

# CTRL+UE



Issue 03 : Memory Drive  
CTRL+UE Magazine

Summer 2025



## ***Letter from***

**Dear readers and admirers,**

- They say nostalgia is a liar. That it softens the edges and sweetens the taste. We think nostalgia is a drive, drive of meaning, memory.
- It reminds us who we once were before adulthood life. Consider

this issue our version of time machine. We ask: what does it mean to remember? To carry old places, forgotten toys, broken cameras and bedtime stories in our bodies? Do we remember something that maybe never really existed, but still shaped who we became? This issue is full of haunted bedrooms, family dinners, school corridors and virtual worlds. We created this issue as a team of twenty-somethings trying to find coherence in a world that moves faster than us. Sometimes making this magazine felt like therapy. Sometimes like opening a memory drive. But always

like home. We hope you find yourself inside. Leaving you as usual with a song quote.

- Now from the 2010s:

“Oh I’m just a kid  
I never use my brain  
I only use my heart  
And my imagination”

— Yanina Shved  
editor in chief

***the editor***

# THE INTERNAL RESULT OF OUR EXTERNAL EXPECTATIONS

issue 3

mentative

Every individual has expectations from life. In particular, these expectations are a motivator and, when they are very strong, they become a motivator for us to take immediate action. But this expectation plays a role not only in the tasks we will do, but also in performing fun activities that add color to our lives. Especially when we consider fun activities in terms of Consumption Culture, it can cause a positive or negative feeling of relentless expectation in us, as if performing these activities is almost a necessity.

The important point here is, whether this relentless expectation is dominated by the true passions of our self or is it dominated by the Consumption Culture that can affect our self? If this relentless expectation is positive and normal, it usually allows us to enjoy life. But if this feeling of relentless expectation is negative and especially at a high level, it can lead to a feeling of "Hunger for Consumption" due to the Culture of Consumption. This hunger for consumption can cause us to not enjoy life and feel as if we are missing out on life.







**The intrinsic result of  
Consumer Hunger: FOMO**

The feeling of missing out on life, which is an intrinsic consequence of consumer hunger, is colloquially known as “FOMO” or “Fear Of Missing Out”. It is not officially a phobia. However, although it is not an official mental illness, it occurs as a result of a socially felt situation. As a dictionary definition, FOMO is defined as “Anxiety due to the posts seen on social media, thinking that there is something interesting or exciting elsewhere”. As can be understood from the definition, FOMO arises due to the visuals shared on social media, which is a part of consumer culture. Since humans are social beings, stimulating the human mind with other people’s posts on social media can trigger a sense of belonging and cause fear of not belonging. It can also cause constant comparison and a feeling of inadequacy

In today’s world, individuals consume not only their needs but also the lifestyles they “should” lead. At this point, Popular Culture comes into play and indirectly imposes many norms such as how individuals should have fun, how they should dress and where they should be. As a result of these impositions, the individual seeks a life shaped according to the general taste of the society rather than his/her own preferences. This external guidance feeds an internal sense of dissatisfaction. Over time, this dissatisfaction can turn into the thought that “I might be missing something”, that is, FOMO. It seeps into our lives not only through social media, but also through TV series, movies, advertisements and influencer culture. The individual starts to doubt their own life, constantly thinking that they are “falling behind”. This can lead to both mental wear and shifts in the perception of reality. While Popular Culture causes the individual to feel inadequate and incomplete without realizing it, FOMO becomes the most intense expression of this feeling.



**Don’t Be Afraid of Missing  
Out, Optimize Your Requests  
with Your Culture**

FOMO is a feeling triggered by overexposure to external stimuli. However, when we get to the root of this feeling, we see that the individual is experiencing a conflict between their inner desires and the lifestyle imposed by society. Therefore, the important thing is not to get caught up in every desire or craving, but to question whether these desires really belong to us. Popular Culture tends to present temporary fads as permanent needs. Therefore, the individual must learn to live a life in harmony with his or her values. Instead of trying to capture every moment of life, turning to experiences that are in line with our own cultural identity and that are good for us increases the sense of fulfillment and maintains psychological balance. It may not be possible to avoid FOMO completely, but it is possible to live life at our own pace by taking it under control. Remember, you should not be afraid of missing out on life, but of alienating yourself.

article by Muhammed Akar  
illustration by Karoline Chevalley (open call)





# A HOWL OF



# A HUNGRY MAN

I am tired of the sun. The sparkling splash  
makes me numb.  
The shining smile, forced upon a fear.  
All act as one.  
Dance!  
To avoid the heaven's drip.  
Laugh!  
So loud there is no doubt to leave,  
That the fire surrounding us  
Is just a warm breeze Of the upcoming fun  
We yet have to live.  
No hunger in a world of free.  
Your ambitions are fulfilled  
With the endless bread and feast.  
Put the glasses on, From the burning star.  
Today's season is pink.  
Chill da fuck out.  
You don't need to be  
Ablaze.  
It's all sorted out.  
I hate you Cuz you hate the rain,  
And all what it's stands for:  
The goosebumps and chills,  
The gloom and the blue,  
The blossom of green,  
The necessary grey  
For a wild to be.  
I don't hide from sad,  
Nor escape in flame.  
I stand!  
With the almighty wind.  
For what I believe.  
It freezes, starves me,  
Thus I feel.  
I am not nonchalant,  
I strike to my chest. With my own faith and  
step I put forward to a march Against the  
gluttony blaze.  
Not fixing the world, Just proving my view,  
Leaving a mark. What's yours, To strike in  
the chest?  
Yours alone, From a bottom of a heart  
To a lungs —  
A howl of a hungry man!



