

A Mirror to the Mirror

*Exploration of, and reflections on, the role of the
photographic professional
in North Queensland.*

A exhibition with thesis in fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree

of

MASTER OF CREATIVE ARTS

at

James Cook University
Townsville, Queensland, AUSTRALIA

by

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A Mirror to the Mirror

Connoisseurs of the shimmering shadow, they polish the surface and align the plane. Just as the *Wayang Kulit* reduces the vortex to a linear stage so they select and extract from the blinding continuum.

Arbiters and jugglers of emphasis and illusion, their time based negotiations take place against a background of unending instants and latent possibilities. Uniquely they execute the mirror dance to multiple refrains. Levitating beyond the democratic milieu, the rigor is theirs to direct the mirror's stare: to identify and declare, to flatter or distort, to distill or condense, to extract or submerge. The instant recedes, a mark remains, an indelible residue, an evidenced moment, the last remaining arguable truth distilled through the lens of insight and exactitude.

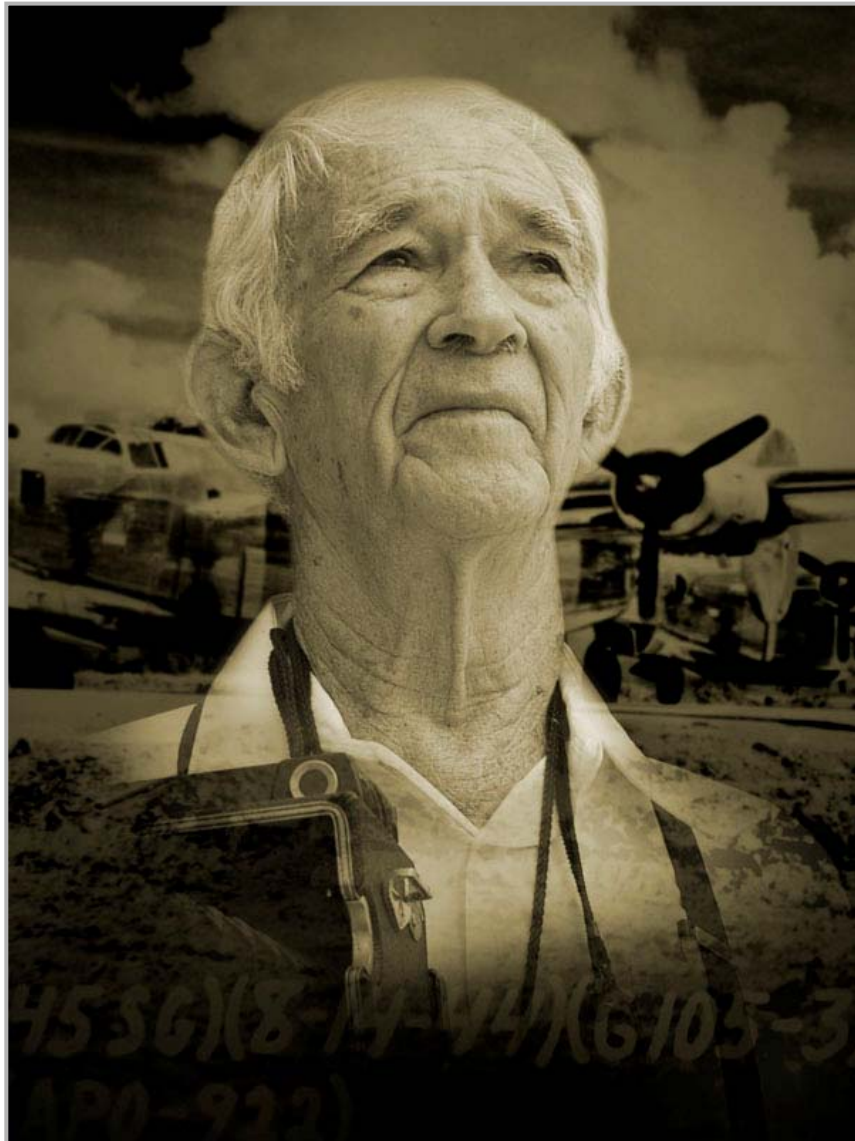
The glare can be great when the mirror is turned and the flickering sheet is lifted. Conscious of the alchemy and the conjuror's tricks, some seek the shelter of the shadows while others advance to embrace the light of another, their all-knowing submission a valorous act. The past faith of others is now transmitted. Trust is proffered as a devout unspoken understanding is enacted.

