

EXPOSURE

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The Bolivian Altiplano and Atacama Desert

Lesley Bretherton



1. Atacama desert

Bolivia is a landlocked country located in western-central South America. It is bordered by Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile and Peru. It is a land of geographical contrast, with the Andes mountains in the west and in the east, and tropical lowlands situated within the Amazon basin. According to Wikipedia, Bolivia is the poorest country in South America with a poverty level of 53% and a population of 11 million people. Nevertheless, Bolivia's economic activities include agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining. Bolivia is rich in

minerals, especially tin and lithium. Named for the nineteenth century revolutionary leader Simon Bolivar, it has been a politically unstable country over a long period of time with coups and counter coups regularly occurring.

The Atacama Desert (Photo 1) is the driest and the oldest continuously arid region on earth. Because of its high altitude, nearly non-existent cloud cover, dry air, and lack of light pollution, the Atacama Desert is one of the best places in the world to conduct astronomical observations. There are plenty of tours available in San Pedro



3. Valley of the Moon

de Atacama to view the night sky. Our entry into Bolivia began in San Pedro de Atacama, a small village in the northern part of Chile, known as the gateway to the Atacama Desert (Photo 2). We entered here, although the actual border crossing is a 45-minute drive up to the Altiplano at an altitude of 5000m. This altitude is designated 'very high altitude' by the International Society for Mountain Medicine and thus requires considerable preparation and acclimatisation before heading up. We spent several days in San Pedro



2. Main Street San Pedro de Atacama



4. Coral Army



5. Island Mirages Salar de Uyuni



7. Waiting for the bus to Uyuni

mountains and bizarre rock formations, gave the distinct feeling of being on a surreal volcanic planet.

We stayed at three different locations on the Bolivian Altiplano; each one the best available accommodation in the Tayka Hotel Chain. The first two nights were spent at Tayka Stone Hotel at an altitude of 3800m on the southern edge of the Salar de Uyuni. Photo shoots here were confined to the Salar and to Pescado Island with its amazing cacti which grow one centimetre per year until they reach about 12 metres, and to an area called the Coral Army (Photo 4). Our first glimpse of the Salar de Uyuni was early afternoon when mirages abounded (Photo 5). Of course, shooting times are limited, because of the tropical latitude. The Salar de Uyuni is at a latitude of about 20 degrees south of the equator so when we were there in May we had around twenty minutes before sunrise and after sunset in which to photograph. However, it is stunning light while it is there, you just need to be quick to catch the amazing ever-changing pastels (Photo 6). During the day, we did some sight-seeing, but the villages appeared desolate and

(Continued on page 4)



6. Pastel sky Salar de Uyuni

(altitude 3200m) sightseeing and going up and back to places of interest and also of very high altitude each day before we tackled the extended stay on the Altiplano. (Photo 3)

The Altiplano is all above 3500m, and mostly at about 4500m, in the 'very high altitude' zone. The highlights of this area are the natural wonder, the Salar de Uyuni; 10,582 square kilometres of flat dazzling white salt, and the many fascinating islands on the lake, with giant cacti growing everywhere. The Altiplano also includes red, green and blue coloured lagoons with pink flamingos, all surrounded by mountains, mostly volcanoes, with no drainage outlets. Geysers, volcanoes, geothermal wonders, striking painted



8. Tunupa Salt Mine



9. Mummies of Coqueza

(Continued from page 3)

abandoned and walking took your breath away – literally.

Our next two nights were spent at the Tayka Salt Hotel on the northern edge of the Salar. As the name suggests it is built entirely of salt blocks. Another day was spent sightseeing around the village (Photo 7) where there were some friendly locals, gorgeous llamas and plenty of red quinoa growing. We photographed the Tunupa salt mine (Photo 8) and visited a sacred sight of an ancient village with a mummified family (Photo 9).

