

Sunday, October 25. 2009

2009.07.20: Nikolas' [unsubmitted] Contessa makeup artistry shoot

Two months before the shoot date Nikolas informed me that he had intentions of entering the 21st Contessa Awards in the makeup artistry category. I was pleased that he was aware of the time and effort required to pull together the models, materials, and time needed to do this shoot properly and that he was still interested in competing in spite already-established recognition for his work amongst my clients and in some parts of the industry in general. I never pass on an opportunity to work with Nikolas and we immediately started creating our list of models that we wanted to work with for this project. The list included many people that we have worked with before and we would have liked to have worked with them all but scheduling prevented us from having more than a single day of shooting. July 20th was our scheduled shoot day. The competition required a day look, a night look, and a look that could be whatever the makeup artist wanted to do. In the end, we didn't produce a night look from this shoot that we felt was strong enough for submission and while we had other options, Nikolas decided not to submit the photos for the competition and I supported his decision. We'd do better work next year and this time we'd have the ideas for the competition brewing in the backs of our minds until summer 2010. Still, I felt that we created some solid makeup-oriented images even though most shots were with very natural makeup. Furthermore, I felt that my yield from this shoot contained some of the best shots of Julie's face that I have ever shot.

Thanks again to our models Whitney Grace, Julie Gillespie, Alteira Evans, and Stephanie Calihoo, photographers Corey Thompson (Yellowjacket Photography) and Rob Lim (Rob & Lauren Photographers) and set designer/prop master Christina Ignacio-Deines (IDBohemia) for making this possible and also to all of the models who agreed to work with us but we were unable to shoot. We will work together sometime soon.

One of the first shots of the day at the shoot location. Nikolas is about to touch up Julie's makeup and Julie looking hot as usual.

Most people's favourite shot of Julie from the shoot. 135/2 Defocus Control Nikkor set to the "2R" setting for spherical aberration de-correction. Shot at F/2, nominal sensitivity of the D3 (ISO 200), and around 1/1000-1/2000s. Almost all shots with the Nikon D3 were shot with these settings and with this lens. Colour photos all untouched outside of Lightroom 2.x. I wanted to experiment a bit with some colour toning and most people seemed to like the "golden" cast that the deliberate white balance offsetting and slight split toning towards yellow for highlights combined with desaturation gave to the photo.

My favourite shot of Alteira from this set. White reflector held above camera and very close to subject to help balance the backlighting of the sun that provides the rimlighting for this photo.

One of Corey's photos and my favourite photo of Stephanie from this shoot. We only met Stephanie this day. She's one of Alteira's friends. Turns out Justin Poulsen knows her, too. Corey was shooting from a low angle through some grass with the D3 and the 70-200/2.8 VR while I was working Rob's Horseman LE.

An experimental shot using no reflector for fill. The ghosting and overall rendition of the 135/2 Defocus Control Nikkor is one of the reasons I still shoot small format digital SLR in spite of the availability of 35mm rangefinders, a digital medium format Rolleiflex system, and numerous large format cameras in my equipment collection.

Nikolas was checking the ground glass of the Horseman to ensure that the camera was seeing what he had envisioned when I told him to pose like he was using the camera. Please, someone shoot a shot like this of me one day or else I'm going to Photoshop my face onto Nikolas' body and it's going to be really weird. Zeiss Ikon, 35/2 Biogon, new Kodak TMax 400 @ 1600 in HC-110, dilution B.

Many more photos after the jump. Corey versus the wasps. I have no idea why he's wearing this reflective bikini-tard all day.

Corey on top of the abandoned house on the property that we were shooting on. The next time Corey returned to use the site he found that much of the house had collapsed. He also noted that the place had been vandalized with graffiti like "Jesus was here" and "666" along with empty beer cans and other litter around the area. I think that his climbing on top of the building contributed to its collapse. Corey insists that Jesus and the devil had a big, drunken brawl in the house, causing it to collapse.

From left, Whitney Grace, Christina Ignacio-Deines, and Corey Thompson. Whitney was one of our models but we were, unfortunately, unable to make her look work with our concept in spite of her incredible eyes. Christina helped harvest and place grass in some of Julie's shots and also helped hold reflectors and Corey assisted with many aspects of the shoot including being official shoot DJ with his iPhone and his mom's iPod amp/speaker system. Highly recommended!

Earlier in the day, Rob Lim carried the Horseman out to our shoot location. Later this day he decided to buy the camera off of me. I believe he is still very happy with the camera.

Rob familiarizing himself with the camera's controls.

A view of Alteira projected by the 210/5.6 Schneider Symmar-S on the Horseman's ground glass.

And a shot of Julie. Both ground glass shots have been rotated 180degrees.

Alteira (accidentally) shot at F/8.

And another accidental F/8 shot.

A more neutrally-coloured shot of Julie.

Hahah!

Cropped to reflect Contessa's 13x10 aspect ratio requirement.

