

# FOCAL PLANE

August 2007



Auckland Photographic Society Inc Est 1883

Hello and welcome to the August edition of Focal Plane. The set subject this coming month at APS is landscape images, which is always very popular.

A number of years ago a photographer asked me what kind of images I made. What she really seemed to be asking was - what did I like to photograph the most, or how did I most like to spend my time photographing. I answered "Black and White landscapes", without thinking it just popped out and it seemed a good enough description. She said "aaah, the most challenging photography of all". As she was older, clearly experienced, was visiting from another country and therefore seemed to have the authority to make such a statement my chest puffed a bit, and I knew for a moment I was on the *right track*. She may have just been charming.

But of course "B & W Landscapes" or "Nature Photographs" or even "Colour Alpine Flower Images" are fairly broad descriptions. Since then I've often contemplated how to be more specific, or rather how to articulate some kind of theme that sparks my imagination. Let me say this is not easy. If you are able to arrive at an answer that can be put into words, are you not then automatically committed to producing images that fit this narrower description? And to then produce images successfully that fit the new mantra requires a substantive shift in mindset. There is far more *making* of images involved than *finding* images, and everything that goes with that.

In a conversation yesterday Chris mentioned educator/photographer Tony Bridge's coined terms *illustrative* or *representative* landscape photography as distinct from *expressive* landscape photography. At first glance they seem clear distinctions and it would be reasonably easy to see which term would apply to any given image.



Ken Duncan

An image apparently without manipulation and looking like a realistic facsimile of the subject is illustrative or representative. It could work well in say a travel

brochure, illustrative book or calendar. Perhaps for those really at the top of the game - a National Geographic magazine, the holy grail. It is dangerous to categorise any photographer, but for the sake of argument some who have photographed this way Craig Potton, Ken Duncan, Colin Prior or in the past of course Ansel Adams ... there are many, many more.

Ansel Adams? Of course. In fact it is in the manifesto of the Group f64 of which he was a founder that they would not show any photography that did not meet "*its standards of pure photography. Pure photography is defined as possessing no qualities of technique, composition or idea, derivative of any other art form.*" They wished to present the best quality and purest representation of the scene possible in response to those wishy washy pictorialists trying to copy paintings that had been popular up until that time.



Michael Kenna

*Expressive* landscape photography. The simplest definition might be images that are obviously manipulated. That is they have had significant modification so they no longer accurately represent the original scene, at all. Rather they are now an entirely new image of the photographers' imagination.

Some practitioners type might be Dan Burkholder, Michael Kenna, John Paul Caponigro, Bruce Barnbaum, or Carl Chiarenza for example.

The definition at first seems easy. It's all about the creative changes, or manipulation perhaps.



John Paul Caponigro

The more one looks at this the more grey areas appear, and it is the anomalies I find really fascinating.

Ansel Adams used dark red filters in front of his lens nearly all the time. He also bleached, dodged, burned, used different papers and film, masked and cropped. He developed a system for contracting brightness so the full range could be contained on film (or expanded for effect). All these things changed the resulting image from what was there when he took the photo.

So is the difference between illustrative and expressive landscape images less about the actual manipulation and more about the apparent manipulation? That is, Craig Potton's and Ansel Adams images *look* relatively untouched, whereas the image above clearly has something going on there. Rocks don't fly, and the ground looks like something funny is going on as well. So it must be of the expressive type. Hmmmm maybe.

Expressiveness is normally associated with feelings. And where else are feelings more often expressed, refined and received than the art world? Is it a far stretch to think (crudely) that maybe *expressive landscape* images are those that would fit there. In a retrospective book of Michael Kenna's (an art photographer) images, Ruth Bernhard says "...they are *captivating and alluring. Like fairy tales, they are magical and terrifying at the same time. Like dreams, they are undeniable in their power yet elusive in their meaning. We are mysteriously touched.*" Phew! - heady stuff, and a fair amount of feeling in there.

Kenna was once asked "'How did you evolve your style?'"

His reply "The photographer Ruth Bernhard used to tell me that this is like asking somebody how they evolved their signature. It is not something I've ever

worked on consciously. I think style is just the end result of personal experience. It would be problematic for me to photograph in another style. I'm drawn to places and subject matter that have personal connections for me and I photograph in a way that seems right. Where does it all come from, who knows?"

Simon Norfolk is a very different kind of art photographer and describes himself simply as a landscape photographer. An ex photojournalist, his intentions are altogether different and in fact quite unconventional. His images appear strangely banal at best, completely straight and without manipulation. The only thing of interest is the remarkably high detail that arrests your attention and draws you in. They are very *illustrative*. There are dirty ponds in the snow, abstract bubbles under a frozen stream, receding dirt hills and power pylons next to the sea. But when viewed in the context of a simple title or the accompanying text an insight and understanding hits you like a freight train. The politically charged messages supported by clear, illustrative images - often anti-war in sentiment - are very affecting.



*A Slight Disturbance of the Sea* - Simon Norfolk

So given Norton's extraordinary ability to invoke feelings in the viewer, are his images the expressive type? Without their titles, they are certainly representative.

