



April CPS Competition – Signs of Change: Global Warming and Open

The April comp was judged by Marc Fenning, one of our regulars in that role. He brings many years of professional experience, both from the commercial world and in more recent years as a photographer at ANU.

His approach was to emphasise the need to “value add” in making photographs. It’s not enough to find an interesting subject – you as the photographer need to make the picture worthwhile for viewers who were not there at the time. “Found objects” (or “found subjects”) are not enough.

So his commentary – positive and helpful – often suggested ways to improve pictures. Sometimes it would be removing elements that detracted from the subject; sometimes a suggestion of a different viewpoint; sometimes waiting for – or finding – a better type of light falling on the subject. His approach was thorough, thoughtful and detailed without being longwinded.

Our previous month’s judge had remarked that he was tempted to give half-marks – say 3.5 instead of 3 or 4. Mark put this into practice, and left the Competition Director with a bit more arithmetic to do.

He was also hard on some of the more exotic experimental images, which he felt were not sufficiently effective as pictures.

Picture of the night was Andree Lawrey’s “Trees, Commonwealth Place”, a B/W image taken with a plastic camera.

It was an informative night with a good offering of ideas on how to make pictures more effective. Like all good judges, Marc comes from a particular viewpoint, but was quite eclectic in his choice of the better images.



Marc Fenning judging

Photography Festival in Lishui, China

In 2007 members of the Australian Photographic Society (APS) sent a collection of images to the China Photographers Association to be exhibited as part of a Photography Festival in Lishui (about 400 Km SSW of Shanghai with a population of roughly 2.5 million).

In November 2007 the exhibition was seen by many thousands of people. Huge crowds attended the official festival opening and exhibition presentation ceremony, including a large contingent of media and police. Presentations were made to the Gold medal winners in the China 12th International Photographic Art Exhibition and a spectacular stage show followed.

The festival exhibitions totally filled three floors of a city building. A brief official opening preceded huge crowds flowing into the exhibitions. 1200 images were framed, hung and superbly lit. The exhibitions comprised the China 12th International Photographic Art Exhibition, several private exhibitions from Chinese and visiting international photographers, and several exhibitions from National Associations (including the one from the APS).

The APS exhibition was sent to China digitally and the China Photographers Association had all images beautifully printed and framed for display. I was one of the APS members invited to contribute images for the exhibition, and two of my images were included: *Floriade Daffodils Variation*, and *Nundle Blue & Gold*.

Brian Rope



Nundle Blue and Gold



Floriade Daffodils Variation

Australian Photographic Society Annual Convention

APSCON 2008 - Launceston 20-26 September.
Information: see

<http://www.a-p-s.org.au/thisyearsapscon.html> or e-mail apscon2008@a-p-s.org.au. (or speak to Graeme Watson or Brian Rope who are both attending).

National competition opportunities

36th Warragul National Photographic Exhibition 2008. Entries close 30 May. Enquiries: Peter Thomas 03 5611 0113 or Marshall Cock 03 5625 2084 (AH). Entry form at <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/excalendar.html#a11>.

38th Royal Adelaide Show National Exhibition of Photography. Entries close 11 July. Entry form available at <http://www.adelaideshowground.com.au/showground/participating/competitions-exhibits.jsp> or <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/excalendar.html#a14>.

33rd APS National Exhibition of Photography - entries close 18 July. Enquiries: Gaynor Robson. E-mail national2008@a-p-s.org.au. Entry form at <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/excalendar.html#a17>.

20th Sutherland Shire National Exhibition of Photography 2008. Entries close 2 August. Enquiries: ssnep@hotmail.com. Entry form at <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/excalendar.html#a16>.

Lots of other national and international competition opportunities

See <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/excalendar.html> and <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/exhibitions.html> and <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/links10.html>.

