

DRAKE MAG



VOL. 61, ISSUE 2

Trixies Salon & Spa 



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D R A K E

M A G A Z I N E



UNCONVENTIONAL DATES

I let my moms run my dating app to find Mr. Right.

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Boosting your confidence from the comfort of your own home.

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Finding time for you at any time of day.

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MIDWEST DAY TRIPS

Adventure starts here



Bits + Pieces

SUMMER BBQ

Grilling without the meat



Food + Drink

GLAM THAT GLISTENS

Looks inspired by the stars



Fashion + Beauty

UP ALL NIGHT

Living with sleep disorders



Wellness + Sex

HYPEBEASTS

Step into the culture



Entertainment

GENE EDITING

People designing people



Features

INSIDE



To say I'm proud is an understatement. For our summer issue of *Drake Mag*, we shot photo concepts we'd never tried before, spoke with professionals from coast to coast, and collabed with some of Des Moines' most local and loyal businesses. And the kicker—we did it in under two months.

Now, I could give you a rundown of what's in the book. But it's not the content I'm most proud of, it's the people.

Brynn and Michael, you put up with way too many of my late-night and last-minute calls than you got paid for. You took chances on all my fragmented visions and made them a reality. To my edit team, you guys made this thing fun. You were on when I needed you to be on, but you also reminded me to laugh along the way. RIP to all the inside jokes that never made it on the *Drake Mag* hoodies. And to everyone else—writers, models, designers, and more—thank you. You make this book come alive.

In four years, I've been lucky to touch eight mags (and that's a LOT of mags), but it's time to pass the ninth off to better hands. My dear Annie Peterson, you will absolutely rock this EIC hat. Take this mag and run with it. I'll be cheering from the sidelines.

And lastly, our readers. I hope in Vol. 61, Issue 2, you see a little bit of yourself. I hope you feel inspired, look towards the future, and enjoy a drink or two here and there. As always, connect with us at drakemag@gmail.com and read on at DrakeMagazine.com.

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It's Not Actually Mid

CONTRARY TO THE TIKTOK AUDIO, THE MIDWEST HAS DAY TRIP-WORTHY DESTINATIONS.

words

MADLINE CISNEROS

design **RIHARDS SERGIS**



DUBUQUE, IOWA

Start your day bright and early at the Dubuque Farmers Market. Every Saturday from May through September, visitors can explore three blocks of the Upper Main District and buy a variety of fresh produce and handcrafted items. For a thrill, go to the Fenelon Place Elevator Co. A magnificent view of the city and the Mississippi River from 189 feet up awaits. Next, head over to the Port of Dubuque to the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium to experience mini featured exhibits like DO NOT HARM: Health Healing and Hazards.

DULUTH, MINNESOTA

Step back in time as you walk through the 39 rooms of the Glensheen Mansion. Built from 1905 to 1908, the family home of Chester Congdon sits on the coast of Lake Superior. If you want to feel the blazing sun on your back, book a kayak, canoe, or bike tour at Day Tripper of Duluth. Visit on May 21 to grab a craft beer and listen to live music at Bent Paddle Brewing Co.'s Festiversary.

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN

For all the adventure junkies, climb dunes at Sleeping Bear Dunes for breathtaking views of Glen Lake. Then, slow things down at one of Traverse City's freshwater beaches. Pro tip: for a more secluded spot, navigate to Peterson Road Beach. Afterward, quench your thirst at 2 Lads Winery, a winery with mod-architecture that sits on 58 acres of the Old Mission Peninsula. From July 2-9, end a long day at the National Cherry Festival. Take a ride on the Ferris wheel or stay ground-level at a concert on the Bay Side Music Stage.



STATE FAIRS

North Dakota State Fair

July 22-30
Minot, ND

Ohio State Fair

July 27-August 7
Columbus, OH

Indiana State Fair

July 29-August 21
Indianapolis, IN

Wisconsin State Fair

August 4-14
West Allis, WI

Iowa State Fair

August 11-21
Des Moines, IA

Illinois State Fair

August 11-21
Springfield, IL

Missouri State Fair

August 11-21
Sedalia, MO

Minnesota State Fair

August 25-September 5
St Paul, MN

Nebraska State Fair

August 26-September 5
Grand Island, NE

Michigan State Fair

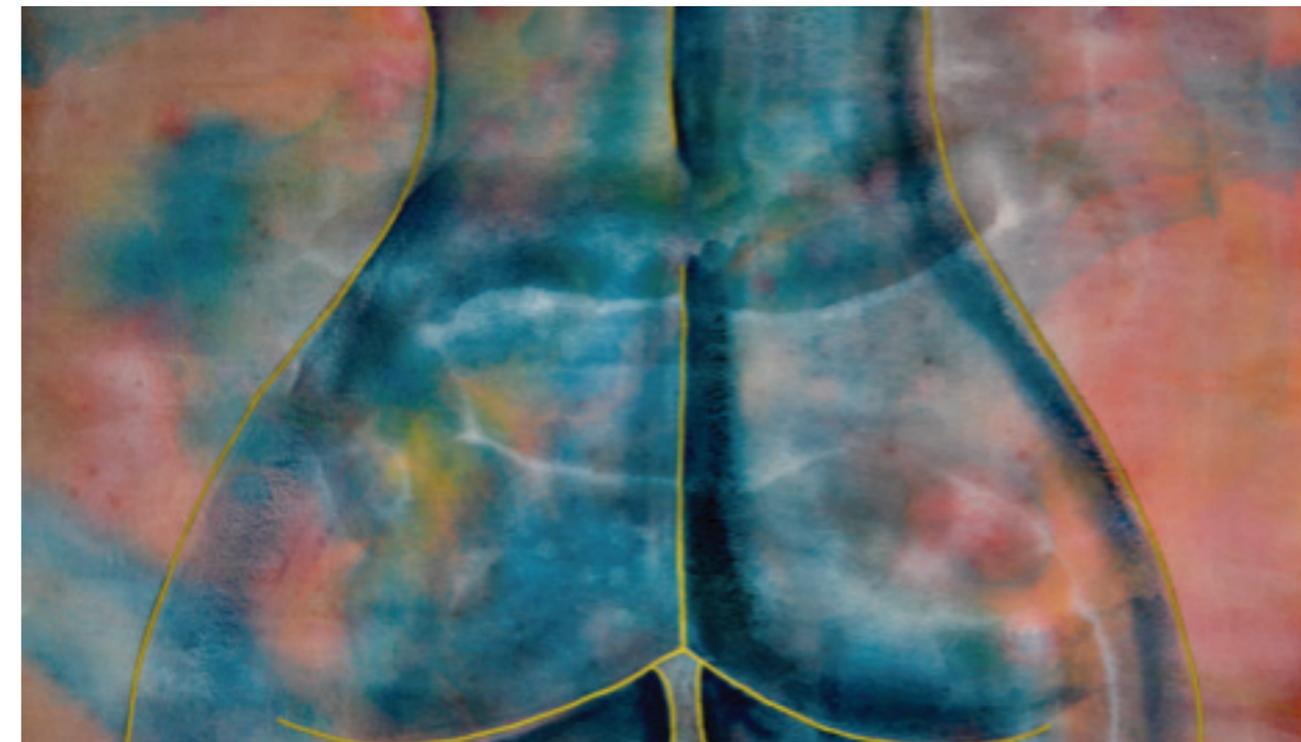
September 1-5
Novi, MI

South Dakota State Fair

September 1-5
Huron, SD

Kansas State Fair

September 9-18
Hutchinson, KS



STAFF PICKS

ARTISTS AND AUTTHORS WHO BRING LIGHT TO BODY PARTS AND PROCESSES KEPT HIDDEN.

photo **LAUREN KARPINSKI** design **EVE KELLY**

@LAURENKARPINSKI

Lauren Karpinski is all about the nude. Her arbitrary use of colors enlivens large-scale paintings of female breasts and bodies. She invites viewers to desexualize sexy, seeing the nude as not just naked, but beautiful.

- Kaili JiMei, Editor-in-Chief

GUYnecology BY RENE ALMELING

Introducing her book with the perspective of an ordinary man trying for a child with his wife, Almeling walks readers through the basic and forgotten factors that play into reproductive health for men. \$25. Barnes and Noble.

- Nate Eisenmann, Assistant Editor

@ART.DRAWING.ANATOMY

@art.drawing.anatomy's Instagram focuses on hyper-realistic forms of the human body. Detailed full body compositions of eyes and lips challenge the perceptions of body parts in their natural forms.

- Sam Rothbardt, Associate Editor

THE V-BOOK: A DOCTOR'S GUIDE TO COMPLETE VULVOVAGINAL HEALTH

We all have questions about our bodies—some are just too embarrassing to ask. The V-Book answers all vagina-related questions judgment-free. With graphic diagrams and how-tos, this book has everything from A to Z—especially V.

- Annie Peterson, Managing Editor

MALE TORSO CANDLE

These candles are the perfect amount of cheeky, each made uniquely distinct from the other. Created from soy wax, natural dye, and vegan wicks, they are all natural and head-turning table centerpieces.

