

Asia's Next Top Model's "Noted Fashion Photographer" TODD ANTHONY TYLER

By VERONICA ANH-VAN

SINCE THE FIRST SEASON OF ASIA'S NEXT TOP MODEL AIRED ON STAR WORLD, IT LOOKS LIKE THE GIRLS HAVE HAD ONE SECRET COMPETITOR WHEN IT COMES TO AUDIENCE ATTENTION, AND THAT PERSON IS THEIR SEXY JUDGE AND MENTOR TODD ANTHONY TYLER. THIS FORMER MODEL AND PHOTOGRAPHER HAS SHOT FOR VOGUE, ELLE, HARPER'S BAZAAR, L'OFFICIEL, GQ... AND UNLIKE HIS SERIOUS LOOK ON THE SHOW, TODD HAS SUCH A WARM PERSONALITY, IS AN ART-LOVER AND NATURE-LOVER AT HEART. A TRULY INSPIRATIONAL PERSON TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH.

F: How did you become a photographer?

T: I have been really doing photography my whole life. My fascination with capturing images started in my childhood. The passion for photography carried throughout my life as a keen hobby. Then it was at the time where I was in a period of personal reflection in the later years of my model career and I was deeply searching for what it was I really wanted to truly do as a profession and with my life. The moment I recognized that it was photography that was my true calling I was completely elated. Photography has the perfect blend of entrepreneurship and creativity for me.

F: Are there any photographers who have influenced your works?

T: At the very start of my career I was more so influenced by the images I saw in National Geographic, as these were the type of images I wanted to do. As I explored my roots as a professional model and the idea of doing fashion photography, I was looking at work from



Helmut Newton, Terry Richardson, David LaChapelle, Steven Meisel and Patrick Demarchelier.

F: Are the experiences as a former model helpful for a photographer?

T: I apply my 10 years as a pro model to my photography work on a daily basis. I can develop a rapid rapport with the model on the shoot and communicate clearly and efficiently. I also of course have empathy for what it is like to be a model and the demands made on you so I can have a little more patience. Another strength from my model experience is

being able to show with my own actions the type of pose or concept I am going for. I never ask a model to do something I cannot do myself. Besides being able to bring the best out of a model, I also can draw from my experience of how a model agency works, connections with bookers, editors from fashion magazines and clients internationally.

F: Have you participated in any reality show before Asia's Next Top Model? How did it happen, the collaboration between you and Asia's Next Top Model?

T: No, this is the first time I am on a



show like this. It was a fairly big learning curve for me as I was going off of an ability to be comfortable in front of the camera but had no major TV experience except for doing some TV commercials as a model. I was hired because I am lucky to have a unique combination of experiences. You might be able to find a successful model or photographer but the combination of having a full pro career as model traveling the world and a portfolio full of tear sheets with equal work experience as a fashion photographer is more rare. Luckily for me I have retained some of my model looks and can draw from all that experience when giving feedback on judging.

F: What do you enjoy most about being on the show?

T: What I like most about being on the show is the opportunity to use all of that experience in a rather unique way. As I mentioned, I can use the model experience in my fashion photography work and my experience and reference with fashion in my photography but the show offers a rather unique situation to be sharing that knowledge with the candidates and the audience. Now with the success of the show I have developed such a great base of fans that I can interact with daily discussing fashion, photography and even just simply life. I would say the fans and the fan interaction has been the most enjoyable development for me from the whole show.

F: If you could change something about the show, what would it be?

T: For season one I was not super involved in concepts, model selection, styling and what so forth. Definitely in a season two I would love to be more involved in the fashion elements of the show and aspire to raise the fashion bar. I think the show has an excellent team in place to continue to develop and make improvements. I would simply like to be part of that process which includes the photography and the model selection.

F: Photography and fashion, which is bigger to you?

T: That is a tough question. The pure artist/photographer in me goes straight to thoughts of photography and how images have such a huge impact on all of us. How images influence us and have influenced history even. However, there is no denying the massive scale of the fashion industry and how we as individuals use fashion to define ourselves – whether we recognize that or not. I think photography and fashion are not mutually exclusive; they really go hand in hand. Top models and finely designed clothes are styled and groomed to take images that bring the models and the clothes to the global audiences attention.



F: Have you always used digital cameras or do you also shoot films?

T: I started long ago shooting film. I only switched to digital about 5 to 6 years ago. I am from the old school way of shooting different types of film and then either using photographic techniques or processing details to create look or treatment. My favorite film of all time is Tri X and to this day I feel like I still cannot really create the look with digital. There are a lot of advantages with shooting digital and when you break down a photo in terms of a photographer's eye or talent the talent is not lost in using film or digital but I do think there was a different process or workflow when using film which I kind of miss.

