



photo & video

You just bought a brand, spankin' new underwater photography kit... Now what?

Text and photos by
Lars Stenholt Kirkegaard

So... you have your new photo equipment. Cool... now what? Should we just jump in the water with it? The fact that underwater photography differs from traditional surface photography goes without saying. Most people know this and don't need anyone to tell them so. But if you ask the same people to list the vital points on how it differs and how one actually takes pictures underwater, they become a bit stumped.

Now, go and ask a completely new underwater photographer about how they have planned to actually carry out their first photo dive, and they usually have not even considered it. For that reason alone, many first photo dives are rarely successful.

Find the essence

Although it is quite different to take pictures underwater, it is not that hard to learn. But you need to put aside your



Smart Start

— *Preparing for Your First Photo Dive*

commonly held notions about photography and learn to prepare in a different manner.

You may well be an experienced photographer and know your camera well, but once you put it in a housing, the buttons and where they have been placed

become a whole new ball game!

So always start out by taking the time to get to know your housing, where the buttons are and (most importantly) be able to identify them with your eyes closed.

And let's be honest... You didn't really

read the manual, did you? You may think you have, and you might have told your friends that you did, but chances are more likely that you haven't done it.

The secret to camera manuals is not to try and read them all at once, but to get started by running over the table of

contents as fast as it takes you to read the letters. Then, do it again, just a little slower, so you now have the overview.

Most manuals repeat themselves forever. But, by knowing the main headlines, you will know where to start reading once you have the need for topic.





THIS PAGE: Adjust your aperture (or f-stop) and shutter speed and ISO settings *before* you enter the water



What you need to know

You will need to know how to turn the flash on and off, how to set the ISO and the basic settings associated with changing between Auto and Manual, as well as adjusting the f-stop and shutter speeds, plus how to enter the menu and run through the settings.

Just forget about the detailed menu settings for now, as they can wait until later.

Put it together at home

Rule #1, when you are about to go diving, is to make sure you have set up your camera equipment at home.

The majority of floods happen because the camera has been sealed in the housing in a rush and not checked properly. This important warning is usually written on the first page of every manual. But since you haven't read your manual, you won't have done it...

So by taking the time to mount the camera in the housing while at home, sitting at a

table with a clean surface, you will eliminate that risk.

Start by preparing the camera and housing completely for the dive. Then, take it apart again, so that you can learn about battery settings, how your buttons work and if the camera sits in the housing the way the manufacturer intended.

Taking these steps also increases the chances that you will get potential problems solved in good time before the day you want to go diving.

Eliminate your settings options

The next thing you need to decide is how you want to operate the camera. At this point, you might be thinking there are so many settings, how does one possibly decide on the right ones to choose? Well, when it comes to camera settings, there are three basic things that control your exposure: your aperture (f-stop), your shutter speed and your ISO setting—which are often collectively referred to as

the "ASI".

Although you may think your camera has none of these features, it is exactly these three settings that control the camera's operation when you choose one of the many shortcuts found on most cameras.

Virtually all cameras have an "Auto" button, usually called "P". It is important that you know where it is, because it is your back-up if every other setting you have decided to go for fails. It will make certain that you get out of the water with at least some reasonable images on your memory stick.

There are many other settings, such as the "Portrait" and "Sport" settings, which you will probably wonder about. The possibilities are many, but they all lead back to the three



Set your camera on the "P" setting

Smart Start

main ASI settings of Aperture, Shutter and ISO.

It is important not to be too concerned about the other settings, if you are not familiar with them, and keep things simple by using the settings you do know and then plan from there.

The long-term goal of any underwater photographer should be to use one's camera in the manual mode. Once you get there, you can always use short cuts to make things easier and optimise the camera's settings. But knowing exactly what happens when you press the



