

ISSUE ONE

SSTUDIO

OCT 2026



ZURI JONES TOUSSAINT

SSTU

LIMIN

BADDIE CHECK-IN

**BADDIEXCLOSET EXPLAINS WHY
BADDIES ARE NEEDED**

DISSONANCE

PHOENIX MONROE RISES ANEW

MAGICAL MODDING

**FIVE MODS FOR YOUR MAGIC
GAMEPLAY**

JUDIO

LIMINAL



FACELESS FIGURES

ODALYS FERRAND AND HER ART

ITS A JAYESIMS WORLD

**JAUYE HINSON CHATS WITH US ABOUT
HIS PROCESS AND INTENTION**

SSTUDIO VISIT

IDEAS STUDIO OPENS IT'S DOORS

SSTUDIO SSTUDIO SSTUDIO MAGAZINE

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The Stub Pump

True Blue, \$895/£325

2AM Laced Mini Dress

White, \$345/£105



STUDIO ATELIER

The Overnight Mini

Black, \$315/\$100

The Stub Sandal

True Blue, \$945/\$340



FROM THE EDITOR



**“EVERY ISSUE
WILL ASK THE
SAME THING
OF ITS
CREATORS:
MAKE IT
SPECIFIC,
MAKE IT
INTENTIONAL,
AND MAKE IT
YOURS.”**

Every first issue is a promise, and we've tried to make ours specific. **SSTUDIO Magazine** exists for the Sims and 3D avatar community, but we don't think of it as a magazine about games. We think of it as a magazine about people who build worlds, dress them, and tell stories inside them, and who deserve the same ambition and craft that fashion publications give their subjects.

In these pages, several stories take hold. Some of these stories are dark, some are playful, and some are quietly tender. What they share is intention. Every concept in this issue was chosen because it had something to say.

We also wanted this issue to feel like a conversation rather than a catalog. Our writers spent real afternoons with their subjects, and we've tried to keep the texture of those hours on the page, the detours, the hard answers, the moments when someone decided to tell the truth. That approach takes longer. We think it's worth it.

This is the first issue, which means it's also the first room we've built. Walk through it slowly. Stand in front of the pieces that excite you. Read the interviews twice. And if something here makes you want to make your own world, that's the best outcome we could ask for.

Welcome to **SSTUDIO Magazine**.

Stacy Strange
Editor-in-Chief





THE BLUE ROOM

members only





LOUIS VUITTON



BADDIE
BADDIE
CHECK-IN

CELEBRITY SKINS LIT TO PERFECTION THE BEST BADDIE DRESSES

 A RELEASE
SCHEDULE
WE CAN
BARELY
KEEP
UP
WITH



WE CHAT WITH THE CREATOR BEHIND IT ALL

To be a *baddie* is to arrive finished. She doesn't get ready on screen. The decision was made before the door opened, and the proof is in the look: a lash curled just so, a lip with exactly the right amount of gloss, a mini dress that knows just where to stop. It's a look built on precision and attitude, and the base game doesn't come with that. The base game gets you a basic girl in clothes. It doesn't get you the baddie who knows what's up. You can't build *her* without **BADDIEXCLOSET**.

YOU CAN'T BE A BADDIE WITHOUT BADDIEXCLOSET

BADDIEXCLOSET began the way a lot of good labels do, out of a practical grievance. Tracy was tired of paying commissions, and had always wanted to be the one making the clothes. The aesthetic goes back further. The baddie look was already a love when it still went by "postbad," in the RP Sims community on Instagram, but the version Tracy had in mind wasn't quite there. So the waiting stopped.

What began as a way out of the commission queue became a point of view, and the point of view became a name.

The Baddie Standard: How BADDIEXCLOSET Dresses the Girl Who Has Already Decided

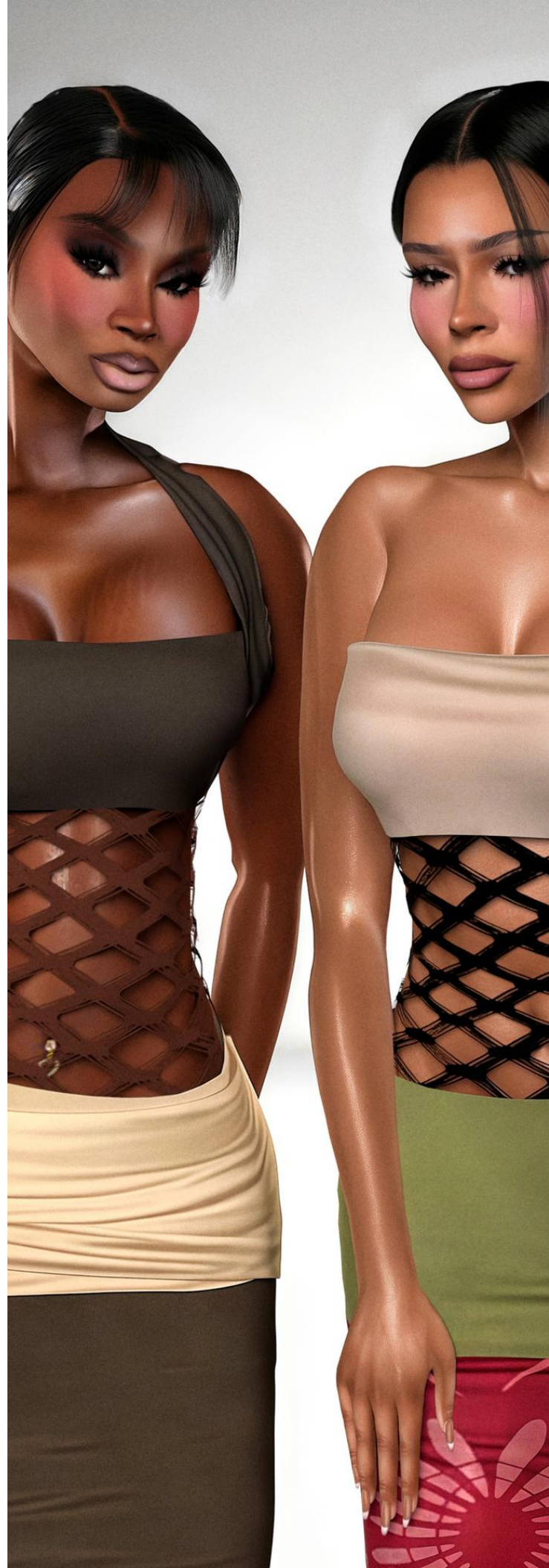
For me, The skins are the standout, every one of them. Skins are some of the hardest CC to make in my opinion and **BADDIEXCLOSET** gets it right every time, each face lit just right. Tyla, Chxrry and Trinity are favorites. Then Beyoncé, the holy grail, and she is done perfectly.

The clothes hold to the same standard. The *Cardi B catsuit*, the *Sunset Dolce dress*, the *I Am Gia bandage dress*, the *Hervé dress*, the *Sinh Set*, the *Sequin dress*, the *Crochet dress*: a long run of pieces cut for a sim who knows she is and loves being looked at.

What carries all of them is texture. In game, in motion, under real light, the fabric reads as fabric every time. Releases arrive steadily and fast, so the closet keeps pace with the timeline.

By time you have the newest look downloaded, the next look is already on its way. **BADDIEXCLOSET** makes the whole thing look easy. What we wanted to know was how.

We sat down with **Tracy** of **BADDIEXCLOSET** and asked a few questions.



BADDIE? CHECK. CLOSET? CHECK.

What made you start making CC?

I started making CC because, honestly, I was tired of paying commissions, but also because I had always dreamed of becoming a CC creator!

Was there a specific moment or piece that made you think, "I could actually do this"?

Most of my CC actually made me realize this! I'm always anxious when I'm creating something, no matter how simple it looks.

Why the baddiexsimmer aesthetic? Specifically, what draws you to that identity for your brand?

I've always been in love with the baddie aesthetic, even back when it was called "postbad." I'm coming from the RP Sims community on Instagram, and I remember not seeing enough people using the specific baddie aesthetic I was looking for, so I decided to step in and make it a real statement!

How would you describe your personal taste/style, and does it show up in the CC you make?

I'm a big fan of late '90s and early 2000s style in real life, especially when it comes to designers' archive pieces. I'm trying my best to show that through my CC.

What draws you to recreating iconic real-world pieces in particular?

When I wanted to dress my Sim in certain clothes but couldn't find them!

What's the hardest part of the process that people probably don't realize? Meshing, texturing, or something else entirely?

I would say texturing at the moment! I thought making meshes would be way more difficult (which it is, though, don't get me wrong), but I'm having a hard time texturing my CC because most of the time I'm making clothes that never had clear pictures that I could use as textures. So I'm holding my breath every time and trying my best, crashing out most of the time too!

How long does a typical set take you from concept to release?

It usually takes me 4 to 5 hours if I really lock in, but it can also take me a whole day or two if I don't sleep lol.

Any favorites among the pieces you've made?

Definitely my Jean Paul Gaultier Obi Dress! I remember cheering myself up when I tested the final result in-game. My friends and I had been looking for that dress for ages, so it was a huge win! Then the Sequin Dress, and probably the Ahriah Set.

Is there a piece you made early on that you'd approach completely differently now?

A few, because I didn't have the knowledge I have now when it comes to meshing.

You make beautiful skins and CC clothing. Is there anything you've wanted to make but haven't yet?

It seems impossible, but I really want to make hair!

What's your holy grail fashion item you want to recreate next?

Honestly, I think I've already made them!

Where do you want your brand to be a year from now?

I'm manifesting more visibility and lots of collabs!!!

Any favorite CC makers who inspire you or that you love?

Oh my god, a lot! KikoVanity, BrandySims, Plasticsimz, KieGross, Coco Games, Bydiv, Satans Hubby, Cecesimsxo, Siikglobal, and the list goes on!!!

What's it like being part of the CC-making community right now? Is it collaborative, competitive, both?

It's pretty chill from my point of view and definitely supportive!

What do you wish more people understood about what goes into making CC?

That it takes a lot of time and patience. For the people complaining about early access or CC being behind paywalls, they need to understand that it's for all the time we've invested in the process of creating!

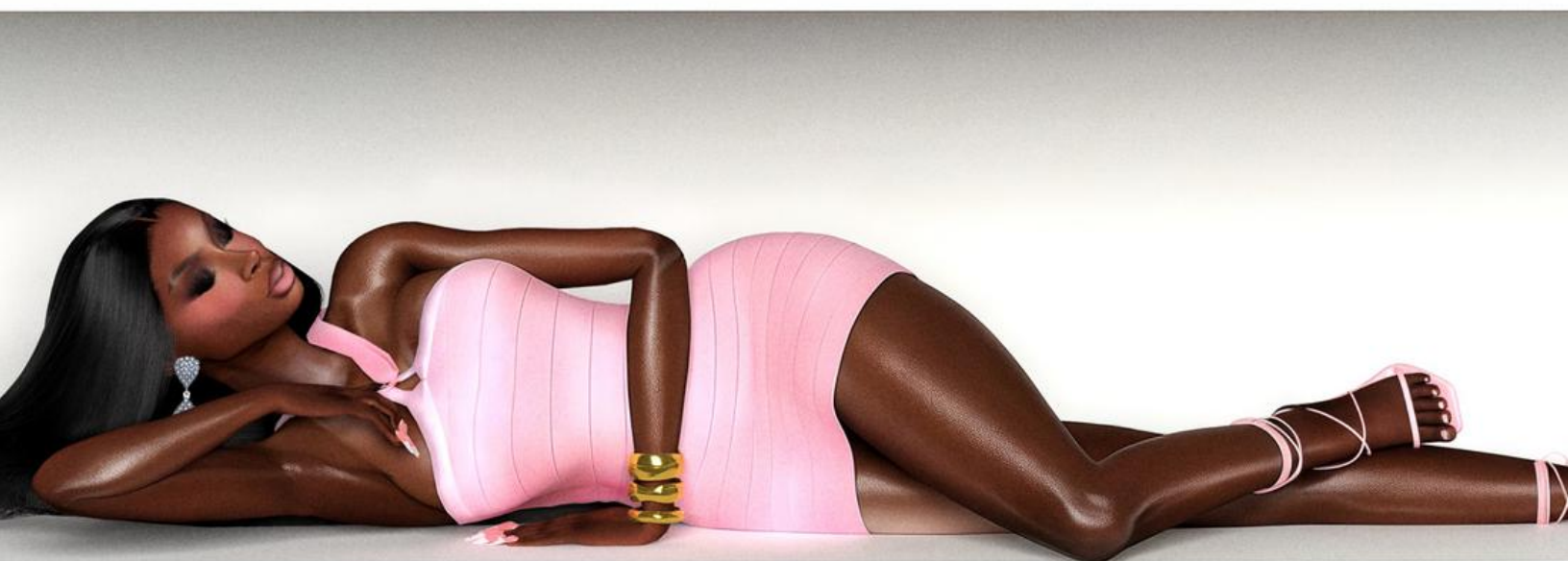
One year in, what's changed about how you approach making CC compared to when you started?

Oooh, one year ago, I remember thinking that I would never be able to make a single piece of CC without constantly going back to the tutorial that helped me learn how to make CC (shoutout to FamSimsss on YouTube!). But I did it, and I learned to trust myself enough because I was lacking a lot of confidence when I first started. I thought I would never be good enough to do it, but well... I proved myself wrong.

What would you tell someone just starting out who wants to make CC?

That they can do it! No matter how difficult it looks! Never give up! Keep going back to it, even if you've messed up 15 times already, and don't be scared to ask for help!

One year in, BADDIEXCLOSET has already made the pieces on the wish list, and the answer to what comes next is hair, more visibility and a few collaborations. A year ago, a single piece meant keeping the tutorial open and working for days. Now there's a closet that treats late '90s and early 2000s archive pieces as fair game, and a creator who, by their own account, proved themselves wrong. Baddie? Check.









