

## CREATIVE RHYTHM

A prolific artist, publisher and entrepreneur, **Bastiaan Woudt** seems to have endless energy and creative reserves. He talks to Tracy Calder about scaling new heights, succeeding in business and his dreams of becoming a DJ.

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Photographers often speak about their love of music: Paul Kenny named one of his creations *Heaven or Las Vegas* after a Cocteau Twins album, Michael Kenna's picture *Draped Boats* was partly inspired by Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *The Phantom*

*of the Opera*, and Ian Beesley likes to play records in his darkroom – apparently it takes one side of an album to produce one print.

When music and photography cross-pollinate, ideas, styles and unique expressions emerge. When it comes to genres, classical, jazz and rock seem to dominate, but having recently spoken to Dutch photographer and entrepreneur Bastiaan Woudt, I can now add electronic music to the mix. 'It's wired into my brain,' he smiles, tapping his head. 'Every time I edit my pictures, I play it.'

The music he listens to and the images he creates share the same energetic, pulsating rhythm. When viewed in book form, they seem to speak to one another in a language

that is both personal and universal. Bastiaan even called his recent book (a beautiful 10-year retrospective) *Rhythm*.

Despite harbouring dreams of becoming a DJ, Bastiaan turned his attention to photography in 2011, initially shooting family portraits and interiors for clients. 'This work helped me get my studio, buy equipment and earn a living, but eventually I got really bored with it,' he explains.

Tired of executing other people's ideas, Bastiaan began to create his own art in 2014. From the outset, his style was refreshingly minimalistic: clean, sharp lines divide the space, drawing attention to form and texture. When he tells me he was influenced by Irving Penn and Richard Avedon, it comes as no great surprise.

What does surprise me is his dedication to black & white. After all, Bastiaan grew up in the 1990s, not a decade associated with restraint and pared-back style. 'There's something magical about the aesthetics of film photography from old-school photographers like Penn, Avedon, Man Ray and Bill Brandt,' he enthuses. 'I love the fact that it's not perfect. There's soul

in this kind of photography, and that's something I try to bring to my own work.'

Bastiaan also enjoys the way that black & white allows him to play with abstraction. 'I'm trying to make art, so whether it's a portrait, a landscape or something I'm doing in the studio, it's not my intention to show reality,' he reveals. 'When we look at the world, we see it in colour, so removing colour helps to remove some of the reality from an image.'

Driven and passionate, it hasn't taken Bastiaan long to carve out a niche for himself in the art world. His photography has been exhibited at leading art fairs including Paris Photo, AIPAD New York and Photo London, and in 2022 he staged his first solo museum exhibition at Museum Kranenburg in Bergen.

Bastiaan has also collaborated with magazines such as British *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* and his commercial clients include luxury fashion house Chanel. When he's not wielding a camera, this passionate entrepreneur also runs 1605 Collective, a platform for artists that includes a publishing house and an annual magazine. >



Below **Tino VII, 2022** Opposite **Float, 2023**



He might be a prolific artist and publisher, but Bastiaan still finds time to expand his mind through travel. In April he completed a four-week Buddhist pilgrimage in Japan, and shortly before that he spent a month hiking and photographing in the Himalayas. 'I have a fascination for being up in the mountains,' he says. 'I've also climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.'

Bastiaan is clearly a busy man and I'm keen to know how he fits everything in, especially as he seems so calm and self-possessed. 'I think structure is the number one thing,' he suggests. 'I've always been interested in the business side of things. Before I took up photography, I worked in hotel and event management, and I took a four-year course learning how to run my own business.'

While the work and studying must have helped, I can't help thinking that Bastiaan would have made a success of things anyway. 'I guess for me there has always been this drive to do everything myself and to be in charge of everything,' he explains (he also taught himself the craft of photography).

