

# Newsletter, November 2019



## Photography on the bushfire frontline

Fortunately, most people's experience of the catastrophic bushfires still raging in Queensland and northern New South Wales (as we go to press) is through the media. It makes no difference if it is television, video on social media, or stills in print media or online, there is always a photographer or camera operator behind the lens – risking their lives to bring the story to the rest of us.

Days, month, years or even decades after a catastrophic fire, most of us can vividly recall at least one image that sticks in our mind as if we had witnessed it with our own eyes. Australia is entering a long, hot summer replete with bushfire risk. It

is a fitting time for us, as amateur photographers who mostly shoot for pleasure and in safe circumstances of our choosing, to acknowledge the professional photographers who cover the emergencies and bring us heart-breaking and heart-warming stories.

Nowadays, reporters and photographers who are able and willing to report on bushfires must do bushfire safety training and be equipped with appropriate protective clothing and apparatus. It is a comparatively recent thing to see television news reporters dressed in hi-vis jackets and other gear. The full kit that must be worn by media personnel covering a

bushfire is: a yellow wildfire jacket and pants; a yellow helmet with the word 'media' clearly visible on the side; gloves; goggles, sturdy footwear and a mask – all of which must be provided by their employer. No gear, you don't get near the fire.



An Eastern Grey kangaroo licks burnt limbs after escaping from the Liberation Trail fire [photo: Wolter Peters]

In NSW, this training is run by the state government, via the Rural Fire Service, for two main purposes:



Tackling a flare up on the Hillville fire [photo: Dean Sewell]



Aftermath scene at Bobin [photo: Mridula Amin]

“[One, it] encourages media personnel to attend our incidents [to help] us in delivering important safety information to the community and [two, it] also shows the valuable work of our volunteers.”

Only once a media representative has completed a two-hour training session and passed a theory assessment will they be given an accreditation card allowing access to an RFS operation. No accreditation card, you don't get near the fire.

Photographers have a reputation as a risk-taking species: think storm-

chasers. Perhaps there are some out there who would see bushfire photography as an exciting challenge, but the precautions taken by professional media photographer to protect their lives (and, by implication, those of firefighters) should be a message for us all.

Stay at a safe distance; be prepared; know what you're doing, or simply admire the work done by those brave souls out there on the frontline – from the safety of your lounge room. And buy a snag at every RFS fundraiser you come across, whether you eat it or not!

**Liz Morgan**



RFS crew undertaking property protection at Woodford [photo: Dan Himbrechts ]

# Members' choice DPI – “Morning and sails”



Oh dear, as is so often the case, I found myself loitering with intent at the Opera House in the early morning. This is merely one of myriad shots over a period of about an hour that day, before the sun crested the sails.

Lovely wisps of cirrus cloud gave the effect of light radiating from the sails themselves. My plan that morning was to stick with in-camera multiple exposures and the combination of light and cloud suited my aim – at that moment – perfectly.

The subject's many lines and patterns provided the added challenge of trying to make the two frames meet up with a degree of sympathy rather than haphazardly or in obvious conflict. And I only needed the top of the sails as an anchor because for me, the power resided in the radiating play of light on the clouds.

Is it art or is it a photograph? Of course it is.

In Lightroom I increased the contrast and made a blue reduction shift and some other minor tweaks.

Olympus EM1, M Zuiko 12-40mm *f*2.8 (12mm), *f*8, 1/2500s, ISO 200.

**Greg Pitty**

# Members' choice mono – “Towers”

The towers in question are those at the entrance to Luna Park, where I recall throwing up as a child after coming off “The Rotor”. Their Deco flamboyance is a beautiful piece of whimsy which has not succumbed to the ravages of time or its fickle tastes.

The day was cloudless and the morning sun was striking the polished silver surfaces at a good, low angle. I deliberately kept the shot tight, zooming in while standing on the steps which lead up to / down from North Sydney Pool. That extra height gave me a good lateral parity with my subject. In yer face, eye to eye. Shapes and their echo, side by side.

Only a little work was done in Lightroom out of camera: tweaking the upright perspective, adding necessary texture and clarity, and taking down the contrast on the really bright bits.

