

ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since its beginning photography has been a means of expression and communication. At first though the camera was used mainly for photographing people and landscapes. The full impact of this discovery was not realised for many years and the early pioneers could not have imagined that their innocent discovery would lead to a multi-billion dollar industry today.

Commercial photography today is a huge business. Page through any magazine and you will see lots of photographs advertising goods from drinks and computer systems to cars. The author will be discussing the way in which the commercial photographer produces the photograph that will sell his clients's product.

2. ADVERTISING'S INCEPTION

The first phase of photography took off from 1839 and for the next ten years the emphasis fell on technical experimentation. Initially photographers seemed content with recording what was there, but after a while they started imitating the painting of the day.

Around 1850 a group of men trained as painters and illustrators made their appearance. Among this new breed of photographers were remarkable men like Charles Negre and Roger Fenton. Together they expanded the early limits of photography and developed a new kind of photographic vision. For the first time objects were moved, bent, changed and even broken. These were in fact the first "built-sets" and one could almost acknowledge these objects as being "advertised".

Only one photograph was usually printed from an exposure. This meant that only a few people at a time could view this photograph. Printing hundreds of copies for distribution was way too expensive.

This problem was solved in the 1880's with the introduction of the halftone process. It became possible to produce halftone prints with mass production making it available to thousands of people. Through this type of imagery advertising grew at a tremendous pace. It became clear to advocates of social change that while words worked photographs carried an emotional backup that was even more effective. This new outlook changed the course of photography for generations to come.

Through the years thousands and thousands of photographs have appeared in countless magazines proving that photography with its ability to produce pictures with wholly accurate proportions and precise representation of detail is ideally suited for the advertising of goods.

⑥ 3. STUDIO SET-UPS

Reality is not all it is cracked up to be. What looks good in real life does not necessarily look good on film and may not be practical to photograph. Assignments usually start off with deciding how to fake something and furthermore how to make it realistic to the camera. Sometimes shooting on location is better for achieving a certain realistic look. Travelling to these locations is sometimes too expensive. The studio is a great help in that it is the photographers own little universe where he is in total control. With enough artistic vision the studio can become a beach, a living room and even outer space. Another huge advantage is of course that in the studio one has control over the weather, rain or sunshine, day or night.

⑦ 3.1 BUILDING A SET

There are three steps involved in planning and building a photographic set. First you have to make sure of the art directors layout and make sure that the agencies expectations are within your budget.

Secondly the photographer visualises how the set will look in the studio and he works out how much space will be needed for the sets various elements. Finally, the camera crew, the graphic artist and the photographer himself helps to construct the set. It is important to construct the set with fine detail to make it very realistic. Take a look at the following example of a man looking into his bathroom medicine cabinet. The point of view is from behind the cabinet. A first idea would have been to get a medicine cabinet and to cut out the back of it, but this would be messy and expensive. It was decided to create the illusion of a cabinet instead. The glass shelves came from a glass store and they were mounted on shelf brackets attached to super clamps, which enabled the photographer to adjust the height of each shelf. The "cabinet door" was a sheet of plastic spray-painted blue and attached to another stand with super clamps.



FIGURE 1: SET UP



FIGURE 2: JACK REZNICKI

FINAL IMAGE

3.2 BACKDROPS

Photographers can hire backdrops of blue skies, clouds, a sunset, etc. or to save on the budget produce it themselves. In case of hiring a backdrop or tranny for backprojection, the copyright is owned by the painter just as a photograph's copyright belongs to the photographer. In this case the photographer pays for the rights to photograph the backdrop. Another option would be to create one's own backdrop. Because paper backdrops are so expensive and exposed to wear and tear it is better to invest in an extra wide roll of material. This roll of material can be painted, sprinkled and crumpled to give it a nice texture. These backdrops come in handy because they can be altered by moving the props or people closer or farther from it. The colours on the backdrop can also be enhanced or changed by using filters over the lights or camera lens.

