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CHAPTER SEVEN: SECURE PRACTITIONERS.

7.1 JOHN DE ROOY ~ AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE.

Five forty five am and the raw immediacy of the electronic alarm demands that I keep my commitment to an early start. As yet not even the slightest hint of the approaching day punctuates the inky moonless gloom that surrounds me. Several weeks of overcast weather have caused a postponement of today’s aerial shoot and, with the deadline drawing ever nearer, a clear dawn is more urgently required. In the half-light of 6.15am headlights arc into the driveway and I am greeted by a cheery John de Rooy. He beams at me, obviously delighted with the still star spangled, cloudless sky. Six thirty am and a dew-covered, high wing Cessna awaits us, its overhead wing configuration a favourite with aerial photographers; a door has also been removed ensuring an unobstructed view.

Six forty five am and, through the gaping door-less doorway the tarmac is sliding past at an increasing blur. As we climb John points out the valleys of mist to our left, which are superbly lit by the first tangential rays of a perfect morning. At one thousand feet the beat of the engine eases, and we head south along the still sleepy Townsville Strand. We are bound for an area a mere twelve kilometres beyond the city and the location of our photographic subject, The Sun Metals Zinc Refinery.
Photography played only a very small part in John’s childhood as his family did not own a camera and his only early recollections of picture making are the travelling photographer who visited once or twice to make a record of the six siblings: “… once in the lounge room and once by the back fence.” At fifteen John purchased his first camera, an inexpensive second-hand model. His early photographic experiments ranged from images of sport to the “budgerigars in the front yard”. As a young police cadet, he had access to the academy darkroom and, from his modest cadet’s wage, updated to a new Ricoh camera. He learnt to process his own black and white film and to print with an enlarger, all the time refining his technique:

… I was probably the person who visited the darkroom in their own time more than anyone… The photography was just something I was interested in… it was always for pleasure, my first posting for the police was out in the bush at Charleville, I was always shooting, I have albums and albums of stuff [taken] for pleasure. (de Rooy, J. 2004)

It was only after John had been stationed at Charleville for a few years that he realized that the rural police work was quieter than he had anticipated. Influenced and encouraged by others in the force and looking to build on what he enjoyed, he made a move towards forensic photography:

There was a detective sergeant out there who used to dabble in photography and finger prints at crime scenes in Charleville, there was
A MIRROR TO THE MIRROR – CLIVE HUTCHISON

no one qualified to do it so I used to help him a bit too: take some photos and muck around in his darkroom. That’s where my interest grew from. (de Rooy, J. 2004)

We fly by our destination at five hundred feet. The refinery sits huddled behind a low hillock; it is of just sufficient height to throw into shadow much of the scene below, shielding key buildings from the low angle of the sun. Only the billowing white smoke stacks catch the morning light, standing proudly above the surrounding unlit gloom. Several low wide circles are made of the valley in anticipation of the critical moment (Plate 7.1.1).

The earth rotates and a few extra degrees of celestial elevation see a curtain drawn back; all is revealed. Instructions from John squawk through the intercom headsets: the pilot, who occasionally checks with air traffic control for permission to raise our ceiling, confirms details of altitudes, angles and directions. John changes cameras and formats, SLR digital, medium format, and Widelux 120 panoramic. Our relative position is continually changing requiring that copious amounts be captured with each move. I remain frustrated that my
own opportunities for image making are necessarily restricted, shoehorned as I am into the tiny confines of the backseat compartment.

A year of intensive training in Brisbane saw John qualify as police photographer in 1981. Seventeen years based in Townsville followed a new applied direction:

I worked all around the region, in Cairns, Mt.Isa, Birdsville, all over the country... When I first picked up a camera it was all about enjoying it, things that interested me, there wasn’t much structure to it at all. In the police suddenly you find that skills in photography can assist a lot in recording evidence. (de Rooy, J. 2004)

After three years in Townsville John also started to take an interest in developing the more creative aspects of his photography. He took formal training via seminars held by leading photographers from around Australia.

The first person I encountered was Geelong photographer Ian Hawthorn. Ian did workshops all around Australia and he was brilliant. He taught me how to see light: outdoors, window light or whatever... the day I got back from that seminar suddenly everything changed, the way I did things [and] the way the final product looked was completely different. (de Rooy, J. 2004)
For a long time John worked as a part time photographer, building a business of wedding and portrait photography on weekends. Growth followed based on personal contact and recommendation and, for many years now, he has operated his own business. Although known by many as a wedding photographer, he has developed a diverse and expanding client base. He claims that challenge of the variety of photographic tasks is what he claims has kept him motivated and involved:

In a small town like Townsville you have to be a photographer for all seasons and this involves just about anything you can imagine. If you specialize too much in any one area you may not have enough rice on the table. Because of my past in forensic photography a lot of my legal friends still call me to photograph victims’ injuries and things for court cases and compensation claims. I do a lot of scientific based photography...a lot of aerial photography, a lot of aerial survey photography of the reef for GBRMPA [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority]...industrial work in the mining and processing of minerals industries... government authorities. (de Rooy, J. 2004)

It is also the on going customer demand that has maintained his involvement over such a long period:

As a wedding photographer you are always booked out twelve months in advance so if you want to fall off the planet it’s going to take you at
least twelve months to do it. It’s also the only business that I know really well that I can run by myself being my own boss and doing my own thing. (de Rooy, J. 2004)

John has never felt disadvantaged by being in a remote location. He believes that his style may have even developed further as a result of not being exposed to the influence of too many other people. However, as the President of the local branch of the Australian Institute of Professional Photographers (AIPP), he has also been responsible for bringing a regular range of industry notaries from around Australia to North Queensland.

The morning’s final images require a more extreme manoeuvre; as the right wing dips, I feel my weight pull heavily at the seat belt and the lack of a door demands all of my attention. Tightly we circle directly over the Monopoly like buildings below, their three-dimensionality clearly revealed by the raking light. Several such circles are completed before John gives the nod to head back to town. We touch down and John removes his photographic equipment from the Cessna and I have him strike a relaxed pose amongst the various planes on the tarmac. The highly reflective white body of a plane provides the perfect fill light to the direct early morning sunshine.

7.1.1 JOHN DE ROOY: “YOU’VE GOT TO CARE ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT”

John de Rooy is the photographic quiet achiever widely known for his tireless work on behalf of the AIPP. John has a rigorous approach to maintaining and
extending the quality of his work especially through sharing with peers and by participation in workshops and seminars. His personal qualities of friendliness, helpfulness and sincerity are recognised and lauded by all in the North Queensland photographic community. With these attributes as foundations I set out to encompass and capture the following in the photography:

- A sense of the genuine.
- A serious but optimistic person who looks to the future.
- A person who is quietly proud of his contribution and achievements.
- A seeker of quality.
- A person who is quietly in control.
- A sense of respect for the subject.
- A person who seeks balance.
- A sense of the traditional values

In interpreting these desired qualities I sought a central image free of artifice and device. The image was to be the genuine article, sincere and straightforward. The first decision made was to place John at the site of his image making, amidst yet dominating, the planes at the airport. Once in position central to frame, with his highly specialised Wide Lux panoramic camera strung around his neck, John was invited to strike a range of poses using the tail of the plane both as a posing aid, and as a compositional device to frame the subject. A wide-angle lens adds additional emphasis to the front hand anchoring the image and contributes to a sense of confidence, authority and control. Diagonals lend emphasis to the centrally weighted composition whilst the face is placed on a golden mean for balance and harmony. A point of view below the
subject offers respect and empowerment. Eyes scan beyond the immediacy of the airport surrounds, to beyond the perimeter of the image, pointing at a horizon of possibilities. The airport context is secondary and is cropped to a suggestion rather than a descriptive competing narrative. An image of high traditional tonal quality was chosen to reflect the formal print values of the subject. Supporting the central image is an outer frame comprising an aerial view of Cape Cleveland captured during our earlier morning flight as the first light strikes the fog-shrouded landscape (Plate 7.1.2).
Plate 7.1.2, John de Rooy, 2005
We arrive at the Mareeba Wetland’s Visitor Centre with about an hour of usable light remaining. Paul Dymond (Plate 7.2.1) is suitably attired in the multi-pocketed, sleeveless khaki vest of the outdoors photographer. The staff already know of Paul as the photographer and writer of several published articles about the Mareeba Wetlands. Paul reacquaints himself with openness and an easy confidence. On this occasion an additional medley of late afternoon images is required to complete a new tourism story on the wildlife experience of the 5000-acre nature reserve. A number of possibilities are canvassed relating to the format of today’s proceedings. As these arrangements are negotiated, I sense that Paul enjoys not only his photography but also the freedom and persona of the freelance photographers’ role. From his specialized backpack he unhurriedly assembles his camera and the various lenses and other accessories required for the shoot. With lengthening shadows we alight by tourist punt on
the duck pond, as Clancy’s Lagoon is locally known. Stealthily we make our way in the midst of a floating carpet of water lilies, inching forward on an electric driven propeller. We join some of the 204 bird species that inhabit the twelve connected lagoons, creeks and channels that make up the wetlands complex. I glance over at Paul who has wedged himself against the boat’s aluminium sole and seat for added camera stability. With intense gaze and a bent finger poised, he surveys his telescopied, viewfinder-framed domain. (Plate 7.2.2).

Bushwalking with an uncle in Victoria during his childhood was Paul’s initial experience of photography and, although he gave it up for a number of years due to the demise of his shutter and the costs of repair, he finally rekindled his involvement during his last year of university:
When I graduated from University I had two choices. I could either go on or do a Masters Degree or I could go to Africa for eight and a half months. Because I had saved up some money and had always wanted to go to Africa I ditched the Masters and headed off... I took a 35mm camera with two lenses and 135 rolls of Kodachrome and I still sell those images and write about that trip today. (Dymond, P. 2005)

Shooting transparency film with no darkroom involvement has always been integral to Paul’s photography and, as such, even images taken in his bushwalking youth have proved to be of commercial value years later:

I’ve still got those trannies today. I never shot print film…and believe it or not one of those photos that I took when I was thirteen years old, actually three of them, got published in a magazine last year. They needed some photos of the Grampians, and I had some photos of the Grampians...I scanned them, I sent them off and they got published. I couldn’t believe it. (Dymond, P. 2005)

In terms of becoming involved with photography Paul sees photographers as largely falling into one of two discrete groups:

There are those that fell in love with photography and they just love to photograph everything, they just love to make an image. Then there are others of us, and this is probably the group that I fit into, who fell in love with something first and then they got into photography as a way to
expressing that love for something. For me that was travel and the outdoors and that inspired me more than any one person. (Dymond, P. 2005)

A cormorant alights from a craggy dead tree and smaller water birds lazily and distractedly move from the path of the slow approach of the punt. A carpet of water lilies parts to allow us passage: they wave back and re-form in our wake. Issues of water management, conservation, species diversity, tourist visits and promotional brochures are amongst the topics covered in the punt between Paul and Tim, the ranger guide. Now working with a digital camera, Paul is free to capture large volumes of images without concern for cost or the lab handling issues associated with film. Two passes are made to capture a new range of water bird images before returning to the dock. In the Park 4WD we seek a range of other terrestrial images.

A group of wallabies silently raise their heads from their grazing posture to evaluate the threat level posed by these latest intruders. However, largely habituated to human presence they assess the threat as low, duck behind the long grass, and return to their grazing. Paul is denied the shot he wants. He waits, now in ambush mode, long lens poised. Will opening the door cause them to take flight and the shot be lost altogether? Will some natural occurrence cause them to sit up attentively as required? Waiting, waiting, …nothing…..clicking and whistling noises are made by our guide Tim, at increasing volume and frequency. Finally resigned to the elusiveness of the
shot, the engine is restarted to move on. Immediate response, several marsupial bodies straighten, ears erect. A motor driven shutter records a series of instants, several every second; the new threat evaluated, the heads disappear again. Satisfied, Paul gives a nod to Tim, and the car edges on.

Paul sees himself as a diverse operator able to work within several niches. He describes himself as a travel photojournalist who also does stock photography:

Travel photography is the all-encompassing thing but I also do a lot of writing to accompany my travel photography and I also do a lot of selling of stock images as well...I have my own stock, I also supply stock libraries. I’m with Lonely Planet Images... I’ve done about 20 or so of their guidebooks. (Dymond, P. 2005)

The coming of stock photography libraries in the last fifteen years has been a revolution in the commercial supply of images to all sectors of publishing. Paul is open in sharing his thoughts on most aspects of stock and his own stock operation:

The thing that I learnt about stock is that if you are running your own stock library you have to have a really deep and wide supply of images in any one area otherwise you just can’t compete with the big libraries... You have to have a niche in travel photography otherwise the best way
to get your travel images out there is to write about them… (Dymond, P. 2005)

Paul’s break in travel photography came with an image being published in a Dutch newspaper after time spent travelling in Nepal with a Dutch couple, one of whom was editor of a large newspaper. When the editor returned to Holland he wrote an article on the effects of tourism on the environment in Nepal and he needed some images to accompany the article. This image has since appeared in other publications but the thrill of seeing it in print for the first time confirmed to Paul the possibility of working as a travel photographer. However it was a book that finally helped to open that door:

Up until that point I had spent all this time travelling in Africa and South East Asia and I had thoughts of selling my travel images but I didn’t really know how to go about it. But in a bookstore in Bangkok … I found this great book by a guy named John Shaw… a fantastic nature photographer. [It was] called: The Business of Nature Photography. It basically talks about how to make submissions to magazines and all these different things… I continued backpacking and lugging this hardcover book around with me. I read it again and again and again just soaking it all in. (Dymond, P. 2005)

Paul used the book as a blueprint for his business with the exception that, to cater to the Australian market, it was necessary to be able to write about the images as well. As his reputation grows, more commissions are coming from
magazines that know his work. This is in addition to any speculative photo-illustrated articles that he may submit.

The late afternoon light adopts the warm deep tones over which photographers enjoy romancing and enthusing (Plate 7.2.3).

Plate 7.2.3, Last Light, 2005

The textures of the tropical savannah countryside are cast into high relief by the low angled rays. As a group of three brolgas pass in the distance, Paul braces himself to steady his telephoto lens. He stakes his claim on the final photo opportunities of the day, his enthusiasm and depth of involvement undiminished. There seems little doubt that, in seeking a pivotal moment from the continuum, he is in his element: at one with the role, at one with his subject, at one with himself. I raise my camera and, as Paul raises his, I release the shutter.
7.2.1 PAUL DYMOND: “SOME PHOTOGRAPHERS WANT TO HIDE THE WRINKLES, I WANT TO REVEL IN THEM”.

Paul Dymond’s self-made status as a working travel and wildlife photographer is deserving of respect. His goal identification in photography was clear from the outset when he departed for Africa with a dream and a bundle of Kodachrome some years ago. His level of enthusiasm for the path that he has chosen is undiminished from his earliest involvement. The photograph of Paul should thus evoke:

- steadfastness of purpose
- self reliance
- high aspirations
- confidence
- connectedness
- passion for his craft
- an association with the wild and exotic

In translating these characteristics to the creation of his image a location evoking the exotic allure of the African savannah, which had originally drawn Paul to travel/wildlife photography, was chosen. The stance of Paul as he braces himself to make images at the end of the day’s shoot is representative of his resolute attitude towards survival in a very competitive photographic sector and his determination to capture the necessary image. Ancient termite mounds rise from the grasses, their weathered and earthy texture highlighted by the acuteness of the late afternoon sun. Paul is placed equidistant between two of them, establishing a triangle of stability and signifying a sense of belonging and
endurance. The sharpness of the low angled light integrates Paul with the natural elements; throwing all surfaces into similar relief.

