

A Rose-tinted view

Meet the fashion and beauty photographer who creates portraits packed with idealised allure



Images by © Ruth Rose

Ruth Rose is a young fashion and beauty photographer who is making waves with her seductively styled and beautifully shot portraiture. Discover her top tips and essential advice for perfect portraits, along with how she got into photography and what inspired her to create such stunning shots.

How and when did you first get into photography? What prompted you to pick up a camera for the first time?

I first got into photography around the age of 13 when I began taking social photos of my friends and I, in the way that teenagers do. I loved to collage and so (much to the dismay of my mum) would wallpaper my bedroom walls with my many images. I can remember putting my films into Boots for seven-day processing, since it was the cheapest way of processing them, but going in every day after school to annoy the staff to see if they were ready early. The anticipation of opening a set of film photos that you hadn't seen before was so exciting and this is something that you can't re-create on digital. Thinking about it, we have definitely lost some magic through the digital process!

How did you start studying photography?

At my junior school, I never remember being particularly interested in art lessons. Art was taken very literally; watercolour paintings of a vase of flowers or a pencil drawing copy of a painting – something that I didn't excel at. However, during secondary school, and particularly during my Art GCSE, art became an avenue to be creative in whichever medium you pleased, which is something that I loved. I discovered that, rather than copying something, I could take a photograph of it and paint over the top of it in the style of various famous artists. It was at this point that I made the effort to learn about taking interesting photographs. I soon found the photography aspect more interesting than the painting aspect and I incorporated as much photography into my portfolio as I could.

When did you realise that you wanted to become a professional photographer?

Funnily enough, I never had an epiphany of thinking 'I want to be a professional photographer' before I was one. I knew that I did deep down, but doing it professionally seemed impossible. After completing my internship with fashion photographer Elisabeth Hoff, the industry seemed incredibly daunting and I couldn't see how I could ever break in without endless contacts. However, as I began shooting fashion and getting great feedback, my confidence grew. I got such a thrill from it, that I knew I didn't want to be anything else.

How did you get your first photographic job?

My first paid shoot was with a small, Newcastle-based, online accessories company created by two sisters. I was searching for fashion brands on Facebook, came across their page and contacted them suggesting that I could do a shoot for them. They posted me a box of feather headbands and I created an ethereal, dreamlike studio shoot for which I cast a stunning redhead model. Excitingly, this accessories company is Rock 'N Rose, which has grown as I have and become an incredibly successful brand. It collaborated with Pixie Lott for a collection, which I shot.

How did you get into beauty, fashion and celebrity photography and what do you enjoy most about it?

I began doing a mixture of photographic work but I soon found that, as well as being what I wanted to do, fashion and celebrity photography was where my passion and talent lay. I found it so exciting that, with fashion and beauty, I could create an ideal image – something beautiful and unique in its own right. I know other photographers who enjoy the documentary style of photography, of waiting for a moment to happen, being at the right place at the right time and capturing it. There is still an element of this in fashion, in that there are so many variables that you can't control (the weather on location being the main one). At the heart of it, I love that you are in control of all the components of an image – the model, the make-up, the styling – and you are able to create a piece of artwork yourself. I also enjoy the balance of being a photographer; one day you are on an exciting set full of buzz and excitement and then the next you are sat editing your creations at your Mac in comfy clothes with a cup of tea.

Knowing that I wanted to go down the fashion, celebrity, beauty route, I began taking test shoots with as many models and companies or individuals that I could manage. I then created a website and kept emailing my work to different fashion companies.

Can you give us the complete lowdown on how you plan, set up and work through a photoshoot?

The first step is the shoot prep. I usually help the client come up with a brand concept for the shoot, find suitable models and book make-up artists and stylists. During my English degree I learnt how an author creates a story and evokes a sentiment in the reader. I like to apply this to my work, through light, shape and composition. I want to create a visual story for shoots. This is in order to compel the customer to look at the image, buy into the ideal being portrayed, want to be a part of this ideal and subsequently buy into the brand. When the concept is confirmed, I put together inspirational images for the shoot day and ensure that I have all my kit packed, which I do very fastidiously, cross-referencing with a list. I still always leave feeling as though I have forgotten something, but I haven't yet! I try to plan as much as possible, thinking through my lighting and location areas, so that I arrive at a shoot fully prepared. On the shoot day, I like a relaxed but professional atmosphere with some upbeat music and lots of hard work to transform our conceptualised ideas into concrete images. As in any profession, commitment and discipline are always the most important factors!

What's your favourite kit to use and why?

I shoot on a Canon 5D Mk II and use a 50mm prime lens. I always aim to make the light as dynamic as I can, so I prefer to use a beauty dish or a softbox at an angle to create appropriate highlights and shadows.

You've done many lingerie and swimwear shoots. How do you ensure that your models feel relaxed and confident when they're skimpily dressed?

