

VOLTA



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VOLTA 2023/2024

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Volta magazine 2023/24 edition is an amalgamation of the identities and lived experiences of the team that has created it. University is a pivotal time in one's life as we navigate and explore different parts of our identity, on our own terms. While the freedom to do so can be overwhelming, so too is the pressure to conform to mainstream culture. While curating this concept, I wanted to ensure that the magazine embodied the variety of ways in which the students, here at Western, have found themselves represented, or have struggled to see such representation.

The stories that are told, within the pages of this magazine, through fashion, photography, written work and art, are meant to inform readers of the ways in which we use creative expression to share our truths and grant the world insight into who we are as complex and multifaceted individuals. Herein this editorial, you can expect to comprehend the intense pressure there is to constantly perform and shine light on the most intimate details of ourselves. In doing so, this imposes labels onto us and pushes us into defined categories. The essence of our magazine shows the reality of our identities, and how our own defining qualities intersect to shape us into the unique beings that we are.

The creative work that encompasses this edition works together, and sometimes against each other, to tell the illogical and uncertain stories of human identity. Our magazine highlights that who we are to our core and who we appear to be on the surface can seemingly be two entirely different people. We illustrate the impact people can leave on us throughout our lifetime, but also the contrasting idea that we are all really just strangers moving through the world, on our own independent journey's. We also recognize that the forced desire to portray ourselves as having it all figured out is not practical, nor sustainable. This idea brings us to the climax of our magazine, which depicts the point in our life when we are able to truly accept and embrace our natural state of being. Sometimes, in order to reach this point, we turn to higher powers to guide us there. And sometimes, the communities that we are a part of make us feel that we are exactly who and where we are meant to be.

This edition could not be possible, or as powerful, without the dedication and vulnerability of the entire collective of talented and creative individuals that have worked on it. It is our hope that you find comfort in seeing parts of your own self captured in this magazine and enjoy engaging with the individual concepts that together, can enlighten us on our commonly shared yet strikingly unique identities.

Enjoy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah McIntyre". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'H' and 'M'.



ALL EYES ON *ME*

BY: ARUSHI GUPTA

Talent:

Chelsea Ngungu, Bisi Taylor-Lewis,

Dylan Patascu, Willow Moffett,

Eli Kennie

Stylists:

Aida Pina Cisneros, Greer Gossack,

Freydig Cohoon Gallego, Erika

Raimondo, Levi Macleod

Hair & Makeup:

Laura Clavijo

Photography:

Umair Dhillon, Connor Calvert





I'M BEING WATCHED

In a predominately digital age, we have an ability, or rather an expectation, to curate our identity towards an audience that always seems to be watching and, despite its persistence, still leaves us yearning to be seen for who we actually are. The pressure to always be camera ready forces us to disconnect from our true self so that we can be perceived as our digital persona, whom we often convince ourselves is better, on all accounts, than our authentic self. The constant eyes on us often leave us unsatisfied and even unsure of who we are when the cameras are off and no one is watching.













WHEN WILL ENOUGH BE ENOUGH?

BY MAKENZIE KEW

I'm not a planner, I'm not an optimist but I am a chronic romanticizer, prone to daydreams and idealizations. Why would I accept *what is* when I could think about *what could be*? My adolescent years could be marked by the singular romanticization of university. Or rather university life. I dreamed of leaving my small town (Vancouver?) and fleeing to the big apple! The fashion institute of technology was where I was *meant to be*. The logic behind this was admittedly lacking, the only class I ever failed was textiles for starters but most importantly there was zero feasibility in this plan. Did that knowledge stop me from spending an excessive amount of time creating an excessive number of pinterest boards titled "NYC dream" "Life soon (heart emoji)" absolutely not. When reality sunk in and it came time to actually choose a university my daydreams did a one-eighty and I succumbed to the ideal of a "traditional university experience". This change in heart was no doubt fueled by every cliché American college movie I've ever seen. I decided because I liked reading books, I would become an English major and spend my days reading the classics within the ivy-covered campus and spend my evenings taking advantage of the party school culture. I spent so much of my time preparing for university just imagining what my life would be once I got to campus that I neglected to think about the academic and social challenges such a change in environment would inflict. I got my romanticised, 18 year old girl leaves home and watches her city get smaller and smaller from an aeroplane window whilst listening to Lana Del Rey fantasy.

