

Kevin Chin
SIMPLICITY
AT **WORK**

By Harvey Goldstein



Kevin Chin photographed his first wedding when he was 16 years old for a family friend. With the positive feedback from the bride and groom (and the \$50 he received), Kevin, with his trusty Canon AE-1, began to photograph weddings for other friends and friends of their friends. He made the transition from weekend to full-time professional photographer in 1990, continuing to photograph weddings and portraits and now, concentrating on his personal work.

A self-taught photographer with no formal training, Kevin learned the fundamentals from reading books, studying with

other photographers and a lot of practice and experimenting. Shares Kevin, "Mastering the basics and fundamentals is very important. It is especially important with today's technology. Anyone can pick up a camera and set it on automatic and get good results, but if you don't know how you achieved these results, the camera is controlling you instead of you controlling the camera." Kevin believes that his creative eye has made him successful. Although this key to success he feels is something one is born with and not learned, photographers should spend more time cultivating the creative side of their brains.

Considering himself a low-tech photographer who is not distracted by equipment, Kevin takes pictures with his heart and not his camera. Being well versed in digital photography, he still prefers film because of the fine art feel that complements the classic and simplistic style of his photography. He photographs with 35mm cameras and the Hasselblad H-1, which is an autofocus medium format camera that allows him to photograph with the feel of a 35mm camera. Kevin's favorite camera is a Holga, which is a plastic toy camera that produces photos with a vintage, organic look. The imperfections of these Holga cameras give



the photos a character and charm that Kevin loves. Because each Holga has its own unique character, Kevin has several Holgas in his collection and will choose one depending on the desired effect he wants. Some Holgas have softer focus than others, while some Holgas have more vignetting than others. No two are alike.

Kevin prefers Portra 400NC for color and TMAX 100, 400 and 3200 for black and white for his weddings and portraits. For his personal work, he photographs almost exclusively in black and white and his film of choice is Kodak TRI-X because of the full range of tonality and the fact that it has just enough grain to give the photographs the earthy quality that he looks to achieve. The grain from this film gives him a certain texture and feel that cannot be accomplished with digital capture. Kevin credits Sheila Ryan at Gamma, a San Francisco-area black-and-white lab (www.gammasf.com), for taking what he photographs on film and translating his vision to the final print.

With a preference for available light, he knows that wedding photography can be

unpredictable. The lighting is uncontrolled, the venue can be dark or the event could be taking place in the open sun at midday with very harsh light. He will sometimes be forced to photograph in direct sunlight, using a fill flash to help eliminate the harsh shadows or use backlighting on his subjects for more of a dramatic effect. However, sometimes rather than correct the lighting, Kevin embraces it and uses it to his artistic advantage.