Out of all of this I keep finding more questions, but the expressive and illustrative terms are certainly useful. Ain't photography great! -

Note: Please pardon the overly long muse. If you have sparked any thoughts along these lines, please do drop me an email. [johnmccallum@xtra.co.nz](mailto:johnmccallum@xtra.co.nz)

*If you are not passionately devoted to an idea, you can make very pleasant pictures but they won't make you cry. - Ruth Bernhard.*

## Congratulations

### Eleventh Laurie Thomas Landscape Salon

Generally regarded as the most challenging national Landscape competition, commanding a very high standard of entries. Of the entries only 18.3% of the slides and 14.4% of the digital images achieved 'Acceptance' and above this year.

Andie Pryce - 2 Acceptance

Brian Cudby - 1 Honours and 2 Acceptance

Chris Morton - 1 Acceptance

### Auckland Festival of Photography

Congratulations Lisa Crandall for making 3rd place in the June Photo Blog (Heart of the City theme) with her image Te Taute 2.

### 2007 North Shore Salon

Congratulations to the following APS members who gained recognition in the North Shore Salon national exhibition.

Brian Cudby - 2 Acceptance

Bridget Winstone - 1 Acceptance

Keith Britton - 2 Acceptance

Lisa Crandell - 1 Acceptance

Liz Hardley - 2 Highly Commended and 1 Acceptance!

*Please advise of any notable achievements by a member for mention. editor@aps.net.nz*



Te Taute 2 - Lisa Crandell

## APS Calendar

- 6th Sept** Workshop/Presentation Night: Print Mounting / Spotting.
- 20th Sept** Competition Night: Landscape Trophy and Open Competition.
- 4th Oct** Workshop/Presentation Night: Hans Weichselbaum on Digital Workflow, Colour Management and Monitor Calibration. A fee will apply.
- 18th Oct** Competition Night: Water and Open Competition.

## Welcome To

A very warm welcome this month to **Catherine Boyle, David Metcalf, Gavin Stansfield, Howard Jack, Jeff Chan, Karen Lawton, Kevin Baker, Max Harre, Michael Franklin, Michele Austen, Sue Romeo, Tracey Thornton**. Please excuse the belated welcome for some.



David Fokos

## What's On

### PSNZ Northern Regional Convention 5th - 8th Oct, Waikato.

With an great lineup of presenters:

**Colin Monteath** - a writer, mountaineer and freelance photographer, particularly of Alpine and Antarctic scenery, is the owner/operator of Hedgehog House Photographic Library in Christchurch.

**Bill Hodges** - from Tauranga Photographic Society hardly needs an introduction, as he's a bit of a legend in PSNZ circles, and many members will know him well. He first became interested in photography through his father's involvement in the late 1950s.

**Phil Brown** - a professional photographer based in Te Awamutu. His particular interest is nature photography, and he is the official photographer for the Maungatautari Mountain Ecological Island which is a forested volcanic cone rising above the Waikato basin near Cambridge.

More details at [www.waikatophotosoc.org.nz](http://www.waikatophotosoc.org.nz) .

## PSNZ Central Regional Convention

"The Art of Seeing"

9th - 11th Nov, Gisborne.

[www.photography.org.nz/central.htm](http://www.photography.org.nz/central.htm)

With an outstanding lineup of presenters:

**André Galant** - a professional photographer who specialises in travel photography and works throughout the world.

See [www.andregallant.com](http://www.andregallant.com)

**Graham Dainty** - widely published 'pure landscape' semi professional who has been photographing seriously for 21yrs, based in Fiordland.

See [www.photofiordland.co.nz](http://www.photofiordland.co.nz)

**Barry Teutenberg** - long established photographer of 34 years with his studio in Gisbon. Barry specialises in people photography following the best technology.

See [www.dunstanking.co.nz](http://www.dunstanking.co.nz)

Sure to be an outstanding, must see Regional Convention.

## PSNZ Southern Regional Convention

Friday October 5th - 7th, Alexandra.

[www.southlandphotographicsociety.com](http://www.southlandphotographicsociety.com)

**Professor Anne Noble** - Professor of Fine Arts at Massey University and one of New Zealand's most accomplished photographers. From the 1970s her work has been characterised by a love of inky blacks, a fascination with light and a sense of tactility.

See [www.bartleyandcompanyart.co.nz/artists.php?ID=505&artist=Anne%20Noble](http://www.bartleyandcompanyart.co.nz/artists.php?ID=505&artist=Anne%20Noble)

**Alan Dove** - based in Dunedin for about ten years. His work includes Portrait, Wedding, Fashion & Commercial work. Alan has many awards to his name.

See [www.dovephotography.co.nz](http://www.dovephotography.co.nz)

**Andrew Busst** - based in Queenstown. After a Wellington Polytechnic Diploma in Photography he worked as a Commercial & Wedding photographer for a couple of years. He will also discuss the techniques and software he uses to prepare his audiovisuals.

