

International
FRAULEIN
Issue 02/2021

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BESTS

Johnson



FIN

Politics

Politics

International
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Issue 02/2021

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“Rebellion against existing constraints can create identity”
Sibel KIKELLI



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Politics

“We live in a time now where
people have so much
FREEDOM
to be who and what they want,
that the idea of feminine and
masculine is limiting”

AMAARAE



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Photography: ALICE ROSATI

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MARILYN MINTER

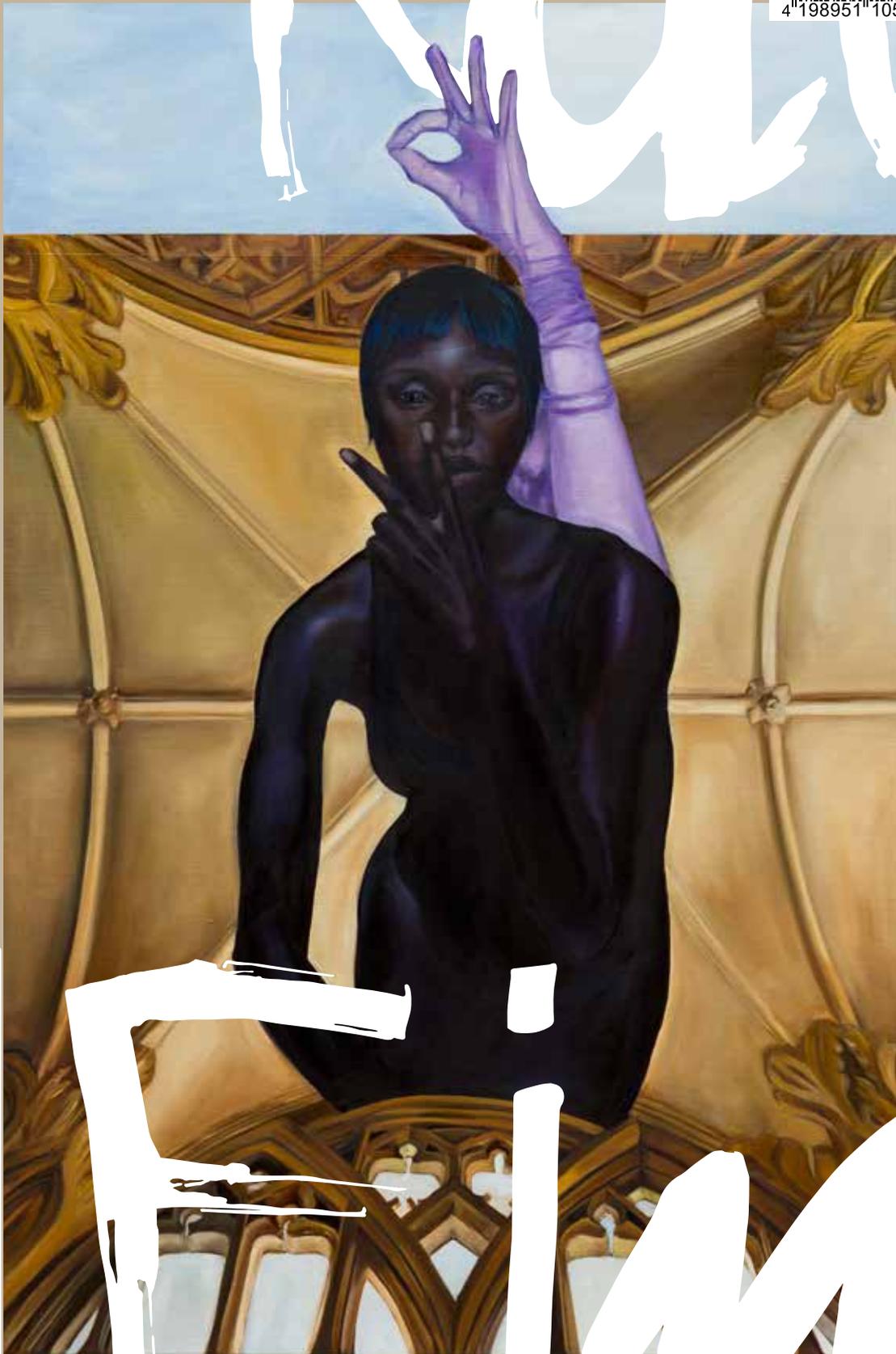
“The eye craves what it doesn't see; that
is why nothing should be
permanent.”

Fraulein

Politics

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SHANNON T. LEWIS
*Solid Intrusion Of The Legendary Into
The Real World, 2019*

DSQUARED2



MEANTIME FALL - WINTER 2021



WE WERE ALWAYS WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN...



ISABEL MARANT



LADY GAGA



VOGE VIVA

MEINE STIMME MEINE KRAFT



DAS NEUE INTENSA


VALENTINO



POLITICS, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

For me, it's much more than the daily business of politics. It's our daily life. And it's our responsibility.

I truly believe that we need to understand the bigger picture. And for us to do so, we need two things which we are not focusing on enough or, rather, don't explore anymore inside our emotional selves. The two things that change the world that we need are EMPATHY and CURIOSITY. We need the curiosity to have the will to have empathy for others.

WE NEED TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW OTHERS FEEL, THE WEAKER ONES, THE LESS FORTUNATE, BUT ALSO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE THE OPPOSITE OF SELFISH OR EGOISTICAL.

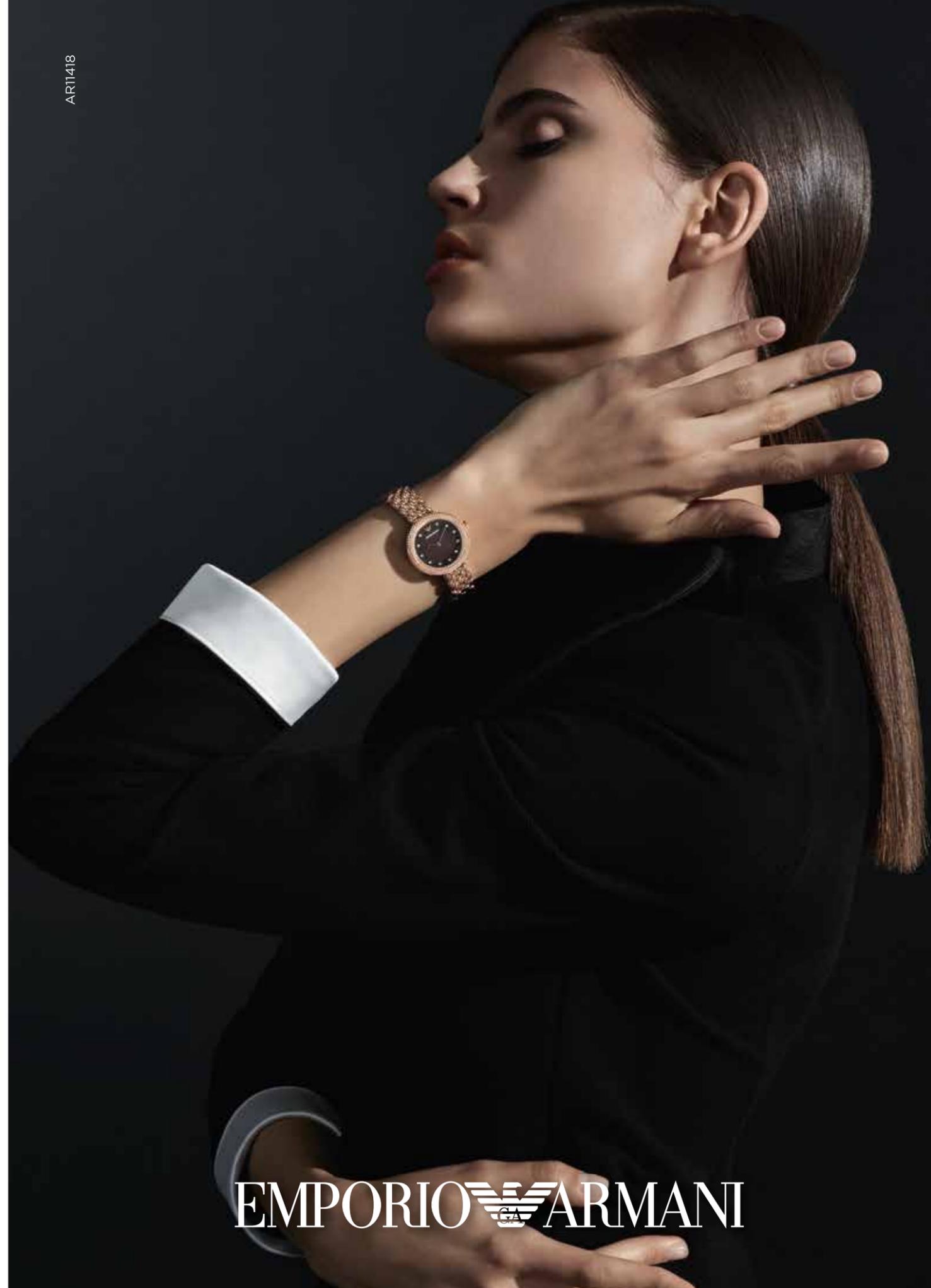
We need to understand that we are all part of the same universe whether we like it or not.

To change, we need to have the will to understand each other. All the movements we have had in the last years are essential for society to progress and have come from amazing roots. But they will not lead us anywhere if we just change our view from left to right. We need to be open-minded and start to see the whole picture. It's not going from black to white that leads us anywhere. The truth for a real change is in the grey. There we find true freedom for ourselves and for others. There we find creativity and solutions we never thought about. If we exclude people just because we don't understand their point of view and where they are coming from, we will not find answers. Leadership is the ability to ground yourself in reality, a vision where you want to go and the path to get there. This is not achieved with a close-minded, singular view. A real leader understands that we all count and understands that change can only happen if you have the empathy and try every day to understand where we all come from and our different points of views and understanding of the world.

Everyone has different hopes and dreams and our lives are totally different. When our leaders understand and respect that we are all part of the whole, then we can have a real diverse society that feels and cares for each and everyone. But it's not only our leaders who need to do so, it's every single one of us. We need to understand that we all can have a great impact on other people's lives. Once we start to focus more on empathy, we will see that there is so much to learn from each other and that there is beauty everywhere, even in the darkest places. If we are curious, we will grow every day, and if we see the world like a curious child with an open heart, we will see and acknowledge the differences between us. But we will see them as something that makes our lives richer and more valuable. It's not about skin color or where we come from, who we love or our social status. If we start to do so, our world will become more beautiful and we will be able to heal.

So let's stay curious, have empathy for each other and change the world.

Götz OFFERGELD



Look LADO BOKUCHAVA



B E T S Y

Johnson

08

Creative Concept, Photos & Styling
BETSY JOHNSON, Hair GREGG LENNON,
Makeup SAM VISSER,
Photo Assistant TYLER BOARDCHARTCH,
Styling Assistant ANTONIA
GETMANOVA,
Talent ZIZI DONOHOE



Look

BALENCIAGA

Look VALENTINO
Hat PIERS ATKINSON

10



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Look LADO BOKUCHAVA



Look ALL TALENT'S OWN



Look

BALENCIAGA

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Dress VALENTINO
Hat PIERS ATKINSON

Gloves ROECKL

Shoes ABRA

1 3

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Dress VETEMENTS

Swim Cap STYLIST'S OWN



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Dress HAKAN AKKAYA
Hat SARAH SOKOL MILLINERY Shoes JEFFREY CAMPBELL





Dress

Hat

Small

GALDYS

TAMEZ

17

Picture:

ISABELLE

Tights

FALKE

Shoes

Look

LUCENTE

JEFFREY

CAMPBELL

BALENCIAGA



Look BALENCIAGA

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Look LADO BOKUCHAVA
Hat & Tights STYLIST'S OWN Bag HAN KJOBENHAVN
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Dress INDIA SAFDIE
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10785 Berlin

Phone: +49 (0)30 28 88 40 43
info@fraeulein-magazin.com
www.fraeulein-magazin.com

ARTISTIC & EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Götz Offergeld V.i.S.d.P.

ART DIRECTOR Mike Meiré

DESIGN Charlotte Cassel, Marie Lautsch

@Meiré und Meiré

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Anna Klusmeier

MANAGING EDITOR Sam Kavanagh

FASHION DIRECTOR Sina Braetz

FASHION EDITOR Fabio Pace

JUNIOR FASHION EDITOR Luis Hartmann

EDITOR Antonia Schmidt

ENGLISH EDITOR Dao Tran

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS Alicia Reuter

INTERNS Anni Jacoby,

Annika Duda, Bastian Hagn

TYPE DESIGN Marvin Armand

CREATIVE DIRECTION OOR Studio

PUBLISHING HOUSE Off One's Rocker

Publishing Ltd. Kurfürstenstraße 31/32
10785 Berlin, Phone: +49 (0)30 28 88 40 43

MANAGEMENT

Hannes von Matthey

PUBLISHER Götz Offergeld

PUBLISHING MANAGEMENT

Anna Klusmeier

COVER



MARILYN MINTER *Lilith*, Artwork MARILYN MINTER ZIZI DONOHOE Photo & Styling BETSY JOHNSON Look BALenciaga SIBEL KEKILLI
Photo ROMAN GOEBEL Styling GÖTZ OFFERGELD Jacket 7 FOR ALL MANKIND Shirt EMPORIO ARMANI ANNA, ASH & CORRIE Photo
ALICE ROSATI Styling SINA BRAETZ ASH: Shirt ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER Skirt ROCHAS Shoes ROGER VIVIER, ANNA: Dress JOSEPH
Socks KENZO Shoes AGL, CORRIE: Dress VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Shoes AMI Bracelet VERSACE SHANNON T. LEWIS *Solid Intrusion*
Of The Legendary Into The Real World, Artwork SHANNON T. LEWIS AMAARAE Photo JESSICA LEHRMAN Styling SINA BRAETZ Coat
EMPORIO ARMANI Body LA ROXXX Earrings & Rings NINNA NEW YORK via PR SOLO Boots MARCELL VON BERLIN

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Phone: +49 (0) 40 38 66 66 0
info@pressup.de
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INTERNATIONAL ORDERS
BoutiqueMags
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The Vineyards, 36 Gloucester Avenue, Primrose Hill
London, NW1 7BB
Phone: +44 (0)207 193 5966
info@whitecirc.com
www.whitecirc.com

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ADVERTISING MANAGER

Oliver Horn
oliver.horn@hof-lieferant.com
c/o Off One's Rocker Publishing Ltd.
Kurfürstenstraße 31/32
10785 Berlin
Phone: +49 (0) 30 28 88 40 43

ITALY
JB Media
Jeffrey Byrnes,
Francesca Fregosi,
Claudia Della Torre
Piazza Sant' Erasmo
20121 Milano
Phone: +39 02 29 01 3427
jeffrey@jbmedia.com
fra@jbmedia.com
claudia@jbmedia.com

FRANCE
Eleni Gatsou,
Camille Pignol
64 rue de Turbigo
75003 Paris
Phone: +33 (0)142 72 02 19
eleni@elenigatsou.com
camille@elenigatsou.com

PHOTOGRAPHERS

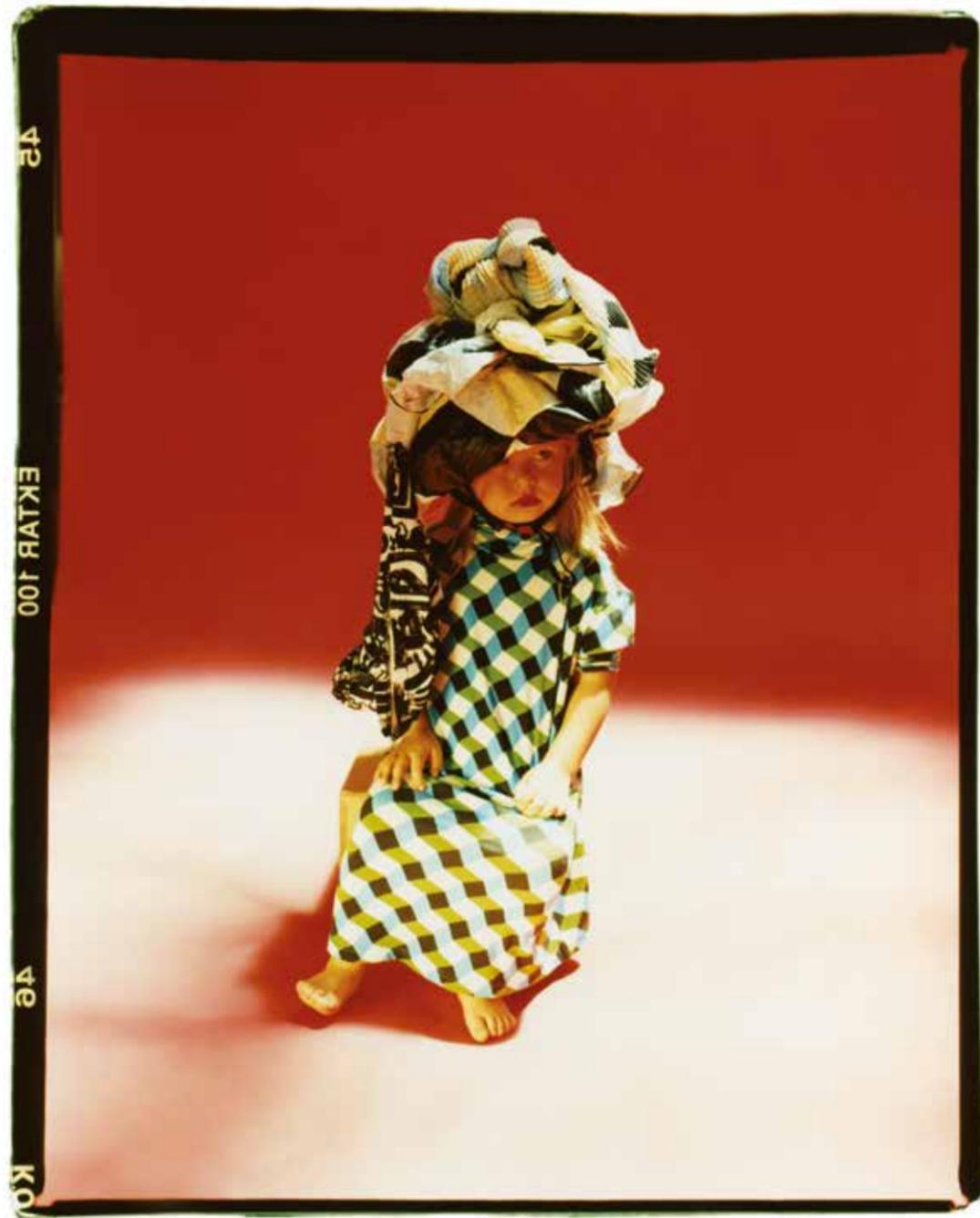
Alice Rosati, Betsy Johnson,
Daniel Roché, David Lindert,
Jessica Lehrman, Roman Goebel

AUTHORS

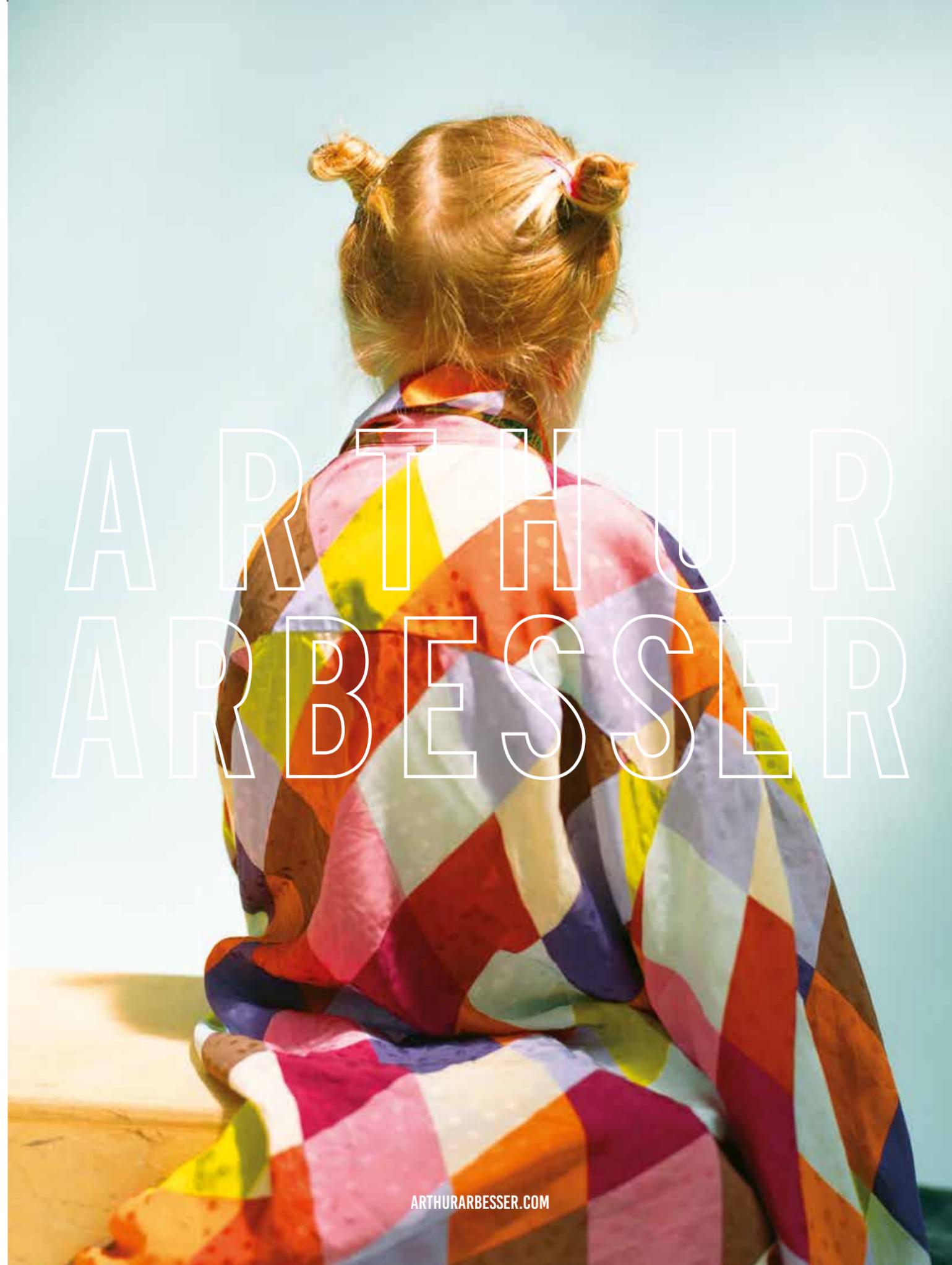
Anni Jacoby, Angela Waters,
Damien Cummings, Diana Weis,
Hanna Hetherington, Hannah Sulzbach,
Shannon T. Lewis, Johanne Björklund Larsen, Lena Fiedler,
Ruben Donsbach, Saint Precious



MAISON KITSUNÉ
PARIS



NEEMA CONNOL CASOLARI
by Samantha Casolari
Brooklyn, June 2021



ARTHUR ARBESSER

ARTHURARBESSER.COM

A close-up photograph of a person's nose and lips. The person is wearing several pieces of diamond jewelry: a ring on the tip of the nose, a ring on the upper lip, and a ring on the lower lip. The diamonds are brilliant-cut and set in a gold-toned metal. The background is a soft, out-of-focus skin tone.

SASKIA DIEZ

saskia-diez.com

CONTRIBUTORS

FRÄULEIN

LENA FIEDLER is a freelance journalist and author. Her work deals with digital transformation, subcultures and her home, the Ruhr region. She lives and works in Berlin and Essen.

DIANA WEIS is a professor of fashion journalism at BSP Berlin. As a writer and researcher, she is interested in online beauty cultures, subcultural styles and body norms. In 2020, she published her book *Modebilder* (Fashion Images) about digital fashion images.

ANGELA WATERS is a Berlin-based writer whose work spans news, wellness and digital innovators across art and fashion. Her work has appeared in *Vice*, *Highsnobiety* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

RUBEN DONSBACH As former editor-in-chief of *Fräulein*, Ruben Donsbach left his mark on the magazine for years. Now he enriches ZEIT ONLINE and other publications as a freelance writer. For this issue, he talks to Sibel Kekilli about freedom.

DAMIEN CUMMINGS is a writer based in Berlin and is currently the music editor at *Exberliner*. His published work generally contends with questions of urban representation in art and politics.

ALICE ROSATI Dead in Fashion: A slogan that has inspired the Italian fashion photographer Alice Rosati to create an editorial that transports more than just one political message.

JESSICA LEHRMAN The American photographer captures the energy of a moment. Jessica Lehrman has photographed icons such as Kendrick Lamar, 50 Cent, Mac Miller and Billie Eilish, and worked for internationally leading publications such as the *New York Times*, *VICE*, *Vanity Fair*. For our issue, she powerfully captured rising star Amaarae.

DANIEL ROCHÉ Difficult to decide what it is exactly that makes the photography of the Berlin-based artist so special: the simplicity in its beauty, the softness that clashes a harshness, the uniqueness of the posing of the subject in front of his camera. In this issue: artist Mary Komasa.

BETSY JOHNSON No doubt that the London-based multidisciplinary artist and director Betsy Johnson is a rebel. And the provocative message in her work aligns perfectly with *Fräulein's* vision. She has delivered a strong fashion editorial for this issue.

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Berliner Festspiele

#GropiusBau

ZANELE MUHOLI

26.11.21 -13.3.22

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Das Land Berlin

Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa

Partner

Wall

Bonn, Oberlößnitz, 2015, © Zanele Muholi

Design: Julia Wilmer - Studio for Spatial & Graphic Design

NEU START KULTUR

Yasmine
M'BAREK

Valentina VAPAUX

Emma
SELIGMAN

Deana MRKAJA

Anoushka
SHANKAR

Talents

Interviews by ANNIKA DUDA, ANTONIA SCHMIDT
and SAM KAVANAGH

The concept of politics must be expanded.

Politics has long since ceased to be made in institutions that are inaccessible from the outside. Has it ever been?

It permeates all areas, all art forms and cultures. Recent times in particular have shown that the political is being played out elsewhere – on social media, on the street, on the internet. In series and films.

In music, art and culture. SO, WHO ARE THE ACTORS IN THIS NEW FORM OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION? Across disciplinary

boundaries, we asked talents what is political about their work, what politics means in the first place, and what changes they would like to see.

EMMA SELIGMAN is a director and screenwriter. In 2020 she made her debut film, *Shiva Baby*, about a queer girl who meets her ex-girlfriend and her sugar daddy at a shiva. The film revolves around sex and young women's relationship to sex, growing up and finding one's own way. EMMA SELIGMAN herself, however, seems to know exactly what she wants.

You grew up in a Reform Ashkenazi community in Toronto. How did that influence you? To what extent is Judaism part of your identity?

My Jewish upbringing has influenced every part of my life. It's the most important and palpable part of my identity. I'm a 4th generation Toronto Ashkenazi Jew and that's not uncommon in my community. I grew up seeing my large extended family at least once a month at a Bat/Bar Mitzvah, a bris, a wedding, a funeral, any holiday, etc. Every kid I knew growing up went to a Jewish sleepaway camp, Hebrew School and services for the high holidays. We never spoke about God, none of us kept kosher or observed shabbat, and yet our entire lives were rich with Jewish culture and traditions. Even if you didn't want to participate, there was no way you could avoid it. In your opinion, what

are the issues of younger generations? That's very hard! I can't speak for my entire generation, but I can try to speak for the young women and people I know in my life and bubble. There has always been pressure on young people to figure out their lives and get a stable job quickly, especially when they've just graduated. However, I think now, for young women today, on top of there being no jobs for anyone, there are other added, contradictory pressures compounding on us. As we try to figure out our lives, we're asked to be so many different things all at once. When I graduated, I felt the pressure to find a stable, traditional job, but also to be an independent, liberal arts grad who carves out a unique career path and doesn't care what people think of me. Even more stressful was the pressure from my family to

dominated our sexual decisions. Therefore, I think some people in my generation struggle to communicate honestly when it comes to dating, romance, sex, etc. Dating apps and technology in general has put up a comfortable barrier for us so we don't have to be vulnerable. It's also made us obsess about every text, DM, etc. for hours on end. I tried to insert this into Danielle and Maya's relationship in *Shiva Baby*. They don't know where they stand with each other because of something as stupid as disagreeing on who texted whom last. It's tragic how situations like this determined the fate of many relationships when I was in school. Is film a political medium?

I think every form of art is a political medium, whether the artist has an intention to insert their opinions or not. We all have

them. I guess having any movie with a female protagonist, especially if it's made by a woman, is political to some degree. The various pressures that cause Danielle to have a nervous breakdown are all societal and cultural pressures created in a patriarchal world (like everything else). It's not a coincidence many women feel the same way she does. I only chose to make a movie about this experience because it felt authentic to me and easy to write about. However, it's been fascinating, saddening and powerful to see how many other young women relate to it. What changes would you like to see in the film industry?

I'd like to see everyone who works on film and TV sets being treated and paid equally for their time and hard work. I'd like to see humane work schedules

and not the

Emma SELIGMAN



date and find a future husband, and the pressure from the rest of the world to be a sexually empowered young woman who doesn't get attached to anyone. At any given family event, at least one person would ask why I don't have a boyfriend. However, in my college community, nobody dated. Hookup culture

a political perspective on the world, at least subconsciously, and I think it's impossible for that to not infiltrate our work. Film and music are particularly powerful because they can often reach a wider audience at the same time. And I think comedy can be an especially powerful genre to sneak political messaging into. Audiences know and hate when they're being preached to. Making them laugh can make any political perspective much more digestible. How would you describe the politics of your films?

I didn't intend for *Shiva Baby* to be political and I still don't find it to be, but a handful of women from different countries have told me that it's political for

norm, which is a 12-hour (or more) workday. There's an expectation in this industry that people will break their backs and lose sleep to get a film made. Lots of people would like to see that end. I'd also like to see more women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities being hired for jobs that are still disproportionately given to white, cis, straight, able-bodied men. In what situations do you feel the most powerful?

I think that depends on the project and on the day. It feels pretty powerful to lead a group of people on set, but I think I feel most powerful whenever there is a lot of support around me and I feel safe. That can be in development, on set, in post-production, etc. It's whenever I trust and feel comfortable with the voices surrounding me.

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ANOUSHKA SHANKAR
A 'sitar player' rather poorly captures what Anoushka Shankar does. Her music transcends genres. With her sounds, she unites different cultures, which is also because she herself cannot and does not want to be categorized simply. Most recently, she took over the reflector event at the Elbphilharmonie in



© Chiaki Nozu

most like home. It's where I've been living for a long time, but I still have roots and a lot of love and affection for California. And a real tie to India, especially through my music. Your music combines

transcultural music mean to you?
That's what I am. That means everything to me. I love the idea of exploring and connecting. Everything can be simplified down to connection. Human connection is what life is about, and connection with the Earth, and connection with spirit. In my work, I seek to connect. That can mean with myself, it can mean with other people, it can mean with other cultures. When those moments of connection happen, those are the transcendent moments that make what I do feel so magical. How do you combine the tradition of sitar playing with modern influences?
It really depends on

ideas that, for example, belong to the flamenco tradition, and applying them on my sitar. Or it might be about the melody playing in a way that wouldn't be part of a raga. Sometimes, it's very much playing within a raga, but it's about instrumentation and orchestration. Fundamentally, where it comes from is an open mind and trying to stay committed to making authentic choices that feel truthful and integral to any given moment. The choice would be different depending on the song, depending on the context. I try and stay really focused on what the heart of that piece of music is and what it needs to be. I try to stay open

music they love, but at the same time, they are incredibly limiting both to the artists and to the musicians. And there's been a good movement in the last decade or so away from narrower radio shows and presentations so that music is presented in a broader way. And that does justice to everyone involved in listening to music, because we're all more complex than those simplistic definitions allow. What part of making music do you like best?
Composing, recording, or performing live?
I love making music, so I love all of it in different ways. Having said that, there is a certain magic to performing live that is really like a culmination of everything else. That feels really special because, ultimately, making music is for sharing. On stage, there's an immediacy to doing that, which is so magical and connecting. Especially right now, with

that having been taken away for so long, I feel extra aware of how wonderful that is. In the last decade, I've been making more and more albums as compared to when I was younger. I've really grown to love recording more. There's a beautiful safety and joy in being able to really dig deep privately and find those connections away from an audience. That's also very beautiful. Your father is Ravi Shankar. Do you find that enriching or burdensome?
Again, simple definitions are really tricky. Having a father and having him be a certain personality in the world, a certain artist, can't be answered in a binary way. I obviously loved my father dearly. He was my teacher as well, I learned my instrument from him. Everything that I am as a musician and artist started with being his daughter or, more correctly, his student. Of course, that has been a huge gift in my

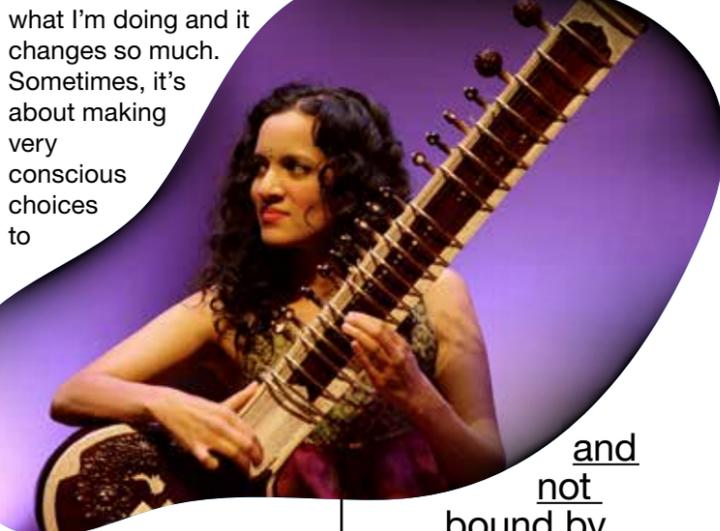
life. And, of course, that has also come with some difficulties, a lot of pressure, a lot of comparisons. Especially when I was younger, that was a bit difficult to handle. Overall, it is who I am. I'm very grateful for that. What music do you like to listen to in your private life?
It's very broad, and it depends on the mood. What I'm listening to when I'm cooking or sleeping is different from when I'm running or spending time with friends. It's really across a lot of genres spanning classical music styles from around the world, folk music styles from around the world. A lot of more mainstream music, a lot of neoclassical, a lot of electronic, a lot of indie. Indian music has religious roots. Is spirituality or religion a theme in your life?
I really prefer to speak about Indian music's spiritual roots

rather than its religious roots. Even though, if you go back many centuries and millennia, it is tied to Hindu roots. But, for so many centuries, that influence has been mixed with other religions as well. Talking about its spiritual core is more important and inclusive. I like to think of myself as spiritual. I have a practice, I have a belief system that is private and personal, it's definitely a big part of my life. You said in an interview that protest music can help movements grow stronger. Can you explain that a little more?
It obviously depends on the artist and the way it's done. Integrity is really important when music connects to activism and causes because fundamentally, people want to listen to music that they love or experience art that they love. When it is truly honest and

Anoushka SHANKAR

Hamburg and curated a musical program that reconciles Indian music between tradition and modernity.

many different styles. Which influences are relevant to you?
I'm definitely influenced by lots of different styles of music. I'm influenced by the emotion in music across



what I'm doing and it changes so much. Sometimes, it's about making very conscious choices to and not bound by fixed ideas. Are categories and genres in music relevant at all?
They have been relevant for many reasons, and in some ways, they make conversation easy. They make it easy for people to identify the type of

You grew up between the United Kingdom, India and the USA. Would you describe yourself as English, Indian or American? Or are such categories even contemporary?
I spent my childhood in the UK until I was 11, and I've been living in London for the last 12 years. If I had to define myself, I would say I'm British, Indian and American. However, those kinds of definitions are simplistic for very complex situations at the moment. London definitely feels

genres and how people express that. I'm influenced by virtuosity and skill. I'm also influenced a lot by other art forms, watching dance, watching human excellence in a body and that uplifting that happens for me when I watch it, that's hugely influential. And, life experiences, what's happening in the world. Those are the influences that really come into my work. What does



important to the artist, it's an incredible way to connect with people. It's an incredible way to be thought-provoking or to connect to a place of empathy in the viewer or the listener. Art has a power to connect to emotions and empathy in a way that sometimes conversation, debate and politics cannot. I do think that art has a really important role to play in uplifting humanity and the state of the world.

