



### BRIAN LEWIS

Brian qualified as an architect at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London in 1970 and has been in private practice for over 40 years. Brian is married to Catherine Lewis and has three children and six grandchildren.

Currently, Brian is the practice manager of the well-known architectural firm acla:works which will be celebrating its 70th year in operation in 2015. Over the years, Brian has been involved in a variety of architectural projects but his more recent projects are the University of Trinidad and Tobago Campus at Tamana and the British Gas headquarters on St Clair Avenue, Port of Spain. He is currently working on commercial projects for the private sector.

Brian has had a long-standing interest in photography that crystallised when, at age 12, he met Norman Parkinson, a world-famous fashion photographer whose firm designed a house for in Castara, Tobago. Over the years he continued his interest by photographing projects for his own firm. More recently, he has decided to make architectural photography a second career and has created the brand LUMIS.

## LUMIS MODERN ARCHITECTURE MEETS PHOTOGRAPHY



**Z: Lumisphotography.com has a wealth of knowledge on architecture and photography. Was this the site's purpose? How did it start?**

The purpose of the website is to establish LUMIS Photography as a specialist in architectural photography. Part of the objective of the website is to promote its expertise in architectural photography by sharing some of the extensive knowledge acquired, particularly over the last five years since the formation of LUMIS. I decided that I would publish a newsletter with three blog posts a month: a feature project, an article on architectural photography and lastly, ideas about promoting and publishing architecture.

The LUMIS website also aims at helping architects better understand the role of the architectural photographer and the need to promote architecture by using high quality photography. The website will also aspire to establish LUMIS as a source of architectural images for publishers.

Around 2009, the architectural business was in a slump just as my career was entering its twilight years. Rather than grumble about the state of affairs that I had little control over, I decided that I should take on a challenge that I would enjoy. Due to the lack of publicity of architecture in the Caribbean, I decided that there was a need for a new reference of contemporary architecture and that led to the idea of the book.

The website started when I decided to publish a book on Contemporary Caribbean Architecture as part of the LUMIS strategy to establish the architectural photography business. By placing some of the work I am photographing for the book on the LUMIS website, it promotes architecture, architects and the book itself and helps to build a degree of gravitas.

**Z: Why do you think there is a lack of published material in Trinidad and Tobago about architecture? How important is it that we understand its significance to a country?**

That is an interesting question! In Trinidad and Tobago and particularly in the 20th century, there has been a lack of appreciation of architecture in Trinidad and Tobago. Schools do

not teach the subject here, so that most citizens grow up without any knowledge or education on the topic and therefore a lack of appreciation of architecture in general. Schools in the UK, for example, teach the History of Architecture during secondary and tertiary education. As a result, the general knowledge and appreciation of architecture in the UK is far higher than Trinidad and Tobago.

Architecture is a reflection of society; it can also help shape civilisation. We see in our buildings a history of our development and the direction we are taking in the future. All in all, architecture is a measure of our state of civilisation. That applies here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Architectural photography also gives the public access to buildings, particularly interiors that they might never ever have the opportunity to see and this can add to a more comprehensive appreciation of architecture.

**Z: As an architect, you have an added advantage in capturing quality architectural images. What special skills and equipment would you consider essential when photographing architecture? Is**

**there any more advice you can give our readers looking to get started in architectural photography?**

Being an architect certainly gives me a huge advantage in constructing images of architecture. I know by instinct the architect's design intent. For a start, I try to avoid photographing poor quality architecture and it's sad to say there is a lot of that around T&T. Most architects and designers would have a good eye for composition and can take reasonable photographs of buildings. But reasonable is not sufficient in today's competitive world. Architecture represents a huge investment of both financial and human resources and it follows that the images should be exceptional in quality.

In today's digital world, anyone with an iPhone can take fairly decent photographs of buildings but to produce high quality architectural images one needs specialised equipment and know how. First of all, we need cameras with lenses that can control perspective. Then we need cameras capable of the high resolution images needed for architectural photography. For interior photography, we would also need special lighting equipment. Finally, we need to understand how to control and

manipulate the digital process to get the most out of the images.

My advice to anyone thinking of getting into architectural photography is to think long and hard. The equipment is very expensive and the market is very small. If your passion is to delve into the field of architectural photography then my advice is to read good books on the topic and attend international architectural photography workshops.

**Z: Based on the scope of work mentioned in your video blog, can you tell us more about your book Contemporary Caribbean Architecture?**

I hope to publish Contemporary Caribbean Architecture in 2015 to commemorate my firm's 70th anniversary. When published, the book will have taken five years to complete. It took me a year of planning, followed by three years to shoot close to 50 projects in the Windward Islands and the Greater & Lesser Antilles. 2015 will be a very busy year for me while I focus on publishing the book. It has been a challenge because I have a daytime job as an architect, so all of this is being done after hours, weekends and during vacations. It has been a great experience for me and I look forward to its conclusion!

