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# RICHARD WAUGH

## From Portraiture to Architecture

by *Emelia Morrell*

# **OBSERVE**

According to Richard Waugh, this is the key to being a good photographer.

It's likely you've viewed Richard's work many times without realising, as it has featured in national newspapers and magazines throughout his career as a press photographer. But his true artistry is shown in many other forms of photography such as portraiture, cuisine and architecture.

Growing up in the far west Queensland outback, Waugh was taken by the stunning country landscapes, and he learned about respect and caring for the environment from the local Indigenous community. When a neighbouring friend bought a camera, he began experimenting in photography and was hired by a local wedding photographer. With little experience handling a camera and one hour of training, Waugh took on his first commission.

Breaking free of the farmer tradition, Waugh left for the city to pursue his passion. He completed his photographic studies at the Queensland College of Art and took to the streets in search of work. With few job opportunities, Waugh and a friend from college opened a photography gallery, which proved to be one of few in

the city. While this adventure was exciting and drew many people to its doors, it was sadly closed a mere eight months after its debut. Determined to stay immersed in the photography industry, he began a job packing prints for Kodak, and later sold photographic equipment for a time.

His big opportunity came when he was hired as a dark room manager printing black and white film for The Sun newspaper. That was the beginning of an extensive career as press photographer for major Australian and State newspapers and magazines.

Waugh moved to Sydney in the nineties, where he relished the iconic places to shoot, in particular the historic architecture the city offered. He also experimented with more creative pieces, such as a black and white series on Bondi Beach. Eventually, he returned to Brisbane, where he still resides and now works as a freelance artist.

### The Digital Age

Waugh recalls the time when photography was transitioning from familiar film into digital, and how strange it was to relearn aspects of his craft. He recalls the 'beautiful feeling' of film, especially when

the photograph is laid out in front of you instead of on a screen, as it predominantly is nowadays. The digital age also brought with it redundancies due to the loss of advertising caused by online news and social media.

Waugh admits he has mixed views on photo manipulation. He recalls doing a commissioned shoot in which the setting was dreary and the image lacked overall excitement. With some digital manipulation he managed to transform the dull image into a place of paradise. While he believes photo manipulation is good for some things, he also feels it is a bit deceitful. The 'purist' and the 'documenter' in him dislike the use of photo manipulation, as photographs are a way of detailing history. In hundreds of years to come people may want to know what certain things looked like, and if they are altered or digitally removed, the photograph becomes a false representation.

### It's not about the celebrities

One of Richard's photographic passions is portraiture. While he says photographing prime ministers and celebrities is amazing, the real excitement lies with everyday



people. He finds it a great privilege to photograph those who have overcome adversity. He believes that we are 'spoilt in the people [we] meet along the way', which proves that the extraordinary really does lie within the ordinary.

Waugh is also very interested in urban architecture and is drawn to old buildings like the stone terraces of Sydney, as well as modern construction. He enjoys capturing his surroundings and observing how people move and interact in their environment.

## Destination Dreams

The diversity of Waugh's photography is evident when you ask about his dream destinations. In terms of natural locations, Waugh says he would love to shoot Tasmanian landscapes, Cape York and the Bungle Bungles in Western Australia. For more urban destinations, Waugh loves the

Melbourne laneways, and other narrow paths in the city. He'd also like to do a series on old sheds; this stems from when he worked for Queensland Country Life and would often drive past dozens of old shacks in the outback.

## Words of advice

Waugh's advice to budding photographers is observation and patience, and remembering that the equipment doesn't make the photographer. He stresses the importance of technique when capturing an image. He believes composition is critical to how a person's eye 'travels within the frame', and that shooting in black and white – as he frequently does – helps to connect the points within the image.

His other wise words apply not just to photography but to any pursuit. He says that ego, an undeniable fault of most of us, is also pointless.

Unnecessarily criticising others and yourself is futile and doesn't help you or those around you to improve.

## Upcoming adventures

Waugh is now a freelance photographer and is striving to become 'more relaxed' about photography. He still thrives on black and white images, as well as architecture, but film has recently sparked his interest, and he plans to experiment more with it.

He is in the process of creating a black and white series of dogs on the beach, further details of which are yet to be announced. Another series titled 'Human Movement in the Urban Environment' showing the interactions between human beings and their surroundings is also in the making.

While it is not yet complete, it is sure to be stunning. ●

