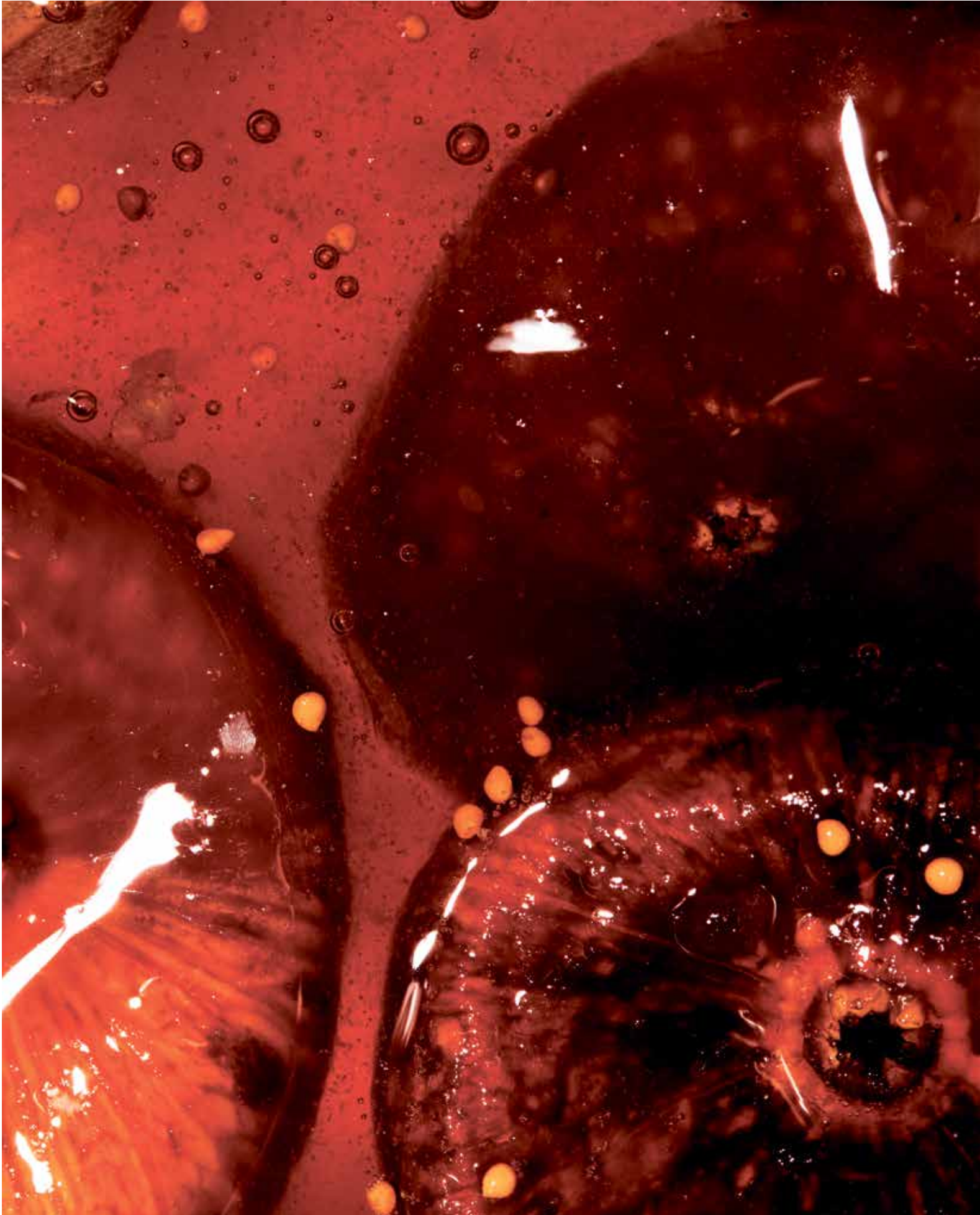


Paradiso

Issue 21

Begin

2022



We are the creative consciousness ...

am free

Featuring: Blak Douglas, Jessie Prince, Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran and Paul Barbera. Plus: So, so, so, so, incredibly delicious, a discerning food review, Rainbow Homes of the Rainbow Region, a look at three joyful spaces and Back Pedal, an honest behind-the-scenes travel story.



Postcard from Paradiso

PHOTOGRAPH AND WORDS BY CLEMENTINE BOURKE

"Ich Möchte zwei Brezeln, Bitte"
 "Mi Scusi?"
 "Ah...Zwei Brezeln, bitte?"
 "Brezeln?"

The man at the counter stares blankly at me. I stare confusedly back at him. Nathan looks at me, a smile tugging at the edges of his lips. After two weeks in Italy, I was excited to go to the mostly German-speaking province of South Tyrol in the Italian Alps so I could show off my highschool German to my partner. Unfortunately, I managed to find the one non-German-speaking exception to the rule at one of the crystalline lakes in the southern Dolomites. The pretzel vendor spoke no German and all I could say in Italian was grazie. Needless to say, I scampered away - no pretzel and tail between my legs.

No.21

Editors' Letter

b e g i n

Hi.

You may have noticed that you haven't heard from us in a while. The start of the year felt heavy for a lot of us and we wanted to take a hiatus to recoup and regather. We caught ourselves saying, "when the dust settles, I'll do x, y or z," but it seems that the dust never really settled. It makes us wonder about this commonly-held notion - delusion, perhaps - of there being some point in the future when we'll feel like we've arrived, or things will feel complete. Perhaps we're always incomplete, forever-nascent, constantly beginning.

Donna Harraway explores this notion in her book, *Staying with the Trouble*:

Kainos (Greek) means now, a time for beginnings, a time for ongoing, for freshness ... there is nothing in times of beginnings that insists on wiping out what has come before, or indeed, wiping out what comes after.

We wanted to come out of hibernation to a lively celebration of creativity, despite it all. And the ultimate hurdle for a lot of us creatives seems to be simply beginning.

With new energy and a slightly new structure (Anna and Nat are co-editing the magazine now!), we create from a place that is different from before - we're the same people, but also not. We've cleaned mud out of each other's homes, we've raised babies and families, we've moved houses. The slate isn't wiped clean, and we don't know what is to come, but we embrace the opportunity to begin again. And we invite you to do the same. Whether it's beginning a new day, a new chapter, or a new hour.

The opportunity to begin is infinite.

Love,
Team Paradiso
 x

Paradiso is created on the land of the Arakwal people of the Bundjalung nation. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians and elders of this land. And we extend that respect to the traditional owners of wherever this magazine is read.

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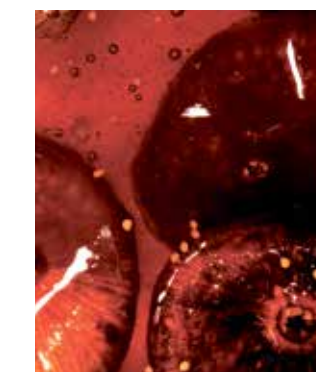
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Cover by Jessie Prince



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Meet The Numbersmiths

Mel Watson wants to blow money shame out of the water for everyone – especially creatives. And, considering how screwed up most creatives’ relationship to money is (thanks, Starving Artist Complex), this is no small feat. Armed with a team of uncharacteristically cool bookkeepers and accountants, The Numbersmiths take a holistic approach to all your money woes. If you want to see your business succeed but you don’t know how to get there, these guys will dig deep and help you figure out what’s holding you back from feeling genuinely excited about making a living for yourself. For so many of us freelancers feeling absolutely lost in the soup of taxes, invoices, and “knowing your worth”, these services are an actual balm for the broke-ass soul. Perhaps, one day, we might actually be able to have our avo toast and a property too!

Book a free chat with Mel via thenumbersmiths.com.au



Seashanty

One of the most amazing things about living in this area is being able to witness and experience the many beautiful moods of the ocean and all the life that it holds. From the first whale making its way north, to watching seabirds hurl themselves into the swell from great heights, to seeing dolphins slide in and out of the waves ... Most of us that live in the area do so because we love the sea. Seashanty Organics is a skincare brand driven by this same ethos – a deep love and desire to re-establish and maintain our personal connection with nature. Harnessing the sustainable power of seaweed for both skin and planet, Seashanty draws upon age-old family history as much as it does on modern green science to formulate deeply nourishing skincare products that actually work. Seaweed improves skin wrinkles in 45 per cent of subjects, reduces wrinkle visibility in 100 per cent of subjects, and reduces reddening by up to 45 per cent. And while the impact of bio-active seaweed extracts on our skin is truly amazing, the earthly benefits of seaweed is the real game-changer. As a sequester of carbon from our environment, seaweed takes five times the rate of carbon than any land-based plant. Do you see seaweed in your future? We certainly do.

seashantyorganics.com.au



Odette & Co.

Ok, pop quiz: what is PR? If you don't know the answer, you're not alone. Even Odette's mum doesn't know what PR is – and Odette's been in the industry for 13 years. But if you've ever wondered how small business owners get a leg-up in their industry (and why kale, celery and cauliflower went from daggy salad-bar fillers to haute cuisine overnight), the answer is PR. Odette Barry, founder of Odette & Co., has secured media coverage for hundreds of incredibly talented people and purposeful brands – and she wants to teach you how to do it for your business, too. Hack Your Own PR is an eight-week mentoring program for motivated small business owners who have zero time to spare and not a single dollar to waste. If you have a burning story to tell, or if your product or service is breaking new ground and people need to know about, Hack Your Own PR is your opportunity to learn how to pitch your story to media publications and win national headlines. Sign up to learn how to create rapid visibility and turn your brand into a household name with PR.

www.odetteandco.com.au

All understanding begins with our not accepting the world as it appears.

– Susan Sontag

CLIMBING JUNGLE

Finally, some good news for all the crag nerds out there! In Ballina's slow but constant move towards coolness, a new climbing gym has just opened in the Ballina Industrial Estate. This schmick, new, state-of-the-art indoor climbing centre boasts 15 metre high walls offering lead climbing, speed climbing and bouldering. We don't know why nobody's done this sooner, but we sure are happy it's here. Open Thursday to Sunday, 11am-7pm. 28 Smith Drive, Ballina.



Bar Heather

Delicious things have been rolling into town quite frequently lately. With bookings now live at Bar Heather, get ready to welcome a natural wine bar “with serious clout,” to the neighbourhood. From James Audas, Tom Sheer (of Luna Wine Store and Lo-fi Wines) and chef Ollie Wong-Hee (of Ester and Sixpenny), this French, fun and moody 60-seater restaurant is sure to take things up a notch or two. Pairing food with wine, instead of the other way around, we're excited to see what fills our glasses, plates, and bellies.

barheather.com

THE LITTLE POET BOOKSTORE

Once you've discovered the potential worlds that books can hold, there's no looking back. But The Little Poet Bookstore, tucked into one of the labyrinthine corners of Byron's Industrial Estate, or induzzi, takes these potential worlds one step further. What started as a dusty pile of worn books has now evolved into a thriving venue hosting exhibitions, gigs, and workshops. Check out their website to find out what's coming up this spring.

www.thelittlepoetbookstore.com



We are a creative studio – we make brands and magazines.

Muse Muse

Base: Byron Bay—Melbourne
Working w/: The World

studiomusemuse.com

So, so, so, so, incredibly delicious



Date night? Family in town? Overdue catch-up with interstate friends? Look no further. Bistro Livi, in Murwillumbah, is where you can, and should, take anybody who loves good food. Simple yet sophisticated in style and flavour, we found that this European-inspired corner bistro is the perfect place to spend a Saturday afternoon.

This was meant to be a discerning food review. I was taking notes, trying to be awake to the subtleties, but all I could say about the food was: “This is the best.” Or, “Wow, so tasty.” There goes my career as a critic. Every sense totally disarmed at the slurp of the first oyster. To be fair, the oysters were unlike any other oyster I’d ever tasted. They were firm, fresh and perfectly briny. Maybe, I’d never had a proper oyster before this moment. The texture was like biting into midsummer stone fruit – the right amount of give, the right amount of resistance. These, paired with Heiwa Shuzo Yuzusho, a divine mix of sake and yuzu juice, sent me straight to Cloud Nine. Start like this and can the rest of the meal get any better? Yes, at Bistro Livi it can. The hours flew by as we feasted on Cantabrian anchovies, jamon Iberico de Bellota, Pippies from South Ballina with ‘nduja, and braised Madagascar beans grown by Robert’s (of Nomadic Kitchen) dad, in Stanthorpe. By the last dish of set cream with local honey, we were in heaven. Who knew? Heaven, right in the heart of Murwillumbah.

Anna Hutchcroft has a chat with Danni Wilson, one of Bistro Livi’s co-founders, about what they do and the food they care about. Photos by Jessie Prince.



Bistro Livi has often been described as a European-style restaurant. Aside from the Spanish influences on the menu, are there any other parts of European culture that influence the way you run the bistro?

The way we run Livi, day-to-day, is really an amalgam of many cultural influences – some could be referenced to European ways of approaching life. In creating Livi, we wanted to be able to curate a space in which we could present simple, considered, shared plates which is very much a part of European culture. We want guests to feel welcome and comforted. This can only be achieved if there is a certain level of calm in our approach to service and also in the way we hold ourselves in the space. In some ways, we look to senses of European elegance to achieve this.

What are some dishes that you, Nikki and Ewen, really love eating together?

Oysters and a glass of sherry at the end of the week is something we all love. Hainanese chicken rice and omelettes with a little salad from the garden dressed in chardonnay vinegar are always on high rotation.

What were you guys doing before Bistro Livi?

Nikky and Ewen spent the last decade working together at Movida, in Melbourne. Ewen was head chef for quite some time while Nikky managed the floor. I left Melbourne three years prior to opening Livi, and moved back to the Northern Rivers. I gave hospitality a break and tried my hand out as a house painter, which I loved.

The dream was always to open up a restaurant together. When the stars aligned, both Nikky and Ewen made the move north. Then, we set out searching for a space.

What kind of food did you grow up on?

Nikky and I were spoiled by having European grandparents. Our grandmother was an incredible cook, influenced by her upbringing in Morocco and France. We both have extremely fond memories of long lunches outside with her and our grandfather. There were always the French classics accompanied with bread (always lathered in butter). The property they lived on neighboured a mango farm. We remember always eating mangoes.

Ewen grew up on the south coast of Western Australia, surrounded by wonderful produce. His father was an eager cook. They would snap up herring and smoke them in the summertime out at the beach and catch blue swimmer crabs in the harbour, cook them and eat with a splash of vinegar. He remembers his Nanna, who was also fond of food, pulling the thinnest of strudel dough over her dining table and filling it with apples, cinnamon and brown sugar.





When you guys were dreaming up the concept for the restaurant with Flack Studio, what were some things that felt important to you? How did these things show up in the design of the space?

The most important design elements for us when creating Livi were warmth, lighting and sound.

We love how we can see these things appear in the Arrotato flooring, beautiful handmade terracotta tiles (each with subtle differences) and the very alluring Pitt & Giblin speakers – handcrafted by two young makers in Tasmania. These, combined with the cedar slatted ceiling, help create a sound that we feel is important in a restaurant.

What's the philosophy behind the delicious drinks list?

Our philosophy behind the drinks list is to complement the food.

It is a concise and considered list. Because of this, all the wines need to represent quality at each level while also offering enough diversity across a relatively short selection. Nikky has a palate that is appreciative of the experimental but also reveres the classics. So, hopefully there is something for everyone.

We focus on producers who are doing the right thing by the land that they occupy, employing either regenerative, biodynamic or organic practices. This is both because we believe that farming practices should give back, but also because more often than not, the wine is reflective of the level of care which is provided to the land.

You guys opened in January, a couple of months before the floods. Despite being under at least a metre of water, you were back up and running again in March. Now, the restaurant shows no signs of being submerged in the muck. How did you do it all so fast?

We were extremely fortunate. As soon as we could access the restaurant, and with the support of the local community, friends, suppliers and our wonderful builder, we got the restaurant back up and running in five weeks.

What's your favourite thing about running a restaurant in the Northern Rivers?

When opening the restaurant, we set out to create a work life with more balance. Albeit fairly new, my favourite thing about running a restaurant in the Northern Rivers is simply that: the lifestyle.



Cheeses Loves You

The team at Paradiso have long been diehard fans of the incredible cheeses that Debra Allard makes under her business, Cheeses Loves You. Many editing, proofing and designing sessions have been fuelled by Debra's cheeses, so we thought it was about time that we found out more! Words by Nat Woods. Photos by Lila Theodoros.

