
manifesto

The aim is to create une maison, a space. But at the beginning, there was nothing, everything was to build, everything was to come. An empty land. An empty land is like a blank page, empty and wide. There is nothing, you've got to make it yours, to set everything up. That's it, turning this piece of ground into a space that is ours.

A room that suits us. We don't suit the room, it suits us. A customizable room, with expandable walls (walls on which we are going to be writing, drawing, sketching), not even actual walls since we can always push them further.

When i was a kid, i always played to create my own house. Always upside down and always playful. Also always comfortable, for my own body and my own self. The room protects you, yourself but also the others. The ones you care about. It slowly become this space that you are going to when you are looking for a shelter. A shelter for your mind and for your body. So what we want to do is to create our own space. But we also want to ask ourselves about what is a space, what is our space, what does it mean, what is its value?

The first issue will involve concrete. Because we need to build something strong enough. The foundations are the starting point, yes, the beginning of something. A point, a point to revolve around. We are creating these foundations together, it's a collective work. Each of us will place one stone after the other. And together we will take care of what we built.

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radical



radical

The radical shift in my mind came when I started to let go of all the unreasonable pressure about having to write something that reaches the highest level of relevance for everyone. To make this a kind of comfort text that pleases the reader, makes them gently smile, and nod approvingly. It is a personal experience and thank god everyone has their own diversity of problems, so it might not feel identical to somebody in the same situation. I trusted the process, that I can birth a thought I feel like I can hold, something palpable instead of piecing it together in this unbearably abstract way. I expected exactly to have an epiphany during the time I am getting my thoughts around the theme, which obviously didn't happen. In fact, this fear of writing something pointless, drove me even more in never ending circles, completely eliminating the possibility of any kind of revelation. I tried to blame it on the never-ending noise that surrounds me. There is no moment of silence, we are constantly falling victims to the noise of society. This is the era of information. There is no such thing as TMI. It's the police car sirens from somewhere far or the thought of what brutality will follow. I convinced myself, I cannot find the silence with the information non-stop violently breaking in my mind, does not give me the space to think. but truthfully, it can be all silence too.

I reckon the point when I was seeking this silence so much, when I found the noise unbearable and the responsibilities too heavy I decided to move abroad. Changing homes would free me from the responsibilities, I believed, I normalized in myself the notion of simply leaving all behind and starting this new, blank page. Not so much my personal life is to blame for the decision, although naturally it is not easy to see the clear distinction and reason, and there is obviously some overlap.

It can be all silence too. The state I tried to force myself into, I can now only see as ignorance. It can be all silence too, of course, but it is the choice of the privileged western individual which I choose not to be. Silence is limiting, creates the illusion of peace of mind. For this reason, the realization I was lacking before comes in the shift I found in the process of writing and my view on the act of living itself.



Is home only the place you find comfort in?

Isn't home the place inhabited by your memories, and a certain sense of nostalgia, those ghosts from the past, ghosts of the people you care about ? These images of those people dwell your mind - at least my mind - as well as my flat. I can always picture them, entering the room, pouring themselves a tee, they inhabit my thoughts.

When you move you take them with you. It's heavy and it's whether a good memory, whether something you will miss. In that second case you have to build your home despite them. So why are you leaving? If you have to leave behind your dearest ones. That sounds stupid of you.

Do you find your home, or do you build it ? Or does it find you ? Is it a re-creation, a transfer from A to B? smooth and easy when you know the recipe.

I'm privileged because I have decided to leave my house and because I can settle down everywhere, nowhere is my home likely to be destroyed, no danger, no threat.

I'm free to leave, return, come back, come again.



I can be anywhere, never really constrained. My home is large, unclearly defined but it doesn't matter since I can theoretically find comfort everywhere. The comfort is also being able to surround yourself with like-minded people, the comfort of having people like you around you.

Often I have been feeling that I'm obligated to the place I'm from. One day I'll have to return back and take care of my dad's garden. I don't want to but maybe i have to parce que c'est comme ça. Maybe I have to because it is a duty to go back where you are from, to the place that gave you everything, and could still provide you with all the food and the water, and the warmth you are needing. So why are you leaving ? Why aren't you enjoying the privilege of having a loving family ? A family that will always take care of you whatever happens to you. Very bold of you, how arrogant you are snubbing the ones that gave you all.

