



Cover Image by Rea Brayshaw
Inside Front Cover Image by Luke Nelson
Table of Contents Image by Will Lula

If you could save a moment, return to it in your mind, and carefully document it – what moment do you choose? What do you hold close to your soul? What shapes you as the one, faithful spectator? In an attempt to answer, *If I Could Witness Anew* sought featured artists that bear witness to their everyday life, yet utilize the camera to expose, archive, and experience monumental, hidden realities. Deeply personal, and sometimes misleading, the images provide visualization to struggles of personhood, complicated relationships to homelands, and the beauty of otherworldly encounters. As you peruse through the pages, the range found between our artists reflects an endlessness of experiences, unbounded by place and time. Above all, the desire to be a witness – and to be witnessed – describes the humanity and timelessness that runs through the issue.

Katie Noble & Elleah Gipson
Co-Editors of ISO Magazine

LETTER

FROM THE EDITORS

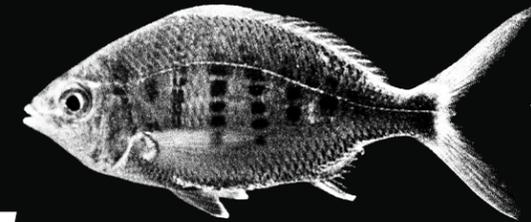
ISO Magazine is a student-run publication based out of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Since 2008, our rotating staff has worked to explore contemporary themes in photography and image culture. We place the work of emerging photographers in conversation with that of established artists, as well as write critically and creatively on photography.

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The Illusory Truth Effect



Yong Min Park

with words by Jarod Polakoff

The photograph has a notoriously contentious history. Since its early 19th century conception, the medium has occupied a unique liminal space, breaching perceived divides between the interpretive emotional subjectivity of fine-art, and the truth-seeking factualism of journalistic media. In its earliest forms, photography was accepted as a science, a tool within the study of optics—to posit its capacity for artistic expression would have been met with immediate dismissal. The photographic image was a descriptive tool in the most literal sense: it created an honest and impartial replication of the world before it. Unlike painting, drawing, or sculpture, the photograph used its material—light—in its least refined, most pure form. The resultant precedent was that an image created with a camera would be unbiased, nonfiction, itself pure.

That the photograph and the machines used to make them are irrefutably concerned with optics has not changed; the photograph would cease to exist without light. But a bevy of contemporary artists use the photographic medium to complicate the false association of inherent truth-telling with this use of optics. Yong Min Park engages with this centuries-long problem in his series *Illusory Truth Effect*, a five-part photographic series which blends truth and falsehood in an attempt to problematize widely accepted beliefs about the

role of the photograph. At the forefront of Park's practice is his interest in memory, and the troubling ways in which the photograph has become an accepted stand-in for it. The title of his series refers to a psychological phenomenon described as the tendency to believe false information to be true after repeated exposure, and in a sense, serves as a literal description of what Park endeavors to accomplish in his photographs.

Chapter I of *Illusory Truth Effect* takes an age-old photographic motif, the seascape, and turns it from something seemingly trite and simplistic, into a deliciously clever exemplification of the photograph's latent capacity for endless manipulation. Across ten identically composed black and white images of a single oceanic horizon, Park captures what would appear to be ten unique lighting conditions; a hazy morning, a bright afternoon cast in overhead sun, a full moon reflected on the rippling ocean current, and a night sky speckled with stars and constellations present just a few of the several weather circumstances represented in the series. This alone is rather impressive, that Park would have been able to document the same landscape with such precise uniformity in such a variety of conditions is a feat in and of itself. Just when you think you understand what you're seeing, Park pulverizes this understanding;

these images are not unique from one another, in fact, they're all the same. These are not ten unique images, but ten unique prints of the same negative, each one manipulated via traditional darkroom techniques—dodging, burning, masking, etc—to create the illusion of a temporal lapse in a single landscape.

“These subtle acts of mischief are what makes Park’s work so powerful; the photographs alone may appear simple, but in shifting the details, truth unravels and he posits a vision of the world anew.”

Park further submerges himself in the ocean in Chapter II: *Paleozoic*. Turning his focus to underwater fauna, Park presents a series of high-contrast black and white photos of fish, sharks, coral reefs, and other aquatic life. Scaly surfaces emerge from the stark black environment, schools of fish move fluidly en masse, and rock formations jut in and out of frame as if to imply, without a doubt, that these images were taken underwater. In actuality, the images from Chapter II were shot through aquarium glass, not only exploiting the unique lighting environment of this captive space to create yet another optical illusion, but also bringing to the fore broader questions of truth and fiction as they pertain to institutional spaces. These questions are confronted head-on in Chapter III of *Illusory Truth Effect*. Moving into the realm of the museum, Park presents a series of photographs of dioramas from the American Museum of Natural History—already an attempt at a total mimesis of reality—and subtly contorts them. Again, Park pays close attention to uniformity across the series, composing each diorama perfectly in frame. The grainy quality of the film in conjunction with the realism already achieved in the dioramas themselves makes the authenticity of these scenes nearly inscrutable. Below each photograph is a label—blurred out to evoke the “haziness of memory”—meant to describe the diorama above. Look carefully, and you’ll notice that some are complete misrepresentations, false names that serve to further subvert our understanding of the photograph, the museum space, and memory as a whole. These subtle acts of mischief are what makes Park’s work so powerful; the photographs alone may appear simple, but in shifting the details, truth unravels and he posits a vision of the world anew.





