

HARBOR

ARTISTRY DE FILM

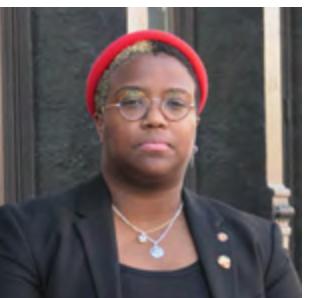
Powering creative filmmaking through radically honest self-expression

HARBOR x SOHO HOUSE

TIM
LEGALLO



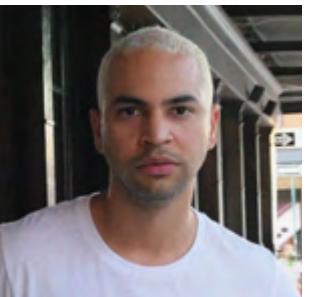
ØCEAN
VASHTI
JUDE



CHRISTELLE
DE CASTRO



JORGE
DORSINVILLE



THE CONVERSATIONS

WRITTEN BY: ELLIE POWERS

We sit in the alcove of the dining room at Soho House NY which feels like a cigar lounge – lived-in leather lounge chairs, red velvet booths, mood lighting with a full bar. Its curated class plays backdrop for my pre-interviews with the panelists at Harbor's Artistry Unfiltered event earlier this month.

Before the event began, I had the honor of speaking with our amazing guest speakers – Tim LeGallo, Øcean Vashti Jude, Christelle de Castro, and Jorge Dorsinville – about their creative processes. But to be honest, the interviews quickly devolved into nerd talk, and I could have spent hours with each of them dissecting frames from films, reciting lines from our favorite books, or discussing the atrocities of Y2K fashion styles.

These conversations reminded me that, while finding common ground enhances the creative process, part of the spirit of Pride Month is celebrating what makes each one of us different. All the creatives expressed, in their own way, how they aim to fill their niche by being unabashedly honest in their work. A pursuit which they constantly negotiate amongst an increasingly commodified creative landscape.

I could detail how extraordinary each of these creatives are, but I'd rather show you through their thoughtful and vulnerable answers from our conversations together.



TIM LEGALLO:

How do you keep your art unfiltered?

You know? By being 100% who I am, always. I've been doing what I do for 30 years, and it has changed tremendously. When I first started in this industry, I was the only [out] person at my agency. This was like 1994, and I was not unfiltered. I was absolutely filtered. I learned the way to get by was by being filtered. I was out. I was proud. But then I got to a point where within the producing and filmmaking, I had to stifle my voice a lot. And I got to a certain point where I just said I would not do that anymore.

Was there a turning point for you?

There was a turning point. I was working on this project for Pride and there was so much that I did not agree with that I let go, and then I thought, I'm not going to do that anymore. And the interesting thing is that's also when I started to rise, and I think that there is a relationship between being unfiltered and success. Because it's authentic and it's true. And that's what people want.

How would you describe your creative process?

I dive in; I'm in and never stop thinking about it. I turn over every stone. I push. I beg people to do things for me. I'm also – it's probably

a good and bad thing as a producer – a massive people pleaser. I want to hear everything that everyone wants, and then I figure out the best way to do it right. But I'm super decisive. If you show me two things, I don't have to think about it. That one – yes. I want people to be happy with what we're doing. But do not mistake my kindness for weakness, because I'm so open and so kind. But I'm also tough.

Did you have any influences early on in your career?

Certainly, if I'm thinking about LGBTQ influences specifically, I had none. There were no role models for success. I felt that for a long time, I accepted where I was at, and I undervalued myself. And then in one of my latest positions, my mentor now, was maybe the first person to see me, see that I could be a leader, and give me the opportunity. It took 25 years. For me, it's about being around the right people who see you. And that's why now, in my position, I'm so vehemently interested in creating spaces for people and making sure that they feel valued and showing them that it's OK to fight for yourself.




OCEAN VASHTI JUDE:
How would you say you keep your art and your creative process unfiltered?

It kind of sounds corny, but I think I always show up unabashedly me. If you look in the context of cinema, it's not me. I don't fit in that box. So instead of conforming to those spaces, let me show up as myself; let me bring my own people; let me tell the stories I want to tell. There's no reason to be someone else, especially when you're making art. Because what is that? There's nothing interesting there. If you're just trying to make the same thing, even in advertising or other spaces, it's just because there's this illusion that this space is only for certain people in certain types of work. But I think we're realizing that, especially with commercials and branded content and TV and streaming, the story about your grandma from the 1930s who loves tap dancing, there's an audience for that. Everything is so niche now. I'm a big fan of getting as weird as possible.

How would you describe your creative process?

I would say my creative process is very visual. Before I even start writing, I pull from photography. Obviously, story is important, but composition is where the eye goes. It's how you say something very profound with just an image. I would say my process is also very collaborative, which I think is [due to] a new generation coming into filmmaking. I will make playlists or compile a list of films. I'm influenced by other movies and other types of art, so there's no point in me trying to just speak it. Let me show you. Let me show you Gordon Parks, let me show you this jazz album, and then let it all come together. I've learned, as a director, I'm just trying to steer the ship. I don't need to have made

the ship and designed the ship and know everything about it. It's about bringing these people together, so they feel like they're empowered to be able to share little things and play with the creative.

