

kanto

CREATIVE CORNERS / N° 4/2016



W O N D E R L A S T

COMPASS

The sandy dunes of Dubai, to the unspoiled beauty of Batanes

RUMINATIONS

Marikit Singson champions the cause of being a responsible tourist

LENS

A year in photos with *Leandro Artigala*

ANGLES

Koen Van Damme's architectural still-lifes is a celebration of geometry

CANVAS

Nate Frizzell brings out our spirit animals through painting

QUILL

The conclusion of *Joanna Parungao's* short story, *The Choice*



Photography by
Yam Otarra @yamsterdam

kanto

[kánto] A Filipino word for corner, cornerstone, angle.

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Timothy Percival
Kit Singson
MYD Studio

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A F E W
W O R D S

I've never really traveled a lot.

This, despite having lived in another country (Indonesia) for a total of eight years, and only having been to two other countries, Singapore and Malaysia, trips which I feel were lacking in terms of cultural immersion and adventure, feeling more like trips to the mall (because of the many hours we spend inside one). What's even more alarming for me is how much I haven't seen of my country, The Philippines. While a lot of friends have been busy crossing off places and landmarks in their bucket list, there I was, listening with envy as they relate to me their travel experiences. So what's stopping me?

While work, lack of downtime and financial hurdles have hindered my chances at traveling more often, the one thing that really stopped me from stepping out the door to explore more often is the fear of uncertainty. Yes, at twenty-four, I still feared going to places I haven't been to with friends, and God forbid, alone. I felt that I lacked the will and independence to throw myself into the unknown and would research the hell out of a place whenever I had to venture into 'uncharted territories.' I tend to stress out knowing how to get to and get home from a place rather than to enjoy the journey. And I hated this about myself.

This year, I am learning to throw more caution to the wind and going out more, even if it were just places within the Metro. Just last month, I went on a walking tour of Escolta with friend and blogger Danielle Austria, and whatever itinerary we had planned beforehand faded as we followed our guts and explored and photographed the decaying architectural beauties of Escolta Street, indulged on a mini food-trip in Binondo's Chinatown, took a short art field trip to the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design in Taft Avenue, and went on an unplanned visit to the Manila Central Post Office Building and the San Sebastian Basilica in Quiapo (watch out for it in a future issue of Kanto). The experience was tiring yet exhilarating. The fear and uncertainty slowly gave way to the excitement of discovery, of the promise of new experiences and stories. Here's to hoping I get to travel even further, and you'll get to hear of my experiences here first of course!

It truly was a pleasure putting this issue together with my talented contributors. It was the promise of hearing amazing stories of wanderlust and adventure that inspired me to pursue a theme of which I knew little of. We have stories of creative individuals striving to capture through their respective crafts the spirit of place of that great city called New York; we traveled to the sandy dunes and gleaming metropolis that is Dubai; we marveled at the natural, unspoiled beauty of Batanes; and lastly, we reflected on the joys and possible perils travel brings to the environment, and what we can do to become more responsible tourists. We hope that we inspire you, dear readers, to pursue your own adventures; to embark on unexpected journeys and experiences that make the wonder last. ●

Patrick
@patrick_kasingsing





#citybeautiful

12:05 PM

June 18, 2016
National Museum,
Manila

Taken with
Canon EOS M

There is beauty in the City.

Find it.
Capture it.
Share it.
Save it.

Scop...

kanto

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NUMBER FOUR 2016

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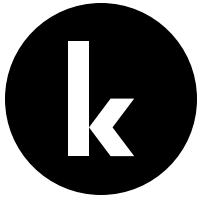
The conclusion to the story of a girl in two worlds by Joanna Parungao

PARTING SHOT

A visual endnote by Kara Gonzales

Gamla Stan,
Stockholm, Sweden

Photography
Mark Vibandor



Awesome People

WHO MADE THIS JOURNAL POSSIBLE



SIBYL LAYAG

Which fictional place would you love to go to?
Hogwarts, of course! I've been waiting for my owl-delivered letter since I was eleven.

Sibyl Layag is a bookworm and a traveler, an animal lover and a beach enthusiast. Although now a straight-edge business news reporter, her first love is writing features, and so sometimes her verbosity cannot be helped. She was formerly the assistant editor of *BluPrint* magazine, an architecture and design magazine.



TIMOTHY PERCIVAL

Which fictional place would you love to go to?
Pessoa's Lisbon, as described in *The Book of Disquiet*. Whilst tied to the Portuguese city, the poetry with which Pessoa writes adds an atmosphere; fictional, ethereal, sublime.

Timothy Percival is a London-based photographer, writer, and architecture lover. He works primarily with medium format film, and the occasional Polaroid.



KOEN VAN DAMME

Which fictional place would you love to go to?
I'm traveling in my head. That's where the inspiration comes from.

Koen Van Damme's photographs have been published in *Frame*, *Decors*, *A+U*, *Deco Magazine*, *Belgium New Architecture*, *de Architect*, *Jaarboek Architectuur*, *A+*, and *Architectural Digest*. In *Innovate*, published by Lannoo, he reduces, condenses and reveals the essential beauty of 20 architectural projects.



LAUREN MOSS (MYD STUDIO)

A practicing architect and graduate of U.C. Berkeley, Lauren Moss has been LEED Accredited since 2006. Her background includes experience in the design and delivery of residential, educational and commercial project types. She has taught and developed curriculum for Cal State Fullerton's Green Architectural Design program. In 2012, she was selected as one of *Engineering News Record's* 'Top 20 Under 40'. She is owner and principal of Moss Yaw Design Studio, an architectural practice based in Orange County, California.



FRANK LEUNG

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

One of my favourite books is a small novel, *Einstein's Dreams*, by Alan Lightman, which describes imaginary worlds if time were to work in completely different concepts than what we know now. I'd like to experience some of those worlds with fantastic ideas of time.

Frank Leung is founder and principal of via., a Hong Kong-based design studio with a holistic, collaborative approach mainly in architecture and interior design.



YAM OTARRA

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

The Shire! I know there's one in New Zealand, but I'd like to be with actual hobbits themselves.

Yam Otarra has been residing in Manila for the last two and a half years after her nomadic streak around the world. Now working for a creative agency in Makati, she still manages to find time to travel and even bring youths to travel with her for a good purpose.



LEANDRO ARTIGALA

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

Up in the trees like Cosimo Piovasco di Rondo, from Italo Calvino's *The Baron in the Trees*.

Leandro Artigala is an architect by profession but a photographer at heart. His work has been featured and recognized internationally. He also enjoys surfing and is in love with New York City, where he lives with his wife Sol and son Lautaro. New York, along with Buenos Aires, the city where he's born, are definitely two of his favorite places in the world.



JESSICA MURPHY

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

While this isn't a fictional place, I would definitely love to travel to South Africa in the future

Jessica Murphy is a photographer and graphic designer living and working in Brooklyn, New York. She recently launched a project, 'Better than a Selfie,' where she invites collaboration with creatives in need of creative portraits for various purposes.



MIGUEL LLONA

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

Because I'm a wicked child, a cross-country road trip across post-apocalyptic America in Mark Millar's *Old Man Logan* would be lovely. A country carved up and ruled by some of Marvel's most twisted villains? Yes please.

Miguel Llona is the former Managing Editor of *BluPrint* magazine. If a genie grants him three wishes, he'll (stupidly) wish for a healing ability, adamantium-laced skeleton and retractable claws.



NATE FRIZZELL

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

Considering I probably have a bit of Peter Pan Syndrome, maybe Neverland.

Nate Frizzell's work can be seen all over the world in galleries and in a range of books and magazines. But his outdoor murals are currently what give him the most satisfaction...that and ice cream.

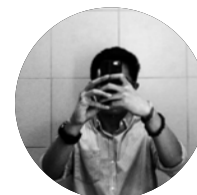


KIT SINGSON

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

Asteroid B-612 to watch the sun set again and again with the Little Prince.

Kit Singson's stories have been published in *Mega* magazine and *Travel Now* magazine as well as on various online sites. She graduated magna cum laude from the UP Diliman College of Fine Arts. A marketing creative on weekdays, she can be found in the ocean (and at the mountains, or in cafés) on other days.

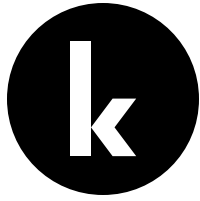


MARK VIBANDOR

Which fictional place would you love to go to?

Diagon Alley!

Mark Vibandor is an Architecture graduate of the Mapua Institute of Technology and currently working at Archion Architects. He is an amateur photographer who, armed with his trusty iPhone, loves to capture architectural details and spaces, as well as documenting a structure's connection to the human scale.



Awesome People

WHO MADE THIS JOURNAL POSSIBLE



KARA GONZALES

Which fictional place you'd love to go to?

"You know that place, between sleep and awake, that place where you still remember dreaming?"

- J.M. Barrie

Kara Gonzales is a designer by profession, but she believes she is an artist at heart. She enjoys travelling, creating things and spending time with her dog Sherlock. She is currently battling depression but she wants to change the world.



DANIELLE AUSTRIA

Which fictional place you'd love to go to?

The Singing Towers of Darillium!

Danielle Austria is a community manager at Publicis Manila. The Internet has given her delusions grandeur that she can do the world so much good by sharing what she had for lunch.



JOANNA PARUNGAO

Joanna graduated from the University of Sto. Tomas with a degree in Literature, and from the University of the Philippines Diliman with an MA in English Studies, major in Creative Writing. She is an established and awarded shortfiction writer with several published works to her name. She was nominated in the Pushcart Prize, and won Best Paper in the La Salle National Arts Congress. She worked as an instructor at UST as well as a freelance writer and editor before joining SNL Financial as a business news editor.



POLYMAT

Which fictional place you'd love to go to?

Anywhere in the Star Wars universe!

Polymat is a one-man design studio specializing in branding, architectural visualization and illustration. More works coming soon.

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Mark Vibandor's architectural imagery is a symphony of light, line and color

Photography
Lauren Moss

A N G L E S
P R O F I L E

Point Blanc

Geometry reigns supreme in
photographer Koen Van Damme's
monochromatic architectural portraits

Photography

Koen Van Damme

Interview

Patrick Kasingsing



VM Residence,
Vincent van Duysen Architects





VM Residence,
Vincent van Duysen Architects

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

My architectural photography is intense and concentrated, involving much more than just picture-taking. Although reality cannot be captured in a photograph, I try to reveal a structure's essential beauty by cleverly combining fragments of the whole into a single plane.

What sparked your interest in the photography of architecture? When, and how did this fascination with buildings start?

My interest in architectural photography was awakened during my photographic studies at the Academy of Arts in Ghent, Belgium. I had the opportunity to follow an architectural course taught by Paul Robbrecht, of the famous architectural firm Robbrecht & Daem.

Your photography style celebrates the beauty of space, simplicity and details. How did you arrive at such an aesthetic?

It always starts with the exploration of an architectural space. And to understand space you need to let it act on you. Architectural photography for me is a process of meditation. I'm always searching and waiting for the point where silent simplicity occurs. I'd like to think of architectural photography as a continuous process of simplification.



What is your imaging device of choice? In this day and age where mobile phone photography has reached new levels of quality and portability, is the imaging device used to capture a photo still a big issue? Why or why not?

I use a reflex camera most of the time. This is my choice because it allows me the opportunity to make use of the best lenses. Lens quality is very crucial when it comes to (architectural) photography. But the rising quality of mobile photography is certainly amazing and worth following.

As a published professional in the field of architectural photography, what for you is the role of photography in the field of architecture? And how is it essential to how people view and understand architecture?

Architecture arises from images in your head.
Architectural photography arises from architecture.
Images in your head arise from architectural photography.
toAP (thoughts on architectural photography). © Koen Van Damme



Pulcinella Youth Hostel,
Vincent van Duysen Architects



Taffeiren Residence,
Vincent van Duysen Architects



Architectural photography for me is a process of meditation. I'm always searching and waiting for the point where silent simplicity occurs.

Bent Shoes,
Goedefroo + Goedefroo





Pulcinella Youth Hostel,
Vincent van Duysen Architects

You embarked on an Instagram project last 2014 which has resulted in a beautifully curated gallery of black and white architectural imagery. What insights and observations have you gleaned from this project?

My Instagram gallery is a continuous project. One image per day, an accumulation of daily architectural impressions. One insight that I got from the project was that what you exclude from your subjects in your photographs can be just as important as what you let in within the frame.

Aside from the photography of architecture, do you engage in other hobbies or interests?

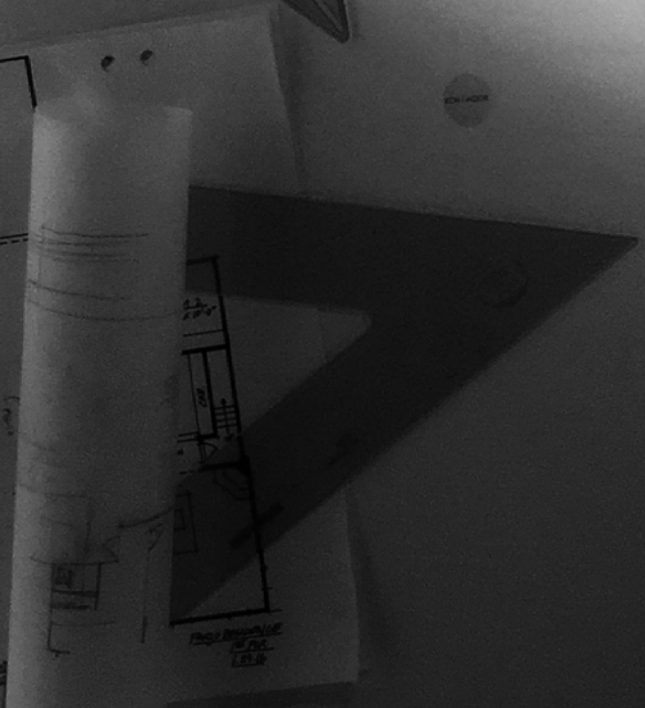
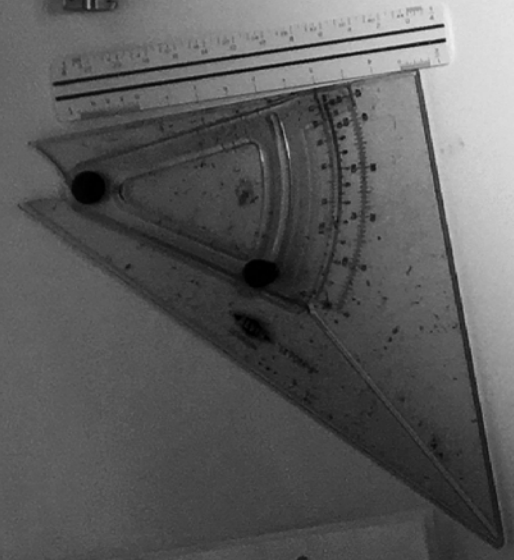
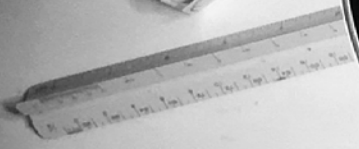
Photography incorporates all of my interests. Henri Cartier-Bresson was right. A good photograph is not just a sudden click of the shutter. It's a result of the movies you've seen, the books you've read, the music you've listened to. Music certainly has an influence on the photographs I take. It helps to inspire, to rouse a particular state of mind. ●

View Koen Van Damme's architectural photography on Instagram @koenvandamme or www.koenvandamme.be

My photography incorporates
all of my interests. A good
photograph is not just a sudden
click of the shutter. It's a result
of the movies you've seen, the
books you've read, the music
you've listened to.

