



PHOCUS 2K22

M A G A Z I N E



Presented by:
Phocus Team
www.phocusproject.com



"Here we are back exactly after one year with Phocus Magazine, the magazine of the world's largest multimedia cosplay contest! A partly renewed team, with lots of ideas and with the awareness of being now a solid group that has reached with a great effort and with the support of all of you very high qualitative levels, which require an absolutely professional work done with great daily passion. This you are reading is version 1.0 of the magazine while the final edition will obviously be released after the Phocus Awards 2K22 ceremony next July 31st and after the tournament on Instagram. The final edition of the magazine will be released at the end of the year and will contain many new features and interviews with the winners of this edition. On the next pages you will find reviews of some of the best photos and videos of this edition, some interesting trivia about our contest, the latest news in terms of photography and videography regarding the best companies in the industry, and all the future steps of our contest. In this 2022 edition we have introduced some new features and cemented some certainties."

- *We designed and built a **crystal trophy** as a symbol of winning the contest that will accompany the classic awards. A tangible and important award for all our photographers and videomakers.*
- ***The Phocus World Ranking (PWR)** has been created, a ranking that takes the results obtained inside our contest and can propel you to the top of world cosplay photography and videography!*
- *In view of the exponential growth of the video category, the **Phocus Oscars**, virtual awards that highlight certain outstanding quality aspects of your videos, have been confirmed.*
- *The awards ceremony, **Phocus Awards 2022** on July 31st will once again be in digital form, all started as a result of the Covid pandemic situation*

but this formula of the show has enabled us to reach an incredible number of "viewers" and permits our followers and contenders to follow the awards practically live from anywhere in the world with a simple smartphone.

We thank ALL for the support, good luck to all the participants, and wish you good reading!

Phocus Team



In this edition we collaborated with GLASSO GROUP a world leader company regarding trophy making. The company has a presence in 16 countries and has some of the greatest artists and technicians in this field on its team. They use the latest techniques such as laser engraving and 3D printing for working with crystal, metals, wood, resins and many other materials.

Visit their portal by clicking on their logo and follow them on their social media.

The exclusive and prestigious crystal trophy we have chosen as the symbol of our contest will be sent for free to the two winners of this edition (one for the photo section and one for the video section).



The GLASSO atelier in Elk Grove Village, U.S.A.



Here is a preview of the crystal trophy.
made by Glasso for Phocus

PHOCUS

WORLD RANKING
M O B F D B V I K I I C

RANKING	POINTS	PHOTOGRAPHER	COUNTRY
1	54	Sandy Bizzozero (S.Photography)	SWITZERLAND
2	41	Velvet Art	NETHERLANDS
3	34	A.Z.Production	GERMANY
4	31	ZeroTwo Photography	AUSTRIA
5	26	Aleksander Photography	AUSTRIA
6	25	dizzymonogatari	PHILIPPINES
7	25	Neon Cosplay Photography	BELGIUM
8	23	Steeve Li Photography	FRANCE
9	20	Valentin Pictures	FRANCE
10	18	KTP Photo	FRANCE
11	18	Ensepra Photography	FRANCE
12	16	RomaiiLee	SWITZERLAND
13	14	md_cosplay_photo	ITALY
14	13	Dristudio	FRANCE
15	13	FoxDirector	FRANCE
16	12	Martina Brui Photography	ITALY
17	10	Barbara Ghiotti	ITALY
18	9	Carlos Adama	SPAIN
19	9	White Raven Photographies	ITALY
20	8	Studio Zahora	POLAND

The **Phocus World Ranking (PWR)** is a ranking based on the goals achieved in our contest by photographers and videomakers starting the 2021 edition (in the photographic section) and starting from the 2020 edition (in the videos section). It will be a great benefit to all those who decide over the years to share their art and skills into our project because it will allow you to be officially ranked among the best photographers and videomakers in the world!

RANKING	POINTS	VIDEO MAKER	COUNTRY
1	28	AleLanz Video	ITALY
2	25	A.sim.O Production	BELARUS
3	20	Sneaky Zebra	UNITED KINGDOM
4	20	Maddalena Montecchio	ITALY
5	19	Blue Crystal Works	POLAND
6	18	H.E-X Photography	UNITED KINGDOM
7	14	Steeve Li Photography	FRANCE
8	11	Totoro Photoset Orders	ITALY
9	10	Omaru	PHILIPPINES
10	9	Andrea De Santis	ITALY
11	7	Fabio Camillo / Mipstube	ITALY
12	6	San4es100	RUSSIA
13	5	Studio Gepard Photography	BULGARIA
14	5	Gagarina	RUSSIA
15	4	Zona Otaku	SPAIN
16	4	Jerry Portelli	ITALY
17	3	ValentinJ	FRANCE
18	3	Barbara Ghiotti	ITALY
19	1	chris_calia	GERMANY

PHOCUS2K22

THE BIGGEST **MULTIMEDIA** COSPLAY CONTEST IN THE WORLD.

PHOTO SECTION

REVIEWS AND FINAL TOP 20



GFX 50sII MORE THAN FULL FRAME

FUJIFILM

X | GFX

Step into a New Level of Image Quality



GFX 50S II

FUJIFILM
X | GFX





An extraordinary photo composition the one made by RomaiLee in collaboration with cosplayer Akira Meyer. One of the best (if not the best) "original" photos of the year. Wonderful colors, fantastic atmosphere and a first-rate technical realization. Congratulations.



Brilliant idea that can only be realized thanks to the mastery of A.Z.Production Cosplay Photography. The German photographer shows off all his class and technique here and together with cosplayer Willow Creative gives us one of the masterpieces of this edition. A.Z. again at the top of world cosplay photography, 10+.



FINAL #12 PLACE

Black and white create a perfect contrast for the "blood red" that flows from the eyes of the White Queen (Eleonora Di Cosmo). The photographer White Raven Photographies is extraordinary in studying and composing a perfect picture for one of the best photos of this edition. Compliments for the idea and the extraordinary realization.



FINAL #14 PLACE

One doesn't find casually at the top of our World Top Ranking and here again S. Photography demonstrates all its extraordinary skills in studio, shooting and post-production. A delicate, warm and regal atmosphere photography enhanced by the grace and refinement of cosplayer LucioleS, always a guarantee. Kudos to both of them.



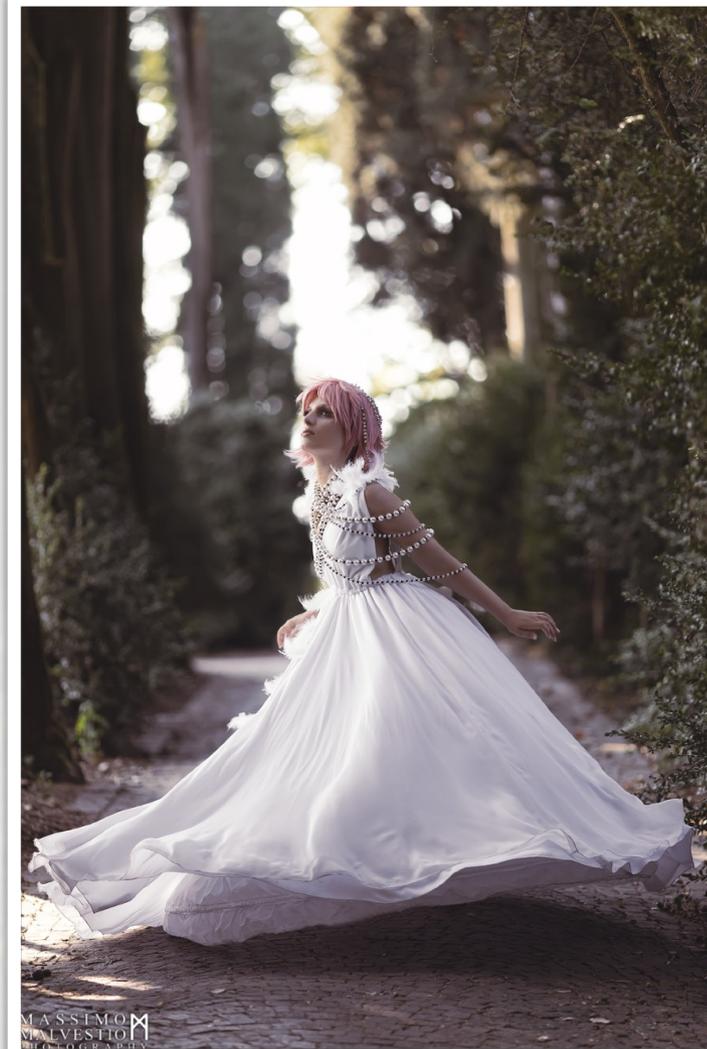
Exceptional photography done by "Il Baro" with the collaboration of French cosplayer Zelama. There is great post-production work here to create the right atmosphere for the famous Nintendo ranch (from the Zelda saga). The particular framing from below is the nice touch that fills the scene and completes the composition excellently. Bravo.



Valentin Pictures...what a masterpiece...a picture where the light "speaks" giving the right value and communicative weight to the image. This is a brilliant communication idea. A perfect location and a fantastic cosplayer (Naiichiru) complete the picture. We congratulate you and shout "Glory to mankind"!



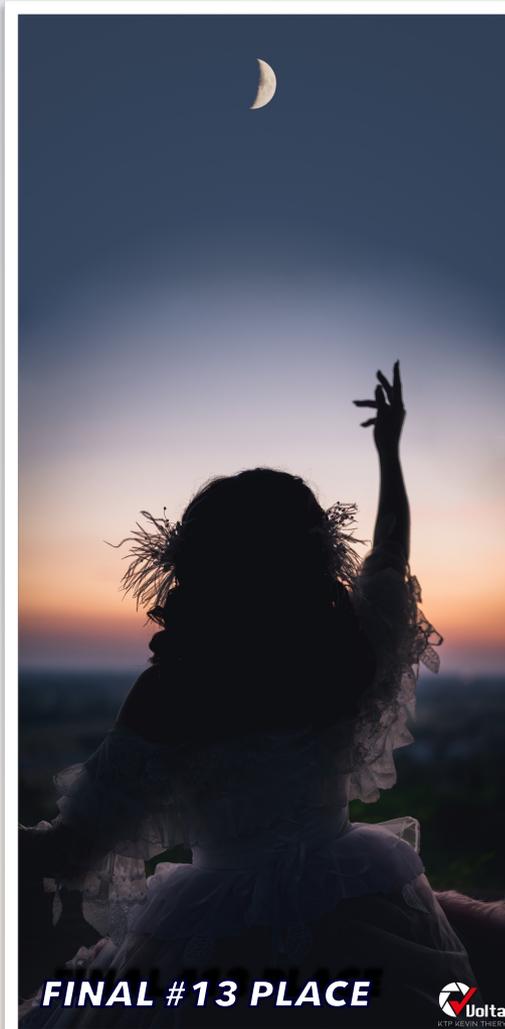
From Brazil comes this extraordinary photo of Cthulhu with cosplayer Sasa. The framing from below gives strength to the main subject as well as the blurred background that allows a total focus on the character. The use of colors and a great and delicate post-production complete a picture with great emotional impact. Very good work!



Photography as an art form, photography as an expressive phenomenon, fundamentals that Massimo Malvestio always keeps in mind for his photographic works. Perfect shot moment, excellent post-production and the pathos aroused by cosplayer Nanami is the right price for the ticket. Congrats both!



Psykoto is a photographer who always likes to experiment and find new ways of communication. He hits the mark again by giving us the the dark energy of the famous power ring from the saga created by J.R.R. Tolkien. Fantastic lighting and performance by cosplayer Hirako Cosplay. Applause.



A photograph that conveys emotions is a beautiful photograph regardless of the techniques used. This photo conveys us direct emotions and others less explicit it's all so simple and poetic. Congratulations to KTRPhoto and Hanako, behind a masterpiece like this there is an absolute artistic vein as well as remarkable technical skills.



There is exceptional knowledge of the character here, an unconditional love for Rinoa from Final Fantasy VIII. FoxDirector and cosplayer Miss Miwooki produce superb, emotionally dragging photography, fantastic final colors. and fabulous use of lighting. Well done.



