

KIDS OF NEW YORK



Cover Photography

by

Hank Willis

THE BLK EDITION

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A moment of silence ..

CURATOR + CREATIVE DIRECTOR + ARCHIVIST

Hertfordshire, England

KARIS BEAUMONT



Why and how did you become a photographer?

It was by accident in a way. In 2015 I found out I had dyslexia and a couple of weeks after was my birthday and prior to that I was saving up for a camera but, it was more to do with styling stuff, like styling work. But at the time, I didn’t really know it was styling. I just wanted to dress up my friends and just have a camera to have so I can just create content basically. Dad bought me a camera cause he remembered that I was saving up for one. I went to Jamaica, took some pictures, posted it on my Instagram and you know quite a few people were receptive to it. At that time I was kinda working alongside the founders of GUAP Magazine as they were getting ready for their launch and they set up a small team of people to promote the launch on social media. One of the founders reached out to me and asked if I had any images in my archive to use as their first cover issue. To cut a long story short I didn’t really have one because again, I wasn’t really taking a lot of photos, I just had the camera but then after a while, I reached out to them like hey, you know, I’d like to help more with this magazine. On my side, I just saw two young black men starting up their own business, I didn’t really understand what they were trying to do but I just extended that help and then they made me a photographer. They’re like yeah, you can be our photographer and you can run our social media and at that time I was a little bit frightened of that title because I didn’t see myself as such. And it’s such a big word, it’s such a big responsibility but I just thought to myself why not, I have nothing to lose. So I started shooting with them and I just fell in love with it and even as I was shooting and stuff I realized I’ve always kind of had an interest in photography I just didn’t really know how to contextualize it if that makes sense.

Tell us a little about the Bumpkin Files

Bumpkin files started off as a small project. It was an archiving project where I scanned family photo albums and posted them on my website and it also turned into a short photography series as well. Bumpkin Files is centered around black British life beyond the capital city. So if you’re in London, whenever we look at or speak about black Britain and the contribution to everything the narrative is usually very London-centric and we don’t hear enough about everywhere else. We have other great cities, other great rural areas as well, and I’m sure other countries have the same issue. That lack of voices coming from the countryside or suburbs or wherever It is. So I started that up because I saw a lot of disconnects and I feel like we live in a time where the Internet is super accessible now and even before really starting up I tried to find information about black stories coming from places you don’t really see on the television and it was really hard to find. I decided to dedicate my work to capturing modern day black British people and even the diaspora in less visible spaces or overlooked spaces. I plan to go to mainland Europe, I plan to go to parts of America, parts of Asia and stuff to tell stories as well. I think it’s pretty much turned into a community resource also so that people can go on the website or go on social media page to learn some stuff and you know reach out to people, a place where I can connect the dots and kind of build bridges and keep people informed about the stuff going on creatively and in everyday life, everyday affairs.



Last year, you got your first billboard from Uber UK how did it feel? Tell us about that experience

To this day I’m still so flabbergasted about it. It’s crazy because at that time, going back to a few months before we got this pandemic I was working part-time in hospitality, and in about February I took a little bit of time off because the virus was going around and then the whole country went to lockdown. In England, we have the furlough scheme where obviously you weren’t working but then they pay 80% of what your monthly wage was. I went from furlough from about March to the end of July and towards the end of July, I got an email from that job saying you’re off the furlough scheme and there’s no hours at the moment. So I was pretty much out of work on that side but then in that timeframe, things are picking up in photography. When they emailed me about no hours left at work, I was in the middle of assisting an commercial shoot, and then fast forward a couple of months I’m working the Uber shoot and that’s like the biggest gig so far I’ve done and it’s just the timing of everything like I went from part-time work and balancing it with photography and not really knowing when I’d be full-time with photography to shooting with Uber, having it on billboards and just creating with my friends. It was like an all black team that me and the Director pulled together. It was great. Really good vibes. It was a two day shoot. Really really

What are some of your career goals?

I would like to break through internationally. I would love to be commissioned to shoot magazine covers and stories as well. I’d love to release a photo book. I don’t know if I’d do that internationally but I’d love to have my own photo book & have my debut exhibition because I haven’t had one yet. In terms of Bumpkin Files stuff as well I want to be commissioned to be a part of documentaries telling Black British stories, and just travel more like having assignments across the way or across the world. I just want to be that go-to photographer for a lot of powerful influential people, as well as highlighting voices around me.

Is there anyone or anything that has influenced your work as a photographer?

One of the things that influences my work is nostalgia. 100%. I didn’t know I was into it but upon reflection, I used to look at family photo albums a lot when I was younger. First I got a feeling and I was very observant of composition and stuff and then fast forward to the Tumblr era where we were all creating our blogs and stuff, my blog alone, looked like a photography gallery. The music I had on there as well was very specific to match the mood and the feelings of the images. If I look at my old blog now it kind of feels like the work I produce today. So nostalgia is definitely something. My heritage as well. My family is from Jamaica, so everything from music to style like how we carry ourselves, different aspects of our culture, it’s very expressive, it’s very bold, it’s very rich. I try to portray that richness and that expression in my photography as well. That’s definitely the main two things that interest my work definitely.

Are there any specific brands or companies that you would want to work with in the future?

I would love to shoot with Essence, daily paper, A really cool clothing brand based in Amsterdam, British GQ, I have a long list. Hunger magazine, maybe a vogue. I’m not really betting on it because again it is a very racist institution so that’s not really the top but if it was an offer and the pay was right, why not?

What are some of the things that inspire you artistically?

It varies but I think one of the things I do before I start shooting is listening to a lot of uplifting music. I love music as well. When I listen to music, I see colors like i can’t help but put myself in a really mellow headspace that helps me get into my zone. Music helps the process and inspires my photography. I think just energy really, I think with every shoot and everything I shoot is different, the process is pretty much different so I think for me it’s all about energy. From when I wake up I make sure that spiritually I’m good, I’ve given thanks, I’m great, I have a clear mindset and state of mind. Just seeing how the energy is with the people I’m shooting as well. I like to make sure that people are comfortable with the set as well and in a safe space when shooting with me, so energy is definitely a big one.



Last year you attended DJ Mustard’s Midnight Brunch in LA. How was that experience? How did that happen? Did you get invited? Was it for work?

So me and one of my best friends, we went out to LA. She’s a singer, R&B. A really really really great singer. We went out to LA and stayed with a group of people just to network and try to get interviews and stuff and she brought me with her because I shoot a lot of her stuff anyway and I’m a photographer. We went out there she was already in touch with Ella Mai anyway . I wouldn’t say they were friends but they were friendly. She invited Shae to this brunch. Shae brought me along and got me on the list and the experience was crazy. It was Beverly Hills. I was in the room with Karruche, Ty Dolla \$ign was there, Lucky Daye was there and it was crazy because I think I made a vision board, maybe the previous month and I had a list of people to work with and Lucky Daye is on there but obviously I didn’t really meet him but the fact that I was face to face with him was like oh I’m actually in the room with this guy and only last month I made this vision board and even traveling purposes as well. I put down places I wanted to travel on this vision board and LA was one of them and I made this vision board before I even knew I was going to LA as well so it was a really surreal powerful experience for me and it just confirmed even further that this is what I want to do because again I love photography, i love meeting new people and capturing people in their raw and organic essence as well . So brushing shoulders with great people, so much black excellence in one room it just gave me the drive I needed It. It gave me the kick I needed as well.

I see that you have some experience with styling is that something that you want to get into in the future?

Maybe for my own projects really. I’ve seen the ins and outs of styling and stuff. I feel like, I love photography. I know that will take up a lot of my time but here and there I wouldn’t mind doing so but maybe for my own projects.





STAY CALM

Being a creative director requires a lot of artistic leadership, what's your process when you're on set for a photoshoot, etc to ensure success?

My creative process to ensure success during a shoot is to always be prepared. I am a perfectionist to the fullest so when I have a project, I make sure mood boards and reference pictures are ready to go. I make sure I have a two-week space before the shoot to make sure I have all items that are being shipped to make it on time. If I have less time than that then I shop at the thrift and customize the pieces to the model's size. Lastly just trusting my gut and not second guessing myself is the most important thing. If I have a vision and I'm confident in it then I apply all pressure to make sure my vision becomes a reality.

How do you stay inspired?

There are two things that keep me inspired. Social media; It's an ever-lasting channel for constant inspiration, especially Instagram. Every time I open the app I always find myself adding stuff to my photo gallery so I can refer back to it later. Also seeing other local creatives' work inspires me because I didn't know the DMV area had a creative scene til this year. I was introduced to all new local connects and I follow them all on social media now so all I see is music, artwork, photography work, and fashions from people that are from the same area as me which such a cool thing to see.

Do you have a stylist process? If you do, what is it?

I don't have a distinct styling process I more so just go to the thrift or Depop and get what looks fashionable. I also tend to look for versatile pieces so they can be used multiple times, unlike statement pieces that I would only use once. If I have a client that wants a specific look, I create mood boards so I can have a vision in mind before I shop. But when I have the pleasure of creating a look using my own inspo or If I'm styling myself, I'm more "go with the flow" and create looks spontaneously.

If you could style anybody for one night only, who would it be and why?

If I could style anyone for one night, it would have to be someone that could sell any look and/or fantasy given. And that person is no other than Rihanna. I have always been a hardcore fan of hers musically and fashion-wise since high-school and she is also a reason I wanted to work in fashion. It was the middle 2010s where she really showed the world how well she can dress and how influential her looks were. Setting trends that people still follow today, like the half-buttoned off-the-shoulder denim jacket look. Her looks have an impact on my personal style so to style such an inspiration of mine would be an absolute dream come true.

How do you determine a client's personal style?

I determine a client's personal style by simply putting them in looks that make them look best. That's if I have free game to style however the way I want it. The first shoot I ever creative directed was inspired by early 2000s video vixens and I knew I needed someone tall with nice curves with confidence that was similar to a video model to give the sex appeal of a hip hop video. Me being practical, I tend to stick to what would look best on a model/client, which is something I need to work on. I'm still learning how to get outside my comfort zone and do something that's out of the ordinary but with time I think I'll learn to be more open and less perfected.



Why and how did you get into fashion?

Ever since I was 8 years old and picked up my first ELLE fashion magazine, I always had a niche for fashion. For as long as I can remember creativity has always been an asset of mine that I was never able to show the world until last year. I studied fashion design and fashion merchandising in college for two years which helped me learn about the history, skills, and actual work of fashion. Those two years made me appreciate the aspect of fashion even more. My original plan was to be a fashion designer but learning how to sew and create garments taught me how stressful and time-confusing sewing an outfit takes so I decided that I still want to work in a fashion-related career, just not as intense. That two years ago and September 2020 is when I had my first glimpse of what my potential career could be. My friend invited me to a photoshoot he was doing the hair and make-up for and I was there to assist. The positive atmosphere of the shoot and the people involved inspired me to finally put my creativity to good use. I also met a very dope clothing stylist Nephie who helped me tremendously with my journey along with Quran Bell whose an amazing hair and make-up artist. They both have provided me opportunities that help me bring out my passion to pursue a hobby that expresses my talents and I can't thank them enough for that. And here I am now, doing something I always wanted to do because of teamwork and self-motivation.

Out of all your projects, which one would you say is your favorite?

