Stills

PHOTOGRAPHY IN DESIGN TREND REPORT
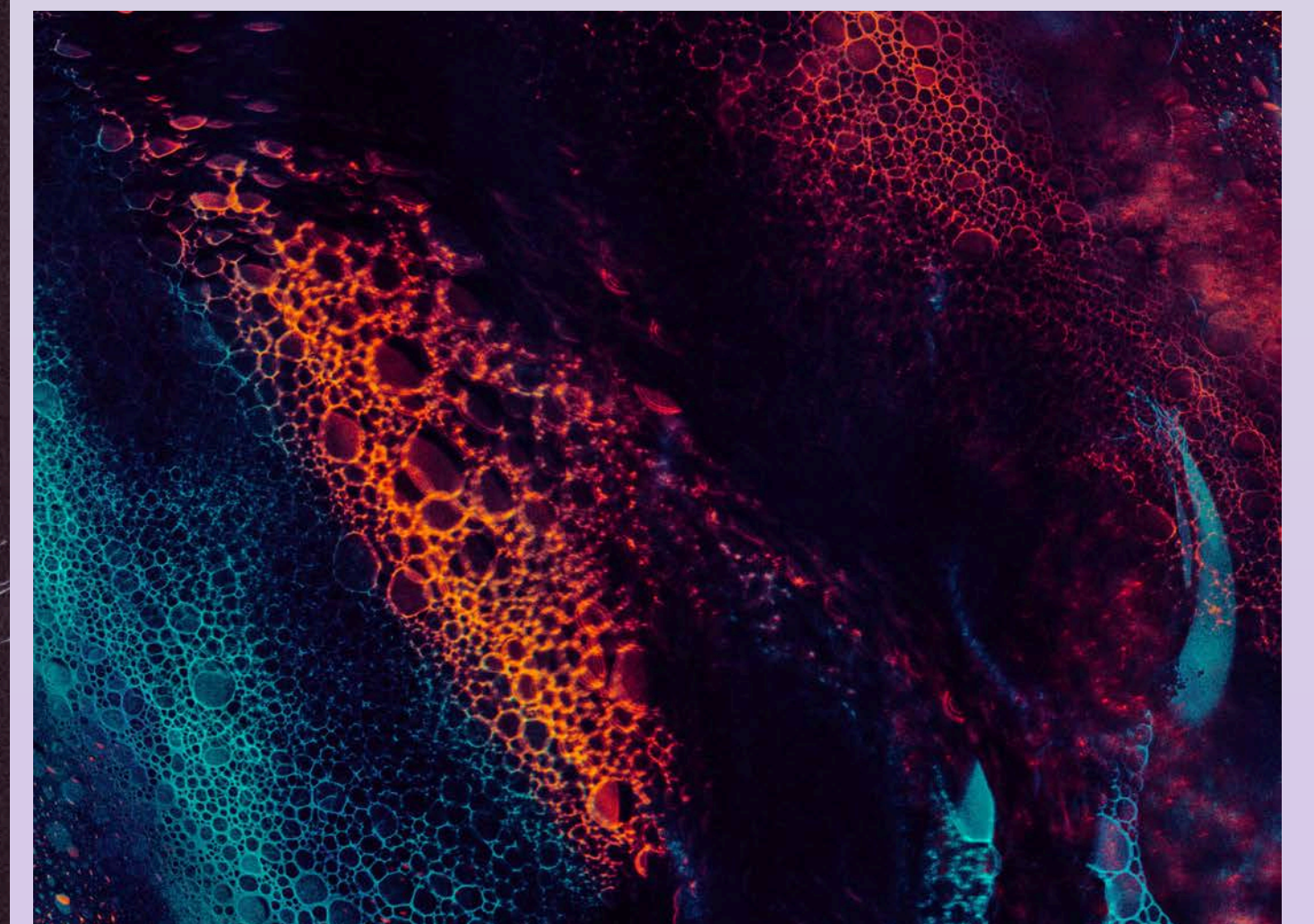
Sasha Stavila
#5037

Braden Lee
#54228

Nikolay
#347766

Zachariah Hagy
#350560

Omar Belattar
#312360

The Trends Defining 2025

Let's be real: designers have their work cut out for them this year.

Between AI overload, dwindling attention spans, and hypersaturated content, it's crucial for designers to cut through the noise and stand out with work that feels authentic, relevant, and emotionally resonant.

At Stills, we have a broad perspective across the design industry. We're a trusted source for the world's most innovative brands and agencies, providing relevant, pre-cleared imagery for a wide variety of creative projects.

Our unique position at the intersection of those creating briefs and those endorsing projects gives us expert insight into the evolving landscape of visual storytelling. Our photography in design trend report is a valuable resource designed to empower creatives like you with the knowledge necessary to produce impactful, authentic work that connects with an ever-changing audience.

(125) (126) (127) (128) (129) (130) (131) (132) (133) (134)
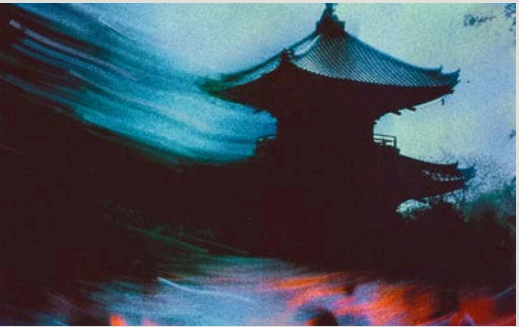
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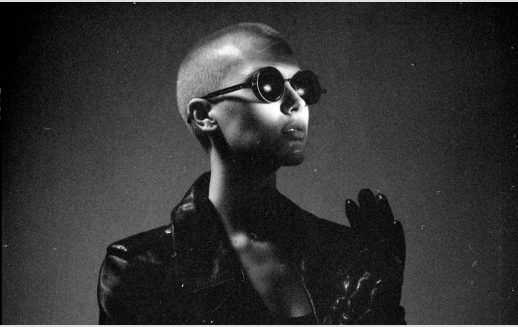
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Candid Photos

PSA: audiences are tired of seeing the hyper-polished aesthetic of the 2010s.

These photos are more than just quick snapshots, though. This year's about capturing real, unfiltered moments that feel raw and relatable. "We want to see more of the rough, the real, and the approachable," says content creator Victoria Stefania.

Remember: not every moment needs to be perfect. Just authentic. Never underestimate your audience's eye for authenticity—they can always tell when something feels staged or disingenuous.
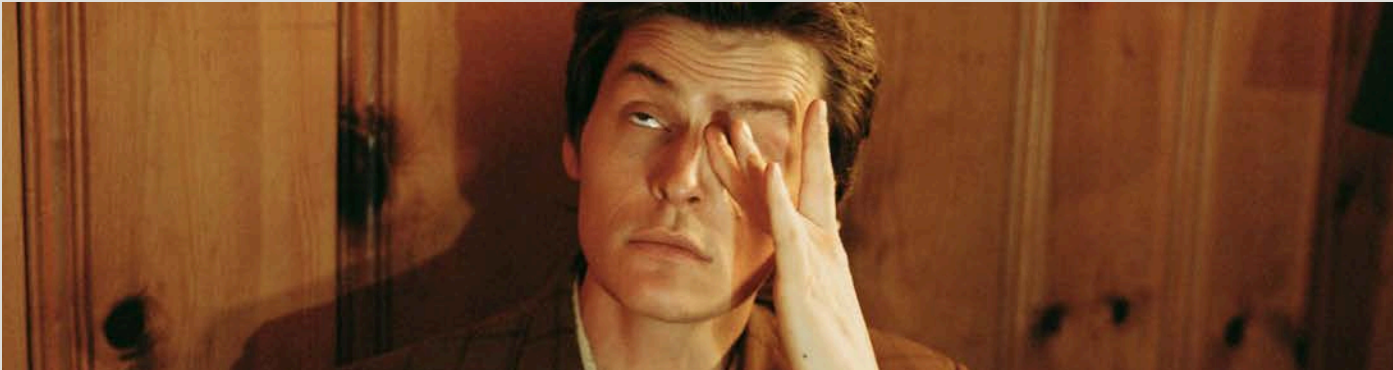
Christian Sorensen Hansen
#226108

Thomas Irwin
#212936

GS & Co
#82136

Sara And Phil
#33569

Lauren Withrow
#319923

REAL, UNFILTERED MOMENTS.

Rough, raw, and approachable.

REMEMBER: NOT EVERY MOMENT NEEDS TO BE PERFECT. JUST AUTHENTIC. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR AUDIENCE'S EYE FOR AUTHENTICITY—THEY CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN SOMETHING FEELS STAGED OR DISINGENUOUS.

REMEMBER: NOT EVERY MOMENT NEEDS TO BE PERFECT. JUST AUTHENTIC. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR AUDIENCE'S EYE FOR AUTHENTICITY—THEY CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN SOMETHING FEELS STAGED OR DISINGENUOUS.

CANDID PHOTOS

CANDID PHOTOGRAPHY IS MORE THAN JUST SHOWCASING A QUICK SNAPSHOT. THIS YEAR'S EMERGING TREND IS ABOUT CAPTURING REAL, UNFILTERED MOMENTS THAT FEEL RAW AND RELATABLE TO YOUR AUDIENCE.

SHOW   THEM   MORE   THAN   A   SNAPSHOT

GIVE   THEM   SOMETHING

THAT   FEELS   REAL

SHOW THEM MORE THAN A SNAPSHOT

Not Every Moment

MAKE THEM FEEL SOMETHING REAL

Has To Be Perfect

YOUR   AUDIENCE   KNOWS   WHAT'S   TRULY   AUTHENTIC

SHOW   THEM   WHAT'S   RAW   AND   RELATABLE

Audiences are Tired of
the Hyper-Polished
2010's Aesthetic

Create Unfiltered Moments
That Feel Raw And Relatable

Explore Exclusive
Candid Imagery for Your
Projects at Stills.com

GRADE SOLOMON
#209038

LIZZY ROLLINS
#246317

TYLER GLASS
#265143

FAIZAL WESTCOTT
#34342

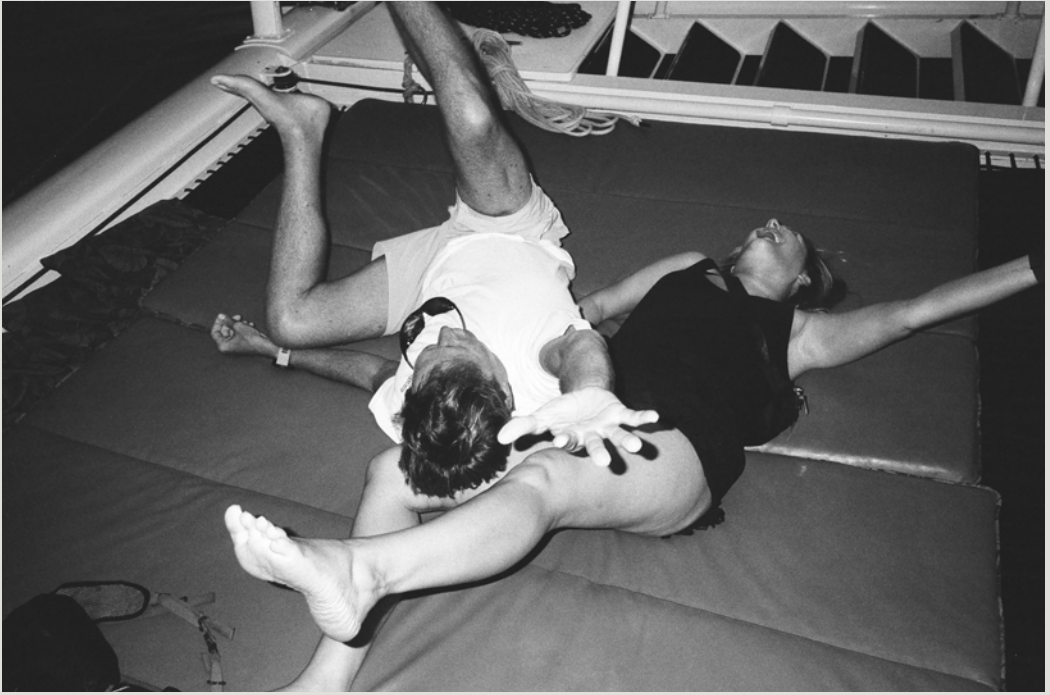SARA AND PHIL
#30460

COLE WILSON
#311407

ALEX BOTTON
#54128

AARON TAO
#263990

GRANT PUCKETT
#9211

TANGUY TROUDE
#282329

LAUREN WITHROW
#2256

NATHAN CYPRYS
#334224

Abstract/Textural

In 2025, flat design feels a little… flat.

Abstract and textural imagery adds that extra oomph, giving your work depth and making it feel more tangible. These images can soften type-heavy layouts and minimalist designs, creating a more engaging and grounded aesthetic.

By adding texture, designers can create a sensory connection, balancing digital precision with a more tactile quality. "It creates a unique balance," says UK-based content creator Robert McCombe. "It feels like a fusion of pre-tech and modern design, digital and physical, leaving a more lasting impression."
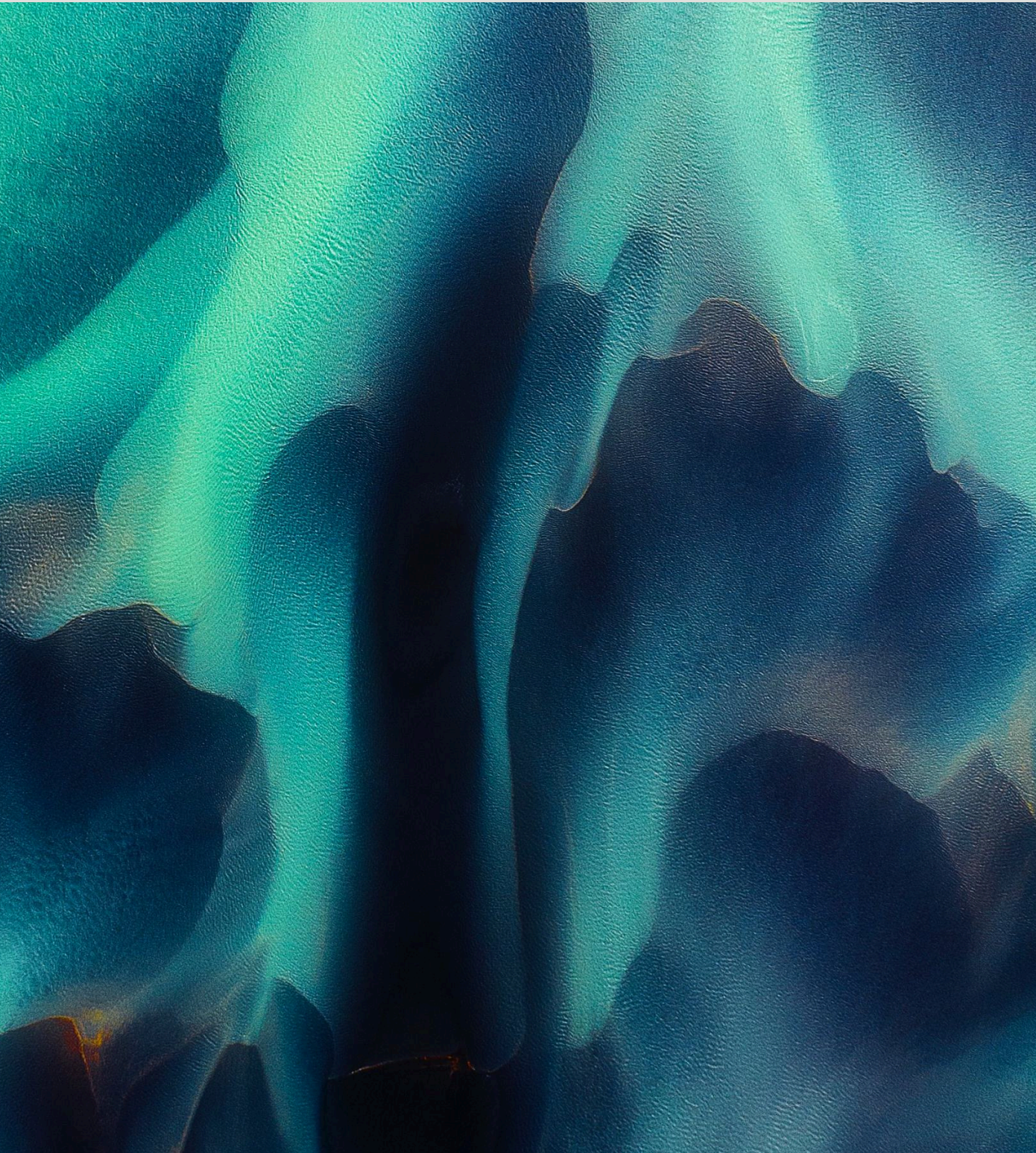
Johan Knobe
#225980

Elliott Chau
#245480

Robert Palmer
#319374

Jeroen Van Nieuwenhove
#211045

Omar Belattar
#341862

DEPTH

ENGAGE

TANGIBILITY

GROUND

TEXTURE

DIGITAL

SOFTEN

CONNECT

ABSTRACT

BALANCE

PHYSICAL

FUSION

/824

Robert McCombe: "Abstract imagery feels like a fusion of pre-tech and modern design, digital and physical, leaving a more lasting impression."

Photography In Design Trend Report

2025

Trend In Action

ABSTRACT/TEXTURAL

CREATE A SENSORY CONNECTION WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

Abstract ABS-STL Imagery
08/01/23

801

ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY CAN SOFTEN TYPE-HEAVY
LAYOUTS AND MINIMALIST DESIGNS, CREATING A MORE
ENGAGING AND GROUNDED AESTHETIC. BY ADDING
TEXTURE, DESIGNERS CAN CREATE A SENSORY
CONNECTION WITH THEIR AUDIENCES.

