



ma tcs

*A non-profit industry publication
featuring 50 emerging creatives sharing
their personal stories, statements and imagery*

#001 mates supporting mates

ALEXANDER ARDISSON * AOIBHIN MAGUIRE * ARCHIE ROGERS * AYSHA LEACH
BEN COLEMAN * BERENIKE CORCUERA * EMILY KEPULIS * EMILY SOFALY
IZZY BOURIC * TYLER JENSON NYKILCHYK * ICKLE * MISS MASH
RIDER SHAFIQUE * TIA PAYNE * DILY TERRY * NYA FURBER * SSUUNA * JACK DUNN
COSIMA ROSS * ROSIE PENNY * ODARTEY ARYEE * RACHEL LAWERH * CHERYL LEE
CHUNG * COCO CHAN * IVAN WONG * SHAN SHAN LI * SIM * JENN TEH
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MARGOT DOWER * ROSIE RISDALE * SI MELBER * TASALLA TABASOM
EMILY SOUTHCOTT * MILLIE HARRIS * SAMUEL TERRY
CAL MACKENZIE FINNIGAN * JAYCEE MENTOOR * ABBIE GREEN * ELLA SUGRUE
JULIET BLOUNT * NANA NAZ * OLIVE MCCOY OYENIRAN

Editor's Letter

"I wonder if the connections we make with others aren't really based on words or actions, but on some deep, unexplainable recognition of each other." — Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*.

For the first issue of *mates mag*, we're starting from the ground up, keeping our focus on the creatives themselves; their craft, visions, thoughts and dialogue, as a way to build a new, and much-needed space that champions emerging talent across the arts.

As public funding shrinks and institutional access narrows, the need for spaces that recognise emerging voices feels more urgent than ever. As Koyo Kouoh asks, 'Who gets to shape the narrative of contemporary art? Who defines its value?' We believe non-profit and grassroot groups which pay recognition to the emerging are critical in a fair construction of the creative industries. *mates mag* therefore aims to provide a space that is centred on fresh talent, working to reframe the creative landscape through the lens of unrepresented creatives. Through interviews and personal stories, we aim to honour individual histories, not only to reflect their craft and perspectives, but as vital contributions to shaping collective cultural narratives.

A strong sense of community is built by the people who support and contribute to it, and through the recognition they offer one another. This issue pays close attention to that act of *recognition*, and we see it as a responsibility that *mates mag* holds at its core. Can we connect like-minded creatives with each other? Can we provide a facility to build upon their portfolios of work? Are we able to showcase their ambitions and motivations accurately? And, are we building a faint impression of the

cultural sphere by focusing on lived experiences? These are some of the fundamental questions that will shape how we evolve with every future issue. For *001 mates supporting mates*, we're introducing 50 fresh faces of all disciplines and backgrounds, emerging creatives whose work speaks to the social realities, personal identities and artistic movements shaping culture today. Some are our dear friends, and others are mates we've made along the way, but all are part of the cultural conversation we are proud to document and support. You'll find a mix of interviews between creatives and conceptual editorial stories across digital and fine art, music, photography, fashion and writing.

What began as individual practices revealed overlapping themes, shaped not by shared intent but by the cultural conditions many of these artists are navigating. Each editorial story explored its own theme, with artists engaging a specific topic through their craft. Notions of the body, gender, sexual identity, motherhood and community prevailed, tracing through the different stories and sculpting the backbone of the zeitgeist. We could interpret these patterns as a move towards introspection – inward towards self-definition, relationality, and kinship. These themes appear not only as modes of expression but reflect lived experiences, authorship, place, and belonging. Together, they speak to the concerns, questions and cultural labour shaping a generation of emerging voices.

Thank you to all the contributors of *issue 001*, who helped us build the foundations of supporting emerging creatives. And a huge thank you to Esme, Millie, Augie, Kat, Imi and Kitty, who have stood by our side throughout the two years it took to bring this publication into being.

ARTISTS	ALEXANDER ARDISSON ANNA MAYS AOIBHIN MAGUIRE AYSHA LEACH BERENIKE CORCUERA COSIMA ROSS DILY TERRY EMILY KEPULIS EMILY SOFALY IZZY BOURIC JACK DUNN SSUUNA TYLER JENSON NYKILCHYK	MUSICIANS	ICKLE RIDER SHAFIQUE
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MODELS	ADDIE SOMUAH TWUM ELLA SUGRUE ELSA UCHECHI ARIRIERI FEI FEI AT SELF MANAGEMENT HONG KONG MARIE SHEEN AT SCOUT MODELS KUALA LUMPUR MUSAH MARIAM NUERKI NORTEY PAUL LEFEVRE AT POWER TALENT AGENCY TRUDY TAB	WRITERS	ALEXANDROS NEFELI CAL MACKENZIE FINNIGAN ELLA SUGRUE EMILY SOUTHcott MARGOT DOWER MILLEN BROWN-EWENS MISS MASH NYA FURBER ODARTEY ARYEE RACHEL LAWERH ROSIE PENNY
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mates supporting mates

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FRESH SALAD

For our first-ever editorial story, *mates* spoke to Fresh Salad, a community-driven platform supporting emerging artists, founded by Archie Rogers and Ben Coleman.

During their Fine Art studies at the University of Brighton and the Slade School of Art, Brighton locals and good mates, Ben Coleman and Archie Rogers established their first group show at Centrespace Gallery, Bristol, back in 2022. An exhibition set up to bring the work of local artists together under one roof, creating an important physical space for connectivity.

The exhibition was a timely, yet indirect, response to the increasingly tumultuous visual arts sector, in the wake of Covid-19, Brexit, and a global economic crisis. Galleries and arts institutions up and down the country lost close to 50% of their funding in the government's feeble attempt to grapple with so-called cultural spending. As much as the world around them influenced a creative reaction, Fresh Salad's first exhibition remained rooted in social simplicity: "to bring people together, stay positive and share artwork with like-minded artists," says Archie.

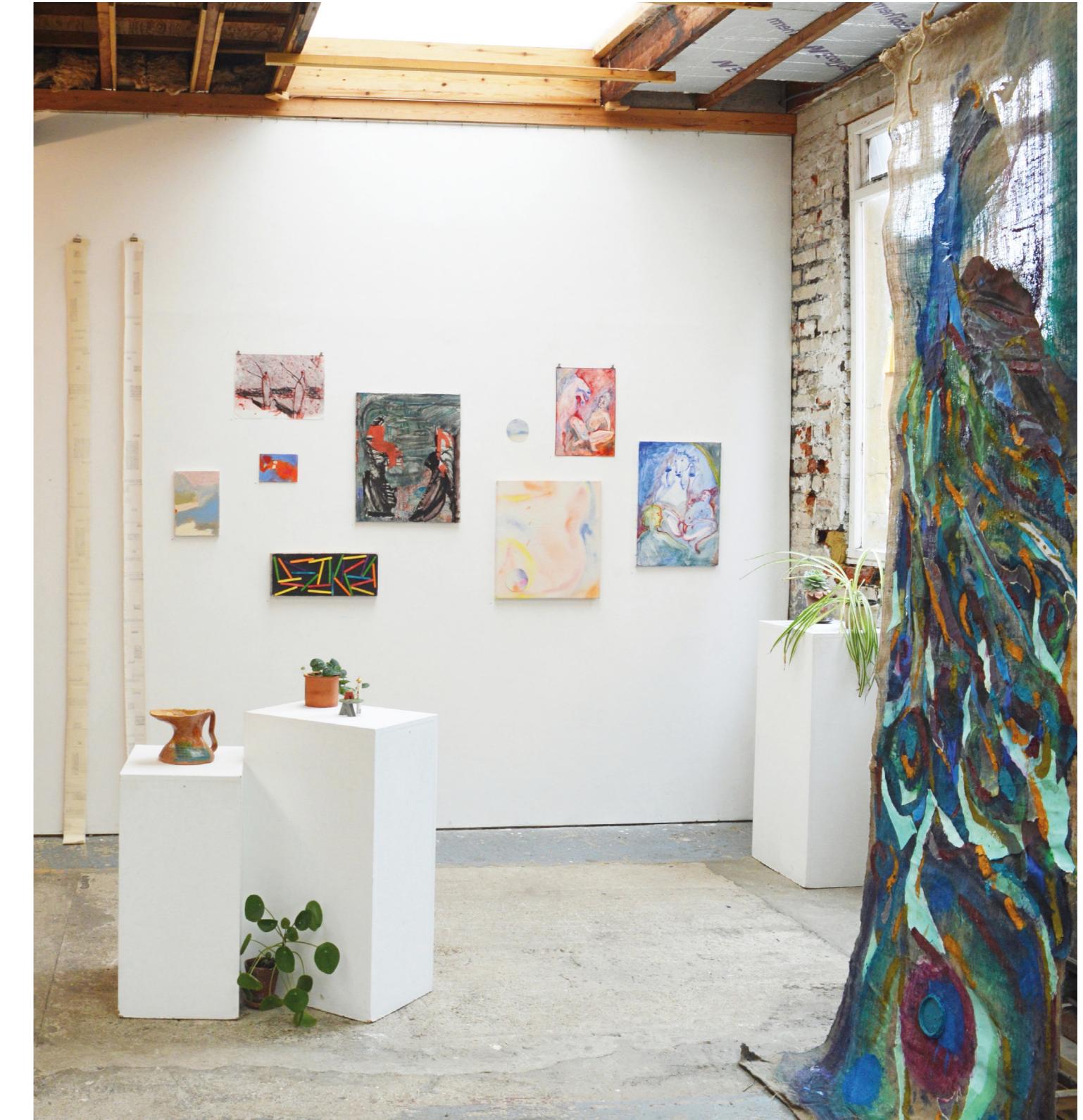
In May 2023, the University of Brighton made further funding cuts, announcing

the closure of the Brighton Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA), a move which left the city's creatives distant from making art that reaches others. Like most other young people in the country, Ben and Archie spent the best part of their first two years at university making art out of their bedrooms, confined to the four walls of their rooms when lockdown struck the UK. Considering these obstacles that still echo today, it comes as no surprise that it is perhaps now harder than ever to thrive in an already competitive and underfunded industry.

