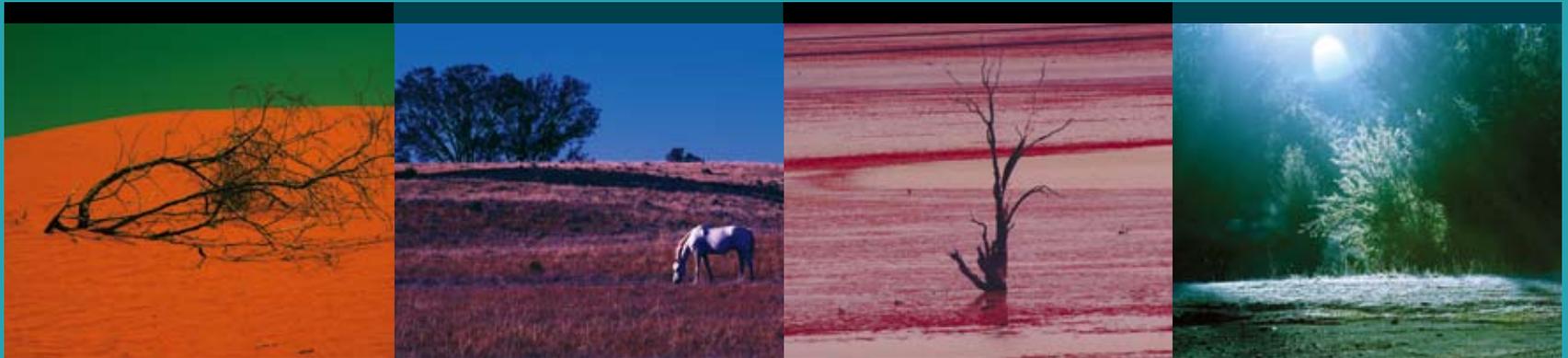


AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER

JIM CHEN

陈志光



UNSEEN AUSTRALIA

Australia has long been a fascinating destination for travellers from all over the world, so its famous landscapes have become familiar to many. And yet, because of its vastness, Australia also remains one of the great unexplored continents on earth.

Author and photographer, Jim Chen, first came to Australia 20 years ago. He was captivated by the land's unique natural beauties, photographing the surprising vistas that opened up to him as he discovered this new homeland for himself.

Now, he presents his photographic collection to take you to a fascinating and intoxicating world through his camera. His collection will let you discover the wonders of Australia through scenes not easily seen from a car or tour bus, or even captured on postcards.

Every traveller is a photographer these days and Jim Chen's aim is to inspire you to take good photographs, to give you a greater insight into nature and a new perspective on the world we live in.

Book designer: Jim Chen

JIM CHEN

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AUSTRALIA

Introduction

My landscape photography

Jim Chen

I feel a deep connection with the beauty of scenery and, over a lifetime, have fallen deeply in love with it. I was one of many creative artist of the Great Northern Wilderness Etching Group. It had a strong influence on me at a very early age and is the origin of my love for scenic photography and is my most basic fundamental inspiration.

Instead of using paints and brushes, I'm now using the camera to capture scenery. Although the medium has changed, my art is still being created with the same pair of eyes, the same capabilities and the same passion.

Landscape photographs often show a famous tourist destination or landmark, with the beauty of the photographs relying on the beauty of the location itself. My main focus is not on those. Instead, it may be a view of nooks or corners, a small piece of a wide field, an interesting shape, a tone or a group of colours. They often don't have a name, like monuments do, and because of their transient nature, it can be difficult to go back and re-shoot the same scene.

I was once an irrigation works surveyor. I have walked through weeds that were taller than me, wandering through wild bushlands and passing ducks nests from dawn till dusk.

These wilderness experiences and my hands-on landscape paintings not only give me a certain degree of landscape architectural competence, but have strange influences on my aesthetic preferences and how I approach my photography.

When I set out to capture a photograph I find myself attracted to capturing the natural world, rather than the people who occupy it. My pictures generally don't contain cityscapes, sail boats or other such human constructions.