Debra, how did you come up with the genius name, Cheeses Loves You?

Well ... I married my husband, almost 30 years ago, and he has three sisters who were very religious but followed different religions. They all used to challenge each other's religious choices. I then decided Cheeses was my Saviour.

How did your journey with making cheese begin?

I attended a weekend cheesemaking course with a few friends about 15 years ago and was hooked from the first minute. I started a little cheese factory a year later with one of the friends who had a dairy and away we went with basic cheese making knowledge. When that business closed down four years later, I started hosting cheese making classes in the local hall and that funded my overseas and interstate travels to gain greater cheese understanding. I went to the UK and was fortunate to be welcomed into several small cheese factories for a day. I went to France and had a week with a French cheese guru and that was where I learnt to relax and just enjoy the experience. New York has a cheese factory right in Manhattan and I watched them make cheddar. During their breaks the cheesemakers sat and chatted to me. I attended the amazing Cheese Festival in Bra, Italy where we booked into cheese matching courses with our translating headphones on. One session was matching bubbles with Comte, another was different local mozzarella and local beers. I'm pretty much stuck in the cheese factory now but I was so grateful for the vast experiences. Six years ago, we restarted the dairy on the 125-year-old family farm where we are now milking 95 stunningly beautiful Jersey cows. I use about 1500 litres of the milk to make cheese every week in the cheese factory and the rest of the milk is sold to Norco.

Perhaps an impossible question, but which cheese is the funnest to make and why?

I love making mozzarella. It is the most technically difficult but the stretching at the end produces very interesting shapes!

It is quite mind-boggling that you can take the one same ingredient, milk, and turn it into so many different variations of cheese (not to mention butter and yoghurt and all the other dairy yums!) – what is it that makes hard cheese hard and soft cheese soft?

Different bacterial cultures, the temperature of the milk and the amount of time the curd is stirred. For hard cheese, the temperature at stirring is between 42-50 degrees celsius. The higher the temp, the harder the cheese. And the longer the stir, the harder the cheese – Jarlsberg is 30 minutes, hard aged romano is 90 minutes, brie is one minute and stracchino is just a cut then hooped 30 minutes later.

I recently made ricotta for the first time ever and was impressed with how easy it is, but it also made me think about Little Miss Muffet eating her curds and whey ... is, or was, that a done thing, to eat curds and whey? Is she basically eating ricotta before it's strained?

No, I would say she had warm milk set with rennet or junket tablets – you might not be old enough to remember junket, but it is delicious. As you scoop the curd the whey rises and that is delicious too. Ricotta is a curd though, but I can imagine hers was more soft and dessert-like.

Your dairy is a Norco dairy – can you please share what Norco is and why people should support it by buying their products?

Norco is a processor of raw milk picked up every two days from dairies from South Qld to mid North Coast NSW. It is the only farmer-owned dairy in Australia. This means the farmers all own shares, we make the decisions and any profit goes back to the farmers. I want all the readers of this article to go to your fridge, pick up your milk bottle and if you can't see a picture of Jim on the bottle then you are buying the wrong milk and you should be ashamed of yourselves!

Lastly, what cheese is on your plate today?

I opened a piece of St Allards (the Patron Saint of the Allard family). It is a Tilsit style, a semi hard swiss cheese that has salty, burnt butter notes but is a smooth cut with an aged rind. I am lactose intolerant so can't eat much cheese and sadly can't drink the milk!

You can find Cheeses Loves You at delis and local farmers' markets in the Northern Rivers. @debra_allard_cheesie



Rainbow Homes of the Rainbow Region

Maybe it was the months of lockdown, then months of rain and then babies, but being confined to my home for so much of the past two years has really made me consider splashing more colour on my walls. As much as I admire those who can maintain a beautiful, minimalist, neutral, matchy-matchy home, I am so much more impressed by people who can somehow throw all the colours of the rainbow into their living spaces and still end up with a space that works. If you're stuck inside looking at your white walls and pondering a change, here are three joyful homes where rainbows are welcomed inside. Words by Nat Woods.

Mylee and Ozzy's Happy Sunhouse

Where is your home and who lives here?

Our off-grid 1950's home is in Broadwater National Park on Bundjalung Country. It sits somewhere along an empty 40 kilometre long beach that connects Ballina and Evans Head. Untouched nature surrounds the home in every direction. It's a place my family and I once lived, however, these days it's used as a creative space and a place for people to tap out and holiday.

What is your approach to colour when decorating your home?

Selecting colours is not something I generally plan out or over think. I usually throw everything together and if it feels too chaotic, I'll refine a little. I wanted to splash the colour green around as a way of inviting nature in. I've always loved the playful combination of green and red that features heavily in one of my favourite french films, *Amelie*.

I grew up in an artistic and colourful home. Pieces had a story and were collected mainly from roadside cleanups and secondhand stores so this naturally influences my approach. Part of me wanted to cover the house in rainbows and part of me wanted to be sensitive to the fact it's a shared space and not everyone loves to live with colour. There are certainly modern and neutral elements (with a side of eccentricity). My good friend and upholsterer, Paige Miller, my partner Ozzy Wright and I went ham on restoring an old couch. We used velvet in all our favourite colours and blasted "Ride The Rainbow" in lettering on the back. It's definitely the funnest piece in the home.

Favourite space in your home and why?

Favourite space is the sunny front deck overlooking the vast northern vista. It's my favourite morning coffee spot to watch the changing light on a sparkling sea and friendly birds singing their morning song.

Any changes you're dreaming of making to your home?

I'd love to open the house up a little to take advantage of both the northern and southern outlooks. We're planning on building a bathroom inside (as the 50's shack only has one separate bathhouse ten steps from the house). I quite like the charm and experience of a separate bathhouse/dunny, however I'm sure not everyone appreciates this as much as I do!

Favourite colour right now?

I've been drawn to royal blue lately. I find myself pulling it out of my wardrobe to wear although I haven't integrated it into my interior space too much! In the past I've viewed it as a conservative colour although these days I see its depth, mystery and creative powers.

Photographed by Nat McComas
@natmccomas



Carter and Jack's Lismore Home

Where is your home and who lives here?

We bought a house in Lismore just over a year ago and I live there with my partner, two daughters and dog.

What is your approach to colour when decorating your home?

I don't actually know how I chose the colours for each room, I just had a feeling once I walked through the house and understood where the light was coming in at different parts of the day.

Favourite space in your home and why?

My bedroom because it's my calm space that gets a lot of day time sun.

Any changes you're dreaming of making to your home?

A deck and a level garden so the kids can play.

Favourite colour right now?

My favourite colour has and will always be blue. I'm a twin and my mum always dressed me in blue and my sister in red to tell us apart.

Photographed by Carter Were
@werebros



Sandra, John and co's Porous House

Where is your home and who lives here?

Our home is on the very edge of the Byron Hinterland, in a valley that was once part of the Big Scrub and is now slowly regenerating rainforest. My partner, John and I share it with our son and another family who have used it as a weekender.

What is your approach to colour when decorating your home?

There was a lot of discussion among us, the four owners, about colour. Our budget constrained us to cheaper materials and finishes and colour is an affordable way of personalising space. We were in agreement that the interiors should offer chromatic contrast with the greens and browns of the forest and not pretend to simulate nature or 'be natural' or 'neutral'. We were also interested in using cheerful colours and motifs that recalled childhood holidays in caravans and country motels. I spent lots of time staring at the Dulux Colour Atlas, trying out samples on boards that we walked around the house while it was under construction and going to and fro with my co-owners to arrive at a colour palette. Even then, there was a bit of mixing colours on site and re-painting. We painted all the tricky stripes and triangles in the kitchen and living areas ourselves, with lots of masking tape over several weeks.

Favourite space in your home and why?

Given that its a multigenerational two family home, the house is organised into distinct 'cabins', each with their own colour, that are connected by a breezeway, a sort of semi-enclosed verandah. Each of the bedroom colours pops out into the breezeway. It's the only space where all the colours in the house can be seen together and it's a bit like walking through a licorice allsort. From the street the house looks like a big shed with no colour, so visitors are always surprised when they come into this space and find it so lively.

Any changes you've dreaming of making to your home?

At the moment our focus is on the flood-damaged riparian zone and getting on top of the perpetual battle against invasive weeds.

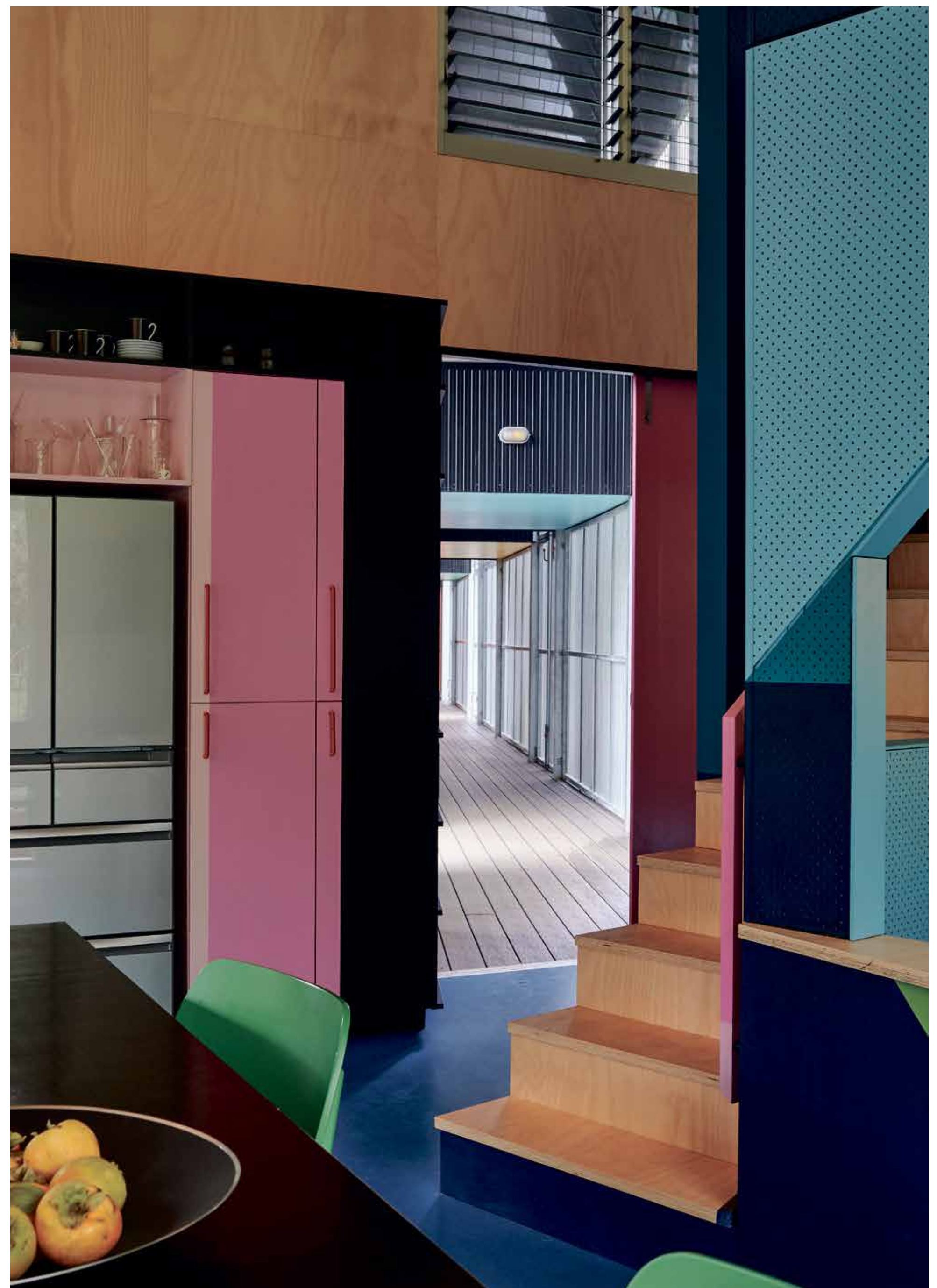
Favourite colour right now?

High-viz orange! You should see the refurbished office building we've just finished in Lismore!

Photographed by Anna Hutchcroft
@annahutch_photo



Book a holiday at Happy Sunhouse by visiting @happysunhouse_ See more of Porous House and other creations at @possiblestudio_ And cook like Carter by buying one of her cookbooks at @werebros





Where They Create

Where They Create is a project and book created by photographer Paul Barbera. On his travels as a photographer, Paul began documenting the creative environments of the artists and creatives he met – the spaces where their work first begins as a spark or an idea and then comes to fruition in the medium of their choice. Paul was kind enough to let us dive into his archives to share some of our favourite profiles (including a few local friends of ours!). Words and Photos by Where They Create.

Caitlin Reilly is an artist working between Byron Bay and Shanghai. Her work is inspired by post-impressionism, abstract expressionism and shan shui painting, but also by new developments in surface rendering. Caitlin's use of state-of-the-art technology to engage with age-old concerns around texture makes her work both current and erudite, full of history and completely new.

Tell me a little about you and where we are right now ...

I'm an Australian-born artist living in Byron Bay. The studio here is in Bangalow, in the Byron hinterlands, about 20 minutes away [from Byron Bay]. I work in many different mediums – this studio is devoted to my small works, mostly and I share it with a fellow artist, Kate Stead, who's working with portraiture. We cohabitate nicely. We met in art school about 15 years ago.

I respond mostly to the local environments, with the landscapes that I'm doing. The journey from Byron Bay to Bangalow, on old Bangalow Road, is a beautiful windy road that I've journeyed on for more than 20 years.

You've spent six years in Shanghai, where your art career thrived and now you're in Byron Bay. How do the two creative communities compare?

I think returning here, to the rural environment of Byron Bay and Bangalow, I had an existing community to come back to, lots of friends who are makers and artists. So, it's home; it's a big difference to the big city sprawl of Shanghai, where there were so many people and anonymity. Though there was a freedom in that too, in not being held by history, just moving into that space as a fresh face and being able to respond to the city with a really innocent gaze – it was wonderful!

I did a lot of street scenes there, and one of the things that I did was these manhole cover rubbings. They're so ornate, all different, beautiful, leading to the underbelly of the city. Like conduits for information. And they're just these massive, steel, ornate pictures in themselves! Someone gave me all this handmade paper, so I did these rubbings while I was at the Swatch residency. They're so ubiquitous in their nature – they're everywhere. And that same attitude is what my return has brought me: at the moment I'm working on the Ibis bird, because they're everywhere.

caitlinreilly.com
@caitlinreilly.slowsongs



Cristopher Cichocki combines organic and synthetic, macro and micro, Earth Art and BioArt to investigate the effects of industrialisation on land and sea. His site-specific, multi-sensory environmental interventions suggest strange new floras rising from human waste and hubris. Cristopher's home, in the blistering Southern California desert, is a half hour out of Salton Sea, a saline lake drained out to feed cities and farms hundreds of miles away, that now threatens to make an entire region uninhabitable from the toxic fumes spewing out of its bed. The land is ever-present in Cristopher's work – at once arid and dangerously alive.

What is something that I would be surprised to find in your space?

In the back of my studio, I have a room dedicated to immersive installations. It's completely enclosed and painted entirely black, so when you enter, it's an unexpected dimension of the space.

Where did you find the courage to follow your own path?

I was lucky as a teenager to encounter teachers that had a strong understanding of contemporary art. First off, my middle school art teacher, Karen Wheeler, made me understand that my intuitive abstractions had something going for them. I had no clue, but Karen gave me tremendous motivation from her support, when I was as young as thirteen. Then, there was my next door neighbour, William Hemmerdinger, who happened to be an incredible artist, writer and educator. The stars truly aligned with William being next door. He told me: "The most difficult part of painting is to know when to walk away gracefully." I think about this every time I'm in the studio. But the bigger point here is that Karen and William gave me courage at a young age. I see so many young, talented artists, and I try to pass along the same support I once received. The sooner a young artist-spirit hears words of support, the sooner they can begin to elevate to the next level.

cristophersea.com
theelemental.org
@cristophercichocki





Mia Taninaka is a Byron Bay-based artist drawing on magic, mysticism and spirituality to create her very colourful canvases. The anthropomorphic birds and masked humans that inhabit her undulating worlds are full of mystery and wonder but never threat. These figures come from different cultures and parts of the world to reveal to the viewer what Mia calls the possibilities of sudden awareness.

What's one practice that really influences your life and work?