'Mies in Krefeld' (Projekt MIK),
Mies van der Rohe and
Goedefroo + Goedefroo Architecten





A N G L E S
P R O F I L E

Good Company

A photographic glimpse into the day-to-day life of
MYD Studio, a design firm in Orange County, California

Photography Lauren Moss of MYD Studio **Interview** Patrick Kasingsing



Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hello! I'm Lauren, a licensed architect in Southern California (Orange County) and owner/principal at Moss Yaw Design Studio (MYD Studio, Inc.)

What for your studio makes great architecture?

In our work, successful architecture means responsibly contributing to the built environment and local communities in ways that produce meaningful spaces to live, work and play.

Architectural studio accounts on Instagram often populate their feeds with flashy renders and project photos, but yours incorporate a day-to-day take on life in an architectural studio. Why is it important for your team to show character, process and the occasional silliness in this social media platform, especially in a 'serious' field such as architecture?

Because we are a small office, the nature of our work and relationships is very personal and collaborative. That value is not only represented in the work we produce, but also in the process by which we take to create it. This process excites us, and the visual nature of it seems to resonate with others as well.

What projects do you specialize in? and would you say that your studio has a signature aesthetic? Does your practice believe in the importance of having a signature style, like say, Zaha Hadid's curvaceous designs or Frank Gehry's crumpled parametricism?

Though we tend towards clean lines and a more modernist aesthetic, we don't consider our firm to have a particular style; we see each project as a result of an examination of numerous site-specific factors and each takes form in different ways.

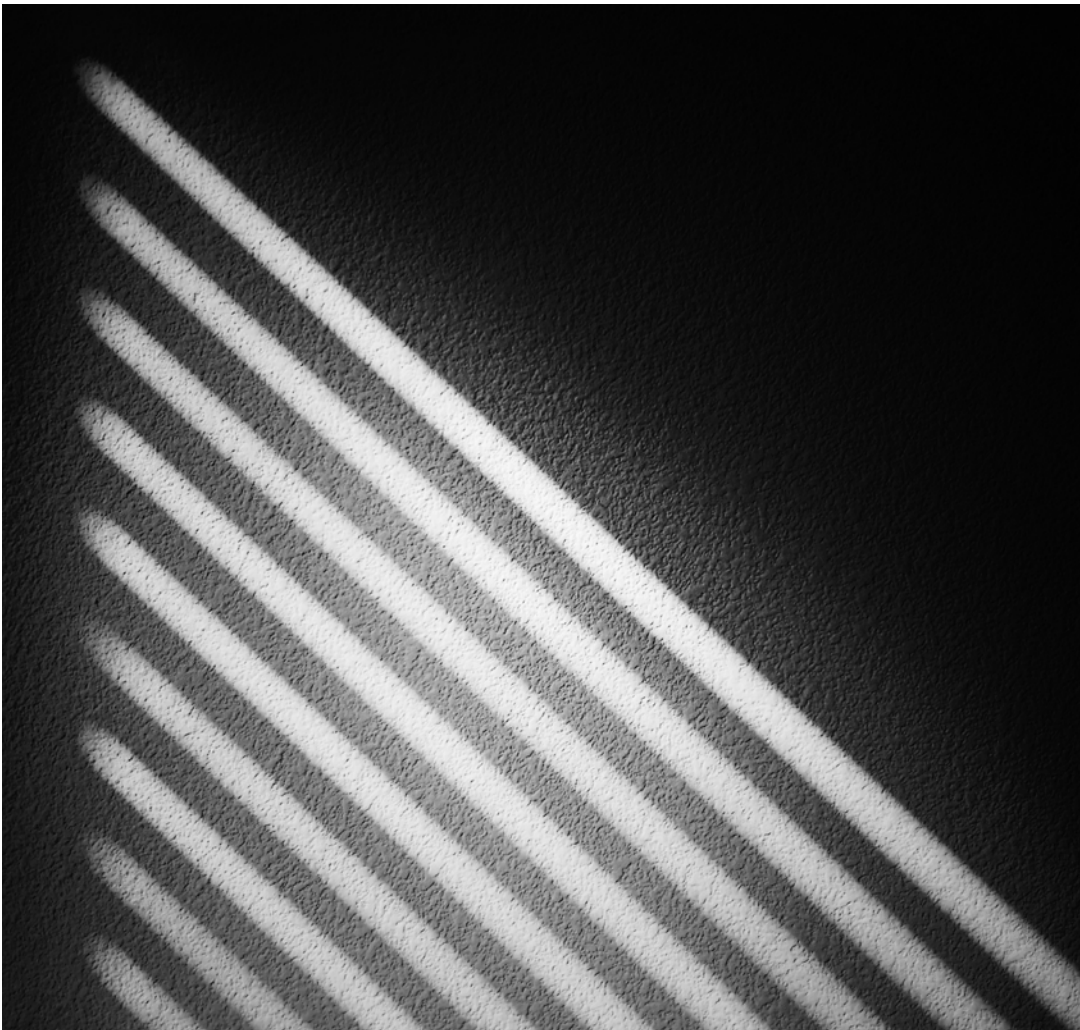
Lauren Moss and Jason Yaw
of MYD Studio





MYD Studio office,
Orange County, California

Successful architecture means responsibly contributing to the built environment and local communities in ways that produce meaningful spaces to live, work and play.





Laguna Beach construction detail

What is a normal day like in the office?

Our schedule varies quite a bit, depending on the phases that ongoing projects may be in, but ranges from typical office/computer work and CAD, to site visits, meetings, and research.

How important is photography to your studio? How do you think photography enhances a person's appreciation of architecture?

Photography is very meaningful—our industry is a very visual one, and an important part of our work is to communicate ideas within that context; we also rely on imagery to represent that work and our values as a design firm. Additionally, photography is the early medium that led me to study architecture and eventually become an architect, so it holds an extremely important place for me, both professionally and personally.

How do you think social media platforms like Instagram affect how people see architecture and architectural practices?

As a media platform, Instagram is particularly well-suited for creative practices, such as architecture, and for us, it serves as a creative outlet that allows us to share our work, influences, and engage with architects and photographers from around the world. ●





At the job site



Villa Park renovation
Opposite page: Laguna Beach interior



More of MYD Studio's photos on Instagram @myd
Visit their website at www.mydstudio.com





ANGLES
PROFILE

The Composer

Mark Vibandor's photography
is a visual serenade to architectural beauty

Photography Mark Vibandor

Interview Patrick Kasingsing





Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hello! I'm a 21 year-old architecture graduate of the Mapua Institute of Technology. I was also an exchange student at Lulea Tekniska Universitet in Sweden where I took additional architecture and design courses. This gave me the opportunity to travel around Europe, an experience which made me appreciate the distinct architectural character of each European country.

What sparked your interest in the photography of architecture? When, and how did this fascination with buildings start?

It all started in my Journalism class in high school, when we were tasked to capture in words, a portrait of the place where we live in. The exercise made me realize how much certain spaces or an architectural work can affect the behavior of its users. It gave me a new lens by which to view places, which inspired me to travel around Metro Manila in pursuit of new places and trying to capture its 'portrait' by way of documenting spaces and buildings through photography.

How do you work out how to capture and present an architectural work in a photo? What factors count in determining whether you take a shot or not?

I always like to challenge myself in capturing the uniqueness and character of a structure; each building has a different play on shadows, different patterns and textures, and connect very differently with the human scale. Each building can arouse our visual stimuli in various ways, and sometimes it's just a matter of finding that perfect perspective or angle. After capturing a photograph, I proceed to enhancing the photos to help emphasize its character through adjustments in color contrast and lighting. Lastly, I go with a photo filter that best describes my feeling and sentiments when I took a certain shot.

Casa Batllo, Barcelona, Spain
by Antoni Gaudi

How does being an architecture graduate enhance your architectural photography? And how does photographing architecture enhance your appreciation of it?

As an architect, my job involves the planning and design of spaces. And in many ways, framing and capturing a photograph is similar. You must consider which elements to include within the frame to be able to come up with a good composition. Photography helped me appreciate the smallest of details as well as views and angles that we often take for granted.

What is your imaging device of choice?

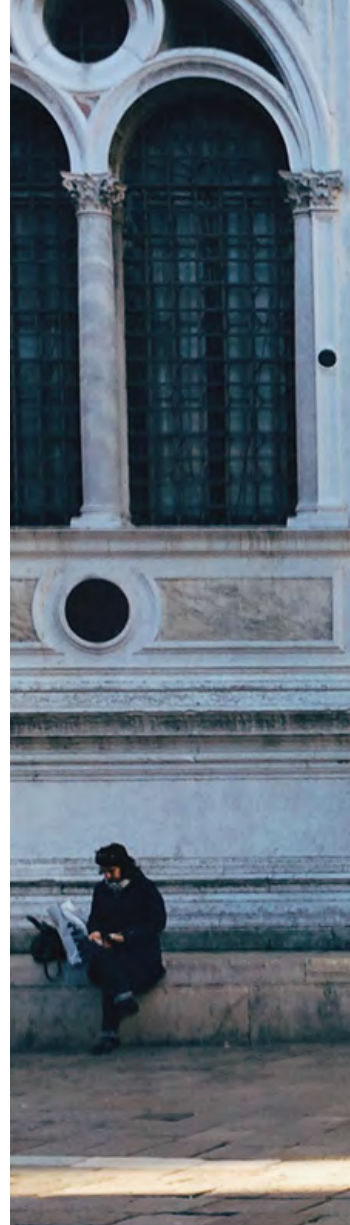
My iPhone. I find it very convenient and versatile. It's also rather useful as a stealthy camera when one is not allowed to take a photo of a building or space!

You seem to be a well-traveled individual. What buildings or places have you photographed left a lasting impression on you?

The Sagrada Familia by Antoni Gaudí in Barcelona, Spain gave me goose bumps. For me, it is the perfect marriage of architecture, art and science. It incorporated three-dimensional shapes that are way ahead of its time, like the hyperboloid and parabola, resulting in striking displays of light and shadows. ●

Follow Mark's Instagram @markvibandor and on his Behance at www.behance.net/markviband7974

Gamla Stan, Stockholm, Sweden





Each building can arouse our visual stimuli in various ways, and sometimes it's just a matter of finding that perfect perspective or angle.



Procuratie Nuove by
Jacopo Sansovino, Venice, Italy



Photography helped me appreciate the smallest of details as well as views and angles that we often take for granted.

Your creative corner is now on Instagram.

Follow us at [@kanto.journal](#) as we deliver your dose of creative inspiration from the fields of architecture, photography, art, literature and travel.

Share your creativity and use our hashtags [#kanto_photography](#), [#kanto_architecture](#), [#kanto_art](#), [#kanto_literature](#), and [#kanto_travel](#) and get the chance to be featured on our feed or in the quarterly journal.

Creativity is just around the corner.

kanto
CREATIVE CORNERS



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EXHIBIT
UNSELFIE

Graphic designer *Jessica Murphy*
wages war against the selfie in
her latest project



Photography
Frank Leung

A woman with short red hair, wearing a tan coat, a blue scarf, and black boots, is walking from left to right on a sidewalk. She is carrying a large red bag. The sidewalk is made of red and brown bricks. To her right is a brick wall with a stone base. A street sign on two poles points to the left. The sign has the text 'On Tai Street' and '安泰街' in Chinese characters. A shadow of the sign and poles is cast on the brick wall. Above the sign, there is a white rectangular object mounted on the wall, possibly a light fixture or a decorative element.

On Tai Street
安泰街



Meditations

The visual ruminations of architect–designer Frank Leung is also a veritable portrait of his native Hong Kong

Photography Frank Leung **Interview** Patrick Kasingsing



Hello! Please introduce yourself.

I'm an architect and designer with my own studio, via., which is based in Hong Kong. Besides creating spaces and places in Hong Kong and elsewhere, It is my desire to bring in a more relaxed, collaborative, almost-familial approach as the central ethic of our studio. We want life after architecture!

What sparked your interest in photography? What compelled you to pick up a camera and start shooting

I would have preferred sketching, but photography possesses that instantaneous quality that enables the capture of light, expressions and coincidences that are unique to the moment at the click of a button. I wouldn't call what I do as proper 'photography', but with Instagram and the smartphone camera, my snaps can be shared with a greater community which is a great way for me to reflect and relax through images.



Your photography comprise predominantly of images of Hong Kong. What do you love most about this place? And what quality of the city would you say is best captured through photography?

Hong Kong is home, and home is where the heart is. I try to capture its architecture with my eye on the street level; to capture moments of everyday life; the contrast of old and new, the little against the colossal. For me, the people of Hong Kong and the city offer unlimited opportunities to explore and express myself visually.





德源大厦



香港政府
交通标志



To see how architecture meets the ground and people, or to observe how people interact with buildings; these are more intriguing to me than the superficial image of a standalone colossal structure.

As an architect with a love for photography, how do you think photography enhances the viewer's experience of architecture?

What I do on Instagram is that I don't try to make architecture the sole 'hero' of the shot. To see buildings in an ensemble or in their immediate surroundings, how architecture meets the ground and people, or to observe how people interact with buildings; these are far more intriguing to me than the superficial image of a standalone colossal structure.

What is your imaging device of choice?

I have a number of cameras for different occasions, but primarily, I use the iPhone 6 and Fujifilm XT-10, edited mostly on VSCO, for the shots you see on my Instagram.

What for you are the qualities of good photography?

For what I do, it's to keep my eyes open. Noticing something worth shooting is the first thing; that visual frame already contains a scene, the right light, some ways of framing it, for a picture to end up being interesting. Good reflexes definitely help in obtaining good shots.

Ultimately, what is photography to you? And where do you plan to take this hobby in the future?

As a species, we have an innate wish to communicate, and I do it through architecture, design, and photography. I've been framing a lot of my shots on display in my studio, in part to remind myself to keep my eyes open, in part to inspire others to take notice of what's around us. ●

Follow Frank's visual journals in Hong Kong and during his travels on instagram @einsteinsdreams





New York City,
June 24, 2015



L E N S
E X H I B I T

Visions of the Everyday

Leandro Artigala celebrates
the beauty of life's little coincidences
and moments in an art book that compiles
a year's worth of photos

Photography Leandro Artigala
Interview Patrick Kasingsing



New York City,
March 9, 2015



Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! I am Leandro Artigala, an architect and photographer based in New York, a city where I've been living in together with my wife and son for the last fifteen years.

I grew up in Buenos Aires, where I studied photography at the Centro Cultural Recoleta and architecture at the National University of Buenos Aires, where I received my BS and MS from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, and where I also used to teach. Sadly, due to the responsibilities of my full-time job, I couldn't devote enough time to continue working as a professor, at least for now. Teaching was such a gratifying experience and was a way of giving back to my beloved school. A prestigious and well-known public institution of which I owe a lot and I'm so thankful to have been part of it.

In 1993, I studied photography for a year; this was also the third year of my architectural career. During workshops, lectures and classes, I was able to find out, discover and experience how amazingly compatible the art of photography is to architecture and design. In architectural school I was one of the few guys who carried a camera all the time. I remember taking photos at site visits and then doing lab all by myself; these were really memorable moments in my life.

While studying photography, my world suddenly turned monochromatic. There was such an attraction to shoot everything in black and white. Some photos are meant to be taken in black and white and some shots are better in color. Every now and then I like to see the world monochromatically; I find its simplicity quite eye catching, romantic and attractive. I had great professors who taught me how to read photos and how these photos open up a different way to 'see'. And that's what I try to do every day. To look at things from a different perspective through photography



New York City,
March 27, 2015

One of the things that amazes me the most about photography is its ability to 'capture' Time within a tiny black box.

