

Peter Scammell

Featured Photographer

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

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By [Peter Scammell](#) & [Michéla Griffith](#) | Posted May 17, 2015 5:12 pm

Peter Scammell has been cited as an influence by – [Chris Friel](#) and [Valda Bailey](#) among others – so I know that for some of you this is a feature long overdue. Peter's journey encompasses a varied career – from art school to working in graphics and as an art director and then back to school for a degree in film making and onto work as an editor and director of music videos. Although he has always taken photographs, a move from London to Devon gave his photography new impetus. His images are frequently monochromatic and are characterised by blur and movement. Each one inspires the next, with the result that his web and flickr portfolios do not always keep pace with his creativity.

Can you tell me a little about your education, childhood passions, early exposure to photography and vocation?

Peter Scammell

Peter has lived for many years in London working in the film industry as a music video director. A move to Devon and inspired by a beautifully blurred photograph of a bridge by photographer Bill Schwab he picked up a camera.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/peterscammell/> again ...

peterscammell.wix.com



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Peter Scammell

Featured Photographer

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Tim Parkin & Guest Presenter

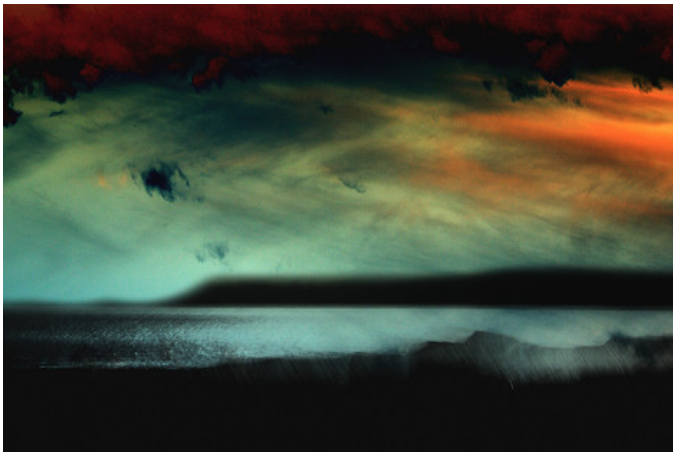
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Not a Master

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Photography

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by Edward Burtynsky

Joe Cornish chooses one of his favourite
images



I gained a degree in Art and Design at Southampton Art School, then a degree in Film at the London Film School.

Apart from occasional family snapshots with a Kodak Brownie my first exposure to photography was at Art School. I bought a Russian made Zenit SLR camera and I remember shooting these abstract type pictures in Southampton docks and discovering that if I stopped down, the sunlight on the water would sparkle like diamonds - brilliant! What else can I mess with I thought? It kick started my lifelong connection, and experimentation with the photographic image.

Michéla Griffith

My work reflects my preference to explore small areas on foot and to make repeat visits - familiarity with a smaller area and a connection to the land is important.

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After Film School I started my film career as a film editor working in London for a variety of production companies and directors, working mainly on documentaries, commercials and drama. I then co- founded a film production company with some friends, one of which was the photographer Anton Corbijn whose work has always been a big influence and inspiration to me. Here I started to direct, working mainly on music videos and commercials and winning MTV and D&AD awards along the way.

What is, for you, the appeal of (landscape) photography?

I like its visual simplicity - sky, sea, land, the frame split into three rectangles in whatever combination, allowing everything from complex to minimal composition and a range of textures as a form of visual expression.

Peeling back the layers of a landscape via the camera and photographic technique. Stripping it back to reveal its soul. Seeing and showing it in a new unworldly light rather than the worldly one we normally view it in.

Does your background (childhood passions, education, and career / vocation) influence your photography?

I think they have, certainly in respect of my directing music videos and commercials. Way back in the day when directing music videos I would shoot hand held super 8mm film myself to obtain a more edgy, abstract “shooting from the hip” feel to the images to contrast with the more controlled 16mm / 35mm footage and I’ve taken that hand held “Intentional Camera Movement” (ICM) technique on board with my photography.

Who (photographers, artists or individuals) or what has most inspired you, or driven you forward in your development as a photographer?

Blimey, a huge cross section has inspired me over the years. Some I’ve probably forgotten about, but ones that spring to mind that I would take to a desert island would be photographers –

Joseph Koudelka, Anton Corbijn, Bill Schwab, Chris Friel, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Michael Levin, Kikuji Kawada, Werner Hannappel, Fay Godwin, William Eggleston, Lee Friedlander,

And artists –

Howard Hodgkin, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, David Hockney, Mark Rothko, Frank Auerbach, Bridget Riley, Leon Kossoff, Franz Kline, Gerhard Richter and on and on.

Have you had any moments of revelation in your development as a photographer where things become clear, or new directions were formed?