⑨ 3.3 CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROPS

Choosing the right props for an advertising shoot is extremely important. Props have to have the right "look". When advertising a certain style of living it is important to choose the right furniture, car, jewellery, etc. For that extra feel of style the colour is also very important. Take for example the perfume ad on the next page. The brief asked for a "Mysteries of the East" theme and a warm feel. Because the bottle has a yellow tint the backdrop's colour used in the photograph enhances the "feel" of the perfume. The woman's red dress just gives the photograph a bit of colour to make it even more attractive. The fact that the background is also slightly out of focus adds to the mystery. This photograph would however have worked even better had the bottle of perfume been slightly bigger in comparison to the woman in the background.



FIGURE 3: THE AUTHOR
"MYSTERIES OF THE EAST"

Many times the availability of props is difficult due to the time of the year. Some fruits, vegetables and clothes are only available in winter and others only in summer. Making use of a model maker is one option and where the clothes are involved, one could ask friends of family for something to be used, kids fashions, sports clothes, etc.

Hiring a stylist is sometimes essential to pull together the right props. These stylists often have a better knowledge of where to find specific props, which stores will rent and of course, what exactly the art director wants for the specific shoot. Sometimes finding the right prop is a combined effort of the photographer and the stylist. This has an advantage in that the art director and the client can then choose what they feel will work best.

~~Take for instance the golfball ad on page 13: At first a dozen white golfballs and one yellow ball was used, but because the balls where shot in an egg basket sprayed blue it was felt that a stronger colour was needed. The only other type balls available had one white half and one pink half.~~

~~After some more searching a pink ball was finally obtained from a professional golfer. In the end it was worth looking for, because as one can see it almost looks as if the pink ball is radiating out its bright colour in contrast to the rest of the balls.~~

~~As one can see from this chapter communication is very important. It does not help if the photographer thinks he is using the right props and colours and the client disagrees in the end. Because this is so important the flow chart on page 14 shows the lines of communication between everyone involved in producing the final image.~~

