

FIGURE IN PLACES

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Figure in Places

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Chapter 1

Introduction

People are often sceptical when you tell them that you are a photographer of the nude. They usually get the idea that you do pornographic pictures. I would say there is a big difference between "Porno" and my type of work.

In my work I like to show the beauty of the human body and as it appears with nature or man made objects.

The nude is a challenging form in photography, you sometimes get the feeling of hopelessness as if nothing that you are doing works. Then suddenly everything goes right, your faith is restored and then you can go on fulfilling your dream.

In the remaining chapters you as the viewer will see how the first photo looked like and how photography developed. When doing a specialised direction in photography there must have been somebody who must have influenced you positively and negatively.

When doing nude photography the photographer must understand the model and the models needs. You as a photographer must know your equipment and be prepared for each photo session. You also must have some sort of idea before you start the photo session. If you and the model doesn't have a good understanding and a good

relationship, you are going to struggle. To get the best results you must tell your model what you need of him and her and to do and what they are going to expect.

Chapter 2

Where did Photography come from?

In 1816 Joseph Nicéphore Niepce took the first photograph and called it a Heliogram (Lemagry 1986:19).

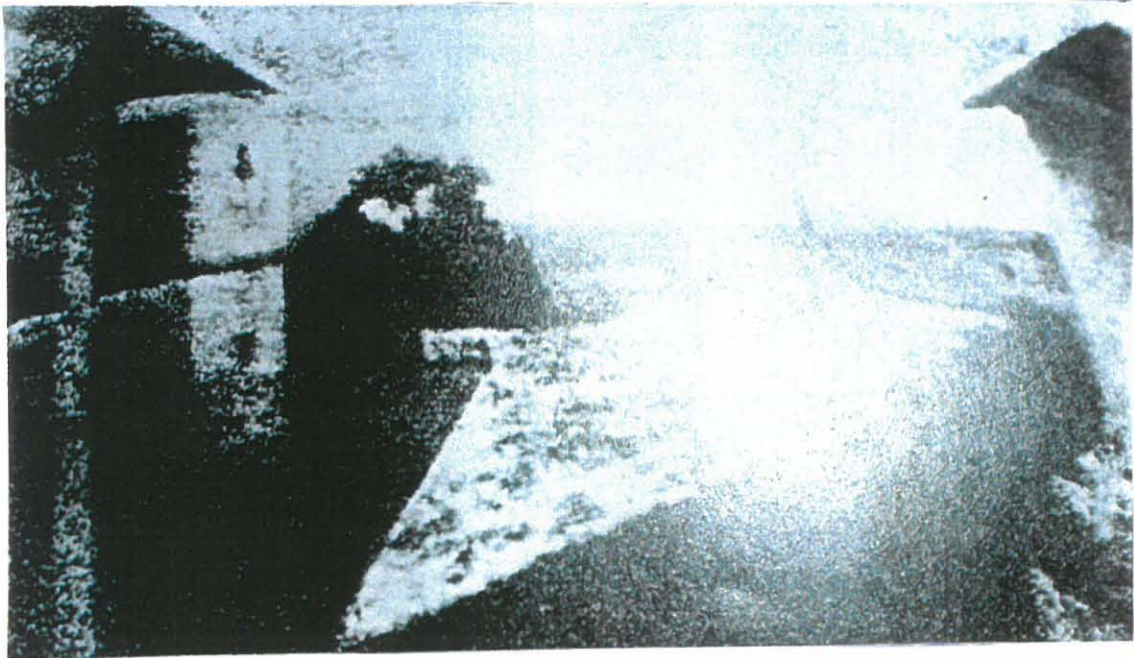


Figure 2.1 The First Photograph
(Lemagry:.....)

After 1847 photography developed more and more each day. In the beginning most of the photographs were taken of static objects, example first photo see Figure 2.1, because of the long exposures. Later they started to photograph portraits and landscapes.

Eadweard Muybridge was the first motion photographer. He did numerous shoots of running horses (Lemagry:1996).

It was much later when the nude was first photographed. I think in those days it was more difficult to photograph nudes than now, because then it was more of a scandal.

There were many different photographers who photographed nudes in the late 1800's and early 1900's until now. Most of these photographers did not only photograph the nude, but photographed in other fields of photography as well.

These photographers include:

Bill Brandt

Richard Avedon

Jan Saudek

Robert Mappelthorpe

Val Adamson

Pete Turner

All of these photographers influenced my work in different ways. Some positively others negatively but still at the end of the day I learnt something 'good or bad' from each of them.

Chapter 3

Well known Photographers who influenced me positively.

There are a few photographers who inspired me through their work. Many of their images are the same as my type of work. There are four photographers who I will discuss.

1. Pete Turner

As you can see on Figure 3.1.1, Pete Turner also photographed the figure in the landscape (Beazly 1994:155). The photograph was taken at sunset and he underexposed it to get the harsh contrast on the figure. I think what made this image so stunning is that the figure in the foreground, is contrasted against the dramatic clouds in the background. The use of light is excellent in the photograph (Beazly 1994:155).

If you look at Figure 9.2 it is basically the same principle. The roughness of the rocks and the broken wall against the smoothness of the wall in the background and the figure on the rock

