



印度寄工帕塔克男到照相馆拍照，准备寄回家乡探亲。(祖绮摄影)

不丹女孩 镜头聚焦相亲客工

从人间净土不丹来到繁忙都市新加坡，今年22岁的祖绮喜欢新加坡的良好治安。就读于拉萨尔艺术学院的她，选择小印度的一家照相馆作为毕业作品的题材，用镜头记录准备回家探亲的客工拍相亲照的过程。

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受访者提供照片

不丹是位于中国与印度之间，喜马拉雅山脉东段南坡的国家，常被人形容为香格里拉。从人间净土来到繁忙都市新加坡，是什么样的感觉？

今年22岁的祖绮 (Zuki Juno Tobye)，在2013年时选择到新加坡的拉萨尔艺术学院 (LASALLE College of the Arts) 修读电影。她受访时坦言，不丹的生活步调确实比新加坡慢，没有这么匆忙，但她喜欢新加坡的良好治安。

“不丹的治安不是不好，但我不会在清晨5点钟，独自一人往外走动。在新加坡，我们有好几次，拍完电影后已经是凌晨时分，我一个人回家也觉得很安全。外面的世界很可怕，但新加坡人都那么奉公守法。就拿简单的搭电动扶梯来说好了，大家都知道要靠左站，右边是让人通行的。整个社会要如何运作，有不成文规定，因此做很多事情很顺畅。外国人来到这里，大概一两周就可以了解和融入这个社会。”

非一般毕业作品题材

谈到新加坡，大多数人都会想到小贩美食、滨海花园、乌节路、牛车水等新加坡特色。然而，祖绮在选择毕业作品的题材时，选的是小印度的一家照相馆。

她说：“有一天，我翻开报纸找灵感，看到一篇关于那家照相馆的报道，他们的顾客大多数是要相亲的客工，我觉得很有趣。我也是住在新加坡的外国人，但对间是外来人士的客工族群了解不多。”

祖绮找到该照相馆，从老板口中得知客工们去那里照相背后的原因。

来自孟加拉和印度的单身客工，有一部分还是靠家里人帮忙说媒相亲。人在异乡的他们，得先寄一张照片回国给准妻子看，双方满意后，这婚事就定下来了。

她从去年1月开始往照相馆跑，每次去就待上两三个小时。

“有大约两三个星期的时间，我每天坐在照相馆外，询问每个进去照相的人，他们是不是要去拍照相亲，愿不愿意让我用影像记录下整个过程。其实挺辛苦的，因为大多数的客工都不愿意跟我分享他们的相亲过程，有些则担心公司不允许他们上镜。”

皇天不负苦心人，几个星期后，她终于遇到从印度来新加坡当司机的帕塔克男 (Shanmugavel

Pathakarnan)。帕塔克男急着想在32岁生日以前娶妻，因为他家乡的习俗是，32岁不结婚。如果他错过了这个机会，就得再等一年才能结婚。

祖绮跟着帕塔克男一起拍照，逛街挑选布料做纱丽给未来的妻子，也拍下他打电话回家，得知家人还没定下婚期的失落。她说，希望透过短片，让新加坡人看到客工们的另外一面。

喜欢马来食物豆腐和天贝

祖绮说，初到新加坡时，她只认识四个不丹人。离家这么远，难免想家，觉得寂寞，但祖绮不会让自己深陷思乡的苦闷之中，选择找朋友一起出去唱卡拉OK，吃东莪。

“我吃货，在新加坡不太容易找到东西吃。我最喜欢马来食物的豆腐和天贝 (tempeh，印尼豆豉)。”

毕业后，祖绮选择回不丹工作，做自由摄影师，目前也在筹备开一家广告和短片公司。

想观赏祖绮的毕业短片，可上网：nyti.ms/2wV7WJT。

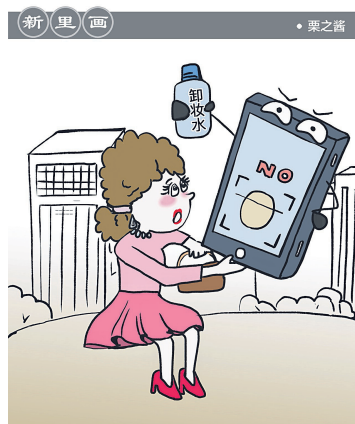


祖绮从不丹来到新加坡的拉萨尔艺术学院修读电影。



祖绮平拍短片过程中遇到的“玩烟火的路人”。(祖绮摄影)

