



David Potts

Colour Work

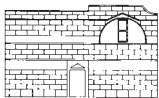
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COLLECTORS' LIST No. 142, 2010

David Potts: Colour Work

Compiled by Josef & Jeanne Lebovic, Lenka Miklos

On exhibition from Wednesday, 3 March to Saturday, 17 April and on
our website from 13 March 2010.

Prices are in Australian dollars and include GST.

Exchange rates at time of printing: AUD \$1.00 = USD \$0.89¢; UK £0.57p

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On Saturday, 6 March 2010 at noon, Josef Lebovic will give a floor
talk on his latest exhibition as part of Art Month Sydney.

Art Month Sydney is a new month-long festival that celebrates the
vibrancy and diversity of Sydney's thriving visual arts scene. The
inaugural Art Month Sydney runs from 1–31 March 2010, uniting

the various elements of the city's art world under one umbrella for the first time. A
diverse cross-section of art will be showcased with more than 70 of Sydney's leading
commercial galleries, artist-run initiatives, public art museums and auction houses
hosting exhibitions, talks, behind-the-scenes tours and special events across the city.
People of all ages and art inclinations are invited to engage with the work of artists as
part of the first Art Month Sydney.

David Potts' long and distinguished career as a pioneer of Australian
documentary photography masks some interesting creative
contradictions. Born in 1926, Potts first trained as a photographer
with the Russell Roberts Studio in Sydney before moving to London
in 1950 to seek work with pioneering publications that were then
using documentary photography innovatively – the *Observer*
newspaper, *LIFE* magazine and *Picture Post*. From the beginning
David Potts saw beyond the orthodoxies of photojournalism. The
impressionistic colour work that he first produced during his time in
London may seem at odds with his better known witty, often acerbic
observations of British (and European) life made then. Potts had
refined his craft in Britain, regularly making strong black and white
photographs that communicated social comment at the highest
level. The young Australian became as comfortable photographing
cat shows in London as he did a man striding through the troubled
village lanes of the recently partitioned Mediterranean island of
Cyprus. During the 1950s one might easily have assumed Potts to
be a classic photojournalist, pure and simple. Not so.

Despite his proven ability
to reflect British post-war
life as accurately as *Henley
Couple*, 1953, and his
classic pet show image *Best
in Show*, 1953, Potts had
already begun searching for
a more free, extravagant,
colourful palette, perhaps
as a creative counterpoint
to his accomplished black
and white documentary
photographs. His reasons
for experimenting with colour at that time and creating such
adventurous compositions as *Piccadilly Circus, London*, 1953,



were, he recalled recently, “Very simple. I wanted to explore what the available colour films would do.” *LIFE* magazine were introduced to Potts’ photographs and paid 25 guineas to see his first images. These works slightly predate the elegant colourist compositions of legendary fellow *LIFE* photographers such as Ernst Haas. In his 1953 image Potts transforms the familiar London landmark into a swirling mandala of colour. “I had a Linhof 5x4 view camera I had bought from Max Dupain with a [film] back that rotated 360 degrees. I simply wanted to see what using the camera’s movements – turning the film around – would do [to Piccadilly Circus] during a long exposure.”

The year 1953 proved to be a very good year for the young Australian photojournalist. “I had covered the Queen’s Coronation for *LIFE* magazine as well as the Festival of Britain – the best festival I have ever been to,” Potts recalled recently. “Britain was a terrific place [then]. They had recently announced the first jet airliner, the Comet, and television had just been introduced.”

David Potts would flourish in 1950s London, working for all of the great magazines pioneering photojournalism – *LIFE*, the *Observer* newspaper and the now legendary *Picture Post*. But against his elegant, concise documentary style, there was a growing, opposite side to the Australian photographer’s creative palette. With a mixture of discipline and playfulness Potts had begun an exploration of hue and form that continues to this day. Despite his accomplished black and white photography, the young Australian photographer, working in the photographic ferment of London in the 1950s, appears drawn to the sensual richness of colour itself – and a liberating visual grammar of longer exposures coupled with a full exploitation of the view camera’s ability to control perspective and depth of field.

On returning to Australia in 1955 David Potts soon revealed what he had learned, showing both his documentary images and several

distinctly painterly colour photographs in the influential exhibition *Six Photographers* at David Jones Art Gallery in Sydney.