Our final three nights were spent at the Tayka Desert Hotel (Photo 10). This hotel is back towards Chile and even higher than the other two hotels. Oxygen is available in all the hotels, and one of our party needed to make use of it. The main attractions near the Desert Hotel were the Siloli and Dali deserts (Photo 11), in which the hotel is situated, the Lagunas (Colarada, Blanco and Verde) and the Stone tree or Árbol de Piedra, an isolated rock formation in the Eduardo Avaroa Andean Fauna National Reserve of Sur Lípez Province.

Laguna Colarada is a shallow salt-lake stained red by minerals and algae and features borax islands (Photo 12) and an abundance of James flamingos (rarely seen elsewhere) (Photo 13). We photographed here at sunset and sunrise where the temperature managed to get as low



11. Siloli Desert

as minus thirteen degrees. Luckily, while the evening shoot was very windy, the morning shoot was extremely calm so the cold was not so profound (Photo 14). More wildlife was seen around this area as well including herds of llamas and vicuñas.(Photo 15)

The high altitudes of the Altiplano and salt flats humble you into understanding the limits of your body. Apart from the obvious lack of oxygen and constant breathlessness, challenges of high altitude photography include the temperature extremes, dust and strong winds. You need to bring layers of clothing. The extreme dryness of the atmosphere means dust on the sensor, chapped lips and cracked skin on the hands. Early on, headaches were common and problem solving is difficult because of the fatigue, both mental and physical, that you experience. Food is harder to digest and hydration is critical in order to remain fit; alcohol was not permitted as it reduces your capacity to acclimatise. Capturing great images under these conditions is not easy. You are limited by the light, which is bright in the extreme during the day due to the clear, thin



10. Desert Hotel

atmosphere and cloudless skies. The ‘golden hour’ is short, twenty minutes at the most, so you need to be prepared. Processing captures is not easy; the pastel hues in the skies and salt lakes do not take to added contrast. Travel is difficult on unmarked ‘roads’ which are rough and dusty, although our drivers were amazing, finding their way back to the hotel in the dark without GPS, lights or markers (Photo 16). Despite the challenges, the Bolivian Altiplano is a stunning area which will make you think. It will impact your view of the world for the better when you see how well humans can occupy such diverse landscapes. It also gives an insight and appreciation of natural selection and evolution.



12. Borax Islands Laguna Colarada



14. Dawn Laguna Colarada



13. James' Flamingos Laguna Colarada



15. Vicuñas

Exposure Cover

Now that we are having seasonal editions I would like to have your contribution for the Summer cover.

The dimensions are for an A4 page, portrait orientation, which is 2480x3508 px. If you would like to contribute an image, send it as a smaller jpeg so that we can look at all the offerings.

Mid February, 2018 is the cut-off date. So, let's call it *Summertime* and see what you can do.

The next issue will include all the EOY winning images. But we still require articles. Please send your cover image and articles to:

mcc-exposure@melbournephoto.org.au

Preferred format is Microsoft Word, with no special formatting. And images to be sent separately with 1800 pixels on long side.



16. Our drivers and cars

Chlorophyll Printing

Mark Devaraj



September mono print of the month Mark Devaraj
Indonesian Gemelang Musician on Banana Leaf

My photography journey started when I was in primary school. My father was a photographic enthusiast and I enjoyed helping him carry his camera accessories. This was in the pre-electronic era, hence he had a whole bag full of bulbs for indoor photography, in his case predominantly for shooting weddings indoors on medium format and 35mm film cameras. This was my first experience of photography which naturally grew as I assisted him on many occasions. So, I grew up like many others in this club exposed (pardon the pun!) to using film and film cameras.

My first camera was a 35mm Yashica electro 35, a hand-me-down from my father, which I still own and have taken many photographs with over the years until the early 80s. Today, I use both film, medium and 35mm, and digital cameras for my photography, including working in the darkroom for film processing/printing and Lightroom/Photoshop for my digital images.