The Centrespace Gallery exhibition aided the need for artistic connection by bridging the spatial divide between creatives and artwork, with Ben and Archie taking it upon themselves to actively support the growth of aspiring practitioners. "Being able to once again bring artists together face to face, and share our artwork while exploring what it takes to organise and carry out the exhibition process, made us really excited. We feel this is essential in helping the community grow," says Archie.



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Previous EMILY SOFALY
*They came back with more secrets,
silent yet ringing louder than ever* 2022
Oil paint on canvas 60 x 45 cm
Featured at the Juice Box digital exhibition 2022

Above The Hanging Garden exhibition
Gallery19a, Brighton 2023

Opposite IZZY BOURIC

Matador 2023

Painting, dried thistles and clay 21 x 29.7 cm

Featured at the **Crawl Space** exhibition

The Crypt Gallery, London 2023

Three years later, Fresh Salad has now reached its 14th exhibition project, showcasing the work of over 500 contemporary creatives. By platforming their fresh crop of some of the most exciting up-and-coming painters, sculptors, designers, makers, and illustrators, Fresh Salad provides a variety of crisp visual styles, mediums and contexts at each of their shows. “Picking work which is diverse yet cohesive as a whole can be quite a challenge, but that is part of the idea, the chaos which we believe is exciting and also excites others,” says Ben.

Their first open-call exhibition, *Silo Ono*, was a call-out for artwork to be featured in a virtual reality gallery space, extending their reach to a global and “natural network of people who support one another,” says Ben. “We believe it is essential for emerging artists to feel confident and professional in their practice, and to gain the skills in hanging work, curating, and collaborating with other like-minded creatives. This is what we hope to facilitate through applying and being a part of our shows, all while celebrating a friendly atmosphere within the art world.”

One of their most popular exhibitions, *Crawl Space*, hosted at Crypt Gallery, beneath St Pancras Parish Church in central London, featured the work of 58 UK-based artists. Under the watchful eye of four sculptured caryatids, that frame the gallery’s exterior, the space welcomes art that provokes and questions, as well as art designed for contemplation – a unique set of beliefs established by the church, which aims to “form an important part of common humanity” and a place perfectly suited to Fresh Salad’s community ethos.

Set against an intensely atmospheric backdrop, the show boasted a wide mix of painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, textile design, live performance, and a runway show hosted by fashion designer Scar Kennedy. *Crawl Space* is a notable example of the platform’s ability to foster collaboration and discussion, whether that is through engaging with artwork or different artists. “That’s what we find most exciting about Fresh Salad,” says Archie. “Having all these young artists in one space creates some really heartfelt and interesting conversations.”





ALEXANDER ARDISSON

Folding Clothes 2023

150 x 180 cm

Featured at the **Crawl Space** exhibition

The Crypt Gallery, London 2023



AYSHA LEACH

I Fell in Love on Colmer's Hill 2023

Inkjet print on paper 30 x 21 cm

Featured at the **Hi, Hey! Hello** virtual exhibition

Dog and Bone Gallery, Brighton 2023





Previous **EMILY KEPULIS**
From Above your Pinky is a Mountain 2022
Watercolour, gouache, coloured
pencil on panel 35.5 x 30 cm
Featured at the **Canyon** digital exhibition 2023

Above **Juice Box** physical exhibition
RuptureXIBIT Studio,
Kingston upon Thames 2022

Opposite **BERENIKE CORCUERA**
El Cido 2022
Appliquéd print with cotton,
polycotton, linen, polyester 158 x 110 cm
Featured at the **Abacus** digital exhibition 2023







Previous AOIBHIN MAGUIRE
A Martyr to Nerves 2022
Acrylic and ink on canvas (diptych)
Featured at the **Silo Ono** virtual gallery 2022

Opposite TYLER JENSON NYKILCHYK
ONEIROS 2023
Digital video (3:33min), 35mm film photography,
cyanotype prints and animation
Featured at the **Oversounds** exhibition film room,
Roseberry Road Studios, Bath 2023

collective FRESH SALAD, ARCHIE ROGERS and BEN COLEMAN
words ALEXANDROS NEFELI

GREETINGS IN DUB

ickle & Rider Shafique in conversation with Miss Mash



131st Anniversary of the Birth of Haile Selassie
Fairfield House, Bath
photography **RIDER SHAFIQUE**





The 'Bristol sound', an amalgamation of sub-genres including trip hop, reggae, jungle and dub, rooted in a history of Caribbean migration has become a foundational pillar in the evolution of the UK's music and soundsystem culture. Late 20th-century Caribbean migration introduced new sounds, Jamaican soundsystems, sound clashes and with them, a cultural enrichment to cities and newly formed communities. Jamaican artists like Johnny Osbourne, Errol Thompson and King Tubby pioneered the dub sound by mixing, manipulating and modifying tracks, soaking them in sound effects, reverberations and echoes, with instruments and vocals dropping in and out of mixes.

Today, the waxing and waning effect of these tracks can be traced in subgenres such as post-punk, hip-hop, disco, house, techno, drum and bass, and dubstep. Multidisciplinary musicians ickle and Rider Shafique have continued a legacy of reinvention, experimenting with a sound that is constantly evolving and re-establishing itself within Bristol's community and the broader British soundscape.

The two artists are interviewed by Miss Mash, a Bristol-based DJ and selector whose musical line-ups delve deep into Senegalese, Latin jazz, Colombian and electronic sounds. In a dimly lit suburb of BS1, her curated collection of vinyl records – *Super Diamond De Dakar* from Soweto, South Africa, Quincy Jones' *Gula Matari* and Niney the Observer's *Bring the Couchie* – are scattered all around them, variegated in pulses of oranges, turquoises and deep reds. The three discuss what it was like to grow up within Bristol's music culture, the communities continuously shaping their careers, and the ongoing evolution of the dub sound as it intertwines more deeply within the fabric of British music.

MM Would you describe yourselves as dub artists?

i I would say I'm a music artist heavily inspired by dub culture, utilising production and engineering techniques that were invented by the masters like King Tubby, Lee Scratch Perry, and Scientist. The music I produce is all derived from dub and Jamaican music in some form. When King Tubby created dub, he essentially pioneered remixing, which led to sampling, and in turn evolved into hip-hop and jungle, then garage and house, and then to dubstep, grime and so on. I have a deep respect for the roots of the music and movement, and this gives me the urge to collaborate with reggae artists, in particular. I think, culturally, Rasta beliefs have had a huge impact on my life and my values, and although I don't consider myself religious, it's important to respect and support the

religious aspect of the culture, as it is the foundation of where this music comes from.

RS I think ickle has covered it well. I consider myself an artist first and foremost, as I work within a wide range of sounds and genres. But yes, I would say that at times, I am a dub artist.

MM How did you meet? Was it through music?

i Was the first time at Shamrock, in Cheltenham?

RS I think I first met you at The Black Swan, at one of Medis' events a few years ago. We'd crossed paths at a few events, but first met properly when we played together. There's this pub in Cheltenham that one of our mates, Prozac, from university ran. It's an old Irish pub that gets quite busy during Cheltenham race week. His mum used to throw Northern Soul nights there, so it was a nice little spot and they'd always put on small community events. Eventually, they asked us to play together. We just did our thing and it felt natural.

MM What sort of music did you play at this event?

i I remember messaging Rider like, "Ohh yeah, should we do like this and that?" And he just replied, "Mate, just do what you wanna do and I'll vibe with it." We played a mixture of stuff really, never just one style. Some dubstep, some dancehall, reggae, dub, and jungle.

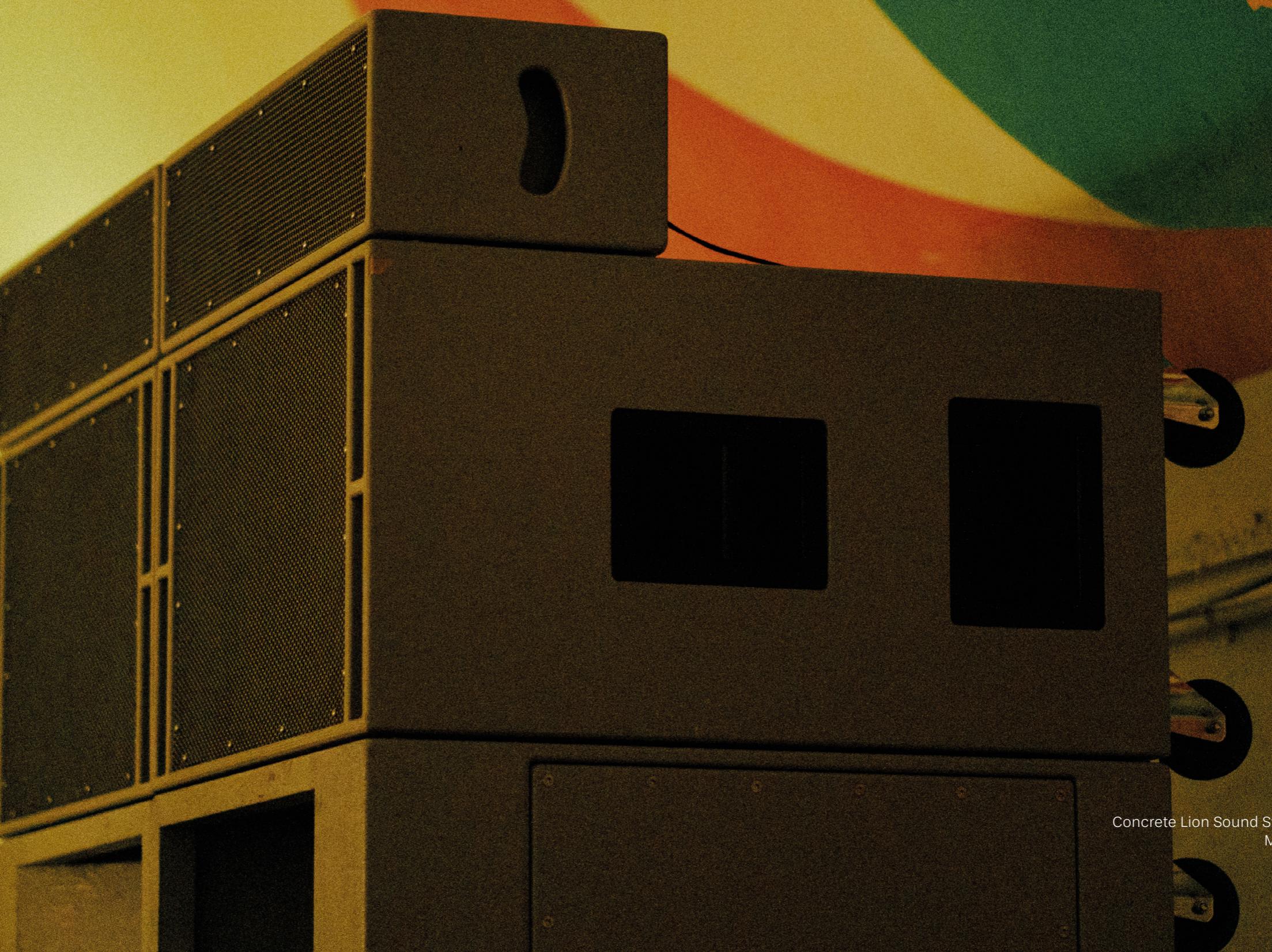
MM A lot of bass-heavy music then?

i Yeah, a lot of the stuff we played there stemmed from Jamaican music.