"WHETHER IT'S DISCOVERING NEGATIVE SPACE WITHIN
IMAGERY TO INTEGRATE TEXT OR EXPERIMENTING WITH
CREATIVE LAYOUTS THAT BLEND TEXT AND VISUALS,
ABSTRACT IMAGERY CREATES A UNIQUE BALANCE."
–ROBERT MCCOMBE

24

EXPLORE ABSTRACT IMAGERY AT STILLS.COM

MOLLY STROHL
#253839

VIJAY SARATHY
#23646

CHANEL FARKAS
#309040

TANGUY TROUDE
#245614

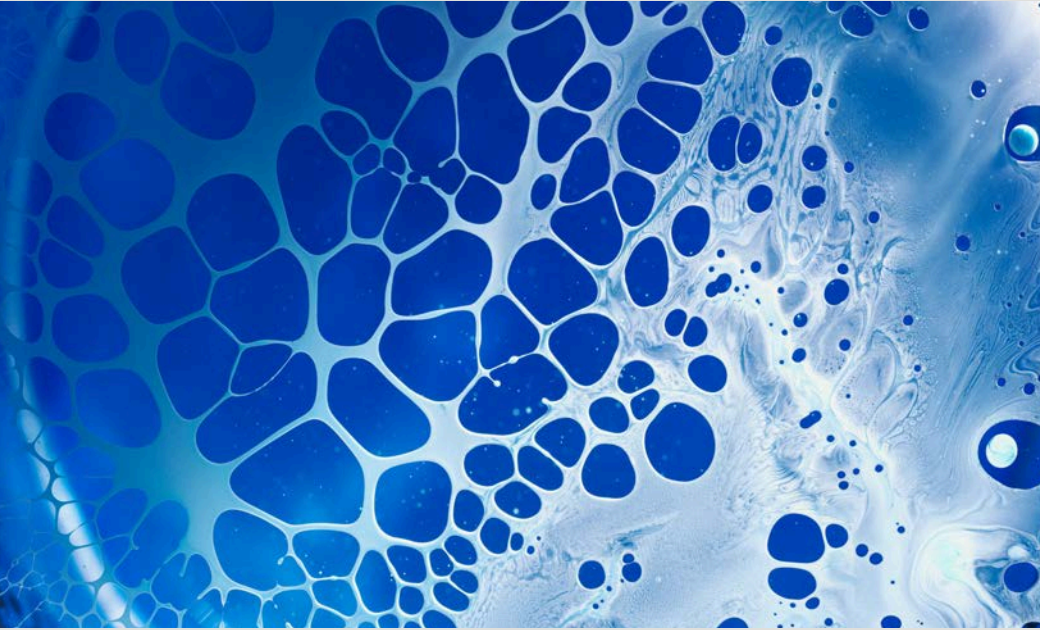JEREMY BISHOP
#316507

ROMAN DE GIULI
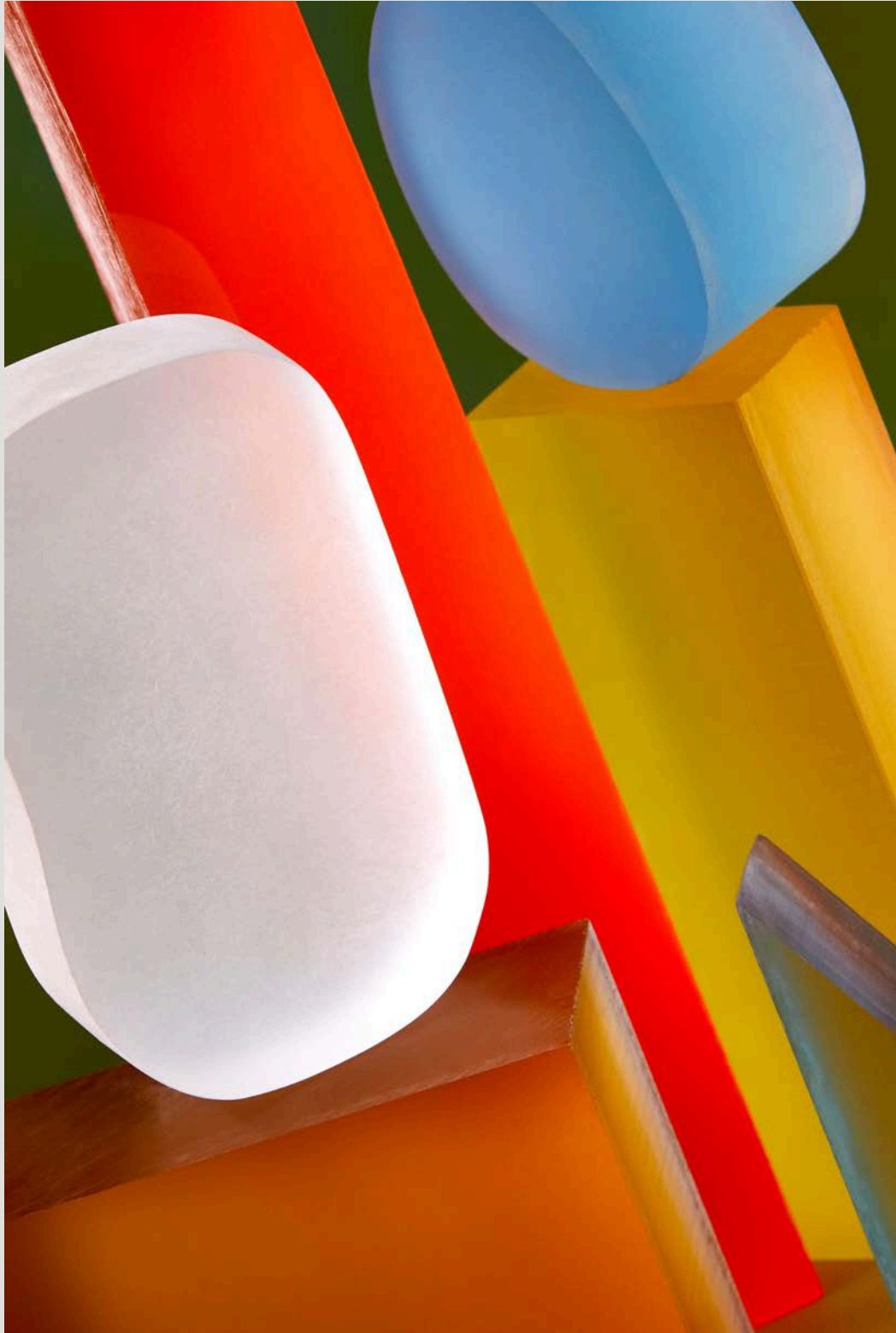#211781

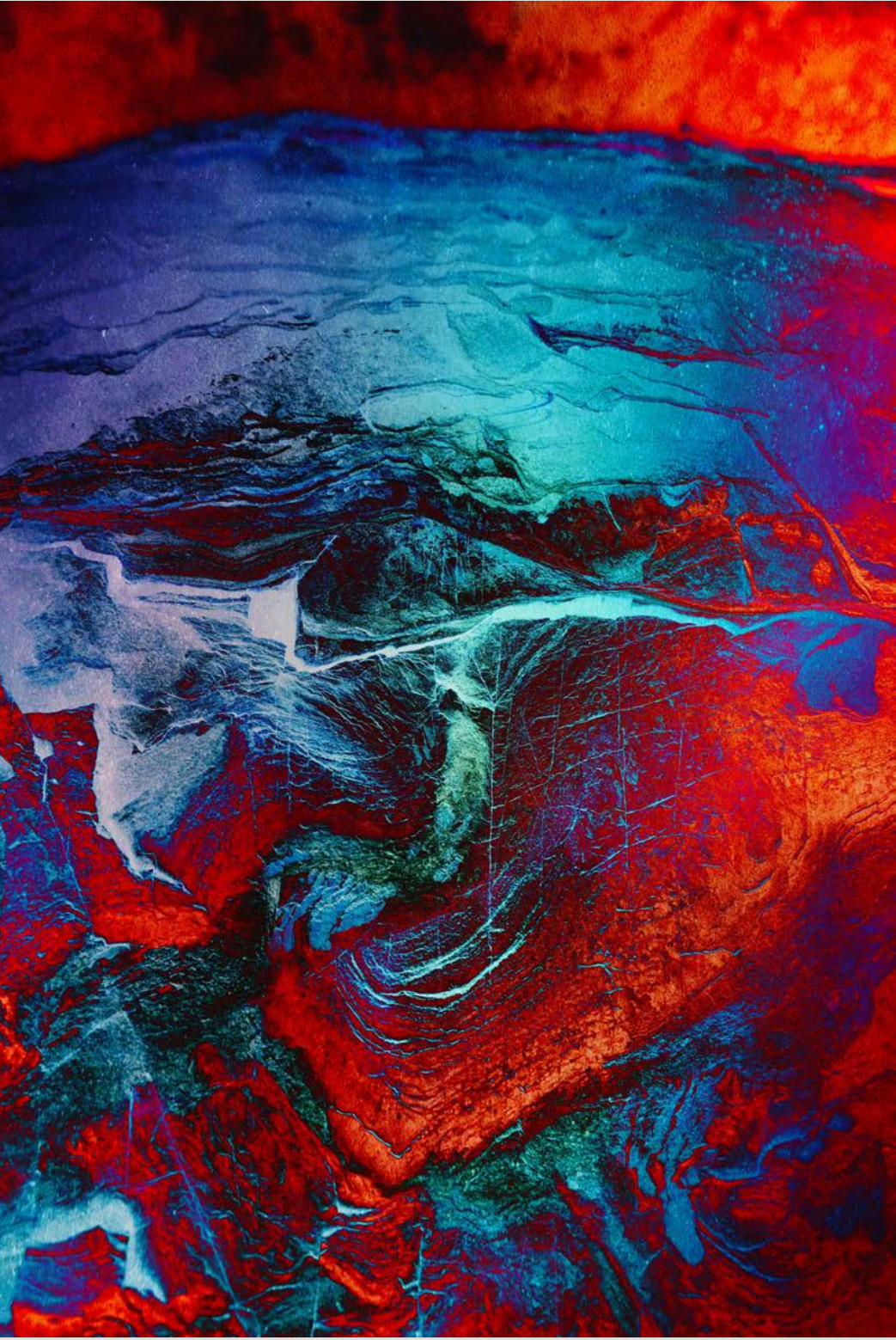CHRISTIAN SORENSEN HANSEN
#222615

OMAR BELATTAR
#301027

ROMAN HILL
#19473

ALEXANDER SILVA
#337702

ALISON SCARPULLA
#332236

SIM WARREN
#226325

Dark Imagery

No, it's not your screen settings—dark imagery is having a moment.

Between blockbusters and dramatic ad campaigns, these visuals leverage deep shadows, muted tones, and dramatic contrasts to evoke emotion and intrigue. They can also amplify visual impact and create a strikingly modern aesthetic, especially when paired with bold, clean typography.
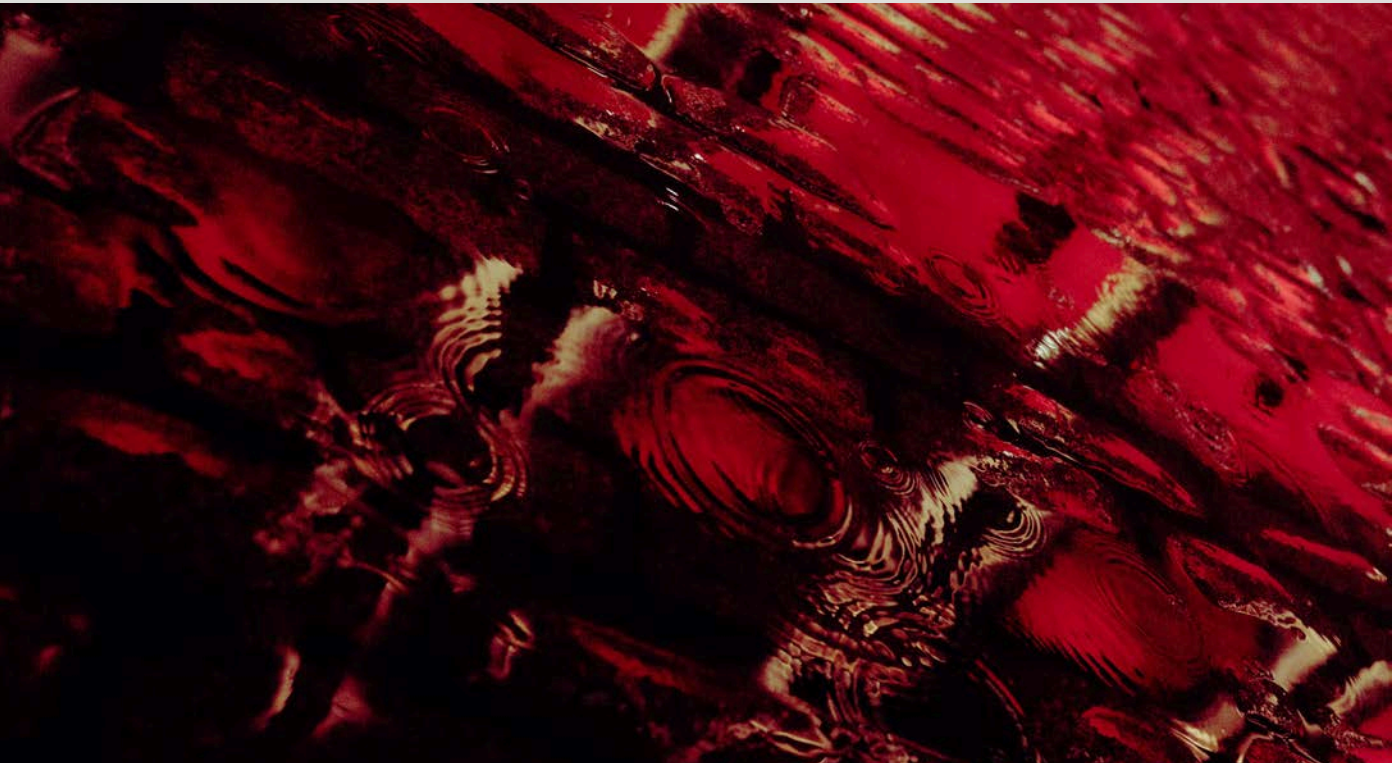
One common source of inspiration: the fashion industry. Brands like Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Fear of God pioneer the use of dark imagery to grab audiences' attention.

Just don't go too dark, or your audience may start squinting and complaining in the comment section.

