

HONG KONG TRIAD BIO • GOING PRO • SURE SHOTS

КЯЕШЛИ

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# КРЕМЛИН



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**Comrade in Chief: James W. Snell**

Welcome to the inaugural photography edition of Kremlin, Calgary's art mentorship magazine. Like spies from the old KGB, we dig deep and punish our competitors with excellence. Kremlin showcases local professional artists at work. Relax. Learn from competent creators. Capture your imagination. In the coming years, we'll cover the full art spectrum. Architecture, classical music, contemporary oil and watercolor, dance, writing, sculpture and much more. Subscribe to Kremlin today. Inject yourself with possibility. Lean back on the tattered sofa of your aspirations. Wake up to mediocrity withdrawal. Kremlin is published monthly. It is circulated throughout Calgary post-secondary campuses for free and available for home and business delivery via subscription. All images by Comrade

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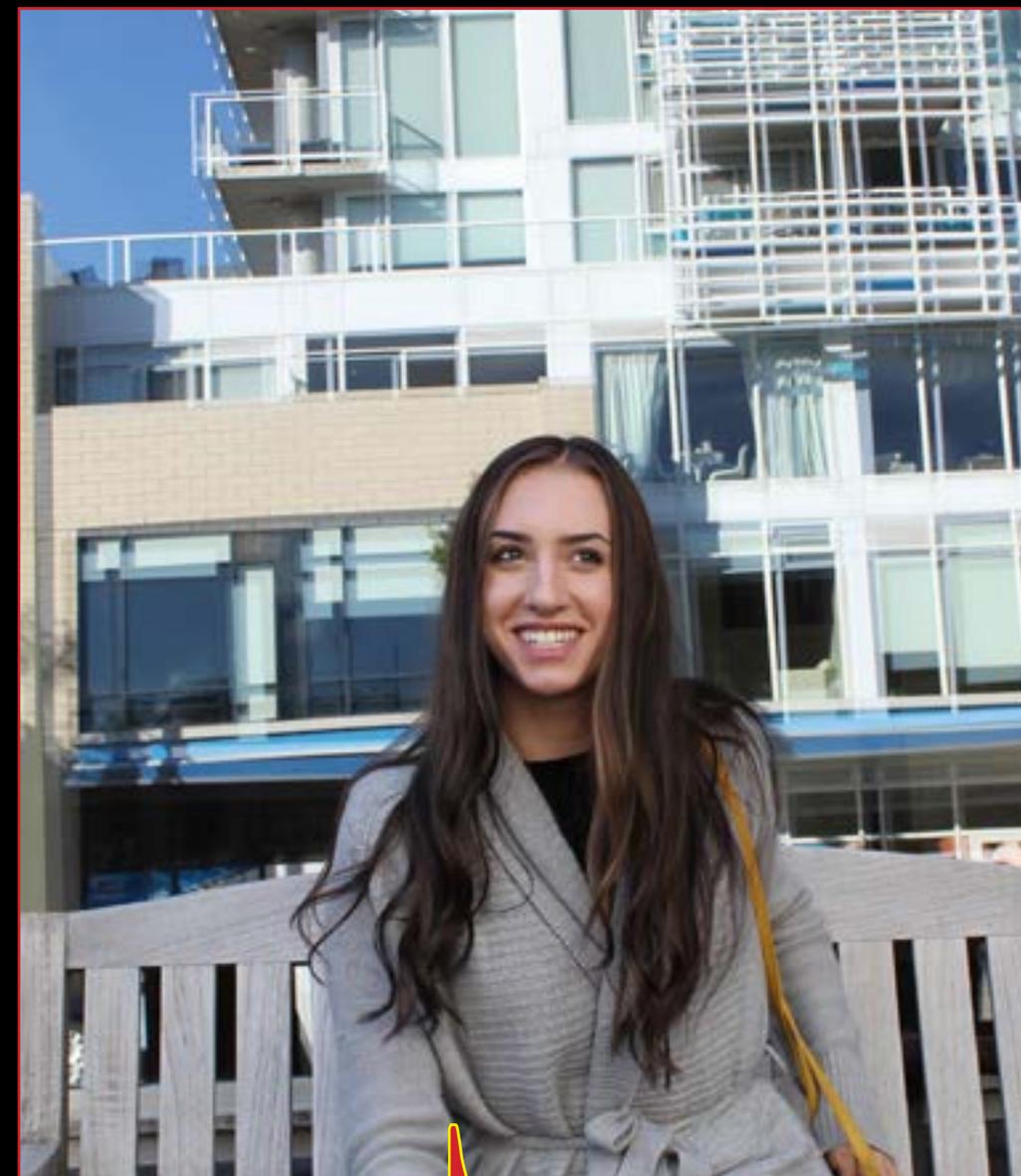
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# THE TRIAD

