

THE MILKWAY

Magazine



Vol 2/ Issue 1/ 2025/ 01

JOY

APEROL SPRITZ

Sorrento Spritz



FRESHLY SQUEEZED
ORANGE JUICE

100%
FRUIT

Lemon Sorbet

FRUIT - JOY



'Lemon Sorbet'
Sorrento, Italy
Ihsane
2024



'The Beautiful People of Sal'
Cabo Verde
Ihsane
2024



Zagreb, Croatia
Elijah Kingson
2024

Editor's Letter

To our amazing readers,

It is with great excitement that we present the second volume of *The Milkiwaey Magazine*, titled *Seed to Soil*. This long-awaited edition celebrates resilience, creativity, and the bold journeys that artists undertake, often in the face of adversity. Through this carefully curated collection of visuals and narratives, we invite you to explore the paths of those who have dared to try.

As I reflect on my own experiences, the theme *Seed to Soil* resonates on a personal level. Inspired by my parents, I grew up surrounded by shelves filled with books and magazines covering everything from sports and fashion to interior design. It feels like a full-circle moment for me. What began as a small collection of digital illustrations, quickly challenged me to face my own creative doubts and imposter syndrome. It is a reminder that every idea, no matter how small, has the potential to flourish with dedication.

This release marks the first half of Volume Two; a two-part edition created to give space to the people behind the stories we have gathered.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Jessica Ajuyah, our lead designer, who worked tirelessly to ensure the vision came to life. To everyone - our team, collaborators, my family and friends, and of course you, our readers; your support and feedback mean the world to us. We are deeply grateful for the incredible community we have created together.

I trust that this issue will not only inspire you but also encourage you to continue to create.

Take time to absorb it all.

We look forward to hearing how this issue resonates with you.

Stay creative, be open to learn, and remember: It starts with a seed.

Love,

The Milkiwaey
Editor-in-Chief

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "The Milkiwaey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small star-like flourish at the end of the word "Milkiwaey".

01. Article

Space and Art: Exploring
Psychogeography and Experimentation

03. Interview with Ugochukwu Azuya

Filmmaker

CONT

02. Interview with Ada Onyiuke

Brand Strategist

04. Interview with Jessica Ajuyah

Visual Artist and
Multidisciplinary Designer

Contents

06. Interview with Ianaire Aderemi

Writer and Filmmaker

**Credits
Glossary**

05. Fashion Segment

What's In My Bag? with Amy
JNSPRTN & Sustainability

CLAPPEDMOB

Fashion 101 with 9rey House

Closing

Letter from The Milkiwaey

WAIT! BEFORE YOU READ...



It is custom for us to kick things off with an official Spotify playlist. Titled 'Side A – TM's World', this playlist is a collection of the songs I had on repeat while creating the magazine, most of these songs are nostalgic to me. It celebrates a mix of genres, from Highlife to Reggae, Rap, and beyond, offering a soundtrack to the essence of this issue. I tried my best to keep it to a minimum of 15 songs, but I am certain that by the time the issue is published the playlist would have over 50 songs on it.



A DATE . . MONO N.R. ON OFF
TIME . . STEREO []

A DATE/TIME

1. Chosen – Madison Ryann Ward	2. Intro – Show Dem Camp, TH
4. Afi're – Beautiful Nubia & The Roots Renaissance Band	5. Din
6. My Foolish Heart – Bhundu Boys	7. Nye Asem Hwe – City Boy
9. Hot Pants – Bola Johnson	10. 1878–76 (Happy Day from Me t
12. How Many Mics – Fugees (Wyclef Jean, Pras, Lauryn Hill)	13.

+ more on the flip side
MW-001 // For archival + listening use only



B DATE . . MONO N.F. ON OFF
TIME . . STEREO []

SUMMER TAPE / MW-001
Curated by: The Milkiwaey

1. The Cavemen, Nsikak David, Horus Al Sagnia 3. Osondu – The Cavemen.
4. Din Wo (Little Child) – Habib Koité & Kélétiogui Diabaté
5. [Band Name] 8. Atesem – Pat Thomas & Kwashibu Area Band
9. [Band Name] 10. [Band Name] 11. Running Away – Bob Marley & The Wailers
12. [Band Name] 13. [Band Name] 14. Why Me – LULU.

Dubbed in Lagos | Milkiwaey Studio 2025

On the other side of our tape, we created a Spotify Playlist titled 'Side B – Collabo', inspired by our creatives' favourite songs of 2024.



Reading an interview and you want to know what song our creatives are listening to? Side B is your go to!

Enjoy as you read through, allow each track add a unique layer to the experience.





Reading tips

1. Turn on the 'Side A- TM's World' playlist on Spotify.
 2. Flip through the pages and take in all the visuals.
 3. Go to Contents and see what interests you.
 4. Read and reflect.
 5. Glance through magazine again.
 6. Close magazine.
 7. Repeat.
- 
- 



SEED
to
SOIL



'A Vast Mind'
Tate Modern Art Gallery
Kelechi Amuta
2024





SPACE



ART

Exploring Psychogeography and Experimentation

A few years ago, I discovered a new way of perceiving and creating art. It was not centred on acquiring new techniques; rather, it emerged from a growing awareness of how my surroundings influence my thoughts, emotions, and creative decisions.

Concepts like psychogeography and experimentation, introduced to me by my lecturers, shifted my perspective forever. My surroundings were no longer mere contexts for my work; they became active participants in my creative journey.



If these terms are new to you, do not worry! I will break them down briefly and guide you through a process that will reshape not just how you engage with this issue, but how you approach your own creative practice.

A Quick Philosophy Lesson

Derived from geography (the study of places) and psychology (the study of the mind), psychogeography suggests that our environment shapes our thoughts, perspectives, and experiences. Whether you are walking through a market, sitting on a bus, or studying in a library, your surroundings influence you, often without you realising it.

The term was coined in the late '50s by French philosopher Guy Debord, a prominent member of the radical group *Situationist International*. This group challenged how consumerism and media warp our perception of reality. Debord's concept of *The Spectacle* describes how society feeds us images, advertisements, and narratives that turn us into passive observers, rather than active participants.

One of the Situationists' key methods of resistance was the *dérive* (French for "drift"). This method involved exploring a city without a set destination, allowing the environment to guide you instead of following a pre-planned path. For instance, they might wander through Paris using maps from entirely different cities. They would navigate Paris as if it were Lagos or London; disrupting the norm and forcing themselves to engage with their surroundings in unique and unexpected ways.

The Dérive and I

Before learning about the *dérive*, I had unknowingly practiced it on several occasions. Sometimes, on my way to buy food, I would take different, longer routes just to experience new environments.

During lockdown, I often took random, unplanned walks, capturing pictures of flowers or ordinary objects without the pressure of time or direction. It was not until I participated in a *dérive* with my class that I realised I had been practising it all along.

One experience stands out. We stumbled upon a hidden stream I had passed many times before but never noticed. As I moved through the space, I became hyper-aware of my surroundings, the shifting light, the sound of trickling water. That moment reinforced the idea that inspiration is everywhere if you take the time to look.

An infinite muse.

A *dérive* might not be the same for everyone, especially if your city is not conducive to wandering or is unsafe. But even that is worth observing. Some cities have clear pavements, while others do not; some are full of signs, while others have a dull, neutral aesthetic. How do these characteristics affect how you create or interact with others?

Personally, I think about how, growing up, everyone knew their neighbours. Now, in many places, depending on the environment, that sense of community seems to have faded. Consider how your environment shapes your creative work and the relationships around you.

Does it help or hinder?



Note:

While wandering through city streets is one way to engage with psychogeography, it is not the only one. Revisit places that hold special memories, reflect on how they have changed, or explore new art galleries or unfamiliar areas.

Ultimately, psychogeography reminds us that our environment is more than just a backdrop. By engaging with it in new ways, we discover new and exciting sources of creativity and develop a deeper connection to our spaces.



Last Collection Time
Monday to Friday
9.00am

For further information on the
mailing process, please contact
the Post Office.
01753 674444

For further information on the
mailing process, please contact
the Post Office.
01753 674444

Saturday
7.00am

For further information on the
mailing process, please contact
the Post Office.
01753 674444



Freedom to Experiment

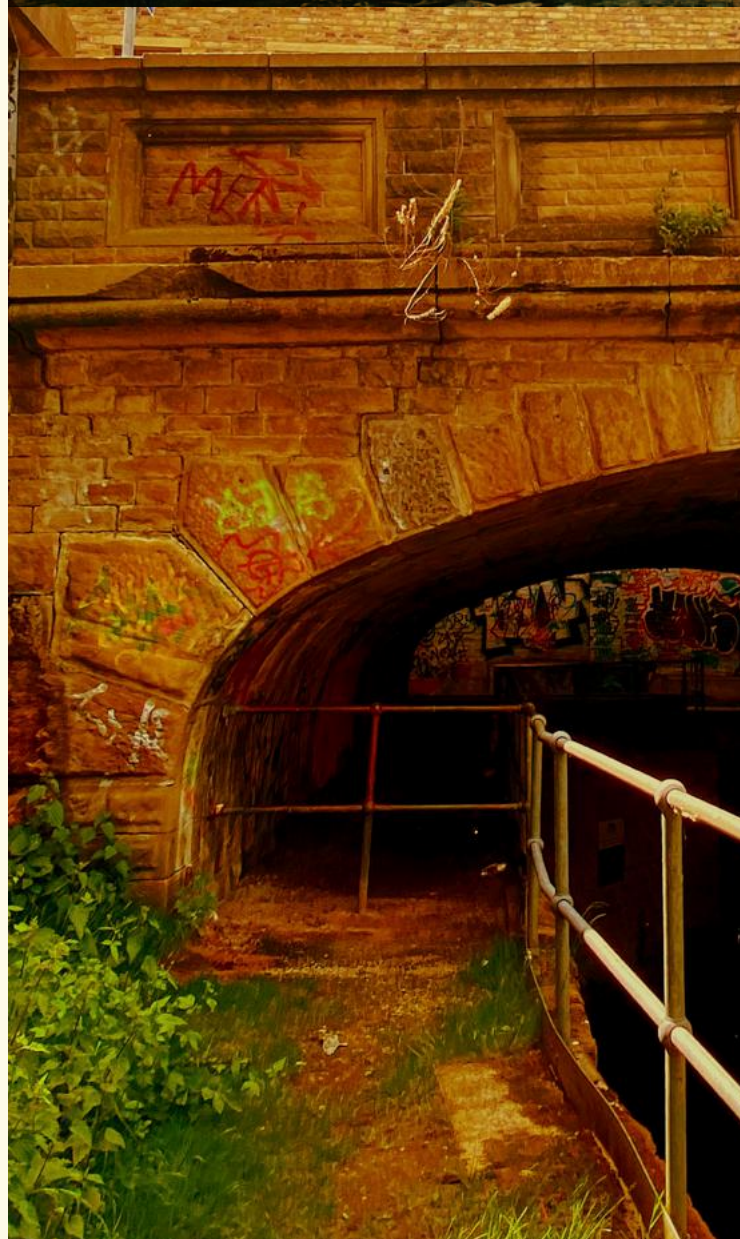
Once I started seeing my environment through the lens of psychogeography, I became more spontaneous in my creative process. I freed myself from rigid expectations and began experimenting with different materials, techniques, and perspectives.


Think about the last time you watched a film. It was not just about the main characters but also the extras, the setting, and the colour grading. These elements shape the story, whether we consciously recognise them or not. The same goes for art. Perhaps there are aspects of your creative process you love but have not fully explored.

In class, we pushed our boundaries by drawing with our non-dominant hands, turning our bedrooms into mini photo studios, and I even experimented with light painting. Some of my best creative realisations came when I stepped outside my comfort zone.

For years, I struggled to define myself artistically because I had so many interests. But through this magazine, I realised a passion for curating and directing; combining my love for fashion, art, music, and photography all in one.

Maybe you love taking pictures and curating Instagram posts. Have you ever thought about creating a zine or photobook? If you love drawing but only use white paper or canvas, why not try painting on glass or coloured paper?






These experiments are not about changing your artistic style but about exploring what happens when you remove restrictions. Often, this shift in process births new thinking.

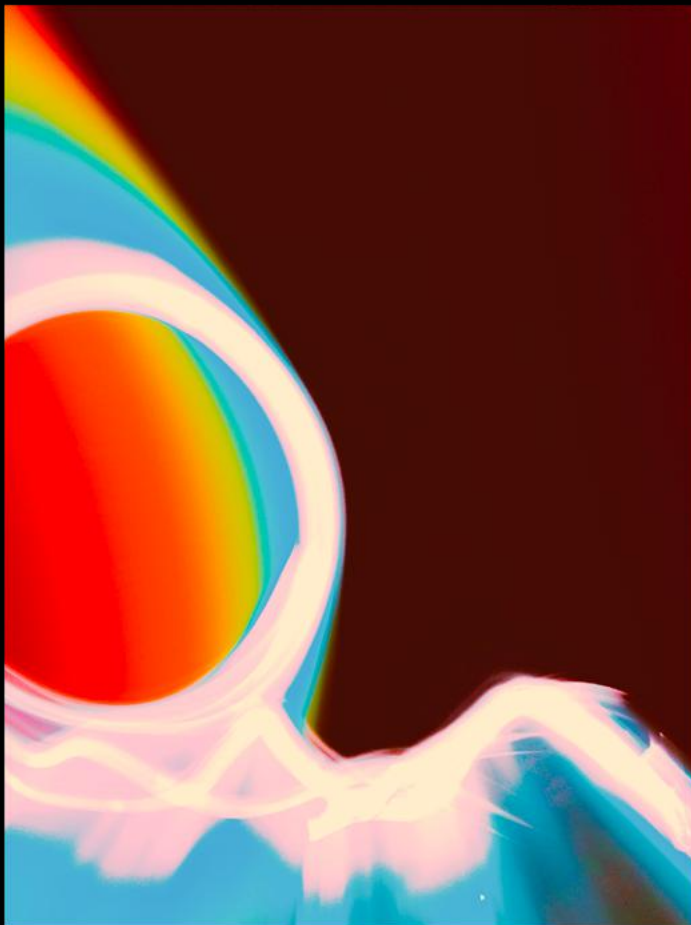
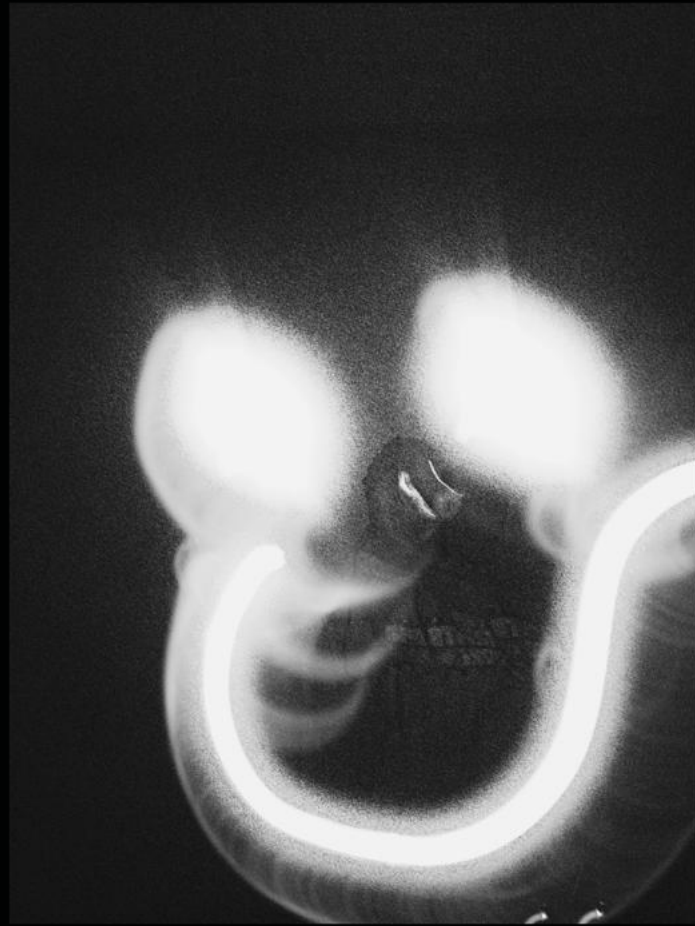
An example of exploration could be incorporating apophenia; seeing patterns and connections in unrelated things. We have all done this at some point, like finding hidden shapes in a pile of clothes or animals in the clouds. This way of perceiving the world can influence your creative approach. Embracing these spontaneous connections might open up new perspectives in your work.

Experimentation is not about creating a “deep artist” persona. It is about genuine exploration.

Be open to trying new things and pushing creative boundaries. It will not always look perfect. It might feel messy at first, and it might even make you doubt your skills. Trust the process; as long as you created it, it counts as art.

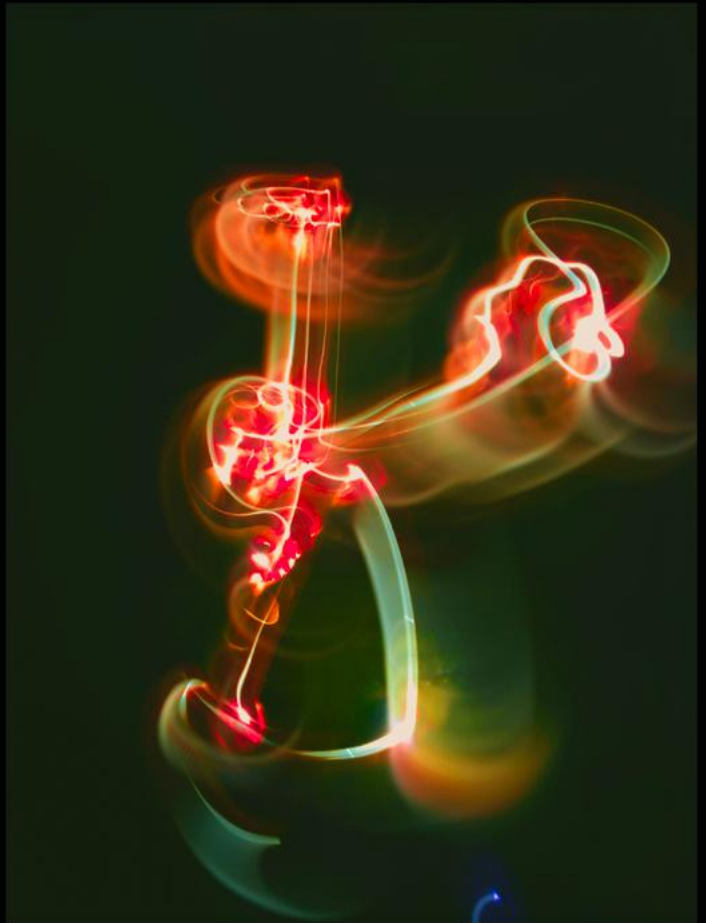
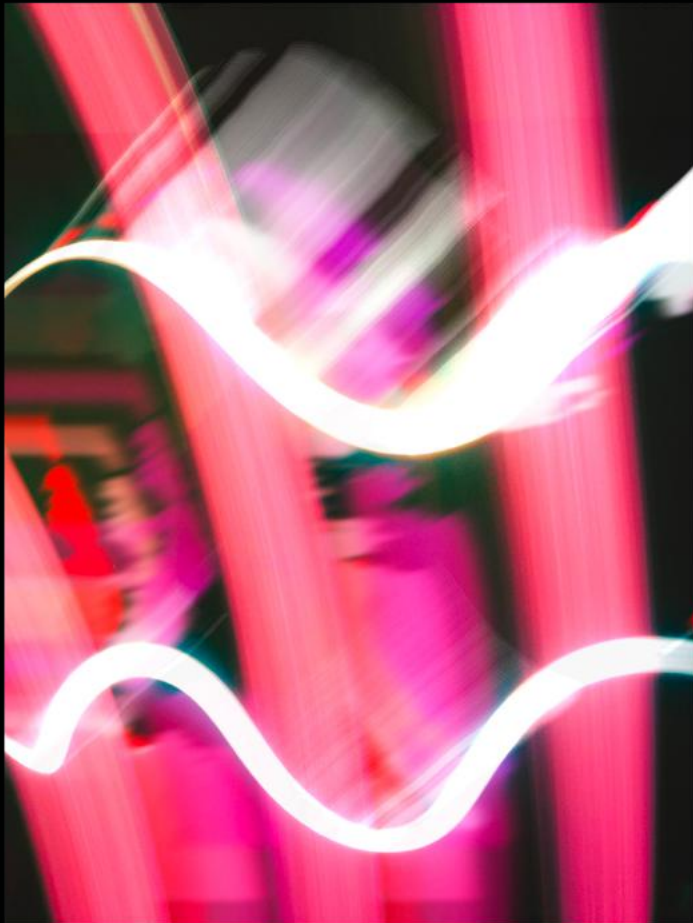
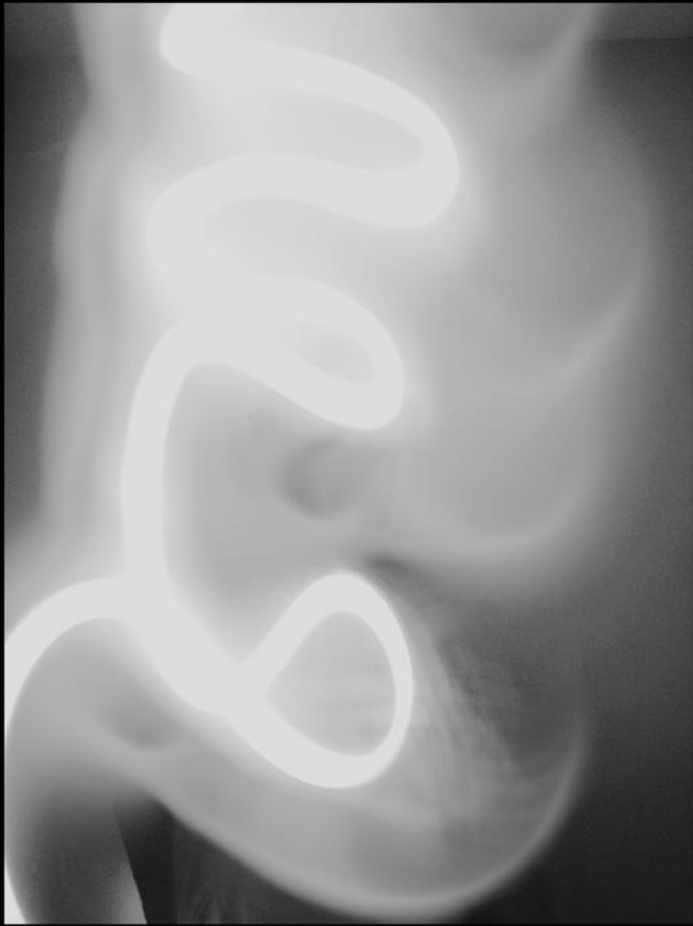
Many of the illustrations I posted in 2024 were unfinished pieces I had started almost four years prior. Some I was sure would never see the light of day; others I experimented with through photo editing and photography. While I made mistakes and know I would do some things differently now, that did not reduce the importance of my work. It challenged me to rethink how I perceived others’ expectations of my work and reject the limitations they imposed on what I am capable of creating.