Vedic meditation: it's the foundation of how I get everything done. I've had a pretty strong spiritual practice for a while now and I don't know where I'd be without it. I can just tap in so much better, so much quicker. Like, I'm dancing around the kids, and I'm able to go into a room, I've got an hour, and I can now get work done in that hour. Whereas, I reckon, three years ago, I needed five hours: an hour-and-a-half to get into the zone and then I had three hours painting.

Where do you find the courage to follow your own path?

I think that I have had a job for maybe one year, even when I was a teenager, and having little jobs to get a bit of pocket money, I knew that I was not a work-for-someone-else person. And so, as soon as I started making a little bit of money from painting, and I had my graphic design qualification, and worked in that for a little while, I was quite happy to just go freelance. When my husband and I made the move to Bali, we both had no work – Jase was a professional surfer, so he had income coming in from his sponsor, but it wasn't a lot. Over the last twelve years that we've been together and we've got kids and everything, there's been so many times when we're like: "What are we doing? We have no money right now." The conversation comes up – do we go get a job? Should I go and do this or that? But it comes down to what is the point of spending all that energy on this thing that you're not passionate about. I believe in what he wants to do, he believes in what I want to do and we work quite well together, so that one of us will work for the day and then he's got the kids and then it switches around. So, there's always money coming in and there's not a huge amount of sacrifice of our journey. We're pretty solid in where we want to go and the path that we want to try to get there; it's always worked out, it's always fallen into place. We've always fallen on our feet – so far.

miantaninaka.com
 @miaeatswolves



Jacob Boylan is a printmaker based in Byron Bay, Australia. Always humorous and often shocking, his prints are at once attuned to Pop Art and particularly Australian. Jacob finds sources in second-hand books and old prints, which he "recycles" to uncover new meaning and poignancy. His work invites us to reassess these banal source images to think about such themes as colonialism, alcoholism and inequality.

Tell me a little about you and where we are right now ...

I'm a screen printer and we're in Mullumbimby, in the Ross Industrial Complex. Before we got here, it was an incense factory, which is why it always smells good here and all my art smells like incense – and when I leave it in my car, I smell like incense! Before that, at some point, it was a dairy. I think my little dark room in there is where they kept cold stuff, which is why it would have all been closed off, without windows.

What kind of child were you growing up? How did it guide you to choose a creative career?

I was always really curious and needed to know the answers to things. I like knowing, I like facts, and then I kinda fell in love with art history and art theory. My high school art teacher would push me, she'd explain what each artist did, and I was like: "Huh, Manet was a badass!" It rattled me and I used to spend a lot of time in the art room with her. Then my mum would always make sure that she'd take me to art galleries. She didn't know heaps about art, and neither did Dad, but I think she just wanted to provide that for me, not just galleries, but theatre and gigs, music and stuff. She was trying to cover all the bases; it's like she knew, almost.

What changes have happened in this area? Who are your neighbours?

There used to be a gallery in that lane just there; they've just moved to the Byron Bay Industrial Estate, which is sad, because they will lose a little bit of their charm. But they were the first; I'd never been to the Ross Industrial Complex until they opened their gallery. I had a show there, it was nice. But before I came here, Emma Walker, who's an amazing artist, was here, and then our friend Mahala, and our friend Nat, who's a freelance writer, and he hit me up, and I came. We kind of all just took over this little zone. It's exciting, seeing people come in and go: "What's going on in here? There's a bit happening in this area!"

@jacobmandude

You can read more
 inspiring stories on
 Paul Barbera's website:
www.wheretheycreate.com

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Tea is good for nothing



Tea is nothing but
Boiling water
And making tea.
This is the only rule
You should know.
Words by Sam Gibb.



The world is a crowded place. Crowded with ideas, opinions, philosophies and expectations. Our minds, too, become crowded places. We end up exhausting ourselves in the constant effort to gain, what are ultimately, small advantages. In Chinese culture, those who retreated from society up into the mountains were described as being cloud hidden. Having set down the crowded world they moved above the clouds, creating space from the vacillation between gain and loss.

Tea is much like this – a mountain to retreat to from our crowded, daily lives. As we gaze into our bowl of steaming liquor, moments of space start to wedge between the tightly packed, unrelenting flow of thoughts. It is emptiness that creates function. The opening in the window lets the light in, the void in the teapot holds the amber ambrosia. You might say that tea is good for nothing; it is not about adding, gaining or taking. Rikyū, one of the great Japanese tea masters, was once asked for the secret of making tea. He replied, “lay the charcoal so that it heats the water, and make a pleasing bowl of tea. That is all.” Adding complexity moves against the current of tea. As we remove what is unnecessary, what is becomes visible. The golden, diffused light through a window; the steam from the kettle evaporating out of existence; the warmth of the bowl in our hand. These are not things bought or sold; added or taken away. These are moments occurring all the time, simply requiring us to stop and enjoy the view.

Perhaps, this is an experience many of us can relate to. Putting a kettle on and sitting quietly somewhere, we are drawn into a place of calm. The problems that seemed so overwhelming before, feel like they have slightly less of a hold on us. However, without periods of silent reflection, our lives can slowly get sidetracked. These moments of stillness allow us to remember. The word in Pali often translated as mindfulness, sati, is more accurately translated as “to remember”. Creating space from the crowded chatter allows us to remember the things that are truly important to us. Like that feeling of getting into bed at the end of a busy day and finally relaxing, only to remember the most important thing you were meant to. When we stop, we remember.

Tea is a natural aid in the meditative process and one that has been used for millennia. Initially the idea of just sitting and doing “nothing” is difficult. However, the process of quietly enjoying a cup of tea seems less overwhelming. Tea connects us to our senses while relaxing our nervous system and focuses our attention. When we approach tea in a meditative way, we become absorbed. Absorbed in the process, in the activity and the experience. This state of absorption evaporates division between ourselves and the experience, allowing for this deeper meditative state to naturally arise. All that is required of us is that we fully and completely drink our tea. This might sound easy enough, but when the student expressed disappointment at the stark simplicity of Rikyū’s answer to the secret of making tea, Rikyū famously replied, “If you can prepare tea this way, I will become your disciple.” Rikyū’s meaning is that we just lay charcoal, just boil water, just make tea. There is nothing added. None of our inner complexity. No thoughts, ideas or opinions, only absorbed action.

Tea asks us to release the mind that asks ‘what is this good for?’ Instead we start to learn to just sit. We drink tea in a very simple way and we start to see that simple things hold great beauty. The name Cloud Hidden comes from the fact that if you look deeply enough into your tea bowl you will see a cloud hidden in there. The water that makes up 95 per cent of the tea was in a cloud only a few weeks ago.

The practice of just sitting is very much like that. When we move beyond boredom and restlessness we can see the magnificence of small actions like an inward breath, the sun on our face or the beating of the heart. Appreciation of the simple things is a big part of what tea offers the world. We create space in ourselves and from that space arises stillness and from this we are able to see what was hidden right in front of us all along.

You are welcome to join us in our space for a tea ceremony daily. We only have a thin earthen wall separating us from the world, but that’s all you need.

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Back Pedal



I looked over to see Juna’s cheeks reddening as she lay slumped in a sunbed with her mouth ajar, a subtle snore seeping out like a waning metronome. I’d wake her and tell her to apply sunscreen or move under the umbrella’s shade, but by now we’d been engaged in a long-running tanning competition, and, if I recommended either, she’d squint one eye open and accuse me of sabotage. Ostensibly, we were on the first day of a two-month bicycle trip, riding from the bottom of Italy to the top, but we weren’t off to a good start. Words and photos by Max Favetti.

Our problems began at home in Amsterdam, with my inability to disassemble the bikes for the flight to our starting point in Catania, where I was to reassemble them and our journey would commence. It’s important to underscore how foreign such skills are to me. I’m the guy that replaced a broken toilet seat and then told his colleagues about it the next morning over coffee. It had a quick release system. Given this ineptitude, we thought it prudent to enact dry runs before we left, taking our bikes apart, putting them together, packing our panniers and riding through the flat Dutch countryside – testing the integrity of our kit. But summer in Amsterdam is a narco-boog-Bacchanal, so such prudence was hoovered away with everything else travelling through that rolled up Euro note, returning only to be erased again by a laser beam lobotomy, conducted in a crowded basement to fax machine music. The closest we got to actually enacting the plan was yelling “we need to enact the plan” at each other on the dance floor.

By the time the final weekend before our departure came around, the only preparation I’d done was rehearse the preliminary stages of a pulmonary aneurysm. We were to leave on an early morning flight that Monday, so we planned a farewell dinner for Friday; the typical pompous precursor to any holiday I took. This schedule allotted only Saturday and Sunday to achieve what was the bare, required minimum: disassembling the bikes into bags so they could be stowed on the plane. Forty-eight hours seemed an ample amount of time.

Come Friday night, we were running behind, cresting the bell curve of a certain, familiar, cosmopolitan couple-stress that is committing to an Ottolenghi recipe. “Juna, you got the wrong rose harissa,” I hissed, as she blitzed the dried porcini in the coffee blender. “And, I’m concerned your method here will compromise the aromatics.” Juna was by this point well versed in my bitchery and when to ignore it, so instead she answered a phone call from her work while I answered the buzzer. “Come up!” I hollered gaily down the receiver, before stomping to the kitchen to deliver fresh stress to Juna as they ascended the stairs. She held up a hand as I entered, stopping me before I could blame her for the construct of time itself. “Work just asked me to take doubles this weekend. We need the cash, I’m taking it.” I felt a pang of shame and returned to prepping the garnish as our friends’ footsteps grew closer. “Will you be okay to get all our stuff ready?” she asked while spooning dollops of white miso paste. I took a dramatic pause from pestling the cumin seeds and scoffed. “Of course, I will.”

Over the next forty-eight hours, Juna pulled back-to-back doubles and I pulled back-to-back benders.

She’d returned after her first shift on Saturday evening to find me right where she’d left me the previous night: sitting at our dining table with a cigarette in my mouth, workshopping my plan for world peace with an indulging pair of usual suspects. She said goodnight with a courteous reminder of our timeframe and the duties remaining. “Don’t worry darling,” I said, pausing my plan’s provision for the rise of China, “it will all be done tomorrow.”

As Juna set her Sunday morning pre-shift coffee on the stove, she popped her head into the living room to find me in the same position, down to the chair – except I had my helmet, bandana and bike glasses on. I had just got to the part where I concede that my plan for world peace was almost entirely predicated on the demise of American hegemony, whilst paradoxically, still contingent on it remaining a global superpower to check the rise of an increasingly autocratic Chinese state. “Max,” she said on her way out the door, trying to hide the concern in her voice and putting it in her eyes instead, “we leave tomorrow morning.” “Juna,” I sighed, pointing a fingerless bike gloved hand at both our steeds I’d leaned against the living room wall. “It will be done, don’t worry.”

By afternoon, even my accomplices grew concerned and took their leave. I scoffed at their weakness as the door shut and got to work. I figured it best to start with the easiest tasks first and fob off the more complex tasks to later, especially as my future-fatigued self wasn’t present to protest such a strategy. I got my wheels off in a matter of minutes. “Another successful conquest of quick release technology for the break room,” I thought, and poured myself another pint of six-euro Cab Sav to celebrate. I took a hearty glug and felt warmth hit my temples. “By the time Juna gets home, you’ll be serving Coq au Vin while she gushes at the neat, packed pile of luggage by the door.” It didn’t take long before my bike was bubble wrapped, duct taped and zipped up in its shoddy carry bag. I was so impressed with myself I took a victory line of leftover cocaine and stared out my window into the burnt orange of the August Amsterdam night. “Oh tits!” I gasped, as my reverie was broken by a flash of remembrance: there was a whole other bike left to go.

I strode towards the remaining frame – mechanically-adept erection first – primed to dismantle Juna’s retro road bike. You see, Juna has a proclivity for a seventies aesthetic, of corduroy flares and lampshades and maroon ceramic serving platters with recipes for Quiche Lorraine painted on their face. This penchant for all things vintage extended to her bike, which, with its red trim and ornate steel engraving was, objectively, gorgeous. But aesthetics does not equal practicality, especially when at the whims of a sleepless cream puff that hasn’t conditioned his hair in three days. Whereas my bike was all quick release and ergonomics, Juna’s was all bolt screws and bra burnings. I hunched over her front brake pads, spanner wedged in a crevice between rubber and metal, making miniscule turns of the nut that held them. Blackish beads of sweat fell from my bike greased face and onto the phone screen showing bike schematics from the Whitlam era, pulled from the bowels of the internet.

Juna didn’t return home that evening to a French braised chicken on the stove but a Max breaking down on the floor. “Why did you do this?!” I cried instead of saying hello as she walked into the living room, my hands palm up towards her bike, as if when she bought it two years ago, she was rubbing her hands in menacing glee thinking of this very moment. “Oh no, is it tricky darling? We’ll figure it out together!” Juna replied, not missing a beat as she set her bag down and made her way towards me. There was nothing indistinguishable between that sentence being delivered to a child or to me: it was pregnant with patience and

devoid of condescension, attributes made starker by my lack of them in kind ... so the only option was to respond like a child. “No! Jesus, I’ve nearly got it!” I said, far from getting it. Juna sidestepped my petulance and made practical use of her time packing our bags, while I spent mine cursing the conspiracy between screw and screwdriver. I followed this by hurling a flurry of insults at the inanimate object, incestuous things about it’s mother, followed by taunts of it’s inadequate utility.

As night fell, our home was halved: one of quiet productivity, the other a theatre of war, as each bike component was pried from its frame. By early morning, I let out a final wail as I zipped up the second bike bag, chin wet with spit, cheeks wet with tears. I pushed it along on my hands and knees to the door, next to a pile of bags neatly packed by Juna, who stood above me drying her hair with a towel. “It ... is ... done” I whimpered at her feet, with all the gravitas of a weary Roman legionnaire. “Get in the shower Max, the cab’s almost here.” “Yes, mistress,” I whispered into the welcome mat as I watched her bare feet turn and walk towards our closet.

A few ungodly hours later, Juna and I held each other, necks wrapped over shoulders as we dozily swayed by the excess luggage carousel in the corner of Catania Airport. It was 10 o’clock on Monday morning and neither of us had slept a wink all night (nor me the previous three, but it’s not a competition). We waited, and a few carousels away from us, the rest of the passengers from Amsterdam waited too. Eventually, even the idea of Italian punctuality was being tested but neither of us could muster the strength to be anxious. And so we watched on silently as a squat man in a hi-vis vest walked over to the fellow passengers, cupped his hands and yelled something at them. Whatever he said sent them turning on a dime, moving in murmuration toward Lost and Found. “Come on!” Juna yelled, yanking my floppy body into action as we tried to beat the crashing wave of stress surging towards the desk. We merged with the mob as it bumped up against the front counter, settling into a seething mound of silent Dutch anger. “What happened?” I asked no one in particular, to which a freckled man in a fedora standing at my shoulder said in his buttery English, “They loaded the wrong plane with our luggage, so it is now in New York!” I turned toward Juna who was shaking my arm, “What did he say Max?” “Our acid is in New York darling,” I answered, referring to the ten dose sheet of Amsterdam LSD we had duct taped to the inner tube of my bike tyre. “We’re gonna be here for a while.”

Five hours later, we stepped out into the hot sea of choking cigarette smoke that is Catania. Clapped in my hand is a rip of paper with some scribbled serial numbers and a website, the sum total of what was provided by a bronzed lost and found attendant. He rocked back in his swivel chair like a despondent teen as we described our luggage, talking over us to gossip with his colleague who was constructing a mortadella panino atop his keyboard. We asked how long we might expect to wait before reunification with our belongings, to which he shrugged and circled the scrawled website on the form, “Check-a here.” I scrunched the paper into my pocket as we broke free of the mob and hailed a cab outside. While we sat in the backseat, I saw the driver mash the start metre button five times before putting the car in drive, so it was 10 Euros before we’d even moved an inch. I stared out the window, hoping to be distracted enough by the landscape to forget we were being fucked. Half-finished, box-concrete houses riddled with protruding rebar languished in the shimmering heat, while the completed homes marked their occupation with drawn window shutters and drying sheets on the line. The island was experiencing some of the worst wildfires in recent memory and one was making its way through nearby farmhouses and vineyards, sending plumes of black smoke to stain the blue sky. Piles of green rubbish bags lined the highway, bloated by the sun, runoff divots that ran parallel to the road were filled with discarded chairs and broken cradles. I’d been to my ancestral home a few times before, but every time I arrived, the sensory overload of Sicily rushed at me like a thrown punch in a bar fight, one I’d unwittingly been swept into while I was sipping my viddy lime soda. “Quarantacinque per favore,” the cabbie says after a 10-minute drive, marking our arrival to our accommodation in downtown Catania. Juna shoots me a look and I return it with drowsy-eyed defeat as I slide a 50 euro note onto the centre console. The toothless man grins and places the change of coins in my limp, clammy hand.

