

# BOOK REVIEW by Michael Eleftheriades



## *GHOSTS - Aerial Photography*

by Philip Makanna

Back in 2012 I was on the way to attend a Birds of Prey workshop. As I got closer to my destination near Old Warden Airfield, I heard the distinctive sound of propeller-engined aircraft overhead. Even though I couldn't see them, it evoked a spirit of magnificent flying machines, gleaming in shiny metal, flown 'on the edge' by pilots who were as technical as they were gentlemanly. At that moment, there was a realisation that I was more interested in the metallic bird of prey variety than what was offered at the workshop, and a love affair of photographing vintage aircraft began at airfields like Shuttleworth and Duxford. So it was with great interest that I received Philip Makanna's new book. Philip is no stranger to *Nikon Owner* magazine, with articles in Issues XIII (2004) and XXXV (2011).

Philip started out in the 1970s as a painter and then a filmmaker. After a few big budget films he had trouble raising funds for the next project, and started using a Nikkormat, which

made him much happier than he had been with his Arriflex. By 1973 he started to photograph the circus, and amassed a large body of work which he hoped to publish in a book. At the back of his portfolio were some airplane photos, and when the publisher saw these, that was the end of his circus career. Holt, Rinehart and Winston published his first book, *GHOSTS, A Time Remembered*, in 1978 and that commenced a career as an airplane photographer. He has been publishing the *GHOSTS* calendar for over 42 years, winning the 'Calendar of the Year' in 2011, as well as the 'Best of Show', the two top prizes in the calendar industry's

premier competition. To capture his aerial photographs, Philip has frequently used Nikon F4 bodies, F5 bodies and an F100, and more recently, the Nikon D2, D3 and D4, with the Nikkor 80-200mm, 24-120mm, 18-35mm and 70-300mm lenses.

*GHOSTS - Aerial Photography* is one of those 'labour of love' books containing the author's most notable aerial photographs of aircraft from both World Wars. Two pages are dedicated to every airplane; included with each are the author's exquisite colour photographs, which make you feel like you are really there, deafened by the noise of the wind and the piston engines and (almost) smelling the hot oil. Alongside, the aircraft's specifications are included (wing span, length, height, power, weight, speed, range, armament and year of manufacture), as well as the front, top and side diagrams of each, and a historical photo, in black & white, of the plane in operation, accompanied by a quote from that time.

If you are lover of vintage airplanes, you will admire the photography as well as the research that has gone into making this book. It is true that these are machines made for war, but we probably would not be enjoying our freedoms today if it wasn't for those airplanes and their pilots. Phil tells me that this may be his last book, but this book will help to ensure that the legacy of *GHOSTS* will remain alive for future generations to enjoy. Highly recommended.

The book is available to purchase for USD \$50 from [www.ghosts.com](http://www.ghosts.com)

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