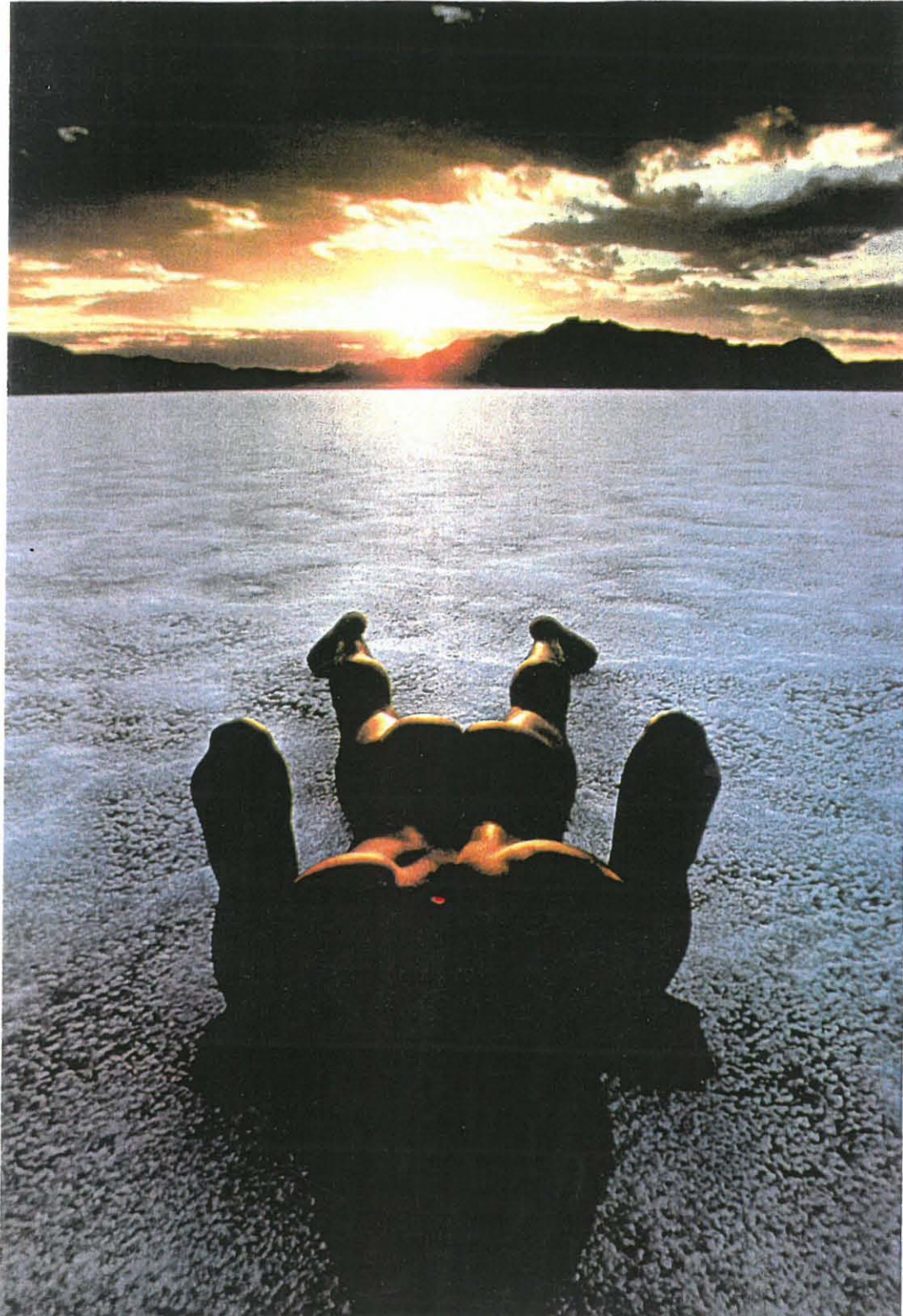


Figure 3.1.1 **Example of positive influence: Pete Turner**
(Beazly 1994:155)

2. Bill Brandt

Over the last fifty years, during which his name became almost legendary, Bill Brandt has been one of the most influential of all British photographers (Cavendish 1982:2186).

He set off in 1924 to become a commercial portrait photographer (Cavendish 1982:2186). Bill Brandt's lucky break came when he became an assistant for the American photographer Man Ray (Cavendish 1982:2186).

Bill Brandt is one of the earliest nude photographers to influence me. He began a series of nudes in 1945, using a wide angle lens (The Nude:68).

Figure 3.2.1 was taken in 1953 on the east coast of Sussex. He used a Pinhole camera with a wide angle of view (The Nude:39). As you can see it is also a figure in a landscape. He also made use of shape and form. What I like about this image is the contrast of the black hair on the white body. I think the roughness of the rocks and the mountain in the background contrast well against the smoothness of the body. I also enjoy the texture of the rocks. When you first look at the photograph you don't really know what is going on, but if you look closer you will see the figure or abstract figure.

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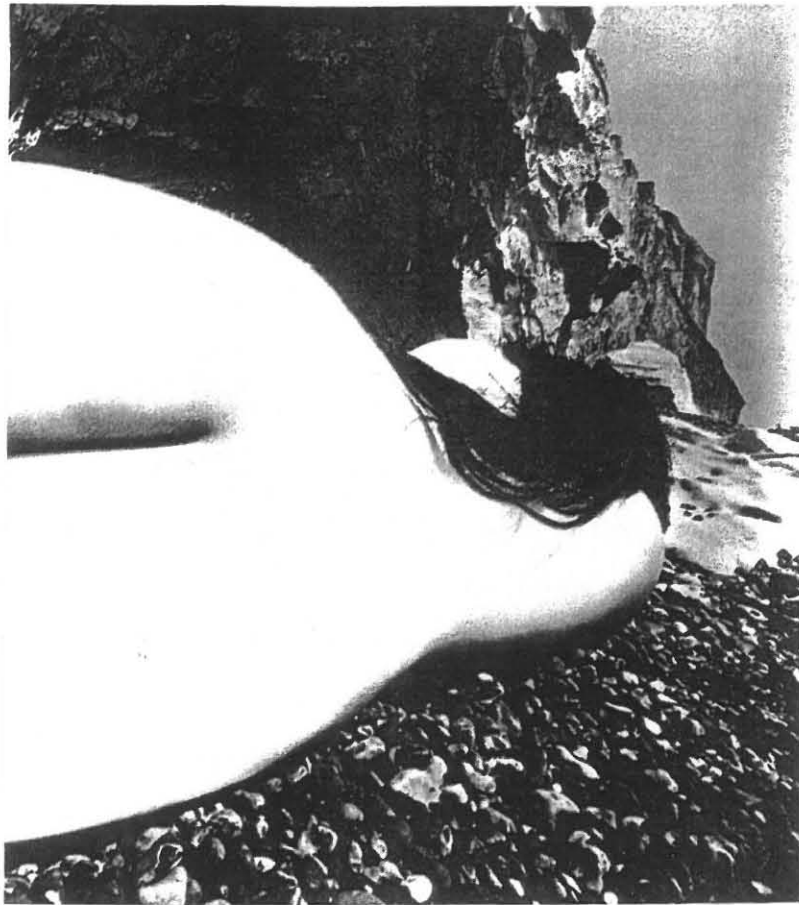