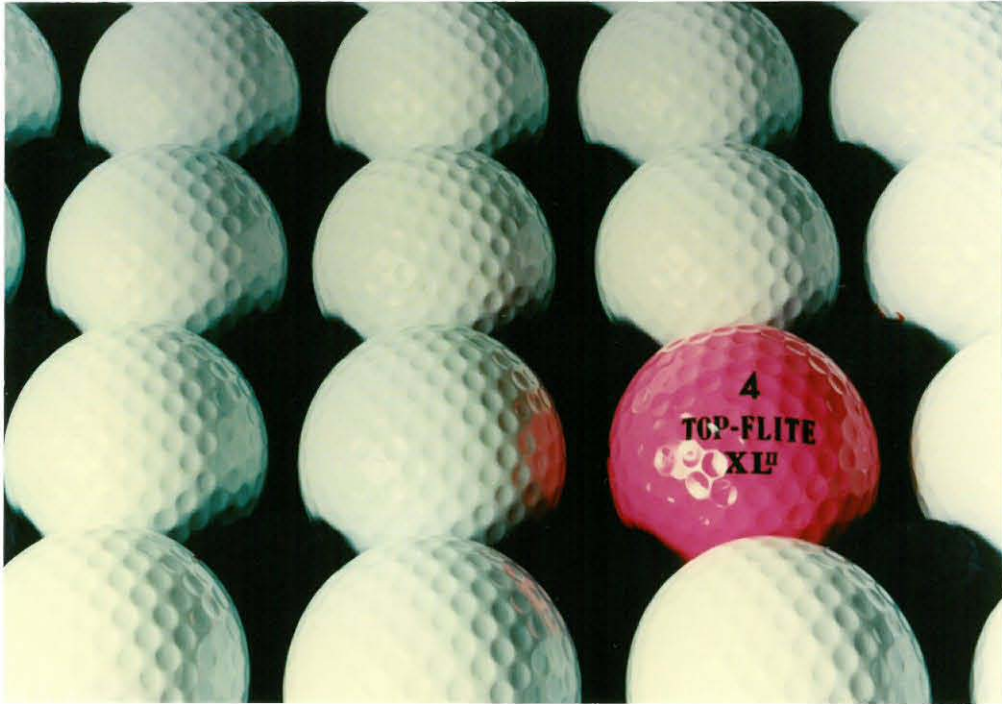
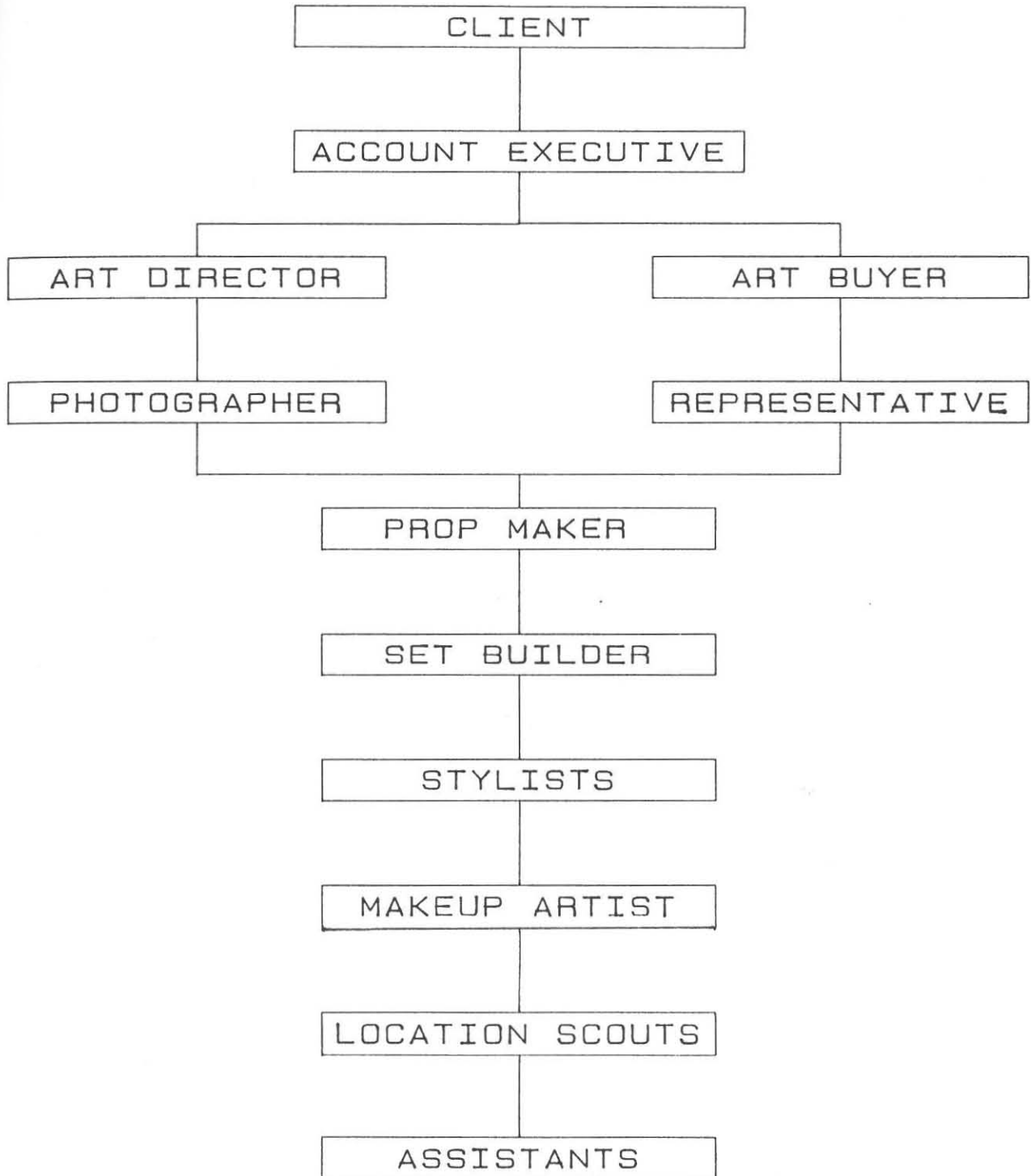


FIGURE 4: THE AUTHOR

GOLF BALL AD



4. EQUIPMENT

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4.1 CAMERAS

Although the 35 mm camera is used for some forms of advertising the larger format cameras are preferable for advertising. The medium and large format cameras have larger negatives that capture more quality and detail.