My favorite project thus far is the cowboy shoot that I modeled. (Shot by @jasmcburr/ Glam by @qur5n) It's my favorite because it was the first time, I modeled a shoot that was my concept as well. During the time of Lil Nas X and Megan thee Stallion there was a lot of cowboy and western influences so for a while I wanted to do something that was similar and being able to live my "yee-haw" fantasy was something I will never forget. And not to sound cocky but I looked sexy as hell too lol. Also being able to be apart of the creative process while being the model is an experience that I plan on doing a lot more of. Plus, I reallyyyyyy love wearing cowboy hats. My other favorite project is the video vixen shoot. It's my favorite because it holds a soft spot in my heart being it is my first project I creative directed. The project taught me so many lessons that helped me become even more successful in my future shoots but it most importantly taught me that creative directors deserve more credit because the amount of work and money that goes into producing a project deserves to be recognized. Although the process was stressful and an emotional rollercoaster, I wouldn't take it back for the world.

Tell us about your modeling? Why and how did you start?

I started modeling in high school because I needed an after-school activity that wasn't just a sport. I wanted to participate in something that fits my interests more. Luckily my high school Fairmont Heights had a modeling team that consisted of runway performances for school functions and competitions. I decided to join my junior year and fell in love with it because it was something I always wanted to do since I was little. Plus, it helped live out my fantasies of walking a New York fashion show. I Was part of modeling teams until my freshman year of college. Three years later I did my first ever shoot, which was the cowboy shoot that I mentioned earlier, and it increased my drive to model tremendously. When I posted the pictures on Instagram, I received a lot of positive feedback which also increased my passion to keep it going. Not too long after that I spontaneously did a shoot with a local clothing brand @entrapreneur.us which was my first shoot for a brand. I'm currently working on styling myself more with designer pieces so I can model them and potentially receive social media recognition to boost client interest.

If you could ban a fashion trend forever, which one would it be & why?

If I could ban a fashion trend forever? I honestly don't keep up with fashion trends I kind of just wear what I think looks good on me because I see potential in every clothing piece. Although I REALLY hope the style from 2011-2014 NEVER returns, don't think I can have another year of emoji printed leggings and "bro" shirts again. But who knows, fashion is an everlasting cycle of recycling looks from the past. It can be seen today with the "y2k" and "60s" fashion elements.





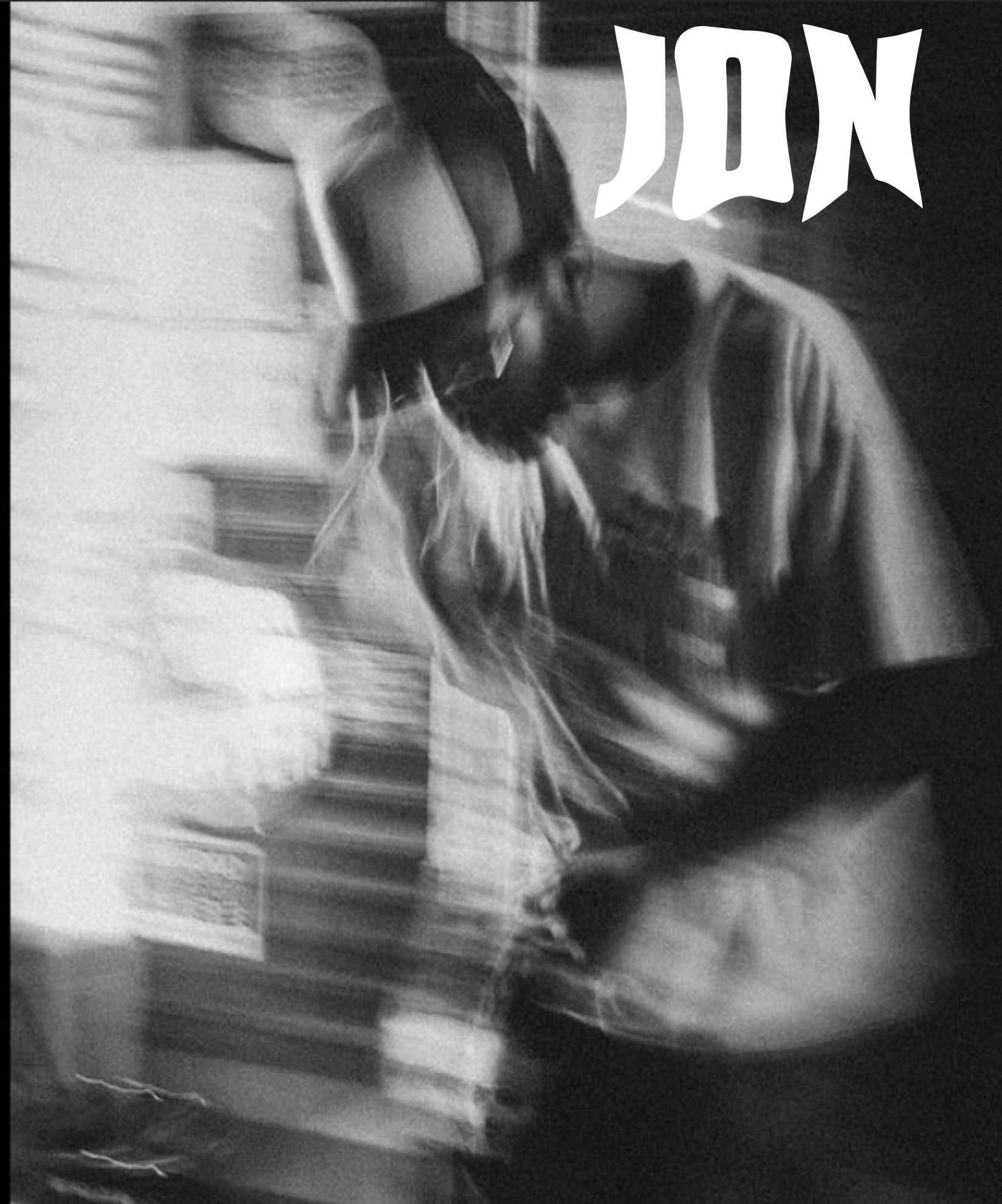
Is there anyone or anything that influences any of your creative work?

There's a number of people and different things that inspire me. What I'm most inspired by is the content on Instagram and Twitter. I follow a lot of photographers, models, creative directors, musicians, hair/make-up artists, and other creatives so there's an overabundance of inspo that I can refer to and make it my own. Also, binge watching fashion shows on YouTube has been a hobby of mine since I was little. I would find and keep a mental note of different elements in the shows such as the hair, make-up, model, fabrics used in the clothing, shoes, runway atmosphere, runway music, etc. My favorite shows to watch are Alexander McQueen, John Galliano for Dior, and 90's Chanel. They all have shows that I can watch over and over again and still get inspired. Lastly, sexy women are my overall inspiration. People don't realize that a confident attractive woman is more powerful than any man living or dead and that ultimate divine fem energy is the main inspiration and theme behind my all my shoots

What are some of your career goals for the future?

- Build a broader client list
- Style a celebrity client
- Build my social media followings to get that blue check
 - Produce more content
 - Have clients from out of state
- Make this hobby into an actual form of income
- Create content for a publication to help build press
- Become more social so I build more connections for potential collabs





JON

FASHION DESIGNER + FOUNDER OF **RAGING ANGELS**

When & Why did you start designing?
I started designing my freshman year of college at Buffalo State. I really wasn’t doing rework things in school I would just create little garments here and there. I was just fascinated by the garments everyone was wearing on campus like the cozy looks, the baggy looks and I was like how can I really rework it to make it look the way I would like it to look. That’s what led me to more denim. That’s what led me to Raging Angels.

Since your very first product was jeans and it is your most popular item, Do you think you’ll specialize in denim in the future?
It’s crazy because I was telling myself today that I’m trynna get rid of denim because I’ve been working on denim for like a year straight. I feel like there’s so much you could do with denim especially if you did it already, it’s hard to keep up that momentum. That’s unless you get into tailoring and different shapes of it.

What’s the story behind Raging Angels?
Raging Angels is the whole concept of how I was thinking way before I even started designing. People feel like the term rage is more like a devilish or demonic way of moving and the word angels bring off a whole other vibe. Everyone thought I was the angel of the family since I’m quiet, and a lot of people just felt like they knew me but in reality, I had a lot of rage. All that rage led me to find ways to express myself, and I realized the only way to do that was by working with clothes. Making clothes was my way of self-expression.

Do you have a specific creative process that you use while designing?
Smoking is what really gets me in the zone but I like listening to my friend’s music just because I relate to them so much. I also like listening to podcasts based on fashion news and fashion trends.

Is there anything or anyone that influences you as a designer?
First, Nigo. That’s one of my go-to designers, I love his work. Raf Simons, Toshikiyo, Kanye, and Virgil. That’s my top 5, I look at their work daily for real inspiration.



Even though RA is a fashion brand do you think sooner or later it could turn into a crew or a group of friends? A community?
Yeah, and that’s what I’m really focusing on right now. Like I said before I’m really trynna get all my friends involved in Raging Angels so we could create our own community and then expand that so everyone can do their own thing under RA. In fashion I feel like everyone is so divided, everyone wants to be towards themselves and I feel like in this time period with COVID going on we need as many people as we can to help each other out regardless of what we’re doing.



Are there any brands you would like to collaborate with in the future?
With me, I’m not really for collaborating in a way because I feel like collaborating is really hard to get both brands to get the shine. I would rather network with other people. I tried doing it when I first started off and I realized the vibe didn’t match. Hopefully, I can find a good amount of brands I can really work with in the future but there’s not a lot of brands right now that catch my attention.

What does the skull represent?
The skull represents my whole mind and the flames represent what I was really going through. You know when you have so many built-up emotions it’s really hard for you to think. It was so much going on I couldn’t really focus, it wasn’t a good tunnel vision for me.

When did you know you wanted to take fashion design seriously?
After I dropped out of school, my friend gave me an opportunity to become a stylist for Nike’s first fashion show. When I did that I was just coming out of college I didn’t know what I wanted to do and there was a lot of pressure on me with my family around me. Me doing the fashion show got me to dip my toes in on what the field is like and sparked my interest even more. When COVID hit, it slowed down my original plans but it made me a better person because I got to figure out things hands-on instead of depending on people to make my dreams come true.

Are you currently a fashion design student at a university/college?
I dropped out of school (SUNY Buffalo State College). I’m probably gonna end up going back but not for fashion, I feel like with us creators we don’t really NEED college. Our creative background comes from the way we think not from educational ways. So if I ever go back to school, I’ll probably go back for business.

Other than design, is there anything else you see yourself doing in the future?
Yes, I love cars, I’m fascinated with cars so I wanna get into car interior design. I feel like raging angels could get me there. I want Raging Angels to be known for many different things like cars, music, clothing.





How would you describe your personal style?

That's hard because right now I'm still working towards it. I'm trynna build my style based on how I work with clothes in a way. Since I do love the whole 80s and 90s era, I try to base my style on that. The majority of the clothes I own are based on that time period besides my sneakers. Besides my personal collection of Rage denim, I have a lot of archived clothing. Archived BAPE, Raf, Margiela. I like going back in time like if I knew I was able to get it back then I would do that, especially if I feel connected towards it. I don't even know how I would put a name on my style. 80s/90s Streetwear?

Other than denim are you looking into designing other pieces?