Podcaster, influencer, journalist and author. What seems contradictory at first is the norm in today's world, and VALENTINA VAPAUX embodies it better than anyone else. She became known through her YouTube channel and has worked for the *New York Times*, among others. This year saw the publication of her first book, *Generation Z*.

Have you always been interested in politics and was that a natural path, or was there a defining moment?

I have actually always been interested in politics. At school, my favorite subjects were history, German, English, art, and always the subjects where you could discuss, talk about what was happening in the world right now. I think that's where a need arose in me to understand what's happening in the world or how it works. Because I always felt I couldn't just go through the world without knowing what was happening. This need then strengthened more and more over the years. And then, there was a time when I was firmly convinced that I only wanted to be a political journalist.

In addition to your work as a journalist and writer, you are also an influencer and YouTuber. Isn't that contradictory?

I understand why people think it's

contradictory at first glance. But I don't think that at all. Because the contradiction that people always see is that influencers are advertising with their person. But what most people don't know is that private media works the same way. When I worked at a big news magazine, it was also all about advertising deals all the time. We had whole pages that we could have filled with content and text, of course. They were then sold to large corporations for a lot of money. And of course nobody says that this medium sells its opinion in order to



© Felix Faber

Valentina VAPAUX

produce content. You also need money for creative things, writing poems or political content. My content is financed primarily through advertising. When I work with brands, it gives me more freedom to become a better journalist and writer. It allows me to actively take time to do something that I wouldn't earn that much from, per se. Because, as they say, writing poetry is a bread-and-butter art, but it doesn't mean it's not important. For me, personally, it is very important. That's why it's not a contradiction at all. What bothers you most about Instagram and YouTube?

I think what bothers me the most – and I write a lot about this in my book, *Generation Z* – is

this number system. Everything is broken down to a number and made comparable that way. It's hard to ignore the fact that you're comparable to everyone – whether it's a friend or a simple competitor.

Every single step, every outfit, every look, everything is analyzed all the time and that bothers me.

What would you do for a living if social media didn't exist?

I think I would have become a political journalist and done creative writing as a hobby. I would have taken a different path; it might not have been as easy. You have to remember that I work with a lot of different media outlets and that's partly, hopefully, because of my content, but also, of course, because of my reach. The media know that they can get content to young people through me. If I didn't have that reach, I probably would have studied politics and literature, gone to journalism school – the traditional path. But by doing social media, I could go my own way. That's a freedom and a privilege I really appreciate. Your book, *Generation Z*, is about the current youth culture and the influence that different

topics have. Do you also see yourself as a mouthpiece for the generation?

I wouldn't say that I see myself as a mouthpiece for Generation Z. I've looked at a lot of scientific analyses and facts, figures and data on Generation Z. There are, of course, areas or personality traits in which I very much correspond to the typical Gen Z kid. But in many ways I'm also very different. Other people have to decide who the mouthpiece is. If my generation would give me that scepter, that baton, then I can think about it. For me, all that mattered was that I wanted to write for and about my generation. On your Instagram account, you can be seen with all kinds of hairstyles and hair colors. Why do you like to reinvent yourself and what is so important about change?

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I always find it super crass when people write to me that I've changed and that I used to be much cooler. I actually get messages like that a lot. And I have changed a lot, both visually and in terms of content. But, for me, it's almost a compliment when someone tells me I've changed – it means I've outgrown myself. I've started to get to know myself better, to find out what I want. I dared, I had the courage. The important thing about change that you see and that is noticeable is that aspect of courage. You have this identity, and then when you break out of that and try something completely new, it shows great courage. That's why I like to change so much.

Podcaster, political journalist for ZEIT ONLINE, regular guest on ZDF's *Presseschau* and frequently seen on various talk shows – YASMINE M'BAREK is 22 years old and has

Yasmine M'BAREK

been active in political journalism for years. A conversation about her career, the growing political interest of her generation, and the politicization of the internet.

You've been working as an editor in the X department of ZEIT ONLINE for some time now. Have you always wanted to report on politics?

I've been fascinated by politics ever since I was in school, which was reinforced in a very cliché way in my history class. The fact that I then ended up in journalism had to do with my even greater love of writing.

Where does your interest in politics come from?

I think I've always been interested in connections, and I found them particularly exciting in politics. My socialization and home were also quite political; one thing led to another.

Do you think you have some influence

increasing poverty, are forcing many young people to do so because this is the only way to tackle the problem. I also believe that the politicization of the internet (which is good) has played its part. Nevertheless, for many, politics is still considered a sensitive topic that is tricky to communicate (online). Do you think this attitude is a hindrance to political education/exchange?

No, not anymore.

Attitudes are becoming more important; the climate crisis and anti-discrimination, for example, are topics that are becoming unavoidable in

on young people's political opinions?

No, and power is also a difficult word in this regard. Opinions are just much more accessible on the internet – so is disinformation, for example. Of course, you have a responsibility in reporting and posting, but it's still journalism. Why do you think there are more and more young people who are now getting involved with politics in the first place, or who are much more critical of political content these days?

I believe that crises of our time, such as the climate crisis or

everyday life.

I see a positive development there. I think lifestyle bloggers

have it a bit more difficult, but even

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greats like Xenia Adonts draw attention to issues like BlackLivesMatter on their



© Leon Hoffmann

channels. You yourself tend to keep a low profile when it comes to your own political classification. Why?

Because I'm a journalist, and my own political opinion is secondary then. You were listed among the #Top30mm in journalism just last year. What is your secret to success?

I wouldn't use the word success. But I definitely like the topics that I cover in journalism. And that seems to be a cool thing to do.

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DEANA works as a freelance journalist and social media professional for various media, and also lectures at the Academy for Journalism in Hamburg. Having studied futurology, Deana explores what the

Tell us about your childhood and growing up, were there any figures that you looked up to that led you to the path that you're pursuing now?

My childhood was a happy one. Although we never had much money, my parents managed to have enough food on the table for the three of us – me and my two siblings. My origins go back to Sarajevo, in Bosnia that back then was Yugoslavia. Most of the family still lives there, or some other country in the Balkans. Everyone who could escape the war in the Former Yugoslavia went to the US, to Germany, Austria or even to Australia. My parents were so-called *Gastarbeiter*

life that I looked up to. But I had parents who gave me the most precious thing you can give to a child: Self-assurance to trust myself and my abilities, the freedom to do whatever I want, and unconditional love I could always count on.

Is there a book that really inspired you? I read a lot. But Didier Eribon's *Returning to Reims* is a book that touched me a lot. The book tells us about power relations, class and gender. The book builds on existentialist, historic

experimenting with new forms of journalism that I call Social Storytelling. We use those channels as our main platforms to tell our stories. Social media is no longer something you do to link to your work, we rather produce content that is actually tailored for audiences on different platforms. And this has a big impact on journalistic work – also in the future.

As I know how the algorithms work and what they prefer, I look at social media in a differentiated way. On a private level, I find a lot of things disturbing. Especially when it comes to certain topics like body-shaming, racism, hate speech, etc. These algorithms push

younger ones. What do you envision for the future of the digital landscape? Sometimes I find it funny how we talk about things like AI and how machines will steal all our jobs in the near future. We talk about it as if those machines had a life of their own, instead of reminding ourselves that it is us humans who can decide how to use these machines we create. I envision a future where digitalization will help us get rid of certain activities no one likes to do. This landscape would enable us to keep our productivity as a nation high, so we can really introduce a universal basic

income. In my vision, people would – instead of consuming even more – have more quality time they would fill with social engagement,

mindfulness and enjoying life. In order for this to happen, we need to discuss how we



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A landscape where politicians snoozed on our most urgent issues: digitalization, climate change and social justice. I didn't see myself joining any of the existing parties as it would have been too much of a

compromise for me. So I decided to start my own party. Our aim is not only to change the outcome of politics, but to establish an even better version of democracy. A more equal, open one. We call ourselves the party of the future – always in a beta version. We

don't want to be just

another political party, but rather see ourselves as a political movement aiming to change politics sustainably and get as many people as possible involved. What is your advice for young people wanting to carve a career in politics? As our representative democracy has reached its limits and we see that those people we put into parliament don't work to really change things in a sustainable way, I would

recommend just starting your own thing. Young people know how to use the power of the media to their advantage, as we can see with Fridays For Future or Black Lives Matter.

Don't overthink your plans, just do it and try to gather people you trust around you to fight for the right goals. In the end, you just need one person to start a movement, one first follower and then the rest will jump in, too. You're stuck on a desert island. What would be the music record, book and luxury item you would want to take with you?

I would take a record of love songs by an old Yugoslavian band called Bijelo Dugme with me as they trigger all the world pain you can feel, Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and sunglasses.

Deana MRKAJA

future of democracy could look like. Her test laboratory is her party, "Die Neuen," founded in 2020. The topics that move them are democracy, justice, social affairs and sustainability.

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(foreign workers) and started their life in Germany before the war broke out. I remember a time when we shared our three-bedroom apartment with 13 people – my family had fled during the war and lived with us for three years. That was a tough time for all of us, but I was happy to have my cousins around and play with them. Kids don't understand what war is. My family is a multi-ethnic one: We have Croats, Serbs and Bosnian Muslims within the family. So, it was never allowed to pick a side during the time our country fell apart. And it isn't until today.

I never really had figures in my

materialist, and sociological traditions. The author is a well-known figure in France, born into a provincial, working class family, who struggled to achieve his rightful place in the Parisian intellectual society. I find a lot of things he talks about in this book relatable. The power of social media can be limitless, both good and bad. What can you tell us about your use of it and opinion on it?

I use it mostly professionally. As a journalist and politician I was trained to use social media to promote my work, but also to understand how the algorithms work. In the past few years I've been

topics that trigger people's anger so they can get the engagement rate up. Content with a lot of engagement gets pushed so even more people see it. And, in the end, you have

the impression that all this media is full of hate, which is pretty

dangerous for a society. People need more understanding of how these platforms work – especially the



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MARINE SERRE

Body politics have always fortified my practice. Questions of mobility come down to “Who can go where? When and why?” Migration of classes, institutions and geographies are down to a mix of economics and culture, but these are always constructed simultaneously with the politics of the day.

PROLOGUE



SHANNON T. LEWIS
Solid Intrusion Of The Legendary Into The Real World, 2019
 Oil on canvas
 Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim

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SHANNON T. LEWIS
Protective Colouration Wherever It Might Be Found, 2021
 Oil on linen
 Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim

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For law, the transatlantic slave trade, the Opium Wars, are entwined in how we code the present in ways not always obvious. In a general sense, to truly have useful dialogue, it's necessary to make sure we all are speaking of the same thing. Through this, we can develop a broader shared understanding of histories, how they are all entangled and how words and images came to signify what they do. To go beyond

speaking in platitudes, global communities of today need to hear more stories than we were exposed to in our particular geographic and temporal bubbles. We need to investigate our national mythologies alongside our own personal mythologies. Beyond hearing what someone is saying in the present, it's important to develop the practice of thinking about what trajectory brought them to this moment. What are all the obscured structures that motivate peoples' desires? Through figuration, I play with the viewers' unconscious

archives of imagery and scramble them, in order to force a slower read of the image. Especially in a digital age, where we process so many images in such quick succession, we tend to fall back on top down processing, filing most things into objects we know and understand. But, I would like to interrupt this instinct if only for a moment. With a body slipping out of place and time, or an appendage squeezed beyond its capacity for support. Not only does it speak to the work of travel—what is the work someone has done to share the same space as you? And what effect has the work had on the traveler?

SHANNON T. LEWIS is a Berlin-based artist

But it also brings to attention how we organize what bodies belong where. Delving into this line of thought, we can unravel our ideas about citizenship, the Enlightenment, “Human vs the Other,” and what social contracts we demand from the State. Inherent in the question “Who can go where?” is the question of the value of bodies in general. The function of “the cut,” in my practice, is crucial to a reading of necropolitics, bodies that are in political peril. But what is perpetually built on top

of such trauma is beauty, culture, joy, sociality and strategies for mobility. The bringing together of the old and the new, the remix, are essential tools for not only survival, but thriving for diasporic Black communities. Fragmentation, in this respect, is not a state to overcome, but a place of possibility. The ability to adapt to shifting landscapes leaves room for shifting borders. To move conversations forward is a necessary tool for a healthy society. A constant reexamining and shifting of the borders. So that more people have room to participate.

The idea that borders are meant to be impenetrable doesn't track with history or the very subatomic structure of our physical world. By making visible the 400-year-old colonization project that includes classification and stratification, we can perhaps unmoor the idea that things have always been the way they are and stop trying to sell a return to a utopia that never existed. If we could build a less opaque picture of the world, perhaps this can free us to dream up a more inclusive future for all.

Beyond Bodies

Words
 SHANNON T. LEWIS

CANCEL CULTURE: A term constantly seen in headlines and news articles – one could say it is currently the most popular phrase to be slung around in political debates, smear campaigns, or over drinks on Friday night (virtual or not). BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS CANCEL CULTURE? A platform for marginalized voices? Actions that are taken to hold others accountable? Censorship of free speech or history? Or an attack on traditional society?

In recent times, cancel culture has become a hotly contested concept in political and international discourse. There are countless debates over what it is and what it means. And where some see a system for accountability, others see censorship and revoked freedom. Cancel culture is driven by the power to call someone out – usually powerful public figures, politicians, or celebrities – by culturally boycotting, objecting to, and shunning controversial behavior or messages. Driven by ideological divides, the power to “cancel” an entity has become a modern form of protest.

So, how exactly did this movement evolve? There is nothing new about refuting the opinions of others, but with an estimated 6,000 Twitter posts per second, not to mention all other media

platforms, there is a never-ending supply of critique and new material to fuel cancel culture. According to journalist AJA ROMANO, it harks back to a song from 1981: The origin of the term

“cancel” is accredited to songwriter NILE RODGERS, who wrote the song “Your Love Is Cancelled” after a bad date. Although the movement was not directly born from this song, the metaphor that RODGERS created, the idea of canceling someone because of something they have said or done, went on to inspire screenwriter BARRY MICHAEL COOPER to use the term in the 1991 film *New Jack City*. There, main character Nino Brown claims to cancel, in this case, break up with, his girlfriend – “cancel that b***h” – after she breaks down in a scene and he objects to her behavior. Yet the term only really began to take the social media world by storm when a cast member from the reality show “Love and Hip-Hop: New York” in 2014 also attempted to cancel – “you’re canceled”

Steered by social media voices, problematic figures are subsequently denounced by the masses, called upon to withdraw from their positions, under collective pressure to dismantle platforms, fame, businesses, companies, jobs, power, popularity – you name it. People like BILL COSBY, HARVEY WEINSTEIN, and R. KELLY have been canceled by the public because of their sexual offenses and crimes – upending the hierarchy of political power and leading to widespread cultural shifts. J.K. ROWLING was canceled for transphobic opinions and HANK AZARIA, the voice actor for the SIMPSONS’ APU character, was canceled due to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and public outcry regarding white actors portraying non-white characters. Each new cancellation became a sign of the times. PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER WILLING TO ACCEPT INJUSTICES ON A SOCIAL, POLITICAL, OR GLOBAL SCALE AND NOW, ARMED WITH THE POWER TO AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES VIA ONLINE PLATFORMS, THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAS BECOME THE AGENT OF CHANGE.

– his girlfriend after watching *New Jack City*. And, thus, the term “cancel” originated from African-American vernacular and began circulating on Black Twitter. Around the same time, social media also gave rise to a renaissance of public shaming. PR executive JUSTINE SACCO wrote the following tweet to her 170 followers: “*Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. JUST KIDDING. I'M WHITE.*” Within a matter of hours, she was the number one trending topic and previously voiceless people suddenly had the power to condemn the social and racial injustice and the misuse of White privilege. Consequently, the cancel culture movement took hold, and with mainstream media adopting the concept, canceling has now become the internet’s most powerful tool.

BUT, IN 2021, IS CANCEL CULTURE STILL AN EFFECTIVE MEASURE TO HOLD THOSE IN POSITIONS OF POWER AND INFLUENCE ACCOUNTABLE? In times of heightened isolation, time spent online exponentially increases. Now, non-public figures also see themselves on the receiving end of public shaming and cancellation. A trend in exposing and canceling “Karen” figures – a stereotype used to describe women who weaponize their relative privilege to carry out aggressions against people of color – evolved into virally publishing private and identifying information like names, addresses, workplaces. Whilst action must be taken against injustices and harmful behavior, the conflict between public versus private poses a larger question. What happens when, in the tirade of mass shaming, private information ends up in the wrong hands? What if the tables are turned and private information from members of marginalized communities is also shared on social media? **At what point does a tool for accountability turn into a mob mentality?** Cancel culture and the power of public voices on social media can spread like wildfire, upending reputations and careers alike within less than 24 hours. But what was originally regarded as a form of contemporary discourse, allowing disempowered communities to stop toxic behavior and assert their values, can now quickly transform into an online feeding frenzy in an attempt to cancel anyone with a controversial opinion.

In today’s debate over cancel culture, larger issues seem to be forgotten while time and energy are spent disputing the actual validity of the movement. Conservative media claims that cancel culture is the oppression of freedom of speech and is a form of

between left and right-wing politics, between pro- and anti-vaccination. While QAnon conspiracy theorists spread COVID-19 denialism and ostracize those who rebuke them, pro-vaxxers take to news – with the claim that dangerous groups want to take over fundamental freedoms.



During this era of cancellation, power dynamics shift into a balancing act when zealous, self-appointed culture cancellers attempt to outdo one another until the other side topples. Some political figures go so far as to weaponize the movement to spur on anti-cancel culture circles, as TRUMP claimed during his speech at the 2020 Republican National Convention: “*The goal of cancel culture is to make decent Americans live in fear of being fired, expelled, shamed, humiliated and driven from society as we know it.*”

While some might find this statement jarring, others would be quick to agree. HARPER’S MAGAZINE published “A Letter on Justice and Open Debate” with signatures from over 150 writers, scholars and public figures denouncing cancel culture, claiming the loss of freedom of speech for creatives and forced ideological conformity: “Editors are fired for running controversial pieces; books are withdrawn for alleged inauthenticity; journalists are barred from writing on certain topics; professors are investigated for quoting works of literature in class.”

When previously marginalized groups become empowered by change, disrupting the chain of authority and power, those who feel threatened start to push back. And whether left or right, in political and social discourse, a pattern emerges where the public figures subject to criticism attempt to cancel cancel culture. But as books are being pulled from shelves, characters rewritten, and certain TV shows no longer being aired, a question still lingers: While all of these creative works are being amended to rectify social, racial, or immoral injustices, what if a different voice became louder and stronger, swaying the balancing act of cancel culture towards a more orthodox, traditional society? **WOULD WE STILL AGREE WITH THE EVOLUTION**

OF CANCEL CULTURE AND THE ABILITY TO MASS SHAME AND REDISTRIBUTE POWER? In a global political culture, where we have access to more information and media sources than ever before, a movement synonymous with accountability also polarizes its audience.

The conversation regarding cancel culture is far from over; it has given rise to critical movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, and given a voice to those who otherwise would not have been heard. It has allowed us to pause and reflect on all the injustices in our society. In the age of social media, it has never been easier to express our views and pass judgment on others.

Will we ever find solidarity in the meaning and use of cancel culture? The complexity of this movement is just as complex as human nature. It is up to us to use the power responsibly and recognize the difference between a justified cancellation or ruthless hazing. Is the fear of being canceled changing the behaviors of powerful, public and influential figures? Or are we creating an environment of shame and rigid standards in which people are discouraged from sharing their ideas? In life, it is a challenge to cultivate wisdom and learn to accept and move on from our mistakes. How do we establish a system in which we can flourish, where modern protests remain the backbone for social change and each of us has the space to develop our values, beliefs, or opinions in relation to the ever-changing world and people around us? **THE VOICE OF CANCEL CULTURE SHOULD BE USED FOR GOOD.** Committed to bettering our communities with a drive towards dismantling the archaic institutions that go against the grain of inclusion and diversity.

“Cancel culture and the power of public voices on social media can spread like wildfire, upending reputations and careers alike within less than 24 hours.”

Culture AND THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC

Words

Hanna HETHERINGTON

For a long time, women were oppressed as a matter of course. The **LIST** of things that women were **NOT ALLOWED** to do was much longer than the **RIGHTS** that were recognized for them. Some of these things only changed in recent history. While **VOTING**, **GETTING AN EDUCATION**, **GOING TO WORK**, or *driving cars* feels natural to us today, **we can sometimes forget the long struggle it took to gain these rights.** And as long as not all women in this world **HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS TO MEN**, this struggle will continue. There may be gains in **WOMEN'S RIGHTS** in some countries, while others are regressing a hundred years. **Will we ever overcome the patriarchy?** As long as women are disadvantaged, **WE MUST UNITE AND FIGHT FOR EQUALITY.** History has shown that even the smallest movements had their impact.

Text: HANNAH SULZBACH

T I M E L I N E :

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

FRANCE 1791

OLYMPE DE GOUGES

is considered to be the first "MODERN" FIGHTER FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. In the course of the **French Revolution**, she wrote, among other things, the *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens* published in **September 1791**: "The woman has the right to climb the scaffold. Likewise, she must be granted the right to mount a speaker's platform." She was arrested during the **Reign of Terror** in the summer of 1793 for hostility to Robespierre and executed in the autumn after a brief **48** show trial.

USA 1848

Indignant over women being banned from speaking at an **ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION**, **ELIZABETH GADY STANTON** and **LUCRETIA MOTT** congregated a few hundred people at their **FIRST WOMEN'S RIGHTS CONVENTION** in Seneca Falls, New York. They demanded **civil, social, political and religious rights** for women in a declaration of sentiments and resolutions: "**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal.**" The **WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE**, in particular, was met with derision by the public, but a movement was born.

Columbia 1853

The City of **Vélez** in **Columbia** was the first city to introduce **WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.**

France 1872

The word **FEMINISM** appears for the first time in the book **L'HOMME-FEMME** (*The Man-Woman*) by **ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS**. He writes: "The feminists, allow me this neologism, in any case have the best intention when they assure you: The whole evil lies in the fact that one does not want to recognize that women belong entirely to the same level as men..."

1872

New Zealand 1893

A suffrage petition was able to collect 32,000 signatures on a 270-meter long list presented to the **Parliament on July 28**. Soon after, **NEW ZEALAND** became the **first self-governing nation to ALLOW WOMEN TO VOTE** and inspired **SUFFRAGISTS** across the globe. On **28 November 1893**, women voted for the first time in a **parliamentary election**, and in the same year, **Elizabeth Yates** became **Mayor of Onehunga**, the first female mayor anywhere in the British Empire.

1906 FINLAND

FINLAND, the fiercely contested abolition of the census **SUFFRAGE** for men, where only those **who could prove certain financial resources** were allowed **TO VOTE**. The sooner men got the unrestricted **right to vote**, the longer women had to fight for it.

Europe 1911

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ON MARCH 8 AMASSED MORE THAN **ONE MILLION PEOPLE** across **GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA** and **DENMARK** for **WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE** and **LABOR RIGHTS**. In its early years, the day became a **mechanism** to **protest World War I**. Most notably, in **RUSSIA** in **1917**, a large women-led demonstration broke out demanding **"BREAD AND PEACE,"** which some historians believe ignited the **Russian Revolution**, as four days later the **Czar** abdicated.

Germany 1918

In **November**, the **right to vote** for women, the **right to work**, the **right to education** and for a **society on a new moral basis** were legally established in **Germany**.

EGYPT 1920s

The **Egyptian Society of Physicians** stands up against the tradition of **FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION** for the first time, declaring **negative health effects**. It is said that there are at least **200 MILLION GIRLS** and **WOMEN alive** today who have undergone **FGM**, mainly on the African continent. According to WHO estimates, **25% die** during or after the procedure.

NIGERIA 1929

The **ABA WOMEN'S RIOTS** was a **REVOLT** by women of various ethnicities in southeastern **NIGERIA** in November and December that was directed **AGAINST THE POLICY OF BRITISH COLONIAL RULE** WHO WANTED TO INTRODUCE A **NEW TAX FOR MARKET WOMEN**. The women sent **palm leaves** as an invitation to their fellow sisters and used a tactic called **"SITTING ON A MAN,"** singing offensive songs and **trying various other ways to humiliate men**. Even though the protest sparked **deadly backlash**, **AROUND 25,000 WOMEN ACHIEVED THEIR GOAL.**

ICELAND 1935

ICELAND WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO PASS THE PREGNANCY ABORTION ACT

on **January 28, 1935**, which was drawn up by the chairman of the doctors' organization, VILMUNDUR JÓNSSON. Although women were still dependent on the decision of a doctor, for the first time, the social circumstances and health risks of women were included in the abortion rules.

IRELAND 1945

Tired of unhealthy work conditions, low wages, overtime and limited leave, around 1,500 unionized LAUNDRESSES went on **STRIKE** for three months, leaving Dubliners' clothes dirty. The strike ended in a VICTORY and gave Irish workers a statutory week of annual holidays.

1945

With the birth of the **UNITED NATIONS (UN)**, ITS CHARTER LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF

gender equality: **"WE THE PEOPLES... REAFFIRM FAITH...IN THE EQUAL RIGHTS OF MEN AND WOMEN."**

A year later, the Commission on the Status of Women became the first global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to gender equality.

FRANCE 1949

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR published her book

"THE OTHER SEX,"

a basis for the feminist movement and gender studies.

THE KEY QUOTE, "You are not born a woman, you become one," refers to the differences between biological sex and cultural or social imprint.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC 1960

"Las Mariposas," as the MIRABAL sisters

Minerva, María Teresa and Patria

called themselves, formed a popular FEMINIST RESISTANCE **AGAINST THE DICTATORSHIP OF RAFAEL TRUJILLO.**

ON NOVEMBER 25, THE SISTERS WERE ASSASSINATED.

In 1999, the **UNITED NATIONS** made it the INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN in their honor.

USA 1966

IN THE 1960s, A SECOND BIG WAVE OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT BEGAN, BEGINNING WITH THE FOUNDING OF **NOW**

THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN ON JUNE 30, 1966.

Several autonomous women's groups were subsequently founded in Europe as well.

GERMANY 1968

The second women's movement in West Germany began with the **THROW OF A TOMATO**. At a meeting of delegates of the Socialist German Student Union on **September 13, 1968**, a dispute arose because the men were not ready to discuss a speech on the subject of discrimination against women. **SIGRID RÜGER** then threw **tomatoes**

at the board of directors and, on the same day, various women's councils split off across the country **TO DRAW ATTENTION TO EXISTING INEQUALITIES BETWEEN THE SEXES.**

1970s

The **first UN Decade for Women** was established, the first **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR** was celebrated in **1975**, and the first **WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN** in **Mexico City** escalated global discourse on women's rights in the same year. Also, since **1975, MARCH 8** has been celebrated as **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY every year**. In **1979**, the international treaty "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (**CEDAW**) was adopted, the most comprehensive international instrument **TO PROTECT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN.**

GERMANY 1971

The term of address **"FRÄU LEIN"** was abolished in Germany after several years of debate. Similar to *Signorina, Señorita, Mademoiselle* or *Miss*, there is a word in many languages for **UNMARRIED WOMEN** which has **fallen out of usage because it defines them based on their relationship to men.**

1993

After the **CEDAW**, it became clear that there was still a **NEED FOR FURTHER ACTION** in order to more precisely outlaw the various facets of violence against women, so the **"DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,"** the first international resolution to explicitly address and define forms of violence against women, was passed. As a result, the office of a **UN special rapporteur on violence against women**, its causes and consequences was introduced.

USA 1990s

The *riot grrrl* movement emerged in the USA in the 1990s, a feminist subculture in the **PUNK SCENE**. The main topic was the **OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF MALE MUSICIANS** and their **DOMINANCE IN THE MUSIC SCENE**. For the first time, a movement used the internet to spread their intersectional message, as well as using guerrilla tactics, creating zines, organizing meetings and concerts.

Liberia 2003

A relentless civil war impels thousands of **LIBERIAN WOMEN TO FORM A MOVEMENT**. Driven by activist **LEYMAH GBOWEE**, the movement employs various tactics, most notably **A SEX STRIKE** to pressure their men to partake in peace talks, and a **SIT-IN ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS BY WOMEN**, who threaten to disrobe as a means to shame and prevent male delegates from leaving without a resolution. The movement was so successful, it ended a **14-year civil war** and led to the election of Africa's first woman head of state, **ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF.**

India 2006

In Northern India's poverty-stricken district **UTTAR PRADESH**, a few women take matters into their own hands when they hear about a neighbor abusing his wife. They intervene together, forcing the husband to **acknowledge and stop the abuse**. This **snowballs** into a statewide movement, the so-called **GULABI GANG**, tens of thousands of women dressed in all pink, who tackle social injustices against women.

Ukraine 2008

The radical feminist group **FEMEN** was founded on **APRIL 11, 2008**, in Kiev by **ANNA HUTSOL**. Their trademarks are topless demonstrations, painted with slogans and wreaths of flowers in their hair. The first actions were **AGAINST SEX TOURISM**, but the topics now range from **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** to **ISLAMISM.**

RUSSIA 2011

The feminist, punk rock band **PUSSY RIOT** critical of government and church is founded in **MOSCOW**, known for the **COLORFUL BALACLAVAS** they wear when performing illegally. A year later, they received international attention after **THEIR ARREST** at a 41 second-long performance in a **RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH** shouting **ANTI PUTIN STATEMENTS**. The ensuing legal process sparked **NUMEROUS DEBATES ABOUT ART, RELIGION AND POLITICS.**

TURKEY 2011

The **"COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,"** also known as the **ISTANBUL CONVENTION**, was drawn up as a treaty under international law to prevent violence against women, especially domestic violence. Originally signed by thirteen member states in Istanbul in 2011, a total of 45 states have acceded by 2020. Turkey, ironically enough, became the first country to withdraw from the convention in 2021 after never applying it.

Pakistan 2013

A moment that shook the world: The attack on school girl and education activist **MALALA YOUSAFZAI** in Pakistan. Surviving gunshots to the head and neck by the Taliban, Malala made her first public appearance at the **UN** on her **16th birthday** in 2013, and became the youngest person to win the **Nobel Peace Prize** the following year.

SAUDI ARABIA 2018

For the first time, women were allowed to drive and get their license in Saudi Arabia. It was the **LAST COUNTRY** in the world to deny this right to women; in the past, many activists were arrested. The new freedoms for women were granted by Crown Prince **MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN** in connection with his reform program, **VISION 2030**, an attempt to modernize the country. However, Saudi women continue to be dependent on men in many areas of life.

Germany 2019 **BERLIN WAS THE FIRST FEDERAL STATE TO MAKE International Women's Day ON MARCH 8 A PUBLIC HOLIDAY.**

USA 2021 Since the beginning of the year, **KAMALA HARRIS** has been the first female **VICE PRESIDENT** of the **UNITED STATES**, as well as the first African American and the first Asian American person to hold this position.

Words
ANGELA WATERS

MARILYN

ALL WE MINTER

Artist-provocateur MARILYN MINTER sits down with FRAULEIN to talk about how far feminism has come, how our treatment of young women still has a long way to go, and what society lets you get away with after menopause.

When it comes to censorship, women's bodies are often a trigger that unleashes a deluge of outrage and restrictions in the name of modesty – just think about the nearly 540,000 complaints JANET JACKSON'S NIPPLE elicited after being exposed by Justin Timberlake at the 2004 Super Bowl, or when the poet Rupi Kaur's menstruation-stained sweatpants were met by a barrage of reports that made Instagram remove the image from the platform. To make matters worse, self-proclaimed feminists haven't always come to the defense of women being picked apart by the public. So, as a woman who has something to say about her own body, how does one deal with the backlash? According to 73-year-old artist MARILYN MINTER: You just have to find a way to survive and keep making the art you want to make.