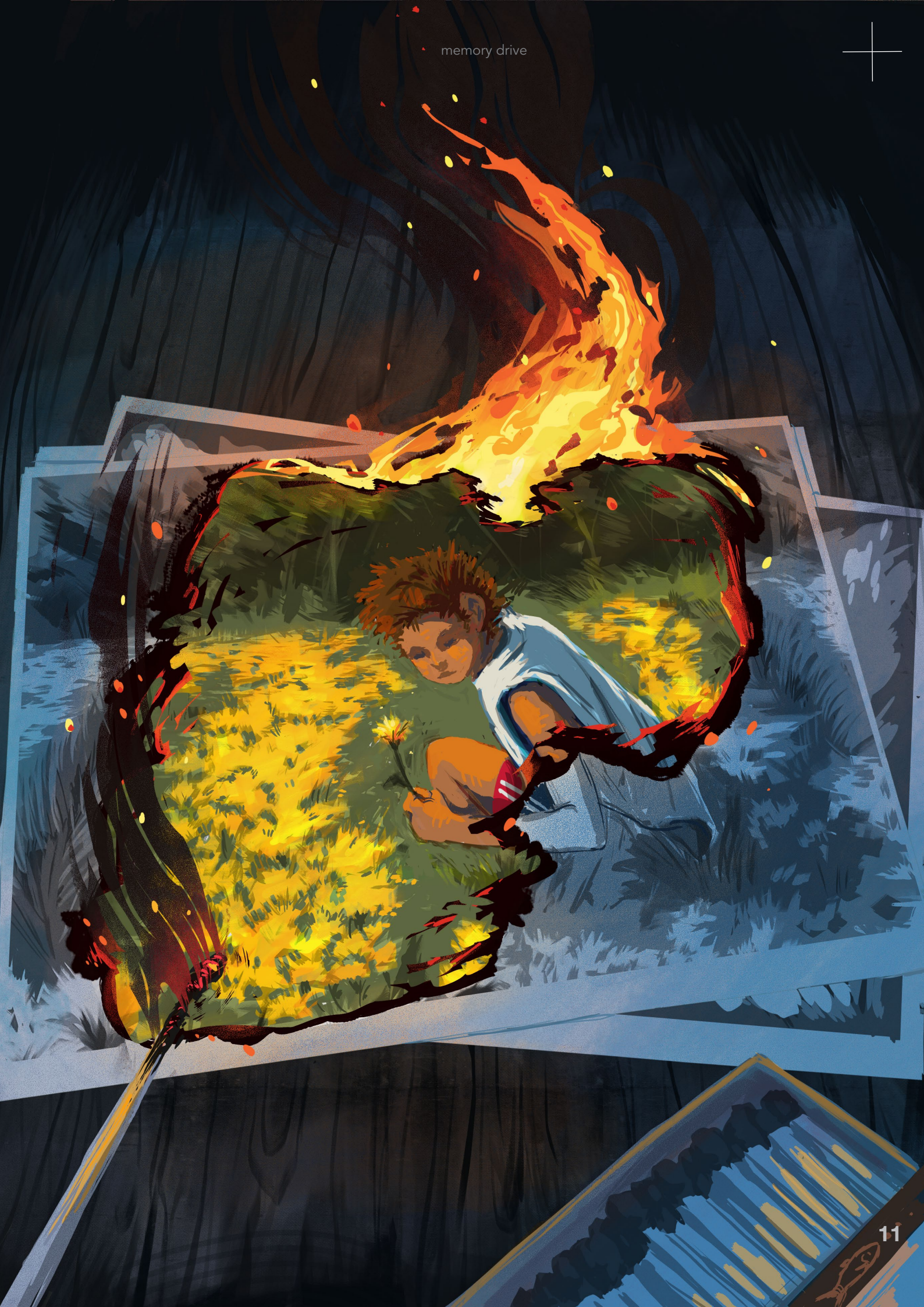


# Missing out on an inner child

poem by Daniel Kondur  
illustration by Sophia Amman (open call)

Have you ever had this happen — you're sitting in your room, having a good time, reading something, singing along to your favorite lyrics on Genius, and then you turn your head for just a second, and realize you're sitting in complete darkness? Is that a good moment, or despair? You're drinking whiskey in the dark, and it comfortably gives you the taste of "home," just so you don't sink back into the addiction you're trying to fight. It doesn't matter how, as long as it doesn't chain you to your bed. And like "Naked Lunch" or "Patrick Melrose", you break the needle over a cuba libre, hoping your soul will become just as "libre".

No wonder we are the nostalgia generation. After 2020 everything magically went to shit. And I'm not just talking about quarantine: I mean the civil wars in Africa, in Myanmar, the drought in the Amazon river, the floods in Brazil and the Philippines. The war in Ukraine — I'll drink separately for that. The whole situation with Gaza, Israel, and Iran. Authoritarianism in Venezuela and the complete annihilation of the opposition. The global rise of aggressive capitalism and the idolization of subscription culture: the idea that you constantly pay for something you'll never truly own. Global inflation, an eight-euro döner. Fuck, I'll drink separately to the times when it was 3.50. That was four or five years ago. Not so long ago, that's why it feels like something magical now. No wonder 2003–2013 is now considered a golden decade. The best games, economy, politics, technology, no need to hate on tourists, striving to improve the world, not profit from it. It feels like quarantine was the last time we were given to enjoy the world. Kind of like your 22nd–25th year of life, when your cells stop constantly regenerating, and you officially start dying.







But honestly, stop running from sadness. So much shit happens in this world because you don't want to feel sad and you avoid it. And honestly, fuck your nihilism. I've seen too many deaths and too many broken lives to lose hope. I've seen too many parents collapse to their knees, dead on the spot, when they hear that their four-year-old child died during another Russian shelling, to let you say "I'm not interested in politics." You won't notice the moment when politics starts to be interested in you — handing you a uniform roughly your size, with the previous soldier's tag ripped out right in front of you.

All quiet on the western front: keeping your inner child safe, above all else. That's not bad. But to be honest, this inner child has brought me more pain and delusion than joy in life. And crushing the small ice pieces while taking another sip, I'm not thinking how hard it is to protect your inner child from this world, but how hard it is to protect yourself from this child. Because it's that childishness that brings so much pain into the world, unnoticeably. Because of our own ignorance, we choose not to fight for our own comfort, saying: "I'm just a child, what can I change?" And by doing so, we bring even more pain, invalidating the suffering of others, hiding our own selfishness behind naivety, and trying to preserve that naivety by totally ignoring others' pain.

Pain and responsibility: they walk side by side. They depend on each other. We try to run from the responsibility of our own existence, going back to the times when the biggest responsibility was failing a math test. Even if you are a child, you can change so much. First of all, you can change how you see yourself and your own sense of importance. The big men in suits know better than you do until you start studying your surroundings.