Alina Nechaeva
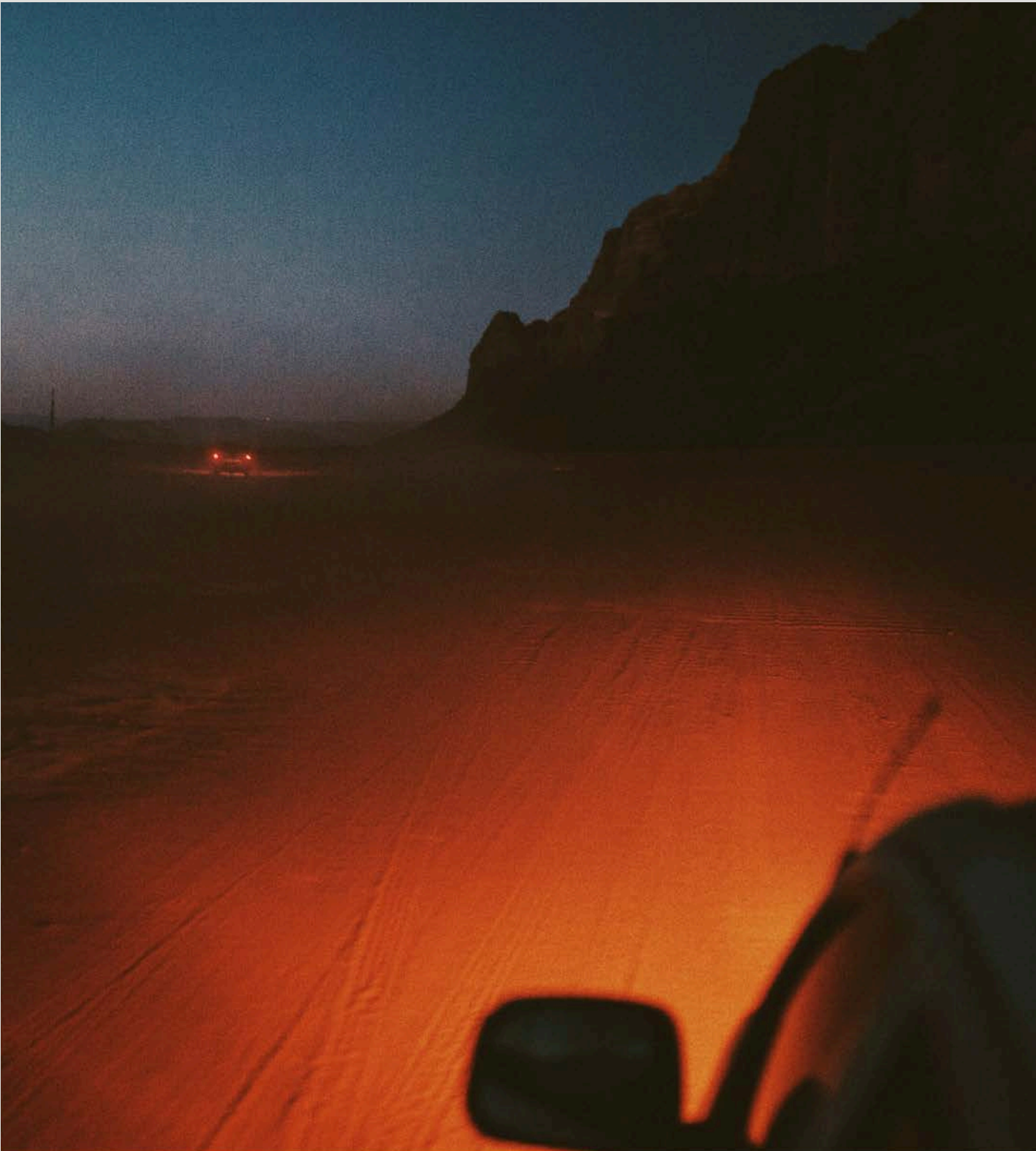#286826

Jonathan Sweet
#211346

Filip Gielda
#335033

Harry Judge
#337123

Rinegg
#30715
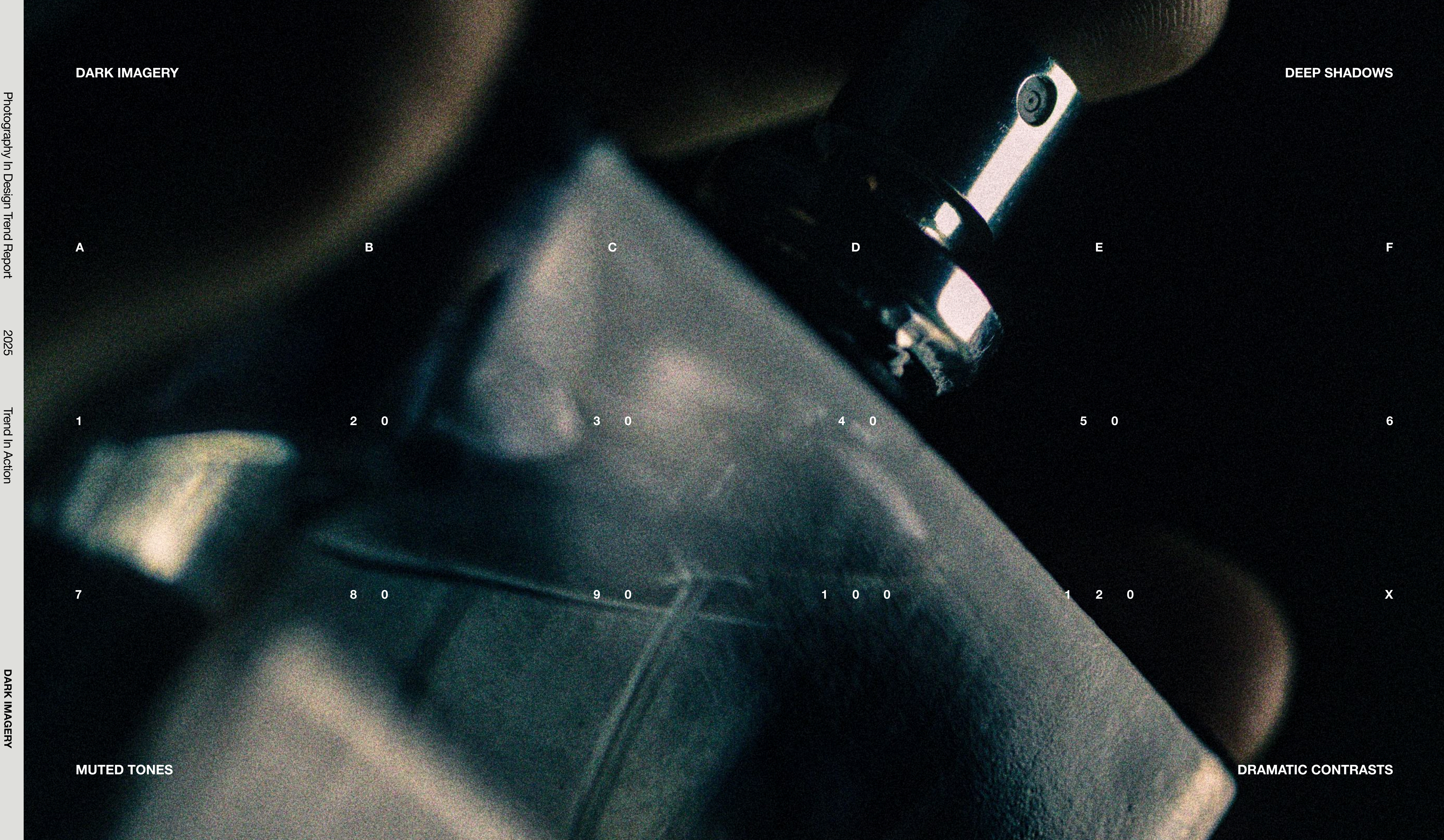
A   B   C   D   E   F

1   2 0   3 0   4 0   5 0   6

7 X   8 0   9 0   1 0 0   1 2 0   X

MUTED TONES

DRAMATIC CONTRASTS

230

231

232

233

234

235

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(NO, IT'S NOT YOUR SCREEN SETTINGS.) AMPLIFY VISUAL IMPACT AND CREATE A STRIKING AESTHETIC WITH DARK IMAGERY.

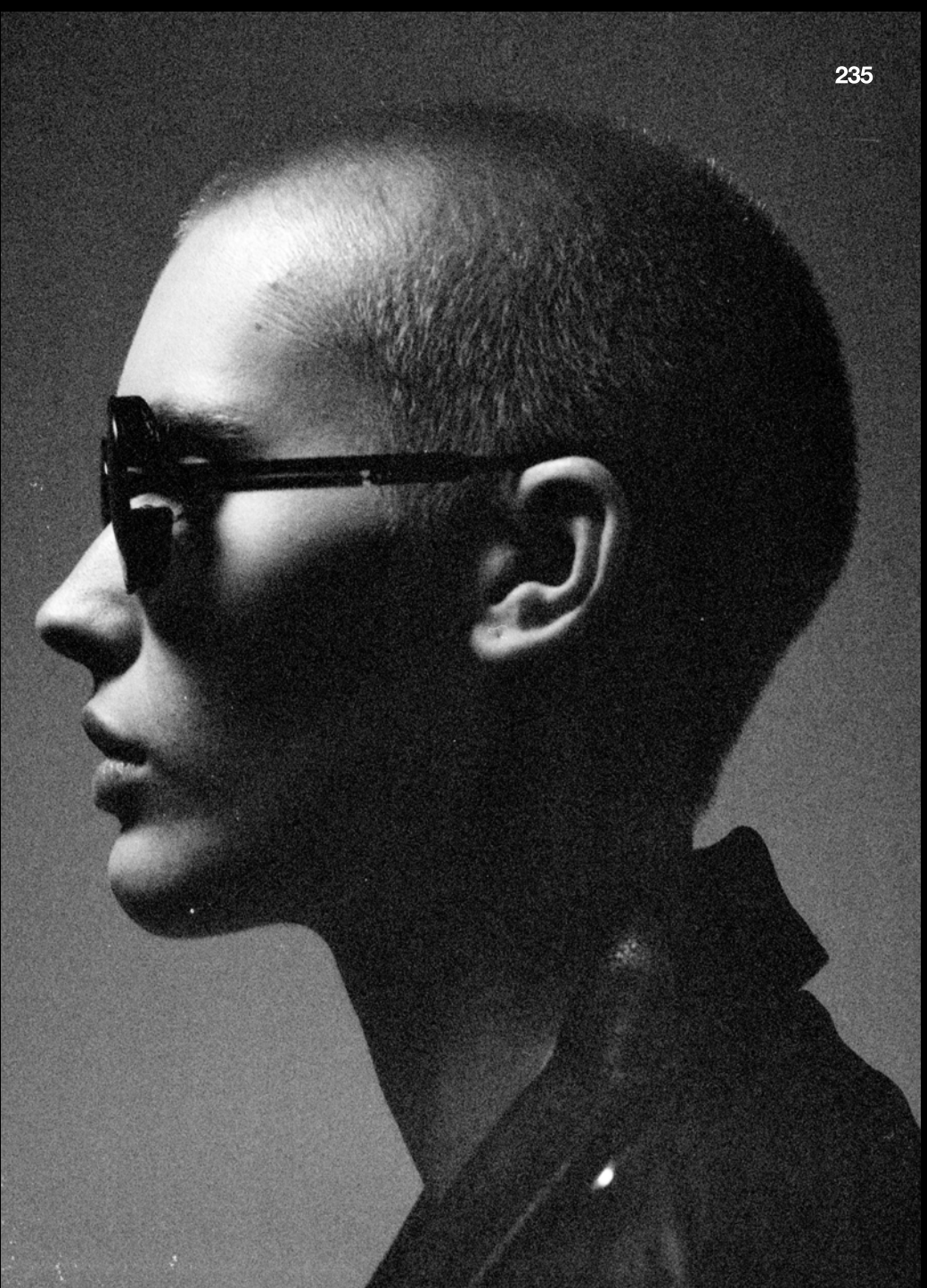BETWEEN BLOCKBUSTERS AND DRAMATIC AD CAMPAIGNS, THESE VISUALS LEVERAGE DEEP SHADOWS, MUTED TONES, AND DRAMATIC CONTRASTS TO EVOKE EMOTION AND INTRIGUE.

