

EXTRA ZINE ISSUE # 21



A Fork in the Road

Photographing the 60's and 70's in Brisbane

By Jude Morrell

Jude Morrell grew up in Brisbane and went on to develop a love of photography throughout her life.

Here are some early reminiscences of those times.



My friend Geoff Kong making a sign of the times

During the hippy era I used to wander the streets of Brisbane. I wasn't homeless. I wasn't even sure where I wanted to live when I left home, but I was curious, as many teenagers are.

Most weekends I would jump on a tram with my Olympus OM1 and go to wander around the city.

I didn't know what I was looking for, until I came across it. I followed my nose and photographed the world I found around me. At that age, you want to explore, and for me, to photograph was, in a way, to be an adventurer in a new realm. Seeing new things, new people and having new experiences. Those experiences came home with me in the form of 35mm film - latent images that would go on to have another life as B&W photographs, hand printed in a dark room.

In a way photography has always been a form of memory for me. Selective memory. Like a contact sheet that has 36 small photographs, with only a few jumping out dramatically to say "Look at me, I'm important".

I particularly liked the soap-box preachers in the park between Fortitude Valley and the city. And there were interesting people hanging out in alleys and arcades in town.

There was always plenty to photograph - young people, cool posters, musical events and protests.

I would usually go into Brisbane on the weekends and one day I wandered across the bridge to South Brisbane. This was pre-Expo and an interesting part of town, a bit run down and somewhat derelict. Old buildings, pubs and boarding houses, before the bulldozers came. It was out the back of a South Brisbane hotel that I met Philip Morris Brown and his cousins. I

don't know if they were cousins or not, but that's what they called each other. Philip Morris Brown was an old wise man amid the chaos and camaraderie that was there on that day behind the pub. It was family in a variety of senses.

I stayed a while and enjoyed their company and then said my goodbyes. Some photos record those times, even the guy who decided he'd pierce his ear with a needle and wasn't so great at framing a photo. I'm not good with remembering names but I have always remembered Philip Morris Brown's.



The back of the pub at South Brisbane



Phillip Morris Brown and friend



Phillip Morris Brown and me

It takes time for someone to call themselves a photographer. It's a distinction or title you don't think you're worthy of for a while. You have to somehow get used to the idea.

I left school at 15, and started my first job as a copygirl for the Courier Mail in the following year of 1969.

I was there when 'man landed on the moon' and the place was abuzz with journalists reporting on this key moment in history. TV's were everywhere and they were eager and excited to report on what they saw. JFK had promised that man would walk on the moon by the end of the 60's and now we were there!



I find myself writing these words in a town not far from Parkes, in the central west of NSW, which of course was instrumental in bringing those blurry, staticky black and white TV pictures to the world via 'The Dish'.

Letterpress printing was used for the publication of broadsheet newspapers like the Courier Mail at the time, and the noise of the paper being printed by those massive machines was immense.

Letterpress printing has been around in different forms since Guttenberg invented the printing press in the 15th century and was now in the form of linotype (line-of-type).

This technology was soon to be overtaken by offset printing in the 1970's but at the time, the words that formed the sentences were created by typing letters into a large keyboard which would then create, from molten metal, the words to be printed in the newspaper.

These timber-backed metal lines of words were then placed by hand into a tray - the size of the page - and imprinted with ink onto very large rolls of paper.



The ancient art of letterpress printing

The desktop publishing term 'leading' comes from those times when a strip of lead was placed between the rows of type in this tray to give extra space.

One of my jobs as a copygirl was to take the copy from the journalists in the Reporters' Room through the Comp Room to the Reading Room where the copy would be read and checked for errors before being published. There was no spell check back then.

Comp stood for compositing which was where all the young apprentice compositors worked. Walking through that massive, incredibly loud, highly metallic and mechanical room in an era of all-male, wolf-whistles-allowed environment was by far the most terrifying part of my job, but I survived.

Technology changes over time - and photography, being an art and a science, changes with its intrinsic materiality, to affect the look and feel of the images, and describe something of the times it is born into.

From the blur of faces that couldn't keep still enough in an old tintype image, to our present ability to conjure up new images from our imagination with specific words and artificial intelligence - photography is always superbly documenting the present times using its newly available tools.

