



*Exclusive
Interview with*

**NICOLA
DAVISON-REED**

By Anne Pinto-Rodrigues

About

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Nicola Davison-Reed is a UK-based photographer with a natural light studio in the Robin Hood county of Nottinghamshire.

Nicola shoots portraiture, conceptual, street and weddings; predominantly in black & white. She photographs with two Canons and tends to use homemade backdrops and a bed sheet. Everything she has in her studio has been scored from the local charity shop or has been cobbled together by her, from things she has found lying around.

When her professional assignments are done, Nicola practices and experiments with her

personal photography. She loves shooting street portraits, and uses her Canon 5d mark II and pancake lens for this purpose. For the editing and developing process, she uses Lightroom and Exposure7 respectively. She also enjoys Conceptual Photography immensely.

Nicola divides her time between her work and her family, which includes her husband, two daughters and several pets.





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Hello Nicola! Thank you for agreeing to this interview with Lens Magazine. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born in Sheffield, raised in the Robin Hood county of Nottinghamshire, and I continue to live and work there. I'm a photographer as well as a mum of two daughters. My family also includes my husband and our pets - a cat, a dog and a hamster. Sadly, the fish died last week. My family is everything to me.

I've been interested in photography since I was a young girl and have always made photographs, developing and enlarging my own prints in my bedsit when film was the only option. These days, I'm all digital but maybe one day, I will return to the trays and the reels again.

I have lived in Australia for a year, in Greece, in Italy and in France; working in flower farms, telemarketing, the grapevines, au-pairing, begging and borrowing, so as to travel and see a bit of the world, which I managed to do. Although sometimes, I didn't know where the next night's sleep was going to be. The whole adventure was totally worth it.

Please tell us a little bit about your journey as a photographer.

My photography journey started during the long, hot summer of 1975, in Blackpool, with an instant Polaroid and my family. With two sisters and a brother, I had plenty of muses to capture around the sand dunes. I can imagine the journey of a lot of photographers from the seventies, started with the Instamatic.



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My inspiration comes from various places - art, music, dreams, literature, societal values, rules, laws, injustice, prejudice, oppression in any form, and of course, the great masters of photography like Eugène Atget, André Kertész, Ansel Adams, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Bill Brandt. The list is endless. Not to mention, the more recent photographers like Chris Friel, Sally Mann, Francesca Woodman, Claude Cahun. Again, the list is endless.

I'm inspired by everyone I meet and everything. There is always somebody or

something to be inspired by. It's the very backbone of my experience and then my work. I can have an innocent, gentle conversation with a stranger and something they do or say can springboard my inspiration.

Your images have an ethereal and mysterious quality about them. How did you zero-in on B&W photography and this unique style of imagery?

When I was 18, my dad bought me a DIY camera kit (an SLR if you like), with all the

gear for developing your own films. From that time, my choice of film has been B&W. The photography books I read were all B&W masters. I just had a natural preference for it. I had experienced the colour Polaroid era and I wanted to learn about B&W.

The still life, the blurred motion and hidden identity images are my personal reaction to the world I live in, have lived in, escaping to or inviting in. My studio allows me not only the physical space but also the inner space required to explore my creativity.

Do you shoot in colour at all?

For my studio business, I shoot in colour, turning images to B&W when colour fails in the photograph. The business folios are mostly in colour. Weddings are 50-50. My portraits, conceptual and street are always B&W.

What are your favourite subjects to photograph?

My favourite subjects to photograph are strangers for my '30 Seconds of Street' project. In this seemingly hostile and fast-paced world, I like to stop for 30 seconds and say, "Hey, look at you. Look at me, looking at you. Look at me, looking at you, looking at me." And in this street portrait, I like to think a connection is made.

Maybe this desire for connection comes from missing all the close friendships that I had made over the years in college, while travelling, and working in the West End in London.

I never found friendships like those again.



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When I met my husband, I returned to my hometown but everyone there had their alliances. I had left all of mine behind and had to start all over again.

What does a work day look like for you?

The day starts with looking at my diary, as these days I can't seem to remember anything. Then the school run, although my youngest is leaving primary school in a few weeks. Whoop, whoop! I drive 8 minutes to my studio, unlock and put out my street sign to say, 'NDR is open for business'.

Put the kettle on, turn on the iMac, go through my mobile phone notes section and work through all the things I've made a note of in there.

If I have a portrait shoot, I check all the available light pools in my studio. I have three rooms in an old building above a shop. I don't use lighting. So each day, the natural light is unique and I move my portrait chairs, v-flats around to maintain the best natural light possible. My clients arrive, I spend time getting to know them and then I shoot. When they leave, I edit and add all the images to an online gallery which the client can access and choose a fine art print. My landlord is a fine art printer, so I got lucky!

I eat, breathe, drink, sleep, photography. There is no 'off' button. But I don't need one. It's as important to me as one of my children. It is my third child.

Any memorable moment you'd like to share with our readers?

I can't think of just 'one' memorable moment to share. There are too many! I'm an ultra-sensitive person. So for me, every moment is memorable. It's like trying to find that one drop that makes the ocean. It's impossible!

What are the challenges you face while going about your work?

The challenges are unbelievable. But I'm not going to say what they are. One of the things I've learnt along the way is that some things are best kept to yourself.

But if you want one, it is trying to work out who you can trust, who won't take advantage of your vulnerabilities.

What is next for you?

I have some idea of what is next for me. Although I do share a lot on social media, I think it is wise to retain some things for yourself. As I get older, I am learning to do this without guilt, and with grace. Suffice to say, I have a focus.





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This is a special issue of Lens Magazine focusing on women photographers. What advice do you have for aspiring female photographers or those starting out in the field?

One piece of advice I would give aspiring female photographers is to not be the hound sent down the hole to fetch the ferret. Meaning to say, don't do all the work for someone else to take it all from you without credit. Be careful with your ideas. Share but not to your own starvation.

Also, I've heard people talk up gadgets, lenses, studio equipment but still resulting in the same old, same old. No voice, just an echo. My advice would be let life happen. Don't kill the picture.

Stay hungry and keep your camera by your bedside.





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ANNE PINTO-RODRIGUES



Anne is a writer and a storyteller, with a keen interest in nature photography and fine arts. Having lived in 5 cities, in 4 countries, across 3 continents, and having travelled long-term to several more places, she identifies as a global citizen.

When she is not out exploring, she can be found crafting articles for magazines or blogging about her travel experiences on her blog **'No Roads Barred'**. Anne has contributed to inflight magazines like Holland Herald (KLM), Silkwinds (Silk Air), SilverKris (Singapore Airlines) as well as cross-cultural publications like Passage and ScandAsia. She writes about a variety of topics, from nature and indigenous art to history and culture.

Anne lived in Singapore for nearly six years, and in 2015, researched and authored a 200-page coffee table book on the decorative tiles seen in the heritage precincts of the city. This book briefly traces the history of tiles from nearly 6,000 years ago to modern day Singapore, and was well received, both by the general public and the media.

During her time venturing through the rainforests of Asia, Anne dabbled in nature photography, an interest she hopes to continue pursuing as soon as she is settled in her new home city of Amsterdam.

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