

Written by Written by Corbin Chamberlin

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Working in the fashion industry for most of my career, photo shoots and photographers are no strangers to me. There is one local photographer who really caught my attention two years ago, and I think his work stands out from the rest. Christos Sewell truly is capable of taking a beautiful picture. Sure, anyone can snap a picture of a model and use Photoshop until there is nothing human about it. And, by doing so, the shot loses its organic beauty. While working with Sewell, I quickly saw his strong points: He always takes the highroad and will torture himself and his assistant to make sure that every detail, even the small ones, are attended to for one single perfect shot. No matter if he is shooting massive ads that will be placed in Time Square or just shooting casually, Sewell always has dignity in his work. The humble photographer recently shot the Arizona Foothills Magazine's first Face of Foothills winner, Stephanie Allen Mannon, in a stunningly glamorous swimwear shoot.



*What aspects of photography appeal most to you?*

Generally speaking, the aspects that appeal most to me is composition and lighting. The way certain textures look and enhance a model's appearance awakens the creative eye in unlimited ways. I can express what I see, the mood I feel and the energy by framing my subjects in the best suitable light. This is the main reason why I shoot mostly fashion and beauty.

*Where do you draw your inspirations from?*

Everything. Movies, fashion magazines, art, culture, music, retro and futuristic ideas, observing random people doing everyday things, you name it. I have often told people I cannot switch-off my mind, and I am inspired at least 100 times a day by what I see, hear and experience throughout any given day. I also gain inspiration by watching others in my field succeed and obtain their personal goals—one of the benefits of today's social networking.

*When did your career in photography begin?*

My photography career began the day I decided to shoot images for personal taste and not that of others. I have always been technically proficient with a camera, but I never attempted to express myself with it until I grew tired of shooting images that limited me. Professionally, I have done product photography, corporate events, celebrity red carpet, etc. While that experience honed my technical skills, it did nothing for me creatively. Six years ago, I shot my first model, just to see if I could emulate the fashion magazines that have always inspired me. With that initial success to build on, I have never looked back.

*While reviewing your work, I noticed that the lighting of the pictures is your strong point. Is this a correct assumption?*

There is always a moment of pride when someone mentions my lighting. I do find it to be one of my strongest points. I found out very early on that incorrect lighting will fail to express your creative message to the observer. Even though photography can be as interpretive as a painting, it still should be accurate and non-intrusive to your general creative.

*Are there any photographers that you admire? If so, whom?*

Too many to name! My inspiration for light and composition came from Ansel Adams before I realized fashion was my calling. Other photographers like Helmut Newton, Irving Penn and Richard Avedon began my interest in fashion model photography. The more current inspirations come from the works of David LaChapelle and Mario Testino.

*How would you best describe your aesthetic?*

I would describe my work as that which is born of someone half-artist and half-storyteller. That is because, to me, fashion shows what is, and also what could be. Editorial-style photography has its strongest pull for me. When the model is ready for her first shot, I shoot what immediately appeals to me. Her body or face inspire me to frame her in a certain way to give more impact to the wardrobe or to her if the material particularly accentuates her. I follow up each look with what-ifs, using my imagination to drive abstract poses, wardrobe placement, unusual accessories and to use her surrounding environment in unique ways. If the model can keep up with these changing roles, the results are often amazing.

*Tell me about your most recent shoot with Arizona Foothills Magazine Face of Foothills winner, Stephanie.*

This is my fourth shoot with Stephanie, and a model I always enjoy working with. Because Stephanie is a model who takes great ownership of her image, she came to me with an idea with several looks in mind. A simple water-themed shoot with fashionable overtones that appealed to her. Classical styles mixed with a modern look, shot against some very contemporary architecture. I was definitely interested. Given the looks she had planned I found locations on the property that could best compliment each look—my only challenge would be to balance out the harsh lighting of the Arizona sun with my additional lighting. Stephanie was more than anxious to get started and her enthusiasm never wavered.

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throughout the shoot. After getting the initial shots out of the way, we started playing with each look, taking advantage of the beautiful location we were at. I wanted to capture something that was unique to Stephanie's character: conservative, beautiful, playful. The shooting that day went very smooth, with the help of great artists to work with (Holli Christensen doing makeup and Lauren Duet on hair) and even her mother on site to assist me. What we captured that day had great range and variety, while still keeping the essence of Stephanie intact.