Uniquely amongst the portraits, the subject (Paul) is here seen looking through his camera. It is also only Paul amongst all of the participants who sees photography as lacking primacy but as a means to an end, in his case as a conduit to travel and exotic experiences. In this sense Paul is directly using the camera’s stare to look to the future, above and beyond the more familiar local horizons. Although the viewer is unaware of the subject of his photograph, it is Paul’s embeddedness and involvement in capturing the natural world that is the subject of this image. The brolgas balance the scene and hint at the possibility and allure of distant places and destinations; the fuel of Paul’s imagination and vision. Paul’s images possess a strong and distinctive narrative quality, a quality that beckons the viewer to seek beyond their current condition. Through the subject’s posture and the richness of his environment, this is firmly established in the final image (Plate 7.2.4).
Plate 7.2.4, Paul Dymond 2005
Peregrine falcons soar effortlessly on the rising thermal currents. Over their lofty domain they are granted supreme authority. Earth bound observers; tourists, nature lovers and those seeking a moment of diversion from the sea-level mayhem of the city below, marvel in moments of quiet introspection as the birds perform their faultless aerial manoeuvres. Castle Hill, known to the indigenous inhabitants of Townsville as Cootharinga, is home to many such personally transforming and restorative natural phenomena. Maybe it was his years of living in a house precariously perched on the side of the hill (some would say cliff) that gives Greg Keating (Plate 7.3.1) his enthusiasm for photographing the environs of Castle Hill but, whatever its genesis, his photography is cultivating a new awareness of the hill’s uniqueness and beauty.
Greg started photographing the landscape in 1979 when he purchased his first SLR camera. Originally from Tasmania, he was drawn to recording the exotic nature of the new places he was visiting such as the bush in the Northern Territory. Despite being technically experimental, he felt immediate gratification from his first attempts:

The pictures came out well despite the fact that I was learning... I learnt how to use the aperture and shutter ... and straight away to make an image...it was great. (Keating, G. 2004)

These first images were prolific but lacking in discrimination, given the directness of response to the exotica of a new environment and the novelty of the photo recording process. It was only later that Greg sensed he was beginning to see the surface of the environments he was recording:

Now I try to be a bit more familiar. I try to find something within the landscape that is more general, I realized that what is exotic for me is not exotic for everyone, or it’s clichéd, or it’s not really putting a lot across other than a theme. (Keating, G. 2004)

We walk together, but in single file, down from the car park at the summit of Castle Hill along one of the many steep and meandering tracks. The car park with its various look-outs, is a place to which most newcomers and visitors to Townsville make a compulsory excursion. Momentarily my mind contemplates the staggering number of film frames exposed and digital images recorded.
from the officially sanctioned photo snap shot vantage points. “Look at that Kapok tree…” intercedes Greg, snapping me back to the present, and pointing out a rugged little specimen. I admire its tenacity, sending down investigative roots to cling and take anchorage amongst the granite boulders. It celebrates its victory by proudly displaying a prolific arrangement of polished green bulbs from its tortured limbs. “…there are so many great things like that up here and yet we are still so close to the city”.

We walk on and Greg is quietly expansive:

> Coming up here, especially at this time of day, the light creates all sorts of different moods and effects that most people never get to see. (Keating, G. 2004)

Often in our discussions Greg returns to a theme that is central to understanding and appreciating his work. This theme relates to the surface, as opposed to the truer and deeper nature of the world around us:

> So much of the photography and painting of the bush is descriptive… the bush doesn’t actually say anything… Some people go to a desert and see it as harsh, barren and a bad place to live, but if you spend some time there it is also beautiful… and you find if you live there there’s a lot more to it than that… the harshness is just superficial. (Keating, G. 2004)
It is the *essence* of the bush rather than the bush itself that Greg seeks to capture. His process is one of ongoing reflection and refinement.

I am continually learning to use my eye... to get to know what the camera will reproduce, that is always an ongoing thing: you get a set of photos and you look them and think about what you are going to do the next time. (Keating, G. 2004)

We greet a few walkers on the track; after they pass, Greg makes images on his new digital camera; images of trees, of foliage, of rocks, of rocks and sky, of leaves and sky.

I want to produce pictures that people will engage with, that will make them feel good about their surroundings, will make them look twice at their surroundings, so that they find things they haven’t seen before... whether it be rhythms or whatever, and with photography the thing is it’s something that people can say it’s real. (Keating, G. 2004)

Greg has an enduring admiration for the recognised greats from the establishment of American landscape photography, Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. However he explains that his approach is more intimate and does not attempt to capture the grand scene or iconic widespread landscape:
I’m trying to get something more personal or one-on-one going. I take an ordinary scene and try to find something extraordinary in it. I find that for me it is something simple to do… I’ve shown people a picture of something they walk past every day and they look at it and go… I’ve never looked at it like that before, that looks like it’s somewhere else. You know that next time they walk past it, they will look at it differently. (Keating, G. 2004)

Greg feels very at home in the Australian bush and has, over many years, worked and lived in remote places. He believes that his experience in the bush and now in remote places in the tropics has brought about a deeper knowledge which is reflected in his work. Further, he argues that those who are familiar only with the superficial appearance of the bush will be unable to capture its essence. He recalls an exhibition based on photographs of the Tropical Savannah by out-of-state photographers to illustrate his point:

I looked at those images and they were so clichéd. It’s like what you see when you first see it. But when you see it a lot of the time you see other things. (Keating, G. 2004)

The light starts to fade and the shadows lengthen as we make our way back along the paths of crumbling pink granite. A gentle zephyr brings some relief to the radiated heat of the hill. Momentarily as an afterthought, the sun breaks through a thin bank of deep violet clouds hugging the horizon. Each suspended leaf is haloed with a brilliant radiating rim. Shedding their normal guise, that of
leaves and trees, they are a shimmering display of ethereal light. A shared glance indicates that the essence of the afternoon, and a splinter of the beauty of Castle Hill have been revealed and recognised.

7.2.1 GREG KEATING: “FINDING THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY”.

The location of Greg’s photography - at the top of Castle Hill - is analogous with his positioning vis-á-vis the ordinary affairs of most people; it is somewhat removed, elevated and individualised. Greg follows his own calling and is motivated by a stream of obsessions and factors that might not resonate readily with many non-photographers. Subtleties of light, composition, colour, and movement constitute the furniture that populates Greg’s vision. A honed connection to place, not just its physical appearance, but the echoes of its essence; its voice and spirit, are the strength of his photography.

The people of Townsville look at (as opposed to see) Cootharinga (Castle Hill) every day. They walk the goat track to the summit, jog up the road to the hill top car park and bring out of town visitors to enjoy an elevated vista of Townsville. However when they experience Greg’s photographs of Cootharinga they are incredulous, for they have never seen these appropriated relationships between leaf and sky, light and shadow, bark and stone. Greg’s interpretations of place are akin to the fine-tuning of the crystal in an early radio, precisely aligned to
the transmission of energy and essence as in his series: *Castlehillscapes* (Plate 7.3.2).

Plate 7.3.2, Keating, G. *Castlehillscapes*, 2003

In photographing Greg, the key driving factors relating to his portrayal were:

- ambivalence to the posturing of others.
- an individualised approach.
- connectedness to place and the natural environment.
- willingness to make a stand for what he sees as having meaning in his external visual engagements, without fear or favour, regardless of consequence.
- a genuine and pretenceless persona.

In bringing together these characteristics, the Castle Hill location, site of his most recent photography, was a natural choice. Many of the values that I wanted to convey about Greg were already encoded in his craggy face, keen eyes and battered hat. But it was his close relationship to place and his ability to
see beyond the surface that were challenges that could only be resolved through identification, on location, on the day. Typical of many photographic projects there was a degree of serendipity as to what visual situations and opportunities to photograph Greg would develop. However as Greg rested, he sat perched, in the manner of the falcons, unconventionally on his nest, equally at one within their domain, central and dominant in the image area, surveying his realm. The background steepness of Cootharinga’s tortured slopes echoes the perilous nature of his lofty views.

In this final image the aims are met as Greg gazes to the horizon; unconcerned with the viewers’ pettiness, he continues to look above and beyond the ordinary, in his relentless search for the extraordinary (Plate 7.3.3).
Plate 7.3.3, Greg Keating, 2004
7.4 FIONA LAKE: OUTBACK PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE.

The Julago Cattle Handling Facility lies nestled, beyond the city fringe, adjacent to the rubbish tip. Weeds overhang and encroach on both sides of the approach road as it narrows rapidly to a little-used, rutted track. The car wheels begin to beat at a frenzied but sporadic tempo as potholes are negotiated whilst drizzling rain has the wipers melding red dust to smeared mud. The dull morning light is flat and uninteresting; it drains colour and definition from the surrounding fields, reinforcing the mood of neglect and decay. Long abandoned cattle crushes and other rural detritus lay scattered about, festooned with a miscellany of wind blown plastic and paper escapees from the nearby tip. These rusted but decorated appendages protrude irregularly above the overgrown waist high grasses. Turning to the right I draw parallel to an unfenced rail track and pull up amongst several chaotically stacked piles of discarded rail sleepers. Just short of the DO NOT ENTER sign, I await Fiona’s arrival.

“Doesn’t look too good” observes Fiona doubtfully as she glances up to a slate grey sky, confirming what I already know to be true about this one-off opportunity to photograph her working in the field. We cross the rail line together and meet up with Rob. Since first light he has already been on horseback moving cattle around the sea of wooden stockyards. With the laconic lilt that typifies so many people of the outback, we are directed to the manager’s house behind the yards. Fiona is re-acquainted with Rob’s wife Dolly and her young son. In the bush tradition Fiona passes Dolly some cakes for
smoko later in the morning and they bring each other up to date with talk of station management and rural politics. At age two, Dolly’s son already has the look of a seasoned drover fitted out with western shirt, jeans, cowboy hat and boots. Fiona makes some informal family snapshots of him playing in the yard. This photographic activity is a precursor to the main event: during the morning three thousand cattle from all over outback Queensland will be loaded from the yards on to a yet to arrive southbound train. Fiona sits poised, comfortable on the railing waiting for the main event to unfold (Plate 7.4.1).

Plate 7.4.1, Fiona at Julago 2005

At the age of ten Fiona Lake was given a 126 Kodak Instamatic by her grandparents, a gift which started her on the path to photography. Her only initial handicap had been a shortage of film:

My parents, like typical farmers, were as tight as ticks, I could only ever get about one film out of them a year, two if I was lucky. So I’d take one photo of this, and a month later take one photo of that, so it was really...
rationed…but maybe that’s not a bad thing either. I was really keen always, and I liked art, all kinds of art, but I particularly have always liked photography. (Lake, F. 2005)

Photography later became more than a passing interest when Fiona attended agricultural college and this led her to embrace an applied perspective to her images from this point forward:

I am not interested in taking photos that have no purpose. While I always took photos at school and at ag college I … [later] started selling them to cover the costs [of film and prints] so I could go and take more. But it was when I went to work on a cattle station west of Cairns …that I realised that I had a burning motivation to record what I could see…because it was amazing, it was just such an amazing experience and ever since then that’s what I’ve been roaming around doing. (Lake, F. 2005)

This passion with photographing outback life and people has continued to be Fiona’s specialisation. She readily admits that having such a narrow focus can be limiting; yet she only barely tolerates working in other areas of photography:

So while I still take photos of other things…to me they are fairly meaningless…the ones I take on cattle stations seem to me to have value: it’s recording history, it’s recording culture, it’s bringing recognition to people who basically get almost none. Most farming stories in the media
concern people who live in more settled areas...whereas these people are just so far out, they are really out of sight, out of mind. (Lake, F. 2005)

The train driver, guided by radio instruction, aligns the first empty cattle car with the cattle race. Skilfully Rob works the stock in set numbers down to the crush. Dolly is in charge of the gates and opens and closes them behind Rob to further control the animals’ movements. The baby looks on from his stroller, content to chew on a Vegemite coated rusk, count the passing beasts, and contemplate his future life in the cattle business. Fiona seeks a variety of vantage points and shoots with different focal lengths to compress and control depth and perspective. As the cattle are moved towards the train she must be careful to stay out of their field of view: any awareness of her presence will impede their progress and make it more difficult for Rob. Throughout the loading Fiona and Dolly maintain a steady stream of mainly rural business chitchat (Plate 7.4.2); who has bought which station and who has sold what cattle. I speculate that opportunities for Dolly to engage in face-to-face female conversation on such matters might be limited.

Plate 7.4.2, Catching up with Dolly, 2005
The morning is now well advanced and the flat and featureless light has not improved. Fiona persists: close ups of Rob handling the stock pony, the legs and hooves of cattle competing for position, wide shots over the expanse of yards.

Apart from a geography teacher at school who was enthusiastic about photography and a cattle station manager who encouraged her to publish her images in a book, Fiona has made her way in photography without any particular mentors or teachers:

I basically taught myself [the skills of photography] from books, and trial and terror [sic] also. Mostly what I have learnt is to edit my photos; when I get them back and sit down and spend hours and hours editing, looking and comparing and seeing what works and what doesn’t… otherwise [I learnt from] magazines and books to just to get the fundamentals. The technical side is something that I’d like to spend more time brushing up on but I just don’t have time. (Lake, F. 2005)

Fiona finds that making money from her photography is difficult due to the narrowness of her specialization and increasing competition in this area. However it has been sales of existing images to advertising agencies that have located her work on the internet which have been the most financially rewarding. Fiona’s profile as a photographer was boosted when a feature was made about her for the ABC Television program *Landline*. The program has
been re-run and re-edited many times since and often goes to air now as a ten minute filler:

They say on average about five hundred thousand people watch *Landline* and obviously a lot of the same people watch each week but I know when it’s on because I get all these emails each time. (Lake, F. 2005)

Fiona insists that she is unaware of what image attributes might contribute to her identifiable photographic style; however the feedback of others has made her aware that she may, in fact, have a style of her own:

Once I was showing my postcards in Camooweal and I was asked if I had taken some images over in the Bungle Bungles, which is in the Kimberleys, and I said, ‘Yes I do. How do you know that they are mine?’ and he said, ‘I can recognise the style’. I was gob smacked. So I don’t know if my style is all that unique, much though I’d like it to be. But I don’t try to pose things [but prefer to] specialize in capturing people working and living…not looking at me, but as if I’m not there at all. (Lake, F. 2005)

Finding your own unique direction in photography is the central advice that Fiona offers to those seeking a photographic career:

Find your own niche, find what you’re good at, find what you’re passionate about…and you either have to compete on quality or compete on price. So if you are doing what everyone else is doing you are going
to compete on price...people will just screw you down to the lowest price that they can get out of you, which is a bit of a tragic way to live your life. You must compete on quality and make what you do unique. (Lake, F. 2005)

The three thousand head are finally loaded. The stop start procedure has taken several hours of intensive and co-operative endeavour. Rob sits his son on the front of the saddle, where he immediately wants to take up the reins (Plate 7.4.3).

Plate 7.4.3, Rob and Son, 2005

Fiona makes several photographs of the two of them and makes promises to provide follow up prints for the family album. It astounds me that this very rural event has all taken place no more than twelve kilometres from the Townsville city centre. I realize that, for many city dwellers in the world’s most urbanised country, Fiona is their bridge to the outback life. Whether her images
are of hardship, triumph or just glimpses of daily life, they help sustain an appreciation of a unique cultural heritage that is distinctly Australian.

7.4.1 FIONA LAKE: “I AM NOT INTERESTED IN TAKING PHOTOS THAT HAVE NO PURPOSE”

Fiona Lake has the forthright demeanour of a rural Australian. She enjoys calling a spade a spade, and is always ready to contribute to any conversation. However her sincere and abiding concern is for the people of the bush and their way of life. She is very aware of the hardships of distance, pestilence, drought and unstable commodity prices. It is via Fiona Lake that we, as viewers of her images, get to experience that remote life. She is the gateway, the conduit, the interpreter, the arbitrator of what we see and experience of the outback.

Therefore the intent of the photography is to capture the following:

- To acknowledge Fiona’s interest and concern with telling the outback story.
- her invitation to experience the outback
- Reverence for another way of life
- Recognition of a harsh environment
- Remoteness
- Fiona’s relaxed and easy familiarity with her subject.

