

# Caelum Mero



## P O R T F O L I O



*GS: Tell us about yourself, why you started creative work with the subject matter and medium you have chosen, and what inspired you to become an artist and fashion photographer.*

*CM: My foray into underwater photography began during university where I was studying*

marine biology and started to really get into diving. Once I was accepted into post graduate research for university, I was no longer able to dive as much as I was used to, and it started to drive me crazy! Luckily, the apartment I was living in had a pool, and so I managed to convince

a friend of mine (who happened to be a Swedish model) to pose for me underwater. This was done purely to satisfy my cravings for underwater photography. But soon enough I was hooked on the creative aspect of this new style of photography, and I soon realized that it wasn't necessarily the diving I was missing but rather it

This image entitled, *Wildlocks*, was produced for a hair salon. Fake dreadlocks are pinned to the models with hundreds of bobby pins. "It was a nightmare to work with," said Mero. ABOVE: Mero used two off camera flashes synced via fibre optics to wash out the bottom half of the image in white

Text edited  
by Gunild Symes  
All images  
by Caelum Mero

**Underwater fashion photographer, Caelum Mero of Australia, has developed a unique personal style that is fun, fabulous and poetic. He invites us into an underwater realm of mystery, magic and grace. X-RAY MAG's Gunild Symes caught up with him to find out the story behind his inspiration.**

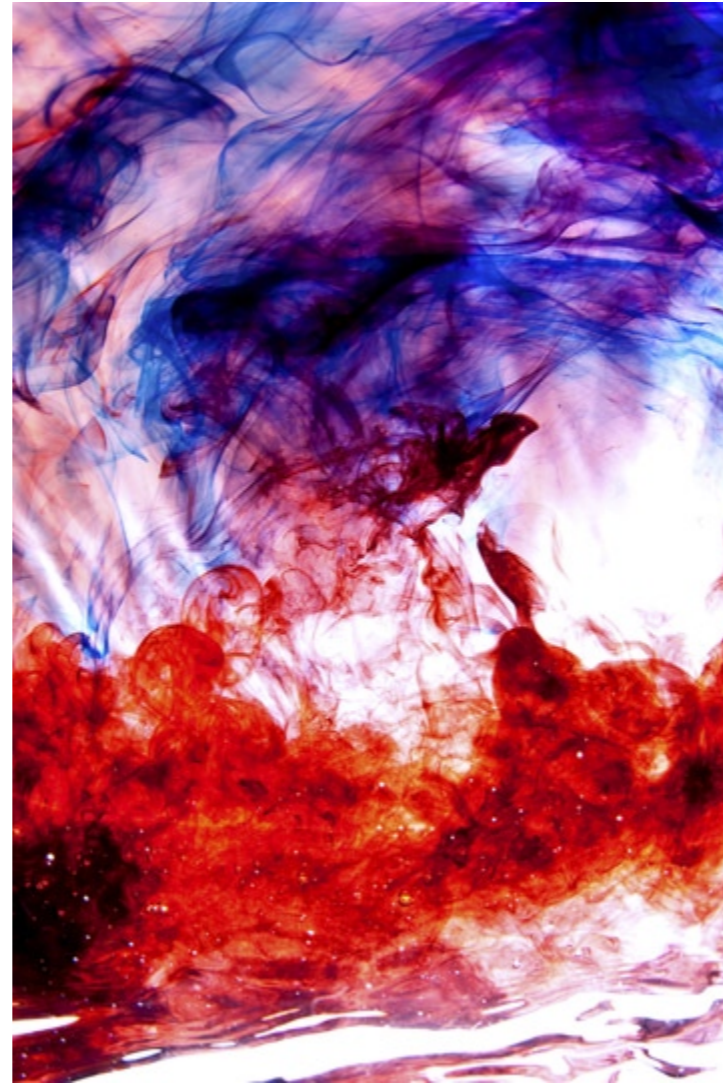
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*Clowning Around.* "This image took ages to produce," said Mero. "It's actually one clown. I created a separate layer, horizontally reversed the original image and pasted it down to make it appear like two clowns."



All images produced with a Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Ds 51 strobes, Ds 125 Strobes, Tokina 10-17mm, Nikon 12-24mm, Nikon 60mm



"This poor model had some heavy duty makeup applied to produce the colours scene here," said Mero. "The makeup artist left before giving him the product to remove it. Apparently, he was coloured like that for a few days."



## Mero

Mero used a scuba tank on the bottom of the pool with some pantyhose over the nozzle to produce these fine microbubbles

Food dye in a bath tub (below)



was the photography.

