

Mikkel Aaland



"It's All an Adventure"

What do You and I Have in Common?

As humans, we share 99.9% of the same DNA but you and I are also connected in other ways. Maybe we met at a photography workshop or festival or perhaps we share a passion for saunas and open cold-water swimming. Maybe we sat together at a café somewhere and discussed the myth of Sisyphus or the purpose of life or perhaps we met on a wilderness trail or a river where I likely carried a fishing pole.

It could be we share the same commitment to family, community, and the pursuit of wellness or we are connected through my world-savvy wife, Rebecca or one of my world-trotting daughters Miranda and Ana Mikaela. Some of you may have received this because you were recipients of one of my previous mailings called World of Light.

If it is ok with you, I would like to use this medium from time to time to stay connected. My interests are wide ranging and so will be my posts. If that doesn't appeal to you, no worries. I totally understand. Just click on the Unsubscribe link below.

Coming Up

In subsequent communications I offer my thoughts on photography, co-ed nudity, health benefits of sweat bathing and the consequences of ghost genes. I will explore the spiritual life of rocks, introduce Fish Stories, and tell you about another new project I am working on; a moving stills homage to the legendary French filmmaker, Chris Marker, who would be 100 in the year 2021. And more... Hope you stick around.

On Photographing Inside Hot Steamy Rooms

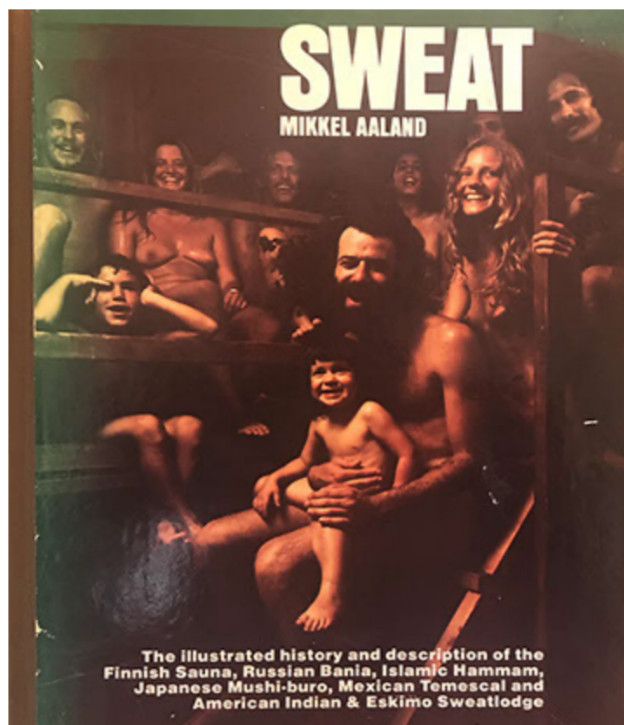
One of the biggest challenges of my photographic career-besides shooting weddings- is shooting inside sizzling hot, steamy rooms.

Back in the 70s when I was working on my first book, *Sweat*, digital wasn't available and I shot film. I often used a Nikon Nikonos underwater camera and even though my lens fogged up the minute I walked into a hot room, the Nikonos was well sealed from moisture and didn't suffer when I dipped it into warm water to clear the condensation. The Nikonos was also purely mechanical so there were no electronics to fry in the heat, as there are with today's digital cameras. On the other hand, most of the rooms I shot in were dimly lit and I never knew if my shot was sharp or properly exposed until weeks later when I had time to develop the film.



The Cagaloglu hammam in Istanbul, built in the 1500s. I took this photo in 1975 with a Nikon Nikonos underwater camera.

When I shot the cover of *Sweat* in 1978 I learned my lesson and invited several of my housemates from Berkeley to meet at a Richmond bath where I had arranged one room to be very hot and another cold. I set up my Hasselblad and lights just outside the cold room and when the bathers were sufficiently dripping in sweat and glowing, I moved them to the cold room where I got the shot.



The cover for my original book *Sweat*, shot in 1978 with a Hasselblad.

I briefly toyed with the idea of feeding my friends a high dose of niacin which dilates the tiny blood vessels near the surface of the skin and produces a red flush not unlike the one that occurs with exposure to heat. No one, except me, was excited about the idea. I also considered mixing glycerin with water and spraying my friends to imitate beads of sweat. In the end, my friends preferred making sweat on their own.

Perfect Sweat

Fast forward to the 21st century. I'm now working on a nine-part documentary series that retraces my original path around the world, this time in search of the "perfect" sweat. We are shooting 4k video and every episode employs a local director, cameraman, soundman, and crew. I'm the main host, and I'm also shooting stills for a companion book. This time I am shooting digital and even though I am experiencing many of the same challenges as I did with film, digital is so much easier to use I am much happier with the results.

One of the cameras I use is the Nikon D4 which boasts a rugged weather and dust sealing. Still, condensation is my biggest challenge, especially when I use fast lenses with large glass surface areas. Sometimes I place the camera and lens in the hot room and wait for it to acclimate. This works, but is not the most practical solution because it can take time and I am impatient. Other times I use a soft, non-scratching, microfiber cloth to remove the moisture from the lens and viewfinder. I tried putting my camera in a plastic camera bag but the plastic over my lens diffused my shots too much so I gave up using it.



Shot at Archimedes Banya San Francisco with a Nikon D4 in 2016.