Olympus EM1, M Zuiko 40-150mm (100mm), *f*10, 1/250s, ISO 100. Monopod and medication for added stability at slow speed.

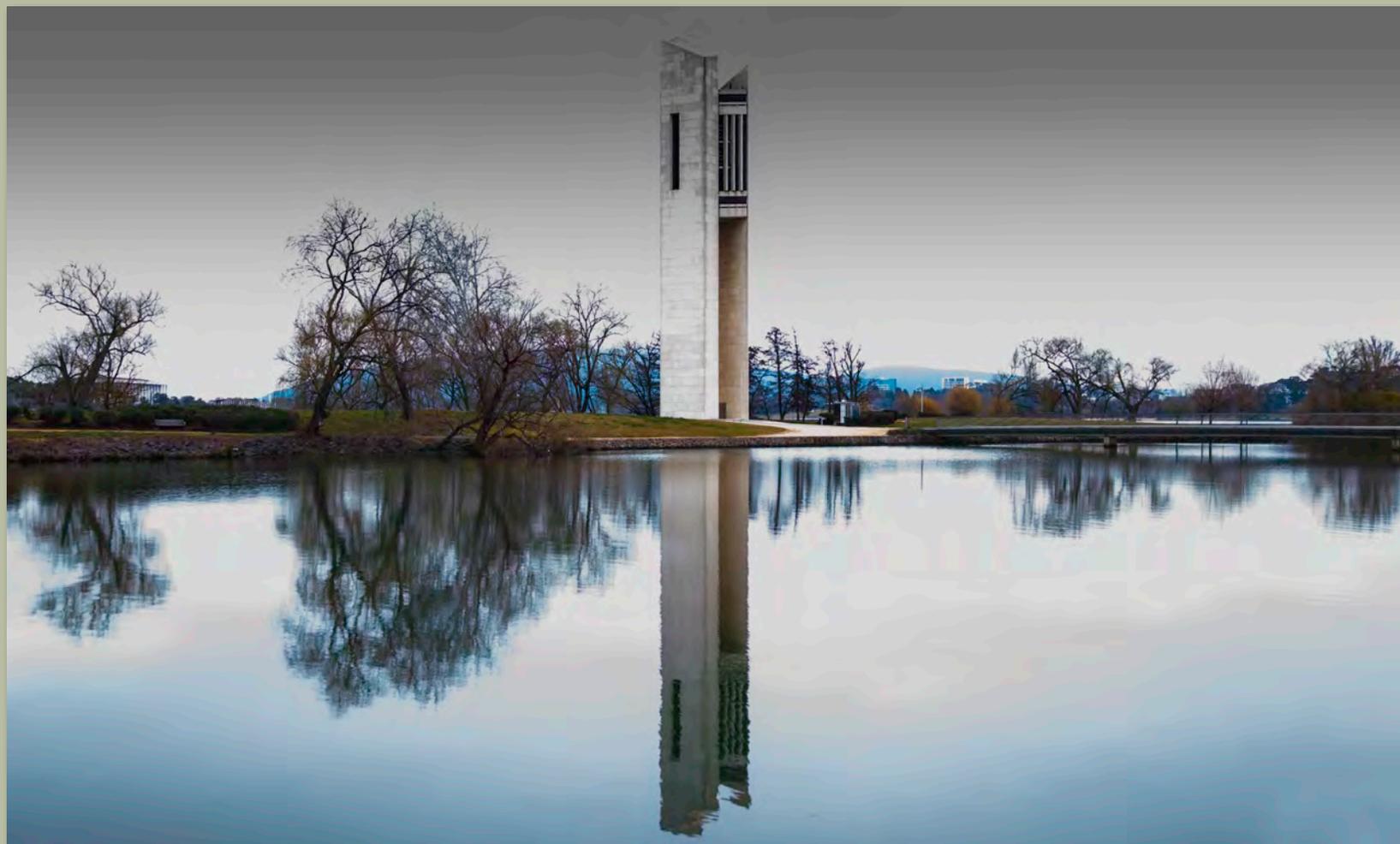
**Greg Pitty**



# Members' choice colour – “The Carillion”

Located on Lake Burley Griffin, the National Carillon was a gift from the British Government to the people of Australia celebrating the 50th anniversary of the national capital. Queen Elizabeth II accepted the National Carillon on behalf of all Australians on 26 April 1970. I was living in Canberra when it was opened. First going to Canberra in 1966 and later doing my PhD at the Australian National University in 2016, I have always had a very fond connection with our national capital and I have been back to Canberra many times.

