bit ugly.



5. There is always the question of investing in 35mm format cameras vs medium format. The closest thing to this camera in medium format would be either a Mamiya 7 rangefinder, or the Contax 645 autofocus, depending on what is more important to you. The Mamiya is more discreet, but the Contax has autofocus. You will have to make the call on this yourself!

6. Centre point for autofocus. When ya gotta be quick, sometimes only having the one focus point right in the centre of the frame can be a bit frustrating!

7. No useable manual focus. None. Nada. Don't even think you are going to be able to decipher this stuff.

Buying Guide

I would definitely want to put a roll of film through the G2 if possible prior to buying. Listen to the motor film winder, and the focusing motor. If you can find one that looks pretty minty, it is probably worth taking a punt on eBay regardless. The G2 was the kind of camera a lot of people with lots of money purchased and then didn't use too often. So look for a minty one.

Specific things to ask the seller :

- Is there bleeding in the LED film counter screen. Not that it matters, but if you are going to part with some cash, you want to know!
- Are all the dials firm and click into place nicely? I received one poorly described body where the focus dial was very loose and did not stay in the mode selected.
- Is the viewfinder housing fixed and firm. Again, this can be a problem where the housings can come a bit loose.

- Are there any whines or unusual sounds when the film runs through?
- And as with any rangefinder, make sure the windows are all clean and clear.



When buying, I found that a lens / body combo often offers the best value – particularly if you can get one with a more unusual 35mm or 28mm lens. The 45mm lenses, whilst awesome, are fairly common and can be picked up under the odds on their own without a body. A lot of sale lots come with multiple lenses. If you can pick one up with a 28, 45, and 90mm lenses with a G2 body and you can afford it, I would go for it. The 35mm lens usually comes at a premium.

If I had to pick one lens, it would be the 35mm. If you are on a budget, get the 45mm. It is the most common and offers best value for money.

I have not used the 21 or 16mm lenses. I have used the zoom in a shop, but just find zoom lenses too distracting.

Pick up the little TLA200 flash – it is a fantastic unit for both street photography and just taking party snaps! It is compact and completely inconspicuous.

As mentioned, the G1 has a reputation as a fussy focuser. I would steer clear of the G1, but I haven't used one... so, if you are hard up, maybe you could give it a go. They are a lot cheaper than the G2 bodies.

A lot of the G2 bodies also have a data back. Don't get one. Complete waste of space, considering the camera never knows what aperture you are shooting at. It is just a dead weight added to the camera.

If you like the Contax G2...

You might like to also have a look at

- Voigtlander R3 or R4
- Leica M6 or M7
- Compact 35mm Cameras such as the Ricoh GR1V / Konica Hexar / Nikon 35ti
- Contax G1 (to save a couple of bucks)

Here is a small selection of shots taken with the G2...



Ballarat International Foto Biennale 2015 Visit & Is HDR Ju...

Sunday, September 06, 2015

Jumped in the Dodge with a couple of mates, Mrs Melbourne Street Photography, and a camera yesterday and headed off to Ballarat for BIFB 2015. The BIFB is a regular on the photography calendar and is always worth a visit.

So, is it worth the visit? For me, no. For you? Maybe. There was a broad range of styles and subject matter. If you want to experience a breadth of images from photographers around the world, then get on the train and visit. Being primarily interested in Street Photography, particularly using film / analogue based capture, there wasn't much that caught my eye.

The Melbourne Silver Mine fringe exhibition was a highlight, with some excellent bits and pieces from my film obsessed friends. Adelaide Photographic Artists (another film group!) also had a small but good set of images.

Meandering through the main streets, we managed to get to a seven or so venues over a couple of hours. Not a lot of street photography...

I prefer photographers who limit the use of post processing gigabytes and ram to achieve a result. Most of the heavy lifting in creating the image is best done at the instant the shutter opens and closes. If more than half the image is created at a studio desk, it crosses over into a multimedia / graphic design kind of space for me, rather than photography.

A little bit of cropping and some basic colour tweaking is all I generally like.

That doesn't mean the images are not beautiful or aesthetically pleasing – it just doesn't meet my personal definition of photography. I also struggle with "projections" – I am ok with a slide show, but once the image includes movement (ie. video) it is not photography. As a member of the CCP in Melbourne, I really dislike the occasional video projects that pop up in the gallery. It is not photography and doesn't belong in the gallery. Yes, I *am* the fun police...

A perfect example to illustrate my "heavy lifting" definition was the core exhibition by Pang Xiang Liang from China – 'The Drilling Workers'. Pang managed to get on site at a massive Chinese oil drilling site and has taken some stunning images. Places I will never see – or probably want to see with my own eyes! – and would have required a significant amount of courage to get into position for some of the shots.

Except they appeared to have been HDR'd to the point of being ridiculous. It is almost as though Pang discovered the HDR button on his camera and has fallen in love with how "special" it makes the images look.



The image is remarkable in terms of the situation. Getting in and under some massive machinery, in the freezing conditions, to get the shot, is just wonderful. The HDR has stolen the soul of the image, in my opinion. It almost looks faked, like a CGI effect in a movie. The extra level of detail in tones that HDR gives is visually distracting. I find it disconnects me from the image. My eyes are unfamiliar with the level of detail and struggles to recognise it as a scene from real life as opposed to a painting or drawing.



In the second image, there is both a sense of pathos and joy that most people choose to feel no matter how hard their personal situation may be. But front and square is the incredible amount of visual information that is not normally perceptible by the human eye. I find I spend too much time processing the detail than feeling and enjoying the image.

Sorry if you are an HDR fan... There is a place for it, sometimes, to bring some minor detail to life. If it is easily perceptible, then ask if you really need it?

I worry that, sometime in the future, Pang will look back at a “HDR Phase” in his artistic development and see the images differently. I look back at some of the quite unsophisticated retouching I did at the start of my journey and am a little let down...

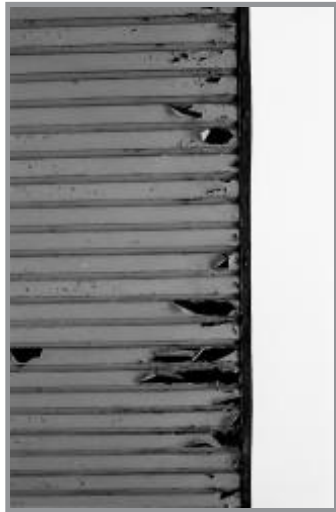
Pang has captured some remarkable images – my criticism is purely directed at the way he has processed the images. There was one image, towards the end of the row of images, of miners in the showers. It was a stand out – free and clear of the HDR effect. I could immediately start to see through the window into the world of the miners, rather than feeling I was watching a CGI sci fi movie...

It was one of the exhibitions which absolutely made sense to have a series of related images. Some of the other exhibitions that had a “theme” tended to the tedious... Repetitive images without any kind of build that I could discern. Maybe I am just a bit dumb when it comes to the “Yartz” or just grumpy?

Beware – Ballarat seems to shut pretty early on a Saturday!

Anyway, I got some shots as we trekked the BIFB trail... Here is some of what you might see if you visit Ballarat with your trusty camera.







Notebook Project – Discarded Objects

Wednesday, September 09, 2015

Without a plan to succeed and do things, nothing will get done. Just thinking about photography is not going to improve your skills or eye. I have been keeping a diary of ideas to help me when I am looking for inspiration and a reason to walk out the front door and into the world with my camera. Every time I use an idea from the diary, I have been following a specific process...

1. Decide on the idea / theme / technique / inspiration / location whatever.
2. Explore the theme in a workbook (handwritten notebooks seem to naturally inspire creativity!).
3. Distill the theme into a brief and shoot plan. 4. Shoot. Develop (for the filmies). Scan.
5. Evaluate. Shortlist. Curate the very best shots into a the shortest list possible. Two or three maximum, unless you have had a very Winogrand kind of day!
6. Print the images for self assessment. Paste them in a photo album and write up the commentary for each print.
7. Summarise what I learned.

This weekend's exercise – “Discarded Objects”

Inspiration

Source : Project 15 “Objects” from “The Street Photographer’s Manual” by David Gibson.

Background

My style is very much a study of people. It only rarely involves subjects without some kind of human point of reference in frame. I often struggle to see the detail in my wanderings throughout the city. When I am out with another photographer I often find I am shooting “over their shoulder” amazed at what they see that I miss.

Looking for discarded objects is a great opportunity to train my eye to better capture detail and to slow down in general whilst trekking the streets of Melbourne and my other favourite cities of the world. The Brief Capture a series of images featuring discarded or isolated objects against the cityscape.

Use a macro lens to further challenge the way I normally view the world with my camera. Wherever possible, avoid human interaction with the subject. Find beauty in very small, tight frames. Guiding Notes

Street objects are part of the flow of people on the street, but approached singularly, they have character. Just like people.

1. Use a ND filter to isolate still, discarded objects against the movement of busy life on the street. Make the object feel abandoned, obsolete, and lonely – discarded and left

behind.

2. Isolate a solitary object that has been discarded and is in rapid decay or disposed of. Place it context by using wide angle – show the perspective from the point of view of the object to give it a life. How can you make the viewer care about the object?

