

Project  
Synergy.

# ORIGINALS

ISSUE 1

I S S U E I



P L A Y L I S T

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contents page to guide yourself through.*



O R I G I N S

# O R G I N S

I s s u e I

**Project  
Synergy.**

O R I G I N S

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For a review of the works cited in the articles, refer to the ‘Works Cited’ section at the end of the issue.

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*Dedicated to you.*

It  
all  
started  
somewhere.

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# E d i t o r s N o t e

Dear readers,

On January 23rd, Project Synergy was just an idea two friends shared over coffee.

Today, 30th of June, Project Synergy has become an ever-growing community of 26 core team members, and more than 30 contributing artists. In just a few months, **Project Synergy** has facilitated the creation of meaningful connections among young people from all over the world. Aimed at and primarily formed by students and young professionals, **Project Synergy** acknowledges that proactive, cultural learning is key to living a purposeful life.

This first issue is the representation of collective creativity and rewarding teamwork.

During hard times, it's important to stick with what makes us curious and what we hold close to the heart. For us and our team, the arts and culture serve as a much needed escape after a long working week. Whether it's watching a movie for the hundredth time, going for a museum visit or just enjoying a street performance, we believe that genuine expression are what pushes this world forward. After all - hard times are precisely what breeds the most beautiful art. As humans, we aim to nurture what makes us whole. We aim to live a purposeful life through creative thinking.

This first issue is called **ORIGINS**. The theme was originally decided on exploring what it meant to begin this project, but it quickly spread out to an incredible variety of stories, reflections and conversations about what "origins" means to each of us. For some, an origin is a birthplace. For others, an origin is a new start. And so on.

When thinking about origins, some important questions arise: where do we come from? Who came before us? How similar or different are our origins? In this issue, these questions are explored through a variety of artistic and cultural means.

Our issue features all types of art: from up and coming graphic illustrations to whole documentary productions. We aim to be mere witnesses, and distributors, of the vibrant reality that exists around us.

We dedicate this issue to you, our first readers. We urge you to read through it however you may like - you can start from the end and work your way back, or you can also follow the playlist audioguide and experience each piece with a chosen song from the contributor. It's all about your personal experience. In the end, it's about enjoyment, distraction, and a little reflection.

We're beyond grateful to all the contributing artists and team members who embraced the opportunity to participate in this first publication. We could never have imagined that we would have people from 28 different countries publishing their work the first time round. If this is the scenario now, we can only feel profound excitement for what's to come next.

We only hope you enjoy the experience as much as we have enjoyed creating this issue.

Yours truly,



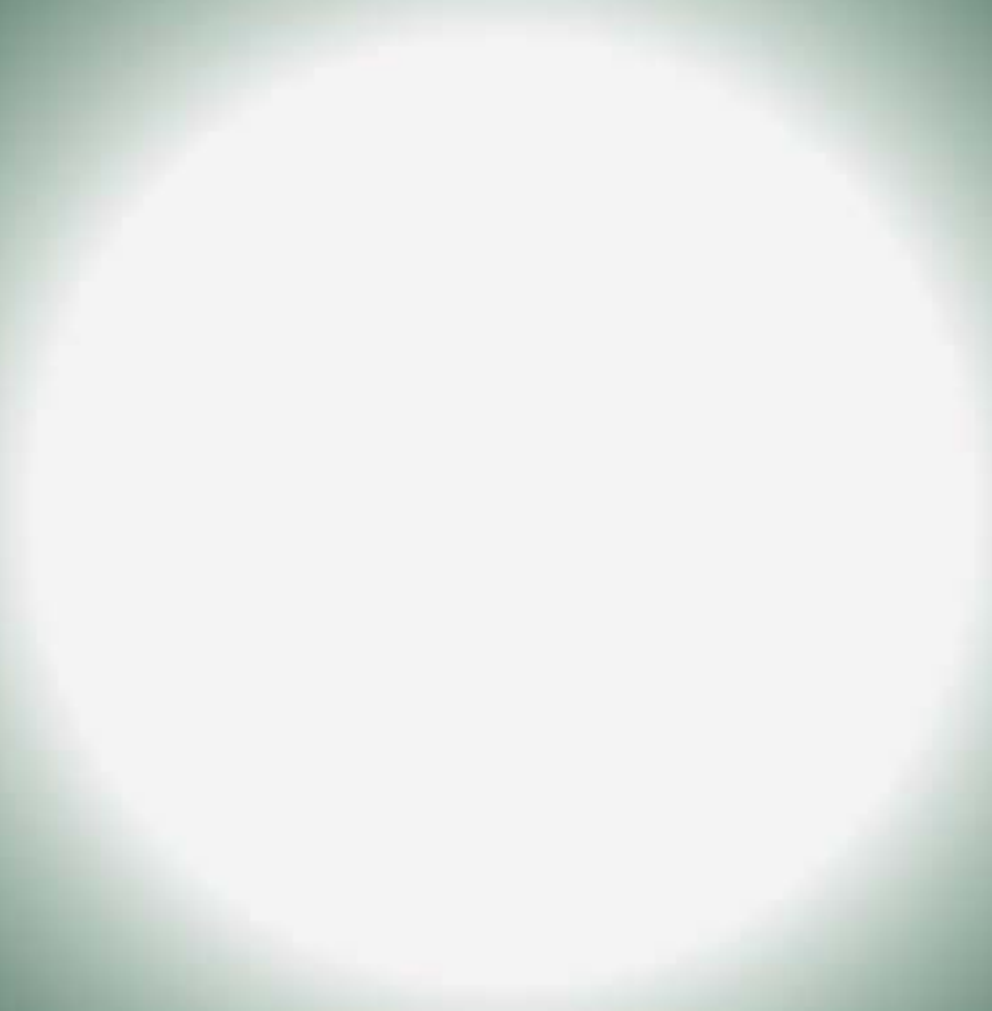
**Isabella Ibañez and Alessia Giha**  
Co-founders, Project Synergy.



Unknown.  
Photos - **The Project Synergy Archive** ©.



*The story behind the story*  
*The grit before the great*



*The trials before the glory*  
*The faith before the fame.*

*TREV DUBE*

# Childhood

D r e a m s

and

# Surrealism

An essay.

MARIAN HAWIT.

I am swinging on the swing set on the rear end of our backyard, just next to the little hill where my sister and I often roll down on. I am sitting on the blue one, my favorite—and swinging front and backwards, trying to gain more impulse as I go so that I can go higher. That is the goal. I am suddenly losing control, and finding myself falling. Lucky me, I haven't fallen on the floor. Instead, I am falling into something. I feel heat, almost too much heat. All I can see is the color orange, and all I can feel is that inescapable falling sensation.

In reality I lie asleep in my bed, and this is a dream. This is a dream that I've had several times before—ever so often, I find myself falling into this active volcano after swinging on my childhood swing set. This is a dream, but it feels real. I can feel my bed falling into that obscure, inevitable oblivion.

This recurring childhood dream was as absurd as dreams come. I can't say that it haunted me, because as strange as it was it intrigued me—for it was a dream and not a nightmare. Each time it came back it only felt more and more familiar. My five, seven, and ten year old self became fascinated by the bizarre complexity of going to bed at night and having these movies, if you will, play in my head and show me these alternate realities that felt like real life.

Having taken various art history courses, I had, of course, heard of Salvador Dalí: the masterful 20th century Surrealist. I had seen some of his most renowned work, but I hadn't really seen it. Upon a recent trip to New York City and a rushed visit to the MoMa, it was there, on the fifth floor: "The Persistence of Memory". The work that I had seen so many times before, yet hadn't really observed. At first glance, what came to mind was how small this work actually is, a mere 9.5" x 13". A couple of steps forward and I began to really see it.

In this artwork, objects are distorted to an extent in which they appear to melt. Alluding to the theme of this issue, I found that Dalí was a great appreciator of origins himself—he opted to paint the golden cliffs on the coast of Catalonia, his home, in this piece. Alongside his wife, Dalí underwent great economic distress while residing

in Port Lligat, a fishing settlement near these cliffs. Ironically, it was during this time of despair in 1931 when he created the piece that would grant him ultimate fame and mark his name as one of the greatest in art history.

Upon observing this piece, I realized it started to become much too familiar: it inevitably reminded me of that recurring childhood dream. Interestingly enough, none of the elements in "The Persistence of Memory" coincided with the elements in my dream, but the ambiance, atmosphere, and dreamscape quality was the same. As a painter myself, I have tried to visually depict or at least try to honor that outlandish dream that visited me so many times. But alas, I can't quite get it right. Part of Dalí's genius, apart from his exquisite precision and rendering technique, was the ability to portray these organic, intangible, and abstract things that are dreams.

By nature we are curious beings, so it comes as no surprise that many sought to explain his work. Some suggested that the clocks in "The Persistence of Memory" allude to Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, to which Dalí almost mockingly denied, stating that a Camembert cheese he observed melting under the sun actually inspired it.

As a young adult, I have attempted to dissect that childhood dream as well as other dreams I've had that have surpassed any level of bizarreness I have ever known. Perhaps that is the problem—trying to assign meaning to things that are far beyond our understanding. After the aforementioned artwork was passed on to the MoMa by an anonymous donor, it is said that Dalí gave a lecture in which he stated, "...The public could rest content with their difficulty in understanding the work, since the artist himself did not know what it meant either" (Radford, 1997). My recurring dream never visited me again after I grew up, but I will never forget it—it is always with me. I encourage that we use our dreams at night as an escape and as an inspiration, just like many Surrealist masters did. After all, regarding sleep Dalí once said: "I work constantly in the moment of sleep. All of my best ideas come through my dreams." And it's not hard to tell.

MARIAN HAWIT.







# THE

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A n i n t e r v i e w .



A large, bulky book with the picture of a woman at the beach sat comfortably on my coffee table. My dad had just bought it to decorate the living room. When I opened it, I felt like it unearthed a door to a past I hadn't be a part of, but was now witnessing: old men sleeping in chairs with party hats, lovers and their honeymoon pictures, goofy children playing in their front porches, and ladies sunbathing at the beach. 'The Anonymous Project- Midcentury Memories' it read. 'Curated by Lee Shulman' it reiterated. I was intrigued. Inspired.

Months passed. **Project Synergy.** was born. Greatly influenced by the curation of collective experience, we decided to contact Lee for an interview. He agreed, and we met through Zoom.

We were welcomed by a smiling face, cool sunglasses, and a wooden backdrop that gave way to a spectacular view of a modern French house. We began with the questions.

**Isabella:** What was the inspiration behind the Anonymous Photo Project?

24 **Lee:** I'm old enough to remember slideshows - to remember my parents showing me slides in the evenings and being really embarrassed by horrible family pictures. I remembered that we used to buy our friends and neighbors over. Slideshows were the Instagram before Instagram. It was a way of bringing people together, like the first home cinema had done.

So, fast-forward: I'm now a filmmaker and director. When I went to film school, we started with slides. We were on the cusp of the analog-digital transition. I remember shooting slides and being amazed by their quality. Years passed, and one day, my dad sent me a box of slides, and said: "we'll get rid of them." But I took them under my wing, and appreciated their beauty. I began to wonder: if my home stored such beautiful memories, how many homes had these too? Immediately, I went on eBay and typed 'vintage slides.' I didn't know why I did it, but the results amazed me: so many people sold vintage slides, at a very cheap price - people didn't want them.

So I bought a box, forgot about it. I was working in my office and this box arrived. And I just opened it, put my hand and I pulled out

LEE SHULMAN.



Montage of Kodachrome slides.  
Original photos - courtesy of Lee Shulman,  
founder & curator of The Anonymous Photo  
Project ©.

one. It was an unbelievable family picture. As I went through them, it felt like an Indiana Jones moment: digging for memories. And I realized that nothing like this had been printed before: who would care about the forgotten memories of an anonymous self? As it turns out, I did care. And other people cared. And now The Anonymous Project has become what it is now.

There's so many memories that are still out there, waiting to come back to life. The images I've collected are just a tiny part of history, but I feel very, very blessed to see all these amazing memories. Each time I get a new box, at the end of the week, it's like Christmas in my office.

**Alessia:** I'm curious - has anybody reached out and said "Hey! That's my aunt!" or something similar?

**Lee:** You know, this is the big thing that really I thought when I started this was all the images are a lot older than we think they are. Most of them come from the late 40s to 50s and 60s. It's a crazy fact that they're so old but have such good color quality. When I started this, I had that same thought - that someone would call to say "that's me!", but that didn't happen. 25

I think that's part of the title of the project. I think this idea of being anonymous is really interesting. It's kind of like, I think we all end up being anonymous at some point. Unfortunately, in the future, as sad as that sounds, it's also quite comforting in some respects, and that we end, I kind of like that idea that these people are anonymous, it's not who they are, or where they were or the date, but it's what they represent is super important.

That's what I'm trying to get into this project, is not that there's the historical side to it, or there's the static side, that's not what interests me. It's really the emotional value of what we find.

I've had one story that said, so. Which is cute, which is actually a story which is around one of these very famous images of the three bodybuilders like this. Two African American guys and a white guy in the middle. And a girl sent me an email saying when I was young,

LEE SHULMAN.





Montage of Kodachrome slides.  
Original photos - courtesy of Lee Shulman,  
founder & curator of The Anonymous Photo  
Project ©.

LEE SHULMAN.

*I think the guy in the middle was my boyfriend. He actually wrote me an email. It was one on Venice Beach. And this young guy had met the two African Americans who were very famous, quite well-known bodybuilders. And he really wanted to be a bodybuilder. So he met them and took this photo. And he wrote me this beautiful letter saying how that moment really inspired him and he dedicated his life to working in sports. So it was really lovely. But that's the only one and I kind of hope that there's more, because it's so lovely when people do but that's also part I think of the story. That's, it's, it's the sadness of it. And then it's also the beauty of the whole idea.*

**Isabella:** As you tell us- the past forms us in a way we cannot comprehend. What do you think this project has taught you about your origins, or the origins of the people you have seen in your photographs?

**Lee:** *Probably the best question anyone's ever asked me - you get a gold star for that one, because this is a very personal project. My choices have always been influenced by my background, and my background was very difficult.*

*I'm Jewish, and I lost all my family. Throughout my life, I have felt very dispossessed, and I've always yearned for a big family. Through the Anonymous Project, I have come to believe that we're all a ginormous family, staring with endearment at old family pictures. I feel like I know all these people in the images - I feel like I know the whole family, and how they're feeling. Sometimes, I get all of these emotions - I laugh, I cry at these great moments.*

*What I'm really interested in is how other people appropriate the images too. I'm amazed by what some people find too intimate, or too primal. This is a very intimate part of a topic that we don't often see, you know. So that's something that I feel very strongly about as well. Emotion.*

**Alessia:** The origins of photography itself are also exposed through this project, because each photograph is truly experimental, natural. Building on what you said, do you feel that these memories paint a more accurate version of history?

**Lee:** *I think the truth is important. When you take away those elements of political and social size, and you get to the emotional core of an image, those emotions and those experiences are universal. They belong to all of us. It doesn't matter where you come from, we can all relate to the image of a child jumping in a puddle, because we all do that. And that belongs to everyone. It's not about class, race or gender - it's about everyone. Collective memory is, in itself, collective history in its truest, most essential form.*

**Alessia:** Has there been anybody that gave you a comment that shocked you?

**Lee:** *I had a big exhibition called 'The House'. It was very beautiful, For me, it was a life-changing experience. We redid a whole house from the 1950s, and included all the images and projections to simulate a real experience. There were several walkthroughs.*

*Suddenly, one woman came up to me and said: "this makes me so sad. It can't believe how real it is, it gives me the blues." The conversation we had after was amazing - she felt like the house reminded her of growing up, and she hadn't had a happy childhood.*

*I then realized that many people lead a difficult life, and memories are more sour than sweet for them. Everybody's memories are different. So it's not about just provoking the good memories. It's also about provoking things that are melancholic, and sometimes sad. I never realized this until I heard it, because I didn't and I don't hear it often. But it was nice. It was something that stayed with me.*

**Alessia:** You mentioned you have kids. Have you ever thought that the pictures you take of them will be someone else's anonymous project?

**Lee:** *You know, I come back to that idea of being anonymous. I think it's really interesting. This will sound like a terrible analogy, - forgive me - but when you go to a graveyard, you notice that the new ones are beautiful and clean. And the older they get, the more abandoned they are. We all, at a certain point, reach oblivion. That's why projects like this gives people a second life.*

LEE SHULMAN.





Montage of Kodacrome slides.  
Original photos - courtesy of Lee Shulman,  
founder & curator of  
The Anonymous Photo Project ©.

LEE SHULMAN.

## O R I G I N S

*I feel very optimistic about these images, because they have a new origin. The images speak to me now, and they will speak to someone else in an entirely different way 50 years from now. A question for you, guys - what are your favorite pictures from the project?*

**Isabella:** I love the one about the man and the woman with a lamp head in their heads, or the one with the old man and the birthday hat falling asleep on the couch. I love that picture. It reminds me of my grandparents, tired at the end of the day, falling asleep on random surfaces.

**Alessia:** I truly love each and every one of them. But I'll have to settle for the dogs collection, because I'm such a dog person.

**Lee:** *They're amazing. And they really have been forcing me to make it over because they sell well. Animals are fantastic and beautiful.*

**Alessia:** One final question before we leave. What does the word "origin" mean to you?

**Lee:** *It's really weird for me because I think it means something different to every single person. There's no universal meaning of origin. Everyone feels things differently.*

*My origin is part of the human race. This is very much a humanist idea. Maybe it's utopian, but that idea that we all are one big family is the biggest thing for me. And that's what it is. And I think that's what origin means to me. (...) The human family is the family for me. And I think if we can really push that idea forward, we'll be in a better place. And unfortunately, the more I think about being all-inclusive, the world seems to be less inclusive. So I feel it's a tough thing. I think you know that too.*

After an hour-long conversation, we ended the interview.

**Alessia:** Thank you so much, Lee. It was truly an honor. And just remember that there's people like you out there, too, you know, who love the idea of one big family.

**Lee:** *It has been great to speak to you guys.*

**Isabella:** Thank you truly, Lee. I feel really close to you, even though we just met.

**Lee:** *You're part of the anonymous family now.*

(End)

LEE SHULMAN.



A

# history of connection.

For Gianfranco, origins are tied with connections, whether these are human or between inanimate objects.

