Mihir Hardikar

For Mihir Hardikar photography is not just a profession, but a creative outlet too. As a commercial photographer, he brings a sense of freshness to product and advertising photography. In his images, one can see defined ideas, and no uncertainty. A regular traveller, he dreams to see all the 196 countries and shoot Chernobyl some day. Currently, venturing into food photography, this young photographer shows a promising future.

How did photography happen to you? When did you decide to take it up professionally?
While studying at the Sir JJ Institute of Applied Art in Mumbai, photography was one of the elective/specialisation subjects I took up in my 3rd year. I had always toyed with my dad's camera but learning the craft and applying it in my projects fascinated me a lot. After graduation, I dedicated a couple of years to learning it professionally and enrolled at the Light & Life Academy in Ooty. There I specialised in various disciplines like food & beverage, portraiture, product, architecture & interiors, automobile & industrial. After the course, I have been a practising photography professionally.

How would you describe your aesthetic or style of photography?
I strongly believe that developing an aesthetic or your own style is an ongoing, learning process. Professionally, I am a commercial photographer and my main areas of focus are advertising, product, food & beverage and people photography. I generally shoot personal work when I travel. I love to shoot landscapes and cityscapes which are not quintessentially beautiful, but tell a story or convey a mood.

What sparked your interest in this style of photography, over other genres?
With respect to personal work, when I was studying to become a commercial photographer I would hardly step away from the studio to try and shoot in natural surroundings. But travelling opened up a whole new world for me. It gave a different perspective towards the craft. It is safe to say that travel alone has completely inspired my personal work.

Tell us about one of your image/series/work that's your personal favourite and why.
A couple of years ago, I was assigned a project by Mr. Uday Parker, owner of the design firm Breathing Space where I worked with him and his team on a diary project called "The Multiply Diary". He personally art directed the entire project where we shot many concept/idea based pictures through the medium of kids. The project got an international award and was also part of a group show in London. In that project, there is an image of 5-6 kids holding a huge life size boat, made from paper and waiting for the tide to come in so they can set sail. It's my personal favourite from the series. The paper boat depicts childhood, the way we play with small paper boats in rainwater, but the size of the boat depicts how the journey towards achieving our goals requires hard work. I find the entire image to be very inspiring.

What are the main challenges when you are a young upcoming photographer?
Deciding on what genres of photography you want to work in can be a long process. But it is very important to have a good portfolio that shows your strengths in a chosen genre of photography. Today, apart from being good at your work, networking and social media have also become a very important part of the process/profession.

What are you currently exploring, any upcoming projects? Any collaboration? Are there other forms/genres of photography that you are interested in?
I am hoping to do some food and people-related personal project soon. As Indians, with our rich heritage, the way food shapes us culturally is something I would like to explore. I'm interested in industrial and interior photography too.

What would you like to advise to youngsters who are interested in entering the field of photography?
I think as a craft, youngsters should pay equal attention to the technical aspects. Photoshop is a tool to enhance a good picture and not to create one. Also, photography is an art that needs to be cultivated. If there is passion in what you are doing, then automatically you can make a living out of it.

TEXT: ABHISHEK DESAI