3. Look for evidence of recent life in a deserted area through the discarded objects left behind. Coffee cups and other non-refuse items. Train tickets. Movie tickets. Not just rubbish!

4. Gonzo the images.

Gonzo journalism is a style of journalism that is written without claims of objectivity, often including the reporter as part of the story via a first-person narrative. The word "gonzo" is believed to be first used in 1970 to describe an article by Hunter S. Thompson, who later popularized the style.

Wikipedia!

Take some interesting props and find the perfect context for them on the streets to get the ball rolling. The polaroid guys do this to add a layer of interest to the image.



Check out more of the polaroid goodness here.

- Some ideas from others include using a stencil.
- Maybe I could use a mirror – a reflection of the item itself on the background rather than just the item itself.
- Perhaps a prop Disney mirror to contrast with the pathos of the abandoned object – a play on “mirror mirror”.
- Quirky post it notes.
- Puffy kids’ “reward” stickers that teachers use – shot in close but with wide angle to give context.

5. Use double exposure to create a “ghost” image of the object.

Learnings from an Instagram feed “Gangculture” – Trevor Hernandez.



- Look for traditional compositional elements in the mess and clutter of the street.
- Use elements in the background to highlight the subject.



- Embrace “Gonzo” photography. Insert items you have created into the street situation.
- What things can you “seed” the scene with to make a point or add interest?
- Consider this, but accept that your ability to achieve this might not come naturally.



- Look for simple, uncluttered solitary objects of beauty.
- Isolate the subject from the field – bring simplicity to the scene.
- Look for simple, textured items – “crinkled” is good.



- Light, shadows, texture.
- Make the most of the golden hour light to lift the subject.
- Carefully search for the right textures and backgrounds.
- Use traditional composition techniques.
- Look for “transformation” of the subject – like the “Mask” shadow in the image.



- Look for signs of decay and human presence since departed. Remnants of humanity.



- Consider “kissing the sun” perspective.
- Use both natural and artificial light to highlight the subject.
- Can you use a flash to create this artificially?



- Look for strong bands of colour and lines.
- Parallel lines and diminishing lines work well.
- Is there something extraordinary in the ordinary scene in front of you?

Gear

- The Ricoh GR gives excellent balance of bokeh and background detail at f6, using an exposure time of 4 seconds at home. The Ricoh feels like it will be very unobtrusive and not upset anyone no matter where I am. It will only need a very small gorillapod for any long exposures.
- F100 with Macro Lens. Black and white film only. The 105mm lens can tend to hunt a bit. Take the SLR gorillapod and remote shutter release.

Book Review : Henri Cartier-Bresson “The Decisive Moment&...”

Sunday, September 20, 2015

Henri Cartier-Bresson’s “The Decisive Moment” is one of the most recognised photographic books ever released. The “spiritual father” of street photography was very fond of presenting his work in books rather than prints. The Matisse cover is just the first of many joys the book will bring you.

The book has been reprinted by Steidl but looks like it has already sold out? You can find it here on Amazon and here at Steidl. The book itself is beautifully presented in a slip case, dust cover and includes a book about the book... Well, it is a classic, after all.



I have not seen an original print of the book, so I can't comment about the quality of the new print vs the previous editions. The reproductions in the book are pretty basic in quality. The images almost look like scans of the original book's pages, rather than high res scans of photos or negatives. If you are looking for studio quality prints, then this is probably not the book for you.

The book is delightfully large, and the images are printed accordingly in size – nice and big!

Cartier-Bresson tells two “stories” in the book – a European and Asian series of images. There are many recognisable images in the first European story. I personally find the Asian images a bit overwhelming and “busy”. They feel more like a documentary of the place rather than an exploration of the people?

Here are the images I liked from the book. I have tried to avoid his most famous images

as you would have seen them many times before :



FRANCE. The Val de Marne 'département'. Joinville-le-Pont, near Paris. 1938.

"A newly-wed bride and groom at an outdoor café on the Marne. The couple were here for the entire afternoon with a full wedding party which included uncles, aunts and small children of the family."

Amazing scene of a bride and groom – an "everyday" couple. The angle of the bride and the pavement work together to subtly provide a dynamic line.

There is also something intriguing about the scales. It suggests that either the bride has been measured or perhaps the couple?

The lack of any engagement from the subjects on the background plane in the image contrasts with the excitement being displayed by the couple.



FRANCE. Paris. Avenue du Maine. 1932.

Elderly people always seem to make great subjects... Is it because they are our own future? Do we see our future selves in the aged? Wow, philosophical!

My favourite element of this image is the silhouettes in the mirror on the rear plane. The parallel lines created by the table settings bring attention to the subject. The white tablecloths offer a dramatic, contrast in the image.



ITALY. Basilicata. Accettura. 1951. A peasant funeral.

According to custom, the priest who officiates at the entire ceremony leaves the group halfway to the burial ground. Only the bearers and mourners accompany the body up the hillside.

A beautiful, dynamic diagonal line delivered by the dark subjects. The figure to ground ratio is strong and combines the balancing elements of the sky and buildings.

There is an element of surprise to what is, initially, an unremarkable image. The viewer's eye is drawn along the diagonal line and eventually lands on the coffin which complete arrests your attention. Once the coffin is recognised, the eye tends to travel back along the line of what are, now, clearly mourners.



ITALY. Salerno. 1933.



ITALY. Tuscany. Sienna. 1933.

"I was visiting the museum and happened to look out of an upstairs window, and saw this empty marketplace, stark in its lack of activity."

Both images remind me heavily of Fan Ho's series of Hong Kong images. Solid blocks of clearly defined tones, contrasted with strong lines of light and shadows. Silhouettes of

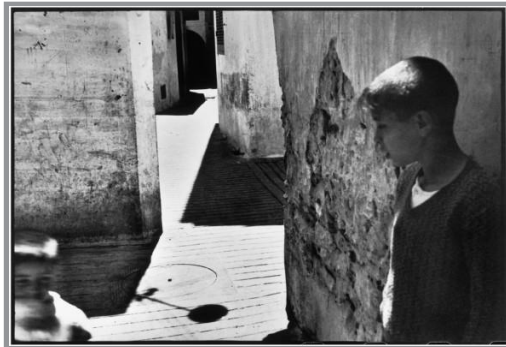
subjects complete the image in each case.

The high perspective of the second shot gives the feeling of a broad brush stroke across the large scene.



ITALY. Florence. Piazza della Signoria. 1933.

Cartier-Bresson was never afraid to crop a key element in an image, and doesn't sweat sharpness. I love the repetition of the tables combined with the motion of the bicycles.



SPAIN. Andalucia. Seville. 1933.

Again, the image features strong blocks of tone and shadow – but with the addition of a zig zag path inviting the eye of the viewer forward, into the image. The young boy looks like he is contemplating navigating the maze ahead, bringing the viewer into the image to make the journey with him.



SPAIN. Barcelona. Barrio Chino. 1933.

The narrow street of Barcelona's roughest quarter is the home of prostitutes, petty thieves and dope peddlers. But I saw a fruit vendor sleeping against a wall and was struck by the surprisingly gentle and articulate drawing scrawled there.

The lack of focus or sharpness adds to the image's sleepy feel. There is a clever juxtaposition of the subject and the image on the wall.



FRANCE. Paris. Place de l'Europe. Gare Saint Lazare. 1932.

I purposefully avoided the “classics” but could not resist the image of the guy jumping puddles, as there are many simple lessons to learn from it.

1. Look for movement.
2. “Wait” for the moment.
3. Tell a story – in this image, you can see where the subject has come from, why he is jumping, where he is going, and what is going to happen next.



GREAT BRITAIN. England. London. Hyde Park in the grey drizzle. 1937.

Clever use of parallel lines in this image. The elderly woman almost looks to be in a stiff corpse-like rictus.



GREAT BRITAIN. London. Coronation of King George VI. 12 May 1937.

“People had waited all night in Trafalgar Square in order not to miss any part of the coronation ceremony of George VI. Some slept on benches and others on newspapers. The next morning, one who was wearier than the others, had not yet wakened to see the ceremony for which he had kept such a late vigil.”

Two planes clashing again – the sleeping guy in the refuse against the rapt attention of the crowd waiting for something to happen. There is a clear space separating the two.



USA. New York City. 1947. A refugees boat coming from Europe has just arrived. A mother finds her son who had been separated from her during the war.



