

REVIEWS

Best Business Practices for Photographers

Second Edition

by John Harrington

Course Technology PTR, 2009.

\$34.99. 523 pages.

Reviewed by Brian Seed

You have only to read the glowing praise by a number of America's leading photographers and professional photography organizations to know that you should run out to buy this book, no matter what your level of expertise. As an example, celebrated nature photographer Art Wolfe writes: "This is the book every photographer needs. It reveals the terrible truth that taking the photograph is the easy part; dealing with business and legal issues makes the difference between success and failure. This encyclopedic book is a vital reference I wish I had starting out 30 years ago." Pulitzer Prize winning photographer David Hume Kennerly says that no matter what your level of expertise "...you better put down your camera and buy this book. I predict it will make your business better and more productive."

What immediately caught my attention, since I'm writing this at tax time, was the chapter on having an IRS audit—15 pages of detailed advice, including IRS correspondence. I immediately understood why my tax accountant (my wife) is continually badgering me for more accurate information. And then there are other chapters that you might think do not belong in such a book but that cover topics that play an important part in a photographer's life and career. One such topic, for example, is how to maintain your loving family relationships while managing the sometimes long periods away from home.

In my 60 years as a photographer, I have had a relatively easy path, at least when it came to a steady flow of lucrative assignments. But like many photographers, I was never much of a business-

man. Most photography schools turn out thousands of budding photographers with no business training. The first photography school in the U.K. where I taught had hundreds of young photographers who considered themselves to be artists. The idea of earning money with their images was to demean their artistry. From what I have seen of much present-day photography education, including photography classes I have taught in Chicago, not too much has changed.

All of this makes John Harrington's truly excellent book even more essential reading, as anything less than a fully professional approach will see you excluded by most companies that can offer employment and also reduce the fees you can legitimately charge. In order to compete with the almost free photography that is now available you had better be professional and very, very good at what you do.

John Harrington writes from many years of thoughtful, top level photographic experience. He has worked over a period of some 20 years for more than half of the top Fortune 50 companies and even more of the top Fortune 500, and also for important editorial clients. In addition to drawing on his personal experience, he has done considerable additional research. *Best Business Practices* is a must for both the beginning and veteran photographer. It offers detailed, voluminous and wise information that, in fact, could be the basis for an excellent photography school course, providing a rock solid base on which to found and run a photography business.

*Art Without Compromise**

by Wendy Richmond.

Allworth Press, 2009.

\$24.95. 256 pages.

Reviewed by Paul H. Henning

Crawling out from under the worst financial environment since 1929, it would be entirely under-

standable if photographers, illustrators and other creative types spent their precious reading time, should they be lucky enough to actually have any, diving into books dedicated to business survival strategies or technical tomes that could help them rise above their competitors by acquiring heightened skills within their craft. Nonetheless, I would heartily recommend *Art Without Compromise* (and don't ask me why there is an asterisk at the end of the title; just chalk it up to creative license) as an antidote to all the grim, front-page news and subsequent forced operation in survival mode that many creatives have found themselves in over the past couple of years.

Author Wendy Richmond, a *Communication Arts* columnist since 1984, as well as a teacher, artist and media observer, has put together a thought-provoking, insightful compendium of brief essays which, in total, are a collective call to arms for the creative process as well as concise commentary on twenty-first century technology and attitudes toward both art and artists. And because no single essay exceeds 5 or 6 pages (most are only two or three), you can easily snatch her book off the shelf and devour an essay or two in one of the many "in-between spaces" she describes in the essay titled "Killing Time":

In our twenty-first century society, most of us have lives that consist of densely packed activities. We do so many things in different locations with different people (even when we are just sitting at our computers) that we have created a by-product: innumerable "in-between" spaces of time. They are the gaps that exist between finishing one thing and starting the next. These gaps are typically short and unpredictable in length: empty moments that, for the most part, simply require us to wait. But we never simply "wait," do we? Because we are a hyperactive, hyperconsumptive society, we have to be busy, productive and entertained, even during the in-betweens.

Richmond is an unabashed proponent of the value of the creative process. Thus, one of the book's values is its encouragement for artistic professionals to welcome the "unknown" (which stimulates curiosity), rid themselves of both internal and external editors, make room for serendipity, and strive for some degree of recapturing a time, perhaps experienced only early-on in their professional lives, when work and play were seamless. There may be more than a few working pros who could use one of Richmond's "excitement meters: an internal gauge, an indicator of what I find interesting and positive and worth pursuing."

Richmond's book is not about photography per se. There is, nonetheless, much within its pages that touches on the creation, effects and applications of both moving and still pictures. The author has extensive history working with both, though often in a somewhat non-traditional context. For example, Richmond discusses the growing pervasiveness of surveillance cameras, and in "Framing Video" states that "on a surveillance camera, everyone looks guilty." Later in that same essay, she says: "More and more, video is becoming the basis by which people learn and then determine what is the 'truth.' Over the years, video has been like a chameleon, literally changing its colors in an effort to be viewed as 'real.' Because we no longer trust anything too slick, we have been given a whole genre of television ads, news and reality television shows that use low production value and appear (or at least pretend) to be unscripted and unedited. Low quality equals high authenticity."