- Emily Postlethwait, Associate Editor

apartment starter pack

IF YOU THOUGHT THE STARTER PACK TREND DIED IN THE TWENTY-TEENS, YOU'RE WRONG. HERE ARE 10 ESSENTIAL BUYS FOR YOUR NEXT APARTMENT.

words
ANNIE PETERSON
design PRINCESS HART

1 HAMMOCKING FRUITS

Hammocks aren't just for humans. Free up crucial counter space with a fruit hammock. Hook it under your cabinets and let your fruits sway.



2 ACQUIRE WIRE

A small kitchen means limited storage. Utilize cabinet space with wire shelf baskets. Hang them from a shelf inside your cabinet, and your countless number of plates are ready to be stored.



3 HAMPER IN DISGUISE

A hamper has one job: store dirty clothes. But it doesn't mean it has to be an eyesore. Rope baskets do the job of a hamper while matching the aesthetic of your home.



4 MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

Mirrors are essential, but they take up a lot of space. Finding one with storage features is the quick fix to combining décor and organization. Depending on the size, storage mirrors can even hold coats and shoes.



5 SHELF-HELP

Who has room for clunky bookshelves? Nailing metal shelves onto a wall gives the sleek illusion of floating books. Place knick-knacks or flowers on top for some extra spice.



8



6 OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND

Don't expect much from an apartment closet. You'll be let down every time. Underbed storage bins are the tried-and-true organizers. Slide under the bed or couch, store off-season décor or clothing.

7 MAGNET MAGIC

Make way for this magnetic refrigerator storage organizer. Store everything from spices to olive oil, from spatulas to tongs. It's even got a built-in paper towel rod.



8 HOOKED ON YOU

S hooks are the multi-purpose organizers for any closet. Hook through pant belt loops, purse straps, and even scarves to hang on any rod. Take the extras to the kitchen for hanging utensils and pans.



10



9 DOUBLE DUTY

Glassware can easily fill a whole cabinet—and that's without the mugs. Save half the space with cups made from heat-insulating clay. Suitable for cold and hot drinks, they'll free up room and last a lifetime.

10 SUPER FRYER

An air fryer is a compact appliance that is capable of anything. From heating up your leftovers to cooking salmon you'll forget all about a microwave or oven.

Raising the Bar

THE ANATOMY OF A PERFECTLY CURATED BAR CART FIT TO PLEASE ANY GUEST.

words

MAGGIE COLLUM

photo MICHAEL CUMMINGS

design PAYTON BLAHUT

PICKING A CART

The standard bar cart typically has 2-3 tiers with room for glasses, spirits, a bottle or two of wine, shakers, and cocktail books. Wine enthusiasts will benefit from a rack to store go-to bottles of vino.

FLAVORS & GARNISHES

Little things like lemon and lime wedges, maraschino cherries, olives, simple syrup, and sugar will elevate your cart and your cocktail.

GLASSWARE

Keep it simple. A nice set of wine glasses and a handful of Highball and Old Fashioned glasses are classics to have on hand.

BOOKS

Even if you think you are a cocktail-making pro, displaying a couple of how-to books adds to the aesthetic. Our picks: *Mixology for Beginners*; *Innovative Craft Cocktails for the Home Bartender* and *Meehan's Bartender Manual*.

SPIRITS

As for the alc, it's key to keep a good variety on deck. Tito's Vodka, Maker's Mark Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whisky, Tequila Blanco, Bacardi Superior Light Puerto Rican Rum, and Bombay Sapphire Gin are all party-pleasers.



TOOLS

No cart is complete without flashy tools. Some must-haves are a good ice bucket, shaker, strainer, and muddler.



the weight of food

FOOD ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE MICROMANAGED OR OVERTHOUGHT, JUST ENJOYED.

words SOPHIA LACY design PAYTON BLAHUT

The sweet smell of chocolate chip cookies swarms through the anticipation in the air. You watch them bake, turning from gooey dough to tiny delicacies. You've waited for this. You're hungry. Your stomach growls. You can almost taste them. All you have to do is wait a little longer.

But then, your anticipation turns into questioning. Do I really need a cookie? What will happen if I eat just one? Maybe two? How about three? Your excitement turns to guilt. The cookies in the oven are now an afterthought.

As we grow older, food becomes a weight of emotions, complexities, and responsibilities. What once was a sweet, indulging dessert is now a gamble you're not quite sure to place bets on. Strict diets like calorie-counting and fasting are limiting how people build relationships with food. They put you on in this tiny box of when to eat and how.

Mackenzie Woolwich, a registered dietitian and owner of MW Coaching, believes altering your mindset around food can help change your relationship with it. There is a balance between eating what your body wants while not feeling guilty about it.

"It's important that we view food through a neutral lens. It's neither good nor bad," Woolwich says. "If we can develop an internal connection with our body's needs and wants, we become confident and empowered with how we are fueling our bodies."

Your body will tell you what it wants. So listen to it. Sometimes bodies want vegetables, other times, ice

cream. But listening to when to replenish your body is just as important as listening to when your body has had enough. Ask yourself: Is this what my body wants?

Melissa Arnold, a registered dietitian and owner of More to Life Nutrition Counseling, describes how we need to unlearn elevating certain foods while downgrading others. This helps connect food to the entirety of our health. The phrase 'you are what you eat' simply isn't true.

"We are taught that food is the main predictor of body size, when a more accurate statement would be that bodies genetically come in all shapes and sizes and aren't a reflection of health or a representation of what or how much a person eats," Arnold says.

The weight of food dissolves when people stop labeling. Donuts aren't bad food; salad isn't good food. Food is food. Like Woolwich says, a neutral mindset helps us understand what we actually want. Once the mindset has changed, the mind and body will work as one balanced system.

"Food is given moral power," Woolwich says. "It can make us feel like a good or bad person for eating a food that we have labeled good or bad."

Our perceptions of food don't need to be negative. Food does a lot more than just fuel. It brings people together. There are plenty of ways to find joy in food and create a more balanced relationship with it. From indulging to listening to your body, find what works for you.

VEGAN SUMMER BBQ

words MEGAN BOHALL photo MICHAEL CUMMINGS design BRYNN YOSHINAGA



ENTREES



MANGO-JALAPEÑO GLAZED CAULIFLOWER STEAKS

Prep time: 20 minutes
Serving size: 3-4 servings

Ingredients:

1 cauliflower head
1 c. brown sugar
¼ c. vegan butter
1 sliced mango
1 sliced jalapeño
2 tsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. red pepper flakes

Steps:

1. Cut cauliflower lengthwise into ½-inch thick strips. Set aside.
2. Mix remaining ingredients into a pot over medium heat until low boil.
3. Reduce heat and whisk until glaze thickens.
4. Blend glaze in a food processor or blender and store in the fridge.
5. On a greased foil-lined baking sheet, line cauliflower filets, and brush on glaze.
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes at 400 degrees.



SRIRACHA MAC AND CHEESE

Prep time: 10-15 minutes
Serving size: 5-7 servings

Ingredients:

1 16 oz. box macaroni noodles
½ c. vegan butter
6 tbs. flour
5 c. soy milk
½ c. vegetable broth
½ c. pasta water
3 tbsp. sriracha
3 tbsp. mustard
1 c. nutritional yeast
3 tsp. onion powder
3 tsp. minced garlic
2 tsp. paprika
2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. cayenne
Sriracha sauce, for drizzle

Steps:

1. Salt boiling water and cook noodles al dente. Drain noodles and set pasta water aside.
2. Melt butter and minced garlic in a saucepan over medium heat.
3. Once fully melted, add flour and stir.
4. Mix in soy milk, vegetable broth, and pasta water and bring to a boil. Whisk until the mixture thickens.
5. Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients, stirring until well-combined.
6. Pour in macaroni noodles and top with sriracha sauce.

SIDES

CRUNCHY RAMEN SLAW SALAD

Prep time: 10-15 minutes
Serving size: 5-7 servings

Ingredients:

1 c. chopped green cabbage
½ c. chopped red cabbage
½ c. shredded carrots
½ c. oil
½ c. vinegar
1 package raw ramen noodles
½ c. sunflower seeds
2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. dried parsley
½ tsp. ground cumin
½ tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. salt

Steps:

1. Mix all seasonings, oil, and vinegar in a small bowl.
2. In a large bowl, combine cabbages, shredded carrots, and sunflower seeds.
3. Break off crumbles of raw ramen noodles and add to cabbage mixture. Stir.
4. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.
5. Top with more ramen crumbles, pour dressing, and serve. For a crunchier taste, refrigerate overnight.



CORNBREAD MUFFINS

Prep time: 10-15 minutes
Serving size: 12 muffins

Ingredients:

1 c. cornmeal
1 c. flour
½ c. vegan butter
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
½ c. canned corn, drained
½ c. apple sauce
½ cup syrup
1 c. soy milk

Steps:

1. Melt butter in a saucepan over low heat.
2. Combine apple sauce, syrup, soy milk, and canned corn in a separate bowl.
3. Whisk in cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
4. Gently pour browned butter into the mixture and stir.
5. Evenly distribute batter across muffin tin.
6. Bake at 400 degrees for 15-20 minutes.



cultural cocktail hour

words

BRYNN YOSHINAGA

photo MICHAEL CUMMINGS

design PRINCESS HART

WE'VE STIRRED UP FOUR DELICIOUS DRINKS THAT WILL TRANSPORT YOU AROUND THE WORLD IN JUST ONE SIP.



