



photo &
video

Edited by
Peter Symes
& Scott Bennett

Choosing the almost black background (in the image below) allowed me to select the fish and isolate it from the background in post production on the computer

Field Work



Text and photos
by Lawson Wood
www.lawsonwood.com

Now, we have our camera and all of its ancillary added on bits. We have checked that everything works. We have our chosen format decided. We have our laptop and portable hard drive all packed up and ready to go on location, but where are we going and why go there in the first place?

Research

Getting to know your subject is perhaps easier than you think, however, we really do not have a whole lot of spare time underwater collecting knowledge on our subject matter. Rather, we read up everything that we can about any behavioural oddities; we talk to other photographers who have been to the location we have chosen; and we research as much as possible, quite a lot of which can be found readily available on the Web.

Timing isn't everything, so they say, but in underwater photography, timing is everything, whether it is the time of day, month, season or year. There are climatic changes annually as well as water temperature fluctuations. Some of the best diving to be done in the Caribbean, for instance, is in August and September, but it is blistering hot on shore, and there



is a fair chance that you may get caught up in one of the periodic hurricanes, which can sweep through the entire area. Typically, hurricane season is from 1 June to 30 November.

There are similar seasonal activities destined to spoil your photography in virtually every location on the planet. Plan any trip well in advance and you will not be disappointed.

More often than not, it is pot luck at the end of the day and your own conviction that you can get good photographs from every dive. If the viz is bad, take close-ups. If daytime conditions are terrible, dive at night.

One time, in the Red Sea, there were a simply staggering amount of jellyfish. They covered the entire surface of the sea and filled the water column for two days. Many people complained, but I concentrated on jellyfish photographs!

Pelagic fish and mammals also have seasonal migration routes. One can photograph humpback whales in Rurutu in French Polynesia in October, or whalesharks in the Seychelles in November, or leafy sea dragons in southeast Australia in February, or basking sharks in June in the Irish Sea and the Sardine Run off

Juvenile Queen Angelfish (*Holacanthus ciliaris*), Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands —105mm lens, ISO 100, Sea & Sea YS180 flash, 1/125th second at F16





photo &
video

Christmas Tree Worm
(*Spirobranchus giganteus*), Cayman Brac,
Cayman Islands—
60mm lens, ISO 200,
Sea & Sea YS180 flash,
1/125th second at F16

BELOW: Divers at sand-
bar off Grand Cayman

South Africa in February—the list goes on. The point is that whatever your desire, someone will more than likely have been there before you, taken photographs there, or even written a book.

I once spent over 50 minutes in seven metres of water inside the crumbling remains of a small shipwreck on the northwest shore of Cayman Brac, in the Cayman Islands. The wreck was a former inter-island landing craft by the name of the *Barbara Ann*. Inside the stern section about three metres square, I found a juvenile queen angelfish (*Holocanthus ciliaris*). It was around 3cm from head to

tail outfitted with outlandish, incredibly vivid colours.

As you can imagine, such a small colourful fish was also very timid. But after watching the fish and creeping closer, armed with my trusty Nikon and 105mm lens, I was able to ascertain its swim pattern where it would perform a figure eight and hide behind part of the old ship's interior mid journey.

I took a photograph, it darted for cover, but then started its normal route, so I took another photograph. It swam for cover. But after a few more photographs, it got used to me. I could soon anticipate its route and managed to take three or four absolutely great photographs of this shy and elusive fish.

Having such a nice and cooperative subject allowed me the time to choose my backgrounds as I took the photographs. Choosing the almost black background allowed me to select the fish and isolate it from the background in post production on the computer. This clean image could now be superimposed on another photograph for instance or used as a graphic representation in a feature article.

Empathy

No matter how we try to be invisible to our photographic subject, inevitably we are just those big ugly, ungainly creatures that blunder around without too much

thought, sometimes getting too close to subjects and at other times not seeing the big picture. You can only start to become more familiar with your subject matter if you can have some empathy and understanding of the intrusion into their personal space.

