

Working with children is never an easy feat, but German photographer Achim Lippoth takes it all in his stride. He's well prepared for their often unpredictable behaviour, writes *Ryan Watson*

DOING IT FOR THE KIDS



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CASTING for Achim Lippoth's photography is a childish business. "You never know what's going to happen," explains Lippoth. "The most immaculately behaved child at the casting can turn up to the shoot and not 'feel like it today.'" But the reality is, unlike his subject, the task on his side of the camera doesn't allow for such sporadic behaviour.

Lippoth is a specialist in, and exclusively shoots, images and films of children. We can all relate to the toddlers who sometimes make it a difficult life on set. Now and then, days come along that begin on the wrong foot and everything that follows seems to correlate in a downward spiral. There's no warning for it. But the mentality of the 42-year-old is that each job should be carried out with an organised logic and planning. "Children are always children and behave that way," says Lippoth. "I still have to get the shots and need to be able to adapt."

When it comes to taming the young models, he's a capable and experienced man of his trade. Born in Ilshofen, southern Germany, it was much later than his own primary years that he realised his ambitions in the field of photography. At 22, he began studying art at the University of Cologne, where he discovered his creative calling, and has been working as a freelancer since 1992.

Given that Lippoth is also a filmmaker on the books at 2AM, his approach to allow time for unpredictability is probably a wise one.

"I think good preparation before each shoot is very important, especially if I'm booked for a job and have to follow a special treatment from a creative director or client," he explains. "But, in the end, it's important to face each project with an open mind and deal with all that comes up. You have to be prepared for anything."

Lippoth also studied in Manchester, England. It was a difficult stint away from family and friends, but there were also good times to be had in the Lancashire city as a young German. He says: "It was hard to be away from home and I can't deny



Previous page
Bond of Friendship
1 Tell it Like it is
2 Family Snapshots
3 American Eagle
4 Bond of Friendship

that I often felt a bit lonely. But it was a good experience and it's a great city to be a student in."

Balancing a devotion to photography and film directing, a third passion in Lippoth's life grew from a temporary project in 1995 and soon became the perfect long-term outlet for his work. *Kid's Wear* began as a fair-trade publication and has since emerged into a bi-annual respected magazine setting the tone for high-class youth fashion photography with an international outlook and readership. "It also deals with art, lifestyle and culture," he adds. "I started it nearly 16 years ago and soon it grew into a conceptual project receiving great support from well-known photographers such as Nan Goldin and Bruce Weber - which, of course, is a great honour."

Lippoth says that starting his own magazine was always part of his plan as a means of communicating his work to others. "It's the perfect platform to fulfil myself - I'm able to publish my own projects and assemble my creative ideas," he adds.

Air of diversity

Despite specialising in one subject, Lippoth maintains an air of diversity and has been commissioned by agencies such as AMV BBDO, Jung von Matt and Leo Burnett. "I'm happy when people recognise my signature," he says. "But I'm always looking for new narratives to fully address diverse aspects of childhood and other themes that interest me. Childhood is the most important period in life - for everyone, everywhere. All the experiences children gain affect their thinking and make them what they are and what they will be."

Lippoth credits the challenges involved in working with kids as his inspiration and strongly believes that there's something there to be savoured at their innocent age. "There are endless challenges in capturing these experiences and the situations that bring them up," he says. "It was an early interest and I've never exhausted the subject matter."

Working with so many different brands, artists and designers, Lippoth likes the jobs that involve travel and interesting places, but he holds the most appreciation and enthusiasm for the ones that face him with tricky briefs. "It's usually the amount of satisfaction that one takes from it that's most memorable," he explains.

Having joined 2AM in November 2010, Lippoth sees a great future working on fresh and dynamic projects at the company, with the wheels already in motion. We can only expect more vibrant portrayals of immaturity to add to his eclectic portfolio. "I'm working on many new projects, such as videos and editorials as well as spring/summer 2011 fashion shoots and, of course, more commercials," he says. **18**



- 1 Lego
- 2 Showcase
- 3 Dinner
- 4 Diesel

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