We had booked a studio apartment in the San Berillo neighbourhood which sat by the sea, but no breeze breached

the maze of streets we found ourselves in. We blasted the rickety air-con and opened our laptop on the kitchen bench to look up the website scratched into the mulch paper I pulled from my pocket. It was the first website invented, I’m sure of it: a page of simple text on a pixelated pastel background with a tiny, white search bar at the top. I typed in the serial code we’d be given and a flashing load screen eventually belched out in bold: Non lo sappiamo. We don’t know. It actually just said that, it said: we don’t know. There was no other information on the screen, not even the vague, aspirational kind, like “... but we will in 2-9 business days”. “Let’s just get in the fucking ocean,” I said, certain the sea would kickstart the romantic Italian getaway thus far quashed by apathetic Italian administration. If I’d known all that was waiting for us at the beach bar was blaring Black Eyed Peas on a coastline more ciggie butts than sand, I would’ve opted for my Dolly Alderton novel in the cool comfort of our Airbnb.

Sicily is beautiful and filthy. It’s impossible and intoxicating. Its young boys with thinning hair and Reeboks leaning on scooters, smoking cigarettes and talking past one another. Its church bells, dogs barking, old women yelling and sirens whirring all at once and on repeat. It’s butt sweat and cheap drinks, arguments and wine stained tablecloths and opening your pants after lunch. Those enchanted charms become loud and deplorable obstacles when you’re racing back and forth to the airport for non-answers day after day. By our third visit to the back office, the staff knew us by voice, and at this stage they would usually pull the booth blind up and say “Niente, tomorrow you come.” We steeled ourselves for another rejection, but instead the intercom crackled: “Uno momento.” We waited a series of momento’s others would call an hour, before a door beside the booth opened and our bike bags were slid along the floor by a pot-bellied, over-perfumed attendant. We lifted the heavy, cheap sacks over our shoulders and waddled free of our luggage limbo and out to the cab rank, wiser to rip offs and ready to rest. On the way home, we were of course relieved, but our defeat was not washed away in a wipe – it seeped slowly from our pores like a subtle poison.

Wordlessly, but grunting, we sandwiched our stuff into the studio apartment. It was clear that we were both very much near the end of our tethers, one defeat away from unconditional surrender. It was up to me to hold the line. “I’ll put the bikes together darling and we’ll get some sleep,” I said. “I can help,” Juna replied. “No, no, it’s all good,” I rebuffed, unwilling to risk my role with a dextrous usurper, “I took them apart, I’ll put them back together.” I was already moving around the furniture to make work space, so Juna said nothing and got to packing our panniers.

I tried to learn my lesson and complete the harder tasks first, so I attacked the antique model. Thirty minutes in and with one wheel half on, me and the bike chain were at an impasse. As the thing kept slipping off the other thing and the sticky bike grease turned sandy and spread all over my hands and forearms, I was making the sighing sounds that can only elicit offers of assistance. “No, I’ve got it!” I yelled at Juna’s third bid to help. Burning silence, punctuated by my muttered expletives, filled the studio. Soon, there was no reason to my method: I was just pulling at pieces of firmly affixed machinery with my fingers while tensing pressure into my head, hoping it would burst and spray wet chunks of brain and matted hair all over her gorgeous fucking bike.

“I’m gonna go buy groceries for lunch tomorrow!”

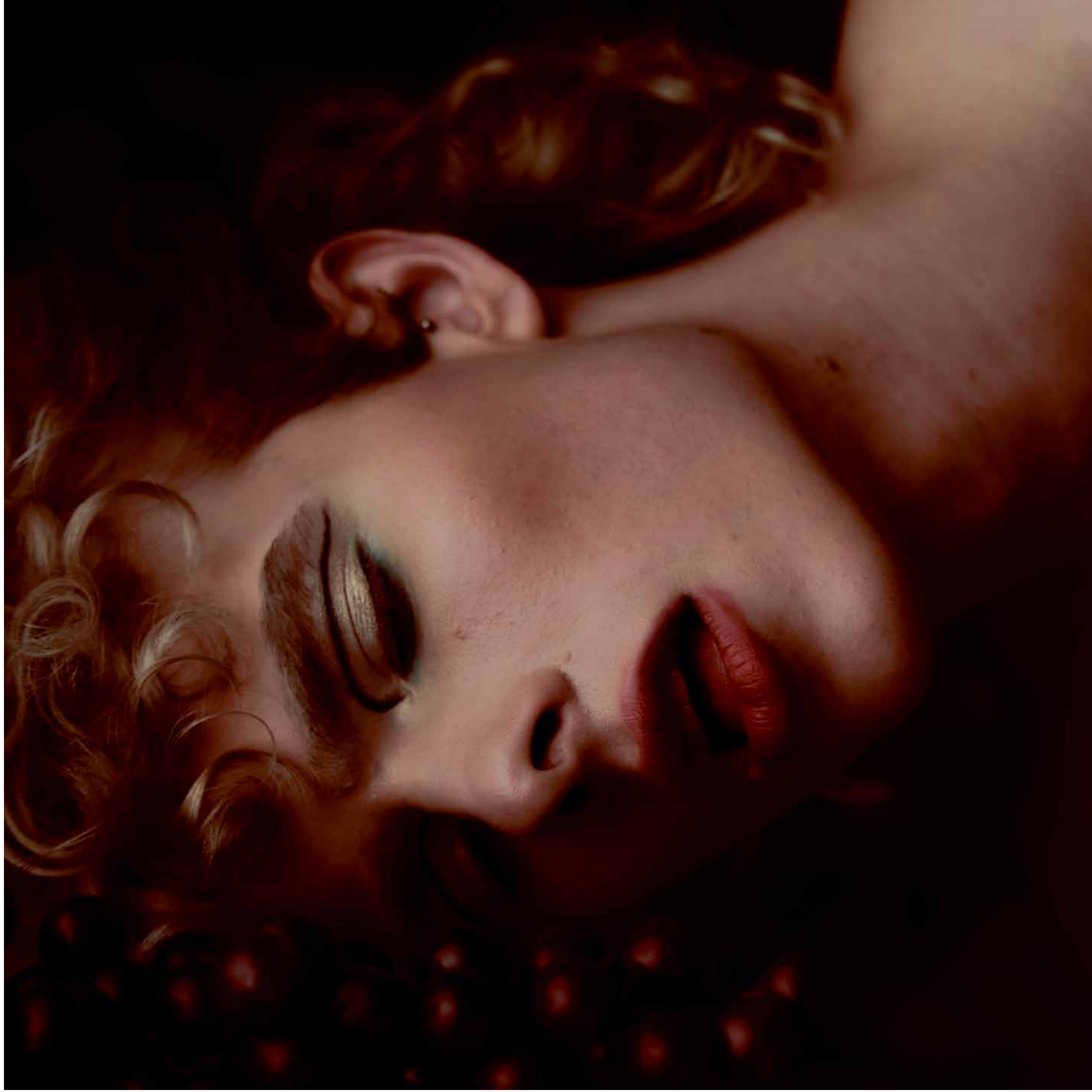


I said, vigorously wiping my face and flipping up from my hunched position. My abrupt movement and announcement took Juna aback as she was clapping shut the last pannier, and stared at me blankly. “Okay ...” she replied. I burst out of the stuffy studio and into the cool night air, taking the low, wide sandstone steps that led to the grocer two at a time. Once inside, I tried to calm down by giving myself little language tests, trying to name the fruits and vegetables on display. I stepped nervously to the deli counter, where an old man with grey hazel eyes and a hairnet engaged me before I’d had time to rehearse the right words in my head. I stuttered trying to find them, before I pointed through the glass into the mountain of produce that lay within it. “Ahh” he said, “melanzane sott’olio, deliziose” as he reached over and grabbed the marinated eggplant and portioned some into a container, gesturing to the green digits on the scale to make sure I was happy. “Grazie, grazie,” I said, feeling a smile stretch across my face and my cheeks tingle. We repeated this process for the cheeses and stuffed tomatoes and cured meats for my lunch hamper. His patience and apparent enthusiasm for this culinary language lesson melted my heart and cleared my mind.

I strode gleefully through the exit of the grocer, arms full of produce, and headed back to the studio, completely sure of what was to happen next. “Juna! Darling!” I said as I turned the key and opened the front door, bursting through only to stop in my tracks. Juna was sitting in a chair and looked up to meet my gaze. In front of her, upside down on their saddles with their wheels turning, were both of our bikes completely assembled. She smiled at me before we both burst out laughing. “I’m so sorry,” I said, once our giggles subsided. “I know how we need to move forward: you’re the mechanic who will save us when we break down in the middle of nowhere and I’ll be in charge of groceries!” “I think it’s for the best,” Juna said with a wry grin, tapping both our bikes with a spanner. “You’re the biggest little bitch I know.” We chuckled at my worthiness of the title. “I love you,” Juna said. “I love you too.”

The next morning we arose to the sound of seagulls, pattering vespas and fishmongers flogging their wares in the nearby square. We’re finally recovered from the weekend, fully committed to our roles and fucking ready to get on the road. Juna oiled the bike chains, aligned the brake pads and tightened the saddles. I placed frozen water bottles in the sandwich bags to keep them from spoiling in the heat, padded the hard boiled eggs with toilet paper to ensure they travel and placed the sunscreen in an accessible location. Our panniers are loaded over our back wheels and we walk our bikes out onto the street, pointing them north down the long coastal road that leads to the mainland. We look at each other as we clasp on our helmets, eyes vibrating with excitement. “You ready!?” I squeal. “I’m ready!” Juna yells back. We swing our legs over our frames in unison and I punch Positano into my handlebar GPS. “Lets Gooooo!” I shout, turning the heads of morning commuters, as we both take our first pedal of the cross-country journey. Within seconds, I hear an ungodly screech of metal crunch then snap and feel the back half of my bike become twenty kilos lighter. I pull to the kerb and look back to see my pannier frame mangled and further along the road, the panniers themselves, ripped and gutted, glistening melanzane splattered across the hot ground, stuffed tomatoes rolling down the cobblestone, leaving a dark, wet tail of olive oil in their wake.

WZCTALR OR TSE SODS



Rediscovering holiness in everyday life.

Photography by Jessie Prince. Words by Jasmine Christie.



*The mind of the day draws no attention;
It dwells within the silence with elegance
To create space for all our words,
Drawing us to listen inward and outward.*

*We seldom notice how each day is a holy place
Where the eucharist of the ordinary happens,
Transforming our broken fragments
Into an eternal continuity that keeps us.*

*So at the end of this day
We give thanks
For being betrothed to the unknown
And for the secret work
Through which the mind of the day
And the wisdom of the soul become one.*

John O'Donohue



The blinking red light beside the metre reads 47 degrees – a maddening, all consuming and inescapable heat. Gazing from behind tinted windows, I can't help but think just how far away home feels now, from this new and foreign climate.

Beneath a rippling canopy of awnings and torn curtains, a theatre of life is revealed in ecstatic motion in all directions; mountains of gleaming fish, valleys of spices, carved by rivers of rosewater. Chickens, seemingly owned by no one, scatter as the tear of a motorbike carves a path through. A man draws a cart of rope and a barber cuts a young man's hair. Life in cycles on display – birds still flapping bloodied to slaughter, bees drunk on honey. A man scales fish. Disembodied from his own limbs, the man's memory does the labour. Stallholders present offerings of fruit, bread, black soap, exotic perfumes of rose and jasmine, of burning wood and indigo. Women count change in communion. A father passes cut fruit still dripping to his son.

I'm convinced that pomegranates are proof that god exists.

The rhythm of the street embodies its own heart-beat. The light emits a soft and nostalgic quality. Pinned in the sky by billions of particles of dust, it creates a filter that warps time in a dreamlike trance. What was once a cool and shadowy street before dawn, heaves with a swampy haze of bodies, bikes and movement, unfolding as if in slow motion. Each turn reveals a scene painted in light as if by the hand of Caravaggio.

Beauty and divinity in the streets of unknown places is not of the elevated, out-of-reach or transcendent kind, but of the earth, indeed the dirt. They are daily rituals and devotions to our very own humanness. At the soul of a place exists its unbound, untamed and unshackled centre. Here lies a purity, a reverence for life that reverberates with kindness, immediacy and truth.

Traversing new landscapes polishes the lens of the programmed eye – an unlearning – to unsee in order to see. The divinity of pure life, stripped of our human projects, social expectations, to-do lists, capitalist demands and the limits of who we are and who we are meant to be. Cut from the dialogue of expectations, our human instincts reveal themselves intact: taste, sight, sound, scent and touch – illuminated by the grace of clear and untethered purpose.

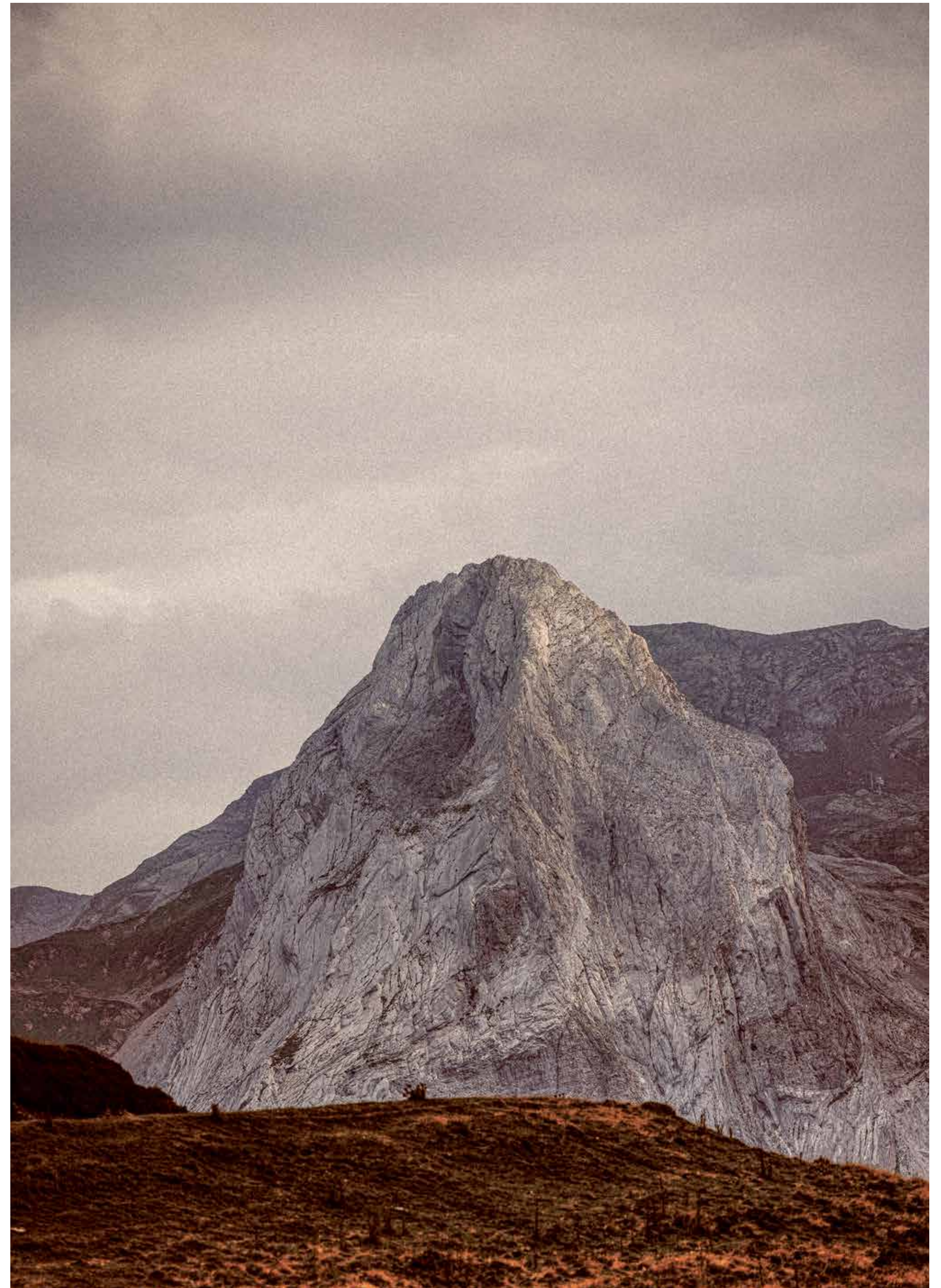
When all consumed by pervasive reality, the pursuit becomes that of how to attune our eyes once again to the elusive holiness of daily life. To prioritise less seeking in favour of just being alive. It is less about religion and more about Spirit. And I believe that Spirit, unlike religion, is enlivened by the senses in step with the natural rhythms of life here on earth. It is here in the mud, the dirt and the dust, with both feet on the ground, that life becomes prayer.



