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for PHOTOGRAPHERS
AND AFICIONADOS

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NZIPP AWARDS 2016
The best of New Zealand

STEPHEN ROBINSON
Remember

IAN POOLE
Observations

Ian POOLE

Observations

Ian Poole has been a professional photographer for more than 50 years. He's an esteemed panel chair and judge for the AIPP, where he's been a continuous member for over 40 years; and the NZIPP, which this year awarded him a Master of Photography. Ian is also a former photo gallery director and curator and a columnist for this magazine.

We've curated a collection of recent images from Ian. They reflect the work of a curious observer, a voyeur, someone interested in travel and people and an unapologetic student of the human condition. Ian's particular fascination with the way people interact with one another, and in a wider sense with their built environment, is demonstrated by these images.

The eldest of four brothers, Ian grew up in the small country town of Sarina, in Queensland, where his father was a builder. It was here, where he joined the Boy Scouts that his interest in photography was kindled. In October 1960 Ian set out on his First Class hike with instructions to take photographs at various points and include them in his log book for assessment. Using father Gordon's wartime Kodak Box Brownie, Ian exposed his first roll of film. ▶



Some Antiques. Beaune, France. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole

Later, with Ian's upcoming attendance at the 6th Australian Boy Scout Jamboree, his parents gifted him his first camera, which would capture mainly scouting activities for the next few years.

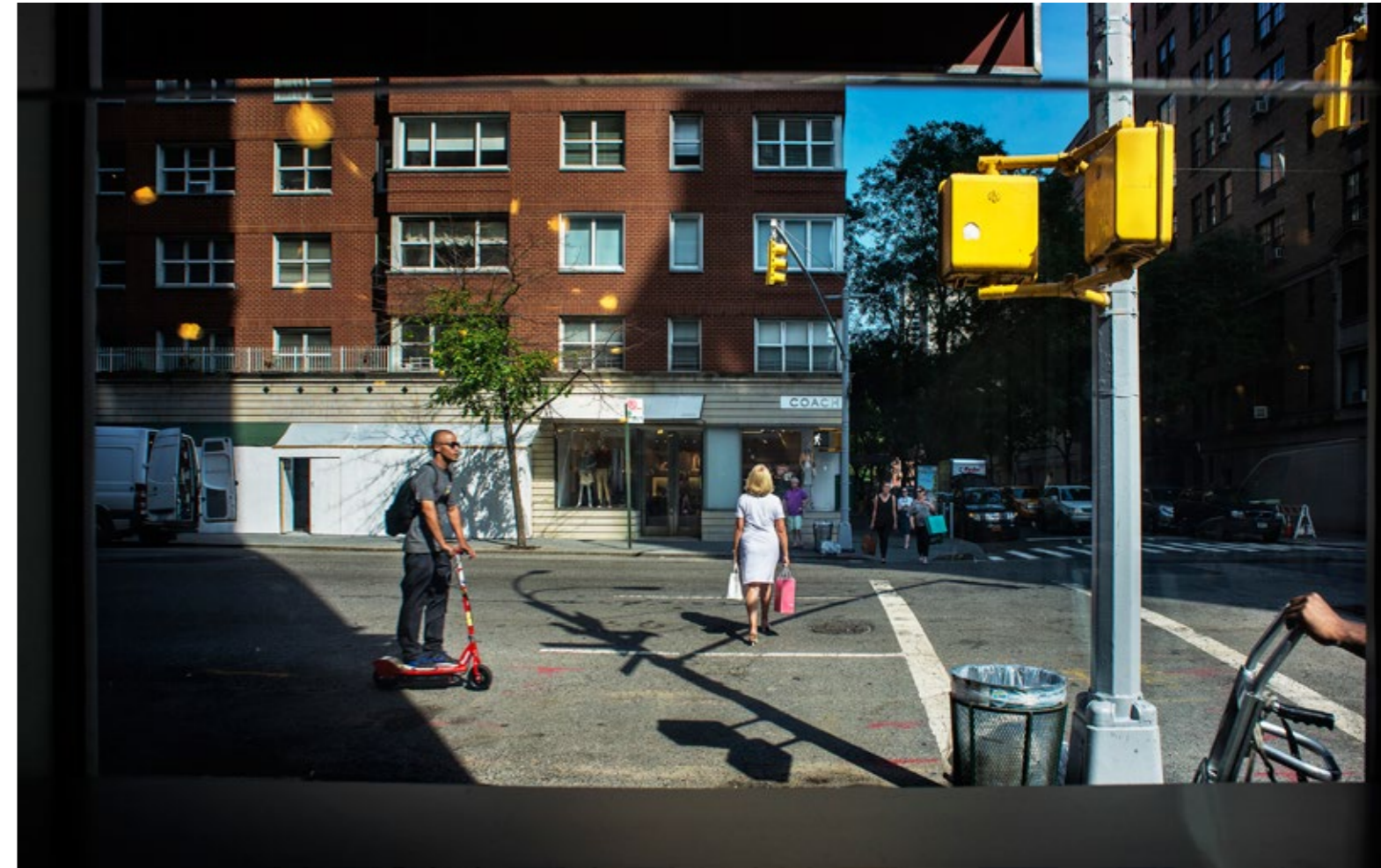