EVOKE AUDIENCE EMOTION AND INTRIGUE WITH AUTHENTIC DARK IMAGERY AT STILLS.COM.
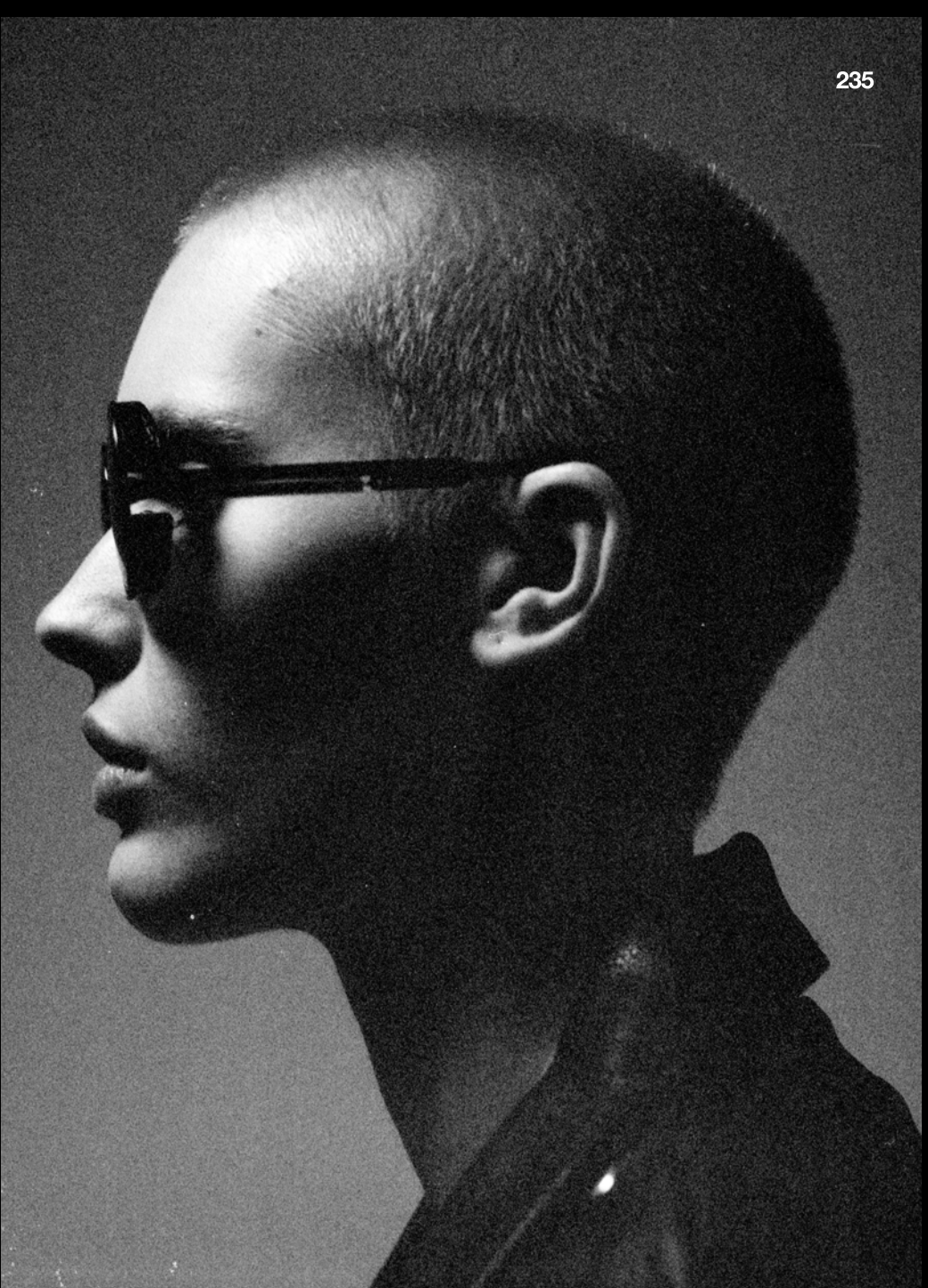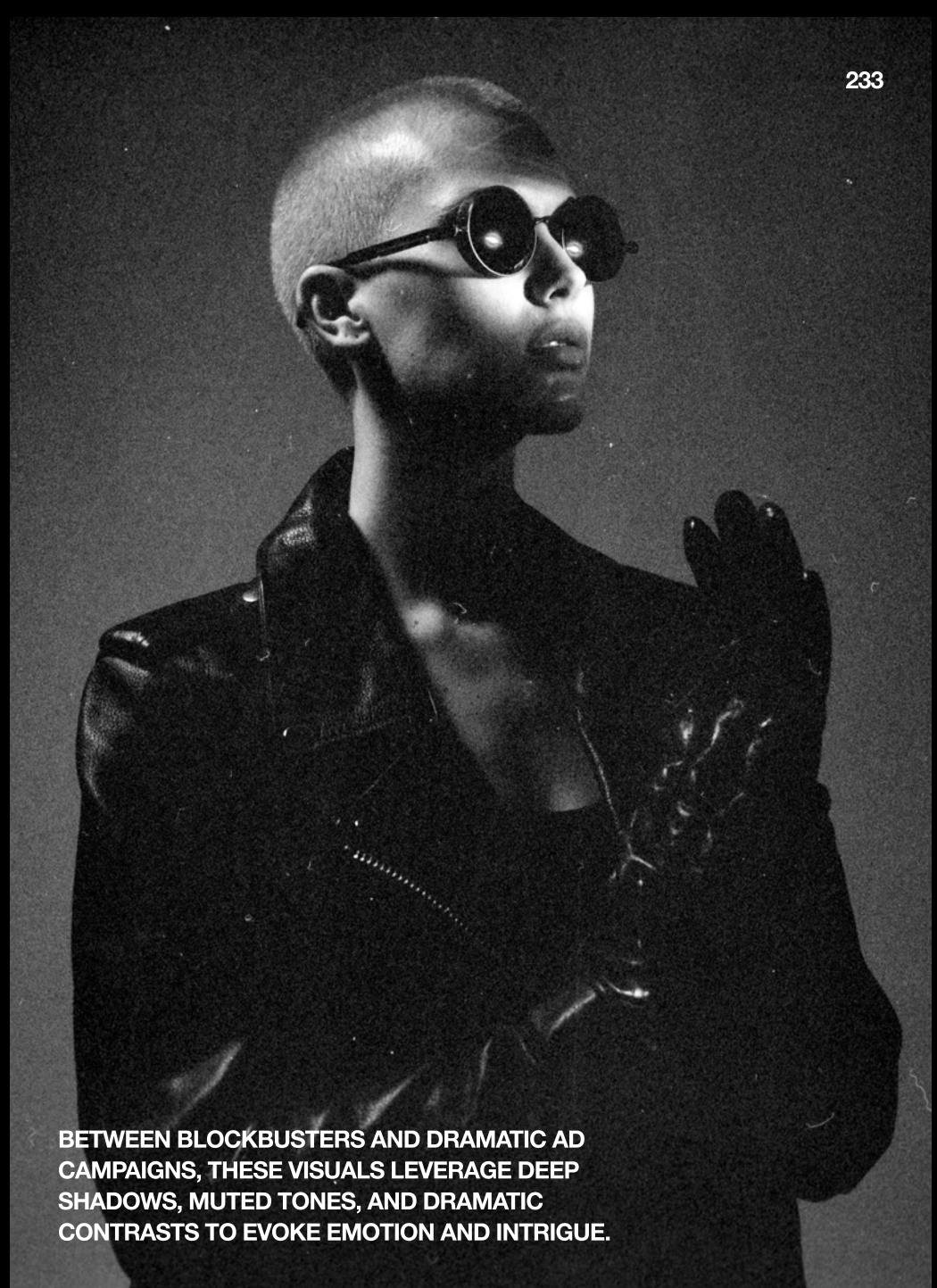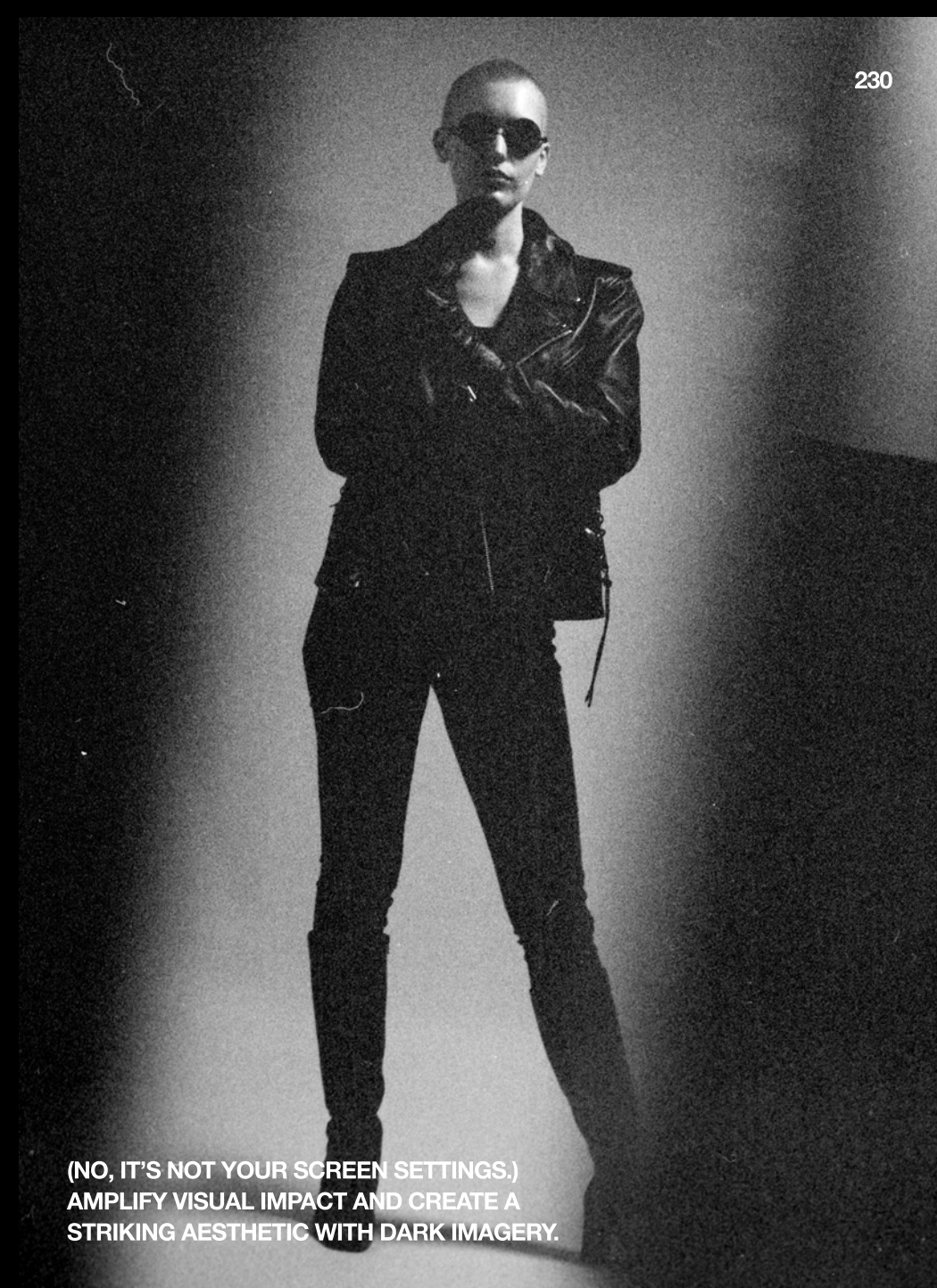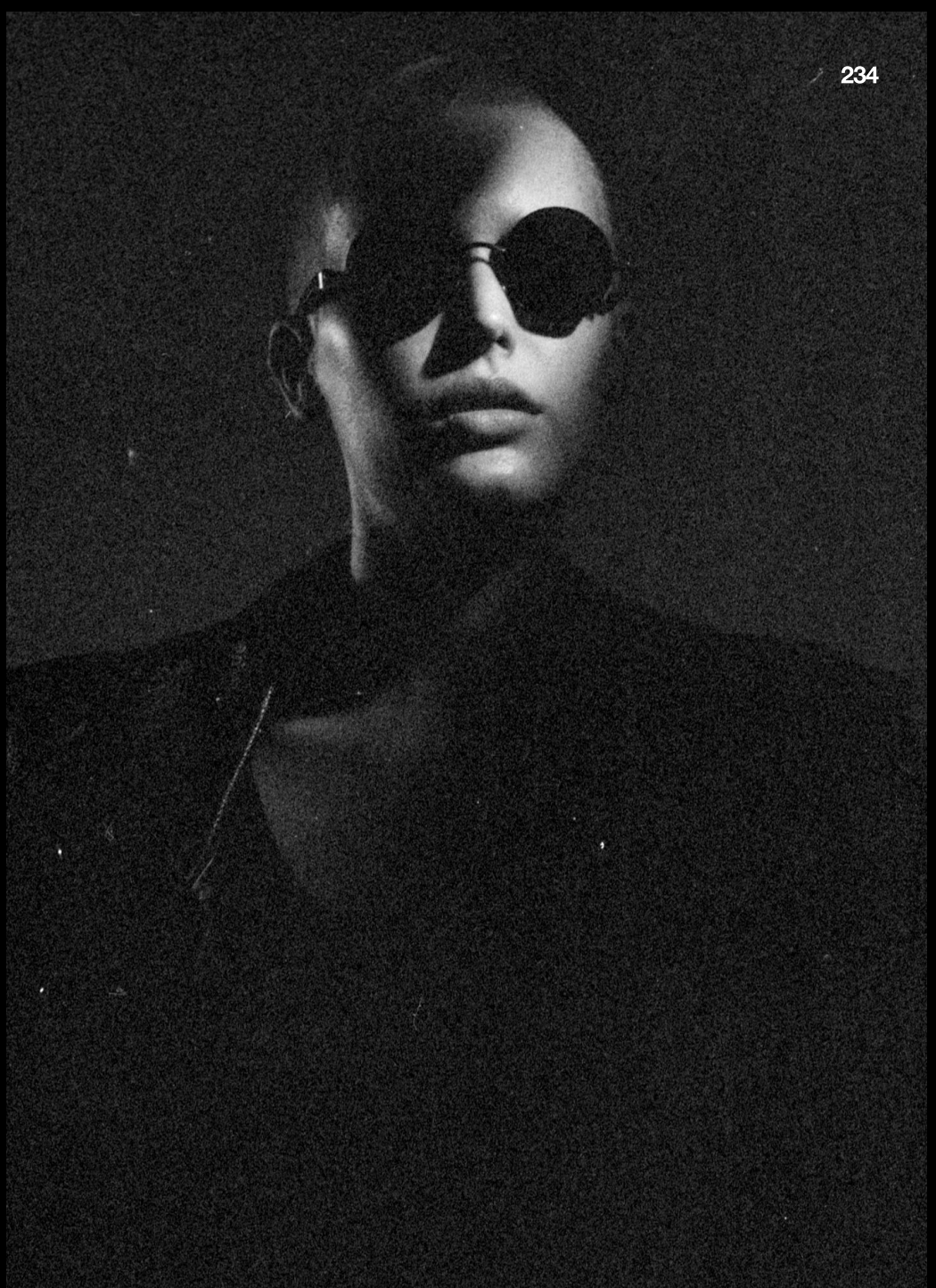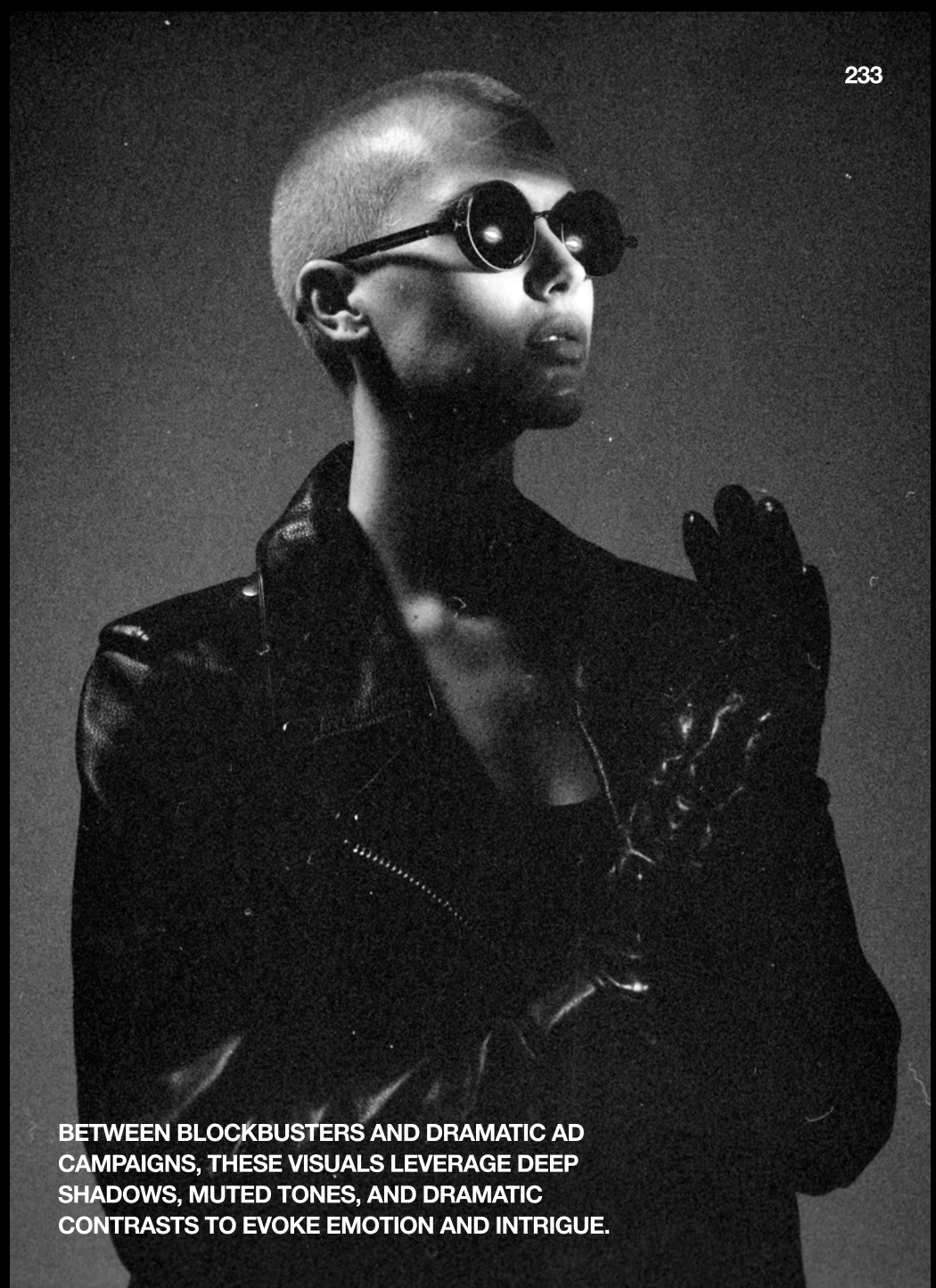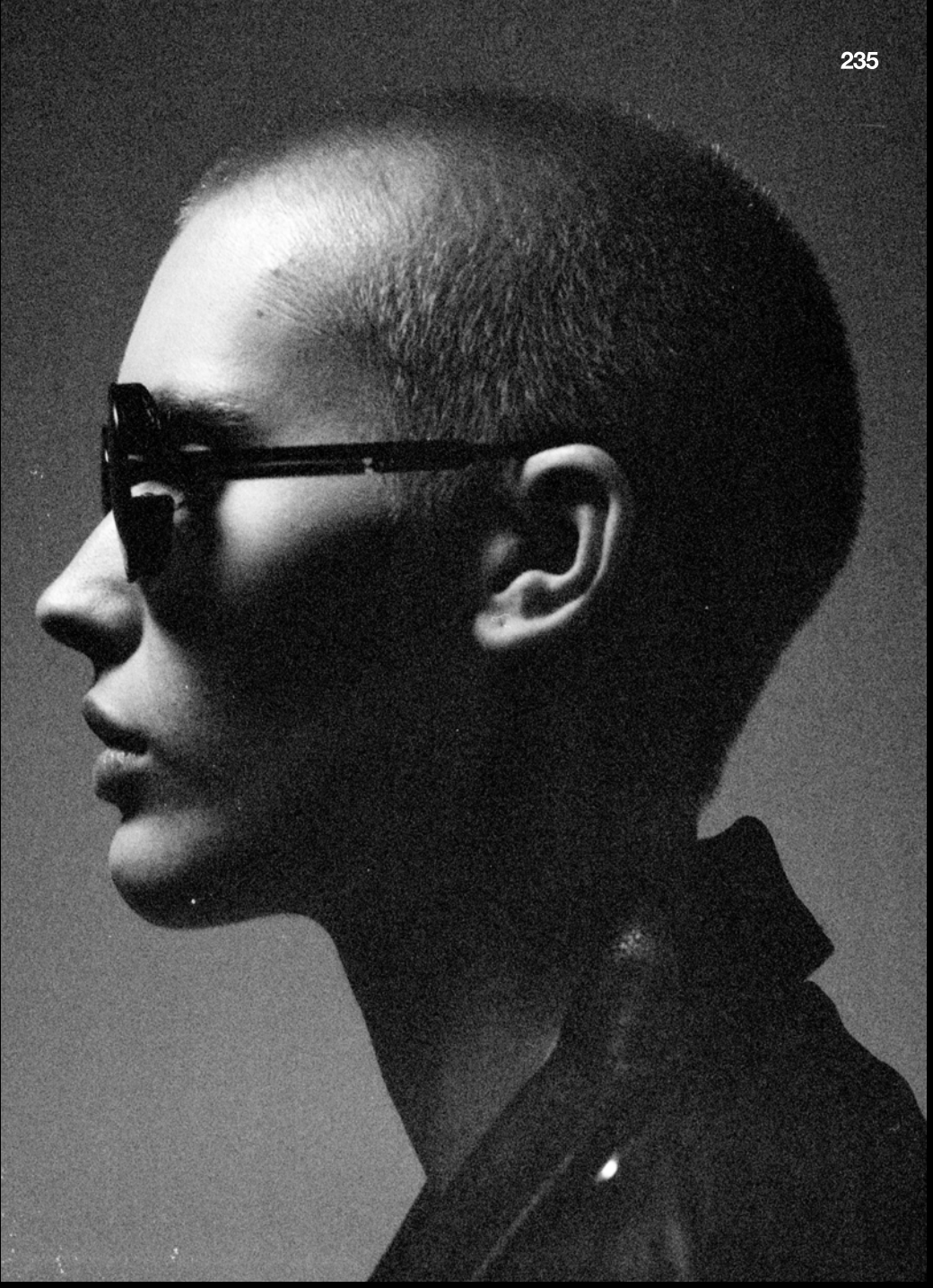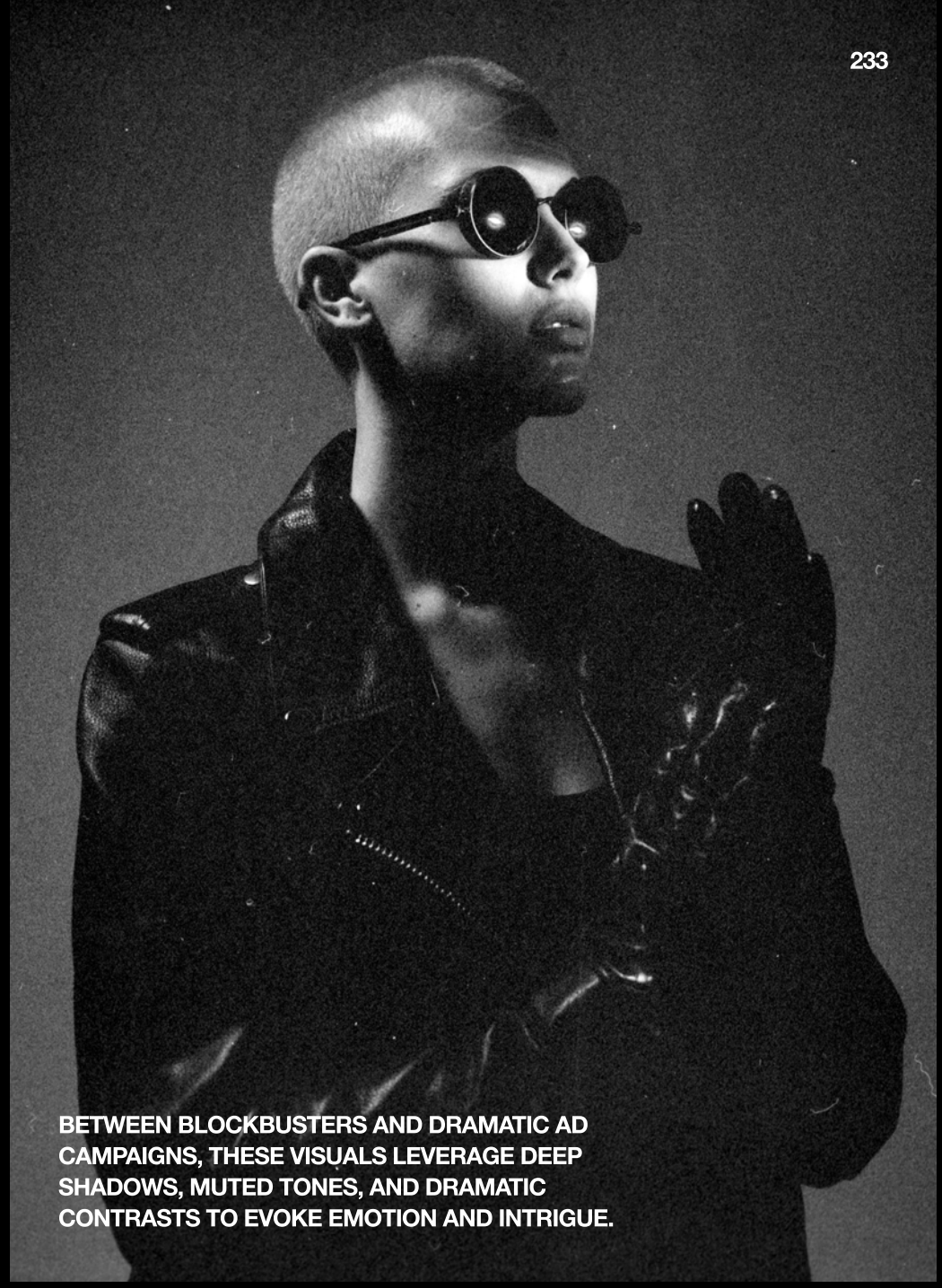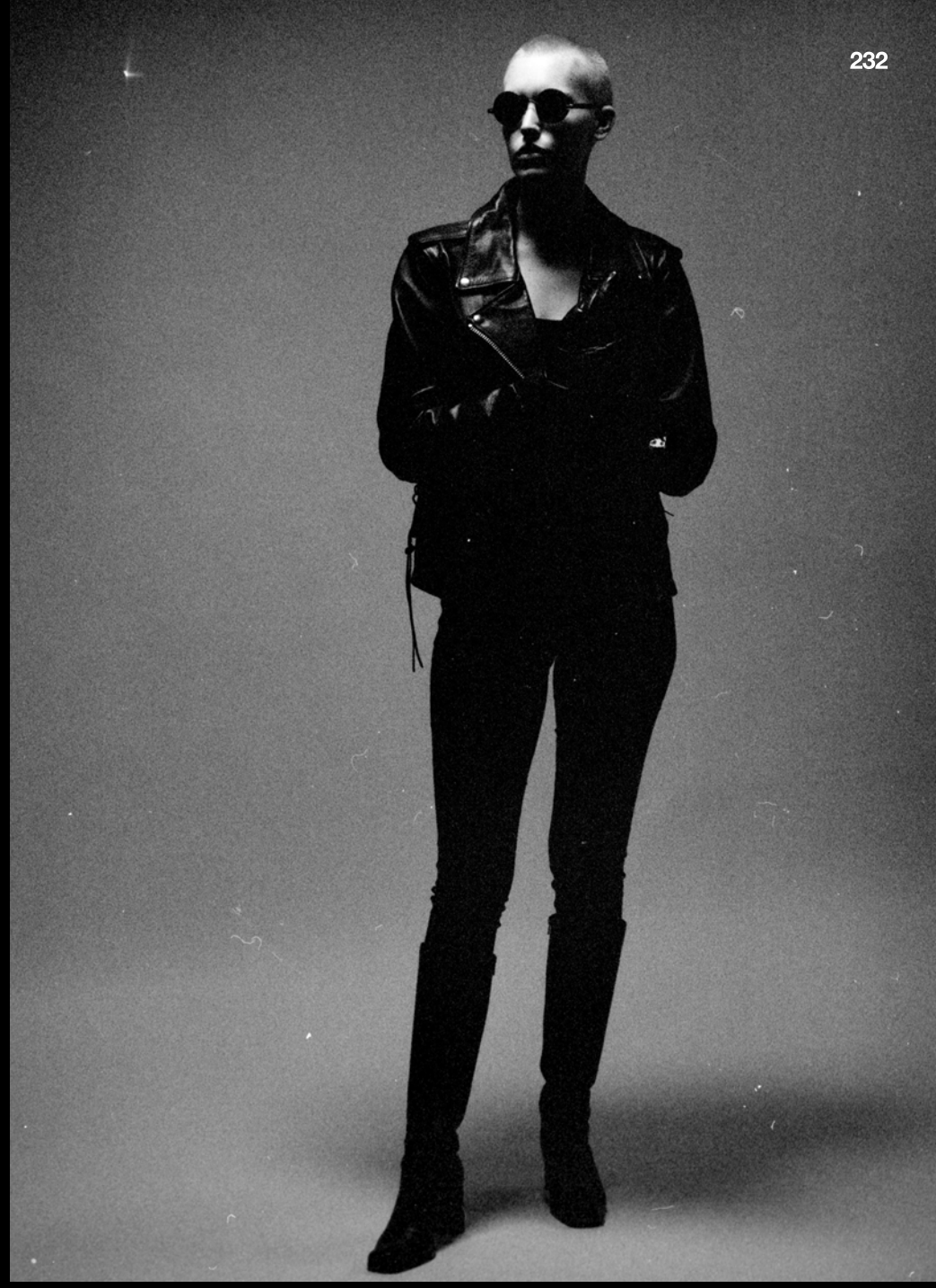
WILLIAM DESENA
#2914