My challenge was to take an image of something that is so iconic and familiar, in a way that was different



but still recognizable for what it is, a dominant and magical addition to Lake Burley Griffin. The tower is 50 metres high and has 55 bronze bells that ring regularly. The bells

can be heard across Lake Burley Griffin and through Kings and Commonwealth Parks.

The image was taken without a

tripod with the camera hand held.

Canon 6D, 31mm,  $f7.1$ , 1/10s, ISO 100.

**Selena Williams**

# Members' choice colour – “Taking Steps”

This shot was taken at Portugal's oldest university, in Coimbra. JK Rowling lived in the city before fame intruded on her life, and the university's graduation robes are said to have given her the inspiration for the Hogwart's version. Lovely voluminous things.

I was immediately captivated by the many, many angles jostling for position in such a small space, especially the inclusion of the right hand window which seemed an apparent afterthought as it dug into the old tiles.

The two windows offered the only source of available light and I liked the way it fell just where the steps began to fan, leaving darkness and mystery beckoning beyond.

Cropping and straightening, using a radial filter to calm the overly bright bits, and increasing vibrance to better match the original orange / brown glow from the stone, were all done in Lightroom.

Olympus EM1, M Zuiko 12-40mm *f*2.8 (12mm), *f*5.6, 1/50s, ISO 640.

**Greg Pitty**



# Members' choice colour – “Three Little Peaks”



This shot was taken in the Matukituki Valley near Lake Wanaka on New Zealand's South Island.

Up until this moment it had been grey and misty with continual light rain, and I had only been using my little Lumix point and

shoot. My eye was instantly taken by the strange lumpy folds of the green hill – probably the result of ancient glacial action and erosion after the forest was burnt to make way for farming.

When the mist lifted to reveal all three little peaks I just had to

take a photograph with my DSLR. In the few moments it took to hastily unpack my Pentax the leftmost peak was completely misted over again. I had to wait 10 minutes or so before the craggy snow-flecked peak was once again revealed.

Cropping in Lightroom, and also some colour adjustment to match the original.

Pentax K5, smc Pentax DA 18-135mm (36mm), *f* 14, 1/400s, ISO 200.

**Michael Peck**

# Diary

**LAST CHANCE**

## Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize 2019

Sydney photographer Tamara Dean is this year's winner of the Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize, netting her \$50,000. In 2013, Dean won a \$10,000 high commendation prize in the same competition. The Moran prize rewards and promotes excellence in contemporary Australian



photography and its depiction of Australian life.

Dean's winning artwork *Endangered 1* (above) shows a number of naked male and female

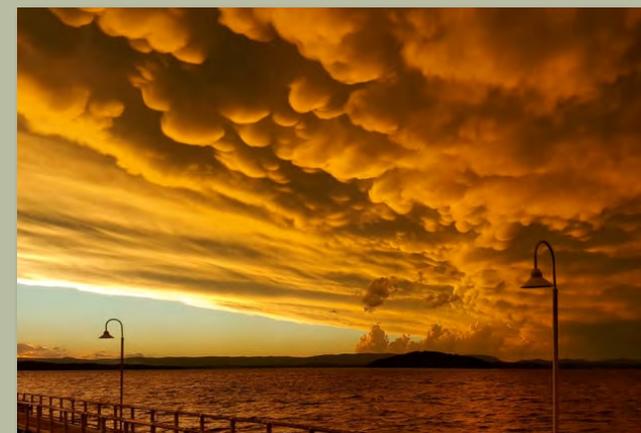
swimmers underwater, and explores the theme of humans and nature; how we, as a species, “are neither separate nor superior to nature” and that “[we] have become the most destructive life form on the planet”. This is quite a dispiriting message but her work is wonderfully uplifting in an aesthetic sense. *Endangered 1*, and the works of all 30 finalists, can be seen at the Moran Gallery at the Moran aged care facility 29 Sylvania Road, Sylvania, until 26 January, 2020. Open 10am-4pm daily, free entry.

