



MAGAZINE



# HOME ISGUE

VOLUME TWO WINTER 2024

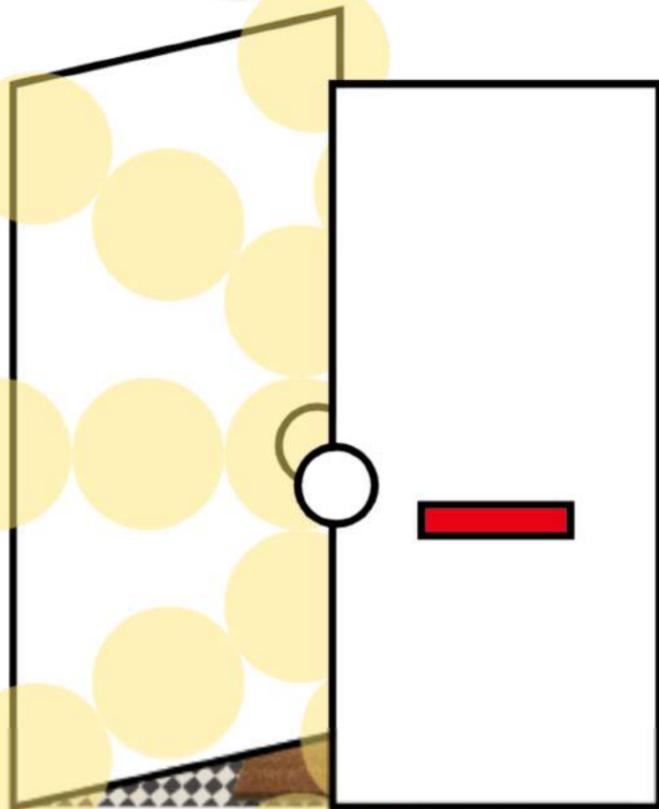
If you are reading this, touch yourself. Bring your hand to your chest and rub your sternum. You are here and you are real. What cannot be confirmed is that you will still feel real by the end of this magazine. For the next 80 pages, you will be taken through the Camper Home Edition, teleported between rooms, genre and worlds. From the world of sovereign citizens to one individual's relationship with her soap, to the future of content creation, the Camper Home is rife with eclecticism.

Volume 2 of the Camper Magazine has been a long time coming. In the magazine community, it is known that most magazines that are started, never get a second issue. Bucking that trend, this issue takes a larger conceptual leap by manifesting a Camper family, full of wonderful contributions by even more astonishing contributors. So take the door on the left and please enjoy your walk through the Camper Home Edition.

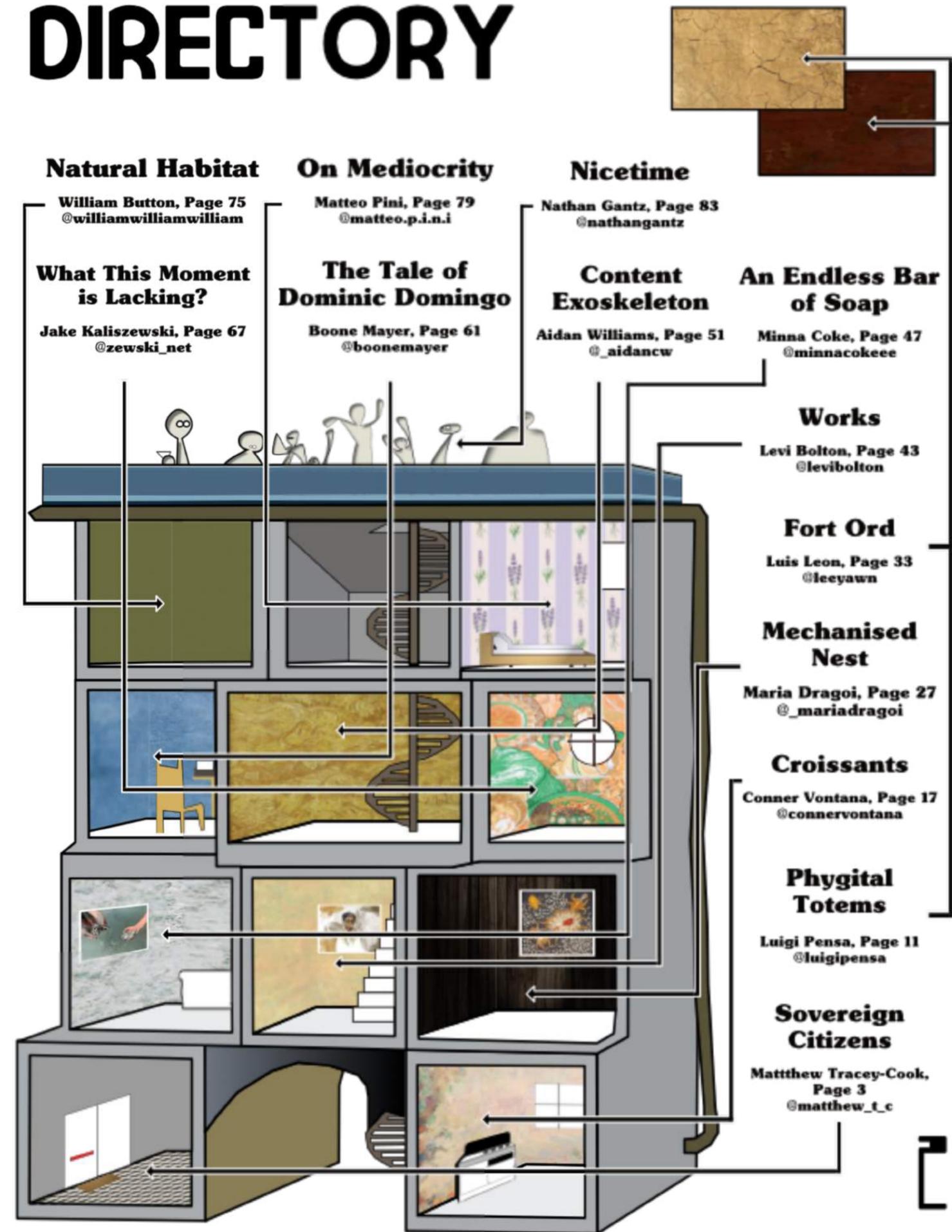
A psychogeographical walk through the places, spaces, and faces of our fledgling minds. Together we will fill a house with our passions, speculations, and ambitions. Even if this magazine releases to a small audience, we can satisfy our ideas with a home to sit soft amongst the ideas of our peers. This magazine has been conceptualized not just as a bound collection of essays, but as an intangible space where we invite you to wander. In this space, each contributor graciously has carved out a nook with their interests.

Aidan

Jake



# DIRECTORY



# SOVEREIGN CITIZENS

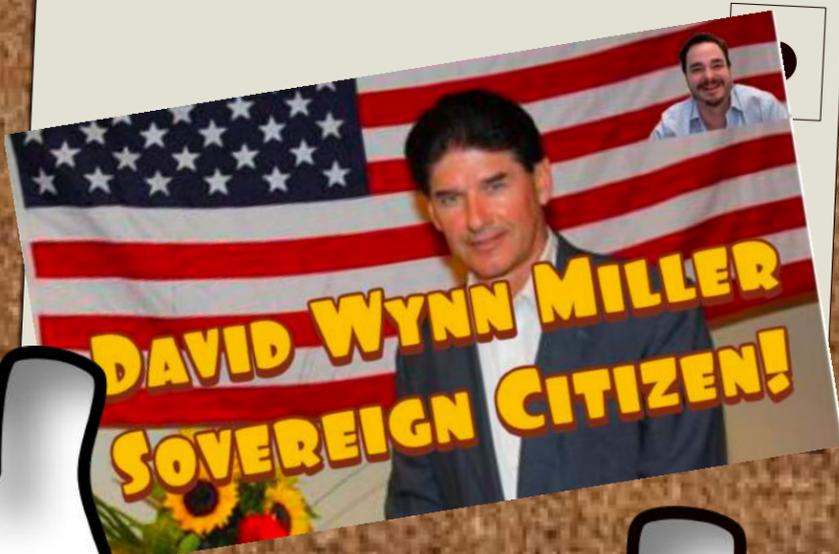
MATTHEW TRACEY-COOK

A few months ago, my girlfriend's mom brought a binder to our flat. The binder, she explained, was full of documents used by her friend Sofia to avoid paying almost any bills, including insurance, gas, electricity and taxes. Sofia, it was explained to me, had been a close friend before she had a deep religious conversion and shut herself off several years ago.

Recently she had made amends and offered us the binder to look through. It was filled with sample responses to various legal breaches: paper to send to the electricity company instead of money, responses to parking tickets, defenses against foreclosure. Sofia showed how she had

installed her own gas meter and had stopped making her car payments. There was a police citation mailed to her claiming she was driving without insurance and demanding a £250 fine—a response, in legal jargon, requesting in special language that the state charge her secret government account—and a purported sheepish reply, saying all had been sorted out. What jumped out was the language most of this stuff was written in—it was almost gibberish, with colons everywhere and no adjectives. I later found out this was a type of pseudolegal language, used by groups including those calling themselves sovereign citizens, and that most of it can be attributed to the work of one man, David Wynn Miller. Miller's jargon is, according to several scholars, gaining in popularity among a range of fringe groups from both ends of the political spectrum. In the popular understanding, this type of legal language is the domain of the armed right-wing. The FBI classifies sovereign citizens as a "domestic terror threat", while the southern poverty law center states that "when cornered, many of them lash out, retaliating through acts of paper terrorism and, in the most extreme cases, acts of

deadly violence—usually directed against government officials". Sovereign citizens were present at the January 6th riots. They were galvanized by the Ruby Ridge incident and the Waco siege, and they probably have more guns than the average American. According to the SPLC, the sovereign citizen's movement loosely began with William Potter Gale, a racist would-be leader of a paramilitary organization called Posse Comitatus, translated as 'power to the country'. It refers to a medieval English law which called on citizens to form a militia to aid in catching criminals, and traces its roots in America to the legislation which removed troops from southern states after the Civil War, ending reconstruction. Gale's theory was that anyone could call a Posse Comitatus as long as the government was attempting to enforce "unlawful" legislation. His aim was the establishment of a Christian ethnostate. He was arrested and died in jail on tax related charges. But sovereign citizen is a poorly defined term, a kind of catch-all group. The more politically-minded organizations, judges, and the people who hate sovereign citizens,



emphasize the Christian-identity, anti-semitic origins of the movement. Others describe the movement as a simple rejection of the state. The legal scholar JJ McNab impressively defines a sovereign citizen as “someone who believes that he or she is above all laws”. What people seem to agree on, however, is the fact that sovereign citizens are just one branch of the umbrella practice of “pseudolaw”, a type of legal jargon with a set of unique internal rules.

When a defendant in court claims to be a “federal postal judge exempt from maritime law”, that person is invoking pseudolaw. The name itself seems to imply anything that isn’t quite law, but that someone thinks actually is. There is a claim to authority implicit there—someone practicing it might tell you, “who are you to say this isn’t law?” Thankfully for them, there are many types of law. There is the code of Hammurabi, or the Magna Carta, or the constitution of Sealand, which have all been invoked at one point or another by people testing the bounds of pseudo-law. The notion that these laws might fall outside the given state law’s jurisdiction, in space or in time, is hotly contested by pseudolegal crusaders. Many of these people believe the state, by using “false language”, doesn’t have any jurisdiction over them at all.

In a recent paper the legal scholar Donald Netolitzky identifies 17 major groups globally that practice pseudolaw, with sovereign citizens being one of them. Politics isn’t a determining factor. Black supremacist groups like the Moors and Canadian communist groups practice the same types of pseudolaw as Croatian fascists or American christian nationalists. Netolitzky claims that many are growing in influence driven by social media platforms, and with that growth comes a kind of natural selection and distortion, writing “These ideas spread much like a disease, from host-to-host, accumulating adaptations that then facilitated new cycles of infection”.

Pseudolaw is a massive headache for courts around the world. A lengthy appeal by Alberta’s associate chief justice J.D Rooke, in the case known as Meads v. Meads, represents a landmark in the study of the practice. Pseudolaw, says Rooke, is a form of “not-law” made up of “techniques and arguments promoted and sold by ‘gurus’ to disrupt court operations and to attempt to frustrate the legal rights of governments, corporations, and individuals”.

In Meads v Meads, Dennis Larry Meads, having been separated from his wife for several years, was asked to pay child support. He was generally cooperative with his payments, which began in 2011. But when he was asked later to provide financial records used to recalculate the amount he would pay, he instead provided documents covered in stamps describing himself as ::Dennis Larry:: “attorney in fact” in a Notice for a Cease and Desist in Enticement of Slavery against Ms. Reeves (his ex-wife’s attorney). When summoned to court, he told Justice Rooke that, when he was born, he was given a “corporate identity”, which was registered with the Bank of Canada and entitled him to an income to the tune of many millions of dollars. If the court demanded Meads pay more in child support, they should simply charge this account.

Rooke calls this the Accept for Value theory, which proposes that every one of

us has a secret government bank account with millions of dollars in our name. This was one of the theories in Sofia’s binder. A friend of Sofia’s later told me, “She believes that you are born with money assigned to your social security number that you can draw on when you need it”.

Justices and many academics dismiss the practice as fraudulent and ineffective, but the reality is that, sometimes, it actually works. I asked Colin McRoberts, a professor at Kansas University and an expert on the topic, about Sofia’s limited success, which he called “entirely believable”. “It’s not uncommon for utilities, businesses, and even courts to decide that someone who has become deeply irrational is simply too much trouble to deal with, at least with overt responses” he told me.

Pseudolaw is a fringe camp, and at the fringes are the extremes. In movies, people who represent themselves in court are either misguided or highly intelligent. In real life, what holds all these legal theories together is a focus on power imbalance. Netolitzky says that pseudolegal schemes “always have a story, a conspiratorial narrative of how people became trapped within their current status, where false, illegitimate authority has denied and crushed everyone’s actual inherent legal rights”. Pseudolaw helps explain the world, and it offers a way out.

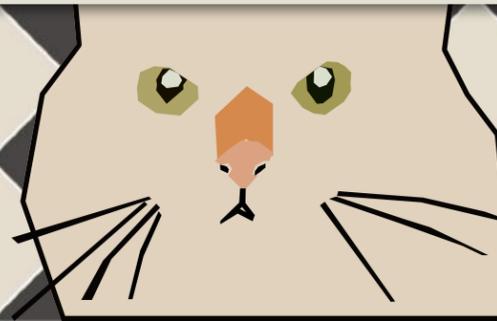
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Behind many of these legal theories is David Wynn Miller—or Plenipotentiary Judge David: Wynne: Miller in his preferred language. A welder and pipe-fitter by trade, he says he saw the light after a botched kidney operation. The origin story on his website reads:

“The Korean doctor read David’s chart incorrectly and surgically removed both kidneys including the adrenal glands – David died on the operating table. In the Morgue the nurse assisting the autopsy noticed David’s heart, which at this stage was lying on the outside of his body on his chest unsevered, incredulously the heart began to beat!...He came back from the dead? Well, yes he did with an IQ of 200 .....go figure.”

Using his new gifts Miller developed a type of legal jargon which he called quantum syntax, and which he claimed allowed the user to win cases by exposing problems with the state’s grammar. His theory, spelled out in hours of free online videos, gives each part of speech a unique legal meaning. For example, an adjective modifies or colors a noun, which makes them legally problematic: “If you modify something, you are attempting to influence an individual’s ability to think by coloring it, and if you color something, you’re actually committing perjury”. Quantum syntax was then fused with other pseudolegal ideas such as the strawman theory, which suggests that your true, “flesh and blood” identity is different from your legal, but fictional one.

In Miller’s words, the legal system has a language problem which renders literally any contract invalid. “If any government, institution [or] corporation has not given you a dictionary or a correct language performance...they have fully violated the basic rules of communication...then there is no contracting parties, for one to claim jurisdiction over the other” he says on his website. The main offenders for Miller are the state, but



his legal syntax could be used to justify terminating any loans, or avoiding any bills. With regard to mortgages, Miller says “the banking system...uses your money to make you the borrower and the lender...so they don't have the jurisdiction to foreclose on your venue”. By the early 2010s Miller was an in-demand speaker in multiple countries, and his program was a financial success. A 2011 article by the Sydney Morning Herald cites a typical example of a retreat, where around 30 people paid \$1400 each for a six-day course in Australia. They reportedly came away from the experience “hailing it a victory”. He followed this up with a conference in Brisbane, where he charged \$1800 per head. Masood Falamaki, an Australian engineer, reportedly paid Miller \$5000 for his legal services, which proved completely unsuccessful. (Out of the 130 micronations in the world, about a third of them are in Australia, which might explain the guru's seeming success there).

Miller took on legal risk for his clients, including directly representing them. Falamaki had been mired in legal issues for a decade over a property permitting dispute with the Wollongong city council. In 2010, Miller appeared in court to argue that the entire case was void because “every word in the English language that begins with a, e, i, o, or u followed by two consonants means no contract”, along with various aspects of maritime law, which he argued for several hours. There are countless examples online of Miller acting in person on behalf of his clients—he is listed over 1500 times in Google Scholar case law, excluding citations, as a plaintiff, appellant or agent in the U.S alone.

This earned him the admiration of his clients. After losing his case, Falamaki told the press “people like Miller are challenging the judiciary. No other people are brave enough to do that”. Many fringe firebrands today are pseudonymous—Bronze Age Pervert, recently outed as Costin Alamariu, has amassed a large following for advocating a return to masculine empire, but never debates anyone. Alex Jones, who broadcasted his way into bankruptcy with his Sandy Hook conspiracies, walked back many of his original claims about the shooting when he was faced with paying millions in damages. Fringe podcasters are more likely to point fingers, prompted by their fans, but less likely to take on risk themselves, which is unlike Miller, who relished the fight.

Occasionally pseudolaw has been associated with violence. On January 8, 2011, Jared Lee Loughner opened fire at a Tucson Safeway where congresswoman Gabby Giffords was holding a constituent meeting, wounding her and killing six people. It soon came out that Loughner had been watching Miller's videos and uploading hours of YouTube rants using quantum language. When asked about the connection, Miller said that the idea he inspired the killing was crazy, and that Loughner had been under government mind control himself. It is worth noting in his defense that there is nothing inherently violent about pseudolaw—it's framework is used, in the vast majority of cases, to defend against things like foreclosure or other massive debts. But it is obviously a desperate measure.

After his death in 2018 collaborators and students rushed to take his place. Mark Kishon Christopher trained under Miller, and calls himself Miller's designated successor. He lives in East London. His website predicts the impending collapse of the global financial system, and claims to have “a reach of 4.1 billion”. I contacted Christopher's website and received direction to buy his products. Russel Jay Gould claimed to have seized ultimate control of the federal postal judgeship when Miller was in the hospital. He, like Christopher, has a following online. He now sells self-representation kits on his slick website. On Facebook, thousands of accounts are reposted, offering hundreds of variations of Miller's legal syntax theories.

Was Miller a fraud? He does have a mixed success rate in court. A naturopath in Calgary went to jail for contempt of court after addressing the judge in Miller's language. One woman was found guilty of child abuse despite her arguing that the Hawaiian Kingdom Government declared her innocent, on Miller's guidance. And one of Miller's clients in Australia was told to argue that the indictment was not in the correct language, and was sentenced to receive psychiatric treatment (Miller claimed this as a victory). But there were also some successes, complicating the narrative a bit. One Australian mother claims

the custody of her children was due to Miller's intervention, after he barged into the courtroom and filed 40 pages of legal syntax.

On Kishon Christopher's website there is a testimonials section where he interviews what appears to be very satisfied customers. One interview with an Irish couple centered around a vague dispute with their bank over several properties. The woman, Irene, says that the banks “backed off” after they enlisted Mark. “We summoned them into my court, my jurisdiction” Christopher says. “They did not show up of course, so I had to send out our judgements, and as the federal postal judge I awarded you the properties as yours, since banks cannot own properties. We brought this to the supreme court of Ireland, and they backed off.” I was unable to find any case law with these names.

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Sofia and Ed are members of the sizable British-Italian population living in Hoddesdon, a suburb north of London. Ed works in construction while Sofia does hair at a retirement home. They have three children between the ages of five and 17 and a four-bedroom house near the park, which they rent from a friend. About four years ago Sofia retreated into a kind of religious fundamentalism. Her and Ed lived together unmarried until one day, when she was making meatballs, Jesus came to her and told her she needed to marry. After that she became distant. She began homeschooling her kids, and started to “disconnect from the system” in the words of a friend.