The returning shadows invite extraction; they seek to live anew on each consideration of the person and the practice. While there can be no fixed and immovable outcome or perception, nevertheless clues remain alluding to context and intent. Consider for a moment the role and importance of these harvesters of time and experience, avid interpreters and chroniclers of lives, events and places. Salute them as we stand before their reflections, their honed mirrors a conduit to a wider and richer passing world.

Clive Hutchison, Nov. 2005



Clive Hutchison
Photography Lecturer
Self Portrait



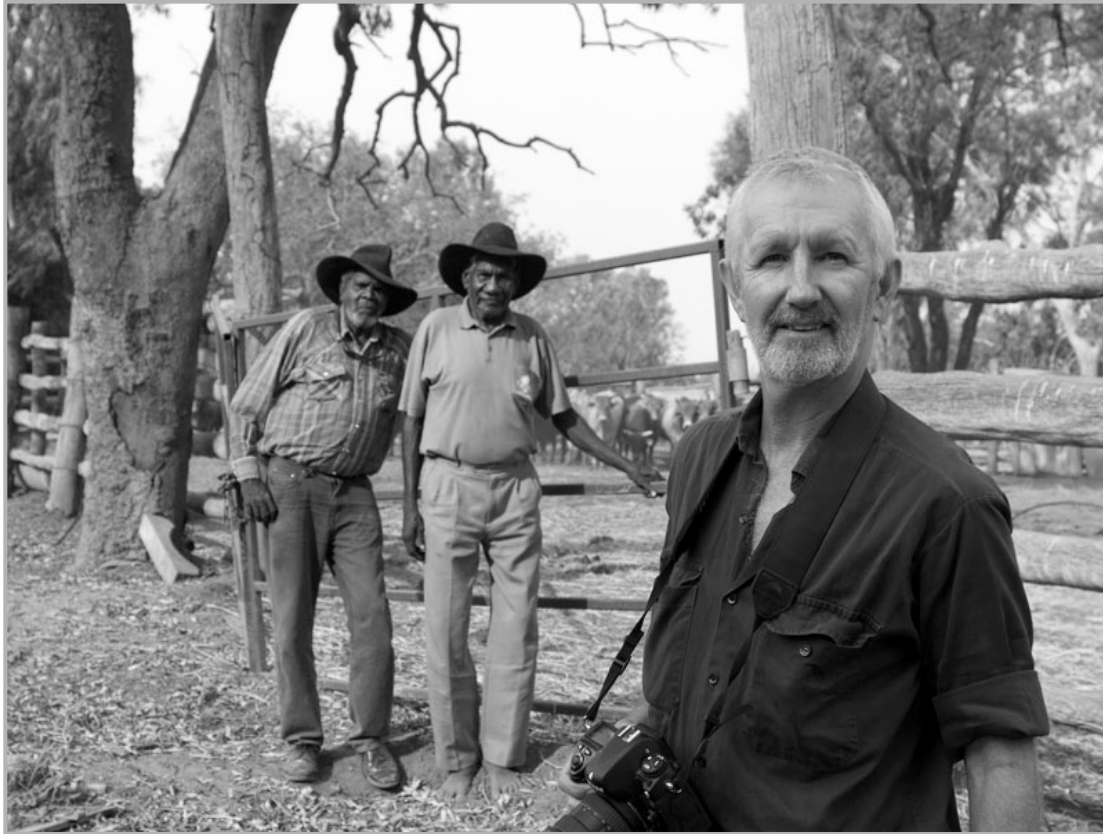
Arch Fraley
Airforce photographer,
retired



