

Client Spotlight: Keith Parry, professional photographer

Keith, you have been a professional photographer since 1990 and have become one of the most well known commercial interior and architectural photographers in London, can you tell us why you decided to become a photographer?

There was no single point where I thought "This is what I will be". It was really an evolutionary process, a process of experimentation. I had always painted and drawn as well as taken photographs when I was younger, and photography seemed to be the right medium for me to explore.

For me, the process of taking a picture was and still is pure magic. I studied a fine art degree in photography and film where one of my tutors was John Blakemore - a great landscape photographer. My interest in landscape turned little by little to urban landscape, but looking back I had not considered working commercially until after graduating.

Where do you get your inspiration from? Who have been or remain your role models from within your profession? Why?

Inspiration can come from anywhere. Thinking visually and being visually creative provides a constant reference and engagement with the world around us. It is almost like being in a heightened state of awareness, of being constantly aware, and the process of looking and taking photographs are all part of the same process. As far as practitioners go - there are many. I ideally like to be challenged, to really be confronted with the person's view and way of seeing. This can come from photography, cinema, painting - anything. I visit as many exhibitions as I can and what is wonderful is that inspiration can come from the most unlikely places. Andreas Gursky, Stephen Shore, Lee Friedlander, Joel Sternfield, Alec Soth, Martin Parr, Robert Frank are all photographers whose work I admire.



Most of our clients will have a vague idea about what a professional photographer does, but could you provide a brief overview of the process and what's involved to produce that winning image for a client?

I think the bottom line is clarity and understanding. I think one of the biggest parts of my job is to fully understand the brief and to challenge it if it is not clear. I think it involves trust from the client to allow the photographer to get on with the job without too much interference. The photographer also needs to be open to ideas and be prepared to have his ideas challenged. This is what good art direction is about - the coming together of minds in a collaborative process. I am equally happy being on my own or with the client.

I tend to shoot very deliberately and concentrate on perfecting images I know will work, rather than producing more images and editing later.

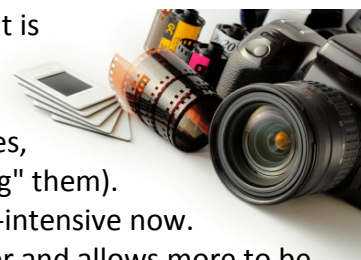
Most jobs are awarded through recommendation or by seeing work online, viewing in a publication, or in a portfolio. Working on location, one is always trying to pre-empt problems, so being prepared and doing as much ground work before the shoot is essential. I tend to shoot very deliberately and concentrate on perfecting images I know will work. If the client has a very exacting brief, of particular shots they require I always try to make time at the end of the shoot

to look for something unexpected. This might be a detail or a particular viewpoint which hadn't been explored.

A classic example of this was a few years ago when I was given a very precise brief by a client with an immediate deadline and turnaround for publication in a magazine for an article on their field of work. The art directors and client had to leave half way through the afternoon and I produced a couple of extra shots which were quite graphic and abstract in nature. I was fairly confident the magazine would like these shots but when I presented them to the client they were not sure about them. About a month later the client telephoned me to say that these 2 extra shots had been used double page at the beginning of the article essentially headlining their company for the article. They were delighted.

Many people have invested in a digital camera, I wonder if you think something has been lost against film?

I don't think so. It is a technically different process for achieving what is essentially the same result. One could argue that, aesthetically, film had a different quality, a more organic feel, but if that is what is required this can be fulfilled digitally through filters. Transparencies, prints and negatives had been scanned for years (therefore "digitizing" them). Work has been retouched for years. It is just quicker and less labour-intensive now. Shooting digitally gives a huge amount of control to the photographer and allows more to be shot, but at the end of the day it is still essential to be able to pre-visualise the end result.



As we have worked together for a number of years, I'm aware of the significant changes within your profession, could you give others a little more insight into what is required to be a successful professional photographer in 2009?

The arguments about what has changed can most likely be applied across many professions. There are factors which haven't changed which are probably more relevant to success, namely passion, commitment, personal vision, innovation and professionalism. There are more tools available for marketing and self-promotion, like web sites, email and so on - these are available to everyone so need to be used wisely and intelligently. Online presence is certainly important and something I wish to explore more with my personal work since I have a site promoting my commercial work.

Could you describe your perfect day as a photographer for us?

There are so many situations. I get a huge thrill that I am being paid to do something I am so passionate about. I guess there is no one situation, but when I can walk away at the end of a day knowing I have produced a great shot that is unexpected and kind of "off brief" I get very excited. It's finding the extra something.

What sort of people would employ you to work for them?

All sorts. Interior designers, retailers, hotels, architects, design agencies, advertising agencies as well as a number of direct clients. My client list on my web site (www.keithparry.com) gives a good indication of the variety.

What is the most valuable lesson that you have learned as a photographer to date?

Working on location I am quite often invading other peoples' spaces. So I'm not sure if this is a lesson but it's enabled me to appreciate the way a lot of other people work, which is interesting.

I know that you have a large collection of images, how can people view and buy these should they wish to?

I am currently working on a site for print sales which will have a link from my current site. At the moment people can contact me directly if they see anything they like at info@keithparry.com

We have worked together for some years, can I ask why you employ Solomon's to act as your financial adviser?

I was introduced to SOLOMON'S some time ago. Having never spoken with an IFA I didn't know what to expect. I found myself talking to someone who wanted to know about me, what my hopes and aspirations were, where I saw my future going and so on. Where, I kept asking myself, is all the financial stuff? By understanding me, SOLOMON'S have been able to provide a better clarity on how to achieve the future I want, realistically looking at the present.

What is your top money-saving tip that you could share with our other clients?

That's what I look to SOLOMON'S for. Now if someone wants a great interior photograph shot, I might be able to help them!