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## Mark Ruff: Is 3D The New Big Thing?

**M**ark Ruff is a Melbourne-based photographer and a member of the AIPP. He has previously been a member of the Australian Cinematography Society (ACS) and is a recipient of the prestigious Ross Wood (Senior) Award for Innovation and Advancement of Cinematography.

Mark has been involved in image making all his life. Starting off as a technical director for the TEN network, he returned to school and gained a qualification in photography. After a stint as a commercial and advertising photographer he eventually found his niche in the film world providing 'frozen in time' effects for television commercials and feature films, often working with up to 60 cameras!

Now the architect of what he believes is a new commercial opportunity for professional photographers, Mark talks about the development of 3D photography and his new initiative to make large format 3D prints a viable product for pro photographers.

"I was quite hesitant about sharing my passion and commercial vision for 3D photography until Jeff Moorfoot wisely recommended I find out how my peers would evaluate the concept by entering the 2009 Canon AIPP Australian Professional Photography Awards", says Mark.

With a high degree of trepidation Mark entered his prints and anxiously awaited the judging, wondering if his dream might end 'there and then' if his 3D entries received the thumbs down. The tension was instantly lifted when his first print received a Silver with Distinction from the five judges. Mark went on to gain three more Silvers, thus achieving the rare feat of receiving four awards from four submissions.

But it was not only Mark's success at the APPA awards that made him believe the timing was right to launch his 3D business venture. Mark points out that 3D cinema and television is continuing its



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assault on the 2D market with more and more cinematic releases being authored in 3D, not to mention the growing introduction of 3D video games.

Although 3D has been around for some time, it has never been a real opportunity for professional photographers. Cameras have been small 'point and shoot' models, with limited adjustment and control, producing small prints that have had to be manufactured overseas. But all that has changed as a result of Mark's experience with the 'dark art and science' of 3D photography and his knowledge of 3D printing (also referred to as lenticular printing).



### How It Works

Mark has developed a proprietary camera system which can now capture 3D in an instant for the purpose of producing the most amazing, large format prints. Mark's system of 3D capture and print is 'auto stereo' which means you don't need to wear goggles, glasses or headsets to view them. The image appears 3D to the naked eye and the magical effect is there all the time. After recently viewing a print made for his father, Mark's dad remarked, "Wow, it's like I'm there!"

Until now only three options were available to create 3D. In the first a single camera scans the subject capturing all the views necessary. This is not so practical for a portrait since it's necessary to capture up to 96 images to create the desired result. The second involves 2D to 3D conversion and again, not that practical for portraiture as peoples' faces are extremely difficult to convert. The method requires many days to perform, is very expensive with all its computer labour and

the result is not particularly convincing. The final option is 2D layers in a 3D environment which is generally considered as the 'gimmicky' way of producing 3D.

With Mark's unique system the big difference is that the work has continuous depth over the subject and is much more impressive. The lenticular printing method has two forms; flip and animation, such as seen in those visual toys in cereal boxes, and 3D which is rarer.

Mark captures a subject with an array of five cameras, fixed to a horizontal rail and supported by a tripod with a dolly. From the five 'key' views almost any number of required views can be generated and are then 'interlaced' or 'spliced' together to create 3D. The three secrets to creating 3D are the capture, post production and printing.

After photography, the captured files are short listed and sent to Mark for post production and printing. A preview can be made on line using inexpensive cinema style red / cyan 3D glasses.

### Business Opportunity

Today Mark works essentially as a wholesaler providing pro photographers with a finished print ready to be on sold to their client. "I could set up my own exclusive portrait studio", says Mark, "however the entrepreneur in me suggests it's more advantageous to share the technology and let other people (pro photographers) who are more experienced at selling to the end client do the photography, while I provide the lab service and support needs".

Mark points out that 3D does not work for every shot or for everyone. However, it does work exceptionally well for the medium close-up portrait.

Mark says his involvement in the process can be flexible as he's committed to fostering the development of the 3D market by providing his customers with whatever support is necessary for the benefit of all concerned.

For the medium to high-end professional portrait photographer, 3D is likely to be offered as an 'add on' to an existing print package.

"Pro photographers may be too busy or may not desire knowledge of the 3D camera system. Alternatively they may simply recognise the potential to attract customers and make more

## AIPP Policy & Planning



by **Melinda Comerford AAIPP**

My first P&P. Sounds like a children's story book, right? Well, I'm the new Queensland AIPP President and I hadn't been to a 'Policy & Planning Meeting' before, so I didn't really know what to expect.

