

USAMI MASAHIRO

MG: What was your first camera?

Usami Masahiro (UM): It was a NIKON New FM2.

MG: How did you become interested in photography? And how did that lead to you becoming a photographer?

UM: I became interested in photography as a university student when I undertook some photography studies. I was interested in the way that the act of holding the camera and shooting the subject could become a means of communication with others. It was something I had not known until then.

MG: Tell us more about your first photography work.

UM: In a Bangladeshi-run curry house called "Dhaka" in Higashi-Nakano (a town in Tokyo), I struck up conversations with customers and then photographed them. I turned those photographs into a photobook featuring people of many different nationalities.

MG: What is your creation process like? How do you plan your subject into an image to be the way you want it?

UM: My creation process is the same now as it was for my first work. Firstly, I think about a plan for the work, and then



Usami Masahiro
Ishibashi Norio, Chiba 2010,
2010, c-print on photo paper, 60
x 76 cm, edition of 8, © Usami
Masahiro

ISWANTO SOERJANTO

MG: What was your first camera?

Iswanto Soerjanto (IS): My first camera is a 35mm SLR given to me by my father. It was an Asahi Pentax Spotmatic, one of the most popular cameras in the 80's.

MG: How did you become interested in photography? And how did that lead you to become a photographer?

IS: When I was 8 year old, I often accompanied my father, who is a serious amateur photographer, to do printing in his darkroom. It was fascinating to watch the latent images appeared gradually in the developing tray. As a teenager, I became more curious about photography and in 1988, I decided to enrol in a photography course at the Brooks Institute of Photography, Santa Barbara, California.

MG: Tell us more about your first photography work.

IS: The first photograph I created was a documentation of school activities. I still keep some of the photographs in my studio. When I was a college student in Jakarta during the mid 80's, I won some honourable mention medals and awards from both national and international photography competitions, but they were competitions for amateur photographers. My first commissioned photography work was in 1990 when I founded my own commercial photography studio in Jakarta.

MG: Is there a difference for you between commercial

through multiple negotiations with different people, I create the piece. Recently, I have been doing thorough research on my subject and creating detailed images of what I anticipate the final work to be – including making drawings to decide on the final composition.

MG: What was the most ambitious artwork you have attempted to or wish to create?

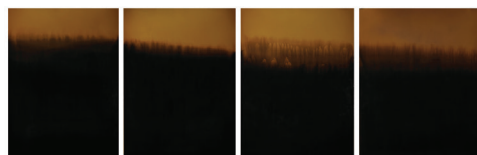
UM: The most ambitious work I've created is probably *Hayashi Yuriko, Hiroshima, 2014*. In a photograph shot in front of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial dome, I was able to express the life of a female survivor of the atomic bombings. It included about 500 Hiroshima residents as participants, from the elderly to young babies, spanning four generations.

MG: What motivates you to continue making images?

UM: Being able to sense the meaning of my existence. Even more than that, it sounds strange, but – I feel the guidance of a kind of god or spirit, calling me to make work in many different places.

MG: What is the one thing you wish you knew before you began photography?

UM: Pay close attention to the images you want to realize, and to the feelings of your subjects. If you do this, your works will always contain hidden possibilities to become something that transcends what you imagine.



Iswanto Soerjanto
Evanescence, 2016, chemigram on silver gelatin paper, 40.6 x 122
cm each, unique edition, © Iswanto Soerjanto

photography and contemporary photography?

IS: In commercial photography, I was hired to produce certain images that was assigned to me. I had to present photography treatments and production plans for each project before taking the actual photographs. However, in contemporary art, the process is different especially since my works do not involve the use of camera.

MG: What was the most ambitious artwork you have attempted to or wish to create?

IS: I am planning to build a camera obscura structure that will serve as an art installation in a gallery in Bali.

MG: What motivates you to continue making images?

IS: I use photography as a method of creating images, instead of taking images with a device / camera. So there are endless possibilities to explore. Each method I find through my image-making experiments always leads me to another.

MG: What is the one thing you wish you knew before you began photography?

IS: It is hard to tell but for sure, but the knowledge of chemistry would be a great contribution to my work, since I am always surrounded by chemicals to produce my works.

MIZUMA GALLERY

FROM THE ARCHIVES

AGAN HARAHAP | ANGKI PURBANDONO | ISWANTO SOERJANTO |
ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI | USAMI MASAHIRO | ZEN TEH

17 AUGUST - 9 SEPTEMBER 2018



Zen Teh & Hera
The Range of Expanse, 2018, inkjet print on Japanese handmade paper, mounted on hand-scroll, 18 x 205 cm, © Zen Teh & Hera

Mizuma Gallery is pleased to present *From the Archives*, a group exhibition by contemporary photography artists from Indonesia, Japan, and Singapore. *From the Archives* presents various methodologies of each artists' art-making process, spanning from traditional darkroom techniques and photographic processes, to more experimental ways of digital imaging and image manipulation. Through short interviews with the exhibiting artists, the exhibition brings to light the talented forerunner and emerging contemporary photography artists of Mizuma Gallery, allowing viewers to gain an insight understanding on their artistic journeys of becoming photographers.

ZEN TEH

MG: What was your first camera and when did you first start taking photographs?

Zen Teh (ZT): I started taking photographs when I was in secondary school. I remember my first digital camera was a very thick, and small camera that only has 7 megapixels. I bought it with my savings accumulated from my monthly allowance and I vividly recall that it was not the most fashionable camera, but it was the only camera I could afford. Shortly after, many new models of camera came out but I continued to use it until my school (junior college) had a camera that I could borrow. I recall the moment when I used my first digital camera, despite its unfashionable design, I was fascinated by the fact that I could capture scenes and details that I would not have been able to complete drawing before the scene changes. The camera also has a tiny LCD screen that allows me to play back the captured image – which really helped shape my art-making process!

The beginning of my image-making started when I was working on my O level artwork. Art was my favourite subject (of course!), and I was making a painting that combined different parts of human anatomy into an infinity symbol placed against a vast landscape. The painting style was inspired by Salvador Dali's *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans* (1936), which presented the horrors of the Spanish Civil

War, painted 6 months before the actual war broke out. I was inspired by the manipulation and construction of forms of the human body, and the spaces within a landscape. The camera was first used as a tool to study details of form to construct a manipulated human form.

MG: What do you find most challenging about photography?

ZT: What I find most challenging about photography at this age is to be looking for a new or renewed way of communication that is meaningful and in tandem to technological advancement. Beyond giving a fresh perspective, these new expressions through photography should also be able to retain and place value in qualities of the photographic medium and workflow.

MG: What are you currently working on and do you have any photographic or exhibition plans for the future?

ZT: I am currently working on an upcoming solo exhibition at ARTIST+RUN Gallery in Bangkok, an affiliated programme of "Photo Bangkok 2018" that is coming up on 25th August through 15 September. Later in the year, I will be going on a two-months residency at Selasar Sunaryo Artspace in Bandung, Indonesia, to expand my research on the *Anthropocene in Southeast Asia*.

AGAN HARAHAP

Mizuma Gallery (MG): What was your first camera?

Agan Harahap (AH): My first camera was a Canon Powershot G5.

MG: How did you become interested in photography? And how did that lead you to become a photographer?

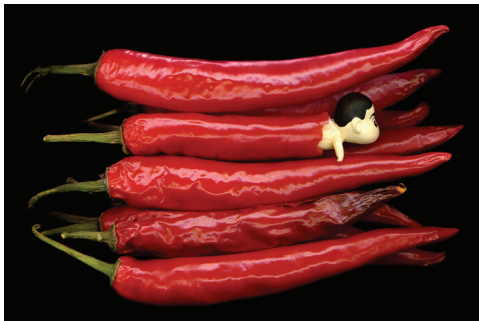
AH: My first experience with photography was not a good one. When I was younger, having a camera was considered a luxury because it was so expensive. At that time, I was just a college student and I disliked photography as I did not own a camera. To me, photography is for students who are not able to draw and paint well. I did all of my projects through drawings and paintings. Unfortunately, in my 6th semester as a graphic design student, I was required to pass a photography module. In order to pass the photography exam, I had to learn to use Photoshop. I used a friend's photograph, edited it digitally and submitted it for the exam. I managed to pass the module with a C grade. After successfully fooling my lecturer, I wanted to fool more people with my images and found enjoyment in it. In 2006, I, who did not know anything about camera or photographic techniques, tried to apply for a job as a photographer in Trax magazine, a music magazine based in Indonesia. I used my friends' photographs again to create a convincing photography portfolio for the job interview. Surprisingly, I managed to get the job. And it was through that job that I started to learn more about photography and its techniques.

MG: Tell us more about your first photography work.

AH: My job as a photographer in Trax magazine was to take portraits of musicians and celebrities. After office hours, I would stay on my desk to create works, combining things and merging them together into one frame to create a new reality. My first photography work was *Octopus's Garden*. It was inspired by a Beatles song and I tried to portray a visual representation of the song.

MG: Where do you usually get your inspirations from?

AH: My inspirations mostly come from what I see on social media. Through my phone, I get to see the world and be



Angki Purbandono
Shin-chan Chili, 2010, scanography, lightbox, 100 x 150 x 15 cm, 1 ed. lightbox + 1 ed. c-print on paper, diasec + 1AP © Angki Purbandono

inspired by it, be it though celebrity gossips, politics, religions or other issues. As I often photoshop my images, I almost never plan how the image will look like in the end. I get surprised by my own creations. Of course, I have to be cautious and put my subjects in a suitable manner in my works so that my creations will not offend anyone.

MG: What was the most ambitious artwork you have attempted to or wish to create?

AH: I do not know. But I hope that one day, my works can change people and give them a better life.

MG: What motivates you to continue making images?

AH: My first and foremost motivation to making images is to make a living to support my wife and children. Secondly, I am unable to control myself when I witness fights and arguments on social media over some stupid reasons and I would like to speak out on those matters.

MG: What is the one thing you wish you knew before you began photography?