Karen Landt
Fine art
Landscape Photographer



Glen O'Malley
Fine Art
Photographer



Kerry Trapnell
Cape York
Photographer



Paul Dymond
Travel / Wildlife
Photographer



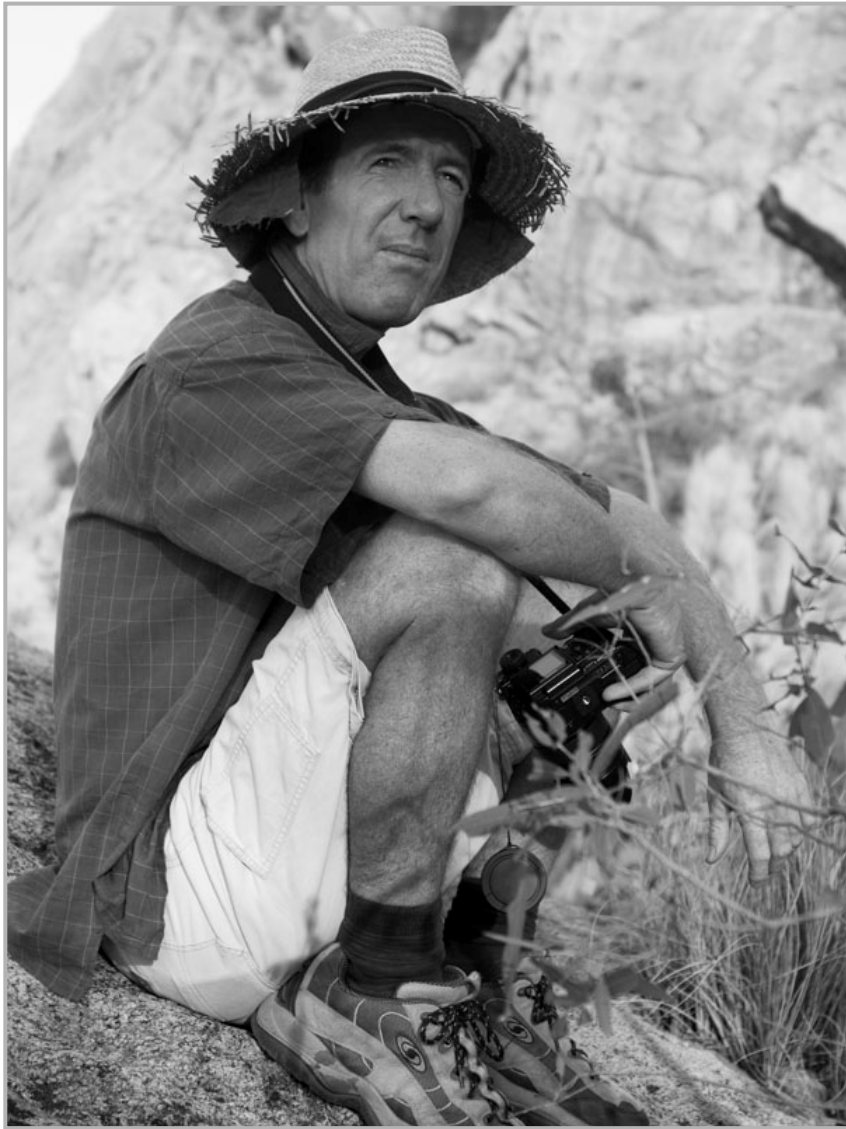
Susan Turner
PNG Village Life
Photographer