What sparked your interest in photography? What compelled you to pick up a camera and start shooting?

When I was a kid my father used to take photos all the time, even videos on a Super 8; He was always carrying a camera around, and was an avid and passionate photographer. At an early age, I was already surrounded by cameras, prints, films and slides at home. He never said I should take up photography, or even gave me a camera to play it. It all just sort of clicked. Another event that pushed me to pursue and study photography was when a friend of mine gave me a 35mm, manual, which I promptly used to take photos. However, when I went to pick up my roll, it was a mess. All the photos were overexposed. That's when I realized I needed to study photography if I really wanted to take this hobby seriously.

Your photography exhibits a playful, often witty take on daily life. Do you have favorite subjects that you love to take?

I'm always attracted with the 'moment.' One of the things that amazes me most about photography is its ability to 'capture' Time within a tiny black box. You capture that unrepeatable moment, which stays there forever and when you look at your prints, it's like magic; like seeing your memories come to life.

I do like and enjoy street photography. But I don't consider myself as strictly a street photographer as I love photography in general and I appreciate great photos from all genres. I really find people interesting. I love to observe people. And there's so much to glean upon when you take the portrait of a person.

You currently live in New York City. How does living in one of the world's most photogenic and multicultural cities inspire your photography?

New York is such an inspiring and cosmopolitan city. I guess you can see that reflected in some of the photos published in my new book. 'Photograph-able' moments are just everywhere, sometimes screaming at you, yelling at you, all waiting to be captured.

This place is truly a melting pot. There is incredible multicultural interaction between people here; somehow New York just succeeds in attracting creative minds from different fields, luring people from all over the world to gather here, create here, live here. In the end, I think it's the people that makes the city great, interesting and unique. These multicultural mix of dreams and talent make New York distinctly New York.

I think every city in the world can be cool, exciting, inspiring and energetic, but there is something about New York sets it apart. Everyday life is visually attractive; you never know what's around the corner, whom or what you'll encounter. Everyday is an adventure in this city. I actually think carrying a camera on your person should be mandatory here. New York and Buenos Aires are definitely my two favorite places in the world.



New York City,
October 21, 2015



New York City, March 18, 2015



New York City, July 21, 2015



New York City,
July 20, 2015

You have recently released a book project 'EyeKlik.' What is the concept behind the book?

Last 2015, and for each of its three hundred and sixty-five days, I took a photo. Armed with just an iPhone 6, I captured cityscapes, people, buildings, landscapes, textures, children, colors, shadows, patterns, airplanes, beaches, seasons, skies, sunsets, sunrises, oceans, trees,

mountains, animals, billboards, crowds, trains, vehicles, clouds, rivers, rain, objects, landmarks, cultures, colors, lights, from dawn to dusk. The result: three hundred and sixty-five images of pretty, mundane, exotic, at times unique, funny, absurd, bizarre, sometimes surreal, even emotional, awkward, colorful, dull, interesting, abstract, romantic, full of light, dynamic, underground, nostalgic, static, boring, touching and many times magical objects and moments that made up each day of my year.

Your imaging device of choice for the book is an iPhone 6. Why is this so? What is it about mobile phone photography that makes it a good medium of visual storytelling despite its limitations compared to professional cameras?

I think one of the main reasons why smartphones are good visual storytelling mediums, besides being our portals to social media, is because pretty much everyone has them in their pockets. Many of these smartphones come with pretty reliable cameras, good resolutions and useful photo apps that can prove useful when one encounters 'moments' that you just had to capture and you don't have a professional camera with you.

This is also what drove me to pursue this take-one-photo-a-day project using such a device, which in my case, is an iPhone 6. I was curious to work on a photo project done (shooting and editing) merely and entirely with an iPhone. I wanted to explore how far one can go with the medium, and to push it to its limits. I was so intrigued to see the project come to life, and judging from the results, I have to say I'm pretty amazed.

In the end, I don't think it matters what imaging device you took a picture with, be it a \$20,000 camera or a \$10 one. What matters most is the way you see through your device. Quoting Dorothea Lange: "The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera."

The beauty of Photography is showing other people how you see the world. I love to learn looking at the works of other photographers, and it doesn't really matter to me if he or she's an amateur or a professional, or what imaging device, medium or editing technique they used. This is part of what makes photography enjoyable for me. It reveals how other see things, as my pictures reveal my perspective of the world around me. *Look with your heart, click with your eye.*



New York City,
April 30, 2015

In the end, I don't think it matters what imaging device you took a picture with, be it a \$20,000 camera or a \$10 one. What matters most is the way you see through your device.



New York City, February 5, 2015



New York City,
March 13, 2015

It was priceless every time I went home and my son would approach me with the question, 'What is your photo of the day?'

Any memorable anecdotes or experiences that you have encountered while doing photography?

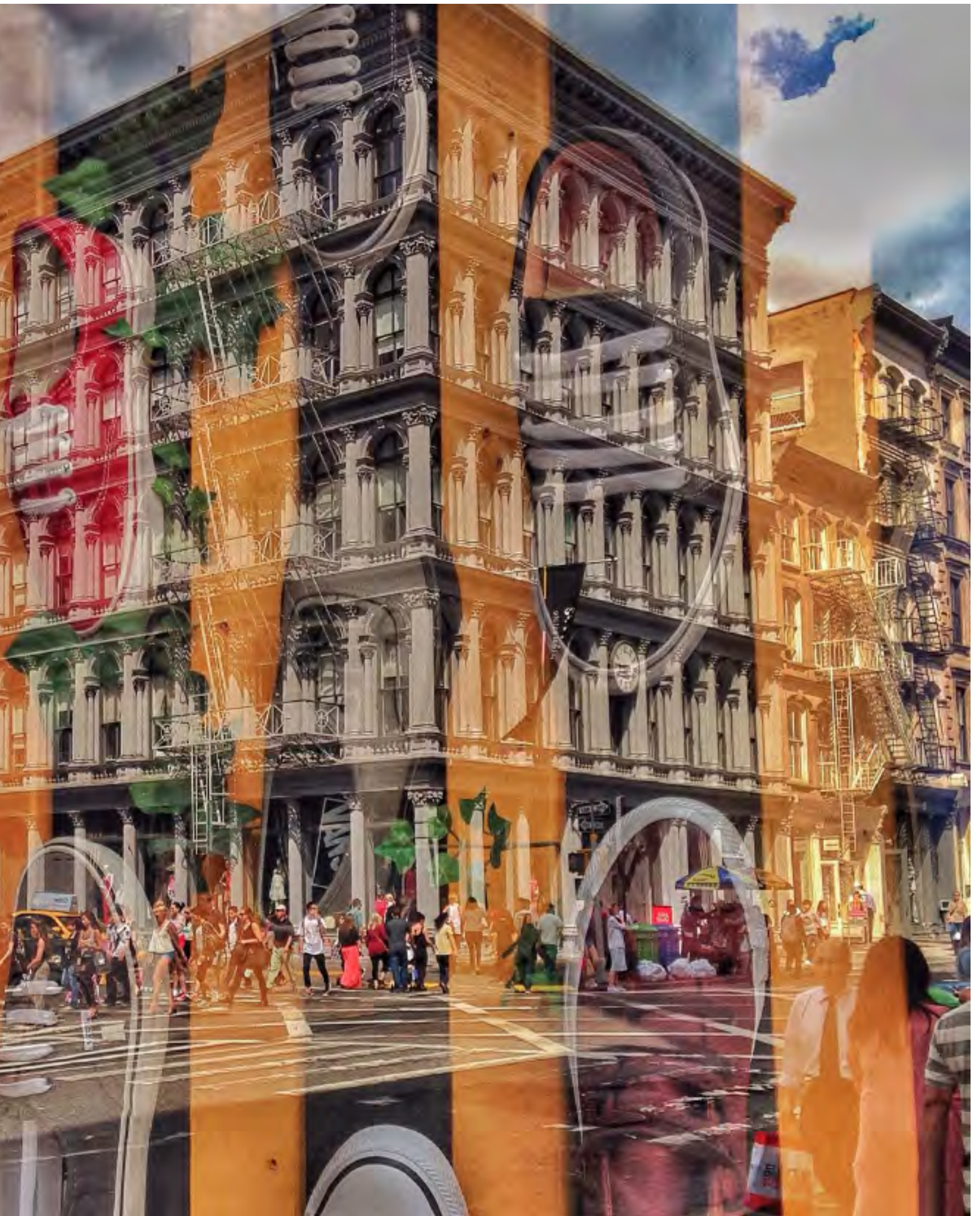
I can never forget shooting the photograph of the guy on a bike dressed as Batman! When I shot his photo, he gave me this stern and stoic expression. He was literally patrolling the city on his customized and over accessorized Batmobile and funnily enough, he actually made me feel secure. Surely nothing bad is going to happen in Gotham City.

Some of the photos were actually my son's eye (idea). He would say, 'Dad I think you should take this photo, this should be the photo of the day!' There was this photo of a guy performing a somersault near the Pacific in San Diego, of which my son was responsible. He asked me if I already had my photo of the day and I say I don't. He then points to the guy and says, 'Look at that guy, I think this can be a good photo!' That's a memorable moment for me. It was priceless every time I went home and my son would approach me with the question, 'What is your photo of the day?'

My last photo for the book, which was of the One World Trade Center taken from the Brooklyn Bridge was also another touching and memorable moment. That particular image always makes me emotional, as it reminds of that fateful day in New York City when the Twin Towers collapsed, with thousands of lives lost. I was fortunate to see those two buildings intact and emotionally devastated to see their destruction. With this image, I wanted to remember and commemorate all the people that lost their lives during that cruel attack, and to share in the grief but also the hope or rebirth with their loved ones.

New York City,
June 9, 2015







New York City,
June 26, 2015

Does being an architect have any impact on your choice of angles, framing and subject in your photography?

Not really. But architecture does figure in a lot of my pictures but I do not have strict preferences in terms of subject. I do enjoy looking at reflections, be it in water, a granite wall, storefronts, glass, etc. I also like framing photos with the sky as it reminds us of how small and insignificant we are as compared to the grandness of nature, like capturing a city skyline with the sky as a background. I do enjoy the editing process the same way I do when I'm looking through the lens. Besides endless techniques, sometimes, simple things like turning photos upside down can get you an attractive and pretty interesting image.

Any place, event or scenario you still wish to photograph but haven't?

A trip to Iceland is something I've always wanted to take off of my bucket list. It's such a small island, a remote kind of place yet home to stunning natural diversity. I heard a lot of good things about the country and its hospitable people. The gorgeous landscape, the Northern lights and its night-less summers. It is a singular place of which there's no point of reference or comparison I can use to describe it. I have also always been fascinated with the Aurora Borealis, and would really love to see and capture it in real life. ●

If you want to view more of Leandro's photography, visit leandroartigala.com, on Instagram @leandro_artigala and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYklik>



New York City,
October 2, 2015



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CREATIVE CORNERS

L E N S
E X H I B I T



Un-Selfie

Jessica Murphy

New York-based Filipino creative Jessica Murphy on recapturing her love for photography and in her latest project, championing the cause of the anti-selfie

Photography Jessica Murphy **Interview** Patrick Kasingsing



Cath, *The New Yorker*

Hello! Please introduce yourself.

Hi! I'm Jessica Murphy, a creative based in Brooklyn, New York City.

What sparked your interest in photography? What compelled you to pick up a camera and start shooting?

My affinity with photography started when I was 14, when I found a film camera in our house that no one was using. I asked my dad if I could have it and he gave it to me. I was previously an editorial writer and cartoonist, but I wanted to learn photography so I dropped editorial writing, and used more of my time to get involved in photojournalism and Photoshop. I used my first roll when I went to San Francisco...It's funny because that was the last time I was very serious with photography. After some time, I decided to go back to taking pictures last year, thanks to the encouragement of my family & close friends who always saw the potential in me. I'm glad to be taking a lot of photos in my life lately.

You seem to have a fascination for portrait photography. Why is this so? What is it about the human face and body that you love to capture behind the lens of a camera?

I'm pretty into it. I like people and it's a subject that often makes or breaks a photo. There is nothing better for me than to be able to get the opportunity to capture the portrait of talented and interesting individuals.

How do you like to frame your portraits personally? Do you prefer studio shoots or do you like to embrace the outdoors for your portraits?

I like natural lighting and settings, but I am interested to work eventually with a studio setup.



Lindsey, *New York Times*



Warren, creative strategist



Justine, painter



Robin, graphic designer and photographer



Mary, fashion student

You are currently based in New York City, and that place is quite the melting pot of cultures and stories (thus the existence of projects like Humans of New York). How is your experience so far in capturing the many faces that make up this City?

You'll never run out of projects (and photos!) in New York City. The people whose photos I've taken of so far are very interesting and amazing in what they do. They are naturally confident and comfortable being themselves in front of the camera, which is what I find to be more important to capture than just making them look good under the lens. It's interesting to take photos of creatives vs. models, but I would also love to do fashion-themed shoots in the future!

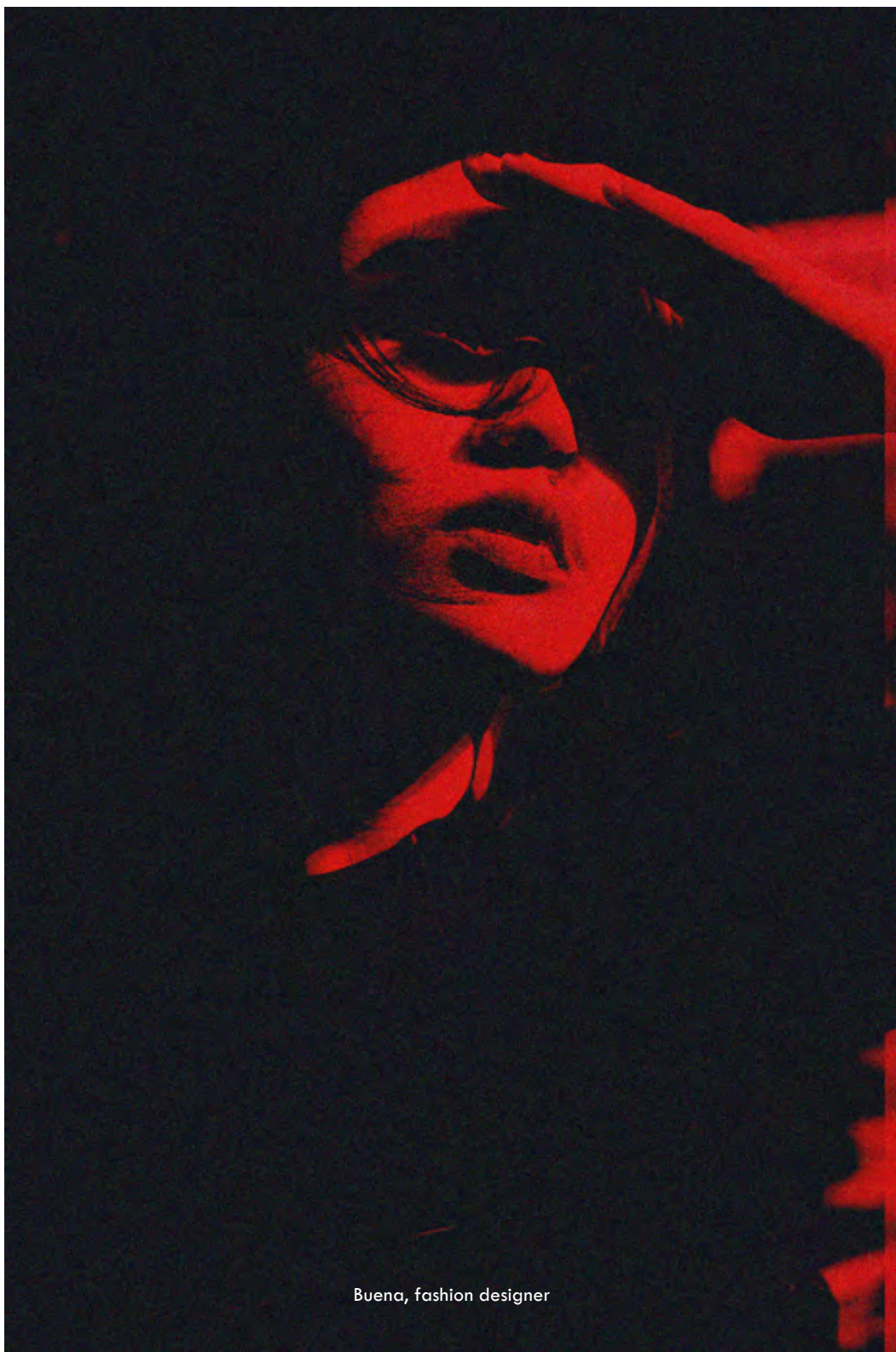
What for you makes a good portrait?

