

Photo: Cooper + Spowart



NOCTURNE

The concept behind the project founded by creative duo Spowart and Cooper is to capture a place in nocturnal light and then recreate that same image in daylight - showcases how different light changes our perception of place... Focus caught up with Doug and Vicky about the project...



Beardy Street Mall photos: Paul Bayne

Tell us about the concept behind Nocturne, where and how was it founded?

We began with an interest in exploring the zone between day and night when our everyday, prosaic surroundings can become unfamiliar or at times, unsettling. Fundamental to our project is the photographic documentation of this transient light. These images evoke an unseen presence within the stilled interstitial filmic moment of the street. Houses and public spaces of habitation illuminated by the afterglow of sunset or by the shaft-like rays from the occasional streetlight seemingly become uncanny shadowy places.

In this work we explore the idiosyncratic nature of the small town street and its architecture. Each image reveals a different insight of the town through the light, colour and form of the twilight hour. Our first major project Nocturne Muswellbrook, engaged with the community through posting our nocturne photographs of the town on Facebook. Through this social media channel the community 'friended' our page, followed our nocturnal photography pursuits and recounted personal narratives and their connections with the places we photographed. The link between the photographs and viewer's memories was vibrant and enlightening for us. As such the most of our Nocturne Projects are created for, and include community collaboration.

A Nocturne project we organised in Bundaberg involved local photographers documenting what they considered important locations in the region and selected images were subsequently incorporated into the a community image archive. In another project in Miles in southern Queensland, community members participated in a week-long

professional development exercise where after a workshop in photography, they completed daily projects and submitted them online.

Their photos were presented online as well as in a screen in the Dogwood Crossing Library and Gallery. At the end of the week these participants met and produced a handmade booklet or "zine" of their images.

What are your backgrounds with creative processes and photography?

Our arts practice is informed by our ongoing and evolving connection with Place.

Our Place-Projects are influenced by the context and the consequences of living within a constantly changing landscape.

We work with a range of photographic concepts, from the camera obscura, through analogue film processes to the digital forms of the medium. Our work is presented as visual narratives in artists' books, photobooks, exhibition images and, more recently, blogs and social media. For further information follow our blog, wotwedid.com.

Talk us through the Nocturne workshop you recently held here in Armidale...

In September we worked with a group of photographers from the Armidale region and Brisbane to highlight the city of Armidale. Key to this community photo-documentary project was the idea of capturing the town in both the early evening's nocturnal light as previous Nocturne projects had done, but this time a second photograph of the nocturne subject during daylight. This "re-photography" project has resulted in a number of comparative pair

of images revealing the beauty of nocturne light and how it transforms everyday places.

Supported by the team at NERAM and with the support of the New England Art Society we began the project by conducting a workshop in re-photography. This included practical shootouts around Armidale from which images were then optimized and uploaded to 'Nocturne: Armidale Project' Facebook page to share with the wider community.

A highlight of the practical work was a shootout at the National Trust Home, Saumarez coordinated by Les Davis. Over two separate nights images were made that highlighted the beauty of this colonial architecture.

This provided for the participants a unique opportunity to put into practice their nocturne photography skills.

Now a selection of these re-photography pairs of images will be on display in the Armidale Art Gallery. Concurrent with this showing of Nocturne Armidale will be another presentation of works of Saumarez Homestead at the Homestead, coordinated by Les Davis.

What different dynamics do you get when photographing in the daylight vs photographing at night time?

Nocturne photography captures a time of day where the afterglow of sunset and the glow of streetlights can transform the everyday experience of place. In these photographs, street scenes and buildings that may be familiar in normal daylight take on

the dramatic appearance of movie sets. Some photographs created at this time can require long camera exposures and therefore produce images that can capture blurred movement of people and car headlight trails. These images offer to the community a different perspective to their daily experience of place.

What are the different processes and equipments used?

Participants in nocturne workshops over the years have used all kinds of cameras from sophisticated professional large format cameras to DSLRs and even phone cameras. The bigger the camera usually slows down the picture-making - cameras are placed on tripods and long exposure times as used. Point-n-shoot and phone cameras are best used for the more spontaneous photos.

Tell us about some of the other projects you personally work on...

We make bespoke books based on creative forms of the book. Importantly for us is producing a story using mainly photographs to form an imaginative and visual experience of reading.

We also use photography in many different ways to capture images of places and natural environment. In this project we can use both traditional analogue and digital photography. To follow or view some of these projects go to www.cooperandspowart.com or wotwedid.com

How can our readers sign up for next years' Nocturne?

Just "like" us and "Follow" then in your News Feed tick "See first" on the Nocturne Armidale Facebook page and we will keep them informed of new Nocturne projects as they develop.

Thank you.

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