

FUJILOVE

ALL THINGS FUJIFILM X AND GFX

43 / October 2019

**High Level Sports
Photography
With Fujifilm X Series™**

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FUJILOVE MAGAZINE

ISSUE 43

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M A G A Z I N E

ALL THINGS
FUJIFILM X AND GFX

Photo: Ines Thomsen

CAPTURING
MOMENTS OF
Emotion

Ines Thomsen

In an industry where it is essential to have a solid understanding of technical details to perform among the best, Austrian photographer Ines Thomsen likes to focus on more than just f-stops and shutter speeds when taking pictures.



*X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at
f/1.2, 1/125 sec, ISO 200*

A solid understanding of the technical aspects of photography is a prerequisite for taking great pictures but when it comes to people photography, my focus is on capturing the true emotions of the person in front of my lens, by making it a personal experience. I try not to get distracted by all the technical details or difficult setups but make the mood essential. This approach can, at times, have life-changing effects for the model.

Born in Linz, Austria, I have been privileged enough to travel the world, going to some of the most breathtaking places on earth to tell people's stories. Some of my most notable work in my 'People' series include 'Faces of Hawaii', a series showcasing Native Hawaiians, bringing awareness to an almost extinct race, due to a forceful political takeover.

X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.4, 1/125 sec, ISO 200



Another significant trip for me was my trip to the Ewaka Foundation in Uganda, to visit a foundation with over 28 children who have finally found a place to call home in Jinja. I did their first-ever professional photoshoot, allowing each child to pose and let themselves be portrayed as who they felt and wanted to be seen as. I then gifted each child with a personal copy of their favorite picture printed on an INSTAX printer. The photographs later played a huge role in raising funds and telling the story of how incredible the children at the orphanage are.

I love to capture people in a way that tells people's story. With the compact Fujifilm X-T3 or X-T2 camera, I feel connected to my models as I am not hidden behind a giant body. This makes it easier to guide the process towards the desired successful outcome. Another great benefit of having a Fujifilm X Series camera is its lighter weight and portability compared to other cameras, making it easy for me to carry it around. Whether it be in the studio or on location, I want to use my photography as a tool to tell an individual story – one that impacts people and helps them

realise their uniqueness, breaking those social standards of beauty and self-awareness. This is a big task that also requires self-reflection and empathy, which means that I have had to work on myself first.

For me to get the perfect picture, a picture that speaks emotions and bursts with the vibrancy of that models' personality, I need to be mindful on set and focused on the task at hand. I have to step out of my comfort zone and ask the same from the person in front of my lens.

X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2, 1/125 sec, ISO 250





X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/4, 1/250 sec, ISO 200

This is truly important for me to identify and capture true emotions with my photography. I turned to photography to cope when my life took a big turn and I was diagnosed with a brain tumor at the age of 23. This fateful event is one of the main reasons why I took my first steps to become a professional photographer. Life is really short. Once you realise that it could all be over from one moment to the next, you stop wasting time and start living your dreams now; you simply do it.

Emotion in a photograph, or any work

of art, is what helps a viewer connect to that piece. If that emotion is prevalent in the viewer in any way, it will awaken a reaction. Happiness and joy, sorrow and despair – these are some of the most common emotions as they are universally felt on this planet.

I believe photography is an essential form of art; it should be able to bring about social awareness, to impact positively, tell an indefinite story – one that strongly makes us reflect on our lives – and I believe this should be at least the core purpose it serves.

One of my first social projects was for a television special in Germany, aimed at raising awareness for alopecia, an autoimmune disease that causes the hair to fall out in round patches or sometimes even completely, losing all hair on the body. Many patients with alopecia shy away and hide behind wigs, hats, fake eyebrows and lashes so as not to attract any form of judgment. This is most common among young girls and women, as alopecia has been stigmatised and looked upon as a flaw in the world of beauty standards.

During this project, I worked with Sam Mantia, a children's therapist who suffers from alopecia herself. We met Sarah, who was only 11 years old when she had already lost all of her hair. She was a shy little girl who lacked self-confidence. Sam interviewed Sarah during the TV shoot about her feelings, thoughts, and experiences as someone living with alopecia. While filming, we had also planned for me to take pictures of Sam for the new alopecia campaign.

Sam invited Sarah to join them on the photo shoot. Sarah was still very shy at first but once she saw how much fun Sam was having, she opened up. At the end of the shoot, Sam asked Sarah if she wanted to join her in front of the camera as a model. Sarah liked the idea. She got so comfortable she eventually took her wig off on national television once she realised she was beautiful the way she was!

*X-T1 + XF56mmF2 at
f/1.2, 1/80 sec, ISO 250*



Those pictures were later used in a nationwide campaign to raise awareness about alopecia. One year later, I met Sarah again at the annual alopecia meeting in Germany. It was incredible to see how she had evolved since the shoot. She was now outgoing, self-confident and had become a little boss girl within her group of friends!

