



By Mary McGrath
Kelly Muncie
*Breaths of Life,
Down Under*



So many photographers spend years not only crafting their skills, but also amassing an arsenal of equipment, mastering their marketing and trying to take better pictures. When I interviewed Kelly Munce, I saw in her images tremendous talent from someone who hasn't been shooting very long. At 37, Kelly's work demonstrates that it's not the toys you have that make for outstanding photography; it's how you interpret what's in front of the lens.

Born in Muswellbrog in New South Wales, Australia, Kelly now lives in Newcastle. According to her, she has always

been a creative person, even though her family always considered her a bit weird. Says Kelly, "For years, I thought this was meant in a bad way. I have now realized it is a gift to see things differently from others. I was always looking for something to make or do."

As Kelly certainly has a multitude of creative gifts, it's no surprise that her journey into photography was unusual. By 23, she was raising three little girls all under the age of 3. For the 13 years following, Kelly, alongside her husband, continued to raise her children. For work, she took on unchal-

lenging odd jobs with the longest of them all lasting only four months. With the support of her husband, who earned a good living, Kelly was eventually able to explore her creative desires.

A pivotal conversation with her neighbor spurred Kelly into artistic action when they discussed what they wanted to be "when they grew up," after their children did the same. Kelly joked, "I don't know, but it's coming. I can feel it. I'm going to be famous one day for something." Her neighbor reminded her about the photo Kelly took of her when she was nine months pregnant



with her eldest child, and that perhaps she should consider a career in photography. The conversation made Kelly aware of the few photos she had of her three girls.

She purchased a small Kodak EasyShare

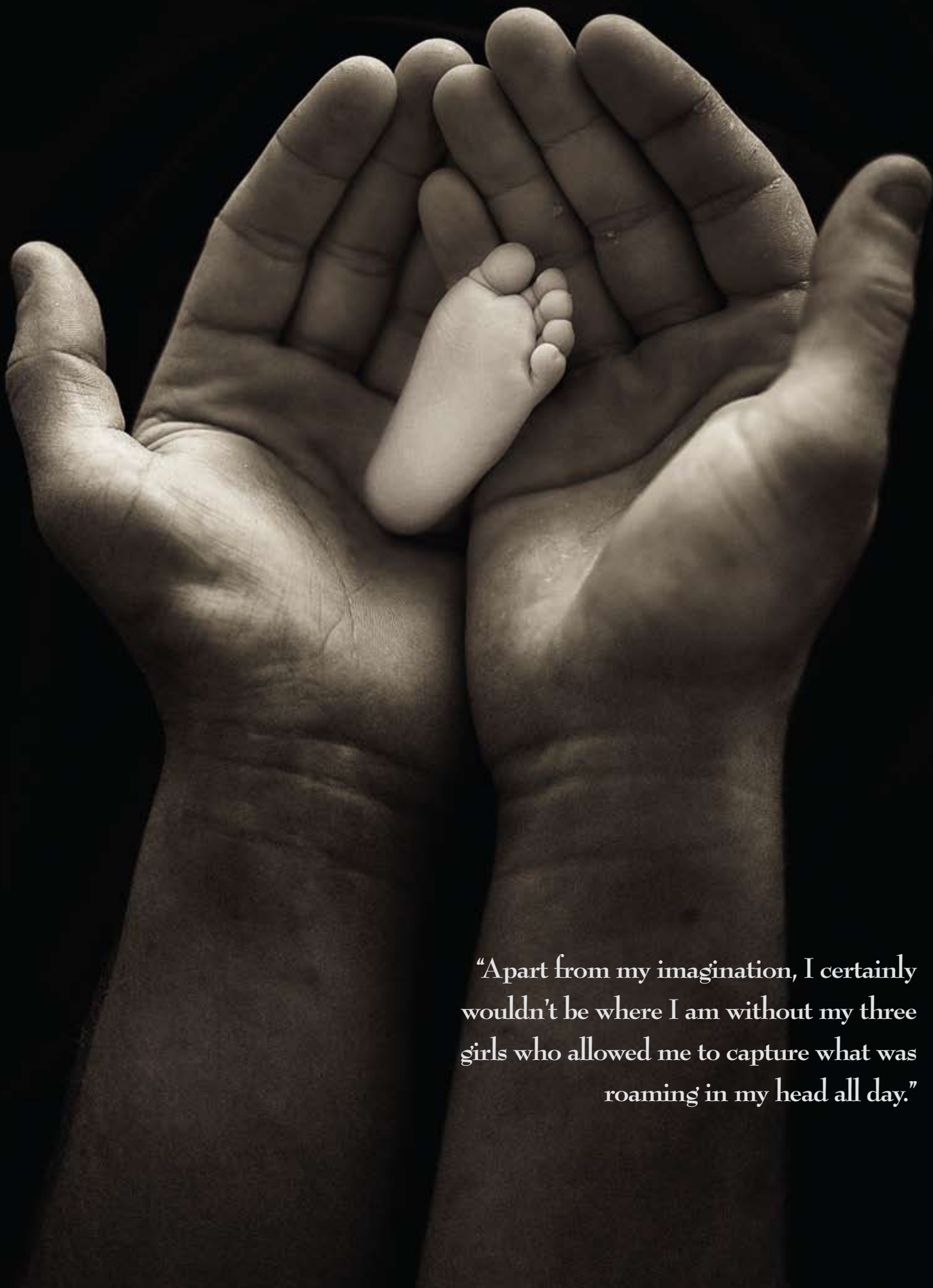
DX6490 but, since she had no idea how to use it, the camera sat in the box for ages. Soon enough though, she discovered a local photographer who taught classes. Although it was a film-based class, Kelly

soon found herself immersed in her digital camera, taking photos of just about anything, including a moth buzzing around her desk light. A few weeks after starting the class, Kelly entered a photo of her middle daughter into a competition, and to her surprise, the image won second place. In fact, she won two awards that day; an amazing feat, since Kelly was still an amateur. The awards started flooding in after that and she was on her way. She had finally found a creative outlet that worked.