Nothing is one-sided: always look at both sides, so you don't become a slave to propaganda. There will always be someone who agrees with your opinion — for better or worse. Don't be afraid to express it. Don't be afraid to be socially active. And if you are afraid for the future of the world, calm yourself with actions. The inner child is not about enjoying the moment, or joy, or life's wonders. It's not Nietzsche. An adult, with eyes wide open, can enjoy the greatness of a moment just as much if not more so, thanks to their experience and knowledge. The inner child is often egocentric. It can represent the unwillingness to take responsibility for your own life, to take it in your hands. I have never seen children, who had to raise several of their younger siblings from an early age, wishing to stay a child. They only wish to move forward.

Sorry for making you feel sad now.

***I'm not asking you to be like them, but to understand your own importance.***

And when we are nostalgic of our golden years, yet again — remember that we can recreate them with our own hands. A human is limitless. Beyond comprehension, even to themself. Unreachable. Like a fifth cuba libre for me. It is something impossible, like a light in a dark room. Yet here I am. It's 3A.M and I know that the light will strike again. The sun will rise soon. Unchained to bed. My inner child cries and triumphs at the same time.





# ***INHERITING THE APPETITE***

poem by Ari Garcia Tellez  
illustration by Julia Tomaszewska



How much I wish this plain window could be seen by you.  
Outside of it, I admire the sky, with the sun hitting the flowers  
in a way that makes the colors appear more vivid.  
I'm certain you can also look out through your window: our  
only physical connection to each other.

Miles away from home, I wonder if I'm now filling the hopes  
you once had when you were my age.  
All the dreams that used to occupy your mind, which never  
had the chance to leave desire and become reality, stayed as  
they were: just sweet dreams.

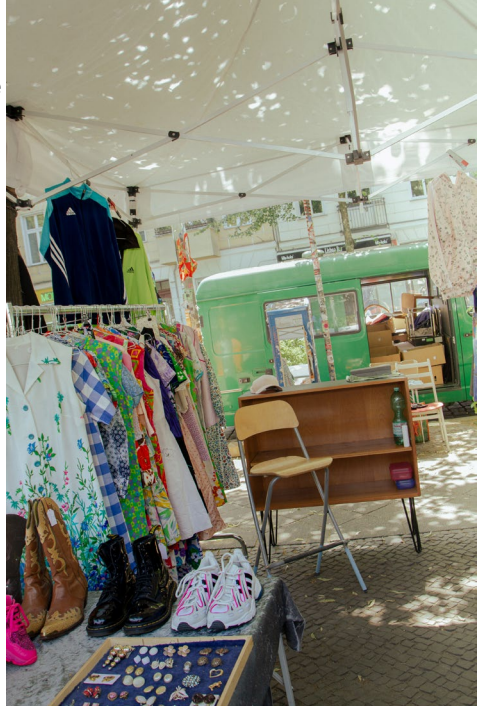
Now, perhaps you imagine me sleeping under the stars in a  
sky far from the one I was born beneath.  
All the streets I've walked, all the sunsets I've watched, all the  
rain I've felt, all the planes I've boarded  
Leaving you behind, wishing I could finally fulfill your unresol-  
ved desires.

I know deep in my bones that your greatest longing has be-  
come my goal: to bring it to life.  
Perhaps in another existence, you are breathing in exactly  
what I am.  
And my hunger only grows as I realize

I am living inside both our childhood dreams.











# WEAPONIZED

# *Nostalgia*

article by:  
Francesca Morosan

## How do companies weaponise nostalgia?

Nostalgia marketing is technique widely used by companies to evoke an emotional response to a product amongst consumers and in turn create engagement as well as a sense of loyalty to said product. And it works embarrassingly well. We are all a victim of it and most of us without realising. We stay loyal to a product as a badge of honour. Many times when we purchase a product to consume that we have consistently bought over time and possibly was purchased for us by family or friends, there is an established emotional attachment. A certain memory that us purchasing it will bring a small part of us back to that moment. Is the pursuit of this small moment of nostalgic euphoria placed there or are we alone responsible for creating it?

Marketing has a way of making its way into almost every aspect of our lives if we aren't aware of it and do something about it. A big chunk of this is thanks to nostalgic marketing. Advertising found its way into our precious memories. Or did it create them? Was the pining of a cold crispy coca cola on a hot summers day an organic thought, or had we associated hot days with refreshing coca colas because the company it was the company's intention to do so? Looking at the history of Coca Cola is an interesting but scary revelation. Coca Cola has every event covered. Family event? Coca Cola. Christmas and our favourite jolly red friend Santa? Coca Cola invented him. Summer holidays? Nothing better than a refreshing cola. With this in mind, it is hard to believe that the company had nothing to do with us wanting the beverage all year round (its addictive qualities aside). Their nostalgic branding, where most of their adverts include comforting images of friends or family over dinner, forever creating an undeniable bond with the consumer. It is a familiar setting, defined by the brand as bringing everyone together. Coca Cola is further responsible for creating a character that generations before and generations to come will forever associate with this nostalgic euphoria. Santa Claus, loosely based on Saint Nicolas, became a notable figure of Christmas when Coca Cola commissioned Haddon Sundblom to reshape the figure we know today so well, giving him the signature colour red associated with the brand. Unfortunately, Coca Cola is not the only brand to do this but is an amazing example of how even memories can be manipulated in order to sell a product.

Admit it. You or at least someone you know has argued over which brand of a product has done the product better. Whether it be your car, your phone, the beverages you buy or even the food you eat. Big cooperations are almost certainly the culprit for this. Controversy means visibility, visibility means selling more produce and possibly to newer clientele. Conversation around these brands create life time and even generation

long brand loyalty and it is strategic in doing so. Companies thrive long term due to this consistent battle between consumers. People stick to brands they were brought up with, and stay loyal to it, maintaining the established attachment they had been brought up with. One of the most notable examples: the argument of android vs iPhone. iPhone customers fight tooth and nail that apple does it best, with no real backing, standing in line for hours to be one of the first people to buy the product. It can be argued, that the constant back and forth between android users and iPhone users is used purposefully to get customers to wait outside the store in those lines. Creating a notoriety of the product that customers love to be a part of. Is it in human nature to want to be a part of the smaller masses that stands out amongst the rest of the masses?