Humans are just the same in this respect. If a stranger gets uncomfortably close, then we automatically back off or turn and be prepared to fight. Our adrenalin peaks, and it is the primeval fight or flight reflex. Well, apply this sentiment to the underwater world when approaching a new subject for the first time.

The creature may be light or pressure sensitive, such as Christmas tree worms (*Spirobranchus giganteus*), and you may only get one chance at the photograph. If you encounter this subject in calm water with perhaps overcast skies, then when your flash fires, the worm instantly disappears into its tube home in the coral. Similarly, if you find these normally shy animals in well lit turbulent waters with perhaps some surge, you can

usually take two or three photographs at different angles before the creature eventually withdraws, if at all.

Christmas tree worms are both light and pressure sensitive and so must be approached slowly and with empathy, as there may be only the one chance of taking the photograph before they retreat.

Lawson was raised in the Scottish east coast fishing town of Eyemouth and spent his youth exploring the rock pools and shallow seas before learning to scuba dive at the tender age of 11. Now over 44 years later, Lawson has been fortunate to make his passion his career and has authored and co-authored over 45 books mainly on our underwater world. Lawson is a founding member of the Marine Conservation Society; founder of the first Marine Reserve at St. Abbs in Scotland and made photographic history by becoming the first person to be a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and Fellow of the British Institute of Professional Photographers solely for underwater photography. ■



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10 Bar releases housing for Sony NEX-5

10 Bar has released a housing for the Sony NEX-5 camera. Supplied with a standard dome port and lens ring, the housing sports an aluminum front, acrylic back, and is rated to a depth of 60m. Suitable for the Sony NEX 18-55mm lens, it features mechanical controls for all functions and will allow for TTL strobe exposure via fiber optic cables.

www.10bar.com



Fantasea FP7000 Housing for New Nikon Coolpix P7000!

Fantasea Line has announced its new housing for the Nikon's new Coolpix P7000 digital camera. Rated to a depth of 60m/200 feet, the FP7000 housing is manufactured to the highest professional standards of function, style and durability and is ideal for snorkellers and divers alike. Designed to be compatible with a complete Accessory System, all controls are easily accessible and labelled for comfortable operation.

Also included is a special mount for lighting accessories, double O-ring seal, removable double fiber optic cable connection and removable flash diffuser. The robust construction is shock resistant and protects the camera from water, sand, dust, frost and other damaging elements.

The expected release date is set for early 2011. Pricing has not yet been made available but other housings are in the US\$100-\$130 price range.



Sanyo Announces Full HD Dual Xacti Underwater Camcorder

The new Dual Camera Xacti is a full HD (1,920 x 1,080) camcorder that records MPEG4 video at depths of up to ten feet underwater. Weighing in at a mere five and a half ounces with dimensions of 3.37 by 1.47 by 4.34 inches, its compact size is a definite travel plus. It can record over 480 minutes of video in addition to 14-megapixel still photos. Other features include a CMOS sensor (14.4 megapixels), wide angle lens and a 5X optical zoom. The Xacti also offers a couple of proprietary features: a "double-range zoom," which enables the use of a 12X zoom for wide angle to telephoto recording, as well as High-Speed Sequential Shooting, for up to 22 photos at seven frames per second. It is compatible with SD, SDHC and SDXC cards. List price: US\$349.99 www.us.sanyo.com

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Inon X-2 Housing for Panasonic Lumix GF1

Inon has released its X-2 housing for the Panasonic Lumix GF1. The corrosion-resistant body design is constructed from lightweight aluminum alloy. Featuring multi-coated lens port compatibility, the housing features controls for almost every feature on the GF1, plus fiber optic bulkheads for external strobe sync. INON plans to support INON 45mm macro, 14-45mm, 7-14mm and 8mm fisheye lenses. An optional leak sensor is also available. www.inon.jp