The medium format camera offers a sensible compromise between equipment mobility and final image quality. These cameras have professional features like interchangeable film backs and polaroid backs. These are very useful for either checking the lighting on an instant polaroid or for changing from colour to black and white and back during a shoot.

The best format for studio advertising is definitely the large format 4x5 and 8x10 cameras. These cameras are very expensive and they demand a slower more craft knowledgeable approach but they give superior quality.

The movable front and back standards of these cameras give excellent coverage that allows one to utilize comprehensive movements for still-life subject matter. You can shoot and process pictures individually and their size means that large prints and colour slides show unique detail and tonal qualities.

4.2 TRIPODS

Because the large format cameras are so heavy, stronger, more expensive tripods have to be used. There are a number of good tripods on the market like SLIK and MANFROTTO that have four sections that can extend from 64 cm to 198 cm. These tripods have strong geared elevator cranks that will hold the amount of extension needed. They also have very solid rubber footholds that will assure a steady stance whilst shooting.

4.3 ELECTRONIC FLASH

There are a number of good flash units on the market like BOWENS and ELINCHROM. These studio flashes gives one complete control to help create almost any effect desired.

For advertising a lot of extra lighting accessories are used like umbrellas, reflectors, diffusers, filters etc. These accessories help to reduce harsh light, shadows and highlights. It can also be used to create a certain mood or effect.

4.4 STANDS

In the studio it is very important to be able to manoeuvre the lights. To accomplish this, a number of stands are available for the studio flashlights. BOGEN super booms of 12 foot and more can extend a flash source over and above a big studio set up. For smaller arrangements like table-top advertising, floor stands and ceiling rails work very well.

4.5 FLASH METERS

The flash meter is one of the most important accessories in the studio. It must be very accurate and dependable day after day. The flash meter must be able to measure both strobe and ambient light. To work in conjunction with the flash meter is the colour meter for measuring colour temperature.

4.6 FILM TYPES

The film industry has come far since DAGUERRE'S process. Today the industry has unprecedented control over crystal formations, thin multi-layer coatings and the use of additives.

Advertising photographs are used for printed reproduction in magazines, on billboards, point of sale posters etc. For this colour slides are preferably used because they have great resolution, rich colours and superior detail.

5. LIGHTING

The elements of a good photograph are everywhere. Take for instance the subtlety of texture, the muted hues in a background, a sudden splash of colour, people's daily lives and the most fascinating one, the interplay of light and shadow.

Lights are the most valuable tool in the studio. Although every photographer uses his own style there are a few important lighting techniques that should set the right mood in order to capture the essence of the products and the people.

Most importantly, the key to using light successfully is the ability to balance rendering detail with a dramatic effect. The lighting should show the products features clearly whilst giving the image emotional impact.

5.1 THE WAYS OF LIGHTING: DAYLAY EGG SHOT

This photograph was on the cover of a brochure for the Daylay Egg Farm. The challenge here was to blend the two dimensional background and the three dimensional egg.

As one can see in Figure 5, on page 21, a single light source from the side was used. This gave texture to the background by skimming the raised pattern. The same light source gives shape to the egg by being brighter on the one side with light reflected back in on the other side. The light reflected off the white fill card slightly brightens the left side of the egg and leaves a shadowed area on the one side.

This smooth transition from one area to another enhances the feeling that this is a round object. The trick here was to get just enough reflected light back in to give a soft, but well defined shadow.

FIGURE 5: TIM GRONDIN
DAYLAY EGG FARM

5.2 FOLGERS COFFEE AD

For this shot the Art Director wanted an early morning effect, to fit the theme of the promotion. Although a bit more difficult to get the right mood than the previous ad it takes just a little bit of pre-planning to get the right lighting.

Knowing that an early morning effect was needed the photographer used a flash head with grid spot attachment and a warm gold gel to the right rear of the set. To get that morning-light-through-the-window look, an old window frame was used that gave some nice shadows. To make sure that it was quickly apparent that this wonderful coffee was FOLGERS, a flash head with a ten degree grid spot was placed at the left front of the set to illuminate the logo.