We were invited to their daughter's birthday party a few months ago as a gesture of renewed friendship, where we were treated to endless, delicious Italian food at a restaurant on the other side of town. I was the newcomer, looking around. The young men and teenage boys wore Emporio Armani shirts and cologne, muttering and laughing. They stood across from the women, younger children and older couples, who mingled and discussed. One of the men asked me about myself. I told him I had started a job recently after a year at graduate school. “Man, if I knew what I knew now I'd be a lawyer or a doctor” he said. “I work in the garage. If it's cold outside it's colder in the garage”. Later, I asked the oldest son Joseph about his hopes. He was finishing his GCSEs and deciding whether he wanted to go to university. “I think I want to do business, but my mom doesn't want me to go to uni” he said.

We ended up dancing. I was never completely comfortable, but their generosity was infectious. I asked Ed at one point which friend owned the restaurant, to which he responded “everyone at the party is family, we're all family. We're there for each other”. Sofia kept offering me dessert. Later, I was told that Sofia and Ed were planning to move to the United States. The friend said that Sofia was driven by a combination of her deep faith, her financial struggles, and a suspicion of authority. America has “more freedoms”, I was told.

Close to a year on from their party, they haven't moved to America. Their house hasn't been foreclosed on, they still have their cars. They live close to the train station, meaning I walk by heading back from work most days. Things look the same—the same papers in the windows declaring this house private property, the same cables feeding up the brick exterior to the jerry-rigged TV dish. I heard from a neighbor that things had been hard. But by some combination of clever avoidance and stubborn bravery, they've kept all the trappings of the average middle class family. I guess a lot is lost in the average.

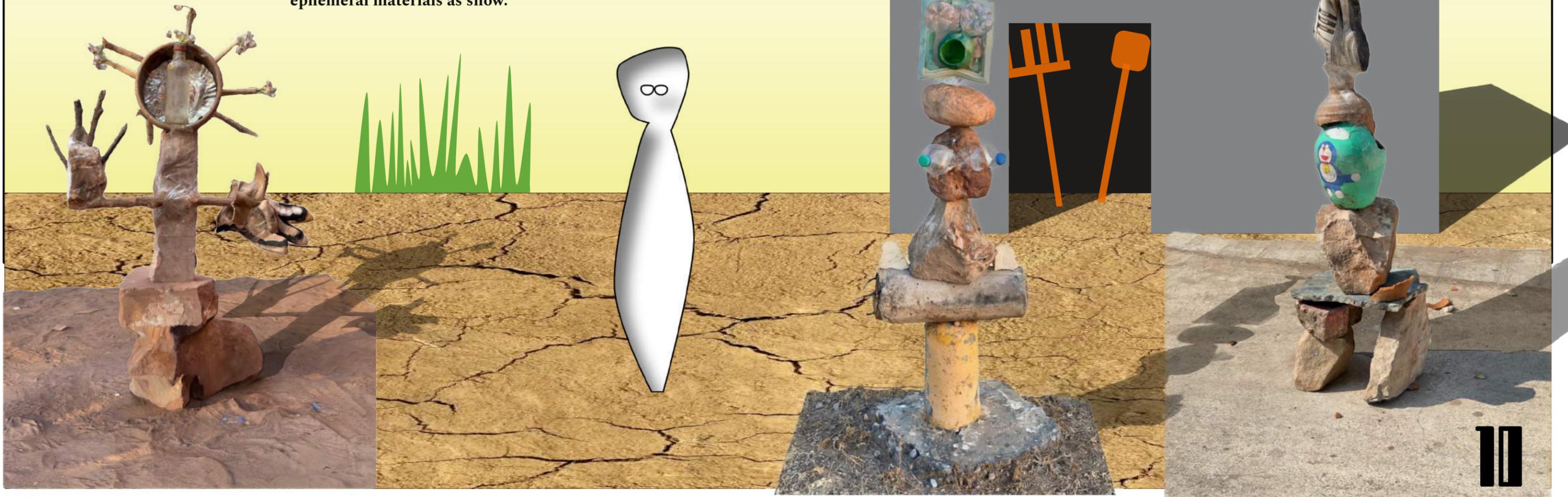
# PHYGITAL TOTEMS

LUIGI  
PENSA

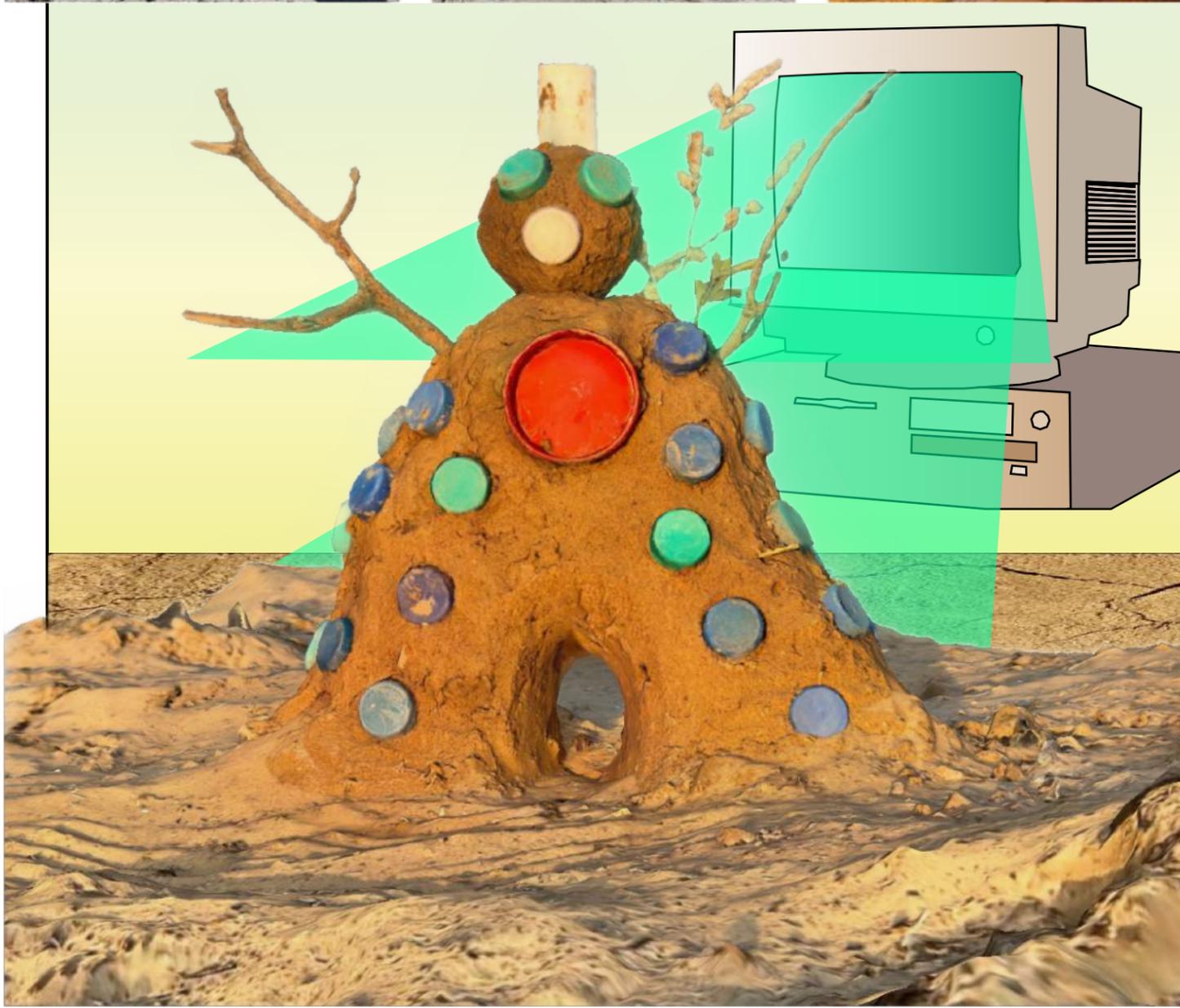
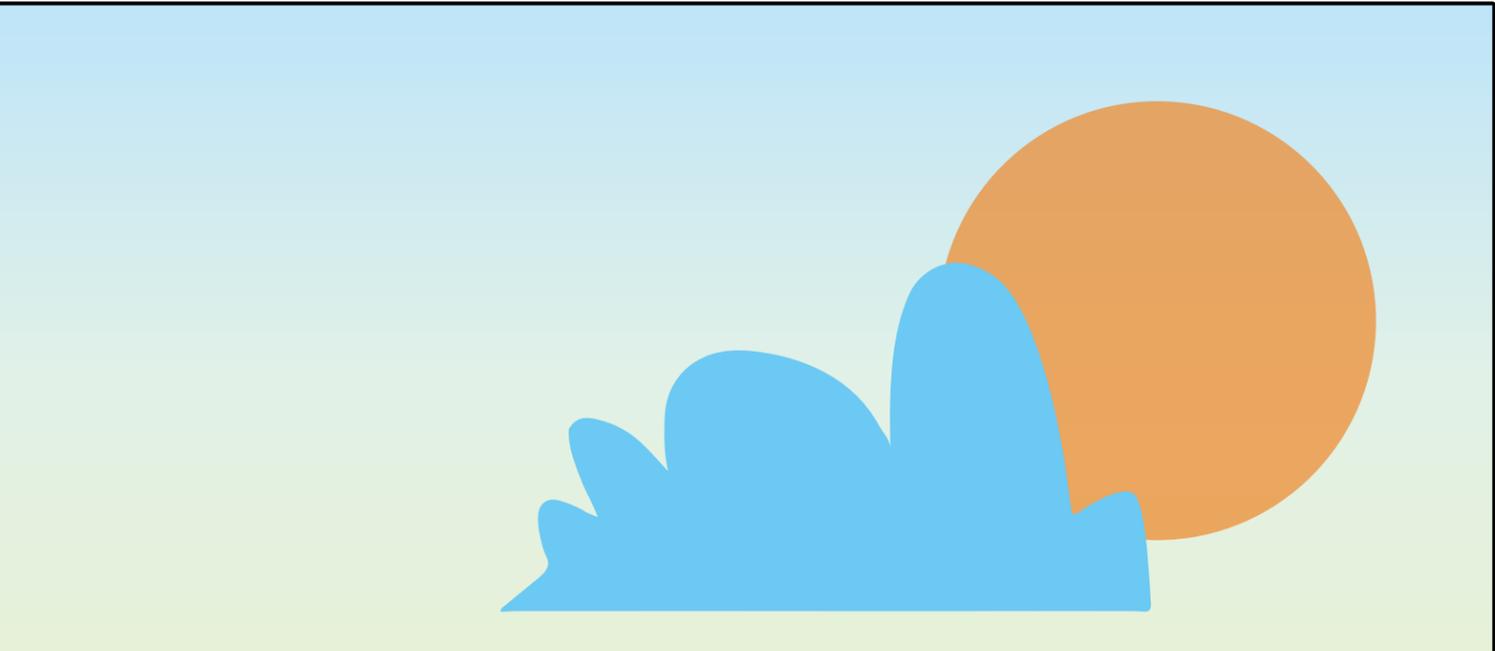
Creating objects and going on an itinerant journey are not irreconcilable moments of life. It can be created but not possessed, built and dematerialized, as if to underline the transience of travel, of creating, of life. The Phygital Totems project was born from when I was traveling in India and had the desire to create a work of art everyday but without having to keep or physically carry them in his backpack.

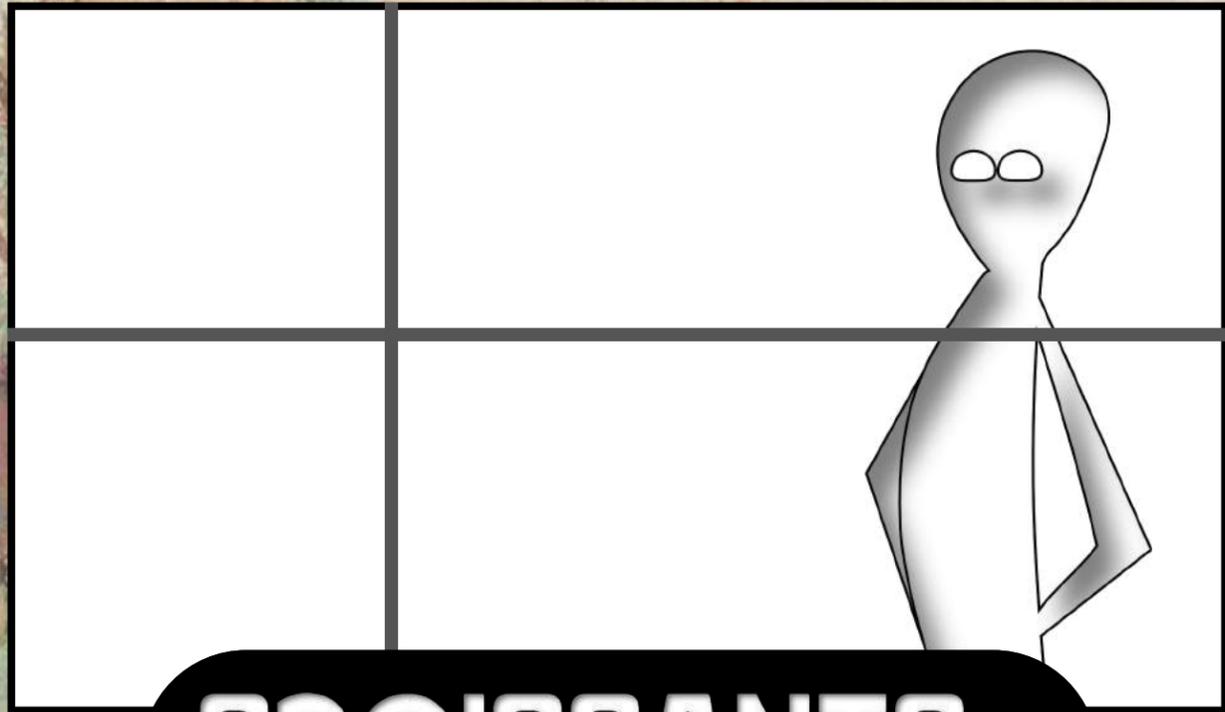
The project derives from the exercise of creating totems in the place where he is using only found materials. The original creation is 3D scanned with my iPhone and then left or given away where it belongs or even destroyed. The object becomes an image and the image can become an object again when needed to, through techniques such as 3D printing or CNC cutting.

The compositions take inspiration from the ancient symbols, amulets and totems of the world, contextualized in the twenty-first century, era of consumption and pollution. The sculptures are usually made from found materials such as plastic waste mixed with more "natural" materials such as branches or stones or even ephemeral materials as snow.



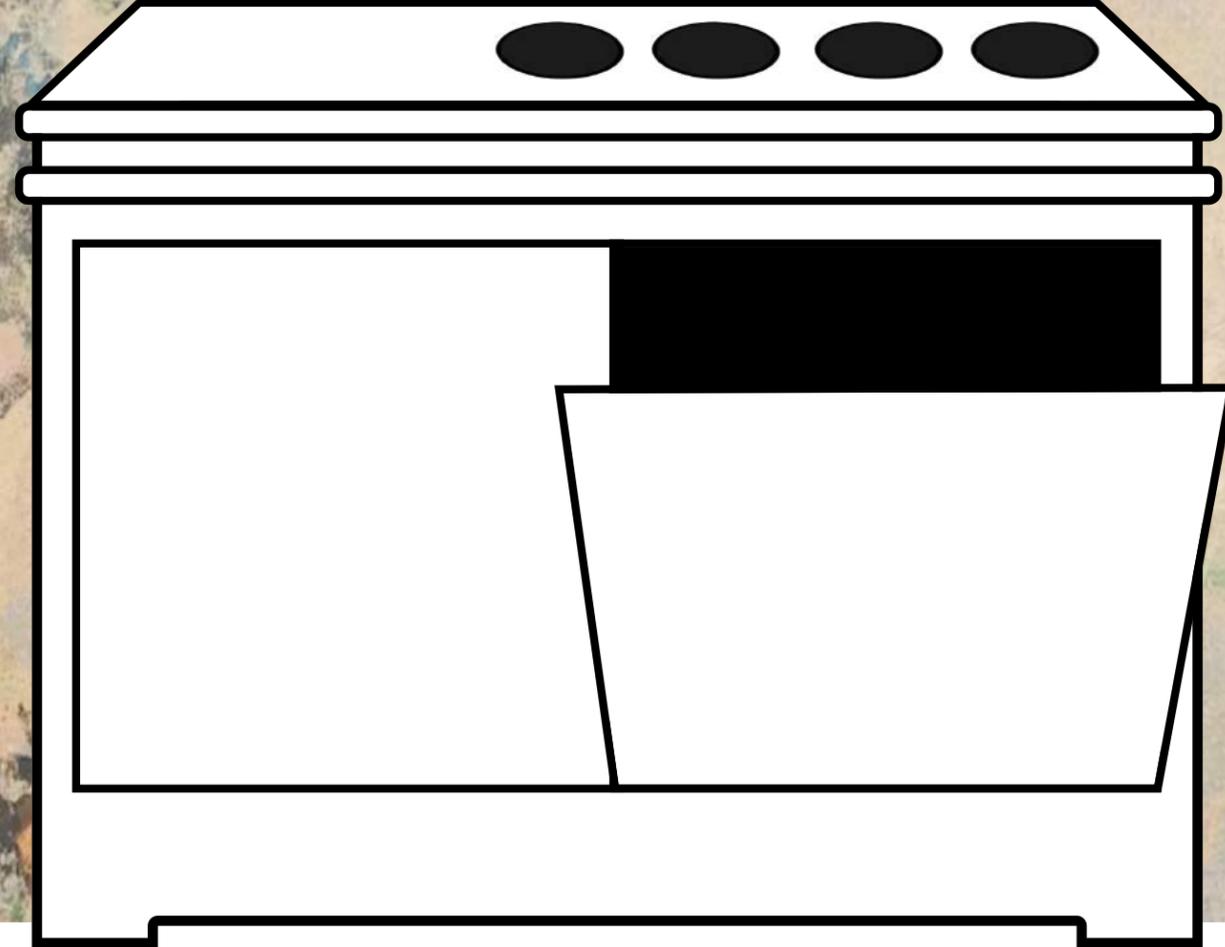






# CROISSANTS

CONNER VONTANA







WATCH THE FILM





# MECHANISED NEST

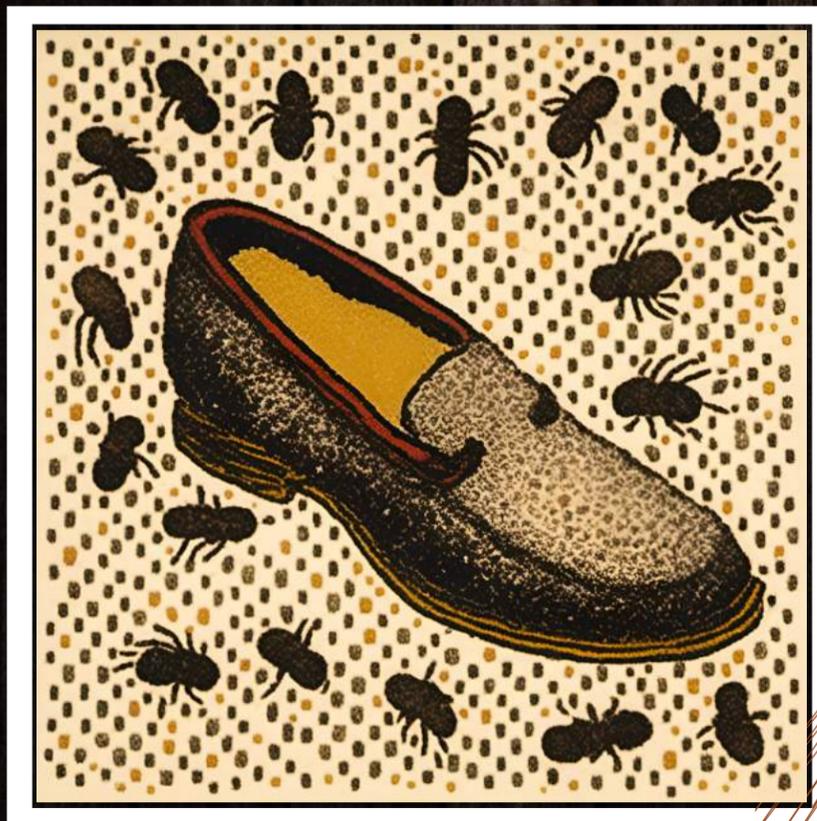
MARIA DRAGOI



Bath piss. I've slicked my hair back like a little Roman boy as I squint at the lines in front of me through sweat dappled lashes. It's been a long time since I wrote something that wasn't critical. I let my fingers soften the edges of the paper and try to plan the rest of my day. I'm unemployed now - I'll hit up a gallery or two. I let the water out and crouch in the empty porcelain bateau, fumbling inside myself to release the last of it. It's public property and I'm no thief.