In recent years David Potts has continued his exploration of colour photography, using mundane subjects such as licorice confectionery and, perhaps with a nod to Edward Weston, a capsicum. “I remember reading where Tina Modotti went shopping and noticed capsicums she thought Weston might like to photograph. After he had taken the picture that became famous Modotti and Weston both dined on the capsicum. Weston remarked later, in his *Daybooks*, that he felt like a cannibal.” Potts then added that the licorice allsorts in his photograph also did not survive – and he understood how Modotti and Weston felt.



In seeing the colourist fantasies and still life images David Potts has made over six decades, it is possible to glimpse the arc of a career that still has the capacity

to surprise. This veteran of Australian photography sees well beyond the first urgent, instinctive desire to make a photograph. Whether through social observation, or his playful (and sometimes edible) still life subjects David Potts invites us to appreciate photography with the same sense of wonder he still possesses.



By Robert McFarlane

Early Colour Work



1. **A Walk Around Piccadilly Circus, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 34 x 42.3cm.

\$1,350

Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."



2. **Catherine Wheel, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 34.2 x 41.9cm.

\$1,350

Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."



3. **Hennessy, Neon Signs, Piccadilly Circus, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 34 x 42.2cm.

\$1,350

Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."...



4. **Slow Exposure Of A Pageant, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 34 x 33.9cm.

\$1,350

Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."

5. **Slow Exposure, Side Of Bus, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 33.9 x 33.9cm.

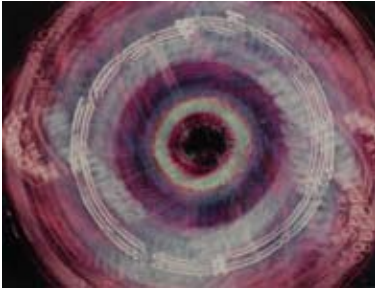
\$1,350

Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."

6. **Mural (Detail), The Festival Of Britain, London**, 1953/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated, annotated and signed in ink verso, 33.9 x 34cm.

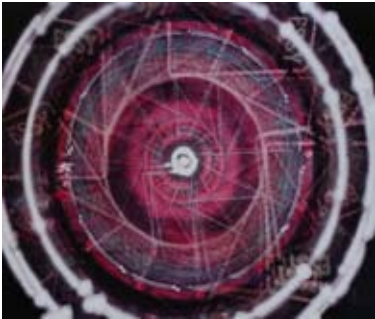
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Annotation reads "Exhibited – *Six Photographers*, David Jones Gallery, Sydney – 1955."



7. **Neon Signs (1), Piccadilly Circus, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33.9 x 43.9cm.

\$1,350



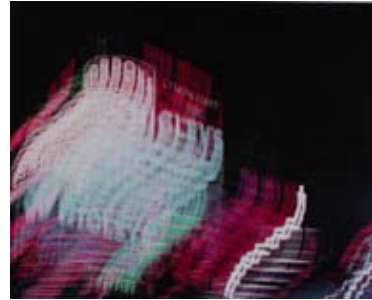
8. **Neon Signs (2), Piccadilly Circus, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33.9 x 43.6cm.

\$1,350



9. **No Right Turn, Piccadilly Circus, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 42 x 34cm.

\$1,350



10. **Lemon Hart, Neon Signs, Piccadilly Circus, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33.9 x 42.2cm.

\$1,350



11. **Merry-Go-Round, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 34 x 33.9cm.

\$1,350



12. **Wrigleys, Neon Signs, Piccadilly Circus, London, 1953/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 34.1 x 42.8cm.

\$1,350

Peace Lilies



13. **Homage To Ansel Adams, "Grass And Rain"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 21.9 x 32.9cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



14. **Homage To Ansel Adams, [Sand Dunes]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.6cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



15. **Homage To Ansel Adams, [Sky]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 21.6 x 33cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



16. **Homage To Bert Stern, Marilyn Monroe (From "The Last Sitting")**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.7cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



17. **Homage To Edward Steichen, 1995/2009.** Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.9cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



18. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Chambered Nautilus - Halved"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.6cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



19. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Nude" [I]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 22 x 33cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



20. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Nude" [II]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 21.6 x 33cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



21. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Pepper"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.8cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



22. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Shell"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.7cm.