Right now I'm working on fleece. I've been working on fleece jackets and I have a couple of flannels I need to showcase. Me & Marc are working on a lot of graphics right now so I can do shirts for the summer. I'm trynna get away from the whole pants aesthetic because that's becoming a big trend now and I'm not really a trendy person. I'm definitely trynna work on trousers so I can get into different fabrics. Definitely start patternmaking and start making my own view on pants. So yeah, there's definitely a lot coming.

Where do you see RAGING ANGELS in the next 10 years?

In the next five years, my plan is to build a foundation in the city. I wanna base my manufacturing and creative process in NYC. In the future, I wanna build my foundation for everyone because in my area there are so many creative people. My area really lacks places where people can really feel free to create so in the long run I wanna create a major space so that every creative field has its own individual space. I wanna have my own building or storefront where people feel free to sew or do photography, music and do all of that.

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How was your experience being the magazine director for KONY Magazine?

It was my first opportunity to showcase my skills in fashion because before that I was lost, I didn't know what I wanted to do some doing that really had me studying more, looking into vogue, looking into different styles on how a magazine should look and it made me a better designer too. It made me want to push myself more to go for better visuals/looks and how my garments look and everything. Even with the magazine, when we first started, the magazine was looking clean and that made me realize I want to make my clothing look that presentable. It definitely helped me out, it was one of the first opportunities I had in the fashion world.





~~WILLIAM~~

A.K.A

ANKH

PHOTOGRAPHER + VIDEOGRAPHER + MEMBER OF 4NORSN

Why did you get into photography?

I saw my friends in highschool doing it. I went to an art school but when I was there my focus was music/singing/songwriting while my friends were in the photography program. This was around the time everyone on Instagram wanted to be a photographer and it was a trend. I knew that if I wanted to get into a career path, I wanted to be able to travel and create art and meet different people, have complete control over it. I could’ve done the same with music but I’m just very independent. I don’t like relying on people. If I want something done I wanna be able to go out with my tools and just do what I want without having to ask someone like yo let me hold a beat or something like that when I can just go out and take a picture if I wanted to or push it however I wanted to. I liked the free range of it.

What are some of your career goals?

My main goal is to create a platform for black artists of different mediums to get their artwork out there. I wanna be able to create a door for artists because I know how hard it is to market yourself and get your work through those doors. Yeah, I’ve done shit with artists but it took me hella work to meet people and travel. It took me over two years to see some of my work finally circle back to me. So creating a platform where black artists can use their art as their voice. Once im more established I wanna be able to go back to my old neighborhood and give back, thats crucial to me.

Out of all your projects, which is your favorite? & Why?

I wouldn’t say favorite project i would say the best accomplishment i’ve made is the start of my media team 4norsn. I started it with my two friends Aloe and Mars. Aloe’s a graphic designer/painter/model he does it all and Mars is a photographer and is really smart in the marketing and business aspect. We would always travel to new york together, hang out together, creating together, and talk about art and the fact that we were able to come together and be like lets do some shit? I think that’s the best accomplishment I’ve been able to be apart of. It’s been great, we’ve done studio shoots in New York, shot for clothing brands, we’re still expanding and getting our shit out there but the fact that it’s been over a year and we’re still doing this shit means there’s a reason we’re doing this.

Is there anything or anyone that has influenced you the most when it comes to your photography?

I would say, my friends. A lot of my friends are into photography, modeling, and other mediums and stuff like that. I feel like my work is more co-dependent on the people I interact with and just creating the vision. I think my environment, who I’m around, and the conversations/interactions I have with other people are what motivates my art the most.

You directed a music video for a Baltimore artist named Cam Quarter? Will you be getting into film/cinematography?

I would love to. I’m still working on it, still practicing. I shot my first video with my mans Gino for YGADDIE and Soduh. That ended up on A\$AP Mob Instagram page and gained like 100,000 views. That was the first video I’ve ever helped shoot like actually shooting and not directing so I think that once my skills develop as a videographer I will definitely pursue it more.

When you changed your major, is that when you realized you were passionate about it and wanted to take it seriously?

For sure, once i started doing it, seeing how much i enjoyed it, and doing research on it i was like yeah this is something that i really want to pursue. I was able to take pictures of my friends and meet new people just off the strength of me doing something i love to do.

You’ve had some experience with fashion photography, but it seems like you gravitate more towards artists. Do you think the music industry might be your niche for the future?

Honestly yeah, based on my background in music, I think me relating to the artist and getting a chance to meet those people, those are always very special moments to me. Whether they’re local, huge, or whatever. I love being able to be in a creative process of hearing what people are making and if I really fuck with your sound and you tell me I fuck with your work, it’s like that’s fire, because there’s mutual respect for each other and music has always been a huge part of my life anyway so the fact that I get to document it and see it for myself? It’s unparallel.

If you weren’t a photographer what career do you think you’ll be in?

I’m not gonna lie I don’t know. When I first started college I was a law major so maybe something in that field but I never really thought about what I would do career-wise. It was like whatever falls in my lap or whatever I find interest in, I’ll just put 100% to it.

Are you still in school? What’s your major now?

Oh yeah, im in my senior year at Towson University, my major is photography/film and graphic design. I changed my major my second semester of freshman year.

What are your values as a photographer?

Respect, boundaries, and genuine energy. I’m a feels type of person, I want everything to feel right, I want everything to feel natural. Bad energy throws me off completely so it’s like everything always has to be genuine.



You’ve been seen up close and personal with the Lost Kids music label and RnB artist Brent Faiyaz himself. Tell us about that experience? How does it feel working with a huge artist?

When I first started photography and stuff, I was meeting the members of Lost Kids individually just off the strength of art and stuff like that. It was always love coming from their side like I fuck with your shit you fuck with my shit so it was always appreciated. The way i got back stage access was kinda funny. I was literally up front and i saw the photographer Zoo. We dapped each other up like yo imma see if I can shoot and shit and he was like if you shoot just let me know. The opening artist was Butch Dawson and Joy Postell who are both Baltimore artists. At the time one of my mans I went to high school with was dating one of the backup dancers for Joy. He saw me and hit me like do you have your camera stuff with you? In an hour, meet me and I’ll give you my pass. When he texted me i left my friends, went to the back and saw brent’s older brother Juan. He saw me and was like come with me real quick, I followed him into this room, and there’s brent, his family, and lost kids, and we’re just talking. He’s a really chill dude, hes one of my favorite artists so it took me a lot to keep a cool composure and shit. I didn’t want to come off as this fan but the fact that I’m in this room, I’m the youngest nigga in here, there’s nothing but God. Just the amount of love i got in that room and just being there to hear him say i’ve seen your art before, my brother put me on, your shit is hard, it was like yo i must be doing something right.



Last summer you got a chance to see some of your work on a billboard in your own city. How did it feel?
It was very surreal when it happened. My friend Rico sent me the link like bro you should apply and see if you can get your stuff up there and I was like yeah sure whatever, let’s see. This was around February/March. I applied, I sent my photos, and they said they’ll get back to me. After a while, I just forgot about it and basically moved on with my life, plus COVID just hit and a billboard was the last thing on my mind. I was actually on a trip with my older cousin when people were tagging me in shit like congrats and I’m like what are yall talking about? I looked at my man’s story and there’s my pictures up there, on a billboard. When I got home my mom and sister picked me up from the train station, ironically the station was right across the street from the billboard and I was like wow this is crazy, a black artist, 21 years old, a billboard in his city. That’s so fire, I’m just focused on all the things I can do next like where can I grow from here?



ATO OBONG

OIL PAINTER + GRAPHIC DESIGNER

My name is Ato-Obong but I go by PG Picasso. I'm from Prince George's County, Maryland, aka PG County, Maryland. I oil paint, acrylic paint, and graphic design. I draw with oil pastels, charcoal pencils, regular pencils, I sculpt, I do it all.



It seems like oil paint is the perfect medium for you. How long have you been using oils?
I’ve only been using oil paints for about 8 months, it hasn’t been that long. I’ve tried to practice every time an art medium is out there.

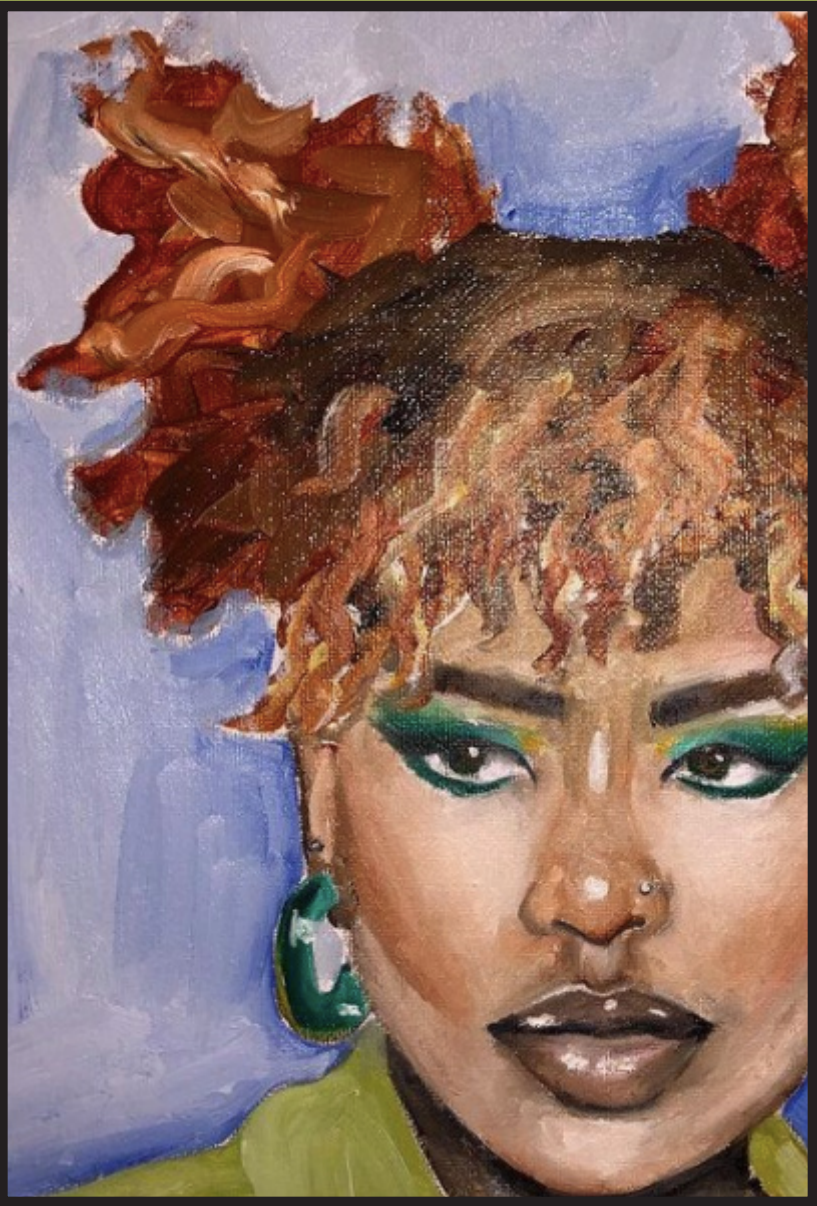
Would you consider it your signature?
It’s not my signature, I just wanted to perfect portraits before I moved on to my next art endeavour.