*May your inner eye
See through the surfaces
And glean the real presence
Of everything that meets you.*

*May your soul beautify
The desire of your eyes
That you might glimpse
The infinity that hides
In the simple sights
That seem worn
To your usual eyes.*

For the senses / John O'Donohue



Blak Douglas



In May this year our Northern Rivers community was in the early months of flood recovery. The rain was still falling, flood victims were (and still are) being moved around between temporary accommodation, the flood hubs were collecting and distributing donated goods and services and the community was filling the gaps left by inadequate government services and relief. Among the chaos, the winning portrait of the Archibald Prize was announced, a piece of national cultural news which perhaps would've gone unnoticed by our flood-ravaged community if it hadn't been a portrait that reflected us and our situation. The towering three metre winning portrait, *Moby Dickens* by Dhungutti artist Blak Douglas, depicts Lismore-based Wiradjuri artist, Karla Dickens, standing ankle-deep in muddy flood waters carrying leaking buckets beneath a never ending stream of clouds heavy with yet more rain. When it felt like no one, the government included, was taking notice of the plight of our community, here was a national art prize placing our reality firmly in the spotlight. Adam Douglas Hill AKA Blak Douglas, took the time to talk to us about the portrait, his journey with art and his take on the contemporary art scene in Australia. Words by Nat Woods.



I start by asking Blak about the turnaround for the portrait given the award was announced in May, just a few months after the floods. "I usually leave it to the last minute [to choose] my candidate. And I'd been speaking to Karla pretty regularly because of the floods and it kind of just made sense to paint her as the subject. She agreed to it and away we went." He goes on to explain that he usually flits around this studio like "a moth to light" moving from painting to painting, but for Karla's portrait he wanted to keep his focus dedicated to that one piece for seven days, "I painted it within a week to keep the focus on that painting and keep the pressure on."

The portrait is striking and at first glance it appears to be a reference to the floods, the climate crisis and community resilience, but there are more subtle messages within the painting which Blak wanted to convey.

In his artist statement, he explains that the leaking buckets are an acknowledgement of the commissions that galleries take from art sales and "the rising muddied waters are a symbol of the artist's position within the art world – trepidatious, unchartered and ominous." After reading this I realise that, in fact, one of the buckets in Karla's hands is a paint tin.

Having been a finalist in the Archibald Prize five times previously, a friend and former employee of the Art Gallery of NSW, suggested he step outside his previous entry style of focussing on faces to include a full body portrait. "I already had the long canvas. So I thought, well, here's the best opportunity to give it a go rather than having to order another two metre square canvas." And the new approach clearly worked, though he jokes that maybe the prize was a way to shut him up. "There's always a

really strong representation of APY lands stuff at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and my beef for many years now is that they grossly lack representation of First Nations New South Wales artists. So I kind of wonder whether giving me the prize was to shut me up for a bit. And it kind of has" he laughs, "but I'll still stand as an advocate for trying to get some kind of balance and keeping an eye on emerging New South Wales and Southeast region artists."

APY, or Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, Lands, are the home of the Western Desert painting movement characterised by the distinctive dot painting style. A Productivity Commission report this year found that two out of three artworks sold as "Aboriginal" art are fake. When the report was launched, Blak also raised the issue of young First Nations artists appropriating the Western Desert style when they're not from that re-

gion. I asked Blak whether he thought that there was a pressure on young artists to adopt styles that are more popular, or perhaps more recognisable or commercial.

“There’s two faults in schematics here, you know, if there’s no incentive for the representation of left field urban Aboriginal artists in the institutions, then it’s no fault of those young artists to think, well, we just gotta paint dots because that’s what gets a look in. So it’s a real catch 22, and it’s one that needs to drastically change. Not only for the sake of creativity here, but also for the sake of educating the masses internationally.”

The pressure also exists for APY Lands artists to stick with their more traditional designs. “Governments and mining companies continue to fail to improve the amenities for those people [in remote communities] so they’ve gotta do it themselves. And the only way to do that is to keep selling the most commodified art on this continent, which is Western desert.”

Unfortunately change is a slow burn in the Australian art scene and for Blak, the only answer is to target overseas markets to gain international recognition that will spur recognition back home. “There’s no money here. Everyone’s tight assholes down here. I’m still getting haggled. People say, ‘How’s it feel to have made it?’ You haven’t made it until you’re not getting haggled for an artwork. Millionaires are boasting about the fact that they got a Blak Douglas for 10 per cent off.”

Beyond *Moby Dickens*, the entire Blak Douglas collection of works is an honest take on life in so-called Australia. Blak has a background in graphic design and when I ask about the influence of this on his painting style he bristles, remarking that he heard an off-cuff remark from a former Aboriginal curator of the National Gallery that “she didn’t care that my stuff looked like graphic design”, which he took to suggest that others did not approve of his style. “That’s my knee jerk response. The first contemporary male artist that was really appealing was Jeffrey Smart so perhaps there’s hints of the perspective in my paintings that Jeffrey Smart presents. And then, the fact that everything’s got a black outline around it is ‘cause that’s the way I feel that an object is completed in my eyes. So it just unconsciously ended up with a very graphic aesthetic.”

“The main focus, by and large, of the Archibald Prize, or the preferential focus is, in the eyes of the lay person art viewer on this continent, is photorealism. So it’s okay to paint paintings like a photograph, but you can’t come along and paint paintings like graphic design.”

I’m reminded of Vincent Namitjira’s portrait of Adam Goodes, *Stand strong for who you are*, which took out the Archibald Prize in 2020, making Namitjira the first First Nations artist to ever win the Prize. Neither Namitjira’s, nor Blak’s, winning portraits could be considered as photorealism, so perhaps that slow burning change is finally taking light.

Blak has to head off to another official Archibald event so I finish up by asking if he was always drawing as a child and he reveals that he used to draw title pages for kids at school for “5 cents or a bag of lollies.” Imagine that, somewhere tucked away in the cupboard of a conscientious mother, could be a school exercise book with an original Blak Douglas title page inside the front cover. We can only hope.

@blakdouglas
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Ramesh Mario



I remember seeing Ramesh swanning about the corridors of my art school. He was difficult to miss, a big presence: a vision of bold, colourful expression amidst a sea of undergrads in their best op-shop chic. And while most of us didn't really know what to do with our Fine Art degree after we finished, Ramesh went on to create more than 500 bodies of work. Some for exhibitions in Hong Kong, Berlin, Singapore, Taipei, or Mumbai and some for festivals like Vivid or Dark Mofo around Australia. Interview by Anna Hutchcroft.



Ramesh, edited by Jaklyn Babington, published by Thames & Hudson Australia, AUD\$100.00, available now

Nithiyendran

The 33-year-old's mind-melting ceramic and bronze sculptures are at the contemporary edge of ancient tradition. He finds inspiration in his Sri Lankan heritage, but also in Ancient Greece, South Asia and Asia more broadly. What he creates out of this inspiration, however, is uniquely Ramesh.

After a couple of re-scheduled phone calls and schedule wrangling, I finally got him in the hot seat to answer a couple of questions. Through all of the crashing, tapping, rumbling, rustling and buzzing sounds of his studio in action, we discussed his new book, culture, colour and the fertility of chaos.

Anna: Hello? Can you hear me?

Ramesh: You just got taken into my bluetooth speaker, but now you're back out! How are you?

A: Good! How was Melbourne?

R: Good, good. I was just working on this big bronze for Sydney Contemporary. It's a pretty epic thing, you'll probably see it next week when it gets installed. So that was actually hectic. I had to sleep for two days after it but I'm fine. It went really well. Um, the work was really good, pretty happy with that, so yeah! Just now ploughing through to the next thing.

A: Do you usually work with bronze?

R: Yeah, I work with bronze quite a bit. But yeah there's a big sculpture at the Art Gallery of NSW at the entrance and that's bronze. And there were a few works in my last exhibition at the AGNS that were bronze. I've worked with bronze since 2016. Not so often, but a bit more often recently as I make outdoor work.

A: What goes into that? Do you have to melt it down?

R: No, I work with a foundry in Melbourne so I make the sculpture out of clay and out of mixed materials and then we make a mould out of it – so it's lots of wax casting. The process itself is thousands of years old, I've just updated it a little bit. [loud rustling of paper]

A: So where's your studio in Sydney?

R: My studio is in an industrial lot in Gladesville. [sound of wheels, rumbling]

A: And is it pretty ...

[rumbling]
R: Sorry, what was that?

A: Sorry, I was just about to ask ... I couldn't hear you – I thought I heard a rumbling or something.

R: Oh you do, sorry! I should stop moving things around.

A: What are you doing today?

R: Ugh, I've got so much to do – I've gotta take some works to the gallery ... Sydney Contemporary is next week and I'm kind of spray

painting all these plinths, ummm ... getting some stuff photographed.

A: What does it look like around you at the moment?

R: Oh, there's shit everywhere. There's work that's half-made, some work is finished, there's rubbish on the floor ... I came in and thought, 'fuck I need to clean – or at least get someone to come in and do a tidy. But maybe it'll have to be after I finish this week. Just to start fresh for next week.

A: Do you find that your studio is often like that?

R: Well, I like working like that. I always work in a series and am working on multiple things at a time but I feel like when there's lots of things on the go, I can be a bit more creative because there isn't a sense that I'm so tied to one work. All of the ideas can just bounce off each other, I don't get too precious with each individual thing. But sometimes, when the deadlines are short, I'll need to have a work ready by a certain time and I can't be as free. But right now I'm in a pretty good space. I've got lots of work on the go, I've got a few months before my next deadline, so ... pretty good! But yeah, there's shit everywhere.

A: So you're currently working on multiple series at the same time?

R: Yeah, I'm generally not working towards one exhibition at a time. Usually there'll be deadlines for fairs overseas and there might be exhibitions and group shows and everything kind of just overlaps. It's not like there are these neat full stops in the studio. Which would be nice, but I kind of like the chaos. It feels productive sometimes and you don't get too obsessive over certain little things, you can just keep the ideas flowing.

A: Like when one thing stops working you can easily move on to something else?

R: Yeah, or just keep working on the things that surround it. I think things vibe off each other when you're making things fluidly. It's not like I like to make a neat drawing and then create the artwork. I'll be working off of three or four at a time and see how they vibe off each other and then they start to change and morph depending on how the others are progressing. It's actually a fairly standard way that most artists work – in multiples, and series, and it's just part of the process I guess.

A: What are some things that are currently driving your work right now?

R: Well my next solo exhibition which will be in the new Sullivan and Strumpf in Melbourne, is going to be looking at bronze as a medium and looking at outdoor sights as well. I'm making quite a few outdoor sculptures for that exhibition – up-

scaling a lot of the work and bringing in some of the themes I'd like to consolidate. A lot of these works are going to be busts, so they're like torsos with heads, essentially. I'm kind of interested in that form and I think a lot of this new work has a few more references to classical sculpture. So, I've been looking at the way in which sculpture from say, Ancient Greece and Asia kind of cross-pollinated at certain points in history. I've been thinking of this global sculptural language and what that means. And, historically, there's lots of things going on. But you know, it'll still feel like my work – I don't think there are any huge surprises.

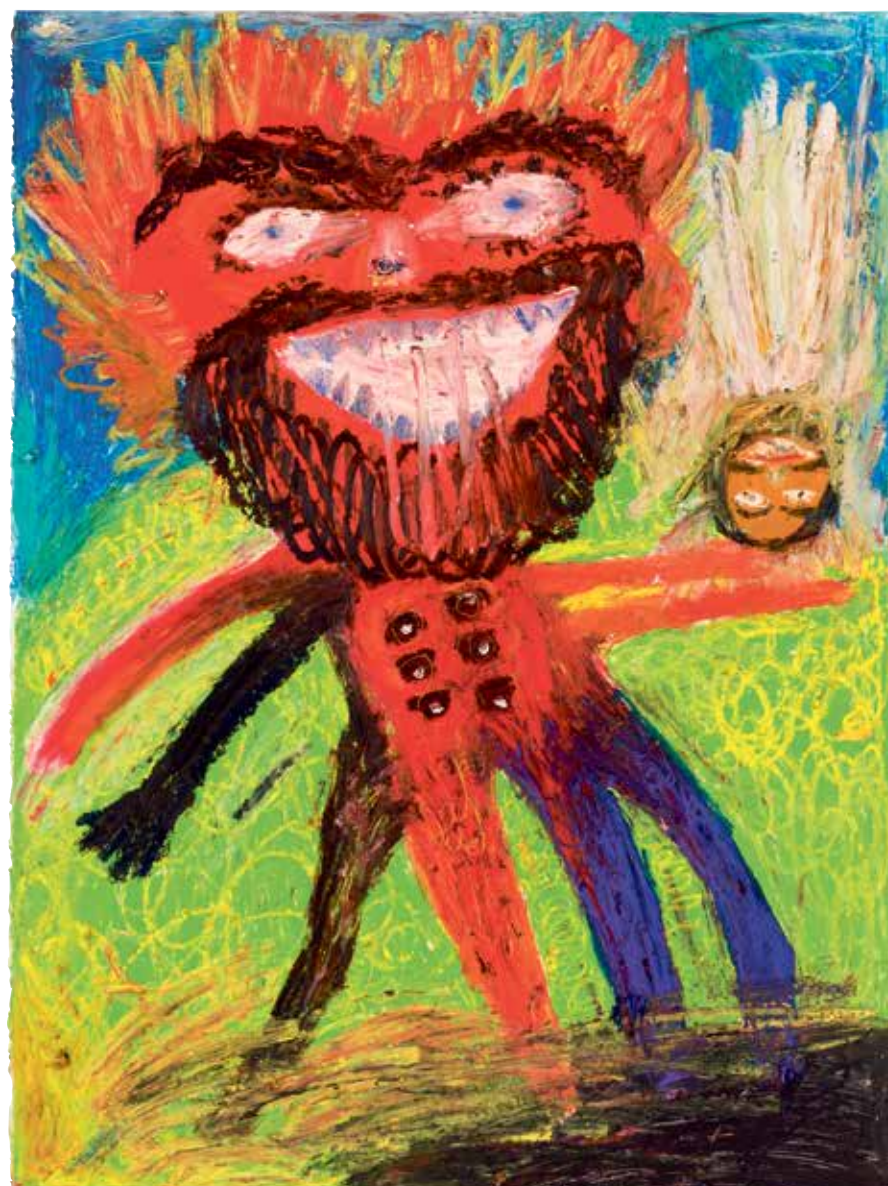
A: I understand busts to be Grecian. I picture a history of these white, marble, almost sterile portraits. But I recently learned that they used to be painted!

R: Yeah! They were never made white. But over time, the painted surface diminished. A lot of theories around this suggests that whiteness propagated a myth around white superiority at a time when that region was trying to colonise and expand their empire. The current discourse is about bringing polychromatic sensibilities back to the marble sculptures. But my research is more focused on Ancient Gandara, which is Northwest Pakistan. Alexander the Great came through at one point and the Buddhist sculptures at that time started to develop or merge with some ancient Greek symbolism. They were called indo-greek kingdoms. A lot of these Buddhas had drapery that was grecian and facial structures that were European. I'm kind of interested in that notion as a metaphor for contemporary culture. I think people often forget that regionally specific narratives are actually specific to multiple regions, not just one. I'm actually interested in vernacular cultural practices from Asia. I look at Hindu and Buddhist sculptures rather than contemporary art a lot of the time. And that's where I find a lot of my inspiration. There's a myth that culture is singular – which I think often serves very specific political purposes.

[rustling paper sounds from Ramesh's studio]

A: So are you pretty free-flowing in just finding things that interest you and then just exploring that? Or do you have a lineage that you like to explore specifically?