JUANBALETT

Whatever happens, you're a foreigner. It hasn't changed at all in 50 years.

We still have our contact with türkiye but our life is here. I feel more comfortable here.

How do you know your friends?

We've made friends along the way. We no longer have close contact with germans. We go to the turkish pazar, visit the places of our friends. We have our gardens here as our hobby.

Maybachufer market.

In the past, our number was smaller and we would see each other on family levels, we would have dinners. There was no tv, telephone, etc. so this would make us see each other and spend time together more. Us, youth, would play football among us. We had a team called türkiyem spor. In the 90s, overnight, they changed the law. We were playing in front of 10K people. After the law, we couldn't go up to the second league and the team weakened financially.

Why is it Kreuzberg and Neukölln mainly?

There was a number of families in the beginning. Back then, there were lots of uninhabited flats, after the war.

There were no proper heating nor bathrooms in those flats. For years. There was a place where you could take a bath for 20 minutes. I would go there to take a bath. Around 70 to 80. 5 families would use the same toilet near the stairway.

Our kids talk in German.

Girls, boys.. They all. Among each other and to us.

How connected are they to the culture in türkiye?

Not really. These cultures are really different. When we would see the elderly and people older than us, we would pay more attention to our acts and attitude.

Here, it no longer exists.

We would hide our cigarettes and even put them up in our palm. These kids smoke it next to their fathers.

Go anywhere in the world, there is no "German cuisine". They don't have food.

They had no idea about salad in the seventies, I remember. People from around the world got them used to eating proper food. They had pickles in jars... of potato, cabbage, etc. they would eat only this as salad. People got them eating varieties of salads.

But you always feel this feeling "we got you here, made you earn money, thus fed you." So, you must obey. I heard these. But, no one does this and therefore you are less lovable.

Construction -- turks do. If you say taxi, turks do it. If there is 12k taxis, 11k of it turks. Go to

airports, it's turks again. Restaurants, markets, you can see us in every field. Along these, there is judges, prosecutors, drs, engineers. The police chef of Berlin is of Turkish origin. Head of some hospitals are turks.

3rd generation grow up very

well. So that they struggle less than their parents, they studied well.

So, inevitably, these kids have less and less connections to "these turks". a prosecutor or a judge wouldn't of course come here and sit with us. That's why I said things developed in different ways.

Is there anything that you remember as an example of discrimination?

Sure. There was this programme on the tv. There was a group of 20 people and 19 were "foreigners" to rent a flat. They apply for the flat. These 19 all have their papers ready and people with stable income. Working kids. The German applicant doesn't have any papers nor job. They eliminated 19 and gave the flat to that kid. They did this programme for the tv to show.

big thanks to Fikret okur & Mamu

THE LITTLE ISTANBUL

AKA KREUZBERG



JUANBALETT

20

minutes pass and no one stopped so far. Then a FedEx truck honked and stopped on a ramp a few meters away. I pick up my shit and walk up. The guy inside is on the phone, he ignores me. A false alarm, I wait. Before coming here I made a bet with a girl who knew too much about my dreams. She thinks I would not make it out of Vermont. God help me prove her wrong.

I walk behind the unfortunate delivery van. Thumb goes up again, the people still stare. I hate being stared at. All those years of standing out for all the bad reasons and I still cannot get used to it. Germans have this way of observing the foreign with a stare that would kill a Canadian. No matter whether you look back or not they just keep staring you down. Everybody stares at each other but nobody says anything. When I'm there I don't mind their looks, quite frankly I partially enjoy it. But their eyes see different, I know it from back home. It's the type of look you do when trying to avoid staring at a person with a strange pimple on their face. My pimple was being a fag in an eastern Polish town. I became invisible because of that, and now, by my request, I stick out once again. A giant Ford stops, my eyes barely reach to see the driver. It's an old man, he was sitting but I could see he is quite short.

He's bald, but his voice still has the spirit of the road. "Where are you heading?" "South."

"I can get you as far as New Heaven." I hop in the back, already smelling like shit. Layers of wool keep me warm but do not make me a good passenger. "Are you homeless?" He asks. "no" I reply truthfully. He's carrying a large pot on the front seat and a variety of gardening supplies.