cinema of dreams

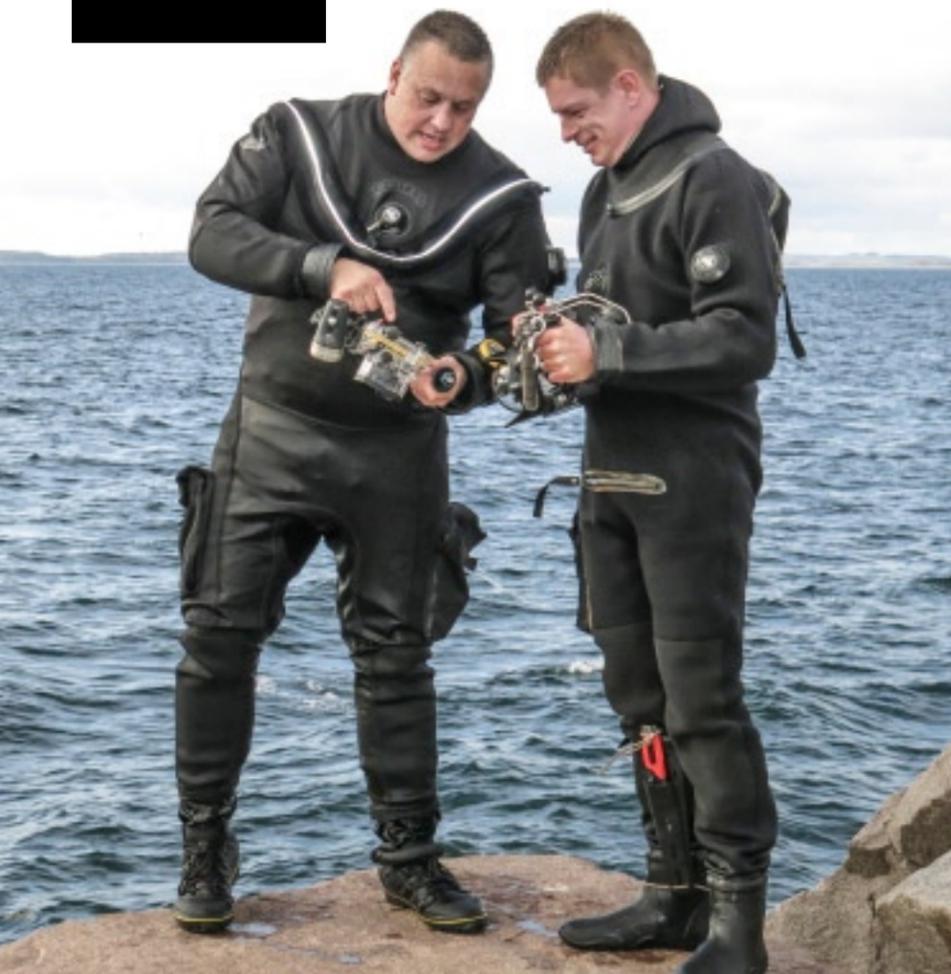


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photo & video



Oops! Did he forget rule #1?
Set up your camera and housing at home first *before* you go to the dive site—thereby avoiding possible flooding of your camera

same as making the sensitivity of your chip higher. If you are doing a deep dive, or one late in the afternoon, you will need the ISO to be as high as possible because of the low ambient light. But there is no free lunch in this scenario, as increasing the ISO will introduce “grain” into the image.

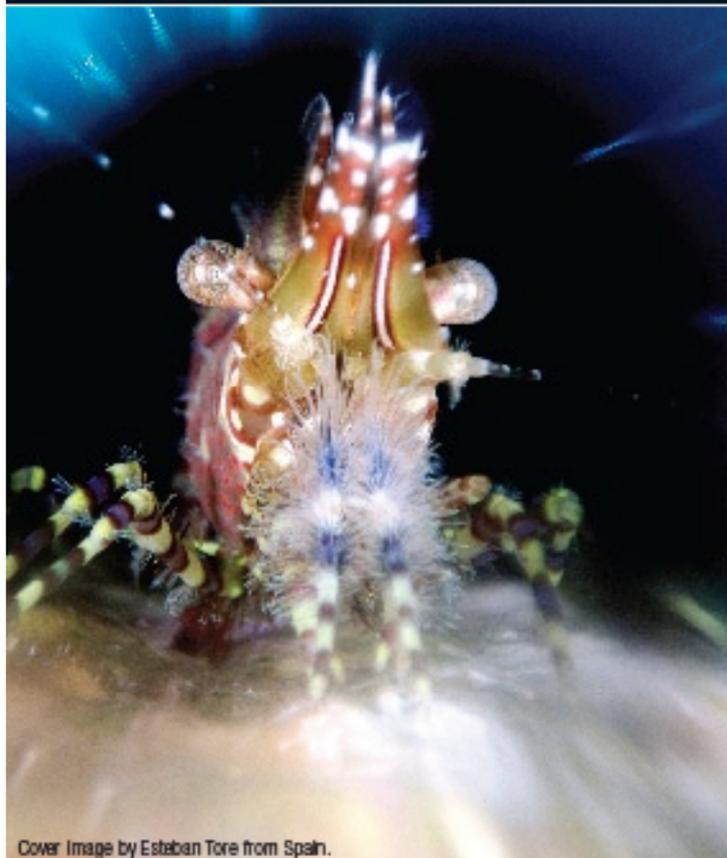
Grain is what used to happen in the old film-based days when “fast” film was used. Grain referred to the silver grains in the film’s emulsion that became visible at high ISO’s. With digital sensors, the grain is electronic noise that is introduced as the ISO increases. While a little bit is okay, a lot will ruin your image quality. How high ISO can be set in



your camera is relative to its quality. The old adage of you-get-what-you-pay-for really does apply here. As a rule, a cheap camera will deliver poor image quality in low light. This becomes a catch-22

for underwater photographers who dive in low light. As your experience increases, having the camera on Auto and manually setting the ISO will become your #2 setting—the one you can always revert

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Example of a *grainy* photograph, or a photo with “grain”

Choose the right partner—preferably someone with similar interests

button for manual mode is probably the most important step in mastering underwater photography.