If I am drawn to it.

Any memorable anecdotes while taking portraits? Care to recall them?

It was in early 2016 when I decided to take photos of where I was: a less interesting place—a province in the Philippines where everything was slow and quiet. I took pictures of streets and people. As someone who is more comfortable in art direction—which entails preparing and planning before a shoot, it was refreshing to just go out and spot whatever's interesting or worth shooting. I learned that the time is now, and that moment is there for you to experience, exist in and enjoy. When I moved to New York I was able to talk to Bryan Derballa, a portrait photographer who told me to just keep working and shooting. He also talked about the trend of film photography or lo-fi and how a lot of them are "lo-fi, in a bad way," so being technically good is important. After that conversation, I was inspired to do better. Being in a fast-paced city, I try to keep track, enjoy the moment but also keep up with the flow. ●

Follow Jessica Murphy's latest project, Better than a Selfie, (betterthanselfie.co) where she collaborates with some of New York's brightest creatives for their portraits



Buena, fashion designer

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EDITED BY SIBYL LAYAG

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RUMINATIONS

THE TWO-PRONGED FORK AND THE EATER

Kit Singson on the joys and perils
of travel and why one should be a
responsible tourist

Photography
Yam Otarra





Have you ever stood atop a cliff, wondering what it would be like if you jumped off it? Apparently, there is a term for that feeling: *l'appel du vide*. The call of the void. I was positively filled with it, looking out into the sharp rocks and churning seas. It was precarious and unreachable and I was drawn to it.

COMPASS
BACKPACK

The Siren Call of Batanes

The dangerous allure of the
Philippines' northernmost frontier

Words and photography Sibyl Layag



I usually like my beaches swimmable, and though Valugan Boulder Beach is the most un-swimmable beach I've ever been to, the rhythmic sight of the wild waves crashing into slippery rocks pulled me in and mesmerized me.

B

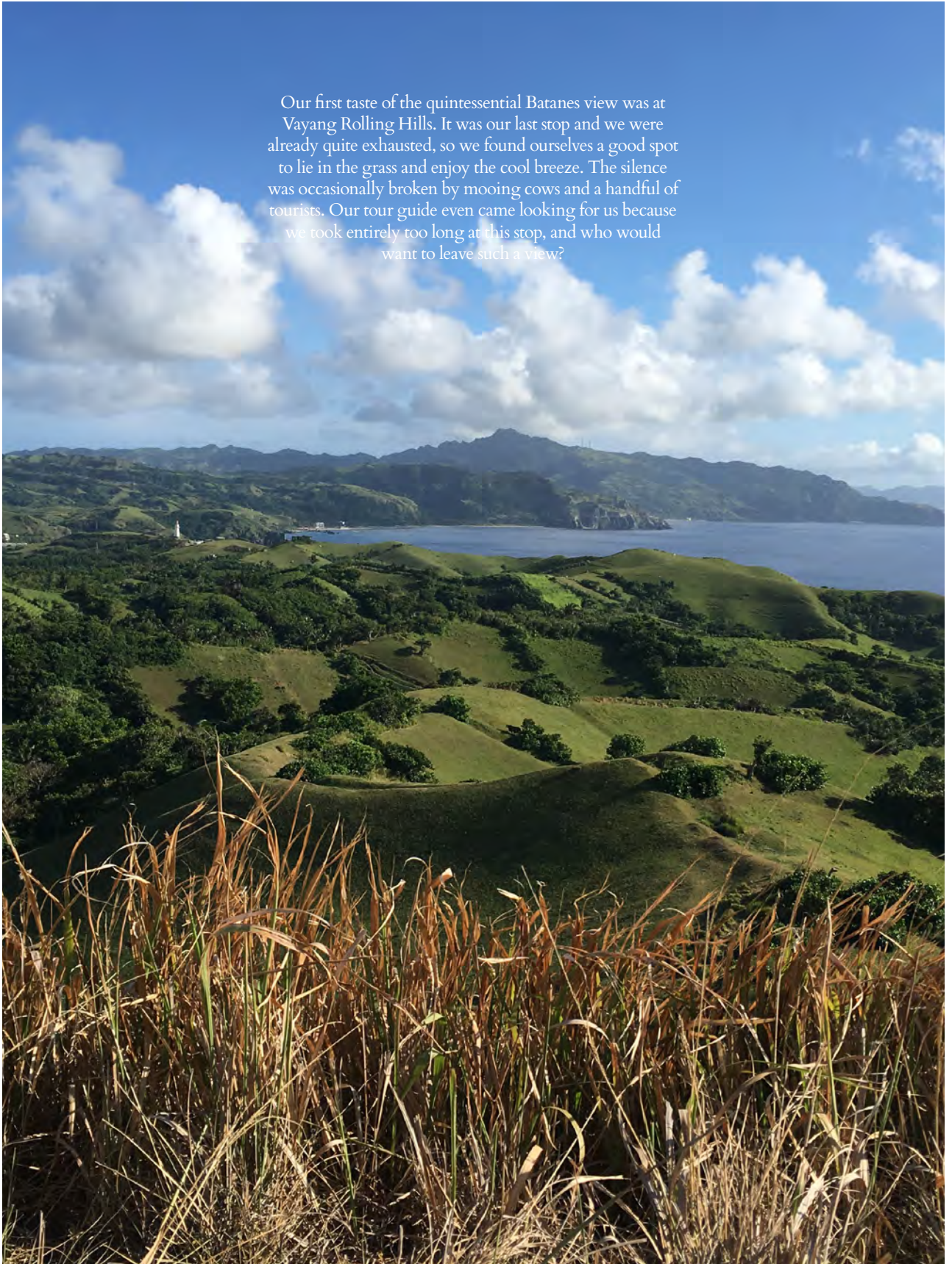
Being in the Philippines' smallest province — both in land area and population — is often described as being like in a foreign country, such as New Zealand or Scotland. But out of our many islands and provinces, Batanes is perhaps one of the most Filipino, possessing our nation's most positive traits. The people are hardworking, resourceful, kind and honest. The views are nothing short of spectacular, the surroundings lush and verdant. It is almost like an illusion. But it is not — this paradise is reachable by plane (albeit an expensive one; trips here are limited to four days in a week and only in the mornings, and only small planes can fit in the airport runways). Save up and scour the airlines for seat sales. All the trouble you could possibly encounter before even getting to this elusive destination is all worth it.





Signs like this abound in Batan Island, where the capital of Basco is located, as there are plenty of blind curves bordering steep cliffs. It's so prevalent that the sign has become one of Batanes' most recognizable symbols. There are even souvenir items branded with it.

Our first taste of the quintessential Batanes view was at Vayang Rolling Hills. It was our last stop and we were already quite exhausted, so we found ourselves a good spot to lie in the grass and enjoy the cool breeze. The silence was occasionally broken by mooing cows and a handful of tourists. Our tour guide even came looking for us because we took entirely too long at this stop, and who would want to leave such a view?







The next day, we woke up bright and early to catch our *faluva* ride to Sabtang Island. The ride was famous for rendering even the most intrepid, seasick-proof travelers numb with nausea. My head was still reeling when we got to Morong Beach, but the view was so enthralling, my seasickness simply vanished. The same waves that throttled me during the boat ride calmed and soothed me at this beach.



The famous Nakabuang Arch framing the crashing waves at Morong Beach. The weather was perfect for a dip and the water wasn't too cold at all, but we weren't able to swim as we only had a few hours to explore Sabtang before the last *faluwa* ride leaves for Batan Island.

Lighthouses — Batanes seems to be teeming with them, and they are more than just great vantage points for birds-eye views of the islands. For all its beauty, Batanes' untouched quality can sometimes mean danger to those approaching it. The shorelines of Batanes' islands are often composed of dangerous rock formations and ragged cliffs jutting out into the sea. This one is perched atop a grassy cliff in Sabtang Island.



One of Sabtang Island's rocky coasts and one of the many splendid vistas we passed during our tricycle ride to and from Sabtang port. There is no such thing as an ordinary tricycle ride in Batanes; all routes are scenic routes.





To travelers seeking adventures in Batanes, these kinds of views are just that — something to enjoy gazing at as a barrage of thoughts and realizations and epiphanies pass through your newly refreshed mind, or something your soul feeds on long before you have left the place. But to the locals, the Ivatan people, these places mean livelihood. They bring their animals here to pasture, they bring their boats out in the sea to fish. And no one can really argue who among us is the luckier set.





After a while, one begins to wonder how an assortment of randomly placed rocks, streaks of dark soil marring sandy shores and patches of dry grass scattered among green — all put together as if by design — can stun you with its profound beauty.

One of the most well-preserved towns in Sabrang is Chavayan, with rows upon rows of traditional stone houses that can withstand the violent storms that frequently batter the province. Walking along the streets of Chavayan was like stepping back in time, if not for the electrical lines and the unsightly campaign posters.





This is how a typical Ivatan house looks like on the inside. Our tour guide let us into his humble abode, and his mother was inside chatting with some neighbors. We joined in, appreciating the brief respite from the heat of the midday sun, and we quickly found out that she appeared in that one movie with Coco Martin and Toni Gonzaga. As it happens, I watched that movie, and I immediately remembered which part she was in because of her winning smile. It was in that moment when I really, fully realized that I was living a dream. As I was watching the movie, I promised myself that I would go to Batanes sooner rather than later, and there I was, sitting with that woman from the movie, in the place I dreamed of visiting when I saw her smile at me from the big screen.

Our last day in Batanes began with a visit to the Mahatao Shelter Port, recently built to keep boats in when the seas get too rough. The harmony of natural and man-made protective elements in the port was poetic, and the sense of progress and civic competence was palpable and admirable.





The Alapad Rock Formation is often touted by locals as a place famous for having been shot in a movie, but I can't recall the title or the starring actors. To me, however, it was interesting because it looked very much like a sinking ship.



The Honesty Coffee Shop is a testament to one of the Ivatan people's most defining traits: integrity. By now, many of us already know how the shop operates: in lieu of shopkeepers, the various items for sale are labeled with their prices, and customers simply place the money inside a designated payment box and write down what they bought in a logbook. And so this coffee shop is not just an oasis for the physically weary, but also for those who are jaded by the prevalence of dishonesty in the world we live in today.



Soon it came time to visit the most iconic destination in Batanes: Racuh a Payaman, or Marlboro Country. It's a privately owned land for pasturing. It is even more awe-inspiring in person — the rich greens and blues, the rolling hillsides, the smell of dirt and grass. The cows may be living short lives, but they are already spending it in heaven.





After spending way too long (again) at Racuh a Payaman, we headed off to the island's fishing village, Diura, for lunch. Our tour guide set us up with one of the best cooks in the island, who also operates a small bed and breakfast. In our dining area hung a couple of *vakuls*, or women's protective headgear, just begging to be tried on by eager travelers (read: us). There was also a *kanayi*, or the native vest jacket for men. Both are made of dried leaves from the *vuyavuy*, or Philippine date palm.



Our last day in Batanes was also my birthday, so I considered this my birthday feast! We were served fresh lapu-lapu *escabeche*, *patatim*, stir-fried beef with vegetables, dorado *kilawin* and nose-to-tail fish soup with the eggs of the fish included — all for what the single lapu-lapu would have cost back in the metro. Easily the best meal we had during our stay, made even better relished over good conversation with our tour guide and the cook, who gave us a slice of life as Ivatans making the most out of their resources and livelihood options. Luckily for us, dorado was in season when we arrived, so we got to eat them fresh. As they're not always available and they're pretty popular with the locals, they are often dried out in the sun to preserve them until off-season.



After days of looking out into beaches and seas and never swimming in them, we finally got to take a dip in what the locals call the Blue Lagoon. I was ecstatic; the swimming abstinence was just too much. I specifically asked our tour guide to bring us to a place where we could swim. While the other beaches in Batanes can be too shallow, cold or turbulent, the water at the Blue Lagoon is the perfect temperature and level for a nice, relaxing swim. It was a bit rocky, but nothing a pair of slippers or aqua shoes couldn't handle. The rock formations and cliffs stood sentinel over us as we whiled away the afternoon at the lagoon.



T H E G U I D E

Batanes

PLACES TO GO Batanes is made up of three main inhabited islands: Batan, Sabtang and Itbayat. The capital of Basco is located in Batan Island, as are the municipalities of Ivana, Mahatao, Uyugan and Imnajbu. Tours in Batan are divided into two: north and south, both with their own set of unique destinations. Sabtang Island is a 45-minute *faluwa* ride from Batan Island and is even more rustic and idyllic. Itbayat is a little harder to get to — about three hours away by *faluwa* (if you can survive it), and less than half an hour by plane. Nature takes center stage in Batanes, but half of its charm lies in the vivacity and kindness of the Ivatan. Some even greet you graciously as you pass by.

THINGS TO DO You can always get a tour agency to set you up a van tour of all the destinations, but if you want to save more and also get to decide how long you want to spend reveling in a particular spot, hiring a tricycle is recommended. Your homestay can set you up with this, or you can flag the first tricycle you encounter and ask if they can do tours. This way, your guide is more focused on you and what you want out of your tours. You can also hire a bike and tour the nearby areas yourself; there are bike rentals available in some homestays and in the city center. An overnight stay in Sabtang is also ideal, as you get to have more time to explore the island and its quaint villages. You can even spend the night in one of the traditional stone houses. However, everything is a bit more expensive there, especially the food. The first *faluwa* going to Sabtang leaves at around 7 a.m., and the last *faluwa* back to Batan leaves at around 1 p.m., so you'll barely have half a day to explore if you choose to do a day tour. It'll be enough to visit all the interesting places, but swimming in the beaches or visiting the less-traveled areas are next to impossible this way.

WHAT TO EAT Be warned: most meals in Batanes are quite expensive. Get your tour guide to set up a lunch meal at the Diura Fishing Village, where you can eat the freshest seafood at rock-bottom prices. There are a handful of *carinderias* in Basco as well, one of the best and cheapest being Hiro's Cafe. Try the braised corned beef — it's made of local grass-fed beef, tender and flavorful. Pair it with turmeric rice, another Ivatan staple. Have a sampling of local dishes such as *wud* or *luñis* at Pension Ivatan. The province is also known for lobsters that are cheaper than the ones in Manila, as long as you buy them when they're in season.