Have companies created false memories and associations to a product, making us long for a time consumers were never a part of ? Gen Z has an incredible habit of romanticising a past they never experienced. Look at how the 70s, 80s, 90s play such a big role of our fashion and social media trends. 90s music and fashion (arguably one the best eras for music), has made a huge comeback. Brands have recognised this pattern and have found a way to market off of it. Food labels have brought back their styles of packaging from the past, appealing to an audience that loves to reminisce. Additionally, fast fashion accommodates the demand for new vintage clothing, creating pieces that emit past clothing styles but not having to be thrifted or expensive. The impact of gen z longing for a time they never knew makes them easy targets to these marketing strategies, as usually products that imitate the past by default have the connotation of comfort not like the usual ill intention associated with normal advertising. KitKat in America using the old packaging labels from the 90s has a higher chance of you feeling better about the Nestle product than it would have done if it kept its same modern packaging. Subconsciously coxing you to buy the treat without any guilt and instead a eutrophic feeling of nostalgia, taking you back to your first ever KitKat.

**One may say that advertising at its core prays on the fact that everyone wants reassurance that what they wear, buy, use on a daily basis is the right choice, needing a guiding hand to show us that what we are doing is correct as everyone else is doing the same, and in this case so did the past. Are we the directors of our own memories or has that choice been taken away from us?**



Illustration by:  
Alexis Simone Reed



poem by:  
Seven Hooker

i miss being chased by the moon.  
terrified to climb the trees,  
their bark revoltingly littered  
with cicada husks.  
couch pillows and cushions that  
became shields and cobblestones.  
finding the space rock that  
smelled of black licorice.  
picking sour fruit off of that  
luscious mulberry bush.

time, never-ending;  
patience, thin as paper.  
like clockwork, memories  
tick in the chambers of my mind —  
if only to not be forever lost; never  
damned to rot and fester in those  
dark corridors,  
until there's almost nothing left.

i will look back someday  
upon this very memory,  
wondering how i let it slip by apace,  
like a body swept out to sea. i  
muster my strength to  
swim against the raging current.  
but my bones and soul tire,  
encumbered by defiance.  
instead, i calm myself  
and tread.

# CLOCKWORK ORK





# Chasing the *Hit*

poem by:  
Daniela Castro Lamas

I chase the memory of it still,  
The moment we never held; running barefoot blindly to the sound of the familiar,  
reaching  
Blind to the purpose of the brute divine  
But you were mine;  
Staring in the back, with the thrill of knowing how alone we are  
Back then in the slippery hands of childhood not knowing what the light was leading  
to,  
And I am still, carrying this hunger with no name.  
The ache of something I once had, or only dreamed.  
And you,  
You are the shape that longing took.  
We whispered our confessions to sky and ley our skin in trembling grass,  
for the feeling we once shared.

To the wild and to the both of us,  
I chase the dust on my summer skin,



photography by:  
Daniela Castro Lamas  
& Arman Surenian





Cause the core of believe is not to vanish,  
And let them try  
Let them write their versions,  
Let them do their wrongs,  
Let them mistake peace for distance.  
No better love has ever justified me.  
No other hands have held my hunger  
And if longing is all that's left;  
If hunger is my last spell, i'll starve with you,  
Again and again.



You,  
The first place I ever came home to.  
I chase the memory of it still,  
we were just two bodies  
under trees and skies,  
laughing like we never forgot how.

I hadn't lived yet, but always would.  
We were never just lovers.  
We were children too.

And the end of every dream,  
We were always returning.