"I didn't have any success as an artist until my 50s," Minter says over FaceTime from her New York studio. "Change is gradual and then sudden. That's how it was when I started making art with hardcore porn; I was called a traitor to feminism. Then, suddenly, the critics now look like school marms. I think it's because of the internet that my side won. But we were pariahs."

While female porn directors like ERIKA LUST are now celebrated by mainstream women's magazines as both artists and activists, Minter faced a very different reaction from feminists when she delved into erotic subjects as a younger woman. Mid-century feminism is often associated with free love and women's liberation, but the 1980s saw a wave of anti-sex work and anti-prostitution sentiment emerge with thought leaders like Catharine A. MACKINNON and ANDREA DWORKIN in radical feminism. MACKINNON argued that pornography was a civil rights violation and DWORKIN published a book entitled *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. Female artists working with explicit imagery was never going to be a concept that played well with conservative families, but owing to this cultural shift in feminism, liberal audiences were equally opposed to exploring a female gaze. Still, Minter wasn't the only female artist playing with porn at the time.

"BETTY is the one that worked with the *Fuck Paintings* and she was censored everywhere," Minter says of her contemporary, BETTY TOMPKINS, whose penetration paintings were recently exhibited next to her own Bathers series at the Montpellier Contemporain (MOCO). "When I met Betty, I didn't know that she had done this work; no one did. As soon as I knew that she had done that, I was blown away."

Not one to let critics and censors discourage her from exploring sexual imagery, Minter's exhibit at the MOCO is titled *All Wet*. The selection includes her 2009 video, *GREEN AND PINK CAVIAR*—which puts a piece of glass between the viewer and a red lipstick mouth that interacts with fluorescent green and pink slime—alongside a dozen large-scale paintings depicting women in the shower through a dreamy haze of steam and condensation. Minter initially got into her earlier hardcore pornography because of the lack of female voices in the space; she had a similar motive for making paintings of women bathing, likening Botticelli and Matisse to softcore pornographers.

"It's an excuse to show naked women, but the culture sees it as high art," Minter explains. "It has always been this game of peek-a-boo, men painting women in the bath or Apollo walking in on Daphne in the stream. Even the images of Artemis killing the hunter for walking in on her bathing is painted by men."

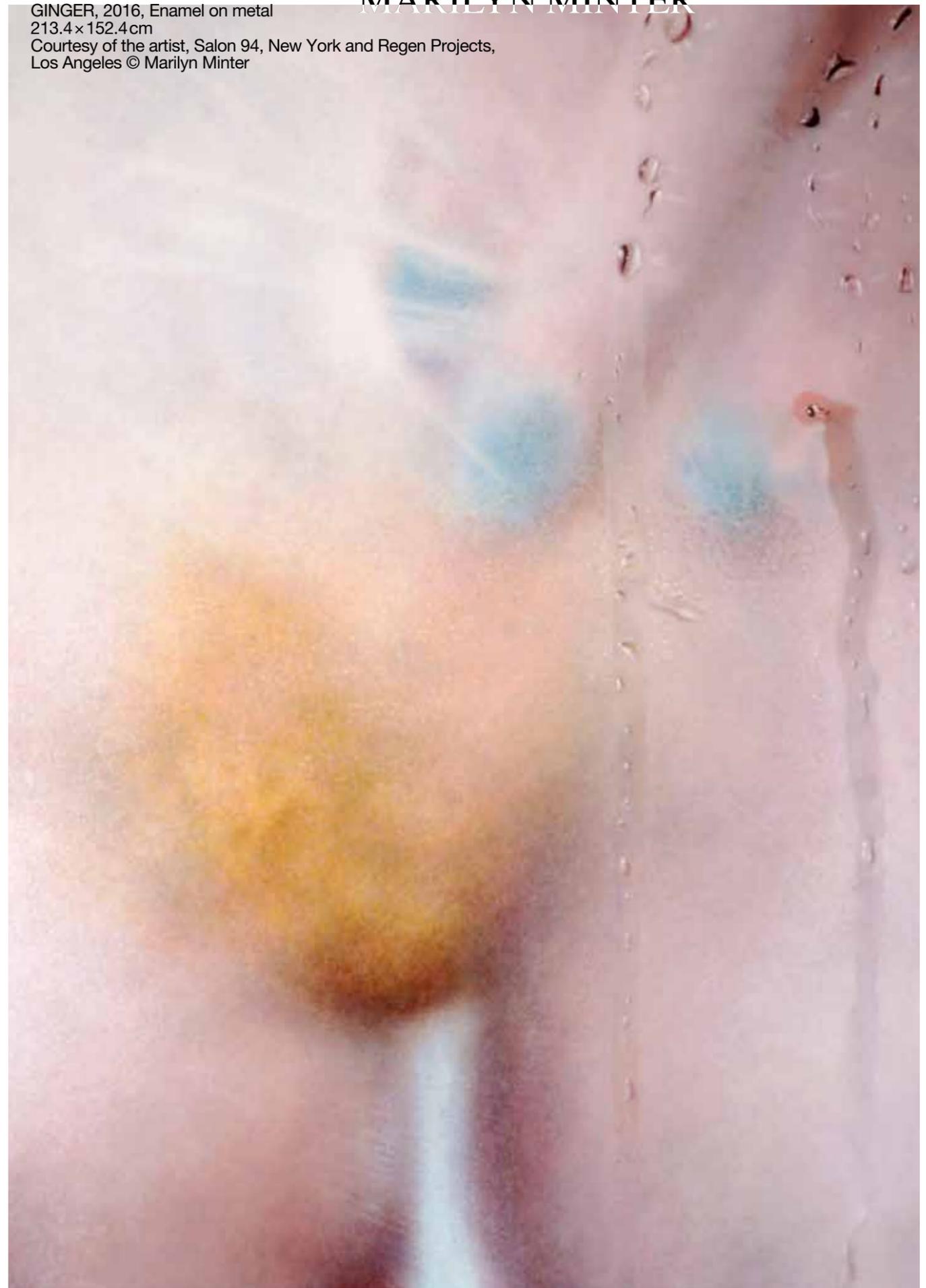
45 "We love to build up these young girls just to tear them apart later. No one escapes. There is no reason in the world that people should be criticizing KIM KARDASHIAN, but she is the butt of every joke."

One key difference between



STAR TATTOO, 2020-2021, Enamel on metal
182.9 x 121.9 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York and Regen Projects, Los Angeles
© Marilyn Minter

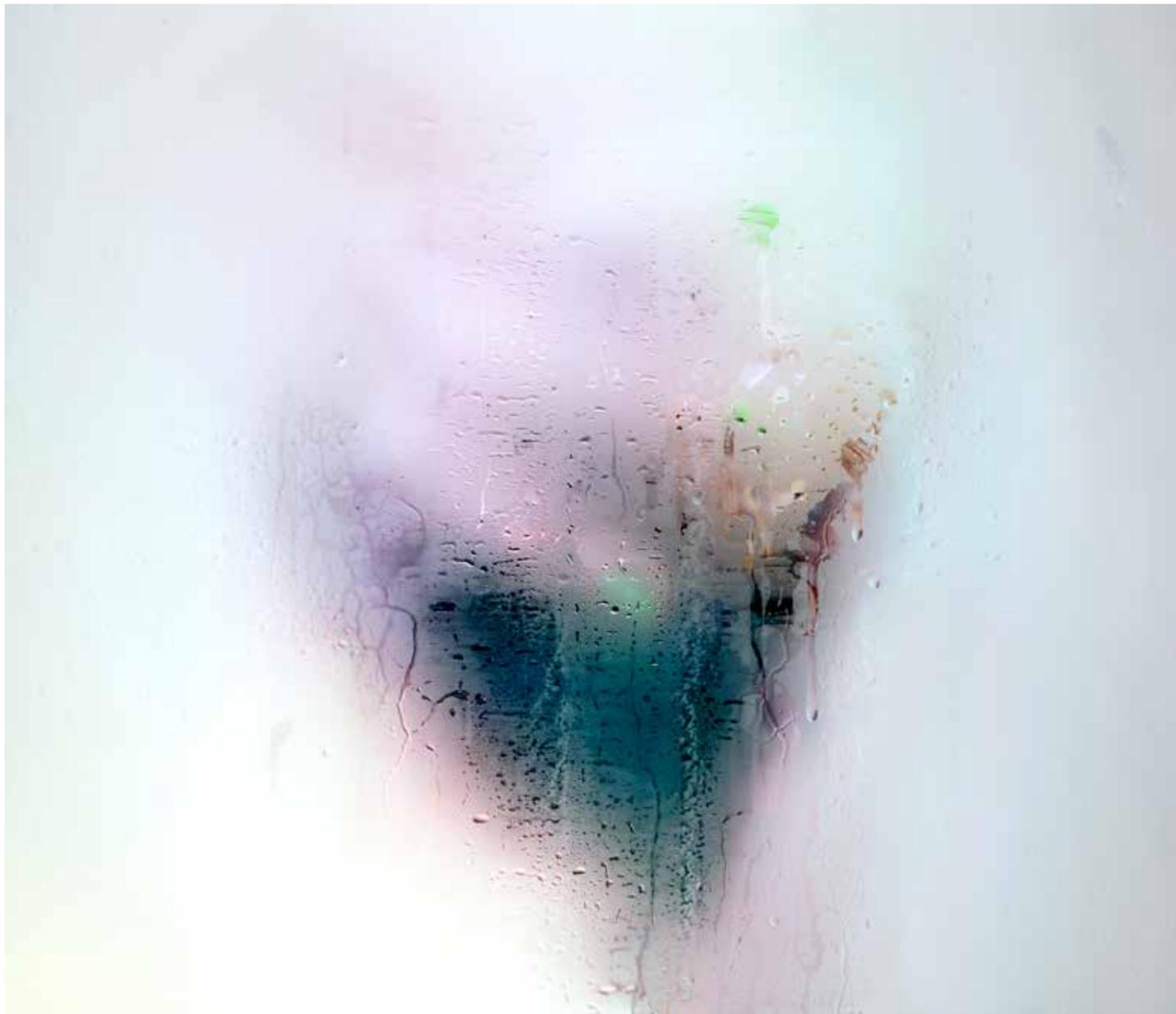
GINGER, 2016, Enamel on metal
213.4 x 152.4cm
Courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York and Regen Projects,
Los Angeles © Marilyn Minter



BIG BREATH, 2016, Enamel on metal
243.84 x 152.4cm
Courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York and Regen Projects,
Los Angeles © Marilyn Minter

MARILYN MINTER

“The eye craves what it doesn't see; that is why nothing should be permanent.”



CORNUCOPIA, 2018, Enamel on metal
182.9×213.4cm
Courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York and Regen Projects,
Los Angeles © Marilyn Minter

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the Old Masters and Minter is that the American artist's bathers come with pubic hair. The inspiration for this focal feature came when she was teaching fine art and her students discussed their preference for laser hair removal. Needless to say, Minter was not won over. Her rebuttal to bald vaginas came in the form of her 2014 photobook *Plush*, which features glossy photographs of pubic hair on bodies of different sizes, ethnicities and ages. The glass barrier distortion techniques used in the book served as a precursor for the *BATHERS* series.

“There are men who have never seen pubic hair,” Minter argues. While she doesn't want to tell anyone how to groom their privates, the idea of getting rid of it forever doesn't sit well with her. “The eye craves what it doesn't see; that is why nothing should be permanent.”

59 Although the pubic hair images are part of the *BATHERS* series, they differ from the face and torso shots in an important way: marketability. “I made all of these big, beautiful, pubic hair paintings so that they can be hung over people's couches, but nobody buys them,” Minter says. “Still, I know that they will in 10 or 20 years. I know that like I know the back of my hand—society has always been catching up with my arguments. There are some things that I sell so that I can make these other things that don't sell.”

Although much of Minter's work is based on challenging a hegemonic male gaze, the artist won't say what benefits a different perspective brings. She also insists that she is not a political artist, arguing that the moniker applies more to people like BARBARA KRUGER or JENNY HOLZER. She describes the relationship between her art and activism as only “tangential.” Still, as a woman who started protesting at 16 against racism in the Deep South, was active in the movement against the Vietnam War, participated in grassroots AIDS activism and regularly uses her social media platform to speak out on issues like sizeism in the fashion industry, strong opinions seep from her work. Minter may not literally spell it out, but choices like her deliberate portrayal of unconventional bodies or choosing to endorse women who are not traditionally seen as feminist icons – like when she photographed PAMELA ANDERSON in 2007 – make it clear where she stands.

Having received her fair share of backlash early on in her career, Minter is extremely sensitive to how society treats its young women, specifically denying them the agency to express sexuality on their own terms. In many ways, the current canceling reminds her of the censorship she experienced in the 80s. “We love to build up these young girls just to tear them apart later. No one escapes,” Minter says. “There is no reason in the world that people should be criticizing KIM KARDASHIAN, but she is the butt of every joke. She is a multimillionaire. It just pisses me off the way they treated Britney Spears. They also tried to tear apart Taylor Swift. And Lena Dunham, they practically killed her.”

Minter is also keenly aware of what it is like to be a post-menopausal woman dealing with the topic of sexuality. She receives a lot less criticism, but isn't certain that

it's necessarily a good thing.

“Because I'm old, I get a lot more forgiveness. What's that about?” she asks. “No one buys it, of course, but no one criticizes me. I think that I am allowed to make mistakes as an old lady.”

That's not to say that Instagram and Facebook are happy to host all of Minter's nude works and celebrations of female pubic hair. Unlike Tompkins, Minter has yet to have her account removed from the platforms, but she is very familiar with being reported and threatened with this type of action.

“I get censored all the time,” Minter says. “But I just put it up again. I don't care. I am old enough that I can't be bothered.”

Although it is probably easier said than done, the approach may be just what we need in the digital age: Focus on the long game.

60 LIMITING BOUNDARIES

SAINT
Precious

in conversation with

AMAARAE

Photos JESSICA LEHRMAN
Styling SINA BRAETZ

With the ever-changing and vibrating world around us, filled with DOs and DON'Ts, Ghanaian-American producer, singer-songwriter and artist AMAARAE opens up about her thoughts on past experiences in her life as well as eras of the life of our world, the flourishing musically and creatively that can now be seen and heard in Africa, as well as how freedom of expression is where the most exciting things happen.

Who is god? What happened to the visionaries of music? What follows if we work collectively, and how tainted is our collective consciousness? If we make room for others in the way we make room for the majority population? If we close creativity to some, do we not close it to everyone? Amaarae agrees that the possibilities are endless, but that things may have gone too far on some levels, and that we must now really manifest solidarity and carry on what we have. Together with the multifaceted artist and writer SAINT PRECIOUS, she opens up doors that previously, at least in public, were but slightly ajar.

SAINT:
I'm wondering who is Amaarae and who is Ama?

AMAARAE:

Who is a Amaarae and who is Ama? That's a good question, huh... I think that Amaarae and Ama are two entirely different people in a sense where as Amaarae the artist, I think that I allow myself a certain vulnerability and sensitivity that as Ama I don't typically allow myself to have. I think Amaarae is much more outgoing and bubbly, I think Amaarae's confidence is interesting. And I think as Ama, I'm just very laid back, quiet, observant, you know, and just kind of go-with-the-flow.

SAINT: *Okay, so you think that Amaarae lets you get out a side that you wouldn't otherwise have? Do you think that music is a part of that, too?*

AMAARAE: 100 percent. Absolutely.

SAINT: *You moved from Ghana to the US – how did that look and feel? And in what ways would you say that social and political climate differs concerning sound?*

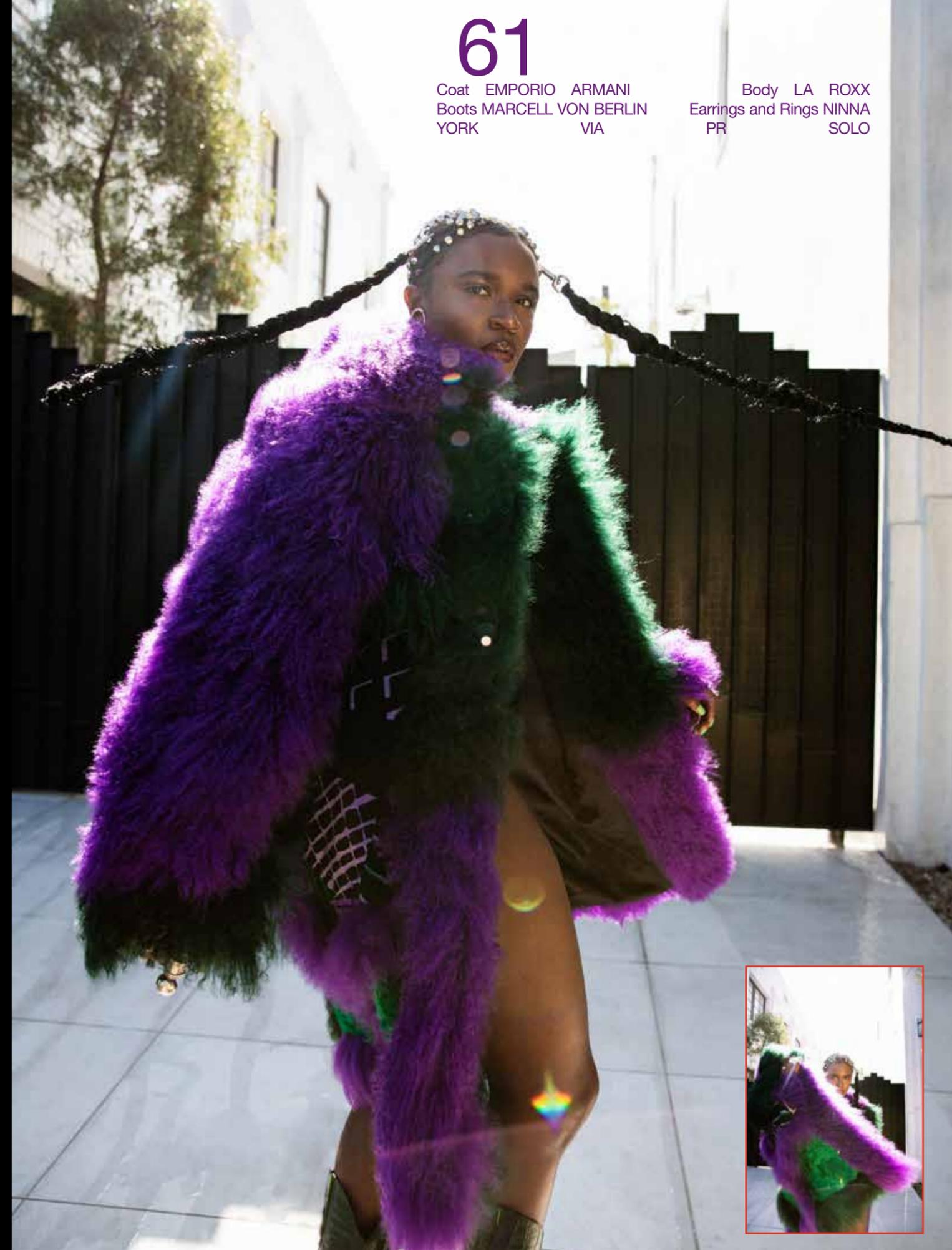
AMAARAE: Huh. That's such a cool question. So, first and foremost, leaving Ghana and going to America I think was such a cultural shock because of how different things were. I mean, things were different down to how my classmates and my peers related to their parents. I was always taught when I was growing up to always be respectful to adults. There's a certain way that I would have addressed my mother or father, and then I would see the way my friends would relate to their parents, as though they were their peers or their friends. That was one of the most interesting cultural things that I experienced because I noticed the freedom that a lot of my peers in school had when it came to expression in terms of the way that they dress, the way that they spoke, and even from the confidence that they had when it came to communicating their needs and their lives. Whereas back home, children are taught to be more fearful of authority and are taught sometimes when things don't fit the cultural values that are propagated, to suppress these parts of themselves.

As far as the social and political response in sound and music, I think that where I grew up in America – which was Atlanta and then Jersey – that the climate varies immensely. In Atlanta, everything is extremely pro-Black. There are Black entrepreneurs, Black hairdressers, Black doctors, Black store owners, and you can hear that in the culture and music. There's

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Coat EMPORIO ARMANI
Boots MARCELL VON BERLIN
YORK VIA

Body LA ROXX
Earrings and Rings NINNA
PR SOLO





Photos JESSICA LEHRMAN
Styling SINA BRAETZ
Creative Concept and Set ISAAC AARON
Hair JOHN BLAINE
Makeup VALERIE VON PRISK
Styling Assistant AUDRIQUE COLEMAN

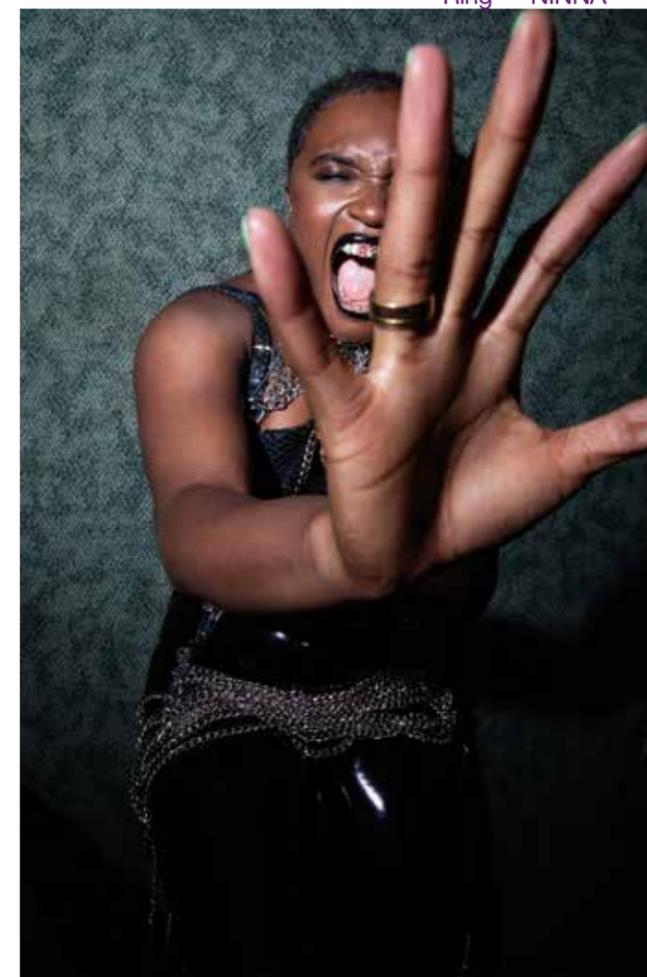
“Creativity comes first, and then you figure out practically how your creative ideas can work.” – AMAARAE

also just this very strong culture of *southern values* and *southern eccentricity* through music. On the other hand, I also grew up in New Jersey in an all-white neighborhood which was very, very suburban. The social implications of the sounds there made one see the disparity at that time between Black and white very clearly. I remember liking bands like AFI and Fallout Boy, and comparing that disparity to Atlanta – my peers in Atlanta weren’t listening to music like that. But then it was also really interesting to see it through the cultural aspect primarily, like the music that I was listening to mostly, which was hip hop, or the way that I would dress would also be of interest to my peers in New Jersey, who were mostly white teens who found it intriguing as well as refreshing, as some sort of new outlet to explore other mindsets or other ways of expression.

Then you bring it back to Ghana, where musically, first and foremost, being a female and making music was frowned upon; that’s number one. Number two, the sense of expression was limited purely to whether people can dance to this music. If not, it was dismissed as not being viable to be presented to the general public. Once again, you see that sense of suppressed expression, so it’s interesting to see all these different places and the way people express themselves, according to the environments and according to who’s around them and what’s around them.

SAINT: And that cultural shock that you went through, in what ways do you think that is reflected in you today? In fact, all of the cultural shocks, because it’s not only

Catsuit and harness LA ROXX
Ring NINNA YORK VIA PR SOLO



about your Blackness and dissimilarity, it’s also the fact that you moved from Ghana to the US. Would you like to tell me something more about that?

AMAARAE:

Of course. I think living in all these different places and meeting all these different people with different types of opinions, opportunities and ways to express themselves just made me untethered; untethered in a sense where I’m not

locked down to one idea, one sense of being, and I think that comes out in my music a lot.

With my last album, *The Angel You Don’t Know*, I was trying so many different things like Pop, Punk, Punk Rock, Trap, Shoegaze, Afro-pop, Afro-punk, House, as well as creating all of these fusions which I think is just a testament to all the places that I’ve been in, but also a testament in terms of the exposure to all different types of realities that made it possible for me to tap into myself in so many different ways. Even with the new music that I’m making now, there are so many different genres that are being melded. I feel so alive, I feel so open to trying things and expressing myself in some of the wildest ways. I think just that experience of being exposed to so many different people, places and things has just formed me in a way where I’m not locked into one mindset. I’m always open to a new experience, a new challenge, or any chance.

SAINT: *But then I think that Amaarae and Ama are two very similar persons, don't you think?*

AMAARAE: Why do you say that?

SAINT: *Because of the resemblance between your music and your life experiences, right?*

AMAARAE: That's a good observation. That's so true! I guess because I separate the two so much, I've never really thought about the fact that if I didn't have experiences as Ama, then I really wouldn't have been on Amaarae... That's interesting.

SAINT: *Okay, what pops up in your head if I say feminine and masculine?*

AMAARAE: You know, this might sound crazy, but I just see a room with four white walls around me. I believe that we've reached a point as a society where those two words almost shouldn't exist. We live in a time now where people have so much freedom to be who and what they want, that the idea of feminine and masculine is limiting. A lot of guys that I know paint their fingernails or will wear skirts, and women I know wear suits. I just think that right now, the world is such an open place that I can't see those as two mutually exclusive terms, it's just people being people.

SAINT: *And when speaking about these matters now, do you think that you're originating from the feminine and masculine, or the binary norm which equals the man and woman?*

AMAARAE: So, I see four white walls, and I see four white walls because I see a space where anyone is free to color as far as energy and expression goes. When it becomes the binary sense, man or woman, I think that, too, is free to expression. People feel how they feel, right? People are how they are, right? Who is anyone to question that? I guess there's the biological aspect of it, but surely what does that mean anymore, or what should that mean? So, like I said, whether it's biological or energetic, those words feminine and masculine don't hold any weight to me anymore because I just feel like we should be advanced enough to start to think past boxes.

SAINT: *In an interview with Pan-African Music, you state that you've had a hard time navigating through the patriarchal structures within the music industry. Are there any specific tools you use when dealing with this for coping and peace?*

AMAARAE: Yes, the art of the friend-zone.

SAINT: *Haha, exactly.*

“I think the tools that I employ most are emotional intelligence and hyper-awareness.”

– AMAARAE

AMAARAE: Haha, I'll tell you something, I'm a fairly androgynous woman, right? So I thought presenting in a more masculine way, that cis men just wouldn't be attracted – but it's like wow, how wrong I was – that's number one. Two, they don't give a fuck. Three, it's the same struggles for every woman, period. You learn how to read between the lines in conversations and how to communicate effectively, clearly, but sometimes, for the sake of your job, you have to know how to still be friendly and present things in a friendly way so that no one gets offended and you're not at risk of losing any opportunities or jobs. Another thing is navigating male entitlement and male ego, which is such an interesting thing in a workspace.

SAINT: *But you think being friendly in these situations has pulled you down?*

AMAARAE: That's what I'm saying: Be friendly, with boundaries. It's such a difficult thing to navigate, but sometimes your friendliness can be taken out of context, and it's like just knowing how to let people know we can be cool, I would be nice, I can be respectful, but this is where I draw the line. This is such an important thing to know how to do.

SAINT: *Period.*

In many rooms, as well as in your music, you mention God and your relationship to them. Could you tell us a bit more about



Latex coat and leather Jacket LA
R O X X
Shirt FROLOV
Tie STYLIST'S
O W N

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the connection and how that has shaped you?

AMAARAE: My relationship with God has been a very tumultuous one and one that has required me to come out of so many different types of mindsets at different stages of my life. As a toddler, I was taught that God operated in certain ways which mostly was linked to the Bible. Sayings such as *God is a jealous God, Thou shalt not sin* – I grew up in that realm. Then I got to a point at 19 years old where I had a very existential awakening, I started to question things that I'd been taught. As much as the Bible says that God is a jealous God, Thou shalt not sin, etc., it also says that the human is made

66 in the image of God. So, to me, that presents some type of oxymoron, almost a conflict of interest, and the way that I started to look at God was as an entity that I had a personal relationship with and an entity who did not pass judgment on the things that I did, but also an entity that was less of a moral and character judge and more so a spiritual guide, you know what I mean?

SAINT: *Yes, of course.* 66

AMAARAE: And that was important to me because I think it freed me and made it possible for me to see myself as a regular living human being that is making mistakes and learning every day, but that's also concerned with working on, building and improving themselves spiritually, mentally and physically.

“I used to see God as an external source that I had to seek forgiveness from, seek guidance and counsel from. Now, I see God as a source that acts within, and once I started to have conversations with myself, once I started to believe in certain things, the God that works within me, that works within you, that works

within the universe, started to act.” – AMAARAE



Shirt KIM OX J. BOLIN VIA PR SOLO Tie STYLIST'S OWN
Earrings and rings NINNA YORK VIA PR SOLO
Choker CHAINED BY SEDONA

SAINT: *So, do you think that God is more of an energy inside of you and something that has grown inside of you rather than something that you have looked up to and that has given you energy externally?*

AMAARAE: 100%, I feel that now. I used to see God as an external source that I had to seek forgiveness from, seek guidance and counsel from. Now, I see God as a source that acts within, and once I started to have conversations with myself, once I started to believe in certain things, the God that works within me, that works within you, that works within the universe, started to act. So it has to be an innate thing, it cannot be an external thing, otherwise, we're not connected.

SAINT: *Mm, tea. A lot of your music is made in Ghana and other parts of Africa. In what ways would you say that the difference between being active in Africa and the US shows?*

67 “I don't feel inspired by it, I don't even feel afraid. I don't feel. And I think that that's the difficulty that I'm seeing that America is facing is just like this regurgitation of what is supposed to sell.”

- Amaarae

AMAARAE: You know, as far as the African diaspora, it depends where you are. And when I say that I focus on that, one of my favorite fan bases exists in Nigeria and it's because in Nigeria, there's so much of this cultural renaissance and experimentation going on. What they're doing with our music and what the listeners are craving is allowing artists to do. Whereas I feel like in other parts of Africa, there are restrictions. Like, certain places exclusively want to hear Afropop or Afrobeats, certain places exclusively want to hear Amo piano or they exclusively want to hear South African house or sounds that are native to their city or country. Whereas in Nigeria, anything goes, and I believe it's one of the most freeing spaces to be creative in right now because they're just so open to allowing people to express themselves. Nigeria is now also the jumping point where everything that's happening there is translating globally as well. So, imagine being an African coming from Africa, where Africans primarily want you to make Afrobeats or Afropop or dance music, and you go into a space that's like “Oh, well, you can experiment in whatever way you want” and “This is a great platform for you to translate the sound globally.” It's extremely freeing.

When I think about America, it seems like they're going through a difficult time, culturally, musically. When I listen to rap, I don't get excited in the way that I used to be. If I think of American music in general, in the 2000s, I remember the different eras of like Soulja Boy, the era of Chanel Orange with Frank Ocean as well as Jhené Aiko, Kendrick and Cole and, you know, all these cool

artists that ushered in a different sound. An album that I always reference when it comes to American pop culture and just someone that just shook the table sonically is Britney Spears' *Blackout* album, because I think that's such a relevant album to pop culture in the way that it changed the sound, in the way that she even addressed some of her issues, in a way where she was searching for liberation. You could hear that in the music; whereas now, I don't know what people over there are articulating to me and I don't feel charged by it. Music can be pop music and still break down boundaries. Beyonce's first and second albums were historical as far as the soundscapes, as far as deciding to shoot a video for every song on her *B'Day* album and make a visual album in fuckin 2006? That's some visionary shit. Missy Elliott, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, visionaries. Where are the visionaries of today?