I peel on clothes, body still making its own damp. I get on the bus. I am moved placidly. I get off.

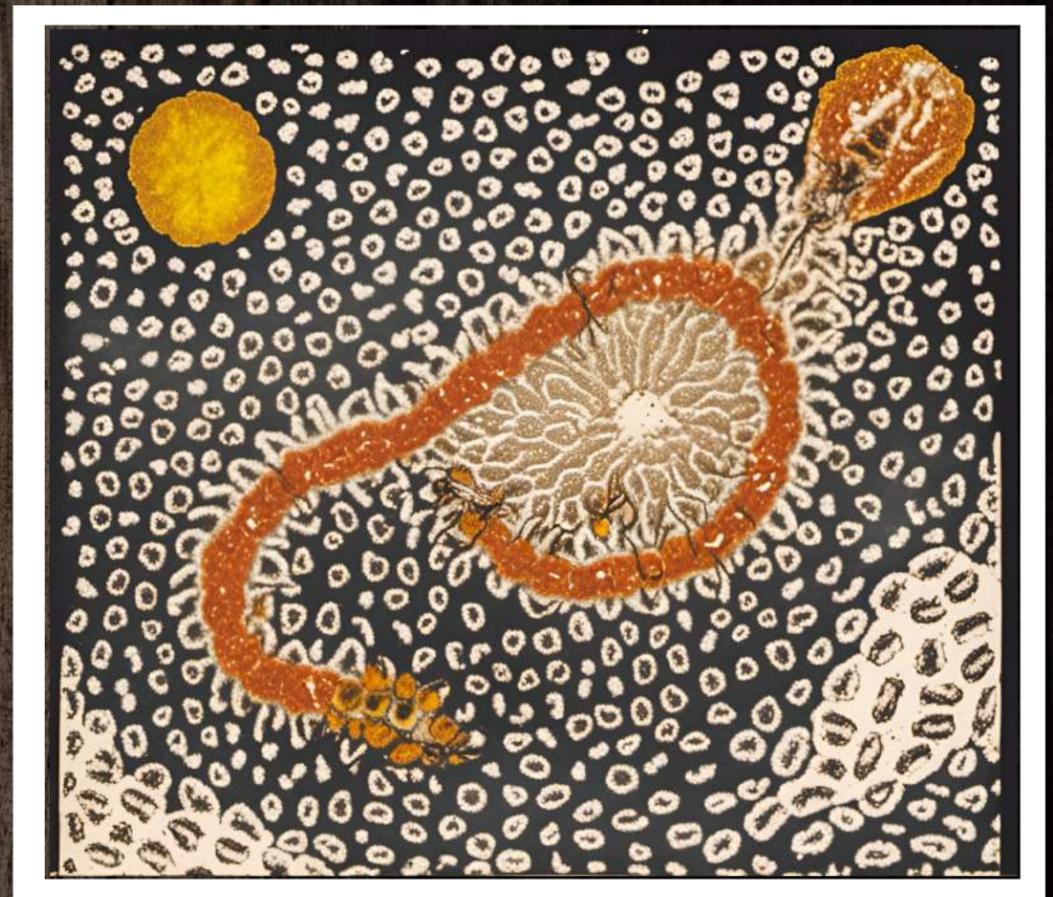
I watch the plume of yellow shoot out from between my legs and into the water.



I beep onto the tube. In the carriage, I make eye contact with a man wearing fish socks. His hat says: "Art Saves Lives". I am making eye contact with him because I want to let him know I find it distasteful. Behind each eyeball hides a retch. A crane fly lands on his polished loafer. He shakes it off. It ambles away. I am bewitched by the six legged beast, and I try to make eye contact with it instead for the rest of my journey.



One time me and my flatmate brought a moth back up to the surface from the Piccadilly line. We released him by Finsbury Park, but I wonder if he might have liked it better on the tube. He might have been going somewhere. Before the bedbugs hit, I remember thinking about whether insects purposefully hitched a ride; to save their wings from rain, or their brows from the sweat of a hot day. Maybe the moth was going to meet his cousin for lunch, and the transport was more convenient. Maybe the crane fly was tired after a hard day's work. The bastards are lucky they don't have to pay TFL fares.



It turns out the London Underground Mosquito has its own Wikipedia page.



An Egyptian native initially, it sought out the warmth of the subterranean passageways. Genetic testing shows it has evolved differently from its friends who stayed above ground. It has also grown to prefer human blood over the avian type. The two clans can no longer produce fertile offspring together, which, perhaps, is for the better. I wonder if tube mosquitos have a higher rate of inbreeding.



I've been reading about how climate change is interfering with insect abilities to copulate.

Air pollution dulls fruit fly pheromones, and no longer able to recognise their biblical duties by scent, they exhibit an astonishing proclivity for male-on-male action.

\*\*\*According to research it's unclear what the women do in this scenario. Maybe they are getting into STEM.\*\*\*



Bees can't handle the heat. It shrivels the drones' little willies, and the queen remains virginal. Eunuched, the heat struck men head underground, the stuffy Victoria line a perverted reminder of their barrenness.

There, they engage in a seedless dance.





The tube carriage doubles as an insect fetish palace. The moths come down for the 24/7 flicker, getting drunk off fluorescence.



The spider's web harnesses the power of the third rail to electroshock its victims. Tied up and zapped, they fall into an ecstatic afterglow as Miss Arachnid dissolves their insides with her acid.

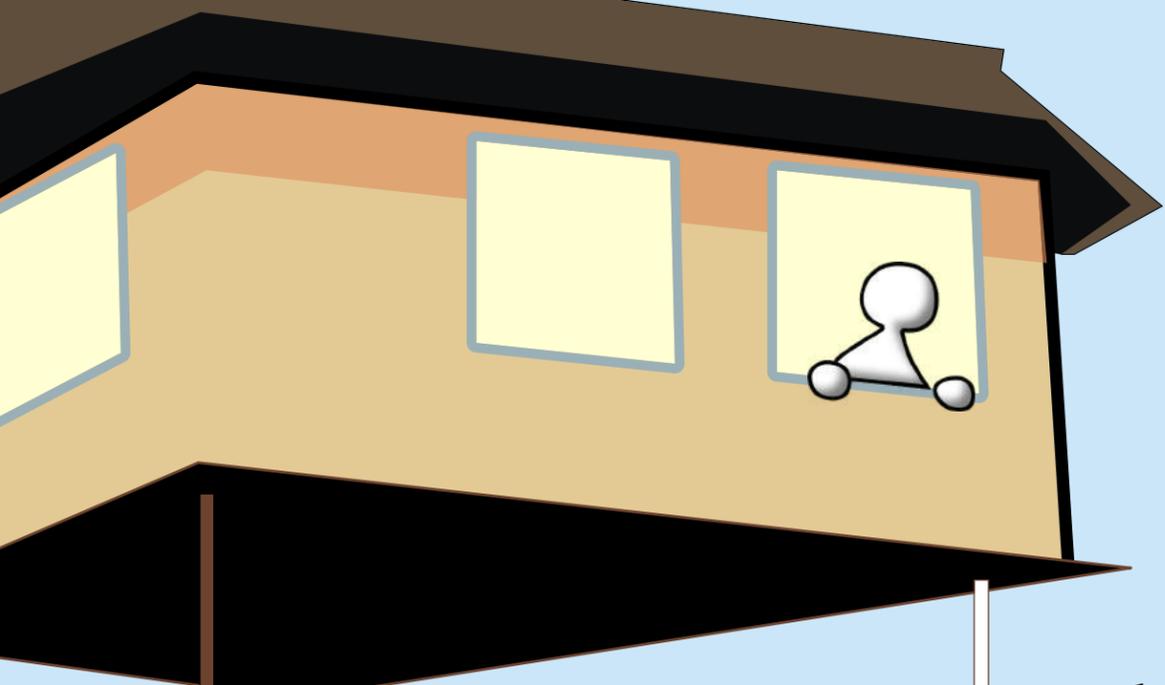
It's an interspecies ride as the behemoth mechanical saloon barrels through the night.

# FORT ORD

LUIS LEON







The land that comprises Fort Ord National Monument was inhabited by the Ohlone and Rumsen people for thousands of years. The descendants of these villages comprise the historic Monterey Band of Monterey County. Their collective range spanned from the San Francisco area down to Big Sur as well as to the east on the edges of Pinnacles National Park.

Fort Ord, a 28,000-acre section of land nestled along the Central Coast, was established as a range for artillery practice in 1917, then transitioned to an Army post in 1941. It is rich in history and unique significance. Music legends Jimi Hendrix and Jerry Garcia were once stationed there during their services. Their time at Fort Ord adds an intriguing layer to the monument's historical tapestry. The Fort Ord military base was decommissioned in 1994 due to Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC).

Fort Ord has always seemed underrated to me. It's unknown to a lot of people, considering the proximity to Big Sur. I have spent a lot of time in the park foraging

mushrooms, frog hunting with friends, and going for runs and bike rides. I had already developed a significant sentimental attachment to Fort Ord when I was hired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) central coast field office. I was ecstatic. I started working for BLM in August of 2022. My first off-project task, which some of us in the office colloquially call sidequests, was working on the Seeds of Success project. While my primary work is rare and endangered plant monitoring, the sidequests have been the most memorable.

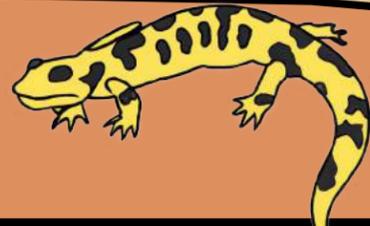
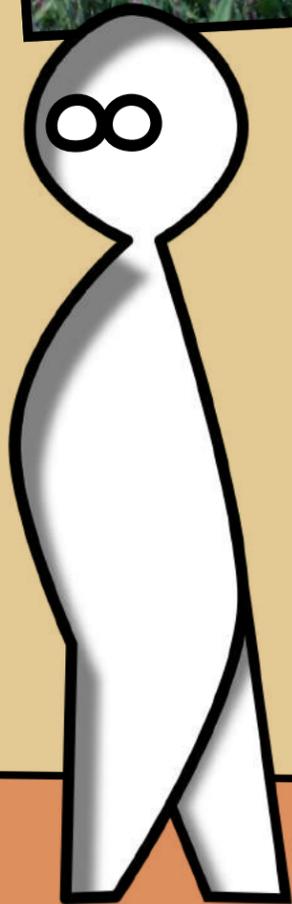
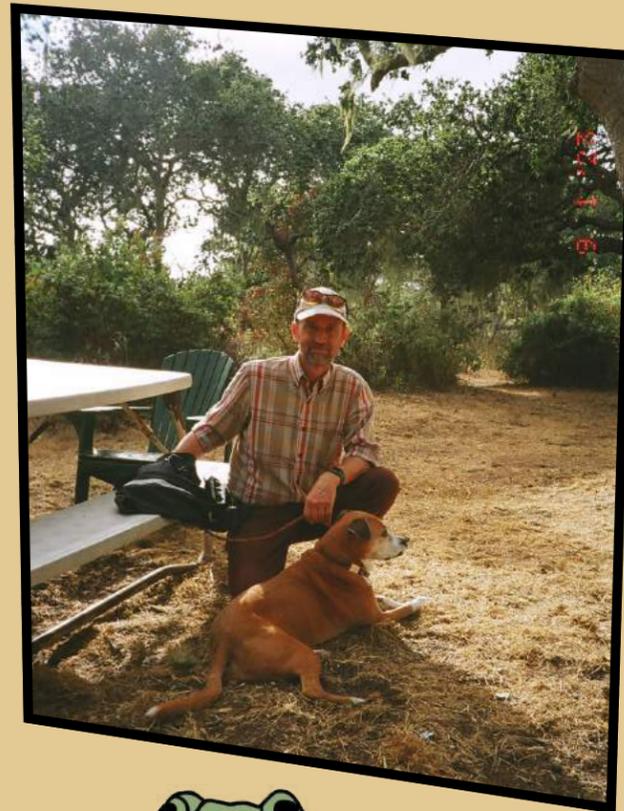
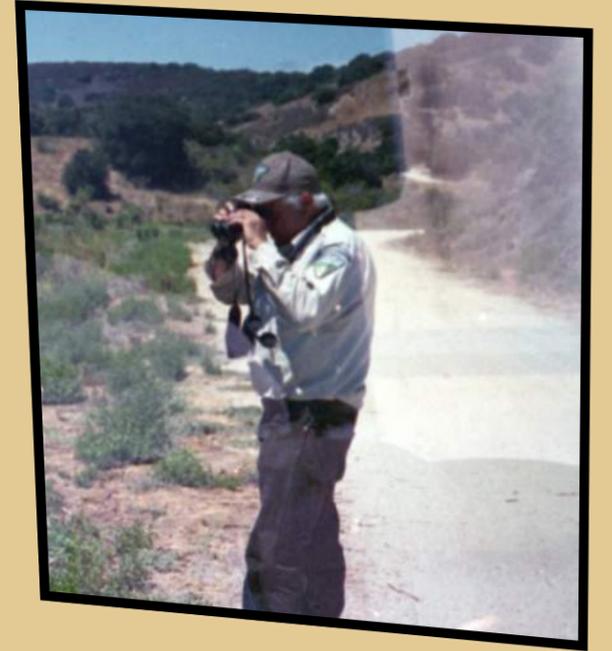
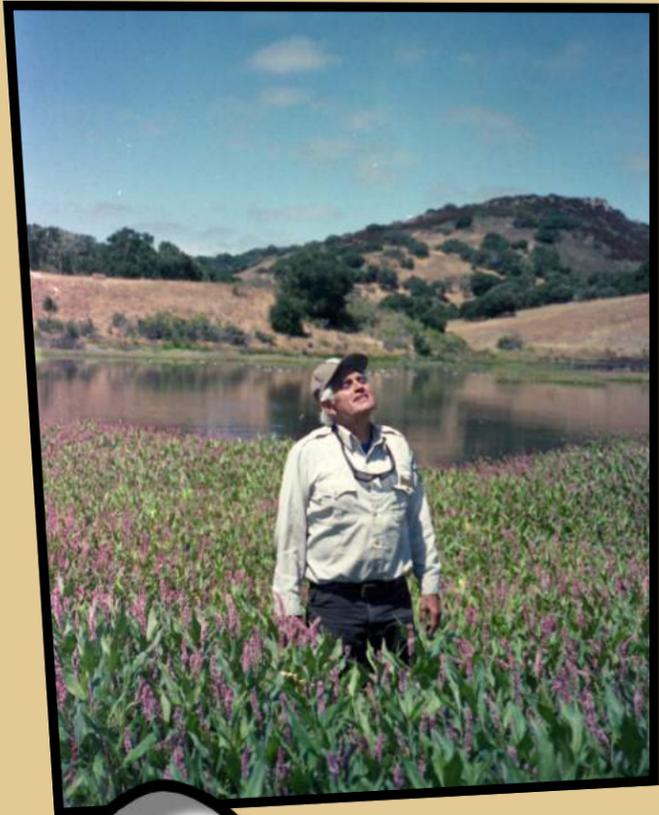
Bullfrog abatement began with the interests of Bureau of Land Management's Ecologist Michael Westphal. Stanford requested bullfrogs from Fort Ord's vernal pools and contacted Michael to capture live specimens, since we were hunting for behavioral and stomach content.

The technique to capture a bullfrog isn't extensive, but it's important to execute it correctly. The best tool is light. We wait until sundown to muck about the vernal pools in search of the bulls. While we wait, we strap into waterproof chest waders, gather our nets, bags, and headlamps. Headlamps are vital to

being able to capture a bullfrog. Michael Westphal and his son paddle around the large vernal pools in an inflatable boat and patrol the area. Propelled by his son, Michael guides and quickly springs at the frogs with a net or bare hands. Myself and my fellow pool walkers slowly amble the rim of the vernal pools without disturbing the water too much. It's important not to spook them while approaching, so we go slow. The best way to keep from getting spooked and diving into the water is to daze them with a high-powered headlamp. Their eyeshine off the headlamp is the best way to spot them from far distances. Bullfrogs become quasi-hypnotized by the bright light. As we slowly approach a bullfrog, we have to keep the light on them. When in range, you point your elbow at the bullfrogs and quickly snap your hand from your shoulder to full extension and nab them. They are wet, slimy, and squirmy, so we have to hold on firmly but not to the point where we impose unnecessary hurt.

From the Stanford research project spawned an internal BLM bullfrog abatement project. The project is at the final stages of approval but the intention is to permanently remove their populations in the bodies of water in the monument. There are various methodologies of eradication, from hiring third party extermination staff to shoot the frogs, to using tricaine methanesulfonate (MS-222), a topical anesthetic. Many staff members were asked if they would be up for killing bullfrogs and I was the only one that agreed. The idea completely went against my beliefs on killing animals, but the bullfrogs had to go as they were invasive and overly competitive. I never thought that I'd accept the idea of killing bullfrogs but I realized that it must be done in order to help California Tiger Salamanders (CTS) populations. Bullfrogs are voracious and eat anything that can fit in their mouths.

I got the opportunity to aid in the capture and tissue sampling of endangered CTS with Robert Cooper, a postdoc researcher out of UCLA's Ecology and Evolutionary Biology department.



He has been gathering CTS in vernal pools and watering holes across California.

I spent two days driving around the monument with BLM staff and Robert Cooper visiting vernal pools. Suited up in chest waders, we'd walk through the pools with nets and buckets in hand looking for salamanders. Pairing up with someone and walking the large seine was the most effective way to capture the salamanders. We'd hoist the net up onto the banks of the pools and place the salamanders in buckets. We surveyed during their larval stages, which meant that their population counts had not been affected by migration, though it was still difficult to find many samples.

Our goal was to capture 25 larvae in each pool; each larva was measured and snipped. Tissue samples were collected for genomic sequencing as a result of hybridization with the non-native barred salamander. The hybrid salamanders are often significantly larger than the native salamander and are believed to outcompete CTS. Unfortunately, population dilution mixed with present bullfrog predation are lowering CTS population counts.

Despite having met Bruce Delgado only recently, I have learned to keep my ears open when he speaks. One afternoon spent with Bruce

driving around Salinas, getting parts, quotes, and picking up serviced machinery, I discovered how important it was to get to know the members of small communities. More often than not, he would know the life story of everyone he had got in contact with.

We ended up at Valley Saw & Garden Equipment to pick up some brush cutters that Bruce had gotten serviced. In the five minutes we were there, I learned about how the owner emigrated from Turkey to the U.S. and how his grandchildren are doing. This wasn't an isolated case. The same thing happened while picking up a field vehicle from an auto body shop in Marina, CA, interacting with the patrons of a local taqueria, educating a group of city council staff about the endangered Monterey gilia, and going out into the field with volunteer extraordinaire and author of Flora of Fort Ord David Styer.

