

## Photographer, Lydia Whitmore

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[Lauren Catten]: Could you tell me a bit about your background?

[Lydia Whitmore]: I grew up in a remote part of the Sussex countryside and as soon as I had the chance went to art school in London. From there, I worked in a film lab and somehow talked my way into a job assisting a photographer. I think it had more to do with the fact that I make a great quiche (part of the job was cooking every day)!

[LC]: How do you feel art and photography influence your compositions?

[LW]: I studied painting in art school and strangely I've found that it's very similar to photography in terms of creative approach. You just have a different physical way of adding a bit of a highlight here or moving a shadow there. I'm really into Matthew Barney for his approach to making work.

[LC]: You're obviously a great photographer, but your set designs are also amazing – is this an aspect of the process you particularly enjoy?

[LW]: I've learnt over the years to not try and do everything myself. It's very easy for me to get this mindset of 'if you want something done right, do it yourself' but I've come to the conclusion that collaborating is actually one of the strongest things you can do – to open yourself and your ideas up to someone else's perspective.

[LC]: What has been your best set?

[LW]: I just did an editorial shoot with set designer [Jaina Minton](#) that involved giant paper Walkmans and cassettes. It was so much fun and something I would never have been able to make myself.

[LC]: I love the way you are able to create these other worlds in your work, what led you to experimenting in that way?

[LW]: I grew up in a fairly remote part of the world. I think I was trying to make fantasy worlds from a young age. I was inspired by the woods around me and what I saw in the horror videos my brother used to sneak home.

[LC]: What would you say is a trademark Lydia treatment?

[LW]: I feel like I've always had a consistent style and there's no point fighting against that or you'll just lose yourself. I tend to make things look fairly punchy, bright, and aggressive. I've tried to be feminine and delicate but it's just not me!

[LC]: How did you get started in photography? Did you begin with still life or was that a transition as you discovered what you liked to shoot?

[LW]: I stumbled into photography in general when I started assisting a photographer full time. I had no technical experience at all, but he just had amazing faith that I would learn. But suddenly for me all the pieces fell into place and I realised it was exactly what I wanted to be doing.

[LC]: Do you strike at random as an idea comes, or are you more methodical?

[LW]: I have a constant notebook of ideas that I'm always adding to, and when I get a chance between commercial jobs I dip into it and figure out what I can achieve with what I have in terms of time, budget, and materials.

[LC]: What's the most important mistake you've made while photographing and how did it change your understanding of your job?

[LW]: For the most part when I approach a job I know exactly how it's going to come out because there's so much planning involved. If there are any unknowns, I'll usually schedule in a test day so that I can anticipate any problems. I think there are more happy accidents in fashion photography and I do miss that sense of capturing a moment.

[LC]: Do you have any particular themes or props that you like to revisit?

[LW]: I always seem to keep going back to the same themes in my personal work, which are futuristic sci-fi style landscapes and more Wicker Man type ritual altars.

[LC]: What do you do to keep things exciting day to day and keep progressing? Do you look at any magazines or sites for inspiration?

[LW]: I tend to find inspiration in films more than anything else, I feel that sometimes following other still life photographers' work on social media can result in feeling more competitive than creative. I think it's good to look outside of your own industry. For me, horror films are super inspiring!

[LC]: Is there an image that stands out to you in your own archive as a moment that was extra challenging to capture or feels more special than the rest?

[LW]: It's an amazing feeling when you suddenly nail something and you realise it's going to be an image you'll have in your folio forever. I did feel like that about one of the last shoots I did for Getty Images!

[LC]: What would you say to people coming up through the process to be a professional photographer?

[LW]: I would say that the best way to get into the industry, and a good way to figure out if it's something you really want to do, is to assist as many people as possible. You'll get a really good feeling for what the job really entails, it's much more than just technical proficiency.

[LC]: What is your go-to app?

[LW]: I guess that we're all pretty deeply immersed in Instagram but I really try to stay away from my phone as much as possible. Having said that, [Exhibitionary](#) is an app for finding exhibitions and openings and it's amazing!

[LC]: What are you listening to at the moment?

[LW]: There are some really amazing cosmic jazz-inspired artists around like Kamasi Washington, Shabazz Palaces, and Flying Lotus.

[LC]: What is the view from your window?

[LW]: I look directly onto the train tracks of Haggerston station in London so I try to keep the blinds shut, because bored commuters tend to just stand and stare at me!

[LC]: What is next on the cards for you?

[LW]: I'm planning to make a short horror film with a friend of mine. It's something we both keep coming back to and hopefully we'll crack it one of these days!