



MO YASIN  
WEDNESDAY  
TRIPLE 5 SOUL  
HENRY STREET  
PIONEER WORKS  
A GUWOP CHRISTMAS  
CITY AS A SNOW GLOBE  
CHRIS FROM PAULIE GEE'S



# WAGNER



## Continental Jacket

Details  
3 Pockets  
100% Cotton, Oxford Canvas 10 oz  
Mother of Pearl buttons on cuff  
Manufactured in NYC

# WAGNER



## House Dress

Details  
2 Pockets  
100% Cotton, Seersucker Gingham  
Mother of Pearl buttons  
Manufactured in NYC





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KODAK 5005 EPP



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25A

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# triple5soul

On a crisp autumn Saturday afternoon in Brooklyn, we had the opportunity to visit Camella Ehlke, creator of the highly influential and highly underrated brand, Triple 5 Soul [formally 555Soul]. Created in 89' by a then 19 year old Camella, what started as a small project sewing custom pieces for her friends grew to be a staple in the "streetwear" industry. The brand's **SOUL** was built on uplifting creatives; artists, musicians, designers and anyone with a passion culture. By 2004, Camella who had taken the brand to new heights through a series of business deals, felt the company had lost that sentiment and left. Nearly 10 years after leaving, Triple 5 Soul is preparing to relaunch and Camella is stepping back into her old shoes as creative director, reimagining its past and future. We recieved an oral history of the brand, talked downtown NY in the 90's and were lucky enough to dig through Camella's extensive archive of the brand.

by Nico Bonacquist & Max Burkeman



NB: On my Instagram story, I posted the Mos Def “Define Your Soul” ad and asked “Do you know what Triple 5 Soul is?” because when I was about 12, it was the early days of Odd Future and Tumblr. From my perspective, those movements really propelled Supreme and “streetwear” into the zeitgeist for a lot of kids like me who were living outside of major metropolitan areas.

CE: That’s right when I left my brand around 2005.

NB: Right! So when I asked, a lot of people responded saying yes. I even had people who told me they have their parent’s collection or used to go to the sample sales with their parents. It was interesting because I became aware of the brand much later than most people, but based on conversations I’ve had with people, it seems to be a brand everyone knows about but isn’t brought up in conversation for its influence.

CE: It’s a legend, I love that!

NB: Let’s start at the beginning, how did Triple 5 Soul start?

CE: When I was at Pratt, I started sewing what I called tie hats. I would sell them to this woman on East 9th street who I worked for part-time at an iconic shop, Pat Fields. I had a storefront apartment on Ludlow and I was living in the back. There were a few small boutiques on Ludlow. It was primarily a Dominican and Puerto Rican residential neighborhood with batida stand bodegas and a few sprinkled in hangouts like Max Fish and El Sombrero. There were also artists moving in because rents were low.

MB: This is at 19 years old?

CE: Yes. I was going to drop out of school [at Pratt]. I felt really stifled and wanted to do my own thing. My Dad said, “Okay, take a gap year”, dad stuff. He helped with my rent. It was around \$500 a month. I had friends help build shelves made from a deconstructed sculpture and found materials and had graffiti on the front gate and interior... We somehow pulled it together. I would buy all my fabrics around the corner where they sold deadstock fabrics left over from the garment industry. I would make tie hats and these crazy blended stripe hoodies. I would cut my shirt patterns in assorted fabrics and colors. Customers could pick and choose combinations. I was doing customization early on. Friends would be like “put that cuff with this sleeve!” A lot of my friends were people in the music industry, up-and-coming DJs, and MCs as well as artists in either graphic or fine art. I had a bunch of friends who would come by and hang out at the shop. It was like a clubhouse. The store’s hour sign was hilarious. It read, “12 o’clock... or whenever I feel like opening the doors.” Back then it wasn’t really a formal store. But it’s pretty amazing if I think about it now. Downtown New York was a melting pot of so many subcultures. I mean, I was telling you about Pat Fields, that was all drag queens and club kids! I knew ravers and a lot of skater kids too. A bunch of friends were involved with hip hop, the only way we could hear the new stuff was in the clubs, on mixtapes, or on Stretch [Armstrong] and Bobbito’s radio shows.

NB: Where did the name come from?

CE: 555 Soul was going to be with a friend I was in school with, but she turned out to be batshit crazy. We riffed off of a party line. At that time, there were party lines and I guess they were chat lines like pre-dating apps. We saw an ad which was on these little flier cards everywhere on the streets and in subways “550-love, 550-Wild, 550-Soul, for soul singles.” And we were like, “That sounds so good.” So, it’s a riff off of that. I got a business partner 6 years later who wanted to expand.

He wanted to modify the name to Triple Five Soul since we weren’t able to trademark the 555 part, mainly because a few large brands like Levis and Diesel were using 5’s. He saw people were buying my stuff and taking it back to Japan. My first wholesale accounts were kids from Japan. People would hang out in the first store buying up whatever I had while waiting for me to sew big batches of the tie hats and put them in their suitcases and take them back. I definitely was a pioneer in the Japan game. I think at the time the combination of something handmade and original really made it a success there and kids were super into it.

NB: When did you start expanding into graphic t-shirts and branded pieces?

CE: A girlfriend of mine was friends with this badass artist/skater, Alyasha [Owerka-Moore] and he told me “Yo, you need a logo.” It’s embarrassing, but I’ve said it in interviews, I didn’t even know what a logo really was. I wasn’t thinking about it. I was young and just sewed and designed clothes. He gave me three different hand-drawn logos that became super iconic for the brand... He ended up becoming a very influential designer in the skate and streetwear world. I was selling friends graphic t-shirts early on. It was always about my community of friends. I think we bartered custom hats for logos!

NB: Your contemporaries had specific subcultures tied with the inception of their brands; A-Life was graffiti, Supreme was skateboarding, and Stussy was surfing. To me, Triple Five Soul feels tied to Hip-Hop? Do you feel that to be true?

CE: Early on, when I was in my Ludlow shop people like Puffy discovered the store. I’m not sure how, but I’d love to interview him about that. He was a stylist / A&R person at the time. I have his business card from back then—”Sean Puffy Combs, A&R development at Up-town records.” He was visiting the shop with this stylist Sybil. They were both incredibly cool to me. Puffy asked me to make matching sweatshirts with tie hats for a new band he was going to sign, which ended up being Jodeci. They wore it for MTV Unplugged. Sybil came and got a velour tracksuit for LL Cool J to wear in “Mamma Said Knock You Out”.

Empire Records was also around the corner from my shop. They were the ones who managed Gangstar. Giant Step was throwing a bunch of incredible downtown music parties. I had this direct connection to people in the industry either artists themselves or people producing or throwing the parties. Rawkus Records came soon after which had a major impact on the brand.

We were among the few shops downtown to sell the mixtapes. DJs like G-Bo The Pro & Double R, Tape Kings, Tony Touch, Doo Wop, and Ken Sport. Artists like Pos from De La Soul would come shopping. Eventually Fab 5 Freddy came to film in the shop for Yo MTV Raps. These massive cool hip-hop guys found the shop and gravitated to it, but it wasn’t planned out that way. Hip-hop was the underground music that was bubbling downtown with house music and then we had techno and raves just beginning. I was also selling to ravers. It was an incredible time for creativity in New York City and we were all coming up together and our different aesthetics were interacting organically.

NB: So to get the timeline in order, when did you have the original storefront?

CE: From 1989 to 1995. From 89’ to 90’ it was coming together. It was just a vibe. That’s when the logos started happening and I started selling other friends’ T-shirt brands in the shop. Friends were building out little weird fittings or making murals out front or on the shop walls. We had a Philly blunt box for the

cash box. A lot of Long Island kids would come in on weekends to shop like Brendan [Babenzien], from Noah. He used to come in with his friend Don Pervert, who also had a cool brand back in the day. In 1996, I moved the store to Lafayette street and my studio space to Mott street. I partnered with a business and fashion house guy who helped me survive and take the brand to the next level.

NB: How many stores were there in total?

CE: Eventually we had 3 stores in Japan, a store in London, a store in LA in the early 90s, which was freaking awesome, and the store in New York, which moved from Ludlow Street to Lafayette Street.

NB: Over on Lafayette with Supreme. Were you and James cool?

CE: James had Union at the same time I had 555 Soul on Ludlow... He was over on Prince Street where the Stussy store was. James and I knew each other because we came up around the same time hanging out downtown and a few of us sold at Tower Records flea market. There was an empty lot on Broadway and Bleecker next to Tower Records and artists could go sell their stuff. It was one of the early flea markets. As I mentioned, I was selling at the flea for this woman who had a shop on east 9th. I think that’s how I met James and Mary Anne who had a shop called Union and then they took on Stussy. They had their own specific following but we all gravitated around each other at the parties and clubs downtown. I think we respected each other’s endeavors and knew many of the same people. Kids would find my shop and then do the rounds to Union, Fat Beats, Liquid Sky, Pat Fields, and a few other cool shops downtown. We’re talking nothing above 14th Street. We hardly went above 23rd street.

MB: I’m curious about the artist takeovers in the stores. How did that come about and how did you decide who to choose?

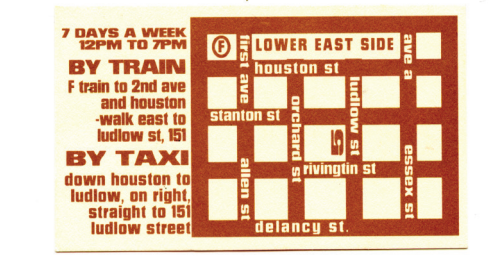
CE: So early on, in the Ludlow store. It was graffiti writers. They’d come in and bomb the whole interior—PNB nation. Which was also a cool subculture t-shirt brand. Eventually, a lot of them were artists like Stash, Futura, Lee, Doze, David Ellis, and TC5. We brought Banksy over from the UK, Graphic Havoc, and these artists Jen and Kiku.

NB: What was the insight for the Triple Five Soul Cafe concept? It’s interesting looking back at interviews where you talk about the idea to have a cafe because now everything has to be a concept space, it can’t just be a clothing store.

CE: When I was going to Japan, I was blown away, you’d be having a coffee and also be in a store. The idea of concept spaces was going on forever there. It was also happening organically in the original store without me coining it or formalizing it. DJs would come into the store’s backyard with Hi-Fi systems. We would throw these big parties in the backyard, because we could. Triple 5 Soul Cafe was just one of my dreams. I started blowing up and wasn’t in the store hanging out anymore. People were like “I never see you” because the original store was a clubhouse hangout thing. It wasn’t a shopping consumer thing. No one had money. I put the turntables in right away after we moved the store to Lafayette Street so I could come just to DJ or have my DJ friends spin in the shop. I would have wanted it to evolve into a Triple 5 Soul Cafe as well as Triple 5 Soul Sounds. I wanted to do all of that.

MB: It’s interesting that your partner wanted to make it more expensive, you did also, but in a completely opposite way, making it more of a community.

CE: My business partner from 1996 onward

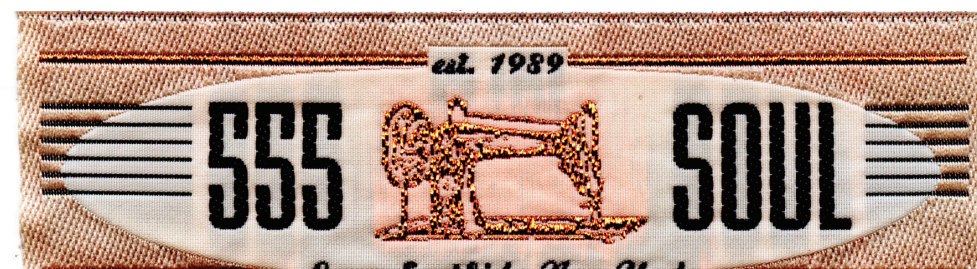






triple five

Soul





right after I moved to Lafayette street was just go, go, go. I'm grateful because it kept the brand going, but 5-6 years into with him I couldn't anymore, it clipped my wings. Money never drove it for me. The creative process is all I wanted to do, it was my passion, and funny enough, Triple 5 Soul no longer existed or I no longer own the name because money had become the driver and it started losing its soul. It became a toxic environment. I had to get sober from it, so I just decided to leave and gave it all up. I didn't look back. But now I'm far enough away from that. I am ready to look back and forward.

NB: Triple 5 Soul is going to relaunch soon. Can you talk about it? Are you consulting for them or how is it going to work since you don't own the company anymore?

CE: When I left my brand around 2004-5 I basically didn't keep the rights to my name. My partner bought out my half of the factory in China and had deals in Canada. Eventually, a company in Canada owned the name and trademarked it globally. Recently the new owner's son took over the company and started reaching out to me and they put together this team. I want to rethink these stories and processes—I'm now again cutting and sewing one-off things just like I did at my flagship store in the 90s. People have sent me archives of fabrics to work with so I'm cutting them up and reworking them into new pieces. I'm doing this as the first drop for Triple 5 Soul, it'll be a direct collaboration with me as an artist, the collection is called Peacework. Triple 5 Soul was a positive force in the '90s and early 2000s and I'd like to make it that again now. I also want to tell the stories of the past, using the brand, but also through a book I'm writing.

MB: And so after your collaboration, are you still going to be a part of the team?

CE: I will be a creative director alongside my team and bring to the table my point of view as well as my heritage archives.

NB: Are there other people from the brand that originally helped out who are coming back?

CE: No, but I did reach out to Alyasha to let him know that I'm really excited to use the OG logos. I would love to also collaborate with him somehow. I will be casting my net to brands and friends from my past and we will also plan to reach out to the new generation of artists and brands to work with.

NB: Is the tone to embrace the nostalgia or are you trying to give it a new feel?

CE: I'm going to do the Peacework collection. With some heritage, but it's a clash, right? It's a mashup of old and new. Here's another example of a crash (pulls out new samples). This was a sweatshirt that I cut up and reassembled to a new sweatshirt and added my extra details. I do want to do a modern collection and an interpretation of my design work. I'm doing these modern T-shirts where I'm sort of thinking about what iconic streetwear is. It's a t-shirt, right? I'm really trying to reinvent the t-shirt in different ways. So I'm cutting them up and piecing them together. I am doing heritage + modern and that's where my creative direction comes in. The kids I'm working with are doing streetwear bodies and then we're going to reach out to up-and-coming artists to design prints as well. We're working with this painter, Young Bachelor.

NB: Oh, yeah. Jack! I don't know him super well, but we have a bunch of mutual friends. I know him in passing.

CE: So I'm not mentoring him, but my girlfriend Michelle and I, she's a big gallerist, we're talking about ideas with him. The guys I'm working with reached out to Jack and



wanted to do a collab. They're all just conversations in the works. I don't want to bring the brand back as a heritage brand. I want these new artists to contribute.

NB: So the relaunch has also promoted a Triple 5 Soul book. Has anyone come to you with a book offer prior to the relaunch?

CE: Yeah. This woman who I did my art exhibition with was the first one, Karen Wong. She was the deputy director at the New Museum. She and I had mutual friends and she had always heard good things about me when my name or brand was mentioned. Karen wanted to meet and we started talking about a book. We kept meeting and forged a relationship in doing so. She basically saw me more as an artist and said, "Until the book happens, I'm starting this new art gallery/ platform, come do a show" and that is when I put together my chair collection titled 'Hey What's Up?' I'm currently working on the book with a writer friend from back in the day.

NB: Have you talked about the target audience? Are you trying to target streetwear people? Or are you just trying to make cool shit?

CE: We're trying to make responsible well-made garments. Keep it fashionable. Yes, there's streetwear in the DNA but nobody wants to be called streetwear anymore or urban or raver or whatever. It's just fashion if you think about it. That's what Virgil [Abloh] and I used to talk about. He was like, "Just get on your sewing machine. What are you making? What are you doing? Because I know that's what you do best."

NB: What were those conversations with Virgil like?

CE: I mean, as you know, he knew and touched so many people. He was such a force of inspiration for people, including myself. Even though he said I inspired him, he was 10 years younger than me. He was a Chicago kid, so he knew what was going on downtown back in the 90's. He knew from the magazines and he knew from the artists and the music. He aspired to that. He was multidisciplinary as well.

MB: How did you meet?

CE: He just reached out via DM and we also have mutual friends like Benji B. Virgil was always so cool, so energetic, genuine, and inspiring. Our conversations were about art, sewing, and making designs during the pandemic. I was helping with this community fridge project and sewing masks for anyone who needed it. We were talking about maybe making these pop-up kiosks for free clothes and essential kits. Then we started talking about the book and he was going to do the foreword and help navigate the publishers because I didn't know how to do it. He asked me how I can get under his Off White™ umbrella. I had this art furniture project I wanted to make so he went ahead and sent me rolls of fabric from his past collection, deadstock materials. I only wanted to make these collections with deadstock garments or materials. We spoke about sustainability and it's been on our minds to not produce new materials but use existing fabrics. He really wanted to see what things I could sew up and work on a few projects.

NB: It's incredible that you were able to have that relationship with someone like Virgil.

CE: Totally blessed to have met him. I mean, I think he touched a lot of people. That was his gift in this lifetime. He was about making and creating ideas and that's what I was when I had my brand. I think he also put that together as well because he knows how much the music, friends, and community were always part of Triple 5 Soul's DNA. It was such a vibe.

# wednesday

words & photos by max burkeman  
conversation held october 28, 2022





It’s November 12th 2021, a shitty, cold day. I’m headed to see a show by my lonesome at Baby’s All Right. For months before, my friends were subjected to my constant blabbing about some band from North Carolina by the name of “Wednesday”. I found them from some Instagram story in early 2020. “There’s something about this band, they’re gonna be big!” I would exclaim, like I was their independent, underpaid, agent who needed a big break. By that point, my friends were sick of it, and by the day of the show, I had convinced two of them to tag along, promising it would be something special. It was. In fact, it was one of my favorite live performances I had seen in a long time. They knew how to write a hit and perform it with personality. A perfect mix of sappy country and screaming shoegaze that actually feels inventive. My friends now also had the bug.

Almost a year later, I had the opportunity to speak with Karly Hartzman, lead singer and originator of the band. With so much time between attending their performance, and thinking about my questions, I ask Karly about what SAP wants to know about herself and her bandmates. Naturally, we spoke about poppers, anti-anxiety meds, rotisserie chickens, haunted houses, Bojangles, and sexy country musicians. This is Wednesday.

Max Burkeman: How's your day been? Where you at?

Karly Hartzman: Good. I'm at my parent's house trying to rest a bit in between tours and everything. We're in Greensboro, North Carolina. It's in the middle of the state.

MB: Right. It looks serene. I see the Halloween decorations are already out.

KH: Yeah, my parents got ghosties and some other shit. It's very cute.

MB: Were you born and raised in North Carolina?

KH: Yeah, I grew up in this house and then moved to Asheville for school. Those are the only two places I've lived.

MB: Oh, where did you go to school?

KH: UNCA. I majored in photography.

MB: Oh, shit.

KH: Yeah, it was kind of just to appease my grandparents.

MB: Were they photographers?

KH: No, they just wanted me to get a degree. They didn't really care what it was in. I met everyone in the band through school. So I'm glad I went but yeah, also a waste of money.

MB: I went to [REDACTED], for film. Three years in I realized I had no reason to be there. A real "What am I doing?" moment.

KH: Yeah, and I'm still 20-something thousand in debt. And I think they just reversed that decision to do financial aid. I don't know if that's actually true. Don't base your decisions on me.

MB: I mean, first off, we have to talk about your high school fits.

KH: Oh my God.

MB: This is too fucking good. In New York, I see at least 10 downtown

girls that dress exactly like this a day.

KH: Wow. *(Laughs)*

MB: I need to know more. What was the uniform back then?

KH: Oh, geez. Um, well, I wasn't a cool kid at my high school.

MB: Were you a scene girl?

KH: My sister was a scene kid. She's three years older than me. I graduated high school in 2015. So the wave right after that, 2010 through 2015 was like, "random core".

MB: Right. “Lol derp”.

KH: Yes. Still like, Rawr XD. But a bit of a different version of it. One that's a little lighter. A little less intense. I had a light version of the scene hair. I don't want to usurp her identity. She was a tried and true scene girl.

MB: It was almost a softer version. You listen to those bands from then and the lyrics are pretty fucking wild. 30H!3 and shit.

KH: And a lot of women hating also. Hating your ex-girlfriend. I remember Odd Future was really like just starting up around that time. I was casually listening to some really violent shit. Those scenes were kinda tied up. But yeah, the outfit that's in question is from high school. I'm all decked out in school spirit gear. There's a really big high school rivalry in town. It doesn't matter who you are, you're into it. It was Page and Grimsley. I went to Grimsley. The Page kids were "Page Preps" because it's in the rich neighborhood. Grimsley was the more, I dunno... The crappy version I guess.

MB: You guys were the rough and tuff ones.

KH: I guess something like that.

MB: See, I like that. I grew up in NYC so the idea of a real high school rivalry is kinda crazy for me. I always saw it in movies and was always a little jealous. The idea where it's like, “I have no reason to hate you, but also, fuck you and your school stinks”.

