



## WE CHAT WITH PATRICIA LEVASSEUR DE LA MOTTE, CURATOR OF PHOTO17 AT SINGAPORE CONTEMPORARY 2017

SHARMAINE KHOO  
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An independent curator and founder of the Philanthropic Museum – an online museum project dedicated to photography and video arts in Southeast [Asia](#) – Patricia Levasseur de la Motte has curated and co-curated several exhibitions like Alain Fleischer, Time Exposures (2008), TRANSPORTASIAN: Visions of Contemporary Photography from Southeast Asia (2009) during her stint at Singapore Art Museum.

And for those interested in photography or art in general, Patricia is the curator of Photo17, the first curated platform dedicated to photography at [Singapore Contemporary](#), promoting photography as a prominent artistic and expressive art form.

In this recent interview with Patricia, we chat with her about all things photography and what to expect at [Singapore Contemporary 2017](#).



Flux series No.4 by Kate Baker. Images credits: Kate Baker

**What's Trending: Photography is gaining momentum as a form of collectible art. In western countries, photography as an art has gained acknowledgement many years ago. In Asia, this phenomenon is relatively new and is gaining traction in China and Singapore.**

Despite photography being popular as an art form in the western countries, there are still ongoing debates among art professionals. One has to differentiate from the various categories of photography, such as Fine Art, Conceptual, Mixed media and Documentary – and they're not always considered as art.

Photo17 at Singapore Contemporary aims to illustrate and explain the various types of photography, and at the same time educate the members of the public on the methods to differentiate photos. The exhibition will emphasize the concept that photography is more than just photo taking and revealing important steps in the photo-making process: the concept, the image taking, image treatment, printing, and in some case, installation.

Each work presented in Photo17 will explore and/or challenge the technical, visual and conceptual aspects of photography. We really want to open up this exciting art medium to more interested people and encourage them to start collecting photography.

For some countries in Asia such as Japan, South Korea or Taiwan, photography has been known for quite some time, with various local artists who are popular among the international art scene. These names include Nabuyoshi Araki, Kim Jung-Man, Chien-Chi Chang and Daido Moriyama – who will also be taking part in Photo17.

China has also been developing very well, with an increase in schools that educate about photography while producing great artists. Similarly, with the opening of DECK- A fully dedicated Photo Center towards the end of 2015, Singapore proves to be more receptive to photography as well.



*Patricia Levasseur de la Motte, curator of Photo17 at Singapore Contemporary 2017*

## **Tell us your choice of camera.**

I have used various models. I started out with a Pentax, which was given to me from my father, followed by Leica and Canon EOS. The camera which I am currently using is Nikon D90.

## Why is photography gaining momentum as a form of collectible art?

I believe that it was due to the recent auctions that helped trigger interest in collecting photographs. Among the headlining records are Andreas Gursky's Rhein II (1999), which was sold for US\$4.3 million at a Christie's New York sale in 2011, Spiritual America (1983) by Richard Prince, which fetched US\$3.97 million at a 2014 Christie's auction, New York, and HK\$375,000 (US\$48,330) record was achieved at Bonhams Hong Kong last year for celebrating the late Hong Kong photographer Fan Ho's Approaching Shadow (1954).

Looking ahead, I believe it's all about having a proper and safe ecosystem which involves four main components – education, artists, buyers/collectors, and exhibition space. Spaces such as museums, galleries, art fairs or independent spaces provides visibility for the artists, and it offers opportunities to be exposed to the public, art professionals and potential collectors.



*Viagem Pitoresca by Cassio Vasconcellos. Photo credits: Cassio Vasconcellos*

## What type of images will appeal to art buyers?

This is highly dependent on each individual and their personal preference. There are many factors which affects an art buyer's decision such as the category, the explanation /

narratives, the concept and contemplation. Some art buyers prefer to head down to art galleries and meet the artists in-person, as it provides an opportunity for them to understand and appreciate the hard work behind the photograph. This has led to the concept of presenting both photo galleries and artists dialogue – a model that was developed first by Singapore Contemporary / Asia Contemporary in Hong Kong.

## **Who are some of the notable photographers whose works have been sought after as a form of collectible art?**

Based on my observation, I noticed that collectors tend to have a preference for notable photographers whose works were already sold at auctions or seen regularly at fairs and museums. They are also looking at emerging talents; whose works are likely to be popular in the future.

With photography typically being “less expensive” than other art media such as painting, some collectors like to view it from the investment perspective only. However, there are collectors who are true supporters of the artists, and would purchase and follow their art seriously.



*Unknown Woman 1 by Zoncy. Images credits: Zoncy and Intersections*

## Are there any that we can expect to see at Singapore Contemporary?

Photo17 will present both renowned photographers and emerging talents which include artists from 17 different countries (no relation with the name of the platform). We are grateful to have renowned and highly collectible photographers such as Daido Moriyama, Roberto Dutesco, Vincent Fournier, and Cassio Vasconcellos. And the emerging talents such as Sukho Kang, Sug Chu Hong, Katsu Ishida, Olivia Marty, Zoncy, Emily Portmann, Chou Ching Hui and Kate Baker.

## What's your favourite genre of photography, and why?

I don't have a specific favorite as I like all genres of photography for different reasons.

Documentary photography provides an authentic perspective of photo-taking and the testimony values which it holds while fine art photography highlights the diversity of the subjects and the aesthetical aspects which resides in the artwork

Conceptual photography is where understanding the challenges faced by the artists in expressing the ideas and narratives in the image comes in, and mixed media and photo installation demonstrates the vast potential of the category in terms of layers of images and endless technical possibilities.

Despite photography being a relatively new medium (only over a century), there is huge potential in terms of image creation and technical development, which I personally believe will be the art medium of the future.

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[Singapore Contemporary 2017](#) is happening from 19 – 22 January 2017 at Suntec Exhibition and Convention Centre.

*\*Top Image: L'Embarcadère des femmes sans mari(detail), recOlectiOn project by Olivia Marty. Image credits: Olivia Marty*