Two of the girls waiting for their turns for Nikolas' attention.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 01:34

2009.06.26: [Getting lost during an] engagement shoot in the woods

The 2009 wedding shooting year wrapped up for Dong and I at the end of September. I'm still working through some colour and silver halide black and white film from the last few weddings and I came across some photos from Vivian's and Aaron's engagement shoot in the mossy forest introduced to me by Cody Tait and Mike Isaak. I started shooting with the Zeiss Ikon at first and then backtracked to pick up my Sinar X and subsequently got lost. Not just a little lost . . . so lost that I had to follow the noise to the high way and then find my way back in, eating up about half an hour of daylight. It was an interesting experience and we got our shots but I'm definitely not wearing sandals into a forest again.

I eventually found the couple and they were about to leave for a washroom break but they had written me a note: "We are going to the washroom and we have your camera."

This shot gives you a sense of the atmosphere in which the engagement photos were shot. The moss is several inches deep, there's very little direct sunlight entering the forest even when it isn't overcast, and the background consists of muted colours but with high contrast between sky, tree trunks, and moss. Shot on the Zeiss Ikon with the 35/2 Biogon ZM on Fuji Provia 100F push processed to ISO 400 by ABC Photocolour in Vancouver.

This 100% crop of the previous frame performed with the Nikon Coolscan 5000 gives you an idea of the grain structure. It's very well-managed and I find it aesthetically pleasing. I intend to try pushing this film to ISO 800 the next time I shoot it and I will try this with 4x5 sheets as well.

One of the frames shot on a sheet of Ilford HP5+ pushed to ISO 3200 in HC-110 dilution B. For weeks I have been trying to find film and developer combinations to produce film grain that I could resolve using the Microtek M1 scanner and this was the first frame in which I managed to do so. Now the majority of my large format black and white sheet film is push processed.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 01:10

Tuesday, October 20. 2009

2009.10.20: Uhhh, I think your hypo clearing agent went bad

This bottle of Hustler's hypo eliminator working solution was mixed a few months ago but seems to have expired prematurely. What's really funny is that after seeing this liquid come out, at first I told Ethan to just keep pouring it. Hahah. Solution dumped and a new batch mixed and everything seems to be okay, thankfully.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Film Processing at 14:57

Monday, October 12. 2009

2009.10.12: Other People's Shoots

One of my favourite parts of being a photographer is being on another photographer's set.

Prepping for one of Curtis Comeau's personal projects. Curtis' brother Trevor is beside me in this incriminating photo of me holding a Canon 1Ds Mark III. It's okay - I rinsed my hands off with gasoline afterwards.

Nikolas working on one of Curtis' models' makeup. Zeiss Ikon, 35/2 Biogon, Ilford HP5+ pushed to ISO 1600 in Kodak HC-110 dilution B.

Stephen Pilby switching from his usual role of supporting some of the world's top photographers and cinematographers with his innovative light shaping tools to doing some of the image capture himself. Stephen's on the right. He shot mostly 35mm HP5+ and some medium format XP2 on this day.

Christina Ignacio-Deines working with some notable Edmonton drag queens. While shooting with the D3 mostly Christina also managed to shoot several frames of Kodak Ektachrome EPP 4x5 sheet film and some of it turned out interestingly.

Christina working the Sinar X and the 210/5.6 Schneider Symmar-S shooting Binky.

Michael Shandro assisting with wardrobe while Nikolas works on Michael's subject's hair and makeup. Shot with the Contax G2 and Planar 35/2 on Fuji Pro Z rated at ISO 640.

Nikolas does some touch ups as Michael checks some of his images on the Canon 5D Mark II. Shot with the Zeiss Ikon and the Leica Elmarit 21/2.8 ASPH on Fuji Neopan 1600, pushed to ISO 3200 in Kodak Xtol, stock.

A poorly-exposed shot of Nikolas helping Sarah Chung hold up a California Sunbounce reflector at Michael shoots.

Not exactly on the set of the shoot but here we have Rico Moran unloading (or was it loading?) some 4x5 slide film in a dark bag. Ethan's in the background helping him out.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Personal at 20:45

2009.08.21: Mural Mosaic for Avenue Magazine

As one Avenue art director moves to Vancouver another is moved back from Vancouver to take his place. Curtis Comeau recommended me to Paige Weir during his meeting with her sometime back but we were all too busy to meet up until shooting had started for the October issue of the magazine. By the time we met, fortunately there was still a story to shoot. I was commissioned to shoot for a story about a company called Mural Mosaic based on an acreage north of St. Albert. The full story is available on Avenue's website. In spite of having to fight with clouds when using the Sinar X and the 75/4.5 for a formal group shot, the shoot went fairly quickly. Most of the shots were exposed with existing light. Ethan Oblak who is spending a University of Waterloo Engineering co-op term with me also snapped some photos, one of which was published. Paige was kind enough to credit him also in this issue.

This image appeared to be one of our art director's favourites, appearing twice in the magazine. It was certainly one of my favourites from the shoot and with this image and some of the other photos shot for this story I started noticing that a lot of my work is created from lower camera angles. This time, the Nikon D3 and 70-200/2.8 VR were use. I was lying on the grass for this shot.