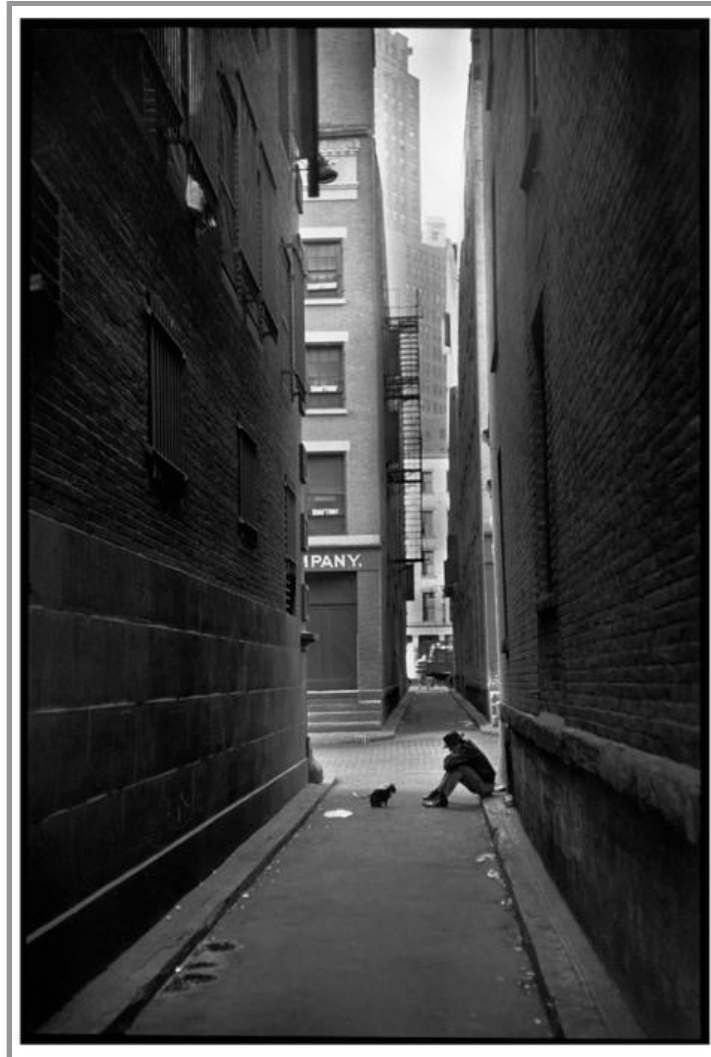
USA. New Mexico. Taos. 1947. The death of a land-owner.
His body was taken out to the burial ground in a shiny black motor hearse. Members of the family rode in a stage-coach; cowhands and ranch help came on horseback. During the funeral, this old cowboy bowed his head at the graveside.

Both of the above images capture a high intensity moment, isolated by a contrasting background.



USA. New York City. West Point cadets and their admiring young ladies attend the Army versus Notre-Dame football game. 1947.

Cartier-Bresson uses the repeating triangles created by the officers' coats to frame the female subjects. Triangles are a great shape to use in an image as either a gestalt or framing device.



USA. New York City. Manhattan. Downtown. 1947.

The “small moment” is highlighted by the enormity of the parallel lines of the walls and laneway. The man and the cat mirror each other perfectly, both looking somewhat lonely and forlorn. The parallel lines really “close in” on the subject and “zoom out” at the same time, dramatising the moment. Not sure if I have explained this very well, but it reminds me of the effect in a longer exposure where the photography zooms the lens during the exposure – but without the obvious distortion.

Conclusion

Cartier-Bresson is an inspiration and worth studying to improve your craft. The book is more of a “nice to have” volume rather than a high quality studio book. I suspect that the

images are not reproduced in a high enough quality for many people. Having the book on my shelves at home is a pleasure that outweighs the quality for me. The Matisse cover was enough to win me over!

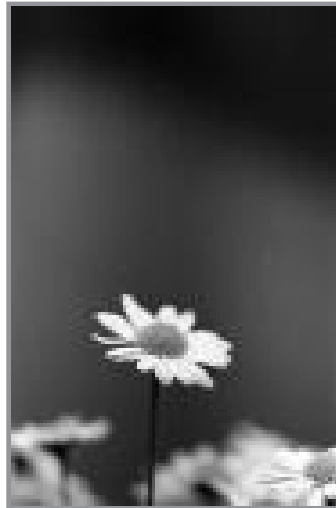
Notebook Project – Discarded Objects – Post Review

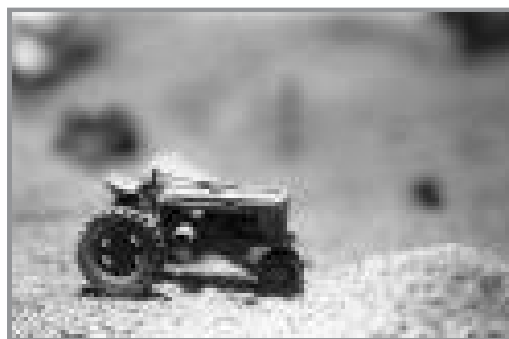
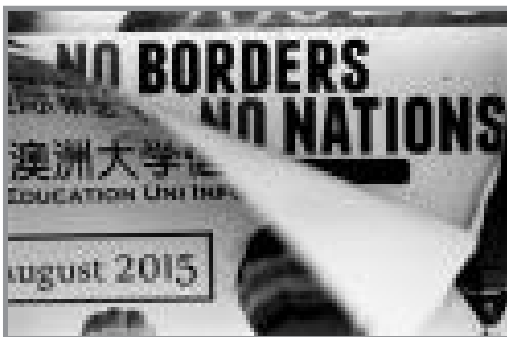
Sunday, September 20, 2015

Packed the Nikon F100 with a macro lens and headed into the city to see if I could capture “discarded objects” as a theme. It was a lot harder than I thought it would be. My ability to notice detail is quite limited. Combine this with a lack of patience, and you have some serious barriers to identifying and shooting appropriate subjects.

You can read about the preparation for this shoot [here](#).

The strangest thing I found whilst following this theme through was how quick I had to be to capture some subjects. Being mostly located on the pavement, they were constantly being stepped on, kicked along, or being swept up by the constantly moving masses of people. I spotted a ticket of some kind and was about to get down to shoot it when someone actually picked it up to put in the bin. Crazy bad luck?





The incredibly short depth of field in macro photography didn't help either. Whilst a creamy bokeh can be very aesthetically pleasing, the short DOF on some of the images did not help the composition.



It was also very difficult to create a second layer of meaning in each image – like the shadow face in the plastic bag image featured in the preparation post. Being so focused on just finding things to photograph was exhausting enough creatively, let alone finding things that have a bit more “clever” in them!

Despite having a clear brief, I found myself just drifting along the city streets. I had a print out of the exercise and objectives but was unable to follow them closely – it was just one of those kinds of days where it was all a bit loose.

The images that kinda work are a bit light on.

The coffee cup has some dramatic rain drops, but there is nothing interesting about the composition itself. The miniature tractor is cool, but I was unable to add anything to the composition – the model maker had done all the heavy lifting creatively. Scraps of paper are interesting from a pure aesthetic viewpoint, but are not yet telling a story.

Whilst the macro lens is autofocus, it tends to hunt a bit most of the time. There were still some OK opportunities for some street shots with the macro!





Learn to Fear the Missed Opportunity

Sunday, September 27, 2015

Decide to take the shot more often. There are so many regrets for the images not taken. So many street photographers I have met have an inner dialogue going on inside their heads, driving passivity and fear.



This inner dialogue leads to “shooting from the hip” and various avoidance enabling gadgets like this. Shooting at a 90 degree angle is not the answer to overcoming your reluctance to bring your camera to bear on a subject. If anything, it will make you feel more self conscious. I find the more self conscious I let myself feel, the more “dodgy” I start to look to people.

I am not anti “shooting from the hip” – but using it regularly to avoid any chance of being noticed will not lead to the outcomes you want as a photographer. Instead, develop the skills and courage to use your viewfinder!

The more confident and direct you can be with your actions, the less bothered people will generally be with your presence. Try and act too stealthy, and people will often start to notice you more!

Confidence also comes from knowing your gear. When the moment arrives, you can't be fiddling with your controls and dials, or setting a new iso. Learn how to use your tools. Constantly be thinking about the light conditions and your focal length. Being a film shooter, I am always considering the balance between aperture, shutter speed, and iso. Moving into an area with different light conditions means it is time to check things again. As a rangefinder enthusiast, I am also looking at the focus zone and hyperfocal distances constantly.



A great example of confidence leading to a positive outcome is this image of a Christian Missionary setting up for the day in Melbourne. Shot on 35mm film using a 35mm lens, the image is one of my more recent favourites.

I spotted them unpacking from about twenty metres and just walked straight up and took the shot. The girl was intent on her work, and only noticed me at the last moments before opening the shutter. Her look of surprised confusion is what I love about the image.

I was only about two metres away from her, and being early in the morning, there was no crowd to melt back into. She knew I had taken her photo. There was no way to avoid it... So what did I do? Just smile and start walking before she had a chance to process the information. No problem, no hassle. Just a great image.

Yah, once in a blue moon one of your subjects might get a bit “interested” in why and what you are doing. It happens to me once or twice a year – keep in mind I go out to shoot at least two weekends out of three, so it is statistically not a significant occurrence. And when it does happen, I just say “sure thing” and disengage by walking away. Nothing much comes of it past this point.

One thing I do lose sleep over is the images that never made it onto my film roll. The

situations where I shit my pants and didn't go for it. Seeing a perfect situation or subject and then worrying about being seen or noticed long enough for the opportunity to disappear is now my greatest fear.

Fear the missed opportunity more than being spotted. Get closer. Smile. Move on.