As photographers, we have the opportunity to make a positive change in someone's life. This is a huge responsibility that we should not take

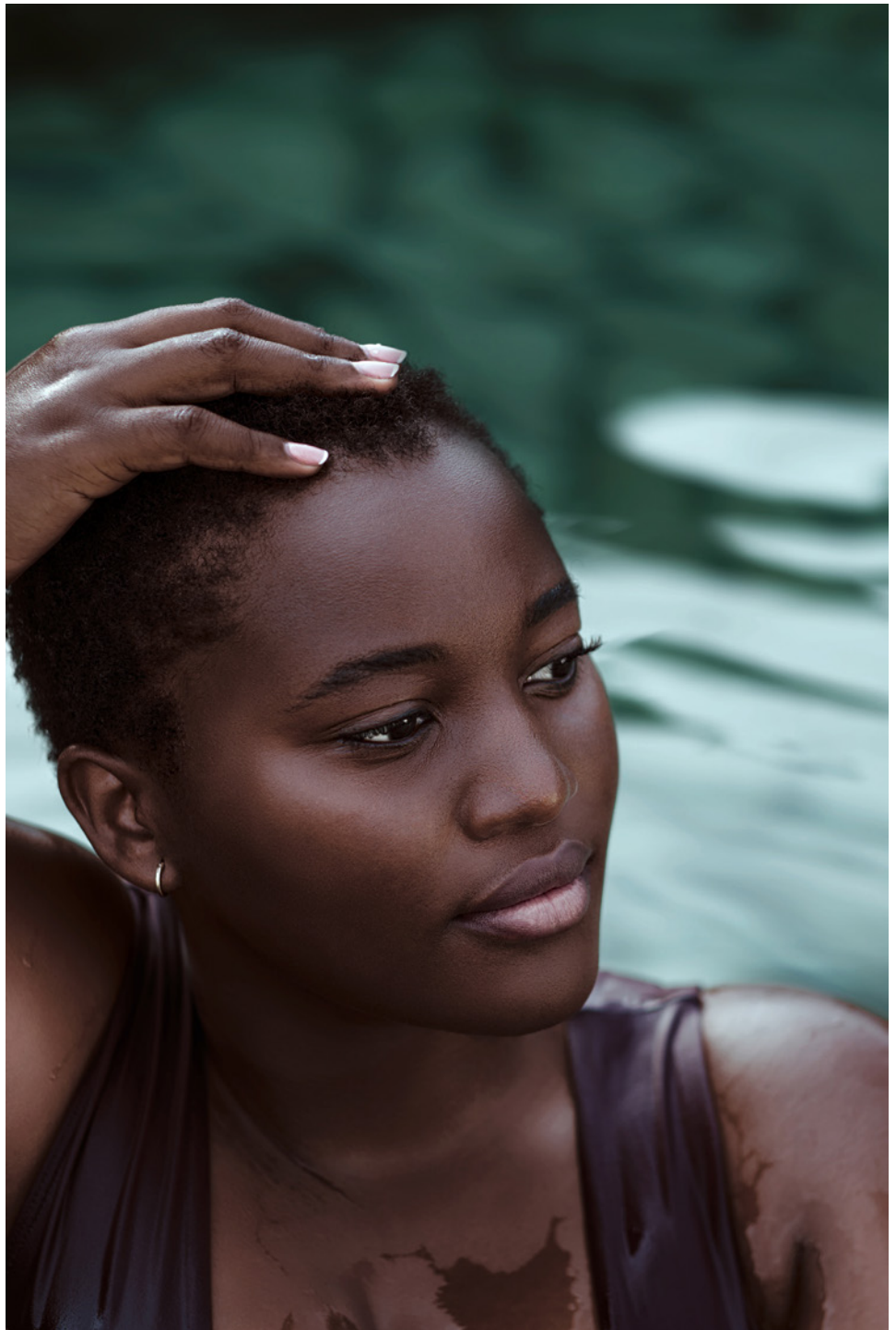
lightly. I want my models or clients to leave the shoot with more than just a tangible picture; I hope to give them a new perspective on their beauty. This person will feel and act differently, which will make them interact differently with life itself, like the ripple effect of a stone thrown into a lake. A successful photo session for me is key in helping someone evolve because someone took the effort to take a deeper look.



X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/4, 1/250 sec, ISO 200

During my different travels, I have been able to meet people from all walks of life, from the rich and privileged to the poor and underprivileged. These backgrounds play a significant role in how people view the world, and how they view themselves and the people around them. Take, for example, the poor and underprivileged communities where there's a huge lack of access to basic needs like education, healthcare, nutritious food, shelter and so on. So much arises from this lack and it's always humbling to hear the stories of how people from such communities have to maneuver through life.

During my shoot at the Ewaka Foundation, I met Imani, a 22 year-old who also acted as my assistant for the day. As jolly and motivating as she was towards the children, Imanis' troubled past had made her lose her sense of self-worth and beauty. As mentioned earlier, photography is just beyond shutter speeds and f-stops. Photography could be considered therapy, as it's an opportunity to give one a chance at self-discovery, to look deeper and beyond. I was able to show Imani through photography that one's past is simply a journey of growth, but that the past doesn't have to dim their light or block their beauty.



X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/2, 1/500 sec, ISO 200

X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2, 1/6400 sec, ISO 200





X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.2, 1/125 sec, ISO 200

Almost a year later, Imani has evolved into a person who believes that everyone is uniquely beautiful. Photography therapy sounded like a crazy impossible mission to her as she had felt fully damaged and that there was no reason to boost her self-esteem, but she now credits these moments in front of the camera as a remarkable turning point in her life. She has gone on to positively impact others with a better perspective on beauty and life through her blog, *The Marooned Islander*.

Imani has now been invited as a guest speaker at the Cambio Beauty Academy in Vienna, where she will talk about her empowering version of true beauty. For me, these moments are the ones that define my work as a photographer.

I want to give people an insight into a world that is more beautiful and richer than the world they've known until now, by providing tangible proof of their beauty right then and there, in their hands.

*X-T2 + XF56mmF1.2 at f/1.4,
1/125 sec, ISO 250*



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