

Images of the Year and Photographer of the Year, December 2007

There was a good turn-up of members and some visitors for the "Images of the Year" event in early December, the pictures being judged before the night by Lindy and Chris Holly, who provided commentary on the pictures displayed and discussed the reasons for their choices.

They were generous with their commendations – although there could be only one winner in each category, quite a few other photographs were commended for their quality. A list appears elsewhere in this Cassette giving the details.

Also on the night the awards were given for the winners and placegetters in the aggregated monthly competitions. And the announcement made of the "Photographer of the Year"- President Jim Mason went through a short list of contenders, then announced Judy Parker as the winner.

After the judges' comments and the awards there was the usual end of year special supper to provide an enjoyable end to the night.

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Lindy and Chris Holly discussing the entered



Jim Mason presenting the Photographer of the Year trophy to Judy Parker

ACTIVITIES REPORT 2008

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 12 February:

**Venue – Griffin Centre, Level 1, Room 7.
John Lafferty presents: The making of a quality photographic book.**

Utilising a special user-friendly digital program John Lafferty will demonstrate a cost-effective method that enables the enthusiast photographer to design and print an impressive book of coffee table standard. This demonstration promises to be a boon for those endeavouring to showcase their work in a unique and professional manner.

Tuesday 19 February:

**Twilight photography outing - northside.
Meet at 7.00pm at the entrance to the National Museum, Acton.**

Due to popular demand another twilight photo shoot has been organised this time on the northern shores of Lake Burly Griffin capturing the late afternoon light on and around the National Museum of Australia, the Commonwealth Avenue Bridge, and Regatta Point.

Then proceed for a quiet coffee afterwards at Tossilini's in London Circuit, Civic (adjacent to the bus interchange) for a friendly chat on the results of the night's shoot and the marvels of modern day digital hardware.

Contact Jim Mason on 6249 9104 (w) or E-mail: jim.mason@ga.gov.au for further details.

Reminder:

For those attending Griffin Centre meetings after the front doors have been disabled, please contact those already in the room using the intercom on the left hand side of the doors.

For Room 6 on comp nights enter 021 or for Room 7 activity nights enter 022. These numbers also appear on the list adjacent to the intercom. Somebody already in the room will respond to enable your access.

Jim Mason

New Films from Kodak

Hot on the heels of Kodak's recent announcement of an improved version of its B/w Tmax-400 film, there are now "improved Versions of its KODAK PROFESSIONAL PORTRA 400-Speed Color Negative Films".

To quote Kodak:

The new films offer:

Finer Grain: Extended use of antenna dye technology enables PORTRA 400NC and 400VC films to deliver finer grain than ever before.

Outstanding Scanning Results: With finer grain and an emulsion overcoat specially designed for scanners, PORTRA 400 films reproduce beautifully, with either optical or digital output.

Spectacular Skin Tones: The new PORTRA 400 films continue to deliver smooth, natural reproduction of skin tones.

The new KODAK PROFESSIONAL PORTRA films will be available worldwide on a stock-turnover basis beginning Q1 2008.

Pictures of the Year Awards:

Colour Prints

Winner Steven Shaw— Stormy Landscape

Highly commended:

Judy Parker—Opera House

Graeme Watson—Pelican

Jocooa Phillips—Giraffe

Brian Rope—Ring in Water

John Lafferty—Church

Monochrome Prints

Winner Brian Jones—Portrait

Highly commended:

John Lafferty—Surfing

Murray Foote—Rob Hirst

Judy Parker—Mist Rising

Ian Copland—Portrait

Projected Images

Winner David Boughey—Blue Room

Highly commended:

Lake George Balloon

Museum Dialogue

Comet McNaught

Mantid

Volcano

Results in the monthly competitions over 2007 were given in the “Leader Board” as printed in the December 2007 issue of *The Cassette*.

Too many “decisive moments”?

Ross Gould

Watching the Australian Open tennis on television during January, I was struck by the number of occasions when there were replays of player actions using super-slow-motion cameras – video at thousands of frames per second. Such imaging would allow extraction of quite a few “decisive moments” for the sports photographer, and eliminate the need for skill in timing (just keep the camera pointing accurately – although that didn’t always happen with the ‘professional’ camera operators). Timing is difficult in part because one always has to anticipate the moment, due to personal reflex time and camera delay, when movement is involved – unlike architectural or landscape photography. For photographing sport, if you see it, it’s gone – you’re too late.

