

USING PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS & MAGAZINES TO INSPIRE CREATIVITY



- I want to talk generally about all these books and how useful photo books are to us as photographers.
- But I also want to talk about some specific books and how they have had a positive impact on MY photography – although you might not notice it!
- I started my photographic journey in 1980 when my then wife, suggested I get off my backside and got a hobby.
- David Bailey was then heavily marketing the Olympus OM-10, so that's where I started.
- So, some of the books on the bench behind me have begun to look rather dated.

INTRODUCTION 1

- Why we should look at photo books
- Helps you find out what's possible
- Helps you find out what you like or dislike

- But when I started out with a camera, trying to learn how, these were popular, recommended books by then experts in their field, both educational and commercial.
- They still have much to offer – in terms of instruction, guidance, and examples.
- In fact, I find many of the older books from “film” days seem to offer more guidance on the nuts and bolts of photographic technique than many modern texts do.
- Certainly, I find, present company notwithstanding, that many amateur photographers base their progress by using the back screen of a camera rather than understanding principals such as Inverse-Square Law- but that's more of a personal frustration.
- Michael Langford's Basic Photography – which I now don't have; I think I gave it to a newbie to photography – very successfully saw me through my Photography A-Level and I can heartily recommend it to anyone here.
- In fact, I have found an updated version as a PDF on the web, and I've downloaded it. So, with an eye on copyright I'll say if anyone wants a copy, let me know.

INTRODUCTION 2

- More listening to me!

- John Hedgecoe's Book of Photography was also an eye-opener – he was Professor at the Royal College of Art, while Langford was a tutor there at the same time.
- Around this time, I also remember subscribing to a weekly magazine – the kind that you had to buy binders for – and accumulated into quite a resource. But the cost was high – on the downside, it mostly consisted of images that you found everywhere else. It didn't provide much bang for the buck that I had to pay for it.
- There does come a point that you could think, I've got enough to look at already and can't cope with much more – you can get overloaded with images.
- However, the sight of all these books did surprise me that I had so many – and sadly there are many that I just haven't spent enough time perusing – it's too easy to pop them on the shelf and forget them.
- So, this has been a good opportunity to check-out books that I should revisit and I'm going single out some of them that I would recommend to you.

SIGNIFICANT PHOTOGRAPHERS

- Why we should check their books?
- How much do they cost?
- Aren't they just coffee table books?

- Why we should check their books - a simple question:
 - To admire their pictures
 - To learn from them
 - To practice our skills against theirs, that is to try copying their work and seeing how we do . . .
- There are many different types of book as we shall see over the next hour or so and we will try and examine the worth of them, be they portfolios or educational. They all have one thing in common, and that is, they are authored by highly competent image makers – from the smallest guide book to the largest coffee table book.
- How much do they cost?
 - Looking around Waterstones or on Amazon, I would say they cost ranges from £15 to £50.
 - My most expensive book is John Swannell's retrospective at £40, although I suspect that the equivalent of some of my older books might be higher than that.
 - Michael Langford's Basic Photography is now £46, although you can get the previous version 2nd hand from Amazon for less than £4 (that's the version I have a PDF of).
- Aren't they just coffee table books?
 - How do we learn what makes a good photograph – I hope the answer to that is, by looking at them. Isn't that what makes our print competitions so valuable – how marvellous, at least most, images look when we can peer up at a print, compared to seeing it in a dark room on a projector screen.
 - Perhaps if we kept them on our coffee tables then they wouldn't gather dust on a shelf – something that I am guilty of I know – It's a little while since I've perused many of these book here.

SIGNIFICANT PHOTOGRAPHERS – WHO ARE THEY?