The two setups

I teach my students to plan for two different settings at the start of their dive. The first one being the one you would like to be able to handle but still have not tried or would like to try more. While the second is the one you already know all about and can return to if everything else fails during the

dive. You should know exactly how to adjust these two settings even if you are deep down doing a cold dark dive and have lots of other things on your mind.

For a novice, the first setting should always be the “Auto” setting, but where you set the ISO manually, while the second setting should be full Auto, with the camera deciding everything.

The ISO is basically the light sensitivity of the camera's chip and increasing it is the





Before the dive, discuss the dive plan or routine with your dive buddy and how you will stick together for the entire dive

to. While your #1 setting will be one that teaches you how to adjust the f-stop or shutter speed to achieve good images.

Adjusting the f-stop and shutter speed are by far the most used settings for photographers using DSLR cameras. A lot of high-end compact cameras have the same ASI settings, but always check whether the housing you are considering actually supports all the settings!

There are lots of settings that you will learn about in time, but a lot of them are just short cuts to the three ASI settings. The really important thing is not to plan on doing too many things on your first dive—and to make sure that you

Before a dive, make sure you and your dive buddy have routines on how to dive together and how to stick together during the whole dive. If your buddy doesn't bring a camera, then he or she might become very bored after a while and get tempted to wander off.

Using a camera and really getting into photography is a time-consuming hobby, and you will probably end up connecting with other divers who enjoy taking pictures as well. Underwater photography is a buddy-sport and is best enjoyed under safe conditions with someone who shares the same interests.

If your buddy does not want to bring

have a setting to fall back upon, which you know by heart.

Keep things simple and avoid unnecessary complications, as your dive time is always too short to start playing with something completely new.

Choose the right partner

As an underwater photographer, you have to look upon yourself as a potential solo diver. Not that you should dive alone at all, but photographers have a tendency to get carried away with what they see and to stay with it and often lose their dive buddy during a dive.

a camera but you still want to dive together, she or he might participate anyway. Keeping track of time (so you don't forget your planned dive time), acting as an underwater model, spotting small creatures for macro images, or perhaps holding a photo lamp to create an interesting effect in the image are some of the many things your buddy can do.

—Leaving you is not one of them!

Find a productive photo dive site

I have often made the basic mistake of having too high expectations of the dive site where I teach, but choosing a very basic site when learning new things is vital. The phrase, "productive site", simply means a good dive site where you are comfortable and where the entry and exit areas are very easy.

Easy access is important in case you need to re-think your shooting strategy. Finding such a site is usually not too

hard. Most experienced underwater photographers usually have a local site they know very well, which they use to try out new equipment and techniques.

Doing a dive with the purpose of taking pictures is like putting on a new set of glasses. Things that were previously hidden are suddenly easy to find!

A productive site can be fun and very cozy at the same time. Find a little harbor with some stone formations, leftovers from construction, some nice vegetation or a little wall with a drop off just a few meters high—and your happiness is complete!

Lars Stenholt Kirkegaard is a professional photographer, graphic arts specialist and dive instructor based in Denmark. He is also a distributor and retailer of several underwater imaging brands in the Nordic Region through his retail shop:

www.fotografit.eu



Pick a productive dive site—one that is easy to enter and exit

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Ikelite EOS 70D Housing

Ikelite has announced their new housing for the Canon EOS 70D. The new housing features built-in proprietary circuitry which, if used with Ikelite DS Substrobes, provides full TTL exposure control. The video record start/stop and AF lock controls are provided as levers on the side of the housing, which is also supplied with an aluminum tray and dual handles. Ikelite started shipping the EOS 70D housing from early October at a United States retail price of \$1,600.



Olympus OM-D E-M1

Olympus has announced the release of its new flagship mirrorless camera, the OM-D E-M1. The new camera features a 16 Megapixel Live MOS sensor, together with version VII of the TruePic image processor. Olympus is claiming superior auto-focus from the OM-D E-M1 because of its DUAL FAST system, which can use either phase or contrast detection depending on what lens is fitted. The OM-D E-M1 also features a very nice full magnification electronic viewfinder. Although larger than the very highly regarded OM-D E-M5, the new Olympus offers the ability to use both the Four Thirds lenses (with a new adaptor) and the Micro Four Thirds lenses, which will appeal to legacy Olympus owners.