KH: Yeah. No, it's cool. It's fun. You'd do something like a week-long celebration. You could wear whatever you want. There's a day when you'd make fun of the other high school and you would come to school with a pregnant belly and dress really sloppy because you're pretending to be the other school. It's fun, and then there's a huge bonfire also.

MB: How was bonfire a part of the rivalry?

KH: It's like a pep rally thing. They'd make a huge bonfire on school grounds. It was like a school-sponsored thing. They would stoke it with two leaf blowers *(Laughs)*. You would just drink before and go hang out. There'd be a marching band that would come out.

MB: I'm jealous. My friends and I were discussing what we were gonna do for Halloween and none of us could think of stuff to do in the city. I was just like, "what if we drove upstate and found a house party to crash." I think I just romanticize small-town living. The grass is always greener, I guess. That suburban kid lifestyle does call out to me though. Just riding on bikes with homies around town.

KH: It's funny because I had so much New York City memorabilia in high



school and in my room growing up. I was the kid that thought New York City was the place to be. I had one friend that grew up in New York City. I'd always want to hear what it was like. Because yeah, it's like what you were saying, the grass is always greener. Now, when I go to New York, I'm so overwhelmed. It's so overstimulating.

MB: It's funny you mention that. Recently I've been thinking for the first time in my life, "Maybe I'm not trying to spend the rest of my life here".

KH: Yeah, I just can't deal with how expensive it is for how little space you have. I live on acres of land and it's like under 400 bucks a month.

MB: Yeah, that's something that I tried not to think about for a while.

KH: Yeah... Sorry... I don't know if we're getting off-topic or...

MB: Oh no, no. Nothing better to me than talking about bullshit. But, I'll ask a real question now. It's been out for some time now, but “Bull Believ-



er” is possibly my new favorite song from you right now. It really gives me chills. I’m curious as to what the story is with the doll on the cover? It's not the first time you guys have had a strange little doll on the cover of something.

KH: Yeah, I was just obsessed with dolls as a kid. And it's just carried over to my adulthood. I like going to antique stores a lot. Finding objects I connect with. I found this whole doll-making community online. I always forget how many people there are on earth. There's a community for everything. There's one for finding random doll parts and making a new Frankenstein doll with them. I found this girl Nova (@novaodette) who did it for the “Bull Believer” cover.

MB: Did you give specific ideas that you wanted? Or you kind of just let her do her own shit?

KH: Yeah, I just really wanted those realistic teeth on there. Right? And mul-

tle heads. And other than that I was like, “run with it.” I love creepy stuff within reason. I am a scaredy cat. But there's something about dolls. I'm being Raggedy Ann for Halloween actually.

MB: That's funny, I was just about to ask you what you were dressing up as.

KH: Yeah, Raggedy Ann. I'm going to a house party I think.

MB: She's the haunted one right?

KH: Apparently, but she's really cute. My mom was a big Raggedy Ann head and she's been around forever. But apparently, they had some scary movie with her in it I think.

MB: Yeah, there's one I saw not that long ago. They have the real Raggedy Ann and she's locked in some glass box in a horror artifact museum or something.

KH: Yeah. I found that out and was so surprised because Raggedy is so cute and harmless looking. There are so many other creepy-looking dolls.

MB: I dunno, not gonna lie, she creeps me out. Maybe it's the eyelashes? Like there's too much detail. Anyways, “Bull Believer” was recorded and produced by Alex Farrar who also did “Twin Plagues.” Were there any differences in the recording of the two?

KH: Twin Plagues was recorded during Covid so we got discounted time. It was a studio out of their house. Since then they had built a really nice real studio with crazy equipment and stuff. So this was recorded in a real space.

MB: Is this the first time you've ever recorded in a real studio?

KH: Yeah, with Wednesday at least. I recorded [in a studio] with another band. But that was a long time ago. So yeah, this was the first time I recorded my music in a studio. We first started recording at my friend Collins's house,





then we moved to Alex's house for "Twin Plagues," and now we're in a real studio. I'm glad it was gradual. I would have been really intimidated by a full studio off the bat.

**MB: For sure. So the whole new album is recorded in that studio?**

KH: Yeah.

**MB: I had to record music in a studio for a project in high school and yeah, it's stressful. Especially if you're limited to a time frame. You really gotta nail your shit.**

KH: It definitely helped that I've known Alex for a while, we're buds. It's more relaxed and laid back. We had as much time as we needed with him. It is different when hiring out a professional engineer. It actually doesn't make a ton of sense to me. I feel like it's actually a stressful place to record. There are often a lot of constraints. I recorded a lot at the university recording space and you have to share the place with a bunch of people.

**MB: "Violin practice is here, you gotta get the fuck out!"**

KH: Exactly.

**MB: I really think you guys have mastered the art of the buildup in a song. "Bull Believer" is no exception. With your songwriting, is that something you have the intention of when beginning a song or does that come later down the line?**

KH: I think it comes pretty naturally. I'm trying to get the most therapeutic experience out of performing it. Especially with a song like "Bull Believer", it takes a lot of work to get to a place in my brain where I can scream. I need that buildup to get there. I don't like performing songs if I'm not genuinely feeling what I'm screaming about. That buildup comes naturally by settling into a song. I think it's a way to ease myself in. I have to get there slowly.

**MB: Right. You knew that you wanted to scream on this song, but it's gonna take eight minutes for you to get there.**

KH: Yeah. I hadn't really screamed at all before this. I had a practice run of the scream I do in the recording but again yeah it's new for me. That's why in the final recording it kinda sounds like... someone who's never screamed before. *(Laughs)*

**MB: I really feel like that shines through in such a genuine way though. The ending part is my favorite. It doesn't feel manufactured. It's so raw. It also really conveys when you play live.**

KH: Yeah, it's gotten easier the more I practice. The first time I recorded it, I was still learning how to do it. So I like that it captured that. I can't scream full-throated when on tour like the way I do in the recording.

**MB: I've never been a screamer. I envy people who can scream, especially when they're angry. Not that I want to scream all the time, but I would like the ability to do it.**

KH: That's kind of how I felt too. I was listening to a lot of angry music during Covid, lots of Gouge Away. I was so angry during that time and I didn't know what to do with it. It's hard to really let yourself do that, scream like that. So it was kinda an excuse to do it.

**MB: You guys just ended your tour. I got to catch one of your shows.**

KH: You were at the Brooklyn show? Sweet.

**MB: How'd you end up feeling about the tour as a whole?**

KH: Oh, it's great. Yeah. I mean, I'm always just surprised that people go to our show at all. I mean, we've been touring forever so it's just really nice that people come out. I always just expect no one to show up, honestly.

**MB: In your head you're about to walk out on stage to something like**

**seven dudes in the crowd.**

KH: Yeah. I've done it enough to know that you have to prepare for that situation, cause it really sucks when you're expecting more than you're given. So it's always surprising and lovely. People are singing words now! It's a whole other ballgame cause when I look at people singing the words back to me, I instantly forget the words to the song. *(Laughs)*

**MB: You get speech jammed.**

KH: Yeah!

**MB: What is your guy's party situation on the road? On the gram, it seems like you guys might get a little rowdy.**

KH: Well, it's funny because I stopped drinking on tour. I'm in charge of so much because I have to manage our tour, and myself, plus I'm DD every night. Someone has to do it. But to do that I kinda let my bandmates do whatever they want. I mean when you have whiskey and beer on the rider every night...

**MB: Is there a party monster in the group?**

KH: Luckily, everyone is pretty chill. Easygoing. Yeah, I mean, everyone has drinks every night. I think actually, Jake, Xandy and Alan, the three of them. It's so cute. The best time to go off is if we have friends in town that we only get to see once a year or something. But actually, you know what I've gotten into on the past couple of tours?

**MB: What?**

KH: Poppers.

**MB: See, I was gonna question you because I saw on one of your Insta stories there was a sneaky little Rush jar on a bedside table. Wait.. so you're hitting poppers raw? Like sober?**

KH: Yeah!

**MB: Jesus Christ! *(Laughs)***

KH: It's so nice for me cause I have the popper feeling for whatever seconds after hitting it and I can really enjoy it. We do it strategically also. We do it to a song by the opening band that we really like. But yeah, I can't get wasted before our sets or anything.

**MB: I mean I had a bit of a popper phase as well but it was always late at night at a club or something; someone would pull it out and it was a momentary indulgence. Though, one time I was curious as to what it's like hitting it sober and I felt like I was gonna have a heart attack. You can just take it to the dome and be chilling?**

KH: I just get really giddy and then lightheaded or whatever. I have to go pretty easy before we play. I have to remember all the words and stuff But I actually just started to be able to smoke weed again, which is nice. So yeah, I stopped drinking and started smoking. I used to get really bad anxiety from weed but I'm coming back around to it.

**MB: I'm guessing you were a huge stoner and then it just started fucking with your psyche?**

KH: Yeah, exactly. I also now get really sick if I drink at all. This might be TMI but I started an anxiety medication and it makes me feel terrible if I drink.

**MB: What do you take? I'm also on anti-anxiety. *(Laughs)***

KH: I think Venlafaxine.

**MB: No. Fucking Way. That's what I take! Hmm, it definitely doesn't affect my drinking. *(Laughs)***

KH: Yeah, so I kind of had to figure something else out on tours.



**MB:** That's crazy. What milligram Are you taking?

KH: Oh, I don't know. I just take whatever. I just take three. I think like 75.

**MB:** Yeah, dude, it honestly has changed my life.

KH: Yeah, it's so necessary on tour too because I have car anxiety, and you're in the car all day.

**MB:** Car anxiety from claustrophobia or what? What aspect?

KH: Just thinking about all the terrible things that could happen on drives. By the time we would get to the show, I'd be exhausted. So yeah, in that way, the medication has totally changed the tour life because I have so much more energy because I'm not worried about dying all the time.

**MB:** Right, right. I'm assuming you grew up in car culture. My parents never had a car. The first time I was in a car with someone that wasn't a full-grown adult driving was in college.

KH: That's crazy!

**MB:** I really look at cars with excitement. Almost like it's a ride at an amusement park or something. Like a dog, "Oh, can we go for a car ride?!"

KH: I mean everyone here gets their license around 16. By the time you graduate high school you have a lot of friends that have been in car accidents and people you know who have passed in them. So I think that's what a lot of it is from.

**MB:** With the creation of Wednesday, was the whole band into country, or did you have to hogtie them in?

KH: Jake, Xandy, and I were kinda the country heads. Jake loves outlaw country and Townes Van Zandt. The classic stuff. He showed me a lot of that. I just kind of grew up around it. You just always hear country around here. Xandy's really into pop country and the 80's and Reba and all that. Then of course, we got the rest of the band into it as well. So we're all kinda country heads now, but Jake is definitely the biggest one. His family passed it down to him. Xandi's also into old-time banjo music. There are so many layers to country music. There are so many different subgenres.

**MB:** It's almost overwhelming in a similar fashion to dance music where there are so many different subgenres that a casual listener might find it really intimidating. Going back to the questions, I like asking musicians what was playing in their houses when they were a kid. What were their parents listening to? In your memory, what's playing in the background at the Hartzman residence?

KH: Yeah. It's funny because my family wasn't an album family. We were more of a mixtape family. We just had a ton of mix CDs that we would run through. And my dad was really into Limewire. He would download a lot of music when I was a kid. It would go from Micheal Jackson to Eminem, to Christina Aguilera, to Counting Crows. They were really into it all. I was surprised, I played Smashing Pumpkins the other day and my mom was familiar with it. I always find out more and more about the music my parents are aware of. And of course, when Avril Lavigne's first album came out, that's all my sister and I listened to for probably three years straight.

**MB:** Did they fuck with Avril?

KH: Oh, yeah. Except for that song. There's that one song that has a lyric, "It's damn cool". My mom was like, "Karly, she's saying damn!" That was the only issue they had with that album. They were never super strict or anything like that.

**MB:** It's crazy that your dad was the Limewire guy of the family.

KH: Yeah, I'm surprised too, looking back. It's funny because a lot of those torrented songs have weird stuff spliced in the middle. So my sister and I would get accustomed to some versions of these songs. It just had weird stuff in it.

**MB:** You also released “Mowing The Leaves Instead Of Piling Them Up” this year which is a cover album. Cover albums are hard for me because I'm often more interested in the originals than the covers. With yours, I actually had pretty much equal interest in your versions vs. the originals. I would assume one of the hardest parts of a cover album is choosing the songs to actually cover. What was that process like?

KH: I just had a running list of songs that felt really good on my voice to sing. If something is in your range it just feels really right. That was just a list of songs that I had. We also didn't expect anyone to really fuck with that album because we were just doing it for fun. I also don't listen to cover albums. I think we also just wanted to give context to why we sound like what we do. Why we go from a country song to a shoegaze song on an album. We've been influenced by all those bands. A lot of those are older recordings. Jake and I would do a lot of them for fun.

**MB:** How long had that project been in the works before its release?

KH: We just got free studio time for “She's Actin' Single (I'm Drinkin' Double)”, “Lock, Stock And Teardrops”, and “Women Without Whiskey”. Then we were just like, "Wait, we have an album's worth of covers just recorded from the past four years". Then we just put 'em on a Google Drive folder and there it was.

**MB:** With the rise of people like Kacey Musgraves and Dolly Parton with a younger, more pop-oriented group, I'm curious as to what your opinion is on where country music is headed. I do feel like you guys are really respected, not just in the country scene but also rock.

KH: I think there's gonna be a lot of music that comes out of borrowing from country music culture that doesn't have the country music experience to back it up. I also think it's gonna be in and out really quickly (Laughs). Then there's going to be some country music that comes out and innovates based on the history of the genre and all the new stuff we have access to. Kacey is gonna last the test of time because obviously she loves country music. She's from the South. I think it's really obvious to people who love country music when it's coming from a place of respect and when it's coming from a trend of whatever.

**MB:** What type of stuff do you think they're gonna pull from country.

KH: I think a lot of people use country as a way to cosplay as poor. Right? That's kind of annoying. I don't know. Just throwing on a cowboy hat, just cause it's kind of a thing right now.

**MB:** I'm not a fan of the cowboy hat, just to be goofy. It annoys me.

KH: Yeah. I mean people can do what they want. It's just gimmick-y. It's very obvious.

**MB:** So no 10-gallon hat for you anytime soon?

KH: No, because I haven't ever worn one for work. I throw on boots.

**MB:** It's crazy; the cowboy trend. So many NYU kids with their boots and pink cowboy hats.

KH: Yeah I mean, they are comfortable, and they're functional. They are in the fashion zeitgeist. You can do it without looking like an asshole, but you can also do it and look like an asshole. I guess that's where I'll leave it. I'm not going to judge anyone for wearing what they want but you can look like an asshole sometimes.

**MB:** I want to talk about the whole situation where you guys put up your earnings from SXSW and touring. I definitely have tons of respect for you just laying it out on the table. The response to it was really wild. Dumbasses thinking you guys are using your earnings on “luxuries”, A.K.A a fucking hotel room. My thoughts were, I want my band hungover and a little grumpy, but hungover from a night in a hotel room. Not hungover from a night in the van. That's a terrible combo.

KH: We've been touring for years. And we've done the sleep-on-a-punk



house floor shit. Like, why do you expect me to do that when I'm 25. And like, I'm trying to make this my career.

**MB:** I think audiences, especially in entertainment and especially with music, forget you're people. This honestly happens the most with the biggest pop stars in the world. They view them as pure entertainment. "I'm paying for this, and so I should get exactly what I want and whatever else is not relevant."

KH: Also, with punk and punk adjacent music people really want you to pay your dues, which like, whatever sure. But I don't know, take care of yourself! You can't kill yourself on a tour, expect to make no money, and also make it your career. Then work at a grocery store when you get home and also be expected to write new music and record it. It's not possible.

**MB:** Did you notice any good responses from that whole thing?

KH: Um, yeah. I mean, I guess it started a conversation. Maybe people weren't thinking about it yet. Because yeah, the response to it was so emotional. I think people want to uplift artists to a certain point and want their favorite artists to survive and make music, but also they don't want them to get too big or successful. People like having music as their own special thing and you can't really have that if you want a musician to keep making music. I don't know, it's a big conversation. It definitely freaked me out, having that many people yelling at me over the internet. But I'm ready to keep talking about it. I just needed some time because that was kind of a nightmare!

**MB:** Yeah, I can only imagine. I'm still relatively new to Twitter. It's such a cesspool. Being genuinely mad about something from someone you've never met. It's insane behavior. Honestly entertaining.

KH: Yeah, it did make me more conscious that behind every account there is some person. But yeah, I'm gonna keep advocating for that. For smaller bands. There are so many fucked up practices that are just happening because no one really brings it up. Maybe we shouldn't be paying opening bands \$250 a night when you're making \$7,000.

**MB:** All right. Dive bar drink of choice? I know you say don't drink on the road anymore.

KH: Hmmm. For Jake, I know it's Miller Highlife. I like a shitty beer, honestly. I like something that's watered-down tasting.

**MB:** I just discovered the pickle shot.

KH: Oh, the pickle back.

**MB:** Well, no. The pickle-back is whiskey and pickle juice. The pickle shot is just vodka with pickle juice and a full pickle in the shot glass. I love a snack with my drink. Big dirty martini guy.

KH: Oh yeah. I honestly think I like a martini more just for the olives than anything else. I'm a bloody mary person. That's a meal.

**MB:** You know I don't think I've ever had a full-on bloody mary before. I've had a cheap airplane one but not one with the works.

KH: Oh, it's good. You gotta get the one with the clam juice in it too. It's fucking insane.

**MB:** That puts hair on your chest. Being from North Carolina, do you prefer the city-slicker shows or the backcountry shows?

KH: I love the city shows during our performances because people go fucking crazy and pack it in, but loading in and out of those shows is a nightmare. Driving in and out of cities with a big van and a Uhaul is rough. Also, it's usually more expensive to stay there. There are a few cities though. I like Chicago. I could spend time there and not lose my mind. I like parts of New York. We just have to sleep in the most uncomfortable places. But also, we played Greensboro, where I'm from, on the last tour. I really love playing in a small town where bands don't ever come through. People are always so happy and surprised when we are there.

**MB:** The smaller towns are probably more appreciative that you're in town.

KH: Yeah, they're just very grateful. They are always asking why we are there.

**MB:** Right. It's either see Wednesday or square dancing practice at the local bar.

KH: (Laughs) Yeah, I mean there are house parties. The only music that was coming through here in high school was pop punk. That was the only shit you could see. For the longest time I thought pop-punk was the only genre of live music. So I joined a pop punk band and immediately I was like, "I hate this."

**MB:** Why'd you hate it?

KH: The community is really scary. Every day there would be someone outed for just doing the creepiest shit I've ever heard. It's a very accepting space, but it's also very scary. I just didn't feel safe.

**MB:** I mean, I don't know if any genre has more allegations than pop punk.

KH: Yeah. I mean any genre where the primary audience stays at 15 to 17 years old, no matter how old the musicians get. It's gotta be a little creepy.

**MB:** That's true. I've never thought about it like that.

KH: There are old heads that come out but the primary audience is tweens and teens.

**MB:** Most overrated city?





KH: Ohhh... I have to think about that. That's hard cause I don't spend much time in the cities when I stay there. Also, there's going to be niches of people that are really wonderful and sweet and nice in each place. I don't know if I've been to a city where I'm just like, "This sucks". OH! Wait, I dunno...

**MB: Oh, c'mon, what is it?**

KH: I don't really understand LA, but I literally saw like, one neighborhood.

**MB: I'm a bit of an LA hater. I can't fully judge it but it just seems so weirdly fake. A lot of my friends are from California. So maybe I can't fully hate on it.**

KH: I feel like it's hard to understand a city if you're there for only a night or two. Everything has its little spots, you just gotta put in the work to find them.

**MB: I want to get some opinions on some North Carolina food staples.**

KH: Haha! Ok.

**MB: North Carolina-style hot dog? (chili, slaw, and onions on a hot-dog)**

KH: Oh yeah. 100%

**MB: Seems pretty sloppy.**

KH: Delicious though. It's the best flavors. The perfect balance of savory and sweet depending on what type of slaw or sauerkraut you get.

**MB: To be honest it seems right up my alley. The normal chili cheese dog, it's missing that zing factor. What about Livermush?**

KH: That sounds like a Jewish thing.

**MB: Except for all the pork (Laughs). It's pig liver, parts of pig head, cornmeal, and spices. It's like a loaf**

KH: Okay, I bet Xandy's had that more than anyone else. I haven't yet. To me that just makes me think of Passover dinner.

**MB: Lastly, Cheerwine? (cherry-flavored soft drink).**

KH: I think it's fine. I mean, the natural pairing is to get a Cheerwine and a tray at Cookout.

**MB: Never had Cookout.**

KH: Oh, Man. That's what you gotta do. You gotta do the Cheerwine with a Cookout burger and Cajun fries.

**MB: I've been dying to do a trip across the country, in part because I want to try fast food. I did Xaxby's in Atlanta once. I was into it, something new.**

KH: The south has the best fast food by far. Bojangles. Bojangles is the fucking best. The Cajun Chicken Filet Biscuit with Bo Rounds. Jesus Christ. Yeah if you're doing a trip across America, that's gotta be your number one.

