

Calendar boys

↳ EXHIBITION: Photographer Ellen Gilhuys and the «Gentle Men of Rugby»
The story of putting together a spectacular series of black and white pictures that became a sport-supporting calendar.

Gusta van Dobbenburgh
Curator

Dutch born Ellen Gilhuys counts many subjects on her list of favorites. She has taken beautiful shots of individuals, families, pregnant women, as well as landscapes, products, and other professionally oriented subjects. But the pictures of her calendar in support of the Sportsmile Foundation will be the most important part of her upcoming exposition at the ELA gallery in September and October.

These are images of the members of the Stade Lausanne Rugby team, a piquant series revealing the beautiful athletic physique of some of its members in near life-size format.

How did Ellen's idea to create a series of beautifully photographed sportsmen originate?

«The Stade Lausanne Rugby Club contacted me to do a calendar. I suggested to create one especially for women,» she clarifies. «I wanted it to be funny and sexy, with-

out being shocking, tapping into this small fantasy shared by many women to have a good looking guy working in and around the house. So the theme of this project became combining the physical aspect of rugby with the «gentlemen side» of it. That we were able to turn it into a fundraising calendar in support of the Sport Smile Foundation is nothing short of wonderful.»

And indeed, the admirers of her calendar have 12 months to indulge in her beautiful photographic work, to the making of which the Lausanne rugby team gladly donated its time.

«I wrote a specific scenario for every picture,» Ellen explains, «combining the rugby moves with household chores. The men are mowing the lawn, cooking, vacuum cleaning, or decorating a Christmas tree, while the women are sipping a glass of champagne, reading a book, or simply enjoying having a muscled man around. A smile for every month.»

Interesting is the fact that Ellen used natural light exclusively,

as she does in most of her photographic work. The result is a very natural appearance of the subjects, and a smooth, almost velvet-like atmosphere in grays, blacks and whites, reminiscent of another era. Some of the black and white pictures have a subtle color detail in soft red, like the emblem on the Stade Lausanne rugby ball, or a flower. The team members also show other specific rugby items, such as rugby shoes, and the supporting white wraps around their wrists and hands.

«We had a great time during the shooting of the pictures,» Ellen recalls. «It was a day for the team members and their friends, spouses, and children. It felt more like a family reunion than a photo shoot. I never had so many volunteer female assistants!

It was interesting to see how we got to the right atmosphere or pose in a very different way in every shot; some pictures needed a lot of trying and adjusting, while others were just a matter of minutes.»

Ellen Gilhuys has not always been a photographer. Though she painted already as a child, and was into acting, she studied psychology at the University of Amsterdam, and worked for seven years as a Client Services Director in the advertising business. But she «knew» that one day she would choose to live a creative existence. She came to the Lausanne area in 1997, and discovered photography in Switzerland.

Motherhood has clearly had an impact on her photographic career; her website shows many pregnancy-related pictures, and she loves working with children.

She feels she was fortunate to have had a few very good teachers, and admits that what made her decide to begin a photographic career was a matter of meeting the right people at the right time. Ellen likes to refer to her work as «pixel poetry» trying to evoke a certain emotion with every picture she takes. This is how she describes it on www.emophoto.com:

«Someone once told me that much like a sentence will make no sense without spaces between the words, and music will have no rhythm if it wasn't for its moments of silence, our lives become meaningful only when we take the time to witness its beauty, and use that energy to create moments of beauty of our own...»

Enjoy the show! ☺



«Rugby will never be the same again»
Photographer Ellen Gilhuys and the «Gentle Men of Rugby»
Exhibition from September 22 to October 31, 2008
ELA Art Cafeteria,
Room 010
Monday through Friday:
8h45 - 17h00
Vernissage: Thursday,
September 25