Everyone shaped up into business mode for the meeting. THE BOARD (in capitals for added scary-factor) was there, as were all the State Presidents, and chairs of sub committees. The day ran incredibly smoothly. Basically, it seemed like a long State Council meeting, but with far more order! There was plenty of hearty discussion, but nothing resembling a shouting match.

In fact, it turns out that the Board (lower case now because it turns out they're not so scary after all!) is trying to streamline processes to make the States' lives easier. Basically, we are coming together and working as a Company, a singly entity for the benefit of you – the members. Improving communication was the key theme and in a country as wide as ours, it can be easy to close off to our own little chapters, and ignore what is happening in

the Institute at large.

P&P creates a great atmosphere to chat about the direction of the Institute and work on ways to improve events, processes and create an amazing organisation that every professional photographer can feel proud to be a part of.

So, what will you notice as a result of our two-and-a-half days of 'chatting'? You'll see happier sponsors who may be able to contribute even more to the running of our events. You'll see events planned and announced in advance, so that you can budget within your business to attend and get the most from the Institute. And there will be more consistency between States as we all come together to frequently discuss what is best for the membership.

As it turns out, P&P was an amazing experience and one that I intend to attend in future. All of your Councillors, along with the Board, are volunteers. We simply don't sacrifice the amount of time and energy on the Institute for any reason other than to get the best results for our membership. P&P is an excellent opportunity to collate what works and throw out what doesn't work.

And you will see a stronger, more cohesive AIPP because of it.

## 2010 Convention & Christmas Bashes



The National Conference for 2010 will be held at Queensland Sunshine Coast Novotel Twin Waters, 17 - 21 October. Speakers will be announced early 2010, but we intend to break the mould when it comes to both speakers and subject matter. The conference

will be structured for all age brackets (including students) and industry sectors and we have not forgotten regional and generalist photographers! Mark it in your diaries and look out for more updates to come.

On behalf of the National Board of the AIPP, I wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas and New Year. Details of the celebrations around the states are listed below.

**NSW** 14 December 2009 The Waterview, Bicentennial Park, Homebush. Directly after T-Day

**Victoria** 9 December 2009, Alumbra, Shed 9, Central Pier, 161 Harbour Esplanade, Dockland. 6.30 p.m. Cost \$50. Includes BBQ buffet and live entertainment. For more

information and to book online got to [www.aipp.com.au](http://www.aipp.com.au).

**Queensland** 10 December 09, 6:00 p.m. – 11.00 p.m., The Fox Hotel, Al Capone room, 1st floor, Cnr Hope St and Melbourne St, South Brisbane. \$40.00 per person. Bookings: [www.qaipp.com.au](http://www.qaipp.com.au).

**ACT** 6 December 2009. Details online.

**Tasmania – 2 events** 9 December 2009. Launceston Christmas Dinner. 6.30 p.m. at Alchemy Restaurant. RSVP to Bruce Elliott - [belliot@kramster.net](mailto:belliot@kramster.net) or via sms to 0417 052 138. 10 December 2009. Hobart Christmas Dinner. 7.00 p.m. at New Sydney Hotel. RSVP by Tuesday 8 to Alan Waugh – email [alanaipp@gmail.com](mailto:alanaipp@gmail.com) or via phone 0418590795.

**WA** 8 December 2009. Platform Restaurant, Woodside Plaza, 6.30 - 9.30 p.m. Tickets at [www.aipp.com](http://www.aipp.com).

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money”, says Mark. In this instance, Mark, or a qualified technician may enter the studio just for the 3D component of the shoot. “In other words”, says Mark, “set up the cameras and be the 3D assistant to ensure the right end result”.

Alternatively, a photographer can be trained in the camera system’s use (probably a one or two day event) so they can take total control themselves. Initially, Mark intends to work with selected photographers and provide the capture service and support services under their brand. Eventually, photographers could acquire a licensed capture system if they felt the concept offered a significant benefit for their business. Seminars and training could follow where Mark would share his extensive knowledge and what he refers to as the secrets of 3D capture.

### Do It Yourself?

There are some barriers for people attempting to complete this process by themselves and Mark points out some of the potential pitfalls below:

#### Cameras

“If you decide to purchase a number of cameras, you will quickly find that they will not be synchronous. In other words they will not capture that precise moment all at once and certainly not with a flash. Your cameras will require internal modification and external circuitry.

