



“In-Conversation”

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Featuring

TAN Choon Lai

Award winning photographer

Interview conducted by

PhotoVivo.com

ABOUT TAN CHOON LAI

Award winning photographer Tan Choon Lai was born in 1969. He started his photography journey in 1992 and over the years, he has won many awards in local and international photography competitions.

Questions:

How did you get started in photography?

“I started in 1992, took up a photography class and learnt photography. I was thrilled by what I saw in the wet darkroom, when my peers “saw images slowly appearing on a piece of photo paper”. I saved money and my first set of camera equipment is Corsina. Though it is not a well known brand, it has won me a few prizes.”

“Later, I switched to Nikon and I began to win more awards. My photography instructor and friends encourage me to join photography competitions to gauge my skills and put to good use what I have shot. For many people, the initial years of joining photography competition can be tough and discouraging. But I won my first few awards in a quarterly photo competition of a photo club and it gave me much encouragement. The ball kept rolling.”

What is your favourite topic/specialization in photography?

“I shot a variety of subject matter. My priority is on joining local and international photography competition. This has been my motivation to keep on taking pictures. I have seen many of my friends giving up photography due to many reasons, such as being busy in business, family etc. I realised that it is important to have objective and motivation to keep shooting. I find it a waste if I were to hang up my camera.”

You have won prizes in many photography competition. How do you prepare for each photography competition?

“It is good to keep shooting regularly. Keep a good stock of images. When the time arises, choose from the stock of images and see which one to submit. Keep shooting. Though my priority is on photography competition, but I

continuously go in search for good subjects. I shoot first, keep them, and then use them for competition even in short notice of time. I usually do not like to rush out and shoot.”

What equipment do you usually bring for your photography shoot?

“18-200mm VR is my favourite lenses. The 10.5mm fisheye is also in my bag, sometimes, I use the 80-200mm f2.8 in certain situation.”

How do you make your pictures different from others?

“The fundamentals are important. Luck plays a part. Be observant of the subject matter, background, lighting and the surrounding. Be at the right place at the right time with the right factors.”

What is your most interesting experience during your photo shoot which you would like to share?

“There was once I tried to take a candid shot of a person having his hair cut on a roadside barber shop. The person got angry and quarrelled with me. I questioned him that this is a public place and I am not shooting him but the whole scene. In those days, there are no instant review of images. I was disappointed and walked away, but this did not deter me in continuing shooting candid.”

How do you get your inspiration?

“Look at more pictures of other photographers’ works, learn from one another. Continuous learning is part of the process. There is always someone better than you, no harm learning from others.”

Which quotation inspired you most?

The late Mr Tan Seng Boon said many encouraging words. “Try to be different and experiment with different techniques.”

“I was taught various techniques, and these helped me in taking photographs in a different way. I can try panning, zooming, framing etc.”

How does photography enrich your life?

“Photography helps to cultivate my mind and patience. I used to be very bad tempered, but photography has helped to curb my temper a lot.”

As an advice to beginners, how can they improve in their path in photography?

“Shoot more, ask more, observe more, look at more pictures of other people, take up courses to learn the fundamentals and get them right.”

Selected Works

















