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ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

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SUMMARY

In order to create a successful advertising image, being familiar with the environment and the equipment, as well as special skills in composing an image are of great importance.

This script deals with some of these aspects. The history and technological advances of advertising photography is mentioned. The studio design, basic studio set-up, advantages of the 4 x 5 inch camera and aspects of composition are explained. A discussion of the author's own work and her approach to advertising photography is also given in this script.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the commercial photographer is a complex one. For example, he/she must use imagination to transform ordinary subjects into arresting images. The photographer must create the picture in his mind into the viewfinder of the camera; and should operate with technical perfection; and above all, he must set dreams of aspiration to create the perfect image to sell as a success.

The advertising photographer must be totally in control of the image-making process, and the ideal is to create an idealistic fantasy into an image: a real image. The ability to create an imaginary world is a mark of a good creative photographer.

The reason for choosing to specialize in the photography of advertising, is that I like to work in the studio. This is just me and the camera, and this way I can create my own images. Playing around with the studio equipment, for example the studio lights, and using gels allows me to express myself.

Following this introduction, in the next chapter some aspects of the history of photography, and the technological progress of advertising photography through using the computer are discussed. Some aspects on shooting perfume bottles and beverages, composition importance and the author's own approach will also be covered.

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PHOTOGRAPHY UP UNTIL NOW

When photography started many years ago, no one would have imagined what it would be like in a few years' time. Today the computer rules just about everything, (Davies, Fennessy: 1994) even photography, and nearly every household uses some kind of computer technology. This chapter will give some idea of what photography was like then, and what it is like now.

2.1 SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

In the early years of photography in the studio, most of the photographers had a similar problem: how to get enough light into the studio to make an exposure (Langford, 1986). Many factors contributed to this problem, such as emulsions that were not sensitive enough to light to make a short exposure; and cameras were still very primitive, without the luxuries of aperture settings (Langford, 1986); and not able to use different lenses, etc, as we can today.

Many of these studios were situated on the building's top floor, with many of openings to make use of daylight indoors (Life Library of Photography, 1982). Poor weather also had an influence, for example when it was raining, or when a dark cloud cover prevented the sun from providing enough light to make an exposure. The accessibility of flashlights

were limited, and in most regions not available at all. Flashes that were available in the early days were nothing like the technology we know today. The flashes could only be used once, and today's flashes can take thousands of flashes before they need to be replaced.

These studios were basically portrait studios. The person to be photographed had to sit very still for approximately a half an hour. But they were always willing to do so, because there were few studios, and because photography was still in the developing period. The discovery of the more sensitive wet-plate, positive-negative system of photography in the 1850's simplified the lighting problem.

It was only years later as emulsions improved that shorter exposures were possible. Today's technology allows you to shoot in very subdued light making use of a film rated 3 000 ISO, shooting with an aperture of f5.6 and a shutter speed of 1/125 second, where in the same conditions in the early years one would have made an exposure of hours.

The character of professional studios began to change in the 1920's (Saunders, 1988). The uses of photographs in advertising were increasing, and it meant that studios began to cater for the needs of industrial firms and fashion houses. The portrait studios remained. Most of the big new studios adapted their operation to commercial clients. Some photographers concentrated on fashion or food, and some on creating imaginative illusions to promote various industries or products.

And so the major studios still remain today – specialized, technically sophisticated suppliers of images to commerce and industry.

2.2 TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography is moving very fast into the field of digital imaging. Especially if one is in the advertising or fashion world. The goal of digital photography has been to develop affordable capture, edit and display systems that will compete with the quality of traditional silver halide processes (Ray, 1994:67). Digital photography does not only compete with silver-based imaging, but it offers advantages that excel above traditional techniques.

Some of the advantages to photographers moving into this field are that they will no longer need to be exposed to poisonous chemicals. Neither will they have to make use of a darkroom to process their films: the computer will be the "darkroom". With modern technology the photographer can make use of a digital imaging camera or –back, fitted on the commonly used RB 67 or 4 x 5 inch camera. The image can simply be recorded onto a chip in the digital imaging camera and transferred to the computer, or the camera can be directly connected to the computer and the image will appear on the computer screen within a few seconds after the shutter has been released. This way the photographer can make adjustment on the set concerning the composition, lighting, etc. Thus the process of waiting for the film to be developed to see the final result is overcome and the results can immediately be viewed on the computer screen.