Light & Motion Releases the Fathom Wetmate 65 Degree Wet Lens

Light & Motion has announced the shipping release of the new Fathom Wetmate 65 degree wide angle lens. Utilizing a robust press-fit system with the flat-port, the Fathom Wetmate 65 is designed to fit all 2010 Sony Light & Motion underwater video housings. Engineered with the highest quality glass on the market and boasting a low distortion rate of only 1.40 percent and a 50 percent zoom through rate, it can be instantly mounted and removed underwater for optimum "one dive" shooting versatility. Price: US\$579.00 www.uwimaging.com



Full High-Definition Underwater Camera

Ocean Presence Technologies has announced the latest addition to its line-up of high-definition underwater cameras: the AquariCam® OPT-12HD. This new Full HD fixed lens camera comes with a 120x optical/digital zoom and provides the highest resolution available with a wide fixed lens. Designed for public aquariums, especially for use in small tanks, it enables visitors to simultaneously view the full high-definition live video stream. The AquariCam-HD can cover a wide 50 degrees of monitoring area with great efficiency and features a 10x optical with an additional 12x digital zoom.

High-definition image sensors now make digital zooming practical without significant image quality loss. Cameras are connected using a single hPoE (High-Power-over-Ethernet, IEEE802.3at compliant) marine-rated cable. Underwater lighting, floating battery packs and wave generator power systems are also available. For more information on this and other HD-IP cameras, visit: www.oceanpresence.com



Nikon 24-70mm Coffee Mug Arrives

For those Nikon users who just can't get enough of their lenses, Canon Mug has added a Nikon version to their popular line of mugs and thermoses. The Nikon AF-S 24-70mm 2.8 features a stainless steel interior and features a fully zoomable lens barrel. The black thermos coffee cup comes complete with a gold box and a drawstring bag to carry it around in. A one-piece lens mug/barrel retails for US\$49.99. Sets of two, four and ten pieces are also available. Just keep your real lenses to avoid unpleasant accidents. www.canon-mugs.com





Dry shooting in wet places

The newest underwater photo kit from Sea & Sea is almost like two products. First, there's the DC-GE5 12.5 megapixel digi-camera that is waterproof to 16 feet without the housing. Yet, the company is marketing it with a polycarbonate housing that allows full access to the camera's controls to a depth of 180 feet. Since it is waterproof, there is little worry about condensation or minor flooding killing the camera in the



housing. Outside of the housing, it withstands rain or sea spray while pursuing outdoor activities. The camera features a 2.7-

inch liquid crystal diode display screen, four-power optical zoom and a lens that zooms from 38 to 152 millimeters. In macro mode, it focuses to a mere 2.3 inches. Sensitivity can be set from ISO 64-3,200, and the shutter speeds range from 1/2000th of a second to 30 seconds. It can be used to shoot 30-frame-per-second movies and has built-in effects including panoramas. Automatic face detection and image stabilization ease snapping shots on the go. It has 16 megabytes of internal memory and accepts SD/SDHC memory cards of up to 16 gigabytes. A lithium-ion battery and charger is packed with the camera along with a USB cable and Arcsoft editing software. The housing weighs less than 14 ounces on land, but only 1.05 ounces underwater. An optional accessory lens can be affixed while underwater to shoot wide-angle images. Grips were positioned on the housing to ease holding the unit and gaining access to the controls.

www.seaandsea.com

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Focus on sharpness

Autofocus does fairly well for shooting on the fly, but to really get things just right there is nothing like manually focusing the single-lens-reflex-style cameras in a housing. Sea & Sea has a new accessory to help discriminating photogs fine-tune their images. The VF45 prismatic viewfinder replaces the original housing viewfinder. It eases focusing by providing 1.2 power magnification of the entire viewfinder area. The angled eyepiece rotates 360 degrees in 90-degree increments to it can be positioned in the most comfortable position whether being used to shoot portrait or landscape images. The VF45 is made of an aluminum alloy that has been anodized for corrosion resistance. At 2.3 by 3.9 inches and weighing less than 1.2 ounces, it slips easily into the gadget bag.