I take a tent, a sleeping bag and cooking utensils. I go somewhere outside the city, camp out for a few days, and the only thing I do is walk and photograph.

It is my belief that scenic photography contains an angle that is overlooked by many and it has its own sense of novelty and beauty. It can be sung and recited. It is a song and a poem.

The human figure generally belongs to the foreground of an image and scenery is merely a backdrop. Most commonly, the human figure is seen as active and dynamic, occupying the 'top layer' while scenery is still and relatively stable, occupying the 'bottom layer'. The human figure is heralded as the master and the scenery is modestly subordinated.

For me, the living space should be the subordinate. I see the characteristic of scenic photography as synonymous with and in harmony with our living space.

When I enter my dwelling after a day filled with work, what I am after is a resting place, one piece of pure art, a small patch of pure nature — a place to turn my eyes away from daily tasks and thoughts.

I feel that I have found myself as well as the most suitable place for my landscape photographs.

15/03/2010

Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge much help and encouragement received from Wang Xin Rong and Yang Shen Liang during my early years when I began to explore art and photography.

In Australia, when I first photographed a withered tree, it was my wife Shao Yayuan's suggestion that I continue to do this and turn it into a series. I thank her for this great idea.

A big 'thank you' goes to my former colleague and senior designer Karyn Souder and my good friend James Harriman who spent a great deal of time correcting and improving my English.

I would also like to thank marketing specialist, Patricia Cheung, who edited and polished the English translation.

Finally, of course, I would like to thank my parents who made all my creations possible.

My daughter Lucy is always an inspiration.

I hope you like the book.

● PART 1

The worn and withered trees in Australia
— the Australia outback in gold and red

During the summer of 2004, my wife and I took two weeks to explore this arid land — the outback. Equipped with all sorts of the camping gear, we set off on a path of discovery.

Bourke, a town located 789 kilometres northwest of Sydney was our first destination. A charming and prosperous town on the bank of the Darling River, it had been a paddle-steamer destination since 1859 and served as a major inland port for the few months of the year that

the river was deep enough. Along this route, paddleboats carrying wool travelled between western Queensland and Adelaide in South Australia until 1931.

Heading further south and west, following the path of the Darling River, we drove along an earthen road. Before our eyes the true Australian outback began to appear. The colour of the soil gradually changed from yellow and orange to a dark red.

The trees, for as far as the eye could see, took on a life of their own. Some of them



Yet the scroll of the natural picture has remained unchanged.



The land which I call the 'true Australia' began to unfold before my eyes.





are straight while others are low and humpbacked. The living trees stand tall while the dead ones slump closer to the ground, with the dying somewhere in between. Upon closer observation we realised that some trees that stood were already dead, while others that hug the ground were actually alive. They are born here, they live

here and die and are buried here, and life regenerates. There is no chiselling, no decorating and no touch-ups. The cycle of life takes its toll, yet the scroll of the natural picture remains unchanged.

Human civilization — the great destroyer of nature — is not welcomed here.

Devastating natural forces are clearly exhibited everywhere. It is not hard to imagine that the wind, rain, frost and summer heat all live here, for the hardships of life have been visibly engraved into the trees' bodies. Each of these figures have transformed into perfect sculptures.

The trees let it all pass in silence and it is in this silence they show us their story.

Our next destination was a place called Trilby station, located not far from Tilpa. The village of Tilpa is at the crossing of Paroo and Bourke Roads. In the late 1800s, it was a place for gathering and dispersing stock, a

Mungo National Park

Mungo National Park is a parkland in the southwest of New South Wales. It is 876 kilometres west of Sydney and is part of the Willandra Lakes region, a World Heritage Site covering 2,400 square kilometres and containing 17 dry lakes.

From Broken hill, follow the signs to Menindee and then to Pooncarie. Travel through Pooncarie and head south for 20 kilometres, there you will see Top Hut Road with a sign directing you to Mungo National Park. Follow this road to its end and turn right at the T-junction.

Road quality: unpaved sections.