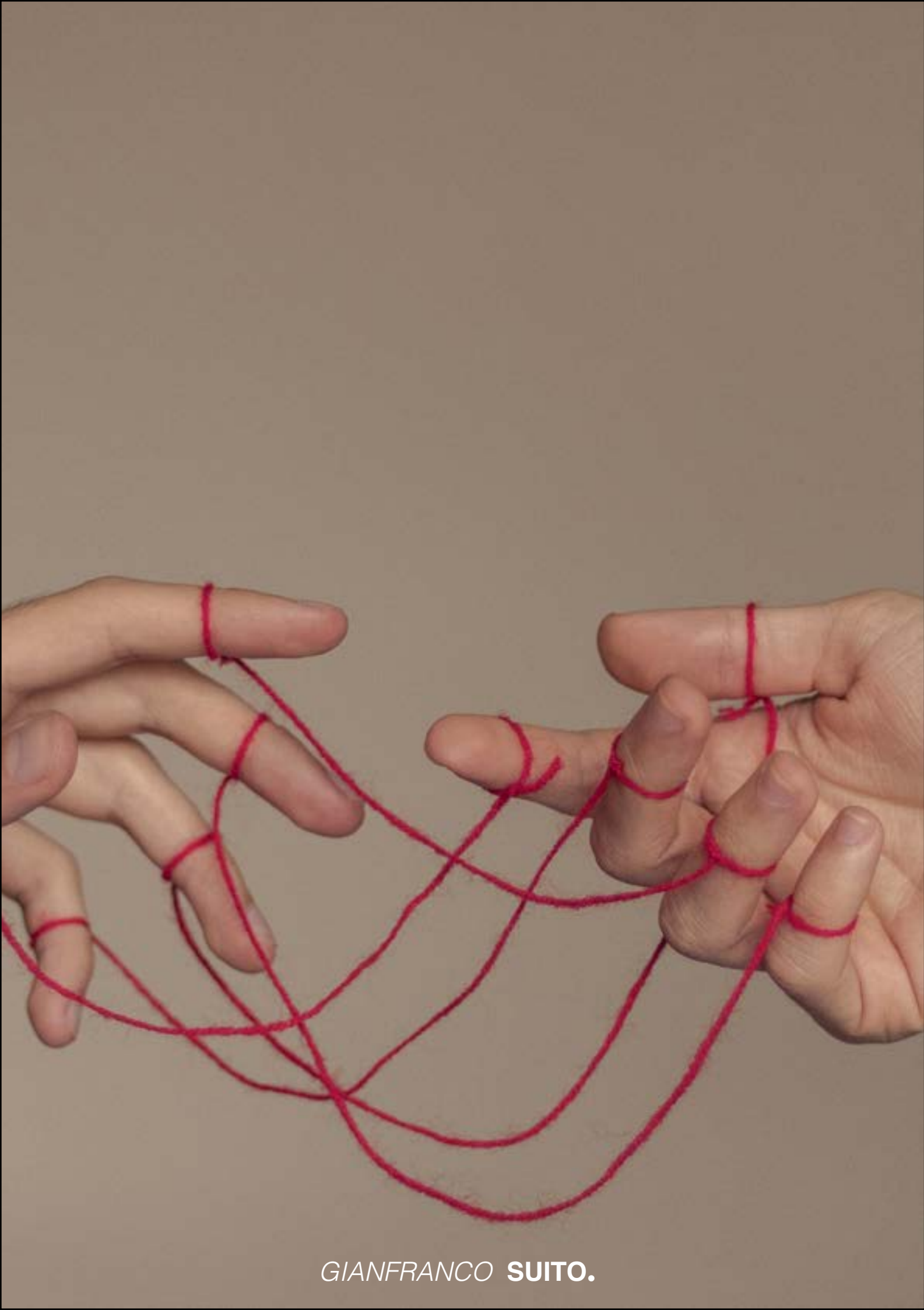
These connections are present in each beginning as they will always lead to an end. And that end will take you to another possible beginning. Thus, everything is part of a cycle.

While creating this piece, his process involved looking through references and finding inspiration to bring forth his own ideas and work. Gianfranco shares that his creative process can be “painfully slow and full of self-doubt.” But this doesn’t stop him. You need to trust the process and your ideas. First, he took photographs; some didn’t work, others had potential. Later, he began looking at all the images together and finding their flow and meaning as a whole, leading to his final piece.

Gianfranco shared that his style is simple and even minimalistic, allowing for a profound message to come through without overwhelming you with information. Inside each image, there is also an allusion to the myth of the red thread. In this myth, the destiny of two people is tied, and no matter the time, the circumstances, or anything else, these two are bound to meet each other.

In these twelve pictures, Gianfranco looked to convey the connections found inside the cycle that is life, full of firsts and lasts. His images show lovers, a mother and child, life and death, start and finish, and past and future.

He searched for his images to bring out a certain feeling of calm, peace, and vulnerability. Inviting you to reflect and perhaps contemplate your own story.



GIANFRANCO **SUITO.**



GIANFRANCO **SUITO.**

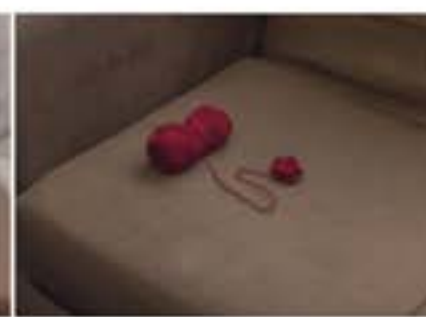


*GIANFRANCO* **SUITO.**



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ORIGINS

*An Essay.*

NICOLAS PARENT.

NICOLAS PARENT.

From the womb of my mother, I was delivered into a suburban world. The forest nearby, or 'the woods', saved us from what Augé (2009) would otherwise call a 'non-place', or Kunstler (1994) a 'geography of nowhere'. But did it really save us? We used this 'natural' landscape, dug trenches into its soil and hammered nails into its trees to build lookout platforms. We would take great pleasure in biking to the dollar store to buy cap guns, using the forest as our terrain of war. Pow pow, you're dead! When I wasn't wearing my military fatigues, I would prance around with my freshly brushed cowboy hat, proud of its superior build quality and confident I could take on any 'Indian' that would cross my path. "Only the strong survive" was something I had learnt from a primary school gym teacher who would often serve this 'fact of life' with a maniacal-laugh pairing. Or it was my uncle, teaching me of the laziness of the poor, that they simply need to "pull they're pants up". Or yet again, my parents professing that respect, income, and even love is earned through hard work; putting their own best efforts to infuse into me the cult of meritocracy.



A common thread exists within this collection of memories, and it is one that has turned (particularly) white men into tyrants. Finding solace and salvation in war, predation, and competition, these are memories that are founded in long-standing myths about humankind and human nature; myths that have been reproduced through the ages to serve and justify one principal goal: domination. Thomas Hobbes is certainly one of the most notable charlatans within this domain, writing in his *Leviathan* (1651) that human nature is fundamentally driven by the maxim of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, of ‘war of all against all’. In fact, this doctrine has existed for so long now, and has served to formulate so many systems of oppression throughout the world, that many have come to believe that competition between humans is our state of nature and something that finds its roots within our origins.

As anthropologist David Graeber (2013: 219) posits, “any theoretical term is an implicit statement about human nature”. And while this applies to value, kinship, blood, et cetera, origin calls greatly upon this reasoning.

I say this because of the imprint evolutionary sciences have had on narratives about human nature, and most importantly through Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). The use of this work’s long-form name is purposeful, pointing to its foreshadowed legacy and part of what it has bestowed upon human society from publication onwards. I am referring to its contributing logic about who and what we are, our instincts and nature as predators vying for power and control, and conversely, how the behaviours of colonists, racists, capitalists, and authoritarians is – well – human nature that dates back to our origins. Let us remember Darwin’s popularized principles of evolution: genetic variation and survival of the fittest, the struggle for existence, and the role of heredity.

Let us also remember that this science was quickly socialized, both by Darwin in *Descent of Man* (1871) and in Huxley’s *The Struggle for Existence in Human Society* (1888/1894), where violence and segregation within social organization was ‘naturalized’ through these

evolutionary findings. This is the social Darwinism of the late 19th century, and that of our present day. If it were not for Darwin, Huxley, and others through time who have fetishized human greed and moral precarity, and conversely, used their status as respected scientists to make such wild claims, Hobbes himself would certainly have dug himself out from six feet under, simply to raise his *Leviathan* in the air and yell “I told you we humans are rotten!”.

And this is the story I and many others have been hearing from our tender childhood through to adolescence, and have ourselves (as adults) been telling, replicating, and contextually adapting until our bitter death. While average people like my gym teacher, my uncle, and my parents have been the strongest voice in perpetuating the dogma of competition as our natural form of sociality, this is a belief system ruled only by elites; the same folks that tell us “competition breeds innovation”, “competition increases productivity”, and “competition suppresses idleness”.

There has been much thought and evidence that defies this dogma, however, and I believe the time is ripe to re-examine what we have been told is natural, original, and essential.

We can look to philosophy, such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s (1851) work on economic mutualism, or Marx (1867/1992) and Engels (1925/1968) dialectical materialism that aligns relationships with real-world conditions such as access to education and health. However, as a greater force to discredit the social Darwinists – the *pièce de resistance*, if you will – is Peter Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902/1989). Like Charles Darwin, Kropotkin was an evolutionary biologist.

His studies in Siberia revealed something quite different: It was sociability and mutual aid that acted as gateways to survival, not competition. Circling these observations back to human society, as Darwin and Huxley had, Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid* outlined a beautiful history of human collaboration, partnership, and free assembly, from the clan and village community to the guild and medieval city. He showed that while competition and predation exist in the world of elites, statesmen, and priests – those with relative power – the common world is more so defined

by an inclination to help and support each other. In my own studies, where I have spent a great deal of time observing, listening to, and speaking with Middle East and Latin American refugees, I have seldom noticed this alleged tendency toward competition and ‘survival of the fittest’.

As I have recently reported to the American Association of Geographers (Parent 2021), it is in these conditions of ‘organized abandonment’ (Gilmore 2007) that creativity, mutual support, and collectivities have thrived. Beyond this, many of us will have observed such pro-social and egalitarian behaviours within our current pandemic landscape; behaviours that have come together spontaneously, not because a decree has been issued by an authority, but because we fundamentally love, respect, and care for each other. These stories exist everywhere, and far more than those of violence, conflict, and bloodshed.

My intention here has been to disturb how we think of human nature, a fundamental dimension that has served humanity in defining its origins. Importantly, I want to demonstrate how this concept is perhaps less of a truth – a prescription of how and who we are – and more of a discursive tool that has allowed those who hurt to justify their continued harm. As this themed issue asks us to consider our origins, I propose that we examine this concept and the contributions herein with similar discretion. Let us not assume that origins are inert, simple facts, and something to take for granted. Let us acknowledge that origins are elusive, fuzzy, and importantly, do not simply ‘live’ in the past; a ‘sense of origin’ is indeed a cultural artefact that crosses temporalities. And finally, let us have the insight and empathy to realize that the concept of origins per se can indeed be imprisoning, hurtful, or prevent us from looking forward to brighter and more equitable futures for all that roam the Earth.

April 2021

*City of Montreal*

Unceded territory of the Kanien’kehá:ka

NICOLAS PARENT.

NICOLAS PARENT.

W h a t d o I k n o w ?

*RODRIGO* **VARGAS**

*W h a t a m I*

*RODRIGO* **VARGAS.**

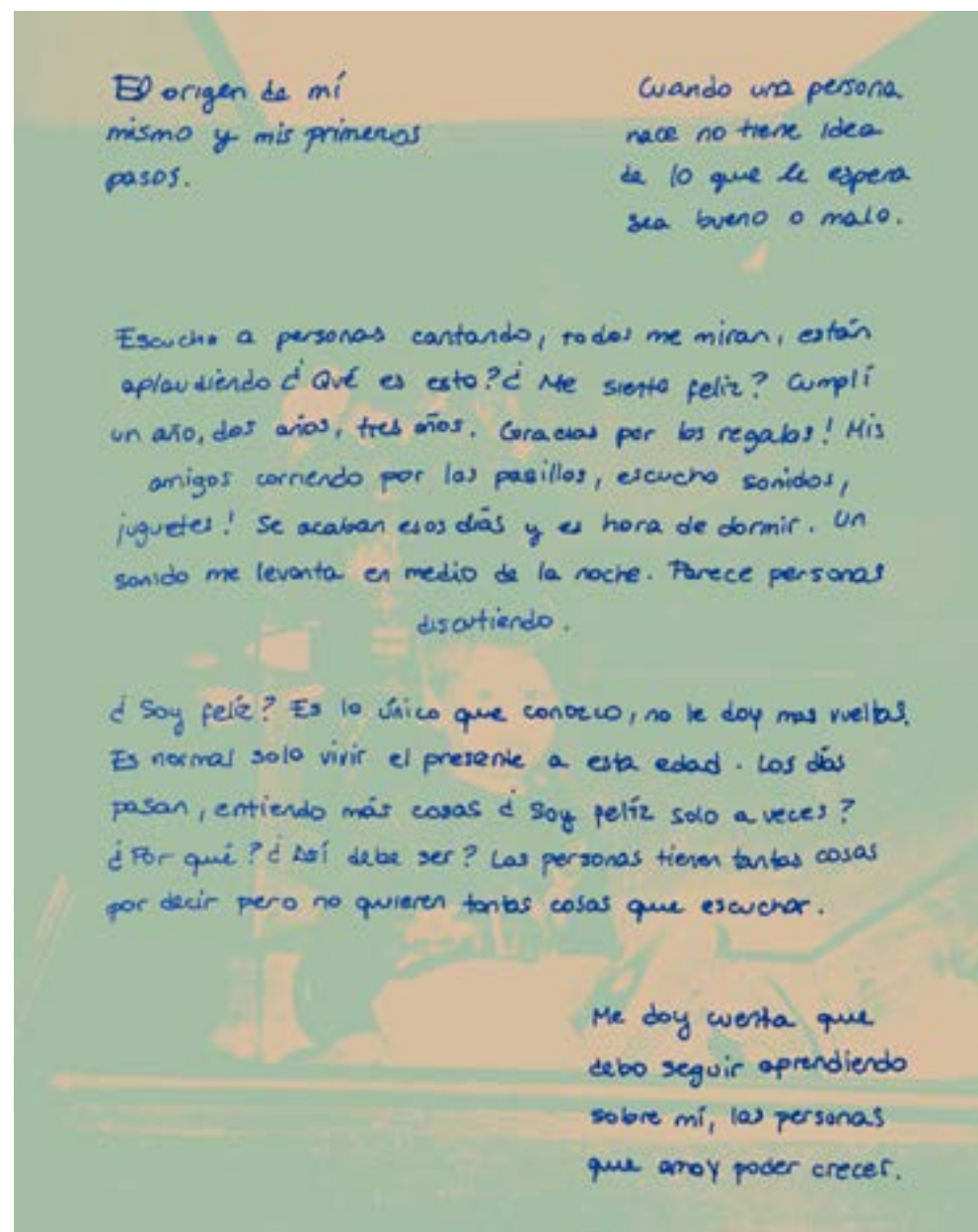
**Supposed  
to  
do?**

*I remember so little from my childhood, I just see a baby with an empty look. I don't know the first thing I remember. When did I start to become aware of my life? I don't remember crying, I don't remember laughing or being happy. I know that my mother's love is what I truly knew, but I didn't know what it was, after all, it's the first thing I felt.*



*What Do I Know? | Tryptic, Part I.*

*What Do I Understand? | Tryptic, Part II.*



*This is a story of myself, in the first three stages of my life. What do I know? What do I understand? What am I supposed to do now? Valid questions. Happiness is such a relative feeling. What are the steps to follow then? and how exciting can life be now that I understand for the first time what to look for?*

This personal approach takes us into his world divided into three stages. The moment he was born and a baby, later as a small toddler and finally as a young child. Rodrigo shared that he believes that these initial years, where everything begins for you, marks much of who you will become in the future. As in these years, you live with a child's innocence and are filled with the curiosity to discover the world around you.

For Rodrigo, the first of the three stages is a picture of him and his mother. As he believes that the first thing you know or should know is the love of a mother. The second or middle stage, is where you begin to understand life but still hold questions. In the third and final stage, while you still ask questions, these are directed more towards the future.

Rodrigo understands each person will have a variety of experiences that don't necessarily align with his. So, he doesn't look for anyone to think precisely the same way as he did or necessarily relate. But just as he took a look inside himself and at his formation, he wants you to try and do the same.

You are the product of a start, confusing and perhaps a bit chaotic, as you didn't necessarily understand what was happening. But as you grew up, learning from life and those around you, making mistakes, and facing the consequences, you can go back and look at your beginning to find yourself and perhaps the cause of some of your actions.

Try to feel, think, and possibly reflect. Just as if you read a book and reflected on that. These three stages show a story with a beginning, a middle, and an approaching end.





NO SÉ LOS PASOS A SEGUIR,  
SOLO SEGUIRÉ CAMINANDO.

¿QUÉ TAN EMOCIONANTE PUEDE SER  
LA VIDA?

## O R I G I N S

### TRANSLATED WORK

*What Do I Know? I Part I.*

*An innocent look without knowing what's really going on.*

*The start of my life  
The start of my life  
The start of my life  
The start of my life.*

*The love of my mother is the only thing I really know.*

*What do I Understand? I Part II.*

*The origin of me  
and my first steps.*

*When a person is born, they don't have an idea of what's to come, good or bad.*

*I hear people singing. Everyone looks at me. They're clapping. What is this? Do I feel happy? Did I turn one, two or three years old? Thank you for the gifts! My friends are running through the halls. I hear sounds, toys! These days are ending, and it's time to go to sleep. A sound wakes me up in the middle of the night. It sounds like arguing in the distance.*

*Do I feel happy? I can only feel what I know. It's normal to live only in the present at this age. The days go by, and I understand even more. Am I happy, just some of the time? Why? Is that how it's supposed to be? People have so many things to say, but do not want to listen.*

*I realize I must keep learning about myself and the people I love so I can grow.*

*What am I Supposed to do Now? I Part II.*

*I don't know the steps ahead.  
I'll just keep walking.*

*How exciting can life be?*

RODRIGO VARGAS.

# POSSIBILITIES

*Alex considers humans within the cosmic chaos and views them as nothing more than dots - beautiful unique and coloured dots. As everything else, humans have their origin in an atom and evolve from there beating in the process statistically improbable odds. If viewed from above, from a far away distance they appear as splashed dots, rambling through the canvas of life.*





ALEXANDRU RAT.



Who



is

your



*An Essay.*

Artist?



FAVORITE

MARÍA MORENO.

We are all taught to play favourites when we are children; mum or dad, girls or boys, sports or arts, maths or humanities, pink or blue. “What is your favourite colour?” is a question I always struggled with as a kid; “they are all different, how could I possibly choose”, I thought. We are constantly induced to choose, to make decisions, to categorise good and bad. Growing up, few will have the privilege to understand the limitations of these actions, and will therefore be, once again, victims of society. This or that. No wonder kids turn out bad.

It is not surprising that this matter has kept philosophers occupied for as long as we can remember. In the scientific field, philosopher Thomas Kuhn suggests an answer to the aforementioned enigma in his book *The Structure Of Scientific Revolution*, in which he introduces the concept of paradigms (Bird). A paradigm refers to “a set of assumptions, attitudes, concepts, values, procedures, and techniques that constitutes a generally accepted theoretical framework within, or a general perspective of, a discipline” (*APA Dictionary of Psychology*). To make it simple, Kuhn’s conclusion is that there is no objective way of comparing two different paradigms, or the work within them, between each other; therefore, he argues, there is also no possible unbiased way to measure progress. (there is also no possible way of measuring progress without being biased.)

