THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

BY

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Submitted in partial compliance with the requirements for the National Diploma in Photography at the Faculty of Human Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

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For children time in front of the camera should be fun time. Too often people force their children into their best clothes and put them into a strange studio with bright, warm lights, forcing them to smile for the camera. That can make them nervous and self-conscious and will conceal their personality.

Children should be relaxed and natural and see the photographic session as a game. Most children like to be the centre of attention, and usually it is not difficult to encourage them to dress up for the camera.

The aim in this script is to see children as they are - full of life, honest and future stars.

Through a discussion of the author's images problems were also encountered and possible solutions are offered in this script.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE HISTORY OF CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY

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The invention of photography made it possible to keep special memories not only in our hearts, but also in an album.

Decades ago people started experimenting with photography.

One of the pioneers of photography was Louis Daguerre, (PHOTO, 1981:1378) and called his invention the Daguerrotype process (appendix).

Niepce succeeded in 1826 to use a plate in the camera obscura (Langford, 1980:10). This camera had a recording time of about eight hours!

In 1834 Henry Fox Talbot (Langford, 1980:12) invented the calotype process (appendix) that gave a recognizable result ranged from 10 to 30 minutes.

The biggest disadvantages of this first processes was the long exposure times. It made it extremely difficult to take a good photograph of a child because of their limited concentration.

A big improvement in photography occured with the invention of the collodian process (appendix) by Frederick Scott Archer in 1851 (PHOTO, 1981:1379). Later it replaced the Daguerrotype and calotype process and continued with it's success until the 1880' (Langford, 1980:26).

Oscar Rejlander was one of the first photographers to use the collodian process to photograph a child. It was in his picture "play" (Langford, 1980;31) where he also used an old man as a model. The two figures rehearsed to adopt the appropriate positions which had to

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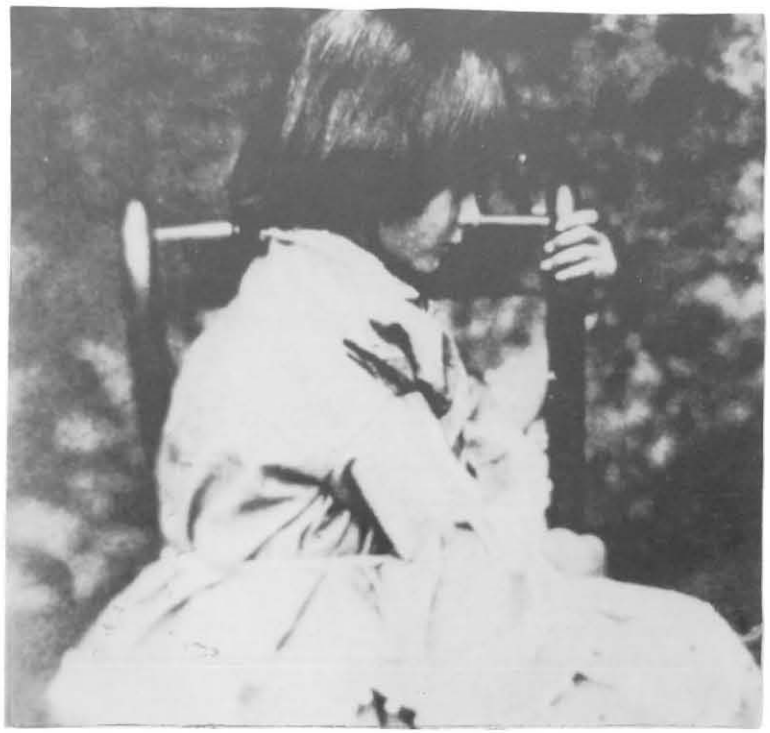

Fig. 1 'Alice in Wonderland' : A portrait of Alice Liddell by Lewis Carroll.

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blocks. Some people called Hine a conscience with a camera.

