

## Adriano Trapani: Phuket's mermaid shooter

**A**driano Trapani claims he can capture the mermaid begging to be unleashed in any woman. Known as Phuket's 'underwater paparazzi', today he is fishing for new 'mermaid models' and isn't fussy about which variety of *femme* he reels in – Thai, European, African, Asian, tourist or local – he wants them all. He even promises to release his catch back into the wild after he's had his fix.

The 36-year-old Italian dive instructor can be found splashing around in Phuket swimming pools with his 'mermaids' – who are dressed in glad rags – armed with his Canon G10 camera encased in waterproof housing.

A self confessed vanity sinner, Adriano's new underwater fashion photography business is generating a swell of interest from tourists and locals on the island.

"Just give me a swimming pool, some props and a subject and my passion and talent will do the rest," he said.

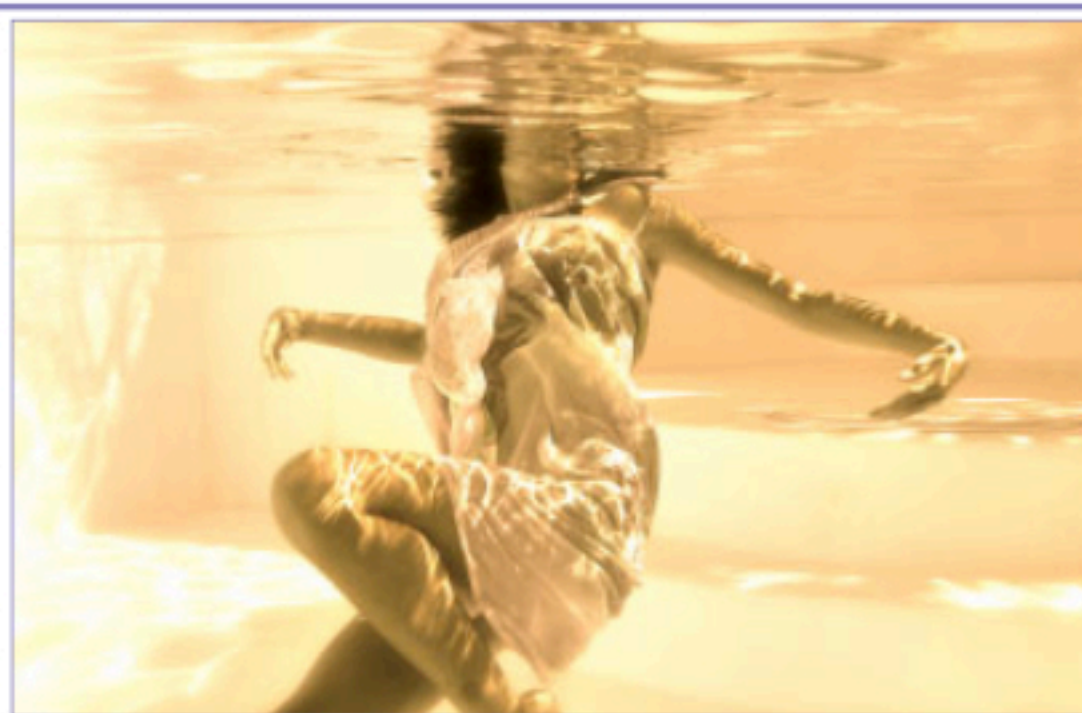
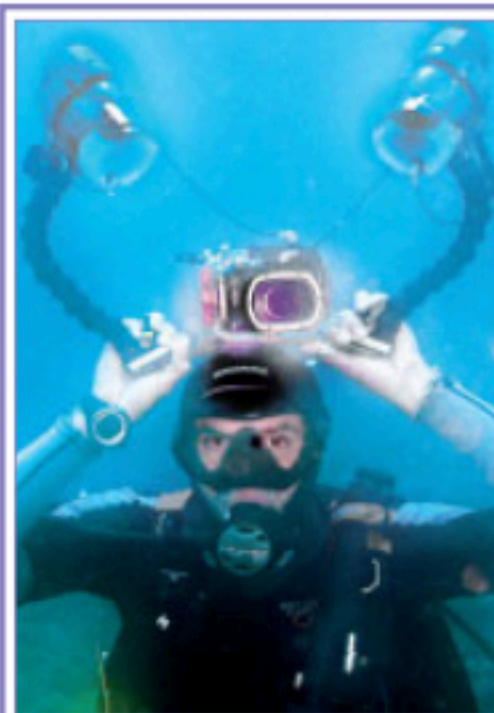
Adriano first coined his 'women can be 'mermaids' idea two years ago, whilst working as a dive instructor in Indonesia.

"I tried some different underwater shots: a female model with colorful clothes on while swimming in the resort pool," he said.

Pleased with the outcome, Adriano proudly hung the photograph on his wall, between his choice shots of sharks and giant manta rays. It was while staring longingly at the mermaid photograph one morning last December that Adriano realized his new business venture: He would take an ordinary woman and morph her into a graceful mermaid, if only for a few hours.

One snag, potential mermaids must be able to hold their breath under water for 30 seconds at a time, longer if possible, for Adriano to get the shot he needs.

With more than ten years of diving and photography experience under his weight belt, Adriano



Adriano Trapani is Phuket's 'Underwater paparazzi'. The Italian dive instructor has started the island's first underwater fashion photography service. Adriano poses with his camera gear on a recent dive (top left) and (top right, bottom) two of his stunning first mermaid photographs.

achieved dive instructor status in 2004.

Opting for a two week Phuket holiday, arriving on December 20, 2004 – just six days before the tsunami struck – Adriano, was involved in the relief effort by volunteering to help the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR).

There, he assisted in the massive 'reef-check' effort in surrounding waters off Phuket, Phi Phi Islands and the Similan Marine National Park.

Working with his Thai counterparts was when Adriano "fell in love with Thailand" and decided to stay to find work in the island's dive industry.

Five years on, Adriano is a professional underwater photographer and veteran dive instructor.

He has been published in dive rags around the globe and his style is causing quite a

stir with the ladies. His key to success: "make a different yet professional photo shoot at a reasonable price available to anyone," he said.

Each shoot takes around four hours and Adriano provides the clothes for models, unless they want to bring their own. A tour operator, a Patong based dive shop and another professional photographer have all given the green light to help get Adriano's small business idea off the ground.

Adriano held his first shoot for paying tourist customers earlier this month. Two young Australian women "held their breath for some underwater fun".

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-Fraser Morton