R: It's not that I sit down in a library or anything, I'm just really interested in those things. So when I get home, if I'm choosing something to watch on YouTube, I'll watch documentaries on Buddhas being unearthed in a certain place – being carbon dated and all those things. That's what I'm kind of nerdily interested in and that informs the work. So, sometimes I might come across something else that piques my interest and it all feeds into the work in different ways.



Clockwise from top left: Red Figure Birthing, 2020, oil pastel on paper, 84 x 59cm; Photographer: Jessica Maurer. Yellow Figure, 2014, earthenware, 42 x 18 x 12cm; Photographer: Simon Hewson. Red Figure with Human, 2020, oil pastel on paper, 84 x 59cm; Photographer: Jessica Maurer. Pewter Dickhead, 2014, earthenware, 46 x 16 x 15cm; Photographer: Simon Hewson. On the opposite page, from left: Dickhead with Gash, 2014, earthenware, 53 x 28 x 22cm; Photographer: Simon Hewson. Figure with Yellow Background, 2020, oil on linen, 200 x 150cm; Photographer: Jessica Maurer.

But I guess what I'm primarily interested in is figurative sculpture across history. I'm interested in ancient iterations of figurative sculpture – which is kind of interesting as well because a lot of those ancient sculptures still have functions today. They're still in the context of ritual or ceremony – they're not just there to be looked at, they have a societal purpose which I find really interesting. This idea that art can have a function beyond speculation.

A: Do you think that working with bronze and more public outdoor sites bring your sculpture more into a functional capacity?

R: Well, with the bronze gods, it kind of locates the history of the work to 8000 AD. Ceramics, especially figurative ceramics, was one of the oldest forms of sculptural production. Some historians think that figurative sculptures were made out of terracotta deposits from the earth as far back as 20,000 BC. I think it's interesting that there are material lineages that come into play just by choosing to work with specific mediums.

A: And when you create work, do you ever think about how an audience might read it?

R: You know, everybody asks me that a lot!

A: Why do you think that is?

R: I don't know, I think people may think my work is a bit challenging or something to certain audiences, which is fine. I often think a little bit like a curator and I think about installation and interaction and encounter. But my work isn't experiential. It's not like a Yoko Ono where you put your hand in a thing and feel something, you know? I think in my

work there are elements of pragmatism. I understand what kind of encounters people have with sculptures in galleries. I'm not hopeful for anything more.

A: With the work that you created for Dark Mofo, Earth Deities, there is such an element of spectacle attached to it and it's so stimulating that I think that there are so many points of entry and so many ways of interacting with it. It makes me wonder who you had in mind when you were creating it

R: That one was very occasion-specific. It was a big festival, there were a lot of families, it was a dark night, it was a place of gathering, it was a bar, so you kind of had to bring in those thoughts, you know? I couldn't do a conceptual piece of paper on the floor in a giant car park – it's about understanding the site. It was a bit like that with Vivid, too. A lot of people were coming expecting a bit of spectacle and I think the work delivered that meaningfully on a lot of occasions so I'm happy. But I'm interested in monumentality, and spectacle, and the way large-scale sculpture can operate in that space.

A: Going from that large scale sculpture practice to creating this other piece of art which is your book, how have you found the experience of taking these crazy art forms and committing them to a page? What was it like for you?

R: The book was edited by Jaklyn Babington, a curator I worked with for my anthology at the NGA. The book designer was Evi O and the publisher was Thames and Hudson. I think when we had our original meeting, I said that I wanted the design to feel discursive. I wanted there to be a sense that the actual design of the book contributed to the mean-

ing of the work and almost activism. I understand what kind of encounters people have with sculptures in galleries. I'm not hopeful for anything more. I also wanted to find a balance: where the book felt like an archive, where it was clear, where there were full colour plates. A lot of the aspects of the book were very considered. We often superimpose three angles of one work on one page – I was wanting to think about the best way to do justice to convey what these sculptures look like, and might even feel like on a page. And that's kind of how I started the process – Evi came up with this amazing document of ideas, and we'd bounce them back and forth. Every single page has a little bit of flare or thought in it, and that's how we wanted it to feel. We didn't want it to feel like we just dropped all these images in a template. I wanted the design to feel meaningful and almost like it was a work itself. There are lots of my diary pages scattered through the book, there are lots of little drawings, there's my own font in there, and all the fonts are different in different chapters – so I was thinking about the quality of my work and how I could reflect that in a book which is kind of this static archive, in a way. I see it as a bit of a record. Ten years of sculpture and practice.

A: I see diaries as such a personal thing. I can imagine that when you're creating a diary, you're not doing it for anyone else. But now that they're in these public places like museums and in the pages of your book, does it change the way that you approach diary-making now, in your own practice? Knowing that they may become public eventually?

R: No. It's visually collected or presented in the context of an artists' personal archive or process. So, they can be how they're seen and that's how they're there – to be perceived.

Listen: Authors

It's been a while since we did a Listen feature, where we ask two people the same five questions. I love these features so much – a little insight into the different minds of people following a similar path in life. This issue, we spoke with two local Northern Rivers authors, Bronwyn Birdsall and Emily Brugman about their creative processes and embarking on their second novels.

Bronwyn is the author of *Time and Tide in Sarajevo* and Emily Brugman is the author of *The Islands*.

When did you first realise that writing was something you wanted to devote time and practise to?

Bronwyn: I've had a daily writing practice for most of my adult life, since doing *The Artist's Way* in my early twenties with a group that met in Wilsons Creek. I had a turning point though in early 2018, when I was living in Sydney. I'd been working on a manuscript on and off for a few years, but it wasn't really coming together. I decided on a whim to rent a desk at Writing NSW, and rearranged my weeks to dedicate concentrated time to work on it. By the time moved back up north in March 2020, I had a viable manuscript. I started talking to my eventual publishers a month later and my first novel *Time and Tide in Sarajevo* was published in August 2022.

Emily: For me, it wasn't until I arrived at the initial idea of my novel that I began to dedicate myself to the practice in earnest. Until then, I had written articles and short stories, and had completed an arts degree majoring in creative writing, but it was once I had that seed of an idea that I began to devote big chunks of time to writing, to willingly, and quite happily, choose to stay home and write above other things.

You're both embarking on writing your second book, has your approach or writing process changed compared to how you began your first book?

Bronwyn: Completely different in feeling and yet exactly the same in practice. I started working on my second novel while waiting on edits for my first – I'd been given the great advice to do that to give myself some perspective and a horizon for after the first is done. The fact I've seen a book through to completion has given me a bit more confidence I think, although each day you do face the page afresh. I've learnt to speak very gently to myself, like a child, just doing the 4-6 pages of drafting new material per day (the goal that seems to work for me).

Emily: My first novel, *The Islands*, is a story that is very close to my heart. It is also one inspired by my own family story, and I therefore always felt a sense of certainty about it. I never questioned its validity – because even if it didn't strike a chord with readers, it meant something to me and my family. I have felt a little lost at sea while in the beginning stages of this next project. Perhaps there is a kind of innocence or naivety that comes with writing your first book, that can't be got back afterwards. I am less gung-ho than I was that first time around, I find myself second-guessing my ideas, wondering whether I am simply rehashing something already explored in book one. As such, I have recently decided I need a little more structure in my writing practise at the moment, and for the first time am using a writing guide called *The 90-Day Novel* to help me to imagine the fictional world of my new story, before beginning to write down the first draft (at the time of writing I have completed Day 1, exercise 1 – so it's far too early to say whether I am a convert to this approach or not!).

How do you begin your writing sessions? Do you have a ritual or an allocated time each day or a set place where you write?

Bronwyn: My ideal is very early in the morning, at my desk at home. I don't try to ritualise it too much – if anything, I try to keep it all as ordinary as possible, trying to trick myself into thinking the stakes are very low. I write

by hand, and just try to listen for the story that wants to be told. I try to release expectations, and embrace something I heard Donna Tartt once say, that she writes across the top of her page: 'This Doesn't Count'. Those early drafts for me are a discovery process – I can think about the reader later. And speaking practically, the most important thing is that my phone is far away from me and if I'm editing on my computer, I'll often unplug the modem.

Emily: I am a morning writer. My mind seems to follow the trajectory of the day – in the morning it is calm and fairly ordered, by the afternoon my thoughts tend to become jumbled, as if a wind has come up.

The current routine goes like this: Up at 6:30am, do a few stretches, make a cuppa and sit down at my desk, which is located in a corner of the sunroom at home. Write for 30 minutes, then get ready for work. On Saturdays I start later, but write for longer. Sometimes before getting started, I open a favourite book and read a passage, to remind myself what this is all about, to remind myself why I write and what I am striving towards. Good books can give you that jolt of recognition, even in a single line.

I used to have Jack Kerouac's *30 Rules for Writing* stuck to the wall above my desk, though I haven't put them up again since moving house. The rule I like best is: 'Write what you want bottomless from bottom of the mind.'

How do you move through those moments when you feel stuck or like you've hit a hurdle or block with your creativity?

Bronwyn: By now I have a bit of a toolbox for this: I've learnt to step away from the page and refill the well: move my body, get fresh perspectives, listen to music, see friends. If a scene itself feels stuck, I turn to generative writing, where you write for seven minutes to a prompt, or try to turn the scene completely upside down. Getting to a feeling of play is a good counter to the inner critic.

Emily: Free-writing is a technique I have used to push through moments like these: you might start with a prompt, perhaps a line from another book or poem, set a timer, and write without taking your pen from the paper for five minutes. This allows you to get away from the inner-critic and tap into your subconscious. I prefer doing these exercises in a journal or notepad, rather than on a computer, because it gives me permission for the writing to be bad (which is important if you are to silence that inner-critic). Afterwards I will read through and underline any image or detail that could be of use, or that sparks another thought or feeling.

Walking is also a great way to get the creative side of the brain into gear. And if all else fails, read.

What are you reading right now?

Bronwyn: I'm actually finally reading Emily's book *The Islands*. It's so beautiful. I've been saving it as a reward to mark the end of a hectic period after my book came out. The unexpected bonus of writing a novel is making writer friends and getting to enjoy their work.

Emily: I just finished *Foal's Bread* by Gillian Mears. It is a bold, rollicking, unforgettable story of a farming family living in the hills west of Grafton during the mid-20th century. I am awed by Mears' willingness to be truthful on the page and to tackle taboo topics, affording them a complexity that is true, if sometimes disturbing. Highly recommend.

Arts Guide

EVENTS

TEDXBYRONBAYWOMEN

TEDxByronBayWomen is here to celebrate the power of women and girls to be creators and change-makers. With a cast of local and interstate speakers, TEDxWomen is an exciting opportunity to engage critically and meaningfully in the discussion about the power of girls and women in our society. TEDxWomen is open to everyone interested in speaking or attending, inclusive of all identities across the gender spectrum. Speakers include: Nickolla Clarke, Jacquie Lewis, Alexx Stuart, Nikki Parkinson, Jessica Maguire, Alexandra Hudson, Claire O'Rourke, Hannabeth Luke, Chelsea Walego and Erin Lovell Verinder.

Byron Theatre

Sunday, 23 October 2022

AUTHOR TALK: JOCK SERONG

The Book Room at Byron Bay is welcoming Australian author, Jock Serong, to discuss his new book *The Settlement*. Winner of the 2021 ARA Historical Novel Prize, Serong's reimagining of the historical events surrounding George Augustus Robinson's role in the violent colonisation of Tasmania.

The Book Room, Byron Bay
Tuesday, 15 November 2022

BYRON BAY FILM FESTIVAL

Byron Bay's film festival is back! With the theme of Shining Light in Darkness, this year's festival program is filled with cinematic greatness.

21–30 October 2022

CAPER BYRON BAY

"Food is everything we are. It's an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It's inseparable from these things from the get-go ... I think food, culture, people and landscape are all absolutely inseparable." – Anthony Bourdain

Caper is Byron Bay's newly beloved four-day food and culture festival. Taking attendees on a foray through Byron Shire's cuisine, drink, music, art and community from beach to hinterland – this is an event that has at its heart the will and desire to champion the bounty around us that we might take for granted on a day-to-day basis. From Bush Tucker tours with Auntie Delta Kay to Cantonese & Cabaret with Chef Louis Tikaram and Monica Trapaga, there's something on the program for everyone.

Various venues
10–13 November 2022

EXHIBITIONS

CAPTURING NATURE

Smartphones have made us all budding photographers, but what did 19th Century photography look like? Tweed Regional Museum is exhibiting a selection of Australia's earliest natural history photographs reproduced from the Australia Museum's collection from 1857 to 1893.

Tweed Regional Museum

25 October 2022 to 28 January 2023

BUILD | REBUILD: NORTHERN RIVERS CERAMICS, AFTER THE FLOODS

A collective of local ceramic artists, all impacted in various ways by this year's floods, are showcasing their works at Lone Goat Gallery in October and November. Many returned to their art practices as a healing balm or have integrated new influences in light of the experience.

Lone Goat Gallery

29 October to 26 November 2022

WORKSHOPS

INTRO TO AGENTS, PUBLISHING & PITCHING

Working on a manuscript or just interested in knowing more about the publishing industry? Byron Writers Festival presents a three-hour seminar with literary agent Alex Adsett. Learn how the different publishing departments fit together, what an agent can and can't do for you, publishing scams to watch out for, the different ways to pitch to publishers (and what not to do).

Byron Community Centre

Saturday, 26 November 2022

Paradiso Issue Twenty-One

37

Learn how to get featured in

The Guardian

VOGUE

BROADSHEET

Forbes

Learn how to be your own publicist and become the next Australian household brand.

Hack Your Own PR

@odetteandco
odetteandco.com.au

Love. Is. Hard.

What if through community engagement and collaborative practice, we move beyond “benevolence” and “charitable thinking” to community-valued exchange? Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre recently produced *Reflections: A ten year retrospective* – a dance show at the Lennox Cultural Centre that celebrated a decade of dance, multimedia and photography. Emma Beattie, one of the dance theatre’s team members, reflects on the show and waxes lyrical about their philosophy, their inspiration, and the people who bring it all together.

A voice cuts through the crowd, a body flings itself through the air. Two women in a clutch of arms, one pair of legs looping, hitched around a bolstered waist.

The waist is that of Kate McDowell, Artistic Associate for Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre and Associate Artist at NORPA. The loop of limbs is Alice Misty Boscheinen, a long time dancer in Sprung!!’s Ensemble.

‘Sprung!! is my family, and I want to be in it forever. I love it.’

“Love,” says Alice, “Is. Hard. Love is hard.”

Alice and Kate are artists, friends and collaborators. Observing them in this animated moment of post-show rapture was almost as nourishing as the show itself. Alice can be a young woman of few words – the affection and depth of connection said everything.

Reflections

Celebrating a decade of dance, multimedia and photography, Sprung!! recently produced *Reflections: A 10 year retrospective*. The show demonstrated collaborative practice at work and broke down barriers of imposed otherness – it was a rich body of collaborative works with absolute artistic merit.

For people with the lived experience of more obvious mobility, cognitive or emotional disabilities, everyday disparagement and discrimination is real. Original ensemble member Tara is conspicuous entering a room; manoeuvring stairs requires assistance. On stage, she’ll knock your socks off. No one was whispering, pointing or mocking on Sept 10, 2022 – the audience was captivated. So too at the Australian Dance Awards where Sprung!! has been a twice time finalist. You could’ve heard a pin drop.

Reflections traversed landscapes of people, time and place. The production was the embodiment of diverse perspectives exploring what it is to exist and co-exist in modern day Australia by revisiting the stories and collaborations of a decade.

Over the past decade, Northern-Rivers-based Sprung!! has created opportunities for people with and without disability. This translates as integrated dance, dance and physical theatre training, collaborative and disability-led process, and the development of dance theatre performances.

Sprung!! has conspired with the likes of NORPA, Ferros Aged Care, choreographer and mentor Michael Hennessy (ex Sydney Dance Co), Andrew Christie (artist, designer and 3D workshop facilitator), Fred Cole (music tracks and a full score), John Rayment (lighting designer, Sydney 2000 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies), and maven costume designer Jennifer Irwin (Opera Australia, Bangarra Dance). It’ll be amazing to see what stories and future collaborations reveal as Sprung!! enters a new decade.

Same-same but different

Sprung!! is more than a dance class.

As good art is supposed to do, Sprung!!’s work reaches into the slumbering recesses of your being and whispers, “wake up.”

Reflections was the embodiment of collaborative and creative practice; the work of self actualisation – the beautiful, vulnerable, humorous and transformative process. *Reflections* evoked wonder and awe.

