

WHAT PHOTOGRAPHY CAN DO!

DEVELOPING THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS ART

„All art is a gift. It is first of all a gift that the maker can do it. It is then a gift to someone else, whether they pay for it or not. The wonder of it is that we cannot get the production of these gifts stopped. Art is life seeking itself. It is our intractable expressions of love for the beauties, ideas and epiphanies we regularly find. I framed the painting. It's now hanging in our den. I have walked this earth for 30 years, and, out of gratitude, want to leave some souvenir.“ (Vincent Van Gogh)

Dear friends,

It's high time to write another newsletter sharing what's going on with my photography, and of course show some of my newest works. The main reason I started this newsletter was to inspire others and to show my development as a photographer. I find this very important; it provides a little bit of accountability, ensuring that I won't always remain in the same place, but constantly grow and learn. Art deserves that.

And I do spend a lot of time learning. I am always driven to challenge myself and the status quo. I am constantly seeking, and it is sometimes only after I discover something I realize what I was looking for.

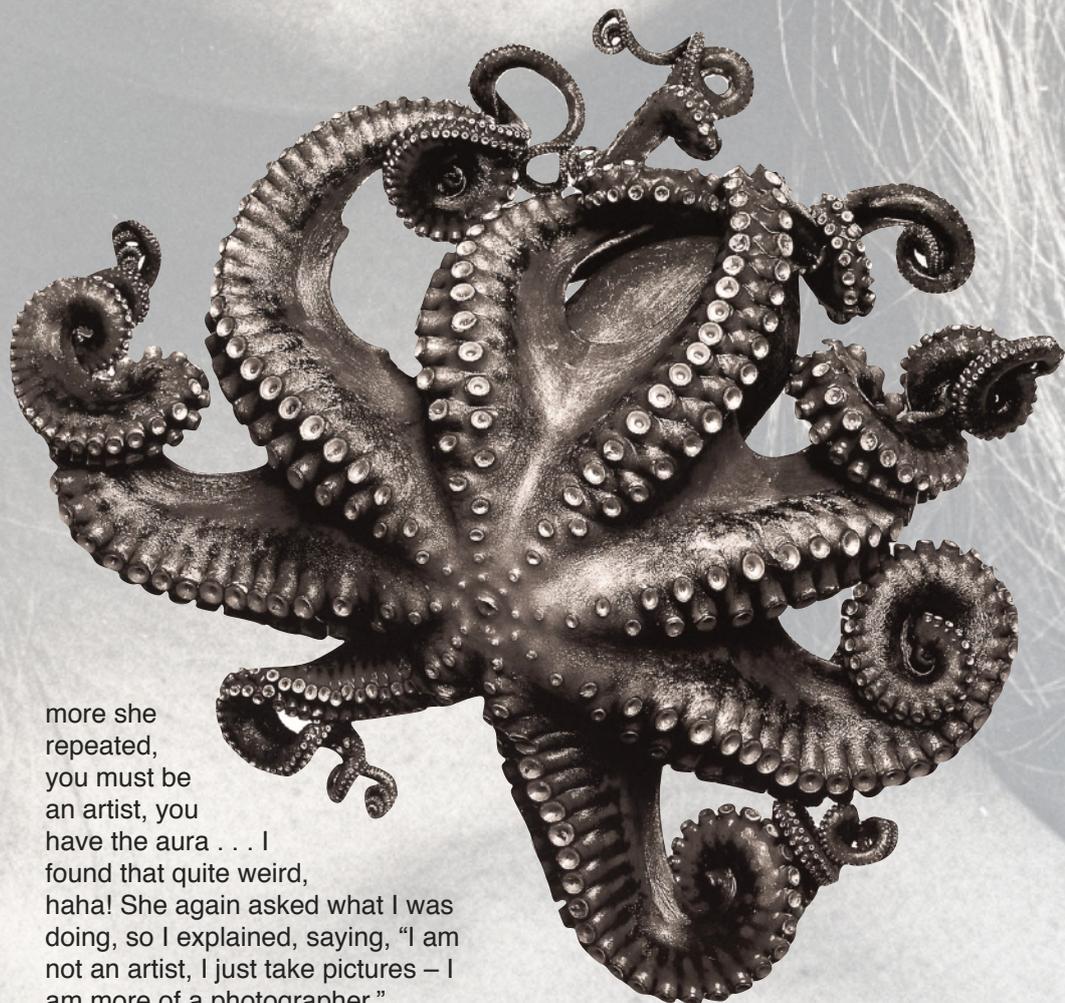
When I was in school in the 9th grade, my art teacher told me that I would be allowed to skip art class because I had absolutely no talent in the arts at all. That's exactly what he had told me. It's created a strange feeling the last few years, hearing people say to me that I am an artist. I remember very well my solo exhibition in Munich at the prestigious "Bernheimer Fine Old Masters" Gallery a few years back. At the opening of the exhibition an older lady approached me asking who I was. Before I could answer she said, "You must be an artist," and was asking if I was perhaps an actor . . . I denied it, and again before I could explain

more she repeated, you must be an artist, you have the aura . . . I found that quite weird, haha! She again asked what I was doing, so I explained, saying, "I am not an artist, I just take pictures – I am more of a photographer."

