

In Camera

The Newsletter of the Hawkesbury Camera Club Inc.

FROM THE CHAIR

Hi fellow members,

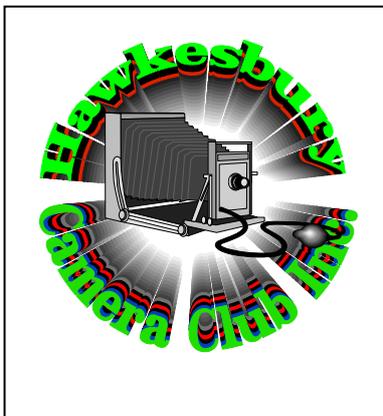
We were privileged to have Des Crawley as our judge for the April club competition. We could not have chosen a more appropriate person to judge our set subject (*what light through yonder window breaks*). It was very gratifying to see the number of members who took up the challenge of such an interesting subject matter. I believe that Des has played a considerable part in the way we approach our photography. He has consistently encouraged us to think outside the square and to also think creatively. All those attributes were on display last Wednesday.

Special mention must go to Robyn Ashton who received a double merit from Des. Des was so impressed with Robyn's image he awarded her the unofficial award. We now have a very exclusive group of members who have received this award. We are keeping a record of those who have received this honour; to date the list reads as follows, Josephine Blue, Ian Cambourne, Alan Aldrich, Paul Hulbert and Heidi Wilson.

This great freedom of expression that up till now we have taken for granted is under threat from our lawmakers in Government. I have just received a letter from The Arts Freedom Australia group and it is with great concern that I pass details of that letter on to you.

Australian photographers are losing their rights to freedom of expression. And it doesn't whether they are full time professional, part time, or strictly amateur, as every person who has a camera can be threatened with unjust laws and regulations.

"We must be the only country in the world where you can get a criminal record for taking a picture of a rock" said Ken Duncan, the chairman of Arts Freedom Australia



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THIS MONTH

- MAY 5** Charles Sutton & Dale Irving present their Great Outback Adventures
- May 12** HAGS at the Richmond Club
- MAY 19** Comp – Australian Culture

And because of this shameful situation, I am asking photographers and other concerned citizens to protest against the undemocratic regulations which now restrict film-making and photography in many public places" Mr. Duncan added.

To this end Arts Freedom Australia (AFA) will hold a rally near Campbell's Cove on Sydney Harbour on Sunday August 29th between 10am and 12 noon to reinforce its message.

"We need to make the Australian public aware of this threat to our freedom," Mr Duncan said, "Because I am sure that they will support our campaign."

AFA has recently completed a comparative study of legislation and policies imposed on photographers and filmmakers within Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America.

"The result of this study demonstrates that the rights of Australian photographers and film-makers are being seriously affected by a myriad of rules and regulations that impose prohibitive restrictions, high fees, and bureaucratic application protocols," Mr Duncan said.

Cheers Geoff Pfister

Geoff's mention of the limitations being demanded by certain groups in society, we meaning as these groups may be. However our rights as photographers in pursuing our art is being curtailed. To gain our insight into the problem Prof. Des Crawley and our own Josephine Blue were asked for their opinion. (AA)

Firstly a word from Des.

Photography as Art.

There is no agreement as to the relationship between photography and art. The main reason for this is, of course, is that there is no agreement as to what is 'art' and even less agreement as to the essential or core features of photography as an

intellectual practice. The history of photography's emergence/evolution helps explain why there are various concentrations of views as to what photography 'is', and 'what it is not' and 'what it could be'.

In most contemporary debates it is accepted that photography can be artful. That there are behaviours and approaches to the making of an image that imitate if not demonstrate many of the characteristics we associate with arts practice in painting, drawing, sculptor, dance, music, literature and so on.

