

ink

THE BRING IT HOME ISSUE
VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 4

FEATURED ARTISTS: MAX
RUNKO & JOHN STAVAS

STREET BRANDS

DEHUMANIZING HUMANS

I STILL LOVE H.E.R.

TRAUMA MOON



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Every issue we put out we always write about how fantastic Richmond is for its diverse art and culture; however, Richmond is a big city and maybe we are spreading ourselves a little thin. That is why we are calling this issue the "Bring It Home" edition, because we are surrounded by waves and waves of talent right here on our own campuses, both Monroe Park and MCV. We have hidden gems right here that are dying to be discovered and I want them to be brought to light for all to see. In this issue you will see the Drag Queens of VCU, the independent street brands such as Chilalay and Rec League, local band Headless Mantis and the residents and curators of Space.88, Maxwell Runko and John Stavas. You will also read the personal story of our very own Morgan White and his experience being hit by a drunk driver. Finally, we have

the return of Word on the Street and the beautiful fashion editorial photographed by Sarah Clarken to wrap up our last issue of the semester. Be sure to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram and also continue to check out www.inkmagazinevcu.com for more stories that will continue to be updated all summer long. I hope you all enjoy reading this magazine as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

Sincerely,
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WORD *on the* STREET



What's your favorite class?

Right now my favorite class is the developmental psych class but I like my human spirituality and philosophy class, just cause it's a neat perspective on the world that I learned from there.

What's the most interesting thing you've learned from your philosophy class?

That things aren't black and white, I guess, you know? There's always many sides to situations and different perspectives. There's no one answer to things.

Thinking back to a year ago, what's some advice you would give to yourself?

Oh boy, I would give a lot advice. I would say chill out, things aren't going to be as terrible as you make them out to be. Try new things, and I don't know, have fun with life I guess.

— Francisco Abate, psychology, sophomore



Are you positive you want to be a business major?

It's actually funny that you ask that because I'm not 100 percent sure right now. I got into the business school which I thought was cool but the more I see business the less I like it because I want to do more social work, more charitable things and business is the opposite roam and it's more like, not corrupt, but selfish and greedy and I don't think I would be that way, but at some point I would almost have to be, to succeed, and to be able to get the money to do good things with and I'm not completely comfortable with that.

What kind of social work do you want to do?

My family does a lot of charity work in Afghanistan and I grew up around that. I really enjoyed that because my family is from Afghanistan and it's in such poor shape right now that I want to make a difference; especially with the women and children because they're the most screwed right now.

— Iman Mourtaza, business, freshman



What's an instance that made you realize you wanted to pursue health administration?

Probably when I realized I would rather be at my job than anything else.

Can you give me an example of what makes you enjoy working at a retirement home?

It's about the connections you make here and the stories you hear of their past. There's so many characters here.

What kind of characters?

Well we have a retired Broadway star, the person who brought NASCAR to the east coast, many teachers, the owner of the cookie company who makes Oreos. You just never know what a person did before or who they really are.

— Tyler Alexander, health administration, sophomore

WORD

on the

STREET



What brought you to VCU in the first place?

I applied to a handful of schools and VCU was the only that stood out to me that I got into and it kind of happened that I wasn't super happy that I was going to go to VCU but once I got here, then I liked it a lot more and am definitely glad I went here then some of the other places I had thought of before.

What brought you to like the school and Richmond as a whole?

Well originally I had never lived in a city before so I didn't think I would like that because I normally like more open spaces and I don't like to be around a whole lot of people all the time but then once I got here, I found out how much stuff there was to do and that there's always somewhere to go.

What's some of your biggest inspirations or what motivates you?

It sounds very cliché but one thing that motivates me is the idea that I can have some sort of, like, substantial impact on someone's life and so it doesn't really matter to me if its large or small scale but of course, I would prefer it to be on a large scale but I would just like improve peoples lives in some way.

So how do you feel like you would do that?

Mainly I think it comes down to changes in systemic practices in the U.S. but there are a whole lot of options out there, I just haven't figured it out.

What made you realize that was what motivated you?

I think people are more often a product of their environment and systems and situations they find themselves in, rather than based on their individual merit, worth, or natural ability because I think someone's nurture is more important than their nature and it affects you in a whole lot more and so I look at the world in a way that I see I can do most good is by enabling the government to empower people and to solve for the cumulative inequalities that we have as a society. So like there's a whole lot of different ways that it can be done so that's my end goal.

If you don't want to work with the government as a political science and history major, what do you want to do?

You know like, there are so many things out there that I don't know about. I'd like to work with a non-profit and I'm interested in development in other countries because I think that a lot of that is done incorrectly so I really don't know, I don't have a fully concrete idea of what I want to do with my future but I'd like to finish college and take some time to actually figure out what I want to do with the knowledge that I've gained.

— James Taylor, History & Political Science, junior



Ideally you want to work with cars but doing specifically what?

Well since it's 2014, cars have so many electronic systems in them that it's not so much the mechanic with nuts and bolts, it's more of a computer system. So the computer systems in the car that make it work the way it does, is interesting, and I want to be a part of that.

What kind of counseling would you like to do?

I think I'll probably do counseling for ages of sixth to 12th grade because that span of life is so hard for most kids so I would do that and probably family counseling. Kids grow up to be adults, so if you get it together then, then when they're adults they'll have better control.