She stepped back a little bit and looked at me and asked what kind of pictures I take. I explained that I take pictures of people, and then it dawned on her that I was the photographer of the exhibition. She said with a loud and confident voice, "You are an artist." She continued, "I imagined the photographer of this exhibition very differently. I thought it would be more of an elfish person, but you are

not like an elf, you look very solid and grounded! But you are an artist and exactly this kind of artist was needed to create these pictures." Later on she bought one of my works.

Since then, I have been thinking a lot more about what an artist might be



*Octopus vulgaris
double layered Platinum/Iridium Print 56x76cm
limited edition of 5 +1AP*

„Don't only practice your art, but force your way into its secrets; art deserves that, for it and knowledge can raise man to the Divine.“ (Ludwig van Beethoven)

and how to become one, and to this day I get a weird feeling when people tell me I am an artist. I realized that I needed to find out what an artist is, as strange as that might sound. I started studying art books, went to museums, met other artists and was introduced by a friend to the work of Amedeo Modigliani. My friend and I watched the movie about him together, went to different museums in Paris looking at his artwork, and stood at his grave at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. He was not a normal person and lived in his own world, and because of who he was he was able to create amazing art. His life and being was mirrored in his paintings.

This discovery fascinated me. I kept searching, learning, studying . . . I started looking at other artists like Egon Schiele, Michelangelo, Vincent Van Gogh, Rembrandt... and with every new artist I studied I understood more and more who I was, why I was struggling with certain things and why I simply often feel that I don't fit into this world.

I realized the music of Freddy Mercury was a reflection of who he was. I also realized how much he was searching for something meaningful: love and to be loved. Music was his language and he had the deep desire to speak that language well. Listening to his "Bohemian Rhapsody" gives you a glimpse of who he was.

I also looked closely at the paintings of Modigliani in Paris and Vienna (and they are amazing), and last year one of his paintings was auctioned for 158 million dollars. Looking at the painting that shows his love and muse, "Jeanne," you can feel his emotions and his fascination for her. That's why his work is so remarkable and meaningful, people can feel something. His paintings continue to reflect him even today. And so no matter which artist I studied, I found the same understanding and the same "energy" in their work. I find that in Irving Penn, Richard Avedon and many others.

If I try to sum it up somehow, after studying each of these great artists even just a little bit, I come to this conclusion: Because they had outstanding lives, because they did not fit into the common mold and because they followed something they believed in, they created outstanding art. They were consumed by their art, they were all searching, and they were not distant and cold but willing to be hurt, and thus they were able to create emotions in their art. They expressed their true feelings, and that's what people feel when they look at their work.

Studying all of those artists really made me ponder my own photography. I looked again at my pictures, closely examining why I take pictures and what I want to happen to the viewer looking at them.

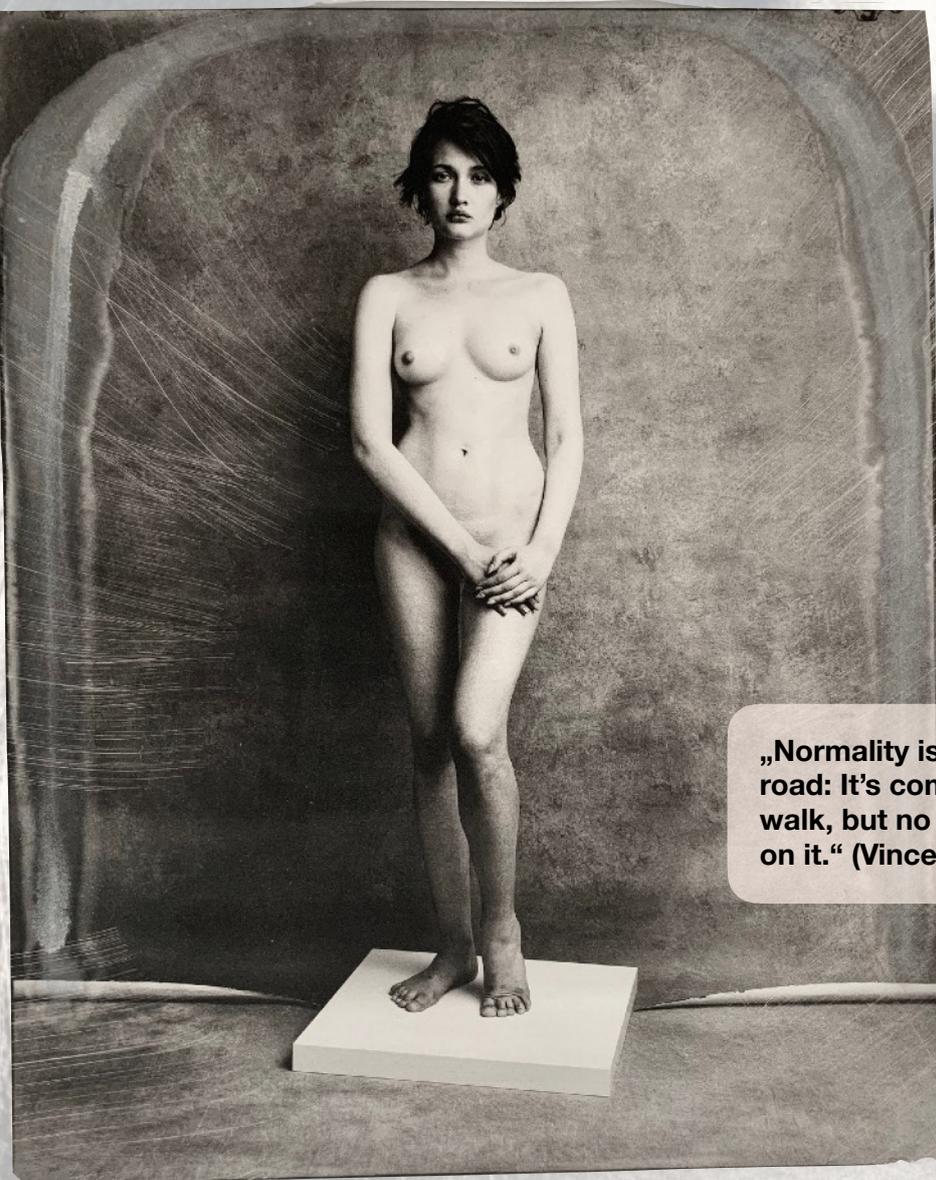
I started asking the question, why do people even take pictures? And I started looking at several Instagram profiles, which over time have become collections and portfolios. You post what you really like and what you hope others will like, and give positive recognition with a little heart.