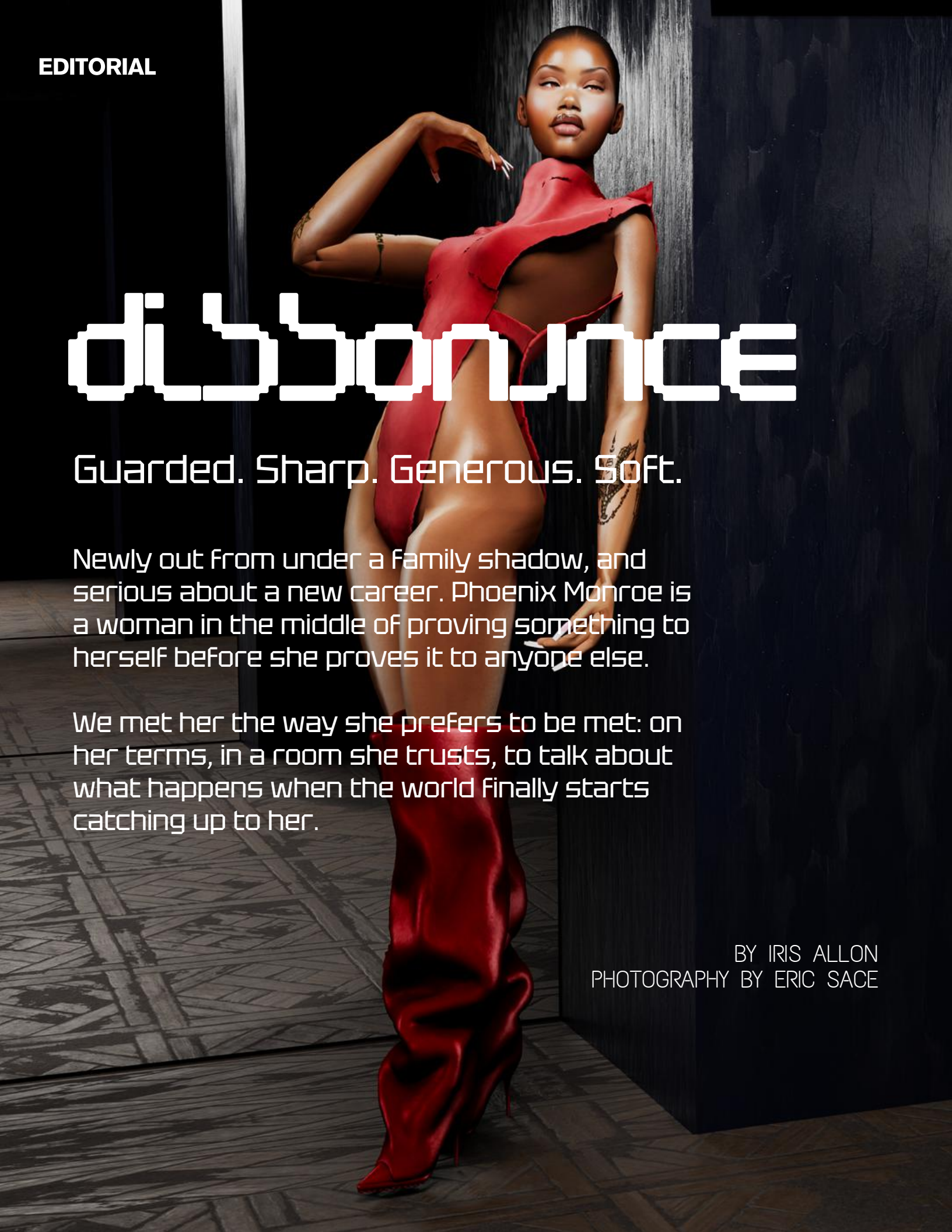
Studio

Atelier



EDITORIAL

dissonance

A full-page photograph of Phoenix Monroe. She is standing in a room with dark walls and a patterned floor. She is wearing a striking, bright red, form-fitting dress with a high slit and a draped neckline. She has her hair pulled back and is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. Her right arm is raised, and her left hand is resting on her hip. She has visible tattoos on her arms.

Guarded. Sharp. Generous. Soft.

Newly out from under a family shadow, and serious about a new career. Phoenix Monroe is a woman in the middle of proving something to herself before she proves it to anyone else.

We met her the way she prefers to be met: on her terms, in a room she trusts, to talk about what happens when the world finally starts catching up to her.

BY IRIS ALLON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC SACE

a note before the night

I was warned, more than once, before this one. An agent's careful phrasing. A mutual acquaintance's raised eyebrow. The general sense, gathered secondhand from people who'd clearly had their own version of this evening, that Phoenix does not make herself easy, and that whatever I thought I knew going in would likely need revising by the end of the night.

What follows is an account of exactly one night, unscripted, occasionally combative, considerably longer than either of us probably intended. I went in expecting to write about a model having a moment. I came out with something else entirely, though it took me most of the evening, and several tests I didn't realize I was taking, to actually get there.

Iris Allen





Bodysuit: BLUPRNT
Boots: Rick Owens

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PHOENIX RISES?

Interview by Iris Allon

FRICION

The car was arranged through her agent days in advance, along with a single instruction that read almost like theater. Blocks from the final address, the driver would produce a blindfold mask and ask, politely but without much room for negotiation, to place the mask on. What followed was ten minutes of turns I couldn't track, before easing down an alley. When the truck stopped, the door was opened and I took my blindfold off and saw that we've arrived at an alley that looks like it couldn't possibly lead anywhere worth arriving at. A hand steadied my elbow and a door with no handle visible from outside swings open and I'm led through a narrow service hallway that opens up into a large dark room with a double wide door.

The next space was a room lit entirely in amber and red with a gold ceiling catching the glow and throwing it back twice as warm, and curved velvet booths tucked into low light. Candles doing most of the actual work to light the room. Behind the bar, bottles glow red against a backlit wall like something ceremonial rather than practical. It's hushed in the specific way expensive rooms tend to be, not empty, just full of people who've learned not to look too hard at each other. Nobody wanders in here. You're brought.

Phoenix finds me before I find her, crossing the room with the ease of someone who has never once entered anywhere uncertain of her welcome. She pulls me into a hug like we're old friends catching up rather than two people meeting for the first time, warm, unhurried, entirely genuine as far as I can tell. "You made it," she says, already steering me toward a curved corner booth half swallowed in shadow, her hand light on my arm the whole way. "I get nervous when I bring people here because of the whole mask thing. I've had some friends that don't want to come because of it and some business that's almost ended because of it."

A server appears with a drink already prepared, no order given, no menu offered, just a low glass the color of burnt orange set down in front of Phoenix like the entire room had been quietly expecting her, a curl of smoke still rising off the top in a way that felt, frankly, a little too cinematic to be entirely accidental. She lifts it toward him in thanks without so much as breaking eye contact with me, the sort of fluency with a room that cannot be taught. "Tangerine, mezcal, they usually smoke it table side, but they know to have it waiting by the time I sit down," she explains, catching me noticing. "Saves everybody the conversation."

She reaches across the table, entirely without asking, and helps herself to a fry off the plate sitting between us, which I have decided to interpret as a compliment rather than the small, deliberate power move it almost certainly is. She settles back into the booth, one leg tucked beneath her, radiating the specific restlessness of someone who has never once in her life sat all the way still. "So," she says, and something in her tone drops several degrees, businesslike now. "Before we go any further, I need to say something, and I need you to actually hear it." A pause, precisely timed. "I don't trust journalists. Not because you're all terrible people, necessarily. Because I've watched exactly what happens to women who hand over too much too early, and I have absolutely no interest in becoming a cautionary tale in someone else's profile or creating any more mess." Her eyes hold mine a beat longer than is strictly comfortable. "So I'm going to be honest with you tonight. And if I feel, even slightly, like you've twisted a word of it, this will be the only conversation we ever have. Are we clear?"

It is not, in any meaningful sense, a question. I tell her we're clear anyway, which seems to be the correct answer, because she breaks almost immediately into a slow, delighted smile, and the entire chill of thirty seconds ago evaporates. "Good. Now that unpleasantness is out of the way." She takes an unhurried sip, the smoke catching gold in the low light on its way up. "Ask me something real. I can spot a boring question coming a full sentence before you finish it."



Suit: Schiaparelli



"You said something a minute ago," I say. "About not wanting to create any more mess. I have to ask, since it's clearly on your mind, is that about your sister?"

The warmth doesn't disappear exactly, but something behind her eyes sharpens, very fast, very deliberate. "See, that's exactly the mess I mean," she says, quiet, almost disappointed rather than angry, which is somehow worse. "It's never actually a mess until somebody decides to write it like one. Teagan and I aren't at war. We never were. But nobody wants to print 'two sisters doing their own thing,' so it keeps getting dressed up as something else."

I tell her that's fair, and that I'm genuinely not looking to dress it up as anything, just asking what it's actually been like.



She studies me for a long moment, deciding something again, then exhales, some of the edge softening back into warmth. "She had her lane first. I had to build mine somewhere else, on my own terms, with my own audience, and that took actual work, not some jealousy plot." A small, sharp smile. "People love pitting women against each other because it's easier than admitting we can both just be good at what we do, separately, without needing to be compared." She takes a sip of the drink, unhurried. "I love my sister. I also don't need to live in her shadow to prove that. Those two things aren't in conflict, no matter how badly certain people keep trying to make them one."

A server materializes at the edge of the booth with the same quiet efficiency as before. "Something for you?" he asks me, and I hesitate, caught slightly off guard, aware that whatever I order is about to be assessed.

Phoenix watches this unfold with visible amusement. "Don't overthink it," she says. "Whatever you get is basically a personality test at this point."

I ask for a glass of red, mostly because it's the least revealing answer I can think of under pressure. Phoenix laughs, low and genuine, waving the server off before I can second-guess myself. "Safe," she says, not unkindly. "I respect it. Some people try to match my order to seem cool and it's honestly a little sad to watch."

TURNOVER

"So how are you separating yourself, then?" I ask. "What's actually different?"

Phoenix considers this one properly, none of the reflexive sharpness from a moment ago, like it's a question she's genuinely glad to get asked directly instead of implied. "Teagan's polished. Controlled. She's good at that, and it works for her." She turns her glass slowly, choosing her words. "I'm not that. I don't really know how to be that. What I have is instinct, and I trust it even when it's messy, even when it doesn't look good on paper first." She shrugs, easy, unbothered. "I say what I think. I don't wait for permission to have a reaction. That scares some people."

I ask if that instinct ever gets her into trouble.

"Constantly," she says, and there's real delight in it, no shame attached whatsoever. "But I'd rather be interesting and occasionally wrong than safe and forgettable. Nobody remembers safe." She glances at me for a second like she's testing me. "You can print that, by the way. That one's not off the record."

"You like trouble, it seems," I say.

She laughs, delighted, tipping her head back slightly. "I like honesty. Trouble's just what people call honesty when it's inconvenient for them." She leans back into the booth, clearly enjoying herself now, all the earlier wariness fully burned off. "I've never once gotten in trouble for lying. Only for saying exactly what I meant, at exactly the wrong volume, in front of exactly the wrong person." A small shrug, unbothered. "I've made peace with that being my whole thing."

The server reappears just then, setting my glass of red down between us with the same quiet precision as before, and Phoenix watches, amused, as I reach for it a little too quickly, like the wine itself might rescue me from whatever she says next.

She studies me a beat, then tilts her head, genuinely curious now rather than testing. "Do you have a sister?"

I tell her no, just a brother, and that we're not particularly close, he's been living down in South America for a while now, doing construction work, and we mostly exist on opposite ends of a group text that neither of us actually replies in.

Phoenix nods slowly, taking this in with more interest than I expected. "See, that's its own kind of story too," she says. "Everybody assumes distance from a sibling means something went wrong. Sometimes it just means two people ended up building completely different lives, and nobody ever circled back to reconnect them." She takes a sip, watching me over the rim of the glass. "Doesn't mean you don't love him. Just means love isn't always proximity."

"Do you love your sister the way you love trouble?" I ask.

Something flickers across her face, quick, unguarded, before the composure slides back into place. "That's a good question," she says, quieter than before. "Yeah. Actually, yeah. Messy, complicated, a little too much sometimes, worth it anyway." A small, almost private smile. "I don't think I know how to love anything the easy way. Never have. My sister included."

She glances up at me, something more open in her expression now than at any point since we sat down. "That's probably the most honest thing I've said all night, and you didn't even have to fight me for it."





Dress: Custom Studio Atelier,
Shoes: Ruchell Sims



Dress: Custom Studio Atelier,
Shoes: Ruchell Sims



She laughs, and I laugh with her, something in the tension of the last twenty minutes finally loosening all at once. I reach for a fry, because honestly, I was starving.

"Oh, now you want to eat," she says, delighted, pointing the rim of her glass at me. "Now that I'm the one spilling tea, all of a sudden it's less awkward, huh?"

"I was waiting for something worth eating over," I say. "You just gave me one."

She stares at me for a second, then laughs again, louder this time, genuinely caught off guard. "Okay," she says, nodding slowly, reassessing. "Okay. I see you." She pushes the plate another inch toward me anyway, somewhere between a reward and a dare. "Most people flinch when I come at them like that. You just came right back."

She pushes the plate another inch toward me anyway, something looser and warmer settling into the space between us. "Anyway," she says, "you were asking what I am doing differently—"



She doesn't get to finish the thought. A figure appears at the edge of the booth, unannounced, moving with the unhurried confidence of someone who's never once worried about being somewhere he shouldn't be. Phoenix's whole posture changes before I even register who it is, not fear exactly, something closer to bracing.

"Didn't expect to see you here tonight," he says, easy, a little too easy, the tone of someone who used to be allowed to say things that easily to her.

"Reece," she says, flat, the single syllable doing an enormous amount of work. "Small city."

He glances at me, then back at her, clocking the notebook, the whole situation, with the mild curiosity of someone who's used to being noticed wherever he lands. There's a history sitting in the two feet of space between them that neither of them is saying out loud, something that clearly ran hot and public for a long stretch and ended without much ceremony. I watch Phoenix hold her expression very carefully, the specific effort of someone keeping a door shut that still, technically, has a working hinge.

"Don't let me interrupt," he says, already backing off, though not particularly quickly.

"You're not," Phoenix says, evenly, a beat too fast to be entirely convincing.

He holds up both hands, half amused, and drifts back toward the bar without pushing it further. Phoenix watches him go a beat longer than she probably means to, jaw tight, something unreadable passing behind her eyes before she catches herself and turns back to me, resetting with visible effort.

"So," Phoenix says, resetting fully, voice a shade too bright, like she's willing the last thirty seconds out of the room entirely. "What am I doing differently? Modeling."

"We can't just skip that," I say.

She looks at me, and for a second the performance flickers, something real underneath it, tired maybe, or just tired of being asked to perform recovery on command. "Skip what," she says, flat, daring me to actually say it out loud.

"That," I say, nodding toward the bar, where Reece has already disappeared into the crowd. "You don't have to talk about him specifically. But you don't have to pretend he didn't just happen either."

She holds my eyes for a long moment, and I can see her deciding something, the same calculation from earlier in the night, except slower this time, more deliberate. "Fine," she says finally, quieter than anything she's said all evening. "One sentence. Then we move on, and I mean it this time."

"It was fun," she says, holding up one finger like she's counting it off. "It was trouble." A second finger. "It had to stop." She lets both hands drop, rolling her eyes at herself as much as at the memory. "Maturity kicked in, unfortunately." A short laugh, dry, self-aware. "That's the whole sentence. You get one, like I said."

She reaches for her glass, done with the subject as visibly as she opened it, and levels a look at me that dares me to push further.

FEEDBACK

"Now," she says. "Modeling. Can we talk about the actual thing you came here for?"

"So what's it actually felt like lately," I ask, "the momentum, the run of bookings, building something that reads as unmistakably yours after starting out, at least publicly, in Teagan's shadow?"

Something in her settles at the question, like it's solid ground after the last few minutes of shifting terrain. "It's the first thing in a long time that's felt like mine without an asterisk," she says. "Early on, every booking came with a little footnote nobody said out loud but everybody was thinking. 'Oh, Teagan's sister.' I got used to walking into rooms already positioned as a comparison before I'd said a single word." She turns her glass slowly. "Now the bookings are coming because of what I actually do. Not because of who I'm related to. That's a different kind of tired, honestly. A good tired."

I ask if she can feel the difference in the rooms themselves, whether people treat her differently now.

"Completely," she says. "People used to talk to me like they were being kind to Teagan by extension. Now they're just talking to me. That took years to build, not months. I had to be patient in a way that genuinely goes against everything about my personality." She smiles. "But I did it. And it's mine."





"Can I be honest?" I ask. "Were you actually patient? Because from the outside, given some of the headlines, it looked more like you were irritated a lot of the time."

She laughs, short and sharp, more surprised than offended. "Okay, fair. Fair." She sits back, considering it properly instead of brushing it off. "No. I wasn't patient. Let's not pretend I was some picture of grace about it. I was irritated. Constantly. I just kept working while I was irritated, which people mistake for patience because it looks calmer from a distance." She shrugs. "Patience implies I was fine waiting. I wasn't fine. I just didn't have another option that made sense, so I kept my head down and let the irritation fuel the work instead of the headlines."

I ask if she regrets any of that showing publicly.