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Yes, I was looking through my attic one day when I first moved to Devon when I came across a print of the Ambassador Bridge, Windsor, Ontario by Bill Schwab. It was just so stunning, so visually lyrical, it bowled me over and I just wanted to produce a photo like it. It really made me pick up a camera again (I hadn't taken any photos for years). It really inspired me to take on board all the things I liked about the picture and apply it to my own interpretation of a landscape. It hangs on my wall - it still inspires me.

How does your film and video experience inform your photographic technique and vision?

I guess working with a lot of great cinematographers over the years has rubbed off on me, especially on the music videos and in particular the indie

record label bands who were more open to creative ideas, allowing me a lot more visual experimentation which definitely has found its way into my photography. I still tend to see my photographs as stills from a film - a frozen moment, where something is about to happen or has just happened. And of course it also works in reverse. Sometimes when scripting for a music video or a commercial I would take the scene in a photograph that I liked and turn it into live action.

You say that you also like to keep your images 'real' rather than totally abstract?

Yes, I can alter and mash up an image to create texture and movement and atmosphere but I still like to contain the resulting imagery in the landscape format - so the framework of the landscape is kept no matter how minimal.

Which cameras and lenses do you typically take on a trip and how do they affect your photography?

Very basic really, I use a digital SLR, a 50mm prime lens and an 18mm – 55mm zoom. I'm not sure how they affect my photography bar the fact that they adequately cover the frame size I need.

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You mentioned that it is not always easy to find the landscapes that you are after in Devon. What draws you to a location – firstly and in returning?

Yes, the Devon landscape - beautiful though it is - is not always as minimal as I might like it to be, so I seek out the simplest landscapes I can find and then tend to return to these and forever re-interpret the same scenes – a bit like Auerbach and his studio gates maybe.

Do you have a favourite time of day or conditions in which you like to photograph?

Not really ... any time of day and all weather and lighting conditions are fine

by me ... in fact the more diverse the better.



How important is post processing in realising your vision? Tell us a little about your workflow and how what you do in camera feeds into this.

Post processing is very important to me. It's here I can enhance the "in camera" abstractions I achieve with the hand held (ICM) technique and the ND filters I use to give longer time exposures. I try to keep it simple, just using the S curve filter to create varying degrees of contrast and texture, plus the selective colour filter to separate out the blacks, mid tones and whites, and the layering technique of paint brushing in light and shade etc. All this goes to create a kind of heightened reality in my work. Lately I've started to use superimposition a lot more to give an extra visual edge to a scene.

Do you print many of your pictures printed and, if so, how do you choose to do this?

When I need to print, for example when I sell pictures, I get them printed in

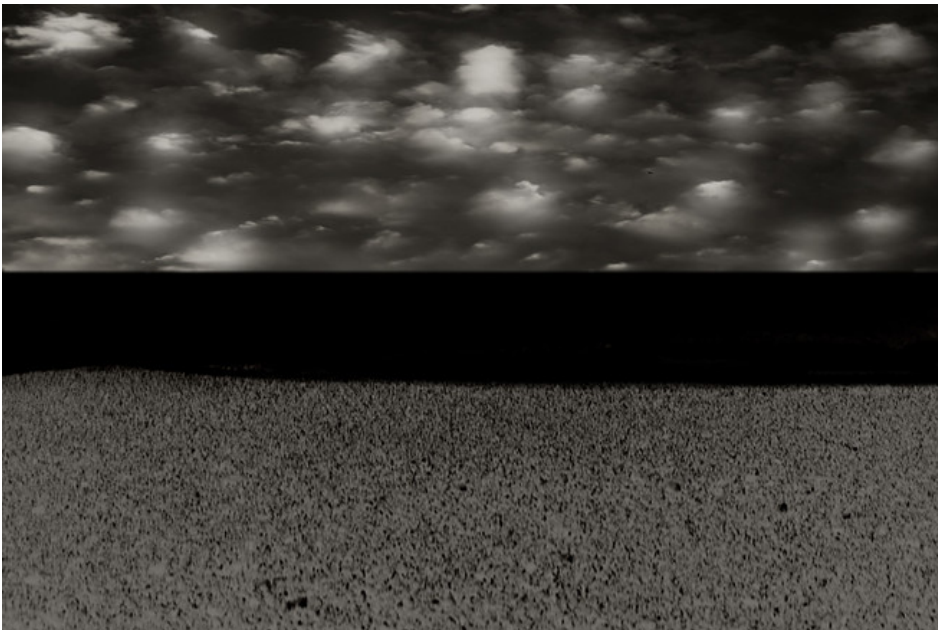
"PHOTOGRAPHY IS AN ART
OF OBSERVATION. IT'S
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IN AN ORDINARY PLACE ...
IT HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH
THE THINGS YOU SEE AND
EVERYTHING WITH THE
WAY YOU SEE THEM."

