

Bruno Stettler, Photographer: Havana, Bangkok, Rio

Future Art Pop with an Exotic Backdrop

From photo models to future girls: erotic beings from alien galaxies pose in teenage fashion, plastic jewelry in front of erotic backdrops. This is how Bruno Stettler, the photographer from Zurich, sets the stage for his happenings in Havana, Bangkok or Rio de Janeiro. Now this magical, almost virtual world makes its premiere appearance on the artist's Internet gallery smiles.ch.

Visitors of www.smiles.ch are about to discover a powerfully erotic art pop world. Bruno Stettler's avant-garde interpretations tantalize the senses with breathtaking art photos of enchanting seductresses. Just a click on the web surfer will take you right to Bruno Stettler's very own universe: Barra da Tijuca is where it all happens. In Rio's boom quarter, women in skimpy garb reminiscent of female police officers pose with plastic cannons. In other scenes, colorful escort terrorists stand guard in front of the runways of Antônio Carlos Jobim airport – just like the hookers do in front of motels for rent by the hour in Ipanema . The future girls may be posing in front of endless concrete structures that were erected in the 70's – lifestyle photographer virtually catapults his cyber models into the Rio of 2525.

Internet gallery smiles.ch does not only show the very best in art photographs, it also gives photo fiends backstage access and provides >making of< insights. Visitors also have the option to purchase art prints in sizes of up to 3 meters and in museum quality.

The Concert Photographer: Close-Ups of the Rockstars

Bruno Stettler, who was born in 1962, develops his enthusiasm for photography in the early 70's after he sees Michelangelo Antonioni's master piece «Blow Up». The story's plot focuses on a photo lab, where the hero investigates a murder and is able to identify the perpetrator. This key scene fascinates the teenager. His father gives him a Yashica brand single reflex lens (SLR) camera. The young music fan has found his passion. At the tender age of 14 he begins to take pictures at pop concerts in Zurich. Everything Bruno Stettler photographs soon becomes the stuff of legends: In 1977 at the «Kaufleuten» his camera documents performances of punk band The Clash, techno gods Kraftwerk, punk group Blondie and at the end of the 70's, reggae icon Bob Marley. Stettler begins to sell his best shots to the public. The smart young photographer develops his work in his own dark room at home – in black and white. His older sister sells them like hot cakes to the fans at school.

The Internet has not yet conquered the world. The highly motivated young photographer soon starts his own photo mail order business and sells his pictures covering artists from AC/DC and Abba to Led Zeppelin through this distribution channel until 1984. As an enthused fan he trails his idols as they tour from one open air to another. In 1980 his lens captures AC/DC lead singer Bon Scott in action – and the photographer has no idea that his picture is soon to become a part of music history. Scott dies in London just a few days after Stettler snaps the photo.

Elias Fröhlich, former «Pop/Rocky» editor-in-chief, is stunned by the quality of Stettler's AC/DC shots and immediately recruits him as a freelance reporter. Stettler, who is also the head of Europe's AC/DC-Fanclub, continues to tirelessly produce T-shirts featuring his own photos and keeps the fan nation abreast of the latest exclusive news.

A True-Blue New Media Pioneer

The MTV era begins in 1984. Bruno Stettler has a sixth sense for new media. Now on a first-name basis with a long list of stars and celebrities, he launches innovative video posters and is the first to capture clip esthetics – considered a breakthrough back in those days. That same year another exciting medium appears on the horizon: video. It is nothing new for Bruno Stettler – he began experimenting with the format in 1980.

He soon relocates to New York City on assignment for Swiss Television, where he discovers Warhol and something considered grotesque at the time: Rap music. He films documentaries featuring the Fat Boys, rock band Foreigner and the launch of Swatch watches in the United States. In Kingston/ Jamaica he produces a documentary on marijuana drug smuggling to the United States – and is injured in a horrific motor cycle accident.