FLORIAN FATTON
#301809

EWAN MCLOUGHLIN
#278557

RACHAEL GALIPO
#351432

EREN SARIGUL
#260644

JAKE WANGNER
#31674

ARMEN MNATSAKANJAN
#211267

VINCENT MEJIA
#282542

VIJAY SARATHY
#316416

KORBINIAN GRAD
#272994

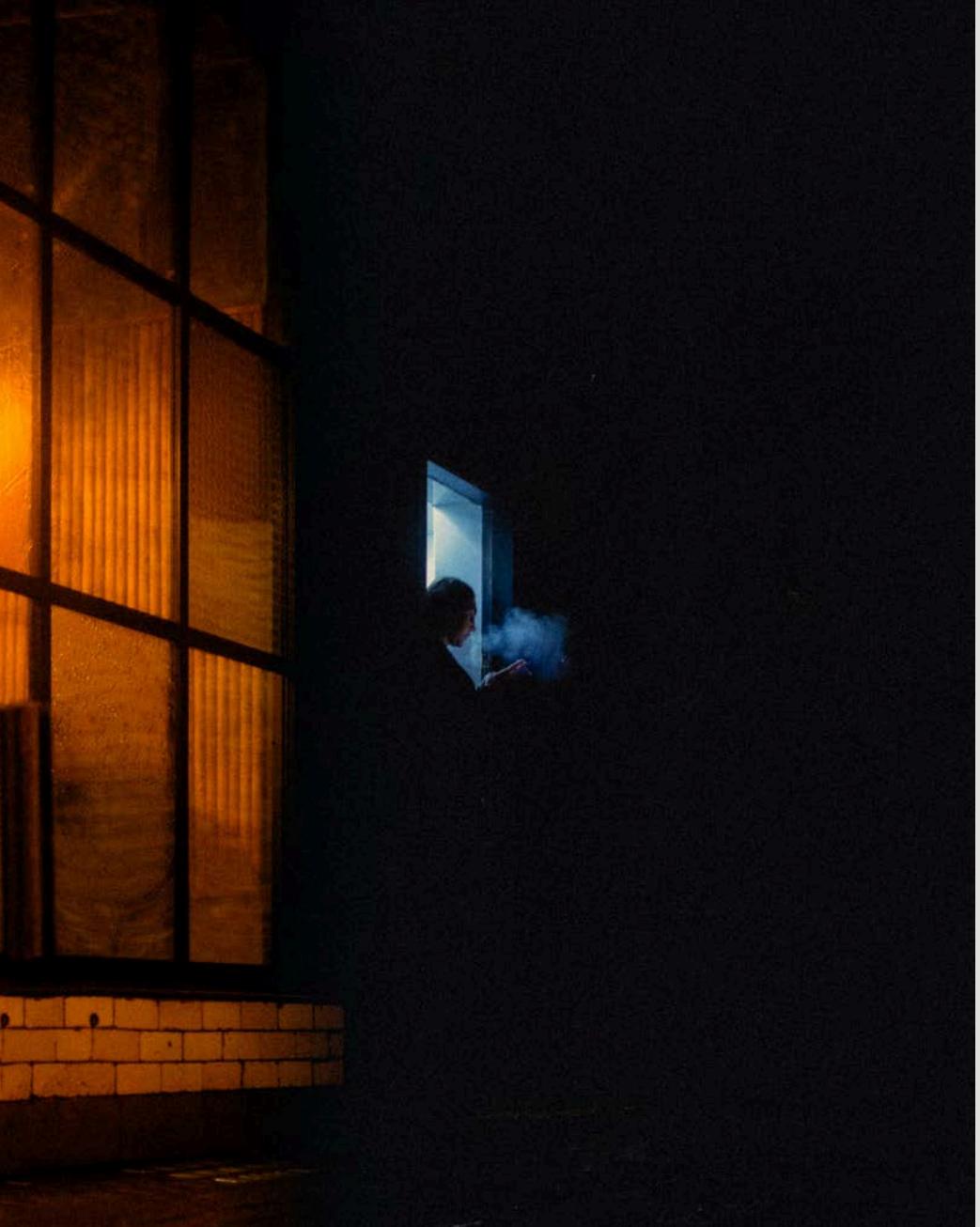**ZACHARIAH HAGY**
#344944

ANNIKA KAFCALOUDIS
#33178

"Flash On"

If you aim to grab attention and feel effortlessly cool, this is your time.

Whether it's a high-end brand or a brand looking to feel more relatable, high-key flash photography is increasingly being used to create bold, high-energy visuals. "There's a higher need for things to feel authentic and 'real' in the digital space as we move forward," Stefania says. "We're going to see more flash photography that displays the real and raw."

This nostalgic style, characterized by direct lighting and vivid subject isolation, feels dynamic and draws attention, especially if your audience appreciates the Y2K aesthetic.

Mary Caroline Russell
#240318

Lauren Withrow
#312588

Noe Langronier
#351441

Delaney Allen
#215177

Xavier Autrey Holschneider
#341093

Create Bold,
High-Energy
Visuals

Tap Into the Y2K
Aesthetic

This nostalgic style,
characterized by
direct lighting and
vivid subject
isolation, feels
dynamic and draws
immediate attention
—especially if your
audience
appreciates the Y2K
aesthetic.

8

Draw Immediate
Audience Attention

"There's a higher
need for things to
feel authentic and
'real' in the digital
space as we move
forward. We're
going to see more
flash photography
that displays the real
and raw."
–Victoria Stefania

Spark Instant
Nostalgia

81
24

Explore More "Flash On"
Photography on Stills

GRAB ATTENTION AND
FEEL EFFORTLESSLY COOL.
THIS IS YOUR MOMENT

Photography In Design Trend Report

2025

Trend In Action

"FLASH ON"

Create Bold, High-Energy
Visuals

Spark Instant Nostalgia

Spotlight Raw Moments

Capture (And Keep)
Audience Attention

Feel Authentic And Real
In The Digital Space

Tap Into The Y2K
Aesthetic

THIS NOSTALGIC STYLE, CHARACTERIZED BY DIRECT LIGHTING AND VIVID SUBJECT ISOLATION, FEELS DYNAMIC AND
DRAWS IMMEDIATE ATTENTION—ESPECIALLY IF YOUR AUDIENCE APPRECIATES THE Y2K AESTHETIC.

ALY KULA
#277178
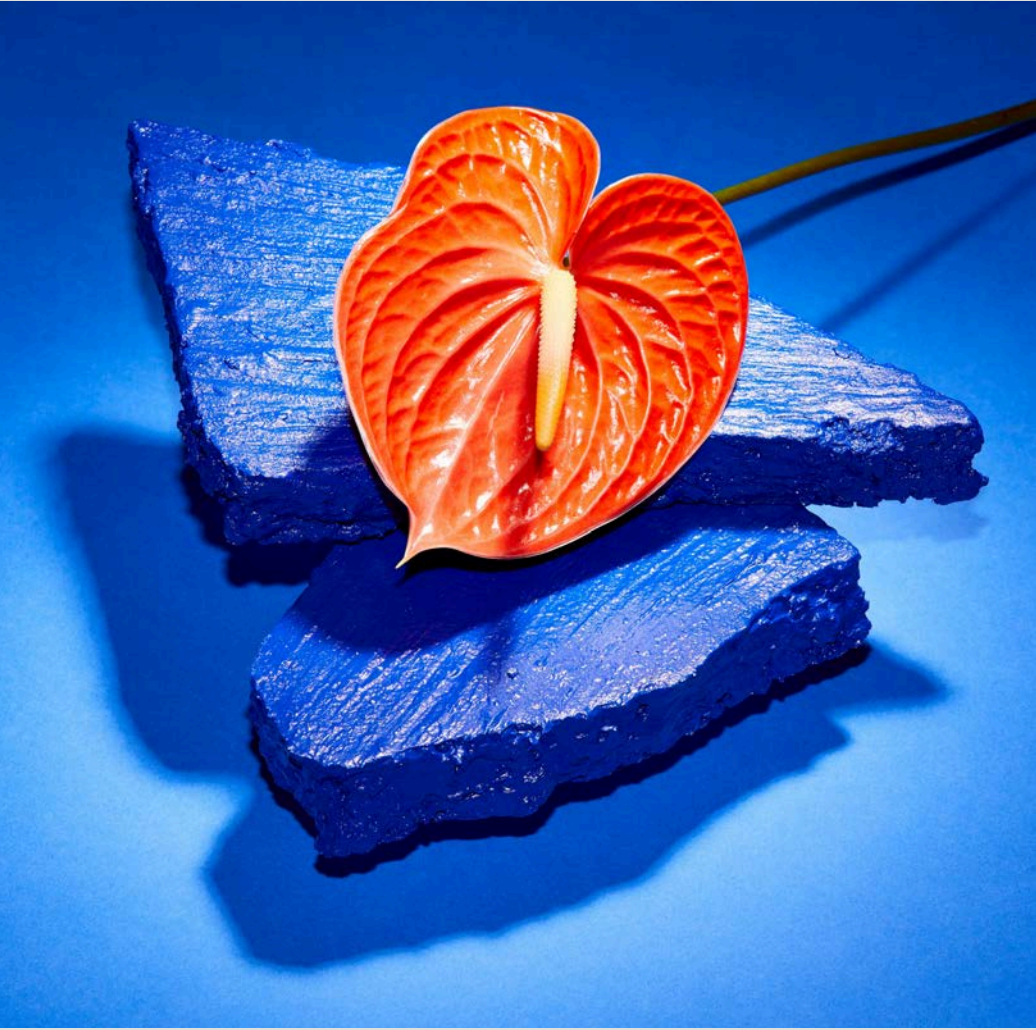

ALEXA JADE
#313888

GIANLUCA MORTAROTTI
#37943

ARNAUD MORO
#343665

BETHANY REED
#268743

ERICA HINCK
#248482

ALEXANDER SILVA
#338625

JAYMIE BELKNAP
#351600

BLYTHE THOMAS
#4238

ASHTON DAVIS
#352367

JERICHO PATRICK
#344220

GS & CO
#68830

JPEG Artifacting

Noise is out—artifacts are in.

Incorporating JPEG artifacts into images is a rising trend that adds a raw, intentionally imperfect aesthetic. "We're seeing a significant shift from digital to 'IRL' culture, where people are increasingly rejecting hyper-modernity and embracing a sense of grounded tradition," says London-based graphic designer and brand consultant Joe Diver.