Our bias, both conscious and unconscious, robs people of their dignity. It shatters equality and the focus turns to the differences between us, rather than identifying our commonalities.

Sprung!! could easily be viewed as a repository for sympathy, a diversity line or disadvantage project. Sharing the sentiments of Chelsea Watego from her important book *Another Day in the Colony*, “we are not doing this to seek acceptance. We are strengthening cultural awareness.”

Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says, “if we only hear one story, the story is incomplete. When we reject a single story, we regain a kind of paradise, repair broken dignity, empower and humanise.” She recounts a childhood memory of Fide, a nine-year-old boy who came to carry out domestic help in their middle class family home. The story she built around Fide was one of pity for his impoverished life; when Chimamanda visited his village, she was surprised to be met by a wonder of colour and creative beauty in woven raffia baskets. She had never imagined Fide’s pitiful family might make something. Pity squashes any opportunity to connect as equals. There are amazing stories beyond otherness and ‘deficits’ – there are stories of humanity, of being.

Tutor, Artist Liaison and Community Engagement Officer Katie Cooper-Wares

says, “When I go into creative development with our ensemble artists to collaborate and co-devise, I make sure to remind myself that I am an artist meeting another artist. I need to be present and not make assumptions. The experience reminds me of the theatresports game ‘Yes, And!’ Our artists come up with an idea and the most important thing is to never shut that down, to explore the extension of it, the progression of that idea. It may grow or change or be put on the shelf but it’s their idea, their artistry and it is of the utmost importance to respect that. It’s how we grow as artists, confident that ideas are worthy of voicing.”

Exploring the spectrum of the human condition can be common ground to relate as equals. To widen our lens and explore the kaleidoscope of life, identifying where we overlap and tumble into each other.

Sprung!! Producer Vanessa Kellas says, “When we all bring a contribution rather than expecting things or arriving with a sense of entitlement, what happens? If we come together as artist to artist rather than administration for artist what might that look like? If we begin to draw on everything the Ensemble have observed in past performances they connect with, the formations, structures, lighting, music, and audio visuals, and combine them with their rich and varied lived experiences, we can really begin to delve into a more collaborative way of making dance and theatre. It becomes shared. We start to become more expansive, practicing new ways of approaching ideas, both technically, working more behind the scenes together, as well as physically being present in body on the rehearsal floor. The Ensemble get to express a bigger picture, creating works which have wider creative parameters with the continued, unwavering support of Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre”.

The team is modelling collaborative practices and new ways of approaching ideas to express a bigger picture. Delivering services from within the organisation is testament to this. At *Reflections: A 10 year retrospective* of dance and photography (September 2022), ensemble dancer Tallula hand-signed (Auslan interpreted) for Kane as he heartily addressed the audience.

What if through community engagement and collaborative practice, we move beyond benevolence and charitable thinking to community-valued exchange?

The Creative Process

The artistic process lies at the heart of collaborative practice. Creative collaboration needs time. Sprung!! provides a platform for the creative process, collaborative practice and cultivates deep running, long time connections.

Back to Back Theatre is a world renowned company of neuro-diverse artists based in Geelong, Victoria. They recently won the most prestigious theatre award in the world – the IBSEN award.

In her thesis McDowell cites Yoni Prior reflecting on her time in research at Back to Back Theatre: “The long process of inventing, testing, discarding, refining, distilling, shaping and repeating creates a safe environment in which to deal with volatile material...working slowly allows time to debrief, to check that everyone has understood what it is they are making, for changes of mind or direction, to retreat, to re-think. At the end, afterwards, the company is very clear what the work means – to them.”

Just as *Reflections* dramaturgy bounced around the years, the creative process too is not linear. Everything as an artist is creative input, it’s metabolised then emerges in new places at a new time with reconstructed value and meaning.

A professional development excursion to Brisbane Festival in September allowed Sprung!! staff and the ensemble immerse themselves in other productions, observing formats, technology, various show structures and potential collaborators. A period of gathering input ensues, making visible goals and wishes.

Ensemble dancer Max hears a bird song in a track and says, “What about this bird song?” His contribution is overlaid, something new emerges. Once on taking a walk he noticed how the wind felt, he became the wind; Max returned to the studio with a new autumnal movement to share and develop.

The Collaborative Habit

Twyla Tharp, NY choreographer and author says “the wisdom of a smart group is greater than the brain power of its smartest member.” Collaboration can mean we’ll try to listen, but it often buckles when it comes to action. The word is flung around, just like other phrases such as: ‘authentic’, ‘genuine’, and ‘we listen’. Brands, organisations and corporations monetise, push and pull these values about hoping to attract their prey



(read: target market, donors, investors and partners).

When ‘collaboration’ is positioned next to ‘practice’, it becomes something more weighted – it’s an action. A dedicated action. Love in action. How might we love ourselves more?

Humans are, by nature, communitarians – genetically programmed to co-operate rather than compete. The groups we belong to inform our sense of identity and belonging. If we are not engaged and participatory, our wellbeing tends to wilt like greens without water.

Sprung!! calls collaborators and audiences into their humanity through the expression of many stories. The next production celebrating the season of spring is participatory: the audience becomes a collaborator. For many of us, it’ll elicit discomfort. We’re not really willing to become the buffoon – to mock, play, or put ourselves in a situation where we’re seen from a strange angle or aren’t taken seriously.

Sprung!! Is less about being on The Spectrum and more about embodying and expressing the spectrum of the human condition.

Alice is on point when she says love is hard. The question New York choreographer and author Twyla Tharp asks of us is, “are we willing to work at it?” Tharp challenges us to rethink collaboration, stating “collaboration is a habit and practice.” She follows up by asking the question: could your relationships be better?

Working in collaboration with others begins as a point of view. But, often, points of view differ. How often is the art of listening lost when the opinions presented differ to our own? When was the last time you truly listened with your whole body, fully present?

Sprung!!’s Ensemble consistently shows up to themselves and each other by asking the hard questions. They listen to the depths of their being and with great accuracy. They translate that exploration and sense of self into a captivating embodied story on stage with the collaborative efforts of producers, artistic directors, choreographers, wardrobe, hair and makeup, audio visual artists, tech crew, dramaturges, musicians ... an extensive list of people dedicated to the creative and collaborative process.

Classical movement can hold challenges for some people with lived experiences of disability. Though, instead of being obstacles, fear and physical limitations become discoveries. An unlikely collaboration between a highly skilled choreographer and a young actor with cerebral palsy demonstrates that every body is capable of

more than we imagine.

Kate McDowell reflects similarly, “Sprung!! celebrates and leans into difference. Artists living with intellectual disability live in and perceive a different world – they see, feel, relate to and translate their experience in unique ways, which our process is about making space for in trust and experimentation. The dancers’ experience of access and opportunity is different. Rather than working to eliminate this difference, the collaborative work brings it to light in a way that names it as worthy and everything from painful to joyous. The work for Sprung!! is to develop artistic practice that invites audiences into other worlds or parallel universes that are existing alongside theirs. Being able to articulate difference through artwork, we move closer together.”

Better Together

Could the ticket to collaborative practice be the brave and humble removing of masks? The will to meet as equals? An earnest practice of deep listening?

If we mix that together, might we conjure more love? In collaborative practice there’s a lot of loving – it’s love in action, a dedicated practice until it becomes habitual. And then, some more love.

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Esther Perel *Where Do We Begin. The Arc of Love*.

EXPLORE

Tune in to ‘How to listen better - tips from a deaf guy’ as Stephen O’Keefe. *The Value of Deep Listening - The Aboriginal Gift to the Nation*, Judy Atkinson. Get Better at Deep Listening, with Oscar Trimboli www.oscartrimboli.com/podcasts.

Northern Rivers based Sprung!! Integrated Dance Theatre is a not for profit and community organisation providing workshops and specialised dance and theatre training for people with and without disability. www.sprung.org.au

The Writer vs The Distraction Machine

I am a creative by nature, a poet at heart and these are very uncreative times. Words by Kathryn Lyster.

Sure, we all ‘make things’, with our iPhones, snapping pics of smoothie bowls, making a video tutorial of eyebrow hacks, we take photos of our newly organised all-linen bedrooms, but the time, space and mental freedom it takes to engage in a deep creative practice has well and truly flown the nest. We are wifi-ed to the hilt, emailed up to our eyeballs and drowning in a soup of screens.

Before Instagram was a thing, during one golden summer, I wrote 70,000 words that would become my debut novel in a few short months. Living in Wilson’s Creek, NSW without mobile phone internet or signal allowed me to float in a fizzing nebulous of ideas and inspiration. Sunrise at my fingertips, jungle in my veins, I have never been happier, I felt connected to something more than myself, like my book was talking to me and I was crystal clear and quiet enough to hear it. I swear the small empty room where I wrote glowed while I was hammering away at an old laptop hour after hour, day after day. That novel is done and dusted, available only on kindle these days, not a recommended read, but still, I cannot believe I wrote it because I can’t write a paragraph these days without checking my phone, or browsing for something I suddenly remembered, or scrolling through photos of my own cat who is nearly always sitting next to me when I sit down to write. IRL.

In this time of media overload, tech tsunamis and a laptop lifestyle that reveals more about my Scandi-Noir addiction than my literary accomplishments, some days I feel that it is impossible to be a writer in 2022. I am simply too distracted for deep thoughts, forget about the possibility of original ideas.

A lot of this comes down to self-discipline and commitment to the work, I know that. I have been alive for 38 years and identifying as an artist for at least half of them. I know that if you are giving your attention to anything that is not your art, there is no one else to blame but yourself and realistically, if you can’t ‘find the time’ to create, it’s because you are giving your time to other things that may/may not be as important as your art. These are ‘unprecedented times’, so unprecedented we never want to hear that pandemic-themed word again. But they are. And either you write about the world around you or you disappear into your imagination and create a new one. Both take time, energy and focus. Both take you rising up out of the ashes of your personal life or society-at-large to say something about something. That’s what writing is – saying something about something and in recent years – a lot of us have felt our mouths drop to the floor, but no sound is coming out.

Since the 2019 summer bushfires in Australia, it feels like the world has gone to hell. We’ve had catastrophe after calamity, on these lands and all around the world. Everywhere. Floods, fires, plagues and if being an artist involves reflecting the times we find ourselves in,

who among us is strong enough? Have I been trying to disappear from myself, the catastrophe of the world and my art? You betcha. It takes a lot of mental energy and resilience to make anything, in the face of so much awfulness. But we must all press on.

My cousin, Rosa, who is a more brilliant writer than I, wrote an essay about a picture of a raccoon stealing a jar of peanut butter and in her words, ‘pressing the fuck on’. I think about it every time I am too tired to write, too sad to think about world events or just too numb from a job in (cough) MARKETING. Press the fuck on girl.

I have spent three years blaming my full-time job for the second novel that has not yet been written. It’s the first time I have worked like this, trapped with no way out, living now in Sydney with exorbitant rent and a lockdown induced online shopping habit that just won’t quit. I bought Tommy Hilfiger like my life depended on it and I cannot explain why. When a Tinder date lasted all weekend, I was asked over breakfast, ‘What’s going on here? Are you repped by Tommy Hilfiger or something?’ Not because I look like someone who belongs to a brand, just because over three days he had seen my socks, leggings, undies, caps, t-shirts all with the red white and blue logo and it was a fair question to ask. So, I have been working harder than I’ve ever worked and spending every cent I made on shitty online purchases. Against my minimalist sustainability values. I have shopped myself to creative death, but the Machine made me do it.

In the evenings during a pandemic, I should have used all that alone time and WFH vibes to scratch away at my novel by candlelight instead of scrolling The Iconic; I wish I had created something iconic, the irony irks me. It’s a dark place to be when you like to think you are a rather deep person, but you become entirely focused on superficial things. When your time goes to shopping sales, chasing orders, sending back unwanted jumpers to the post office, tracking deliveries and couriers who don’t want to drop off your things at the top of 100 steep stone steps. All of this, is against type. I remember in my twenties, being so wrapped up in what I was writing I didn’t shower for three days, I was glued to my desk. Meeting a friend at the library, of all old-fashioned things, we hugged and a pair of balled up undies fell out of the leg of my jeans. That’s how consumed I was in the other world, the ether of creativity and the story that had captured my attention.

This speaks to the archetype of the artist so lit up with their work, that the living world fades, reality becomes less real in the face of the art that is emerging. Painters in paint-splattered clothes, writers with pencils sticking out of ratty buns. One of my favourite books, *High Tide in Tuscon* by Barbara Kingsolver is a memoir to end all writerly memoirs. Living in the high desert, she talks about the writing life in the best way. She describes being a women writer of note in the 90s in her all-black ensem-

ble, she wasn’t concerned with fashion. In my mind, it’s because she was creating something that would become fashionable: *The Poisonwood Bible*. A literary tome. This makes me want to cry. Also, it makes me wonder if Barbara would have been able to write like that in 2022, would the bible be poison if she’d had a smart phone? In the face of all this hypothesis, this remains true: I bought enough Sandro blazers to fill a walk-in, imagining myself wearing them to book launches, but if I added up the hours I spent browsing online stores, consumed with consuming, I would have my novel by now. Ready to print.

This addiction is against all of my values and yet I cannot stop. Even though I know there is a global marketing monster behind all of this, designed to make a relatively free and intelligent person into a slave like this ... But still – I SHOULD BE STRONGER. So bingeing on fashion, sometimes fast – sorry to everyone and the earth and all the women who made this shitty t-shirt I bought on sale, I feel deeply ashamed. In an attempt to stop the cycle, I handwrote a quote from *My Favourite Murder*, my favourite podcast, pinned to my wall that goes like this: “Do not let the patriarchy sell you trash made from the bones of a dying earth”. It didn’t work. I just bought some velvet cushions, to soothe my feelings and also to make me forget that I haven’t written anything creative in months.

This brings me to my next bingeing addiction – podcasts. Being a writer requires a relative level of daydreaming, silence, swimming in the inky space between words and thoughts and imagination. It requires that you sit alone in silence for hours on end. Unlike other types of art creation, writing is not about movement of the body, it is not a performance, writers rarely write in shared studio spaces like visual artists, there is nothing collaborative about the process while they are writing. Even the medium is sparse – it is small letters on a blank page, no colour, no pizzazz, the meaning, the brilliance is non-visual, it is about making tiny letters dance. And if you are dancing yourself, it just doesn’t work, not in the traditional sense anyway. Inspiration can come from anywhere, but so many writers talk about how it comes when they are on long walks or other solitary pursuits. Murakami wrote a whole book about how running is the most important anchor to his life as a writer and we’re talking long hard slog runs, marathon kind of runs. So what happens if you fill the quiet space where words live with noise? I listen to podcasts at least six hours a day. When I’m driving, doing laundry, out on a walk, at the beach – all of this previous ‘daydreaming’ time is now filled with words, other people’s stories, voices imprinting on my brain. I don’t hear the waves with my morning coffee, I am listening to a story and I am convinced this impedes my ability to hear my own story.

In 2017 after a savage breakup, I began to experience panic attacks on the regular and podcasts were a very quick fix. They numbed my overactive mind and spiral-

ling thoughts, seemed to level me out, grabbing the reigns from the existential crisis I’ve been having since I was seven (yes, diagnosed by a child psychiatrist) so really, over-thinking is in my DNA. Podcasts made the white noise disappear, but the white noise was what I wrote about. So what now? I’ll tell you – without silence, gaps in time, space for my mind to expand and fill out, all of the creative work that happens before the actual writing (a.k.a the other side of the creative process) dried up. I can no longer write for eight hours a day. I also no longer have panic attacks, but is the trade-off worth it?

This assessment of my bingeing demons is not complete without the biggest of them all – streaming entertainment until my eyes bleed. Netflix, Stan, AppleTV, Binge, BritBox (there are too many), have stolen years of art-making. They are the primary reason I am a writer with one novel under her belt, not thirteen. Or even three. I recently found three half-finished novels that I had kind of forgotten I’d written. They’re like failed relationships, shoved in a drawer, filled with dreams and promise and a distinct smell.

Living alone, working in marketing in the beauty industry during the days and then turning on the blue-haze glow of Netflix until I drift off is me not living my best life. I know this. But it’s like eating too much sugar, it’s so easy, it’s just there, and I can binge nine episodes of a subtitled Scandi Noir until I’m numb – numb to feelings, to creative stirrings, longings, losses, numb to the solostalgia we all feel as the natural world we love and value burns to the ground. As the earth that literally supports our every breath is up in smoke on every continent, Netflix is pumping out shows to make it all go away quietly, it is fading reality. It allows us to think nothing, feel nothing, lose our discernment about what we are watching, as long as we are consuming something that makes us feel nothing. (I’m conscious many of these shows are someone’s creative dreams and I would die if anyone wanted to make something I wrote into a Netflix show, so maybe I’m just jealous I haven’t been asked yet). But still. It’s a very bad thing for a writer to feel nothing. To fall into silence. To be distracted into apathy.