The family moved to Brisbane where after leaving school Ian struggled valiantly for 5 years to achieve his parents dream that he might pursue a career in accountancy – perish the thought. Ian tried to enlist in the Royal Australian Air Force, looking for a role as a photographer. He thought that this would give him the photographic education for which he was looking. This idea did not work as the Air Force had more than enough personnel as a result of conscription. Ian's next attempt at photographic education was via the Famous Photographers School – a correspondence based, fee-paying business that was available at that time. A canoeing disaster on the Indooroopilly reach of the Brisbane River had given his Minolta ST101 35mm camera a terminal salt water dunking. Using the resulting insurance money, Ian put a deposit on a Nikon F, the classic 35mm single lens reflex camera from Arnold Ballschmieter's Camera Shop in George Street Brisbane. Arnold generously offered a repayment scheme that required a weekly payment of one pound, 10 shillings. After a period of time Ian found that he needed to improve his earnings to maintain this commitment. He found a mostly weekend freelance job working for Roland Girling who was the proprietor of Stirling Photography Studios. This was a time when twenty-first birthday and engagement parties would, almost by default, commission a photographer to take shots during the course of the event. It was in the era just after the introduction of the Kodak Instamatic (126 film format) revolutionised amateur photography. By 1968 Ian was attending weddings and taking what was called 'spec' photos of guests and one or two photos of the bridal party. Sales were created by handing business cards to the guests encouraging them to visit the studio a few days later and view proof sheets. Commission was paid to photographers along the lines of 2 shillings per