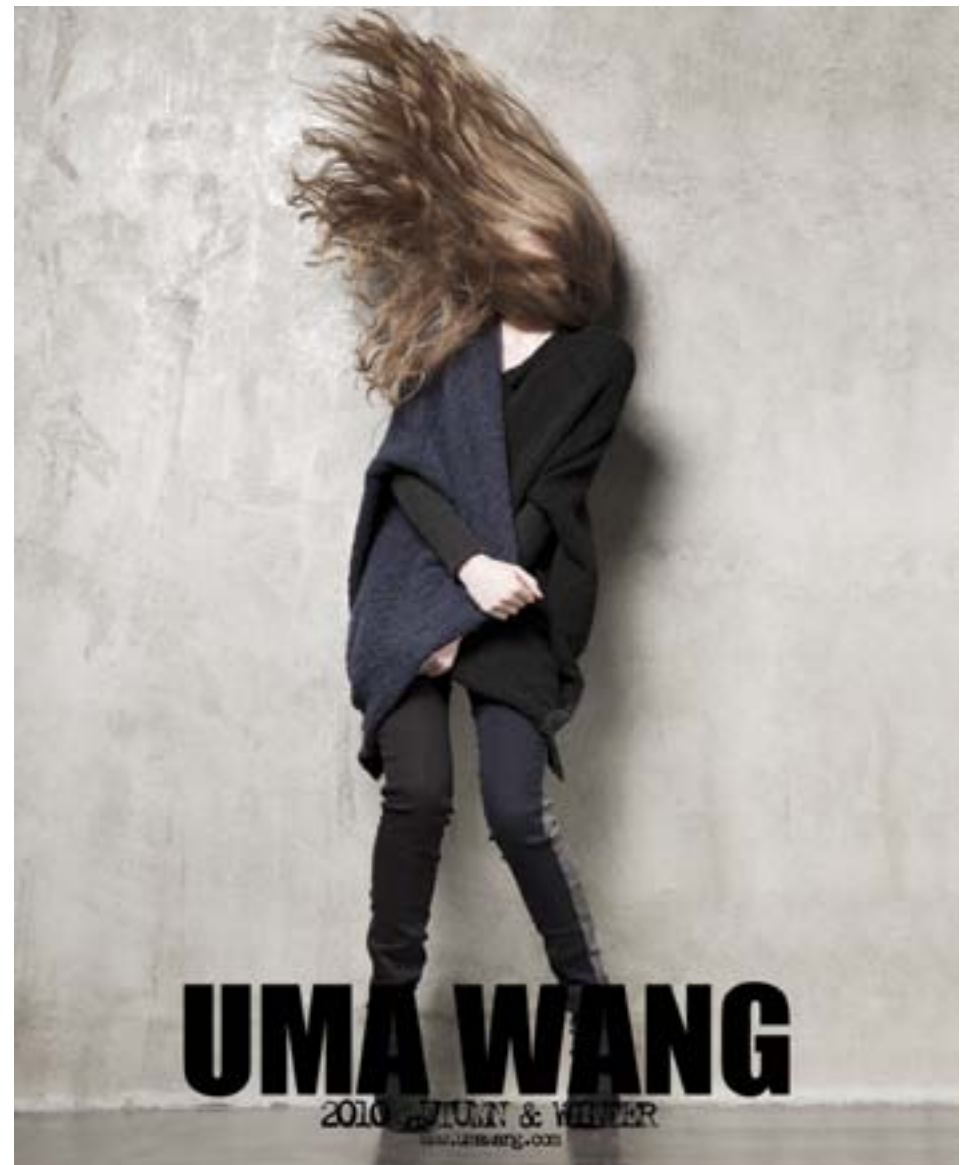
F: Are colours important to you? What do you feel about black & white photography?

T: I think it wouldn't take much to see in my body of work that I lean towards shooting black and white – I really like to shoot B&W images for the mood and tone and over all story telling. However, plenty of times an image really works from the impact of colors. That said – color photography has to be done very carefully in my opinion. Careful attention needs to be paid to color combinations, backgrounds and whether colors are contrasting or complimenting. I tend to feel that black and white images leave a more lasting impression but a carefully crafted color image can leave you with a

vivid memory and often times and uplifting feeling.

F: How do you usually find your inspirations?

T: At this point in my career inspirations come from both classic and contemporary art, painting, sculpture and design, sometimes also from everyday life, human interaction and gestures and nature. I find myself strongly inspired by European fashion style, designs and magazines. I personally relate to Europe's take and direction on fashion. I like going to museums and looking at art books. A lot of inspiration came from one of my best friends fashion designer Uma Wang. Any time I am over at her



studio I always come away from seeing her designs and having a chat with her about fashion and art feeling super energized and inspired to create!

F: If a picture turned out not great, who should be blamed, the photographer or the model?

T: Good question! I find with photography it works like this. If the photo looks great you are an amazing photographer – such a wonderful talent. If the photo doesn't turn out for a number reasons including bad weather for light, poor model, poor styling or unfortunate make up and hair – then you are a bad photographer, the worst ever. It is pretty much like one photo can bring you from hero to zero. So with

that in mind photographers are generally trying to control their shoots as much as possible – shoot with the best light, work with a great team and cast an excellent model because any of those factors can bring down a shoot. The right model and a good model is at least 50% of the shoot and I think you can even see that on the show as the girls are shot in similar conditions with the same photographer but with different images resulting. A lot of times clients don't understand why you pay more for one model over another; with limited reference it might be hard to tell but anyone in the industry can really tell you that a model can make or break a shoot, either in their abilities or even to the point of being inspirational for the photographer.