The dilemma about the nature of photography in some circles is caught up in the three visual cultures we associate with photography derived from its long link and pre-occupation with technology. In brief, photography was established in response to a need to find a way to 'document' subjects studied by science. Thus, the origins of photography and its practices were geared to taking objective records of subject matter. That is, to record faithfully the material world. Thus the work was prized where it was objective, technically profound, precise and eliminated the 'hand' of man, or the influence of the photographer. There was no 'genius' involved, no creative enterprise needed or sought. The camera was an instrument – it measured and captured light so as to record what was placed in front of it. This tradition of camera vision continues. The strongest opposition to accepting that photography has any relationship to art making is usually found in the work and views of the 'documentists'. This view extended into and across the general populace when technology innovation gave the ordinary person the power to record the events of their daily lives. The document evolved into the vernacular – images of the common 'man'. It was widely seen as a democratic process and no more artful than writing a letter or using a hammer. The second visual culture that evolved dipped into and overlapped that of the documentists. It owed something to the Secessionists and/or Pictorialists who saw photography as a medium that could embrace and use many of the aesthetics of the visual arts. So, a significant body of work emerged in the early 19th century that utilised grain, diffusion and atmospheric light as well as many design elements found in the visual arts to portray a more 'subjective' interpretation where the camera vision was modified by the 'hand of man' to produce work that

hovered between realism and surrealism; between objectivity and subjectivity; between facts and ideas; between 'taking and 'making'. Pictorialism as a movement was short lived and was soon overtaken by the foment in Europe and the United States linked to WW1, the depression, the rise of totalitarianism, the abandonment of colonialism, gender politics, globalisation, post modernism, mass education as well as technical innovation that gave photography scope to be a 'tool' for propaganda, persuasion, coercion, awareness and ultimately power.

The pictorial photograph and the document prevailed as the major visual forms well into the 1960's. Pictorialism prevails today, within the camera club movement, and sits uncomfotably alongside its ancestor – the document. These traditions dominated the philosophical and ideological structures that gave rise to much of the 'governance' behaviour of the various salons and related amateur or enthusiasts traditions we associate with the cameras club.

In the 1970's a third visual culture, that had been on the margins for many years began to take centre stage with the emergence of the 'photographers as artists' and 'artists as photographers' debates within the theoretical and critical analyses of the discipline of photography. Essentially, this view ultimately saw photography as an art form based on the same intellectual and practical foundations as any form of creative expression. That is, one could within the photographic medium achieve the same levels of creativity, expression, experimentation, conceptualization, individuality of style, interpretation and representation indistinguishable from other arts practice. The real issue for the 70's and beyond was linked to status. That is, the acceptance that a photograph can be a work of art. Within some fossilised corners of the camera club movement this debate – if there is any debate at all – lingers fitfully. In mainstream photographic circles this debate has become exhausted. No serious examination of the modern world of contemporary visual communication asks the question, "is photography art". Rather, the question now is, "What can photographic art contribute as part of the new media arts?" The debates have moved on.

Over the next decade the new technologies of visual communication will facilitate the progressive unification of a range of experimental and

transgressive arts practice. This merger will involve the integration of light, image, sound, movement, graphic, text and performance. The iPod will become the iClub! If you do not believe this analysis just have a chat with your grandchildren and or go online and look at the cyber clubs, forums, blogs, twitters and the like. These are clubs of the digital age.

In this quick survey of the origins and nature of photography as art there are a number of unifying characteristics we can use to define 'photographic art'. They are:

- a. It is conceptual. It is centred on an idea. It is usually fictional.
- b. It is a means of self-expression facilitating the individual who has something to say as opposed to wanting to record what the camera "sees"
- c. It is creative in that it speaks to new relationships derived from an individual's capacity to see and to feel.
- d. It is imagined, subjective and uses expressive compositional devices as key drivers as opposed to technology.
- e. It is unconstrained by rules, precepts or restrictions or, where they exist, it contests them
- f. It is original and if there are appropriated, imitative or derivative features they speak to purpose or intention.
- g. The work demands audience participation via interpretation and deconstruction.

So, art photography has moved well beyond the restrictive meanings associated with such terms as 'fine art' photography. The latter has always referred to an art piece distinctive because it has high order technical finesses embedded within an image that has a conventional or formal style as well as an aesthetic derived from the characteristics of the medium and its use of light. 'Fine Art' photography is but one component – a reified component - of a much broader suite of expressive forms and practices that is contemporary photographic art practice.

Prof. Des Crawley

Now Josephine's Contribution.