Crafted in the '70s, this cocktail welcomed visitors at the former Kuala Lumpur Hilton in Malaysia—oh, and it tastes bitterly sweet.

Ingredients:

Ice cubes
2 oz. pineapple juice
2 oz. dark rum
1 oz. Campari
½ oz. lime juice
½ oz. demerara syrup
Pineapple wedge to garnish

Steps:

1. Combine pineapple juice, rum, Campari, lime juice, and demerara syrup into a shaker with ice.
3. Strain into a glass of fresh ice.
3. Garnish with pineapple wedge.



Referred to as the Sangria of Africa, this cool and bubbly cocktail is a common drink at Nigerian gatherings.

Ingredients:

Ice cubes
4 oz. orange soda
4 oz. Sprite
2 oz. Cassis (black currant liqueur)
1 orange
1 lime

Steps:

1. Slice orange and lime into triangles. Place at the bottom of a glass.
2. Fill glass halfway with ice.
3. Add orange soda, Sprite, and Cassis.
4. Stir and enjoy.



Wanting a taste of South America? Try this simple yet refreshing national drink of Brazil.

Ingredients:

Ice cubes
2 oz. Cachaça
2 tbsp. granulated sugar
1 lime, cut into wedges
3-5 mint leaves

Steps:

1. Lay sugar, lime wedges, and mint leaves at the bottom of a glass.
2. Fill glass halfway with ice.
3. Pour in Cachaça and stir.



Socializing over drinks is customary in Korean culture. Soju, South Korea's most consumed alcoholic beverage, is great for drinking straight or mixing into fruity cocktails.

Ingredients:

Ice cubes
4 oz. any flavor of soju
4 oz. Binggrae Melon-Flavored Milk
2 oz. Sprite
Matcha Pocky Sticks
Mint to garnish

Steps:

1. Fill glass halfway with ice. Pour in soju, Binggrae melon-flavored milk, and Sprite.
2. Add Pocky Sticks and top with mint.

1 WAY OR ANOTHER

FASHION IS ABOUT OPTIONS, NOT CONSTRAINTS. HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO STYLE ONE OF FASHION'S MOST UNDERRATED ACCESSORIES: A SILK SCARF.

words
MARA FENDRICH
design KAILI JIMEI
photo MICHAEL CUMMINGS



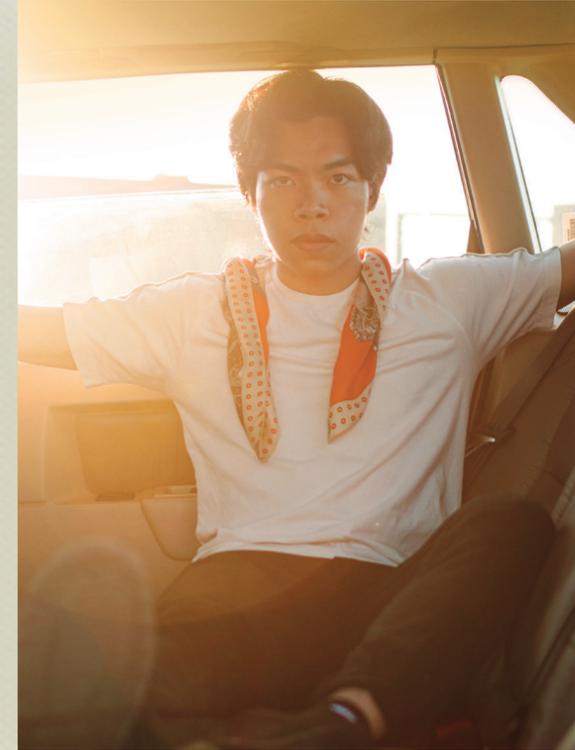
ALLURING ANDROGYNY

The 60's scarf is back for all. Drape the scarf over your head to secure your hair on a windy car ride.



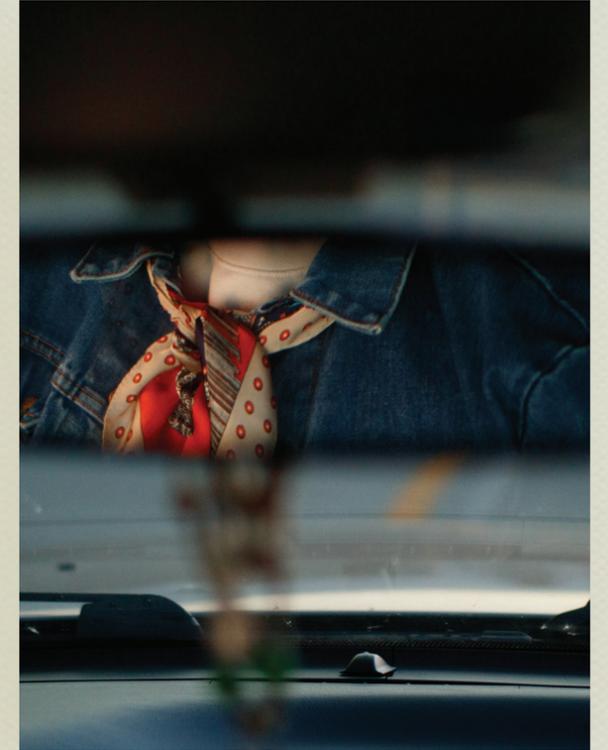
PULL IT TOGETHER

Faux leather, meet soft silk. Soften the look of a belt with a bold-patterned scarf knotted around the waist.



LET LOOSE

Don't take life so seriously. Let the scarf rest around the neck for a laid back yet stylish appearance.



HIGH MAINTENANCE

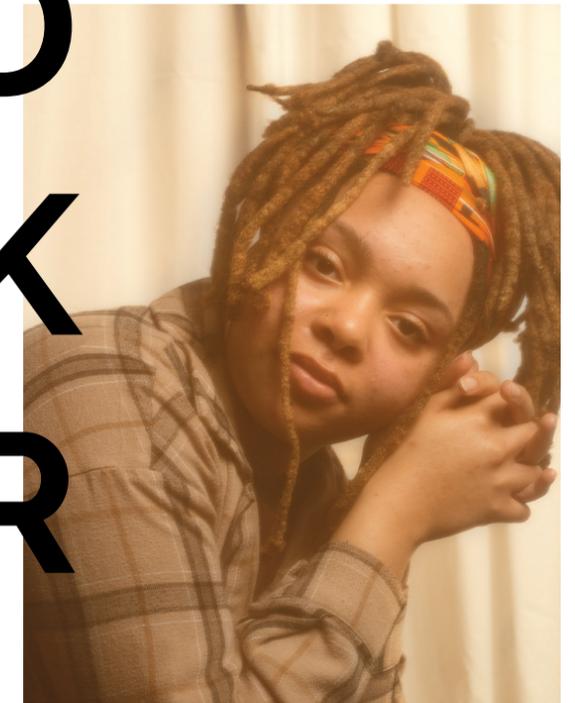
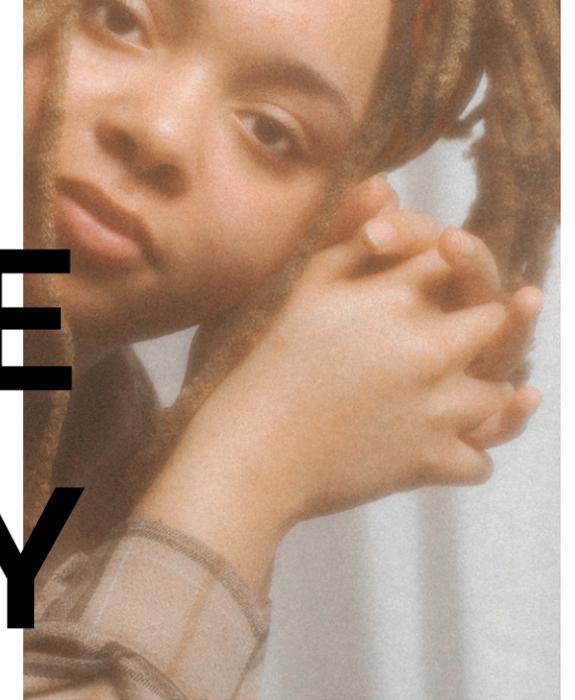
Play the preppy card and show some class. Tuck under a collar for semi-exposure and tidy up with a knot.



TWIST OUT

Worn up or hung loose, the twist out is a low-maintenance style for wanting to hit reset. Wet hair is divided into sections and twisted, allowing each to dry and set individually. Once dry, the twists are unraveled, and hair is set free.

THE BEAUTY BEHIND BLACK HAIR



TO AFRICAN NATIONS—PAST AND PRESENT—HAIR IS MORE THAN WHAT GROWS ON THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD. IT'S A SYMBOL OF STATUS, IDENTITY, AND ANCESTRY.

words KHADIJA ADEN design KAILI JIMEI photo MILEZ FRITZ
stylist EMPIRE HAIR STUDIO AND UNIVERSAL BARBER SHOP





BRAIDS

Defining tribes, ranking social status, mapping escape routes for slaves. Historically, braids have carefully intertwined tresses passed through generations as an integral part of Black and African cultures. Box braids originated in South Africa in 3500 B.C. and were worn by women of wealth. They can be styled and personalized with beads, cowrie shells, and jewels.

