

Self torture

German photographer Volker Figueredo Véliz has made Cuba the subject of his work. He captures life on the Caribbean island with an M9-P and Summicron 35 mm, as seen here in project *Cámara de Tortura*: body-building under the unique conditions of Cuban socialism.

VOLKER FIGUEREDO VÉLIZ

Born Volker Büffel in Zweibrücken in 1953, he lives in Germany and Cuba.

He trained in business and for 37 years worked as IT sales representative and specialist for storage solutions at IBM Germany. A self-taught photographer, he will soon be offering workshops in Havana.

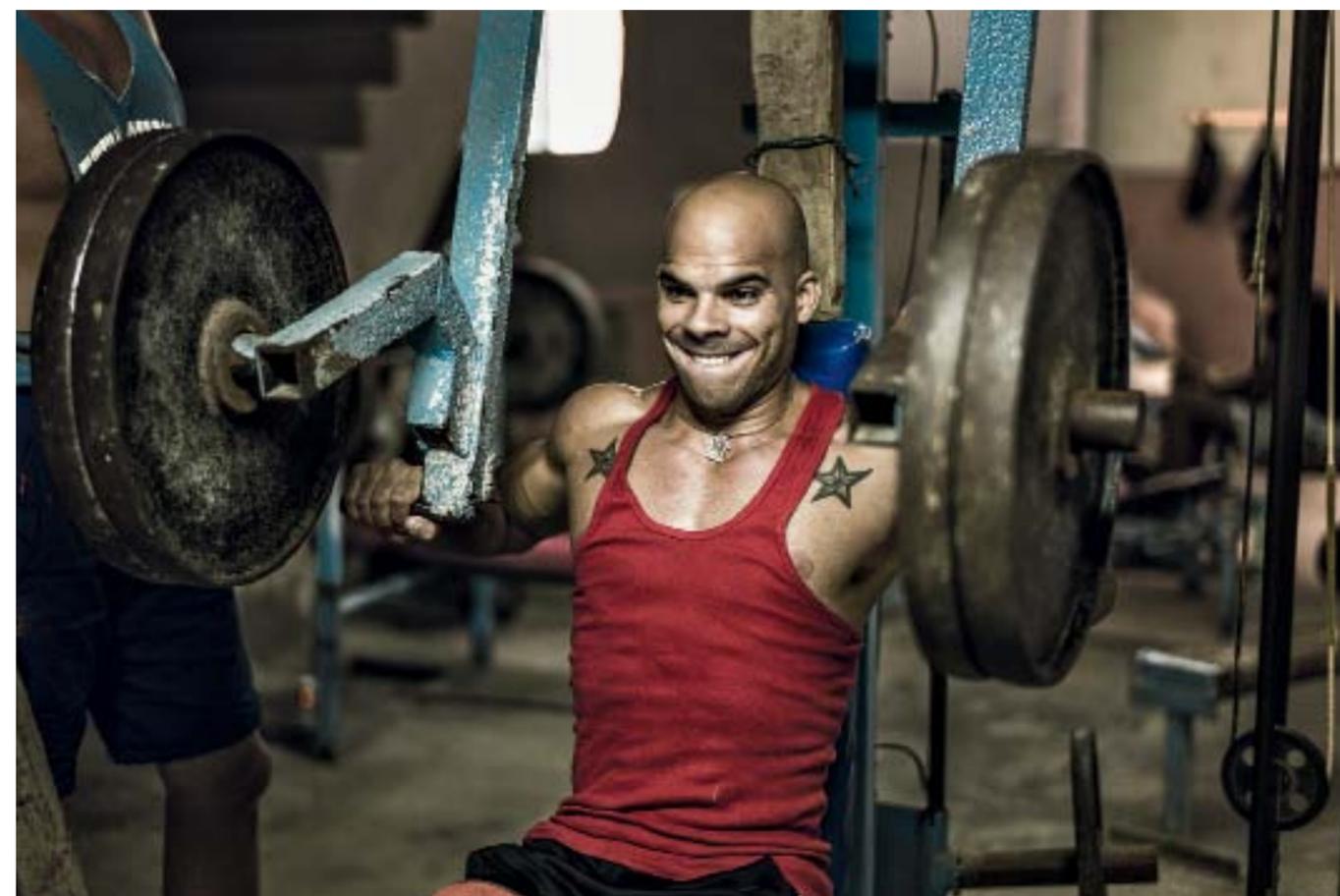
Further informatio at: www.figueredo.de (as of March 2015), www.500px.com/Figueredo