Not only do you paint but you also design tattoos? Tell us about @tattsbypg.
I’m really trying to become a tattoo artist by the summer. I have tattoos myself, I have five tattoos. I’ve designed tattoos for my friends and they want me to tattoo them, it’s just that tattoo kits are so much money but once I get my money up enough to get my tattoo equipment, that’s what I’ll be doing.

Digitally or Traditional? Why?
I like traditional better. I feel like for digital, it’s not as hands-on. I like getting messy, like paint and all of that. I like cleaning after, I think it’s very therapeutic. I only do digital because people were asking for commissions and I was like alright, this is another way for me to make money.

How is your personality reflected in your art-work?
What I’ve been told is that the way I paint faces is the same exact way I do my makeup. So like, for example, if you look at the Alissa Ashley painting, or I think it’s the Dosha Deng painting, you’ll see sharp contour and powder underneath the eyes, like super vibrant powder underneath the eyes, and powder on the nose and forehead. When I usually do my makeup, I usually end up looking exactly like my paintings.

Most of your work is portrait style, do you ever see yourself expanding your craft & painting anything different? Landscapes? Still Life?
I used to paint Landscapes and Still Life, but I mostly do portrait style right now because I still have a little problem with proportions, so I’m trying to perfect proportions. Once I get that down, I’m going to move on to cooperating everything into a painting, like landscapes, animals, human beings.



Other than paint, are there other forms of art you would love to get into in the future?
For other types of forms, I've said previously that I do sculpting, I use acrylic paint, charcoal, pencils, oil pastel. I want to start sewing, start sewing stuff, and crocheting next. I can sew with my hands, but sewing with a sewing machine, that's kind of tricky. So, I'm trying to get into that. I want to start making my own clothing because other people's clothing, it's very nice but I'm a broke girl and it just be mad bread and I'm trying to be sustainable because I don't like fast fashion.

Where do you want to take your career in the next 5-10 years?
So in five years from now, ten years, thats 25-30, hopefully, I can be self sufficient and good off just my paintings and graphic designs, and tattooing. I really want to be a tattoo artist because I don't really see that many Nigerians tattooing, I think it would be fun, and I don't really see a lot of female tattoo artists.

Do you have a process? If so, what is it?
My process is, oooh, this is so bad. I will roll a spliff, or three, smoke that, and then, start painting. That's about it.

Out of all your work, which is your favorite?
My favorite is the Tyler Creator painting because I'm obsessed.

If the people wanted prints of your work, where can they go to purchase them?
If people want prints of my work, it's available on my website which is atoobongsupply.com. It's also linked in my @artbyato bio page.

What inspires you to paint?
It kind of gives me a god complex. Lowkey, I can see and I can replicate as I'm creating from scratch. It's kind of narcissistic but, yeah .. we move.



SYDNEY

DJ + MODEL + STUDIO ARTIST



What category would you put your art in? Why do you make the kind of art you do? What drives it?

In terms of a category, I would say my art could fall into modern expressionism but not really abstract expressionism. A lot of my art emulates most of my past traumas in terms of my family trauma, just everyday life things, and things I have gone through in college. So I think a lot of my art has to do with things around sexual assault, child abuse, and things of that nature.

How do you interpret the meaning of your work? What does your art mean to you?

That's a very hard question because a lot of what I end up putting down on paper has a lot of very strong emotions behind them. To me my art means healing, my art means processing, my art means giving my inner child a chance to breathe as it should have been able to breathe.

What are some of the things that inspire you artistically?

I think I take inspiration from a lot of things. I take a lot of inspiration from food and cooking and the process of having to cook for myself, I take a lot of inspiration from that in terms of color, texture, having to sit through a process. I take a lot of inspiration from some of my favorite artists, some of my favorite artists are Julie Hansen and Louise Bourgeois. I also take a lot of inspiration from my past experiences specifically when I'm starting a piece and I know I want it to emulate something from my own past so I start doing some digging into my past such as looking at old photos or looking at all of the accomplishments I have had, and all of the downfalls I have had.

Out of all of your pieces which do you think is your favorite? Which do you think speaks to you a bit more than the other?

Picking just one is very hard. I have this yarn piece featured on my instagram and that's my favorite piece of work I've ever done, it took me three months to finish and it helped me dive deep into the traumatic things I had lived through, and even staring at it now I see a lot of pieces of myself that I have never shown to anybody else. A lot of people when they tell me what it looks like to them they're like "Oh it looks like a pregnant woman." or "Oh it looks like this, it looks like that" they never really get it spot on and I'm okay with that. I like when people have their own interpretation. But looking at this I do want people to know that this is an encapsulation of me dealing with my own everyday things and dealing with things that have caused me immense pain as a child and as an adult now. My second favorite piece of art I actually did like two days ago. I really love it. It's really beautiful to me, it says "wilt" on it, and when I had written that my intention behind the word "wilt" and the flower on the painting itself, it just spoke to me about what things can stop me as an artist, what things can stop me as a DJ, and as a model, and understanding that with death comes rebirth and even though that right now things may feel uncomfortable this rebirth will be one of the most prolific rebirths I ever experienced in my life so far.



You're a DJ? How did that come about? How long have you been into music?

That's actually a story people don't usually ask me about. I went to art school for highschool and I had been singing my entire life. My parents told me I used to stop people and have them listen to me sing as a child. I have been in choir since before I could remember and in middle school my choir teacher was the one who told me I should audition for art school. So, I auditioned and I got denied at first but I put in an appeal and they accepted me the second time and I went there for all four years. During those four years I was classically trained as a vocalist. There were musicals, recitals, and intense vocal courses. Going there opened a lot of doors for me. I remember being a part of a camp that worked with Broadway which then allowed me to work under a lot of big people in the industry today.

But I will say I grew up in Hagerstown, so going to this school was definitely an adjustment. And the biggest reason I stopped doing music was that I was being bullied in school, some of my teachers were even bullying me and they really made me feel like music wasn't for me and that I wasn't going to excel and that I was doing this just for fun. So with that being said when I went to college at McDaniel I did not touch a piece of music for four years because my art school had sucked the life out of me.

But then after I graduated and I had moved to DC, around the start of May last year I actually got covid so since all I could do was stay in the house I decided to practice on my controller my friend had gifted me. When I started I had never expected it to keep going and it wasn't until I was asked to do a set for a collective in Seattle, called House Party Seattle, that that was the first time I had ever DJ'd for anybody other than my close friends and myself. After that, I gained more attention and then more people began asking me to do sets, and more people kept reaching out to me. So as much as I would like to consider this a hobby it is also a job for me but overall what DJing really is is what reminded me of my love for music.

What's your favorite genre of music?

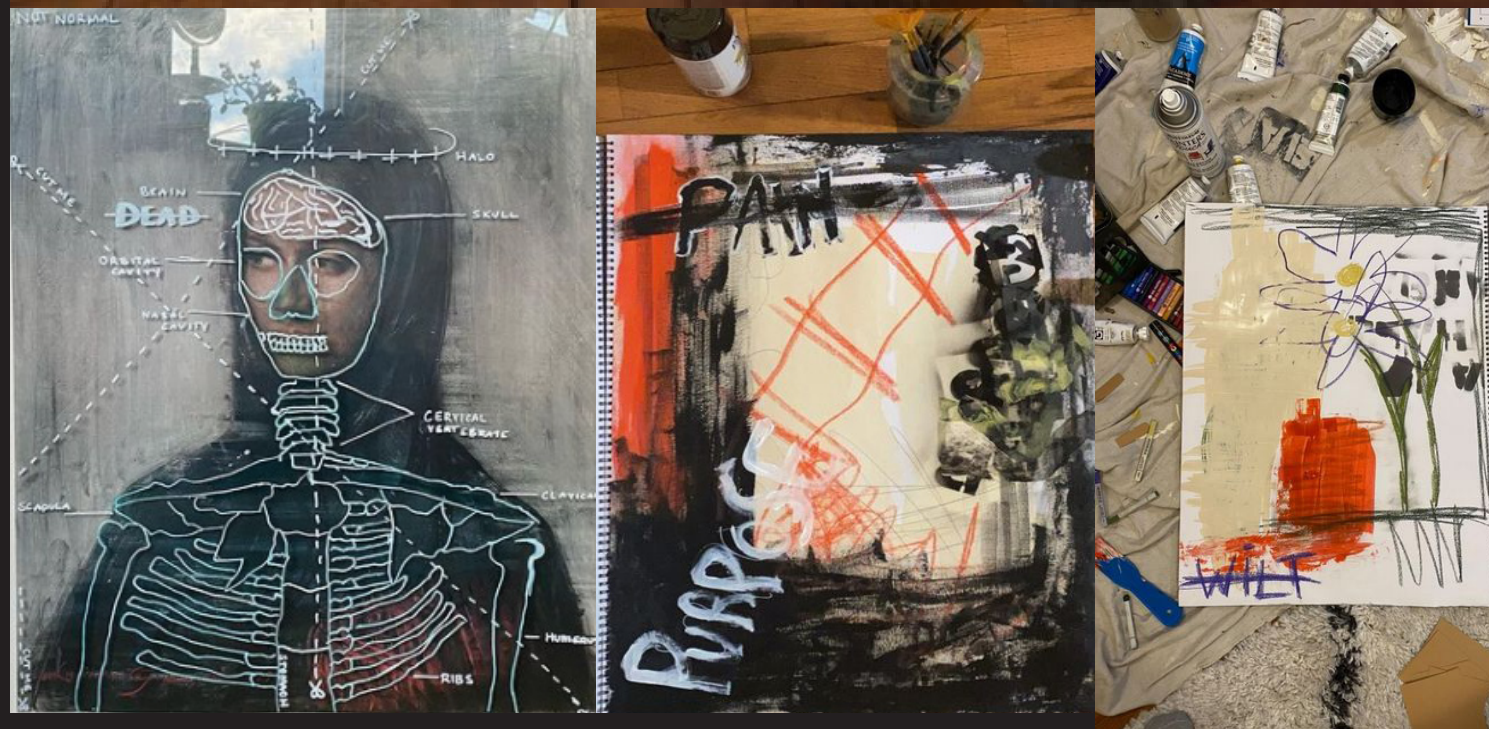
My favorite genre hands down is House music. House Music, or almost any type of music that was created by black people I'm going to rock with. I love jazz, jazz was one of my biggest inspirations and one of my specialties in high school. I really really love House Music if anything though. With my family being from Trinidad, House Music is what I grew up on. I like that the songs don't need any lyrics for me to be able to feel something. That being said I am open to listening to any type of music, or any specific genre that someone recommends.

Who's in your Top 5?

My top five would be hands down Janet Jackson, MF Doom, Sahbabii, El Blanco Nino, and Ticklish.

Do you have any mixes that people can listen to? Do you plan on adding anything to a streaming platform?

As of right now, everything that I have done is on SoundCloud. You can find it on my main page because as of right now everything has been published by someone else but I do hope to someday get my work on Apple Music.



Not only are you an artist but you’re a model? When did you start? Is it something you take seriously?

I started that about a year ago, I started when I had moved to DC in October so, coming up two years soon. I do take it seriously. It’s one of the main things that I usually do. I started doing it because everyone always told me I should be a model and I never really took that seriously, I never took my appearance seriously, I wasn’t very confident as a child or as an adult so growing up people would always tell me that and I would say “ Oh no you’re just joking” or “You’re bullying me”. But now that I have been taking it seriously it has been taking me pretty far. I’ve been really enjoying it. It’s given me a lot in terms of creative directing, and styling, and makeup. Also seeing how others work to create something out of nothing is really beautiful. It is something I do take really seriously, as of lately I have even started charging people, and this year I will get signed, speaking it into existence. And yeah, it is one of my favorite things to do but I do take big breaks from it for my own mental health but it is still at the forefront of my life right now.