LOCS

Locs made their debut in towns of India and Egypt. In the African country of Namibia, the Himba Tribe uses otjize, a paste made of ground ochre (red oxide earth pigment), and butterfat to color their locs red, representing the earth. Traditional or maintained locs are re-twists of new hair growth, while freeform locs form organically, letting the hairs live and grow on their own.

BANTU KNOTS

The Zulu people of southern Africa created Bantu knots. Some parts of Africa call them Zulu knots and duuduubs. Hair is sectioned off, twisted, and coiled to produce spiraled knots all over the scalp. This style carries substantial meaning in Black culture because it represents ancestral roots.

AFRO

The afro or 'fro' is a natural hairstyle worn outwardly in a big, often circular, shape. Though it's been around for years, the fro gained the most popularity in the '60s during the natural hair movement, which inspired Black people to take pride in their natural hair. Kinky, coiled, or curly, all-natural is beautiful.



IF EARRINGS COULD TALK



EARRING PERSONAS AND MORE FROM SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY STYLIST BELLA MUSSELMAN.



words + photo MILES FRITZ
design PRINCESS HART

Stud: The Artistic Observer

Subtle and small, the stud speaks to a more reserved individual. These earrings accent a personality instead of painting with broad strokes. This persona doesn't pull focus at the party. Instead, they find their own corner of the room and quietly people-watch. They can be found at a local art museum or on your newest barista crush of the week.

Dangle: A Classy Conversationalist

As a dangle earring swings back and forth, so does the wearer in the many social circles they find themselves in. Versatility is their strength, and it feels effortless to adapt to life's many challenges. There is an essence of charm and flirtatiousness tied to this persona. Movement in jewelry, such as the dangle earring, can invoke a sensual feeling.

Mismatched: Calculated Rebel

Why choose when you can make your own rules? "I think wearing a mismatched earring would take a good eye to pull off," Musselman says. "Someone who knows more about styling would definitely succeed moreover someone who isn't necessarily into fashion like that." This mismatched earring calls out to the designers of the world who push the envelope.

Hoop: Presence in Power

The hoop earring persona is the main character. Personality seeps out. That much is clear through the many friends they have. The open circle of the hoop sends a message of approachability to others, which extroverts love. Introverts, on the other hand, may prefer to use hoops to express friendliness.

Obscurity: Walking Art Project

Larger than life sums up the obscurity earring persona. They collect new things to hang from their ear and are always the first to get an 'I love your earrings' at the function. "They can really make or break an outfit though," Musselman says. "Because they are extra and outgoing it can be a little bit too much if someone was to pair it with clothing that is heavily patterned or very unique in its construction."



WHEN BEAUTY AND STARS ALIGN



ZODIAC-INSPIRED MAKEUP LOOKS TO HELP YOU CHANNEL THE SIGNS OF THE SUMMER.

words

MAGGIE COLLUM

photo **MICHAEL CUMMINGS**

design **BRYNN YOSHINAGA**

TAURUS

A lover of luxury and everything nice, Taurus knows how to treat themselves. Pair a clean brow with a swipe of green eyeshadow under the eyes for subtle glam. Take things up a notch with a lash set and your favorite flowers for an earthy glow.



GEMINI



Gemini's chaotic and expressive sense of versatility makes experimenting with color effortless. Play with different shadow colors and rhinestones on the eyes. Finish with a bright cherry lip.



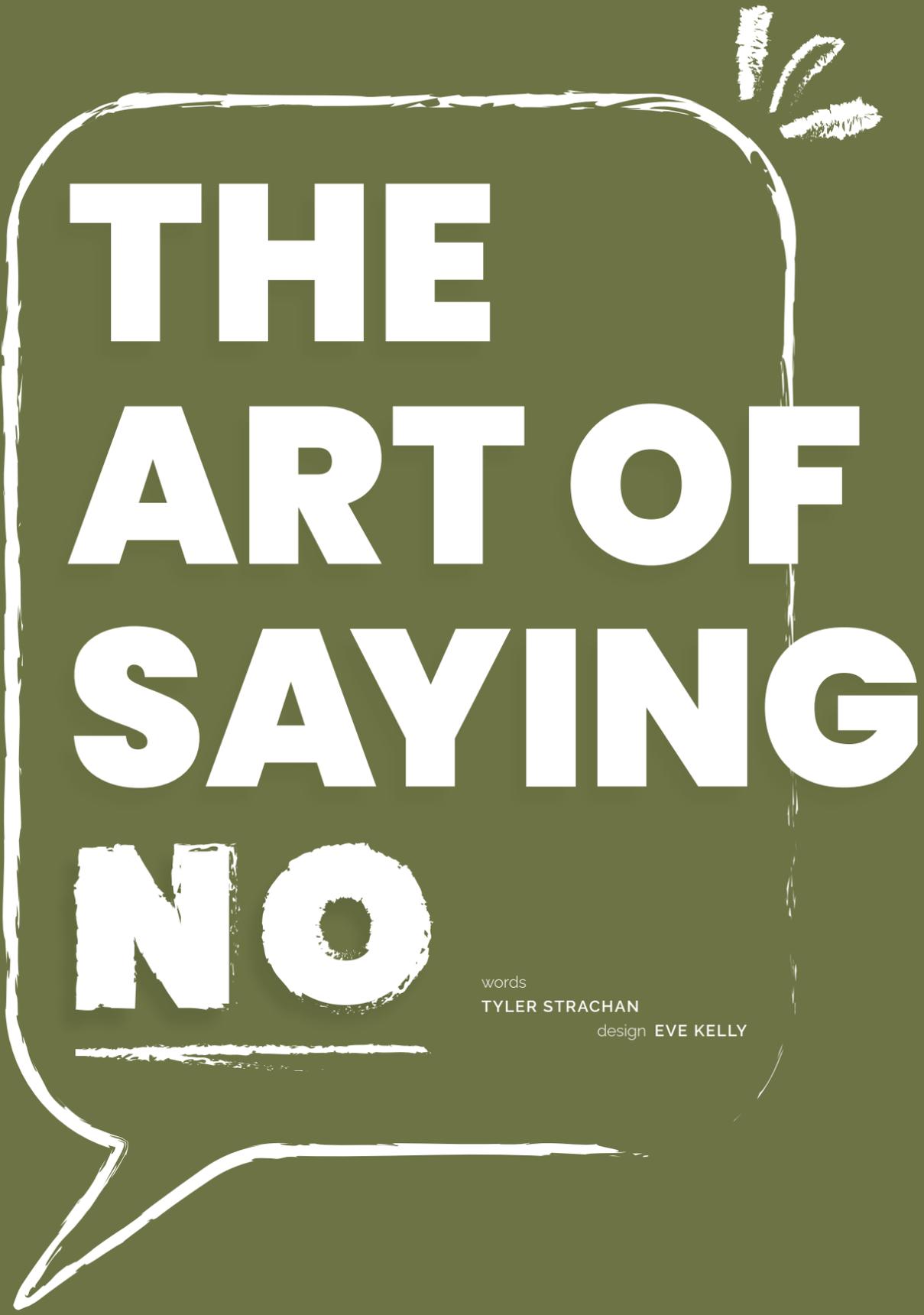
CANCER

The gentle personality of Cancer calls for showing off your softer side. A sweep of coral blush paired with a pearly highlight on the upper cheekbones will radiate your inner beauty. White liner with pearl embellishments adds a soft, unexpected effect.



LEO

Leos are not afraid to make a loud and dramatic presence everywhere they go. This sun-ruled sign will shine with a look that's all about the eyes. Unleash your main character energy with gold foil and rhinestones on the lids and inner corners.



THE ART OF SAYING NO

words
TYLER STRACHAN
design EVE KELLY

We're inherently people-pleasers. We agree to take on tasks that aren't ours and rearrange our schedules to fit others. But soon, those small yeses pile up. Suddenly, we're expected to be in two places at once or slapped in the face with major burnout. Some of us thrive off the adrenaline of hustle culture. Many of us don't. At the end of the day, we need to create room to say no.

"If we don't have boundaries, we tend to sort of overgive, and that can find us being depleted and unable to be the people that we want to be in the world," Holly Strelow, a licensed professional counselor, says. "Boundaries are for your own energy and vitality."

Strelow is right. Creating space to say no allows our bodies and minds to feel recharged. This concept is easier said than done. So, what are your options?

Know your non-negotiables.

Set rules for yourself. Don't instantly say yes, never say yes to lending money, don't change your previous schedule on behalf of others. Guidelines work. Disordered boundaries don't. Generate a few anchor phrases for different scenarios to save time wavering over excuses.

Set expectations.

This is key. There is a difference between providing context and convincing. For VIPs (parents, roommates, best friends) it is healthy to provide context when saying no. Your boundaries will be understood and

upheld in the future. For lower-tier peers, we can find ourselves convincing, providing unnecessary explanations. Think about your social life. Why do you feel the need to justify not going out two nights in a row? Even if you don't have anything going on, having confidence when saying no is all the explanation you need.

