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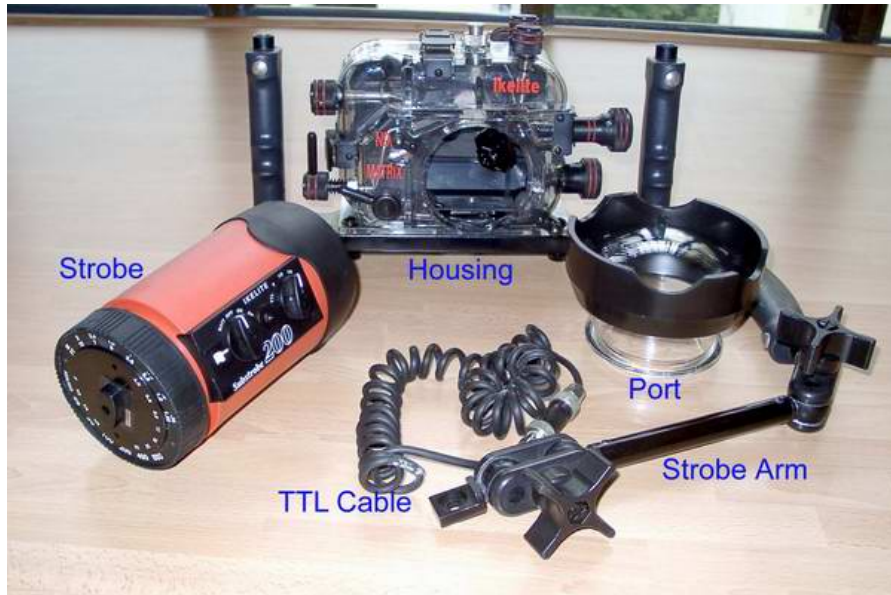
**Underwater Photography**

by **POH Liong Kiat**

Category: Technique

**Underwater photography is the same as land photography, except that the underwater camera has to be waterproofed. There are two types of underwater camera systems; the Housing System and the Amphibious Camera.**

Have you ever wondered what is it like to be able to see a different side of the world, swim along with marine animals and feel weightless as in space? Man has been diving since 415 BC, although, until recently, divers were mainly the military or scientists. Then, in 1878, Englishman Henry Fleuss invented a tank able to contain compressed air, allowing man to breathe underwater. He named it SCUBA or Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus. Recreational diving only began in the early 1950's when Jacques Cousteau created a cheaper SCUBA system. He introduced this sport to the public.



Scuba

Diving is an equipment intensive sport. To enjoy it you will need a mask, air tank, buoyancy compensator device, regulator, fins, wetsuit, weights & belt. Well, now that you have learned something about Scuba diving, let me talk about underwater photography.

Underwater photography is the same as land photography, except that the underwater camera has to be waterproofed. There are two types of underwater camera systems; the Housing System and the Amphibious Camera.

Housing Systems are considered superior for their precision of composition and versatility in most underwater situations, as well as the variety and flexibility of the lenses that can be used. This is because we actually place a SLR camera into the system. Housing systems are best for taking macro shots.

Amphibious Cameras are cameras designed to be waterproof. It works just like a normal point-and-shoot range-finder camera. The best in range is the Nikonos system, which is popular among underwater photographers for taking wide-angle shots.



With all the above systems, we should not forget about the Strobe, also known as the flash unit. Strobe not only restores colour filtered out by water density, but transforms underwater images from ordinary into magnificent.

To get a good underwater image, first you MUST master your buoyancy skills. You won't want to kill the coral just to take a good photograph. Then you will need to know the equipment limitations. Even the most powerful strobe can't reach a subject further than 1.8 meters. You have only 30-60 minutes of air supply and only 36 shots to take, unless you choose to bring more than one camera.

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A professional underwater photographer would bring both types of cameras. As for me, currently I am using Ikelite Housing System for my Nikon F90X, 60mm Macro lens and 28-70mm zoom lens with an Ikelite Substrobe 200.



I started underwater photography 3 years ago. At that time, I used a housing system that housed an instant camera. I took photos mainly to show others the marine creatures I had seen. Within a year, I had a desire to take better photos and so I broke my piggy bank and bought my current system.

Taking photos with the instant camera's housing is very simple; just point & shoot and you will get what you want. With my current system, things are different. First, the housing is heavy and bulky. Secondly there is no more point & shoot. You now need to get your strobe angle right or your photo will be in blue. Then, you must contend with the underwater current. It is annoying when your subject is in position and you are about to press the shutter for the "perfect" shot, to find yourself being caught by the current and off you go.....

Despite all this, my interest still grows whenever I look at the slides. It makes me want to learn more to bring out the best in my camera.

Images:

1. My underwater camera setup
2. Bohadschia graeffei taken with instant camera
3. Smallscale Scorpionfish taken with F90X

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