Quang-Tuan Luong biography

Luong is well known for his landscape work and enjoys applying the same principles to his cityscape work. He actually got into photography through another pastime – mountaineering. "I began to take photos to show people who weren't there what they were missing." Today he's still mostly known for his outdoor photography and has been working on a large project on the National Parks of the USA.

He moved from France to California ten years ago to see what it would be like to live there more than anything else. The camera he uses depends on exactly where he is shooting. When he is in the US he will use his 5x7 wooden camera hand-made by Keith Canham. But if he is overseas he relies on his 35MM Canon EOS.

Shooting tips

Top ten factors to consider when shooting a cityscape:

1. When you want to start shooting a city, scope out different viewpoints the day before to assess the full of light and best angles. The best thing you can do is find a position that hasn't been explored by other photographers as it can make your photograph more financially viable.

2. Using water can add depth and complexity to a shot. Many cities sit on water, be it an ocean or a river. At night, the lights of a city play on the surface and draw the eye through the photograph.

3. Just like Monet's haystacks, recording a cityscape at different times of the day and season can produce dramatically varying images. Most photographers agree that the best times to shoot a cityscape are at dawn and dusk. The minutes before and after each scene dramatic changes in the light, with clouds of blue and pink altering the recorded photographs. To get an idea of the effect you want to create start shooting and don't stop until you are satisfied.

4. Don't rule out shooting in bad weather. Fog and clouds add atmosphere to a photograph and can often produce more interesting shots than a straightforward skyline.

5. Use the reflective surfaces of buildings, as you would water. In this way it is possible to capture the eyes of the sun and its changing hues without shooting directly into it and reducing the photograph to merely a silhouette.

6. Try to think outside the box. Grant Smith actually captured his view of St Paul's Cathedral from a half-built building, which didn't have any windows in yet. He was able to get a clean, previously uncaptured image.

7. Experiment with different lengths of exposure. A long exposure around 30 seconds – not only captures the strong lights of a night scene, but also the movements of vehicles and the people living in the metropolis. This will make your image feel like it is full of movement and vibrancy.

8. Try shooting the same view with a different lens – the varying focal lengths can produce a wide range of results. Fish-eye, telephoto and wide angle can all be used. Also make an effort to shoot the same scene in both portrait and landscape format. This will give you more scope for your image.

9. Filters can be used – especially graduated grey filters – to prevent either the sky or water being washed out from a shot. Polarisers and fluorescent filters also can be used to good effect.

10. The best shots are actually taken when there isn't some light in the sky. Occasionally the light of the city can be so bright that a strong photograph can still be recorded. But don't depend on this working and try a variety of different times at twilight.