Italian born fashion photographer Alessandro Vasapolli enjoyed taking photos as a child and remembers when his love for photography started; picking up his father camera at around 7 years old and taking photos of a castle in Germany on a family trip. He states though, that the serious passion began to come into effect when he was at university. "At the beginning I was exclusively shooting wildlife and landscapes but after one year running after animals all around Africa I tried shooting portraits (basically because friends were asking for it) and I started enjoying the process more than I expected."

But it was through this journey into portraiture that he discovered it wasn't his passion and his love was fashion photography. "I tried to read some books on portraiture photography but I always thought that the pictures in the books itself were terrible and the authors were too concerned with the technical aspects rather than the final outcomes. I don't know how, but I got my hands on some copies of Vogue Italia and I felt in love with the photos I saw in it. At that moment I decided I had to shoot fashion images."

As he didn't study photography at university, Alessandro is completely self taught. "I decided that the best way to learn about fashion photography was to read the most technical books on photography and then try to apply the concepts to achieve the results I had in mind. At the same time I was reading and collecting all the material that I could find on fashion and fashion photography. In my studio back in Italy, I have a room especially dedicated to my collection of magazines and those big fashion photography books. I spent hours staring at those images wondering how the photographers managed to take such great pictures and now I consider those books my school of fashion photography." This process of self education worked well for him and he states on the topic of photography school "Even if I had such opportunity I wouldn't have gone there…I think this has been a truly successful strategy as now I have a clear view of the technical processes of both digital and film, and this enables me to approach a new project from multiple points of view."

Despite the fact he began shooting in the digital era he describes digital photography as "more practical, faster and an incredible resource", Alessandro also has a big love for shooting on film and Polaroid. "Soon after I started being interested in fashion photography and probably in contrast with the general trend, I began to study how to take pictures on film." He does not prefer one other the other though, and states that both have pros and cons but "Polaroid and film add that "chaos" factor to the images that in digital would only be possible to (badly) replicate. The "ghost story" in this issue of Sheer has been done completely on 4x5 Polaroids and I really enjoyed the process". On the subject of digital photography he adds: "One thing that I absolutely hate and avoid as much as I can is a heavy retouch with Photoshop. I think one should get the image as perfect as it could be already with the camera and Photoshop should only be used to enhance the image without altering it too much."

Some of the photographers who influenced Alessandro the most are Richard Avedon, Steven Meisel, Paolo Roversi, Helmut Newton and Mario Testino, although he claims: " There is no artist that I love everything he/she has ever done: I always find something that I don't like or that simply doesn't transmit to me any emotion". He also finds it important to distinguish his work from those that are influencing him, "obviously I admire and respect their work but I understand that's their work and it

has nothing to do with me. I always try my best to come up with something that it's absolutely mine and not copying anybody is a really important thing for me". And it is not just photographers that influence his work "I really like to talk to people involved in different kinds of art, as their different approach can sometimes be very inspiring. I love photography, probably because I feel naturally drawn to it, but I don't think it's better than any other form of art".

Alessandro feels that establishing a connection to the person you are shooting is very important, but the way to achieve this is different with every individual "in lucky cases you simply, by nature, get on well with a particular person but other times you might have to fight to achieve the other person consensus. It is an approach that has to begin within yourself. If you don't like somebody the chance that he or she will accept you is extremely low and for this reason, when I find myself in trouble, I try to find something special that I really like about that person and I start building a relationship from there".

When describing his work and personal style he states: "Generally speaking, I think that my work is really sundry but extremely coherent within the same project. I think that this variety derives from the fact that I learnt different approaches and techniques and I like to use them all, or mix them, depending upon the results that I, or my clients, want to achieve. I don't have a particular theme or rule that I like to follow but I always try to be elegant. I don't like those pictures with people doing silly things".

When is not taking photos Alessandro is an instructor at the Circolo Velico Caprera sailing school in Italy. He also likes to take time out to relax "When I can I love to go sailing, fishing or just hanging out with friends. And my favourite thing to do is relax on a beach in Varigotti, a very small seaside town in northern Italy, where my family owns a house".

And for his ambitions for the future, Alessandro won't reveal much! "I cannot disclose anything. The good news is that, in the short term, I have already in my schedule shootings with some big names".

By Philomena Lines