

DP
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Best foot forward

We talk to photographer **Bela Borsodi** about this striking advert for **Selfridges, London**

Bela Borsodi was born in Vienna and has lived and worked in New York since the early Nineties: "I studied fine arts and graphic design but often incorporated photography in many of my projects. When friends started working at magazines and asked me to take photographs for them, I became more interested in photography. That led to my early career as a photographer, shooting a lot of editorials in Austria and Germany. I was at the time mostly shooting portraits and reportage and also a bit of fashion. I came to understand that shooting for magazines makes it possible for images to reach a large audience."

Borsodi has only recently discovered the delights of shooting digitally, saying: "Most of the time I shoot with a 4 x 5 camera (either Toyo or Sinar), but I started to work digitally only about one year ago, using the Phase One P25 with Mac."

Borsodi has since become one of the great up-and-coming talents in the world of photography, as the photographer's work shows.

See this shot

To see more of Borsodi's very glamorous portfolio of work, visit www.belaborsodi.com.



DP: Can you tell us more about the creation of this particular image?

BB: This image of shoes on their poker night was created as one of three different adverts for Selfridges in London. The other two images were lipsticks having a photo shot in a studio and handbags going to a nightclub.

The London-based agency, Mother, asked me to work with them and the idea was based on an editorial that I shot for *City* magazine in New York about one year earlier. Mother approached me with



The stakes were high. One of them was going to walk home

a layout that was inspired by that story, which in its concept was very similar. Naturally I had to show different products and the agency had other environments on their mind. We started then to discuss possibilities and after a while all soon took on shape.

Although this image reads well and looks very simple, it is conceptually quite complex to make it work visually. One has to really understand that the only way to make it read well is to deal a lot with the idea of scale and context. A realistic scale becomes very important to give them a sense of reality. This adds humour because the shoes in the real world would also need to deal with realistic proportions. In that way they shape a reality of their own, which becomes believable. They drink out of tiny shot glasses because they are smaller and to their arms they are still quite large. To build miniatures or to use digital means I would have to change the scale of reality – all would be much less fun and also less believable. It would have looked really wrong.

To establish the personalities and the characters of shoes playing poker works visually only because shoes are doing this – and only shoes. As a 'group of shoes' they so can be identified as personalities doing something together. Just imagine bags and scarves and belts and many other things trying to join that game of poker; that would then just look like a confusing pile of things and not like characters.

Once all the three images were conceptualised, I came to London and we built the sets and did a lot of detailed work prepping and creating an environment to suit the different situation. We worked on all the three sets at the same time and I shot all on film. I had to shoot a few frames for composites because of different contrasts and optional colour temperature. These were then put together digitally and also a few minor things of the prepping material had to be retouched. But the final image looks pretty much as it was originally built on set. I was very pleased with this production, it was a lot of fun and the people I worked with were extremely pleasant and inspiring.



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come with nothing.

SELFRIDGES & CO

DP: How do you come up with the concepts?

BB: All my concepts come out of my mind, and since I focus on original ideas I have to illustrate and sketch them beforehand. I try to never repeat myself and only go for projects that I am really interested in exploring. I am constantly inspired by so very many things around me, and usually these find themselves being reflected in my work.

I also love working with art directors and discussing ideas. It is very important for me to understand their side and also the context of the images in relation to their venue and purpose. Good art directors are great in challenging me and making things possible. A good inspiring communication with them and with friends always leads to seeing more possibilities and adds layers of meaning to a project – as much as it is also very much fun to be in a dialogue. I greatly appreciate many people who I work with and I am always thankful for their input and their inspiration.

DP: Do you do any post-production work and do you do this yourself?

BB: No, I have other people working on this and prefer to concentrate more on creating my images. Digital photography is still rather new to me and I am constantly learning more about it. Only for the layouts that illustrate my concepts do I work on the computer myself, but I am very interested in gaining more control and knowledge about the digital possibilities. I believe that at some point soon I will start to look more into this and do some things by myself.

My work is more about the basic idea and the adventure to make it all happen. The most important aspect of my work is what actually happens in front of my camera. Whether that image is now recorded on film or on a chip is less important to me, as long as the results reveal what it is all about. Sometimes my work is also very technical, but this is only within the more traditional aspects of photography, as in lighting and

camera. All the digital aspects are quite new to me, and at the present moment they don't fascinate me much more than what it is important for me to know to turn my images into reality.

DP: What excites you about your work?

BB: Everything that I get involved with becomes a new adventure and often I don't know in the beginning where it all will possibly go. I love surprises and dealing with contradictions and to constantly change direction, to freely create out of a totally uninhibited inspired mind. When I am thinking about a new project I love to get really lost in its endless possibilities and with associations, as bizarre and impossible as they might be. After a while when a basic idea takes on a more dominant shape, I need to then take it back to the realm of what I can do with it in reality. Most often, this also adds new interesting layers to the original concept. That is a lot of fun and a huge part of my work.

I am shooting my images to find out about things and try to challenge them. How things work and what could be interesting to be explored and created. How it would work within a certain context and how this adventure could possibly excite myself and also other people. How can an artist communicate feelings and emotions and share a process and an inspiration? How can one touch feelings and trigger curiosity through photography? If an artist is sincere with their own enthusiasm and doesn't shy off to make an effort and to explore freely what they're inspired by, this can be possible. It keeps me motivated to work this way, to explore what I don't know yet and what seems to be a promising experiment. I am much less interested in projects when I already know they will work out in the end or that are already done, either by myself or by others.

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