POLAR BEAR



TUNDRA



MANZANITA LAKE



CARAVAN NATIONAL PARK



BLOOD GUTS & BUBBLEGUM

Rea Brayshaw

Text by Ella Cilli

In *Blood, Guts, and Bubblegum*, Rea Brayshaw encourages the viewer to see in unexpected ways. When viewing each image individually, they are eerily sterile. Every piece of fur and feather is in focus, and methodically arranged throughout the composition. Jars of insects and animals floating in liquid sit on spotless counters. On their own, the images are clean and concise. However, when observed holistically, they take on a new form and meaning. The sequence of these cold, calculated images implies the gore beyond the frame. This is not only hinted at in her title but apparent in the photos as well. Note the small knife and tool by the tiger fur or the ambiguous marble: blood has and will be shed. The blood and guts of taxidermy is to be expected. By steering the primary focus away from the unavoidable gore, Brayshaw challenges her viewers to reconsider their preconceived notions about taxidermy. She does so by instead intensely focusing on the artistry and attention to detail of the practice. It is evident that Brayshaw

respects and appreciates this craft through her calculated composition and form. All of the taxidermists Brayshaw worked with requested to remain anonymous. Though their reasons are unclear, the faceless artisans add an aura of mystery to the series. All of the images share a common thread: bright yet soft light that gives the project vitality, which contrasts expectations of the subject matter. Brayshaw's title *Bloods, Guts, and Bubblegum* accurately represents the intersection between the beauty of this craft and the violence that inevitably precedes such art. Brayshaw does not shy away from violence, but rather represents taxidermy with care and intention. Instead of shocking viewers with gore, she encourages them to look deeply and thoughtfully, utilizing context. By representing taxidermy in this way, she is revealing that this unseen industry is not often portrayed with accuracy. As Brayshaw explores and reveals taxidermy, she and the viewer connect over a mutual discovery of something anew.







QUEERING NATURE:

The Landscape of Queer and Trans Masculinity

MADDIE PROVOST



Throughout literary and artistic history, nature has stood as the archetype for freedom. Escapism is often gained through people's connection with the natural world, including themes of liberation, introspection, and beauty. In *Queering Nature: The Landscape of Queer and Trans-Masculinity*, Maddie Provost dissects these themes of freedom and connects them to queer and trans-masculinity. Stemming from a critique of the Western Manifest Destiny concept as well as their own journey with queerness, Provost explores the intersections of nature, queerness, masculinity, and liberation. With queerness historically being deemed as unnatural by cis-hetero society, *Queering Nature* shows Provost rejecting this outdated notion and embracing the naturalness of queer and trans bodies and existence. Traveling across the US, they brought their cameras to various states, from New York to New Jersey, Wyoming, Arizona, California, and their home state of Colorado. Shot exclusively on film and mostly hand-developed by Provost, they wanted to embody the themes of naturalness not only in nature but in the darkroom. The photos in this remarkable and earnest project show queer and trans bodies embracing the

nature around them. In stunning photos of otherworldly purple fields, coupled with black and white images of queer bodies becoming one with the mountains and the skies, they offer a queer lens to nature as a place of liberation and freedom. This project provides a new vision of queerness, embracing its validity by placing it in nature. Provost's ability to seamlessly blend queer and trans bodies within nature is unparalleled in this powerful work against rigid gender standards.

In their statement about the work, Provost explains how nature symbolizes their own experience with masculinity from a trans lens: "A continuous cycle of transition, much like a plant, flower, or tree undergoing annual transformations. Witnessing the leaves gracefully succumb to fall embodies a beautiful death, illustrating the simultaneous strength and delicate beauty inherent in nature's seasonal transitions. For me, masculinity serves as a tool of strength rather than power, providing a perspective that allows me to perceive beauty through unexplored eyes."

Text by Lamar Kendrick-Dial







Handumanan sa Pamilya



Jacob Herrera Wachal





Stare at the unmade bed, and witness the sunlight cast shadows through the blinds onto the wall before you. That painting on the wall might be unfamiliar – or perhaps you just can't seem to recall where you've seen it before. The pillows lay arranged in the shape of another body in bed – holding space and comfort next to where you just awoke from. Domestic spaces do not have to be your own to recognize the comfort of a place called home.

Handumanan sa Pamilya explores Jacob Herrera Wachal's identity as a second generation Filipino-American, interacting with his elders who hold the memories of Cebu, Philippines. Working against the oppressive history of Western colonialism, the images capture the specificity of banal domestic moments, while preserving a magical element of archiving his familial memories.

The collaboration between himself, the camera, and his elders allows Wachal a unique freedom in expressing kinship. It is the crisp, cold water poured over your head or the heat radiating off the stove while cooking with relatives. It is placing your head on a your mother's lap, and the comfort while catching a glance at the ring she's worn all your life. It is the hands that join together – cooking, working, playing, sharing – that strengthen generational memory. Wachal's images of the diasporic American home transform the

physical place, far from Cebu, into a new temporal space defined through tradition, passed down by each generation. In an act of honor, love, and gratitude to his elder's memory, *Handumanan sa Pamilya* is Wachal's attempt to document his heritage for the present, and future family living on the same foreign land that he was born.

Words by Katie Noble







A NOMAD IN TOWN



NOOR ALIRIZA



Navigating to find a sense of place within a new worldly perspective and finding comfort in a new landscape are central themes in Noor Alireza's recent body of work, *A Nomad In Town*. The visual narrative follows the character of a Nomad from a distant land, Saudi Arabia, who arrives in the United States with an avid curiosity for exploration. The Nomad's exploration is a photographic reflection of Alireza's personal experiences visiting and living in the United States. Each image serves as a glimpse into the Nomad's travels. Alireza draws parallels between the United States and her homeland of Saudi Arabia through her images of coastal beaches, dry desert plains with draping palm trees, and soft mountains. The Nomad can find a sense of place – a sense of home – and a sense of belonging from the various destinations. They witness the rich culture and landscapes found along the way. Particularly inspired by Vijay Agnew's book *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*, Alireza seeks familiarity through intersecting identity to landscape, such that "Memories can be nostalgically evocative of imaginary homelands" becomes the goal of the Nomad's journey. Thus, collective memories, stories, and visions of the homeland manifest themselves into the imagery. The series concludes with the Nomad realizing that home is an endless possibility to their choosing. To search for connection within the unknown is a fearsome journey, but by embarking on it you will ultimately find it.