Age old wisdom, I mean REALLY old, from Cicero, summed up the main advantage of old age as being a trade off : lose strength but gain wisdom. Another ancient proverb says "Man is born to trouble, just as the sparks fly upwards. "I'd like to add to these philosophies of life and assert that out of affliction comes wisdom, and one little gem I've distilled and observed is that the person who says " NO "has power. I've also learned that it's easier to just go ahead and do things, to fly under the radar, that to ask someone's permission.

I was in a store recently and waited near the check-out, at the "head "of a line, if there was a line. The sign said to wait at the other end of the barrier, but being the only one waiting, I thought better of it to just wait where I was, closer to the cashier than take the long way around. It must have been the Manager who asked me to "wait at the other end of the queue and he'd be with me in a minute. I turned around to the deserted area and said "queue? "and continued to wait where I stood.

Give someone a title and uniform and they think they can boss people around. The cashier I'd been standing closest to served me in the next 30 seconds. Should I really have "obeyed" the command, (he was quite aggressive) and walked around the circuit to arrive back at where I had been standing in the first place? My options were to 1) do as he said, 2) ignore it 3) leave the store.

I ignored it and felt quite within my rights and self-respect to do so. I wasn't breaking any "law "as such.

Which leads me to a bigger issue at hand. Last year at the Top Shot Awards I had the privilege of hearing Ken Duncan talk about photographers' rights being eroded. It seems we will soon need a permit to take photos. That sounds like a bit of an overstatement but the bureaucrats are moving in.

Most Australians own a camera: just go to a wedding and see how many cameras come out when the minister invites people to take a photo of the bride and groom. If we are soon going to need a permit to take photos, how will this affect all of us? Will there be an official asking us to put away our camera if we don't have a permit, or delete the images we just took in the street or at the beach?

From my distillation of wisdom, affliction and trouble, I see it as important for us not to just fly below

the radar and keep taking photos until we are told not to, or told we have to "obtain a permit to photograph a sunrise, beach or tree. It's time to let politicians know our concerns about their bureaucracy, rules, regulations and revenue raising erosion of our freedom.

I'm not saying that I condone all types of photography and photographers; clearly when children are at risk of being exploited and abused, the government must act to protect them. But there has to be a better way than to deny Mr and Mrs Citizen the right to take a photo. And what about tourists? Will they have to apply for a photographer's permit along with their visa when entering our country? And would that stop anyone from taking the "wrong" sort of photos anyway?

Ken Duncan is calling for support in his rally to make everyone aware of this situation that will continue to erode our freedom if we do nothing. Individual objections are not as powerful as a big group of voters saying NO! Using our combined strength and wisdom.

It's about rights and freedom, and to do nothing means it could indeed become illegal to take a photo of a rock.

Josephine

The argument has been sharpened by exhibitions such Bill Hansen's. The sensationalist press aided by the neo-conservative element is society only saw this as perceived dangers to children. Most of the criticism was in response to second hand reports.

This pressure now loaded in with other groups wanting to copyright buildings and landmarks for commercial gain means our rights as photographers is being threatened.

What is Fine Art Photography?

After a few hours trawling the Internet I am as confused as ever. Here is a condensation of opinion.

Fine art photography refers to photographs that are created in accordance with the creative vision of the photographer as artist. Fine art photography stands in contrast to photojournalism, which provides visual support for stories, mainly in the print media, and commercial photography, the primary focus of which is to sell products or services.

The problem of definition

There are no universally accepted definitions of the related terms "art photography," "artistic photography," and "fine art photography," as

exemplified by definitions found in reference books, in scholarly articles, and on the Web.

Definitions in reference books

Among the definitions that can be found in reference books are:

"Art photography": "Euphemism for nude photography".

"Art photography": "photography that is done as a fine art -- that is, done to express the artist's perceptions and emotions and to share them with others".

"Art photography": a definition "is elusive," but "when photographers refer to it, they have in mind the photographs seen in magazines such as *American Photo*, *Popular Photography*, and *Print*, and in salons and exhibitions. Art (or artful) photography is saleable."

"Artistic photography": "A frequently used but somewhat vague term. The idea underlying it is that the producer of a given picture has aimed at something more than a merely realistic rendering of the subject, and has attempted to convey a personal impression".

"Fine art photography": "a picture that is produced for sale or display rather than one that is produced in response to a commercial commission".

"Fine art photography": "the production of images to fulfil the creative vision of a photographer. ... Synonymous with art photography".