The VF45 is currently compatible with the MDX series housings including the MDX-7D, 5DMKII, D300s, D700, D300*, 40D*, PRO D3*. *Requires LCD window be replaced, please contact your retailer for parts information and availability. A release date is set for the end of September with an MSRP of \$1,075.00. www.seaandsea.com



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Tania LIUBAVITSEVA, 12 ans, Saransk, Russie



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Unique Dive Site

The Rio Negro's Amazons

The *Inia geoffrensis*, more commonly known as the pink dolphin, is nicknamed locally as 'Boto' and resides in the waters of the Rio Negro. Although still poorly known, this species is considered the most intelligent of the five species of freshwater dolphins. The pink dolphin has a melon-shaped head, a thick and elongated back, a crest instead of a dorsal fin, and disproportionately large ventral fins and tail—all of which making it less refined than the common dolphin. Yet, when you see its agility and wild grace underwater, it makes you think of the legendary Amazons.

The pink dolphin's flexibility is unique; its spine allows it to perform impossible contortions compared to other dolphins. Thanks to its flexible neck, it can turn its head 180 degrees. The dolphin's sight is quite keen, despite its small eyes. Its very sharp high-frequency communication system allows it to move in the Rio Negro's dark waters and detect its prey. As with all dolphins, sound waves are emitted through air bags under the respiratory openings, albeit the pink dolphins sound waves are amplified by the mass of fatty tissue found in its voluminous melon-shaped head. While some of the sounds it makes can be heard by humans, most are inaudible due to their high frequency.

The Rio Negro

The source of the Rio Negro (Black River) in Colombia, continuing its journey to Brazil, through the rich Amazonian forest. Here, it converges with the Rio Solimões to form the Amazon. From afar, the Rio Negro

appears to be black, but with a closer look, it is actually dark brown. This dark color is due to the humic acid that forms due to the incomplete decomposition of the phenol contained in the vegetation of the sandy clearings.

Both rivers, the Rio Negro and the Solimões, meet south of Manaus, the capital of the Amazon. The Solimões source begins in Peru. Its waters are clearer (beige in color), and it is filled with sediment. The meeting point of the two rivers is a most impressive sight, as they do not blend together. They continue to run alongside one another for approximately forty kilometers (25 miles) before finally mixing.

This can be compared to a glass filled partially with water and partially with oil. They simply do not blend.

More surprisingly, the fish species living in the respective rivers do not cross over onto the other side; they stop at the border.

This phenomenon, whereby the waters do not mix, is due to several factors: a difference in pH (potential



Text and photos
by Michel Braunstein

Pink dolphin coming out of the dark (above); Sailing on the Rio Negro (top left)





Hunting dolphins (top right) Get this image on a new T-shirt at www.sharktees.com

hydrogen) levels; the Rio Solimoes is basic, whereas the Rio Negro is acidic in nature; and large temperature differences, ranging from 28°C to 35°C (82-95°F) in the Rio Negro River and a much cooler Rio Solimoes with temperatures ranging from 20° to 22°C (68-72°F). The last significant difference is in the speed with which the rivers run. The Amazon flows at a speed of 8km per hour (5 miles per hour) and the Rio Negro at 3km per hour (1.9 miles per hour).

Pink dolphin behavior

During an expedition to the Amazon in 1992, the Cousteau Society studied the pink dolphin. Unable to isolate the animal in a pool, they had difficulty analyzing

its behavior.

The pink dolphin lives peacefully alongside another species, the *Sotalia fluviatilis*, or gray dolphin (gray dolphin enters the Amazon River from the sea).