"Not really," she says, without much hesitation. "I'd rather people see a real woman getting frustrated than a fake one pretending she wasn't. The headlines made it sound like drama. It was just impatience with a very long timeline. Those aren't the same thing, even if they look identical in a screenshot."

"How often do people get it wrong about you?" I ask. "The headlines, the news, social media. How much of it is actually right, versus completely off?"

She exhales, long, like this is a question she's been waiting all night to actually answer honestly. "Maybe forty percent right. Generously." She counts it off on her fingers again, a habit I've clocked by now. "The edge is real. The bluntness is real. I do say what I think, I don't perform for people who haven't earned it. That part's accurate." She pauses. "What's wrong is the framing. They make it sound calculated, like I'm doing a bit. I'm not doing a bit. I'm just not built with a filter most people have, and I stopped apologizing for that a while ago."

I ask what gets left out entirely, the stuff that never makes it into any version of the story.

"That I'm actually soft with people I trust," she says, quieter now, and there's something almost vulnerable in how quickly the edge drops. "Nobody wants to print that. It's less interesting than 'she's a lot.' But the people close to me know I'll show up for them at three in the morning without a single complaint. That never becomes a headline. Only the messy stuff does."

She shrugs, some of the sharpness returning, though warmer this time. "I've made peace with it. The persona gets the headlines. The actual me gets the people who matter. I don't need those to be the same audience."

The server reappears setting down two dishes between us with the kind of quiet ceremony that suggests they weren't ordered so much as anticipated, miso-glazed short rib, dark and lacquered, scattered with charred scallion and black garlic, and beside it, yuzu-kosho braised oxtail over crisped rice, glossy under the low light. Phoenix doesn't look up right away, still half in the last thing she said, but reaches for a fork almost automatically the second the plates land.

"Oh, thank god," she says, some of the intensity breaking into something looser. "I was getting too honest. I need to stuff my mouth before I show my own personality." She slides one of the dishes an inch toward me, an invitation rather than a question. "Eat. You've earned a bite for that last question alone."

We eat in silence for a moment, an easy one, the first real pause of the night that doesn't feel like either of us performing anything.

I let the silence sit for a moment before picking the thread back up. "You mentioned the people who actually get to see the soft version of you," I say. "Who's in that circle? Who actually knows the real thing versus the persona?"

Phoenix considers this while she chews, unhurried, like she's deciding how much of an answer this actually deserves. "Small circle. Intentionally small," she says finally. "A couple friends I've had since before any of this. My mom, obviously. My sister, whatever people want to believe about that." She points her fork loosely in my direction. "New people have to earn their way in slowly. I don't do fast intimacy. I've watched what happens to people who let everyone in too quickly, and it's never pretty."

I ask if that makes her lonely, keeping the circle that tight.

She actually laughs at that, no hesitation at all. "Hell no," she says, shaking her head. "People assume a small circle means empty life. Mine's full. I just don't hand the word 'friend' out to everybody I've taken a picture with." She gestures loosely around the room, at the low light, the familiar faces scattered through it. "I know exactly who's actually mine. That's not loneliness. That's common sense."

I let a beat pass, then steer somewhere lighter. "Speaking of who's actually yours," I say, "can we talk about Dre?"

The shift in her is immediate and almost comic, the sharpness dissolving into something closer to a grin she's clearly trying, unsuccessfully, to suppress. "Oh, we're doing this now," she says, delighted, sitting up slightly. "Fine. Ask your question."

I ask what she's willing to actually share.

"Not much," she says, still grinning. "He's good for me. That's the whole press release." She holds up a hand before I can push further. "I'm not doing the couple's-profile thing where I describe how he makes me feel using four separate metaphors. He's good. It's easy. I like it easy now, believe it or not."

I ask if "easy" is new territory for her, given everything else she's described tonight.

"Extremely," she says, laughing. "I used to think easy meant boring. Turns out easy just means nobody's lying to you." She takes a bite, already closing the door on the subject with visible satisfaction. "That's all you're getting tonight. Ask me literally anything else."



Top and Skirt: Studio Atelier,
Shoes: Ruchell Sims



Skirt: Custom Jo Lee
Shoes: Studio Atelier

"Alright," I say. "Something else, then. What's ahead? Anything on the horizon you're excited about, work or otherwise?"

Something shifts across her face, quick, deliberate, the same calculation I clocked earlier in the night when she was deciding how much to give me. "There's something," she says slowly, choosing the words with unusual care for someone who's spent the whole night saying exactly what she thinks. "Something bigger than a booking. I'm not ready to say what it is." She catches my expression before I can even ask. "And no, that's not me being difficult. Some things you don't talk about until they're real enough to survive being talked about."

I ask if it's work-related.

She just looks at me, unreadable. "You'll know when I know you should know," she says, which is, I suspect, the most honest non-answer I'm going to get out of her tonight. "Ask me again in a few months. I might actually tell you something."

Something in the room has loosened considerably by now, the plates mostly empty, the low light doing its slow work on the whole evening. We have a few more drinks and eat a bit more. Phoenix studies me for a moment, the same assessing look from when I first sat down, except entirely without edge this time.

"I like you," she says, simply, like it's a small verdict she's just finished deliberating. "You didn't flinch, you didn't fish, and you actually let me have the messy answers instead of trying to clean them up for me." She finishes what's left in her glass. "I don't say that to just anybody."

I tell her I'm glad the blindfold was worth it.

She laughs, already sliding out of the booth, gathering her things with the same unhurried confidence she walked in with. "Don't get used to the easy version of me. This was a good night." She looks back at me, half amused, half daring. "Come on. We're not done."

I ask where we're going.

"Out," she says, like that's a complete answer, which apparently, for her, it is. "You're not taking a blindfolded car home after a night like this. I'm taking you with me."

It isn't really a question, the same way nothing tonight has been, and I find myself standing anyway, gathering my things, following her back across the room the way she'd crossed it hours earlier, entirely certain of her welcome, stopping twice to greet people who light up the second she reaches them.

Whatever version of Phoenix the headlines have built, it isn't the one who just spent two hours letting her guard down slowly, deliberately, on her own terms, in a room built specifically so she never has to do it in front of strangers, and it certainly isn't the one currently pulling me by the arm toward whatever comes next.

What follows is less an interview than the rest of an actual night out, another room, another round, Phoenix somehow softer with every hour that passes rather than more guarded, laughing easily, pulling me into conversations with strangers who all seem to already adore her. It's well past any reasonable hour by the time a car finally delivers me home, no blindfold this time, the city gone quiet in the particular way it only does right before it starts turning light again.

I think, driving through those empty streets, about how little of tonight matches the version of Phoenix I'd read about beforehand, the edge, the headlines, the sense of a woman perpetually bracing for a fight. That woman was there, briefly, in the first ten minutes. But underneath her was someone else entirely, funny, warm, fiercely protective of the people and things she's chosen to keep close, and generous in a way that costs her nothing to give and clearly means everything when she does.

Whatever she's building right now, career, relationship, whatever she wouldn't yet name, I suspect it's going to be built on exactly that same quiet fierceness. I just got to see it a little early.



STUDIO ATELIER

The Bib Mini

Deep Cosmic, \$345 / \$118

The Stub Pump

Electric Checker, \$895/\$325



STUDIO ATELIER

The Bib Mini

White, \$345 / \$118

The Bib Mini

Black, \$345 / \$118

The Stub Pump

Electric Checker, \$895/\$325





editorialdolls







WE'RE JUST PLAYING IT.



written by Stacy Strange

There's a version of Sims modding that's purely cosmetic: new hair, new furniture, a prettier world for the same handful of stories to play out in. Then there's Jaye Hinson of **JayESims**, who has never been interested in that kind of modding.

With over 150 projects deep, his catalog reads less like add-ons and more like extensions of a world that is entirely of your making. Hinson has built entire rulesets, traits, careers, mood packs, and full gameplay systems, all built around one question: what does a Sim actually need to tell a story that feels true?



I know for one, you can't build a deep, dramatic save file without **JayESims**.



Hinson builds **JayESims** around a simple mission: every simmer deserves to tell their story, without their wallet deciding if they can. That shows in the specificity of the work, traits rooted in real slang, style, and lived experience, instead of the flattened defaults the base game offers.

It shows in the drama he's willing to build space for too. Chaos, heartbreak, and obsession often show in his mods, rendered with real mechanical weight instead of smoothed into something tidy and vague. With his extensive catalog of mods, Hinson makes it clear the range and nuance is the point.

With mods like, **Resilience & Remission** that brings real nuance to a **Cancer Survivor** storyline. **All About That Life** and **The Muva Simmer Legacy** which builds entire cultural identities with traits the base-game doesn't offer. **We Can't Be Friends** and **Beacon** hands players real narrative mechanics for the messy stuff they need like, exes, energy vampires, and connections that slowly unravel.

A personal favorite of mine is **Beyond the Label**, which includes six new sibling dynamics that finally give family storylines the same emotional complexity the game has always reserved for romance. For me, *simming* is all about legacies and families, and this mod allows for more storytelling where things often end up feeling dull in gameplay.

Like mentioned before, *accessibility* isn't an afterthought for **JayESims**, it's structural. **The Mods For All Program** funds a significant share of his output specifically so costs never decides who gets to tell a story. It's a quiet generosity that's easy to miss next to the scale of everything else he's built, but it's arguably the most important piece of the whole operation.

Fourteen thousand plus people now make up the **JayESims** community, all building worlds on systems he designed, a huge share of them without ever paying a cent for the privilege. Few creators in this space have built something this expansive while keeping the door this wide open.

We sat down with Jaye to talk about building the world other people's stories now live inside.



HOW DOES ONE BUILD THE WORLD?

Q & A with Jaye Hinson of JayESims

What made you start building gameplay mods instead of CC or builds?

It truly was due to the lack of gameplay depth! So many things were centered around builders and fashion. All of those things are nice, of course, but it's a simulation game.

I started making mods because I wanted those missing everyday pieces to actually exist in gameplay.

Was there a specific gap in the base game's storytelling that frustrated you enough to fix it yourself?

***BLACK CULTURE FOR STARTERS**, and the depth of **CHOICES**. I want the game to hand the story back to you. I want players to see themselves in-game. Not just in Create-a-Sim.*

How do you think about "storytelling" as a design problem when you're building a mod? What has to be true for a mod to actually deepen a story rather than just add a feature?

*For me, a mod **deepens** a story when the choices you make actually matter and give you something to build on. I can create the interactions and systems, but what happens next is up to the player.*

What has to be true for a mod to actually deepen a story rather than just add a feature?

The stories have to be real. The intentions behind it. The characters. If there's no progression, what are we doing?

Your traits often reflect real culture and lived experience in a way base-game options don't. How intentional is that, and why does it matter to you?

It matters because the players matter.

*Why are we playing a game we can't fully see ourself in that **PRAISES** real-life simulation? Every click in our game is **intentional**. My work is **intentional**, every damn post.*

My favorite mod of yours is Beyond The Label. Do you have a favorite mod that you've made?

*I **hate** this question because my favorite changes depending on what I'm building.*

*My **Co-Parent Chaos** series has been really fun to make! We have 1 and 2 out, along with a DLC. However... my new series for my "**Ship Da**" universe has produced **Ship Da Lids Off**, **Ship Da Papers Off**, and **Ship Da Emails Off**, which has grown to be my favorite.*

Walk me through how a mod idea actually becomes a working system. What's involved that people wouldn't expect?

The first version of an idea usually fits in one sentence. The finished version usually has fifty questions hiding inside that sentence.

What's the hardest problem you've had to solve, technically or creatively?

The hardest creative problem is knowing when realism stops being fun. I love detailed systems, but I never want somebody to feel like they're doing paperwork instead of playing The Sims.

I either hear too many steps OR not enough depth. Finding balance.

The Mods For All Program funds a lot of your work to keep it free. What made that important enough to build into the foundation of what you do?

I never wanted money to completely determine who gets to experience my work. Obviously, this is real work, and it takes an enormous amount of time, so I had to find a way to make that sustainable. Mods For All became my way of trying to balance both.



I see the stories, the mentions, the testimonials, the insane amount of love that you've garnered in such a short amount of time is crazy. Is there anything for you that you feel proud of most?

I'm probably proudest when somebody tells me a story about their save, and I realize my mod became part of a world they've been building for months or years. Hearing people tell me that I saved them from themselves, depression, grief, and more? I can't explain.



Any stories that your mods made possible that stuck with you?

Honestly? It's hard for me to think. There's so many. I just really love hearing things that they dream about actual being in their game. Like, am I their Fairy Godfather?

How does it feel knowing people are building entire narratives, entire worlds, on systems you built?

Insane. Wild. Humbling. Stressful. Shocking. Every emotion. How did I get invited in so many stories?

Is there a piece of storytelling functionality you still wish existed in the game that you haven't built yet?

I can't actually say, or that'll ruin the surprise!

What comes through most with Hinson, is that it's all about the players. Them actually seeing themselves in the game they love and insuring they can intentionally build a world that reflects theirs. He gets stressed by the scale of it, humbled by it, and occasionally bewildered that so many people's worlds now run on something he built alone. Piece by piece. Sentence by sentence.

But underneath the modesty is a clear confidence and conviction to ensure every click, every post, is intentional, and if the story doesn't actually progress, he isn't interested in building it.

That's the whole philosophy, really. Not features for their own sake. A system generous enough, and honest enough, to hand the story back to the person playing it.

That's the world you're playing in with **JayESims**





DELUXE

WORLDWIDE WOMAN:

Girls Trip





WORLDWIDE WOMAN DELUXE

Girls Trip

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER

STUDIO ATELIER

The Open Back Baby Tee

Grey, \$195 / \$67

Square Denim=Twill Skirt

Navy, \$295 / \$101



STUDIO ATELIER

The Open Back Mini
Black, \$395/\$120

The Stub Pump
Lego Green, \$895/\$325





3 STUDIO VISIT:

IDEAS STUDIO

What happens when a thirty foot gummy bear turns into a business helping others build their ideas?

Our Location & Homes Editor spends an afternoon inside an Redhook Warehouse with Erick Richard of Ideas Studio to see how the studio makes little ideas larger than life.

BY DANI REYES-CHO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOMI SHORT

IDEAS.

BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP

I've been told Carroll Gardens ends somewhere near the expressway, and I'm already homesick for it. I'm in the back of a car with a wrapped basket on my lap and a driver who stopped asking what's in it three blocks ago. Looking out the window, the stoops start to go away. The brownstones give up. The streets get wider and quieter, and past the canal and the shadow of the expressway the cranes at the container terminal rise over the rooftops like something I wasn't supposed to see yet.

This is Red Hook, or the part of it people argue about the name of, and I decide I love it before the car stops.

The car stops, and we pull up to **IDEAStudio**, which was situated in a converted warehouse that didn't look like much from the outside, but I found that to be beautiful. There's no sign or mention of a studio name, so I check the address twice and then a third time, before I find the right door.

Soon, the door opens, and Erick Richard and I do the thing where two strangers decide in about nine seconds whether they're going to like each other. "Come in", Erick says proudly.

I step in and we introduce ourselves. I hand over the basket. Erick unwraps it slowly, looks at it, and looks at me. "You can't be serious."

Uncrustables. A dozen, grape and strawberry, in their little crimped packages. I'd read online that this studio runs on them, and I'd like it noted that I did my homework. Erick says nothing for a moment, takes one, and I know I'm in.

Erick: "You're nuts. How did you know we liked these?"

Dani: Vice! An article from 2019, when you guys were talking to Vice about a burning man statue? A 30ft gummy Bear

Erick: Our first major piece. Whew, vice, RIP.

The two of us laugh briefly before we start the tour.