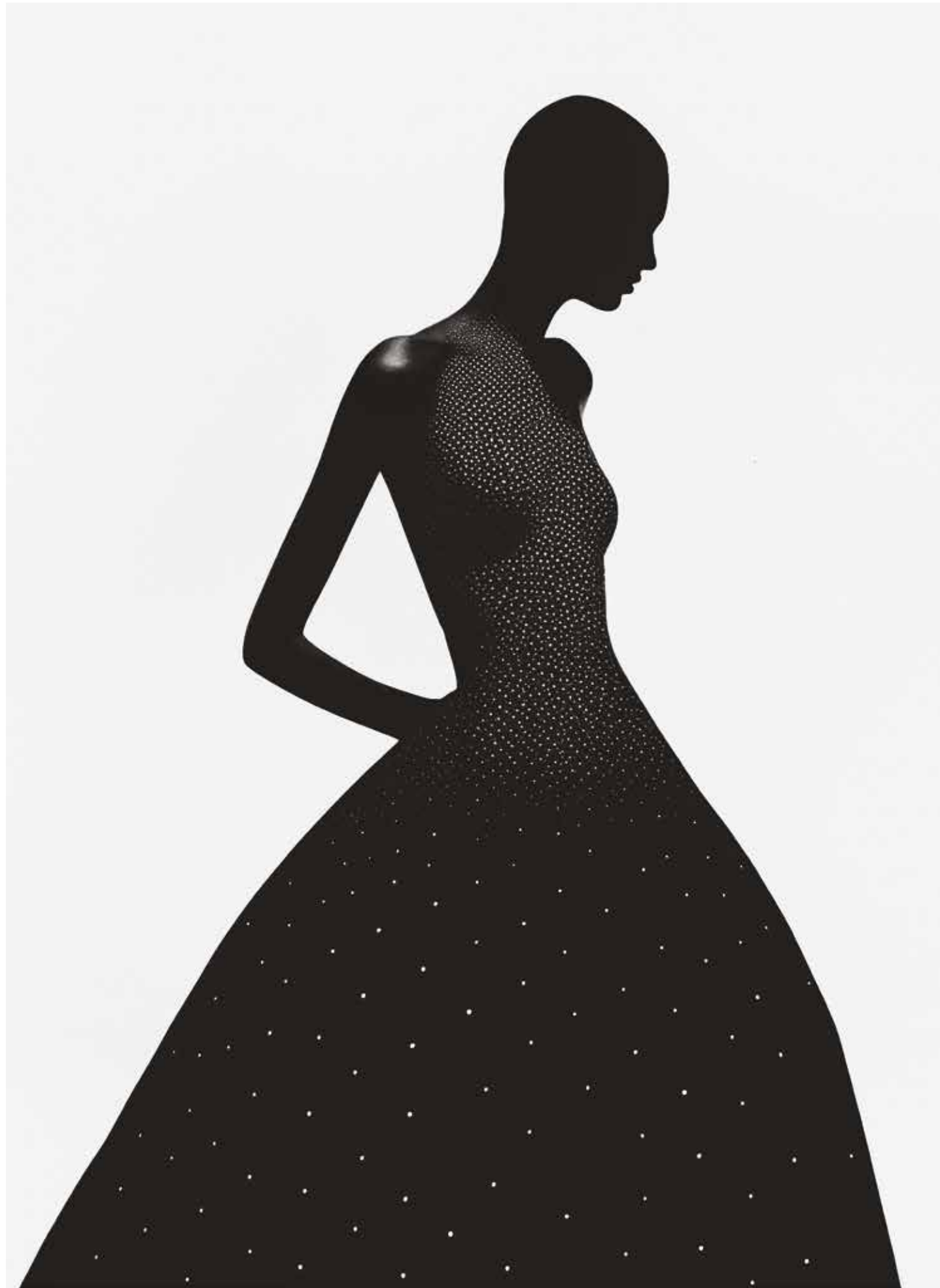
Some people consider art and business to be unhappy bedfellows, but Bastiaan has a different view. 'I know a lot of people who are great artists but suck at business,' he admits. 'Luckily, there are ways around it. For example, you can get a manager, look for gallery representation or join an agency.'

For Bastiaan, striking a balance between the two is easy because he considers himself as working with each gallery, client or agency rather than simply for them. It takes confidence and courage to insist on equal billing, but Bastiaan has done more than enough to prove his worth. 'The starting point is always with me, but we decide what to do and how to expand our businesses together,' he says. 'I would never give someone complete control over my business.'

Each union provides an opportunity to exchange ideas, learn and grow. 'You start to see how other people, especially those outside your own bubble, run their businesses and you begin to take bits and pieces from all the things you've seen and learned, much like you do as an artist,' says Bastiaan. >







Opposite *Echo from beyond*, 2023 Above (left) *Vivian*, 2020 Above (right) *Side circle*, 2020

earning from others might help Bastiaan grow as an artist and a businessman, but publishing is in his DNA. 'My father had a printing company that produced art books,' he recalls. 'He passed away when I was 13, so he never taught me about the business, but I guess everything runs in the blood in some way.'

Before launching 1605 Collective, Bastiaan produced a few books with other publishers. To begin with, he was grateful to see his work in print, but it wasn't long before he noticed a serious imbalance. 'The people who make money off your work often say you should be grateful for having a book – they give you a few boxes of your book and then go away and make money off you while you're getting next to nothing,' he says. 'This happened to me, and I just didn't think it was fair.'

Not one to mope, Bastiaan took matters into his own hands and promptly published *Tino*, a celebration of his collaboration with

model Tinotenda Mushore. 'We set up a website, published the book and it sold out in a few days,' he recalls.

Having learned what it takes to produce, publish and promote a book, Bastiaan (and creative director Janneke Schrey) began to offer services to other photographers. 'I knew a lot of photographers who didn't have a book or weren't happy with the current publishing model,' says Bastiaan. 'We have a different approach in that people who publish with us always get properly paid for the things they do.'

Bastiaan's open attitude and impeccable standards have led to collaborations with, among others, Kacper Kowalski, Maura Sullivan and Babs Decruyenaere. Kacper's book *Event Horizon* was awarded first place in the nature category of the American International Photography Awards.

With books, a magazine and a successful art photography career to attend to, you'd

think Bastiaan would spend his downtime resting and recovering. Having spoken to him for the best part of an hour, however, I think it's fair to say this isn't the case. 'I have regular work, commissioned work, NGO work and my personal projects,' he says. 'I'm also working on an AI project on the side because I really want to explore the new technology.'

And then, of course, there's the music. In the thick of it all, Bastiaan has found a beat he can follow and a rhythm that satisfies his creative soul.

***Bastiaan Woudt – Rhythm* is on show at Jaeger Art in Berlin until 16 November. This is Bastiaan's first solo exhibition in Germany and features various bodies of work, some of which have never been shown to the public before. To find out more, visit [jaeger.art](http://jaeger.art).**