- Charlie Waite
- David Noton
- Don McCullin
- Cecil Beaton
- Helmut Newton
- Ansel Adams
- Henri Cartier-Bresson

**Read their Books,
Look at their Photos**

- Robert Capa
- David Bailey
- Robert Doisneau
- Richard Avedon
- Annie Leibovitz
- Elliott Erwitt
- Weegee
- Edward Weston
- Martin Parr
- Joe Cornish

**And Many
Many More!!**

- Discuss:

INSTRUCTIONAL

- Michael Langford
- John Hedgecoe
- Lee Frost
- Tom Ang



- Probably the single most important genre of photo books for the likes of you and me . . .
- You might refer these books as “how to” type guides as they are instructional and educational. Why not let somebody with experience guide you?
- I was brought up on this kind of books and these particular author’s’ books feature heavily in my library.
- Not only do these books show interesting images but they tell you about the nuts and bolts of how to take your photographs.
- I’ve now ordered 2ndhand copies of both the Michael Langford books – they do still refer a lots to film – let’s face it, both these authors died some time ago!
- But Lee Frost is a great alternative and he seems able to author good book regularly.
- Tom Ang is also a well-known and accomplished writer and photographer.
- It is worth looking at Lee and Tom’s websites.
-
- Discuss!

PORTFOLIO

- Don McCullin
- Lichfield
- Ansel Adams
- John Swannell
- Robert Doisneau
- Elliott Erwitt



- This really follows on from the Significant Photographers section I spoke about earlier.
- And I just want to take you through these books that I have here and you can take a look either at the break or at the end of the evening . . .
- There are so many other photographers whose work can admire, I'm not sure where you stop . . .
- Discuss

DOCUMENTARY

- National Geographic - Magazines
- Don McCullin - Vietnam
- Hold Still - Lockdown
- Elliott Erwitt - Dogs
- Martin Parr – The British seaside



- Discuss
- How amazing it is that we take a magazine like National Geographic for granted – the photography in this monthly magazine is continually fabulous, from a whole gamut of photographer / journalists, who delve into parts of the world, month after month.
- Now, a bit of cheating here: The Don McCullin and the Elliott Erwitt books here are both compilations and not specifically about one issue. However, you will see that they DO show you these photographers have concentrated on specific issues in a documentary style:
 - Don McCullin is famous for his Vietnam images, but also for his East End of London photos.
 - Elliott Erwitt – well known for his black and white candid photos of ironic and absurd situations within everyday settings. He was a member of Magnum Photos from 1953. His main role was to simply document “life”, mainly American.
- The then Duchess of Cambridge launched the Hold Still project to capture life during lockdown in Britain and gathered 31,000 submissions from participants aged four to seventy-five years old. The core themes of the exhibition focused on "Helpers and Heroes, Your New Normal and Acts of Kindness."

LANDSCAPE 1

- Charlie Waite
- David Noton
- Ansel Adams
- Joe Cornish



- When talking about landscape photographers, I don't know where to stop, or really where to start.
- I've kept this list short deliberately because whilst I love landscape photography, there are so many expert photographers out there, I just can't name them there are so many.
- I have books by the first three on this list; in fact several by the first two and they provide me with much of what I want to see.
- Charlie Waite's distinctive style of calm images that focus on quite simplistic scenes, in fact often focussing on a single element in a scene can be quite extraordinary.
- While writing this presentation, I went to pick up one of his books to expound upon, but I then found there were four of his books in my hand – I managed to leave one other on the floor!
- My first favourite of his is called Hidden Works and is effectively a catalogue for an art gallery exhibition held in 2020 and includes 68 superbly (for a paperback) printed images – both colour and black & white. They just cry out to be enjoyed. There is no explanation or description of these images, just a title and a number, that leads back to a price list to purchase prints – you can have an 8" x 5" for £2,300!
- The next is In My Mind's Eye, a book of his black & white images – many of which defy the conventions that judges seemingly impose on us, but in the content and the image quality – photos can be grainy and still have quality.
- Thirdly is simply titled Landscape and is a commentary of 50 of his favourite photographs. You can tell why these are some of his favourites. They include images from France, Italy, Greece, the USA and even Namibia.
- Each photograph is one I would like to have taken. With a little imagination and a little research, similar images could have been taken of many of them in this country – although perhaps not the desert in Namibia!
- My fourth of Charlie's books is The Making of Landscape Photographs: An innocuous paperback but which hides a wealth of good advice, points to consider and great images. It's 30 years old now, so has plenty of references to film and filters.