Before leaving the small welcome area, Erick insisted on showing me the before first, on a phone, with the apologetic energy of someone sharing baby photos. A bare concrete floor with worn wooden ceiling, steel beams, a row of plain dusty domed lamps, a curved sectioned off area in the back that took up an odd amount of space. It looks like a place where things were stored and nothing was ever made.

Erick: When we moved in the space was completely empty. Everything you see is completely built out when we moved in.

He opens the door and leads me into a space completely unrecognizable from before.

A space filled with dozens of odd mixes of large art, pottery, open tables, shelving, paint, and dozen of work spaces littered about with a cool blue glass house sitting in the middle like a little clubhouse.

Dani: Wow, completely different space. You guys have really filled it out.





Lounge

Erick: Let me show you around. I'll take your bag.

Erick grabs my things and takes the uncrustable filled basket and drops them on one of the tables. I look a bit nervous.

Erick: They're good, I promise.

He says like anyone wouldn't even be bothered to look at my things.

He walks me over to the ceramics area. Obvious, because of the large neon sign hanging down from the ceiling obviously revealing the name.

Erick: Ceramics and pottery are a large part of our business and our working process here. A lot of what we make is custom, and custom shapes require custom molds, so it became easier to build out a ceramics department that can handle that, and the other projects that need it too. Every sample gets made here, then we send it out for further production depending on the project, product or partner.

Dani: What are the 'other' projects?

Erick: We sometimes get orders for custom large-scale pottery for set staging, and most recently, home decor for building patios, lobbies, that kind of thing. We've done some great business with a few new buildings in the area.

Dani: Aiding in gentrification? Got it.

Erick laughs.

Erick: Hey, man, a check is a check. I don't think an eight-foot planter is doing any more for gentrification than a plant is.

He pivots quickly and shows me the kiln, which Erick tells me is the largest in Brooklyn: eight feet by fifteen by ten. I don't know how to describe a kiln that size except to say that I stand in front of it the way you stand in front of a very large dog, politely and without sudden movements. I write down "ask about the first firing."

We move down the side of the warehouse to a lacquered glossy white area.

Erick: So, here's our painting room. We've split it all by large and small scale. We can get something as big as a car in here, and also work on something as small as tiles.

Dani: Is painting as common as ceramics for you?

Erick: Externally, no. We don't book jobs for painting objects, but internally it's crucial to our workflow. About eighty-five percent of what we produce is painted in-house, and any sample rendering starts here before production goes external, so it's important we have the space to do what's necessary.

He then walks me to the back of the studio, to a large open staging space. Finished work goes here to be photographed before it leaves, and it's also where the physical space and understanding of a project get worked out. Right now, a large red lacquered rearing horse stands atop a black-and-white checkered plinth.

Erick: We made this three years ago for our partners at Studio Atelier, for their lounge space, The Blue Room. The space they were in before is closed, and they'll be moving to a new one later this year. We've been holding the horse, and we'll make a few duplicates, so we need to match the scale.

Dani: Why a horse?

Erick: Honestly, we wanted something shocking and fun, and who isn't shocked by a horse inside?

He *shrugs* and turns to walk toward the final space in the studio.

In the middle of the floor is a glass-walled room washed in blue, with a red sofa deep enough to lose a weekend in and a screen playing a cartoon with the sound off. It's built in for the people who work here and anyone who visits, which is to say it's for me. We sit on the couch, and he throws an Uncrustable onto my lap.

Erick: Okay, so what questions do you have?

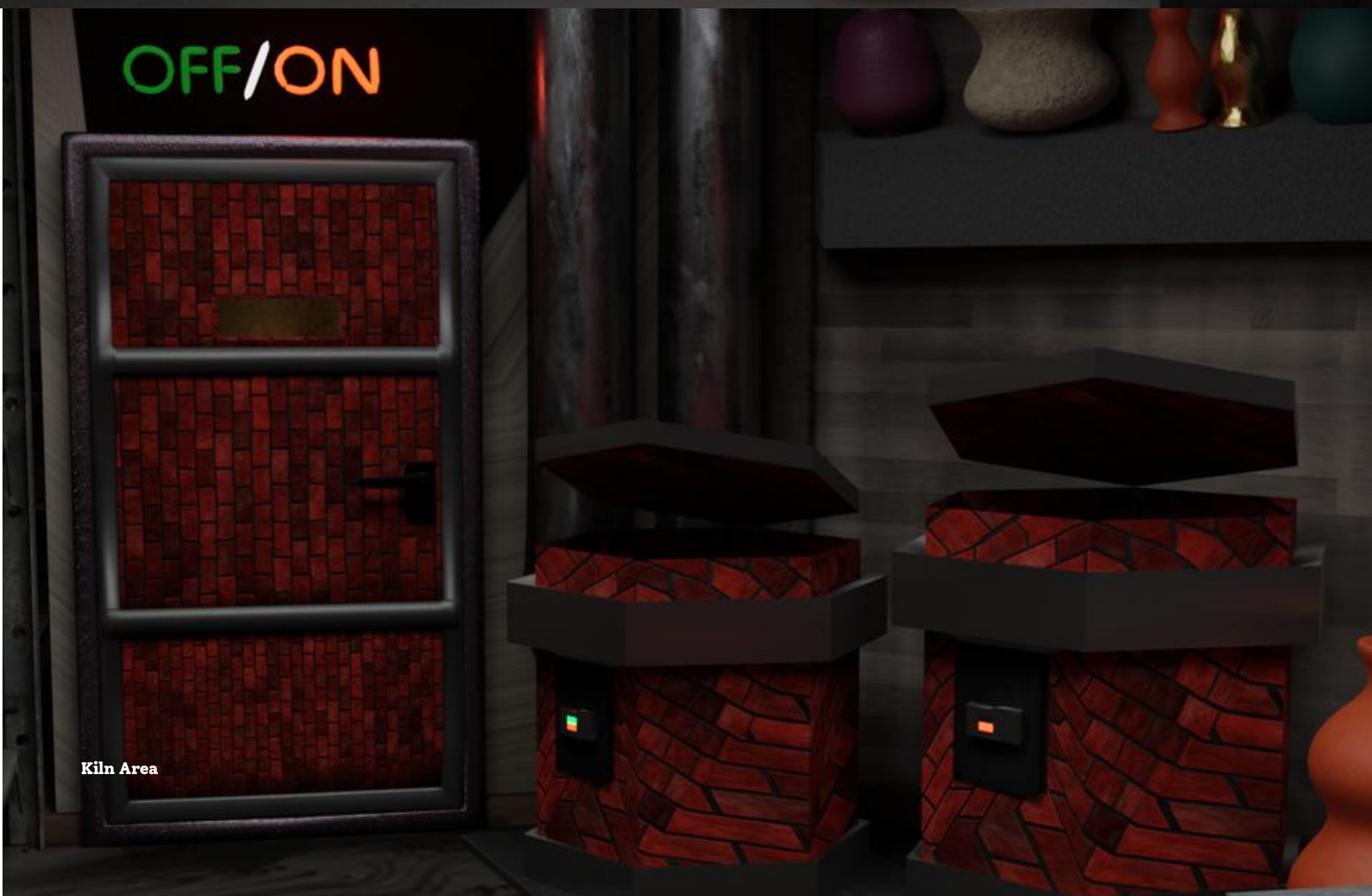
CERAMICS



Ceramics Area

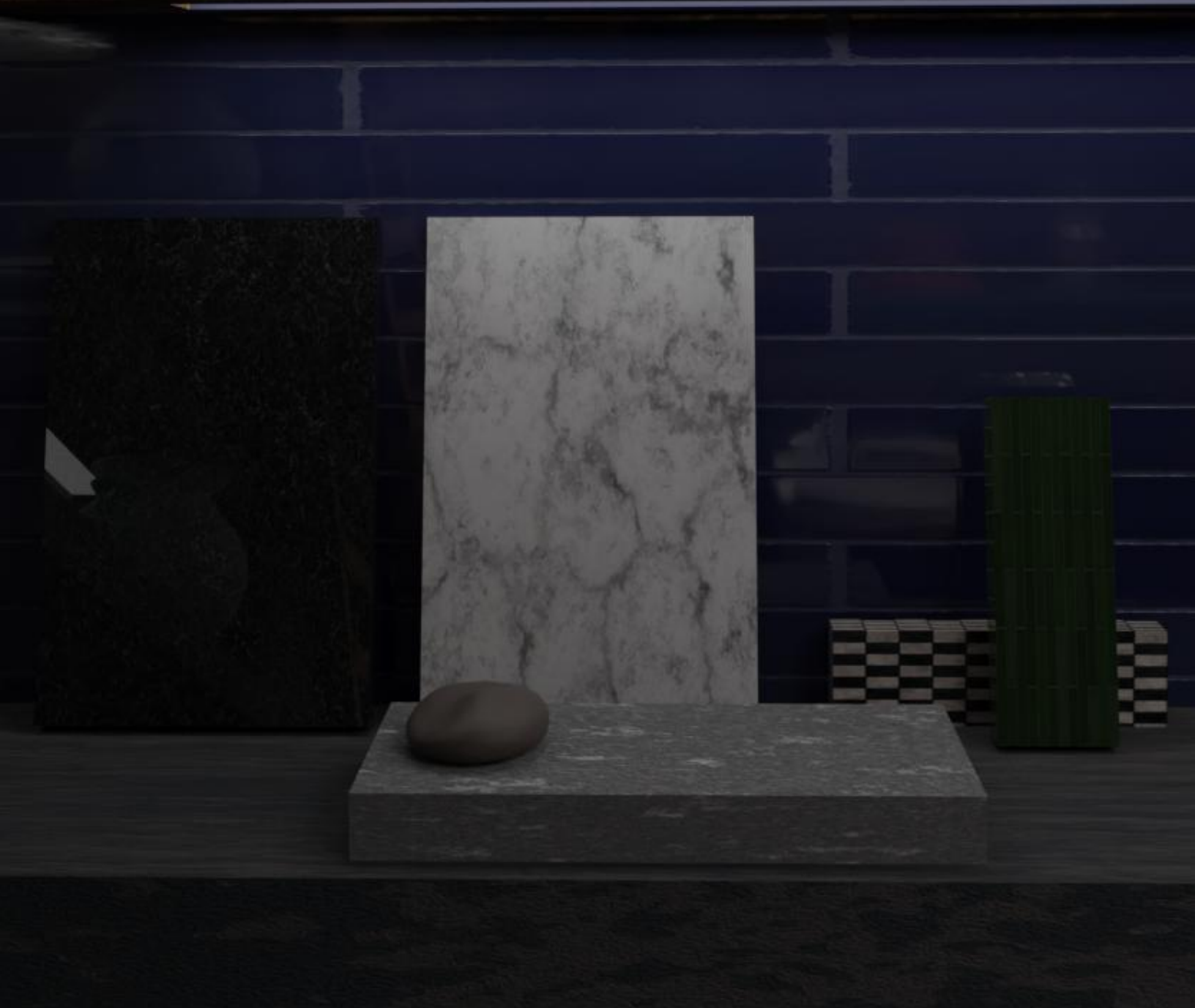


Ceramics Work Table



Kiln Area







Workroom Sink

Before I answer, I take a second to listen. From the couch, the studio has a sound: a radio turned low, a saw that starts and stops somewhere out of sight, the occasional clang of something being set down with care. The air smells of cut cedar and something warm and faintly chemical, like a hardware store at the end of a long day. I've sat in a lot of creative spaces that perform their own busyness. This one just is busy, at a pace that has nothing to do with the rest of Brooklyn, and nobody has looked up at us once, which I take as the highest compliment a working studio can pay a visitor. I feel a little underdressed and very welcome, and I realize I've already lost half my list.

Ideas Studios began in 2018 in a rented bay in a shared industrial building near the Gowanus Canal, with one borrowed table saw and a landlord who didn't ask questions. The early jobs were small and strange: window displays, photo-shoot props for labels that couldn't afford a real prop house, a set of oversized chess pieces for a stylist who paid in cash and lunch. There was never an advertising budget. Work came by word of mouth, from stylists and set designers who passed the name along the way you pass along a good plumber's number. For years the website was a single page with a phone number and a photograph of a staircase that, as far as anyone can tell, no one ever commissioned.

Erick Richard is from Bed-Stuy, and it shows in the way he talks about any neighborhood: precisely, and with a long memory. He didn't come up through design school. At nineteen he took a job at a boatyard in Sheepshead Bay, two trains and a bus before sunrise, sanding hulls and learning how wood, fiberglass and metal behave when they're asked to hold weight and keep out water. Set shops and fabrication gigs followed, then a long freelance stretch building other people's visions in other people's basements. He's quiet while he works and generous when he stops, and he remembers how everyone in the building takes their coffee. He doesn't hurry a sentence, and he'll tell you when he's wrong.

What follows is our conversation, edited for length and nothing else.



Dani: If someone asks what Ideas Studios is at a party, what do you say?

Erick: That we build big things for people who have ideas and no idea how to make them. Metal, wood, cast fiber, plastics, clay, whatever it takes. Usually they nod and ask where the bathroom is.

Dani: How does a thirty-foot gummy bear turn into a business?

Erick: Badly, then slowly. Burning Man taught us you can't ship a mistake, so everything starts as a handmade model. Make the small version, make it wrong, then make the big one. That's the whole company, really.

Dani: Why Ideas? It's a big name to put on a door.

Erick: Nobody walks in with a plan. They walk in with an idea and a napkin. The name was a placeholder, and then it was on the lease.

Dani: Did you plan a space this size, or did it happen room by room?

Erick: Room by room. The long tables came first, because you can't make anything without somewhere to put it. Everything else grew toward the tables.

Dani: You have a co-owner who also runs another studio. How did that happen?

Erick: Stacy came in as a partner first. Atelier does the rooms, we do what goes in them, and we kept ending up on each other's jobs. When we outgrew our old place, Stacy invested, and that's how we got this building. So when I say nobody stopped me about the kiln, Stacy is part of why.

Dani: How many of you are there?

Erick: Four at the core, that work on most of the projects. Then we have about 7 or 8 rotating freelance artists that we bring in for certain projects.

Dani: Whose idea was the kiln? What happened at the first firing?

Erick: Mine, and I'd like it noted that nobody stopped me. First night, we fired a full load of planters, which is not what you're supposed to do. About half survived. We stood there at three in the morning and clapped for the half.

Dani: What's the hardest thing about building from an empty warehouse that nobody sees in the photos?

Erick: The gas, the power and the ventilation. Eighty percent of a build-out is stuff you'll never photograph. The pretty part is the last twenty.

Dani: Eighty-five percent of what you make gets painted in-house, but you don't sell painting. Why keep it internal?

Erick: Because it's where we find out if we're right. Whatever we build, steel, wood, fiber, plastic, it doesn't look right until it's painted. Painting is where the lies come out.

Dani: What do you say no to?

Erick: Anything where the deadline doesn't respect curing time. Clay, resin, paint, none of them care about your calendar. We once turned down forty identical pieces in a week, and I still hear about it.

Dani: When a fashion or lifestyle brand walks in, what do they ask for, and what do they actually need?

Erick: They ask for a thing. What they need is someone to tell them what the thing is. Half the job is a conversation, and then a handmade model on the table, because nobody understands a render until they can touch something.

Dani: I joked earlier about gentrification, so let me ask it properly. What's your relationship to the new buildings you make lobby pieces for?

Erick: *(He doesn't laugh this time.)* It's a fair question, and I don't have a clean answer. We're a warehouse studio in a neighborhood that's changing, and some of the people buying our work are part of why. We've turned down a lobby job because the brief wanted a costume of the neighborhood. I hire from the block, and local makers can book shop time here. That doesn't fix it. It's what I can do.

