

DEVELOPING THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S EYE, HEART AND MIND

INSPIRED EYE

ISSUE CXV



TO INSPIRE AND TO BE INSPIRED BY ALL OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY COMMUNITY

INTERVIEW WITH AMIN LUU-TRONG



What inspired you to become a photographer?

My innate curiosity about people and things around me.

I've always been a visual individual. Photography allows me to communicate my thoughts and feelings better than I can through words. It gives me a voice through imagery.

Who inspired you to become a photographer?

My father was an avid photographer. He is the main reason why I became a photographer.

What age are you and at what age did you start your journey as a photographer?

I'm in my 50s now. My journey started at 16, when I got my first camera, a Canon Snappy 20 point and shoot.

It was not until 2004, with my first DSLR, a Nikon D70, that I embraced photography and became more serious with this art form.

Would you mind sharing some of the things you feel helped you along the way with your photography, (lessons, workshops, books, etc)....and also some of



the things that may have hindered you, that you overcame on this journey?

My journey with photography is mainly via the internet. I can gain immediate access to almost anything my heart desires; it's all at my fingertips.

Do you feel photography enhances your life?

If so, how?

Definitely, yes. I've realized that I'm both the audience and the performer in the theater of life. Photography has made me more discerning of what I perceive around me and made me more empathetic towards my subjects.

If we are speaking specifically of photographers, which are the ones of the past and present do you admire?

In no particular order: Man Ray, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Lee Friedlander, Helen Levitt, Anders Petersen, Diane Arbus, Josef Koudelka, Vivian Maier, Fan Ho, Chien-Chi Chang, Harry Gruyaert, Stephen Shore, Saul Leiter, and Gueorgui Pinkhassov.

What purpose does photography serve for you?

Photography is therapy. It is an escape and a creative outlet. It gives me a way of framing the world and as such, allows me to be me at my truest and lets me express myself most authentically. Through the viewfinder, I become a visual storyteller.

Do you do photography for hire or as an art form?

An art form.

What genre of photography are you most comfortable working in?

I am most comfortable working in candid street photography. I also enjoy shooting surreal, abstract, cinematic, and fine art photography. Not all of my photos fit neatly into a single genre. Instead, they tend to straddle the line between different genres.

When you work, are you working on different series or just finding photos that fit the way you feel at the moment?

I work on different series or themes and whatever I feel at the moment. It should come naturally, but it's a bonus if it fits into one of my ongoing series.

Can you describe a few of the trigger mechanisms that make you want to stop and shoot?

I strive for photos that find meaning and purpose in seemingly ordinary moments or interactions, hoping to make the viewer think about something that they might otherwise pass by. I frame the scene and look for something that captivates me, something spontaneous, unexpected, and enigmatic. I am fascinated by people's unique complexities, idiosyncrasies, and spirits.

I also look for the interactions between light, shadows, and form, then organize them into hopefully dynamic and evocative compositions.



How strong of a connection do you have with your subject matter and can you describe that connection?

All the photos I'm presenting here are images I've made since the start of the pandemic, in 2020. Safety during this time is a priority, therefore I do a lot of drive-by shootings or stop- and- shoots from the car.

Even though I shoot from a distance and rarely interact with my subjects, I feel connected in some way to them. That connection is what inspires me to press the shutter.

What are your recurring themes?

I find beauty in the mundane. I see different faces of humanity scattered across the urban landscape.

What camera are you working with currently?

Leica M8 & Iphone 13 Pro.

What is your favorite Focal Length or Field of View

21mm. (crop factor of 1.3 on Leica M8 ~ 28mm on a full frame camera).

What is the distance to your subject you are most comfortable with while working?

Since most of my work is candid street photography, I prefer to blend into the



scene and work inconspicuously, ideally be "a fly on the wall" so to speak.

How do you see the relationship with your camera? Is it a friend, tool, or whatever?

To me, the camera is like a musical instrument. The more you practice, the better music you make.

Do you have a preference for Black & White or Color?

I enjoy working with both. Each has its advantages and limitations.

Are you self-taught, educated, or a little bit of both?

Mostly self-taught.

How do you feel about being photographed?

I don't like being photographed by others although I enjoy taking self-portraits.

Do you like to work by yourself or to have someone with you? Please explain why.

I am more focused when working solo. It's because I like fully immersing myself and being present when I'm shooting.

Do you listen to music while you are shooting? How do you feel the music enhances the visual experience?

I don't listen to music while I shoot. However, I listen to music during post

editing /processing. It certainly enhances my creativity.

Do you have a preference for images in an analog or a digital state?

Each has its advantages and disadvantages. I enjoy the imperfections and limitations of film photography. Digital can look too perfect. Too smooth. I prefer the film aesthetic, but digital is often the more logical choice due to time constraints.

How important is the post-processing of the pictures in your work?

It is during the editing process that the image comes to life. This is when the image can be anything I want it to be; it is my favorite step in the creative process in photography.

Where in the world are you located?

I am in Southern California.

Where is your favorite place to work?

Anywhere and everywhere.

When you're feeling somewhat slow or lost, how do you find your way back to find inspiration to get working again?

When that happens, I just take a break from shooting. However, inspiration always returns with fresh eyes.



Do you exhibit your work in any form?

I'm on Flickr, Instagram, and Facebook. My photos have been featured in online magazines. I'm also planning to have my own website as soon as time permits.

How do you feel about the current state of photography?

It's an exciting time for photography and I look forward to what's to come.

Can you describe how you judge the success or failure of your work?

I want my photos to express a poetic vision of the world around me. My approach to photography is visceral rather than intellectual. I favor intuition and subjectivity over technical accuracy. Photos that are technically perfect but soulless aren't good photos. Instead, my work should tell a story and evoke emotions, rousing the viewer's curiosity about the meaning of the scene depicted.

The photos should ask more questions than they answer; I like a sense of mystery and ambiguity in my storytelling. The resulting photos are a mixture of my personal past experiences, cultural background, and artistic sensitivity; I'm satisfied when those factors are reflected.

If you would like to make a closing statement, we'd love to hear what you have to say.

I would like to thank Inspired Eye Magazine for giving me the opportunity to do this interview.



I'll leave you with one of my favorite quotes by Diane Arbus. "A picture is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, the less you know."

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