Producer, Record Covers, Party Flyers

Upon his return to Zurich Bruno Stettler rocks the country as a music producer of Electric-Body-Music-Bands from 1985 to 1995. His love for the Commodore C64 computers lands his band "FYNO" in the Swiss Hit Parade in 1988 with Switzerland's first House Song, the sample track «Scoobidoo». In the 90's he discovers and produces Cornelia Grolimund («Das Puppenhaus» (Doll House)) and Christine Lauterburg («Echo der Zeit» Echo of Time). Both songstresses make it to the Swiss Top Ten.

Meanwhile, Bruno, the multi talent, also creates artwork on his Apple SE20. In 1990 he is among the first desktop designers to come up with party flyers for techno parties, which are becoming ever more popular in Switzerland. Moreover, he creates computer and video arts experiments. As an autodidactic he immerses himself into the world of multimedia without any false restraint: photography, video, music, graphic design. After all, he has no intentions of embarking on an artistic career. What drives Stettler is the desire to implement his ideas and visions and to make them accessible to the world. This also explains

why he, the founder and CEO of mobile entertainment enterprise LAWA, supports artists and music and invests a lot of money into projects he has a lot of fun with but do not yield any profits.

From Pornography to Pop Art

Stettler lays the foundation for his current work in 2000 at a Moldavian webcam house. The first thing he does is provide the amateur girls of the porno provider with a new gaudy wardrobe. He dresses them in flamboyant clothes sourced in Switzerland at the H&M teenager department. The colorful school girl outfits provide a stark contrast to the gray day-to-day life in the Eastern Block country.

Fidel's Best: Chicas de Habana

In 2002 he joints artist and film maker Cyrill Schläpfer (www.csr-records.ch) on a voyage to the Cuban metropolis Havana. This is a place where time has stood still since the revolution of 1959. Bruno Stettler arrives in the Havana beehive loaded down with carefully selected garb and accessories purchased in teen departments, thrift shops and cheap stores. Intense colors that hug the girl's youthful skin, mini skirts that look as if they are ready to burst, hot pants, T-shirts, underwear, plastic jewelry. The assortment is further enhanced by winter socks, gloves, caps, scarves and umbrellas. He prowls the streets of Havana in search of model girls and hookers. He takes their pictures against the timeless backdrop of a 50's villa swimming pool on the property. The shoot recorded in stills as well as on film. A limited series of post cards featuring 48 photos from this session completes this first art work process. On New Year's Day 2003, an edition of 1,000 is given to customers and friends.

Play it again, Cuba!

Subsequently, Bruno Stettler spends a year in Switzerland preparing his second Cuban session. Inspired by the latest in fashion photography, he develops his own image and esthetics concept. He sees images and visions that show the erotic component in a perfect world. Harmony is coupled with incredible joie de vivre and beauty. Cuban ex model Maria spends months combing the island for young beauties. She finds models – diamonds in the rough – in this socialist blue collar world. In 2003, Stettler rents yet another villa. He lives there with the Communist beauties – as if he were right at home. The result is the creation of a very intimate world in pictures.

During his 10-day exile, Bruno Stettler successfully creates images that exude a timeless, worry free and sensual mood – despite inclement weather conditions. For the very last time in his life he takes pictures with a Canon EOS 30 SLR camera on 135-Kodak-Extrachrome slide film. The photos are digitalized in Zurich.

Subsequently, over a period of six months, he and Zurich-based graphics designer Oliver Fries create «Chicas de Habanna 2004», a limited edition art photo calendar. Only 500 copies are produced. Stettler's special esthetics become evident only after the careful selection, composition and professional

enhancement of the photos with Photoshop®. This is how he makes the unforgettable moments of serene joy in Havana everlasting. The calendar is now out of print and no longer available. Collectors will treasure it for many years and way beyond 2004. Later, the images are also used in party flyers and on various CD covers.

2005: Girls from Bangkok

Bangkok 2005 is yet another conscious Stettler choice of a city that is anything but a fashion metropolis. He does, however, adore Asian women for their girlishness, tomboyish appearance, devotion and enchanting ways – making them look right at home in Manga comics as well as in Bangkok, the mega city.