SAINT: *I would say that you are one of the visionaries today.*

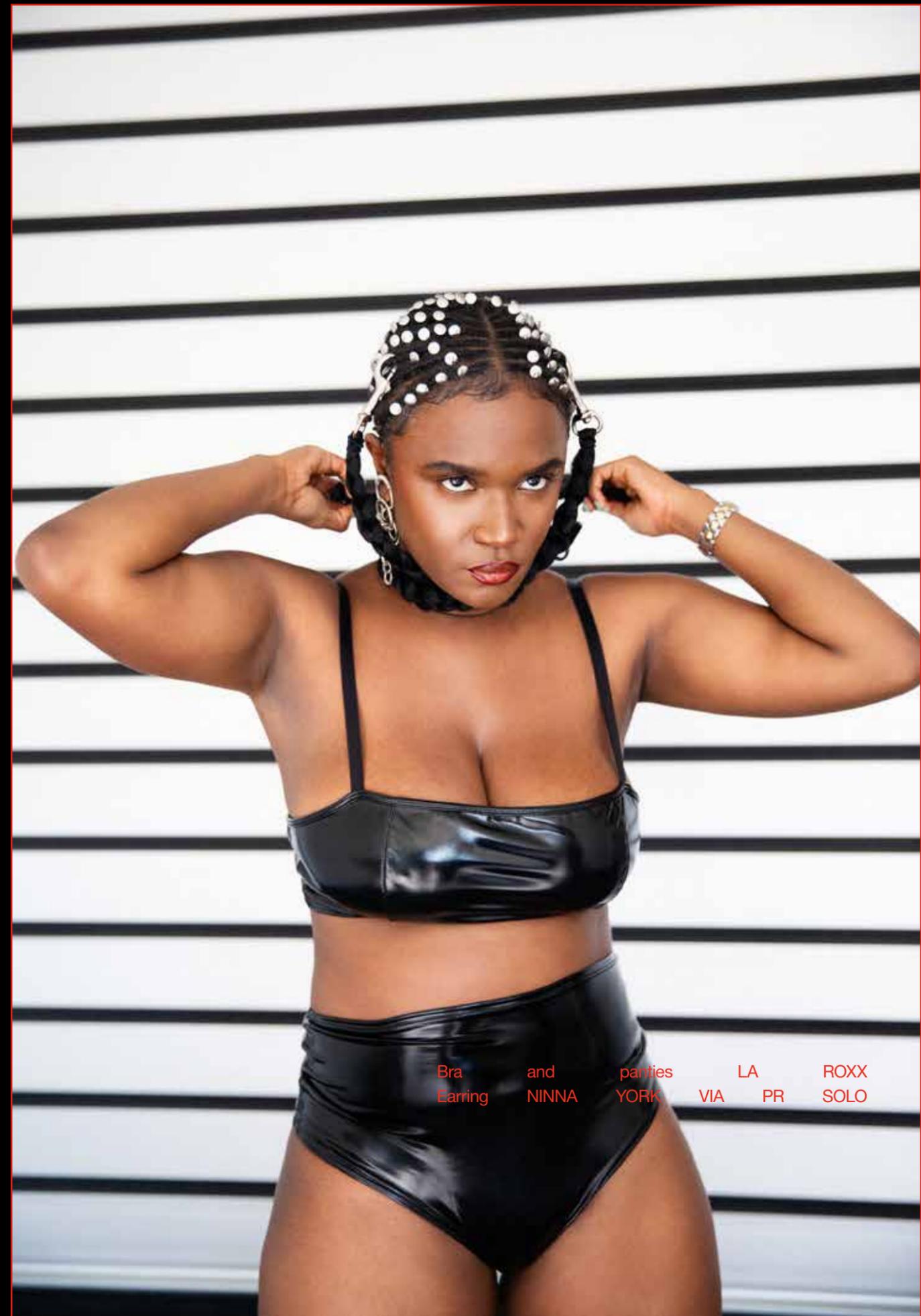
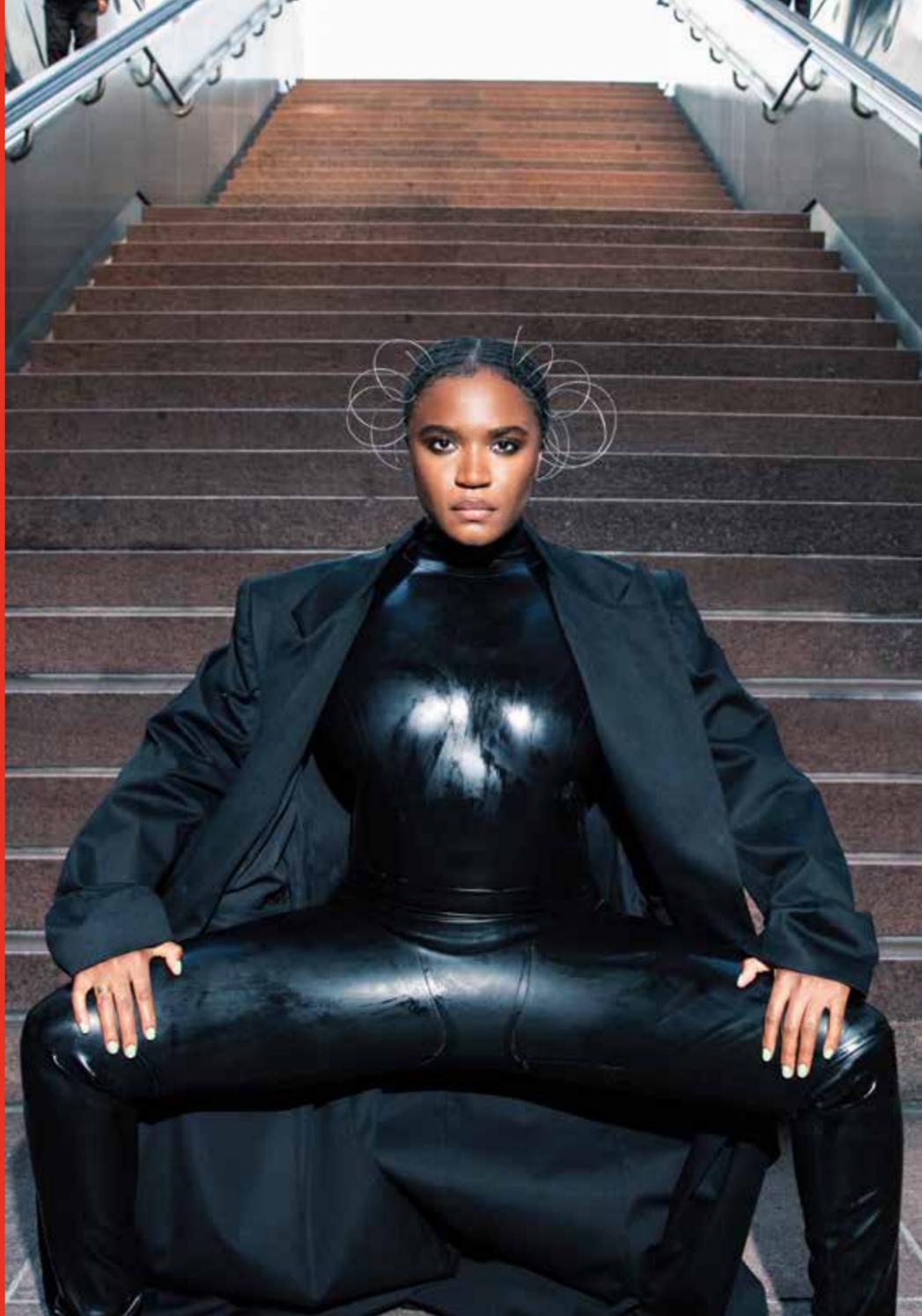
AMAARAE: Well, thank you! That's such a compliment. But I'm not American. We used to look to them as the beacons of people making great music. You know, Prince! Do you know? But now I don't. I would say besides like Young Thug and Future, who are my visionaries in terms of what they've done culturally and musically in the last seven to eight years? There are not too many people that are just shifting and pushing the culture anymore except Frank Ocean. Frank Ocean is another one, though, and Drake! Another huge cultural shift. But right now, who's going to break all of Drake's records? Non-existent. I feel like a lot of the culture right now and a lot of the experimentation and a lot of the danger, you know, the aggression, the angst, the excitement, is all coming from Africa.

SAINT: *The collectives of this world are without a doubt tainted due to the damage caused by colonialism and all that has grown out of that informs our norms, structures, etc. In what ways do you think that this affects you and your roundabouts?*

AMAARAE: You mean, how have the effects of colonialism affected me?

SAINT: *Yeah, what damage do you think this has done to you and your roundabouts?*

AMAARAE: I think the biggest thing that colonialism has done, the most damage that is caused has been to the consciousness of the



“The very vibrant and futuristic artist Amaarae wants to pay it forward and give back to all the Black girls, more specifically, in Ghana, that can’t access viable resources for their dreams.” – AMAARAE

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Latex Catsuit and Coat LA ROXX

Bra and panties
Earring NINNA YORK
VIA LA PR ROXX SOLO

African. Or the Black person in general. And I think it's also shattered our innate confidence and belief in ourselves as well as our valuable ideas that built communities and societies.

When you look at the biggest empires of history and their philosophy, the science, the models of education, the inventions – they're all basic thoughts and basic ideas that we still apply today. I think that if we had been able to continue to build our world without the interference of colonialism, to continue to build our societies and our communities, there is no telling

a public school. At the very least, my public school had air conditioning, heat, good teachers, tables, chairs. I didn't have to buy books because my books were provided to me by the state or by the county. If you look at a public school in Ghana or Nigeria or Cote d'Ivoire, teachers are on strike, the tables and chairs are falling apart, the buildings are falling apart, students can't afford to buy books, can't afford to buy school supplies. They're not teaching people to think critically, they're just saying: Here's a book, read the text, take the exam, pass or fail. That's not the way to groom the next generation of thinkers. You have to teach them to think themselves, think critically, and to be free, which I think is the most important trait of creative problem solvers.

“And really and truly, that's also why I do what I do – because I want to be able to get to that point where I can provide that resource. So, yes, it bothers me, it impacts me, and I want to say that it is one of the core reasons for why I even give a fuck about being creative in the first place.”

– AMAARAE

SAINT: But how does that affect you?

I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I can, as the Black trans woman I am, also hear and feel the pain in you.

AMAARAE: This does resonate in me, but I think... Hmm, you know, there are days when I don't want to do the job that I do and days when the bullshit is just too much to deal with. This can make me tap into a mode where I feel like I don't want to continue to be an artist or to be creative. But I really and truly sit down and think if I can just do this long enough where I can build something so that a lot of the young girls that are in school right now back home, dreaming of becoming rocket scientists, sound engineers, singers, painters, etc. have someone by their side that can be a resource, and make those forms and parts viable.

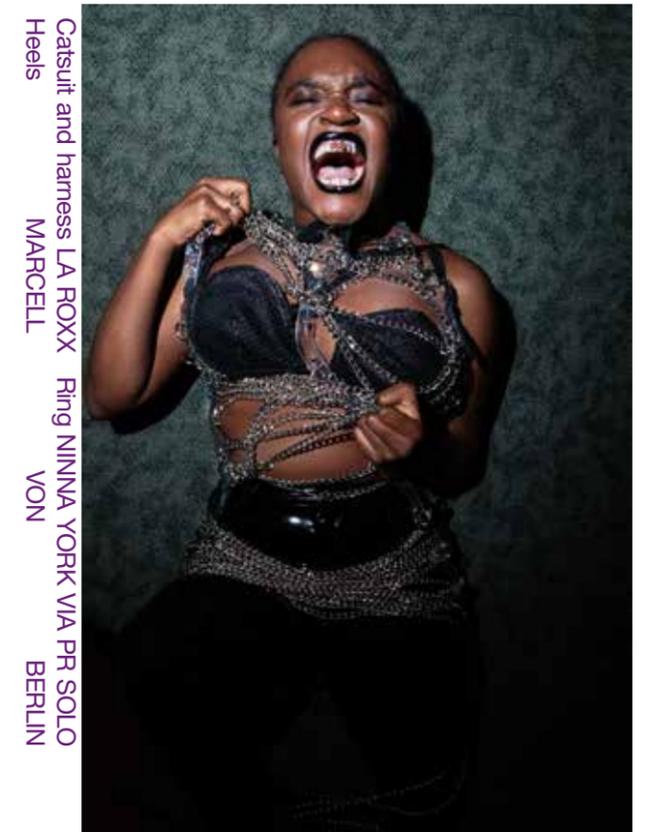
SAINT:

In an interview with HotLagosFM, you mentioned that you went through a severe breakdown because of expectations laid on you as an African creative from your parents. A huge help for you coming out of that was through music and constantly affirming yourself. What advice would you give a young Black girl with a similar background as you, to avoid a complete breakdown?

AMAARAE: I don't think you can ever avoid a complete breakdown, let's just put that out there. Sometimes, a breakdown is a thousand percent necessary because of the lessons that come from it, the strength that comes from it... I'm not encouraging anyone to not take care of themselves. I guess what I'm trying to say is that life can be frustrating, but also beautiful in the way that it's unpredictable, right? And I don't think I have the answers as far as how to avoid a breakdown, but what I can say is this: At every stage, the things that you know and the things that you learn are different. Do the best with the tools that you have and don't be too hard on yourself. At any point, whenever you feel something in your gut, trust it, don't fight that instinct. And when you do eventually break down, find the strength within you, as hard as it can be, to get back up. I hate to say this, man, but no one is coming to save you. That's it. It sucks, but it's sobering advice that we need to start telling ourselves and each other. This world is a difficult place and nine times out of ten, no one is going to come and hold your hand and walk you through. No one is going to come

and save you. You have to do it yourself. But here's the thing: When you get to that point where you do it yourself and you get past it, pay that shit forward.

SAINT: *Pay it forward. The importance of this act. If only more white people got that... and whom they should pay it*



Catsuit and harness LA ROXX MARCELL VON BERLIN
Heels MARCELL VON BERLIN
Ring NINNA YORK VIA PR SOLO

forward to... Now, performing is a very important and impactful way for all artists within the music to both let out, but also, of course, let in. When COVID struck, the living as an artist truly was tested in ways not seen before in this era. How did all of this impact you?

AMAARAE: The COVID period was interesting for me because I remember that was I was literally in the middle of finishing *The Angel You Don't Know*. We had planned a tour as well as a media tour and, all of a sudden, we were left with the digital space alone. It was interesting and taught me resilience and that there is no such thing as impossible.

SAINT: *Nothing is impossible! Thank you so very much, Ama, for answering these questions and for taking your time.*

AMAARAE: Thank you! Bye, Saint.

SAINT: *Bye, love!*



Catsuit and harness LA ROXX MARCELL VON BERLIN
Heels MARCELL VON BERLIN
Ring NINNA YORK VIA PR SOLO

where we would be in terms of science, in terms of technology, in terms of education. And when it comes to the way that people think, I believe that we were on a path to spiritual greatness. Now, even basic things in Africa are inaccessible, for example, education is extremely inaccessible in Africa. When I went to school in America, I went to

The art of NARRATING Subaltern

the

Words
ANNI
JACOBY



Photo © Paul Niedermayer

CEMILE SAHIN, *car, road, mountain*, 2020
Digital video, site-specific installation with
photographs, advertisement banners and airplane slides
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Film still © Cemile Sahin

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The Berlin-based artist Cemile Sahin started studying Fine Arts at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London while finishing her degree at Universität der Künste in Berlin in 2018. As a part of Cemile's artistic practice which evolves around film, photography, text and sculpture, she also published the novels "TAXI" in 2019 and "ALLE HUNDE STERBEN" in 2020. While diverse forms of narration are key elements in her artistic works, she also explores the powers of language and speech. Tied to a political necessity, Cemile negotiates the topics of militarism, geopolitics and states as social institutions. At the same time, she gives visibility to the multilayered dimensions of the Kurdish identity and the sociopolitical battles Kurds have to fight as a divided collective affected by the different political regimes of Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. After all, for Cemile, art is a force of political resistance: "And that's why I will never do anything else."

F: I want to start this conversation by getting to know more about your artistic process. First of all, I wondered what your understanding of "art" is?

Artist **CEMILE SAHIN**

C: For me, personally, art is an instrument to discuss political issues or to understand political contexts and their history.

F: So, you perceive art as an instrument that makes specific phenomena and situations more understandable?

C: Exactly. That, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I perceive art as an instrument that makes contexts and histories accessible.

F: In your artistic practice, you work with photography, film, sculpture, sound and text. Would you describe yourself as a multimedia artist?

C: Yes. I choose my medium depending on the concept I am working with, whatever I think works best for getting the content across. I either work with images as the basis or with texts that are based on research which

in the end I again condense into images.

F: Subsequently, I would like to talk again about

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"And I say that I am a Kurdish woman from Kurdistan because it originates from a political necessity."

during the day



CEMILE SAHIN, *car, road, mountain*, 2020
Exhibition view: ARS VIVA 2020, Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2020
Courtesy of the artist, Kunstverein in Hamburg, and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Photo © Fred Dott

“The phenomenon when fake history has taken place and there is no counter-processing against it; then, over time, this fake story becomes a kind of “truth” and then it just prevails.”

“text” as a medium. Would you say that “text” forms the bridge between visual art and literature?

C: Not at all, because I don’t pinpoint my works in literature. I look at the whole thing in terms of a cinematic aspect. For me, images and text belong together. And that also corresponds to the way I generally work. I personally think that when you work with film, you also must have a certain relationship and access to language, because you can’t detach one from the other. That’s also connected to the fact that narration plays a major role in my works. In the end, I either write texts and turn them into films, or I collect pictures and turn them into films.

F: We talked about your creative process in questions about form and by looking at different media. Now I want to know more about your thematic content, do you have a thematic focus?

C: There are especially larger topics that interest me politically, but I usually break them down into different fragments. In addition, I don’t believe that you have just one huge subject that you turn into a major project and then it’s done. I prefer to work with series which collectively contribute to a bigger issue or theme and respectively negotiate different aspects of it. For me, it’s practically a matter of looking at a diversity of aspects regarding a phenomenon because political issues have so many layers. What I also think is worth mentioning again – which is also tied to my attentiveness concerning political matters – is that I want to make political issues or conflicts visible and accessible especially because the art sphere is so elitist. I have always remarked it as problematic that certain cultural knowledge is required regarding the perception of art. I feel like one totally loses reference to the real world that takes place outside of those artificial art spaces because in those spheres, everything evolves around specific codes that have nothing to do with actual reality. About eighty percent of people not related to the art scene have neither access to the cultural understanding nor spatial access to it. I want to overcome the fact that art is only reserved for an exclusive circle of people.

F: And how do you choose what kind of political conflict or matter you want to examine and share with the world?

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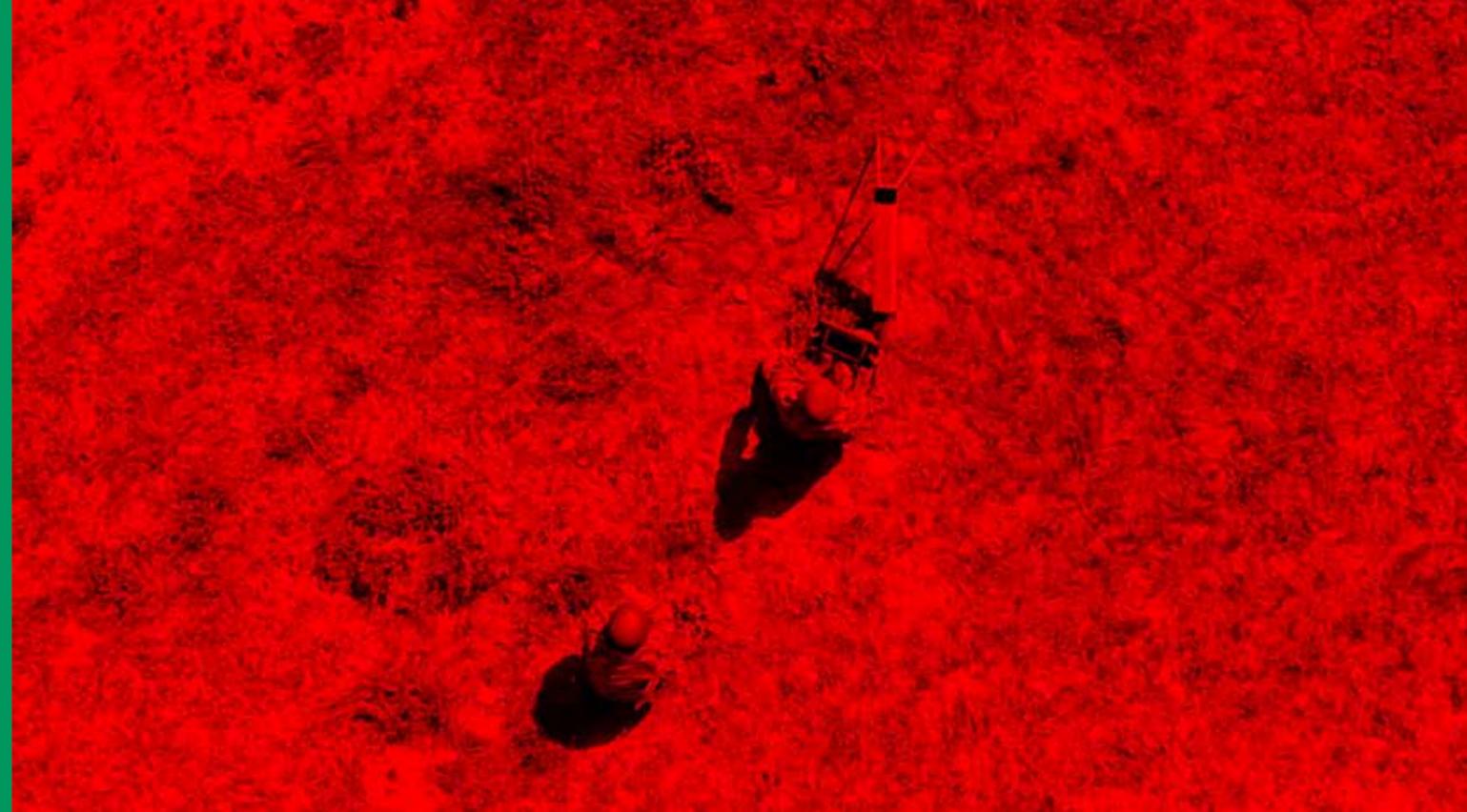
C: I am a Kurdish woman from Kurdistan. I think that’s very important contextually. And I say that I am a Kurdish woman from Kurdistan because it originates from a political necessity. My language, my culture, my history, everything has been denied since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923. And this hasn’t only happened in North Kurdistan – or Bakur as we call it – but also in all the other parts of Kurdistan.

All these problems within and around Kurdistan take on such huge political dimensions that ultimately, they pose questions and problems that affect not only the entire Middle East, but also Europe until this day. Since the division of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of separate states, Kurds have been persecuted and killed, and it is still happening today. It is an ongoing cross-generational conflict that you have to work against different state authorities that actually want to wipe you out with everything that relates to your history. All these things have therefore always played a major role in my whole life.

F: What has been your experience in Germany regarding this historic conflict?

C: In Germany, I experience the same things concerning Kurdish identities – that Turkish narratives overshadow our entire existence. In the 80s and 90s, no one in Germany really knew who or what Kurds were, they didn’t know we existed. There are approximately 1.5 million Kurds in Germany who are registered through the other countries they came from – so, from Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Even here you have to fight for your true identity because other state narratives, especially the Turkish narratives, are dominating.

“I personally think that when you work with film, you also must have a certain relationship and access to language, because you can’t detach one from the other.”



CEMILE SAHIN, *car, road, mountain*, 2020
Digital video, site-specific installation with photographs,
advertisement banners and airplane slides
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Film still © Cemile Sahin

F: I guess historicity is an essential part of your research process as well?

C: Yes, it plays a significant role in my conceptualizing processes. What motivates me specifically to incorporate historical research: The phenomenon when fake history has taken place and there is no counter-processing against it; then, over time, this fake story becomes a kind of “truth” and then it just prevails. But all these political conflicts and decisions that constitute it are ignored. And that’s one thing that has always been a concern for me.

F: What has your experience been with Western media trying to narrate discourses concerning the conflicts around the Kurds?

C: What I think is horrible concerning this aspect is, for example, that Kurdish women were actually only brought into the spotlight in relation to the siege of Kobanî, which was the period when the media went crazy about the IS. Before the rise of the Islamic State, we were invisible in a lot of political discourses. I feel like Kurdish women have only been high-key fetishized in the Western media and aestheticized as strong women with guns fighting against the Islamists. Whereas it is an embedded approach in Western centrism as generally named Orientalism, when it comes to Kurds it is much more



dominant. And at the same time, we are pushed into a corner as people with neither their own language nor culture, and everyone behaves like we just fell from the sky and suddenly fought against the IS. And that’s a thing Western media did – suddenly, Kurds were on many covers, but no one really cared who the Kurdish people were and what happened to them. The West was only interested as long as it had something to do with Europe because the Kurds fought against the IS to suppress it, which also meant protection for European countries. But, for example, every war crime that Turkey committed against the Kurdish population since the founding of the Turkish state is and never has been a big deal in Germany. Kurds get slaughtered and it doesn’t matter, but when it comes to fighting the Islamic State, Kurds are the brave heroes who get killed for humanity.

F: What you just explained is a super interesting point that Western media extracts singular, rather heroic aspects and aestheticizes them,

“I feel like Kurdish women have only been high-key fetishized in the Western media and aestheticized as strong women with guns fighting against the Islamists.”

and after some media outrage, it drops the whole narrative, and no one ever dives deeper into the context of certain conflicts.

C: Exactly, and that is the only reason Kurds were talked about for a hot second while for over a hundred years, the conflict around Kurds and Kurdistan is roaming and so many problems are linked to it. And the situation in the Middle East will never be settled as long as the Kurdish question is not resolved. In general, this is such an important topic that it will shift everything in the Middle East. And this unsolved issue won't just go away; I mean, a hundred years later and it's still a problem. Therefore, I will probably never address anything else.

F: In relation to that, I was wondering how you perceive the correlation of art and politics and how do you feel about the approach of art as a political instrument?

C: It might sound a bit basic now, but I think it's important to make art that has something to say, and I always try to point out certain symptoms or problems. My aim is to deal with issues in an artistic way. I see art as a force of resistance.

F: I think it's very interesting what you just said because I currently struggle with my personal relationship to art and the understanding of it. For example, I was asking myself whether informativity is a determining aspect of art.

C: Yes, I think it's a very thin line. I don't think I can just construct a political thesis and try to artistically exemplify it as a scientific or historic textbook would – as I am neither a scientist nor a historian. But I think you can still open up discourses with art, especially with art that serves as a vehicle that transports political content. I believe that art is a tool that can convey or narrate the political dimension.

F: In the following, I would like to talk about the specific content of your work “car, road, mountain” as well as about your two books “TAXI” and “ALLE HUNDE STERBEN.” In these works, you explore how repressive political

systems and militarism affects individual subjects. You do so by adapting a subject-centered perspective. What motivates you to look into particular subjectivist perspectives?

C: It has a lot to do with the fact that these perpetrator-fetish narratives incredibly frustrate me. That happens a lot in the media-centered narration of political issues, especially when dealing with groups of people who are harmful. That again ties back to the discourse around the IS, which only focused on armed men and visualizing danger. Of course, we need public clarification and understanding of what is happening, but it is wrong to only focus on the perpetrators and leaving the subaltern and harmed ones behind. With this kind of narrative, it seems that it is acceptable that thousands of humans are just wiped out by extremists. This gives rise to the idea that only the harmful perpetrators are worth shedding light on and that the people who have been killed are secondary. What I think is most frustrating about it is that European journalists who are totally removed from what is happening are trying to tell a story with many knowledge gaps in Kurdish historical contexts. This usually results in portraying distorted narratives which are infused by hegemonic ideologies.

F: What has led you to consider these diverse subjective experiences of political crisis?

C: What has driven me specifically is to shift the narratives because the problems have always been present, and nothing changes. And, at the same time, it is so difficult to get attention because exports of arms and geopolitical strategies seem just much more important than the lives of humans. A lot of people don't bother because they think it is so far away and they don't see that the problem also lies right here.

F: And, in the end, the Western world generally has a lot to do with the fact that such structures and asymmetries exist at all.

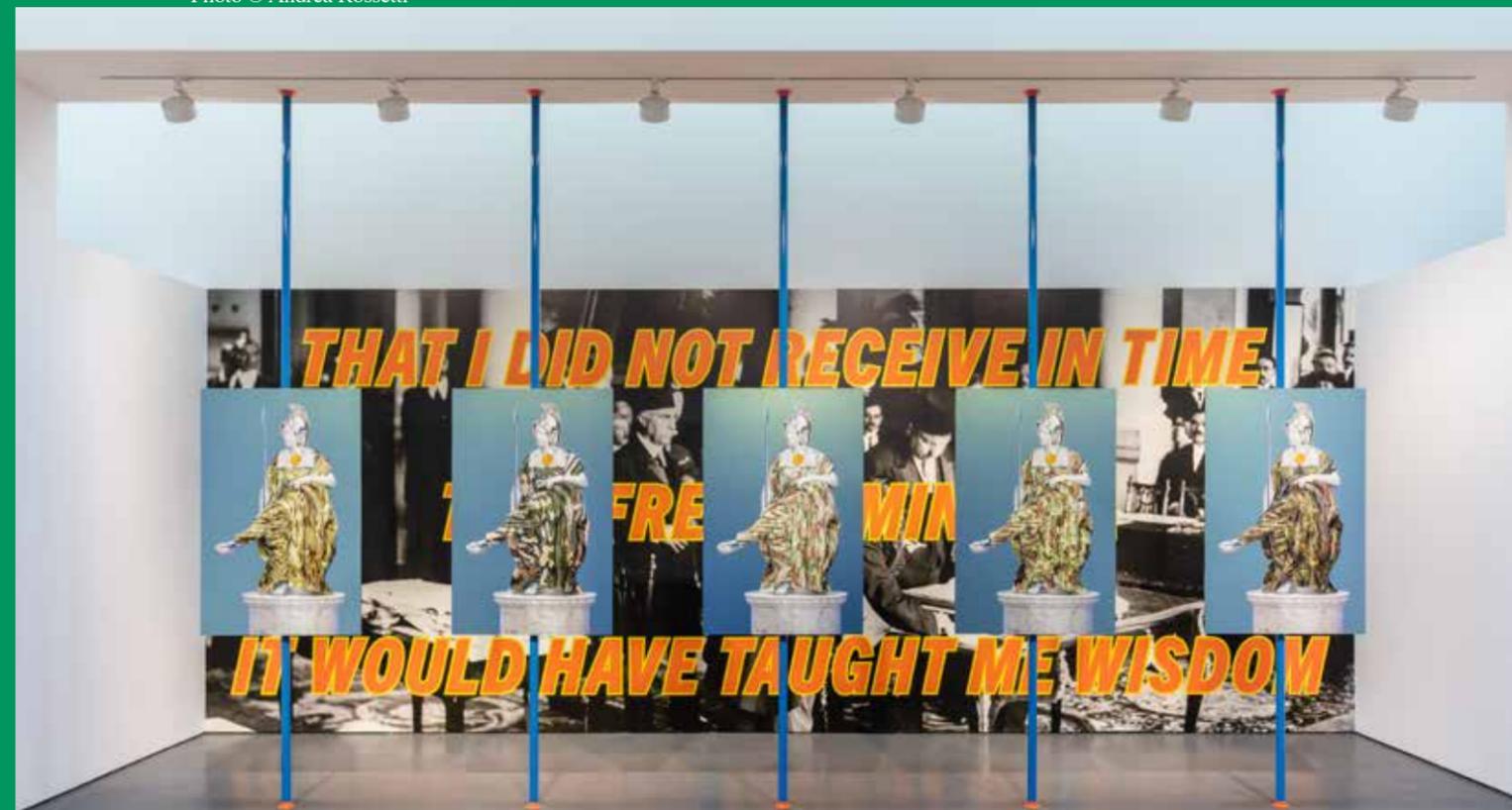
C: Yes, but that doesn't mean that everything is exported from Europe. There was Ataturk, who was the founder of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In Europe, he is seen as a secular president, but, interestingly enough, at the same time, he was a great role model for Hitler. He bought poison gas from Hitler in Berlin and committed a genocide against the Kurds in my hometown of Dersim 1937/1938. Using Hitler's gas, he gassed the Kurdish people in Dersim in caves. Why is that not present in any form of discourse or historic narrative? This is a huge topic that people should actually talk and know about. That's why I always say that I could never do anything else – because I have to work against all the time and have to work through what happened during that time and, at the same time, this historical falsification continues to grow.



CEMILE SAHIN, *car, road, mountain*, 2020
Exhibition view: ARS VIVA 2020, Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2020
Courtesy of the artist, Kunstverein in Hamburg, and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Photo © Fred Dott

CEMILE SAHIN, *It Would Have Taught Me Wisdom*,
Esther Schipper, Berlin, 2021
exhibition view
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Photo © Andrea Rossetti

“I see art as a force of resistance.”



There's a small wooden shack in the beer garden of the WILDE RENATE CLUB. A cheering crowd press their faces against the front of it. They peer in through small slits, clapping and banging loudly against the wooden door. What is it that has captured their attention?

Revealed to their gaze, as if woman pressing DONALD TRUMP's head to her bosom. Blood drips from her fingers and the sagg mask. On her head, she wears the iconic red baseball cap with "MAKE AMERICA AGAIN." She moves through the red velvet-lined room, dancing. Mirrors hang on the walls, reflecting back the image of the woman. With arms outstretched, she sits and slowly spreads her legs, the sunken face of the former US president in her lap. The walls shake, dollar bills fly through the air, people roar as MELANIA TRUMP throws her husband's mask into the corner. Blood drips from her breasts onto the floor. Who is this woman



which people can learn about our work and lives, and, last but not least, to share the art of stripping." This evening will be the last live performance for the collective, which is disastrous because there's no money without shows. What solutions can they find to the Corona hygiene rules, which to this day prohibit sex workers from working? And what explains the enormous popularity of their shows? Unlike regular strip clubs, their audience is young, hip and diverse. WHY? Strip shows have long since ceased to be something that only take place behind closed doors in urban red-light districts. On the contrary: gyms offer pole-dancing classes; in a video, rapper LIL NAS X glides from heaven to hell while explicitly dancing; and FKA Twigs also performs on a pole to the song cellophane. The striptease has shed its grungy image. The collective benefits from this, even if they don't regard this development entirely positively. Too many people can benefit from the lifestyle and aesthetics of strippers without having to fear the stripping disadvantages. What does represent in Berlin, where great importance has always been attached to the naked body?

"I WAS TIRED OF WORKING FOR ASSHOLES," CHIQUI says over Zoom a few days after her show. The three founding members of the collective, CHIQUI, EDIE and SUKI, danced together in a Berlin strip club known for its miserable working environment. "You're hired as a freelancer, but you have no rights," Edie says. She says the manager instituted a punitive system that allows him to withhold funds from

The Pursuit of Pleasure

impersonating MELANIA TRUMP in a peep show? It's the end of September 2020, a few people are loitering on the Elsen Bridge, drinking beer. Where otherwise masses of people stream towards an uncertain night, today only a few lonely teenagers are strolling around. A bar owner warns them not to drink alcohol in front of his store – because of the pandemic. The police no longer allow it. Berlin these days seems tired, caught between lockdowns. No one knows yet if the bars, clubs and stores will have to close again soon. Today is one of these last evenings, at WILDE RENATE as well.

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The woman who ripped DONALD TRUMP's head off is called *Chiqui Love* and is part of the Berlin Strippers Collective, an association of about ten strippers. They've all worked in strip clubs and joined forces to form the collective in 2019 because they wanted to define their own working conditions. Their goal is to open Germany's first strip club run by dancers. Until that happens, they will organize their own shows or collaborate with friends for events like this one in the garden of Wilde Renate. On their website, they write, "We want to destigmatize stripping and sex work as a whole, to start a dialogue about sex work in

the dancers for any misconduct. A practice that exists in many clubs, even outside Berlin. Moreover, the manager decided to withhold part of the strippers' tips – without expecting any resistance from the dancers.