"Nice pot you have there." Thinking Who the hell gardens in the middle of October? He says he hasn't seen a hitchhiker since the 80s. "I used to hitch back in the day." Turns out we were equally crazy. If I saw news of Ted Bundy instead of Joe Biden falling down the stairs I maybe would reconsider my trip. But he still went for it. A wild guy "When I was 17 I went to a concert in San Francisco," he says. "After I came back, I knock on the door and an unknown woman opens. She told me my parents moved, somewhere in Canada. That was the last time I heard from them."

"That's messed up," I reply. Maybe I give my parents too much shit. People have this tendency to open up to me. It's passive, sometimes I don't know what to say but mostly I just like to be in silence. Not everybody understands that, they think it's a sign for them to pour their hearts out. I don't mind this either, I like to listen. But with Kei, that's his name, we talked.

He has a company. I didn't ask for the details but it has "an office," and "employees." It doesn't matter. We speak of writing. Dostoyevski, Bukowski and Tolstoi. These are his favorites. Russians. He thinks Bukowski is russian. He might be thinking that I'm too. I'm not Russian. Nor is Bukowski Vermont is gorgeous this time of the year. Either the Appalachians or Adirondacks dance in the distance.

I understand how people went in there and imagined some weird shit like the Bigfoot or Skinwalkers. I don't want to get caught by a skinwalker, if anybody murders me I want it to be a human, or a large bear. Dying used to be such a bigger deal in the past, now I don't think I'd even end up on the state news. Maybe a student newspaper would pick my story up. The title would be : "Why Hitchhiking Is Not A Thing Anymore." I hope Kei doesn't kill me. Some people feel like they killed too many demons inside and outside to be capable of pulling shit like that. At some point you either accept the world's cruelty and become an axe murderer or really get into running marathons. Kei isn't the runner type, not an axe guy either though. He doesn't have a wedding ring. I wanted to inquire but after his childhood story I figured it would be too much of a therapy session to handle. I need to pace myself. He has his pot, he should be fine.

"See this road? Keep the Interstate 7 until you get to Middlebury, then keep the 7th." We stop by the curb, right after the lights. There's a big red truck waiting for its turn. "Good luck with everything, don't get yourself killed out there."

"Thanks, I'll try too, good luck gardening." He drove off, did a U-turn and took the left onto the road where the truck was waiting. A nice guy, he went through so much shit. Our encounter left me hopeful for the trip, and my life. We will never see each other again, I told him I might write about him. No kids. There's a chance that this might be the most permanent proof of his existence, his kindness. When I'm going to be old I'll also pick up hitchhikers. No time for thinking now, the city of Albany is waiting. Eighteen minutes to noon, the sun sets at around 6PM. The weather is damp, I'm both sweaty, hot and cold all at the same time. Next time I enter somebody's car denying the homelessness question will be a bit more difficult. My deodorant is tucked somewhere beneath the Target-brand string cheese and a box of hot dogs. The juices from the hot dogs spilled in my bag, some of it on my sweater's sleeve. I smell worse than a wet dog. My perfume, Givenchy L'Interdit, is in the bag's top pocket. Without much luck I try to cover up this explosive combo.

The thumb goes up. 253 miles to NYC



H O M E L E S S .

I am homeless.

I am not homeless in the sense of having no shelter, nor am I homeless in that life has led me to misfortunes that put me out in the cold streets of a city I don't belong to, where people stare in pity and fear. Pitiful of the state and fearful of turning into it. I am not shelterless, I am not alone, but I am homeless.

I am homeless in the sense that the land I was born into has rejected me, I am homeless because the people I once called family no longer know me. I am homeless because the house I once called a home now serves as a battle ground for the woman I had to be to and the woman I am. These women don't hate each other, but they are strangers with an ocean so vast between them that even when having the same face, same blood and same language, they don't recognize each other. And hate where I am from, is born of ignorance. I am lonely. There are four walls in a country that has outlawed me that once witnessed my lies for years, walls that were the only bystanders to the tears I shed every night after a day of being someone whose skin no longer fit her, whose voice no longer felt like her own, whose lies were too many to count. These walls now play home to my brother, a man whose stranger eyes wouldn't recognize me in a crowd were it not for the memories we forged over shared blood and shelter. I love my brother still, I always will but I know his life of ignorance will want me dead before he would try to understand why I left them all behind. I wonder sometimes if these walls would recognize me. I wonder if he knows that if I had spent another year with them I would have been a year younger than I am now for rest of his life.