Figure 3.2.1 **Example of a positive influence: Bill Brandt**
(The Nude:39)

3. Val Adamson

Figure 3.3.1 Muscle Straight

What I like about Val Adamson's work is the use of shape, form and lines. Figure 3.3.1 shows the direct use of shape, form and lines. She used an athletic body and posed the figure in such a way that you almost think it is the rocky background. The lines of the muscles on the figure look almost the same as the lines on the background. The skin tones of the figure contrasts well with the tones of the rocks, the black line around the photograph also works (Adamson 1994:).

Figure 3.3.2 Curtain Call

In this image she used a slow shutter speed so that you can get the idea of flowing water. She also made use of lines and shapes. I think what makes this image so good is the use of a slow shutter speed and the water running over the figure. I enjoy the models pose and tones on the body (Adamson 1994:).



Figure 3.3.1 **Example of positive influence: Val Adamson**

Muscle Straight

(Adamson 1994:na)

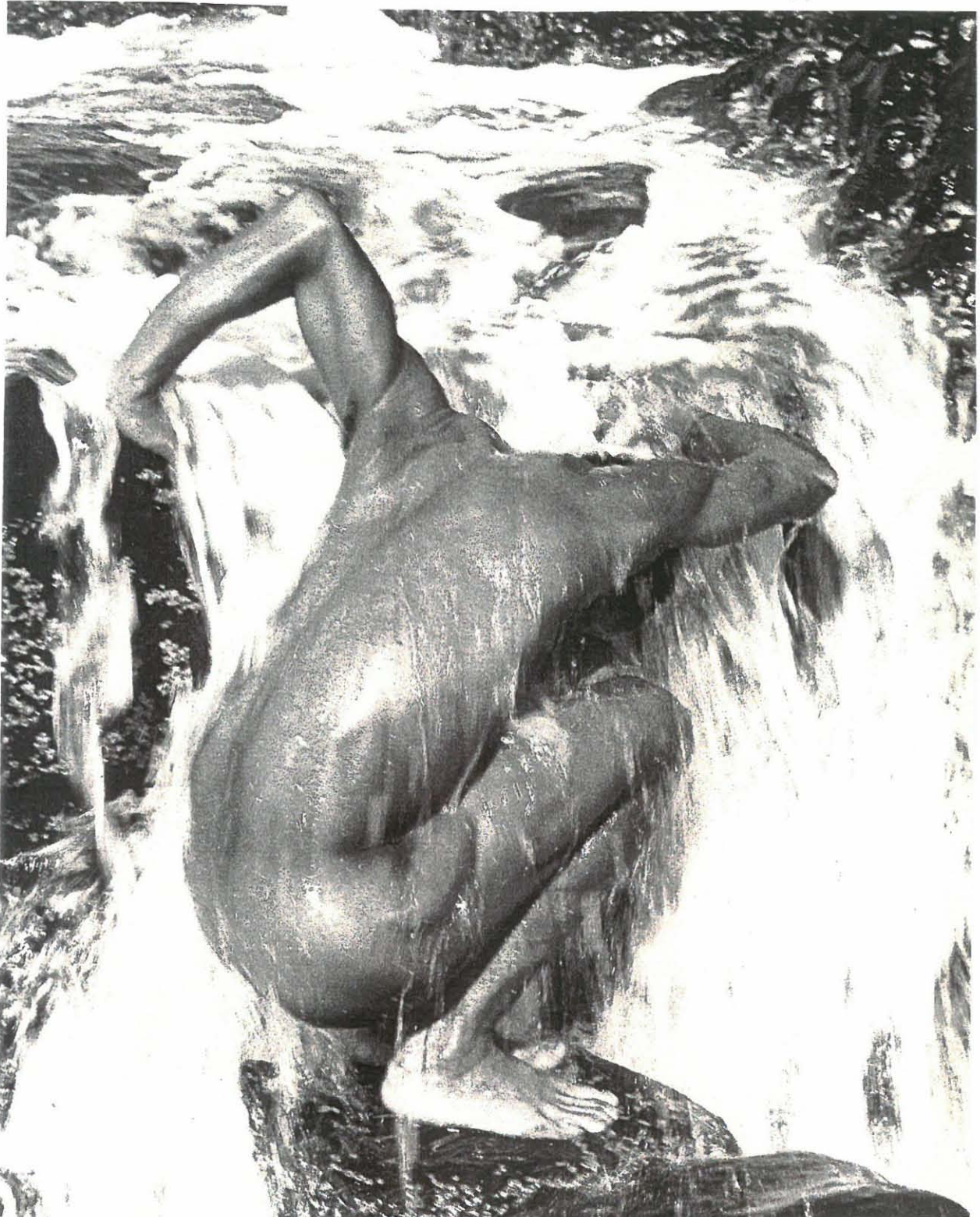


Figure 3.3.2 Example of positive influence: Val Adamson

Curtain Call

(Adamson 1994:na)

Chapter 4

Well known photographers who influenced me negatively.

Robert Mappelthorpe

Robert Mappelthorpe images influenced me in a strange way. Most of his images are strong images, but still in my opinion, it seems as if he wanted to bring out the ugliness in nude photography. Maybe because he photographed the 'private area' of the human body in such a way that it is almost one step further than pornography, in a sense that some of his work has a bizarre feature.

Opinions about his work are divided some people say that his work is successful, because it turns them on and that there is nothing wrong with his Mappelthorps work.