These digital imperfections tap into early-internet nostalgia while offering a unique visual texture that contrasts with today's overly polished visuals. This experimental approach also adds a "found on the internet" feel, which can help brands appear more grounded and innovative.
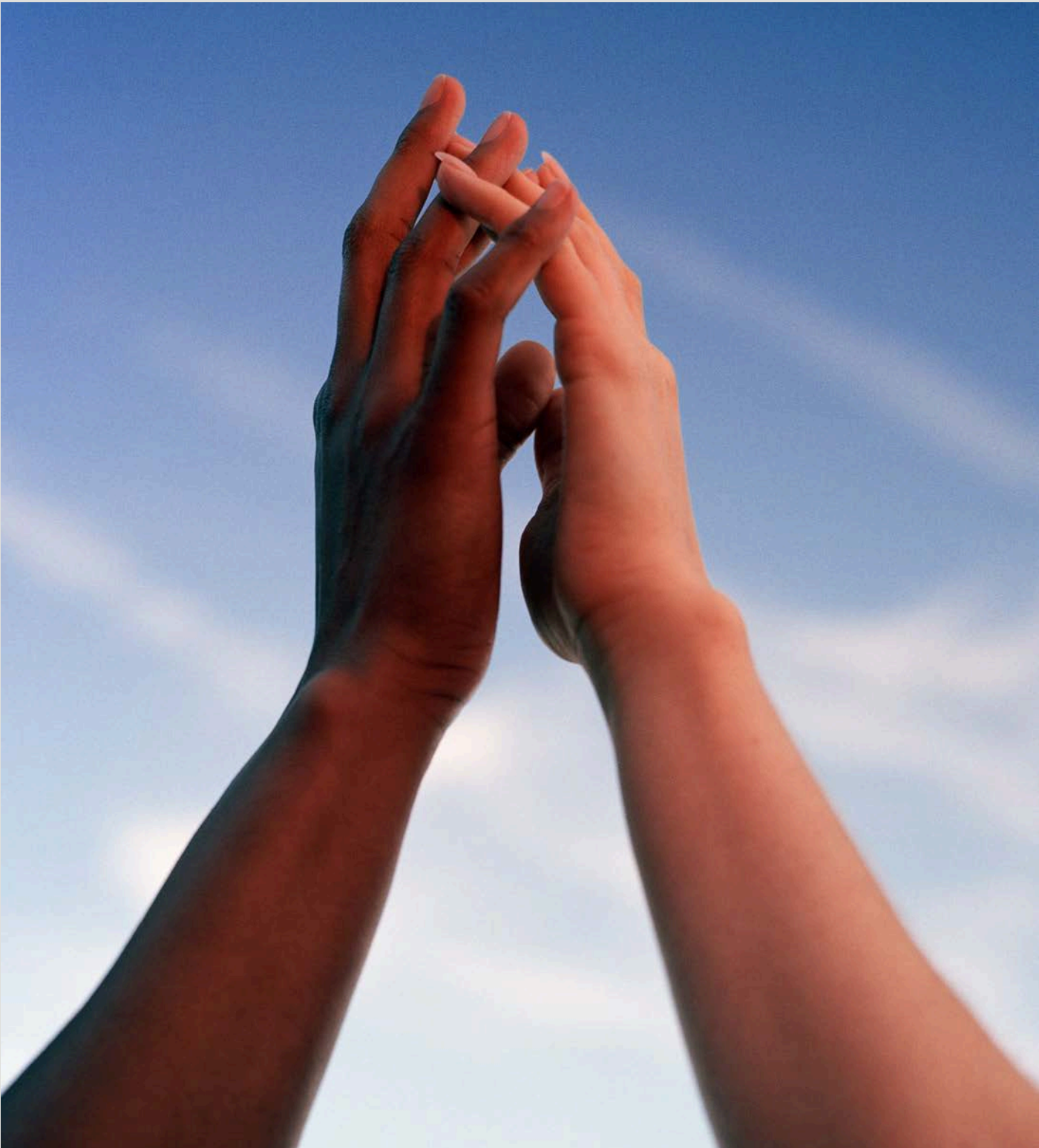
Grade Solomon
#209038

Nathan Cyprys
#328763

Rachel Eblin
#333443

Pascal Schonlau
#307428

Anne Holiday
#38109

JPEG ARTIFACTING

ADD A RAW, INTENTIONALLY IMPERFECT AESTHETIC · REJECT HYPER-MODERNITY · ADD A RAW, INTENTIONALLY IMPERFECT AESTHETIC · REJECT HYPER-MODERNITY

REJECT HYPER-MODERNITY · ADD A RAW, INTENTIONALLY IMPERFECT AESTHETIC · REJECT HYPER-MODERNITY · ADD A RAW, INTENTIONALLY IMPERFECT AESTHETIC

FORGET OVERLY POLISHED VISUALS · TAP INTO EARLY-INTERNET NOSTALGIA · FORGET OVERLY POLISHED VISUALS · TAP INTO EARLY-INTERNET NOSTALGIA

TAP INTO EARLY-INTERNET NOSTALGIA · FORGET OVERLY POLISHED VISUALS · TAP INTO EARLY-INTERNET NOSTALGIA · FORGET OVERLY POLISHED VISUALS

NOISE IS OUT · ARTIFACTS ARE IN · NOISE IS OUT · ARTIFACTS ARE IN
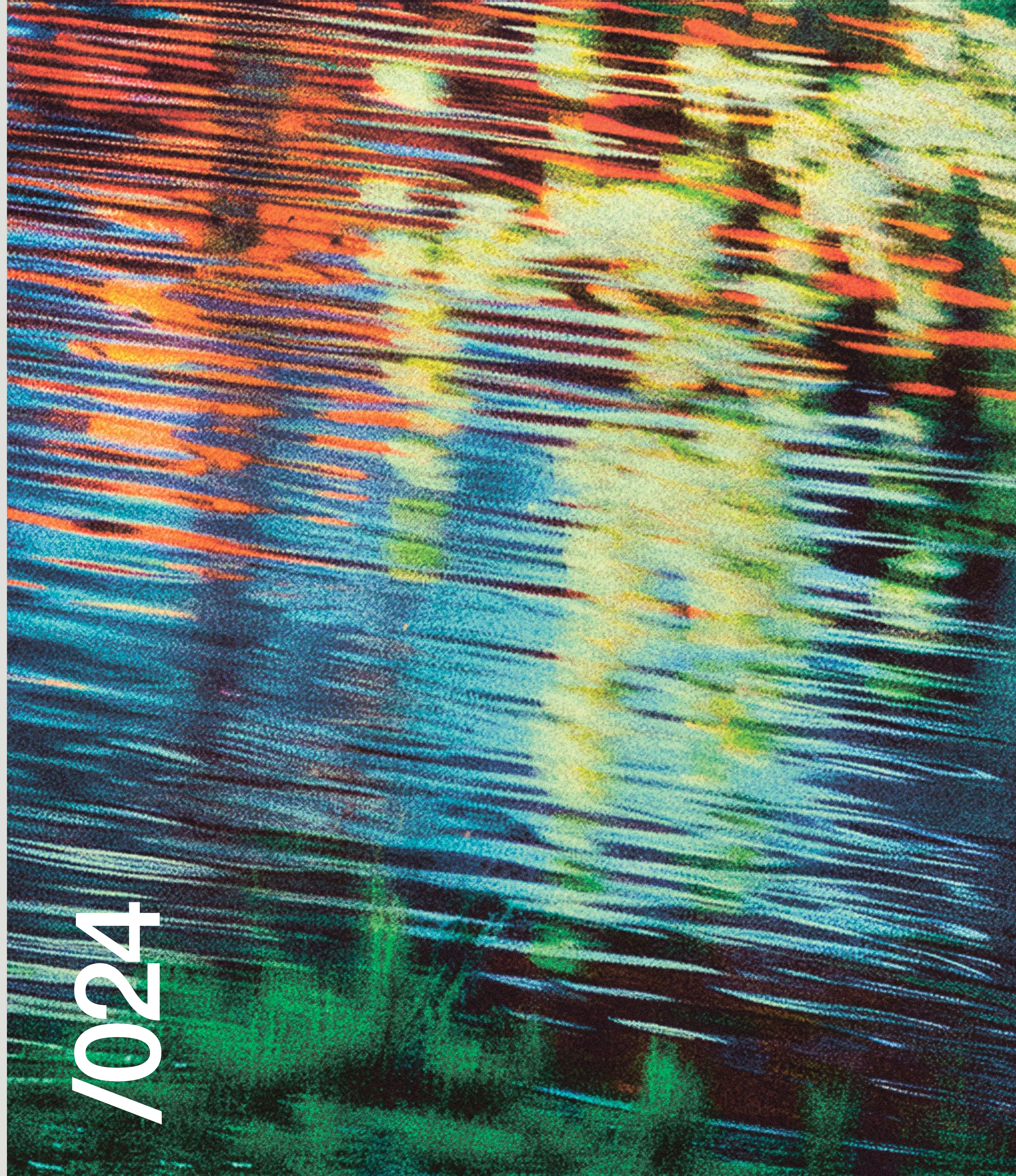
ARTIFACTS ARE IN · NOISE IS OUT · ARTIFACTS ARE IN · NOISE IS OUT

ADD A "FOUND ON THE INTERNET FEEL" TO YOUR PROJECTS WITH AUTHENTIC IMAGERY YOU CAN ONLY LICENSE ON STILLS.

Amet144

/024/

Add A Raw,
Intentionally Imperfect
Aesthetic With Artifacting

Tap Into The Early-Internet
Nostalgia That Instantly
Connects With Audiences

Embrace A Sense Of
Grounded Tradition

Photography In Design Trend Report

2025

Trend In Action

JPEG ARTIFACTING

Noise Is Out—Artifacts Are In

Go Experimental

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT,
JUST AUTHENTIC

Reject Hyper-Modernity

OFFER AN EXPERIENCE THAT
CONTRASTS WITH TODAY'S
OVERLY POLISHED VISUALS

Break The Rules

INCORPORATE A RAW,
INTENTIONALLY
IMPERFECT AESTHETIC

Forget Digital Culture

ADD A UNIQUE VISUAL TEXTURE
THAT SPARKS INSTANT NOSTALGIA

Tap Into IRL Culture

CHANNEL A "FOUND ON
THE INTERNET" FEEL

NATHAN CYPRYS
#330742

STEVEN CLOUSE
#197345

ZACHARY HERTZMAN
#224913

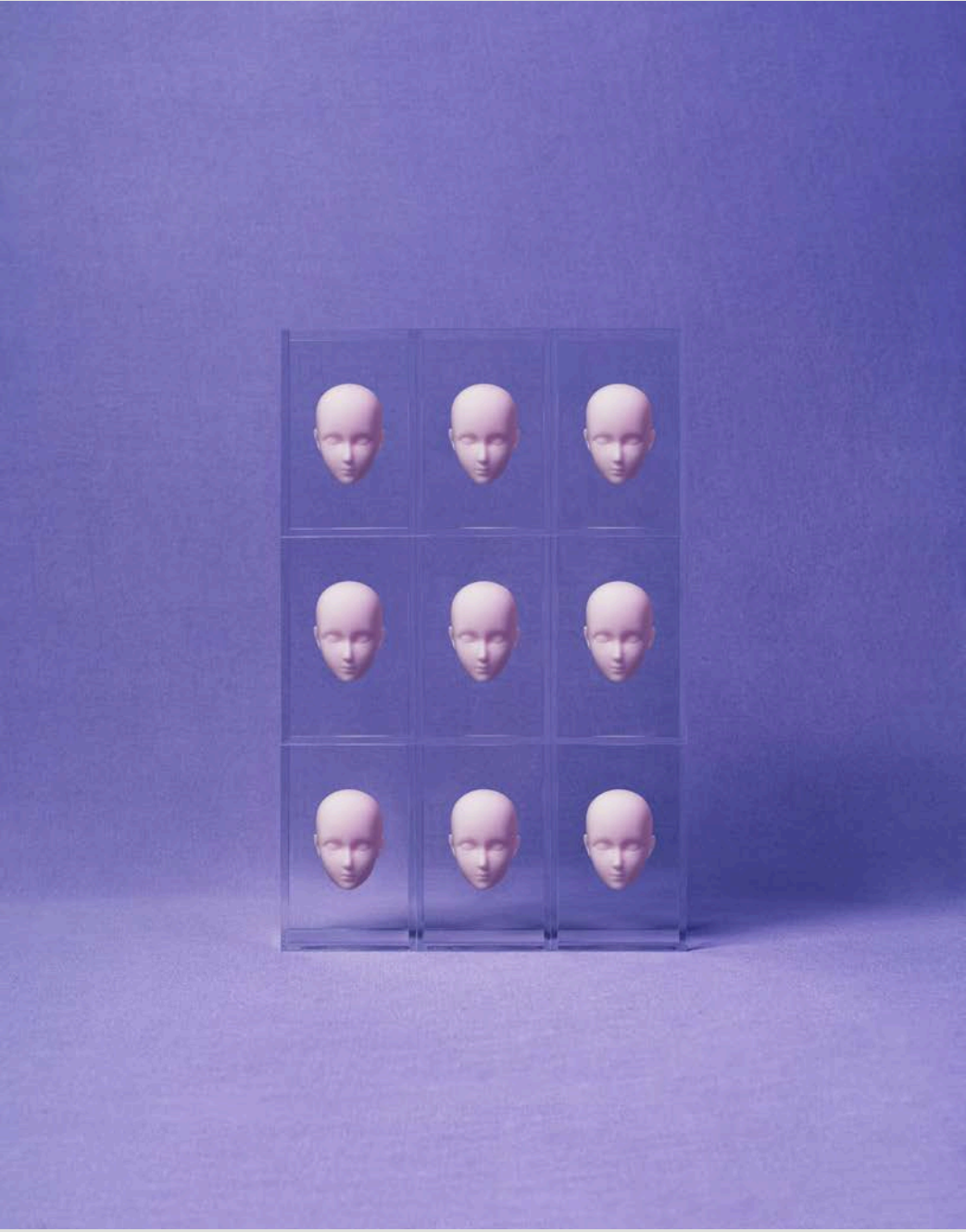SEAN HAGWELL
#307021

ILKA & FRANZ
#307951

JOHNO FAHERTY
#272579

MARGEAUX WALTER
#336723

LEVIN LEE
#291484

ALISON SCARPULLA
#222649
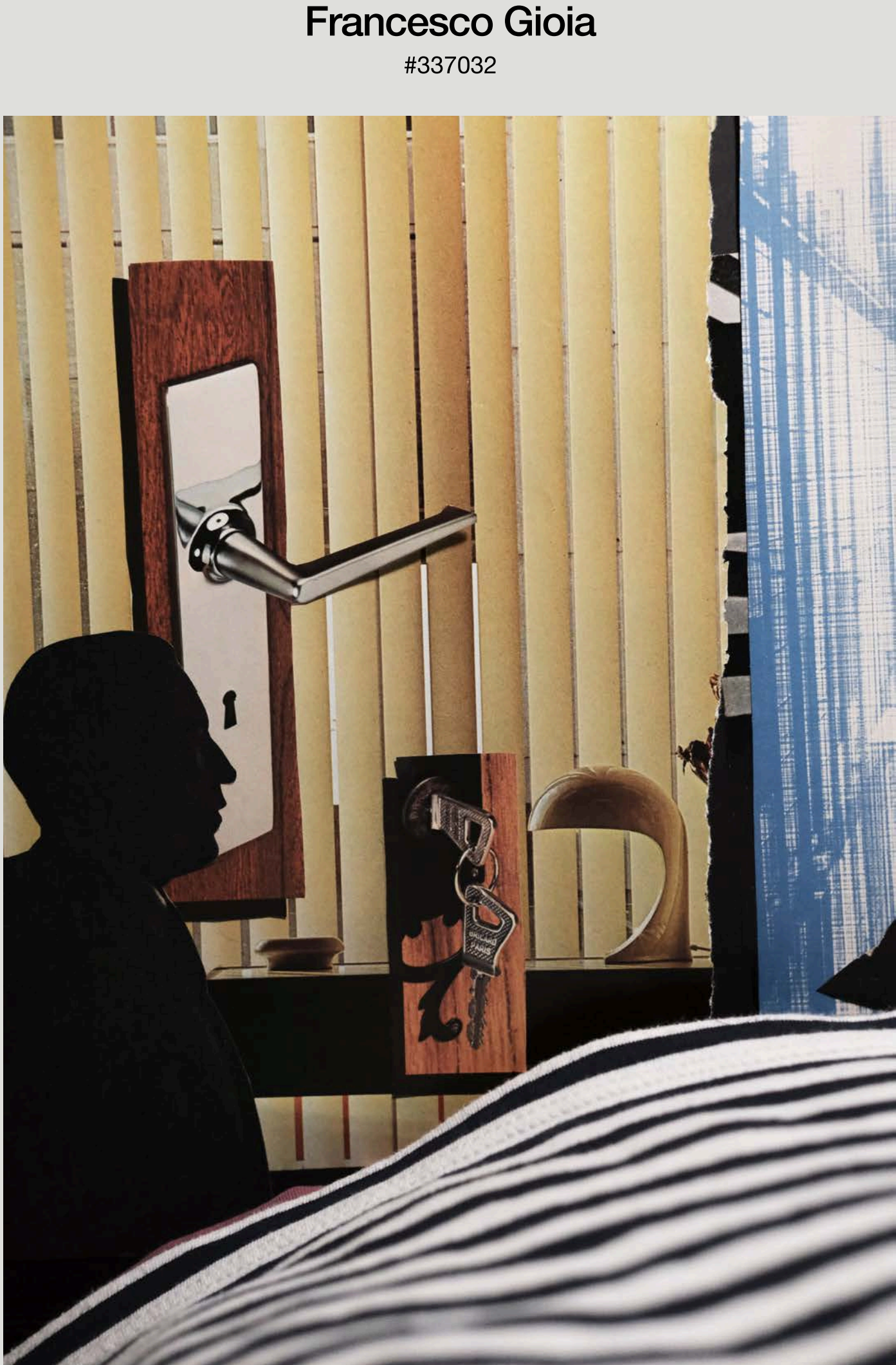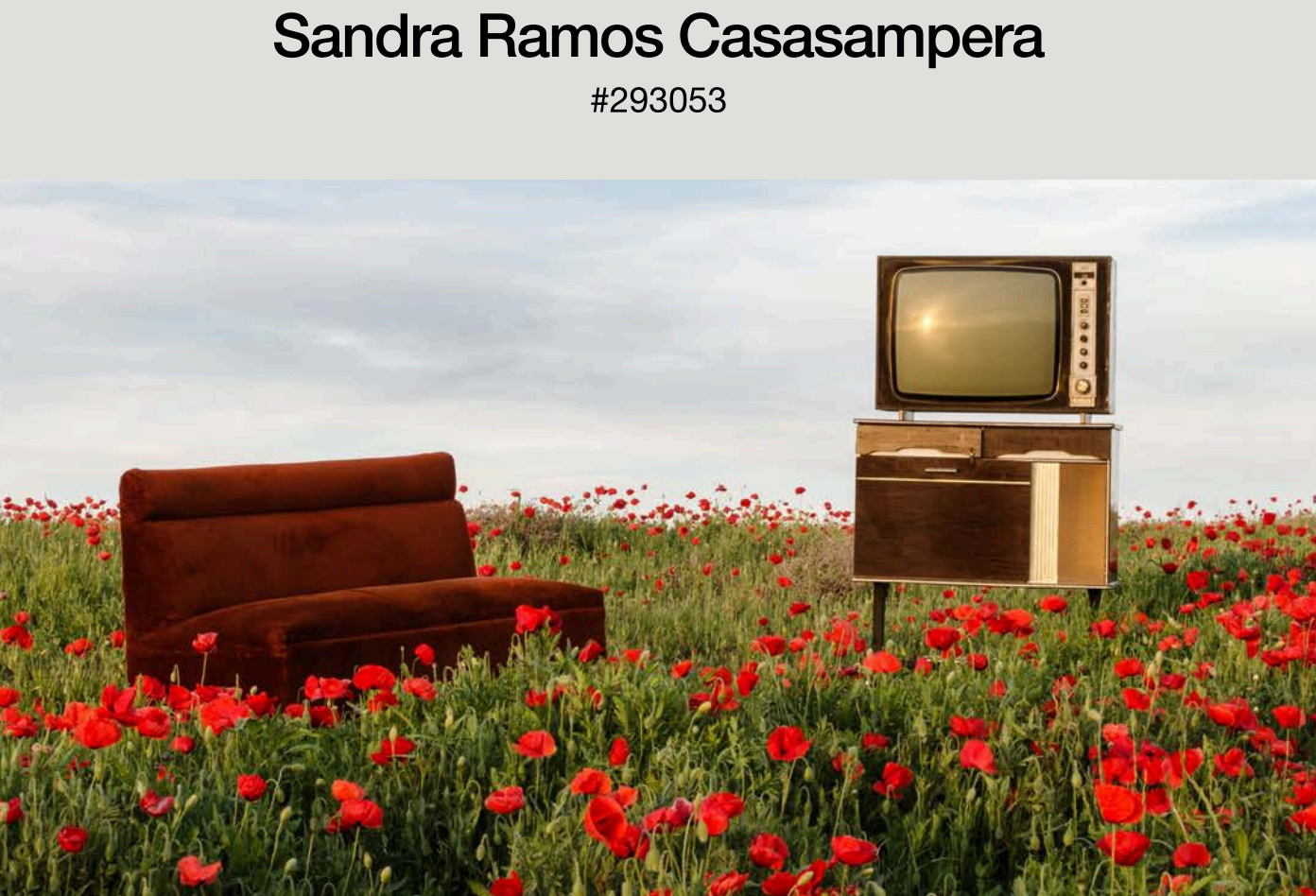

RACHEL EBLIN
#333099

SARAH MCCOLGAN
#222399

&WALSH
#235392

Collage

Cut it, layer it, mess it up—collage is back.