Some more reading on this topic here :

Dealing with Confrontation

Inconspicuity Angles

Inconspicuity Gear

What's Your Excuse? Tash Wrote a Cookbook...

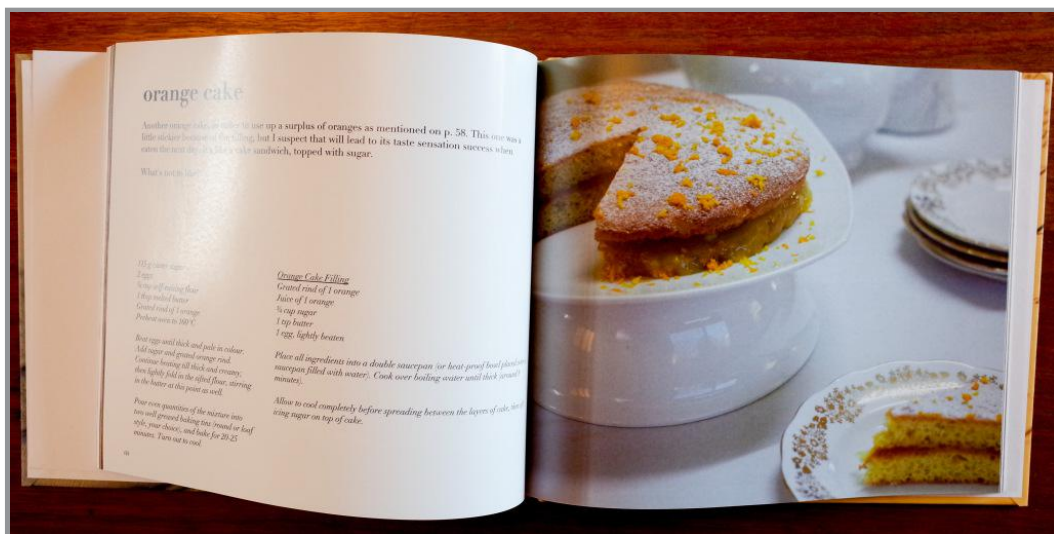
Sunday, October 11, 2015

Everyone can live a more creative life. The access to so many tools to execute your particular artistic objectives must drive the ghost of Shakespeare to #SMH.

The same thing that has destroyed the book industry has democratised it. Computers and the internet have decimated the traditional publishing business, but at the same time has enabled anyone with a laptop and interweb access can print a book they have written. Or publish an e-book. Always thought you could do a better Better Homes and Garden? Put your money where your mouth is – write, design, and publish it.

My photography buddy Natasha has just published a cook book of her Nanna's favourite recipes.

You can pick up a copy here.



Tash spent what I imagine to be quite a few weekends reading her Nanna's recipes, testing them, photographing them, and then writing and laying out the book. Now she is an amazing, published cooking author. She kept going through the difficult times in any project when you aren't sure if it is ever going to be finished or if it is going to be any good.

No excuses, just action and achievement.

Digital photography has completely broken down the "sometimes" or "special" occasion nature of film photography. There is zero cost to snap a moment vs the expensive and complex film processes. iPhone photography has further encouraged people to engage in developing an aesthetic style for their instagram, or their creative skills in creating an account for their dog or cat to live through.

There is no excuse for not living the creative life you aspire to. I work professionally in the food marketing business. My job is to try and understand what kinds of lives people aspire to and then develop food that can help them reach their ideal life... or at least give

them a small moment to experience that life in.

The only barrier is your own approach. Read this article from Harvard Business Review and then come back... It is not the standard "how to set and reach a goal" article.

<https://hbr.org/2011/02/nine-things-successful-people>

Some thought starters...

- **Get Specific.** Set a creative goal that is time bound. For a photographer, the two that make the most sense are to either publish a photobook or hold an exhibition. By setting a deadline to work to, you will be more likely to deliver the project. Having a goal gives you a constant reason to get out, photograph, curate, and shortlist continuously.
- **Seize the Moment.** Set aside time to engage in your creative tasks. I try and go out to shoot every Saturday morning, and then process my films in the afternoon. It also means being spontaneous. If you are just couch surfing on the weekend, just make a choice to pick up your camera and walk out the front door. The TV will still be there when you get back.
- **Knowing Exactly How Far You Have Left to Go.** A bit more challenging, but can be as simply as knowing you need 15 images for an exhibition and how many you currently have short listed.
- **Be a Realistic Optimist.** There is some pop psychology fact out there saying that believing you are creative is the biggest driver of creative success. If you believe you ARE creative, it will change the way your mind thinks to BE MORE creative. Once you make a decision to pursue street photography, engage with it. Read books, blogs, look at the photos of others, share your photos, participate in forums. Do anything but isolate yourself.
- **Focus on Getting Better Rather than Being Good.** I don't think any artist, athlete, or entrepreneur is ever satisfied. Their success comes from a constant need to improve and learn. Be the same. If you think you have mastered street photography, let me know... I have been doing this now for at least ten years. There are times when I am elated with my images, and other times deflated by how much there is still to learn. The journey is one that never ends, everyone is on, but all at different spots along the path. I am a lot further along the path than I was five years ago, but then I see people like Vivian Maier and Fan Ho a long way off in the distance, on the same path. So long as I keep moving along the path, I am happy.
- **Have Grit.** The start is easy, and once the finishing line is in sight, it gets easy again. The middle part of your creative project is the hardest. You cannot see the end goal being realised yet, but have to keep at it. No matter how much your project may miss on your original expectations, the most important thing is to finish it.
- **Build Your Willpower Muscle.** Do things you don't want to. Get out and shoot, rain hail or shine. Take more photos of people and get closer. Don't be afraid. Push hard. Then harder again.
- **Don't Tempt Fate.** Don't overpromise to yourself – if you overcommit on projects you are more likely to fail. Be realistic but optimistic. Ramp up your commitment mid project if you are feeling good, but don't go too hard at the start!
- **Focus On What You Will Do.** Phrasing it "I am going to spend Saturday Morning shooting" rather than "I am not going to watch Saturday Morning Cartoons on Fox8" is more effective for your motivation...

What's your project going to be?

Over the years my projects have been a few exhibitions, some photobooks (usually of street photography trips overseas) and this blog.

If it is not street photography, explore what else is out there. November is Nanowrimo – National Novel Writing Month. Why not commit yourself to writing about 1600 words a day to finish with a short novel at the end of the month? I did a few years back – yah, the book was complete rubbish about the zombie apocalypse before it got all trendy again, but at least I can say I wrote a book in my lifetime.

And a Final Word.

Support those who do creative things as best you can. At the very first self-organised exhibition of photography I put on with some friends many years ago, I made the opening speech. We had a lot of friends and family attending – the gallery was packed.

“And if you buy something, thank you. I cannot explain just how exciting and rewarding it is for the artist when you like something enough to buy it and put it up at home or wherever.”

I love the cookbook, and hope that Tash also gets a bit of buzz knowing I liked her project enough to part with some cash to have it.

Share What You Do...

Sunday, October 11, 2015

I would love to feature some street photography blogs or galleries here each week. Fill out the form below and stay tuned.

Contact me here

Name(required) Email(required) Website / Blog / Gallery(required) Anything you want to say?(required)

Featured Street Photographer #1 – Ed Fetahovic

Saturday, October 17, 2015

What a great place to start with featuring other Street Photographers! Ed is a Perth based SP focusing heavily on his passion for black and white photography. His website, Monochrome View offers a great mix of all kinds of information and thoughts.

<http://www.monochromview.blogspot.com.au/>

Ed approaches his creative growth in a mindful way, ensuring he is constantly challenging himself to try new things and build the tools to fully realise his natural feel for subjects.

His article on preparing for an upcoming trip to Japan is a great example of mentally prepping for a “big game” just like an athlete does. Break down the skills into individual activities that can be practiced, so that when the “moment” occurs, the techniques to create a perfect moment on the frame come naturally and instantly.

The way Ed is developing his thinking as a photographer is evident in his posts, most of which tend to explore a different facet of photography that he is working on, along with some examples of his responses to the challenges set by himself!

Monochrome View has been up and running since September 2015, and already has some great content. Reading it is like having a conversation with Ed over a beer! Keep up the content Ed. I loved it!

Let's find out a little bit more about Ed...

Why Street Photography?

To be honest I got drawn into it because of photographers like Willian Klien, Gus Powell and Dayido Moryama. But rather than name dropping I will expand – Street photography can incorporate every style you can think of, from motion, to light, to abstract to long exposure, to portraiture just to name a few, and none of it is staged (or it can be) – it doesn't really matter (non staged is my preference though). It's all raw and challenging to me. I discovered this not long ago when I was out one day. I nabbed a photo of a guy standing in the perfect lighting and to be honest I never looked back when realising its everything I like about photography with the added challenge of random chance and probability.

What do you shoot with?

I'm a minimalist in this sense. I use 1 lens; my 28mm -105mm manual focus; my D5100 I bought off my dad like a year ago (subsequently the time I took up photography), and sorry to disappoint but no bag. I go out with just the camera, Maybe I could tell you whats in my pockets instead? I usually have my keys, wallet, phone and my razer gaming headphones, the headphones are usually over my ears though. There's nothing like being out in the city listening to music as the world go's by, all the while capturing moments of random probability.