Even non-creative professionals will find many of the essays in *Art Without Compromise** engaging. Especially stimulating are the chapters "Questioning the Tools" and "The Twenty-First Century Landscape," both of which offer up enlightened opinions on such topics as computers, iPods, cell phones

and the post-9/11 trend towards Big Brotherism. Addressing the plague of our times, the self-absorbed cell phone user ("Private Talk in Public Places"), Richmond observes: "Perhaps when you see only one-half of the conversation, that person seems to be committing a greater breach of public space. The tone of a cell phone voice is distinctive. It is a little bit louder, and it is self-privileging. It implies a lack of civility... The lack of awareness of one's immediate surroundings is benign when it's confined to a private place. But take it out in public and it enrages those who witness it."

Chances are that most readers will never meet Wendy Richmond in person. My guess, however, is that after finishing *Art Without Compromise*, the reader will want to, and the ensuing conversation would be anything but boring.

Hellen Van Meene: tout va disparaître

Photographs by Hellen Van Meene
Introductory essay by Jörg M. Colberg
Schirmer/Mosel, 2009.
\$65.00, 88 pages.

Reviewed by Rachel Seed

In this square, hardcover book, Dutch-born Hellen Van Meene gives us a collection of arresting color medium format photographic portraits of children and adolescents in Europe and America. The images have a cool tone to them and the subjects look, in turn, scared, pensive, confrontational, proud or self-protective.

All of the pictures were shot in natural light, which is in homage to the Golden Age of Dutch painters, according to Jörg M. Colberg, the German artist/critic who wrote the introductory essay. Many of the images have a dreamlike quality and a feeling of melancholy. Except for a framed picture, there are no adults present, which gives me the feeling that perhaps the children have been abandoned or are being neglected in some way.

In the opening essay, Mr. Colberg suggests that maybe these images, by example, can help us remember to open up and feel as free as we did when we were children. However, I find this to be strange advice considering the general tone of the book, which does not come across as uplifting or liberat-

George Rodger: On the Road 1940-1949

Photographs and text by George Rodger
Edited by Andrea Holzherr and Isabel Siben
Hatje Cantz, 2009.
\$40.00, 160 pages

Reviewed by Brian Seed

I defy anyone to name a photographer who led a more exciting and dangerous life than did the British war photographer George Rodger: perhaps Robert Capa, with whom Rodger plotted the post-World War II agency that was to become Magnum. Their sketchy plan for an agency that would be free from editorial dictates was formulated while they were following the American 5th army in Italy, living in a rented villa, and being cared for by an apparently attractive young woman they called "the crumpet."

George Rodger (1908-1995) had the wanderlust from an early age, beginning his travels as an apprentice deck officer on a tramp steamer, and sailing twice around the world with the British merchant navy. He survived the depression years in the United States, working in a variety of jobs. He then returned to London penniless.

Rodger's career as a photographer began in 1936 working for the BBC's *The Listener* magazine. His subsequent and highly evocative photography covering the German air-raids on London (the Blitz) for *Black Star*--some of it shown in this book--drew the attention of *Life* magazine. In 1940, Rodger became a roving war correspondent for *Life*. As you read this book you become aware of just how much hair-raising "roving" Rodger did for *Life*: 75,000 miles by August 1942, when his travels and travails working in 61 countries as a war correspondent were still far from complete.

Rodger had the very dangerous habit of moving into enemy territory ahead of the allied armies. He went in knowing the opposing side had capitulated while the resident garrisons still thought they were at war. He first did this in North Africa, driving alone into a town still garrisoned by the Italians. As one might imagine, the Italian commander was delighted to hear the news.

He did it again having just witnessed the surrender of the German High

Command at Luneberg, where he set out for Denmark. He passed straggling groups of retreating German soldiers along the way and made the mistake of asking an SS officer for directions. The officer stuck an automatic pistol into his belly. Wisely, Rodger had obtained a copy of the document signed by the German generals proving that their forces had capitulated, and this convinced the SS officer that the war was over.

A debatably less dangerous incident occurred when Rodger wanted to travel with General Patton. Patton exploded on seeing this nattily dressed Brit wearing a uniform made to his own design by a Saville Row tailor, a scarf made from parachute silk, and this splendid attire topped by a beret. According to Rodger, the irascible general's hand flew to his pearl handled pistol. Rodger did not get to travel with Patton's army.

Rodger was among the first photographers to enter Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Winston Churchill's description of what the advancing troops saw as they ap-

proached the camp: "We are now entering the dire sink of iniquity." Rodger was so traumatized by what he saw that he ended his career as a war photographer on the spot. Indeed, his account of the camp is more horrifying than I have seen anywhere else.

Judging by the frequent television programs, World War II seems to endlessly fascinate people. This book presents a fresh and quite different view of the war than you are likely to have read before. This is the adventure story that tops all others.

After the war was over, starting in 1949, Rodger spent his time traveling in Africa as Magnum's African correspondent. While the first half of the book addresses World War II, the second half gives an account of Rodger's travels and work in Africa. The book is copiously illustrated, with many photographs of the tribes of Kordofan, a province of Sudan, and of the Nuba people.

All of the images in this book are black and white.



GEORGE RODGER
ON THE ROAD 1940-1949

HATJE
CANTZ