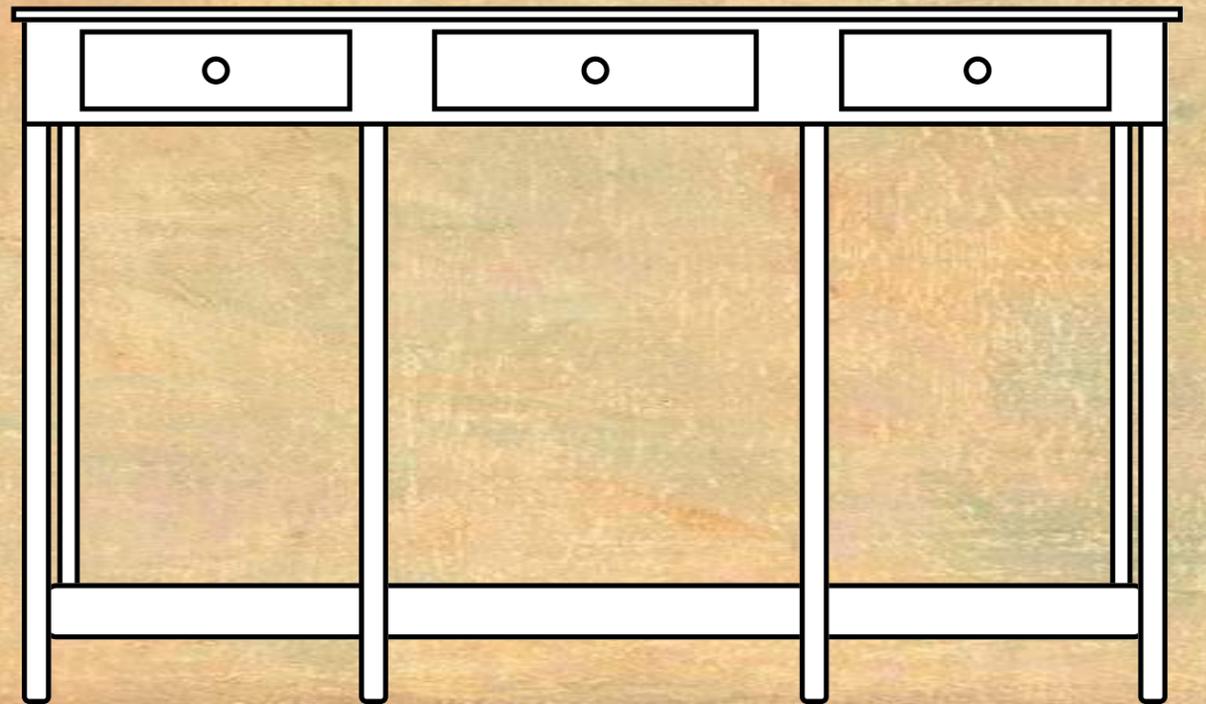
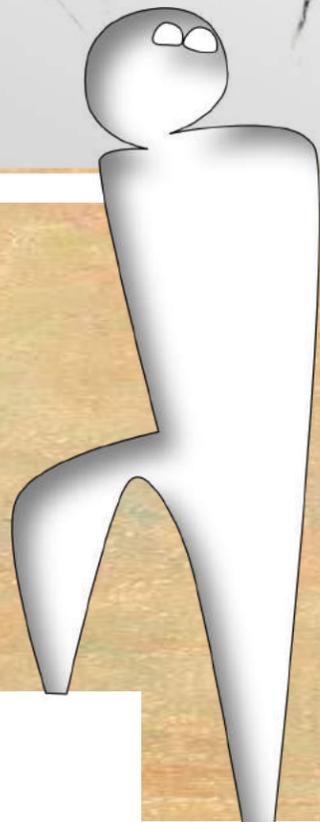
Serving as mayor of Marina, CA for over a decade, in addition to being a botanist for the Bureau of Land Management for over 35 years, Bruce cannot stop. He is a machine of a human being. Being in his early 60s, he is without a doubt the most hardworking of the lot; oftentimes working to the point of near collapse. While not advisable, it is commendable. Bruce gives his

all to his work, which I have indirectly learned can be a detriment to one's personal relationships. On my very first day of work, and quite possibly our first conversation, Bruce asked me: How long would you mourn the death of your best friend? What an introduction. Since getting hired to work at the Central Coast field office, we have talked about loss, love, friendship, death, ethics, and relationships.

The most impactful side quest I was given was to facilitate multiple education-oriented hikes for the students of the Watsonville Wetlands Watch. The students come from the Pajaro Valley Unified School District, of which over 80% of students are Hispanic/Latino. The students are part of a program focused on protecting local wetlands while educating students and volunteers with the information and skills they need to tackle the intricate environmental challenges their community faces. I met so many bright-eyed and enthusiastic students getting ready to apply to colleges, which really filled me with happiness. Being Mexican, it is always exciting meeting someone like myself in the world of STEM, and that day, I realized the importance of being that presence for them.

During my hiring interview for BLM, there was a somewhat offhanded mention that there would be other tasks expected of me outside of my main project. It seemed like a sneaky cop out for me to work on menial tasks that no one wants to do. I never expected that I'd gain a lot more from them than my main work. When I was much younger, I never would have thought that I would get the opportunities that I've had in life. I was naive in thinking that there are set chapters in one's life that are inelastic. I never would have thought that I would ever be in charge of the care and guidance of students for my university's recreation department or find myself wading through a vernal pool looking for California tiger salamanders. It's important to embrace the side quests life sends your way.





**WORKS**  
LEVI BOLTON





# AN ENDLESS BAR OF SOAP

MINNA COKE

Written in the Summer of 2023

Minna and I, the editor, wanted to acknowledge the violence in Gaza. We stand with the people of Palestine and hope for an end to conflict now.



The shower always gets me thinking. A quotidian and simple ritual, but I can always rely on my evening ablution to dilute the crowded chaos of my frazzled post-work mind. Taking hold of my grey and gritty bar of soap I begin to wash myself, a simple act of self care. As the granules break off along my lathered body, I realise it was exactly a year ago that I was in Nablus, Palestine, buying my soap from Muath Majed Al Nabulsi in his 800 year old soap factory. But my reminiscent thoughts are interrupted when I notice that the granules are beginning to out-weigh the bar itself. It is shrinking and malleable and it is ready for soap-fusion.

Lined up on my bathroom shelf is a red-packaged, Imperial Leather bar of soap. Without a second thought I have wiggled it out of the packet to stick the two bars together. A nifty old trick, passed down to me from my dad and no doubt practised by generations more savvy and less wasteful than our own. It is simple soap- shrinking-optimisation.

I return to the shower with this new hybrid bar of soap. To ensure successful soap-fusion it is crucial to apply adequate pressure to either side. With the palms of my hands poised to do so, I begin. Pushing my Palestinian bar up against this new arrival, I

notice how it tries to hold onto its initial, independent form. But this invading imperial bar has a larger belly and swollen, it presses itself onto the ripe and ancient land of Palestine.

Usually I don't pay attention to the encounter between two bars of soap in my shower. But something seems different this time. I got one bar from Palestine, beyond the military checkpoints. As we neared the barrier our eyes fixed on the cargo clad bodies of the armed Israeli guards, rippling in the low horizontal heat. Our Palestinian cab driver gave us the options: tell the truth and say we were in the West Bank, or lie. The latter is preferable, he said. We rehearsed our line, repeating the name of our alibi: the one illegal Israeli settlement in site. With the Nabulsi-stamped soaps buried deep in our luggage, we were suddenly face to face with the soldiers but our tongues went limp in dry mouths. They waited. 'Was it Jewish?' they said. 'Yes' we replied and we could pass.

My soap made it back to my bathtub in the city of London. And now the bar is being introduced, though somewhat reluctantly to another one, an Imperial one. What are the politics sealed between these two bars of soap? What is concealed beneath the creamy lather forming on the surface of my white skin? That slipped across a military

checkpoint with as much ease as the bar of soap sliding out of my grip.

I extend my head back, stretching out my spine. When my eyes meet the cascading water, they are ambushed by the clinical glare of LED ceiling lights. I blink quicker than you can say 'bewitched butter', but it's not quick enough. A thousand black and white flashes put on a dazzling display beneath my eyelids, as I perform a balancing act in the acrylic bathtub. A hundred dark spots have emerged in my vision, as black as barrels - the ones perched atop every rooftop in Nablus. They dominate its skyline like a hoard of beetles basking in the sun. Israel controls access to water in Palestine and plays with spontaneously cutting off its supply. The swarm of beetles gathers up what rainfall they can in anticipation of this flick of a switch. But their exoskeletal armour has chinks. One shot from the proboscis of an Israeli sniper and a family's water flows away.

I notice the different textures of each bar. Curious about their differences, I lift the hybrid bar up to my nose and sniff. I have to pause and concentrate, turning each side over to isolate their distinct smells. The sweet perfume of the Imperial Leather bar beckons me away as



I inhale its aroma. There is something in it that I know, but I cannot for the life of me say why. I close my eyes again, this time to shut off my sight and heighten my smell (though again looking the fool in the shower). I can now focus on longer, deeper inhalations and my mind is free to explore the qualities of this curiously sentimental aroma.

A staccato frenzy of miniature blue tiles tornado into my vision, filing out around me to conjure up my childhood bathroom, square by flying square. Crumpled on the side of my bath is the red Imperial Leather packet. It catches my eye and whispers 'with the power to evoke nostalgic memories'. Whisked back to the present, I scowl at it, surprised and disappointed by the truth behind its branding and my susceptibility to it.

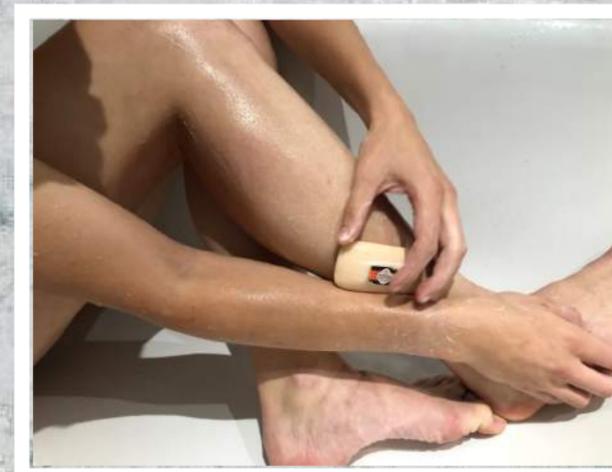
But back to washing... I innocently wipe my eyes, hardly a belligerent act - but the soap launches its attack. Disguised by its smooth and creamy scent, a soapy shard bolts into my eye, stinging as it spreads over the glossy surface of my ambushed eyeball. Staying true to its word it evokes another nostalgic memory.

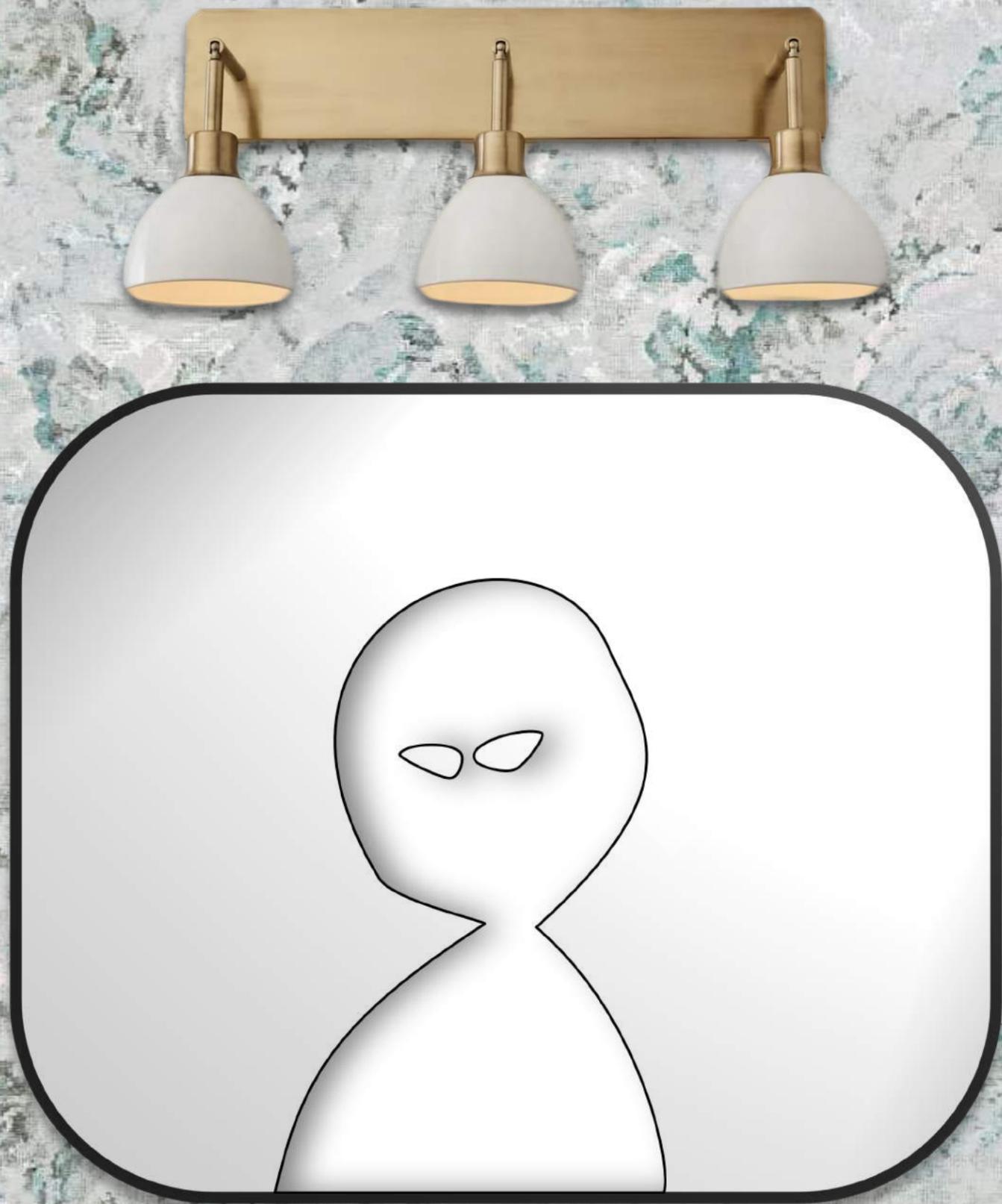
Two friends and I are congratulating ourselves on our impeccable bow poses. That wouldn't be worth bringing up ordinarily, except that we were floating on the surface of the Dead Sea. Legs bent above our backs,

hands gripping onto our ankles, squinting out across the salty surface. Slowly we span round and round to see the hazy horizons of Jordan, Israel and Palestine in turn. But I slip and break through the surface. A shard of deeply salted, deeply saturated water penetrates my left eye and I'm temporarily blinded. It's really not funny but my two friends are laughing.

Al-Baħr Al-Mayyit (The Dead Sea) رجبافا lies just south of Jericho. A salty basin of the world's most buoyant water, it is the lowest point on our planet. Its shores are a bounty of mineral-rich mud, dusty-dry ground and hidden pools of effervescent fresh water. All presided over by a veil of soft pink and blue hues. We were in Metzoke Dragotz, surrounded by the hotchpotch community that calls it home. A makeshift tent village with the air of a transient and gentle community, if you don't mind the military checkpoint and settlement peering upon you from the hill, that is. The people here look to live sparsely and in harmony with the land. It makes me think of the Bedouins, the nomadic people indigenous to this region, who have lived in their intricately tented caravansaries for thousands of years. But their homes are being bulldozed now.

I work a smudge of muddy granules between my forefinger and index finger. It





breaks down naturally and easily under the pressure - a world away from microscopic plastic beads in exfoliating facial scrubs. The Nabulsi soap caressing the surface of my skin is made with the same three ingredients that it has been for more than a thousand years: Olive oil, water and an alkaline sodium compound - which, today, takes the form of sodium hydroxide. Before the bulldozers arrived, the alkaline came from the ashes of the Barilla plant and its industry thrived. For thousands of years Bedouins gathered **نِفْرٌ ه ^** (qilw), a semi-desert plant growing just east of the River Jordan and transformed it into a sodium compound, ready to trade with the three soap cities of the East; Aleppo, Tripoli and Nablus.

Nothing can survive in its waters, yet there are three nations biting into its salty shores. That day we missed our bus. We watched it curve through the desert as we traipsed up the shoreline, beach bags in hand, sticky slick of baklava in beach bags. A man in a Tesla saw our outstretched hands, thumbs raised to a darkening sky and offered to drive us back to Jerusalem. We asked to be dropped off at 'Damascus gate'. He hesitated, for it's in East Jerusalem, Palestinian Jerusalem. Then with his hands firmly on the wheel, the ex-Israeli soldier told us "be careful of them, they're' dangerous". His words imprinted in our memory, now fastened there forever, as securely as the little sticker stamped onto the Imperial Leather bar of soap.

Two days later we crossed our first checkpoint: The Qalandiya checkpoint on the road to Ramallah. We were just 3 amidst the 26,000 Palestinians who are obliged to cross back and forth every single day. And, 70 years earlier, more than 3000 miles away, back in Grosvenor Square in central London, Imperial Leather published an advertisement. Two young boys smiling as they bring forth the fruits of their labour, shiny new bars of soap. The red curtain heralds their performance. Dressed in finery from head to toe, the boys meet us under the watchful eye of the jewelled crown. Is the reality of the soap's production hidden in darkness?

Seventy years earlier and 3,605 kilometres North West, Imperial Leather published an advert: Under the watchful eye of a jewelled crown two young black

boys are in imperial dress with smiles pasted onto their faces. They stride towards us offering up the fruits of their labour; shiny new bars of soap. A red curtain heralds their performance but conceals from whence they came. Where have they come from? Where was the soap produced and what were its methods of production? In the grand theatre of industry the curtain descends heavily. Is it concealing a potential paradox inherent within the soap's genesis? A product of purification but one born from methods shrouded in their own, less savoury, guise of cleanliness.

At a molecular level, soap is fizzing with contradictions. The molecule has two poles, its head is hydrophilic or water-loving but its tail is hydrophobic, or water-hating. This hydrophobic water-hating tail is lipophilic, oil loving. Its hydrophilic, water-loving head is lipophobic, oil hating. Beneath a bank of bathroom steam, they are working hard together to cleanse the surface of my skin. The tails are entwining themselves around greasy particles of dirt, whilst the heads are latching onto the silken water molecules. Beneath my nose and upon my body, they unite dirt and water, encompassing them in a protective soapy shell, ready to flow away.

When I left Palestine, my international citizenship was my soapy shell. It carried me back home to safety, through pathways denied to Palestinians and granted me the liberty to traverse boundaries. I slide my two compressed bars back into their tray. The final rinse pours down and envelopes me in a hydrating embrace. Through the vertical threads of falling water I observe my hybrid bar of soap, seemingly struggling to right itself. I turn the tap and step out of the shower, taking care not to slip. My evening ablution comes to an end and I open the bathroom door. A billow of steam unfurls, releasing the seeds of my musings amidst a dewy warmth. They linger and germinate, the seeds of an endless bar of soap.



Content is everywhere. It is the new currency. Money is important, yes, but content is the engine of human productivity. People still want things, of course, but all in service of human attention. There are still real problems on earth, no doubt, but the wealthy top 20% have settled their desires. That is entertainment.

