



photo & video

Photograph taken in the domed cylindrical pool at MChS near Moscow.

Text and photos by Anatoly Beloshchin

It used to be that when one talked about underwater photography, one primarily meant photographing sea animals in their natural surroundings; however, it can also be interesting to shoot underwater images in swimming pools. Firstly, a pool can be turned into an underwater photo studio. Secondly, there are pools that are unique in themselves. I present some examples in this article.

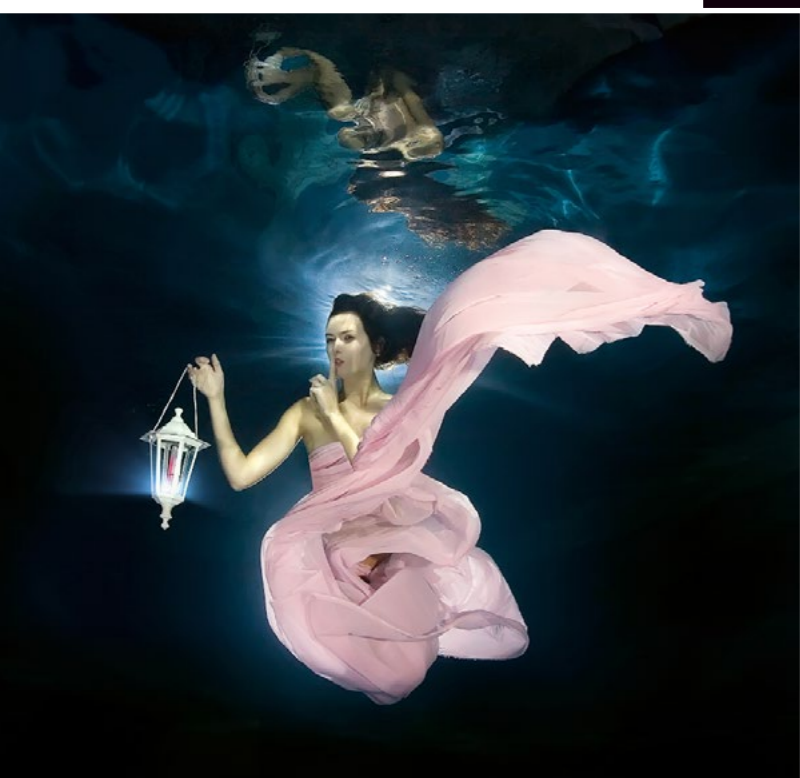


Photo taken in swimming pool with black backdrop



Swimming Pools

& Underwater Photography

When doing underwater photography in pools, I have always been irritated by the inherent "feeling of a pool" in the resultant images. What does one shoot in a pool?

People! However, if it is not to chronicle dive training or swimming competitions, why do we have to include the pool's tiles in the shot?