*Olesya S. IV, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series,
Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP +1MP*



*Olesya S. V, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series,
Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP +1MP*



Olesya S.III, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP +1MP

„Normality is a paved road: It's comfortable to walk, but no flowers grow on it.“ (Vincent Van Gogh)

I think this is absolutely profound: Only when it is true can you feel something! You can not try to create emotions with your art if you don't have them! It's like giving someone a gift that's nicely rapped but empty. That's what Kitsch tries to do, express fake emotions, whose purpose is to deceive the consumer into thinking they feel something deep and sincere. Kitsch is closely related to sentimental art... Kitsch offers instantaneous emotional gratification without intellectual effort... (Wikipedia).

Now it began to make sense to me. That is what I saw in the lives of Freddy Mercury, Modigliani, Egon Schiele, August Rodin, Renoir, Picasso, Gauguin, Klimt, Van Gogh... they expressed their true feelings and were driven by them. They lived in their own universe with their own rules and were misfits in the systems. They were driven by their heart and not by their mind. What we see in them are outstanding lives – not the longest lives for sure, as some of them died very young, but no question outstanding and extraordinary. It seems to me that normal people will take normal pictures, extraordinary people, will take extraordinary pictures.

I was doing that in order to find out how I wanted to continue with my photography, not to judge anyone else's work. To me there seemed so much of what I feel is meaningless "Kitsch," like a collection of beautiful models, or like trophies on a shelf. I found over and over the same faces captured by different photographers. The more I looked at it all, the more I felt the urge to not be part of this mindless race, simply producing more and more pictures of beautiful girls, and instead I wanted to focus on going much, much deeper. I want to use photography as a language and say something about the subject, and I want to express myself. I want my photography to be like a view out of the window, and at the same time to be a reflection in the mirror of myself. I want to express deep feelings like fascination, affection, love, pain, hurt and hope.

I have a very good friend from Russia, an outstanding artist and actor at the Bolshoi theatre, from whom I learned something profound. One day she told me over the phone: "... if it is not true, I can not feel anything... **only when it is true I can feel love, otherwise I can only feel sadness.**" Wow, this statement made me think, and when we met a few weeks later and she helped me understand what she meant on a deeper level.



Maya B. VI, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP +1MP



Polina S, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP + 1MP

Classical Portraiture Workshop

What I have learned and what I am doing are things I always want to pass on to others. This is why I am so passionate about workshops. I am so amazed at what photography can do and I want to help others discover the power of it. I am not so interested in helping others get a little bit better at what they are already doing, but much more to change their photography and their approach to taking pictures.

My next one is "The Classical B&W Portraiture Workshop" from August 30th to September 1st in Nuremberg, Germany. In addition to taking pictures of two amazing model friends of mine, we will talk a lot about the subjects mentioned in this newsletter.

It will be an intensive time of learning and growing, and I might again over-challenge the participants, like I usually hear after a workshop. Space is limited to 7 photographers and as of right now only two spots are still open.

More information about the workshop is found on my website, www.jan-schlegel.com/workshops.