The *abras* are the local water taxis. An efficient chaos, serving wanderers to the old souks. They present views of the riverside cafes, who themselves set a scene, idyllic, and obscurely for Dubai from street level.

C O M P A S S
P A S S P O R T

Desert Visions

Dubai, from its dusty outskirts to the gleaming metropolis it has become

Written and photographed by Timothy Percival



The light is flat under a blanket sun. The shadows cast are lightened by reflections from the surfaces close by, the hotels and the car parks and the traffic's consistent gliding along the main straight.



And although the glass has been constructed modern, the undesigned emerges in puddles of light. Wrinkled and liquid. Cast at angles, and allowing the strict panes, ever so slightly warped, chance to demonstrate a moment of reality.





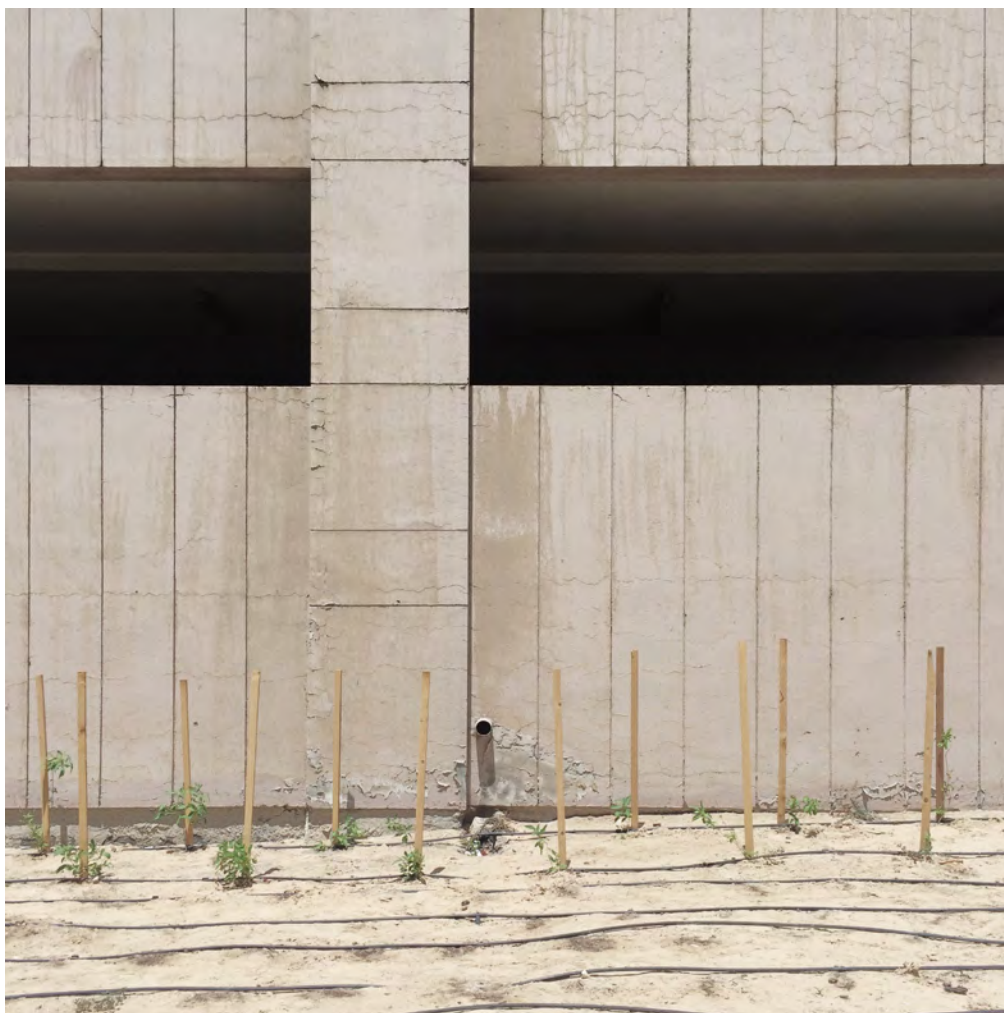
Though yet to be over-dreamt are Noor Bank's single story warehouses. With all the weathered character of corrugated metal, they add an un-lauded history to the city. The area is maybe unique in that it shows signs of a progressive growth, as opposed to the curated vision on display elsewhere. Old motor yards, dusty macaroni factories, and collapsed JCB diggers sit alongside juice bars, brunch menus, and the polished shoes of an etiquette in the midst of change.



Subtle emblems of an enfant city hide themselves everywhere. Freshly painted road markings, impractically white cars, architectural statements on the grandest scale. When did you arrive?
The self-proclaiming juvenile.

WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE






To live here is to breathe a dry air. In the summer months although the heat exposes a dense humidity, life is experienced journeying between air-conditioned towers. The winter holds a calmer heat; dustier, coarser. But a heat that reminds us of the city's foundations, built upon an arid sand.



Dubai should be viewed as an accomplishment of ideas. Forget the notion that this is a city, corporate, monopolised, and charmless. For each tower is an emblem of a ventured dream. Still too new to be a continuous whole, it's home to an architecture overseen with parental pride.








Head to the desert. The heat rises and the purity of the horizon is distorted and corrupted by the warm air, Skyscrapers become nothing more than the humble glow of an irrelevant scene far away.

A place exists not in what it calls itself, nor in what it believes itself to be, but in the tensions of its ego. Dubai is known as the bold metropolis, and less for what it is—an idea, a dream incarnate.

You can find snippets of Timothy's work on his Instagram account [@percivalpercival](#).







COMPASS
PASSPORT

Local Color

A Peruvian sojourn from the vivid colors of Cusco, to the rugged beauty of Huaraz

Words and photography Yam Otarra



Cusco

A small street near Plaza de Armas called Procuradores is where backpackers will find the cheapest travel agencies that will take them to Machu Picchu. Some go as low as 100\$ for a one-night stay in Aguas Calientes—but no one can ever be sure of scammers!

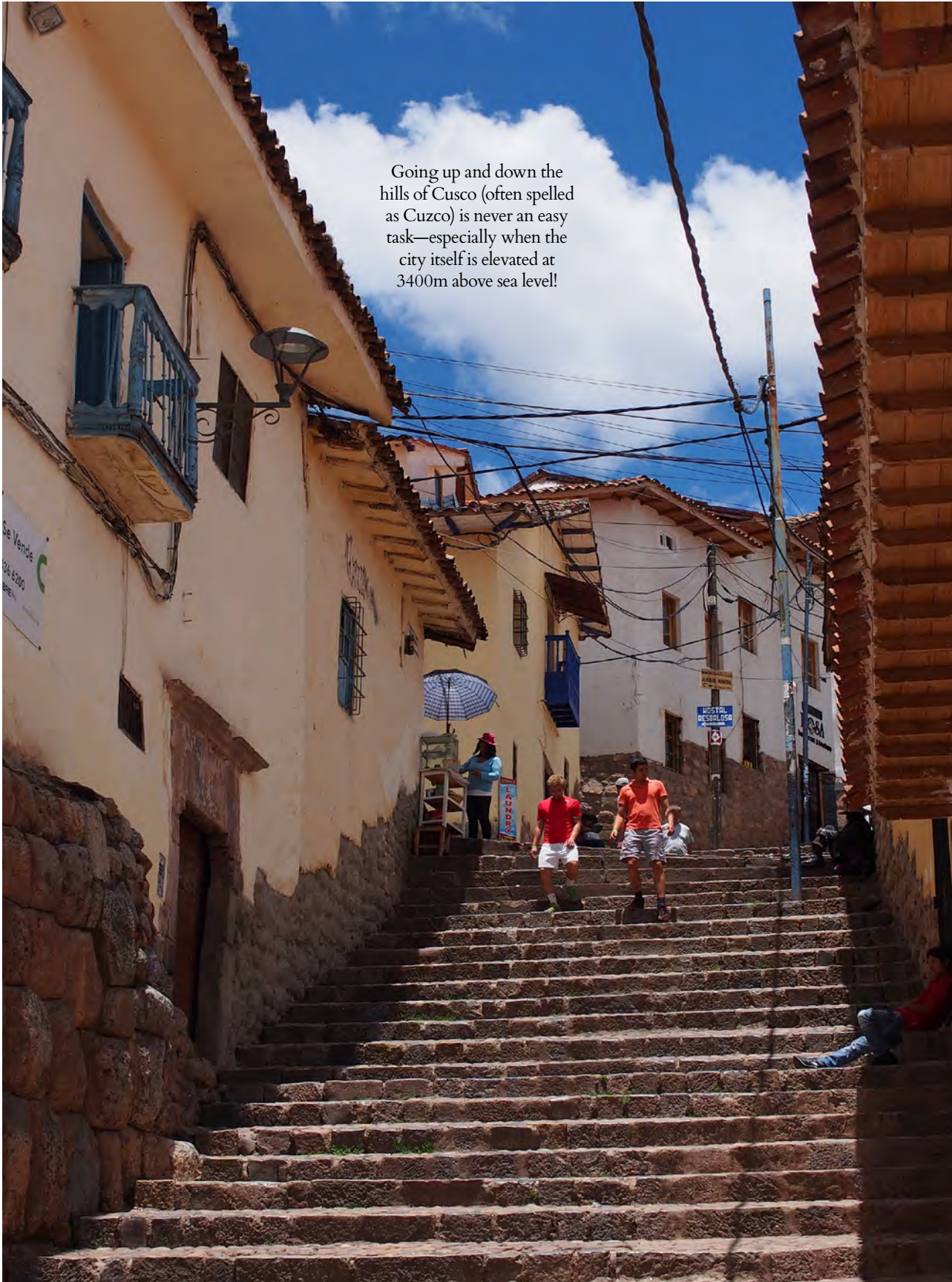


Cusco

Dynamic by day and pumping at night, Cusco gets an overwhelming number of tourists every year, many of them wandering around the main square—Plaza de Armas—which is where you’ll probably be heading if you like people-watching. From their second-storey balconies, you will have observed children, lost tourists, and locals enjoying the Peruvian sun by the time you finish your first cup of coffee. Just behind Catedral del Cuzco, panoramic hills serve as backdrop, where a huge “Viva El Peru” is carved out to be seen from any point in the plaza. If you go a little farther away from the city, you’ll realize it’s not all rip-off artisanal shops and expensive restaurants. Hidden behind the more maintained cobbled streets and stone houses are public markets, eateries serving meals for as cheap as 4 soles (1.25 USD), Israeli and Hindi restaurants that offer all-you-can-eat buffet for 15 soles, and of course, Peruvian drug sellers who sell weed or what they call *yarok* (literally translated to “green” from Hebrew).



Going up and down the hills of Cusco (often spelled as Cuzco) is never an easy task—especially when the city itself is elevated at 3400m above sea level!



A stack of several pieces of Peruvian fabric, each with a different vibrant color and geometric pattern. The top piece features a repeating diamond or zigzag pattern in shades of red, blue, and green. Below it is a purple fabric with a fine, repeating geometric motif. The third piece is a red fabric with a similar fine pattern. The fourth is a green fabric with a repeating diamond pattern. The bottom piece is a blue fabric with a repeating diamond pattern. The text is centered over the stack.

Colorful
Peruvian
fabrics are
showcased in
both major
and quaint
streets
around
Cusco.

Huaraz

Peru is home to one of the most beautiful national parks in the world, the Huascaran National Park. For amateur hikers like me, climbing Laguna 69 (at 4700 meters above sea level) was one of the easiest I could take, especially when I've been lounging the past few days right next to the beach.







On top awaits
a scenery hugged
by mountain
caps, rocks, and
spectacular flora
and fauna.







This bright turquoise lake could only be reached after a strenuous three hour hike through rivers, forest moss, extraordinary looking lakes, and slopes at an almost 45-degree angle. But on top awaits a scenery hugged by mountain caps, rocks, and spectacular flora and fauna that could only be seen on Peru's Cordillera Blanca (*Blanca* means "white" in Spanish).



Huaraz is as local as it can get. From different kinds of *quinoa* to colorful cloths used as grocery bags to women preparing *Cuy* (guinea pig) on the streets—Huaraz is nothing short of an experience.





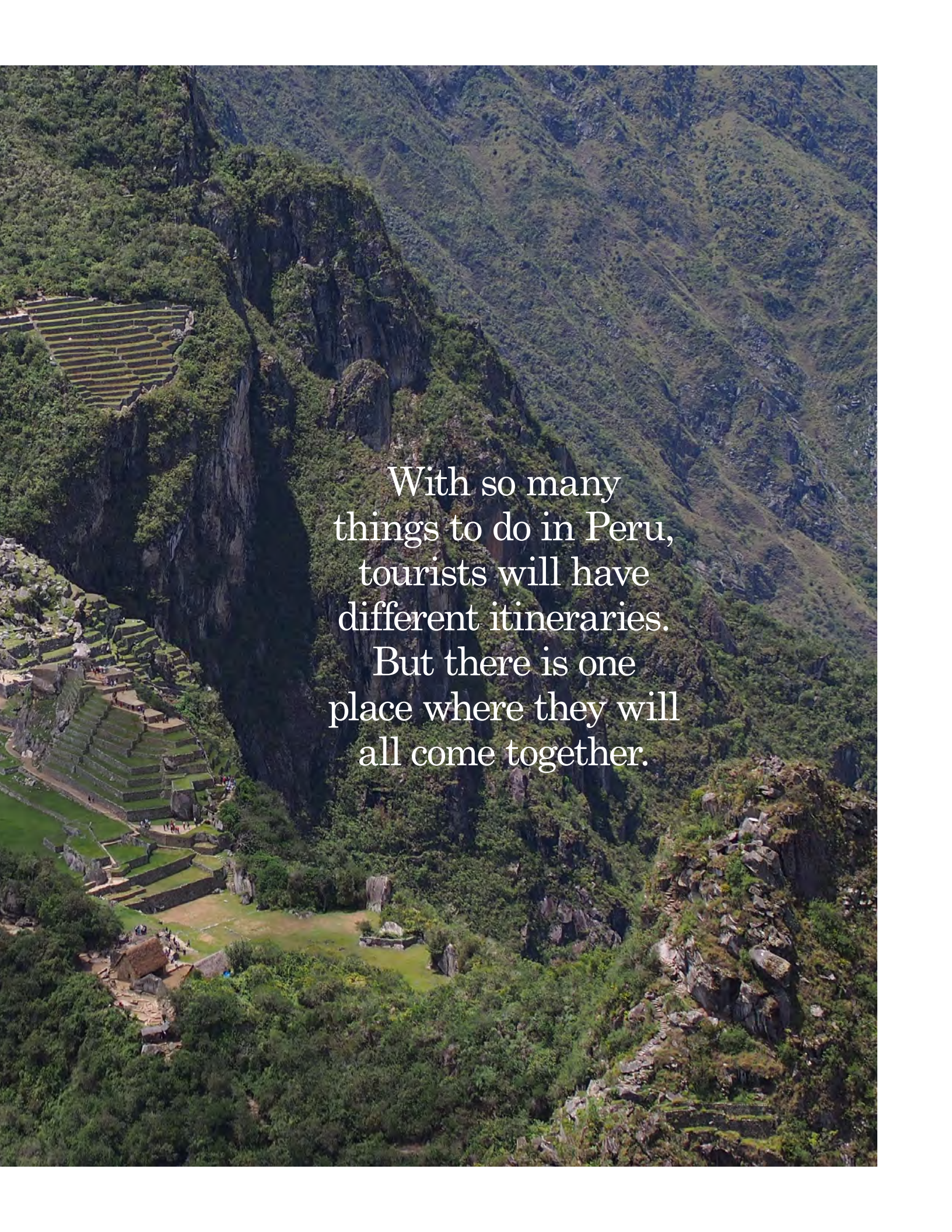


Machu Picchu

My five weeks in Peru consisted mostly of partying and hiking—which isn't really the best combination. You could lounge by the beach one day and fish piranhas the day after, and find yourself surrounded by mountains in the next couple of days. With so many things to do in Peru, tourists will have different itineraries. But there is one place where they will all come together—Machu Picchu. Sitting on a mountain ridge almost 8000 ft above sea level, this sacred citadel was built around 1450 and is the most famous landmark of the Inca civilization. Now, the picturesque ruins are a spectacle to about 5000 visitors a day (during high season) and is a must-visit.