Know the line between work and play.

No one likes a flaky, non-committal coworker. Share your availability of when to reach you, recognize what is on your plate, and allocate time to focus on the tasks at hand. Ignoring and running away is never the best option. Proactive communication will save you time in the long run.

Assess your needs and wants.

Fear of missing out. It's a natural fear. But consider this: when we say no one place, we prioritize elsewhere. Find comfort in that. We get to say yes to opportunities that accurately reflect our values and passions. We all have things we wish for, but how often is it a reflection of what our mental, physical, and emotional health needs?

Everyone has obligations, but dedicating extra space can allow us to focus on ourselves and our desires. Self-reflection can lead to a greater sense of identity, higher self-esteem, more independence, and avoiding things like stress and burnout. Don't get caught up in the details. Saying no is a form of mental health.

REFRAINING FROM SEX HEALED ME

words KIM BATES photo KAILI JIMEI design EVE KELLY



I've never been good at relationships. Maybe it's because I'm in my 20s. Maybe it's because of me. I've never thought too deeply about it. That is, not until I experienced a toxic relationship that left my heart aching and body reeling. I was finally forced to look at what I wanted and did not want in a relationship – what I deserved and what I certainly did not. The last night with my former lover was the night I met my mental and physical breaking point. After a moment of less than consensual sex, I realized I had to show up for myself. So I broke up with him. But I did not predict my journey towards self-love would lead to learning that not having sex can be just as empowering as having sex.

But let's take a step back.

Usually, when I go through a breakup, I party my way through emotional numbness with one-night stands and calling up a long-term friend-with-benefits. I do it to feel beautiful and desired again. But this time, it didn't work. I was afraid to be touched. I feared being looked at. I felt like my mental stability was coming apart at the seams, and I had no idea how to stitch myself back together. I betrayed my values so much that I did not trust my intentions, let alone anyone else's.

I've spent the last few years of my life preaching about sex. Safe sex, steamy sex, first-time sex, fun sex. So I surprised myself when the need and want to be abstinent entered my mind—but I had no idea what being abstinent meant. I thought it was just a religious practice or something to shame young people into not having sex.

Turns out, abstinence is to refrain from or not engage in something for a period of time, like until marriage. Some say it is supposed to make you feel a type of cultural reset or revival, which sounded like shit I would not normally fall for. But I thought I'd try it out. I decided to think of it in terms of a self-reset. Plus, I could make my own rules, so here they were:

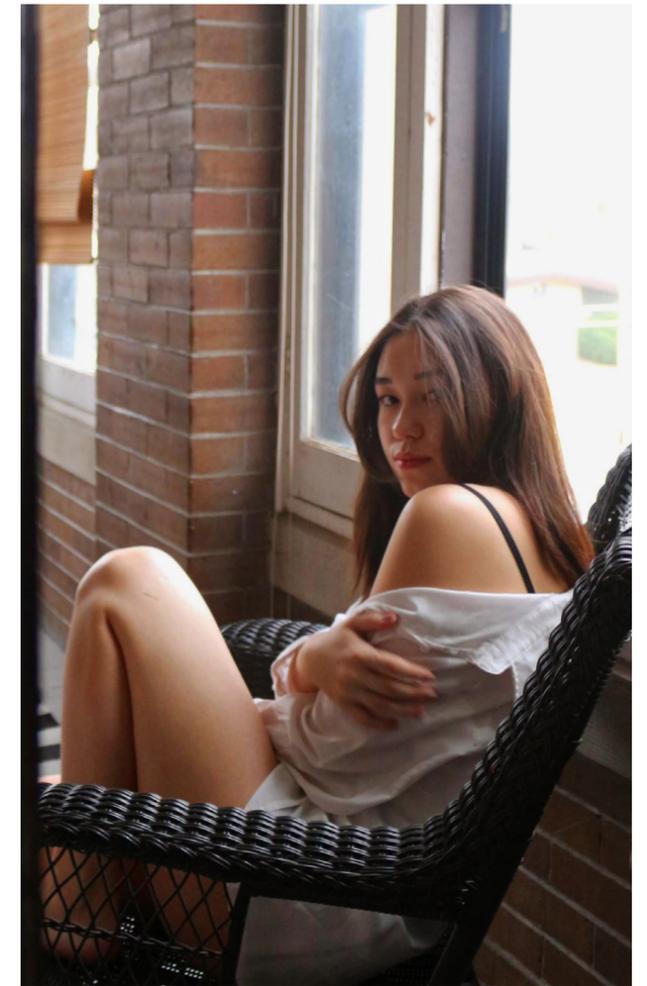
1. No sex. Kind of obvious, right? I wanted to take it back to the days when first dates didn't end in someone's bed.
2. Kissing is okay. A kiss goodnight at the door sounded like a good kind of different.
3. Riding solo is also okay—in fact, encouraged.

The decision to become abstinent was born out of needing to heal my mind and self. I needed to face my fear of sex and intimacy.

Along with my three rules, I resumed therapy, which I'd been in and out of for years. My first session was a lot of word vomiting. I spilled everything about my ex: how we met, when it became volatile, and the end that left me feeling broken. Eventually, I started to gaslight why I had thought the relationship was toxic, to begin with. But in one hour, my therapist validated seven months of hurt.

Then, I decided to be mindful of my body. I didn't do hot yoga or go on some juice cleanse, though. I masturbated. I'll save you the details, but during these go-arounds, it came from a place of mindfulness and intention, not just pleasure. On nights I craved intimacy most, I turned to my hot-pink friend and reminded myself that I was safe and in control. I could trust me. I allowed myself to feel my emotions and naturally respond to my body.

Halfway through my journey, I re-downloaded dating apps. I was so fearful of getting close to someone that I viewed every date neutrally. I didn't give myself space to become emotionally involved. I felt so detached from my body and had such a desire to have sex that I never told anyone I was refraining from it.



After a few months, I met up with a long-time friend-with-benefits for a drink. One thing led to another, and I broke my self-imposed abstinence comfortably and with confidence. I had always felt safe with this friend, and my sexual desires were resurfacing. We started slowly, and it took some time, but afterward, I felt like I achieved a significant milestone in overcoming my fears. Through reclaiming my sex life, I was in the process of healing and regaining a part of myself.

I didn't expect my former relationship to have such a profound impact on who I was and who I would grow into. I'm thankful to those who acknowledged the abusive nature of the relationship, but I also want to wrap my arms around my inner self, thanking her for choosing to care for herself. She has learned that no one can take away her power.

sleep disorders

THEY'RE MORE THAN A HOPE FOR AN AFTERNOON SIESTA OR DOZING OFF DURING A NIGHTTIME MOVIE.

words KILEY KAHLER photo MORGAN ERWIN design PAYTON BLAHUT



“Sometimes it’s just a nap, but other times I open my eyes, and the day is over,” Adele Gorman, 19-year old.

Gorman faces a unique illness called idiopathic hypersomnia, a rare sleeping disorder causing her to reach REM sleep, whether it’s within five minutes of her head hitting the pillow or driving at the wheel. Essentially, it is the opposite of all-too-common insomnia. Sleeping disorders are medically diagnosed illnesses that chronically impact around 70 million U.S. citizens, according to the CDC. They can impact performance at work, energy, health, mood, and overall quality of life.

Since 8th grade, Gorman has experienced heat rashes on her legs from long stretches in bed, chronic exhaustion, a negative attitude, depression, and an ability to fall asleep—literally, anywhere. She remembers visiting her old elementary school with friends one day and falling asleep on the park bench from exhaustion. “A big part of it was, ‘oh she’s a teenager. She’s sleepy.’ But no that’s not sleepy, that is an illness,” Gorman says.

National Sleep Foundation studies show that females are 40% more likely to be affected by insomnia, and twice as likely to develop other sleeping disorders. There is a gap in sleeping based on socioeconomic status, gender, race, and ethnicity as well. If we’re talking race, over 40% of Pacific Islander, Black, and Native American people reported a lack of quality sleep.

While talk about sleep disorders almost always hits on physical and mental wellbeing, sleep disorders also play into relationships and intimacy.

Nguyen-Ly Huynh, a physician assistant at DSM Sleep Specialists, recognizes the vulnerability it takes for her patients to open up about their sleep disorders concerning partners and intimacy. “Usually this question is not comfortable. Sleep is a very private conversation, but it’s important for us to create safe environments to talk about it,” Huynh says. She says some of her patients voice struggles of wanting to sleep with their partners but aren’t able to because of restlessness and fear of waking them up, while others refrain from engaging in relationships because they don’t want to fall asleep and miss out on valuable time.

“When you can’t maintain your level of alertness, you can’t control your emotions,” Huynh says. “So if [they] experience really intense emotions in the relationship, [they will] fall asleep, and they don’t want to miss out. Patients really do struggle with this.”

Another handful of Huynh’s patients use CPAP machine therapy to help with breathing at night and ask how they can use them while still having an intimate night with their partners.

