

BELA BORSODI

BELA BORSODI IS AN ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER BASED IN NEW YORK. AFTER STUDYING FINE ART AND GRAPHICS IN SWITZERLAND, HE BEGAN EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF STILL-LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY, COMBINING ART, DESIGN AND CRAFT SKILLS TO CREATE SURREAL IMAGES. TODAY HIS UNIQUE FASHION IMAGERY BRINGS ACCESSORIES AND CLOTHES TO LIFE FOR MAGAZINES SUCH AS VOGUE, WALLPAPER AND ANOTHER MAGAZINE, AND FOR FASHION BRANDS SUCH AS BAUME & MERCIER WATCHES, HERMES AND SELFRIDGES.



41



42

**Varoom: Your hybrid fashion imagery combines photography, set-design, styling and illustration. When did you begin to work in this way?**

Bela Borsodi: In 2000 I was offered a project shooting still life for the Annual Report of a company called Migros in Switzerland. It was a big job. I had to live in Zürich for two months shooting garbage that had been specially collected from trash bins all over Switzerland. At the time, I wasn't really interested in shooting still life, but this was one of these projects that you just couldn't say no to. At the time I was mostly shooting portraits and experimenting with unusual light sources. I had always sensed that I might have a talent for shooting still life, but having never really pursued that direction I was surprised by the trust and encouragement given to me by the art director Beda Achermann – who I had met only shortly before he offered me that job.

**Was fashion always a calling for you?**

To work with fashion is a great platform from which to communicate ideas and feelings, and to have adventures on. In photography you can use fashion to tell stories, and fashion is also an imaginative form of art and communication in itself. Fashion and photography can inspire and enhance each other really well – for me, fashion became more interesting once I began working with it. My background is fine art and graphic design.

**And what are the influences that shape your work today?**

Everything that catches my mind and my heart. Anything that I get fascinated by or obsessed with; anything that I want to explore or that challenges me. I often feel like an investigator who actively tries to find out how things work and how the mind works – or perhaps it is also that the 'things' want to find out how 'I' function? I look at art and I watch a lot of movies. I listen to stories and observe life around me – music, science, psychology, nature are inspiring. I often find little hidden things that catch my attention; to communicate with people and to share ideas and do projects together; the situations and experiences that I or my friends go through: love, life, death, joy, sadness, anger, excitement, defeats and successes, the good and the bad and the dull moments in one's life.

**You are primarily known as a photographer, yet your images combine many disciplines.**

**How do you develop ideas for your projects?**

I try to think and to imagine as freely and uninhibitedly as possible. I look for ideas to try out in a real experience to see what will happen and where they will take me. The inspiration can come from anywhere. Once I have found a promising approach for a project I try to get more and more into its psychology to find even more layers of interest. Also I try to listen to what 'it' has to say – it is very important to listen and to communicate to the nature of the project – it usually has a lot to say and has quite a big ego.

**And what are the processes and materials that you use in your work?**

First it is all about finding an idea and giving it shape and meaning. I often contradict myself during that process – one of the basic factors of creating anything of interest is to embrace the concept of contradiction as a creative necessity. And then it becomes about the craft and the skills to get it there. There are no rules – and breaking rules is more interesting anyway. If I am looking

for a particular shape for example, I force something to take on that shape, whatever it might be. If something has to levitate in a corner of a room, I just make it happen. If something has not been invented, or is not available to me then I just have to invent it or create it. I have the luck of being very crafty and I spent all my life making things – drawing, painting, building, etc – so to craft something is very natural to me. For materials I use a lot of wires and cardboard and clay and anything that I get my hands on to do the job. I have also collected a vast selection of odd things that then become treasures or special tools and materials for me.

**You have created advertising campaigns for Baume & Mercier watches, and recently for Selfridges accessories. Do you recognise a difference in your creative approach to your more commercial clients?**

I try to treat each of my projects equally and to make them interesting for myself. I always try to do something that can translate the joy and the intrigue that I experience when I am working on it. With commercial projects there is more responsibility involved with all the logistics and demands to deal with – but I believe in making images that inspire and tell stories, that touch and intrigue peoples minds and hearts. A fascinating image will always stand out and will be recognized – whether it is found in a commercial context or in a freer art context. I have the luck to work with interesting clients who trust me and understand what I am up to.

**How do you see the role of image-making in the fashion industry today? Do you find clients open to using unconventional fashion stories?**

Some do, some don't – it depends on what parties you go to, and how you and your work are perceived. It is a wicked and complex world out there and you have to find your position and develop your skills to get trusted. Then a lot of things could eventually happen (or not). I found it helpful to develop a visual language that is quite particular and differs from others.

**Are you currently working on any personal projects you would like to talk about?**

In a way every project I am involved with also turns into a personal project. That is as much of a great thing as it is also a curse. I don't really separate my projects – personal, private, commercial or art. I believe you either do what you do totally and it will go right into your system ... or you just don't. If I ever come up with something that I really want to do but that has no place, I will first try to find a place for it ... and if I can't, then I will just do it anyway. ♦♦

Further reading  
[www.belaborsodi.com](http://www.belaborsodi.com)

NEXT ISSUE: Varoom 05  
Mapping the terrain:  
New children's illustration  
Profiles of four practitioners.  
October 2007



43

41

42

43



44



45

44

45



46



47



49



48



50

*The stakes were high. One of them was going to walk home with nothing.*

**SELFRIDGES** London

46-48  
out of 30

49  
out of 30

50  
out of 30