ACHIM LIPPOTH  German, 1968

PRODUCTION

Achim Lippoth is a storyteller. He'll report on a narrative he is fact or fiction. He collects books, consumes cinema, and is inspired by historical photographic artists like those of the Bauhaus. All these inspirations chime with current events and fuse as inspiration for his next work. But a story is nothing without a performance, and a performance is nothing without a stage.

The journey from concept to print is a deliberate one and great care is given to the production of Lippoth's work. Although, he has his own production team (consisting of a production manager, production assistant, a casting and location director – plus 3 people in post production), they solely focus on the organizational aspects of a shoot, so that Lippoth can have the time and freedom to do the creative work. The primary role of production is not to show how fancy a shoot can be done (although it can accomplish this), but rather, and most importantly, it can clear the path for creative thought and serendipitous moments. Production involves scouting the location, wardrobe and props. But it's also the care given to the children on set through a child friendly atmosphere, an open and honest rapport and downtime available as needed.

There is a quality to Lippoth's work that production alone cannot manufacture. This is the authenticity of the children, and one can only set the stage to encourage it. "Of course casting is a very important part of my work," Lippoth explains, "without choosing the right kids, a shoot can never be successful." In casting he looks for "natural characters who still behave like real kids." After great care has been taken to cast children, secure a location, provide wardrobe styling and the like, the child is introduced to the scene. This is where Lippoth's creative aptitude and interpersonal ease shines. He provides the children with an idea or concept but balances this with the freedom to be themselves. In this autonomy, potential images are born and "capturing that right moment is always the great challenge."

The level of production in Lippoth's work can seem unobtainable and unrealistic for the aspiring artist photographer, but it's important to note that Lippoth has both made work that requires a high degree of production as well as production that is scaled down. Yet, all his work has the visual finesse that suggests "production value!" Production value is code for a well thought out and executed image. It does not always require money, but it constantly involves forethought, preparation and care.

Achim Lippoth's diverse body of childhood photographs (and videos) have won a myriad of international awards, notoriety and acclaim. Still Lippoth is always in the process of creation, and ready to tell his next tale. He sees each series as a new challenge to the next, during him to create something new and extraordinary. And each time, he rises to the challenge!

Don't give a speech, put on a show!

— Paul Arton

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