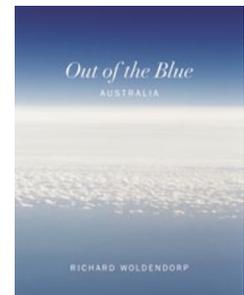


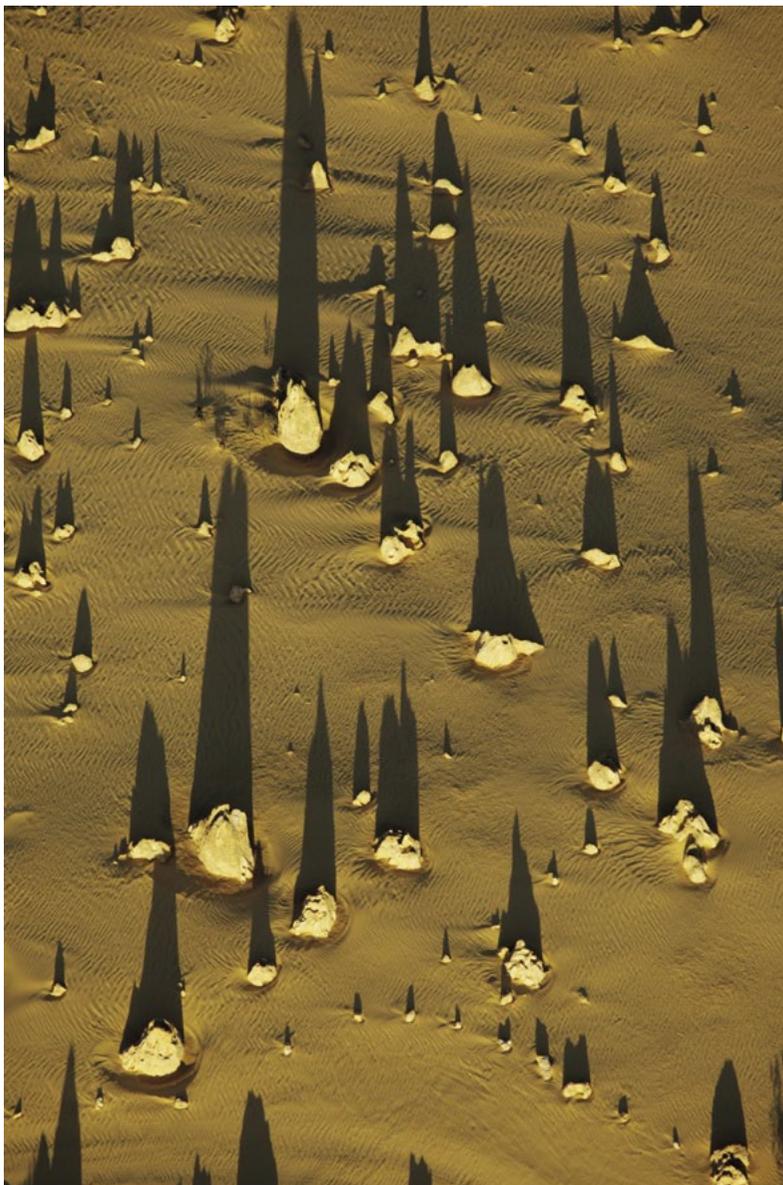
Richard Woldendorp's latest book, *Out of the Blue*, is expected to be released in late October 2013 and will be available through major book stores. You can also contact Richard directly at rlwphoto@inet.com.au



Out of the Blue

Richard Woldendorp, AM

By Peter Eastway



Nambung National Park, (Pinnacles) W.A.. (Opposite page) Dam, South Australia.



Last year, Richard Woldendorp was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia for service to the arts as a landscape photographer. His work, including a strong body of aerial landscapes, has featured over the past 50 years in countless books, magazines and exhibitions, both in Australia and around the world.

Despite being an octogenarian, he is as active as ever and just about to release his latest book, *Out of the Blue*. It is a compilation of amazing aerial photographs taken all around Australia.

Aerial Photography

"The front cover is photographed from a Qantas jet, flying across the Nullarbor at 30,000 feet. It is all blue with just a line of white cloud, under which you know there must be land."

Richard's previous book and exhibition, *Abstract Earth*, also featured aerials, but since then he has made two more trips around Australia, picking up an amazing collection of work.

"I've been working on this book for five or six years and I have probably spent more time in the air than ever before because the book has to be better than the previous ones. I also knew the gaps I wanted to fill – and I was very fortunate to have Lake Eyre flooding as well.

"Limiting your point of view, such as shooting from the air, narrows your vision, but it also intensifies the way you see things.

"I decided I wanted to shoot more photographs of the Kimberley coastline and make use of the peak tides. Flying over the landscape near Derby, you see incredible landscape appearing out of the super low tides. It was really revealing and I simply couldn't take enough photos.

