

1) What gear do you typically use for these shots? We noticed you shoot Hasselblad, but would you mind going into a bit of detail? Body, lens, preferred lights?

These 11 pieces were all photographed with the Hasselblad H2 with Phase 1 p65+ back. I mainly shoot with the 50mm lenses and 80 mm on occasion. Over the years I have collected many White Lightning self contained strobes which work very well on location. I have a variety of accessories but use all sorts of unconventional materials when I'm lighting.

2) From the behind the scenes video it seems like each of the images was VERY involved and time-consuming. About how long would you say it took to create each one from conception to finished product? What stage took the longest? And about how many people in all helped with each image? (costume designers, makeup artists, assistants, etc?).

The whole project took almost two years to complete. Each piece had it's own set of complex challenges and issues that had to be worked out. Overall I am working with a restricted budget (I was granted a small amount from the Candada Council for the Arts) and that is never easy. The makeup artist that I have worked with in the past Vicky Chan moved away to LA so this time around I worked with various makeup artists in Vancouver. My core crew has worked with me for years and I truly depend on them. We also bring in students and volunteers for extra help on set. Even my friends lend a hand when needed. I start with the concept and then figure out what has to be done for the concept to come to life. As with all of my other series, my first priority is to find the right person to portray the lead character of the piece. This process can happen quickly or may take months or even years. I tend to do a lot of street casting and/ or work with local actors and performers. The circumstances are always different but somehow seem to work out at the end.

Tammy Larkin came on board early on as my costume designer and together we came up with ideas and solutions for outfitting our Gods.

I do all of my own location scouts and gathering of props. My studio XX is headquarters for the production with interns and assistants busy online and on the phone gathering information, working on various organization details.

When the raw shoot is finished I assess the image and together with my post team (Cake Imaging) we work on finessing the final piece. Details are essential in my work and especially in Gods Of Suburbia where the symbolism is in the tiny details. Unlike other artists who roll out new work often, I wait to release a complete series. This exercise in patients (something that does not come

naturally to me) gives me time to ponder and enhance the narrative within each piece.

3) Which of the images posed the greatest challenge for you? How so/why?

Every image is a challenge to produce. As I mentioned earlier I am working with tiny budgets and each time have to find a way to bring people on board and to get them excited about something that does not yet exist. I strive to find the right locations and there is always the disappointment of it falling through for one reason or the other. Take Buddha and Darwin for example. I had to convince a local designer supermarket to allow me to shoot during working hours, when the subject matter was clearly critical of the market itself. We had to find a way to work around that and finally was granted permission to shoot at a competitor's market. This took months to organize. There are strict rules in regards to photographing in a functioning casino and making this happen seemed fruitless at first. In this case I personally made lots of calls and utilized my connections, friends, acquaintances etc...My years of experience as an editorial shooter taught me how to communicate well with those who have the power to make things happen.

4) Any interesting anecdotes from shooting this series? We imagine there had to be at least a few weird looks doled out when you're standing next to deity in public...

Yes my subjects are clearly iconic and recognizable, from Disney Princesses to Barbie and Ken and now to Gods and Deities. When these characters are out in public people in Vancouver just assume that we are shooting a movie (as there is much of that here).

-Christian who played 'Ganesh' had to endure an hour in a head cast (for the elephant head) and later told me that he is claustrophobic.

-Xenu was portrayed by the tallest man in Vancouver 7foot

Most of the drama students at the high school that I used for Muhammad didn't show...so a few of the kids are actually crew.

-We were given permission to shoot in a house scheduled to tear down but when we got there it was locked...so we had to break in...that was fun.

-Darwin is my husband's uncle and the extras include other family members including my mother.

-I collected the birds from wild life photographers around the world.

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-Jason who portrayed Jesus is a well know actor and has performed in some well known films.

-Trisha who is Lakshmi is actually a well known clothing designer and at the same time just released her line called embracing the Goddess within

-I asked kids from my daughter's class to be in the Ganesha piece. My daughter Jordan is skipping rope.

-Satan is my fitness instructor and Grandma is actually my husband Jonas' grandmother.

-I bought most of the elements for the Lakshmi costume while in India on a residency.

-Shooting the Last Supper in Canada's poorest postal code was not an easy task...every time I turned around some props would be missing or moved as people would walk up and just grab a beer from the set.

-Craigslist is essential in my process!!!

5) Each photograph in Gods of Suburbia (and your previous work) has a very distinct feel to it... these beings — whether they're fairy princesses or deities — whose otherworldly glow is being encroached upon by the darkness of the reality surrounding them. How much time to do you spend in post honing that look? Any secrets/tricks of the trade you'd be willing to share?

I've been shooting for over 22 years and until recently (8 years) most of my work was more documentary with no elements of PS or retouching. When I moved towards Pop surrealism, portraying these supernatural characters, my visual language and storytelling techniques morphed into what you see today. This mainly because I had to create much from very little. Perhaps if I had unlimited budgets I would work differently?

For Gods I collaborated with Cake to create custom 'Glow' for each character. This was a fine balance as too little would not be noticeable and too much would look cheesy.

Also as I mentioned above my process for Gods was unique in that I built on the narrative with the help of post.

6) Any advice to aspiring photographers who would like to be doing what you're doing? I know this is a generic question but I think it's one our readers always enjoy hearing the answer to.

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I find that a lot of young aspiring photographers today are passionate but lack work ethic. When I started out I didn't make much or any money... That went on for years. I spent long hours in the darkroom and assisting, learning the craft.

Now there are a lot of photographer coming out of school and expecting to make the big bucks right away.

I say pay your dues and don't charge too much right off the top. Get as much experience as possible and make your mistakes at the beginning without too much consequence. Work up to getting the prestigious jobs. If you are thinking of a career in the fine arts make sure that you have a tough skin because even if your art is good you will encounter many rejections. Persistence is a skill and if you can continually produce a cohesive body of work you will eventually find an audience.