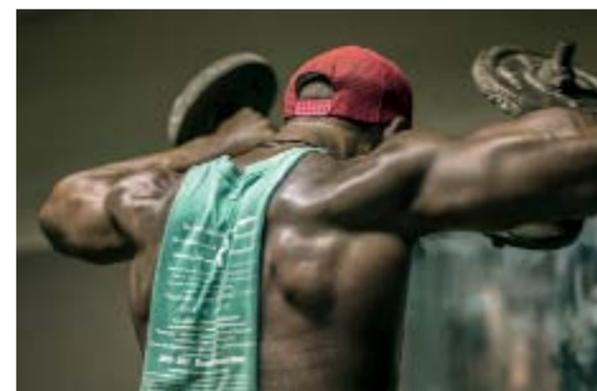
Volker Figueredo Véliz began taking photographs almost 40 years ago. Back then he was deeply involved with the technology of analogue cameras and their creative potential. "I wanted to know what kind of influence I could bring to the pictures. What effect the aperture setting made on the depth of field and how this changed the image. Because I knew precisely how I wanted my pictures to look, it was essential to become facile with aperture setting possibilities and other applicable functions." Though the technology's creative options fascinated him, the actual process of releasing the shutter was an intense and almost erotic experience. "You feel how

the mechanical side actually completes the work." He acquired one of the first digital mirror cameras. "In principle, you could also influence everything, but you lost the direct relationship with the technology. With time, the passion for photography was also lost. I wasn't photographing any more."

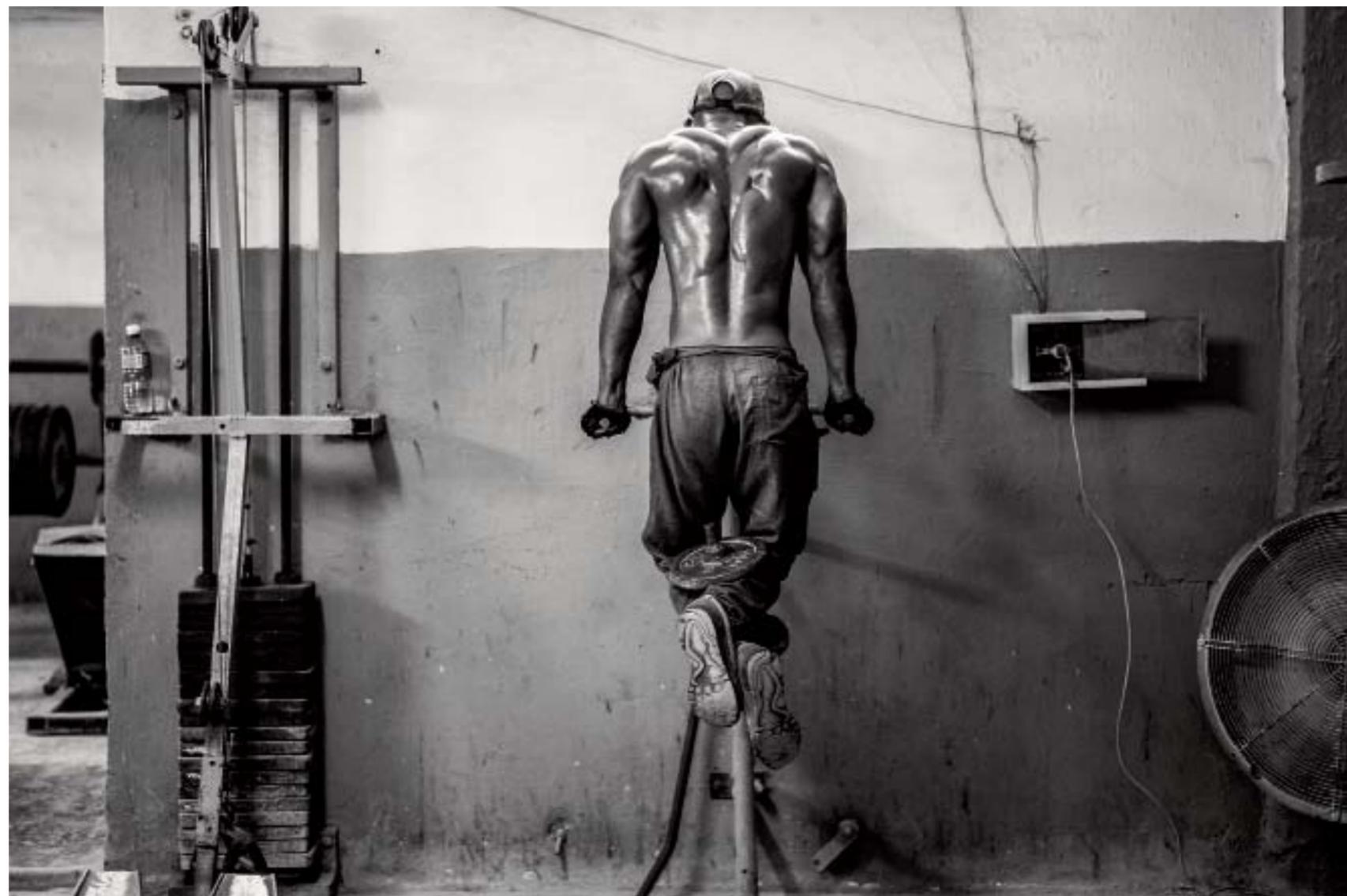
Around three years ago Figueredo discovered the M9-P. "The direct control was back and the passion returned. I sold my other digital cameras – because, in the end, it was intelligent software deciding if a picture would be good or not – and limited myself to just one lens." The Summicron 35 mm is Figueredo's tool of choice as it harmonizes perfectly with