MM So, looking back at that first-ever musical linkup between you both in Cheltenham, how would you compare the music scene then, to now in Bristol?

RS The music has changed massively. Back then, it was the dubstep and drum and bass era. Drum and bass has always been around, but it wasn't as prominent as it is now. Dubstep isn't as big now, so the music has shifted. There are a lot of younger MCs that have come up that ickle has been working with, like Who Knew and Ashanti Selah. The sound has grown from a more dubstep-sound to steppas, it's gone full circle. The music keeps evolving and growing, it's now a mixture of many different elements.





Concrete Lion Sound System – Paul Maasi Memorial Dance
Malcolm X Community Centre, Bristol
photography **RIDER SHAFIQUE**



MM I feel like steppas is important to Bristol's dub scene. Normally, when you go to a soundsystem session, there is an emphasis on steppas music, whereas back in the day it was more focused on dub and roots wasn't it?

i Yeah, for sure. In Jamaican music, there's always been steppas and rockers, but particularly in Bristol, people like Peng Sound, Gorgon Sound, and Dubkasm have always played that sort of music. And Ashanti Selah plays a lot of that steppas sound as well.

MM Would you say that Bristol as a city, helped you to grow musically and gave you the opportunity to play what you really wanted to play?

RS I started to play more and more in Bristol when dubstep first came about. I think Bristol really championed the dubstep sound. I'd never really been involved with drum and bass in the way I am now. It was dubstep that got me doing a lot of bits and pieces in Bristol.

i Who was the first person you worked with in Bristol? I'm quite intrigued.

RS I used to come to Pinch's subloaded nights. I think I MC'd at a couple, too. I worked quite a lot with Gatekeeper in Bristol, and Sam Binga – who was called Bow Binga at the time. I'd also done some dubby spoken word stuff with ID.

i Yeah, because that was a mad era. I didn't grow up in Bristol, but it's where I was born. So for me, I remember coming up to a night in 2008 or 2009, when three of my mum's friends' sons were really into the dubstep scene here. I remember around that sort of time, I was seeing those subloaded lineups and being like, "Wow, this is what I want to go to."

MM Do you think if you started as an artist now, you would rely on so much collaboration with other Bristol-based musicians?

i 100%. Collaboration is a huge part of supporting each other and building up the community. Bristol and the South West have so much to offer, and it's important that we all work together and support each other's music.

RS There is an old Jamaican saying, "Dance a yard before you dance abroad," which means to establish yourself at home before trying to do so elsewhere. I think I'll always collaborate with those local to me.

MM Rider, I wanted to chat with you about your night with Dubkasm and Ishmael Ensemble at Strange Brew. Because personally, when I saw the event poster, my first thought was, "Wow, two worlds colliding," modern jazz and heavy dub. I'm keen to hear about how that collaboration came about.

RS I've been friends with the Dubkasm guys for years, for a long time through mutual friends, before they were properly doing their thing in the same way, you know? I'd done a track with them before, on a more dub poetry kind of thing.

MM "Enter the Gates" if I remember correctly?

RS Yeah, yeah. Around that time, Pete from Ishmael Ensemble approached me. He asked me to open up for a few of their shows with some spoken word. Then, I did a version of one of the tracks from their album, called *Empty Hands*. They did the original album, and then also had a separate album for different vocalists and versions of the tracks. I'd been travelling with them, opening their shows. Eventually, Pete and I did an EP together, and two of the tracks on that EP were remixed by Dubkasm.

MM *In A Dub Style* is an amazing record. I couldn't make the launch at Strange Brew, but I've only heard great things about that night. How do you find collaborating with a variety of artists, like Ishmael Ensemble, who are a group dominating the modern jazz scene? Do you find that working with artists like Pete flows together nicely?

RS My approach has always been to ride, ride the riddim, ride with whatever is given to me. I don't tend to write without music, generally. So it depends on whatever someone gives me, that's how I'll write and that determines my flow. I need to think about how that particular piece of music makes me feel. And because I've been a solo MC for so many years, I've had to be able to do this. As we said, Jamaican music, Caribbean music, and Black British music have grown so much over the years. There are many different styles, voices, and tempos out there. I'm the embodiment of that – I'm mixed, I grew up in the '80s and '90s, and my influences are from all over the place. From dancehall and hip-hop to drum and bass and dubstep. My dad listened to a lot of dub, my mum listened to Northern Soul, and music was always playing in the house. I've grown up with all these different elements within me. When I was asked to do my first spoken word show by a Bristol artist named ID, I never really intended to do a spoken word track. But I approach it all in the same way – just by riding the beat. He asked for something more poetic. People often ask me to do

different things musically, but there are many voices of Rider. I ask – which one do you want?

i It's funny how being creative can take you down different avenues that you'd never thought you would go down, musically. Going into spoken word is quite different from what you would've been used to, although it's still sort of within the same bracket as rap.

MM For sure, spoken word is so exposed compared to rap.

i It's crazy how someone can say, "Could you do something like this?" and then suddenly you're doing it. To see you working with Swindle, and to witness how far your voice has gone – that was so powerful. It just goes to show you can never know the limits of your creativity. You never know what you're going to end up doing.

Opposite
Street Party, Gloucester
photography RIDER SHAFIQUE

musicians ickle, RIDER SHAFIQUE

words MISS MASH

introduction ALEXANDROS NEFELI

photography TIA PAYNE and RIDER SHAFIQUE







DILY TERRY

ON QUEERNESS AND PORNOS

artist DILY TERRY photography TIA PAYNE words ALEXANDROS NEFELI



DT I'm going to dye my hair today – I'm dyeing the roots bright blonde and leaving the rest dark brown, almost like a reverse of blonde highlights.

AN You've gone through a lot of hairstyles since you moved to Bristol from Brighton. I'd say the city has definitely influenced your style, but would you say it has also influenced what, and *who*, you paint?

DT Bristol has pushed me to work with different mediums: graphic design, 3D animation and video edits. Whereas when I was living in Brighton for university back in 2022, I felt limited by the specific ways I had to paint or who my subjects were – it would usually be traditional paintings on canvas, portraying feminine subjects.

AN When I look at your work, I definitely see your subjects as feminine, yet they are also very masculine, often gender-fluid, sometimes depicted with a penis or a combination of genitals – they are unconventional in the way you represent them.

DT One of the recurring themes in my work is the exploration of gender. My work tries to make "fem", or the representation of femininity, not intrinsically tied to anatomy. Because femininity and masculinity are found in everyone, regardless of whether they have a penis or a vagina. I guess I always paint them in the way that I want to see myself.

AN Is that where your reference to gender-fluidity stems from? The way you look at your own gender and body?

DT I base a lot of the subjects that I paint on my body. Even displaying certain things that I don't like about myself. But when I paint, it makes me see those unwanted traits in a different, positive light. Obviously, I don't identify with everyone, I also paint people of colour. I don't want it to seem like I'm projecting myself or my issues onto anyone else's body. That's not what I am aiming for. Instead, I want to represent my subjects in a powerful way that isn't bound by race or gender. It's just people.

Recently I've realised that I rarely paint plus-size bodies. It's not that I don't paint them because I'm trying to avoid my own relationship to body size, but I've found that it's not an issue I want to explore just yet.

AN That's interesting, because you reference a lot of vintage porn magazines in your work. Do you think that's where your body size references stem from when you're deciding on the architecture of your subject's body?





"THERE ARE
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DT I agree with that – I do take a lot of influence from models of that era, and in general. Models in vintage pornography are, most of the time, skinny little ladies who are portrayed in these curated and dramatic poses. I guess I'm interpreting my paintings as a reflection of how the world sees women, their faces and their bodies, often as slender, athletic people.

AN It creates a fantasy, right?

DT I think a good pornstar creates a good narrative. People want to be invited into the narrative. If you look at the golden age of porn, those pictures are hyper-artistic and are very beautifully done. But behind the camera, it's complete chaos. Often, the production of those images carries a weight of horrific physical and emotional abuse that those women experienced. For me, that becomes part of the final image. I want to think I'm reclaiming the narrative of those models through my work and honour their pain.

AN You take it a step further, redefining your subjects with unconventional body types and a mishmash of genitals, like in *Drenched* (2021), where a set of fem-presenting people, pictured with a chihuahua, are genital-grabbing and pissing. Your paintings would scare a straight man.

DT Or Tories.

AN How would you contextualise your work for someone who's never been exposed to queerness, queer culture or art?

DT Within the queer community, sex and the ability to openly discuss sexuality are very powerful and important. Historically, anyone under the queer umbrella was shunned and pushed aside to the margins of society, so it's really important for me to have a community that is unapologetically sex-positive. I feel lucky and privileged to live in Bristol and the UK, because it feels like, culturally, we're getting to a stage where people can be more themselves – openly queer. Through my artwork, I use sexuality and references to sexualised models as an explicit point to say, "Fuck you". To show that I can use sexuality and sexualisation in my own way, without it being tied to misogyny.

AN Fuck, marry, kill: *Censorship* (2021), *Drenched* (2021), *God Save the Queen* (2021).

DT That's tricky... I would fuck *Drenched*, marry *God Save the Queen*, and kill *Censorship*.

AN I need to know your thought process.