Sealux Lumix GH3 Housing

Sealux has released its new housing for the high-end Panasonic Lumix GH3 mirrorless camera. The CSGH3 housing provides access to most of the high-end Lumix's camera functions, plus Sealux states that it can also be fitted with an optional HDMI bulkhead. The housing is small in overall dimensions to take advantage of the minimal size of the GH3 and features large o-rings and double control shaft seals to maximize overall integrity. The CSGH3 housing is made of a seawater-proof aluminum alloy and is CNC milled out of a monoblock, anodized in black and powder coated on the outside. Sealux are advising that the housing is available now at EU€1,799.



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Nikon's D610

In a move that has been widely rumoured on the internet, Nikon has released its D610 Full-Frame (FX) DSLR camera. It seems that the new camera is the solution for the sensor oil spotting problem that occurred with its predecessor the D600. There are only



three new features on the D610 compared to the D600, with the major one being a new shutter mechanism allows for 6fps continuous shooting and a quiet continuous mode at 3fps. The new shutter is the solution to the oil spotting problem and the D610 is available from late October at a U.S. retail price of \$1,999.



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Diver from IAHD
Adriatic in the
Hydro Lab at
Star City in
Russia

Star City

—Hydrospace without barriers

Text by Svetlana Murashkina
Photos by Dmitry Sakharov

In late April 2013, a delegation of 16 people from IAHD Adriatic – International Association for Handicapped Divers visited Moscow in Russia to become the first disabled divers to dive in the Hydro Lab of the Russian cosmonaut testing facility located in Star City. It was the realization of a long held dream for the leader of the delegation, Branko Ravnak, who worked for years to make the event a reality. Svetlana Murashkina, the editor-in-chief of the Russian dive magazine *InVertum*, reports.

— *We did it!*

The delegation to Star City included Slovenians Damjan Peklar (CMAS Instructor), Barbara Slaček and Aleš Povse-Yoda, as well as Croatians Zoran Vlah—who gets around in a wheelchair in everyday life—and Peter Majcen who is on crutches. There were also several volunteers and helpers including Alenka Fidler, Blaž Ribič, Gaber Guna, Katarina

Richter, Matjaž Paj, Nevenka Richter Peče, Urška Gajšek, Rajko Prelog, Tomaž Bobik and Petar Vresnik.

The delegation was led by the president of IAHD Adriatic, Branko Ravnak, who flew to Moscow

specifically for the immersion event in the Hydro Lab (Neutral Buoyancy Training Facility) of the Gagarin Research and Test Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City. It was the first time wheelchair users have dived

in the facility. It was a dream come true for Ravnak—a dream he nurtured for several years and finally realized thanks to a friendship with the Foundation supporting the Russian federal program "Dostypnaya

Sreda" (Accessible Environment).

On the Russian side, disabled divers who participated included Nikita Vankov from Anapa, and Anna Demidova and Svetlana Fomicheva from Moscow. Volunteers included Elena Topyricheva

from St. Petersburg and Ilya Dubrovsky, Svetlana Konohova and Andrey Zaikin and Igor Murashkin from Moscow.

Underwater videography was taken by Vladimir Prokhorenko from Anapa, while underwater





Star City

12m, and a capacity of 5,000 sq m) filled with water at about 30°C, has a mounting plate with a capacity of 40 tons. The density of the water is less than that of a normal swimming pool thereby achieving exceptional clarity.

It was here that cosmonaut training and development of operations took place under simulated weightlessness in a water environment, providing solutions for the problems of cosmonaut training in extravehicular activity, performing experimental

photography was done by Dmitry Sakharov, with the help of assistant lighting diver, Anton Sakharov, and land photography was done by Zoya Pechorkina—all of whom were from Moscow.

The dive went as usual. A briefing was held by Valery Nesmeyanov, director of the dive centre, SPACE DIVE, and distinguished test pilot of the Space Technology agency of the Russian Federation. Each of the two groups of divers spent at least 60 minutes underwater, during which time each diver could check out the construction of the ISS (International Space Station) and experience for themselves what astronauts do in training (and even in outer space!).