In most of my photographs I tried to avoid his style of nude imagery. I will always try not to show the "pubic area" example Figure 9.8. where the hands are covering the "pubic area". Imagination is left to that of the viewer.

In the following two images of Mappelthorpe, you as reader can choose for yourself, if you like or dislike his work.



Figure 4.1 **Example of negative influence: Robert Mappelthorpe**
(Mappelthorpe, 1988:88)



Figure 4.2 **Example of negative influence: Robert Mappelthorpe**
(Mappelthorpe 1988:24)

Chapter 5

Equipment

Summary of equipment used for own work

Introduction

Chapter five to eight deal with technical aspects and overall approach followed by eleven images discussed in chapter nine.

Type of Camera's

I use mostly a Mamiya RB 6x7 camera, just to get that extra quality in my images. I also use a 35mm camera the Pentax MZ 5

Type of Lenses

For the Mamiya RB 6x7 I use the 90mm the standard 127 mm and the 180mm lens

For the 35mm system I use a 35-80 and 80-200 mm lens

Type of Film

When I photograph in colour I use Agfa Ultra 50 ASA professional film as well as Agfa Optima 100 ASA professional film.

When I photograph in black and white I like to use Agfa Pan 100 ASA, Ilford FP4 125 ASA and sometimes Kodak Tmax 400 ASA.

Type of Filters

I usually use a Polarizing filter for both colour and black and white photography. The polarizing filter darkens the sky.

For Black and white I also have a red filter. The red filter also darkens the sky and allows clouds to appear more dramatic.

Chapter 6

Technical Aspects of own work

Grain in Photographs

To achieve grain in black and white photography I will use 100 ASA film and uprate the film to 400 ASA, but when it comes to processing I will develop the film according to recommended processing charts of each film. I will also agitate a little bit more then usual to get extra grain.

My exposure times

Many of my exposures times are 1/60 of a second, depending on the time of day I photograph.

Only a few of my photographs are shot at a higher shutter speed then 1/60.

Time of the day

I prefer to do a shoot late afternoon when I shoot colour. I prefer to use 50ASA film at this time of day because the colour will appear richer and will have more contrast. When I photograph black and white, time of day does not really matter, as long as the sun is not directly on the subject.

Chapter 7

Personal Preferences

1. Sex of model

When it comes to the choice of a model (male or female) I prefer female models, maybe it is because I am a man and I am attracted to woman. But on the other hand it is more exciting to work with a male model. It is not that you can do more, but male models are usually more at ease. You can ask them to do anything and they will usually do it. Sometimes they will give their own ideas. I am not saying that female models are dead when it comes to a nude pose. There are female models who will use their own discretion and can actually do a lot with the female body, but it is the most of the time difficult because the model is shy and does not want to show nudity.

I think at the end of the day I still like female models more, but as I have said, it is more exciting to work with male models.

2. Film

I think my preference of film at this stage is black and white film. The reason why I say that is that you can play much more when you make the actual print. A black and white film could create a classic image.

I will not only use black and white film, because in some cases colour

works better, you also get beautiful colours at sunset.

The thing that is important is that you have to know when to use colour or black and white film. If you are not sure what type of film to use you can maybe use both. Sometimes you think the image will look perfect in colour, but when you print it, it does not look good. I still find it difficult to choose which film to use.

I would also say that sometimes you have to use your own discession and do what you want to do and not what books tell you to do. This is not only for choosing film but also for the rest of your photographic experience.

Chapter 8

The Relationship between the model and the photographer.

Nude photography is unlike any other area of photography, you require total involvement with the model and mutual understanding. Everything must be planned and if you have to travel you already know what you want to do. You must take care of the model and let him or her feel at ease. You must also find a private place for the model to undress. I do not think there is anything worse than the photographer watching a model while he or she is undressing (Boys 1981:88 - 94).

You should warn your model before hand not to wear clothing which may leave marks on his/her body, because you don't always have the time to wait for the marks to disappear. You must also ask your model to remove all jewellery, necklaces and watches, if the model is female she must also remove her make-up and nail polish. If on location, it is a good idea to arm yourself with fly spray to kill off flies and mosquitoes (Boys 1981:111).

It is also a good idea to take some body oil with you and if the model has untanned 'bikini marks' you can also use self tanning lotion.

To make your model feel at ease you must communicate the whole time and encourage your model, have faith in your model and make your model have confidence in you. You must always be polite and

respectful to your model.

L. Clergwe said: *"You have great responsibility towards your model for how aggressive it must seem, to be coolly observed before the shutter is released in a guillotine like motion"* (Boys 1984:na)

Finding Models

I think finding models to photograph the nude is one of the biggest problems for the student photographer. If you start with nude photography I think you should start asking your friends first.

For the photographer shyness is probably the biggest obstacle to overcome. It is not easy to go and ask somebody if he or she should like to pose nude.

I think for the model shyness is also the biggest problem. If you as a photographer just walk up to a person and ask if he or she would pose nude, most of the time you are going to get no for an answer. There are some cases where the person will say yes. My opinion is that there are a lot of people who are dying to have the chance to pose nude, but will never dare tell you.

Do not think that only fashion models can pose nude, any man or woman can make an interesting nude. If photographing the body as a whole does not work move in closer and concentrate on photographing shapes and forms.

I think the best way to advertise yourself as a nude photographer is to place your name and telephone number on a pamphlet and send it around. I think this way all those shy people who wish to be photographed nude will call you.

Chapter 9

The authors own work

Figure 9.1 Untitled

I photographed this image with Agfa pan 100 ASA film. It was taken just before sunset and I asked the model to stand in the water because of the reflection. There was not really anything to do so I gave her a dead sunflower to hold. I think if the reflection was not there the image would not have worked. I struggled a lot with the printing because I underdeveloped the film, so I used a higher filter which compensated for the underexposure.