Dani: How do you keep a custom piece feeling handmade when it's eight feet tall and there are five of them?

Erick: Everything starts as a handmade model made by one person, not a drawing. We scale up from the model, whatever the material, so the hand stays in it. If it doesn't have a thumbprint somewhere, we made it wrong.

Dani: The horse can't be the only huge thing you've built. What else have you made at that scale?

Erick: Honestly? Parties. We've built out every SSTUDIO event, and the Boyland x Studio Atelier nights too. Walls, bars, stages, the entrance you walk through before you've decided whether you like the place. Rooms that exist for one night and have to look like they've always been there. And the flowers. You've seen the big ones in various events and shoots, the oversized blooms. Every one started as a small model on a table here, then we cast the petals in fiber and paint them until they stop looking like plastic. Then there's the brand work. A fragrance house wanted a bottle you could walk into. A streetwear label wanted its logo as a doorway. A hotel group wanted a lobby chandelier that wasn't a chandelier. I can't name most of them, and the ones I can, I'd rather not. The horse just gets the attention because it's red.

Dani: What's your favorite thing you've ever made?

Erick: It's a step stool I made at the boatyard when I was nineteen, out of oak offcuts from a hull repair that were headed for the dumpster. Nobody asked me to. It's crooked by about a quarter inch and I've never fixed it. I've built things taller than this room, and it's the only one I've never wanted to change.

Dani: Is it here?

Erick: Under my desk. Please don't go look at it.

Dani: What did you get wrong early on?

Erick: We priced the gummy bear like a favor. Never again.

Dani: Why Red Hook?

Erick: Loading doors, high ceilings, and neighbors who don't mind a kiln. And nobody here asks what you do for a living first. Great coffee and food.

Dani: What's the project you'd do tomorrow if someone wrote the check?

Erick: A building. Not a room inside someone else's, not a party that lasts one night. A pavilion, forty feet tall, with a steel frame, a cast fiber skin, a real roof, a real door and a staircase that goes somewhere. It would stand in a park for a summer, and you'd walk around it before you walked in. We've done rooms, we've done parties, we've done pieces that sit in lobbies. I want something with weather. And I already have the model. It's about this big. (*He holds his hands a foot apart.*) It's in a drawer.

Dani: Where is Ideas Studios in a year?

Erick: Fewer jobs, bigger ones. And finished horses. I keep saying that.

Dani: Last one. What's the one thing in this building I shouldn't leave without looking at?

Erick: The back corner of the painting room. There's a wall of failed samples, years of them: glazed tiles, bad castings, bent steel. Take a picture. Don't steal one.

I write "*steal one*" at the top of my list.

I stay longer than planned, which Erick pretends not to notice. On the way out he hands back the basket, empty except for something small wrapped in newspaper at the bottom. I don't open it until the car has turned off the block. A failed glaze tile no bigger than a coaster, mottled gray-green, the glaze gone wrong in exactly the right way. Not stolen, I tell myself. Given.

Behind us the cranes go on lifting things nobody will ever photograph. The tile goes at the top of my list anyway, under a new heading: given.







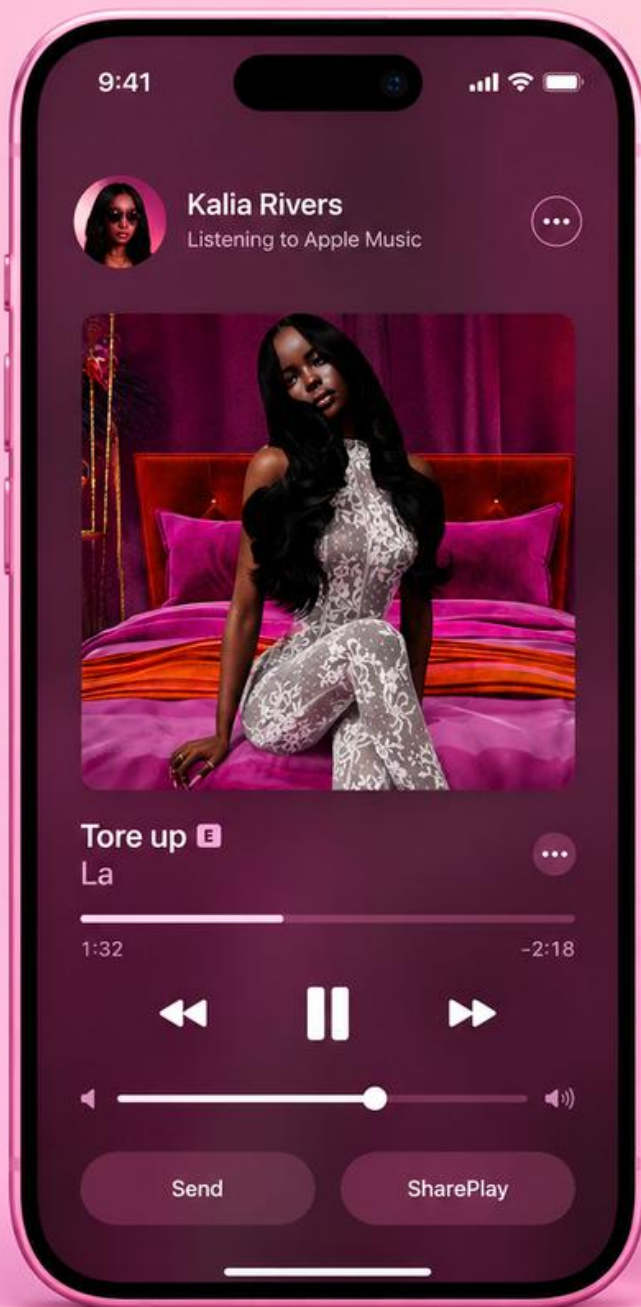
LOUIS VUITTON



**"LONG NAILS. SHORT TEXTS.
ZERO TYPOS"**

Kalia Rivers, La





TYPE EASIER.

lphone 18 Pro MAX

EDITORIAL

LIMIN

New name. New chapter. S

Zuri Jones Toussaint arrives for SST's inaugural issue already in motion; marriage becoming.

We meet her in the space between voices, a space reflecting where she's been for

MINIMAL

ame wonder.

UDIO Magazine's
ried, building, still

w and vision. In a
the last year.

BY IRIS ALLON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC SACE

IS THIS A NEW ERA?

Interview by Iris Allon

"Some people announce a comeback. Zuri Jones Toussaint simply stopped explaining her absence and let the work speak for itself once it was ready. This is what she was building in the meantime, and what it actually looks like when someone finally stops narrating her own life and just lives it."

I am fifteen minutes late, which in Los Angeles, at this particular hour, is essentially early. The hostess walks me through a lobby that's doing a very convincing impression of old Hollywood. Brass everywhere, a piano nobody has the nerve to play, and the kind of hush that costs extra. We walk out onto a patio drenched in that specific LA light that manages to be both punishing and extremely flattering, a trick I have never once managed with lighting at home. I spot her immediately: Zuri Jones Toussaint. No entourage, no fuss, and her sunglasses pushed up into her hair as though she'd genuinely forgotten they were there. She has already ordered tea, and was sipping her tea cup gently before she sees me.

She stands to greet me, and I notice that she is entirely, almost unfairly, at ease. Not the practiced ease of someone performing serenity for a stranger with a notebook, but the real thing, the kind that makes you sit up a little straighter yourself just to keep pace. There is a directness to how she holds your eye, and a warmth to her that doesn't ask anything of you. Something I've found, extremely rare among people whose faces are their livelihood. Most people this photographed have learned tricks to not really look at you, but make you feel heard. Looking past the ears, sunglasses. Toussaint looks straight at you, amused, like she already knows how this is going to go and finds it faintly delightful. "Hi!", she says in an excitedly warm tone pulling me in for a hug, "it's so nice to meet you!". We sit down and she starts pouring me tea. "I can't wait to talk and see what questions you have for me. It's been a minute."

If this is what people mean when they say someone has "taken time off," I would like whatever she has been taking and doing. She seems sharper, and more herself. There's a confidence to her that reads less like armor and more like comfort. That specific, hard-won kind that comes from having spent an extended period of time answering to absolutely no one but herself. It is, frankly, extremely alluring, and I say this as someone whose job requires a professional immunity to that sort of thing.

"I got very good at doing nothing on purpose," she tells me, stirring her tea with a bit of unhurried confidence. "Which is different, by the way, from doing nothing because you're avoiding something." She says as she laughs, without fishing for a reaction. Settled, amused, entirely without the need to convince you of anything. It is the least defensive I have ever seen a very famous, very newly married woman discuss her own life. We are here, ostensibly, to discuss a wedding and a year off. Within about four minutes flat, we are discussing absolutely everything else instead, and I get the distinct sense she planned it that way.

THE SPACE BETWEEN

There is a particular kind of quiet that comes after a big decision and change, not exactly stillness, but a held breath before the next thing begins. Toussaint has been living inside that quiet for a year now. Not resting in it, but working in it. Somewhere between the wedding and whatever comes after, she has been quietly assembling the next version of herself, one decision at a time, in the way people do when they've stopped needing an audience for it.

"Was there anything that prompted your time off? Was the wedding too much? It was an entire week," I ask.

Zuri laughs a real laugh, not the practiced kind. "No, the wedding was actually perfect. We spent a year planning everything for that week, and we had a team of planners and a newly assembled business team behind it, so that part was actually super simple for me. It was just time. After a few years breaking into this industry, mainstream success on *The Bachelorette*, everything after that, and then a marriage, it felt like the perfect time to pause. Everything felt in place."

It's a very tidy answer, delivered without a trace of the defensiveness people usually bring to the word "pause." I ask what "everything felt in place" actually means to her and whether that's a feeling she trusts easily, or one she had to talk herself into.



"I don't think I've ever trusted it easily," she says while turning her teacup slightly on its saucer. "I'm someone who's always been three steps ahead of myself. Planning the next thing before I've even sat with the current one. This was maybe the first time in my adult life I looked around and thought, actually I don't need to be doing the next thing right now. I can just be here." She says "just be here" like it's a slightly embarrassing admission.. "Which is new for me. I used to think stillness meant falling behind. Rest was wasteful"

"And now?" I ask.

"Now I think stillness was actually where all the good ideas were hiding." She smiles at this, pleased with it. "I was so busy being available before. To the industry, to my schedule, to what came next, that I never gave myself a real chance to just sit with a thought and see if it was actually mine or if it just belonged to whatever was happening around me at the time."





I ask what she means by that, a thought that's "actually hers."

She takes a moment with this one. "When you're moving as fast as I was for those few years, you stop being able to tell the difference between what you want and what's just... next. The next opportunity, the next project, the next version of yourself that makes sense for where you are publicly and in your career. I got very good at saying yes quickly. I don't think I was always asking myself what I actually wanted before I said it." She shrugs, unbothered by her own honesty. "I don't think I made any decisions I regretted or was unhappy with, but this year was the first time in a long time I let a thought just sit there without immediately turning it into a plan."



“Was that uncomfortable?”

"Excruciating," she says, and laughs again, delighted by her own dramatics. "I'm someone who likes momentum. Stopping felt, at first, like I was doing something wrong. Like I'd left the stove on somewhere and couldn't remember where." She pauses. "But it got easier. And then it got... I don't want to say it's addictive, but close to that. I understood why people protect their peace so aggressively once they've actually had it."

I ask if the constant momentum goes back further than the last few years. Whether it traces back to her life before entertainment, when she was practicing law.

"Oh, completely," she says, sitting up slightly, like this is a version of the question she's been waiting for someone to ask. "People forget that about me, or they never knew it in the first place. I was an entertainment lawyer before any of this. And that world does not reward stillness. Every day was the next contract, the next negotiation, the next fire that needed putting out for someone else. I was excellent at it because I never stopped moving. That was the job." She laughs. "I just didn't realize I'd carried that pace with me into an entirely different career."

"Do you still practice?"

"Not in the traditional sense, no," she says. "But I didn't leave it behind completely. I actually have a small firm now. It's an extension of my husband's studio, technically, but it's very much its own thing. We oversee contracts and contract negotiations specifically for Black talent coming up in the industry." She says this plainly, without the performative modesty people sometimes reach for around their own philanthropy-adjacent projects. "It felt important to me that the skill set didn't just disappear because I stepped in front of the camera instead of staying behind a desk. I know exactly what it looks like when young talent, especially Black talent, signs something they don't fully understand because nobody explained it to them properly, or worse, nobody wanted to. I'm in a position now where I can make sure that happens less."

I ask if this work feels different to her than the pace-driven version of law she left behind.

"Completely different," she says. "That version of law was reactive, and I was always responding to someone else's timeline. This is the opposite. I get to build something on my own terms, slowly, with people I actually believe in. It's the first time practicing law has felt like my choice instead of the next logical step."

"What does rest actually mean to you now, after a year of consciously practicing it?", I asked. She thinks about this one for a while, longer than any question so far, and turning her teacup slowly before answering. "I think I used to believe rest was the absence of something. Like, rest was just what was left over once you'd stopped working. A gap. Something you fell into when you ran out of things to do." She shakes her head slightly. "It's not that at all. Rest is actually really active, if you're doing it right. It's a decision you keep making, over and over, to not fill the space. That's harder than it sounds, especially for someone like me."

"What does doing it right look like for you, practically?"

"Honestly? Boring things," she says, laughing. "Sitting in my garden doing genuinely nothing. Reading a book slowly instead of rushing to finish it so I could talk about having finished it. Not checking my phone first thing. Cooking a meal just for myself and my husband instead of hosting a large dinner or running out to a gala." She pauses. "I think rest, for me now, means actually inhabiting the life I've built instead of just running toward the next thing on top of it," she says. "I've spent years building something beautiful and I don't think I ever really stopped to live inside any of it. I was always constructing the next room before I'd even furnished the one I was standing in." She pauses. "This year was the first time I actually sat down in the house, so to speak. Rest isn't really about disappearing for me. It's about finally being present for something I already have."

I ask if that's harder to maintain now that she's stepping back into the public eye. This interview being, in some sense, evidence of exactly that. She considers this unbothered. "I don't think so, actually. Because it was never about being seen or not being seen. That was never really my thing to begin with. It's about whether I'm actually here, mentally, for my own life. I can do this interview and still be resting, in the way that matters to me. I know that now. I didn't always."

IN TRANSITION

We finish the tea, and several rounds of gossip I have been sworn, quite seriously, not to repeat, before she glances at the time on a phone she has mostly ignored for the better part of two hours. "Should we keep going somewhere else?" she asks, already standing and gathering her things, as though the question is a formality and the answer was decided before she asked it.

I notice, properly, what she's wearing only once she's on her feet. A fitted hot pink tank top, and a fitted white leather mini skirt with a pair of sandals that seem to have wandered off a runway rather than out of a closet: one heel in teal, one in a citrus green, each fastened with an oversized fabric flower at the toe that has no business working as well as it does. It is the kind of styling choice that reads, on paper, like chaos, and in person like someone who has simply stopped asking permission from her own closet. She catches me looking. "They don't match on purpose," she says, before I can ask. "Everyone assumes it's a mistake. It's the only part of getting dressed today that took any real thought."







A black SUV is already idling at the curb by the time we reach the entrance. No visible driver instruction required, no fumbling with an app, the particular choreography of a car that has clearly been waiting exactly as long as it needed to and not a second longer. Toussaint slides in first, tucking her leather mini skirt beneath her with the unbothered efficiency of someone who has gotten in and out of the backs of cars for a living. "There's somewhere I want to show you," she says, by way of explanation, offering nothing further. I get in anyway.