Click [here](#) for more details.

## Dear Santa

If there's something we do better in the Upper Blue Mountains than most places in NSW it is weather: we truly have four distinct seasons, and each one brings a discrete challenge and joy for photographers. There are the Misty People (our current club president, for one!); the Frosty People (one of your editors, if s/he can brave the icicles); the Autumn Fungi People (you know who you are, and we know where you go to shoot), and the Spring is Sprung Sorts (you're everywhere as soon as the daylight lengthens).

With Christmas but another full moon away, we suggest you might consider sending a letter to Santa Claus suggesting yet another stocking



Mammatus clouds, Murrays Beach, Lake Macquarie, NSW [photo: David Macdonald]

filler, alongside those filters, new lenses, waterproof bag, etc etc) – the 2020 Bureau of Meteorology Weather Calendar. Maybe one / some of you entered a photograph for inclusion?

Hundreds of amateur and professional photographers from every state and territory (including Antarctica) vied for 13 shots that cut the mustard for the 2020 calendar, on the theme of weather safety for all Australians. A very pertinent choice given the horrendous start to the bushfire season this month.

The good news is that Australian Photographer magazine has a copy to give away, and you can try your luck on its Facebook page (click [here](#)). Otherwise, you can order copies from the BOM [website](#) for \$15-\$17 plus postage.

## The camera in the artist's palette

Upper Blue Mountains artist Wendy Tsai is best-known as a painter. However, in her latest exhibition *Drawing Kedumba* she demonstrates the depth and breadth of her considerable creative palette by including photography in her work.

*Drawing Kedumba* tackles some of the big issues of our times – biodiversity, Aboriginal displacement, colonisation and land management practices among others – through the lens of tracing the Kedumba River as it meanders its way from the Gully, behind Katoomba town centre, to Katoomba Falls in Leura.

The core of the exhibition is a series of more than 40 small drawings hung together to form a huge detailed visual map of the area. Video, photography, and embroidery provide smaller narrative encounters.

The Gully (also known as Catalina Park or Frank Walford Park) has a chequered and painful history. Before white settlement, the traditional owners of the Gully – the Gundungurra and Darug peoples – used the Gully as a summer camp. Colonial settlement at the foot of the mountains forced many Gundungurra and Darug people to resettle permanently in the Gully well before 1950, where they lived alongside itinerant workers and their families until everyone was evicted in 1957 when a motor racetrack was



Wendy Tsai: *McRaes # 6*, charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper

built. The Gully was designated Aboriginal land in 2002 and has been co-managed by traditional owners and Blue Mountains City Council since 2009.

Tsai weaves this turbulent and painful history throughout *Drawing Kedumba*, while celebrating the area's outstanding beauty.

To this novice photographer, the Gully is an incredibly difficult place to take pictures: the light always seems to be in the wrong direction; where or what is the focus of the shot? How do I make visual sense of the story my head and heart is telling me is there but I can't quite seem to see through the viewfinder?

Tsai's training (she has a Master of Philosophy, Painting, from ANU School of Art on the subjective experience of place, particularly in relation to the natural world, and she worked as an art psychotherapist while raising her children) has enabled her to capture not just the visual beauty of The Gully and the Kedumba River, but its emotional complexity, too.

There are only two photographs in the exhibition, each one a collage of small images. One work focuses on grasses; the other on the bitumen racetrack and the many anthills and weeds that have recolonised its surface. They are arresting and thoughtful pieces.

As Tsai shows to good effect, photography is a powerful storytelling tool – whether in isolation or as part of a wider range of art mediums. Club members might be inspired by Tsai to experiment further with their photographic art practices.

*Drawing Kedumba* is on at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, Katoomba until 1 December. More information [here](#).

**Liz Morgan**

## Exhibition of nature photographs

Mount Victoria based fine art nature photographer Ian Brown has a new exhibition, *Implicitly*, at the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, where he is a frequent exhibitor due to public demand.

Ian's work has been widely published, appearing in books, calendars, diaries and magazines, as well as in numerous exhibitions.