What was your favorite part about growing up?

My favorite part would have to be not paying the bills.

What are some of your favorite memories from growing up?

I guess I was kind of grown by now but not exactly, I was in between of being a junior and senior in high school and I went to a governors school for dance.

Where was it?

At Radford university and I was there for a month over the summer in 2010.

What kind of dance do you do?

I do all types of dance. Pretty much anything you can sing along to that you can dance to.

What do you get out of it?

It's kind of a release for me. I've been dancing since I was 10 so I've done ballet, jazz, tap, modern, lyrical, hip-hop, all of that stuff. I do everything. I just do it for fun. I don't like it when it becomes a job or when you have to produce a result for a show.

— Michael Hairston, Info Systems, junior

TOP 5 MOST ANTICIPATED MOVIES OF 2014



Godzilla (May 16)

Based on the explosive trailer alone, this reboot of the classic Japanese tale looks promising to say the least. Starring “Breaking Bad’s” Bryan Cranston and built on a budget of \$160 million, it’s hard to imagine “Godzilla” not destroying box office records this summer.



22 Jump Street (June 13)

What’s not to be excited about for a sequel to the crowd favorite “21 Jump Street?” Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum return to their hilarious buddy-cop roles teaming up to fight crime once again... Only this time, they’re in college.



Guardians of the Galaxy (August 1)

Marvel, the powerhouse comic book studio, has pieced together another assured blockbuster, “Guardians of the Galaxy.” With a colossal cast including huge names like Bradley Cooper, Vin Diesel, and Zoe Saldana, this misfit-superhero story is a curious turn for Marvel. It’s not often we see a genetically engineered raccoon who’s an expert marksman.



Interstellar (November 7)

Coming off of two enormous hits (“Inception” and “The Dark Knight Rises”), director Christopher Nolan is returning in fine form with Interstellar. Headlining A-list stars such as Matthew McConaughey and Anne Hathaway, this tale about a group of scientists traveling through a wormhole is sure to take some interesting twists and turns.



The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (May 2)

Your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man is back in action ladies and gentlemen. In this second installment to the rebooted “Spider-Man” trilogy, the classic superhero faces new challenges about his father’s past and two different villains: Electro and Rhino. It will be interesting to see how Peter Parker handles these encounters.