LANDSCAPE 2

- David Noton



- I was going to talk about Ansel Adams, but I seem to have mislaid his book.
- Alternatively, I will mention David Noton: Many of you may not recognise his name, but he is a major name in landscape, both as a gallery artist of also taking landscapes commercially.
- I came across David when I found his website offered a subscription service to a monthly magazine that included “how-to” videos and other articles, not just about himself. You can access these e-magazines by looking up his website – they are now free.
- Full Frame take you around the world in images coupled with vivid descriptions of the story behind each picture. It enables you to think you could do it too. It’s a well printed hardback and is the sort of book you can take on a journey, dipping into it’s wealth of information whenever you can.
- Waiting for the Light – not quite the most unique of titles – has a different presentation.
- It’s broken down into four main sections, each describing a different aspect of his photography.
- Firstly, the visualisation of the shot – looking at the different elements that make a good image: Shapes, light, colour, distance, time and motion within the image.
- Secondly, he shows different environments: rock, sand, ice, wood and the images he has taken including these elements.
- Thirdly, is a more traditional gallery of images, but still with good notes on where and how!
- Finally, the mechanics of the job – preparation, equipment, accessories, film vs digital, etc

PORTRAIT



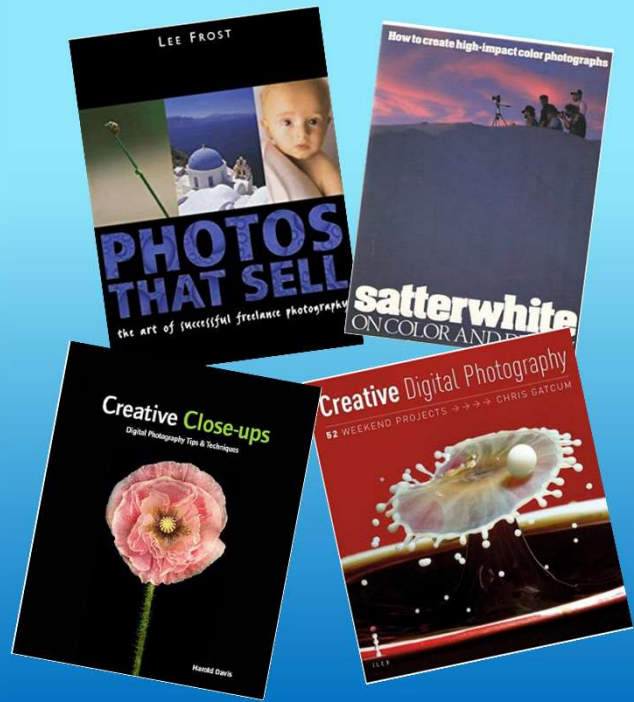
- Interestingly, I do not have a book specifically devoted to portraiture.
- I have lots of books that include a lot of portraits – particularly, those of famous authors; like Lichfield and Swannell
- Many of these images are set up by fashion designers or at least in formal settings
- Also, quite a lot of instructional books – telling us how to pose our subjects in the most attractive manner and I have several such books – how to pose ladies or children or families
- They were fairly helpful in days when I used to take portrait photographs for customers.
- Unfortunately, most of these books are US published and we might find them a little twee . . . Especially 40 years after they were published.
- But, of course, there are more recent books available, I just don't find I need them these days, when most of my portrait photography consists of taking selfies for passport photos or pictures of grandchildren!

STREET



- In my view, street photography is one of those subjects that we would like to do more of . . . But are too shy!
- One book I have specifically on the subject – Mastering Street Photography – is excellent, in that it demonstrates you don't always have to walk up to strangers with a wide-angle lens to take a street-style photograph.
- There are so many other opportunities to capture what's happening around you, perhaps just a little patience to stand in one place.
- It shows you can stop opposite, say, a poster and wait for someone to walk past . . . Rather like Andy's picture of the angel wings in, where, Shoreditch?
- The book usefully also talks about the ins and outs of photographing in public and semi public spaces – your legal rights, red-lines (that's what's not acceptable to us to photograph, for example homeless people), and copyright.
- The second book I have – Street Photography – A History in 100 Iconic Images – is simply that: a fascinating trawl through history of some of the best street images you can come across

HOW TO'S



- Where do I start? – I have probably got more of this type of books than everything else, except landscapes
- And once you've got past for more instructional books I mentioned right at the beginning of the evening, these were next on my acquisition list
- There is too many to list, so I'll just talk about them . . .