Mary McGrath: To what do you attribute your success?

Kelly Munce: Apart from my imagination, I certainly wouldn't be where I am without my three girls who allowed me to capture what was roaming in my head all day. As soon as school would be over, off we'd go until way after dark, and shoot, shoot, shoot. Without them, future clients would not have been able to see the kind of work I wanted to do.

Also without the wonderful Rob and Shirl Heyman, and Lindsay Merritt, I would've given up long ago. Rob opened



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me up to the world of Rembrandt lighting and other masters. These three beautiful people have totally believed in me, and have been there for me when I thought I could not do this anymore. To the three of them, I owe so much. They totally rock!

MM: Do you have a favorite theme in your photography? A favorite photo?

KM: Water, especially with pregnant women, would have to be my favorite theme, and funnily enough, I am scared of the water. Quite funny how I throw my clients into the water, yet I wouldn't do it. I also love art pieces, turning my photos into a beautiful piece of art on canvas and seeing it hang on a client's wall. It's done with blur, motion, textures, grain or a combination of all of these.

But, I'm actually not a fan of my own work; I get bored with it very quickly. But a couple of images that stand out are the "Blue Water Pregnancy," "Miss Understood" (pg. 135), "I Fell Off My Bike" (bottom, pg. 136) and the photo of the Pasha Bulka (see left, bottom). All these photos tell me something without knowing the story behind it.

MM: Name three of the biggest challenges to becoming a successful photographer.

KM: Having thick skin, being able to take criticism and learn from it; the time it takes from your real life, although it's quickly become my family's real life; and earning enough money to keep going.

MM: What type of equipment do you use such as cameras, hardware, software and lighting?

KM: I use a Canon EOS 5D, with mainly two lenses. The "el cheapo" 50mm f/1.8, although I desperately want the f/1.2 and the EF 70–200mm f/2.8L IS USM. That's pretty much it. I will sometimes use a video light also. I work only on Mac computers, mainly my MacBook Pro Laptop, with Photoshop CS3. I'm boring, that's it.

MM: Are you involved in any other creative pursuits besides photography? Any books, films or other projects?

KM: Not at this stage. I have a few things I would like to get involved with later down the track. But as yet, I am just concentrating on getting into my target market with clients here, getting situated in the area where we have recently moved and getting my name and style out there. Those are my number one priorities at the moment.

MM: How has WPPI impacted your photography and your business?

KM: It's given me a total boost of confidence, knowing your peers see something in your work, getting an award among all the other photographers in the world, and so far, the most exciting, is being in *Rangefinder*.

A priority for me right now is to show future clients that photography is so much more




particular challenges shooting women who are pregnant?

KM: I have been driven to shooting pregnant women and babies, since for so much of my life, I was either pregnant or breast-feeding. So I get a connection with [pregnant women] straight away. Since I don't have my own photos to show for it, I want them to realize that without their own photos, they will soon forget the short time they were pregnant. I want these children to be able to see what mum looked like while they were in her tummy. To have an undated, gorgeous print or canvas of that child on the wall in 18 years is just too special for words.

The only challenges I find when shooting pregnant women are they worry that they look fat. But when getting down to the nitty-gritty of why they think they look fat, it's usually their face that they hate, so I really try to make the belly a focal point, and not the face.

And babies, each baby is a challenge within itself. I let the baby determine how he/she wants to be photographed. I try not to push the boundaries much. After all, we are trying to capture their tiny little ways, how they look and the little things they do that mum and dad will remember.

Kelly's motherhood images clearly illustrate her talent and ability to skew the viewer's eye to a new way of looking at pregnancy. Portraits of women, babies and teens unveil a dark moody vision of untold beauty. An award-winning photographer who only opened her studio three years ago, Kelly Munce's boundless talent is sure to grow. To view

more of Kelly's work visit www.kellymuncephotography.com and www.kellymuncephotography.blogspot.com. 

than just having a family portrait done. It's about having something to pass down to future generations, something that will last forever and, most of all, something that doesn't simply show them looking at the camera. Winning these awards with WPPI has helped me achieve that.

MM: People seem to be an important part of your photographic efforts. Is there

a particular reason for this?

KM: Because I don't believe that I can take landscape photos, I find I always want to put a character into a landscape to complete more of a story.

MM: It seems as though a large percentage of your work is devoted to some aspect of motherhood. Is it difficult to shoot babies? What are some of the challenges? Any

Mary McGrath is a freelance writer and photographer whose work has appeared in Newsweek.com, MSNBC.com, WPPI, AfterCapture magazine and many other publications. She can be reached through her website at: www.marymcgrathphotography.com.