An example of me experimenting was with light paintings. I practiced in my dorm room, turning off all the lights and using a small flashlight, which I moved around to trace motion in the dark. I used a slow shutter app to capture the movement,

transforming simple gestures into fluid patterns of light. The result felt both spontaneous and intentional, as if I were drawing in space rather than on paper. This experiment reinforced my interest in process-based creation, embracing play, chance,



and environment as essential parts of making. It reminded me that creative exploration often begins with curiosity and the willingness to transform ordinary surroundings into spaces for discovery.

u LE S u T e
THINKSTUDY
u c y e r
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THINKSTUDY
u c y e r



MUSEUM VISIT-TATE MODERN

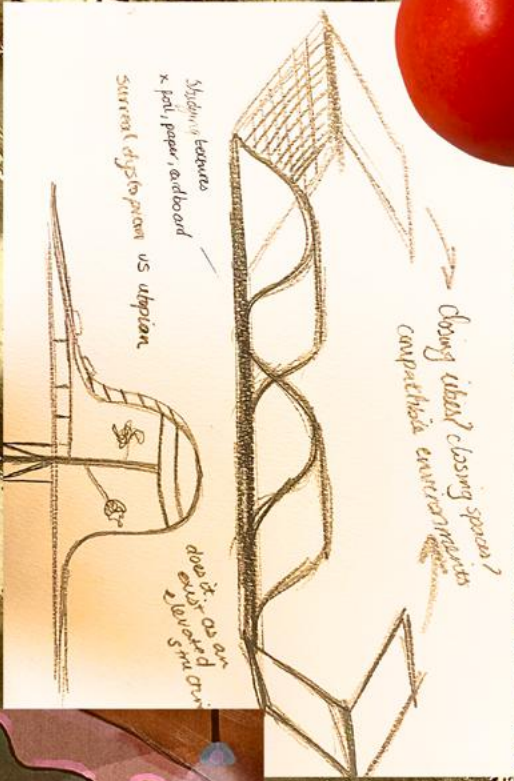


GHOST IN THE SHELL

In 2018, I was able to visit Tate Modern in London with a friend. Amongst many wonderful pieces was really drawn to the neon installation titled 'No Ghost Just A Shell' from my interest in anime and Philippe Parreno. This piece completely drew my attention asides from my interest in anime and anime, there was a sort of playfulness to the installations that was refreshing. The picture on the left shows a projected video of a 3-D animation of the character they named 'Anniee'. Pierre Hughe and Philippe Parreno, purchased Anniee from a Japanese animation studio and the character was not going to be used there fore they named it 'Anniee'. They then gave Anniee the rights back to its ownself symbolising the idea that it hosted its own perceptions. All the art installations about Anniee always depict the idea that it was inspired by an old 1995 anime Ghost in the Shell which was an action movie that was based in the year 2029. I had to watch it and it reminded me of movies like the Matrix and that were coming of age and inspiring as it looked at the future with the fascinating cyber and technologically based cinematography. Below are some pictures from the movie.



The film was extremely symbolic and addressed a lot of philosophical and theological ideas. It explores the thoughts of the cyborg named Motoko Kusanagi who was originally human and how she feels, possessing both a human and mechanic brain so it explores her emotions and purpose as she is torn between the knowing both a understands and the feelings she has as part human. I wanted to incorporate it with a theme and thought of the idea for a campaign titled 'The Future is Here'. This campaign would be explained in further pages. I really loved the use of colour and art futuristic style and this helped me create my colour palette for my backgrounds.



As I explored experimentation through the lens of psychogeography, I created a piece titled *Nomland* using found materials such as cardboard, old receipts, foil paper, and packaging from a makeup palette. I wanted to examine the contrast between smooth and grid-like structures of mapping; the idea that structure and movement can coexist within the spaces we inhabit. The piece invites the viewer to imagine walking through a landscape, reflecting on how our surroundings influence perception, emotion, and creative thought.

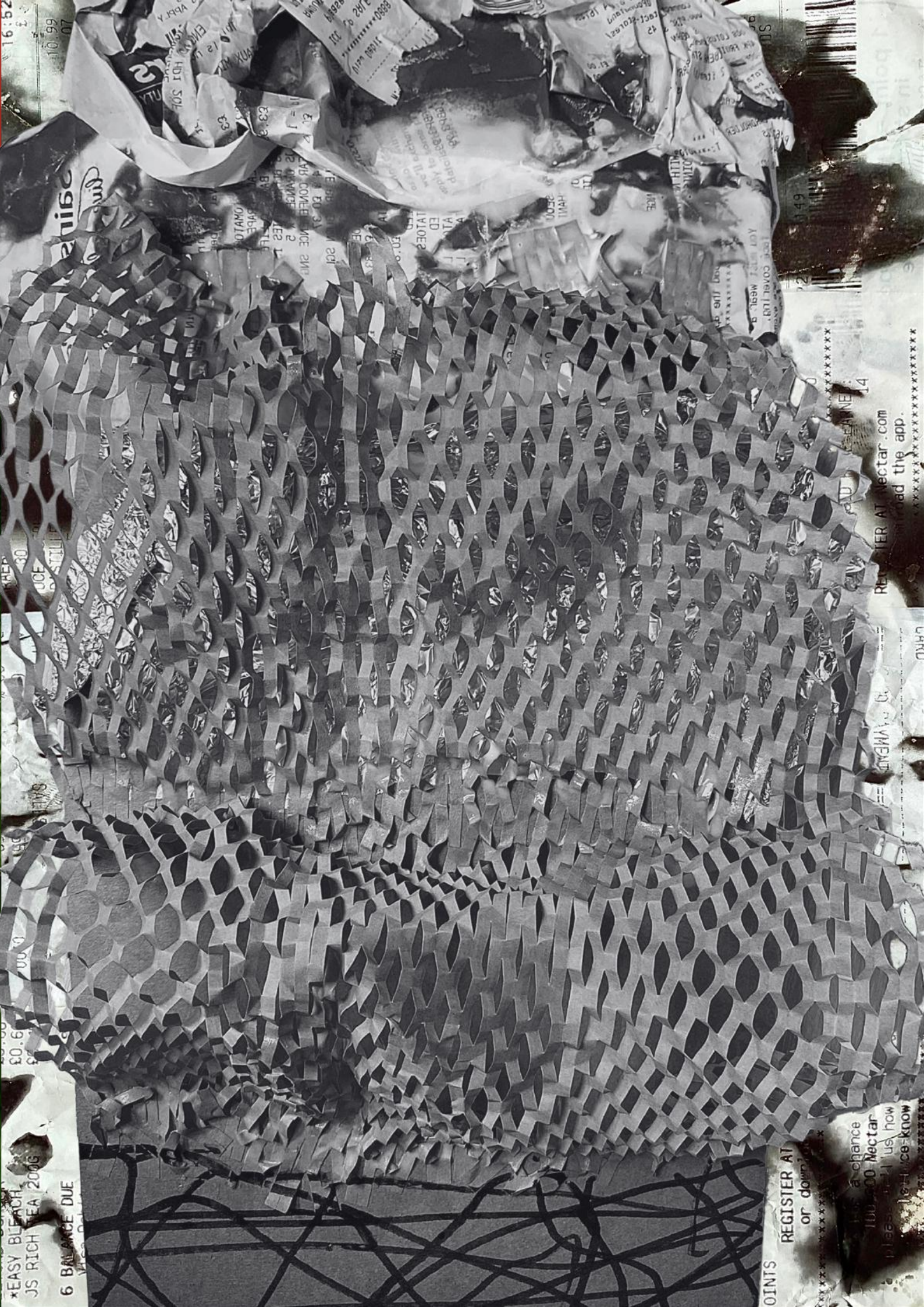
The idea for *Nomland* emerged while I was working at a restaurant, when a receipt fell on the griddle and left black marks that resembled landmarks. I began experimenting with this by recreating those accidental patterns and textures, exploring how unexpected marks could represent the traces we leave behind in physical and emotional spaces. This act of transforming an everyday moment into intentional design reflects a psychogeographic awareness, finding inspiration within the spaces we move through.

During this process, I also began reading parts of *Nomadology: The War Machine* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The text's concept of nomadology, which explores movement, fluidity, and the rejection of fixed structures, resonated deeply with my approach to creating *Nomland*. I related to the idea of the artist as a nomad, one who navigates without strict boundaries, allowing ideas and materials to determine direction. It was a strange creative process for me, as I often felt everything had to appear perfect or fully formed.

These early experiments now influence the way I draw and compose. Architecture also guides the visual language that has become central to my process. I have become drawn to curvature, repetition, and organic form, elements that recall the domes, sunken spaces, and circular geometry of Earthships, conversation pits, and retro-futurist interiors from the 1960s and 1970s. These architectural influences express a longing for fluidity and interconnectedness, environments that blur the boundaries between the natural and the constructed, much like *Nomland* itself.

Through them, I have discovered a language of movement and enclosure that continues to shape my visual style and spatial understanding.





*EASY BLEACH
JS RICH TEA 2006
6 BALANCE DUE

£0.67
£0.97

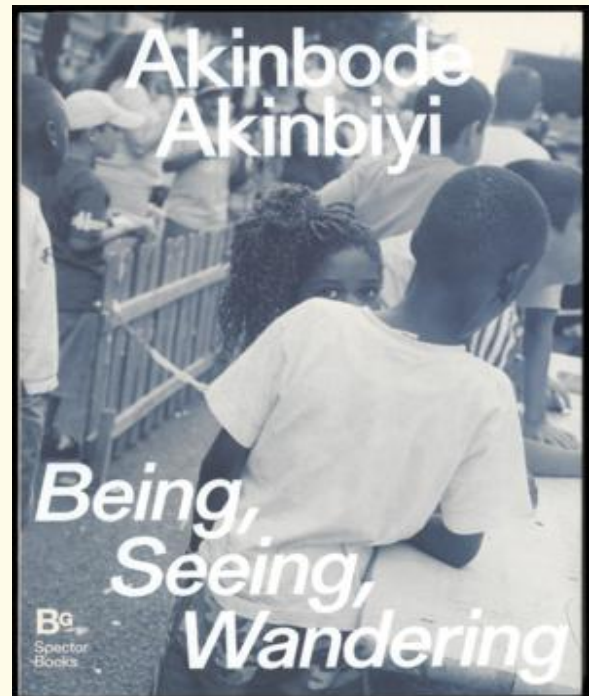
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Psychogeography in Art

Psychogeographical art uses space itself as a tool for expression. One of my favourite examples is photographer Akinbode Akinbiyi, whose street photography explores how the everyday interactions of life in cities like Lagos and Berlin are shaped by the spaces people inhabit. His strong black-and-white imagery portrays the subtle ways space influences people's experiences, encouraging us to reflect on our own relationship with the environments we live in.



Akinbode Akinbiyi, *Being, Seeing, Wandering* (cover, 2024).

Source: Spector Books.



Akinbode Akinbiyi, "Lagos: All Roads 6" (2003). Source: Artspace Africa.



Akinbode Akinbiyi, *Six Songs, Swirling Gracefully in the Taut Air* (Exhibition Review, 2020). Source: Exibart Street.

Another artist, Janet Cardiff, transforms our perception of familiar places through audio narratives. By guiding participants through cities with recorded sounds, stories, and instructions, Cardiff makes spaces feel entirely new. Her work reminds us that places hold memories, stories, and emotions that can deeply influence creative expression. This resonated with me when my class experimented with sound. I recorded the ambient noise near my accommodation, which helped me realise how every city has a distinct soundscape, a chaotic blend of car horns and people shouting in some places, and the eerie quiet of an empty street in others. These sounds shape how we experience and interact with not only the environment but the people in it.



Janet Cardiff, *The Whispering Room*.
Source: Alchetron



Janet Cardiff, *The Forty Part Motet*.
Source: Alchetron.



Nengi Omuku, Days Gone By, 2023

Nengi Omuku also explores psychogeography through her work, exploring topics such as memory and identity. She uses sanyan, a traditional Nigerian fabric, as her canvas to illustrate how the spaces we occupy shape our sense of self. Her art is known to beautifully depict how environments become extensions of our identities.



Nengi Omuku, Mum, 2020



Nengi Omuku, Comfort and Joy, 2022



'Esther'
The Milkiwaey
2025



Moving Forward

It is easy to stick with what feels familiar and safe, but I challenge you to step outside your comfort zone. Try new materials. Change your creative space. Take a *dérive* through a different part of your city, visit a friend, or watch a film in an unfamiliar genre. Notice how it makes you feel, what drives inspiration, and what does not. You will never know unless you try.

Sometimes we want our art to feel cohesive, and that is okay. I, too, worry about whether my work makes sense to others. But the key is to stop relying on external expectations. Art should be fun, not a task or a requirement.

As you read through this issue, ask yourself:

How does your environment shape your artform? Are you limiting your creativity by sticking to what is comfortable?

Explore. Learn. Experiment. Step outside your usual creative space, and you might just stumble upon the breakthrough you have been waiting for.

For me, this journey of exploring my environment, experimenting with new methods, and embracing the unexpected has transformed my perspective. I am excited to see where your path of discovery and experimentation will take you.







The Milkiwaey
2023/2024



Bloom

'Bloom'
The Milkiwaey
2025



'Are You Visiting?'
The Milkiwaey
2025



'The Sleeping Giant'
The Milkiwaey
2025



INTRODUCING
YOUR ULTIMATE URBAN EXPLORATION GUIDE



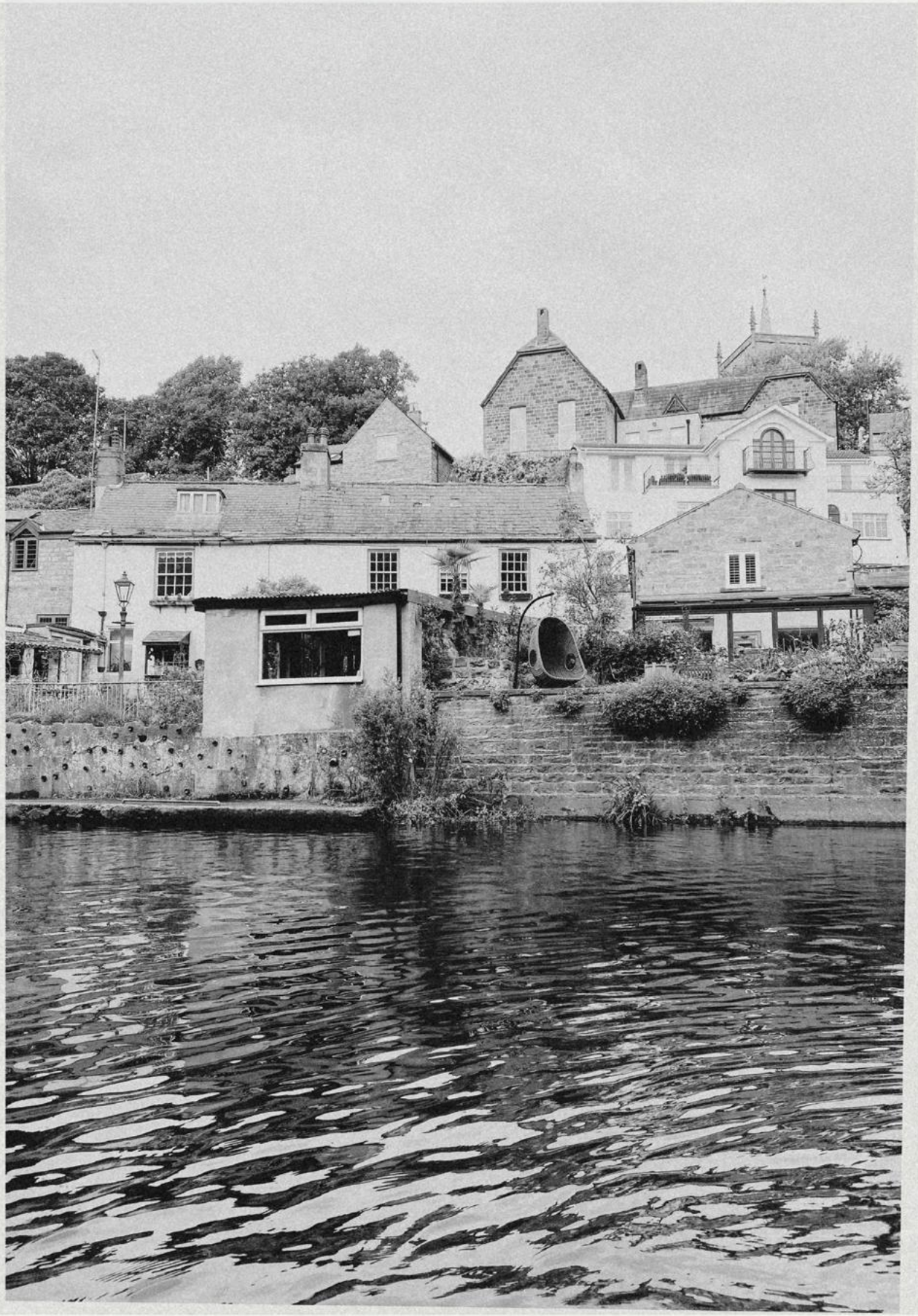
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The Milkiwaey
2023



Interview 01

Adaeze Onyiuke

Hi everyone, my name is Ada and I am a brand designer and strategist. I work full-time as a senior designer at Strange Works. I have been in the design industry for five years professionally, and it has been an exciting ride!

Q. What first drew you to the world of brand strategy and graphic design, and how has your journey shaped your perspective today?

Ada: I have always been drawn to design, even if I did not know it at first. I remember, as a kid, my brother and I had a lemonade stand, and I was more interested in creating posters for it than making the lemonade itself.

Little things like that made me realize I had a natural inclination for signage and branding. I think I always assumed that the graphics I would see were templates. I could not really wrap my head around how people designed these or the thought processes they went through. Even in secondary school, I was obsessed with designing signs for events. During our Model United Nations programme, we had to design signs for our countries, and I remember being completely absorbed in the task. At the time, I saw it as art and did not understand what it meant in the context of a career.

It was not until college, I remember being on Twitter one day, and someone shared brand work she did for a friend's hair company that everything clicked. I have always been fascinated with brands and always remembered what caught my eye about a specific logo too. The more I

figured I had this interest, the more I realised this was something I could pursue professionally. From there, I dove into self-learning. Since I was not studying design in school, I taught myself the tools, like Adobe Creative Suite, and studied design principles. It has been a self-led journey, but once I realised design and branding were careers, I have been in love with it ever since.

Another memory comes to mind from secondary school: the school was celebrating its anniversary, and there was a competition to design a commemorative shirt. That experience was a turning point for me. I loved the process; drawing type, experimenting with fonts, and seeing my ideas come to life. It made me realise that I enjoyed art not just for myself. I see myself as artistic, but I would not necessarily consider myself a traditional artist. I genuinely love working with clients to define how they want their brand to look and feel, and that is what makes designing in service to others so exciting for me.