Although Kuhn was speaking facts in scientific language, I wonder what would happen if we apply this concept to the arts. Science and art are not so different; after all, they are both built of “assumptions, attitudes, concepts, values, procedures, and techniques that constitutes a generally accepted framework”; they both experience revolutions, and constitute paradigms. Thus, all of Kuhn’s theories can - and should - be validly applied to the arts.

Who’s the best artist of all times? What is the best artistic period? Where has the best art been created? Can we measure progress in the arts? Can these questions even be answered? Or should we just accept Kuhn’s rabbit whole? The first point I feel responsible for stressing is that we cannot keep comparing artists as if we were talking about candy; it is not valid to just say that one artist is tastier than the other.

As Kuhn described it, there are several sets of rules and assumptions that contribute to the creation of a paradigm (Kuhn); equivalently, there are several sets of rules and techniques that form an art movement. To illustrate this, picture *The Birth of Venus* (Botticelli, 1485–1486), *La Mona Lisa* (Da Vinci, 1503–1507), and *The Starry Night* (Van Gogh, 1889), three of the most

famous paintings of all times (which are some of the most, if not the most, famous paintings of all time.).

Can someone confirm that one (of them) is better than the other two? Yes, they can, but the statement would only count as an opinion, given that all masterpieces were produced at different times, different places, and under different sociocultural conditions, different techniques; (with different techniques and under different sociocultural conditions;) or as Kuhn would say, under different paradigms.

Secondly but equally as relevant, I shall conclude that there is no objective way to measure real progress in the arts, as artistic revolutions separate one paradigm from the other, forcing us to accept change and stop evaluating improvement. According to Kuhn, science experiences a never ending cycle that goes as follows: normal science, model drift, model crisis, model revolution and paradigm change (Kuhn). This is not different at all from the arts. Let’s analyze for example the 20th century; when photography appeared, and paintings could not become more realistic, the model drifted because of a creative crisis. Artists could not do another thing but to innovate, creating a paradigm change, and giving birth to the avant-garde. My point here being that no one could agree that impressionism is more advanced than romanticism. I wished Goya could discuss this with Monet.

I could also contradict myself here: art is a subjective matter and thus cannot be treated as if it were merely science. Different people have different tastes, but once again, art should not be treated as candy. However, no one said artists shall not under any circumstance whatsoever be compared to each other, I said it cannot be done objectively. You make your own conclusions now.

I cannot help but wonder, what would Kuhn say if he read this article? Even a crazier thought crosses my mind. What would Rembrandt, or even crazier, Picasso think if they read this? Would they agree? Hypothesising here, I believe they would. Art, like science, is framed around assumptions, attitudes, concepts, values, procedures, and techniques that constitutes a generally accepted paradigm (Kuhn). Art also follows a cycle that constitutes paradigms, which enables us to make any kind of objective assessment of which artist, art period, technique... is better than the other.





# Sebastian Llosa

## Carlos Cruzalegui

An interview.

Styling Alessia Giha  
Photography Aitana Castillo  
Fashion Contributions José Clemente

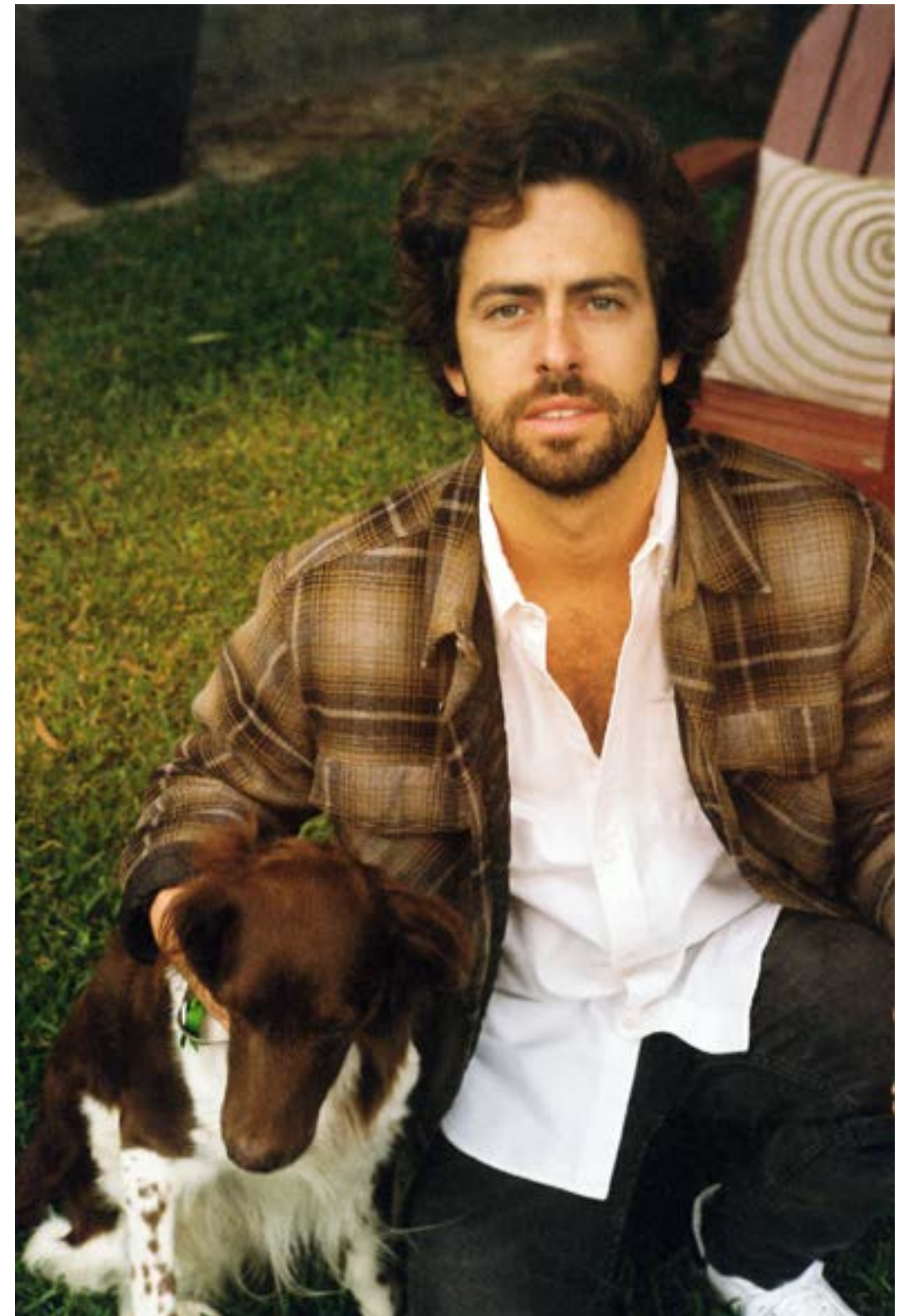






*Portrait of Carlos Cruzalegui.  
Attire - Winter 2021 by José Clemente.*

**CARLOS CRUZALEGUI.**



*Portrait of Sebastian Llosa.*

**SEBASTIAN LLOSA.**



Creative divergence. Similar charisma. Same birthplace.

Carlos and Sebastian, two young and upcoming artists from Lima, Peru, shared an afternoon of nostalgia, laughter and music with us. After separate online interviews, we met up with them for a photoshoot.

Below we show their words.

**Isabella:** How did your musical journey begin? How do you think your childhood influenced the genre of music you listen to or create today?

**Carlos:** *It definitely all began with my family and the music I listened to as a kid. My grandmother is a plastic artist. She began her career at the age of 70. It was strange - but exciting - that after a lifetime of being a housewife, all of a sudden, she began making art. She started hanging out with different artists: painters, sculptors, musicians, curators... and the like. I don't really remember this much, but my aunts and my mom always remind me of her.*

So - when I was a kid, I always found validation in the artistic environment I was growing up in. I was very free to do what I wanted with my creativity. There was always something to do. That's what my grandma would say: "we should always be doing something because there is always something to do." Even if it was to recite a poem, there was always something creative to do, dance, sing, play an instrument, there was always something to do. And that's where it all began, and where my connection with traditional Peruvian music comes from.

**Sebastian:** *I think that, more than the music I listen to (because I change genre a lot, like everybody) I have this tendency to only listen to something one month and then the next month listening to something completely different. But my home has always been very musical. As a kid, I was obsessed with watching, for example, concert videos. So I would buy DVDs of any concert of the music I liked at that time and I would spend hours watching them. There was a time that I was all in with electric guitar so I would spend hours practicing guitar solos at home. But yes, all of this was strongly influenced by my close relationship between my family and music.*

CARLOS CRUZALEGUI.



*It was different with my friends' parents because they would put new music on and they would say "put the volume down", but when I was in the car with my mom, it was always "put the volume up". And that stays with you. When I was a kid, I would listen to the music that she loves: classic rock; The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, and Danny Mitchell. After that, I started to explore fields like Latin music. The cool thing is having a relationship like that with my mom. She's someone who loves music, and she enjoys every kind. I can put a rap song on or some new electronic music that just came out and she loves it.*

**(Personal question to Sebastian) Alessia:** During my research, I came upon an interview you did with Hola! Magazine, mentioning that you graduated from Yale University as an economist. My question to you is, where did this passion for economics come from and how did you jump from economics to music?

**Sebastian:** *Well, I guess the "passion for economics" never actually existed. It was more like I didn't know what I wanted to study, I didn't know what I wanted to do or to dedicate my life to - and even though everyone in my family is involved with creative careers, I knew that it's a hard industry to succeed in. They would tell me "why don't you become a lawyer or an administrator or something like that?" and I believed it. And by the time I got to college, I thought "well, economics will be useful so that I could have a steady career in the future like being a banker or something..." When I graduated and I got a job, I realized that it wasn't for me.*

**Alessia (to Sebastián):** You are surrounded by artists - your brother is a filmmaker, your father a film director, and your uncle, Mario Vargas Llosa, a literature Nobel Laureate. Do you think that at one point in your life, you wanted to rebel against the artistic world?

**Sebastian:** *I don't know if it was because I wanted to rebel against that world. I don't know why I had it closed. That side of me embarrassed me, I never let myself think "you know what, I can do it too." At least with music. When I was a kid I would say I wanted to be a film director, like my dad. Strangely enough, it didn't seem so crazy to get involved with that industry, but for some reason, it was never music.*

SEBASTIAN LLOSA.



*I would write things but for me. I guess it wasn't because I wanted to be a rebel, I just felt embarrassed. And it is kinda hard performing on stage, to put yourself in front of a group of people and sing. In the beginning, it took a lot out of me to do that. But eventually I got used to it, started to let loose and stopped paying so much attention to the part of me that doubted myself so much.*

**Isabella:** When do you feel more inspired and how do you think that a difficult situation, like a global pandemic, limits or opens doors to art and creativity?

**Sebastian:** *For some reason, I tend to get more inspired when I'm having a bad time [laughs]. I don't know how healthy that is. Ideally, the songs I write come out better when I'm happy and unworried, but that's not the case. When I'm not okay emotionally, that's when I tend to take out the guitar and start writing.*

*I think that every experience one has, good or bad, has the potential to become something beautiful. The only thing that does have a big negative impact is that you can't put a fixed date on the music release, and that does generate a bit of stress, equally to any political situation apart from the pandemic. We still can't play live music and we don't know when we will be able to - and I believe this is what is mostly missed. And if you have an upbeat song while everyone is moaning, it might not be the best time to release it because it might not stick. So right now might not be the best time to launch music, but it's a great time to work on and create music.*

**Carlos:** *I think that I have recently dedicated my time to be an "artist" in the pandemic, because before I was more into the production of music. Don't get me wrong - I still like to produce, but I felt kind of lost. Before the pandemic, I felt like I didn't know where I was going. I believe that one should have a path; a north, always. At least that's what works for me, but with that in mind, one needs time to think. I started to dislike what I was doing and I started to explore. And in that new path, I got to explore something very beautiful. It was hard, but many people had an epiphany that made a drastic change in their life, and they had the opportunity to understand things and digest them better.*

*Like why did an artist write a certain song, what was its meaning? I feel that before, it was all very superficial. The typical "Hey! How are you? Let's take a selfie!" and not really enjoying the moment or having a good chat with a friend felt false and boring. I think that we need to understand two things: one - to take advantage of this opportunity that we have to think and listen, and be thankful that we have this space to "relax" - because many people don't have this opportunity. And, two - to acknowledge every opportunity and know that with the opportunity comes great responsibility to be productive and to create.*

**(Personal question for Carlos) Alessia:** We know your mom has a beautiful voice because you uploaded a video on your instagram with you and her singing. We also know it was her side of the family that got you involved with the artistic world. Did she show you a bit more about music? Did you sing with her a lot as a kid?

**Carlos:** *It was just now! I am an only child, the roles of my parents have always been kinda, "inverted". My dad was always the warmer one, the one who would ask me, "how are you?" "Are you hungry?" and my mom was more of a strict parent.*

*It was never my mom who showed or led me into the music world consciously, but one thing is for sure, there was always a cultural activity to do. It was always "what's playing in the theater this weekend, what should we see?". It was the weekend and on the weekends we always had to do something cultural. Even if it was going to an art exhibition we didn't like or enjoy we would always go out to these events.*

*My parents are doctors, so they were never really involved in the artistic world but these little trips on the weekend were enough.*

**(Personal question for Sebastian) Isabella:** Do you feel like the connection between you and your mom is what influences you the most, musically speaking?

**Sebastian:** *I don't know if now, but definitely when I was younger. I believe one grows up and creates their own relationship with music. I do believe that going to her concerts got me familiar*







CARLOS CRUZALEGUI.

with the show business environment. Being backstage for me was like being a rocketship. It was incredible. And to this day, I still get that same feeling. I feel the exact same way when I'm backstage, that definitely stayed with me.

**Alessia:** What do you think about the music industry in Peru today as a young upcoming artist? What do you think works well and doesn't?

**Sebastian:** I think it's an industry that is still very small. It has lots of potential, but it still needs to grow. We are a growing country and I do see more and more people making music and I believe that social media is helping us out with exporting these amazing talents. And I think that's what we are missing and something we can definitely do better is export our music, and by exporting our music the industry is compelled to grow.

**Carlos:** I think that in Peru we are always transitioning. We are always a work in progress. Unfortunately, we still don't have a population that consumes much culture or values it very much. I would love to be a bit more romantic with that but it's not that easy. That's how things work with selling and buying. We still don't have an "industry", we have more like a "community". My dad told me "well, that thing you call 'community' is your industry..." He is right, but it's still really small. I think being an artist here in Peru is still seen as something very taboo. It's a hobby, it's something one does to pass time, "oh he sings well I'll just hire him for this event", it's still not treated as an actual job. This is obviously unfortunate, but on the other hand, in every crisis, there is an opportunity. This pandemic has represented an identity crisis. We are now wanting to travel and recently more and more people are curious about their own country and where they come from and the traditions we hold. And I think there is an opportunity there. I believe that Peru is the land of opportunity - just that we still haven't taken advantage of that opportunity. We are the big fish in the small tank but we still don't realize it.

**Isabella:** Who would you like to do a duet with? I know it's a hard question to ask so instead of the all-time favorites, go with your recent idols.

**Carlos:** Good question! Right now I'm listening to "L'Impeératrice" a lot, very sexy [laughs, makes dancing gestures] I feel sexy [laughs]. I'm embracing my body [laughs]. I also listen to afro a lot, but the roots of it, something very raw. I'm listening to Cytro Soto. And very, very recently I was having a conversation with a friend, he is a guitarist, about how the Peruvian instrument the "Cajon" reaches flamenco music. I've been listening to this record called "Touchstone", a Chick Corea Album. And what's special about it is that it's the first time that Paco de Lucia plays with Alex Acuña, a Peruvian percussionist, invited, both of them by Chick Corea. Also- Sara Poem's version of "Honeysuckle Rose".

**Sebastian:** For me, it's so complicated to choose a favorite artist. I think it has to be someone with whom I share a style. The truth is - I have no idea. Right now, I guess what comes to mind is a Spanish rapper called C. Tangana, because before the interview I was just listening to him. I would love to be able to work with him. And probably in a few minutes, I'll have even more artists that are like him or most probably not even close - but, yeah that's someone.

**Alessia:** Finally, what does "Origins" mean to you? 65

**Sebastian:** Origins, for me, is where I come from. Because we are talking about music and everything that has to do with creativity, Origin means home. To begin with, the country I come from: I travel a lot, but for me, Peru and particularly, Lima, is my home. And my family. Definitely, that comes to mind, Origins is also family to me. I have a great relationship with my family and I share everything I do with them and I believe that wherever my family is, that's my home.

**Carlos:** I think that our origins are a constant discovery, because an origin is timeless. It's a constant motivation to discover who you are and where you come from, to know yourself more. That hunger and passion are what one needs to live as an artist. It's a constant discovery, a constant exploration. Also, Origins for me means building perspective. It's everything that makes you feel secure, safe, everything that brings you back to earth.

SEBASTIAN LLOSA.









In the end, it felt more like a small gathering between friends.



*CARLOS CRUZALEGUI.*



*SEBASTIAN LLOSA.*



P

74  
3/3



G  
P R  
2,0 4,0

14,0cm

Photo: An ultrasound.  
Mother's Day Special.



My grandmother reads a book. I walk past her, and she calls me by my mother's name. "You two look just the same!". I tell her to wear her glasses, please. "Insolent girl," she tells me. Every time I pass by, she thinks I am my mother again. "You two look the same sideways." Yes, grandma, you are right.

May arrives. The sky is grey again, and everything got tense. Now I like the grey sky. But that is one acquired taste. Just like olives or spicy food, or I would say whiskey, but actually, I still hate that last one. When I was a little girl, I used to hate the grey sky. It made me think of sad things. So, May arrives, and the grey sky and Mother's Day and I start to think about sad things like the fact that we won't wake up together soon.

We've already been far apart before. I don't like it. Sometimes I get sad when you go away for the weekend with your girlfriends. Or even when you're not at lunch. Would that be because, as you say, we are one? Or because I was your mother in another life? And in another, your sister, and probably in another one, your dog?

I grew up and I look more like you. I became stronger. I don't get mad anymore because you're not home all the time or because you don't drive me to school. I no longer cry all the time, and I'm even afraid of fewer things. I don't do ballet anymore, nor do I draw all day long. I am no longer allergic to lemons. I hide my desserts, just like you. I get angry at people that walk slowly and at families that occupy the whole sidewalk. I turn the music up and I sing while I work. I cry when I watch documentaries and I hate cats. I have the same tone of voice as you, the same tempo. That also confuses grandma. Also daddy. I think even Miranda. Maybe also Blue.

*A love letter to mom...*

*Truly yours,  
Aitana.*

**AITANA CASTILLO.**



Photo: Sumy Kujon, Aitana's Mother.  
Original photos - courtesy of Aitana Castillo.