One of the best post-productions of this edition. Class touches everywhere that make "real" all the imaginary components added obviously thanks to post-production programs. It takes uncommon technical skill to make such believable special-fx. Compliments to Kerly Piix Photography and cosplayer Muralu.

EOS R7

EOS R innovation meets APS-C design



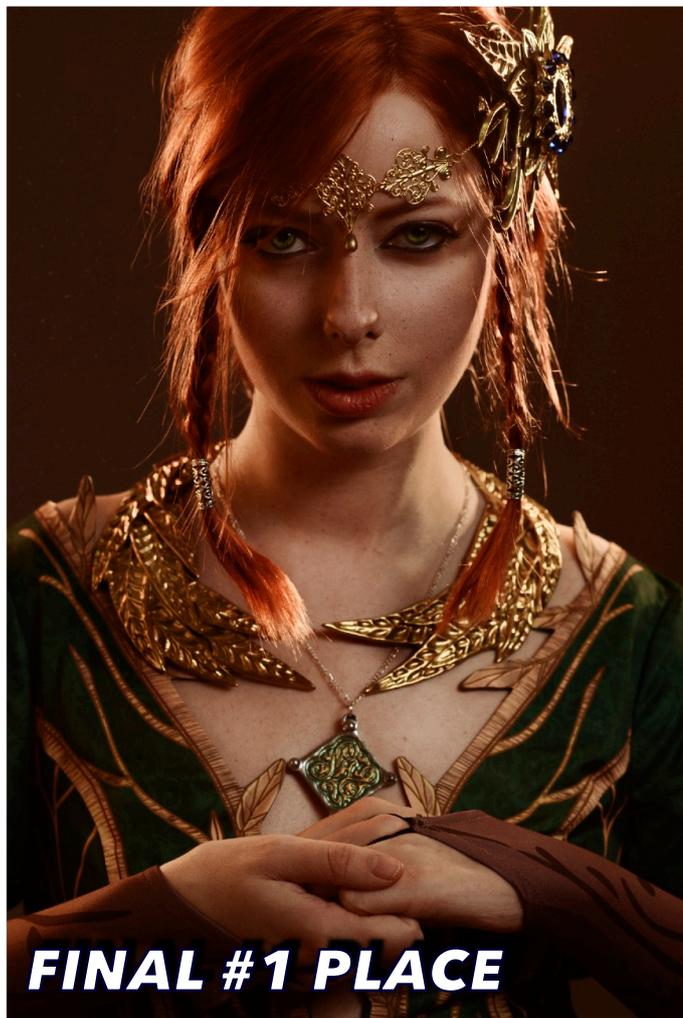
Canon



All the poetry of Journey in one image. Stunning set made by "Il Baro" and cosplayer Alex Dames that we recommend you to view in its entirety. We think that in photography if emotions rest on a high-level technical basis we will go very high. Congratulations wonderful work.



H.E-X Photography is an absolute top photographer (and videomaker) and we know it well now! We find him together with cosplayer konniichiwa, a seemingly simple photograph but enhanced by the incredible use of special effects done in a crazy and extremely believable way by the talented British artist. Applause!



A half-length shot made using canonical techniques to the close-up... a genial idea that capture the soul of the subject while taking the viewer's breath away. Brilliant photography, hypnotic, and with wonderful lighting and colors. Ten minutes of applause to the work come to us from Elena of the Belgian duo Neon cosplay photography and the beautiful cosplayer Kurama's corner.



A first-rate photo composition with some of typical features of Austrian photographer Aleksander Photography, he give us one of the best photos of this edition. The level of the cosplayer Sweet Angel (miciaglo) is crazy, the lights, post production and foreground elements give energy to the entire image.



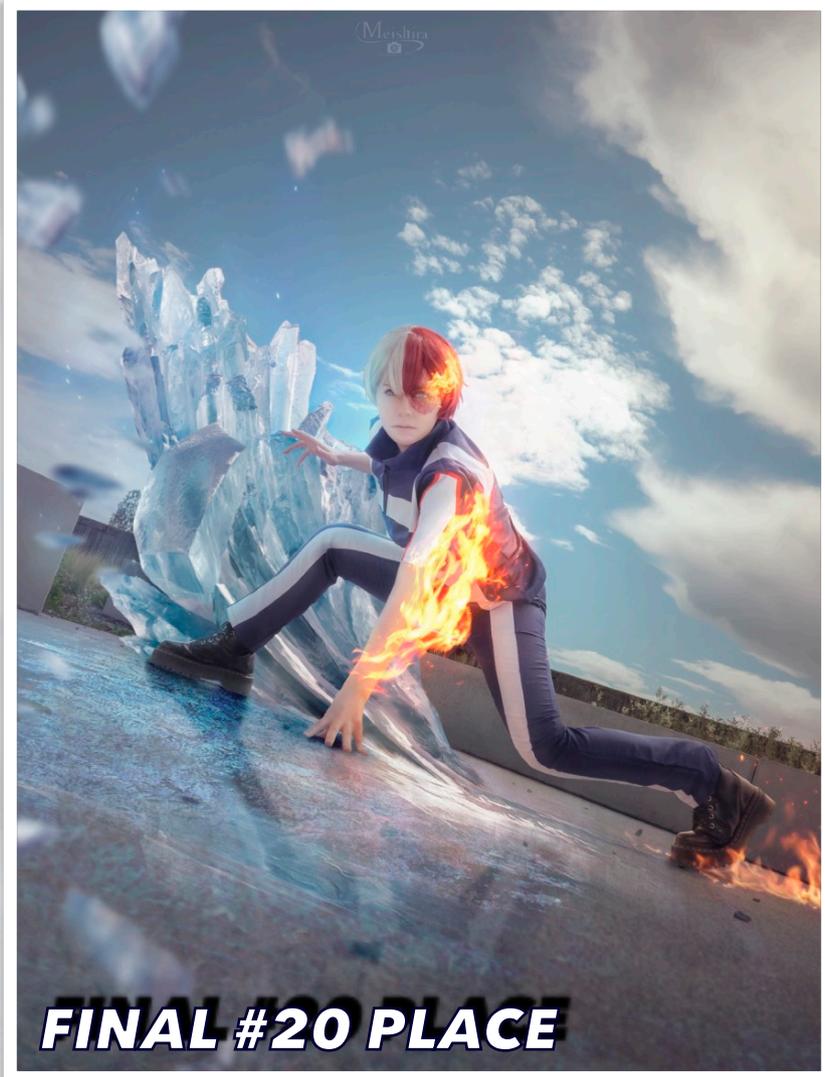
Photography with insane cleanliness of image. Simple in its brilliance, the result of the great technical skill of photographer Mr X Photography and the expressiveness of cosplayer Miyu Inverse. In addition, the light source gives importance to the subject and makes us appreciate so many small details of the of the character. Compliments both.



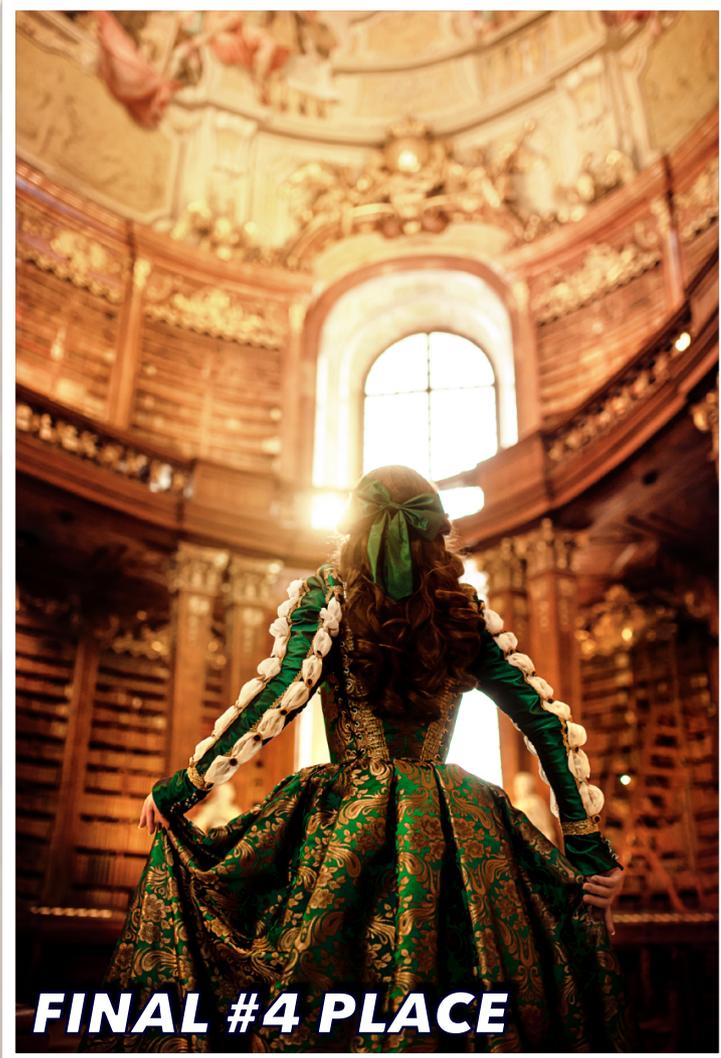
How important is understand and exploit light in a photographic composition, from Ukraine noritaiga.photo and Cudo_cos shows us a masterfully crafted final image that captures the viewer's eyes thanks in part to a great knowledge of the character and the cosplayer's expressiveness.



Very powerful and evocative image the one sent to us by the excellent Medero Photos with the collaboration of cosplayer Letizia_cosplay. Leeloo from The Fifth Element is excellently characterized in both her aesthetic and temperamental side. The whole package is built to focus on the character. Well done.



What a spectacle! One of the best special effects pictures of this edition! Masterful technique by Meishira who builds around the Peaky cosplayer a spectacular final product! All the elements added in post-production look absolutely real! Congratulations it's a wonderful job and done in a technically superb way!



An impressive duo (S.Photography + LucioleS) for one of the most beautiful photos of the year. The framing behind the character gives great pathos and makes the scene strong, romantic and emotional, it also doesn't descend into banality because a story is told here through visual emotions. Masterpiece.



Arriving in the hours of the contest, this photo is a small masterpiece expertly constructed by Totenpictures and cosplayer Drymartini. The design is inspired by artwork from the video game The Witcher and the character portrayed is Adda The White. Take a look, the reproduction is crazy and masterfully executed. Congratulations to you!



Excellent photographic composition by White Raven Photographies that focuses almost everything on the ring giving great impact to the image. Even the model (the cosplayer Malombra) despite being in the background lives inside the composition and is extremely insightful. A very original composition technically laudable. Congrats.



A big applause to photographer "Il Baro" and cosplayer Francesca Frey. Total focus on the subject (beautiful compliments, also in expressiveness) with total black background that highlights the colors and make-up of the model. Congratulations, simple but not for everyone photo that shows an out of the ordinary artistic vein.