A view of Machu Picchu from Wayna Picchu, some 45 minute trek where visitors can also see a view of Urubamba River.



An aerial photograph of the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu, showing its terraced stone structures and lush green surroundings on a high mountain peak. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

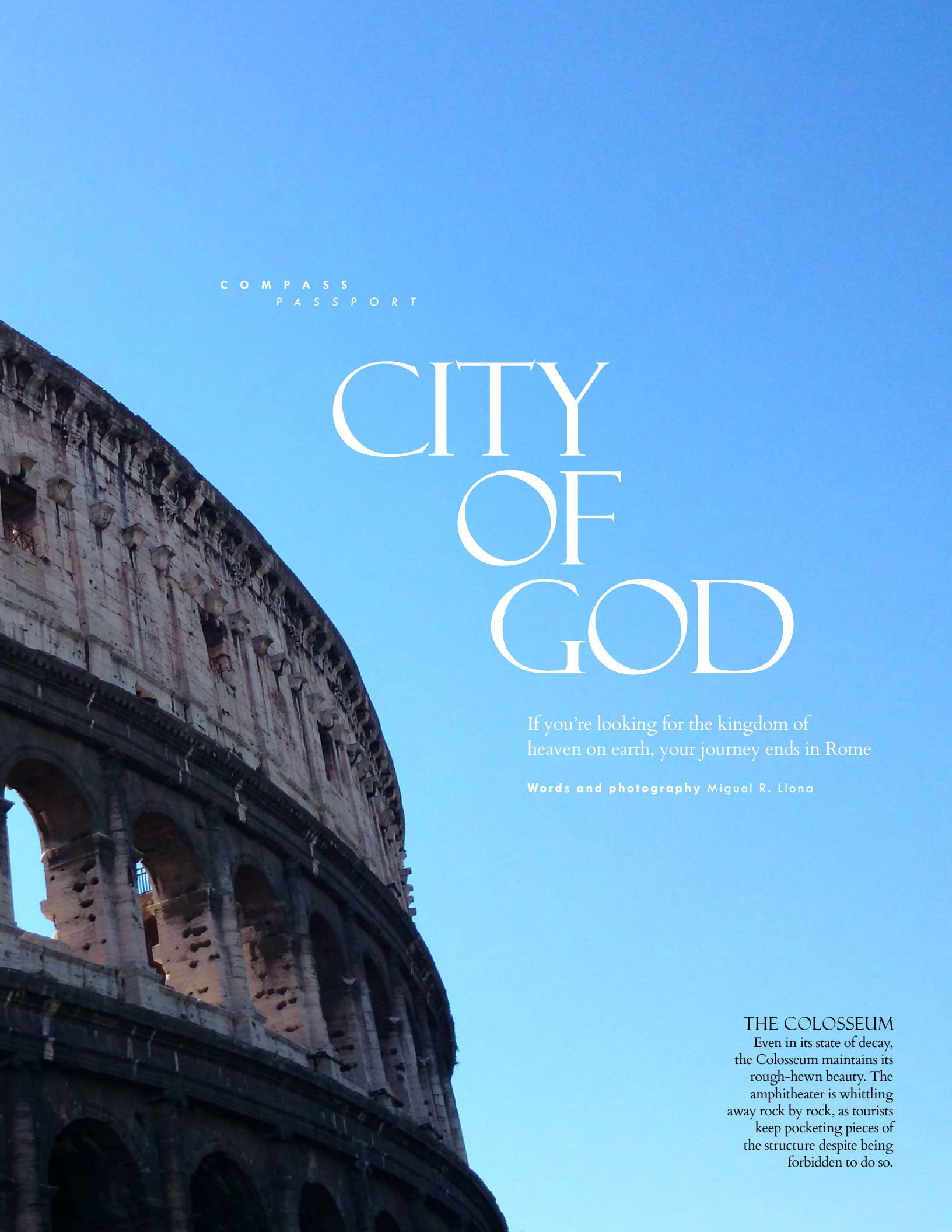
With so many
things to do in Peru,
tourists will have
different itineraries.
But there is one
place where they will
all come together.





Quietly sitting on the edge
of the ruins and blinded by
the towering mountains
of the Andes, the longest
continental mountain
range in the world.





C O M P A S S
P A S S P O R T

CITY OF GOD

If you're looking for the kingdom of
heaven on earth, your journey ends in Rome

Words and photography Miguel R. Llona

THE COLOSSEUM

Even in its state of decay, the Colosseum maintains its rough-hewn beauty. The amphitheater is whittling away rock by rock, as tourists keep pocketing pieces of the structure despite being forbidden to do so.

VATICAN CITY

St. Peter's Square is teeming with tourists day in and day out. People are either lining up for entry into St. Peter's Basilica or simply admiring the saints perched on the famed Bernini colonnade, who in turn observe the crowd below with impassive eyes.



R

Rome wasn't built in a day. I've heard it countless times, but it took a weeklong trip to the place itself for me to truly appreciate what it meant. The city is a labor of love—its building facades, statues, monuments, paintings and murals are overflowing with details that are too much to take in, yet too captivating to look away from. But look closer and you'll see chips and cracks, reminding you that everything is built and carved by human hands. The realization these magnificent structures will eventually crumble to ruin only adds to my gratitude for the experience. A week may be too short a time to spend in Rome, but it is more than enough to appreciate the divine beauty of this man-made city of God.





ST. PETER'S BASILICA

The basilica is a labyrinth of art and sculpture that preserves the heights of Christianity. Every niche and nave shelters a religious relic or artifact, such as Michelangelo's *Pieta*, Bernini's *baldacchino*, St. Peter's tomb, and various sculptures of popes and saints. In certain times of the day, rays of light stream into the cavernous naves—a sign of God filling the space with His presence.



VATICAN MUSEUM

The queue for the Vatican Museum is long, and for good reason. Going through the museum halls is akin to a religious experience, induced by the dizzying array of paintings, sculptures, ceramics and tapestries collected by popes throughout the centuries. The halls eventually lead to the Sistine Chapel, where your neck will cramp from looking up for 15 minutes, all because it's forbidden to take a photo of the famed ceiling (boo).



TREVI FOUNTAIN

Seeing the Fontana de Trevi for the first time is quite an experience. You first go through a maze of side streets in the Trevi district, then you turn a corner and the sudden sight of the majestic fountain hits you like a rock, making you feel like you've wandered into the gates of heaven.



THE SPANISH STEPS

As with most places in Rome, the Spanish Steps was designed for people to flock to so they could rest their tired legs. The afternoon sun imbues the twin tower church on top of the stairway with a sepia glow, giving a calming effect after a long day's walk.



TRASTEVERE

Trastevere, a neighborhood near the Tiber River, provides a charming respite from the city's Romanesque churches and architecture. Its streets are full of vendors, street performers and al fresco cafes. The place is bustling with activity from morning til night, and there's no shortage of hole-in-the-wall restaurants to try out.



THE PANTHEON

The Pantheon is the perfect example of how architecture can induce feelings of awe. Gazing up at the magnificent dome and the oculus at its center is like looking God in the eye.



T H E G U I D E

ROME

Rome is the capital of Italy, and boasts some of the finest works of architecture and art in the world. Tourists flood the city every year, but the sights and weather prevent one from feeling too crowded and harassed by the crowds that troop towards the city's major attractions. Art buffs and architecture geeks will want to get lost in the city for days, hunting down little-known churches, museums and buildings.

PLACES TO GO Where to begin? Beautiful buildings and plazas are scattered all over Rome, all accessible by train. A trip to Vatican City should be on the top of your list, together with the Colosseum and the Pantheon. My personal favorite is Trastevere, one of Rome's neighborhoods where you can walk down cobblestone streets and winding alleys, and eat from a variety of restaurants that serve classic Italian dishes. The rustic, old-world charm of the place is a pleasant contrast from the imposing splendor of Rome's more famous structures.

THINGS TO DO Bring comfy shoes, because you'll be doing a lot of walking in Rome. Explore some of the city's famous plazas such as Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Navona and the Spanish Steps, where you can relax, have coffee in nearby cafes, or observe people from all walks of life milling about in a public space. The Vatican Museum is a must-see as well, with the Sistine Chapel as its highlight. If you have a few Euros to spare, consider joining a tour of the museum so you can enter immediately (there are numerous agencies nearby where you can sign up). Otherwise, be prepared to line up for two or more hours.

WHAT TO EAT Do you even have to ask? Have your fill of pizza and pasta, particularly from restaurants hidden in the side streets of Rome for a more authentic, native flavor (don't ask waiters to slice your pizza for sharing, though—it's meant to be eaten by one person only). Another delicacy to try is the gelato, where a myriad of flavors are offered by various gelaterias. Make sure you stop by the Gelateria Valentino near the Fontana de Trevi—it's widely considered the best in Rome.



Mt. Pulag

The Two-Pronged Fork and The Eater

We devour the splendour of nature through travel,
but we need to take a look at what we leave on the plate

Words and photography Marikit Singson

To travel, especially in the Philippines, can induce self-inflicted emotional stress. Submitting yourself to the wonders of an unknown road, an unfamiliar path, or a first-time experience can get you the exhilaration your spirit is yearning for. You get to try the local fare via the popular transportation option: the *habal-habal* to go around the island of Siquijor, or top-loading a jeep to traverse the lower peaks of Benguet (living off on canned meat and instant coffee are the icing on the cake). Your eyes are allowed the beauty of nature—the ashen flats of Pampanga, white beaches of Camiguin, charging rapids and beautiful river systems of Cagayan de Oro, and the seemingly extra-terrestrial sulphur-ridden boulder trails of Mt. Apo.

But alongside breath-taking views and the series of heart-flutters, I think it's safe to say that you have had your share of heartbreaks too in your expeditions. You have learned that, in every place you visit there are two kinds of backdrops: those you take pictures of and those you do not. Bluntly put, those whose beauty have not been maimed by humans, and those that have or are in the process of wasting away because of our impact.

You've got the high highs and the low lows. Like our country's geography.

As an avid traveller, I speak from experience when I say human impact is real and it's here. Case in point: Mt. Pulag. The first time I climbed Mount Pulag, it was majestic, raw, and there was a strict ordinance prohibiting deviation from the trail. Climbers were afraid of making loud noises and always brought down their garbage from camping out. The mossy forests were thick and almost constantly misty, the grasslands a rich brown and thriving. There was no outhouse, just (thank god there were) bushes where you did your business. There were only two tents besides our group's.

From 2007 to 2015, enchanted by this holy mountain, I went back five more times. On my third visit, there was an apparent increase in the number of tents (and people you said hello to along the trail), and a formal latrine (with a door and a roof). On the sixth there were tour groups of maybe thirty novice climbers whose so-so tents were shaking violently with the winds and rains on that day, and more than one established trail to accommodate the growing foot traffic. Nowadays I hear from friends that the campsites' conditions are so bad climbers aren't allowed to stay there anymore. Instead of revelling in the first light of the morning, viewing the scenic multi-peaks out from your tent, you had to complete the ascent-descent in a day, and spend the night at the Rangers' Station. I speak from experience when I say human impact is real and it's here.



In every place you visit there are two kinds of backdrops: those whose beauty have not been maimed by humans, and those that have or are in the process of wasting away because of our impact.

Case Number 2: Whale-shark feeding in Oslob. This is probably the single most bothersome experience I've had in terms of my moral compass. I participated in the activity and loved every second of it, heck I'd swim with those remarkable creatures again, but I am not proud to have done it. However, the upside of first-hand knowledge is that I have an understanding of the process, and I can educate other people about what's really happening (as opposed to just reading about it on social media and news sites).

What I've learned is that it is a source of livelihood for the locals and the government. For a hefty fee and stringent cut-off rules, you can go through an orientation on general facts about whale sharks and how one should behave to keep disturbance at a minimum. You are carried to an enclosed area in open water via small boats with no motorized propellers and you stay there for a set amount of time (about 30-45 minutes). The boatmen feed the sharks going round the enclosure from one end to the other as tourists in their snorkels and fins try to get as close to them as possible, at about 10 feet away. Point is, the locals have a source of income as guides, the area progresses, and the whale sharks, although now inept to hunt in the wild (and this being a possible threat to their survival), are affected the least possible way according to the Department of Tourism's capacity. It's not ideal and it's inexcusable. But it is also an effect of a booming ecotourism in Cebu, an informal and accidental planning at that. I speak from experience when I say human impact is real and it's here.

Case Number 3 and one of my most recent heartbreaks—the destruction of Mt. Apo in Davao-Cotabato. The country's highest peak, it takes a different kind of courage to experience this brute. It took us four days and three nights of round-the-clock hiking, rock climbing (cliff-hanging and pulling ourselves unto 87-degree inclines), river-crossing and scampering in the dark to reach the campsite. It took all of our energies to go forward as the weather did not cooperate and the terrain had a habit of surprising us (first bridge to the jump-off was obliterated by the typhoons, as were those in the last leg of the Kidapawan traverse). I was nursing a semi-torn knee the whole way down.



I implore everyone to choose to be eco-tourists. Be responsible for your waste, and be mindful of your influence on nature. Keep our mountains and oceans as you saw them, experience—not conquer.

But I don't remember the difficulties without the joys of being cradled by the mountain. In fact, I remember them more than the less-than-ideal conditions. Apo has the most stunning environments I have ever been in: plains and grasslands, mossy forests, pine forests, the never-ending boulder trail, meadows, marshlands, lakes, and rivers. It has it all. It was the kind of beauty that put a tear in your eye.

Only a month and a half after my visit, the news of a fire breaking out from the summit campsite of Mt. Apo reached online news sites. It took the local government, volunteers, and international aid four weeks to put out, saving what's left of the mountain beyond Lake Venado on the Cotabato side (coincidentally, we planted a Jar of Peace from the Dalai Lama in said lake). My anger was so deep, so intense that it was all I talked about. But I wouldn't have been affected as much if I didn't see the reality while I was up there. The last campsite before the summit was a dump. Packs of junk food and tin cans of corned beef and tuna littered the place. There were used tissue sheets, plastic utensils, and everything else you could think of—not in tidy trash bags left for the rangers to collect—in concentrated mounds, beside what seemed like ash and burnt ground left from campfires. Just two days prior to our climb, the rangers were able to bring down twenty bags full of garbage. Oh and yes, there were cigarette butts by the hundreds. No wonder the grass caught fire. I speak from experience when I say human impact is real and it's here.