Photo: Sumy Kujon, Aitana's Mother.  
Original photos - courtesy of Aitana Castillo.

*AITANA* **CASTILLO.**



Photo: Sumy Kujon, Aitana's Mother.  
Original photos - courtesy of Aitana Castillo.

*AITANA* **CASTILLO.**





## O R I G I N S

Mom shakes my hair and it gets all tangled up and I get mad. Anyways, we always make up. When we're far from each other, nobody shakes my hair. That makes me happy and I forget that I miss her.

Thank you for being mom, dad, sister, even grandparents, cousins, psychologist, gardener, professor, and president (somehow a dictator one, honestly). For having every single role. And doing every single one so well.

Mom, I didn't realize/it took me a while to realize how much I missed you until I went out for a run and Madonna started singing and I had to stop running because I couldn't stop crying. Until one day somebody screamed "Chini!" in the street and I turned thinking it was you, but it wasn't. Until I fell asleep on the couch and nobody covered my feet with a blanket.

Love,

Aitana.

Written in Lima, Peru 2021.

Mom, I didn't realize it took me a while to realize how much I needed you until I didn't know what to wear and you weren't there to pick my outfit. Until I really liked a boy and I wanted to tell you to see your reaction. Until I did something awful but you didn't ground me.

Mom, I'm not sure I am ready to miss you and need you again.

I really want these months to extend and become longer. According to Einstein, time is relative. I already forgot the formula to calculate that but I can check if you want me to. I want them to become long, so long that the goodnight kiss remains physical. I am not ready to kiss a picture goodnight. Even that picture that I love. That 2003 picture, with my mushroom hairstyle and your short hair, where I look at you and I laugh and I wrinkle my nose as if I had done something bad. That picture, that one you find every time and tell me that we have been partners in crime since I was 3. I don't understand how you come up with such beautiful conclusions from such simple things.

Thank you for teaching me to look at things the way you do. With an Asian look and a little bit of myopia. Thank you for saying goodnight every night we were far. For asking me how my day went and what I ate, who I liked and if I cried. If I fell or laughed or danced. Thank you for always being there. I am sorry if I ever ghosted you. I am sorry if I ever missed one of your cries. I am sorry if I ever forgot to call you to say good morning.



Photo: Sumy Kujon, Aitana's Mother.  
Original photos - courtesy of Aitana Castillo.







Photo: Monica's first birthday, April 1973.  
Original photos - courtesy of Isabel Fuentes.



Photo: Monica's Prom, December 1989.  
Original photos - courtesy of Isabel Fuentes.







Photo: Sylvia Rodríguez in the 90s.  
Original photos - courtesy of Alessia Giha.



Photo: Sylvia Rodríguez in the 90s.  
Original photos - courtesy of Alessia Giha.



Photos: Mother's Day Special.

**Original photos** - courtesy of Alessia Giha, Marian Hawit, Aitana Castillo, Marianne Majluf, Rafaella Mufarech, Isabel Fuentes, Lucija Primorac, María Fernanda Ascenzo y Cayetano García.







Origins mean culture to Mathias Buxx. Culture and where we come from. He has decided to create a set full of the experiences and music of different cultures so we can all return to our origins while listening to it. As we can experience, it's always essential for him to tell stories through music.

When he decided to work with culture within the Origins theme, he has chosen beautiful tracks with elements of different cultures such as Latin, African, Brazilian, or Arabic. He created the one-hour-long organic house set inspired by these culture-related details, including them in the melodies, connecting the music to his own origins, his memories of traveling, and our common origin, culture. Mathias highlighted the Arabic and the Brazilian tracks as favourites.

"I think that as Brazilians, we are very passionate about our culture. That's why I see culture and origins as closely related. It is a personal thing, but it means something to many others as well. I see origins as culture, where I'm coming from, my past, and how I grew up. That's how I relate to this concept." As he explained, the creative process took quite some time.

MATHIAS BUXX.

To find the most suitable culture-related songs, match them together, create one coherent set and record the music needed time and patience.

At the beginning of his set, we can hear Project Synergy's idea in his own voice about 'who we want.' He recorded himself saying the sentences and put a melody behind them to make the set even more personal. This was a long process, but it became one of the parts closest to his heart.

*"We want the curious. The writers. The travellers. The readers. The food-tasters. The photographers. The musicians. The cinephiles. The filmmakers. The graphic-designers. The artists. The journalists. The poets. The philosophers. The thinkers. We want the passionate."*

About his experiences with developing the work, he said: "It sparked memories of childhood because of the culture-related theme. I love to travel around the world, and I have experienced lots of cultures. Hence, while I was listening to these elements of specific cultures, it brought back memories of traveling and also the Brazilian culture. It sparked something very nice inside of me."

The authentic set is for calm moments with a chill atmosphere and a pleasant environment — moments when we can deeply enjoy the music and connect to our origins through its cultural references.

Written by Dorottya Kiss.

CLICK OR SCAN



MATHIAS BUXX



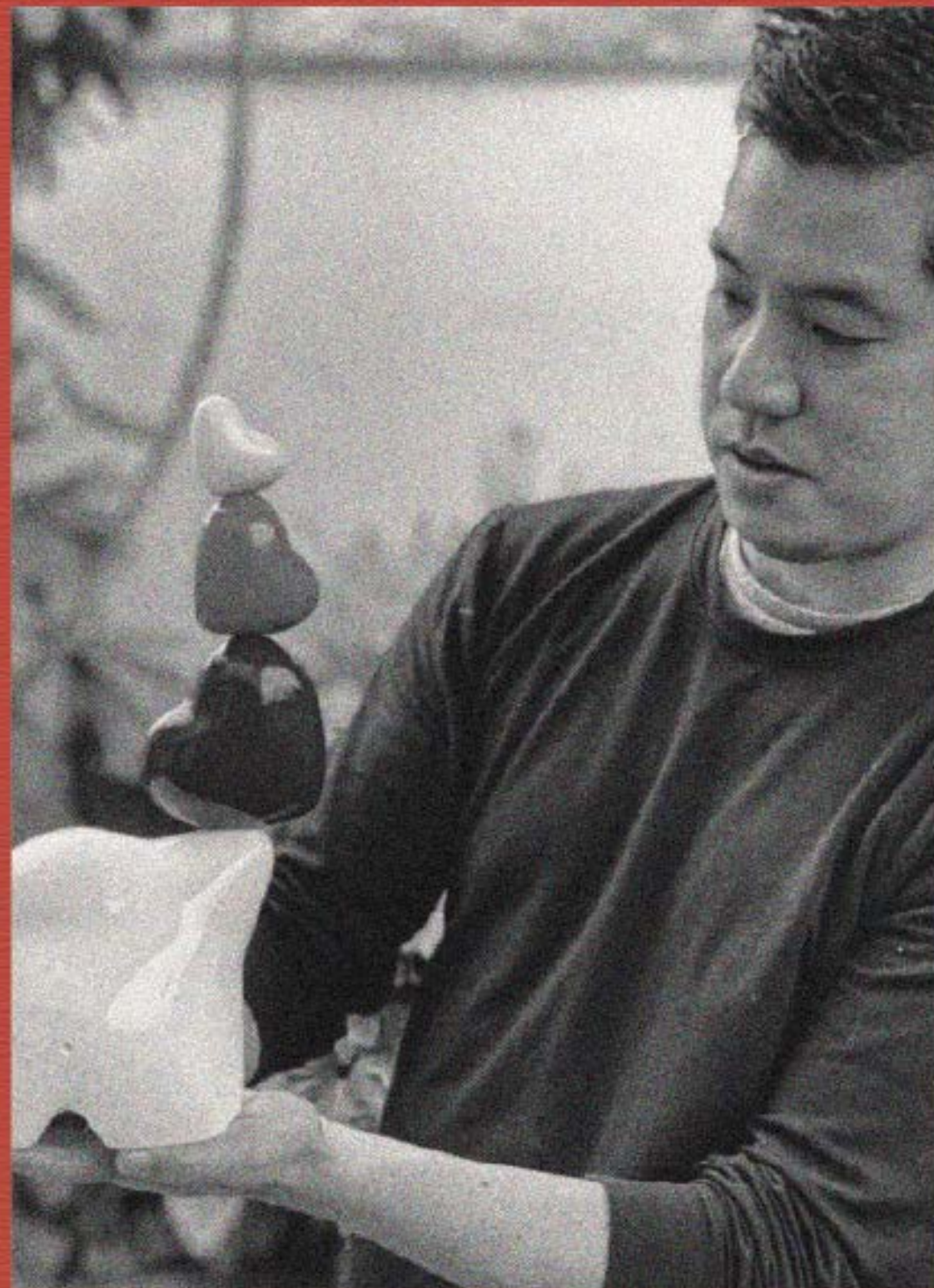
# MARCELO WONG

An interview.

Written by Vaninna Vasquez







**Portrait of Marcelo Wong.**  
Courtesy of the artist.

In 2002, after he got his degree in art, Marcelo decided to dedicate himself to sculpting, giving birth to his very well known “gorditos”. Portraying his origin as experience itself, the Peruvian artist doesn’t fail to encourage young people to “just go out there and do it”. In this interview we could see life and art through his own eyes, getting the chance to get to know the artist behind such successful, fresh, and innovative sculptures a little better.

**Which one of your collections do you consider as the most meaningful one?**

“I actually think I should mention three of them. Anyhow I do believe that the one that should be the most meaningful one because of the transcendence it brought was the one called “Resilience”, which told the story after the fire.” (For those who may not know, in 2012 Marcelo’s workshop was burnt down by a fire which’s cause is still unknown, causing severe damage to most, if not all, of his art works.) “I do believe that moment in life marked a before and after, since I was able to portray a new vision to the outside world”. “On the other hand, my first single exhibition was the one I feel put me in the public eye in Lima for the first time, but the one I did with some friends was the one that actually got me my first opportunity to work with an actual gallery.” He also mentions that the collection he designed for Disney®, featuring Mickey Mouse pieces and the one designed for the “the Little Prince”, also known as “El Principito” in spanish, are ones that he holds very dearly in his heart.

**What do you think was your origin as an artist? How was your first encounter with art?**

“Actually, as a child I was a very sporty kid, art wasn’t something I had present since the beginning, I could even say I chose to study art in a very irresponsible way because I wanted something where I felt like I didn’t have to do much studying, but nowadays I know it goes way beyond that. If someone came up to me and told me they wanted to study art, I would be the first one to overwhelm them with questions and different scenarios or situations to actually make them think twice before they embark themselves in this career.” He said between laughs. “I also think my art originated in a very unconscious way”.

He also mentions he’s not the kind of artist to feel “misunderstood” by his clients or spectators, as he always tries to walk on “the other side of the road” so he’s able to produce something that would make him smile every time he sees it, as a way to accomplish that same feeling for the people who own one his pieces.

**So, what do you feel was the origin of your very famous “gorditos”?**

“I actually dedicated all of my free time, in between helping with the family business and studying, to my sculptures. If I close my eyes and remember that particular stage of my life, I remember those tiny spans of time as “my special moment” because I poured my heart out making them, which is why I think the “gorditos” originated from pure love and dedication. In a way, the way they were created was very organic, which is why I feel like the way they started to get attention only kept increasing, which I feel would’ve been different nowadays, where social medias are a big part of businesses, in which I feel like you could pay for advertisements and have your work be very known for a minute and then the slope would start going back down again. So yes, in a way I believe that the moment I created them was perfect because of the absence of these medias. Either way, I believe Facebook gave me this chance to share my work with everyone I knew and not only my closest friends or family, so it has its pros and cons.” “Also, because they [the gorditos] were made during my free time, every time I would get a buyer, they would have this immense variety where to choose from.”

**Do you feel like your creative process reflects your origin as an artist?**

“I really wouldn’t know actually; I think in my creative process I could be reflecting how important family is to me. Growing up my father worked until a young age as he decided he wanted to focus more on his family. Both of my parents were the most supportive people in my life as my career began. I really believe that after the fire, my wife and I took this opportunity to restructure my work life, deciding that to me, just like my father, family should be the most important thing in life.”

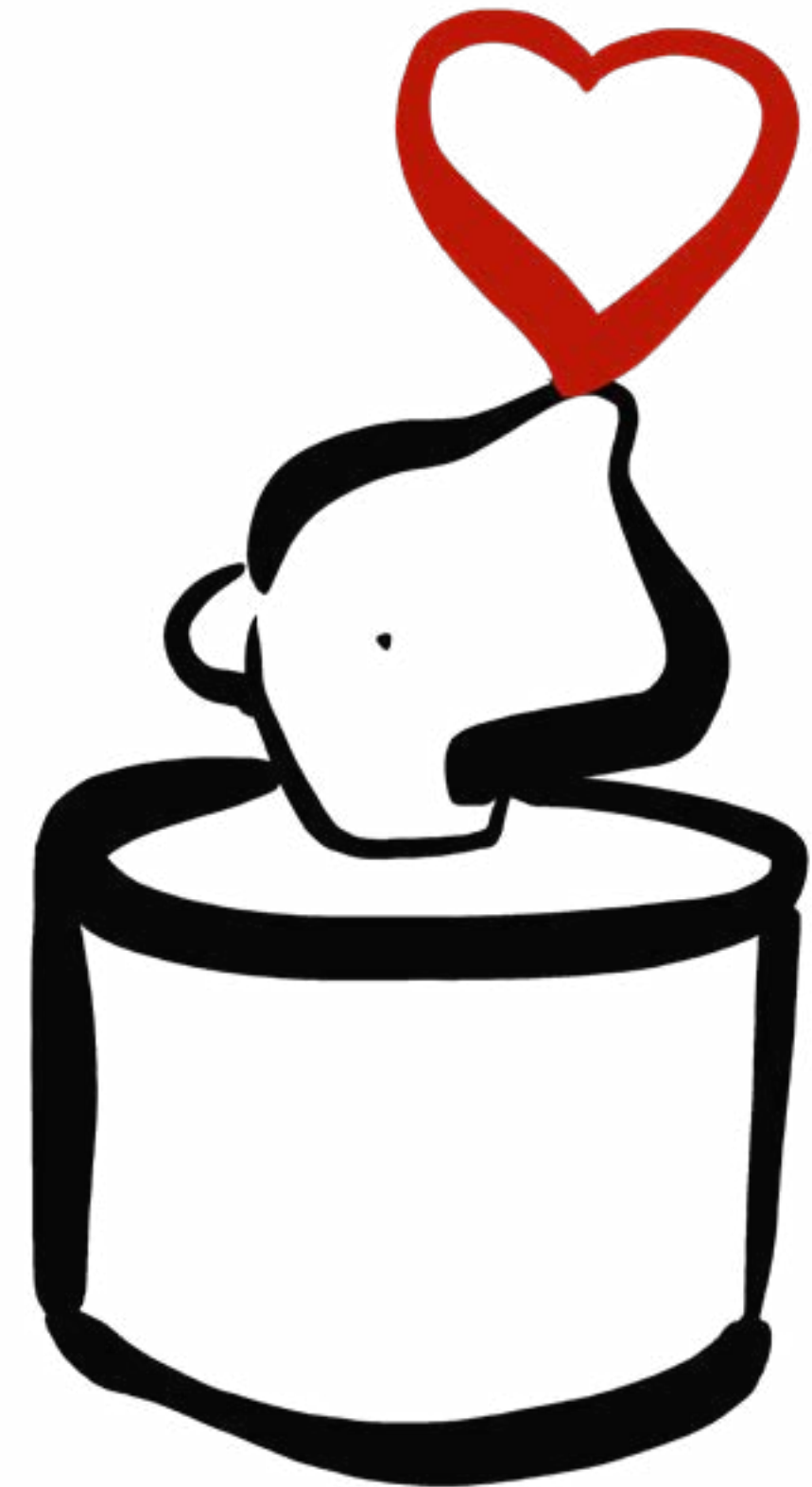


“Plus, I really think experiences are the most important thing that people seek nowadays, everything used to be very materialistic. You will never really know if the path you’re taking is the best option for you unless you try it, and keep in mind that you can try multiple ones in order to get as many experiences as you can.

I can definitely say there was a lot of sacrifice to get where I am today, but it only made me appreciate every single one of my achievements more, so I encourage young people to do so, to try and walk different paths until they get to where they want to get.

Even though I believe that any amount of light brings the same amount of darkness, that darkness is there to teach us and to let us see the light with more clarity, as we start to appreciate it better.”

MARCELO WONG



Artist Interpretation of Marcelo's Gorditos.  
Illustration by isabella Ibañez.

MARCELO WONG



# Our First

**w o r d :**

## The Origins of Language

*An Essay.*

SPANDANA **DASH.**

**“Dede.”**

“Dede.”

### Cave Painting: The First Language?

As I haphazardly said the word above, a dance of footsteps made their way from the adjacent room. They were frantic and hurried as if they would miss a momentous occasion. While I naively gazed at the joyfully bewildered expressions painted across my parents’ faces, they gently asked, “Pakhi, can you say that again?” I, again, proclaimed my two incoherent syllables loudly for my elated parents to soak in once more.

Parents worldwide have experienced the above phenomena, where a child’s first word signifies a miraculous gift, an unforgettable and defining moment in their early development. While the giddy excitement of nonsensical syllables is inevitable for parents, events as such exhibit the value placed upon our first word, highlighting the gravity of language within humanity today. While all forms of life have their peculiar communication systems, humans have refined and mastered cognitive language communication – the basics of talking, writing, and conversing are prerequisites one must possess to integrate themselves within society successfully. At its core, language forms and fulfils our innate need for human connection, enabling people to convey opinions, beliefs, and feelings through discourse, writing (glyphs) and gestures. However, humanity’s fabric has intertwined language profoundly; our existence has become dependent upon it for survival.

Even at our earliest stage, scientists attest that our own primitive biogenetic design hints at the use of language to interact and connect with others of our kind. While not as developed as modern-day humans, these genetic predispositions undoubtedly place language at the centrepiece of human discourse – our greatest invention to date. For some, the essence of language is even divinely inspired where language is considered to be gifted and bestowed by God. In Norse mythology, the God Odin sacrificed himself to attain the revelation of runes. In ancient Egypt, the word hieroglyphics translates into “sacred carvings”, given to the Egyptians with the intention of wisdom and memory but was instead used for written documents that facilitated these elements. In India, the goddess Saraswati is seen as the inventor of Sanskrit who granted language to humanity. These divine associations accentuate language’s significance to humans.