Whether it is an inability to rest or wake up for a new day, one in every five Americans lives with a sleeping disorder. Gorman hopes for more resources to connect with people facing these medical conditions to discuss their social, mental, physical, and spiritual health. And to support those with sleep disorders, Huynh recommends being intentional and providing safe spaces to host vulnerable dialogue. When stumbling across someone struggling to keep their eyes open, instead of recommending a nap, consider lending your shoulder.

the melting pot of POP

EVERY CONTINENT HAS THEIR OWN STYLE AND STORYLINE OF POP. HERE ARE THE DIFFERENCES FROM UP NORTH TO DOWN UNDER.

words

PETYA HARALANOVA

design RIHARDS SERGIS

NORTH AMERICA

Postmodern Jukebox (PMJ) is turning back the clock on modern pop. Since 2011, the cover band has taken hits like Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass” and Fountains of Wayne’s “Stacey’s Mom” and remixed them with rhythms of old-time jazz, giving listeners a new way to experience their favorite pop hits. Mexican pop has regional roots and American rock and roll influence. Hear the quick tempos and fast-paced rhythms in “LA FAMA” by Rosalía, “Ya Supérame” by Grupo Firme, and “Pa ti” by Jennifer Lopez and Maluma.

ASIA

Asian pop isn’t limited to K-Pop. You’ve also got C-Pop (China pop), J-Pop (Japanese Pop), Mandopop, Okinawan Pop, City pop, and more. Every year, South Korea hosts the Asia Song Festival (ASF), a pop music event, for countries to perform their style of pop. Styles range from sounding lo-fi chill to techno and rave-like, making the ASF a true cultural experience. Our song recs include “Butter” by BTS, “Weekend” by Taeyeon, and “Blessed-Cursed” by Enhypen.

EUROPE

European music offers a wide range of pop from Norway to Greece and everywhere in between. At Eurovision, the world’s largest music event, you can hear Europop royalty like The Roop, Ukraine’s goth-pop rockers, and Blind Channel, a Finnish band that combines heavy metal with bubblegum pop. Starting at just seven bands in 1954, the week-long festival has grown to 52 competing bands. Previous well-known Eurovision performers are ABBA, Celine Dion, France Gal, and Kristian Kostov.

AUSTRALIA

For years, Australian pop has reinvented itself, taken influence from other countries, and started anew. After gifting us with world-famous pop artists like Sia and Vance Joy, Australia continues to evolve and search for the next up-and-coming artists. But with that, it’s important to nod to the country’s founders of pop. The voices of John Farnham, Peter Allen, John Paul Young, and Tina Arena all contributed to building the reputation Australian pop has today.

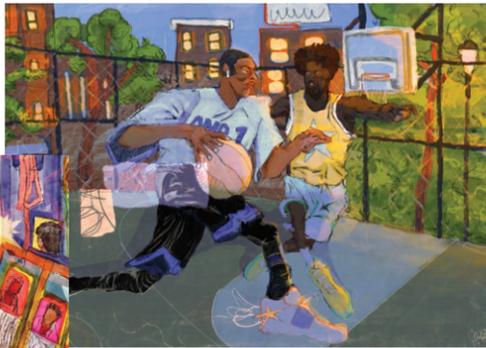
SOUTH AMERICA

The sound of Latin Pop varies in Latin American countries. But if one thing has remained consistent, it’s the genre’s electronic beats, rhythm, and percussive instruments— congas, güiras, maracas, timbales, and tamboras. Many of the musicians sing quick verses in Spanish or Portuguese. If you ever need easy songs to dance to, add classic Latin Pop artists like Enrique Iglesias, Selena Quintanilla, and Ricky Martin to your playlist.

AFRICA

West African and South African pop is referred to as Afrobeats—and it doesn’t get the recognition it deserves. Influenced by South America and American rock and roll, there are many sub-genres of Afrobeats to explore, like Afro-soul, Bongo Flava, and African Reggae. To showcase these styles, African artists created the AfriMusic Song Contest, a Eurovision-inspired music festival, in 2018. Wizkid, Mbube, and Batonga are all popular Afrobeats artists worth listening to.





words

CARRIE LAWAL

photo JOELIUS DUBOIS PORTER

design PAYTON BLAHUT

JoeLius Dubois Porter

LITTLE DID THIS RECENT HOWARD UNIVERSITY GRAD KNOW HIS BIOLOGY DEGREE WOULD BE BRUSHED OVER IN BROAD STROKES.

Melodic beats of smooth jazz steady a young mind at work. A city view outside a high-rise apartment window enables JoeLius Dubois Porter's illustrations to come to life. Hues of green, blue, and brown lay, waiting in anticipation to take shape. A playlist shuffles and lyrics from genre-bending musician Smino remind Porter to venture away from the fundamentals and into the abstract.

A digital pen paints the path for Porter, a 22-year-old Columbus-based artist. Despite obtaining a degree in biology for his undergrad, the recent graduate of Howard University didn't always know his passion lay in the arts. After being gifted an iPad and digital pen in high school, inspiration struck. He began painting colors and curvilinear lines that would resemble people living their day-to-day lives, playing chess, or having fun at a cookout.

"What I focus on really is creating a sense of unity and community through my artwork. I like having multiple people in my pieces interacting with each other," Porter says. "As an artist, there's some type of responsibility to tell stories so that after you're gone, they can be passed on."

In June 2020, his art reached new heights. He began regularly sharing his illustrations with the world as @JoeLiusDubois on Instagram. Within two years, his style and creativity garnered 15.4 thousand followers.

From campus organizations to musicians and producers, he has landed opportunities to promote his work wide-stream. Porter's achievements have landed him opportunities to collaborate with musicians like Wade08, ggTheProducer, Joel Ross, and Mick Jenkins with whom he was able to draft and develop album covers. As his follower count continues to grow, he envisions an open door to his dream collaboration.

"I'd like to do something with Telfar," Porter says. "He's from Liberia. My mom's from Liberia. Why not?"

Next stop, pharmacy school in D.C. Dreams of working with Telfar are paired with a drive to attend pharmacy school at his alma mater. But underneath demanding applications for the upcoming semester lies a determination for a creative future. His ambitions leave him at

a crossroads, professionally and mentally. He's noticed the burnout is real.

"One of the things I was trying to figure out was why do I keep working through [it]? Yes, to make money. But also, I'm not a machine," Porter says. "Just the other day, I was doing pharmacy applications. It's hard managing art and applying to pharmacy school...but I have to take breaks."

At the end of the day, Porter remembers he started making art because he enjoys it.

"When I'm drawing, it's almost like the closest thing to peace. After I set out some guidelines and I get to a certain point, it's like I'm on autopilot," Porter says. "When I'm creating, I'm in a good space."

Keep your eyes peeled for what Porter has up his sleeves. His next big project lies in the creation of an anthology series. In a few years, he also hopes to work with an illustration agency, designing concepts for art and animated films—and later, open a community art center for Black youth to learn and gain access to more opportunities in the field.



HYPERBEAST CULTURE

words
KENDRA CURRY
photo + design RIHARDS SERGIS

From starting as a sticker on skateboards to collaborating with Louis Vuitton, Supreme has created its own sector of fashion and is one of the leading brands in hypebeast culture.

You're familiar with the fashion junkies who drop hundreds of dollars on name brands. You know, the ones dressed top-down in Off-White or Balenciaga. They collect luxury names to elevate their style, usually with a streetwear focus. They are hypebeasts.

Hypebeast culture found itself under the spotlight in 2016 with Bathing Ape (BAPE). Their bright-colored camo-printed jackets, pants, and hats were a collaboration with Stüssy, one of the oldest and original streetwear brands—hypebeasts couldn't get enough of it.

But clothing isn't the only attraction to these fashion entrepreneurs. Sneakers also contribute to the hype, starting with the Air Jordans in 1984. Chicago Bulls basketball star Michael Jordan wore the red and white sneakers at the 1985 All-Star game. The celebrity effect caused prices and demand for the shoes to skyrocket. Owning Air Jordans became a symbol of status. And you can imagine how eager hypebeast collectors and resellers were to get their hands on a pair.

Heath Wheeldon has been buying name-brand sneakers since 2018 and owns over 70 collector's pieces. To him, shoes like Air Jordans and Dunks are in high demand because of the amount of time passed since the first releases.



"It's all about having what others can't get elsewhere."

"Most shoes are insanely expensive because they are a popular silhouette, designer, and exclusive," he says. "I have a pair of \$600 Nike Off-White Dunk Low 9/50's. This style was released around 5 years ago but because of the collaboration with Virgil [Abloh], they're in immense demand." Unlike other fashion brands, hypebeast brands don't always have an actual storefront. Buyers have to wait by their computers for a brand to do a drop, a limited release of quick-selling items. But if you're just now getting your hypebeast feet wet, chances are resellers will snatch your dream pair of shoes before you can even click 'add to cart.'

Brad Thompson, the owner of Kulture Kingz, a resell hypebeast storefront in Des Moines, is ahead of the game when it comes to mastering the drop.

"There's gonna be OG sneakerheads that don't like the hypebeasts because of how quick shoes sell out, but it's all about the supply and demand. That's why I built an actual storefront," he says. "Getting these kinds of shoes is a whole experience and having a physical store to get them [at] puts me higher in the game and provides buyers with a good business relationship."