I am a daughter. I call my mother every day – no, that was a lie, I called my mother every day. I don't anymore. Every milestone I cross to the person I fought to become, I am further away from the woman I wished loved me for who I am. There is kindness in her voice I don't recognize, I never heard it until I had left her alone in a house that never felt like home. I can't tell you if it is because I have been doing nothing but surviving all these years that I didn't notice it or if this newfound kindness was born out of the pain of my absence. I don't know which would break my heart

more. I am a broken law. There are 72 countries where I am illegal, and men with sun kissed skin of my culture here look at me like a crime they wish to commit were it not for the laws of this strange land they don't belong to. I look back because here, I am brave, here, I am bold. I dare you I say in the brown of my eyes that matches their own, I dare you, I say in the way I kiss the beautiful girl that chose me over them and they walk away, offended by my existence, disgusted by my freedom. Later they will tell their friends how they wished they were in the country they had left behind so they could hurt me, restore their natural order and the woman with the blue eyes and the porcelain skin could choose them. It never crosses their mind that they were never a choice, it never crosses their mind that this isn't a choice. I am a stranger in the place I call a refuge and unwanted in the place I was born. I don't speak the language here and I don't remember my old one. My tongue is tired of wrapping around new syllables and I know I will never sound like one of them. I don't know how to set roots even if I had learned how to. There's a restlessness in not having a place to call home that never leaves your bones. My feet are blistered with the weight of the emptiness I hold and my words are weathered from carrying all the loss I had collected on the journey here.

I am running, I am always running. I am always searching. There is no home for the unwanted and there are no roots for those that rip them out. Purpose is foreign and staying still is what my nightmares are made of. I look back and I don't recognize my past, I look ahead and I don't see a future. Guilt rattles my ribcage and leaves me wondering what was the point of it all? What was the point of all this grief if I don't know what to do with all this freedom? What was the point of all the hearts I broke if I don't know what to do with mine anymore? What was the point at all?

I am homeless because I am gay. I am homeless because I chose myself. I am homeless because I am a rebellion in a girl's body. I am homeless because if I do nothing with all this autonomy but exist in the skin I chose, in clothes I pick, in words I write, and nothing more, it is still worth it. That will be good enough for me someday.