6½ x 8½" black and white print, each of which sold for approximately 7 shillings and sixpence. The decision about which weddings to cover was made early Saturday morning after Roland had consulted the Courier-Mail Weddings column and looked for weddings where there was no appointed photographer named in the announcement. But of course that often led to other photographers who had followed the same procedure appearing at the wedding. It was not uncommon to see five or six photographers at a wedding, but stories abounded about ten or more and there is a story of one wedding attracting over twenty photographers! No pressure...

Ian and friend Greg Minns formed a photographic partnership, Greg Minns and Ian Poole, Commercial Photographers, in 1973. Initially this business was operated from underneath the home of Greg's parents until premises were found in the ground floor of an old terrace house in Spring Hill. This building was owned by accountants who occupied the first floor, and the top floor was a series of residential rooms. Greg and Ian refurbished the premises into a substantial studio, with its own darkrooms, work room, and lounge where clients were entertained and jobs discussed. Ian recalls:

'We made the decision to combine our talents and chase work within the commercial and advertising world of Brisbane. Me with my bookkeeping and office management skills and he with his inside knowledge of the world of advertising. We were aiming at commercial assignments but were photographing small children, weddings, second-hand cars - anything to bring dollars in the door. Probably no greater decisions have ever been made with less skill!'

These years were a steep learning curve as neither had been in private practice before. Starting with one primary client - taking photographs of houses for publishing in the real estate pages of the Courier-Mail, the business slowly expanded into working for advertising ▶



Soho Scooter. New York, USA. Nikon D800 with 20mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole

agencies. An opportunity to expand to larger premises was spotted by Ian but Greg was unwilling to take this next step. Ian found support from one of Brisbane's established advertising/commercial photographers – David McCarthy. David was keen on the idea of two photographers sharing space and costs but operating separate businesses. IAN POOLE does PHOTOGRAPHY was founded on Friday 13 February 1976 sharing the re-modelled premises with David McCarthy Photography. This two story former church of over 4,000 square feet, gave each photographer separate studios, offices and darkrooms with a shared reception space and work room, as well as off street parking for clients.

'I shared this large space for 13 years conducting mostly an advertising and commercial photography business - my wedding days were well over by that point.'

After 13 years there, in 1988, Ian moved his portion of the business to a facility under his home in Red Hill, Brisbane. The house was a classic 'Queenslander' built on wooden stilts and had ample room underneath to construct a small studio, negative and printing darkrooms and space for a client discussion area and office space.

Since 1994, Ian has been liberated from the ties of a studio, working from his home and also undertaking stints in other areas of endeavor, including government work, lecturing and presenting.

'My membership on the executive of the Institute of Australian Photography brought me into contact and criticism of the current tertiary photography training syllabus. Following a challenge to assist in writing a better training document by the government department of the day, I was suddenly asked to lead the commercial/advertising subject at the Brisbane based College of Art Photography Department. As a part-time lecturer I worked at Griffith

University for 16 years and 3 years for the Queensland University of Technology photography departments.'

Ian takes up the story, and talks about his journey:

'As a classic baby boomer conceived in the dying days of World War II and born in tropical North Queensland, my parents ensured that my education was of the conventional bog standard variety. Not a lot in the area of aesthetics, art, theatre or music, but a solid grounding in the Three Rs (readin, riting, and rithmetic). Leaving school in the middle of my secondary education meant that I was work-aware at an early age when my contemporaries were still arguing their way through university.

My earliest touch of a camera was with my father's ubiquitous Kodak Box Brownie used to document that Boy Scout hike to gain a badge. Photographic documentation has been part of my DNA since that first roll of film.

A Kodak Starflash (using the long dead 127 roll film format), a Minolta A5 rangefinder, and my first SLR, a Minolta STR101 (and it's amazing Rokkor 58mm f1.4 lens) made up my early sequence of personal cameras.

My first weddings were captured using a twin lens Mamiya C3 and Metz 502 battery powered flash. Flash on camera and f11 were my constant companions at that time, and these were captured using Ilford FP4 film.

It was while lecturing that I questioned whether my own knowledge was up to the grade. Good advice (from permanent lecturers) led me to gaining a position within the post-graduate photography department of Griffith University. This period of study and research was not only a dramatic turning point in my photographic knowledge but formalised years of learning by my mistakes. Essentially, mine had been very much a self taught education. I was encouraged to question and research not only elements ▶



He Proudly Struts The Plaza. Havana, Cuba. Nikon D800 with 20mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole

'My earliest touch of a camera was with my father's ubiquitous Kodak Box Brownie...'

of photography but the wider art world that had been hidden from me all my life. A love of classics in art and music was incubated and a knowledge of abstraction (art) and music (jazz) was fermented. The tuition by a good lecturer about art criticism gave me my first formal understanding of what has now become a critical part of my skill base - judging, analysing and de-constructing photographs.

Post graduate photography study encouraged my early showing at photographic exhibitions and honed my skills at working within a genre and concept. Some major solo exhibitions were held and I was able to curate a number of exhibitions which gave a platform for other photographers to bring their work to a larger audience.

Applying for, and winning, an Artist's Residency in Tokyo Japan also aided in my visual development. This four month residency sponsored by the Australian Council for the Arts enabled me to take advantage of connections I had with a number of senior Japanese advertising photographers in Tokyo and Nagoya and widen my knowledge from an international viewpoint.

The photographs represented in this f11 Magazine portfolio are a combination of documentary and illustrative genres. Whilst I do not have the desire or inclination to be an in-your-face documentary photographer with a wide angle lens in the style of Robert Frank, Nan Goldin, Dorothea Lange, Gary Winogrand or a more contemporary Sebastião Salgado or Martin Parr; I am interested in the reaction of people to their surroundings and their interaction with the world in general.