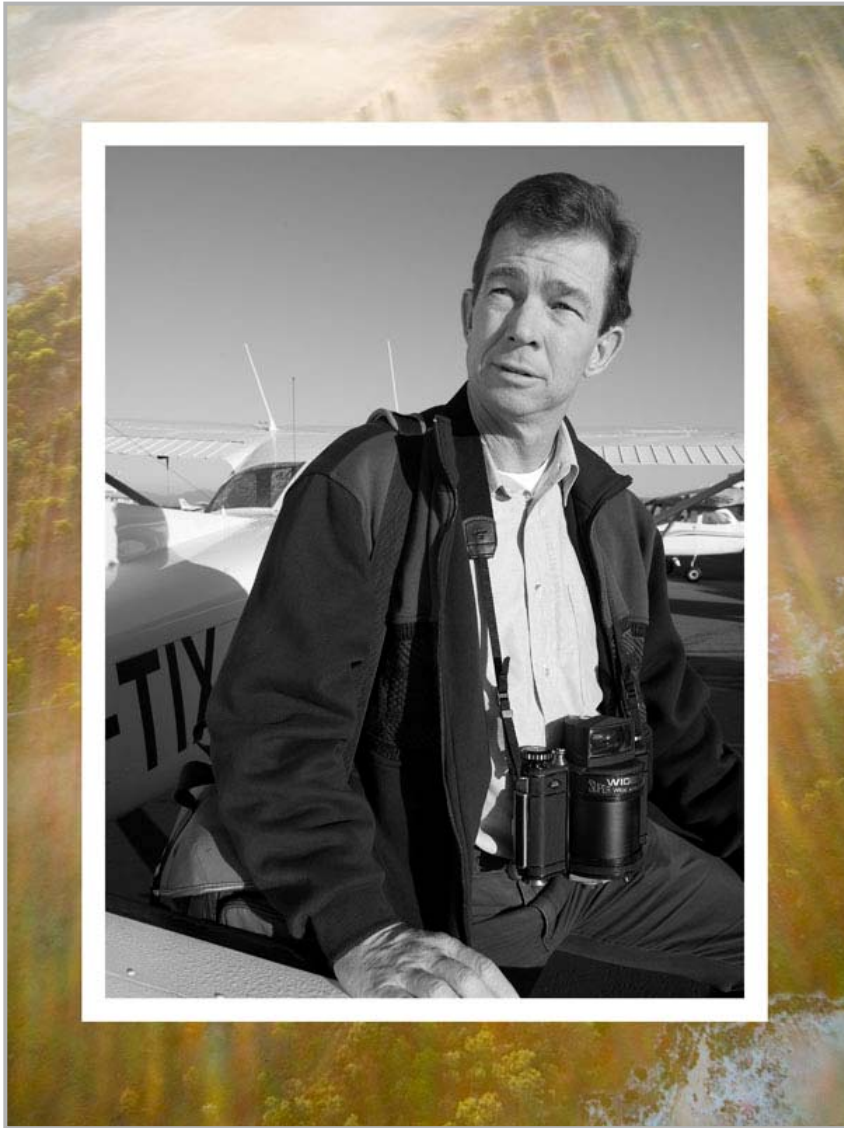
Peter Treasure
Wedding Portrait
Photographer