Do you have any career goals?

In terms of my art, my biggest career goal would be to have a museum space purely done by me. For modeling it’s to get signed this year and begin working with some of my favorite brands, I would love to see my face in a Chanel beauty ad that would be amazing. Having a black person featured would make history. For Djing, a big career goal for me would be to have a residency and to DJ somewhere every week, or to have a radio station that would be awesome.

Do you have any favorite photographers? Some you have worked with or would like to work with?

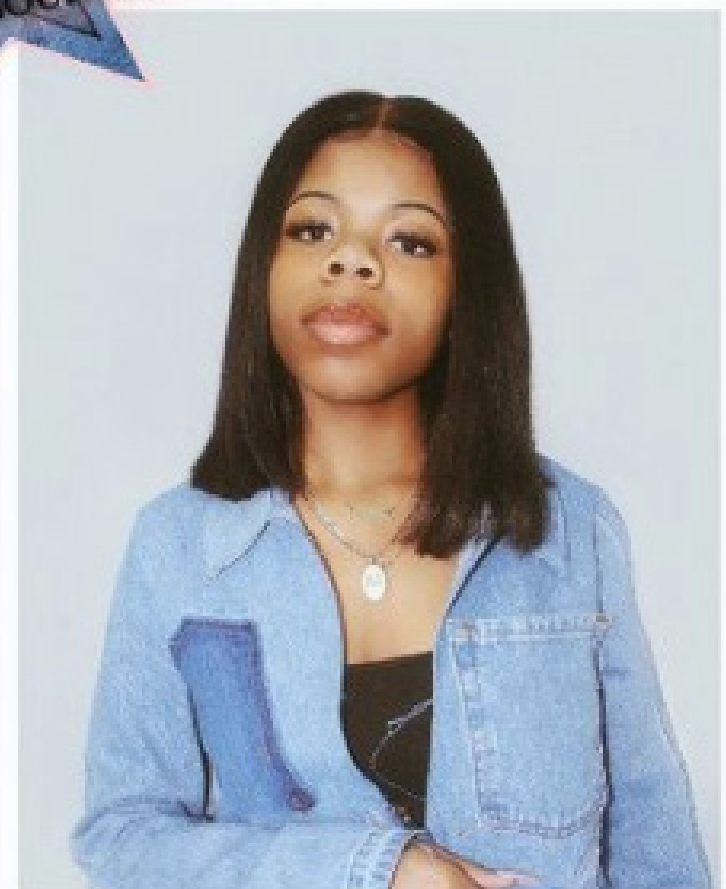
Yes, one of my favorite photographers, she lives in Baltimore, her name is Anna Divinagracia. Her concepts are always amazing and every time I work with her I always feel like the best vision that could possibly happen has or will come out of her. She is also extremely encouraging and she never makes me feel as though I am less than or that I am inadequate in any way. One of my other favorite photographers is I Am Melani B, they are so amazing and a great creative director. The photos they take always tell a really great story. Another recent photographer I recently worked with is @TazzHQ on instagram, I love his vision, he is always down to let me have creative bounds to style and direct, and he is always super supportive.



TIANNA

My name is Tianna but everyone calls me T. I'm 18, I'm a gemini but I act more like a virgo because it's my rising sign. I'm from the Bronx but not the Bronx everyone else knows aka the South Bronx. I'm from Wakefield. It's a small and pretty unknown neighborhood but it's full of culture so different from the Bronx everyone else knows. I've lived there for all 18 years of my life and have no complaints but living here, I don't get the real "nyc" experience here. There's no super busy streets or high rise buildings, it's a pretty calm place with a strong "family love" vibe. As for what I do, I run a clothing brand solely by myself. The brand's name is just my name, Tianna Osbourne. I design and construct clothes, accessories, jackets, and rugs .. pretty much anything you can think of. But I didn't take designing/my brand seriously until I was about 16 years old. At 16 I had just quit my job at old navy and had a lot of free time afterschool so I would have my friends give me their old jeans, I charged him a small fee for me to customize them. I started posting my work on Instagram and my following began to climb, so I just kept going.

+ FASHION DESIGNER +



What’s the meaning behind BourneStar?

BourneStar is the name of my most recent collection. I came up with the name when I was thinking of tattoo ideas and my friend told me to get the word bornstar tattooed. I didn’t get the tattoo but I customized the word born to be my last name “osbourne” minus the first two letters “bourne” and added that to the star -- “BOURNESTAR”. The whole meaning behind BourneStar is just everyone is just born a star. One of my favorite rappers, Lucki, said “I can’t wait for no sh*t that I’m just born to get” in one of his songs, once I heard that lyric I ran with it. My Bourne-Star collection’s slogan is “can’t wait for nothing i’m just bourne to get”. When people see my bournestar clothes and read the slogan I really just want them to know that we each have our own, separate, creative, unique path that we are meant to follow. You shouldn’t wait to explore or find your path when it’s meant for you, you were just born to follow that path. I’ve seen a lot of young people sort of give up on their dreams and follow a cliché route knowing that it wasn’t necessarily meant for them. Which just prolongs the finding of their path and causes regret. My parents had taken a break from real estate to focus on something with a more steady income, my mother became a nurse and my father a truck driver. For most of their careers they were utterly miserable with their situations, they really didn’t feel a sense of fulfillment until they quit their jobs to pursue their real estate dreams. If they had listened to their hearts, they could have avoided 15 years of sorrow. When my audience sees bournestar I really just want them to know it’s OK to follow your dreams. You shouldn’t worry about money or notoriety yet, as long as you’re just consistent with doing what you truly love to do all the blessings will come your way because it’s meant for you.

What was the first piece you ever designed?

I started designing clothes when I was 14. I remember for my 15th birthday I wanted a really creative and unique outfit, I wanted to wear something that literally could not be found in stores. I took a pair of old jeans and just got to work. I started cutting them, drawing on them, throwing paint on them, sewing/embroidering designs, anything you could think of using any materials I could find. I stumbled upon an old picture of those jeans a few months ago and I was amazed at how, let's say, “wild” they looked but you know, the first piece is always the worst, and practice makes perfect.

You started off reconstructing jeans, how does it feel now that you’ve graduated to designing bags, trousers, shirts, jackets, etc?

Honestly when I first started reconstructing jeans I never thought I’d be able to do anything else. Making even a bag from scratch seems so complicated and it just seems like I never be able to progress to that point without formal education. But I definitely just stayed motivated and ended up surprising myself by teaching myself new techniques and designs and such it’s really amazing. Knowing that I’ve progressed so much puts a smile on my face. I can take a bed sheet and turn it into a full outfit which just seems like magic to me. The mere thought of me being able to create magic with my two hands and a few supplies is mind bending.

Sewing is very time consuming and requires tons of patience. How do you stay motivated? What pushes you to keep going?

Sewing IS very time consuming. Doing things like threading the needle and picking the stitch need to be done perfectly or the whole project would fall apart. So as you can imagine I definitely need time and patience and motivation to create my pieces. I keep motivated by putting an idea of where I want to be in 10 years in my head. I vividly imagine in my future, and realize I have to keep putting in a certain amount of effort to achieve my ideal lifestyle. Thinking about that keeps me motivated and gives me enough effort to persevere even when things get very stressful. Along with that listening to music helps me so much. When I listen to my favorite artist it’s like all the stress and lack of motivation goes away, my goals become clear. Listening to music really helps me focus on the task at hand. I can sew for hours straight with no need for a break just because of music.



Are you self taught or did you study fashion design?
I am fully self taught! The only education I got was a sewing class I took in fourth grade. I was planning to study fashion business management at FIT, but after I got accepted I didn't really want to continue attending college. So I dropped out after maybe a week, and decided to just continue being self-taught until I find a school or a class that will keep me interested enough and interested in a degree. It's more stressful when you're self-taught because you don't have an instructor or someone physically there helping you, but it is beneficial because you set your own pace.

What are your greatest strengths, as well as tell us about your weaknesses?
My main greatest strength is being consistent. There's times where I don't really work but I still am constantly thinking of new ideas to keep my brain going. It's really hard to be consistent or as productive as you want to be. My strength is pushing through that my weakness is it really a weakness it's just something I have to deal with, my mental health has been kind of iffy for most of my life, and there's times where I truly can't get out of bed to make my calls you know and run my brand. Or times where I just don't feel like responding to customers. So as you can imagine that definitely takes a toll on my business but it's not something that can be fixed quickly. So I've been learning how to deal with it and fix it slowly.

If you could scream your last words from the rooftop, What should the people remember/know about Tianna Fucking Osbourne?
"IM STILL THE DON"
I would just want people to know I tried my best, and I followed my heart.

How would you describe your brand aesthetic?
My brand has a very unique aesthetic, I feel like it can fit into so many different categories. I would say my womenswear has a bright sophisticated aesthetic. While my menswear has a natural tone with a hint of excitement.

Out of all your pieces, which one would you say is your favorite?
Out of all my pieces, the supreme jeans jacket was my favorite. I had brought these Supreme jeans that I wanted for a long time but when I got them they were too big and didn't really fit well. So me being me, I took them apart and made them into a cropped jacket.