My style is more that of an observer. A voyeur if you wish. I tend to stand back a little and am anxious not to be observed. I will leave my psychoanalysis to others but the images shown are resultant to world travel. It is an attempt on my part to learn about areas that are foreign

to me. An analysis of camera data indicates my preference for wide angle and standard view lenses. Only very infrequently do I use a medium focal length lens, and never a telephoto.

I hope that viewers of my portfolio will not only observe the participants but be able to locate and connect them in some small way with their environment. One reason for using wide angle and normal viewpoint lenses is their ability to drag a large amount of background into the shot. This relationship between observed and location, is vital to my oeuvre.

Since that early purchase of a Nikon F I have mostly used their equipment. There was a short dalliance with a Canon EOS1 film outfit when I found the Nikon F4 too heavy. The Canon was impressive and I used it during my Japanese Residency at Takadanobaba – an inner city Tokyo suburb.

My digital take-up was steady starting with a Canon EOS D30 with its 3.1 megapixel sensor. I moved back to Nikon, with a second hand Nikon D200 in 2007, rapidly moving to a D700 and later a D800. My equipment epiphany happened in New York in 2014 when I found that I was locking the D800 outfit in my hotel ▶



Japanese Underpass. Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF1 with 20mm lens. © Ian Poole

room and venturing out with an i-Phone because of the weight of the DSLR gear. Over a period of some months I researched until making the decision to move to the Fujifilm X series cameras - eventually purchasing a Fujifilm X-T1 and some prime lenses. The bulk of these recent photographs have been taken with either a 14mm f2.8 or 27mm f2.8 Fujinon lens. Whilst always shooting a RAW file I often pre-visualise using the delightful Fuji film emulation jpegs. The closeness of these jpeg files to previous Fuji film stock has meant that I do very little post-production processing using Nik software – my go-to of choice.'

After a lifetime of creating images to order, entirely at the whim of art directors and clients, these pictures are finally all about Ian. No commercial imperative, no brief or story board, no arbitrary judgement call from someone else to change direction half way through the creative process.

Instead, these pictures are made entirely at the whimsy of their creator, a position well earned and now highly valued by the man himself. After 50 years of being commercially driven, Ian Poole now does photography – for himself. ■

TS

<https://poolefoto.wordpress.com>



Istanbul Dolls. Turkey. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole



Under The Tracks. Shimbashi, Tokyo. Nikon D700 with 20mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole



Blue Door. Trinidad, Cuba. Nikon D800 with Sigma Art Series 24-105mm f4 lens. © Ian Poole

'My style is more that of an observer. A voyeur if you wish. I tend to stand back a little and am anxious not to be observed.'

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Tate Modern Gallery. London, England. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole



Edinburgh, Scotland. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole

*'My equipment epiphany happened
in New York in 2014 when I found
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in my hotel room and venturing
out with an i-Phone because of the
weight of the DSLR gear.'*





Birmingham, England. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole







Tokyo Opera House, Japan. Nikon D800 with 20mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole



Tallin, Estonia. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 27mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole



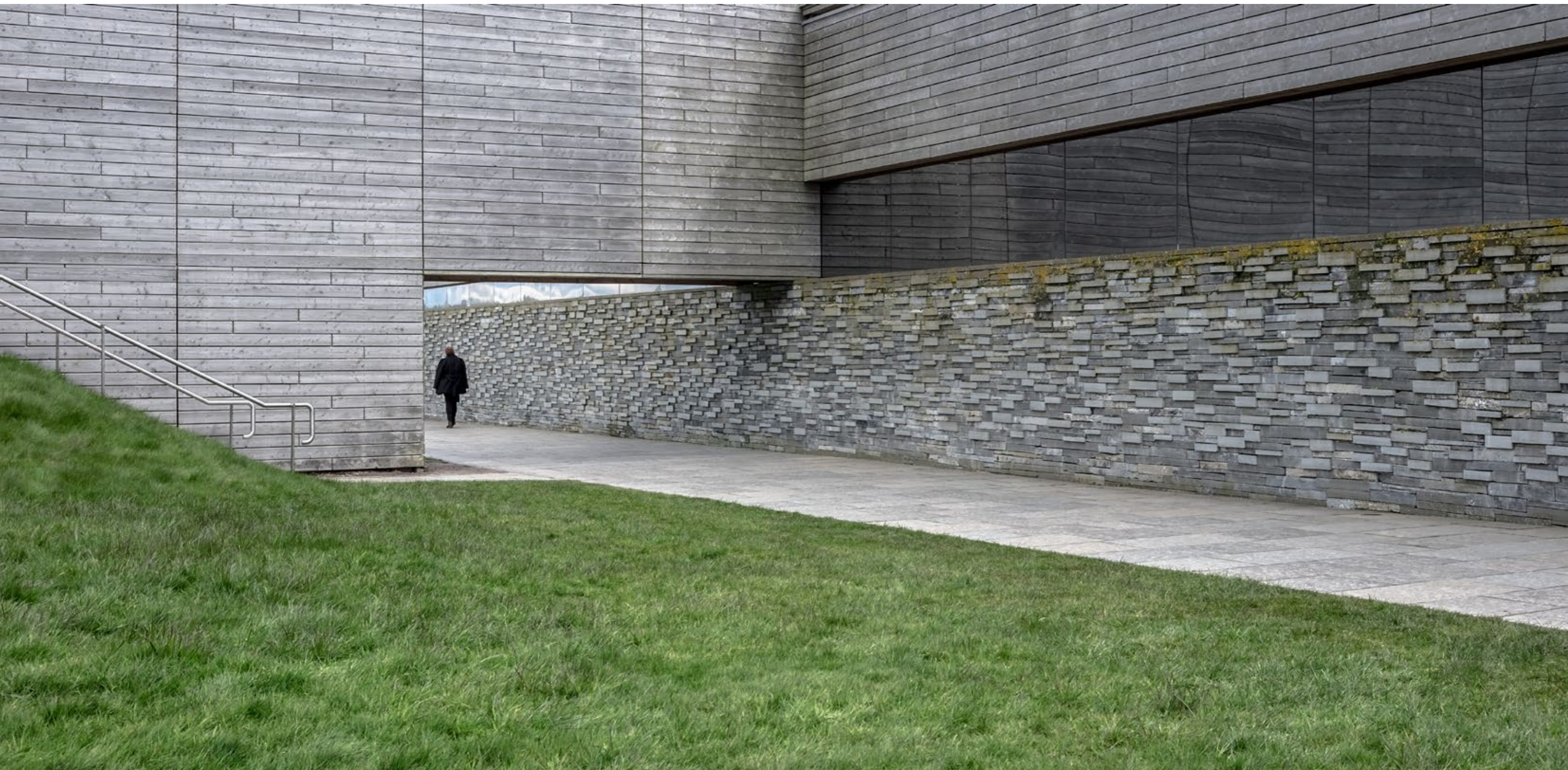
I Did But See Her Passing By. France. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 14mm f2.8 R lens. © Ian Poole



The Cyclist. The Ginza, Tokyo. Nikon D800 with 20mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole



London, England. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 27mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole



Scotland. Fujifilm X-T1 with XF 27mm f2.8 lens. © Ian Poole

All our own work?

An earnest debate amongst Australian professional photographers is currently ensuing online regarding the legitimacy of using second and third party professionals to prepare entries for photography awards.

In this instance specifically, whether professional retouchers should be able to work on an awards entry and whether the resulting modified photograph still remains within the original photographer's integrity of ownership.

The debate resonates on many levels.

Firstly, the Australian professional institute has encouraged its members to enter the awards with a view to improving professional standards across the broad range of the industry. Comparing current entries with those of 30+ years ago, this has been achieved well beyond the imagination of the two or three Australian photography industry founding fathers' fondest thoughts, wishes or hopes.

Secondly, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of first time professional photographers practising their craft without any degree of formal training.