The introduction of George Eastman's Kodak number one camera in 1888 (Langford, 1980:50) brought major changes in photography.

With the slogan "You press the button, we do the rest", (Langford, 1980:50) Eastman changed photography for ever. For the first time photographers did not have to know anything about chemicals and processing as with the previous processes.

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CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEMS AND CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT

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1. Little models

When the photographer is a stranger to the child there can occure some problems. The child can be shy or even start to cry!

To sort this problem out the photographer has to win the child's trust. When there is enough time a solution to this problem is to talk to the child about things that interest him or her.

The next problem with children is to focus the child's attention on the things you want them to do. When the child is interested the photographer must do everything fast and according to a certian plan.

Poses must be suggested rather than demanding that they stick to a specific formal sort of pose. The whole arangement has to be set up before the child must pose for the camera. A way to get the child interested is to involve him/her in setting up the studio. A child's concentration is limited, that is why the photographer has to act fast to catch the vital expression or moment in the first couple of minutes.

2. Choice of equipment

The 6x7 medium format camera gives good quality but when photographing a child this format can be difficult to work with.

The 35mm format is undoubtly the easiest format to use when doing a child study. The single lens reflex (SLR) camera allows the photographer to view and focus through the lens. This way the photographer can see exactly what he is photographing.

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The choice of lenses is very important for the photographer.

A standard or 50mm lens is a good option. A big advantage of this lens is it's speed (appendix), making it ideal for low light conditions.

Another option is a zoom (appendix) lens, because the photographer doesn't have to move around that much. A lens ranging from 35mm - 80mm are suitable.

3. Lighting

The time of day is very important when the photographer wants to use daylight to lit the subject. To fill in darker areas like the eyes the photographer can use a fill-in flash or a reflector. (fig. 4)

To get the right exposure time, an exposuremeter is required. A built-in type is handy when the photographer uses daylight, but when the photographer works with flashlights in the studio a hand held meter gives beter results.

4. Film

The requirements of the final results determine the choice of film.

There are black and white or colour negative and colour transparecy film.

Black and white films are very popular when children are photographed.

For photographing in colour there is a choice between negative and slide film.

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Fig. 4 L. Botha, Childstudy
Darker areas were filled in with fill-in flash

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The disadvantages of slide film is that it has not as much viewing convienience as negatives and having prints made from slides is very expensive.

Comparisons between prints and slides:

1. Both are capable of accurate skin tones.

2. Slide material can cope with far greater contrast range (appendix) than a print film.

3. Colour casts in print film can be corrected afterwards, and with slide film correction filters are needed in the shooting stage.

Film should be stored in a cool place before and after exposure to ensure quality.

To get outstanding quality the photographer must be aware of all problems that can occur during a photographic session.

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CHAPTER THREE

WAYS TO A BETTER CHILDSTUDY

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When working with children in the studio the photographer has to follow a certain plan.

The approaches to photographing children of different ages are very different.

Hints and tips (Hilton:22)

Have a selection of books and toys to hand to keep your subjects entertained while they are in the studio.

These could then become invaluable as props during the actual photographic session.

If you want to take movement and action shots, playing their favourite music may help. Arrange for them to bring their own tapes with them when they come to the studio.

If you have more than one child in the studio at the same time, you may be able to take pictures the way they interact with one another. (fig. 10)

Most children are scared of the lights in a studio, but there are some other possible ways to do a portrait of a child that in some cases will be even more striking. (fig. 5)

If the windows of the room you have the photographic session in receive bright light the artificial illumination is unnecessary. The photographer must be aware of the difference between the background and the submect. In most cases everything except the foreground are underexposed. Because the background is underexposed it does not distrack attention from the subject.

The background does not always have to be distraction

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Fig. 5 L. Botha; Childstudy
Available light from a window

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but can also allow the photographer to transform the atmosphere of the pictures. But if the background does not tells the viewer something extra about the subject, a plain background is preferable (fig. 6). When working with colour film the background must not clash with the clothes of the subjects. With black and white film there must be looked that the tones of the subject and background are not to similar.