Nikon D850



45.7MP

| 9 fps*

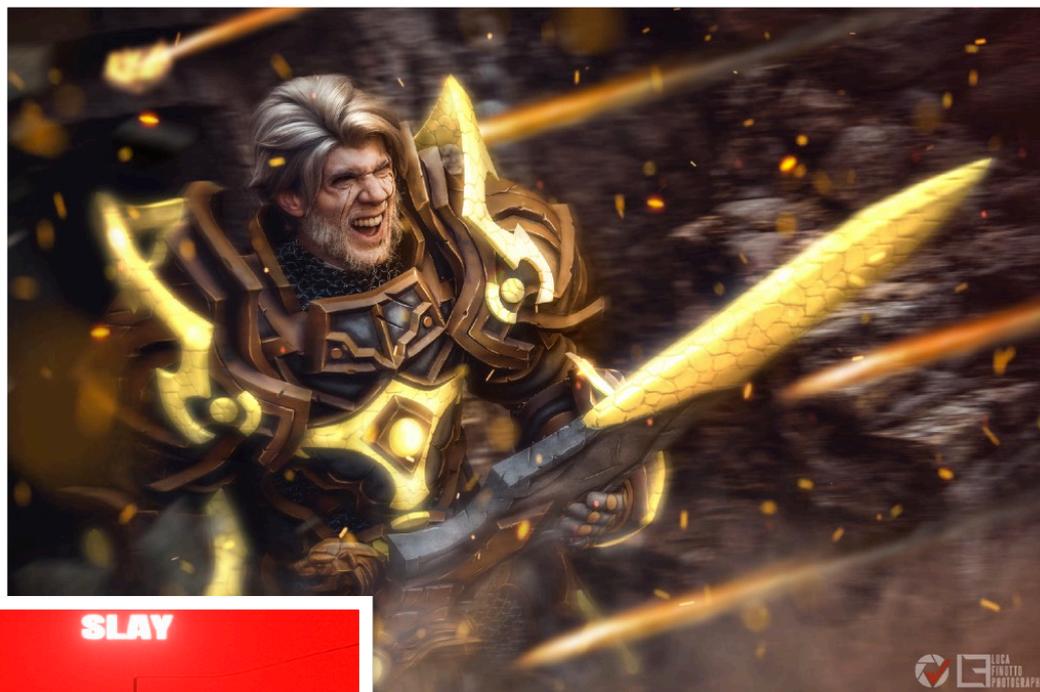
| ISO 64-25600

| 4K UHD VIDEO



Create without limits and deliver without exception.

Epic photo by Luca Finotto taking us into the world of World of Warcraft thanks to the cosplayer Danny Mcfly. In this case, the massive post-production is really relevant to the battle context that was intended to be recreated. This is the kind of digital artwork we like to receive in our contest. Congratulations, great work!!



Once again A.Z.Production Cosplay Photography demonstrates to us his capabilities in various "worlds" of photography. Here we are presented with a very commercial image with great scenic impact. The fiery red color of the background and the neon wheels of the motorcycle, (just to give two examples) are extraordinary elements that together with the excellent cosplay made by Lux Cosplay (always a guarantee) that completes a picture of absolute impact. Congratulations.

Nishimi photographie gives us a photo full of pathos and great energy. Stunning shot moment for one of the most "action" photos of this edition. Beautiful location and the skill of the photographer in capturing the expressiveness of the two cosplayers niten_roc and d_cos_park. Congrats to this amazing trio!

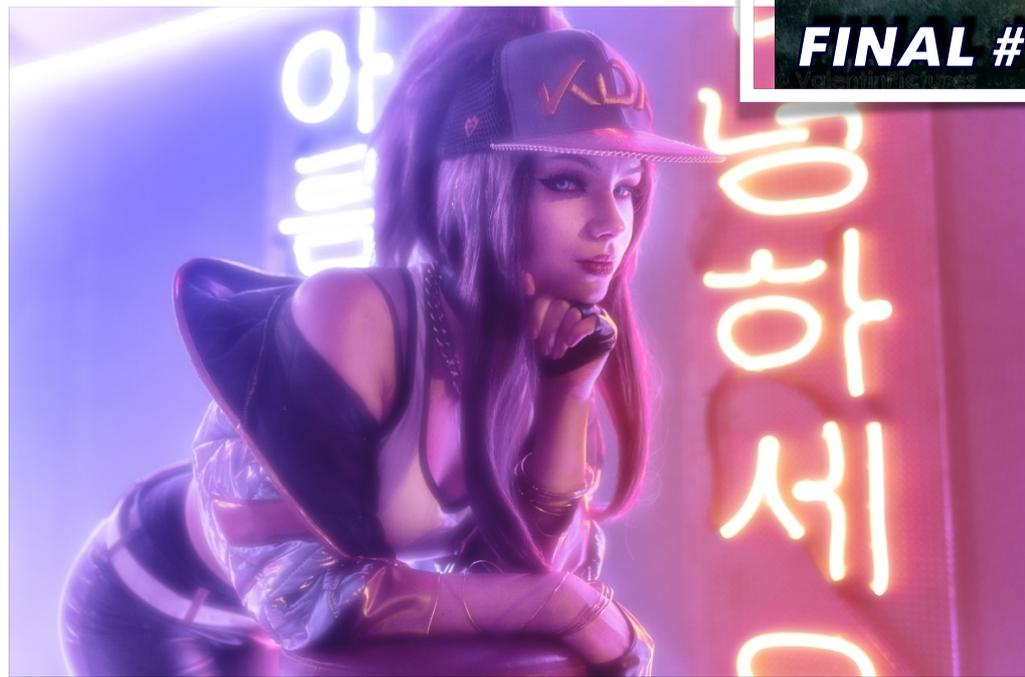


Ensepra at a very high technical level, all the characteristics for good photography of this kind are excellently offered here. This is a typical photographic technique aimed at capturing the emotional aspect of the person being immortalized. This is a self-portrait where the artist emphasizes that she really loves the chosen character. We take the liberty of virtually awarding an award: "Close-up of the year" to this photo. Congratulations from our entire team.

Perfect geometries, refinement of subject, crazy light and colors in this masterpiece photo composition presented to us by Valentin Pictures in collaboration with cosplayer Ainlina. Very high levels of cosplay photography achieved by the talented French photographer year after year come to us with authentic masterpieces! Congratulations wonderful work!

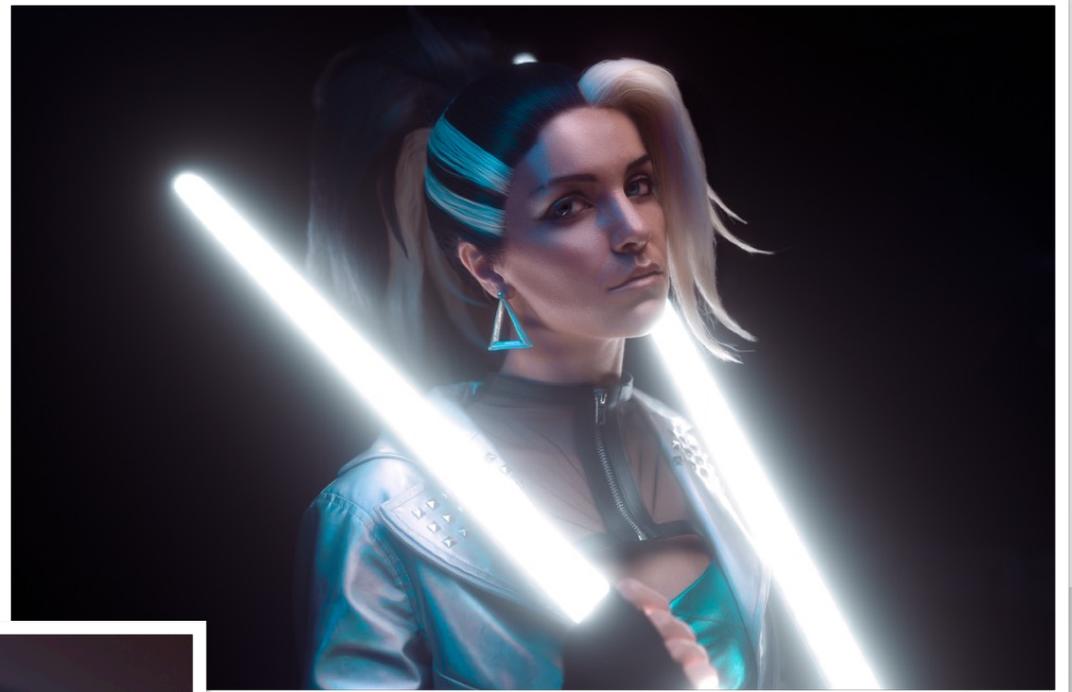


FINAL #9 PLACE



A graphic work that really looks like a screenshot taken from a League of Legends movie. Very particular post-production and ingenious use of lights by the German photographer moped_1 that together with the cosplayer kuro_m_cosplay give us one of the most beautiful shots of this edition dedicated to the very famous Riot's video game saga! Congratulations!!! What a show!

We are familiar with Terobes Arts excellent German artist we have followed for a few years. Behind the apparent simplicity of this shot hides meticulous and researched work (also in post-production). Compliment. Stylistic choice with total focus on the subject (the excellent hummel.cosplay) and first-rate technical realization that when analyzed in detail gives many joys to photography lovers. Applause!



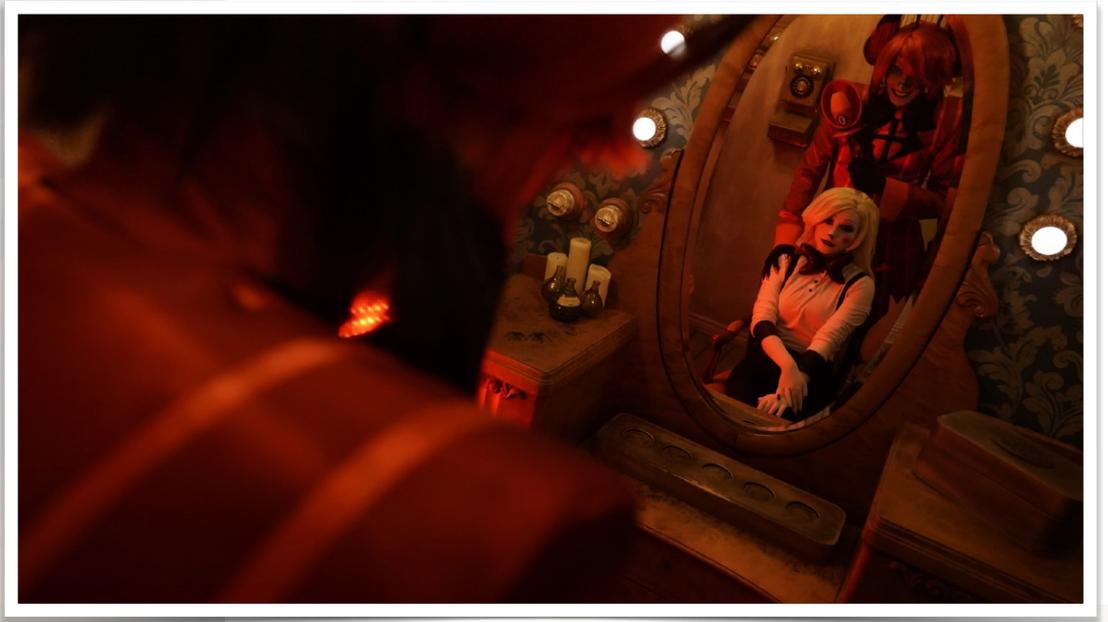
The technical talent and artistic vein of Barbara Ghiotti traces the best that can be seen in a contest of this level. The Italian photographer together with cosplayer Roshiazelos show absolute love for the chosen character (Toge Inumaki from Jujutsu Kaisen), and through the use of original techniques in shooting and post production, a photographic composition of the absolute highest level is achieved. The cleanliness of the image is also crazy. Well done.

OLYMPUS



WITHOUT LIMITS - *OLYMPUS E-M5 Mark III*
Everything you need to explore wherever and whenever you want.

Particular photo project inspired by Hazbin Hotel by the talented Belarusian photographer (and our actual champion in the video section), A.sim.O Production (Aliaksei Simkin), who with the collaboration of the always good cosplayer Lady Integra and the excellent cosplayer Captain Squalo packs a "creepy" (in a good way) and original picture. Excellent use of colors and perfect moment shots that capture the great expressiveness of the cosplayers and the atmosphere of the inspirational series. Good job!



So much talent, flair, and creativity in this elegant shot proposed to us by photographer Maddalena Montecchio. The grace of cosplayer Yuki no Hana Cosplay is masterfully captured by the photographer. The photographer uses extremely professional photographic techniques in packaging one of the most beautiful photo compositions of this edition. Congratulations, these are the photos we want to see inside Phocus, awesome!

