



Underwater Model Photography

— *Conducting Sessions for* **Beginners**

Text and photos by
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After the coronavirus lockdown was imposed in my country in March 2020 and all my dive trips were cancelled, I only had one event left on my calendar—an underwater model shoot.

I had offered this kind of event before, and a lot of young aspiring models were really interested, but the expenses for them were much too high, some of them being students or not earning much money. So, rather than hold a shoot for just one model, my idea was to offer three or four young women the opportunity as a group, so they could share the cost of one expensive underwater shoot, just to try it out and discover whether or not underwater modeling was right for them.

After the lockdown, swimming pools were closed as well, and we had to shift our schedule. The young women in the first group were disappointed, but there was no way to get into a public pool. Then, after the restrictions

Lilla Miklós, an experienced model but never underwater, got stunning results.

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were lifted, I suddenly had the opportunity to use the outdoor pool of a small nearby hotel. At first, the owner thought I was kidding when I emailed him my request, but then he became enchanted by the idea of hosting events like this in his pool and he let me rent it for a small fee. The outdoor pool was the perfect place where we could main-

tain social distancing without the need for face masks, which made working with small groups possible and more enjoyable.

So, I started holding underwater model shoots for groups of three to four beginners each, using just some basic equipment such as two external strobes and some lamps as well as basic decoration in the pool, which meant we were able

to keep costs as low as possible. There was also the ulterior motive in mind to keep costs low because during the hard times of the coronavirus pandemic, people would not be earning much money, and as a result, would not be able to pay much for the shoots.

Positive results

Life has not been easy during this

UW Models

Mother and daughter—a new experience for both models Nathalie Pirard and Charlotte Pesch (left); *Skyfall*, with “Sky Chan” cosplayer Katharine (far left); *Surface Reflection*, with Nathalie Pirard (below). The outdoor pool at Pension Elfi in Maring-Noviad in the Mosel Valley of Germany was a fantastic location during the summer. Hotel Blesius Garten in Trier had a wonderful indoor pool for shoots during the colder months.





The Little Mermaid, with Charlotte Pesch (left); Monique Nikki Giling in a Roaring Twenties theme (far left); A moment capturing a very nice performance by “Sky Chan” cosplayer Katharine (below); *Sensual*, with Filipa Gomes (lower left)



pandemic, but this concept has been a total success—and all the young women who were keen to give it a go, finally got to experience their first time in an underwater shoot! In these sessions, the models used their own basic outfits and only the colourful long fabrics were provided by me.

After the first session, I made and posted a short video of the event to offer a glimpse into the shoots, and what can I say—every two weeks during the summer, I had enough participants for another underwater model shoot. In every session, the aspiring models were all very happy for the opportunity, and we had a lot of fun!

Challenges and highlights

After a short briefing and introduction to posing underwater, each participant had only half an hour to perform. The time for renting the pool was limited, so we had to hurry up, as hotel guests also wanted to use the



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Fairy Tale Fantasy, with Monique Nikki Giling (above); Falling Out of the Clouds, with Charlotte Pesch (right); Spanish Dancer, with Vanilliam Martins (far right)

pool during the hot summer.

For some of the young women, it was easy; for others, it was a challenge, as they were not used to opening their eyes underwater and had problems with water going up their noses as well as difficulties with posing in the water. I also had participants who were strugg-

ling with personal crises and wanted to prove something to themselves. One older woman, with severe health problems, managed to do a wonderful shoot and was so proud of herself when she saw the stunning results in the photos.

In addition, the guests were also

amused by the shoots and enjoyed the entertainment, watching the sessions from the terrace near the pool while drinking their coffee or cool drinks. They also cheered for the aspiring models, encouraging them in their performance underwater.


Response

There were, however, some colleagues in underwater model photography who criticised me for the concept of these events. They said the results from these sessions amounted to just "snapshots."


Of course, the resulting photos were not like those of high-end model



Elegance, with model Lilla Miklós (left); The Princess, with Monique Nikki Giling (above); Summer Dream, with Filipa Gomes (right); Dramatic reflections captured in an indoor pool session with Diana Hemmers (far right)

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shoots—that was never the aim. But we still got really stunning results. The concept also proved to be a really good experience for me, as it also was for the many happy faces of proud and satisfied clients. What else do you need?

Now, as the cold season has set in, I really need to find a hotel with an indoor heated pool. One of my models, with whom I have worked together many times, wanted to make one of her dreams come true, which was to do a special shoot in the theme of

the Roaring Twenties—more specifically, *The Great Gatsby*—and plans for a new shoot are already being made. So, the show will go on, even during winter, with the small groups, once a month. Fantastic! ■

To see a video of one of the underwater model shoots, go to: [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

Claudia Weber-Gebert is an advanced diver, underwater photographer and dive writer based in Germany.