The divers exchanged experiences and posed for pictures in front of the spacecraft. Now in their log-books two stamps appear: one for the dive center SPACE DIVE and, as a special, memorable experience, a stamp from the Foundation supporting the Russian federal program "Dostypnaya Sreda" (Accessible Environment) as well as the signature of the president of CRASA (Russian underwater federation), Valentin

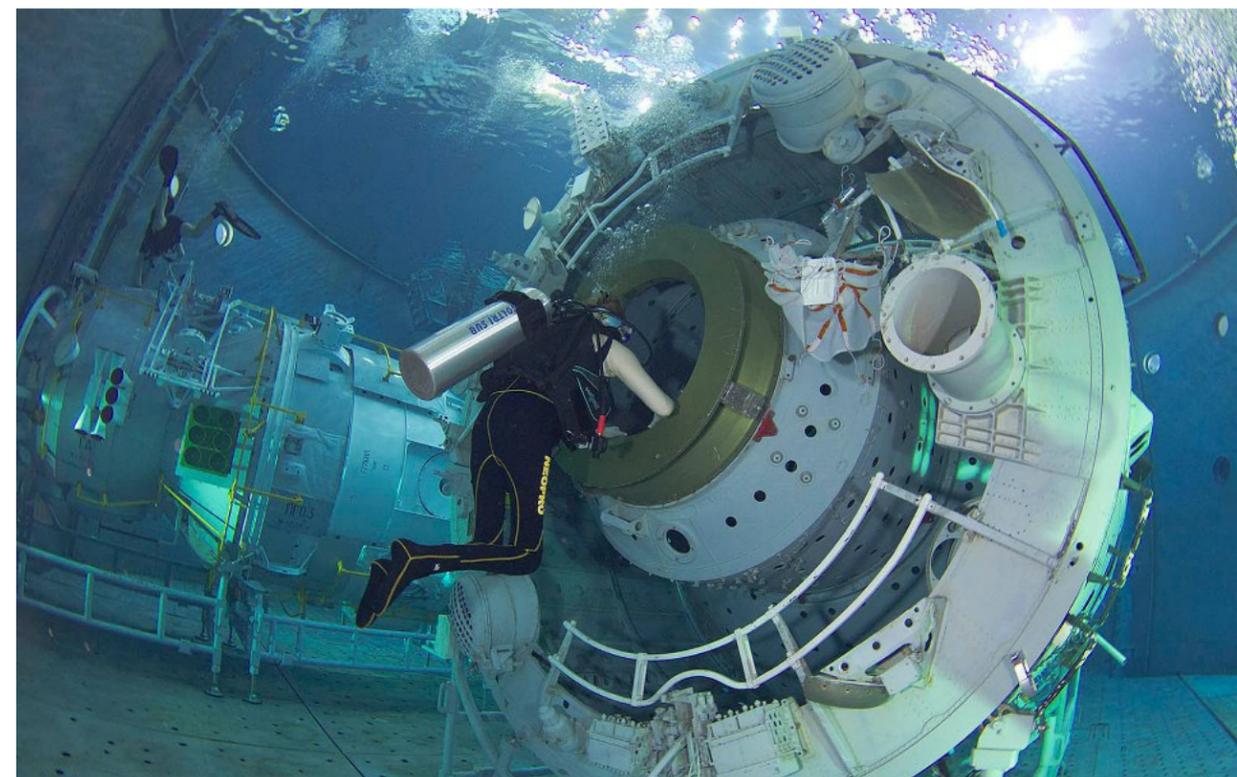
Stashevski, who personally observed the dives.

The famous Hydro Lab

The Hydro Lab was commissioned in 1980. This unique structure, the central part of which is a cylindrical vessel (with a diameter of 23m, a height of

studies, ergonomic testing of objects of space technology, and simulating maintenance work performed by astronauts in outer space. The same building houses office space, technology systems, equipment and other means of cosmonaut training.

On the side of the cylindrical surface



With the help of instructors and assistants, divers of IAHD Adriatic enter the Hydro Lab at Star City



of the pool are 45 windows through which one can take photos and shoot video, watch and monitor the activities of the astronauts in the pool. The

hydrolaboratory is equipped with a set of experimental facilities (the overall layout of modules) that can be placed on a moving platform and lowered

