

# “YOU CAN ONLY DO A GOOD JOB WHEN YOU LOVE WHAT YOU’RE SEEING”

Nature photographer **Florian Smit** is one of a new breed of photographers for whom diversification is the key to success

**H**e may only be 24, but Florian Smit’s path as a nature photographer has already covered a lot of ground.

He chooses his own projects, sells his own work, develops connections at festivals and exhibitions and maintains them →



Florian often ventures into woodland looking for subjects such as this dew-covered moss spore, photographed with his favourite macro lens  
Nikon D810, AF-S VR Micro-NIKKOR 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED, extension tubes, ISO 100, 1/5sec @ f/2.8



1.

using social media. He's now developing his own photography workshops, too.

On leaving school Florian enrolled on a three-year photography course and started making Nikon connections at his graduation. He recalls: "They talked to me after the ceremony and that was the start of the relationship."

It has been a close relationship ever since. In 2015, Nikon invited Florian to make a journey to Borneo and Java to try out a camera they were set to launch – the flagship D5. The trip helped Smit build partnerships with other brands, too. "When we started the Borneo

project we looked for sponsors of equipment, wrote emails to companies, so something started. Nikon opened doors, definitely."

For a young photographer, working in the tropical rainforest and experiencing active volcanoes was eye-opening. Today, though, Florian remains focused on the European landscape, creating fine art prints to appeal to his predominantly German customer base. Last year, one of his photographs, *Magical Glow* (see pic), was a finalist in the Plants and Fungi category of the prestigious European Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, organized by the German Society

of Nature Photographers (GDT).

Most of Florian's work is made while travelling, with the chosen prints made available for sale through his website. It is a working method with no guarantees of return but preferable, he says, to working to a specific commission. "Most of the shoots I do are self-directed projects," he says. "I choose a destination that looks interesting, take the photos just the way I like them try to sell them afterwards. I like working this way, because you can only do a good job when you love what you're seeing."

Of course, finding a scene or subject that will prove popular with the art-



2.

---

“I choose a destination that looks interesting, take the photos just the way I like them and try to sell them afterwards”

---

buying public is not an exact science. "When I have a favourite picture it's not generally the picture that sells the best!" says Florian. One of his best-selling prints is a colourful double exposure, "one image sharp and one unsharp", of star moss taken in Norway during the autumn, using one of his favourite lenses, the AF-S VR Micro-Nikkor 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED. "I really like that lens

because it is one of the sharpest and used together with the D810 you get very, very good image quality. I'm always doing pictures with lots of bokeh with lens flare in the background to create something like a mystical little world where people can lose themselves in their imagination."

With summer here, you are more likely to find Florian in front of →

**1. It would be tempting to say the leaf was placed on this toadstool, but Florian stresses this shot is exactly as he found it.**

Nikon D800, AF-S VR Micro-NIKKOR 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED, ISO 100, 1/10sec @ f/11

**2. A pine forest on the west coast of Italy during sunset, A similar photo taken a few minutes later was selected in the final of the plants & fungi category of the 2016 European Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition**

Nikon D800, AF-S NIKKOR 14-24mm f/2.8G ED, ISO 100, 5sec @ f/16



**Florian Smit**  
floriansmit.com

#### Why Nikon?

When I grew up my father always took pictures with a Nikon. But for my first camera my father didn't buy me a Nikon on purpose, because he didn't want me to use his lenses all the time! But I always wanted to go back to Nikon, which I used during college.



Nikon D5



AF-S NIKKOR  
400MM F/2.8E FL  
ED VR



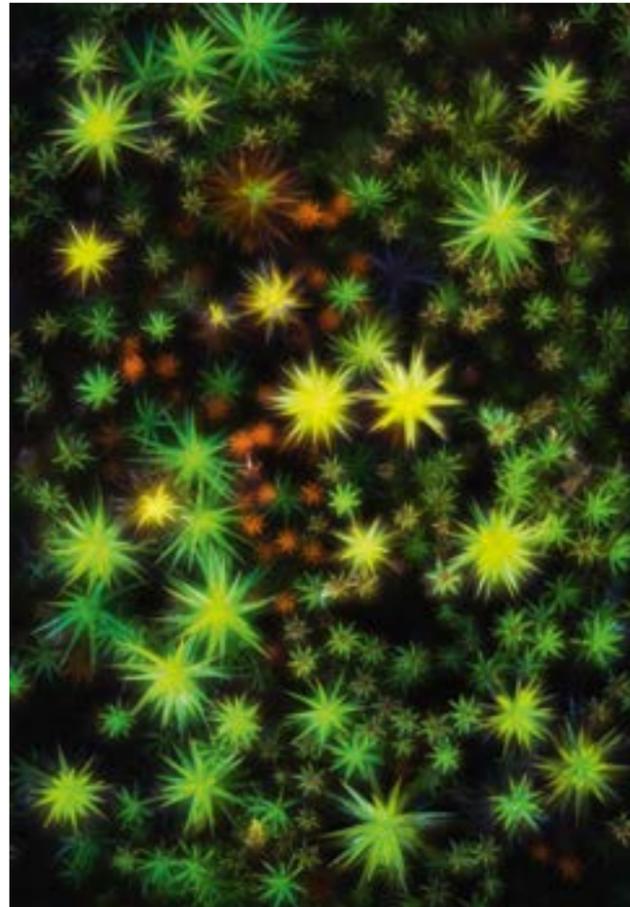
AF-S NIKKOR  
70-200mm f/2.8G  
ED VR II



Micro-Nikkor  
105mm f/2.8G

#### Next piece of equipment?

At the moment I'm considering buying a shift lens and a fisheye to complete my equipment.



3.

his computer screen than peering through the viewfinder in a shady woodland. Spring and autumn are his favourite seasons for photography, followed by winter. "I don't like the summer so much because it's very hot and all the greens outside are not fresh and colourful anymore." That said, this time of year is important for office work, magazine contributions and attending Germany's summer festivals. Europe has a strong tradition of festivals and conventions, covering a wide variety of outdoor interests, including nature photography. These are important networking occasions for anyone trying to get

established. Indeed, Florian believes they can be more effective than social media for securing clients and customers. He explains: "Most of the clients and people I work for, I get to know at nature festivals, during evenings when we're talking together. For me the most important thing is to go to these festivals to make personal contact with people in the industry."

But Florian has a new strategy to improve his chances of obtaining new business this summer: "This year, I will be at Photo+Adventure in Duisburg, not just for nature photography but also for the adventure part, because I want to

4.



“There’s just a limited market to sell your image so you must have different ways to sell your skills”

go more in the direction of adventure and travel and offer workshops.”

Diversification is key to his future; this year he started his first nature photography workshops. "I'm very young and most of the participants are much older than me, but it's working very well. Next year we will start workshops outside of Germany, in Norway perhaps." This is one area where he has found social media to be very effective

when it comes to attracting participants.

"I think you have to do a lot of different things to make a living as a nature photographer because it is so specialist. There's a limited market so you must have different ways to sell your skills."

Summer may not be Florian's favourite time of year for photography, but it's certainly the best season for getting the business done. ■

**3. One of Florian's best-selling prints – a double exposure of star moss taken in Norway**  
Nikon D810, AF-S VR Micro-NIKKOR 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED, ISO 100, 0.8sec @ f/32

**4. Florian is also adept at shooting classic long lens wildlife portraits such as this image of flamingoes in the Camargue, France**  
Nikon D4s, AF-S NIKKOR 400mm f/2.8E FL ED VR, ISO 100, 1/4000sec @ f/2.8