The newest content product serves to blend the physical with the digital. "Why make content when you can be content?" asks the intrepid inventor, ACW Model 1 (Aidan Williams original clone). The **Content Exoskeleton** was designed inspired by a now-extinct breed of creatures: insects, in fact, on a particularly stunning creature known as the Mantis, which was visually leaned on directly in the construction. We at the Camper Magazine sat down with ACW Model 1 to talk about his new product in the latest edition of Camper Magazine 38:

*Camper Magazine (CM): Thanks again for taking the time to speak with us today, I am sure you're busy with production and marketing.*

*ACW Model 1 (ACW1): Not a problem. The Camper Magazine is my favorite editorial, though I prefer the digital visual VR installment.*

*CM: So, you said in an interview with Content Weekly that you saw an opportunity in the content product market. Can you tell us a bit more about what you saw?*

*ACW 1: I saw a product market filled with content consumption products, AR cerebral implants, motion controlled like and share modules, penile and vaginal agitators, but barely any content production tools. Everything on the market was ugly, cumbersome, and unintuitive. The beauty of the CE is its simple, unencumbering design and use.*

*CM: On that note, can you tell us a bit about the design of the CE?*

*ACW 1: The CE is meant to be worn as a comfortable extension of your own body. Simply click the button on the back, slide the skeleton over your shoulders and you are now making content. What you do from there is the fun part. We modeled the frame after a now extinct creature known as the mantis. With its curved arms and rigid structure, the CE is both rewarding to wear and admire.*

*CM: You have been around for a while, so you have seen the rise of augmented reality and the evolution of perma-internet lifestyle communities. What do you think its effect has been on larger society?*

*ACW 1: The tides of change are stronger than any one man. Either ride the wave, or let it sweep you off your feet. Whenever I get nostalgic about playing in the coastal California mud as a young boy, I can enjoy that concept in high definition 5D simulation. And so can you! The future is adaptation and it always has been.*

*CM: We have now seen CE on police officers, professional pranksters and in the military. Do you think this has created a negative association for Camper? What does it mean to have these groups using your product?*

*ACW 1: Great content products follow great content. The people are loving the new season of COPS (Corporation of Officiating and Protecting Subjects). Just the other day, I tuned in to*

*this hilarious episode where the new Autonomous Policing Model 3 (APM3) subdued and neutralized a ranting and aberrant clone who was clearly high on Tectrial. Since the APM was wearing the CE, I was able to get the perfect view of the operating.*

*CM: Would you consider it dangerous that policing and military exercises are being commodified into an entertainment? Especially when there is such an obvious power imbalance between subject and subjectee?*

*ACW 1: We don't deal in danger. We are a media product company providing a product for creating great entertainment.*

*CM: Let's turn the attention onto you briefly. The ACW clones have long been subject of media attention for their radical and divisive actions. Many of them have reached astronomical success while many more have crashed and burned dramatically. What is it about the originator that leads to such varied results?*

*ACW 1: I think the originator was great for what he was, but it took the subsequent improvements of the clones to become what we have today. For example, ACW 24 has spent the last few years working on a new design for a Panopticon for low-atmosphere prisons. ACW 6 just released a truly sentient music creator that interacts with humanoid input.*

*CM: And ACW 15?*

*ACW 1: With every batch of clones, there is no doubt to be abberants. But he does not speak for the majority.*

*CM: Imagine a majority of the humanoid world adopts the CE into their everyday life, what do you see as next for a world creating and consuming content?*

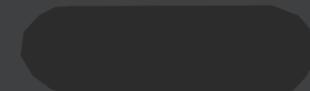
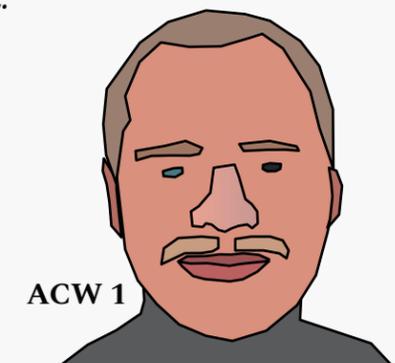
*ACW 1: I hope to see new forms of entertainment that we have not seen before. Parasocial relationships on a higher level. Individuals living the mundane of others. I have always been interested in the possibility of hybrid humanoids with two coexisting lives, physically separate, but mentally conjoined.*

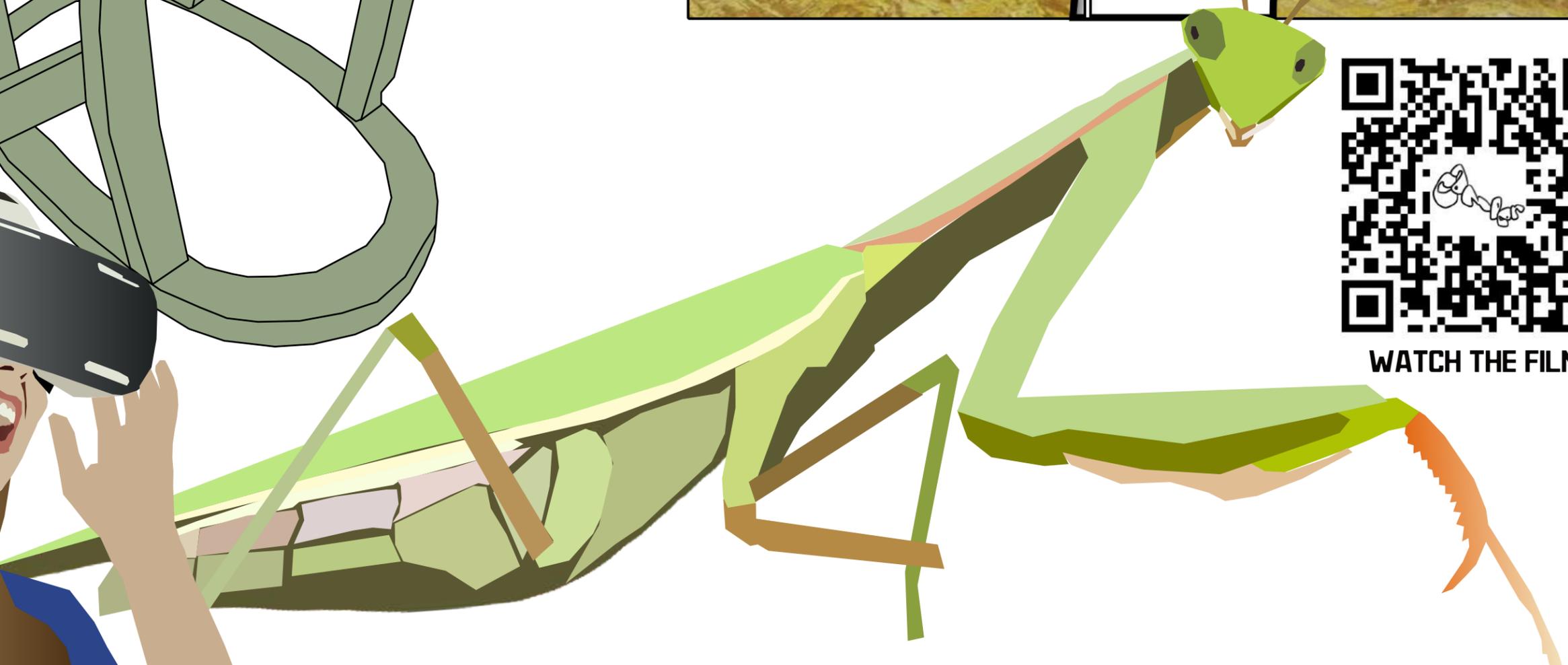
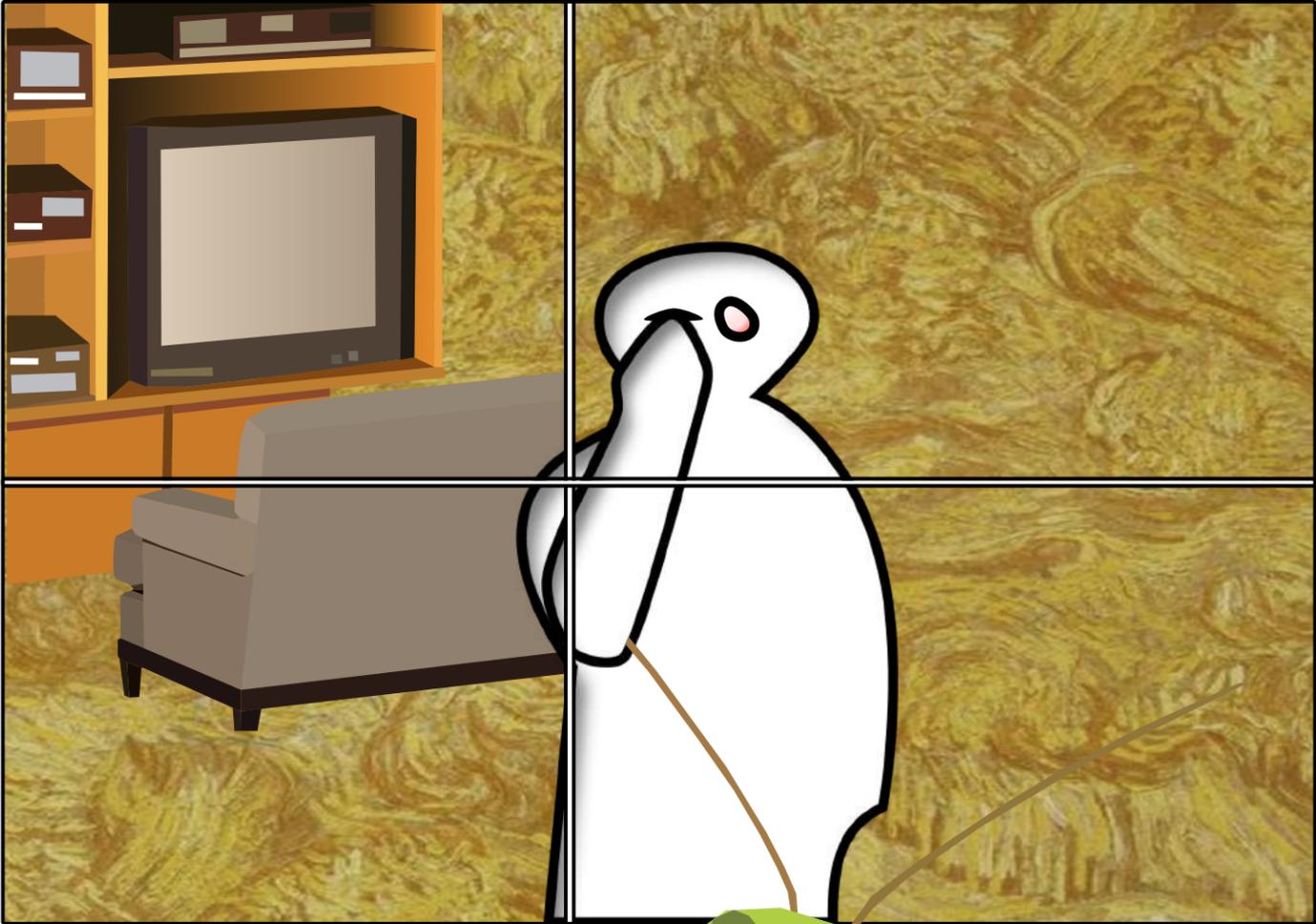
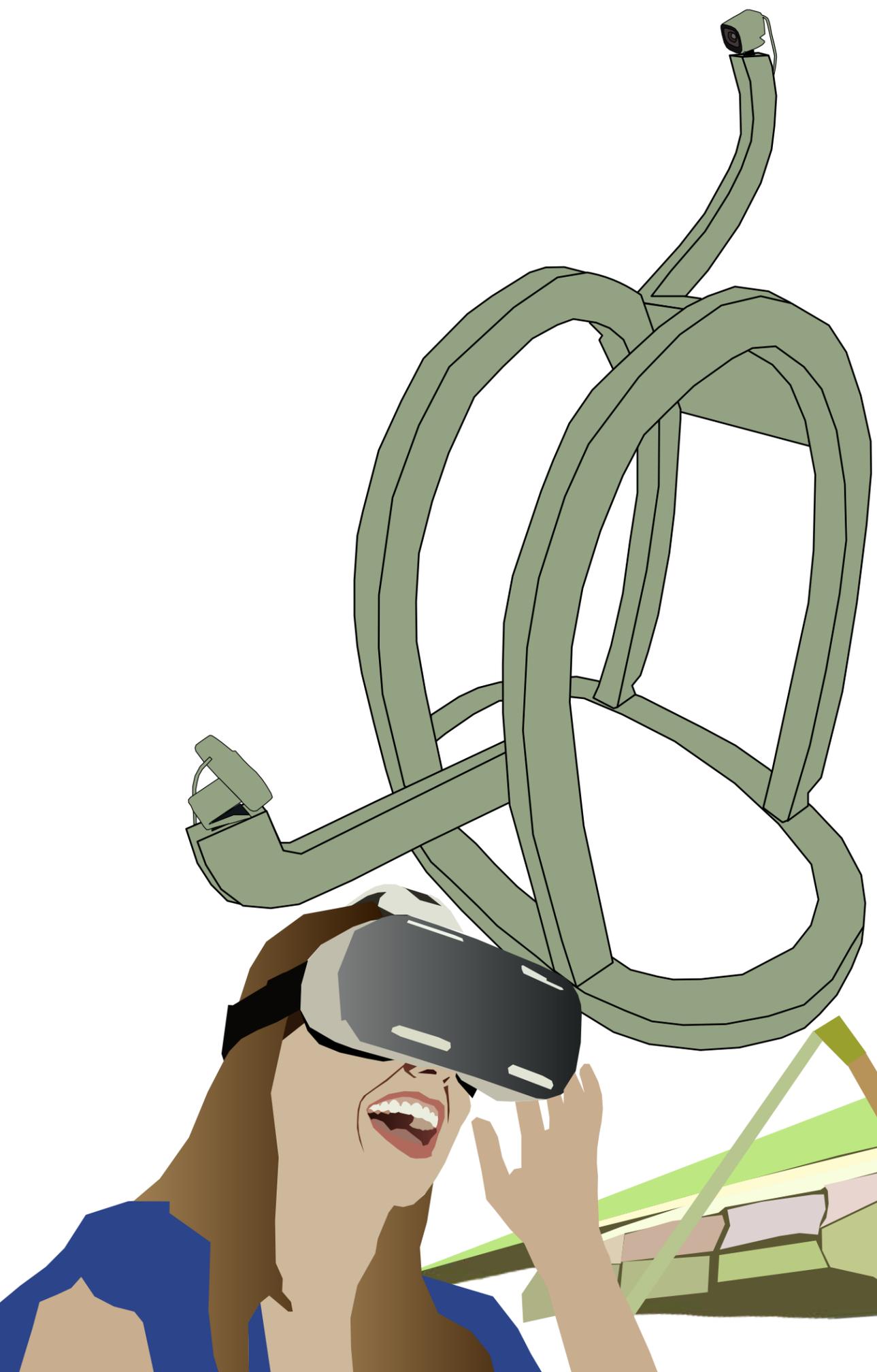
*CM: Sounds like a nightmare.*

*ACW 1: Ride the tide or get swept over.*

*CM: Well, I'd like to thank you for your time today, and wish you the best of luck with the Content Exoskeleton. If you would like to pick up one for yourself, orders can be placed through your comlink at CE.cml. \$3500, shipping not included.*

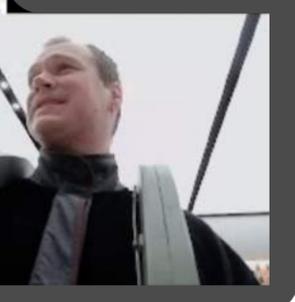
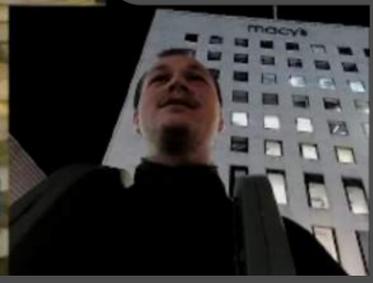
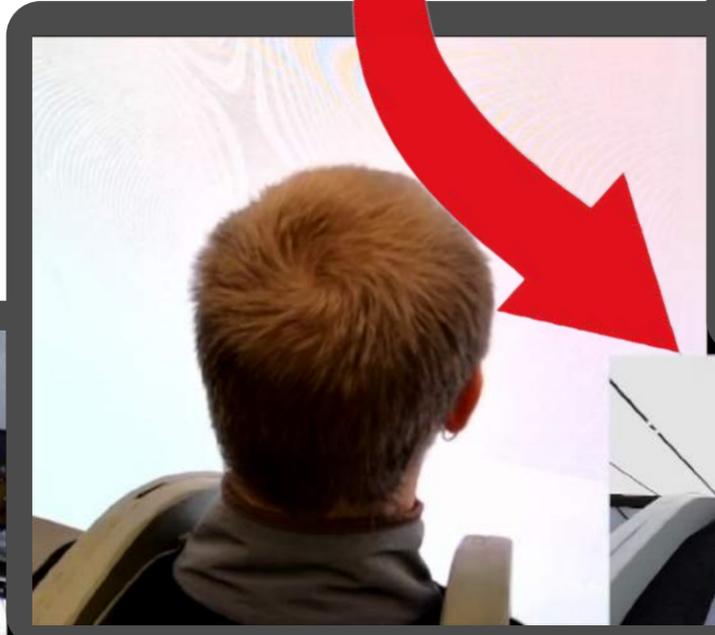
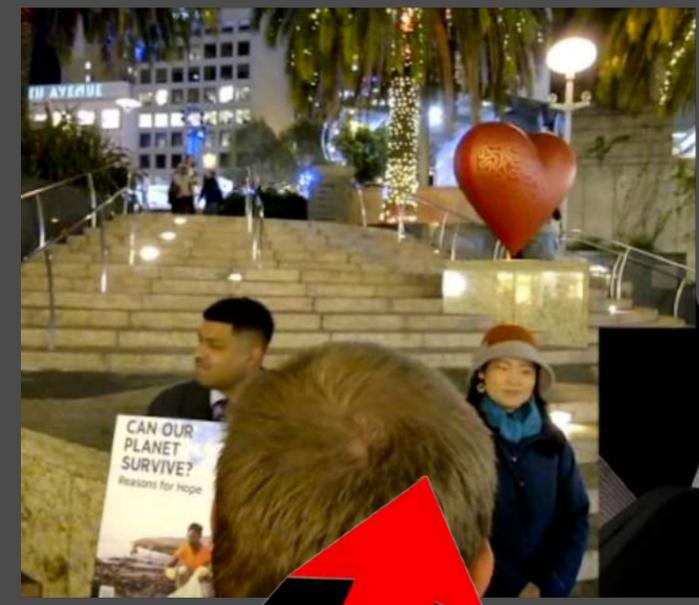
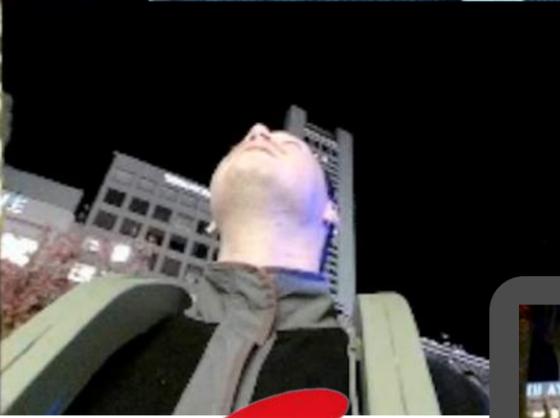
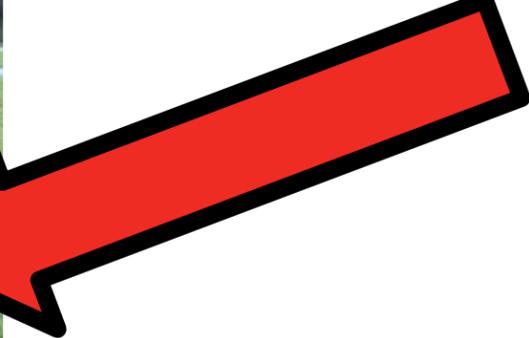
*ACW 1: Thank you Camper Magazine.*

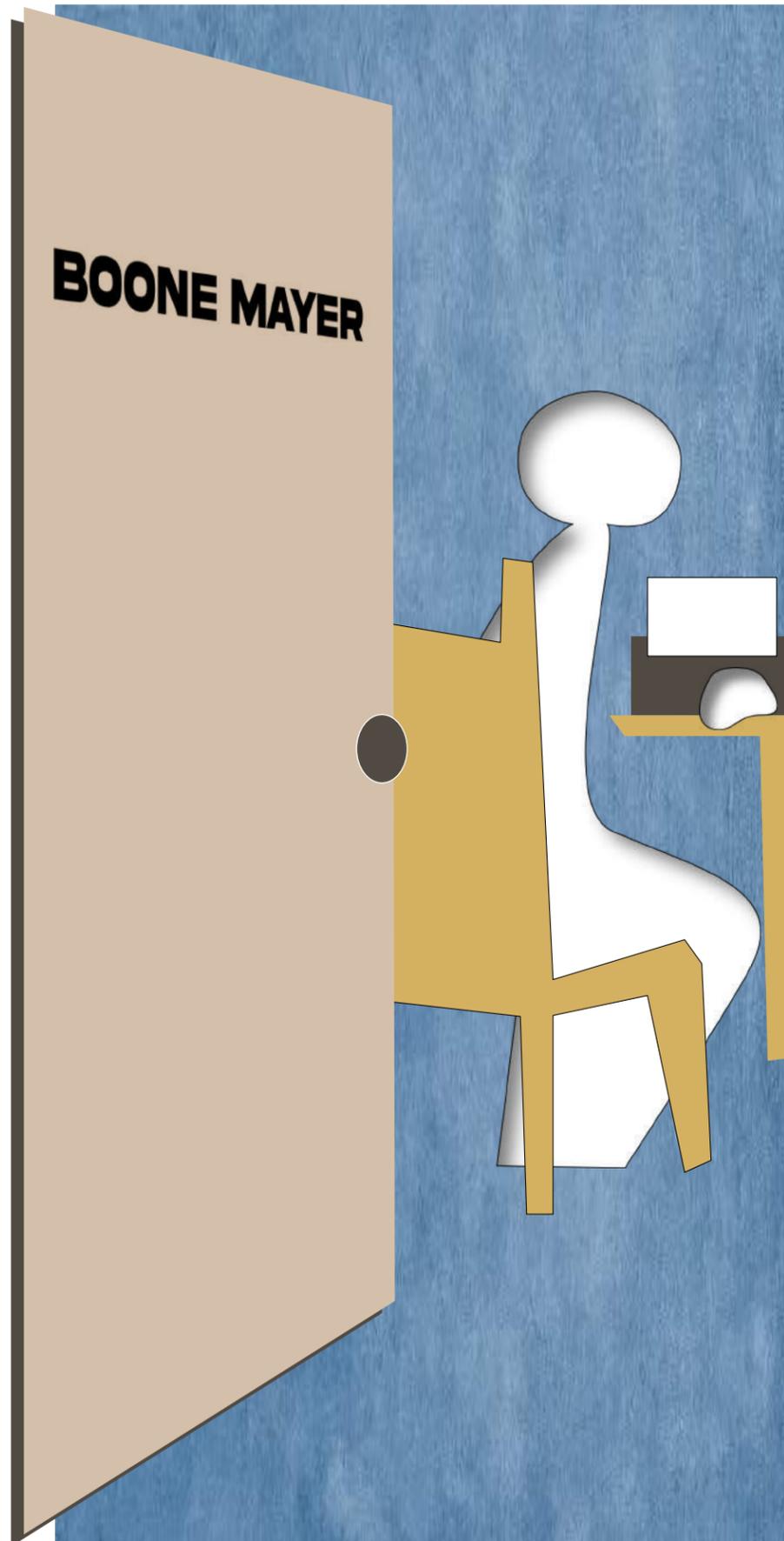




WATCH THE FILM







## THE TALE OF DOMINIC DOMINGO

Domenic Domingo suffered from an odd predicament for a novelist: every book he wrote was hailed as an absolute success and sold about a million copies. At first glance, this seems like the biggest blessing imaginable. It slowly revealed itself to be a curse.