One of the few shots created with anything more than existing light. Depicted here is Lewis Lavoie in one of his studios. The Bowens Explorer and a Quad X head drive a Chimera Pancake lantern to subtly kick up the shadow areas and balance some of the backlighting.

Paige requested some detail shots of some of the work being done and some artist tools. In the end, I believe that only one detail shot was used and Ethan shot it. Hahah.

Ethan's photo that was published. Shot with a Zeiss Ikon on a late pre-APO Aspherical Leica Summicron 90/2 on what I believe is Superia 400 film. Scanned with a Nikon Coolscan 5000 ED.

I happened to have brought two film range finder cameras with me. While Phil Alain and Paul Lavoie were setting up the area for a photo I snapped a few frames. A frame similar to this one was published. Shot with the Contax G2 and the Zeiss 35/2 Planar on Fuji Pro Z 800 film rated at ISO 640.

One of the photos that didn't make it to press.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 19:37

2009.05.05: Avenue Magazine Edmonton's Style Q&A with Sam Abouhassan

This day's shoot for Avenue magazine was my first shoot for an editorial publication. I met with Rob Machida and our subject, the renowned tailor Sam Abouhassan before shooting to look at his store and to discuss ideas for the shoot. Rob knew that we needed a photo for a double page spread and we were also shooting with the intent to generate a few options for the cover. Admittedly, nothing went as I had expected (including the issue for which we thought we'd be shooting) but after seeing the published piece I was pleased with the finished product and how Rob put the design of the pages together. Rob was there to do art direction and Nikolas Seyhatheb imaged Sam by helping to piece together some of his outfits after Sam had picked out the major items. Nikolas also handled hair and makeup allowing me to deliver the photos unedited save for a minor eye tweak and the removal of an electrical socket in one photo. Sean Traynor, Corey Thompson, and for a short time, Lillian Patz, were on set to help out with the photography end of shooting.

I brought along my Rollei 6008AF w/ Phase One back and Schneider Xenotar and also the 75/4.5 Calumet Caltar-N II and the 210/5.6 Schneider Symmar-S but all photos selected for publication were shot with the Nikon D3 and either the 24-70/2.8 AF-S Nikkor or the 135/2 Defocus Controll Nikkor. Shots with the 135 were done at ISO 1600 or above and still looked really clean.

Our last shot this day. Sam's tailoring room in the back of his main floor Commerce Place retail front had a lot of interesting artefacts including this wall of thread spools. Lighting was mixed with a longer shutter speed to allow some ambient fluorescent lighting to "contaminate" the purer daylight-balanced light two Bowens Esprit Gemini 500's. One used with the Chimera Pancake to fill in shadows and another with the Calumet Illuma Medium to key light and contour Sam and to help separate him from the wall.

Part of the first look that we did this day. I used my Bowens Explorer to drive two Quad X heads. One was used with a Chimera small strip and 40degree Lighttools Soft Egg Crate for separation light and the other with a Calumet Illuma Medium for key. Filled with a white reflector. I considered swapping the Illuma Medium for a Large but thought that too much light would spill into the background area. I wish we had more room to back up and light with but we were lighting from the entrance of the store and Sam and the mannequins were already as far from the back wall as we could get them. A photo from this set was chosen as the cover of the July/August issue of Avenue Edmonton.

Another simply lit shot with a single Bowens Esprit Gemini driving a Calumet Illuma Medium soft box with a Lighttools 40degree Soft Egg Crate to prevent spillage.

I was concerned that we didn't give Rob and Avenue a solid cover option so I discussed with Sam the possibility of a reshoot at a different location. Sam agreed and felt it was important that I had created a cover option so we booked some time to shoot at his home after business hours. We experimented with some of the locations in his gorgeous home on Saskatchewan Drive but finally settled on shooting in his mud room because I liked the light gradient cast against the wall leading to his basement. Light was enhanced with a Bowens Esprit Gemini monolight with a Calumet Illuma Medium and 40degree Soft Egg Crate to help spread the light around a wall facing our subject. The exposure time was pretty long even at ISO 1600 and F/2 so this shot was shot with camera mounted on the tripod.

Immediately after the first day of shooting I vented to Corey over supper with some of my frustrations from the first day of shooting. There were some judgement calls that I later realized that I should have made but failed to. I should have insisted on a different location and I should have recognized that the subject would be more comfortable shooting in a different location. I am glad that we were able to reshoot and will know better for next time. Shooting in Sam's home was so easy. The subject was fully relaxed and we weren't distracted by the high volume of pedestrian traffic crossing outside his store. Surprisingly a photo from the first day of shooting made it to the cover. To be completely honest I was a bit disappointed by the selection at first but after seeing the finished layout for the cover I was very impressed with

what Rob managed to pull off. This issue would be Rob's last with Avenue. Shortly after completing this issue of the magazine Rob relocated to Vancouver with his fiance. A huge thank you to Curtis Comeau for introducing me to Avenue. At time of blog posting, Curtis has referred me to two Avenue art directors. Curiously, as a photographer competing for the same market share, Curtis has done a better job promoting me than I have done for myself and I will always be grateful for that. =)

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 19:01