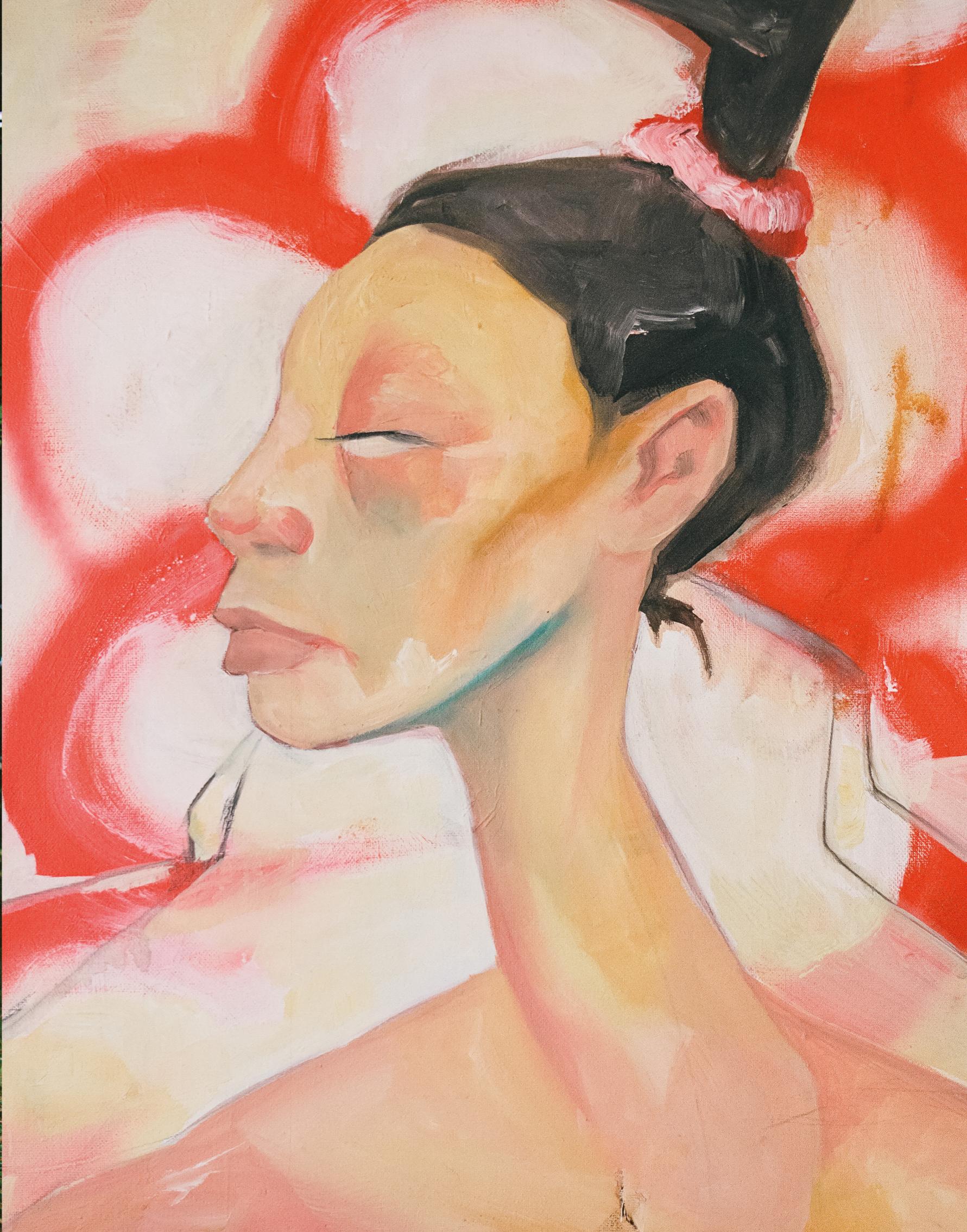
DT There are two people in *Drenched*, so that could be fun. The reason I hesitated at first is because I don't want to be pissed on. So I'm a bit torn.

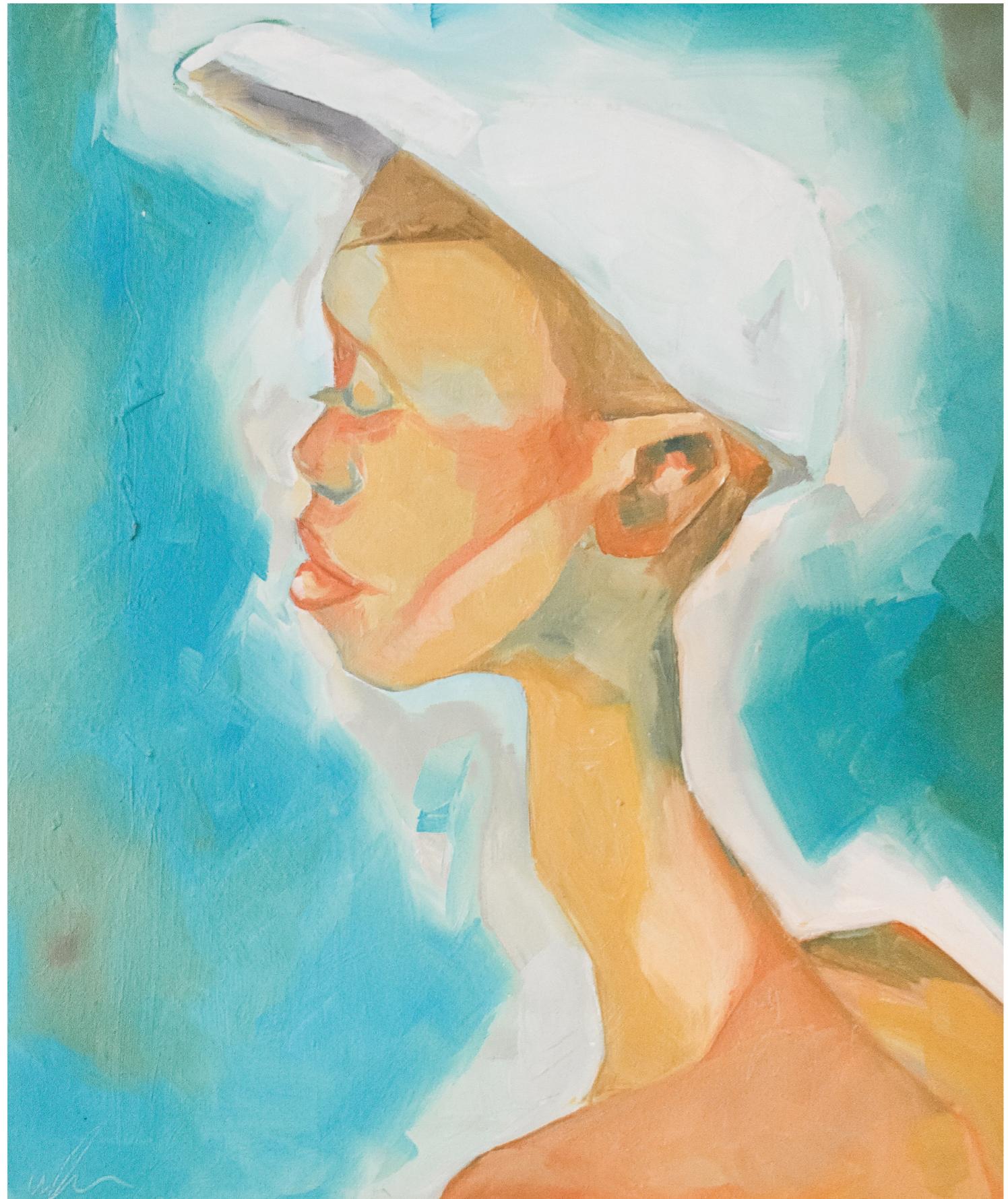
Previous *Censorship* 2021
Digital artwork

Opposite *Drenched* 2021
Oil paint on canvas
152 x 117 cm



Dress DILY TERRY and NANCY MADDOCKS





Previous *Pony tail* 2021
Oil paint on canvas
50 x 40 cm

Above *Blue* 2022
Oil paint on canvas
50 x 40 cm



Red 2023
Oil paint on canvas
60 x 50 cm

SSUUNA

artist SSUUNA words NYA FURBER

Opposite *femme africaine* 2020, acrylic on paper 29.7 x 42 cm

London-based artist Ssuuna creates vivid, elemental pieces that burst out of the canvas and the phone screen. His paintings feel almost alive as the subjects stare back at us, some warm and emotive, some cold and unreadable. The artist's sense of style across his portrait-heavy work comes from his striking use of colour and patterns. In our interview, we spoke about Ssuuna's childhood, his cultural identity, and how these factors influence his artistic practice. As much as Ssuuna's work contributes to the important canon of African representation in the fine art world, this interview reminded us that we should all take a break from analysis and critique, and instead, as Ssuuna tells us, "Just have fun painting."





black blues 2020
Acrylic on paper
29.7 x 42 cm

NF Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your family background?

S My family is from Uganda. I was born in London, but I was lucky to go back to Uganda every year in my teens and have done since then. I've always had a very strong sense of Ugandan-ness, which I think a lot of second-generation immigrant kids do have. In my case, one might think I was born there but I wasn't. I was brought up with a lot of Ugandan influences around me: the food at home, the music I listen to, and I speak the language. So, as British as I am, when I introduce myself to people, I always say I'm both. One's not complete without the other.

NF What initially drew you to becoming an artist?

S That's a loaded question for me. I hesitate to describe myself as an artist. Once, I bumped into this older gentleman on the tube while I was holding this massive canvas. He said, "Oh, well you're an artist, are you?" And I said, "No but I do paint in my spare time." He said, "But have people paid for your art? Well, then why wouldn't you say you're an artist?" Maybe it's a kind of imposter syndrome that makes me hesitate to define myself that way.

Saying that, as a kid I was always drawing and painting. But I didn't do any art at all from the age of about 16 to 24. I fell out of the habit, then got nervous about it - I didn't think I'd be good anymore. Just before the pandemic, I promised a friend I'd do a painting of her. When I finished it, I was surprised because I was artistically better than when I'd last been painting at 16. I thought it was strange, because I hadn't been doing anything in the interim.

NF I want to know a bit more about the influences of your artwork because a lot of it mediates on Black identity. I'm interested in how this came about and whether it was conscious or unconscious?

