

Photographer, Klaus Vedfelt

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[Lauren Catten]: How did you get started in photography? Did you always know it was what you wanted to do?

[Klaus Vedfelt]: In 1993 I remember borrowing my father's old Petri SLR camera to photograph graffiti pieces. Graffiti and hip-hop culture were very influential on me at that time.

At age 14, I decided that I wanted to be a photographer, without having any idea what a career as an image-maker would be like. I just had a gut feeling that it would be the right job for me. I started a photography course after school and learned how to develop black & white film and printing in the dark room.

When I finished school at age 15, I was determined to get an apprenticeship with a photographer so I could get into the Danish school of commercial photography, but this seemed to be impossible because I had no experience and was told that I was too young. Instead I decided to offer my assistance for free. This way it was a lot easier for me to get a foot in the door. For the next two years I worked full time for free, with three different photographers in Copenhagen. All that hands-on experience gave me a huge advantage and at age 17 I was fortunate to get a full time paid assistant job with two of Denmark's most successful fashion and celebrity portrait photographers.

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[LC]: How do you feel art and photography influence your compositions? Do you have favorite artists that have had an impact on your work?

[KV]: Since the beginning of my career, I have always been fascinated with surreal and cinematic lighting. I remember being intrigued by Salvador Dali's paintings at a young age. Later, it was photographers like Steven Klein, Steven Meisel, and David LaChapelle. I was very inspired by conceptual fashion photography, in the beginning of the 00s and thought I wanted to be a fashion photographer. As I got older, I discovered that fashion did not interest me much - I was more excited by the story, mood and lighting in the image rather than the clothes. Later I found inspiration from photographers like Gregory

Crewdson, Nadav Kander and Christopher Anderson. At the moment I am very inspired by the 19th century Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi. Currently, I am researching for a project that will be related to him in some way.

[LC]: Your style is SO versatile, it seems you can turn your hand to anything at all! Do you have a preferred style or something you think of as signature Vedfelt?

[KV]: My preferred style is working with artificial lights, like flash or HMI. I often use colorful gels to create a more cinematic feel. For me, the light is the most essential part of my conceptual images.

[LC]: What has been your favorite shoot, if you can pick one?

[KV]: I love doing conceptual photography. I just finished my second portal shoot in the dunes of Cape Town, images which are metaphors for transformation, innovation and prosperity. The most interesting for me shoot is usually the latest one.

[LC]: How do you put a shoot together – do you do it all yourself or is it a collaborative process?

[KV]: I usually collaborate with an art director, but I am very involved in the whole production and take on a producer role.

[LC]: You approach lifestyle in such a natural way, how do you manage to get the models to be so relaxed?

[KV]: Generally, I try to be calm and relaxed myself. I feel it influences the whole atmosphere on set. When I shoot lifestyle, I usually use daylight. This enables me to work more freely around the models. I also think casting is super important. I pick models with a good energy and who have a personal style that contributes to the shoot. After a short briefing, I try not to direct too much. On the other hand, I am very attentive to capture the right authentic moment. Sometimes, I use music to crank up the mood and get some energy in the room.

[LC]: Do you strike at random as an idea comes, or are you more methodical?

[KV]: I like to be very prepared when I do a shoot. I always do a location recce before the shoot day. I always have a shoot plan and a moodboard. I rarely look at this on the actual shoot day, but it is good to fall back on, if you get stuck in the middle of the shoot. Often my creativity blooms in the moment, and I get inspired by the random moments that occur when you work with people.

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[LC]: What's the most important mistake you've made while photographing and how did it change your understanding of your job?

[KV]: I once lent out my camera. When I got it back, it was set to shoot only small jpg files and I did not check this before shooting a portrait of a CEO. Now I always double-check when shooting!

[LC]: Do you have any particular themes or props that you like to revisit?

[KV]: Currently, I am fascinated by shooting from above and the way it can change the whole perspective in an image. I have done two shoots like this and am currently working on producing the third.

[LC]: What do you do to keep things exciting day to day and keep progressing? Do you look at any magazines or sites for inspiration?

[KV]: I used to spend a lot of money on magazines, but now Instagram is my main inspiration. The collaboration with you as my art director is key for my work. I need sparring to get the creativity peaking.

[LC]: Is there an image that stands out to you in your own archive as a moment that was extra challenging to capture or feels more special than the rest?

[KV]: Last year I did a series with non-binary people. I really struggled with getting the light right. But suddenly the model closed their eyes and while their face was turned away - I clicked. Right away I knew it was a special image.

[LC]: What would you say to people coming up through the process to be a professional photographer?

[KV]: Working long and hard is key, even more important than talent in my opinion. If you are not satisfied with a personal shoot, then re-shoot it and learn from the mistakes. Choose, if possible, people with excellent professional skills of their own to add new and creative qualities to the project.

[LC]: What is your go to app?

[KV]: I am not a big app user, but I use [Instagram](#) a lot.

[LC]: What is the view from your window?

[KV]: In my Copenhagen studio, the view is the buildings from the end of the 19th century. From my home office, I have a wide view of a curvy landscape with fields, sheep, and forest.

[LC]: What is next in the cards for you?

[KV]: Right now I am finishing on a big production I did a few months ago in Cape Town. After this I will do my conceptual 'from above' shoot part III.

