

PROFESSIONAL photographer

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FABULOUS FASHION

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Light FANTASTIC

ARTISTRY BEGINS WITH MASTERY

BRIAN SMITH, SUSAN TEARE,
BILL GEKAS, JAMIE HAYES

Sir Richard Branson
Founder of
Virgin Group

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that rivals medium-format

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sets the bar higher

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One-light wow: Multiple
a single strobe's impact

©Brian Smith

Susan Teare brought her observation and vision to documenting the artistry of reuse in *Salvage Secrets*. Now she's at work on a second book and happily ensconced in light-filled buildings, Hasselblad in hand.

LIGHTING

By Lorna Gentry

Drawn to light

In architecture, light brings design to life

For photographer Susan Teare, architecture is about light. The shifting of natural light throughout the day can change the aesthetics of a room in subtle and dramatic ways. Whenever possible, Teare sits in a house or commercial building she's been hired to photograph and observes the light for hours.

"Many of the houses I photograph are vacation homes, so I can go and stay there," she says on the phone from her home office in Essex Junction, Vt., a charming village outside Burlington. "I'll take my laptop so I can work and watch the light. Architects typically design to bring natural light into a house, and I

want to capture it in the best possible light."

Natural light is an important feature of the photographs in her first book, "Salvage Secrets" (W.W. Norton), on which she collaborated with designer Joanne Palmisano. The book is a practical guide to retrofitting and re-purposing salvaged and recycled materials into furniture, lighting fixtures and architectural accents. Most of the book's photographs illustrate how repurposed materials look in practical applications, mostly in homes. The two are at work on a sequel to be published in 2013.

All images ©Susan Teare



Teare's mesmerizing lighting throughout makes everything look fresh and natural. "Almost all of the pictures in the book were photographed in natural light. I looked for the right time of day to shoot." Occasionally she used a diffuser and fill lights, she says, "But I always try to have the luxury of time to learn what time of day is best to photograph."

She works in medium format with a Hasselblad H3D-31 camera, and in 35mm format with Nikon D700 and D200 digital SLRs. On the Hasselblad, Teare uses 28mm and 80mm lenses, and on the D700 a tilt-shift lens to help correct distortion and a 70-300mm lens to shoot architectural details. "The nice thing about using the medium-format system is that there is so much information in shadows and highlights. It allows us to take some risks using natural light and still have beautiful, detailed images."

Teare works with architectural design firms, builders and craftsmen nationwide. She shoots for DIY Network, is a contributing photographer to houzz.com, and shoots stock for Getty Images. Her work has been published in *Better Homes and Gardens*, *This Old House*, *Fine Homebuilding*, and *SKI* magazine, among others.

She got into photography through a bit of cunning and good fortune, she says. An undergraduate in art history at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, she wanted to take a photo course but couldn't get in. So she snuck in. A family member gave her a camera for graduation and later she inherited her grandfather's Hasselblad. Although the camera had been stowed in a closet for 16 years, it was in perfect condition, and she used it to shoot some architectural jobs, launching her career.

In 2007, she switched to a digital Hasselblad and hired a consultant to help with workflow. "I have an amazing editing person and an equally amazing photo manager. Between

Architecture appears for the first time when the sunlight hits a wall. The sunlight did not know what it was before it hit a wall.

—LOUIS KAHN, AMERICAN ARCHITECT (1901-1974)





natural progression of her heritage: Her great grandfather was an architect. “We’ve come full circle in an eerie way.”

For Teare, architectural photography is spiritual. “Documenting a house is capturing its spirit. When I take great photos I feel complete. It’s a very satisfying way to live. When I’ve been in a house all day and seen it sunrise to sunset, I have a full experience of it. I love hearing from architects their abstract thoughts about a house because I can bring those ideas out in my photos. Photos are usually all an architect or builder has to share and keep of his or her artistic creation. Whenever I hear, ‘We trust you,’ from a client, that’s terrific, and more so when I bring back photos of things that they maybe didn’t see. One architect told me, ‘It’s your craft on our craft.’ These images show their legacy. Sometimes it’s only one or two shots that capture the essence of the design, but for them that’s everything.” ■

To see more of Susan Teare’s work visit susanteare.com.

the three of us, we get the job done well and on time. This hasn’t always been easy, particularly with the transition from film to digital. We developed a successful workflow that took years to figure out. I am extremely grateful to these women who work with me. Workflow in the digital age of photography is key and it’s different for everyone.”

Before the switch, she had maintained a darkroom, also inherited from her grandfather. He was an English teacher who took up photography in his later years. Discovering his basement darkroom as an adult was emotional for Teare. “On the darkroom wall were his handwritten notes and test shots of me when I was little.” In a way, her becoming an architectural photographer fulfills the



PROFIT CENTER

What I think

Good workflow and good people are good business for Susan Teare

What's your secret for efficiency in your business? Having great people working with me. We have an established workflow and we communicate well to make things happen.

What's the greatest challenge your business has faced in recent years? When my business grew, I had to change my workflow. The post-production was a critical piece that needed to be done onsite, correctly and within the budget. As digital technology evolved, we had to adapt to stay efficient and to keep offering high-quality images. We're always looking at how to work more efficiently while creating the best images possible.

What's the biggest business risk you've ever taken? Taking out a big loan to buy the Hasselblad H3D. It was worth it!

What's your deal breaker? If I don't feel like the fit is right, I recommend the client to someone else. I usually steer clear of new clients who are unwilling to enter into a contract.

How will the business of professional photography evolve? Rapidly evolving technology is likely to have the greatest impact on our profession. Keep up with it and hire the best team you possibly can to keep creating high-quality images. Remember to stay passionate about your work and shoot what you love!

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