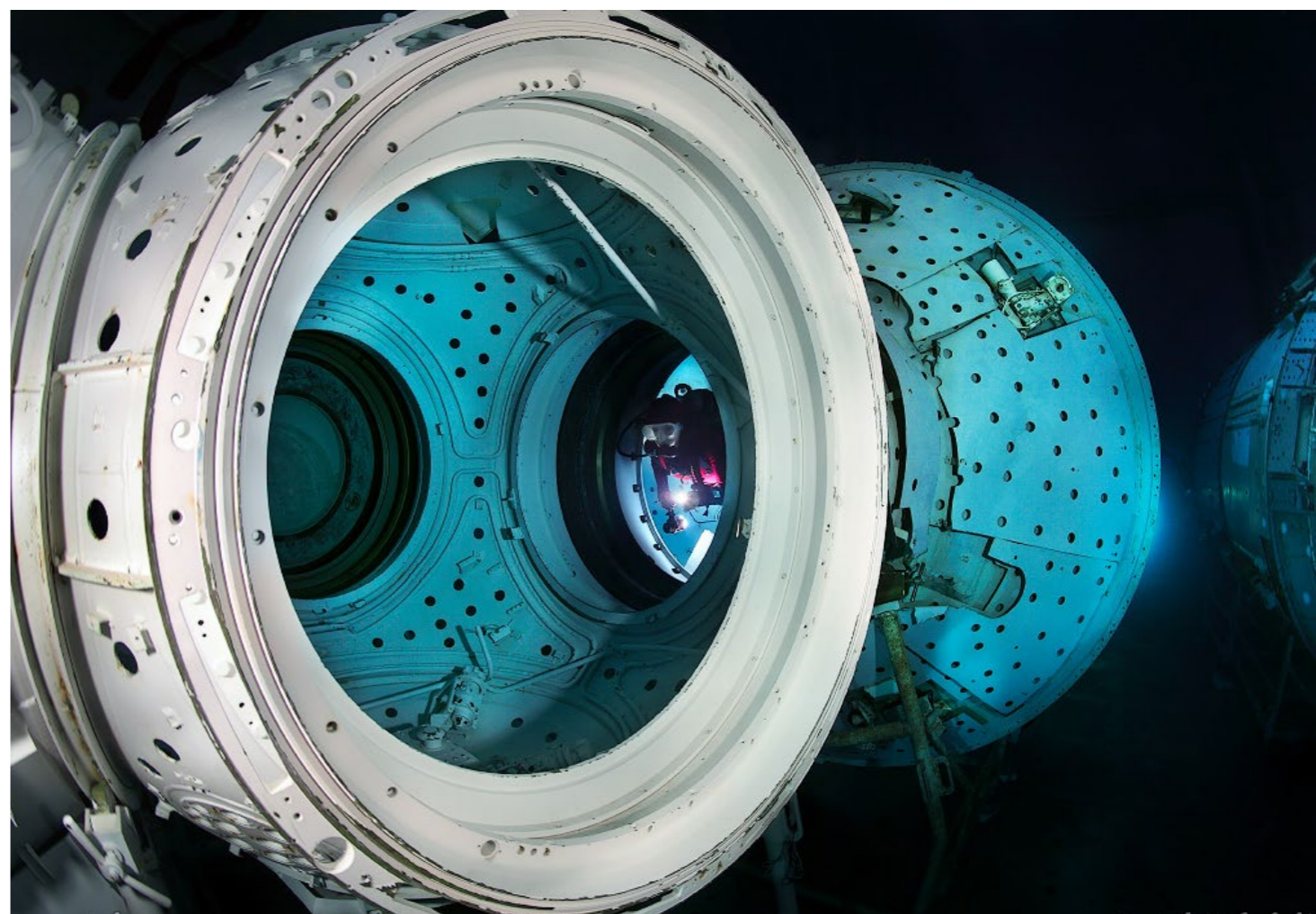
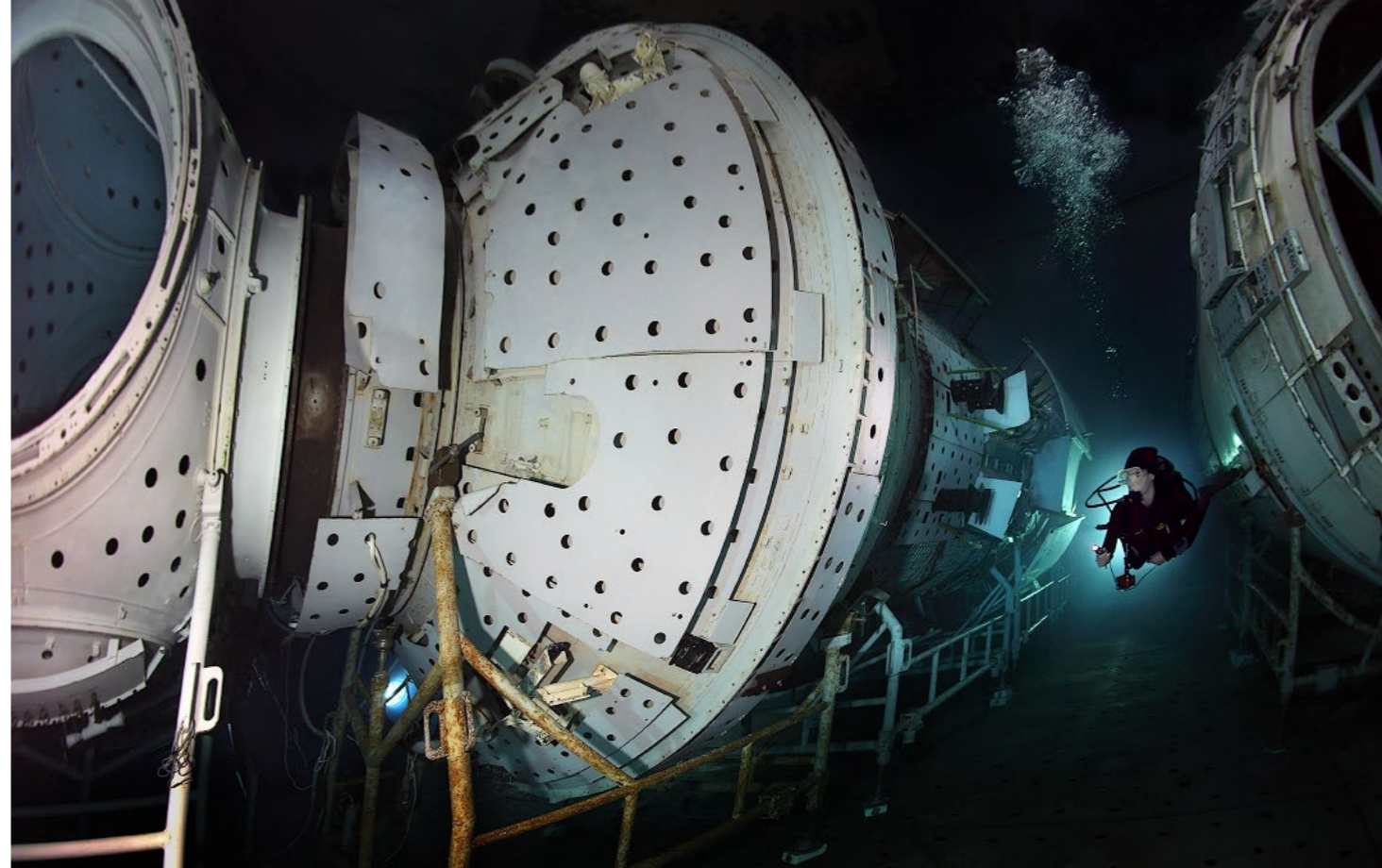