If you have an attractive setting, (fig.7) take time to ensure that you get the very most out of it. Backgrounds and foregrounds can harmonize and complement the subject, but must not compete for attention (fig. 9).

Taking pictures of young babies are very difficult (fig. 8). The main fact lies in the fact that babies are too young to take any type of derection (Hilton: 82). The photographer's eye cannot leave the viewfinder for an instant to catch that expression on the subjects face that will fleetly disapear again. Natural light is a better option because flash lights can upset young children.

Mood and contrast (appendix) can be manipulating the final print. A high contrast image usually works best with older children. A hard grade printing paper with a soft contrast negative to print into a contrasty effect that will otherwise be a flat looking print, will work best.

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Fig. 6 Priscilla Rattazzi: Choose a background that does not distract.

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Fig. 7 Priscilla Rattazzi (1982) Urbano Los Cardos, Argentina
Make use of an attractive setting

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Fig. 8 Priscilla Rattazzi (1989) Rebecca and Sake Honesdale, Pennsylvania.
Backgrounds and foregrounds can harmonize and complement the subject, but must not compete for attention

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Fig. 9 Robin Dance: Taking pictures of young babies are very difficult. The photographer's eye cannot leave the viewfinder for an instant to catch that expression on the subjects face that will fleetly disapear again

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Fig. 10 L. Botha (1996): If you have more than one child in the studio at the same time, you may be able to take pictures the way they interact with one another.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CHRIS BARKER

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When Chris Barker illustrated his approach to portraiture, he decided to take individual portraits of his three year old son, Leo, and his nine year old nephew, Sam (PHOTO, 1981:1698).

Both of them are serious boys and Chris wanted to bring that part of their character out in his images.

Chris let them pose in their everyday playing clothes allowing them to look natural in front of the camera. He used settings of an outbuilding near the house to add atmosphere to the pictures (PHOTO, 1981:1700). With Sam, his clohtes convey an honest image of boyhood and an adventurous, independent child (fig. 13). The surroundings and the ancient trunk look like a place where he is not supposed to be and adds a feeling of adventure to the image.

In the image of Leo (fig. 11), the rocking horse in the background shows that the child are in the boundaries of his playroom.

Chris does not like to make props too obstrusive and prefers them to remain as small clues in the picture.

Chris prefers daylight where possible. For Sams portrait he placed his double flash head and large single umbrella alongside the window so that it gave the effect of daylight (fig. 12). And for Leo's portrait he placed the lights to his left, and above.

Chris used an aperture of f/22 with his 4x5 MPP MKviii camera to get the depht of field he wanted.