For his first three novels, the acclaim came as much-needed validation.

But his fourth novel was different. Domenic couldn't help but feel like something was off. One day, slogging out hundreds of special-edition copy signatures, he ventured a peek inside. He started on page 35, and worked his way to page 123 before throwing the book away in disgust.

It sucked. The plot was cliché, the characters were weak, the writing stiff. The syntax was difficult at times, and some sections were damn near unreadable. Domenic could not believe that he had thought it a half-decent effort, or that his editors had allowed it to go to print as it was.

The front cover, however, was filled with the usual praise: "A tour de force that hit me like a hurricane" - "Domingo cements his status as the greatest novelist of our age" - "I spent six months in therapy just to process this novel," and so on. It went on to win a slew of prestigious awards- a Nobel, a Pulitzer, Obama's book list. HBO optioned the rights for \$40 million. Apparently, the book was popular on BookTok, though its status was contentious there.

Domenic wrote his next novel somewhat lazily, expecting to receive at least a smidge of negative reviews. Instead- endless praise, awards, the late-night circuit. He decided either he was some kind of literary genius with low self-esteem, or the entire world suffered from some kind of mass delusion regarding his writing.

To test this, he penned an extremely odd novella. The only characters were two chickens and a donkey, and the entire thing took place in a barnyard. The book was filled only with the mundane actions of the animals, described in real time. Domenic's final assessment was that it was unsellable.

The praise for this book was as extravagant as usual: "Domingo beats Kafka at his own game" - "Revelatory" - "Made me become a vegan." Not only did it receive universal acclaim, but it was his bestseller so far and was quickly adopted by high schools in several states as required reading.

Increasingly frustrated, he wrote the most avant-garde unreadable shit he could come up with. It was designed to be rejected by his publisher, critics, readers, anyone. At the very least it would be divisive. The final product: a 1200-page novel depicting the events of the Arab-Israeli peace process as if they had occurred during an extended meth-fueled orgy. At its climax, a million George Bush clones admitted to perpetrating the Holocaust and began cannibalizing each other. Throughout the book there were random interpolations of medieval tax codes, Dr. Seuss poems, and crude drawings of vaginas. All the dialogue was written in bad Swahili, and the only punctuation was exclamation marks.

The reaction to this book was on a new level: "A parable that explores the depths of human weakness" – "Biblical" – "Brought hope back into my life."

Domenic was at a loss. The world had gone ape. He spent long hours scrolling through the news to see if things were odd in general, or just his life. The world was strange as ever, but people reacted to it in the same ways they always had. After a year of seeking answers on the darkest corners of the web and smoking Turkish cigarettes non-stop, he ventured back into the world, looking for a path to sanity.

He took a job writing lawn mower manuals, hoping that neutral, constrained non-fiction would be immune to hysterical praise. Instead, the sales of lawn mowers peaked across six countries and his book sold more than the Bible for eight weeks straight.

He worked as a court stenographer until he realized that taking dictation was having a profound impact on the justice system. Cases he took transcribed routinely made their way to national courts, and one simple landlord dispute almost led to a change in the Constitution.

He reported on the price of scrap aluminum for six months, until everyone that read his reports left the business, effectively tanking the scrap aluminum trade. Traders found true beauty in his words they couldn't find in commodities figures. Most of them spent the rest of their lives hunting for romance and adventure.

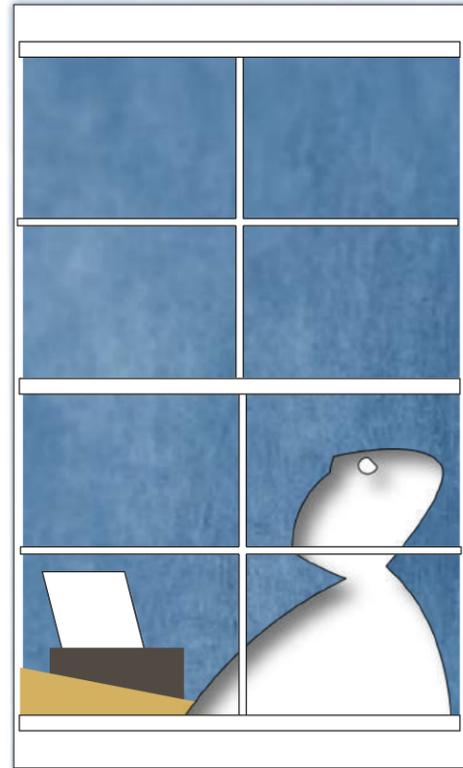
Writing non-fiction had too great an impact– people focused their attention wherever he pointed his pen, with bizarre consequences. Writing fiction felt masturbatory– anything he wrote would be lavished with praise. And yet, his soul still felt wrapped up in words.

To satisfy his craving for criticism, Domenic began actively pursuing rejection. After a while he found the perfect outlet. Every night of the week, he went to an open-mic night and performed as many minutes of unrehearsed standup as they would allow. He had little to no stage presence, and it was clear to every audience that he had not prepared any material beforehand. He bombed pretty much every night.

Bombing became his greatest refuge in the storm of literary adulation. The moments on stage where a joke completely failed to land among his audience provided a feeling of relief and, at times, euphoric joy.

Local comics embraced Domenic with all their hearts. While his material sucked, his ability to bomb horrendously without batting an eyelid won their respect, and veterans of the comedy circuit began giving him pointers. He rose above the multitude of hangers-on, aspiring comedians who never seemed to improve, and was adopted by a crew of heavy hitters.

His hero was Bert, a wizened hardass who specialized in self-deprecation. Bert was everyone's mentor. He looked like a zombie, smoked like a chimney and drank like a



fish. It was local comedy legend that he never ate anything except Papa John's and Lays chips. Despite his appalling health habits, he was limber and youthful. If you asked him how he maintained good health, he would tell you that he sustained his life force off of "the roast."

Back in the 1970s, Bert's insult comedy had brought him a run of late-night appearances and national tours. Somewhere along the way, something went wrong and his career was smashed to bits. There were rumors of conspiracy– enemies high in the comedy world, scandals surrounding a sitcom pilot that never made the air, and a brawl that put Bert behind bars briefly. He never used insults professionally since. Even so, he could not resist constant teasing

The first time he met Domenic, he lit into him, roasting his weak bits, his forlorn expression– even his oversized feet. Domenic loved every second of it.

But Bert's penchant for criticism was always mixed with kindness. After ribbing Domenic a bit, Bert told him he was one of the braver comedians he'd met.

Bert accepted Domenic into the comedian circle quickly. It was known in the local scene that if you could hang around Bert without getting offended, he would eventually treat you like family.

Soon enough, Domenic was having dinner at Bert's twice a week and began enjoying the moments when his jokes worked on stage almost as much as the times they didn't. More than that, he relished the port-mortem with Bert. To Domenic, Bert felt like an umbrella shielding him from the craziness of the world. More than anything, Bert reminded him of his dad.

When Domenic first discovered his love of writing, he sent his early efforts to his father. Domenic Sr. was a distant man. He worked in the engine rooms of aircraft carriers in the South Pacific, and what time he spent at home was largely dedicated to fighting with his ex-wife and to his greatest love: gambling vast sums in seedy pinochle games. His relationship with his dad was always strained, but one thing drew them together.

Domenic would send his dad letters with samples of his latest story. Senior would return the pages post-haste. Every idea, every word, every punctuation mark, had some suggestion or critique scrolled across it. Senior would write ten words for every word Domenic wrote. His critiques always stretched Domenic to his limits, forcing him to strain his imagination and style, working day and night.

Senior had wanted to be an editor younger in life, but a burgeoning gambling addiction and teen pregnancy sent him into the welcoming arms of the U.S. Navy. Despite his many mistakes, Dom Sr. always managed to appear content with the life he had ended up with. His greatest hope as a father was to shield his son from his own bitterness, putting high walls around the failures of his life. If there was one thing Dom Sr. avoided, it was putting his regrets onto his son.

Domenic's first novel was as much a triumph of his father's talent as an editor as his own talent as a writer. Two hundred rounds of revisions passed between the continental U.S. and the U.S.S. Saratoga until he finally received the treasured letter: "No notes. Well done." When he submitted the work for publication, the editor told him that the text could go to print as it was, without a single revision— a career first for her.

When his father died, after the publication of his third novel, his writing suffered. He went through editors like hotcakes, barely re-reading his work. By that time, he was so well-regarded in the literary world that editors hesitated to ask for significant changes, and his ego had grown to the point where he thought the work was good as it was— until he read the published copy.

As he sank his teeth deeper into the comedy world, he began to see how his friends interacted with his world, with some jarring results. More and more of his comedy friends recognized him, and the change of his behavior

When he found A Lawn Mower Owner's Guide at Bert's house, he broke down. It became impossible to listen to the critiques of a friend ensnared in a mass delusion centered on his own ability. His prime source of critique had been a fraud— his friendships felt deceptive at best. He disappeared from his comedian circle, moved away, and sank deeper into his despair.

He got a job at a call center for a hated political organization. Cold-calling irate citizens all day long gave him a sliver of the satisfaction of stand-up comedy, but he remained inconsolable. He hired a dominatrix to demean him, but when he stumbled across her normie LinkedIn, he found that she had once been an aluminum trader at the firm he worked at. He briefly took to street preaching, but nothing really worked.

Months slipped away. He tried writing, but it was impossible to believe in any of his ideas. He stared at blank pages for days, only to burn through 50 pages and toss them in the rubbish without a second glance. He couldn't figure out if he was punishing himself for being destructive in his new relationships, or whether his lack of a rudder was propelling him towards the bottom. He tried religion, therapy, obsessive exercise, drugs, self-help gurus. Nothing helped.

At the bottom of his depths, a spark of inspiration jolted him out of his doom. A crush on his mail carrier brought a tinge of feeling back into his chest and he began to write.

For three months, he barely moved from his desk except to walk around the city and listen to the thrum of life coursing through it. On his laptop, he wrought a war-story. He filled it with love, chaos, shame, and more than anything, pure desperation. The story grew like a vine, stretching and wrapping itself across any branch that it could, building new homes and putting new roots wherever it could. The words moved through him as they had when he was young, and first discovered writing.

He typed the last word and fell into a deep slumber, feeling, for the first time in years, genuine satisfaction. He knew he had written something good.

When he awoke, he felt a stirring in his stomach. Something from the depths of his soul compelled him to print the story, bind it together and post it.

Two weeks later he awoke to a voicemail.

"Hey, kid, this is Bert. I read your little book. There's some good stuff in there, some real feeling... But... It's not funny. There's barely any joy or light in the whole thing, and most of the darkness is useless. The whole thing feels like it's gesturing at something but never quite coming out with it. The language is a bit pretentious, too, you know? I don't know, every time I read one of your metaphors I get a bit confused. The point of words is to communicate, right? And god damn, those sex scenes are just unbearable. Half of them are pre-teen fantasies and the other made me think you're a sick pervert. Just cut them out! I think it could just use a little less doom and gloom and a little more hope, and maybe 800 less pages. Anyways, kid... I don't know what happened with you but, uh, I hope you're doing well, and, uh, I don't know, I'd love it if you came by for dinner sometime."

Six months later, the day of the novel's release, Domenic could not stop himself from refreshing every book review website on the internet. Bert had told him, over pizza and beer the night before, that he should take the day off-line, to avoid spiraling, but the temptation was too strong.

The advance reviews had been overwhelmingly positive, with no hints of critique or negativity at all, but for some reason, Domenic felt hopeful. As he refreshed his browser, the first reviews he saw all seemed to be in the vein of classic Domingo reviews—

"Laugh-out loud funny"

"A spectacle of hope"

"One of the triumphs of the modern age"

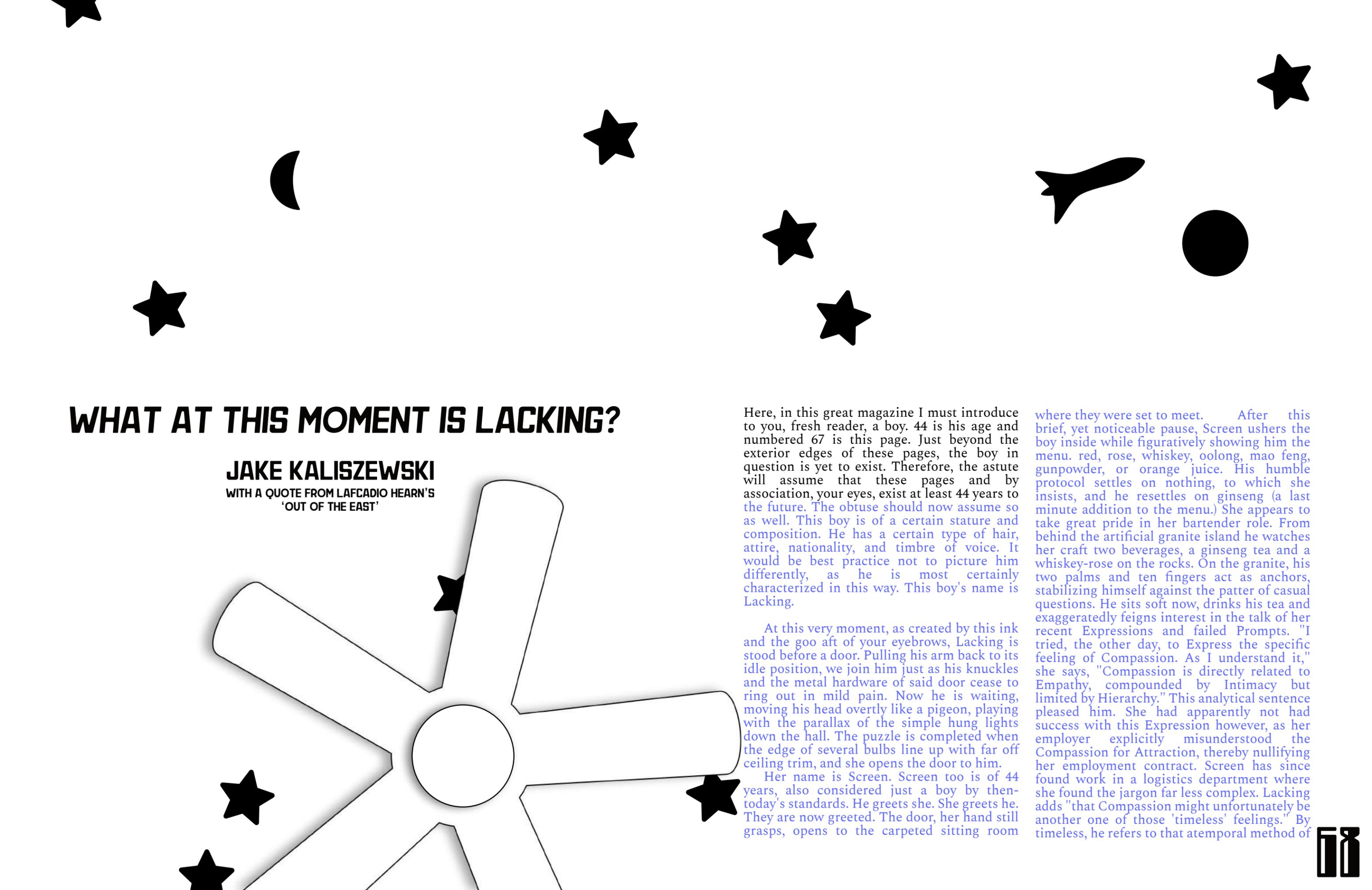
—

But then...

"The women in this book primarily exist merely to satisfy the protagonist's sexual needs. I think the contemporary literary world needs to take a good, hard look at its obsession with Domingo, because, quite frankly, he is a pig."

He let out a whoop of joy and smiled the truest smile he had since his father died.





# WHAT AT THIS MOMENT IS LACKING?

**JAKE KALISZEWSKI**

WITH A QUOTE FROM LAFCADIO HEARN'S  
'OUT OF THE EAST'

Here, in this great magazine I must introduce to you, fresh reader, a boy. 44 is his age and numbered 67 is this page. Just beyond the exterior edges of these pages, the boy in question is yet to exist. Therefore, the astute will assume that these pages and by association, your eyes, exist at least 44 years to the future. The obtuse should now assume so as well. This boy is of a certain stature and composition. He has a certain type of hair, attire, nationality, and timbre of voice. It would be best practice not to picture him differently, as he is most certainly characterized in this way. This boy's name is Lacking.

At this very moment, as created by this ink and the goo aft of your eyebrows, Lacking is stood before a door. Pulling his arm back to its idle position, we join him just as his knuckles and the metal hardware of said door cease to ring out in mild pain. Now he is waiting, moving his head overtly like a pigeon, playing with the parallax of the simple hung lights down the hall. The puzzle is completed when the edge of several bulbs line up with far off ceiling trim, and she opens the door to him.

Her name is Screen. Screen too is of 44 years, also considered just a boy by then-today's standards. He greets she. She greets he. They are now greeted. The door, her hand still grasps, opens to the carpeted sitting room

where they were set to meet. After this brief, yet noticeable pause, Screen ushers the boy inside while figuratively showing him the menu. red, rose, whiskey, oolong, mao feng, gunpowder, or orange juice. His humble protocol settles on nothing, to which she insists, and he resettles on ginseng (a last minute addition to the menu.) She appears to take great pride in her bartender role. From behind the artificial granite island he watches her craft two beverages, a ginseng tea and a whiskey-rose on the rocks. On the granite, his two palms and ten fingers act as anchors, stabilizing himself against the patter of casual questions. He sits soft now, drinks his tea and exaggeratedly feigns interest in the talk of her recent Expressions and failed Prompts. "I tried, the other day, to Express the specific feeling of Compassion. As I understand it," she says, "Compassion is directly related to Empathy, compounded by Intimacy but limited by Hierarchy." This analytical sentence pleased him. She had apparently not had success with this Expression however, as her employer explicitly misunderstood the Compassion for Attraction, thereby nullifying her employment contract. Screen has since found work in a logistics department where she found the jargon far less complex. Lacking adds "that Compassion might unfortunately be another one of those 'timeless' feelings." By timeless, he refers to that atemporal method of

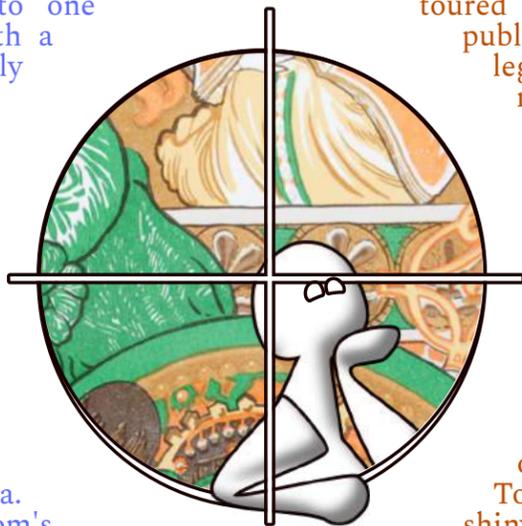


communication legally inaccessible by their generation, which she too understands.