In order to reflect these values in the final image I decided to photograph Fiona in an outback setting; the site of all of her photography. If an outback location was not possible it was desirable to at least strive for a rural environment.
However, Fiona has a young family and a busy schedule, the opportunities to photograph her within the time frame of this project were extremely limited. Eventually only one day emerged when she could take part. Unfortunately this day was overcast with flat light and periods of drizzling rain. As the first images were taken it became increasingly obvious that Fiona, that outgoing and self-assured individual behind the camera, was shy, self-conscious and uncomfortable in front of the camera. This was not an uncommon scenario with many of the photographer subjects. They wanted to co-operate and knew that after asking so many others people to be the subjects of their photographs, they could hardly decline, even though it was not their preferred role; they were more comfortable being the arbiters of the image making. Dodging showers, and always aware that Fiona was professionally engaged to make her own images that day, dictated that quality image making opportunities for this project would be few.

Fiona sat astride a cattle crush fence photographing the beasts as they were progressively squeezed into the ever-narrowing alley of the crush. As Fiona’s friend Dolly calls to her she momentarily abandons her image making and looks down to listen to her. The moment reveals an unselfconscious country smile, an expression of interest and openness, the basis of the final compilation is established. However is it enough? Is this one image sufficient to convey all that needs to be said about Fiona, her photography, and her role as a photographer? In post production I add two additional images: the deeply cracked surface of a drought-died waterhole, photographed by the author in
Western Queensland, an icon of the harshness and persistent challenge of outback Australia, and the open outback gate, a reference to Fiona’s conduit role in bringing the disappearing outback lifestyle to a broader audience. Is this willingness to embrace other eclectic images to further the narrative in a compilation image a failure by the author to respond adequately in the original photographic context? Alternately to what extent is the image compilation a valid approach given its long-standing place within the established photographic tradition? (Plate 7.4.4)
Plate 7.4.4, Fiona Lake 2005.
7.5 KAREN LANDT: FINE ART LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE.

With sandals firmly grasped in her left hand, and her arms slightly extended, Karen Landt leaps lightly to the next rock of the weathered but still proud outcrop. Despite the earliness of the hour and the length of the shadows, the sun is already infusing the rugged volcanic boulders with its warmth, topping up any heat that may have dissipated overnight. “I always take off my shoes”, adds a barefoot Karen, “I like to feel the energy of a place directly”. Majestic Hoop Pines tower over us, maintaining their hard won, enduring vigil.

For me this is a day of photographing Karen in the field, while for Karen, it is one of raw data collection. Details of a unique environment are mentally observed and noted across the range of senses. Tactile qualities are experienced through holding, patting and stroking; aural characteristics are absorbed through quiet introspection and tape recording, whilst visual elements are photographically documented, for later examination and contemplation. *Encapsulating an Environment: Magnetising the Isle* is the title of Karen’s Doctor of Philosophy research. This comes as the latest incarnation of an intensely personal journey on Magnetic Island that has taken place over nine years. Its aim is to understand and interpret the Magnetic Island environment through physical manifestations of place. The work is underpinned by living on the island and an involvement with photography, both as an artistic and scientific medium, dating back to adolescence.
As a child and later as a teenager, Karen’s prime interest was always art. As long as she can remember, she has been sewing, drawing, painting or making things. When investigating the potential for a career in the arts, it was the words of a career advisor that influenced her decision:

They said *if you do photography … you can earn money during your course but if you do art you can’t earn money during your course.* As I had to pay for the course, that sounded like common sense to me. (Landt, K. 2004)

Karen pursued a Diploma in Illustrative Photography followed by a Bachelor of Arts in Photography at RMIT. Concurrently she trained as a medical photographer at the Peter MacCallum Hospital, later becoming a research photographer at the Baker Medical Research Institute. The majority of the photography completed in the course was to satisfy the requirements of assignments to a defined standard with little emphasis on personal creative work. Karen describes this stage of her education:

I really didn’t do any of my own stuff [in the photography course] I was just doing what was prescribed. But I would always do everything three or four times to perfect what was required. I avoided taking other photographs because the light was never right or I didn’t have the larger format camera. (Landt, K. 2004)
Consumed with method and process, it was only on the birth of her son that Karen broke away from the formal constraints imposed by the rigour of her course:

It wasn’t until Daniel was born that I got a little Instamatic and recognised the concept of photographing something for its content. It was the first time I had freely taken a photo. (Landt, K. 2004)

Twelve years of medical photographic work gave Karen knowledge of, and access to, a range of image making options not available to most photographic practitioners. However it was only much later that a creative confluence of all these photographic experiences was to come about. For example, the use of a Scanning Electron Microscope has played a key role in the image making for the Magnetic Island project. Outside her work and formal studies Karen’s creativity has always been developing through other mediums and disciplines, “There’s always been art and craft; spinning workshops, weaving workshops”. Attending creative workshops often took the place of times normally reserved by most people for holidays or travel:

There was a Swiss felt maker, so I did that for a week…I have done all of Les Walkling’s workshops; the print ones I have done two or three times…they were so intensive... I suppose it all comes back to a love of processes and learning new knowledge. (Landt, K. 2004)
A White-Bellied Sea Eagle soars dizzily overhead. I feel its effortless grace mock me as I climb and scramble further around the headland. Making our way between the pines we discuss their place in the biodynamics of the island and rub up against their scaly trunks of small polished plates. Looking up their colour and form is startling against the saturated blue of a cloudless patch of Russell Drysdale sky. The obvious natural beauty of the island is casting a heady spell. As if by osmosis, I sense the closeness and depth of attachment that the specificity of this place has for Karen.


Karen’s work extends well beyond the conventions of mainstream representational photographic imagery. Treading a sensate path of self-expression, light and chemistry are used tangentially to record responses to the environment. The process in all aspects of Karen’s work is given at least equal weight to content, whether it be the process of recording and creation, or the
process of experiencing the end work. However, overarching all it is the photographic process that still fascinates Karen. It is the revelation of imagery, whether representational, abstract, or scientific, through the action of light and chemistry that continues to excite her:

The pendulum has come right back to expressing myself with chemistry and light...having this latent image sitting in the developer and for the first time watching it come through... the image just appear before your eyes... to me that is just fascinating. (Landt, K. 2004)

Although looking back, Karen can see a pattern in her career, where one photographic occupation or experience has led to another; she insists that many of the opportunities and paths she has followed have been evolving happenstance:

I just did things day by day. When I look back now I can see how it all fell into place, but it wasn't planned it just evolved...for example I got the job at Peter MacCallum Hospital because, while being treated and photographed there, my aunt said my niece is doing photography at RMIT, and the medical photographer working with her replied Oh! We're looking for someone. (Landt, K. 2004)
To those newly considering a photography career, Karen’s diverse and long-term perspective as a photographer, multi-disciplinary artist and photographic educator centres most importantly on the artistic/commercial divide:

I would ask them [students of photography], what do they really want to say? What do they want to express from within themselves? Do they want to … enjoy what they’re doing, or do they want to use the process to make money? There is a difference… If you don’t produce what the client wants you won’t get the job again and you won’t get paid. Or you might want to purely work as an artist and express what is within, you become the person you are satisfying. (Landt, K. 2004)

We have photographed at West Point until the sun has set. We have now philosophised about photography, photographic processes and influential photographers ad nauseam. Our past experiences, and our future visions are at many points aligned and at others divergent. However, more importantly, I now know that the Isle will indeed be encapsulated by a unique creative contribution by a committed individual. “It’s about expressing power of place”, sums up Karen as I take a final lingering look at the topographic richness of my surroundings and remove my shoes.

Plate 7.5.3, Karen 2004.

7.5.1 KAREN LANDT: “IT’S ABOUT EXPRESSING POWER OF PLACE”

Karen’s photography is experiential and experimental, eclectic, multi-layered and tactile. Her fascination with process, materials and the interaction of chemistry and light delve into areas of photographic practice that transcend traditional boundaries. The close alignment of Karen’s work with its iterations of the landscape, especially Magnetic Island, exude a deep seated resonance.
and connectedness to our understanding of the importance of place. Geological structures, botanical details, the actions of tides and a multitude of other manifestations of the environment all collide with an exciting personal vision in Karen’s work. Never content to settle for established methodologies, Karen’s unique response has led her to the use of artist’s books, exhibition combinations of print with experiential tactile mediums, alternative processes and materials.

Her series of images Lower Granite Hills is made with alternate and mixed photographic mediums. The images are formed on location at sites on Magnetic Island by direct physical and chemical processes; these processes might even include tidal action. These methods are further testament to the connectedness and individuality of Karen’s vision.

Therefore the intent of the photography of Karen is to capture the following:

- a close affinity to the environment of Magnetic Island.
- an absorbing interest in photographic processes.
- the unique and distinctive nature of her photographic vision.

After spending considerable time with Karen, both at interview, and discovering Magnetic Island anew in her presence, my quest became to create a distinctive image that drew upon her unique blend of research, passion and the Magnetic Island environment. A compilation from three source images is the strategy adopted in this case (Plate 7.4.5).
The image on the left is a detail taken directly from a scan of Karen’s work *Lower Granite Hills*, 2002. The other images were taken on sequential days on Magnetic Island. The central image depicts Karen at work, her figure bending over the camera and tripod mimicking the majestic hoop pine, as in-turn it bends to the contours of a monumental granite boulder, a very distinctive Magnetic Island feature. As Karen cradles the camera, the tree shelters the rock, both forming a circle of symbiosis and connectedness to the environment. The close up image of Karen on the shore is redolent of a stillness, a oneness with place, a contentedness, as breathing with the tides, she enmeshes herself with the “power of place” identified in her work. I wanted viewers to have direct access to a glimpse of Karen’s image making via this work, to establish a conduit to her sense of connectedness to her work and then the work to the viewer.

In order to emphasise further Karen’s relationship to the darkroom and the wet photographic process, the images are layered in unique ways within the
portrait. Instead of having a full-bleed to the edge of the image area, they float in mid space, as sheets of photographic paper float in a tray. In waves they become evident, first one then the other, partially overlapping, the delineation partly obscured.

I have known Karen over many years, and also know her work well. The photography was conducted over a number of days and there was also the opportunity to evolve the concepts underpinning the image making process. As a result this image of Karen most fully meets my expectations of the compilation images within this research and best synthesises the aims of the image making into the final print (Plate 7.5.5).
Plate 7.5.5, Karen Landt 2004.
7.6 BRYAN LYNCH: NIGHTLIFE / PRESS PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE.

Easter has put a break on the popularity of the Flinders Street East nightclub precinct. By 10.30 pm the crowds that are usually starting to build on a regular Saturday night have largely failed to materialize. The normally long queues of festooned and expectant patrons negotiating admission from surly and discriminating door staff, are replaced by small groups of footpath wandering night clubbers. Several solo and sequinned individuals adorned with bunny ears scour the contact lists of their mobile phones seeking the whereabouts of absentee friends.

Taking up a strategic position between the Mad Cow Tavern and The Bank nightclub, photographer Bryan Lynch has already subconsciously calculated the type and number of images required to satisfy the social pages editor. “Ooh it’s a quiet one tonight. Must have all gone to Maggie” (Magnetic Island), observes Bryan (almost to himself) as he peers up and down the length of the subdued streetscape. From the direction of Molly Bloom’s hotel a small but high-spirited and high-heeled band of young women emerge from the gloom. They giggle and joke their way, arm-in-arm, towards Bryan. Sporting a long and extravagant crinkle curled hairdo, and make-up applied with a slightly too-heavy hand, the boldest enquires: ‘Are you doing photos for The Bully?’ (The Townsville Bulletin Newspaper) Bryan’s night has begun.
Photography has been a constant in Bryan’s life. From an early age a fascination developed with all manner of subject matter:

I’ve always dabbled in photography ever since I was a kid. I had a little Box Brownie 126 camera. I was about twelve or thirteen when I got that. I shot anything and everything. Whatever I could find the film to do. I did landscape… I did portraiture… (Lynch, B. 2004)

Experimentation with a freedom to record and interpret all aspects of country life, the rural environment, details of daily life and minutiae, some of which would remain unremarkable to others, completed his lexicon of picture making:
I tried to set up different shots, and remember, it was all black and white back then. I still did sunsets, nice patterns in the sky, different shapes and lines... you know the way kids play... flowers, leaves, animals, whatever...(Lynch, B. 2004)

At this stage the pursuit of photography was all in the family; a carefree escape with no compulsion to please others or to seek their reward.

Bryan adopts the nightclub communication idiom: a quietly assertive patter, that cajoles the reluctant to express, and the overly expressive at least to cooperate. Small jokes and asides pass between all stakeholders quickly establishing an easy familiarity. A thirty-second ballet is enacted, its wheels well lubricated by a heady mix of Margaritas and Black Russians, floating on a
sea of Fluffy Ducks. Assemblages of egos contest for centre stage. Outrageous expressions of real or feigned affection are mutually lavished between revellers.

Throughout the intensity of directing, recognising and recording a representative moment, Bryan remains the greatest actor of all (Plate 7.6.2). Although perceived by his subjects as a fellow merrymaker with a camera, a level head is maintained. Instant but crafted orchestrations must be made in a moment, only to be later critically, and often repeatedly, assessed by now sober subjects, at their leisure. The momentary structured unity of the photographed group fades. They excitedly gather around the recent miracle of the digital camera LCD screen to witness their exaggerated, smiling pantomimes.

Bryan’s early passion for photography appears intuitive. Without coach or mentor his enthusiasm continued, the picture making creating a satisfying end in itself:

Back then there was no TV, ...being one of twelve [children] we didn’t have a lot of magazines to keep up with what was happening, where. It was just a medium that I liked. I couldn’t draw and I wasn’t a painter or an artist in that form but I did like to be able to create something. The camera was my tool for being able to create. (Lynch, B. 2004)

It was only a matter of time before Bryan’s abilities were recognised by others but his efforts were usually unaccompanied by financial reward.
As time progressed I was always the one that was asked to do the wedding for them for free and I’d always do a nice photo you know. (Lynch, B. 2004)

Bryan’s adult life was well established before a coalescence of circumstances brought him to the point of taking up photography in a more serious and structured way:

Because my daughter was doing journalism at uni… I saw that they had lectures in photography… I wanted to learn more about photography. On delving a little deeper my wife and daughter found out that they had a full photography course. The next thing I knew I was shooting a folio and signing applications to try to get into uni. (Lynch, B. 2004)

Despite competing time commitments involving a morning milk delivery run in Ayr, Bryan managed to stay up to date with his studies, making the 180km. return trip from Ayr almost daily. His photographic talents became recognised by the Townsville Bulletin. This new involvement expanded to the extent that Bryan now had a new problem:

Within the first year I was doing work for the paper, by my second year I was nearly unable to complete the Diploma because [photographic] work was now interfering with uni. (Lynch, B. 2004)
To scores of regulars Bryan is an integral part of the nightlife scene. With seven years on the job, this is evidenced by the regular bouts of often over familiar recognition, and “high five” palm slapping. With sufficient socializing groups now recorded we meander back to a fast food restaurant where images of the night are magically despatched from the camera, to the laptop and via a PCMCIA/CDMA modem card to the Internet for later processing and publication I photograph Bryan engrossed in this task. “What the bloody hell are you doin’ that for?” enquires a laconic, cantankerous and alcohol weary individual perched precariously on the corner of an adjacent piece of stainless steel public furniture. “I mean who’s he?” he questions me while belligerently motioning to Bryan and critically appraising me through squinting and bleary eyes as I make photos of Brian. “What bloody good is that gonna do for anybody, takin’ his f…ing photo at McDonalds at one o’clock in the f…ing morning?”
My mind whirls while searching for a succinct and appropriate response to such unwanted and mounting attentions. With simple and sincere eloquence Bryan comes to my rescue. “We are working on a project which is a study of the media,” he intones, causing a slow motion response from my protagonist as he drags his accusatory eyes reluctantly from me to refocus clumsily on Bryan. The earnest patter from Bryan continues; based on a matrix of facts and circumstance, it is delivered with friendly but serious tone. Eyes glaze over, consciousness partly recedes, an elbow slips on the damp and polished table surface; forced to an uncomfortable sudden awareness he stands and shuffles off into the shadows. Bryan returns his attention to me and finishes his sentence seemingly unaware of, or immune to, the unreasoned nature of these intoxicated post-party ramblings. For the first time I truly appreciate that the skills of the seasoned nightlife photographer extend well beyond those of apertures, shutter speeds and fleeting compositions. I sit in awe; immeasurably impressed.

