

David McCormack ARPS

Biography.

Born in 1962, on The Wirral Merseyside, David's interest in photography began at school and at fifteen years old he set up a makeshift darkroom at home. Seeing the magic of his first image appear in a tray of chemicals, David knew photography was going to be an important part of his life.

After studying photography at The Wirral College of Art & Design, he started work in 1981 as a darkroom technician in Liverpool. It was at this time that he discovered 'the great outdoors' and spent many weekends walking in the Lake District and North Wales. He soon came to appreciate that his love for the landscape and his photography would go hand in hand. In 1985 he took on a position as a photographer in Birkenhead with a group of visual & performing artists. This creative environment motivated him to produce a portfolio of images and in 1986 put on an exhibition along with three other artists in Liverpool.

"My photographs in the exhibition were quite varied in subject and style. I received good feedback about my work but I knew myself that I needed to develop a personal style and that an exhibition should be a cohesive body of work. One thing for certain though, I loved photographing the landscape and I loved working in black & white!"

The job in Birkenhead was not a permanent position. David left his home in Port Sunlight and headed to London where he trained as a wedding photographer for two years before settling in Northampton till 1995. Being a wedding photographer taught him many disciplines of camera work and how to work quickly in varied situations including the changing weather! These disciplines still help him today with his landscape work. He continued his wedding photography in Northampton and also took on a position as a darkroom manager for a busy commercial lab.

"I loved the excitement of photographing weddings, and the challenge of producing pictures in such demanding conditions, but soon came to realise that the photographs were not for me, they were always for someone else, the bride & groom! Even in my role as a photo lab manager, working with so many photographers, all the printing I did was always of someone else's images. I wanted to take photos for me, but struggled to find the inspiration I needed as my time in Northampton was very demanding and somehow drained all my enthusiasm for making my own photographs. Even when I walked in the Fells, I preferred to leave my camera at home along with my busy photographic life! Looking for a new start I made a decision in 1995 that would change my life forever..... I gave up photography, moved to West Yorkshire and trained as a Dispensing Optician!"

It was his brother Robert, who owns a Dispensing Practise, that offered him the new start. David took to his new career with great enthusiasm and enjoyed the challenge of further education, gaining his Fellowship with the Association of British Dispensing Opticians in 1998. During this time he met his wife to be, Sarah. They both spent a great deal of time

outdoors exploring places such as the Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria, Wales and Scotland. Spending so much time in these beautiful places, David came to realise how much he missed his photography. He and Sarah married in 2000 in one of their favourite places, The Lake District. David decided to photograph their wedding himself and the decision to do it in black and white rekindled his love for monochrome photography. Another makeshift darkroom quickly appeared at home and before long he was back into the landscape with his camera. Inevitably, David started to think about his future in photography and of a solo exhibition.

“I have always wanted a solo exhibition and the chance to move on from the Liverpool show. I want people to look at my images and know they are the work of one photographer. I was working hard at building a portfolio but often found it difficult to know if I was producing work worthy of a solo show. Although Sarah was always there with encouragement and support, I needed the advice of my peers, so I joined the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and submitted a portfolio for assessment. I gained my Licentiate Distinction with them in 2002. This gave me a great deal of confidence. I also needed some feedback from a public audience so I showed my work at a local craft fair. I had a great response to my photographs and made some good sales. Around the same time a couple of my photos were published by Arem Publishing Ltd. I knew I was heading in the right direction for an exhibition.”

As David became more involved with his photography, he knew he wanted to devote more time to it, and he needed more space in which to work, so in 2002 he moved his darkroom to the Dean Clough Mills in Halifax. He started to sell more of his work and became more committed to it. In 2004 he made the decision to become self employed as a full time Fine Art Photographer. The total commitment and support from Sarah made this move easier for David to take. He submitted a second portfolio to the RPS and gained the Associateship Distinction in August 2004. In October 2004 he submitted his portfolio to the Dean Clough Galleries and was offered a solo exhibition of his work which opened in Spring 2005.

“I now recognise how important the landscape and photography are to me. I’ve always loved being outdoors and I’ve always wanted to make photographs for myself but at the same time wanting other people to appreciate them. But I’ve now come to understand that my photography is more than just a collection of images, it’s a way of promoting ‘the great outdoors’. I want my work to portray the landscape as a place to be and a place accessible to everyone. My photographs are simple images and reflect a personal connection with the subject. When looking at my photographs, I want the viewer to see and feel the outdoors, to be drawn in and caught by the detail. Working with traditional and contemporary monochrome techniques and to exacting standards allows me to produce this captivating detail. The outdoors is all around us and very colourful, but when photographed in black & white we start to see shapes, textures and patterns that draw us in and encourage us to explore further. Monochrome invites us to become involved and intrigued with the subject. Our landscape offers us the same invitation and I would like to think my images encourage people to explore it for themselves.”

His solo exhibition “*Into the Landscape*” at the Dean Clough Galleries was very successful, generating positive feedback and good sales. Twenty two of the original photographs from the exhibition are still currently on display in one of the Mills at Dean Clough.

The world of photography is going through a big change due to advancing new digital techniques. David has always produced his pictures in a chemical darkroom, preferring the quality of traditional prints. But, always wanting to further his knowledge and skills in photography which ultimately allows him to express his love of the landscape, he has now embraced the new world of digital printing. He is now making his prints at his home in Horbury after closing down the darkroom at Dean Clough. However, he still prefers to capture his images using traditional cameras and film, thus allowing him the best of both worlds. He still develops all his films himself by hand, to ensure exacting standards.

“I firmly believe, that in order to produce captivating monochrome pictures, one must see and think in monochrome when walking through the landscape. Working with traditional black and white film allows me to do this. I still prefer the quality of monochrome film to that of a digital camera sensor. Once I’ve processed and scanned the negatives into my computer, I’m able to take advantage of digital techniques to produce beautiful images that have been in my mind’s eye from the moment I exposed the film. Having printed for many years in a darkroom, with an understanding and appreciation of traditional skills, I’m able to transfer and use those skills with modern digital printing.”

All of David’s prints are produced by himself to archival standards. He only uses pigment based inks and cotton rag papers which are 100% acid free. Prints are finished with conservation quality mountboard. All of this ensures the longevity of his work.

David is currently working towards his Fellowship with the Royal Photographic Society. He has just been offered a solo exhibition at John Ruskin’s Brantwood, Coniston. This exhibition opens in February 2007.