Traveling is a privilege, it is a gift we give ourselves. But I implore everyone to choose to be eco-tourists. Be responsible for your waste, and be mindful of your influence on nature. Keep our mountains and oceans as you saw them, experience—not conquer. Do practical conservation and restoration acts (Abiding by the Mountaineers' Code, doing clean-ups, and bringing your own trash and others' with you) and educate your friends about the ethical ways of going on adventures. And I hope, nay pray, that more people will cringe at the sight of poor behaviour while on trips, and that more people will develop the conscience that it takes to save our planet. I'm not talking about saving it for future generations. I'm talking about saving it because it's the right thing to do. ●

Follow Kit's sea-to-summit adventures on Instagram @kitsingson



Found the perfect shot?

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and photography at kanto.journal@gmail.com

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kanto

CREATIVE CORNERS

THREADS

FASHION BY A.RUSH APPAREL



GETAWAY

The destination doesn't matter;
It's how you get there

Creative direction Marikit Singson / **Photography** Yukie Sarto and JC Cerilla
Stylist Dianne Viray / **Hair and make-up artist** Syd Helmsley







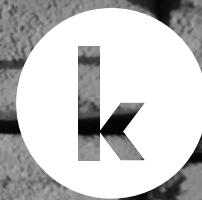






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of creativity!

kanto
CREATIVE CORNERS

ART AND DESIGN

CANVAS

EDITED BY DANIELLE AUSTRIA



To See Her Like You'd See A Star,
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SERIOUS PLAY

Danielle Austria and *Patrick Kasingsing*
on why 'playing' with work can lead to
more exciting outputs

Believe, oil on canvas





CANVAS
ARTIST

Spirit Animals

Nate Frizzell's body of work is an exploration of the primal instincts and desires that drive us

Portfolio Nate Frizzell **Interview** Kariza Gonzales



Hello! Please introduce yourself.

My name is Nate Frizzell. I'm an artist from Los Angeles, California.

What sparked your interest in painting? What drove you into this particular art form?

I was always drawing as a kid but I didn't really try my hand at painting until I was in College. I was one of the few in my year who chose communication arts as a major but we were all pretty much driven towards graphic design over traditional media, as that's where the money's at. I really started to enjoy painting, though, and after a year of sitting in a small office cubicle as a designer after I graduated, I quit and decided to pursue art as a career.

Tell us more about your artistic style.

I'm not sure that I have any particular style. Maybe it would be easier to identify as an outsider looking in. But I didn't really learn to paint in a traditional way. It was mostly trial and error (mostly error) and a development of skill over time. My early paintings were almost cartoonish and over time they've become more life-like. But photorealism was never the goal. I just want the paintings to look good.

Your work tends to have very raw and emotional themes. Juxtaposition is also a prevalent concept in your artwork. Is there a reason for this?

I try to create work with imagery that is recognizable, that people can connect with, and that is open to interpretation. The goal is to inspire some sort of emotion and maybe allow the viewer to put themselves and their own stories into the artwork.

Opposite page:
Charlotte, acrylic and spray paint





Viridian, oil on canvas



I like to use animals as metaphors in my work. I think everyone has their own idea of what a certain animal represents.

Could you describe how you come up with juxtapositions between man and beast?

I like to use animals as metaphors in my work. I think everyone has their own idea of what a certain animal represents. So they can connect easily with each one and draw their own conclusions on how they relate to the subjects in a painting. content and regularly getting a variety of illustration projects.

Are your work intentionally reflective of social issues?

I've never been intentionally political in my work. But a lot of the time I find that after a painting is complete and I reflect on it later, there were a lot of things I was saying that I didn't even realize. Often my own personal issues and the social issues that surround me can be seen if you start reading into the paintings.

To See Her Like You'd See A Star,
oil on canvas



Yellow, oil on canvas



Lions' Pride, oil on canvas



Everything influences my art, as I'm still learning as I go. So the more I see, change and grow, it can't help but affect what I paint

Your work has been featured in numerous places around the world. How has travel influenced your art?

Everything influences my art, as I'm still learning as I go. So the more I see and change and grow, it can't help but affect what I paint. I've actually been thinking lately, I'd really like to travel to more scenic areas and integrate more landscapes into the work. Or maybe that's just an excuse to travel to beautiful places. I'm in either way.

What advice can you give to artists who are in the process of finding and solidifying their artistic identities?

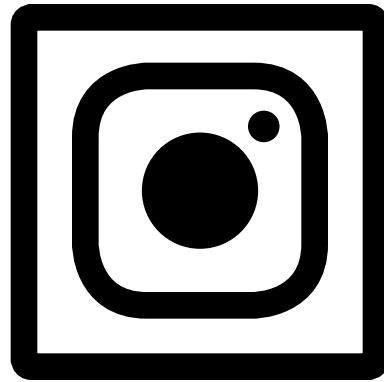
I'm the last person to deal out advice, but from what I've learned the simplest answer is, "Just do work." The more you work at it, the more you learn and you will eventually find your voice. Creativity breeds creativity ●

Instinct is Enough,
oil on canvas

Opposite page:
What Goes Up, oil on canvas

You can see more of Nate's work on his
Instagram @natepaints or his website
at natefrizzell.com.





C A N V A S
T H E L I S T

Pocket Gallery

Our pick of the must-follow Instagram feeds of contemporary art galleries around the world

Editor Danielle Austria



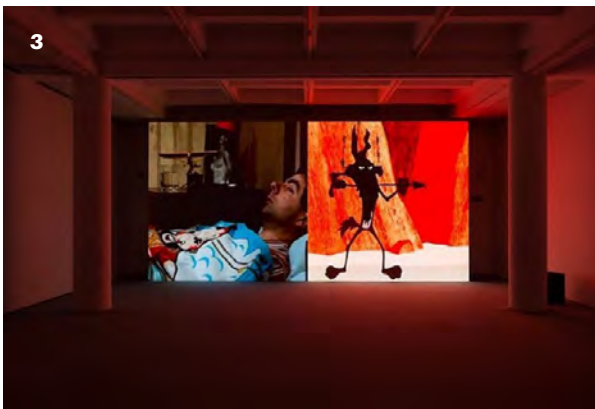
One of the best ways to get to know a new place, apart from its food and its people, is to look at its art. More than inspiring, art educates, and it often tells stories that you won't find in history books and tourist brochures. Yet gallery hopping is still such an underrated travel activity. It could be because most people still find the art world too exclusive or intimidating, or maybe they just don't know where to start.

Thankfully, community-building apps like Instagram has made both art and travel a lot more accessible and democratic. Whereas art galleries and museums once seemed cold and distant, in the Instagram arena they are reaching out to capture more audiences and potential visitors. (That includes *you*.) Travelers no longer have an excuse to skip them if they're in town.

We mapped out a few galleries from different parts of the world that you can Insta-follow, just in case you need some ideas for your next trip or if you're simply looking for a subtle introduction to the #ahrt world. ●



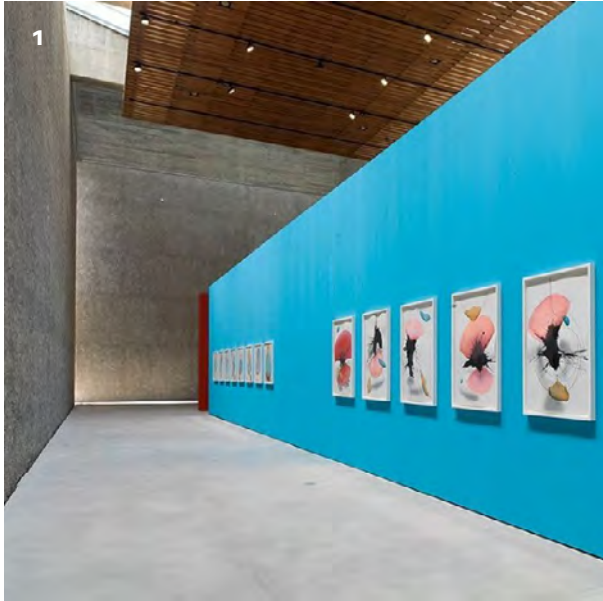
Asia



1/Studio Concrete
South Korea / @studioconcrete

2/Rockbund Art Museum
China / @rockbundartmuseum

3/Mizuma Gallery
Singapore / @mizumagallery



Europe

1/Konig Gallery
Germany / @koeniggalerie

**2/Center for Creative
Industries Fabrika**
Russia / @cci_fabrika

3/Mad is Mad
Spain / @mادismad_gallery



North America

1/LE Gallery
Canada / @le.gallery

2/M+B Los Angeles
USA / @mblosangeles

3/Pratt Museum
USA / @pratt_museum



South America

1/Galeria MÜ
Colombia / @galeriamu

2/Ruth Benzacar Galeria de Arte
Argentina / @ruthbenzacar

3/Galeria Lucia dela Puente
Peru / @galerialuciadelapunte





Africa

WHATIFTHEWORLD
South Africa / @whatiftheworld_gallery



Australia

Linton & Kay Gallery
Australia / @lintonandkay

Metro Manila



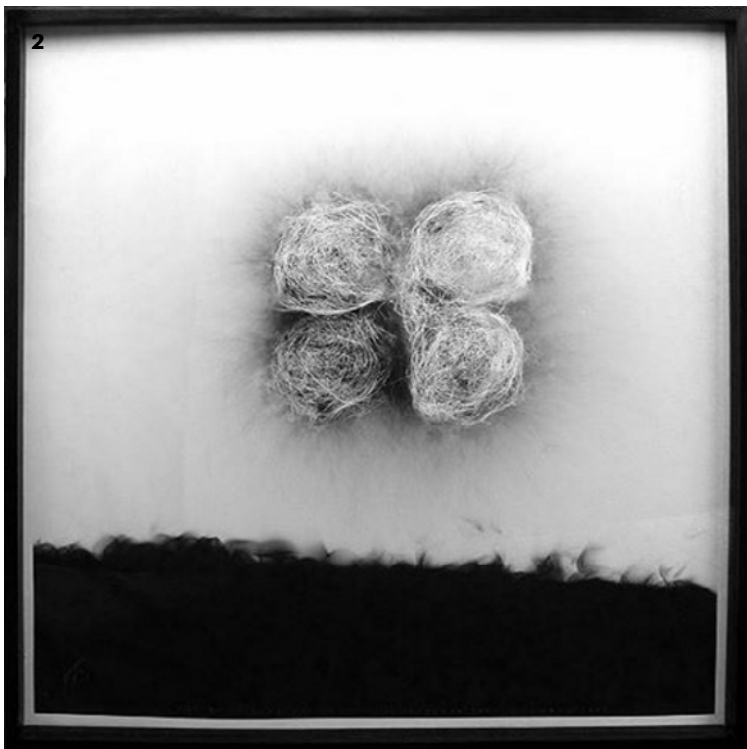
1/Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD Manila)
Manila / @mcdmanila

2/Vinyl on Vinyl
Makati / @vinylonvinyl



1/Finale Art File
Makati / @finaleartfile

2/Galleria Duemila
Pasay / @galleriaduemila



Metro Manila



1/NOVA Gallery
Makati / @novagallerymanila

2/Secret Fresh
San Juan / @secretfreshgallery



1/Pablo
Taguig / @pablo_post

2/Silverlens
Makati / @silverlensgalleries



Photo from unsplash.com

Serious Play

All work and no play can lead to uninspired design

Words Danielle Austria and Patrick Kasingsing

Design work entails a lot of creative thinking and brainstorming. You always have to make sure that your creative juice tank stays full so you have something to show for in every design project.

In reality though, we are only usually in our best creative mindsets up until the projects are handed over to us. As soon as the work begins, we are back at square one with an important decision to make: do we create something original but experimental or do we go with tried and tested ideas?

Personally, I strive to always take the first route, presenting new concepts and/or unique re-interpretations of old ideas, but it's not as it easy as it probably sounds.

The thing with new design concepts is that they always come with greater risk. It either produces amazing results or blows up in your face. It's a scary thing for designers to lay all their cards in an idea that might not even translate to a real output. This, I think, is why today's design market is saturated with similar concepts to the point that it appears devoid of any creativity at all. The prospects of failing to justify new concepts scare us so much that we stick to what has been done before or what has greater chance of succeeding. We are afraid to gamble.

This is where *serious play* comes in. It may sound paradoxical at first, but it's a concept that greatly benefits the design world. Serious play is about trying to maintain the balance between two important elements: Work and Play. Two complementary ideas that are often drowned out by the other.

Design, like people, can be overworked. If you focus too much on success rates and forget to enjoy the process of figuring things out, you could end up with a product that lacks personality. Some of the best works are the ones that seem to have gone on a journey, the ones that have stories to tell—not the ones that look like they came out of a factory. On the other hand, if you play too much with ideas—rushing the concept in the process, you run the risk of incompleteness or a half-baked design. Even the most creative environments benefit from serious intent and stern habits.

So I propose, something that we often hate to hear from our clients (but quite useful in this very isolated case), that we begin to “marry the two”.

Serious play understands that *work* and *play* are both important in our field. That design *is* a work and play field. That you can have fun and still produce something great.

It rewards us in two ways: you arrive with an output that has more life and personality, and you get a sense of accomplishment that can only be achieved with enjoyable work. We are often robbed of the latter in the imbalance.

Serious play gives back to the designer the joy of creating. It gives you back the confidence in your ability to produce a design that you really believe in, so you can continue to love what you do, so you can do work that will bring the same joy to others.

In the end, it all goes back to the Yin and Yang philosophy. *Balance*. It may not always be achievable, but it's something we should always strive for. ●



Q U I L L
S H O R T S T O R Y

The Choice

A tale of a girl in two worlds

Written by
Joanna Parungao

III

There are no coincidences. The law of large numbers assures us of this. Still, I can't help but describe the manner in which Professor Rilke entered my life as something of a meaningful coincidence. The first time I met her was in the third year of my studies in CalTech. I entered the classroom and there she was, immaculately dressed in a charcoal grey suit. She was tall, blonde, and blue-eyed, with nary a hair out of place. She could have been the poster girl for Nordic superiority had she been so inclined.

I had enrolled in Hum/Pl 9, a class called Knowledge and Reality, because it promised to examine the nature of the world, knowledge and the self. The course description stated that one of the topics to be discussed was the quantum enigma, which is a particular interest of mine—I've found that things always get more interesting when consciousness comes into play. Professor Rilke was the assigned instructor.

Initially, I thought we would get along as she herself had an MS in the field of Physics, but on the first day of classes, she had, upon learning my major, looked me over and inquired if I thought I had the gumption to finish the course. When I answered in the affirmative, she smirked at me and rattled off the Copenhagen Interpretation, explaining to her non-physics students that, "according to this interpretation, no property of a microscopic object exists until it is produced by observation." She shook her head at me as though this was somehow my fault. "Reality explained away so succinctly. A pretty delusion all you physicist subscribe to in order to circumvent an inconvenient truth." She raised an eyebrow. "How craven...."

Imagine my surprise when a few days before the end of the semester, I found myself summoned to her room. The reason behind the summons was not clear, only that she wished to speak to me. She had been unaccountably antagonistic towards me since the beginning of the semester, always teetering on the brink of being unprofessional but knowing just when to rein herself in. I had considered dropping her class after the first day but had decided to stick with it instead of allowing her to run me off. I had a goal to fulfill and I wasn't about to let her stop me from attaining it. I missed my family. I wanted to go home.

It's been five years, nine months, and two days since the last time I spoke to the fortuneteller. I've moved from Manila to Pasadena, built a life here for myself. My surrogate family has been supportive and loving, but my awareness of the true state of things has prevented me from assimilating fully into their fold. In Pasadena, away from the life I had stolen (how difficult it had been to finally own up to the truth of it), I feel more at ease. Here I have more freedom to be myself.