"Australia is not spectacular like South America or the Himalayas, but its landscapes are unique and the result of millions of years of erosion. The only way you can really appreciate their structure is to fly over them."





Cooper's Creek, near Windorah, Queensland.

Technique

Richard's earlier work was naturally all shot on film, but today he is comfortable working with his Canon EOS 5D.

"The most useful lens is the 24-105mm and I use it most of the time, although to get in closer, a 70-200mm is helpful. With these two lenses I can shoot anything from the air, but of course, shooting is very weather and season dependent. If it's hazy, I might be flying at 1000 feet, whereas if it's clear, we might get up to 5 000 or 6 000 feet."

Richard says he avoided photographing the cities and the towns because he felt other photographers had already covered this, but he has a few agricultural patterns and man-made structures where he liked the abstraction.

"It has taken me a long time to see the diversity of the Australian landscape. I think I'm looking at it differently now, paying homage to what is there. It might not have the spectacular changes from season to season that you see in Europe or the huge mountain peaks of Asia, but it has these wonderful structural patterns that have evolved over the eons.

"I think it's important to emphasise and be inspired by the environment we live in, especially in these times when we are on the edge of affecting the world with global warming. Through photography we are much more aware of the world than we have ever been before."

Richard prefers shooting from a plane over a helicopter, partly because of the vibration. "In a plane, I've taken photos at

1/100 second and they can still be sharp. This assumes you're at the right height – when you're higher up, the land below is moving more slowly.

"If you need faster shutter speeds, the digital cameras let you increase the ISO setting and so I'm usually shooting at 1/500 second or faster."

And although Richard's Canon EOS would let him shoot lots of images, his experience with medium format film and 10 shots per roll means he is still being selective. "I never use the motor drive," he laughs. "When I see something in the distance, I will open up the window and shoot it from a couple of different angles. If it's really good, we might fly around it as well."

Richard says the biggest challenge in shooting from the air around Australia using a light plane is the logistics of getting from one airfield to the next and having fuel. Generally speaking, he has a maximum of four hours' flying, so planning is very important.

However, shooting from a plane does have its advantages. Last year he planned to shoot South Australia around Victor Harbour, but the weather closed in and looked poor for the next week, so he simply flew north and shot somewhere else!

"But these are limitations you have to work with and I'm fine-tuning my attitude to the subject. It's just like someone working in a studio with lights – with practice they are able to refine the process and it's no different when shooting from the air."



Farmland, Avon Valley, W.A.



Farmland with wildlife corridors, east of Southern Cross, W.A.

INSIGHT

Emigrating from Holland (The Netherlands), Richard Woldendorp spent three years in Indonesia before making his way down to Fremantle in the early 1950s. He says by this time he was used to life outside Europe, but even with five years in technical school and four years in the army, he hadn't actually done a day's practical work!

"I was always interested in landscape painting which I studied in Holland, so when I arrived in Australia and mentioned the words 'landscape' and 'painting', they gave me a job painting houses.

"After a year, my boss moved into dry-cleaning and I took over the business which comprised a plank, two tresses and a few brushes. I worked for MacRobertson Miller Airlines and country builders and soon found myself travelling all over Western Australia." This experience was to be pivotal for Richard.

In 1955 he took six months off and went back to Holland and bought a 6x9 Voigtlander camera. "It was an amazing contraption and a pleasure to use," enthused Richard who still fondly owns the camera today.

