

Above and beyond

From young stargazer to freelance sky photographer, Nat Geo Award 2013 viewers' favourite winner Will Cho captures images of the night sky that many of us never get the chance to see

DUBBED the "Little Prince of the galaxy", Will Cho loves the skies and with his golden hair, he does look a bit like the Little Prince. One may perhaps think his childhood dreams were to do with the stars. But it was not that **romantic**.

Cho spent his childhood in Ap Lei Chau (鴨脷洲). His bed at the time was beside a window and he looked up to see a star-dotted sky every night. He **laments**, "Now I am grown up, stars have somehow become a rare sight." Cho believes Hong Kong has a serious light pollution problem which is evident after dark.

Cho has been into sky **photography** for nearly two years, meaning he knows the basics of **constellations**. "When you see three bright stars close together almost in a straight line and other stars on its two sides, then that's the constellation called 'Orion the hunter'. The three stars are its belt. It's hard to describe in words," he says.

He uses star gazing **applications** on his smartphone too. "I do use apps. Just point at the sky and you will find out what constellations you are looking at," he explains. So, other than WhatsApp and Facebook, the smartphone is a useful tool for stargazing too.



▲ Cho won the 'Viewers' Favourite' award in the photography section of the Nat Geo Awards 2013 with this photograph.



▲ Cho appears in all of his sky photos, such as in this one at High Island Reservoir (萬宜水庫).

Patience is a virtue

CHO always appears in his photos – usually small and casting a lonely silhouette. The idea first came with an experience he had at Sunset Peak (大東山) on Lantau Island (大嶼山). The weather is always fine on weekdays but his friends were at work. "I was feeling a little lonely. I did not intend to put myself in the photo, but I just wanted to express that special feeling," he says.

Taking star shots requires a long **exposure** time. Including himself in the picture may mean Cho ends up with a blurry image if he makes even the slightest movement during the capture time. "I have stayed motionless for as long as 45 seconds," Will says. In a **demonstration** of how difficult it is, he ran in front of the front of the camera in 10 seconds and maintained his posture for 25 seconds. He finally got the shot he wanted after several attempts.

Although the camera can be remote controlled, sometimes he is just too far from it. "It's best to get someone to press the button for you but that person may not actually know what I want," Cho explains.

Picture perfect

CHO has visited Sunset Peak, his favourite site, over 50 times in the past two years. Each visit takes a lot of time and effort, in addition to a little courage. He resigned from his day job two years ago. "It's not that the job was not good. But a good job will make me complacent. I will not make improvements," he says.

Now Cho is a freelancer. He may have no regular income at all, but he has no fear. He said, "Whenever there is a chance, you should give it a try, whatever!"

Although Cho believes he needs to transform and adapt what he is doing in the future, he admits that he still does not have any immediate plans. Instead he gets involved in everything. Only a day before this interview, he organised a Sunset Peak clean-up campaign with 46 enthusiastic citizens. He saw a lot of rubbish there on his previous visits and urged people on Facebook to join him in the clean-up.

"I hope that was the first and last time I have to organise a clean-up campaign," he says. For Cho, the sky is the limit and his award-winning photography speaks for him.

VOCABULARY

M : Meaning E : Example

1 romantic (adj) 浪漫的
M: having a strong effect on one's emotions
E: He is good at writing **romantic** poems.
E: Some people say Paris is a **romantic** city.

2 lament (v) 抱怨
M: express annoyance or disappointment about something
E: He **lamented** the lack of choice in TV programmes.
E: The teacher **lamented** the decline of language standards in students.

3 photography (n) 攝影
M: the activity or job of taking photographs or films
E: **Photography** is one of his hobbies.
E: He took a **photography** course last month.

4 constellation (n) 星座
M: a group of stars that forms a particular pattern
E: It is not difficult to recognise some **constellations** on a clear night.
E: How do you identify the Gemini **constellation**?

5 application (n) 應用軟件
M: a piece of software
E: Some smartphone **applications** have to be paid for.
E: Make sure you update the **applications** on your smartphone.

6 exposure (n) 曝光
M: the amount of time the camera shutter is opened when taking a photograph
E: The photo looks excellent with the correct **exposure**.
E: Moving lights will draw lines on a photograph taken with a long **exposures**.

7 demonstration (n) 示範
M: the act of showing someone how to do something
E: We watched the cooking **demonstration** attentively.
E: The swimming **demonstration** lasted half an hour.