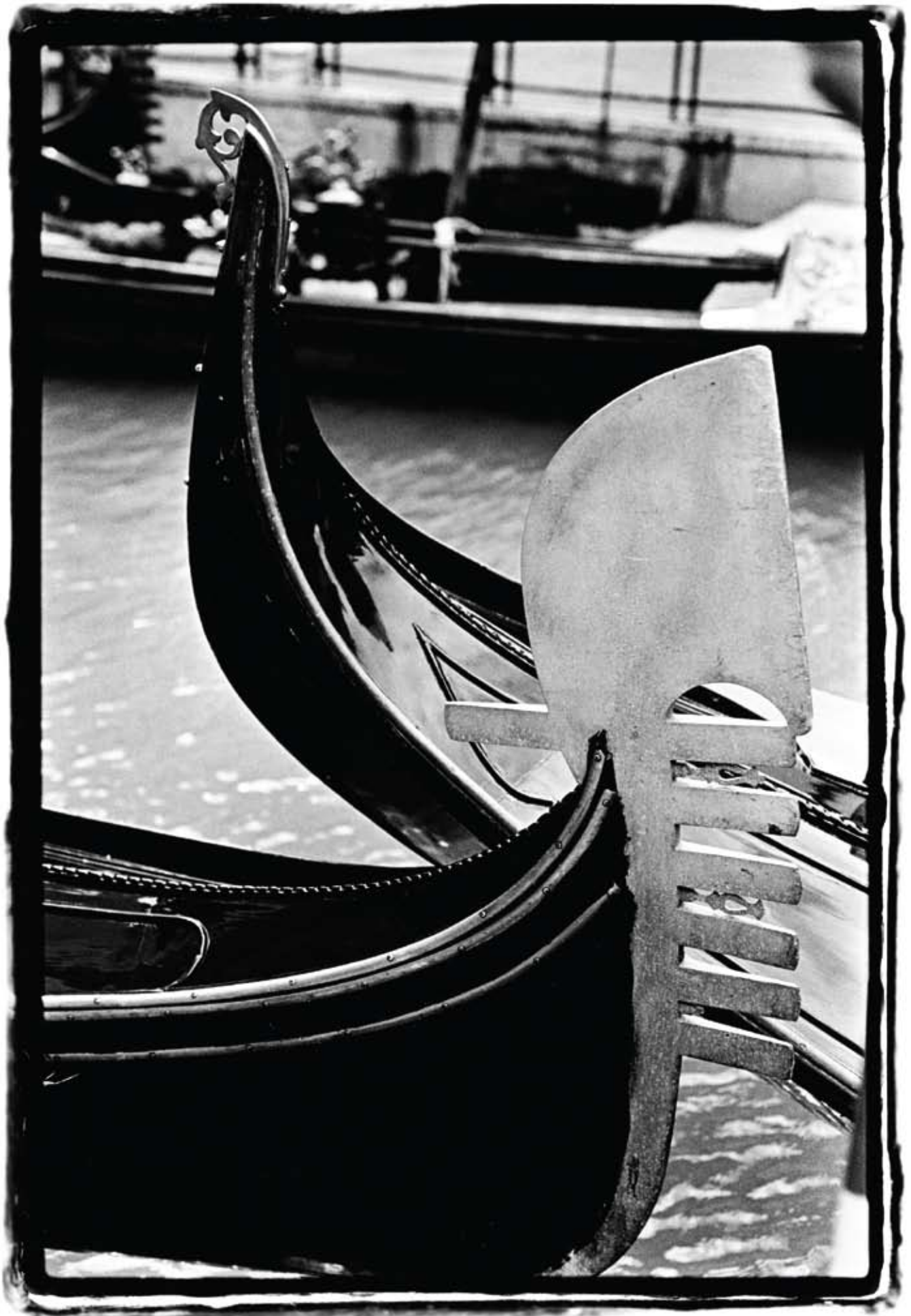
Kevin's studio lighting for his portraits and his still-life fine art work consists of a large LightDome softbox and a Dynalite strobe. This setup produces a classic light that wraps around the subject. Because he likes the way the shadow side falls into a deep shadow, he rarely uses a fill light, giving his portraits a very dramatic effect.

Kevin feels that his personal work is a way for him to share how he interprets the world. "I have been very fortunate to have traveled the globe in my career through my commissioned destination weddings." For example, a wedding he photographed in Lima, Peru gave him a new appreciation for South America. While in exotic loca-

tions, Kevin strives to bring his newfound perspective to the viewer. "Even though the viewfinder's point of view is narrow, I feel that it is my duty as a photographer to capture images that will expand that narrow view so that others seeing my work will have a broader perspective."

Kevin's personal work is an expression of his love of simplicity. "It's art at its rawest stage. I believe in simplicity in composition, technique, medium, lighting and equipment. The simplicity of forms, lines, patterns and strong geometric shapes appeals to my senses and most of my work celebrates that." Kevin uses various textures, forms and lines to tell a story. An example of his graphic style can be seen in the image "Rush Hour," taken in Hong Kong (see above), or two gondolas crossing paths in Venice, Italy (see next page).

Kevin has branched out from his wedding/portrait studio and is now marketing his personal work. He sells his fine art limited-series prints at a San Francisco boutique, the Big Pagoda. His café portraits from Italy and France have been published as a fine art boxed





greeting card set called "Café Society." He has another notecard set of his still-life images of flowers titled "Shadow and Light." Both sets are published by Marcel Schurman Designs and are sold nationally at Papyrus stores.

Adding personal work to his wedding and portrait photography allows Kevin to fully express himself as an artist. His wedding and portrait work consists mainly of people and their emotions, whereas his personal work is usually still-life studies without people. If there are people in his personal work, they are not the focal point, but rather props in his composition.

Kevin's advice to aspiring photographers is not to follow in his footsteps, but instead to follow their passion and dreams. He believes that few people follow their dreams because of their fear of failure. Kevin shares that one can never truly succeed being afraid of failing. "We live in a country with many resources and opportunities. We have the freedom to make whatever we want for ourselves so there should not be any excuses. Keep yourself inspired because inspiration fuels passion.

My goal is to evoke feeling with my photography. I want the viewer to react to my photos. Even more thrilling is to have each person have a different reaction when they view my work because then I know that it is speaking to each of them on a very personal level."

View Kevin Chin's work on his website, www.kevinchin.com.

Harvey Goldstein from Branford, CT, has been in the photographic industry for more than 30 years. He is a former studio owner and presently edits numerous association newsletters and magazines, as well as being a freelance writer.

