

# HENRIK PURIENNE— PURELY PURIENNE

*Henrik Purienne, filmmaker, photographer and founder of Mirage Magazine, travels between Cape Town and Paris photographing perfection—idyllic women stripped down to their basics. Ask Purienne to share the stories behind his photographs and his response will be, “I believe ‘a picture says a 100 words.’”*



Interview - JANINE BARTELS





The more commonly known phrase is, "a picture is worth a 1000 words," however, Purienne steers clear of the ordinary and expected. His cutthroat confidence is glorified with smug to the point responses. A man of few words (approximately 100).

Creating tension in interviews is not the same effect his photographs have. Gorgeous girls unveil in front of his camera, and at least 100 sexy words surely spring to mind. They stand naked before him, appearing at ease, their beauty effortless and raw, they are in their element. In case you didn't know, sex sells (sex scandals don't). American Apparel didn't miss the memo - the brand has previously locked down Purienne's nostalgic nudes for their ad campaigns.

In May, he released a voyeuristic and hedonistic book titled Purienne, a compilation of photos shot with disposable cameras and 35mm film spanning over a period three years. Models line the pages. Sultry and sandy, the sun-kissed beach babes glow. The South African photographer scores striking snaps with his keen eye and wry charm. What does he coo to them? He won't divulge secrets, and if he does, it's difficult to ascertain whether he's being serious or sarcastic. "Just stay in character," he says. Say no more. When you're as talented as Purienne, a silver tongue is just part of being in character.

JANINE - In an interview you state the title Mirage was chosen "cause life (and fashion) [are] an illusion." I completely agree, however, there has to be something real in the illusion. What is real to you? Who or what can you rely on to always be there and not vanish? (Please do not say a photograph).

HENRIK - I was just kidding. But it sounds cool doesn't it. Damn... now I can only think of the word 'photograph'.

JANINE - You have founded Mirage and in addition shoot some of the editorials. Referencing the saying, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," are there instances where you feel possessive over the magazine and thought about being the sole photographer for Mirage?

HENRIK - Curating the content gives me enough freedom to design my vision. If I shot the whole magazine it would be a book.

JANINE - You date stunning women. With a track record like that do they flock to you or do you pursue them? What's your secret... any tips for the boys reading?

HENRIK - Neither. Things will happen while they can... Just stay in character.

JANINE - "Things will happen while they can..." Are you referring to youth? Correct me if I am mistaken or if you were joking in the interview, but I understand you were compared to Hugh Hefner? Clearly age is not an issue for him, but do you see it eventually hindering you?

HENRIK - No, I just mean I don't really think about it. I guess Brad Elterman compared me to Hugh since I publish a magazine and am surrounded by interesting/attractive friends.

JANINE - How old were you when you first started viewing women in a sexual way? I would love if you could divulge details. Was it your babysitter or your childhood girlfriend?

HENRIK - There was this really pretty blonde girl in primary school who used to wear these old pair of worn out low-rise leggings in winter. Somehow it drove me crazy.

JANINE - Has a woman ever denied you from photographing her? Not much appears to faze you, humor me, but what is the worst or most embarrassing rejection? Feel free to share a dating story if it's more suiting.

HENRIK - I just shoot my friends, so no need to strut around in a cheesecloth shirt and a bottle of red wine trying to coax strangers into shoots. (I've never been on a date.)

JANINE - There are so many women that enter and leave your life! How have you managed to evade going on a date? Describe your definition of a date.

HENRIK - For me a date is anything that does not happen naturally. If you have to make an appointment to see anyone it's insane already.

JANINE - A clichéd question on my part, but if you were to go on a date, what would be your ideal date?

HENRIK - No idea. I always say the only thing worse than 'a good time' is planning to have one.

JANINE - The women you photograph are perfection, the ideal woman (by fashion standards and the majorities' aspirations). I understand many of your subjects are girlfriends - you can chose who you date - but have you or would you ever refuse photographing a woman if her body type or look didn't mesh with your image? How would you dismiss them?

HENRIK - I do what I like... But in general I'm not that into pale super skinny girls.

JANINE - You previously responded to a question regarding business and pleasure as, "It's basically like a mullet... business in the front. Party in the back." To my knowledge you don't have any sex scandals, but American Apparel does. Having shot American Apparel ad campaigns, did the buzz surrounding sexual harassment scandals with CEO Dov Charney alter your views and involvement with the company?

HENRIK - I once had an ad banned by the BAA for 'sexualizing a girl that is clearly under the age of 16,' but it was really just a picture of my 23 year old girlfriend putting on a pair of socks in our bedroom. As a result I believe most of these 'scandals' are just pure fantasy cooked up by some British feminists.

JANINE - It doesn't matter if you believe or disbelieve in re-carnation, what would you be in another life if you had any say in the matter?

HENRIK - That worn out pair of low-rise leggings...

JANINE - What projects do you currently have on the go? Any additional books like Purienne in the making?

HENRIK - Books. Films. Stuff. Aka 'Various projects in numerous stages of development.'