Another item I hold dear to my heart is the slate and slate pencil which I used in grade one at school. I went to Kedron State School, and they still had them then.

The funny thing, besides how archaic they were, was how they look so much like an iPad and stylus today. Same size, same shape. To wipe the slate clean I had a little wet sponge in a tin.

A swipe of your finger on a screen these days can do the same thing.

After the Courier Mail, I went to work in photography.

The beginning of decades has always marked a new time for me. In 1970 I started a new job as an apprentice photographer at the Anna Smith Studio in Chermside.

Anna Smith died a few years back at the age of 104. In her long lifetime, throughout the twentieth century, she saw photography change from glass plates and film to digital.

Who knows what will come next in the 21st century?

Mrs Smith put me through 'tech college' which is now called Queensland University of Technology (QUT) but was then the Queensland Institute of Technology (QIT). It was obligatory to be working in the industry to study there and I was there for three nights a week over two years. Along with my full-time work at the studio, I got a pretty good education in a broad range of photographic skills.

After a while, I wanted to travel and needed some money, so I got a couple of other jobs. One of these was developing and printing restaurant photos at night at the Crest Hotel in the city.

The other girls I worked with took the photos and I would develop them.

My job was to take the film that the girls had shot, develop the negatives (developer, stop bath, fixer, water) print the negatives while still wet in an enlarger, (developer, stop bath, fixer, water)

dry it quickly and then insert the photo in a little cardboard folder.

The girls then returned the prints to the couples before they left for home. All up this process took three minutes. Now processing an image in three minutes may not sound like much in these digital days, but in the 70's, it was pretty much an Olympic feat.

Also, with that mix of liquid and electricity, needless to say, WHS rules were not very big at the time!

I still remember the smell of darkrooms and I have to say I have never minded the introduction to digital!



'When the cat's away' A photo from the Crest Hotel darkroom days.

We took this when our boss wasn't in. Girls posing for the camera. Does anything ever change?

My other part time job was retouching negatives, a thoroughly dead technique these days. You'd take a pencil, whittle an inch

or so off the wood and sand the lead to the finest possible point imaginable with 000 sandpaper. Then sitting at a sloping, enclosed bench over a piece of back-lit frosted glass with the 5x4" B&W negative you would make the smallest circles with the pointy pencil to remove someone's wrinkle or pimples! Making tiny circles with the pencil, a clear mark on the face in a negative could be filled in to create a smooth (if you were good at it) complexion. Even passport photos were retouched.



One day Nancy, my friend at the studio came in and told me that she had seen the most amazing woman as she was driving in from Redcliffe. The woman had been standing out the front of her house, surrounded by long grass, in a potato sack!



Here was a woman who had spent a rich and interesting life travelling and was now self-sufficient in her own home, growing a wide variety of vegetables in her back yard outside Redcliffe.

We decided we wanted to go and meet her and if possible, take some photos. She turned out to be an incredibly resourceful woman who had travelled the world throughout her life and was now pretty self-sufficient, producing most of what she needed in her own little backyard.

She was lovely, enjoyed our company and liked the little cakes we brought her.

I have found that photography truly can be a passport into other people's lives and a great way to spend your own.

Jude Morrell
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ARI REMIX PRESENTS “SELF-MADE, ARTIST-RUN” A NEW ZINE-BASED ARCHIVAL ART INITIATIVE “THE EXTRA ZINE PROJECT” | feat. TEN ARTISTS, TEN ZINES [2022-2023]

EXTRA

EXTRA is a Queensland/ Australian networked zine collaboration building from past, present and future 'living' archival art initiatives. Issue # 38 Online Launch 22 May 2023. This emerging zine and zine making projects builds out directly from the ARI Remix Project [2011-2026]. It places an emphasis on making and transmitting creative archival assemblages comprising little stories, hidden histories, marginalised narratives and digitised art/ artists' ephemera safeguarded in the personal archives of artists. Artists and allies who were directly involved in the expanded and expanding SEQ/ Queensland/ Australian artist-run ecology 1940 to Now.

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The ARI Remix collective acknowledges and respects the traditional and ongoing custodians of the lands where we live, make and work. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded. We support the Uluru statement from the heart.

ARI REMIX | PROJECT TWO - Stage One 2022-2024

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