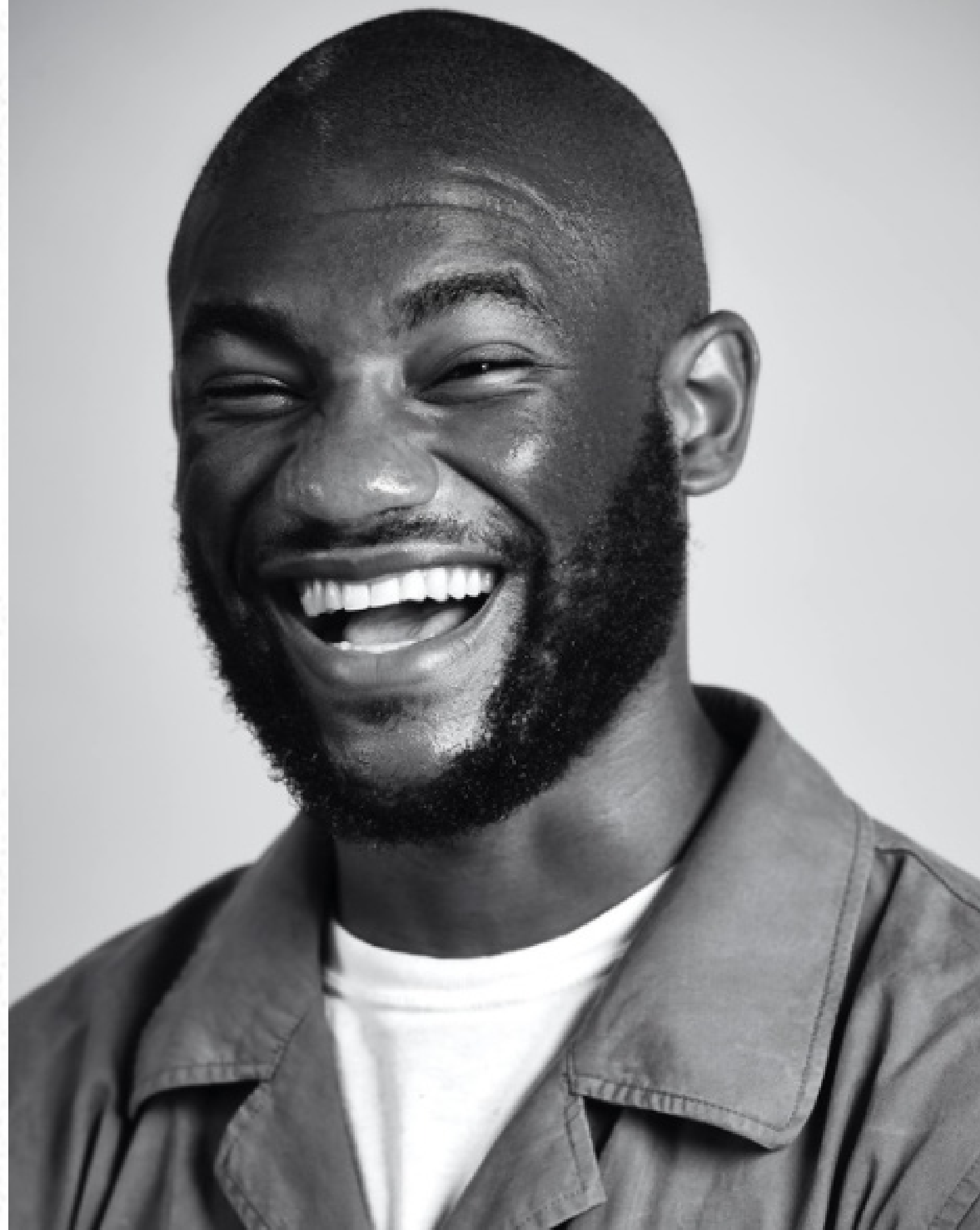
Where do you want to take your craft in the next 5-10 years?
I have very big goals for myself. I really really would love to have a store, and a private studio for me to work out of along with some employees. I really want to make every single item from scratch, I really want to incorporate lots of recycled materials. I just want to be the first brand that consistently comes out with new creative material. I want to continue making things people have never seen before. I want to make everything from formal menswear to women's ball gowns, in the next couple of years my brain will have something for everyone to love, it will be more of a household name. I want to make everything from formal menswear to women's ball gowns, in the next couple of years my brain will have something for everyone to love, it will be more of a household name.





MALIK

+PHOTOGRAPHER+
BUFFALO, NEW YORK



400-2TMY

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KODAK 400-2TMY

How has photography influenced you as a person?
Easy. Photography has made me be more out there. I remember not knowing what I wanted to do in life, and then I picked up the camera and everything just changed. I wanted to go outside more, I wanted to talk to people a little bit more. Basically, photography has broken out of this introverted shell that I used to have. I didn’t want to talk to anybody, and now I’m always in people’s faces, always messaging people. It just made me a lot bolder and I’ve gained a lot of self-esteem from it

If you could take your art in any direction without fear of failure or rejection, where would it lead? What new thing would you try?

That’s a well-worded question. I would, it’s kind of like off track in a sense, but I would put the camera down and get into fashion and styling. A lot of people, especially in my hometown of Buffalo, is a city that’s behind the trends, and things like that and I tend to be on the trends. So, fashion and styling have always been a big part of everything that I do. It’s something that I pay attention to a lot... It’s something that if I could do something else alongside photography, it would definitely be fashion and styling. It’s just something about putting something on somebody that you envisioned and it looks right. So, that’s something I would try/do.

Film or Digital? Why?

To be honest, I would prefer to shoot digital, but as far as in this question, I would say film. The reason why is because I found this new love for film, and the reason being that is because I figured out that with film, I tend to pay attention to details a little bit more because I don’t necessarily know how my shot is going to look. It’s so many different factors with film. Shadow, high-lights, different light sources, how light can be coming thrust these windows, you know, rays of light. Film is just beautiful. It’s just a beautiful thing, I highly suggest that anybody who does photography, if you’re shooting digital, step back, pick up a film camera, and just learn it and go out and shoot something on film because film is definitely beautiful.

What category do you think your photography falls in? Photojournalism? Landscape? A little of every-thing?

It falls in the category of editorial. Editorial and photojournalism are like the same thing because editorial is basically a photo that goes onto a paper that is published amongst words. I would definitely say it’s a lot of photojournalism, fashion, photography, beauty photography, and scene photography. I don’t like to call it landscape. I say scene photography because I don’t look for just something to take a picture of. I do want to be multifaceted. I want to be able to do anything that you would hire me for, but, my main focus, what I would love to get paid for and love to do more is definitely editorial work and photojournalism.

What are some of the things that motivate you as a photographer? Where do you get your passion for your work from?

My guys. My guys inspire me a lot. They motivate me a lot. They’re really hard on me, and I appreciate that because, in the art realm, you can fall into your own lies. A lot of people say “I’m the best ‘ and I’m like you haven’t even seen your best yet, you gotta work to get there, and even when you get there, it’s still going to be another love that you want to achieve. Women are another big thing too. Women in my opinion are the things that drive the culture, they drive fashion, they drive photography, music even. I get my passion from my work. It’s like a mixture of how I would want to style. I put my fashion and styling sense into my shoots. I contour up all of these ideas, I write them out. My assistant and I, help me finalize things and make sure things are concrete and things of that sort.



Can you tell us a little more about Diversify Photo? How did you become a member?

Actually, I signed up. I talked to somebody and they were like “you should see if you would get accepted into this group of photographers and stuff”, to give people effortless photos. This big archive of people of color and minorities, across the photography world, is often sometimes overlooked because photography is a white-dominated art form in a sense. That’s what diversified photos is. It’s this big database of good photographers, or beyond great photographers that these companies can look at and hire them to get more cultural and diverse representation across the spectrum of photography. I became a member, thought I wasn’t going to get accepted, then I woke up one day and got an email that said “you’ve been accepted. I’m like “oh shit, wow, oh my god”.



Where do you want to take your career in the next couple of years?

I often say this but, If I could make \$100,00 a year, just in photography alone, that’s my dream. I don’t dream to be this millionaire photographer. I just want to live good, live well, and be able to do what I want to do when I want to do it. I want to be able to book bigger gigs, shoot for bigger companies, and that comes with hard work, determination, and getting to know the people that you need to know.

Do you have a favorite picture you shot? If yes, what’s the story behind it?

I think my favorite photo I have taken is like this rustic, gold photo that I have on my instagram and it’s like a picture of this shack. That’s my favorite shot just because I always wanted to go out during the fog and take a scene photo and kind of keep you in that notion of “yo, what is there?”, “What is this?”. My scene photography is inspired by this guy named Todd Hido. A photographer that does the same scenic photography that I do.



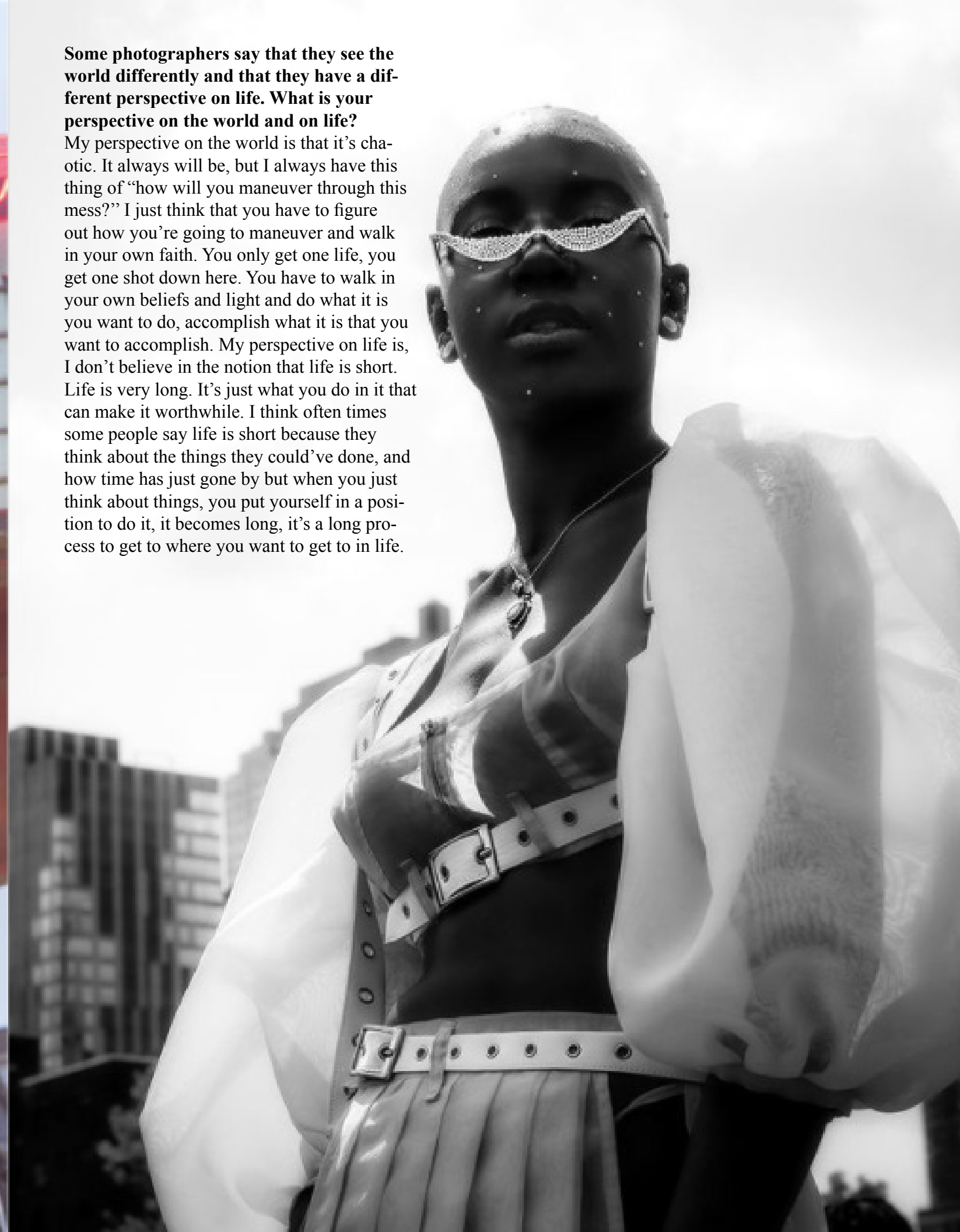


Last year you got the chance to shoot for the Wall Street Journal to photograph Lynn Kinsella, the owner of the Aurora Theater. How was that experience?

That experience was amazing! Shoutout to Stephanie, I believe that Stephanie was the photo editor that hit me up for that opportunity so God bless her soul, I love her so much. I would hope to work again with her. I've never been to East Aurora before it was actually my first time and being able to see the Aurora Theater and meeting Lynn Kinsella and how she gave me a rundown of the history of the theater. It was dope! She had a lot of these old movie projectors from the 1940s or 20s. This was the second time I actually worked with the Wall Street Journal, my first time was in my hometown of Buffalo.

Some photographers say that they see the world differently and that they have a different perspective on life. What is your perspective on the world and on life?

