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# UNDER THE SURFACE

離開表面的世界

Text : Hong Photo : Susanne Stemmer





Susanne Stemmer

Specialized in underwater photography, Susanne Stemmer is an international fashion and advertising photographer who has been working in the business since 2003. Susanne works for brands like Swarovski, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Audi, Jil Sander and additionally started a career in art two years ago. Her series UNDER WATER were exhibited in Paris and New York. Always on the move, Susanne lives between Paris and Vienna.

Susanne Stemmer 為一國際知名的時尚及廣告攝影師，自 2003 年起至今已有超過十年的專業拍攝經驗，專研水底攝影。Stemmer 曾和多個知名品牌合作，包括 Swarovski、Louis Vuitton、Chanel、Audi 以及 Jil Sander，並於兩年前開始發展其個人藝術事業。Stemmer 的作品系列《UNDER WATER》曾於巴黎及紐約展出。她旅居各地，現遊走於巴黎及維也納之間。

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P: Photographer is Art   S: Susanne Stemmer   攝: 攝影是藝術

Photographer Journey

P : From a diver to professional photographer, can you briefly tell us about your journey in Photography?

S : When I think back, I always wanted to be an artist and tell stories that take people with me into my dream worlds. I started diving when I was 20 in Australia, at the Barrier Reef - the most fantastic dream world you can imagine. The world under the surface would never let me go. One day, I proposed an underwater shoot to a fashion magazine that I was working for quite often. It was a bit risky as I didn't know much about shooting underwater. We made it work in the first shoot and the clients were happy. Since then, I found a new world and a new way of expressing myself.

攝影的旅程

攝: 可以分享一下你是如何從潛水員轉型成為專業攝影師嗎？

S : 我現在回想起來，發現自己從小就想當個藝術家，在訴說故事之時把人們帶進我的夢想國度去。我二十歲的時候開始潛水，那時在澳洲大堡礁，那是我看過最如夢似幻的美景。水底世界對我有難以言喻的魅力，讓我難離難捨。有一天我向跟我合作無間的時尚雜誌提議，拍攝一輯水底的作品。第一次正式拍攝便成功，客戶也十分滿意。自那次以後，我有如發現新世界一般，找到一個截然不同的自我表現手法。









## Under Water

**P** : What do you think is special about working underwater?

**S** : The magic is the weightlessness and the silence as you only hear yourself breathing, plus the slow motion and the floating. It is a different world.

**P** : What are the difficulties associated with shooting underwater and what recent obstacles have you encountered?

**S** : Now comes the reality, it is actually hard work for me and the team, especially for the models. We usually spend a lot of time (about 10 hours a day at a shoot) under water. We train the models to do the movements I want.

For example, the Belvedere Vodka Campaign, featured a girl standing on a swing, pretending to sway easily under water. It just does not work physically and it just would not look right. So, we trained her to get the exact position of a girl swinging on the surface and moved her hair so it would float exactly as we wanted.

## Behind the Scene

**P** : How would you usually plan and prepare for your shoot? How does the whole process work?

**S** : It depends on the shoot of course. We usually fill about two minibuses with equipment. We have a favorite diving pool, which belongs to a diving school, where we designed a special underwater construction that allows us to use

different backgrounds, light stands, and all kinds of stuff. When we do commercial shoots under water there are usually a lot of questions from the client, such as are the models going to look like dead bodies under water? How much can we control? I've been shooting under water for nearly 10 years now, and we have learned to control nearly everything: movements, air bubbles, how the fabric is floating and in which direction, etc. Shooting under water always has this special energy. During the days in and around the pool, the team and the client both grow together, in which it is a bit like a pool brotherhood and sisterhood.

**P** : Do the models require professional diving skills? How do you communicate with the model under the water?

**S** : We train our models. We spend at least two hours with them in the water beforehand, without the pressure of a camera. We do breathing trainings and show them the positions we want them to do at the shoot. We don't communicate under the water. That is really important for me: it is quiet and calm under the surface. I get to the surface if I have something to say.

**P** : Can you tell us about your essential photo gears?

**S** : I mostly work with special constructions. Having found out that lighting from above the surface does not really please me, and the existing

underwater flashes are of course made for sea life and fish photographers, I started to build my own lighting.

Love to work with a mixture of steady-lights and flashes to get the image blurred in some places and sharp where I find it is necessary. Yes, all my images are made with photo techniques and not with post production; that is really important for me.

We design the light formers and air bubble machines we need in-house and we construct all kinds of reflectors that work underwater. Together with our partner SEACAM we constructed a 15m long underwater USB 3 cable. I guess we are a little team of inventors because the gear I found on the market just wasn't 100% right for what I wanted.