Text by Gabby Bates







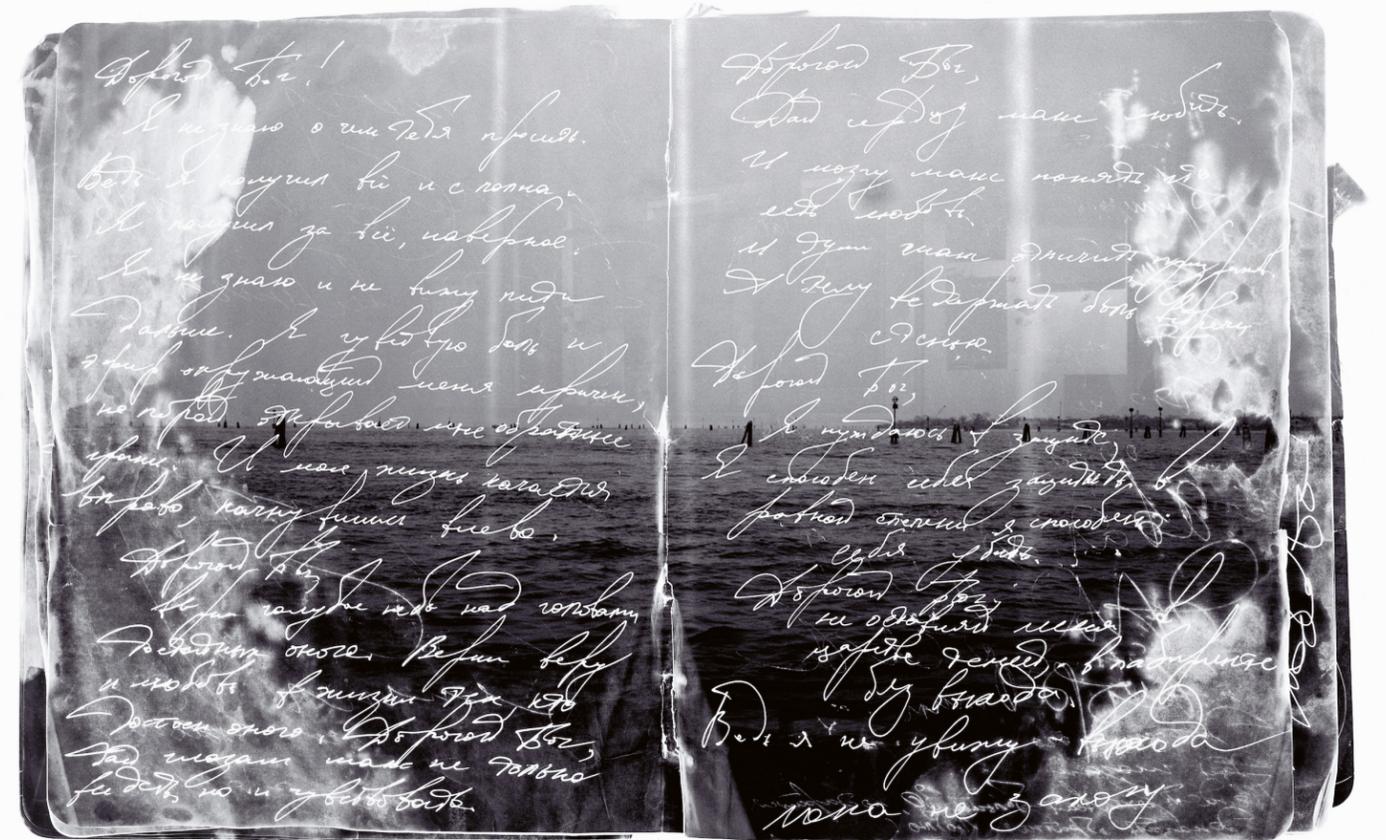
.Raw

Daniil Kobizskiy

In .Raw, Daniil Kobizsky gives a glimpse into his life after leaving Russia. His use of the Oxford dictionary's many interpretations of "raw" allows him to capture moments that speak to the unadulterated essence of life's struggles. Similar to raw materials or food that hasn't been cooked, the photos show scenes that haven't been altered or embellished, letting the viewers experience his true feelings and experiences. Kobizsky, who has a deep sense of authenticity, captures these moments without the need of interpretation or justification, just journaling the pure complexity of human existence. Every image is a moving reminder of the genuineness of life's path, where feelings are strong and unapologetically guide our thoughts. We are invited to see the raw reality of making new starts, accepting change, and starting over through Kobizsky's vision. The series considers how to define authenticity and investigates the life-changing potential