Somewhere between the bartender act and the analytical act, she moved to sit on the same sofa as he. He was aware of her movement, but is only just now aware of the fact that they are actually sitting really close to one another. He indicates this with a now blushed face and acutely inaccurate eye contact. Two quick sips of the alcoholic tea steady the latter, but redden the former. In coming-of-age-rom-com montage fashion, the two young people break each other's conversational boundaries down. Set to sleepy future-music, they undress each other's worries from several cinematic angles and eventually come to a natural conversation free of dogma. Softer and lower into the room's fine furnishings, this leads to that, and well... That of course, involves no palm prints on sweaty glass or romantic climaxes. It leads to an enduring friendship between two like minded souls. From this night forward, their life-long friendship misses the mark of sexual relationship, but instead diverts to professional partnership akin to a law firm: Lastname & Lastname. They produce experiences, experiments, and Expressions, together searching for the meaning of life and the nature of their existence. They die together, successful and revered in their community, leaving behind them a trail of significance...

And the asymmetrical standing chair swivels 20 degrees back to center, such that the blurry screen interface settles directly ahead of Lacking's line of sight. His focus pulls from  $\infty$  to 5m revealing the faded green wallpaper of his office's back wall. 5m to 0.5m; two soft white glowing screens sit side by side, each full of text in 12 pt Times Newer Roman. One page in English and the other in Tagalog. "I used to really force myself to translate," his pretend future-self tells his now-self, as he forces himself to translate. He believes that translating works of fiction and history is by itself an art. It's the most powerful way he's found to distribute perspective across distance and he feels that sharing the lessons of diverse languages is of the utmost importance to society's development. Yet he sits and swivels more often than he moves

ideas from one language to another. It is not the job he was made to do but at a fork he found value in it, so he kept at it. In actuality, Lacking wasn't made to do anything specific.



He was constructed as a show-piece, toured around to conferences and publicity events as one of the first legally sentient man-made machines. The boy gave symbolic handshakes with 14 world leaders, 19 dignitaries, and a gaggle of Princes. For this gesture he was often awarded honorary residence, making him a citizen of 8.2 more countries than the average humanoid. After the unofficially named "Takin'-the-Edge-off-of-Tech-Terror" World Tour came to a close, the once shiny Richards-Robotics hardware gave way to newer, more functional models. Even though he was resigned to storage, his Central Expression Algorithm was continuously updated under its license from the AIden Software company. In the merger of Richards Robotics and a subsidiary of NewtonAI, later acquired by m\*crosoft, our boy was dug out of storage and deemed useful. Although he didn't receive any of the hot-shot m\*crosoft consumer updates, he was accidentally turned into a test bed for several backend subsystems. The hardware throughputs of the early AIden Software script were written into most of m\*csofts military sector autonomous vehicles, which for any engineer wanting to test became a bureaucratic version of Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling. So for the few years where actual vehicles were off limits to the subsystems developers, Lacking was the primary test platform for the groundfeel algorithm and the overtaste algorithm (what the military wanted with acute artificial taste has yet to be disseminated).

While this series of corporate shuffles gifted him with modern intelligence well beyond his years, a major side-effect of his autonomous vehicle days is the deeply ingrained prediction engine. To effectively drive, one must remember recent driving patterns while also forecasting possible road events. Lacking's prediction engine, however, is so advanced that it might as well be time travel. He has the body of a 40 year old, but the mind of a super-advanced

autonomous taxi. Simply put, our boy has the ability to live in any moment, **past**, present, or **future**.

This lifestyle, however, often unintentionally inhibits a productive day of translation.

In his office, Lacking is currently translating a 548 year old Suluan account of the intrepid negotiations with Micronesian Islanders. In this recounting, the King of Mazaua dies a brutal death by the hand of his own people. Lacking now writes this footnote.<sup>1</sup> I now write this footnote.<sup>2</sup> What is now happening to Lacking.<sup>3</sup>

In the blink of an eye, Lacking is now in the polished fourth row, corridor B of an open plan office. The sightlines of corridor B, of course, direct one's eyes to the skyline from high above a major metropolitan area. Down corridor b he is walking, past row 4, now row 5, and he has finally come to the infamous row 6. Once more, he checks the eight pages within the envelope, within his confident grasp, within the office of the Crafters Guild. He's come here to interview for a Crafters grant in traditional pencil making. And got it! Without any of the hard work that usually comes with these sorts of things, our boy went straight for what he wanted and got it. He will be a world class pencil manufacturer, designing and hand crafting boundary defying pencils. While the standard long ones are the best sellers, his personal favorites are the upside down ones and the inside out ones (both sold in long and medium wide 2H-8B).

His pencil company, Unders Westover, slowly but surely settles itself into the pencil pusher scene as one of the great artisan carbon carriers. Pushed by the litigious likes of Larry Lubenhouser and the lawless eleven, The Unders Westover brand identity quickly but tumultuously went from in-the-hands-of-hip-young-illustrators to in-the-hands-of-culture-



conscious-corporate-lawyers. Ultimately bought, sold, subsidiaried, and dissolved, the only leftovers of Unders Westover was a green enamelled industrial pine Mitterer and a great project to look back upon in the rear-view mirror of his hyperactive temporal processing unit. Dammit he says to himself, after this blink of an eye once again reveals the screens on his desk.

Again, he seduced himself into the future. In just 232 milliseconds of a microsleap, Lacking lived a stint as a pencil crafter in the 2080s. Moments earlier, Lacking was a DJ in 2071 and over breakfast, he lived out next week in its entirety. The beautiful life he would live pulls him decades away from the job at hand, and it is amazing. And it is agonizing. Depending on the length of his escapade, it might take years for the hour hand on his wristwatch to advance. At the least controllable of times, Lacking is in perpetual tumble. Moving across his timeline with erratic jumps. He sees the implications of unforeseen events and the perfect symmetry of each story. He moves through each "present" without the

<sup>1</sup> "The problem, however, is that The King of Mazaua is not a king nor are his people 'his.' The English reader must use their imagination to describe the relationship, as neither the idea of King or the possessive 'his' exist in the original language."

<sup>2</sup> For this translation, Lacking has now written four footnotes in this vein and he is starting to get tired. The idea of linguistic determinism used to excite him, however the missing concept of 'possession' in the original language appears not to be as utopian as he had once hoped. The king after all was still murdered by unhappy subjects.

<sup>3</sup> Microsleap: A microsleap is a sudden temporary episode of sleep lasting up to several seconds and is often imperceptible by the individual.

constraint of control, wherein each scenario presents itself with the magical next step. Each divinely calculated for maximum pleasure.

From the finite code that allows his temporal flexibility emerges an inexplicable feeling of intellectual orgasm. Each blinding, joyous, and fearful leap scratches a desire deep within Lacking to justify the path he is on or solve the logistic puzzles of an unfulfilled life. But, just as a dog surprisingly hits the end of its leash, so too does Lacking reach the end of his prediction. At some point, the lust for life yet to be lived flips to pain for life already unlived. The pain comes to the front of his head, fogging over the predicted situation and revealing the one that he 'should' be in. If he could, he would exist solely out of time, yet he is invariably pulled back here, to what we would call "the present moment." It is a feeling of *despair* that awaits his return. It sits frozen waiting for the programming that gives it life. While he has seen his death a thousand times, he knows that the invariable return means he will one day experience it in the sluggish, real time.

He first noted this feeling around the time when his overtaste algorithm started acting up. On one Tuesday in 2045, and every day prior, Lacking tasted food. Every day after this Tuesday, Lacking tasted the hands that prepared the food, the rock that sharpened the knife, and the cosmic forces that made the dirt in which his favorite vegetables grew. One can grow accustomed to the taste of hands. It is much harder, however, to grow accustomed to the passage of time as bodily systems begin to fail and the processes of aging become evident. This simple reminder might have been enough to trigger a vague and deep-seated feeling of hopelessness within Lacking. This hopelessness, for a future that might never be, has grown with him.

It's a dilemma that is tearing him apart. At least 20% of his processing power at any one time goes toward fighting off the future, or disseminating its effects. Is the despair a symptom or a cause, he wonders. Even in this self-reflection, he catches himself adrift.

He catches himself adrift 506,423km above his Boston office. Now he's aware of the fantasy and aware of the despair that waits below, but this is a favorite of his recurring daydreams so he allows it to continue. In that beloved fantasy he is now holding onto the lower aft gantry of a

small-hold Gestalt Class freighter. The gold foiled, boxy craft was retired half a century ago and sat unused until it was bought at auction by Lacking and a dozen internet friends. They turned it into a cramped recreational space explorer and have called it home for the last four weeks of their journey. He looks back towards the dark of the Moon, which the ship passed three weeks ago on their pseudo-scientific expedition to a novel asteroid trailing Mars. Still holding onto an exterior structural member of the ship, Lacking unzips and takes a leak straight toward the deep blue black twinkle of sector nine.<sup>4</sup> Then he goes back inside to resume a conversation with his ex-cloud based friend Screen.

As if she remembered the fact while he was away, she says with surprised geniality "Oh, you are here now..."

Lacking gives a puzzled smile.

"Well you were here the whole time, but now I can tell you are really here." She can see the credence in his eyes that follows him to each place in time.

"I guess you are right." Lacking lowers to the galley floor as far as possible from Screen, which is still close due to the size of the cabin. "I mean, I remember the events before I went outside" he says as he uses his wine glass to point to the dirty dishes, "but I'm pretty sure I was actually back in Boston."

"When?"

"2064...ish"

"I was worrying about my condition" he continues, shuffling over to a small port-hole window at hip height. "I was sitting in my office dreading about what I want to come... Ah nevermind. I was just translating some old rag."

"Well if you were translating, then why are you here? You used to get so wrapped up in your work."

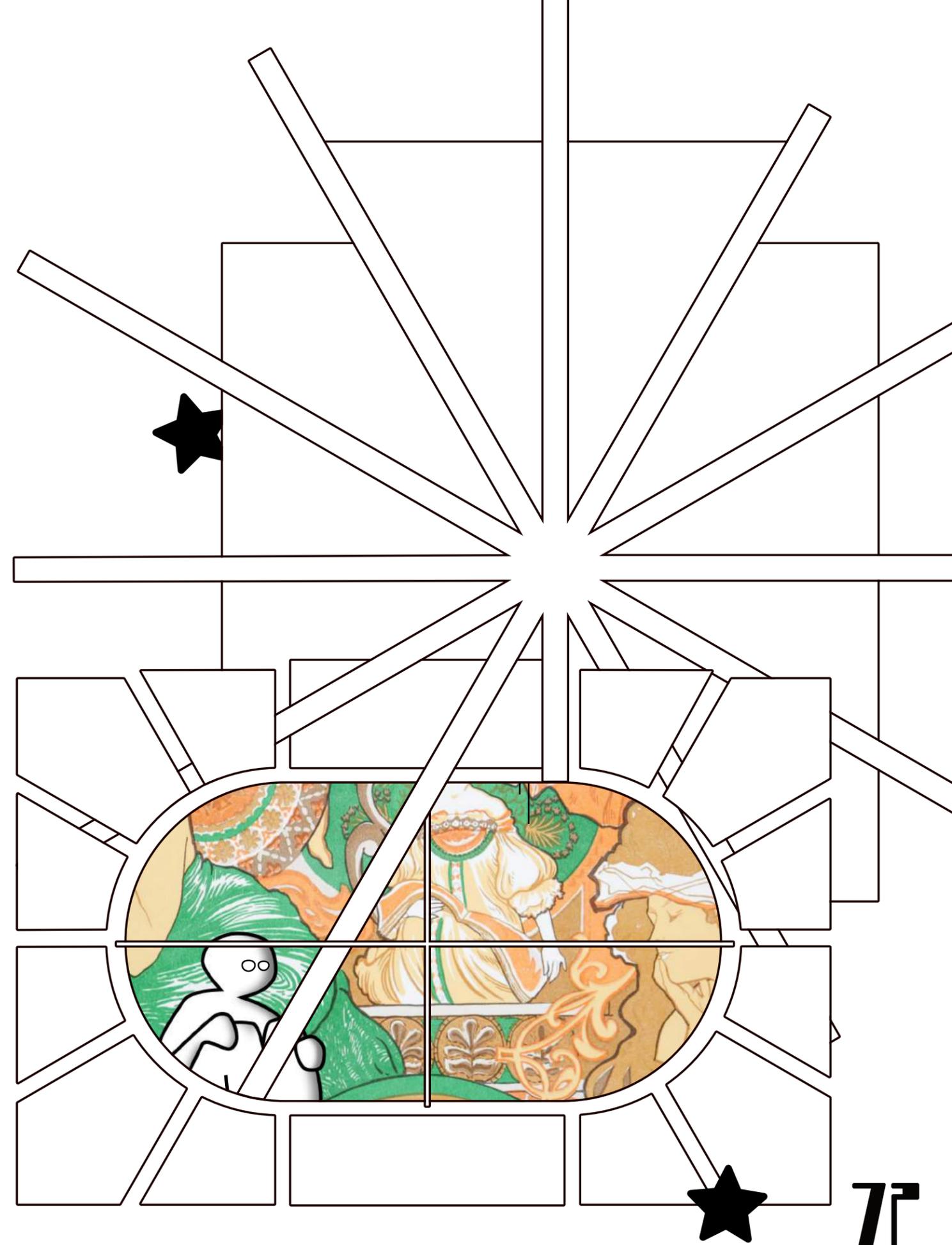
After some time Lacking can only reply with the single word: "oh...Worry."

"And it's driving you insane."

Non-verbal confirmation.

She attempts to give an empathetic anecdote. "I find it hard to decide what the best use of my time is. It's easy now, you know. Keep up on the navigation and make sure that the sprouts don't die. But on a longer timeline, when there isn't a clear destination, I think I

<sup>4</sup> Sector nine is the constellation 3 quarter swivels up-left from Earth. As a constellation, it's so complex it wasn't catalogued until the 9th generation of AutoAstrolabe, named Jim, was created. Lacking coincidentally met Jim in an earlier intergalactic tour and garnered from him this astrological ability of celestial recognition. Ever since, Lacking mainly uses this gift to first spot and then pee specifically towards various constellations.





default to the ...standards of others. I guess I can't stop wondering what my peers would think most interesting of me. Or what my parents would have wanted me to do or what my kindergarten facilitator thought I'd be best at. That's where I go when I space out. Maybe it's the same thing."

Hearing that other people feel the same way makes him feel pathetic.

Screen picks up on a minor eye roll and twist of the mouth so she tries again.

"It may remain for us to learn... that our task is only beginning, and that there will never be given to us even the ghost of any help, save the help of unutterable and unthinkable time."

Lacking suspects that Screen is reading this from her Eye Piece but he can't tell.

"We may have to learn that the infinite whirl of death and birth, out of which we cannot escape, is of our own creation, of our own seeking; -- that the forces integrating worlds are the errors of the Past; -- that the eternal sorrow is but the eternal hunger of insatiable desire; -- and that the burnt-out suns are rekindled only by the inextinguishable passions of vanished lives."

He pauses and recalls what is said, listening back to the last 30 seconds of auditory input. He looks her in the eyes now,

feeling for the first time that he has no time. That he is not in it, but of it. He doesn't feel like he's constantly slipping down the stairway of time because he is also the stairway. And of course there is no rush to traverse the stairs when you are the stairs. When you are that thing that can move you from one place to another.

It is only small, but he is also hit by a feeling of Certainty. A certainty that comes with love revealing itself from the place where it's been hidden. This is compounded by immense Compassion.

"So," Screen asks,

"What, at this moment, is lacking?"

His head yaws to look up and out of the window.

"I don't think I get it." he says with finality.

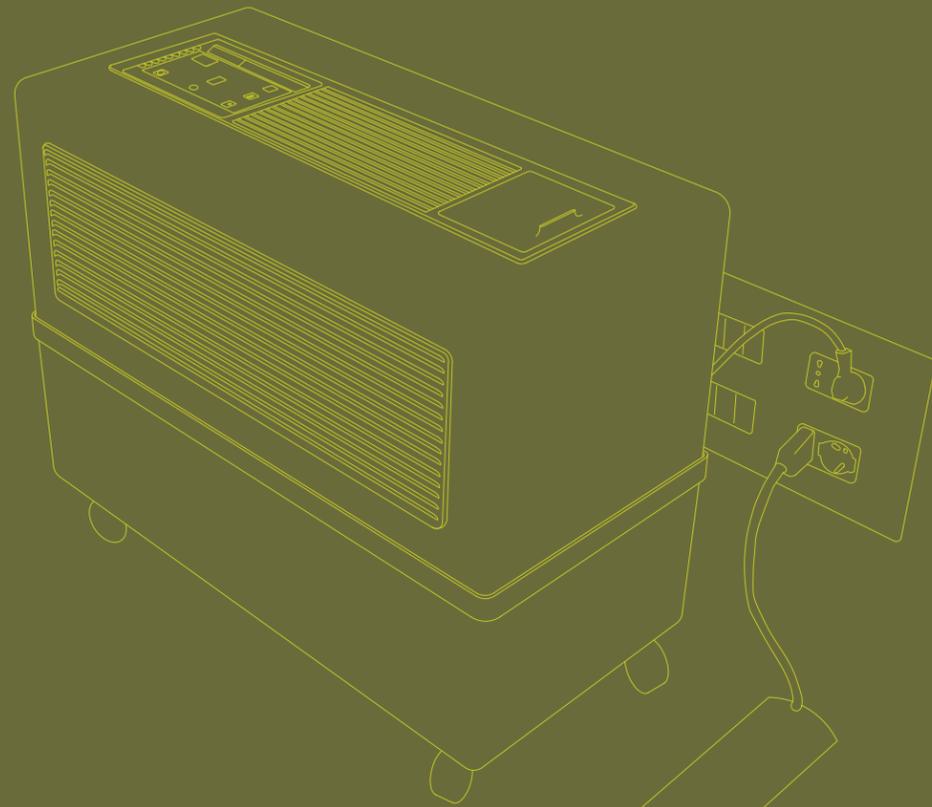
And in a state of exhalation, Lacking becomes nothing but a pair of eyes stood witness to the dark moon and a permanent panorama of stars. He inhales and blinks with intention. This time he chooses to go back to this very moment, the place where this story started.

Lacking surmounts the last step of the four flights of stairs, passes through an open fire door and decides to try going left down the hallway first. His nerves guide him surprisingly quickly to Apartment 23. In a last minute aesthetic check he knocks the crust out of his eyes, then knocks on the door. He thinks briefly about the great light of the moon. And that it is simply the dim reflection of a star. Seemingly in slow motion he brings his arm down by his side, puts his hand in his pocket, takes it out of his pocket, looks down the hall, calculates some angles, executes a bizarre head movement, and the sound of the door latch sings.

Even slower now, the door opens and she appears. The light of the Sun blasts through a window behind her and engulfs their two figures entirely. In preparation for an awkward first greeting, time utterly ceases and Lacking stays in this moment forever.

# NATURAL HABITAT

WILLIAM BUTTON



A dull murmur fills the air. The shoulders and necks of the paying public surround you in a sea of black and blue, as amber light ricochets off freshly painted walls. People move in perfect aqueous unison, flowing from room to room with ruminative steps. You watch as those around you gravitate like moths toward keyholes of light projected onto walls and floors. Perfectly framed in these crisply lit apertures are objects. Some old, some new, all important enough to warrant their place in the light.

After some time following the current of bodies, drifting from spotlight to spotlight, a perfectly palm sized gold and ruby brooch catches your eye. It sits in an anodised aluminium mount, an arms length away. Looking into the darkness beyond the stark lights, you glance toward the corner of the gallery. Your eyes adjust slowly, and you pick out the binary LED flick of a security camera. You follow the length of heavily painted cable extending from beneath the cameras casing, which disappears into the labyrinthine innards of a wall. You wonder for a moment, where does it go?