Q. Tell us about your journey from studying Communication to Design.

Ada: Growing up, the career paths most often suggested to me were the familiar ones: lawyer, doctor, engineer, finance, or business. Creative careers, such as graphic design, were not even on

my radar. In school, subjects were often grouped simply as “art” or “science,” and I didn’t fully realise how an interest in History could lead to a wide range of courses and career paths—or that Art and Design offered similar possibilities. It was only later that I understood these were not the only options.



At the time, out of all the career options they gave us as an arts/business student in college, law was the one I figured at least I could read and express myself in some way. In America, you study a first degree and then go to law school, so I started studying criminal justice. I did well, but after my first year, something felt off. I realised I was not truly passionate about it. As much as I loved law shows like *How to Get Away with Murder* and *Law & Order*, I knew deep down that law was not for me, and I know my preconceptions of these shows were not always the case in reality.

My heart was not in it, so I shifted gears.

I thought business might be the next best thing, especially marketing. I loved the idea of being creative and coming up with new concepts. What I did not know was that I was actually passionate about branding and how companies develop marketing strategies. Living in a consumer-driven country like the U.S., I became fascinated by ads, spotting the brilliant ones and the truly bad ones.

That is when I knew this was the field for me.

However, to get into marketing, I had to go through business school, which was not exactly what I imagined. The curriculum focused more on technical roles, like setting you up for Wall Street, and not the fun 'ooh lah lah' roles, and I struggled with courses like Statistics. After changing my major three times in three years, I concluded business school might not be the right fit for my creative side.

That is when I found communications; a perfect balance of creativity and business. It offered the same career opportunities as marketing, but with a more creative focus. I switched to communications, and it was one of the best decisions I made. I loved learning about communication theories, health messaging, and even minored in public relations and strategic communication.

As I progressed in my communications studies, I recognised I was more drawn to the visual aspects of the field. I enjoyed executing ideas visually, but writing press releases was not something I wanted to pursue. I stuck with communications because I enjoyed it, and the tools I learned there later informed my work in brand strategy.

During the pandemic, I struggled to land a job in communication, and that is when I finally decided to focus on graphic design. As everything was slowing down, I had the space to focus inward and build my skills. I spent a lot of time self-learning, and with a friend from college, we launched a design agency called *Table and Chair*. We worked with clients, executing designs and handling brand strategy.





That time was crucial in shaping me into the designer I am today, and I am incredibly grateful for it. From Law to Marketing to Communications, now in Design.

Q: Can you please tell us a bit more about Table and Chair and what that shift was to the job you are doing now?

Ada: Sure! Our agency ran from 2020 to 2023. We took on projects across various industries, blending design and strategy. Helping brands define what makes them stand out and how they can sustain success. It became clear that for a brand to thrive, it needs a unique vision, and that is what I helped clients build, pushing them to think beyond just the design and toward the bigger picture. I was also able to do a lot of PR from my communications experience, so the skills were definitely transferrable.



Q: Please describe your design process and if you have any work traditions?

Ada: When it comes to my design process, I am all about consistency. I prefer working in the same space where I started a project, whether it is my home office, which is my room, or even the dining table. I call it my "HQ." Keeping that same environment helps me maintain momentum and stay focused. I am also a big believer in coffee and music, that one is standard! No coffee, no work!

My design process is strategy-led. I do not jump into the design until I fully understand the "why" behind a project.

I spend a lot of time in the discovery phase, having conversations with clients to understand their needs and their "why". I am an attentive listener, picking up on both verbal and nonverbal cues to really get into their mindset. There is a little bit of role-playing; understanding my clients so well that I can think like them.

After that, I build inspiration boards based on what I have learned. Then I bring initial ideas to the table, and the feedback helps me understand their preferences. This is where I do a lot of “gut checking,” ensuring I know what they like and do not like before diving into the actual design.

Once I have gathered enough insight, I move into the design phase. I used to present three options, but now I prefer a more streamlined approach, trusting that I have already understood the client’s vision. It is often a challenge when clients do not fully know what they want.

That is where asking the right questions and translating their needs into visuals becomes essential; through mood boards or palettes. My role is to guide them through the process, refining their vision without imposing too much of my own style. I always create my own brief, even if the client provides one. They might come to me with a general idea, but through conversation, I uncover the deeper detail, for example, whether their fashion brand is meant to feel like Chanel’s “old money” aesthetic. Clients will not always say that directly, but it is my job to translate those unspoken ideas into something visual. Like a doctor diagnosing a problem, I have to listen and ask the right questions to get to the core of what they want.

The discovery phase is crucial.

Clients often expect quick turnarounds, but for me to design effectively, I need to understand their mindset deeply. When I was freelancing full-time, I would spend two to three weeks just on “discovery”. Once I am clear on their vision, I can work quickly and efficiently in the design phase. For me, working fast is all about fully

understanding what I am creating first.

My work is always in service to the client. While I do not completely switch off my personal preferences, I use my experience to translate their ideas into something that fits their vision.

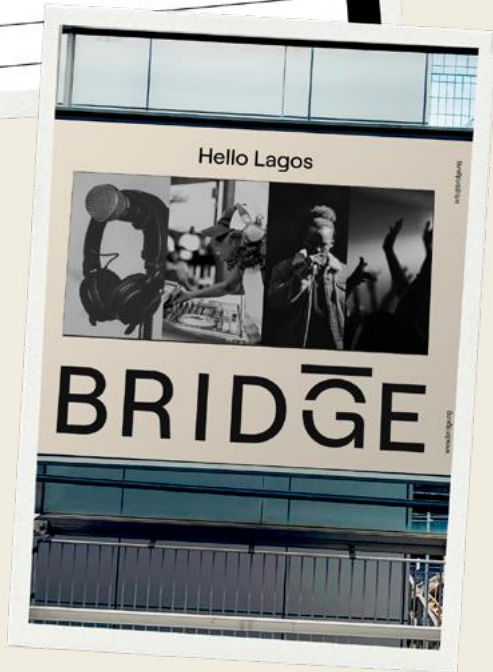
My job is not about creating something for myself; it is about executing what the client truly wants, which requires a lot of upfront time and understanding before I even begin designing.

Over time, I have learned that people often do not know what they want until they see it.

Clients do not always realise how much effort goes into creating distinct designs. They may think it is easy to churn out variations, but it is about finding the right fit.

This is why I spend so much time on the mood board phase. Laying a solid foundation makes the design process smoother.

Early on, I would jump straight into design and end up revising endlessly, sometimes saving them ‘v10, v15, v20’. Now I know that taking time to establish clear parameters up front speeds things up later. Even after the design is finished, there are always small tweaks. Once I am confident in the direction, I may revisit it, but I have learned that staying confident and iterative leads to better results. I also like to check in with clients after the project is complete, when I can, keeping that connection is important.



I also learned that not every project is for me; not because I cannot do it, but because it may not align with my passion.



Q: Have you ever been in a position working with friends or being recommended by a friend? What is that like for you?

Ada: Most of my work comes through recommendations, and while I am no longer freelancing, I still approach every project with the same professionalism. I was clear about my rates and the process when I freelanced, but early on, I struggled with setting boundaries, especially with friends. I would often assume what they could afford, and allow them to essentially devalue what I did because I felt shy about it, which was not always the best approach.

Over time, I learned that not being upfront about my rates and boundaries did not help anyone. It was more about not trusting my worth. I felt, because I went an unconventional route, “meanwhile this was my bread and butter, oh!” But I did not trust myself to stand by those rates. Now, I am clear about costs, revisions, and scope. I am okay saying no to projects.

If the project goes beyond the original agreement, clients understand the additional cost. It is about balancing professionalism with being personable while respecting my value as a business owner.

That is why I am no longer freelancing full-time. I am now focused on projects that excite me, taking breaks when needed to reassess and return with a clearer vision. Working with friends taught me to set boundaries and value my work, and I have actually really enjoyed it. I think you also need to get to the reason why you do not want to set those boundaries and learn to navigate them, because for me, one of the main reasons was that I actually did not believe in myself enough to do so.



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Eventually, I believe everyone finds that balance. This journey has taught me to set boundaries, manage expectations, and trust myself as a designer. It has not always been easy, but it has made me more confident and efficient in my work.

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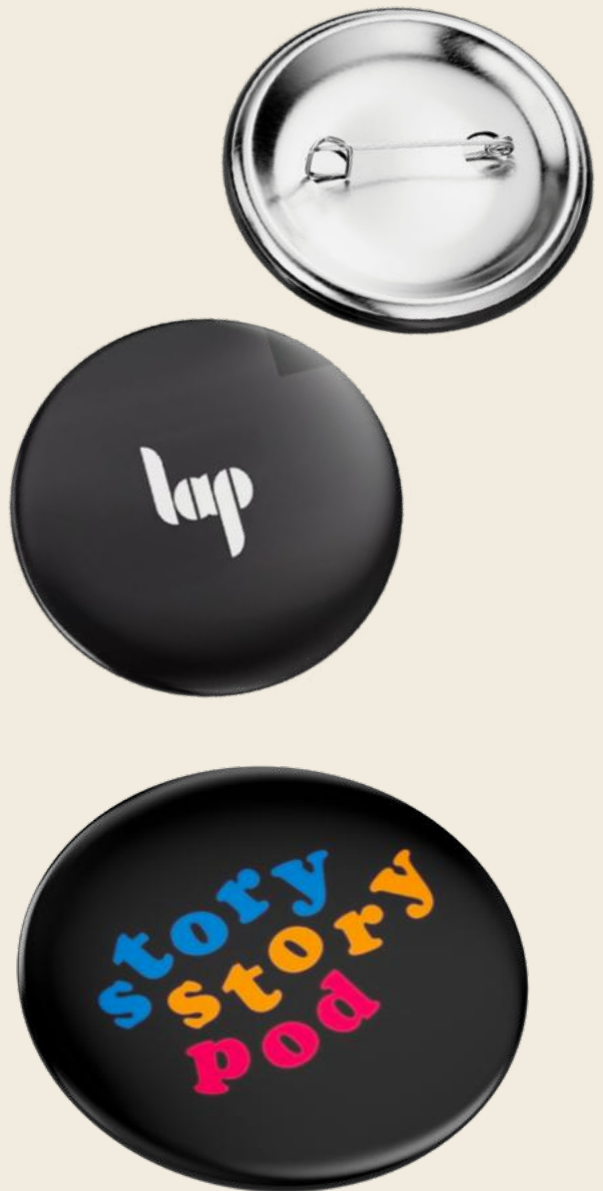
Q: Can you speak further on some challenges you have faced with clients?

Ada: As a freelancer, sometimes clients may not fully understand the value of design or branding. They might only want a logo without a full branding perspective, and it is okay to give them that if that is all they want. It does not mean their brand is not important to them, they might just need that logo depending on their industry. For example, a law firm might not be as bothered about the branding as maybe a drink company. While I get that they may not be ready for full brand strategy, it can be frustrating knowing how much more the design could do for them.

For a brand that may require more extensive brand strategy extensive brand strategy, and if I sense a client does not grasp branding's importance, I give them a "Trojan horse crash course" by using examples. If they mention a brand they like, I provide them with an analysis and help them understand why it works, the color scheme, the packaging, the values it communicates.

It is also important to recognise that if a project is not a good fit, it is okay to walk away. Money matters, and realistically, I cannot ignore that. Finding the balance is easier said than done. At the same time, doing work that aligns with my values is equally important, even if it sometimes means choosing a project that may not offer as much financially as another opportunity. Taking on less-than-ideal projects, especially when funds are tight, has been an important part of my learning process. Still, I have learned to evaluate opportunities carefully and set boundaries that protect both my values and growth.

I believe that when a client is open to learning, it is a chance to educate them about the value of design beyond just a logo.



I have had clients who initially only wanted a logo but later realised branding is much more. One of my favourite clients, *lanaire aderemi*; I worked with for *lanaire aderemi productions* and *story story pod* is a great example. After more discussions, she left with an understanding of brand strategy. Years later, she is still using the concepts we developed and has built a successful brand. It is rewarding to see how that evolved.

Ultimately, it is about educating clients on the value of good design and helping them see the bigger picture.

Q: Please tell us a bit more about the work you do now and how you handle criticism in any of these situations?

Ada: As a senior designer at StrangeWorks, a quantum computing software startup, it is a completely different space than the experiences I have described, but I love it because we are working in such a complex industry. The design team tries to make it fun and easy to understand, and I love doing this as a designer. I have been here for about two years, but this is my first corporate design job. Prior to this, I had design internships and freelanced, so transitioning into a corporate environment was a big shift. When you are working in-house with a brand that already exists, you need to learn it. There are professionals there who have already 'lived and breathed' this brand.

Early on, I struggled with constant feedback because I was used to working independently. It was tough not to take it personally. I understood that they were the best people to gain more information from to fully immerse myself into the brand identity.

As a self-taught designer working alongside trained professionals who went to design school, I often dealt with imposter syndrome. But over time, I recognised that feedback was not about me, it was about improving the design for the brand. I have definitely improved skill-wise, and I am glad I took the time to understand the brand better because, after a year, I began to feel more confident in receiving feedback—if I got any. Now, I actively seek it out. I understand that feedback is crucial for making sure the final product speaks to the brand and its audience.

I have also learned how to communicate my needs when receiving feedback.

For example, when I work with other designers, I prefer them to explain why something is not working, I do not want them to fix it for me.

I want to go through the process myself.

With clients, I always ask clarifying questions to ensure I understand the root of their concerns, as vague feedback is not always helpful.

It is essential to create an environment where feedback is constructive, and that requires clear communication.

I always try to communicate from the beginning how I would like feedback to be delivered when working with clients. I will tell clients: "When it comes to feedback, this is how I would prefer it, and here is the point of contact." I make sure to establish who the main contact person is for the project. Are they the person I will be working with directly, or will someone else be handling it?

That is the only line of communication I will have, and I will CC others on emails if needed, but I want to make sure everything is funneled through that one contact. It helps avoid confusion later on. You need to understand your process over time to help guide these conversations.

Q: How do you manage the balance between your creative vision and the client's expectations?

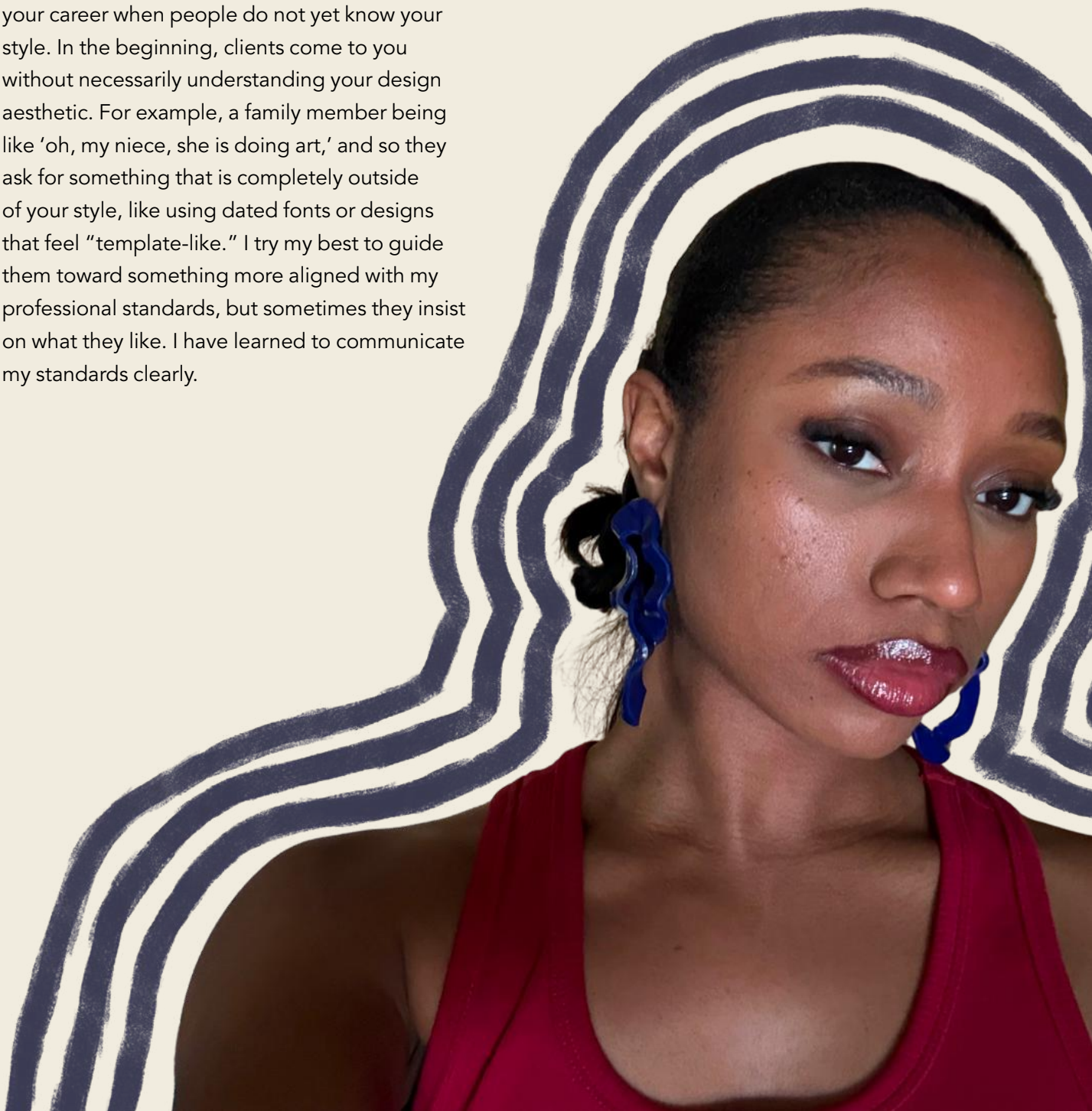
Ada: I love this question, as I mentioned earlier, I am an artist in service of others. Most of the time, I do not have a specific creative vision that I am attached to. I see myself as someone who brings creative insights based on my experience and the needs of the project. I try not to bring any specific emotional attachment to any design elements I create. So, when I am presenting concepts, there is usually one that I like more than the others, but it is still up to the client to choose. I do not go into any project with a set idea of what I want. I let the brand inform the process.

The way I approach a design project is more about understanding the client's needs and their brand and letting that guide how we proceed. I do not have a rigid "creative vision." What I have is a professional standard I adhere to. If a client shows me reference images that I do not feel align with the professional standards I follow—say, something that is not quite modern or is more "outdated," I will try to guide them toward what is relevant and effective.

But it is not always easy, especially early in your career when people do not yet know your style. In the beginning, clients come to you without necessarily understanding your design aesthetic. For example, a family member being like 'oh, my niece, she is doing art,' and so they ask for something that is completely outside of your style, like using dated fonts or designs that feel "template-like." I try my best to guide them toward something more aligned with my professional standards, but sometimes they insist on what they like. I have learned to communicate my standards clearly.

Ultimately, if a client is insistent on things that are not up to that standard, it is usually a sign that we might not be a good fit. But sometimes, you just have to do it. You try to make it work by finding alternatives that still meet their needs, but are closer to the standard you believe in. It is always a balancing act.

Sometimes you cannot just say "no" outright, you have to find a middle ground. You try to meet them where they are at, but without compromising too much.



I think it is important to trust your expertise. Even if they insist on something you are not happy with, it is your responsibility to offer alternatives that align with professional standards, like finding typography alternatives that still communicate the same message without completely sacrificing design integrity.

Q: What is one of your favorite projects you have worked on and why?

Ada: I get so excited talking about this, Eden. This was a self-led design concept. When projects you love do not come your way, you create the ones you want to see.

I imagined my dream client and went through the whole process, just like a client to a designer. It was the last self-led project I did before interviewing for corporate roles, and I really stretched myself as a designer, using everything from Photoshop to Procreate, Figma, and more.

The beauty of the project was how it went beyond just being a vegetarian restaurant; it was about creating an experience. How do you elevate that concept?

With Eden, I wanted it to feel "larger than life," using religious cues I grew up with, while keeping it tasteful.



“

It is not just about the design itself but crafting a story and lifestyle that speaks to the audience. Especially coming from a Marketing PR perspective. You are not just putting down words, you are creating a narrative, like “food for the soul, not the flesh,” which ties into the bigger concept.

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EDEN

Wine List

Carefully curated list of plant-based and
vegan wines

EDEN

Dessert Book

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DIVINE FULFILLMENT

DINING
, SA • XX

EDEN

PLANT BASED FINE DINING
MM • JOHANNESBURG, SA • XX



Another mention is the Perambulator font, another self-led project inspired by Fela's album covers. I always wanted to create a font. Listening to Fela's albums, I became fascinated with Lemi Ghariokwu, who made many of his covers by hand. I took inspiration from the *Perambulator* album cover, developed the font, and built the rest of the letters. It was a homage to Fela and Lagos, where I paid attention to flyers and signs which are such a big part of our culture.



