

BEHIND THE LENS



Derek Winchester

1) When did you first pick up the camera?

Well, I guess I grew up around cameras. My dad was a great photographer and he was always clicking away with his old Canon AV-1. He had that camera for 30 years, but I really didn't "get it" until I came to Korea. I started out with a point-and-shoot camera but I was disappointed with the lack of control over the end image. So I bought a DSLR and everything took off. Since then I have inherited my dad's old AV-1. Shooting with that has given me a new insight into both photography and my dad.

2) What subject do you most like to shoot? Why?

Oh, people 110% I like how portraits reveal the character and history of a person and I like how wide-angle street shots tell a story. I like how street portraits can show people lost in their own world and how that plays on their faces. Those expressions are universal and can speak to anyone.

3) What appeals to you most about Korea? Where do you find your inspiration?

I like to see Korean people keeping a culture alive like in the traditional dance performances or the 24 martial artist shows. To them, Korean culture means something. It has a reality and I like to record that reality.

This also plays out in the cosplay conventions. These comic characters mean a lot to these kids. I like to see people showing what they are passionate about and recording it.

- 4) What's the most memorable experience you had while photographing in Korea?

Well, I was at the martial arts performance in Suwon and after the performance one of the performers came up to me. I had a co worker that used to train with them so I had been introduced to them and they knew me, having seen me there taking photos of them about a billion times. Anyway, he introduces me to another photographer there. We start talking and I start showing him my martial arts photos on my iPod. We get to one shot, he gets really excited. He pulls out a pamphlet with about 20 images of the gates of the fortress in Suwon. All of them composites of thousands of little photos arranged to look like one big photo like on that life magazine cover. Anyway, he starts trying to explain to me that my photo had been used in one of these photos. I thought maybe he had taken one of my photos to make up a bigger one. Anyway he said it was on the wall in a gallery in Insadong. So that afternoon I went into Seoul and found the gallery and sure enough this guy had made a composite image of thousands of little photos to make one huge image of my photo. I was really flattered. The guy had done it by hand and had taken him 6 weeks. Later on, some of friends felt like he should have asked me my permission first and usually I would agree but I just kept thinking this guy had put in six weeks work. The shot I'm referring to is [this one](#).

- 5) What's on the horizon for you? Any exciting projects lined up?

Well for lunar New Year I want to get shots of the shamans at Yongin folk village. They are there every year telling fortunes. Then I would like to go down to Cheju for the fire festival. I hear they light up the side of a mountain for that. Then next summer I want to go back to Canada to take photos of a pow-wow. Hopefully I will get some good shots at all of these places.

I help administer a group that has regular photography meet-ups called Flickr in Seoul here:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/flickrinseoul/> we have meet-ups every two weeks. There is also a photo contest that I really like in the Seoul Photo Club group

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/seoulphotoclub/>