



The
Strand
Gallery

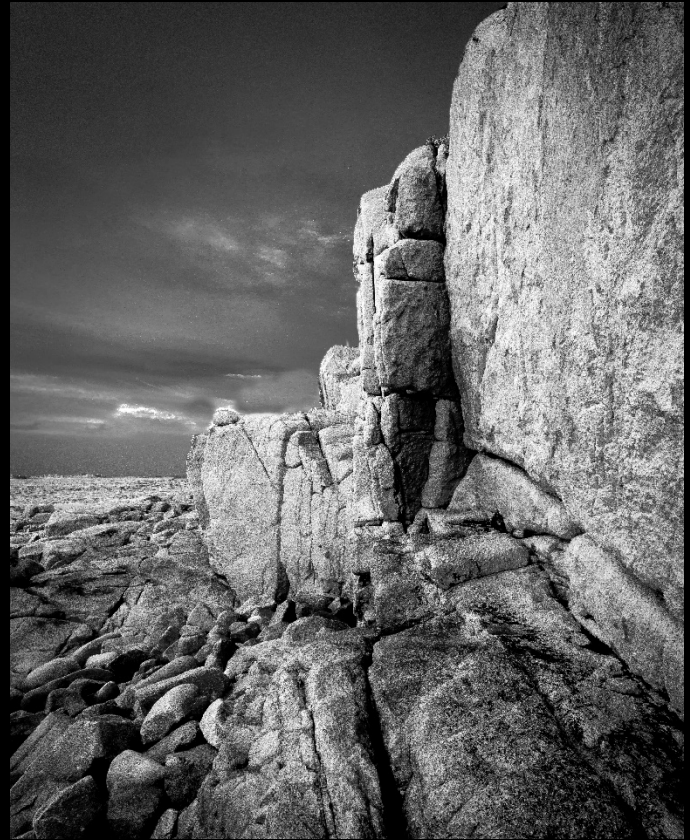
f.64 Photography in the Digital Age

Ron Langman

'Group f.64' were landscape photographers formed by Ansel Adams in the thirties. The term f/64 carried some meaning. It meant large format cameras and implied disciplined photography on a tripod.

Photographs taken by the f/64 group reflected outcomes of exhaustive location research and disciplined technique. The extreme contrast of light in the landscape required careful control of tonal range and darkroom technique.

Ron Langman pays homage to this group in an exhibition of monochrome landscapes.



Homage to Adams, 1/10

Ron Langman 2019



Moonlight Jetty, 1/10

Ron Langman 2019

The f.64 photographers understood the disciplines of composition and how to invoke emotional response but realized that the harsh light and high contrast of western landscapes demanded a more disciplined approach to the science of photography than was common in the cities of New York and Europe.

The loose f:64 group wanted sharp mountain ranges on the horizon, micro detail of foliage in the foreground, black blacks, white whites and control of all the tones that nature provided in between.

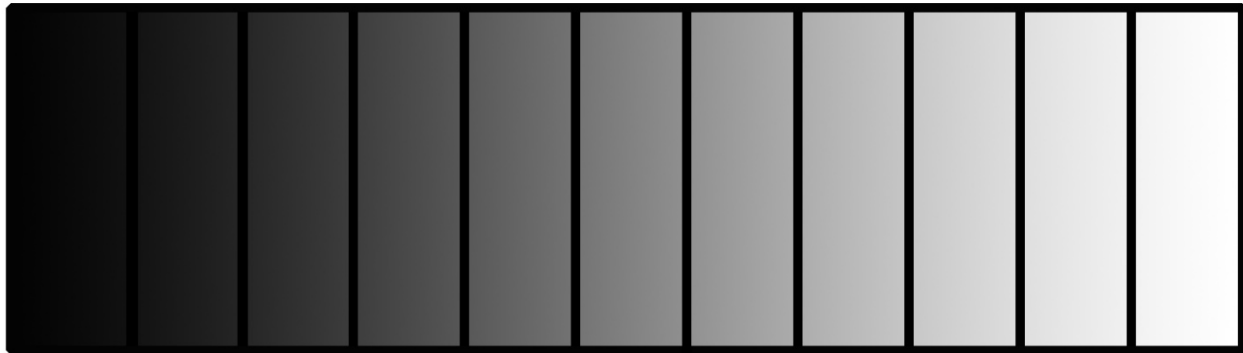
But more than this they wanted to add something to their pictures something that spoke of the experience of time and place and light. To overcome technical difficulties and constraints of analog cameras, a new approach was developed called the Zone System