ABCDEFGHIJKLM

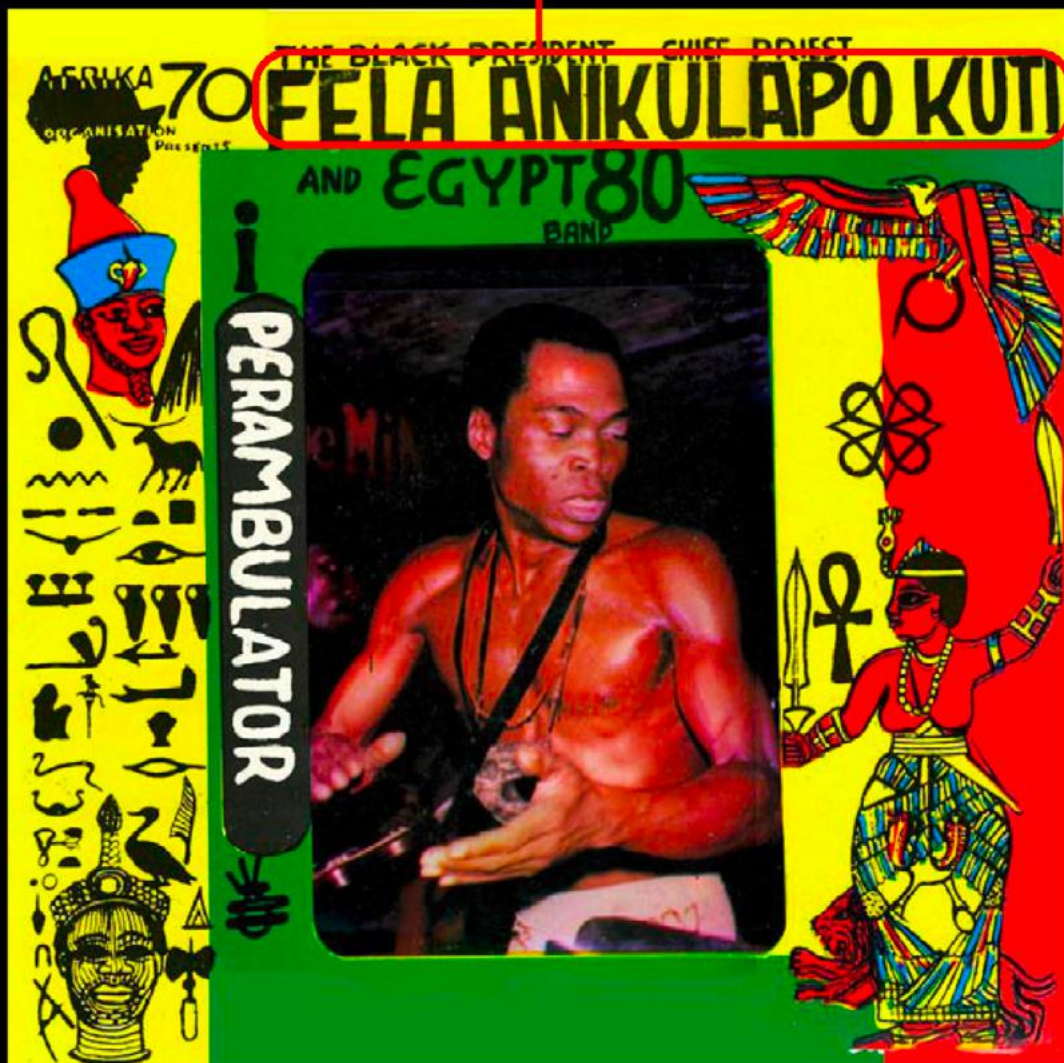
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FELA



A Display Font Inspired by the works of Fela Anikulapo Kuti

PERAMBULATOR



I also loved working on *Local Global*, though it is not even on my website yet. The branding and website design were such a great fit for my style. I was involved in everything, from logo design to web layout. They are an amazing client who used to have a design studio, so it was a great collaboration. For *Local Global*, the concept was about tying home to a global reach. The wordmark in the logo represents this duality, Africa at the center while connecting to the world.



The design system was flexible enough to accommodate the brand's dynamic nature, with an icon set symbolising home, the world, and community. The colour palette used subtle, vibrant shades, and the *Grotesque* font type was chosen for its modern, fun, and youthful energy.



The modular nature of the logo and typography gave the brand flexibility for social media, allowing for creative play across platforms. It is rewarding when a client truly embraces the design system and expands on it. Local Global has done just that, and it is exciting to see how cohesive everything looks across their digital and physical touchpoints. Working on this project was one of those moments where I saw everything come together in a way that felt bigger than just the design.

LOCAL·GLOBAL IS A CREATIVE STUDIO DOCUMENTING, DEVELOPING AND ARCHIVING STORIES FROM AFRICAN COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD.

2024

++ SUMMER DROP 04

CREATIVE PRODUCTION

view project



2024

REMA - HEIS RAVE (TORONTO)

CREATIVE PRODUCTION

view project

2024

LOU VAL - IN UR MOTION (MUSIC VIDEO)

CREATIVE PRODUCTION

view project



VIEW ALL PROJECTS ↗

COMMUNITY



local-global is hiring a SUMMER INTERN

Deadline: July 1st, 2025

06-23-2025

HIRING: Summer Intern

We're looking for a Social Media Intern who's chronically online in the best way - someone who deeply understands digital culture, our brand and how we would like to show up in the world.

PRESS



09-05-2024

PASSPORT: Ashley Peña

Ashley Peña, a Dominican-American artist, reflects on channeling her roots as she documents the lives of marginalized communities across the Dominican Republic, Maryland, and New York.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



08-02-2024

PASSPORT: Deh'ya

Tyrell MacLennan, co-founder of Deh'ya, discusses how the Toronto collective creates community-focused spaces that blend traditional and contemporary Caribbean cultural practices and sounds.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

Q: What are some of the challenges you would say you have faced in design in general?

Ada: One of the most difficult aspects for me is when projects take longer than expected. I will start with a timeline in mind, thinking a project might take two months, but then it stretches into six months or more. That can be frustrating, especially when juggling multiple projects. Sometimes it is a matter of miscommunication or underestimating the scope of work.

You hit those moments when you are like, "Okay, I just cannot balance everything right now," and it is totally okay. You have to allow yourself that grace, even though it feels frustrating. The pressure to do it all is real, and there are times when no matter what you do, it just does not feel like enough.

But the key is giving yourself space, especially when life gets in the way. It is important to pause, focus on what you can control, and then tackle things when you are ready.

Q: What is some advice you would give to people who desire this type of career path?

Ada: When breaking into design or freelancing, the best advice I can offer is to ease yourself into the process. Start small, whether it is through

Canva or something more complex. Be real with yourself about where you are at. If you are just starting out, that is fine. But treat it seriously, even if the people around you do not immediately recognise your passion. You have to be your biggest cheerleader and trust that your love for what you are doing will shine through.

It is funny because, when you start out, you will take on some self-led projects or unpaid work opportunities. Use them to figure out what you enjoy, what you are good at, and what kind of clients or environments work for you. Everyone goes through this, but no one really talks about it. It can feel frustrating, but it is all part of your growth and would change as you learn and develop yourself.

Q: Have you ever experienced creative block or being dissatisfied career-wise and how do you deal with that?

Ada: Definitely, you start to wonder, "What am I doing with my life? Is this it for me?" I have definitely felt that. When I first started freelancing, I loved it. It gave me freedom to explore my creativity and control over my time and projects. But when I transitioned to a full-time role, I realised I did not have the capacity for freelancing anymore.

In my first year at the company, I just could not give my freelance projects the attention I used to. I was saying "yes" to projects that were not aligned with where I was at, and it was draining. I had to step away from taking on new clients for a while. The last thing I wanted was to provide half-effort work. If I could not give 100%, it was not fair to anyone. Over time, I realised freelancing was not something I wanted to keep doing, at least not in the same way.



Now, I am focusing on the projects I am passionate about and phasing out freelancing to rediscover my love for design. I have been exploring other creative outlets like painting and baking, which I have not done in years. It helps recharge my creativity and gives me a fresh perspective on design.

Q: As a multifaceted creative, are there any new exciting projects we can expect from you?

Ada: Right now, I am working on a startup project with some friends. I cannot speak too much about it, but it has been such an exciting journey to help shape the creative direction for the brand and be part of a team building something from scratch. I have been diving deep into user research and target audience analysis, and the autonomy I get in this project has been so rewarding.

Q: What is your favourite song at the moment, and what place would you love to travel to?

Ada: YAYO by REMA. His whole HEIS album is like a 'booster!' (laughs)

It keeps me so energised. I hate to relate it to branding, but even with his aesthetic changes, he has always had a strong brand image with his teddy bear and cover art. It is nice to see how it has evolved, reflecting his Edo roots. Favourite album of the moment, for sure.

If I could travel anywhere, I would love to visit Senegal. One of my very close friends is Senegalese, and I have always been fascinated by the culture, language, food, and music. I think I would feel so inspired just immersing myself in everything the country has to offer.



The people, the history, the vibes. It is a place I have been dreaming of visiting for years, and I cannot wait to experience it firsthand.

Q: What are some of your favourite hobbies or interests?

Ada: When it comes to hobbies, as mentioned, I have gotten into baking and painting lately. There is something so therapeutic about those activities, they require patience, focus, and an appreciation for the process. It is the complete opposite of everything fast-paced that we are surrounded by, and it helps me reset.

As creatives, we are often in a rush to create, but we also need to remember to be present and enjoy the process. The balance is so important, and that is something I am actively working on. You have to remember to slow down sometimes so that when you do come back to your work, you can really give it the attention it deserves.

Q: It is so nice to hear about how you slow down in a fast-paced environment, any closing remarks based on our discussion?

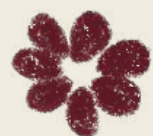
Ada: When we are talking about our fast-paced world, the most important thing to remember is that you cannot rush the experience. As much as you may try to accelerate your career, there is no substitute for the time and effort it takes to truly understand your craft.

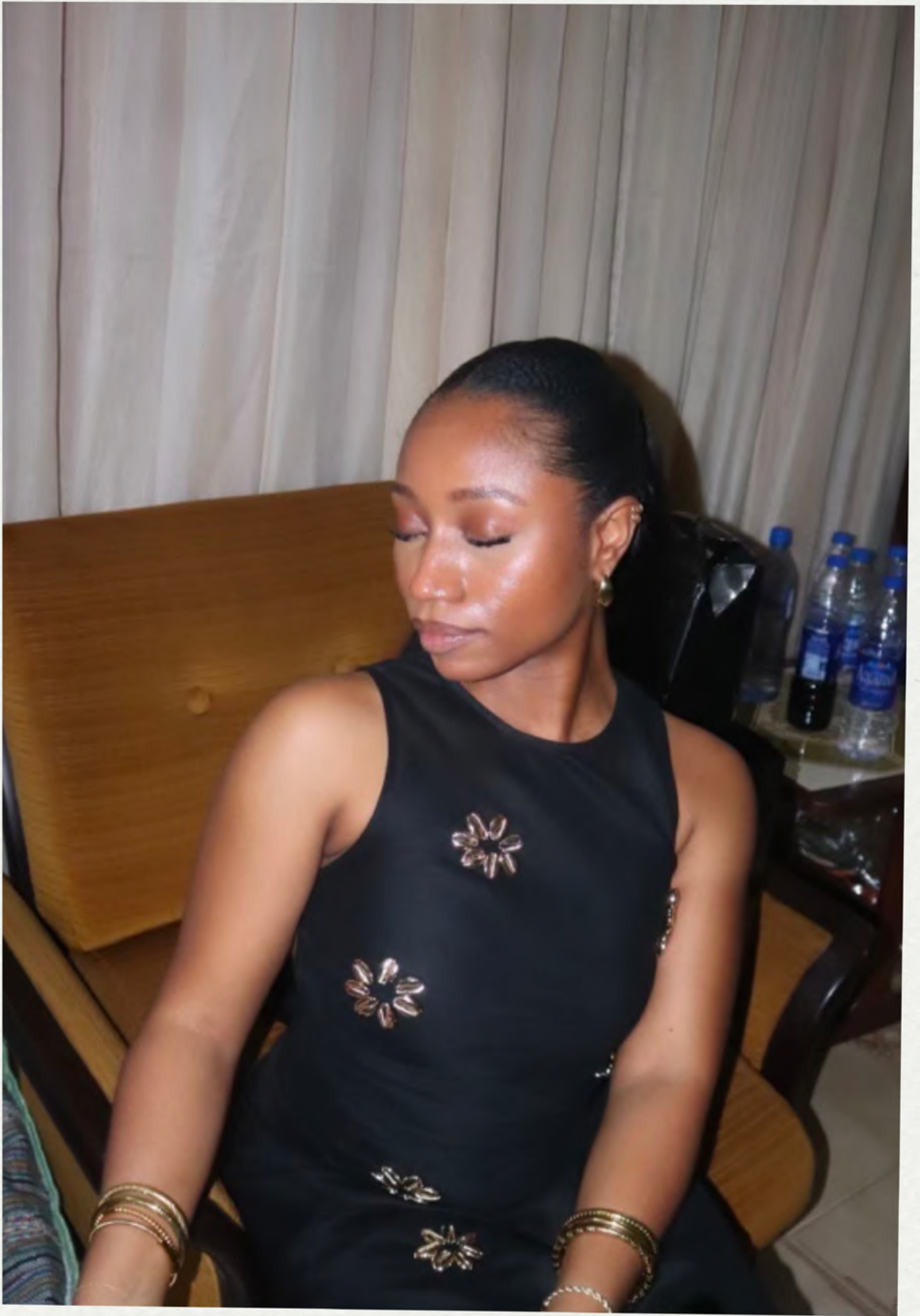
Experience is not something you can buy or shortcut. It is built over time, and it is what makes you a better designer.

The more you work, the more you learn, but you cannot skip the process. So, my advice is to take your time, embrace the journey, and be patient with yourself. Every step, every setback, and every victory will help you grow.

Just talking about this reminds me of how much I have learned over the years. I can see that, even from last year to now, I have grown so much. That is what excites me about the future, knowing there is still so much to learn and experience. So, stay patient, stay curious, and remember that everything will come when it is meant to.

You are doing exactly what you need to be doing right now.







The Milkiwaey
2022



'The Beautiful People of Sol'
Cabo Verde
Ihsane
2024



Interview 02

Ugochukwu Azuya

My name is Ugochukwu Azuya and I am a filmmaker. I love to direct and write films.

Q: So can you tell us a bit about your journey into filmmaking and film writing, What inspired you?

Ugochukwu: I would say since 2019. 2020 was when I decided, "Okay, this is happening. I am taking this seriously." I never expected it for myself. It was so unexpected. I was in the car, it was raining, and I had this naïve intrusive thought: "What if I make films and put them on Netflix?". I love telling this story. It was totally random.

At that time, I do not remember there being Netflix in Nigeria. Ever since I had that thought, I have felt convicted to dive into the practice of filmmaking, trying to figure out how to make films and, eventually, what kind of films I want to create. It has been a journey, an education. I say it is so odd because before that experience I had zero interest in films or filmmaking. Sure, I watched shows, but I would rather do something else than watch a film.

I always saw making films as something rich people did (laughs). I never saw it as something that people actually invest their time in or really pursue as a career.

Since I had that thought, I have gone through several stages of growth. Now, it is a mix of reading, watching, and just evolving as a person, figuring out my tastes, which, of course, are always changing. The more you grow, the more you realize how much shifts and the less you know of what you thought you knew. That is basically how I got started.

Q: Could you share some insight into your early career aspirations?

Ugochukwu: I was studying Economics, I was in my second year, home for the holiday, when I had this feeling. I remember just waiting for the summer to pass so I could return to school for my third year. It was not like I was not happy with my course, I just did not feel fulfilled. Then, unexpectedly, I found myself developing a growing desire for filmmaking.

I fell in love with it, even though it is tough. When you get into something and move past the honeymoon stage, you realise, "Wow, this is really hard." It requires a lot of discipline, time, money, the list goes on. Somehow, in a very masochistic way, I still enjoy the process. I think that is what I love most about filmmaking: the process itself.

Q: It is interesting how careers sometimes unfold in ways we never planned or expected. Would you say that is true for you?

Ugochukwu: Yes, I agree. It is honestly strange to me. I keep thinking, "Why this? Why not something else?" But that question is what drives me. It keeps me motivated and keeps my spirits up. Even though I did not consciously choose this path, I have since realised I have a flair for storytelling; cinematic storytelling. I love creating with images and sound, moving in time. But still, I wonder: "Where did this come from?"

Q: Love that, *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma* is not your first project I believe, what was your first short?

Ugochukwu: Yes, correct. I did make a one-minute short on my phone pretty early on in 2019. A friend I met suggested we enter a mobile film festival, so I just picked up my phone and created something. It was called *A Dreamless Sleep*, shot with my sister and aunt at home. It was just me cranking something out.

But I would say *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma* was the first official project where I really applied a lot of effort, time, energy, all of it.

Q: As we discuss more about *Swimming in Sea of Trauma* and *A dreamless Sleep*, dreams seem to be a common theme, this kind of thriller, subconscious storyline? Is that a concept you intentionally explore?

Ugochukwu: (laughs) I do not think so. I am interested in exploring other kinds of stories. I enjoy a variety of genres, and I really like comedy too. I would say filmmaking, in general, is about reflecting reality. Filmmaking is about capturing and presenting what we see. Dreams, memories, visions, myths, these are all part of our reality too, even if they are more internal and subjective than what we see objectively.

I think that is where this comes from. Dreams, in particular, tie in closely with the language of cinema. Dreams often unfold through images, you remember what you saw, not necessarily the sounds. It is a succession of images, from one place to another. So, when I think about the nature of dreams and their language, I feel it aligns tightly with the language of cinema.

I believe it is just something that naturally comes out of me. Most of my ideas are very intuitive, so maybe it is just something that resonated with me at the time, and is still there. I have never really thought about it. I do not like to think about it, honestly. I do not like to just sit down and watch my own work, either.

Q: I have encountered many artists who expressed the same sentiment about not watching their own work. Why would you say that is the case?

Ugochukwu: You do want to watch it, but you do not see it the way others do. What I see are all the mistakes. I think, "Oh, this could have been better here, the writing could have been tighter, the shot selection could have been better..." Almost as though everything could have been improved, from the framing and staging with the actors to how you handled the whole shooting process. Maybe it is just part of the growing pains.

When you look back at something you wrote five years ago and think, "Who wrote this?" I guess it is all part of the process, but some people are different. Some people love watching their work and talking about it. For me, I am trying to be more patient now with the idea. Filmmaking often requires waiting for things to fall into place, and I am learning to be more intentional and careful with the process. You do not realise it when you are creating, but once it is out in the world, it is going to affect people. People will react, whether positively or negatively. And you want to be sure you did your best, that you really paid attention to what you put into the world. It is all on you, and it is not just a small thing.

Q: Could you tell us what *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma* is about and what inspired you to create it?

Ugochukwu: I usually describe it this way: It is a ghost story about the memory of the Biafra War. Specifically, a ghost story centered around the Biafran war and the psychological trauma attached to it. I was reading Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* at the time and the book deals with similar themes of the interconnectedness between several planes of reality amidst socio-political occurrences. I guess while reading the book I received the idea of a situation: One girl meets another girl, possibly both linked by ancestry, in some kind of limbo place where the latter was still dealing with psychological traumas associated with the Biafra War.

UZOAMAKA ONUOHA

MARYANN IVY

A FILM BY UGOCHUKWU AZUYA

SWIMMING IN A SEA OF TRAUMA



**OFFICIAL
SELECTION**

INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2023

VANGUARD PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS A FILM BY UGOCHUKWU AZUYA STARRING UZOAMAKA ONUOHA AND MARYANN IVY
CINEMATOGRAPHER GRANVILLE WILSON EDITOR EKENE AMAONWU ART DIRECTOR KELECHI CHINWENDU KELECHI
COSTUME DESIGN OBIANUJU AZUYA SOUND RECORDIST BANKOLE ADEMOLA
VFX MICHAEL SEMUSHEV GAFFER ALAO ABIODUN

When I started my research and found that some of my ideas aligned with some of the concepts surrounding death, ancestry and burial rites, I found that to be delightfully uncanny.

Q: Could you share more about your research process and how it influenced the development of your project, including the choice of its final title?

Ugochukwu: I started reading and researching a lot of material. It took about three or four months of reading and writing drafts, maybe four or five drafts, before I felt like I had something solid.

I read accounts from people who survived war, watched videos, and dove into books like *Igbo Arts, Community, and Cosmos* by Chike G. Aniakor and Herbert M. Cole, with a foreword by Chinua Achebe. I also read several academic papers on Igbo spirituality and worldview. They discuss aspects of Igbo art, such as the use of ancestral masks, and how these elements are expressed within the culture. I also read several academic papers on Igbo spirituality and worldview.