"Fine art photography": also called "decor photography," "photo decor," or "wall decor," this "involves selling large photos... that can be used as wall art".

Definitions in scholarly articles

Among the definitions that can be found in scholarly articles are:

Two studies by Christopherson in 1974 defined "fine art photographers" as "those persons who create and distribute photographs specifically as 'art.'"

A 1986 ethnographic and historical study by Schwartz did not directly define "fine art photography" but did compare it with "camera club photography". It found that fine art photography "is tied to other media" such as painting; "responds to its own history and traditions" (as opposed to "aspiring to the same achievements made by their predecessors"); "has its own vocabulary"; "conveys ideas" (e.g., "concern with form supersedes concern with subject matter"); "is

innovative"; "is personal"; "is a lifestyle"; and "participates in the world of commerce."

Definitions on the Web

Among the definitions that can be found on the Web are:

The Library of Congress authorities use "art photography" as "photography of art," and "artistic photography" (i.e., "Photography, artistic") as "photography as a fine art, including aesthetic theory".

The Art & Architecture Thesaurus states that "fine art photography" (preferred term) or "art photography" or "artistic photography" is "the movement in England and the United States, from around 1890 into the early 20th century, which promoted various aesthetic approaches. Historically, has sometimes been applied to any photography whose intention is aesthetic, as distinguished from scientific, commercial, or journalistic; for this meaning, use 'photography'".

Definitions of "fine art photography" on photographers' static Web pages vary from "the subset of fine art that is created with a camera" to "limited-reproduction photography, using materials and techniques that will outlive the artist".

Discussions of "fine art photography" in Usenet newsgroups, Internet forums, and blogs have not come to a consensus regarding the definition of the term.

History

One photography historian claimed that "the earliest exponent of 'Fine Art' or composition photography was John Edwin Mayall" who exhibited daguerrotypes illustrating the Lord's Prayer in 1851. Successful attempts to make fine art photography can be traced to Victorian era practitioners such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, and Oscar Gustave Rejlander and others. In the U.S. F. Holland Day, Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen were instrumental in making photography a fine art, and Steiglitz was especially notable in introducing it into museum collections.

Until the late 1970s several genres predominated, such as; nudes, portraits, natural landscapes (exemplified by Ansel Adams). Breakthrough 'star' artists in the 1970s and 80s, such as Sally Mann and

Robert Mapplethorpe, still relied heavily on such genres, although seeing them with fresh eyes. Others investigated a snapshot aesthetic approach.

American organizations, such as the Aperture Foundation and the Museum of Modern Art, have done much to keep photography at the forefront of the fine arts.

Framing and print size

Until the mid 1950s it was widely considered vulgar and pretentious to frame a photograph for a gallery exhibition. Prints were usually simply pasted onto blockboard or plywood, or given a white border in the darkroom and then pinned at the corners onto display boards. Prints were thus shown without any glass reflections obscuring them. Steichen's famous The Family of Man exhibition was unframed, the pictures pasted to panels. Even as late as 1966 Bill Brandt's MoMA show was unframed, with simple prints pasted to thin plywood. Since about 2000 there has been a noticeable move toward once again showing contemporary gallery prints on boards and without glass. In addition, throughout the twentieth century, there was a noticeable increase in the size of prints.



Ansel Adams' *The Tetons and the Snake River* (1942).

(Do we alienate our right to make and appreciate such fine photography as this because someone thinks it's copyright able?)

Politics

Fine art photography is created primarily as an expression of the artist's vision but as a by-product it has also been important in advancing certain causes. The work of Ansel

Adams in Yosemite and Yellowstone provides an example. Adams is one of the most widely recognized fine art photographers of the 20th century, and was an avid promoter of conservation. While his primary focus was on photography as art, some of his work raised public awareness of the beauty of the Sierra Nevada and helped to build political support for their protection.

Such photography has also had effects in the area of censorship law and free expression, due to its concern with the nude body.

Current trends

There is now a trend toward a careful staging and lighting of the picture, rather than hoping to "discover" it ready-made. Photographers such as Gregory Crewdson, and Jeff Wall are noted for the quality of their staged pictures. Additionally, new technological trends in digital photography has opened a new direction in full spectrum photography, where careful filtering choices across the ultraviolet, visible and infrared lead to new artistic visions.