Before long, I was shooting two to three times a week in the pool and constantly practicing and learning new techniques. Getting into fashion photography was just a natural extension of what I was already doing. Fashion photography is brilliant, as it allows you to combine the technical aspects of photography with no hindrance on your own personal creativity.

*GS: What was your training and education as an artist and fashion photographer and how did you develop your personal style? Do you have any role models, artistic, cultural or political influences?*

CM: My own training and education

as a fashion photographer came purely from trial, error and a healthy dose of obsession. I would constantly read and review prominent fashion photographers works and techniques.

My own personal style is still developing and definitely not cemented yet. I'm constantly evolving the way I shoot, and I'm currently working on a new major body of work at the moment.

My photography role model has to be the technically flawless Howard Schatz. His work is always an inspiration to view, and I often find myself checking out his work before a big shoot to help me focus.

From an artistic point of view, I would have to say that I draw a great deal of inspiration from Salvador Dali. I believe that the underwater world can be used to generate some stunning surrealist photography.

*GS: Tell us about your artistic method... what is your process, how do you*



*choose a subject and compose a shot?*

CM: That's a complicated question! Well first and foremost, I always look for and examine the natural light at my location. I believe firmly in using natural light for underwater fashion photography. For the artistic side of things, I tend to find my subjects and ideas in very odd and peculiar locations. I spend so much time underwater, that I often find myself wondering how people and objects would look floating around in a pool!

GS: *Tell us about your experience under the waves. Where are your favorite*

*spots and what most inspires you about the underwater world and the oceans?*

CM: The underwater world has been such a major part of my life for the last six years. I studied marine biology, worked as a marine biologist, researched marine biology and then became a full time underwater photographer. Every day, I'm either in the water, editing photos from the water or planning a shoot in the water.

My favourite spots are the cold, remote, hard to get to and almost untouched dive sites that you can find along the rugged coastline of Victoria, Australia. Some of these sites are only dived a few times a year. A place that is also particularly special to me is Lizard

Island in the Great Barrier Reef, where I spent two months researching my honours thesis.

The most inspiring aspect of the underwater world is its dynamic nature. Everything is constantly in motion and changing. To capture this on film is such a brilliant challenge.

GS: *What are your thoughts on art and marine conservation? How do you see them influencing one another, you and your audience?*

CM: If you can produce an art piece that conveys a message—whether it be about the beauty, rarity or plight of our oceans—then you're directly impacting marine conservation.

I originally started underwater photography to raise awareness about my

Mero



FAR LEFT: A complicated shot actually taken at a horizontal plane and flipped into a vertical shot. The fake eye lashes were a nightmare to work with, said Mero.

LEFT: "This shot was great fun to produce," said Mero. "We used a variety of costumes to get the right look for the umbrella. The lights above the pool gave the water the lovely orange tones you can see."

ABOVE: Two off camera strobes were used to illuminate this model from below. The hardest part was finding a good dress that would suit the image, said Mero.

# portfolio



BELOW: "This image was hard to produce," said Mero. "I had to get the model to pretend she was holding a ball of light underwater, and then I added it in later in Photoshop."

Mero



"This image has been flipped upside down," said Mero. "The model jumped in and slowly floated to the surface, which is when I captured this image." RIGHT: Bath tub and food dye

local marine ecosystems, which none of the local public seemed even remotely aware about. I was determined to bring back meaningful and beautiful images from these unknown ecosystems.

GS: *Why art? Why is art important?*

CM: I produce art because if I don't, it slowly drives me mad! I have all these ideas running around in my head, and if I don't try and photograph them, they never seem to go away. I tried drawing, painting and a few other mediums, and photography is the only artistic medium that really allowed me to produce the ideas that I have, effectively.

Art's importance lies in its ability to

communicate and convey a sense of feeling and emotion... or sometimes just a random idea. It's the communication behind art that makes it so important. The concept behind an image doesn't need to be obvious or uniform, it can be totally ambiguous, but as long as each viewer draws their own conclusion about the image, than it's a successful art piece in my opinion.

GS: *When you teach workshops, what is your focus or mission or point of view you like to share with students?*

CM: I mostly focus on the practical side of photography and try to teach students how to achieve various cam-

era and lighting effects. I leave the creative composition up to the students. I try to give them the tools necessary for them to go out and build upon their own ideas. The last thing I want to do is dictate to a student what good composition is without taking into account their own creativity and opinion on good photography.



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NOVEMBER 2010

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ANDY MURCH



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