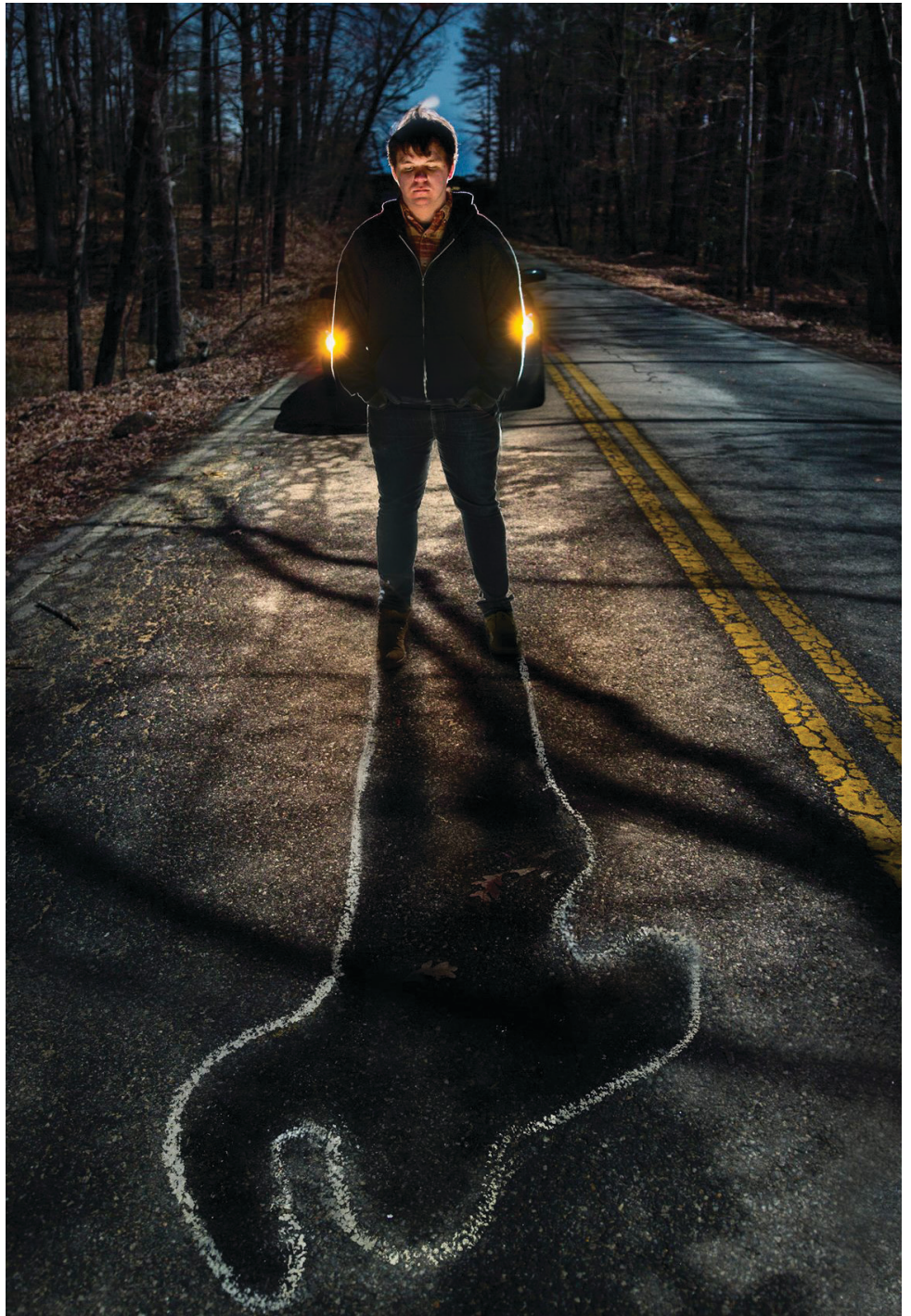
TRAUMA MOON

The years I spent with the girl I thought I'd marry only to find our Armageddon hidden in our hatred for each other, the moment that I almost didn't say goodbye to my grandmother while she was on her death bed, the time I believed in "The Catcher in the Rye" more than I believed in myself — I am the sum total of all of my previous actions. Of course it's more complicated than that; the list should be pages long. I could even add in the time I ran a half marathon to prove to myself that I wasn't worthless or the summer I spent with another man's girlfriend. Most recently, though, I am the guy who was hit by a drunk driver on Cary while crossing the street against the signal, who rolled onto the car before being flung into the air while my body flipped repeatedly before landing on the right side of my skull 40 feet away. It was a Friday night.

I had met the guy who hit me earlier in the night at the party I was at. He was the DJ, the friend of mine I went there with introduced me and I shook his hand. I drank a few beers. The rest of the night was a blur. I saw two headlights and though I was dreaming. The next day I woke up in the ICU surrounded by family. A lung contusion, liver laceration, skull fracture, concussion, as well as having my left knee and arm injured painfully but luckily not enough to break either. It was December, the 72nd anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Coming out of the hospital a day and a half later I had trouble finding words. If I was in a conversation for more than ten minutes I'd need a nap. I realized the extent to which people reply when someone has something terrible happen to them. Facebook must have had at least a hundred people commenting on the matter. People I had only talked to three times at work cried because they thought I was going to die and their lives were momentarily ruined because something bad was happening somewhere nearby. Friends shed their condolences with things like, "I'm really glad you're still alive."

If you want to know the truth though, it's a constant struggle. It wasn't right after that screwed me up the most, it's later on when it hit hardest. Sure everything was a haze and I could barely lift my left arm or walk because of my left knee. It's coming back to it though when you start to realize what you have to deal with. There's guilt in my bones for stepping in front of a man's car that happened to be drunk. I don't know the full extent of the moment. Most parts of my memory from around that time are gone. His insurance company is trying to pin the fault to me. I feel guilty for being alive when Meg Menzies, the wife of a police officer, was killed while running in



the morning by a drunk driver right outside of Richmond. She had three kids. What do I have to lose? I'd trade places.

It's been about three months now. I passed by the intersection where it happened at Cary and Laurel today. The sunlight was reflecting off of the cars. There were buds at the end of the branches on the trees next to the parking garage. Spring's not too far off, it still may have been the coldest day of the year though. I didn't have a flashback when I crossed the

street this time. I just wanted to know where my face hit the asphalt. Perhaps past the intersection, maybe it was before it. I don't want to do harm to anyone, not even the driver. I just want to live. The world kept spinning, those in places far worse than mine kept suffering, cars kept passing by, and I kept walking. It's a burden to deal with. It's my burden to deal with.

STORY BY MORGAN WHITE
PHOTO BY CASEY LYNCH



GETTING THROUGH YOUR 20S

When I feel depressed, discouraged and like I'm the only one who cares about the things I do, I'd rather go someplace where like-minded and supportive souls collect than be sad in my room alone. So I found myself at my favorite museum in Richmond, surrounded by the achievements of other people who've once felt the way I have, encouraging me to go on. It's a timeless lesson for those of us in the odyssey of our 20s to learn how to navigate through this time alone.

For me, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts ended up being my choice of refuge. I celebrated my seven-month relationship with it on Valentine's Day. I've cried, laughed, worked, dined, drank and been inspired there. Their Best Café is actually the best café. Glass walls encase flocks of stylish intellectuals and conversationalists, with a koi pond bordering the outdoor sitting area. While offering me a sanctuary, I thought of the word "sonder."

According to The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, *sonder* (n.) is "the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid

and complex as your own — populated with their own ambitions, friends, routines, worries and inherited craziness — an epic story that continues invisibly around you like an anthill sprawling deep underground, with elaborate passageways to thousands of other lives that you'll never know existed, in which you might appear only once, as an extra sipping coffee in the background, as a blur of traffic passing on the highway, as a lighted window at dusk."

After some contemplation, I sought after the knowledge of how other people our age find refuge and the way they independently experience lessons and comfort in life.