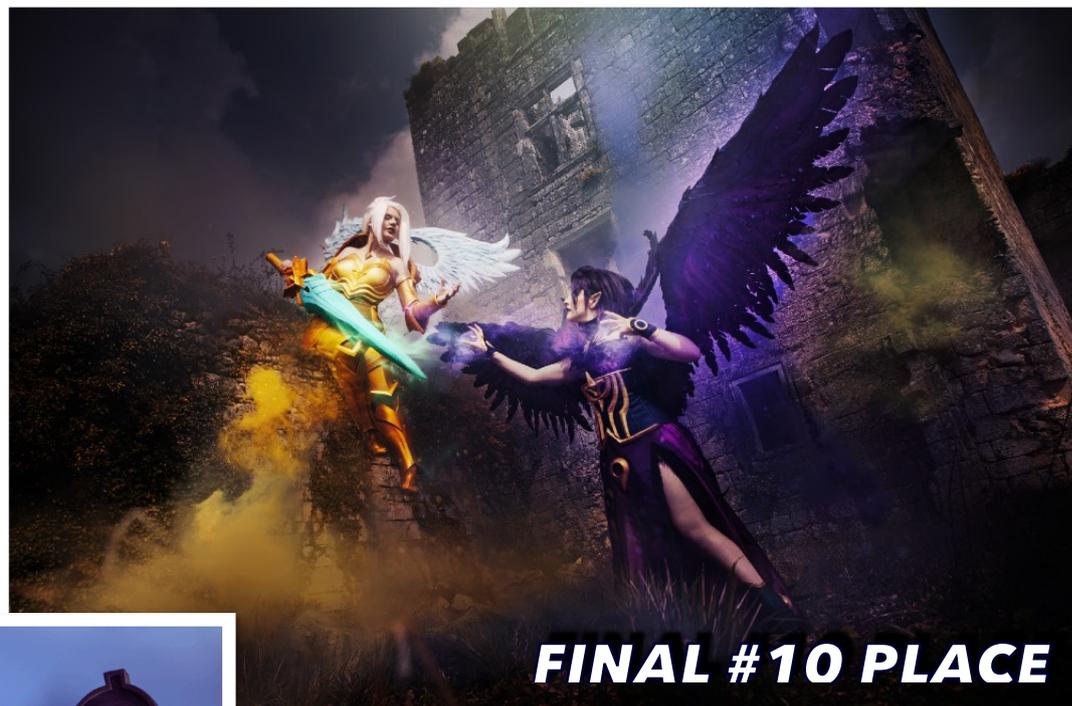
Again a great test of technical skill and imagination by Barbara Ghiotti who together with cosplayer penny_in_cosplay1 projects us into a quiet moment of life with an original point of view on the character of Aloy the protagonist of Horizon, a great video game masterpiece by Guerrilla Games. Truly beautiful play of light in a beautiful location. The placement of the camera gives originality to the project. Congratulations.



Exceptional work by Velvet Art and cosplayer Mikasa, a masterpiece of unique refinement combined with great technical skill when composing the image. This is photographic art, a timeless masterpiece, one of the best photos ever received in Phocus. The overall picture is the result of great study and flair, starting from the wonderful location, to the model's pose going all the way to the natural lighting... Standing ovation.

FINAL #2 PLACE

Steeve Li Photography is a great photographer, videomaker, and digital artist who makes us stand up on the sofa! An epic photo, shot and constructed with great artistry and absolute technical skills. The Phoenix Sparkle and Hiraku cosplayers are extraordinary in this image, powerful and expressive! One of the best (if not the best) digital works of this edition. Congratulations because here we're at the top regarding post-production of photographs in the cosplay field.



We loved this artwork that came from Brazil by Santos CosPhoto in collaboration with cosplayer slimyFrogz cosplayer. The pose chosen for the model is ingenious, the result of a great study that makes the image more dynamic. In addition, the shooting technique allowed the photographer to work softly and pertinently in photo retouching. The end result is a highly communicative and emotionally rich image. Congratulations on the technical and artistic skills of both of them.

LUMIX GH6

A New Creative Dimension



Panasonic
LUMIX

Little talents grow, and zerotwo photography is a prime example. You aren't in the Phocus World Ranking by accident. Photographic composition at the top of this edition, the rule of thirds applied to perfection leading the viewer's eye to precise and studied points. A magnificent photographic composition. Image sharpness of highest level, lights, and colors at the top. We also applaud the model (the cosplayer narga chan), always perfect in front of the lens. Wonderful work, congratulations!



Masterpiece by Carlos Adama that tells us about a fight between Ellie and Abby from The last of us part 2. The photographer is brilliant because everything we see is the result of a study and a great love (also of the two cosplayers Opal Ink Cosplay, Beyond Believing Cosplay) towards the context that was intended to be recreated. When a photo "speaks" it means that a great communicative result has been achieved, is the idea that the artists wanted to tell us, manifest and visible before our eyes. Goal achieved this image conveys emotions. Congratulations excellent work.

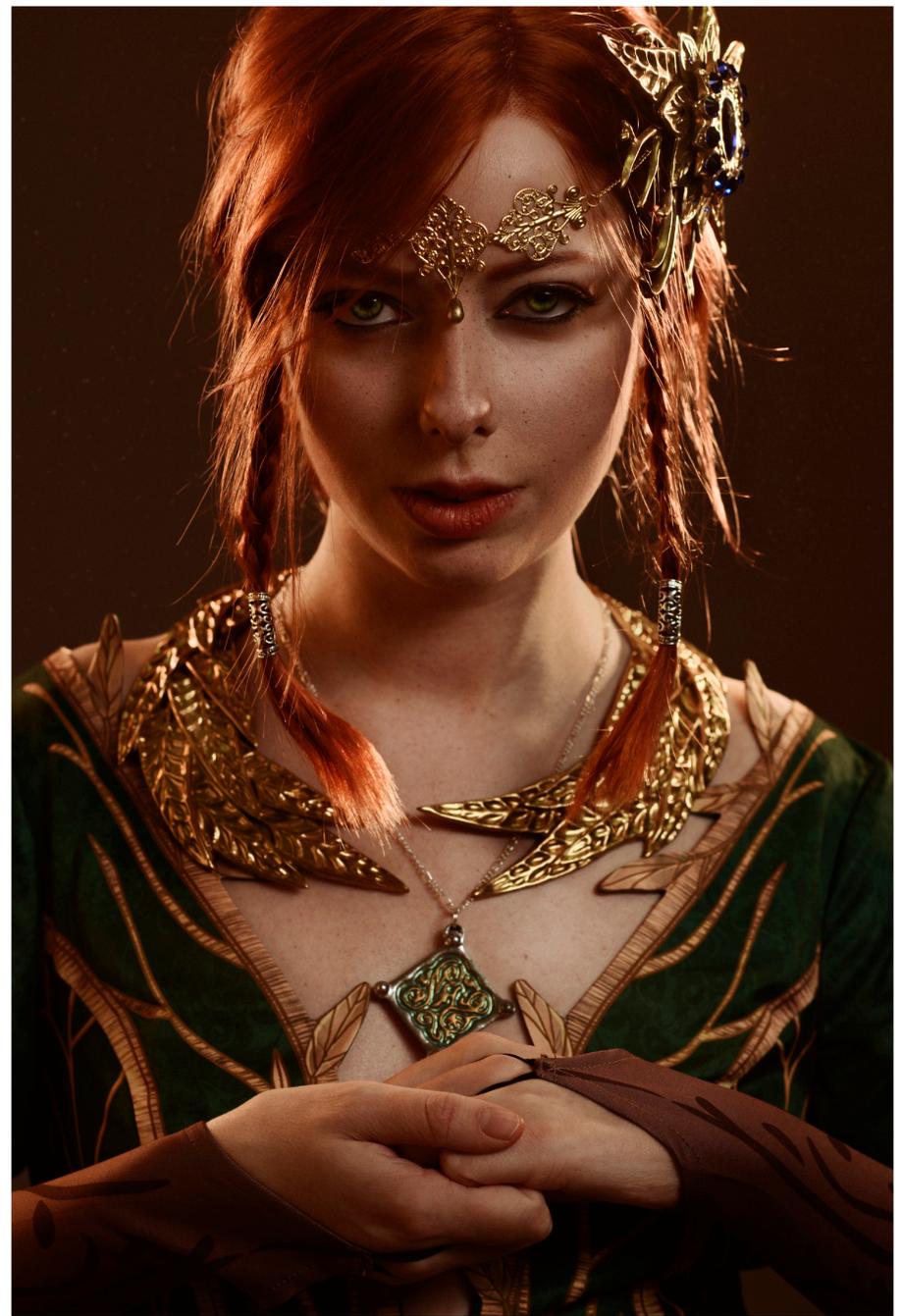
The oblique below is a photographic technique also used in filmography that tends to enhance the figure of the immortalized subject. The Polish photographer noxcraft together with the cosplayer ela_arvedui center the objective of this type of shot and together with the choice of a location (pertinent to the character) and a good post-production gives us an image that respects all the canons of good photography. Congratulations, nice work appreciated by our team.



Group shots are always difficult but in this case lphotouk surprised us by giving us an original image. Researched project and photo composition really well done with a profile shot where the subjects are out of focus (intentionally) but they "participate" actively in the image for one of the most epic shots of this edition. Well done also to all four cosplayers: kryzecosplay, Hannah_in.wonderland, Charliemott5 and Jhbcosplay who look effective and expressive.

PHOCUS 2022
WINNING PHOTO

Credits: **Neon Cosplay Photography**



Neon Cosplay Photography (Elena Gubbels) from genuine outsider to reigning champion, today we went to visit her and she is here with us!



1) Hi Elena congratulations you are our champion! First of all we would like to ask you what was, and how was, your training in photography characterized. How did you get to this level of quality and what are your sources of inspiration? Why did you start photography in the first place?

Thank you so much! I feel very honoured to be the winner of Phocus 2022. Since I was a little kid I was always fascinated by the magical worlds of video games, movies and series and my creative outlet as a kid was drawing unfortunately I was pretty bad at it so I kind of stopped with it. When I became older I gained interested in digital art, seeing al the amazing artworks on deviant art and such I became inspired again. But I still couldn't draw any better. Around that time I also bought my first little camera thingy to photograph my many pets (I was studying animal care back then). I was really enjoying photography and a year later bought my first dslr in 2012. I decided to do an evening class of photography and learned some of the basics.

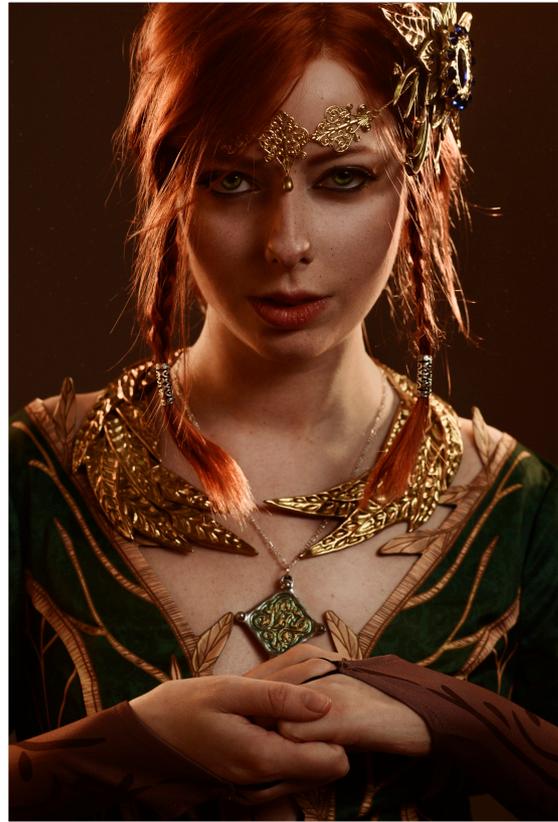
I also went to my first convention a week after I had my DSLR so I was super excited to bring it with me. Looking back on those pictures now they were absolutely terrible but we all have to start somewhere. I also came across the work of David Love who did a lot of photo compositions that looked a lot like the digital art that inspired me. So I started trying things with Photoshop and made some horrible, horrible creations but learned a lot! After that my year of evening classes where over I decided to try for a bachelor in photography because I really enjoyed it and wanted to make my career out of it. During those three years of college I really learned so much ranging from fashion to portrait to still life and so much more. My interest in digital art and cosplay stayed but was a bit frowned upon by my teachers (up to today it is still prohibited to shoot cosplay for school projects on Narafi because of me :p) Combining everything I learned and being a bit stubborn I started to develop my own style of photography more influenced by digital art and some of my other favourite photographers that specialize in portrait and fashion photography like Tim Walker, Nick Knight, Ren Hang and 35Ryo.