The car pulls away smoothly, and I mention, half to make conversation, half because I mean it, how effortless that whole exit was. The car waiting, the lack of any visible orchestration, the sense that the world simply rearranges itself slightly whenever she needs it to.

She laughs, but there's something a little rueful underneath it. "That part is still strange to me, honestly," she says, watching the hotel disappear behind us through the window. "I built a career where I was scrappy about everything. Chasing meetings, doing my own research, fighting for every inch of the way, and now there's just... a car. It's always just there." She turns back to face me. "I don't think I'll ever stop noticing it, if I'm honest. I don't want to stop noticing it."

I ask if that's new because of the marriage specifically. As she is now married into a family that doesn't really have to notice cars waiting for them, a family whose name has been attached to this industry since before there was much of an industry to speak of.

She considers this for a moment, unhurried. "It's a different kind of Hollywood than the one I came up in," she says carefully. "I earned my way into rooms one deal at a time. Julian's family — they built some of the rooms. There's a difference between climbing into an industry and being handed a blueprint of one that's already got your name half-written into the walls." She says this without bitterness, more like she's still working out the geometry of it in real time. "It's not lost on me what I married into. Generations of it. People who were opening doors for Black artists in this town back when there weren't supposed to be any doors at all."

"Does that legacy feels like pressure, or something closer to inheritance?"

"Both, some days," she admits. "But mostly it just makes me want to be careful with it. You don't marry into something like that and treat it casually." A small smile. "Ask me again in five years." I ask what else she's actually been doing this year, beyond the deliberate not-doing and whether there's been anything unexpectedly ordinary in the mix.

She laughs, delighted by the question, like she's been waiting for someone to ask something small instead of something existential. "Okay, this is going to sound very unserious after everything we just talked about, but I adopted a cat this year. A British Shorthair. His name is Marbles." She says his name the way people say the names of children they're slightly too proud of. "That cat has genuinely restructured my entire schedule. I used to think I was busy before. Now I have a creature who needs a very specific breakfast at a very specific time, and somehow that has been more grounding than any wellness routine I've ever paid actual money for."

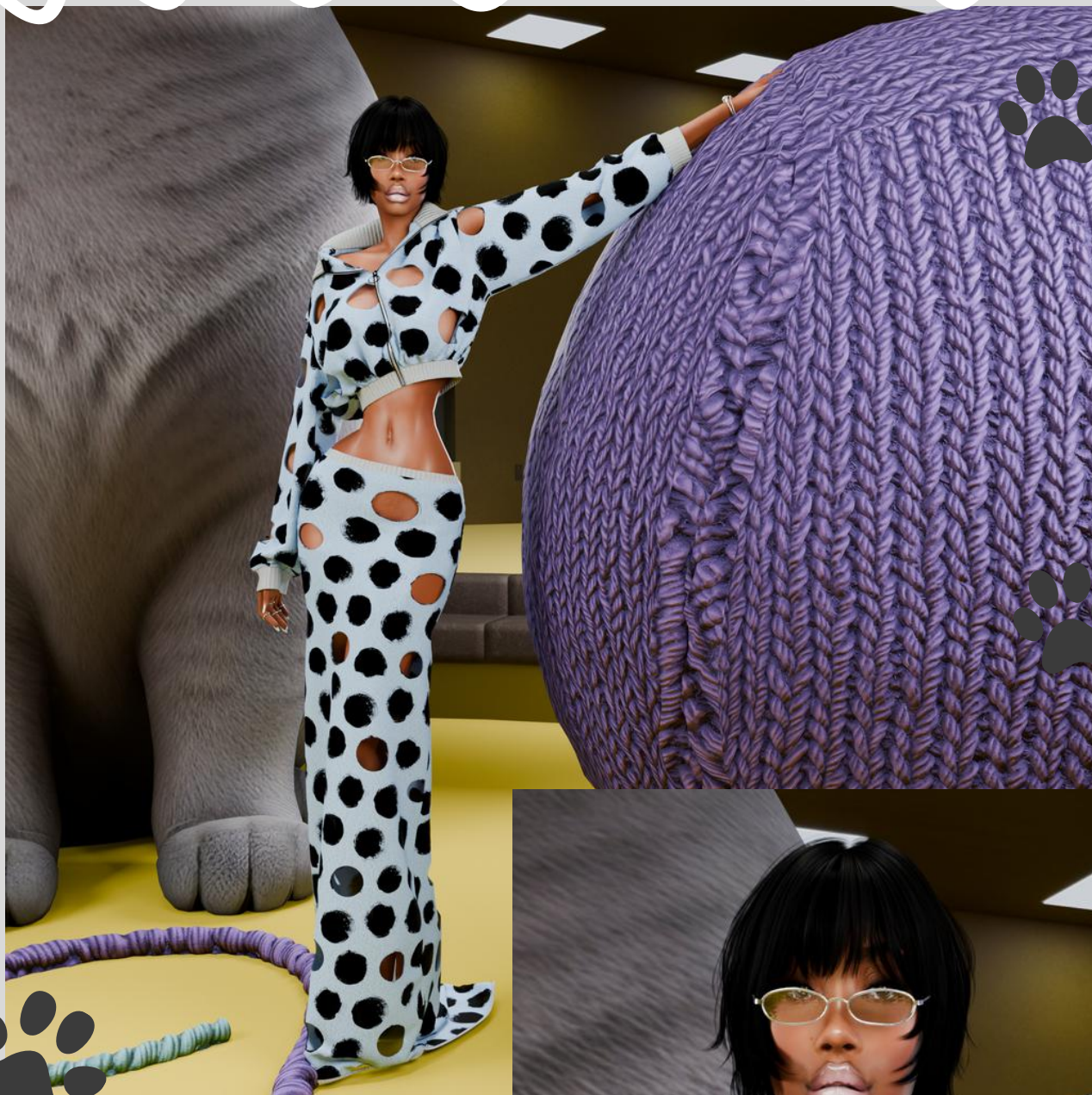
"Why Marbles?"

"He's enormous," she says. "Not fat, but built like a very small, extremely opinionated boulder. The vet actually warned me he'd get big for the breed, and I just thought, well, that's a marble statue of a cat, isn't it. It stuck before I even brought him home." She pulls out her phone, unprompted, to show me a photo of Marbles sprawled dramatically across what looks like an entire sofa cushion by himself, staring at the camera with an expression of total, undisguised contempt. "He does not do anything quickly. He does not apologize for it. I've started to think of him as something of a role model, honestly."

I ask if he's settled in well, given how much travel and change the year has held for her. "Better than I have, some days," she says, laughing again. "He's got this way of just... occupying a room. Fully. No urgency, no performance. I'll walk in stressed about something and he'll just be lying there, completely unbothered, and it resets something in me every single time." She tucks the phone away. "Julian thinks I'm insane about him. I probably am."

"I can't help but notice the glee in your voice when you talk about Marbles. Does that same domestic instinct extend to actual kids? You've been with Julian four years, married now, is that on the horizon?"

She laughs, but it's an easy laugh, not a guarded one. "I was wondering how long we'd go before someone asked me that," she says, shaking her head slightly. "Look, I'm not going to pretend the question offends me. It's a normal thing to wonder. But I will say, the cat was a very deliberate practice round." A small, knowing smile. "I wanted to see if I could actually take care of something else's needs before my own, consistently, without resenting it. Turns out I can. That was useful information."



"So is that a yes?"

"It means we're not in a hurry," she says, choosing the words carefully now, the first real caution I've seen from her all afternoon. "Julian and I talk about it. It's something we both want, eventually. But I just spent a year learning how to actually be present in my own life instead of just performing forward motion through it, and I don't think I want to rush into the next big thing just because it's the expected next thing." She looks out the window for a second, then back at me. "When it happens, I want it to be because we're ready, not because we hit some invisible timeline everyone else has already decided on for us."

It's a diplomatic answer, delivered with total ease. The kind of non-answer that somehow still tells you everything you need to know.



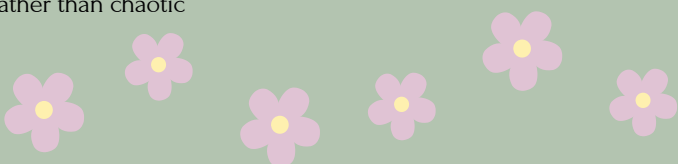




BLOOMING

The car slows and pulls up outside a shopfront that announces itself in a way the hotel never did. A riot of color visible through the glass before we've even stopped moving, hanging blooms crowding the window like the building itself is in full bloom. "We're stopping here," Zuri says, already reaching for the door handle. "Five minutes. I promise I'm not kidnapping you."

Inside, it's less a plant shop than a small, extremely confident world. Vaulted ceilings painted a deep, glossy green, paper lantern light fixtures glowing amber overhead, oversized decorative florals in jewel tones flanking a curved counter like something out of a fever dream that happens to also sell orchids. Every surface is deliberately, expensively too much. Hand-painted ceramics, an eclectic sprawl of exotic greenery that somehow reads as curated rather than chaotic









Zuri moves through the shop like she's been here a hundred times, which, it turns out, she has. "This is the one place in this entire city where nobody wants anything from me," she says, trailing a finger along a shelf of hand-thrown pots without really looking at them. "I used to come here on Sunday mornings before any of this", she makes a vague gesture that seems to encompass the car outside, the interview, possibly her entire public life, "and just stand around for an hour. No phone. Nobody recognizing me. Just plants and a very judgmental shop cat."

"Rediscovered, honestly," she says, crouching to inspect something with small, improbably purple leaves under an arch dripping with orchids. "I used to think of this as a reward. Like, I've earned an hour of quiet, I've done enough today. This year I started coming just because. No earning required." She straightens up, empty-handed, apparently satisfied simply to have looked. "I don't even always buy anything. Sometimes I just need to be somewhere this beautiful that isn't asking anything of me in return."

It's also, she tells me, where most of her actual garden has come from. A fact she offers up almost shyly, like it's the least public-facing thing about her entire year. "I built a garden. My own, at the house. That was never something I saw coming." She says this like she still finds it slightly funny about herself. "I killed every plant I ever owned before this year. Genuinely, a real track record of failure. And then I just tried again one day. Badly, at first."









She gestures loosely at the shop around us. "This place basically raised me through it. I'd come in with a photo of some sad, dying thing and just ask what I'd done wrong." Now, she says, entire mornings disappear into it without her noticing. "It's the most unglamorous thing I do, and it might be the thing I'm proudest of this year. I made something that just grows because I take care of it. There's nothing complicated about that, and I think that's exactly why I needed it."

She catches the shopkeeper's eye across the room, gets a nod of easy recognition rather than the attention I half expect her to draw, and steers us back toward the door. She then turns the questions back on me before I can ask my next one. "Do you have a favorite flower?" she asks, genuinely curious, like this matters more to her than most things we've discussed all afternoon.

I admit I've never really thought about it before. Probably the worst kind of admission in a room this deliberate about beauty. She looks almost delighted by my answer rather than unimpressed by it. "You should think about it," she says. "It tells you more about a person than people expect." Hers, it turns out, is the ranunculus. "because it looks like it's trying way too hard to be a rose and just isn't, and I love that about it. It's not pretending. It's just fully, extravagantly itself." She says this the way she's said most things today, like it's not really about flowers at all.





Before we leave, the shopkeeper appears from somewhere in the back carrying an enormous, elaborately wrapped bouquet that was clearly finished only minutes ago with the paper still crisp. Wrapped was a wild, deliberate tangle of blooms in colors that have no business working together and somehow do anyway. "For you," the shopkeeper says, handing it not to Zuri but to me. I must look as caught off guard as I feel, because Zuri laughs. "I called ahead," she admits, watching my face. "I wanted you to have something ridiculous to take home. I refuse to let anyone leave a conversation with me holding nothing."

I try, weakly, to protest and she waves it off entirely. "Absolutely not. You're not writing this from some sterile press kit mentality. You're going to remember today. That's the whole point."

"Okay," she says, already turning for the door. "Now I actually will kidnap you. There's somewhere I want you to see."



IN MOTION

We get back into the car, bouquet propped carefully in the seat between us, still trailing loose petals onto the leather, and the drive shifts almost immediately. The boulevard giving way to the particular hush of streets that get quieter the further up they climb. "This next part isn't really a secret but it is the next step forward and not many people know," Zuri says, watching the city drop away behind us through the window. "I don't even like calling it a company. It confuses people, but it's a machine of sorts."

What she means, she explains, is Chess. The umbrella entity she and Julian built together, quietly, in the year before the wedding, long before anyone outside their circle knew a partnership was forming at all. "Chess handles the actual architecture of everything we're building," she says. "Investment, equity, the real bones of it. People saw the wedding special and assumed that was the story. The story was already well underway by the time cameras showed up." Beneath Chess sits Lapiz, which she describes almost fondly as "the part that translates all of it into something the public can actually see" — partnerships, editorial, the pieces of their world that get photographed. Then there's Terrace, their hospitality arm, currently in the middle of a years-long transformation of Hearst Castle into something closer to a living retreat than a museum piece. And, almost as an aside, a minority stake in a spirits company "Julian's contribution, mostly. I stay out of the liquor," she says, laughing.

I mention the wedding, which is almost impossible not to, given that half the internet is still dissecting footage from The Vow months later. I ask about the part that seemed to surprise even seasoned industry watchers: that the transformation of Hearst Castle for the wedding weekend didn't get dismantled once the guests left.

Zuri's whole posture shifts slightly, more animated than she's been all afternoon. "That's actually the part I'm proudest of, if I'm honest," she says. "Everyone treats a wedding like a single weekend you spend a fortune on and then it's gone. We built something we had no intention of tearing down." All the structures: bungalows, event spaces, the wellness terraces, were designed from the start by Tenfold Projects to be semi-permanent, she explains, not disposable installations. "We knew going in this wasn't just going to be a party. It was going to be the first real asset under something we were building together."

That something, it turns out, has a name: Chess, a private investment initiative she describes as "seeded by the marriage itself," focused on cultural restoration, hospitality, media infrastructure for underrepresented voices, and design-led product ventures. Hearst Castle is its first holding. "The bungalows are still standing," she says. "Over sixty of them now, refined since the wedding. Solar, rainwater systems, and scent diffusion throughout. What was the reception hall is now what we call the Assembly House, an event and concept salon. We're already talking about using it for designer residencies, maybe an activation space for Julian's film projects, maybe for my own clients."

I ask what it becomes, long-term and whether this is a one-time transformation or an ongoing operation.

"A seasonal cultural resort," she says. "Invite-only, twice a year. Private off-sites, residencies, press junkets eventually. Villa rentals for creatives we believe in." She says this with the specific, unhurried confidence of someone reciting a plan she's already fully built in her head, long before it becomes public. "People got a wedding special. What they didn't realize is they were watching the groundwork for something that's going to outlast the marriage itself. Not because the marriage won't last, but because that's just not the point of it. The point was always to build something real."

I can't resist pointing out the obvious tension here. "This doesn't sound like a woman who spent the year resting."

She laughs, unbothered, clearly having heard some version of this observation before. "I know how it sounds," she admits. "But almost none of what we just talked about happened this year. Chess, Tou, the whole architecture of it, that was two years of work before anyone ever saw a single frame of that wedding. One year building it quietly before the wedding even happened, and another year after, letting it actually take shape once the noise died down." She pauses, choosing her next words carefully. "The rest wasn't about stepping away from any of that. It was about not adding anything new on top of it. There's a difference between building something and constantly generating something new to prove you're still relevant. I was done with the second one."

I ask if that distinction is hard for people to understand from the outside. Rest that isn't actually *ONLY* stillness, just the absence of noise.