The Leader Board after the April competition

Competition	Person	Total
A Grade	Dave Bassett	118
	Steven Shaw	109
	Judy Parker	95.5
	Brian Rope	85.5
	Brian Jones	85.5
	Rod Nazer	76
	Julie Garran	69.5
	Ross Gould	50.5
	Graeme Watson	41.5
	Richard Marris	39
	Marlene Lux	36
	Russell Hunt	34.5
	B Grade	Tate Needham
Jococoa Phillips		40
Eleanor Garran		38
Frances Turner		34
Jill Crisp		34
Russell Hunt		33
P Livingston		32
Andree Lawrey		24

Photographs Wanted for Reproduction in The Cassette

Have some of your photographs received a 4 or 5 score from the judge in the CPS monthly competition? If so, we'd like to reproduce a small version of it in The Cassette.

Digital versions in jpg format can be emailed to the Editor at rgou4576@bigpond.net.au.

Files should be no larger than the size for our projected images competition—that is, 1024 x 768 pixels. Sizes down to half of that (512 x 384) are sufficient for Cassette use.

Books

In recent years a rising tide of books on photography has included quite a few discussing the changes made possible with the move from film-based to digital photography. One such book, that I picked up remaindered, and which can be acquired via Amazon.com, is *Photography Reborn* by Jonathan Lipkin (NY, Abrams, 2005). I thought it worth mentioning here, and providing a taste of the contents, because it gives some thoughtful analysis of some of the new directions being taken in what I'd call photo-media, the new styles of picture-making that increasingly have taken up much of the space that was previously occupied by photography. Here I'm not suggesting that "from today, photography is dead" in imitation of the famous comment about painting when photography began, 170 years ago. Painting obviously survived.

To proceed to the book. Below are some extended quotes from the Introduction chapter, in which some preliminary mapping out of the territory to be discussed is mapped out. Lipkin discusses the nature of digital imaging, differences from film-based photography, and indicates some of the significant new directions.

Digital photography stands poised to replace its film-based predecessor ...

By the end of the 1990s, sophisticated photo-manipulation software and the hardware to run it - not to mention desktop printers that rivaled the accuracy and resolution of traditional photographic darkrooms and a vast electronic network that allowed almost anyone to transmit a photograph instantaneously to anyone else - had become available to a mass audience, often bundled with inexpensive digital cameras.

As photography moves from the realm of the physical into the realm of the circuit, as photographs become nothing more than strings of numbers, the medium itself is transformed. This change represents more than just another stage in photography's evolution. Digital photography is photography reborn.

Thanks to digital technology, the boundaries of the photographic act, once quite clear, are

now shifting in unexpected and unrecognizable ways. Some digital photographic images - those created with digital cameras - are very clearly descended from their traditional forebears. Others share a different lineage, however much they may look like photographs: they are drawn, or "rendered," in a computer and in spite of their outward appearance have more in common with paintings. This is a radical departure from lens- and film-based photography, which can produce only a likeness of something that has a physical existence. ... Digital photography makes possible every conceivable variation and combination of these different sorts of images ...

He goes on to discuss some of the essential differences between old and new:

*How can we define digital photography? Traditional views of photography do not seem to encompass it. In 1966, in [his classic book] *The Photographer's Eye*, John Szarkowski enumerated the elements "peculiar to photography": "The Thing Itself," "The Detail," "The Frame," "Time," and "Vantage Point." Today, digital technology has radically transformed each of these. [For some comments about Szarkowski, long-term curator of photography at MoMA, see the August 2007 Cassette].*

In "The Thing Itself," Szarkowski remarks that "our faith in the truth of a photograph rests on our belief that the lens is impartial," while in "The Detail," he describes photography as essentially different from painting, since once captured, the contents of a photograph are difficult to alter. Both of these statements are called into question by image-rendering and photo-manipulation software. In "The Frame," Szarkowski describes photography as a reductive act, one that forces the photographer to make choices about what to include in the frame of the photograph.

But digital tools allow the photographer to supplement that choice, to add elements that were outside the initial frame of the image-or to erase elements from it. "Time" and "Vantage Point" are infinitely malleable in a digital environment, as digital cameras can be used to collect data over months or even years, visual data that can

be used to synthesize photographic images from any one of a multitude of perspectives.