London.

ELLIOT ERWIT

Can you select 2-3 favourite photographs (of your own) and tell us something about them

WAVE



I like the simplicity of the sea and beach in contrast to the vibrant sky with its explosive surreal vivid white clouds. The sky's energy and visual noise disrupts the silence of the shoreline to give an unworldly feel to it.

SEA



I like the way the sea forms a hand, clawing at the shore line, gradually eating away everything in its path. Also the slight "spin distortion" on the image that gives it thrust and urgency.

If you were told you couldn't do anything photography related for a week, what would you end up doing? Do you have interests other than photography?

I enjoy walking so I would still walk the coastal path here in Devon but curse because I didn't have a camera!



Do you have any achievements as a photographer of which you feel particularly proud?

Apart from the body of work I've produced so far, there's nothing I can think of in particular.

Would you like to talk a little about the quotes you reference on your website – the importance of learning to find interest in the commonplace?

"Photography is an art of observation. It's about finding something interesting in an ordinary place ... It has little to do with the things you see and everything with the way you see them." Elliot Erwit

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." Marcel Proust



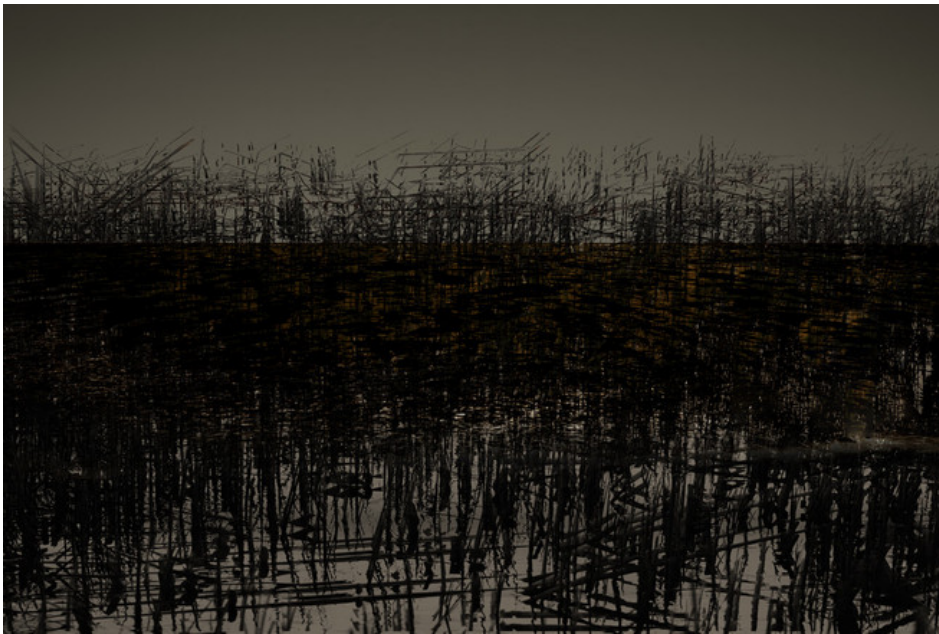
Food for thought I guess ... little “gems of wisdom”, that could open up the door to new exciting ideas, exploring new ways ... Instead of looking at the cliché way of shooting things such as the ubiquitous “chocolate box top” shots of sunset, sunrise, and misty vale mornings and all the rest of the repetitive standard issue stuff - look beyond the cliché and observe things in perhaps a way you haven’t done before, revealing the beauty and drama and silence that exists in the common place, in the mundane. Seek it out and ask “what if I did this?”, “what if I did that?”, “what if?”... And by doing so end up with something fresh and original.



But hey ... each to their own. All it's doing is just suggesting another route to a way of expressing yourself ... a gentle guiding hand. OK, lecture over.

***What kind of things do you think might challenge you in the future?
Where do you see your photography going in terms of subject and style?***

Subject wise, no doubt more of the same in terms of seascapes and landscapes - but I'd like to have a go at photographing the flatter landscape of the south east coast. I love its minimalism and it would make a nice change to the rolling hills of south west Devon. Also I might try a few cityscapes again.



I've taken quite a few in London so I might give that a go plus there's also Dartmoor which I need to tackle one day. Oh and train journeys and the ever changing landscape just outside the window, that produced some interesting images for me a few months back ... so I'll probably buy another train ticket!

But there's no set plan. Generally what happens is that inspiration appears from out of the blue, could be from a photograph, painting, film, music video, landscape, seascape, cityscape - whatever, causing me to view things from a fresh new angle, and it's this that dictates the path I take.

Which photographer(s) would you like to see featured in a future issue?