His photography has often been in support of environmental campaigns and he has been a finalist multiple times in the prestigious Australian Geographic ANZANG nature photography competition.

The exhibition runs from 15 November 2019 through to 15 January 2020, Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, Mt Tomah. For more details click [here](#). To see more of Brown's work click [here](#).



Ian Browne: *Grose Wilderness, Summer's Blue Dusk*, exhibited in 2015.

## End of Year Camera Club Social

A time for us to get together over shared food and good company to celebrate the year almost gone.

### **WHEN**

Wednesday **11 December** from 6pm.

### **WHERE**

Wentworth Falls Lake at the Leura end of the park, somewhere near the large parking area.

### **WHAT TO BRING**

- plate/bowl/other large container of tasty food to share.
- your own plate/cutlery/cup/glass/drinks/blanket/camping chair and anything else you think you might need, perhaps mosquito repellent/camera/tripod/?

Partners or 'significant others' are welcome.

### **PLEASE NOTE**

The toilet block is closed from 5pm to 7am!

Hope to see many of you there.

**Eve Taylor**

# WWW

## Senegal Secrets

Most keen photographers will have heard of Vivien Maier, the elusive New York nanny who secretly took more than 100,000 photographs that were discovered, almost by accident, decades after her death.

The 2013 film about her life and her craft, *Finding Vivien Maier*, was shown worldwide, befitting Maier's recognition as one of the 20th century's greatest photographers.

Fewer photographers, if any, will have heard of west African photographer Robert de Silva.

Now the BBC has brought to light the incredible work of De Silva (right, outside his studio), who was born in Benin, west Africa and who fought for the French army in World War II. De Silva left a huge archive of some 75,000 shots, on negative, none of which were publicly shown in his lifetime.

It was while serving as a soldier that De Silva took up photography. Having been injured, he was tasked

with taking photographs for the army's medical service, including documenting the condition of concentration camp survivors in Europe.

After the war, De Silva moved back to Africa, this time to Senegal, which was on the cusp on independence from France.

It was a thrilling and turbulent time, which De Silva captured in high-society portraits taken in his studio in the capital, Dakar, and typical Senegalese life on the streets.

During his career, De Silva rubbed shoulders with jazz great Louis Armstrong, and Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman during the heady 1950s and 1960s. Yet, it has taken until now for the full archive to be retrieved and restored by the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

For more on this story, and fabulous images, click [here](#).



# On the ridge

This is a new section for the newsletter where we invite club members to submit recently taken images anywhere in the Blue Mountains and loosely based on the theme of “photography on the edge” and hopefully featuring a club member (for those who shoot alone, selfies are permitted).

To kick off, here is an image of our veritable club president literally on the edge. It was a heart-stopping moment when I looked up and he was gone.

Thankfully he re-appeared in a few minutes, no doubt with the stunning image you can view [here](#).

Mind your steps and *f* stops!

**Michael Peck**



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## Submitting images



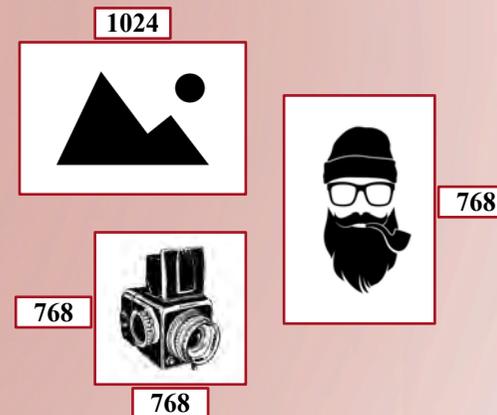
Apple Mail users: after attaching your images please ensure you select

Image Size: Actual Size 

Whether submitting a DPI or digital images of your prints the required format to match the projector is a maximum width of 1024 and a maximum height of 768 pixels.

For a landscape format image, set the longest side to 1024; for portrait, set the longest side to 768, and for a square image, all sides are 768.

Please ensure you name your image file in the following format: {title}\_{initials}.jpg e.g. wombling wombats\_JX.jpg.



## Our web site

[www.upperbluemtnscameraclub.com.au](http://www.upperbluemtnscameraclub.com.au)