

Melissa Persaud

New York City College of Technology

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Professor Thelma Bauer

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Lillian Violet Bassman was born June 15, 1917, in Brooklyn and later grew up in the Bronx. She was born into a Jewish family from Russia, who raised her as a free thinking intellectual. At the age of 15, Bassman moved in with the man she who would later become her husband, the documentary photographer Paul Himmel. Bassman studied fabric design at Textile High School, known as a vocational school in the Chelsea section of Manhattan. I chose this person because of her mindset. She lived as an independent and unconventional woman because that's how she was raised. Bassman worked as a textile designer and fashion illustrator before working at Harper's Bazaar with Alexey Brodovitch. She modeled for the artists hired by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project and began working as a muralist's assistant. Then she applied for a night course in fashion illustration at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Brodovitch was impressed with her work, he waived tuition for her, he accepted her into his Design Laboratory at the New School for Social Research. This is where she changed her interests from fashion illustration to graphic design. Later on, she became a photographer. Bassman's fashion images are very unique, it achieves their full effect through manipulation in the dark room.

Bassman's had a sophisticated style that was evolved and was bold, moody and elegantly expressed in fashion photography. Her images were had a very romantic feel to it, it also revolutionized fashion photography. Bassman's talent was highly sought after because she was considered a unique individual. She was full of mystery, sensuality, and expressionistic glamour. Bassman's dramatic black and white photographs capture secret moments and dream memories. She was considered one of photography's "Grand Master" by Vanity Fair magazine. Bassman worked under Alexey Brodovitch, the renowned art director of Harper's Bazaar. This is when she entered the world of magazine editing and fashion photography. The magazine created a spinoff called Junior Bazaar. This was aimed towards teenage girls, Bassman was asked to be its art director, along with Mr. Brodovitch at his insistence.

Bassman was appointed Art Director at Junior Bazaar in 1945. She gave projects to photographers such as her husband Paul Himmel, Richard Avedon, Robert Frank. In 1947, she moved up from Junior Bazaar and officially became the Art Director at Harper's Bazaar, where her work was displayed throughout Harper's Bazaar during the 1940's and 50's. Some time during the 1970's, Bassman's work was almost completely destroyed by a water leak in her studio. It wasn't until later, during the 90's, her work was finally revived. At Harper's Bazaar, she had began visiting the darkroom on her lunch break to develop images by the great fashion photographer George Hoyningen-Huene. She used tissues and gauzes to bring certain areas of a picture into focus and applying bleach to manipulate tone. According to Lillian Bassman, Fashion and Fine-Art Photographer, Dies at 94 by William Grimes "I was interested in developing a method of printing on my own, even before I took photographs," Ms. Bassman told B&W magazine in 1994. "I wanted everything soft edges and cropped." She was interested, she said, in "creating a new kind of vision aside from what the camera saw." Bassman, in 1996, received the Agfa Life Time Achievement Award and the Dem Art Directors Club Award.

During the 1970s, Bassman was began to dislike the way the fashion industry was changing and how high-maintenance the models were, “I got sick of them,” she told The Times in 2009. “They were becoming superstars. They were not my kind of models. They were dictating rather than taking direction.” said Bassman, according to the article, The Mistress of the Darkroom. She was so disappointed with her chosen profession, she decided to shut down her studio, completely abandon photography, Bassman destroyed her commercial negatives and dumped the editorial ones in garbage bags in her home. Instead, she photographed semi-abstracts privately for herself.

Bassman began photography again when she was asked to photograph the Haute Couture collection for New York Times Magazine, the Autumn Collection for Neiman Marcus, as well as work for German Vogue in 1996. Her work has been displayed across the world. In 1997, in an interview with The New York Times, she stated that she wanted “.. to ‘take the hardness out of the photography’ in order to make it less literal, which she accomplished using darkroom techniques such as bleaching, dodging and burning, and selective focus.” Bassman’s success can relate to CDMG and COMG because she is not only a photographer, but a graphic designer as well. She worked in advertisement and created many designs for companies.

Work Cited

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