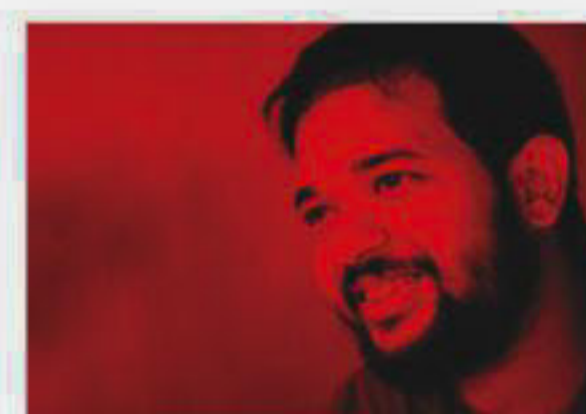




**INTERVIEW**



# INSPIRATION FOR THE NEW

*In conversation with Munem Wasif*

Photo: Munem Wasif

In a country where the arts are never encouraged as a trade, Munem tells us of his early challenges. "My father told me that if I wanted to pursue photography, I would have to pave the path for myself." Working in film can be quite expensive and it was challenging for Munem to have to constantly weigh the costs for the path he had chosen.

**M**UNEM Wasif is one of the first photographers in the Bangladeshi photography scene to make it big on a global platform. What started out as a hobby for this student of sociology has now reached a level of quality for him to be working at the prestigious Agence VU. A documentary photographer, Munem has three books published - the latest of which deals with his long time muse - Old Dhaka. 'Belonging' explores the old city through the eyes of an artist looking beyond the place he grew up in.

Photography is today one of the most popular hobbies in the country with a swarm of youngsters out with their cameras trying to make it big. But before DSLRs were so widely available, and the craft was still one where the cost had to be constantly weighed, starting out for Munem was not easy.

Munem tells us how his uncle inspired him to take up photography initially. "When I finished school, my uncle enrolled me in the Begart Photography Insitute." Learning the basics there, he fiddled around with his camera. A year later at the Chobi Mela he was introduced to the big names in global photography when he saw the World Press Photography exhibition. "That had a

big influence on me. I then got admitted to Pathshala," he says.

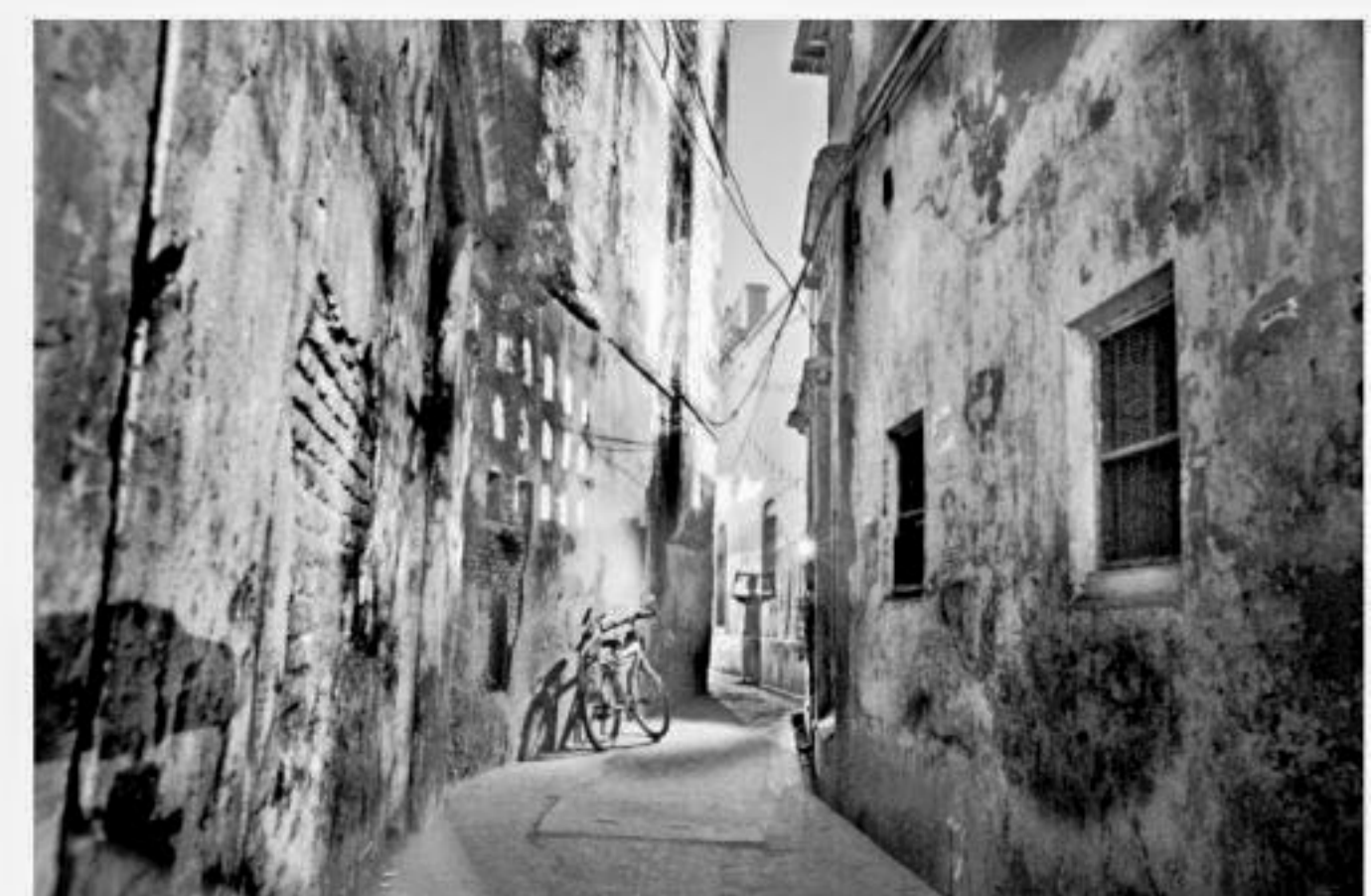
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pursue photography, I would have to pave the path for myself." Working in film can be quite expensive and it was challenging for Munem to have to constantly weigh the costs for the path he had chosen.

Not daunted, Munem Wasif decided that practicality was the best approach. With his big

ambitions still in mind, he started working small jobs of wedding photography and such to pay for the costs which would come with his bigger projects. He soon moved on to work professionally for Star Lifestyle at The Daily Star, where he



was faced with the challenge of working a full time job and assignments which ranged from fashion to food. "It really ground me. I honed my craft there and the fact that my photos were getting published every week was a big help."

He never stopped studying though -- while