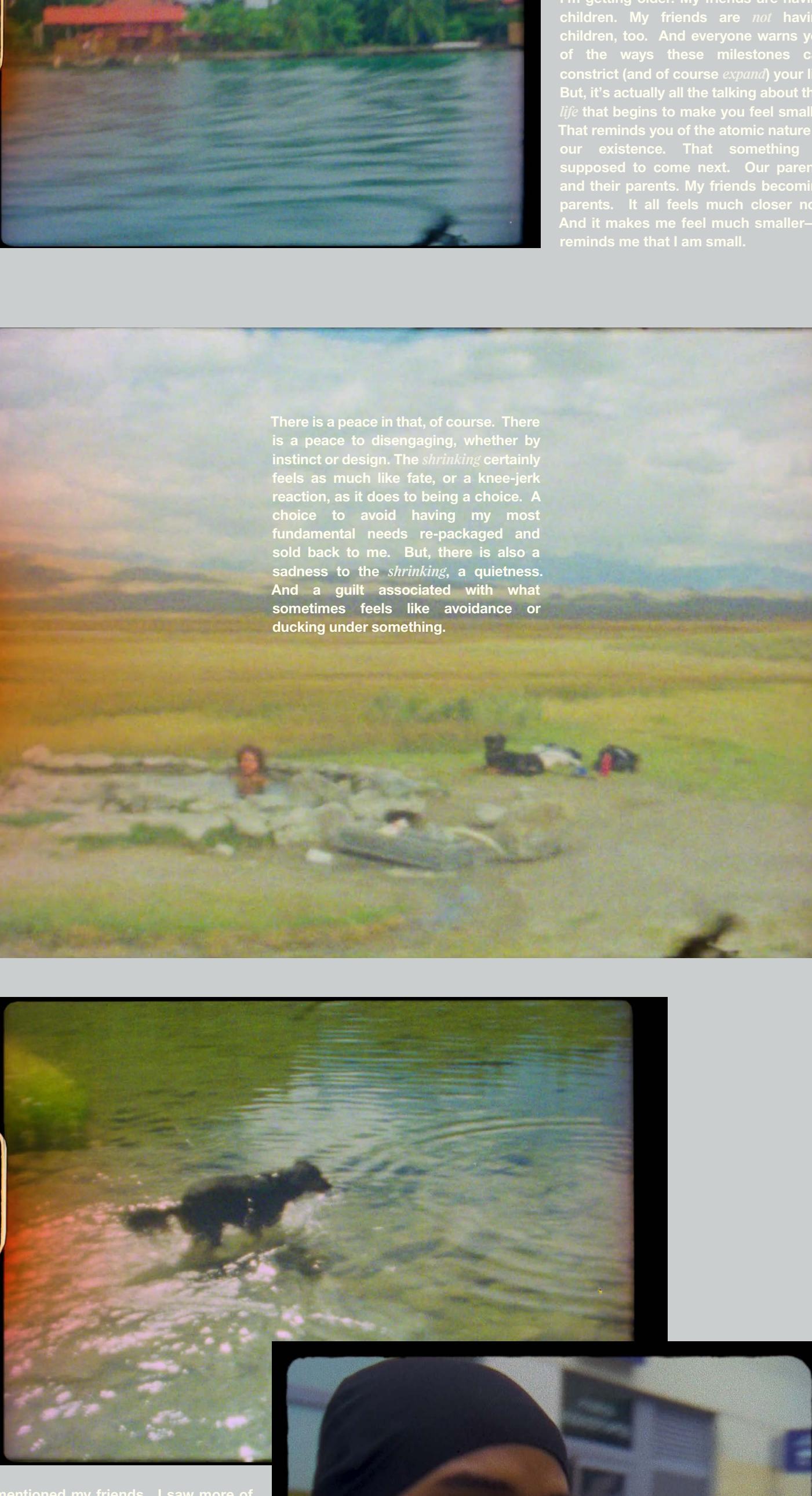


DANIEL NOAH MILLER

I want to speak for a moment on a shrinking-feeling I've experienced this year. It's a feeling that has shown up for me in the brightest and darkest moments of twenty twenty-five. And I see, too, both its positive and negative hand on my life and decisions.