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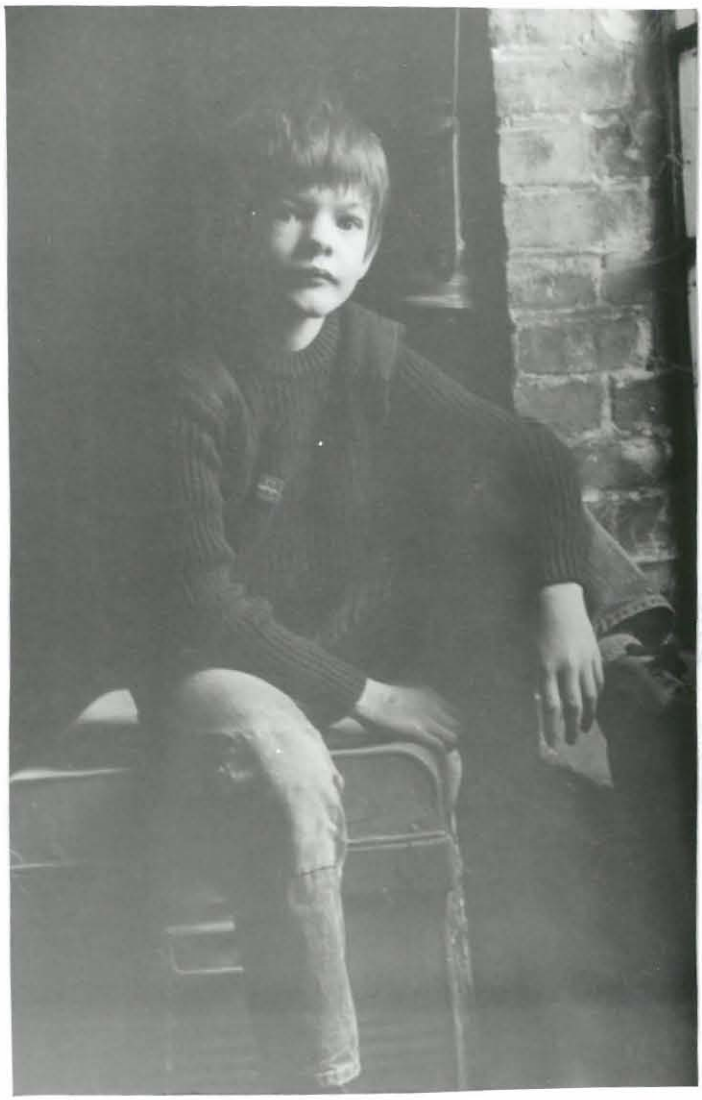

Fig. 13 Chris Barker: Portrait of Sam

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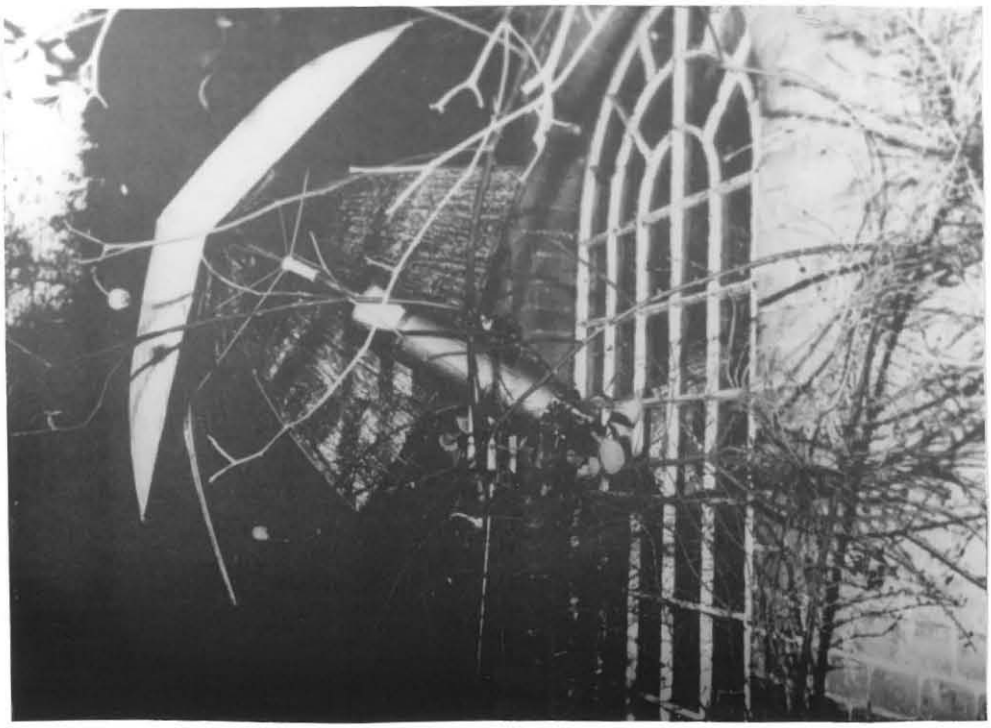