Megan Marano
Child Portrait
Photographer



Greg Keating
Environmental
Photographer



John DeRooy
Aerial
Photographer



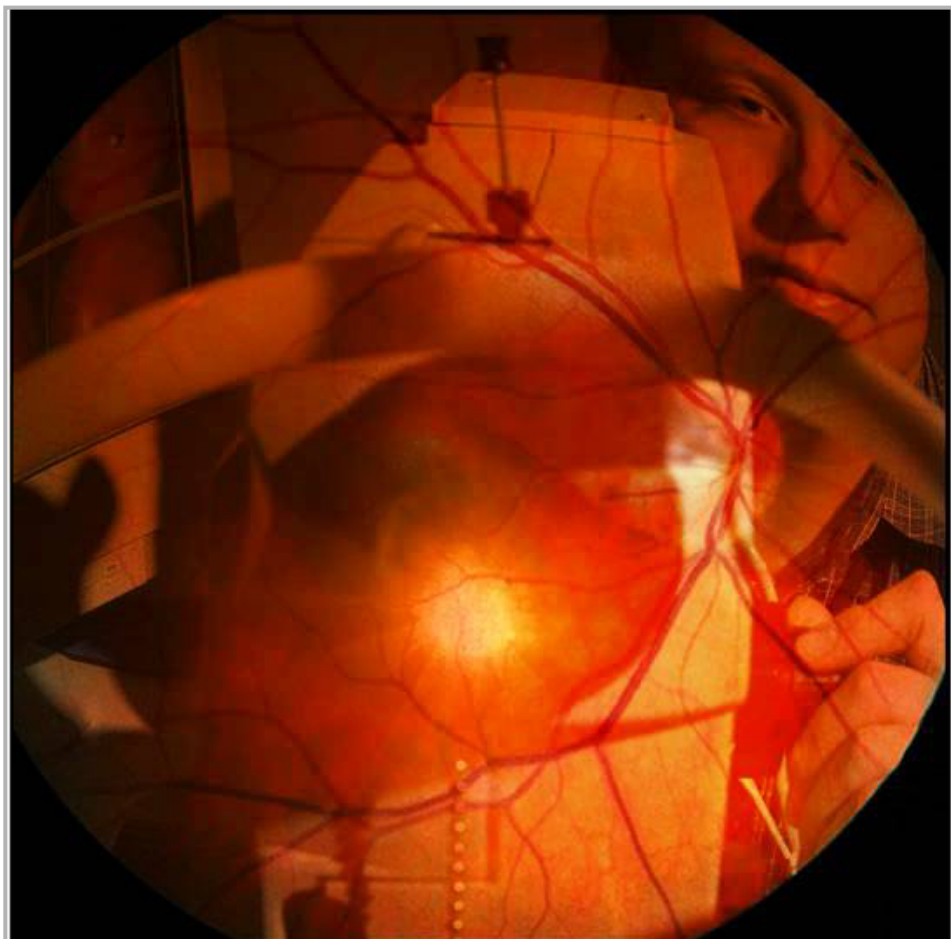
Rob Parsons
Commercial
Photographer



Davey Rintala
Page 3 girl photographer



Leigh Turner
Landscape photographer



Ian Hitchcock
Medical photographer



Natalie Martin
Rodeo Photographer



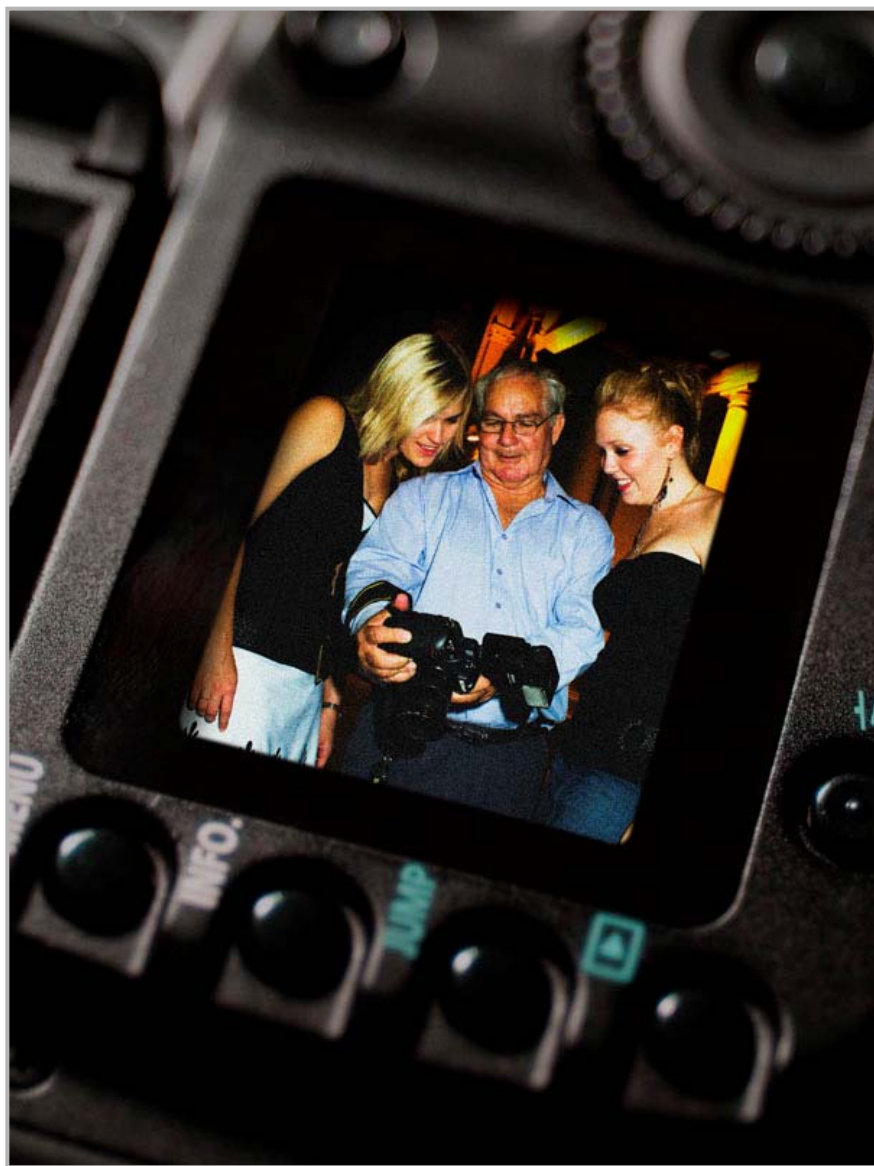
Ziggy Zeigler
Wedding photographer



Fiona Lake
Outback
Photographer



Mark Tessmann
Motorsport
Photographer



Bryan Lynch
Night life photographer

A Mirror to the Mirror – An Overview

Background

Within North Queensland there is a thriving microcosm of most of the practised fields of photography. In addition to wedding and portrait practitioners, there are photographers working in the areas of medical, tourism, aerial, advertising, fine art, sports, newspaper, wildlife and many other branches of the profession. This project seeks to work with a cross-section of current photographers in North Queensland, across a range of genres, to investigate the nature and importance of their work. It also attempts to tap into, albeit in a heuristic manner, the critical and underlying question: "What is it to be a photographer?"

Rarely are working photographers the subject of creative photographic study. In this case photographers have been photographed within the context of their own image making either at their place of work or on location. The new photographic works give insights into each photographer's branch of their profession, their practice, and their personalities.

It was envisaged from the outset that these final works would be as eclectic in style as are the practices, circumstances, and personalities of the photographer subjects. In each case a unique and responsive solution has been sought as a direct rejoinder to these individual drivers. It is further envisaged that this project might underpin new levels of mutual support and understanding between all stakeholders in the North Queensland photographic community as they continue to participate in, or bear witness to, this work.

The Aims of this research are:

- To identify a diverse and representative group of photographers in North Queensland, and to canvas, collate and analyse their thoughts and opinions as a basis for creating an exhibition of original photographs which will:
- Offer a mirror to the person and the practice.
- Reflect the characters and personalities of those that comprise the selected group.
- Allude to their modes and styles of photography and highlight their individual contributions to the collective canvas of image making in NQ.
- Investigate the role of the portrait and in particular the photographic portrait as an image and an object. To reflect on the importance of the portrait in the history of the medium and its place amongst current debates.
- To challenge some of the constructs of the photographic portrait in light of post-modernist doctrine and the advent of digital imaging.
