



Glowing Graffiti

Light paths floating in a photo are neither a computer effect nor a complicated photographic technique; they are all a light-painter draw with a torch before a camera.

"I'd never imagined using light as a paint brush," said Nikki Li Wing-yan, a 19-year-old student majoring in arts and design in the Polytechnic University. "I tell people that I paint with a glow stick. It's simply awesome."

The trick is that she adjusts the shutter speed of the camera, which means the time that the camera absorbs light is increased, to eight seconds. Then she fixes the camera and presses the capture button.

In the eight seconds, she moves her torch in darkness in front of the camera as if drawing figures in the air. The light path is captured throughout the period and her drawing is left in the photo.

"You have no idea what you've painted until the pictures show up. I love that mysterious feeling of drawing in the dark," said Miss Li.

She posted her works of light painting on her own blog. She even light-painted her own name and used the picture as the front cover of her online album.

Miss Li said that she was first impressed with this exclusive kind of drawing by an online video shared on the Internet, which was produced by a Japanese artist called PikaPika and his team of around 10 people.

In the video, more than 16,000 light-painting pictures were displayed in rapid succession, creating an animation. The pictures were taken at night with different colours of light illustrating cartoon faces, flowers and even Cinderella's pumpkin carriage. Over a million people have watched the movie.

"I'm interested in it because it shows boundless creativity," Ivan Huang Yukin, a student of the Guangdong Financial College, Zhongshan, said.

Mr Huang has been posting his works on his blog. He drew people with different actions like fighting and riding

a bicycle by a torch. One of them shows a girl attacking a boy, while the boy uses a glowing shield to defend himself.

While amateurs are publishing their works on the Internet, there are also courses offered by professional photographers which teach people how to light-paint.

Peter Poon, a commercial photographer who has been working in the field for over 10 years, teaches a course in which he gets his students to create and sketch lines along animation figures like robots. They use rows of coloured light bulbs to produce different pattern in the background.

"Light-painting is now gaining popularity and attention among teenagers," said Mr Poon, who is also a member of the Hong Kong Institute of Professional Photographers.

"You can cover your light source, like a torch, by cellophane of different hues," he said. "This would create different colours in the photos."

Suki Chow 