



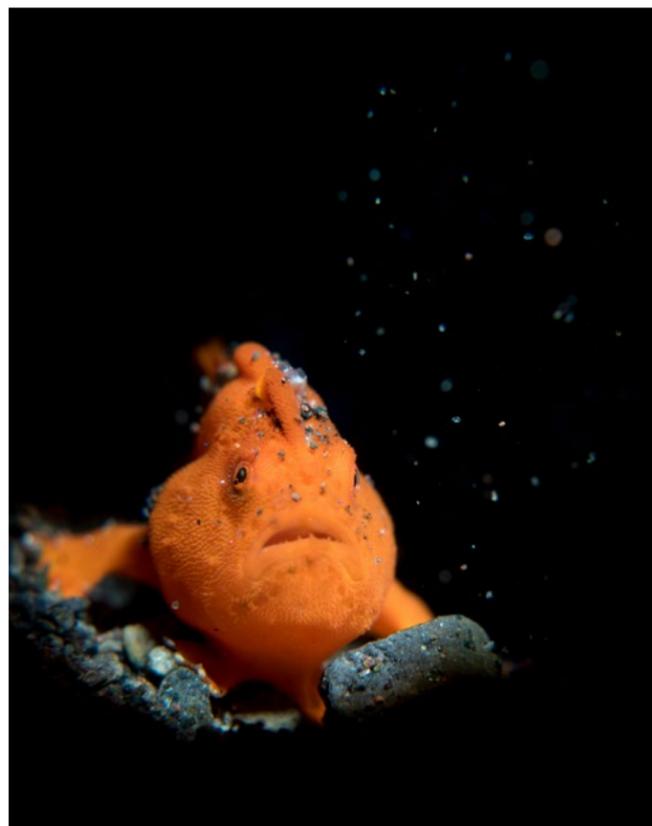
photo & video

An interview with

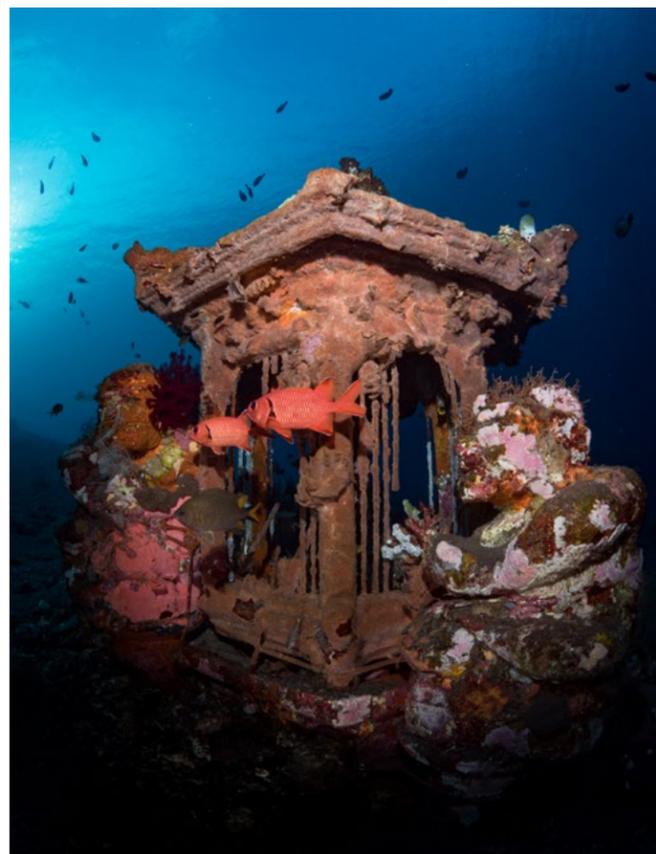
Lilian Koh

— *Lens Beyond Ocean Portfolio* winner

A close encounter with manta rays in 2000 inspired Lilian Koh of Singapore to take up scuba diving and underwater photography. Also drawn to tiny critters, her macro photography has won top awards.



Snowing – Frogfish at Kuwanji, Tulamben, Bali. ISO100, f5.6, 1/250



X-RAY MAG: Tell us about yourself, your background and how you became a diver and underwater photographer.