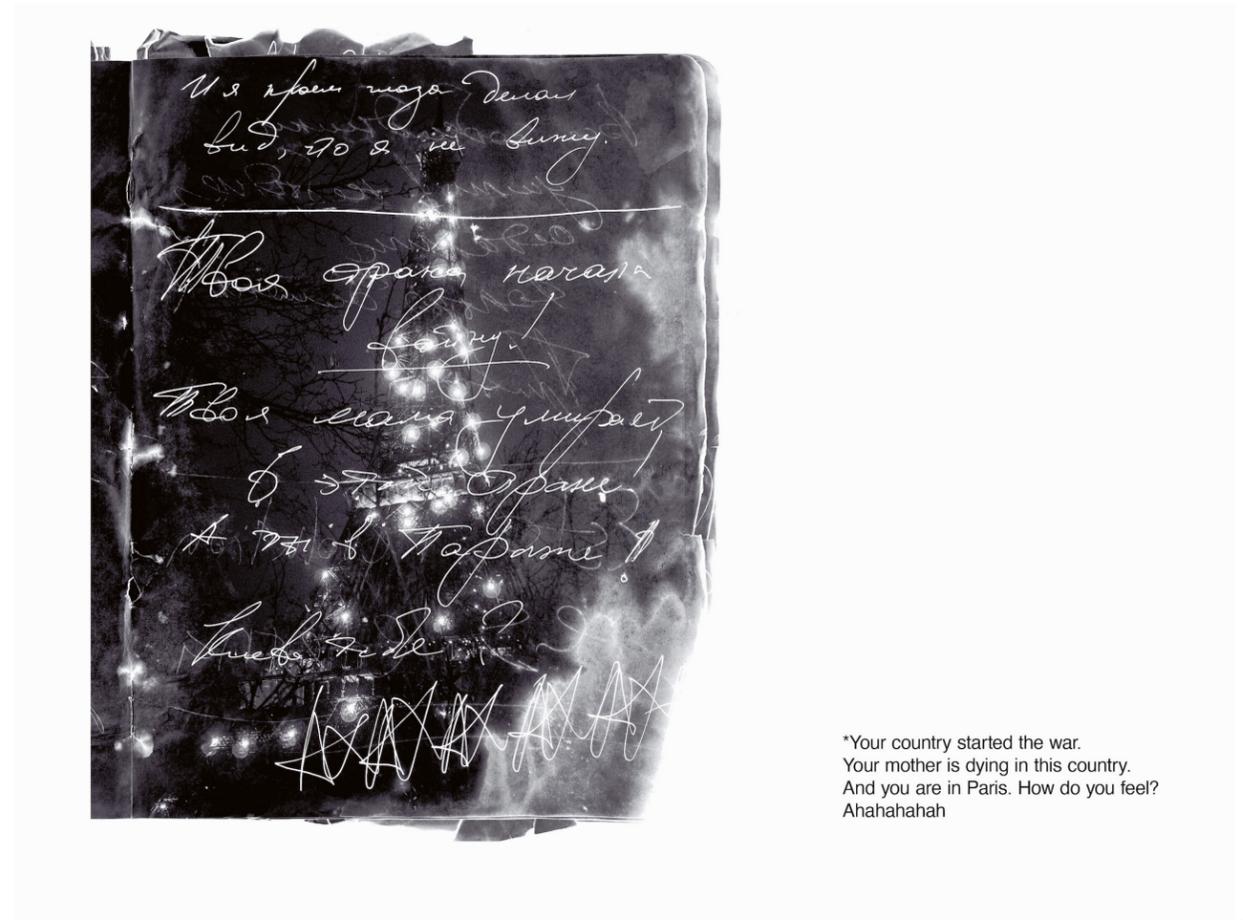
of experiencing life at its most basic. We are invited to connect with him on a highly intimate level, reading the diary pages of his contemplations on religion, family and politics. With moving words layered over the photos, such as "Your country started the war. Your mother is dying in this country. And you are in Paris. How do you feel? Ahahahahah," Kobizsky gives the story layers of nuance and complexity. He is exploring the turbulence of young adulthood, while physically displaced from his homeland. The pictures themselves show a variety of moving scenes, such as a lone figure reflecting through a window or an empty, chaotic room that represents change and unrest. A sense of loss – both within himself and in the world at large – pair with the high contrast images and cursive handwriting to put the viewer at unease.