S I think a combination of conscious and unconscious. When I was a kid, we had a family friend, his mum was Kenyan and his dad was Jamaican. I remember one time I was at my friend's house, drawing, and his dad said to me, "Oh, why don't you ever draw any Black people?" He told me to draw a Black person, so I did. I drew a face and gave them curly hair. He said, "Well, that's not a Black person. That looks like a white face with an afro."

I remember at the time feeling a bit confused and maybe that was the first sowing of the seeds of understanding Black identity. I guess as a kid, I was drawing what I saw from my drawing books and cartoons: mostly white people. Over my late teens and early twenties, I developed a more reflective viewpoint on myself as a Black person in white society. It's not that I wouldn't paint a white person, but rather that I am producing things that aren't necessarily for a white audience.

Opposite durag 2020
Acrylic on paper
29.7 x 42 cm







NF Would you say it's kind of serendipitous, the way these images come to you?

S Yes, when I'm painting things just come to me. Sometimes I'll change my mind. Sometimes I won't pick a colour or a pattern until I'm actually doing it. So in that way it's kind of unconscious. I also pull on different African themes as they come to me but not always. In *femme africaine* (2020) the background is from the pattern of Kente cloth (a Ghanaian fabric often associated with the Ashanti) whilst the headwrap is inspired by the *gele*, worn by Yoruba women who mainly hail from Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. I liked the contrast of the bold colours with the dark skin.

Sometimes my references aren't completely accurate either. When I was painting *adumu* (2021) my stepmother gave me all kinds of feedback on its cultural inaccuracies. She'd say, "No, that jewellery doesn't look like that," or, "They don't wear it this way." But my paintings are not meant to be an exact representation. It's more about drawing inspiration and having fun.

NF Unlike most of your portraits, *adumu* (2021) depicts a group of people. Why did you choose to focus on the Maasai and was it a spontaneous decision too?

S In a way, yes. The Maasai people are a Nilot ethnic group from Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa, which is where I'm from. They're famous for their colourful, distinctive red dress and jewellery as well as for their unique jumping dance that they perform at ceremonies. When it comes to the background, there is no real reference, I just got an instinct to do it like that without necessarily a specific meaning tied behind it. I am quite a fan of the colour gold and metallic paints in general.

NF In your process you're quite impulsive, does that feel right?

S Yes but just in painting practice. What I love about art is the freedom to not have to explain why. Over time, I've enjoyed a lot more art that isn't necessarily 'painterly.' As a child, it seemed like art had to be as realistic as possible to be considered 'true art'. But as I've gotten older I've developed a taste for things that are more expressive. Sometimes I still do this but other times I'm just slapping the paint on and mixing it about. The impulse thing - I guess it's just enjoying pure creativity.

NF Are there any artists you draw inspiration from?

S I take inspiration from Kehinde Wiley's use of super vivid, colourful backgrounds, often depicted full of vegetation, and which seem to blend into the foreground and his subjects. I also admire his treatment of skin tones. Also, Michael Armitage's use of colour. It is more pastel-like than the colours I use but I particularly love the way he represents and blends realistic forms or subjects within these wacky worlds behind them. Another artist I take inspiration from is Harmonia Rosales. I often picture those three artists' work in my mind when painting as I am always thinking of different styles and techniques that I want to try. I'm just really enjoying the creative process.

Previous *Head in the Clouds* 2020
Acrylic on paper
29.7 x 42 cm

Opposite *adumu* 2021
Acrylic on paper
29.7 x 42 cm

IMAGE AS TYPE



artist JACK DUNN







COSIMA ROSS

artist COSIMA ROSS
words ROSIE PENNY
photography WILL REID





Previous *Belly documentation 1* 2021
Opposite *Belly documentation 2* 2021
photography **WILL REID**



The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog 2023
Oil paint, varnish and gloss paint on paper

Cosima Ross studied traditional painting at the Florence Academy, London, before moving to Brighton for university. Ross's work combines the narrative storytelling of frescos with the abject experiences of a misbehaving body. In her studio on Brighton's Grand Parade, an unfinished painting was roughly hung up on the wall – depicting loosely outlined figures grappling on a canvas of bruise-coloured hues.



Birth cave painting 2023, watercolour on paper



Preparatory sketch for *The horse is back* painting 2023, pencil, chalk and conte pencil on paper

UFO 2023, oil paint and varnish on primed paper



COSIMA ROSS / ROSIE PENNY

RP Why do you reference frescos in your practice?

CR I come from an art history background. I have this great book, *Italian Art: An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Italian Art at Burlington House, London* (1930), and it's all in black and white. I've never read any of the words, I just look at the pictures, and it's like the visual language from my whole upbringing. Both my parents are art historians, so this kind of work, and frescos, are what I've grown up with.

RP What attracts you to the horse as a recurring symbol in your fresco-like scenes?

CR I love horses. I can't stop using them in everything I do. It started in my first year of university, when I had a tumour and was trying to find a symbol for my frustration. It was an illustrative, emotional tool, whereas now it's more like a companion to my figures and self-portraits. I like horses because

they mean so much to so many people. They're masculine, they're stallions, they're heroic, but they're also free, spiritual, and erotic. The horse stands for different things in each of my works. In some drawings, the horse is inside an ovary, and the ovary has grown to accommodate the horse. I grew up around horses so I saw them a lot too, they were an easy thing for me to latch on to.

RP When I look at your work I feel like the internal and the external are muddled. I was wondering if this bodily transgression was an intentional choice, and what it signifies for you?

CR At the moment, what I've been trying to do is move on from what happened in my life medically, and expand into how those experiences have changed my way of thinking. I'm more interested in the ineffable and uncomfortable experiences of having a body, where we all just walk around and

Too big for comfort 2023, oil paint and varnish on primed paper 59.4 x 84.1 cm



go about our lives like it's perfectly normal just to be made up of pieces of meat. That's just so unusual to me. And I think that's because I've been lucky enough, in a weird way, to see the inside of my body, which is so cool to me because I don't think a lot of people get to do that. I've got pictures of my ovary, which I've now got printed on fabric, isn't that crazy?

CR I love it. This was from when I had both my ovaries, and this one was the one they took away. But anyway, I just think it's really cool that I can see what's inside of me, and that the stuff that's inside of me is also inside of you. It's like when you think about space too much and then you're like, "Wow, there's just so much". Like the Big Bang it just keeps growing – that's the kind of feeling I get when thinking about the insides of my body. I just can't comprehend how it all works. I feel like the type of surfaces I'm painting on, and how I'm using paint at the moment, is kind of bodily, because it's a lot of rubbing away and painting on a really shiny, slippery surface.

That's basically like a whiteboard. I pretty much could wipe this whole thing off, which is great. The scale of my work also means that I use a lot of physical movement to paint, so the paintings can be an exercise in themselves – utilising my whole body, it can sometimes feel quite strenuous.

RP If your work was located in a chapel, like many frescoes are, what would it be devoted to?

CR It would be devoted to the body, but not a specific body, or a functioning body, or a perfect body. It would worship all things human, like pain, grief, chaos, sex, lust and anger. Opening up a conversation about sacredness and the biological body. Bridging a connection between the tangible functions of a body and the intangible experience of spirit or essence.



Gullet womb 2023, oil paint, varnish poster paint, gloss paint and charcoal on primed paper

"A
CONNECTION
BETWEEN
THE TANGIBLE
FUNCTIONS
OF A BODY
AND THE
INTANGIBLE
EXPERIENCE
OF SPIRIT OR
ESSENCE.





Previous *Look out! Heavy load* 2023
Oil paint, varnish, charcoal and gloss paint
on primed paper 150 x 266 cm

Cave painting x ray
Watercolour on paper

CARRYING COMFORT

creative direction, words **ODARTEY ARYEE** and **RACHEL LAWERH**
photography **ODARTEY ARYEE**
clothing designers **AJABENG CLOTHING**, **AWOVI**, **ELEDZINE**
models **NUERKI NORTEY**, **ADDIE SOMUAH TWUM**, **MUSAH MARIAM**,
TRUDY TAB and **ELSA UCHECHI ARIRIERI**





In the mornings of my childhood, breakfast times were distinguished by the smell of delicious, fresh tea bread and a melodious call cutting through the morning quiet. By the rhythm and sound of her voice, we knew it was our favourite vendor: "Teaaaaa breaaaad eehhhh!". Her wooden tray, all-white gown, flat canvas shoes, socks, and gloves were not only her style, they were practical and protective for her long hours of walking.

She marked the beginning and end of various activities in our lives. These door-to-door vendors were a part of the network of relationships in our community, going from home to home, town to town, delivering essential items and conversations in the comfort of homes.



"Accra's evolution into a fast-paced city, has shifted traditional doorstep transactions into vibrant street-side commerce.

In the heart of Accra, life unfolds on the roads, whether commuting to work, navigating traffic, or selling wares. Vibrant street vendors and the melodies of *Trotro* buses set the tempo of daily life. *Carrying Comfort* draws inspiration from this dynamic environment, capturing the pulse of Accra's streets through fashion and performance art. Through this project, we're telling stories where daily life meets performance, preserving Ghana's rich, nostalgic past while reflecting its evolving culture. Like the vendors of our childhood, today's Ghanaian street vendors continue to shape the rhythms of daily life, creating a shared cultural experience across generations.

Each day, Accra's streets transform into a bustling marketplace, with vendors weaving through the flow of *Trotro* buses, offering a variety of goods in a moving market that is both accessible and unique. Named after the smallest colonial currency of the 1940s, *Trotros* are the backbone of Accra's public transport. At every stop, vendors crowd around, offering their goods through the open windows, extending the marketplace into motion.



Shirts & trousers AJABENG CLOTHING

"YESSSSS



Dress AW01

EY3

BROFOT!!

"EY3
RICH
OOO PIE!!
PUREEEE
PURE!!



Dress, shirt & skirt AWOVI

The vendors' rhythmic, well-crafted calls act as advertising taglines, skilfully attracting attention to their goods. Their wares, carefully balanced atop their heads, reflect a strategic blend of practicality and artistry, aligning with the Ghanaian tradition of carrying items on the head rather than the back, where space is primarily reserved for babies. This daily performance is not just an act of commerce; it is a cultural and visual art form passed down through generations.

As Accra has grown into a fast-paced city, doorstep exchanges have given way to vibrant street-side commerce. This shift is more than economic, it reflects the resilience of a community adapting to a changing city. Here, tradition and modern life

meet on the streets, where the country's heritage moves with the rhythm of the present.