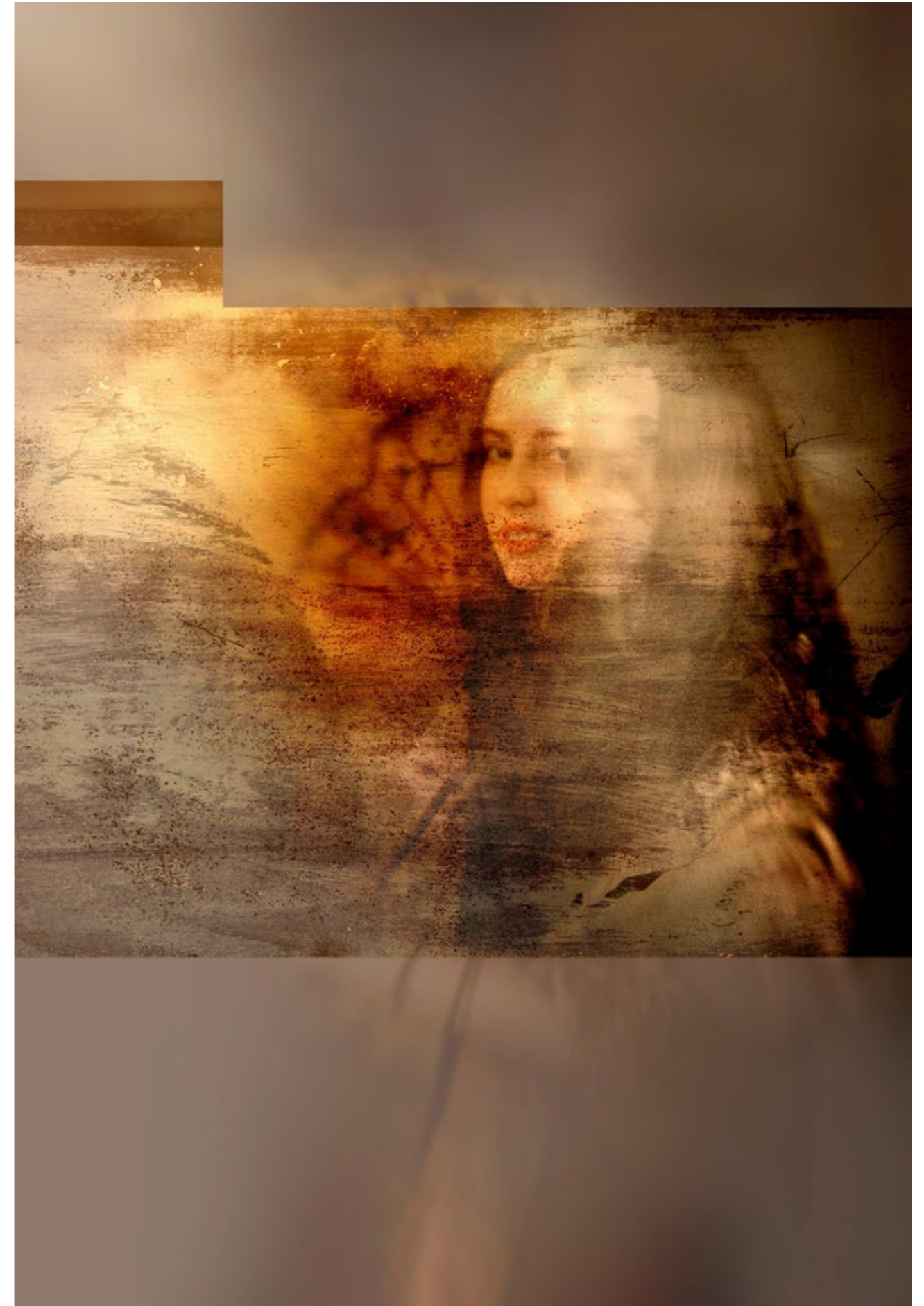
And thirdly, many of these new industry members are trying their hand at entering professional awards for the first time using photographic images that were commercially sound enough for sale to clients – but then fail to attract high assessments from the panel of judges. The antipodean professional awards of New Zealand and Australia present some of the highest standards in photography, as evidenced

by the success of some of their participants on a world stage, so where does the disconnect occur, and why?