Text by Elleah Gipson

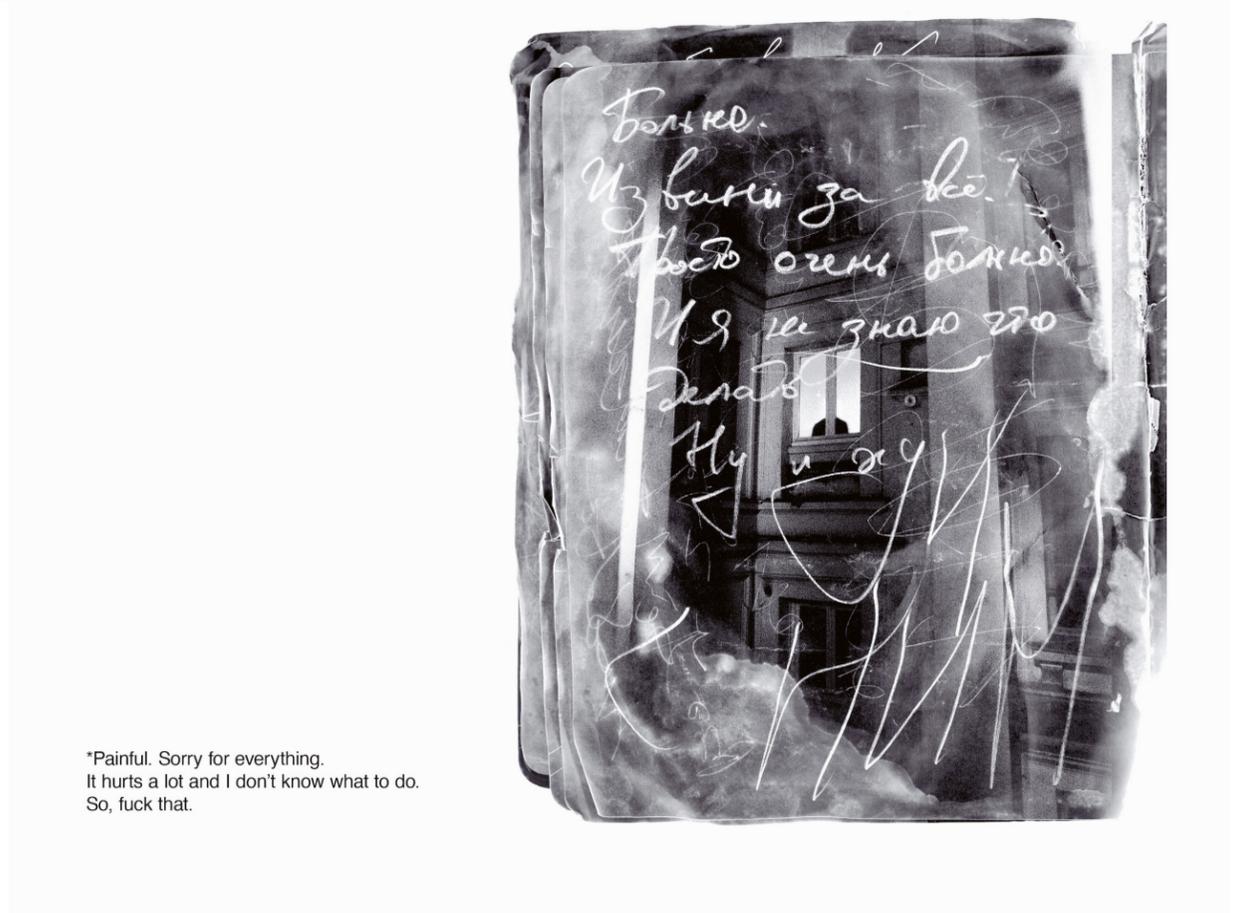


*Dear God...

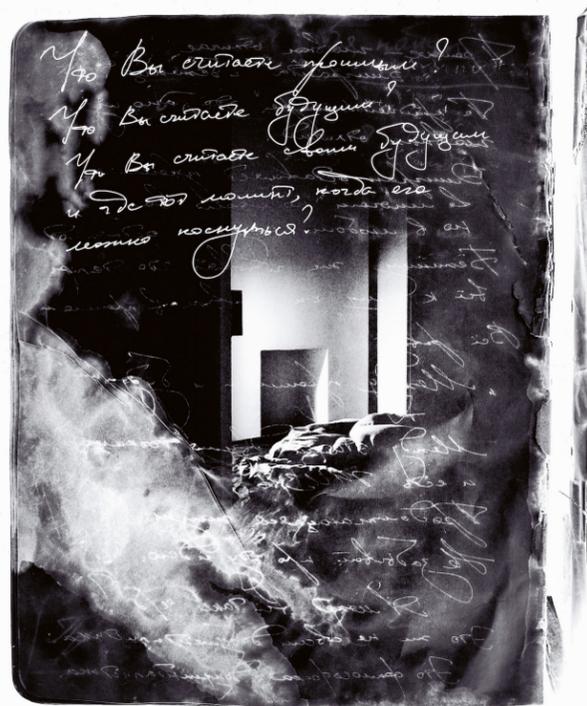




*Your country started the war.
Your mother is dying in this country.
And you are in Paris. How do you feel?
Ahahahahah



*Painful. Sorry for everything.
It hurts a lot and I don't know what to do.
So, fuck that.



*What do you consider as the past?
What do you consider as the future?
How do you think your future looks like?



ALL WE EVER WANTED IS TO BE SEEN

Jo Lieber

text by Katie Noble

In a reimagination of iconic works of art, Jo Lieber offers a modern approach to gender archetypes that seem so fraught with strict divisions between “man” and “woman”. *All We Ever Wanted is to be Seen* visualizes the performative nature of gender, especially womanhood, as understood by Lieber since birth. The inundation of gendered imagery in modern culture frames our understanding of personhood, unknowingly. Lieber utilizes historical, iconic artworks in Western society as cultural guidelines to create a reflected image that serves the modern public. She bridges the extremities of “woman” vs. “man” by changing the gender of her subjects from their referenced images. In *Myself, After Dürer*, Lieber imitates the characteristics of Albrecht Dürer’s original posing, embracing his masculinity without forgoing her own femininity and modern adornments. The referenced painting, *Self-Portrait at the Age of Twenty Eight* conflates artist and Christ into one secular

Lieber bridges the extremities of “woman” vs. “man” by changing the gender of her subjects from their referenced images.

image, in which Dürer implies that his artistic abilities are God-given. Boasting his mastery, during a time in which self-portraiture was uncommon, defines Dürer’s distinctive masculine ego. However, unlike Dürer, Lieber’s gaze is unwavering at the viewer, aware of her own spectatorship; as such, the innate performance of womanhood is preserved. She is not forgoing her own ego of artistic merit, yet her expression



Myself, After Dürer



Left: *Ami, After Olympia*

welcomes the viewer into a safety to identify alongside her.

The religious iconography continues further while basking under the heavenly rays of sun, Lieber and her mother reach out to each other in a gender-reversal of Adam and God in Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*. Floating down from the heavens, God made Adam in his own likeness, which is depicted in the painting as the spark of life from God's hand. In Lieber's dramatization, her womanhood is formed in the likeness of her mother. There is a fraught tension between the duet; a clear elevation of mother to divine figure above Lieber's own body grounded on the sand. In Michelangelo's painting, God and Adam never quite touch hands, symbolizing the divine gap between humanity and God; yet Lieber and her mother