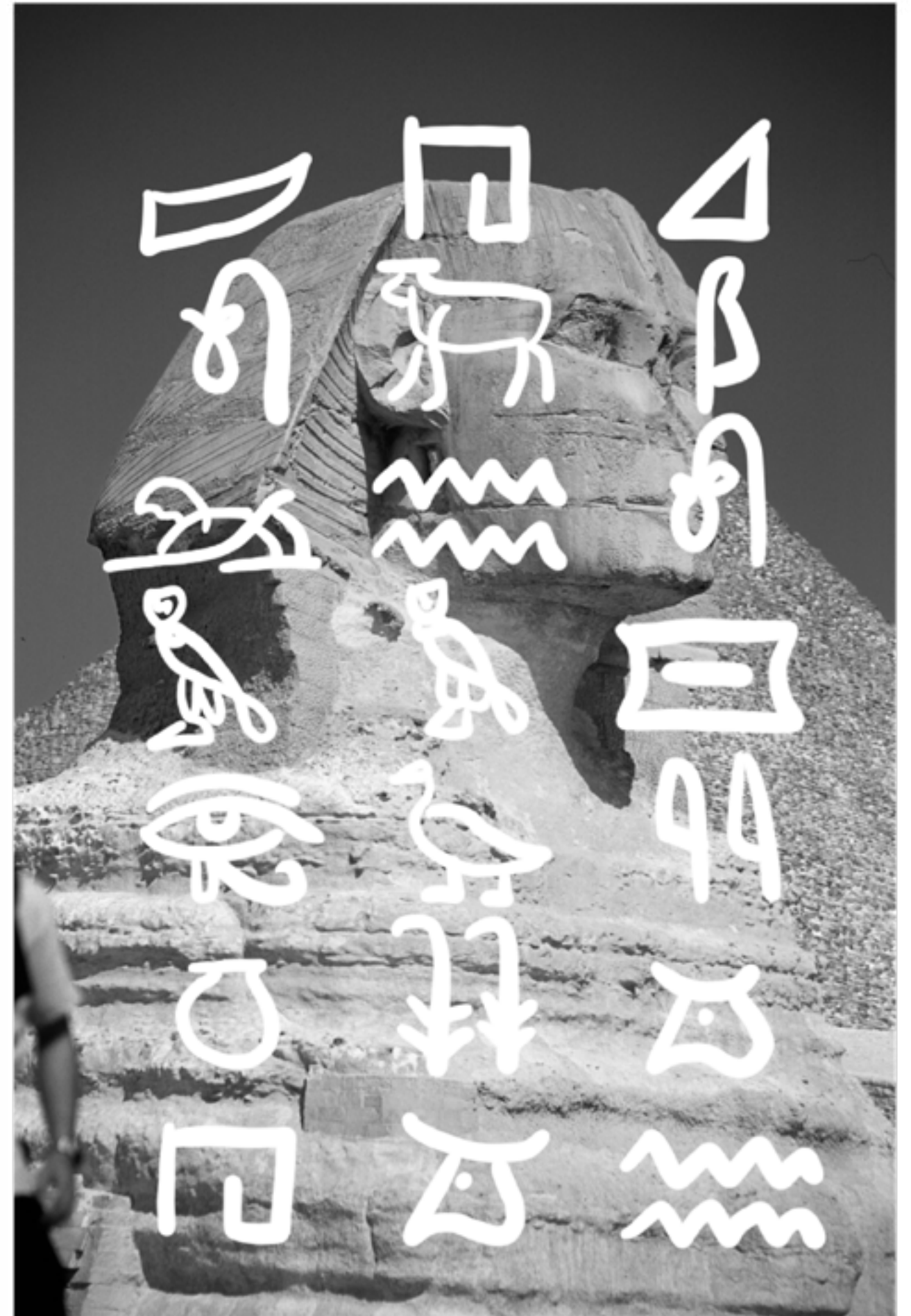
Nevertheless, ere the birth of Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Tamil, Old Chinese, Aramaic, Hieroglyphics and Cuneiform, one more language came before them all: cave paintings.

While an unconventional notion, cave paintings could serve as our first attempt at human language. The symbolic and communicative nature of these Paleolithic drawings hints at our biological need for language, views which are shared by Steven Pinker, a Canadian psychologist and psycholinguistics expert. Pinker views language as instinct—innate and intimate, its development is rooted within our DNA (Pinker 2007, 18). Research supports this idea, suggesting that early humans possessed the neurological mechanisms, specifically the hypoglossal nerve – muscles that control the tongue – that is essential to cultivating language. Nevertheless, our primitive design did not permit the same complex sounds and sentences we possess today. These early forms of communication, while instinctive, had no meaning attached to the sounds our mouths would voice. In this regard, cave paintings could take place as the first form of human language through an important vehicle: **art**.

Art as a precursor to human language is not as uncanny as it may seem. Art encompasses a world of functions, each unique to the artist and the eye of the beholder, serving a physical to personal purpose. However, when looking at its personal functions, many artists create art out of a need for self-expression of their inner thoughts and subjective views. Hence, art aids in communicating a thought, a point of view or emotion and serves as a means of documentation of experience, recording stories in a creative manner that can be used to communicate, express meaning, and even persuade. These elements of art resonate with the intricacies of language. In the beginning of our time on Earth, primitive individuals undoubtedly possessed many complex and expressive internalised thoughts, to which their vocal development failed to serve justice. Drawing depictions of their internal and external world visually portrayed what people saw, thought and could even display basic human emotions. These cave paintings provide evidence of language and communication as a fundamental backbone of our genetic makeup. Overall, this union of art and language expressed through cave paintings can be considered our first language, among other purposes for its existence.

### The Birth of Glyphs and Divide from Origins

As our inherent need for human connection flourished into the Mesolithic and Neolithic Age, we advanced into more complex ways of living. More and more individuals began to cluster together into settlements until civilisations were formed (Kennedy 2019).



**Ancient Egypt Hieroglyphs**  
Illustrations by isabella Ibañez.



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In essence, these networks of people were complex agricultural societies, and all had one common aspect, the birth of glyphs. The earliest civilisations, such as the Sumerians in Mesopotamia, used a writing system called “Cuneiform”, a syllabic writing script consisting of wedge-shaped pictures that could be interpreted as sounds and objects to readers. Slowly, there began a transition into a more complex phonetic system which included glyphs, with characters, symbols and inscriptions that represented parts of words, sounds or gestures. Regardless of civilisation, record keeping and writing were necessary aspects of society. While civilizations were divided by distance, culture and physique, the development of written language as a whole flourished at the same time where value was placed upon documentation of people’s origins. Without the development of glyphs or writing, most of our history would have remained undiscovered and unknown to us today.

Glyphs and written language served a multitude of purposes throughout history. As we evolved, the purpose of written language evolved alongside us. At its core, written language was an avenue to record events, cultural processes and religious beliefs of which all were written by scribes (individuals who could read and write). As ancient Mesopotamia was among the first to create a written language, it served as long-distance communication for

trade. With the rising wealth of cities, the need for movements of resources to regions was ever-growing. Hence, language was developed to help people communicate across long-distance trade.

Written languages aided in creating what would not have been possible prior to its invention: literature. Literature allows us to step back in time, gather understanding about culture, people and history itself. The first writer was a woman, a Mesopotamian priestess named Enheduanna who wrote hymns (religious prayers typically of adoration) to the goddess Inanna, which she signed with her name and seal. Written languages were also used for more minor, everyday things. Mesopotamian messengers would often write the messages of kings as they couldn’t remember everything in their journeys back and forth. Different cultures found different ways of using written language. In Ancient China, for example, fortune-telling and record-keeping were written on bones named “oracle bones”.

Finally, written language served personal purposes by guiding morals, describing societal interactions and helped transport people into other worlds through storytelling. The first story was titled the “Epic of Gilgamesh, which included tales of the great king of Uruk, Gilgamesh, and his quest for the meaning of life. These stories served higher-order purposes, such as teaching people right from wrong, the complexity of our world, and the human race. Much of early literature consisted of stories of gods and human heroes, and all presented morals and cultures of specific regions. The authors of Homer (c. 800 BCE), Mahabharata (c. 400 BCE), and Virgil (c. 70-19 BCE) followed in these footsteps, showcasing the humane and the divine through stories (World History Encyclopedia 2011). Together, they conveyed the thoughts and feelings of people, culture, collective history, and the human condition for future generations to learn and understand. Fundamentally, written language was a key puzzle piece of language and its evolution. The written word meant existence. Without something left behind, the cultures, livelihood and beliefs of civilisations would be lost, and we would never know.

Consequently, there are roughly 6500 languages spoken today. However, if language all served similar purposes throughout history, why do we not have only one? It is natural to assume that communicating with one language is easier, but that is not the case. A reason for this divergence from the origin is that languages are created in light of diversity. We did not combine into one whole community, but rather a set of communities each with their own unique identity, their own cultures and distinct origins in the world.

The diversity of languages symbolises the beauty of our diversity.

## Language Today

Today, the evolution of language is ever-present. Amongst the many inventions of our time, language is one of man’s most dynamic yet fatal innovations. Words have an unconscious power within our world, being able to start revolutions and end wars. From its early beginnings, language has intertwined with humans, making it essential to our existence. Its importance doesn’t only serve itself, but also to the development of other essential innovations that were created with the intention of expressing language. Mesopotamian scribes developed reed pens to write words easily. As to what to write words on, the Egyptians fashioned papyrus, while the Greeks and Romans made parchment scrolls. The printing press, first created in China, equipped us to write more, share information quickly, and generate more information for people to read. Many other technological inventions followed the birth of language: telephone, laptops (specifically keyboards), television, messaging applications, facetime applications and many more. All of these inventions even have their own computerised composition of language (codes), equally as complex as our own.

Just as humans, language has evolved from its origins to become more versatile than ever before. The origins of language were simple, just like our human race, used to preserve knowledge and communicate with others. Now, language does that and more. Language today is multifaceted, used to influence, to argue, to direct, to describe, to humour, to evoke emotions, to lead, to inspire, to create, to love and most importantly to be human.

On

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*A short film.*  
Remembering.



**Self-Portrait of Al Reem Al Beshr.**  
Courtesy of the artist.



I feel the most like myself when I'm making movies. It took me the longest time, and it is still taking me the longest time to feel like a real artist. To believe that my art has any value. To believe that my art is meaningful and true. I learned this year that I have a powerful way of following my gut and intuition when making art. I didn't realize that until I listened to myself, until I observed myself. I think of my human experience as a performance. I feel like being a storyteller shapes my existence and enhances it. Being a filmmaker is the most magical thing in my world. I don't know who I am without it. My creative process is very fluid. It is anchored by growth. I love to think visually and artfully before weaving a narrative or story. I usually build a pinterest board of all my magical ideas and then write screenplays that match my mind's aesthetic. However, that all changes and twists when I am in the process of filming or making. I play along to the improvisations that come to me, and that is where my best work stems from.

I am an 18 year old filmmaker and writer from Abu Dhabi. I am very experimental. Sometimes I make things that feel like the warmth of a hug. And sometimes I make things that feel like the sharpness of a knife cutting through your guts. I love to experiment according to my emotions and feelings. The more strongly I feel an emotion, the more I create. I foster a feeling deep down in my art until I don't feel it anymore. This is how I work best.



**Still Frame of *On Remembering* opening scene.**  
Courtesy of the artist.

*On Remembering* is a visual poem about memory. The memories, people, places, and things that make us. It radiates the growth we experience and the first time we really look at the world. I am who I am because of the memories that mold me. The origin of our human experience is delicately rooted within the soil of our memory. We are watered with love and pain. Soon enough, we stem into individuals with our own take on life. Our leaves are uniquely magical. *On Remembering* begins on a birthday. The day we evolved and stretched our origins and our beginnings. The day we learned to see, feel, and discover. It is a personal story made of all the visual memories I made in the world through the lens of a camera. It is a story weaved with love, capturing the origins of my human existence and what it means to be alive.

CLICK OR SCAN





*when I was little  
I wanted to be big  
grow my roots far from my feet  
but when I grew  
I knew  
to be big was to stay little  
humble and brittle  
with fragile roots subject to rain  
growing fluid subject to pain  
the origins of me  
to turn inwards, as they should be.*

**IONA BERNAZ.**



**Turning Inwards.**  
Illustration by Isabella Ibañez.

**IONA BERNAZ**



**Self-Portrait of Cayetano García.**  
Courtesy of the artist.

O R I G I N S

# Our Story.

## Our Skin.

*A Photo-Essay.*

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*CAYETANO* **GARCÍA.**





CAYETANO GARCÍA.

During the past two years, I have developed a deeper connection to clothing. Being around so many racks filled with gorgeous dresses and designer pieces, made the concept of the nude body a dull one. The possibility of identity expression throughout clothes became a leitmotiv on my personal creative process. However, as I went around debating to myself about the idea of the “origin” state of the elements around me, an everything but dull perception of the nude body came across.

While ancient civilizations came to an end, leaving space for new ones to exist, a reiterative subject was found in the representation of the mundane experience through artistic expression: the nude body. Through the lack of clothes, artists over the years found something nuclear and common portraying nudity. It seems that by stripping the individual to its sole skin we could find much more of the history that led them to this exact point of time. Nudity as the starting point of our human experience’s self expression.

There is one question that pops in my head while I’m staring at a painting of a nude body. When was the exact moment that we stopped being nude? Anthropologists and historians relate this to the theories of shame inspired by religion or the idea that attire indicates that the individual is part of the civilization, as noted in Contemporary China. On the other hand, the Greeks were flabbergasted by the symbolism of nudity in their ceramics and famous sculptures.

However, the origin of clothing has to do with the social aspect of the human kind. Our inherent need to be part of social systems led to the use of fabric and animal skin to associate our identity with that of one of our peers and separate ourselves from the wild. “Clothing is a barrier between us and the world. It is the thing that separates us from nature, literally and symbolically. It actually affects us in the way we perceive ourselves and our environment”, mentions Ian Gilligan (2018) in his study of prehistoric origin of clothes.

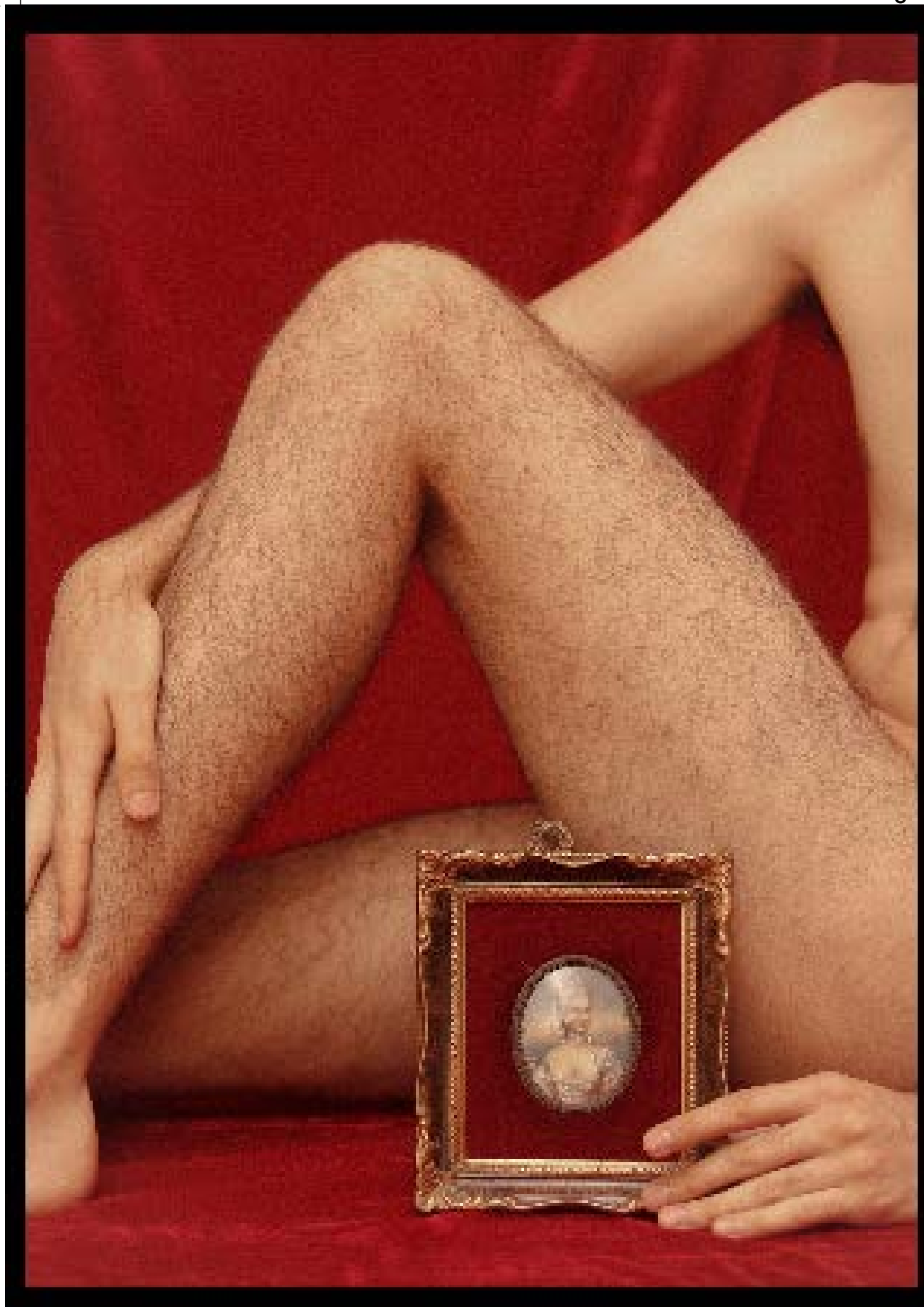
**Our Story. Our Skin.**

Cayetano García.

CAYETANO GARCÍA.

The representation of nudity through art is the recurrence to the most natural aspect of the human. Artists that took this subject, succeed in communicating that a naked body and its symbolism, which oscillates between sensuality and innocence, is the origin of our very nature. There is an ignition of a sense of belonging to a bigger community when we see naked bodies in photography, painting, sculpture or video.

We relate to the significance of those bodies and look for symbols that identify our very own humane existence. Take for example the skin. The largest organ of our body that communicates sensorial experiences and acts as the bridge when relating to other humans. Being the outermost part of our anatomy, it's the presentation card of human identity. "Skin has served as a statement affirming an affinity to a group or a belief, as a shorthand message of how we view the world... how old we are, the kind of life we've led, our general health, the environment our ancestors experience," mentioned Nina G. Jablonski (2013) in her book "Skin: A Natural History".



CAYETANO GARCÍA.

CAYETANO GARCÍA.

With this photographic essay, I wanted to portray the human desire for nudity as it connects us to our most primal state. Connecting the idea of sensuality granted to the naked body with the observation of our own skins in order to find the origin of our human experience.