Fig. 12 Flash system

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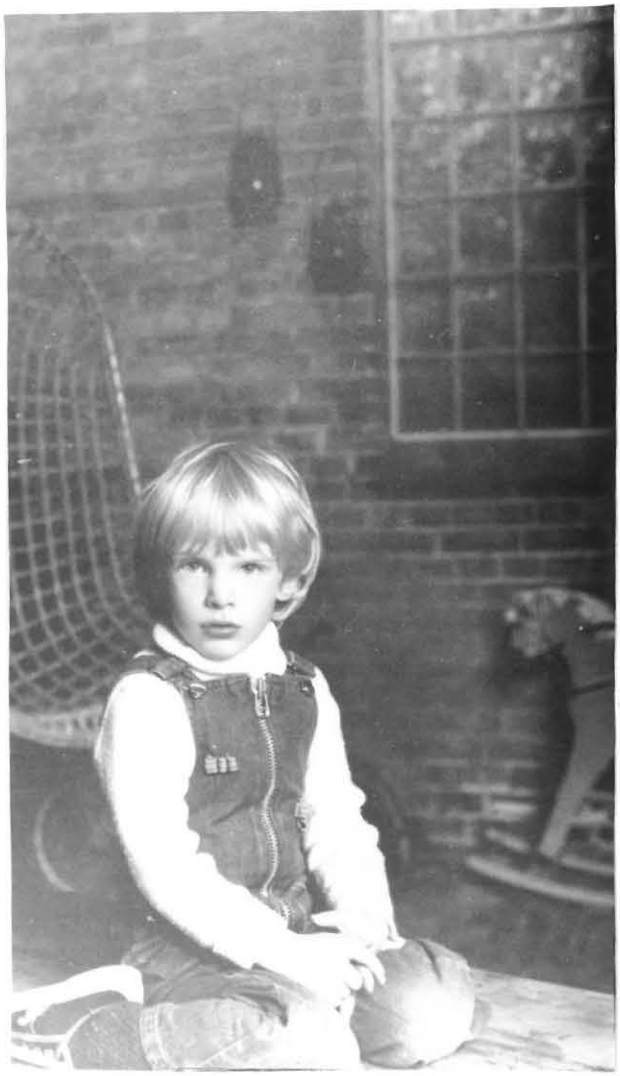

FIg. 11 Chris Barker: Finished portrait of Leo

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CHAPTER FIVE

AUTHOR'S WORK

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Fig. 14 was taken with the author's Pentax MZ5n at the 'Care Bears' pre-primary school in Bloemfontein. The children were very curious about the camera and the author had to be patient with them.

The author used Agfa HDC 200 film and a 50mm lens.