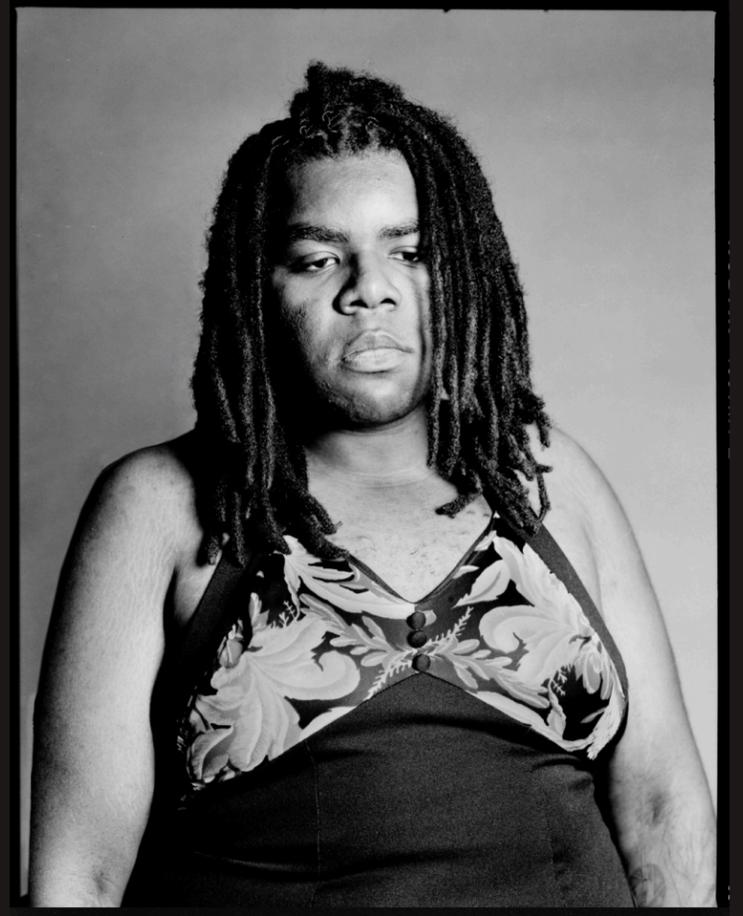
just reach each other, concreting the seemingly impossible difference between mother and daughter. The womanhood of mother becomes a model for daughter; an icon in which one looks and acts like, yet the daughter will never be the same woman. But in the idyllic beachscape Lieber creates, the beauty of the two women is unified: both on the same ground.

Working in the same performance of womanhood, Lieber offers the masculine figure space to take on the glamor of female models. *Jeremy, After Manroe* reimagines Marilyn Manroe's photograph by Richard Avedon. In recomposing this frame with a male subject, his body contains all the history of Monroe as a pervasive sex symbol in American culture. Yet in both images, there is a disconnect between the glitzy dress and the person in front of the camera. Both

In the middle ground she creates, there is hope to find a more accurate, realistic, and identifiable iconography of gender expression.

hold a certain melancholic expression, defeated by the need to perform and caught in an off moment.

Modern gender performance is exhausting, both for the feminine and masculine. Through *All We Ever Wanted is to be Seen*, Lieber dissipates the tumultuous difference in the representation of each gender at its most extremes. In the middle ground she creates, there is hope to find a more accurate, realistic, and identifiable iconography of the spectrum of gender expression. Lieber's artistry establishes the images in which one may finally see themselves reflected back.

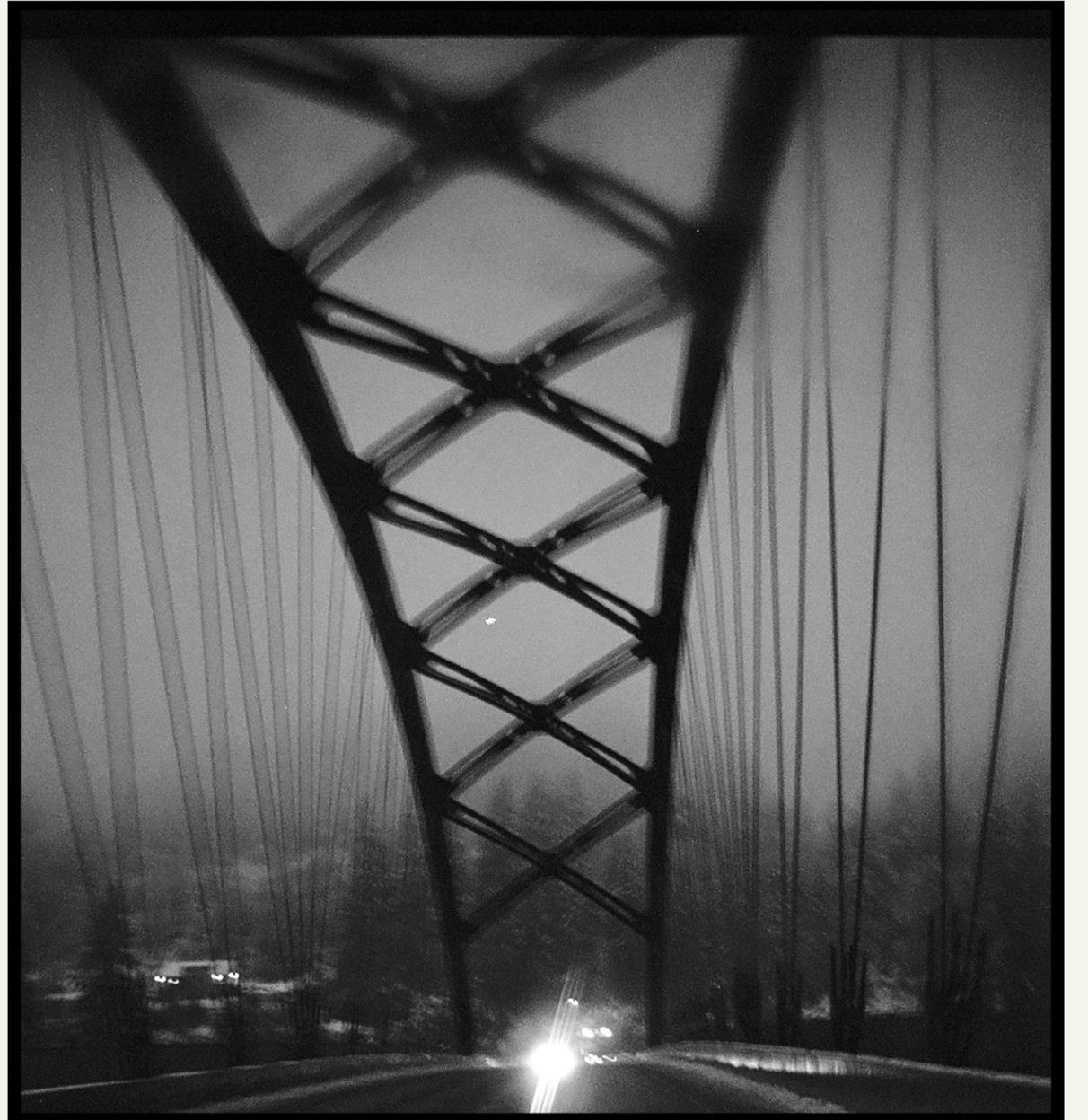


Above: *My Mother and I, After God and Adam*
Opposite Above: *Jeremy, After Monroe*
Opposite Below: *Salomé, After the Surrealists*