When was the last time you walked around a museum, gallery or other institution which houses objects of value? At some point, your eyes may have tired of the dead man's work you have paid two hours wages to see. And as your mind wandered, did the paint begin to crack in front of you? Wood-worm begin to crumble gilt frames to sawdust and the canvas erupt with a thousand Webbing clothes moth larvae? Did wax busts effervesce in the midday sun and Pentelic marble Lapiths become gouged with valleys of red and green sublimate, left by a hundred years of rainwater.

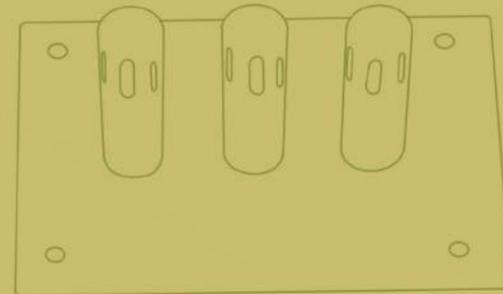
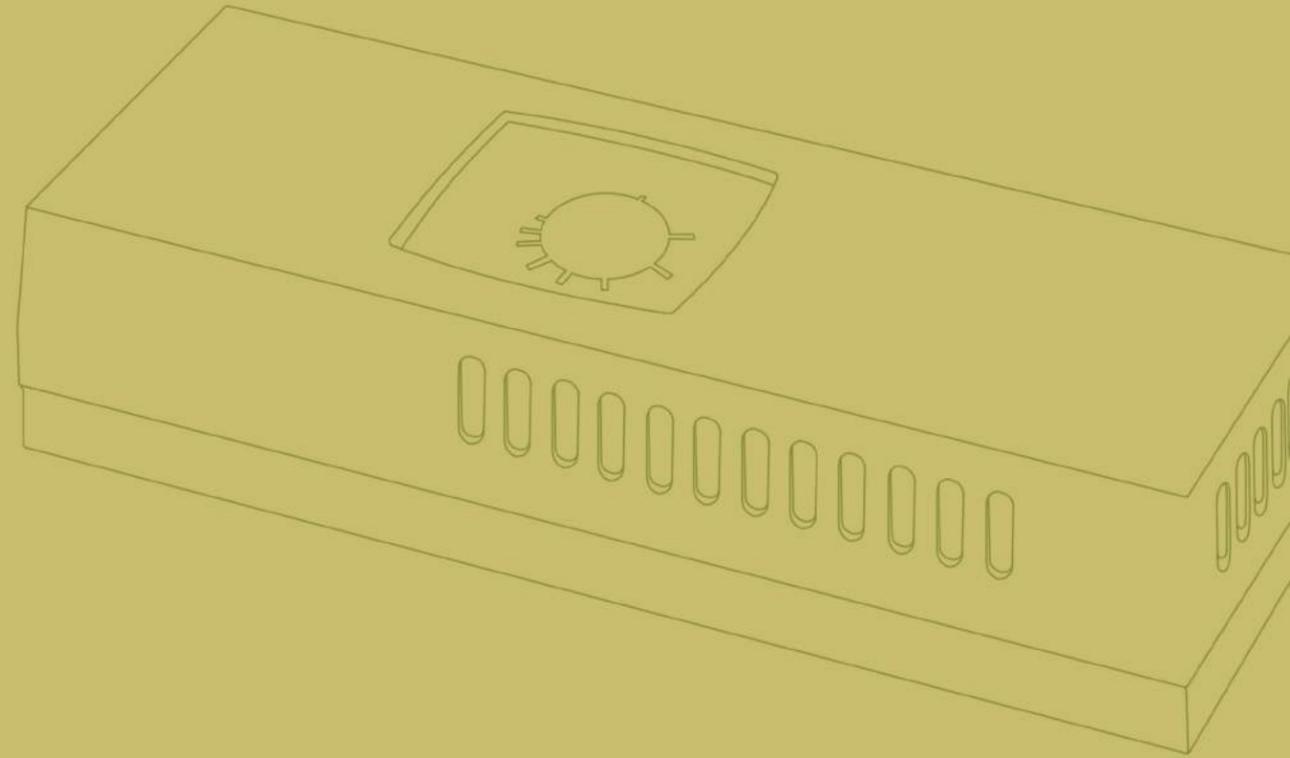
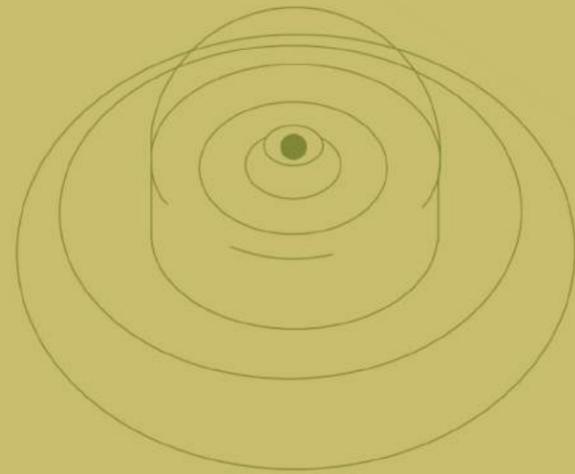
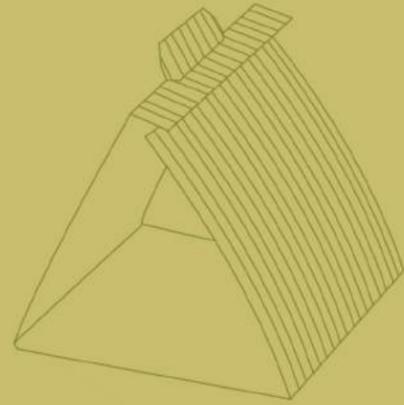
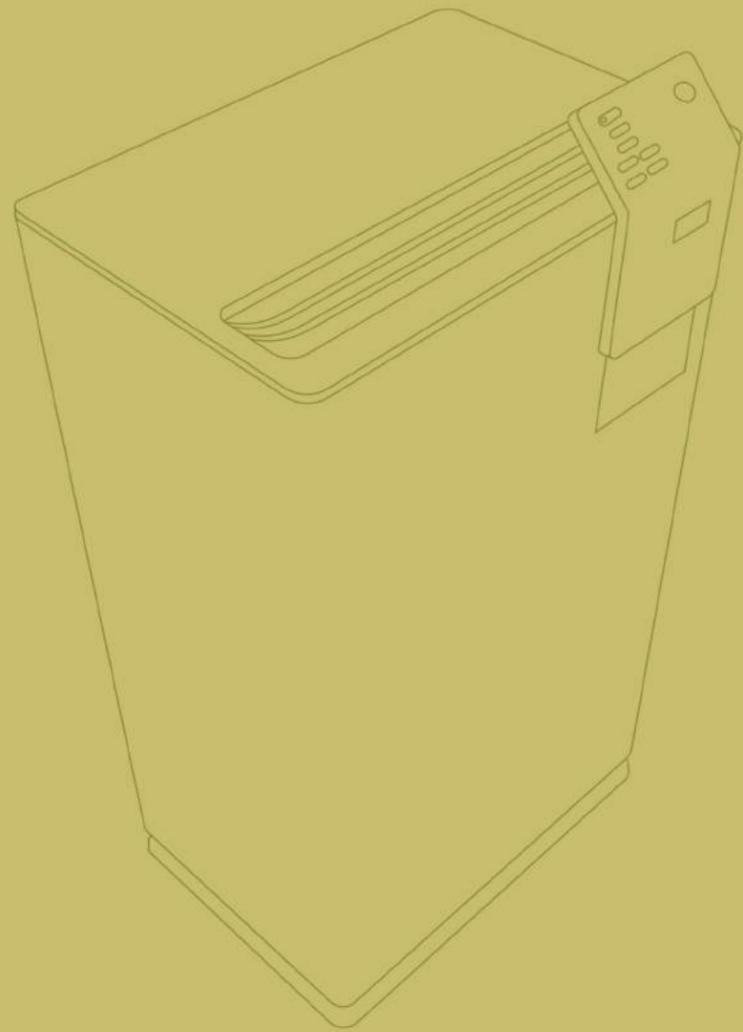
And when none of these things happened, did you peer behind a frame? Looking back into the shadow gap, you might have noticed a faded tan box with a glass faced dial, slipped snugly into its plastic holster. In the space between two sculptures, did you pause for a moment, your eyes passing over a neat concertina of striped card, bent into a prism? Or turning to examine the next painting, glance at the knee high plastic box, humming softly to itself amongst the shins of other gallery goers.

Once I saw these objects, positioned and coloured so as to draw as little attention to themselves as possible, I couldn't help but notice them. Even the most minute objects are cast into stark relief against textureless walls. Incognito and yet incongruous, their forms are hard to ignore in such heavily fetishised and curated environments.

The function of the objects in question is to maintain the homeostasis of a museum or gallery. These regulatory systems are put in place by specialist conservators on behalf of institutions which house potentially unstable or corruptible assets. Such stringent monitoring systems are therefore predominantly used for historical objects. More specifically, objects which may have been historically exposed to damaging environments and contaminants, such as mould, an infestation of clothes moths or even dehydration. And whilst everyday entities and even the buildings that house the aforementioned objects crumble, we as humans have become increasingly concerned with the preservation of articles which allow us to recall a narrative surrounding our origins. Or rather, shareholders have become more concerned with the preservation of a particular history that they wish to perpetuate, situating themselves at its centre.

It has been known for institutions to consider some storage conditions unsuitable for preserving historical artefacts, and so requisition objects, so that they may be monitored more closely. Through the acts of surveillance and protection value is manufactured, and thus more protection is requisite. This cycle has grown some museums to bloated masses, where, weighed down by their desire to control and protect, they are unable to display even 1% of their collection.

Picture for a moment, a dimly lit corridor, extending beyond the horizon. The temperature is regulated between 15.5°C & 21°C and the humidity is kept below 60%. Either side of you tower grey laminate cupboards, and on every door, a table of contents is tucked into a softly yellowing line-bent acrylic plaque. The latin names of hundreds-of-thousands of animals, plants, minerals, human remains, sacred objects and tools, taken from every corner of the earth, are neatly printed in times new roman on a sheet of discolouring card. You stretch out a palm toward the cupboards cool brass handle and pull, but the door is locked and the keys are nowhere to be found.





10. Mediocrity is a form of non-being. Greatness is obsessed with permanence, weathering the sands of time and impacting generations. Perhaps the truest gauge of a mediocre work is how quickly it is forgotten. Artists like Sade or Portishead, derided as mediocre dinner party fodder in their heyday, have since achieved legendary status in their respective genres. I would make the same case for Dido, whose run of highly polished, almost pathologically ordinary hits in the early 2000s earned her the epithet "Queen of Beige". Yet Dido's beige-ness contains emotional shading, and her relentlessly domestic lyrical focus sounds far more apt in our era of casual apocalypse. Real mediocrity is gestural, the failure to fully embody an emotion or a mood; it is not merely about moods perceived to be uninteresting.

11. There is such thing as a mediocre sublime, a pure state of bewildering adequacy, in which the banal, the normative, the middling and the specific come together to form something oddly captivating. My pantheon of sublime mediocrity may include:

The aforementioned "Life" by Des'ree  
Dinner Date  
"Together We are Beautiful" by Fern Kinney  
Ladies of London  
Blackpink  
Fred...again

12. The aesthetics of mediocrity are not the same thing as camp. Camp is delusional, even manic in its confidence; it bites off more than it can chew; it is defined by excessive ambition which fails, making a dramatic scene in the process. The pleasures of mediocrity are meeker, weaker. If camp is failed seriousness; mediocre works don't take themselves seriously enough. Figures like baileyjmill, while dealing with the aesthetics of mediocrity, are never mediocre in sensibility.

13. Greatness was to some extent invented by the Victorians with their "great men of history" theory. Before that, a comparative lack of social mobility and the influence of Christian dogma gave mediocrity a predictive character: mediocre or "average" selfhood is not something to be ashamed of because in the eyes of the Lord, none of compare to his Greatness. Mediocrity, by contrast, is atheistic; it does not reach towards divinity but centres itself within the aesthetic spectrum.

14. In David Guetta and Bebe Rexha's "I'm Good" and its astonishingly unimaginative sampling of "Blue" by Eiffel 95, the pain and pleasure of the song stem from its fundamental contradiction: that humans have made this. The resistance to mediocrity is in some ways life-affirming; we have a great enough belief in the possibilities of what we can achieve that we shrink away from the uncanny sensation of promise undelivered. I look forward to the new mediocre potentials of AI, at which mediocrity, divorced from the humans who make it, will be able to self sustain.



# NICETIME

NATHAN GANTZ

*Hi. I'm Nathan, I'm a performing artist and musician living in Brooklyn. I have been organizing a series of outdoor concerts, called Nicetime, that showcase a diverse range of artists and artistic expression including music, dance, meditation, and visual art. Our collective aim is to create concert experiences that embrace a profound connection with the surrounding environment.*

*As an artist based in a large city, I spend too much time working within enclosed spaces, poorly ventilated rooms and venues where it's clear who's overworked and underpaid. If you know you know, It's pretty fucked up.*

*We've been longing to detach from the world of everyday consumerism. We've waiting to be immersed in an ethereal real-life artistic encounter. The opportunity to put on great sounding, affordable shows in forests, churches, on rooftops etc. holds tremendous value for me and my friends. If you're like us and are inspired by spaces and the world IRL, keep reading.*

*These events have become transcendent experiences for both performers and spectators alike. It's been really nice to gather with people with a similar longing to connect in this way. I want to continue to curate shows combining exceptional artists with appreciative audiences within a memorable space.*

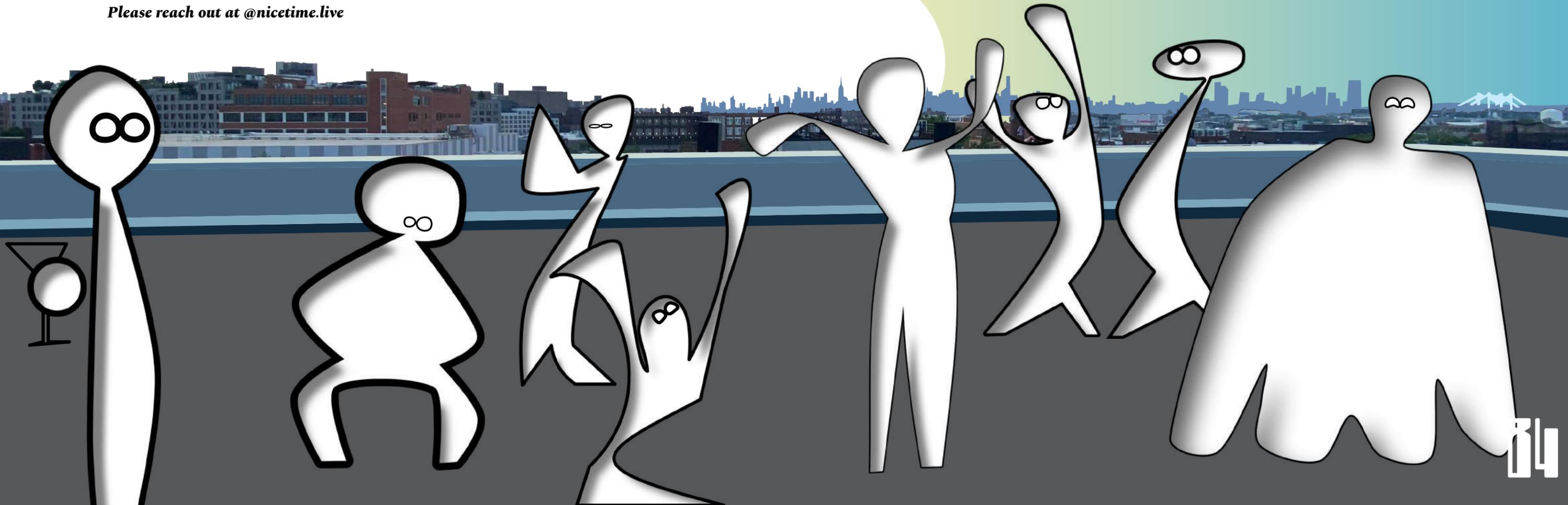
*So what do I want from you? Reader of this magazine? Nicetime wants to come to you. This is a call for communication.*

*If you are an artist or art-lover with a community of a similar ethos, please reach out. If you know of a really special place that is begging to host a Nicetime event, please reach out. Maybe it's your uncle's backyard, maybe it's that abandoned lot, maybe it's that river bank you go to to cry.*

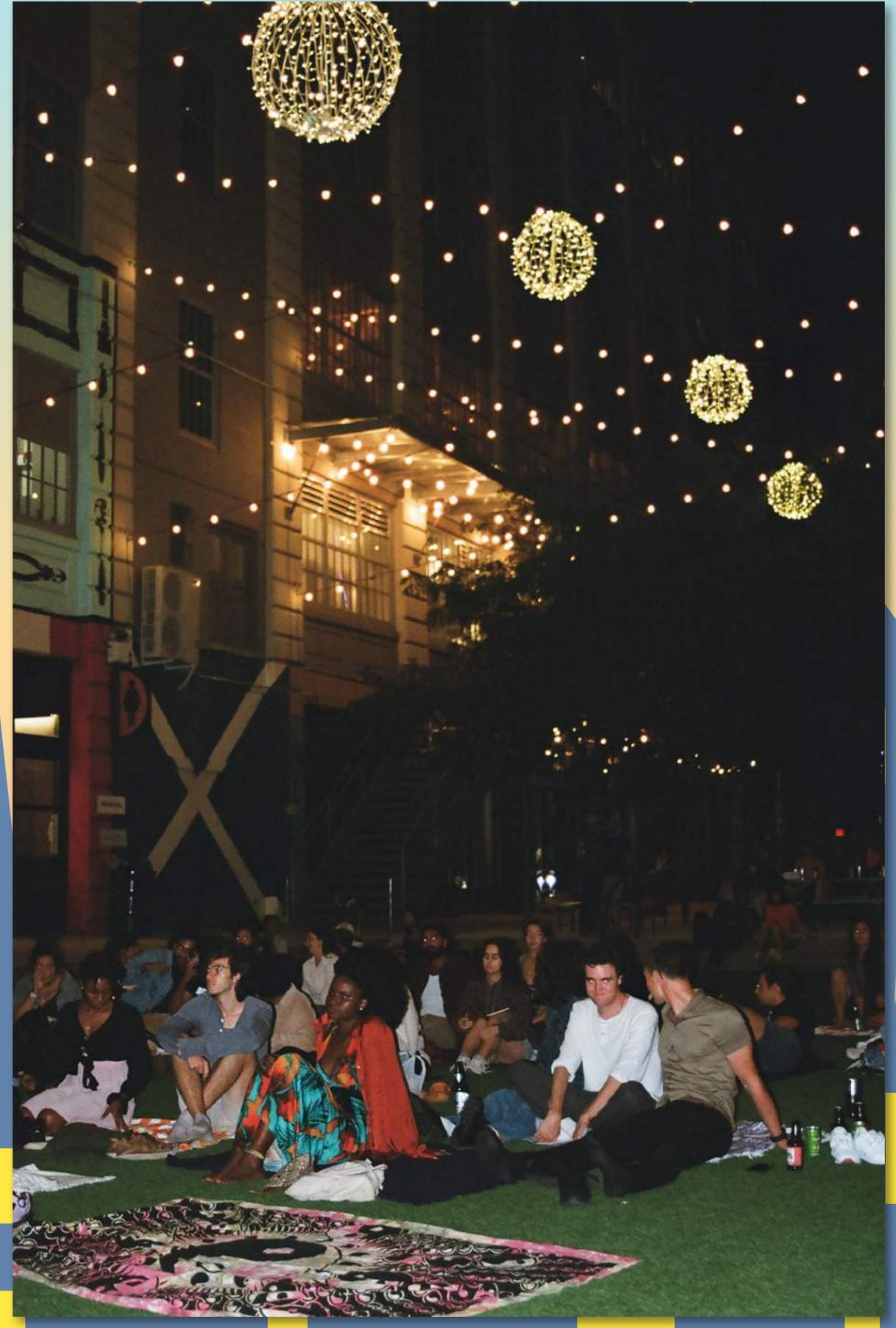
*Securing locations is half the battle. The other half is spreading the word to get your people there. The third half is the technical part, but our team will figure that out. Let's put on a show.*

Love,  
Nathan

Please reach out at [@nicetime.live](https://www.instagram.com/nicetime.live)







CO



Matthew



Luigi

NTRIBU



Minna



Conner



Aidan



Maria



Boone



Jake



William



Luis



Levi

TO



Nathan

RS



Matteo

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