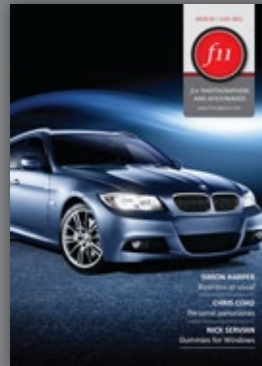
That third point is the basis on which many photographers are now questioning their own poor results and looking for answers in places other than deep introspection. Some are rooting suspicion from their discovery that some entered photographs have received post-production treatment that might not all have been the work of the entrant. A lack of formal training in photography means that some fundamental knowledge of the history of the art is absent, missing in action, from their perspective. This colours their judgment, hiding the real issue.

Right from the earliest days of photography there was a dependence on skilled third party assistance for the photographer to be able to produce saleable portrait images. From the late 19th century through the early 20th century the production methods were similar, albeit the materials used varied. The photographer (usually a male) exposed sensitised material and worked with the clients in The Gallery and behind the scenes vast numbers of staff (mostly female) worked on the production of the finished product. Some photos of these areas in very large studios indicate an almost Dickensian workhouse nature. In a very real sense however, both sides of the production process were equally harrowing as work places.

◀◀ Continued on page 147 ...



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IAN POOLE does PHOTOGRAPHY



With an active and long-term membership of the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP); a lifetime of photographic experience; an extensive role in judging photographs in Australia and New Zealand; and a post-graduate degree in visual arts; Ian Poole is well placed to assist you with your photographic images. Ian's previous teaching experience at university level, as well as strong industry activity, gives him powerful skills in passing on photographic knowledge.

Are you looking for assistance in any of the following?

- Portfolio construction and development
- Initial advice for a photographic exhibition
- Curatorial assistance with an exhibition (opening night details – even choice of wine)
- Re-assess your photographic output – weddings/portraits
- Writing a strong artist's statement
- Choosing strong photographs for competition entry

Ian works from Teneriffe, an inner city Brisbane suburb, but there are many ways to contact and speak to him.

SKYPE | EMAIL | SNAIL MAIL | FACE-TO-FACE

+61 0424 727 452 ~ poolefoto@gmail.com

Blog poolefoto.wordpress.com

Skype [poolefoto](https://www.skype.com/en/contacts/voice/poolefoto)



▶▶ Continued from page 148...

The widespread use of colour materials in the mid-twentieth century brought about a dramatic change to the business model. A host of colour processing laboratories created a revolution where photographers concentrated on finding clients and taking photographs while relying on their finished print production being entirely done by laboratories. The resulting images were really only packaged back at the studio for delivery to clients.

This reliance on laboratories by domestic photographers was echoed in the commercial world. The difference being, that instead of processing negatives these laboratories worked with transparency film and offered additional skills for sale. Compositing two or more transparencies into one, adding text to a transparency, blending several images to create one finished result - something that any half trained photography student could do today in minutes with Photoshop - had to be sent to an expert or experts (often in another city) for completion.

My personal experience of having seen most of the Australian professional awards judged was that this manner of production was always perfectly acceptable. Whilst the viewer often marvelled at the technical skill required to achieve some of the effects, nevertheless it was the brilliance of the concept, or the execution of the original exposure, that was being assessed and attributed to the entrant. Today, the common practice of having one's award entries printed and finished by a master printer is not only accepted, but tacitly encouraged. Judges don't expect entrants to be master printers, so why should they expect the same photographers to be master retouchers?

The disappointment some new entrants to the awards system face is the discovery that their 'successful' commercial output does not rate

highly in a peer review competitive situation. Money from clients (albeit the most important yardstick for a commercial enterprise) while essential is also on a par with lavish praise from one's own mother. The success of the trans-Tasman competitions is that the quality bar has been raised to a very high level. Something to be applauded, not dragged down to a lesser level by adding the criterion that if the image was adequate enough to sell, it is therefore good enough to be applauded and awarded by a jury of our peers.

Content, intent, story-telling, description, emotion, memory, originality, technique and many other signifiers are the harbingers of an award winning photograph. Judges tend to wait and hope, looking for photographs that bring a special message and trusting that they will be able to recognise these images when revealed in the dance of assessment in those quiet rooms.