Several theses and academic papers on Igbo worldviews on phenomena like Death, Reincarnation, and Death. In between, I also read some poetry like Achebe's Christmas in Biafra. One poem that really stuck and came through in the work was "*Refugee Child and Mother*."

Initially, the title of the film was Igbo Requiem, but then intuition led me to *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma*. I kept asking myself, "Why does this feel right?" At one point, I tried to change it, because friends or people who worked on the film with me thought it was a mouthful, and I was like, "Only if you have a better name" (laughs). Which never happened, so it stuck.

Q: Incredible! Could you walk us through the creative process behind *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma*, from research and character development to the collaborative efforts during production?

Ugochukwu: As mentioned, the process began with extensive research and reading. After completing the initial drafts, I started writing and researching simultaneously. I would take notes from my research and integrate them into the script while developing the characters, using elements from my own life to make them feel personal.

Once the draft was in a more solid place, I began gathering visual references. I prefer to create a production book with images and descriptions of the setting and lighting, rather than referencing other films, as I feel it encourages me to be more original. I share these references with my team, explaining the vision as clearly as possible, while still allowing space for collaboration.



For the costumes, I sourced everything myself, paying someone just two days before (laughs), and prepared everything step-by-step. During the shoot, there was a lot of back-and-forth as the ideas took shape in real time. Sometimes, things did not come out exactly as envisioned, which made the process more collaborative, adjusting and working with the team to realise the vision.

In post-production, I have learned to slow down and take my time with editing. I think rushing the editing process can hinder the work, so I plan to approach future projects with more patience. Writing also requires a balance of research, drafts, and breaks. Sometimes stepping away from the work helps clear my mind, allowing the project to develop more organically. The hardest part of the process is when you finish a draft, think it is great, and then revisit it weeks later only to realise it needs more work.

It is a constant cycle of reassessment and refinement, but that is where the real growth comes from. You have to acknowledge your mistakes, swallow your pride, and ask, "How do I make this better?" It is all part of building your character as a creator.

Research was endless, and the challenge was always finding balance, too much information or too many conflicting viewpoints can be overwhelming. But the key is in wanting to get it right, no matter how difficult the process may be.

Q: Absolutely! Especially since the subject matter is so important and sensitive. Did you worry about misrepresenting it?

Ugochukwu: I try to be as honest as possible. That is really all you can do. I aim to be as sensitive as I can while approaching the topic, ensuring I gather as much material as possible. Whether it is research or something else, I process the information, take notes, and ask myself if I have made it as strong as it could be. Ultimately, people will form their own opinions, and that is beyond my control.

I wanted to place the film in a context where I would not make mistakes, especially in terms of historical accuracy. But I also knew that some aspects, like the metaphysical ones, are not necessarily literal. They are more symbolic. With *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma*, when I first got the idea for the girl in the limbo space, I did not know about the concept in Igbo spirituality of a "bad death" or the belief that dying in that state could prevent someone from reconnecting with their loved ones through the process of reincarnation.

It was only after doing research that I realised my concept aligned with these traditional beliefs. It felt almost serendipitous. The idea had been there all along, which gave me the confidence to pursue it. If I had not found that connection, I would not have moved forward with it.





I cannot 'event' within somebody's belief system. It was crucial for me that the cultural representation was accurate because there is a negative side to exploring culture through art, almost using it as a crux to progress yourself. You become wary of that, and so I had to be careful to create in the right way. While not everything was perfect, it all worked out in the end, thanks to the people who were involved.

Q: Do you have any particular routines you follow before starting your process?

Ugochukwu: I used to have a really strict routine, and if I did not stick to it, I felt like I was chasing the day. But now, with so much on my plate, I have learned to just show up and get to work.

That said, if I do not have my coffee in the morning, forget it, my day is basically doomed (laughs). It is one of those things where, mentally, if I do not get it, I am like, "Today is not happening." But I am learning to be gentler with myself now. If I am tired, I rest and pick it up later. "Oh, but I love a good routine", when you do not have any disturbances, it gives me energy! Sticking to routines is tough because life always throws curveballs.

Sometimes, you plan to work for 2-3 hours, and then something unexpected comes up, and you have to pivot. It is all about adapting and finding time where you can. 3-4 hours of mental focus is usually my max; after that, I cannot do anything too tasking. That is just not me.

Q: Could you discuss the challenges and emotional aspects of the creative process, particularly how you navigated the balance between your initial vision and the evolving nature of the film?"

Ugochukwu: It sometimes involves a lot of going back and forth, sometimes. I mean, we shot the film in November 2021, and it was ready by April or May 2022. The film premiered in January 2023. The process was lengthy, and for someone looking to complete something quickly, it is definitely not the best way.

But there is something invaluable in reading the script out loud with your team and realising that some things are not quite right. It is not perfect, and that is normal. Even highly established directors face this. Sometimes, you film scenes that end up not making it into the final cut. You have to deal with it emotionally.

The film itself is constantly evolving and growing on its own. If you get too attached to your initial vision, you might miss what is actually happening in the moment. It is about working with what is in front of you and finding ways to improve it. It is not easy, but it is all part of the process.

The process can be very unglamorous. It happens to every artist, no matter what level you are at. What you finish is never really "finished". It is just where you decide to stop. At some point, you have to say, "This is good enough." And even if it feels incomplete, you might come back to it later, and it could evolve into something much more developed over time. It can be a very emotionally draining process because you constantly question whether what you are creating is good enough, wondering if it will ever truly be what you envisioned.

Q: How do you decide when to trust your instincts and when to embrace feedback or change?

Ugochukwu: Even if something is standard practice, I sometimes think, "Okay, this is how it is done," but then I will choose to do it my way. If I do it the standard way, it is not going to stand out; it is just like everything else out there. I might be stubborn, but I can recognise when I am completely wrong as well. In the end, it is just a choice. It is not about defining something; it is just how I decide to approach it, and I will learn from the outcome.

I am not trying to create a movie that is just like every other film out there. Of course, there is a standard to things, but I do not believe in a 'one size fits all' approach in filmmaking.

If everything were the same, there would be no diversity or originality.

Q: How do you navigate moments where your original idea does not work out, and how do you embrace the process of trial and error?

Ugochukwu: Yeah, with the *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma* shoot, we initially wanted this huge, abandoned Guinness factory for the backdrop; it was perfect. You did not need to do any set dressing or art direction because it already fit the concept. But we could not get it, so we had to pivot. We found a smaller, more intimate location instead, and I was not sure about it at first.

But sometimes you just have to make a decision, even when you are not fully confident, and trust that it will work out. And in the end, it did. The first idea is not always the best, but you have to work with what you have got.

I have also learned to appreciate having multiple options. It is like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle, every part is a step, and eventually, everything clicks. Most of the time, things do not come together perfectly right away; it is a mix of trial, error, revisions, and mental work. I went over it so many times, what I thought was final was never really the final version. I would revise again and again until it felt right. The process is messy, but it is a necessary part of creating something that works.

Q: What would you say is the most challenging aspect of the filmmaking process for you?

Ugochukwu: Every phase has its challenges. Filmmaking has a very arduous, sometimes chaotic process because you can have so many things involved at the same time. For someone with minimal experience like myself, the way I approach it is to take everything one step at a time and document every minute and necessary detail on paper. Aside from that, I would say for me it is all about process.

Making a film is a continuous process, and most of it is about preparation. It is about maintaining oneself through the rigours of this process and keeping the main thing paramount, which is the making of the film, which never really ends even when it reaches the stage of audiences experiencing the film.

I am the type of person who might say, "Let me think about this," before making a decision. I need time to process and work through things. Once the film starts to come together, it feels like you are getting closer to the final result. The challenging part can also be in shooting. It often feels clunky, and it can be overwhelming. But you have to keep your spirits up and trust that you will get through it. The key is to ensure you are getting what you want for the final product.

Writing is also hard. I have been working on commissioned articles, which has made me appreciate the difficulty of writing, especially when I think about people who write entire books. It is never easy, and I do not think anyone feels confident the whole time.

You constantly question if what you are doing is as good as you think it is. But when things start coming together, you feel like you are in the groove.

Q: How can we address this gap in knowledge, especially when many seem unwilling to learn?

Ugochukwu: Sometimes, I understand why people may not want to learn or confront difficult truths. When you live in an oppressive society, you are often just trying to improve your own situation, looking for ways to escape or feel better, like turning to entertainment after a long day. But at a certain point, especially as adults, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and deal with these issues, even if we do not face them head-on.

Whether it is indirectly or in our social behaviours, we see the effects. As adults, we cannot just ignore these issues.

Doing so only perpetuates the problems. It takes courage to face these realities and ask, "How can we fix this? How can we make things better for those who are suffering?" It is difficult, especially when the world feels overwhelming and there is a lot of context to these behaviours. But we have a responsibility to do our part to be informed and not just empathetic, but also intentional about being better for the next person.

Q: How do you see the role of film in preserving and interpreting historical events?

Ugochukwu: I think about the time when I went to Enugu to premiere the film and someone asked why more films in Nollywood do not explore pre-colonial history. I thought about how film can be paradoxical. A film, especially a historical one, can convey truth, but it may not be entirely accurate. Even when sets, costumes, casting, and events are carefully recreated, people often say, "This is not how it really happened" or "My grandfather was alive then, this is not true." (laughs). The paradox of historical films is that while they can represent truth, they are also shaped by interpretation. This seems to be an inherent part of how films work; they capture a version of truth.

I believe the essence of a historical film should be the focus, the mood and feeling of the times that is being portrayed on screen. When asked that question, I really thought about it realistically. Are we truly going to depict this accurately, or in a westernised way? How much do we really know about pre-colonial life, how people lived, moved, or spoke? How authentic can we be when recreating that time? Languages have changed over time.

To make a historical film, I would focus on capturing the essence and stripping away the unnecessary details. But it is a tricky topic, especially when recreating historical events. I am still thinking about it. Even with a biopic, for instance, you have to balance how much to focus on someone's life. Some might see it as entertainment, highlighting their achievements and struggles, but it can be difficult to stay true to the complexity of a person's story.

Another aspect to consider is how stories were told within the culture. Storytelling was not just one monolithic approach, it varied widely. For example, when you read a Greek play and it's approach to dramaturgy: the interplay between human situations and Greek gods, in these works distinct beliefs, myths, and cultural elements that shape it. It is important to acknowledge the cultural differences in storytelling when recreating a historical or cultural narrative.



Still taken from Swimming in a Sea of Trauma

But ultimately, when making something, the goal is to keep it accessible and meaningful, even if it is complex. The balance between factual accuracy and artistic interpretation is delicate.

Ultimately, it is about finding a way to adapt the story to the medium.

Q: Could you tell us about some of your favorite filmmakers that have influenced your work?

Ugochukwu: I admire a diverse range of filmmakers from different times and countries, and one day, I would love to make a Nollywood money ritual genre film! I recognise that filmmaking operates within a tradition, so while I acknowledge the influence of others, I strive not to limit myself to these influences as well. I believe that all films made since the inception of cinema are in constant dialogue with one another.

One filmmaker whose work I particularly admire is Michael Haneke, an Austrian director. His films, such as *Amour*, *Code Unknown*, and *The Piano Teacher*, are some of my favourites. *The Piano Teacher*, in particular, is a film I watch every year. I appreciate how Haneke explores human nature, examining our fears, anxieties, and societal divides. His films are often described as brutal and unsettling but for me I find them uncompromisingly human.

I am also deeply influenced by Asian cinema, especially the work of Hou Hsiao-Hsien, known for his unique storytelling style and visual design schemes. Films like *The Puppet Master* (1993), *A City of Sadness* (1989), *The Time to Live & The Time to Die* (1985). In addition, I have a strong passion for telling the stories of young people, particularly my generation.

As time passes, I hope to continue exploring how we live and experience the world today. Alice Diop, a French-Senegalese director, also greatly inspires me. Her film *Saint Omer* delves into the emotional complexity of a woman who kills her child, offering a profound exploration of personal and societal issues through the genre of a court drama.

I also appreciate the body of work of directors I have not talked about extensively: Jia Zhangke, Todd Haynes, Claire Denis and many others.

As I mentioned earlier, I am trying not to limit my influences to just filmmakers. Writers, critics, musicians, and life itself all shape my creative process. The list of films I love is ever-evolving, but here are a few I watched a while ago that have left a lasting impression on me: *The Life of Oharu* (1952), *Elegant Beast* (1962), *Pale Flower* (1964), *Il Sorpasso* (1962), *The Only Son* (1936), and *Chime* (2024).

Swimming in the Sea of Trauma.



Q: How did your experience at the Rotterdam Film Festival compare to your expectations, tell us more about the various festivals where your film has been shown?

Ugochukwu: Honestly, I was quite pleased with how far the film travelled. The film festival in Rotterdam, in particular, was fantastic! It was a wonderful experience. Initially, I had expected it to be a lot more serious, but when I arrived, I realised it was much more informal and relaxed than I had imagined. People were having a good time, and while networking was certainly happening, it did not feel as stiff as I had anticipated.

As for the reactions to the film, some people were really intrigued, asking thoughtful questions and showing genuine interest, while others appeared a little more confused, unsure of what they had just experienced. But that is part of the festival experience. From the official reactions, it was mostly a blend of curiosity and intrigue.

Beyond Rotterdam, I have had the opportunity to showcase the film at festivals in Holland, Italy, Brazil, New York, South Africa, and, of course, Nigeria. I have also had special screenings in the UK. In total, I have probably shown it in at least ten or more different places.

Q: How did your initial expectations compare to the realities of the process, and what lessons did you learn from the experience that have shaped your approach to future projects?

Ugochukwu: Honestly, when I first finished my film, I was eager to get it out there, so I submitted it to various festivals, thinking, 'Let us see what happens.' I was quite naïve about the process initially. I assumed many festivals would be free to submit to, but of course, I quickly learned that was not the case. Some festivals had significant fees, and the whole submission strategy was much more involved than I had anticipated.

I applied to as many festivals as I could, and through networking and persistence, I was fortunate enough to get selected for a few of them. When I first found

out, I was completely stunned and thrilled. I had to take a moment to think, 'How did this happen?' It felt surreal, but also incredibly validating.

Looking back now, I am moving into a new headspace where I am thinking about what is next. I want to focus on future projects, with my ultimate dream being to make a full-length feature. However, those festival experiences were invaluable, they pushed me to learn more, connect with people in the industry, and gain a deeper understanding of the entire process. It has been a journey of growth, networking, and refining how I approach future projects more strategically. The whole experience taught me a lot about being decisive and how to improve my approach moving forward.

I was truly happy; it is such a surreal feeling. You receive messages from people saying, 'I am so proud of you,' and you are thinking, 'But you do not even know me, how is this possible?' (laughs) It is strange, but also quite beautiful to receive that kind of support.

Q: How do you handle feedback and criticism, especially when it comes to your creative work?

Ugochukwu: I take feedback and criticism much better now than I did before. While I still care, I have learned to approach it with less emotion and more detachment, which helps me be more constructive in my revisions. Feedback is essential because it provides an outside perspective on something I have been deeply immersed in. When you are too close to a project, it is hard to see things clearly or express ideas as you intend, so others' perspectives are invaluable.

I usually share my work with a small group of people who can offer varied feedback. I will give it to someone who is a strong reader and understands the themes I am exploring, and based on their notes, I may agree with some points but disagree with others. At times, I will seek input from someone with a different viewpoint to get a broader sense of the work. Lately, I prefer receiving written feedback, such as bullet points, rather than engaging in lengthy discussions.

Debating the work can become frustrating, especially when someone does not fully understand the intent behind it, I try my best to avoid that scenario. Sometimes, it simply means the work is still evolving and needs more development.

Criticism is a crucial part of the process. Once you release your work, there will always be critics, and that is normal. Not everyone will connect with it, but that is fine. Embracing criticism helps refine the work, and over time, it will find the right audience as it continues to grow.

Q: How do you balance that with trusting your own instincts while continuing to refine your work?

Ugochukwu: For me, I am quite tough on myself and as I get older, more self-demanding. Sometimes you have to be self-reflective enough to know if something you are working on is not quite there yet and that it might need more time or refinement.

It is the creative 'process' for a reason.

It is definitely something you always have to check yourself on. There are times when I just have to step back and reassess. It can get really sensitive, especially when you have worked so hard on something, poured your heart into it, and then realised it is not quite where you want it to be. It is tough, but sometimes you just have to be honest with yourself and admit, 'I have put in the effort, but maybe it is not there yet.' It is a fine line between acknowledging where you are at and accepting that more work is needed.

Talent is important, of course, but it is not the be-all and end-all. I like to think of talent as a starting point in the path of doing the work.

As humans, we have the ability to learn and improve. It takes training your mind, and yes, it is tough, especially if it is something new. Sometimes it can take years to get where you want to be, but that is part of the journey. It is not a quick process.

I am the type of person who honestly believes that with enough effort, I can do anything I set my mind to. Which in reality means lots of practice and mistakes. Even if you are painting or doing any kind of creative work, you do not just get good once and then stop. You have to stay consistent and keep working at it. If you get sloppy or lose focus, it will show. There is no perfect, and there is no one-time success. It is about constantly refining and improving, even when it feels difficult.

Q: How would you say your personal background/culture influenced your filmmaking style and choices?

Ugochukwu: I often think that most of my work comes from experience and memory, which are directly intertwined with culture and socio-economic circumstances, your upbringing. Sometimes, these influences are both direct and indirect, as I often find myself having ideas about things I thought I had not really paid attention to or things I have no knowledge or memory of. In terms of filmmaking style, I am not entirely sure there is a direct influence, as it is a combination of various interests and a nurtured sensibility at work.

Q: What message do you hope viewers take away from "Swimming in a Sea of Trauma"?

Ugochukwu: Not to be funny, but I think what the audience should take away from the film is the sheer experience of watching it. In my opinion, that is the only real value a film can offer. It is like life: experience first, derive possible meanings later! One has to experience the film in order to 'see' and also 'hear' the dimensions of reality with which the film is working.

A film is an aural and a visual field composed with light. Once this happens, due to the potency of the film, it will work on the subconscious and emotions of the audience regardless.

Q: How do you handle creative block when it arises, and what strategies do you use to stay inspired throughout the process?

Ugochukwu: Burnout is usually what I am struck with. These days, I am much kinder to myself when it comes to experiencing burnout. I try to take the time off that I need or simply seek out the necessary joys in other things in order to return to my motivations in the practice of making films. Sometimes, distance is necessary.

Q: What are some of your favourite songs you are listening to right now?

Ugochukwu: Some of my current favourites are Slip by Autechre, Ijoba Orun by Lara George, all of the HEIS album by Rema, Crayon Angels by Judee Sill, Say Your Love by Psquare, and pretty much anything by D'Angelo.

Q: Are there any countries you have always wanted to visit? Do you have any other hobbies or activities that you enjoy doing in your free time?

Ugochukwu: I will not lie, I would love to be a world traveller and visit as many countries as possible. A tour of several African countries is definitely high on my list. As for hobbies, I love to read.

These days, I probably spend more time reading than watching films or engaging in any other activities.

Q: Can you share what future projects you are working on, and what themes you are interested in exploring next?

Ugochukwu: Honestly, my dream is to eventually make a feature film, and I am working towards that. But, of course, it is all about the natural progression and process to get there. At the moment, I am working on my next short film, which is a science/speculative fiction piece about the climate crisis set in Lagos titled *Watershed Dream*, alongside other projects I am developing, piece by piece. I also recently produced another short film *Saint Simeon* written and directed by my producing partner Olunmi Ogunsola, that is in post production as we speak. The themes are similar to what I explored in *Swimming in a Sea of Trauma*, particularly our connection to nature and the psychological impacts of disasters.

I am really excited about it and am working hard to get it together. We should be in pre-production soon.

Q: What advice would you give to aspiring filmmakers dealing with complex subjects?

Ugochukwu: I am a skeptic for giving out unwarranted advice so I will start with what I tell myself: I would say that I should be fearless, disciplined, and morally responsible for what I am doing. I must be serious in my endeavours, regardless of whatever genre or mode I am working in. Seriousness is important.

The motivation for the craft should be the paramount goal in the practice. If I am making films that are simply replicas of those that have already been made, then what is the point?





'Midnight Sky'
Gillingham, Kent
Kelechi Amuta
2024





Photographs taken by
Ekene Amaonuwu



Bahia Palace, Morocco
Elijah Kingson
2023



Marrakech, Morocco
Elijah Kingson
2023



Malta
Elijah Kingson
2023



Interview 03

Jessica Ajuyah

Hello, I am Jessica Ajuyah. I recently completed my degree in Graphic Design and have a strong background in Fine Arts. At the moment, I am transitioning into becoming an Art Director and exploring ways to merge design, fine art, fashion, and film.

Q. We would love to hear more about your journey into studying Graphic Design. How did it all begin?

Jessica: Definitely! I took a gap year to really think about my life and what I wanted to study. I wanted to make sure I was choosing something that aligned with my interests. I saw a lot of people around me study courses, and five years later, they were like, 'This is not what I want to do.' So, I thought about which course would suit my interests while still being broad enough to keep my future options open.