The problem: In Berlin, there's a lot of competition among strippers. That means: Anyone making trouble can quickly be replaced. So, when a colleague was fired after reacting to a customer that said something racist, the three decided

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something: "I COULDN'T KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT ANYMORE," Edie recalls. They decided to form a collective – unusual for an industry that rewards dancers for working independently of one another.

The collective is not alone in its decision to organize in solidarity. Like many others in the gig economy – such as Gorilla delivery people, nannies, cleaners, Uber drivers and package couriers – strippers are now beginning to organize. Since 2018, there has even been a union in the UK that campaigns for their rights, the United Sex Workers. Earlier this year, they won a significant legal battle that was also groundbreaking for strippers in Berlin. Dancer SONIA Nowak went to the British Labor Court and sued the boss of the strip club where she worked. Her club owner had assigned her shifts, set prices for her services and made her sign a list of house rules – all signs that it

was a dependent employment relationship. As a self-employed person, Nowak could be terminated at any time. However, as an employee, she would be entitled to continued pay, job protection and vacation days. She won the case. Since then, the union has received many

own platform, where we set the rules ourselves,” explains TRIXIE. They make every decision democratically, including where to perform, who to include in the collective, and with whom to speak publicly. What’s more, they share the money and responsibility among themselves. Anyone who searches can find some groups online - Cybertease, for example, an association of sex workers who offer online shows. “I think it’s great that more and more people are joining together,” Chiqui says. **“I’M REALLY TIRED OF ONE PERSON TELLING US WHAT TO DO, TAKING HALF OUR EARNINGS, AND THEN NOT EVEN TREATING US NICELY. THIS PANDEMIC HAS ALSO SHOWN US THAT WE NEED TO BAND TOGETHER.”**

CHIQUI is forty and has long brown hair that falls loosely over her shoulders. She is a good storyteller who knows how to entertain. How did she come to work as a stripper in the first place? Chiqui laughs. She was twenty-two years old when she started, had just moved to London and was trying to scrape together money with just a bar job. “All I had to eat at home was bread and butter,” she says. A friend was working as a stripper in one of the East London pubs, Chiqui decided to go to an audition at the pub as well. “I had prepared choreography to Shakira’s *Whenever, Wherever*, but forgot my CD,” she recalls. “I was nervous, drank four tequilas, and ended up shaking my butt and everything my mama gave me to the CD that was there, *Living’ la Vida Loca* by Ricky Martin.”

Chiqui talks about the dancers in the club who fascinated her: “They were in charge, they had power, this sexiness, and they ruled the room.” Her narrative breaks with the usual stereotypes people have in their heads about strippers – like the fallen girl from a good home who needs to be rescued. Rarely are strippers portrayed as strong people who earn their own money. Although financial worries motivated Chiqui to work as a stripper, she doesn’t think that’s a good argument against sex work. “We live in a society where we have to pay our bills. I don’t think people work in a supermarket because they really want to work in a supermarket,” she says. “And I’ve found that I enjoy stripping a lot more than waitressing.” Because she likes her job but also knows that many clubs are bad places to work, she wants to make a difference without condemning sex work per se. “I don’t want other people telling me what I can do with my body.”

It’s the night before Valentine’s Day, the feast day of lovers, the biggest day for the flower and chocolate industries. While lovers write love letters to each other, the collective hosts the Valentease Variety Show. A person with a curly black mane and heart-shaped sunglasses lolls in bed with a pink feather boa and breathily coos the names of the respective acts over a

corded telephone, while a white cat meows between their arms. The show takes place online because the Corona incidences are so high in Berlin at the end of February.

With the purchase of a ticket, guests are sent a Zoom link. The camera turns on, two young women turn around, their hands touching the pole. One of them is TRIXIE. Their bodies glide in sync around the pole they share; you’d think their bodies were literally floating in the air. The camera stands where the audience would normally sit. Instead of a club, viewers here are looking at an elegantly furnished living room with mirrors on the walls. One advantage of the online show is the knowledge of being unobserved; the viewer’s own camera remains switched off. But this also means that part of the game is missing: being able to exchange glances with the dancers.

GEORGIE BEE writes TIP TIP TIP in the chat window, along with a PayPal link to send tips to the dancers. SUKI wears a short white costume with wings on the back and reads out love letters that have been sent to her by participants. Georgie Bee laughs. **“WHY SHOULD I ONLY HAVE ONE VALENTINE WHEN I CAN HAVE TWO OR THREE!”** The mood is great. These streams are a challenge for the collective because much of their work otherwise consists of physical proximity in a room among people. But Chiqui also sees advantages. “With the digital shows, we have a much wider reach. I remember a woman from Italy writing to us saying, ‘Oh my God, I’ve always wanted to know what crazy things are happening in Berlin, and I got a taste,’” she recalls. “And we’re now also accessible to people with limited mobility.”

Each act lasts about ten minutes; GEORGIE BEE calls MAX and IVAN on stage. They slide into the picture on a stripper pole. Big Shaq’s *Man’s Not Hot* plays in the background while they do bare-chested crunches. Once on the floor, they stick their chests out, spit on the floor and start spinning around the pole. MAX and IVAN have painted-on beards, an artificial six-pack, and otherwise act as if they were real cis men. After a few acts, it becomes clear: This strip show is funny and sexy at the same time.

No show is like the other. And: There’s no nurse, no schoolgirl and no snake lady performing here. This could also be because the dancers themselves are so different and that some don’t conform to heteronormative ideals that otherwise form the basis of attitudes in clubs. For example, because they do not want to conform to the expected body measurements or because they enjoy performing as men. In the context of the striptease, the image of exaggerated masculinity that Ivan and Max portray seems puzzling, but also as if they want to conform to conservative representations of male attractiveness. It also becomes clear that a striptease can be

understood as a form of artistic expression that occasionally also wants to be political. Because the show is not just aimed at arousing heterosexual men, a space is created that can entertain in very different ways.

At the Valentease show, about 110 people purchased tickets. Suki says 70 percent of them are women. One attendee writes **“SO HOT!!!!”** in the chat. EDIE and TRIXIE suspect that so many women and queer people come to their shows because they feel more comfortable at the collective events than at a strip club. “Most strip clubs are not particularly queer-friendly,” TRIXIE says. Because the collective also performs in places that aren’t strip clubs, they automatically attract new audiences. Taking stripping out of the strip club has made both the performers and the audience more diverse. And it’s also making stripping more popular in the mainstream.

Ask the members of the collective why they dance and the answer is – of course – money. “I see stripping as a way to exploit a system that is

misogynistic and sexist,” says Edie. She’s in her late twenties and comes from Italy, a country she says is repressive, especially when it comes to female sexuality. “If men try to touch me in the street, my consent and that’s not okay,” Edie says. “If men want to touch me in the strip club, they have to ask first and agree, then we also negotiate a price for it.” The collective is a platform they support each other. “The most important thing the collective is having someone to talk to,” Trixie says. **“THE STIGMA YOU EXPERIENCE FROM OTHERS WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME SELF-STIGMA IF YOU DIDN’T TALK TO OTHERS.”**

The collective is always looking for ways to make political views publicly demonstrated with signs like **“Sluts against capitalism”** – which at first seems like a paradoxical position because their job ultimately only works in a system where sexual services can be bought. The collective deliberately calls what they do sex work. For them, it’s an umbrella term. Those who work as strippers but try to distinguish themselves from other sex workers believe in a “whorearchy,” Chiqui explains, meaning a

hierarchy among sex workers. Because everyone is stigmatized equally, solidarity is essential, she says. Chiqui says that at many events, there is a confrontation with people who demonstrate against sex work and believe that sex workers do not serve feminism well. They accuse them of selling their bodies. Chiqui snorts just thinking about it. “The last time I checked, I still had all the parts of my body.” So, in addition to the strip shows, the collective also hosts events where they educate people about sex work.

At the end of June, the time has finally come. At 800A, a cabaret club in Berlin’s Wedding neighborhood, stripping is back on, in the flesh. The Berlin Strippers Collective had its first live performance since the evening at the Wilde Renate almost a year ago. But on this day, there’s more than just dancing. In addition to the sexy pole dance performances, the dancers will also tell stories about their work. For example, how they manage to walk drunk on twenty centimeter heels. Why are so many of their customers female? And what really happens at bachelor parties in the club. Two externally invited performers also appear today. Ginger from London reenacts men on stage who try to redeem the dancers from their profession. A song from The Police plays in the background: “Roxanne. You don’t have to put on the red light.” A couple of days after the show, says, “It was fantastic. Everyone was happy, everyone had fun. We got a lot of messages from people saying they learned a lot.”

Earning money with one’s own body is always accompanied by stigmatization and a certain risk, whether in a strip club or on an online platform like OnlyFans. On Instagram, where many sex workers promote their work, pictures showing female nipples are immediately deleted. Moreover, the algorithm recognizes content that refers to sex work and ranks it as less relevant than other posts or bans it completely from the platform. So although sex is omnipresent in the media and advertising, sex work remains invisible – except where it is consumed. That’s why the collective is now increasingly trying to organize events outside the strip club.

When asked what her ideal strip club would look like, Chiqui talks about a London party organized by strippers and sex workers. “They had a stage that looked like an altar and they

want sex workers to have a say in the rules. We’ve never worked in a club where a manager asked us: ‘WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO HERE?’”

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When asked what her ideal strip club would look like, Chiqui talks about a London party organized by strippers and sex workers. “They had a stage that looked like an altar and they

hired all kinds of strippers to dance around us. There were people with all kinds of bodies, a Black lady, a queer guy who vogueed in massive stripper heels, and some lady strippers. It wasn’t just this women dancing for men.” Chiqui reflects, “I

want sex workers to have a say in the rules. We’ve never worked in a club where a manager asked us: ‘WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO HERE?’”

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When asked what her ideal strip club would look like, Chiqui talks about a London party organized by strippers and sex workers. “They had a stage that looked like an altar and they

messages from dancers complaining about their working conditions.

The members of the Berlin Strippers Collective also know their rights. But they deliberately take a different path than their colleagues in Great Britain. “We don’t believe that the working conditions will change soon. That’s why we decided to create something of our own, our

Writer LENA FIEDLER meets a stripper collective from Berlin who see their job very politically: Debating the naked body, the working conditions in strip clubs, and how they try to open their own strip club.

MEET



PROJECT: ARTNOIR + ARTSY

From: Friends To: Friends Benefit Auction 2021

PROJECT:

AN12 2020

Artist

Nate
Lewis

Signaling 45, 2021 Acrylic on Canvas
18 x 24 in / 45.7 x 61 cm

ARTNOIR



86

On FREEDOM

Photos ROMAN GOEBEL

Sibel
KEKILLI



Jacket 7 FOR ALL
MANKIND
Shirt EMPORIO ARMANI

87

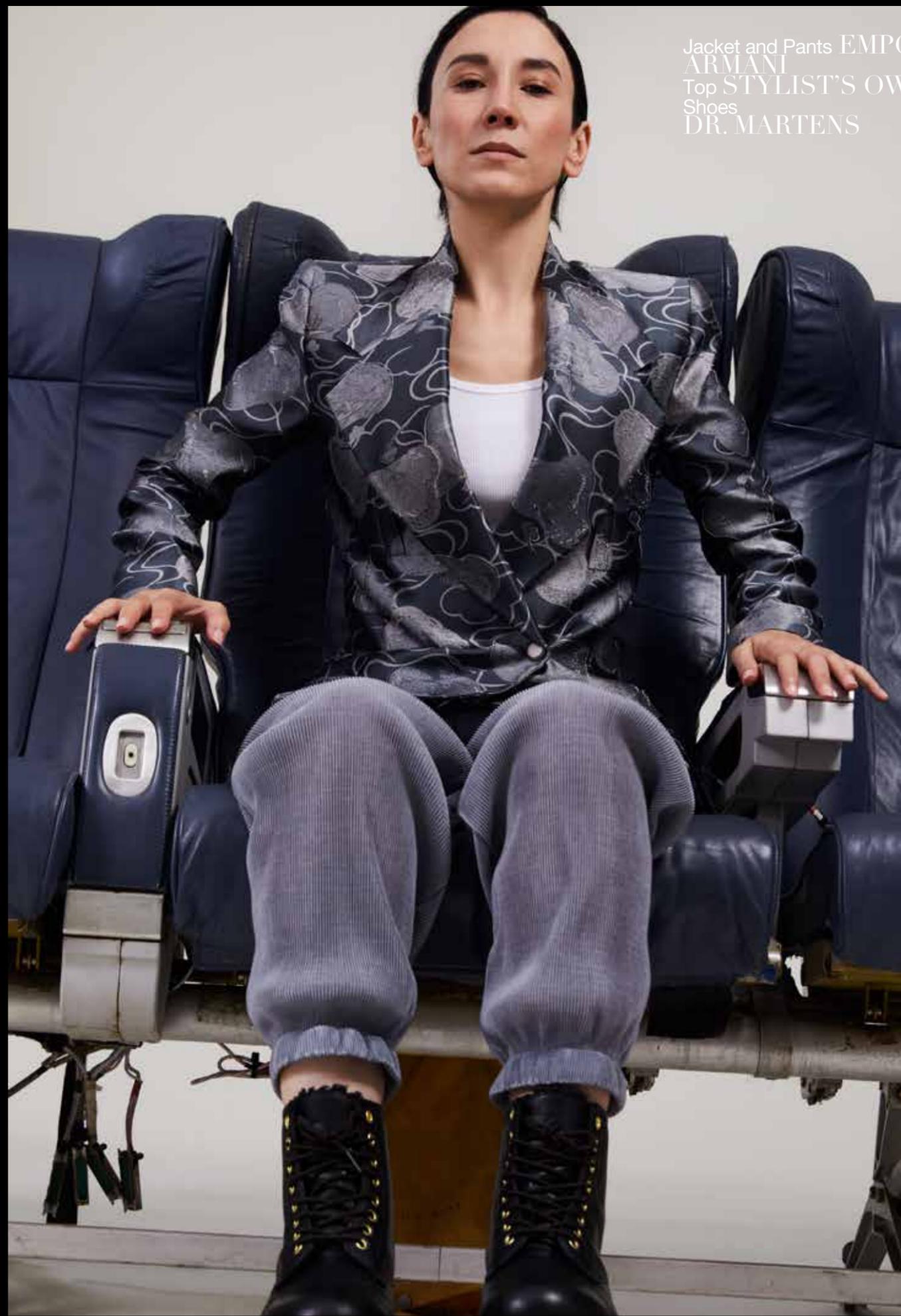
“I’ve been calling myself a feminist since I was eighteen. I think women are amazing and strong, and I wanted to help them succeed in life.”



Skirt and Sunglasses

EMPORIO ARMANI

Top STYLIST'S OWN



Jacket and Pants EMPORIO ARMANI
Top STYLIST'S OWN
Shoes DR. MARTENS



“To find myself,
I had to fight,
sometimes even
rebel.” – Sibel
KEKILLI

Photos ROMAN GOEBEL Styling GÖTZ OFFERGELD
Hair and Makeup STEPHANIE WILLMANN at BALLSAAL
90 Photo Assistant ANTON RONTZ
Styling Assistant ANNIKA DUDA Talent SIBEL KEKILLI
With EMPORIO ARMANI FALL 2021 LOOKS

Sibel Kekilli became an overnight star with her film debut in *Gegen die Wand (Head-On)*. The film was awarded the GOLDEN BEAR at the 2004 BERLINALE and Sibel Kekilli won the German Film Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role. She received her second Lola for *Die Fremde (When We Leave)* from director Feo Aladağ. Not much later, Kekilli became known internationally as Shae in *Game of Thrones*. In addition to acting, Kekilli is a committed advocate for women's rights and equality. In a 2015 speech during a symposium held by then German President Joachim Gauck together with the women's rights organization Terre des Femmes, she said, "I love my culture. On the way to my freedom, I lost it to a very large extent. I paid a lot for this path. It was long, painful and self-destructive. But my vision has always been freedom, for the sake of which I have even lost my way from time to time."

Words
Ruben Donsbach

What does she feel today, in 2021? Was the price of freedom too high, or would she do everything the same way? A conversation about revolt, the establishment, and assertiveness in times of patriarchy.

Sibel KEKILLI

FRÄULEIN: Sibel, when was the first time you felt that you weren't free, that you had limits?
KEKILLI: It started pretty early on. Because I realized that as a girl, I wasn't allowed to do everything that boys were allowed to do. There were significant differences between boys and girls, between men and women.
FRÄULEIN: In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazine* shortly after the Berlinale 2004, you said that tradition shaped your childhood. Tradition can be a constraint, but it can also create identity. Did you have to reinvent yourself and give yourself a completely separate identity to be truly free?
KEKILLI: Absolutely. Rebellion against existing constraints can also create identity. To find myself, I had to fight, sometimes even rebel.
FRÄULEIN: What sparked this revolution in you?
KEKILLI: The desire to be an autonomous and independent person that is respected and not constantly judged. And who is not devalued because of their gender.
FRÄULEIN: As an actress, isn't it difficult to be autonomous and free when you continually have to slip into other roles and lives?
KEKILLI: One shouldn't be confused with the other. In acting, I can let off steam and be someone else without having to fear the consequences. I'm allowed to empathize and be emphatic, which also helps me in real life. On the other hand, being in the public

eye means that one's roles and life are seen as the same. But you're right, in the end, it's absurd. I wanted to be free from being judged by others, yet I work in a profession where I am constantly judged.
FRÄULEIN: You haven't been on a talk show for seventeen years, except recently on *3nach9* with Giovanni di Lorenzo. Is that partly because there's much less control in that kind of live situation than in a printed interview like ours?
KEKILLI: Yes, among other things. I went through a very difficult time after *Gegen die Wand* and, at the beginning, had no one to protect me. The film production was primarily interested in promoting the film. Of course, a live interview is something different than a protected magazine interview.
FRÄULEIN: Today you are involved with NGOs like Terre des Femmes. What made you decide to do this?
KEKILLI: Following *Gegen die Wand*, I mentioned in an interview that I would like to work on behalf of girls' and women's rights. Terre des Femmes approached me and we've been working together ever since.
FRÄULEIN: What does feminism mean to you?
KEKILLI: I've been calling myself a feminist since I was eighteen. I think women are amazing and strong, and I wanted to help them succeed in life. Even my classmates looked at me askew for that. They thought, "Oh God, what does she want now?" At the same time, for me, it's not feminism to reject or even hate men. For me, feminism means standing up for the equal rights of other women and girls without envy or jealousy.
FRÄULEIN: Honor killings are a significant subject for you.

Sibel KEKILLI

Jacket LEVI'S RED TAB
Pants EMPORIO
ARMANI



Jacket LEVI'S RED TAB
Skirt EMPORIO ARMANI
Top STYLIST'S OWN



“Art and culture must make society’s diverse and progressive image visible, thereby normalizing it. However, it’s often unsuccessful because immigrants are frequently still stereotyped, i.e., as fruit sellers, cleaners, bouncers, or refugees.”

92 So, the public mission of culture, which, as I understand it, is breaking down this inequality, is left unfulfilled.”

“As soon as you talk about racism in the German mainstream society, people become aggressive instead of dealing with the consequences of their language and actions.”

Sibel
KEKILLI

KEKILLI: Among other things, yes. For a long time, it was taboo in Germany to talk about girls and women with a migration background from traditional families – and yet there is always a lot of crying after a murder like this has been committed. Many people still don't dare to say anything, partly because the community quickly accuses them of denigrating their culture and threatens to ostracize them. Incidentally, this also works the other way around. As soon as you talk about racism in the German mainstream society, people become aggressive instead of dealing with the consequences of their language and actions.

FRAÜLEIN: During a speech on International Women's Day at the Bellevue Palace in Berlin, which we've already quoted at the beginning of our conversation, you also said, “What frightens you, fathers, brothers, husbands?” and continued, “What is so threatening about a free woman?” What were the reactions to that?

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KEKILLI: Overall, they were reasonably positive. Of course, there were also objections from some sides, but that's always the case when it comes to such topics. There was no intention of pointing the finger at anyone or lecturing, rather asking why a woman poses a threat. I just don't understand it.

FRAÜLEIN: What do the women you meet in Germany, Bulgaria, or Brazil during your work dream of? What do they need to attain freedom?

KEKILLI: They need to attention in the first place. But, of course, it's also about active help. For example, some young Roma girls in Bulgaria are married off at the age of twelve or are later forcibly prostituted by their own families. In South America, some women have to fight for their very existence. Every second woman there is a victim of sexualized violence. In Mexico, a woman is raped every three minutes. None of these women are free or safe.

FRAÜLEIN: How do these women view Germany?

KEKILLI: It's very ambivalent. They have problems, for example, when I talk about local sexism, racism and discrimination. For them, our topics often seem banal, which, of course, they are not. But, ultimately, you can't blame them because they are living in a completely different reality.

FRAÜLEIN: What are you thinking about specifically?

KEKILLI: In Germany, making problems visible is a real challenge, if only because so many here consider themselves to be enlightened and “developed.” That's also why #metoo has had virtually no consequences in Germany. There was no real outcry. Of course, that's also because we women here don't stick together enough. On the contrary, I was approached by female colleagues to sign petitions defending men who were accused of misconduct – by women who were not even present during the incidents. Of course, there were accusations against men that turned out to be nonsense. But I was stunned with such a

showing of blind solidarity. Why don't we listen to the victims first?

FRAÜLEIN: Would you say that film and television still play a crucial role in our perceptions of social norms?

KEKILLI: I don't know whether it's a decisive factor. But the roles portrayed by film and television certainly play a significant part. Art and culture must make society's diverse and progressive image visible, thereby normalizing it. However, it's often unsuccessful because immigrants are frequently still stereotyped, i.e., as fruit sellers, cleaners, bouncers, or refugees. So, the public mission of culture, which, as I understand it, is breaking down this inequality, is left unfulfilled.

FRAÜLEIN: German film is essentially reactionary?

KEKILLI: Oh, it's always hard to criticize German film and television constructively, and I don't want to. I like working as an actress but, of course, a little more courage would do our industry a world of good in becoming more diverse and colorful.

FRAÜLEIN: Looking back, what would you say to your younger self? Would you encourage her?

KEKILLI: Of course, I would encourage young Sibel. But I would hope that she would be spared much of what I went through.

FRAÜLEIN: When you truly want to be free, where do you go, what kind of place?

KEKILLI: There are several places. For example, Santa Fe in New Mexico – I feel free there. Ultimately, however, this feeling of freedom has less to do with particular places than with the people who surround me. I feel safe and free with my friend in Baden-Württemberg, for example. She lets me be who I am, gives me my space, and we can talk, but we can also be wonderfully silent.

Jacket 7 FOR ALL
MANKIND
Top STYLIST'S OWN
Skirt
EMPORIO ARMANI



95

Art as Staging Ground for ASPIRATIONS 96 and FEARS



COCO FUSCO, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, 1992–1994. Performance.
Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021 Coco Fusco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The artist, writer and curator, **COCO FUSCO**, does not shy away from dealing with uncomfortable topics. Her work dissects the structures which frame and determine our lives. Through video, performance, text and interactive installations, she explores topics such as race, power structures and colonial legacies. Her work often has a satirical tone, which brings to mind the tradition of using caricatures as political commentary; though there are elements that elicit laughter, one cannot miss the serious messages behind it. In the performance, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, from 1992 – 1994, she and the artist GUILLERMO GÓMEZ-PEÑA explored colonial legacies, seeking to make visible the history of abuse and exploitation of indigenous people. Confined in a cage, the artists portrayed native ‘Amerindians’ of the fictional island of Guatinau and performed activities typical of the Amerindians, such as watching television, drinking Coca-Cola and sewing voodoo dolls. The performance was inspired by the real-life stories of historical figures such as OTA BENGA and SARAH BAARTMAN, and a reminder of the dark history of human zoos. In *Observations of Predation in Humans* (2013), she transformed into Dr. Zira, the chimpanzee psychologist from the 1968 film, *Planet of the Apes*. She approached it through the perspective of a non-human to show the predatory nature of humans and comment on human behavior.

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COCO FUSCO, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, 1992–1994. Performance.
Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021 Coco Fusco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

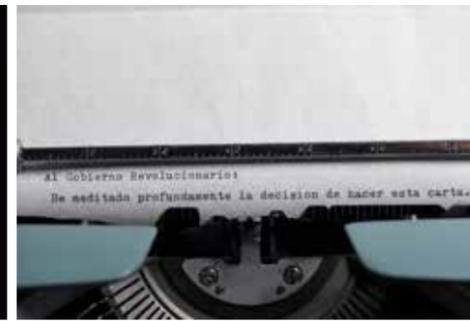
She is a staunch proponent of free speech and has not backed away from voicing her stance, even when it is not the popular opinion. When DANA SCHUTZ’S controversial painting of EMMETT TILL, *Open Casket* (2016), was met with demands to be destroyed, FUSCO defended the work against the calls for destruction, arguing that “presuming that censorship and destruction constitute a legitimate response to perceived injustice leads us down a very dark path” (*Hyperallergic*, March 27, 2017).

As the daughter of a Cuban exile, Cuba has held a central role in a lot of her work and she has been actively engaging with the cultural scene. Her book *Dangerous Moves: Performance and Politics in Cuba* (2015) looks at life and culture in Cuba and analyzes how the language of performance can be used for social and political commentary in a context where free speech is being censored.

In 2018, the Cuban government introduced Decree 349, a law which requires artists to get permission in advance for private and public exhibitions and performances, as well as allows the government to shut down events and confiscate works that they deem inappropriate, such as art which uses “national symbols” to “contravene current legislation.” The law sparked an outcry and was met with demonstrations, sit-ins and performances. Coco Fusco openly supported the protests and called the detainment of artists and activists an intimidation tactic of the authorities. In 2019, she was barred from entering Cuba, and though no official reason was given, Fusco herself believes the decision stems from her support of the activists.

Text
JOHANNE
BJÖRKLUND
LARSEN

ARTIST
COCO FUSCO



COCO FUSCO, *La Confesión*, 2015.
 30 minute single channel digital film.
 Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021
 Coco Fusco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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COCO FUSCO, *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*, 1992–1994. Performance.
 Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021 Coco Fusco /
 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



COCO FUSCO,
Y entonces el mar te habla (And the Sea Will Talk to You), 2012.
 Installation with 45 minute single channel digital film.
 Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York. © 2021
 Coco Fusco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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WE REACHED OUT TO THE ARTIST TO ASK HER ABOUT POLITICS, ACTIVISM, FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND CENSORSHIP.

JOHANNE BJÖRKLUND LARSEN: *Politics and activism are central aspects of your work. What is it that makes art a powerful vessel for transmitting ideas and messages?*
 COCO FUSCO: I usually explain that as an artist, I am interested in power relations, and that my work explores how power relations are made manifest and transformed. Art is a form of communication that allows us to reflect upon our experience and imagine different worlds. It is a staging ground for our aspirations and fears.

JBL: *Your work and research look at how performance can step in as an alternate mode for social commentary when free speech is limited. What are your thoughts on this?*
 CF: Much of my practice focuses on colonial, neo-colonial and post-colonial contexts in which subaltern speech is limited by various forms of political repression. In such contexts, ephemeral actions (i.e. performances carried out without “permission” or prior authorization) are sometimes used to communicate what cannot otherwise be expressed. The challenge is to get around the barriers set by the authorities.

JBL: *How have you applied this to your work?*
 CF: I have made many performances and videos that explore the relationship between poetic expression and politics in Cuba, to give an example. I have also used performance to make repressed elements of colonial history and archives come alive.

JBL: *How do you continue to work, and protest, in such an authoritarian environment?*
 CF: There has always been repression and authoritarianism in Cuba. One has to look for different ways to contend with that reality.



JBL: *In 2018, the Cuban government passed the censorship law, Decree 349, which has severely limited independent culture and essentially criminalized any art the government does not approve of. What happens when a government ‘gags’ a population? What have been the consequences for culture in Cuba?*
 CF: These are very complicated questions tied to histories of repression during the Cuban revolution. Censorship in Cuba has been ongoing and implemented through a variety of means: direct censorship, expulsion from jobs and professional organizations, reeducation in prisons and labor camps, intimidation of intellectuals by political police, etc. This has often led to a great deal of self-censorship or waves of departures to exile. The intensity of the repression varies, depending on the political moment. Since the implementation of Decree 349, there has been a heightening of repression against outspoken artists, journalists and intellectuals. The fact that Cubans have also had internet on their cell phones since 2018 means that it has become much easier to communicate horizontally among different interest groups, and this has encouraged more resistance and protest.

Kwame & Max (Variation 1), 2017
 Zohra Opoku
 Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery
 JBL: *In your piece in Hyperallergic about Dana Schutz’s work depicting Emmett Till, you highlight the important difference between protest and destruction. Could you elaborate on these thoughts?*
 CF: The Bill of Rights in the US constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression and the right to assembly. I support the right to peaceful protest. I also support the right to free expression, for artists and for all members of society. I do not support censorship or any violence that results in the destruction of art or harm to persons.