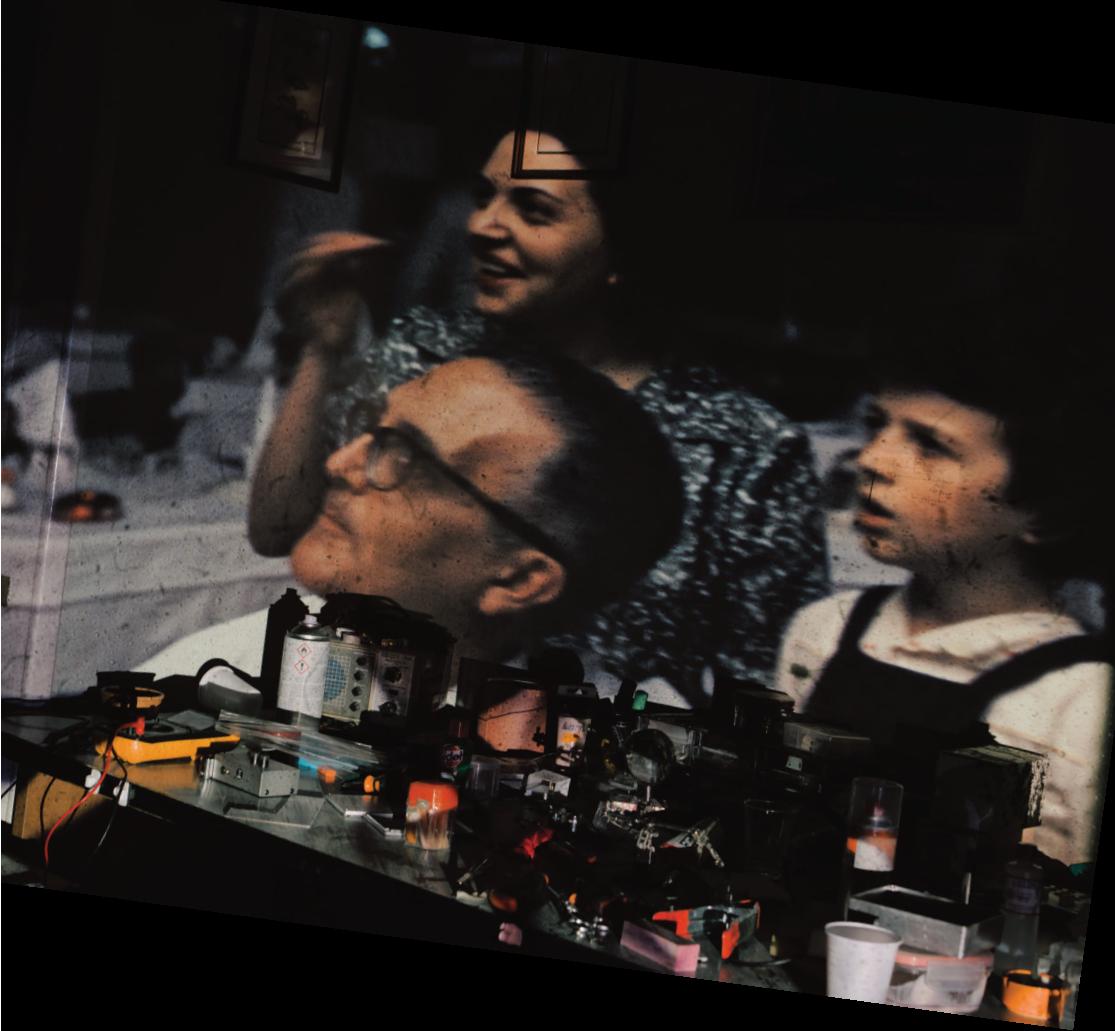


Pic 1: Sliding sunshine into my hands
That's the only way to grow up
That's just the way I am

Pic2: It looked like I could just climb there and say hi to everything that felt like a threat to me, from way up above // But it's never that easy, your steps can't be as wide as you imagine them to be// even the imagination turns finite// even the childhood disappears while it covers you whole with the illusion of its lingering // its littering // no trash bin in this street

Pic3: chocolate// wrinkled, pale cheeks that smell of skin // freckled hands, kiss- put it on your forehead // all grandmothers are your grandmother// every child is you in return

Pic4: no one lives there anymore now the shirt that smells like sun and is not looking for its owner any longer the acceptance holds its own head downit changed while breathing in the same exact loop- forever



In late May 2023, driven by a deep discomfort at home and a need for independence, I relocated to my late grandmother's house. She had passed away two years earlier, and with my parents' understanding, I embraced this opportunity to carve out a space for myself. What began as a pursuit of autonomy soon became a journey of reconnection with my family's history, particularly from my mother's side.

Living in that house, I found myself grappling with a perplexing need to distance myself from my parents and the life with them. My childhood had been marked by a lack of bonds with relatives - our interactions limited to holidays and special occasions. This estrangement left me feeling disconnected from my family tree, an absence I became aware of while living alone in that house.

Months into my stay, my perception of the space started changing. The objects within, from old documents to personal belongings, bore the weight of memories that felt both distant and deeply personal. Among these was a box of old slides, accompanied by my grandparents' documents and passports. In February 2024, determined to bring these slides to life, I sourced a vintage

Kodak projector with the help of a family friend, and started projecting the pictures on different walls as a way to bring back to life a part of those who lived there, even temporarily.

Moving the projector around the house revealed the interplay between each figure and the physical space, decomposing the still images that would now project on furniture, glassware, and objects on table tops. The projected images soon blurred the boundaries between past and present.

The projector would rhythmically alternate images to complete darkness while switching slides, as if allowing for a brief and glorious return of those who inhabited the space before moving back to darkness once again.

This experience completely reframed my connection to the place. I still wouldn't call it home, but it has become a vessel for reconciling with my family's legacy. The act of rediscovering and honoring these fragments of the past has grounded me, offering a sense of gratitude for the shared path that

brought me to this place. Through light, shadows, and memory,

I've come to see this
house not only as a
space but as a bridge
to my roots.