7.6.1 “FROM FATALS TO THE FLUFFY STUFF”

The dynamics of the street photography of Bryan Lynch and the integration of digital imaging into that role continue to fascinate me. Having known Bryan well for many years and in the light of his responses made during the interview there were several aspects of the person and his practice that I set out to capture and communicate in the photography:
• The nature of the passing late night serial relationships and alignments formed between the subjects of the photography themselves and between these subjects and the photographer.
• Bryan’s central role as the social facilitator of these casual alignments and encounters.
• The instant gratification and self-referential nature of digital capture.

To give expression to these image aims the nighttime sidewalk was chosen as the location. This is where Brian plies so much of his trade. The initial street image is composed to expose the conspiratorial closeness of the temporary tryst; it is immediate and intimate. Triangulated, the three faces, with Bryan as the pivotal central figure stare at the digital image that he has just captured. Free of coaching from the author, knees are bent or straightened as required, to bring about the necessary alignment of eye lines. The nightlife clothing, hairstyles and demeanour of the young women stand out in stark contrast to Bryan’s everyday work wear, his keys and mobile phone fastened to his belt; the trademarks of the practical man. Yet all barriers are transcended here. Together they inhabit a physical space that would be normally unthinkable between a middle-aged man and two teenage girls yet in that 30 seconds they are united by common purpose. The image and the process take them, and bind them, their environment suggested only by the illuminated background facade of the nightclub. I want the viewer to share their conspiracy as the fourth participant in their digital dance. Two images are digitally combined to complete this image compilation: the image that could be seen on the back of
the camera at the time of capture, and a photograph of the back of a digital camera taken under similar directional lighting conditions in the studio. A seductive circle is traced; not only do the two girls appear on the back of the LCD panel, but the entire dynamics of the scene are shared. That is: Bryan shares the image of the girls with the girls, the subjects of the street image, the author then captures Bryan capturing the girls and extend this to the viewer in a context that draws on the visual power of the original experience inhabited by Bryan and the girls at the time of capture. Thus the nature of the exchange is effectively captured and extrapolated to include the viewer and Bryan’s central role confirm.
Plate 7.6.4, Bryan Lynch, 2004
7.7 MEGAN MARANO: CHILD PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE

Skipping through the remnant she-oaks bordering the Cape Pallarenda foreshore, Megan Marano enthuses over the clothes the children are wearing and the degree to which they will contribute to the finished images. The Jones family are regular customers who are intent on maintaining a complete photographic record not just of their children’s formative years but of the relationship between all family members. The magic hour rapidly approaches; a daily fleeting window of luminous opportunity that exists before dusk. It is a time of rim lighting, long shadows and golden romantic renderings. A range of topics of mutual interest is revived with great enthusiasm and conviviality. Common values are reaffirmed; bonds of trust and friendship are rekindled within the current moment, an atmosphere of shared purpose and co-operation is established.

As a young mother, Megan first began to take an interest in photography through the child photography of local Ayr photographer Dan Tomacchio:

He had the most brilliant work. I would always go to look in his window. Every time he changed his display I would go down town specifically to have a look. When my son Jesse turned one it was to Dan that I turned to have his photos done… When my second boy turned one I was back there again. (Marano, M. 2005)
The rapport established with Dan grew with time as each successive child had regular portrait sittings. This regular contact and enthusiasm for Dan’s work led to a job at the studio, initially filing negatives and other forms of office/studio management. At this time Megan had no intention of taking on the photographer’s role:

…I just never thought I would be able to that. But after about a year I started to get into a little bit of the technical stuff and I became intrigued as to how it all works. I then borrowed a camera and started to do some shoots of my own kids. (Marano, M. 2005)

Employing her unique mix of enthusiasm, client knowledge and photographic know-how, Megan works the family as a group. The children gain confidence from their parent’s participation in the picture making process. “OK, walk towards me, that’s it, a little faster, that’s great, oh! yes, yes, OK now swing good, good, now just get your feet wet, great great” continues her constant patter of positive reinforcement. Megan seems completely unaware of her own physicality as she walks backwards through the small breaking wavelets in an effort to maintain a constant distance from her approaching subjects. The foaming crests wrap around her legs, soaking her jeans to the knees. “That was fantastic, let’s do it just a couple more times.” While confidence is high and the children appear relaxed and joyous, and before the stress of following instructions takes its toll, Megan jollies the children to the next activity. Firstly in groups and then individually, concentrating on the youngest child (thus the
shortest concentration span) first, Megan looks for guided spontaneity. Laying spreadeagled on the sand, camera pressed to forehead, elbows and forearms acting as tripod legs, many images are captured, moments of fun are interspersed with instances of a child’s introspection or interaction with their peers. From her low perspective the children are visually empowered to express aspects of their world and personality normally hidden from a casual adult viewer.

After two years with Dan Tomacchio in an administrative role, a pivotal event would swing Megan’s life irrevocably in a new direction:

Someone needed to book in for a wedding and Dan said ‘I’m booked but I think you can do it’, I went home thought about it and returned the next day to declare that ‘I can’t do it, to which Dan replied ‘I’ve already booked them.’ He threw me in the deep end but luckily I swam. The wedding worked out fine but I know that if he hadn’t thrown me in the deep end I never would have done it. I was just too unsure. (Marano, M. 2005)

To Megan anything now seemed possible. She began to book regular jobs. Her first portraiture job resulted in a record print order for the studio. With her confidence thus boosted, she took on weddings, couples and children. However as she grew busier, she felt that she was being drawn from the subject matter that she really loved: children:
Kids and families are where I belong and all the rest, well, I just don’t want it. I decided that this was what I was going to do and it has just grown from there. This is because I can remember the way the first photos that Dan took [of my children] affected me. These are my prime possessions. They still hang on my wall, people still wow over them. I want to be able to move people the same way. (Marano, M. 2005)

With nine years of photographic experience in North Queensland, Megan now believes that operating here may have made it easier to make a start than in a capital city. She further believes that greater word of mouth in a smaller community can result in increased referrals. She speculates that this is one of the things that may have propelled her success in photography. In terms of style she sums up her approach simply:

The recipe is that I put a child in a perfect lighting situation and then let them do whatever they want to do. It’s all over in about fifteen minutes, with young children after twenty minutes they’re bored. I try to capture mannerisms. I don’t want parental intervention, if they stick their finger in their ear well then that’s what they want to do. (Marano, M. 2005)

7.7.1 MEGAN MARANO: “I TRY TO CAPTURE MANNERISMS”

Megan Marano’s passion for her role as a photographer is undeniable. Her eyes light up as she relates the stories of past shoots, anecdotes about particular
children and how she has captured them. She is particularly interested in relationships between family members: child-to-child, child/children to parents, and parent to parent. Yet her insights into these relationships are only possible because of the quality of her relationships with her subjects.

Those of Megan’s subjects I met, trusted her to produce more than a superficial likeness. This trust was engendered by a bond, a connectedness that derived from the joy and fun of their interaction. Its importance was crucial in allowing subjects to be gently guided, cajoled and jokingly encouraged into meaningful acts of self and interpersonal revelation. My plan was to encapsulate the essence of this joy, and richness of these relationships, in a candid moment reflecting Megan’s style of spontaneous image making.

Therefore the intent of the photography is to capture the following:

- Megan’s passion for her photography.
- The closeness of Megan to her subjects.
- The sense of spontaneity that seems to permeate all of Megan’s photographic work.

Nevertheless, in giving expression to these aims, the author had little input into either the Pallarenda location or the clients that Megan photographed. For Megan this was a typical commercial photographic shoot and I knew that it could only be from observations of the interaction between Megan and her clients that I would be able to structure my photographic response. At the
location initial images were made of Megan splashing in the wavelets as she ran backwards to keep reverse pace with the children, her subjects running towards her (Plate 7.7.1)

Plate 7.7.1, Megan #1, 2004

However these images were only of Megan and it was her relationship with her subjects that I was determined to capture. The golden reverie of the last light of the afternoon was rapidly descending into the featureless gloom of dusk. The children’s interest in being photographed was spent, only momentarily being revived by my suggestion that they pile onto Megan and give her a big hug. Their response is genuine and immediate; she has made a connection, from the outset the children have sensed her integrity. On such matters of interpersonal sensibility children can never be goaded to anything other than an ingenuous reaction. In the mass of laughing, juvenile humanity before me, Megan is almost lost; she is on their level, carried away by the natural, spontaneous and uninhibited joy of the children. How apt (Plate 7.7.2).
Plate 7.7.2, Megan Marano, 2004
7.8 GLEN O’MALLEY: FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE

The Townsville Town Common, a conservation area on the outskirts of town, is without its wetland cloak. In the middle of the dry season the floors of the shallow clay pans are caked to the crazed brown pattern so often associated with drought and the harshness of the Australian outback. Large areas of grass are blackened from recent incineration further adding to the flat bland austerity of the surrounds. Several kilometres from the gate, we pull up next to a wide, open expanse and begin a lengthy trek across the ankle-breaking, irregular terrain. We carry an eclectic assemblage of esoteric props ranging from a wicker chair to books and a mantle clock.

Plate 7.8.1, A Common Chair, 2004

Glen tries a few initial set-ups, loosely directing his model, Christina, to enact a range of scenarios involving the chair and the book. Adjustments are made to accommodate the background and angle of light. I sense Glen mentally engage
with a range of possibilities as pre-formed concepts intersect the immediacy and actuality of the Common environment. Glen enthuses as he changes angle of view and suggests changes to Christina’s attitude to, and accommodation of, the chair and book. Happy to oblige as he builds a visual narrative, Christina stands and sits, reclines and slouches, looks with intensity one moment, and abandon another. Glen further warms to the task, Christina walks, struts and paces about as a charred phoenix. Part blend, part relief, black merging with black, the heavy afternoon sidelight selectively frames her form.

Plate 7.8.2, Black on Black, 2004

By his early twenties Glen had already become involved in painting and ceramics. However increasingly he could feel himself being drawn towards photography. He was propelled by the romantic ideal of being an artist, an ideal, which he doubted at times, would ever eventuate:

...living in an attic and having beautiful girls drop by, it was just one of those silly dreams and I never thought it was really going to happen…I don’t think I ever would have become a painter and I don’t think I ever would have become a potter but photography seemed to be the way to
open that up. Once I had that in mind, well...it’s just something I’ve always done. I haven’t always done it all the time, I’ve gone back to teaching and I’ve done other jobs... but I just make photos and I have since 1970. (O’Malley, G. 2004)

Glen bought photography magazines and the photo annuals to try gain insights into his own early image making: “to understand why the dumb little snaps I was taking were interesting”. Feeling drawn towards Robert Frank and surreal Japanese photography Glen wrestled with his creative urges. He recounts with enthusiasm the issues and interest raised by one of his pivotal early images:

This was one of the first really interesting images for me. A funny, dumb image, it’s a picture I’ve never exhibited...it’s just a picture of a little girl in a mini skirt looking longingly into Wallace-Bishop’s window in Brisbane at the engagement rings. I grabbed [the photograph] from the waist one Saturday morning. I love it. I’m going to show it one day. I think what I couldn’t understand about it was that it was a boring picture and then of course the whole ennui thing became one of my trademarks anyway, A lot of what I deal with... is the boringness of suburbia, the boringness of ...yeah...I wish I knew where I had a copy of it [the photograph] to lay my hands on. (O’Malley, G. 2004)

Scenes from everyday life (and later, not so everyday life) are a recognisable aspect of Glen’s image making. Yet beyond the everyday there always lies a
twist, a corollary; a hint at another dimension, beyond the room, around the corner or even beyond the border of the photograph itself.

Glen O’Malley’s early influences and inspirations included many of the mainstays from the weighty pantheon of photographic greats: Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004), Diane Arbus (1923-1971), and, later Helmut Newton (1920-2004):

I can remember walking into the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney one day, in ‘75 I suppose, and asking…who did that picture? And it was Helmut Newton, they were the first of those big colour swimming pool ones…Three fairly different people [Bresson, Arbus and Newton] but I think I have dragged a bit of each of them into it. (O’Malley, G. 2004)

Plate 7.8.3, Veil, 2004

Two stark concrete buildings stand in square relief to the flatness of the Town Common. Abandoned and enigmatic, they are from another time; WWII oddments, their relevance lost in the euphoria of peace. They now offer the only
vertical surfaces capable of holding a shadow and punctuating the horizontal, a natural stage and fertile ground indeed for Glen. As if on cue, the sun lays down a sheet of golden rakish light.

Experiments with light underpin the next scene; transmission and contrast struggle for dominance and whirl on the photographers’ stage. “Raise your arms”, implores Glen excitedly of Christina as her shawl drapes in sumptuous folds. The black material hanging in generous scallops casts resonant shadows and shapes: a jewelled veil of intersected, dappled sunlight.

The pace quickens in the zone of light and opportunity, shadows interplay on the back wall of the bunker. Photographer and subject are drawn into a whirl of creative interaction. Which holds the greater truth: the subject or the shadow? One is adorned with referents and miscellany, the other stripped bare of possible fakery and distraction. The paring back is complete. To what extent are we looking at layers of past emotion and experience or flailing against the hint of unrealised possibilities? The tension increases; an awareness of the
transience of the moment strikes us all: dusk is pulling a curtain on this fertile makeshift stage.

At Prahran College Glen had learnt to use light to describe objects but found that, on his return to Queensland, the place where he had spent his childhood, a new approach was required:

The light wasn’t even any more [as it was in Melbourne]...it broke things up. So the early work that I did after college was about light and the complete and utter breaking up of light and having shadows fall across peoples’ faces and things like that...from there I got talking about the Queensland thing with John Buckley from the Institute of Modern Art and went out and did my first big documentary project. (O'Malley, G. 2004)

Travelling all over regional and outback Queensland and documenting people and their lives were the fuel of Glen’s photography for the next twenty years. It was only in the late nineties that Glen’s work headed in a new direction and he began increasingly to experiment with contrived situations:

I still use the camera as a recording tool. I still really enjoy going out and documenting things... but the set up images are about having fun...I think the collaboration part of that is fun too. Even the other show I’m working on at the moment, the portraits of the musicians, it’s very much
a case of asking them where they’d like to be photographed...It gets more complex when I edit. I think I’m a good editor and the way that you arrange a group of photos changes the way people look at those photos. I enjoy playing with that. (O’Malley, G. 2004)

A recent innovation and now a recognisable tattoo of many of Glen O’Malley’s photographs is the incorporation of text with the images. These often-cryptic phrases are reminiscent of lines from Japanese haiku poetry. The words do not offer further reference to the subject matter but they add another layer of tension and energy that different viewers will draw upon and interpret in different ways:

It’s something I’ve only really done since 95. It started by accident...[during university studies] I got hung up on the surrealists and really got excited by what they were doing...So many of the things [of interest to me] that I wrote down were out of surrealist manifestos that were absolutely useless for my thesis, they were things like: The Whores of the Ghost Ship are 84. What the hell does it mean? Isn’t it a shame to waste it!...and I got the idea that I could drop it onto these photos. Even the title of the show, Whistling with the Angels, that started with a Gauguin painting I’d always liked called Jacob Wrestling with the Angels and I decided that I was wrestling with certain angels with that group of photos and I was going to call it Wrestling with the Angels, I wrote it on the box [of photographs] really badly, every time I looked at it, it looked
like *Whistling with the Angels*. It got to the point where I changed it to that…(O’Malley, G. 2004)

Glen is a future biographer’s dream. Since his first exhibition he has kept a complete record of his life to date in photography. A series of weighty scrapbook tomes contain innumerable invitations, press clippings, reviews, and letters. Equally the images, kept as multiple boxes of enlarged proofs, are methodically catalogued and labelled with names and dates of past exhibitions. Individual images are also notated; some on the emulsion side with jottings from surrealist manifestos, others overleaf with the name and phone number of the model.

Glen maintains a host of current photographic involvements. These include holding community photography classes, active involvement in multiple photography projects, participation in local and international exhibitions, and as a facilitator of exchanges with Japanese photographers. Just as his Innisfail home sits on a hill and is tightly nestled amongst the sugar cane, Glen is firmly embedded in the photographic landscape of North Queensland and is a vital contributor to it.