I have always known I would lean towards something multidisciplinary. Looking back, I realised I did well in subjects like ICT and Fine Arts during secondary school, and I remembered that I was actually considering Film Studies at first, but then I realised the modules were more focused on history, and I was not really into that. So, I thought, 'What is the perfect blend of my two favourite things?' And Graphic Design was the answer.

Apart from that, there were definitely influences from my childhood. I used to do art workshops with kids at my mum's school, so I was always surrounded by hands-on creation and art.

My dad worked in advertising, which made me consider it as a career. I believe it is a tool that businesses will always find helpful. During my gap year, I interned at an advertising agency, mostly in the creative department, where I had the opportunity to work alongside illustrators and graphic designers. I loved the work environment, it was so flexible. It was a dream, honestly, getting to design every day. These experiences shaped my idea of design today.

Q. Do you have any unique work habits? How have these habits and your approach to creativity evolved over the years, especially during your time at university?

Jessica: When I wake up, I go straight to my laptop because I feel energised and ready to work. I am tempted to work on my bed, but I know I do not work best there. I prefer working on a couch or at a table. During my first year of university, I was taught to be disciplined, so I would sit at a table in my accommodation, facing the wall, because I know I get distracted easily (laughs).

In my final year, I learnt that I work best in the morning, when I am most alert and focused. Another habit I have noticed is that sometimes,

I am tempted to start a project right away, but I have realised that rushing in can create unnecessary pressure, so I try to avoid that.

I am a visual learner, and sometimes I forget things easily, so I always write down my ideas, even if I am repeating myself. I find that when I do not overthink it, the ideas just come naturally.

For example, I once worked on a project called *Above Sea Level*, where I had to create a publication design based on a piece of writing by a creative writing student. I was not sure what direction to take at first, but then I watched an episode of *American Dad*, and they mentioned something about being 'above sea level', and that sparked my creativity for this project. It is funny how random things can inspire you!





Q. That is interesting. So, for you, it is a mix of jotting down ideas and also pulling inspiration from things around you? Tell me more about the *Above Level Sea Level* project.

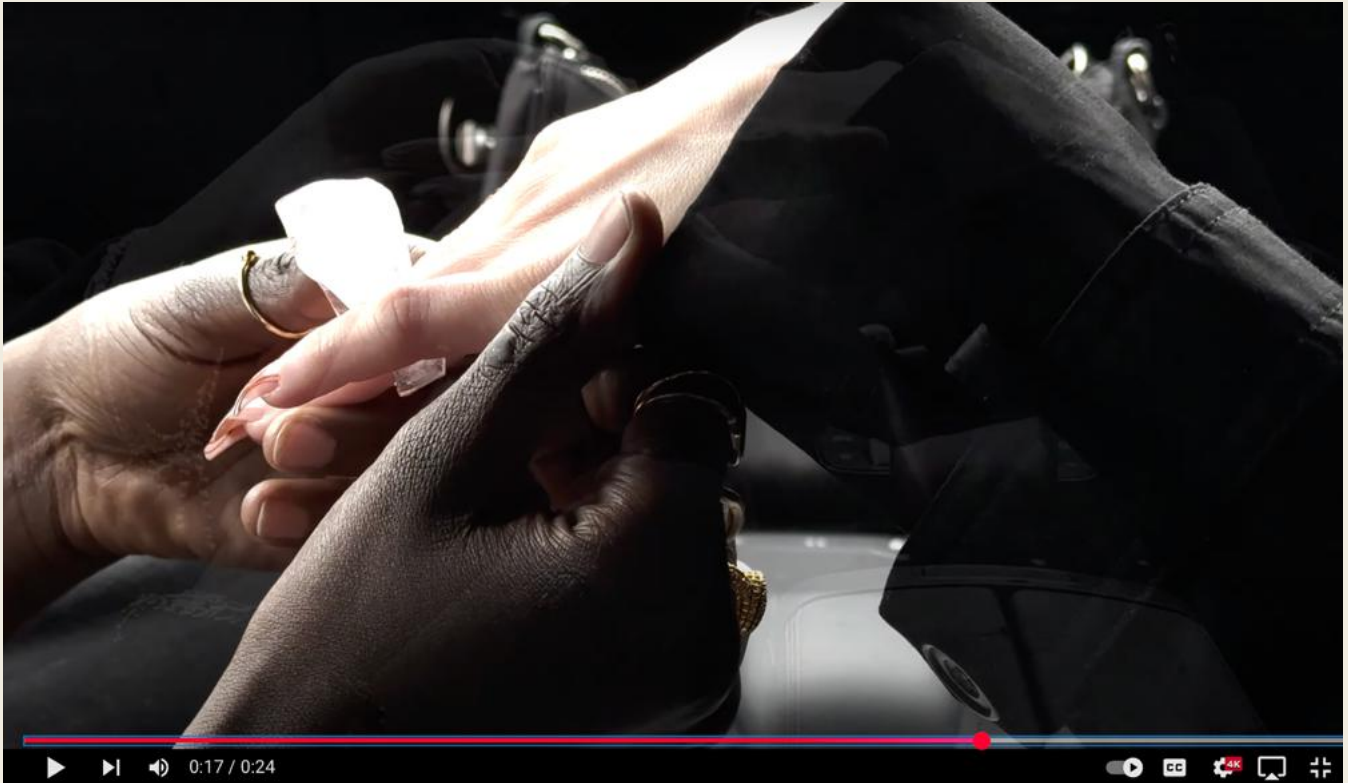
Jessica: Yes, I love writing things down because it keeps my thoughts in order. Writing things down helps me stay organised and focused. I agree, inspiration can come from anywhere. With *Above Sea Level*, I had to read an anthology that mixed poetry and prose. I was not a big fan of the reading part, mostly because I am not into fictional reading, but I love researching.

The anthology was UK-based, and since I was not familiar with some of the cultural references, I had to dig deeper into the parts of England the author referenced. I broke it down into about 12 or 14 sections, and I thought it would be cool to design the publication like an album cover, since music and poetry have a similar vibe. The project had a strong theme on nature, so I designed the front cover inspired by nature and the beach, and

the back cover with a sunset. I remember one of the poems was just one sentence, so I decided to break the sentence up, with some letters split across different pages just to keep it interesting. When you opened it, it looked like gibberish, but when you closed it, it all came together and made sense.

We were not allowed to use images, which really pushed me to think outside the box. For example, I played with textures and colours, using different types of paper. For the back cover, I got inspired by Nigerian album covers that I saw growing up.

That became the main inspiration for my design. I would be lying if I said I did not find this challenging, especially because I am a visual learner. I wanted to include images, but when designing for others, we are usually advised not to design for ourselves. So key points are to research and explore different ideas, which usually helps me balance any constraints.



Q. How do you handle feedback and criticism on your designs, when you are at university receiving feedback on every assignment, how did you manage that process?

Jessica: If you had asked me this before I did A-Levels, I probably would have had a different answer because I could not handle criticism. Well A-Levels gave me perspective on the importance of feedback. I had a few experiences in my final year of university where feedback really made me rethink my approach.

For example, I worked on a project for a fictional brand I created called *UltraCut*, which was all about anti-branding. The brief allowed us to create any brand we wanted, but I had to portray the brand as either the 'good guy' or the

'bad guy.' I had this idea to create a publication or coffee table book aimed at creating awareness of the ethical issues within the diamond industry. The aim was to have these books in luxury spaces.

However, during the feedback session, I was advised that this idea would not work because, for example, who wants to shop luxury items while reading a book telling them they are doing something wrong? I remember feeling a bit disappointed, but the feedback made me rethink my approach. I recall hearing, 'I cannot really tell what you are thinking. You have a poker face.' (laughs).

I just took a step back, listened, and thought about the next steps.



Ultracut

I do not like wasting time, so I would rather rethink it and adjust the plan if necessary.

Q. When do you implement feedback after receiving it?

Jessica: I think feedback depends on the project and the stage it is in. I usually do not ask for feedback until I am finished or have arrived at a concrete concept, especially with my illustrations. For example, with my recent ID magazine booklet concept, I received feedback on the front cover. While I liked my original design, I had to consider how it would be perceived, so I was open to suggestions.

But with my drawings, if someone suggests something after I have started, I might think about it for the next project, but I am unlikely to change anything once I have finished. It is a mix of confidence and precision for me.

I like to finish a project quickly because I cannot relax until it is done, so I usually do not share the process. The only time I ask for advice is when I am feeling stuck or need fresh perspective.

Q. I have noticed a distinct graphic style in your work, especially from *The Capsule Explosion to A Brief History of Graphic Design*, with your intentional use of shapes and text placement. Did you consciously develop this style?

Jessica: In a way, it was a conscious decision as it has evolved through an intentional approach to each design aspect. I am always thinking about clarity and balance when laying things out. I like to keep it concise, but still visually engaging. Since I never really know who might be reading it, I try to design in a way that feels inclusive, making sure the text, imagery, and spacing all work together to communicate clearly and thoughtfully.



Q. Could you tell us a bit more about UltraCut and your view on sustainability and consumption? How did you approach the topic?

Jessica: With *UltraCut*, honestly, I was really reluctant to take on a branding brief. I wanted to avoid branding, but I am glad I did not. I understand the principles, even though I may not have initially enjoyed the type of brief.

What makes *UltraCut* one of my favourites is that it was the first time I got to be an Art Director. I enjoyed casting, copywriting, and recording the brand video. It was fun working with the models, managing time, and just bringing the whole concept together. It felt like I was making a mini movie or commercial, which I have always wanted to do. That was really cool.

The project was about how the media brainwashes people into certain spending habits and desensitises them to issues like the history behind diamonds. A conversation with a friend really influenced me. She said she wanted a diamond ring, and when I tried to explain the ethical concerns behind diamonds, she was not really convinced and she was very persistent about her view. That got me thinking, why do not some people care about the history behind

diamonds and how they are sourced, especially when they are so connected to exploitation?

For the visuals, ice was used to represent the tears of the people being exploited. Water, like diamonds, and the way it can change shape and colour really resonated with me. I wanted my design to appeal to multiple senses: sight, touch, and even smell or taste, if possible. I wanted to portray the uncomfortable reality we are all contributing to without realising it.

During the promotional shoots, I made the models wear rings made of ice that I had moulded into different shapes. I wanted people to empathise with how painful the whole process can be, for the miners as well as the other people caught in the system of exploitation. The melting rings became a metaphor for how easily value fades when it is built on overconsumption and unethical practices.

The branding was inspired by water and transparency, which is why I used blue tones. In general, I had fun working on this project.

I worked with my fantastic photographer friend Faizal Abdulateef and I really enjoyed directing and modelling. I will always be grateful to everyone who helped bring the vision to life.



Still shooting hoops today ?

Yep I've booked it for 6

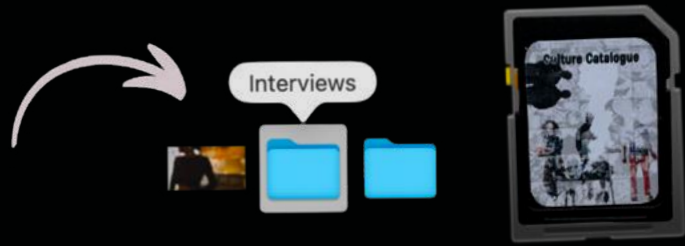
Come whenever after then

Q. Tell us a bit more about A Manner of Existence and the discourse on culture.

Jessica: Sure, A Manner of Existence is essentially a documentary about my friendship group and culture. Interestingly, the first session of the project took place on my birthday, and I think that influenced my thinking that day. I decided to explore the concept of friendship and how we have created a safe space to discuss anything, breaking down cultural norms.

I remember when I was younger, my grandma used to complain that I did not have a routine and say how I would just do whatever I wanted. I was not really used to that structure at home, so it was interesting seeing how different it was when I visited. I mirrored this with a time when I stayed with friends, and six of us lived in one house that summer. It was fascinating to observe our differing routines, one friend would wake up at 5 AM to play games, another would order food while the rest of us were still sleeping.

I wanted to capture those moments, showing how we could freely talk about anything, our dreams and desires, without any pressure that might usually come when speaking with parents about such topics. It was the complete opposite of that dynamic. This exploration of cultural perspectives was based on my personal experience and that of my friends, living in a new place and trying to find our way. It was also helpful that I had a lot of content to reflect on. I have always recorded my friends, even though they hate it! Those candid moments are invaluable. It is funny, I did not realise how much footage I had that would be so crucial to the project. It just felt instinctive to capture those little moments.

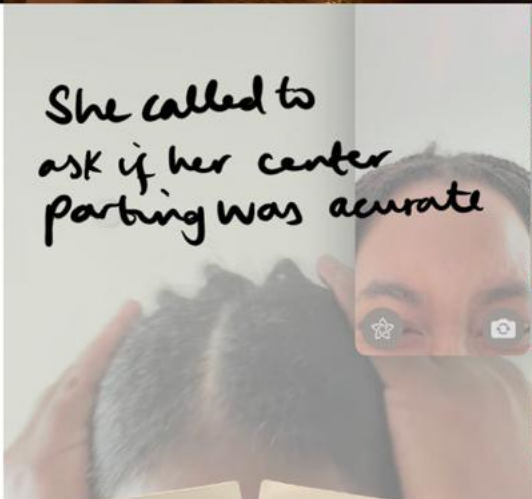


I wanted the project to feel fresh and authentic, not forced. I believe culture is a way of life and I was not too bothered about presenting myself in any specific way. I remember when I showed it to my brother, he said it looked very “Nigerian”. I had not consciously aimed for that, but I guess that influence is always present, even when I am not trying to highlight it.

The project explored how culture and environment shape your “way of existence.” It was about capturing the essence of how culture influences life, your habits, interactions, and even your way of thinking. Growing up in a Nigerian household, those cultural influences are deeply embedded in me, and no matter what I do, they always surface in my work.

That is the beauty of it. It is a reminder that you cannot fight the natural flow of your culture and experiences, they come through, whether you are trying to force them or not.





PIZZA & GIRL TALK

Not I catch am 🤔



Jess I just tried to stretch in the office and I farted by mistake 🤔🤔

I think the guy beside me heard it

Oh my dayyyyysss

I'm adding this



uture Catalogue

ON
PERIENCE

s all night at the club
mirrors on the dance floor.

H HOUR



A MANNER OF EXISTENCE ☺

Q. Cookies, that is another project I love. Can you tell us a bit about it?

Jessica: The cookies project is a design intervention that takes the form of an exhibition. It is aimed at educating 30–60 year olds about online privacy and the ways big data is used and misused. The brief came from ISTD (the International Society of Typographic Designers), so the project was very typographically focused, but the topic was quite broad.

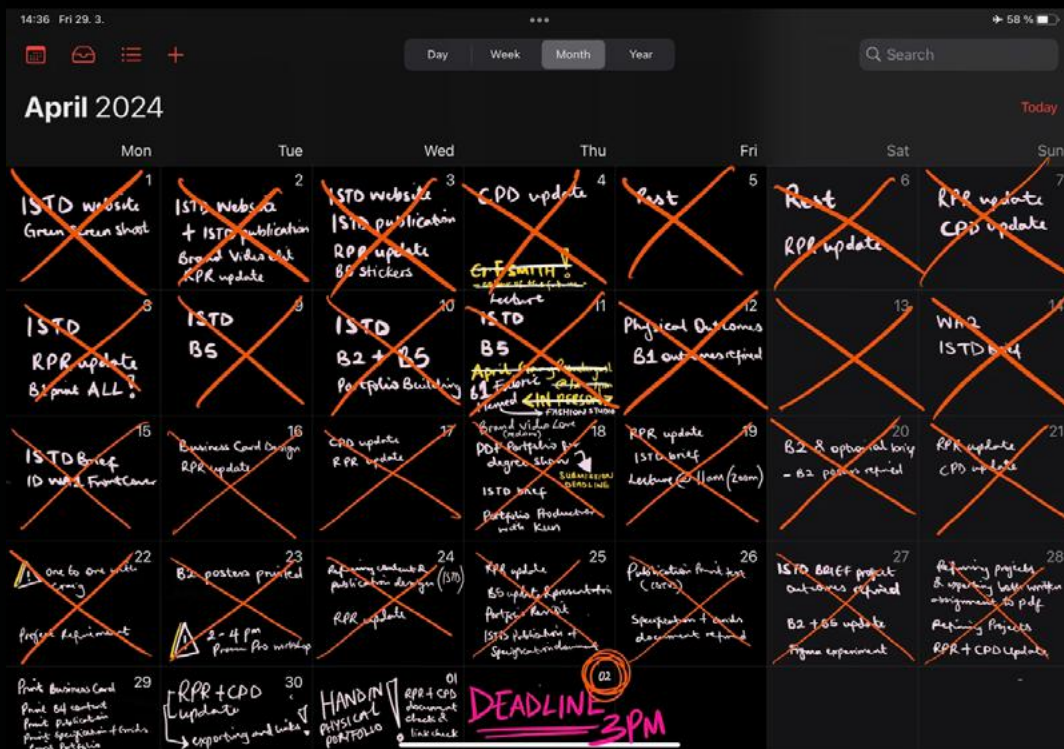
At first, I found it a bit overwhelming. I kept jumping between ideas, not really sure how to approach it, so I had to do a lot of independent research to ground myself. My initial idea was to explore data and politics specifically how data is handled in countries like Nigeria. I was interested in issues like data leaks and how information is used without regulation. But I quickly realised that to explore that properly, I would have needed to be physically present to get the full picture. Without that proximity, it did not feel honest or complete.

What helped shift things was a line in the brief that really stuck with me: data is like oil, useless until it is refined. That became the foundation of my concept. It got me thinking about cookies, the little data files websites use to track us.

Once I started researching, I noticed cookie banners everywhere. It was wild. You cannot even browse simple websites like news sites or recipe blogs without being asked to accept tracking. That is when the idea clicked into place.

I found it really interesting speaking to people in that 30–60 age group, especially those who did not grow up with the internet. A lot of them were shocked by how much data is out there about them. I enjoyed that part of the project the most having those conversations, learning from their reactions, and building something that was informative and visually engaging. It was also my first time working with such a broad and older audience, which added a new layer to the design process.





Q. You have so many interests, I love to hear that! How do you manage tight deadlines and multiple projects?

Jessica: Oh, deadlines...They can be tough sometimes, especially in the world of freelancing where you need to directly deal with clients. In my experience, the people I worked with so far have often been flexible and do not give me solid deadlines which is great but on the flip side this can mean projects can extend longer than anticipated.

If I am working on multiple projects at once, I prioritise based on what is urgent. What helps is breaking tasks down. I take screenshots of my calendar on my iPad, highlighting important dates, and I keep it as my lock screen.

That way, every time I pick up my phone/laptop etc., I am reminded of what I need to do. If I do not write it down, I forget. It has helped me so much since 2022, honestly.

In terms of juggling projects, when I was working on *A Manner of Existence*, the *UltraCut* project and *Cookies: Big Data* project overlapped, and it was quite hectic. Luckily, *A Manner of Existence* had a mini deadline for the exhibition, so that helped me with prioritising what needed to be done first within the project.

However, with *UltraCut*, I got really frustrated because it took forever. I kept getting feedback, but I did not always understand what changes I needed to make. That was definitely a tough one. I definitely felt like an octopus!

“

I try to stick to the rule that even if one project is 'smaller' than the others, they need the same level of attention or intentionality, which can be overwhelming.

It is frustrating when you want to move on to the next thing but know that leaving something unfinished will just drag out the process even more.

”

Q. I can imagine how that feels! What do you think is the most challenging aspect of designing for you?

Jessica: For me, one of the most challenging aspects of designing is knowing when to conclude each stage of a project. **There is a fine line between pushing an idea as far as it can go and recognising when it is time to step back.**

This challenge becomes even more evident with personal projects. For example, I have a concept that I am eager to explore, but I have not fully committed to it yet because I am also managing other responsibilities, such as job applications. The need to balance different priorities often makes it difficult to dedicate the time and focus needed to bring a project to its conclusion.

I have come to understand that knowing when to move on is a skill in itself. It is something I am still learning, but it has become clear that finding closure at each stage is essential for making progress. This understanding has allowed me to approach my creative work with greater intention, and while balancing multiple commitments can be challenging, it is also an opportunity for growth.

Q. That makes sense! Have you ever gone through a period where you have faced difficulty staying inspired? Have you ever experienced a creative block or burnout?

Jessica: I try to stay on track by keeping myself inspired. I often visit galleries or attend art shows in London, as they help refresh my creativity, especially when I feel stuck. Instagram can also provide a boost at times. I find that creating mood boards is helpful, but I usually only do that once I have a clear concept in mind, usually during the research phase. I prefer to jot down my ideas first and then start moodboarding later on.

At the moment, I am experiencing a bit of a creative block. I am working on creating social media templates for a brand, but it is a new type of project for me, and I am not sure where to begin. I keep overthinking it, questioning whether I should take the project in a different direction. It is frustrating, especially as I have been juggling a lot of work recently.

