



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 10 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

3. Last year he decided it was time to go digital and had his eye on a Canon 1DS, but changed his mind. It is a choice he regrets.

Now he says, “This will definitely be my last year with film – last year I was thinking about buying an EOS 1DS but then I didn’t. It was a mistake not to have changed, I think.”

He brings his landscape photographer’s eye to his cityscapes. He tries “to capture the city as I would the natural landscape. I look for something in the composition to express the sense of very good light. For me there is the same kind of analogy between the human and natural world. You view a city like New York in that way. It has deep canyons and very specific shapes.”

QT always shoots in colour – he thinks it makes the images more visceral. “Colour is a really important part of the experience – the visual or artistic statement, which gives you a lot of expression.” Working exclusively as a freelance photographer QT sells his images via his image library (www.terrageria.com). “I found out a couple of years ago that it was quite possible to sell my work via the web.”

Because he runs his own business, scanning is very important to him. “I do most of my business online so I have a Nikon S4000 colour Super Coolscan. It has a slide loader, which saves time. When I have so many slides to scan I can just load them and get on with something else. So far I’ve scanned more than 10,000 images. I’m looking forward to the days when all my shooting is digital to bypass that.”

- **Camera:** 5X7 Canham, Canon EOS 3 and 300D
- **Scanner:** Nikon S4000 colour Super Coolscan, Epson 4870 scanner for large format
- **Tripod:** Three different Gitzos



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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 fall 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 see dramatic changes in the light, with casts of blue and pinks 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 rays 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 clear, 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. Polarising and fluorescent filters also can be used to good effect.

10 The best shots are actually taken when there’s still 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

Camera: Canon EOS3
Lens: 28-135MM
Settings: shutter speed 30 seconds
Time: midnight

QT Luong shot this in Hong Kong at midnight. “Usually I wouldn’t try and take this kind of picture so late. The best night pictures are taken when there is still a bit of light in the sky. On this occasion I made this picture on the move when I had just arrived in Hong Kong. I was looking around for a hotel and eventually I found something and just went out with my camera. I went to see what the city was about and the reason I took that picture is because those clouds were moving across and working with the light from the tower. QT would usually use a perspective lens on such an occasion, but didn’t on this occasion because he was caught on the hop. So he corrected the image’s perspective in Photoshop – something he wouldn’t normally do. Settings-wise he prefers to use the longest shutter speed that he can. “I was trying to capture the lights of the passing boats – Hong Kong harbour is very busy and I waited for the ferry to come across so that it would leave a light trail on the water. That’s why I opted for a 30-second shutter speed.

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