ANNA: Coat and Pants GAUCHERE Shirt AMI Shoes BOTTEGA VENETA
CORRIE: Sweater ATTICO Skirt VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Boots CHANEL

We 102

are



all Photos ALICE ROSATI

Styling SINA
BRAETZ



ASH: Shirt ALEXANDRE VAUTHIER Skirt ROCHAS Shoes ROGER VIVIER
ANNA: Dress JOSEPH Socks KENZO Shoes AGL
CORRIE: Dress VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Bracelet VERSACE

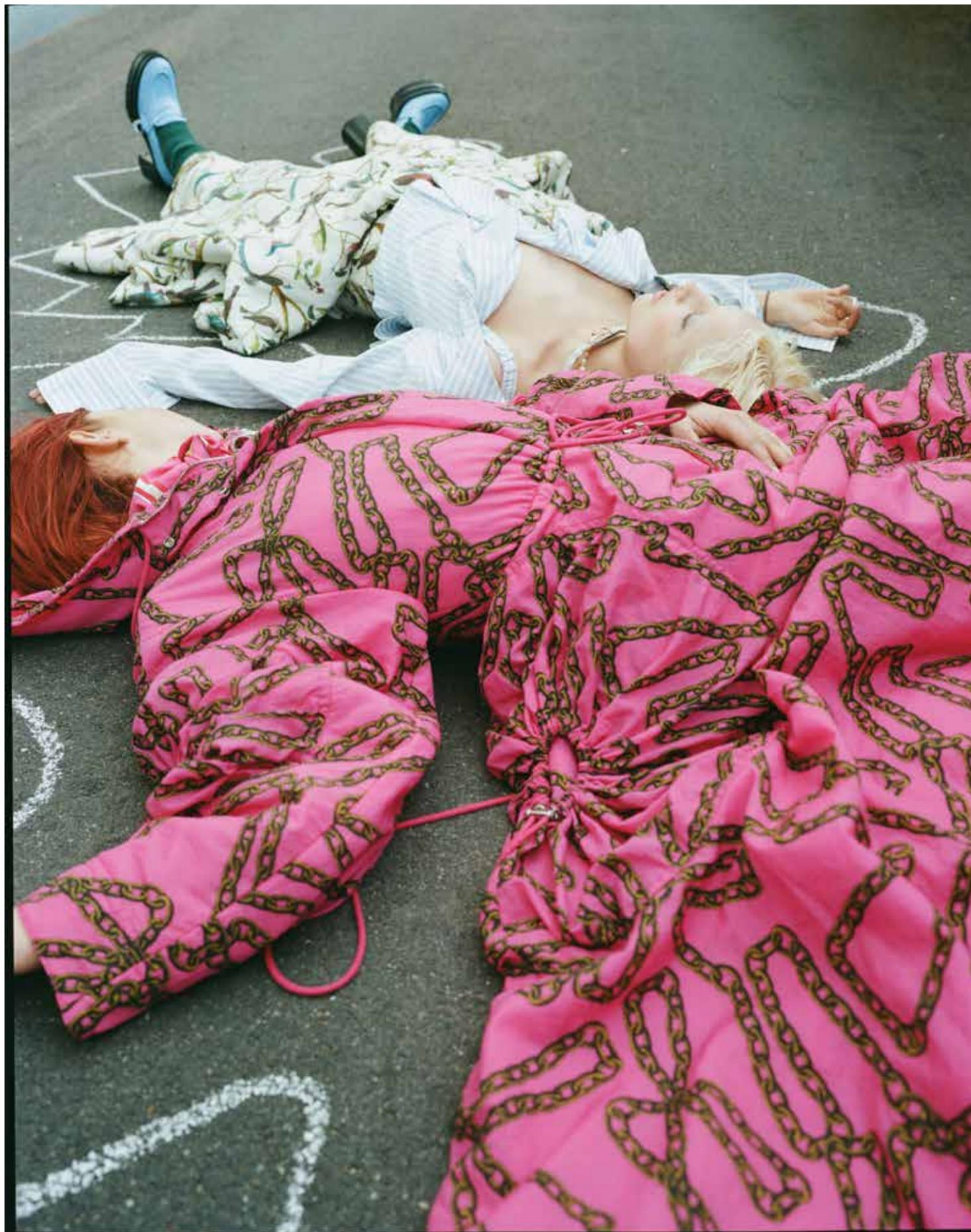
ANNA: Coat SANKUANZ Pants VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Shoes AGL Socks STYLIST'S OWN ASH: Full look PRADA

CORRIE: Coat SANKUANZ Dress ROCHAS Shoes CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN



ASH: Jacket CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE Skirt GAUCHERE Gloves ROECKL Shoes SACAI





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ASH: Dress KENZO Foulard HERMÈS Shoes SACAI
ANNA: Blouse VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Skirt and Socks KENZO Shoes AGL Necklace VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

107





CORRIE: Look DANAME Shirt SITUATIONIST
Earrings CHANEL

108

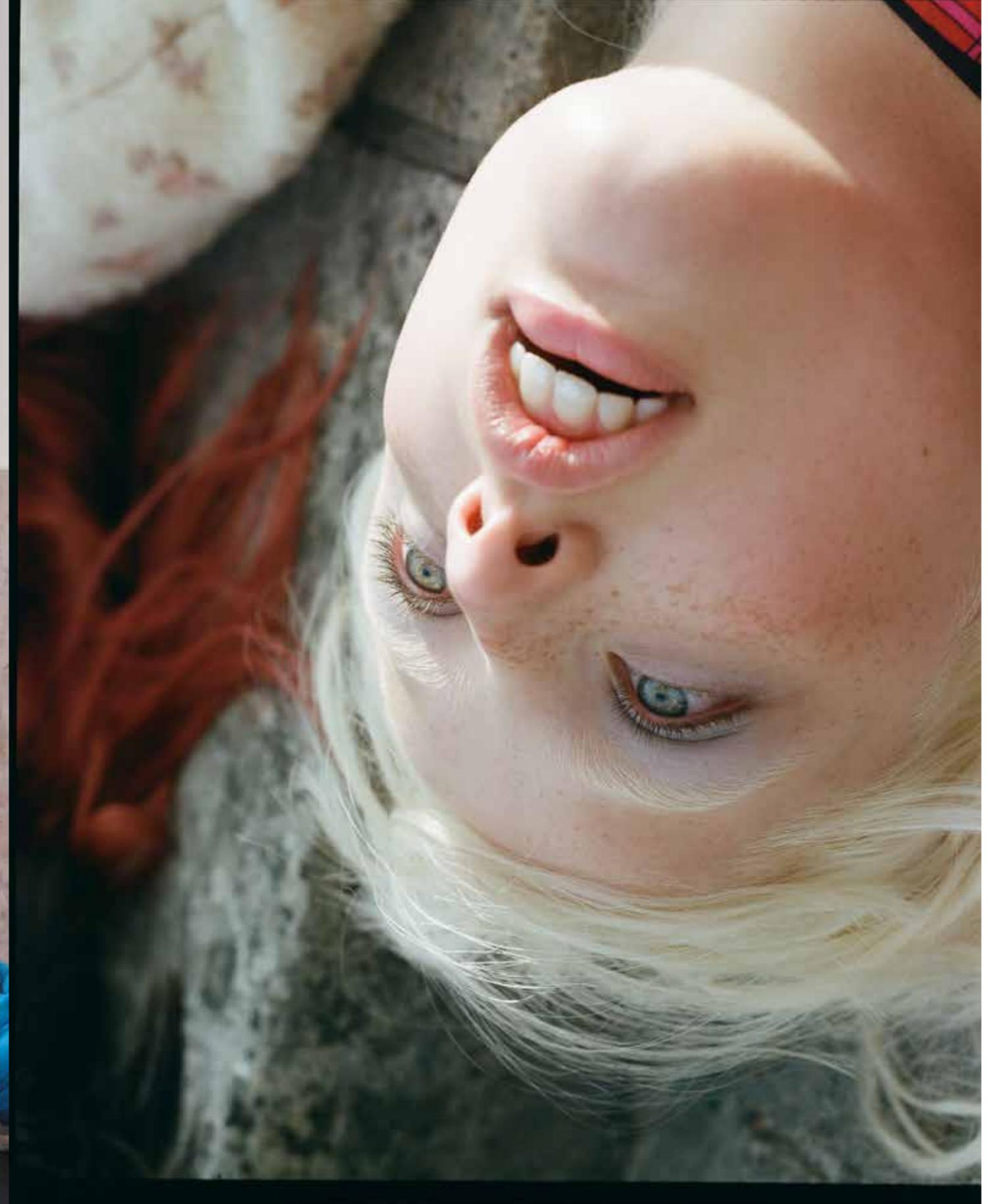
ASH: Look AMI Shoes ROGER VIVIER
Socks STYLIST'S OWN
ANNA: Coat, Pants & Necklace VIVIENNE
WESTWOOD Shirt DIOR
Shoes CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE

CORRIE: Coat MARNI Top and Skirt 2 MONCLER 1952 Shoes SITUATIONIST ANNA: Coat and Bustier DIOR
Dress ROCHAS Skirt CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE Shoes Y/PROJECT ASH: Coat ACNE STUDIOS
Dress VALENTINO Shoes SERGIO ROSSI

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Dress HERMÈS
Skirt CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE
Belt VERSACE
Boots AGL
Bag HERMÈS
Scarf DIOR
Gloves STYLIST'S OWN



PHOTOS Alice Rosati	EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Maximilien Rivolet	CASTING Marie Lévy
STYLING Sina Braetz	PRODUCTION Obvious TV	MODELS
HAIR Sachi Yamashita	PRODUCTION ASSISTANT Colin Viellard	Corrie Letendard at Next Models
MAKEUP Ruben Mas	PHOTO ASSISTANTS Giulia Baroni, Teresa Casoli	Anna Etzrodt at My Agency
	STYLING ASSISTANTS Remi Mascia, Gloria Gzimailaite	Ash at Girl Management



112

ASH:

Full look BOTTEGA
VENETA

CORRIE:

Dress and Tights
VERSACE Shoes
ROCHAS Bracelet
HERMÈS



113

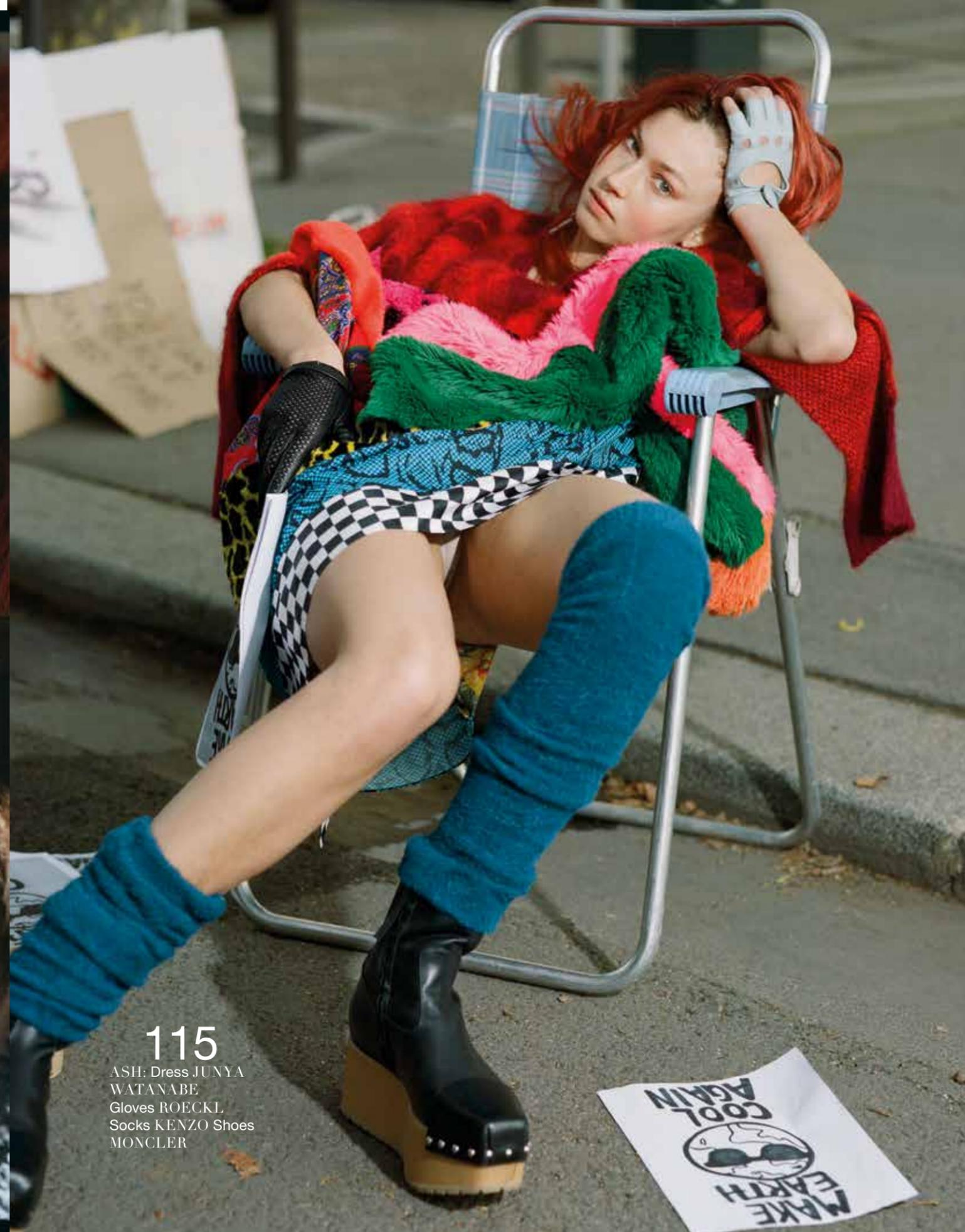
ANNA: Coat SANKUANZ Dress ROCHAS Shoes LOUBOUTIN

ASH: Look PRADA

CORRIE: Coat SANKUANZ

Pants VIVIENNE WESTWOOD Shoes AGL

114



115

ASH: Dress JUNYA
WATANABE
Gloves ROECKL
Socks KENZO Shoes
MONCLER

HYPHER FEMMES

and the Beauty of ADOLESCENT

C H A O S



Tales of Lipstick and Virtue, 2014-2018
Anna Ehrenstein with Momo el-khader, Elif Özdas, Suela Shala, Bashir El-Nomenri, Abdelrahman Fahhro, Deniz Kaan, Ali al Ali and Ranim Chanim, *Inverted Guide*, 2018
Anna Ehrenstein with Will Fredo and Miss Boogie, *Brujas, Putas, Regalos Dios*, 2017-2020
Courtesy of the artist and Office Impart and KOW Berlin

ANNI JACOBY:

There are generally strong philosophical and cultural studies approaches in your work.

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ANNA EHRENSTEIN:

I think it's a form of appropriation. Half of my family is working class and the other half comes from a kind of academic milieu. Because Albania was communist, most of my family percent of the country also studied. You can't compare it exactly to a context that, because of on education and the Germany and my sister a Western class model. But it's still a privilege to come from the communist system, placed a particular value on education and the promotion of the arts. To add to that, I went to school in Germany and my sister went to school in Albania. It was exciting to see that everything you learn in Germany is largely subordinated to a Western narrative or propaganda, while my sister in Albania also read Arabic, Chinese, or Russian literature. Having this direct comparison growing up, it was kind of constantly striking to see how much propaganda there is in our education system.

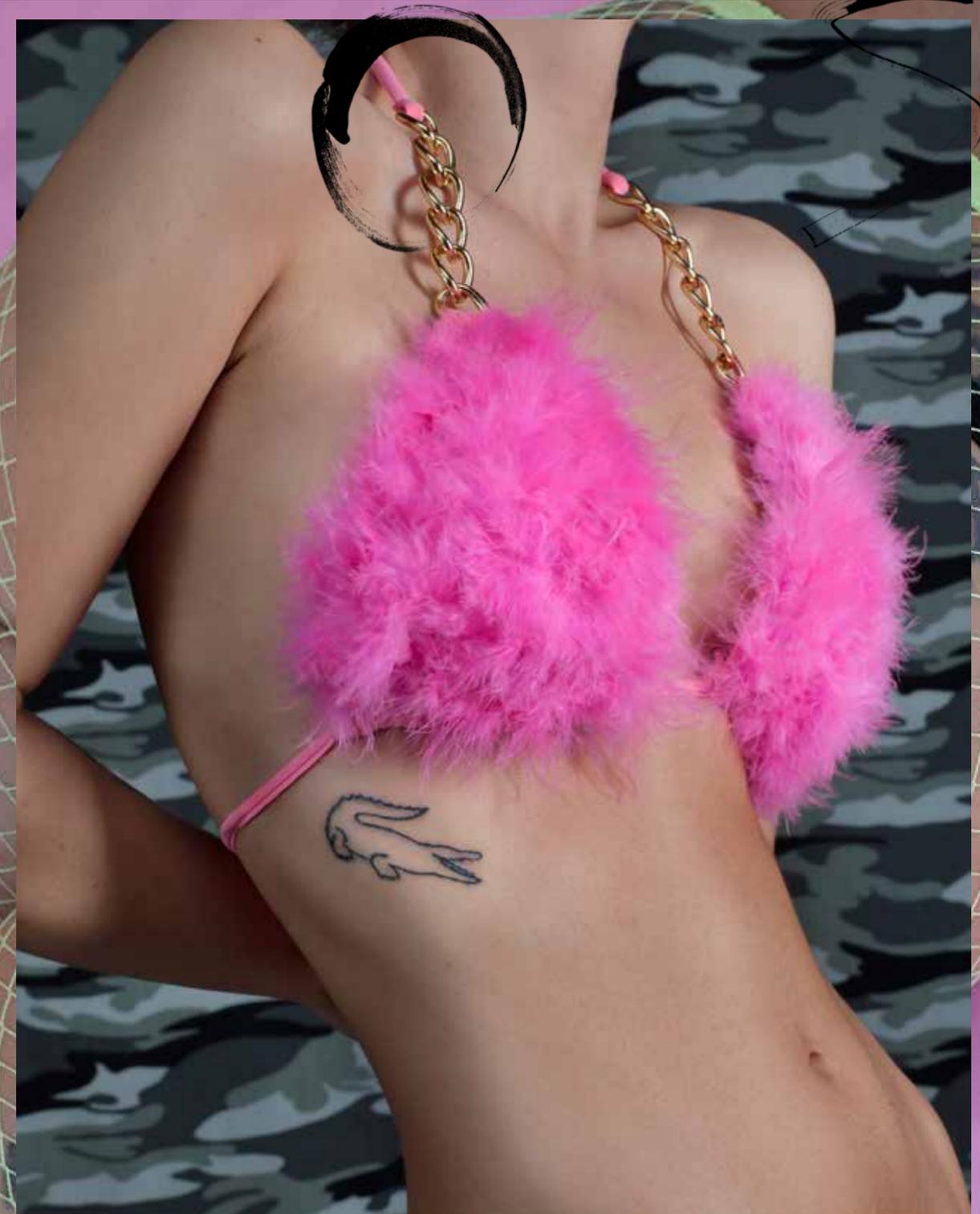


Artist

ANNA Ehrenstein

INTERVIEW:
ANNI JACOBY

After being *hit hard by puberty*, I didn't really start doing conceptual research until I was out of it. I wanted to





understand why the context I come from is actually so poor and so fucked up and why other contexts are not so poor and so fucked up. Because daily journalism usually only analyzes obvious problems in the Global South, but not how

dependencies are caused by historical occupations and maintained by neocolonial "development aid" from the IMF and the WORLD BANK. And then I just started researching. There is also this saying, "Research is Me-search." In the process, I realized that all these theories that I stumbled upon in my research were actually ultra-awesome, but also what blatant language barriers and, of course, access barriers there were to them. And then I took some more curatorial courses after my first degree and decided to continue working with it and realized how much incredible theory there actually is. But because of the world and the internet being such noisy places, you never actually have conversations about it. And then, I started to discuss this theory, which somehow sits in such a small elitist art context, with people from other contexts. And I realized how productive that can be.

Who influenced you beyond that?

A lot of pop culture. Foxy Brown or any other female rapper who had "balls" inspired me, especially aesthetically. Definitely my mama, a really bad chick.

[laughs] All I can say is that it's not so much

I find adolescence and puberty the most interesting years. Maybe because they're the most exhausting and shittiest. You feel like you're already FULLY GROWN, but your synapses and your brain aren't actually fully developed yet.



individuals that have inspired me, but more how the work is done. I remember in my early twenties, I was in LA for two, three months because my ex lived there for a while. That was the first time I went to an exhibition that also worked effectively with the whole space instead of just the walls. Where I realized, "What the fuck is this, actually?!" I had thought art was old men hanging on the walls. Goya and stuff like that. Things that interest me rather peripherally, and then I suddenly came into a space that did something with me, which told me a story.



That was the decisive moment for your relationship to art?

Yes, definitely. But it took me a little longer to gain access to artists who combined this with an aesthetic that I also find cool, where I have the feeling that it relates to my everyday



life and is closer to things that interest me. Young artists who are simultaneously interested in thematic complexes relevant to my generation, but also have an interest in fashion, for example, are a bit "street," and have an awareness of the complexity of our culture.

The theme of generation directly or indirectly plays a significant role in your work, also because you seek out distinctly contemporary that?

themes.

How

conscious

is

that?

On the one hand, I'm also influenced by people like PAULO FREIRE or bell hooks, who co-founded Critical Pedagogy. bell hooks, for example, wrote the book *Teaching to Transgress*, which is very important to me. I really appreciate PAULO FREIRE's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. There are many discourses on the decolonization of childhood because, if you go back to the eighteenth century, and therefore to the time when the ENLIGHTENMENT began, but also when the idea of White Supremacy began, the idea of the West having to civilize the world was dominant. Pedagogy also flourished and sought to make the wild child a productive part of society through education. The world and humankind, on their own and without civilization, end up in satanized chaos. Only through discipline, punishment and education can we domesticate ourselves.



That's an interesting point. You collaborated with teenagers from Neukölln for your series "Inverted Guide." How did that come about?

I read this quote from curator LUCY LIPPARD. I don't remember the exact wording, but the idea was that if people would start looking at their own neighborhood, as they do when they travel, they would learn so much more. That kind of touched me because *Neukölln* is a district that has become hardcore gentrified, but at the same time, the kids who actually grow up there often live precariously. These are two bubbles that have relatively little to do with each other. And I just talked to one of the girls: She's fifteen or sixteen, she's never had a passport or an ID card. That means vacation is not an option. I was interested in making this possibility of doorstep vacationing a topic and at the same time thinking, what are the things that actually make up my environment and how can I analyze those. Basically similar to what happens in hip-hop lyrics.

What did you and the girl talk about?

First of all, look at the middle-class German afternoon television and how it views Neukölln. The district, German TV says, is no longer multicultural, but monocultural, because it's dominated by Arabs. And, if anything, it's a multi-problem district, not a multicultural district. And that is this kind of blatant stigmatization that you start to feel at the age of fifteen. Then, ten years later, you realize that your zip code dictates a relatively large part in your life if, in fact, you haven't moved on. Somehow, it's about that reflection and also thinking, where did that actually come from?



All these energies that you then somehow *cram together* afterwards to be part of this society, they're still totally free, and they make for a certain kind of beautiful chaos in total.



and it reminds me to loosen up again, not to worry all day about whether I've answered all my emails.

Absolutely, everything is somehow even more exciting at that age... Among your selected works, a few are from the series "Tales of Lipstick and Virtue." Can you elaborate on those?

It's actually the project I've been working on the longest. I've been working with fake textiles and hyper femmes in my hometown Tirana. In Albania, there are the main ports for everything that is illegal and coming into Europe. That means 80 percent, maybe even 90 percent of fake textiles sold in the West come to Western Europe through the port in Durrës. Even more, the understanding of feminism in Albania is quite different from that of the West. While women in West Germany had to fight for their rights, for example, until the 60s or 70s, you could not practice certain professions without a man's signature. In Albania, this was history following the Italian colonial period. From the mid-1940s, women were finally allowed to vote, became engineers, and were able to study under recently established socialism. But what did not occur was a sexual revolution. All these organically grown forms of emancipation or birth control through the pill came much later.

That is, many things that are seen from the Western feminist canon as symptoms of oppression, such as living out your sexuality or being perceived as an object, can be



So, for example, the rap video I created in collaboration with my friend Heiko-Thandeka Ncube. The video is also about how hip-hop is part of a culture that emerged from the transatlantic slave trade. And that these colonial systems, which seem so eternally distant to us, actually still shape our reality. A few days later, I talked to another girl whose family has been here since the first generation of Tunisian immigrants, and we spoke at length about family problems. And just about such structures as: Your family thinks you automatically live in gold and luxury in Germany. Family back home expects money. people get mad when it doesn't come. All these structures that countless families share, and then she says to me: "Hey Anna, this is because Tunisia was also a colony, right?" And I'm like, "Yas, baby! That's exactly right! Your family is not crazy, you guys don't suck, but that's part of a bigger structure and that's why you listen to hip-hop."

I LOVE MOMENTS LIKE THAT. Because it's about understanding the *bigger picture*. It's about realizing that we're all part of bigger systems and a lot of crap comes out of those systems, but so does hip-hop. And that's music that makes me get up in the morning and feel like going to school. And those moments are very cut e.

You put together works on the subject of age for NUMERO Berlin. What thoughts played a role in the process?

I was particularly interested in young people's material culture and how it creates identity at this age – whether it's *fingernails* or *television*. For example, in the series "Inverted Guide," I asked teens to photograph what they found most amazing in their homes.



So it was about trying to think about what makes up your IDENTITY in relation to what's around you, for example, what architecture reflects you.

Personally, even though I work with many age groups, I find adolescence and puberty the most interesting years. Maybe because they're the most exhausting and shittiest. You feel like you're already fully grown, but your synapses and your brain aren't actually fully developed yet. It's also an age that our society always portrays totally insanely. Because on the one hand, up to a certain age, children are thought of as a bit "purer," but when you're fifteen, then you're already definitely fucked up and sullied by all the things that make our society fucked up. At the same time, you still have an idealistic naivety or the attitude of not being interested at all. All these energies that you then somehow cram together afterwards to be part of this society, they're still totally free, and they make for a certain kind of beautiful chaos in total. I'm always happy when this is shared with me,

perceived as a privilege by the standards of a non-Western canon. I was interested in how this kind of GENDER CONSTRUCTION actually happens at different ages, when you act so feminine when you're older that it's already no longer perceived as feminine because it's already a little too aggressive for "good feminists' taste," a little too plastic, tits that are a bit too manufactured. I've done a lot of research and thinking about this and I came to understand that this comes from different historical contexts.



Tales of Lipstick and Virtue,
2014-2018



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These are certainly exciting links between concepts of femininity and age. Authenticity in the context of age is also interesting.

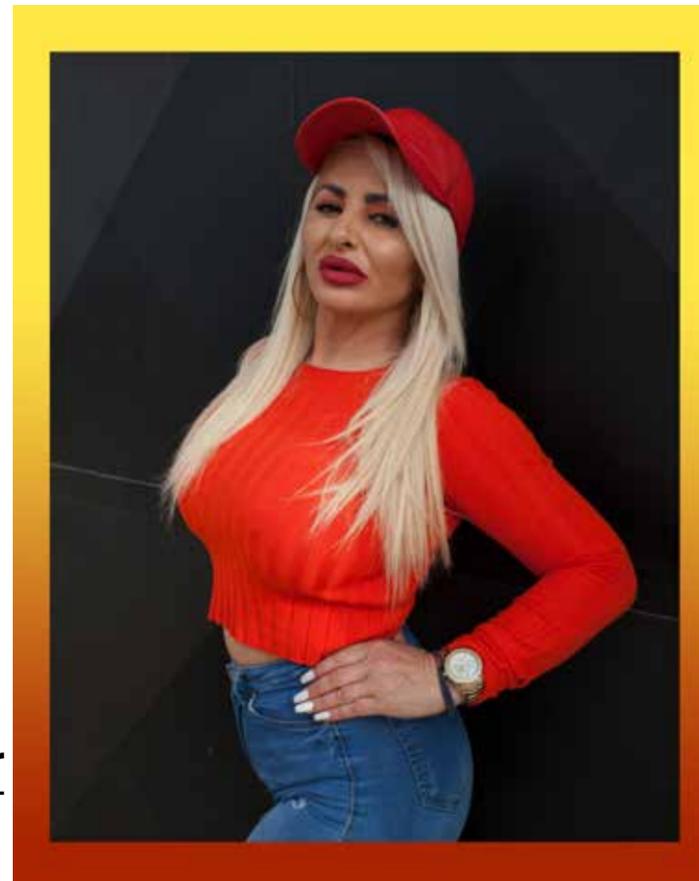
Yes, that also plays a role in the work. There's this image of two sisters who look like twins, but they're not twins; they're just wearing the same outfit. They're also part of this Albania work. They're both wearing oversized sunglasses, they have super blond hair. I'm guessing they're in their forties or fifties. There's a zero-fucks-given factor there.

They're also a bit famous in Albania because they're older and keep doing what they feel like doing. People are fascinated by the "twin sisters" who are a bit older but wear fashion made for younger women. This enabled them to build a huge follower base on INSTAGRAM, among other things. They sort of play with what would be appropriate for their age group and what would not be

I had a roommate once. When she turned thirty, she said she couldn't wear certain things to



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I was interested in how this kind of gender construction actually happens at different ages, when you act so *feminine* when you're older that it's already no longer perceived as *feminine* because it's already a little too AGGRESSIVE for "good feminists' taste," a little too plastic, tits that are a bit too manufactured.



BERGHAIN because she's not twenty anymore. [laughs] And it's like, people stress themselves out for shit like that. My jaw dropped a little bit at that moment because I was like, "Honey, you're thirty and not eighty and even if you want to walk around kind of naked at Berghain when you're eighty, do it." That's also how I see the two Albanian female influencers. Their motto: "We've lived our lives up until now and others are stressing about what they're wearing and we're wearing, what we're into and it's great that we're creating an Instagram follower base with it."

Preach. Let's talk about the third series, "Santa Boogie." In this series, among other things, you dealt with the marginalization of bodies of color and queer bodies. How does this approach connect to the topic of age?

The protagonists of the work are both friends and acquaintances of mine. For me, it's important either to work with friends or for ideas to arise by chance. I don't choose such subjects purely strategically and without a personal context. The rapper *Rose* grew



up between the Dominican Republic and Brooklyn. And in the Dominican Republic, there are a lot of *Christian Catholic saints mixed with West African Jehovah culture*, and together they become part of a canon. When she was growing up, Rose was a gay man and later transitioned to a woman. At the time, Catholic women in the Dom Rep noticed that she was different and would say to her, **“Jesus loves you, too.”**

From that idea, she made a music album and we decided that we would appropriate that **i c o n o g r a p h y .**

And then Martha, a friend of a friend of mine in Bogotá, who is an activist and a very different generation, saw this concept and was like, **“Yo, I’m really into this, too, let’s do it!”** She’s been a trans rights activist for, I don’t know, forty years or so, and has lived in Bogotá, in Santa Fe, the red light district for years. And did her trans operation back in, I don’t know, the 60s. All in all, it was somehow exhilarating for me to see how ages actually communicate with each other, through these two very different contexts.

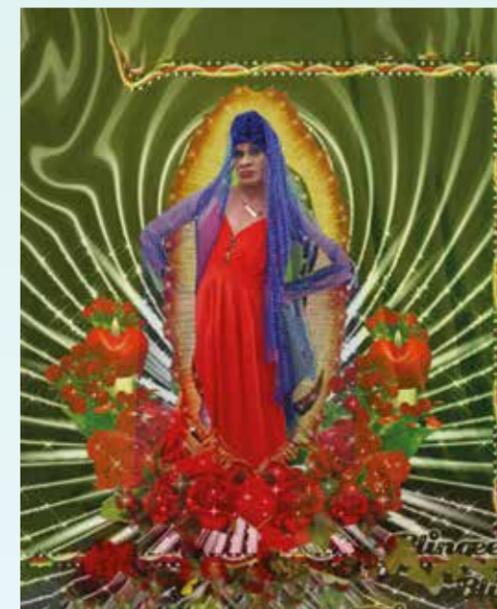
How do other generations that are not as close to contemporary pop culture as you and your generation perceive your work?

It’s different. And I don’t know if that’s solely a generational thing. But, of course, any pop culture code that I use is read a certain way by

a certain group. That means that when I refer to **THINGS** and to **POSES** that are shared on **SOCIAL MEDIA**, not everyone who is not on **INSTAGRAM** understands them right away. That’s when other associations arise. And that’s where we actually come back to this **“translating,”** for every statement that I make may trigger different subjective interpretations. And everyone somehow has a different approach to the work. There are also misunderstandings about my work. I’ve had conflicts with White German feminists who claim that I continue to subordinate women to the male gaze. That’s where I definitely realize that there are generational and cultural differences in terms of what freedom is for you. The critics spoke of a 90s Valie Export-feminism, where the biggest problem was that someone wants to grab your tits. But the world is much more complex than that.



Brujas, Putas, Regalos Dios, 2017-2020



“Honey, you’re THIRTY and not EIGHTY and even if you want to walk around kind of naked at Berghain when you’re eighty, do it.”



B O R N

THIS WAY

by DAMIEN CUMMINGS

It's been one year since the massive women's rights marches spread across Poland in 2020. It's also been one year since the grievous decision by Poland's ruling Law & Justice party to enact a near-total ban on abortion in the name of so-called traditional family values. And the country fumbled towards the bleak milestone with a sequence of appropriately grim events.

MARY KOMASA is caught between two worlds. Hers was supposed to be the *golden generation* for Poland, the one whose minds would shape the country after the fall of communism in 1989. Yet, like many young Polish people, her context is shaped by the powerful competing dualities of *family* and *religion*, *freedom* and *progress*, the desire to leave and the need to remain.



“We’re talking about a country in central Europe that is banning LGBTQ+ rights, basically banning abortion law and taking women’s rights back to the Middle Ages. Every day, it’s harder and harder for me to be proud of being Polish – I never imagined myself saying those words.”

The musician and activist is in the study of her Berlin home. It is a serious place, an artist’s retreat of few distractions, designed for getting the job done. She is speaking in an animated way about the dire situation in Poland that can’t be faked. It has to be experienced.

Photos DANIEL ROCHÉ Styling SINA BRAETZ
All Looks CHANEL FW 2021

First, there was a parliamentary debate on whether Poland, as a nation, would vote to ban pride parades and other forms of public LGBTQ+ celebration. Then, the Polish day of independence, a date almost always marked by large-scale, right-wing demonstrations.

Between those events, a scant two weeks apart, a young woman, 22 weeks pregnant, died of septic shock after doctors refused to perform an emergency caesarean section of the foetus until the heart had stopped beating, for fear of violating abortion laws, knowing full well that the mother's life was at stake.

The Polish border is little more than 100 kilometers away from Mary's apartment in Berlin. She's as close as she could possibly be to home while still living the life that she wants, the life that she deserves. It's part of the conundrum that she faces as both an artist and an activist, and though certain elements of those lived experiences seem so distant as to be insurmountable, Mary is resolute in her belief that change is coming, and it is inevitable.

"In Poland, there was no revolution in 1968. It happened all over the world, but it never happened for us – that's what we're seeing right now, it's very late, but it's happening."

Growing up, Mary was sure that she was living in a developing country on the right track. Her parents and grandparents had high expectations for the coming years and would often tell Mary that her generation would be the ones to genuinely change something.

"There was a lot of hope for people born in the late 80s and the early 90s. We were the first generation of prosperity and basically the first ones born in a democratic country."

Mary comes from an accomplished, artistic family. Her father is an actor, her mother a singer, and her siblings are also musicians, directors and designers. It's the type of family that is almost always associated with a liberal upbringing.

"I grew up as a woman in a very Catholic family. I attended mass every Sunday. So, you know, it was absolutely the opposite." Alongside her brothers and sisters, she left the church in an early form of the activist spirit that would continue to guide her. "It breaks us apart. We love each other, but they probably never thought that

this would happen to their kids, that they would not just go against the Church, but also fight for their rights. But, that was something we just had to do."

It's not the change that the previous generation was expecting, but it is the change that the current generation needs. Over the last two decades, Poland has been systematically opening up on the one hand and shutting down with the other.

For one thing, Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice party preside over an increasingly urban society from a very rural voter base. Then there is the power of social media to both expose people to new ideas and also insulate against them. Similarly, Poland's ever-increasingly visible LGBTQ+ presence on the city streets is juxtaposed with a statue of Jesus that's even bigger than Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer – it is the largest in the whole world. The factors are multitude, but the result is a country of extreme polarization, even by 21st century standards.

"I remember when we joined the European Union in 2004, and I felt like that was the beginning. Things could only get better." There was genuine optimism, and as a young artist moving to Berlin 14 years ago, she didn't feel so much that she was leaving Poland, but instead going somewhere new.

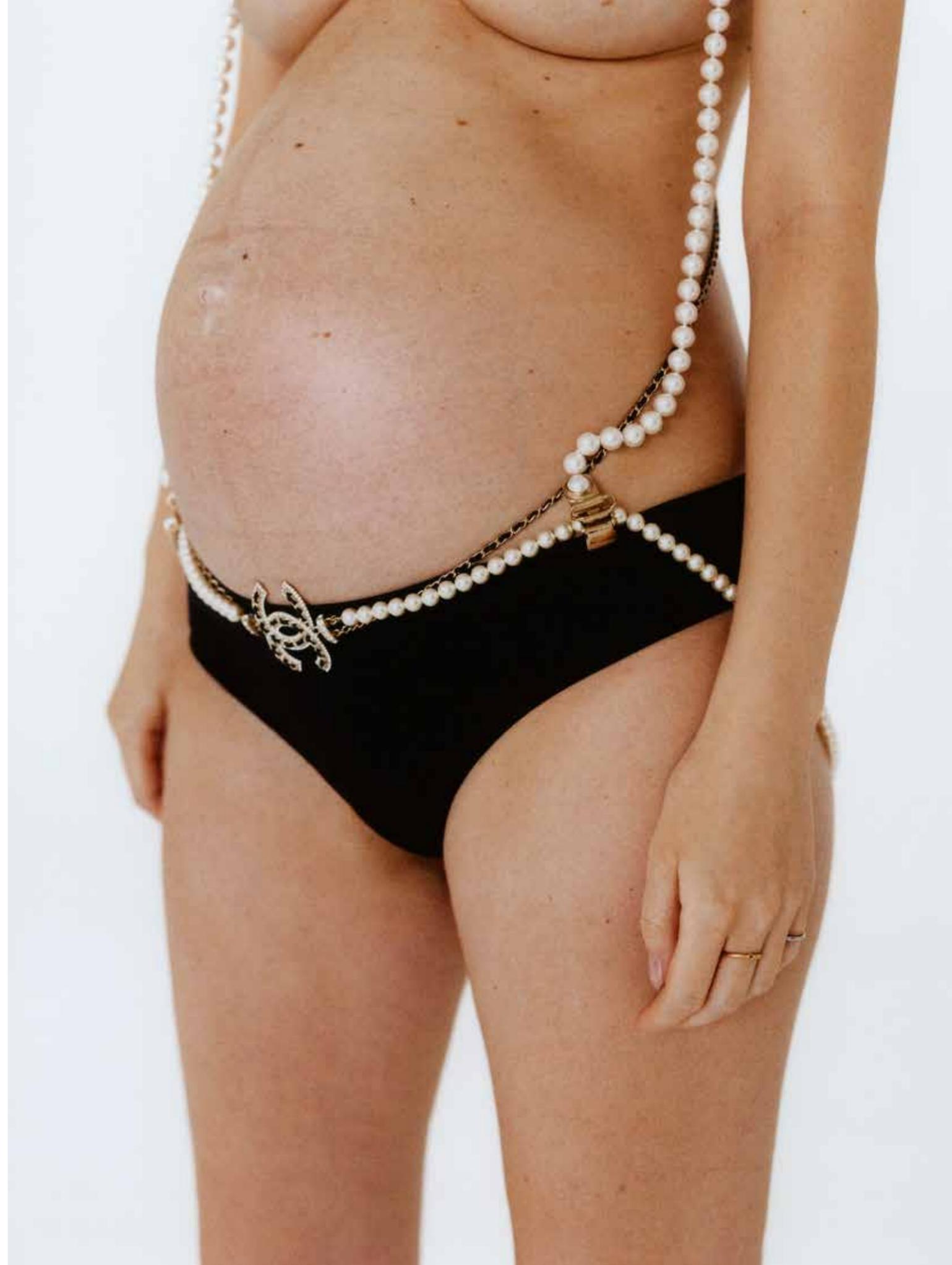
"Nowadays, people are fleeing Poland because of the political situation. It's something that I heard from past generations, and now it feels like history is repeating itself because people are fighting for their lives."