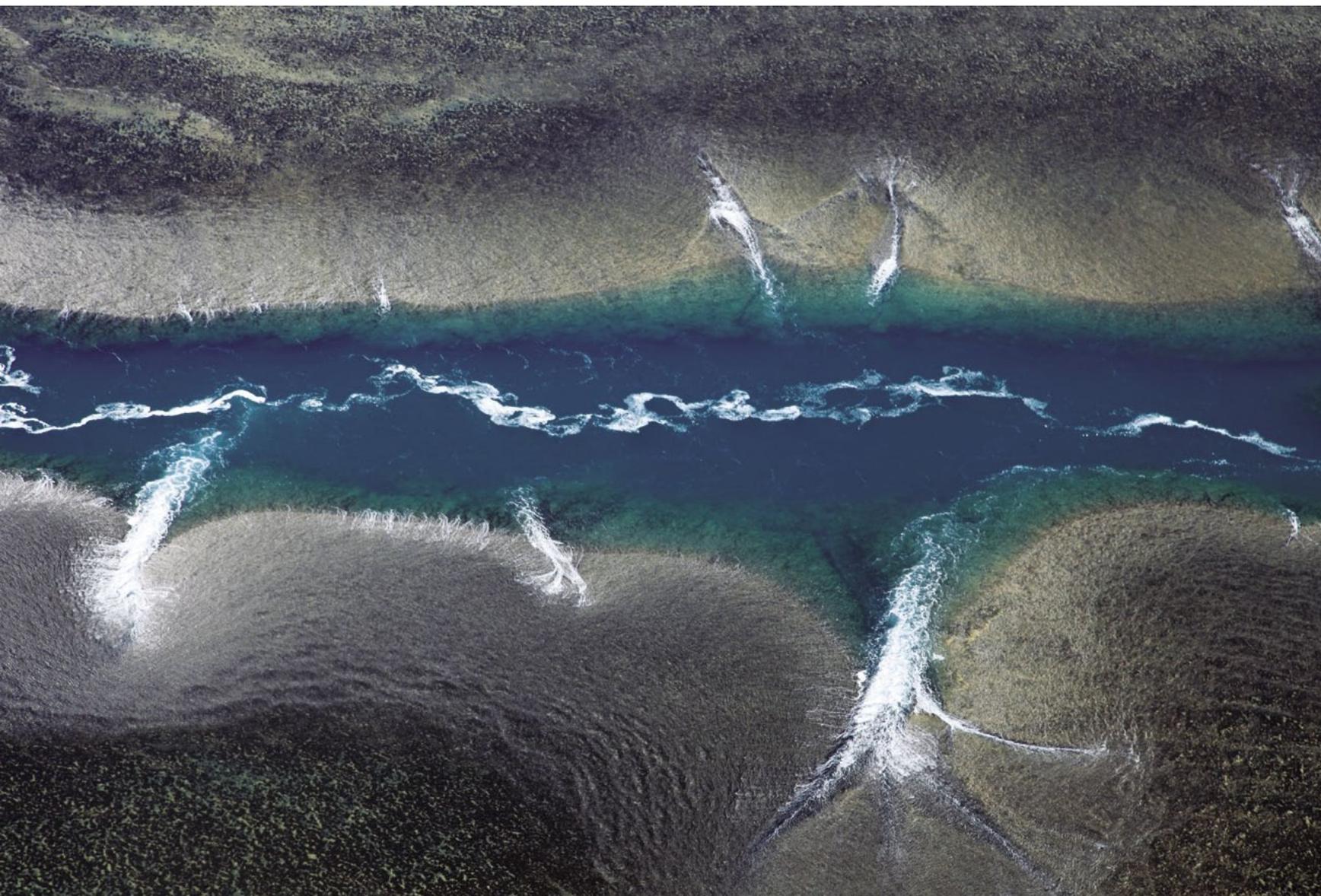
"When I had the films processed, I knew I was going to be a photographer."

Richard built up a portfolio of work and travelled to Australia's Eastern States. He visited magazines and publishers and met photographers such as Athol Shmith, Max Dupain and David Moore. "The magazines and businesses all said we can use someone like you in Western Australia," said Richard modestly, explaining that because Western Australia was so remote in those days, photographers couldn't just jump on a plane like they do today.

"So that's why I returned to Western Australia. I also worked for Hamersley Iron and The Australian Tourist Commission. I didn't want to have a studio because it would mean people brought work to me and that would tie me down. I wanted to be completely freelance so I could go anywhere at the drop of a hat."

This freedom gave Richard a great insight to Australia and the idea for his first book, *The Hidden Face of Australia* which he produced with Peter Slater.

Following the success of his first book, Richard is now one of Australia's most published and exhibited landscape photographers.



Tidal variations, Montgomery Reef, Kimberley W.A.

Flying Partnership

Richard explains that when he is in the air, he's mainly looking for abstract forms and the identity of the landscape. "It's always a flight of discovery. You can fly over an area in the morning and it will look completely different when you fly back in the afternoon. And you never know what to expect because the weather or recent rain can make areas look completely different.

"I like the idea that down below is a living world. I will leave the technical side about what is living there to the scientists. I'm not explaining anything, I'm just recording the structure and the patterns, and the seasonal variation.

"When I went around Australia the first time, shooting from the ground, everything was new and different. But that was 55 years ago. Ayers Rock and the Blue Mountains were important, but now we've seen enough of them, so I need to find other aspects of the landscape that are worth looking at and recording."

Richard has a friend who is a pilot and owns a Cessna

180. They have worked out their seating arrangements very satisfactorily.

"He sits in front with his wife next to him, and I sit in the back and tell him where to fly! He is quite small, so I have good access through the windows and I can shoot out either side. Also being a 180, the front wheels are a little further forward which means I can shoot straight down if needed."

On some trips, Richard might only take a dozen photographs because the landscape doesn't change very much, but then suddenly he will come to an area with lots of variation and he will shoot a lot of material in a short period.

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"It's one thing to make people aware of the beauty of the world, but another to also have a purpose behind it. When I go into the bush, I want to make photographs and this gives you extra intensity to look at things. Photographers are very fortunate."