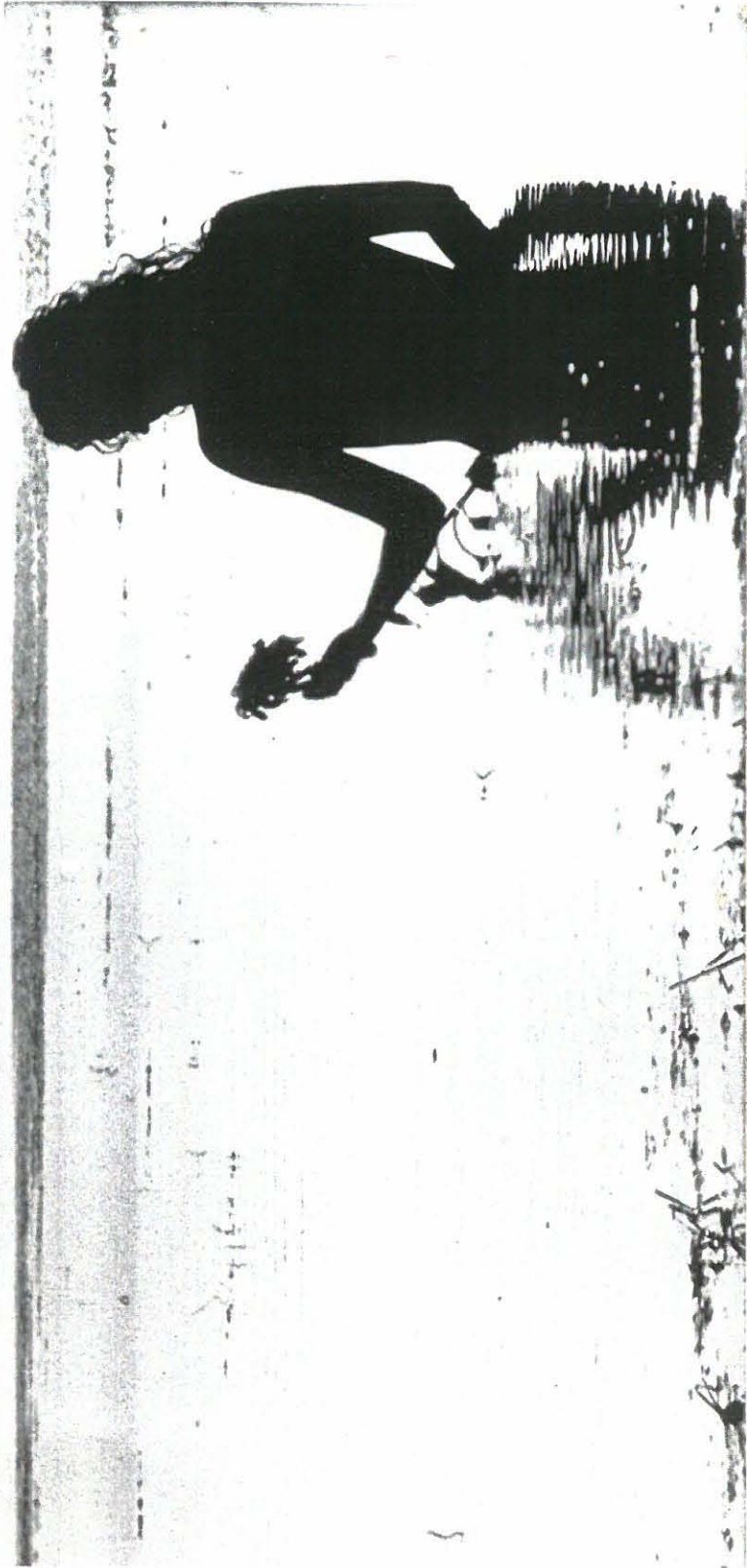


Figure 9.1 **Untitled**

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Figure 9.2 Chick on the Rock

This photograph was also taken with the Mamiya 6x7 camera. I used Agfa Ultra 50 ASA professional film. The image was also taken just before sunset. I was there the day before to see if I could get a found object and I saw the rock and the broken wall. I went back the next day and photographed the nude. What I like is the roughness of the rock, the broken wall and the stones in the foreground against the smoothness of the figure and the wall in the background. The other thing is the colour of the photograph, I think it has to do with the film and the colours of the sun just before the sun set. There is more on the negative, but I cropped the image to create the pleasing composition.



Figure 9.2 **Chick on the Rock**

Jacobus H. Smit

Figure 9.3 The Mirror

This photograph was taken with the 35mm Pentax MZ5. I had a XP2 400 ASA film and I wanted to try it out. While we were busy photographing, the model picked up a piece of wood and turned to the wall, I then saw the shadow on the wall and I photographed it. The lighting is a little harsh because it was just after 12h00. I really enjoy the shadow on the wall. I think the shadow makes this image work. There is only one problem with this image and this is that the model's left elbow looks like a breast. I tried to re-shoot the image but I could not get the same shadow effect..



Figure 9.3 **The Mirror**

Jacobus H. Smit

Figure 9.4 Twins

I used the Mamiya RB 6x7 camera with Agfa Pan 100 ASA film. I took this photograph at midday because during this time it was the only time when it was not too cold, because it was in the middle of winter. It is of an old farm house that is falling apart.

I printed the image and turned the negative around and printed it again, the same as the first one. I pasted the two images side by side so it looks like a set of twins in one big window frame. I think the white mounting board works well in contrast with the black window frame surrounding the model.