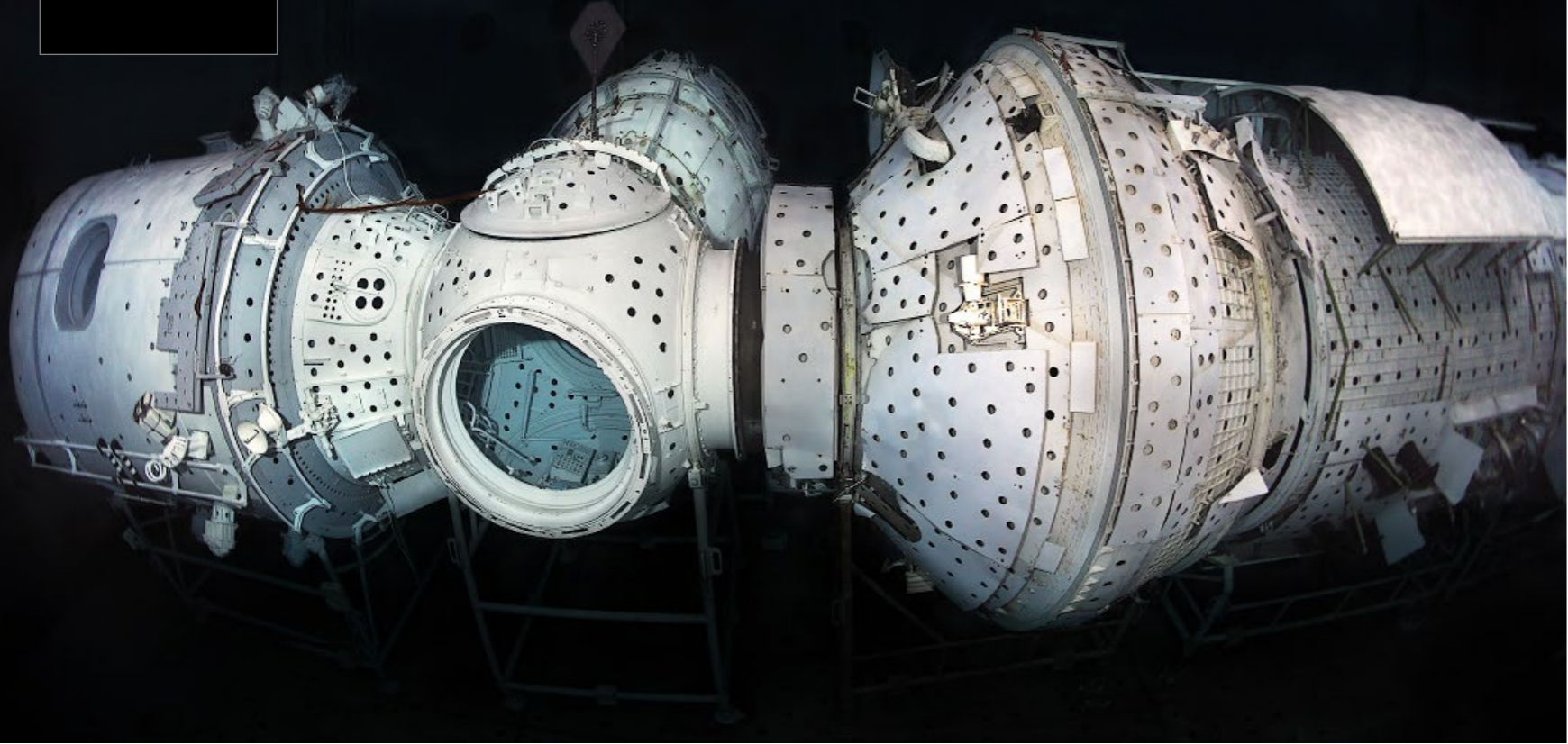
So, I decided to create a photo studio out of a pool. I bought a big piece of

