

DIGITAL IMAGES FOR PUBLICATION

Garry Benson

As a 'professional' photographer (I had my first camera at 5 years old) I've worked as a designer, and sold photographs for more years than I care to admit to. Starting in Australia in the 1980s I designed and/or took shots for *SA Crafts*, *Textile Fibre Forum*, *ArtLink*, *Craft Australia* & *Craft Arts* amongst others.

And in workshops like *Professional Presentation* I pushed the idea, up and down the country, of artists having a professional approach to photographs of their work. Those were the days when 35mm & 6 x 6cm high-resolution photographs gave the best quality printed images. Get the exposure right and you didn't have to worry about weird things like 300 DPI⁽¹⁾ and PIXELS⁽²⁾ - but better still, you could get a PROFESSIONAL to take your photos.

Photo: Peter Wojciechowski

When my friend Jayne Stacey came up with the idea of the *Fibre Design* book, (promoted in this issue, and on TAFTA's website www.tafta.org.au) and asked me to work with her on it I said, 'We have to have technical information for all the artists about the quality of the images they present. If they're not good enough we'll have to exclude them'.

So I started to get together the technical part of *Fibre Design's* Entry Form, using standards that both magazines and professional digital archivists (like the *State Library of SA*) use. Here's an example:

Format:	TIFF, uncompressed.
Mode:	24-bit RGB colour
Resolution:	Minimum 300 dpi
Resultant file size:	Minimum 15 - 20 MB

And Jayne said, 'To me that's all gobbledegook - why can't I use my own digital camera to take the shots?'

Why not indeed? Now everyone can be a 'professional' if they know how to use a digital camera with a modicum of skill. *Kodak* stopped making slide projectors back in 2004; 35mm slide film is becoming harder to find; and everyone can buy a digital camera at an increasingly cheaper cost.

You still have to know what you're doing with the lighting, resolution and the end result in terms of the best image of your artwork. And of course you can use your own digital camera to shoot your artwork BUT for artists who use their own camera the minimum resolution is 10 mega pixels (10,000 pixels) shot at the highest resolution to produce an image of 300 dpi. This means the file size would be 15-20 MB and must be sent, for book entry purposes, preferably on a *Mac* compatible CD or DVD.

If you don't have access to a computer this is a tough call. Almost all digital cameras record the images on a memory card as JPEGs, a file format that makes files smaller by compressing them. And compressing them degrades the quality of the image colour, contrast and resolution even if you take them at the highest resolution possible.

Professional cameras allow you to shoot images in the RAW format - and the image is literally untouched or adjusted in camera. It's then simple to download them onto a computer and use *Photoshop* or a similar program to make adjustments in colour, brightness and contrast with no loss of quality and eventually save the image as a TIFF file. However professional digital cameras can cost up to many thousands of dollars, as does software like *Photoshop*.

'So', Jayne said, 'how can I tell how good my digital shot is in terms of 300 dpi etc if I don't have access to either a computer or the software?'

Well, you can't, unless you take it to a computer savvy friend to check it. All you can do is take the shot you love, of the artwork you love, to a chemist or photo store and ask them to put it on that *Mac* compatible CD and take a chance with your entry. As Jayne pointed out to me, there are probably masses of people out there who would love to enter the *Fibre Design* book competition but simply don't understand what I'm talking about in my *Photography Tips* section of the Entry Form.

I can give you all the hints you need when using a computer and *Photoshop* to check the quality of your work, but if you're not computer savvy it definitely is all gobbledegook. So I'm going to make you what I hope you see as a great offer. Read on.

If you wish to enter images of your work in the *Fibre Design* book competition and you are truly uncertain how to get the image right - first read the *Photography Tips* section of the entry form, choose images that you think conform to the rules, get them downloaded onto a *Mac* compatible CD, post the CD to me and I'll check it out for you technically.

'How do I make sure the CD is *Mac* Compatible? I have a *Windows*-based PC.'

We ask for *Mac* formatted CDs & DVDs as **the preferred format** as it's much easier to use. It isn't a major problem for me if you don't know what format the CD or DVD is - *Macs* can open PC formatted CDs, and *Photoshop* on a *Mac should* read TIFF files you can create on a PC. Most professional photographers, graphic artists & video producers work on *Macs*.

My job is NOT to say what artwork will be accepted for publication - that's up to the judges - but at least I won't reject it on technical grounds *if* it's OK. If there's a problem you'll have to get a professional to take the shots - and you would be allowed to enter again at no extra cost.

Two conditions: if you don't have an email address, then enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope when submitting your images, so I can tell you my opinion of the technical standard of your image. **An email address is preferred.** Secondly I can't return the CD so you'd better get another copy made for your entry *when* the images are acceptable. The competition closes on September 1st 2010 so get in now!

My 'snail mail' address is: Garry Benson
PO Box 433
Yankalilla
SA 5203

Best of luck!

*Garry Benson joined Jayne Stacey in presenting the idea of the Fibre Design book to TAFTA (The Australian Forum for Textile Arts Ltd) via Janet de Boer. He is the official Art Director & Designer of the intended book, **Fibre Design** for Australia and New Zealand and will assess all entries for adequate technical quality of the photography. He'll be teaching **Digital Photography & DVD Production** at **Wrapt in Rocky**, the CQ Textile Forum 2010 from June 25th to July 1st. He'll also be OS in late May/early June - so don't expect a quick reply in the month of June. Otherwise he's in the vicinity of Yankalilla most of the time.*

^[1] DPI stands for dots per inch, the number of dots of ink that will print in a 1 x 1 inch square. Thus, 300 dpi is talking about print resolution.

⁽²⁾ A pixel is a single piece of information in a digital file. The number of pixels within a document is referred to as the document's resolution. PPI stands for pixels per inch, or how many pixels will appear in a 1 x 1 inch square. One dot of ink does NOT equal one pixel. Pixels can grow and shrink in size, meaning that it can take more than one dot of ink to represent one pixel or a particular colour.