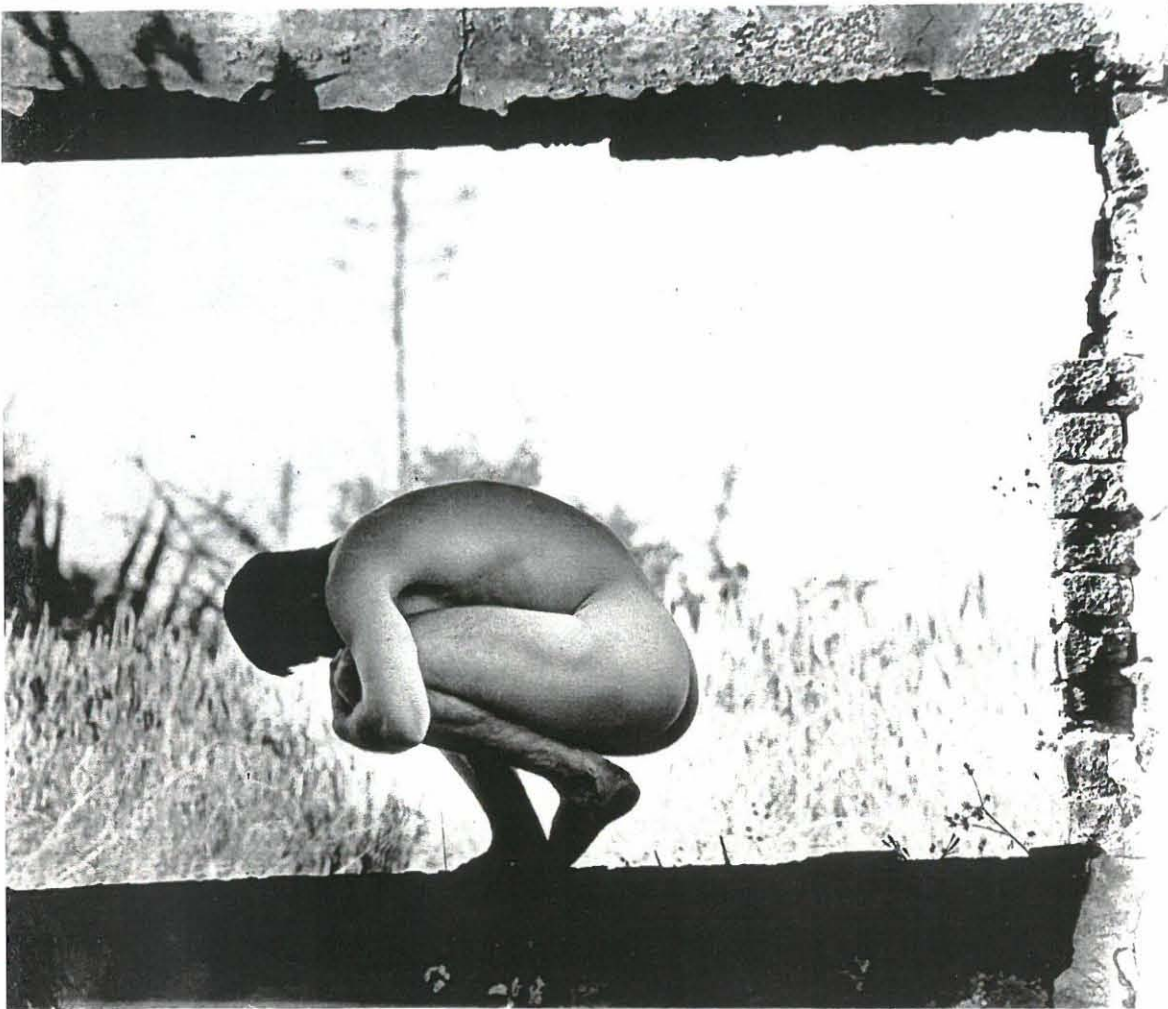


Figure 9.4 **Twins**

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Figure 9.5 Man and Silo

When I photographed this image used the Mamiya 6x7 with Agfa Pan 100 ASA film. This photograph was also taken during the middle of winter on a Sunday afternoon. Driving passed the silo in the image, I decided to combine the nude with industry. If I had to choose I would say that it is much easier to photograph a figure in a landscape. Of all the photographs which I did when I combined industry with the nude, I think this one works the best. I think what made this image work is the lines of the roof and the concrete and the shape of the silo ending up at one point. The figure itself is not really that strong but the way the figure is looking in the same direction as where the lines are going creates a pleasing composition.



Figure 9.5 **Man and Silo**

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Figure 9.6 Untitled 2

This photograph was taken with the 35mm Pentax MZ5. I used XP2 400 ASA film. This was also taken at midday. The figure in this photograph fits nicely in the environment. It is almost as if the figure is meant to be there. When you look at the photograph your eyes go straight to the figure, then goes over to the right side, you look at the chimney and then your eyes return to the figure. It is as if you confirming the figure and the chimney.

