



# Space + style in all things

There's something about the Italian 'way of being' that finds form in Marco Joe Fazio's photography: stylish to a point and brimming with creative vision. As he says, it's in the blood – and over here...

**B**orn and raised in Tuscany, Marco Joe Fazio trained and practised as an architect. 'I worked in architecture, interior and lighting design for more than 18 years,' he says. Marco founded an award-winning architectural studio in Arezzo, between Florence and Rome. It begs the question 'why up sticks and head to London to become a photographer?' But all the same, Italy, design, architecture, lighting – these are very favourable elements that should easily form the foundation of a particularly stylish photographer... And so it turned out: 'It was during my life in Italy that I fell in love with photography and since I moved to London eight years ago, I have started to turn this love into my professional world.' →





→ It is no accident that the aesthetically literate professions tend to feed into highly creative and often visionary photography... striving for perfection; the combination of physical structure and light; forming a hyper-real environment greater than the sum of its parts... it is a fantastic recipe for commercial photography and it somehow oozes out of every word Marco speaks: 'My background as an architect will always remain at the heart of my photography – it gives me a distinctive perspective – but a love of style and fashion is also in my blood.' It could certainly be argued that it's when Marco's beautifully shot interiors and his obvious sense of

a strong editorial image come together that his work really stands out, as evidenced by our image selection here.

He concurs: 'My vision is to bring pictures to life by combining these passions. I see it as space and style merging architecture and fashion to introduce a powerful sense of theatre and an engaging narrative to my images.'

Marco is fully prepared to go the extra mile (or more) to achieve this. →







→ The opening image in this feature was shot for Italian designer Carlotta Actis Barone and it's a perfect example. Marco used a Profoto Spot Small on a movable stand operated by an assistant to create the projected effect for the model's 'shadow'. What you might not have noticed is that the shadow was actually formed by a second model. Does this seem like a lot of effort to go to? Marco said of the image when talking to Profoto: 'I did this to add another layer to the concept, borrowing it from the art of Chinese shadows. I wanted to stay true to my aim to turn the every day into the hyper-real and imaginary. So, I came up with the idea of using the Spot Small to light a second model standing out of frame mimicking the poses of the first model, and then project the second model's shadows on the background behind the first model. As it turned out, this was a good idea. After a while the models started to interact

and play around with each other's positions, which created a very nice vibe on the set. Also, I do believe it improved the final result.'

Those who are as observant as Marco will have already noticed that he came to these shores right at the time of the Credit Crunch. Not a great moment to begin a new life in a new profession you would think? Marco explains: 'The thing is that many aspects of professional life are far more difficult in Italy – there is a great deal of interference. I came to the UK to work, although starting a business in a new country is always going to be a challenge, Credit

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→ Crunch or not. It takes time to build contacts and become established. Particularly when you leave your own country, you realise how valuable it is to have people that you know around you, your reliable contact base, and you know how things are – the ways of working. At first, just finding something simple was a challenge. It takes time, but my mind is young and my work keeps me young. In some ways perhaps my brain is somewhere around 15 years old!

Whilst in Italy you really have to stop for lunch, surely being Italian in this profession and in this country must have some major benefits? Marco replies: 'I find that people do like me, my background and my style. In Italy you live and breathe culture and I have that deeply ingrained in my being, in the way that I think – maybe

it's just something that happens when you live in Florence.'

All of which drives us neatly towards how his work began to take shape. He says: 'I think that a rational idea of my photographic style is hard to pin down. Let's say first you aim to do what you covet. Everyone covets what they see, what they observe and like in real life. I am no different. All the world's a stage – that sums everything up for me. I'm trying to transform everything into a piece of theatre; to transform reality into something more; to make the ordinary →

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Image © Marco Joe Fazio



→ extraordinary if you can forgive the cliché. In my view, that's why architecture and fashion can mix together – it's not reportage, it's not sci-fi – I am taking pieces from reality and pieces from theatrical worlds and joining them to create something believable but hopefully fantastic.'

Marco is influenced by painterly use of strong shadows, for example Caravaggio and Rembrandt, and then photographically references contemporaries such as Tim Walker's extravagant staging and romantic motifs or Gregory Crewdson's crude hyper-reality. It all returns us to a 'scenic theatricality', transposed or even embossed onto normal life. Just as the trick with straight interiors is to caress it without losing realism, Marco knows that the viewer has to believe and find an inspirational or excited path into the picture. 'Style,' he comments, 'is part of your DNA. It is a gift. Only God can actually create something – we can only transform something we find into something else.'

On Marco's website there's plenty of behind the scenes footage of shoots in progress and he's almost at pains to explain that what he does is the culmination of a team effort. Why is it important to get this side of his work across? Marco comments: 'Sometimes when I watch a movie it's the making of it and the long end title's crew list that's more interesting. Team work is fundamental to the process. To see how the work of many comes together and to communicate the many processes that sit behind my work is all part of forming an idea of where I sit as a photographer. Personally, I really like to know what is behind everything and I think it's good for some of the ways we work to be public. Pragmatically, showing the complexity of what we do is always good.'

Marco gives every single picture his undivided personal attention – his work very definitely flowing →









Image © Marco Joe Fazio

→ through his veins: 'I worked with Photoshop before I became a photographer and so I have created my own standard procedures and ways of working – and it's a high benchmark. Outsourcing, therefore, is hard because every picture is different – unique to me in fact – and I am very attached to what I think about the picture and how I "talk" my way through the picture. It's always going to be very hard to explain what I want, so retouching is a personal process. I do let clients get involved in the finishing of an image. I'll send contact sheets and examples of one or two edits, and then they agree the workings of the files. But it's a very dangerous business to sit on a computer with a client. It's too much,

and I'm not trying to have them think everything is possible. What I want is buy-in to the creative vision and so I prefer to give them options a, b and c and we can talk about what they like.'

Marco also continues to be entirely independent without an agent to handle the business end: 'Actually, it's all been about word of mouth to date. If I look back to my first client in the UK and then to all my work now, funnily enough it's been about the next person

coming to me through the person before. It seems that good agents are very rare and difficult to access,' he says with a smile. 'Definitely this is a time in my business when an agent would be valuable to me. It is time consuming doing everything by myself and there would be value in delegating marketing, promotion and account handling. I think also that with client demands being what they are, I am looking to grow my offering so projects become more and more complex and I like the challenge – actually given by some clients of mine – of working across their whole brand id. In those cases, to keep the whole process in hand and to not to overstretch yourself, you have to plan everything diligently, constantly communicate with your client and work with a professional and talented team.'

I would like to be known for more complex jobs that have a strong creative edge – at the end of the day I know that I can't get there as a one-man band... I need to be the captain of the football team instead! That's why I gather a core team of creative director, make-up artist and key assistants and present that team to clients. I'm offering the whole package and in this way show the potential to up-scale the job. tP

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