

Minimalist photographer captures simple beauty through camera lens

ART & CRAFT



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There is beauty all around us, but when we're rushing from here to there and checking our phones, we miss a lot.

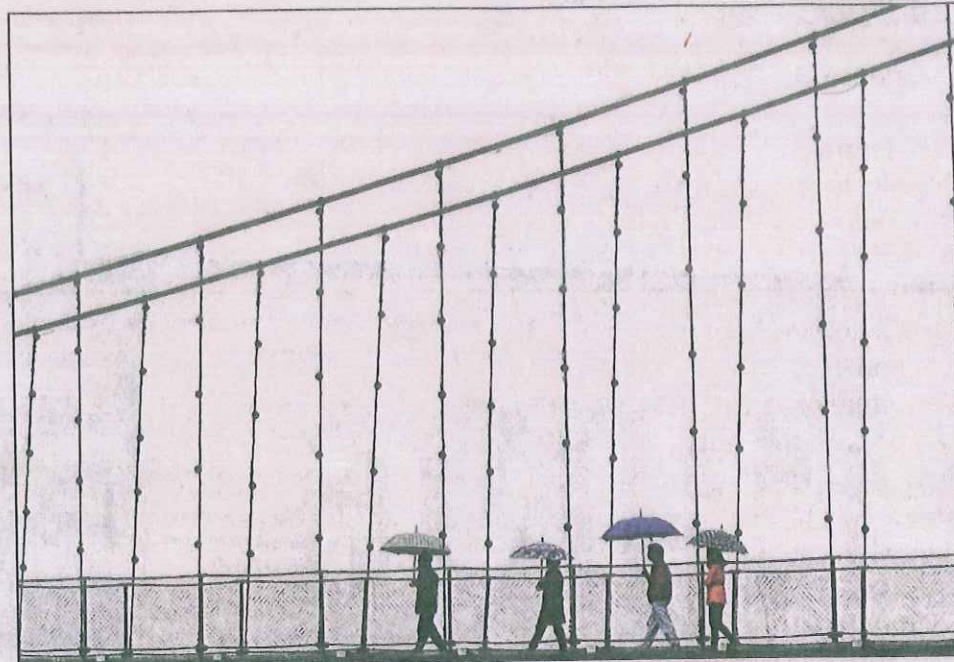
This is where Wei Shyuan Peng comes in. By day, he's a hydrogeologist who adopted the nickname "Stone" while enrolled as a graduate student at Western Michigan University. When he's off the clock, he's a photographer armed with the Nikon D300 he has been using for years because "that is good enough for me."

Peng, 53, of Grand Rapids, likes to compose minimalist photos and is willing to spend hours waiting to capture the right image.

While visiting his parents in Taiwan in 2012, he waited four hours for the fog to roll in so he could capture the image of four people carrying umbrellas across a bridge against a foggy backdrop.

Much of Peng's photography focuses on a single subject, such as the one of a leafless tree standing with purpose against a sloping, snow-cover landscape in southern Kent County. While there is much bustling action in the world to photograph, Peng prefers to brave the cold and wait for a blanket of snow or a wall of fog to take his signature photos.

"The main reason is life is too complicated," he said, explain-



Wei Shyuan "Stone" Peng, right, is a self-taught photographer who sells his minimalist photos at local art shows and online. At left, Peng took this photo in 2012 while visiting his parents in Taiwan. After four hours of waiting for the fog to roll in, Peng captured this image of four people carrying umbrellas across the bridge. (Submitted by Stone Peng)

ing his minimalist approach. "I try to make it simple, make it easy. When I go through nature, I feel a very minimal subject. ... The Chinese philosophy of life, the principle is 'less is more' and 'empty is full.' I don't want it too complicated. People can feel (a) more emotional feeling from when you see a simplified subject."

So Peng strives to help people see the beauty that captivates him.

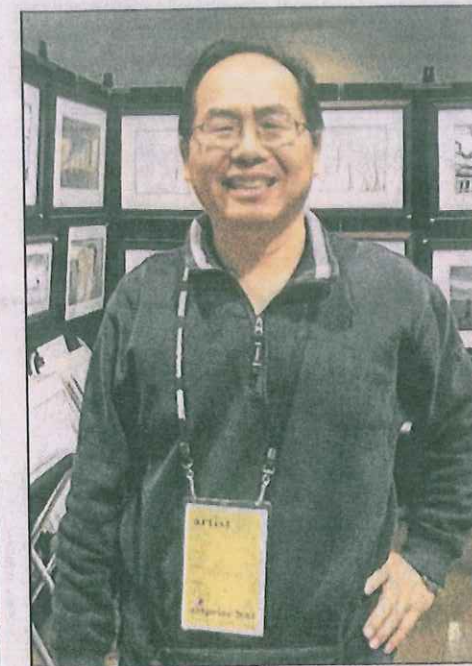
Sometimes, this requires him to change his vantage point, and that often results in questions from passersby. When he dropped to the ground to photograph a tiny, bright red plant blooming against a white brick wall in Niles, "a lot of people were wondering what I was doing," he recalled.

"When I lay down to take that

shot, that is what I want to show people," Peng said. "When you feel nature, if you put your heart (in it), you can feel that nature is your friend. That feeling — that is the beauty."

Peng makes me feel good about my own shutter bug tendencies. Beautiful things catch my eye on a daily basis, and often, they're things that others might not value as photo-worthy. I like to photograph the usual stuff, including my kids' sporting events and candid photos from their daily life, plus wilted flowers, tiny bugs, the stray cat that looks in our front window, closeups of my craft projects and found objects I stumble upon.

While I use Instagram to share my photos, Peng shares his work via art shows and his website, stonepeng.com. We met at the



IF YOU GO

STONE PENG

What: Stone Peng's minimalist photography at the Forest Hills Fine Arts Center

When: Peng will be the featured artist Jan. 8-29 and will be greeting guests at a reception from 6-7 p.m. on Jan. 15.

Where: 600 Forest Hill Avenue SE, Grand Rapids

Information: fhfineartscenter.com and stonepeng.com.

ity," he said. "If you isolate one small part of their personality, you will see everybody's beauty."

What a nice thought to subscribe to this holiday season.

Peng sold his first piece of art two days after it was displayed in a Holland gallery. It was a photo of the lighthouse that was purchased for a wedding gift. He said his photos are especially popular with people who want to create a welcoming environment in their home or workspace.

"When people see my photo, they are calm," he said.

Inspired by Peng, I challenge you all, dear readers, to seek out the simple beauty of the world around you. It's there; you just have to look carefully and give it a chance to slowly reveal itself.

— Email art & craft column story ideas to Jennifer Ackerman-Haywood at jennifer@craftsanity.com or write P.O. Box 888192, Grand Rapids, MI 49588. Follow @CraftSanity on Instagram and listen to Jennifer's podcast interview with Peng (episode 151) at craftsanity.com.