But, when I got to campus, I was sorely disappointed. I'm sure we have all heard the warnings of the freshman 15, how it feels going from smart to average, small fish in a big pond etcetera etcetera. But actually coming to terms with this new reality shifted my perception of my identity more than I ever could imagine. Feeling like I wasn't smart enough, blonde enough, thin enough or white enough was a constant throughout my first year. My romanticisation of meeting my new best friends during O-week, confidently participating in class and fitting in evaporated. Instead I got Covid during O-week, was exhausted by the sheer amount of awkward introductions, and had never felt more out of place. Now, I'm not here to pass judgment on how anyone decides to spend their time but constantly trying to enjoy things I simply didn't with people who I had not an iota of a thing in common with made me feel like a different version of myself. My identity got so lost in my own romanticisation of what life could be that I was left feeling aimless and disconnected. I unconsciously started mirroring my surroundings, dressing differently, acting differently and wanting different things. Eventually I adjusted to the change, regained my confidence and formed meaningful connections. Though I'm hesitant to use the clichés *"I had to lose myself, to find myself"* or even worse *"stay true to yourself"*, I do wish I could tell my 1st year self to focus less on trying to perfectly fit into the university experience at the cost of myself but instead take what works. Even though last year I reimagined a million different scenarios where a) my Western experience was different b) I transferred C) I went home, I am endlessly grateful for sticking it out and letting my identity grow alongside my experiences instead of around it.



A TELL-TALE

HEART

BY THALIA MA LEI





*The eyes are the window
to the soul.*

But what if not every
pair of eyes can see
our soul?

What if our soul has
been broken in the
process of trying to
appeal to the eyes of
our audience?

What if we start to
wear the brokenness
that fills our heart, on
our sleeve?

What if we can never
hide it again?