**MB: Okay. Bojangles is definitely on that list now. Do you think you're staying in North Carolina for the future?**

KH: Yeah. I mean, my family is here. I am really close with them. It's relatively central, it's cheap, and it's a day's drive to DC or Philly but also not far from Miami and New Orleans. You can go to the beach, it's got mountains. I love it here.



**MB: How often do you venture out when not touring?**

KH: I'm a homebody as fuck. I don't travel a lot if I'm not touring. Plus I got a cat.

**MB: You opened up a P.O. Box recently, which is not something I see bands really do. I wanna know the best stuff you've gotten. Any letters confessing love written in blood?**

KH: *(Laughs)* No. It's been pretty tame so far. A lot of people send their music, which is really fun. I liked to hear music that might be influenced by Wednesday because we are so obsessed with our influences. I realized a lot of people don't know how to address a letter. Someone sent me a postcard but didn't write their name or their address. I'm like, "Who is this? I need to respond to your letter!" I'm also sick of DMing. It's exhausting. Not even as a flex but my inbox gets so full when you don't check it for a couple days. It's like, fuck, people really pour their heart outs and I want to hear them. I just can't look through that shit anymore online.

**MB: Do you respond to everyone that sends you a letter?**

KH: Yeah, it's still manageable. I've maybe sent back like 20 things. It's such an intimate way to communicate. I've been writing letters since high school because I think it's a better way to get to know someone.

**MB: I've actually been wanting to write more letters. I think a lot of people are wanting to, actually. It's more tactile. It's my Mom's birthday today actually, so I made her a card. Just adds more personality, even if it's a bit shit.**

KH: And receiving a letter is the best feeling.

**MB: I asked the last musician I interviewed for SAP, Colloboh, what his backstage rider go to is, and he said he would get pistachios and beer every time and by the time he was done with his tour, he couldn't look at pistachios, he was so sick of them. What's the band's go-to rider?**

KH: Ours has been really basic recently, but I think we've realized that we want to put a rotisserie chicken on a rider. Can you imagine? Just being able to dig into a hot chicken as soon as you get in. *(Laughs)*

**MB: Oh, fuck yeah baby. I love a good rotisserie. Any specific one? Costco or BJS?**

KH: I just think about the one at my Ashville grocery store.

**MB: When you get big enough and play MSG you can be like, "No not Costco rotisserie, I said the Ashville one!"**

KH: *(Laughs)* No, I don't think we'd be too picky. I actually don't have a Costco membership, so I haven't had theirs. Is it really good?

**MB: It's kinda a classic. I think they actually lose money on it. It's so ridiculously cheap. Ok, so the rotisserie chicken. I like that. All of you just huddled pulling meat off the bones. What's your guy's biggest time killer on tour?**

KH: I thrift as fuck. As soon as we get into any city I look for a consignment store. I mostly just look out the window honestly. I just zone out and look out for hours. I'm usually driving for that reason. We kinda just do dumb shit in the van.

**MB: Who has aux?**

KH: Depends on what mood we're in. If we want someone to play good music, we give it to Jake. If we want chaotic shit, we'll give it to Alan. He'll just play like, diarrhea sounds, and sometimes we're in the mood for chaos. We'll let Alan go crazy.

**MB: I love that moment of group tiredness where everyone in the group kinda just loses control of their brains. It's just exhausted absurdity.**

KH: Yeah, that's when we need Alan. We like to listen to our friend's albums when they come out. We use that time to listen to their music.

**MB: Yeah, that new Gutting a Body of Water is dope.**

KH: So good. Also Knife Play. That's another band from Philly that just came out with an album.

**MB: Ok. So here's a weird one. When I saw you guys at Brooklyn Made recently, I was writing down notes and questions I thought about when seeing you guys. I was pretty drunk so I wrote down something but now have no idea what it means. Does, "Haunted House - if you don't go you weren't cool" mean anything to you?**

KH: Oh, I know. The smell of the smoke machine on stage reminded me so viscerally of the haunted houses in Greensboro. Everyone would go to one called Woods of Terror. As I said, I'm a scaredy cat, but it was the cool thing to do. My friends would force me to go; it was 20 bucks at the time which was really expensive to me. Why was I wasting 20 bucks to be in a claustrophobia simulator with people jumping out at you? It was horrible... but everything smelled like that smoke.

**MB: I've never been to a haunted house actually.**

KH: Not worth it. Down here you'll have to drive through woods for 30 minutes. Just straight farmland. When you get there people just chase you with chainsaws.

**MB: Did you do it every year?**

KH: I think I went twice. Then I started advocating for myself and was like, "I'm done with this shit."

**MB: At your show, you guys said you have 3 songs left and there's not gonna be an encore, 'cause encores are lame. What's the mindset?**

KH: I don't know. I think it's another one of those weird rock traditions. I kinda think it's a jerkoff fest for the artist. Like, "We want to hear you clap until we come out and play all our best songs you wanted to hear." I just tell them this is our last song. This is not a joke. Go off, 'cause we're not coming back.

**MB: *(Laughs)* Right. Ok, I respect that heavy, actually. So I saw you're selling your hair for mutual aid. How much hair are you chopping off the top? I'm also curious as to who is buying this. I'm sure there are some for a good cause but others may have more... nefarious intentions. Is it just from you?**

KH: It's all mine. I cut my hair before the Trucker's Tour and just saved it thinking it would be good for something. I'm gonna keep doing it cause I cut a lot of my hair off. It doesn't seem like any weird shit so far. Think it's more that people are happy to support. I feel like inherently if you're into our music you're into weird shit. Dunno.

**MB: Now I think this is my last question, sexiest country singer?**

KH: I gotta say, there's this one John Prine album cover.

**MB: Knew you were gonna say Prine for some reason.**

KH: It's the one where he's holding a cigarette.

**MB: Yes, I think it's "Pink Cadillac". Okay, so you're kind of into the more like big hair big mustache kind of vibe.**

KH: I guess for his case. I'm also just into lankiness. Also Grant Parsons. Yeah. Me and Jake actually both have a crush on him.



**“[W]hen I fall into the error of writing about art, it was valid more as personal and provisional insight than as fact objectively derived...” Rainer Maria Rilke**

I was working the night of the great Henry Street opening of Sept 7. As of the time of this writing, I am employed by the artist Jimmy Wright, who had his own reception around the corner from the hubbub at FIERMAN’s new location on Pike and Henry. From the sidelines, a filmmaker working on a doc about my boss turned to me and said, “It’s like an artist’s colony around here.” It’s true: Gallerists are like ants at a picnic; one finds something interesting, be it a piece of real estate or discarded watermelon, and a horde comes swarming. At this moment in time, Henry Street is having a moment.

While the olds gather in Chelsea for restrained wine chatter, the true heads head to the Lower East Side for rowdy cerveza-fueled hangs. Writing for The New York Times, Max Lakin declared TriBeCa “NY’s Hottest New Art Gallery District” I call bull. Or, not exactly bull—I do like most of all the galleries in that neighborhood—but these places just aren’t where my friends hang out. Hell, I’d be surprised if any of them had even heard of P.P.O.W gallery, whose co-founder, Wendy Olsoff, told ARTnews “Chelsea just got to be too corporate for us.” No, TriBeCa is just a little too...established? In the basement of King’s Leap, owner and director Alec Petty puts it this way: “The Lower East Side is the intermediary between Chelsea and TriBeCa.” [Everyone around this area seems to use Chinatown and LES interchangeably.]

That opening night was something out of a movie, or at least an episode of Girls, where the goal is to make contemporary art seem like the hot new thing. It’s definitely not new but there is an excitement that is palpable. Why though? Likely it’s the eclectic programming of Henry Street, which is accessible yet daring. The skaters and established moguls such as Jeffrey Deitch can both commune over a painting and understand it. The work speaks for itself. Without diving too deep into literal art criticism I’m going to attempt to give an overview of what separates Henry Street from the gilded gates of the behemoth outlets on the numbered streets west of the High Line.

“Wednesday had an authentic energy to it,” Will Harrison, writer of the infamous Dimes Square Baffler essay, says over text message. “Dare I say “electric”?,” he continues. “Perhaps some of this was drinking, running into friends organically, flirting with someone I just met, but then that’s part of it.”

He isn’t wrong. These openings are a scene.

Here’s an anecdote that might add some perspective: An older woman whom I was contracted to work for asked me what type of art I write about. She had just finished telling me about visiting the Armory show. I didn’t want to tell her what was on my mind, which was, “Not the type of art you would buy.” Emerging artists are primarily who you will find hanging on the walls of Henry Street and their work is in direct opposition to the somewhat safe fare of the Chelsea circuit. What they make is subversive. You wouldn’t find, for example, something like Allan Gardner’s Indifferent Stars, No Galleries’ current show, which the text repeatedly says is not about meth. Yet, to look at the small oils on canvas is to see somewhat abstracted figures sucking on glass pipes. And I’m not trying to flatten all the context Maggie Dunlap provides in her press release, but these are confrontational images of explicit drug use. The 12 smaller paintings are beautiful, they are hard to look at, they ask us to be unflinching in our gaze. That said, the hallowed white cubes of Chelsea would find them to be too imminent. These pieces could only be shown at David Zwirner if Hilton Als found them in the archives of a long-dead artist who never got her dues in some long-forgotten 1970s milieu. And, to be frank, most of the moneyed elite buying off the walls of Pace would find this type of stuff morally reprehensible.

Over drinks, my friend Claire Felonis, a former director of Baltimore’s Lil’ Gallery, makes this observation: “[These galleries show] art by and for partygoers. It’s catering to the crowd that they’re drawing. The type of person they want smoking outside the

gallery.” Henry Street’s DIY ethos feels like the real deal and people build community around a genuine underground network.

With the help of FIERMAN owner David Fierman, I traced the history of Henry Street’s galleries back to Gabrielle Giattino, perhaps the first pilgrim to open shop on the strip. Speaking with Collecteurs, she said, Dispatch opened in 2007 and was followed by Bureau, which opened at 127 Henry Street in 2010. It was succeeded by Chapter in 2013 at that same location before FIERMAN took over in 2016. Others early to the party were SITUATIONS (2015), 56 Henry (2016), and then there was the new guard, perhaps spurred by pandemic prices, that came in 2020-21 starting with No Gallery and then Public Access and King’s Leap shortly thereafter.

Fierman had the following to say: *“With the people just on this block I’ve been talking to—Ellie [Rines] and Casey [Gleghorn] from No Gallery and Jackie and Alec and Leo [Fitzpatrick]—it’s a bunch of really interesting people who are all doing different things, showing different work and having different communities around each other. And it’s collaborative but not competitive. So it’s a cool spot for serious people who are not doing everything fancy.”*

I had to leave early on the night of the big opening, but according to Artnet’s intrepid art market and gossip reporter, Annie Armstrong, “Mobs of people showed up for the event, which featured a rented ice cream truck from ATM Gallery and free-flowing booze.” In her article, she crowns Henry Street, “New York’s New Affordable, Experimental Art Hub,” with the caveat that the good times might not keep rolling on. The piece is an art market report, whereas mine is more of a critical scene dispatch. In it, Annie says that many of the gallerists pay \$3,000 a month, a relative penance compared to other neighborhoods where rent can easily be double that.

“Overhead is low so it allows for not just rich people to own galleries,” my friend, the painter Eli Hill tells me. “It also allows them to take more chances. They don’t have to sell out every show. They can put on shows that won’t sell to enhance the mythos.”

It’s true. Someone is clearly buying the art but I wonder what the average Henry Street collector looks like. Angel investors is how one source put them. People who have the money to keep this ship afloat but who know that their dividends won’t increase the way they might if they hauled home a Rothko.





When my girlfriend and I visit the cluster of the Henry Street galleries East of the Manhattan Bridge late on a Saturday in September, the fanfare and crowds of the previous Wednesday have completely died down. In fact, apart from at Public Access, Julia and I are the only lookie-loos at No Gallery, King's Leap, SITUATIONS, the brand-new DIANA, FIERMAN, and 56 Henry. If you haven't been to any of these spaces, I'll try and set the scene for you. Most operate out of store fronts and the space is limited. The gallerists appear to be hanging out and enjoying themselves. If you're more affable than me, you could probably strike up a conversation with them. When people do come into the galleries, they look like they could be strutting their stuff on some runway for Eckhaus Latta or whatever the cool brand is these days. But nevermind that. What about the art itself?

My favorite show on Henry Street from that tour is my boss'. What can I say? I'm being objective here when I write that FLOWERS FOR KEN is a stunning presentation of Jimmy Wright's work. The transition from seeing these two 72 x 72 inch canvases sitting on box crates in Jimmy's studio to seeing them hanging in FIERMAN's new space is revelatory. The



whole show is just that; two massive paintings dedicated to Ken Nuzzo, Jimmy's departed lover who died of complications from HIV / AIDS. These six-foot tall and wide memento mori are a labor of love and a reminder of love lost. Each depicts the same sunflower, Jimmy's calling card if you will, one the front and the other the back, as it dies. The textured pieces, their impasto viscosity, are a site to behold. In person, they fill the room with an awe inspiring sublimity. From what he's told me, when Jimmy first made these works c. 1988-1992, the public wasn't ready for the conversation to be had around them. I'm glad, in this moment, that he is getting his due. It is well deserved.

Two weeks after the opening, like the diligent writer I am, I take my friend Vivian, a painter, back to Henry Street to make sure I take everything in one last time. We start out below the main strip at HOUSING, which opened in 2020. On this trip, not much has changed. It's a sunny, Wednesday afternoon in between Summer and Fall and things are quiet, the weather is fair, and we are once again the only people gallery hopping.

What's up at HOUSING, Vivian and I agreed, was the best art we saw all day. By the time you're reading this, the dust will have settled, the paintings will be in crates on their way back to who knows where, but for the sake of posterity, I will attempt to describe what we saw. Woodland Sermon is Taína Cruz's first New York solo exhibition. In it, the artist takes on the "African American and Puerto Rican folklore and ritual traditions in their present-day manifestations." The results are

diverse yet cohesive. Spooky yet inviting. They are a world where demons and angels cohabitate and the balance is daring. My favorite piece features three girls, hair braided, faces blurred in a blue patina. Over their shoulders rest hideous figures. What are they? I can't say. But kudos to the artist.

I went into this assignment wondering if the art is ancillary to this moment. Will tells me the scene can feel sceney, which can also make it feel a bit shallow at times. I'd hate to make a sweeping generalization, but sometimes the art can feel secondary to the bragging rights that come out of shutting down the block. That's why I've tried to some extent to describe, in what is by no means a complete list, the art that inspired me.

"A lot of the programming is soso," the Instagram account problemchild.advisory told me over DMs. "But that's only because they can't compete with the big money spots in any other neighborhoods. [I]f an artist is really special they are going to go to a place that can cash them the fuck out."

The account's owner had mixed things to say about Henry Street. "It feels a lot more punk and cool down there, the work is at a younger cheeper [sic] level than other neighbors," he said. But then he listed galleries not on Henry Street doing similar programming that he liked better such as Gern, Entrance, and WHAAM! And it's true, there are many great galleries in the same price range working with young artists making eclectic and idiosyncratic work that challenges preconceptions, such as Lubov, C-L-E-A-R-I-N-G, Harkawik, Estrella, and, perhaps the most hyped of them all, O'Flaherty's. That last gallery is now infamous for a party where the streets overflowed with revelers attempting to enter the space. When I arrived on the scene, I couldn't believe me eyes. The cops came. It was a big mess. Some of those galleries listed, and more, are only separate from the spirit of Henry Street because they share a different lower Manhattan street name. I liked what I saw for the most part, though. (Shout out to MASAMITSU SHIGETA: DANCING PLANTS for creating a gratifying, whimsical depiction of L.A.'s flora. I wish I had more words to get into that show, too.)

On my second tour, speaking with Casey at length was a big help. He had a genuine enthusiasm for the work and I think that's what really makes these places cool. The owners are around and they will come out from behind their desk to tell you why the works are of interest to them. He wasn't trying to sell me on his show; I was already a fan. But he gave me some good intel. He said, yes, there is uptown interest in what is going on on Henry Street. And yes, people are purchasing the work. "We had people buying art on opening night, which is usually an email hustle later on," he told me. He showed me the sign-in book and pointed at The Nation and Artoforum editor Barry Schwabsky's name. (At FIERMAN, in neat cursive I spotted a Wayne Koestenbaum.)

Henry Street is cool. I don't have to tell you that. Even if I disagreed with the herd, I would be wrong. When I asked problemchild.advisory if Henry Street is overhyped, he said, "Buying into the Hype is only fucking with like these money people who are basically evil haha." So there ya go. Who cares? You can have your wild parties and sell art, too. And apparently these galleries are doing something right because I've been circling around several ideas regarding them without really saying anything aside from...



public access

"Hey, these galleries are neat, don't ya think?"



Pioneer Works can be described as an artist and creative utopia. Located in deep Red Hook, the massive 27,000-ish square foot, three floor, half acre footprint building stands tall and proud in the humble, isolated area. Originally an iron factory built in 1866, the space has now been constructed as a nonprofit cultural center, fostering innovative thinking and passion since 2011. SAP has placed Taschi Belt, Brooklyn born photographer, and Gabriel Florenz, Pioneer Works' Founding Artistic Director, on a Zoom call for a conversation to talk about the project and Gabriel himself. Both have known and been extremely close family friends for over four years. Neither have interviewed each other before.

# Pioneer Works and

# Gabriel Florenz

interview by taschi belt  
photos from patrick no & walter włodarczyk  
page 32 performance by *This Is Not This Heat*, PW 2018



**Taschi Belt:** We're just gonna start because apparently, I have to pay for zoom meetings, which I did not know. And I'm not doing that.

Gabriel Florenz: Oh, because you only have 30 minutes?

**TB:** Yeah, whatever. It's fine. What's your name?

GF: My name is Gabriel.

**TB:** What's your last name?

GF: Gabriel Florenz.

**TB:** Word. Where are you from?

GF: I have one of those bouncy routes that got me here. I was born in Berkeley, California. And when I was two years old, my parents moved to central Mexico. I grew up in a town close to Mexico City until I was 13. And then popped over to Austin, Texas, and then popped over to Oakland, California. Then went to Hawaii for a year when I was 17. Then lived in California till I was 21. Then I was traveling in Europe and kind of living in Turkey for a little bit and then landed in New York City to work with my cousin Dustin Yellin, who had wanted me to come out and work in a studio. I wanted to explore New York and try to become an artist.

**TB:** And when you say working in a studio, were you his assistant?

GF: Yeah, I was an artist assistant. I had already worked as a studio manager and I was glassblowing since I was 14. I was good with fabrication and general studio stuff. When I came, he was pouring these paintings he did with layering resin. He would pour a layer of resin and then paint a little bit and then pour another and so through that I became a painter. I was helping, but couldn't really hack it in the city working 60 hours a week and make it as an artist. I didn't have the financial background to do so, so I was kinda like, *"fuck New York I'm going to Sweden."* Then one of his sculptures fell on my hands, like a 2000-pound piece crushed my hand. I nearly lost a finger. So I stayed in New York and started doing photography for him, and worked on the business side, eventually becoming his studio manager.

**TB:** Right.

GF: I was still really wanting to make my own work at the time. Then Dustin got this old factory called Pioneer Ironworks. It was built in 1866 as an iron factory. When he got it, it had been a storage facility for this moving company. There were no windows in the whole place, it was all boarded up, very little electricity, no plumbing, and just fucking boxes of paper everywhere. Before he bought it, he had this idea of a utopian art space. Multidisciplinary, with artists, scientists, poets, whatever. It was very loose, but it was something he wanted for a long time. So that's when I became involved with the project. From the start. We didn't know what a nonprofit was, we didn't know if it was gonna be for profit. It was loose. That was in 2011.

**TB:** So, Dustin spread his obsession?

GF: Yeah. I helped birth it and was involved from the very start. I also ran the renovation process which oversaw the construction and design work. I think at the heart of it, it was about preserving this temple and figuring out how to reuse this space.

**TB:** So, what is it like to have a nonprofit at such a large scale? Did you ever think it was gonna be the size it is now? That's two different questions but...

GF: Um... So in a way, yes. I think that Dustin always believes that anything can happen. And my dreams and vision have gotten bigger. But also, I can't believe what has happened in terms of the scale of it and how supported it is. There's a lot of *"Oh my God, I can't believe what's happened."* I feel like we're more excited about what's to come. The idea that it could fail was very much present during the first five years. There was definitely an element of high stakes. Dustin was selling pieces to support construction. I was renting out the space for weddings and would make like \$25,000 and then do an exhibition with that \$25,000.

**TB:** I seeee.

GF: And like, this guy Tom Beale, wanted a studio because we had a studio and we were like, *"Oh we want you here, and you want to be here, why not build another studio?"* It was just whatever the fuck we could do. Very loose. Whereas a lot of nonprofits start with a clear vision, ours was very seat of our pants. But we were agile. It is definitely not something that I thought we would be now.

GF: I think the idea of what success looked like at the time is different also. The fact we can do a science talk and get 2000 people to come easily, or exhibition openings and get people to buy tickets and come to Red Hook is fucking crazy. 10 years ago, people would think your crazy to go to something in Red Hook. It's almost another town. Now we love the isolation. It's a little quiet research space, but we get so many people. It's so beautiful to see.