2) There is a lot of "soul" in your photos. How do you work to bring it out in your models? How would you define your photographic style?

Hearing this is a very big compliment for me. During my studies I had a teacher that really hated me and always told me that my photos had no style or soul and that it reflected my personality that was 'empty'. It was very harsh to hear and almost made me stop with photography completely. In the end I kept going on and passed his class barely. I kept working on it the years after I graduated to get more and more 'soul' in my work. I still haven't figured it out completely how to do it but having a good connection with your model definitely helps. Knowing each other and feeling safe shooting together and feeling the vibe of the light brings a different kind of feel to your photo.

As told before my style is a mix of different genres of photography. But also analysing movies, games, series and even music videos give me a lot of inspiration for different approaches to composition, colour grading and light. Blending all of that with different inspirations from fashion and portrait photographers I ended up with my style that I hope tells a story and makes you connect with the characters.

3) In your work you respected the character of Triss Merygold and enhanced it with great photographic technique made moreover of a great use of lighting and colors, how and where did this photographic project of yours originate? What aspects of this set do you feel most satisfied with?



The Witcher games are some of my all time favourites so I'm very familiar with who the characters are and what kind of personality they have. Triss being one of my favourite. The photoshoot it self was more of an impromptu shoot, Last year I struggled a lot with a burn-out I hadn't touched my camera in a couple of months what was the first time in almost 10 years. We had some friends over since Kurama wanted to take some pictures with them. Later that day I finally found some energy and asked if she still wanted to shoot Triss since the costume was laying around for quite a while by now and I started playing the Witcher 3 again during that time while. We went to our attic where we had our own little studio and just went with it. I created a little setup with two backlights, some flags in the back and some whiteboards in front to bounce some of the light back to create a soft moody atmosphere that had a lot of warmth. My inspiration was the passionate and warm personality that Triss has as well and for the first time in months I finally felt a bit like myself again. So that was definitely the part of the shoot that I was the most satisfied with. After shooting for half an hour I think we felt confided that we had the shot and I went back to the PC and started editing the photo immediately because we both were so happy. We both really felt happy that evening after a long and difficult period for the both of us.

4) We could talk days and days about various photographic techniques and their implementation, but how much does the emotional aspect matter to you in the world of photography? What mesmerizes Elena Gubbels and makes her say, "Yes, this is a great photo"?

The emotional aspect is super important! For me personally I feel a lot of emotions from light and colour. A bit as in abstract paintings where we have shapes, colour and light forming a composition. This applies to photographs as well. There is with photo's also an other emotion that we sometimes can feel and that is the connection between the photographer and the model.

With cosplay it's a lot harder to bring that last aspect because the model can't be herself most of the time and is acting like a character unless the character perfectly matches the personality of the model. Also adding effects in photoshop will often break the barrier of realism for me. Don't get me wrong I love seeing some good photoshop composition work or some nicely added effects to a photo but it will never have that emotional aspect because our brain will always tell with a little voice this is not real and as soon as one important part of the photo doesn't feel reel everything else will also loose realness. So personally I will judge cosplay photo's more on light and colour and how well it matches and brings forward the character and say WOW this is a great photo!

5) Going back to your project and, more specifically, to the emotional aspect, how important is the relationship created between the photographer and the immortalized one?

Very important. I'm a very introverted person so it's often hard for me to connect with people and bond with them in a short amount of time. (some people can do this in an instant and sometimes I'm a bit jealous over that) So over the years I made peace with that this often won't be the case. You can still make some amazing photo's with someone who you don't have a emotional connection with. But often it will just feel different, at least for me.

I'm happy that I made this photo with Kurama since we have been working together for so long now. (since my student days) and over those years we grown very close that we know very each other well. if it was any other cosplayer the result would have felt different.

We appreciate your support for our project and thank you for your availability. See you soon champion!

We met Kurama's Corner the gorgeous face of Phocus 2022! Hi Kurama's corner congratulations on winning Phocus 2022 and thank you for being with us today! Before we get into the details of your photo project we would like to ask you a question:

1) How long have you been a part of the cosplay world? What do you like about this world?

Hi! I've been cosplaying for 11 years now and have been looking in awe to cosplayers since long before I started! Personally I like cosplay a lot for it's creativity and people you get to meet with the same interests!

2) What were your feelings the first time you did a shoot? What do you think is the most difficult aspect of being in front of the camera?

My first photoshoot was also with Elena who was still a student back then, many many years ago! Back then I was super insecure and had absolutely no idea how to pose or 'act' like my character. She really guided me a lot back then!



I think the most difficult aspect as a beginner is to get to know how to pose your body and face in a way it looks both good and natural in photo, and to find a way to portray different kinds of characters. Then again this is something that I think goes a lot better with practice! But when I started out this was definitely most difficult to me.

Now I would say it's working with a new person as I notice some people have a very different approach from others and it's sometimes hard to find a good and fun way to work around these different approaches :)

3) Your interpretation of Triss was extremely insightful, warm and engaging. Who is Triss Merigold to you? What aspect of her did you have to study the most to best represent her?

Personally I view Triss as someone who's very kind hearted, strong and yet gentle. She's a very interesting character, as most characters in the Witcher games are to me! I didn't study her much per se, I just tried to bring forth her more emotional side. To me it definitely helped I have a bit of a similar personality as her in a way.

4) Is there any anecdote or curiosity that is part of your photo shoot but that we don't know about and you'd like to tell us?

This shoot was actually not a very planned one at all. The time we did this photoshoot both Elena and I had a harder time and were struggling with a lot of things like (both mental and physical) health. Before this shoot we had not done many shoots as in those times we simply had other priorities. The photo was taken in our home studio when we had one of our friends over who also did some shooting that day. Personally I remember this as a really nice day, and a much better one than the period that went before it. I personally think our emotions during this time reflect in this photo and have influenced the result heavily. Elena was struggling with a burn out back then and it was the first time she actually felt like shooting again and enjoyed it.

5) Besides Elena (Neon Cosplay Photography) is there any other photographer in the cosplay world with whom you would like to do a project one day?

There are so many photographers I really like it's hard to name just one! From the people I haven't met yet I'm incredibly fond of 35ryo and Akunohako but there's so many others I would also like to meet and work with beside them! I'm also very lucky to have met and worked with many other talented photographers already! But in the end I think for bigger / more personal projects I'll always prefer working with Elena as we just know each other so well, can really put our ideas together and because of the bond we have.

INSTAGRAM TOURNAMENT



PHOCUS
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THE FINAL EIGHT



PHOCUS INSTAGRAM TOURNAMENT 2022

**AFTER PHOCUS 2022 LET'S FUN WITH
THE THIRD EDITION OF OUR
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JUDGE!**

- The 128 best photos
- 1VS1 fights into our stories!
- Thousands of votes and hundreds of comments.
- The photographer Velvet Art (Netherlands) and cosplayer Mikasa (China) win the third edition!



***INSTAGRAM
WINNING PHOTO***

Credits: **Velvet Art Photography**

Today we meet Velvet Art the winning photographer of the 2022 edition of our Instagram tournament. Hi Anne!!! Congratulations and welcome.



1) Let's start with your recent success, an overpowering victory with a record (total votes obtained) for our Instagram Tournament. This is also the first time a photographer has won the tournament having also placed on the podium of the classic Phocus contest! You conquered the jury and our followers! Well done!!! Did you ever expect such great success? What do you think the audience liked most about your shot?

Thank you, Phocus team and jury but above all the voters from the Instagram Tournament. Even till today it still feels unreal to be placed first in this tournament. I couldn't have done it without the massive support and votes from everyone. It's very touching to see that work that felt so free and inspiring to make gains this kind of recognition. The feedback and love on the photo given by many during the classic Phocus contest were already overwhelming. It's hard to say from a photographer's perspective how others should feel or like (the most) about my photo/work. All I hope is that they see the genuine hard work and the beautiful result when following your own creative heart.

2) Let's go into more detail about your incredible work. Our jury already knows the background behind that project, but could you tell to our followers how and where that photo originated? What characteristics did you want to emerge in that shot? And what was it like working with Mikasa?

Hahaha well, it means a lot to hear the jury truly reads the story behind the sent photo. The idea for this shoot was shaped after being seated next to Mikasa during one of the office renovations in UBISOFT Chengdu. We've started talking from one cosplay experience into another. Sharing our portfolios and it was amazing to see both our energy and passion for Cosplay/photograph passion. We both shared our goals and so did I. My goal was to shoot the traditional Chinese Clothing style 'Han Fu' 汉服; it was before we knew it that we had shaped a project, let's do this!

Shooting on real – outdoor offsite - location are always preferred; our challenge was to find one that matched all our check marks with the twists of Traditional Chinese clothing style and game. DuFu Cottage was one that stood out for both of us after location scouting. The poetic history of the garden, and its connection to one of the oldest parts within the city of Chengdu made it a perfect match. Once doing the research on poses is where the characteristic proposal with colors, mood boards and reference photos came together. This part truly shaped my vision and our project. But I felt the pressure, it was our first shoot together. I wanted to be fully prepared and have our visions aligned so we held meetings together after work and lunch times to match our idea's.

All set was only the vibe and story mood we were going for left. After doing research, we both decided to bundle our strongest assets. Mikasa was empowered to emerge deeper into the character's moves by creating a dance around the poses. She shared the rehearsal videos to me so I could decide the angles to go for. Meanwhile I wanted to make sure to capture that feeling from the character and her feeling comfortable.

Though it was our first time working together, creating a language of understanding and how to give the best directional feedback was something we managed quickly. The trust was built through the time of the shoot. And then that one magical moment, I could sense Mikasa was into her dance and completely drawn away in the moment. That's when I took this photo, no directions were given, all she did was just to dare to show the emotion in her movements. As if the poetic location gave both of us the right vibe of energy - a small sunset peaked through the bamboo trees and there you have it: The recipe of the perfect shot. Taken in motion filled with emotion.

Looking back and retracing our steps made me realize this hahaha, it's just that kind of energy you have or don't have with a model.

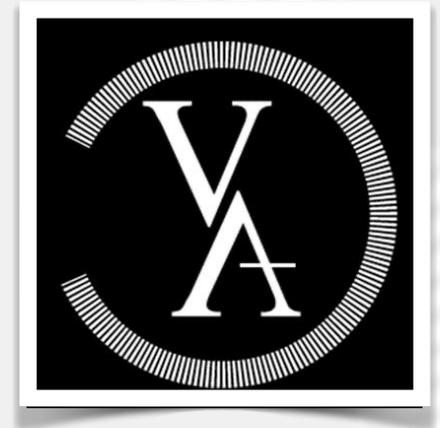
Working with Mikasa was a blast, this first collaboration together has reached above all my personal expectations. Therefore, we are now creating more and more plans to realize. Some are more ambitious than the others while some are easier to create. But I will stay curious and always keep pushing myself to look for new techniques as result.

3) Knowing you well, it's reductive to describe you simply as a photographer, you have qualities and skills as a Visual Designer and can work all-around in the field of photography and videography. We think you know exactly how to communicate through images, so who's Velvet Art? How, where and when your passion for this world born? Are there any artists you are inspired by or particularly love? Do you have future projects currently "work in progress" that you are looking forward to publishing?

Thank you for the generous words, it means a lot to hear my work and skills are being noticed. For me Velvet Art grew through the years as I created a stronger visual appearance with my work me personally grew as well.

Like many others the passion and interests in this world started for me with seeing the craft online in form of Cosplay Videos. I was inspired and dragged deeper into the world where I discovered the stories behind this craft.

The hard work and passion were something I wanted to capture in photos/videos. Even I struggle and grew to understand how to portray models/cosplayers/friends the best way. With my background as educated Cinematographer has my work always been different compared to deep rooted photographers.