Inspired by this blend of tradition and change, we envision the streets of Accra as fashion runways, where vendors moving through traffic become models of resilience and artistry. Clothed by domestic designers such as Ajabeng Clothing, Awovi, and Eledzine, they showcase bold colours, striking patterns, and the energy of the city, displaying a flair and vibrancy native to their homeland. *Carrying Comfort* is a testament to the unwritten traditions passed down through generations, an ode to the ingenuity and tenacity of those who gracefully navigate the urban landscape.





NAILED!

creative direction, styling, nails **COCO CHAN**

photography **IVAN WONG**

makeup **SHAN SHAN LI**

hair **SM**

photography assistant **CHUNG**

model **FEI FEI** at Self Management Hong Kong

clothes **CHERYL LEE and BOYS' CHOIR**





我的生活變成了何種模樣

What has my life become?

我在哪裡結束 你又在何處開始

Where do I end and where do you begin?





top CHERYL LEE

我已無法分辨錘子與釘子

I can no longer tell the hammer from the nail





我愛你 如同愛著丙烯、絲綢、清漆和膠水般

I adore you in acrylic, silk, shellac and gel





你是我生命的脈動

My vital organ



NAMO STYLISMS

你不能再破裂 離開我

You mustn't crack and leave me, again

WEE YANG

love, grocery

words MILLEN BROWN-EWENS

top CARO CHIA skirt, leggings STYLIST'S OWN



In his playful series *love, grocery*, fledgling photographer Weeyang imagines the plurality of motherhood

"The creative scene in Malaysia is slowly opening up," says Weeyang. "The industry here is small but I am very grateful to have met many young creatives like me willing to experiment and collaborate to explore different ideas and concepts."

After studying fashion design and pattern making at the prestigious Parisian school of design, ESMOD, the 20-year-old Malaysian creative, who now resides in Kuala Lumpur, is forging a path for himself as a photographer in the rousing Southeast Asian creative scene. Collaborating closely with designers, artists and musicians, Weeyang enters into a dialogue around the cultural difficulties that can come with working creatively in this part of the world, acknowledging traditional views that see the creative field as an unviable career path. Nevertheless, in the past year, his choreographed, playful compositions have garnered admiration from magazines such as *L'Officiel Hommes* and *Grazia*, setting out an entirely contemporary style.

Colour is very much the protagonist in Weeyang's practice. His flash-bleached palette takes cue from the late photographer and poet Ren Hang, widely considered one of the most prominent personalities of the new creative youth in China. Since his premature death by suicide in 2017, a wave

of contemporary photographers have drawn on his centring of nature, intimacy and honesty to render experiences of the modern world. "Ren Hang has been an inspiration of mine ever since high school," says Weeyang. "I admire the way in which his photographs portray nudity and sexuality in a way that I've never seen before. They are so raw and honest."

Using a 35mm point-and-shoot film camera, Weeyang joins Hang and a canon of photographers making the craft more accessible and expanding the appeal of homespun authenticity. He subtly experiments with light and shadow across a muted colour gamut, embedding a formal softness that brushes up against works by the likes of Yevonde and Georges Antoni.

The photographer's latest series, *love, grocery* honours the matriarchs who selflessly embrace their role as family caretakers and transform mundane tasks into acts of love and devotion. "My own mother has been a homemaker for twenty years," Weeyang shares. "She has cooked almost every day for our family but recently revealed to me that she has never actually enjoyed cooking. This acted as a stark reminder of the sacrifice she had made for me throughout my life but also alerted me to a sense of identity; this idea of her being a young girl with big dreams beyond the family unit."







"I'M VERY MUCH INSPIRED BY THE FASHION AND ENERGY OF '80S AND '90S HONG KONG. WHEN I'M DEVELOPING AN IDEA, I ALWAYS TEND TO SEE A TOUCH OF THAT INFLUENCE.







In the series, Weeyang conveys the transformative power of love, where youth – characterised by the balloon as an emblem of playfulness and colour – dances with maturity. Imbued with signifiers of domesticity, such as shopping bags and carpets, the compositions situate themselves within time-honoured traditions while offering something new.

Much like Hang, Weeyang cites the influence of late 20th-century Cantonese pop culture in his work. 1980s Hong Kong, in particular, is considered a decade of splendour with an immense boom in innovation across various entertainment mediums, including music, film and television. The energetic spectacles of Cantopop icons such as Anita Mui and Danny Chan injected colour into everyday style and advertising, which spread like a kaleidoscopic wildfire throughout the city.

“Chinese music and film from the ‘80s have played a big role in my life, especially because my parents are real movie lovers,” reflects Weeyang. “I’m very much inspired by the fashion and energy of ‘80s and ‘90s Hong Kong. It may not directly shape what I do, but when I’m developing an idea, I always tend to see a touch of that influence.” Drawing on his Chinese heritage, Weeyang has developed a bold visual vocabulary that is at once surreal and obscure yet formalised in its clean lines and deep shadows.

Some of the films that hold a special place in the photographer’s heart include Edward Yang’s *Yi Yi* (2000), a romantic drama set in Taiwan, Wong Kar-wai’s *Chungking Express* (1994) which follows two policemen on a quest for love, and Jia Zhangke’s intimate epic *Mountains May Depart* (2015), which have collectively shaped his artistic sensibilities and opened his eyes to the diverse ways stories can be told through cinema.

Weeyang hopes to hone his practice, with plans to extend his thoughtful and familial *love, grocery* series further. “I’d like to expand this into a bigger project, depicting a unique story of love and dedication shared between family members, friends and romantic partners.”

As he artfully familiarises himself with the world of photography, Weeyang joins a host of others exploring the fading distinction between photography and fine art. In his hands, the camera expresses a way of seeing, thinking and interacting that builds on his cultural heritage with a distinctly youthful energy.





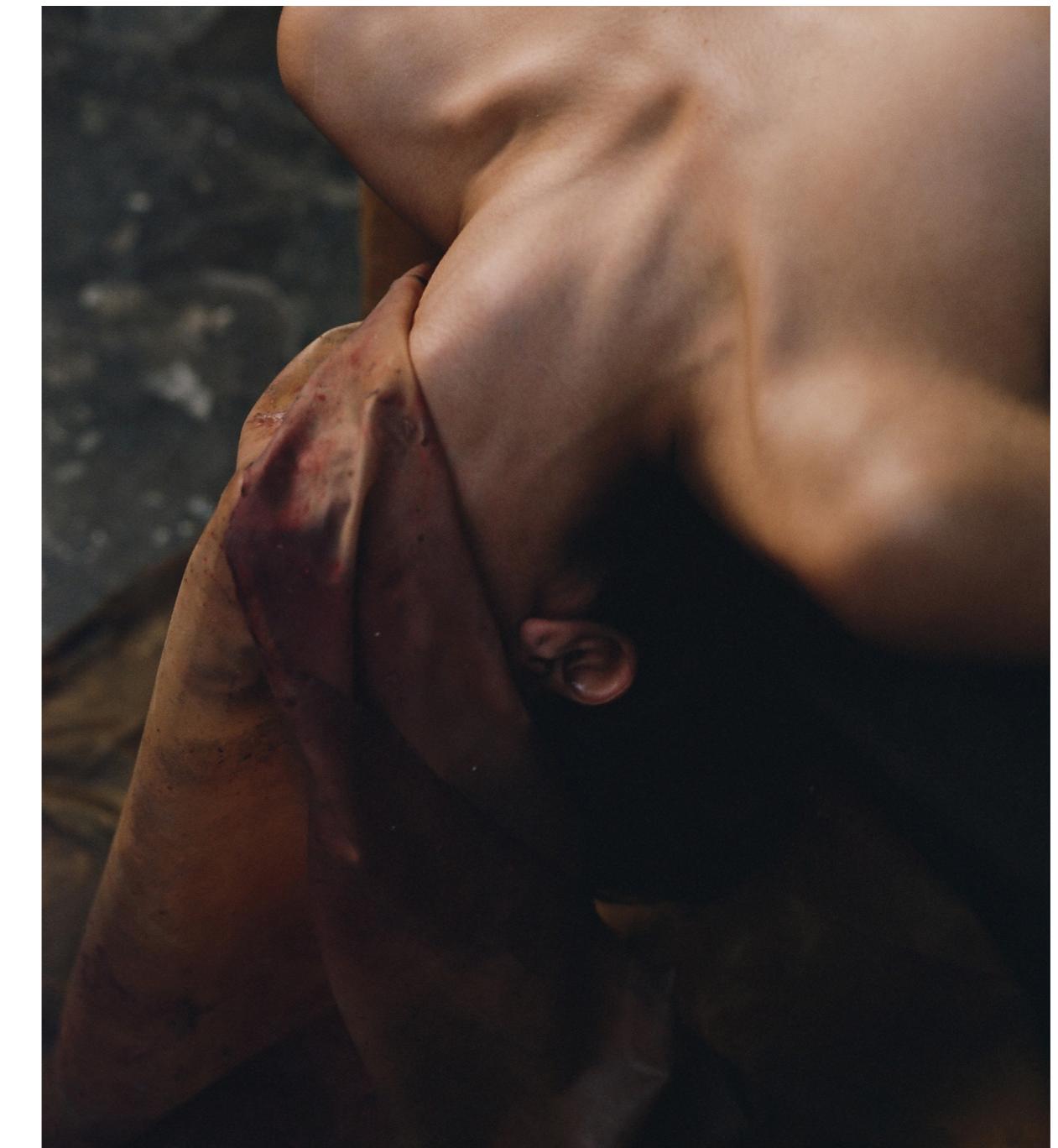


photography WEEYANG
styling WEEYANG and JENN TEH
hair and makeup JENN TEH
model MARIE SHEEN at Scout Models Kuala Lumpur
words MILLEN BROWN-EWENS
clothes CARO CHIA



EDGE OF ABSTRACTION

Anna Mays is a printmaker and artist from Dublin. Her work is centred around the use of her body as both tool and subject. Her practice engages in the critical examination of what happens when the body is taken to the edge of abstraction. While we spoke the night drew in, and halfway through our conversation, she stood up to illustrate a point, walking away from her computer and returning with one of her works. As a printmaker who also works with textiles, I wanted to understand how her work operates between traditional tools and vernaculars of print, like ink, metal and paper, as well as unconventional, more bodily ones like dust, graphite, ash, fat, latex and fine muslin cloth. "Because my work is about the sensory body, it became hard to describe that purely visually," she says. "The materials had to become central to the work."



artist **ANNA MAYS**
art direction **ESME ROTELLA**
photography **SI MELBER**
performer / art practitioner **TASALLA TABASOM**
photography assistant **ROSIE RISDALE**
words **MARGOT DOWER**

“I COVER
MY BODY IN
OIL, IMPRINT
MYSELF ONTO
CLOTH, AND
THEN COVER
THE CLOTH
IN GRAPHITE
POWDER TO
REVEAL AN
IMPRESSION.



