

A diving buddy of mine was enthusing about a salvage documentary he had watched the previous evening on Netflix. Unique gold statues had been found in a shipwreck off the Nigerian coast and had been raised under the highest security and put on display in a museum in Venice.

From his description, the story and the artefacts sounded almost unbelievable and in fact that is what the project had named the unknown ship from 2000 years ago as “The Unbelievable”.

At this stage my only desire was to get home, source the programme and watch it as it sounded absolutely amazing. There was, however, a faintly distant bell sounding in my mind about the whole ‘thing’ which was naggingly starting to sound, well, unbelievable.

A quick Google scroll confirmed that the whole documentary had been an elaborate hoax by the artist Damien Hirst to promote his new exhibition in the Venice gallery.

Now I like a good parody as much as anyone; Spinal Tap and Best in Show being just two superb examples of spoof movie entertainment but when a major broadcaster like Netflix airs such a documentary as just that, it concerned me on several levels.

Get real, Daddy-o. Loosen up, Dude, I can hear the younger readers muttering and maybe I should but when the BBC withdraws its Human Planet series from box set (which it really did this week) because four scenes, including a whale hunt, had been faked, I would hope those murmurings would stop.

There are fine lines everywhere in today’s media driven world but, as far as I’m concerned,

the line is big and fat and all encompassing when it comes to natural history documentaries.

And then comes the news that the winner of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Environment category had fooled the judges by using a stuffed anteater!

Just as we underwater photographers should not manipulate subjects to improve composition and colour for competitive gain so too should natural history image makers record just that - natural history.

Blacro

Blacro? What’s Blacro? Well it’s a shortened version of Blackwater and Macro where divers descend at night from a boat, below which is lowered a very powerful light. This light attracts small creatures up from the depths and gives underwater photographers the opportunity to photograph some amazing, hitherto unphotographed, animals.

My guess is that this all started in Hawaii but has since spread literally all over the world because, when the ambient light disappears, the background behind these small creatures becomes black. Hence Blacro.

The good thing is that Blacro diving can be done anywhere in the world, even in comparatively limited visibility, regardless of whether it’s blue or green water during the day.

Photographically it brings its own challenges

with focusing and exposure being the first two let alone the complete lack of scale and orientation so it is not for the fainthearted but the results being produced are really ground breaking and exciting.

3D printing

Dan Bolt’s excellent and informative article on 3D printing will make fascinating reading to all those who like to ‘personalise’ their gear with slight modifications to suit their needs.

This revolutionary method of creating products is quite a mature industry now but it still enables the individual to create bespoke one off parts very economically and there are even some shaped parts which are now very simple to have made which previously would have required very expensive machines, intricate programming and therefore prohibitive costs.

If the capability of this new technology is in time developed to its full potential it looks set to rewrite the manufacturing rule book and could ultimately reduce manufacturers’ stock levels to an on demand basis or even a download the plans and manufacture at home capability.

Exciting times, indeed.

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