black material, made it a "backdrop" for a photo and installed an underwater light. As a result, I got a photo of a model that seemed to be hanging in weightlessness.

I think that the main problem with such a photo is the lack of a feeling of

the water. There are two ways to solve this: Firstly, include in the shot the illuminated surface of the water, catching the reflection of the model; and secondly, blow bubbles into the water. Catching the model's reflection is quite





THIS PAGE: Photographs taken in the GCTC pool at Star City. The pool has replica segments of the International Space Station and Soyuz space craft.

to connect a hose lined with holes to an air-filled balloon, or, if depth permits, put a diver nearby, exhaling bubbles from scuba equipment. If there is a possibility to turn off or dim the light in the pool, then the resulting image can be very interesting!

Such an underwater studio can be made quickly from almost any pool. However, there are pools that are unique in themselves. I had a chance to shoot in three such pools.

GCTC

The pool at the Yuri Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC) is located near Moscow in the Zvyozdny gorodok, or urban settlement, of Star City in Russia. It is a cylindrical pool with a diameter of 23m and a depth of 12m. Replica segments of the International Space Station (ISS) and the Soyuz spacecraft are immersed in the pool for use in training astronauts in weightless conditions.

Here, one may ask the pool staff to turn off the lights. By the way, the lights turn off quite spectacularly; they do not go out instantly but slowly dim, imitating a sunset. Being without light in the water at the space station in the pool feels like being in outer space—with only one difference: You can go home by car the same day. Plus, the temperature of the surrounding water is a comfortable 30°C (86°F).

easy by tipping the camera angle upward. So then, you just need to tinker with the bubbles. To create bubbles, one option is

The pool lights can be switched off, giving one the sensation of being in outer space!

