The thinking photographer

HE IS PART of that illustrious crowd which includes photojournalists Steve McCurry, James Nachtwey and the late Henri Cartier-Bresson. This is because the speaker at this year’s Digital Life-Canon Photo Marathon 2006, Mr Alan Lim, is a winner of last year’s International Photography Awards — akin to the Oscars of the photography world.

Mr Lim, 33, swept the third prize for fashion photography and won honourable mentions in the other editorial and special effects categories. The senior executive photographer of The Straits Times joined the newspaper in 1991 after graduating from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in Florida in the United States. Along the way, he did freelance commercial work in Miami before returning home to Singapore.

During his two sessions, Mr Lim will be talking about working with subjects and the use of natural and artificial light. He will also dwell on what it is to be a thinking photographer.

The seminars will be held on Sept 24 and Oct 1 at the Singapore Press Holdings Auditorium in Toa Payoh North from 2pm to 4pm. Admission is free. Sign up at www.photomarathon.com.sg.

— By Serene Luo

Get the picture

Award-winning photographer ALAN LIM gives tips on how to make people pictures stand out from the crowd

Short of “buying lots of eye wash”, it is impossible to always see things with “fresh eyes”. That is photography wisdom according to The Straits Times’ photographer Alan Lim.

Going by the wacky responses on how to bring fresh perspectives to a picture, you can tell that the 33-year-old is just a little crazy when it comes to shooting.

People are practically the most important part to any shot, he said. “If the subject is good, it’s like a layman carrying an idiot-proof compact camera and shooting a beautiful sunset at Scotland River,” he said, describing the magical feel of the result. “The effect will be just, ‘wow’.”

He should know. Mr Lim has had his fair share shooting celebrities like supermodel Naomi Campbell, chef Anthony Bourdain and actress Gong Li. Here’s how he shoots people.

Children

The perennial favourites. But avoid the cardinal mistake that so many adults make: getting children to “be more mature than they are.”

Said Mr Lim: “Don’t try to pose them, don’t try to make them look like you.”

Shoot children the same way you would animals: “Just sit and wait to capture the moment,” he said.

Beautiful people

They are obviously easier on the eyes and on the camera’s viewfinder. But what happens if beautiful people are in short supply?

“Then your lighting must be damn good,” said Mr Lim with a chuckle.

But he sobered up to say that “the way a subject looks is one factor to making a picture look good, but other things like lighting and composition also come into play.”

Pay attention to content, one of the most integral parts of any shot. “It’s like someone trying to get an acting job... but he doesn’t have the look.”

“He’d better pray hard that his talent is better than his looks.”

Portraits

People skills come into play when trying to get this type of shot.

“If you want to bring out their true self, their real personality, you can’t be a stranger to the person,” said Alan.

So, he spends time with his subject, talking to them, asking them questions, and taking an interest in their work.

“You need to be there long enough for them to be comfortable with you before you get the shot.”

Get the picture?

— By Serene Luo

Sign up for the Digital Life-Canon Photo Marathon at www.photomarathon.com.sg

• Date: Oct 14, 2006 • Venue: Suntec Theatre • Registration fee: $10