**TB:** Do you feel like you have surpassed your original goals? Or has there been anything that you guys wanted from the start that hasn't been completed yet?

GF: I don't think that what we have now surpassed our goals. I think if we were to go back to where we started, we would think it was successful. I feel good about it. But, the thing about it, is we are a foundation for creatives to expand their practice, communicate with each other, make more complex work, and hopefully, live their lives and make the world better. But those support systems are limited. Instead of doing six big shows a year, why not try to really support two big shows and have bigger artist fees, and more support for the artists. And make sure when we have lectures and music shows, we're paying people as best as possible. I think artist fees are a fucking travesty in terms of what artist fees are set at. They're not taking into account what it costs to live in New York City. Say, for example, an artist has an idea for a cartoon, I'd love to be able to be like, *"Hey we can support the initial sketch, animate it, and help get it produced, and help them pitch it to major networks."* I think the power of us and the idea is to really change people's lives. We recognize talent in all these different spaces across all these different disciplines. To take that and at least expose them to opportunities and to be taken to the next level is really special.

**TB:** With the residency programs, how do they work? How many people is it limited to per year?

GF: We've kind of refined it in a certain way. We have a technology residency and a studio practice residence. With the studio practice, you get your own studio, and with the technology residents, you share our technology lab with like two or three people. We have six studios.

And we have three people at a time in the Technology Lab.

**TB:** Right.

GF: So that's, say, nine people at a time. And those are five months, roughly. So we do two terms a year. Depending on it, we can go up to six months, but around five months for those terms. And for the musicians, we have a one-month residency for musicians in our music studio. That's three residences. So then that's like 30 people a year. The residencies are all selected through independent juries. So like, I, as Artistic Director, oversee a lot of the programmers. But for the residences, I don't select it at all. Nobody at Pioneer selects the residencies. We use independent juries to select them within each department. We might get 600 applications because we have an open application, then we whittle that down to maybe 200. From there, we pick a jury. I think to get real growth and to add real complexity, you have to have different people be part of the process. Every jury that comes in has a different style. We want to see different types of people.

**TB:** One of my favorite parts about PW is that art and science are combined. But also, for someone who doesn't know much about art and science, it seems very beginner friendly. Asking the smart questions but allowing people to understand.

GF: Right? Absolutely. Science is kind of a gilded institution that can have a barrier to entry that can be pretty severe coming down to things like socioeconomics and education and all that. We have people working next to large-scale things being presented. And I think a lot of times you go to a museum they hide the process. At Pioneer we are always trying to be like these things should be open. It's all about exposure and educating people, but

really showing that all these things are much more accessible than the world is making them seem.

**TB:** Outside of PW what else do you do? You do a lot of curatorial stuff, right?

GF: So...I think in a way I have the greatest job I can imagine. I always wanted to be an artist and make my own work and be an individual. It was a hard transition for me. But now, there is so much I'm doing every day that I couldn't do without Pioneer Works. I kinda feel like it's three full jobs that I'm never really doing good enough (Laughs). So for me, I just wanna read and play music and write down what's happening and maybe try to sleep occasionally. But yeah, I play music and I like to stay connected to artistic practice but only in terms of spirituality, and I can do that endlessly through Pioneer Works. I also have this place San Pedro, the Mexican Restaurant, which is a fun little outlet that I have. I don't really do much else besides trying to stay sane.

GF: My goal is to bring in as complex of a world as possible here, and that means staying interested. Everything I do, and everything I participate in feels like a part of the job.

**TB:** I feel like it's interesting because I've talked to people all over the world who know about Pioneer Works. People in Brooklyn know about it, but I found that people in Manhattan don't really know.

GF: It's funny, I talked about this earlier but people used to never come to Brooklyn. Now I feel like it's changed where people don't really have an issue with it. Except now there are people who are proud to not come cause it got so popular. You know, I've lived in Red Hook for







years within a 500-foot radius. I kind of think of the five boroughs as one place. I'm not really necessarily more into one than the other. Sometimes, it's funny, I'll tell someone, not expecting them to know about PW that I work at here and they'll be like, "*Shut the fuck up? You work there?*" (*Laughs*) Like, I didn't know if you would know! I'm not gonna assume! I think it's easy to view our story as a success, but we just didn't have to take loans out for payroll two years ago.

GF: The idea that people talk about our space as a model and place that is doing substantial work is super humbling and amazing but also they are teaching this shit at universities. I don't know.

TB: So is there anything that you want motherfuckers to know? Besides the stuff you answered.

GF: I think a big goal of PW is to replicate the idea of neighborhoods, cities, yanno? People need places to gather and to talk to each other, to make things, to play with each other, and meet each other to make businesses or bands or fucking whatever! Space is such a commodity in New York. We have the opportunity to make really irrational decisions and incredible possibilities within ours. As the city grows the things that make it beautiful are slowly pushed out because the people that make it cool can't afford it anymore. You needed spaces that are retained as the city grows for people to communicate, to make things, and have cultural relevance; because I think once you lose that necessity, it's like, "*What the fuck are we here for?*"

TB: Absolutely. I think we're good. That was my first time interviewing someone. So thanks for doing... that.

GF: Cool. I'm here whenever.



# MO

BORN IN VIRGINIA AND LATER MOVING TO BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, MO YASIN HAS BUILT A NAME FOR HIMSELF (HAS SET QUITE THE TONE?) IN THE NIGHT-LIFE SCENE HERE IN NYC. WHETHER IT IS THROUGH HIS DESIGNED SOUND SYSTEM PRODUCTION, CURATED MIXES, DJING, OR NOTABLE EVENTS SUCH AS "GOOD FAITH" & "TIVOLI SESSIONS," YASIN'S AMBITIOUS ENDEAVORS SET HIM APART FROM THE REST. HIS VENTURES INTO PERSONAL PROJECTS HAVE LED HIM TO WORK WITH DEVON TURNBULL AND REPUTABLE CLUB SPACES SUCH AS PUBLIC RECORDS. HIS WORK ELUCIDATES AN INTENTIONAL JOURNEY THROUGH SOUND TO CREATE AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL LISTENERS. BEING UNDERTAKEN BY MO'S SPEAKERS IS TO FEEL TRANSPORTED, BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT IT IS TO BE UNANIMOUSLY IMMERSSED IN AN AUDITORY EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH MUSIC IN A SPACE INTENDED JUST FOR THAT. CREATING AN AUDIO SYSTEM OF THEIR OWN LED TO REDEFINING WHAT SOUND MEANT TO THEM, THEIR PARTIES, AND EVERYONE AROUND IT.

# YASIN





Maria Perna: I want to talk to you about the Good Faith parties actually. I wanted to dive into that a little bit. I remember you doing those in 2019, around the time I moved to NYC. Did you start that before 2019? Or did it kind of pop off in that era?

Mo Yasin: The first good faith party was in January 2019. Did you go to that one?

MP: January? Honestly, maybe. I know there was one at the Sultan Room I believe. I think there was one on a rooftop... that got shut down.

MY: Yeah. *(Laughs)*

MY: Yeah, a lot of shit got shut down. The very first one that we did was January of 2019 at a venue called Secret Project Robot in Bushwick. It was mad fun. It was me and Derek, my homegirl Ella Hustle and TYGAPAW, so it was like a two room kind of thing. That was the very first party that we had. So it was kind of crazy that it got as packed as it got. Our homie Moya Garrison-Msingwana hand painted the flyer for it and we made prints of it and handed them out. I feel like the art for that party is kind of like, what set the whole thing off.

MP: Like the flyers and stuff?

MY: Yeah, the first few runs of flyers that we did. Moya is a super talented painter and visual artist from Toronto. So he had painted like the first few flyers that we did.

MP: I remember just seeing the flyers and thinking, "Oh, this looks fun, this looks sick." I had no idea who the DJs were yet or anything like that. Was it difficult to promote it? Or did it just pop off automatically?

MY: It was actually not difficult to promote that party, for whatever reason. I don't really know. That was like a weird time. I mean, it wasn't a weird time. It was like an active time. I think 2019 was like a really fun year for nightlife in New York. Derek, who is Yellowtech, the DJ that I started that party with, were one of the few DJs in the city that I think had kind of a wide purview of shit in the city in terms of playing a bunch of different styles of music, which is now the norm.

MP: Back then I feel like a lot of people weren't used to that eclectic variety of music. I listened to the Crack Magazine mix where you guys really just focused on New York DJs and artists. That was a really incredible mix. I feel like you are known for playing a lot of different kinds of genres and stuff, especially in your mixes and just out. So it's really sick. Do you feel like after 2019, when COVID hit, there was a halt? Did it fuck up throwing these parties?

MY: Yeah, definitely. Like, obviously, COVID changed everything in nightlife. So, we don't do Good Faith anymore. We just kind of went in different directions with what we're trying to do, career wise. Musically, Derek and I have very different styles and tastes, so I think we just have different creative goals now. I think the time that we spent locked down not being able to DJ actively illuminated all of that, which it did, for everybody. I started nerding out on speaker shit and went in a different direction. For me, it was kind of like a good thing. I was DJing full time pre-pandemic and I finally got to think about something else. That shit is such a grind that you don't really have a chance to sit down and think about what you're trying to do or develop a new skill or put some time into building something long term.

MP: Yeah, that's kind of what I wanted to get into because I figured COVID had a significant drive for you to start building your speakers. It gave you the time to focus on that. How did that all transpire? I feel like that didn't happen instantaneously. I know you worked with Devon Turnbull. Were you guys friends before COVID? Or did you guys form this friendship during?

MY: I met Devon when we were like, maybe 75-80% done with the sound system. We got introduced through a mutual friend, so I hit him up just to ask him questions about speaker building. When I started the project, I had literally zero knowledge about woodworking or speakers. I know a little bit about audio and music just from DJing, producing, and being in nightlife, but speaker building, I had

zero experience. That project started for us to put together a sound system, then I just got really obsessed with it. Then it turned into, "We're gonna build these speakers from scratch." I was locked down, I was getting unemployment money, I ain't have shit to do because I ain't had no gigs. So, I was just spending like eight hours a day reading forums and watching YouTube videos and just trying to learn as much as I could. I would hit up homies, kind of like my OG's, that have been doing sound stuff in New York and around the country for a while that guided me a lot too. Devon was the first person that I was able to speak to in person that is a legit speaker designer, who knows how to make sound systems and stuff. So when I hit him up, I told him about my background and the project that I was working on. At the time, he just got a big contract to do all of the speakers for the new hotel in the Lower East Side, 9 Orchard. And I guess he needed some help. So, I started to work with him part time.

MP: That's incredible. That's crazy how it's been like two years and you've already worked with Turnball, people know he's obviously sick. Do you see people eventually building more of their own sound systems in the future? Kind of like the same way that you did?

MY: Yeah, for sure. I mean, it's definitely a thing.

MP: I feel like right now a lot of people are...

MY: A lot of people are building systems right now. I don't want to call it trendy, but there's definitely a wave of people both getting into audio and into DIY speaker building. I think people are paying a little bit more attention to sound systems, both on the Hi-Fi and audiophile end of things, and in nightlife. I think people are paying more attention to what spots have good sound systems.

MP: Absolutely!

MY: There's a lot of venues that are promoting the fact that they invested a lot of money into the sound system, or you know, it's 'featuring' the sound system as a part of their offering, which is cool.

MP: Yeah, I know Public Records obviously does that. How did you get the in for Public Records? Was it through Devon? Did you reach out to them or did they reach out to you about having your speaker in the garden?

MY: Francis, one of the partners of Public Records reached out to me about doing that summer series. I know, for instance, that through the work that I did with OJAS, we kind of have a relationship. That's how that came about.

MP: Maybe I'm assuming, but I'm gonna guess you enjoy doing day parties a bit more...?

MY: That's not true at all. *(Laughs)*

MP: Really???!! I feel like the parties that I've been to that you're playing at have almost always been day parties, which is interesting.

MY: Tivoli Sessions is a nighttime party. I will always prefer to do DIY shit. I like & enjoy playing clubs, but doing DIY shit just gives you more creative control over everything that you're doing. More control in the music that you're playing, in crowd curation, in designing the lighting system, and all that. It's much more difficult to pull off, or get away with throwing a DIY party, especially if it's like a semi-legal situation at night than during the day. That's probably the reason you've been to more.

MP: Yeah, I was wondering if you had a specific preference or anything because I just noticed that about you.

MY: I feel like the music that I prefer playing tends to be a little bit moodier and darker.

MP: Really?!

MY: Not sunshine happy shit, you know what I'm saying?

MP: That's interesting, yeah. In the future, are there any other spaces that you'd want to see your speakers be used at? Maybe not even just



in New York, or maybe even at other spaces that you've been to that have inspired you.

MY: Not any specific physical locations that I can think of, but I definitely have a vision in my head of a type of spot where I can build a big ass stack and design the whole room. Tivoli sessions are the thing I do. I think a lot of people are kind of starting to know me as the soundsystem or the speaker guy, or the dude that is into audio shit and builds speakers and shit like that. All of that stuff is secondary to DJing for me. I only built a sound system so I can DJ with it. Kind of to circumvent typical club politics or the club landscape in New York. Also, just to have more creative control over the human experience. So, all of it is in service for throwing parties, like that's the only reason the system exists at all. I don't have any ambition of manufacturing speakers for the rest of my life.

MP: So the speakers are more tailored to your sound, or how you want your sound to come out in the speakers.

MY: Yeah, exactly. I think it's harder to explain to Americans because we don't have as strong of a sound system tradition and culture as you might find in places like the UK, Jamaica, Colombia, or other places. So, a lot of people hit me up wanting to just rent my stack and I'm like, "That thing is an extension of my DJ practice." It might sound dramatic to some of my DJ homies, but like it's the equivalent of asking to rent my record collection. This is like a part of the thing that I do. Yeah, so that system is like an extension...

MP: ...of your sound. I was also going to ask you if you saw yourself building speakers for other people in the future.

MY: Not in that style of mind. Another thing is that stack is not an original thing. All of the plans are just sourced from free plans on the Internet from other DIYers. I designed the system as a whole, but like but none of the cabinets are designed by me, the horn is a vintage horn. I'm not an original horn designer. The only commercial work I did is through OJAS and that's the extent of my ambition with it. I'm eager to continue building and improving my system, but only as a means to be more intentional about the sound that I'm trying to get after and how I play and what I play.

MP: I think it's really important to be intentional with that, especially as a DJ. I feel like people here [America] don't really care about systems or maybe just not as much as in the UK or Jamaica, like you said. They really do care about their systems. I was also going to ask if you were inspired by anyone specifically in the UK or Jamaica that builds their own system, like Channel One, they're really known for that. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about Mashallah. That is written on your speakers.

MY: I actually just got a new horn. So there's another decal on the other side of that horn that says Tabarakallah. So the full phrase is: "Mashallah Tabarakallah." It's a nod to my Muslim faith, but it's an expression that you use to express awe or beauty of a thing, event, or person. So to credit God for that thing. It's kind of like a phrase of humility, but you say it to praise a thing. For example, "Mashallah, that thing is beautiful." Or it's well done or I am emotionally impacted by this in some way, and God is responsible for that. Basically, it's like I'm a vessel for this thing.

MP: Do you feel like religion ties into the way you live your life and your music taste? Or how you view music in general? The phrase being on your speakers seems like a pretty clear connection towards that.

MY: Yeah. 100%. I have to say this delicately, because I feel like a lot of other Muslims might feel a way about it. Music is a very serious thing to everybody. Particularly for people who are invested in nightlife. It's a spiritual-like practice for them to go out and go to a party. I don't want to sound too self-serious about it because a lot of DJs will talk about the way that they DJ as if it's always some like, you know, revelatory experience that they're giving people. I don't know, that can be a little bit cheesy, but like, people do take it seriously. Music is an extremely powerful thing that we can experience collectively. So, in the same way that a devout religious person might go to a church or a mosque, club people that get a really similar experience out of



going to a really good party. So it's, kind of like, trying to draw a connection between what types of spiritual experiences different people might have?

MP: Yeah, I definitely agree with that. When it comes to even the dance floor, there is a very spiritual aspect to it. It's a big emotional space for some people to really connect with others. As someone that is a dancer, when I go to these sets, it can be very intense, emotionally. It does feel like a very spiritual thing at times, not to sound corny, but connecting music with movement and people, it can be very personal, and that's where you can build some of the most important connections in people's lives.

MP: I actually have a quote here by you, "To elevate the dance floor to a sight of spiritual significance, to come in good faith." Even the dance floor has a spiritual aspect to it.

MY: Damn, I wrote that a long time ago. I almost forgot about that! (Laughs)

MP: (Laughs) So, What does a spiritual dance floor feel like to you?

MY: One, it's a very personal experience, but it's a personal experience that can only be achieved through feeling that connection with other people. Which is the difference between what I do as a DJ, so like my job requires me to have an audience. And some of the Hi-Fi audiophile world, where it's really much more focused on maybe like a single person sitting in a room in between two speakers and having like, a solitary experience listening to music. So in my mind, it's the difference between praying by yourself at home and praying with a group of people. The practice is like a one on one thing with whoever, whatever the object of your worship might be, but it's a different experience to do it with other people. You feel a different type of emotional experience.

MP: Absolutely.

MY: The way that I practice it as a DJ, everybody has to feel like they're doing it together, but you're having a personal experience of something that you can't really share or talk about.

MP: I'm someone that sees the dance floor as an emotional space, to really connect with people. So, sometimes there are instances where I can feel a disconnect between almost the entire space at times. On Friday, I went to see a few DJs play at Nowadays and we all kind of collectively agreed that there felt like a disconnect, between maybe the music, the dance floor, or everyone. It was like a very agreed upon thing. So as a DJ, can you feel when there is a disconnect on the dance

floor from the DJ booth?

MY: Yeah, of course. That's why we do Tivoli sessions, we can have as much control over what the experience is going to be as possible. There's like a million factors that go into making a good party. A lot of them you don't have any control over, right? You try your best to be as thoughtful and intentional about what exactly you're trying to communicate, for example with how the space is laid out, what it sounds like, the music that you're playing, obviously, who's there, who's doing the door, who's controlling the lights, all that shit, you know what I mean? That's the reason that we throw our own party because it feels like you're giving up way too much over what you're trying to communicate by just getting booked at a club, or just plugging into whatever.

MP: I think that intention definitely shows in certain parties. Usually when there is intention, you can feel it. You can feel when the DJ, space, or promoter are genuinely trying to create this environment, that has that specific feeling, whereas, like you just said, someone is just playing to play. You can feel it. As someone that comes from Miami, it's interesting to notice. In Miami, I never felt that emotional connection through even dancing with other people, or through other dancers, or other DJs, or even other people that are very into the music. When I felt that [connection] it was, not to be corny, like a revelation of: "Oh, where has this been my entire life growing up in Miami?!" I love Miami. I love the DJs, they're incredible. Although, it is noteworthy to see that the space, the sound, and the lights matter so much. It matters. It matters so much. I try to explain that to some people back home and they're like....

MY: It's crazy how simple what the elements of a good party are, against how rare it is to achieve it. It really doesn't take

much. You get some decent speakers with the right people in a room and a DJ playing music sincerely and that's it. You don't gotta be the most technical person in the world. Just like play some shit that you mean to play. Play it with intention, integrity and with honesty, without any sort of pretense about, "I'm trying to say a certain thing." Just play some shit honestly in front of the right people and that's kind of it. It happens so rarely that you probably only have a handful of memories in your head about nights you're gonna remember pretty well.

MP: Yeah, totally!

MY: Even though there are like a million parties every single night in New York,

MP: It's definitely a lot. Sometimes I'm like, "Oh, maybe I should save my energy for a night that I think will be really special." Then some-

times I'm like, "It's okay to have the nights that aren't that special." Lighting at parties at night matters a lot to me. I don't know why I pay so much attention to lighting now, but day parties, I think, have a more wholesome community feeling. I recently went to Sustain-Release and I was absolutely in shock and kind of almost overwhelmed at how the lighting and the sound were set up. It was insanely immersive to the point where I didn't know if I was tripping, or like on drugs. I'm wondering if lighting is something that you prioritize at your parties or not necessarily.

MY: It's the new frontier for us. We do think about it, but it's a whole other discipline and craft and practice that I'm just like not that experienced then. I'm trying to learn because it's massively important. It's like a huge part of how you want people to enter your space, and for them to be able to forget about the outside world for a while. The music needs to be like, loud, and it needs to feel like a different world. I don't like for there to be windows in the space for you to be aware of what's going on outside. Even at the Tivoli sessions party, we cover all the windows up.

MP: Oh, that's sick!

MY: I tried to make it dark and light the room in a certain way just to be able to suspend reality. You want to feel like you're not thinking about the outside world for a few hours. You want to feel like all that matters is being with the people that you are around.

MP: Yeah, totally. I want to revert back to the spiritual and emotional elements that we're talking about. I was listening to your two part mix on SoundCloud recently, "Give Us the Strength to Love Again." Maybe it's just me, but it seems to stem a bit from a spiritual or emotional element. Can you tell me what inspired you to make this two parts? Or was it just coincidentally two parts?