7.8.1 GLEN O’MALLEY: “WHISTLING WITH THE ANGLES”.

It is the allusive sense of the surreal that attracts me in Glen O’Malley’s photography. There is always a sense of an alternate or multiple readings of the image. The viewer, bringing a signification that resonates from personal values
and experiences, overlies these potential encoded meanings. Seemingly disparate elements are integrated to create a unique state of tension. The visual elemental integers are layered in planes from front to back, and motion is detected as we oscillate between these planes. An apparently discarded boot here, a nude female form there, a child rushing, a threatening crane or industrial appliance. We are immediately involved in a series of concurrent alternate realities as the characters of his images play out an unfinished symphony of their own. Even in images with no human involvement we are pricked by the poignancy of the possible readings. A house is under renovation - a scene of everyday domestic activity – but, in Glen’s capture, we are led beyond the immediacy of the room in which we stand, its ladder and drop-sheet passed over for the suggestive possibilities of what lies beyond. A rush of narratives, heightened by his post-modern use of text, stimulate and tease the resonance and relevance of the image.

In engaging with Glen and his photography I seek to portray:

• His perception beyond the borders of our everyday experiences.
• His image making as a creative and spontaneous event.
• His ability to make connections between subjects/objects on different planes.
• Awareness of his stylistic imperatives and his forthright photographic authority.

In seeking to give expression to these aims it was imperative to take part in a shoot of Glen’s where the signature surreal aspects for which he is renown might have the greatest opportunity to emerge. A female model at the
Townsville Town Common, late in the day had all of the necessary prerequisites. To feed additional grist to Glen’s creative mill an assortment of peculiar props were supplied by the author to expand the possible alignments and connections: an umbrella, book, cane chair, hatstand, gloves, shawl, telescope and other potential supplementary and referential ingredients.

Glen and his model were followed from place to place; the initial images taken of Glen at work with the camera had an imitative feel. It was as if my captured images were in some ways parasitic progeny of Glen’s; they were crafted observations rather than the creative participation sought. During a lull in Glen’s creative maelstrom he turns towards me; meanwhile Christine (the model) continues to practise various prances and manoeuvres in the background; Glen is motioned to look camera left. That’s it! A Bresson moment. All elements coalesce. Glen is close, intent and enquiring; in the spirit of his own image making he is placed on a plane that creates tension between him and a secondary interest (the model) with the umbrella punctum. Of all images in the study this is the most complete expression of the researcher’s image making aims (Plate 7.8.5).
Plate 7.8.5, Glen O'Malley, 2004
In response to a head nod, Rob Parsons removes a clear neoprene plug, and leans his briefly unprotected ear towards the mouth of his guide. ‘Our product handling standards have to be at an International best practice level’, insists an emphatic plant manager in a voice raised to transcend the incessant clatter of the processing line. Steam, heat and an all-pervasive whiff of seafood begin to penetrate nostrils and clothing. Located near Cardwell, North Queensland, tucked away from view from both road and sea, lays Australia’s largest prawn farm and processing facility. Daily they process hundreds of thousands of pond raised prawns destined for the restaurants and tables of Australia and beyond. Their market edge against increasing Asian competition is quality control. It is this story that an ear protected, hair netted, often white coated, and rubber booted Rob Parsons has come to capture visually. For an instant I am struck by the contrast of the industrially hygienic Rob as opposed to the normally urbane and casually well-dressed Rob. However the moment quickly fades, lost in the pressing current business of completing the job before the shift ends.

A 110-format camera is a humble device. Able to exploit only a very small film area, the camera’s usefulness, even for family snapshots, has generally been scorned by serious photographers, such a limitation eventually bringing about the format’s demise. Yet it was the chance gift of such a camera that was Rob Parson’s initial childhood introduction to the world of photography.
Immediately fascinated by the ability to record, Rob rapidly was elevated to the role of unofficial family photographer. At this stage he remained completely unaware of the limitations of his equipment. His consciousness was also free of the burden of needing to consider the control of focus, resolution, film grain, exposure and the army of other technical parameters drawn on by the advanced picture maker. Thus unencumbered, no barriers existed to experiencing the joys and rewards of capturing a boyhood life in rural Queensland:

…that was in the beginning, I grew up on a property out in Central Queensland and I was shooting sheep, skies and big landscapes, stones…[laugh] all on the 110…(Parsons, R. 2004)

Access to increasingly sophisticated equipment and methods would come at a later stage, for now a hibernating kernel of connectedness to photographic recording was indelibly established to re-emerge after completion of High School.

A friend of mine was right into cameras…he had Pentax K1000 or similar and I was pretty impressed. I used to play around with his gear and later brought a camera of my own duty free to visit him after he travelled to the Philippines… there I took a heap of photos just of people. (Parsons, R. 2004)
On returning to Australia, and after working in Brisbane, the circle was completed when Rob returned home to the outback property.

...It was then, photographing the rainstorms, cars ploughing through mud, and general station life I got a thrill and feel for it. (Parsons, R. 2004)

Technical challenges abound in the unique industrial environment of the prawn processing plant. As equipment emerges from non-acclimatised cases, condensation immediately clings to glass to form a misty barrier to resolution.

Plate 7.9.1, Rob, 2004

The existing light is of poor photographic quality; levels are of low intensity and high contrast. The colour balance is also of the sickly green fluorescent variety; unless correctly handled it will add a deathly pallor to the skin of his photographic subjects. The unforgiving medium of colour transparency film will also demand correct film exposure and luminance range. While balancing this complex coalescence of technicalities (a lack of due consideration for any parameter giving an unacceptable result), Rob must at the same time maintain a
creative eye for image making possibilities. He must also continue a professionally positive patter of interaction if his subjects are to respond as the enthusiastic process workers that plant management will expect them to be portrayed as in the final images.

It was in his early twenties, after the experience of several unsatisfying jobs, that Rob finally decided to try photography as a full time pursuit:

I sat up and thought I’m not enjoying what I’m doing. Its time that I got myself sorted. I wanted to do something I enjoyed. I’d always enjoyed photography… at that time it became a toss up between photography and scuba diving, I enjoyed the two but you can only go up and down under water so many times before you get sick to death of it and it wrecks your body as well. I thought that the possibilities with photography were broader, far more interesting and I guess potentially far more lucrative if you did it right. So I quit my job, went back to Uni and studied photography and set out from that point [with the attitude that] this is what I want to do. (Parsons, R. 2004)

Once the prawns have departed the icy environment of the sorting and classing area, they travel by conveyor to the high temperature oven for rapid cooking. This rise in temperature necessitates even higher hygiene standards. To enter the post cooking area we go through a wash and lock area, scrubbing hands with antiseptic, donning freshly laundered coats and pristine boots. “We just
can’t take any chances of contamination, we are very stringent, just one slip up could ruin us” sternly reminds the food handling manager. The prawns, now elevated above their drab green, pre-cooked state, exhibit a jubilant orange, as they are quickly cooled and ice packed in polystyrene boxes ready for dispatch. Rob records every stage of the process, now working under the added pressure of a strict deadline, as the run is soon to finish. Packers are captured in the process of showering their produce with streams of crushed ice and then sorting, wrapping and neatly stacking palettes of white, sterile polystyrene boxes in the loading bay.

Plate 7.9.2, Prawns, 2004

One of my regrets is that I just stepped out of Uni and established my own business and did not go to work for someone else. You hear about photographers like Brian Brant who just died in Melbourne. It seems that half of Melbourne [photographers] went through his studio. You hear about what an inspirational man he was, the list of names of people you know who are successful photographers now. I think wow that
experience would have been great. For me it was a very slow start, I did it from scratch. I haven’t come out of a studio and had all that experience and thought ‘well this is how you do it’. For me I’ve discovered it all for myself. (Parsons, R. 2004)

The final items remaining on the job sheet are to photograph the prawn ponds and record the scale of the operation. This proves to be a challenge considering that there are no truly satisfactory elevated vantage points. “Unless they can provide a cherry picker we could be struggling here,” Rob quietly confides. A reasonable compromise is finally found in the presence of a small hillock at a far corner of the massive property. Final shots “in the can” and we head back to Townsville. En route, just after lunchtime, we pull over at a water hole just off the main highway. Rob proudly produces a plastic bag brimming with plump orange crustaceans, a small thankyou from a grateful client.

7.9.1 ROB PARSONS: “ALL I’VE EVER WANTED TO PRODUCE IS A QUALITY PRODUCT”.

Within any given week Rob Parsons can be involved in architectural, corporate, public relations, advertising, wedding, portraiture and a host of other commercial and general photographic applications. Within any one of these genres he might be expected to have to adapt to, and operate within: specific and often restrictive client specified parameters, a limited time frame, or tight budget constraints. Much enterprise of this type often goes unrecognised for the high level of expertise and craft involved in the production of a quality product.
Photographic assignments, such as this one at the prawn farm, also require a wide ranging set of interpersonal skills that extend beyond those normally associated with a commercial photographer: the ability to communicate with a wide cross section of people, to solicit cooperation successfully, and to solve the inevitable problems that arise due to the one-off nature of every on-location photographic project.

To photograph Rob Parson and give an insight into his persona and working genre, the image making aims were:

- To portray Rob's genial qualities
- To convey a sense of his professionalism
- To depict Rob in control of the situation
- To give an insight into the variation of activities and demands of a commercial photographic assignment

In giving expression to these aims the initial decision was to choose from several forthcoming scheduled assignments and to decide on which one to accompany Rob. In addition to the prawn farm the other options were a wedding, a portraiture shoot and photography of a motor vehicle showroom.

The prawn farm assignment appeared the most likely to present a wider range of varying situations and photographic possibilities. It is also a location and activity to which the public have restricted access; this is an example of a privilege that many photographers experience – ease of access.

From the instant Rob arrived at the prawn farm the pressure was on him to perform. The processing of the prawns would finish at a certain time and Rob
was required to complete a long list of photographs within that time. Each photographic set up within the job carried with it a unique set of technical and creative challenges: How should the ambient light be used? What type and level of supplemental lighting should be employed? Should a longer focal length be employed to compress perspective?... not only was Rob grappling with each of these variables, he was simultaneously dealing with all manner of human interactions. These include interchanges with the staff being photographed such as: should I look at the camera? and do you have my good side? through to more serious interchanges with management over the day’s schedule and things to avoid photographing. Meanwhile every stage of his image making process was photographed. The list of original aims for this image gained greater clarity; it is Rob as the genial ringmaster of his photographic realm, in control of the demanding commercial job at hand that I would seek to reflect.

As the images from the shoot of Rob are evaluated, there is none that stands alone as accurately reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of the job that he has now successfully completed; each image appears to exist as an individual vignette in its own right. As an eye is cast over all of the image options, a solitary solution is sought. The response is a multi-layered compilation image of Rob at work. The image is constructed as 35mm slides cast onto a lightbox, their randomness reinforcing the helter skelter of Rob’s busy photographic program and the demands of commercial photography. Distanced from the viewer, each contributory image attends to its own purpose. In the central slide, Rob is pictured maintaining his good humour amidst the pressures of the shoot, the ringmaster prevails, directing, co-ordinating, controlling. A broadening
shaft of light unites the composition and seeks further to illuminate Rob’s professional contribution (Plate 7.9.3).
Plate 7.9.3, Rob Parsons, 2004
7.10 DAVEY RINTALA: MUSIC AND PAGE THREE GIRL PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE

As the deadline for the Wednesday edition of the *The Sun* newspaper approaches, another young hopeful will need to be photographed to feature in the Page Three girl swimsuit competition. “I’ll meet you at the fountain just after five” offers Davey Rintala in a hurried last minute mobile phone call to confirm our rendezvous. The fountain at Anzac Park is a popular location for photography. Along with the band rotunda and the old Customs House, it is on a list of preferred locations for many wedding and portrait photographers. Each weekend they seek out these places as a backdrop to their clients’ special day. I recognise Davey and his subject casually chatting amongst a variety of camera bags and aimless, curious tourists. He enjoys using his hands as he speaks, gesticulating and offering possibilities for posing and expression to the inexperienced. He nods recognition as he sees me approach and reaches into one of his bags. “Which shirt do you want me to wear?” he asks offering two T-Shirts; the first emblazoned with *Monaro by Holden*, the other adorned with a hand painted rock star.

The words: *Photo: Davey Rintala* are always prominently displayed under each weekly swimsuit image. For this reason many locals immediately think of Davey only in terms of bikinis and smiling young faces; yet beyond this most visible presence lies a long and diverse involvement with photography that reaches back over a decade.
I started by completing JCU [photography studies] in ’93. It was a two-year Associate Diploma back then. Basically I’ve been involved ever since. Then I started [work] at the photography section of JCU at Douglas Campus...worked out there for about ten months on contract… kept on sending my resumé into the Townsville Bulletin hoping that something would come up. (Rintala, D. 2004)

Persistence was finally rewarded when a call from the photo section was received in April 1996.

It was around Anzac Day that they gave me a call to ask if I could come in for an interview in and bring a folio…basically I got the job on the spot…and I’ve been there ever since. Last year …I quit as a full time photographer but I still work there three days a week on contract to them and do other freelance stuff. (Rintala, D. 2004)

Davey believes that people skills are the essential ingredient if you want to work in his area of photography:

You’ve got to be a people person first. If you can’t talk to people and get them to relax, forget it, unless they want to be a landscape or wildlife photographer, but for most photography you have to talk to people...Listen to what people have to say. If someone has got an idea
take it on board, try that idea and maybe put your own influence into it.

(Rintala, D. 2004)

The shadows grow longer and increase in density, the colour of the light sweetens to an increasingly saturated shade of yellow/orange. The model, Lauren, is happy to be guided by a pantomime of possibilities performed by Davey (Plate 7.10.1).

Sequentially he demonstrates: arms raised hair back, hand on hip, reclining and looking beyond, dipped chin and a range of other body, arm and head positions. Overlaying the poses are a gamut of facial expressions: moody, joyous, studious, inviting. As the minutes pass more spontaneous and natural combinations start to appear as Lauren warms to the task and Davey enthuses over her efforts: “yeah, good”, “now lean back yeah, yeah, nice, good”, “now try …”… his words merge to a rhythmic expression of encouragement and congratulation. “‘What about I lean on this?” suggests Lauren now emboldened
to take directions of her own. She gathers her hair in one hand, slightly tosses her head to one side and stares imperiously beyond the frame. “Mmm,... Yeah,... mmm...yeah... great, great... “, Davey continues whilst holding one hand aloft to block the glare of the now rakish light and firing the shutter repeatedly so that even the slightest change or nuance or expression will not go unrecorded.

Davey expands on his theme of people skills:

A lot of people don’t like having their photo taken. You have got to help them to feel relaxed and comfortable. From homeless people to lawyers and doctors, you have to treat everyone a little bit differently. If you are trying to photograph a doctor you try to be professional but you try to make them laugh, so they are a bit more relaxed. People like that are usually very shy in front of a camera... whereas off the street people won’t mind having their photo taken. (Rintala, D. 2004)

Of all of his experiences of people based photography, it is working with models that he enjoys the most. Both he and the model are now working co-operatively to the same end.