The last time I experienced burnout was during my first internship. I made the mistake of showing how quickly I could work (laughs), and as a result, I ended up taking on even more tasks. It taught me that balance is crucial. In the past, I have had to take breaks when I felt burnt out, but now it is harder to step back, as I feel the weight of responsibility on my own shoulders.

It is especially difficult when you work in a capitalist society, where everything has to be done quickly. People expect constant productivity, and even when you take a break, you feel guilty, as you are always thinking about what comes next.

Q. Do you feel that pressure differently because you have moved abroad? Do you feel like there is a responsibility to succeed or prove something?

Jessica: That is a tough question. It is difficult to compare, as I cannot truly say how it would be back home, but I have always felt a pressure to succeed, particularly when you are in a different country. It can feel overwhelming at times, and often, it seems like you are fighting with yourself to make things work. As an international student, you are constantly juggling work and gaining experience while thinking about your long-term career and future in the country. You are trying to build a career, but at the same time, you are also concerned with practical matters such as your visa or sponsorship.

It is part of the challenge of navigating a new environment and the restrictions that come with it. For example, certain visas do not allow you to start your own business, so you have to be aware of these legal requirements, things you might not have to consider back home. It is a different experience, and it is important to recognise these differences when having this discussion.

Q. I want to hear all about how film has inspired your love for art, design, and the work you create.

Jessica: Absolutely! This actually reminds me of a project I worked on, especially in relation to exploring identity. Growing up watching films with my family had a significant impact on my art. I am deeply influenced by the concept of secondary socialisation, and that belief shapes a lot of my design work. As a consumer, I am quite stubborn, unless something truly captures my interest. It is difficult for me to watch an advertisement and immediately make a purchase. Films have definitely shaped the way I think and even influence my conversations. I often find myself referencing films, sometimes without even realising it.

I remember when I was younger, my dad would set up a projector, and we would all watch films together as a family. It was an interesting experience because we did not just watch the film in silence; we discussed it afterwards, shared opinions, and sometimes, someone would leave, while others would stay on and continue watching. Growing up in a household where we talked about films made it so much more interesting to hear different perspectives on the same movie.

That is why, even today, I am always curious about how others interpret films. I often look up reviews or discuss them with friends to hear their thoughts. I have always been fascinated by the behind-the-scenes aspects of filmmaking; how props are created, how scenes are put together.

During the lockdown, I watched a vast range of films, many of which I would not have chosen myself, and that really expanded my appreciation for different genres.

I have been making a conscious effort to be more open-minded when it comes to film. It is so interesting to listen to directors talk about their creative process. Films with deeper meanings intrigue me, and sometimes, even when it is not a film, I find myself fascinated by how various forms of media are made.

While I enjoy comedies, I am also drawn to darker, more meaningful films. There is something about the way films like *Coraline* unfold, showcasing different, relatable perspectives in such an unusual way.

Sometimes, I even find myself collecting films, though I do not actively search for them. If I happen to be in a charity shop or somewhere that sells films, and I see something intriguing, I will pick it up. It is not just about the film itself, but also about the experience of being there, having conversations, and recalling the moment. I also make YouTube thumbnails for my brother. Just yesterday, we worked on one for *Watchmen*, a film I had never seen before. Every time he wants to do a review, we have a call to make sure I get the right images for the thumbnail.



DUSK

JUICY

CREW

AWRAD

Stoke!

DORIC SKATEBOARDS

ANKS
TEPARK!



NEVR RATED



MAKE MUSIC NOT MISSILES



SOUR CREAM



What is interesting to me is creating these thumbnails without having watched the film. It requires a creative approach even without knowing all the details. Once I do watch the film, I often think, “So that is what I was unknowingly trying to capture.” It shows me that I can still create something meaningful, even without knowing everything—sometimes, less context gives me more freedom to be creative.

Q. That is so cool! Before you started doing thumbnails for your brother, I remember you made some movie posters. Do you remember that? It was ages ago. I think you made a cool one for *Casino*. I was so impressed with that.

Jessica: Yes! That was part of a student-led studio workshop I co-led for Foundation Year Art and Design students. It was such a fun experience. The workshop focused on using the lasso tools in Adobe Photoshop.

As part of the session, the students recreated existing film posters using Photoshop, and I designed one for *Casino* as well as *The Notebook*. It was a really rewarding project. Personally, I found it exciting to reimagine the visual identity of films through design.

It challenged me to think carefully about composition, imagery, and tone; all through the lens of interpretation and creativity.

Photography plays such a vital role in creating movie posters. The images you select, and how you choose to manipulate them, really set the tone for the entire design.

For me, it is all about using visuals that communicate the feeling of the film and hint at the story in a way that draws people in.

Even though it came with its difficulties, I genuinely enjoyed the process. It pushed me to think intuitively, trust my creative instincts, and work resourcefully.



Robert
DeNiro

Joe
Pesci

Sharon
Stone



A MARTIN SCORSESE Picture

Q. What are some of your favourite films, directors, and inspirations for your design?

Jessica: Ooh! One of my favourite movies is *Fight Club*, the subject matter, discussions on consumerism and capitalism, I find quite interesting. On the flip side, I also love the animation *Flushed Away*. It is so nostalgic and I remember watching it over and over as a kid.

My favourite film director is Martin Scorsese. I have always admired his work, not only for his incredible storytelling but also for his longevity in the industry. It is easy to forget how long some of these legends have been working, especially with the fast-paced nature of today's media landscape. Scorsese is in his 80s and yet he is still making films that resonate with audiences worldwide. It is remarkable how he has maintained his passion and vision over the years.

When it comes to design, I really respect a company called Wieden+Kennedy. They have a unique approach to creativity and innovation that really speaks to me. Their work consistently pushes boundaries while staying true to powerful, engaging storytelling. I appreciate how they combine bold concepts with a deep understanding of the culture and audience, and it is something I really strive to bring into my own work.

Q. What else are you working on? Are you still pursuing film projects?

Jessica: Yes, I am currently working on some videos for a concept with a few dancers. I had an idea for a song, but I am still waiting on them to create the dance moves before I can fully work on it. Directing a music video has always been a dream of mine, so I am hoping to add that to my portfolio soon.

Well, I recently got cut off from my Adobe privileges (laughs), so now I am learning how to use Final Cut Pro. I am in the process of figuring it out before diving back into my design projects. So, right now, I am just learning the software and experimenting.

I hope to do more film and editing next year.

Q. Ah, that is interesting. What does finding your niche look like when you have so many different interests?

Jessica: I have tried to keep my online presence fresh by mixing things up. One day I will focus on photography, another day on illustration or design. It keeps my creativity flowing and makes sure I am always doing something. When I do not know what to focus on, I just pivot to something new, whether that is creating new work or sharing old work. It is all about maintaining momentum.

However, finding your niche to me could mean focusing on one or two things that you are really good at. If you spread yourself too thin, it can be hard to stand out. For example, if someone is great at HTML, JavaScript, and coding, they can position themselves as an expert in that field.

Right now, I want to focus on cultural and emotionally driven design as my niche, refining how I tell stories through visual language. When I focus on connecting emotion, identity, and aesthetics, the work naturally feels more authentic. I think it is about building expertise and really diving into one area while still being flexible with other creative interests.

Every year, I revisit my portfolio to reflect on how my work has evolved and to challenge myself to create new projects that reflect where I am creatively.



I am exploring how design can express emotion and connect people across different cultures and experiences. I think a lot about how visuals can tell stories that stay with you; how a colour, layout, or small detail can make someone feel seen or understood. My process is thoughtful and intuitive, and I always try to create work that feels genuine and intentional.

I want to work on projects that are both interesting and sustainable. Maybe I will aim for two or three projects next year and go from there but ultimately figuring out what I want to explore and focus on has helped me develop my skills in that area and keep me focused.

Q. That sounds amazing! I cannot wait to see those projects come together. Do you have anything exciting coming up soon?

Jessica: Yes! I am really excited about a project I have been working on since August 2024. It mixes music with design and focuses on sustainability in both fields. I cannot say too much about it yet, but I am hoping it will be ready by next year at the latest.

The project is in response to something that is becoming a bigger issue in the world. Musicians, for instance, are doing something that I think is worth exploring. I plan to finish my research soon and then move into the design stage.

Hopefully, it will spark a conversation about how we can improve things in the industry. I cannot wait to share more when it is ready!

Q. How has your experience and understanding of social media algorithms influenced your approach to sharing your work?

Jessica: Early in my career, I worked on a few rebranding projects, and I learned a lot about the importance of online presence. It is interesting because I see a lot of students stop posting after they graduate, but I think staying active online is key. When I worked at a marketing company, I learned a ton about how algorithms work on different platforms, especially with things like TikTok. I am considering moving my art to TikTok soon, and understanding these shifts is going to be important.

It is a constant learning process, especially when things are always changing. But it is also exciting because it gives me the chance to explore new ways to share my designs.

Q. Absolutely. Now, I know you have had a lot of fun working on collaborative projects too. How do you feel about working with others compared to solo work?

Jessica: I love working with others! It is not my project alone, I get to bring someone else's vision to life and experiment with new ideas. But I also think that freelancing has its own perks. I am a big believer in delegation, when you are working with a team, everyone brings something to the table. It is less stressful for me. Freelancing can be tricky because I tend to take on too much, like I mentioned before, it really is about balance with these things.

Q. Tell us about your other hobbies and a place you would love to travel.

Jessica: Ooh, Iceland is top of my list! It might sound like a weird choice, but I really want to experience how cold it is (laughs). In terms of hobbies, I spend a lot of time on YouTube. There is something about watching a creator's video, it feels personal, like they are speaking directly to you and sharing their journey. It is super inspiring, even if it is not related to what I am doing at the moment. It shows what is possible.

Plus, YouTube makes it so easy to find random content. Who needs a script when you can just dive into the "rabbit hole"? I love watching those GQ actor interviews, too. They push me out of my comfort zone, hearing actors talk about their behind-the-scenes experiences is fascinating. I remember watching an interview with Javier Bardem, he spoke about working across different languages and navigating the film industry. I learned so much about him that I did not know before.

I also love listening to music and singing. I try to go outside more these days, which has been good.

Q. Speaking of music, do you have a favourite song right now?

Jessica: My favourite albums of 2024 have been Don Toliver's *Hardstone Psycho* and Normani's *Dopamine*. I think it is a very different mix, I listen to rap and hip-hop too and with Don Toliver, he also gives a biker vibe, but sometimes I crave something a bit calmer like Normani's album.

Q. Lastly, what advice would you give to anyone who would like to pursue a similar career path?

Jessica: Honestly, networking is key. Right now, I am not great at it, but it is so important. Building relationships and keeping in touch with people is essential. I have met so many interesting people, but I regret not staying in touch with them.

Talking to people with different backgrounds broadens your perspective. Plus, when it comes to finding a job, just asking about people's journeys is incredibly inspiring.

Hearing how others made it reminds you that there is no one "right" path.





'Up The Hillside'
Gillingham, Kent
Kelechi Amuta
2023





'The Strand'
Gillingham
Kelechi Amuta
2023



ULUS

RECORD FOUND HERE

ICE BEETLEJUICE

RECORD FOUND HERE

ROMULUS



Interview 04

lanaire aderemi

My name is Lanair Aderemi. I am a playwright, poet, and researcher dedicated to amplifying and archiving untold stories.

Q: I have seen you grow from a spoken word artist to a playwright, doing so much across different creative fields. What does balancing all these interests look like for you?

lanaire: For me, storytelling is at the core of everything I do, whether it is spoken word, playwrighting, or film. Each medium serves a different purpose, but they all align with my interest in telling compelling stories. I try not to take on too many projects at once.

For instance, I spent the last few months focusing exclusively on a film project, and that has been the main focus to avoid being too overwhelmed. I always encourage making healthy choices, whether it is limiting social media or changing your eating habits. That really helps take a bit of the stress off when I start to feel overwhelmed.

In cases where I am juggling two projects, I also ensure to immerse myself in the material relevant to each, and focus on them. For example, when I had to write a short story and a play at the same time, I tried to consume content or information that was targeted at these specific areas and tried not to distract myself with other ideas or plans.

I also draw inspiration from other forms of art, like visual art and music, as they help fuel my creativity. It is all about training the imagination; it is like building a muscle.

Q: What would you say to someone who struggles with time management?

lanaire: I would say, do not overcommit. Over time, you need to see what works for you and how you work best. Being honest with yourself about what you can handle within a certain time frame helps to avoid possible stress. "Time blocking" works for me; I try to keep a general schedule, so taking specific time for reading or writing; but I mostly stay flexible. I find it helpful to tell someone, like a friend, about what I plan to do. That external accountability keeps me on track, and it also motivates me to avoid letting them down.

Telling people even on the internet can also be good. I do this a lot when I am struggling to write newsletters. I make an Instagram story telling people when they should expect it, and because I hate to disappoint, it adds more motivation. Ultimately, I find that focusing on one thing at a time works best for me. When I start to get overwhelmed, I remind myself to stick to the task at hand: discipline and accountability.

Q: Please tell us about your short film titled 'Record Found Here'. What was the inspiration behind it?

lanaire: The inspiration for the film came from a story my grandmother told me about a women's movement that happened in 1940s, which was

essentially a movement to fight against colonial taxation. I am so grateful that I went to a secondary school that emphasised History and the Arts, and despite it being British curriculum, they did not neglect the Nigerian historical experience.

I was exposed to this particular event in year 9, I believe, and I did some research on it at university. As I said, my grandmother shared more about the movement, particularly about Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's character and how it was driven by strong, determined women. During my PhD, I realised there was little information about the movement, and film was always something I wanted to do, so I thought, "Why not make a film about it?" The goal was to create something informative, to share the importance of this event, as I knew even a lot of Nigerians were not really aware of the details of the movement. It was important for me to document this, and I felt that with film, it could travel far.

Q: That's incredible. Can you tell us a little more about your PhD research? How did it connect to this project?

Ianaire: My PhD has definitely influenced this project. As an academic, you are encouraged to research a lot, and with the film, I had to dive deep into oral histories and primary sources. I realised how vital it is to document untold stories, especially through photographs and oral accounts.

I saw that it was a bit difficult to find some information, especially as most books were not focused on the movement but mainly on Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. During my research, I discovered a lovely professor, GD Fairfield, who has been pivotal in shaping my understanding of these historical movements.

I truly was able to see the value of translating knowledge into artistic expression. While my academic work focuses on documenting these stories, I also want to bring them to life through creative mediums. That is where the film came in, it felt like a natural progression of my academic and artistic journeys.

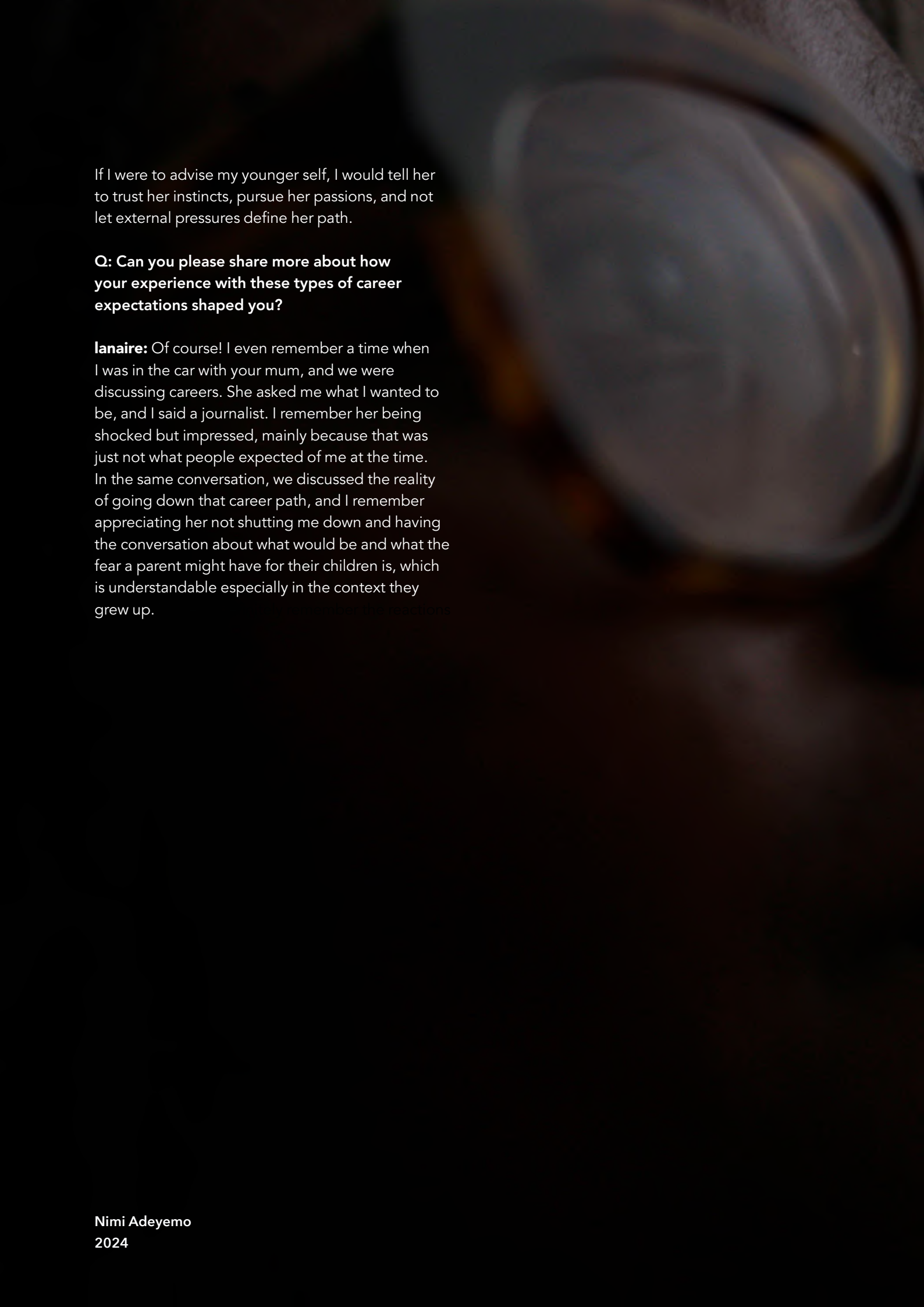
Q: What role do you think discussing historical events like this plays in our world today?

Ianaire: I believe understanding history is essential because it helps us make informed decisions. When you understand the root causes of things, you can better address issues within your family, your community, or even in broader policy decisions. History also plays a huge role in art. It is always beneficial to society; knowing the history of art movements, for example, gives us context for why certain techniques were developed or why an artist used a particular style. In understanding our past, we can better appreciate the present and make decisions for the future. I have always been interested in history from a young age, despite being more of a 'science student' in secondary school (I thought I was going to go on to be a doctor) I enjoyed history and went out of my way to stay informed.

Q: You mentioned a time when you considered other career paths, like becoming a doctor. Did you ever envision yourself as a writer or storyteller back in primary/secondary school? What advice would you give your younger self?

Ianaire: I would say the creative side was always there. In school, it made sense that something like medicine was where I could excel. But as I got older, I started to realise that my true passion was storytelling. I think a lot of people feel that pressure to pursue more "practical" careers.

The best thing is to pursue what truly excites you, even if it does not fit the mould. Honestly, I would not change anything. I am happy with how things have unfolded. It was easy to be swayed by expectations, like my mum wanting me to become a doctor, as I said, it seemed like the practical pathway. Interestingly, she has always been my biggest supporter, and definitely, she saw me through navigating this process of nurturing this artistic side. I remember I used to write all the time, I always had journals and loved to read too when I was young, so once everything unfolded, it made so much sense.



If I were to advise my younger self, I would tell her to trust her instincts, pursue her passions, and not let external pressures define her path.

Q: Can you please share more about how your experience with these types of career expectations shaped you?

Ianaire: Of course! I even remember a time when I was in the car with your mum, and we were discussing careers. She asked me what I wanted to be, and I said a journalist. I remember her being shocked but impressed, mainly because that was just not what people expected of me at the time. In the same conversation, we discussed the reality of going down that career path, and I remember appreciating her not shutting me down and having the conversation about what would be and what the fear a parent might have for their children is, which is understandable especially in the context they grew up.



Nimi Adeyemo
Abeokuta
2024





record
found
here



film by lanalre aderemi

lap

Record Found Here Lagos Premiere
Eko Opeyemi
2024

record

found

here

a film by lanair e aderemi

lap

Illustration: Tife Sonaik e / 7ifetheillustrator
Art Direction: Niyi Okeowo

panel



tami makinde
re strategist + writer



lanaire ade
director



people had based on what they expected of me. I was even so institutionalised too that I also saw some of these courses as almost less than. At that point, I was going to study law because it seemed like, "Okay, if not medicine, then law."

I ended up studying sociology for my first degree, and I remember a period after I graduated where a tiny part of me was slightly embarrassed to say that was what I did.