THIS PAGE: Photographs taken in the MChS pool facility located near Moscow. It has two pools lined with stainless steel, which offers curious reflections and lighting effects.



MChS

Another even more unique pool—which, more precisely, comprises two pools—is also located near Moscow in the Academy of Civil Defense of the Russian Ministry of Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief (MChS). One pool measures 25m by 17.5m, with a depth of 2m to 5m. The other is cylindrical, with a diameter of 5m and a depth of 12m.

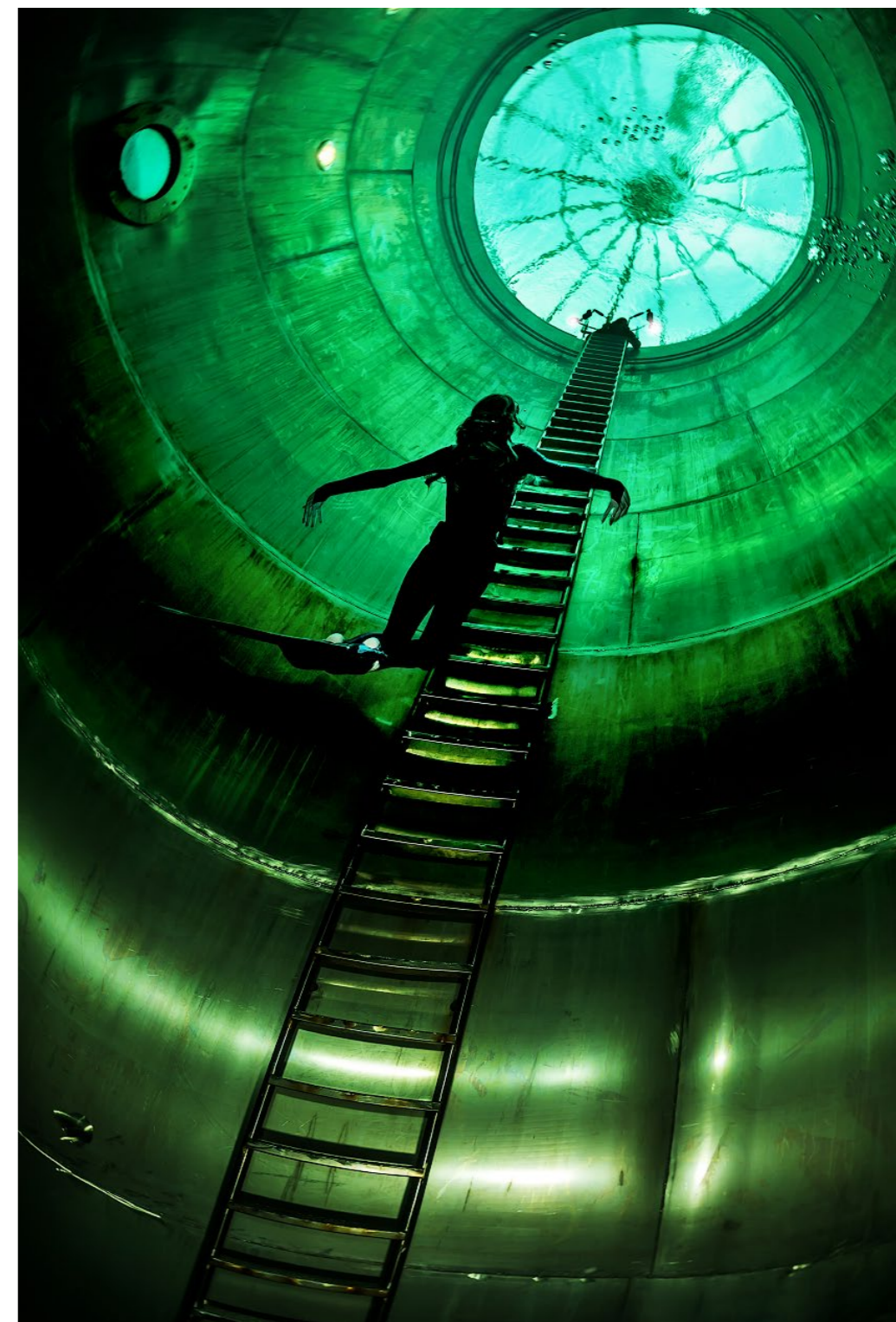
What is unusual about this facility is that both pools hold water from a well located 190m underground, and the pools are made of