This kind of high-speed video material can’t be used to show action at real speed – the way we humans see things, normal film or video at 30 fps requires some blur in the individual images to give the illusion of motion without stroboscopic effects (flickering).

But there’s an increasing interest in using high-frame-rate video for news coverage and sports photography. The December 2007 issue of *Digital Photo Pro* magazine (USA) has an article by one of their editors under the heading: *Misinformation: Photography isn’t still*.

The writer suggests that Cartier-Bresson was wrong in his famous statement that “There is nothing in the world that does not have a decisive moment”. To quote the commentator:

Today, one can begin to refute this declaration and state that we now live in a world of “decisive movement”. That is, HD camcorders exist side by side with still cameras, recording footage where a still image

is easily extracted – an “extended moment” from which to choose the image, so to speak.

Having provoked the still photography reader with this opening, the writer backs off a little, admitting that the camcorders should be seen as supplementing the still camera rather than replacing it. The benefit is seen in terms of “story-telling” rather than producing still images as such. Certainly, it would be useful for sequence photography, especially for sports photographers who feel handicapped by having a mere 8 to 11 frames per second capability on their current still cameras (oh, the limitations – some of us started long ago with single frame timing of shots... but I digress).

Interestingly, there is the comment that *Adding video also offers the photographer the ability to capture moments that are sometimes missed with the still camera alone. It captures action that they often didn’t see when the footage was recorded...*

Curious, I thought. We already have that experience with still photos – often showing details beyond eyesight capability at the time. The ability to “split the moment” with the still camera doesn’t only depend on huge numbers of frames in a moment. It occurs both in action photography with still cameras on motor-drive, and with individual frames that freeze action.

An excellent example of the latter is the dance photography of Lois Greenfield. Over the last thirty years Greenfield has undertaken an extension of the flash-in-studio photography of dancers that was pioneered by Barbara Morgan in the 1930s and 40s. Greenfield takes it further by commonly having her dancers in white space, and

timing her picture taking to catch gravity-defying moments. The resulting images show what the eye didn't see at the time, but Greenfield intuitively "saw" and recorded with masterly timing. Her work precedes Photoshop and doesn't need it.

Greenfield has published two books of her dance photographs, *Breaking Bounds* (1992) and *Airborne* (1998). In the latter, William A Ewing who provides essays on her work, describes attending one of Greenfield's photo sessions.

...Greenfield's imagery is distinguished by a certain nonchalance: the dancers appear to have lifted themselves into the air, waited for the photographer to snap the shutter, then deigned to return to earth. Naively, I had assumed that I would be seeing such images in the flesh, as it were... It had not occurred to me that each 'shot', with its complex ensemble of movements and gestures, would be over and done with in a split second, and that the eye would never be able to take it all in.

As the dancers performed ... I could see nothing ... that remotely resembled a Greenfield image; all I saw were heavy, sweating bodies thudding about... the action never seemed to coalesce into the elegant, ordered motif I was expecting. It dawned on me that the action was happening too quickly to be observed and then acted upon; Greenfield was forced to envision what was about to happen, timing her shutter release accordingly. Thus, seeing the picture in the viewfinder would mean only that she had missed it. This implied not only total mastery of her apparatus, but also an acute awareness of the nuances of movement.

Ewing went away feeling the session was "a flop". A few days later he returned to the studio to see the results – *I was amazed: there on the contact sheets were the trademark Greenfield images that had eluded me on the set. In image after image, the*

forms of the dancers were the epitome of grace and lightness, and the three-dimensional 'chaos' I had witnessed firsthand was transcribed on paper as coherent, ordered imagery.

He concluded – Greenfield's approach was therefore nothing like the act of straightforward 'reportage' I had naively assumed it to be, but was rather a complex refashioning of her 'raw material' – dance – into works of art in their own right.

One might come to think that photography is, for the onlooker, not a spectator sport. Likewise most of us would not have been likely to see the Cartier-Bresson images in the real world had we been present – the best photographers extract the moments from the flow of time in a way that reflects their particular consciousness and way of seeing. It is particular, and not just the fortuitous use of the equipment that produces the notable image. The photographer, as some great photographers have remarked, is present in the image. That's something we know when we see pictures of familiar things made new and unfamiliar again by someone's perceptive seeing. Photography can show us what we did not see, and that capability is not limited to the speed of imaging.