Recently at MCC I have had a couple of chlorophyll prints in the Traditional Darkroom and Printmakers Group (TDPG) exhibition, and have won monochrome print of the month

with another chlorophyll print. So why did I venture down this path?

I wanted to exhibit something different and interesting, as I knew that most of the exhibits at the TDPG exhibition would be silver gelatine prints. Moreover, I wanted to produce something that was unique and which I could print at home. This sent me on a journey of discovery. I scoured the Internet, and some books, to understand what alternative printing processes were accessible and easily executed at home. I toyed with the idea of cyanotypes but gave it away as I did not have a good Ultra Violet light setup at home. At this point I came across Chlorophyll prints in some of the literature, which set me off to experiment with using just sunlight to “burn” an image onto an organic substrate.

The chlorophyll process is an alternative photographic process which is similar to the Anthotype* process. However, instead of printing with the crushed extract of fruit or plant matter, the prints are bleached, or decomposed, by sunlight directly onto the surface of leaves using a positive image. Basically, the chlorophyll in the unmasked areas decomposes or degrades leaving the masked areas of

the image on the leaf where the chlorophyll remains intact to some extent.

The first step in my workflow was scanning a film negative and converting it into a high contrast positive which I then printed on to transparency film. You can start with a digital image, however as it was for the TDPG exhibition, I started with a 35mm film negative.

The next step is finding a suitable leaf that would work well with the selected positive transparency image. I experimented with many leaves, and sunlight exposure times, some of which were partially successful. I ended up with two leaves that worked the best; banana and fig leaves, both of which were readily available in my garden. The positive image is then sandwiched in a contact print easel or between two pieces of glass and exposed to the sun.

The exposure times in the sun was pure trial and error, depending on the intensity of the sun. Typically, it takes about three days in Melbourne’s winter sun. The next step is to stop the decomposition, and the way I do that is to shield the image from further sun exposure. The literature does point to fixing the image in UV stabilised resin which I am still experimenting with.

I am still determined to perfect this Chlorophyll printing process end to end. So, watch this space for this last step with resin, to be exhibited in time to come.

**Historical reference from AlternativePhotography.com: Henri A. Vogel and Sir John Herschel first experimented with Anthotypes in the early 1800s.*



Sixty Years a Camera Club Member

Ian Bock



With my Rolleiflex

I was given a Kodak Box Brownie camera, 70 years ago last May. After being shown by my father how to develop my first film, by seesawing through the chemicals on the table in the darkened kitchen, I made a life-changing decision. I decided that taking photos was easier than painting pictures. Now I am not so sure about that, but one thing I am sure of "photography is fun!"

A folding Zeiss Nettar camera which I still have, was a combined present for Christmas and passing matriculation in 1949. Then, in 1954 I exchanged my then current camera, a Rikoflex twin lens reflex, and all my savings, for a 1938 Rolleiflex which I still have.

My first darkroom was a corner of my bedroom in my parent's home, then in the spare bedroom in our house at Mount Waverley. The next was at the back of the garage (which suffered from dust and ants) and finally in a purpose-built bungalow.

In 1964 I purchased a Pentax S1A and I have stayed with Pentax ever since. I rewarded myself with a Spotmatic with TTL metering when I succeeded in producing excellent slide copies. This is one task that, in fact, does not really need metering, as one is copying correctly exposed slides using a constant light source, so the exposure is always the same!

After completing a degree in chemical engineering, I did a one night

per week course in photography at Melbourne Technical College. Much of this course was in the fundamentals, the composition of developers and fixers, etc, etc. but I was always interested in stretching the envelope and manipulating the image. The portrait, bottom right was taken at this course and I added the background several years later, why bother with Photoshop? Of particular interest was a fellow student, a policeman who would, at times, set up his camera on a tripod at a curve on a country road and photograph cars crossing the double line. We all know where that little experiment ended.

I joined my first club, the Preston Camera Club in 1957. I married Diana in 1960, shifted to Mount Waverley, and joined the Southern Suburbs Camera Club; my first boss was a member there.