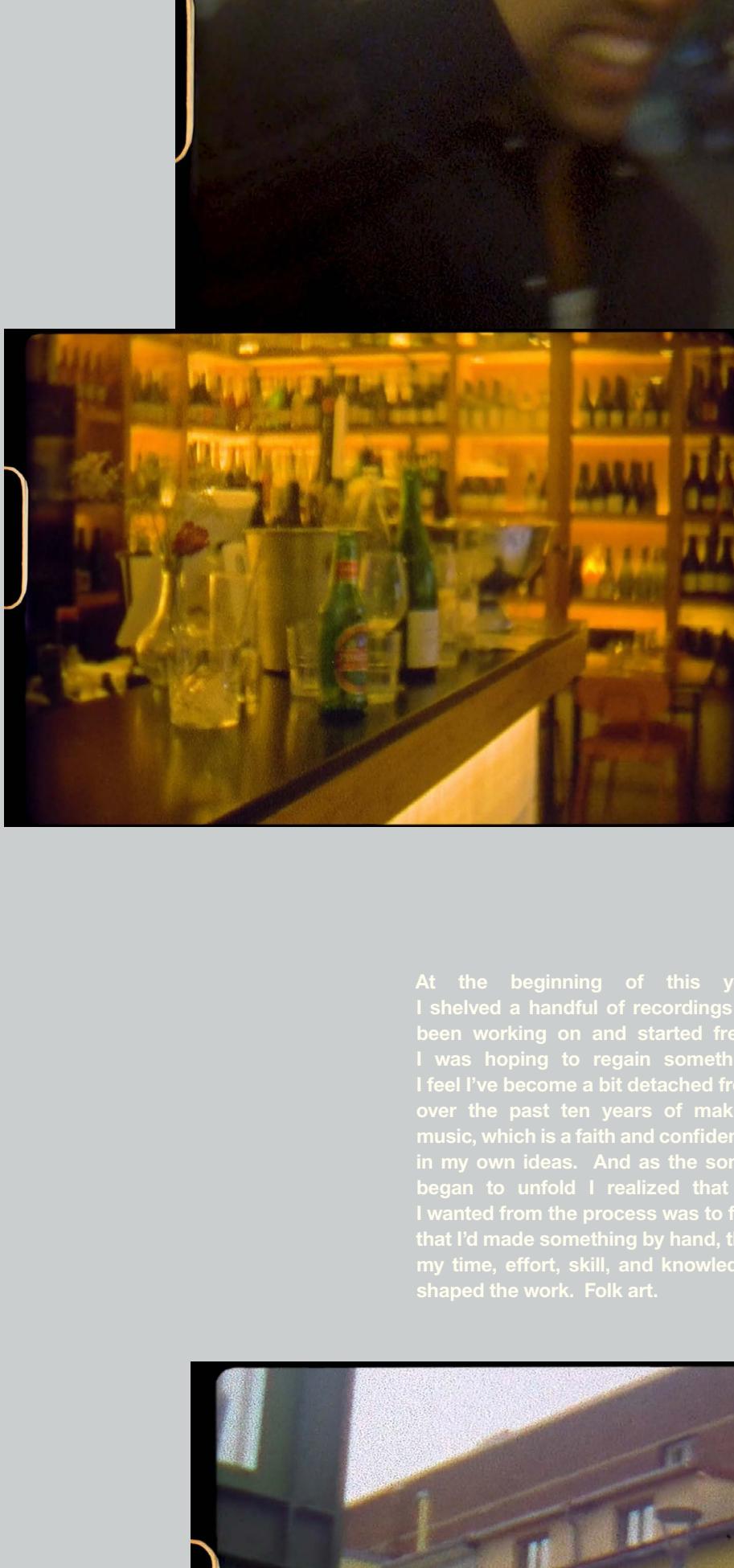
But, this shrinking-feeling is also still largely a mystery to me—a reason to write about it. What I know for sure is that it deeply influenced the song I shared this month, and the small body of work that is coming next year.

I can trace the origins of the shrinking somewhat. The pandemic played a role. It re-shaped my social life, and I relocated to Los Angeles in its midst, and there are many ways to understand LA, but it is undeniably a more *separate*-feeling place than any other city I've lived in. My life shrunk quite literally, and has not fully taken on a new shape yet.