I like working with models because you tell them what you want and they do it. A lot of other jobs at the paper you’ve really got to work to get co-operation. With models they want good shots, you want good shots, you’re working for the same goal. (Rintala, D. 2004)
When asked if he had any other photographic involvements Davey revealed that photography centred on motor sport and the music business are other areas of perennial absorption and represent an extension of personal interests and passions:

...drag racing, I’ve been a photographer at the drags since ‘99. I’m an old hoon I suppose, I love the old V8s. I like photographing bands, I’m in a band myself. I love my music...[we play] rock, heavy metal. We’re recording a CD next year. I’ve photographed plenty of big bands; *Metallica, Kiss, Alice Cooper*... Those sort of gigs are never here, they’re always in Brisbane and I have to apply through the paper for a press pass...I love my music, music is me, it’s made me who I am; the long hair, the clothes, love my music, can’t live without my music, I need a fix every day, a good blast of *Metallica* or something...Photographing *Metallica* in January this year at the entertainment centre...I had goose bumps...an awesome experience. (Rintala, D. 2004)

Davey’s photographic ambitions may have drifted, at least for the moment, into fantasy. His young family now take first place among the competing pulls of profession and lifestyle:

I would love to go on the road, to be a photographer with a band and tour around the world... [but] I’ve got two young kids. Townsville is a
A MIRROR TO THE MIRROR – CLIVE HUTCHISON

A MIRROR TO THE MIRROR: PHOTOGRAPHIC PROFESSIONALS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND

good-sized place for me, and I can still do my job at the paper and go to photograph these concerts occasionally in Brisbane. (Rintala, D. 2004)

The change to digital technology came more subtly for Davey than for many others. Being an employee of a regional newspaper he always had access to the latest incremental digital innovations and improvements as they came on to the market:

Now we have gone fully digital we are freed of the darkroom. We’ve got more time to shoot photos, which I love...Some might like the burning and dodging in the darkroom or Photoshop...[and although] I don’t mind doing a little bit of tweaking in Photoshop I like to get the photo as close [as I can] in the camera. (Rintala, D. 2004)

He sums up his attitude to his profession and the lifestyle it brings in the straightforward manner that I would expect:

Knowing that every day is different. I’m not going to go to work and it’s going to be the same mundane, sitting in the office, doing the same stuff. I mean you are taking photos [every day], but everyday you are taking photos of different people...Freelance is definitely favourable in my situation. I can spend a day with the family, have a few beers, have a jam with the band…whatever. (Rintala, D. 2004)
The numbers that make up the digital readout on the light meter are tumbling as the last moments of afternoon illumination fade fast. Lauren seems immune to the stares of the older Japanese couple that have settled in to enjoy the modest spectacle of a bikini clad girl in a fountain. They smile continuously from a respectful distance and nod shyly when acknowledged. Davey pulls his eye from the viewfinder, straightens, and then stretches his back. This time he uses thumbs up to indicate to Lauren a job well done. Exuberant and chatty, he seems to be enjoying the moment but when I think about it, this is his essential character: he is the quintessential likable Aussie bloke, genuine and free of pretension. He is the perfect supportive guide to the next season of young glamour aspirants.

7.10.1 DAVEY RINTALA: “YOU’VE GOT TO BE A PEOPLE PERSON FIRST”.

Davey Rintala, whom I had not previously met, was the first surprise. Davey is a family man who chooses to work part time so that he can spend more time caring for his children. I hoped that I was not being unfair to Davey given that, for him, the Page Three Girl photography is very secondary to his other photographic interests. His attitude to the Page 3 Girl photography is that, for many of these girls, they are seeking a start in a modelling career and it is often their first opportunity to work in front of the camera with a professional photographer. Rather than intrude on a genuine newspaper job, Davey was generous enough to set up a replication of a typical shoot. My daughter Lauren, herself a committed feminist, agreed to act as the model.
The appearance of a young bikini clad girl as a regular feature in the *Sun* Newspaper has always struck me as anachronistic. It reminds me of the type of image that would appear in the Melbourne’s *Sun News Pictorial* when I was a child or on the cover of *Post* Magazine in the barber’s shop waiting room. We still have an abundant flow of such images filling magazine stands but they have largely been relegated to the more specialised genre of the glossy men’s magazine and are no longer seen in a news context. There is also no doubt that, for a great many women, and many men, such images are now at least problematic if not unacceptable; they represent a hangover from a pre-feminist age when the objectification of women as the playthings of men was common.

The image making aims for the image of Davey were to:

- to portray Davey and his casual but confident attitude positively
- to portray a tension not normally found in, or associated with, this type of image making scenario
- to explore the relationship between the model and the photographer
- to leave the viewer of the final image with a sense of unease

To give expression to these aims a location shoot was arranged to embrace Davey’s usual photographic mode. Constraints existed in the creation of this image as there was only one available occasion to photograph Davey within the scope of the project and the window of time available on that day was restricted to twenty minutes of usable light prior to dusk. Working within such constraints the emphasis shifted to the photographer-model-context relationship rather than Davey the person and as such the first aim to portray Davey in a positive light may not have been fully realised. In order for the
model and Davey to grow accustomed to the presence of another photographer, many preparatory images of the two of them talking together and negotiating their image making were made. Davey directs and gestures to the model; from my perspective, the photographer, the model and the background appear layered on distinct planes. These planes vibrate with various alignments and misalignments of message and meaning, intent and outcome. I speak to Davey; he wheels around to face me, the expressions on both their faces enigmatic and open to question. The image is made. Is Davey’s expression one of pride and satisfaction in a job well done? Is the model questioning the appropriateness of this entire event or just impatiently waiting for Davey’s returned attentions? As the model looks to Davey, Davey looks to us, the viewer is challenged to arbitrate the image, and the event. The inclusion of the photographer in an image of this subject matter in itself places a tension within the frame that does not usually exist and helps to raise questions in the viewer.
Plate 7.10.2, Davey Rintala, 2004
7.11 KERRY TRAPNELL: PEOPLES OF CAPE YORK PHOTOGRAPHER, CAIRNS.

From the moment we are introduced to Colin he takes on his role of storyteller and guide with great gusto. As an elder of the Kowanyama aboriginal community, he is able to speak with authority on an enormous range of subjects. The life of his dignified companion Esra stretches back over an even longer period: to WW2 air crashes, mission life and droving. Kerry Trapnell grasps the hands of both men warmly and puts them at ease as he outlines his current project for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

Plate 7.11.1, Esra, Kerry and Colin 2004

Both Colin and Esra nod earnestly in agreement as Kerry informs them of his belief that it is about time the Kowanyama Community was represented in the annual, AQIS sponsored, Cape York based, calendar. They know the calendar well and stories are exchanged about the people and places across Cape York that appeared in previous editions. Kerry enquires about current community activities that he might be able to photograph. Colin is a mine of information:
“People are on the out stations, babies are comin’ in to be weighed tomorrow, there’s art lessons in the centre, kids swimmin’ at the pool after school. Lotsa stuff happenen’ here. What da’ ya’ think?” It is agreed that meeting people on the out stations is a great place to start.

Although no one ever mentions the word drought, all agree that it is bloody dry. Heading out past the local airport on dusty tracks, the city trivia; CDs, GPS, spare sunglasses, etc. jangle uncomfortably atop the dashboard of the 4WD; like myself they are getting the message that we are in the real outback now.

Kerry Trapnell first connected to photography when he was an undergraduate student completing a science degree at the University of Queensland in the early 1970s. It was the influence of one of his Botany lecturers, who was a keen photographer, that created a new and heightened awareness of photography:

...he would go out and shoot photographs of the landscape and of wildlife and come back and produce these big Cibachromes which I thought was amazing. This was the first time that I had looked at photography face-to-face. I just felt a really strong connection to the process of image making and while admiring his work. I had a semi-instinctive sense that this is something that I could do and maybe would do. It felt like [I had] an intuitive connection to his work in a very personal way. (Trapnell, K. 2005)
It was, however, quite a while before this influence was to translate into action. In the early eighties Kerry moved from Brisbane to Cairns and started some early photographic work as he travelled around Cape York:

That early intuitive connection with photography and Cape York as a region; they were the two things that really inspired my *entrée* into photography...I started to take an interest, did a photo course at TAFE, and just started photographing the landscape up in Cape York...From the moment I started it became a really strong passion. It became a major interest for the next ten years. (Trapnell, K. 2005)

Unless you are flying into Kowanyama it is not an easy place to access. Five hours west of Chillago, through tropical savannahs, over rutted and dusty roads, it is situated near the junction of the Alice and Mitchell rivers. Its isolation is even greater during the wet season from December to March when the roads are impassable. In recent times many local people have been moving out of town to their traditional country and living on out-stations. Living a
simpler life with only rudimentary amenities, they are re-establishing new links to the land of their forebears.

At the first outstation we visit, Colin introduces Kerry to two middle aged women who sit under the shade of a galvanized iron carport. Colin enthuses over past calendars photographed by Kerry and relates stories of people who have featured in them. The women grant permission for Kerry to make some photographs of themselves and the settlement. However Kerry, a well-tuned barometer in relation to the sensitivities of others, confides to me that they do not appear altogether comfortable with the proposition and he leaves the lens cap on his camera. We walk down to the adjacent waterhole and I make some casual images of Colin and Kerry as they chat about fishing, noxious weeds, rainfall, water levels and other topics of perennial outback interest. Esra cannot see the point of standing by the river when you can sit in the shade. Strategically he positions himself by the water tank, outdoor kitchen close at hand. Kerry makes mental note of the black and white Friesian cow patterned contact on the un-powered refrigerator. He enjoys the way it matches the dress pattern of one of the women. I know that part of him would love to make an image that draws on this patterned parallel. Later over dinner he confides that he might go back to the settlement and try making this image but only if the women appear more comfortable with his picture taking presence.

Kerry continued to pursue his photography of Cape York throughout the eighties. However it was not until the mid nineties that he finally put aside
other pursuits and, propelled by his fervour for image making, became a full time photographer:

…it was really those two things coming together, a great landscape; a landscape, that I really became fascinated with and passionate about, and the process of image-making…I was still pretty raw at that stage [in the eighties] and probably incredibly naïve, but I felt that some of the images that I was taking early on even as a learner still stood up, I think some of them still do… not that there is a great volume of early work that is fantastic but I felt that this was something that I was driven to and could potentially do well…so I put a lot of energy into it, and have ever since. Once I picked up the camera it became a strong part of what I do and who I am. (Trapnell, K. 2005)

Kerry sees his career path as almost unique as it has come about with a lack of connection with the photography industry and has involved only minimal formal training via an introductory TAFE course. He reiterates that it was his high level of passion and motivation that caused one experience to lead to another and his work to expand and embrace also the peoples of Cape York:

…being in the landscape out there and taking those pictures gave me an introduction to the people that lived there and particularly the aboriginal people… you start to know people and you get connections, you get
interested in what they do, which is really different to what other people do. (Trapnell, K. 2005)

Kerry has several insights into the benefits of having a specialization in photography but equally recognises that it can also pose a range of financial challenges as well:

I’ve sort of strongly specialized in a narrow band of photography which works in that arena. That’s been good to do but it’s also been fairly hard to make a living from it… at times. I think it is really important to have a speciality area, a niche that you become well known for and that you might be good at, and that [you] want to be good at. I probably think that I could have made my road a bit easier by being more connected to the industry and ways of keeping afloat and making a viable income over time. Like many others I have at times supported my photography through other jobs, although since having gone full time I still try to focus on the areas that get my blood moving. I have now realized that you maybe have to get a bit broader, adapt, connect and to pay your way. (Trapnell, K. 2005)
We travel to a number of outstations, each with its own unique character and characters. We arrive at one of the larger outstations at the hottest part of the day. Aboriginal contractor, Bob, is busy directing the building of a number of additional amenities. A team of workers of differing ages is using a bobcat and tractor to dig foundations for a new toilet facility adjacent to the recently erected water tower. Kerry is keen to photograph this hive of activity and everyone co-operates while he makes a series of both candid and more formal images. Representing the Kowanyama community in the next AQIS calendar remains a strong motivator. Bob explains that skills and training are difficult for local people to source in such a remote location and that being able to take part in local construction projects such as this one builds not just skills but self esteem as well.

At our last outstation on the Mitchell River we meet Steven and Darren who are interested in discussing the recent rugby league final. Steven once played at state competition level. Down at the river’s edge Colin takes over: “lota stories
in that country” pronounces Colin profoundly as he stares penetratingly out over the almost dry Mitchell River delta. He follows up with entertainingly recounted local stories such as why the Brolga has a flash of red feathers on its head (representing blood) as a result of its feud with the emu. With a twinge of sadness he moves eloquently, but without apparent bitterness, to more painful stories of a life of unpaid droving and of poisoned flour and government sponsored child abductions.

On our way back to town, a final photo session is conducted with Colin and Esra at a cattle yard that Colin helped to construct years ago. The light improves and starts to stream golden through the surrounding trees. The newly mustered cattle are flighty and stamp up and down the yard raising clouds of dust that add to the atmosphere. Proud of their association with the cattle industry, and with little direction, the two men assuredly strike an iconic pose for Kerry.

Kerry describes his work as akin to a documentary setting and applies this to his landscape work as well. His regret is that he does not have as much time as he would like to spend in the field photographing that which he is still so passionate about:

It’s harder to get that time out there, because the demands on you now to work with your images is quite high, and the back end of field work is quite large. Around here we have some of the highest quality wilderness
areas on the planet, with massive diversity are all nearby, world heritage areas…wet tropics, Great Barrier Reef, outback, Cape York and more. If your interest is in photographing natural history or the landscape it is one of the hot spots on the planet…or if you’re interested in photographing culture, both indigenous and people of our own culture, there are iconic opportunities here. (Trapnell, K. 2005)

7.11.1 KERRY TRAPNELL: “I STILL TRY TO FOCUS ON THE THINGS THAT GET MY BLOOD MOVING”.

There are elements of paradox when considering the isolation of Cape York. On the one hand we are attracted to it because it is not stamped with the numbing over-familiarity we feel for so many locations. However this isolation also keeps us from experiencing its treasures first hand. For most of us, Cape York lies far outside the normal operation of our daily lives. Its landscape and its people are largely unknown. Its isolation leaves us with feelings of mystique and the pull of the exotic unknown. For many people Kerry Trapnell’s photographs will constitute their only vicarious experience of that remote location. But, for the indigenous people of Cape York, the role of Kerry’s photography is more significant. Kerry’s images are like a visual message stick. Not a mirror, not a filter but akin to a lens. His images bring into sharper focus the activities of other communities, whether celebrating achievements or coming to terms with challenges.

In making the image of Kerry the central themes to express are:

- his sincerity and pride in this role
his connectedness to the indigenous people of Cape York
his sharing of their achievements and empathy for their challenges
his reverence for the place that is Cape York.

In addressing these aims a Cape York location was the first ingredient. This setting had the capacity for genuine experience to evolve: Kerry has just photographically captured Colin and Esra, not as the anthropological novelties of Victorian photography but as the proud gatekeepers of Cape York, with its long and rich indigenous and outback heritage. Stately trees frame their countenance, and imbue a permanence to their presence. The eye is further assured of their central importance by the converging fence rails and beckoning gate.

Kerry’s open and direct stance towards the camera (and viewer) present him as an honest and open intermediary. Placed on intersecting means and triangulated to the two elders, Kerry is fused to the composition; authenticating connectedness. The combined outlines of all subjects are confirmed to a self contained circle of mutual co-respect and understanding. Due to its remoteness and seasonal isolation, it is only through Kerry’s image making that so many will encounter Cape York and its peoples. However it will also be through this image that others will get to know of Kerry and the exceptional nature of that relationship. In this regard the final image satisfies the goals set.
Yet there is another image made during this photographic trip that I also considered to be worthy of publication. In Plate 7.11.1 we encounter Kerry standing between Colin and Esra. On one level it has the hallmarks of a family snapshot; bodies in a row looking to camera, yet, in this seemingly straightforward encounter, there is so much that binds and identifies of the three men and speaks of their relationship. Despite their differing lives and stories, they stand separate yet together optimistically facing their individual futures of challenges and possibilities. Beyond the obvious linkage of the jaunty angle of the bush hats, open necked shirts and easy expressions, there is that elusive *punctum* as Kerry’s arm inconspicuously reaches out to Esra in a natural gesture of invitation and friendship. Both images of Kerry with Colin and Esra (Plates 7.11.1 and 7.11.4) remain pre-eminent in my understanding and recollection of the people and their relationships encountered during the Kowanyama trip. Weighing the merit of each image and choosing between them remains a equivocal and tenebrous act.
Plate 7.11.4, Kerry Trapnell, 2004
7.12 PETER TREASURE: PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER, TOWNSVILLE.

The exhaust of the black, late model Alfa-Romeo emits a muted bark as we weave our way nimbly through the unusually heavy, late afternoon traffic. We are en route to semi-rural Serene Valley, a small hamlet just beyond the Townsville city limits. It has been a hectic day for Peter Treasure and the car’s climate controlled interior creates a welcome break from the oppressive heat and steamy humidity of a December afternoon. The hands-free mobile phone demands regular attention as Peter juggles a variety of business commitments and engagements from the helm of his sporty leather-lined cocoon. Pirellis crunch to an abrupt stop in the gravel forecourt of a rambling high-set Queenslander. A variety of digital camera gear is swung from the rear hatch as the lady of the house extends her hand and exudes a warm and familiar welcome. The family’s photographer has arrived.