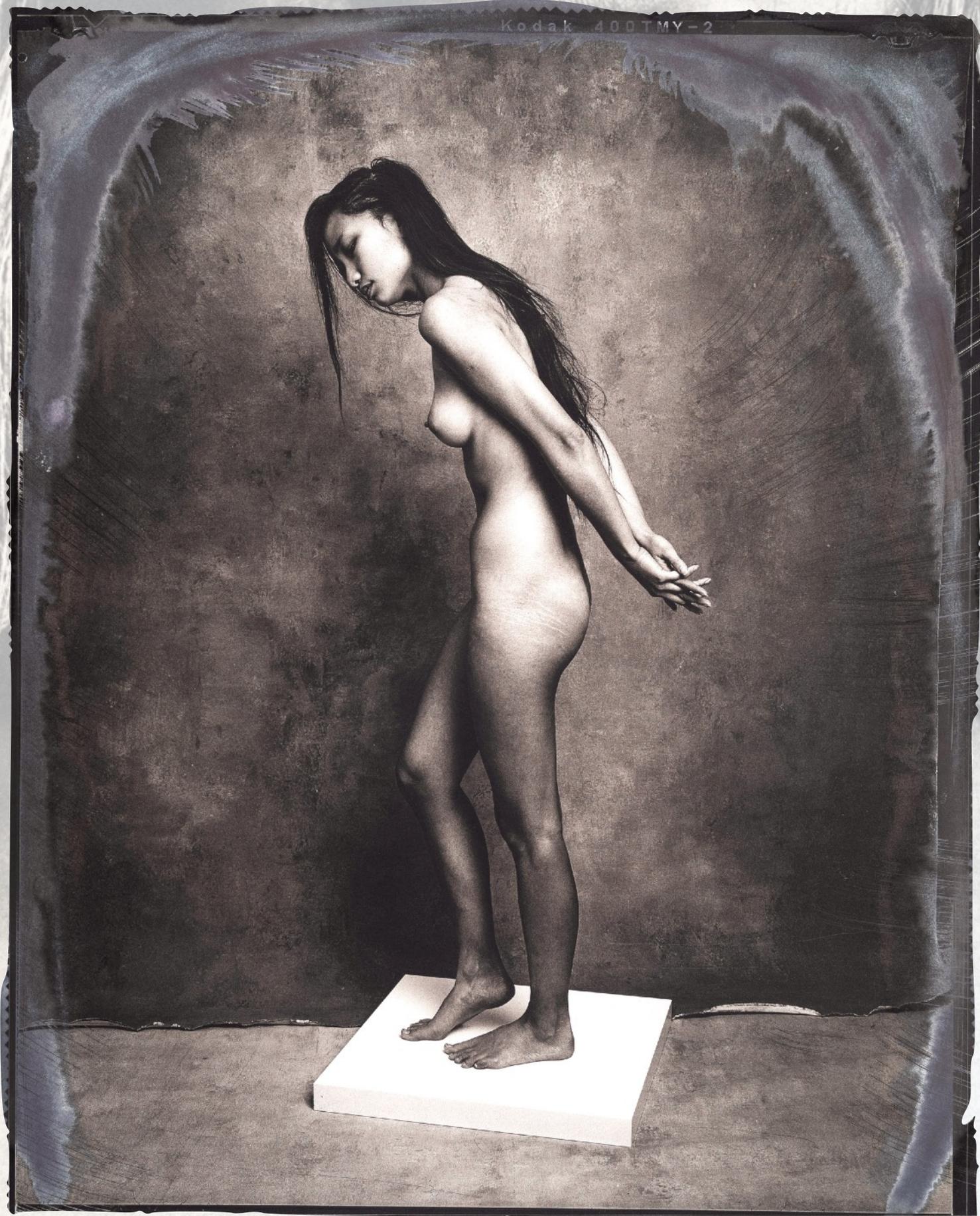


Polina P, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP + 1MP



Polina P, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 +1AP + 1MP

„A mediocre man copying nature will never produce a work of art, because he really looks without seeing, and though he may have noted each detail minutely, the result will be flat and without character... the artist on the contrary, sees; that is to say, his eye, grafted on his heart, reads deeply into the bosom of nature.“ (Auguste Rodin)



Kim S. IV, Muses - Homage to Auguste Rodin series, Platinum/Iridium/Rhodium/Gold Print. Edition of 5 + 1AP +1MP

This discovery changed everything for me, and explained a lot about who I am and who I want to be. I have no desire to be another collector of beautiful girls... and to be frank, it's easy to take pictures of beautiful girls. I want something deeper, something more sincere and more meaningful. I want to find my "Bohemian Rhapsody," I want to be able to say, like Modigliani, "I paint your eyes when I know your soul," and I want the people who look at my work to feel the same affection or love that I felt when I was taking the picture. I think photography is a powerful language, it's a language everybody somehow speaks or can relate to. But, like August Rodin in 1908 said: "*I believe that photography can create great works of art, but hitherto it has been extraordinarily bourgeois and babbling.*"