Velvet Art is just solely me, a crafted name with a hidden message. It stands for velvet the clothes, combined fabric and Art is for leaving the impression as an artist. The goal is to make work that's worth your second glance and sticks while it calls up a feeling inside you.

Long story short: Work with a story and emotion.

Who as an artist inspires me? I would do myself and many diverse artists short if I would prefer one artist. To say, not only one specific artist inspires me but more diverse the better. It keeps me sharp to explore new techniques. Despite artists, and all the social media, the world around us is shaped in so many curves and lights, from architecture to nature. There are always different looks and colors to be found when you observe the places already close around you.

New projects to look forward to? Absolutely! Some projects are always in motion, and I'm proud of keeping some idea's out of work to realize. A few will be realized in a short time and others are in shaping progress and might see the daylight in 2/3 years from now.

But there are plenty of opportunities! I'm working on more visibility within China as well to get even more projects off the ground hopefully soon.

4) Difficult question: In a photograph much of the work is merit from the photographer and his study of the basic image but some experts say: "the creative star is the one who does the post-production". You are the right person to ask; What do you think is the contribution that post-production can make to the basic photograph? For Velvet Art what other features are important in making a great photo?

It is a beautiful saying and for some parts I can say it's true. Post-Production especially with the crazy amount of software available these days you can create amazing results. The post-production is indeed a difficult and sensitive topic, when is too much? Who made it the photographer or is the photo saved by post? Or was it initially a concept relying on (heavy) post- production? In my opinion it all depends on your own goal, they can complement each other and strengthen the combination if used.

I personally believe it isn't only about the post-production but the concept you aim for from the start. But to reflect the saying with what I learned as cinematographer: If your mindset is 'Fix it in post' – it will hurt your searching eye and creative solution thinking on site.

Where you will pay the price for in post-production. Therefore, I always aim to get the shot I want from the start directly on camera. The dynamic approach of my work is already created 'on set' through the lens of my camera.

Post-production is there for me to enhance my work, to give it even a deeper emersed feeling. There is nothing wrong with post-production, but I never want to solely rely on this. If your basic photo is good, it should give that wow feeling already, and with the right use of post-production it is able to enhance the final work. It's a good and natural balance, but I also like to explore the edges of this when possible, as long as it feels balanced and natural.

5) An interesting topic: Can you be a great photographer even without the use of super- professional equipment? Many people love your work, so what advice would you give to a young photographer who would like to pursue this career?

Thank you for asking this question about the equipment question. It is always a hot topic, among any level of photographers but mostly the starting ones. In my perspective the equipment doesn't make the artist, but your creativity does. Phones and budget friendly cameras are the best take off your progress in searching your style. I call it that way because you will always be searching for that perfect shot, it never just comes to you. Go out and seek your style and once you feel you hit the limit of your equipment look in what direction you prefer to upgrade to strengthen your creative style of work.



A photographer and videographer should know the tools does not make the great picture, but your creativity does. Of course, practice comes along with it (and those few extra pixels are crispy to see), but I feel just as good with using my iPhone camera or any Sony mirrorless brand. That's simply because of experience and starting from the bottom up. The expensive cameras are coming with a lot of fuzz attached to it. Which could makes any starter overwhelmed and quickly confused. Which may even lend into giving up, and a dusty expensive camera on your desk. But a great starting model can be found everywhere that suits your taste.

All I would like to say to young or starting photographers; never give up! Emerge yourself in the way of storytelling through your own eyes and imagination, learn the old masters' techniques from art and get to understand the basic conventional rules of third, etc. Because right after learning those conventional rules you can mess around with them by searching the boundaries and expanding those rules of your comfort zone of yourself.

But most above all: Be you and enjoy this messy but creative progress of what you love to make and what makes you smile.

Silence that little voice in your head about followers. This competition of Phocus showed even me that a small photographer with less than 5K followers on IG can take 2nd and 1st place. And I sincerely hope you're the next!

What you love to make and what makes you smile. Silence that little voice in your head about followers. This competition of Phocus showed even me that a small photographer with less than 5K followers on IG can take 2nd and 1st place. And I sincerely hope you're the next!



***Today we're with Mikasa! Dancer, cosplayer and much more!
Thank you for being here with us!***

1) Congratulations for your photo you are beautiful! We really believe it is a very difficult photo to create, the location is stunning and full of history (Du Fu Cottage) but what impressed us (and our followers) is your interpretation that we dare to say "poetic" almost magical. How did you prepare to realize those incredible moves? What were the main difficulties?

Thank you for your appreciation! Talking about the moves, they are from my dance's practices. I love dancing as physical exercise in daily life. All the moves are my body memories. Plus, the character I act is also a dancer. She dances with her proud and emotions. Anne perfectly caught the moments when I felt myself and her were in ONE mentally and physically. I was her, she was me. She lived in a dynasty far away from now. She danced with her pride, fame, and the misses of her love. There was no time for her to stay in sadness because everyone was watching her dance. Everyone needed encouragement from her dance. When she danced, the kingdom was like an energetic blooming flower. She brightened the time but she was always alone. Moving to the difficulties, it's a very interesting topic hehe. I love dancing but it was my first time doing the Traditional Chinese Dance. Anne discovered me when I was dancing as K/DA. She said, "hey, I think you can dance when wearing Hanfu". I was very excited with her idea and proposed, "I know a character in a Chinese game. Maybe we should try a cosplay!" But also I was very upset because I never tried Traditional Chinese Dance before. So I went to the classroom and asked a Traditional Chinese Dance teacher to teach me something.

After a twice per week in 2 months' learning and practicing, I made it. We also met the Covid wave by the day we planned to shoot. So we postponed to another month to achieve the cosplay. I kept upset till the day she showed me the result. It was a tough experience. LOL. What's more, it was also not easy to dress up like that when dancing. It was super heavy _(3] △)_. I also had some friends helping me with hair style, make-up, and taking care of belongs when shooting. Thanks for their help so that I can focus on becoming into the character. When getting into the character, I didn't feel troubles anymore.

Anyway Anne should have been more tired than I was. She was a video and photographer, director, talent coach and a cheerleader(thank another friend who said this. Perfectly matched)! She has absolute leadership! We can't make it without her talents!



2) Tell us about your relationship with Velvet Art, on this photo and in general life. What was it like working with her and do you have any curious anecdotes to tell us about this collaboration? (P.s. will we see you working together again!?)

We are friends in life, co-workers in work and best partners in shootings! We knew each other only around 10 months, but we were like long-time-no-see friends with a lot words to say. I'm super lucky and touched meeting her. Her talents, diligence and enthusiasm in photos and videos inspires me a lot. She helps me discovers beauties in daily life. She has special eyes which can always see things differently in a beautiful way! What's more, she also makes me confident again in front of camera. I find myself look better looking in her camera than I really am in life. LOL.

The most memorable experience with her was the days when we were preparing Qixiu cosplay, the one we won the competition. It was our first time working as a cosplay team. We did a lot of preparations like visiting places where we thought could be a good place to shoot. We took a weekend visiting some places and museums then we chose Du Fu Cottage. I also shared more information of the game to her: history, background, character setting etc. She showed me some video vibes and explained what she could achieve in cameras. Then I went to learn Traditional Chinese Dance for gaining more body movements. We also made a fast mood board the day before shooting for better alignment...

Now looking back, I always can learn something new from the experience. Everything happened just so naturally. We both knew what we should do and what we could do best then we did it. And everything we did was just right for the shoot. No complains, no argues. If we had ideas, we shared and discussed. Our goal was the same: to make what we can do best and enjoy the work. It was a very good teamwork reference for us both in future collaborations. It shows me what a good team and best matched member should be like. Anne is absolutely my best partner! Yes we have more plans and we are now doing one by one. Please come to our pages, you'll see more!

3) Dance and art... Two lines that always travel together and often make beautiful intersections. What are the emotions that dance brings to you?

Some famous dancers have said in some interviews "Dance can create a better world". Do you agree with this expression? What is the dance for you?

Dance is part of my life. I do dance weekly to free myself from work as well as getting some physical exercises. I enjoy dancing when I feel I'm SOME ONE who is not myself anymore. Just like I'm experiencing what SHE feels, acts and even thinks. It's like reading some one's life book. There're a lot of stories and emotions. It touches me and releases myself.

I do agree "Dance can create a better world". I'm not a professional dancer. But I can enjoy different angles of life and cherish every minute when dancing.

Dance makes me can live in presents. I don't have to worried about what happened before or what will happen in the future. It makes me feel I'm alive. It makes me feel my own body and mind. And it helps me to take a break mentally by being someone else. It's so interesting.

It has some similarities with cosplay. So combining dance and cosplay is double fun.

4) A phrase on your social profile really impressed us, "I try to be who I am and enjoy life," all of this is beautiful. Who is Mikasa then? Besides dance what are your passions? What are your goals or plans in the near future? This is an interesting question. Who is Mikasa and who is me?

I guess people who watch Attack on Titans all know who Mikasa is. I love Mikasa Ackerman who inspires me courage, power and belief. I see her as a very self-disciplined idle who is strict to herself mentally and physically. I wish I could get energy from her and be some one like her. So I took her name.

I've been doing Yoga for 10 years, gym for 4 years and dance for 3 years. I'm not ambitious achieving some competitions or awards, but enjoying every minute when I'm living at presents. I love painting as well. I graduated from a Fine Art university. I love painting and dreamed to be a mangaka. After painting manga none-stop while getting worse on health so I gave up. LOL.

That's why I started to work out. I love mangas and animations. Now cosplay is a good way for me to show my love for characters and stories. I'm very happy that I can show them by my body. Doing exercises not only makes me healthy again, but gives me a good body shape to have more cosplay possibilities.

Moving to my near future goal, I'd like to present in 2 ways. On my personal life side, everything is usual. On the cosplay side, we are discovering new cosplay things. There are some challenges for us both. Let me keep it as a secret for now. You may see it soon!

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VIDEO SECTION

REVIEWS AND FINAL TOP 10

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SEE IT!**



#10 FINAL PLACE

The videomaker Gagarina in collaboration of cosplayers Sunny and CheshirKo send us this really exciting video to the notes of After Dark by Mr.Kitty, a very nice short montage that uses on-screen text and numerous shots to emphasize the moment of the meeting between Xiao and Aether from Genshin Impact. Excellent work.

Sneaky Zebra again teaches everyone how to make a character trailer in cosplay world, and he does it together with LittleJem, an amazing cosplayer (wonderful costume and accessories). Crazy video quality, lots of different shots and focus on costume details, fast rhythm and perfectly synchronized musical accents on particular cuts of the image. A wonderful video and at the end it leaves that feeling of "I want more!" really enjoyable. Congratulations!



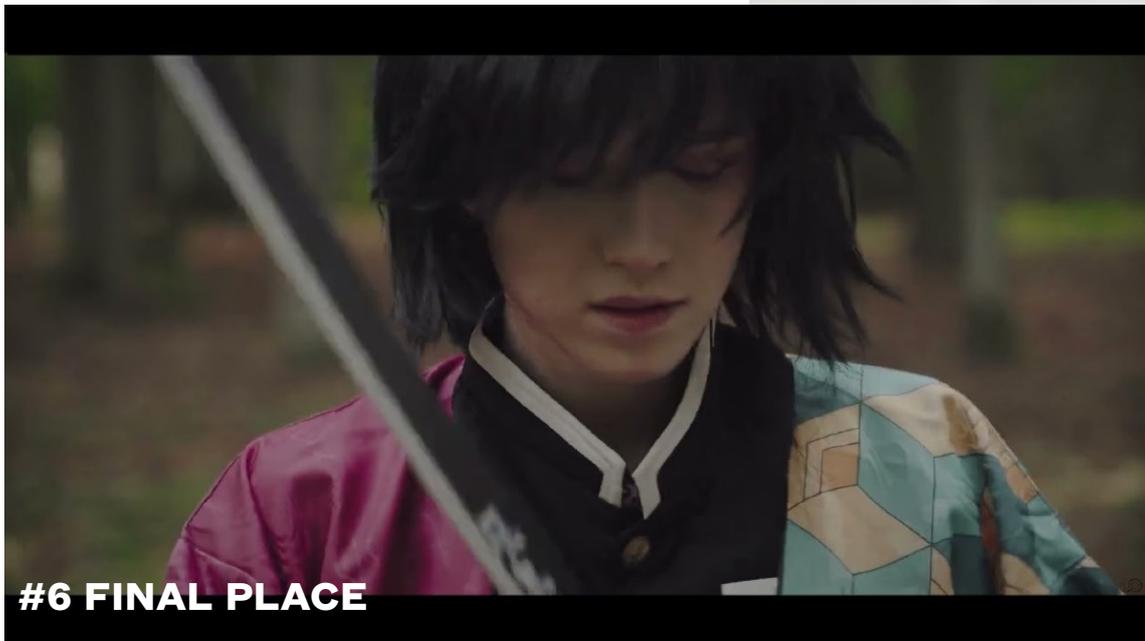
#3 FINAL PLACE



The team of Italian videomakers AlelanzVideo at the top of our Phocus World Ranking, after two great years, are back with a new video set in the world of Ghostbusters. The video talks about Egon Spengler (the excellent Damiano Nicastro) and his face-to-face with a ghost in an abandoned building. Good as always the technical realization and implementation of the Special Fx. Without spoiling anything, the ending leaves open the possibility of a sequel...Interesting...Bravo!