Growing up in a rural community Peter was introduced to photography from an early age. His mother, a primary school teacher, was a keen advocate of photography:

She decided to set up a darkroom in the school and converted an old janitor’s cleaning room.... she showed me how to do black and white photography and the process in the darkroom, at that stage I was more interested in the darkroom side of things than the photography. I thought it was interesting dealing with the chemistry. (Treasure, P. 2004)
Despite this close encounter and Peter’s mother assuring him that it was a “good little hobby that you can continue with down the track”, Peter’s prime adolescent interest was computers and it was not until he was looking for part time work during the school holidays after completing year twelve that a connection with photography was re-established. However his initial career steps towards photography had their ups and downs:

I found there was a place at a photography studio that offered me a little bit of work. Three weeks in I thought this is pretty good. I enjoy this. When the fourth week came the photographer said “look Peter you’ve got great talent, but the trouble is I have a photographer here that is trained and I want to put him on so I’m going to have to put you off” I was devastated. (Treasure, P. 2004)

Led up the driveway, we pass an array of four-wheel-drive vehicles; each has delivered a different branch and generation of the extended family to this central point to have their collective portrait made. “I’ve told them all to get ready but the kids are hopeless, I’ll have another go at them” utters a slightly exasperated Jean. Although only mother of some, she is known to all of the young tribe of Jacksons still playing wild and noisy chasing games all over the veranda. I notice Peter’s eyes widen slightly and a new line of perspiration break out around his collar. He knows that the hour is late and opportunities to fulfil the family’s photographic expectations will all have to occur in the next
fifty minutes or the light will fade to a point when further efforts will be fruitless. “Come on you kids, Peter’s here, how many times do I have to tell you to get ready,” implores Jean as she is almost skittled on the stairs by a three foot tall, yet to get dressed, rubber mallet wielding, warrior.

A photographic cadetship at a local newspaper was the next step. In this position a wide range of community activities, events and news were covered. However Peter was still restless; the initial challenges, through repetition, soon seemed mundane.

I enjoyed it but I was always looking for more. There was no training involved, you did what the old fellow did; go along, take some photos, process it. I was working long hours and weekends for little money. (Treasure, P. 2004)

Whilst weighing up other career avenues within photography and in the search for more training. Peter’s ears pricked up when he overheard the RAAF commanding officer from Sale Air Base mention the RAAF’s photography school. Inquiries led to annual leave being spent working in the photography section.

Being just down the road from Bairnsdale where I lived I thought this is fantastic but when I asked how do I get involved I was told that the air force employs 130 photographers, that they only take on eighteen trainees a year, and although they were not looking to take
on any more at the moment I should by all means apply. If things changed I might get a call. (Treasure, P. 2004)

Next to fighter pilot, air force photographer is the most sought after position in the RAAF. Everyone he spoke to told Peter that he was virtually wasting his time. However persistence prevailed; a phone call came and, despite a heart murmur, medicals were passed. From the eighteen places available to 5,000 applicants, entrance had been gained. Later it was discovered that words of support from the Sale Base Commander, in recognition of his voluntary work and positive attitude, had helped gain him a coveted place.

“Can we start with some of the family whose kids are ready?” asks a smiling Peter as the shadows grow by the minute and the sky begins to take on a faint magenta hue. Jean’s demands of the family to “get ready” are made with increasing urgency. Peter has established the setting for the portraits as the staggered platforms of the front stairs. The first family group, one of parents with children, is arranged and captured; Peter’s easygoing attitude helps to relax his subjects. Far from being practised models, they are initially awkward, not knowing where to stand, what to do with their hands or whether they should look at the camera. Subtly but purposely the group are shuffled and arranged, jokes are exchanged, amid the rapid firing of the shutter.
Working with increasing but managed urgency, differing family groups are formed and reformed, a complex network of extended family relationships revealed (Plate 7.12.1). Three-year-old Becky is vacillating between states of catatonia and hysteria. Neither promises of reward nor subtle pressure can crack the cycle of contorted non-compliance. The risk of compromised settings of focus and exposure begin to grow as ninety-year-old “Dad” is directed and cajoled to his rightful position for the final and pivotal grouping. Meanwhile Becky is whispered soothing sounds and held in a vice like grip from behind. The camera curtain rushes from left to right one final time. Crickets and an onset of mosquitoes usher in the rapid onset of darkness so familiar in the tropics. The shoot is over.
Eleven years in the RAAF and a million dollars of training followed. Highlights included flight test photography, flying with the Roulettes, pioneering the development of digital photography facilities, a posting to Townsville, and recognition as Townsville Airman of the Year. Leaving the Air Force, a photographic business was built entirely on digital technology. Diversification into many areas of photography followed with wedding and portraiture at the core. Now further diversification into advertising, graphic design and web design have taken place. Peter’s view is that:

To survive on photography alone, even if you have a great name, is becoming increasingly difficult and this has led us into other areas... As a profession I feel I have taken photography as far as I can, I am now interested in developing a broader business system and managing that business. (Treasure, P. 2004)

8.12.1 PETER TREASURE: “I GET SO MUCH PLEASURE OUT OF EVERY SHOOT I DO. EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL”

Peter is energetic and ambitious. He has a raft of plans for future business expansion in photography and beyond. Graphic design and Internet developments in particular are at the heart of these plans. However Peter is also very much a people person who genuinely enjoys not just photographing his subjects but building a relationship with them and becoming the equivalent of a trusted extended family member.
In photographing Peter my aims were:

- to tap into and portray the energy he exudes
- to portray him as a hands on practical person
- to create a presence a little larger than life as he engages with viewers of his image
- to portray the joy that Peter feels for his role as photographer

To give expression to these aims I asked Peter to choose an occasion and location that he felt most typified the photographic jobs that he takes on. His response (and this was typical of many of the photographer subjects) was that there was no such thing as a typical job. Peter did suggest, however, that this family portraiture job would be an enjoyable occasion when he would have an opportunity to interact with a range of subjects and, while not frequent, was certainly not an unusual type of job within his working week. As Peter’s positive outgoing nature and interpersonal communications were an aspect of him that attracted me to him as a subject, this was agreed.

From the outset I wanted Peter’s face to dominate the frame for, although he doesn’t exhibit a forceful personality, he has a persona that reaches out to all he meets. In the final image Peter’s face and hand reach forward as a wide-angle extrusion dominating the viewing plane and suggesting a readiness to engage with a challenge, the can-do entrepreneur with the hands-on approach. Meanwhile the rest of the extended family is grouped on the step behind, falling in to be directed according to Peter’s will and visual ambitions.
Despite the fact that photographic equipment appears in many of these portraits (only natural when you are photographing photographers at work), this is the only image where the equipment is more than incidental. I suggest in making his camera so prominent that he is making the proposition: ”Give me the tools and I’ll take charge”. Directly below the camera Peter’s shirt carries the embroidered company logo, his photography never far from the emblem and text describing his multiple business aspirations. A grin comes readily and naturally to Peter’s face; no other expression seems either as appropriate or indicative of his professional manner or private persona. It completes an image that may not represent a typical job but provides a worthy insight into Peter’s working approach and personality (Plate 7.12.2).
Plate 7.12.2, Peter Treasure, 2004
7.13 SUSAN TURNER: PHOTOGRAPHER OF PNG VILLAGE LIFE, CAIRNS.

His smile comes easily but his gaze is penetrating. Warriors from the Papua New Guinea highland province of Enga have a fearsome reputation. Even when they visit the tough no-go zones of the outer urban settlements of Port Moresby, their powerful personal bearing is respected, and due deference is accorded. Petite photographer Susan Turner relies on her long-standing friendship with the Enga warrior John Yoko to offer a degree of security in what is still a challenging and sometimes dangerous place to live and work. During twenty years of travelling all over PNG, at both village and settlement level, Susan has forged strong bonds with many such fascinating individuals and communities.

“John we have to shop early for the mumu” insists Susan as she and John discuss the details of the following day’s program. Their conversation slips easily between Pidgin and English, a symptom of the depth of their friendship and their knowledge and acceptance of each other’s disparate backgrounds and cultures. Although an enormous amount of firewood, bananas and sweet potatoes have already been accrued, chickens are still to be purchased. A mumu is more than a meal. It is a significant cultural and community event. John appears not too sure of the necessity for an early start but eventually relents to Susan by agreeing to her in town timetable.
Awareness of photography came at a young age for Susan. Her parents gave her a camera for Christmas when she was still a young child of about six years.

They gave me a little Brownie Box camera with a big old monstrous flash with a bulb in it. So I began taking pictures of my friends and around the neighbourhood with that camera and I still have the negatives…I always had a camera even when I first went to Europe and shot black and white film. So I would say [I have had an awareness of photography]…my whole life. (Turner, S. 2005)

Whilst living in Europe in the early 70s Susan started seeing more of photographs, photographic catalogues and photographic exhibitions and appreciating their place in terms of an art form and as a means of personal expression:

I remember very early on in the seventies seeing a picture by Gary Winogrand. At the time I didn't know who he was, but I can remember the picture. It’s one of a young woman laughing at a location like Coney Island and I found out later it was from his book Women are Beautiful… I was impressed by that. Then I was living in Spain and started taking some pictures [in] about the early seventies… I was interested in more than just taking snapshots of friends. (Turner, S. 2005)
On the outskirts of Port Moresby, Gordon Market teems with life. Beyond the market gates vendors spill out into the car park where they display their wares on plastic sheeting spread on the ground or arranged on makeshift tables. John Yoko’s young nephew Peter stays behind to mind the car and we make our way with John through a cavalcade of taro, cassava, sugar cane, and all manner of greens, vegetables and spices. The amalgam is a heady and exotic mix of colours, aromas, produce and people from all areas of the country. Susan and I are the only non-PNG nationals. I can’t help feeling a little conspicuous with a camera around my neck and the constant attention that I receive. This is in marked contrast to Susan who appears completely at home. In the meat hall slabs of pork are laid out alongside wallaby, and a range of other meats that I could not identify. Stallholders maintain a metronomic rhythm of small branches to ward off flies in the sticky un-refrigerated atmosphere. Susan is constantly busy. She intersperses her purchasing patter in Pigeon with a serial conversation on photography with me in English.

In turn her market excursion is intermingled with bursts of picture making of people and situations in the market. Subjects are generally enthusiastic about having their photograph taken. Some, however, are over co-operative; grouping themselves into tight and contrived compositions with thumbs up poses directed to the camera. Amongst the surrounding hectic mid-market energy surrounding, a small boy reclines dreamily against a doorway, a natural moment surrendered and recorded by Susan. John calls us over and enthuses over some sizable cuts of pork, raising the ante above the chicken based mumu
originally proposed. I suspect that he is capitalising on the increased status that holding a *pig mumu* at his settlement home will bring: Susan relents and two sizable dark skinned portions are added to our once *chicken mumu* fare. “When they see the smoke they will come,” adds John, his eyes sparkling mischievously with both satisfaction and anticipation.

Susan’s developing awareness of photography became a more serious pursuit after returning from Europe. She began taking regular trips to Guatemala to trade in textiles and took a semester of photography at a university in San Diego, California:

> That gave me a little bit of direction, not too much, but it gave me basic darkroom techniques and from there I’d go to Guatemala shooting and when I’d go back to the states I had a little darkroom set up in a four foot by four foot bathroom with a little Submarine enlarger, everything in miniature. (Turner, S. 2005)

At this early stage recognition and encouragement for her photography came from friends and increasingly from a few important others, including a photography lecturer to whom she was introduced:

> The lecturer liked my work...he began encouraging me. Each time I came back from Guatemala he would look through the contact sheets and make some suggestions...after doing this twice he said that he
didn’t need to see me any more, that I seemed to know what I was doing and to just keep shooting… he was a good photographer and very important to me. He [also] knew John Szarkowski, director of photography at MoMA in New York City… He took some of my work to John Szarkowski who suggested that when in Mexico I visit and show my work to Manuel Alvarez Bravo. (Turner, S. 2005)

This meeting with Bravo, an established and highly respected Mexican photographer, became pivotal in developing a future direction in photography for Susan. He became her long-term mentor:

We became friends, I worked for him, I modelled for him and he was always very encouraging… he encouraged me to look at the work that other people were doing but not to be too impressed by the current fashion or the current critique. I remember at one time complaining about how everyone was printing bigger and bigger… He said: Well if everyone is printing bigger and bigger you should start printing smaller and smaller, and I’ve stuck to the same sized print ever since. He was very good at keeping me level headed… at not being too influenced by whether people were buying the work, to just do what I did. Plus he was a wonderful person to be around, he was very well read and had a fantastic music collection… He advised me to find a profession that pays well and doesn’t make you too miserable and then do your photography in the time that you have [left]. (Turner, S. 2005)
Fire burns furiously in the *mumu* pit. It was freshly dug in the rock hard ground of the settlement earlier in the day. Volcanic stones are piled onto the flames in successive layers, which will become the heat source for the underground oven. John Yoko was right; a succession of friends and neighbours see the smoke and drop by to enquire about the *occasion* and to offer additions to the larder; a chicken here, more vegetables there. Everyone contributes, making the fire, preparing the food and finally adding it to the pit. Susan knows the procedure well and directs traffic at one side of the pit: first the pit is lined with hot stones then leaves, then vegetables, then bananas and sweet potato, more leaves, more layers of stones, meat, leaves etc. (Plate 7.13.1).

Plate 7.13.1 Mumu, 2005

Finally, with all the food added, it is drenched in coconut milk and covered with bags and then soil. Susan records with her camera all aspects of the proceedings, concentrating especially on the people, their roles and their relationships to one another.
With two hours to spare until the food is cooked we excuse ourselves and drive to the National Museum to inspect Susan’s current retrospective exhibition spanning her twenty years in PNG. We leave the gathering playing cards on the porch (Plate 7.13.2). In the classic format of black and white prints with simple but elegant mattes and frames, the 60 works stand as noble testament to the level of integration and empathy that Susan has with her subjects and the landscape. Whether set in the settlement, the remote highlands, or on the delta plains, the images speak eloquently of a way of life still largely unknown to much of the outside world. Each image evokes a new narrative and taps into our curiosity for strange and exotic peoples and places, in our shrinking Discovery Channel, world. A young woman of shy but regal bearing guides a shallow dugout across a vast delta. (Plate 7.13.3)
Unhurried she appears completely in tune with the leisurely tempo of delta life: a counterpoint and maybe subtle challenge to the meaning of our frenzied modern world existence. In another evocative image, an adolescent girl sits on the ground; it appears that she is chatting with a pig, a scene of innocence and oneness with the natural world.

There is a hint of humanity through everything [I do] even if it’s a landscape it is touched by man or there’s a garden somewhere, or felled trees or a gate or a road or a fence. I don’t photograph pristine untouched…types of landscapes. I’m not opposed to that, it just doesn’t come out of me. (Turner, S. 2005)

The *mumu* pit is uncovered with ceremony and pride. Invitees bring large plastic bowls and the food is meted out with much counting and precision. Much of the food will be consumed later at home and further distributed between friends and neighbours. I am flattered and somewhat overwhelmed as
John makes a speech dedicating the *mumu* in my honour to which I respond with reciprocal formality. The remainder of the day happily evaporates with hand shaking, farewells and photographs. I exhaust through repetition my only Pidgin phrase, the farewell greeting: “lookum you”. Departing the settlement is an emotional experience. I am presented with gifts of *bilum*, the traditional knotted bag of PNG, from unknown strangers of very limited means. I realize that, whereas others might sense the closeness of Susan to her subjects and their way of life; I have had the pleasure of witnessing the wholeness of that relationship at first hand. I am also aware that the elevated status extended to me as *Susan’s friend* was a direct reflection of the high esteem in which Susan is held.

7.13.1 SUSAN TURNER: “THE VIEWER SHOULD SENSE THAT THERE IS AN ON GOING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY.”