AH: No, I did not wish to know anything before I began photography. I would rather let my thoughts and creations flow freely, let my works be a learning process for you, me, and the entire human race.



Agan Harahap
The Fight of The Century, 2018, c-print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Ultra Smooth 305 gsm, 33 x 50 cm each, total of 5 pcs, ed. of 3 + 1 AP, © Agan Harahap

ANGKI PURBANDONO

Mizuma Gallery (MG): What was your first camera?

Angki Purbandono (AP): My first analog camera was a Canon AT 1 (Single Lens Reflex camera 1976), which I bought in 1994. My first digital camera was a Canon Powershot S50, which I bought in 2004.

MG: How did you become interested in photography? And how did that lead you to become a photographer?

AP: I have attempted drawing or painting to translate my ideas into visuals but that always failed! I am not really a photographer. After going through some 'trial and errors' in basic and experimental photography, I became more interested in visual art through photography as a medium.

ROBERT ZHAO RENHUI

MG: What was your first camera?

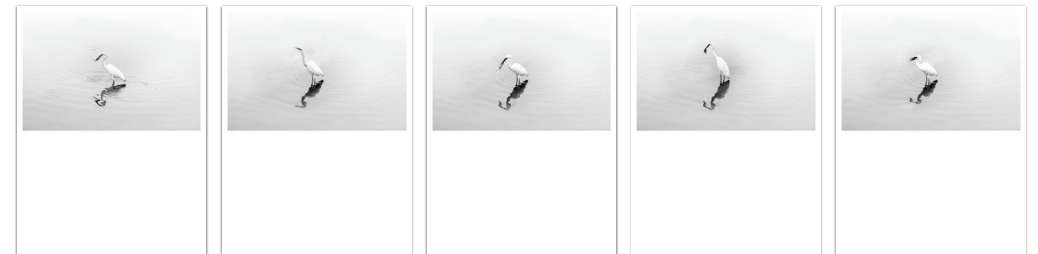
Robert Zhao Renhui (RZ): Yashica Electro T-35.

MG: How did you become interested in photography? And how did that lead you to become a photographer?

RZ: Photography is a very common language today. It is more common than the written word. We want to see photographs and we want to believe in photographs. I was trained in photography from a very young age so photography is something that I am comfortable in using to talk about what I am interested in. I think we are very naïve when we look at photographs, we allow ourselves to be deceived by photographs without thinking. When I use photographs in my art, I want people to slow down this consumption of photography and start to think about what they are looking at in the photograph and how the photograph came to be about. It is to raise questions.

MG: Tell us more about your first photography work.

RZ: I was playing with my father's camera when I was young. It was a film camera. I brought it to school and took photographs in the classroom. I was also reading a book on how ghost photographs are created. By using a marker pen to draw on the negative and sending it to the printer afterwards, you get a 'ghost' photograph. I created some ghost photographs of the classroom and brought it back to show my friends. They were really afraid. I guess from there I realised the potential of photography to tell stories that affects people's way of thinking.



Robert Zhao Renhui
Natural History (Egret), 2017 - 2018, diasec in frame, 29.7 x 39 cm each, total of 5 pcs, ed. of 3 + 1 AP, © Robert Zhao Renhui

MG: Tell us more about your first photography work.

AP: My first work is about 'deconstruction' in photography. It was in 1999, where I did collages and chemical experimentations using negative and positive films in order to find a new beauties through the concept of photography.

MG: What is your creation process like? How do you plan your subject into an image to be the way you want it?

AP: My creation process is always based on discovery. I always try to meet some people whom I believe are able to talk more about my subjects before I decide to present the concept to public.

MG: What is your creation process like? How do you plan your subject into an image to be the way you want it?

RZ: When I do research, social media and the internet helps a lot but it also makes it very difficult to discover and encounter anything inspiring on my own. I try to follow my intuition as much as I can when I am visiting a new space. Chance is probably very crucial in my practice. It is usually the things that I did not plan for and expect that turn out to be the most important discoveries.

MG: What was the most ambitious artwork you have attempted to or wish to create?

RZ: *The Bizarre Honour*. It was an installation where me and curator Alan Oei took over a whole house in Holland Village and created a narrative based on my collections of narratives of Singapore's history with a focus on nature.

MG: What motivates you to continue making images?

RZ: I am mainly inspired by the absurdity of everyday life, especially with nature, we are always making do and coping. Nature is a rather violent force that is unpredictable but this does not stop us from controlling nature. It begins absurd when we start believing that nature can be controlled via various systems. The absurd part of the story is what completes the story for me. A lot of ideas we discuss about nature are absurd but at the same time they come from a good place as well. Most of us love nature but we just can't seem to find the right way to show it.

MG: What is the one thing you wish you knew before you began photography?

RZ: Science.

MG: What was the most ambitious artwork you have attempted to or wish to create?

AP: It would be prints on public transportation (plane, train, bus, ship etc).

MG: What motivates you to continue making images?

AP: I do not know. Perhaps I will realise that I am a human being who never stops thinking till the moment I am dead.

MG: What is the one thing you wish you knew before you began photography?

AP: The moment.