

Capture & Expression

Tony Hewitt G.M. Photog. explains it's not all about the 'shot', but rather the journey from capture to expression.

The 'Decisive Moment' is a concept well known to many photographers, that precise moment when the planets align and everything is perfect for the shot! Does it appear out of thin air, showing up when we least expect it, or is it the luck of the draw for those lucky few? And what happens either side of this unique sliver of time?

Sometimes it is just that, a simple case of being in the right place at the right time. We happen to be present with a camera when something or someone catches our attention. Other times we carry our camera, knowing there will be moments to be frozen, images to record. Either way, the events and actions leading up to the precise instant of capture can be seen as a journey, a pathway to the picture.

Journey of Capture

Leading up to the moment we press the trigger, there are many options available to us, from decisions regarding content to location, and even to the time of day. From our choice of lens, ISO, aperture etc., there are many variables that lead to a single image. This is the Journey of Capture.



Photo: Peter Randell



Photo: Dean Tollis

The photographs accompanying this article were taken recently by participants at Tony Hewitt and Denis Glennon's Masterclass on Rottneest Island.

For instance, the wedding is months away and yet we know that there will be a kiss at the altar, we have chosen our viewpoint, the lens we prefer and so on, and we move towards the 'decisive moment'. Whether an accidental observer or a deliberate venturer, the pathway to the moment we press the trigger can be seen as a 'journey of capture'.

Along the journey there may be times when we are challenged to 'see' an image, to find something to shoot, to just start. At these times, we can choose to focus on one idea at a time, to 'filter' our environment. We can deliberately look at colour, texture, shape or form. We can focus our attention on emotion or symbolism, or even concentrate on timing. By isolating one aspect of the journey of capture, we can reduce distractions, allowing us to find a starting point. Everything begins with a single idea, a single thought. Once started, our imagination has something to build on, a direction to explore.

I often find myself operating out of simple curiosity, allowing myself to respond to whatever catches my interest,



Photo: Shevaun Buschenhofen



Photo: Veronica Winterbourn

noticing something as simple as a strong colour, or an interesting textured surface. Then by isolating these aspects of what I am seeing, I begin to develop simple visual ideas. Not every concept is worth pursuing, but more often than not, I am led to a new way of seeing.

There are many steps along the journey of capture and learning to 'see' in new ways enriches the journey. Of course there are also many times when we have a definite plan,

whether our own, or imposed on us by a client or situation. Even then, we have options and choices that will contribute to the final image.

Journey of Expression

While the decisive moment may appear to be the final destination on our journey of capture, it is not the end of the



Photo: Louise Slater

ROTTNEST ISLAND: A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Until recently, photographers enjoyed essentially unrestricted rights to capture images of places and people in public spaces. Whilst there is no overarching legislative or regulatory veto on photography in public spaces in Australia, there are ever-increasing controls on photographers whether they be capturing images of street life, beach life, foreshores, swimming carnivals, school sports, surf lifesaving events, police officers on duty, army barracks, government buildings, iconic buildings and structures, transportation facilities, airports, local and national parks, protest marches, political demonstrations, to mention a few 'no-go' subjects.

The explanations provided to photographers for these restrictions are lawfully dubious. They are frequently vague and conflicting, and are loosely linked to non-specific justifications such as: security, terrorist threat, privacy, photography is banned here, for architectural reasons so that the design is not stolen, to protect the safety of children, a permit or licence is required, or culturally sensitive.

However, for the vast majority of professional and amateur photographers, the taking and display of images, in private or in public, have always been underpinned by high standards of civility, consideration, and respect and consent where required. These underpinning ethics of professional photography are poorly understood by many of those responsible for policy development related to commercial photography.

Positive signs are emerging whereby commonsense is prevailing and reasonable arrangements are being negotiated between photographers and regulators that allow photographers to seek out and capture iconic images.

The constructive reviews of current commercial photography policies by some Australian States and local authorities will increase the degree of freedom to photographers using ethics-based practices that have served photographers and society well, for decades.

In Australia, The Rottnest Island Authority [RIA] is at the forefront of updating its filming policies. A recent review of its policies and regulations now gives a clear message to photographers that photography of the island assists in promoting a strong, positive image of the island's environmental, cultural and tourism significance. The taking of photographs and filming is now encouraged, provided that it is carried out in a manner that does not compromise day-to-day management activities or the enjoyment of other users of the island. Unlike many other places managed by government agencies, photographers can even sell their images at a later stage, if they are lucky enough!

If photographers wish to take onto the island large amounts of equipment such as sets, models and the like, and/or require the assistance of RIA staff above and beyond that provided to normal visitors, or there is the possibility of environmental damage, then they will require RIA's permission and approval, and may be required to pay a modest fee, which is understandable.

The RIA is always seeking great images of the many iconic spots on the island to assist with the promotion of this unique holiday destination. Rottnest welcomes all photographers.

road. Where to next with this initial capture? Is it complete or does it need further interpretation? Is this single summary of the moment enough and how should I share my vision with others?

So begins the Journey of Expression.

Once the image has been captured, we then have further options available as to how we present our vision. From the



Photo: Catherine Matthys



Photo: Denise Yim

digital file, we can move through basic image processing, subtly fine-tuning our original capture. If needed, further refinement can be made through Photoshop, or some other magic software that allows us to express our personal vision better. The software options provide many more choices that in turn offer us the

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Photo by Jerry Ghionis



Photo: Jeff Grant

opportunity to present our original capture with little or a lot of similarity to what we saw in the decisive moment.

What was it that led us to press the trigger? Sometimes it is obvious, at other times we are challenged to remember what inspired us in that moment.

Once our original motive for pressing the trigger has materialised in the form of a file that meets with our satisfaction, what next? How do we share our decisive

At a recent Masterclass at Rottneest Island, Western Australia, Tony Hewitt and Denis Glennon explored the concepts of Journey of Capture, and Journey of Expression. The Masterclass series, the Evolution of the Photographer, explores the photographer, the photography and the photograph. Feedback from attendees at these Masterclasses has been extremely positive; a selection of testimonials is available on the testimonials pages of Tony and Denis's websites. Details of upcoming Masterclasses are also available on these websites: www.tonyhewitt.com or www.denisglennon.com. Tony and Denis plan to expand the Masterclass series to include unique locations around Australia in 2012. Please call Tony on 0411 555 508 or Denis on 0418 923 103 for further details.



Photo: Libby Holmsen

moment with the rest of the world? Maybe it is destined for the eyes of a select few, or maybe it will travel beyond our control, moving from viewer to viewer, taking with it our selected moment in time, and the individual responses that will invariably accompany it?

We can choose to express our vision as a print or a digital file. Do we plan to have the image enlarged and framed, and if so, what medium do we print on, photographic paper or perhaps canvas?

Whatever direction we take, we are on the continuing journey of expression. Some images are powerful in isolation, framed and hanging on a wall, while others seem to tell their story more effectively when viewed in conjunction with other images, setting context and providing a background for interpretation. A slide show or printed book, are some ways these images may be best presented.

With the continuing evolution of technology, we are constantly exposed to new forms of expression. Indeed, in this digital world we are offered a steady stream of new ways to express our vision. Through Facebook or Twitter, via an online gallery or our own website or blog, there are many options for sharing our vision. The journey of expression allows for a myriad of ways to share with the world the unique way in which we see.

While curiosity and focus may provide the driving force on the journey of capture, it is imagination and passion that often takes us through to the final expression of our visual ideas.

Enjoy the journey!

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