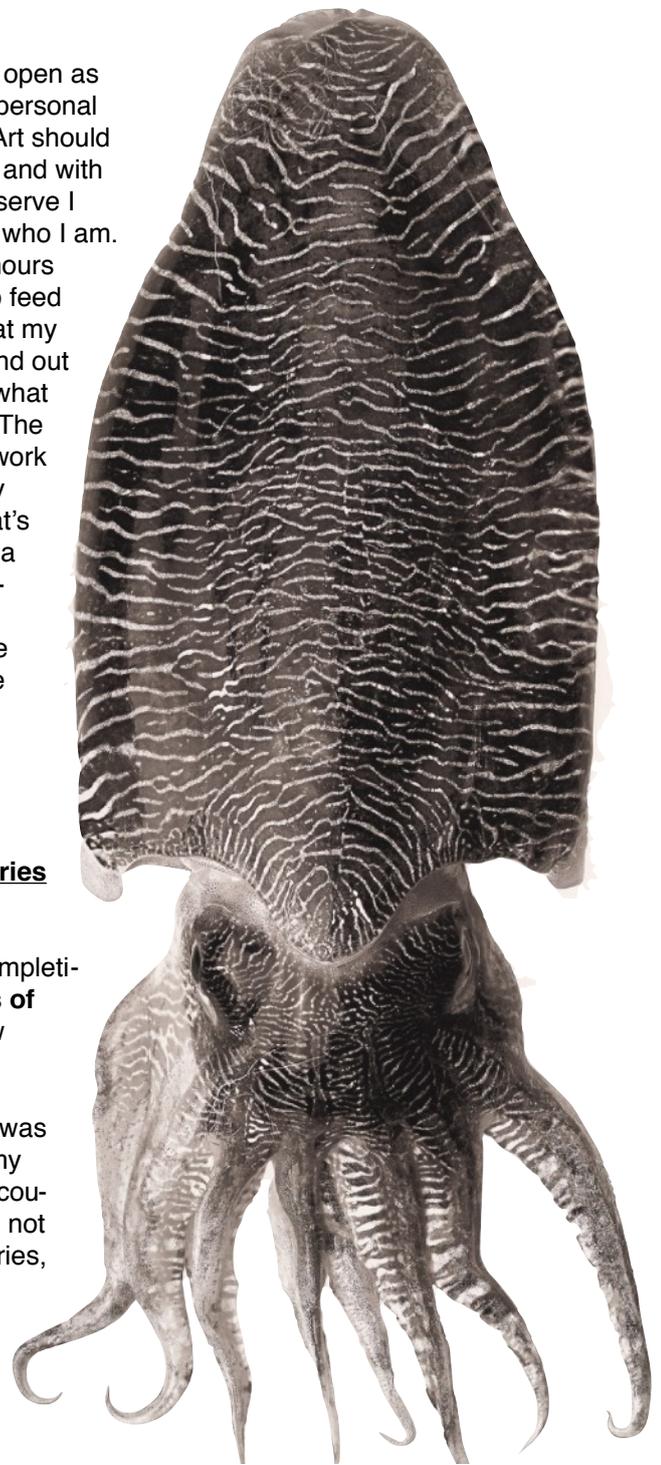
I am not sure how it will work out, practically speaking, but I want to work on a new series about one person showing beauty, emotion – an exhibition that is like looking through a window at someone, and at the same time you see a little reflection of the photographer's intentions. Different styles of photography would be shown, and every picture would tell a story and express feeling. An exhibition that would show in a new way what beauty is. I think photography can do this. I think the key is that the pictures must be true... and that's the most difficult part.

I am always trying to be as open as possible when sharing my personal journey with photography. Art should always be a self discovery, and with every picture I take and observe I understand a little bit more who I am. This is why I spend many hours looking at my work... not to feed my pride, thinking how great my pictures are, but trying to find out why I took the picture and what I want to show or express. The most critical person of my work is myself. I am never happy with my work... well no, that's not completely true, I have a few pictures in my "Muses - homage to Rodin" series in which I feel power, because they are true and show true intentions. They can move me to tears and whoever I show them to is moved as well.

