

“In-Conversation”

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Featuring

Dr Barry Senior Hon FRPS

President, The Royal Photographic Society

Interview conducted by

Steven Yee Pui Chung



ABOUT DR BARRY SENIOR

Barry is currently the President of The Royal Photographic Society which is the oldest and one of the most prestigious photographic societies in the world. He is also the immediate past Chairman of the Distinctions Advisory Board which is responsible for advising Council on policy and procedures. A member of Council since 1999, he is also the immediate past Chairman of the Society's Digital Imaging Group. More about The Royal Photographic Society can be found on www.rps.org

His interest in photography started in 1957 and concentrated mainly on monochrome landscapes which he printed in the darkroom until 1997 when he started digital work. His Fellowship was achieved in 2004 with still life images in colour many of which were digital capture.

Questions:

1. How did you get your start in photography?

I got started in photography at school where I was introduced to monochrome darkroom work and the fundamentals of the science of photography.

2. When did you join The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) and how you benefited from the membership?

I joined the RPS in the early 1980s because I wanted the challenge of obtaining a Distinction, but the greatest benefit has been the many friends I have made while becoming involved in the Society's activities.

3. One of the key highlights of photographic societies is the distinction titles. The RPS titles are very much sought after all over the world. But for the newbie, they may not be aware of the relevance, significance and criteria of the titles (LRPS, ARPS, FRPS). Would you like to provide some insights?

Membership of the Society is open to everyone. The Distinctions enable members to demonstrate their ability and have it recognised. The first level Licentiate (LRPS) requires a sound technical knowledge and skill and appreciation of picture making. Associates (ARPS) will be very competent photographers with a personal style and Fellows (FRPS) show distinguished ability usually with a very strong personal signature to their work. Information on the Distinctions is available at www.rps.org as a pdf download.

4. Supposedly some serious amateur photographers somehow turn freelance or even fulltime photographers. How will the Distinction titles help them?

It has to be said that professional photographers ultimately succeed because they meet the needs of their clients in the market place. A distinction can be useful because it demonstrates that the photographer is serious about their work and has worked at their photography and achieved a recognised level of competence and quality.

5. Having being the chairman of the Distinction panel for many years, what would be your advice for someone who is keen to apply for the Distinction titles?

Seek advice and constructive criticism and listen carefully. Become a critical judge of your own work and seek ways to improve. Try to see as much work as possible of other successful photographers.

6. What is your take on the possibility of setting up a RPS Asia Chapter for RPS to better reach out to photographers in Asia?

I hope we shall soon see an active Chapter in Asia but this needs demand and action from members in the area.

7. Your tenure as President of RPS is a voluntary task and requires much sacrifice in time and effort. Your wife, Fiona Alison is also past President of the Master Photographer's Association. How has this affected your family or work life in the past and present?

These roles do involve a big commitment of time and energy but the plus side is the opportunity to meet other photographers and to see their work.

8. What is your vision for RPS?

The RPS must keep in touch with its past but at the same time embrace advances in technology in meeting its objectives of promoting excellence in the art and science of photography and its role as an educational charity.

9. Cool. Thanks for providing some insight into RPS. Now lets talk a bit about your photography journey. What is your most interesting experience during your photo shoot which you would like to share?

At any time the current project tends to be the most interesting experience.

10. How do you get inspirations for your works, especially a series or project?

In many ways, from exhibitions, from seeing the work of others in books and on the web, and often from attending lectures.

11. Which is your favourite photograph?

Hebdon Bridge by Dennis Thorpe.

12. Which photographer inspired you most? What did you learn from him?

Ansel Adams. Importance of light and the importance of quality for impact

13. How does photography enrich your life?

It provides an outlet for artistic expression and I meet a lot of wonderful people who share my interests.

14. What would you say is the new challenge for photography as a whole?

To embrace technological change which is currently very rapid while at the same time recognising that it is the photographer who makes the picture.

15. As an advice to beginners, how can they improve in their path in photography?

Take a course, join a photographic organisation, meet other photographers and enjoy.

Works of Dr Barry Senior