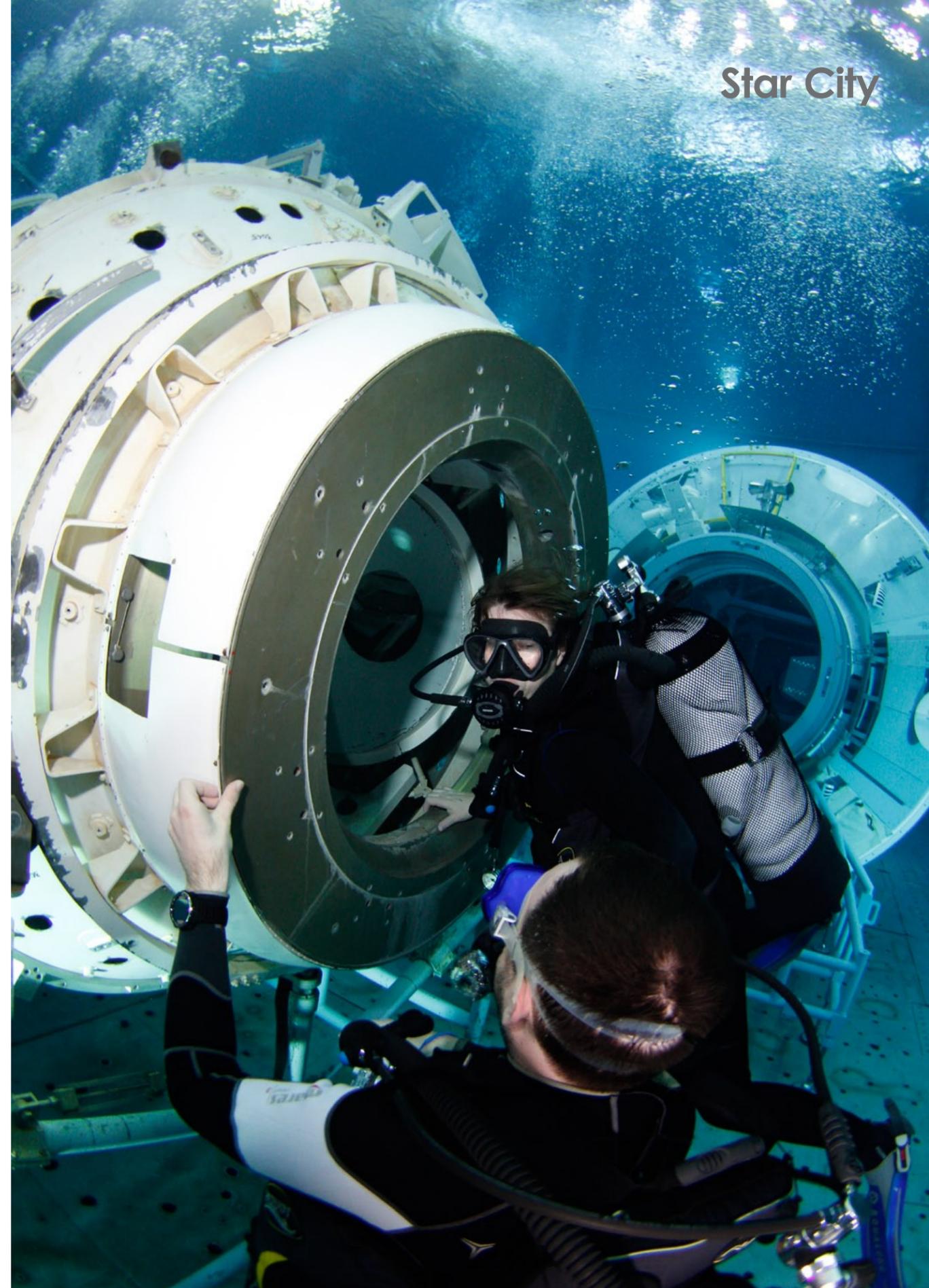
down into the hydropool for training. All experimental settings are done in full size with full volume simulation of internal and external contours of the structure. (See: www.gctc.ru)

Itinerary for the visit

The delegation from IAHD Adriatic had less than four days in Moscow to complete the entire event.

On April 27, the delegation arrived in Moscow. They participated in the International specialised exhibit and congress "Integration. Life. Society", on the employment and benefits of disabled scuba diving, including a round table discussion on "The Road to Paradiving" (we use this word in Russia for 'disabled diving'). In the evening, the participants attended the ballet *Spartacus* at the Bolshoi Theater and then enjoyed a tour of the Moscow subway.

On April 28, the delegation met at Star City. The first event of the day was immersion and diving in the Hydro Lab,



THIS PAGE: Disabled divers from Croatia, Slovenia and Russia explore the various elements of the Hydro Lab



followed by a stunning tour of the training center, a visit to the museum in the House of Astronauts, and even the office of Yuri Gagarin, where astronauts have traditionally come before their flight. There was a meeting with the head of the Urban District Star City, Nikolai Rybkin, and a meeting with the cosmonaut commander and hero of Russia, Sergei Alexandrovich Volkov, and

specialists from the Department of Social Development Administration. In addition, there was a laying flowers at the monument of Yuri Gagarin, a promenade on the Walk of Heroes to the House of Astronauts, and the awarding of diplomas to participants by the head of the city district administration and the head of the city



Star City

chairs in churches) and toured Red Square. There was a reception at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia and a meeting with Mrs. Ada Filip Slivni, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in the Russian Federation.

