

Candice - a bold new talent

by Sarah Jackson

Amateur Photographer magazine



Shot in the Maldives for FHM magazine, f90 aquatica housing wide angle lens. Kodak E100SW film. "Timing is very important when shooting split level"

Candice (she never uses her surname) came into photography by a circuitous route. She used to work with horses in New Zealand and Australia, before setting off to backpack round the world. A qualified diver, she was inspired to take pictures after diving off Australia's beautiful Great Barrier Reef.

Once Candice was back in the UK, she decided to study for an HND in Photography at Plymouth College of Art & Design. Naturally, she chose the college's underwater photography option. At first Candice spent her time photographing more conventional subjects under the waves, but that soon changed – she explains, 'I got bored of photographing fish'. Instead, she decided to concentrate on people, choosing the unusual route of taking fashion shots underwater.



Her work was spotted by British Airways which commissioned her, while she was still a student, to do a shoot in the Red Sea for its in-flight magazine, High Life. Returning to the UK, she started to get other commissions

Shot in a studio pool in london, using hmi film lighting, E100SW Kodak film, Bronica Etrsi camera, held very carefully above the water whilst I was standing in the water, no splashing allowed!! For Saturday Times magazine



Shot on 160vc kodak film. Nikon f90 in aquatica housing, wide angle lens. Commissioned by Sunday Times magazine, shot in Cape Town South Africa



(Above) f90 aquatica housing, shot in studio pool in london, E100SW Kodak, using hmi film lighting. For Saturday Times magazine



Shot in Portugal, in an icy freezing pool, but beautifully clear water! f90 aquatica housing 20mm lens for Speedo and Harrods

(Below) Commissioned by a pharmaceutical company, shot using underwater tungsten lights and f90, aquatica housing, 160 vc, Kodak film in a pool in London



which led to more fashion shoots (some underwater, some not) in such places as India and the Maldives. She acquired an agent; yet she was still at college. Looking back, she says, 'It all happened very quickly.'

Since then her career has really taken off. Now a professional photographer based in south London, Candice reckons 30% of her work is carried out underwater, often fashion or beauty shoots for brands such as Sainsbury's, Alitalia and Harrods, or for magazines like FHM, Harpers & Queen and Elle. She also does lifestyle shots for picture libraries and magazines, portraits for private clients and weddings. Candice says, 'I love photographing people.' This element, and a wonderful informality, is common to all her shots, whatever the setting.

When you're shooting underwater it's vital to have back-up equipment and for that reason Candice has four Nikon F90 bodies, with lenses from fisheye and wideangle to 60mm and a macro lens. The camera is protected by Aquatica housing, designed for professional use. Film is Kodak, either print or transparency depending on the effect Candice wants to achieve, and she prints everything out using paper and ink from Epson, which sponsors her. Candice normally has one camera under the water, with a second in the hands of her assistant, who takes care of film loading, changing lenses and anything that has to be done above the surface. The other two bodies are kept in reserve.

She has travelled all over the world for underwater shoots, from chilly swimming pools in London to

exotic locations like the Seychelles. Where the shoots take place depends on several factors, including the time of year and the budget available. For the comfort of the models, the water can't be too cold (which rules out UK coastal waters) and for the best quality results on film, the water must be crystal clear.

An indoor shoot typically takes two days – one to set up and



one to shoot. Outdoors, if the shoot involves only natural light, it may take just a day. Candice says, 'Often I'm in the water all day. As I get older I'm getting colder!' It can be extremely tiring and, as she's underwater, concentration is vital at all times.

A shoot in or near water involves more people than the average shoot in dry surroundings, because of safety issues. Candice is always accompanied by a dive 'buddy' in case she should get into difficulties. If the shoot is in an indoor swimming pool or water tank, powerful, daylight-balanced lights (of the type used on film sets) are usually needed. Fitted with gels to change their colour, there are often as many as eight positioned around the pool, some directed on the models and some on the backdrop, according to the effect Candice is looking for. That means electricians need to be on hand and more assistants to check that the cables don't go anywhere near the water.

Underwater, Candice wears either a wetsuit or a semi-drysuit. She often shoots within 5m of the water surface, in which case she will either hold her breath or use snorkelling equipment. Sometimes, however, she goes down to 10m or 12m, necessitating a dive-support team and the wearing of full diving kit, including air tanks. Any further down and there would be a lot of light fall-off and colours would start



to lose their brilliance. All this kit doesn't come cheap, of course, but Candice is lucky enough to be sponsored by Scuba Pro, as well as by Epson.

Composition can be tricky as 'everything appears 30% closer underwater' and so the photographer has to compensate with the framing. I can't imagine peering through a viewfinder while wearing a snorkelling mask, but Candice has got used to it and doesn't find it much of a drawback. She normally sets the camera to autofocus – as long as the housing is clean, the lens won't be fooled by the glass directly in front of it. Communication with the models is done by hand signals.

As is normal on a fashion shoot, a stylist is often on hand to dress the models and there will be input from an art director about the look needed in the final shots. However, Candice is given quite a lot of freedom when it comes to actually taking the photographs. Apart from the fact that her style is known and trusted, she points out that you can't shoot Polaroids underwater, so there is no way for anyone to check what the shot will look like on film. When you're going halfway round the world, you can't afford to make mistakes that will not come to light until after the

entire film has been processed.

Underwater photography sometimes involves hairy close encounters. On one occasion photographing off the Seychelles, a shark came close by. Luckily it had plenty of fish to feed on so it wasn't interested in the delicacy of a female photographer. Worse was to come when Candice was again in the Seychelles for a different shoot. A hurricane had brought a sea snake close to the shore. The poisonous, 7ft-long creature gave her quite a fright before it swam away without harming anyone. But Candice was fascinated when she encountered a manta ray in the Maldives. It had a 6ft wingspan and nosed round the models before looking Candice straight in the eye and gliding off – an amazing sight. Underwater, it seems, you have to be ready for anything.

Candice's website is at:
www.candice.co.uk

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Candice's dive
equipment is supplied
by Oceanic
Tel. 01404 891819
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