Despite all differences, family is clearly very important to Mary. So much so that she found herself on the verge of moving back to Warsaw earlier this year. "We almost bought an apartment in April. I thought it would be better for me to be closer to my parents and be a part of a change in Poland, and then I took a pregnancy test. Suddenly, it was very black and white to me. That's not happening."

Mary is eight months pregnant, and while her activist spirit has never waned – she is a regular feature on the front lines – she has found herself with new questions to answer. The kind of questions that her generation wasn't supposed to have to reckon with.



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Photos **DANIEL ROCHÉ** Styling **SINA BRAETZ**
Hair **SUTIDA VESTEWIG**
Makeup **KENNY CAMPBELL** using products from **CHANEL BEAUTY**
Photo Assistant **BELEN ROVEGNO**
Styling Assistant **BASTIAN HAGN** Post Production **NITTY GRITTY BERLIN**
All Looks **CHANEL FW 2021**

“I remember going to a gynecologist here in Berlin and being frightened. What would happen if I found out that there was something wrong with the pregnancy? How will the doctor look at me? Will they try to convince me to abort the baby or try to convince me not to do that? All of this strange, fucking crazy shit went through my mind. But then, the system here is very much



different, they leave it up to the patient to decide, but I still couldn't believe it. Honestly, it was tough for me to understand that I'm in charge, and this is my body, and this will be my choice. Think about that from the perspective of Polish women. Can you imagine that? That's the freedom I have, and they don't.”

This exact question is part of a broader civil rights movement that is igniting across Poland right now. It's difficult on two fronts: First and foremost, it is illegal, and the second is that it is unspoken. Even now, Mary's choice to leave the Catholic church, one that is hers to make legally, is a bone of contention among her family.

"Essentially, we don't talk about it. Leaving the Church was one of the biggest moments of freedom in my life," she says, and yet it has undoubtedly put distance between her and her loved ones.

"You would never call a jail your home, you know, you would never call a place that is taking your own rights your home." Perhaps there is no more significant sign than the fact that her child will almost certainly be born in Germany, and she will continue to live there at least for a while.

Organizing across those borders is incredibly difficult. It is a problem that Mary is aware of, and she does what she can to help. She mobilized with the mass women's marches in 2020. She is connected and vocal in a movement of people that are educated and united. The main outlet for her activism is her art. She understands that her voice comes with a responsibility to support and empower people, to show that they are not alone and that people are paying attention both in and out of Poland.

From the very beginning, she has consistently challenged the status quo. "My first video, *City of My Dreams*, was a very gay video, and for Poland, it was very shocking." Mary freely admits that she is a niche artist, but she had the support of a major label – Warner Music Poland. "What I was doing was against the popular trend. It was against what the major artists were doing," but it did prove that it was possible to air a different reality on a major label.

Mary's reach is what gives her sway in the music scene and beyond. "Things have changed a bit since then, but I'm still the one who is always talking to celebrities and other artists in Poland." She is pleading with them to apply themselves and understand that their voice matters in bringing about change and that simply posting Instagram content is not enough. "Could you please be more engaged? Of course, some of them just don't give a fuck. But some of them, some of them do. You have artists that are not involved that are going to tell you that their life

path is through music, but that's not in my personality. I had to tear and push my way through to find my voice, and after many, many years, it's pretty loud and clear."

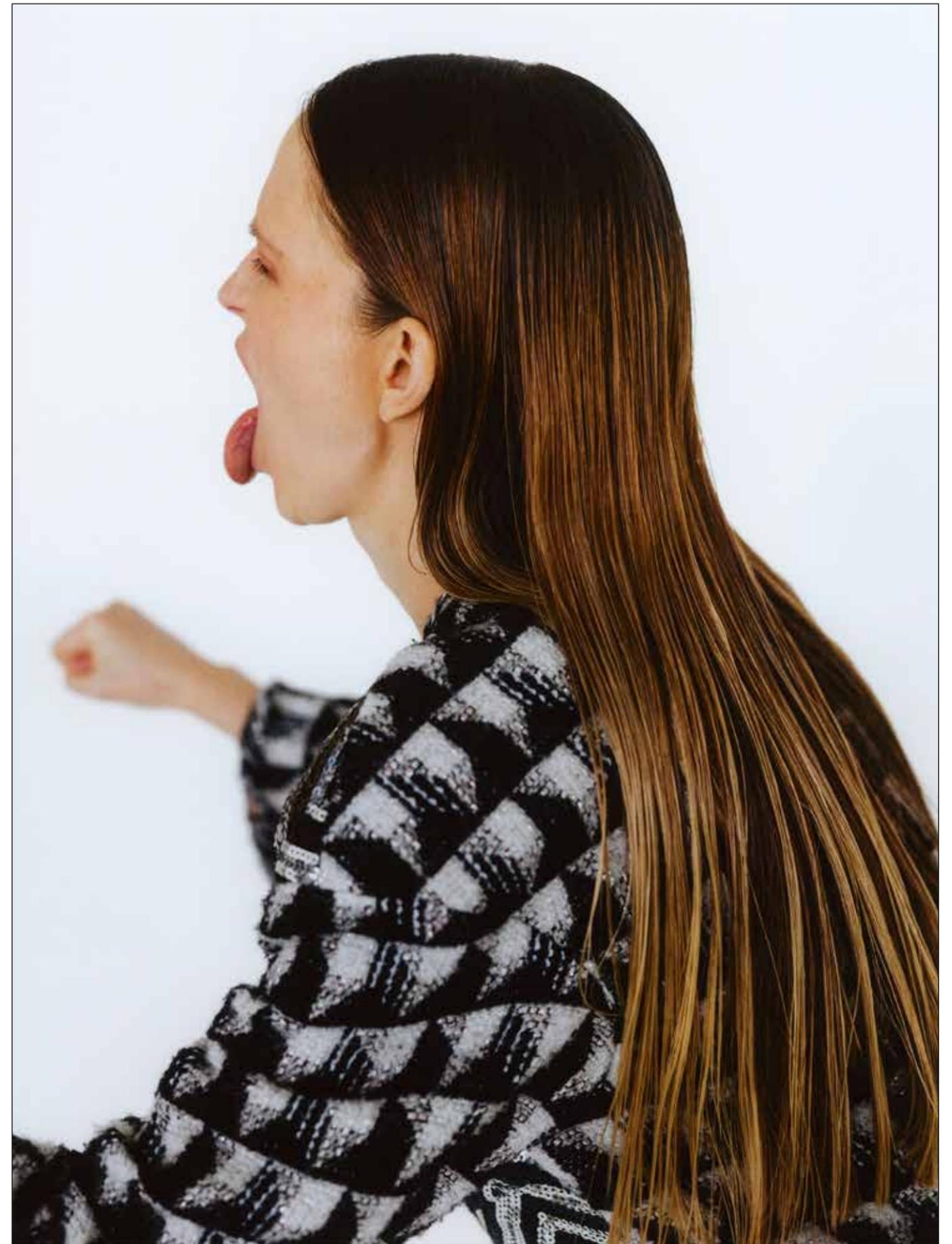
It says something about the bottom-line reality of the situation in Poland and around the world that during all this time, her views remain the same. Her music is about love and hope, and she has said in the past that she doesn't want it to shout. "I've shouted many, many times. My previous album was called *Disarm*. The song says disarm, but don't surrender, and I think that's my motto in general."

Yet, Mary admits that she finds herself shouting more often than she would like. "When I see that someone is being hurt and my voice will help in any way, then I will use it." It's a sign of where things are headed, and how she is forced to use her incredibly versatile voice as a singer is worrying her. "We are being pushed to the point of no return, and I'm really frightened."

It's a double-edged sword, "Last year, at the women's marches, people were basically fighting. They were fighting against the government and the police, but the energy was very positive. They were united. They were celebrating freedom." Like many situations of oppression, the problem is apparent for all to see, while the causes are often much more difficult to pinpoint.

She has the feeling that things have changed drastically since she lived in Poland. Yet, she also senses that her generation was naive to the warning signs. "I do not recognize the country that I left. It's not the country that I grew up in," she starts before doubting herself. "Well, maybe it was, you know. One thing I know for sure was that I was living in a bubble, but I had no idea that it was such a huge bubble or that we were all living a dream."

Clearly, that bubble has now burst, and while she will not like the experience of everyday life in Poland today, Mary, and everyone else, can see it for what it is, and therein lies the path to the solution.



Rebecca

Words SAM KAVANAGH

An afternoon with Lilach and her friends, 2021
oil on linen, 320×130 cm,
Courtesy of König Gallery and the artist

of human emotion and drifts between the conscious
and u n c o n s c i o u s mind.
After studying painting at the respectable institutes Ateliers
des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris and Central St. Martins College
of Art and Design in London, she later also did a masters in
S o c i o l o g y .



Paris-based artist REBECCA BRODSKIS has a vivid imagination. Having spent her childhood between Morocco and France, the painter draws inspiration from both cultures to create worlds which are both of the imagination and of real life. Brodskis' work is one that explores the internal mindset

Brodskis

This is reflected in paintings which balance between the wonders of the imagination, chaos and self-awareness in each subject created. *Fräulein* spoke with Rebecca to better understand the mind of the creative.

Rebecca

État d'âme, 2021
oil on linen, 130×97 cm, Courtesy of König
Gallery and the artist



Brodskis



Angelica, 2021
oil on linen, 47×37 cm
Courtesy of Galleria Anna Marra and the artist

“It’s very wide. My characters can be either friends or people I admire, either total strangers on the streets or a complete product of my imagination. It really varies. I do get a lot of inspiration on my daily travels. I walk a lot and I travel a lot. It’s very unusual for me to stay more than a few months in a place. I don’t like being in a routine and knowing a place too much.”



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Les équilibristes, 2021
oil on linen, 146×114 cm
Courtesy of Galleria Anna Marra and the artist



Relation de réciprocité, 2021
oil on linen, 130×97 cm, Courtesy of König Gallery and the artist



Noa, 2021
oil on linen, 100x81 cm, Courtesy of König Gallery and the artist

Describe your childhood, were you creative?

I had a very beautiful but chaotic childhood. Always on the road, not going to school much, and meeting many extraordinary people, artists, filmmakers and so on. My parents are what you would call in French *soixante huitards*, as in intellectual bohemians.

As a kid, I was not allowed to watch television – only films from time to time, and that would be a Chaplin or a Keaton or even some Cocteau at age five. So, in my free time, I would be very creative. I was always drawing a lot, painting and reading.

We would spend most winters in my grandmother's house in Morocco. She was a painter and there were two big rooms turned into an atelier in her house. I would spend a lot of time there painting.

How did you discover art as a form of expression?

Art has always been a form of expression in my life. As I said, I was always drawn towards creativity. I also love to write. I have kept a diary every day since I was eight years old. Painting for me is like meditation, a time of self introspection that allows me to function. Basically, art allows me to digest life.

What is your creative process? Do you have a routine you go by daily?

Yes, I do have some kind of routine. I always do a very fast sketch with charcoal, and then I cover the canvas with paint. A very very fast first layer. From that, I start to elaborate. Layer after layer, the painting appears, the forms become clearer and more defined until at some point, it's just over and everything makes sense.

What inspires the characters you create?

It's very very wide. My characters can be either friends or people I admire, either total strangers on the streets or a complete product of my imagination. It really varies. I do get a lot of inspiration on my daily travels. I walk a lot and I travel a lot. It's very unusual for me to stay more than a few months in a place. I don't like being in a routine and knowing a place too much. I always have this need to be in places I don't know. It always activates my creative energy. New people, new streets, new sceneries.

Are there any contemporary or non-contemporary painters that you look up to or are inspired by?

Yes! Many! The list is very long, but I would say the ones that inspire me the most are Marlene Dumas, Balthus, Francis Bacon, Romaine Brooks. I am also obsessed with all the painters from the New Objectivity like Dix, Schad and so on.

How do you spend your time in the studio? Describe a typical day.

I usually arrive, change my clothes and go straight to work. I have two small kids so my time is always so limited. Literally, every minute in the studio counts and I have no time to waste so, yes, I am very active. I do take coffee breaks now and then, but otherwise, I am just painting and painting nonstop.

Are there any unrealized works which you would love to paint? If so, what are your ideas?

I don't really know. I don't plan much. I never know what my next painting will be, to be honest. I am very spontaneous.

Sometimes, I even start a painting without really knowing what should be the outcome of it. Anyway, even when I try to plan things, it always turns out completely different...

In my perspective, art has a factor of randomness in it, or maybe even cluelessness.

What are you working on currently?

Currently, I am on a residency in Dakar, Senegal. I am painting street views. At the moment, a 5m40 piece called *De jour en jour a Dakar*, which depicts a very typical scene of Dakar market life.

Coming here, I was very amazed by the way time is apprehended in a completely different way.

The day-to-day life. Not setting any expectations. Living the present fully... this is what I try to depict in this new piece.

How does the use and choice of color impact your creations?

Considering the fact that I am mainly inspired by the sight of people and social encounters, the society I am living in affects my palette of colors rather than the other way around. The cities I live

in deeply influence

my choice of

colors; whether

it's conscious

or not, the environment

I am in

colors my

mind's

palette.

Now that

the world is

starting to

open up and

become more

accessible, do

you have upcoming

shows planned?

I will have an

exhibition here in Dakar

at the end of the residency.

Then, I will show in a few art

fairs – Art Dubai, Zona Maco

in Mexico, Art Paris. And

otherwise, I have three

upcoming solo exhibitions –

one in Lausanne, one in

Vienna and one in London.

After that, I will be going to

Singapore for a residency

and an exhibition.

Who else should we be looking out for in the art world?

I really like the works of Claire Tabouret and Danielle McKinney.

Other than art, what else would you like to explore – whether it be creative or non-creative?

I really want to travel the world. There are so many places I want to discover. I just want to hit the road!

I don't plan much. I never know what my next painting will be, to be honest. I am very spontaneous. Sometimes, I even start a painting without really knowing what should be the outcome of it. Anyway, even when I try to plan things, it always turns out completely different...

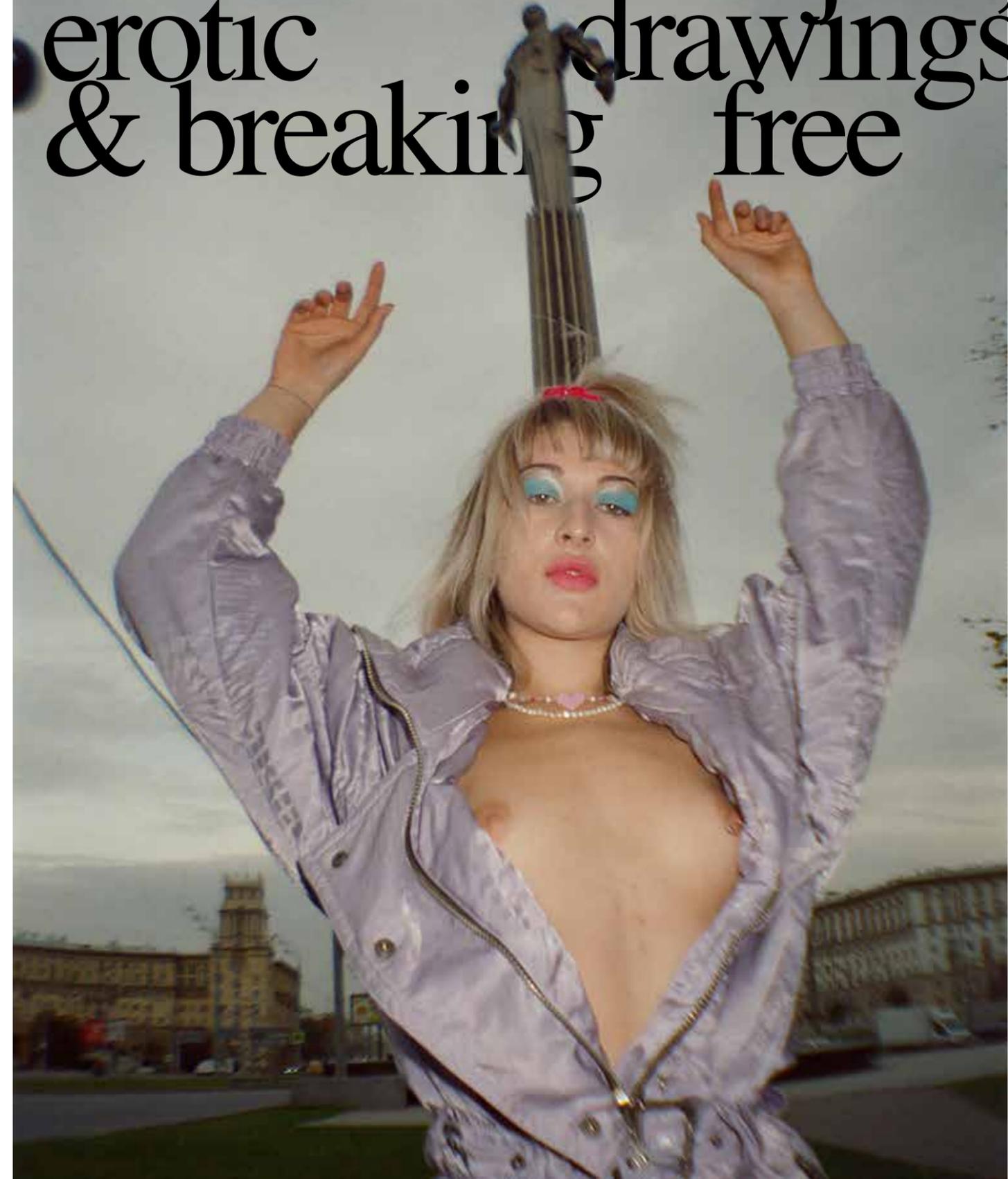
Demonizing



MILITSA KROSHKINA

In our conversation, MILITSA KROSHKINA, also known as little sexyangel on *Instagram*, dives deep into biographical moments that fractured her identity as a woman and what it means to get in touch with your sexuality. MILITSA shares the intimate insight of what it felt like for her to grow up in a conservative family in Russia shaped by satanized narratives around sex and the naked body. She takes us on a journey of escape through art and by creating your own ways of viewing the world and oneself. She tells a story of liberation. And how liberation can never be absolute: “Basically, my art is illegal in my home country.”

the. sexual subject,
erotic drawings
& breaking free



In conversation with
Militsa Kroshkina

FRÄULEIN:

You are an artist, stylist and a public Instagram persona, and you were raised in a small town in Southern Russia. Overall, you stated in your biography on your artist webpage that your interest in eroticism and nudity is connected to your conservative upbringing. Can you tell me more about that?

What were the conservative beliefs you grew up with?

MILITSA KROSHKINA:

My parents were born in USSR. It was a sociocultural setting where sex and sexuality were under strict censorship and stigmatized as a taboo. It was like no one ever had sex. People just couldn't talk about sex, not on a day-to-day basis, or even in family circles. They were ashamed and scared of what seemed the most unnatural and perverted act, despite it being the most natural of all. In sum, my parents were real puritans, just like everyone else seemed to be. Looking back, I realized that I always loved to undress and not wear anything at all. And I was



allowed to do so until I started to grow older, and my female sexual characteristics began to appear. Though, around the same time, I started to love to wear shorts, miniskirts and tops. Of course, my family never approved of my style and my clothing. Especially during my adolescence, they started to restrict how I wanted to dress and forbid certain clothes that I wanted to wear and clothing that I was comfortable in. Simultaneously, my parents used to tell me that nudity is obscene. They told me that sex is a sin.

They echoed the common social stigma that sex is an indecent behavior that will never be accepted in our society.

So, we never had a normal family discussion or even conversations about sex. We never talked about safety and contraception. The only option was to not talk about it at all and to pretend it didn't exist. The only exception was when my brother turned 20 and my father confusedly gave him condoms, advising him to use them. Funny, because there was never such a conversation with me. So, he was allowed to explore sexuality, and I as a female wasn't. I guess we lived in a world where only males were allowed to have sex. Controversial enough. All that led to me suppressing my sexuality and my femininity for too long.

F: How did you free yourself from the conservative context you came from? Can you describe how it was to get in touch with your naked body and sexuality?

How was the process of detangling the naked body and sexuality from a satanized narrative?
M: In my teenage years, from 13 to 18, I was full of insecurities. I was ashamed of my body and I didn't accept myself at all. That sexual stigma was so disturbing that it was interrupting my growth, my progress as an artist, as a person, and as a woman. I remember the first time I drew an erotic sketch. I was 13 and bored in class so I sketched in my notebook. I used to hide that sketch deeply in the closet because I was afraid that my mom would find it, until finally, I destroyed it.

In addition to that, I usually spent the summer holidays in my childhood in a small Russian village with my grandmother and my older cousins. In total, it was three boys and I living side by side for three months. We were playing together and inspecting our bodies as all children do. One time, the adults caught us examining our naked bodies and consequently we were immediately disciplined. That experience constituted another key moment for instilling the idea of sexuality and nudity being dirty, forbidden and unacceptable in our child's minds. We were ashamed of our bodies and of what we had done. We were punished for the interest in our bodies and punished for the exploration of ourselves. Now I understand how wrong that

F: What do you think about it nowadays? How do you perceive the naked body today?

M: Now, when I think about all those years, I understand that my conservative and restrictive past was an essential part of my journey of coming to understand my true beauty and growing love for my body and myself. No one is born with certain perceptions; it is what society does to you. Especially in our childhood, we run around loving ourselves and the world around us. During that time, our parents are the most important people to us. And if our parents don't love themselves and if they have issues with their bodies, they transmit that condition onto their children and involuntarily put them in the same unhappy state. That is exactly what happened to me. But, finally, at this stage of my life, I find that

“They were ashamed and scared of what seemed the most unnatural and perverted act, despite it being the most natural of all.” – Militsa Kroshkina

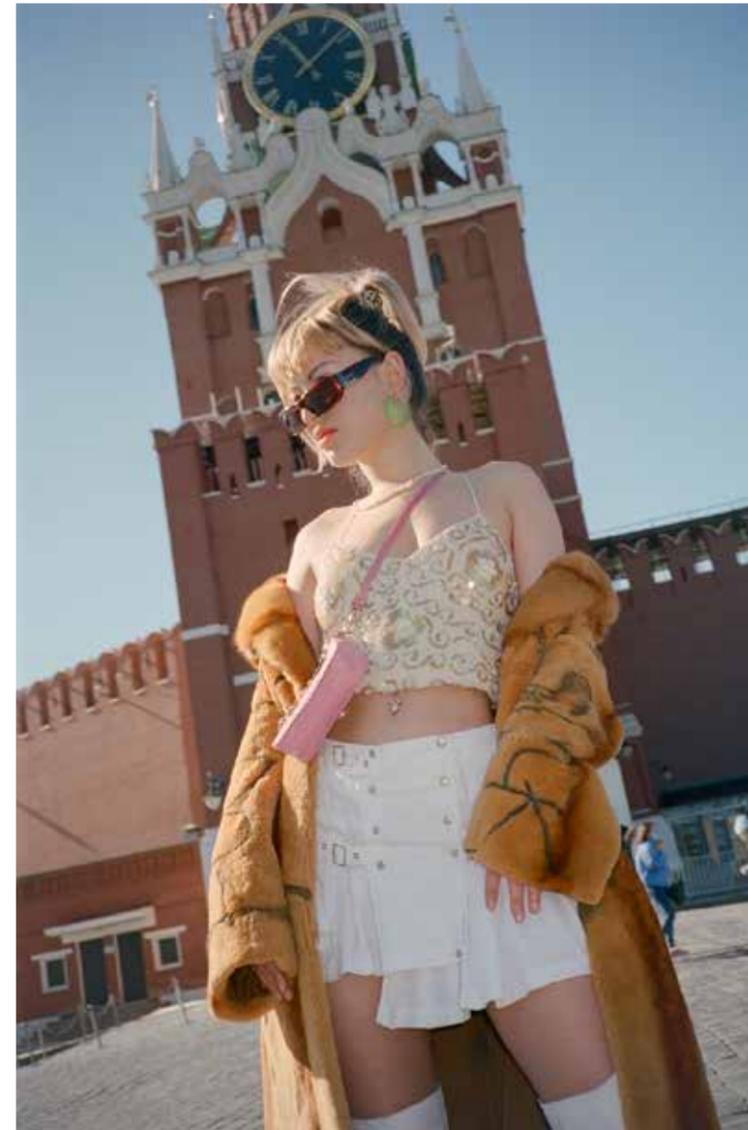


Image Courtesy of Militsa Kroshkina and Anastasia Vladimirkaya



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Image
Courtesy of Militsa Kroshkina
and Anastasia Vladimirskaia

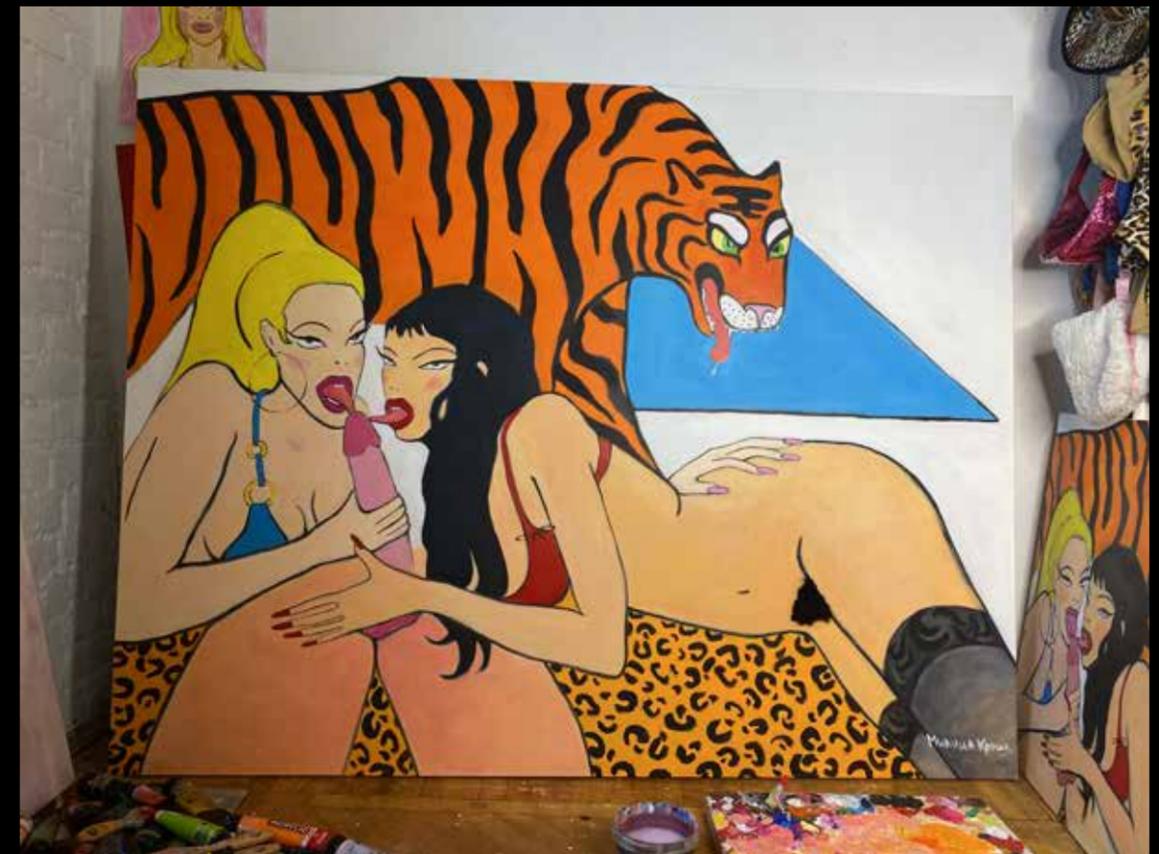


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“Basically, my art is illegal in my home country.”

“I overcame that
forbiddance, shame, and I
also conquered my
body issues. I survived.
I overcame imposed
values and found my own.
I returned to the practice
of exploring my body.
I started drawing myself
naked and taking nude
photos of myself. I broke
free.”

Militsa Kroshkina



the naked human body is the most beautiful thing ever created. Nudity is art. Each body has its unique beauty, language, its grace and charm.

F: What do you enjoy most about art, nudity and sexual exploration, since all the aspects play a major role in the art you create?

M: My biggest inspiration is the perfection of lines, contours and shapes of the naked body. The radiance of skin and hair. When people are naked, they become true and pure. They emerge into the most truthful version of being. Suddenly, body language is enough. There are no words needed. All in all, I feel like body language reaches its peak during the act of love. It is like a beautiful dance, bestial and charming.

F: What would you say your agenda is, concerning the curation of your public Instagram page? What kind of narrative or discourse do you want to share with your followers?

M: I want to share beauty with people. To tell them about self-love. I'd recommend everyone to look at themselves naked in the



F: In addition to that, what is your understanding of sexual liberation? Would you describe yourself as an advocate for sexual liberation and female empowerment?

M: Of course, I would describe myself as an advocate for sexual liberation. When I speak about liberation, I mean liberty for everyone: to express their sexuality or to not express it at all. Freedom to be sexually attractive and to not be judged by it. I stand for exemption from censorship. Our bodies are the most natural instance on this planet, how could that be unacceptable?! According to that, our bodies shouldn't be censored – neither in real life nor the digital world. Nowhere.

F: In one mail, you were talking about censorship in Russia. Can you tell me more about it? What exactly is censored and what are the policies?

M: Overall, there is strict censorship for nudity in Russia. Even in the art sphere. Galleries refuse to take my artworks because of erotic motifs. In Russia, any nudity is essentially classified as pornography. Everyone should read about Yulia Tsvetkova, a woman who is under arrest because she illustrated vulvas and naked women – which were not even realistic. Basically, my art is illegal in my home country.

F: In that regard, Instagram follows a strict censorship policy that prohibits visual content of the female nipple and the vulva. What has been your experience with online censorship so far?

M: The Instagram censorship policy is terrible. All my different accounts have been fully deactivated at least three times in total by now. Aside from that, the Instagram support is absolutely useless and incompetent concerning communication with their users. Plenty of my Instagram stories were deleted with no right of appeal. I just want to know why. It seems so random and arbitrary to me. And if I reach out, the Instagram support ignores all my requests. In some photos that were deleted, I wasn't even naked; I was either wearing a bikini or my nipples were censored. I have no understanding for the fact that apparently there is a public need in the 21st century for prohibiting female breasts, to the extent that it must be censored or deleted because some seemingly can't even look at it. It is just incredibly regressive and flawed. I feel like that is exactly the kind of propaganda that is collectively spreading the non-acceptance of female bodies which leads to women feeling ashamed, miserable and unlovable. Also, some of my friends' accounts with way more followers were blocked from Instagram. It feels like that femme nudity per se just gets blocked or deleted, while content that, for example, contains animal abuse, can flourish in the digital world. You just have to confirm that you are "okay" with seeing it and you are ready to go! I guess that means that cruelty and abuse can be displayed,

while nudity has to be restricted. Apparently, the female body is more harmful to society than violence. The only thing that I get from it is that I think Instagram is an active participant and supporter of the propaganda of cruelty and brutality.

F: Do you view the naked body and female sexuality as a political weapon or as an instrument of empowerment? Do you feel like it is a political act to claim spaces on the internet as a "naked woman"?

M: Generally, I believe that our bodies are the most beautiful, precious and powerful possession we own, and that bodies need to be nurtured with love. It is everybody's individual right to employ your body however you want to, where you want to, and how you want to. I guess that some utilize their bodies as a form of political action or resistance. But I personally do not look at the female body as a political weapon. Though my body plays a big role in the art I create, I merely want to share and spread the message of how glorious and lovable the femme body is.

F: In a utopian world, how would you rewrite the societal narrative on female bodies and sexuality? Or what do you wish for regarding these aspects?

M: In an ideal world, I think there would be no censorship or restrictiveness around the female body and how you want to pursue your sexuality. In such a world, people could walk freely and safely naked on beaches, parks and basically everywhere. I generally wish there would be collective affirmation on the matter of nudity and the individual body. On the whole, I guess I long for discharging narratives around the naked female body, of the shameful energy it often evokes in public scenarios. I fancy the idea of normalizing the aspects that humans are in fact naked and sexual beings, everything else is socially constructed.