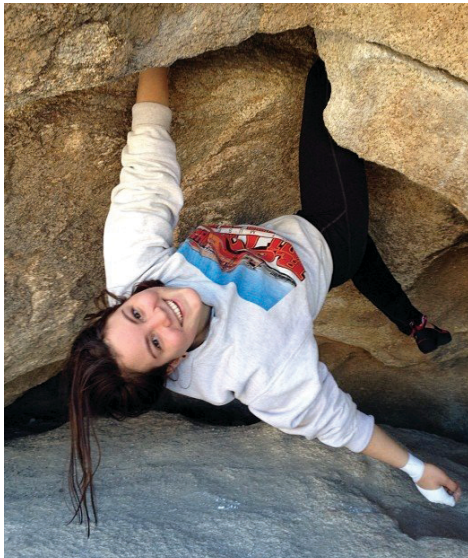
Creative advertising major Kelsey Gesbeck is an almost-super senior who's roamed curiously and bloomed at her own pace while deciding on a major to study. She gave Ink some insight on how to create a map for yourself when you feel lost.

"Fake it 'til you make it," Gesbeck said. "You have to manifest the person you want to be today and actively pursue your future ideal self, and one day you'll catch up to that future

self. You have to flirt with the person you want to become, even if you have no idea what that exactly is at the moment. It's that kind of mentality that keeps me going."

When asked about her method of escape during times of uncertainty, Gesbeck said, "I'll go for a bike ride, or go grocery shopping and you know, those are distracting but can also be monotonous. What really grounds me is people-watching by myself, which can sound a little oxymoronic. When you're people-watching alone, you don't have a filter to what you see and aren't influenced by anyone else's opinions. Seeing other people's lives can reveal your own, because sometimes you see that we're not so different from each other." Like the word *sonder*, she suggests that when you connect to the buzz of other people, you can connect to yourself.

Fellow artist Rachel Ludwig, a senior sculpture and extended media major exemplified the concept of *sonder* when her and colleague Alex Curley set out on an adventure to Iceland this past summer to pursue a col-



laborative project together. They launched a website with a textbox that allowed people to enter anything they wanted to say – thoughts, words, poems, secrets – and submit it anonymously. The duo then flew to Iceland where they ventured to Vik Beach, Vatnajökul Glacier, Skogafoss and other various locations, and enacted a performance piece by reading anonymous submissions and releasing them out loud.

“I had a sense of detached empathy while reading other people’s words out loud,” Ludwig said. “The words that were going through my body weren’t mine, yet there were sounds that I felt when I released them. Being able to do that for others allowed me to experience their feelings similarly for myself. We played with the idea of sound and language and how physical they are when it’s spoken ... there’s something about the difference between lan-

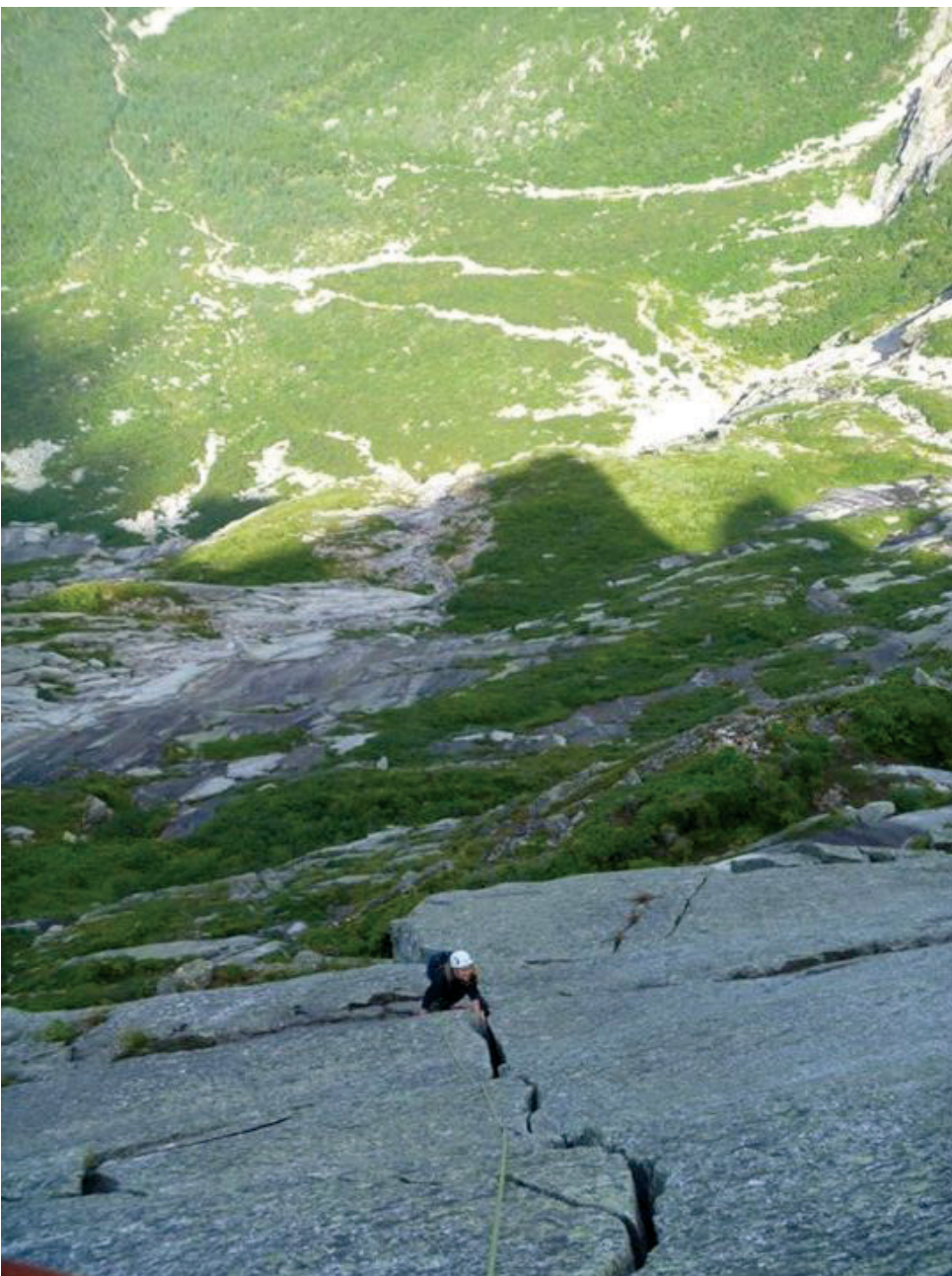
guage that’s within you versus when you express it in the world.”