# Origins of art.

*A Monologue.*

<sup>116</sup> *The origin of everything will always be art for me. It is the platform through which I began to understand the world. I grew up being a sensitive kid, with emotions which often overwhelmed me. Through literature, poetry, music and film I discovered that my emotions were valid. That my sensitivity was a strength.*

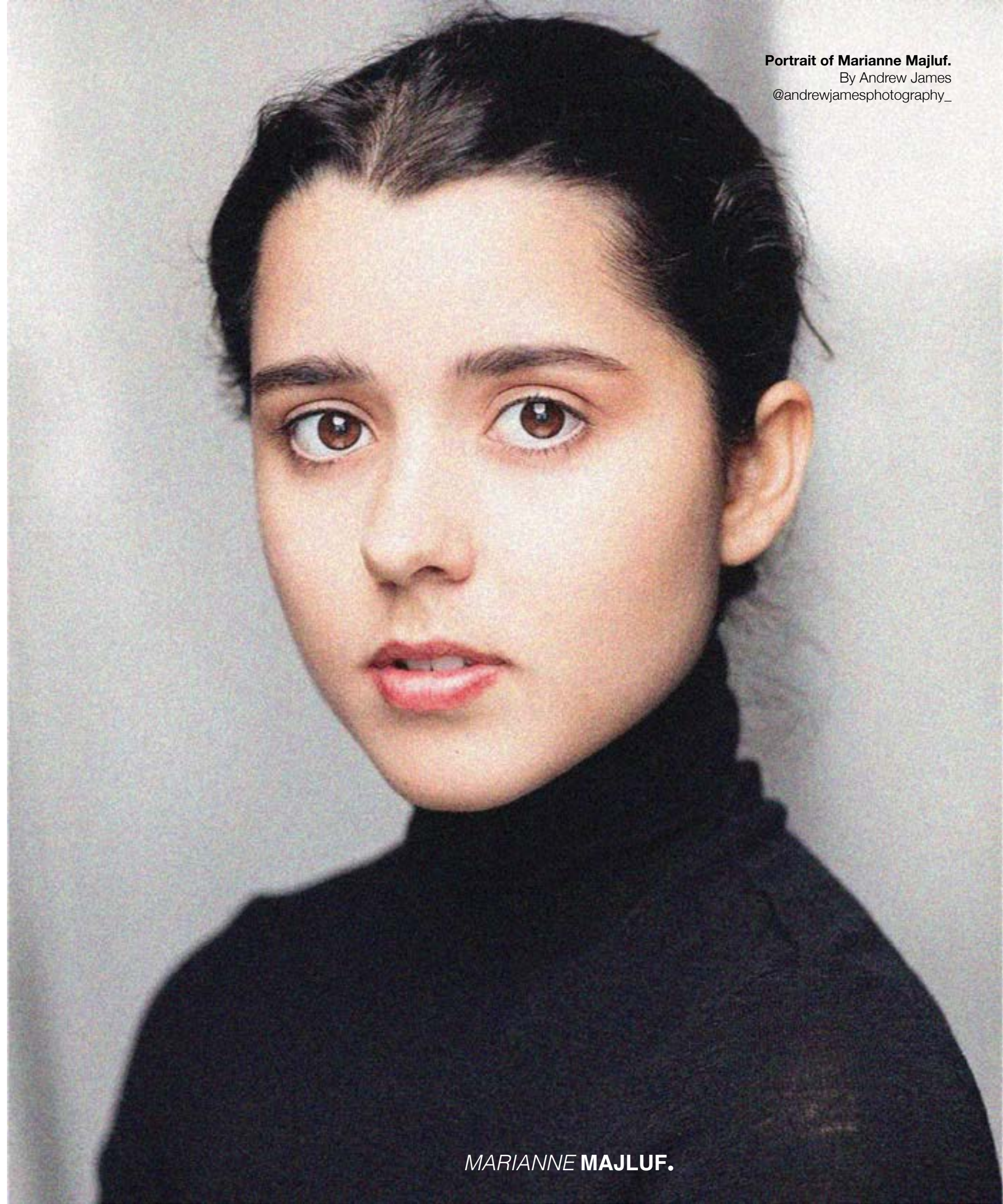
*I went from wanting to study literature, to graphic design, photography, film and finally – acting. But as an artist I know that every art form merges with one another. That being a painter doesn't mean you're not allowed to dance, or to explore typography. All art forms are interlinked.*

CLICK OR SCAN



MARIANNE MAJLUF.

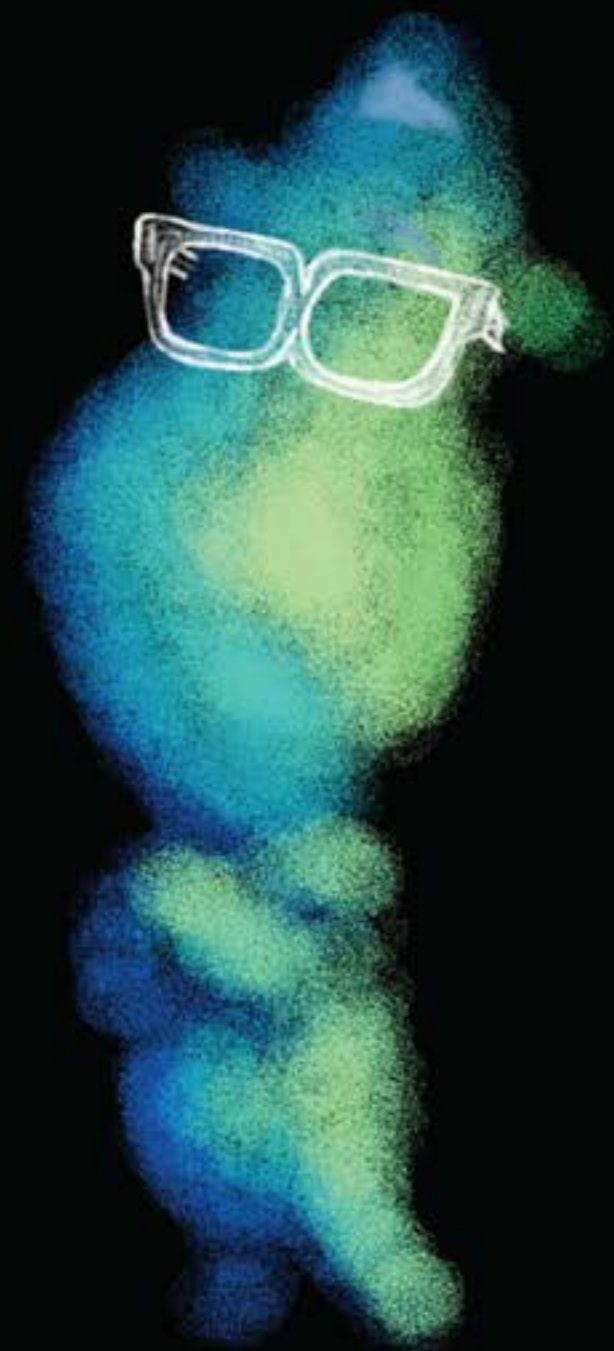
Portrait of Marianne Majluf.  
By Andrew James  
@andrewjamesphotography\_



MARIANNE MAJLUF.



Interpretation of Joe from 'Soul'.  
Illustration by Alessia Giha





Who are we? Why are we here? These questions have troubled humanity for as long as history can record. As we attempt to answer them through philosophy, biology, psychology, the arts, or religion, we can only agree we don't have a definite answer. But why is that? Probably since we are all different. We all have a different soul, a different physical appearance, different emotions, and social skills. So I ask you a far more critical set of questions: Who are you? Why are you here?

As many areas of knowledge have tried to answer these questions in a plural manner, a branch in psychology employs a slightly different approach: Positive Psychology. This scientific study explores what makes life most worth living, and it was created to study how to improve quality of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Within this branch of psychology, an alternate theory to Sigmund Freud's Personality Theory was born called the Self-Concept Theory, which only aims to explore and answer: Who am I? Carl Rogers believed there are three different parts to the Self-Concept: the Self-Image (how you see yourself), the Self-Esteem (how much you value yourself), and the Ideal-Self (how you wish you could be) (Carl Rogers, 1963). So, in this essay, we will explore the origins of identity and try to understand what yours is through the analysis of Disney Pixar's characters: Anton Ego from *Ratatouille*, Jessie from *Toy Story 2*, and Joe Gardner from *Soul*.

In the movie *Ratatouille*, Anton Ego rediscovers his identity through a change in his self-image. Throughout the film, we perceive Ego as a bitter and arrogant food critic. As his job is to judge other people's work, the sense of superiority he feels has inebriated him with power. The audience understands this as Ego becomes infuriated when Gusteau's, a restaurant he negatively reviewed, regains its popularity, leading him to say: "That is where I left it, that was my last word. The last word... Then tell me, how can it be popular?" (*Ratatouille*, 2007).

The way Ego questions Gusteau's latest review, made by an equally reliable food critic, reflects his god-complex, where his opinion has a higher value in society. Ego's character development further explores this as he returns to Gusteau's, challenging the new chef with threats saying, "Pray you don't disappoint me." (*Ratatouille*, 2007). At this point, the audience has wholly identified Ego as the film's antagonist, where his only purpose is to destroy what Gusteau has rebuilt. However, as Ego arrives for the final encounter and the audience expects him to be humiliated due to his inability to tolerate defiance; we find ourselves emotionally invested in him. This effect occurs as Ego explains, "They have rocked me to my core" (*Ratatouille*, 2007), as his eyes light up when he tastes *Ratatouille*, a dish that reminded him of his mother and his childhood. Here, the audience feels sorry for Anton as they ask themselves, why was he like this? Making them understand how being transported to a happy moment in his life and being unleashed from a position of power created a moment of vulnerability. This allowed him to be inspired and embrace reality, as he reflects, "Not anyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere" (*Ratatouille*, 2007), defying all initial perspectives the character had on talent and life. Hence, his self-image evolved into a merrier and more truthful version of himself. He now uses his passion for food to enjoy life and has become an investor in a small restaurant where he can also appreciate and relish it. Thus, Anton's journey demonstrates how coming back to your roots and reflecting on how you see yourself can honestly answer: Who am I?

Another key component of identity is self-esteem, as it allows the persona to value themselves and what they're capable of accomplishing. A Pixar character who explores the importance of this is Jessie in *Toy Story 2*. When we first meet Jessie, we set eyes upon a character who depends on others to know who she is. The audience

realises this as she hyperventilates and screams, "It's you! It's really you!" (*Toy Story 2*, 1999) when Woody enters the room. Her excitement is created because Woody was the missing piece of a toy collection. Now that it's complete, she has a family and will no longer be stored in the dark. However, Woody tries to escape several times as he wants to return to his owner, Andy, making Jessie constantly anxious, stressed, and angry. At this point, the audience understands why Jessie's identity suffers and depends on this toy collection, as Randy Newman's song "When She Loved Me" guides the audience through a story of abandonment, grief, and loneliness. As the lyrics develop, it illustrates how "When somebody loved me, everything was beautiful" (*When She Loved Me*, 1999), making the audience realise how Jessie's previous owner, Emily, grew up and donated her, as "The years went by (...) and she began to drift away" (*When She Loved Me*, 1999).

How Emily abandoned Jessie created a void in her, as she lost her only family, making her self-esteem go downhill as she felt abandoned in the dark. But this changes as Woody offers her to return with him to Andy's home. Jessie hesitates at first, as she wonders, "What if Andy doesn't like me?" (*Toy Story 2*, 1999), but as the film unfolds, she accepts the offer. This frees her from the trauma she experienced and allows her to discover she is a brave, friendly, and unique cowgirl. As Jessie arrives at Andy's room and fills the emptiness she had, she joyfully screams, "Bullseye; we're part of a family again!" (*Toy Story 2*, 1999). The journey Jessie embraced made her self-esteem fluctuate, but it is only through this journey that she learned who she was. She now understands that her identity isn't the same as her purpose, to bring happiness to a kid. And understanding this allows her self-esteem to rise, making her value herself for what she is, not for what others want or need her to be.

The last component of one's identity is the ideal-self, as it creates goals and a vision of who we wish to be. Joe Gardner, from *Soul*, suffers from his ideal-self, making him lost

on his journey through life. Joe is a frustrated jazzist, as he finds himself only living to achieve one goal: perform on a stage as a professional musician. He highlights this by illustrating: "I could die a happy man if I could play with Dorothea Williams" (*Soul*, 2020). Unexpectedly, Joe gets a gig with Dorothea Williams, one of his idols, but unfortunately, he goes into a coma after a tragic accident. Being in a coma, Joe is transported along with the audience to the Great Before, where a soul is born, and the Great Beyond, where a soul dies. As we navigate through these spiritual scenarios, the audience learns how each one of us is just a soul within a vast world, making us reflect on how our lives are just for ourselves. But a further important concept is explored: the lost souls. These souls are the ones "Obsessed by something that disconnects them from life" (*Soul*, 2020), like workaholics, overly ambitious people, or getting caught up in "the zone", a place where you explore pure happiness by being so invested in your passion.

So, as Joe experiences and journeys his way back to his body, the audience understands his obsession with achieving one goal, as he makes comments like, "Once I get on that stage tonight, all my problems will be fixed" (*Soul*, 2020) or how playing jazz is "My reason for living" (*Soul*, 2020). Joe is so fixated on who he wants to be that he isn't enjoying all the little things 22, the soul he is trying to teach why it's worth living, is enjoying. Ultimately, he manages to return to his body and play the gig, allowing him to accomplish this ideal-self he's been pursuing his whole life, but when the gig ends, he describes how "he thought he would feel different" (*Soul*, 2020). Dorothea Williams proceeds to tell him an anecdote about a fish:

"I heard this story about a fish. He swims up to this older fish and says, 'I'm trying to find this thing they call the ocean'. 'The ocean?' says the older fish, 'that's what you're in right now!'. 'This?' says the other fish, 'this is just water. What I want is the ocean!'" (*Soul*, 2020).



## O R I G I N S

Joe lost himself in his ambition to become his ideal-self. He became so invested in a single goal that he forgot to live. So, when he remembered how important it is to appreciate the little things in life, such as savouring a pizza or watching the sky, he realised his ideal-self has a new mindset for his life: "I'm just gonna live every minute of it" (Soul, 2020). Thus, the audience learns that it's fine to be ambitious and have an ideal-self; just don't forget to live as you chase it, so you'll never forget who you truly are and who you are becoming.

As we conclude the analysis of our Pixar characters, we understand the importance of working and constantly reflecting on our self-image, self-esteem, and ideal-self. These three components are essential to the origin of our identity. Even though all characters achieve them through entirely different journeys, we can all agree that the only way they experienced those journeys was by living. I came across these questions when I decided to take a gap year and delay my university's first year from September 2020 to September 2021. In this gap year, I've learned that I am a storyteller at the bottom of my soul, and my favourite medium of communication is music, creative writing, and photography. I've also learned that I want to dedicate my life to telling stories and helping all the people I can with them. Still, even though I've gathered such knowledge about my identity, I have much left to explore about it. These have probably been the most challenging questions I've ever faced: Who am I? Why am I here? So this is a cathartic essay, as it's given me a deeper perspective on who I am, and I hope it's helped you too.

A character's journey is no different from a human's journey. Each one of us is the protagonist of our story, just as the characters analysed become when they understand who they are. Identity chases everyone, no matter where you come from or how old you are. It's fine to get lost, as we have learned it's part of the process, and as long as we're

able to get back on track, we'll always end up knowing who we are. So, I leave you with a final reflection on a famous quote by Oscar Wilde: "Be yourself, everyone else is already taken", and ask you one more time, Who are you? Why are you here?

*BARTOLOMÉ BULOS.*



# RELEASE

A p h o t o - e s s a y .

CARLOS RIVAS.

## O R I G I N S

As architects, we are taught to aid our communication and ideas through diagrams. They are one, if not the best, tool to dissect complex ideas into their most essential form in order to be understood by the many. Diagrams are a vague concept and can be subjectively defined. They are perceived to be a mere visual aid but, we could argue their ability to morph as long as the ethos of the idea is transmitted to the subject effectively.

I have tasked myself with diagraming the most complex moments in life through a series of short, architecturally inspired narratives and mixed media. These moments such as the loss of a loved one, the hope to regain a loving relationship or the strength to endure an illness create a point of convergence in the lives of the many as most of the subjects have or will experience such.

By dissecting these experiences and sharing the outcome I hope to reach out as an aid.

The larger the outreach, the better performance out of this experiment as a vehicle to serve as a catalyst for communication.

For Project Synergy's first issue, *Origins*, the ethos of my work relies on the existential truth of me as the subject and the platform as the vehicle for successful outreach.

I believe form follows experience, and experience should follow intuition. I welcome my readers to engage in this passage with hopes of nurturing collaboration through proper development and together create an impact beyond the digital realm. We all need it.

CARLOS RIVAS.



**Above:** Release, p. I.

**To the right:** Release, p. II.

**Following page:** Release, p. III.







# Looking for the story.

*A short film*

CLICK OR SCAN



*Maybe you're wondering what you're watching.  
Who are the characters? What is the plot?*

*In the first days of film, audiences were entertained  
by just watching the reality of everyday life pass  
before their eyes. The Lumiere brothers shocked  
people by presenting moving images of a  
train passing by. Since 1896 the audience has  
changed. We all look for a story, a character to  
follow. We want more beyond the original magic  
of moving images.*



# The Origins of Pride.

*LGBTQ+ History  
From Ancient Rome  
To Stonewall*

CORRADO SAVANTIONI.

**Portrait of Marsha P. Johnson.**  
Illustration by Alessia Giha



June 28th of 1969, that's when, over fifty years ago, the Stonewall riots started the LGBTQ+ liberation movement known today as PRIDE. Now, festivities and parades for this event take place in hundreds of cities around the world, celebrating the fight towards the acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, non-binary, and asexual people, and serving as demonstrations for their legal rights. Going to a PRIDE parade is an incredibly fun experience that I recommend to anyone, but it is necessary to understand the history of the community, the origins of these events, the reasons behind it, and remember that it wasn't always a fun event. In this article, I will investigate how we got to a point of such harsh oppression of LGBTQ+ people and explain how gay people were perceived in the past, as queer people are often erased from history. So, let's go back a few thousand years, start at the very beginning of the history of LGBTQ+ people and make our way through the centuries.

But first, there is something to keep in mind while reading this article: what I will talk about, just scratches the surface of what happened over thousands of years, so it's important not to overgeneralize. Moreover, we must remember that modernity cannot be forced on history, as gender and sexuality weren't always understood the way we do today.

The first same-sex couple of which we have any information comes from Egypt in the 2400s BCE: the two Egyptian men Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum who were buried together, even though they both had a wife and children; they are often represented kissing each other but there is still no certainty of their relationship, as some historians debate they might have actually been twins. But we know that ancient Egyptians' lifestyle was very sexually liberal, as "the acts of Egypt" was even a way that Talmudic literature uses to refer to lesbianism. We have no hard evidence, but many sources point to the fact that they were open and accepting of homosexuality.

In Mesopotamia, Sumerian mythology had multiple myths we can find relevant: the one of Ninmah, goddess of fertility who created people of all genders, binary, and the myth of Gilgamesh and his companion Enkiku, who had a relationship "like men and wife" and are often portrayed kissing and embracing each other.

In ancient Assyria, law codes were created to regulate sexual behaviour, basically condemning everything that wasn't consensual, but without distinction between homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

Further east, in Ancient India, we believe that homosexuality was well perceived, with many Hinduist texts containing stories of characters changing gender and engaging in same-sex relationships; one chapter of the famous Kamasutra is even dedicated to sex between men. However, in the second century BCE, regulating laws were introduced, punishing sex between women with a small fine and sex between men with a fully clothed bath and a one-night fast of "purification", but other heterosexual practices were punished much harshly.

