

It's never too late... TO CELEBRATE YOUR BODY

Rhianne van der Linde, 42, from Cape Town embarked on an underwater essay with photographer Kali van der Merwe after the loss of a relationship and retrenchment. **BY CATHERINE EDEN.**



I've had quite a charmed life and have never felt there's anything "wrong" with me, but in coming to terms with retrenchment and the loss of a relationship I realised I'm full of little splits, defences and ways of being that need to be healed.

This photo project was part of that process. These photos were really a celebration for me.

I'm addicted to perfection, so this was an exercise in letting go, feeling and enjoying my completeness, confronting myself – and showing myself to the world – just as I am. I tend to get stuck in my mind, but when these were taken I was 100 percent in my body.

Kali is fascinated by the transformative power of water and

has worked in the medium before. She believes humans are deeply dependent on water to create new life, to love, to feel, to cry, to metabolise, and to survive. I felt totally safe with her because her portraits seek to honour female energy and essence. She aims to show female sensuality in its purity, in connection with the elements, and in its spiritual aspect; in touch with the deepest part of the self and the Divine. In her words: "Sensuality is about honouring the body and its immense capacity for experience, healing and creativity."

Every stage of the process, from concept to execution, was beneficial and transforming, and I think the pictures are exquisite. I love being

in water; I wanted to delve into the unconscious feminine place in me and see what might manifest. Water also symbolises cleansing and rebirth. I know now that there is so much more to the essential self, and that something has to die in order to allow something new to emerge.

Things happen in life that make you look at yourself. Even though the end of my relationship and the loss of my job felt brutal at the time, the gifts were twofold: the lifting of the illusion that my sense of self had to be built around a set of circumstances, and the breathing space to do some introspective work. Everyone is on a journey through life, but not many get the opportunity to take a break for reflection and restoration. ☒