On April 30, the delegation had breakfast at the

district in Star City, Moscow region, for participation in the International Forum "Hydrospace without Barriers" program—"Social adaptation and rehabilitation of people with disabilities through scuba diving."

On April 29, the delegation toured the Kremlin (with stops to get wheel-

Embassy of the Republic of Croatia and a meeting with Igor Pokaz, Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in the Russian Federation. Finally, the delegation got on their flight home to Ljubljana.

Barriers, the barriers...

There were stairs and steps everywhere in Russia—steps one does not notice until one starts thinking about disabilities, especially wheelchair users. The par divers

RIGHT: One of 45 windows around the lab through which observers can take photos and video





delegation was informed about this and prepared.

There were eight steps to the old entrance of the Moscow Hostel near metro station "Park Klytyri" where the delegation stayed (since the price was acceptable) and more at the entrance to the Hydro Lab pool, which was located on the third floor. There were ramps and lifts in underground passages; escalators in the subway; worn ancient steps on the entrance of the Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. The delegation had to overcome everything. However, they did manage to acquire the use of special buses with rising platforms provided by a partner—the Russian Union of Disabled Sports! In addition, the administration of the Bolshoi Theatre offered an "upgrade" of tickets to orchestra seats where wheelchairs were placed near the stage, right behind the orchestra.

Despite all obstacles, it was a chance to meet again with colleagues and friends, and added another link to the chain of international cooperation in paradiving.

The Star City event was organized by the Foundation supporting the Russian federal program "Dostypnaya Sreda" (Accessible Environment) (dsfond.ru) and the Russian Disabled Sports Association (Rssii) (sky-open.com). ■

Acknowledgements (in alphabetical order): Vladimir Ananyev, founder of the Foundation; Sergei Kovalev, excellent translator and expert on Moscow; Valery Nesmeyanov, head of the dive center SPACE DIVE; Nicholas Rybkin, head of the city district of Star City and specialist of the Department of Social Development District Administration; Valentine Stashevski, President of CRASA; and SUUNTO for support of the IAHD Adriatic delegation.



Divers from IAHD Adriatic pose for a group shot (top right) before exiting the Hydro Lab (above)

Diver poses with InVertum banner in Hydro Lab

Nancy Tilles



P O R T F O L I O



Nancy Tilles is an award-winning artist based in Florida who works in traditional oils, but captures on canvas a timeless vibrancy and immediacy in her underwater scenes, which highlight the diversity of marine life found on reefs but also their fragile nature. X-RAY MAG caught up with the artist to find out more about her work and artistic process, gaining insight into her experience of the underwater world.

Edited by Gunild Symes
Photos courtesy of Nancy Tilles

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your background and how you developed your artistic process.

NT: I have always identified myself as an artist. I grew up in New York and moved to Florida when my husband and I were married. In 1977, I received my Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Miami with a focus on printmaking. About 14 years ago, I began painting in oils. I love biology and had originally wanted to pursue a career in medical illustration. I suppose that is why my subject

matter is the natural world. My style has been described as "painterly realism" because brushstrokes are evident and my subject matter is represented realistically. Tropical South Florida has been my home for most of my life, and I have been greatly influenced by all the rich colors that surround me.

While working on underwater scenes, I realized that one painting seemed to continue to the next painting. I began pursuing this method deliberately, and I now have multiple series of connected paintings called diptychs and triptychs. Original paintings are sold together, as one unit. Signed and numbered giclees can also be purchased individually.

X-RAY MAG: What is your artistic mission or vision?

NT: My artistic mission is a journey and has been evolving over the years. Originally, I wanted to be a portrait artist. I wanted to create emotionally stirring representations of people. The more I painted, the more important color relationships became to me. I continued to devote myself to the individual and expanded to include sea life.

When I began painting underwater scenes, I would carefully render each creature. The personalities of the creatures were evident and influenced me to create visual stories,

Sea eEscape I and II Diptych by Nancy Tilles. Oil on canvas. Each panel is 48x36 inches (122x91.5cm)

PREVIOUS PAGE:
Fantastic Journey I, II and III Triptych, by Nancy Tilles. Oil on canvas. Each panel is 36x48 inches (91.5x122cm)



which became my diptychs and triptychs. Before completing any design, I critique my painting to make sure it is filled with vibrant light that can only be achieved with intense color relationships.

X-RAY MAG: What about the sea and its creatures inspires you?

NT: Another world exists under the sea. It is one of our most important resources. In addition to being beautiful and amazing, it provides our planet with its primary source of food. As an artist, I can help to keep the public aware of its wonder. At the very least, I can keep the conversation going.