As for China, documentations of homosexuality date back to ancient times. Many emperors in the Han dynasty had male lovers, like Emperor Cheng of Han, who was in love with another man but forced by his mother to leave him; or also Emperor Ai, who was said to "not care about women" by nature. It wasn't rare for men to have homosexual relationships as well as heterosexual ones, since having gay sex was just something most people did for pleasure and prestige.

The two civilizations which we probably know the most about are ancient Rome and ancient Greece. In the latter, the most common form of homosexuality was pederasty, where a boy as young as 12 was paired with an older man for educational purposes, but they also had sexual relationships. In the army, units like the Sacred Band of Thebes were present, which were composed solely by male couples, so that soldiers would fight better to impress and protect their lover. The ancient Greek understanding of sex was purely about penetration and pleasure, therefore, gender did not matter in sexual relationships. However, the passive role in the male-male sex was considered to be unmanly, causing stigma towards the passive men in adult male relationships, as they were seen as giving up their masculinity. From Greece also originates the term "lesbian", as it comes from the island of Lesbos, the birthplace of Sappho, a female poet who wrote thousands of letters on her love for women. Just like the Greeks, Romans too believed in domination more than gender: men were free to have sex with other men as long as they were in the penetrative role. The men who took the passive role were often slaves or prostitutes and had a great variety of names depending on their age, status, and actions. Many powerful figures, like Julius Caesar, had male lovers. For example, Emperor Hadrian, who - as legends say - never had sex with his wife, even made his male lover Antinous a god after he died.

At this point, it is relevant to mention that the lack of information and documentation on lesbian relationships is most likely related to the fact that these relationships were seen as non-existent, as

the ancient's core concept of sex did not allow for female relationships to be possible, due to the lack of penetration.

Some more and some less, ancient civilizations were all quite accepting of homosexual behaviour and all gender identities. However, this view has shifted through time, and Catholicism can be considered the main reason why.

During the Roman Empire, always stricter rules were implemented. In the 3rd century, male prostitution was banned and, in the 4th century, passive men were sentenced to death. Finally, in the 6th century, all men involved in gay sex were condemned to death, as it was considered contrary to nature and cause of God's wrath.

Once the empire fell and the Middle Ages officially started, the persecution from the Church continued, even though homosexuality was still legal in most of Europe. It is during the Renaissance that, due to the Roman Catholic Church's oppression, homosexual behaviour was deemed illegal in many European states, often punishable with the death penalty.

Christianity did not impose this only on Europe - it has influenced other countries and cultures as well. In China, for example, it is believed that the opposition towards same-sex relationships rose in medieval times during the Tang Dynasty, due to the possible influence of Christianity and Islamism. In India, homosexuality was criminalized during the British Colonial period, due to the export of Christian values and beliefs.

In Japan, where homosexuality was a common practice - from pederastic relationships between samurai (wakashudō) to all other kinds of male-male relationships (nanshoku) - the rejection of homosexuality only started when the country exited from isolation in the 1850s. Japan started taking western countries as a base to create new guidelines for the new Japanese state, making the first anti-sodomy law in 1872.

Native American Nations, and their beliefs, also suffered from colonization. They had a very different view on gender from the one we have now: they were not concerned with the biological sex or sexual preferences of a person, but with the socio-economic role each person had based on their identity. Two Spirit is an umbrella term that was coined in 1990 to bridge between the Native and the western culture and indicates people who occupy gender roles that do not align with their biological sex.

The colonization by European states forced the Christian norms of gender and heterosexuality on Native American people, procuring severe damages to them, their traditions, and the Two Spirit communities.

In the 19th and 20th century, society became more aware of homosexuality and many urban centres, such as New York City in the United States, and Berlin in Germany, became beacons for queer people. The latter was indeed a very liberal city, where the most active LGBT rights groups were present, with plenty of gay and lesbian clubs, and the first-ever gay men's magazine. Obviously, this completely changed once the third Reich started, as gay men were then considered to be an obstacle to Nazism's goal of the "master race" and thousands were arrested, incarcerated, sent to concentration camps and killed.

After World War II, gay people continued to face strong discrimination. The U.S. State Department included gay men and lesbians in a list of people considered un-American, because the "acts of perversions" to which they took part could not coexist with emotional stability, and in 1952 homosexuality was declared a mental disorder. In those decades, small riots and sit-ins were happening in various American cities. In New York, where the most crucial event for LGBTQ+ people took place, most of the gay bars were owned by organized crime and, among them, the Genovese crime family owned the Stonewall Inn, the gay bar of New York, as it was the only one that allowed dancing. Police riots were frequent, but the owners of the bar would bribe policemen to know when the riots would happen.

Nonetheless, cops would line up all present, ask for ID, and arrest anyone that didn't dress as their biological sex, which included both masculine lesbians, men in drag, and transgender people. On the night of June 28th of 1969, the police raided the Stonewall Inn, but the raid didn't go as planned. We don't know exactly what started the riots, but it is believed that it was Stormé DeLarvernier, a black butch lesbian, who refused to be arrested and threw the first punch, inciting a call to action. The riots lasted several days, and, amongst the important figures of these events, we see Marsha P. Johnson, a black trans woman, and Sylvia Rivera, also a trans woman. Both were gay and trans activists who fought the police and lead the marches in the following days, having a crucial role in the Stonewall events.



After the riots, the Gay Liberation Front was formed: a liberation group which continued the fight started at Stonewall. On June 28th of 1970, one year after the riots, the first Gay Pride marches took place in various cities in the United States, spreading throughout the world in the following years, originating the now world-renowned PRIDE movement.

Now, 52 years later, our fight is not over: being gay is still illegal in over 70 countries, same-sex marriage is possible in only 29 countries around the world, the gender identity and/or expression of transgender people is specifically criminalized by 15 jurisdictions, and LGBTQ+ people face discrimination every day.

This June, let's remember what we are fighting for, but above all, let's celebrate how far we've come. Happy Pride Month to all!

To Linda, Origins does not mean a completely new beginning. To her, it means we are all able to start our own 'origin' story, no matter where we are in life. "We hold the power to make something of this life and to follow our passions", she comments.

That is why she chose to make a short documentary about someone who has also done this - George Wink. A few years ago, he suffered a burn-out and started doing something that he loves. Having graduated from the conservatory as a pianist, Wink is currently teaching others how to play the piano. "I find that incredibly inspiring", she concludes.

# STARTING ANEW: *LET YOUR PASSION DRIVE YOU.*

*A documentary*

CLICK OR SCAN



13-04-2021

It's been a crazy busy week at work. I feel very sleepy but also very inspired, so here we go.

Tuesday 6-04-2021

Busy day at work. My subject said yes! Let the preparations begin! so far the time constraints could become a problem. With good planning I hope everything will be done in time.

4-04-2021

I considered not going to the meeting at all. I was incredibly scared that I would have to show something or introduce myself. Luckily, that was not the case. I entered the meeting and the energy was actually quite nice. Everyone seemed so nice and so enthusiastic! I left the meeting incredibly inspired and couldn't wait to begin! The next day, however, I noticed the fear creeping up on me. I had made a to-do list with things to prepare, because the other days this week I will be working. (...)



# How

F l a m e n c o

## Entered

# my Life

# Without

W a r n i n g

*An essay.*

MIGUEL ÁNGEL ALVAREZ QUINTANA.

## O R I G I N S

According to experts in the field, Flamenco was born at the end of the 18th century in Andalusia. However, for the most part, the exact circumstances of its origins remain a mystery: neither the day and place, nor the creators have been determined. Lucky for me, I am not concerned with the historic facts and figures. My connection to Flamenco has its very own roots. If you ask me, Flamenco was born at some point in my childhood between the age of five and seven years, and it continues to be reborn every day, both in my life and in the lives of many others. Every personal anecdote, every unique memory, each of these “micro-births” eternalize the significance of Flamenco.

Curiously, Flamenco entered in my life without asking and together with Rock’n’Roll from an old radio, in a program that was broadcasted before sports news that began with Rock music. Both of them produced a vibration that mysteriously flooded my body with the intensity of either fear, or my mother’s intense presence, or the face of that girl who looked at me and caught my breath. That alteration almost bothered me, so, suddenly and since I couldn’t help it, nor the pleasure that I felt in seconds, I would surrender happily.

In the 70’s you couldn’t be a rocker and flamenco at once openly. Only inside yourself. But, since both were already inside me like two sides of the same coin, how could I live happily hiding one or the other? There was no flamenco atmosphere in the Madrid where I lived. Talking about it could mean marginalization and even bullying. At that time, for my generation, Flamenco was something related to adults, of grandparents, nothing attractive, like a history lesson to be forgotten. Being a rocker was easier, modern, a mandatory future. I was a very good student, I had good teachers at school, but I didn’t have a guitar teacher, or a rock teacher, much less someone who could teach me Flamenco. Could I live without these three passions? Yes, but I refused.

Being a good student and loving Flamenco at the same time was the least sexy thing in life. As I did with many other things, I had to find references and I preferred to find mine, even if I was wrong, because later I would be more sure of the right ones to choose. Then I had to connect them and secure them tightly to defend them and hold myself down like a funambulist without a net.

My references in Rock were clear and in Flamenco I understood them quickly and without explanation, because they were the ones that excited me and bristle my hair: the “quejío” (moan) and the “duende”, the two fundamental columns over which an infinite desire of freedom, wisdom, passion and art were built.

The quejío overwhelmed me and the duende penetrated me. Everything was a pure and unreasonable feeling, nothing mattered more than perceiving them to understand them, because when they are pure, you hear them as truths.

But when and why did I understand that the quejío and the duende, clearly highlighted by Flamencos, are the basis of Flamenco? Well, it took time and maybe you won’t believe me if I tell you that it was during a philosophy class that I was fascinated by the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope.

Like the Blues or Samba, the roots of Flamenco emanate fundamentally from the suffering of prosecution, pain and repression, as summarized by G. Nuñez de Prado in “Cantaos Andaluces”: “The people who sing the most are the ones who suffer”.

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The quejío expresses what the cantaor José Mercé calls the “tragic-rage” of the quejío: a cry that “hurts, breaks, pains, fills, is round and contains everything inside”. It is a feeling of purification that the poet Manuel Machado understood in the “cante” (flamenco singing) like this:

*No hay penilla ni alegría  
que se quede sin cantar.  
Por eso hay mas cantares  
que gotas de agua en el mar  
y arena en los arenales.*

Flamenco is closely linked to gypsy culture. Gypsy people, after a long journey to Europe and Africa that began in India in the 9th century, arrived in Spain towards the end of the 18th century, settling mainly in Andalusia. Although the gypsies were well received in the 15th century, with the support of Pope’s official letters, they were rejected because they did not comply with the social order and lived very little integrated among the local population, practicing criminal acts that unleashed a slogan of harshness against the gypsies.

MIGUEL ÁNGEL ALVAREZ QUINTANA.



The gypsy people lived according to their gypsy laws, created for a wandering and changing life; but they didn't accept the autochthonous and sedentary official legality, considering them false and against their own gypsy principles. A form of justice to arbitrarily benefit a minority.

In a way, Diogenes was a gypsy: he had to leave Sinope, expelled for falsifying money together with his father and he didn't consider that as a crime. Diogenes considered the morality of his contemporaries false currency. For this reason he understood that his mission was to metaphorically transfigure the "moral-currency" of his time and turn it from "false" into good.

On the other hand, Diogenes lived in Athens like a vagabond, sheltering in a big ceramic jar, among pains and even hard deprivations, despising the society that surrounded him and its conventions. Opulence and unnecessary and excessive refinement of any kind were for him an obstacle to the clarity that leads to knowledge. He took care to live upright and free, consistent with his principles instead of forming a school of followers.

Gypsies' existence and pain were progressively aggravating in Spain due to the marginalization they experienced and their reviled way of life, seeing themselves more and more deprived of recognition, belongings and opportunities. In fact, a fairly accepted theory of the Flamenco denomination comes from the term "fellah min gueir ard", which in the Andalusí dead language would mean "landless peasant". Their condition led them to a harsh life of scarcity and close to slavery, living in caves, slums and squalid houses. A reality that Diogenes would have understood perfectly from his jar, barefoot or sleeping under the porticoes of Athens, just like when he was sold as a slave by the pirates who kidnapped him. However, his wisdom freed him by the art of his seductive philosophy and he became an instructor, by then free, to the children of his buyer.

However, Flamenco is a non-exclusive artistic expression of gypsy culture. The gypsies, in their migration to settle in Andalusia and it's more benevolent climate, were incorporating songs and local folklore from other cultures and people that already existed in Spain.

The result is an artistic expression that is a mixture of Arab, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Caribbean and African cultures, among others. It developed from "cante", as a form of expression and added dance and guitar playing, attracting other non-gypsy people whom they called "payos". Both payos and gypsies shared a similar social and existential condition, so they were integrated into the same feelings, expressed in the complaints of their feelings by their voice, body or the guitar. However, and despite this differentiation, there is a mutual appreciation and respect between non-gypsy and gypsy flamenco artists, without differences in sensitivity or artistic ability.

In view of what has been said, it might seem that Flamenco could be a kind of social revolution, with the purpose of conquest and struggle for power. However, this is not the case, despite having many reasons. But art and politics are like oil and water, they don't mix well.

Andalusia and Flamenco sing to forget the sorrows, their sorrows, tears and suffering, loneliness, misunderstanding, injustices, misfortunes, the tragic meaning of life. On the other side of the same reality, laughter, irony, jokes and the most playful aspects of the human being, all of which are best expressed in these verses:

Si piensas que porque canto  
tengo el corazón alegre,  
yo soy como el ruiseñor,  
que en no cantando, se muere.

As Rafael Cansinos Assens said, the cante is a "resigned complaint" and a cry to understand his destiny by sublimating oneself in his art, as this song says:

No hay penilla ni alegría  
que se quede sin cantar.  
Por eso hay mas cantares  
que gotas de agua en el mar  
y arena en los arenales.

And how is art sublimated and raised to conquer abstract spaces from the crucible of the concrete and mundane, the simple, sweet, cruel, bitter, complex, dark, luminous, ugly, indescribable or beautiful and indescribable among other limitless attributes that got the life?

Well, through the flamenco "duende". The duende could be understood as what we refer to today by "flow".

That feeling of extreme conscious fullness that we have – or not – at a certain moment and we repeatedly seek to achieve. This is how I understand it. It reaches others, artists and the public, in the midst of a kind of collective trance thanks to the sum of charisma, technical mastery, improvisation, emotion and innate virtue united in a state of special grace. As the great poet Federico García Lorca said: "The duende is a power and not a work, it is a struggle and not thinking. I have heard an old master guitarist say: 'The duende is not in the throat; the goblin rises inside from the soles of the feet'."

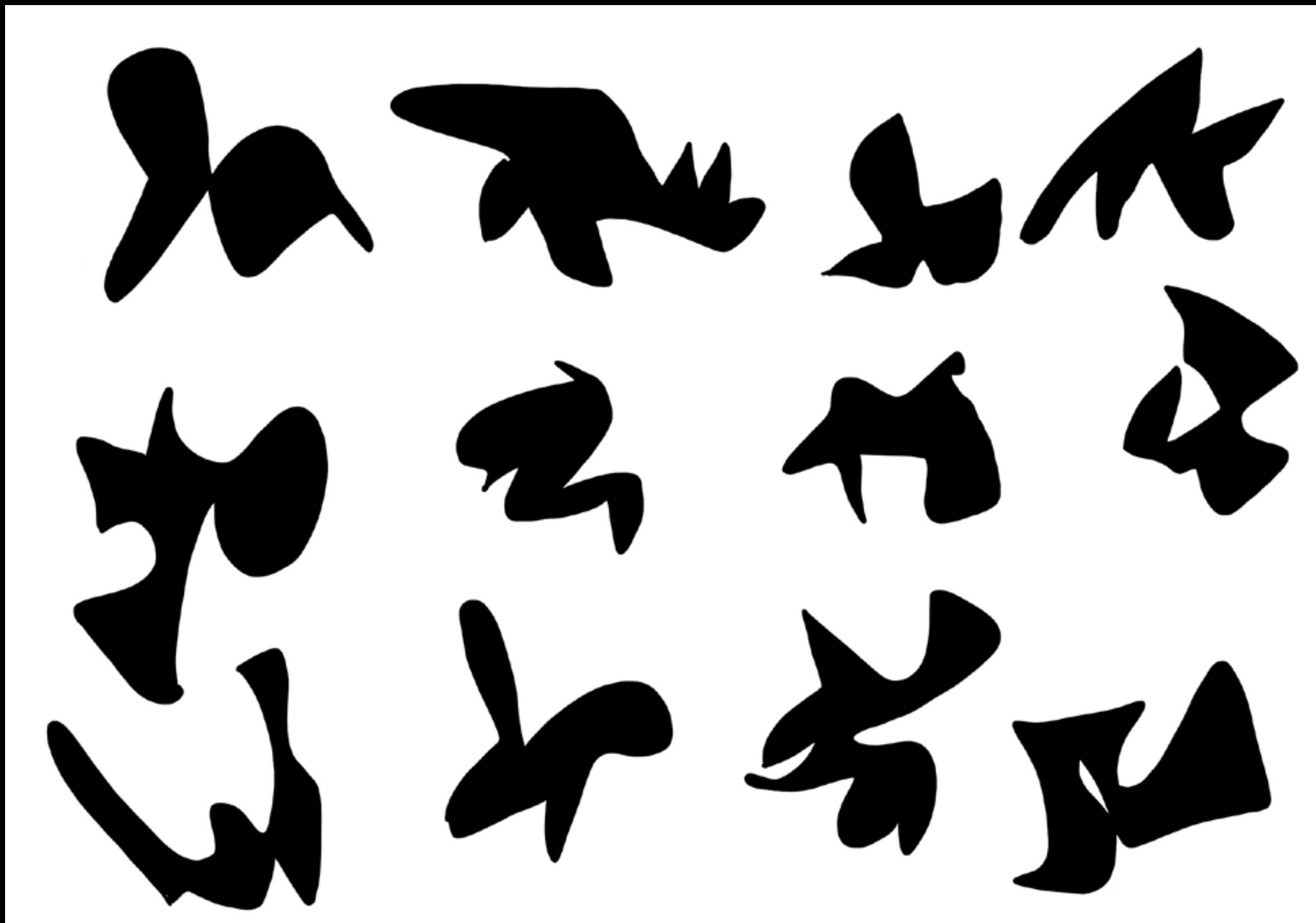
Thanks to the duende, Flamenco has climbed to the highest heights of virtuosity and unrepeatable moments of compositional and interpretive inspiration. The desire of freedom and creativity from canonical flamenco musical forms seeking to achieve what in classical Greece was called "arete". Thanks to the duende, Flamenco has explored the deepest caves, peaks and abysses – sad and happy, lucid and sick, great or low – of the soul and human nature, like a Phoenix that does not renounce know itself and wants to redeem its fateful destiny.