Note how irrelevant to digital photography is Henri Cartier-Bresson's still-popular notion that the proper task of the photographer is to capture the "decisive moment," releasing the shutter when all the elements of a photograph come together. Digital images are in many ways like traditional still lifes. In a still life, a photographer or painter collects subjects that are of interest, and photographs them in a studio. In digital images, the photographer collects subjects by photographing them. In place of the studio, the photographer brings the images together through image-manipulation software.

One of the most revolutionary properties of [traditional] photography, its status as the first imaging technology where an image is taken directly from the visible world, is attributable to the passive, mechanical way that light acts on the film in the camera. The relation between a photograph and the scene it portrays has been called indexical - a term invented by the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce to designate a direct relationship between a signal carrying a sign and the sign's object, as smoke is a signal for fire - because of the one-to-one correspondence between the two. A photograph is a sign carried by the light reflected off the objects it represents. The French critic Roland Barthes once wrote that "the referent adheres" to the photograph.

However, the intervention of electronic technology has severed the tie between the photograph and the world. As the artist David Hockney says, "Computer manipulation means that it's no longer possible to believe that a photograph represents a specific object in a specific place at a specific time - to believe that it is objective and 'true.'" The special, even legal, position that photography once had is gone. The hand has returned to lens-based images, as the computer has brought the photograph closer to drawing and painting once again. Its software uses terms like "palette," "brush," "pencil," and "paintbox." [Language use is informative of the beliefs and attitudes of the users of the words]

The digital photograph, so easily manipulated, can no longer be trusted to accurately repre-

sent a scene. It is not even strictly indexical, in Peirce's sense of the word. Artists are using digital photography to make us acutely uncomfortable about equating photographs with reality. Confronted by a fabricated image that looks like a photograph, we may understand, intellectually, that it is a fiction, but our expectation that a photograph reveals something "real" produces a disturbing feeling of dissonance. This expectation will certainly change as a generation grows up with digital cameras and software that allow such easy manipulation of the photographs they create. [Of that last comment my thought is: but what is also lost in no longer having that "expectation"?)]

Of course, a digital photograph need not be any less faithful to physical reality than a traditional photograph. The image is determined by a set of data, but we must remember that this data - unlike light - is only sometimes representative of physical reality.... [and the new preference by a lot of people is to make the pictures less faithful to physical reality]

But it's not just technology driving the change. Technology makes it possible to put a different attitude to picture making into practice.

In this book, I hope to show that recent changes in photography cannot be understood by technological advances alone. The radical changes in painting that occurred over the past two hundred years had very little to do with the technology of applying paint to canvas. The modernism of the early twentieth century offered a radical new way of looking at a world that was shaped by a host of social, cultural, and technological innovations, not the least of which was photography. Yet the canvases of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse were not, by and large, produced through any new technology; their shocking newness reflected more profoundly a shift in thought and feeling, a shift of attitude.

Digital photography is at once a new attitude and a new technology. It is even possible that the attitude came first: the look and content of digital photographs today-in both the arts and sciences-was prefigured by analog work of the 1960s and 1970s. Like traditional photography before it, digi-

tal photography's impact is largely due to the process through which it makes images: it is first experienced as a new technology. What is so radically transforming about digital photography, however, is not the technology itself, but the ideas that ultimately are expressed by it. ...

There is of course a lot more in the chapters of detailed discussion that follow. Some chapter titles are "The Body Electric", "Avatars", "The Technological Sublime", "Enchanted Landscapes", "The Indecisive Moment" and "Expanding the Boundaries of the Self".

This is only one of many books discussing photography and photo-media that have been published in the last few years. Next month, I'll list a few more, and give brief details of some of the new books about significant photographers.