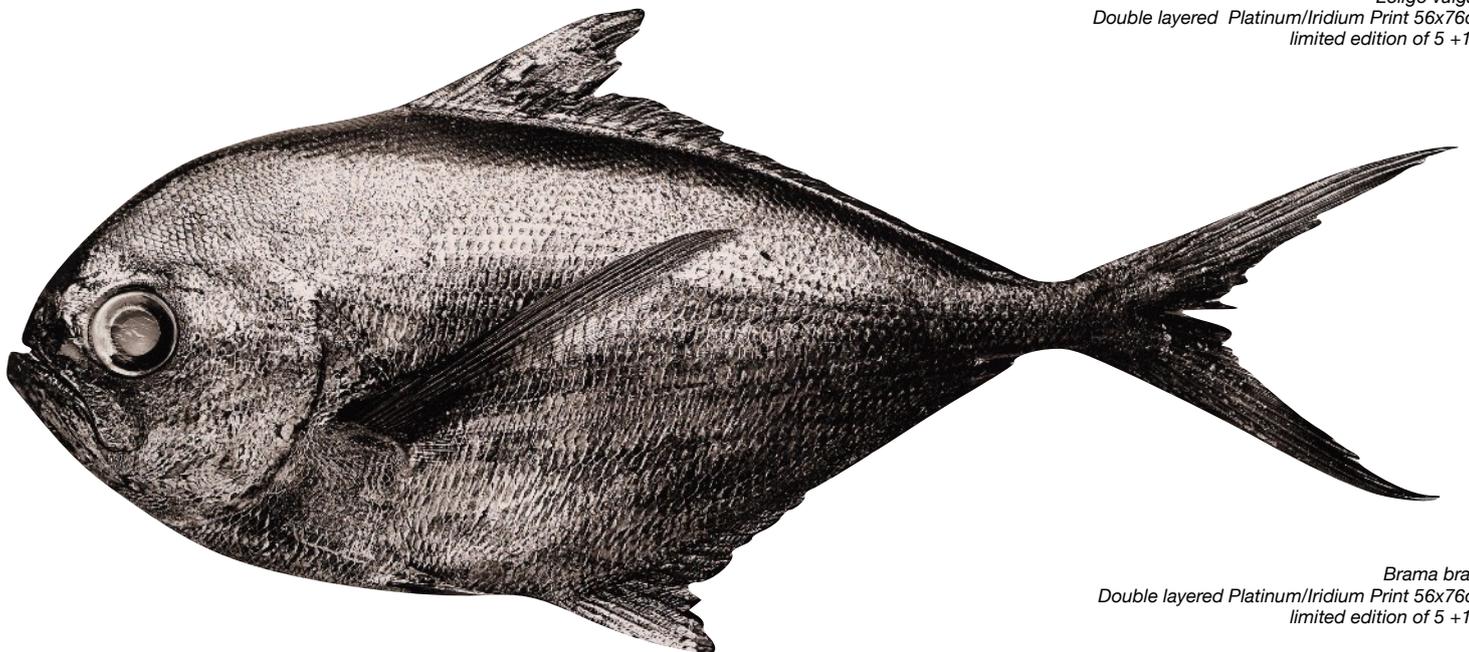
So, about my different series and current projects:

I am very excited by the completion of my series "**Creatures of the Seven Seas**" just a few weeks ago.

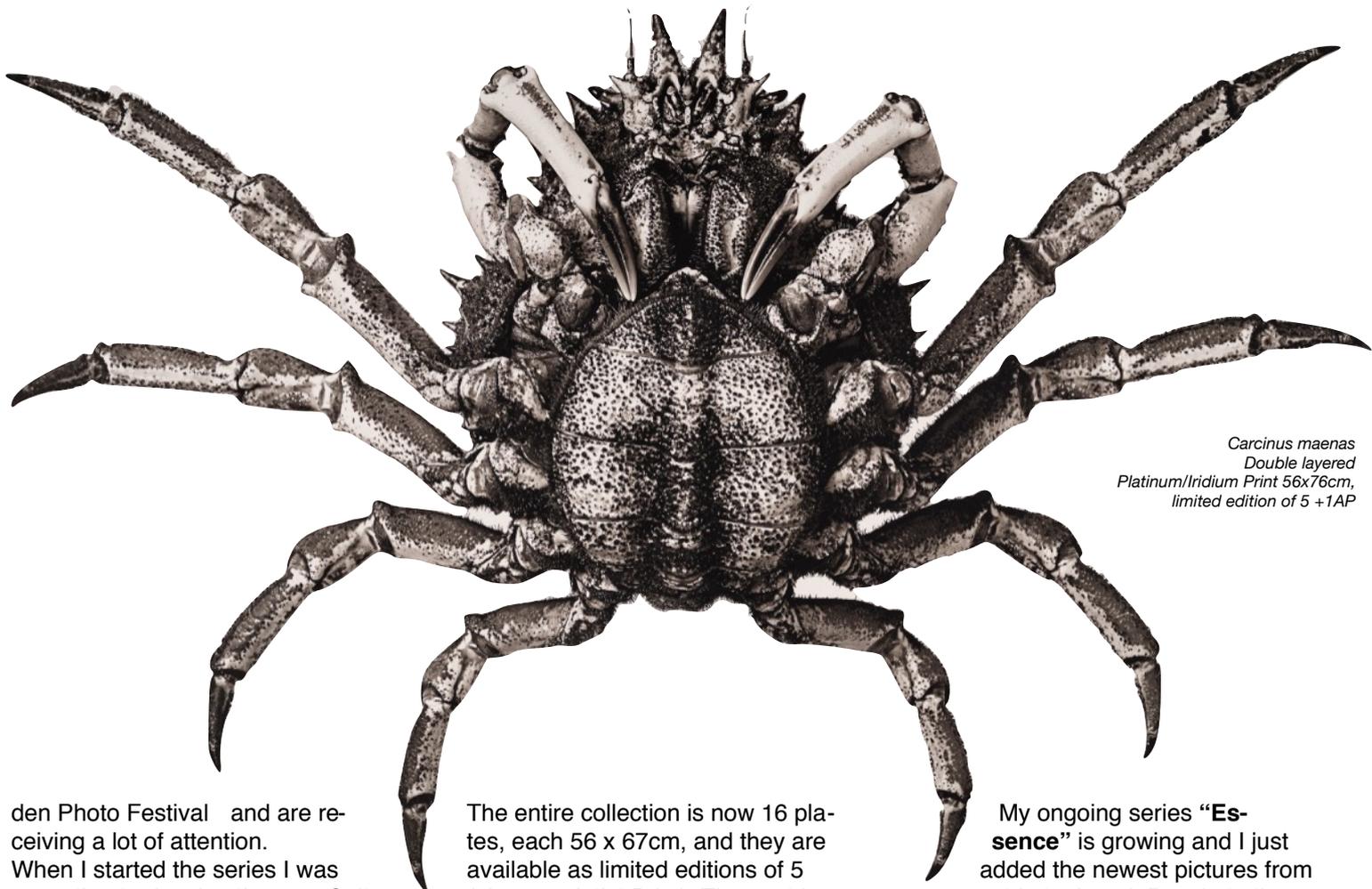
When I started the series I was unsure and unhappy with my first results. Without the encouragement of Kim S. I would not have continued with the series, and today I think it's one of my best works. The pictures are currently shown together with my "Of Monster and Dragon" series at the LaGacilly/Ba-



