

Clems Cruz (b. 1977; Malabon) graduated with a degree in Food Technology from the University of Santo Tomas and worked for almost 14 years as a 3rd generation butcher.

His passion for photography started with an old broken camera he found in their house. Although he did manage to get published in magazines and major dailies after taking photography workshops- over the years, he struggled to find his niche--doing a little bit of everything from portrait, landscape, product to sports photography. In 2015, at the age of 38, acknowledging that he still lacked the sufficient technical expertise and necessary vision he decided to enroll in the Photography Program of the De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde.

The projects that Clems Cruz worked on as a student at Benilde cohere around concepts that allowed him to closely study the inextricable link between theme and technique, especially how formal constraints could push an artist to see more clearly the inherent paradoxes in his subjects. His thesis exhibition titled "Larawan" employed montage to reframe Philippine cultural icons like the jeepney, halo-halo, tsinelas, and sari-sari store with a defamiliarizing approach. It is a celebration of our colorful hodge-podge culture, always on the verge of becoming whole and disintegrating into fragments. Allowing the seams to show, the assembly of photographs kept the already stable meanings of cliché symbols constantly shifting, elusive and strange once more.

Clems Cruz is quite new to the field and continues to expand his palette. "I wish to be a visual storyteller in time. For now I am delving into conceptual photography and incorporating short videos so as to effectively combine the tri-media presentation of varying stories of identity and real life circumstances." His recent video shorts, "Photo ID "and "State of Zen" acquire a more meditative and spiritual dimension which provides a counterpoint to his earlier work.

Clems Cruz currently teaches at De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde.