

FANTASY FIRE

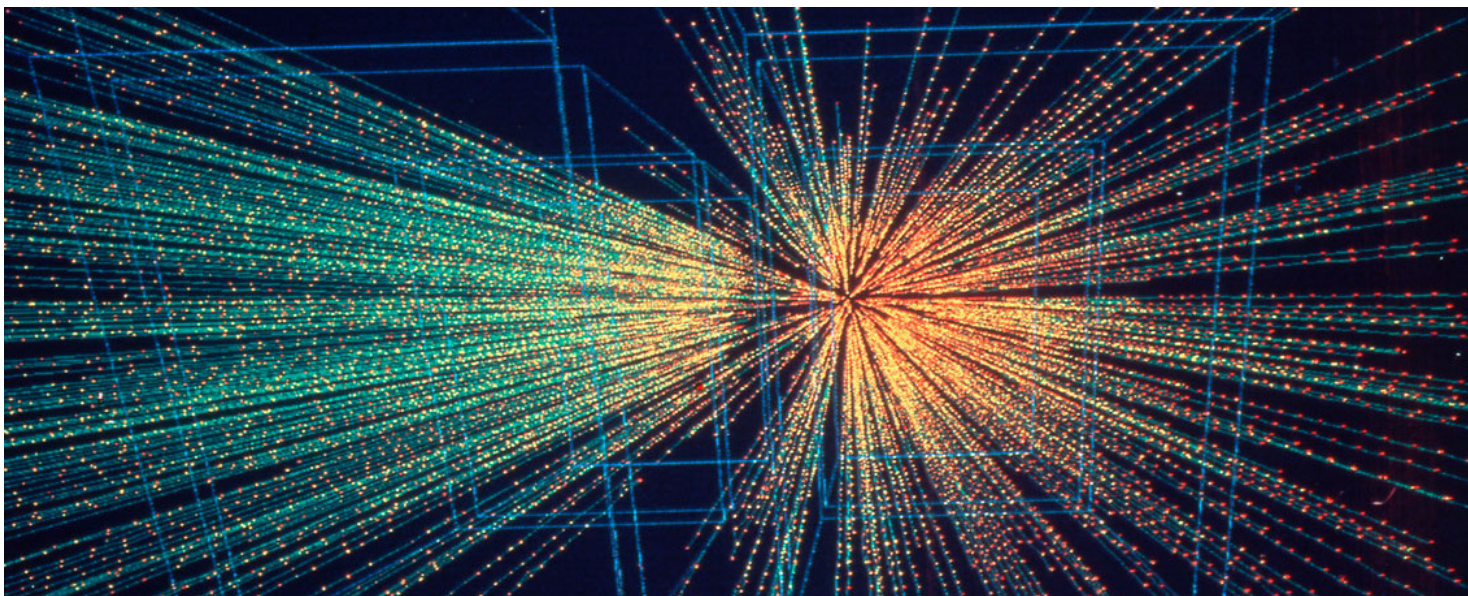
ISSUE #48 //
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ATELIER OLSCHINSKY
CHRISTOPHER JONASSEN
JESSE LEITINEN

HEAR THAT HUNGRY ROAR

ANDREA JANKOVIC HITS
THE SUMMER DOWN UNDER



BACK TO THE FUTURE

LIFE AT CERN'S LARGE HADRON COLLIDER IS ALL BAGUETTES, MYSTERIOUS BIRDS AND TIME-TRAVELLING TWEEDSMEN, MAYBE THEY'LL GET BACK TO THE SCIENCE SOON

After spending much of the last month absorbed by *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*, at least until my Xbox 360 turned what was a sparkling new disc into a dusty, much-scratched replica that struggled to get through 10 minutes gameplay without crashing the system, Activision's latest sales record-breaker was to be my topic of discussion this month. That is until a man from the future turned up at the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, attempting to sabotage their experiments, lest we fall into a world of limitless power, the elimination of poverty and chocolate for all.

Eloi Cole, arrested wearing a bow tie and tweed, claims to be responsible for an incident a year previous when a bird dropped half a baguette on the machinery, causing it to overheat by almost 8 Kelvin, significant when the Collider normally operates at 1.9K.

Ever since James Cameron's glorious *The Terminator* back in 1984, time

travel and people being sent back from the future have played on the minds of geeks and conspiracy theorists alike. It only takes a whisper to start something that soon enough, is of cult-ish proportions and a much wider, public importance.

Shows like *Futurama*, however silly, still make you wonder of what the future does hold. Not in terms of marriage, kids and that dream Ferrari somewhere down the line, but suction tubes for travel, colonies on Mars, Neptune and Venus and the discovery of alien races far beyond our wildest dreams. In that world I just hope we've got as big a media empire as Mom, though floating eternal heads of world governments of late aren't such a necessity.

Oh wait, the Hadron Collider story was posted by *CNET* on April 1st. As you were.

Sam Bathe
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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CHOLULA HOT SAUCE



FILM LEAKS

AEROPLANE
IN FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT



**IN FLIGHT
ENTERTAINMENT**



**IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY
IN PHILADELPHIA**

LO-
VE



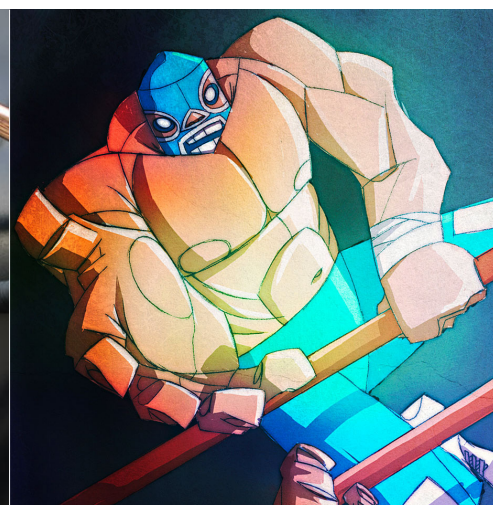
CRANKY PRESSMAN



WE ARE HANDSOME



**DETROIT BICYCLE
COMPANY**



**FNFF GOING MONTHLY
AT THE OLD BLUE LAST**



**NEW YEAR'S EVE
(THE MOVIE)**



**PEPPER SPRAY COP
LT. JOHN PIKE**



COMPAHOLICS



ORANGE

**HA-
TE**



**SLOW MOTION
SPECIAL EFFECTS**



**MARVEL PROMO
MATERIAL**



**POINTLESS REVIEW
EMBARGOES**



SEPP BLATTER



MUSIC



YOUTH LAGOON



FOE



FOTOSHOP



COASTAL
CITIES



ALBUM REVIEWS





COMING IN FROM THE COLD

TREVOR POWERS MIGHT BE A WALKING CLICHÉ COLLEGE DROP-OUT MUSICIAN BUT HIS MUSIC UNDER PROJECT YOUTH LAGOON CERTAINLY SETS HIM APART

WORDS SAM BATHE

You could make a genre of its own for bedroom-recorded indie-pop, one-man projects that often take up much too much time for the quality of their output. But then every so often, along comes a Youth Lagoon.

Bucking the trend of flimsy, one-note EPs from bands that pad out much of SXSW's always-meteoric line-ups, it's fair to say Trevor Powers is thoroughly different deal. Putting out debut album *The Year Of Hibernation* under moniker Youth Lagoon, the talented 22-year-old has quite rapidly made a name for himself. In fact, on the quite wonderful LP, Powers makes a mockery of his inexperience and its low-spec production.

Each of his tracks are so delicately arranged with tingling percussion guiding you along before softly-spoken vocals and a more powerful, hood-laden melody take the front foot. The music is atmospheric, expansive and layered with the warm roughness of the analogue age we now miss.

It's unsurprising the music industry took note, and *The Year Of Hibernation* found a release via Fat Possum/Lefse in the late summer, meaning a wider listening saturation is now forthcoming. Album standout *Daydream* is taking care of that, an effortlessly catchy yet beautifully measured track, as a whole though, the LP boasts total cohesion and feels utterly fresh.

Mastermind Trevor Powers' unassuming background no doubt played a heavy influence on Youth Lagoon's early success. A Boise, Idaho, native, Powers is surprisingly sure-footed given his youth, at home in a big city which lacks the hustle and bustle you might come to expect. Once studying English at Boise State, Trevor dropped out to concentrate on music, the passion that's really in his heart.

Wanting to write honest songs that truly boast his thirsty emotions, Powers finds an excitement in closing the door and wrapping on a track from conception to the final beat, although when on the road he's backed by a full band. Touring the States in November, his first full tour, with further dates and a jaunt across Europe scheduled for early 2012, Youth Lagoon seem like a dream for SXSW next March but they might have already grown too big.

Heavily influenced by Cocteau Twin while writing and recording the debut, the ageless, sceneless feeling he was after has certainly been achieved, the name is a perfect fit too, and while 'Trevor Powers' certainly has its own ring to it, 'Youth Lagoon' draws you in even more. Miss them at your peril.

The Year Of Hibernation is out now





FRIEND OR FOE

HANNAH CLARK AND PRODUCER ADAM M. CRISP ARE SETTING NEW TRENDS FOR THE BOY/GIRL DUO WITH FOE

WORDS SAM BATHE

For a while now, labels have been on the look out for the next big female-fronted thing. Florence pretty much hit the nail on the head, but the likes of Little Boots, Ellie Goulding and Marina + The Diamonds never really matched such heights. It's probably no surprise therefore that FOE have seen their stock escalate significantly throughout the year.

Formed of Hannah Clark (vocals) and Adam M. Crisp (production), the latter whom has his own thing going in Entrepreneurs, the duo's make-up has got La Roux written all over it, but their music, it's fair to say, is pretty different.

From the tiny town of Fleet, Hampshire, where she used to waste away days working in the local pharmacy, Clark's darker side certainly

comes out in the music. Suffering hallucinations as a child, while aged 10 at school, her classmates thought she was a witch; she has an edge that you just can't buy in pop these days, at least not where it's a label-driven cliché.

And the music press have been lapping it up. With all kinds of ludicrous adjectives at their style, it's probably simplest to describe FOE as a female-voiced, much harder Golden Silvers. On debut EP *Hot New Trash*, out, and then sold out, earlier this year, the duo drew further comparisons to Feist, Regina Spector and PJ Harvey, gathering a lot a lot of buzz throughout 2011.

Single *Deep Water Heartbreaker* has followed since, but while FOE have shown a lot of potential, they're still far from the finished article. With a 6

Music session amongst the highlights of a fruitful early career, their often unconventional song set up will need a more careful overview if they're to really make a name in 2012.

With at times drawling, otherwise charming, lyrics played off against heavy riffs and sickly sweet synths, their full length debut would certainly will hopefully come under the guidance of an outside co-producer, able to pull together the various styles their songs possess.

FOE are all set to be crowned one of the artists to look out for in 2012, with a spot waiting on numerous hot new bands lists, Clark's penchant for wigs and all, so let's just hope they nail the debut album, and make good on a lot of early promise.

Deep Water Heartbreaker is out now ♣

ARTIFICIAL TRUTHS

WITH A NAME LIKE FOTOSHOP, JARNO-ERIK FAARINEN IS SURE WALKING A FINE LINE WHERE ADOBE ARE CONCERNED

WORDS SAM BATHE



Self-releasing debut album *Lifeforms* online via his Bandcamp page, Jarno-Erik Faarinen, better known as Fotoshop, has crafted a 10-track LP that aptly captures the expanse and exploration of its mountainous cover art.

As if Miiike Snow put out an album of chillwave, *Lifeforms* shares tonal similarities with Brian Eno, bombasting the listener with powerful opening track *Too Little, Too Late*.

You could draw further comparisons with Trent Reznor's output as a soundtrack composer but really Fotoshop has crafted a nice little niche aside from genre strongholds Washed Out and Com Truise.

Born in the Lapland town of Tornio before moving to Helsinki four years ago, Faarinen released his first tracks on MySpace in Spring 2009 before actively touring and penning new material. Fotoshop's *Accidents* EP was an initial breakthrough but it's *Lifeforms* that really announced the musician on the scene.

Dropping in November, the LP makes heavy use of disoriented synthetisers, distorted bass and encapsulating percussion, spreading out into heavier techno and shoegaze, though it's a sound you perhaps wouldn't suspect is crafted in such auspicious circumstances.

Composing, playing, singing, programming, mixing and mastering, it's fair to say Jarno-Erik takes charge of the lot when it comes to his Fotoshop output, even designing the graphics and directing music videos all from his home studio, lovingly described as "a MacBook and, well, not much more".

Since the release of *Lifeforms*, Fotoshop have been gathering momentum online, and with the instant appeal Faarinen's music brings, it's not surprising. The LP is exciting and unique, with the darkness and depth that only stutters in Washed Out. Watch this space.

LP Lifeforms is available now at fotoshop.bandcamp.com ♣



DARK, COLD AND WINDY

NOTHING LIKE THE WEATHER ON THE COAST, COASTAL CITIES
QUICKLY MAKE A MOCKERY OF THEIR PLAYFUL NAME

WORDS COCO WONG

Coastal Cities are a juvenile quintet from High Wycombe, comprising of Declan Cullen, Lewis Slade, Dan Hardy, William Clark and Sean Semmens who met at a school detention. Though they're still a young band (all members are still just seventeen years of age), they've already caught the attention of bands like The Drums. We caught up with vocalist and guitarist Declan to talk about their upcoming releases and their early time together.

The beginning of December saw the band release four-track EP entitled *Think Tank*. "We recorded the EP in March this year and released it ourselves but it's going to be re-released on Once Upon A Time Records," Declan explains. Coastal Cities' music is very vibrant, a fruit of the band's spontaneous way of recording. "We usually start off with a riff then work our way through the rest of it. We like to keep

our songs pop-y, short and catchy and upbeat at the same time," he adds.

Their drummer's shed is the Mecca of Coastal Cities. Where they rehearse, the same shed is also featured in the band's debut video, and title track off their EP, *Think Tank*. "We filmed the video in August, over just a two day span. On the first day, we began shooting at four in the morning in Southend-on-Sea. It's where we shot our 'outdoor' scenes, on the beach. On the second day, we filmed the 'indoor' scenes at our drummer's shed. It involved a lot of DIY, with Christmas lights in the background and such," Declan recalls. The video premiered on Neon Gold's blog and spread much wider soon after its release.

Though their work to date has been captivating for sure, their new music is also something to look forward to. When asked about new re-

cordings Declan explains: "We've been writing some more songs with Ollie (a friend of the band) at his house for a whole week. We stacked mattresses on the wall and the house was turned into a working studio. He's our friend so he knows what we're after."

Life though too, Coastal Cities give a lot of importance. "We try to make it a true performance when playing live. We're a very 'human' band and so we don't always sound perfect, or like the recordings. But it will work with watching us play visually. We try to connect with an audience rather than trying to sound perfect, because after all it's entertainment and that's all it should be. We enjoy watching bands like this too, where going to see them play live, is essentially a different thing to putting on their CD."

Think Tank EP is out now on Once Upon A Time Records





THE BLACK KEYS EL CAMINO

RELEASED OUT NOW

When you release an album that is received so well it instantly becomes the only thing a band is known for, how to follow it up, can be quite the problem.

Though six albums deep with more than an enviable fanbase, talk to the idle listener and the only thing the band's name will call to mind is 2010's *Brothers*. Though they'd found wide critical acclaim, sold over a million albums and won countless awards, when *Brothers* hit, it's as if nothing in their history had happened.

Perhaps, therefore, *El Camino* was only ever going to be a disappointment, but The Black Keys have still made a pretty good go of it, despite picking a release date in the musically anonymous December.

A little easier going and yet a little more expansive, *El Camino* isn't quite as coarse as *Brothers* was at times, but it still comes packing The Black Keys' now signature riffs and hooks. Danger Mouse produces to mix in the background noise for a fine 7th album. **SB**

★★★★★



YAMANTAKA // SONIC TITAN YT//ST

RELEASED OUT NOW

If Yamantaka // Sonic Titan's mysterious name wasn't enough to get you interested, then perhaps the gorgeous black and white album art might do it. That, their label who are called Psychic Handshake. Whatever gets you to listen, you certainly won't regret it.

Expansive, experimental and possessing a sound that is instantly all-encompassing their unique outlook has been forged by a remarkable culmination of cultures. Formed of Ruby Kato Attwood and Alaska B, the pair are each of Anglo-Asian descent, the former being Japanese-Scottish, and the latter Chinese-Irish.

Opener *Raccoon Song* is a bit of a curveball but Yamantaka // Sonic Titan quickly kick into gear with second track *Queens*. Drawing comparisons to PJ Harvey and elements are Arcade Fire, they have a prog feel to their music that while fans might have been put off, an energy and momentum will pull them straight back. This is an exciting pair, to say the least. **TM**

★★★★★



KID SISTER KISS & TELL EP

RELEASED OUT NOW

There are a few labels around where when a release comes around with their name attached, it is given a lot more attention than perhaps it otherwise would have garnered. You could attribute this to Kitsuné, perhaps Domino and Ed Banger, and with A-Trak behind it, certainly Fool's Gold Records too.

With a debut album out in 2009 through Universal, Kid Sister perhaps didn't find the success she might have hoped, but returning to Fool's Gold where she released her first single, rapper Melisa Young is hoping for more success a second time around.

Though it clocks in at just under 11 minutes, there are things to like on *Kiss & Tell*, but on the whole, it's a frustrating experience. Opener *Mickey* is a lot of energetic fun, in fact fun is a theme that runs throughout.

Hide & Seek is much less successful, though Kid Sister could still be destined for great things and *Kiss & Tell* only makes album no. 2 all the more crucial. **SB**

★★★★★



THE RECUSANTS ELLIOTT STRANGE EP

RELEASED OUT NOW

Regulars on the London scene for some time now, The Recusants recently completed their second mini-tour of the UK, which culminated in the release of *Elliott Strange*, a five-track EP which thankfully captures all the energy and likability of their live performances.

Things begin with *Sunday Afternoon*, which kicks off as a deceptively simple indie pop song but develops into something much more energetic. *Name In The Lights* continues the trend of imaginative song writing driven by irresistible drums and swimming guitars. *Barmaid's* rousing chorus of "Show me a door, show me there's something; show me there's more, more than this nothing" offers another high point.

As *Paint By Numbers* gently subsides, hidden closer *Elliott Strange* barnstorms through three minutes of thumping drums, Arctic Monkeys-inflected riffs and grainy vocals; a succinct closing salvo which sums up everything this band is about. **MR**

★★★★★



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THE LORAX

RELEASED MARCH 2, 2012 (USA) JULY 27, 2012 (UK)

The last time we saw Dr. Seuss' work adapted on the big screen was in 2008's CGI Jim Carrey-starrer *Horton Hears A Who!*, a film which was warmly received in most parts. In 2012 we will have *The Lorax*, a fable concerning the industrialisation of the world, and how it threatens nature.

In Chris Renaud's (*Despicable Me*) version, Zac Efron lends his voice to Ted, a young boy who, in order to win the affections of Audrey (Taylor Swift), must set off to discover the Lorax (Danny DeVito), a grumpy creature fighting to save nature. Ed Helms provides support as The Once-ler, who tells Ted about the Lorax.

This family-friendly animation is decked out in bright colours and stylised visuals which, based on the trailer, call to mind the general look of the wonderful *Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs*. The voice cast seem well-selected too, in particular Danny DeVito, clearly enjoying his ill-tempered role, and overall the film looks pleasant. Illumination Entertainment are the developers behind this project, and of their previous two efforts, fans of Dr. Seuss will be hoping this ends up closer to *Despicable Me* than *Hop* in terms of quality. **MR**





THE HUNGER GAMES

RELEASED MARCH 23, 2012

Gary Ross' adaptation of the first installment in Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* trilogy of young adult novels arrives next year, proving that Hollywood is still hankering for new and potentially lucrative youth-based franchises to latch onto.

This *Battle Royale*-esque story stars Jennifer Lawrence (*X-Men: First Class*, *Winter's Bone*) as the bizarrely-named Catniss Everdeen, who volunteers to take her younger sister's place in the yearly Hunger Games, a grotesque tradition in which the nation of Panem forces two children from each of its districts to participate in a to-the-death competition in the ruins of what was once North America. The children, called 'tributes', must fight until only one survives. The whole thing is naturally televised for the whole world to see. Woody Harrelson stars as Haymitch, a previous 'winner' of the event who schools Catniss in how to survive.

The sequel film has already been announced, such is distributor Lionsgate's confidence that this will be a success. Given that this first film cost an estimated \$100m, that's a fairly substantial punt to take. There is potentially a built-in audience for this, given that the books have been popular with the current generation of youngsters, but their interest alone won't be enough to prop up such a large production. It's currently scheduled for a March 2012 release, meaning it will at least avoid direction competition with the various behemoth's lined up for summer. The trailer looks reasonably promising, and with talent lined up on and off screen, this could be a pleasant, if quite bloody, surprise early next year. **MR**





BRAVE

RELEASED JUNE 22, 2012 (USA) AUGUST 17, 2012 (UK)

Disappointment is not a feeling I'm used to associating with Pixar, and so it was with a faint hint of sadness that I thought back on the trailer for their forthcoming Scottish fairytale *Brave*, which stars Kelly Macdonald as Princess Merida, a young woman who defies convention and breaks tradition in the Scottish Highlands.

There have been some lovely concept art pieces and stills released from this film, but the trailer feels oddly like a step backwards, painting characters that seem to lack Pixar's usual edge and demonstrating visuals which at this stage still look unfinished. It does at least provide some more information about the feel of the film, which to date has been hinted at only in those moody flashes of artwork. Here in the trailer, that slightly darker visual aesthetic is maintained, albeit alongside the introduction of more characters (unfortunately including Billy Connolly's King Fergus), but it feels like something is missing: that Pixar magic which, in most of the company's other films to date, (barring *Cars 2*), has brought a warm smile of appreciation to my face, even in the their various trailers.

But it's not all negative. The trailer may lack magic, but the film is some way from release yet, and those visuals will undoubtedly be touched up in the interim. Similarly, the characters introduced in the trailer aren't given enough time to make a true impression, and the storyline itself is only hinted at, rather than elaborated upon. It's far too early to lose faith in Pixar over *Brave*, and there is still a good chance that smile will be back on my face come summer 2012. **MR**









COGAN'S TRADE

RELEASED 2012

Based on George V Higgins' novel of the same name, this crime thriller features Brad Pitt (also producing) as Jackie Cogan, a point man for a hitman, who investigates a heist pulled off during a mob-protected poker game. A cursory glance over the internet suggests that the novel featured some dark humour – whether the film will share that quality is as yet unknown.

In fact, not much is known about *Cogan's Trade*, but there are reasons to be excited nonetheless. Firstly, not only is Pitt cast in the starring role, but this is also his second collaboration with Andrew Dominik. The two of them made a great film in 2007 with *The Assassination Of Jesse James By The Coward Robert Ford*, and their partnering will hopefully bear similar fruit this time around.

The film is distributed by The Weinstein Company and features an interesting and varied supporting cast which includes Richard Jenkins and James Gandolfini. There is also a smaller role for Scoot McNairy, who you may remember from last year's breakout low-budget sci-fi road movie *Monsters*, as well as Ben Mendelsohn, who was so impressive in David Michôd's Aussie drama *Animal Kingdom*. Primarily, though, it's the thought of another collaboration between Pitt and Dominik which sets this above standard fare. That and the fact that, although he's only directed two features in 11 years, Dominik has a pretty decent back catalogue – he also directed *Chopper*, in 2000. **MR**

INTERVIEW WITH

***GUY
RITCHIE,
ROBERT
DOWNEY JR.,
JUDE LAW
& NOOMI
RAPACE***

DIRECTOR AND CAST OF *SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS*

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows arrives to high hopes. The first instalment, featuring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law as a ragtag, all-action incarnation of Arthur Conan Doyle's famous creations, proved to be a pleasant surprise when released two years ago. Its stylised vision of Victorian London combined with Guy Ritchie's kinetic direction was a good blend, even if the film eventually went off the rails as its director became more concerned with set pieces and style at the expense of plot. The second instalment sees the duo travel across Europe in a bid to stop villain Moriarty.

Aided by a gypsy fortune teller played by *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*'s Noomi Rapace, and with *Mad Men*'s convincingly sinister Jared Harris as Moriarty, the film certainly has more dramatic talent at its disposal. It's a shame, then, that *Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows* favours bigger, better set pieces over any deeper exploration of its characters or in telling a good detective story. While the central relationship retains all the charm that made it so attractive in the first instalment, what ultimately emerges is an entertaining if unmemorable action adventure. We sat down with stars Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law and Noomi Rapace and director Guy Ritchie to talk about the film, and what they had to say confirms the suspicion that those involved were as interested in having fun making a globetrotting adventure as they were in creating a fitting take on one of literature's most enduring detectives.

FAN THE FIRE: A major attraction of the films is the chemistry between the two leads. Could you talk about that?

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.: People will talk about chemistry, and it's really great that it comes across that way. You work really hard, and you have immense respect for each other. We've all seen, and some of us have been in, sequels that sucked, and we really wanted to avoid those pitfalls.

FTF: What are the bad sequels you have been in?

RDJ: I must have misspoke!

“WE’VE ALL SEEN, AND SOME OF US HAVE BEEN IN, SEQUELS THAT SUCKED, AND WE REALLY WANTED TO AVOID THOSE PITFALLS.”

FTF: So you were concerned about the sequel not living up to the first film?

RDJ: I think there's natural inflation that occurs with success, and until it happens you can't know it. So I guess the danger is that you take the audience for granted when you presume they're with you because you are with yourself, and that's not true, so I guess that's the thing; what do we expect, and what could we get wrong the second time because we were thinking about how to spend the money we made from the last one.

JUDE LAW: I think no matter how happy everybody was having created the first film as a group, it's always the case that 20-30% of the film is taken up at the beginning getting to know each other. You end on a high and you end up learning how each other works, so we never felt like we dropped the ball from the first to the second [film]. A lot of energy carried from the first into the second, and a lot of enthusiasm for the relationship that worked, and we wanted to flesh that out.

FTF: How important was the work of Conan Doyle in shaping the films?

RDJ: When we first met we cracked the books and we started getting chills. Watson was never this chubby old doofus with his foot in a wastepaper basket. He was dynamic and he was in the army, and Holmes never wore a deerstalker cap. We felt that we had the chance not to rewrite the history of Holmes, but in some ways to extrap-

olate from the actual history.

JL: You can compare Watson and Holmes in a way to Shakespearean characters who have been played by hundreds of actors over many years, each one is a different interpretation, and the fact is that source material can take that kind of interpretation. I think one of the reasons the books have survived the test of time and have been explored by so many people is because they're incredibly rich. So first of all we had a tome of work that we can use by Conan Doyle, to investigate how to keep these characters rich and alive, and secondly to create an environment in which we are free to keep structuring and trying new ideas.

FTF: What is so special about this interpretation of the characters then?

RDJ: I love his dependency on Watson, and we found a way to make the audience not judge him for driving a wedge between him and his wife! I think he's somebody who needs to be taken care of so he can do what he does best.

JL: I think the reason they've been popular for so long is that they symbolise characters that we all know and that we have in us, the side that's very down to earth and reliable, and the side that can be imaginative and creative and eccentric and anarchic. There's a lot there to play with.

FTF: How did the film come together?

GUY RITCHIE: First of all there's a creative team. Everyone has an equal part in creating what we think is excit- ➔



ing. It's a powerhouse of creativity, and no creative individual trumps another creative individual: it's a case of harnessing all of those ideas and I don't think any one of us can take credit. It became a living organism, this creative mind. The script was so rough, which some of us found quite frustrating at times, we didn't think it was the film we wanted to make. But it got broken down and rebuilt, and broken down and rebuilt, by this creative mind.

RDJ: But any moment in the film that touches you, moves you, makes you laugh or makes you cry, that's mine, and the rest is the creative mind!

FTF: The film also has a new cast member in Noomi Rapace, from the original *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*...

NOOMI RAPACE: I met Joel [Silver, producer] and Robert in LA and it was a very quick, intense meeting, and we didn't really talk about Sherlock. I came out from that meeting and I was smiling, so it was very emotional. It started from a very honest conversation about movies and what kind of movies we wanted to make. It felt like I was invited into an amazing opportunity to work with people I've been admiring and whose films I'd been watching for many, many years.

FTF: What was the hardest aspect of the role?

NR: the biggest step for me was to move into the English language, because I didn't speak English two and a half years ago. I was afraid I was going to be caught up in feeling that I need

to translate everything from Swedish into English, and not being able to improvise and adlib; to feel free to live in the language. But what surprised me so much was that thanks to how they work and the way that everybody took care of me, it felt like everybody grabbed me and pulled me in, and I forgot that I was nervous. Everything else faded away.

FTF: Was there ever a discussion about whether to do the film in 3D?

GR: Well I like 3D movies and I'm a bit of a film geek: I like the technical aspect of filming a lot. So I did try to push this for 3D but the reticence was that there was a lot of 3D coming out, and it felt tired at the time that we were embarking on this. But I am a fan of it and I think it's innovative. I think that if we'd gone that little bit earlier I would have pushed harder.

RDJ: Also I think when you're shooting in 3D you can't have the alacrity and swiftness of movement. Sometimes Guy would be doing really innovative shots, and the movie leans on being able to go guerrilla style here and there. It's not just a question of beautiful frames. Sometimes I think that as it stands right now 3D can be really inefficient, but I'm sure the tech is catching up with the needs of filmmakers.

FTF: Guy, do you feel constrained in making mainstream films, originally coming from a very indie background?

GR: I don't at all. Filmmaking has changed as we all know, and indie mov-

ies have been somewhat muscled out in conspicuous fashion. Who's responsible for that I don't know, but at the same time I still see myself as an indie filmmaker. I certainly got no resistance from the studio in trying anything we thought was innovative, they encouraged it. Filmmaking in the blockbuster sense has absorbed the influence [of independent film], and I think that's the upside of the position we found ourselves in. Big movies are becoming increasingly more interesting. So no, I don't feel constrained at all.

FTF: It's quite a physical film, with a lot of heavy action. Was that tough?

JL: It was another important element that we wanted to push further. We were pushing the dialogue, pushing the banter, pushing the characters and the relationship, but we also wanted to step back and say 'let's really elevate the physicality', because going back to our original idea it was to take these guys out of Baker Street. You see them talking about their adventures and we wanted you to see them running with them and living them, and surviving them, and so that bar was pretty high. I think we got into certain things knowing what we were doing, and then somebody would come up with something that would add another 20%, so we'd be working at 150% all the time.

GR: Some of these action scenes went on for two weeks, and these guys were working eight hours or 10 hours a day. No one asks a professional athlete to do that in their work, and consequently these three were constantly on a diet, constantly on an exercise regime. The warm up goes on for an hour, the cool down goes on for an hour, and then there's 10 hours in-between. It's almost impossible to appreciate the demands on them physically.

NR: What's really impressive about these guys is that they do their own stunts. A lot of actors will do no stunts, but these two do everything. There are some things that the insurance companies won't let you do, but they did everything else.

Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows is out December 9th



"[...] THERE WAS A LOT OF 3D COMING OUT, AND IT FELT TIRED AT THE TIME THAT WE WERE EMBARKING ON THIS."

Lack of imagination.

WORDS MARTIN ROBERTS

Now that we're approaching the end of the year, it strikes me as a good time to revisit a dialogue which emerged early in 2011 between film industry spectators, participants and writers. The dialogue primarily concerned the state of Hollywood, and whether or not we could seriously look forward to a period which was scheduled to screen the most sequels (27) ever shown in a calendar year.

In that dialogue, Mark Harris wrote a good article for *GQ* in which he made the salient observation that when a film like *Inception* is greeted as an anomaly, disavowed by the industry as a fluke, despite achieving staggering success; the state of modern filmmaking is championing the wrong values.

There was a suggestion made in 2010 that Warner Bros indulged Christopher Nolan's expensive passion project in order to persuade him to helm a third Batman film. That project, now

entitled *The Dark Knight Rises*, which at the time was still up in the air, has since been put into action with Nolan at the helm. The fact that *Inception* was a huge box office smash, as well as a critical success, seemed to confound the generally accepted rule that if you're sensible you don't take a \$200m punt on anything that isn't a sure-fire hit. But in actual fact, it may inadvertently have highlighted the growing trend for low-risk, but big budget, blockbusters.

The events leading up to *Inception*'s release are not intimately known, but the important thing now the film has been and gone is to see whether it has any lasting effect on the industry. By looking at the release schedule of 2011 you would have to say it hasn't had much of an impact, although given the production times on these kinds of projects, it is hardly practical to assume that change would be so immediately apparent.

So did *Inception* really disprove







“The difference now is that the films which routinely suffer the poorest critical receptions are usually the ones raking in the cash.”

the murmurings that Hollywood has lost its imagination, or was it simply a pleasant fluke which unexpectedly struck the zeitgeist? The truth is, not enough time has gone by to give a compelling answer to that question; the reason I cite the film is because it stands alone as a blockbuster which to some extent broke the blockbuster tradition of recent years and still accumulated a huge worldwide box office. Naturally people will look to it as a herald of what Hollywood *could* achieve. The question which *can* be looked at in relation to 2011, however, is one asked irrespective of *Inception's* success.

Lay of the land

It isn't sensible to loudly decry that films are far worse now than they used to be. Posterity has a tendency to forget the dross; the collective memory inevitably hails the best and comparatively overlooks the worst. The difference now is that the films which routinely suffer the poorest critical receptions are usually the ones raking in the cash. The duds of old tended to fade into obscurity – or at least the annals of film criticism – because they simply didn't make a mark, or otherwise courted controversy which made them memorable, but ultimately lacked voice. Expensive failures such as *Heaven's Gate* were comparatively rare.

Now, the critically derided films tend to cost \$200m and earn four times that (*Transformers 2*) and not only are they loud, brash and impossible to ignore, but they are often entries in all-conquering franchises. You don't hear about the failed art house pictures because their billboards aren't hanging up outside your house or driving past on the sides of local buses. Their creators spent £500,000 making a film which nobody saw – for whatever reason – and they quietly fade away. That is just the nature of the filmmaking beast – Hollywood is placed on a pedestal of critical attention because of the money it throws around.

And rightly so. Mark Kermode has made the point frequently that given Hollywood's vastly superior budget,

shouldn't it be making better movies on a more consistent basis?

The problem – as has been stated by him and others on numerous occasions – is at least in part the desire to cater to the widest possible audience. Films no longer live and die in Hollywood based on their US takings, but on a worldwide basis. Every year the strength of the US box office is diminished by comparison to the worldwide audience. Take *Johnny English Reborn* as an example. A film which cost \$45m to make 15 years ago would have been considered a monumental failure if it (like *Reborn*) essentially tanked in the US, but the worldwide box office has made it a resounding success. The safety of the worldwide market has made wide-reaching releases – even if they are budgeted to crazy levels like Paul Anderson's *The Three Musketeers* remake – the new 'safe bets'. How crazy to think that the biggest budget films are now the most risk-free endeavours. *Transformers 3* had success written all over it before it got anywhere near a cinema, and it looks set to finish 2011 in second place behind Harry Potter, having made over a billion dollars.

Business is business

But it's difficult to blame the distributors. Why would they not commission *Transformers 3* and *Pirates of the Caribbean 4*, knowing they're going to make billions? And to be fair, some of the biggest distributors funnel some of their income back into art house wings such as Focus Features (Universal) and Fox Searchlight. But that doesn't make up for the fact that it's the big releases, the multi-million dollar franchise entries, which get the big press pushes. We seem almost surprised now when a film like *The Social Network* makes millions, because after all no buildings blow up, but we shouldn't be. There was a time when dramas wouldn't automatically be sidelined as middle-of-the-road successes at best.

At the 83rd Academy Awards this year, only two of the ten Best Film nominees were present in the year-end box office top ten; *Toy Story 3* and

Inception. Five of those 10 films were franchise entries. In 2011, at time of going to print, eight of the 10 top-grossing films are franchise entries. At the top, *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2* is the *eighth* entry in its franchise. Then there is *Transformers 3*, *Pirates of the Caribbean 4*, *Fast 5* and *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*.

It doesn't exactly point to a trend of originality, especially when you look at the amount of remakes, rehashes and re-imaginings around them. But the fact is: as long as people go to see these films, they will continue to get made. By shelling out their hard-earned cash to see *Pirates 4*, punters have brought *Pirates 5* (and probably 6) into existence. It's simple supply and demand: if the demand is there, so too will be the supply. In this climate, moderately-budgeted films can be susceptible to the worst box office failures, and whenever an art house picture doubles its budget, it's considered an exception to the rule.

Crowd mentality

The answer lies in the actions of the audiences, who could theoretically vote with their wallets and boycott the trash they claim they don't want to see but line up for anyway. Has Hollywood lost its imagination, even though there are so many talented screenwriters around? Possibly, yes, but if it has then it has developed a keen sense of intelligence in its place. Why would businessmen who, ultimately, are out to make profit, take unnecessary risks and jeopardise their positions? For artistic merit, you say? That can't be measured in dollars, unfortunately.

It would be nice if the massive studios could take one or two more calculated risks from time to time, even without the incentive of holding onto the services of a man like Christopher Nolan, but ultimately the distributors are feeding the audience's demand, and that is something which is almost impossible to actively change. Audiences did vote with their wallets when *Inception* was released; maybe 2012 will bear the fruit of those actions. ♣

INTERVIEW WITH

BRUCE ROBINSON

DIRECTOR OF *THE RUM DIARY*

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Bruce Robinson arrives, as expected, a little late. All ruffled hair and punkish swagger, he sports the personality in keeping with being the creator of *Withnail And I*. The observation may be clichéd, but it is also important, as his most famous creation looms large in the conversation surrounding his return to direction after 17 years, and not just because journalists can't seem to resist asking him questions about it. Indeed *Withnail*, after all this time, seems to grip on his own character, with Robinson candidly detailing how he was based on several of his friends, as well as himself, after wrapping up an interview to promote his return.

Wild youth and substance abuse are important themes in Robinson's sparse output, and his new film, Hunter S. Thompson adaptation *The Rum Diary*, sees him coming out of a self-imposed exile at the behest of Johnny Depp, and exploring some surprisingly similar ground. Set in 1950s Puerto Rico, it sees Depp's Kent (effectively a stand in for Thompson) take a writing job on the island, and soon finds himself being undone by his unhealthy thirst. Becoming involved in Aaron Eckhart's shady real estate deal, he also begins to chase Amber Heard's demure, rebellious socialite. What emerges is a fiercely entertaining if uneven pleasure, containing Robinson's trademark dialogue as well as a host of colourful supporting characters and a romanticised, beautifully captured Puerto Rico.

FAN THE FIRE: How were you were tempted back to Hollywood?

BRUCE ROBINSON: Not Hollywood at all, but by Johnny. I had no aspirations to be a film director ever again in my life, and that's absolutely true. I made a promise to myself that I'd never do it again, and kept the promise for 17 years! Then I was on vacation in Spain and I got a phone call and it was Depp. It was quite surprising, I don't know how he found me. "Oh, it's Johnny here, have you read *The Rum Diary*?", and I said no, and he replied "Well I'm getting a copy to you tomorrow". And then *The Rum Diary* turns up

and then he says "Do you want to write it?" Well, I'm a screenwriter, so I said "Yeah, sure, I'll have a go at it", and I did. And then he called me up and said "Well now you're going to direct it", there was a bit of a friction over that. It's almost facetious to say it but here's the world's number one film star, bullying me saying "You've got to do this" and I mean it's extraordinarily flattering, firstly, and secondly it was very difficult to say no to someone of his stature inside the industry. I did say no in the beginning, but he was so confident about it and kept on about it, so I thought "Well, it's not my chops on the screen, the risk isn't mine, because if I f*ck this up, so what?"

FTF: How did you feel about making changes to the source material? You combined two characters from the book into one in the film, for instance.

BR: There's a lot of Hunter S. Thompson disciples carping about the movie in the States. The reality is that there's an enormous difference between a book and a movie. If you're so in love with the book take the f*cking book into the cinema. There are two lead characters, and that might work in a novel but when you've got one big film star it doesn't work. So there was Yeamon and there was Kemp, and I realised that Hunter S. Thompson had split himself down the middle into two separate characters, and as soon as I realised that, retrospectively it seems very obvious, but it wasn't at the time. So I threw one of them overboard, and all the Thompson fans are freaking out.

FTF: The film is being touted as a tribute to Thompson. How do you see it?

BR: I only met him once. I sat in a hotel room for two hours and we never said a word to each other. How much of a tribute is making *Great Expectations* to Charles Dickens? How much of a tribute is making *Hamlet* to Shakespeare? It's not a tribute at all. It's a piece of work that Hunter Thompson created and I've adapted for the screen. I think that there is a corporate perception, certainly in America, that this is about a sort of guy getting stoned,

drunk and drugged in a hotel room and it isn't. It's a bit of a butterfly this one, I think.

FTF: Johnny Depp is playing a version of Hunter S. Thompson that is quite different from that in *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*...

BR: Well, we obviously discussed that before we started shooting and it was very apparent to me that it would have been a different kind of negative comparison. Terry Gilliam is a friend of mine, he's an extremely talented man. I didn't want to remake that [*Fear And Loathing*...], what would be the point? Plus, in the period this film was set, Hunter Thompson was a very handsome young man. He used to model clothes to get money in Puerto Rico. So my interest was pre-Gonzo.

FTF: That leads on nicely to the central theme of the story, which is Kent's struggle to find the voice that would later become the Thompson style...

BR: It's a key line in the film for me where he says "I don't know how to write like me" and that's the great problem that anyone who writes. A writer I don't enjoy, Bernard Shaw, said "When you start writing like yourself, you've got a style". I wrote for years until I thought "Christ, that sounds like me". And so that was the side of it I wanted to look at. Thompson wrote this book with a fictitious character, of course based on himself, and it's got nothing to do with *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*. This was actually written 15 years before. You don't need Johnny with a false bald head and shorts and machine gunning everybody. I didn't want to write that. It's the only thing I find tedious about the criticism is this constant comparison between this and *Fear And Loathing*..., I suppose it was inevitable, but it's very frustrating to me.

FTF: But there is one scene of 'Fear and Loathing' style drug use in the film, when they try LSD for the first time.

BR: It was the beginning of the CIA experimenting with LSD, and I thought it was a novel way to use this drug in the film. They don't even know how to take it. "You take it in the eye?" So that's ➡



the way they did it in the film. But yeah, that is a slight precursor to *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* but I can't even remember why I wrote the bloody scene now. It's an extremely difficult thing to do on film I think, to show the subjective state of inebriation.

FTF: How much of Thompson's dialogue is actually in the film?

BR: There was a review that my son showed me on the internet who really hated the movie. He said "The only thing that saves this movie is Hunter Thompson's scintillating dialogue", and there's only two lines of his in it! So I thought "Oh wow okay, I'll take that as an inverted compliment".

FTF: How do you feel about the film having opened badly in America?

BR: You can't say the film's bombed in America because no-one's been! That's kind of the tragedy. A film bombs if you open on \$25 million on the first weekend and the next weekend it takes eight and six, that's a bomb. But this film was extraordinary, just nobody turned up. It's very weird. But then again, it's a little film, and my stuff doesn't appeal on a broad front anyway. It's got nothing to do with me, my job is try and make the film. It hasn't got anything to say other than "I hope you laugh" and "I hope you're sucked in and find it a bit glamorous and amusing". That's all it was meant to do.

FTF: How did you come to cast Amber Heard?

BR: When Amber came in, this vision came through the door. I thought, "God! Who the f*ck is that?!" and she got the part there and then. Hunter Thompson's lifelong writing obsession was this American Dream, what is the dream? Is it a real thing or is it not? I wanted a dream girl, every boy's dream girl, Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe rolled into one type-of-stuff. So Amber walks in, and she got the part instantly. I didn't tell her, we brought her back, tested her, and all the rest of it. Thereafter, whenever she was coming back I would always go and loiter in the office that had about a dozen guys all working in it, to look at them looking at her to see if it worked, and it did work. Amazing presence. I have this feeling with actors that they can't be in front or behind of it, they've got to stick to the celluloid; she stuck to the celluloid.

FTF: Did you cut anything out of the film that you hated to lose?

BR: The film could probably profit from another 10 minutes taken out of it frankly. But it's all about balance. Sometimes the problem with cutting is that it throws something else out of kilter. The Amber Heard scene where she does her dance with the black guy, that was cut down. It was so tense, and

I really regret taking half of that scene out. It was just you grinding your teeth, you know, what's going to happen to this girl? There was a lot of stuff hit the deck, you know, and has to.

FTF: What is the strongest aspect of the film for you?

BR: I have absolutely nothing but admiration for the quality of the actors in this film. Any mistakes, obviously, are mine, narrative mistakes or whatever, but nobody can say they're not f*cking great actors these people. They're as good as it gets, I think. It was an absolute joy to make and I'd do it again with them. I'm not so sure I'd do it again with anyone else, but I'd do it again with them.

FTF: So this doesn't mean that you'll be returning to directing on a regular basis then?

BR: Oh no, no. No it doesn't. I have converted a novel I wrote into a screenplay, which I may well do. But it's a tiny little English film, you know, a couple of million quid. I've been working for fourteen years on the same book, about the Whitechapel murderer, which is a kind of obsessive passion of mine. It'll take me another two years to finish that. The thing about directing is you take a great filmmaker like Ridley Scott. He does movie after movie after movie, this one's a dog, that one's not bad, that's brilliant, but my stuff can't be like that because it's kind of esoteric, so if I make something and I f*ck it up, I'm persona non grata, which truly doesn't bother me.

FTF: Are you surprised how well *Withnail & I* has held up?

BR: It's amazing isn't it? Totally by accident and not design it doesn't seem to age. That wasn't my intention, I didn't think "Oh I'm gonna make a film that won't age" but I saw it with my son, and I hadn't seen it literally for ten years, and it's still the same Richard E in that long coat, and fresh! Anyway, you definitely laughed [at *The Rum Diary*] didn't you?

FTF: Yes, definitely.

BR: Thank f*ck for that. *The Rum Diary* is out now.

"IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH ME [POOR BOX OFFICE TAKINGS], MY JOB IS TRY AND MAKE THE FILM."

WHO IS THE FAIREST SNOW WHITE OF all?

2012 WILL MAY BE REMEMBERED AS THE YEAR
IN WHICH NOBODY AT ALL CRIED OUT FOR
TWO LIVE ACTION ADAPTATIONS OF THE SNOW
WHITE STORY, BUT GOT THEM ANYWAY

WORDS MARTIN ROBERTS





LEFT: TARSEM SINGH'S *MIRROR, MIRROR*
RIGHT: RUPERT SANDERS' *SNOW WHITE AND THE HUNTSMAN*



Tarsem Singh recently described his Julia Roberts-starring version – *Mirror, Mirror* – as “sickeningly kiddie.” Then the trailer came out and everyone understood what he meant. It doesn’t help that the screams of his *Immortals* were still ringing in most people’s ears. Although now that I think about it, that film was sickeningly kiddie too, Admittedly in more of a throat-slicing, mallet-to-prostate kind of way, but childish nonetheless.

Singh’s film, which stars Lily Collins (*The Blind Side*) as Snow White and Julia Roberts as the queen jealous of her beauty, will be up against Rupert Sanders’ *Snow White And The Huntsman*, a far more serious-looking affair in which Kristen Stewart and Charlize Theron play the same roles. These queens are disparate figures, however.

Roberts’ Queen Clementianna is not really evil, just insecure about her age, while Theron’s Ravenna most certainly is: she can transform into a cloud of ravens and isn’t afraid to do a spot of idle murdering.

The trailer for Sanders’ film arrived first, and while it has some interesting quirks, it didn’t exactly raise the excitement level too far. Ironically, the subsequent emergence of the rival trailer for *Mirror, Mirror* made most people think that actually *Snow White And The Huntsman* might be the best Snow White film of 2012 after all, a conclusion which may turn out to be faint praise indeed.

At least the films look sufficiently different to ensure that if we are to be subjected to two bad interpretations of Snow White in the same year, then at

least they won’t look the same, even if they match each other on quality.

While it is a little unfair to pre-judge films on the evidence of their trailers alone, there isn’t a great deal of encouragement in these two-minute teasers. That said, if Singh can recapture the right mix of visual extravagance and storytelling, ala *The Fall*, and if Sanders – directing his first feature film – can keep his more epic interpretation tight and exciting, then we may all be pleasantly surprised and reflect on a year in which we didn’t ask for two live action adaptations of Snow White, but got them anyway and, against all odds, really rather enjoyed them both.

Snow White And The Huntsman is out June 1, 2012 and *Mirror, Mirror* is in cinemas March 16, 2012



INTERVIEW WITH

AMBER HEARD

STAR OF *THE RUM DIARY*

WORDS BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Amber Heard can certainly hold your attention. Waltzing into a London hotel suite, she is demure and relaxed, and as glamorously beautiful as one would expect of an actress required to play the object of Johnny Depp's affections. That part is Chenault, the beautiful, rebellious socialite in Bruce Robinson's *The Rum Diary*. A Hunter S. Thompson adaptation set in late 1950's Puerto Rico, the film's backdrop is the slow American corporate encroachment on the island, which Depp's drunken journalist becomes a part of when Chenault's boyfriend, crooked property developer Sanderson (played by Aaron Eckhart), recruits him to write some articles promoting his latest venture.

Heard was obviously attracted to the strength of her character, not to mention the glamour of the film's setting. But what also emerges from a long conversation is a fierce ambition that having starred in films like *Drive Angry* would make seem unlikely. Indeed, there is a sense that she is not really used to having to answer real questions, and she seems almost relieved when one comes her way. Her ambitions to also work behind the camera quickly come to the fore.

FAN THE FIRE: What attracted you to *The Rum Diary*?

AMBER HEARD: I didn't think about it for too long, let's put it that way! It was a beautiful story, written by one of my favourite authors, told by Bruce Robinson – who's a genius, in my opinion – opposite Johnny Depp. I didn't have a long list of cons. I also liked my character. I liked that she looks like this archetype of a leading lady, this 1950s housewife-in-the-making, the kind of iconic symbol of a woman at that time or something that represents the elite status or what the elite status strives to obtain. She represents all these things very well on the surface but yet is not that underneath; she's flawed and vulnerable and fiercely independent and rebellious and I relate to a lot of those qualities.

FTF: Bruce Robinson talks about your character as being a metaphor for the

“I FEEL LIKE BRUCE DID SO WELL BECAUSE HE DIDN'T TRY AND COMPETE WITH THE BOOK, HE DIDN'T TRY AND SET ANY NEW RULES. HE DID THAT WHILE STILL PROTECTING THE ABSURDITY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER.”

American Dream.

AH: On the surface she looks like she epitomises not only the American Dream but the class system, or the elite class that owns that dream. We're seduced by it too in the audience, in the beginning of the movie, by the cars and the beautiful music and the women and the beaches and the parties. Chenault is very much a part of that system at the beginning. She's just like those items, those commodities, those things that represent a certain system. She represents that on the surface but is not that on the inside. She's the kind of girl that will sneak out of a party and go skinny dipping by herself in the ocean. I kind of liked that about my character. She's a rebel, she just doesn't look like it.

FTF: Do you think that's what attracts Depp's character to her?

AH: Every moment that we meet Chenault in her element, she's rebelling in some way. She is struggling to free herself from Sanderson's grasp in the nightclub because she wants to go dance with the locals, she's escaping a party to go skinny-dipping in the middle of the ocean at night. She's very much rebelling against the system but the cage is gilded, her handcuffs are like very nice gold bracelets and I don't think she realises. I think that she, with the audience, takes a journey that is from one lifestyle to the other. She

falls for the antithesis of that, which is Johnny Depp, his world, his madness.

FTF: Are you aware that Bruce says you had the part as soon as you walked in the room?

AH: Damn that Bruce Robinson! I swear. I'm plotting some sort of revenge for that, because it was such a gruelling process they put me through. It was many auditions, it was not the most relaxing of circumstances, to walk into a room with Johnny Depp and Bruce Robinson. But I'm charmed, I'm charmed, of course. It's sweet.

FTF: How was he as a director?

AH: He's very laid back, and I think it comes from a confidence that he knows what he wants to create. He's an artist, and I think true artists know where their strengths lie and they know where their weaknesses take them and I think he allows other artists to do their thing. At the end of the day he knows what he wants and will work around the various personalities that are his paint.

FTF: Had you seen *Withnail And I*?

AH: Oh, yes! I saw *Withnail And I* a long time ago, long before I heard of this movie and I remember when they said Bruce Robinson I thought could be nobody better to make this movie, and I think I was right.

FTF: The film has a very a stylised look doesn't it?

AH: This movie and my performance, ➔



it was meant to be very stylised, much in the way that the classics were done, the *To Have And Have Nots* or the *Casablanca*s. It was meant to feel like some sort of vision or some sort of other-worldly encounter. I love period pieces, I love things that have a vintage feel to them, just because there's a certain texture to them that we just don't have anymore. I think I've been stuck in the '50s or '60s for a while now! It's a style, and I think we've lost a certain appreciation for style.

FTF: How do you think the film compares to the novel?

AH: I think what makes this movie so great is that it didn't set out to change the book, it didn't set out to compete with the book, it just meant to augment an already wonderful perspective on life. And I've made movies that were adaptations before and I've been frustrated by the process because, you know that old axiom 'It's never as good as the book' – it's often true because nothing competes with your own imagination. I feel like Bruce did so well because he didn't try and compete with the book, he didn't try and set any new rules – there's an innocence and a sweetness to the book and I think he did that while still protecting the absurdity of the subject matter.

FTF: What about Johnny Depp?

AH: Anything I could have expected, he just far surpasses. He's wonderful to

work with. Everybody on set respects him and likes him and it's because he brings so much to work with him. He's such a wonderful presence, people are drawn to him in a way that I've really never seen before. Perhaps that's why he is the movie star that he is. He's a true character actor, trapped in a leading man's body and I respect that.

FTF: Shooting in Puerto Rico must have been quite an experience.

AH: Puerto Rico is very much a character in our story. It provided the impetus for Hunter S. Thompson to write this novel in the first place. There's this duality to Puerto Rico that very much encompasses the struggle that our book sets out to expose. Puerto Rico has two flags, and two anthems, and two songs, and two classes, and two kinds of people. There's a duality, just in and of itself, just being half America, half not. It's a weird place and that lends itself perfectly to the struggle in our story between art and commerce.

FTF: Do you have any kind of method of preparing for roles?

AH: It's a funny thing to me – I think the moment I decide to take on any sort of specific set of rules or guidelines or methods when approaching something as organic as acting is, it would be a struggle for me to try and commit to a set of rules, in any sense. Sometimes certain tricks work and

other times you have to let all of that go. That's kind of my job, being prepared for anything.

FTF: Do you find it hard that Hollywood rarely offers strong, interesting roles for women like this?

AH: It's damn near impossible, because the parts aren't there. We categorise women in one of two ways and if you're seen as beautiful or sexy then your only options in terms of character descriptions are beautiful, sexy, cute – and that's it. And that affords you a certain amount of opportunity but that opportunity ultimately leads to a spark, never a flame. In the other category there's so much more to do – you can be seen as witty, intelligent, independent, you can be seen as a bitch, you can be seen as vulnerable, you can be seen as smart... yet you cannot be beautiful or sexy. And because we compartmentalise women and our female characters in that way, it's really incredibly limiting.

FTF: So you would like to be both?

AH: Charlize Theron in *Monster* and Halle Berry in *Monster's Ball*... both had to take all sex appeal away from their characters in order to be respected and seen in a serious light, and that's frustrating. Although I would love the opportunity to gain some weight [laughs], part of me is frustrated by the fact that I would have to do that in order to be taken seriously. Why can't I just be taken seriously?

FTF: Have you considered working behind the camera to create those roles for yourself?

AH: Yes. I'm developing something right now that I don't know if I even will be acting in. It would be wonderful to see this movie come to life, but it will be my third movie to have produced. I think that's the only way to get these good parts for women is to just make them yourself, I guess. We still make up like one, maybe two percent of the directors and until we make up a bigger or a more significant majority or proportion of the filmmakers, or until we have a larger stake, then we won't accomplish that representation.

The Rum Diary is out now.



“WE CATEGORISE WOMEN IN ONE OF TWO WAYS AND IF YOU’RE SEEN AS BEAUTIFUL OR SEXY THEN YOUR ONLY OPTIONS IN TERMS OF CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS ARE BEAUTIFUL, SEXY, CUTE – AND THAT’S IT.”



YOUNG ADULT

DIRECTED BY JASON REITMAN **STARRING** CHARLIZE THERON, PATTON OSWALT, PATRICK WILSON, ELIZABETH REASER, COLLETTE WOLFE & JILL EIKENBERRY

RELEASED DECEMBER 9 (USA) FEBRUARY 10 (UK)

The latest collaboration between director Jason Reitman and writer Diablo Cody, *Juno* this ain't, as the pair turn in a smart, darkly comic movie that could have been so much more were it not for such a one-sided narrative.

In the process of writing her new book, the last of a successful teen series, Mavis Gary (Theron) returns to her small hometown for inspiration, though spends most of the time trying to steal back the heart of her former high school sweetheart. Jumping into the trip after mistakenly receiving an email newsletter, it's no surprise to her, however, that Buddy Slade (Wilson) is now happily married, recently celebrating the birth of his first child, and with unresolved issues at home

and dealing with an unstable mental state, Mavis' few days in her old shoes do go not quite as she had planned.

Along the way Theron's character finds an unexpected friend in former classmate Matt Freehauf, a platform that might prove at last to be the breakout performance for Patton Oswalt. Patrick Wilson is impressive too, although with the story so focal on Mavis Gary, it's tough to wrestle the limelight away from our lead. Theron is a tour-de-force, giving a whole-hearted performance that subtly teases cracks in Mavis' stability, able to keep things together until it all starts to go wrong. It's unfortunate therefore, that Theron is restricted by a stunted script.

Young Adult doesn't have the warmth or rounded character arcs of Reitman's previous films and could have done with more comedy and less of a bruising tone. While it was important to keep elements of this film very dark, they aren't supplemented with anything to give Theron's actions a sense of balance, or any sort of redemption when we hit the credits.

The film has a very full-on atti-

tude, which works in part but hampers elsewhere. The narrative drives forward for a powerful 94-minute runtime but it leaves little opportunity to really invest in what's going on.

Reitman generally helms well, although up against *Thank You For Smoking*, *Juno* and *Up In The Air*, it's his worst film to date. On a \$12m budget and 30-day shooting schedule though, *Young Adult* is still a wonderful achievement, but thanks to deficiencies in the script, it's just far from a classic, even in the genre.

The film tries to suck you in, but it's very difficult to feel anything but disdain for the central character. Matt Freehauf is more appealing but he doesn't quite have enough screen time to steal the limelight. In the end you feel sorry for Mavis Gary, rather than falling in love with her, and as a result, it's very hard to fall in love with the film as a whole.

Young Adult is an impressive movie, but it's not a rounded movie and as a result proves to be a captivating if entirely unrewarding experience. **SB**

★★★★★



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - GHOST PROTOCOL

DIRECTED BY BRAD BIRD **STARRING** TOM CRUISE, JEREMY RENNER, SIMON PEGG, PAULA PATTON, MICHAEL NYQVIST, VLADIMIR MASHKOV, ANIL KAPOOR & JOSH HOLLOWAY

RELEASED DECEMBER 16 (USA) DECEMBER 26 (UK)

It's really rather good. That's the main thing you need to know about *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*, fourth entry in the ever more bizarre – and bizarrely still likable – franchise.

When I think back to *Mission: Impossible* in 1996, I don't remember it as an action film particularly. Perhaps my memory is faulty, but aside from an exploding restaurant and that silly helicopter business at the end, it was pretty much a thriller; slower paced than the sequels which have followed, and more reliant on tension and trickery. Since John Woo got hold of the franchise it has become an action staple, and is now known primarily as an 'action spectacular'. This fourth edition, in particular, is more like '90s Bond than ever, with its reliance on an assortment of futuristic gadgets to propel the narrative.

Number four is less of a MacGuffin chase than number three was. Here,

the story – though still mostly throwaway – is more clearly delineated, and provides a decent enough excuse for much globetrotting action. New director Brad Bird – helming his first live action piece after making his name at Pixar – does a great job here of containing all the bluster and contrivance of the narrative down into a fairly long but consistently enjoyable romp.

Bird's direction is workmanlike when it needs to be and often spectacular when it doesn't; he even harnesses the power of IMAX beautifully in some gorgeous establishing shots and action sequences. The pinnacle of these is undoubtedly the already-famous Burj-Khalifa set piece in Dubai, which is frankly breathtaking. Tom Cruise, now almost 50 but embodying Ethan Hunt as ably as he ever did, performed some truly astonishing wire work on the outside of the world's tallest building, and Bird and his editors have created something special here. Watching on IMAX, I felt my heart leap in my chest on more than one occasion; the inventive, visually arresting sequence works hard to exploit its vertiginous setting, and it succeeds.

But it's not just visually impressive – it's fun. I don't know whether it's the addition of Brad Bird, or simply that the new scriptwriters have made a conscious effort to lighten things up, but the film never forgets the truism that this genre can do wonders in papering over its cracks simply by letting you have a good time. Much of this film's comic relief comes from Simon Pegg as Benji, now a fully-fledged field agent after his more supporting

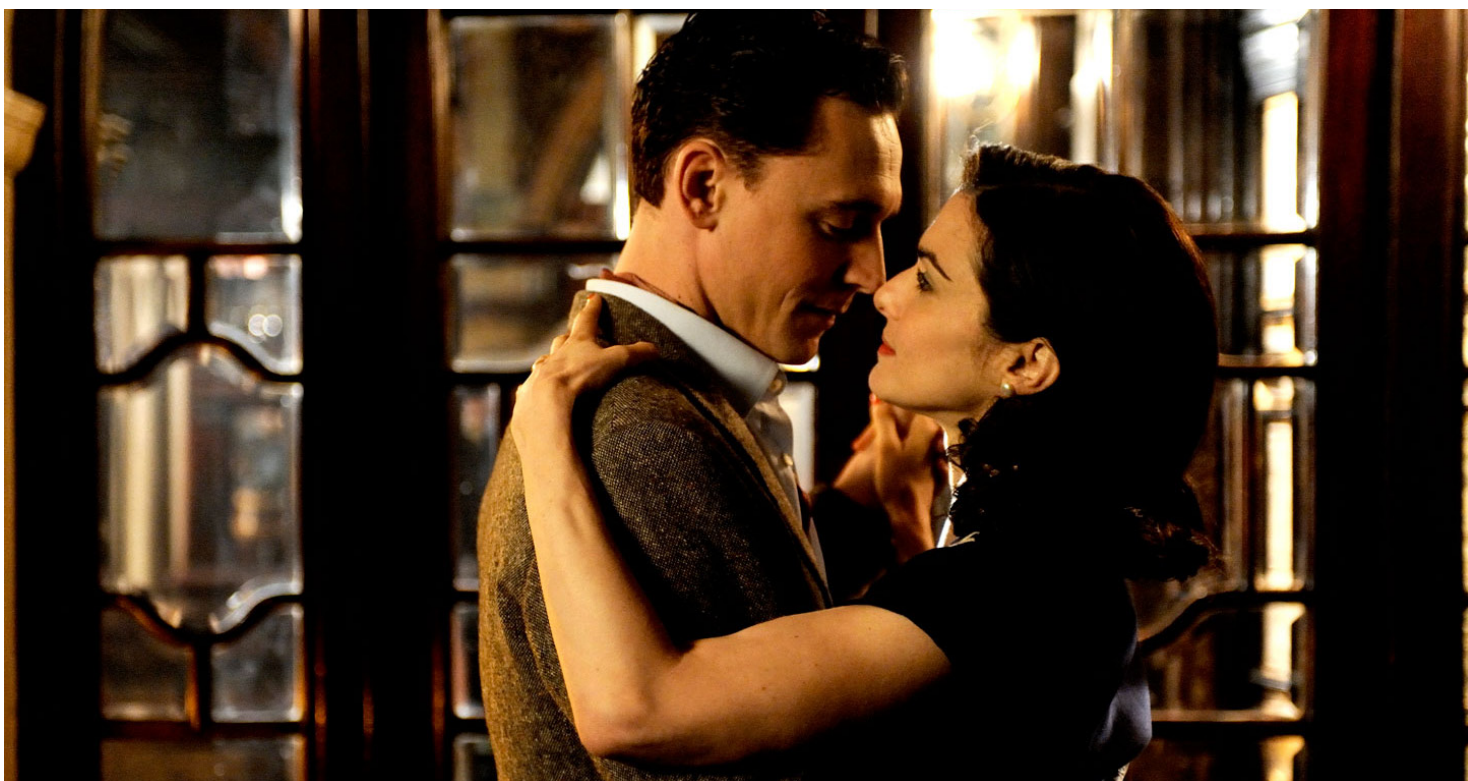
turn in *M:I:III*; he's the funniest he's been for a while now, and adds a great deal to proceedings. Other new faces include Jeremy Renner as William Brandt and Paula Patton as Jane Carter, both of whom make decent impressions despite not having a great deal to work with.

It's the overriding sense of fun that earns countless brownie points in *Ghost Protocol's* favour. The contrivances of the plot (IMF being disavowed and cut off hardly matters when they've got a truck full of weapons and ultra high-tech gadgets, does it?) are allowed to reside pleasantly in the background, even when the film's obviously commercially-inspired globetrotting and product placement crop up.

There are numerous face-shattering collisions in which Ethan somehow escapes entirely unscathed, but these draw smiles rather than frowns. Indeed, Cruise, pretty much the franchise's only remaining continuity (though the ending suggests that situation may be about to change), is still able to make Hunt a character to root for, even if his arc over four feature films is still laughably insubstantial.

Bar some dodgy CGI on a couple of occasions the film looks fantastic, and Brad Bird more than makes the case that he's one to look out for in live action as well as animation in the years to come. Hardly a franchise reinvention, but rather a streamlining exercise with a crucial injection of fun, this may well be the best *Mission: Impossible* film we've seen yet, 16 years after that silly helicopter in the tunnel. **MR**

★★★★★



THE DEEP BLUE SEA

DIRECTED BY TERENCE DAVIES **STARRING** RACHEL WEISZ, TOM HIDDLESTON, SIMON RUSSELL BEALE, ANN MITCHELL, KARL JOHNSON, HARRY HADDEN-PATON & SARAH KANTS

RELEASED OUT NOW (UK) TBC (USA)

How pleasing to have Terence Davies back making films again after his period in the cinematic wilderness. Following 2008's *Of Time and the City*, his semi-autobiographical, Liverpool-focused documentary, *The Deep Blue Sea* is Davies' first narrative feature for 11 years. It's an adaptation of the Terence Rattigan play of the same name (fairly loose, I am told – I haven't read or seen it myself), which debuted in 1952.

Davies' film begins "around 1950" in London, to a dialogue-free introduction in which Hester Collyer (Weisz) attempts to kill herself. As the wife of a judge, she understands only too well that attempted suicide is illegal. As she recovers, her deep puffs of cigarette smoke transport us to flashbacks,

where her extra-marital relationship with Freddie (Hiddleston) is examined. We also meet her husband William (stage veteran Simon Russell Beale), who refuses to grant Hester a divorce when he finds out about her infidelity. As things progress, the narrative pleasantly folds in and out of itself in unhurried, uncomplicated fashion.

From time to time, the film feels like a stage production which has been shoehorned rather ill-fittingly into the camera frame. The dialogue is very theatrical at times and doesn't always work in front of the camera, but for the most part it does work, and once you get a handle on the pacing, on the style, then the charm of Davies' film can come through. The pace is considered but always dramatically active, meaning that it never feels slow, even when perhaps it is. It is restrained but gripping, which is why the more melodramatic scenes stand out as the ones which could've benefitted from having their theatricality tamed.

It feels a little austere at times, but Davies tempers this feeling with soft focus and lovely framing. He also respects the characters in the piece and doesn't make a villain of anybody. Hester is the protagonist but is not a heroine in the traditional sense – she

is as much a fallible person as the two men competing for her love. Weisz and Hiddleston do a lovely job of conveying both love and distance, only let down by the script on rare occasions; more often than not when they are required to start shouting. Beale gives a dignified, unshowy performance as William, completing a convincing trio, and there are good supporting turns, too, particularly from Ann Mitchell as Mrs. Elton, Freddie's landlady.

Davies makes great use of sound in the film; a series of music-based set pieces, in particular, give a wonderfully cinematic feel. From a tracking shot in a beautifully introduced wartime flashback to a heartbreaking evocation of class boundaries in a local pub (where Hester tries forlornly to join in singing with the crowd), the sound design and choice is excellent. The film culminates in a reprise of the opening movement which makes for an affecting and dramatically satisfying conclusion.

The Deep Blue Sea is a film which knows what it wants to be – it's a stylish, self-contained, evocative drama with strong lead performances that overcomes the odd dip here and there to provide a distinct and satisfying experience. **MR**

★★★★★



HAPPY FEET TWO

DIRECTED BY GEORGE MILLER **STARRING** ELIJAH WOOD, ROBIN WILLIAMS, ALECIA MOORE (P!NK), SOFIA VERGARA, AVA ACRES, BRAD PITT, MATT DAMON & HUGO WEAVING

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 2 (UK)

Matching the *Cars* franchise, film for film, Warner Bros.' *Happy Feet* returns too with another outing in the icy arctic as the dancing penguins regroup for a sequel no-one was particularly clamouring for.

Such a lack of anticipation was well placed by the general public, and right from the work go nothing really happens in the story. Picking up as Mumbles' (Wood) penguin colony launch into an redundant dance routine, his son Erik (Acres) wanders off, his two left feet making him feel lost amongst the legions of superstar dancers. Alongside a couple of friends, Erik stumbles into another colony far across the ice, meaning a lengthy trek back when his father at last catches up with the three little runaways. But they return to find their home in massive danger as with a glacier closing

in, their fellow penguins lie trapped in a wide gorge; the only way out? Well, dancing of course.

If you hadn't picked up by now, *Happy Feet Two* is massively uninspiring stuff. The villain of the movie is a glacier, and that says more about the capacity for excitement in the plot than this review ever could.

The glacier and Erik's worrisome walk bring about a story arc very similar to the equally boring *Alpha And Omega*; in that, a pair of wolves find themselves separated from their pack, making the arduous journey back to save their friends and family from a life or death situation. It's the same here too, but never are you on the edge of your seat, never thrown into the narrative or captivated by the plight of our little black and white friends.

Dancing is a bizarre and ineffectual quirk to the main plot but never is its importance to the colony explained nor taken advantage of to be entertaining. The choreography is boring, the songs clichéd and everything about it so utterly drab.

Instead you might hope the visuals bring flair, but while animation is generally nice, against the snowy white backdrop, any bright colours are dulled

by the ineffectual 3D making the whole film feel even more dreary and unspectacular.

With little else to rouse your attention, it falls on the voice cast to save *Happy Feet Two*, but sadly they only contribute further to the film's downfall. Elijah Wood's performance is passive and wimpy though it would be unfair to signal him out for being particularly frail. Hank Azaria's day-saving hero Sven is a laughable Swedish stereotype that stirs up everything but laughs and Brad Pitt and Matt Damon should have known better than to accept roles of Will and Bill the krills, whose side adventures are less than an obvious copy of nut-obsessed Scrat in the *Ice Age* movies.

In a year when a *Cars* movie is again Pixar's disappointing output, the chance was there for Warner Bros. to again clean up as the best animated movie of the year. It's fair to say they missed that chance. That the first film made such a big profit was something of a miracle, that the sequel has already been a huge box office bomb should come as no surprise, especially given the lacklustre production it turned into. **SB**



SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS

DIRECTED BY GUY RITCHIE STARRING ROBERT DOWNEY JR., JUDE LAW, NOOMI RAPACE, RACHEL MCADAMS, JARED HARRIS, STEPHEN FRY, EDDIE MARSAN & PAUL ANDERSON

RELEASED DECEMBER 16

Sherlock Holmes has just thrown his companion Watson's wife off a train speeding toward their honeymoon in Brighton. There has been lots of gunfire, an explosion, some cross-dressing japery. Holmes and Watson sit despondent, ragged and dishevelled, as the train carries them away. And yet, when the next scene begins, my first thought is not "what will happen next?" but "where did they get those shiny new outfits from?"

This was a recurring theme while watching *Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows*, Guy Ritchie's sequel to 2009's reimagining of Conan Doyle's classic detective. I was uninvolved enough in the story to worry about trivialities like this, while at the same time I longed for the frivolity of the first film – for some wit, for some fun. Because I enjoyed the first picture, even if it was heavily flawed, but this follow-up sits, sadly, in its predecessor's shadow.

We pick things up in London, where Holmes is trailing Irene Adler – Rachel McAdams' femme fatale from the first film – for some as-yet-unknown reason. Her delivery of a parcel doesn't exactly go according to plan, and neither does her meeting with previously unseen benefactor Professor James Moriarty (Harris), whose name will be immediately familiar to fans of the books, and indeed probably to

many who have never read them. This is Holmes' great nemesis, his intellectual equal, his sternest challenge. This, we are lead to believe, is the test of all tests. Holmes and Moriarty are just beginning their war of the minds in Ritchie's film, but thankfully the script doesn't try to keep them apart for long. Indeed, there are a few confrontations between the two in the film, and they play out as some of the strongest scenes, as Holmes' usual eccentricities are played to a more serious note in the face of this steady, unflappable opponent, performed well by Harris, who sneers and exudes cleverness in an effectively restrained way.

What an unforgivable shame, then, that Holmes' greatest opponent is not given a script that is worthy of him. Come to think of it, the script doesn't serve many of its characters particularly well. Casting Steven Fry as Holmes' brother Mycroft was perhaps the biggest misstep, because although he's only on screen for about five minutes, he steals enough of the limelight away from his brother with a few lines to make us realise that something is sadly missing from all of this. The central bromance – more homoerotically charged than ever – between Holmes and Watson (Law) is still present and correct, and still likable, but their banter isn't as witty or interesting as in the previous film, and crucially the attempts at humour fall flat more frequently than they did before.

Jarred Harris' performance as Moriarty is wasted criminally. The script doesn't give him an interesting motivation or ultimate goal (indeed, it's one we've seen before from countless lesser screen villains) and the mind games hinted at throughout the film are crushingly anticlimactic. The big reveal we hope for never really comes, and although the final confrontation at a Swiss castle perched atop a crashing waterfall, featuring both Holmes' chess game with Moriarty and Watson's search for an assassin, is handled decently, the payoff is hardly

worth the journey.

That journey is part of the problem. Although we begin in London, the film eventually plays out like a country-hopping action film, and by the time we reach Switzerland (after two hours), a lot of good will has been squandered. The less palatable elements of the first film – mainly Holmes' slow motion forward planning and calculation – were at least kept in check for the most part in Ritchie's first film, but here he can't help himself. Even the face off between Holmes and Moriarty degrades into a fist fight, albeit a hypothetical one.

Not only are these slow motion sequences largely uninteresting, but the times in which Holmes' predictions are shown fail to provide any real sense of revelation or excitement. A protracted sequence in which Holmes, Watson and new supporting character Sim (an underused Noomi Rapace) escape from a munitions plant and into a snowy forest is excruciating; Ritchie cuts loose with his off-kilter camera flourishes, Zack Snyder-esque slow motion and stylised bullet time, effectively killing any drama in the scene and reducing the whole sequence to an unpalatable mess.

In the end, this film shoots itself in the foot by diminishing the charms of the first one and beefing up most of its flaws. There are less laughs and more slow motion punch-ups, less genuine detective work and more explosions; it's gone from an action franchise with identity to something mostly generic and uninspiring. If there is a third film, and there probably will be, then the talent behind this franchise (who at least maintain the visual style of the first film) need to remember what made it endearing in the first place.

Sherlock Holmes: A Game Of Shadows has promise at times, but those moments only serve to highlight how much of a better film it could and really should have been. **MR**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★





IMMORTALS

DIRECTED BY TARSEM SINGH STARRING HENRY CAVILL, STEPHEN DORFF, LUKE EVANS, ISABEL LUCAS, KELLAN LUTZ, FREIDA PINTO, MICKEY ROURKE & PETER STEBBINGS

RELEASED OUT NOW

The thought of a *300*-esque Ancient Greek romp helmed by visual maestro Tarsem Singh and detailing the events following the Titanomachy – the war between the Olympians and the Titans – was an exciting prospect. Alas, the great potential inherent in this project is matched only by the disappointment experienced while watching it, and anticipation for Singh's next effort – a new take on the *Snow White* story – should be significantly diminished.

King Hyperion – himself a Titan – (and played by a snarling Mickey Rourke) is searching for the Epirus Bow, an artefact which will help him free the Titans imprisoned in Tartarus and thus wreak vengeance on the Gods. But now humans have entered the equation, and Hyperion is ruthlessly bludgeoning his way through anybody and anything standing in the way of his search. And so his forces begin to descend on the village of strapping peasant Theseus (Cavill), a good-hearted soul but one reluctant to get involved in the affairs of war. He soon develops a personal interest in Hyperion, however, and along with a small group of companions (including an

oracle priestess played by Freida Pinto) sets off to find the bow for himself, and put a stop to the violence.

Singh quickly establishes his unique visual sensibility with a striking introduction depicting the Titans trapped in a box under Tartarus. Unfortunately, this promising outset is quickly overshadowed. Singh's aesthetic flair is drawn exasperatingly thin on this project. Some of the CGI-assisted sets, designed to be minimalistic and purposefully out of proportion, just don't work, while the colour palette and overall visual style suffer from similar diminishing returns to *300*, a film with which *Immortals* shares more than just a producer credit. There are some visual beats which do hit the mark – Singh's take on the Minotaur myth, the innards of a steel cow, the aftermath of a wave of tar-filled water – but in general the film's visuals are hugely disappointing.

In his previous film *The Fall*, Singh's artistry sometimes overwhelmed the narrative, but at least it was almost always arresting – there are scenes here which are just dull, hamstrung by unimaginative CGI landscapes. The design flourishes in the masks and armour, too, didn't work for me; the elaborate headdresses of the Olympians in particular.

The Fall, crucially, had a human element to back up its visual whimsy; characters which meant something. Here, Henry Cavill does his best to inject an underwritten heroic staple with some semblance of personality,

but he's fighting a losing battle, as are many of the supporting characters. John Hurt gets some dull dialogue as Theseus' mentor, while the Olympians, youthfully cast and decked out in shimmering gold outfits, inexcusably lack weight, both visually and dramatically. Luke Evans, as Zeus, comes out of it best, at least conjuring a sense of fractured nobility, while Isabel Lucas, as Athena, looks lost as the goddess of wisdom and war.

The film is fairly violent at times, but it's dramatically vacuous action with little to no weight. Fight scenes reminiscent of *300* not only come across as shockingly derivative, but also inferior to the film they're lifted from. The film's crescendo, a large-scale battle between warring human beings and, later, between more supernatural entities, loses interest before it even begins, requiring Theseus to make one of the worst motivational war speeches in recent memory. When the Olympians finally get called into action late on, they are unforgivably sidelined in a series of increasingly shallow CGI-inflected brawls.

It's presented in 3D, but the post-production conversion adds nothing to proceedings. There is one scene, in which a horse's galloping hooves kick dust into the screen, which looks particularly poor. Underwritten, dramatically shallow and visually disappointing, *Immortals* is a missed opportunity. Unlike the myths on which it is based, it will be quickly forgotten. **MR**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



SHAME

DIRECTED BY STEVE MCQUEEN STARRING MICHAEL FASSBENDER, CAREY MULLIGAN, JAMES BADGE DALE, NICOLE BEHARIE, HANNAH WARE & ALEX MANETTE

RELEASED DECEMBER 2 (USA) JANUARY 13, 2012 (UK)

Cinema is awash with studies of addiction – drugs, alcohol, violence; all are widely covered. Sex addiction is less prominent, perhaps understandably so, because sex is a subject which tends to get audiences rather hot under the collar, and knowing how to handle it is difficult, particularly in a narrative where sex itself is the driving force.

Shame is British director Steve McQueen's second feature, and his second collaboration with leading man Michael Fassbender, who here gives an intoxicating performance as Brandon, a well-to-do 30-something living in a New York City shot brilliantly by Sean Bobbitt. This is a city which seems almost perpetually in half-light; gloomy and uninviting. Were it not for a few pointers – including a bravado tracking shot as Brandon goes out for a run – it could be pretty much any city.

Brandon is well-mannered, charismatic, has a good job and earns a lot

of money. But his life is a solitary one, a conveyor belt of sexual encounters stripped of meaningful human contact. His apartment is unnervingly stark; all glass and bare white walls, shorn of distinguishing characteristics, often shot from restricting angles. At times, as in the film's well-executed opening which intercuts various scenes, the camerawork is borderline voyeuristic – unmoving and resolute.

Into Brandon's isolated existence comes his sister Sissy (Mulligan), a singer with relationship troubles and nowhere else to go. Immediately there is a tension in the household – Brandon's private life is invaded, his space is compromised, his sexual freedom is restricted. Their relationship is complicated, and although Brandon blames Sissy when his life begins to unravel, in actual fact her presence is exposing the fundamentals of his existence in unexpectedly clear terms, and he doesn't like it. He feels shame. He understands how another might see him. After watching Sissy sing at a bar one night, an unpleasant reversal back at Brandon's apartment affects him in a deeply conflicted way.

McQueen tackles the subject matter head on – he isn't afraid to show explicit sexual content, and both of his leads are required to bare themselves

for the camera. Fassbender in particular gives a brave, fully committed performance, and it is primarily on his shoulders that the film is carried, as technically impressive as it often is. But Mulligan is excellent too, and like Fassbender is enjoying a stellar period in her young career.

The film treads a fine line between being explicit and being excessive, and it only rarely moves into the latter territory. It's easy to forgive the film its occasional overindulgences because in general its handling of the subject matter is reassuringly astute. There is lots of nudity, lots of sex, but it is very rarely erotic – this is crucial to the narrative's success. The film's only genuinely erotic set piece, meanwhile, is handled with excruciating adeptness.

Closing with a cleverly inverted sense of ambiguity, *Shame* is an effective film both performance-wise and from a technical standpoint. McQueen manages to make the film look both beautiful and somehow repellent, which may be the result of his careful handling of the potentially difficult subject matter. Though it ultimately doesn't deliver the emotional punch it feels like it could have done, *Shame* is a mature, considered film driven by strong performances. **MR**

★★★★★



SNOWTOWN

DIRECTED BY JUSTIN KURZEL STARRING BOB ADRIAENS, LOUISE HARRIS, FRANK CWIERTNIAK, MATTHEW HOWARD, MARCUS HOWARD, ANTHONY GROVES & RICHARD GREEN

RELEASED OUT NOW (UK) TBC (USA)

In attempting to portray serial killers, both real and imaginary, on screen, filmmakers have incorporated a wide variety of methodologies. While one might assume that films about serial killers are, by definition, horror films (and on one level they are), much depends on how the director chooses to frame a difficult subject.

Justin Kurzel makes his feature-length debut with *Snowtown*, a depiction of real-life Australian serial killer John Bunting who, along with accomplices, killed 12 people in Snowtown (north of Adelaide) in the 1990s. Kurzel has made a grim thriller which deals with its horrific subject matter in a generally intelligent and sophisticated manner.

The film's depiction of Snowtown itself is chilling. This is a deprived, poverty stricken community, apparently neglected by the authorities and spiralling out of control. Every other person, it seems, has something to hide, and sexual predators – many of whom target minors – plague the streets.

How accurately this Australian town is presented in the film I cannot say, but Kurzel does not attempt to explain how the area came to be so desperate, and nor does he hide from its grim reality. It doesn't feel like the bleakness of the setting is being sen-

sationalised, however, and this is because although the film's subject is the now infamous 'Snowtown murders', its protagonist is not Bunting himself but one of his soon-to-be-accomplices, James Vlassakis. He is played convincingly by newcomer Lucas Pittaway – indeed, most of the cast are first time performers.

Kurzel spends some time establishing James' day-to-day life before Bunting ever comes into the frame, and during this period the foundations are laid for a transformation that is never justified, but is contextualised by, early events. James lives with his brothers under the care of his single mother (Louise Harris) and her boyfriend. We quickly ascertain that all is not well in the household, and initially the appearance of charismatic John Bunting (Daniel Henshall) into this setup seems to provide a reprieve. Bunting chairs ragtag community meetings in which a gathering of locals vent their hatred and fears about the society around them, mainly directed at paedophiles. James is encouraged to attend these meetings, and quickly forms an eerie familial bond with Bunting, whom we as the audience know is carefully preying on James' insecurity and repressed anger, gently moulding him into something he should never become. This relationship – and, crucially, James' transformation – convinces, and the film is all the more unsettling for it.

Bunting, unlike the others at the meetings, is unsatisfied with simply venting through words. He is prepared to take matters into his own hands, as James eventually learns. We watch as he is unwittingly drawn into Bunt-

ing's band of killers, until through circumstance it is too late to redeem his grieving soul. Pittaway's performance as James is strong enough to generate considerable sympathy – how close his character is to the real man is difficult to say, but it works for the purposes of constructing a believable drama.

In general, Kurzel is content for the relationship between Bunting and Vlassakis to carry the film, and it works. Vlassakis may come across as sympathetic to us, but Bunting does not. Charismatic, yes, but not sympathetic. We come to understand that his actions may not be as principled as he claims – perhaps, on a level, he simply enjoys killing. There is also significant suggestion made in the film (in particular through a couple of creepy, suggestive scenes) that he is little more than a hypocrite. When Kurzel briefly allows the film to move into more graphic territory during one late scene, he seems to compromise his well-established tone a little, but the outcome of the scene is significant and he obviously felt it couldn't be done any other way.

Dotted with little flashes of directorial flair, *Snowtown* is a well-made, considered film. When the photography occasionally allows us to move outside the titular community, we are grateful for the open space and an expansion of the colour palette. The fact that the film loses its way a little in the final third isn't enough to derail the hard work that has come before. Its grimly realistic style may be off-putting to some viewers, but this is a convincing and effective portrayal of a serial killer. **MR**

★★★★★



ANOTHER EARTH

DIRECTED BY MIKE CAHILL STARRING BRIT MARLING, WILLIAM MAPOTHER, MATTHEW-LEE ERLBACH, MEGGAN LENNON, AJ DIANA, JORDAN BAKER & FLINT BEVERAGE

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 9 (UK)

Sold to Fox Searchlight off the back of great buzz at this year's Sundance Film Festival, *Another Earth* is unfortunately a film that can't match a pre-standing reputation, and fails to come good on what is an intriguing concept at its core.

After an apparent mirror of Earth appears in the night sky, Rhoda Williams, driving home on a rainy night, looks up to take in the remarkable phenomena, but after drinking early that evening to celebrate her acceptance into MIT, loses control of her vehicle, and slams into a waiting car at the upcoming intersection.

With a young family on the receiving end of the unfortunate collision, only the father (Mapother) makes it out alive, and overwrought with guilt, and wanting to apologise for the harm she had caused, after serving her sentence, Rhoda impresses herself upon the still grieving John Burroughs.

A minor at the time of the ac-

cident, Rhoda's identity was always kept hidden, and after losing her nerve at the very last minute, instead offers services to clean Burroughs' house. Unaware of who she is, the pair soon grow close, although as the other Earth draws ever nearer, a new clarity in Rhoda's mind means she must in the end come clean, sure to rock each other's life once again.

The idea for the film was conceived by co-writers Mike Cahill and Brit Marling as they speculated what it would be like to encounter one's own self, but not once does this play a factor in or influence the story on the whole as *Another Earth* proves massively underwhelming.

The whole idea of a mirror of Earth approaching our planet is entirely underplayed. In a way this is the idea; similarly to how *Super 8* is a film about friendship with an alien creature running around in the background, *Another Earth* is a film about redemption and the bonds of a relationship, all the while, a second Earth just happens to be lurking in the background. In *Super 8*, however, the characters were interesting and you cared greatly for their plight, here, there's nothing to even approach the same emotional involvement. Without the other Earth playing a key role in the story, what's left is a generic tale of uninteresting

characters trading fairly laboured and boring dialogue.

Another Earth falls in with every other bittersweet indie picture of redemption and righting wrongs, but it struggles to even stand up to them.

Though the cinematography is left lacking at times, everything from a directorial standpoint is generally OK, that you don't believe in the central relationship, however, is laid equally at William Mapother's feet as the lacking script. He never feels convincing as the broken man/talented musician, though opposite him, with a writing credit also to her name, Brit Marling might just be on her way to the top.

Such self-consciously indie films give themselves a license to explore, but *Another Earth* dares little. The only step outside of the standard is for Mapother's musician to play the sword (yes, sword), turning what should have been a moment of great emotion into the ludicrous.

Another Earth is an intimate picture about redemption, guilt and the loss of our loved ones, and yet without any warmth to the characters, chemistry between the leads and a cold and oppressive aesthetic and narrative tone, it isn't at all engaging, when it could have been one of the most remarkable indie films of the year. **SB**

★★★★★



PUSS IN BOOTS

DIRECTED BY SHAWN LEVY **STARRING** HUGH JACKMAN, DAKOTA GOYO, EVANGELINE LILLY, ANTHONY MACKIE, KEVIN DURAND, HOPE DAVIS & JAMES REBHORN

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 9 (UK)

When Puss In Boots (Banderas), a vigilante fighting for good, becomes embroiled in the search for magic beans, he's thrust back alongside with childhood friend, Humpty Dumpty (Galifianakis), and feline acquaintance, Kitty Softpaws (Hayek). Catching wind they're in the possession of murderous outlaws Jack and Jill, the trio hatch a plan to steal the beans, but even if they pull off the daunting task, planting them and what awaits atop the

beanstalk means it's only just the start of an enviable mission.

A spin-off from the *Shrek* franchise (though it pre-dates them as if they pleasingly never happened), *Puss In Boots* is far and away better than anything featuring the green ogre and feels fresh not having to rely on pop culture references for the vast majority of the comedy. The dialogue is witty and sharp, with excellent comedic timing across the whole vocal cast.

With Antonio Banderas, Selma Hayek and Zach Galifianakis all smartly playing off each other, it's the latter who steals the show, providing much of the laughs though Banderas is really great too. While the design of character Humpty Dumpty leaves a lot to be desired, the visuals in general are fantastic, with great animation in particular of the two central cats.

What the film boasts in charm and exuberance, it sadly lacks in emotional core, and while there isn't really any depth to the bonds formed over the 90 minutes, it's still a great family-friendly action-comedy.

Though it's certainly aimed largely at kids, *Puss In Boots* is still darker and more edgy than you might expect. There's a surprising amount of sex-driven humour throughout, while the representation of Jack and Jill as a ragged couple, feared across the land, is marvellous.

Very well helmed by director Chris Miller, *Puss In Boots* is cohesive and captivating, a world away from his only other effort, *Shrek The Third*, but on this form, if he returns to the swash-buckling feline world again, we'd be delighted. **SB**

★★★★★



CARNAGE

DIRECTED BY ROMAN POLANSKI **STARRING** KATE WINSLET, JOHN C. REILLY, JODIE FOSTER, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, ELIOT BERGER, ELVIS POLANSKI & JOSEPH REZWIN

RELEASED DECEMBER 16 (USA) FEBRUARY 3, 2012 (UK)

The petty resentments of polite society are ruthlessly exposed in *Carnage*, Roman Polanski's deliciously tart four-hander on parental rivalry. His taught dramedy sees Alan and Nancy (Christoph Waltz and Kate Winslet) invited to the home of fellow parents Penelope and Michael (Jodie Foster and John C. Reilly) after their son is the apparent aggressor in a schoolyard altercation. What begins as a toe-curling exercise in liberal conflict resolution soon descends into a farce of petty squabbling, physical altercations and hysteria as each succumbs to their base prejudices. The sort of film Michael Haneke might make if he had a sense of humour, *Carnage* is a withering takedown of a manicured class.

An adaptation of Yasmina Reza's feted Broadway play *The God Of Car-*

nage, Polanski has created a fantastically cynical drama. Filmed in a single location and unspooling in real time, it is an example of creating an atmosphere of unease primed to explode, as Foster's high minded, patronising Penelope and Waltz's flippant, insouciant Alan combine to light the fuse on a powder keg.

With an all-too-recognisable sense of politeness agonisingly preventing Alan and Nancy leaving the prim New York apartment, the couples are forced to prolong the agony even after they have openly mocked each other's values, competitively badmouthed their children and, in one particularly fantastic scene, vomited on the art collection.

Committed to keeping things interesting, class resentment (Michael works in hardware supplies, Alan in corporate law) and enmity between husbands and wives leads to shifting alliances and power dynamic across seventy mostly excruciating minutes. Even when the film begins to struggle to find new terrain, such as in the contrived subplot in which Alan represents a company supplying dodgy pharmaceuticals to Michael's mother,

it remains fantastically played, brittle entertainment.

The single, restrictive scenario always puts extra pressure on performances, and the strength of *Carnage* ultimately lies in four players delivering razor-sharp takes on a crackling, often nasty script. Jodie Foster is convincingly unstable and unbearable as the film's most eccentric character, while Winslet and Reilly put in quieter performances as the more conciliatory players, an approach that only serves to make their eventual explosions all the more effective.

Carnage, though, ultimately belongs to Waltz. A screen presence so magnetic that his only-recent discovery remains baffling, he is priceless as the borderline-amoral Alan. What's more, in his speech about his belief in the 'God of Carnage' and the true, animalistic nature of humanity, he boasts the film's central thematic moment. One suspects that Alan is the closest thing to Polanski's spirit on-screen, and indeed it is Polanski himself who is the God of Carnage here, overseeing a deliciously brutal assassination of bourgeois dishonesty. **AS**

★★★★★



THE THING

DIRECTED BY MATTHIJS VAN HEIJNINGEN JR. **STARRING** MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD, JOEL EDGERTON, ULRICH THOMSEN, ERIC CHRISTIAN OLSEN & PAUL BRAUNSTEIN

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 2 (UK)

The dangers of revisiting beloved material are there for all to see in *The Thing*, the latest Hollywood rehash of a genre touchstone. While technically a prequel to John Carpenter's cult sci-fi about a shape-shifting alien loose on an Antarctic research base, Mathijs van Heijningen Jr's film is so stuffed with riffs from Carpenter's film that its status as a precursor scarcely seems to matter. A convenient guise under which to revisit the original, it is a prime example of the dangers of cinema being remade by people who obviously both love and completely misunderstand their source material.

Working to both the timeline and basic structure of its predecessor, this new *Thing* sees Mary Elizabeth Winstead's palaeontologist recruited by the Norwegian scientists briefly featured in Carpenter's picture. Finding an ex-

traterrestrial buried under the ice that proves to be both alive and capable of replicating other life forms, they are soon turning on each other in a bid to weed out the alien as it sets about replacing members of the group, an impending ice storm meanwhile cutting off all routes of escape.

The 1982 version, with its extreme environment, sense of paranoia and gruesome special effects – the monster all slime, tentacles and stretching flesh capable of splitting into multiple creatures – is a gift of a setup. But where Carpenter created effective shocks through sudden, prosthetic gore from a creature that mostly remained in hiding, van Heijningen doesn't have that sort of patience. Opting instead for the monster equivalent of stalk-and-slash, unbearably tense scenes from the original (protagonists undergoing blood tests whilst tied to a couch) are first re-imagined (a dull dental examination) before quickly being dropped in favour of another bloodbath.

Similarly, where Carpenter kept his audience engaged with a cast of grouchy character actors led by a bearded Kurt Russell, van Heijningen can only offer up a carousel of faceless

Norwegian monster-fodder. Winstead and Joel Edgerton (*Animal Kingdom*), marked out as nothing other than American and inexplicably attuned to danger, are wasted here, and the *thing* itself, while brilliantly designed and not lacking for the power to shock, is a trick that is allowed to wear thin without the sustained mystery of who might not be what they seem.

All of which simply calls into question van Heijningen's blind striving for fidelity. Carpenter's film was not an original idea either, inspired as it was by John W. Campbell's novella *Who Goes There?* and Howard Hawks' 1951 adaptation *The Thing From Another World*, which used the story as a thinly-veiled anti-Communist parable ("Keep watching the skies!"). Carpenter revisited both to create a bleak, gorily nihilistic vision, and while van Heijningen has again reinterpreted the material, he has instead done so for an era in which horror films are remade by commercial directors who get the look, but miss the feel, of the original article. For a film about a monster that perfectly clones its prey, that is strangely fitting, if still incredibly disappointing. **AS**

★★★★★



J. EDGAR

DIRECTED BY CLINT EASTWOOD STARRING LEONARDO DICAPRIO, ARMIE HAMMER, NAOMI WATTS, JOSH LUCAS, JUDI DENCH, DAMON HERRIMAN & JEFFREY DONOVAN

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) JANUARY 20, 2012 (UK)

J. Edgar examines the life of one of America's most mysterious figures, FBI Director Hoover. The film follows Hoover (played by an unrecognisable Leonardo DiCaprio) towards the end of his life, as he attempts to dictate his memoirs and the story of the FBI (the two being wholly intertwined).

In 1924, at the tender age of twenty-nine, Hoover was appointed director of the Bureau of Investigation, and remained until his death in 1972. The Bureau was his life: he never married or had children, and he kept his secretary, Miss Gandy (Watts), and deputy Clyde Tolson (Hammer), with him throughout his career.

Hoover's tenure at the Bureau oversaw some of the most important controversies and scandals of the American century: John Dillinger's capture, The Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassinations of JFK and Martin Luther King, the death of Marilyn Monroe, Hoover's name crops up everywhere. Clint Eastwood's film stumbles nervously through a few of these energetic and utterly cinematic situations before settling on the most stale and

untenable facets of Hoover's life: his cynical involvement in the Lindbergh kidnapping case, and his homosexual love affair with Tolson.

In March 1932 legendary aviator Charles A. Lindbergh's infant son was kidnapped from the family home. It was a case for the state police, but Hoover used the ensuing trial to widen the scope of the FBI and to create a centralised fingerprint database. It is an important part of American history, but a comparatively boring one. As for Hoover's homosexuality: it can never be proven, and allowing it to consume our understanding of the man is demeaning. He wasn't a good person, but he was a multi-faceted one. Tarring him (for two hours) with this brush is irresponsible and, again, boring.

This is all a huge shame, because Hoover was unarguably one of the most sinister and shadowy figures of the 20th Century. He answered to nobody, and used his power to amass private files on every political figure and celebrity in the United States. He was Norman Bates with a more attuned and sinister "Mummy" complex. He didn't need to spy through a hole in the shower, he had the most well funded institution in Washington for that. He spied on John F Kennedy and used the resulting sex tape to bribe brother Bobby, then Attorney General, to fund his ongoing and entirely pointless anti-Communist campaigns.

You could close your eyes and poke a stick into almost any part of

the man's life and come up with a story bristling with intrigue and energy.

How Eastwood has managed to create so dull a film is actually quite stunning. Nor can Eastwood argue that he didn't want to cast aspersions on unproven stories: if this were the case, why does he spend half the film watching Hoover and Tolson's wild and emotional love affair, for which there has never been a shred of corroborated evidence?

The film is almost saved by its three central performances. DiCaprio, Hammer and Watts have their faces caked in varying degrees of makeup and prosthetics throughout the film in an attempt to convey the almost half a century over which the story takes place. The makeup is as good as you will see without the overpriced CGI geekery of Cameron or Fincher, but it is hugely distracting for the viewer and, with less capable actors, might have destroyed the natural performances.

Fortunately these are not lesser actors. DiCaprio is, as we have come to expect, excellent as Hoover. He transcends the prosthetic appendages and conveys the slow deterioration of a powerful man in ways no makeup or CGI ever could. His eyes are always alight, but his voice slowly weakens to a croak, and his shoulders stoop to creaking. It is a powerful performance, supported admirably by the understated grace of Naomi Watts and the chirpy, disarming Armie Hammer. **ND**

★★★★★



NEW YEAR'S EVE

DIRECTED BY GARRY MARSHALL **STARRING** ROBERT DE NIRO, MICHELLE PFEIFFER, JON BON JOVI, ZAC EFRON, ASHTON KUTCHER, HILARY SWANK & KATHERINE HEIGL

RELEASED DECEMBER 8 (UK) DECEMBER 9 (USA)

A lot of guys would wince at the thought of 90 minutes in front of a chick-flick, but I normally quite enjoy them. Sure, they're utter drivel, but with story lines so predictable you can outline the entire plot just from looking at the poster, there's something comforting about what you know is always going to be a happy ending.

A sort of sequel to his 2010 big name compendium *Valentine's Day*, stars are back in force for Garry Marshall's follow up, and another night of romance, in *New Year's Eve*.

The story is as you'd expect; a big handful of stars from across the city (New York in this case) see their paths intertwine, as with that big midnight moment on the horizon, whether they'll find happiness and love as the new year hits appears entirely up in

the air. Yeah, good one.

In amongst the rabble is a party planner (Heigl) who just happens to be running an event where her ex-fiancé (oddly played by rockstar Jon Bon Jovi) is performing, a NYE cynic (Kutcher) who is trapped in an elevator with a passionate singer (Michele), an excitable bike messenger (Efron) attempting to restore a middle-age woman's (Pfeiffer) faith in the world, a playboy businessman (Duhamel) who wonders whether he should play the romantic or stay single and a sick father (DeNiro) on his death bed, who's given up hope on making up with his estranged daughter and instead holding out just to see the Times Square Ball drop one more time.

In each of their own movies, perhaps the various characters might have proved entertaining (in particular a duelling couple both attempting to give birth to New York's first baby of the new year) but you don't spend anywhere near enough time with each of them to care about their plight as the countdown to midnight heats up. The relationships themselves are utterly unbelievable too, with mismatch of couples across the board.

The clichéd stock characters don't have an ounce of individuality between them, but were the narrative a sweet, endearing tale of innocence, affection and redemption then it could have at least started to pull you in. The script, however, is so rapidly shallow, with everything portrayed on a one-note, superficial level.

Though you're expecting the predictable ending, the finale, and what goes on before it, feels phoney and contrived, while a vulgar mean streak throughout only further puts you off. Zac Efron's character proved to be fun and Sofia Vergara is very funny, but how Abigail Breslin was caked in make-up was horrible to see. The only other humour is provided by Ludacris' comically oversized policeman's uniform, but unless a genius move from wardrobe, it's wholly unintentional.

Valentine's Day was nonsense but quite fun, this is just berating. And with the big names (note. not A-Listers (bar a couple)) unable to save it from an awkward and unconvincing conclusion, you'd be well advised to avoid *New Year's Eve* and go have fun on your own terms instead. **SB**





A VERY HAROLD & KUMAR CHRISTMAS

DIRECTED BY TODD STRAUSS-SCHULSON **STARRING** JOHN CHO, KAL PENN, THOMAS LENNON, AMIR BLUMENFELD, NEIL PATRICK HARRIS, DANNY TREJO & PAULA GARCÉS

RELEASED OUT NOW (USA) DECEMBER 9 (UK)

The film which star Kal Penn had to take a leave of absence from his role in the Obama administration for is quite the dumping down for the talented, and apparently clever, actor.

Set a few years on from their last adventure, Penn jumps back into role of Kumar Patel, medical student dropout and massive stoner, though buddy Harold (Cho) seems to have matured. Now married and trying for a baby,

Harold lives own a glorious house in the suburbs and has made a name for himself as an investment banker.

But it was only a matter of time before they were thrown back into each other's lives, and when a package for Harold is mistakenly sent to Kumar's address, it isn't long before mishap finds them too.

After inadvertently setting fire to Harold's Christmas tree, what should have been a flyby hello turns into an evening of mayhem as the pair are flung into a city-wide mission to replace the charred decorations, crashing a mobster's daughter's house party, getting drugged on spiked eggnog and becoming back-up dancers in a Christmas musical.

If you've seen any of the previous *Harold & Kumar*s, you'd be foolish not to expect another silly 90 minutes of slapstick and stoner comedy, so how ridiculous the film is at times isn't a problem, how devoid of laughs it proves to be, however, certainly is.

The dialogue isn't snappy while the physical comedy is predictable; *A Very Harold & Kumar Christmas* is low-

est common denominator humour, without the wit or great timing to convert into laughs.

Kal Penn and John Cho have matured into solid actors now and really see their talents wasted with such a laboured script. The film is inoffensive but perhaps that's part of the problem, the characters don't really have an edge any more and there isn't anything that pushes the boundaries.

Making his signature cameo, Neil Patrick Harris is the best thing about the movie; his charisma, the in-jokes and fun had with his fictionalised persona easily steal the show. Thomas Lennon too, as Harold's pandering assistant, is more entertaining than the central duo.

Billed within the movie's full title, 3D throughout is a needless gimmick with random objects flying out of the screen that will look utterly ridiculous when shown in 2D, though all in all, it's a very disappointing production. Hopefully the lead duo now forget their stoner pals and move onto bigger and better things in the future. **SB**

★★★★★

THE KILLING II

Wonderful second series upon which the breakthrough US TV show was based, here things take a political twist and the murdered victim is revenge for Muslims killed in Afghanistan. Wonderfully captivating stuff again.

Show ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



RETREAT

Interesting if flawed psychological thriller about a couple whose remote second home is invaded by a mysterious character who claims the rest of the world is at its knees thanks to a fatal airborne disease sweeping the planet.

Film ★★★★★

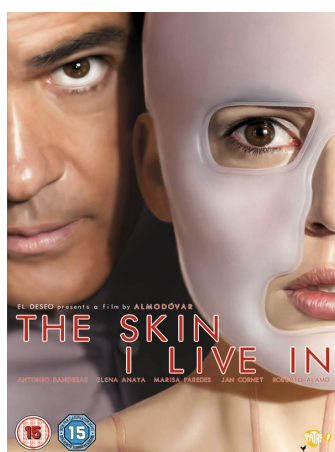
Extras ★★★★★

THE SKIN I LIVE IN

A smart, complex and intelligent movie, from a filmmaker at the top of his game, Almodóvar returns with a film that tonally draws comparisons to the wonderful *Oldboy* as Banderas gives his captive a total body makeover.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



BOARDWALK EMPIRE: SEASON ONE

Captivating first season of HBO's Prohibition era crime drama series. Steve Buscemi goes some way to stealing the show but really across the board the show captivates.

Show ★★★★★

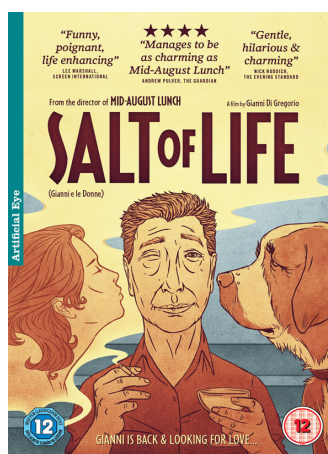
Extras ★★★★★

HARRY POTTER & THE DEATHLY HALLOWS PT.2

The finale to an epic franchise that was never really going to disappoint, if only because it rounded off so many arcs for the numerous characters. Good in its own right too.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



SALT OF LIFE

Don't be fooled by the gorgeous cover art, this isn't a sweetly animated comedy, Gianni Di Gregorio film though still charms, about a house husband who reacquaints himself with some of life's great thrills and pleasures.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

REAL STEEL

In the near future, regular human boxing has been replaced by 'Real Steel', a form of boxing in which humans control robot competitors from the sidelines, but fight sequences are languid and there's no emotional core.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



THE THREE COLOURS TRILOGY

Available for the first time on Blu-ray, Krzysztof Kieslowski's remarkable pictures are rightly a landmark in world and independent cinema. An education and must-watch.

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★



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BOTTLE ROCKET
BY THINH DONG



ANOTHER EARTH BY
ATELIER OLCHINSKY




DEVOUR BY
CHRISTOPHER
JONASSEN



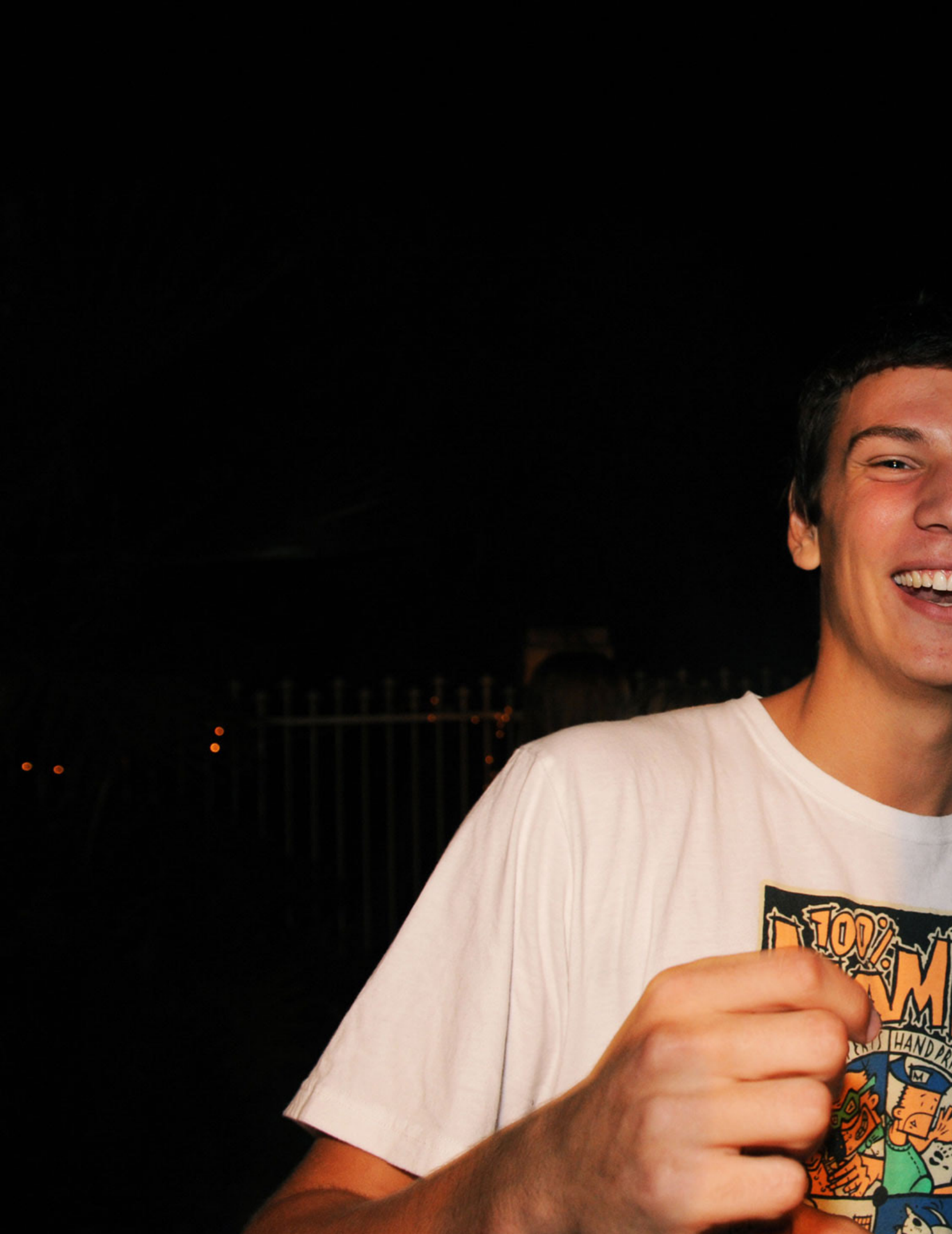
LOST BY
KEVIN HAUGEN





Bottle rocket

PHOTOGRAPHY THINH DONG (BEETLEWINGS.TUMBLR.COM)









































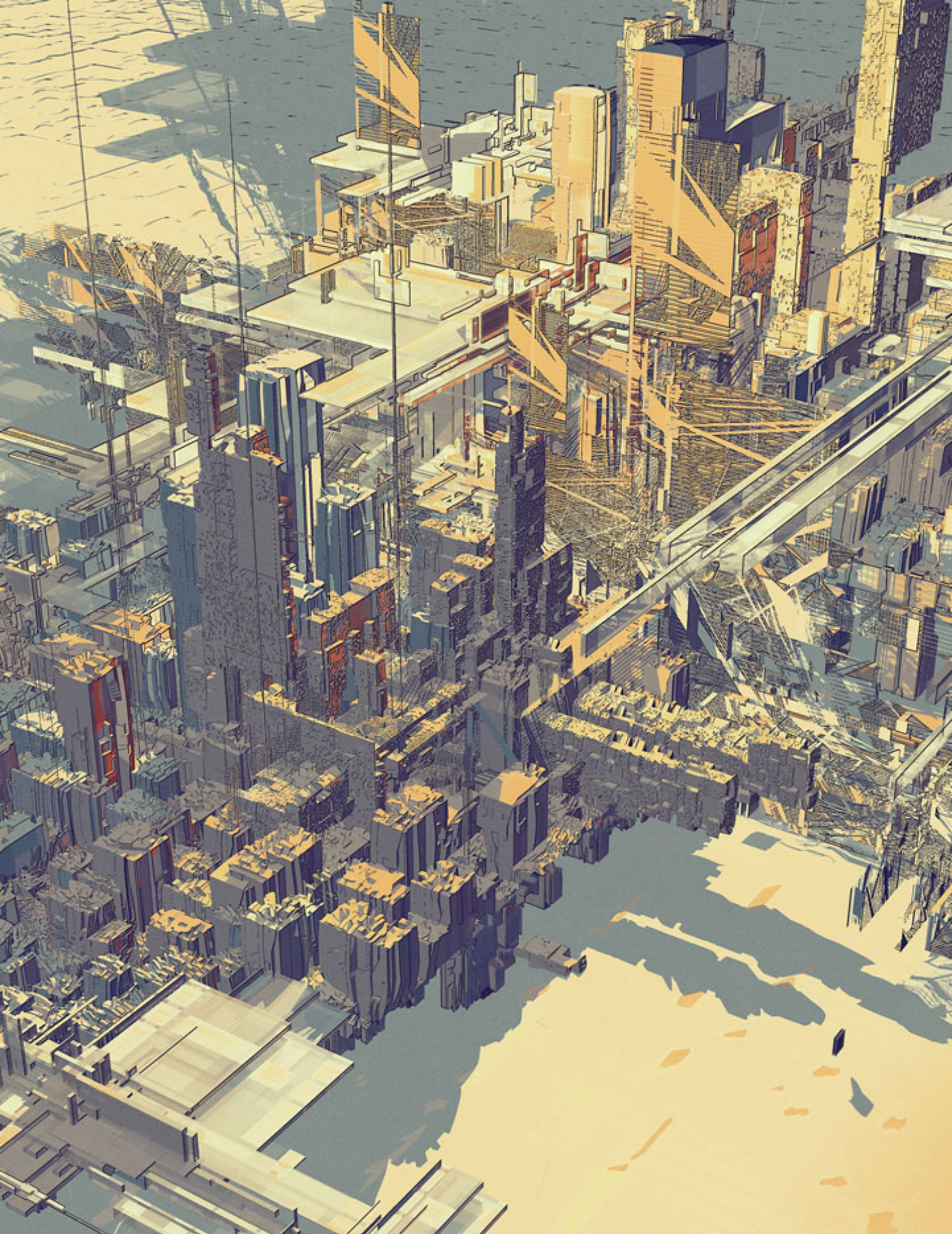
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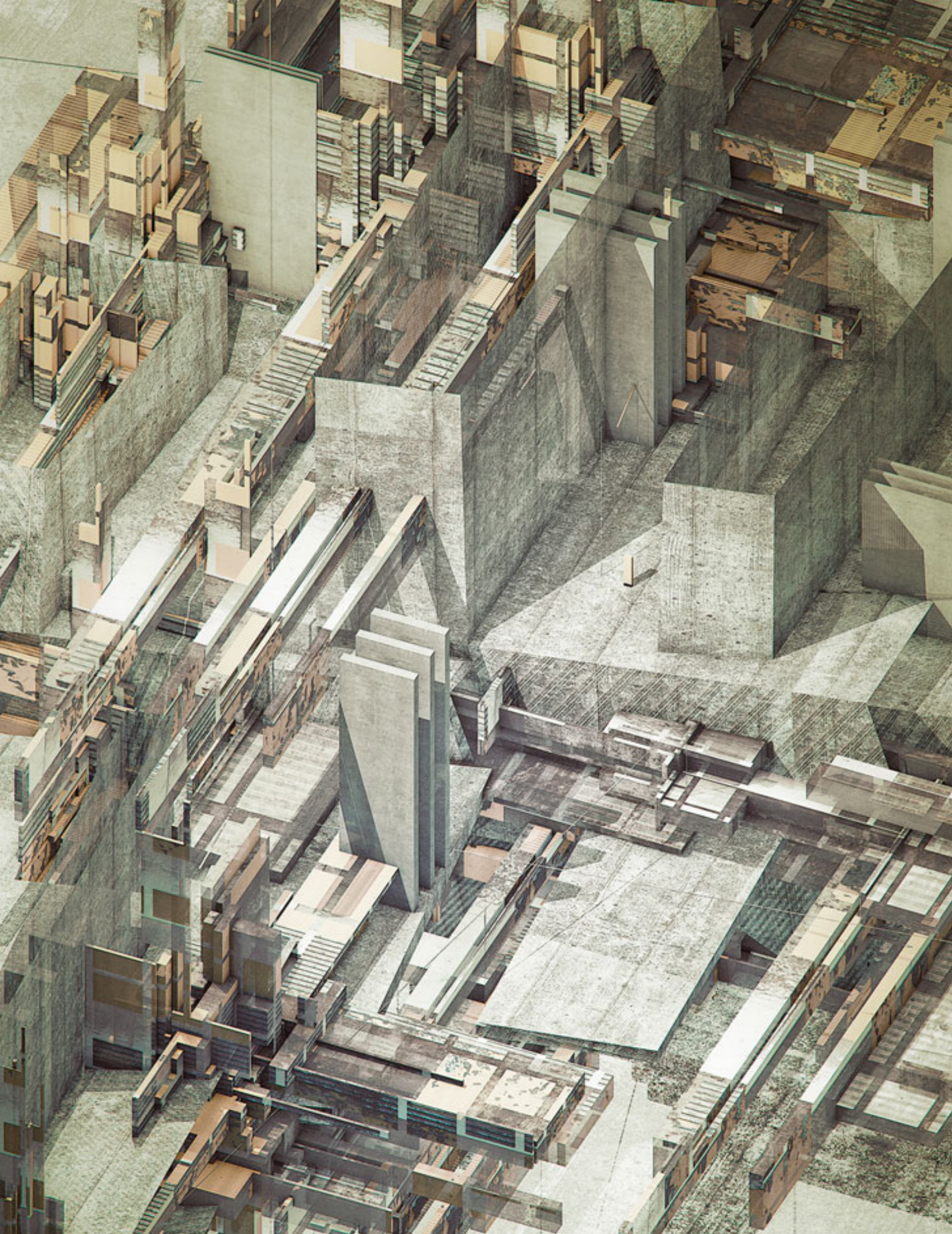
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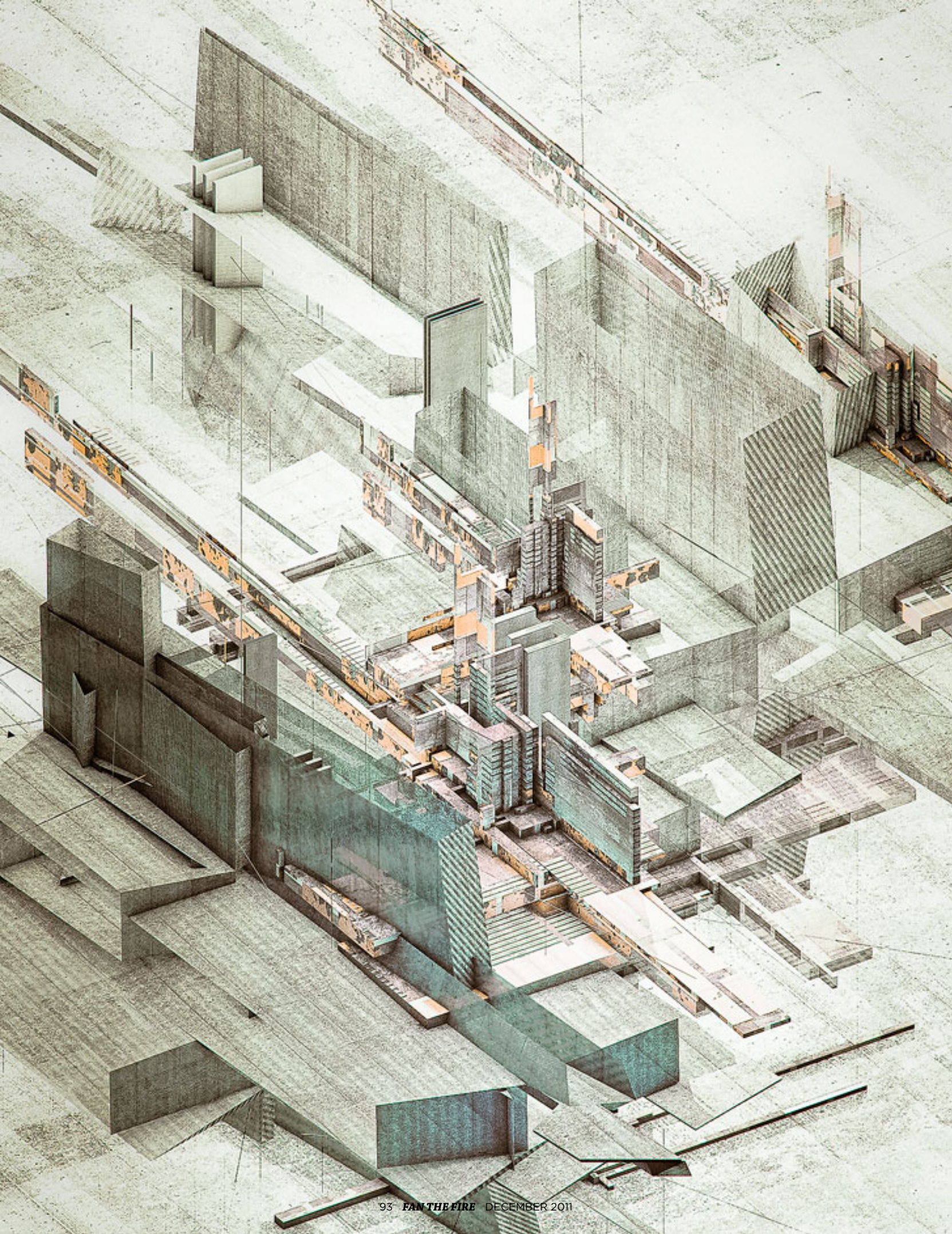
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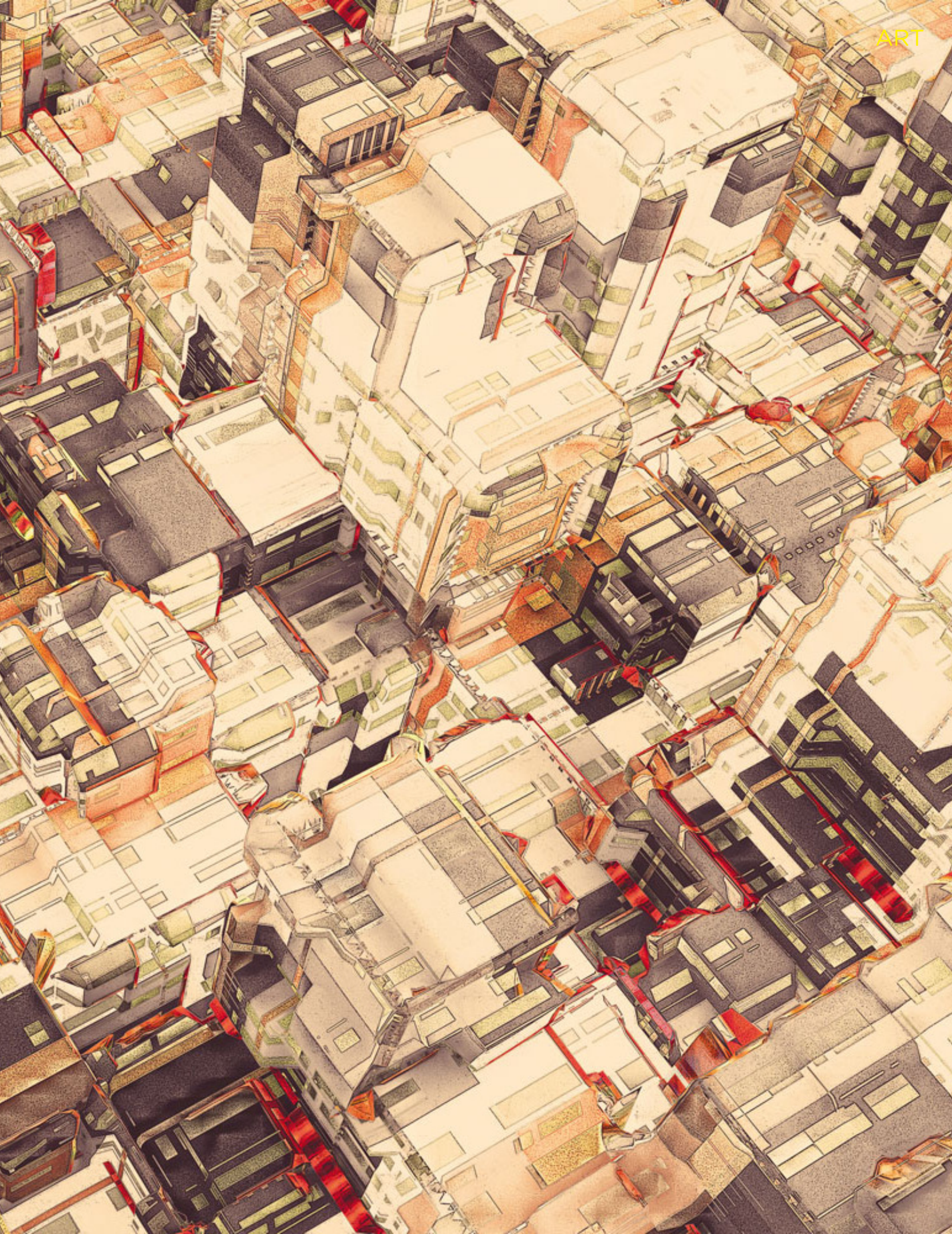






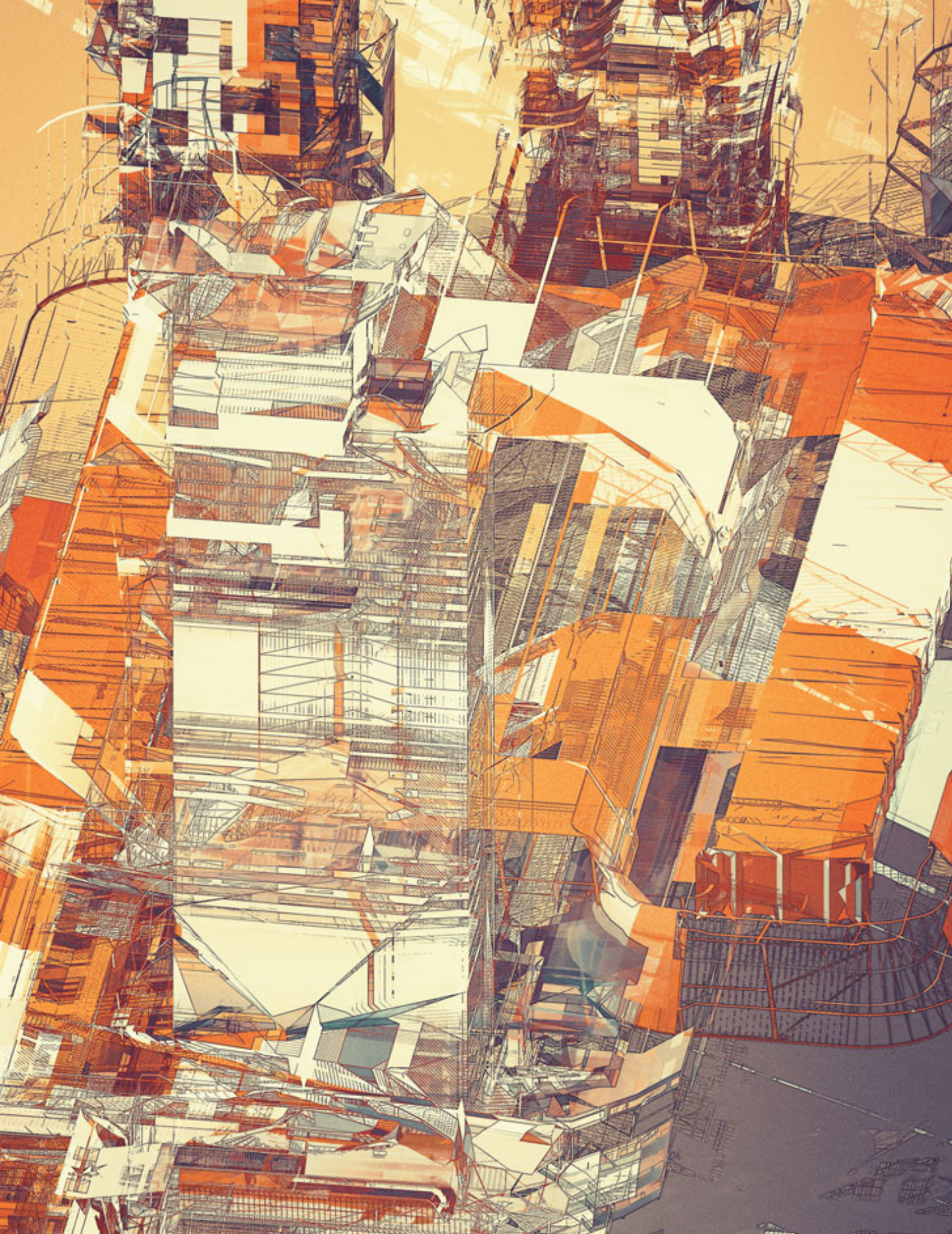








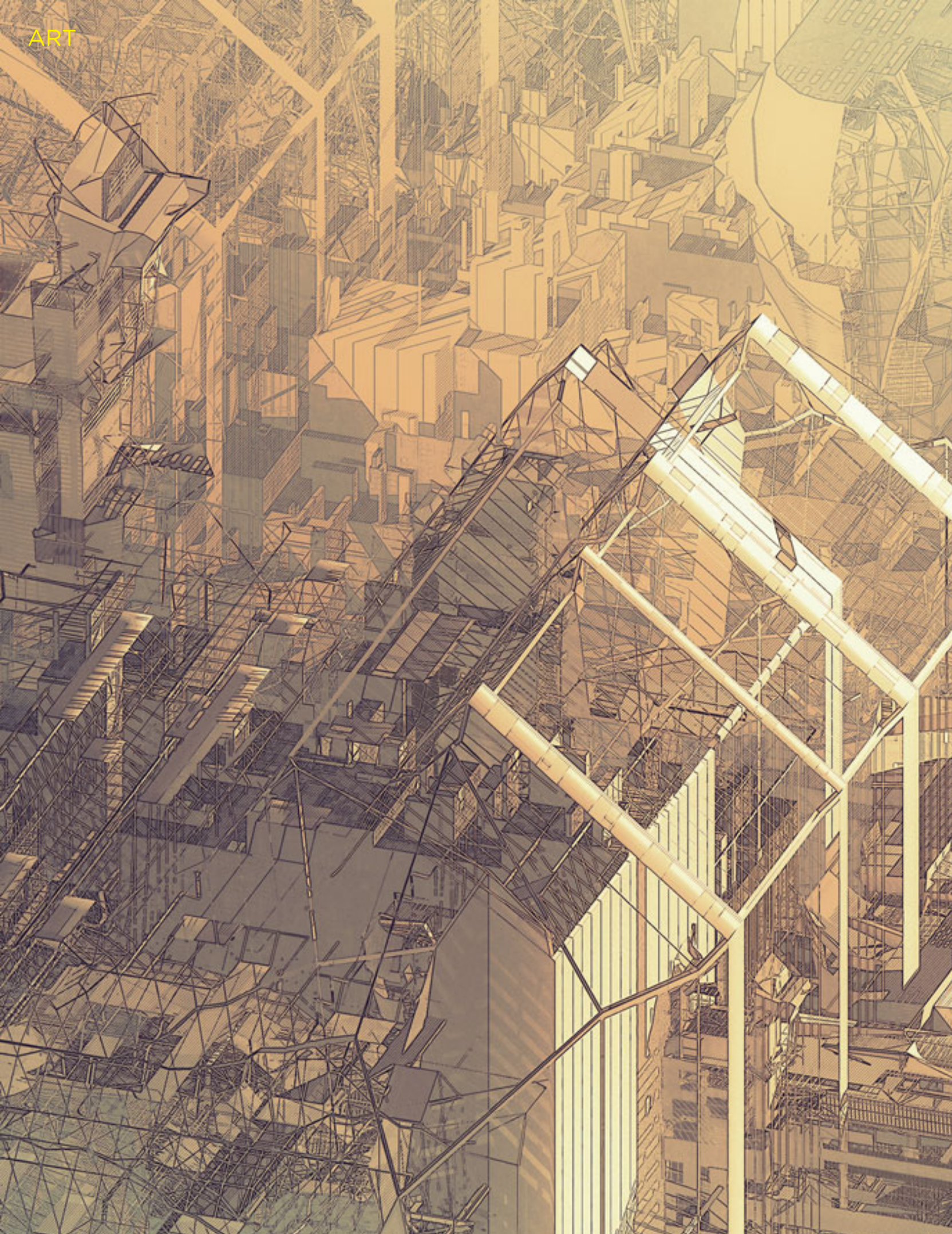


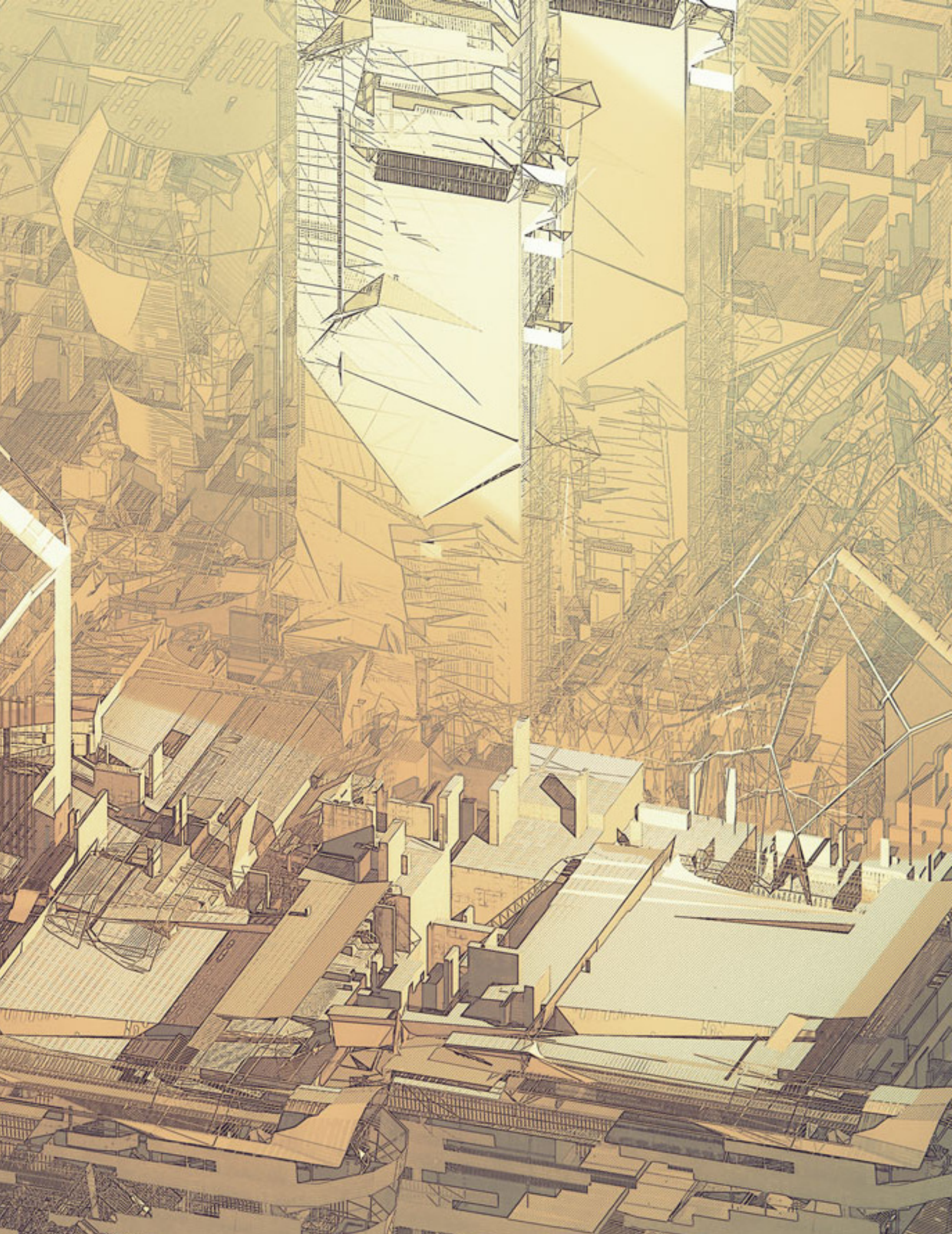


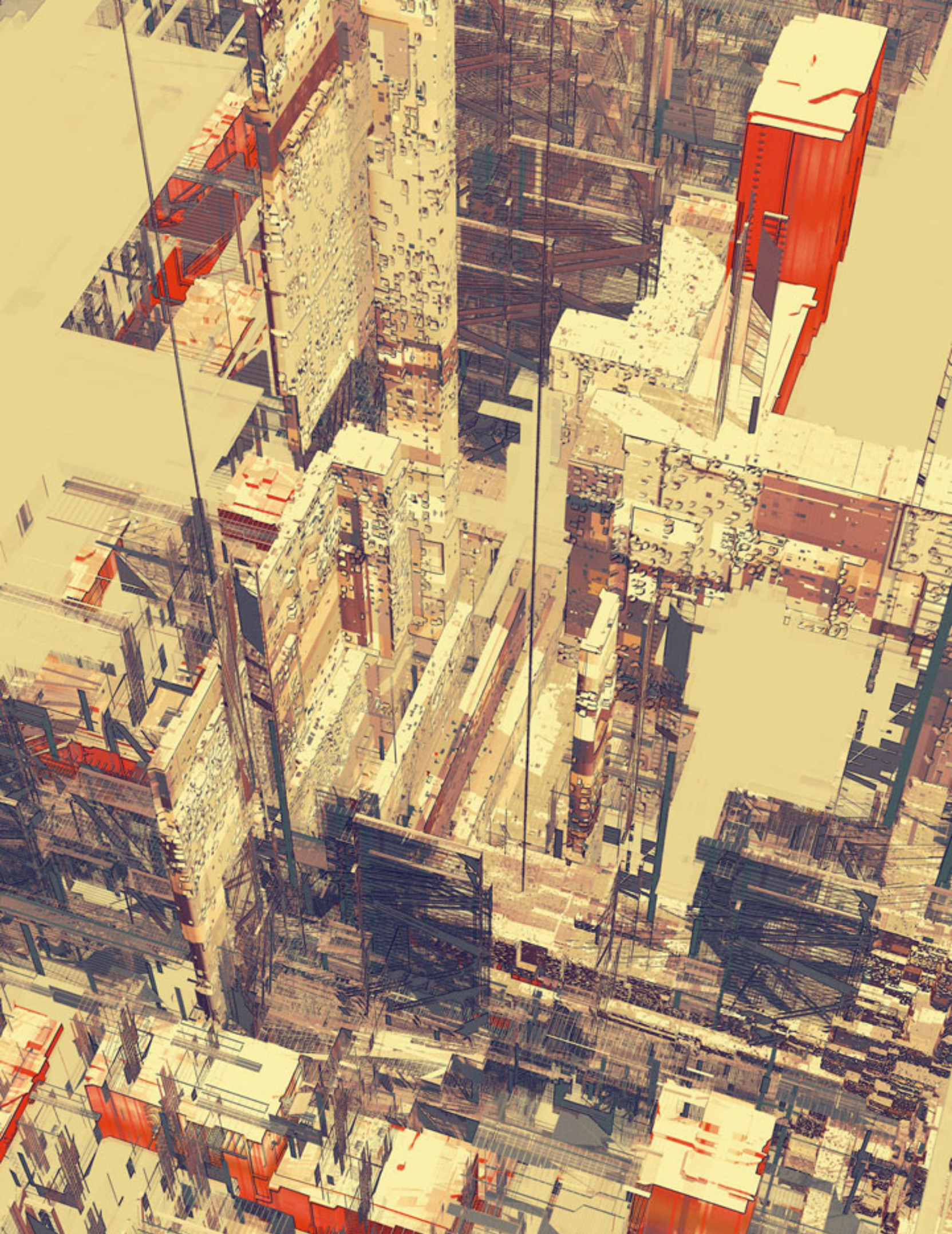












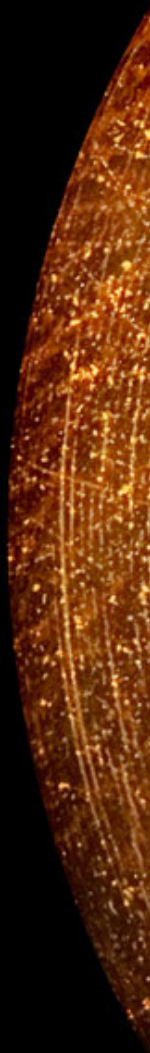


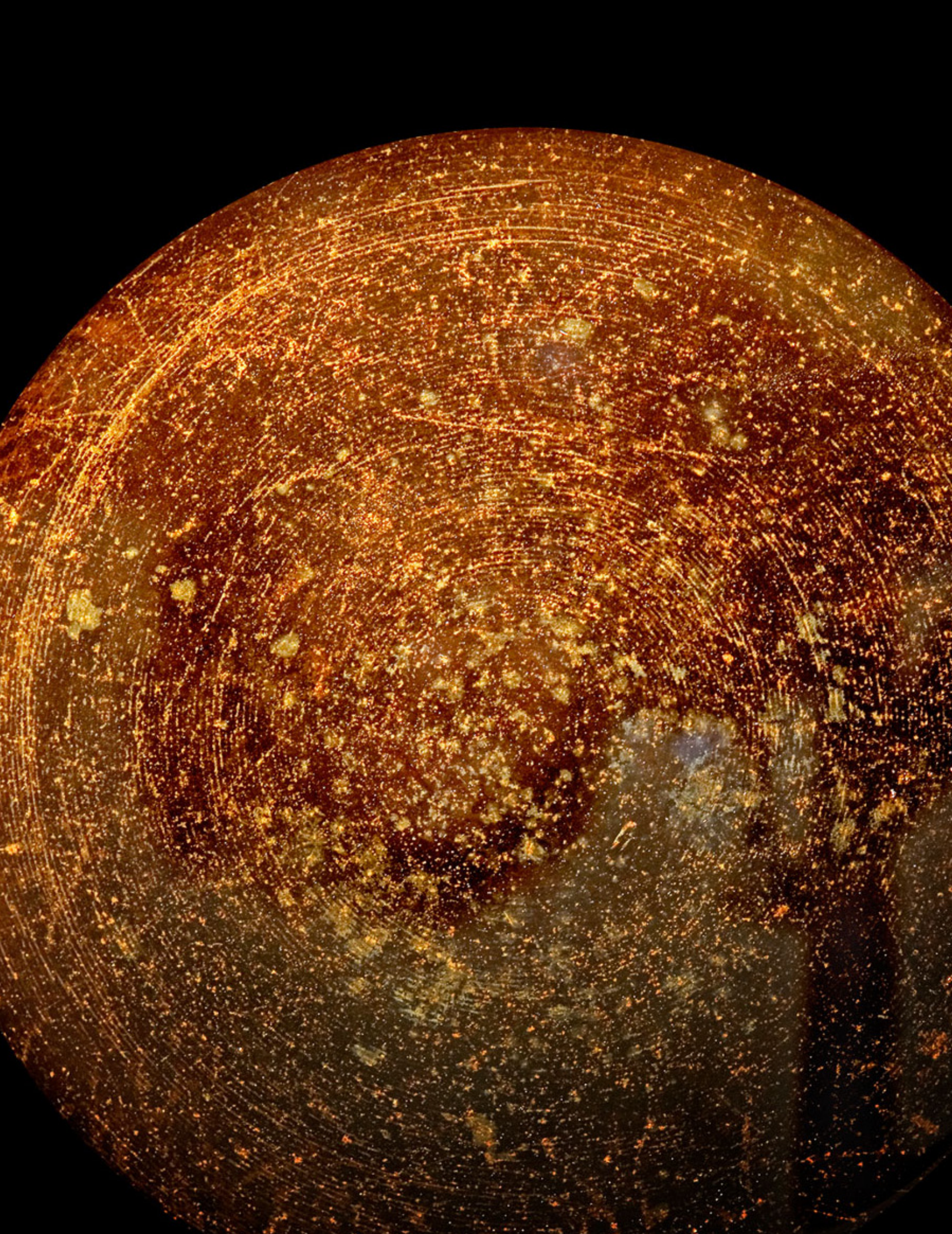
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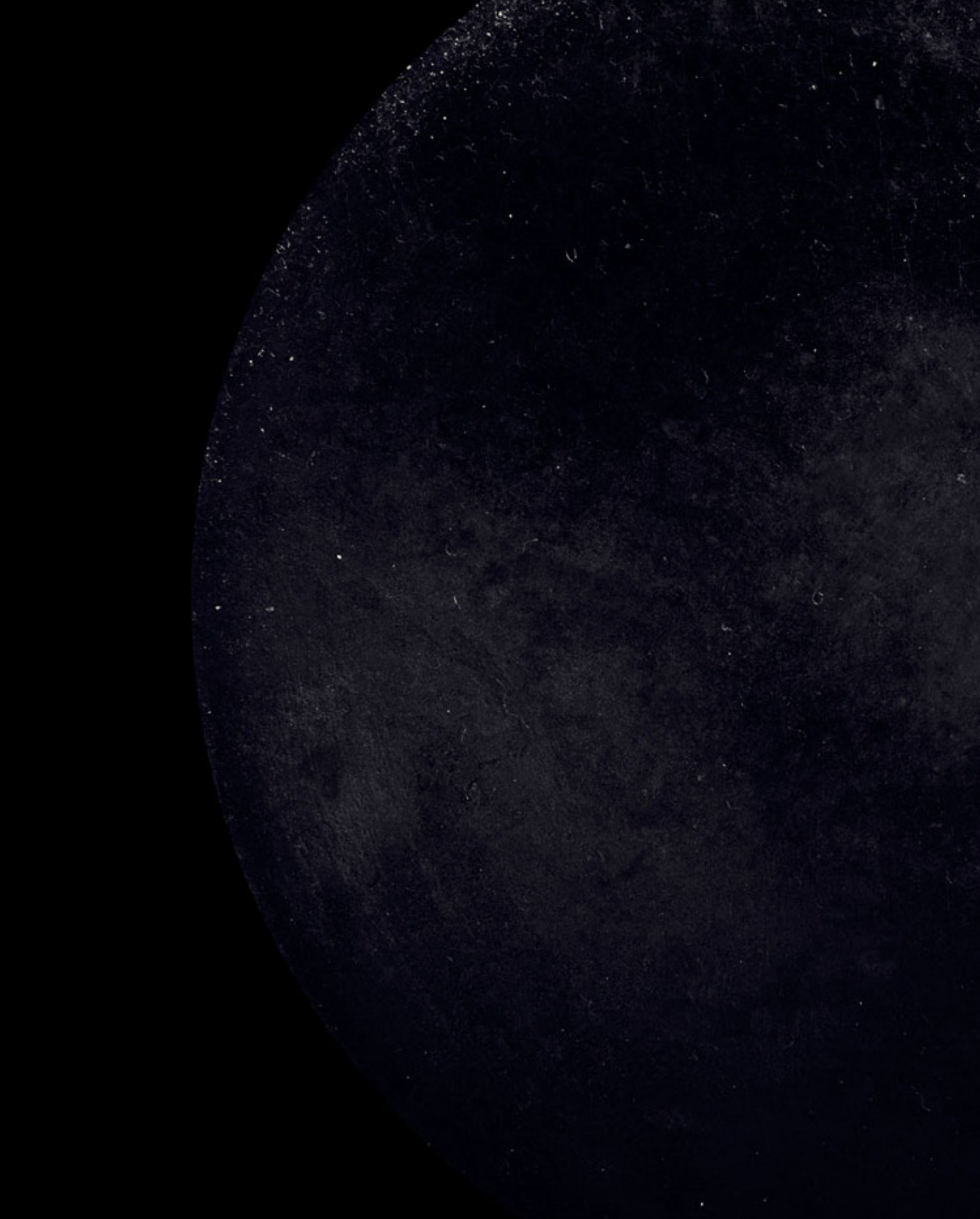
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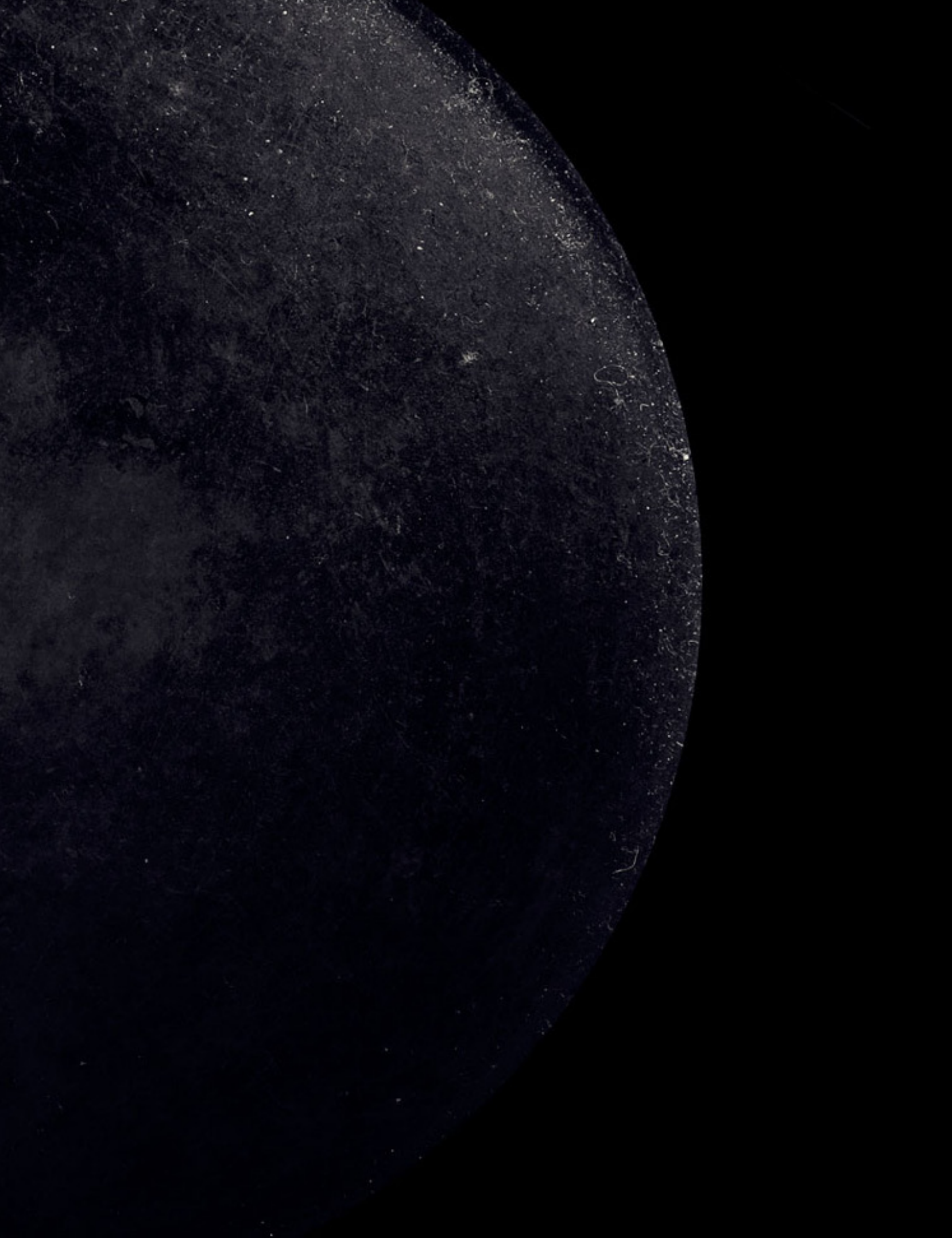