When Trevor Marks, the top printer in the club, and later treasurer of the cooperative that financed purchase of our building in 1979, transferred to a bank in Hamilton I felt there was no one with whom to compete. So then I joined Camberwell Camera Club before switching to Melbourne Camera Club in 1966.

I've held all the offices in the club over the years, although I was acting secretary only for six months, when the incumbent had a heart attack. In 1970 Leigh Hawke passed on the task of making the annual trophies to me. I made them from sensitised aluminium and mounted them on polystyrene colour chips produced at work. This continued until I was unable to purchase the sensitised aluminium and I now have them produced by a firm in Geelong.

About 1970 I pensioned off the Rolleiflex and used two Pentax SLRs; one for slides and one for black-and-white. I only did colour negatives on rare occasions. Most of my slides were kept in Gladwrap boxes, 300 per box, but they tended to get out of order as some were removed for competition or slide talks and failed to be replaced.

Negatives were much more orderly and contact prints for each film were bound each year. If I know when a photograph was taken, I can find the contact print and from there the negative within minutes. A quick count showed that I took 270 films with the Rolleiflex and over 1500 36mm exposure rolls of

B&W film with my various Pentaxes.

In 1990 I was retrenched/retired, and for about 10 years derived some income from photography. I was a casual operator at a one-hour processing shop, and also processed film from bank security cameras. When the security company's lease on its building expired they lost their darkroom and paid to have my darkroom connected to the sewer, and supplied with hot and cold water. This part-time job continued until they converted their cameras to digital.

I also copied and restored old photographs for the photo processor, for the Victorian Genealogical Society and several historical societies. This was initially in the darkroom, then with an early copy of Photoshop. At that time computer printers could only produce prints that faded rapidly, so I photographed the monochrome computer screen, yielding a normal black-and-white negative and print. In 2004, I purchased a four-megapixel Pentax DSLR, and have done very little darkroom work since.

I became one of the lecturers at our introduction course and took it over when Peter Hunter retired to northern New South Wales. Eventually Robert Groom took it over from me. I have done a lot of judging and speaking to camera clubs and other organisations and have been awarded SSVAPS, SSAPS, an OAM, and finally a pin and medallion by the VAPS this year for 60 years in Victorian camera clubs. I still take over 500 photos a month and compete every month in MCC competitions and sometimes even get an award.



Photography is fun

Silver Prints from the Golden Age of Photography- 1900 to 2000

Alan Elliot

In October, the Melbourne Camera Club's History and Archives Committee held an Exhibition of Historic Photographs from the Club's Permanent Collections.

The Exhibition was opened by Alex Syndikas, former Lecturer and Co-Program Director of the Bachelor of Photography degree at RMIT University.



Alex Syndikas - photo by Charles Kosina

Alex was very impressed by the exhibition. He noted that the era of wet-processed silver-gelatine black and white enlargements, was represented by many award-winning prints from National and International Salons. He also expressed his anxiety about the safety of some of the images in their present state. There are many valuable and irreplaceable prints in the collections, some internationally significant. For example, the portrait of Winston Churchill taken by Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsch in 1941.

Our permanent collection of photography has two major components: prints collected for and donated to the Club's archive collection, and the Australian Photographic Society Collection transferred to our club in 2014.

The archive collection also includes slides, reference books, minute books and photographic equipment. It is unique, and irreplaceable, hence it must be stored and managed securely.

The several-thousand prints in the collection require care and attention. Some prints need to be re-mounted on archival matboard, and the Access database kept up-to-date. If you would like to become involved please contact Alan Elliott at:

mcc-archives@melbournephoto.org.au



September colour PDI of the month

Ian Bock

The Painter

A Challenge to Members

During a chat about the club's history, I asked about the significance of the photos on the stair walls. There is no significance; they were originally intended to be the start of a



regular change of members photos, but lack of interest meant the changing fell away. Well, let's give it another go. Today's members might participate more willingly.