RG

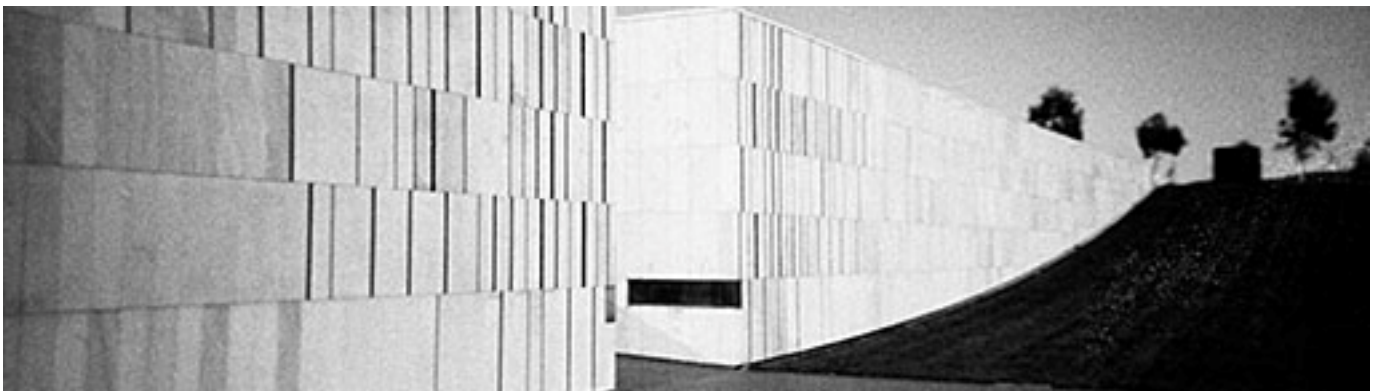
*Page 1 photo in banner:
Gymnast vaulting, by Ross Gould*



Taj Mahal Sunset by Brian Rope



Abandoned Baby by Brian Rope



Trees, Commonwealth Place by Andree Lawrey

Some Thoughts on Wedding Photography and the work of Jeff Ascough

Ross Gould

The recent presentation to CPS of two approaches to wedding photography, by Marlene Lux and Jim Mason, highlighted the changing style of that long-established genre of photography. Marlene has moved firmly into a reportage style, essentially that of the photo-journalist, though with a better aesthetic sense than one sometimes finds among the photo-journalists. Jim has maintained more of the traditional formal style, but he too has ventured into a more informal and sometimes tilted-camera approach. And not all the photographs are finished as colour images – monochrome and sepia also find their way into the wedding albums.

I was thinking about these matters, as a very occasional wedding photographer, when I came across an item of interest on the Canon Professional Network website (Canon Europe). Here can be found (address below) a write-up of the wedding photography of Jeff Ascough, UK-based award-winner, etc, whose approach to photographing weddings is very much that of the photojournalist, and who prefers monochrome to colour. His clients get his choice of pictures, so only about 30% of the final choices are colour pics. Brave, I thought – I long ago found in theatre photography that a mediocre colour pic trumps an outstanding monochrome – indeed I'd cynically thought of giving people pieces of coloured paper instead of B/W photos, as colour obviously was all that really mattered, not the picture.

However – to return to Jeff Ascough. Yes, he shoots in digital these days, having changed over after many years of film photography. As the article remarks, Jeff has “developed a thriving high-end business by bringing the values and techniques of black and white documentary photography to a field generally associated with posed, often over-lit, medium format colour pictures”. He much prefers natural light – available light – to using flash. And he finds one benefit of digital over film is the underexposure latitude – much greater with digi-

tal, as many of us have noticed. And because his SLRs can be used at very high ISO settings he doesn't need to be restricted to non-zooms to get the fastest apertures.

A side thought here is that high speed film has been very useable for quite a few years. In colour, Fuji's colour neg films, at 800 ISO and 1600 ISO could produce surprisingly good results – A3 prints from the 800 ISO, off 35mm negatives. I've also done 12"x16" prints from Kodak's P3200 B/W film rated at 3200-4000, again from 35mm negs. And the prints, while grainy close up, were not images lost in a sand-storm. Digital can of course be much smoother – though that's something Jeff Ascough isn't entirely happy about, and has developed Photoshop techniques to change.