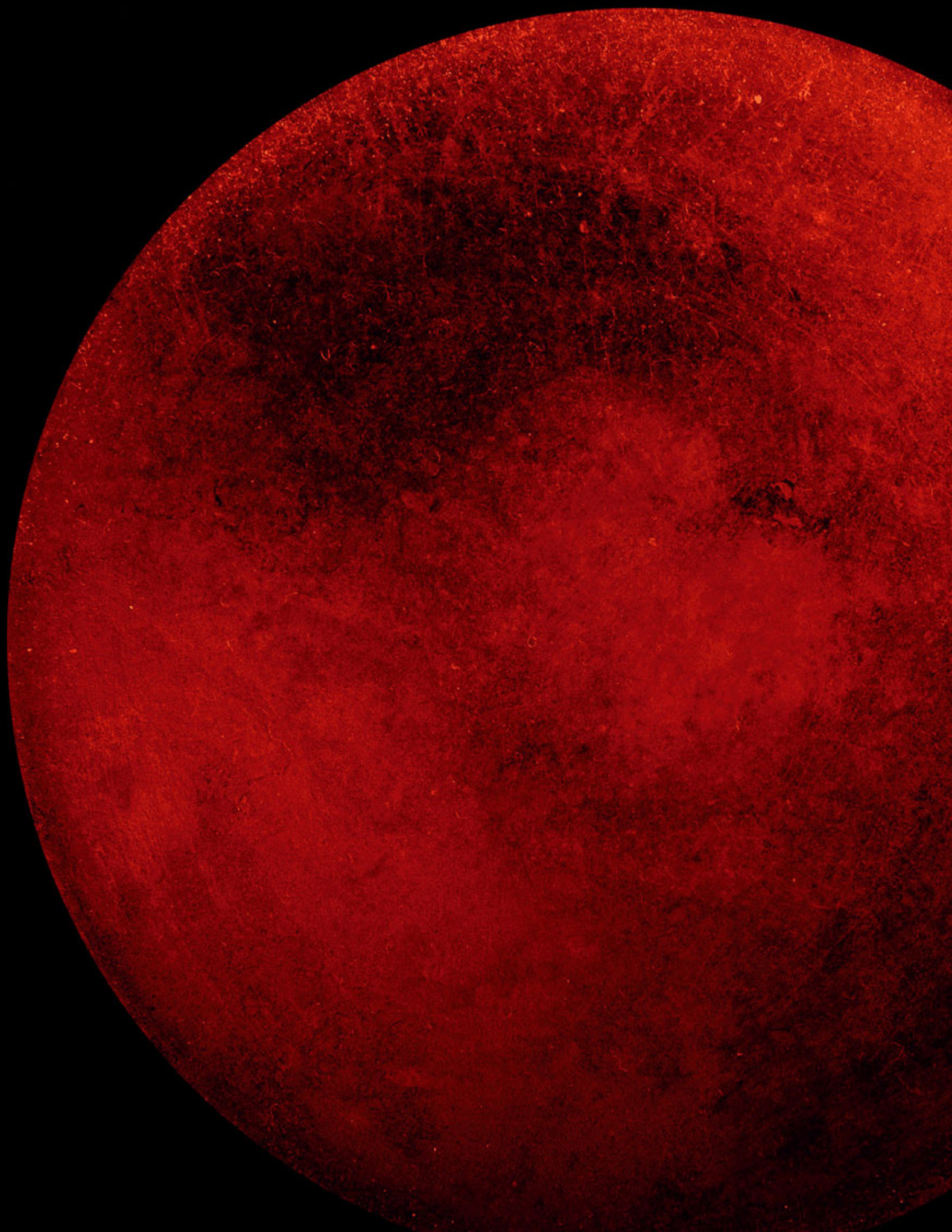




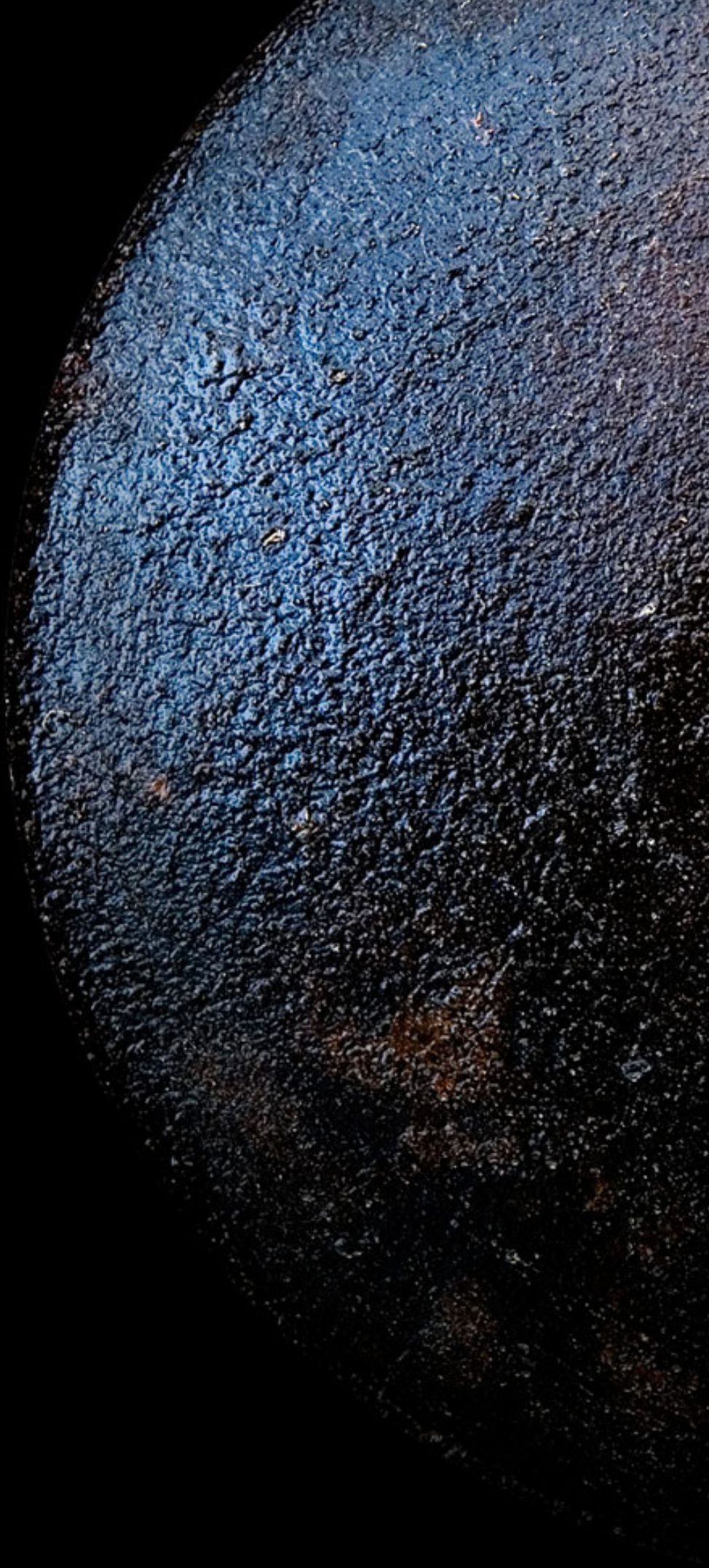




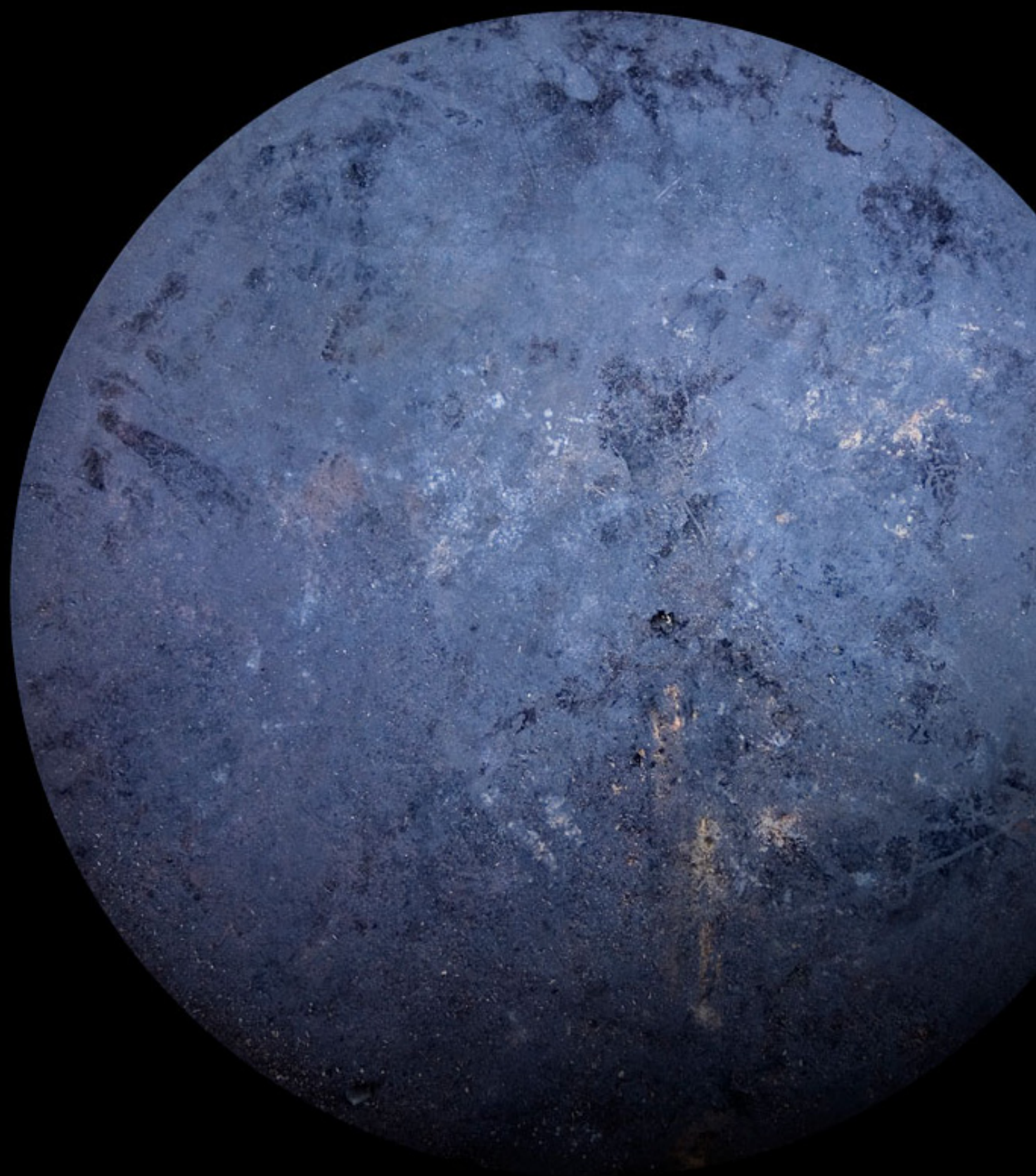




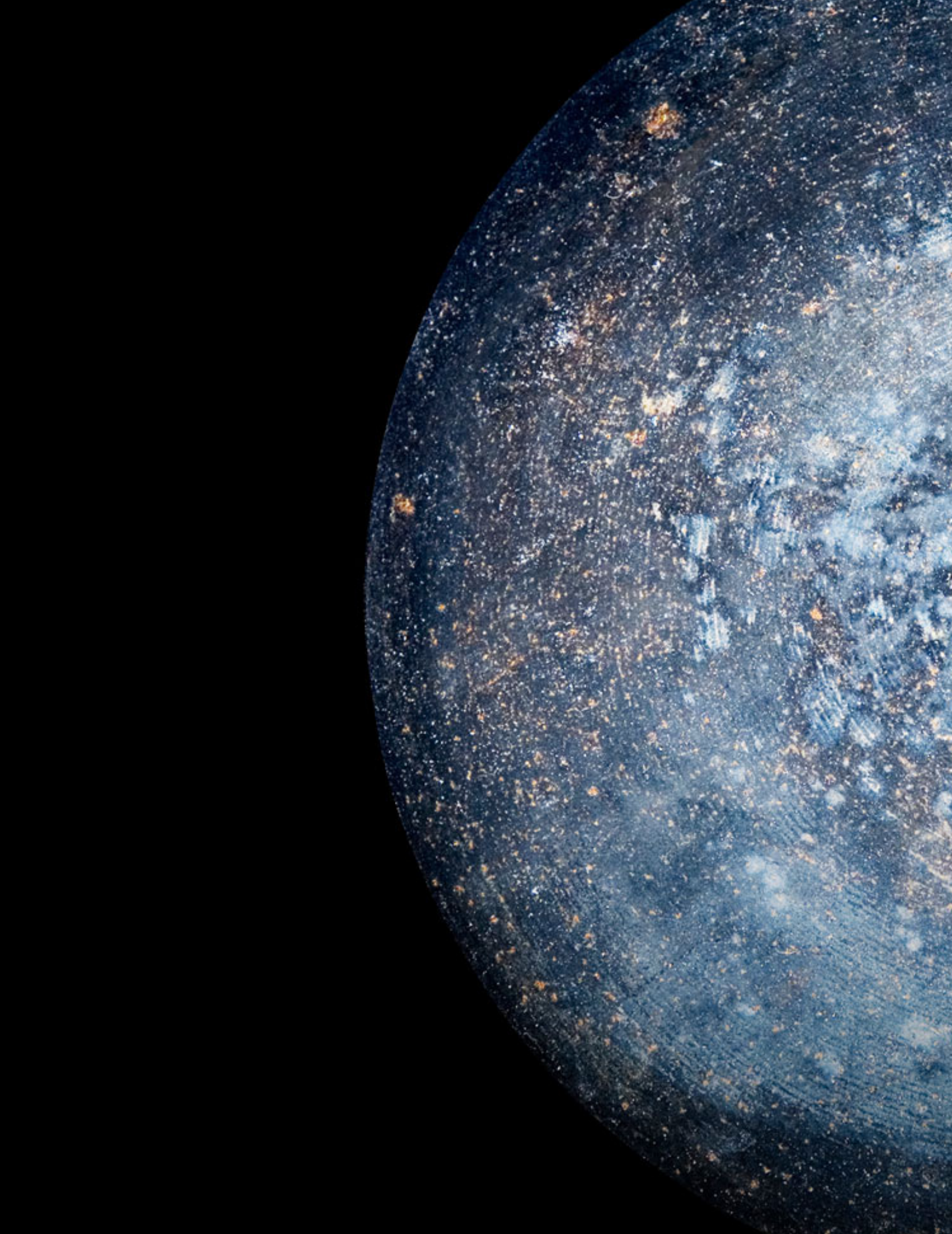














ART

LOST

PHOTOGRAPHY KEVIN HAUGEN (KEVINHAUGEN.COM)







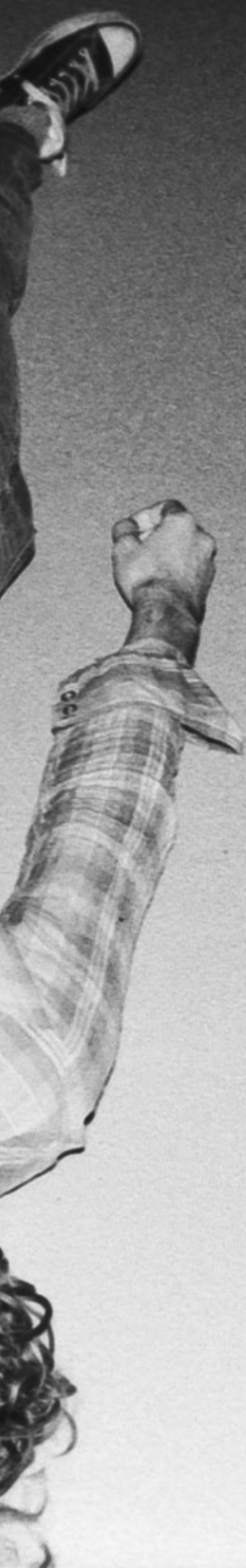




































STYLE



AT MY HEELS BY
JESSE LEITINEN



THE AUTUMN BURN
BY ANDREA JANKOVIC



LEAVE NO TRACE
BY ANDREA OLIVO



LES HOMMES &
LES FEMMES BY
MARC HUTH

STYLE

AT MY HEELS

PHOTOGRAPHY JESSE LEITINEN (LAITINENPHOTOGRAPHY.BLOGSPOT.COM)







(Left)
Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**

(Above)
Dress **Acne**



(Left)
Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**

(Right)
Leather jacket **Vintage** Dress **Vintage**





(Above)
Dress **Acne**

(Right)
Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**







Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**





Both dresses **Vintage**



(Above)
Dress **Acne**

(Right)
Coat **Acne**







(Above)
Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**

(Right)
Dress **Vintage**



(Above)
Coat **Acne** Dress **Vintage**

(Right)
Leather jacket **Vintage** Dress **Vintage**





The autumn burn

PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREA JANKOVIC (ANDREAJANKOVIC.BLOGSPOT.COM)

SWIMWEAR THE VINTAGE COLLECTION BY WE ARE HANDSOME (WEAREHANDSOME.COM)

MAKE-UP JESSICA REILLY

HAIR KATYA COX

STYLIST ASHLEIGH KELLEY

MODEL KEELY (VIVIEN'S)



One piece **The Hunter** by **We Are Hand-
some** Head piece **Paula Kyle Walden**



Zipsuit **The Diver** by
We Are Handsome



EXIT



One piece **The Hunter**
by **We Are Handsome**



Coat **Atomic Martini** Leggings **The Anchorage** by **We Are Handsome**
Shoes **Jock Fairweather**









Mini dress **The Garden**
by **We Are Handsome**



One piece **The Hunter**
by **We Are Handsome**







Coat **Atomic Martini Bikini The**
Showman by We Are Handsome



3490752

TELEPHONE



ENTRY

STYLE

LEAVE NO TRACE

PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREA OLIVO (ANDREAOLIVO.COM)



Dress **Pinko** Bracelet **Paola**
Frani Shoes **Casadei**



Sleeveless Shirt **Jean Paul Gaultier** Bracelet **Bee Queen**











Top **Twenty8Twelve** Skirt
Pollini Belt **Lorella Signori-**
no for Love Sex Money
 Bracelet **Frankie Morello**
 Boots **Narciso Rodriguez**

IPPODROMO DEL GALOPPO



Top **Twenty8Twelve** Skirt **Pollini** Belt **Lorella Signorino** for **Love**
Sex Money Bracelet **Frankie Morello** Boots **Nárciso Rodríguez**







Top **Twenty8Twelve** Skirt **Pollini** Belt **Lorella Signorino** for Love
Sex Money Bracelet **Frankie Morello** Boots **Narciso Rodriguez**



Shirt **Gianfranco Ferré** Skirt **Valentino** Shoes **Marni**



STYLE





Coat **Alberta Ferretti** Shirt **Angelo Fren-**
zos Tights **Calzedonia** Boots **Casadei**



(Left) Dress **Pinko** Braclet **Paola Frani** Sunglasses **Dior** Shoes **Casadei**



(Above) Sleeveless Shirt **Jean Paul Gaultier** Bracelet **Bee Queen** Boots **Giuseppe Zanotti Design**

LES HOMMES & LES FEMMES

PHOTOGRAPHER & POST-PRODUCTION MARC HUTH (MARC-HUTH.COM)
PHOTO ASSISTANT KENNETH SCHULTZE-PETZOLD & MARTIN E. LANDSMANN
MODEL TOBIAS LISIUS (SEEDS), JAN BURCHARD & DEVID GUALANDRIS
STYLING / MAKE-UP & HAIR MANUELA MARIA REUT
STYLING ASSISTANT TOMASZ BULIK





(Centre)
Shirt **Carhartt** Bow-tie **Private** Jacket
Don't Shoot The Messengers Trousers
Vladimir Karaleev



Coat **Juliaanben** Trousers
Juliaandben Shoes **Vladimir**
Karaleev Bag **Freitag**





Hat **Kiss by Fiona Bennett**
Collar **Starstyling** Shirt **Esther**
Perband Jacket **Vladimir Kara-**
leev Coat **Hien Le** Scarf **Kiss by**
Fiona Bennett Gloves **Private**









Collar **Starstyling** Shirt **Starstyling** Jacket
Holland Esquire Trousers **Private** Watch
Rainer Brand Shoes **Floris van Bommel**



Shirt **Holland Esquire** T-shirt **Starstyling**
Bow-tie **Private** Jacket **Hien Le**

Shirt **Carhartt**
Bow-tie **H&M by**
Lanvin Sweater
Starstyling







Hat **Kiss by Fiona Bennett** Shirt **Carhartt**
T-shirt **Don't Shoot The Messengers**
Cardigan **Weekday** Coat **Holland Esquire**
Vest **Vladimir Karaleev** Laptop case **Lap á**
Porter Trousers **Hien Le** Shoes **Emu**





Collar **Starstyling** Shirt **Starstyling**
Jacket **Holland Esquire**



(Left)
Shirt **Holland Esquire** T-Shirt **Starstyling** Bow-tie **Private** Jacket
Holland Esquire Shorts **Esther Perbandt** Stockings **Starstyling**





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