The Cuban government does not consider body building a sport. Censorship blocks easy access to important information. Tips and advice are passed on by verbal propaganda within the scene



Clockwise from the left: M9-P, Summicron-M 35 mm f/2 Asph, f/2, 1/60 s, ISO 500; f/2, 1/60 s, ISO 400; f/2, 1/90 s, ISO 500; f/2, 1/90 s, ISO 500



The 35-mm Summicron is the only lens with which Volker Figueredo Véliz can realise his precise ideas and ambitions. He even uses it for portrait photographs



Clockwise from the left: M9-P, Summicron-M 35 mm f/2 Asph, f/2.4, 1/45 s, ISO 800; f/2, 1/90 s, ISO 640; f/4, 1/15 s, ISO 800; f/2, 1/60 s, ISO 800



ONLINE

Check out the interview with Volker Figueredo Véliz at lfi-online.de/blog

his photographic aims. He even uses it for portrait shots. “You have to get up close, so that the picture is alive and authentic.”

For the past few years Figueredo has lived in both Cuba and Germany. He finds most of his themes in lively Havana: “Of course, you can’t avoid photographing the vintage road cruisers, but at some point you look for new subjects and that led me to my *Cámara de Tortura* project. At the end of the sixties, body-building enjoyed a real boom in Cuba after the Cuban born Sergio Oliva won the Mr Olympia title three times. The state didn’t recognize body-building as a real sport so the scene developed

pretty much underground.” The chronic lack of high quality nutrition and specific mineral compounds make it a challenge for Cuban body-builders.

“Cut off from other athletes around the world, restricted and ostracised by the state, Cuban body-builders have created an exclusive society. It’s an interesting subject, to express how a community can find its way thanks to perseverance and a strong will.” Figueredo’s pictures reveal an imposing dynamism and credibility. The photographer uses gut instinct to decide if a picture should be in colour or black and white. The result is a strong impression of a self-created torture chamber. EDYTA POKRYWKA