This trend is about breaking the rules and having fun with your visuals. "In a time when AI and automation are at the top of my mind, I've been drawn to trends with a human element," says New York-based designer and illustrator Kirsten Holland.

By leaning into the imperfections and organized chaos of the process, collage work can produce designs that feel organic and one-of-a-kind in a crowded visual landscape. Remember: the more weird you get with it, the more you stand out.

Francesco Gioia
#337032

Pascal Schonlau
#306537

Layla Sailor
#261042

Sandra Ramos Casasampera
#293053

Zachariah Hagy
#350560

MESS IT UP

CUT IT UP

COLLAGE

FORGET THE LIMITATIONS AND LEAN INTO THE
ORGANIZED CHAOS OF YOUR PROJECTS

CREATE SOMETHING ORGANIC TO STAND OUT
IN A CROWDED VISUAL LANDSCAPE

THE MORE WEIRD YOU GET WITH IT,
THE MORE YOU STAND OUT

HAVE FUN AND
BREAK THE RULES

LEAN · INTO · THE · CHAOS

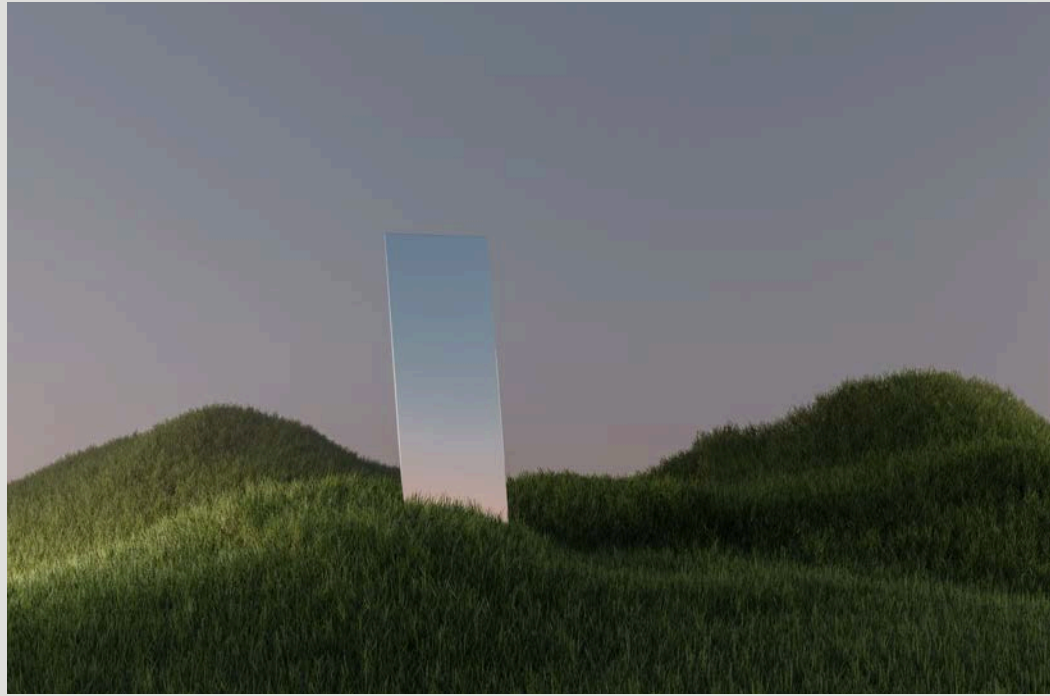HAVE · FUN · AND · BREAK · THE · RULES

S T

☀
COLLAGE

Stand Out in a Crowded Visual Landscape
Explore exclusive pre-cleared imagery for your projects at stills.com.

GS & CO
#191222

ALINA NECHAEVA
#303771

FRANCESCO GIOIA
#213679

ANDREW MCCARTHY
#289416

CHRISTIAN EKEIGWE
#320133

JADE STEPHENS
#270936
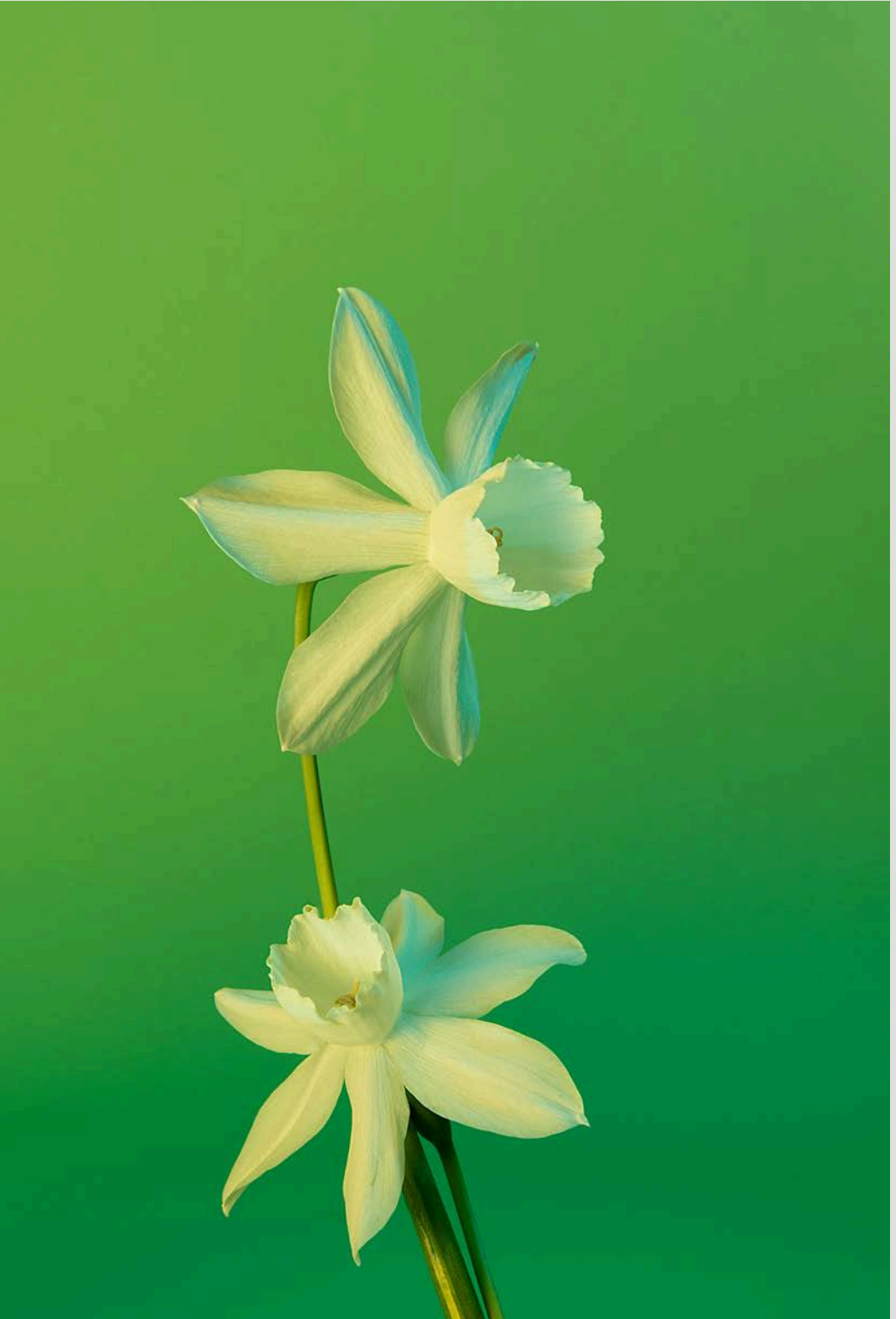

JORDAN LANCASTER-GRAHAM
#267518

ILKA & FRANZ
#287908

HANNAH DIMMITT
#333195

CHAD PEACOCK
#292911

OMAR BELATTAR
#328063

ROWAN SPRAY
#255676

DESIGN TRENDS

DESIGNED BY

POSTER 01

DAYDRE

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

HALF-FINISHED
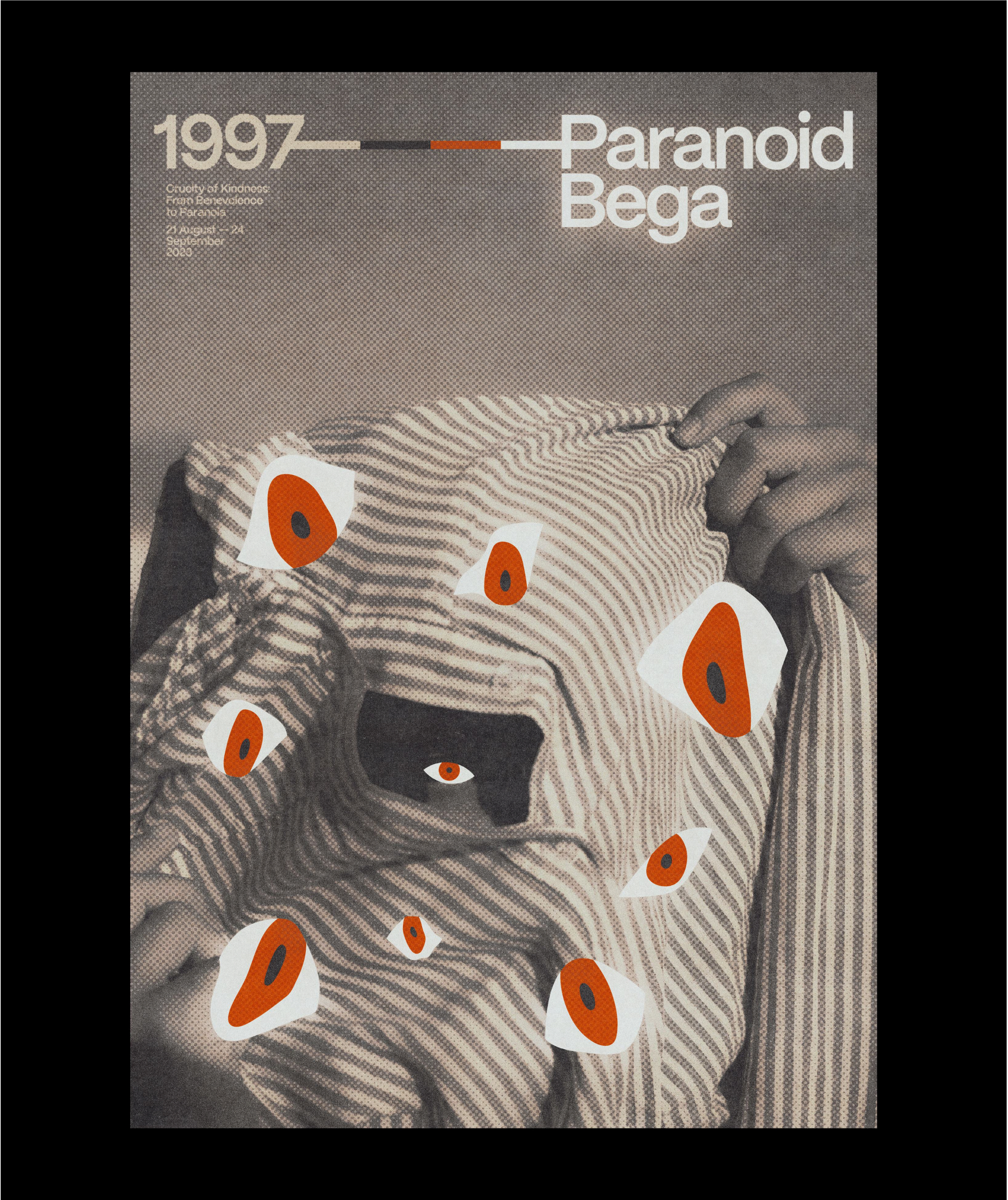
CUT AND GLUE

SERIFS ARE KING

Half-Finished

PSA: perfectly polished is boring.

This year, designers and brands are embracing a half-finished, hand-drawn look that feels raw and real. "We've started to see the return to character and personality in identities as brands reach into their past to pull out a handful of things that make them truly unique and feel ownable only to them," says Wieden + Kennedy creative director Nik Reed.

By blending illustrative, imperfect elements with minimal layouts, these visuals create a sense of approachability and craft. This stripped-back style challenges the hyper-polished norms of traditional design, standing out for its organic feel.


Kuvvat Ashyrov   01

Jesse Nyberg   02

Dani Hunt   03

Cut and Glue

Forget AI—the future of design is messy, personal, and human.