"Completely," she says. "People see a quiet year and assume nothing happened. Meanwhile the foundation was already poured. I just wasn't out there announcing every brick." She glances toward the bouquet still resting on the seat beside her, then back at me. "I think that's actually the whole difference in how I want to live now. The work doesn't stop. But I don't need to be visibly working for it to be real."







ARRIVING & AWAKE

We pull up to a gate that opens without anyone visibly buzzing it, easing onto a smooth paved drive that curves through overgrown hedges toward a low, ivy-softened structure. The kind of house, from a distance, that looks built to disappear rather than announce itself. Nothing about it says "office." No sign, no name etched into anything, nothing that would give away the fact that decisions worth nine figures happen somewhere inside it.

Zuri gathers the bouquet as the car slows to a stop, glancing at the building with an expression I can't quite place; pride, maybe, or something close to satisfaction at simply arriving. "We bought this place separately, actually. it's not the house we live in," she says, already reaching for the door handle. "It was another old property up here, and we converted it specifically to be this. Somewhere clients could actually come to, somewhere that felt private and a little residential, but still completely its own thing from home." She steps out, heels landing easily on the even stone, waiting for me. "Come on. I want you to see it before the day gets away from us."

We step inside, and the house reveals itself as something much larger, and much less residential than the ivy-covered exterior suggested. High, industrial ceilings crossed with exposed steel beams, walls of white-painted brick climbing two stories toward a mezzanine level, sunlight pouring in through a wall of factory-style windows. It should feel cold, given the bones of it, but it doesn't. Every surface has been layered with color and life instead: an enormous abstract canvas in citrus orange and cobalt anchoring one wall, a mid-century leather chair in burnt orange pulled up against a kilim rug so busy it borders on chaotic, plants climbing toward the skylights from oversized ceramic pots in colors that shouldn't work together and somehow do.

"Nothing in here is precious on purpose," Zuri says, setting the bouquet down on a long communal table that looks more suited to a dinner party than a staff meeting. "I didn't want people walking on eggshells around expensive furniture. I wanted a place where ideas actually get made. Messy, loud, a little too much color, exactly like the way I actually think. Half of what's on these walls is art from friends. People we're actually building with. I didn't want to hire a decorator and have this look like everyone else's idea of tasteful."

We pass a glass-walled conference room, curtained in soft ivory drapery, a rounded terrazzo table inside surrounded by chairs the exact red of the ductwork overhead — clearly a deliberate echo rather than a coincidence. "That's where most of the actual deals happen," she says, almost offhand. "I like that it doesn't look like a boardroom. People say things differently in a room that doesn't feel like it's testing them."

I ask if this was always the vision, or something that evolved as the business itself did.

"It evolved, honestly, the same way I did this year," she says, glancing up at the light pouring through the windows above us. "I used to think professional meant sterile. Somewhere along the way I realized the work is better when the space actually feels like us."

Zuri leads me past the conference room and through a set of tall glass doors I hadn't noticed, out onto a balcony that opens up over the hillside below — a sudden hush after the color and noise of the room we just left, just the sound of the city somewhere far beneath us and a breeze moving through the plants lining the railing. "This is where I actually get anything done," she says, settling into a low chair and gesturing for me to take the one across from her. "Everyone thinks the big open room is the heart of the place. It's not. It's out here."

A moment later, someone appears with a tray of small bowls of fruit cut with more care than fruit usually gets, and two glasses of something freshly pressed, a deep, saturated color somewhere between beet and pomegranate. Zuri thanks him by name without looking up, already reaching for a glass. "We do this every afternoon," she says, offering me the other. "It's ridiculous, I know. But it's the one hour of the day that's non-negotiable for me now."

I ask if that's new too, another piece of the same instinct she's been describing all day.

"Completely new," she says, turning her glass slightly in the light. "I used to eat lunch at my desk for years. Actual years. I thought that was just what ambition looked like." She takes a sip, considering. "Now I think ambition looks like this too. Sitting somewhere beautiful, actually tasting your food, talking to someone without one eye on a screen. I don't think I fully believed that a year ago. I do now."

I ask her directly, "You seem to have it all. The home, the career, the life, the love, and now the peace. I wonder if there's anything else."

She's quiet for a moment, longer than she's paused for anything else all day, turning her glass slowly in the light before she answers. "That's a generous way to put it," she says finally. "And I don't want to be precious about it, because I know how it sounds to say 'yes, actually, there's more I want' when you've just listed everything most people spend their whole lives chasing." She looks out over the hillside again. "But yes. There's more."

I wait, and she takes her time getting there.

"I think I want to build something that outlasts my own name being attached to it," she says slowly. "Everything we've talked about today. Chess, the house, even this peace I keep circling back to, and it's all still, in some way, about me. My career, my marriage, my healing. I'm proud of all of it. But I think the next thing I actually want is to build something that isn't about me at all anymore. Something that just exists, and helps people, long after anyone remembers whose idea it was." She smiles slightly, almost surprised by her own answer. "I don't think I could have told you that a year ago. I would have said a family, probably, and given you the easy answer." She shrugs. "That's still true too. But it's not the whole of it anymore."

I ask if she has a shape for that yet, or if it's still just a feeling.

"Still just a feeling," she admits. "But the good ones usually start that way for me. The cat started as a feeling. The garden started as a feeling. Chess started as a feeling, if I'm honest, long before it was anything real." She looks at me, steady again, all the earlier ease back in place. "I've learned to trust those. Eventually they turn into something."

I ask if there's anything, right now, that she's genuinely excited for, something already in motion, not just a feeling waiting to take shape.

She doesn't hesitate on this one, which is its own kind of answer after how carefully she'd weighed everything else.

"Honestly? This shoot, actually," she says, gesturing loosely between us. "This is going to be the first major public-facing thing I've done since the wedding that isn't an award show or a red carpet where I'm just standing there for four seconds. This feels different. This is going to be mine, in a way those aren't."



I ask what makes it feel different before it's even happened.

"The people, mostly," she says. "I get to work with a friend on this one. That matters more to me than people probably realize." Her whole face changes talking about it, something looser and more delighted than the composed warmth she's carried all day. "Stacy, at Studio Atelier, is making everything for it. We've been friends since we were seventeen, so working together isn't new. He also made my wedding week looks, and gown, and both reception looks. So there's something fun about us getting to do something less serious now, and something less personal." She says it simply, without needing to make more of it than it is.

"Does that make stepping back in front of the camera less daunting?"

"Completely," she says. "That kind of trust is rare in this industry. I'm not dreading it. If anything, I think this is exactly the right way to come back into being seen."

We keep talking a while longer after that. The conversation drifting easily away from anything on the record, into restaurant recommendations and a very involved debate about the merits of her building's fresh-pressed juice versus literally anything from a bottle until the light outside has shifted enough that neither of us seems to notice we've been sitting here for the better part of an hour past when this was supposed to end.

Before I can even think about wrapping things up myself, Zuri is already handling it. "I've had a car arranged to take you home whenever you're ready. No rush," she says, standing to signal someone inside. "And there's dinner waiting for you tonight, from a place I actually like, not just one that sounds good in an article." She says this with the same easy authority she's had all day, the kind that makes it clear this isn't a suggestion so much as something already set in motion. A moment later, someone appears with a bag, which was way heavier than I expected and clearly curated rather than thrown together. Zuri hands it to me herself. "Don't open it in the car," she says, half-smiling. "Wait until you're home. I want you to actually enjoy it."

We keep talking a while longer after that. The conversation drifting easily away from anything on the record, into restaurant recommendations and a very involved debate about the merits of her building's fresh-pressed juice versus literally anything from a bottle until the light outside has shifted enough that neither of us seems to notice we've been sitting here for the better part of an hour past when this was supposed to end.

I ask my last question before we say goodbye; if there's a single word she'd use to describe where she is right now, given everything we've covered.

She considers it for a long moment, the kind of pause that suggests she's genuinely searching rather than reaching for something quotable. "Awake," she says finally. "Not rested, exactly, though that too. Just... awake. Like I opened my eyes on my own life again after a long time of just moving through it." She smiles, gathering her things. "That's the best way I know how to put it."

She walks me out herself, past the balcony and back through the color and noise of the main room, the bouquet from earlier still sitting where she left it on the long communal table, already starting to open. At the door, she hugs me. Unhurried, unguarded, the same ease she's carried through the entire afternoon, and thanks me for the conversation like I'd done her a favor rather than the other way around. Then the car is pulling away, the gate closing quietly behind me, and the house disappears back into the hillside the way it was built to.

Driving down through the last of the evening light, goody bag on the seat beside me, I keep returning to that word she landed on. Awake. Not the language of someone who spent a year disappearing, but of someone who stepped away just long enough to see her own life clearly again. The marriage, the firm, the garden she killed a dozen times before it finally took, the empire quietly built in the two years no one was watching. Zuri Jones Toussaint didn't take a year off. She took a year to actually arrive at the life she'd already built. And from where I'm sitting, driving away from a hillside most people will never see the inside of, it's hard to argue she isn't exactly where she means to be.



a note from the journalist:

I've done enough of these to know what a managed hour feels like: the careful answers, the eyes that drift to a publicist hovering just out of frame, the sense that you're being given a version of someone rather than the person themselves. This wasn't that. I don't think Zuri Jones Toussaint knows how to hand someone a version of herself. What you get is what's actually there, which is rarer than it should be at this level of visibility.

What stayed with me, riding home, wasn't any single answer, it was the consistency underneath all of them. The woman drinking tea at a hotel bar and the woman standing on her own office balcony talking about legacy were the same person, unguarded in exactly the same way, at exactly the same volume. She isn't performing stillness or performing ambition. She just seems to have finally stopped performing at all, which after a certain amount of fame is its own kind of quiet miracle.

I went in expecting a wedding story. I left with something closer to a portrait of a woman mid-assembly — not finished, not in a hurry to be, and entirely unbothered by anyone watching her take her time. If there's a headline in any of this, it isn't the marriage, or the empire, or even the year of rest. It's that she seems to actually believe she has time. In this industry, in this town, that might be the rarest thing she owns.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Iris Allen". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Iris" and the last name "Allen" written in a single, continuous stroke.





editorialdolls

THE SPELLCASTER'S MOD LIST

LIST PROVIDED BY SMITHSIMS

The base game's magic is a good start, but a short one.

Here are five mods that deepens the gameplay, raise the stakes of casting, and makes familiars worth keeping around.

Realm of Magic hands a Sim a spellbook, a familiar and a handful of Sages to answer to, then leaves the rest to the player. The rest is where it gets interesting.

These five mods each push on a different part of the same system: one widens it, one raises the cost of using it, two change what keeps a spellcaster company, and one adds spells the base game never wrote.

EXPANDED REALM OF MAGIC

Zero

01

SPELLCASTER TWEAKS

Kuttoe

02



This mod deepens spellcaster gameplay across the board.

Sages become playable, with a career-like gig system that leaves their NPC status intact. Spells get darker and broader, with forbidden magic added and existing Maxis spells expanded. Children can learn and use magic, and expanded necrocall options let spellcasters summon ghosts, night wraths, skeletons and ancient vampires.

On [Patreon](#).



Every cast costs more Charge, so a spellcaster has to watch the meter instead of spamming spells. Dedethify now almost guarantees an Overload without the right perks, so bringing someone back costs something. Every feature toggles on and off in-game. Requires Realm of Magic.

Free on [itch.io](#).

FAMILIARS REPLACEMENT

Moriel

03



A default replacement that swaps 13 of the base game's familiars for new designs, with nothing to place or hunt down. The Dragon, Velid (Void), Hex Doll and Glow Frog come in alternate colors, with one variant allowed per familiar. Requires Realm of Magic..

On [Patreon](#).

CUSTOM SPELLS

Minerva's Cauldron

05



A creator building custom occult spells and magical gameplay features, including Arcane Constriction, Aura of Defense and Exorcism. Where the other mods work with what the game already has, this one gives a spellcaster new magic to learn.

On [CurseForge](#) and [Patreon](#)

BETTER FAMILIARS

LittleMsSam

04



Summoning a familiar now gives a 50% XP boost, and familiars send gifts that help with potions. A hidden relationship system tracks how close you are, and a "Talk with" interaction builds it. That makes a familiar a companion worth keeping summoned, not just an accessory. Requires Realm of Magic.

Download on [CurseForge](#).

None of these mods change what a spellcaster is.

They change what one can do, what it costs, and who is watching while it happens.

Check each creator's page for patch compatibility, back up your saves, and start with whichever one the base game was missing for you.







ODALYS FERRAND

FACELESS FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT

The space is done by the time I get there, final walkthrough energy, with nobody rushing anymore. Just the quiet satisfaction of a room that's finally finished. Odalys is standing off to the side studying her sculpture like she's seeing it for the first time. Arms crossed and head tilted with the posture of someone double checking their own work even though it's clearly too late to change anything now. I walk up, and she doesn't startle, just glances over with the kind of calm that tells me she already knew I was coming. "Perfect timing," she says. "I was just deciding if I still like her." I ask if she does. "Ask me after the party," she says, and leaves it at that.

Odalys Ferrand has spent the better part of a decade making bodies that refuse to look back at you. Haitian American, Miami-born, Yale-trained, she works almost exclusively in scale, monumental, cast figures, rendered in all types of positions and materials, with faces she deliberately leaves out entirely.

For SSTUDIO's inaugural issue, her work doesn't just appear once. It recurs, quietly, across the whole project, first as a dormant presence inside one of our shoots, and again, in an entirely different register, anchoring the launch party itself.

Ferrand traces the facelessness directly back to where she grew up, Miami.

"Growing up in Miami, I quickly learned that you have to perform in a way. In that city, you are always on display, whether you chose it or not. Like it or not," Ferrand says. "Fine, I'll play it, but on my terms. I let the body do exactly what it's supposed to do, entertain, seduce, perform. I'm giving you exactly what you came for. You get the show. You don't get anything more than that. That's the fun of it for me. Edging you a bit." She laughs.

Her figures play with that exchange. There's no face to read, no expression to interpret, nothing for the viewer to extract and move on from. What's left instead is pure posture, weight, presence, the body, and entertainment. Stripped of the thing that usually lets a stranger decide who you are, the sculptures return that glance back at the viewer with materials that excite and reflect.

"If you're going to look, I want you to see yourself doing it. That's why I reach for anything reflective, anything that catches light and throws it back. You don't just look at the body. You end up looking at yourself," Ferrand says.

Miami gave her her upbringing, and Yale gave her a formal education in architecture, the discipline of scale, structure, and material logic, but the refusal underneath the work is entirely her own, shaped by a childhood spent watching a city constantly looking without ever really seeing, and by a Haitian household that understood presence and dignity as something built, not performed.

That refusal didn't arrive immediately. Ferrand spent several years after Yale working within architecture itself before sculpture became the whole of her practice. She's described leaving it less as a single dramatic exit and more as a slow erosion, a growing passion that was hard to ignore and was world changing.

Her first sculpture wasn't planned as art at all. It started as a model, something built to work through a building she was supposed to be designing, except the model kept growing past any usable scale, past any client's actual brief. By the time she realized what she was actually making, she'd already stopped caring whether it fit the assignment.

"I was supposed to be solving a structural problem," she said. "Instead I built something that didn't need to be useful to anyone. That was the first time in years I'd made something just because it wanted to exist. It was hard to go back to the actual project after that."

What followed wasn't an immediate leap. Ferrand kept the day job for nearly two more years, building sculptures on nights and weekends in a studio she rented quietly, telling almost no one it existed. Her first real exhibition came from a connection she almost didn't follow up on, a small gallery show in Miami that nobody involved expected much from.