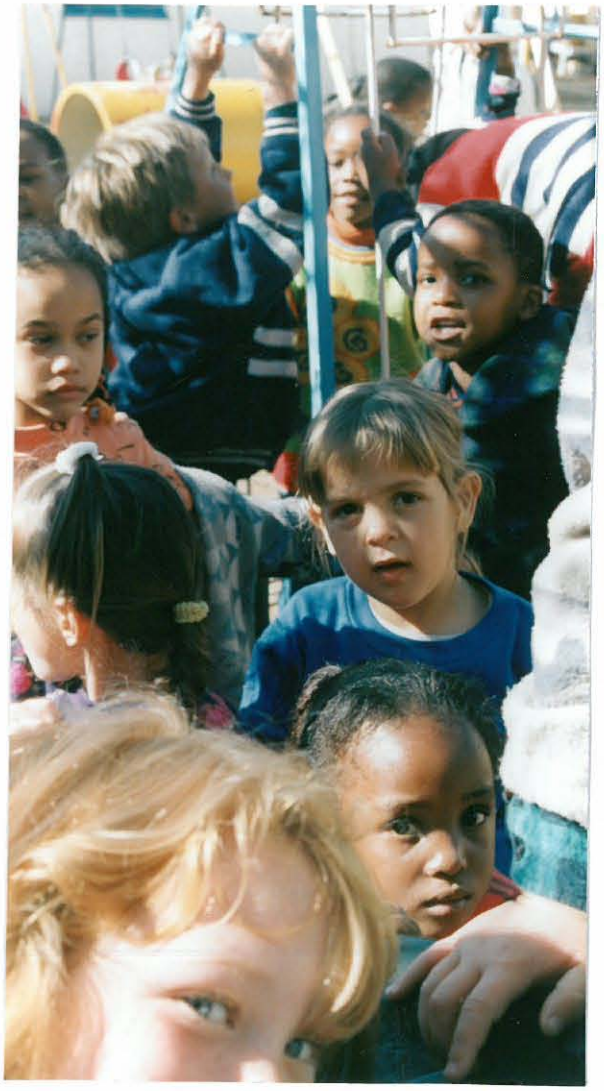

Fig. 14 'Playground'

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Fig. 15 Untitled

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In fig. 15 a real duck was used to complete the image. The child likes animals very much and did not mind to be photographed with the duck. The child was relaxed and it shows in the image.
The author used Illford FP4 film and a 50mm lens.
The time of day was just before the sun setts and a fill-in-flash was used to fill in the dark areas.
Fig. 15 can be compared to fig. 11 where the child's enviroment is shown with certain elements.

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Because the girl in fig. 16 is only two years old her concentration is limited and the author had to act fast to catch the vital expression or moment.

The author suggested some poses and her mother helped to achieve the poses on the final results.

To get the sepia toned colour of the images the author used Konica 400 black and white film

Because of the low light conditons the author used a flash with a diffuser to fill in darker areas.

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Fig. 16 Untitled

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In fig. 17 the author used a faked tattoo to complete the image.

The image was photographed with Illford FP4 film.