A short trailer of the Zelda character from the very famous Nintendo saga. Very beautiful the costume made by Adularia, excellent behind the camera SA VIDEOMAKER who in less than a minute manages to convey to us all the sweetness and quality of the character thanks to some skillful framing cuts set between a location perfectly related to the famous princess and a music (Zelda's Lullaby) that we will never want to stop listening to. Well done!





#6 FINAL PLACE

Minifilm by our current champion (Aliaksei Simkin - A.sim.O Production) really wonderful. The Belarusian videomaker (and photographer) tells us about Demon Slayer in his own way and he does it with a "silent" film but playing with sound in key moments (the videomaker is a master of this technique). Also excellent are the two cosplayers Shinko and Akito with a delicate and mature performance. Great film, congratulations to all.

Extraordinary tribute to Princess Mononoke by British videomaker H.E-X Photography and cosplayers Mosacchi and Sil. Great video with a very well defined narrative structure combined with excellent direction, the entire team works with great passion and love towards the work of master Hayato Miyazaki and this feeling is evident throughout the video. Accompanying us in the three minutes of video are the notes of maestro Joe Hisashi... spectacular. Congratulations to all.



#5 FINAL PLACE

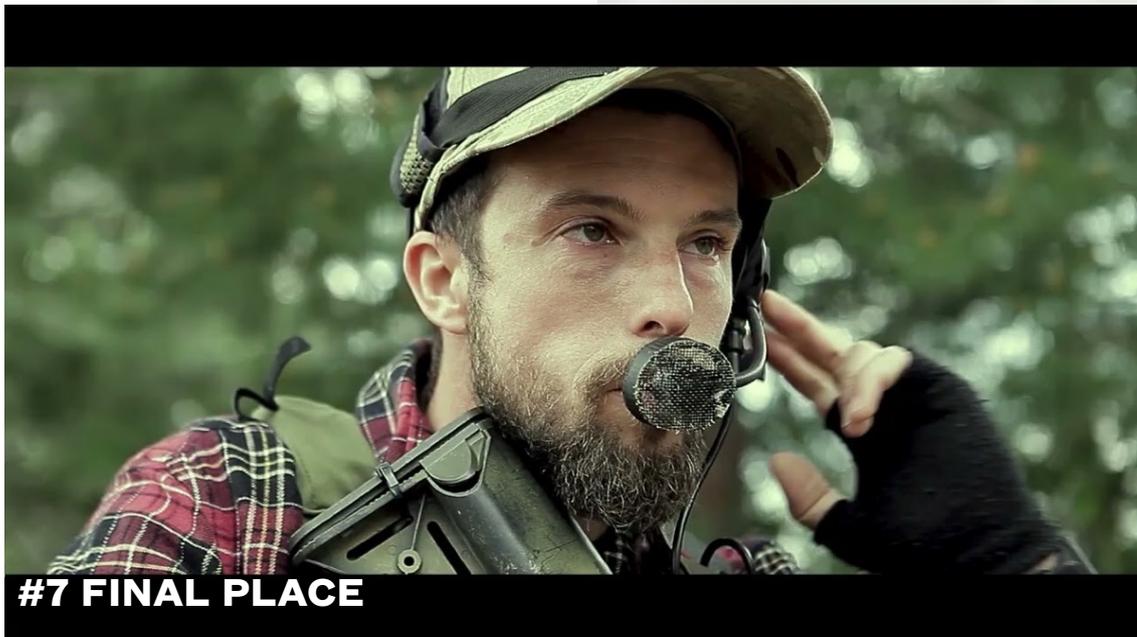


Telling a story, completely capturing the viewer's eyes for a couple of minutes and doing it using extremely professional filming techniques and script writing, in these few lines we describe "Descensus" by Maddalena Montecchio. Mention also for Ren Mori (prepotent candidate for the Phocus Oscar for performance of the year). Completing the perfect project of the Italian videomaker is a musical compartment that takes the narrative higher than normal level for productions of this type. Standing ovation.

The famous Pugoffka and Firiaticat offer us a hilariously film that pleasantly impressed us. They don't take themselves seriously, they don't use some super professional filming techniques but simply have fun. A type of video lately working well on social media such as Instagram or Tiktok.

A working video for the purpose for which it is made. Warning: The level of this Ukrainian duo (Videomaker + cosplayer) is one of the highest in the world cosplay scene, we would love to see them working together again maybe on a completely different project.





#7 FINAL PLACE

Jerry Portelli and his team show us how to make a professional trailer for a film. They start relatively quietly, mention the story, then the rhythm accelerates, ingenious shot changes on characters and situations that the director wanted to emphasize, and boom! You reach the goal! "Look for the light" is a great trailer for the movie about "The last of us." At the end of the movie, you feel like leaving the house to go see the hypothetical movie in the theater. Well done to all, cosplayers included.

ValentinJ and cosplayer Alifiacosplay tell us the story of Jean Gunnhildr from Genshin Impact. Interesting and really well-produced film, which in less than two minutes of footage shows us numerous locations, excellent shots (also using the drone) and the entire footage runs pleasantly to the viewer's eye. This is the kind of film we like to see inside Phocus, storytelling that hits its goals and deserves our applause. Compliments to your entire team!



#8 FINAL PLACE



The current champion (Aliaksei Simkin - A.sim.O Production) had told us in his interview last year about this new project related to Spider-Man and we were really pleased to receive it as part of this edition. A special film that shows the excellent skills of the Belarusian videomaker in all components of videography (including video editing and sound) and demonstrating great fellowship with cosplayers Lady Integra and Captain Squalo. Congratulations for this job and remember Spidey...never trust Black Cat too much!

Having the ability to tell a story exciting those to whom you are telling it. This is the summary of our review about " Last Goodbye" Steeve Li Photography's masterpiece that homages master Hajime Isayama's work Attack on Titans. The performance of the two cosplayers and particularly that of Mikasa is exceptional (Princess Piyo Chan & _senshu congratulations both, excellently characterized and believable), the musical background is magical and the director is brilliant in composing the various shots to give us his point of view of the story with a roundup of exciting images. Just applause.





#4 FINAL PLACE

After receiving this cover of the Italian cosplayer Fiore di Luna part of the Phocus team hummed "Fly to your heart" di Selena Gomez for days. It was an amazing thing and this only turned the spotlight on this beautiful video by Andrea De Santis. An excellently realized cover video, well sung and interpreted and where you can see the hand of a true professional videomaker behind the camera. The framing cuts, the meticulous attention to detail and the emotions generated on the viewer are the result of a great job. Congratulations to all.

A trailer for Eldarya's character Erika that gives off love from all pores. Cosplayer Meishira (but also director in this case) collaborates with Maeva.g.photography exceptionally well giving us one of the best clips of this edition. The various shots are excellent as is the editing and implementation of special effects, the opening close-up is spectacular and deserves the ticket price alone. A fabulous work that shows the great creative flair of the young Meishira, an emerging talent from Switzerland we pleasantly discovered in our photo and video sections in this edition but who we will certainly keep an eye on. Well done.



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“DESCENSUS”
THE WINNING
VIDEO OF
PHOCUS 2022!

(a film by Maddalena Montecchio)



Maddalena Montecchio
— *Descensus* —

Today we are with Maddalena Montecchio young Italian video maker writer and director of Descensus the film that won the first prize in the video section of Phocus 2022.

1) Hello Maddalena and first of all congratulations on your film, a journey into Viktor's life (and mind) which you wrote and directed excellently. When and how did the Descensus project originate?

Good evening!!! I would like to take this opportunity to tell you personally that it was an honor to participate in your contest and thank you for rewarding my work.

The project was born to a fortuitous alignment of planets last spring: My friend Ren Mori, who plays Viktor in the video and with whom I have been collaborating for years was planning to bring this cosplay to the Comics Festival in May, and I asked him if he would be willing to do two shots with me, something I hardly ever propose at the fair.

Coincidentally, a make-up artist friend of ours, Celine, was at the event and touched up Ren's make-up before the shoot, making him look practically like Viktor from the series.

In addition to the resemblance, I was very impressed by the physicality that Ren managed to put into the character, not only in his poses but also in his movements and the way he spoke.

So I asked both of them if they would be willing to shoot a video; at first, it was only meant to be a slavish quotation of the run on the pier (since Ren and I both live in Veneto), but galvanized by the team's skill, I expanded the initial idea and thought of telling Viktor's entire descent into hell.



2) Quoting a small excerpt from our jury's review we report "In less than two minutes telling a story while completely capturing the viewer's eye," Descensus is objectively a film that has captured our audience as well, the views and positive comments have been many. How did you work on the creative process of the film? And what is the aspect of it that you feel most proud of and that in your opinion impressed the audience the most?

From the first draft of the script I knew I wanted to divide the video into 3 distinct segments: the run on the pier, the acquisition of the drug (shimmer) needed to be able to run, and the injection of it at home. Then in both shooting and editing, the parts were rearranged differently from my initial vision but I think that this way it managed to achieve the right level of immediate understanding and pathos.

The comment I've heard most often is that the video seems shorter than the full two minutes it lasts. Every time makes me very happy because it means that the pace we managed to give the story, in terms of location, lighting, music, and the plot keeps the viewer glued to the screen until the end.

I think this achievement is due in part to the way we were able to mix scenes faithfully from the series with my interpretation of Viktor's arc within Arcane, and I'm proud of how we were able to pull off both the run on the pier despite the crowds and how my love of magenta lighting rendered so well in the final scene inside the palace.

And a big part of the credit goes to Ren, who despite having never even done a day of theater proved to be an extraordinary actor, to the point that many scenes were "good firsts."

3) With Descensus in our opinion you have masterfully told a story. What is storytelling for you? And what do you think are the cornerstones of this kind of videography?