Loligo vulgaris
Double layered Platinum/Iridium Print 56x76cm,
limited edition of 5 +1AP



Brama brama
Double layered Platinum/Iridium Print 56x76cm,
limited edition of 5 +1AP



Carcinus maenas
Double layered
Platinum/Iridium Print 56x76cm,
limited edition of 5 +1AP

den Photo Festival and are receiving a lot of attention. When I started the series I was expecting to develop them as Salt Prints, like the previous series "Of Monster and Dragon," but it seemed not to fit the subjects. I tried out several techniques and realized I needed to turn them into Platinum Prints, a very noble and costly chemical printing process. I did not know that process and so I needed to learn it. My hero photographer Irving Penn used that technique for some of his most iconic images, and experimented with it extensively. I tried to find as much information as possible on his Platinum Printing technique and started following his steps as much as I could. I included different metals like he did, and ended up with a mixture of Platinum and Iridium as metal compounds of the liquid emulsion that you brush on the fine paper. Some of my pictures are even double layered, which increases the depth and tonal range quite a bit.

After a lot of learning and many expensive fails, I finally found my formula that works best for this series.

The entire collection is now 16 plates, each 56 x 67cm, and they are available as limited editions of 5 (plus one Artist Print). The next issue of the LFI Magazine (Leica Fotografie International) will show the portfolio.