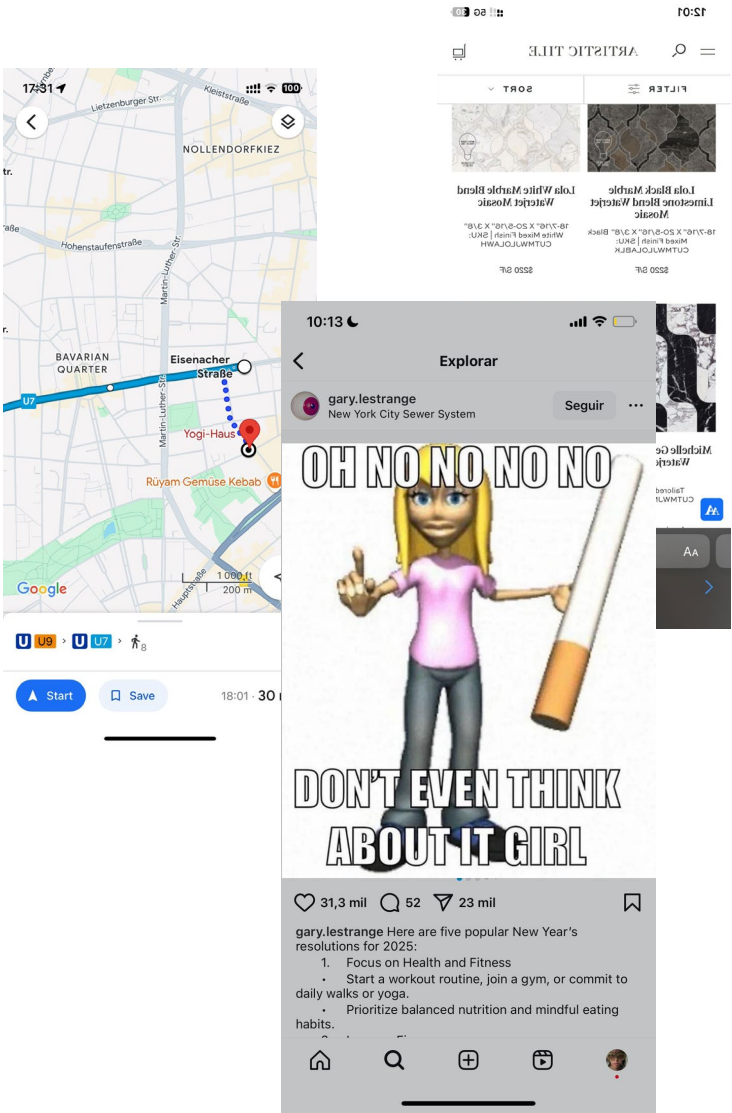




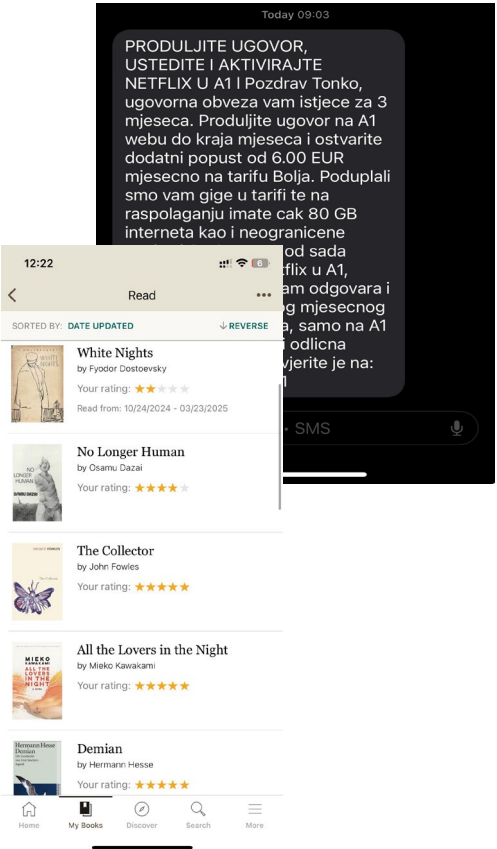
# Digital Folder

article by:  
Rita Spahiu



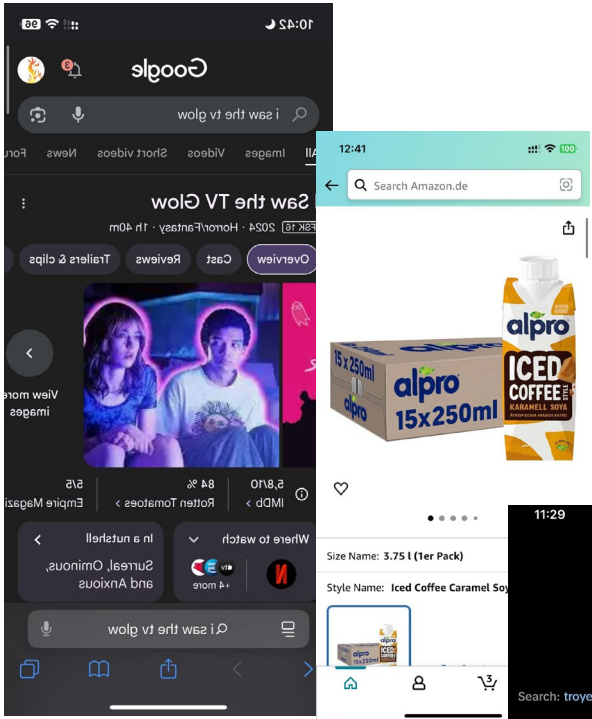


What is the last thing you screenshoted? A list of 100 movies you absolutely must watch in your lifetime? That invoice from 6 months ago you won't delete, because - you never know, you just might need it? Was it the 'perfect' outfit you saw on a stranger's Instagram reel? Or the newest low calorie recipe that will finally fuel the deficit for your summer body? No really, what was the final nail on your coffin of aspirations?



It is a truth universally acknowledged, that we are collectively running out of time. Caught between the mundane and the dynamic, there never seems to be enough. Our attention is constantly drifting, and our time feels borrowed. We measure our lives in a panic that what we seek is just around the corner, but somehow never present. Never here.

In the desperate attempt to preserve something that's not real and not certain, our generation is plagued by inauthentic foragers. We are paused in the drafts, bookmarked too deep to act upon what we actually want. Every saved pin stagnates our actions. And all this hoarding does is give us a false sense of control. In an unstable environment where everything



These 'personalities' are meticulously curated, but never translated into the physical realm. And it's not out of reach - because there's nothing to grasp at in the first place. It's a fleeting illusion. We collect keepsakes like triggers. Each image packing more sentiment than the next. But nostalgia is a feeble trick; a hoax of the mind. There's nothing tangible in a rose colored look-back, just like there's nothing concrete in our digital folders.

disappears and even relevance dwindles, it's not only tempting, but quite natural that each of us has a thorough archive of potential. Our screenshots act as digital souvenirs of what could have been. It's nostalgia manufactured not through memory, but through longing. We absorb in an attempt to emulate, and project in the attempt to be emulated.



From one queue to endless open tabs, it's a vicious cycle that keeps us tethered to the past. We're connoisseurs of romanticism. Curators of nothing.





# A SKETCH OF

article by:  
Daniel Kondur

It was a quiet night of a sultry summer. Night was his favorite time of the season—when one could wander in an unbuttoned shirt until dawn without fearing the chill. He was fond of romanticizing; imagining himself lighting a cigarette while strolling through a city he did not know. Broken, yet undefeated. Perhaps, this was his secret longing—that people would recognize his pain. But this was not what occupied his thoughts now. No.

Now, he stood on the open balcony of the theater, savoring the scent of trees drenched by the recent rain. The cold, unyielding marble was his solace after a long day, a place to rest his hands—and his thoughts. The statues behind him observed him with silent judgment, scrutinizing the youth as though comparing him to their eternal, monotonous grandeur. They stood as sentinels of knowledge and culture—Muses and creators—while he was merely a traveler, a youth yet to find his place. A wanderer displaced in time, yearning for another era. A dreamer who longs to be elsewhere—but not here, not now.

Now, he had transported himself into the twentieth century. Standing on the theater balcony, cigarette in hand, awaiting her. Trousers, a shirt, a body sculpted by endless training. A bright future stretching ahead—brimming with ambition and expectation. It was the anticipation he cherished above all: the idea that adulthood would unveil ever more fascinating wonders, that he would roam the world freely, discovering places no one had touched before. What he missed most was this very expectation—the belief that the world owed him something; the faith in a future he might predict, or at least not fear. He loved to romanticize. But tonight, he was blessed to experience this moment in reality.

At last, she arrived.