To start the process, I offered a mystery photo of a half-buried tractor on Kangaroo Island. Left it for 3 months, no one noticed it, so I changed to another weird one – a row of stuffed toys. That will stay there till December unless there is a better offer. After that, not an empty space, I hope.



If you are worried your shot might not be up to standard, these two aren't much to beat.

Don Hampshire

A Little Editorial

Do you read the contacts list which appears in every edition of Exposure? It tells of the many people who make the Melbourne Camera Club work. The people who organise the interest groups as well as the board members who make the decisions some are so keen to criticise. If you read closely you will see many names that occur more than once, more than twice sometimes. There is one missing in this edition.

Frances Egan has worked assiduously for the club for many years. She was awarded the Queenie Gatt award in 2016 in recognition of her contribution. Now she wants a rest from organising the print competition on a monthly, and on an annual basis. She wants a change, we all do sometimes. So, get your name on the contact list next issue. Charles and I are proud that our names appear, you have the opportunity to be an important member of the club too. So, have a chat to Frances and put *your* hand up to contribute to Melbourne Camera Club.

Sue

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Gary Richardson

Much has happened since the last President's Report column in the Winter edition of Exposure.

On 5 October we had the 127th Annual General Meeting. For the first time in my membership of the club, there were more candidates than positions available. This resulted in elections for Secretary, Vice Presidents and Elected Members. Joining me on the Board are Michael Tuffy as Treasurer; Selby Markham as Secretary; Lesley Bretherton and Peter Tredrea as Vice Presidents. Elected members are: Ian Bock, Colin Booth, Mark Devaraj and Sue Brunialti. Copies of reports from the AGM are available on the website (About>Annual General Meetings>2017).

At the time of the AGM, the scaffolding was being erected for the works to the exterior of the building.

All of the balusters along Dorcas Street have been replaced, while the Ferrars Street balusters only needed to be cleaned and patched. Repairs were undertaken to the coat of arm; gutters were repaired or replaced; the roofing nails were replaced with screws. The windows and doors have been repaired and repainted, and the render washed. The contracted works have now been completed. Since 1 January 2017, just in excess of \$290,000 has been spent on the building, of which \$99,000 was funded by the grant from the Victorian Heritage Restoration Fund. The Board will now need to consider what, if any, additional works, particularly to the interior, can be prudently funded.

As 2017 draws to a close, on behalf of all the club members, I want to say thank you to all those members who put in an enormous effort to help

keep our club the premier camera club in Melbourne. To all of the coordinators, their assistants, committee and board members and all those who lend a hand when called upon, the club would not be where it is today without your dedication.

With a number of new initiatives this year, there has been an even greater need for members to step forward to say "I will do that". Running this club with events every Monday and Thursday, one Tuesday, three Wednesdays and one Sunday each month. Let alone, two 'Introduction to Photography' courses and numerous Analog Photography Basics courses; exhibitions and workshops. None of these events happen by chance. They happen because dedicated members step forward and make them happen. Right now there is still a need for more people to step up – as Print Competition Stewards and to

lend a hand to Reuben Glass organizing the Thursday program.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to wish you all a joyous and safe festive season and look forward to seeing you back at the club in 2018.



MCC Board: Selby Markham, Lesley Bretherton, Mark Devaraj, Peter Tredrea, Susan Brunialti, Colin Booth, Michael Tuffy, Gary Richardson
Photo by John Spring

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October mono print of the month Susan Brunialti *Summer Shuffle on St Kilda Pier*



October mono PDI of the month Sheila Lunter *Metropolis*



October colour print of the month Ian Bock *Lavender*



September mono PDI of the month TengTan *Backlit-poise*



Colour print of the month September Gary Richardson *Mouth of the King River near Windham WA*



Colour PDI of the month October Jane Barnes *Portraits & the Viewer*