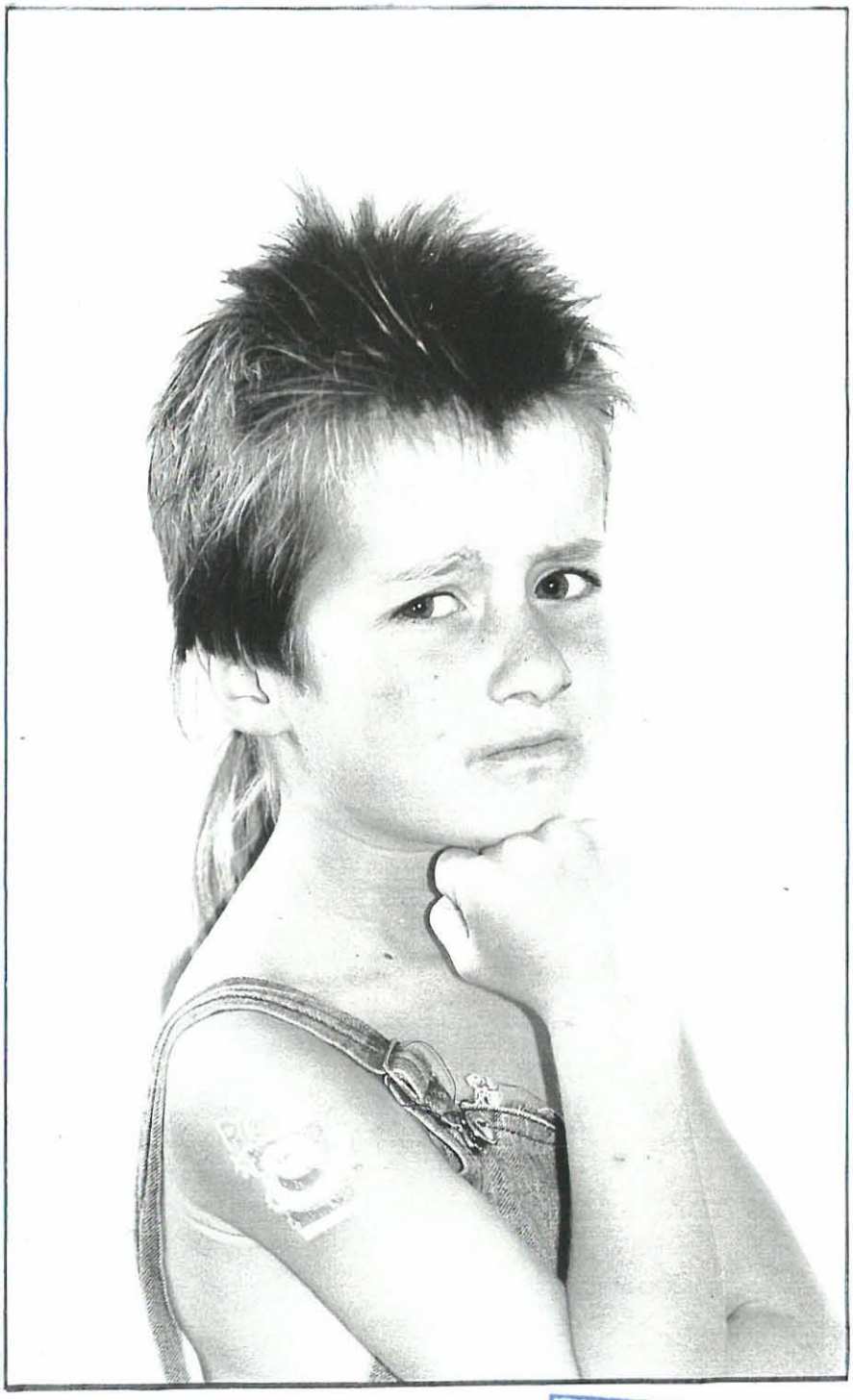

Fig. 17 'Rebel'

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In fig. 18 the author chose a time of day when the highlights are very strong and the focus can be on the boy.

The author used HDC 100 film.

Fig. 18 Untitled

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In fig. 19 the author saw an oppertunity for a candid shot.

The photo of the boy feeding the birds was photographed with a 75 - 300 mm zoom lens to get some of the back-ground out of focus.

Fig. 19 'Feeding the birds'

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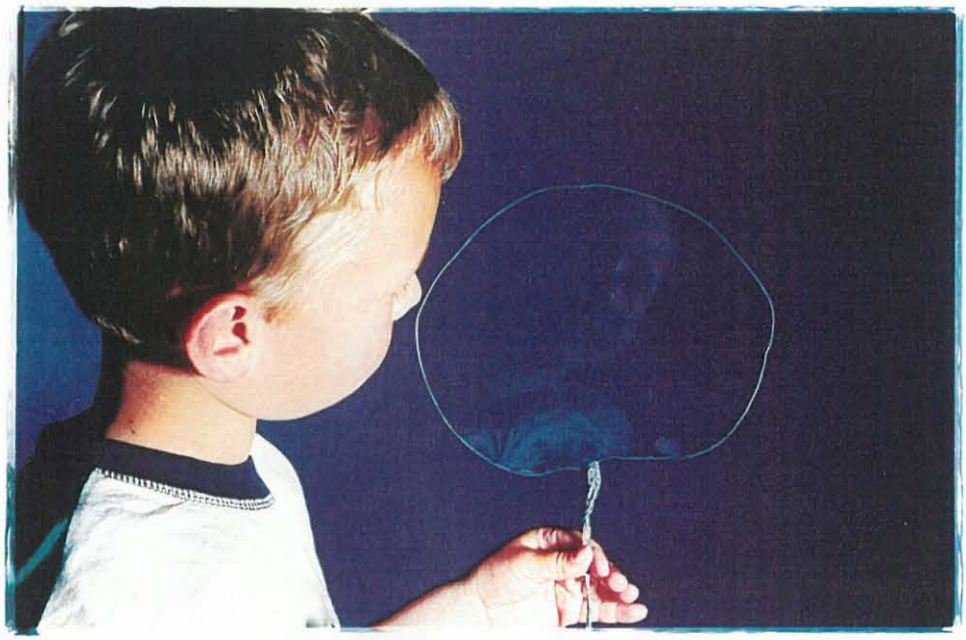