The tablet still worked. I carried it around with me all the time. People often inquired as to why I bothered with such outdated equipment when there were newer, more powerful ones available in the market. I have those too of course; I needed them for my research. My friends figure that it's a part of my idiosyncrasy, for every scientist and mathematician must have one. How quaint, they say. Not really. The tablet simply afforded me a modicum of comfort.

Sometimes, during my more philosophical moments, I would think about what that woman, the fortuneteller, had said about attending CalTech or MIT. Had she been talking about the other me or was it me she had been referring to all along? I had applied to both schools and had been accepted into both. I had chosen CalTech because of its strong theoretical physics department and its smaller, more intimate campus.

If one were to subscribe to the belief that time was not limited to a linear state of causality then could she have known that it was I who would be fulfilling her predictions? I took up Professor Rilke's class thinking it might help me come to terms with this conundrum. The thing about Newtonian Law and Determinism—it's so obvious I can't believe it had slipped my mind—is that they are mere estimates. What is real, on a molecular level, is quantum mechanics. Einstein and Schrödinger knew better. Newton had been debunked. His universal laws are only approximations for the movements of large-scale objects. They don't hold true in the microscopic world and it is this world, the world of sight unseen, that I needed to be more familiar with.

I've found that the deeper I delved into the quantum world, the less logic had to do with reality. If I depended too much on logic, I would doom myself to the same flaw the Greeks had succumbed to. Not everything that is true is logical. Heisenberg once said that "the experiments about atomic events deal with facts, phenomena as real as any found in everyday life. The atoms themselves however, the elementary particles, are not real but form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts". I like that description, a world of potentialities and possibilities. I held on to it, made it my mantra. The thought of a photon and an atom in a superposition state that gives way to all possible positions after the photon bounces off an atom and becomes a probability wave moving in all directions gives me comfort. Following this line of logic—if the world is then reduced to wave functions and probabilities—then the possibility existed that I would be able to find my way back. Going home ceases to be an impossible notion.

I rapped on Professor Rilke's door and it opened after a moment's pause. She ushered me inside. I had never been to her office before but the décor, with its sleek lines and minimalist feel, was exactly like I expected her office to be—austere.

"Sit down," she said, gesturing to one of the chairs placed in front of her glass-and-metal desk.

The chair was sturdy and was as comfortable as it looked, which is to say, not at all. I forced myself to keep still and avoid squirming, despite the fact that the metal and leather contraption brought to mind a streamlined electric chair. I placed my messenger bag on the floor and it rested against my leg. The familiar feel of my ancient tablet through the ratty canvas was a presence I drew comfort from.

Professor Rilke did not sit down. She stood behind her desk and continued to loom over me, her arms crossed and her demeanor cold. I had never felt her to be a comforting person, and her flinty blue eyes, as they stared down at me, did not disabuse me of that notion.

"You're a mole from the Blacker House aren't you Miss Mendoza? Do you enjoy living there?"

"Yes, Professor."

"The House of Fucking Geniuses, am I right? Tell me, do you still have the letters HOFG running along the tunnel walls?" She held up a hand. "No, no, never mind, I don't really care." A sigh. "You are a physicist, yes? Well, you want to be... you'll be pursuing graduate work?"

I nodded.

"Have you thought about which group you'd like to join for research? You work on quantum gravity yes? The Particle Theory Group I think will be particularly suited to you," she smiled. "Before you decide though... I'd like to know; what did you think of some of the subjects we took up this semester? They weren't at all very scientific. More metaphysical perhaps, certainly not the science you know. Not the kind of physics you are used to, in any case. Have you retained anything or did you simply accomplish the course work to get it over with?"

“I’ve learned many things. And they were very helpful in broadening my understanding of . . .” A curt motion of her hand cut me off. She was being rude and her line of questioning was strange but, so far, as in countless other times before, she hasn’t really said anything that would warrant a complaint. I waited.

“I hate pandering, Miss Mendoza. It’s undignified and a waste of time, don’t you agree? Why don’t you explain to me please, what an odic force is, if you really did retain as much as you claim.”

I started. “I’m sorry professor, am I being quizzed?” I could feel the furrow between my brows deepening in displeasure. I endeavored to smooth them out and attempted a smile. I failed at both.

A slim, blonde eyebrow flew up in response. “I suppose you are at that. Any objections?”

I shook my head and reminded myself that the end of term was only a couple of days away. I had tolerated her thus far. I could do so for a little while longer. It would have been easier had she shown the same degree of antipathy towards everybody else, but it seemed she had singled me out for that particular purpose.

“Any time now, Ms. Mendoza.”

“I’m sorry professor. Odic force . . . from what I remember . . . it is said to be the universal fluid, the vital energy that pervades all of nature.” “Give me an aspect of this force.” “Objects charged with this force can influence each other at a great distance. The force itself is said to show properties similar to electromagnetism.”

She smiled. “Does this remind you of anything Ms. Mendoza?” “I’m sorry professor . . .”

She tutted. “I dislike mindless apologies. Think, Ms. Mendoza. What you said about odic forces. Does it remind you of anything?”

“Quantum Mechanics,” I said after a pause. “Because the same holds true. The theory states that observation of one object can greatly affect the behavior of another distant object, despite the lack of any physical force connecting the two.”

She nodded her head in approval. “Very good. That is correct. However, it must be noted that unlike the case in magnetism, those charged with similar odic polarities are attracted to each other and not repelled.” She smiled again. “An interesting facet of this force is the inherent paradox in its behavior—that it can be both particulate like fluid and energetic like light waves. It echoes the wave-particle paradox of light. But what you have to understand, really, is what the odic force is. Put simply, it is energy. It has as many names and elucidations as there are cultures and belief systems in the world. Knowledge corresponds despite the separation due to physical location. It’s inevitable—the human brain trying to make sense of the world it inhabits—though it doesn’t always do a very good job.”

I nodded.

“You must be wondering why I asked to meet you. I must admit that I did not expect to be impressed by the paper you submitted for your finals. Consider my expectations thoroughly subverted.”

It took a moment for her meaning to sink in, and when it did, it was so unexpected that I found myself unable to speak for a moment. When I managed to force a few words out, they sounded like a garbled squawk. True to form, Professor Rilke cocked a derisive eyebrow my way. She gave me an amused smile. “I like what you wrote about the correlation of the earth’s ley lines and vortices to the chakras of the human body. It’s a paper that has been written before of course, but I enjoyed your take on it. I commend the effort and thoroughness of your research.”

“Thank you, Professor...”

“I give credit where it is due. In your research, could you reiterate, off the top of your head, what you learned about vortices?”

“Vortices are high energy spots on earth, supposedly caused by the planet’s electromagnetic field. They are said to be connected by ley lines. NASA research has proven that our own energy fields, human energy fields, are attuned to certain earth waves that oscillate between seven to eight cycles per second.”

“Hmmm... I’m curious. Why did you choose to work on this particular topic?” “Because of the connections formed, because of the coordinates and the geometry formed. The representations of some of the chakra types remind me of Calabi-Yau shapes.” I began to wonder what she was trying to get at with her line of questioning. I tried to keep the suspicion from my eyes but I could feel the furrow forming in my forehead again. I squirmed in my seat, the hard metal in the contraption discomfiting me further.

“Did you encounter vile vortices in your study?”

“A little, though I didn’t dwell on them too much.”

“What can you recall?” she asked as she walked over to stand next to the 50-inch screen mounted on her wall. “If there is anything at all?”

“I know that there are twelve of them. Also, that they are called the Devil’s Graveyards.”

“Yes, that’s true,” she said with a nod. I watched her initialize the screen to show a map of the earth. “The twelve together form an icosahedron.” The map folded to show a rotating globe overlapped by a twenty-faced polyhedron. “Ivan Sanderson, the founder of the Society for the Unexplained, was quite involved in investigating ship and plane disappearances linked to the paranormal. Ten of his vile vortices can be found in the tropic regions of the earth, distributed equally between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.” She pointed out the location of each one on the screen, each part she touched becoming marked with a red dot. “The remaining two can be found in the north and south poles, here and here.” She smiled at me. “This brings us to 1973 when three Russian scientists extended Sanderson’s theory. They proposed that the earth had twelve pentagonal plates that made up a matrix of cosmic energy.” The globe shifted and became a map overlaid by a planetary grid made up of a complex mix of polyhedrons. “It is said that the sixty-two junctions produced by the intersection of any three plates have proven to be sites of anomalies and mysterious phenomena. Now, of the twelve, there are three areas that are the most popular, the most active. These are the Bermuda Triangle, the South Atlantic Anomaly, and the Dragon’s Triangle in the Devil’s Sea.”

It was all very interesting really, but something inside of me was telling me to go. This woman had an agenda. Our conversation had ceased to be about academia and my future in it quite a while ago. A feeling of awareness, of entrapment washed over me. I stood up. “I don’t really understand what this has to do with me, professor. With all due respect, we never took this up in class and I’m really not in the position to comment on...”

She motioned for me to sit down, her frosty blue eyes brooking no argument. “Quiet! I’ll ask for your opinion when I need it. Right now what I need from you is your attention, your mind. This has been a long time coming. Surely you must sense that.”

I stared at her, felt the gravity of truth in her words, and obeyed.

“Look at this, in the region of Asia right here off the coast of Japan between Iwo Jima and Marcus Island, almost exactly opposite the Bermuda Triangle. That is Ma-no Umi, the Sea of the Devil. It doesn’t appear on any of the official global maps but it’s there...”

With quick motions of her fingers on the screen, she zoomed out of the Dragon Triangle and showed in a broader angle, the continent of Asia. “If you were to incorporate the world grid, the new one by Becker and Hagens,” as she said this, the planetary grid shifted and became even more intricate, “look here, see how even the land masses are shaped, how they correspond to the pattern? Even with your Philippines, right here on the bottom, see how its curve follows this circle here?”

I pressed my back against my chair. Like this, eyes bright and voice intent, Professor Rilke reminded me of the fortuneteller, despite the difference in their looks and general demeanor. My heart began to race and I felt a faint trace of fear slither down my spine. Did she know about me?

“Obviously the vortex is very strong here in this spot.” She pointed to the Dragon’s Triangle. “The Devil’s Graveyards, these vile vortices, are areas of the earth where disappearances occur, mechanical failures, time-space distortions. Explorers have disappeared if they were unlucky enough to cross these places at the wrong time of the lunar and planetary alignments. These factors serve as switches that activate particular areas. Look here, the green dots represent an approximation of anomalous disappearances and where they occurred.”

The number of green dots that appeared astounded me.

“Those are just disappearances, mind you. Miss Mendoza, are you all right? You seem very uncomfortable. Shall I guess the reason? You are baffled, I suppose. Why am I telling you this? Well, because you see...aren’t you an anomaly yourself?”

I kept my face impassive and I looked her in the eye. “Excuse me?”

“It all sounds so very esoteric doesn’t it, but you should know. What, no comment? Nothing to say? All right, I suppose I can understand your reticence. I’ll tell you a story then, so listen. Sanderson went about his investigations and in one of them he found the story of a pilot who had flown very near one of the vile vortices in Hawaii. He had been flying with passengers, maintaining constant radio contact with tower officials, when suddenly he found himself flying blind. His equipment has been rendered useless and he had lost all communication with the outside world. He flew anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour, relying only on his sight and his instincts. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the experience ended and he found himself able to get in touch with the tower once more. The interesting thing about this incident is that for the people in the tower, no such time had elapsed. One moment, the pilot was speaking to them about his coordinates, and in the next moment he was in a panic, calling out that he had lost communication and that he was flying blind, had flown 350 miles without the aid of any instrument. Time is relative yes, but by that much?” She leveled me with a glare that brooked no argument. “How could such a thing happen?”

I answered automatically, before I could stop myself. “They must have entered into a time warp, a different dimensional frequency unaffected by time.”

“Exactly so,” she nodded, the note of approval unmistakable in her voice. “That’s what I think as well. You’ve seen how particles behave, existing simultaneously in all directions until observed. The relative weakness of gravity is explained when other dimensions are factored in. What do you think about the possibility of parallel universes? Do you believe that they exist?”

How could I not? I grew cautious but nodded nonetheless “Yes, I do. But it’s all theory right now, mathematically consistent, but theoretical still. I don’t understand what all this has to do with me though. I mean, I’m not an anomaly.”

“Oh, aren’t you? I have seen you around. More than that, I have sensed you. You possess a great deal ofodic force, though much less than the levels you are capable of carrying. You were depleted somehow, weren’t you? Someone must have taken it away.”

I forced myself to keep still though my heart had racing. “What?”

“You don’t belong here,” she stated matter-of-factly. “You’re from an alternate plane.”

“You’re insane!” I cried, all the while wondering if I should just tell her everything. Could I trust her? This was the first time anyone had ever mentioned anything even remotely related to my not belonging to this reality. I stared at her, her too-old eyes looking out from a too-young face. How old was she anyway? Not even past her mid-thirties, only a few years older than myself. What would she be getting out of this?

“You are an anomaly. It’s easy to see when you know what you’re looking for. I knew from the moment you stepped into my classroom. You don’t belong here. You carry it around with you everywhere. Your energy distorts the matter around you.”

I looked down accusingly at the bag resting on my calf. Was the tablet the reason? Or was it really me? I toed my bag away. “Can you sense any fluctuations in the level of the odic energy I emit? If what you say is true, then haven’t you considered that perhaps I’ve simply served as a conduit to an outside source?”

She laughed. “That tablet of yours is a part of it, but mostly it’s coming from you.”

“How do you...how can you...?”

“You should let me help you. It’s the reason you’re so intent on understanding gravity, isn’t it? You think it might be the key. That’s a smart inference. What is it that you want? To explore? To replicate the process? You and I, we could help each other. There are others like you, just as there are people like me. We are the ones who know about this phenomena occurring.”

“We? People like me?”

A sardonic twist of her lips preceded another laugh. “Did you honestly think that you were the only one? We are dealing with quantities as large as infinity here, worlds splitting again and again enumerable times.” She lifted an eyebrow and regarded me with a level stare. “Well then, are you interested?”

“Interested?” I repeated, something like hope beginning to unfurl inside of me. I squelched it before it could fully bloom. After years of nothing, here this woman was, this professor, presenting me with the means with which to attain my goal. It didn’t feel real.

“You’re being tiresome, Miss Mendoza, and it’s starting to annoy me. You weren’t this slow in my class. Yes, I’m asking you if you are interested. Do you want to learn more? Follow Alice down the Rabbit Hole, step through the looking glass, look far down into the abyss and have it look back at you?”

I stared at her quietly for a moment, needing a bit of time to process what was happening. I felt excited and anxious, wanting to believe and yet afraid to let myself hope. Should her promise prove false, if this was all some kind of psychotic scam, the worst-case scenario would be that I’d end up dead in a desert somewhere. Taking this into account, would the risk be worth it? For the moment, Professor Rilke’s offer was my best chance of finding a way back home.

“Well?” she prompted. The look on her face told me that she knew exactly what my answer was going to be. “Okay,” I said with more confidence than I actually felt. Whether or not I could or should trust her did not matter. In the end, it all boiled down to me, to whether or not I was willing to risk it... to risk everything for this one chance. Yes I was.

“I’m interested,” I said. “Let’s do it.” ●



LOCATION *Hong Kong* **DATE** *June 2013*

PARTING SHOT

A VISUAL ENDNOTE

Photographed by Kara Gonzales

This photo was taken while crossing a street in Hong Kong. I liked how the English words, Chinese characters and the arrow were all there. I felt like I was being directed somewhere (I had recently resigned from my job at that time).

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See you in September 2016!

All Lives Matter.



The best things in life are free.