Antonio Alcaraz is Reverse Logistics Officer in the chemical industry and a Maritime Photographer, with a genuine passion for boats, ports and terminals. Alcaraz has a special interest in the activity done by pilots at his home port of Valencia, and other terminals worldwide. His camera gives him the opportunity to travel the globe, always looking for the perfect photo. We met Antonio during his recent visit to Algeciras, whom was welcome to give Marine Strategy a zoom in on his work.

Please talk to us about your passion for ships:

My hobby starts very early in life, as a child, when I visited the port with my parents every week. Back then, one could access these areas whilst having a walk in the port, which gave us an opportunity to view the ships moored at the quay. I loved it because when I returned home I would try to replicate the boats with an arsenal of pieces of Tente, construction game of that time similar to Lego®. What I liked the most were the manoeuvers of docking or undocking with tugboats, pilotage and mooring. Then I moved on to the construction of first static and then dynamic scale models, successfully building a tugboat with Schottel propulsion. Back in 2004, I met Manuel Hernandez, Boluda tugboat Base Manager, who inspired me with photography by first capturing ships and participating in a boat website (that unfortunately no longer exists). In 2012, I began to photograph from a small boat and then had the opportunity to embark with them, discovering the images that have driven me to carry out my own project.

Is it essential to have good photographic equipment?

I think you have to have good equipment and goals that fit your needs. I would however discourage multi-purpose lenses (or also known as “all terrain”). I prefer a short and medium range lens combined with an optical zoom.

What are the keys to making a good photograph?

In my experience, digital photography allows us to make several shots with a chance to give it my own perspective at the development stage. I add my own character in the framings, cropping, contrasts (etc.), without fear but with respect. I do not intend to bend the rules however, I am not afraid to defy or personalise them.

I guess your interest in photography has taken you to many ports across the world. Which would you highlight and why?

I would outline Rotterdam, Hamburg, Antwerp, Shanghai and Algeciras. Rotterdam is a giant terminal and perfect to photograph as everything is visible from land. You have cruises in the centre and one can visit the great terminals of Maasvlakte. There is also public transport that accesses the entire port. I thank Loodswezen, Rotterdam pilots, to allow me to spend a day with them, which was an unforgettable experience. Hamburg and Antwerp are also very large and have tours, facilitating good photography of the terminal, ships and facilities. I went with a Chinese photographer to Yangshan terminal (Shanghai) where we hired a boat for the visit. This is a mega-terminal that ships everything we buy worldwide, from the cheapest of goods to the most chic. Of course, Algeciras is a great strategic port together with its terminals, refinery, bunkering... a great bay.

Which other ports do you plan to visit?

In September 2019 I will visit the port of Odessa (Ukraine) and by 2020 I am planning to visit an Asian port.

What are the challenges when starting a photographic project?

The first item on the list is the budget, especially when everything you do is self-financed. However, leaving that aside, a very important challenge is to be clear about your work and be open to improvement. One must bear in mind that public entities (port authorities) are quite strict in issuing permissions. I can only be grateful to private companies, as they have made this project possible by giving me support and permits.

What is your favourite ship?

I like them all because they are all manned by teams of people. I really like Heavy Lift ships or those vessels transporting special loads.

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