Do you have any influences: anybody you look up to or think about when you're making art?

In terms of filmmakers, I like a lot of South Korean filmmakers. And I really like Terrence Malick. But his movies sometimes just need more story. My concentration was screenwriting, so I'm always thinking about his work, but with a stronger story.

Have you seen *Memories of Murder*? That's one of my favorite films. And obviously it's commentary on the 1980s [in South Korea], because a lot of serial killers were around then, and they end up catching [the guy] years later. For that film, I think he was trying to comment on how people didn't care about these women.

Right now, I'm writing a film about a Black girl who goes missing in Cincinnati. Cincinnati is this weird place because it's so close to Kentucky. So, it's poor but black. And it's this mixture. Growing up, I always had this weird feeling that people didn't care about Black girls. When you look at how they disappear, say a 12-year-old, the cops say, she probably ran away with her boyfriend. And I'm thinking, she's 12! You wouldn't say that about a white girl from Illinois. That wouldn't even be a question. Those kinds of experiences or questions that I have, I try to answer through art.



CHRISTELLE DE CASTRO:

How do you keep your art unfiltered?

OK, let me think. So that depends on are we talking about commercial work or are we talking about fine art?

Whatever you want it to be.

Because commercial work is filtered, let me tell you. With fine art, it's easy to be unfiltered.

It's for me. I'm not doing it for money. It's for my healing. It's for my practice and it's for fun. Inherently, it is unfiltered by nature. Commercial work is very different, and that's always a battle and a struggle, but it depends on the job. There are jobs where I feel like I will die on this sword. And then there are other jobs where I think, you know what? Pick and choose your battles. I'll take the check.

Are you working on anything right now?

I'm working on a portrait series of friends and people I love. That's been nice because I haven't done that in ages. As filmmakers, we require teams to make shit happen, so we can't just make a film. Because it is going to require so many people to be like - 'I'm down.' And then it's so expensive on top of that. If I could have it my way, I would just be a fine artist. But there's something with directing. I don't care what it is. I will have fun if it's a tampon commercial. Give it to me. I don't give a shit: we're going to enjoy ourselves. I love every part of it. With photography, when I get hired to do it, only

specific things really excite me where I feel like I'm fulfilled on set. While literally anything I'm directing, I'm having a blast.

How would you describe your creative process as a director or a fine artist?

It requires a lot of heart for me. That's how I work. I see directing as being an energy doula; you're managing and orchestrating the energy and exchanging with the subject, having them feel safe and seen so that they can perform at their best. It's about getting the whole crew to be so into the job, even if they didn't understand what it was when they walked in, that they are quiet and giving respected space to the subject matter. And that everybody feels seen so that they can do their job to the tenth degree.

What are your influences? It could be a person, a thing.

I pull influences from moments in life, real scenarios that happen. And stylistically, I pull from still moments in life, things that I see. And I pull a lot of influence from content that I grew up with as a kid. Like there are old movies that I used to watch. Because you've watched this film like f----- 20 times, it shaped the way that you thought the world was going look. It's kind of fun as a filmmaker to bring those themes back in and be playful with it.

JORGE DORSINVILLE:

How do you keep your art unfiltered?

You be you! Keep yourself as you are: who you are, what you bring, where you come from. Every time I go to do my job, I bring with me all my history, my baggage and the baggage of culture, family, and the factions of love. I would say it's challenging. It's a daily exercise.

I'm always trying to go back to that child. You know what I mean? That child that you want to change the world through. Love that child.

And through my job, I use my body, my voice, my expression, everything I've been given from whatever universe.

Do you have any rituals to get in the creative mood? What sparks your creativity?

My body is my first place to go. My instrument – the body, the physical – is where I start everything. Through the body, I can get everything. When I think in terms of creation, automatically, a pose takes over my body. An arm, a rib cage, legs, a position of the head. And from that, comes everything else. Even if I'm creating a brand, like JDOnly Love, there is a body, an energy, a movement that I want to capture.

My creativity comes from the movement. I come from the movement. It can be a cultural movement. It can be a physical problem, or a pain. Movement was

the first territory in which I could express myself. Dance, movement, has always come first.

What are some of your inspirations? Who did you look up to when you were younger or, it doesn't even have to be a person, an experience or anything that influenced you?

Humans, always humans. I used to wake up so early and want to leave my house. I want to go out, to see people. I want to see the street, the cars, the energy, the weather, the nature. Just observe. My mother used to tell me to go play, and I would sit on the curb in my neighborhood and just watch people, like the guy from the bodega opening for the day.

As an actor, you know, you do all this training, but there is nothing, nothing close to living. My biggest studio training is life – every experience and everybody you meet. Even in the grocery store, if you stop and you just wait a moment, you can learn so much from the energy.

New York is an amazing place to do that. All the different energies. All here right now. As an artist, as a creative, we listen. We're so full of anxiety and expectations. And then there is no connection. There is no more future. No more road along. It's all about how much we can do and change together.

