

Newcastle Music Week Presentation

Hi there, I am Sophie Howarth

Thanks to Elle for inviting me to speak today

As this is a workshop I intend to give you something through my presentation that you can take home with you that will be useful. Feel free to write anything down that strikes a cord with you.

I began my career while I was still at Art School. What has supported me financially and creatively began through just living my life. I photograph large advertising campaigns now amongst other photography jobs of all scale. But it began because I loved music and festivals and art. It all blended together. There was no separation between what my life work love was and this remains the same today. The thing that remains a constant which I have never wavered from is that I love to take photos and in this my life has been guided by this.

I went to the National Art School the syllabus may be the same as here. In 2nd year I chose a major and minor. I chose Photography because I could see that it was a medium that I could use daily in being creative and supporting me financially. I had a flow with photography too.

I had a subject. All my friends were musicians or somehow related to the music industry. They were publicists, promoters, festival organizers. And they needed a photographer. I got a pass to the first BDO and remain part of the family today. Going on the road each year to document the event for the BDO. I made a book which some of you may be aware of Peace Love and Brown Rice A Photographic History of the Big Day Out.

This gave me the opportunity to put all the photos into a chronological order and give the festival its first photo album. By all accounts I believe I hit my goal of giving the audience of the BDO their event to take home. The book aims at being all inclusive – backstage , front of house, onstage , in the pit, the crowd. This is how I see the BDO it exists because of the energy of the crowd and the performers. It is such a celebration the BDO. When I step onto the site each year I feel as though I am in the BDO vortex everything of my life is left behind for that pocket of time.

Before I made PL&BR I had already built up a rich and rewarding photographic journey which has included much travel. A wish I made when I left collage was that I worked in my art daily and it involved travel. For me it all relates. I love to travel and I love to tell a story with my camera. If we look at the BDO it has a cycle morning to night. In a cycle there is a story. And in the story there is great learning through experiences and challenges.

Show Presentation Slide Show

My Style

I believe my photographic style grew out of this festival environment. Shooting at festivals because I was watching people-how they move,physically interact,talk,what they respond to. I learnt how to be patient and wait and anticipate a persons movement I figured out that I could move with them or wait for them to move into my space. There is no opportunity to control the situation if you see it you got to snap it and if you don't it's gone. This is how to seize the magic of the moment. Through surrender to what is before you and be fluid and spontaneous. A moment presents itself and is gone in the next as another moment presents itself. You learn how to flow. The key for me is to go with my feelings and don't

get hung up on what I saw and missed photographing because I'll miss the next moment All this I believe is why a photo that 'packs a punch' speaks when you see it in print because of the power of the moment it was shot in because all the stars lined up! I have broken down my photography life to show you how and why there were different stages and what became clear to me they were based on my needs as an artist.

Put Examples For Each Up On Slideshow

MUSIC – festivals, band promotional shoots, album art work = Creative Freedom. The shoots were based on my ideas once I met the band and they told me all the things that were important to them.

Photo

EDITORIAL – Photo essays = more meaningful subjects – I could use my camera to say something more than promoting the next big thing-social conscience.

Photo

ADVERTISING – TVC's , add campaigns = Personal challenge could I shoot using my style and understanding of the youth culture to create financial stability.

Photo

Book

Peace Love and Brown Rice A Photographic History of the Big Day Out = New challenge Art and Commerce- designing and self publishing.

Create a passive income and a profile for my work outside any industry. The aim to inspire others to follow their hearts their dreams.

I returned from making the book, marketing and distributing satisfied – I love wearing all the hats creator and business but ultimately as there is only so much time I love to take photos most of all.

When I shoot I have the best days. I get home and almost don't recognize my home – I have been so far away in another world it feels.

The Photography Industry

- How to get into the Industry:
 - Follow you heart and don't get put off, trust.
 - Be consistent and persistent.
 - Locksmith on every corner.
 - Think of your career as a life long journey-the big picture. I believe then you will be happy all the way.
 - Practically one good way to get your foot in is to become an assistant to an established photographer. All photographers need assistants and this role covers many things from the really exciting like going on location somewhere possibly overseas the the mundane filing negative or organizing receipts, getting the cofo.
 - Working in a lab who deals with files and printing, retouching.
-

Maclay input.

The internet is a great tool as you could research photographer's that interest you and if their email address is there you can get in contact with them directly.

Recently I went to New York. Duanne Michales is an American photographer that really inspired me when I was studying. Through much research I got in contact with his gallery and said I was interested in meeting him. They got in contact with him and when I arrived I rang him. Unfortunately he could not meet up because of his sick Aunt he had to take care of. I left a copy of my book at his gallery.

Career Opportunities:

- fashion photographer
- portrait
- art-exhibit in Galleries
- car
- editorial
- home
- sports
- advertising
- music
- digital operator
- retoucher
- gallery owner/assistant
- studio assistant/operator

the Pay

The photography industry is made up of some major areas. All these different areas have different structures as to how they pay.