MD Print has always felt like a language of dialectics or binaries to me – positive and negative, oil and water. Does this inform how you work?

AM I'm very interested in how things meet to form relationships, tensions and parallels. I like to use contrasting scales, and mediums – the very messy, bodily nature of working with latex against the very precise nature of screenprinting. I'm interested in the correspondence between the microscopic and the macroscopic. My work looks inwards, at the micro-universe inside of the body, but contemplates larger topics as well – space and time, death. Everything is so connected.

MD When I first saw your work I was interested in how you arrived somewhere. It felt like there was a lot of filtering, or that images passed through different stages – procedural, almost.

AM My work is incredibly process-driven, and there's a dialogue between these different processes. For instance, when I'm working with etching plates, I cover my body in oil, imprint myself onto cloth, and then cover the cloth in graphite powder to reveal an impression. Later, I use the muslin directly to expose a silkscreen, which I can print onto an etching plate, which is what I use to cast the latex sheets. I like working with the body directly and immediately.



"I FELT
THE BODY
IS MEANT
TO SPILL,
TO NOT BE
CONTAINED.





MD We're speaking about procedure, but it feels like we're also speaking about time, and decay.

AM I think our relationship with time is really difficult to untangle. There seems to be this human desire to leave a mark, or trace, a desire to create a moment no longer subject to time. I'm interested in the idea that the only direct contact that we have with the past is through traces, marks, remains. I use organic and transitory materials in my work like latex, dust, ash, oil, to explore degradation, breaking down, fragmentation. I suppose I work with lifespans, exploring when things become visibly subject to time. How materials respond to each other differently, and how little control I have over their responses.

MD There's also something here about failure, maybe, which is a word I associate with drapery – its fallibility, how it is about to fall. These new works are made with muslin, they are textiles.

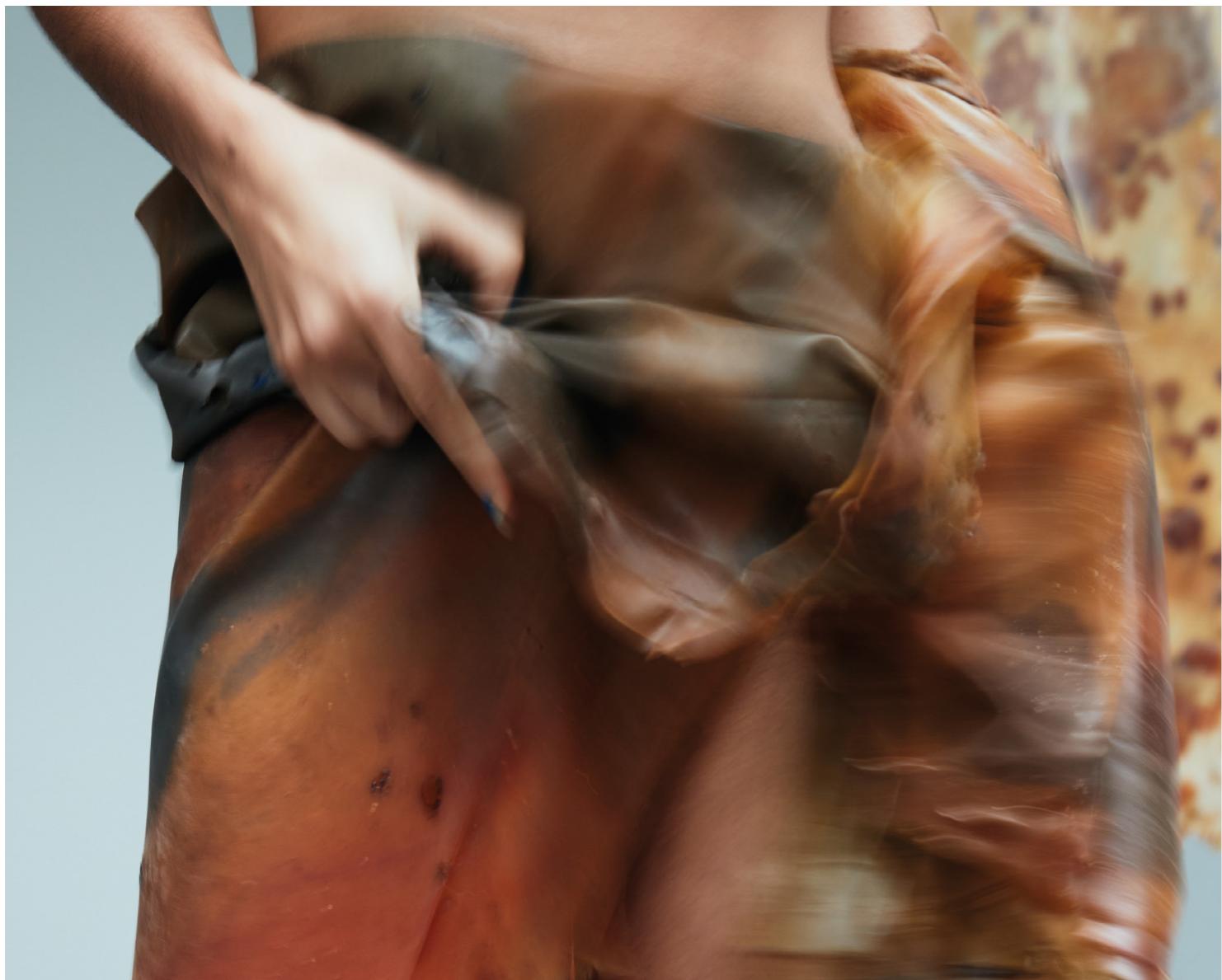
AM Printmaking can be very image-based, and I wanted to move away from paper. Because my work is so centred on the sensory body – how it lives, breathes – I had to expand the way I thought about substrates. That's why I started working with latex. I felt the body is meant to spill, to not be contained. The use of muslin is an important part of my process, though it never appears itself in finished work. I definitely work with textiles, and the latex behaves like a textile, though I wouldn't have the skills or experience to call myself a textile artist.

MD Spilling is movement. I'm intrigued by how one substrate leads to another – metal plates, muslin, paper, latex, plate again... It seems procedural, but also cyclical, there is a sense of forward momentum.

AM The way I understand our relationship with time is through surface, and mainly through touch, imprinting, leaving an impression, a mark. This is fundamental to print. But with printmaking, it's also about reproduction. I wonder about how reproduction can mean the loss of a sense of intimacy, because they fall away from being directly linked to a moment – the moment of impression.

MD I've always considered and loved printmaking as evidence-making, or a kind of fieldwork or note-taking. In the same way that it's interested in traces, it's interested in recording.

AM I am fascinated with the fact that we are living in the Anthropocene; the geological époque that is defined by human impact. The earth is keeping an archive of human history, from paintings in caves to the constituents of our soil. It tells the story of our history and our ancestors: waste, fossils, marks left in caves. I think our physical bodies mirror this, they remember, and tell the individual stories of our lives: fractures, scars, growth arrest lines in bones. I see this through the lens of print.









MILLIE HARRIS

woodworker **MILLIE HARRIS** photography **SAMUEL TERRY** words **EMILY SOUTHCOTT**





MILLIE HARRIS / EMILY SOUTHCOTT

A designer, woodworker, and a dear friend of mine, Millie and I have spent many evenings together, gossiping about our crushes, sharing tears over heartbreaks, and attempting to put the world to rights. But tonight feels different. I find myself slouched next to Millie on her loveseat, ready to talk about her work.

Millie is a country girl at heart, which has dictated her design journey, chasing a constant calling to reconnect with the natural world around her. *The Courting Bench* is a testament to so many facets of Millie's persona in this respect. A bespoke piece with nods to 17th-century design, sustainability, and modern techniques. A striking curved beam cuts loudly through the centre, connecting the two individual seats.

You can't help but feel like this is a visual love letter to the material of the wood itself. With her heart and hand devoted to emotionally durable design, a genre that enhances the longevity of the relationship between users and products, Millie brings soul to a design that celebrates connection within the physicality of separation.

Its essence is in the functional architecture that the bench cultivates. It's for girls like us in our twenties, for the intimate conversations between the couple down the street, for the local postie to sit on with the neighbours. This refreshing take on contemporary design, weaves together a harmonious balance of social proximity, ergonomics, and a sprinkling of tongue-in-cheek modernity.

ES Tell me about the start of your journey with woodwork.

MH When I was little, I spent a lot of time at my dad's wood workshop, and whenever I'd go, I liked to collect all the offcuts from the floor and make little necklaces. I always had a creative eye for making things. Where my mum lives too, is surrounded by tall oak and beech trees. The forest itself is a place to go back to and settle my mind.

ES So, in effect the material you've used for *The Courting Bench* is raw not only in its origins, but also how it's connected to your upbringing. What was next for you as an artist?

MH I got into Brighton University to study 3D Design and Craft. To be honest, the workshop was a very male-dominated environment. I found solitude hiding in the corner and really honing my craft at woodturning. It was less competitive and I could really switch off and get into my own art.

I went around and collected wood burls and diseased bits of timber from tree surgeons and turned them into sculptural forms, showcasing them alongside different tales of the landscape of Sussex, connecting themes of memory and

narrative. After this, I joined the *Highgrove Traditional Crafts, Create: Rethinking Wood for Furniture* course at The Snowdon School of Furniture, where I learned everything from forestry management to intricate joinery. This is where I really developed my ideas as a woodworker and maker. My final piece, *The Courting Bench*, is an amalgamation of everything I loved in traditional design and also contains sculptural elements.

ES Sourcing the material is a key decision in woodwork, how did you choose the wood for *The Courting Bench*, clearly sustainability is a focus for you?