I am so inspired by the colors. Sunlight through the water creates the most amazing

patterns of light on the reefs and the creatures who survive on them.

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your experience in the underwater world, scuba diving or snorkeling. How and why did you start diving/snorkeling?

NT: My first experience with snorkeling was

about 18 years ago in the Florida Keys. The reefs were pristine, and the water was clear and gorgeous. I remembered how beautiful it was but did not go back until 2005 when waterproof cases became available for digital cameras. My family and I began making multiple snorkeling trips to Key Largo every year after that.

Sea eEscape III and IV Diptych, by Nancy Tilles
Oil on canvas. Left canvas 36x30 inches (91.5x76cm); right canvas 48x36 inches (122x91.5cm)



Lion Fish
by Nancy Tilles
Oil on canvas
20x16 inches
(51x41cm)

Marlin Frenzy
by Nancy Tilles
Oil on canvas
48x48 inches
(122x122cm)

Leopard Shark and Jellyfish
by Nancy Tilles
Oil on canvas
20x16 inches
(51x41cm)



X-RAY MAG: *What are your favorite dive sites, underwater subjects, locations?*

NT: I have been fortunate enough to live only a few hours drive from the Florida Keys where some of the most beautiful snorkeling sites exist. I have also visited some of the islands in the Caribbean. That is the extent of my experience with underwater locations. However, we have hopes to visit many more places soon.

X-RAY MAG: *Tell us about your paintings... how are they made? Please describe what is unique about your method or concept. How do you compile your underwater scenes? What informs your art?*

NT: Inspiration for my paintings usually come from photographs that I have taken. I include all the primary and secondary colors in my palette, and I work to incorporate them in my painting so

that the colors are bright, pleasing and balanced. I am satisfied with my paintings only when the colors sing to me.

I use the Canon Powershot D10 underwater camera. I have had it several years, and it has always taken clear reliable shots.

Parrot fish, angelfish, seahorses, blue tang, yellow tail and many other colorful fish from the reefs fill my paintings. I have also painted deep sea creatures such as dolphin, marlin, mahi mahi and



sailfish. But my most loved paintings seem to be of turtles.

X-RAY MAG: How does your art relate to conservation or environmental issues facing our oceans and reefs?

NT: Since my first experience snorkeling, there has been an unfortunate decrease in the health of the Florida Key reefs. Under-

water parks, which were once bedazzling in color, have become grey with exposed rock. It seems to be a result of the rising temperature of the water, overuse of septic tanks and other reasons that are not completely understood.

There are many conservation efforts along the coast of the United States and their efforts seem to be having a positive effect on the turtle population. The Loggerhead

Marine Center is located just a few miles from me in Jupiter, Florida, and I have taken pictures of their rescue turtles from all different angles and used them as models in my paintings.

Living in South Florida, I have found that people are particularly fond of turtles, especially loggerheads. Turtles live almost 100 years. They are slow on land and fly through water. They are considered to be wise and

peaceful. With these traits they came to symbolize longevity, determination, wisdom and peace.

X-RAY MAG: Why art? Why is art important? What are the challenges and benefits of being an artist today?

NT: Art and design are everywhere. A good design eliminates confusion, brings beauty

Sea Food Chain I, II and III Triptych, by Nancy Tilles
Oil on canvas. Each panel is 36x48 inches (91.5x122cm)



and simplicity to our lives. Art inspires us in every way and encourages us to be inventive. Art can bring people to destinations and creates cultural excitement. For me, it is my own personal journey.

As a young person, I believed that I would never be able to earn a living making art, so I became a commercial artist to ensure that I would be paid. I could not imagine how I would be able to market my work. How

would people find me? When I finally began showing my work at art festivals, I realized that I was wrong. People crave art, and they are willing to pay for it.

Today, the Internet has enabled every artist to show and market their work in unique ways. Artists in one country can reach buyers in another country. It has made the world a smaller place.

X-RAY MAG: What's next? New? Upcoming?

NT: I am working on another triptych of colorful reef fish. This painting will be very decorative. I am contemplating a more abstract direction with a concentration on color.

I enjoy exhibiting my work at art festivals where I can meet people and exchange ideas. I have appeared in festivals through-

out Florida including Naples, Stuart, Jupiter, West Palm Beach, Delray Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Miami and the Florida Keys.

You can view my work at www.nancytilles.com, email me at nancy@nancytilles.com or come to South Florida and visit me in person at one of the upcoming art festivals. ■

Sail Fish Plunders Baitball I, II and III Triptych, by Nancy Tilles. Oil on canvas. Each panel is 36x48 inches (91.5x122cm)