DEVELOPING THE PHOTOGRAPHER



- This might be a topic we can easily overlook – how do we consciously make ourselves better photographers
- There are two books that stand out for me;
- My first book is one I have had for many years – it was published in 1984, so right from my earliest days swinging a camera.
- It's not even written by a photographer, but by a photographers' agent. She explains how professional photographers should look at their portfolio – look at what sells and what type of photograph they like to take. This includes her clients changing their photographic direction from say, fashion to travel.
- Then how to present that portfolio in the very best manner, down to the order in which the images are presented – it's a fascinating take on how we should look at our output and it reminds me of a quote from Colin Westgate about what photos to enter in competitions – he said, put in the photos you like
- My second book is The Photographer's Portfolio Development Workshop. I purchased this only last October after following Gill Moon's blog.
- Here the author provides an 8-week course helping you to build a tightly edited portfolio of work based on the type of photography you are best at, by continually defining your portfolio based on your best images
- The author – who is an expert photographer – uses his own photographs to demonstrate how this is done.
- This is difficult for most of us, because 1, we don't take enough photographs and 2, we mostly take general pictures as we come across situations. But it is well-worth taking a look at.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - MAGAZINES

- Digital Photographer / Outdoor Photography / Digital Camera / Amateur Photographer
- £££s
- Which?
- Broaden your horizons

<https://lenscratch.com/>

<https://www.artdoc.photo/>



- There are a plethora of magazines out there of the shelves of WH Smith's and the like.
- The trouble is many of them seem to deal with the same topics month after month, or in the case of Amateur Photographer, week after week.
- Once again, how pictures do you need to see before you get sensory overload.!
- I used to subscribe to Practical Photography (which I see has now closed) and then I subscribed to Outdoor Photography, but both of them got a bit repetitive as I mentioned. So now, I tend to be a selective about buying them and only purchase a magazine when I see a particular review or article that I know I'll find interesting.
- However, magazines to have a role to play in our journey to taking photographs, in the same way as the books already mentioned.
- Long-term they can work out to be more expensive than buying a few selected books, but you do get a variety of topics covered in a fairly short time span.
- I do tend to find that whilst they often have interesting articles about photographers for instance, and the main reviews on say, new cameras or lenses are good, they often fall down on reviewing accessories and often have strange groups of items to review.
- I noticed that an annual subscription to most of the monthly magazines runs to around £115 per annum - Amateur Photographer, because it's a weekly magazine is £184/ year.
- You can buy a goodly number of excellent books for that sum There are specialist magazines for specific camera brands – both Canon and Nikon have them.
- Also, there is a growing number of online magazines that are well worth taking a look at. Of course, they require a subscription.

SUBSCRIPTIONS – BLOGS / WEBSITES

- Free (most!)
- Broaden your horizons
- Variety

<https://photographycourse.net/best-photography-blogs>

- Another growing trend, now that the internet seems to be the way to spread information among, dare I say it, young-er people, is via blogs.
- Now I just haven't quite got the hang of using Instagram, but I know there is a major trend to using it as a platform. But I'm mainly going to refer to blogs you can find on the web.
- There are two blogs that I regularly take a look at:
- Gill Moons because I like her style of photography and I've been on a few of her courses. She has a weekly blog, which you can get an email reminder for. She talks about the things that we need to keep in mind when out with our cameras. She combines it with examples of her own photography supporting her text.
- Tom Archer is a photographer you've probably never heard of – he is the partner of the daughter of one of Janice's friends. He is a really good photographer and his travel photographs are anything I'd wish to take.

PUBLISHERS

- Kodak
- Amphoto
- Rotovision
- Amherst Media

- Back in film days, I bought several Kodak book – large format soft back books about processing and films. Sadly only one book has survived, showing (in very 70s fashion) how to set up interesting shots, some amazing.
- Amphoto is a publisher of a wide range of photography books – they are mainly USA based but usually of good quality and it worth checking their website.
- I have a couple of books published by Rotovision – they are very high quality soft-back books.
- Amherst are rather like Amphoto – I don't think they are connected – but their website is very simple and they suggest you buy through Amazon anyway. One rather unique aspect to them is that they promote self-published Photography books and have a links so you can chat with them to publish you book.

THE END

- I hope you've enjoyed this session. Do come now and take a look again through this collection of books – if any take you interest, make a note of the title and author's name and perhaps the ISBN too.
- Thanks too, to those of you who have shared your books this evening – it's interesting to see how our choices overlap