Currently, Flamenco is freer, but more orphaned at once for having lost great figures and talents. It is still a slave, but a slave now to his inevitable search for new horizons in the forthcoming new ways of life. At last, it coexists with dignity and pride among all the most recognized, admired and respected musical genres.

Flamenco is an universally expanded art and it has been declared by UNESCO one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, on Nov/ 2010. It is now eternal and will not be forgotten, just as we will never forget the eternal Diogenes and his genuine, original, rooted and pure thought, of an infinite spirit of freedom.







**Illustrations.**  
By Fabrizio Tamayo.

# The

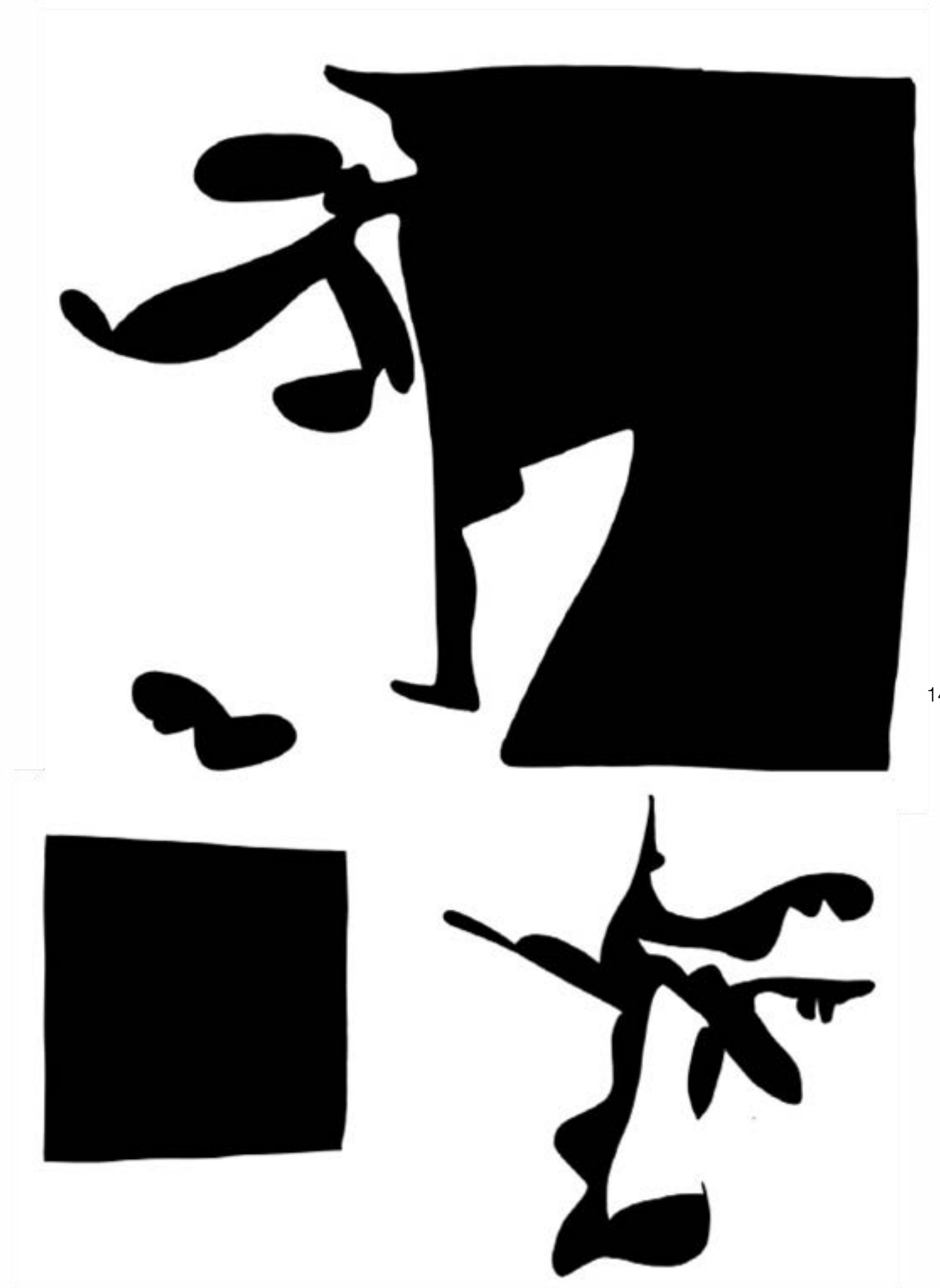
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E m o t i o n

*Illustrations.*

FABRIZIO TAMAYO.



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FABRIZIO TAMAYO.



"Live in the world as if an immense museum of strangeness, full of multicolored toys which can change their appearance" (Giorgio de Chirico, 1911)

*My main idea is to express my perceptions of the world through the lens of anxiety in my artwork and illustration. I communicate this through my own abstract representation of what living with anxiety is like. In a way, anxiety is what gives birth to my creative process. It is the raw origins of my creativity. On a personal level, this means a search for inner peace.*

*My work expresses my perceptions of the world living with anxiety through art and illustration. The abstract representation of anxiety can show the origins of the different sorts of artistic creativity and artistic process.*

*My recent work has been used as a personal and emotional evolution, which has a profound impact on how I express architectural and artistic processes. In this current climate, being at home for a long period of time has become part of my daily lifestyle due to the pandemic. Due to this context I find myself eager to explore my inner self living with anxiety and adhd. A true project and experience.*

*My art explains the process of leaving everything aside and breathing, letting my body and mind circulate on the same axis seeking that inner balance through broken lines, curves and color. This impulsive process of creating gives birth to a new way of seeing the origin of a new form of expression through abstract art and architectural volumes.*

# T h e F a l l

*A poem.*

*In the departure of Eve,  
tear away the good and evil,  
undress, take on the shape of birth.*

*In the absence of Adam's apple,  
I am a sole tree. Trapped,  
in the shadows of my seeds.*

*I wish to know,  
how I intended to grow.  
No more faces that shape,*

*the complexities of being.  
Scratched off layers, should reveal  
the bark, the bare.*

*Burned, penetrated, and burdened by woodpecker's force,  
the root was poisoned as fellers belittled  
and chainsaws howled*

*to overtake the cries.  
I wish to know,  
how I intended to grow.*



# The Origins of Identity.

*An essay*



DAKSHITA BISHNOI.



Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. (Leary and Tangney 69) Identity is “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others”. Andrea Wharff defines identity as an ‘activity of self-discovery and becoming’. There is a diverse range of meanings attached, assumptions made and purposes given to identity and the process of identity formation. The term ‘identity’ is derived from French *identité* (14c.) “sameness”, “oneness”, from Medieval Latin *identitatem* (nominative *identitas*) “sameness,” ultimately from Latin *idem* (neuter) “the same”. Scholars from different fields have tried to define identity and the predominant perspectives are from sociology, psychology, social psychology, anthropology and philosophy, even scholars of political sciences and economics have made references to the concept of identity. In recent years, scholars working in a remarkable array of social science and humanities disciplines have taken an intense interest in questions concerning identity. (Fearon 1) Fearon states that ‘while the origins of our present understanding of “identity” lie in the academy, the concept is now quite common in popular discourse.’ (Fearon 4)

As David Buckingham points out, “Identity is an ambiguous and slippery term.” (Buckingham 1) He talks about ‘the fundamental paradox of identity’ where identity is a ‘unique possession’ (characteristics unique to oneself) that distinguishes us from other people but at the same time it is also a kind of ‘affiliation with the collective’ as in case of cultural, national or gender identity (shared history, territory, interest, values, social or cultural experiences etc.) where identity takes on the form of identification.

The dichotomy between ‘being oneself’ or ‘finding one’s true self’ and ‘seeking multiple identifications with others’ leads to a classification of identity into personal identity and social identity. There is significant overlapping (as in case of role identity and type identity), exchange of influences and relations between individual/personal and group/social identities. Identity is developed by the individual, but it has to be recognized and confirmed by others. (Buckingham 3) One’s perceptions of one’s identity are shaped by various social, cultural, educational, historical, biological, political,

geographical and economic situations one experiences and the narratives that the person is introduced to which gets ingrained in one’s being over time. Identities are distinct parts of the self-concept, the internalized meanings and expectations associated with the positions one holds in social networks and the roles one plays. (Leary and Tangney 74). Reflecting on our perceptions of identity can lead us to analyse the questions concerning what informs our identities and the need to re-analyse the origin and formation of our identities.

As Berry H. Gillespie puts it, “The path isn’t a straight line; it’s a spiral. You continually come back to things you thought you understood and see deeper truths.” Understanding where our identities come from is crucial to understand how and to what extent they are shaping our judgment and behavior in the present moment and over time. The common perception of identity as ‘who we are’ is prone to confine identity to a notion of stability and regards it as something that remains more or less the same in its essence. “Identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. ... [Until recently, we have incorrectly thought that identity is] a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action ... the logic of something like a ‘true self.’ ... [But] Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself” The complexity of identity is portrayed by the fact that people are not really one thing or the other, but an amalgamation of all sorts and that influences their sense and perception of identity and its development. As Charles Taylor states, “in fact our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it”. The very features of malleability, context sensitivity, and dynamic construction of one’s identity as a mental construct call into question the notion of its stability. Identities are not the fixed markers people assume them to be but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment. (Leary and Tangney 69-70) Some social science theorists articulate both stability and fluidity as aspects of our identity.

According to the social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, the new prominence that is accorded to identity is a reflection of the fact that it is becoming ever more problematic. The frantic search of identity is the side-effect and by-product of the combination of globalising and individualising pressures and the tensions they spawn. Identity has become a project that needs to be worked upon and the ingrained perceptions of identity move one towards a tendency to focus on what one should be rather than what one is. The process of identity formation is influenced by political economy, social and cultural practices which regulate and define identity for people. This becomes all the more apparent and problematic for the people and places which were at some point of time colonized, which resulted in the centralization of specific theories and perceptions in time, space and place.

There was the creation of a master narrative. The master narrative is what Romeo and Stewart refers to as ‘the stories of shared reality that subsume differences and contradictions and narrowly define people and their identities by supporting ideas constructed by the dominant group’. This also led to the marginalization of certain aspects of the identity of the colonized. There was also a shift towards ‘essentialism’ - which refers to generalizing about the members of a particular group and assimilating them to a singular identity through the introduction of colonial forms of knowledge (colonial education, history writing, eurocentric discourses, introduction of census etc.) which fixated identity in significant ways for example in terms of people’s biological characteristics or their historical origin and neglected their diversity. This led to problems of cultural hegemony, institutional biases and barriers and internalization. Identity is not a static, but rather a socio-dynamic, racialized, and historical construct. (Berry and Candis 45) Decolonising the mindset, questioning the established notions of identity and identity formation through a study of the origins of identity and reassessing one’s way of doing so is essential to understand ourselves, reshaping, and moulding our identities, to diversify the process of identity formation and evolution. Clifford James poses an important question which needs to be pondered on. “Yet what if identity is conceived not as a boundary to be

“Yet what if identity is conceived not as a boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject?”

History, arts and culture and education have always been the medium through which people, societies, cultures and hence minds have been colonised. And it will only be through them that the normative constructs of identity can be challenged. Reanalysing and restructuring these mediums can help people to move beyond the eurocentric identity paradigms and as a consequence a space can be curated for open perspectives. Challenging and dismantling the monolithic perceptions and discourse of identity formation can be done by acknowledging the multi-dimensionality and intersectionality of our identity where one should recognize race, class, gender, nationality, regionality, language, sexual orientation, and talents/ability as intersecting, indivisible identities of self. Education and the learning environment can play a significant role in addressing and counteracting the biases that deeply influence the formation of a person’s identity.

That, in turn, can help people in developing their identity in a way that leads them to embrace the different aspects of their identity and also helps in negotiating and dealing with the forces of cultural hegemony witnessed and experienced by them. Engaged pedagogy: “a progressive, holistic education” proposed by Bell Hooks, according to T.R. Berry and M.R. Candis, “facilitates classroom discussion that allows students to interject many facets of their complex lived experiences into the curriculum.” (Berry and Candis 52). This will help inculcate a sense of exploration of one’s identity from a young age in one’s life which in turn will better equip that person to discover, experience and embrace the dynamics of an ever-evolving identity.

Utilizing narratives or storytelling as counterstories to the master narrative which is the dominant discourse in identity formation can play an important role in regaining and reconstructing our identities. Focusing on and strengthening the marginalized notions of self and identity can be done through decolonisation where the marginalized identities will be centred by bringing their (the colonized people’s) stories to the fore.



Being aware of the perceptions we need to unlearn and take off the guise of established, colonised norms of identity development and assertion can open up the space for identity to re-emerge and to be reborn.

DAKSHITA BISHNOI.

## Waves

A poem.

*I awoke to the sounds of drums and hums  
emerging from the depths of the ground  
the earth was calling me in tenor unison  
following the beats of the rattling stones  
like a little dance*

*suspended in the elements i lay  
dying, unborn  
embraced by stillness in a funny substance  
which is not matter  
and much like the feeling of silence  
separates you from invisible worlds*

*what a miraculous interaction!  
in between being and not  
of a mother and her unborn child  
conversing with other than words  
and sensing each other without touch*

*a pulsating life force (a god?)  
secretly feeding your blood  
you remain unaware  
of your state of  
becoming*

*dancing with the sea as she  
rocked me to the beat of my own heart  
every oscillation  
drew me closer into a quiet place  
in the interim of thoughts*

*i let it take control  
from one end to the other of me  
growing in awareness  
of every-one of my parts  
as i forgot my separation*

*and i could no longer contain the flow of my  
veins  
every chain of life had a capacity of its own  
to detect the signs of vibration  
a rhythm  
a becoming*

*dancing with the sea as she  
rocked me to the beat of my own heart  
every oscillation  
drew me closer into a quiet place  
in the interim of thoughts*

*i let it take control  
from one end to the other of me  
growing in awareness  
of every-one of my parts  
as i forgot my separation*

*and i could no longer contain the flow of my  
veins  
every chain of life had a capacity of its own  
to detect the signs of vibration  
a rhythm  
a becoming*

*all that is presented itself to me  
imbued of an enormous description of rotation  
and told me that we've got it all wrong  
the way we terminate existence with linearity  
when the ori-gin and the end-ing  
are too much like -ing verbs to be considered  
dead-ends*

*an unfolding of desire  
to the culmination of expression  
i discovered it to be quite simple  
life  
no more than a song of little frequencies  
falling into one another like waves  
and creating a dissonant sound full of symbols*

*so i say  
thank you to those who came back from  
the journey of mystery  
with new forms of perception  
some grace in uncertainty  
yet I must still begin from the one  
for it appears to be the purpose of the end  
to begin again.*

MAIRA WALKER.



# Little Girl

The little girl looked into the mirror and asked: "Who am I?"

But the mirror did not respond. The little girl ran outside and shouted into the forest: "Who am I?" and so the wind whispering through the leaves carried back the echo: "Who am I."

Scared and confused, the little girl went on to her mother and asked: "Who am I?" The woman, although much older, showed the same features, her soft chestnut hair lightly brushing her sharp collarbones. The few grey strands melting into the mane told the story of a strong woman serving as remnants of past battles. She reflected the same curiosity and warmth in her eyes, her crooked yet bright smile lighting up the room, allowing anyone to feel at ease around her. Understanding her daughter's impatience too well, the woman said: "You are my daughter."

A few months later, the little girl started her first day at school. She was asked to introduce herself. She announced proudly: "I am my mother's daughter."

As time passed, weeks turned into months, months turned into years and as the little girl was not so little anymore, she noticed a shift in the way people behaved around her. And so, she decided to adapt her answer.

From now on, if asked who she was, she would respond: "I am who society wants me to be. If my teachers expect me to obtain good grades,

I will study harder. If my friends want me to be a pillar of support, I will listen more closely. If the boys want me to look pretty, I shall wear my most enchanting dress." And people seemed to accept her.

One day, the now young woman came across an elderly man sitting on a park bench. Drained and exhausted from work, she settled down beside him. The man saw a woman who was young and beautiful and yet seemed to carry the entire world on her shoulders. Suddenly curious, he asked her: "Excuse my bluntness, but you look like you could use someone to talk to. It's been a while since a young woman sat down beside me. May I ask who you are?"

LEA TEIGELKOTTER.

- "I am whoever anyone wants me to be. And whenever expectations seem too far out of reach, I must try to jump higher and become better."

- "And what if there was no one else? Who would you want to be then?"

- "I want to be beautiful and bright like the beaming sun allowing the tulips to glisten in their full glory.

I want to be calm like the turquoise ocean on a warm summer day

And yet wild like the daunting black waves in the thunderous, roaring night.

I want to be loving and caring like a mother holding her new-born and smile like a man admiring his wife.

And I want to be brave like a soldier leaving to fight uncertain whether he'll be back for his son's first birthday.

I want to be sweet and comforting like a hot chocolate in front of the fireplace, while being as inexorable as the flame burning inside it.

- "I want to be enough but not too much."

- "What is holding you back?"

- "I can't decide where or how to begin. All my life, I have felt like a snowflake being carried by the icy wind only to end up melting on the ground."

- "Sometimes, all it takes is simply letting go of the world around you. Take a leap into the cold water. Let the currents carry you wherever you are meant to be. From time to time, you will face hardship and challenges. But you shall not fear the rocks which block your path, which force you to redirect or to simply stop. Don't waste your life creating a one-size fits all version of yourself or you'll wake up one day realising the grey and discreet costume you've sewed will never suit you. Realising that you were meant to wear all of the rainbow's colours and let their beauty reflect yours.

Trust the flow. Be passionate and wild. Loving and calm. Take risks. And you will see how in the end you are everything and more than you ever dreamed of being, all along."

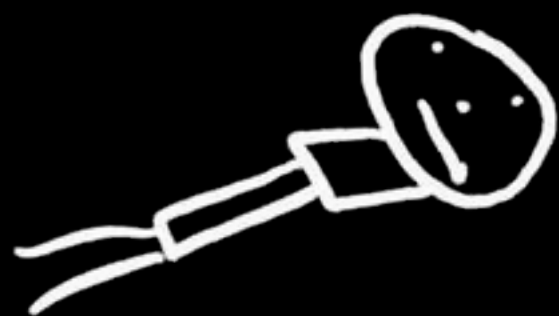
The old lady looked into the mirror. All of a sudden, she found herself taken back to a long gone memory of when she was a little girl. Proud and fierce, she smiled at her reflection. Her wrinkles had deepened over years of laughter and joy.

LEA TEIGELKOTTER.

She no longer doubted who she was. Along her path, life had shown her all the different colours the world had to offer and in being herself she had learned to appreciate every single one of them, bright or dark. She looked into her warm, bright eyes and whispered: "I am me".



An interpretation of 'Little Girl'  
By Alessia Giha.





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