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Taking time into consideration, the client can wait to see the final result, and if he/she is not satisfied, the image captured can be enhanced or manipulated. Contrast, brightness and colour can also be modified. All this can be done while the client is waiting. The final image can then be printed out.

Another advantage of digital imaging is that the image can then be changed before it is printed out. Manipulation is done by making use of software programs which are loaded onto the computer. There are a variety of software programs available, such as Adobe PhotoShop, which is highly recommended by graphic designers.

The digital camera or back is not the only way images can be captured onto the computer. By scanning the image (whether a print, negative or transparency) via a scanner connected to the computer, the image can be transferred onto the computer screen (Davies, Fennessy, 1994). The images can be manipulated the same way as when a digital camera or –back is used.

The main disadvantage of digital photography is that it is very expensive to purchase the equipment all at once. But in the long term it is very cost efficient. There will be no need to use films, no developing and printing costs, or waiting for the final results.

Digital photography might be of great help to advertising photographers, fashion photographers, documentary photographers (sending their images minutes after it is taken

to the publishers via satellite), and graphic designers, but the traditional role of the photographer can never be replaced. The professional skills of a photographer is still needed in the studio, where skill is required in the lighting set-up and in the planning of the composition, and also on the sports field or in the townships when the shutter needs to be pressed at the decisive moment.

In the next chapter, the advertising studio and some advantages of using the 4" x 5" camera for advertising photography will be discussed.

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THE STUDIO

For the advertising photographer the studio is a very important place. All the necessary equipment must be accessible, and there must be enough space to work in. Some aspects of an advertising studio, as well as the advantages of the most important piece of equipment – the camera, will be discussed in this chapter.

The result of the oldest surviving daguerreotype, made by Louis Daguerre in 1837, is a still life with plaster cupids and a wine bottle, artfully arranged in a corner of the inventor's studio (Time-life Books, 1982:46). This studio only had the dim interior light, slow reaction of time, and was operated with one of the first cameras and plates. Inventor Samuel FB Morse was so enthralled that he declared this studio to be "Rembrandt perfected" (Time-life Books, 1982:46).

Space is needed to operate within, as well as, around the studio set-up. Camera movements must be easy to operate. And there must be enough space for storing equipment and supplies. These two functions are obviously best handled when they are located together. Good organization and skilful planning will make it very simple to set up the studio. The studio must be neat.

Figure 1:

The images provided by the author in the appendix were all done in a fully equipped studio. The results of making use of the following equipment in a studio can be seen in the illustration shown above.

A sinar 4 x 5 inch view camera mounted on a Manfrotto tripod and a 300mm lens was used. (A range of lenses varying from 75mm – 360mm can also be used as alternatives.) Available flash heads such as Elinchrom 2000, 3000 and 4000 connected to an Elinchrom studio power pack were used. The Elinchrom 4000 were placed underneath the infinity board (where the image is placed on), creating the white translucent effect. The Elinchrom 2000 were used for backlighting (a flash is placed behind the object to enhance the colour of the contents and to bring out the shape of the object to make it stand out against the backdrop) together with a reflector to reduce the highlights that accured, and the Elinchrom 3000 was placed in front of the object with a softbox, to enhance object's name. A broncolor digital flash meter was used to take the light-meter reading to give an exposure of 1/125s, with an aperture of f32. Compensation had to be taken in account because of the bellow extensions, give a final aperture setting of f16. Finally the highlights were removed digitally.

Additional flash meters can be used, for example the Calcu-flash S digital flash meter. Maximum depth of field can be achieved by a large aperture setting as well as making use of the *Scheimphlug principle**.

Additional lighting equipment like gels can be used to place in front of the flash heads to get a different feeling of the object. A manual torchlight can be used to do some painting with light.

Drawing an imaginary line from the object plane, lens plane and film plane so that they meet at an imaginary point, is a guide to achieve maximum depth of field (Langford, 1986:109).

ADVANTAGES OF THE 4" X 5" CAMERA

When it comes to having a choice of which/what camera to use, the larger format cameras is an excellent choice. Using the 4 x 5-inch camera makes a difference in quality of the final image, especially when using with advertising photography in comparison with smaller format cameras. Listed below are a few advantages (Langford, 1986:63) when using such a camera.

- It has a simple construction, consisting out of a lens plane, film plane, bellows, rails, and a tripod mount, which can easily be installed or removed.