What made this fairly simple shot work in the end was the successful golden light that suggested early morning, the attractive look of the coffee and the readability of the FOLGERS logo.

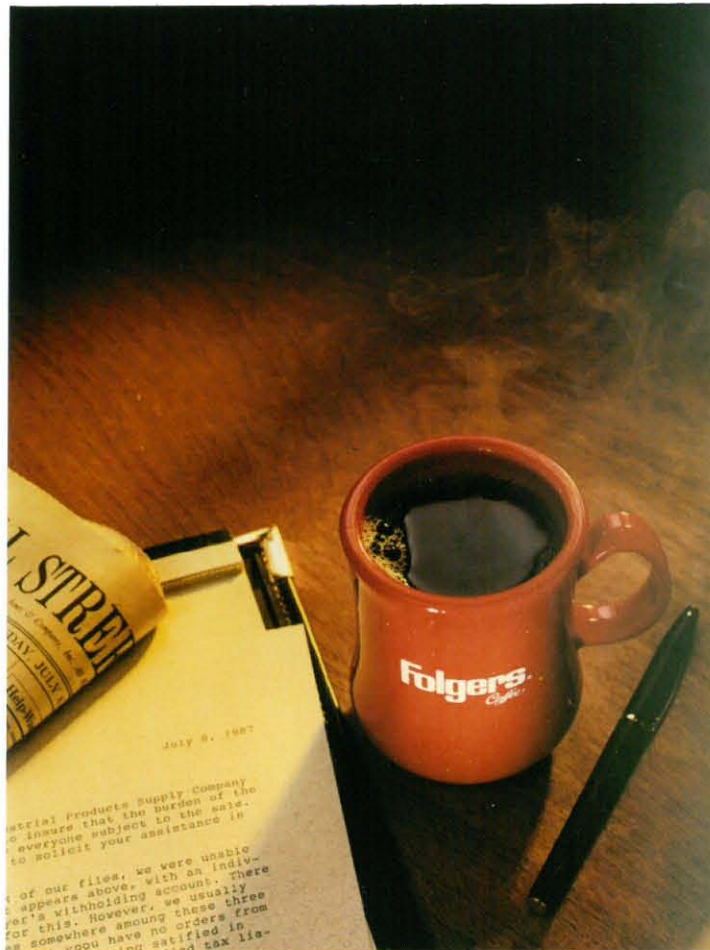


FIGURE 6: JOE BRAUN
FOLGERS COFFEE AD



5.3 BEER AD

A bottle of beer nestled in a bed of ice can be a compelling image. To translate that image from the mind to a photograph is the challenge. As often happens in advertising photography, all is not as it seems in this photograph. Ice would hardly last long enough for the photographer to focus the camera, let alone survive the heat of the light, and of course, the bottle would not stay cold enough to show condensation after sitting under the lights for a while.

Since the ice will quickly melt under the hot lights the bottle was placed in a pure white tray. The bottle was then correctly composed and the camera focused. Then the lights were placed, one at the front and the main light from behind and from the top.

The light placement gives the bottle a deep, rich brown colour. The label has to be lit so that it is very readable, but it should not be too bright.

To give the label good saturation and definition, a small diffusing screen was placed in front of the front flash light. A diffusing screen was also placed in front of the top light to make the highlight on the bottle broader, longer and softer. The ice was now added and to give it a "cooler" feel a blue gel was placed over the top light.

Finally the bottle was sprayed with water to act as condensation droplets. The light focused on the bottle gave each droplet a small, bright highlight. This gives the droplets and therefore the whole image, that bit of sparkle.

It is important to know how a photograph will be used. In this case the photograph had to communicate a cold, icy effect while keeping the label clearly readable.



FIGURE 7: TIM GRONDIN

BEER AD

6. ROLES OF ADVERTISING

6.1 MARKETING ROLE

Photography is the most visible element of a companies promotional programme. Big companies like Coca-Cola, Nashua, Ford, etc. spend millions of dollars each year promoting their products. Some countries even use advertising to improve public relations with other countries. Take for instance airline advertising from different countries promoting their flights and hearty invitations.