Art is a refuge for the intangible to express itself physically unto the world. On the subject of creating something for you versus creating to fulfill the need to share and relate, Ludwig said, “It’s awesome when people look at work I’ve done and have a new perspective on something other than my own, it’s a cool feeling. But I’m very experimental with what I do, and I’m okay making things that people don’t understand, as long as they ask questions and find it interesting. I don’t think art should be solved, and it should answer some questions, but ultimately ask more than they answer. It’s a liberating space. We can make creative outlets for ourselves but it doesn’t always have to be for the public — you can also do things for yourself without showing anyone and it can still liberating.”

For the creative mind, producing something can fill the void that the company of others cannot. And most often times, we find that we don’t always have to relate to others to figure out our direction. The creative mind births mental expression as well as creative expression in the physical sense. Dancers, actors, and even athletes are akin in this sense.

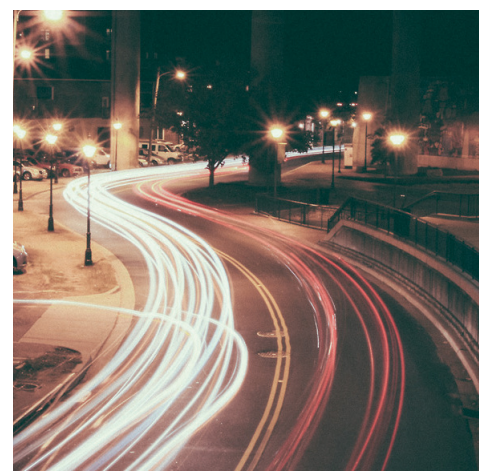
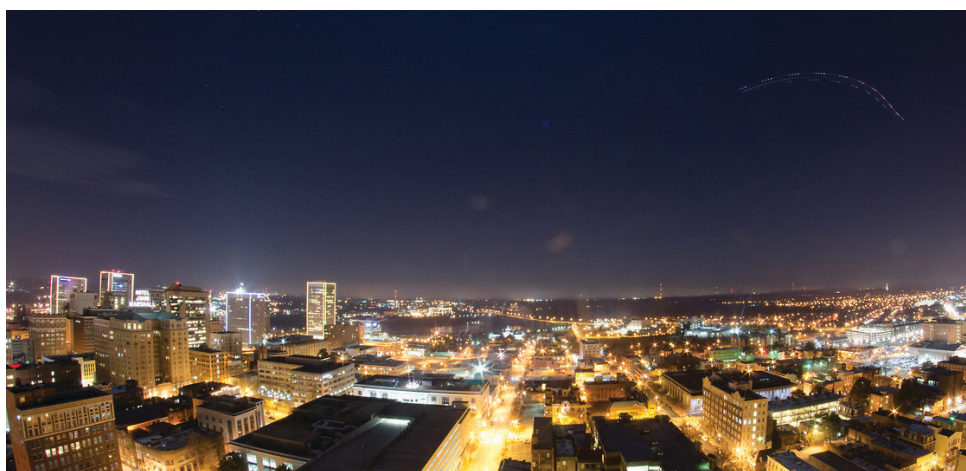
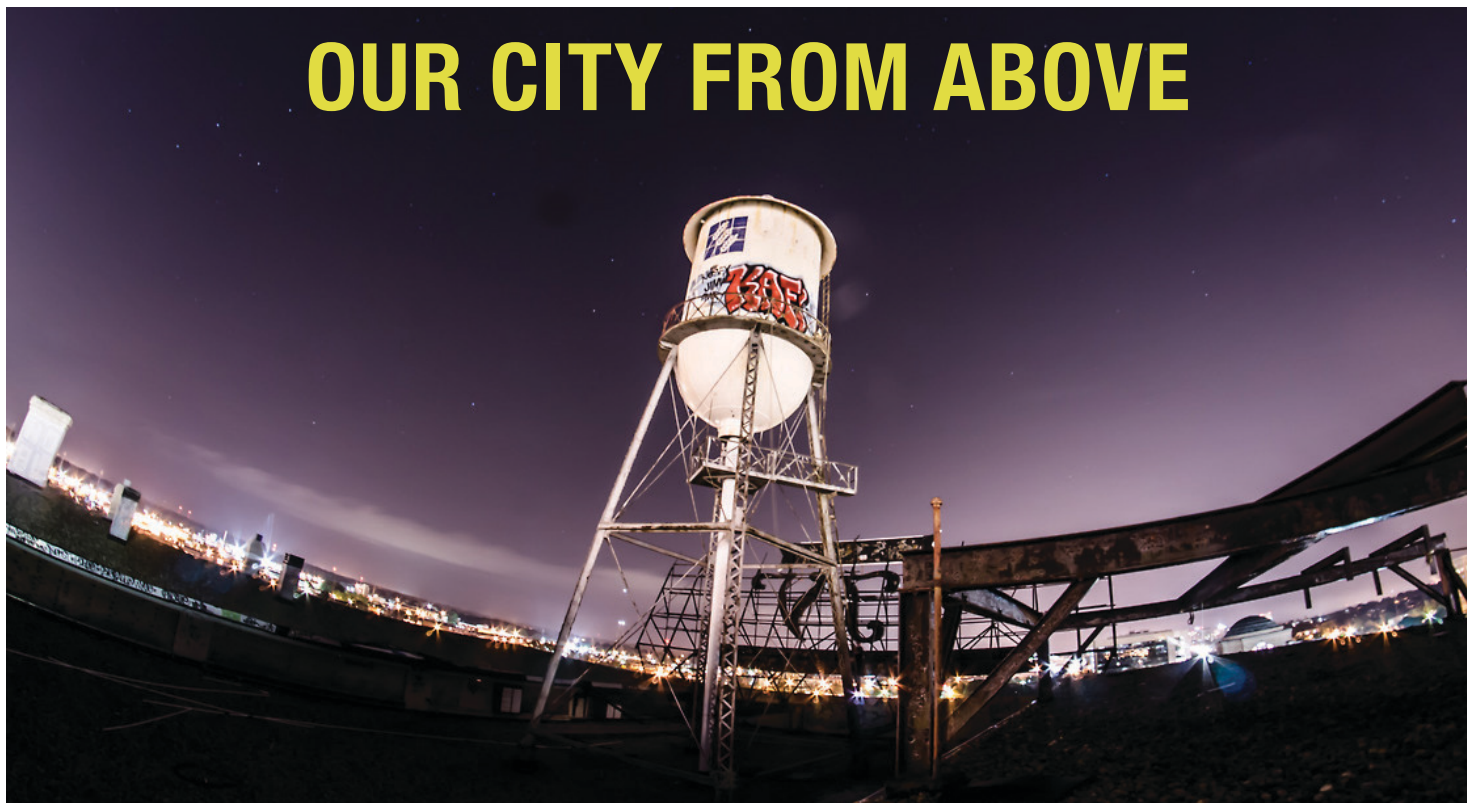
One fellow student studying mass communications has been a rock climber for the past year and a half. For someone who just recently started climbing, Rachel Harman began overcoming harder routes at a rapidly advanced rate. “When I was feeling lost one summer with two jobs I hated and felt relationships was hard, I started going to the gym a lot and at the end of every workout I’d do a route or two. People who worked there encouraged me to try something harder and I started coming every day,” Harman said. For her, rock climbing gave insight to strengthen not just her physical skills, but also became an asset for other life skills such as commitment to development and constant growth, and continuing to keep going even after setbacks and failures.