- One has the ability of camera movements, which allows the photographer to set the camera exactly the way that is needed, for example when photographing a building, there is always the possibility that the building might look like it is falling over, and with these camera movements it can be corrected.

- It allows you to consider the composition and set-up very carefully, by looking through the large ground glass.

- It allows you the take and process of single images, so one can check on each result as one go along.

- The large format gives you good quality, which is excellent for photographing architecture, landscapes and still-lifes.

Some disadvantages of these view cameras (Langford, 1986:64), is little in comparison with the result that one gets. For example, it is very bulky to carry around, it takes time to take the light-meter reading, and it takes a while to set up.

Larger formats than the 4 x 5inch camera are also available, such as the 8 x 10inch camera. This format is commonly used by a lot of advertising agencies. The advantages and disadvantages is more or less the same as the 4 x 5inch camera, with the exceptional advantage of quality.

Personally, I think the composition of a final image is one of the most important aspects of advertising photography. In the next chapter, composition is discussed.

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COMPOSITION

Composition is the ability to show the subject/image in the strongest, constructive, and most effective way possible (Salomon, 1987). This is just as important as all the technical aspects of photography. Although each photographer has his/her own style, it is the photographer's "job" to create a perfect composition for the setup. Composition is a very skillful technique that one learns through practice.

This doesn't always mean that the composition is technically right, but that the subjects/elements in the picture is composed in such a way, that to the eye it looks right, and thus bring out the element to be photographed, or advertised. This means making use of line, pattern, shapes, tones and space, so that they relate together effectively (Langford, 1986:5).

Depth of field is an important aspect of advertising photography. It is important to know the subject; what is expected by the client; and the purpose of the shoot. Therefor it is necessary to be able to change the depth of field the way the photographer wants it, to bring out the subject. In some cases a larger depth of field is needed, to emphasize on the whole image and not on one subject only, and other images, or compositions only need a sharp view of the object.

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The concept of lighting has an influence in the depth of field, but it is not a problem. All one needs to do is change the power output of the flashlights, or move them around.

Advertising photography can at times be more effective without shadows. Too many shadow areas are more likely to be a disturbing factor in the image. Without shadows the image is presented as a clearer, sharper image. But there is no rule that says shadows are not allowed. Sometimes shadows are a perfect compositional device. The photographer must know what he/she is doing, and what is expected of him to do, and therefor make perfect use of the shadows.

Making use of the rule of thirds (Langford, 1986:142), as learnt through practicing photography, is a guideline to composition. This has an impact on all kinds of photography, and it leads the eye through the whole image that is presented.

Of course there is no rule of composition in photography. The photographer is free to express and compose as he likes to, but some compositional devices will help in perfecting an image.

The approach to advertising photography, some aspects on shooting beverages and fragrances, and the explanation on how the author went to work on preparing and shooting the photographs shown in this script will be handled in the next chapter.

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THE AUTHOR'S WORK

Every photographer has his/her own approach to photography, just as any artist, or even an architect, for example. But the aspect here is that each one develops their own style, in some way expressing themselves. The same way I like this kind of music, or I don't like that kind of food, some people will like my work, and some won't find my work attractive at all. These are risks every one of us take every day. I will now discuss how I approach my work in order to satisfy others and myself.

5.1 AUTHOR'S APPROACH TO ADVERTISING PHOTOGRAPHY

I like the emphasis of my work to be on the main subject. Mostly I do close-up work and concentrate on the bottle/container itself. I try to fit the whole subject into the frame, and this way the only necessary background will be included into the final frame. I also make sure to exclude any unnecessary space on the frame. To get more interesting colours, I sometimes make use of coloured gels, which I put over the flashes before I shoot. In advertising one is also expected to get maximum depth of field, so I make sure I use a lens with the right focal length. I also make use of reflectors to achieve correct and enough lighting for a large lens opening. Some elements I use to create interesting backgrounds, for example, is ice, metal, water, smoke, and glass.

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The author's approach to photographing advertising, is concentrating on the bottle or container itself. It is important taking notice of the colour of the contents and the shape of the container before photographing it. Lighting the name of the product is essential, whether it means from above, below, sides, back, or from the front. Composition is of great importance in showing the name of the product, and bringing out texture and colour of the product.

In some cases the name of the product is more important than the product itself. Through advertising it is the name that benefit most and not the contents itself.