Petrel Cove in Black and White, 1/10

Ron Langman

The Zone System



Zone 0
-5 Stops

Zone I
-4 Stops

Zone II
-3 Stops

Zone III
-2 Stops

Zone IV
-1 Stop

Zone V
+/- 0 Stops

Zone VI
+1 Stop

Zone VII
+2 Stops

Zone VIII
+3 Stops

Zone IX
+4 Stops

Zone X
+5 Stops

The Zone system is based on measuring light directly from different parts of subject and placing it on a zone that the photographer knows will be within the capability of a film developed in a specific way. This what is called the 'dynamic range'. Whilst the technique was developed for the very high contrast conditions of a desert landscape under brilliant sunlight at mid-day, it could also help with strongly lit still life.

It meant that, after choosing the optimum location and time for a photograph the photographer would need a 'spot meter' to measure the darkest and lightest parts of the subject. He or she would then determine what combination of film, developer, development time and temperature and exposure variables would best fit the conditions. As they looked at the image on the ground glass, they would be thinking about how they would be 'holding back' parts of the image and 'burning in' other parts in the printing.

They would be considering if a yellow or red filter would be useful in darkening the sky or adding contrast to the clouds. They would be looking at, or even calculating, what aperture would be needed to achieve sharpness across the range from foreground to the horizon. Often this would be f.64 but such a small aperture represents its own compromises since the sharpest aperture is usually around f.8 or f.11

Today we do not need all this calculation with digital photography as we have wider dynamic range in digital [up to 13 stops in medium format]. We have a Histogram to tell us if we are 'clipping' highlights or shadows. We have HDR to expand our dynamic range dramatically. [perhaps too dramatically] We have film speeds [ISO speeds] that are off the planet and allow for smaller apertures. We have lenses with depth of field from close up to infinity and we have focus stacking if that is not enough.



The Survivor, 1/10

Ron Langman 2019

What is the relevance to the f:64 group to landscape photography today?

The answer is discipline.

We are probably not going to get award winning photographs out of a car window on our way to a picnic. Some, of my best landscape pictures started out as looking at images on Google earth or detailed maps and asking questions about the geography, position of the sun, dawn and dusk times.

Some of my photographs are the result of visiting the location 3 or 4 times and never taking the camera out of the bag. Some have been shot and post processed in my imagination several times before I leave to go to the location. All of them are shot with the camera on a tripod, even if there is no need to hold the camera still. The tripod is more than an instrument to provide stability, [although I am usually shooting at ISO 50 in late or early light.

It is a discipline of committing to the one or maybe two or three optimum locations from which to shoot
It is the discipline of always reviewing what you have shot and checking the histogram on the review and considering if different settings might be needed. It is the discipline of experimenting with multiple post processing approaches and backing them up.

It is the discipline of accepting that the picture you have taken of this location is a step toward a better one that might be taken in a better light with better skies on another day.

About Ron's Giclée Prints

All photographs at the Strand Gallery are defined as 'giclée prints' as they meet professional criteria for the printing process and choice of material. We print 'in house' on Hahnemuhle fine art paper on a professional large format printer. Our printer uses pigment based inks rather than the dye based inks common to standard ink jet printers. Our paper is 100% cotton, is acid free, has a matte premium coating which meets museum standards for age resistance.



Monotree 1/10

Ron Langman 2019

The Strand Gallery

F.64 Photography in the Digital Age

Exhibition by Ron Langman

From 4th August to 31st August 2019

The Strand Gallery,

41 The Strand, Port Elliot.

Open Saturday and Sunday 10am to 4pm, other times by
appointment by phoning 0419 501 648

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