“My destination was to climb better and harder and realized it was about the experience itself,” Harman said. “When you get shut down on a climb, you lose your confidence and it’s a learning opportunity to use it not as a way to dislike yourself but become better. It’s important to deal with the feeling of defeat in life and it’s a big part of climbing.” After pursuing her interests, Rachel caught some opportunities to turn her passion into professions, and now has two jobs she loves that both revolve around rock climbing. Rachel shared a bit of advice as to how to get to where you want to be: “It’s possible if you really love something. Things fell into place for me as I went on, believing most things usually work out.”



STORY BY YOORA LEE
PHOTOS BY RACHEAL HARMAN, ALEX
CURLEY, AND RACHEAL LUDWIG

OUR CITY FROM ABOVE



Out-of-body experiences are mystical, terrifying and powerful. In Richmond, a couple of photographers realized this, and decided to create portraits of our city. Unlike other artists out there, these guys put their lives on the line every time they click their shutters, as they seek out ways to photograph RVA from its tallest buildings, effectively giving us an out-of-body experience with every shot. RVAbove, as this small collective and blog are called, give us a toy-like, vibrant perspective on the city with their use of long-exposure shots, unusual angles, and breathtaking landscape shots. Sure, you've seen VCUarts students prance around Carytown, taking photos of people with their vintage film cameras, but I can guarantee you've never seen shots like these.

STORY BY JOSE D'ALTA
PHOTOS BY REESE KEMPTER



HEADLESS MANTIS

Bands come and go, their names lost to memory and their sounds in the endless abyss of the internet. While most bands would see this as a negative statement, Headless Mantis members see this as something to live by. Cannibalizing their own previous band the Foresters, Headless Mantis is a rebirth of sound for a group of musicians who demand change. Wrought in the bowels of a slimy underbelly, Headless Mantis' music will make you squirm and crawl, but in the good way.

Ink: So who are you guys?

Headless Mantis: We're Headless Mantis, coming to you from Ghost House!

Ink: When did you guys first meet?

HM: When we were young.