This is the age of cancel culture, but really – what we are cancelling is ourselves. Our creativity, our vitality. And even the sanctity of our homes. All of this technology, platforms and mechanisms designed to grab our attention exist in the palm of our hands and come right into our homes. And writers write at home mostly – or in cafes or bookshops. So even in a bookshop I am not safe from consuming instead of creating. But mainly, the fight for time is more important than ever because our focus has been commodified and our homes are now portals to all kinds of consumerism.

Just like nature and our bodies, we need to be speaking more about how the private sphere where we live and where some of us create, because of technology like phones and laptops and mainly because of the internet – we have lost control of our private realm. You don’t have to step outside, it all comes right in through the front door. My bed can be a shopping centre via The Iconic, an autopsy scene via a true crime podcast, a ‘meat market’ via Hinge, and a way to spy on all the people I do and don’t know on any given evening. Writing takes energy, concentration, focus – and after a long day of life, adulting, work, being a human in 2022 – we want to be distracted and hummed softly into oblivion by any means possible. Quickest and cheapest please.

Can I palm off my weak will in the face of the Distraction Machine to my muse? Can it be Her fault and not mine? Maybe it’s not me that got tired and lazy, maybe it’s her. She is the Tommy-wearing, true crime bingeing flake, blank-faced with the glow of another Norwegian forest seething with dead women or more glaciers and snowstorms than have ever existed on earth. This muse is crap, and badly dressed and not inspiring me at all.

In *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert told us how in ancient Greece a muse really was an external force, a spirit, and the great artists of that time just had really shit-hot muses. So, I could blame my inability to write on my rubbish muse, but I know it’s not true because until 2019, she was lit. She poured bush honey on my head and we were in a flow so golden, I could cry just thinking about it. It’s not her fault at all, and it’s not really the fault of Apple or Meta or the streaming services I mentioned either. I have to take responsibility for throwing my writing aside and settling into an apathy that hurt like hell, even while I felt nothing at all.

Writing is about imagining ourselves in another’s shoes, about imagining other worlds and new futures and if we stop doing this, then we are accepting the status quo, or allowing those in power to write the future for us, by consuming the mass-entertainment we are missing the nuances and niche perspectives we could offer or explore. We have to rise up above it and keep creating.

Drawing lines in the sand is important – as humans, as artists. We have to try and fix what is breaking us. What happened yesterday doesn’t have to happen today. Which is why I am in bed suddenly writing. Feeling the juices rise. Time for this distracted writer to grow up, eat some peanut butter for brain power, find a pad of paper and any old pen and PUSH ON.

If you ever read the novel that is buzzing around my head like an octopus on mescal, it will mean that my commitment to my art won’t over the machine designed to make me dumb. It will mean that I rescued myself, my life and my creative process from the gutter. It will mean that I stopped distraction-bingeing and started living and writing again. Like my life depended on it.

Love For One Night

A review. Words by Nat Woods.

Sitting tucked snug under my knee blanket, waiting patiently for the show to start, it suddenly seemed like the 130-year-old Eltham Hotel was always destined to be a theatre stage. The large window at the front and centre of the building allows a clear view into the bar and the upstairs balcony could’ve been pulled straight from hundreds of theatre set designs. With no stage curtain to hide last minute adjustments to set, costumes, or props, the action of the pub and the play seamlessly merge into one – patrons I’d seen drinking at the bar now reveal themselves as the actors themselves and at some point, the true bar staff disappear and are replaced with the show’s solo bartender. And while the hum of the local pub goes drifts across the open air from the beer garden, the play’s live “pub band” kicks off the musical score and the show begins.

Under the Northern Rivers’ starry sky, NORPA’s *Love for One Night* unravels delightfully and raucously – a series of love stories that make you cry with laughter and tear up with sentimentality. Part drama, part musical, part ... acrobatic french kissing ... I don’t know that I’ve ever seen anything like it. With references to the floods, lovers being lost to local cults and the stories behind the theatrical upstairs rooms of the Eltham, the show feels like something we can all own and be proud of as a community. What a beautiful thing to have after everything we’ve been through. I hope it’s back for another season very soon.

@norpalismore
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In the Stars



Mercury retrograde has become synonymous with astrological chaos, thanks to the general hysteria in response to the glitches and confusion it elicits. Cute statements like, “don’t blame the retrograde” are stubbornly true. During this time, all planets stop in their tracks except for the Sun and Moon. When a planet is direct, it means it’s in a cycle of attention and extroversion (read: doing).

When in retrograde, the process turns inwards for awareness (read: timeout). Both are necessary for progression and creativity. We are now in the clear of Mercury’s post-shadow, after retracing steps of unrealised potential and beginning to understand the bigger picture. It’s a pat-yourself-on-the-back, I’ve-come-pretty-far kind of moment. But restlessness doesn’t leave just yet with Mars, the planet of how we expend energy fighting (and the other F-word), stationing retrograde in Gemini from 31 Oct to 13 Jan. It’s a move Mars makes every two years,

marking this period as ripe for a review of what you have energy for. It also calls you to look at our current survival strategies. Are you experiencing resistance? Are you frustrated? Are you being invited to do things differently? It’s time to reflect.

Our celestial landscape continues to be rearranged with Eclipse Season – the cosmic wildcard. On 25 October there’s a solar eclipse in Scorpio, and on 8 November there’s a lunar eclipse in Taurus. Here, our inevitable realignments come back to make space for new developments.

We end the year with one more Mercury retrograde on 31 Dec in Capricorn. A disquieting notion, perhaps, but I’d encourage you to find the sort of grace that comes with actively participating in new ways to re-identify yourself with your convictions. Even if it does come after being backed into a corner. Ah, the beauty of being alive.

Beginning well involves a clearing away of the irrelevant and the complicated to find the beautiful, often hidden lineaments of the essential and necessary.

– David Whyte

WANT MORE?

Brooke Macqueen, the owner of Various Friends, is an astrologer, writer and storyteller. Get in touch for all things sky poetry and shop the celestial at www.variousfriends.com



Paradiso Book Club

Pacific By Ming Nomchong

When Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan first encountered The Pacific Ocean he was greeted by such calm and gentle seas that he named the waters that famously skirt Byron Bay the Mar Pacifico or ‘peaceful sea.’

Ming Nomchong’s debut book of photography and collage – with poetry by Kathryn Lyster – appeals to the better angels of Byron Bay’s nature. In *Pacific*, the female body, cresting waves, shells, rocks and palm-trees are objects of the same loving scrutiny. Like a string of pearls, Ming creates poetic associations between these forms until their hidden meaning expresses its own internal logic.

Pacific is subtitled ‘Escaping Place’ and at first blush, its images are romantic, transportive and evocative of a place that may exist more in one’s imagination than reality. Seashells are captured momentarily before being eroded into grains of sand, lithe and supple bodies are captured momentarily before being subject to the gravitational pull of old-age and the ocean itself is momentarily captured on a time-scale whose gradual entropy we cannot comprehend.

On a second reading, *Escaping Place* reads like an unmet challenge. Mired by our own rootedness, our sense of place is the one thing that we cannot truly escape. In the words of Susan Sontag, photographs can only “testify to time’s relentless melt.”

Contemplating the words and photographs in *Pacific*, we are reminded that every escape is a species of return.

Review by Kasumi Borczyk. Book is available from Toko Toko, in the Byron Arts and Industry Estate.



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Crossword:

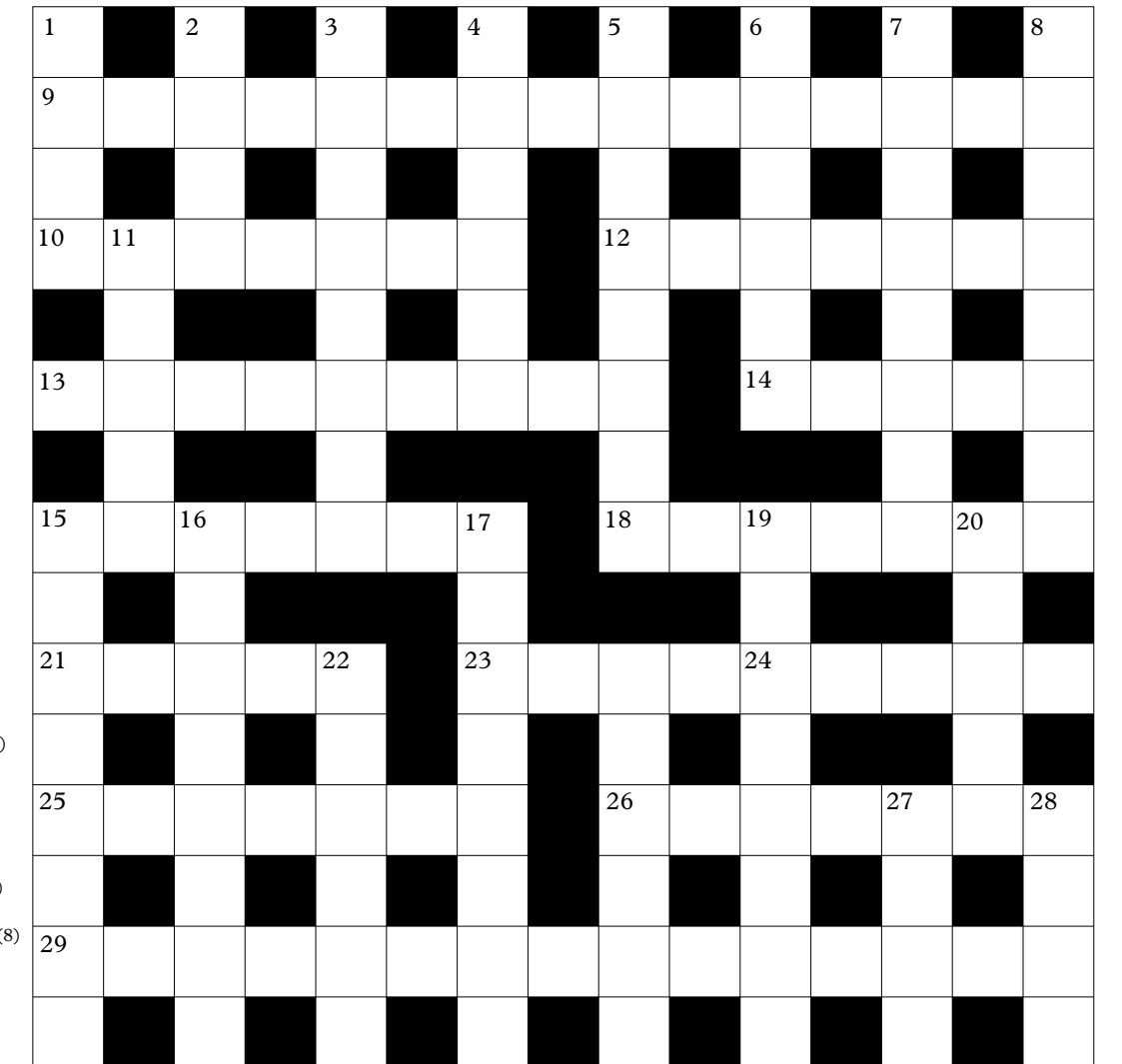
Partner up or
go solo with this
puzzling puzzle.

ACROSS

9 self-betterment (4-11)
10 mortal (7)
12 Pasta (7)
13 Depiction (9)
14 Fantasy (3-2)
15 Thaw (7)
18 Pistol (7)
21 Stiff-upper-lip type (5)
23 Passable (9)
25 consequence (7)
26 Cannot find (7)
29 _____ designer (7,8)

DOWN

1 small landmass (4)
2 Vague (4)
3 Up to now (8)
4 Nimble (6)
5 Basic and fundamental (2-6)
6 Go away (6)
7 Speedwell (herb) (8)
8 Unemotionality (8)
11 Unaccompanied (5)
15 Purge (8)
16 Nominal head (male) (5,3)
17 Inclination (8)
19 Brandy (e.g. after dinner) (8)
20 Pass along (5)
22 Adorn (6)
24 Flirter (6)
27 _ _ _ (first-rate) (1-3)
28 Arrange (4)



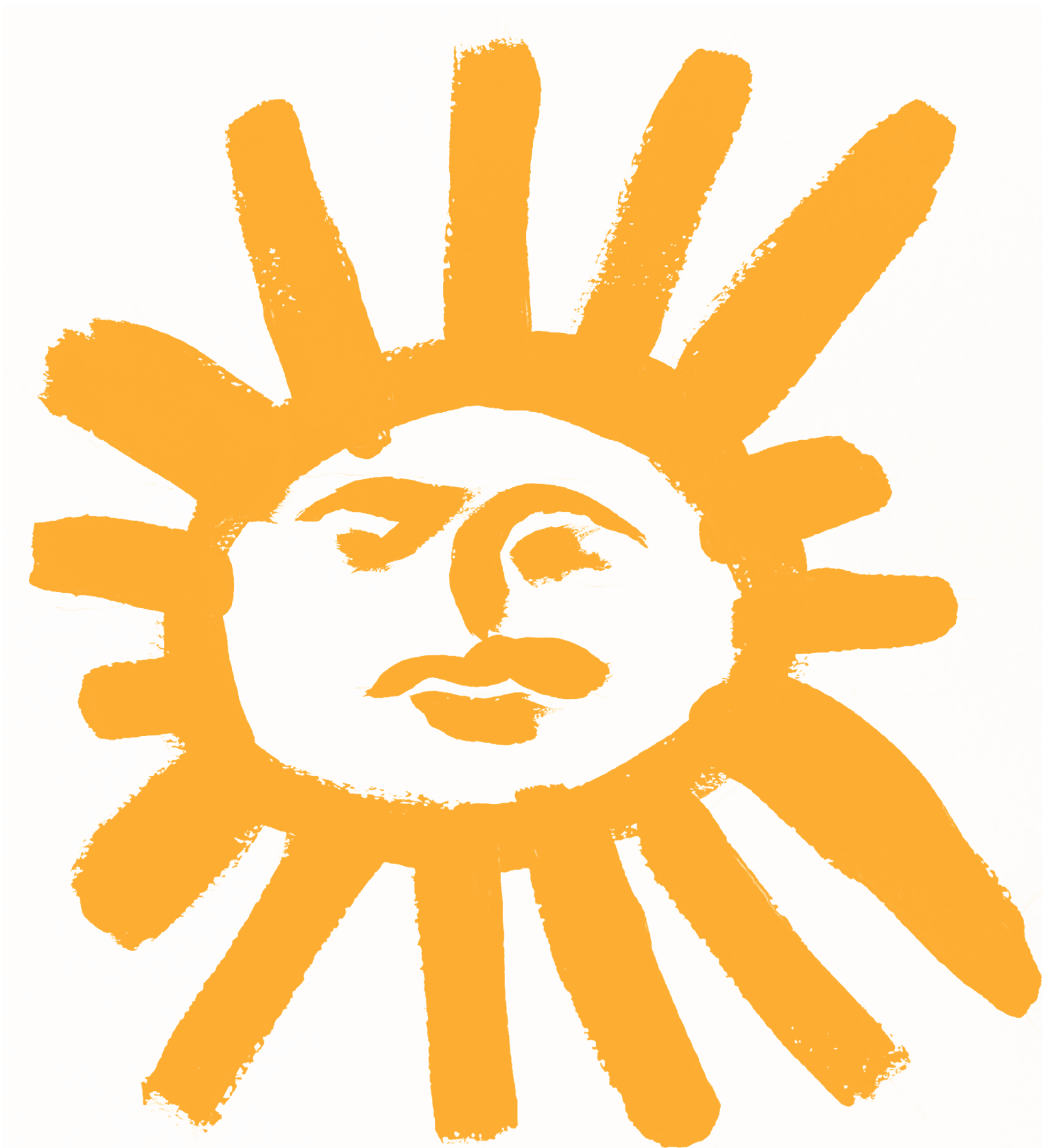
Oh, you’re at the end.

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you can always go to our

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and read a curated selection of
features from the Paradiso archives.
Issues 01 – 21

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“There is a sun
within every person.”

— Rumi

Paradiso