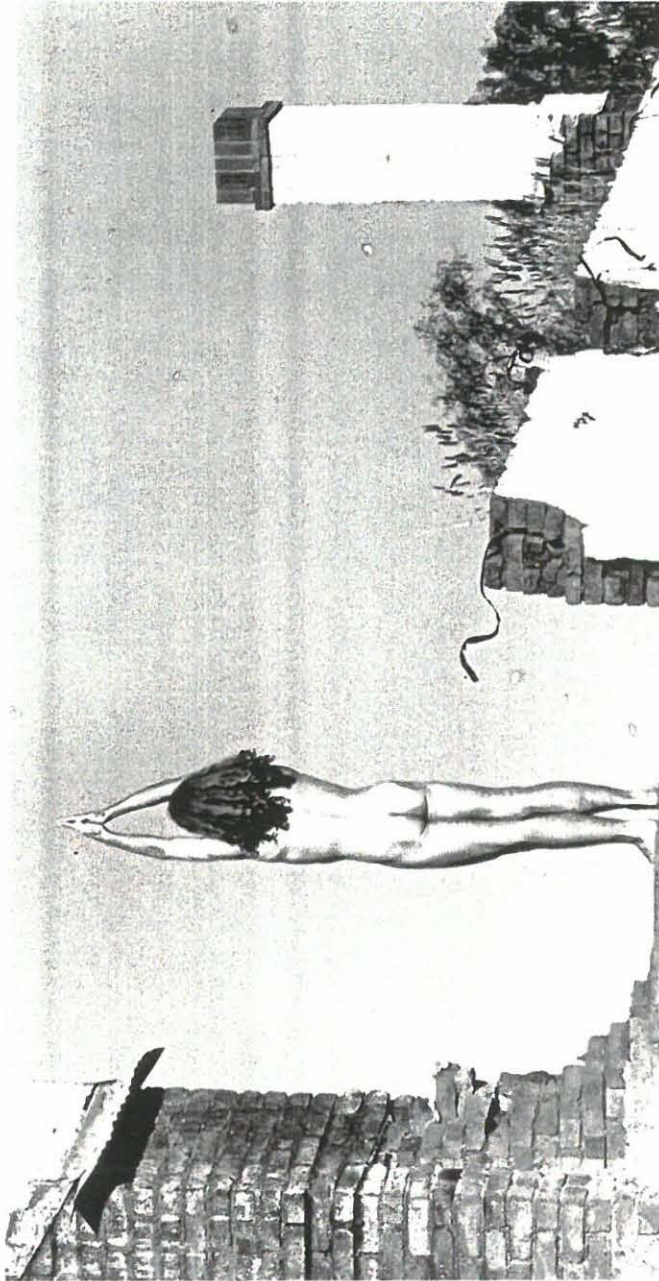


Figure 9.6 **Untitled 2**

Jacobus H. Smit

Figure 9.7 Man and Industry

I used the Mamiya 6x7 camera with Agfa Ultra 50 ASA professional film. This image is not as good as Figure 9.5 but I like the colours in this image. It definitely has something to do with the type of film, and this was taken just before sunset. I also like the figure and the massive industrial tube. Over all, this image has a more industrial look to it as the first one I talked about. I am also not sure but I think maybe it is too busy in the image, but then I think it is because of the figure. If the figure was not there the image would not appear busy.

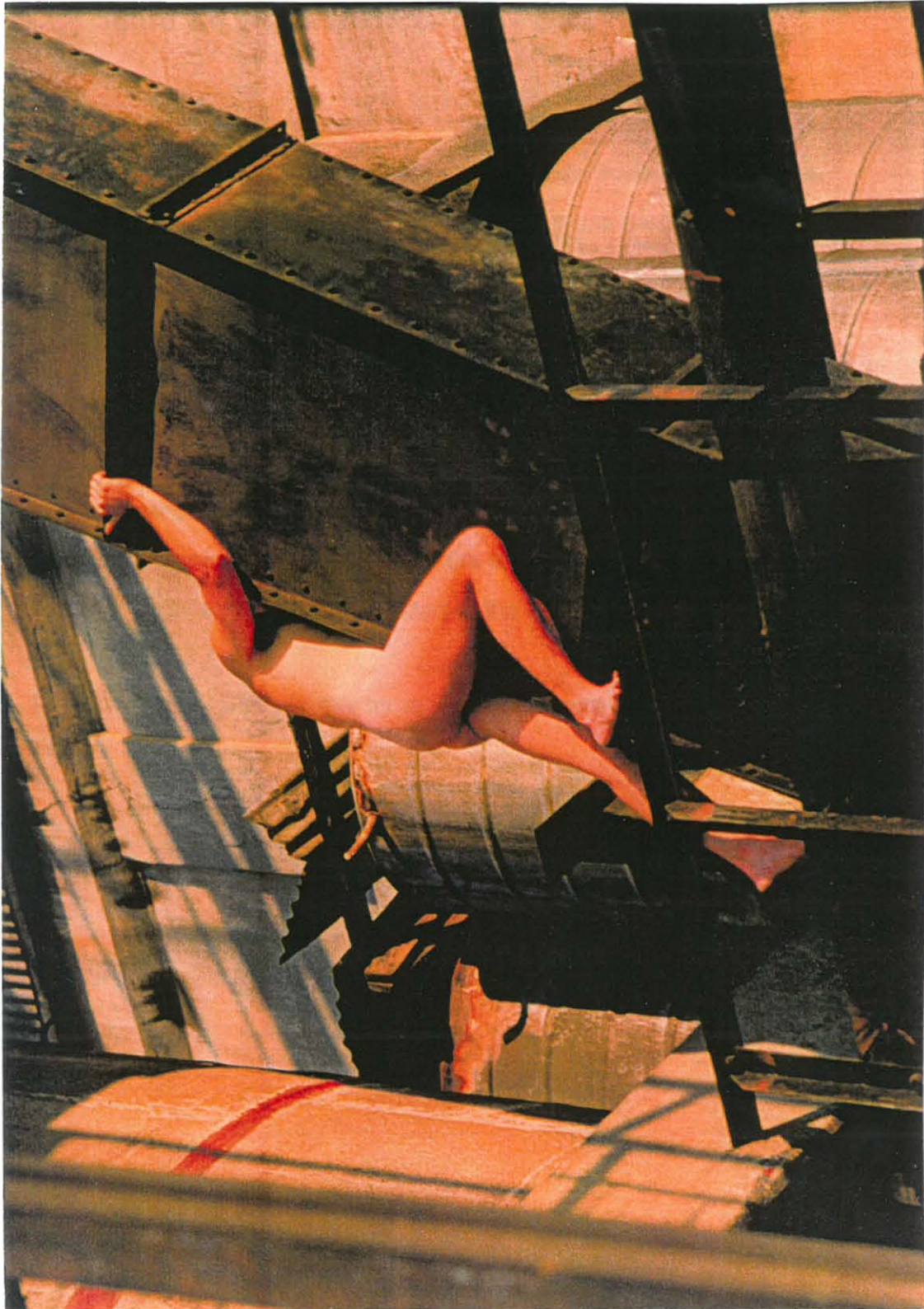


Figure 9.7 **Man and Industry**

Jacobus H. Smit

Figure 9.8 The Mirror has Two Faces

I took the photograph with the Mamiya 6x7 camera and used Agfa Pan 100 ASA film. This image is my first studio nude. I had this idea of experimenting with shadows. I only used one flash light from the side, but unfortunately made a mistake and overexposed the image by one stop.