外面的世界很可怕，但新加坡人都那么奉公守法。就拿简单的搭电动扶梯来说好了，大家都知道要靠左站，右边是让人通行的。——祖绮



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Girl from Bhutan focuses on migrant workers going for match-making

Having come from the natural haven of Bhutan to the busy city of Singapore, 22 year-old Zuki likes the latter's safety and security. As a student at LASALLE College of the Arts, she chose a photo studio at Little India as the theme for her thesis film, where she captured the process of migrant workers who get their photos taken to be sent home for match-making purposes.

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Located between China and India, Bhutan sits on the southern slopes of the eastern Himalayas, often described as the last Shangri-la. Just what does it feel like coming to bustling Singapore from this natural haven?

Twenty-two year-old Zuki Juno Tobyge made the decision in 2013 to pursue her studies in BA(Hons) Film at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. When interviewed, she confessed that the pace of life in Bhutan is indeed slower than Singapore and less of a hurry, although she likes Singapore for its safety and security.

“It is not that Bhutan’s security is poor, however, I would not leave home alone at 5am in the morning. In Singapore, there were times when I would go home alone after movie shooting past midnight, and feel very safe. The outside world is scary, but Singaporeans are law-abiding. Take the simple escalator as an example. Everybody would stand to their left and leave the right for those who choose to walk. There are unwritten rules as to how the entire society should be run, which makes for smooth operation. Foreigners who come here need only one to two weeks to understand the society and be integrated.”

An Unusual Theme for Graduate Work

Talking about Singapore, many would associate it with hawker food, Gardens by the Bay, Orchard Road and Chinatown as the country’s highlights. Yet, when Zuki had to select a theme for her thesis film, she chose a photo studio at Little India.

She said, “One day as I was flipping the papers for ideas, I came across an article about the studio. Their customers are mainly migrant workers looking to match-make. This got me interested. Although I was also a foreigner in Singapore, I knew little about migrant workers’ ethnic groups.”

After locating the studio, Zuki found out the reason from the boss, as to why migrant workers would go there for photo-taking.

Among single migrant workers from Bangladesh and India, a small group still depends on their families for match-making. Being in a foreign land, they will first send a photograph home for the prospective wife, and if both parties are satisfied, the marriage will then be fixed.

Zuki started visiting the studio from January last year, staying between two to three hours each time. “For about two to three weeks, I would sit outside the studio asking every person going in for photo-taking, if they were doing it for match-making, and if they were willing to let me video-capture the entire process. This is pretty tough actually, because most migrant workers are not too willing to share their match-making process, while some worry about their employers’ disapproval of them being in the spotlight.”

Zuki's hard work finally paid off a few weeks later, when she met Shanmugavel Pathakarnan, who came from India to work as a driver in Singapore. Shanmugavel Pathakarnan was eager to get married before his 32nd birthday because according to customs in his hometown, it is not ideal to get married at 32. If he missed this opportunity, he would have to wait for another year.

Zuki tagged along with Shanmugavel Pathakarnan in his photo-taking and shopping for *saree* fabric for his wife-to-be. She captured his sense of loss during his phone call back home, when he learnt that his family had not fixed a wedding date. She hoped that with the short film, Singaporeans would see the other side of migrant workers.

Love for Malay Tofu and Tempeh

Zuki said that when she first arrived in Singapore, she only knew four Bhutanese people. Being so far away from home, it was inevitable that she missed home and felt lonely. However, Zuki remained upbeat by hanging out with her friends, singing karaoke or eating.

“As I am a vegetarian, it is not easy to find food to eat in Singapore. My favourites are Malay tofu and tempeh (Indonesian fermented soya beans).”

After her graduation, Zuki decided to return to Bhutan to work as a freelance photographer. She is also planning to set up an advertisement and short film company.

To enjoy Zuki's thesis short film, please visit nyti.ms/2vW7WJT online.