

## Photographer and Filmmaker, Kelvin Murray

Dec 31, 2020 | Rachel Brinton Matthews

[Rachel Brinton-Matthews]: Let's start at the very beginning...how did you get into the world of photography? Did you study it at college?

[Kelvin Murray]: I didn't study photography. I actually studied economics and psychology at university for no other reason than at the time it meant that I could leave home and go a long way away which felt like a very good thing at that age!

When I was in my early 20's, I assisted two different photographers and both experiences were crucially important in forming the photographer I am today.

The first person I got a job with was a still life photographer, so I started out creating that style of photography. I'm still really proud of my early still life work as it helped my craft and developed my portfolio. From my still life work, I then started getting booked for location shoots. I began shooting for a wide range of brands, from Dunhill to Tropicana, and started travelling all around the world for shoots.

[RBM]: Where do you get inspiration for your shoots?

[KM]: A lot of the inspiration just comes from things I see every day. One time I rode past these queues of people waiting for buses in the rain. They were all putting different things on their head to shelter from the rain which looked hilarious. There was a sense of comedic depression in it all and it inspired me to create something similar for a shoot. Humour is important to me and creeps into all aspects of what I do.

My two boys are also great sources of inspiration and I photograph them a lot. In fact, a lot of those personal shots go into my portfolio now and they get me other work. Commissioners can see you doing something a bit different and because you have such an intimate relationship with the sitter, you get work that has this added element of value.

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[RBM]: Do you approach your Getty productions differently than other paid work?

[KM]: Yes and no. I care about the stories I tell and the quality of the final product and that is the same for my Getty work and commissions. I also use my shoots for Getty to help me leave my comfort zone. I think photographers can be prone to hunker down in their comfort zone and not want to leave and that means that you get a narrower and narrower range of commissioning clients. With Getty, I can do anything because it's me who is paying for it. I can go out there and shoot things that I would never get permission to do and then that feeds into my portfolio and my website - so in creative terms, it's not so

different. I just have more freedom.

[RBM]: How do you begin your production process? Does it start with a story or is it driven by location or casting etc?

[KM]: Everything starts with my art director. I will be led by their suggestions on the subjects and together we develop a brief that has a strong story and purpose. I obviously want the content to be commercial, but I also need the emotional hook behind the narrative to help me deliver an amazing final product. Building a strong story is the best way to do this.

Then once we're set on the story, casting is next. Casting is super important, if you get it wrong, then you may end up wasting the whole shoot. I put a lot of energy into casting and if I can't get the right cast, I'll probably keep on casting and just push the shoot date back a week or two.

[RBM]: We've worked together on a number of shoots now and I know you tend to have a decent sized crew with you. What's your advice for collaborating vs working alone on shoots?

[KM]: I never shoot alone, not if I can possibly help it. I might shoot a very small stills project with one assistant for example, but for the most part, I will always have a crew of experts. With video, it's so important to collaborate as, for the type of shoot I am producing with multiple sets, lighting, and costume changes - it would be impossible to do solo.

It's really important to put the effort in with your crew at the start of the day. Their mood can have a massive impact on the shape of your day and I've learned from previous experiences that a bad atmosphere on set filters quickly into the cast and then the content...

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[RBM]: Very sound advice, don't underrate your crew!! What do you think is the most overrated aspect of shooting?

[KM]: I think people are obsessed by equipment. I don't think it matters so much as long as you've got an appropriate camera for what you're trying to achieve. Great ideas trump great equipment for sure. Although if you're planning on shooting video make sure you have a record function at least!

[RBM]: How was your transition into shooting video? What have you learned about yourself as a video director?

[KM]: I like video and I'm getting more and more excited by the storytelling aspects of moving images as it's more three dimensional, so you can do more. I've been very happy to turn my hand to video because that's becoming an increasing part of what my clients want.

There are challenging parts, such as getting coverage, which is when you find all the different angles and

perspectives to tell the story. It took me a couple of years to get my head around that. Directing is more challenging with video because you're telling a story in twenty seconds, not in a fraction of a second. And that means the casting is a lot more important as they need to be able to carry their motivation longer. I had to learn a lot of new terminology when moving into video, such as the different shot types. This is so I could easily communicate with my video crew when asking for a different viewpoint. Some of the terminology is used in photography, but a lot was new to me so it's well worth becoming familiar with the terminology if you are new to video.

[RBM]: A great tip for all our budding filmmakers out there! Do you have any other advice for up-and-coming creatives?

[KM]: Be prepared to adapt. Things move fast these days and it's of no use to you to try and fight it. A few years back one of my agents was sick of me moaning about life and asking, "why can't it go back to being like it was". They suggested I read a book called *Who Moved My Cheese*. It's a very small book, a simple parable about the need to face change. It worked for me!