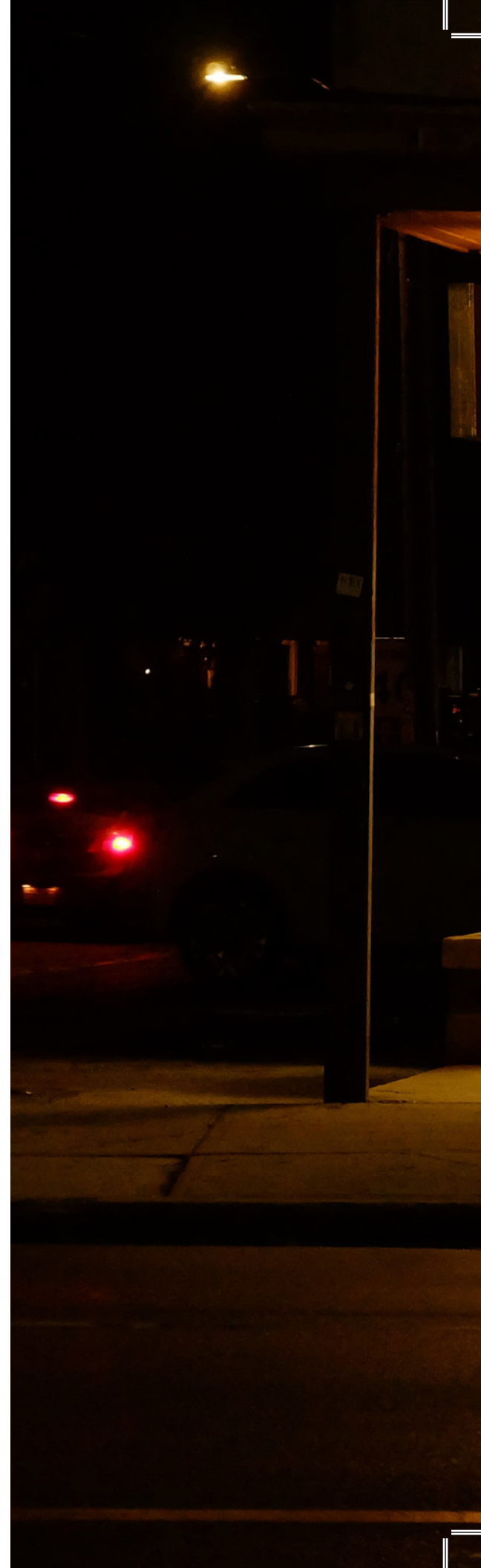




FAULTY COMPARISON TO THE SAVIOUR

BY AMY RICH

You fall between my second and third rib
Next to birthmarks and scars, freckles and fat
You all play the same part
In this macabre symphony
Venomous underbelly rubbed raw for salvation
Lives left unlived and love left unlit
I give you my body
Nine dollar wine
And swete bread i baked just this morning
I march to my crucifixion tomorrow and i may give you no more
But try every night as you pick through my pieces
Tonight youll wash my feet with your blood
And confess me your love
I who is made so much from you
So utterly taken and joyless and lying in wait
I peel layer by layer of skin
Pulling back muscle and tendon and bone
Until i am all that is left
And you look into the abyss that was made for you And you cry
So put back your prayerbooks, your sunday blouse
I am no altar - no priest nor pastor
Yet still i draw the damned and you never truly learn
I cannot wash away your sins
Nor can i wash mine from you



ATM

B&C VARIETY
Coca-Cola

















Talent:

Brenda Zhao, Daniyal Khan, Brandon
Leung, Vanson Nyugen, Bruce Jiahan

Stylists:

Daisy Gamble, Zaynedeem Senbel,
Howard Wen, Daniel Lohse

Hair/Makeup:

Michaela Marchildon


Photography:

Annie Li, Michael Roz



BODIES

BY MADISON AU

A man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a black leather jacket, is looking out of a window at night. His hand is raised to his chin, with his index finger pointing up. He is wearing a ring on his ring finger and a band on his middle finger. The background is dark with some blurred lights, suggesting an urban setting at night. The overall mood is contemplative and moody.

Upon the onset of the night's darkness, existentialism fills our brain and we are kept awake by the sudden urge to reinvent ourselves. In the comfort of our rooms, far away from judgment, we try to feel in tune with the empty shell that carries us. Our newfound hopes and dreams are expected to nourish us and give us meaning. We are all under the same blanket of stars each night, but in our own rooms and our own heads.







WHEREVER MY SHOES MAY TAKE ME

BY ALEXIA BOYAGIAN

I came back from Europe and walked into my home for the first time in over a month. I sat down and peeled off my converse, which at this point were clinging to my feet as tightly as plastic wrap, morphed to the shape of my foot, refusing to let go. After walking 20,000 steps every day I could, by the end of the trip, I could feel the cobblestone through the soles of my shoes - any support they once provided had completely disappeared from existence. Side note: converse are NOT the right option when doing a backpacking-esque trip, I highly do NOT recommend it. When taking off the shoes I could notice that they were sun damaged, the rubber cracked, and the once white laces black and fraying. I had the thought to throw them away and buy a new pair, but something inside me told me that maybe keeping them wasn't such a bad idea. Although unwearable, these shoes had taken me across the world. These shoes I wore when I met some of my best friends for the first time in Boston, these shoes I wore on a flight to Greece all alone to join my best friend on a months journey across Europe, these shoes I wore to fly to my boyfriend in New York and every shift I worked at my minimum wage Barista job. These shoes told my story. Every crack in the rubber, every scuff mark, every tear in the black canvas, it was all an archive of what had once been.

I've never been a person who is afraid of the wear and tear of my possessions. Is that not what they are for? I'm not afraid to ding my guitar, get a run in my tights, or wear my shoes in the mud. To me, shoes are meant to be worn, they are meant to take you from A to B. I've always been confused when people are afraid to crease or dirty their shoes. Doesn't that defeat the purpose? What I think most people fail to realize is that through your shoes, a time period of your life can be immortalized. Similar to the smell of a perfume you used two years ago or your favorite candy from childhood, a taste, the smell, a look in the mirror takes you beyond the basis of what something is. Sure I like the look of converse, but now after all this time these shoes mean so much more.