MH As a woodworker it's important for me to choose materials native to the location where I am crafting. The whole seat is from a single piece of green ash timber, a native species to its environment at Highgrove. Lots of trees are being cut due to ash dieback, which is a fungal disease. I wanted to showcase how this material can still be turned into something beautiful. That's where the gradient within the colour of the seat comes from. The strong olive tone running through the blonde ash acts as the heart of the tree.

ES Did you stay true to the form of a typical loveseat or did you adapt its design?

MH In the traditional design of a loveseat, the seats are opposite, rigid, and forward facing, so you can engage with the other sitter but not so intimately. I decided to change that and ergonomically carve the seat so the whole body is naturally positioned to face and engage with the other sitter, relaxing into the S-shaped back rest.

ES What process did you use to create this S-shape, with such an ordinarily rigid material?

MH The S-shape itself is classic in all loveseats. I used steam bending on one 2m piece of wood, loosening the fibres so that I could turn each spindle individually on a lathe. It's based on a 17th-century French design, made for ladies who had their big puffy dresses on. As women's dresses changed, so did the loveseat. Then the design changed, turning into a double-seat gossip chair or a kissing bench. It's interesting to me how simple design is passed on and changed, iterated throughout time. I wanted it to be engaging for each couple, whether they're sharing a kiss, or being intimate. Its purpose is ever-changing.

ES What do you consider to be the role of the modern loveseat?

MH I think it's all about connecting objects to memories - the power that design holds. The object itself has power in your home, holding the memory of a particular person or interaction. *The Courting Bench* is always there, but it's the people using it that change. Which makes me think that maybe the things that really matter are the interactions we have, the last time we cried together or the last person we snogged.







“MAYBE THE
THINGS THAT
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OR THE LAST
PERSON WE
SNOGGED.





JAYCEE MENTOOR



photography JAYCEE MENTOOR words CAL MACKENZIE FINNIGAN model PAUL LEFEVRE at Power Talent Agency

ON MASCULINITY

What defines masculinity? And how does one go about presenting it?

These are perhaps some of the fundamental questions that creatives ask themselves today when drawing up briefs for new projects and forging connections with other creatives. Photographer Jaycee Mentoer's unique approach to masculinity joins the canon of contemporary understandings of its complexities. A detailed academic study of *Men and Masculinities* didn't formally commence until after the Queer Rights and Women's Liberation movements of the '60s, '70s, and '80s. One central insight stated that masculinity is not a natural or intrinsic possession of manhood, but rather a more amorphous coalescence of societal positionings and characteristics, historically ascribed to certain types of men.

Much discourse surrounded this decoupling of masculinity from man, in an attempt to delineate masculinity into categories. However, the understanding that masculinity is plural and moving has permeated much of today's popular creative discourse and practice.

Today, there are many ways in which masculinity is played with and presented by creatives. One such creative who works with the fluid potential of masculinity is Cape Town-born Jaycee Mentoer. At age 16, Mentoer was gifted his first camera, a Canon 1100D. A decade later, the photographer's work is marked by a desire to capture the nuances of masculinity, presented through a charming softness and easy intimacy, achieved by the frequent use of domestic

settings that feel familiar to us all. The essence of home often acts as a backdrop to his sitters, producing a natural atmosphere of vulnerability and candour.

Where are we at our most relaxed, easy, and intimate? Often, the answer is at home. By incorporating visual emblems of domesticity, Mentoer ties his masculine subjects with comforting associations.

Much like in the 1990s, an era marked by the study of masculinity entering the sociological mainstream, diverging into something more individual, Mentoer's work exhibits each model uniquely, prioritising how they want to be seen. Describing photography as a "learning process," Mentoer's practice demands a case-by-case approach.

trousers SANDRO





“AN HOMAGE
TO, AND
REMINISCENT
OF YOUTH.



Gilded mirrors, plush velvet sofas, ornate vases, and varnished wooden floors transform everyday backdrops into essential focal points, working alongside his warmly lit front-facing models. Through this treatment, warmth is generated, as if at a friend's house, during a balmy day in the height of summer. Mentoer notes that his photographs deliberately thread nostalgia throughout, describing them as "an homage to, and reminiscent of youth."

Memories of childhood summers gone by shine through in Mentoer's homely scenes, illustrated by the soft lustre of boyishness with which he treats his models. This can be seen in the photos of Paul, standing casually against a wall or in front of a sofa. In another, he poses against a plain white background, with a decorative golden wall feature behind him, resembling a halo.

These photographs work alongside those that incorporate more obviously domestic objects. The result is an overall feeling of

nostalgic comfort through the mundane. Photography has been part of Mentoer's understanding of himself since his first assisting job at age 15. He considers his work a conversation, with others and also with oneself. Indeed, the soft domestic charm that Mentoer constructs acts as a vignette through which the model's, and his own, sense of self and masculinity become increasingly tangible.

His first solo exhibition, *Homecoming King*, at Goodspace Gallery in 2018 was a poignant example of this desire to understand himself through his creative process. For the series, Mentoer photographed exclusively people of colour from Sydney. As a Black man, collaborating with people he resonates with is a process of "catharsis." *Homecoming King* also delved into the representation and exteriorisation of self – by which seeing yourself in others provides vital, life-affirming insight, especially for those artists and viewers often marginalised

in mainstream photographic cultures. Drawing from a broad cross-section of society, Mentoer spoke to that masculine plurality in this exhibition, ascribing the title *Homecoming King* to both himself and each sitter, while actualising the sociological conclusions made decades earlier; that masculinity can be found anywhere, in anyone, through self-assertion.

Mentoer's work is individual and personal, paying homage to his youth and bygone summers. But going beyond the personal, his work is part of a larger conversation, a historical discourse around masculinity. Through his creative choices, the young photographer demonstrates the fundamental conclusions reached by sociologists in the 1990s, which still inform how we see masculinity today; as plural, moving, and accessible to us all.



top JAC + JACK trousers FRETTE shoes DR MARTENS



top VINTAGE trousers GIMAGUAS shoes DR MARTENS



rebirth

creative direction **ELLA SUGRUE** and **OLIVE MCCOY OYENIRAN**

photography **OLIVE MCCOY OYENIRAN**

model, makeup, styling, words **ELLA SUGRUE**

hair **JULIET BLOUNT**

photography assistant **ABBIE GREEN**

nails **NANA NAZ**



In the sulking depths, something has changed.



You won't know who you are when you emerge.

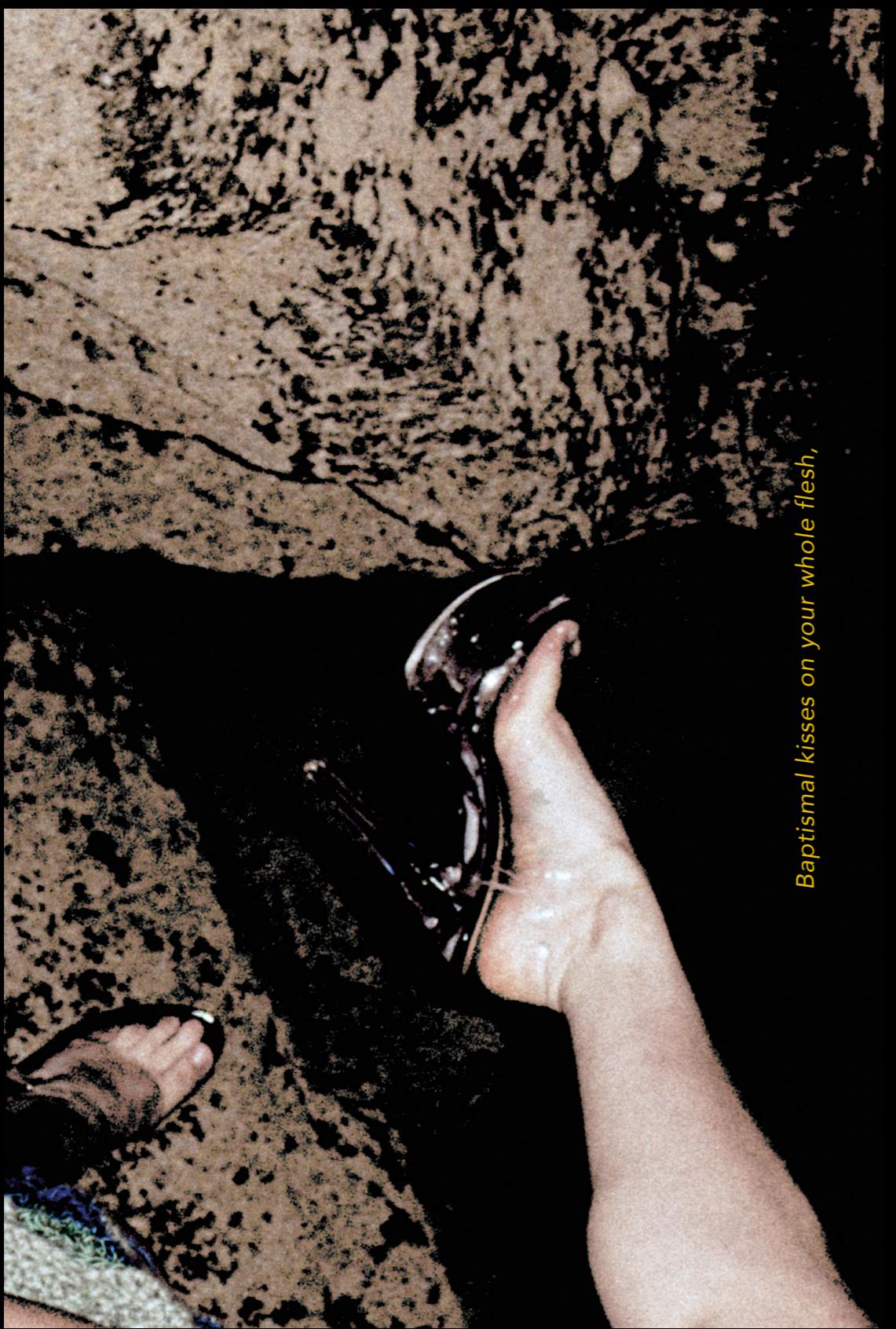
The water is brazen, comforting



and dry land addles you, now.







Baptismal kisses on your whole flesh,



and seaweed tugging at your heels.



It is a rebirth, a solemn rebirth.



You'll stay here.



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