FROM HONG KONG  
TO YYC STREET CRED  
GIL NGAI CONFESSES



**By James Snell**

**G**il Ngai grew up in the urban jungle of Hong Kong, where ‘everyone grows up around concrete, steel and pavement.’ His father, who was into photography, had a Rolleiflex – a very expensive, premium analogue camera. Ngai doesn’t know where he got it, but he always used to watch his father. This was in the late 60s early 70s.

“There was a mesmerizing amount of things to shoot in Hong Kong, so we were busy,” said Ngai, who came to Canada when he was seven. He got into drawing because his family had no money for toys – or anything else.

“That was all there was,” says Ngai. “I imagined things and created things on paper. That was my world. I went to Emily Carr for one year, then went to Grant MacEwan for a diploma in graphic arts.”

Ngai got his first SLR camera in high school. He worked at The Bay. He continued in his father’s footsteps and started Day One Media after a lot of experimentation in various jobs.

**“I imagined things and created things  
on paper. That was my world.”**

**Gil Ngai. Photo By James Snell**

# GOING PRO

By James Snell

“Struggles and learning experiences, that’s how Day One Media started. That’s how successful self-employment begins – a sum of many experiences,” says Gil Ngai. Ngai worked as a graphic designer for 8 years and was a wedding photographer for 17 years. He worked for Avenue Magazine, Samaritan’s Purse and iStock Photo.

These places were not right for Ngai. He had an independent spirit. The organizations had a heavy corporate culture, which was very financially driven. “No question, companies have to make money, but it shouldn’t be the driving force behind everything. Working for love of trade is critical,” says Ngai.

“I love adventure – too.”

He began exploring the outdoors, both domestically and internationally. This was great inspiration to him. He began taking his young daughter on overnight backcountry ski trips into the mountains. “I always returned invigorated to chase beauty in urban settings.”