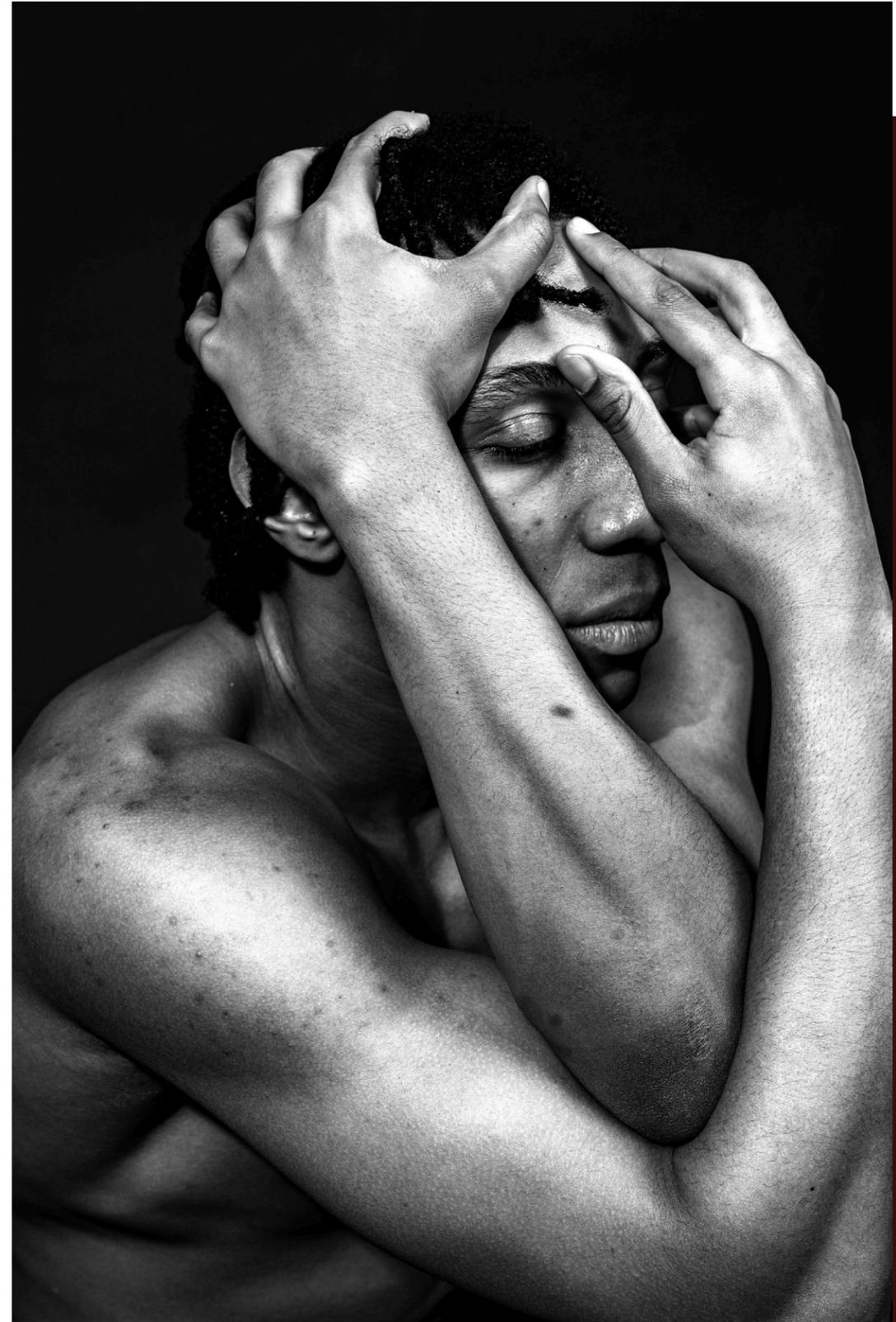
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***THE
GALLERY***