As printing technologies have improved since around 1980, a photographer's art prints reproduced in a finely printed limited-edition book

have now become an area of strong interest to collectors. This is because books usually have high production values, a short print run, and their limited market means they are almost never reprinted. The collector's market in photography books by individual photographers is developing rapidly.

According to *Art Market Trends 2004* 7,000 photographs were sold in auction rooms in 2004, and

photographs averaged a 7.6 percent annual price rise from 1994 and 2004, around 80 percent were sold in the America. Of course, auction sales only record a fraction of total private sales. There is now a thriving collectors' market for which the most sought-after art photographers will produce high quality archival prints in strictly limited editions. Attempts by online art retailers to sell fine photography to the general public alongside prints of paintings have had mixed results, with

strong sales coming only from the traditional "big names" of photography such as Ansel Adams.

Overlap with other genres

Although fine art photography may overlap with many other genres of photography, the overlaps with fashion photography and photojournalism merit special attention.

In 1996 it was stated that there had been a "recent blurring of lines between commercial illustrative photography and fine art photography," especially in the area of fashion. Evidence for the overlap of fine art photography and fashion photography includes lectures, exhibitions, trade fairs such as Art Basel Miami Beach¹, and books.

Photojournalism and fine art photography overlapped beginning in the "late 1960s and 1970s, when... news photographers struck up liaisons with art photography and painting". In 1974 the International Centre of Photography opened, with emphases on both "humanitarian photojournalism" and "art photography". By 1987, "pictures that were taken on assignments for magazines and newspapers now regularly reappear - in frames - on the walls of museums and galleries".

Attitudes of artists in other fields

The reactions of artists and writers have contributed significantly to perceptions of photography as fine art. Prominent painters, such as Francis Bacon and Pablo Picasso, have asserted their interest in the medium: *I have discovered photography. Now I can kill myself. I have nothing else to learn.* - Pablo Picasso; *I have always been very interested in photography. I have looked at far more photographs than I have paintings. Because their reality is stronger than reality itself.* - Francis Bacon. Noted authors, similarly, have responded to the artistic potential of photography: *...it does seem to me that Capa has proved beyond all doubt that the camera need not be a cold mechanical device. Like the pen, it is as good as the man who uses it. It can be the extension of mind and heart...* - John Steinbeck.

Sydney Photographic Exhibitions

Sydney Exposed : Online Photographic Exhibition
From 25 July 2006 @ State Library of NSW website

Click back to a time when Victorian fashion strode through city streets in an ensemble of fluted skirts, lacy blouses, hats and the essential parasol, as *Sydney exposed*, reveals the city through an online photographic journey from Tuesday 25 July.

Powered by the State Library of NSW, *Sydney exposed* captures images of people, places and events from the 1860s through to the present. Journey to the days of trams, now long gone, wild city celebrations, ticker-tape parades and the changing landscape of our harbour home, focused on by amateur photographers and famous names such as Max Dupain, David Moore, Frank Hurley and Harold Cazneaux.

Sydney exposed puts the spotlight on rarely seen images from the city's colourful past and contains a rich collection of thought provoking photographs in black and white, and colour.

Art Gallery of NSW

Alfred Stieglitz: the Lake George years

17 June – 5 September 2010
Rudy Komon gallery, Upper Level

Lake George brought forth some of the most sublime photographs of the 20th century, whether of people or place. It was where Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) conceived his remarkable cloud photographs the *Equivalents*, possibly the most visionary works to exist in the photographic medium, spawning the era of 'straight' photography worldwide.

This will be the first exhibition of the photographs of Alfred Stieglitz ever held in Australia. It will present works rarely seen together, from prestigious institutions including the National Gallery of Art Washington, the Museum of Modern Art New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, J Paul Getty Museum Los Angeles and Museum of Fine Arts Boston, among others.

The exhibition includes 150 photographs and publications from the 1910s to the 1930s, including some of Stieglitz's earliest 'straight' photographs, later editions of the journal *Camera Work* and portraits, including from the remarkable series of his wife Georgia O'Keeffe.

Next Month

June 2

Guest Speaker

June 16

HAGS at the Richmond Club more on the use of layers and enhancement

June 23

Comp – Table Top Photography, a constructed image