6.2 COMMUNICATION ROLE

All kinds of products advertised transmit different types of market information to match buyers and sellers in the marketplace. This type of photography transforms the product by creating an image that goes beyond straight forward facts. The aim: To get the market to notice the product.

6.3 ECONOMIC ROLE

Here advertising plays an important role in that it persuades the customer to buy a product. One interpretation of the economic role of advertising can be described as follows:

"Helping society to achieve abundance by informing and persuading members of society with respect to product, services and ideals".¹

6.4 SOCIAL ROLE

Advertising informs the consumer about new and improved products and teaches us how to use these innovations. It also helps us to compare products and make informed customer decisions.

1. Wilmhursstt, T. **THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ADVERTISING**, Oxford, Heinemann Professional Ltd, 1989.

7. THE AUTHOR AT WORK

7.1 JELLY TOTS AD

The interesting photograph of jelly tots on the next page was photographed with a 4x5 SINAR view camera. Soft even lighting was used to eliminate harsh shadows and to show the sugar covering each jelly tot. To liven up the colours of the jelly tots a light was placed underneath them. A 300 mm lens and long bellows extension was used to produce a macro-type photograph. This gives the jelly tots an abnormally big size and very tasty look.



FIGURE 8: THE AUTHOR

JELLY TOTS AD

7.2 PRO-KENNEX GRIPS

Also shot on a 4x5 camera using 100 asa Fuji slide film this symmetrical photograph demands closer attention. At first it looks like neatly placed rolls of material, but on taking a closer look one realises that they are actually sport equipment grips. The way they are placed and the brilliant colours make for an appealing photograph. (Figure 9)



FIGURE 9: THE AUTHOR
PRO-KENNEX GRIPS

7.3 SPEEDO SWIMMING GOGGLES

This shot looks simple enough, but if you don't have an underwater camera it makes it a lot more difficult. Firstly a glass tank was built with thin faultless glass. It had to be wide enough for the goggles to fit in but not too wide because then the refractive properties of the water would have distorted the goggles too much, the next problem was lighting. By using a blue backdrop the blue colours on the goggles almost disappeared. White was one solution but the colours looked desaturated. In the end a backlight and softbox 2/3 of a stop weaker than the two front lights were used. This gave nice see-through water and saturated colours on the goggles.

The last and probably the most difficult problem to overcome was to make the goggles drop into the water and to capture the impact and bubbles. Dropping the goggles at the right angle and expecting the logo to be in the correct position was asking a lot. Alternatively the goggles were placed at the right angle and water was dropped into the tank. Fortunately the second exposure produced the correct look. The final image gives a feeling of frozen action - "The goggles dropping into a swimming-pool."



FIGURE 10: THE AUTHOR
SPEEDO SWIMMING GOGGLES



FIGURE 11: THE AUTHOR
CHANDLERS BEER AD



FIGURE 12: THE AUTHOR

GUCCI SHOE AD



FIGURE 13: THE AUTHOR

RUSKS AD



FIGURE 14: THE AUTHOR
LIGHTS AD



FIGURE 15: THE AUTHOR
WOMAN'S FOOTWEAR



FIGURE 17: THE AUTHOR
PERFUME AD



FIGURE 18: THE AUTHOR

FOOD AD



FIGURE 19: THE AUTHOR

JUST JUICE AD



FIGURE 20: THE AUTHOR
JEWELLERY AD

8. CONCLUSION

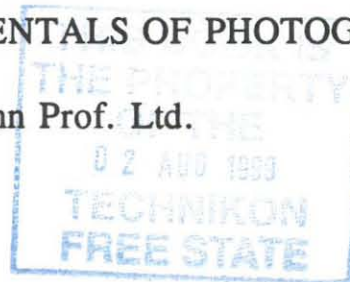
As a photographer I like advertising photography because it is a new challenge every time you have to produce a specific image for a client. You have to get the market to notice the clients's product.

I love using strong, vibrant colours for my advertising. When the client requests more subtle colours I make use of interesting textures or patterns. I like using shadows, wether it be harsh or soft and well defined. These shadows often help to create the right mood for the product being advertised.

For me advertising speaks of style, gesture and people; and it will serve as an important time reference for future generations.

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