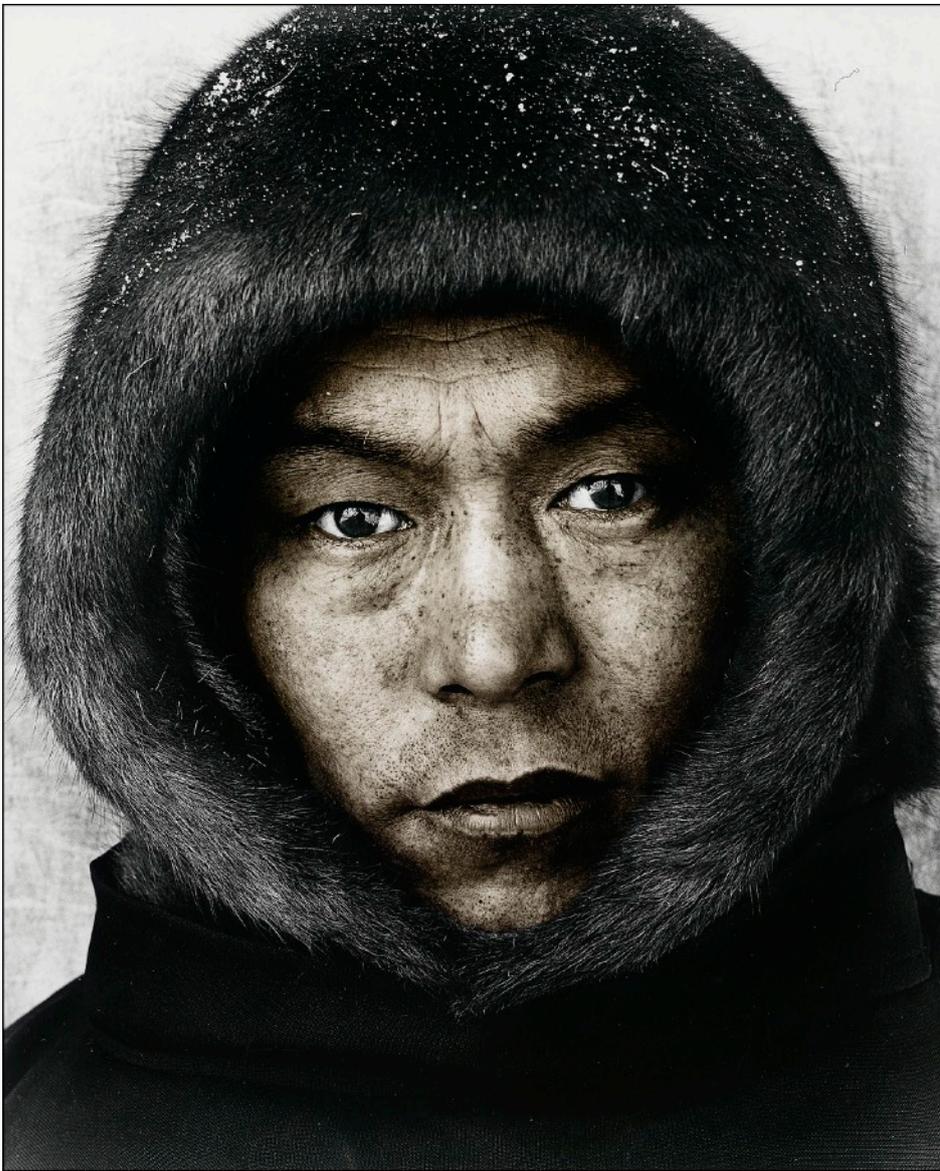
My ongoing series "Es-sence" is growing and I just added the newest pictures from my trip to Jamal, Russia to the website. Those pictures were taken on 4x5' film and developed in my darkroom and afterwards partly toned.



Thenum orientalis
double layered
Platinum/Iridium Print 56x76cm
limited edition of 5 +1AP

The other series I have been intensely focusing on is "Muses - a homage to Auguste Rodin." These are also Platinum Prints in the tradition of Irving Penn. Again I was using Iridium (and also Gold) as a second metal salt, but for some of my strongest pictures I actually used Rhodium - the most expensive and least reactive metal, which gives the pictures the longest life span - even longer than Platinum. The Rhodium also increases the feeling of depth in the picture. Because it is so expensive and very difficult to get, I have only used it on 3 of my prints so far.

The Muses series is now almost complete and ready to be exhibited. I learned so much while I was creating these images. With every photo shoot and looking at the results afterward, I felt that I was discovering something special. This series inspired the idea for my



Reindeer herder of Yamal, Northern Siberia/Russia. „Essence“ series. Silvergelatine, partly toned. 50x60cm, Limited edition of 10+1AP

next project that I mentioned a few paragraphs earlier.

In the process, I also learned the importance of print making. This is so much a part of the creative process and even interpretation. I tried different printing techniques, and each one created a totally different atmosphere. The print making process is essential to allowing the picture to have an impact or to be effective. It seems to me that only when you match the right printing technique to your photo you are able to truly create emotions with it. Of course in the Muses series I ended

up with the most noble printing technique, that not only has the widest and deepest tonal range with unbelievably rich blacks, but one that also values the picture or the subject of the picture the most in the longevity it gives the print.

As for paper, I was using Arches Platine Rag, size 56 x 76cm, and the prints are also limited editions of 5 (plus 1 Artist and 1 Model print).

New Galleries I am represented at.

Over last two years I have been very busy creating new series and adding

more pictures to them. Now I am finally ready to show them, and I am happy that several Galleries approached me.

I am to be represented by “IMMAGIS FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY” Gallery in Munich now. It’s one of the leading art galleries in contemporary photography.

Kathrin and Joachim make up an outstanding team of curators and a source of great creativity, inspiration, knowledge and ideas. **I am very excited that this prestigious gallery will show some of my newest series that are created as platinum prints or salt prints for the first time as original prints.**

The exhibition will open on October 9th with a spectacular VIP opening, and with a public opening following the next day. If you want to come to the opening and need an invitation please let me know. And let me tell you, their exhibition openings are a special experience...

Another Gallery that has begun representing my work is “**Maison D’Art Monaco.**” It’s a leading art gallery in Monaco acting globally. Founded in 1997 in the Principality of Monaco, the Art Gallery Maison d’Art operates in the Modern and Contemporary Art field with a strong background in Old Masters from the 13th to the 18th century. Besides Modern and Contemporary art exhibitions held at the Gallery, Maison d’Art enthusiastically takes part in major art fairs, such as TEFAF Maastricht, London Masterpiece, the Biennales d’Antiquaires in Paris and Florence, the Moscow World Fine Art Fair and many others.

As I am always looking for new exhibition opportunities, I am looking forward to seeing my pictures exhibited in Monaco in the near future.

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