Maybe I am too sentimental with inanimate objects. I journal and hoard photos like gold so it's not surprising I would feel this way about a pair of dusty old shoes. I refuse to deprive my shoes of the opportunity to analog my life. I step in mud, I run, crease, scuff and give them the whole wear and tear. I wear my shoes recklessly and I encourage you to do the same. I will always keep my old Converse as a time capsule, even as I begin a new journey with a different pair of shoes.











Talent:

Sonya Tsou, Munahid Shakil

Stylists:

Aida Piña Cisneros, Samiksha Patange,
Samuel Sax-Martin, Victoria Belanger,
Callum Pild,

Hair/Makeup:

Summer Xu, Angelina Tong

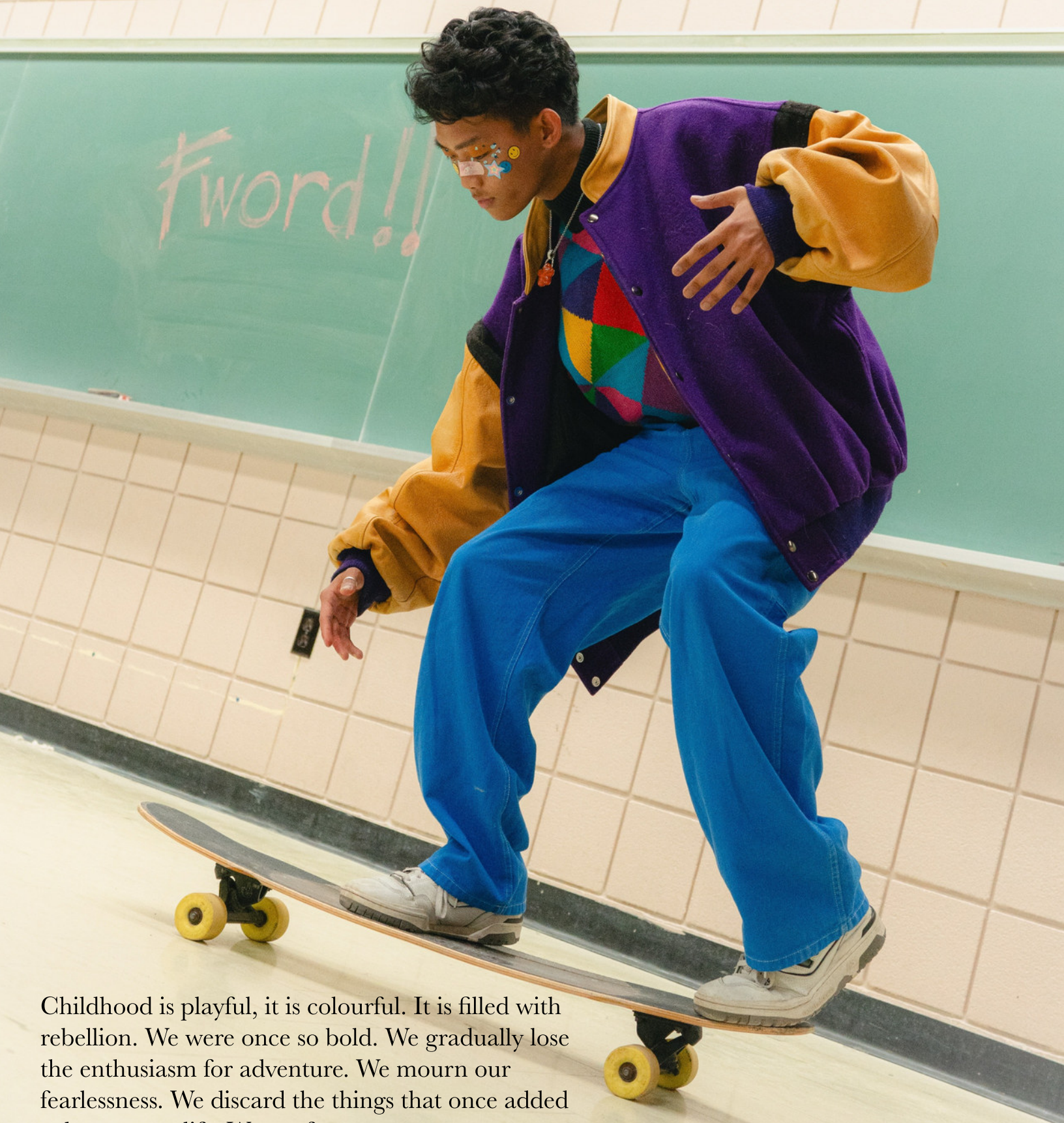
Photography:

Umair Dhillon, Michael Roz



DIVERGENT

By MATHÉO KNOPP



Childhood is playful, it is colourful. It is filled with rebellion. We were once so bold. We gradually lose the enthusiasm for adventure. We mourn our fearlessness. We discard the things that once added colour to our life. We conform.















Talent:

Matthew Chen, Serena Spence,
Jadhen Pangilinan, Noor Al-Ramahi,
Aishlee Kailey

Stylists:

Reesa Dayani, Samiksha Patange,
Sharon Chen, Vaanan Murugathas,
Michael Yang

Hair/Makeup:

Amber Jia, Bella Buckley

Photography:

Dilyar Deniz, Ema Paskvalin

Art Contributor:

Jadhen Pangilinan





Microfilm
AN5. L8F7 1849...
→







DREAM HOUSE

BY EMMA HOFFMAN

The standardized concept that we all have the same dreams is a utopian idea that has perpetuated a dystopian state of being within our society. As we strive to meet impossible standards, we simultaneously set ourselves up for disappointment and fail to embrace the struggle that gives our perfectly imperfect human experience meaning.















Talent:

Brenda Zhao, Daniyal Khan, Brandon Leung,
Vanson Nyugen, Bruce Jiahan

Stylists:

Daisy Gamble, Zaynedeem Senbel, Howard Wen,
Daniel Lohse



Hair/Makeup:

Michaela Marchildon, Madeline Dominguez,
Jenna Maccines

Photography:

Annie Li, Michael Roz

Art Contributor:

Chloe Serekno



INNER ALCHEMY

BY HANNAH ELATTY

Talent:

Marlowe Zimmerman, Emmy Want,
Tsidkenu Tomori, Zipporah Darou, Paige
Jansen, Kylie Muscat

Stylists:

Bisi Taylor-Lewis, Anvita Vavilla, Reesa
Dayani, Sharon Chen, Isla Mitchell

Hair/Makeup:

Michaela Marchildon, Jenna Maccines,
Maddie Dominguez

Photography:

Umair Dhillon



MIRROR

By HANNAH ELATTY

The idealization. The glimmering, golden long blonde hair. The kind that you always see as haircut inspiration on Pinterest. The glowy, unmarked porcelain skin. Being tall but not too tall. Thin but not too thin and you should have some tone. Perfect makeup that does not scream for attention but enhances your natural features.

Family has been here for generations. Wealthy, but doesn't flaunt it. Not too loud and super agreeable. She's the fun, cool, trendy girl!

The Other. Who knows what kind of hair she has, it's probably dark, curly, or maybe a soft wave. Darker skin that stands out more. Probably taller, maybe wider, definitely. Maybe she loves makeup, maybe she likes lots, maybe she doesn't want to wear any at all. Maybe she wants big lashes, cool eyeliner, maybe she wants none.

Family immigrated, probably recently within the last few generations. Her culture is louder, less agreeable than the accepted culture of the West. She's categorically remarkable, but she's not trendy.

There will always exist "what we want" and "who we are". What is the standard, and what is the outcast. A never-ending battle between what we learn, the cultural norms we observed, and the undeniable, and stubbornly unchangeable, reality of what we are. The outcasts, the others, the sore thumb... I've thought it all. And then comes the inevitable, and naïve, rejection of fixed identity.

Some things are stubborn. As much as you may want to wish them away, they refuse to leave. Maybe it's an accent. Maybe it's your hair texture. Maybe your skin colour. You know, it's unfortunate. It takes a long time to realize the things make us, US, the differing aspects of who we are, are truly worth embracing and enjoying. I wanted to badly to be the idealization, but I am the Other.