- The accompanying thesis will document the research underlying the exhibition and probe both process and product.

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A Mirror to the Mirror – An Overview

Questions investigated in this research include:

- What confluence of personal experiences brings people to the practice of photography and keeps them faithful to the call?
- To what extent are there underlying motivations that transcend practitioners' areas of photographic specialty?
- To what extent are there underpinnings and predilections that cross the applied/ art divide (if such a divide should really exist)?
- How do these photographers perceive the future of their industry?
- How do industry players perceive themselves within the wider community?
- To what extent do photographers also see themselves playing a role as social or political commentators or visual historians?
- Which of the technical developments in photography have most profoundly influenced professional photographers and their audiences?

The process:

In the past sixteen months this project has involved:

- Interviewing at length over twenty photographers across a range of genres.
- Photographing each of these photographers at work.
- Writing 40,000+ words to date towards the completion of a thesis exploring the meaning of the person and the practice of each participant within the context of the research aims.

Highlights of the process:

While my experience with each photographer was profoundly rewarding the following are undisputed highlights:

- Meeting with and recording the personal stories of a diverse and interesting group of individuals directly involved in the same process that has shaped my life.
- Travelling to Papua New Guinea to work with Susan Turner in the settlements of Port Moresby.
- Chatting with indigenous elders in the company of Kerry Trapnell in remote Kowanyama on Cape York.
- Watching the sunrise over Cape Cleveland from 3,000 feet in the company of John DeRooy.
- Spending a day on luxurious and beautiful Hayman Island with Ziggy Zeigler (even though it rained and I had about ten minutes to make an image of any sort with him at work – greatly increasing my respect and empathy for the role of the wedding photographer).
- Getting to know Arch Fraley whose experiences and achievements in photography go back over six decades.

Items of special importance:

I received 100% co-operation from every photographer approached. However many important photographers from NQ were not included in the study due to the need to sample across genres and avoid duplication. Due to the busy professional schedules of the individuals concerned, only one photo session was practicable for each person and was fitted in around their work commitments on the day.

C.H.

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Thankyou to everyone who has given their time and expertise to this project.

C.H.