Thompson compared Jordan's celebrity effect to Travis Scott's. After the Houston rapper was seen wearing different pairs of Nike SB Dunks, retail prices jumped from \$110 to over \$1,000 a pair at re-sell.

"People will go crazy for any shoe that's worn by a celebrity, especially when that celebrity shows fashion interest already. It's an even better opportunity for these brands to upscale the price, it shows quality," Thompson says

It's resellers like Thompson who have an expert understanding of what it's like to work in hypebeast culture. "It's all about having what others can't get elsewhere. We've got a few Louis Vuitton and Gucci shirts, but it's the bags and accessories that sell the most."

In 2019, hypebeast met luxury with Louis Vuitton and Supreme's one-off collab. The drop ranged from clothing to bags, even luggage trunks. The melangé of one of the most luxury brands in the world with a streetwear brand shocked the fashion industry. Streetwear got a seat at a million-dollar table, and Louis Vuitton—an unexpected sell-out. A match made in heaven.

Supreme even went on to work with Tiffany & Co., which opened doors for both brands. Supreme made its name in the jewelry business, and Tiffany & Co.'s demographics expanded to a younger audience. It was a marketing success.

Hypebeast culture is ever-changing. It adopted drop culture techniques and championed celebrity endorsements. Over time, expect to see more collaborations from luxury brands and niche brands in the fashion industry. Maybe one day you'll get your hands on a rare piece and step into the culture.



S O C I A L S P A C E

A N E W



UNDERSTANDING
THE CHAOS AND
CROSS SECTIONS OF
CRYPTOCURRENCIES,
NFTS, AND THE
METAVERSE.

words
NASH LINSLEY

photo + design **RIHARDS SERGIS**

In March of 2021, something either remarkable or, depending on your perspective, remarkably confusing happened. An NFT—a non-fungible token—of a piece of art called “Everydays: The First 5000 Days” sold at auction for over \$69 million. It was the most ever paid for an NFT—and more than the price of real-world works by artists like Picasso, Warhol, and Monet. It made Mike “Beeple” Winkelmann the world’s current leading digital artist by a long shot.

It also made the buyer, MetaKovan, a cryptocurrency investor, the king of the metaverse—not surprising since his name translates from Tamil as “King of Meta.” The last time he bought a Beeple piece, MetaKovan, whose real name is Vignesh Sundaresan, held a party in the virtual metaverse called Origin City in a digital gallery he had designed by real architects. People danced in zero gravity. There was digital champagne. It was basically a scene out of “Ready Player One,” virtual guests mingling together, viewing virtual art at a virtual party in a virtual world in real time.

If that last paragraph—heck, all of this—confused you, you’re not alone. In the last few years, some areas of technology have become so complex it’s overwhelming to keep up. Crypto was hard enough. Now with NFTs and the suddenly hot metaverse, it’s downright confusing. We’re not experts on the subject, and we certainly won’t make you one, but at least next time you’ll be able to hold your own with a crypto-bro.

CRYPTO

Most people understand that cryptocurrencies are another form of currency much like the US dollar or EU Euro. Except for how transactions are recorded. Cryptocurrencies use a blockchain to record every transaction made with that specific coin on an electronic ledger that is shared with

every device that is connected to the network. Blockchains can do this by encrypting every transaction with a complex set of computations—known as a block—that is solved and voted collectively by the market. If the data does not match between enough of the devices, the block will be moved back in the order of transactions and run again until it can be verified. Once a block is verified it is added to the chain and also verifies the validity of the blocks before it. The collective agreement of the market decentralizes it, therefore, ensuring that no single entity is able to affect the ebbs and flows of the market.

NFTS

NFTs are a product of cryptocurrencies that attach works of art, collectibles, and other forms of visual media to the blockchain. With the advent of a way to decentralize online currencies, others began brainstorming ways to decentralize the ownership of online objects as well. The idea got bounced around a few times in 2012 and 2013 but never came to fruition until May 3, 2014 when Kevin McCoy minted his non-fungible token called Quantum on the NameCoin blockchain. As previously mentioned, NFTs did not really make their way into the mainstream until spring 2021. Throughout the seven years, some different NFTs had a brief time in the spotlight of internet culture such as Rare Pepes. Along with gaining the attention of meme connoisseurs, Rare Pepes were some of the first NFTs bought and sold using the current most popular NFT blockchain, Ethereum. The Ethereum blockchain was the first blockchain equipped with the proper tools to store NFT data without bogging down the speed of transactions and making sure that all the tokens stored on the blockchain could be properly identified.

META

Metaverses are online spaces where people can compete, socialize, consume, and basically anything that

can happen in the real world. For instance, Counter Strike: Global Offensive, a popular first-person shooter game, has a marketplace where weapons skins hold real value, gambling websites to obtain these skins, and a professional competitive aspect to it. There are plenty of other examples of games that combine different parts of real life. While video games are considered metaverses they have yet to fully integrate every part of real life into their platforms.

Several NFTs are used in a metaverse. They attach to the token and blockchain network used to verify ownership. These NFTs can be applied as clothing for an avatar, status, or power symbol, or just visual displays attached to your account within the metaverse. This integration of real-life value into these metaverse has opened up many opportunities for individuals to extract value from these sources. A metaverse known as Decentraland has already begun selling virtual real estate. These metaverses have virtual stores to buy NFTs, casinos, fashion, and the arts. Clothing brands like Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Burberry have already started making NFTs and may soon be setting up metaverse shops to display them across multiple metaverses.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Now that there’s a basic understanding of what cryptos, NFTs, and the metaverse have to offer, why should average shmoes like me and you care? There’s an incredible amount of money being poured into all three facets, and it’s only going to go up from here. Sure, living a second life to escape the reality of the physical world is nice—a vice for many people in the way of video games and online personas already. But the idea of living another fully simulated life in a metaverse is enticing as well. Being able to shed the skin of reality and immerse yourself in a global and diverse space with endless possibilities gives those restricted by monetary

issues, exhausting personal relationships, and a slew of other issues the chance to escape.

Yeah, it sounds nice—but not for the time being. Metaverses that operate similarly to real life require \$300 virtual reality setups and a computer powerful enough to run the thing. It may not seem like you’d need that much processing power for a metaverse since it’s been done before on lower-grade technology, but blockchain technology consumes a massive amount of energy. Blockchain verification can happen at the metaverse owner’s server farms, but they still require a lot of power, nonetheless. If owners have to buy more sophisticated equipment and use up more energy, then without blockchain technology, they will opt to charge consumers more to participate on their platform. The disadvantages don’t only come from an economic barrier too. Blockchain technology is already highly energy-intensive with Bitcoin using a similar amount of power to countries the size of Poland. The expansion of NFTs has already affected the amount of energy used and integrating them into a metaverse would only add to the energy usage of these systems.

New technology will always continue to advance and use up more energy. As more people adopt this technology, prices will ultimately fall on behalf of consumers. We aren’t saying that if you are able, you should be rushing to be a part of the first wave of metaverse users. This technology still has a long way to go for it to be rolled out to the public on a large scale. Plus, the culture of this new social space has not even been established yet. Understanding the technology is just the first step. We are all in a similar liminal space between whether this is the future or not. Patience and time will be the deciders of how this technology will impact the day-to-day lives of everyone.

The American Family Update

FROM ADOPTIONS TO SURROGACIES, THE PATH TO CREATING A FAMILY LOOKS NOTHING LIKE IT DID IN THE '50S.

words SAM ROTHBARDT
design + illustration PRINCESS HART



In the best of circumstances, deciding to be a parent is a huge decision. For Nathan Lair, it was an even bigger decision than that.

See, Lair is a single dad—and that was by choice. What's more, he had his son via surrogacy.

"What really made me take the jump was meeting Heartland Surrogacy and meeting my surrogate. Their support made me brave enough to start down the path," Lair said.

Lair began to research surrogacy in 2010 after worrying about fertility issues and revisited the idea in 2018 when he was ready to become a single parent. Heartland Surrogacy met with Lair to discuss the legal and financial process. From there, Lair went through medical and psychological testing, home tests, and finally was matched with a surrogate carrier. Lair was able to start the family he's always wanted in a way he'd never thought was possible.

"I had wanted to start one traditionally with extensive genetic testing due to my risks, but life never worked out that way," he said. "Dating with fertility issues wasn't easy and was not an easy conversation when I felt it appropriate to share because it also came with telling someone I had a chronic life-long disease."

He isn't alone. In fact, he and his son are just one of an ever-growing legion of non-traditional American families. It's been ages since the average American household has consisted of a husband, wife, two kids, and a picket fence—if it ever existed in the first place. In the last 50 years, American families have transformed.

More and more families are starting in non-traditional ways. One out of every 25 families in the U.S. has at least one adopted child and nearly 140,000 were adopted last year according to the US Adoption Network. A significant change in legislation has caused large increases in these numbers since 2000. It's not just adoption either, surrogacy numbers are rising too. In 2004, there were 738 births via surrogate compared to 2,807 in 2015.

These numbers show a dramatic increase in families beginning under non-traditional circumstances. According to fertility specialist Dr. David Harari, "The traditional American couple is no longer written the way it was in the past." His

clients include straight couples, gay or lesbian couples, and single people. Harari also helps patients who have problems conceiving and matches them with surrogates or other gestational services they may need. "The one thing I think that's a universal characteristic in all people is the desire to have a family at some point in their lives," Harari said.