Your best tip?

Practise. You won't get better just by looking at other people work – you need to train your eye to see more of what is aesthetically pleasing to you (and if like me you over think things, supplement it with some form of research). That statement “training the eye to see what you think is good” is the key – It took me months of frustration to learn that. There is a reason all of the photography blogs and websites say this too – it's because it's the one true way to actually getting good at taking photos. Trust me, there's no secret button on your camera that pintrest can reveal for you, stop scrolling and start snapping!

What's your favourite “go to” spot?

I don't have one – and I subsequently don't want one. I normally try and find something new about the different places I walk though and if I'm walking through a familiar place I do the same; I spend a little bit of my time every day with or without my camera noticing things I never normally would. This is about as hard as training your eye to see the photos you want to take before they happen...but thats why I mentioned practise above, its all encompassing.

What got you into Street Photography?

Random occurrence I guess. I found myself enjoying the idea of photography in the first few months of picking up a camera but the learning curve and the quality that was out there was already so staggering I found myself quite overwhelmed. I think after short while of trying to take a photo I almost gave up because of the staggering difficulty to get noticed – what I didn't notice was that my photos were very mediocre.

After a while I just decided to take photos of whatever I found interesting and built on that. I'm glad I found that thought though – I probably wouldn't be doing photography at this stage if I didn't. So after getting use to and understanding the basics of photography I naturally wanted to push the envelope.

I didn't really consider street photography for a while after – but to keep the story short, it bloomed through the influence of my partners support in my ideas and development. Also notably I stumbled onto a book which caused a little bit of the right type of inspiration. I found it at boffins and it's titled : “The World Atlas of Street Photography”. I kind of hit the ground running from there.

What were my favourite images from Ed's portfolio?

I am still fascinated by self portraits. Ed has been developing a style that features hard lighting and is very compelling. Here is Ed himself!



A great example black and white photography being used to create a unique image, that just can't be replicated with colour. Ed has a wonderful beard which features heavily, both in the image and then reflected in the strong profile shadow on the stark wall. The image has been converted to BW, but even in colour, it would be quite monochromatic regardless.

The simplicity of the image is so beautifully suited to black and white. The shadow profile has a few little bits and pieces for the viewer to discover – his glasses look a little different in the shadow, maybe a little bit more futuristic?

The careful consideration of the angle of the shadow thrown on the wall is clever and interesting. From a front on view, Ed's face looks to be a pretty standard angle, due to the two dimensional nature of photographs. The shadow on the wall shows the true angle, but helps the viewer almost disassociate the shadow as an alter ego or similar. It appears somewhat disconnected to Ed in some way to me, but still part of him – a guardian angel? or maybe the “devil” that speaks in your ear when you want to do something naughty!?

Self portraits are something every street photographer should try at some point. It is just part of what all the greats do... so why not you too?



Whilst most of Ed's work is BW, I loved this image. The solid blocks of colour and texture, offset by the angles of the shadows thrown by the awning are aesthetically pleasing. It reminds me of some of my favourite work by Fan Ho. The colour of the awning is so simple yet contrasts with the orderly nature of the rest of the image. Ed had his eyes open wide the day he spotted this one!



I have not yet really been able to crack this motion style of photography. A lot of the images I am seeing on the net that I like feature this at the moment. I suppose it is a little

harder using film – you can't take an image and see what happened immediately to adjust. Focus is over-rated – Ed has really captured the constant motion of the street in this image.

Thanks for sharing your work Ed.

Some Melbourne Street Images

Monday, October 19, 2015

Some images taken over the last two weeks in Melbourne. I don't post a lot of my own images here, as the whole social media cycle of feeling the need to shoot / post, shoot / post, shoot / post, was becoming a real chore.

But hey, I like doing the less expected thing sometimes...











Featured Street Photographer #2 – Sean Breadsell

Saturday, October 24, 2015

Sean has a very well curated site where he posts his best images. There is very little image clutter due to loving all his creative “children” equally. Having the decisive mindset to pick only your very best images from each shoot is something to aspire to. Forced choice is often my go to tool – one or two images per roll is what I expect to make the first short list. Any more than that, and I find I am being a bit vain...

Perth in Black and White is featured heavily in Sean’s website. Sean shares some of the stories behind his best shots, which is a great chance to learn how someone else does it – and the knowledge that most of us share the same fears, curiosities, and wants.

You can check out Sean here.

Developing an eye for potential images is a skill that is evident in Sean’s images. He has a particular knack for seeing a composition, and then getting the shot pretty much right by waiting for the right moment and right subject to come into frame.

Let’s get to know Sean a little better...

Why Street Photography?

I am a people watcher from way back and I find people of all types interesting in their own right. I like how people interact with the environment and with other people around them. Often when I walk I see scenes before my eyes forming with people in or entering the scene, objects and acts of nature like the wind, the rain or shadows from the sun....I love it all, potential photos everywhere. Black & white helps see the scene for what it is without the disturbance of colour, but when the colour screams out to you....trust me you will notice!

What do you shoot with?

Honestly, a camera and any camera. I have bought into the whole, discrete small camera only myth, but I have used anything from a small camera like a Panasonic GX1, OMD series of cameras and big DSLRs like Nikon D90/700/800. I often or maybe somewhat often shoot with film, I currently have a Nikon FM2, F90X, Olympus Trip 35 and other various cameras that I have used. Lenses, you need to get up close and shoot in people’s faces haha....no you don’t, this is my journey and I see scenes through my eyes, I shoot with whatever I have.....even iPhones.

Your best tip?

Be your own person, photograph what you like and make up your own rules. Share photos and get feedback, but don’t take it personally because everyone has an opinion. Most of all, enjoy!

What’s your favourite “go to” spot?

I don't have a favourite but I love walking the streets of Perth, love my city.

What got you into Street Photography?

I am not sure what made me start in the streets, probably because I walk a lot around the city. I have worked in the city for the last 20 years and it is what I know. I see scenes, and once I got more into photography, it was just something that I started doing...I will say, buying my first DSLR got me into photographing more seriously, even though I had always had a camera of some sorts since I was a kid.

Here are my three favourite images from Sean's website which demonstrate his decisive moment skillz!



I suspect this wall is very popular in Perth with Street Photographers! It is a pearler... Starting off with a colour shot is probably not representative of Sean's work – but shows how important waiting for the right subject is.

The solid blocks of colour of the wall look striking and create dynamic lines in the image. Even the yellowy colour (I am red green colour blind, so don't judge me too harshly if I get it wrong!) is quite a passive colour to my eyes, along with the others.

The angular lines in the image add to the dynamic feel.

Contrasting against this is the strong and bold red of the subject's shopping trolley. She is wearing plain black which only helps highlight the trolley even more. I only wish she wasn't looking at her phone! But that is not Sean's fault... Kids these days...

This image is the perfect example of one of my favourite quotes

"There are the two basic controls at the photographer's command – position and timing – all others are extensions, peripheral ones, compared to them."

David Hurn

which you can read more about [here](#).



I am quite envious of this image in Sean's portfolio... I have been looking for my own version of this moment for just about forever, inspired by this image by Robert W. Kelley a Life photographer.



Photographer : Robert W. Kelley

There is much to learn from the team that photographed for Life Magazine.

Again, seeing the potential for the image, and then having the patience to wait for the right moment has created a wonderful image. The repetition in the image adds to the feeling of “calm before the storm” you can imagine the subject feeling in both images.



The final image I am going to feature today is this one, titled “Life”. I probably like some of Sean’s other images that feature a contrast between movement and still, but there is something to learn from his commentary about this image which you can read here.

How often do we all see a composition with our eyes, but keep walking. What keeps us walking when an image beckons?

Fear of strangers?

A feeling the moment has already passed?

Momentum has pushed you past the opportunity?

Sean saw this opportunity and kept walking. This time, however, he broke the mental cycle that was a barrier to his creativity. He stopped and went back and asked for a portrait... And got this great shot that he loves.

Ask the question. Go back and get the shot. The worst thing that can happen is that the opportunity has disappeared or the person refuses. And then you just keep walking anyway.

Here is an opportunity I saw, but for some reason, kept walking. I managed to stop my stumpy little legs moving and went back and asked for a portrait. I am glad I did...



Featured Street Photographer #3 – Carmelina Pascoe

Sunday, October 25, 2015

Next up is Carmelina Pascoe, a talented Melbourne based photographer who is also about to spend some serious time in a very photogenic New York City. Can't wait to see what she shoots there!

Carmelina's site and instagram feed are all exceptionally well curated, which makes them exciting and inspiring to visit.

Carmelina is on the interwebs here :

<http://www.carmelinapascoe.com/>

<https://instagram.com/chapterandverse/>

<http://facebook.com/CarmelinaPascoePhotography>

She uses black and white primarily to create wonderful images of the world around us all, interspersed with some colour shots that only make sense in RGB. Carmelina is also working professionally in photography, shooting events and portraits. Her portraits deliver on the whole "I don't want to look posed" but "you have to pose for" genre perfectly. Next time I get married, I will be sure to give her a call! (BTW Mrs Melbournestreetphotography is a wonderful wife – just in case she is reading!).

