

Swiss Masters in UW Photo 2025

by Fritz Liechti

From 10 to 13 September 2025, Switzerland, and in particular the Verzasca Valley in Ticino, became the stage for one of Europe's most exciting underwater photography events.

Ten of the world's best underwater photographers, including four world champions, competed in an exciting live competition for the best photo in four categories.

The Swiss Masters in UW Photo is structured as a competition modelled on the UW Photo World Championships. The images, taken by some of the world's most renowned underwater photographers, aim to showcase the unique beauty of the Verzasca and encourage viewers to rethink their attitude towards protecting the often heavily polluted waters in their own environment.

The photographers from various European countries and the USA have become ambassadors for river photography and environmental protection.

Who is behind it?

The organiser and director of the Swiss Masters in Underwater Photography is Fritz Liechti. Fritz, himself a multiple and successful participant in national and international underwater live photography competitions, has been a passionate diver, diving instructor and CMAS staff instructor in underwater photography for over 40 years.

The underwater photographers were Dr Alex Mustard (UK), Lisa Svensen (DEN), Jos Broere (NLD), Nuno Gonçalves (POR), Stella del Curto (SUI), Steven Miller (USA), Guglielmo Cicerchia (ITA), Damir Zurub (CRO), Peter Borsch (GER), Pedro Vasconcelos (POR). The jury was Harald Slauschek (AUT), Franco Banfi (SUI), Jean Rydberg (USA), Mirko Zanni (SUI), Tom Peter (SUI).

The first competition day started on Thursday at 9 a.m. with the first dive and the first rays of sunshine in the Verzasca. After a quick lunch, the second dive took



Wide Angle category Lisa Svensen (DEN)



Creative Nuno Gonçalves (POR)

place in the afternoon with a change of dive site. At 5.15 p.m., the photographers had to hand in their memory cards to the IT team. Any deletion or editing of the photos was prohibited and monitored.

On Friday, two more dives were carried out between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. At 3.15 p.m., the photographers had to submit four photos (one photo per category) to the IT team. Then the work of



Wide Angle with Model Guglielmo Cicerchia (ITA)

the five-member jury began.

The photographers went into the water with sealed camera equipment and had to take photos in the following categories: • Wide angle • Wide angle with model • Creative • And the special category “Watch”

After surfacing, any manipulation of the photo was prohibited. In short, pure photography without



any computer editing was required. In an age of countless image editing possibilities – including AI – the focus here is on the photographer. Above all, however, the focus was on the Verzasca.

The competition took place at the R.merbrücke and Misura diving sites under the watchful eye of numerous spectators and Ticino television station RSI.

Diving in the Verzasca

Diving in the Verzasca is very dangerous without detailed knowledge of the dive sites and the current water and weather conditions. Every year,

OVERALL WINNER – DR. ALEX MUSTARD

WIDE ANGLE



WIDE ANGLE WITH MODEL



CREATIVE



Fritz Liechi



Special category “Watch” Peter Borsch (GER)

there are fatal accidents involving swimmers or divers in the Verzasca.

As soon as the current is a little too strong, or the diver swims just a few metres out of the safe area, they can be swept away even at low water levels and become trapped under boulders. Local divers, the Gruppo Sub Verzasca water rescue, or the Hotel Posse in Lavertezzo can provide information on this.

We have all the time accidents with divers without knowledge of the dive sites and water conditions. When there is a thunderstorm up in the mountains the water level can go up in 30 min for up to 4 m. Absolutely deadly.

If enough sponsors can be found, the Swiss Masters in Underwater Photography will be repeated in 2027. Apparently, all the photographers want to come back, which speaks even more in favour of the event. Many thanks to all sponsors, helpers, the municipality of Lavertezzo, the Fondazione Verzasca and the Gruppo Sub Verzasca.

Fritz Lietchi

www.photo-swissmasters.ch

<https://youtu.be/2sSQ6sxoQyQ>