The return to authenticity is tiring. The acceptance of difference, the unlearning of deeply ingrained internal prejudice... it's extremely challenging to get out of. Identity is difficult, and although not typically categorized as such, subjective. We constantly inherit similar patterns of thinking and being. Trends are the end-all-be-all of relevance. Life is a mirror. We observe and apply it to ourselves. Until one day you wake up, and you realize, that everything you have done has ripped you away from realness. I guess then is when you start thinking independently, intuitively. A reclamation of culture, of heritage, of tradition, of the things that separate us from our peers, now that is the ultimate prize.

“و خلاص لقيت كل الي ياما حلمت بيه في اللحظة دية”

“And finally I found all that I dreamed about right at this moment,”

- Amr Diab, *Wehyati Khaliki*, (2009)











WAR

BY HANNAH ELATTY

Picket lines and picket signs
Don't punish me with brutality
Come on talk to me
So you can see

- Marvin Gaye, "What's Going On?" (1971)

War has, somehow, become a part of everyday media consumption. Over the last few decades, you open your phone, or turn on the TV, to see "BREAKING" accompanying some tagline about some devastation happening in some corner of the world. My perspective may differ from others. As a first-generation immigrant, born to Muslim parents in Pennsylvania circa 2002, I am no stranger to the personal impact war can have on a people. The War on Terror. The PATRIOT ACT. The propaganda used to slaughter millions of Arabic people. I am quite familiar with it.

War is mediated through a prideful lens. We are born and bred to be proud of our troops. To hear their stories. To honour the fallen. To send well wishes and respect to the active members of our military. It took me years to realize how blind I was to the suffering of my people. Growing up in the West, I fully rejected my heritage, my culture, my language, and the traditions my parents begged for me to participate in. I made an active effort to erase the brownness from my skin, which fortunately never worked. It wasn't until I was 18 years old when I realized the damage I had done to myself. Over the last few years, I found my way back to myself through painful self reflection and reclamation of my identity. To say the least, the things I became aware of were difficult to come to terms with. Not only did I have to undo all the whiteness I had forced myself into, but I forced myself to learn about the War on Terror and the sickening stereotypes inflicted on to people who looked like me. It wasn't that I was unaware, I have been called a terrorist and Osama, among other slurs, more times than I can count. I have scrolled through social media reading hundreds of comments saying that the world would be better without us, that we need to die, that all we do is commit heinous crimes and cause pain. It was... hard.

As a result, through the years, I have turned into an activist on these topics. I have dedicated my time to reading, learning, and processing my own trials and tribulations and realized I cannot live in a world that does not believe I have a right to my religion and to my identity. How can I sit and watch people spread massive amounts of harmful rhetoric about people like me, like my parents, like my family, like my country?

One of my most vivid memories, not necessarily of war, but as a result of civil unrest, is the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring spread through North Africa and the Middle East like wildfire. Egypt, my country of origin, was particularly notable during this time. I was nine years old, sitting on the floor in front of my parents, watching as millions took to Tahrir Square in Cairo to protest. Colonialism and governmental corruption were the culprits of this anarchy. But it speaks to bigger themes of destruction in the Middle East. It speaks to frustration, to Western interference, and to the necessary rebellion required to change the ways in which people think of us. The scary Muslims. The violent Arabs. But really we are soft, tendering, caring, loving, vivacious, eager, happy.








To OUR LAND

To our land,
and it is the one near the word of god,
a ceiling of clouds
To our land,
and it is the one far from the adjectives of nouns,
the map of absence
To our land,
and it is the one tiny as a sesame seed,
a heavenly horizon ... and a hidden chasm
To our land,
and it is the one poor as a grouse's wings,
holy books ... and an identity wound
To our land,
and it is the one surrounded with torn hills,
the ambush of a new past
To our land, and it is a prize of war,
the freedom to die from longing and burning
and our land, in its bloodied night,
is a jewel that glimmers for the far
upon the far and illuminates what's outside it ...
As for us, inside,
we suffocate more!