She is a very thoughtful photographer – being able to explain the creative process is a skill not many of us possess. There are some great blog posts on her site, which I enjoyed reading. I would encourage her to write a bit more as I would love to hear more about her journey. Actively thinking through your technique and options is something I also recommend to everyone looking to develop their skills, and Carmelina has been kind enough to share her thoughts here :

Why Street Photography?

Quite simply, people fascinate me. Street Photography tells our story, it advises what it is to live in this time and place. It is the documentation of our lives, albeit in my case with a little poetic licence.

What do you shoot with?

I began shooting street in mid September 2013 an iPhone5, but switched in May 2014 to a Canon 450D with a 50mm f/1.8 borrowed from a friend. I moved to a Canon 7D later that year and added a 50mm f/1.4 and a 24-72 f/2.8 to my kit.

When shooting I will choose a lens and use that for the day as its less to carry, on occasion I will take both lenses. Most of my shots are taken on the 50mm f/1.4 as I love the depth of field it produces. Not to sound too preachy but the other weapon in my arsenal is respect. I use it in all my shots. I do not believe street photography should be an outlet for ridiculing others. If I wouldn't want myself in that photo, I wouldn't take it. It's

a privilege to shoot the streets, my subjects deserve the dignity and respect of me as a photographer and of the audience viewing them.

Your best tip?

Train your eye, work on the artistic quality of the photo. Focus on the story in the photo, the composition, the lighting, the subject, they all go a long way to conveying the essence of the photo, and whilst we can't change the sun, or the clouds or the crowds behind (or in front of) your subject, maybe there's a way to take the shot that will give you a better result than what you first thought. And to that end – practice, practice, practice! Instead of taking one shot of a subject – take more, the hand movement or the tilt of a head, the angle or distance from which you take it, may make the difference in the shot. See how you and your camera react in different circumstances. Look outside the world of street photography, other genres, other art forms for ideas on lighting and composition. I've found some amazing techniques using existing lighting when looking at sculptures or paintings, or even dancers performing on stage or the way a singer is lit in a smoky bar.

What's your favourite "go to" spot?

Almost reluctant to tell you as it's already crowded! Sadly, I don't get there anywhere near often enough but... Centre Place. The natural light there is amazing and changes in fascinating ways throughout the day.

What got you into Street Photography?

As I said earlier, people fascinate me. Every person has a story to tell, everyone has a history. When I was a child my mother would create stories about the people we would pass in the streets. Some would make me laugh, some would sadden me and others would scare me. It wasn't long before we were creating conflicting stories for the same individuals and it made me realise that we all see the world differently, but it also made me realise that people have more than one story in them, no-one is two dimensional.

When I look at art from the past, the images that stick in my mind are street or documentary in style. It shows us how we live today and how our lives have changed. It is a moving medium and genre in a way that others aren't. It also allows me to title my photographs with stories. These are not the actual stories of the people in the photos, but my interpretation of their story as an observer. Generally, they are stories that we can all relate to, or at the very least empathise with. The human condition is truly inspiring.

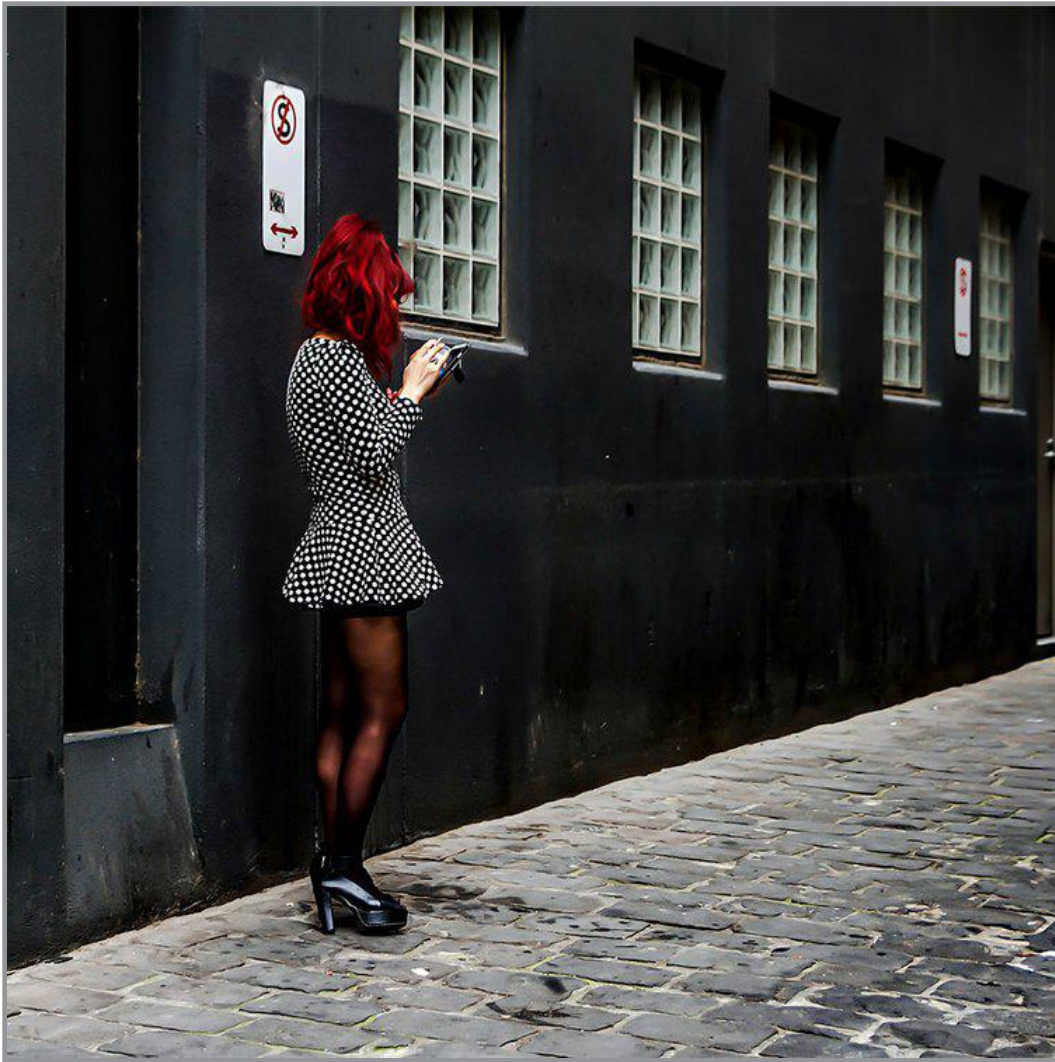
So, let's have a look at some of Carmelina's images that I loved!





The first two images are a great demonstration of Carmelina's ability to "see" images all around her, and get the camera up quickly before the moment passes. There is only the quick and the dead in street photography. Moments are fleeting, and if you cannot get your camera up and the shutter firing quickly, you will miss images like these. The two guys mirroring each other in the first image would only have been there for a few seconds before crossing the road. Carmelina needed to spot the opportunity, frame it, and get the shot quickly.

The second image would have had a little more lead time, potentially. The image is made more interesting by the expression of the subject, and his hands, both of which would have shifted in a few seconds as well. I love the multiple planes of this image, with the chess pieces and the subject being in very different places in the image. They feel linked in some way, but yet separated by space and distance. Spooky.



Perfect use of colour in an image. There is still a monochromatic feel to the image, but it is still in colour. Everything in this image just works so well... The diagonal lines of the lane, wall, and windows, starting at the subject and then converging to the right of the image. The contrast of the subject's dress against the wall. The repetition of the window frames. Diagonal converging lines always seem to be a winner in images.



Another image featuring different planes. The main subject is almost in the “middle” of the frame, front to back. There are people in the foreground and background, none of which are interacting with him. You can almost feel how ignored the busker feels in this spot – people in the Flinders St subway are all in transit from one place to another, on a mission to a destination. Ain’t nobody got time for distractions. Not a great place to busk, I suspect...

Again, Carmelina has used lines effectively in the image to direct the viewer’s eye to the busker.



I often worry too much about exposure – getting a nice even light so you can see everything. Carmelina has created a deeply moving image by showing us less, rather than more. The main subject's legs are lit and my eye travels from there up to her thoughtful face. It is only then that the second subject, moving away from her becomes visible. I start to wonder why he is leaving? Why isn't she going with him?

Again, the diagonal line bisecting the image brings the water to life, and the story of the image is told along this line.

Thanks for spending some time with Melbourne Street Photography Carmelina!

Featured Street Photographer #4 – Cameron Delaney

Monday, October 26, 2015

Highlighting the work of some other Aussie Street Photographers has been a blast. Cameron Delaney is the latest to share his work with Melbourne Street Photography.

Cameron is based in the Byron Shire, New South Wales, about 50 kms south from the Queensland border. A tough place to be a street photographer... Limited locations!

You can check out Cameron's images here :

<http://cmd-photos.tumblr.com/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/125276298@N03/>

Let's find out a bit more about Cameron.