Advertising: top money because the photos are used to advertise a product which generates much money for a company.

Fashion: for magazines and advertising campaigns – it is expected that the budgets start small and for smaller magazines like Dolly then build toward Vogue where the budgets would grow and then campaigns like Calvin Klein with huge budgets and top models.

Editorial: this has a smaller budget but greater reward with the work that a magazine will actually print. Editorial appear in magazines. Editorial usually tell a story in the form of a photo essay .

Portraits: these can be for magazines, journals, company reports, personal/private-budget will depend on who the client is

Music: budget depending upon the artists size/popularity

Weddings: small and casual and huge and almost like a fashion shoot. Small to big budgets.

There is always a sliding scale in terms of what one gets paid for a job. In any industry there is always a budget which a company or group is willing to pay for a particular shoot. This is mostly under what the job really costs this is why negotiation is a big part of photo shoots. It is key here to aim for everyone to be happy at the end of a shoot. So as the photographer you need to have your sliding scale in place as well and know what your bottom line is. There may be a small budget to cover your costs but not

necessarily a fee to cover your time but there might be great advantages for doing the shoot which are not monetary. There will be time when the 2 do not meet and it is ok to let a job go if you can see that there is no money and no benefit for you. I believe costs should always be covered as costs are cost-it costs to get in your car and drive to a shoot for example but your time you can give if you choose.

Shooting work off your own back and then setting up a meeting to a magazine editor to show them the work-this speaks loud that you are really keen. If a meeting is not possible send the work in and be sure to follow up a few days later with a call to see if they received it. Don't wait for them to call. You are one of many things to an overworked person!! They many not even have got it.

How to Promote your work

Nothing beats Face to face meeting if you can set them up to show your work. Either hardcopy portfolio or laptop with slideshow. Show example.

If not ask if you can email some of your work or direct them to your website.

Sending call put cards puts you in the radar of people-show card. Show examples.

Have a consistent look with everything you send out-good presentation is impressive and memorable. Show letterhead and stickers.

Equipment & Techniques

Cameras:

I have recently crossed over to digital. This has been driven by my clients. I love to shoot using film. Today I have brought in my 2 film kits.

- Nikon
- Mamiya 645

For me because of how I was taught photography has a process that is very tactile. This is what I love because it is a vehicle I use for my creative voice. For me I don't have that same relationship with the computer. I love to be in the darkroom. I love to touch prints and film. I enjoy waiting to get my results. Taking my film to the lab.

New technologies

Trends have changed I have also moved into different fields of photography. I believe that what trends have changed involve majorly the internet. As I began shooting live music I would shoot on the weekend and present the prints, that I printed in my own darkroom from film I had developed by Thursday deadline. It could be said that what has changed is the materials and the medium and how it appears. This I think makes it more accessible in 2 ways. The photographer doesn't have to have any formal training or understanding of the photography I learnt, how to deal with low light situations as one does at a night concert and how to process and print film. The internet provides a wider audience for the photos.

Digital moving ahead quickly. Film is becoming a specialized area. I shooting film for myself and digital for my jobs. Other photographers I know shoot both on jobs as film holds a desirable look.

I shoot digital and have close contact with my lab who knows how to colour balance and file manage to my liking. Other photographers I know are a one man show and as they are firstly a digital photographer they shoot with the knowledge of how they will file manage when they sit down to the computer.

In my eyes it is 2 different ways neither is one is superior. They both have a place

Light

Without light there can be no photo. As film is light sensitive. And in theory I guess digital is also. As you the ISO speed can be increased to get more light out of a situation where there is little light be still if it was pitch black there would still be nothing captured.

My specialty is shooting using 'available' or natural light on location as opposed to studio and artificial light. I watch light all the time. I have become aware of light and it moves across subjects and objects. At what times it is magic , harsh, cutting , beautiful soft and I recall that-tuck it away somewhere to recall it later. Photography is about seeing, your eyes. Your eyes also include smell touch and sound.

Different artificial light sources;

- Flash, on camera or big studio light
- Tungsten- orange light –sonic
- Daylight-white light , like daylight
- reflectors

Natural

- The sun.
- the clouds

To a non photographer one might think that a grey overcast day is a bummer if you were shooting people outside but infact it is a gift. The cloud acts as a massive soft box-giving the subjects a beautiful even ligh on their faces. On a sunny day the light is harsh and the shadows deep. To correct this you often have to bounce light into these shadow areas using a reflector or flash on the daylight.

Show Slide-Lighting

Film Types

Film has a grain structure whereas digital has a pixel structure.