MY: Thank you for asking about that. It was really difficult to make. I had a very difficult year and had a really, really bad falling out with a really close friend. That mix was the result of an emotional process that I went through; through a big ass friend breakup. So, part one, "Give Us the Strength" was kind of like a plea to find the strength to pull yourself together, to get through it. "To Love Again" is what it feels like to come out on the other side of when you're going through a difficult thing like that. It sounds a little bit cheesy, that was like my healing process and the mix is what that process sounded like. It was definitely a personal mix.

MP: I don't think that's cheesy! That's beautiful. Yeah, I can definitely feel that when I was listening to it. I was actually on my way to school and I was just like, "This feels very emotional even with an outside perspective".

MP: I wanted to ask you a little bit more about scratching. I recently read an interview where you said you got into DJ because of scratching. You said no one wanted to hear and you said you weren't good. Could you ever see yourself trying to do it again or try to master it? Or has that ship sailed?

MY: I don't think so.

MP: (Laughs)

MY: I started DJing when I was in middle school, or maybe even ninth grade. I first got into it with the goal of being like a DMC battle DJ, like a turntablist. Once I started DJing house parties and playing hip hop, r&b, and dancehall, I wasn't doing no crazy tricks, like juggling or scratching. Now I'm playing mostly dance music. The longer that I DJ, the more simple my J style becomes. I try to get out of the way as much as possible. The more confident I am in my selection and letting the records tell the story, the more I try to get out of the way and not do too much. So, I don't really use fader mixers anymore. I prefer a rotary to a fader mixer. You can't scratch without a crossfader. So I'm not doing any scratching at all. It's like it's a lot more simple now. And straightforward.

MP: Do you prefer vinyl? Or do you kind of focus on vinyl more now, compared to other stuff?

MY: I play both. My ideal setup is two turntables, two CDJs, and a

rotary mixer. Vinyl is just fun for me to play. I have a lot of records that I can't find digitally. It's more like: whatever gets the job done. I'm not like a snob about it.

MP: Totally.

MY: I don't buy records on Discogs, so it's fun for me to play vinyl because my entire record collection, at least what I own physically, is a record reflection of where I've been. Every record that I bought, I've physically gone to that place and purchased that record. So, it's a much more personal collection of music than what I could get digitally, which would be just downloading stuff off the internet, like off Bandcamp or BeatPort or whatever. That's kind of the main reason that I like to play records, it's more personal.

MP: I also saw that you worked at a record store. Where did you work? Did you find yourself discovering new music genres while working there that you didn't know about before?

MY: Yeah, 100%. I used to work at Turntable Lab at the original location on Seventh Street in the East Village, then I worked at Blue Sun. Working at Turntable Lab opened up my whole world musically. It's kind of where I started to get into dance music for the first time and really get into record culture. I owe a lot to how I DJ, even being aware of how it happened, and getting a broad view of the DJ scene in New York. At that time, all the DJs were coming through. That's where you went to get gear, that's where you went to get like new dance singles. So, we were exposed to a lot of different types of DJs and different scenes in the city. Working there is definitely a big part of the reason that I think I'm able to play a lot of different styles and make it make sense, or connected, you know?

MP: For sure. How old were you when you worked there?

MY: I started working there when I moved to New York, so 2015? How old was I in 2015... 24... 23?

MP: You were pretty young. How do you organize your music before a set? Or do not at all?

MY: It depends what it is. If it's like... it just... it just depends. Like I'll pull... It depends on a lot! (Laughs)

MY: I might make a folder and just drop a few tracks just to remind myself to have a framework of type shit that I might want to play that night. If I'm playing records, like Tivoli sessions, I'm spending a lot of time thinking about organizing because I'm playing longer sets and also I'm putting a lot more thought into what I want to play. When I pull records, I obviously have to physically have those records with me, so it takes longer for me to like, go through my collection. So it depends on what it is. If I'm playing records, it takes a while.

MP: Yeah, yeah. So do you typically have any pre-set rituals at all?

MY: Nahhh.

MP: When you first started DJing, did you ever get nervous before or during a set?

MY: I still get nervous sometimes. What I've noticed is that I only get nervous before the gigs that I really care about. So, it's not a good sign when I'm not nervous.

MP: Yeah. (Laughs) Are there any certain albums or genres that set you off into a more productive mindset or...?

MY: I don't like to listen to music while I'm working.

MP: Wow, that's so interesting.

MY: I know that's really weird for a DJ, but I believe very much in intentional listening. If I'm doing a task that requires my attention, I don't like to listen to music because I feel like it's kind of disrespectful to the music, you know what I mean? I want to be able to pay attention to what I'm listening to. I also get distracted very easily if I'm listening to something, like it's gonna give me an idea to look up something else, then I'm just not doing what I'm doing anymore. So,



unless it's like some super mindless task, I'm usually not listening to music.

**MP:** Wow. Yeah, that's, that's interesting. I feel like I've never really heard anyone say that they're more productive in silence. That's awesome.

**MP:** I also wanted to ask you a little bit about drumming. How's drumming going for you?

MY: I had to abandon drumming, unfortunately. I miss it a lot. I was taking drum lessons for a little while and I had rehearsal space that I was sharing with some other professional musicians, but we had to give up that space during the pandemic because we still owed rent on it and we weren't allowed to use it. So, we were just like, yeah... It's hard to find space to play drums in New York.

**MP:** Yeah, I can imagine.

MY: I miss drumming a lot, but I haven't been able to play. I'm also just a little too busy.

**MP:** I also want to ask if you're reading anything at the moment.

MY: I am reading! I have a really bad habit of starting mad books simultaneously, so it takes me forever to read stuff. So, right now I'm reading three books. I don't want to fuck the title up on one of them, give me second.

MY: This is probably a pretty good cross section. (Laughs) I'm reading Greg Tate's "Flyboy in the Buttermilk." He's like a music critic and cultural writer. I'm like a quarter way through this one. I'm also reading Al-Ghazali's "Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship" . This one is pretty cool. I'm like, almost done with this book. Al-Ghazali is a pretty famous medieval Islamic scholar and philosopher. I'm also reading Karl Marx's "Capital." I'm actually following the David Harvey NYU lectures on this because I am not arrogant enough to think that I could go through this on my own. David Harvey is like one of the foremost experts on Marx and Marxist thought so he has a free online series where he teaches the book and gives lectures on it.

**MP:** So you just watch the lectures or you're like in a class?

MY: I'm not in a class. They're just, they're just on YouTube. I've been reading this for a very long time, it's dense as hell.

**MP:** It's huge. (Laughs) Is that the biggest book you've started or read? Or are they typically that dense?

MY: No, I kind of like reading dense academic shit.

**MP:** Yeah, that's awesome. That's really interesting. I feel like it's interesting that you're reading three books at the same time because, for me, just reading one dense book I'm like, "Okay, I need to really..."

MY: I don't like that about myself. I wish I could be more focused. I know, probably everybody does. My mind is all over the place, I'm trying a million things at once. I really would like to just focus on one thing at a time, but...

**MP:** You feel like your brain just wants you to take on a bunch of different tasks at the same time? Not necessarily in a negative way, but more so always wanting to do more, in some sense.

MY: Yeah, and I'm trying to resist that impulse.

**MP:** Really..?

MY: I don't think it's healthy.

**MP:** I feel you. I feel like I also have that problem where you kind of start a bunch of different tasks and it can almost feel a little overwhelming.

MY: Switching gears takes a lot of energy, you know? I feel like we could be a lot more efficient and happier with the things that we do if we were more focused on one thing at a time. Throwing parties is

one part of that. I'm trying to focus on or think about getting a flyer done and figure out all the logistics of throwing the party, while at the same time trying to think about how to DJ and what to play, and also having to invite people and then you have to book staff and then finally promote it. It's a million different things. Definitely gotta wear a lot of hats where sometimes I just want to think about DJing and the music that I'm gonna play, but also got to think about audio production and...

**MP:** ...actually putting together the party.

MY: Yeah!

**MP:** Which I'm sure can be a little stressful, but I'm sure that you have a lot of people that help you out, unless...

MY: Not enough. (Laughs)

**MP:** (Laughs) It's evident that your stuff is intentional. Sometimes it's better to do something on your own or maybe with not too much help just so that it comes out exactly how you want it to. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Virginia club culture versus New York club culture. Do you feel like there's any significant differences between the two?

MY: I'm from Northern Virginia, like the DC area. I wasn't really deep in the club scene when I left. So, I can't even really tell you that much about what's going on in DC in nightlife even right now. I have a few homies that are down there that are doing cool stuff. When I was there, a lot of the stuff that I was exposed to was bottle service, top 40 club shit. I DJed a few of those things, but it's definitely not my lane, like at all. I used to do a lot more like commercial gigs than I do now. Early on, especially in Virginia, I was DJing, like, hookah lounges and shit like that.

**MP:** How old were you when you're doing that? Were you a lot younger?

MY: Yeah, like 21/22 years old?

**MP:** I feel like that's where a lot of people start off though, doing commercial stuff

MY: Yeah, definitely.

**MP:** So, what would be your favorite space to play in New York?

MY: Like actual location, or...?

**MP:** You can tell me both.

MY: The party I do with Mel, really is my ideal situation. I just want to keep improving that experience. The room itself isn't like the most perfect room in the world, but just to have a blank canvas, to be able to do whatever you want is the most special thing in the world to me. That's all I really care about. From setting up the booth, building a DJ booth, putting together the setup, figuring out where I want that, or what mixer or isolator I want to use, how it sits, what angle it sits at, designing the acoustics of the room, the sound system, obviously, thinking about what lights to put in it, every detail, everything we get to pick and decide. So, by definition, it's my favorite space because we get to do everything.

**MP:** Is that your ideal dream venue?

MY: Again, the actual space itself isn't like the best club in the world. I feel really grateful to have the opportunity to be doing these parties. It means it means a lot to me. Mel and I pour a lot of ourselves into this party, you know?

**MP:** How long have you been doing these parties?

MY: Tivoli Sessions started in Summer 2021. So we did season one that summer, which was four parties. Our goal was for just every party to be an improvement of the last one, and I think we accomplished that pretty well. The first one was cool, the homies pulled up. But like, you know, there was obviously a lot to figure out and learn from. For example, how to arrange the space and who to hit up, or how to





promote it or how to treat the room acoustically so it'll sound better and treat the system differently. So, the second party was a little bit better, the third one was mad fun, and the fourth one was amazing. So, now we're starting Season Two this Saturday.

**MP: Are they done by season? Like every season you're gonna do parties?**

MY: I don't know. We're gonna see how it goes (Laughs). Right now, we're focused on Season Two which will be another four parties that we're doing.

**MP: That's so exciting. Honestly, that's really, really awesome. I'm super excited to come. When you played the Public Records Garden, I was really impressed and I honestly had so much fun at that set. It was a very, again, wholesome time and everyone was in a really elated mood. Also, the tracks you guys played were really awesome. I was really dancing for a minute, I was in my zone and my friends were like, "Alright!" Do you have a specific favorite DJ that you enjoy seeing play live or anyone that maybe inspires you or inspired you in any way?**

MY: There are a few. It's funny, like people ask me this question and it always like...

**MP: I mean, it could switch up you know, like...**

MY: All my favorite DJs are for real, just my homies. I know that sounds whatever, but I really mean that. My homie Ivan Monegro, who really put me on to a lot of dance music, records, record culture, who taught me how to dig and shit like that, is an incredible DJ. The homie Paul Nickerson, who does Dope Jams, is also super incredible. I'm very inspired by DJ Monchan (Toshi) from A-1 records, who now moved to Japan. He did the Cedar Room parties and has the Daily-session label, which has underground house and disco stuff. The Cedar Room parties were also a big inspiration for the Tivoli Sessions parties too. It's that tradition of underground, loft-style dance music parties, where you try to curate every aspect of the party or present a special musical experience. That's my shit.

**MP: Yeah, I think it's important to get inspiration especially from your friends. I feel like that's more special, being inspired by your own friends compared to sometimes even bigger DJs.**

MY: I mean, maybe I'm like, a little jaded at this point. I've been DJing professionally for almost eight years now and I've been into DJing for a very long time, for over half of my life now. So, I've seen a lot of shit, I'm not really like, moved by much. (Laughs) Everything from like, big festival DJs to you know...

**MP: Yeah, yeah. I can see that. I've definitely heard some, not horror stories, but instances where people that mean a lot to others and inspire them, ended up meeting them and it wasn't all that they made it out to be. I think that happens with anyone that you look up to. You cant always have that expectation..**

**MP: You said one of your friends taught you a lot about digging for records. Do you guys often have times where you and your friends just sit around and listen to records together or not really?**

MY: Ivan is probably the only person that I'll sit down and exchange music with, which is really like him playing records for me. Besides that, not so much. I don't really have that many like... [friends who enjoy it]. Maybe it's like a good thing. Sometimes, I feel like I be a little bit too in my own world and not aware enough about my peers in the DJ scene in New York. For the most part, I go to record stores and I be in the crib... that's kind of like my exposure to music. It's not really exchanging music that often like with other people, who are also DJs.

**MP: Yeah I see. Lately, I get really excited to show my friends things like, "Oh, this record I got is so good!" I'll play it and they didn't really ask, & I'm just like, "I'm doing this now!"**

**MP: You can gatekeep if you want... but what are some of your favorite record stores to go to?**

MY: Oh no! I don't mind. I go to A1 records a lot. I go to Blue Sun a lot, obviously. I used to work there. Record City, actually around the

corner from where I live, is super good for reggae. I go everywhere. Are we talking about just New York?

**MP: Anywhere. Anywhere that really stands out to you.**

MY: So, in New York I hit a lot of spots. Human Head, A1, Acade-my, Ergot Records, Blue Sun... what am I missing? There's so many. Record City, Mixtape Shop, where I get mad shit from, Second Hand Records. That's a lot of them. What am I missing... In other cities, People's Records in Detroit, one my favorite record stores and Hard-wax in Berlin. Super dope. Palace Vinyl in London. Incredible record store.

**MP: Is it curated towards just dance music? Or is it every genre?**

MY: Palace Vinyl is very, very curated. & that's kind of what I look for in a record store. One of the reasons that I really enjoyed working at Blue Sun was that the selection there was not huge. Where a place like A1 has a lot of stuff, and I end up spending more time at smaller record stores than I do at big record stores that have a lot of shit. If I walk in and there's way too much to look through, I'm probably gonna dig through, like, a couple of stacks; whereas a spot like Blue Sun, it's the perfect size for me to be motivated to look through everything that they got there at once.

**MP: When does a record, specifically one that you haven't listened to or don't even know the artist, stand out to you? Is it the art? Is it the name? Is there anything that calls out to you when you're looking for music?**

MY: It could be anything. It could be the title of the record or what the label looks like. I might recognize the label that it's on, but not the track or the artist. It could just be the artwork on the cover. And It could just be my mood. Also, sometimes, record stores like to write notes on the sleeve too. A lot of DJs are too snobby to admit that they are actually guided by that, but it is effective. If they write something like, "This has a good break on it" or whatever, I'm more likely to want to check it out.

**MP: Yeah, for sure. When I go look for records, I like to pay attention to the year it came out. Or sometimes I think, "What genre am I going to look for today?" Like you said, when there's too many records, there's definitely an overwhelming aspect to it. I also read that you like switching it up between genres. Are there any music genre combinations that you feel like haven't been explored enough or that you want to explore more of?**

MY: By me or just in general?

**MP: Any music genre that you feel like hasnt been explored enough lately. And any that you want to explore more of.**

MY: In general, no. (Laughs) I feel like everything has been done. No ideas are original, and that's cool. It's not a bad thing. I would never like to be arrogant enough to proclaim that I'm gonna like, try a new combination of something that nobody has ever done before. Just because you don't know about it doesn't mean that somebody else didn't already do it, you just haven't come across it yet, you know? So everything has probably been done, I'm just not aware of everything in the world. And It's my goal to expose myself to more shit so I can keep learning and keep digging. Continuing to expand my knowledge and my taste. In that spirit, yeah, I want to keep trying [playing] different shit. I feel like my taste keeps getting darker and moodier the longer I DJ.

**MP: What kind of genre would you say?**

MY: I'm not really guided by tempo or genre that much, but it has more to do with... I don't know how to describe it, but the palette of the track. So, if it's disco, then I'll lean towards more soulful or like maybe even somber disco or shit with minor keys. If it's like techno it's going to be techno with the funkier or soulful side. With house music, I tend not to play super happy house music. You know? It doesn't matter what it is like, from jungle to hip hop, r&b to disco, drum and bass, like, whatever, you know.

**MP: I'm definitely gonna keep my ear out for that now! Would you say**

**you play the more somber stuff out? Or mainly in mixes?**

MY: When I'm playing out, I like to play some shit with some atmosphere, stuff that has a little edge to it. The happier that it sounds, the less likely I am [to play it]. Even if it's like a happy subject. I feel like it's easier to get into a spiritual or emotional bag if there's like a hint of sadness to the arrangement or melody or keys.

**MP: Yeah, I feel like people do enjoy listening to sad music. It kinda gives them that emotional element throughout the day, even when it's walking through the city or on the train. People like feeling something.**

MY: Yeah, you like a little bit of drama! It could be booty bass music, but if it's got some dramatic strings to it that'll give it that edge, that's when you get that feeling you know?

**MP: Are there any upcoming DJ sets that you're looking forward to? Even between friends or bigger DJs?**

MY: Definitely the next Tivoli Sessions, it is what i'm most excited for. I'm DJing Bossa Nova for the first time on a Tuesday with the homies Ned Nice and Ivan Monegro, who are both incredible DJs.

I'm pretty excited for that because I don't get to play techno out that often. I don't know if we're gonna play all techno but just to be in a spot where people are a little bit more open to that. I feel like people don't really know that I can get into that bag!

**MP: I know that Bossa, since it just reopened, has been pretty packed out. I was actually there last night for TYGAPAW and the line was, like, insane. (Laughs).**

**MP: This might be coincidental as well, but I noticed that you include DJ Sprinkles a couple of times in your mixes. They're coming to Public Records soon, do you think you're gonna be going into that?**

MY: Yeah. I really hope that I can make it to that party. I'm a big fan.

**MP: Last question. Where do you go to find silence in the city?**

MY: I'll be in the crib. I'll be inside. On my couch.