My perspective on the world is that it's chaotic. It always will be, but I always have this thing of "how will you maneuver through this mess?" I just think that you have to figure out how you're going to maneuver and walk in your own faith. You only get one life, you get one shot down here. You have to walk in your own beliefs and light and do what it is you want to do, accomplish what it is that you want to accomplish. My perspective on life is, I don't believe in the notion that life is short. Life is very long. It's just what you do in it that can make it worthwhile. I think often times some people say life is short because they think about the things they could've done, and how time has just gone by but when you just think about things, you put yourself in a position to do it, it becomes long, it's a long process to get to where you want to get to in life.



CHRIS CXCAINE

FASHION DESIGNER + CREATIVE DIRECTOR



What are some of the things you do to get in the groove before creating?

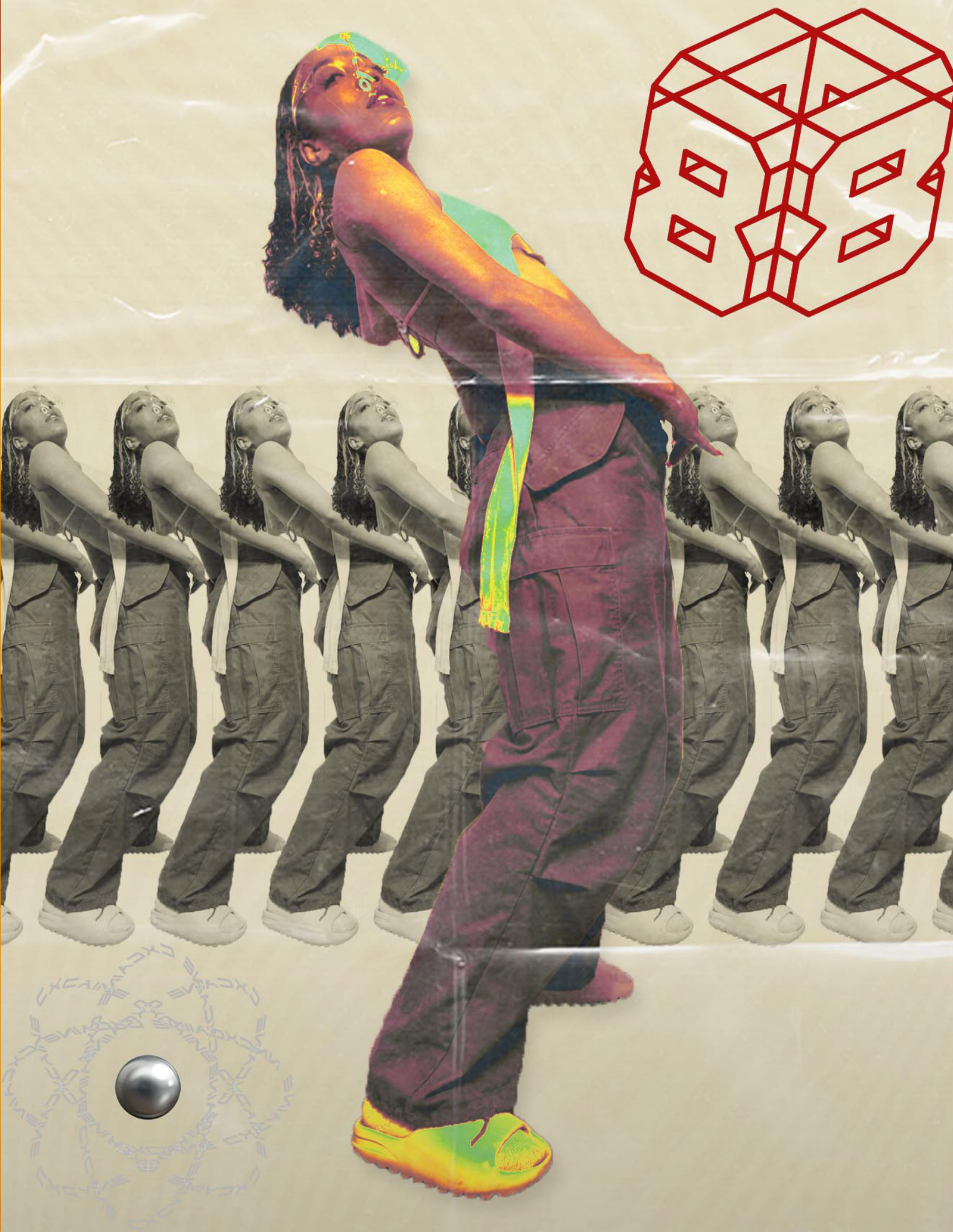
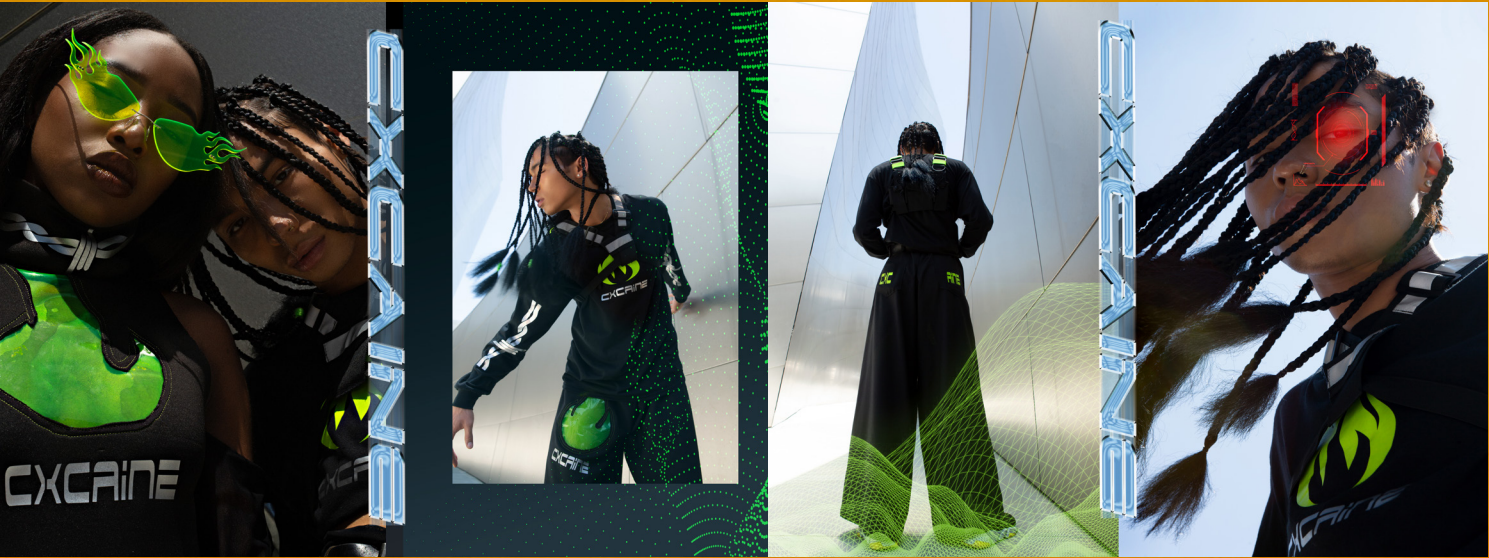
I usually listen to music that affects my mood. It'll either be completely aggressive or calming music. I'll also eat my favorite foods. It is really important for me to be in a good mood before I start creating; especially in the brainstorming phase. The better I feel the more I can spiritually pour out. When I am overwhelmed or stressed I have such a creative block. I am also an empath so it is important that my energy is also "fresh". This is sometimes difficult for me because I'll go long periods without creating because I feel so crappy. Then, in contrast, I have days where I spend 10 hours just sitting home creating and editing. Artistry is an emotional thing for me. My experiences shape my artistic scope.

Tell us about CXC Labs.

CXC labs is an aesthetic platform/company I am planning to launch. I named it CXC which is short for "Cxcaine" and labs because I believe everything has a formula. So anything I create has a science to it. I am a physical learner so once I learn how to do something I master it. I am such a geek at heart so I value intelligent, progressive messages. If I can spread knowledge I will do so. I believe we are all existing to share knowledge and strengthen one another. So science will be a huge part of my brand aesthetic. It is an ever-evolving concept. Dynamics are important to me because I value longevity. If something is too simple or basic it can only be interesting for a short period of time. I try to make remarkable things regardless if people actually like what I create. You might not like it, but if you've experienced it. You remembered it. I get bored of things very easily so it is necessary that my brand reflects my taste.

Are you more of a collaborator or work-alone type of guy?

I am a very intentional person, especially with art. So if I do not necessarily have to include other people, It is easier for me, but that is also contradicting because I love muses. Especially female ones. I am very much into androgyny and androgynous themes because it is very balancing for me as a person. I usually get inspired by someone's story or energy when I meet them and really get to dive into the layers of their persona and I am able to build a story/theme for them. Energy is super important to me so I tend to only work with people who see eye to eye with my vision. Being an unconventional person is sometimes hard to relay ideas to others because they are not things everyone can see. Most times it takes me to bring things to life for others to finally understand what I foresaw. It is crucial that I can work with others that have foresight. Once we are on the same page everything just flows. It is a very beautiful thing. My most current muse Yéyo has really shown me just how much I can actually dive into an energy form and how it can translate over time and transform. I have a Gemini moon, rising; Aquarius Mercury and Venus. All of these placements push "evolution" in-different & futuristic themes. That's forcing me to be very specific and authentic. Every energy exchange is a different combination with different results. So in summary, unless I know something makes sense and flows I won't do it. I went to school to study fashion marketing and managing and learned many psychological tools that are important for the field I am in. This helps me gauge what intentions I have for projects and jobs. I am a perfectionist. I call myself the "one-hit assassin". "Somebody else can shoot you but I'm gonna aim right between your eyes and give you a head shot".`



Does CHRISXCaine mean anything? Is it just a brand name?

I developed the name Chris Cxcaine because anyone who had ever met me has always felt an effect by me. Even as a child my mother was a young mom and had to bring me everywhere with her when she could not find child care; to her college at Columbia University, to her job, etc. Anytime I would visit, her co-workers and professors were always so fascinated by my maturity and entertaining qualities. I have always been an overzealous expressive person. As I got older, and it came time to pick a brand name, Chris Cxcaine was perfect. I am not actually trying to promote drug use; just the ideology that any path you chose in life you can be great enough for people to have a unique experience from you. You don't actually have to use drugs but you can become one yourself. I myself personally feel "high" when I am doing what I love. The "X" in Cxcaine mimics the X in the algebraic formula $y = m(x) + b$. Essentially meaning you are "x" and whatever situation or "formula" you are involved in can greater the outcome. I am not just an "x" everyone and anyone can be an "x" or their own drug. It is just a modern take on our societal values. Drug use is popular and glamourized in modern times, so it is sort of a mind game. I am not actually selling drugs but I am selling my own products that can affect people like one. My brand also represents having self-confidence and promotes you to be your best self. Find your "drug" and master it. Whatever it is you have to contribute to the world, find it, and be the best you can be at it. We are all existing for a reason. I want my brand to reflect quality. I feel like with social media and the oversaturation of entrepreneurship, quality isn't valued anymore. Everything is about instant gratification and does not value longevity. Slow and steady WON the race. This is what my brand will promote to change this current narrative.

What do you love most about being a designer?