LK: I am from Singapore and formally worked in the banking sector as an executive assistant, with an interior design background. Currently, I

Underwater
photographer
Lilian Koh of
Singapore



JOHN GOODRIDGE

Swoosh (right) *Favorinus mirabilis* nudibranch with eggs, Kuwanji, Tulamben, Bali. ISO100, f8, 1/250; Shrine (left) Temple at Coral Garden, Tulamben, Bali. ISO200, f6.3, 1/250

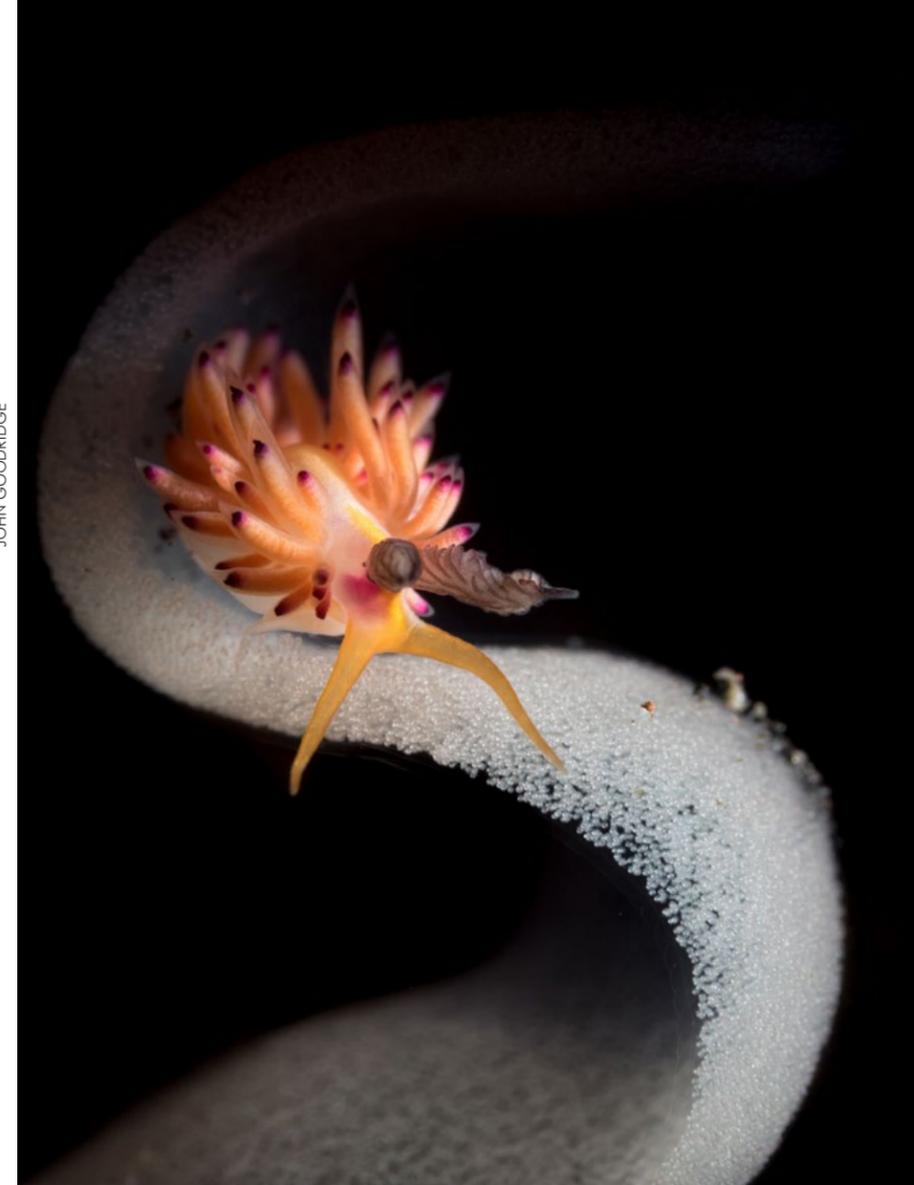
dive and shoot whenever I can, after quitting my job many years ago.

I did my Discover Scuba program in the Great Barrier Reef, and it took me more than two years after that to be certified. I was on a dive trip as a non-diver and had a close-encounter with manta rays, which peaked my interest to discover more. I signed up to be a scuba diver within a couple of weeks. My brother was the first one in my family to be certified and I continued where he left off.

My first big trip was to Sipadan where I was armed with a tiny camera with a one-inch display. From then



Keyhole – *Costasiella kuroshimae*, affectionately known as the “Shaun the Sheep” nudibranch, at Malesti, Tulamben, Bali. ISO100, f10, 1/200



onwards, I have always dived with a camera to capture beautiful marine life.

X-RAY MAG: What is the backstory behind each of your winning images. How did you get the shot?

LK: For Keyhole (left) I was exploring a variety of ideas while using a snoot and wondering how to shoot everyone’s beloved Shaun the Sheep nudibranch (*Costasiella kuroshimae*) differently. The idea was conceived during a surface interval. Simple materials like duct tape and a penknife helped me to execute my idea and get the shot I wanted.

For Shrine (center): When in Bali, it’s hard not to pay a visit to a temple. These magnificent structures were placed underwater and acted as sanctuaries for marine life. This image was taken during one of my visits. I picked a location and waited for the right moment for the fish to appear in my frame.





photo & video

Underwater photographer Lilian Koh with her camera rig (below)



BENEDICT SEAH

For *Snowing* (previous page, far left): This image was taken using a snoot. While I was shooting it, several divers swam passed and kicked up some sand. As you can see in the image, the sand added another element and created a snowing effect.

