

pure attitude

Bea Blauwendraat's submission for Associateship was given the recognition it deserved in August, upgraded to an award of Fellowship. The portfolio is divided equally between young models and older women. It's not about flattery and it has involved a brave photographer and some brave sitters.

In the town of Bilthoven, Bea Blauwendraat finds portrait sitters who want conventional images. She's an expert working professional, college lecturer and Adobe Photoshop expert with a solid reputation in the Netherlands, and no shortage

commercial and social business; she gave up her photographic teaching career in 2006, opened her own studio in 2009 and now specialises in portraits.

But Bea is not afraid to ask her sitters if the session can be extended to experiment with

dramatic concepts they have not even imagined. Working with a tethered digital back on ten metres of umbilical cord, her Hasselblad is a starting point for montages using her own background and overlay shots. Costume, make-up and props

turn her sitters into the stars of acted scenes or the raw material for works of art.

Her portfolio consisted of ten "beauty girls" with extreme attitude, and ten "golden girls" willing to be represented looking older rather than younger, and



Bea has worked for a long time with beauty make-up and body painting artist Monique Penning of Oostvoorne. "The make up for Donja (below) is one of her specialities", Bea explains. "We also do many body paint photo shoots."





with no attempt to flatter. Whether the image shows a young girl out on the town in Utrecht, tipsy wine glass in hand to match any British city on a Friday night, or the lines on a face blending into the bark of an old tree, Bea's pictures are challenging to the viewer and the subject alike.

For every sitter, there are two images. The athletic shot below left is one of a pair with the image we have chosen for the cover. The double-barrelled lady is matched with a closer shot obscured in dark texture.

The headless symmetrical pose below is paired with the upper torso and face seen through birch bark.

These are not arbitrary portrayals. The younger girls were all looking to become models, or talent-spotted by Bea. The women aged between 55 and 75 are all represented by their interests. Margaret, aged 66, is a keen hunter and the gun is not just a prop! Martinette on this page is 75, and she's a keen traveller and walker, with legs Bea wanted to show off. Marry, on the cover and below left, is a 63-year-old dancer.

On the previous spread, the lower pair show Donja, a girl whom Bea says is 'always smiling' and that it was a big challenge to direct her to look otherwise. The upper right



hand smaller pair show Aziza, described as a 'very modern girl from Morocco' who was working in a coffee shop. Bea wanted to show the girls' interests or talents, and for Georgette, on this page, the second image casts her in her rôle as a musician.

The images were all printed on baryta-based inkjet paper – Innova Fibaprint for the young subjects, Hahnemuhle Fine Art Baryta for the "golden girls". Bea did not make her own prints, but used Netherlands lab Arca Print Supplies of Moerdijk who were also able to mount the finished panel on aluminium which she prefers for unframed exhibition work.

It's not surprising to learn that Bea was mentored by Vincent O'Byrne FMPA, the Irish master of multiple image montage. Her own accreditation as a Photoshop trainer since 1998 no doubt in the subtle matching of image structure and colours between two entirely different camera systems.

"I use an old Hasselblad H1 with an iXpress 16 megapixel digital back", she told us. "I know I really should update from the tethered system. For the location pictures used as backgrounds, I used a Nikon D700 with 24-70mm lens."

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