The film crew is much more meticulous with their expensive equipment. For many indoor shots they detach the camera lens from the camera and place it in a moisture-tight box, which they place in the hot room and let the lens acclimate slowly. When they are ready to shoot, they reattach the lens to the camera. They don't pre-heat the camera because the high-end cameras we are using are very sensitive to heat and don't function a short time before shutting down.

Believe it or, I am getting some of my best shots from my iPhone (iPhone 7 Plus & iPhone XS Max). The lens surface area is so small condensation is easily dealt with. The latest versions are water resistant. 12 megapixels is plenty enough resolution for what I am doing and prints up nicely up to 8 x10 inches. The iPhone is also the camera I always have with me and it doesn't intimidate the bathers as much as my large, professional camera does. It's also quiet and doesn't interfere with the filming. It shoots acceptable 4k video, which we can use as supplemental (B roll) footage if the professional video camera isn't around to get the shot.



Shot in 2018 at the AQUARDEEN THERMAL PARK in Verona, Italy with an iPhone 7 Plus.

The main drawbacks to using the iPhone is it doesn't handle low light as well as my Nikon and it shuts down when overheated. Alas, nothing is perfect. Come to think of it, nowadays cameras are built and targeted to just about every niche market, why not a Perfect Sweat camera!

I should trademark it.



Links

We have shot episodes of *Perfect Sweat* in Finland, Russia, Italy, and Germany and we are planning on shooting in Japan and Turkey in the next few months, followed by Norway, Mexico, and north America. We will finish the shooting next fall, and it will be available as a series on one of the streaming outlets early 2020.

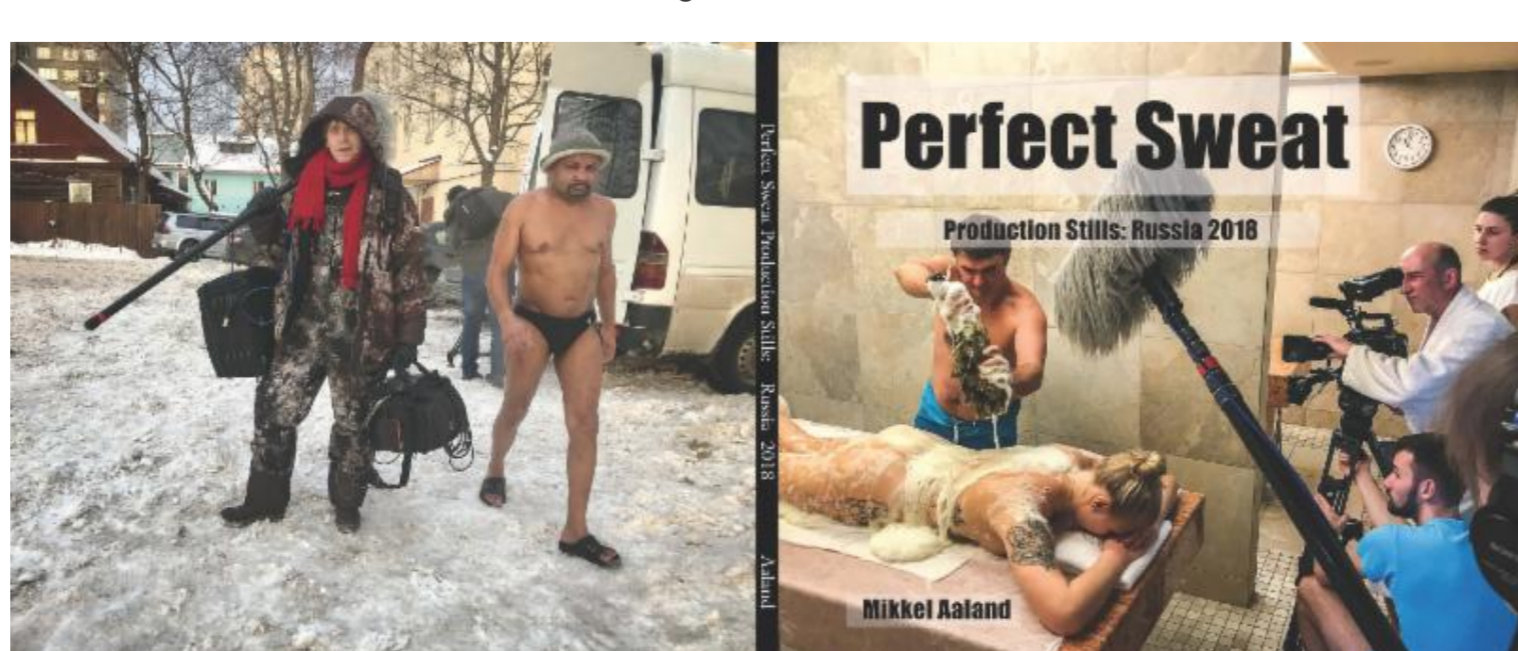
To see the trailer for *Perfect Sweat* and learn more about the series go here www.perfectsweatseries.com

To see more of my bathing photos go here <https://www.mikkelaaland.com/the-perfect-sweat.html>

For a copy of the *Perfect Sweat* Production Stills book for each country go here: <http://www.blurb.com/b/8445059-perfect-sweat?ebook=649810>

To see an online version of my original book *Sweat*, go here. <https://www.mikkelaaland.com/sweat.html>

Follow *Perfect Sweat* on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



Jacket for *Perfect Sweat* Production Stills book Russia episode.