stainless steel. In addition, a glass dome covers the deep cylindrical pool.

This pool facility attracts not only divers and freedivers but also underwater photographers. The metal walls of the pools create very unusual reflections of light streaming down from the surface, which can result in very interesting photos. Additionally, the cylindrical pool with the glass dome can widen the scope of a photographer's imagination.

One of the MChS pools is cylindrical and is covered with a glass dome cover, giving photographers a chance to stretch their imaginations (below)

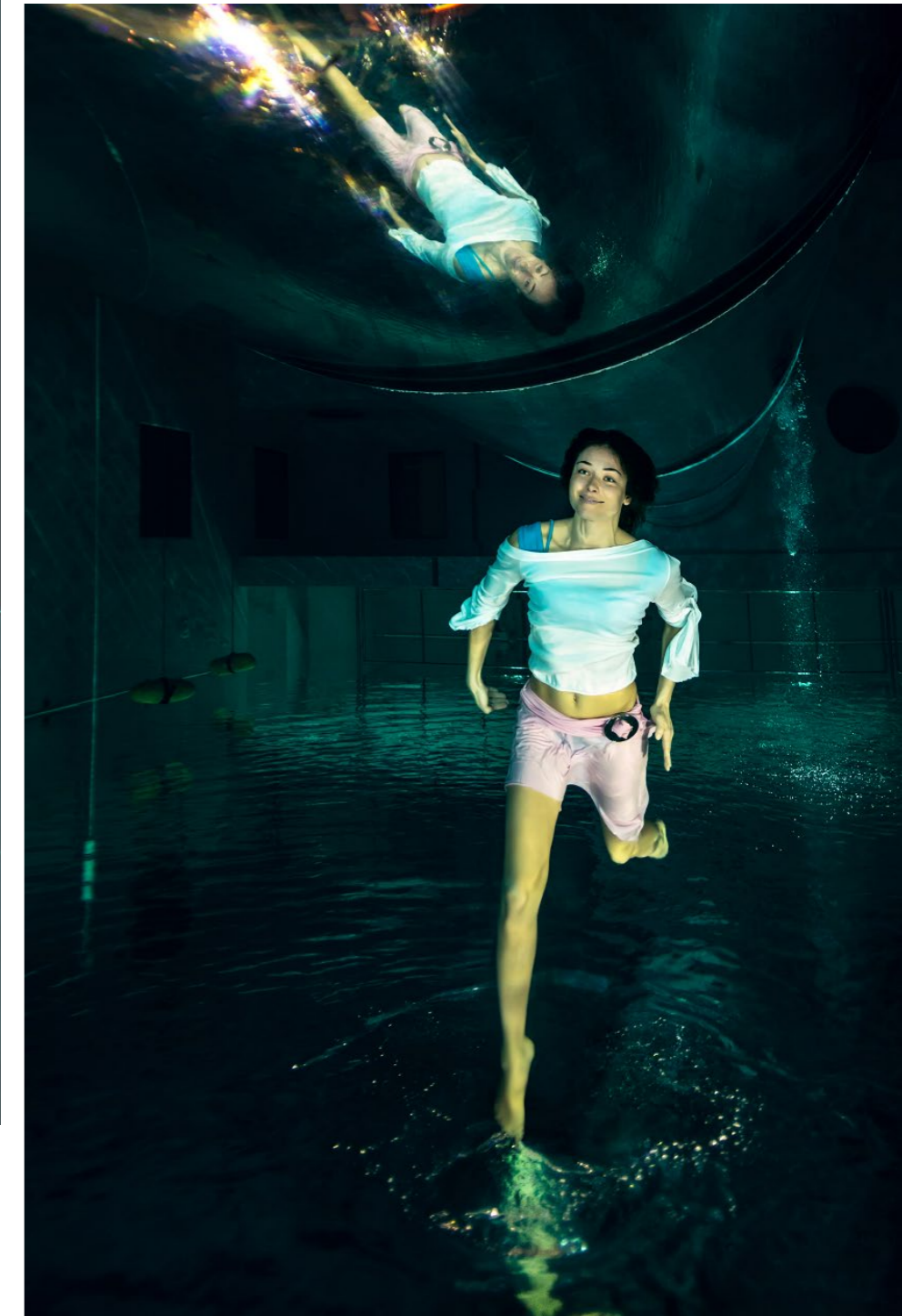
Pools



Y-40 "The Deep Joy"

One more unusual pool is located in Italy in the small city of Montegrotto Terme, which is 12km from Padua. This pool, called Y-40 "The Deep Joy," is the deepest pool in the world. It is even listed in the Guinness Book of World Records, as its depth is 42m!

Before traveling to this location, I was



slightly skeptical about the idea of shooting underwater images in Y-40. Above all, I was interested in an interesting photo session, and it was not clear to me what else there was, besides the pool's 42m depth, that was worth the visit.

But when I got there, I discovered more features. Briefly:

- Y-40 has an unusual shape. It is not a rectangular basin like a typical pool, but rather, it has a layered form. At the shallow end, the depth is only 1.5m. Then, there are several "terraces" at a depth of 5m, one of which gives you a feeling of being in a theatrical scene, underwater. The pool then descends deeper to 10m and 15m. The deepest

part is in the "pipe," which has a depth of 15 to 42m.

- On one of the pool's terraces, there is a big mirror, which offers a lot of options for shooting images.
- There are stylized caves or grottoes of various kinds.
- There is a glass tunnel, which crosses through the pool, and large windows.
- The pool's surfaces are finished with large plates. Moreover, some parts of the pool have different colors. There is no feeling of "tiles" in Y-40, the surface texture that bothers me

the most in typical pools.

In addition, the pool is filled with very clear mineral water at a toasty temperature of 34°C (93°F)!

The above three locations are probably the most interesting pools where I have had a chance to shoot in. But there is yet another pool I know of that is unique in concept, located in Houston, Texas, USA, on the 40th floor of the Market Square Tower. Part of this pool is suspended outside the building, hanging out over the city, at a height of 152m (500ft)! Furthermore, the suspended part of this

"sky pool" has a transparent bottom and walls. Unfortunately, I have not yet visited this pool, as it is built in a private apartment complex. But I hope to go there one day and share my photographs from this unique place. ■

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Edited by Rico Besserlich

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Chasing Gladius Mini Underwater Drone

This small 15.2 x 8.9 x 5.4in (38.5 x 22.6 x 13.8cm) underwater remotely operated vehicle (ROV) is capable of shooting 4K UHD video and 12 MP stills (jpeg and DNG formats supported) up to a depth of 328ft (100m). The built-in 5000 mAh rechargeable battery supports a run-time of two hours. Two built-in LED lights of 1200 lumens each add a little light to underwater scenes. The ROV is connected to its surface base station by a tether cable; all operations of the vehicle can then be controlled by a smartphone or tablet, which connects to the base station via WiFi (with a maximum range of 10m). The built-in camera supports a 95-degree field of vision. The 1in CMOS sensor supports an ISO range of 100-3200. The ROV is powered by five thrusters, allowing a maximum cruising speed of 4 knots (2m per second). A depth sensor tells you the depth of the ROV. All signals and data are transmitted in real-time. chasing.com



