



Wesley Wong, Director & Printmaster of Giclee Art, wesley@giclee-art.my

## REALISING ART: A MASTERPRINTER'S PERSPECTIVE

*The interior of GTower is a meld between a contemporary city building and an art gallery. A bold sculpture of wild chilies looms tall at the centre of the lobby lounge, and paintings and photographs line walls like gallery displays.*

BTT decided to take a deeper look at the photographs capturing the beauty of Sabah, by famed photographer Maria Espeus. These images grace the offices, restaurants and hotel rooms in GTower. Espeus' art had captured the heart of GTower's developer, having seen her work in Barcelona. She had then been commissioned to interpret the first lines of two classic poems, and illustrate them with her trademark black and white images.

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*"To see the world in a grain of sand,  
and to see heaven in a wild flower,  
hold infinity in the palm of your  
hands, and eternity in an hour"*  
~ William Blake~

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*"A thing of beauty is a joy forever"*  
~John Keats~

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What followed were two months of tedious work exploring the wild, untouched inlands of Borneo that produced over 3000 ethereal panoramic and close-up images of the dense, tropical forest.

Nonetheless, no matter the depth of talent that the artist possesses, art cannot be fully realised unless the artist's vision is accurately transferred onto canvas or paper. Espeus, a seasoned artist who holds great value in her work, knew how best to portray her vision and there was

only one printing company known to her that could deliver. As a result, half of her photographs that now hang in GTower were developed in Germany and shipped to Malaysia in heavy crates. Fortunately, the art patron stumbled upon a little known printer in Kuala Lumpur who lived up to Espeus' high standards. Wesley Wong was actually enjoying a successful career in the IT industry but decided to pursue his passion in the arts and the art of printing. Now, with Giclee Art expanding rapidly, Wesley's reputation as a masterprinter and supporter of local artists is growing in tandem. BTT sits down with Wesley to reminisce about his experience working on the Maria Espeus project.

"It was quite intimidating!" Wesley admits. "She is a very experienced, worldly wise photographer and I think she was a bit skeptical about my abilities at first. But she returned to Malaysia to oversee the remainder of the production stage and we grew to respect each other.

"I'm not just a printer, but also an avid photographer. So, I spoke her 'language'. I think that helped convince her that I could do the job, and do it well."

Wesley exudes an obvious enthusiasm for his work. He sees the task of a masterprinter as more than just printing, but rather to see the images from the

artist's perspective and to realise it when the ink touches the paper.

"A blank canvas is never a blank canvas. It is just unfinished art," Wesley shares. "The art is already composed in mind of the artist. So, 80% of the creative work takes place inside the mind and what remains is simply having the skill to translate it to a tangible, visible piece of work."

This is precisely true of Espeus who had spent more time sculpting the scene than the actual snapping of the photographs. With the clever use of fishing line, she spent hours manipulating leaves, stems and vines to sculpt the scene until it was exactly how she envisioned her photograph to be. "For photographers of nature, identifying the subject is key," Wesley says "Then he or she should be mindful of what surrounds it. Does it contribute to the composition? If it doesn't, how can the photographer remove or mitigate the surroundings? Espeus was working in a foreign and difficult natural environment, yet she did not want to destroy the elements that didn't contribute to the composition."

He adds, "Many photographers would have chosen the easy way and used a scissors to "snip snip" away the unwanted elements, which I believe is the wrong way to photograph nature."



01 MARIA ESPEUS  
02 MARIA'S HASSELBLAD CAMERA

Espeus' equipment of choice is a Hasselblad film camera, instead of a digital one, which meant heavier and bulkier equipment that had to be lugged into the jungle. It also meant that a more complicated developing process would ensue. Wesley supports the use of any equipment that gives the artist confidence in fulfilling his or her art.

He explains, "An artist that paints can use charcoal, watercolour or oil paints. It doesn't mean that any one is better than the other, but rather which one will help

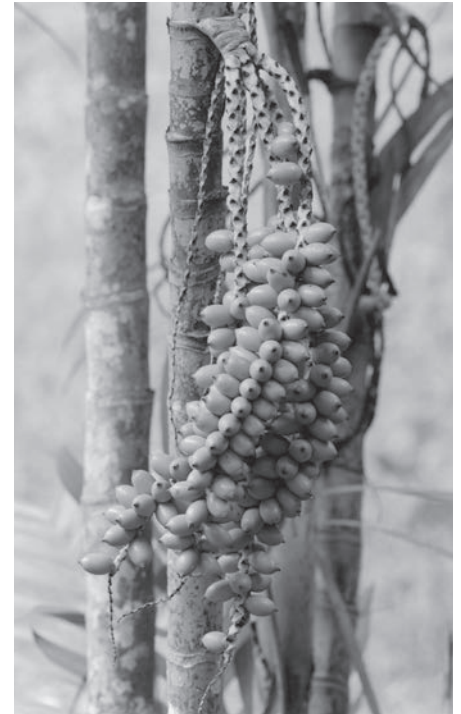
the artist best in creating the art."

The analog technique which required traditional processing in a dark room, the size of some of the prints and the choice of Baryta paper to be used were the reasons why the photographer and patron initially thought it could only be accomplished in Germany. Wesley appreciates that they did not yield to easier methods, showing that they truly value art and would not accept anything less than what they deemed was perfection.





“...I AM NOT TRYING TO CAPTURE ANECDOTES OR FREEZE TIME. I DON'T WANT TO REPRODUCE REALITY NOR DO I ASPIRE TO BE OBJECTIVE. I AM MORE ATTRACTED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSMUTING THAT REALITY INTO ANOTHER SUBJECTIVE REALITY, ONE THAT IS MORE TYPICAL OF POETIC LANGUAGE.” MARIA ESPEUS, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE STAR NEWSPAPER, PUBLISHED 3RD OCTOBER 2010.



His passion for the subject has inspired him to venture into providing photography courses. Among the courses provided is the “Art of Seeing”. He contends that great artists are masters of storytelling. “The artist has only three seconds to make an impression through each piece. The question is ‘how do you earn another ten seconds?’”

A photograph comprises of shape, texture, contrast, colour and, most importantly, emotion. The last, Wesley says, cannot be learnt. He explains that the best art is not necessarily reliant on technique and skills. “Pulitzer Prize winning photographs may not be the sharpest or the most

technically perfect, but they managed to capture the attention and the emotions of the world.”

Aspiring photographers will not be able to learn that in a classroom. Instead, Wesley encourages them to open up their minds to different art forms. In appreciating various forms of art, they will be able to perfect their own.

As if he didn't have enough on his plate, he also ventured into helping up-and-coming local artists to upsell reproductions of their art. In his studio, he manages to achieve art reproductions of superb quality, almost undistinguishable

from the original. It is the responsibility that he has taken upon himself to elevate the appreciation of art in the local scene.

The next time we admire a photograph, perhaps we should take a step closer. When appreciating the contrast, the colours and even the paper, it is not only the spirit of the artist that we see. Entrenched within the four-cornered frame, there also lies the art of the printer.

Maria Espeus' photographs can be viewed at GTower on Jalan Tun Razak. [www.gtower.com.my](http://www.gtower.com.my).