Even so, there's still a stigma around surrogacy and adoption. Blame it on a hangover from the 1950s ideal of the nuclear family. Americans still love a minivan of kids conceived the old-fashioned way. But Harari believes that with more people achieving their dreams of having a family by whatever means, the concept of the nuclear family has changed, and the taint of surrogacy has vanished.

"I think the stigma of surrogacy has been lifted," he said. "There's a lot more transparency with discussing how children came into the world, and it's created a healthy environment of openness."

Starting a family is one of the most precious things someone can do, and Harari believes no one should be judged for how they came into the world.

Pushback on family situations is nothing new. Studies from the Healthy Place Index show that raising a family is easier with two parents, but the task is not impossible with one parent, especially when only one child is involved. The concept of the nuclear family in America still exists but is steadily changing. Some adopted children don't look like their parents. Many families have parents of the same gender. Single parenting is expanding because of relaxed legislation. These increased rates of adoption and surrogacy prove people still want the family lifestyle but are also exploring other ways to find their family.

"I love being a dad, and I do enjoy the sole authority of being a single dad. I thought I may date after [Paxton] was born, but I've really fallen into a nice routine and am just happy. He loves his grandparents, and they spoil him every day," Lair said. He really enjoys being a dad and wouldn't trade it for the world. Paxton, his two-year-old son, loves to play outside and help his father with chores. Just like many other children, he has a good relationship with his grandparents, and the family is happy. Lair has no plans to carry out another surrogacy in the future and is completely focused on raising his son and being the best father possible.





ETHICS OF GENE EDITING

SCIENTISTS CAN MODIFY GENES IN MANY ORGANISMS, BUT WHAT ARE THE ETHICS BEHIND EDITING THE HUMAN GENOME?

words
NATE EISENMANN
design PAYTON BLAHUT



In 2018, a little-known Chinese scientist named He Jiankui turned some '90s sci-fi into a real-world ethical nightmare. He'd created designer babies. But he didn't do any of the things we think of when we talk about customizing kids. He didn't give them a certain color of eyes or perfect skin. Instead, Jiankui created twins that were immune to HIV by editing the genes of the embryos using CRISPR, a technique that allows scientists to slice out or add bits of DNA in order to get a result that wouldn't occur naturally. He cut out the protein that HIV uses to enter cells.

The world flipped out.

The day after he presented his findings at the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing, Jiankui had his research shut down by Chinese authorities. Later that year, he was sentenced to three years in prison and ordered to pay a large fine.

But why was this such a big deal if one of the goals of science is to advance knowledge and medicine? The man was literally trying to eradicate a deadly disease.

THE NEED FOR BIOETHICS

Enter the field of bioethics. With more groundbreaking research surfacing, the pressure for companies and scientists to be held accountable and follow strict regulations ramps up.

"Bioethics tells us about what we should and should not do when we interact with living things, either in science, or in medicine, or in society," Dr. Karola Kreitmai, Assistant Professor of Bioethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, says.

Since Jiankui's CRISPR-ethics catastrophe, the debate of CRISPR's use in humans has only grown. But the practice is used beyond human embryos, and legally, too.

Editas, headquartered in Cambridge, MA, is one of many biotech companies using CRISPR to its advantage. They conduct research and offer patients gene therapy to treat otherwise incurable genetic diseases.

"There is already a clear path for somatic cell CRISPR genome editing medicines building off the past several decades of gene therapy in the U.S. and Europe," Dana Robie, Editas senior manager of corporate communications says.

Editas uses CRISPR to modify somatic cells in humans, which are cells whose DNA will not get passed down to offspring.

"We have focused our research and development efforts on diseases for which there are currently few or no treatments available," Robie says.

Restoring vision loss for people with diseases like Leber congenital amaurosis 10 (LCA10) is one of Editas' treatment offerings. Editas takes a modified form of CRISPR called EDIT-101, which they developed, and injects it into a patient's eye. The contents of the injection recognize and delete the mutation in DNA that causes vision loss, and in doing so, vision can be restored.

Currently, Editas is also doing research on CRISPR as a possible cure for some cancers by genetically modifying the body's cells to recognize and destroy cancerous tumor cells.



BEYOND A CURE

Unlike editing somatic cells, editing genes in an embryo requires changes to germline cells.

"Germline editing uses gene editing technologies on germline cells, such as eggs, sperm, or embryos, which are cells that can pass on their genetic information to future generations," Robie says. "Germline editing for clinical application is prohibited in the U.S., across most of Europe, China, and many other countries."

Regardless, Robie says Editas has no plans to engage in germline editing. It wouldn't matter if they did, though, because President Barack Obama signed an FDA ban on germline editing for clinical trials in 2015.

"Gene editing in humans brings up multiple ethical concerns. There are definitely issues with safety due to the fact that this is a newer technology, and its implementation within humans is limited thus far," Maggie Freese, a licensed genetic counselor with the University Iowa Hospitals and Clinics says. "So there's a considerable need to establish regulations on its use until accuracy can be ensured."

WHO MAKES THE RULES?

Carolyn Brokowski, Marya Pollack and Robert Pollack, professors at Columbia University, wrote in a 2015 analysis on ethics and CRISPR: "Should medical enhancement by CRISPR technologies be considered a form of free speech and/or expression? If so, how, if at all, might these rights be limited, and why? Who has and/or should have the authority to decide?"

The idea of embryonic enhancement as a form of free speech raises important legal questions about the First Amendment. Under the Constitution, Congress can make no law that restricts speech or even expression.

"Free speech is certainly important, but we don't let people inflict body harm on others because they feel like doing so is part of their free speech," Kreitmair said. "With CRISPR... it's not clear how we could justify using it as an enhancement, rather than a treatment, when there is no medical need."

Enhancing our bodies with CRISPR makes it sound like we're breeding the next wave of superheroes. But instead of super-human strength, powers might just look like a prolonged life span or immunity to a particular disease.

"The majority of people are opposed to the utility of CRISPR technology for 'enhancement' purposes and choosing certain non-medical characteristics—height, athleticism, intelligence," Freese says. "I don't think this selection would be considered a form of free speech [or] expression due to the fact that it has direct implications for the health of another human being."

But this idea does not consider situations where CRISPR could improve a child's health based on genetic flaws before birth. Right now, abortion is legal in the U.S., though it is becoming more restricted.

Just like there are concerns about abortions without medical reasons, there are many concerns about an embryo being edited without medical reasons.

"There can be an argument made that parents have a right to choose whether to have their embryo's genome-edited," Freese says. "There will need to be a balancing of potential risks and benefits for decisions about non-medical characteristics and in the near future, I don't foresee the amount of potential risk decreasing enough to support making these non-medical reasons."

DESIGNING THE NEXT GENERATION

The 2018 summit ultimately upheld the decision that there should be no human germline editing, and there needs to be more guidance put in place around this topic.

Throughout history, humans have fantasized about how to become the perfect species. About 100 years ago, it was a leader who tried to get rid of an entire ethnic group. In 2018, it was a Chinese scientist who may have had good intentions, but opened up a can of worms the world wasn't ready to face.

"The events in Hong Kong this week clearly demonstrate the need for us to develop more specific standards and principles that can be agreed upon by the international scientific community," Steve Olson, author of the summary of the summit, wrote. "We look forward to joining others on the path forward called for by the organizing committee."

A third summit is scheduled for 2023. Scientists will be faced with a multitude of decisions—whether to continue sweeping the legality of human gene modification under the rug, give up and face a new reality, or something in between.

“If a woman has the right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy, should she have the right to have her child modified to ensure it’s as healthy as possible?”

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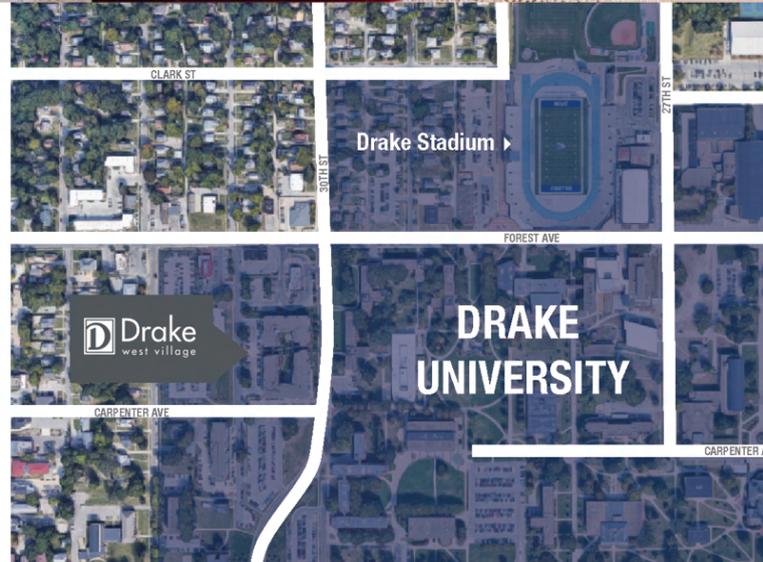
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