**MP: Awesome.**







DISRUPTED  
GROUNDS

PHOTO HENRY JOHNSON

STYLING LUCIA FOSHEE

TALENT ERIS ASSAEL



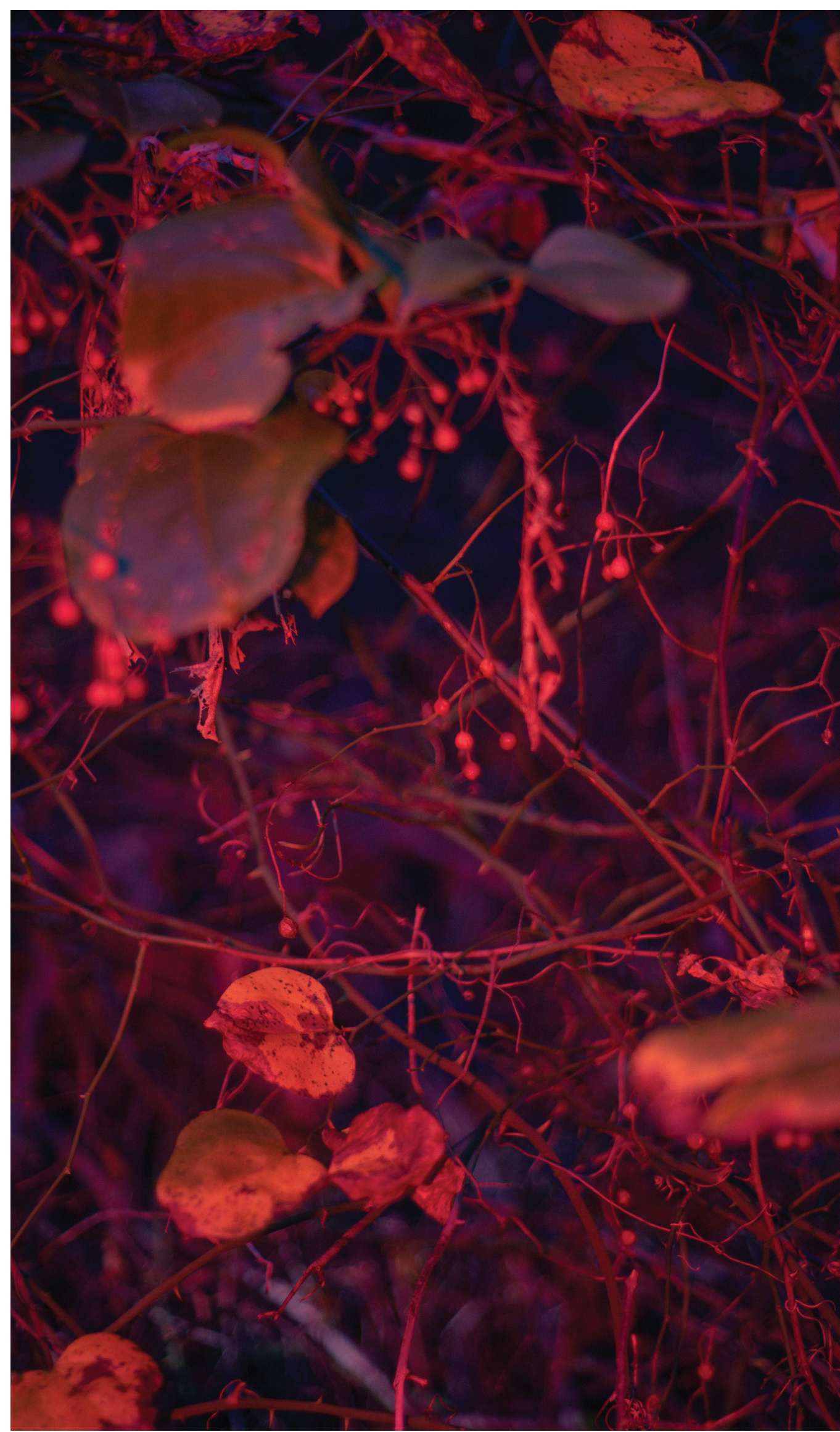
vest LIGHT SOURCE  
skirt LIGHT SOURCE  
shirt MARNI  
shoes WEATHERPROOF





hank LIGHT SOURCE  
arm laces LIGHT SOURCE  
goggles CLIMATE  
pants ECOSYSTEM WORKWEAR  
shoes MODEL'S OWN





jacket LIGHT SOURCE  
dress skirt KENZIE  
shoes VIVIENNE WESTWOODD  
accessories MODEL'S OWN

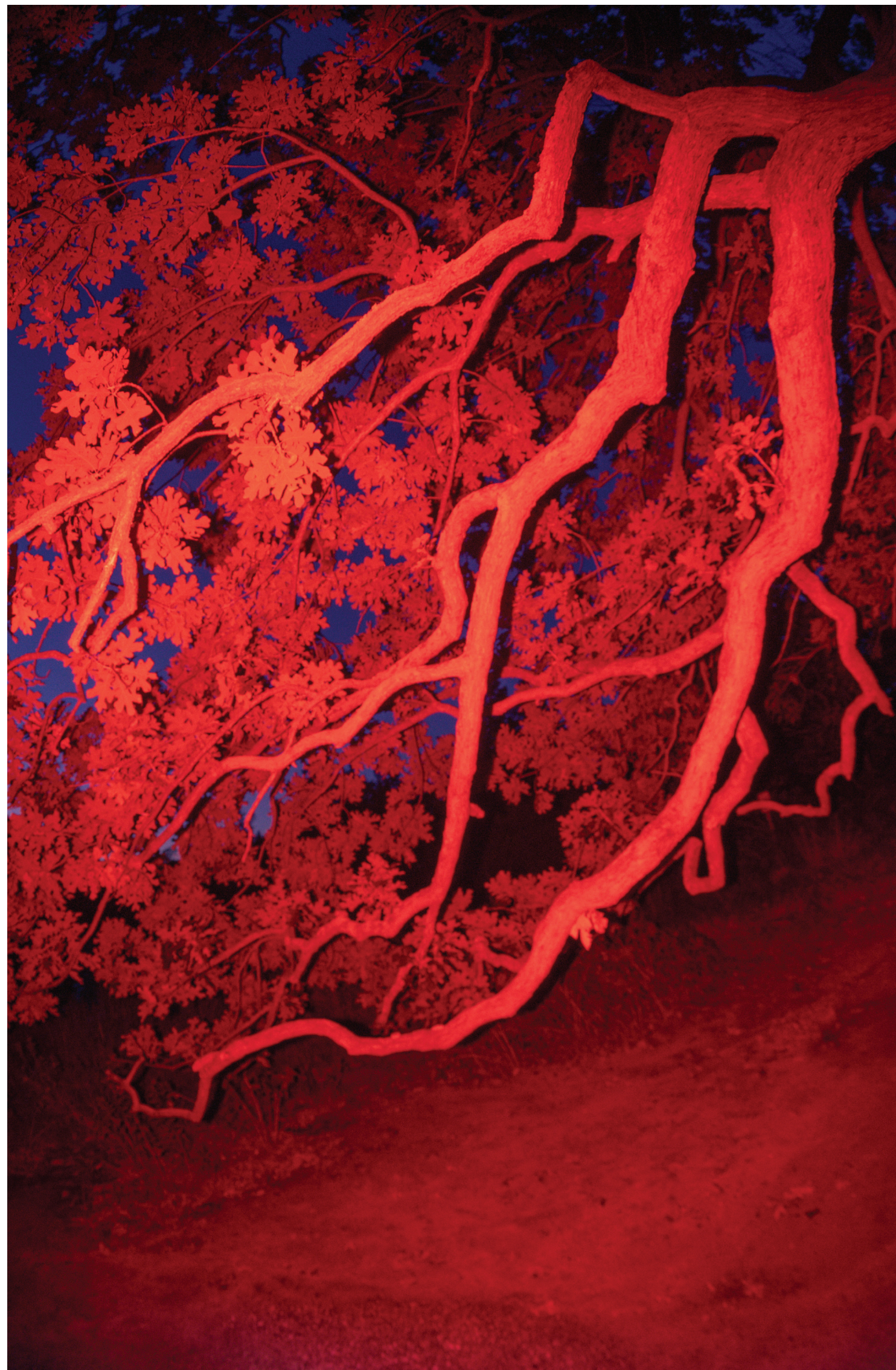








dress ECKHAUS LATTA  
shrug capelet LIGHT SOURCE  
shoes NORTHFACE





# CHRIS FROM PAULIE GEE'S WITH RJ FROM BEST PIZZA

RJ: when did you start doing pizza

Chris: when i graduated highschool, me and my mother started beefin and she took the battery outta my car.. So I lost the job at the sushi spot. After a stint at a big national coffee shop I bought a one way ticket to rural Ireland. Like if Ireland had an Iowa equivalent this would be it. I was gonna just live and work with my cousins there. No real plan. Wanted to get into farming but it's really hard. The only job i could find was this Albanian ran fish-n-chips shop that served pizza too. The pizza was shit.. They would only make 15 doughs a day. They were selling like a bunch of shit like gyros, chicken and burgers

RJ: is this like ireland's hood chicken pizza spot that just has everything?

Chris: Nah this is like a gas station in Louisiana that had a section that sold food. I mean it was great.. He paid me 5 euro an hour and a pack of cigarettes was like 13 euros?? It worked out...but while I was in Ireland I began to get more into pizza after seeing some solid pizza spots in the country.. My Homie Quinn was finishing college. He had no plan on what he was gonna do. We said fuck it let's go to italy.

RJ: woah thats fuckin nuts.. Just like that?

Chris: Jus like that.

RJ: did you just walk into any random shop and ask for a job?

Chris: na so Quinn was looking up art schools, I was thinking about learning how to make bread. Turns out finding a bakery who would take on someone was hard as shit and Pizza was easier to find someone who would teach me. I saw that there was mad pizza courses in Napoli and it sounded corny but fuck it how corny could it be? I found one and started emailing them. said I'm not going to pay what you're asking but ill give you this much money... my thought was if they say no i can just go to any pizza shop and say youll work for free. And they said yes. The spot was super sick and I'm not gonna say which one because i don't want to fuck their money up.

RJ: wow really ballsy

Chris: yeah super ballsy but it worked. It was a 2 month program where I would get there at 6 am everyday and do everything that you would in a pizza shop like make dough and prep and learn techniques n shit.. but it was also a real pizzeria where I basically helped during service with minor shit. I loved the guy who taught me neapolitan pizza. We still talk.

RJ: so you get back to nyc

Chris: Albany first. Worked in a kitchen kitchen saved bread then i moved and I get a job at Keste in the financial district because the guy who opened that spot trained under my guy. and they just told me that I dont know how to make pizza and get the fuck out. So that was sick.

RJ: what the fuck?

Chris: yeah it was some other shit... then i worked for this unnamed pizza restaurant in Harlem for this Father/daughter team. Thats a red fucking flag.. A father/daughter team. The daughter hired me to basically be the new head chef and was like change the menu - go crazy ahahaah.. And then the prep cooks wouldn't listen to any notes I would say and fuck up the dough and I had to constantly fix shit. The father would come in and justify all the shitness that was going on and look at me crazy. I was thinking of quitting then one day he comes in with a new guy and says to me "i thought i fired you" i was like "you didnt call me" and then grabs my apron and pull me out. Im like this is fucking bullshit. I was with my girlfriend at the time and she was like "i was at paulie gee's the other night." and she said that they could probably use help.

RJ: "and this is where it begins"

Chris: then i see Paulies ad on craigslist "Popular Greenpoint pizzeria looking to hire apprentices" and I was like yeah i know what the fuck im doing in the email. I came in for the interview and Paulie just said one of my cooks just called out want to work the night? And then from there the rest is history. I never took a day off. I tried to come up with pizzas. Befriended everyone i worked with and worked straight through the pandemic, got tapped on to do some shit I ain't ever think i'd do, did it and came back home. Now I don't know what i'm gonna do but imma do it.

RJ- truly an inspiration.. Thank You.

# How Guwop Stole Christmas

## [FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE CHRISTMAS]

Alriiiggghhttttt... So, the story actually begins five days before Christmas, and it begins with my debit card being used for fraud. Somehow, someone took my card information and bought like \$170 worth of shit on Amazon. So, I obviously had to cancel my card and wait for them to send a new one. Bank of America enjoys being slow as shit, so by the time I left for the holidays, I wouldn't even have it. Luckily, through the app, I was able to get a temporary card hooked to Apple Pay/TAP function. God Bless. Sort of. The relief in my mind was like, *"Ehhh... I should be fine."*

My journey originated with plans to meet up with some family halfway through the country in Detroit & Indianapolis, setting out on Christmas Eve. I waited a really long time to get a flight, so I got a pretty bad SOUTHWEST AIRLINES ticket that left at like 7AM from LaGuardia with a layover in Atlanta. 7AM is pretty early, and I thought that TSA would be a bitch that day, so I decided to just say Yolo All Nighter whateverrrr. I had a really busy week with work and Christmas shopping, so I didn't really have that much time to do laundry either. I'm packing dirty clothes and clean clothes because I'm kinda thinking I can just do laundry when I arrive, which will also make me have an excuse as something to do with too much family time. I also only packed 2 pairs of socks because all my other ones were dirty and I could just buy new socks when I landed. No biggie, right?

## [CHRISTMAS EVE MORNING]

Let's start it off with my Lyft to LaGuardia at around 5 which got me there in 20 minutes. Turns out that TSA was a joke too, and I was pleasantly surprised with no line to get through. Yippee! Since there was no wait at all, I had time to eat breakfast, and that morning I decided to go with the gluttonous indulgence of Wendy's. Mmmmmm... Wendy's Breakfast. Before you shit on me for eating Wendy's breakfast at LaGuardia Terminal B, let it be known that I've sampled the breakfast selections of almost every single establishment in that terminal near that stupid, loud ass fountain they built for no reason. I've had Zaro's, Dunkin', even Junior's. So this time, I wanted to try Wendy's breakfast. Overall, it was okay and Zaro's is still the resounding king of LGA Terminal B Breakfast.

I ended up sleeping on the entire flight to Atlanta. I landed around 10ish and had a few hours to kill before my next flight that afternoon. At that point I just decided to wait at my next gate. I wasn't hungry and I wanted to get more sleep on my next flight. You know, if you're lucky, your local airport has Eames Tandem Sling chairs as their seating selection. Nope! Not in Atlanta, because that shit was fucking ass, basically all plastic.

I'm sitting there, in a barely awake state of mind just yearning to get on this next flight to sleep, when I get a text that delays my flight by nearly four hours. Oh brother, that sucks. Whatever, that's a couple more hours, not the total end of the world. 8 minutes roll by... new text, but not from anyone I want to hear from. It's from "64553." A new delay for the next evening, which is Christmas day. Christmas Day at 7:45PM? EXCUSE ME?

The whole entire gate is moaning and groaning. I'm texting my family like, *"What do I do... do I just fly back and I can celebrate Christmas later with y'all or what."* After a long discussion of flying into Chicago, Columbus, or even Nashville, or having me rent a car, they decided that it wasn't worth it, and that I should just go back to New York.. I got in the customer service line and waited for 2 hours to

rebook my flight back to LGA that night. While in line, other people have started talking about teaming up to rent cars to split the cost... I almost joined a group of 2 other mid 40's dudes to drive, but I pussied out and didn't feel like getting sex trafficked.

## [CHRISTMAS EVE AFTERNOON]

It's around 2PM at this point and I've probably slept for maybe one and half hours so I'm running on E now. After spending the day idling at the ATL airport institution that is the Truly Atlanta Truly Bar and eating more fast food, I received another sext letting me know that after a cancellation, my new flight wouldn't be taking off until 11PM on Christmas day. Holy shit.

At this point, it dawns on me that I'm actually gonna be stuck in Atlanta for my Christmas, whether it be on the floor of Con-course C or an airport hotel. I wait in line for about an hour and I get a \$200 flight voucher and a night at the nearby Holiday Inn Express. Eventually, I'm dropped off at the hotel and all I want is to lay down. I notice a small counter with food, mainly chips, sweets, candy etc... and a freezer with frozen meals and individually wrapped Hot Pockets?

I get to my room and realize that I practically have over 24 hours of freetime, and I kinda thought it would be funny to go to Magic City. Magic City is pretty much the nation's most well known, premiere strip club. Oftentimes, Atlanta based rappers will throw it into a song. I mean that's how I figured out what it was. (And if you didn't find out because of that, you're lying) I decide to put a poll on Instagram, and promise that if I get 100 yesses, I'll actually go to the club. At this point, I was fully committing to the bit and making the most of my time here. And by *"making the most of my time here,"* I mean going to a strip club. On Christmas Eve. The yasses are flowing and the no's are being thrown in the mix every so often. (BTW, if you said "no," I remember, and you are a loser in my eyes now.) Eventually, I kinda just said fuck it, and decided I would go at 10PM. I showered, got ready, and called a car.

## [CHRISTMAS EVE EVENING]

I get in a red Toyota Corolla, picked up by a nice man named Akbar. He accepts my ride on his phone and he notices the destination: Magic City. He does a double take at his phone and looks through his rearview mirror at me. Yaaasss, bitch I said Magic City!

At this point, I'm extremely nervous. At 22 years of age, I've never been to a strip club before, I'm **STONE COLD SOBER**, and I have no idea what to expect. Well, I'm expecting to see fat BBL asses and huge boobs. But in regards to the ambiance, am I gonna be the only one there? Who else is gonna be at Magic City on Christmas Eve? Degenerates and... *me*. I'm listening to Future on my Airpods, and I'm starting to get so nervous that I'm getting nauseous. I finally arrive, with a lot of cars in the parking lot, and 2 huge bouncers at the front. I give them my New York ID and they say: "\$20 cover." One of the security guys also mentions he was born in Brooklyn and noticed that I live off of the Hewes JM and he was like, *"Abbb... South Williamsburg, right under the bridge, that's dope man."* Honestly, it made me feel a bit more comfortable. We chit chat a little bit and then I mention how I have to use the ATM, and he escorts me inside. Well, I'm inside Magic City on Christmas Eve. Time to live it up babeeyyyy! Oh wait... waiiiit a minute. Not too fast bitch. This ATM doesn't have the TAP function. And come to realize, I don't know why I thought it would have it either. I still insert my old card in, hoping that it could



work, which it obviously didn't. I had about 30 seconds to glimpse around the world famous strip club before I had to leave. It was smaller than I expected, with an entire section just for the kitchen, and... was quite empty. There was one dancer, with maybe 4 people around her, all obviously her friends, and some people in corners by themselves. There were also some people with little gift bags and a couple of friends too. I can only imagine that some of the strippers were having a little Christmas gift exchange with either other strippers and/or their friends, which is honestly quite cute. At this point I'm bugging out and I ask the New York security guard where an ATM is that has the TAP function. He replies with, *"No worries. You can try the Greyhound Bus stop across the street, they have an ATM but I don't know if it can TAP, might as well try though."*

Look, I've taken a Greyhound in my life, but this station was different. I mean it's literally across the street from Magic City. I walk into this Greyhound station looking like a white guy that's gonna shoot it up, and I'm getting looks from almost everyone in the station. I'm trying to get out of here as quickly as possible to not create a scene, or to prevent someone from trying to talk to me. I circle around the entire station before I realize that the ATM was at the entrance and I completely missed it. It obviously didn't have the tap function.

It's around 10:30 now, and I'm absolutely not giving up. I spent like \$40 to Lyft out here from my airport hotel and I NEED to get inside Magic City for real. I open Google Maps to try to find a local Bank of America or any ATM nearby. Glory to GOD, there's a Bank of America about a 0.7 mile walk from Magic City. Well, might as well try right? It could be like BofA's in NYC where the ATM's are open 24/7, or where you can insert your card to open up an ATM room. I'm walking in 'what feels like' 10 degree weather, praying to god that this ATM has a 24/7 ATM room, of course it doesn't.

At that point, my adrenaline and commitment are diminishing. Did I really just Lyft to Magic City for nothing?! Yeah, pretty much. I'm extremely disappointed in myself. I know. I baited on Instagram and made it look like I went to Magic City on Christmas Eve. Yeah, caught red handed, suck my dick alright. But look, the effort was there, and I TECHNICALLY stepped foot inside.

I was talking to one of my friends, Julia, earlier in the day about stuff to do in Atlanta and she mentioned that in a past visit, she went to Clermont Lounge, another strip club. At this point, I'm kinda just like: fuck it. I took a Lyft to Clermont Lounge, and after doing some research, I saw that Clermont Lounge is connected to Clermont Hotel. Okay, they HAVE to have a TAP ATM, it's a 4 star hotel. Well I arrive, and 2 guys at the front door immediately say "bars closed." Okay, damn didn't even get me a chance to ask... Do I really give off the *"trying to go to the strip club on christmas eve"* look? Fuck.

Upon doing more research on the Clermont Lounge, I discovered on their Wikipedia page that they do not accept credit cards and they are *"best known for featuring some dancers who do not meet the traditional physical standards for strippers, the most famous of whom is Blondie, noted for her ability to crush empty beer cans between her breasts as well as for her poetry."* God; I wish I saw Blondie do that on Christmas Eve. That would've been awesome.

I immediately am crushed. I'm 0/2 on trying to get into strip clubs. I'm devastated. I saw maybe 2 seconds of boobs and butts. I can say I tried though, right? Well, at this point, I just wanted to go to a dive bar around the area. I'm outside, still in 10 degree weather typing in "bar" on Google Maps on Christmas Eve. Eventually, I see a handful that could be open on the same street as the Clermont Lounge so I decide to walk over. There's one that seems to be popping, and looks quite divey from the outside, so I quickly decide that's the one that I want to go to. It's called Friends on Ponce. There's a sign on the boulevard that says "neighborhood bar." Well, I can't beat that. I'm sold! I get to the entrance, and there's a single guy smoking a cigarette outside and the music is pumping. It's definitely top hits, but I don't mind at all. I enter and it's genuinely packed, and I'm in line for security to do a full pat down. And I mean full pat down. One of the workers mentions it's a \$5 cover, and of course, I go to the ATM that's provided and no TAP. I leave, desperately wishing I had just \$5 in cash, just to spend more money at the bar and get A BEER. I leave, and go to a smoke shop in the same minimall to convince them to give me cash back on a purchase. The guy is wearing a black shiesty and black sunglasses, blasting March Madness in his establishment. Nope, couldn't get cash. Now, I'm getting really desperate. I walk half a mile to a Circle K / Shell to buy a pack of Parliaments and get cash back. I

do so, and no cash back. I gave up.

Upon doing more research on *Friends on Ponce*, it appears to be the neighborhood gay bar. I had naturally stumbled upon the gay bar. Looking back, there were ONLY men in this bar and I legitimately cannot stop laughing while writing this. Of course the gay bar would be packed on Christmas Eve in the South. I think If I did have \$5 and got in, I would definitely be queerbaiting like a bitch, but also I think some dude would probably have come up to me and told me it was a gay bar, so I probably could have made some friends that night. Just friends. Not gay sex friends. You wish I had gay sex.

Anyways, it's about 1AM and I walk back to the Clermont Hotel and smoke 2 Parliaments in the cold while I wait for my Lyft to take me back to my airport hotel. I get back and realize I'm quite hungry, and I remember that the front desk had that snack section area. I go back downstairs and pull out two bags of Miss Vickie's Jalapeno chips and a bag of M&M's. I go to the counter and I ask if the Holiday Inn Express accepts Apple Pay, and of course, it doesn't. Now I feel like I'm just being mocked at this point. I sadly put the chips back and with a rumbling stomach, I head back to my room. By the way, I still have only slept on that plane ride from LGA to ATL so I'm feeling pretty delusional. I decide to try and order McDonald's for some reason at 2 in the morning on Christmas Day, thinking, *"It's McDonalds, so they have to be open."* Well, they weren't. I waited about an hour thinking I could get 2 double cheeseburgers and a large fry, but I had to call and cancel. It's alright. In retrospect, I didn't need those extra calories.