In model July, Stettler finds a local contact via the Internet. She contacts friends who are top models to participate in the photo shoots. They like the work Stettler did in Cuba, which they find rather unusual and the artistic aspect of the project. No one realizes that ladyboy Noki has joined the crew of Thai models. Today, Noki is a star in Thailand, with her/his own books, CDs, TV shows. Noki has become an icon many Thai ladyboys try to emulate, given that he/she is considered the perfect incarnation of classic Thai beauty.

Hua Hin is a two-hour drive from Bangkok and is located on the Gulf of Thailand. It is the location of Stettler's third photo session. He chooses a large free-standing apartment complex with swimming pool and garden for this project. Here he finds what he considers paradise: no tourists, but luscious colors, perfect weather conditions for photo shoots and Mother Nature as a backdrop.

The group lives, eats and laughs for four days while creating new beautiful photos. Noki, May, Julie, Meaw and Noki – they all love the photo session. And they love themselves. They perform to the point where they turn themselves into objects of art and cross many boundaries. They show themselves in the nude – without ever taking their clothes off. Stettler somehow manages to inject something of the Asian comic's culture: the models mutate into living Mangas. They wear bikinis and underwear made for young girls. Pink, silver and gold are the colors of their «Sci-Fi-costumes» and later actually become their personal outfits.

Back in Bangkok, sunset time has been booked at the «Landmark» hotel. On the 13th floor, past and future shake hands. The sun breaks through the foreboding cloudy mood, brownish plumes envelop the skyscrapers of downtown. It is as if there is no today, as if this was the Metropolis of the 20's, as if it was a photo composition. Dots of color thrown against the canvas, Thai Manga women in a fascinating end-time mood – that's the stuff that makes Bruno Stettler happy: he has simultaneously transcended time.

2006: Chicas de Rio

Another year later, Bruno Stettler finds his ultimate backdrop: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Copacabana, Ipanema, Barra da Tijuca. This is the home of the beautiful and the very wealthy. Barra da Tijuca is a booming quarter in which Latin America's largest shopping centers are being developed. Stettler chooses this venue in 2006 to work with very young newcomer models, among them bi-racial women. He converts them into pop art future girls, into cyber police women with plastic cannons who patrol airport runways, into escort ladies waiting for tricks in front of by-the-hour motels in Barra. Not a soul can be seen alongside the endless symmetric concrete highrise streets. Not a person in sight. And for a short moment, the last surviving cyber models have Rio 2525 all to themselves.

Bruno Stettler's dogma: Avoid composition. Leaving things up to chance is part of the concept. The best photos are created when one does not actually want to take a picture. «The more time you spend setting the stage, the worse the pictures will turn out», he says with conviction, «the more technology one uses the less intimate the moment recorded. » Once the photographer has become invisible and no one pays attention to him or her anymore, an ideal scenario has been attained. Naturalness is important to Stettler: «Too much make-up distorts it and destroys it.» Imperfection is what he finds challenging – trashy appearances, smeared lip stick, wet hair, stares at nothing: «Laugh and talk, forget yourself, me, the moment, baby, that's when something new and beautiful is created. »

Place Orders for Limited Edition Art Prints

At Internet gallery www.smiles.ch fans can order Bruno Stettler's photographs as premium quality, oversized art pop art prints in museum quality in dimensions of up to 300 cm x 100 cm. All are available as limited editions, which are numbered and signed. A wooden wedged frame will be custom-made for each image (rested genuine wood frame panels with wedges). The image is stretched over this original double wedged frame by hand. Ultra-modern digital printing machines are used in the reproduction process, which prints the pigmented art paint on the pre-treated artist's canvas via Piezo technology. The Ultrachrome-K3 ink by Epson boasts up to 75 years of color fastness and is the **current** standard for the reproduction of artwork.

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