

Reality and Purpose

Ewen Bell Guest Speaker 17th March 2022

*“The art of photography is not about the camera, it’s about what you do with it.
Change your attitude to change your photography” – Ewen Bell*

At our first meeting for 2022 the Club was pleased to welcome professional travel photographer Ewen Bell. Ewen is the former "Editor at Large" for [Digital Photography](#) magazine in Australia. He shoots for Tourism Boards and is a contributor to many international travel publications including Food & Travel (UK), Lonely Planet Traveller (UK), National Geographic Traveller, Geo Saison, Luxury Travel, Vacation & Travel, Higher View, Outback Magazine and many others.

Mentoring has been a key part of Ewen's life for the last 20 years, instructing and running workshops since in 2005. The lessons and conversations from those journeys form the foundation his book ‘*Ewen Bell ReIMAGINE Photography Book*’ published April 2019.

He also runs an online workshop – “*eBooks and Curation*” which is designed to offer a different way to think about your photography and how to present your images - “It’s not about a single photo, it’s about the connection between them”. In this workshop Ewen will help guide you through a process to turn your photos into a story.

Ewen’s presentation Reality and Purpose is a part of the workshops offers.

Key points

- Documentary vs Art - Documentary is a genre not a reality therefore everything is art.
- Art vs Expression - What makes the photo valuable?
- Embrace your Art - Freedom to express yourself.
- The Camera Looks both Ways - Reveals something about the photographer too. A reflection of you.
- There are degrees of Truth in photos just as there are degrees of Truth in Art. Can you remain neutral?
- The photographer is most important because they choose what to photograph.
- Ewen referred to Schrödinger’s Camera – to explain that the act of taking the photo changes the nature of the photo.

(Schrödinger (an Austrian-Irish physicist) stated that if you placed a cat and something that could kill the cat (a [radioactive atom](#)) in a box and sealed it, you would not know if the cat was dead or alive until you opened the box, so that until the box was opened, the cat was (in a sense) both "dead and alive".

The concept of Schrodinger's cat is very much applicable to film photography - the delay between exposing the film and seeing *the developed image may well be the scariest or worst part of shooting film, the argument being that the exposed but not yet developed film photograph is both as good as or better than you expected and not as good as you expected. As the thought experiment goes, these states exist simultaneously until the film is developed and viewed for the first time.*)

- Stolen Portraits – Moments that never even existed. Ewen mentioned the concept of stolen portraits with regard to what is truth in photos for example Lenin's speech. On May 5, 1920, Lenin gave a famous speech to a crowd of Soviet troops in [Sverdlov Square](#), Moscow. In the foreground of the original photo of this event were [Leon Trotsky](#) and [Lev Kamenev](#). The photo was later altered and both men were removed from the image by censors.

Presenter suggestions

- Genuine Moments_- Take your time and let reality happen. Sit back and watch before you shoot.
- Know your subject – You can't express what you don't know.
- Purpose – What do you have to say (in your photograph) that isn't being heard?
- Motivation – Separate purpose from motivation. One does not necessarily follow the other.
- Impermanence – Nothing lasts forever – not even a photograph.
- The unique copy – Nothing is original, but there is always room for the unique. You can borrow ideas from other people and make it uniquely yours.
- Your voice – An image says 1000 words. Are they yours?
- Why – Why capture this photo. The why changes how you want to shoot it. Consider going beyond story to a broader idea from which to take guidance.
- Concept – The concept determines why you capture and how you capture your image.
- Creative vs Reactionary When you shoot with a bigger picture in mind. A creative space. Without limits there is no need for creativity.
- Clarity – Get more from your photographs- by focusing on less you can focus on more.
- Are you present within your photography? – What does your photography say about you?

“Reality is enough. I don't need a fake one. The real world is actually good enough”.
Ewen Bell.