In an era of automation, these analog processes help creatives distinguish their work as human and authentic. "It's great to see gravitation toward more tactile projects," says Brighton-based graphic designer Dan George Hill. "It brings such a unique contrast to our increasingly digital world."
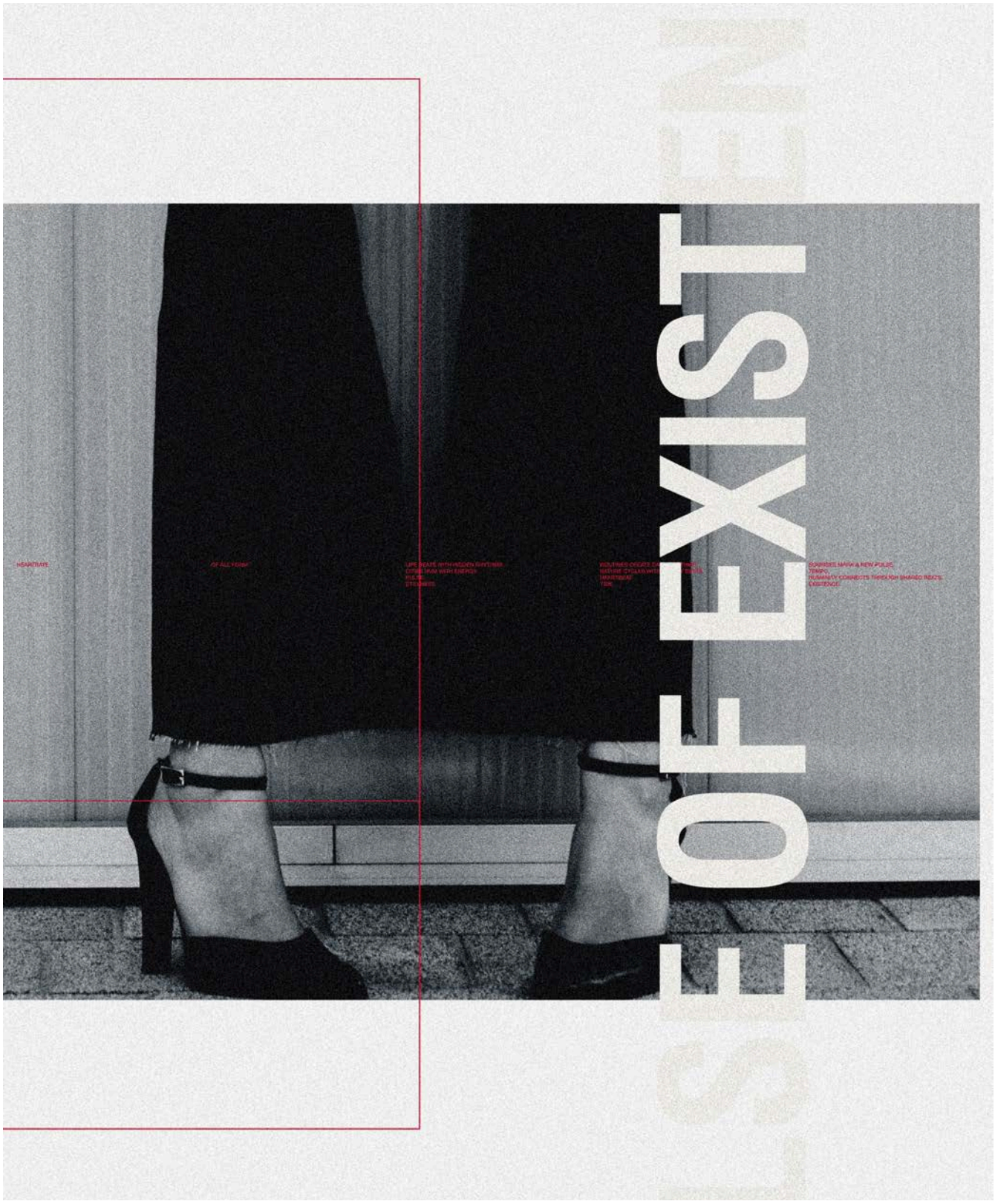
By physically assembling and reassembling printed materials, designers introduce imperfections that make the work feel personal and unique.
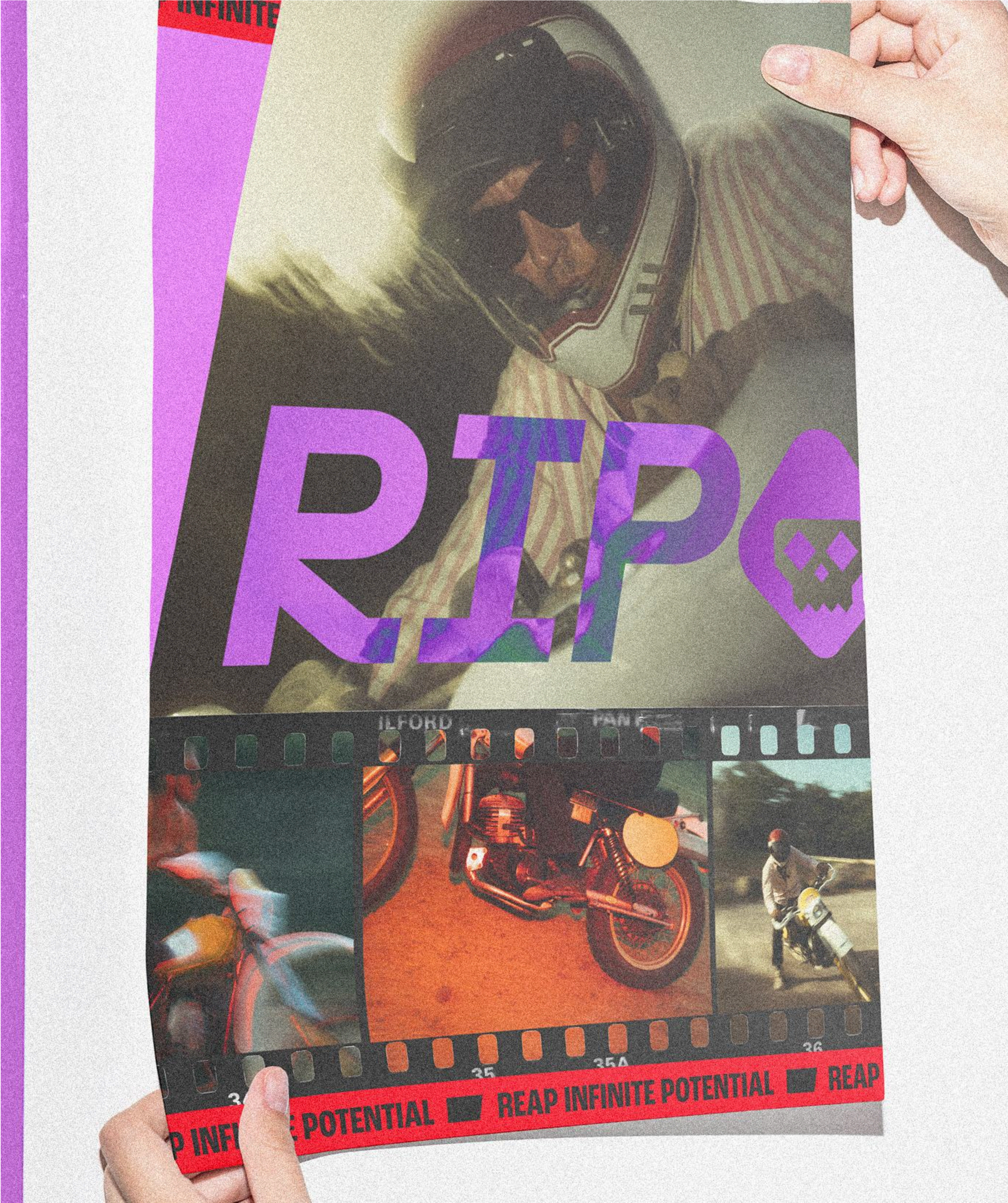
Victoria Stefania   02

Max Hofert   01

Joe Diver   03

Serifs Are King

**Serifs are back on top, and honestly, they deserve it.**

Designers are turning to serifs to counteract the overly digital aesthetic of modern typography. "It feels like a fusion of pre-tech and modern design, digital and physical, leaving a more lasting impression," says UK-based graphic designer and content creator Robert McCombe.

Serifs convey sophistication, heritage, and a sense of timelessness that resonates across industries. Everyone is trying to make their designs feel less like they were spat out of a computer, and serifs are a go-to for adding some old-school sophistication.
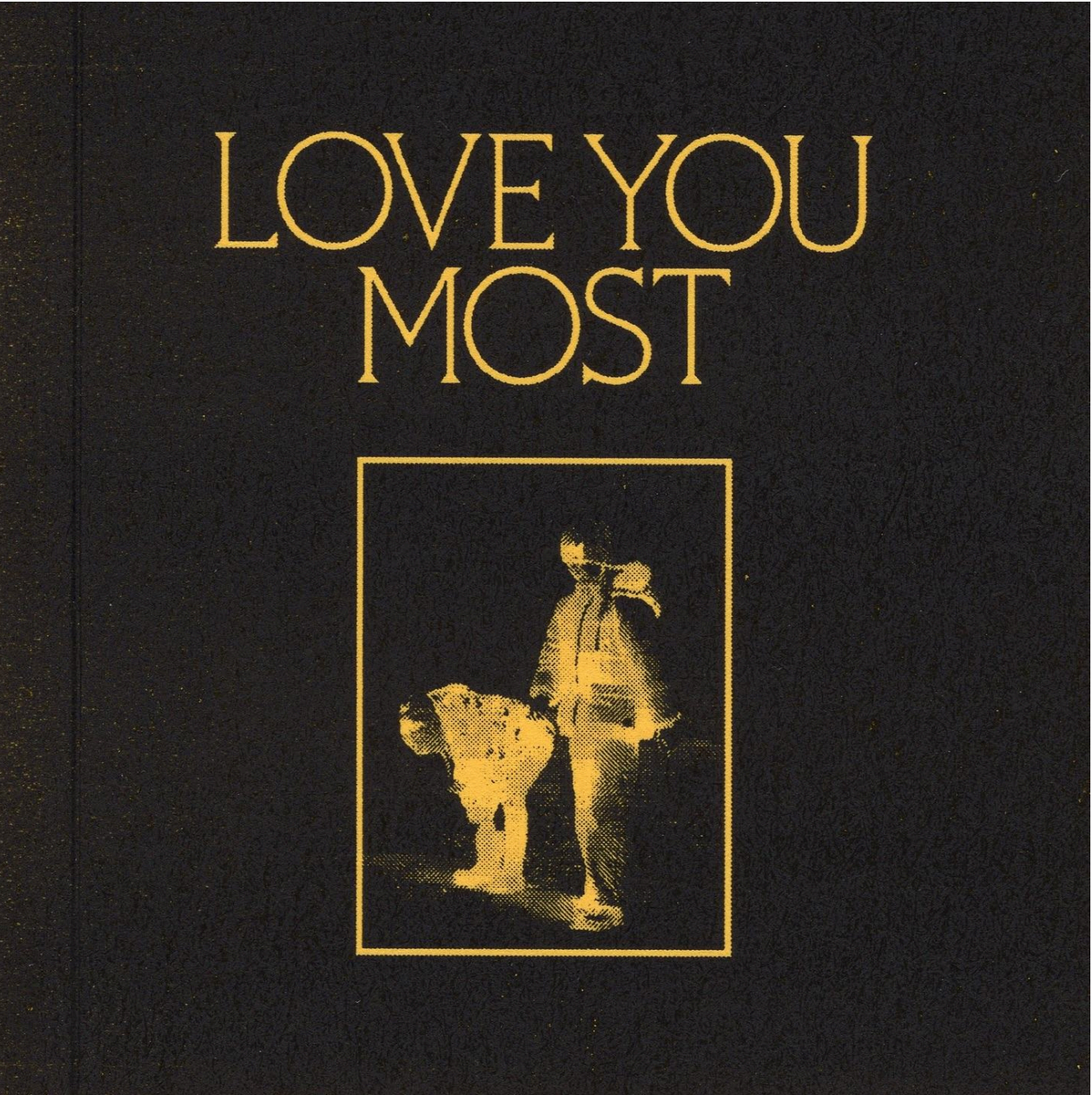
A great example of typography's ability to spark something can be seen with NYC-based agency &Walsh's Type of Feeling: an exciting foundry featuring a unique collection of fonts, each built around its own sentiment and mood.

YELLOW LEMON - TYPEFACE   @Jazheiman

Yellow Lemon

Balance
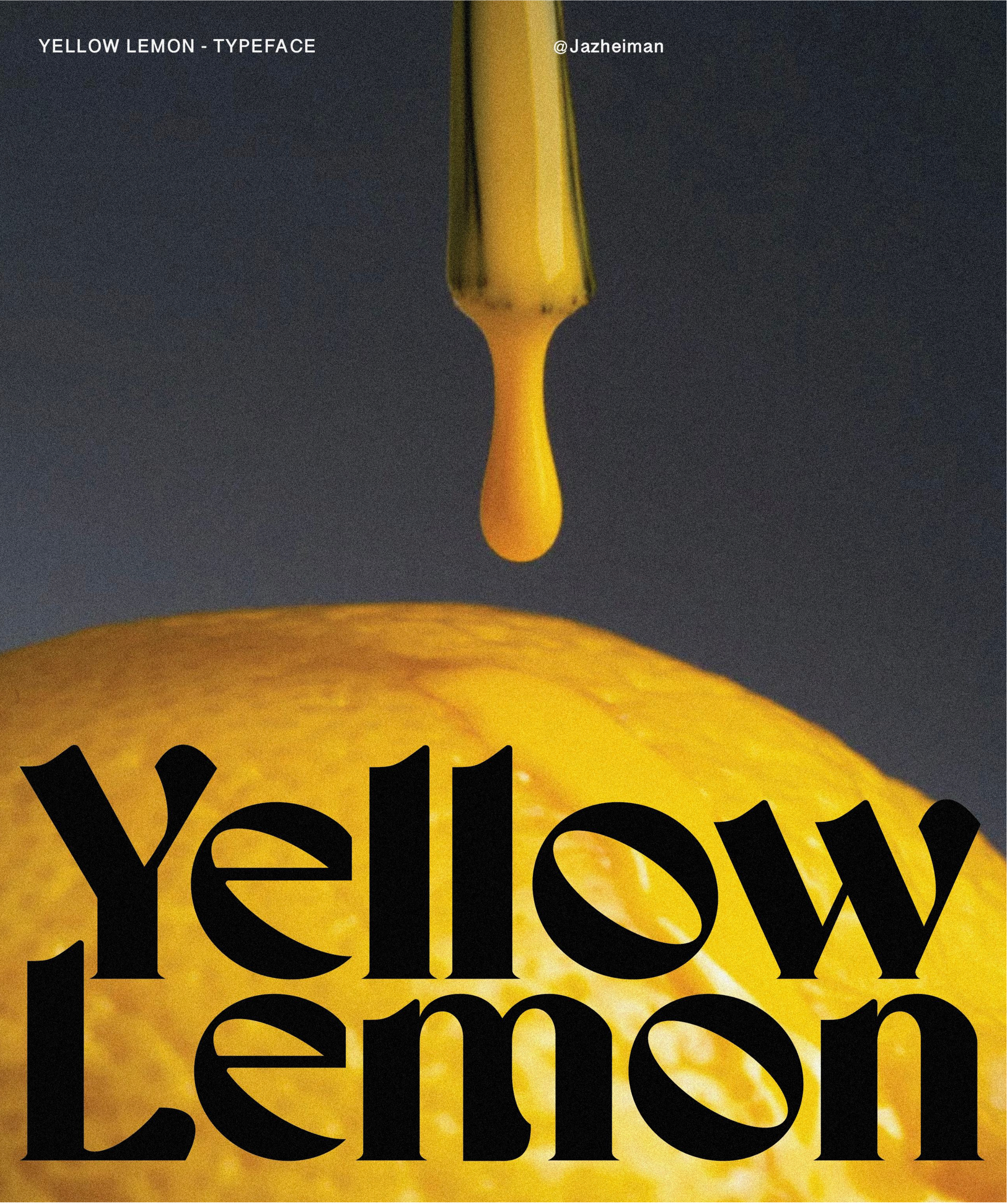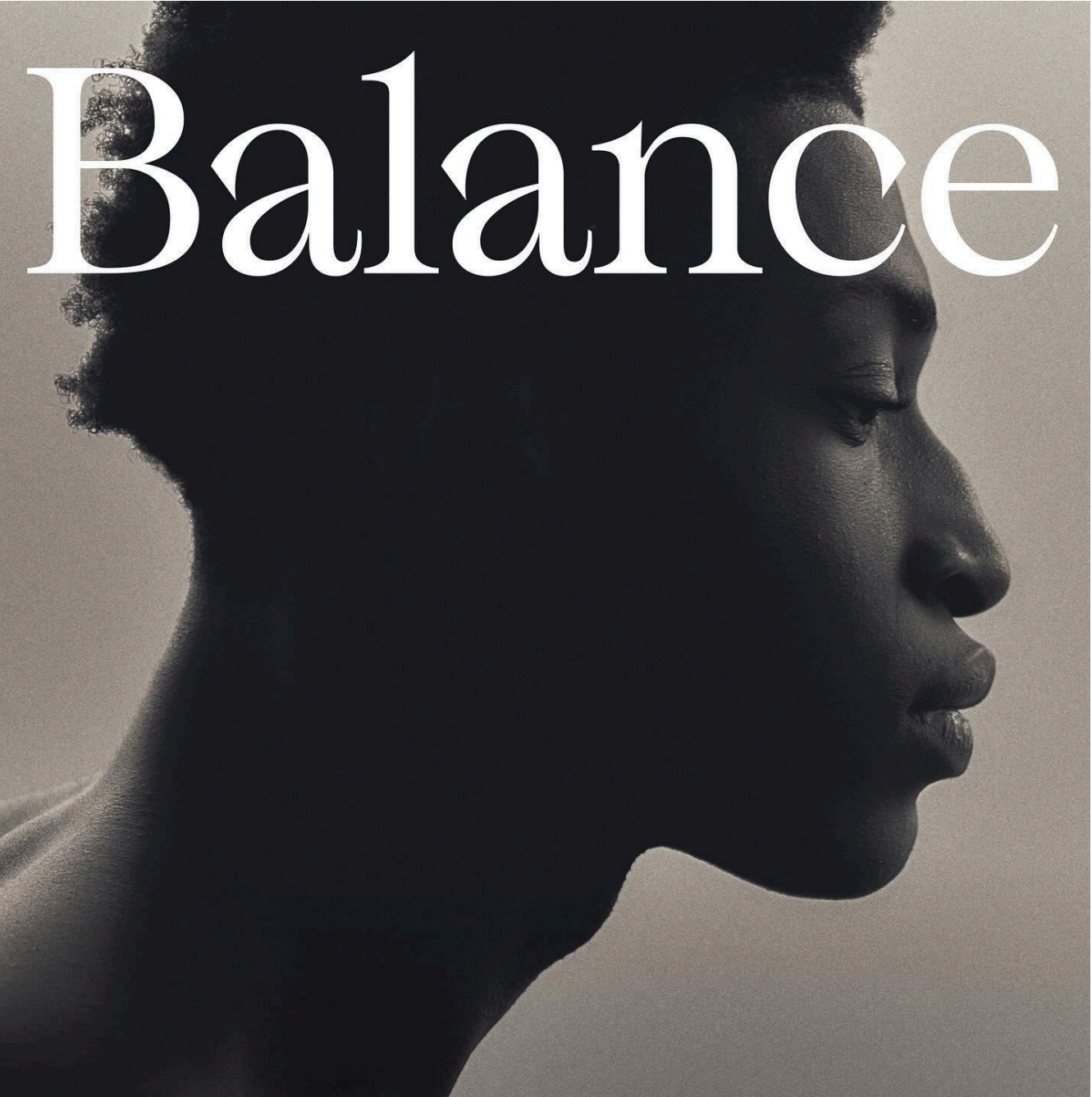
&Walsh - Type of Feeling   02

LOVE YOU MOST

Jesse Nyberg   03

Image is Everything

Trends come and go, but providing a genuine connection is timeless. That connection is your ultimate competitive advantage, and nailing that first impression is crucial. You cannot compromise on the critical piece that sparks that connection: the imagery.

Stills exists to help you foster that connection. With curated, authentic, and pre-cleared imagery you won't find anywhere else, Stills empowers you to maximize your budget and streamline your workflow with photos that capture and keep your audience's attention.

Discover the new standard in photo licensing with AI-powered search tools, advanced filters specifically for designers, and exclusive photo collections curated to connect with audiences. Remember: they'll see it before they read it, so use images they'll never forget, only with Stills.