Ink: How old?

HM: Devon Hammer: I was like 11 when I met Tim and I was like 14 when I met Jeff, who was friends with my older brother but we just convinced him to play music with us

Ink: What genre do you classify yourselves as?

HM: SLIME.

Ink: Slime?

HM: Slime, like slime-groove-soul. Like sewers and broken things and old folk tales mixed with really weird melodic soulful crooning messes. With the best percussion in the city.

Ink: Alright, slime. So do you have any albums up and coming?

HM: We have some songs we've been working on and Jeff has been playing with us a little bit too. We'll see how that goes but probably pretty well, 'cause damn look at him, that's a fine dude. We've also got a new song for free online at headlessmantis.bandcamp.com and a bunch of

house shows and other venues lined up!

Ink: So are you also known as the Foresters or is that a previous project?

HM: Previous project, this is a completely different sound and it's refreshing, we like it, the drummer from the Foresters created a new group called the Gloom Merchants, it's pretty rad and probably online somewhere.

Ink: So why pick Richmond?

HM: Why pick anywhere? I mean we're not gonna stay in one place, you could go anywhere, but the most viable option in Virginia for making music, meeting people and monetarily speaking, Richmond was the best option, plus, VCU and college kids.

Ink: To finish this up, what is most important to you as a band?

HM: It's (deep pause) three things.

Loading and unloading gear together, writing-slash-practicing together and forgetting that work is work and having fun working without realizing it.

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO BY DANIEL POTES



THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Albert Einstein said, “True art is characterized by an irresistible urge in the creative artist.” For local artist Jack Alden this quote is all-too-true in his day-to-day life. Jack is an extremely talented glass blower who is not a part of the VCU arts department, but instead is a business major. After working under other artists in North Carolina and Florida, Alden decided to come to VCU in an effort to one day open his own shop. When he is not at the business school learning to become an entrepreneur, Alden works out of Planet Zero Art Studio alongside two other glass blowers in a small art space riddled with various glass work ranging from jewelry, various art like a glass tree and an extensive collection of glass paraphernalia. Alden said, “Sometimes the art and jewelry doesn’t always sell, so we sell the bowls and bongos to various tobacco shops around Richmond.” These pieces have such intricate designs that it is difficult to envision anyone actually smoking out of these pieces of art, due to the level of detail that goes into each and every one of them. For example, one of the bongos that Alden had created had what looked like a glass monkey inside the smoke chamber.

One of the qualities that Alden feels sets his shop apart from the others is the fact that everyone he works with are all VCU students. “Most shops will stick to one thing like pipe making shops, spoon production, we are trying to come into a project with an artist’s mindset,” Alden said. “Whatever we are making we have to ask how are we going to make it different, and how are we going to incorporate our skills that we have learned to make new art as opposed to just ‘glass.’”

After VCU Alden hopes to one day open up his own shop, not just for glass blowing, but for all mediums of art. “I want a place where we can have painters, sculptors, and even musicians come together and promote one another’s work through different mediums,” Alden said. A noble dream, and with the business education and his artistic talent, there is no doubt that this dream could definitely become a reality in the near future. For more information on Alden and to see more of his glasswork, go to www.jackaldenglass.com.

STORY AND PHOTO BY CORT OLSEN

featured artists



Stavas, left, and Runko, the apartment owners and the founders of the Space.88 shows.

There's an apartment at 1125 West Grace Street, in Richmond, Va.; in that apartment live two VCU students, Maxwell Runko, a sculpture major, and John Stavas, a film major. These two young men had an inspiring idea drawn from the gallery-going experiences of Richmond's art scene: Why not create a space for the art of their fellow students?

It's something well-known to art students, though not necessarily to the rest of the school community: In a class setting, artists work weeks at a time painstakingly on a single project, only to be able to show it once to their peers in a critique the day it's due. After that, those pieces are left in bedrooms and studios to pile up and be forgotten. In addition, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to get student work put into local gallery spaces in town.

When Runko and Stavas noticed this, they took it upon themselves to create a gallery where student work would be fully appreciated in the setting it was made for, by peers and fellow artists who empathize with the work and admire the effort behind it. They called the gallery Space.88 and housed it in their own apartment on Grace Street.

It seems hard to imagine, but the pair have already had two shows here before, and plan on having another just before this school year ends. Each time, they literally empty the entire apartment, pushing all of their belongings and furniture into one room in the house, and then they block it off. In itself, this is a powerful visual, watching an entire life between two people, with all of its intricacies, be completely removed from a space with no hesi-

tation whatsoever. The space in this way becomes more than just a home, and has a greater hidden purpose exposed as a blank canvas with endless possibilities for its users. According to the owners, the name they gave their gallery itself is indicative of that notion of keeping things personal. Stavas, in explaining the choice of name, said, "Well when we went to other galleries we noticed the names were abstract or crazy or meant something. So for us, we live at 1125 West Grace, so we took 1125, and divided 11 by 25, got .44 from that, then multiplied that by two because there's two of us, and got .88." And in their choice to call it a space rather than a gallery, Runko said the reasoning also relates to the purpose. "We wanted this space to be able to be changed to anything we want or need it to be



A dancer's live performance for a packed house at the first show on Jan. 18

... we didn't want to pigeonhole ourselves by calling it a gallery. It's an art space."