Before I had any experience on-set I thought that to be a photographer you had to be extroverted and loud to command a shoot. I have actually found that

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putting people at ease by being relaxed and giving gentle but firm instruction is far more effective, especially on lingerie shoots. I think female versus male photographers depends on the model and which gender they feel more comfortable with. I often find myself on all-female sets and upon hearing ‘Oohs’ look behind myself to see a group of women looking in awe at the beauty of a model. It’s important to facilitate an encouraging, relaxed mood on a set. I think that whether it’s a bonus photographically being a female photographer depends on whom the images are aimed at. My lingerie shoots usually have the goal of making women look beautiful to other women, since women are the customers, so I may have more insight than a male photographer in this regard.

You’ve shot looks for a range of fashion labels – do you have shoots that stand out to you as being particularly exciting? What do you like about the clients and the shoots you do for them?

I was privileged enough to be booked to shoot the SS13 campaign for shoe company Duo (www.duoboots.com) and have since shot its AW13 campaign too. Through the imagery we produce for Duo, we aim to provoke a luxury experience in order to encourage the customer to want to own this quality brand. I particularly enjoy the Duo shoots because each campaign has a different but equally inspiring concept and makes use of a specific environment to help get across that concept. For the brand’s summer campaign, we flew to Cannes to shoot in a rooftop villa with stunning white, angular architecture framing palm trees and an infinity pool. Then for the summer campaign we used the idyllic French Riviera in Saint-Tropez. By contrast, for the autumn/winter campaign we shot at a retro Seventies-style house in the Nottingham countryside, the winter wilderness of the Peak District and the ancestral stately home Althorp House. It’s incredibly inspiring to be given such magnificent landscapes to provide the backdrop to the images.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Ruth Rose
Website: www.ruthrose.co.uk
Year and country of birth: UK, 1988
Typical kit: Canon 5D Mk II, 50mm prime lens, 80mm prime lens
Professional biography: Ruth Rose is an international fashion, celebrity, lingerie and beauty photographer based in London, UK. After attaining a string of academic qualifications (a 2:1 honours degree in English and Philosophy from Southampton University), Rose decided to pursue her ambition of becoming a fashion photographer. She completed an internship with Elisabeth Hoff, during which she assisted her on prestigious photo shoots for high-end fashion magazines.

Do you have a team that you particularly enjoy working with? Who are they and what do they do?
 I particularly enjoy my shoots for luxury maternity brand Tiffany Rose (www.tiffanyrose.com) and being part of that team. Pregnancy is a time when women often don’t feel like being glamorous and drawing attention to themselves in a statement gown. So, as a team, we want to create images that show women that look desirable, happy and content: a feeling that women hopefully desire to emulate. As a result of this aim, I get to shoot in stunning houses, among beautiful dresses, freshly cut flowers and serenaded by Frank Sinatra. Tiffany definitely facilitates the encouraging and relaxed mood on a set that I find most creatives thrive under, having built up a team that respect and work well together. I always enjoy the special occasion scenario created to shoot in and feel privileged to be a part of the Tiffany Rose team.

Do you have any advice for young or emerging photographers who’d like to get into fashion and celebrity photography? Do you think there’s a strategy for getting into the industry?
 One thing I learnt from Elisabeth Hoff is that you never stop learning and you should always be your own worst critic! During my internship, we would finish a shoot where I thought that she did incredibly and then in the car journey back to the studio she would be thinking of what she could improve on. I never understood this at the time, thinking if I had taken those shots, I would feel nothing but proud and satisfied, but I notice myself doing the same thing now. Once you feel that you can’t improve I would imagine that your work becomes stale and passionless. Having said that, you also need a get-up-and-go attitude. I have met creative people who are too critical and never launch their website because it ‘isn’t quite finished’ and who never start shooting ‘because they aren’t ready’. There is a point where you have to just do it. This sounds contradictory advice but I believe that you need to be both bold and positive and yet aware that you are only as good as your last shoot!

Emerging photographers can find a celebrity shoot unnerving – have you ever found this with any of your subjects? If so, how did you deal with this?
 If the subject is well-known, then sometimes I can find chatting to them at the start of the shoot a little unnerving. But the minute I pick up the camera, the shots occupy my mind and these nerves fade, since I have a goal and an objective to focus on. Furthermore, I am aware that it’s my job to make the artist feel relaxed in order to get the best out of them and enable their character to show in the images.

I was recently on a shoot that was filmed for *Made in Chelsea*. I had no idea just how nerve-racking it was to be the other side of the camera and it gave me a great, if brief, insight into how vulnerable you can feel when stood in front of a professional camera and crew. Interestingly, once a shoot begins I often find that the celebrity status of the subject fades and the creative team become on an even pegging with them. Perhaps

being in front of the camera is a vulnerability for them, as it is for most. Just because celebrities are used to being in front of the camera, it doesn’t mean that they aren’t nervous to perform. In fact it’s often an element in people who are successful that they are always striving for perfection and therefore never completely satisfied or confident. This means that they are often just as much in need of reassurance as anyone else.