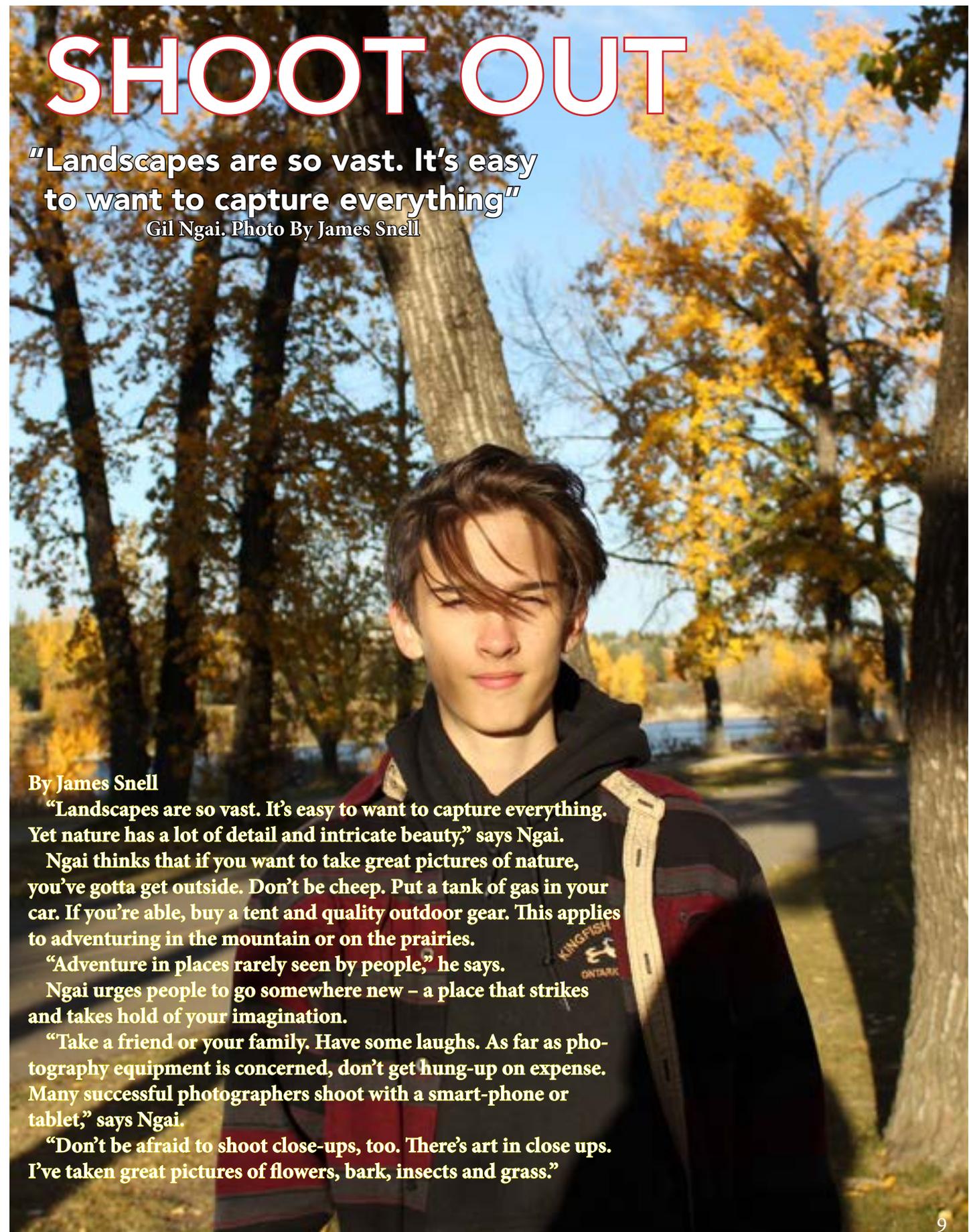
**“I always returned invigorated to chase beauty in urban settings.”**

Gil Ngai. Photo By James Snell

FROM HONG KONG TO NYC STREET-CRED GIL NGAI CONFESSES



DAY ONE



# SHOOT OUT

**"Landscapes are so vast. It's easy to want to capture everything"**

Gil Ngai. Photo By James Snell

By James Snell

**"Landscapes are so vast. It's easy to want to capture everything. Yet nature has a lot of detail and intricate beauty,"** says Ngai.

**Ngai thinks that if you want to take great pictures of nature, you've gotta get outside. Don't be cheep. Put a tank of gas in your car. If you're able, buy a tent and quality outdoor gear. This applies to adventuring in the mountain or on the prairies.**

**"Adventure in places rarely seen by people,"** he says.

**Ngai urges people to go somewhere new – a place that strikes and takes hold of your imagination.**

**"Take a friend or your family. Have some laughs. As far as photography equipment is concerned, don't get hung-up on expense. Many successful photographers shoot with a smart-phone or tablet,"** says Ngai.

**"Don't be afraid to shoot close-ups, too. There's art in close ups. I've taken great pictures of flowers, bark, insects and grass."**



**“Shooting a great portrait involves your ability to connect with a person”**

Gil Ngai. Photo By James Snell

## URBAN PORTRAITS

By James Snell

“Great urban portraits really reflect the passion that is within a person. Shooting a great portrait involves your ability to connect with a person,” says Ngai.

“It’s important to understand what the subject is passionate about. Style. Expression. Their clothing. Or other props,” he says.

Ngai thinks that urban landscapes are defined by people and structures. He says that finding the interaction between the two, which reflects emotion and character is critical. “Are people busy? Are they moving a lot? Are they relaxed? Are they at play? Try to get the vibe of what is going on,” he says.

“Day and night photography are very different,” he cautions. “Look at the available light and what that night reveals. You are looking at specific lights and what those lights are revealing. What story does the light reveal?”

Ngai is certain that night stories are different from day stories. He says it’s just a different demographic – downtown at night. He thinks it’s always a good idea to shoot pictures with a friend. For safety.

“With a partner, it’s much safer to enter and shoot inside back alleys.”



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