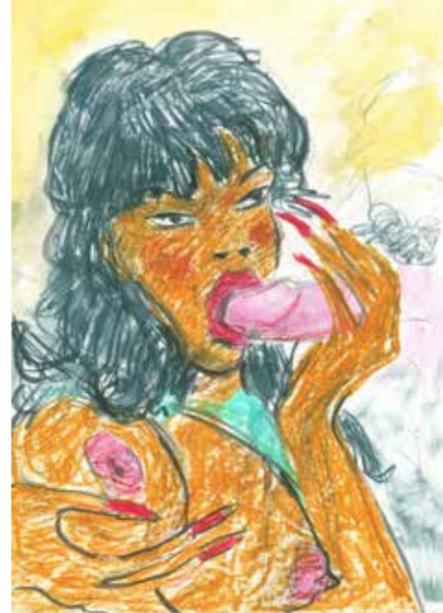


"I find that the naked human body is the most beautiful thing ever created. Nudity is art. Each body has its unique beauty, language, its grace and charm."

– Militsa Kroshkina

F: As a young woman who had to repress her sexual and female energy during adolescence, what would your advice be to young people caught up in conservative sociocultural settings?

M: I would tell someone to, first of all, get in touch with your desires and explore what you are thinking and what you are feeling. Maybe figure out what feels good to you and start to prioritize what you enjoy and what brings you pleasure. Primarily, you should take care of yourself and nurture your mind and your body. I think the key to coming in tune with oneself is to detach yourself from the imposed values and to find and follow, maybe even create, your own. One easy step could be asking yourself: "What do I like? What actually makes me feel good?" Explore yourself, your body and your sexuality. Don't hold back. Look in the mirror and try to adore what you see. That's how it begins.



mirror and to just admire their own body. I'd like everyone to feel that their body is the most beautiful in the world.

WHAT IS LOVE?

journalist
and author

Şeyda KURT

Words LENA FIEDLER
Photos DAVID LINDERT

Romantic relationships are political because they are shaped by **SEXISM**, **RACISM** and **CAPITALISM**, writes journalist and author Şeyda Kurt in her new book, *Radical Tenderness*.

She has not written a guidebook for open relationships, but a political and historical analysis of our relationship models.

Here she explains why it is worthwhile for us to try out new paths, away from the norms of **LOVE**.

WRITTEN BY YOU'VE
DEALS WITH A BOOK THAT
LOVE. WHY DID YOU
CHOOSE THIS TOPIC?

ŞEYDA KURT – In your late twenties, you start to ask yourself how you actually want to live – and with how many people. How can we take care and be there for each other? I became conscious of dependencies more clearly than I was in my early twenties, when I thought I was **INVINCIBLE**. Since then, I've learned that I am naturally dependent on other people and other people are dependent on me. I want to make the conditions of this dependence positive. There has been a politicization of various people in recent



Şeyda Kurt

years through movements like **BLACK LIVES MATTER** or **#METOO**. I was interested in deepening these approaches on a level that has been mostly overlooked until now. Oddly enough, our private home life is the only sphere that we don't politicize. This is despite the fact that since the **60s**, **leftist feminists** have been aware that **the private is political**. When we talk about **STRUCTURAL RACISM** and **SEXISM**, it's important to examine the *spheres* into which these problems reach and shape lives where we haven't even suspected it. When the word "love" comes up, many think of it as being about nature or biology. Love just happens. But, of course, even in the intimate space between people, we find **sexist, capitalist, or racist structures** that we need to examine.

WHEN DID YOU
REALIZE THAT
SOMETHING
WAS WRONG
WITH LOVE?

ŞK – When I was a child, I discovered *Turkish romance films* that had a strong political element, dealing with **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**, **IMPOVERISHMENT** and **EXPLOITATION**. Meaning, they differed from the **HOLLYWOOD** films that were shown on German TV at the same time. So, I already knew, even if I didn't have the words for it yet, that the world's misery also affects relationships. My parents' divorce marked my very personal break with the ideal of the **BOURGEOIS NUCLEAR FAMILY** and its *values, ideas and truths*. With the end of the marriage, the truths of my family, which had previously been vehemently defended, also wavered. Namely, that the greatest and best thing for a female is to have a relationship and that this relationship must culminate in marriage.

IN YOUR OWN EARLY RELATIONSHIPS, DID YOU REPRODUCE YOUR PARENTS' PATTERNS?

ŞK – In some relationships I reproduced what I knew. My parents' marriage broke down, among other reasons, because of the norm of monogamy. I looked for that in other relationships.

Because I saw what **cheating could do**, I defended monogamy all the more vehemently. Later, I realized that for me, personally, I don't need monogamy as much as I thought I did back then. There is never a point when I say goodbye to all norms and become a totally *free person*, with completely new ideas about myself and others. It is a lifelong process of negotiation.

IN YOUR BOOK, YOU TALK ABOUT A SENSE OF DISCOMFORT THAT STUCK WITH YOU. IN WHAT SITUATIONS DID IT EMERGE?

ŞK – For me, discomfort is like background noise that's always there. It reminds me that I don't have to accept bad

"I may not be able to directly change what kind of person I am, but I can, at best, choose what to do. I MAY EVEN DECIDE HOW I BEHAVE OR HOW I ACT. It opens up a great many possibilities to get closer to people, to reach out to people, and to experience each other in shared action."



“As a norm, this idea always excludes people. And has often been used to justify violence and power relations.”

circumstances in the world and even less in my own relationships. Discomfort is an engine of action for me, rattling in the background, reminding me that things like sexism and racism exist. These are problems I try to see, name and change.

IN THE FACE OF RAPID CHANGES IN LIFE, LOVE IS A RETREAT FOR MANY PEOPLE. YOU’VE SUBJECTED THIS PLACE TO CRITICISM.

SK – I am not alone in my critique. I cite thinkers like SILVIA FEDERICI, whose Marxist critique of hetero relationships has shown how capitalism shapes these relationships, but also at the same time depends on the monogamous bourgeois relationship of two because of the free care work that is performed.

For marginalized people like me, it is existentially important to question what is sold as the norm and truth because we realize that we are excluded from these concepts anyway. It may be more popular now to be non-monogamous, but at the same time, there is a racist discourse about supposed plural marriage or polygamy among Muslim or Black people. Who can practice love and tenderness the way they want to? Queer people are attacked on the street when they exchange tenderness. Who has the privilege of engaging with these issues? That’s why it was obvious that I should dedicate myself to this topic. >

> YOUR BOOK, I REMEMBERED THE LINE THAT EVERYONE KNOWS FROM MOVIES. THE WIFE CATCHES HER HUSBAND WITH SOMEONE ELSE, WANTS TO SEPARATE. AND HE YELLS AFTER HER, “BUT, I LOVE YOU!”

what kind of person I am, but I can, at best, choose what to do. I may even decide how I behave or how I act. It opens up a great many possibilities to get closer to people, to reach out to people, and to experience each other in shared action. If love is something that simply exists, then I would not have to enter into negotiation with the other person. And then I will never experience my counterpart in their genuine humanity.

SK [laughs] – This shows that the idea of loving each other is strongly disconnected from acting accordingly. There is no correlation between saying it and behaving accordingly. In that example, the man is not concerned with communal action or truths. “I hurt you, I do violence to you, but I actually love you” – this narrative has always been repugnant to me. As if this love is simply an entity floating in space. That’s a very dangerous cultural narrative because it takes away people’s responsibility for their own actions in the name of love. Then I can act however I want. Love becomes a one-way street if you don’t behave accordingly. You can see the consequences of this narrative when you look at the reporting on FEMICIDES: The man loved his wife so much, was so jealous, that he had to kill her in the end – LOVE DRAMA.

DOESN’T THIS TURN LOVE FROM AN END IN ITSELF INTO A MEANS?

SK – I deliberately keep my agenda of radical tenderness open. It is about the question: Who has room? Who has time to fall in love? And about political conditions that allow people to experience tenderness at all. I don’t want to do what has been done for centuries and millennia, especially by bourgeois, white males: To tell people what love is. As a norm, this idea always excludes people. And has often been used to justify violence and power relations, I deliberately turn away from love to give people the opportunity to find out what love is. My ultimate goal is community, which does not have to be LOVE IN THE CONVENTIONAL SENSE as we know it. If it is a means to an end to create a more just society without RACISM, CAPITALISM and EXPLOITATION, then I am happy to accept that.

IN YOUR BOOK, YOU ARRIVED AT THE WONDERFUL TERM: “TOXIC ROMANCE.” SK – Yes, where everything is permitted in the name of love. That’s toxic romance. When someone is in love without requiring any action.

SO, LOVE TAKES ACTION?

SK – When I say that love is action, it allows me something very human, namely to have opportunities for action. In my book, I understand love as ethics, and that always means action. The question of action is the question par excellence, in my immediate relationship, but also on a social level. I may not be able to directly change

“If, like me, you hold that what is often mystified as an act of love is actually unpaid care work, then you are likely to be accused of treating love as a commodity.”



L O V E



WHY ARE SINGLE PEOPLE CONSISTENTLY ASKED ABOUT THIS? IS HAVING NO INTEREST IN INTIMACY THE BIGGEST TABOO TODAY? **SK** — Because we live in a society in which PEOPLE or IDENTITIES are *hierarchical*, and so are forms of relationships. And in this hierarchy, the idea that a person doesn't have romantic relationships at all is so absurd that the most common form of hierarchy doesn't even appear. That is why I resist narratives of ROMANTIC LOVE as human nature. There are enough people who can't do anything with romantic love. Just as there are asexual people. For me, it's about a plurality of tenderness, but it doesn't have to be romantic or sexual in the conventional sense.

IF I FOLLOW YOU AND WANT TO POLITICIZE MY RELATIONSHIPS, DO I HAVE TO FEEL GUILTY BECAUSE I'D RATHER GO ON A WELLNESS WEEKEND WITH MY BOYFRIEND THAN ATTEND A FEMINIST PORN FESTIVAL? **SK** — [laughs] No. If it makes anyone feel better, I love wellness.

I would like to see people behaving with solidarity in relationships and, in the best-case scenario, demanding this SOLIDARITY on a society-wide level and translate it into POLITICAL PRACTICE. It is primarily a matter of somehow integrating this principle of solidarity and justice as a common thread in one's life and reminding oneself of it again and again. You can also practice wellness on a weekend and then go to the demonstration afterwards.

I SOMETIMES WONDER IF I CAN TRUST MY DESIRES. AM I REALLY IN A MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE I WANT TO BE, OR BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN SOCIALLY RAISED TO DO?

SK — That's a question I also ask myself even today, and I don't think there's a definitive answer. I'm always in dialogue with other people and not isolated from society. That's why I can't deny it. I'm sometimes asked if I still watch cheesy love stories and I always answer yes, of course. It's just important to me not to see them as identity-forming.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE ROMCOM? **SK** — I've only watched TURKISH SOAP OPERAS all my life, but my favorite love story is *Titanic*.

IN THE END, WOULD YOU HAVE PULLED YOUR SWEETHEART UP ONTO YOUR PLANK SO HE WOULDN'T FREEZE TO DEATH? **SK** — I hope. [laughs] Ideally, we'll both fit.

THEN IT PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE BECOME A FAMOUS MOVIE.

SK — That's exactly the thing with *HOLLYWOOD*. There always has to be an absolute, either the absolute tragedy or the absolute happy ending. But, of course, it would be boring to show two people in the water discussing how they would both fit on a piece of wood.

SINCE THE ADVENT OF ONLINE DATING, IT HAS BECOME MUCH CLEARER THAT MARKET LOGIC ALSO APPLIES TO LOVE. PEOPLE ARE JUDGED ON THE BASIS OF THEIR APPEARANCE AND SELECTED LIKE ITEMS FROM A SUPERMARKET. DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR US TO DO WITHOUT?

SK — I'm torn. EVA ILLOUZ writes in her book *Liebe in Zeiten des Kapitalismus (Love in Times of Capitalism)* that certain market logics are becoming more visible in online dating. And I notice this on platforms like TINDER or GRINDR, for example. The platform is dominated by a logic of exploitation that favors people who match certain physical characteristics and follow the law of supply and demand. At the same time, I don't want to completely demonize online dating, because I also know that for a great many people, it created new spaces in the first place. Of course, these spaces also have issues, but, nevertheless, having their own spaces in which they can experience themselves as thinking people in the first place is important. In a different society, we could certainly have a nice and tender time online dating.

BUT IT IS TRUE THAT CAPITALISM MUST DIE BEFORE I CAN TRULY LOVE AUTHENTICALLY?

SK — With Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, there is the idea of main contradiction and secondary contradiction. So, when we have overcome CAPITALISM, the main contradiction, then everything else clarifies itself and patriarchy then suddenly disappears, just like RACISM. I don't share this view. I do believe that social conditions have to be radically transformed in order to bring about social conditions in which all people are truly free. But, clearly, there are *material* conditions that determine our relationships. Having an apartment that we can live in. To have time to even experiment with tenderness, which, under capitalism, we simply have to sacrifice for wage labor. I argue in the book for establishing solidarity in relationships and transforming that into a social agenda on a larger level.

IF I ACCEPT THAT RELATIONSHIPS TODAY ARE ALSO ECONOMICIZED, WOULDN'T IT BE LOGICAL TO CHARGE

MONEY FOR DATA? **SK** —

There are apps that openly display the economic principle behind DATA.

If, like me, you hold that what is often mystified as an act of love is actually unpaid care work, then you are likely to be accused of treating love as a commodity. Although my point is actually to show that this is the case anyway, I would like to talk about it. These dating apps that you're referring to show that in a very radical way. But it's not a vision of society that I have in mind, of course. But it can help to make certain imbalances, as they already exist, visible.

HAVING OPEN RELATIONSHIPS HAS BECOME MORE POPULAR IN RECENT YEARS. DOES THIS BRING US ANY FURTHER IN TERMS OF LOVE AND TENDERNESS? **SK** —

I don't think that much changes socially when privileged people stop living monogamously. If ANNEMARIE and LISA have sex with other people every Friday, capitalism won't fall. This is ultimately an opening of already bourgeois concepts of relationships. Two-way relationships, the little islands that function in isolation from other two-way relationships, where possessions and property are accumulated, are not broken up, but only adapted and moved into the mainstream. Unless we make relationships fundamentally different, not much will change.

HOW COULD I DO IT BETTER, IN THE SENSE OF YOUR CONCEPT OF RADICAL TENDERNESS?

SK — For me, tenderness is a productive, affirmative action with one another — and the insight that action is never possible in isolation, but that it always needs a certain collectivity. I can't decide on my own to stop living monogamously without engaging my partner. Otherwise, I have not translated my intention into shared reality and have done harm to my partner.

I can report from my personal experience that it takes a lot of negotiation and a lot of discussion. It has to be a joint movement. I don't want to deny people happiness in a monogamous civil relationship, for example. I want a range of tenderness, in which the classic, monogamous relationship can also find a place.

THE OTHER CHRONICLE OF HISTORY

“Art Should Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable.”

This phrase describes few contemporary artists as aptly as Kara Walker. Especially the second part of that sentence. It seems to have become her program. Her art is disturbing, unsettling. Leaves one with questions. Kara Walker paints social grievances. She paints intersectionality. And, in doing so, has been one step ahead of contemporary discourses.

With some artists, it becomes clear at one point that they will go down in history. It may be at an early point in their career. Or at a later point. For some, it may be after their lifetime, when the canon is reconsidered, or when the work is rediscovered after having been forgotten. The point, for those lucky enough to experience it, however,

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always comes. Kara Walker is such an artist. For her, that moment may have been in 2019.

Yesterdayness in America Today, 2020
© Kara Walker



Barack Obama as Othello, „The Moor“ with the Severed Head of Iago in a New and Revised Ending, 2019
Collection Joyner/Giuffrida, Kara Walker, Photo Jason Wyche

That's when she showed her monumental sculpture, *Fons Americanus*, which is more of a monument than a sculpture, at the Tate Modern in London. The 13-meter-tall fountain features faces, characters and iconographies that intertwine the colonial histories of Africa, America and Europe. Inspired by the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace, it turns water into a symbol of the transatlantic slave trade. Perched atop the sculpture is a woman. Jets of water come

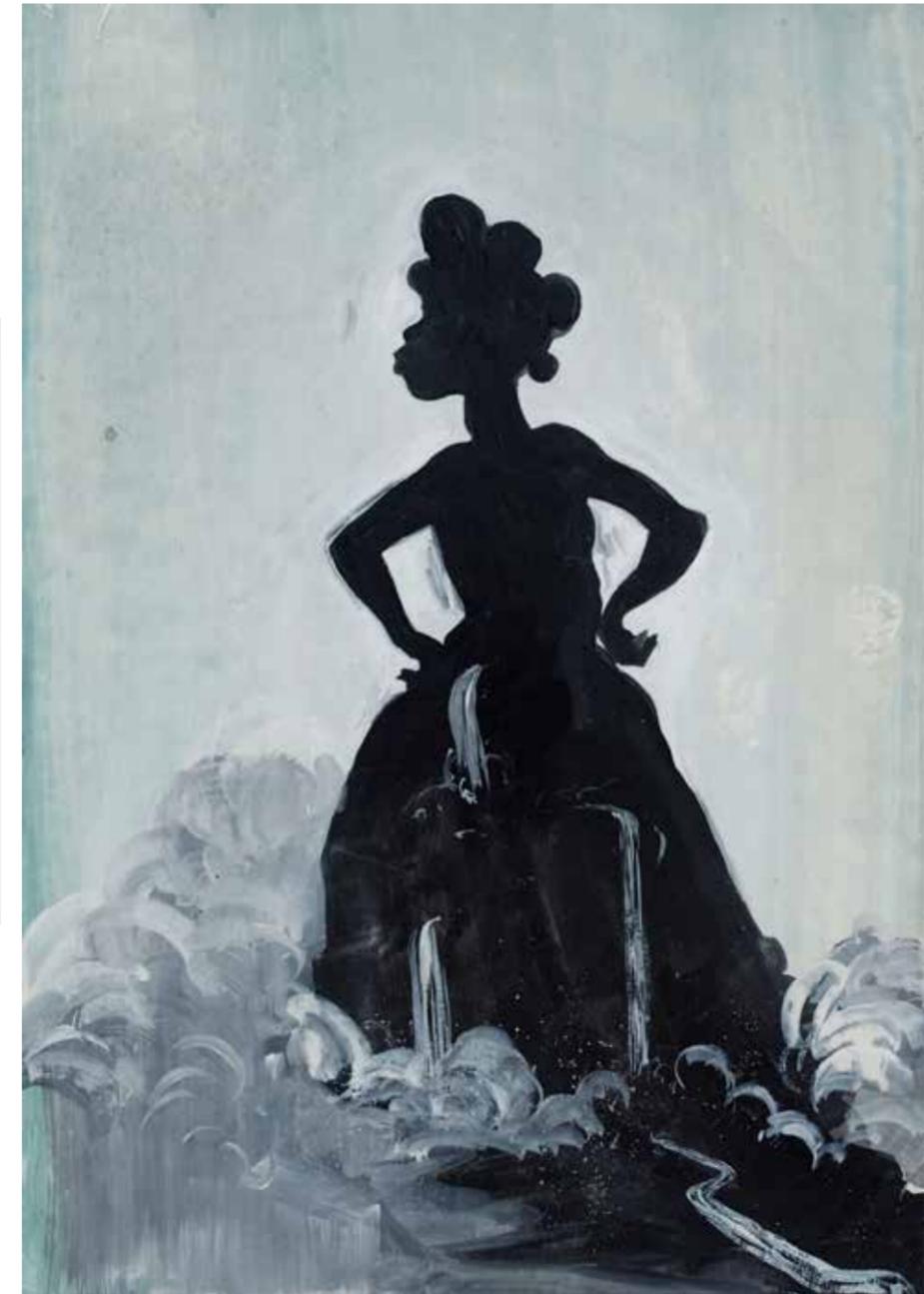
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The Welcoming Committee, 2018 from the series with 38 works:
The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam
 © Kara Walker

Untitled, not dated
 © Kara Walker

Untitled, 1997-1999, from a series with 13 works
 © Kara Walker



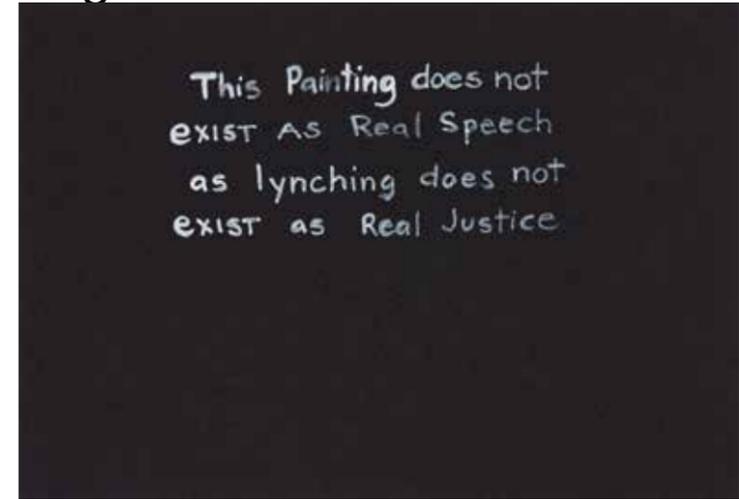
“I’m an unreliable narrator,” Walker admits, propagating a history far removed from white majority society versions. Although Walker still has a lot of creative time ahead of her, her artworks already seem to have become the epitome of current issues.

from her breasts and throat. Boats are stranded on the first level. Human figures still sit in them, others swim between sharks. On the second level is Queen Vicky, a direct reference to the monument outside Buckingham Palace. Except that Walker’s queen is cheerful, she is a laughing woman holding a coconut. *Fons Americanus* makes a deep impression. It tells an alternative narrative, an unreliable version of history. “I’m an unreliable narrator,” Walker admits, propagating a history far removed from white majority society versions. Far from what is taught in schools, always mixed with fiction and reality made unrecognizable. Power relations, racism, violence and sexism. In the comprehensive exhibition *KARA WALKER. A BLACK HOLE IS EVERYTHING A STAR LONGS TO BE* at the SCHIRN in Frankfurt,



Untitled, 2008
© Kara Walker

Kara Walker is showing her central works on paper, her cutouts and silhouettes, this winter. With around 650 works, she is opening her drawing archive to the public for the first time and is also showing selected films. *BARACK OBAMA AS OTHELLO "THE MOOR" WITH THE SEVERED HEAD OF IAGO IN A NEW AND REVISED ENDING BY KARA E. WALKER* is the name of one piece shown in the exhibition. In it, as the title suggests, Barack Obama is seen as Othello. That Obama is holding the decapitated head of Donald Trump in his hands is also suggested by the title. The scene is woven into Shakespeare's tale *Othello*, in which the eponymous protagonist kills his wife and himself out of jealousy through an intrigue by Iago. Here, too, the story is revised, the ending invented from a different perspective. At the same time, the artist intertwines the fates and stories of two successive presidents.



Untitled, 2012, from the series with 28 works: *Trolls*
© Kara Walker

Kara Walker was born in California in 1969 and grew up in Atlanta. She became known for her cut-paper silhouettes in the mid-1990s and has brought new popularity to the medium, which was especially embraced in the 18th and 19th centuries. With their mostly black figures against a white background and scenes that appear fairytale-like but, on closer inspection, do not skimp on violence, they unleash their subversive power. Although Walker still has a lot of creative time ahead of her, her artworks already seem to have become the epitome of current issues. Another quote from the artist that will stay with you: "The work is difficult because the history is hard. But don't you want to see it?"

Kara Walker lives and works in New York City.



'merica 2016, 2018, from the series with 38 works:
The Gross Clinician Presents: Pater Gravidam
© Kara Walker

There's a scene in the 1998

documentary **KURT & COURTNEY** in which director Nick Broomfield asks Courtney Love's father, Hank Harrison, if he really used angry Rottweilers to discipline his teenage daughter. No, that's not true, Hank replies, it was Pit Bulls.

Three years earlier, in April 1994, "Live Through This," the second incredible album by Courtney's band Hole, was released, and one still wonders what would have happened if her husband Kurt Cobain hadn't taken his own life seven days before the release date.

Perhaps Courtney would have become something that doesn't exist even today: a real female rock star. Not one who sensitively stomps around on indie stages and not one who performs choreographies in a glittery bodysuit. Instead, a veritable monster with vulva and guitar, whose every fucked-up expression of life fuels her audience's imagination and ardent adoration. Maybe then, countless festival organizers would have no excuse for still having all-male lineups today. Things turned out differently.

It could be that Hank was the first person in Courtney's life who thought her rebellious ego needed a good trimming. Certainly, he was not the last. Songs like Miss World, Doll Parts and Asking For It documented, a good twenty years before #MeToo, the anger and cynicism with which Love confronted the objectification and sexual violence she had to deal with daily as a woman in the music industry. Only back then, it wasn't yet a topic for the arts and culture pages of newspapers.

The Riot Grrrl movement formed in the early 1990s, at a time when feminism was considered uncool and stubborn. The second wave of feminism that characterized the 1960s and 70s had ebbed. It was the decade of the so-called

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"backlash" – young women, who had more freedom than ever

KINDERWHORE

Text
DIANA WEIS

before in part because of the battles their mothers' generation had fought, turned away from feminism. Instead, they watched PRETTY WOMAN at the movies and dreamed of designer clothes and marrying wealthy businessmen.

Against this backdrop, grunge felt like a liberation, a reminder that not everything was good and that there was still pain and dirt beneath the smooth surface of pop culture. Grunge became a rallying point for outsiders for whom creativity mattered more than money. But like punk or hardcore before it, grunge was primarily a movement of angry young men. Girls who moshed in the pit or stage-dived at grunge concerts were groped. Musicians like KURT COBAIN, LAYNE STALEY, or CHRIS CORNELL were revered as pain-filled geniuses, while female musicians were reduced to their looks and not taken seriously as artists. That's why they started supporting and encouraging each other.

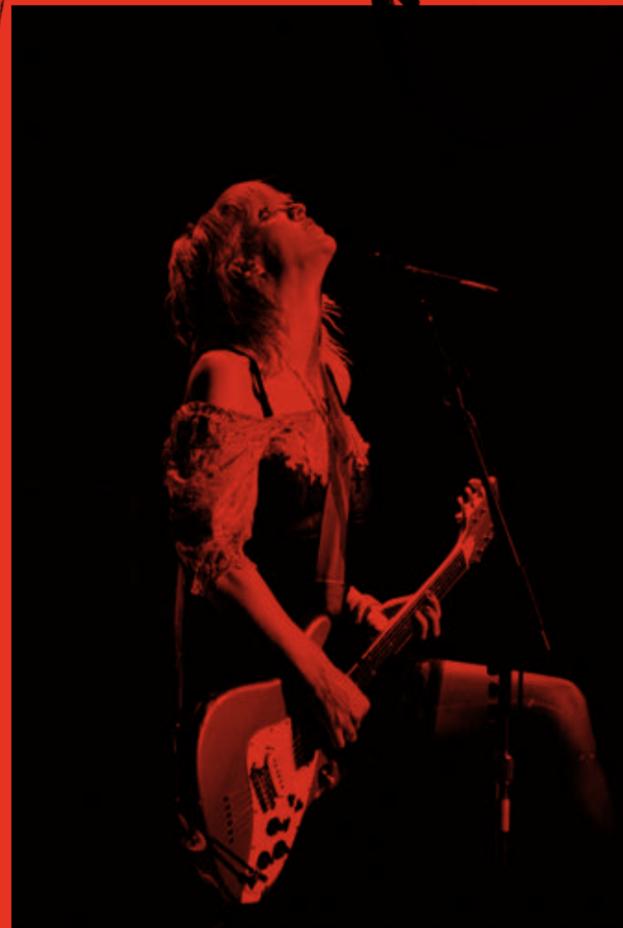
And they made sure that there were protected spaces where women didn't have to fear sexual assault. Riot grrrl bands like Bikini Kill demanded "Girls to the front!" at their concerts – for once, the boys had to settle for places in the back.

The official Riot Grrrl manifesto was published in the Bikini Kill zine in 1991. It reads, among other things: "BECAUSE viewing our work as being connected to our girlfriends-politics-real lives is essential if we are gonna figure out how we are doing impacts, reflects, perpetuates, or DISRUPTS the status quo."

The Riot Grrrl movement stood for female solidarity and fought to take the problems and concerns of young women seriously. It was a blueprint for today's net feminism, which addresses very similar issues.

So, it's only logical that a new generation of young women is rediscovering the aesthetics of the Riot Grrrl movement and its unarguably most influential icon, Courtney Love. In the early 1990s, she, along with other Riot grrrl bands like Babes in Toyland, coined a style known as Kinderwhore. The musicians liked wearing romantic, Victorian-style vintage dresses, which they combined with punk set pieces like torn fishnet stockings or sex worker clichés like smeared lipstick.

GETTY IMAGES



Later, in an interview, Courtney commented: "I would like to think – in my heart of hearts that I'm changing some psychosexual aspects of rock music. Not that I'm so desirable. I didn't do the kinderwhore thing because I thought I was so hot. When I see the look used to make one more appealing, it pisses me off. When I started, it was a *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* thing.

My angle was irony."

The look can be seen as an emancipatory postfeminist practice: It is considered a gesture of liberation to appropriate traditionally feminine symbols and to deal with them playfully. As parody, markers that are considered "typically female" are called into question.

New York-based label BATSHEVA HAY had celebrity models in 2019, including actress and #MeToo co-initiator Rose McGowan, wearing frilly dresses and reciting lyrics from Hole songs like, "I am

doll parts. Bad skin. D heart."
Two years later, Courtney worship entered the pop mainstream: Gen Z megastar Olivia Rodrigo posed in promotional images for her album "Sour" as a prom queen with a tiara, bouquet of flowers and tear-stained mascara – a concept that recalled the cover image of Hole's "Live Through This" in every detail. It also caught the eye of Love, who posted the image on Instagram with the caption, "Spot the difference! #twinning!" An amusing banter ensued, as Love responded to Rodrigo's richly banal reply, "love u and live through this sooooo much," with, "Olivia – you're welcome... My favorite florist is in Notting Hill, London! Dm me for deets! I look forward to reading your note!"

One has to assume that Rodrigo never sent Love flowers, because a few days later, a now clearly soured Courtney commented on Facebook, "Does Disney teach kids reading and writing? God knows. I suppose I thought it was meant to honor *Live Through This*. No credit given where due? That's ass."

Love refused to accept the objection from some quarters that the motif of the dark prom queen had already had a firm place in pop culture since Steven King's CARRIE. The concept for the cover image of "LIVE THROUGH THIS" was entirely her idea.

Granted, Courtney's doggedness sometimes makes her seem unsympathetic. But you have to understand that she's a fighter from a different era. She had to go through things that would be unimaginable today. The picture that the media painted of her after Cobain's suicide is a lesson in how differently the rock business valued the same qualities in men and women. Kurt and Courtney both played in bands, took drugs, were considered socially awkward, and were parents to a daughter. But while Kurt was revered during his lifetime as an unconventional genius who was forgiven everything by pointing to his wounded soul, Courtney was the witch, the bitch, the ugly, unloved child who didn't shy away from intrigue or plastic surgery to illegally secure a place in the pop universe with her claws extended. Then there were the co-called Courtney truthers, who suspected her of Cobain's murder and searched for evidence. One thing was obvious: Jail isn't punishment enough for that kind of woman, she'd need a funeral pyre. The fact that Courtney Love has not been declared bankrupt or officially insane to this day must be seen as a partial success. It's just a pity that she hasn't made a really good record in twenty years.

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We took a closer look at 6 COUNTRIES and 5 MEASUREMENTS of political indexes for a side-by-side comparison.

By ANNIKA DUDA

World Politics

Index

- 1.) STATE MODEL
 - 2.) STATE-ECONOMY RELATIONSHIP
 - 3.) NUMBER OF WOMEN IN HIGH POLITICAL POSITIONS
 - 4.) DEMOCRACY INDEX/QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY
 - 5.) FREEDOM STATUS
- (Measured in the Freedom in the World report, an annual global report on political rights and civil liberties, composed of numerical ratings and descriptive texts for each country and a select group of territories)

COUNTRIES

- #### GERMANY
- 1.) Federalism
 - 2.) State as guarantor of free competition, state as regulator
 - 3.) 35% female deputies
 - 4.) 8.67 / Full Democracy
 - 5.) Political Rights 39/40 points // Civil Liberties 55/60 = 94/100 (free)
- #### FRANCE
- 1.) Centralized unitary state
 - 2.) State as driver, government control
 - 3.) 40% female politicians in Parliament
 - 4.) 7.99/Flawed Democracy
 - 5.) Political Rights 38/40 points // Civil Liberties 52/60 = 90/100 (free)
- #### ITALY
- 1.) Regional unitary state
 - 2.) STATE PATRONAGE AND SUBSIDY ORIENTED
 - 3.) 35% female Members of Parliament
 - 4.) 7.74/Flawed Democracy
 - 5.) Political Rights 39/40 points // Civil Liberties 54/60 = 89/100 (free)

Politics plays an omnipresent role in all of our lives, and

MAP

clearly growing interest in political content (and thus also a certain growing thanks to the politicization of the internet, there is also a criticism), especially among the younger generations. And the more political interest enters our everyday life, the more important it is to take a look at other countries in the world and TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS SET UP ELSEWHERE.

USA

- 1.) Presidential Republic
- 2.) Free market economy
- 3.) 23.5% women in US Congress
- 4.) 7.92 / Flawed Democracy
- 5.) Political Rights 33/40 points // Civil Liberties 53/60 = 86/100 (free)

AFGHANISTAN

- 1.) Islamic Emirate
- 2.) No information
- 3.) 27% in Parliament prior to its dissolution with the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021. There are no women in the new government and the Ministry of Women has been eliminated altogether.
- 4.) 2.85 / Authoritarian
- 5.) Political Rights 13/40 points // Civil Liberties 14/60 = 27/100 (not free)

JAPAN

- 1.) Centralized parliamentary monarchy
- 2.) Trading Nation
- 3.) 9.9% lawmakers in Parliament are women
- 4.) 8.13 / Full Democracy
- 5.) POLITICAL RIGHTS 40/40 POINTS // Civil Liberties 56/60 = 96/100 (free)

Source: The Swiss Institute of Technology in Zurich; DemokratieIndex; Amnesty International; Freedom House; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Economist Intelligence/EIU

N°5