I have been designing since I was about 4 years old. So personally I enjoy the idea that I can create pieces that will tell a story or give my take on what people can/should look like. Every designer's clothing is their personal scope on what society can be. When people wear your clothing they are physically embodying your ideology and impressions on life. There are so many layers you can unfold depending on your aesthetic and design process. Even in modern times, people are designing clothes that are recyclable or eco-friendly that part of their morale also contributes to what they think fashion should represent. My personal design aesthetic is futuristic, minimal, and seductive. Art to me is a superpower. So when people wear my clothes I want them to feel confident and empowered. They chose to buy my clothing because it helps them be the best version of themselves. Not because it is popular but they know the point of the message.

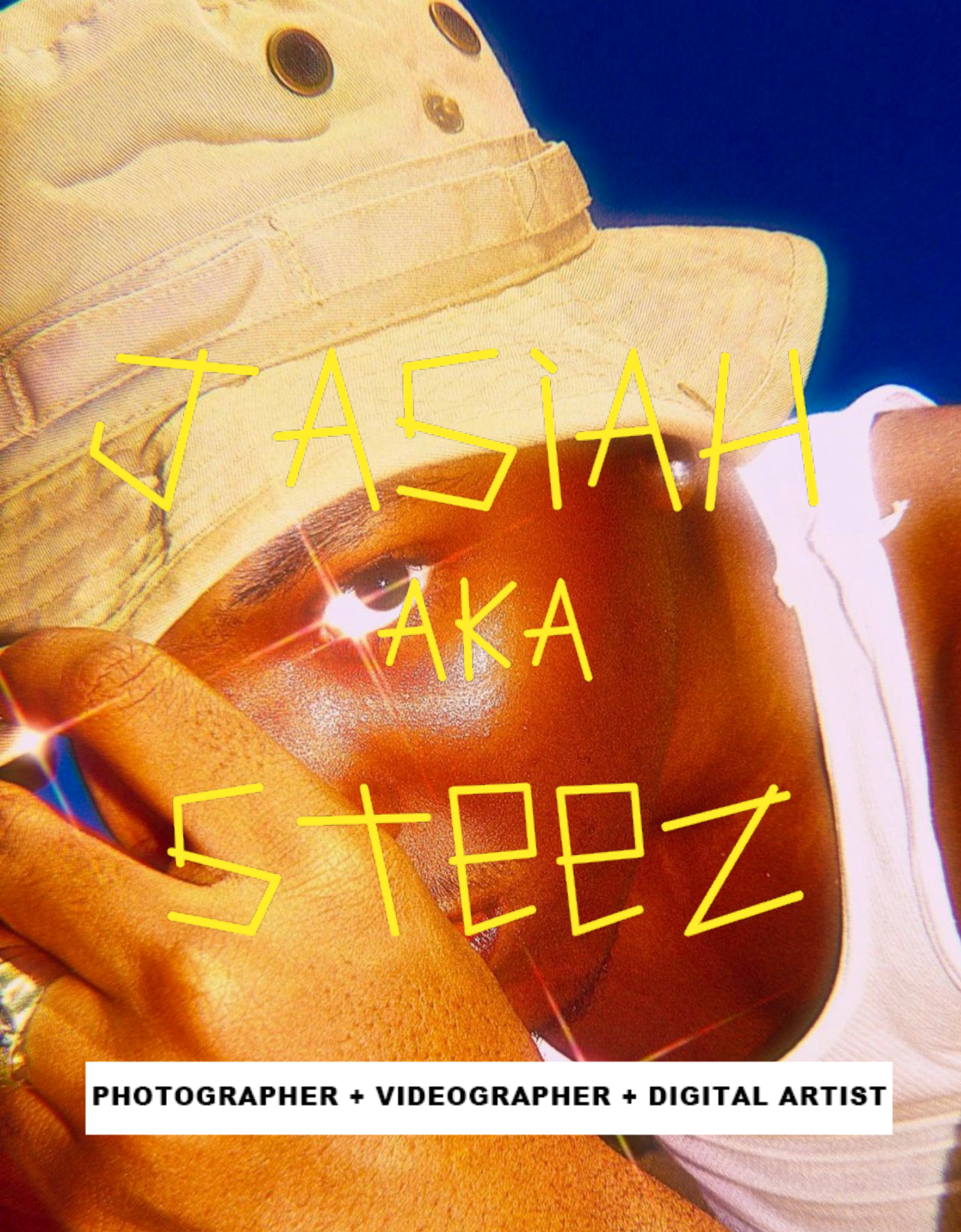
How would you describe your personal style?

To be honest I have no clue. I feel like a chameleon I literally can adapt or alter myself to look like whatever I want. It is important that you understand embodiment in fashion. You can only pull certain looks off if you know how to channel them. Everything I do is a combination of 2 things. For my personal style, I feel like I have 2 different personas. "Christopher" is a peaceful, calm, zen, personal energy. "Chris Cxcaine" is the exact opposite "dark, rebellious, and edgy. Being able to personify my mood is what really determines what I wear. I dabble in workwear, utility, grunge, and tech wear. I also love mixing vintage and futuristic concepts. Most of my looks are also inspired by Asian fashion. I love black, I have to force myself to wear colors because if it was up to me I'd just wear all black, all the time. I love outfits that are super clean. Monochrome outfits are my absolute favorite. I'm into this phase where I only like things are one solid color. It just makes it easier for me to style. The smallest detail can stray me away from a piece. Sleekness is always a priority to me.

Who are some of your biggest influences from the world of art and design?

Anyone that knows me knows how much I like YEEZY. The lengths Kanye West has gone to bring innovation to fashion as a black man is so remarkable. The brand exemplifies many futuristic and minimal qualities that I really appreciate. David LaChapelle is another influence I have. His portraits are some of the most important images of our time in entertainment. I love his attention to detail and the surrealism that his work usually carries. Hype Williams also influences my work. His color grading and big picture ideas play a big part in why I chose the career path I'm pursuing, he is responsible for 90% of the music videos and films I enjoyed from a young age.





ASIAH
AKA
STEEZ

PHOTOGRAPHER + VIDEOGRAPHER + DIGITAL ARTIST



When did you know you wanted to be a photographer? How did it start?

I always had a knack without really knowing. Freshman/Sophomore year of high school I always used to be the one to take pictures with my friends on iPhones and stuff like that and I always had fun with it. My angles and everything was always good but I wasn't trying I was just naturally good at it. I started shooting when my friends started doing stuff like one of my closest friends Noah, started making beats, my other friend Mo did some modeling thing at the time, my other friend had a meme page even though its a meme page it was still "oh shit that's crazy" and I was the only one not doing nothing so I started to think about some things I genuinely enjoy. Around this time, my brother got a camera from his dad and I stole it from him. I snuck it out of the house every day and did photoshoots at the school. Once I did my first shoot, from that point I just fell in love. It just progressed from that point on.

What do you want people to take from your work? Do you want people to view it a certain way?

I don't want people to view it a certain way, I just want people to view it as me. My biggest thing is authenticity. I never try to be nobody I'm not and I never try to emulate anybody else's work. As a creator, there's no such thing as being original. All great creators pulled something from other creators to be great, they garner new information and they learn new things to be great. However, I just want people to see my work and be like "oh nah Jasiah did that, Jasiah def did that". The beauty of it all is perception. What do you perceive it to be? What do you want it to be? Don't view it a certain way just enjoy it. I want people to think, a wide array of thoughts. I just want genuine energy and authenticity to be taken from my work. I want people to see this and say wow he's doing this with his friends, he enjoys it, it's true to him, it doesn't look like anybody else's.

You're also into videography, we see you've shot and directed multiple projects. Do you see directing in your future?

I'm actually more into videography than photography right now. My end goal in this is to create short films. That's really my thing, I wanna create short film narrative pieces that just resonate with a lot of people. I feel like there's a progression in my work, I started as a photographer, got into video, now I'm fully into video so yeah I definitely see myself directing in the future. I even see myself directing now.

It seems that you have this oversaturated color aesthetic. Most photographers are afraid to play with intense colors due to the fear of bad quality images but you make it work. Is that your favorite editing process?

I got that a lot, I honestly didn't even notice my work was oversaturated because I don't notice stuff like that. I just do what's true to me, I personally don't care about stigmas or what other people think about oversaturated work or whatever. I don't care about traditions or what's traditionally accepted or what's normally cool, that's not really my thing. I just do me and I think that's what gotten me so far. The moment I try to impress other people or do stuff that's not my own or that does not represent me, is the moment imma stop regardless of how ahead I am. My editing process is half and half. I love black and white images and I love a lot of colors, there's no between.

Has being from Bedstuy inspire you in any way?

I don't really get to shoot as much as I want in my own neighborhood because it's not that safe but it's like a mentality, it's a certain mindset I got. I just tell myself I work dumb hard not just because I have to work hard, I work hard because I don't wanna be in the same place in the next 10 years. I love where I'm from but I need to be above this. All my creative friends from my neighborhood have a certain drive like we gotta go crazy. I can't explain it because it's not like some shit I thought about. It's just a mindset engraved in me since I've been here. I spent most of my growing development in this neighborhood so that's how it is for me.

Not only are you a photographer, but you're also an artist that goes by Jasiah Steez. What made you get into music? & Do you plan on taking it seriously?

My friends made me get into music. I've actually been rapping my whole life since I was like 3. I didn't even know I was rapping until my cousin told me. He was like "you still rap?" I'm like how do you know that? He was like "you used to rap when you were mad young". My primary group of friends started making music, and I was the only one not making music so I tried it during the quarantine. Once I got into it I was like aight this shit kinda fun, and it was better because I was making it with my friends. Taking it serious? Nah, that's why I don't promote it because I just do it for fun and I just do it because it's true to me. At this moment, I'm just trynna be great in my visual art or any art that comes after that, but, that's not my primary goal. I's not gon get me where I need to get at the moment.



Do you have any career goals?

I wanna make a multitude of short films with no dialogue that emits emotion that I've felt myself and emotions I want people to feel. It's just gonna have music in the back that emulates the feeling that's being emitted in the video. Urban films, love films, nature films, but all-inclusive to black people in so many different settings. Maybe a disco setting, a nature setting, a Bed-Stuy brownstone love setting. I don't wanna be a music video editor, I don't wanna make movies, I think the complexity of it is way too much. With short films, I have the power to create something beautiful and have more control over what I want, and with so many simplistic sentiments, it's just so much easier to work, to create something fire in such a compact manner.

We've seen some of your sketches! Fire. With your other artistic skills, do you draw often?

Fun fact, I actually suck at drawing. I'm really good at digital art though. Digital drawings like trace art? As long as I can get the tracing down or whatever imma be good with that then the art takes over. I only do that to implement that into my primary work like my videos and my pictures and stuff like that. If I'm not drawing a storyboard, I don't really draw.

What can we expect from you next? Any New Projects? New Music?

I have three projects. One is the Vans project, similar to the North Face project, except this one is gonna be a lot more narrative-based, the other one is the Love project, and then To Give Praise project which is gonna be another narrative piece as well. I have these all written down, literally hanging on my wall so I can keep track of it all. But those are gonna be the next three big projects that I put a lot of time and effort into and I'm gonna be very proud of myself regardless of the feedback I receive. Those are the three things you should expect hopefully in the next three months. As far as music, I'm probably not gonna drop another tape until August/July because I wanna put a lot of time into that one.



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