### [CHRISTMAS MORNING]

Although waking up on Christmas Day in a Holiday Inn Express could be a bit demoralizing, I was fairly confident today. I thought my little endeavor in Atlanta would be over, and I could now say that I had truly lived it up for my Christmas Eve. I got a free coffee, took a quick shuttle ride back to the airport, went through TSA, and I realized that my Southwest app had gotten no update for my flight back to LGA and I had gotten no new email or text regarding anything. I mentally groan, and I head back to the shortest customer service line. Another 2 hours in line, let's fucking go! I give them my information and she mentions to me, "I'm sorry Patrick, but you're not booked for any flight today, and that flight to LGA is full." My jaw drops. I reply, "Are you kidding me right now? The worker yesterday said I would get an email or whatever, and I got nothing. He told me that the printer was 'broken' and that he couldn't print a boarding pass." She apologizes and tries to work her magic. At this point, I'm debating going anywhere. Like literally anywhere. I ask her, "Okay, well if that flight's full, how about going to Fort Lauderdale or Miami? Or LAX or Long Beach or Burbank or Ontario or Orange County? Also, could I get a meal voucher, please?!"

She tells me that all of those California flights are either fully booked or canceled, but she mentions that there is a flight to Fort Lauderdale in a couple hours that I could get on. At this point, I'm so over everything, and I have a couple of friends in Miami that have a place for me to stay, so I said, "Fuck it. Fort Lauderdale."

Miami bitch! I'm going to Miami! A couple hours pass and after more delays and more airport food, and it's finally around 7. One of the workers for the flight mentions that they are ready for the flight, but are waiting for one final flight officer to arrive, and they cannot leave without them. They mention that the flight officer has two hours to arrive, and if not, then "another solution will be available." I had hope at this point, for some reason. I thought, "Okay well, it's Christmas Day. And I feel like whoever's getting called in has to be getting like, Holiday pay PLUS overtime, so like, could be worth it?"

9 o'clock runs around. No new worker is to be seen. Flight. Canceled. Wow! At this point, the fun and games of the "bit" are starting to wear off. I'm waiting in line again at customer service, with this time my game plan being to go to any airport in the state of California or New York, or to an airport in Southern Florida. Two hours go by, and I'm 5th in line from the front. Thank god! Until, the clerk says, "I regret to inform you, but I must say that it is my time to go. I have tried to get another supervisor to swap my position, but no one has answered. Your best bet is to get into another line."

I audibly yelp, "WHAT!?" Everyone in the front is furious, including me. I'm supposed to wait in another line for 2 hours to get any new information for rebooking. I'm starting to lose my mind at this point, as I go up and down the C concourse trying to locate the shortest line. I spot one at a farther gate, but reluctantly go to the front



ISSUED BY AND VALID ONLY ON  
**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**

**ETKT REFUND RECEIPT**  
**NOT VALID FOR TRANSPORTATION**

ISSUED BY AND VALID ONLY ON  
**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**  
AGENT: 001188  
DATE: 26DEC22

TICKET NUMBER [REDACTED]

CUSTOMER NAME NO/PATRICK

TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED \$447.79

\$447.79

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**

TYPE: Lunch  
CONFIRMATION: [REDACTED]  
VOUCHER NO: [REDACTED]  
EXP DATE: 25MAR23  
FLIGHT: 2396  
STATION: ATL  
AUTHORIZED: J  
REASON: Flight Cancelled

ROUTE: ATL MDW  
POSITION: WNBOOCES  
EACH: \$10

DATE: 26DEC22  
ISSUED: E306322

**Meal Voucher**  
ISSUED DATE: 26DEC22

To vendor: Only actual expense authorized not to exceed amount shown above. Additional charges incurred must be collected from the customer. Submit this coupon with statement to local Southwest Station Manager.

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**  
PATRICK NO

Flight **2335** Gate C6

ec 25, 2022

Confirmation Number: 259JWX

FROM TO FLT# TIME FB BOARDING  
ATL FLL 2335 05:10PM R 05:51PM

**Wanna Get Away(R)**

Boarding Group **A**  
Position **51**

WN6618D 256JWX

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**  
OPEN SEATING 51

**NO/PATRICK**  
Conf. 259JWX  
Dec 26, 2022  
2335 ATLANTA  
to FORT LAUDERDALE

Boarding Group **A**  
Position **51**

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**  
PATRICK NO

Flight **2891** Gate D2

Dec 26, 2022

Confirmation Number: 259JWX

FROM TO FLT# TIME FB BOARDING  
DCA LGA 2891 08:15PM R 07:45PM

**Wanna Get Away(R)**

Boarding Group **B**  
Position **50**

259JWX

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**  
OPEN SEATING 50

**NO/PATRICK**  
Conf. 259JWX  
Dec 26, 2022  
2891 WASHINGTON  
to NEW YORK LAGU

Boarding Group **B**  
Position **50**

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**  
PATRICK NO

Flight **717** Gate C17

Dec 26, 2022

Confirmation Number: 259JWX

FROM TO FLT# TIME FB BOARDING  
ATL DCA 717 08:15AM R 08:15AM

**Wanna Get Away(R)**

Boarding Group **B**  
Position **41**

259JWX

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES**  
OPEN SEATING 41

**NO/PATRICK**  
Conf. 259JWX  
Dec 26, 2022  
717 ATLANTA  
to WASHINGTON R

Boarding Group **B**  
Position **41**

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**

VOUCHER NO: [REDACTED]  
CONFIRMATION: [REDACTED]

ISSUE DATE: 26DEC22  
EXP DATE: 25DEC23

BALANCE: \$200

All travel using this voucher must be completed by expiration date

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®**  
**NO/PATRICK**

VOUCHER NO: [REDACTED]  
CONFIRMATION: [REDACTED]

ISSUE DATE: 26DEC22  
EXP DATE: 25DEC23

BALANCE: \$200

All travel using this voucher must be redeemed at the time reservation funds and status of your Southwest call 1-866-393-2041

PRINTED AT: ATLUND16C BY E345560

**Southwest LUV Voucher**  
ISSUED DATE: 26DEC22

**Southwest LU**

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Entity NGA CC 0101028 TIF 00007  
Acct Type CHK \*\*\*\*\*3662  
Electronic Withdrawal \$150.00  
Available Balance [REDACTED]

Member FDIC  
95-14-2005B 03-2020

99

Chick Fil A #69  
Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta  
International Airport  
Atlanta, GA

1229 Shadya H

Chk 3577 PATRICK  
Dec 26 22 06:34AM

Est 0

**QUICKSHOT BUCKHEAD**  
2631 BUFORD HWY NE  
ATLANTA GA 30324  
404/600-6378

**SALE**

REF#: 00000027

Batch #: 362001 RRN: 834627487

12/28/22 18:05:48

Invoice #: 27

APPR CODE: 01609C

VISA Contactless

\*\*\*\*\*8676

**AMOUNT \$135.23**

APPROVED

AID: A0000000031010  
TVR: 00 00 00 00 00

Thank You  
Please Come Again

CUSTOMER COPY

Dine In  
1 CFA Spicy Bisc 4.69  
1 Bisc BEC 4.36  
1 Hash Rounds 1.71  
AT103242 X002834  
Visa 11.62  
Subtotal 10.76  
Tax 0.86  
Payment 11.62  
Sales Tax 0.86

We would love to hear from you regarding your experience today. Your valuable feedback is crucial in our strive to constantly provide great guest service and assist us in recognizing our associates who provide First Class Service. Please visit MyFoodFeedback.swg.com You will need to provide specific information from this receipt. SURVEY CODE: 4252 6672 3010 6290 3007

**Waffle House 1058**  
3016 PIEDMONT ROAD  
ATLANTA, GA 30305  
404-231-0023

Ticket #580257120 User:Cashier.  
Sales:Cashier

12/28/22 4:13 PM

Item	Description	Qty	Price	Total
Check		1	\$13.75	\$13.75
Subtotal				\$13.75
Inclusive Tax				\$1.08
Tip				\$2.00
Total				\$15.75
=====				
Tender:	VISA			\$15.75
Card Number:	****8676			
SALE APPROVAL				
Auth:	01346C			
Entry Method:	CONTACTLESS			
AID:	A0000000031010			
AC:	3D89519B90D33019			
CVM:	None			
ID:	470858126			
Number of line items purchased:1				



and straightforwardly ask the worker, “How late are you working? I just got kicked out of line at the front of another gate and I don’t want to waste my time.” He replies after a 5 second pause, “15 minutes.” Another layer of fury erupts from this line, due to my question. Ultimately, it saved people some time so I think I did a good deed. I finally found another line where the workers said they’re “gonna be here all night.” Of course it’s the longest line too. God Bless These Workers.

#### [CHRISTMAS EVENING]

I get in the back at 11PM now, preparing for a long night. I shit you not, I get to the front of the line at almost 2AM. I complain to the worker about my previous cancellations and what not, and that I need to be compensated. I receive: 1 \$14 meal voucher, and I lied about not getting a credit voucher the previous day, so I received \$400 in Southwest credit. Alright, woo... \$600 of vouchers, that’s a roundtrip ticket right there, fuck yeah... I guess? For my rebooked flight, I explained my game plan [above] and she told me that every Southwest flight to the state of California or southern Florida is booked today until the 29th. I rebook a flight to LGA that leaves in 15 hours, with a layover in Nashville. I also quickly do some math in my head and realize that if I did sleep at the airport hotel I probably would only sleep for 6ish hours and I didn’t find it worth it. In retrospect, I should’ve taken the airport hotel.

Well, here goes nothing. I’m sleeping overnight at the airport. In my delusional state, I wanted to see if the Delta Lounge, even though I was on Southwest, was open for some reason, to no luck. Luckily this Delta concourse had way better seats than the Southwest one, and of course it would. Not Eames Tandem Sling chairs, but a holy grail for overnight airport sleepers: 5 seats with no armrest.

#### [DECEMBER 26th MORNING]

It’s about 6AM, I’m groggily awake, and I smell like shit because I haven’t showered since before I tried to go to Atlanta’s premiere strip club. I just want to lay down in a bed, shower, or board a goddamn airplane at this point. After eating more Chick Fil A and listening to Brian Eno, It’s about 8AM and I check my flight’s status: delayed already. Knowing some logic about some previous events, I immediately went to a customer service line to change it. This flight isn’t making it. I reluctantly changed it to fly into Washington DC, and my plan was to take a train or bus back to NYC; or I’d have a friend pick me up in Philadelphia or something. That DC flight was already delayed, but I was grasping at straws at this point. I needed to get out of this airport. The worker also gave me \$51 of food vouchers.

I arrive at the DC gate and it’s already delayed, as every other flight that’s scheduled today. I wait 20 minutes, and ask the lady I’m sitting next to why it’s delayed. She replies with, “They’re waiting on a flight attendant to come, then we’ll be good.” Once again, knowing some information about previous events, I stand up and get right back in line. Fuck. This. I’m canceling my shit and getting a car and driving to Miami. I dont give a shit.

I cancel my flight, and I pass the Truly Atlanta Truly Bar once more thinking, “hmmmm... what if I could use my food vouchers for a hard seltzer.” Well, they don’t work for beer obviously, but worth a shot. I almost leave, but I said, “fuck it.” and got a hard seltzer.

There’s another dude at the bar and we start chatting about the situation, and he’s flying Delta, so he hopes that his stuff isn’t messed up. I got 2 Truly drafts, don’t remember what flavor but it was obviously very sweet. We conversed with the bartender as well, and during the discussion, I got a car rental reservation through Avis for a Mustang. I closed my tab, and the other guy paid for my drinks. Good man, didn’t give him my name, and he never told me his, just like how it should be sometimes.

#### [DECEMBER 26th AFTERNOON]

I leave to go to the car rental service area and at this point I’m famished and slightly tipsy. Aaaanddddd... the line is 4-5 hours long. Every other car rental service was not giving out cars and Avis was the only one that supposedly was. At this point, I’m beyond desperate and I start calling other Avis centers in the Atlanta area to try to get a one way down to Miami. I get an answer to one in MAR-IETTA and decided, Fuck it.” I called a Lyft to go 35 minutes out of Atlanta, and 10 minutes before my arrival, I got a call back from the center explaining that they don’t have a car. They give me another phone #. I called. They say no. They give me another phone #. I called.

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They say no.

I’m literally running on empty right now. Barely any sleep, just called like a \$40 Lyft for actually nothing, and I’m just somewhere in Marietta, Georgia. I’m pretty much losing my mind and my eternal-ly grateful mother just said, “Fuck it, just get a hotel and wait til this all blows over.”

So, that’s what I did. I booked 3 nights at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Buckhead. I have absolutely no knowledge about Atlanta at all, but I’ve kinda heard Buckhead is a nice & cool area, supposedly. I take ANOTHER Lyft to the hotel, almost cry of happiness because of a real bed again, order Thai food, and pass the fuck out. I woke up hours later and booked a flight out of Atlanta on the 29th through Delta, praying that at this point everything should be fine. I don’t do too much after, as I just wanted to lay in bed and do nothing.

#### [DECEMBER 27th AFTERNOON]

The next day, however, I got a text from my sister that South-west is reimbursing hotel fees, car fees, transportation fees, food... practically everything. Does this mean... free vacation???!?! Instead of seeing my family on Christmas??!? YES! This is where the fun begins. My hotel was right next to Lenox Square, a mall often referenced in Atlanta specific rap songs, ICEBOX Jewelers, a Waffle House, and a gun range wasn’t out of the picture either.

I was slowly running out of underwear and had been wearing the same socks for days, so I decided that I needed to reup on that. My side job back in NYC is doing retail at the Bowery & Williams-burg J. Crew, so I wondered if there was a J. Crew in Lenox, and there was. I get to the mall and I see in nice big sans serif font, “LENOX SQUARE.” I haven’t been to a normal mall in years, so I was kinda excited to see what I’ve been missing out on. Am I going to see Tik-Tokers ask me if I would suck cock for \$5,000? Am I going to see some dude do a diamond test on some guy’s chain? Am I going to feel lonely as hell being 22 by myself in a mall? None of that happened, unfortunately, but what did happen is I saw a fairly large shiesty kiosk (which was run by a white guy with a glowing backpack), multiple fake diamond chain kiosks, and a lot of terrible outfits.

I went to J. Crew and dropped a BAND (\$88) on underwear, socks, and 2 brushed wool sweaters. After that, I decided to walk around and see what all the hubbub was about this mall. To be honest, it’s literally just a mall. I see the appeal as there are some high end stores, but at the end of the day, it’s just a mall. I ate at California Pizza Kitchen after my walk around and after that I went to Neiman Marcus just to see what was new. I noticed the Loewe section, went awooooo-ga, remembered that they had a collaboration with On Running, was mortified, and then I left.

#### [DECEMBER 27th EVENING]

I was pretty tired after all that so I just went back to my hotel room. I began to realize that I should definitely start writing about this ridiculous adventure, so I turned on the gas and started typing away. I was getting tired at about 4AM but I was fiending for nicotine, so I left my room to go smoke a cigarette outside. And man. You wont believe this. I’m outside and this very drunken man comes out of the lobby asking for a cigarette. I oblige, of course, and we start chatting. He immediately goes on a tangent about girls, specifically sex workers. He initially started complaining to me about how he was upset about the sex workers staying too long in the morning, how they’re messy, and how they’re sometimes “teethers” (when a girl sucks your penis and you sometimes feel their teeth). Once he started talking about “teethers,” I subtly went to voice memos on my phone and started recording this ridiculous conversation. After a couple minutes of chatting, I asked him his name. He replies, and I quote, “Andre Phillip Von King, four names, four women, four head (?)... I’m also a social scientist, a Christian comedian, and a philanthropist... I used to be a superhero, but I realized that really sucks.” Taken aback, I reply, “You used to be a superhero?” to which he exclaims, “Pppppffftt... over-freakin-rated. They really over-glorify it.”

I ask him what his superpower was, and he replies with: Humor. I’m a code-cracker too.

I’m stunned, naturally, and I let Andre keep talking. He mentions that he also has “relentless persistence... I’m unpunishable... and I have a loooott of freakin’ energy.” He drunkenly slurs some words

then begins talking about a new topic, a bit more dark than before. “They just don’t care... they want to die. One: people want to die. Two: they don’t believe there’s a heaven, but they believe there’s a hell on Earth. You’re not gonna have sex in hell, you’re not gonna do drugs in hell, you’re not gonna have ice cream– all the things you like, they’re not gonna have in hell. So, stop saying there’s hell on Earth.”

I wonder... “Who is they? Who is he talking about? I mean, he is right, there will be no ice cream in hell!” He starts babbling about intelligence, different languages, and over/underpopulation, and I start to get a bit bored of the conversation. I go back into my hotel room thinking to myself, “What in the hell just happened. Thank god I smoked that cigarette.” I couldn’t have asked for a better way to end the night, so I capped it right there.

#### [DECEMBER 28th AFTERNOON]

It’s my final day in Atlanta. Hopefully. I decided to do the most Southern things I could possibly do: Waffle House, shooting guns, and... Magic City redemption. Don’t you think I fucking gave up from Christmas Eve! Knowing I needed cold, hard cash, I located a nearby Bank of America to get cash out. Of course, the outside ATM is not working so I had to talk to the bank clerk. I explain my story to him and ask him if I could get a temporary card, to which he replies with: “Oh, we don’t do temp cards anymore.” Wow. So, even if I wanted to get a temporary card a week prior from my fraud situation, I couldn’t even get one. Awesome. I give him my information and I ask for \$150. That was my Magic City spending limit.

Feeling good with pocket full of cash, I walk to a Waffle House #1058. I’ve only ever had Waffle House two other times, both on a road trip down to Savannah, Georgia, so I was excited. I ordered the All Star Special, with over-easy eggs, white bread, bacon, and for my hash browns to be smothered and covered (with an added slice of cheese and sauteed onions). Yeah, it’s good as fuck. I don’t know what else to say. I took my headphones off to hear the natural ambience of the southern institution. I noticed one of the two Waffle House employees leave to go to the BP / Circle K across the street. He skips towards the convenience store and comes back with a red bull. Nice.

Now that I got some food in me, time to hit the fuckin’ ranges, baby. As I was on the way to the range, I was looking online at the gun catalog and trying to decide what I should get. I couldn’t wrap my head around the fact that you can literally shoot guns that were in the last Call of Duty I played. I’m pretty nervous. The last time I shot a gun was in Texas doing a clay pigeon course with a shotgun (extremely fun BTW). I stepped inside, looking like again, a school shooter. I anxiously tell the worker that I haven’t really shot anything besides a shotgun so I didn’t know where to begin. He suggested a Glock-19, which I chose, and I began browsing some of the automatic weapons. Can you believe you can literally shoot a P90? I decided to pick the Uzi instead, as the P90 was one of the most expensive options. My hands are sweaty, and after I have all my gear, I head into the range. I’m being assisted by a guy named Alex and he pretty much shows me the ropes of how to do everything. Let me tell you, this shit is LOUD. The Glock was fun, had a decent amount of recoil, and I finished my ammo in about 15 minutes. I have NO IDEA how movies have people shoot pistols with one hand, that’s impossible. Now, onto the Uzi. I’ve never shot an automatic weapon before so I had no idea what to expect. Well, it was awesome. I basically just sprayed & prayed. Like in Call of Duty, there was recoil and it naturally guides up. After two magazines of ammo, I was done. It was a very quick stop into the gun range and I didn’t feel like wasting more money. As I was leaving, I noticed this Asian grandma in another booth in the range and she pulled out a pistol out of a Louis Vuitton purse. Fuckin’ dope. Another guy in the range had an old looking pistol with a laser sight attached, good god.

I was there for about 45 minutes and spent \$132, and luckily the guy waived my Uzi rental. Worth it? I don’t know, maybe it would’ve been better if I was there with friends. I called another Lyft to take me back to my hotel to rest a little bit before my final stop on the day: Magic City.

#### [DECEMBER 28th EVENING]

Oh boy. I’m excited. I got my cash. And I’m ready to see some ASS. I chill in my hotel room until about 10PM and head over to the Holy Land. Still nervous, but not as nervous as the first time, I get in line. I get a pat down, and to my surprise, it’s the same worker

who I saw on Christmas Eve. He mentions, “Damn, still here?!” I tell him that my flights have been canceled for the past couple of days and he replies with, “Ahh shit I’ve seen that on Twitter.” I ask him what the cover is, and he tells me, “Nah, you’re good don’t worry.” Wait a second. Am I good here?!! Am I valid in Magic City?!!

My first instinct: get drunk as fast as possible. There was no way I could be sober in the strip club. I go to the bar and ask for a double shot vodka cran. \$24. Well, fuck it I guess. I find a small two person high top table and decide to make that homebase. I have never thrown money in my entire life and I seriously had no idea how to do it. I’m legitimately watching other people throw money to study how they do it. I’m obviously not Future, who supposedly brought \$60,000 and broke a magic city record, so I can’t make it rain. I’m watching and after a second double shot vodka cran, I ask the bartender for \$60 in ones. I pull up to the stripper poles and start watching and tossing ones. My heart is legitimately beating so fast but the boobs and buttholes are easing my anxiety, obviously. I go back to my seat and these two guys next to me come over and tell me, “Broo! What are you doing?! Slap their asses, dog!” I reply with, “Are you sure you can do that here?” He says, “Yeah man!!!” Now, I always thought that strip clubs were like under a no-touch policy, but not here I guess. You can also smoke cigarettes inside, which is an enormous plus, to which the guy asks for a cigarette. I oblige, of course.

