



WELLINGTON STREETS

LESTER BLAIR



JULIAN WARD



GABRIELLE MCKONE

Wellington Streets

Due to the rapid pace of technological change it is imperative we document what life is like now, to record for posterity how people live, play and work in their local environment. It is easy to underestimate the importance of photography in its historical role to capture for future archives what Geoff Dyer aptly calls "The Ongoing Moment".

When a house fire occurs, it is well known that survivors want to save their precious family photo albums from destruction. It takes such an emergency for families to become aware of the value of the proverbial shoebox stuffed with snapshots under the bed. Personal memories are treasured in the form of the humble snapshot. What a sense of loss is felt when it all goes up in smoke; as for families, so too for other forms of social organisation.

Here then, is an opportunity for street photography. To make some sort of sense out of chaos - to present an alternative, exciting, idiosyncratic, spontaneous take on the minutia of daily life. May be this is what Alexander Rodchenko was alluding to when he wrote that he "was for the snapshot and against the portrait". It was not just about a comparison between large format and 35 mm cameras. He was making a case for candid photography, and a new way of seeing based on constructivist design principles of the time.

This trio of Wellington photographers differ from each other in their practice yet all share something in common - the emergence of intended and unintended meanings from street photographs. We should be grateful for their documentation, recording and interpretation of the present for future.

Des Brough

Julian Ward

Cover: Lambton Quay, Wellington 2010

Website: www.julianward.co.nz

Lester Blair

Cover: Upper Cuba Street, Wellington 2009

Website: www.lesterblair.com

Gabrielle McKone

Cover: Manners Mall, Wellington 2009

Daily Blog: www.gabriellemckone.com

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Julian Ward: Courtenay Place, Wellington 2011



Julian Ward. "It is all about mystery, mystery, mystery." The ever present influence of Henri Cartier-Bresson is evident in choosing the decisive moment. It is about patience. Julian waits to gather such moments and calls his work human landscapes. Beautifully balanced and framed. Figures are integrated into a design made up of rich tonal range, accents and nuances of body language (either whole or parts) all tightly framed. People caught in random moments, often in chaotic groups, or conversely in diagonals, or horizontal lines. Symmetrical pairs and reflections are two of his signature compositions. Here, he flirts with fashion, window shopping for reflections that sparkle like diamonds (cover photograph).

Julian Ward: Willis St, Wellington 2011



Julian has experienced many changes over his forty plus year career. One thing that has not changed is his photographic craft. He has retained his former darkroom practice and replicated it in his digital workflow. With the same attention to detail and use of black and white, he achieves the film look. His prints retain that trademark 'Leica glow'. Those rich mysterious blacks, modulated mid-tones and silver highlights are hallmarks of his work. Design is not just about how his photos look, it is about how they work for the viewer. What sort of thoughts, feelings, meaning, or questions do they evoke?



Julian Ward: Willis St, Wellington 2010



Julian Ward: Cuba St, Wellington 2011

Lester Blair: Corner of Pirie Street and Porritt Avenue, Wellington 2009



Lester Blair. "Pass me the screwdriver". Lester is searching for his resonant places - where he can feel the vibes and tune-in to his elusive dreams - documenting people he meets along the way, often placing them in the middle distance to emphasize the importance their surroundings. He uses perspective to scale people down so they appear somewhat like stick figures, higher than a letterbox, shorter than a lamp post. By keeping them at arms-length, Lester is like an artist holding out his outstretched pencil to judge perspective or scale for the easel. People inhabit his new topographic landscapes with a cool urbanity. Lester is involved in a contemporary counterpart to Gulliver's Travels.

Lester Blair: Corner of Majoribanks Street and Hawker Street, Wellington 2009



The incongruity of a young woman in party dress, headless under a car, is disturbing (see cover). She is definitely not dressed for success. He becomes involved in a social transaction that casts him in the role of a willing helper with kerbside repairs. The context of Kiwi DIY culture helps him to establish a rapport with his subject. By going with the flow, Lester makes his dream come true. He is certainly not lost in translation. Following his feelings is the way Lester Blair draws a unique emotional street map to chart his resonant world.



Lester Blair: Palmer Street, Wellington 2009



Lester Blair: Roxburgh Street, Wellington 2009



Gabrielle McKone. "Dear diary....". Photo blogs are visual diaries recording an endless work in progress. They reflect the personal choice of fragments of daily life to form a poetic narrative. Glimpsed, yet not fully understood, diaries are invitations to review or return. Life in hindsight. The discipline of posting a photograph each day is paying off. Using a photo blog daily diary, colour, and dating her photographs, Gabrielle McKone coincidentally follows an approach taken by Stephen Shore.

With a keen eye for juxtaposition and a sense of humour, Gabrielle comes up with her own take on the ubiquitous orange marker cone (page 15) - such a persistent feature of Wellington streets. The whimsicality of a marker cone becoming transformed into a super size codpiece echoes a famous painting by Rene Magritte where a locomotive is emerging out of a living room fireplace with clocks on the mantelpiece ("Time Traveller" 1938.) This is a playful erotic image. The orange cone also re-appears elsewhere as a party hat on a sculpture. Great fun.



Beyond the city, Gabrielle revels in the Eastern suburbs streets, zigzags, walks and beaches. Playful perspectives, unconventional clothes hooks, willing posers, playful Pasifika kids and wool graffiti all merge into a biographical landscape. Use of colour helps to express changing moods. Hip shots bring spontaneity and an intimacy of sharing a very personal, yet public visual diary.

Gabrielle McKone: Victoria Street, Wellington 2010 (above)

Gabrielle McKone: National War Memorial, Wellington 2009 (left)



Gabrielle McKone: Midland Park, Wellington 2011



Gabrielle McKone: Oriental Bay, Wellington 2009



Lester Blair: Carpark off Victoria Street, Wellington 2009