Long may that expectation reign. ■

Ian Poole

Poolefoto.wordpress.com

ian@f11magazine.com

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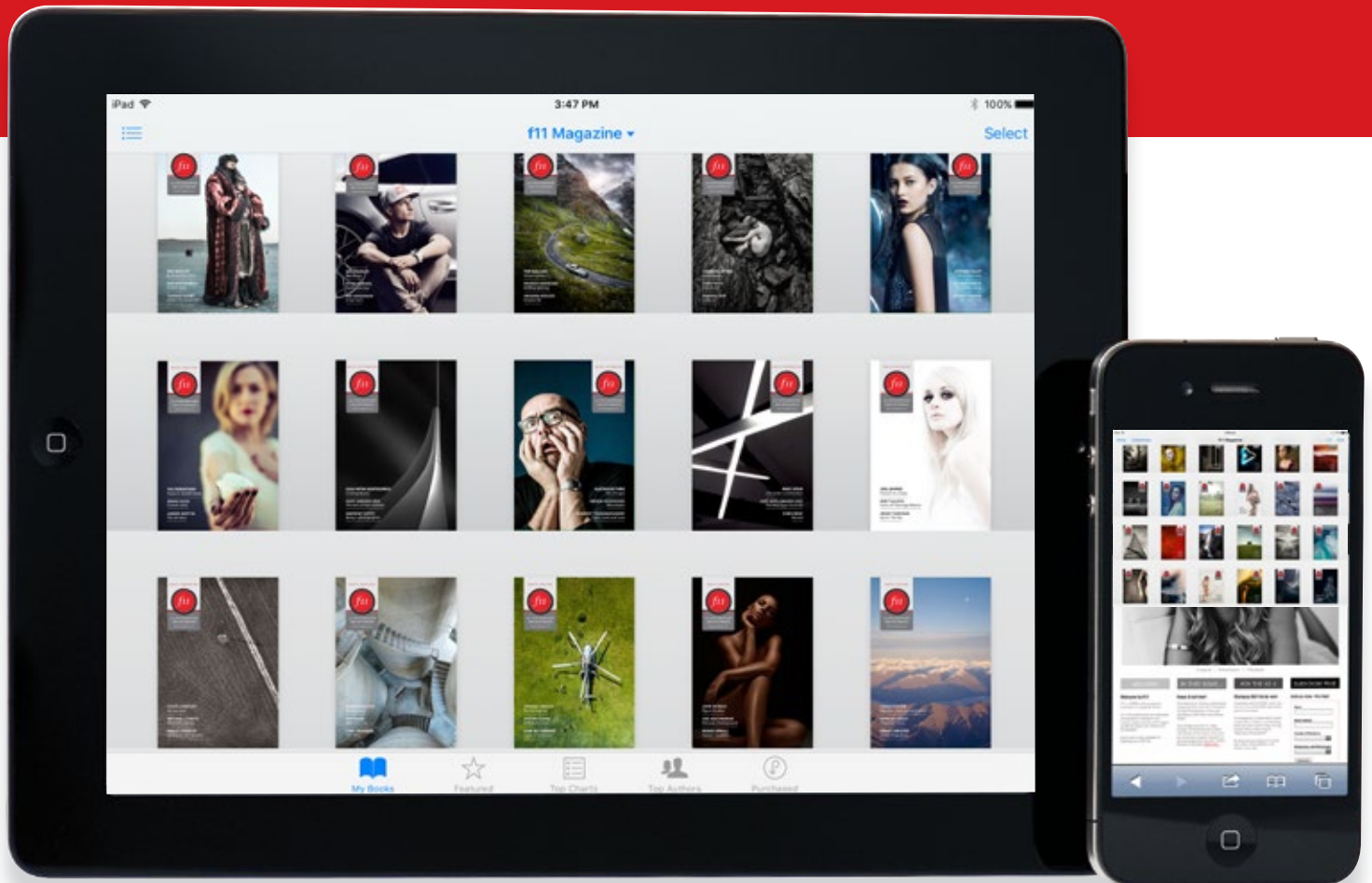
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