From Mildura, cross the bridge to Buronga and follow the Silver City Highway towards Broken Hill. As you leave Buronga, you will see Arumpo Road with a sign pointing to Mungo National Park. Follow this road to its end.

Road quality: unpaved sections.

At the 33 kilometre long crescent of the Great Walls of China, erosion has sculpted the sand and clay into dramatic formations.

The sand dunes mix with clay to form mountains and city walls.





Some of the trees had just enough soil to root into a dune and could stand tall but found themselves alone without any neighbours.



It was not obviously whether the tree was dead or alive.



Still, some managed to stand, half fallen, like soldiers on a battlefield.





Near Murray Valley Highway, Ebdon, Victoria.



The Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

The Great Barrier Reef is composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 600 islands stretching for over 2,300 kilometres in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland.



| The Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

| A mystery and fantasy, looking at the Great Barrier Reef from the air.





Mt Lagoon, New South Wales.

Mt Lagoon, New South Wales.

Sun squeezed through a small hole in the clouds, like a stage light and beamed down a path under the trees as if it was the opening to Nature's play.





Mount Kuring-Gai

Mount Kuring-gai is a suburb of Sydney, in the shire of Hornsby. It is located approximately 32 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD and 8 kilometres north of Hornsby. Surrounded by bushland, it borders Kuring-gai Chase National Park. There are several bushwalks accessible from the suburb including the Great North Walk and a path to Apple Tree Bay.



Hill End, New South Wales.

Hill End is a living village featuring intact gold rush streetscapes and buildings dating back to the 1860s. Preserved much as it was in its heyday, it's the perfect place to relive the early gold mining days of 19th century. During Easter 2006, we camped there with a few families and, because it is inland, we saw morning frosts in April.



Glen Davis,
New South Wales.

In the late afternoon, the sky was full of white sulphur-crested cockatoos that rose up and wheeled this way and that, spontaneously and raucously. They shuttled back and forth from field to tree, then flew out of sight to unknown places.

Near Nimbin, New South Wales.

In Australia, the cultivation, selling and possession of cannabis (marijuana) is illegal. But in Nimbin, all three activities are part of an every day hippie culture. Officials seem to turn a blind eye, and locally grown cannabis is openly bought, sold and consumed on the streets and laneways.

We drove around Nimbin town, then north along the Blue Knob Road. The spring rain fell gently and silently on the few trees growing at top of the hill. Thick clouds float in front of us, giving us tantalising glimpses. A minute ago they annoyingly covered my view, but now they move to form a backdrop, hiding the detail I did not want to capture. I've got my photo!





Olympic night at Sydney Opera House, 2000



'Light on sails', Sydney Opera House, 2009



A dream world | the Australian coastline in blue and green





Jim Chen, journalist, editor, artist, photographer and graphic designer. Australian Chinese. His printmaking work, 'A New Field', joined with 'The selected works of a modern Chinese printmaker' exhibited in Japan in 1980. His photography work, 'the Green Ripple Dream', won a silver prize in the Sports Photograph Competition of Zhejiang Province in 1988; 'The Skier' also won a silver prize from the Art Photograph Association of Australia in 1996. Jim has been recognised in the book of 'Chinese Artists in the Modern Age' (Shanghai Publishing House, 1992). He migrated to Australia in 1990, and is currently living in Sydney, working as a graphic designer.

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‘When we turn our eyes from the numerous political, philosophical, historical, scientific, technical tasks to a natural habitat, one piece of pure art, a small patch of pure nature is satisfied.’

‘The human figure belongs in the foreground of the image and the scenery is merely a backdrop. Most commonly, the human figure is seen as being active and volatile, occupying the “top layer” , while scenery is still and relatively stable, occupying the “bottom layer” . The human figure is heralded as the master; and the scenery, it’ s subordinate full of modesty.’

‘I see this characteristic of scenery as being particularly synonymous with living space; for dwellers, the living space is the subordinate.’



‘It is my belief that scenic photography should be viewed and enjoyed. It contains an angle that is overlooked by most and it has its own sense of novelty and beauty. It can be sung and recited. It is a song and a poem.’

— Jim Chen

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