## 水面之下

**攝** : 水底世界的魔力是？

**S** : 魔力來自那無重狀態、只能清楚聽到自己呼吸聲的徹底靜默、在水中時的載浮載沉，和那有如慢鏡頭一樣的視野。那是另一個世界。

**攝** : 在水底拍攝常遇到什麼困難？最近一次拍攝時的障礙是？

**S** : 對我和攝製團隊來說，水底拍攝可謂困難重重，特別是模特兒。每次拍攝都得花上很長時間（大概一天十小時左右）。我們會先給模特兒作特別訓練，學習在水底拍攝時的動作。有一次我們為 Belvedere 伏特加拍攝廣告，其中我們需要一個女孩在水底站在鞦韆上裝出輕盈搖曳的姿態。那個動作並不符合人體工學，不管怎樣調整，看起來就是不對勁。於是我們得重新訓練她學習好在水面上搖盪鞦韆時的精確姿勢，以及擺動頭髮時的動作，使之看起來如我們所願地在水底下漂浮起來。

## 鏡頭以外

**攝** : 你會如何規劃和準備每次拍攝工作？整個過程如何運作？

**S** : 準備功夫當然得取決於拍攝內容。通常我們會把兩輛小型巴士塞滿拍攝所需的器材。當

中有一個我們特別愛用的人造潛水缸，它來自一個潛水學校，在那裡我們搭建了一個佈景結構，可配合使用不同的背景、水底專用燈架等等。

當我們為商業項目進行水底攝影時，客戶們通常都有滿腦子疑問，諸如，模特兒看起來會像是漂浮水中的死屍嗎？你們能控制場面到什麼程度？

我已有近十年的水底拍攝經驗，差不多能把場面都掌握住，像是人的動作、氣泡、衣料浮動的方向等。水底拍攝經常讓我精力充沛。在水池邊工作的日子，創作團體跟客戶共同成長，真的有點像兄弟姊妹般的手足情誼。

**攝** : 模特兒需要專業的潛水技巧嗎？

**在水中拍攝時如何跟對方溝通？**

**S** : 我們會負責訓練的部分。拍攝前通常會花上最少兩小時讓模特兒在不受拍攝壓力的情況下適應水中環境，教導他們水中呼吸的方式，並向他們展示如何擺出我們心中屬意的姿勢。在水底下我們不作任何溝通，那裡必須是安然靜默的狀態，這點對我來說非常重要。如有話要說那就浮上水面去吧。

**攝** : 可以向我們展示你常用的攝影器材嗎？

**S** : 我通常在特別搭建的佈景內進行拍攝。水面上的燈光效果未如理想，而現有的水底閃燈是專門為海洋生態和魚類攝影而設，並不合用，於是我開始製造燈具。我喜愛將穩定光源和閃光燈混合使用，這樣能更輕易掌握畫面上清晰和模糊的影像構成。我的作品效果都是運用現場的攝影技巧而不是經後期製作所得，這一點對我尤其重要。我們的團隊負責設計所需的遮光罩及氣泡製造機，也親手製造各種可用於水底的反光板。我們曾跟合作伙伴 SEACAM 一起建造了一條長達十五米的水底 USB 3 數據線電纜。我們就像一個小小的發明家團隊，只因市面販售的器材總是跟我心中所想差之毫釐。





## Commercial and Art

**P** : How would you define yourself as a photographer? Fashion photographer? Portrait Photographer? Diver Photographer? Fine Art Photographer?

**S** : I definitely started as a dreamer and my aim was to get all the photo techniques necessary to express what I wanted to tell. Then, I slipped into fashion photography and liked it a lot. I still shoot fashion and advertising with great pleasure. I just love building a story around a brand. My newly found way definitely is art.

**P** : How would you differentiate between commercial work and personal art project?

**S** : Commercial work is about building a story around a brand. Most of the time I am involved from the beginning, doing the concept and designing visual language. I find this really interesting. My personal art projects are about me and my life, which is a bit more philosophical for sure.

## In the East

**P** : What is your impression of Hong Kong?

**S** : I've been there with a cruise ship that I worked on. That was a while ago in 1998 and 1999. I loved this pushy, lively, great city.

**P** : Have you ever thought about creating a photo series in Asia?

**S** : Every single corner in Asia invites me to dream and shoot. Until now, I have been travelling in Asia with a backpack, sometimes on motorbikes, and leaving the camera at home (I really need this time without a camera in my hand). However, it was really tempting to just rent a camera and some flashes and do a little story shoot in Asia, which is still in my headstory shoot in Asia, which is still in my head.



## 商業與藝術

**攝** : 你如何定義自己的攝影師身份？

是時尚攝影師、人像攝影師、深潛攝影師、藝術攝影師，還是畫廊藝術家？

**S** : 我剛開始時是名副其實的夢想家，一心只想掌握所有攝影技巧，好能隨心所欲地表達自我。然後我進入了時尚攝影的範疇，並深深愛上這份工作。我現在拍攝時尚或廣告作品時還是會感到心滿意足。我熱愛為品牌以影像建構其專屬故事。我最新發掘的創作模式必然是藝術。

**攝** : 你如何劃分商業作品和個人藝術創作？

**S** : 商業作品是為品牌創造及建立他們的故事。通常我會從頭參與其中，研發創作意念、設計視覺語言等，這些過程都非常有趣。至於個人藝術創作則是關於我和我的生活，那肯定含有更多哲學性的觀點。

## 東方印象

**攝** : 你對香港的印象是？

**S** : 我在遊輪工作時曾隨行到過香港。那是1998及1999年，已是好多年前的事了。我愛她的朝氣勃勃、生機處處，是很棒的城市呢！

**攝** : 有想過在亞洲進行攝影創作計劃嗎？

**S** : 亞洲每個地方都像在邀我到此一遊，來此盡情投入夢想和拍攝之中。直到現在我還是在當個背包客在亞洲各地穿梭，有時駕著機車，相機我則不會隨身攜帶著（我非常需要沒有相機在手的休息時光）。可是人在旅途上時，有時候會有衝動在當地租個相機、幾枝輕便的閃光燈，拍下亞洲的點滴片段。這個念頭還在我腦中縈繞未去。Ⓟ