Easydive DivePad

This underwater housing for IOS and Android tablet devices (up to 10-inch screen size) allows you to shoot underwater images or videos up to a depth of 60m. The housing communicates with the tablet via a Bluetooth connection. For IOS devices, a downloadable app allows you to trigger all camera functions; for Android devices, no extra app is required. A "selfie button" allows one to switch between front and rear camera views. The built-in electronic unit has its own battery, which is fully charged within two hours and provides 14 hours of operation. A built-in 6Ah power bank provides the tablet with extra energy. The housing is made of anodized aluminium. Waterproof sealing is guaranteed by a double O-ring on the back and eight stainless steel lever latches. Two standard balls allow users to attach additional devices such as underwater lights. easydive.it



INON UW Tripod System

The INON underwater tripod is a modular, highly customizable system that allows one to mount underwater housings of any dimension, weight and size to a tripod during underwater photo or video dives. The main modules consist of a tripod hub, different tripod heads (ball, 2-way, and 3-way) and telescopic arms and legs of many different lengths. The operation height of the tripod is 14cm to 127cm, depending on the legs and tripod-head chosen. inon.co.jp

Kraken Sports Solar Flare Mini

The new underwater video light from Kraken Sports has a light output of 12,000 lumens. A COB LED gives it a warm colour temperature and a smooth, even beam with no hot spots. With its dimensions of 8 x 6 x 4in and a weight of 3lb, it is designed for professionals who need powerful yet compact lighting systems. The Solar Flare Mini is flood-resistant with a vacuum-sealed battery compartment, head/lamp and battery compartments are completely isolated from each other. The video light is prepared for remote controls, which are available as additional accessories. krakensports.ca



Paralenz Vaquita

This new dive camera from Paralenz features include a True Color OLED display and an improved image processor, which auto-corrects white balance while measuring the depth of the dive. It also has 4K video with 60 frames per second or 1080p with 240 frames per second. It can shoot 12 MP RAW or JPG stills and has a built-in image stabilization. In addition, Vaquita now automatically tracks conductivity, temperature, depth and location (GPS) during a dive. The LCD display has a dive profile overlay, providing dive data on screen. The Paralenz app (for IOS and Android) serves as an intelligent dive log and media library, which automatically organizes all recorded footage neatly. The camera features a 1-inch IMX577 sensor by Sony. It is made out of aluminium and has a weight of 240g and dimensions of 128 x 40 x 43mm (5 x 1.5 x 1.7in). It supports microSD memory cards of up to 128 GB in capacity and its LiPo 2000 mAh battery can be recharged by a USB Type C cable (fast charger). The Vaquita is shock-proofed and depth-rated to 350m (1,150ft). paralenz.com





Edited by
G. Symes

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Guardian in Lacy Palace, by Chong Wan Yong of Malaysia, First Place, Compact Camera category, Lens Beyond Ocean 2019

Call for entries: Lens Beyond Ocean photo competition

This year marks the tenth year of the annual international underwater photography competition held by the Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) in Kuala Lumpur. Since its humble beginnings in 2011, the contest has grown each year, with over 850 underwater photographers from all around the world competing for a chance to win attractive prizes.

Indeed, this year's prizes worth US\$25,000 do not disappoint, comprising dive travel packages to some of the best locations in Asia as well as top-of-the-line dive equipment and underwater camera gear. Judges of this year's competition include renowned underwater photographers Tobias Friedrich of Germany, Jason Isley of the United Kingdom and Nurul Yazid of Malaysia.

Entry deadline

The deadline to enter is **15 May 2020**.

Categories and winners

First and second place winners will be chosen in each of seven cat-

egories, including Macro, Wide-Angle, Compact Camera, Creative, Freediving, 3-Minute Video, and Portfolio. Additional images will be awarded honorable mention as "Memorable Pictures" by the panel of judges. Winners will be announced on 5 June 2020 and awarded prizes on the main stage at the MIDE 2020 on Saturday, 13 June 2020. All winning photos will be on display during MIDE 2020 in the foyer from 12-14 June 2020 at Hall 1, Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur. Winning videos will be showcased on the big screen of the main stage at MIDE.

For more information, please visit: Lensbeyondocean.com. ■



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