All of my work is done in the studio. I make use of all kinds of lighting, to fit the image to be created, whether it is lighting from above, from beneath or from the side, or from behind. The type of film I made use of is Agfachrome RSX 100 professional film. All the images are on trannie. I like the impact the trannie has. The prints I made from the transparency by scanning it into the computer and then making a print out.

5.1.1 BEVERAGES

Most of these beverages have got more or less the same shape. I concentrate to emphasize the name of the brand. I take the colour into consideration and then decide what element would work best with the image, or what background would assist in the composition. One must be very careful and make sure no highlights (Hiemstra, 1996) is seen on the containers, or at least the highlights seen is not disturbing, for most of them are glass containers. The container as well as the liquid inside is important. To get the

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colour of the liquid the best I make use of back lighting. The final results must be presented in such a manner that whenever the buyer see the advertisement he must feel that he must have a taste of the beverage that is advertised right at that moment.

5.1.2 PERFUME

The word 'perfume' comes from the Latin words 'per', which means through, and 'fumes' which means smoke (Roets, 1994:1).

Ancient people burned fragrant resins, wood, etc. as incense to their religious ceremonies. (Roets, 1994:1). They enjoyed the pleasant smells from the smoke. Today, these pleasant smells are inseparable from the human being. These fragrances are used to make you feel special, and even more positive towards life.

As Robert Ricci's (son of Nina Ricci, famous fragrance house owner) philosophy to fragrances was: "Perfume must be a work of art."

Approaching the physical aspect of advertising these fragrances, it is whether to sell the product, or the name. For example, will the man who wears 'Cool Water' by Davidoff achieve the look of 'sensual virility and sportiness', if he uses this product (Roets, 1994: 30). In this case it is important that the customer will benefit from this product, not the name itself.

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In the case of photographing fragrances it must appear in such a way that it feels like you can smell the fragrance just by looking at the image. By making use of props this aspect can be enhanced.

Like with beverages, I concentrate on the container and the liquid inside, but making sure the brand name is correctly seen on the container. I made use of coloured gels, and the necessary lighting.

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CONCLUSION

Advertising should convince the viewer that the specific product is what they want or what they need. It is in the hand of you, the advertising photographer to create an image to sell the product that is photographed. Advertising photography and the product's appearance go hand in hand. They must compliment each other.

The goal of the advertising photographer is to create imaginative and attractive photographs, making the product look more appealing than it actually is. The photographs must full fill the client's needs. Therefor the photographer must be able to put other people's ideas into his own work, satisfying the need of others. Advertising is also based on quality. The better the quality, the better the appearance, and the better it will sell.

Just as important as the appearance of the final result is, the equipment used in creating the results play an even bigger role. It is essential to make use of powerful flashes and as large format camera as possible to achieve optimal quality.

Imagine the world without advertising!

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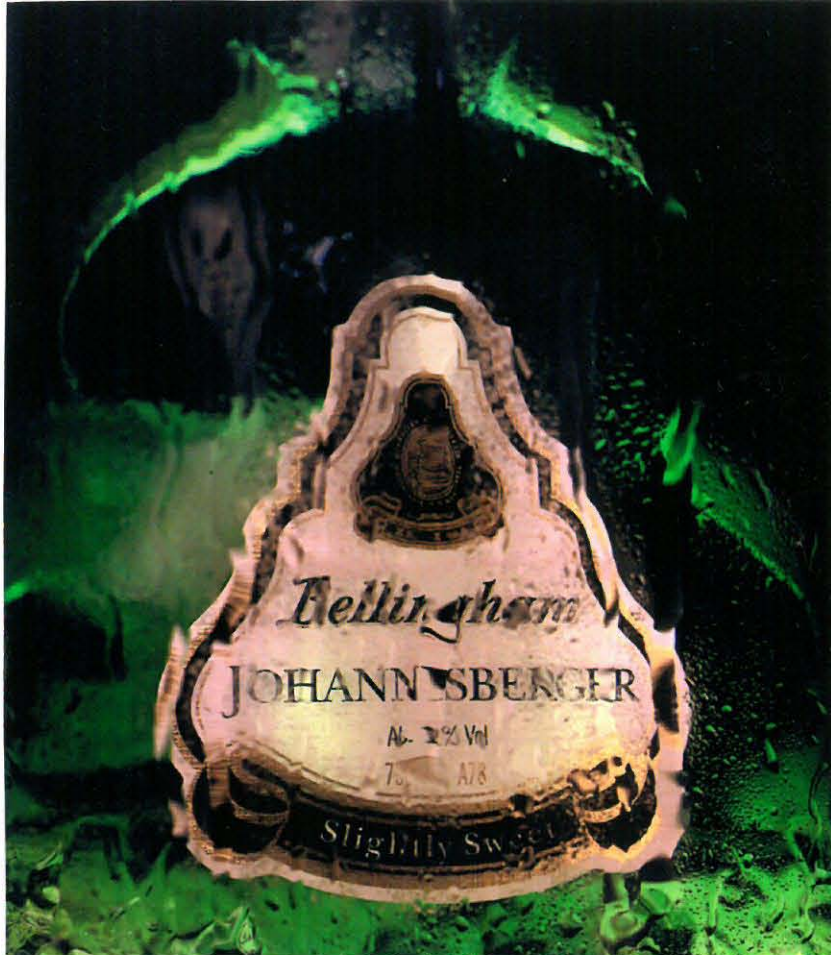
APPENDIX