The pink dolphin has no natural predators, except man, and is a dreaded hunter. Piranhas fear it because it feeds on them, as do the "Pirarucu"—the famous giant fish—and the Cayman. It feeds on catfish, various crustaceans and other fish.

The pink dolphin lives in the Amazon basin. It can be found all the way up to Ecuador and Peru, where it is called "Bufeo colorado" (colored dolphin). It can also be found in the Orinoco basin, where the Rio Negro source starts (Colombia, Venezuela). You may

often see it in areas where there is a great concentration of fish or where the rivers converge.

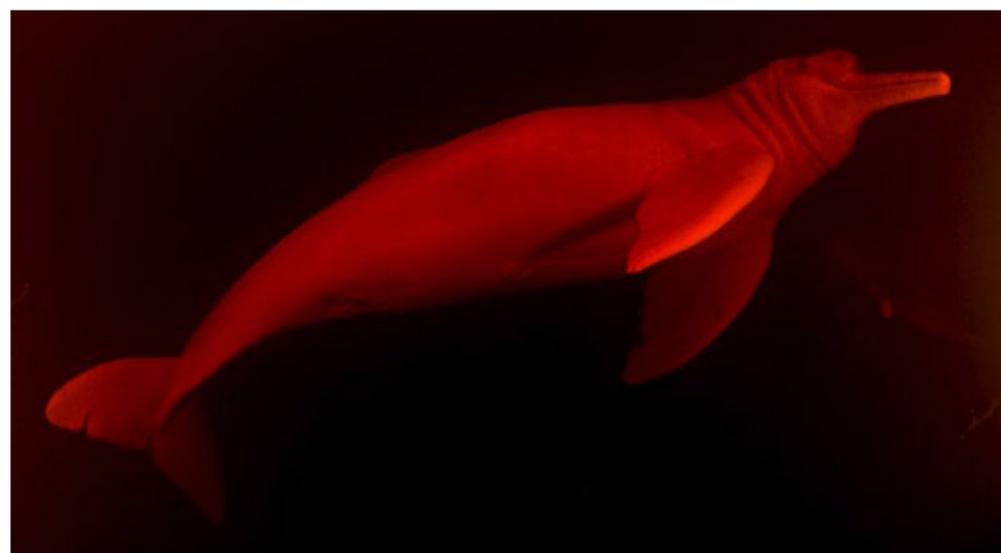
I was fortunate to see the dolphins in the Rio Negro, near the Arou lodge, 60km from Manaus. There is a place where they frequently visit and from which they can be observed. If you are lucky enough, you can even get near them and swim with them. This is a unique experience. It is impressive to see these huge of 2.5- to 3-meter long animals come out of the dark and move with amazing agility, especially when hunting. They are so fast in the water, making it difficult for photographers to immortalize them on film.

The origin of its color is not clear; it could be caused by the capillaries under its skin. Some of



Feeding the dolphins (above and bottom left)

Thanks to the pink dolphin's flexible neck, it can turn its head 180° (top left)



TOP TO BOTTOM: The pink dolphin sports a crest instead of a dorsal fin; The pink dolphin's flexibility is unique—its spine allows it to perform impossible contortions compared to other dolphins; Splendid botos are very important in keeping the balance of the regional ecosystem



the boto's can also be pale blue or even albino.

The pink dolphin is very active in the local mythology; some native tribes of the Amazon worship it, while others think of it as the devil and hunt it. The gray dolphin is usually considered as sacred. A traditional myth of the Amazon tells us that the pink dolphins emerge out of the water come nightfall, transform into handsome young men and seduce the young women. They then resume their original shape and return to the river early in the morning.

Threatened status

A mere 20 years ago, the species was not threatened by extinction. However, its population is decreasing significantly due to intensive fishing, deforestation, forest fires, destruction of the habitat (dams, agriculture, construction), extermination by fishermen—who are angry because dolphins destroy fishing nets—river pollution due to raised mercury levels, fishing methods using explosives and overpopulation.