- Mahmoud Darwish

ARCANA

BY LARA LUZIO RAMOS



Sometimes, we do not have the answers or the explanations for our own intricacies. We crave enlightenment and justification from external relationships. We rely on something bigger than ourselves. We have faith that they can reveal parts of ourselves that make everything else make sense.







Talent:

Erica Bernardo, Olivia Dunstan, Charlotte Johnson,
Jacqueline Chen, Freydig Cohoon Gallego, Sonya
Tsou

Stylists:

Anvita Vavilla, Arabella Bareno, Jodi Keizer, Victoria
Belanger, Callum Pild, Sebastian Glen

Hair/Makeup:

Isabel Spice, Jenna Maccines, Rachel Cumming,
Maggie Eng, Brianna Beharie

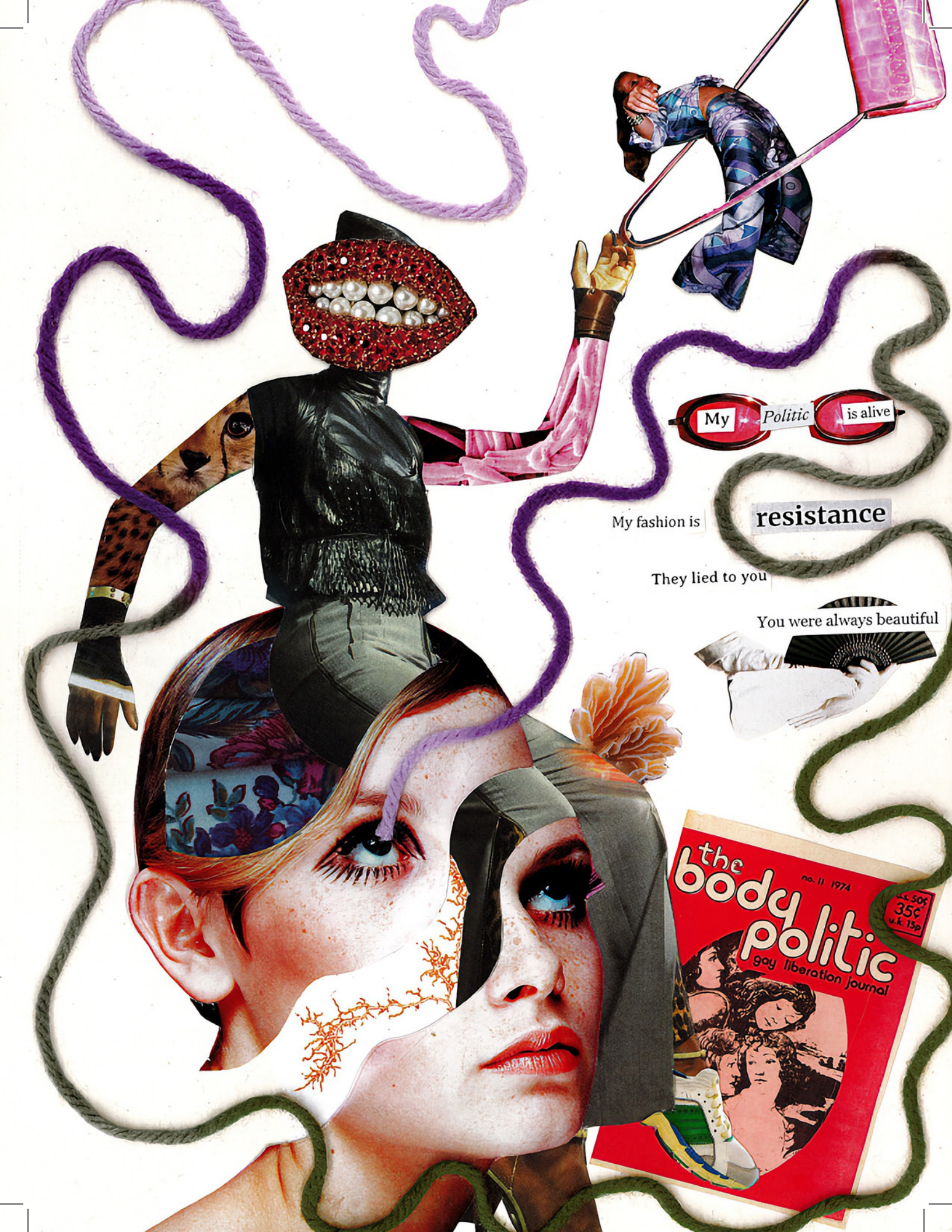
Photography:

Julia Costache

Art Contributors:

Freydig Cohoon Gallergo, Jadhen Pangilinan





My Politic is alive

My fashion is

resistance

They lied to you

You were always beautiful

the
body
politic
gay liberation journal

no. 11 1974

35¢
u.k. 15p









HOMEcoming

By JEHAN KHAN

We depend on the communities that make us feel accepted. We depend on them to help us find solace in our own skin. We depend on them to foster space in which we are embraced. We depend on them for granting us the courage to come as we are. We depend on them to welcome us home.





FINDING MYSELF THROUGH FRIENDSHIP

BY MEGAN SPILLER

Feeling like you know who you are in University is a difficult task. How can I understand myself when I feel like I change every day? When what I'm "supposed" to be, changes every day. What do I do when I feel like what I'm supposed to be is so out of reach. How do I navigate life away from home when I have no idea how I'll feel on any given day? Being a 19-year-old girl is sometimes the highest of highs, like a non-stop adrenaline rush as you go down a roller coaster. It is also the lowest of lows, like the feeling of a long drive home after you've just had your heart broken for the first time. Being a teenage girl is the best, but it's also the worst.

When I began my second year of University I moved into my student house. I had 5 other girls who were going to live with me, and they'd all come to be some of the closest friendships I'd ever made. Two doors down our other friends had moved into another house on the street, and quickly, girls I had only had a few conversations with before, were the ones surrounding me on my great days and my horrible days. I had always felt lucky with the great female friendships I was able to sustain throughout my life, but living alongside 10 compassionate, funny and down-to-earth girls was a sense of love I had never felt. We have laughed together, cried together, sang together, shared stories late at night, gathered in the early morning, hugged each other when it was needed most, celebrated each others wins, rallied for each others losses, and built a sincerely unbreakable foundation of trust and friendship.

The truth is, the feeling of not quite knowing yourself probably never goes away. It probably never feels like you have entirely wrapped your head around who you are. I don't think we ever actually stop becoming who we're going to be, because we're always changing. This is incredibly confusing, but with the warmth of great people, it becomes exciting as well. It becomes less scary, less isolating and less impossible. I still don't know exactly who I am, but I do know the people I'm meant to be surrounded by. If I have found belonging in a special group, I know that it's a puzzle I'm supposed to be apart of. If I can understand and truly love the people I around me, then I can also love myself. My friends have made me appreciate who I am more, because if people as spectacular as them want to be around me, I must be doing something right. There has been a weight lifted off my shoulders since I have lived on this street, and the sense of indescribable gratitude I have for my circumstance grows everyday. This street has brought me a family I never knew I needed, and a connection to myself I was always searching for.





HOMOSEXUALITY AS A TRANSGRESSION

By AMY RICH

shameless regret keeps me in your embrace
the too-fast beating of our hearts as my hand reaches closer to your breast
long held secrets tangle us together -
my hand in yours to hold us steady
sisyphus is no stranger to languid look and gentle touch
lust is a sin we crush up and snort overachieving our way to damnation
I say lover,
If we pass untouched
may we meet again in pain
and bloody pleasure

Talent:

Eli Kennie, Emma Honey, Sebastian Glen,
Bisi Taylor-Lewis, Alexis Sutherland,
Freydig Cohoon Gallego, Munahid Shakil,
Claire Zhang

Stylists:

Grace Dong, Jasmine Gu, Victoria Belanger,
Vivian Shen, Levi Macleod

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We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the entire team of people that has made the 2023/24 Volta magazine possible. This includes the team of creative advisors, models, stylists, photographers, hair & makeup artists, creative contributors and the administrative team that has worked behind the scenes to bring this project to life. In addition, we would like to acknowledge and thank the venues that have generously hosted us including Idlewyld Inn & Spa, Sarah Deleeuw, SoHo Haus and XUUX Artists Studio.