The reclining figure she showed sold within the first hour. A second commission followed within the month. By the time she finally gave notice at the firm, she's said, it felt less like taking a risk and more like admitting something that had already quietly become true. "It was time to move on."

SSTUDIO found Ferrand the way most good discoveries happen, through a single image that wouldn't leave anyone alone. During early research for the issue's visual language, an image of one of Ferrand's sculptures matched something the team had been circling without quite naming it.

Reaching out felt less like commissioning an artist and more like recognizing one. Ferrand, for her part, has said the fit was immediate on her end too, a magazine built around imagined identities and constructed selves was, in her words, the first project in years that didn't ask her to explain the facelessness.

The first figure most readers will have already encountered without knowing her name. A single reclining form, pale and veined like real marble, surfaces mid-shoot in *Liminal: Nascent*.

"It came from thinking about the earliest version of a self, before language, before a purpose" says Ferrand, "I wanted something that felt like it had just arrived. Not posed. Not aware of being looked at yet. There's an innocence in that". It's easy to read it as pure set dressing in the moment. It isn't. It's Ferrand's language in its quietest register, still, and patient.

For the launch, Ferrand created a new large-scale sculpture. Ferrand calls it *Entanglement*, and unlike the quiet singularity of *Nascent* or the pointed irony of the party's solo pieces, this one is explicitly about what happens between two people rather than what one body performs for a room.

"Intimacy isn't clean," she said. "It's not two separate shapes standing politely next to each other. It's genuinely hard to tell where you end and the other person begins, and I wanted a piece that made the viewer work for that distinction the same way you have to in real life." Scaled to dominate the room, *Entanglement* doesn't sit quietly the way the launch's other figures do. It demands you walk around it, more than once, before you're entirely sure what you're looking at.

Entanglement will remain on public display in a warehouse space in Brooklyn Navy Yards through the end of October, giving readers who weren't in the room the chance to stand in front of it themselves.

This also won't be the last time Ferrand's work appears in these pages. SSTUDIO's relationship with her extends well beyond a single commission, and will continue into future issues and events.

Our Social and Culture Editor, Shahauni Phillips meets with Ferrand ahead of our Launch Party to chat with her about her work and career.

Hauni: How would you describe the last few years of your career, looking back on them?

Odalys: Compressed. That's the word I keep coming back to. I spent almost a decade building slowly, quietly, mostly for myself, and then the last two years happened at a completely different speed. I went from renting a studio I didn't tell my own mother about to having people recognize a piece from a photo before they recognize my name. I'm still catching up to it, honestly. The work hasn't changed that much. The volume around it has.

Hauni: Was there a specific moment you'd point to as the real turning point?

Odalys: Art Basel 2023, without question. Before that I had a career. After that I had a trajectory, and those are two very different things to be holding.

Hauni: Has that moment changed how people approach you now, or how you approach new work?

Odalys: People approach me assuming I'm chasing that moment again, trying to recreate the viral thing on purpose. I'm not. That would be the fastest way to kill the work. What it changed, actually, is the scale of what people are willing to let me build. Budgets got bigger. Rooms got bigger. I'm not making different work because of Basel. I'm making the same work, just more money and space.

Hauni: Has the facelessness, the whole language of the work, evolved at all since you started, or has it stayed consistent

Odalys: The language is consistent. The intent underneath it keeps shifting. Early on it was pure refusal, don't look at me, don't read me. Somewhere in the last few years it became more collaborative than that, almost generous. I'm handing over the material and saying, fine, go ahead, perform with it. Entanglement is the clearest version of that so far, two bodies, still no faces, but it's not about withholding anymore. It's about what's actually happening between people when nobody's performing for an audience.

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Hauni: Of everything you've made, is there a piece you're still especially attached to?

Odalys: There's an early one almost nobody's seen. I made it the year my grandmother passed, a small seated figure, barely two feet tall, cast in this dull gray stone I never used again. I didn't sell it. I didn't show it. It's sitting in my mother's house in Miami right now, on a shelf nobody's allowed to move it from. Everything I make now is loud, big, built for a room full of strangers. That one was built for exactly one person who was never going to see it. I think about it more than anything I've shown publicly, honestly.

Hauni: What are you chasing right now, creatively, that you haven't fully solved yet?

Odalys: Sound, actually. I keep wondering what these bodies would do if they weren't silent, if the material itself could hold a frequency the way it holds light. I don't have an answer yet. I'm genuinely excited not to.

Hauni: What do you want people to actually feel standing in front of one of your pieces, if you had to name just one thing?

Odalys: Caught. Not moved, not inspired. I want someone caught, mid-gesture, mid-glance. If I get that from someone, honestly, I don't need anything else from the encounter.

THE BLUE ROOM





THE BLUE ROOM

members only

ISSUE N° 02 IS OPEN FOR COLLABORATORS & SUBMISSIONS



ISSUE TWO ARRIVES IN NOVEMBER, AND WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE PEOPLE WHO WILL SHAPE IT. IF YOU BUILD WORLDS, DRESS THEM, PHOTOGRAPH THEM, WRITE ABOUT THEM, OR SCULPT SOMETHING THAT REFUSES TO LOOK AWAY, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

We're open to creators, writers, and artists across the whole spectrum of what this community makes: fashion editorials, avatar and CC builders, mod makers, photographers, essayists, and interviewers with a point of view. The only requirement is intention. Tell us what you're making, why it matters to you, and what you want the story to feel like once someone finishes reading it.

If you're interested, email us at sirxstudio@gmail.com with a brief introduction, a few examples of your work, and a sentence or two on the idea you'd like to bring to the issue. We read every submission, and we'd rather hear from one person with a clear vision than fifty with none.

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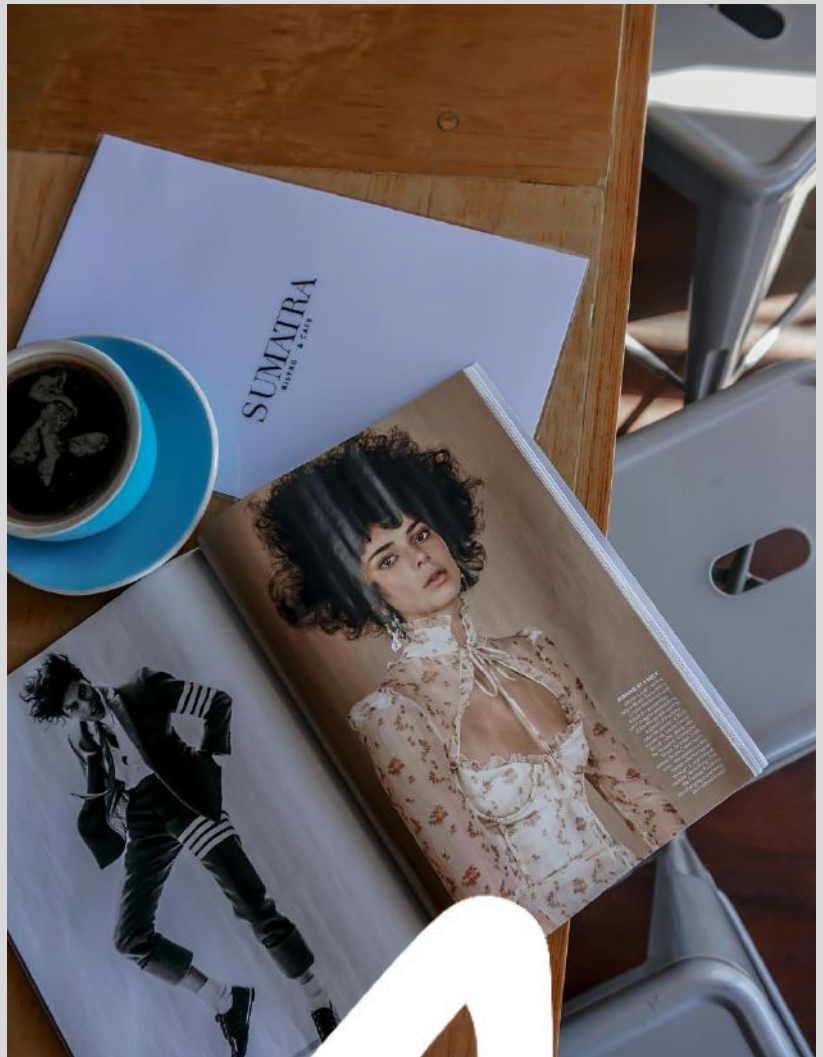
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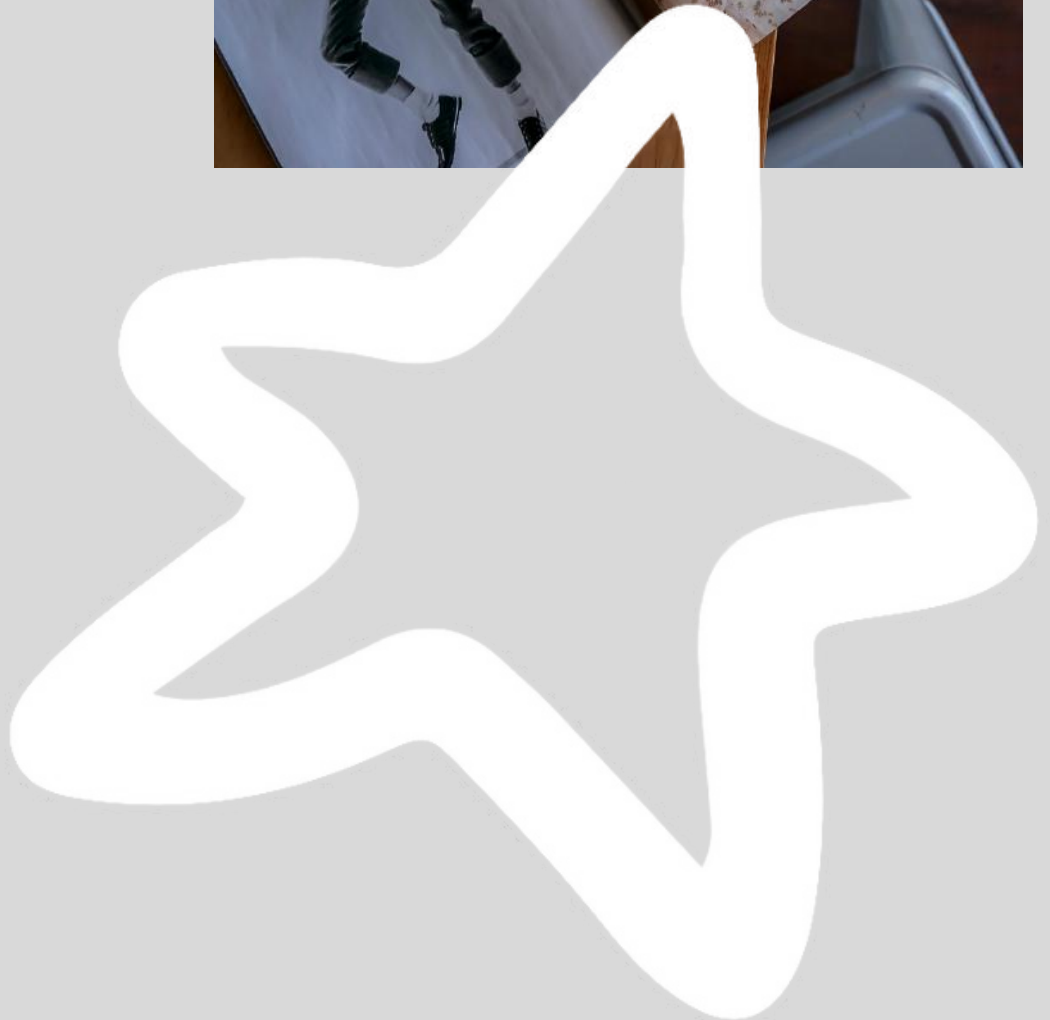
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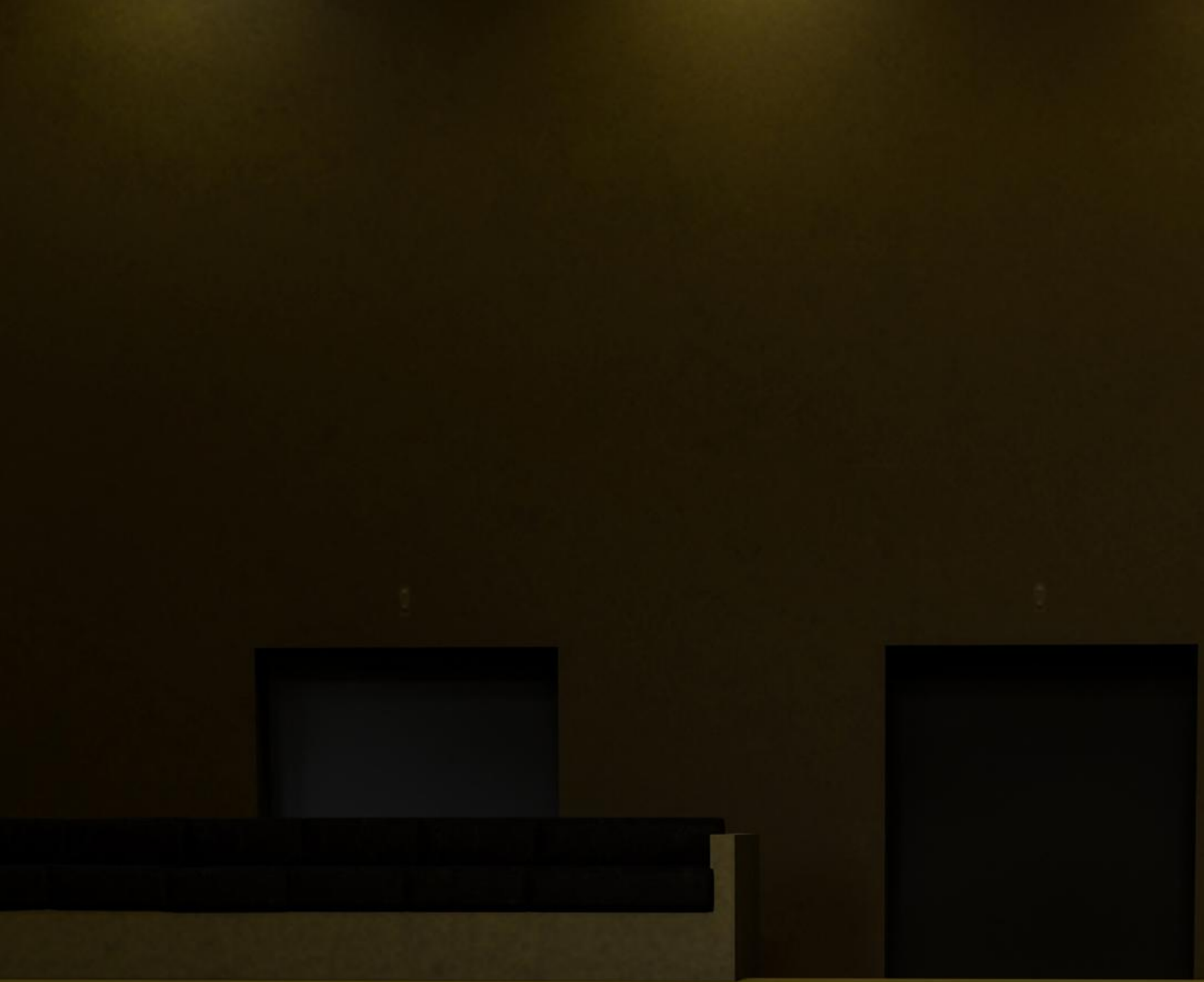
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