It didn't matter how long they had been apart—it had been long. But finally, she stood before him. Her eyes sparkled beneath the lights; she was nervous, yet gentle with the tender grace of a pianist interpreting Debussy. The floral sundress created a perfect contrast against her skin, accentuating both of these aspects. She was not perfect—she was alive. He approached her; they did not embrace but gazed into one another's eyes. A smile hovered on their lips, slowly dissolving beneath the weight of emotions flickering between their glances. How long we

have waited. How wonderful it is to see you again. How bitter that I see you so rarely. How unjust fate is. How I long to escape. How vulnerable I am before you. How hard it is to forgive. How impossible to soothe myself. How precious it is that you are here.

They needed no greetings; they resumed their dialogue exactly where it had once paused long ago. As they looked at each other, time seemed to collapse and reverse, as if only five minutes had passed. They chatted while waiting for the performance to begin, standing on the balcony of a bygone empire. Though speaking of the past, both were lost in thoughts of the future—of how sweet it would be to share it together. Imagining themselves as two adventurers, exploring beloved places untouched by the spoil of tourists; sharing not only their expectations of the world, but of each other. Though they did not speak it aloud, each envisioned an ideal, nostalgic world—one where they belonged, and where the world itself knew its place for them.

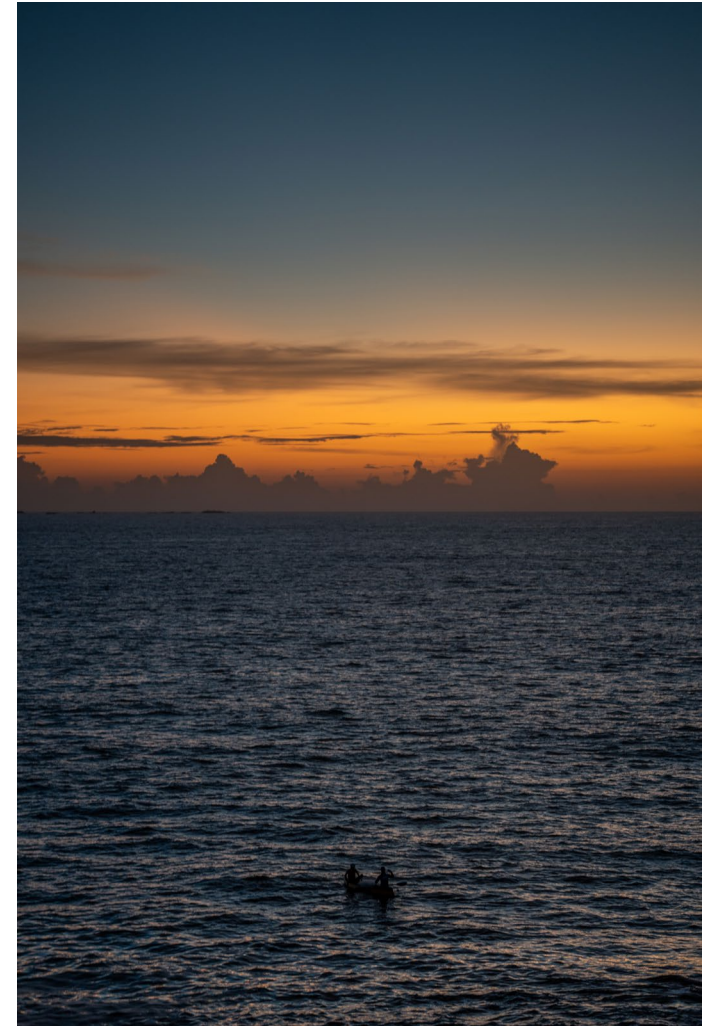
The bell rang: the performance was about to begin.

They took seats somewhere in the middle—close to the edge of the hall, so as not to disturb others with their playful chatter and whispered remarks. Yet as soon as the performance commenced, they were swept away by the magic, the dedication, and the passion of the many souls on stage. For him, it was happiness to witness her smile—pure, unfeigned joy illuminated by the moment. He needed nothing more. Only the reality of her happiness, born of this fleeting instant. And for her—it was his warmth, among the countless souls surrounding them; the simple comfort of his closeness, as she pressed gently against him. That evening, for the first time, they thought neither of the past nor the future, but only of the moment itself. That fragile instant of silence between them, amidst the storm. They dared not disturb it—it was too precious.

Who knows how many more adventures await them in this sweltering summer? When will he next see that smile? When will she once more lay her head upon his shoulder? But for now, the most beautiful thing for them both was the silence of this warm night.

# A MOMENT





photography by:  
Saneet Kumar Goud Ko





# The Taste That Made Me

article by  
Nathaly Pereira Kovalski Ereno  
photography by  
Sandra Tchiaureli



Taste carries memory as powerfully as any other sense. It may not confuse us like catching a stranger wearing a loved one's perfume, or stop us in our tracks like the sound of a familiar voice in a crowd. But taste offers something different: comfort, a quiet kind of time travel. A single bite can teleport you to a moment when your mouth had one or two fewer teeth, and your whole body buzzed with the simple thrill of sugar. That rush, that glee, addictive and immediate, is an irreplaceable joy that accompanies us from the moment we discover the pleasure brought by food.

**For many, the earliest memories associated with food are sweet... quite literally.**

Sweets and their brightly coloured wrappers, accompanied by sticky fingers and the unmistakable high of a sugar rush, are the highlight of one's childhood. Whether it was a pack of gummy bear candies, a lolly after a doctor's visit, or the rush of eating a biscuit from a friend's lunchbox, the feelings these treats evoke go far beyond premature addiction to sugar and cheekiness. They represent joy and a fleeting sense of ingenuity. On a bad day, unwrapping your favourite sweet isn't just an indulgence; it's a return, a way to remember a time when life was simpler, and happiness could be measured in chewy mouthfuls.

As time flies by and we no longer have time to think about the simplicity of childhood, the sprinkle-covered sweets turn into refined pastries, and the cup of chocolate milk is replaced by overpriced coffees from a gentrified café you stopped by on your way to work. Nonetheless, they still anchor us to our past, moments where taste rewinds time, if only for a few seconds.

Perhaps that is the beauty of taste: it evokes nostalgia, but not just about the past, it's about the present too. It reminds us that the things we once loved still have the power to move us. Sometimes, all it takes is a single sweet to feel like yourself again.