Why Street Photography?

I like people a lot more when I'm photographing the street, I smile, speak and even have the odd conversation which I would never do if I was just passing through the streets in everyday life. Also the fact that I don't live in a large city means I have to go to those areas (Brisbane & Surfers Paradise) just for the purposes of taking photographs, which forces me to see the city with its buildings, roads, cars and people all as one.

What do you shoot with?

95% of the time it's the X-pro1 & 18mm, zone focus, set & forget. I carry the 35mm and am saving for the 27mm pancake which I hope will become the default street lens

I sometimes carry a Canon Kiss X4 with a 50mm.

I was recently gifted an entire darkroom setup which is about to change the way I do my photography, so my film cameras, Olympus-Pen EE2 and Lomo LC-A will be getting a workout soon enough (& hopefully some brothers and sisters to join them)

Your best tip?

I have to repeat this to myself a lot.

"Slow down, find the canvas, wait for the paint"

What's your favourite "go to" spot?

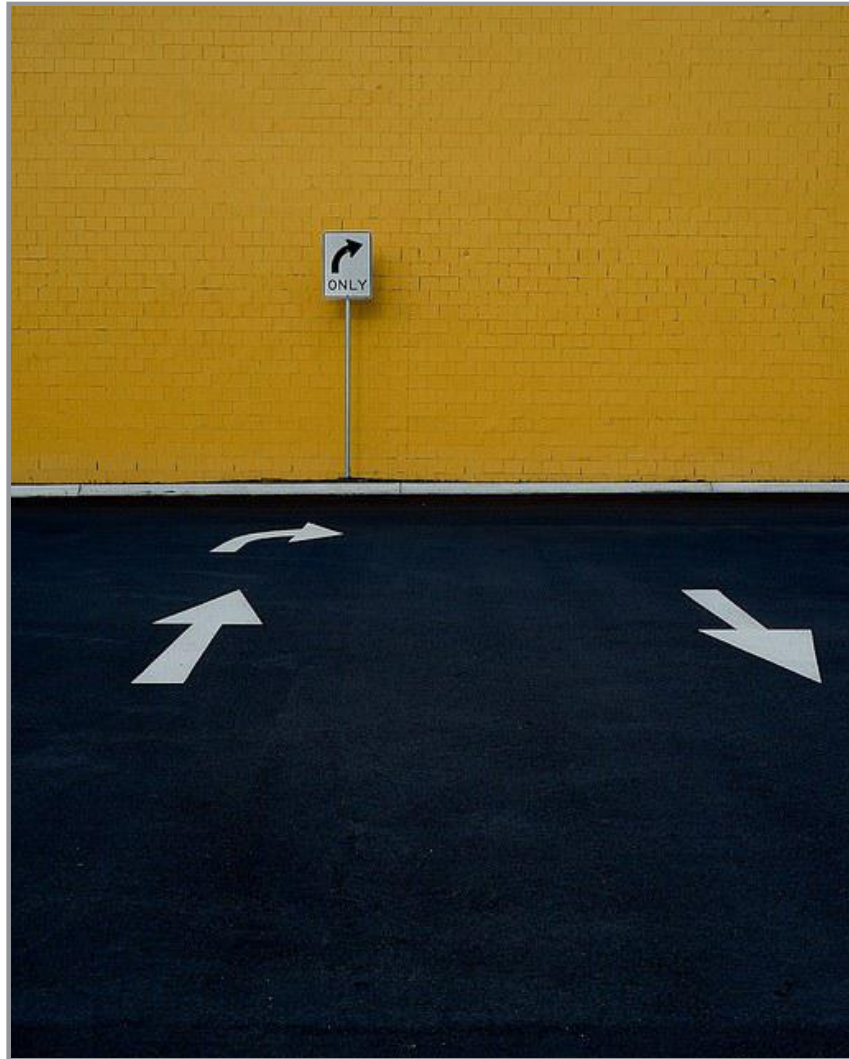
Wherever there are people, buildings and light.

What got you into Street Photography?

Truthfully it was looking at and following great photographers on Tumblr. The images I

liked and gravitated towards tended to be predominately street photography & urban environment. A friend at work is also passionate about photography so we started going for walks, driving to different towns. I started a separate picture only blog on Tumblr and even now like to upload at least once a day. Before long I realised I was hooked and have been fumbling, cursing and giving up ever since.

Cameron's images are a pleasure to curate and think about.



Let's get the obligatory colour shot out of the way first. Cameron has a great feel for colour and how to use them for the greatest impact. The clear blocks of colour in the image are both striking and evocative. The bisecting line of the gutter gives both of the main colours space to breathe and live separately. The arrows provide a natural path for the viewer's eye to travel, and is a little bit quirky and playful in the way the eye travels up the wall and then back down to the ground. Nicely spotted!



Focus is over-rated, as the saying goes. Three is always a good number in street photography. It always seems to deliver a dynamic feel and motion to an image. The three subjects in the image form a bit of a gestalt triangle shape, which is aesthetically pleasing. The lack of focus also adds to the feeling of fluidity and movement in the image. The subjects feel as though they are in motion.





The next two images demonstrate the excellent mastery of light that Cameron has. Understanding how light and shadow work together to create great images is something that is worth working on! Not everything in an image needs to be lit – sometimes by having dark, negative spaces, it can highlight the subject even more.

In the first image, the edge lighting on the subject is very appealing, and adds to the her sense of momentum. The runner's hair flapping back in the wind is only partially visible. The light only hitting in a way that highlights her hair, rather than illuminating it. I think I would also like to see this image cropped a bit to take out the source of the light at the top of frame and just leave her and the road markings. Maybe in a panoramic style crop?

The second shows an awareness of the opportunities that only experience helps you see. Seeing the sliver of light and then waiting for the right subject to present itself is part of Cameron's mantra and is perfect in this image.

Cameron's tip is a very useful one for street photographers. Find a canvas and wait for the paint – but please try and do this without looking creepy for all of our sakes'!

Cameron has recently acquired gear to process and print film – I am very much looking forward to hearing how he goes... I love the process of shooting film, and hope Cameron does too.

To wrap things up, Cameron also shared with me a personal inspiration of his – a letter written by Magnum photographer Sergio Larrain in 1982 to his nephew, who had asked Larrain for advice on how to become a photographer. Enjoy.

First and foremost, find a camera that fits you well, one that you like, because it's about feeling comfortable with what you have in your hands: the equipment is key to any profession, and it should have nothing more than the strictly necessary features.

Act like you're going on an adventure, like a sailing a boat: drop the sails. Go to Valparaíso or Chiloé, be in the street all day long, wander and wander in unknown places, sit under a tree when you're tired, buy a banana or some bread and get on the first train, go wherever you like, and look, draw a bit, look. Get away from the things you know, get closer to those you don't know, go from one place to the other, places you like. Then, you'll start finding things, images will be forming into your head, consider them as apparitions.

When you get back home, develop, print and start looking at what you've done, all of the fish you've caught. Print your photos and tape them to a wall. Look at them. Play around with the L, cropping and framing, and you will learn about composition and geometry. Enlarge what you frame and leave it on the wall. By looking, you will learn to see. When you agree that a photograph is not good, throw it out. Tape the best ones higher on the wall, and eventually look at those only (keeping the not-so-good one gets you used to not-so-goodness). Save the good ones, but throw everything else away, because the psyche retains everything you keep.

Then use your time to do other things, and don't worry about it. Start studying the work of others and looking for something good in whatever comes into your hands: books, magazines, etc. and keep the best ones, and cut them out if you can, keep the good things and tape them to the wall next to yours, and if you can't cut them out, open the book or magazine at the good pages and leave it open. Leave it there for weeks, months, until it speaks to you: it takes time to see, but the secret will slowly reveal itself, and eventually you will see what is good and the essence of everything.

Go on with your life, draw a bit, take a walk, but don't force yourself to take photographs: this kills the poetry, the life in it gets sick. It would be like forcing love or a friendship: you can't do it. Take a new journey: go to Porto Aguirre, ride down the Baker to the storms in Aysén; Valparaíso is always beautiful, get lost in the magic, get lost for days up and down its slopes and streets, sleep in a sleeping bag, soak in reality – like a swimmer in the water – and let nothing conventional distract you.

Let your feet guide you, slowly, as if you were cured by the pleasure of looking, humming, and what you will see you will start photographing more carefully, and you will learn about composition and framing, you will do it with your camera, and your net will be filled with fish when you arrive home. Learn about focus, aperture, close-ups, saturation, shutter speed. Learn how to play with your camera and its possibilities. Collect poetry (yours and that of others), keep everything good you can find, even that done by others. Make a collection of good things: like a small museum in a folder.

Photograph the way you like it. Don't believe in anything but your taste, you are life and it's life that chooses... You are the only criterion. Keep learning. When you have some good photos, enlarge them, make a small exhibition or put them in a book and have it bound. Showing your photographs will make you realize what they are, but you will understand only when you will see them in front of others. Making an exhibition is giving something, like giving food, it's good that others are shown something done with seriousness and joy. It's not bragging, it's good for you because it gives you feedback.