Everyone expects you to fit into a mould, even if it is not really what makes you happy. I have always been drawn to the creative side, whether it was writing or performing. I think that's when I felt the most alive. But it took time to figure out how to turn that passion into something concrete. If you had told me that one day I could even consider making a living from this, I probably would not have believed you.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your first EP 'Bless the Memory'? What were some of the challenges you faced?

Ianaire: Bless the Memory explores my journey and the lessons I have learned in my faith. I really felt God was trying to help me step outside of my comfort zone and express myself in a new medium, music. I have always loved music, but I never imagined I would create a full project. It was intimidating, especially because I am not a trained singer, or at least did not consider myself a "singer singer".

I believe because of my spoken word and poetry background, I have a sense of rhythm and flow. The first thing I did was hire a voice coach, who helped me develop my skills. We worked on a lot of vocal exercises; the real deal, "Sharpay" vocal warm-ups are real! (laughs). I learned how to control my voice and develop better technique.

There was also distance between me and the producer Yinka Berinie, and that was another challenge. He was in Nigeria at the time, and I was in the UK, so a lot of our communication had to happen over Zoom.

It was not always easy, but it forced us to be super focused and organised, and he really helped me learn the beauty of collaboration. The writing and production process too... it is funny because a common message I am telling through the EP is to be patient, and I was really tested with this and had to learn how to be patient with myself, especially because I was working with professionals who had much more experience in the music industry.

Learning to market effectively, especially on platforms like TikTok, was out of my comfort zone. Putting myself out there was definitely challenging. Working with a large team, too, from designers helping to market, etc. But ultimately, I grew a lot as a person through these challenges. It was also amazing to realise that God can give you new gifts that you never knew you had, which made the whole process even more meaningful.

Q: Do you have a favourite song or album at the moment?

Ianaire: Yes, my favourite album at the moment is Tems's *Born In the Wild*. My favourite tracks right now are *Hold On* and *Burning*.

Q: If you could travel anywhere, where would it be and why?

Ianaire: Japan is definitely at the top of my list. I admire Japanese design and their incredible attention to detail. I would also love to visit Mexico City and Portugal. I have been to Spain but have never been to Barcelona, and it is a dream destination for me. I want to have my Cheetah Girl moment. (laughs)



Record Found Here London Premiere
Damf Ayo Vaughan
2024



Q: What are your hobbies or interests outside of work?

lanaire: I am an avid reader and a huge fan of magazines—collecting them is one of my favourite pastimes. Speaking of this, I was just reminiscing about your mum’s collection of magazines when I was growing up. She had shelves full of them, and I would bury my face in them. It was like a salon (laughs). Aside from that, I enjoy going to art galleries, watching films, and, of course, shopping and window shopping. I love browsing through shops when I travel, there is something so satisfying about it!

Q: I really love your style. If you had to describe it in three words, how would you do it? And where do you get inspiration from?

lanaire: Oh, thank you! Someone described my style as eclectic, so I would say that, playful, and whimsical. I love mixing different elements, it is a ballet skirt with a chunky sweater, other times it is a bold blazer with something soft and flowy. I draw inspiration from a lot of places. I have always loved watching people and seeing how they express themselves through their clothes. I always tell people I wish I had a vivid photographic memory. I love just taking inspiration from people I see and their outfits and understanding what it is I love about it.

As for brands, I love Loewe, Issey Miyake, Miu Miu, Schiaparelli for jewellery. I also love Fisayo Longe’s style too. Their designs are timeless, and I admire the craftsmanship. I also love the quote from Susan Sontag:

“Every style is a means of insisting on something”

Essentially, when we dress up, write, sing, we are all sending a message. When you dress up, you are showing the world a bit of who you are. Whether you are minimalist or bold, you are communicating something. We all insist on something, whether we realise it or not.

Q: Any exciting new projects or highlights you would like to share?

lanaire: Well, I am currently taking a little break! It has been a few years since I have had some downtime, and I am really enjoying the chance to relax and focus on what I have worked on recently. But definitely keep an eye out!

Q: Lastly, what advice would you give to anyone starting out in a creative industry?

lanaire: I would say collaborate with your friends. People underestimate the power of it. It is all about horizontal networking. It is not always about climbing up the ladder but building genuine connections across.

Also, apply for everything! I used to dedicate Wednesdays; I called it ‘Application Wednesdays’ to sending out applications for jobs, internships, or collaborations.

That habit really paid off. Those small actions eventually opened doors and got me seen in the industry. Lastly, be patient. You might not see the fruits in the beginning, but eventually, you will.

what personal history do you want to preserve?

My grandparents
religious practices

My family stories
- Our language
- My creative outputs

My grandmother's
Legacy. The rise
of civil rights, Nigeria
Independence, Segre-
gated America. She's
traveled the world
and seen it all.

Preserving Community through
the contribution of skills and
resources to uplift and
Support those who need it

Memories of growing
up in Surulere in
the 90s.

In my neighborhood
every Christmas we go
and go to a specific
charity that we want
to help

My bestfriends and I have
a tradition that on the
day we became friends
we go somewhere
special to celebrate
our friendship.

Our language
art
MUSIC
proverbs

my religious
upbringing

• My strong Yoruba
and pluralism identity
• Eating together +
the joy of storytelling

Igbo
Language
+
Biafran
war

Our health
&
wellness
practices

Yoruba Systems
of knowledge
& technologies
- IFA
specifically

Early Nigerian
music with
strong anti-
oppression/government
themes

the stories of
local and
community
growth and
resistance

The Sierra
Leonian diaspora
community -
His inherent
decentral nature

MY IGBO
LANGUAGE +
HERITAGE
x



Record Found Here Lagos Premiere
Eko Opeyemi
2024

record found here

a lanaire aderemi production



lap





Seun'dele

Seun'dele is not just a lifestyle brand; it is a new chapter in African design, led by a Gen Z visionary who is shaping the future of style through heritage.



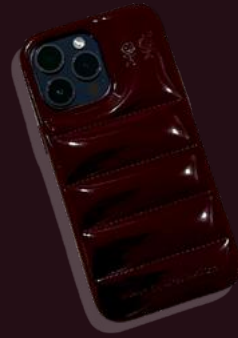
WHAT'S IN MY BAG?

Hi TM Magazine, it's Amy!

I am an Assurance Auditor who is in love with fashion. I find comfort in shopping, discovering brands and styles online and in magazines.



Hydrating Lip Gloss
Cherry Glaze
Armani Beauty
Prisma Glass



iPhone 14 Pro Max
Apple



Hydrating Lip Gloss
Clear Shine
Armani Beauty
Prisma Glass



Neewer
Selfie Light



Les Petits Joueurs
Cindy Moon Bag



Poppy Lissiman
Cardholder



Vintage Compact
Mirror



Shape and Hold Gel
REFY Brow Sculpt



Crap Eyewear
The Marquee Rox
Sunglasses




7023 SUNSET BLVD
HOLLYWOOD - CA 90028
323 849 4401







London
Jessica Ajuyah
2025





Athens, Greece
Jessica Ajuyah
2024







Model : @sarithgirl



Photography by Odey Ikpa



Join The





Photography by Odey Ikpa
Model : @ifee.buschell
Model : @ore.idowu



JOIN THE MOB

SLAPPED

NUOVA ABC
ROMA

Join The Mob
MOB
18



Model : @ifee.buschell
Model : @ore.idowu



Photography by Odey Ikpa
Model : @ifee.buschell



Model: @debbyfasingha



'Highway'
Marrakech, Morocco
Elijah Kingson
2023





Le Saly , Sénégal
Elijah Kingson
2022





FASHION 101 WITH GREY HOUSE

Hi TM Magazine! My name is Wisdom Ebong, a Lagos-based fashion stylist and enthusiast.

'9rey House'—pronounced Grey—is the creative persona and brand I am currently building. While it is still in the works, the vision is active. I have been styling behind the scenes and bringing looks to life, and now I am excited to shape that energy into something more public.



From a young age, I have always been inspired by how fashion can change how we feel, and how it plays such a big role in shaping culture and society. As a stylist, my mission is to empower individuals to look and feel their best. I believe fashion is a tool for self-expression and reflection.

In my career, I hope to style Nigeria's global artists like Rema, Burna Boy, and Wizkid just to name a few and collaborate with designers and stylists across the world—with hard work and consistency, I know it is possible.



Q: Where do you get your style inspiration from?

Wisdom: Honestly, it comes mainly from my mood. How I feel each day inspires what I wear.

Q: What is the one thing that can instantly elevate any outfit?

Wisdom: Accessories! Glasses, jewelry, a panel cap, a bag. They not only set you apart but elevate the look no matter how basic it is. Your style can go from 0 to 100 with learning how to accessorise.

Q: What is one style do, and one style don't for you?

Wisdom: Style do: Wear baggy clothes! They make everything look better and it's so freeing.

Style don't: Personally, skinny jeans. I know this is a common 'ick' in the fashion world so it is not surprising. Some people rock it and it is fine but it is a no for me. You would not see me in skinny jeans.

Q: What is a fashion mistake you see often?

Wisdom: People not knowing how to play around with colours. It is usually black on black or black and white—nothing wrong with that, but we can mix it up more! You can mix up red & camo green, yellow & purple, Orange & grey, white & brown too many that I can think of.





Q: Any tips for staying stylish on a budget?

Wisdom: Thrifting. It is way more affordable than straight off the rack designer pieces. You could get a \$5 t-shirt and look like a million bucks.

Q: What are your must-have items before leaving the house?

Wisdom: My rings and my jean chains—they go everywhere with me.

Q: If your favourite outfit had a soundtrack, what song would be playing?

Wisdom: “Cooler Than Me” by Lancey Foux.

Q: Who is your top dream client to style and why?

Wisdom: Rema! I relate so much to his style. I can wear what he wears, and I feel like he could rock my style too.

Q: What advice would you give to someone developing their own personal style?

Wisdom: Just be yourself and let it come organically. Do not copy someone else’s swag or try to be who you are not.

Wear whatever you feel like wearing—and never let someone who cannot dress tell you what to wear.







Bergen, Norway
Jessica Ajuyah
2025





'Mountain Treasure'
Murdeira, Cabo Verde
Ihsane
2024





JNSPRTN

Sustainability

Hi, I am Jessica, the founder of JNSPRTN, a slow-fashion label devoted to giving vintage denim a second life. I like to call what we do "denim miracles"—taking old jeans and re-imagining them into something fresh, timeless, and full of character.

JNSPRTN exists to nurture a community that understands the beauty of a circular closet where every piece has many lives and endless possibilities. Our goal is to show that sustainability is not a trend; it is a lifestyle of creativity and care.

Creative Process

I draw inspiration from everyday objects and people, always adding a little *Naija* spice to keep each design vibrant and personal. Each piece starts as an illustration, followed by a detailed sample or blueprint before it becomes a finished garment.



What Makes JNSPRTN Unique?

Distinct Design & Intricacy: Every product is one-of-a-kind, with thoughtful details that make it unmistakably JNSPRTN.

Eco-Friendly Sourcing: We choose sustainable, high-quality natural fabrics, think linen, cotton, wool because quality outlasts quantity.

Zero-Waste Production: Nothing is discarded. Every off-cut is transformed into a new piece or an accessory.

Mindful Quantities: We produce in limited runs or on a made-to-order basis to avoid the waste that comes with chasing fast trends.

Sustainability in Practice

As a designer in the sustainable space, I believe small brands should not fall into the trap of mass-producing “trendy” pieces that quickly go out of style and end up in landfills. Our ethos is to create garments worth keeping; pieces that tell a story.

What is Next?

Our fourth drop expands beyond clothing to include handbags and footwear. I am also planning collaborations with brands that share our mission of conscious, creative fashion, with the vision of making JNSPRTN a household name.



Highlights & Challenges

Building a sustainable brand comes with hurdles: sourcing eco-friendly materials, managing production timelines, and finding a like-minded community. But there have been unforgettable highs; like the day a well-known influencer shared a heartfelt PSA about JNSPRTN when we were just a month old with only 46 followers. That recognition affirmed that we are on the right path.

With every collection, I want JNSPRTN to spark conversations about how we dress and how we live. The journey is only beginning, but the mission remains clear: to make sustainable fashion irresistible and accessible, one “denim miracle” at a time.



INSPIRTM





Jnsprtn.

Wahy

هنتي



Creativity is a fizz away



Produced by The Milkiwaey



'Timi's Dream'
The Milkiwaey
2025



Mixed media:
Post card from Tate
Photo by The Milkiwaey
2020



The Milkiwaey
2018







The Milkiwaey
2018



'Seed to Soil: Issue 1' has been an unfolding conversation about environment and experimentation. We explored how the places we inhabit, both physically and mentally, shape our practice and our perception of what art can be. Through the voices of different artists, we witnessed how process, and persistence become part of the creative landscape itself.

What stands out is that experimentation is not always deliberate; it often begins as a response to constraint. Each artist we encountered navigates their own geography of space, memory, and emotion. They have found ways to translate limitation into language, transforming it into something tangible or expressible. Space becomes more than a setting; it becomes material, something to work with and against.

As we close this chapter, it is clear that the relationship between space and self is in constant dialogue, each shaping, responding to, and redefining the other.

The next issue continues this conversation, shifting from awareness to creation. If 'Space and Art' questions where ideas come from, the concluding piece of Issue 2 explores what happens when we attempt to bring them to life. How vision translates into form, and how process becomes product.

Thank you for being part of the journey, building The Milkiwaey Magazine has been like a joyful tear.

Until next time.

Love,

TM







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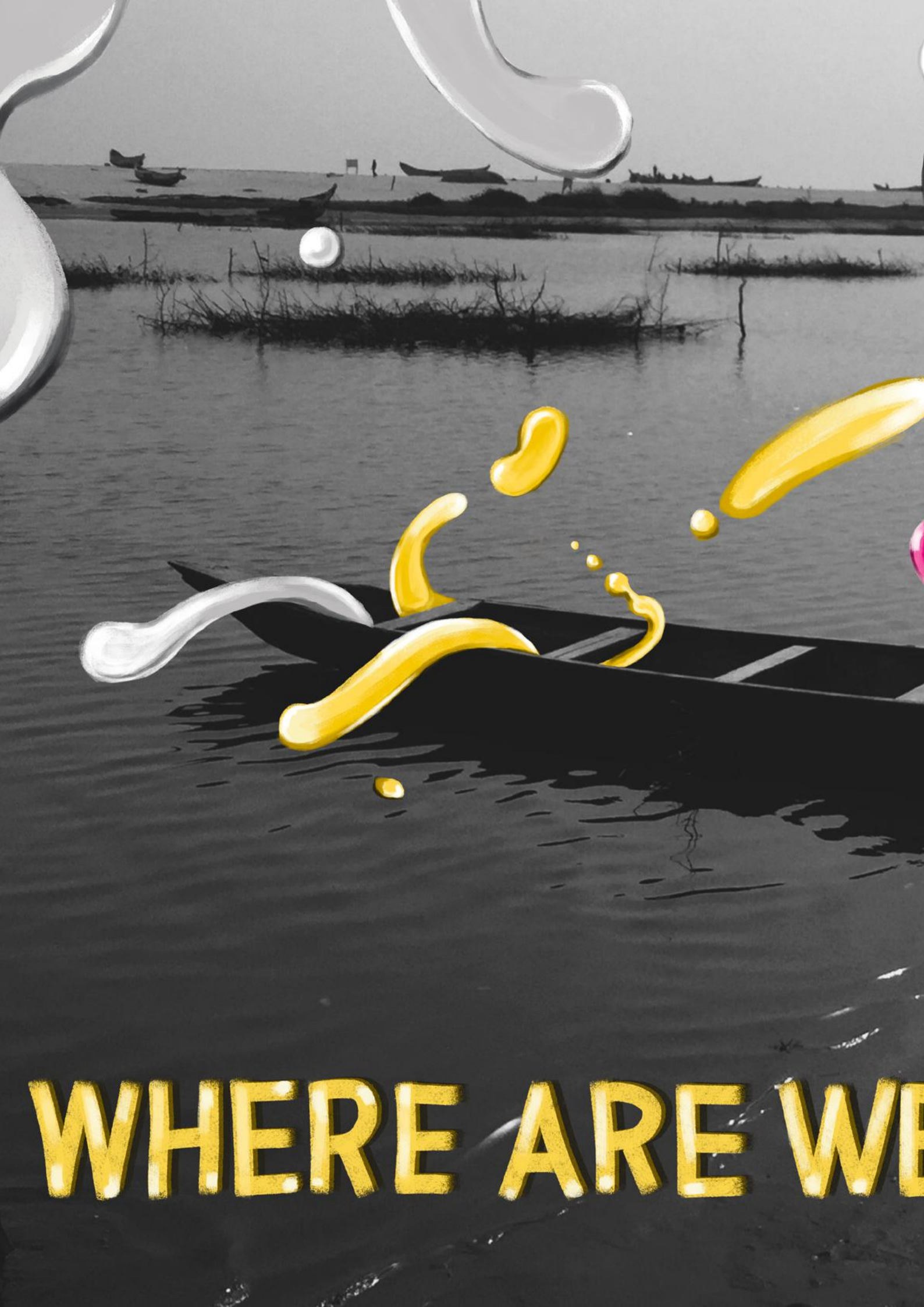
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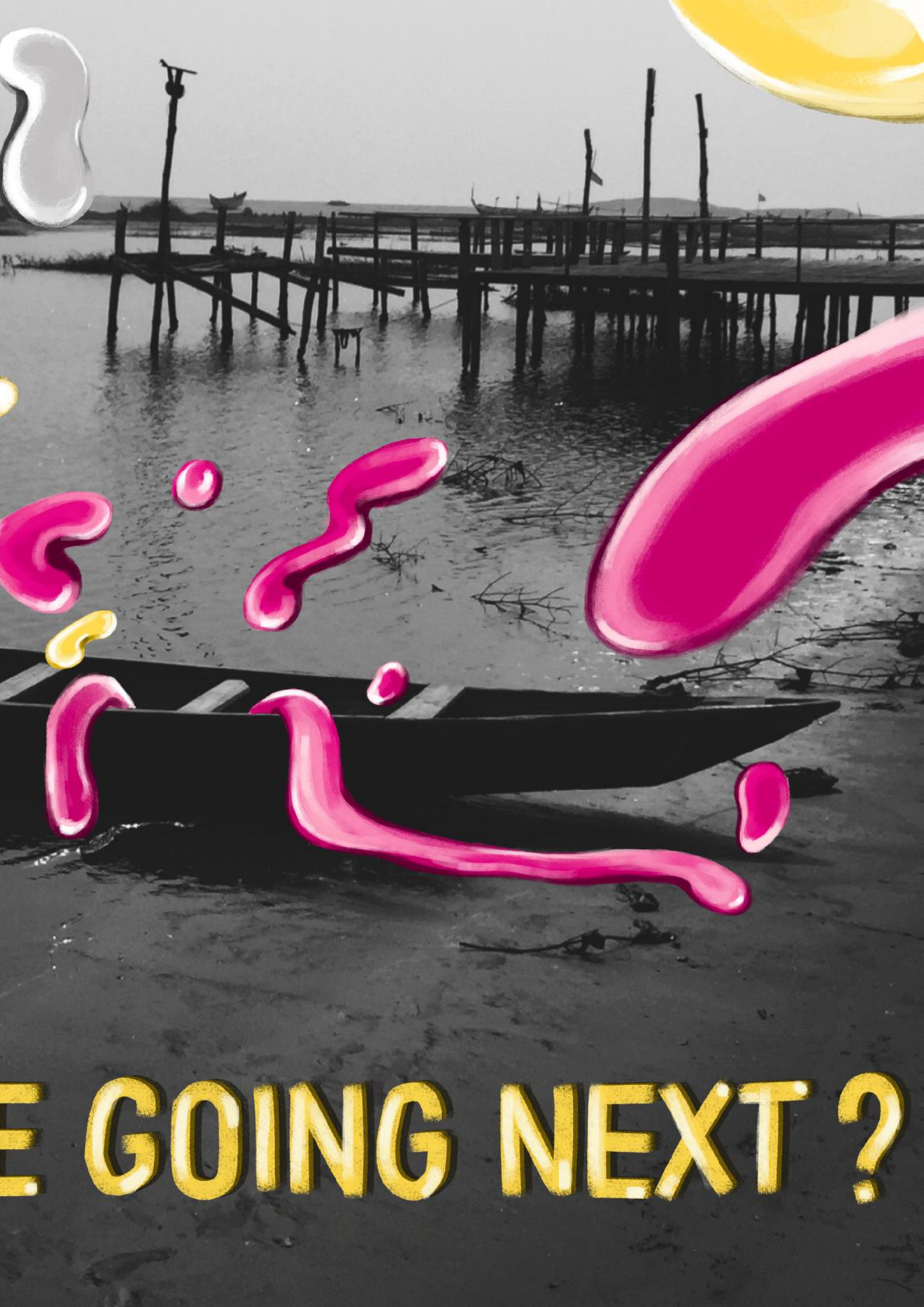
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WHERE ARE WE



WE GOING NEXT ?