# Botox, *Bows* & TradWives

article by  
Marta Vidmar

photography by  
Illia Sorokin

## Being Served Regressive Politics in 10 Seconds

Depictions of women in the media have rarely served us well. From lack thereof to caricatures of subservience, the narrative always settles in the same disappointing manner: beautiful, cheerfully imprisoned, and stripped of personhood. Misogyny is systemic and the digital sphere is no exception. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram reverberate and amplify both overt and subtle misogynistic content, with social media trends reinforcing regressive gender politics by repackaging them as personal aesthetics.

One of today's growing trends is the overwhelmingly white and implicitly alt-right 'TradWife' movement – a direct rejection of equality and modern feminism. Emerging in the social media landscape in 2013, the online phenomenon romanticizes an ahistorical reality and crafts a nostalgic fantasy. It is deeply aesthetic and visually echoes degrading advertisements from the 1950s aimed at the privileged white nuclear family, retaining the image of Betty Boop, from-scratch baking recipes, and postured grace whilst overlooking and simplifying the abhorrent realities persecuted groups endured.

Beyond the explicit 'TradWife' movement a plethora of other trends reinforce manufactured sexist ideals. 'Clean Girl', 'Girl Dinner', 'Girl Boss', 'Coquette', 'Tomato Girl' ... the list is never ending and ever shifting. Though these trends can seem innocent and oftentimes do start out as such, their cumulative effect is the positioning of women as the Beauvoirian Other. This is of course no surprise when considering the trends and aesthetic choices are shaped by algorithms that reify existing social inequalities and favor the status quo; thus in acting them out one also reinforces the oppressive system itself. The trends recycle dangerous stereotypes while aligning with far-right ideology of women's positioning as submissive, apolitical, and domestic roles through micromessaging.

Despite decades of feminist resistance, this aestheticization of subjection exists in the digital world where the illusion of nostalgia for the patriarchy masquerades as "Get Ready with Me" videos served on the "for-you-pages" of tech-savvy 8-year-olds. Nothing occurs in a vacuum, especially not the internet. These trends serve as cultural scripts and turn backwards sexist ideology into an aspirational aesthetic, reshaping public consciousness.

When left unquestioned, we allow oppression to look beautiful, desirable – even empowering.











# Stoicism of Nosta

The dictionary definition of nostalgia is **“a longing for past events, people, or periods; an emotional attachment to the past.”** This definition of nostalgia conjures up positive and pleasant memories in our minds. People whose current lives are not going as they would like often use this positive meaning to compensate for the negativity in their current lives. However, while this defence mechanism may be positive in the short term, it leaves negative effects on our minds in the long term. In fact, a study on this subject reveals that excessive nostalgia can increase the risk of negative feelings such as depression. In addition, nostalgia creates an illusion in our minds, making us believe that our memories of the past are only positive, while also preventing us from focusing on current problems in our personal lives.

One of the important reasons for the formation of this negative defence mechanism is the feeling of hunger in our minds. This feeling of hunger in our minds is constantly focused on being happy and, in addition to providing us with benefits, idealises our past happiness, refusing to accept negative situations that may arise in our lives and encouraging us to always strive to reach the idealised level of happiness, even though we know that we cannot reach this level of happiness in every situation and are not satisfied with our current situation. This encouragement can cause us to become mentally exhausted and leave us feeling weak. Fortunately, some philosophers developed a system of thought called Stoicism centuries ago as a solution to such negative defence mechanisms and the never-ending feeling of hunger.

First, when we examine the nostalgic longing we can see that it's the feeling of hunger in our minds that causes it, and eventually this nostalgic longing in our minds triggers a negative defence mechanism in order to satisfy it.

## Stoicism: a mental shield

The Stoic school is one of the main schools of thought in Ancient Greek culture, which forms the basis of Western thought. It spread and reached the present day through later Stoics such as Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. The fundamental dynamics of Stoicism are: living in accordance with nature and rationality, living virtuously, remaining indifferent to negativity and toxic optimism and, lastly, control: only feeling sad about events we can control while not feeling unnecessary sadness about events we cannot control. Reducing negative emotions but not trying to eliminate them. Focusing on the positive aspects of negative emotions.

article by  
Muhammed Akar

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Dmytro Bielokon







### The First Dynamic of the stoic solution would be:

1

Nature always moves forward toward the future. Therefore, in harmony with nature, we should create a future-oriented mindset and achieve our goals with short- and long-term plans, while also accumulating new memories in our lives instead of resorting to defence mechanisms that keep us stuck in the past. In this way, we can prevent the emotional void caused by hunger and nostalgic longing from turning into a negative mechanism.

### Then the Second Dynamic:

2

When we address the feeling of hunger in the mechanism and focus on virtuous living, we can satisfy it, especially the hunger for happiness, by realising that it is part of human frailty and that this frailty is contrary to virtuous living. In addition, we should know that our identity will not always be happy or unhappy, and we should act in accordance with the words of the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, 'We should often think about how much of everything, both what exists and what will exist, is lost,'. Another important point is that instead of idealising our past happiness, we should remember that even in our best times there were negative aspects, and that there may be negative aspects in the present as well, and we should aim to turn the present into one of the best times.

### And the Third Dynamic:

3

One reason we idealise past happiness and create a defence mechanism to live in the past is that we try to control even events outside our control in the present moment and even feel sad about these events. This sadness can automatically turn the past into an escape point. Instead, we should focus on events within our sphere of control and do our best to keep our lives on track. Because knowing that we have done our best will bring us not only happiness but also peace of mind. The feeling of peace is the key to resolving the feeling of being stuck in the past. In addition, knowing that negative emotions are part of our nature, we can channel these negative emotions in our lives as a motivating force by focusing on their positive aspects rather than trying to eliminate them.

### Stoic Self-Regulation is another part of our lives

When we compare our lives to an apple, we can say that longing and hunger are one half of this apple, and Stoic Self-Regulation, which is the solution to these feelings, is the other half. From this perspective, we can see that these two parts actually form our lives, maturing us like a fully ripened apple and giving us a sense of the developmental process and meaning of our lives. Otherwise, just like the apple, there would be no complete life in the middle. Additionally, setting goals in our lives gives meaning to such feelings. Especially, channelling these feelings into productive hobbies and sharing them with others helps reduce these negative feelings while adding meaning to our lives and enabling us to help others by sharing the insights from our inner journey.