There is fine grain and large grain films. The size of the grain is related to the speed of the film. The slower the film the speed the smaller or tighter the grain. The faster the film the larger the grain. You would have often heard people refer to a photo as grainy or sharp. The speed of the film choice is made for different lighting situations. Grainy film of high speed is necessary where there is little light as the film is more sensitive to picking up what light there is. One of my favorite films was the Kodak TMAX 3200 film.

The faster the film speed allow you to shoot at a faster shutter speed which is an advantage when you are shooting a moving subject and you want it to be sharp. Movement is effective also for mood.

Photo of Fergie

Live from Splendour

Film Techniques

- infra red
- cross processing

show slide

Composition

I go by my feeling. This is how I find the shot that will tell me later about that moment.

Recently I did a talk and someone in the audience said it was the law of 3rd's. The photo was balanced always in 3ways.

The Subject

-in organized shoot communication is key. Good with directing people. This comes from a good knowledge of your own feelings so that you can put yourself in the subjects shoes. Not everyone likes to be photographed or something might have happened to unsettle that person before they arrived. You have to be available and sensitive to your subject.

One technique I use to make the magic happen if things aren't comfortable. I set a scene so the subject can play a role like an actor. This way they will drop into a feeling which will result in an action connected to that feeling. Even if it all feels stupid at least they will laugh because they either think I am an idiot or they just drop their nerves and loosen up. It can be in the smallest direction which will give the biggest, deepest result.

As Nick Cave wrote: "to be touched by the hand that is not of this world"

Peace Love and Brown Rice

Shooting live

Obstacles

Lighting and film

- with the advent of digitals some of the old obstacle have been overcome. With Film shootinga a festival moving inside and outside-daylight and darkness with stage lights. Changing film to suite.

First 3 songs not flash

- this is a rule when you shoot in the pit(front of stage) you are given only the first 3songs to get your shot. It is said to be for safety issue. Sometimes the performer is just warming up so the best shots can be at the end of the performance not the start. Having only 3 songs you have to work quick. But not get trapped into just shooting anything. Keeping your intention clear to get a good shot . Waiting for a shot is key to a good shot.

Changing Lighting

-shooting at night time means there is much stage lighting happening and quickly. Film is far more sensitive to this than digital and you don't have so much control with film is post production to fix the shot up. To have manual control while shoot live can be an advantage once you can

make some rough guess about aperture and shutter speed. As at times there will be a light pointing right in your camera which is brighter than the light on your subject at the front. So to have manual control means that you can set your camera for the subject at the front and let the light at the back go.

Show Live Shot Slides

Physically

- shooting live at a festival is a challenging on your body as the day can be a 17hour day by the time you get to be and you have been on your feet the while time running from one stage to the next.

Choices

- most festival have a few stages running at the same time. The BDO site is particularly large so one has to make a good plan before arriving at the event making choices which bands to see and some just won't be possible. But being organized before. Allowing time to get from one stage to the next and getting through the crowd. Time at a festival is what to be aware of.

Personalties

- when dealing with celebrities I really work by intuition. I can feel is a situation backstage is open to be to approach a group of performers and ask them if I can take their photo or if it is closed. I always ask if it is ok with them as this is their private area.
- onstage a performer can play to the camera which is always fun. Sometimes of I know the band they play to my camera and later say did you like that Soph!

My Inspiration

My inspiration comes from nature, words –reading, art of all sorts, myths, legends, stories of people, cultures, religions, fairytales, natural healing, the body's natural energy, the planets the skies the stars and moon and what is out there, trees, inspirational people-biographies, travel, design, calligraphy, guilded religious art, architecture, spaces, walking, dreaming, sleeping, music, dancing, movies, the ancient world

I have talked about the festival environment and how I see the shooting flows I am going to run a SLIDESHOW of PORTRAITS while I talk about How a organised shoot flows in my eyes.

A shoot has a flow to it – dependant on shoot if its my creative control

- meet to discuss job-see if it is for me
- yes, then research it-look for reference and location then send through to make sure we-client and artist all on the same page
- on the night of shoot I get good sleeeeeeep
- early up for a walk and swim-think about how the day will flow-I usually say a little prayer out to the ocean for a good shoot for everyone concerned
- arrive shoot
- the structure around the shoot is important – I see a producer key to his process – so that on the shoot day all the variables of slip ups are reduced
- what matters most is the shoot and this is the subjects feeling comfortable. If the structure/environment is secure then the subject feels comfortable.
- the PRODUCER-is important for the communication and job run smooth as mention.

For me I get better results as my head is not in all the facts and figures negotiations, contracts. Once the job is confirmed I can submerge myself in ideas and research.

- if a job goes pear shaped and it is you the island and it can be completely crushing. With a team there is support and greater resolution.
- In choosing a look and location, film, lighting etc have to know clearly what message the band or company wants the audience -as I'm sure you all know.
- the key once this clarified is head and heart= complete communication.