Fig. 20 'Reflection'

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Fig. 21 'Estiaan'

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CONCLUSION

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TOWARDS LIFE

I'm going, Mommy.
I feel light.
Free and light
Ready to run across the field
To that great forest
That waits for me over there.

Let me go, Mommy.
I feel good.
I want to discover, to explore,
All of life's pathways.
I want to learn
Through making mistakes.
I want to discover who I am:
I can do this only
By myself,
Far from you.

You love me, Mommy:
I know you'll let me go
To live my own life.

-Ilaria Rattazzi

(Book: CHILDREN)

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61

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APPENDIX

A.S.A

System of rating the speed of sensitize materials, laid down by the American Standards Association in the A.S.A standards. The A.S.A speed can be expressed either as an arithmetical speed - eg. A.S.A 100 - or a logarithmic form.

Ref: Focal Encyclopedia of Photography p65

CALOTYPE

Process for making paper negatives in the camera. Calotype was patented by Fox Talbot in 1841.

1. Writing paper was brushed with a solution of silver iodide and potassium iodide and allowed to dry.

2. Before use the paper was treated with a solution consistiong of silver nitrate, acetic acid and gallic acid crystals.

3. Paper was the exposed in camera; about five minutes in bright sunlight at f8.

4. After exposure, developed in a silver nitrate and gallic acid solution.

5. Then rinsed and fixed in 'hypo', washed and dried.

Ref: Langford, M. The Story of photography p13

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COLLOCION PROCESS

Invented by F. Scott Archer in 1851

1. To prepare, a clean glass plate in coated with collodian containing potassium and other iodides.

2. In the dark, bathed in a solution of silver nitrate.

3. The plate is exposed in camera while still wet

4. Developed with a solution of ferrous sulphate and acetic acid or pyrogallic acid.

5. Potassium or sodium cyanide or sodium thiosulphate used for fixing.

Ref: Focal Encyclopedia of Photography p265

CONTRAST RANGE

Slide material can cope with a greater contrast range than print films. A typical scene might have a brightness range of 160:1; whereas a slide can have a range of 400:1 or more if projected. The way prints and slides are viewed also has an effect - slides are viewed by transmitted light wile prints are viewed by reflected light.

Ref: Practical Photography May 1991 p74

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DAGUERREOTYPE PROCESS

Invented by Louis Jacques Daguerre and published in 1839. Photographs taken by this method were called Daguerreotypes. The process:

1. A silver coated copper plate is polished and exposed to iodine vapour.

2. The plate is exposed in a camera for up to twenty minutes.

3. The plate is developed by placing over mercury vapour.

4. The plate is fixed in a weak solution of sodium huposulphite.

5. Plate is washed.

Ref: Langford M. The story of Photography p12

FILMS

Films for colour photography are of two types, negative and reversal. Most colour films are intended to produce a vissually correct representation of subject colours. They are sensitized or given a colour balanve which will produce the desired results when used with illumination of a specified colour temperature. A daylight type emulsion is balanced for 5500 Kelvin illumination. Films for use with tungsten illumination are designated either type A, for 3400 Kelvin light, or type B for 3200 Kelvin illumination. Most tungsten balanced colour films have type B emulsions.

Ref: Kodak Encyclopedia of Practical Photography p450

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ZOOM LENS

Lens system with movable elements allowing the focal length to be continuously varie withiin design limits, also called a variable focus lens.

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