

CLOSE-UP

Whimsical poses: cherries to bag lady

By Scott Harrah
Senior Editor

He goes by one name only. Lumir. But such a short moniker means a lot to the models he photographs — it means photos free of structure and conventional poses.

Ask any of his customers what they like best about his work and they'll probably tell you it's his sense of spontaneity and his ability to capture the unrehearsed moment and make it into something intriguing.

But what does he find most interesting about his work? The concentration and creativity fashion photography demands.

"I enjoy fashion photography because you've got to work for it," he says. "You get to *make* the picture."

He hardly fits the image of the stereotypical fashion photographer. He doesn't wear a silk scarf around his neck or call his models "dahling." In fact, he wasn't even interested in fashion when he first started taking photos for the military in World War II.

Lumir attended art school in Los Angeles afterward and then moved back to his hometown, Omaha. He covered graduations for a while and did portrait photos, but was offered a job shooting models for a Brandeis catalog and soon discovered that fashion photography was his true niche. But, he says, a woman must have an innate talent for modeling to make everything work for him.

"Models are born — you can't make them," he explains. "Some girls are like a sack of potatoes because no matter what you do with them, they still look awkward."

And what makes a good model even better?

"Make up does it," he says of his best subjects. "Hair-dos, a lot of jewelry and anybody's gonna' look good."

Lumir's forte is the unusual backgrounds and venues in which he takes his photos.

"I want to go down to the freight yard in the spring and get some shots of models wearing fancy clothes while they hang out in boxcars," he laughs. "I also wanna' shoot some models on one of the overpasses on the Interstate some night."

His plans include shooting some photos for posters and traveling to Europe to interview and photograph hookers for a photobook on the prostitutes of the world.

"I want to do a photographic essay book, but there's too many of them that deal with nature, scenery shots, the birds and the bees — I mean, who cares?" he says.

"I wanna' instead do one of the fashionwear of the hookers of the world because everywhere you go it would probably be different."

Currently, he's been experimenting with photos of models and maraschino cherries. He attaches a string to the cherries and dangles them above models' tongues for a hilariously offbeat effect.

One of his latest projects dealt with a \$100 bill and a model wearing spiked-heeled shoes. He stuck the large bill between her toes and took various shots of her sticking her foot between the headboard of a brass bed.

Lumir creates such visual whimsy in the studio above his home, a flamboyant menagerie of photo-plastered walls, wigforms, mannequins, birdcages and backdrops.

Sitting in the middle of his studio is a cylinder-shaped chair that's painted a day-glo orange and covered with paisley designs.

"See this?" he says. "This used to be one of those cylinders construction workers use when they lay the foundations of buildings."

Costumes and his own imagination often help him use mundane objects in an innovative manner. One of his basic props is a backdrop covered with imitation bricks. For model Maureen Evans-Hansen, those bricks bring back some wacky memories of a photo session she once had with Lumir.

"We created a seedy alley scene and I played a bag lady hooker," she explains with a giggle, pointing to a photo of her on the wall. In it, she wears a pair of jeans with slits cut out of both sides of the legs, allowing lots of skin and sleaze to show as she drinks a bottle of booze and sprawls out on top of a garbage can.

Such photos are the kind Lumir loves best, but he also takes more serious shots of bands, comedians and business people for public relations agencies.

And, of course, he still takes some portrait photos and model composites.

How much for all this?

"My prices start at around 50 bucks or so," he says.

That's a small amount to pay for the talents of a man who can make anybody look weird, glamorous, serious, or — in the case of Evans-Hansen — like a bag lady hooker.



Photo Courtesy of Lumir

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