See [www.imagescapes.co.nz](http://www.imagescapes.co.nz)

**Dr Stephen Voss** - Stephen's interest in Astronomy has been present since childhood, but in the last seven years he has seriously begun to explore the heavens, and producing images to share with others. Hear about caring for your gear on cold nights and see images that are out of this world!

See [www.astrokiwi.com](http://www.astrokiwi.com)

Another sure to be outstanding Regional Convention. Great location, excellent speakers. Take advantage of those cheap airfares!

## Classifieds



"Photography is the art of seeing "

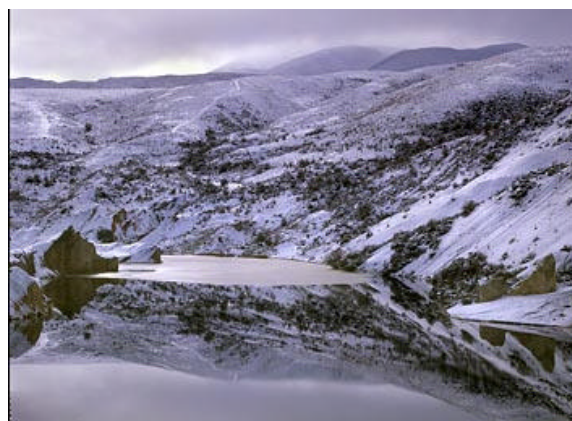
*New Zealand Camera 2007* is a beautiful coffee-table book that contains over 160 superb photographs by members of The Photographic Society of New Zealand (PSNZ). Many of the pictures have won national and international awards. They were selected from over 600 submissions. *New Zealand Camera 2007* presents a unique version of the world through the eyes of PSNZ members. See gallery at [www.nzcamera.org.nz](http://www.nzcamera.org.nz). Subjects include landscapes and animals, plants and people, flora and fauna. The book includes reflective quotations from artists and philosophers, and an essay on creativity by the renowned Canadian photographer, Freeman Patterson.

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J.McC.

## Interesting Websites

### [www.photography.org.nz](http://www.photography.org.nz)

It's worth visiting the PSNZ website regularly. As APS is an affiliate of the Photographic Society of NZ the membership has access to many useful resources available there.

### [www.artlimited.net](http://www.artlimited.net)

Another online forum for photographers. Oriented towards more *expressive* or artistic photography. Worth a look for the variety of creative thought out there, or join in if you dare. Excellent example.

A few interesting Landscape Photographers' websites, who I believe have distinctive styles of their own.

## Colour

### [www.andrisapse.com](http://www.andrisapse.com)

Very successful NZ photographer with an emphasis on good light and locations resulting in spectacular images.

### [www.danburkholder.com](http://www.danburkholder.com)

American photographer who uses his travel and conceptual photographs for artistic results. Interestingly he prints in the very old darkroom process of Platinum Printing then overlays the images with subdued inkjet colours resulting in a distinctive style.

### [www.colinprior.co.uk](http://www.colinprior.co.uk)

Successful UK photographer known for photographing wild places (illustrative). An avid environmentalist and has a straight and unmanipulated style.

### [www.kenduncan.com](http://www.kenduncan.com)

Ken pioneered the use of the medium format panoramic camera in Australia and has had enormous success through publishing.

### [www.johnpaulcaonigro.com](http://www.johnpaulcaonigro.com)

Cleverly manipulated images of the landscape.

### [www.christopherburkett.com](http://www.christopherburkett.com)

Christopher makes often textural, abstract images from nature. Simply beautiful.

### [www.freemanpatterson.com](http://www.freemanpatterson.com)

Educator and master photographer who has pioneered formalised methods of what he terms 'building blocks of Visual Design' in photography.

## Black and White

### [www.michaelkenna.net](http://www.michaelkenna.net)

A successful UK art photographer with a very distinctive style. His sudden 'overnight' success (over 30yrs or so) has spawned a large following with many emulating his approach using long exposures of sky and water with relatively simple compositions. Highly recommend any of his books and especially his latest "Hokaido", which is printed on art paper with maplewood veneer covers and includes exquisite images.

### [www.barnbaum.com](http://www.barnbaum.com)

Black and White photographer of the school of US Westcoast photographers of Ed Weston and Ansel Adams. Finely crafted images with an emphasis on balance and form.

### [www.billschwab.com](http://www.billschwab.com)

Bill comes from a career in commercial photography to turn his talents to photographing the landscape around his home and further afield to Alaska.

### [www.davidfokos.net](http://www.davidfokos.net)

Fokos' images are again deceptively simple compositions with an unusual aesthetic beauty.

### [www.romanloranc.com](http://www.romanloranc.com)

Loranc shoots most of his pictures within an hour's drive of his home in California. Liberal use of toning has become his signature. Often misty and mysterious.

### [www.kosoff.com](http://www.kosoff.com)

Unique style, very identifiable. Seeks landscapes that he can apply his well developed vision to, with amazing results.

*'till next month - Ed.*

*I love the medium of photography, for with its unique realism it gives me the power to go beyond conventional ways of seeing and understanding and say, "This is real, too."*

*- Wynn Bullock*