An empathy and understanding for the photographic work of Susan Turner was sensed from the first encounter with her prints at a local gallery. However after meeting with Susan on several occasions to conduct interviews, and to look at and discuss hundreds more of her photographs, this understanding was greatly amplified and helped to clarify my aims for the photography to follow:

- to photograph Susan on location in PNG
- to portray the depth of the relationship Susan had developed with the people of PNG over a significant period
- to portray the integration of her photography and her life with PNG

In giving expression to these aims I considered not only the circumstances of her life but the recurrent themes and the language used by Susan, when she
spoke of her life and work. Relationship, the word occurs again and again, when speaking of her photography and her connections to people and places in PNG. Relationship is also the word that epitomises the closeness and interrelatedness that Susan feels to the work that she does. Her images are populated with people with whom she has formed a bond. Her subjects are known in conversation and in exhibition labels by their personal names; it is Abugi, not girl or villager that paddles home (Plate 7.13.3).

Once in PNG I began by taking images of Susan involved in the tempo of daily life, as in the mode of her own image making: photographing at the market, interacting with friends, bartering with store holders, sitting on the veranda and preparing a meal. In its own way each resultant image tells a small part of the story. Susan’s closeness to some of the settlement children is noted and I fabricate some whimsical shots of them entering the settlement gate together beneath an arched stand of bamboo. Eventually it is Susan’s photography of, and participation in, the making of the mumu on which I decide to concentrate. The intensity of the interactions, the richness of the relationships, these are at no time more evident than at this communal event. The mumu is a traditional and symbolic ritual as well as being an unusual culinary option. Incumbent upon those who make a mumu are a series of communal obligations and interpersonal responsibilities. These involve both the practical, such as who will pay, who will do the work, who will make the fire, and who will come, through to issues of status and tribal/community obligation. The central roles that Susan plays in all aspects of this event are highly relevant to the concepts of establishing and maintaining relationships, her life in Papua New Guinea and her photography.
Having never experienced a *mumu* before I was not sure what to expect and the process was full of surprises. Apart from the purchasing of enormous quantities of food, the volume of smoke was one of the first. As soon as the fire was lit clouds of it billowed throughout the settlement. Susan had been photographing proceedings in her own manner when an unexpected breeze swung gently through 90 degrees and she and her companions were caught up in a moment of shared humour and abandonment. A small almost inconsequential moment in the grand scheme of things, yet, within its dimensions, so much of Susan’s relationship built with the people and place over twenty years in PNG is revealed. The layers of activity, the sense of place, the naturalness of the moment and the authenticity of the interaction are synthesised to give clear expression to the aims of the image making (Plate 7.13.4).
Plate 7.13.4, Susan Turner, 2005
Ziggy and his diminutive protégé “G” are already standing on the dock when I arrive. The outsized dimensions of their camera-gear backpacks offer an easy guide to their identity. We introduce ourselves and fill the ensuing waiting moments with relaxed conversation. Gliding towards us, across protected water, the early Hayman Island ferry approaches. Its cargo of returning bleary-eyed but colourfully dressed holidaymakers stands out in stark relief to the crew. The crew’s immaculate white shirts are adorned with restrained blue naval-style epaulettes, rendering them a vision of crisp efficiency as they make fast the necessary lines. This ferry and its crew are the first manifestations I encounter of the standard and style of the Hayman Island Resort, one of Australia’s longest operating five star island destinations. The resort’s services include wedding packages complete with wedding photography, a unique niche market. Ziggy initiated the photography component and has built a solid business based on the tropical romantic dreams of his mainly international clientele. With as many as three hundred weddings to photograph at Hayman Island each year, it is not surprising that some of the wonder of the hour long, early morning crossing from Shute Harbour, has dimmed for Ziggy and G. They settle alternately into sleep and newspaper reading. However my nose remains pressed to the window, the innumerable shades of Whitsunday aquamarine a novel and endlessly stimulating focus.
Ziggy’s involvement with photography goes back to when he was seventeen years old growing up on the south coast of New South Wales, his camera an essential accoutrement to a pleasure centred beachside lifestyle. As a rider and, later, maker of surfboards, he and his friends would take a Praktika 35mm camera, in a home made water proof housing, out into the surf to make images of each other surfing. His imagery took on a more serious and clandestine tone when it became a vehicle to sponsored travel around Europe:

I got a job working for the American Army taking photographs of stuff. I trouped around Europe and North Africa. As a non-American free-lance contractor I could get to places that the Americans could not. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)

Once back in Australia Ziggy returned initially to designing and making surfboards. When he discovered there were no photographs being made of his boards in action he took matters into his own hands: “To get some publicity shots I did them myself. Shot the guys riding my boards and sold them the photos as well.” Once word of Ziggy’s prowess with his camera disseminated to friends and, later, the wider community, he was called on to provide an increasing range of photographic services:

You know how it always starts: “Oh, you know how to use a camera. Do you want to shoot my wedding?” [laughs] That’s the old story I think just about everyone has one of them. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)
However, it was being able to sell those first surfing images that set Ziggy firmly on the path to a career in photography:

> Although I was making surfboards and was being reasonably successful at that, being able to sell the images at $20 each for a 10 X 8, back in the 70s that was pretty good money. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)

As a self-taught photographer, photographic know-how was accumulated on a need to know basis and Ziggy was soon to be confronted with his limitations as his client base grew:

> I very quickly worked out that I didn’t know what I was doing. People would ask me to do stuff and I didn’t have a damn clue. I was fortunate enough to get a place at Reid TAFE in Canberra in the Diploma of Photography... I did as much as I needed to do to get the knowledge I wanted, and then went off to take photos. I did everything from newspaper to weddings to... well we didn’t do Bar Mitzvahs there weren’t too many synagogues in our area...but we did just about everything [else]. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)

The staff to guest ratio on Hayman Island Resort is almost 1:1. The combined staff make up a small residential community consisting of cleaners, barmen, waitresses, chefs, entertainers, administrators, managers and more with their own discrete housing and amenities. In the staff cafeteria Ziggy and G plan
their days activities over breakfast; they double check times, names and requirements. A regular procession of friends, associates, staff and interested parties stop at the breakfast table. From a: “How are ya Ziggy,… G”, an inquiry from a passing friend to: “Are you going to use the chapel this afternoon or the lawn near the coconut grove first?” from the regular wedding celebrant who will officiate at the afternoon ceremony. Further discussion between G and Ziggy revolves around the charge structure for the days shoot: “He says he just wants the RAW files on CD - no prints” informs G. “Does he want raw files or “RAW” files, does he know what he really means?” Asks Ziggy. “Well he’s some sort of advertising guy and he says he has Photoshop CS2 and wants to process the RAW images and output them himself, so he thinks he knows.” “When you meet with him and his partner later this morning make sure that you show them the new digital price list, the one that covers CD only”. Ziggy explains that the profit on print orders is what makes the business viable and that, if clients wish to forgo ordering prints, the cost structure must accommodate this.

Today G will do most of the wedding photography. Originally employed in the Whitsunday islands as a photographer on the Maxi ex-racing yachts, preserving yachting holiday memories of wind, sun and sea for visiting tourists, over the past three years, she has been trained by Ziggy in all aspects of his wedding photography operation. A superbly wood-panelled hotel sitting room of enormous proportions is the venue for the pre wedding briefing. Ziggy chooses to sit back in the opulence of the deeply padded leather seats and casually
observe from a distance G’s negotiations with the current clients. Before they all finally settle on the client’s preferred RAW file/CD option, a further attempt is made to point out the benefits of a prints and album outcome.

Ziggy has continued to be self employed in photography since the completion of his TAFE course almost thirty years ago and he remains proud that he built his photographic abilities and business largely on his own:

There were no established photographers in the area so I didn’t have mentors; I didn’t have people I could look up to; it just wasn’t there. But I would read, make a point of talking to anyone carrying a decent camera, and I also employed a huge degree of trial and error as well...It was great though [as] there were no rules, we just got the image ...end of story. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)

Ziggy describes the current business operation:

Our main work is on Hayman Island, where we have a little mini-lab that can produce up to 8 X 12 inch prints. We can shoot a wedding in the morning, have it proofed by lunchtime, clients can choose the photos to go in their album, we can print it that night and feasibly they can go home the next day with an album. This is possible because we are so close to our clients while they are here on the island...(Zeigler, Z. 2005)
When asked what has kept him involved with photography for so many years, he points to the ever-changing nature of photography and the evolution of the tools and processes. However, more fundamentally it revolves around the ongoing experience of couples on their wedding day:

...the fact that you meet people on a really good day. If they are not having a good day on their wedding day well ...it’s sad for them. But I’m here to tell you that most people, like 99 per cent of people, are having a wow of a day; you’re meeting them on the best day of their life. That’s pretty inspiring, especially in the locations that we have here. (Zeigler, Z. 2005)

A white, Rolls Royce Silver Cloud delivers the couple to the palm enclosed beachside lawn. G attends to the close ups in and around the car. Meanwhile Ziggy looks for a range of wider, special interest, and detail shots, to support the main bride and groom activity. Apart from sun showers and a breeze that threatens to whisk away the celebrant’s papers, another wedding in paradise is on its way to a successful conclusion. Ziggy and G will have photography to match.
7.14.1 ZIGGY ZEIGLER: “WE JUST GET THE IMAGE …END OF STORY.”

From my first meeting with Ziggy I was impressed by his good nature and warm interest in this research. It was easy to appreciate that he has the people skills necessary for success in the intensely people based activity of wedding photography. In many ways this people centeredness is a recurring theme with many of the experienced photographers. Ziggy also gives the impression of being very much at home with himself and his role, no doubt a fringe benefit of remaining in one field for an extended time. The efficiency of Ziggy’s operation and the fuss-free way in which he organises it is astounding. With over 300 weddings a year, sometimes back to back, and usually requiring a 24-36 hour turnaround, the pressure is always on. To brief, shoot, print and package the photography in such a time frame, necessarily requires a high degree of system and routine. Yet I couldn’t help but be impressed with the intensity of continuing self and shared evaluation and critique that Ziggy and G engaged in; swapping notes, reviewing recent albums, discussing new ideas.

Thus the aims of the image making became to:

- depict Ziggy as relaxed, in control and at peace with himself
- to give a sense of the allure of \textit{paradise}
- to hint at the organization of his photography operation
- to hint at the fleeting nature of the client relationships

In giving expression to these aims a decision was made to photograph Ziggy on location on Hayman Island as this is where the majority of his photography is conducted. There was only one mutually suitable day for the photography to occur and as it further transpired the opportunities for photography of any
kind on that day were very restricted. The weather closed in during the early afternoon and intermittent showers stalked the wedding ceremony, Ziggy and G’s photography, as well as my own. Ziggy stood back from much of the photography of the bride and groom preferring to supervise and to operate a video camera at his client’s request. I captured a range of images of Ziggy yet, in themselves, they seemed to communicate little of the desired aims. Only an image of Ziggy in profile seemed to hold any promise for, although it communicated little of his photographic operation and his relationship to his clients (or G for that matter), it does effectively capture Ziggy’s personal qualities of being relaxed, in control, and at peace with himself. In response to the remaining aims a compilation image was constructed. On the left a contented Ziggy looks out to the viewer justifiably satisfied with his photographic operation; firmly but casually imprinted against his island backdrop. The repetitive and cyclical nature of his operation is embodied in the stripes of vertical variation in the nature of a photographer’s darkroom test strip. The happy couple, privately occupied with their own intimate concerns of romance and fantasy, faintly register on the verdant lure of paradise. Of the compilation images within the research this probably remains the least resolved and falls short of the desired aims. I sense that the composition may not yet serve to hold the image together adequately and that, as a consequence, it has the potential to appear too contrived (7.14.1).
Plate 7.14.1, Ziggy Zeigler, 2005
7.15 COMMONALITIES AND DIVERGENCES

The interview is a deliberately qualitative technique, which seeks to capture the idiosyncratic, and the individual. Hence, to attempt to quantify commonalities and differences across fourteen photographer subjects is not necessarily an easy task given the data. Nevertheless it is still possible for the responses to many of the research questions to be presented in a tabula form. Hence Table 7.15.1 summarises the responses of the secure practitioners’ group in relation to ten of the research questions for purposes of comparison.

Table 7.15.1 Responses to Key Research Questions

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<th>Q#</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>% of secure practitioners.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you work freelance?</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you embrace new technology?</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you engage solely in commercial applications of photography?</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you consider photographic documentation is integral to your work?</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you consider your NQ location is a stylistic influence on your work?</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you consider the geographic remoteness of NQ as an advantage to your work?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you identify the lifestyle associated with being a photographer as a key attraction of the profession?</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you hold positive views on photography as a</td>
<td>86</td>
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In terms of commonality questions two, eight, nine and ten are of particular interest as all secure practitioners reported that they integrate new technologies into their practice (totally 86%, to some extent 14%), are in broad agreement on the value of a photographic education and almost all have a positive outlook on photography as a career for new entrants. It is possible that unanimous endorsement of the value of receiving a photographic education may have been influenced by the respondents’ awareness that the researcher is a tertiary photographic educator. Nevertheless, even if this were the case, each respondent advanced very clear and individual ideas about the ideal content of photographic courses. Generally, as might be expected from practising professionals, there was a strong emphasis on business knowledge, solid technique and interpersonal skills. However several respondents also expressed the importance of developing creativity and a strong visual aesthetic, such as the following observation from commercial photographer Rob Parsons:

Formal education in photography is invaluable for those who wish to pursue it as a career… [the content] should be more philosophical and a little less technical, you do need to understand the technical side but too much time is spent on nuts and bolts and not enough on getting
students’ minds ticking on developing concepts, visual ideas and coming up with creative solutions as opposed to just the correct f stop.

Some of the photographer subjects have queried the use of the category grouping name secure to describe them, thinking that this term implied to their financial security, rather than an involvement in professional photography exceeding five years. Yet regardless of their financial position all subjects agreed that professional photography had substantially, if not entirely, met their creative and personal needs. None of the participants is thinking of abandoning photography as a career, either now, or at any stage in the future. In fact, when asked this question, the common response was usually quizzical disbelief; as if the possibility of such an outcome had never, and would never, be considered under any circumstances. Kerry Trappnell’s heart felt expression: “…it’s not just a job; it’s a lot more than that” typifies the sentiments expressed by most of the subjects regardless of their primary genre.

Participants commonly felt the allure of aspects of the lifestyle of the professional photographer. Again these aspects are not necessarily related to level of income, or genre, but rather derives from the oft cited variability of activities from day to day, the high level of interaction with other people and an involvement in their lives, as well as opportunities to travel. Atypically in the case of Paul Dymond the love of travel as a travel/wildlife photographer holds a higher priority than photography per se. He confirmed that: “I photograph to travel rather than travel to photograph”.

A MIRROR TO THE MIRROR: PHOTOGRAPHIC PROFESSIONALS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND
7.16 WORK STRUCTURES

The diversity of practice within this group is so great that few parallels in work structure, apart from the general free-lance nature of their employment, can be readily identified. However, unanimously all secure practitioners, regardless of genre, agreed that to some extent (29%), or absolutely (79%), documentation holds a central place in their image making. Hence it is still, despite the greater malleability and new creative possibilities of the digital image, photography’s direct referencing of the external world that defines its place and its importance.

7.17 PERSPECIVES ON CHANGE AND THE FUTURE

The majority (86%) considered that the profession was still an attractive option for those desirous of entering it. Although it was generally agreed that some areas of practice (especially lower end applications such as residential real estate) may have contracted for the professional due to new technologies, many new areas, such as making images for the internet, had emerged. More significantly many existing areas of operation had also expanded to compensate. This was deemed to be due primarily to a growth in the size of the market over-all and a enhancement of the available product range and options to offer clients, examples being multi-media diversification and extended print output options. The democratisation of image making through the introduction of affordable high quality digital cameras, and the availability of economic options for image dissemination and output by non-professionals was not considered a threat to the viability of the profession. Secure professionals generally considered that their advanced skills are still recognised and valued.
by clients over those of the non-professional as is, more importantly, the pre-eminence of their creative photographic vision.