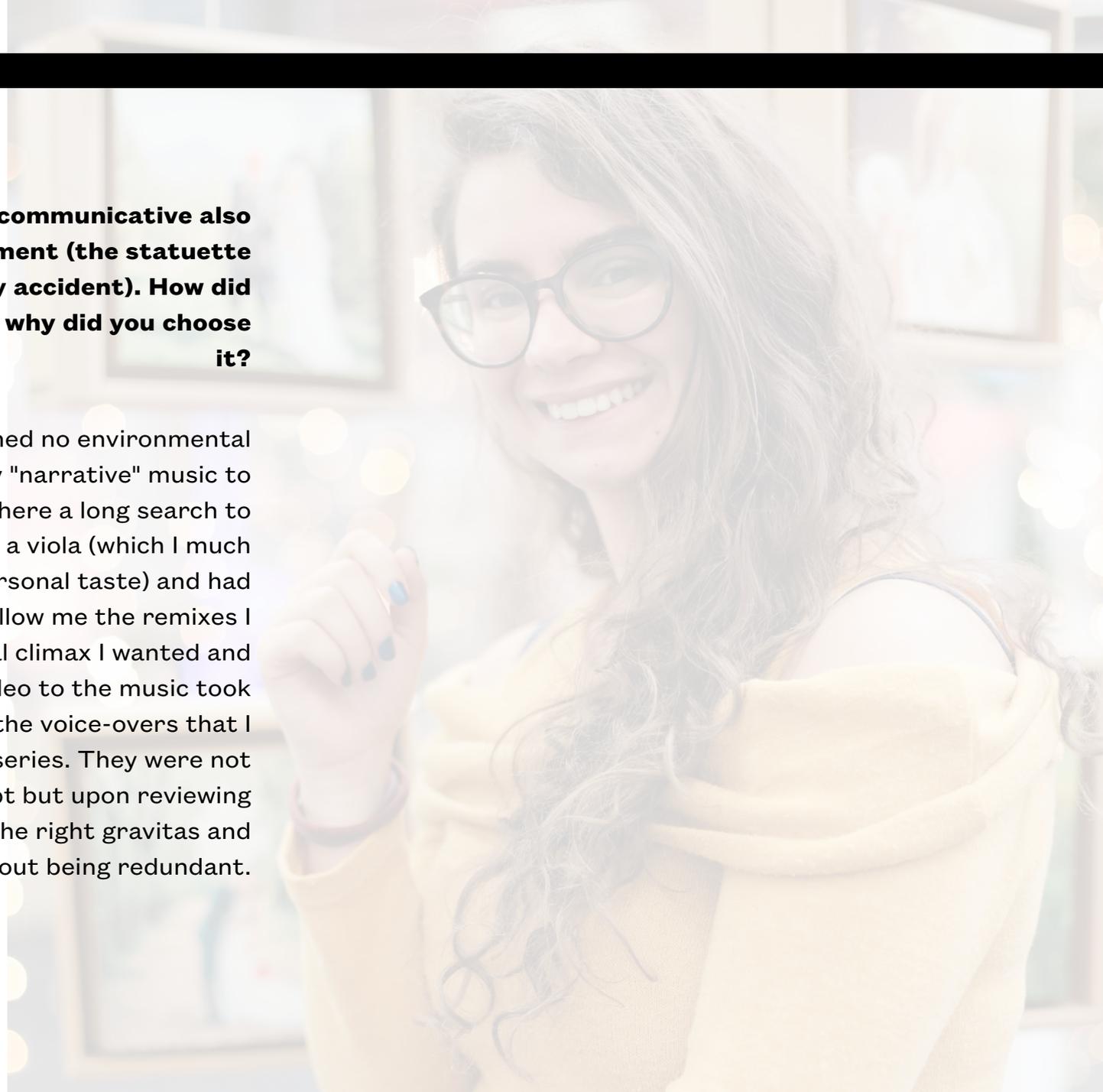
Working with cosplay, both in terms of photos and videos, has a unique feature: behind that product, there is already a world that the viewer already knows. This allows me to be able to summarize an entire story with a single shot or allows me not to have to introduce any narrative universe if I am shooting a video.

On the one hand, it can be constricting to move within someone else's narrative, but on the other hand, it allows me to focus on the nuances I want to tell about a certain aspect of the story or a character without fear that my audience will not understand.

This is why I think it is crucial to be a good balancer: you have to maintain a close connection to the source universe but also be able to tell an original story that has its beginning and end or you risk just copying.

4) A film that was made so communicative also thanks to the sound compartment (the statuette in this regard didn't come by accident). How did you arrive at that track and why did you choose it?

From the beginning I had planned no environmental sounds so I needed very "narrative" music to accompany the narration. From here a long search to find a free track that included a viola (which I much prefer to the violin for personal taste) and had enough musical phrasing to allow me the remixes I needed. Getting the musical climax I wanted and adjusting the editing of the video to the music took me a full afternoon. Last came the voice-overs that I took from the original series. They were not originally planned in the script but upon reviewing the edit I found they added the right gravitas and clarity to the video without being redundant.



5) Descensus in addition to the award for best film of 2022 also took home 4 Phocus Oscars the result of your great work within which, however, numerous people took part and formed a great "team." Can you introduce us to your team? And what was it like working with all of them? Any anecdotes or curiosities during the shoot?

First, a heartfelt thanks to Ren Mori, lead actor, and outstanding friend, is mandatory. In life, he is involved in veterinary medicine and agility competitions with his beautiful dogs, but in his spare time, we have been shooting together for years and had already shot together before Descensus. So I knew of his skill, and I am not exaggerating when I say that I wrote the video with him in mind, knowing what he was capable of. And he not only acted flawlessly but dragged me along at several moments, especially when the run on the pier did not come out as I had hoped the first time and we had to return to Venice at a later time to re-shoot it with the right lighting conditions. Second but not least was Celine Masutti, a wonderful all-around artist from illustration to hair and makeup. She was vital in making the last third of the video: she made a remarkable journey to reach us in the building where we shot, styled a more natural wig than the one Ren originally had, did her makeup masterfully, and in the 4 hours it took to shoot the scenes she helped us in every way, holding up lights, helping us set up the LEDs we used as scenery, and filming the backstage shots you can find on my Instagram among the featured stories. Also acted as a motivator and spurred us to always continue despite the late hour (we finished filming at 2 a.m.).

Last but not least I would also like to thank Red.Shinigami and Shioblaze assisted us during our second trip to Venice to shoot the pier ride scene. They were vital in deflecting significantly more tourists than expected so that they would not get into the shot and prevented some curious passersby from running over me as I ran along with Ren to catch it and could not look ahead.

6) Finally, we would like to ask you what you like about your work in both the photographic and video graphics fields, whether you have any photographers, directors, or videomakers from whom you have been inspired over the years, and if you feel like giving advice or let's say a tip for those who would like to enter this profession.

From the beginning what attracted me to the audiovisual environment was the possibility of storytelling, the freedom the profession offered, and of course the creativity I could express. I work mainly in advertising and now rarely have the energy and free time to make the shorts I would like and that is also why Descensus and the results it has achieved have been so important to me. I have been practicing this profession for 6 years now, 3 with a VAT number and I have to say that while I knew it would be hard to start from the bottom and without being a child of art it would be complicated, I did not imagine how much. I hadn't considered that yes I would be able to express myself behind a camera and then in postproduction, but that I would also have to manage social media with a constancy that I've never been able to maintain, keep my accounts in order, chase clients who tergiversate payments, procure new contracts...

Above all, I had not considered how much uncertainty it leaves in terms of growth and how difficult it makes it to plan for the future.

Perhaps in hindsight, I would have chosen a profession that offered more security and specialized in media as a hobby or second job. I definitely would not have approached this environment as a sole proprietorship. But I learned a lot during my two years at covid and I am continuing to learn, so professionally I hope that I can start a new career chapter soon and that by the time I send in my application for the 2023 Phocus I feel more settled professionally.

So if I had to advise those who want to approach this world, I would tell them to think hard about what it means to not be able to plan one's life based on a fixed salary, to have neither paid vacations nor paid sickness, to have to be always with your antennae out to apply for a new job, and to have no real division between private and professional life in terms of time management and friends.

As inspiration in general I am constantly consuming audiovisual content, from informational videos on youtube to movies and TV series, and I really couldn't point to a particular muse of mine. I tend to get more attached to a single piece of content than to the author who created it.

In the Cosplay Music Video area, however, I have been following very passionately a channel of Swedish female authors who made some real gems a decade ago, especially given the times and the equipment they had available. The name of the channel is Vändettv Cosplay and to this day I still happen to remember and look back on some of their creations.

Ren Mori, cosplayer and outstanding performer, was in the limelight in Phocus 2022 in the video section, with Descensus a film by Maddalena Montecchio winning the video section of Phocus 2022. Ren...what can I say so many compliments on your interpretation of Viktor and just for that we would like to ask you some questions:



1) Who is Viktor to you, how did you study this character? You played him beautifully and your performance earned a prestigious statuette, but what were the main difficulties you had to overcome to identify with him?

I met Viktor through the popular League of Legends video game and was immediately struck by his utopian ideology. With the release of the Netflix series "Arcane," I completely fell in love with this character and his inner strength in pursuing a goal despite physical and other difficulties. I empathized with that young scientist Zaunite from his first appearance: I suffer from a degenerative condition in both knees, so I understand what it means for Viktor to push himself beyond his limits to achieve a goal.

Casting myself in character was indeed not difficult, aided also by the fact that I am comfortable inside a real laboratory, thanks to my work. So I am happy to have conveyed so clearly the emotions and thoughts of the character I played!

2) The scene as you run among the people in Venice is one of the most touching in the whole film, a little gem that we would like you to describe to us. How did it come about? What was it like to make it?

The scene in question was deliberately recreated by taking cues from the same scene within the "Arcane" series. The "behind-the-scenes," so to speak, could be melodramatic: we had to go back to the location as many as two different days to reshoot, we had to fight with tourists to leave the pier clear enough to run, Magdalene risked hitting a couple of passersby and a few light pillars, and, which I wouldn't wish on anyone, running barefoot on Venetian cobblestones risking getting a hole in them is not something I would willingly do again. Aside from the comedy of these backstories, it was also a very touching scene for me. I had to grit my teeth a couple of times to keep from shedding a few tears. Unfortunately, for over a year now, I have had to stop my chance to run as a result of another knee injury, so the pathos conveyed I think is natural. (Of course, if my physical therapist had seen me he would have kicked me for doing such a thing without patellar braces.) To me, that scene means a lot.

3) Viktor believes that scientists should find ways to make the world a better place and this a very noble concept, while for YOU what should the world be like to be called a better world?

I share Viktor's ideals, but not only do scientists have a duty to make the world a better place, but also the ruling class, representatives, the well-to-do, the middle class, and every single citizen of this planet. If there were more respect, meritocracy, and altruism on everyone's part, I believe society would also benefit. Less pollution, less waste, birth control, and eco-sustainable technological evolution. I understand how this is a utopian vision, but if one can dream, better to do it big.

4) How was your relationship with director Maddalena Montecchio and the rest of the team during the filming of Descensus?

I firmly believe that a better team could not be created! Maddalena is a great friend of mine and is extremely professional when it comes to photo shooting or video making. We have known each other for a long time so working on creating this footage with her was nice and fun. Even if she asks to reshoot a scene, change an expression, or pose, her critique does not cause me any difficulties at all as it would if done by others. It thus allows me to express myself at my best behind the lens without anxiety or stress! I have also known Celine for several years and I never doubted her great skills as a make-up artist, she did an excellent job and was a not inconsiderable support in the creation of it all. Mention also the technical support of Blaze, Kurenai, and Nacchan: without them, we would never have been able to create Descensus! From finding the right wig to carrying me around the Venice pier when my feet hurt too much, their presence was crucial. The most important thing about this team was the mutual help, passion, and fun we all put into making this film.

INTERVIEW TIME

**We congratulate
you again, thank
you for
contributing to
our project, and
thank you so
much for your
willingness to
interview.**

**Thank you so
much again for
this interview and
for choosing
Descensus as the
best 2022 video!**



CLICK ON THE VIDEO TO SEE IT!

DESCENDUS by MADDALENA MONTECCHIO

MADDALENA MONTECCHIO in DESCENSUS

REN MORI in DESCENDUS

IORE DI LUNA in VOLERAI

**LAST GOODBYE - ATTACK ON TITANS
by STEEVE LI PHOTOGRAPHY**

**LAST GOODBYE - ATTACK ON TITANS
by STEEVE LI PHOTOGRAPHY**

DESCENDUS by MADDALENA MONTECCHIO

**MONSTER HUNTER - FULGUR ANJANATH
by SNEAKY ZEBRA**

DESCENDUS by MADDALENA MONTECCHIO

**LITTLE JEM in
MONSTER HUNTER - FULGUR ANJANATH**

BEST VIDEO 2022

BEST DIRECTOR

BEST INTERPRETER

BEST MAKEUP & HAIRSTYLING

BEST SUBJECT

BEST EDITING

BEST SONG

BEST SOUND EDITING

BEST PHOTOGRAPHY

BEST COSTUME

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M A G A Z I N E

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