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From the *Peace Lilies* series.



23. **Homage To Edward Weston, "Toad Stool"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 21.9 x 33cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



24. **Homage To Jean Dieuzeaide, "Dali Dans L'Eau, Cadaquès, Port Lligat"**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.5cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



25. **Homage To Julia Margaret Cameron, [Mrs Herbert Duckworth]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.9cm.

\$990

From the *Peace Lilies* series.



27. **Peace Lilies [1]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.7cm.

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From the *Peace Lilies* series.



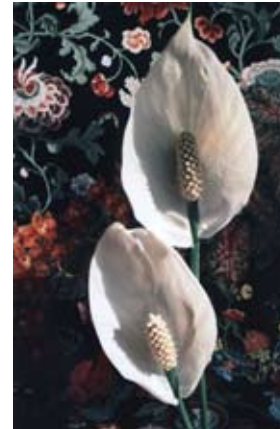
26. **Homage To Man Ray**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.8cm.

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From the *Peace Lilies* series.

29. **Capsicum**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.1cm.

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28. **Peace Lilies [2]**, 1995/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.2cm.

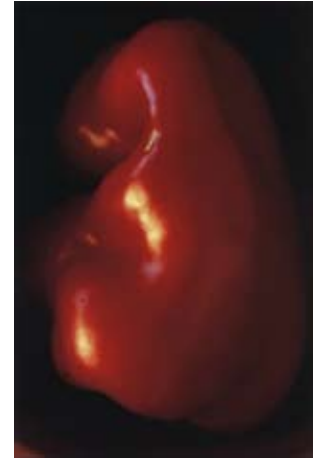
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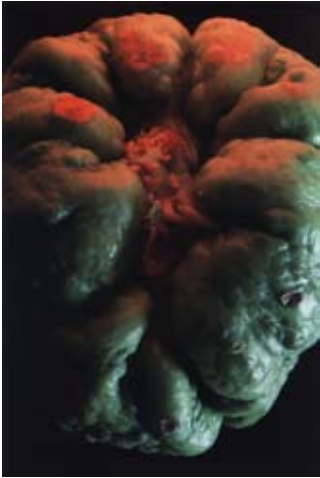
From the *Peace Lilies* series.

30. **Capsicum And Jaffas**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22cm.

\$990

Food





31. **Choko**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.7cm. \$990



33. **Ginger**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.6cm. \$990

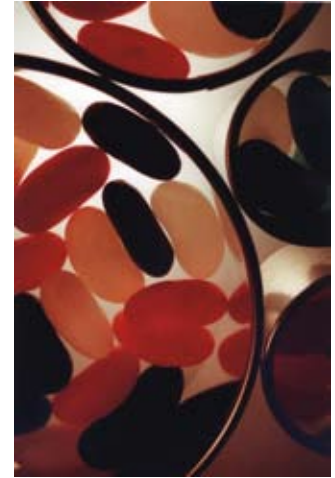


32. **Fennel**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.5cm. \$990

35. **Jelly Beans**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.7cm. \$990



34. **Jaffas And Onion Ring**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.7cm. \$990



36. **Kumera**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22.4cm. \$990



37. **Leaf And Onion Ring**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.7cm.

\$990



38. **Licorice**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.8cm.

\$990



39. **Licorice Stack**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22.3cm.

\$990



40. **Orange Ring And Leaf**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.8cm.

\$990



42. **Pumpkin Wrap**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.9cm.

\$990



41. **Pepper (Jaffas And Licorice Allsorts)**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 22 x 33cm.

\$990



43. **Witloof**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 21.5cm.

\$990

48. **Green Face (1), Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.9cm.

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Faces



45. **Face With Glasses, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 25cm.

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46. **Green Face (2), Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22.9cm.

\$990



44. **Soap**, 2003/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 22.8cm.

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47. **Green Face (3), Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.7cm.

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49. **Boy George, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22cm.

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51. **Laughing Face, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22.2cm.

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50. **Face, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 33 x 22.6cm.

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53. **The Lips, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 21.7cm.

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52. **Pop Face, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22cm.

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54. **The Eye, Poster (Detail)**, 2004/2009. Digital c-type photograph (captured on film and converted to digital format for printing), titled, dated and signed in ink verso, 32.9 x 22.7cm.

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