Stoicism is not the path we follow; it is the guide for our path. We are the ones who will chart the course we will take.





It was a rainy day in May, in New York City. Somewhere near the Flatiron building, I found myself in the legendary Pentagram office, about to sit down with one of the most iconic names in design: Paula Scher.

If you're even remotely into design, you should know her. Public Theatre. Windows 8 OS rebranding, Quad cinema. Bold typography, sharp and strategic thinking, brutal honesty. And if you don't, then sorry, are you sure you're actually into design? You might wanna work on that. For those who are just stepping into the field, this is your chance to hear from someone who shaped it.

Turns out, even giants of the industry go through heartbreaks, losses, identity shifts. And sometimes, those are the very things that make the work deeper, rawer, better.

I walked in nervous. Jetlagged, starving, overstimulated by the New York chaos and intimidated by the number of interns walking around. My worst fear? Saying something weird. But Paula? She was calm, glowing, composed. We sat in a small conference room. On the right sight, spectacular view of skyscrapers and Gramercy park. She smiled. I exhaled.

# In Conversation with

Interview by  
Yanina Shved

Paula Scher  
Paula Scher  
Paula Scher  
Paula Scher  
Paula Scher

**Yanina:** Thanks again for taking this meeting. It means the world to me. Actually, you know, in my first semester I had to do a presentation about you and your work... and now it's so funny to actually talk to you and see you. So surreal. Anyway – let's move on to the interview. My first and main question is: what changed in your work radically after experiencing love or loss?

**Paula Scher:** You know, I was married to Seymour twice. The first time I married him, I was very young, and he was a big deal. I was a student. I had gotten a job working at CBS Records, and I was growing, but there was a huge clash in the marriage. After it broke up, I got very serious about my work. From the moment the marriage was ending to starting my own business, I became exceedingly serious. I'd come home from work, make dinner, do all the stuff for him. He'd be working late, ignoring me. Then it flipped. I just said, I'm going for my work. That's when I began really building my reputation, doing the work I wanted, pushing it, growing it. It became a habit. It's still habitual today. We're married now again, and we're totally fine.

**Yanina:** Have you ever made something that felt too radical even for you?

**Paula Scher:** Well, this AI thing\* turned out to be radical. I didn't think it was radical when I was doing it,

\*Performance.gov its first public work built in-part through the image generator Midjourney. Designed library of 1,500 icons that were the result of Midjourney image training and prompting, the work has divided the design world into two camps.





but I got a whole lot of crap for it. I was shocked. I didn't realize the profession was that conservative, or that afraid.

**Yanina:** They didn't even use it in the end, right?

**Paula Scher:** Then he lost the election. Biden. They wanted to use the illustrations, and I said no, because I wasn't giving it to Trump.

**Yanina:** Yeah. Fair enough. I saw that – you were doing the online presentation with the Projector Institute from Kyiv. I know them. It looked like a pretty radical job.

**Paula Scher:** Actually, there wasn't anything radical about the job.

**Yanina:** It was only the illustration, right?

**Paula Scher:** It wasn't even the illustrations. The radical part was that I used AI – for writing. The website's goal was to let the government publish information about new programs and update it on their own. A self-operating website. If you go back and look at the old websites, the way they write about programs, it's too sophisticated. Dense. Lots of figures and facts. No normal person can get through it. So first we used ChatGPT to write the copy. Then we needed illustrations, created our own style, used Midjourney to output it so it could be self-generating. Then the next step was getting software that could run the ChatGPT functionality, because the government isn't allowed to use ChatGPT, so we had to build a proprietary program. The AI would run the site automatically and update itself. And my goal was to keep all the government people out of the selection process – because I knew they'd never make a choice. They'd hold everything up.

**Yanina:** That's why they don't have it.

**Paula Scher:** Exactly. I worked with them long enough to know. At one point we thought maybe we could give them a choice – two options. But then they'd say it's not enough. Three? Then they can't decide. Then they say, "We don't like any of these," and go to someone else. That's how they operate. So I thought, we have to lock them out.

**Yanina:** Do you plan to work with the government again anytime soon?

**Paula Scher:** Not our government. Not for the next four years. *I hate Trump.*

**Yanina:** I mean, you're not the only one.

**Paula Scher:** I know I'm not. Most people do. He's like a giant cloud suffocating us. He fired the Librarian of Congress – who's appointed by Congress, not by the administration. She didn't report to him. He fired her because he claimed she was doing DEI, which wasn't true. She had acquired a lot of collections – American folk art, old cartoons like Betty Boop. She was my client. I did the identity for the Library of Congress. She was spectacular. She did things other librarians didn't think to do. Some of the materials she brought in – yes, some were racist, sexist, but that's the archive. That's real Americana. It should be available for everyone to see.

**Yanina:** Thanks for that note. I think I'll visit the Library of Congress.

**Paula Scher:** You should. You can find anything there.

**Yanina:** Last question, since we're a student publication, mostly young creatives just starting out. When you look at a student portfolio, what makes you think, "This one has something"?

**Paula Scher:** Good question. When I look at student work, I'm not usually looking for innovation, because they're imitating things already out there. That's how you learn. But I look for innovation in color, scale relationships. That's everything. What's big, what's small. What makes something look new or shocking on the page. Sometimes it's composition, physical objects, juxtaposition of words, something that forces you to see it differently. It's not about using a new color system. It's proportion and scale. That's what makes something "wrong" but it works. That's when you really learn something.

**Yanina:** Like stretching type? (laughs)

**Paula Scher (smiles):** I was doing that earlier.

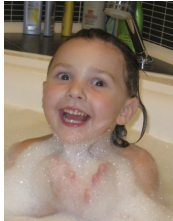
**Yanina:** Well, thank you. This was lovely.

(Then she started naming places I should check out while I'm in NYC, and somehow we ended up talking about Bavarian furniture. But that's another article.)





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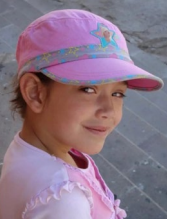
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\*overwhelming applause, standing ovation\*  
\*crowd goes crazy\*

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