Photograph 1: Absolut Vodka

A small double-tot bottle placed in a glass filled with water and fake ice was used to create this image. The pinkish colour was achieved by making use of red gels infront of the flash. A soft box with flash for front lighting and another flash for back lighting was used.

Exposure: 1/15s, f/16 (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 2: Bellingham

A piece of glass was placed infront of the bottle. The glass was sprayed with water.

Backlighting were used, and a soft box was placed infront to lighten the brand name.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

Photograph 3: Heineken

The three bottles were placed behind each other. The diagonal stripes of the backdrop finishes off the composition. The bottles were sprayed with water to give an icy effect. Backlighting with reflectors were used to enhance the colour of the liquid.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 4: Jack Daniel's

The glass with ice and water (mixed with colourant to give the correct colour) were placed next to the bottle. The black stripes of the backdrop were placed behind the subject. Backlighting was used to bring out the colour of the contents and front lighting for the brand name.

Exposure: f/16, /125s (Afgachrome 100)

Photograph 5: Lupini

The bottle was photographed from the top, making use of the shape of the bottle as well as the colour of the ingredients. Backlighting with reflectors were used to bring out the blue colour of the ingredients. A soft box were placed infront to see the brand name clearly.

Exposure: f/16, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

Photograph 6: Nachtmusic

The bottle was placed lying down. Leaves were placed around the bottle, enhancing the brown colour of the bottle and ingredients. Only lighting from above was used.

Exposure: f/16, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 7: Spiced Gold

Two similar bottles were used creating a flow of the brand name from the one to the other. A red gel was used to create a warm feeling. Backlighting was used to bring out the contents of the bottles and front lighting for the label.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

Photograph 8: Cherish

The bottle was placed on a steel grid. Red gels were used underneath the infinity board over the flash. Backlighting was used for enhancing the shape of the bottle and front lighting to bring out the fragrance name.

Exposure: **f/11, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)**

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Photograph 9: Fantasmè

In manner to bring out the rich colour of the bottle, lighting from below was used. Fake ice cubes were placed around the bottle to give it a strange but interesting feeling.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 10: Longing

Two bottles were used to give this repitition, creating an even flow through the image. A shallow depth of field was used. The backdrop is a piece of material, used to give colour to this image. Lighting from below is used to enhance the ingredients of this fragrance. Lighting from the front provided enough light to enhance the name of the fragrance.

Exposure: f/11, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 11: Unforgettable

The brand name is not visible on the container, therefor the box of the container was used so that the brand name is visible. The container had an interesting texture, and I made use of this to enhance the bottle. Backlighting was used with reflectors to give enough light for the brand name on the box.

Exposure: f/16, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

Photograph 12: Gillette

The container was put down in a tray. Water and soap was used to create the bubbles.

One flashlight was used to enhance the brand name, together with a reflector to reduce

highlights.

Exposure: f/16, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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Photograph 13: Innoxa

The transparency of these products contributes to the richness of the colours. Backlighting was used, enhancing these colours, and reflectors were used so that the brand name can be visible.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

Photograph 14: Speedo

The swimming goggles was placed in such a way to reflect the brand name on the swimming cap. Water was sprayed onto the goggles to give a fresh look. An additional swimsuit was added to finish the composition. Lighting from the front was used so that the brand name can be seen clearly.

Exposure: f/22, 1/125s (Agfachrome 100)

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