#### Post Production

“Working in the film industry has meant that I have had to find solutions for just about everything. Post production houses will not tell you their secrets since they make their living out of providing high-end, special effects and

the sorts of secrets behind their creation are not readily shared. The tools of post production are also very, very expensive. And even though Photoshop CS4 has 3D in its menu, it is far from a practical solution, so it will only guide you to what everyone else can do as opposed to what I do.

#### Printing

“Through experimentation you have to find out what lenticular

lens to use, what adhesive, paper, laminator and what printer will work best. Then you have to invent a jig to efficiently manufacture the print itself.”

Mark has ten years experience in camera arrays and even though he collaborated with an experienced, lenticular print manager, finding all the solutions still took him over twelve months.

So while doing it yourself may seem an option, Mark doesn’t think it’s viable at this stage. For those who don’t want to reinvent the wheel, Mark has done the hard work and says he has a proven system ready to roll out so you can offer your clients 3D right now. And once you capture in 3D you already have a 2D image by default.

Another advantage Mark claims for 3D prints is that they cannot be copied or backward engineered. If the client wants more prints, then they have to come to you to get them done.

### 3D Digital Cameras

Nothing much has changed since the Nimslo days. With the new Fujifilm 3D compact camera, users are still limited to a small size and prints are manufactured in Japan. One possible advantage is that you can see the 3D effect on the back of the camera and Fujifilm also offers a 3D viewer screen. However, what you see and what is printed are two different things and in Mark’s opinion the final prints don’t have the same depth as his system.

Without doubt Mark brings a high degree of valuable knowledge and experience to the 3D category. And after reading many issues of *The Working Pro* regarding the ‘evolving’ nature of the industry and listening to the concerns of other photographers about the impact from ‘shoot and burn’ photographers, Mark says 3D may well be of assistance in addressing these issues.

### Sample Card Enclosed

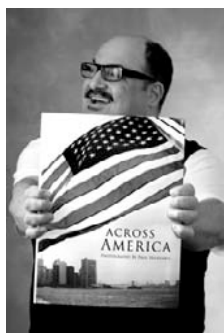
*Enclosed with this newsletter is a sample 3D business card. Mark explains that the 3D effect on the card is somewhat limited due to the materials used and the offset printing process. It’s a different system to print 3000 cards for this newsletter and printing*



a single portrait for sale, just as a photograph looks different to a printed magazine page. Mark's larger portrait prints use another process resulting in enormous depth and are hand-made. If you are

interested, Mark can send you a larger sample print that accurately displays the optimal effect. Mark can be contacted via his web site [www.timesplice.com.au](http://www.timesplice.com.au) or the details shown on his card.

## Across America



Paul Velissaris whose first book features the landmarks of America says, "Australia is lacking its own icons and the tourism industry may be the loser".

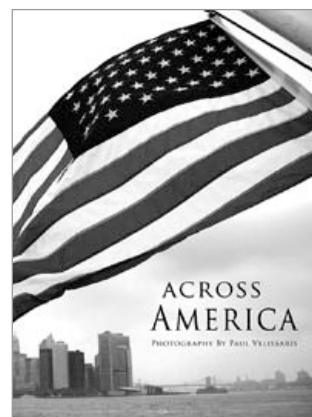
Launching his first photographic book 'Across America', Paul believes it would be much more challenging to present an equivalent collection of Australian icons. "Is Australia's tourism suffering as a result of so few historical, cultural or commercial icons?" he questions.

Paul took leave from his studio to travel through the USA during the 2008 Obama presidential campaign and was amazed by how many icons he photographed. "There were more icons in each American city than Australia has as a whole.

"In a way, it saddens me to think how

few icons we have in Australia. Of course we have spectacular natural landmarks, but our historical and dare I say commercial icons are seriously lacking. The images documented in 'Across America' showcase the spirit of the land of the 'stars and stripes'. It was very humbling to be in the presence of such majestic icons, as the Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge, Empire State Building, Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Hill – just to name a few!"

"I would love to be able to do something similar for Australia. My hope for this book, is that it can give me an introduction into Australian Tourism with the idea of creating picture icons that capture the true soul of our country, with the enticement for tourists to experience the wonder that is Australia"



## YouTube

For a view on how commercial photography works world-wide, Eric Victor sent in this YouTube link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2KbQsdj5VY>.

Unfortunately, it's not a joke!

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