For *Swoosh* (previous page, top right), I found this nudibranch feeding on a ribbon of eggs. At the time, the surge was strong. Every time the ribbon of eggs moved along with the surge, it created different compositions. While shooting and snooting in these kinds of conditions, usually I

Nauticam housing, with Inon z240 strobes, plus a Retra LSD snoot.

X-RAY MAG: How did you develop your style of photography?

LK: Personally, I love isolation. That is why I am addicted to snooting. Able to control light, illuminating and isolating a subject from a busy environment, snooting helps the subject to pop in your images. Normally, during a dive, I do not have a specific critter to shoot. I will have a few ideas in my mind and look for critters and a suitable environment, which is



would have given up. I am glad I persevered and managed to get a series of images.

X-RAY MAG: What camera and lighting equipment do you use?

LK: I use an Olympus EM5 Mark II camera with a M.Zuiko ED 60mm f2.8 Macro lens or a M.Zuiko ED 8mm f1.8 Fisheye PRO lens, housed in a

but a truck load of patience as well.

X-RAY MAG: Who are your role models in underwater photography or diving and why?

LK: Basically everyone who takes photos underwater. Critters might be similar, but how photographers

Transparent,
photo by
Lilian Koh

Co-exist,
photo by
Lilian Koh

best-suited to executing the image. I will always bring my snoots during my dives and make sure they are always available when I need them. Setting up and positioning them requires time. Shooting critters with snoots requires not just time,

see them and what they see translates to their images. By studying other photographers' photos, one will start to explore how they shoot and compose. It is always good to learn from others.

X-RAY MAG: In your relationship with reefs and the sea, where have you had your favorite experiences?

LK: It has always been my dream to dive with dolphins. Most of the time, I saw them from afar, while on a boat. Finally, during a trip to Cocos Island, Costa Rica, I encountered a small pod, swimming and playing around me. I just stopped taking photos and took in those moments just to enjoy their presence.

X-RAY MAG: What are your



thoughts on ocean conservation and how does your photography relate to these issues?

LK: I hope that through my photography I am able to show people the beauty of Mother Nature and her creations. I want viewers of my photography to see the amazing critters we can see and find in the ocean. From pelagic to macro critters, we divers need to do our part in protecting them.

X-RAY MAG: What are the challenges and benefits of being an underwater photographer in the world today?

LK: Too many places, too little time to explore them all. I will slowly tick each location off the checklist.

X-RAY MAG: How do people respond to your works?

LK: I get positive comments from fellow photographers. I am very glad they like the way I present

my images and are inspired by my art.

X-RAY MAG: Do you teach photography?

LK: I'll be at the Anilao Photo Academy (Philippines) as an in-house coach for a month, from 21 June until 21 July 2017.

X-RAY MAG: What are your upcoming projects or events?

LK: I am thinking of running workshops, so stay tuned for any updates. I am constantly looking for and learning new techniques. I recently upgraded my whole camera set-up from a mirrorless camera to a DSLR so there are new and exciting adventures ahead, which I will share on my social media pages. ■

Please visit the photographer's webpages on Facebook at: [Facebook.com/liliankohphotography](https://www.facebook.com/liliankohphotography); and Instagram at: [Instagram.com/liliankoh](https://www.instagram.com/liliankoh).



Tiger, photo by Lilian Koh

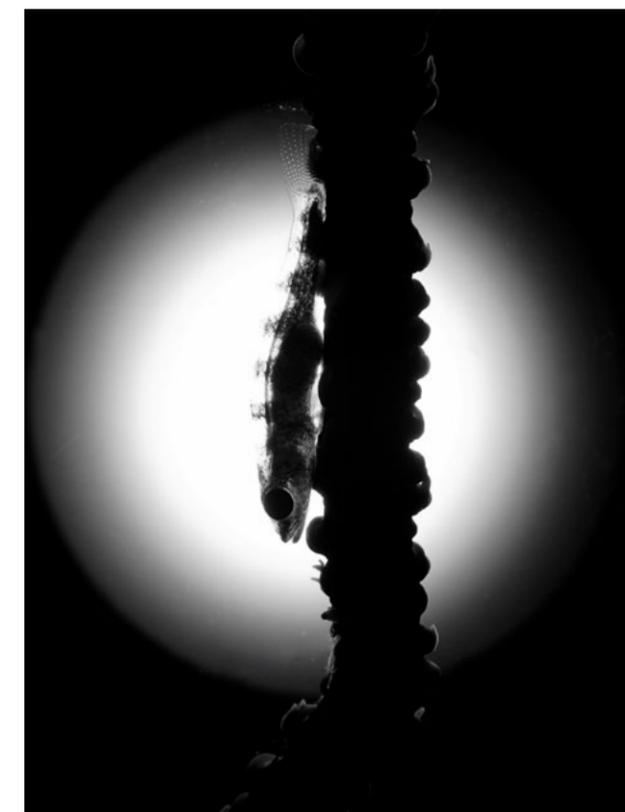




Macro: Marchione Giacomo, Italy (right); Compact Camera: Dragos Dumitrescu, Romania (top far right); Young Talent: Garri Immanuel, Philippines (lower right); Wide Angle: Yen-Yi Lee, Taiwan (below); Freediving: Cendric Peneau, Reunion Island (bottom left)