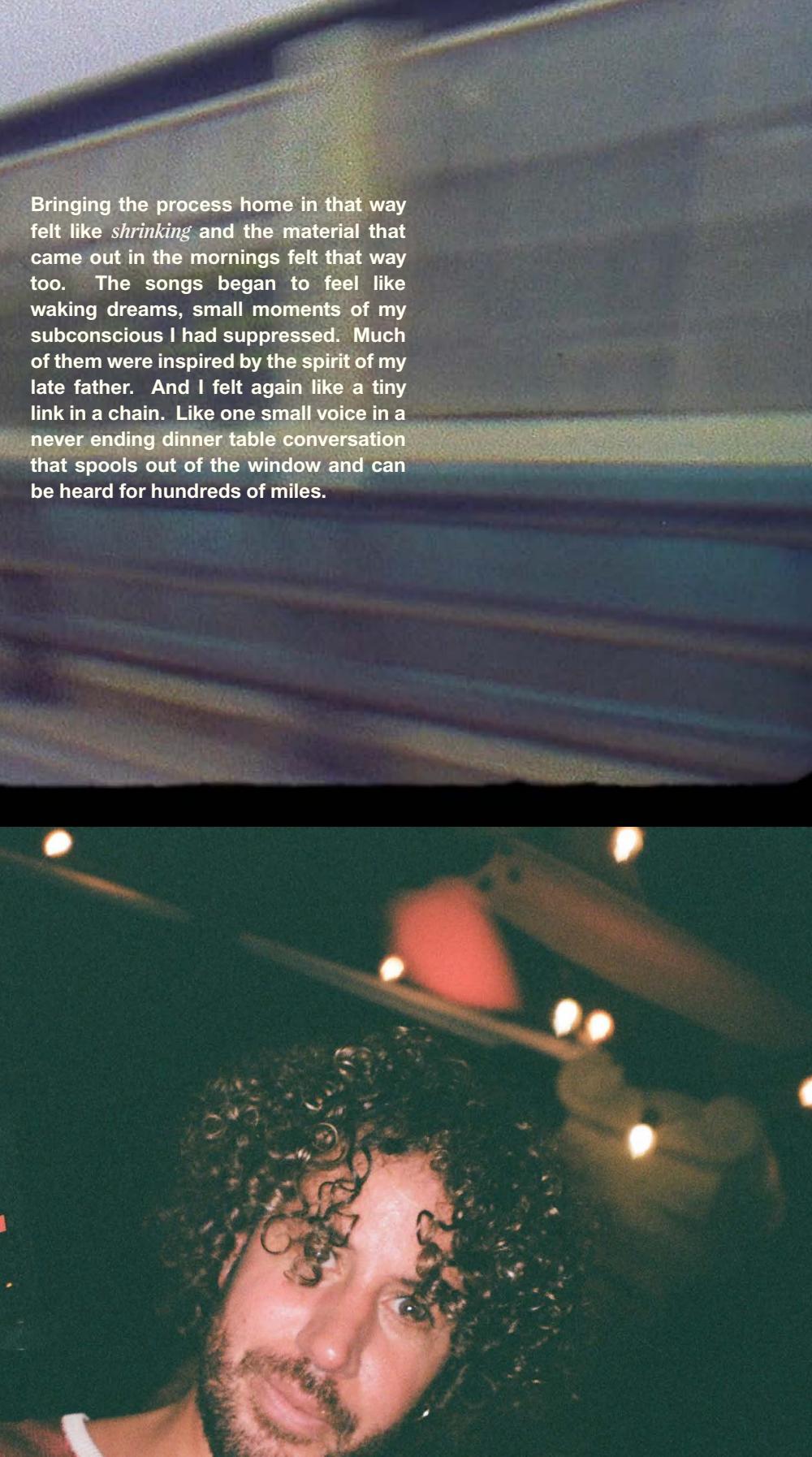
But, more broadly, the shrinking feels like a reaction to the current cacophony of the world. I imagine there is a broad spectrum of responses this cacophony elicits. But, mine, it seems largely, has been to shrink.

I got a flip phone this year. I welcomed the questions it raised. I minded the small tasks of my day. I rode my bike more.



And there is one more factor that accounts for my shrinking, which is that I'm getting older. My friends are having children. My friends are not having children, too. And everyone warns you of the ways these milestones can constrict (and of course expand) your life. But, it's actually all the talking about that life that begins to make you feel smaller. That reminds you of the atomic nature of our existence. That something is supposed to come next. Our parents, and their parents. My friends becoming parents. It all feels much closer now. And it makes me feel much smaller—it reminds me that I am small.

There is a peace in that, of course. There is a peace to disengaging, whether by instinct or design. The shrinking certainly feels as much like fate, or a knee-jerk reaction, as it does to being a choice. A choice to avoid having my most fundamental needs re-packaged and sold back to me. But, there is also a sadness to the shrinking, a quietness. And a guilt associated with what sometimes feels like avoidance or ducking under something.



I mentioned my friends. I saw more of them this year. I made more time to see them this year. I went to far flung family weddings and took what felt like my first adult vacation with a close friend. Our conversations brought tears to my eyes many times. And I felt my world shrinking as I watched these friends grow and change and take on dimensions I may not get the good fortune or time to ever understand anew. I felt my world shrinking as I noted that I may not meet many more new close friends in my life.

