

L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

What's new, Andreas H. Bitesnich? Interview by Nadine Dinter

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It feels like I've known the work of **Andreas H. Bitesnich** all my life. At least during the time, I have dealt with photography ever since I began building up my photographic horizon in the late 1990s.

Every magazine that featured “hot & sexy” photography sooner or later published Bitesnich's sensual, sculptural, flawless bodyscapes. For me he was the German version of Herb Ritts, and through his (and others') works, magazines such as *MAX* became my bible.

So you can imagine how excited I was to finally meet him in person, first in 2019 at another photographer's aftershow event – and this year to work with him on his show at IMMAGIS ART PHOTOGRAPHY. While speaking about *what's new*, we also did a little recap. Here comes the interview – enjoy!

Nadine Dinter: Andreas, you currently have a solo show at the gallery IMMAGIS ART PHOTOGRAPHY in Munich. It is a retrospective of your work from 1991 to 2015. How does it feel to look back at the photography you created during that quarter of a century?

Andreas H. Bitesnich: I am delighted to have the chance to show my work at IMMAGIS. I have lived with these works for a long time. They are part of my journey as

an artist and feel almost like a diary to me. There is a story behind every image. Looking back on them, sometimes I wonder how I managed to get the shot; I guess the answer is persistence.

You shoot mainly in black & white, and your works are famous for their minimalistic background. How did you develop your style; did it evolve naturally over time?

AHB: Starting out, I felt that with black & white photography, I could fully influence how I imagined my images should look. Of course, the absence of color simplifies things a lot. Concentrating on the shape, form, balance, and shadows kept me busy enough. Communicating with my models and collaborators was a great learning experience. So simplifying things seemed the right thing to do.

Your show is full of brilliant portraits but one of them especially caught my eye: the picture of Philip Glass. What's the story behind it?

AHB: I was fortunate to meet Philip through a mutual friend. When he and the conductor Dennis Russell Davies agreed to have their portraits done, I was thrilled. Right after the sitting, they invited me to join them on a trip to New York and a Carnegie Hall concert. Since then, I have photographed both artists on numerous occasions, also in private portrait sittings. If things go according to plan, a book of those many images will be published by teNeues in the fall of 2023. It's a project close to my heart, and I am very much looking forward to holding the book in my hands.

How do you operate when taking photos? Do you have your own studio, or do you prefer shooting on location?

AHB: At first, I worked mainly worked in studios, so I gained a lot of experience with the studio environment. But I also find working on location very inspiring. When I moved to the countryside, I initially didn't want to have a studio at home. But after a couple of years, I realized it would be fantastic to be able to create something whenever inspiration strikes. So I decided to install a studio there after all.

Your nude photography depicts strong, athletic bodies in almost dancer-like poses. What was your inspiration?

AHB: There is something about balance and form that mesmerizes me. So I decided to work with models who would be physically capable of following my vision. At first, I worked mainly with fashion models but increasingly worked with athletes and dancers.

In your more recent works, we see women with tattoos and piercings, portrayed in color. How does it feel to shift from black & white photography to color? Was it a necessary change or is it related to the subject matter?

AHB: In the beginning, my works were mostly in black & white so that I could do my own prints. As the technology developed and scanners arrived, I could fulfill my vision in color. It was almost as if a door had opened, and I could finally enter these rooms full of color. From then on, my works were mainly in color. But after about ten years, I rediscovered my love for black & white photography. The great thing about art is that there is a palette

of possibilities.

The human body is such a fascinating subject, and I enjoy embracing all visual aspects of it in my work – this has always been the case.

You are also active in the film business. Can you tell us about your latest project?

AHB: Well, it's too early to speak about it in depth. I am currently developing a full-length feature film, and things started moving recently. I hope there is more to tell in the near future.

Apart from your own fame, you are friends with several celebrities, including Till Brönner, whom you have portrayed many times over the years. In your current show at IMMAGIS, we see Brönner holding his trumpet with his eyes closed in an almost meditative pose. How did you meet, and what's your mutual secret when taking photographs?

AHB: Till and I met through our mutual love for photography. We both have a strong vision of how things should be done. He is a hard taskmaster, and that's what I love about him. We also share a passion for music. I guess we appreciate each other's company for all those reasons. We became friends quickly, and spending time together is always special.

Whenever I take pictures of Till, I feel complete trust from his side; there are no barriers between us. That's a great gift for every artist.

You have published an impressive number of books in the past three decades. How has making books changed over the years and is there any new book project in the making?

AHB: Books were a primary resource for me when I started out in photography, and I always wanted to publish my own work in book form. When I finally got the chance to do so with my first book, *NUDES* (Edition Stemmler, 1998), it all made sense to me. Completing a book always feels like the closing of a chapter, almost like a diary. It liberates me to move on and pursue new ideas and projects. The beauty of a photo book is also that it gives one the sense of "owning" an artist's work. That might be the reason for my obsession with collecting rare books.

The process has stayed more or less the same over the years. I usually work on several projects at the same time. It usually takes me around five years to finish a project.

As I mentioned before, if things go according to plan, my book on Philip Glass and Dennis Russel Davies will be out in fall 2023 with teNeues.

What's your advice for the new generation of nude & portrait photographers?

AHB: To be an artist is not a choice but a calling. Follow it, and it will work out.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.bitesnich.com/> and check out Andreas's IG account @andreas_h_bitesnich

The exhibition:

"Selected Works" by Andreas H. Bitesnich, until 19 November 2022, at IMMAGIS ART PHOTOGRAPHY