To date, no one knows exactly how many specimens still exist,

but the dolphins of the Amazon are definitely important for the regional ecosystem. It is mandatory that we look after them because of their vital position at the heart of the planet's lung.

Michel Braunstein's passion for the sea was born when he was a child watching Jacques Cousteau's movies. At 20, he started diving and doing underwater photography. Since then,

he's never stopped taking underwater pictures, first with the Nikonos V, and today, with a DSLR. Recently, Braunstein started an exceptional scuba t-shirts website at www.sharktees.com. To see more photography by Braunstein, visit: www.braunstein.co.il—a website which won the prize for best promotional website at Antibes World Festival of Underwater Pictures in 2007. ■



TOP TO BOTTOM: Swimming with pink dolphins in the Rio Negro; Piranha fish fear pink dolphins because they feed on them—therefore there is no danger to humans from piranha fish when swimming where the dolphins are circling; Dolphins circle around the fishermen's nets; At night in the Rio Negro, a speeding cayman alligator also fears the pink dolphin

Caelum Mero



P O R T F O L I O





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.

PREVIOUS PAGE:
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."

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

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

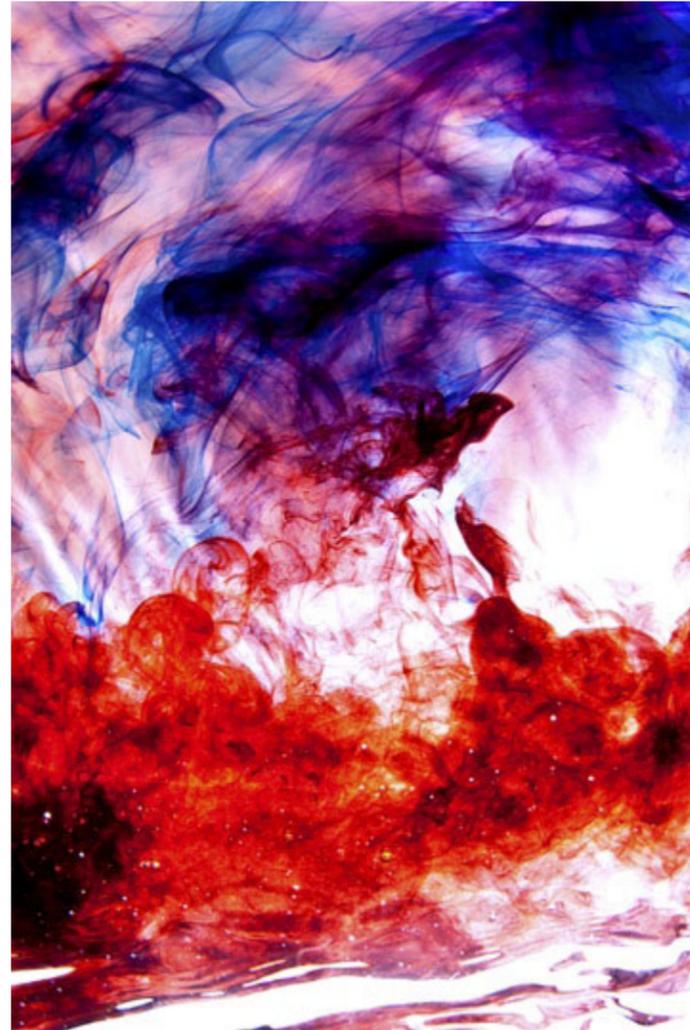


"This poor model had some heavy duty makeup applied to produce the colours scene here," said Mero. "The makeup artist left before giving him the product to remove it. Apparently, he was coloured like that for a few days."

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.



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.



OUR NEXT ISSUE

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Happy Diving!



ANDY MURCH



ERIC HANAUER



ERIC HANAUER

— from the staff at X-RAY MAG

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