To find out more (much more) you'll have to read the whole thing, and there you can also look at some of Jeff's pictures, at <http://cpn.canon-europe.com/content/btl/jeff-ascough.do#container>

For me the most interesting thing was that someone could win both commercially and artistically (the two are often separate) by using a new technology to do what had been done previously with an older technology, though less conveniently with the old. It isn't identical, but it shows that with the right clients, particularly if like Jeff Ascough's, they're picture-literate, you can avoid the “all photos look alike” syndrome. Digital has reinforced that syndrome with its ease of use by turning everyone into a photographer – but, as I noted in a previous article, quoting Elliot Erwitt, not a good photographer. Individuality – the person behind the camera making a difference – can still happen.

Competition Results for April

Month	April	
Sum of Score		
Competition	Person	Total
A Grade	Dave Bassett	41
	Steven Shaw	38
	Russell Hunt	34.5
	Brian Jones	28.5
	Judy Parker	27.5
	Brian Rope	25.5
	Ross Gould	25.5
	Rod Nazer	22
	Julie Garran	21.5
	David Boughey	19.5
	Ian Copland	14
Graeme Watson	8.5	
B Grade	Tate Needham	38
	Frances Turner	34
	Andree Lawrey	24
	P Livingston	16

A member's web site:

Malcolm Smith, well known for the quality of his photography in several subject areas, has set up a new web site devoted to his work in photographing the fine art nude.

You can find the web site at:
www.ember-razement.com.au

Some photos and text up already, with a promise of tech articles to come.

Art Gallery of NSW - Current Exhibitions

Archibald Wynne & Sulman Prizes 08

8 March - 18 May 2008

Lower Level 1

The Archibald Prize is one of Australia's oldest and most prestigious art awards. JF Archibald's primary aims were to foster portraiture, support artists and perpetuate the memory of great Australians. Since its inception in 1921 the prize has been awarded to some of Australia's most important artists, including George Lambert, William Dobell and Brett Whiteley.

The Wynne Prize is awarded to the best landscape painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours or for the best example of figure sculpture, by an Australian artist.

The Sir John Sulman Prize is awarded for the best subject painting or genre painting or mural project by an Australian artist.

Charles Bayliss

Landscape Photographer

9 February - 25 May 2008

Australian Collection focus room,
Ground Level

Renowned for his pioneering work in panoramic and landscape photography, Charles Bayliss is considered a leading figure in Australia's photographic heritage. This display presents two substantial portfolios of his photographs that picturesquely document aspects of pastoral life and landscape along the Darling River and Riverina districts in the late 1880s.

Ghosts in the machine

Anonymous photographs

10 April - 16 July 2008

Lower Level 2

The most prolific and the most eclectic artists of the 20th century are unknown photographers. In the last 15 years a number of collectors have acquired remarkable collections of amateur photographs. These images discarded for unknown reasons have sometimes found a home where their failures become successes and the moments which they record have assumed an importance because of the discerning eye of their rescuer.

National Gallery of Victoria St Kilda Road

291

Photographers in the circle of Alfred Stieglitz
2 May – 28 September 2008
Photography Gallery , Level 1

Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) was a monumental figure in the history of twentieth century photography. In the opening decades of the century, Stieglitz championed the cause of artistic photography with the Photo-Secession group, and went on to become an important and influential modernist photographer.

From 1903 to 1917 Stieglitz was the editor of *Camera Work*, a journal committed to promoting the merits of photography and avant-garde art. During this period he also opened the *Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession* at 291 Fifth Avenue, New York. Established in 1908, the gallery, which became known simply as *291*, was initially a venue showing the work of photographers committed to the ideal of photography as a medium for artistic expression.

This exhibition, drawn from the NGV collection, brings together around 40 works by a number of the photographers who exhibited at *291* and includes the work of photographers Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Gertrude Käsebier, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Adolphe De Meyer, Paul Haviland and Paul Strand.