I really enjoy this image especially the sharpness of the body and the out of focus black shadow against the white body. The compensating also worked nicely. It do not really matter that the head is not showing because of the shadow. The hands, covering the "pubic area" add to the mood of the image.

I think that I will definitely try studio nudes more often.



Figure 9.8 The Mirror has Two Faces

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Figure 9.9 Untitled 3

I used the Pentax MZ5 35mm system with Ilford FP4 film. This photograph was taken on a Sunday afternoon, also just before sunset. It was not because I planned it that way, it was because I arrived there late. If you look at the image it is as if it is lacking something. The pose is quite nice, with the arms spread out and it looks like the head is been chopped off. I think the back of the model stands out nicely against the white sky and the background, that has been placed out of focus.



Figure 9.9 **Untitled 3**

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Figure 9.10 Untitled 4

This photograph was taken with a Pentax MZ 5. I used Agfa pan 100 ASA film. When I developed the film, something went wrong and it came out overdeveloped. I struggled a little bit to print the image, but in the end I liked the high contrast. The only thing that disturbed me are the toes, but other people say you don't even see it.



Figure 9.10 Untitled 4
 Jacobus H. Smit

Figure 9.11 Jaco

I Photographed this self portrait with my Pentax MZ5 camera. I only used a wide angle of view. The camera was set on self timer and I pre-focused on the wall. The photograph was taken on f8. The time of day was 13h00. I did a series of photographs (24 exposures) of which only five exposures came our right. I thing the expression on my face, the shadow on the wall and that there is action happening in the photograph, is what makes this image effective.



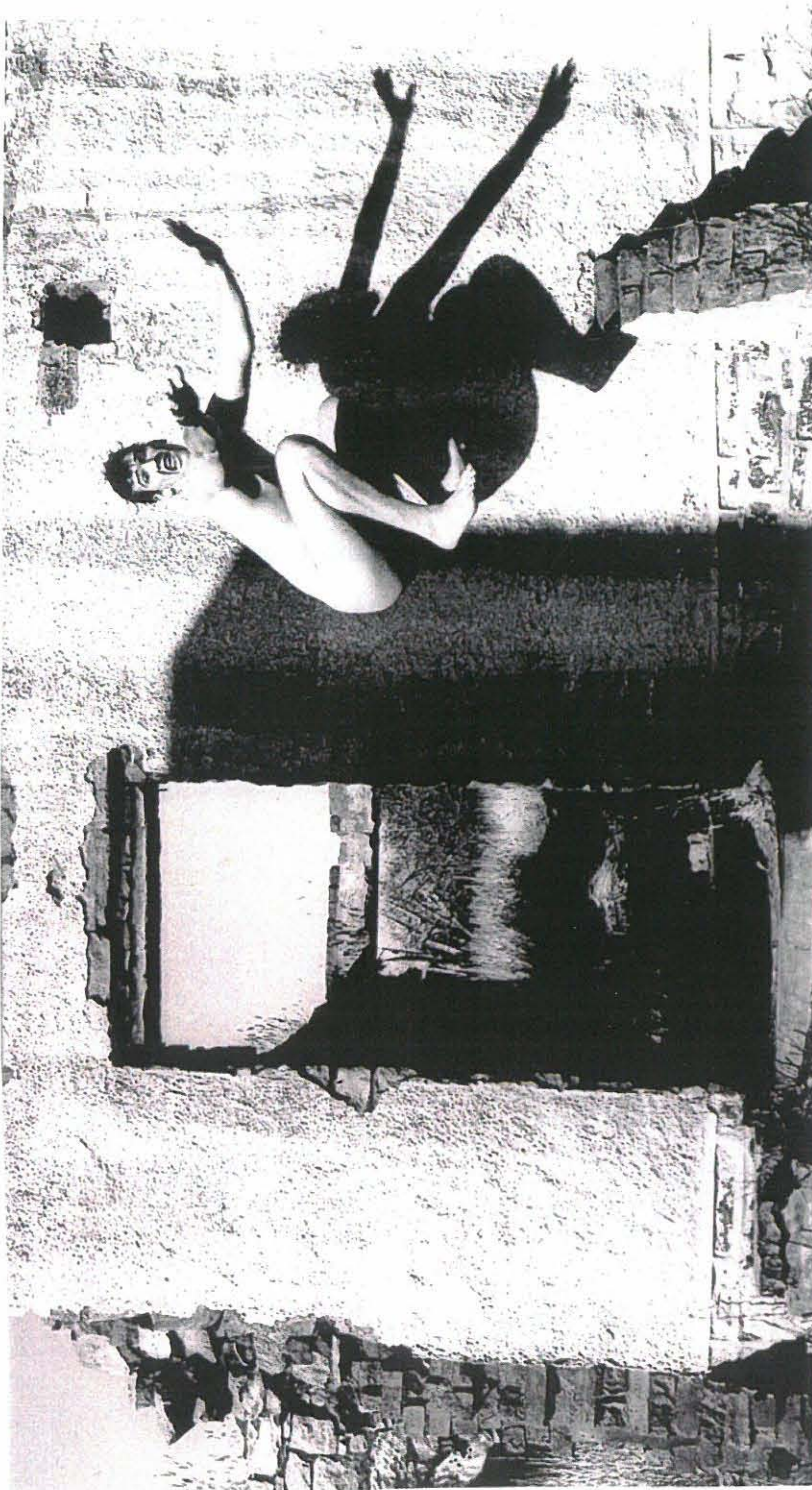


Figure 9.11 Jaco
Jacobus H. Smit

Conclusion

Being a photographer of the nude takes a lot of concentration and practice. Each photographer has his or her own unique style and emotions. The photographer has to develop it, experiment with it and practice it over and over. Each time you photograph a new model you learn more and more about people, yourself and your style.

Nude photography is like any other kind of photography, once you discovered your style and technique, you just have to practice and try to make a success of it. Not every 'shot' that you take is going to work but you just have to go on, because the more you do the better you will get.

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