That's enough to start. It's about vagabonding, sitting down under a tree anywhere. It's about wandering in the universe by yourself: you will start looking again. The conventional world puts a veil over your eyes, it's a matter of taking it off during your time as a photographer.

Featured Street Photographer #5 – Michael Zikaras

Wednesday, October 28, 2015

Michael has a very distinctive style, featuring strong use of colours, combined with light and shade. Many street photographers tend towards featuring black and white monochromatic images. Michael is the exception to the rule. His images make me want to pick up a roll of soon – to – expire Portra 400 and get out there to see the world in colour once again!

Visit his website here.

<http://www.michaelzikarasphotography.com/>

What has Michael got to say about stuff?

Why Street Photography?

I love looking at street photos – their randomness, emotion evoking qualities, stories, colours, shades and shadows. I also love the process of making street photos. I enjoy the chase for the “keeper” photo, searching for the right moment, with the right light, with the right person with the right gesture. The editing process is just as enjoyable for me, and it’s often at that point that I realise I have a good shot.

Capturing an emotive street life moment, and producing it, through my camera and editing, is what drives me most and fuels my passion. Everyday millions of moments, gestures, expressions and situations pass us by. To capture just one of those single “moments” and turn it into art, is totally addictive and what I love doing.

What do you shoot with?

I started taking street photos under 2 years ago, and started with a Canon 700D, but now use a FujiFilm X100T and my iPhone 6. I love the FujiFilm and use manual settings which I adapt to my most enjoyable conditions: early morning, late afternoon, colour rich environments with interesting subjects.

Your best tip?

You miss 100% of shots you don’t take. If it doubt, take the photo. A sizable percentage of photos I have ended up with the biggest emotional connections, have been random, 100% instinctual photos. The more photos you take, the better you’ll be faster. And when you do have those days where you come home with nothing, don’t sulk (well, no longer than 15 minutes of sulking), and get back out there as soon as you can. Some of my very favourite photos, I took the day or morning after a “bad day”.

What’s your favourite “go to” spot?

I have many, but anywhere where there’s colour, shade, people and good light. I love Melbourne’s CBD, St Kilda, Chapel Street, South Melbourne and Vic Market. My favourite scenario: golden hour in the CBD.

What got you into Street Photography?

I think a few years ago, I began a subconscious search for a creative outlet. My grandfather was a very prominent sculptor in Europe and my father more so in Melbourne. I had hints of my fathers' artistic abilities, but had never pursued anything until I got the street photography bug. I was overseas taking some photos with my phone and a few turned out to capture an emotive street moment that looked good and resonated with me.

Since 2014 I have spent all my spare time taking photos and enjoying researching the masters – Joel Meyerowitz, Alex Webb, Jeff Mermelstein and Saul Lieter. I also love looking at modern photographers like John Goldsmith and Michelle Rick who inspire me with their amazing work.

It is often a consistent theme as street photographers develop to reduce and simplify their camera of choice. Michael's tip and preferred tool – the X100T – ensure that he has a camera with him more often. Most people start thinking a DSLR is the right tool. Over time, the pull of something a little more portable and less obvious can become quite strong. I love my SLRs, but they are what people define as “pro” cameras. It is a little more confronting to have a big SLR poking at someone on the street vs a little point and shoot, or rangefinder.

Consider your choice of camera carefully, and remain open to possibilities. The lens on the X100T is much better than most kit lenses you will get with a DSLR, and will easily fit in your bag or even a pocket. Do you really need that DSLR weighing you down? (Yeah, but I admit one of my all time favourite cameras is the Nikon F3!).

As a primer, you can find out more about rangefinder cameras here. Or maybe have a think about something like a Ricoh GR Digital (what I have as an alternative to the X100T).

Don't laugh it off quite yet...

This camera fits in my pocket.



And took this image when we travelled to NYC together!



Let's have a look at where Michael's talent and camera combine...



This first image represents Michael's strong visual style perfectly. Deep, rich colours, bathed in the light that floods Melbourne during the "golden hour" which he calls out. The silhouette and the shadow outline are somehow of different people. Not sure how he got this one pulled together, but it is clever in the way it challenges the viewer's initial perception of the scene.

Like a number of the images I have discovered, reviewing different local photographers, Michael has no fear of dark places in his images. Negative space created by the lack of light serve to highlight the subject and make sure the moves to the places intended by the photographer. Courage is needed to not worry too much about lighting every corner of the image.



I love this image. Again, a lot of dimly lit space, which leads straight to the subject who is exiting the frame bottom right – the same place your eye is going to exit. This image is what I would imagine Garry Winogrand would shoot if he were around today. A bit gritty, a bit real, and a realistic representation of life.

Not sure what camera Michael used for this image, but I suspect it was the X100T. The 35mm focal length would have enabled him to capture the subject in the bottom right to deliver the dynamic feel of the image, but without having to point the camera directly at the subject. The small, relatively inconspicuous size of the camera, combined with a technique of keeping moving would have resulted in the shot happening in an instant without it really even registering on the subject's radar.



And finally, an instant favourite for me. This image is a great interpretation of a common subject. Public laundries seem to show people in some kind of suspended animation, just waiting for someone with a camera to come on by. This image features exceptionally strong framing, with the dark outside of the laundry, and the window frames working together to segment the image.

There is a nice feel with the tumble driers and the wall on the far right working together to balance the image. The subject is dead, smack middle, dispelling the rule of thirds mandatory.

Thanks to Michael for spending some time with Melbourne Street Photography. Love your work!

I'm Big in Japan – The MSP Guide to Street Phot...

Sunday, November 22, 2015

Japan is full of delightful quirks and eccentricities. Here are some of my tips for the street photographer travelling to Japan.

1. Get a Mobile Wifi Router. They are about 1000 yen per day and have virtually unlimited usage. I got mine here. You just pick them up at a counter once you get through customs. Mine was a little twitchy – It was a bit on the lazy side and wanted to go to “sleep” all the time. The battery on these suckas lasts all day easily, so google maps your heart out!

2. Google Maps is Your Friend. Don't bother with paper maps in Japan. They will only confuse the shite out of you. I chucked mine at the end of day one. Call me an internet doofus, but it was only on this trip that I learnt how to use the direction pointy thing on Google maps, that orientates the map to which direction you want to go in. Every tourist I saw with a paper map in their hands had a matching look which combined frustration, terror, and complete helplessness. Get the wifi router, and learn the features of google maps.

3. Google Translate is Your Other Bestie. Learn how to use it before you depart. Then you can go read pretty any menu in town with the swipe of your finger. I couldn't have ordered the New Zealand Lamb at a Japanese “French” restaurant without it. There a lot of places where people are very friendly, but don't understand any English.

4. Learn Some Basic Japanese. The Japanese are like a friendlier version of the French when it comes to visitors. Some basic phrases will go a long way to helping you through everything. Learn how to say the basics before you go. Yes, no, please, hello, good evening, sorry etc. You will be surprised at how much the locals appreciate you making the effort.

5. Get the Airline Limousine Bus. The Narita Express, whilst looking ridiculously cool as a Transformer was a real hassle. Schlepping your cases up and down stairs at Narita, on the train, and then at your transfer at Tokyo station is less than the most exciting thing I did. I was tired after arriving and managed to get lost between my final local station and the hotel. On the way home, we got the bus. Picked us up at the hotel door, and dropped us to the front door of the terminal. Assuming the same thing happens in reverse – take the bus.

6. The Train System is Hot Mess. Buy this App. And then upgrade to the full version for where you are going. The train system is seriously awesome, but without a trusty guide, you will end up in Kyoto by mistake. Even the locals struggle with the pure number of lines, stations, and connections. And make sure you know which exit you want – otherwise you can end up walking a kilometre in the wrong direction before you hit daylight!

7. Yodobashi for Gear. If you need anything whilst you are away, check out Yodobashi. It is pretty cool. But make sure you know what you want, and shop with a mission, or you may never make it out of one of these monstrous stores.

8. My Favourite View. Park Hyatt Hotel – ya know, the one from Lost in Translation. Book for the set price lunch and you will escape the big money they charge for dinner. The appetiser buffet was pretty special... If you go easy on the drinks, you will get the best service and still leave only 7500 yen out of pocket per head – tops. And you get to look out of the window at the bar for as long as you want for the rest of the afternoon and contemplate what your life has become! Oh, and they love you taking photos of the view...

The pic for this post gives you a very small preview – more to come later.

9. Try Some Japanese Whisky. The Japanese have a real fascination with the stuff.

10. What's Happening? Time Out is both online and on paper. It is a great guide to what is happening during your stay. I came across a few really cool local things that were happening, like a Frank Gheary exhibition and another arty show on "Totems of Tokyo".

What about photographing people in Tokyo? Like most places, sometimes people duck their heads when you point the camera in their general direction – making a wide angle lens a key part of your kit. A 21mm lens on a 35mm format camera captures a lot of stuff that just doesn't seem to be in the general direction of where the camera is pointing.

Will be more to come over the next few weeks on my just completed trip to Hong Kong and Japan... Now I am back home, I can get back into posting!



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