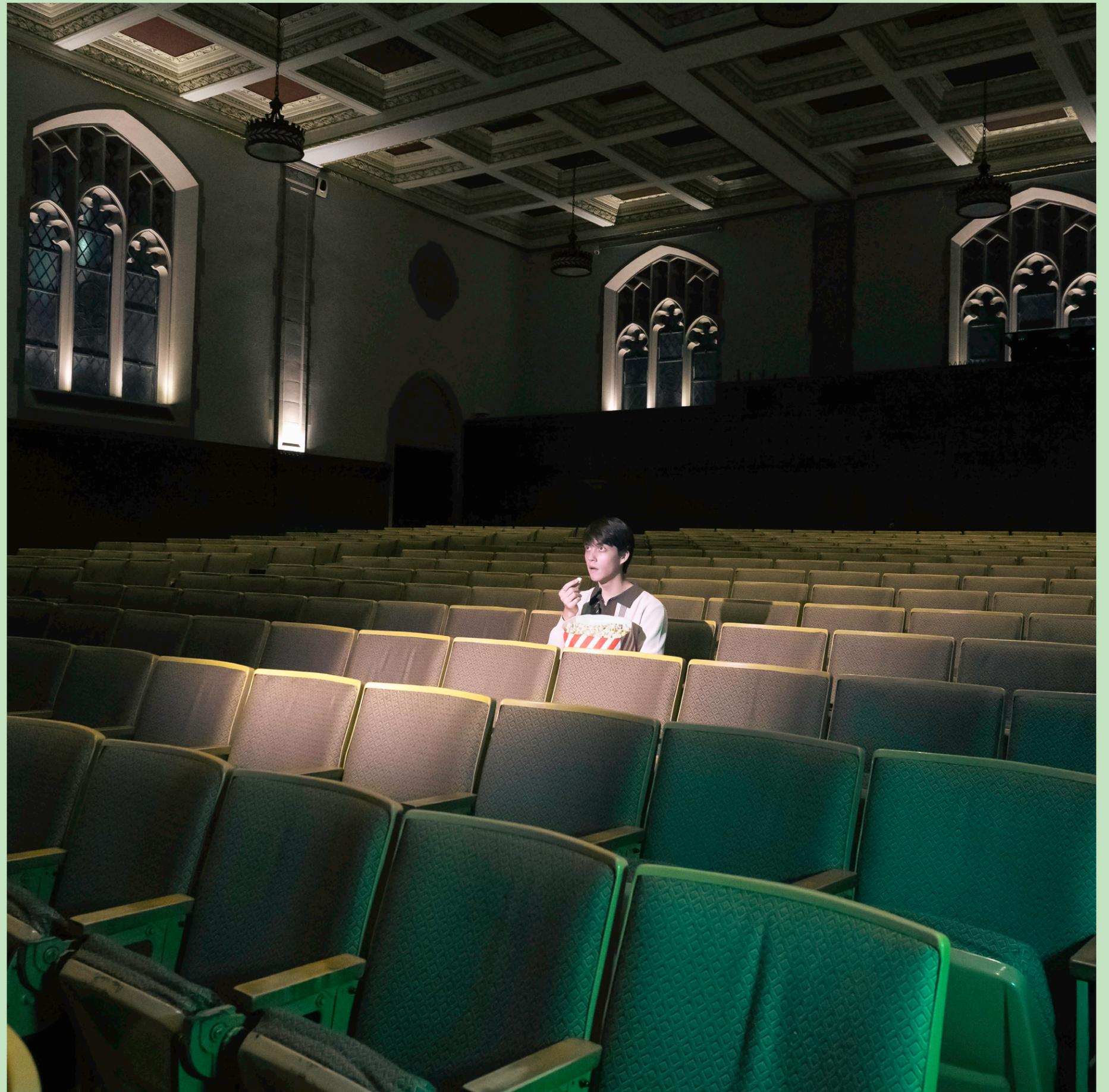




Stained Eyes

I am merely an onlooker into my own existence;
Blending, morphing as a catalyst for perception.
Mine own eye abides by the dictation of an audience.
The unending out of body experience-
Always hovering right above the vessel that would allow me to slip in.
Gaped in the dark, I am met again by the council of unspecified truths-
Leering toward an approach to retiring as the subordinate
where do I begin?
From the rubble of fallen stained glass
Etched from alien hands,
I become the inhibitor for premature accusations-
Conceived again
Fully and truly like the holy virgin, but refusal to be of a nameless incubator
With sliced fingers I pick up each of the lucid crystals that is my reality
No longer a marionette for estranged minds
The strings fade away and miraculously I stand alone.

Nyasia Cooper



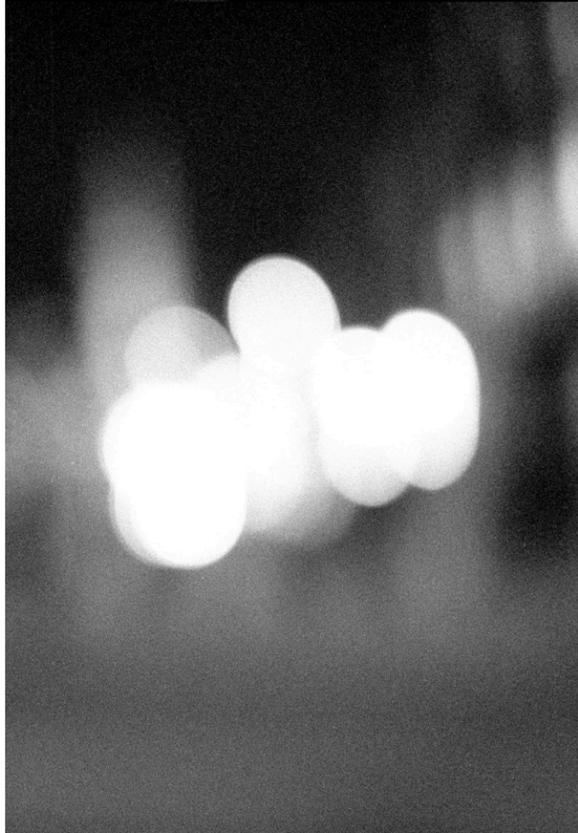


To the bone.
And closer to the root.
Yes, I am okay.
No, it's not like I'm drowning.
It's more like this lockdown feeling.
To be stuck where I SHOULDN'T be stuck. A mistake from God.
Un Gran Quizás (A Big Maybe).

Santiago Molina







Retina

inside my world of subtle hues and shapes
are the silhouette of faces and spaces
peeking past the rim I find my escape
a perpetual blur where reality erases

blur is my peace, blur is my fear
it brings a peaceful silence to my world
in tandem it upheaves my hidden tear
I pray for my eyes to go un-pearled

their faces abstract, yet known to me
their shapes, details, and colors soften
the face no longer looks normal to me
but the memory is not forgotten

I seek to portray the plight, of a constant fight
of moments stolen within my own mind
so I'll show you through my sight
to catch a glimpse of a vision so blind

my retina interpreted yet forever untold
so gaze into the aperture that are my eyes

Gabby Bates

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