I’m starting to get a bit hungry, as my last meal was Waffle House about 6 hours ago. You know what they say, Magic City wings are supposed to be awesome. I obviously had to try them. I ordered a 15 piece “Louwill Lemon Pepper BBQ” with fries, and I was quite excited to try them. Also, while this was all happening, there was a Denver Nuggets vs. Sacramento Kings game playing on multiple TV’s across the establishment. What’s more ‘dude’ than this; eating wings at a strip club watching both the NBA & naked women shaking ass. The wings are obviously fantastic and I’m quite happy at this point. While I’m eating my wings, I see this lady get on top of the stripper pole, to basically go full ‘jungle gym’ and was literally spinning on the ceiling. What in the hell. I got another double shot vodka cran, so now i’m down \$90 just on drinks, and I have a little bit leftover for some throwing. At this point I’m now properly drunk & I got an initial lapdance from a girl with probably the biggest ass this halvie has ever seen. The highlight of the night was lapdance #2, from Malibu Barbie. I told her I had \$13 left and she said that’s alright. She asked me what my sign was. I said Taurus. She said Aquarius. She asked me, “Are you Korean?” Flabbergasted, I replied, “Yes... how the fuck did you know that.” She laughs and starts giving me a lapdance. My mind is spinning. How the fuck did she know I was Korean? She tells me, “You’re really hot... why are you here?” I briefly explained my flight situation and she whispered something in my ear that I couldn’t understand but I just kinda laughed and said “yeah, yeah.” I don’t really know why I even tried to explain why I was there to be completely honest with you. She ends the dance and I’m out of cash. \$150 gone in about 2ish hours. I’m completely satisfied at this point and this was thee perfect end to my Atlanta conundrum. I got back to my hotel around 1:30 and realized that my alarm for my flight back to LGA was at 4:30. Fuck it, all nighter. Full circle, baby.

I get to the airport and everything’s smooth sailing from here. Tired as fuck, I board my plane and I’m finally coming back home. I’m seated in my sexy Delta flight... I put my headphones on... and I downloaded Gucci Mane’s “How Guwop Stole Christmas” hours prior. I lift off, and all of a sudden I feel immediately relieved. And now, I press play.

*“I’m pourin’ fours and shit, I need to just put a deuce in.”*

I think I’m finally beginning to feel the Christmas spirit.





# The City As A Snowglobe

written by will harrison

Let's pretend you are a teenager. Let's pretend you are seventeen and you have just taken a \$15 bus from Chinatown to Chinatown with your best friend and the two of you have been listening to Nas' Illmatic on your iPod nano for the past hour or so. You've been in stop-and-go traffic all throughout Queens, you've passed over the Kosciuszko Bridge, you've marveled at the way the headstones in the nearby cemetery mimic the serrated blue strip of skyscrapers out beyond. Suddenly—as if you'd fallen asleep for a moment, the final throes of the trip passing you by—you are stationary, holding your suitcase to your chest. Out on the sidewalk you feel naked, unprepared, fragile even, as if the slightest gust might blow you straight to Poughkeepsie.

You will never forget it, this moment, so crystalline yet dream-like: standing beneath the shadowy awning of the massive Buddhist temple, your young, hungry eyes making an assemblage out of this intersection. Over the years, this corner, Bowery & Canal, will always remind you of your high school self, will always be your own personal diorama. Each time you pass it by, you will latch onto one, two, maybe three of its details: the immense gold dome of the HSBC Bank, the glossy onyx face of the Manhattan Jewelry Exchange, the forever-unreachable "Pasta" tag looming on the billboard above the temple, the curling brick façade of the Confucius Plaza apartments, the great blue strip of bare sky overhead, and, finally, the granite arch and colonnade atop the Manhattan Bridge, that Greek Revival gateway replete with carvings of bison, clipper ships, lions, men on horseback, and the god Mercury flanked by two businessmen wearing top hats.

This will always—even in its quietest moments—feel like the gateway to the universe. And over the years, you—or rather I—will imagine said gateway as a sort of portal where time runs flat, unspooling on top of itself as if all the moments of our lives were both preordained yet somehow novel.

It was in this hypnotic state, hallucinatory but lucid, that I recently entered the brick-and-mortar Happy99 store on Forsyth Street, in the shadow of the bridge, around the corner from the bus station at the center of my life. It feels fair to call Happy99 an anomaly, a uniquely contemporary business that also feels ripped from another era. Walking up Forsyth, curling around the base of the bridge, passing the street vendors selling greens and fruits and live crabs, shuffling through a warm autumn mist, I felt a bit like I was inside a diorama as I approached the storefront itself, eyeing its taxi-yellow awning that blended perfectly with those on either side.

Even the very existence of this storefront was a wonder unto itself, I thought in this moment of initial approach. Nathalie Nguyen and Dominic Lopez—the couple behind Happy99—had started out making digital renderings of shoes and clothes, after all. And while it was certainly a thrill to manually flip through the rack of shirts and hoodies and shorts, I was mostly just enjoying the mounting sensation that I was inside the bedroom of the coolest teenager in the world. On the wall opposite the clothes, Nguyen and Lopez had installed a riotous assemblage of items, a colorful tapestry that included one-off samples from their personal archive, keychains of Sonic the Hedgehog, Sailor Moon sticker packs, action figures from the Sanrio universe, and countless other prepackaged, brightly colored, nearly edible trinkets.

At the very center of the store Nguyen and Lopez had configured their true masterpiece: a fantastical yet impossibly realistic diorama of the very block upon which we stood. There it was, the store itself, with Nathalie and Dominic standing out front alongside each other, calmly, as a gigantic robot tore the roof off their building. To the left, there was an exact replica of the Wing Kei Noodle Co. (its roof intact), and to the right, a similarly precise replica of the Greek Orthodox church next door (its roof destroyed). With no miniature Manhattan Bridge to hem things in, the street was in a state of total disarray, its concrete buckling to reveal a rush of water, into which a DHL truck and a police car had tumbled (ACAB). The USPS truck out front of the store was safe; the box truck with the massive, multi-colored fill-in from MOIST that I'd just passed out front was tipped over.

After buying a souvenir style t-shirt and chatting briefly with Dominic I left the store in a state of lucid, muted delirium, still feeling like I myself had been shrunken, miniaturized, and was now walking through a model version of New York's Chinatown. Moving north on

Forsyth with the bridge to my left, I drifted into Sara D. Roosevelt Park and decided to sit on a bench to thumb through my book and watch the men power-walk around the small track. I had become obsessed with the idea of my own inaction, with the notion that I was too distractible to do anything but sit on the sidelines of reality, commenting on the things in front of me before forgetting them once they'd passed out of sight. I was an inert critic, a wandering Jew, a lonely stoner, I thought to myself, immediately disgusted by this stream of lazy truisms. The cinema of the city was too much for me, that's why I'd become so fixated upon this universe that surrounded the base of the bridge. I needed everything to be frozen, still, shrunken—a tableaux, a miniature.

Whether or not I was actually reading Walter Benjamin that afternoon is beside the point. Sometimes we enact order retroactively, building our little stage sets and shoe-box miniatures that will explain the world to us, order it, elucidate its otherwise meaningless patterns. You will have to grant me this, forgive me for it, the urge to pack up my library and desk and laptop and bring it all to Sara D. Roosevelt Park, where I found myself that day, floating above the city with everything suddenly at my fingertips. Looking up at the oak trees, at the blistering sun now peaking through the clouds, I could see him, my forebear, Benjamin himself, toiling away beneath the green glow of a banker's lamp, beneath the massive dome of the reading room in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in the year 1940 at the height of the war, with the Nazis closing in on Paris and his very identity—secular, spiritual, Marxist, mystical, melancholic, Jewish—under attack.

"The true picture of the past flits by," he wrote in that great library, still failing to leave Europe despite pleas from friends, colleagues, and his ex-wife Dora. "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again." Which images were flashing before him in that very moment, as he poured over his notes, as a brilliant shard of sun emerged and then bloomed upon the carpeted floor beneath his feet? Sometimes life is a tiny snowglobe carried by a refugee: crystalline, portable, prone to sudden bouts of obfuscation. Was it Berlin he thought of, Berlin, to which he knew he'd never return? By that point, he'd known for at least eight years that he would never again witness the staging ground of his childhood, that long gone place of melancholy, wonder, and comfort.





In Berlin Childhood (I am shuffling through my books rapidly, with burgeoning haste), Benjamin wrote of “the almost immemorial feeling of bourgeois security that emanated” from his grandmother’s apartment, an apartment in which death had no place, since the rooms themselves had “no place in them to die.” In the mind of a child—a mind which an older Benjamin re-configured on the page—“the street became an Elysium for me—a realm inhabited by shades of immortal yet departed grandmothers.” And yet, for an adult Benjamin (and for me), it must have been impossible to read this reflection and not think of death. Where does one go to die? Not Berlin.

And so I keep reading of Berlin from my little desk in New York, building another diorama inside the one surrounding me. Moving along the page, I hear of Benjamin’s childhood classmate, a certain Luise von Landau, who became for him the symbol of death. After hearing of her passing, “when I now passed by the banks of the Lützow, I would always cast my eyes in the direction of her house,” he wrote. “It lay, by chance, opposite a little garden that overhung the water on the other bank. And this garden plot I gradually wove together so intimately with the beloved name that I finally came to the conclusion that the flowerbed on the riverbank, so resplendent and inviolable, was the cenotaph of the departed child.”

For years, Benjamin had toyed with the idea of mapping his entire life, hoping to find a form that would allow him to include every street, alleyway, or plaza that he had passed through. If such an expansive project seems like a repudiation of a death he knew to be rapidly approaching, his mastery of brief, allegorical miniatures seems to reflect a sort of acceptance or encouragement of it. “The only pleasure the melancholic permits himself, and it is a powerful one, is allegory,” he had written in his postdoctoral essay, *The Origin of German Trauerspiel*, which was rejected by the University of Frankfurt in 1925, sending him to a place darker than melancholy. In the 17th century *Trauerspiel*, or baroque “mourning play,” a young Benjamin had found a genre that successfully converted time and experience into space, taking a panoramic conception of history and breaking it into elaborately staged tableaux that could be frozen, taken apart, and then mined for deeper meaning.

It is easy to see the appeal of freezing history in such a way:

a methodical, protracted approach gives one the impression that time is plentiful, expanding before us. By reconfiguring life as a series of stills, a stack of photographs, a sequence of scenes in an unreal theatrical production, a writer can construct a place of refuge amidst the ruins of experience. Even when darkness threatens to blot out all else, memory appears as a structure unto itself in Benjamin’s writings, as in his collection *Berlin Chronicle*, a series of fragmentary, miniature reflections intended as a teenage companion to *Berlin Childhood*. In one such fragment, Benjamin reflects on the death of his peer, the poet Fritz Heinle, who committed suicide during the outbreak of World War I, days after the German invasion of Belgium. Circling around his friend’s death, temporally as well as spatially, unable to utter the term “suicide,” Benjamin fixates on the space in which they met, a Meeting House where young political activists such as themselves would organize. “No matter how much memory has subsequently paled, or how indistinctly I can now give an account of the rooms in the Meeting House, it nevertheless seems to me today more legitimate to delineate the outward space the dead man inhabited, indeed the rooms where he was ‘announced’ than the inner space which he created” in his poems, Benjamin wrote.

Written from a position of exile, while Benjamin was darting around a rapidly changing Europe, these words unfurl like some subterranean trail running beneath a city wiped off the Earth’s face. “You will find us lying in the Meeting House,” Heinle wrote to Benjamin, and sure enough, this was where the then-twenty-two-year-old critic found the forever-nineteen-year-old poet, lying dead alongside his girlfriend in an apparent double suicide.

If “the past can be seized only as an image,” as Benjamin wrote in the fifth of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, then perhaps we—perhaps I—can be forgiven for attempting to restage an image of the past so that it can be utilized as a temporary dwelling space in the present. Twenty-six years after the death of Fritz Heinle, Walter Benjamin sat in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, beneath the great dome of the reading room, at the height of the war, composing his theses as he postponed working on his opus, that massive, over-grown manuscript we now call the *Arcades Project*. I can picture him now, thinking of that long-suppressed image of his friend’s lifeless body lying alongside

his equally lifeless girlfriend. Or perhaps it was not Fritz Heinle he considered while staring up at the ceiling, perhaps it was not the Meeting House in Berlin but rather the camp in Vernuche, the labor camp from which he’d only recently been released. The passage from Paris had nearly broken him, that forced march through the woods alongside three hundred other prisoners, all of them German émigrés detained by the French authorities. In Vernuche he’d made do, delivering lectures for which he was paid with cigarettes and sleeping on the cold, stone ground until straw was found, his weakened heart still keeping pace.

I am writing, it must be noted, from the vantage point of the present. It is simple enough to build a miniature this way, to sit at one’s desk and create a tiny, shoddy model out of the life of a dead man. In Sara D. Roosevelt Park, in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, the children are still kicking a soccer ball, the men are still looping slowly around the track. In Sara D. Roosevelt Park I am composing this essay, muttering to myself, wishing for an outcome that cannot and will not be. After leaving Vernuche—his release coming only after the intervention of the PEN international writers’ group—Walter Benjamin returned promptly to the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and renewed his library card, all but securing his fate. Writing to Greta Adorno in January of 1940, only five months before the Nazis invaded Paris, Benjamin confided that he was anxious about completing his opus, his *Arcades Project*, adding that he was not willing to put the book at risk, even if it meant risking his life.

Read in its present form, the *Arcades Project* is dense, sprawling, the kind of book that induces an almost schizophrenic delirium. Utilizing a wildly atypical structure—titled sections that contain personal reflections, analyses, and many, many quotes from outside sources, some of them attributed, some of them not—it is a book that attempts to do something impossible, that is to swallow 19th century Paris whole. If Benjamin did not quite succeed at this project, he can be forgiven; no writer could ever recreate an entire city, much less a city of the past, the very city that gave us our current conception of modernity. Named for the iron and glass covered shopping arcades which defined this era of Parisian architecture, Benjamin’s project reads like some never-ending sketch made by a master architect. It is the opposite of his compact, structurally sound allegorical miniatures, a colossal model outgrowing the studio in which it is arranged. In Benjamin’s mind, reality—the physical reality of the city in which he wrote—mixes with memory, the imagination, and all the fanciful inaccuracies that these modes induce. Walking through the *Place du Maroc*, “Not only city and interior but city and open air can become entwined,” Benjamin wrote. “And intertwining can occur much more concretely.” Thus the *Place du Maroc* in humble Belleville—the Plaza of Morocco, if you will—can contain what Benjamin calls an “interpenetration of images,” becoming “not only a Moroccan desert but also, and at the same time, a monument of colonial imperialism.” This sensation, “ordinarily reserved for intoxicants,” was something he wanted to give to us, his present-day readers, so that perhaps we can begin to see the contradicting layers of the cities, streets, and intersections that surround us.

And so he refused to leave, insisted on reporting to the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, insisted on finishing his unfinishable life-sized model. For despite its hallucinatory quality, the *Arcades Project* could not be completed off-site; it needed to be fed by the Paris that Benjamin himself lived and walked about in. When the Nazis invaded France on May 10, 1940, he remained unsurprised and yet he remained put. Even as they advanced, the Nazis, Benjamin remained in the capital, the city of light, finally leaving the morning of June 14, the same day that Paris was overtaken. By late afternoon a flag bearing a swastika hung from the *Arc de Triomphe*. An entirely new city had been born.

From Paris, Benjamin traveled south, alongside his sister Dora, heading towards Lourdes and then to Marseilles. It has been said that he took only a suitcase containing a gas mask, bathing supplies, and a manuscript, likely the *Arcades Project*, which was more important to him than life itself. Whether it was inside his suitcase or his jacket, Benjamin also brought a fatal dose of morphine, one which he had already carried around Europe for years, the elixir waiting like some Luciferian talisman. While in Marseilles, that sooty port city, Benjamin received the news that his friend, the philosopher Max Horkheimer, had procured for him a non-quota visa providing entry to the United

States. What he lacked was an exit visa from France; by this point he knew that the Vichy security forces would happily hand him over to the Nazis.

In Marseilles, Benjamin met with Hannah Arendt, his old friend, as well as her husband Heinrich Blücher. He also crossed paths with Hans Fittko, whom he had initially met while interned at Vernuche; Fittko, a German anti-Nazi who had been on the run since the 1930s, and who had—alongside his wife, Lisa—helped smuggle several refugees out of France, suggested that Benjamin travel through the Pyrenees and across the border into Spain. From Spain he could make his way to Portugal, and from there he could sail safely to New York.

After a month in Marseilles, Benjamin boarded a train to the seaside village of Port-Vendres, near the Franco-Spanish border, travelling alongside Henny Gurland, future wife of Erich Fromm, and her teenage son, Joseph. In Port-Vendres, the party met with Lisa Fittko, who would lead them to the Spanish town of Portbou. Fittko had been alerted that the most direct route through the Pyrenees was now manned by Nazi troops and so she led the group westward, higher into the mountains, on a path she feared would be too taxing for Benjamin and his fragile heart. In her memoir she would recall how Benjamin, at forty-eight, resembled a much older man, and yet, that day, he traveled valiantly, making his way up the shady rockface as Henny and Joseph Gurland took turns carrying the suitcase that they called his “burden,” the suitcase that—we will recall—contained an entire city. After several hours, the group reached the summit. From there they could easily make out the massive blue expanse of the Mediterranean, the pale green curl of the Costa Brava, and the small outcropping of orange roofs that made up the seaport village of Portbou. At the summit Benjamin found himself on the verge of cardiac arrest; Joseph Gurland and Lisa Fittko carried him through a vineyard as they made their way down the mountainside and into the village of Portbou, deciding to leave him under an olive tree as they set out to look for proper lodging.

From here the story gets increasingly vague, enshrouded by the opinions and memories of individuals. In Sara D. Roosevelt Park, in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, with the sun going down, I am blinded by the events I am trying to recount, blinded by the diorama I have strained to create for you. What we know is this: in the tiny fishing village of Portbou, the Spanish police caught up with Lisa Fittko, the Gurlands, and Walter Benjamin, denying them asylum and vowing to send them back to occupied France the next morning. They were to be held overnight in a small hotel that had been turned into a makeshift prison, for, that very same day, the Spanish government had changed its policy toward refugees, arbitrarily deciding that any person crossing the border without Spanish citizenship was subject to detainment. Even though this order was only enforced for a few days, and was fully rescinded in two weeks’ time, it remained in effect that day, September 26th, 1940.

While I sometimes feel that I have spent time inside the room that Benjamin himself slept in that night, I am mistaken, for the room I have constructed in my imagination is far more comfortable than the room in which he likely found himself. Sometimes the room is quite simple, outfitted with cream-colored stucco walls, wide windows, a single candle, and a Persian rug. Other times it resembles an American motel room from the 1970s, containing a bunny-eared television, shag carpeting, a moth-eaten lamp, and a St. James bible. Of course, I am well aware that this habit of imaginative reconstruction is an exercise in denial, an attempt to avoid the reality of what occurred that night. For whether it was a Stalinist collaborator who killed Benjamin, or the far more likely historical assumption that he consumed the morphine he’d carried with him for several years, the final result of the story is the same. By occupying the room in which he lost his life, by reconstructing it over and over again, as a series of stills, tableaux, miniatures, I find myself living inside of an infinite threshold, attempting to bury the very notion of death, the very legacy of history. In Sara D. Roosevelt Park, in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, I am typing rapidly, my keyboard and books and notes suddenly warped by the tears running down my face, for no matter how hard I try, no matter how vividly I imagine the stars radiating above the Mediterranean that gruesome night in Portbou, I cannot forestall the inevitable. I can only give you this diorama I have built.





# WDERATED

ALEX	ArtForum App
CAMELLA	Being fantastical
COLETTE	Sandwiches
ERIS	Being chill
GABRIEL	
HENRY	Sedimentary rock
KARLY	Sauerkraut
LUCIA	Clocks
MANUELA	Fingerless gloves
MARIA	Porno mags
MAX	Underboob.
MO	Gatekeeping
NICO	Little spoon
PORK	Silence
PATRICK	Di Palo's
RJ	OMG Pizza
TASCHI	Yellow Redbull
WILL	Remaining unhinged

# OVIRATED

ALEX	Cocaine
CAMELLA	Lining up for clothes
COLETTE	Hating things
ERIS	Being disingenuous
GABRIEL	
HENRY	Metamorphic rock
KARLY	Buc-ee's
LUCIA	Tarot cards
MANUELA	Being known
MARIA	Porn
MAX	Sideboob.
MO	Inclusivity
NICO	Big spoon
PORK	Money
PATRICK	Kid Cudi
RJ	Tony's Pizza
TASCHI	BeReal
WILL	Settling down



Editors-In-Chief:

Max Burkeman  
Patrick No

Writing:

Alex Wexelman  
Maria Perna  
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Taschi Belt  
Will Harrison

Photos:

Henry Johnson

Styling & Clothing:

Colette Belhumeur  
Lucia Foshee

Editors:

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Design Consulting:

Nico Bonacquist







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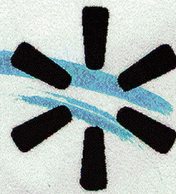
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