How do you approach a shoot with a celebrity? Do many other celebrity photographers inspire you?
 I love the idea of taking a celebrity, transforming them and putting them into a fashion story. Having said this, I feel that when photographing someone well-known, it’s important to retain the portraiture aspect and even if they have a different look on the shoot, you still need to capture their character. You want to transform people, but keep an essence of their self.
 As for inspiration, I have a folder on my Mac where I save any image that interests me. I love to look at images by all the great celebrity photographers, such as David Slijper, Peter Lindbergh, Rankin, Annie Leibovitz. A quote I particularly like is: ‘Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that fuels your imagination. If you do this, your work will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is nonexistent.’ That’s by Jim Jarmusch. It’s important to experiment with your work and create something different, but don’t be afraid to look for stimulation and motivation in other artists.

Can you tell us more about one of your favourite celebrity shoots? Do you have any anecdotes you can share about this shoot?
 One of my most enjoyable celebrity shoots was shooting the Christmas campaign for Pixie Lott’s collaboration with accessories company Rock ‘N Rose. Because the accessories are vintage-inspired, I found a location with some old-fashioned Victorian charm as the setting for the shoot.
 At the heart of Rock ‘N Rose is a mis-match of the hard rock and the soft rose, so this is demonstrated in the mix of stones, settings, colours, textures and shapes. This gave us the idea to create a shoot where there was a clashing, eclectic mix of prints, fabrics, patterns and shapes. When I photographed Pixie she was on a voice rest for a big concert the following day and was unable to speak. In order to communicate she had to write me notes on her iPhone. She was such a professional that she understood direction without the need for much discussion and was able to produce fantastic images despite this lack of verbal communication!

What are your plans for the future?
 Coming up this summer, I am shooting in Spain for Louise Thompson’s jeans line, Pocket London. The team are spending a week out there, so it should be a fun shoot! In the autumn I have some exciting campaigns with my regular clients and also a few new ones to get geared up for. I hope to continue to work hard and enjoy being privileged enough to do what I love for a living.

FAME AND BEAUTY
 Assorted shots from Ruth Rose’s portfolio. Clockwise from right: Duo shoot in Marbella; beauty test shoot; tear sheet of *Made in Chelsea*’s Spencer and Louise; Lucy Pinder



PIXIE LOTT
 Ruth Rose photographed pop star Pixie Lott in a vintage-themed shoot for a collection she produced with accessories brand Rock ‘N Rose, one of her first pro clients



Images by © Ruth Rose



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Ruth Rose’s tips for success

Here you can learn some of the fundamentals for making it big as a portrait, beauty and celebrity photographer

Research the business

I think that nurturing creativity is incredibly important. You don’t want to remove the passion and excitement by eliminating the artistic element. However, I was only aware of the artistic use of photography when I was at school, but I didn’t have any knowledge of the fashion industry or how to become a professional photographer. Perhaps schools need to be more businesslike in their advice to photography students.

Be proactive

Knowing that I wanted to go down the fashion, celebrity, beauty route, I began taking test shoots with as many models and companies or individuals that I could manage. I created a website and kept emailing my work to different fashion companies.

Give clear and concise direction

I’ve found that models need informative and constructive direction. I think that the temptation is to not give direction to the model through concern of sounding negative and critical and making them uncomfortable. However, my experience has been that models prefer helpful direction so that they know what is expected and what you hope to achieve.

Light make-up

I think that you need to keep the make-up as light as you can. It’s best to clear any blemishes in postproduction rather than with thick make-up and to keep the skin texture visible. More often than not, as with many aspects of beauty photography, less is more.

Highlight and shadow

It’s always important to produce highlights and shadows, with make-up on the model’s cheekbones and jawline. This can also be enhanced with extra lighting, so that the shot feels dynamic.

Allow time to warm up

An experienced fashion photographer told me that they preferred shooting film because the team could not see and instantly critique the shots. Instead, the moment was between the model and the photographer to develop the shot and the team had to wait until after the shoot to see the images. I can relate to this, as when you take the first test shot, it’s not often there yet because it’s the first shot. However, the team, being conscientious creatives, swarm the computer and jump in to make changes. This can often make the model panic and seize up, which can obviously ruin a shoot.



Express an idea

My first shoot for fashion brand Candy Kittens definitely stands out as being one of the exciting moments of my career. Candy Kittens is the business venture of Jamie Laing, star of *Made In Chelsea*. For the first shoot for the brand, the Candy Kittens team and I developed a concept in line with the Candy Kittens ethos: fun, young, sexy. The ultimate goal was to develop a scenario that the viewer wanted to be part of. Through the angles, energy and excitement portrayed in the images, the viewer then felt part of the fun and part of the brand.

Communicate clearly

If you think that something isn’t right and isn’t working, tell the model and find a solution, rather than looking concerned and making them guess at what they are doing wrong.

Retouching

While it is important not to rely on postproduction, I think that retouching is a key component in beauty to achieve perfect skin. I think that there’s a move away from retouching in the media. As I see it, the goal is to create a beautiful image and retouching is part of this.

Embrace fantasy

For me, photography is just like painting a picture or telling a story. You shouldn’t feel compelled to depict reality, in fact sometimes you should actively avoid it to produce something truly original.