Creative: Kenji Cheow, Malaysia (right)

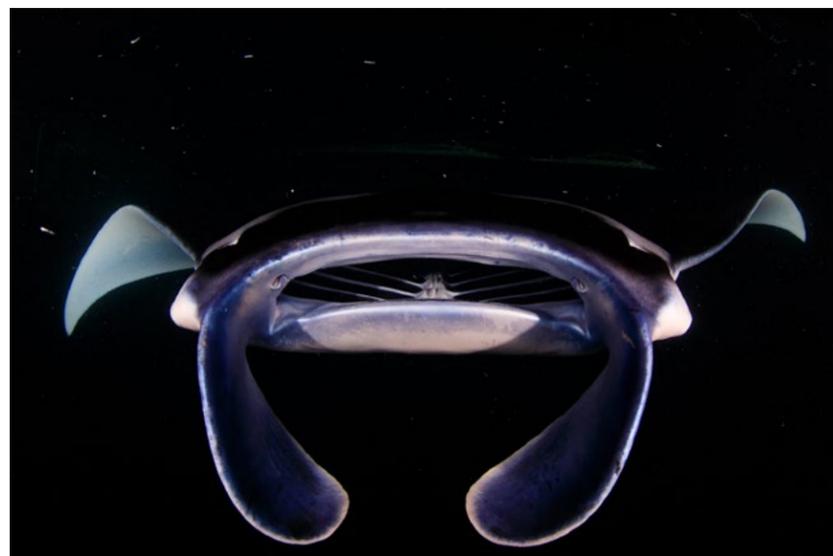


Lens Beyond Ocean 2017 winners featured at MIDE

Winners of the 5th annual international underwater photography competition, Lens Beyond Ocean, were featured in an exhibit at the Malaysia International Dive Expo in Kuala Lumpur 12-14 May 2017. The competition received an overwhelming response, with entries from 46 participants from 13 countries.

Macro. The Macro category was won by Marchione Giacomo of Italy, with the Memorable Photo honor going to Wu Yung-Sen of Taiwan. The prize for this category was a 5-day/4-night dive package at Nusa Ceningan Resort in Bali, Indonesia.

Wide-Angle. The Wide-Angle category was won by Yen-Yi Lee of Taiwan, with the Memorable Photo



honor going to Tang Mun Phun of Malaysia. The prize for this category was 4-day/3-night dive package at Sangalaki Dive Resort in Indonesia.

Creative. The Creative category was won by Kenji Cheow of Malaysia, with the Memorable Photo honor going to Masmawi Rahim of Singapore. The prize for this category was a 4-day/3-night dive package at Seaventures Dive Rig in Sabah, Malaysia.

Compact Camera. The Compact Camera category was won by Dragos Dumitrescu of Romania, with the Memorable Photo honor going to Aliah Roslan of Malaysia. The prize for this category was a 4-day/3-night dive package at 7SEAS Dive Resort on the island of Gili Air in Lombok, Indonesia.



Freediving. A new category this year was Freediving, which was won by Cedric Peneau of Reunion Island, with the Memorable Photo honor going to Yen-Yi Lee of Taiwan. The prize for this category was a 4-day/3-night dive package at Tenggol Coral Beach Resort in Malaysia.

Portfolio. The winner of the Portfolio category was Lillian Koh of Singapore, with the Memorable Portfolio honor going to Iyad Suleyman of Ukraine. The prize for this category was an interview for a feature editorial article in X-RAY MAG, which you can read on the next page.

Young Talent. The Young Talent category was won by Garri Immanuel of the Philippines. The prize for this category was a 3-day dive package at Nusa Penida, Manta Point, Bali, Indonesia sponsored by AquaMarine Diving Bali.

Judges included marine biologist and editor-in-chief of *Scubazone*, Massimo Boyer (Italy); founder of *ScubaPortal.it*, Marco Daturi (Italy); underwater photographer Eric Goh (Malaysia); and publisher and editor-in-chief of *X-Ray Mag*, Peter Symes (Denmark). ■

MIDE thanked the sponsors of the contest prizes, the judges and the participants. For more information, please visit: Mide.com.my/lensbeyondocean