Through social media Stavas and Runko were able to quickly inform their friends everywhere about their plans and the word spread faster and farther than even they anticipated. The event has its own public Facebook page which the duo continuously updates with information regarding submission requirements for work, dates and times for the next upcoming events, and a listing of featured artists for those events. They also post some sneak-peek photos, pictures taken at previous events and the official line-up posters for the events, both of which so far have been designed by the Travis Brothers. This allows friends and interested artists and newcomers a chance to get involved, stay updated, and hopefully spread word of the event themselves to their friends.

It is their hope that with each event, more and more people in the Richmond area and the art community as a whole can see their project and attend. The description on the page reads, "This is a space where gallery

showing, events, and performances will be held, located in Richmond, Va. It's for you. It's for your leisure. Cheers!"

And thus far it would appear that people are attracted to their state of mind and excited to contribute. The first show brought in many of Runko and Stavas' local friends from across Virginia. Since then, their second show has spread its applicant basis not only from other states, but all the way to other countries, with people eager to submit their work from as far away as Switzerland. Much of the artwork sent in is spread out over a wide variety of media, which the two curators highly encourage.

The first show, hosted on January 18, was named abstractly with an online random name-generator tool, "YOU: Stepped on a Great Artist like Civilized Human Beings without Getting Accused," and the second, which took place March 1, was named, "I Observe Myself Observing What I Observe." Applicants are not required to submit pieces that have anything to do with the titles, but between the two shows there was an obvious

change in the atmosphere.

The pair commented during set up of the space that they believed this feeling was not only in thanks to a fresh array of great pieces submitted to each, but from having experienced the whole process of setting this space once before. They seemed very at ease while preparing, which they mentioned differed from the first show, and the result in their opinion was a great show, stronger perhaps than the first, and leads them to believe the next show coming this year will be even better.

It was an amazing experience just to watch them set the space in preparation for the evening with assistance from Runko's twin brother Sam, who also submitted a piece of his own to the show. They do everything possible to make as refined a space as they can for these shows. From setting up their own lighting for the artwork, making pamphlet outlines of the artists displayed as your tour, and measuring the perfect hanging heights for each piece, to retouching the white walls and sweeping the floors, not a hair is out of place. They



"If I May," by Sarah Mattozzi, is a striking photo/paint piece on display in the gallery.

"Barfday," by Nicanor Lotuaco, a sculpture in what was originally Stavas's room.



used pedestals for sculptures, created a space outside on their patio and in the bathroom, making even the most mundane spots in a normal home into a blurred line between daily life and art space. The final, most powerful and yet probably smallest touch was the moment they worked to hang a giant piece of black fabric from one edge of the kitchen to another, completely hiding it from view. No longer was the space anything except for anything they wanted it to be. And within the next few hours, that apartment-turned-showroom hosted nearly a hundred close friends and interested peers circulating over a period of five hours.

This most recent show featured pieces in video and sound, as well as photography – featuring emerging artists like Kyle Thompson – paintings, sculptures and a beautiful live performance on violin by Chanel Hurt, a music

major here at VCU. While this show received many applicants in photography especially, the mix of pieces and layout of the space offered a great variety, with no piece at all like another.

Upon questioning several gallery-goers who attended the evening, some perspective could be gained on the pieces that gained priority in their memories. A portrait of a sour looking, tattoo-decorated middle aged man. A sculpture of a human head with orbs protruding from its mouth. A provocative painting piece covered in the word "Nigga," layered in subtle layers of black paint strokes, so multifaceted you barely notice anything but the texture. A huge photograph print of an unflushed toilet hanging on the door in the bathroom. Whether taken deeply and emotionally by the artists who made them, or taken surface-level by those less

versed in art forms, the effect is still breathtaking for all viewers equally, and the tour through the space is dynamic and full of things to ponder. It's obvious immediately that there is a system behind the selection of pieces, and an attention to detail that makes this tour so successful and fun, on a level where even some local galleries don't compare.

What makes the whole event so powerful in reality is the fact that most of the artists involved know one another, but may not have seen each other's work until this event. It truly creates a space not just of appreciation of one artist's work to another, but of collaboration and communication with everyone who goes there. There is a very personal feeling that comes with viewing another artist's work next to your own in a show setting, which allows you to feel closer to them and their process, and as guest attending an event like this, it's a moment where you can see through a window of inspiration to an artist's mind, and explore art forms you didn't appreciate or comprehend before, merely because the atmosphere

matches Runko and Stavas's end goal perfectly. And that goal is to make their work, their peer's work, and the work of emerging artists overall accessible to everyone, artist or not, to a degree that hasn't yet been seen before.

The next upcoming event is intended to be held in the spring, before the school year's completion. The name has not yet been announced, but will undoubtedly be posted soon on the Space.88 Facebook page. Currently Runko and Stavas are encouraging artists from all fine media as well as performing arts fields to submit work for selection into the event. It is not clear yet which pieces have been sent in thus far, but the two of them commented that they definitely plan to have a few more performance pieces featured. Over the next few months they will choose from those submitted, and prepare their small apartment once more to transform itself into a great canvas.

STORY BY CAROLINE ZEMP
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JOHN STAVAS



An incredibly detailed painting, "Untitled," by Matthew Rea.

STREET BRANDS

IT'S NO SECRET THAT RICHMOND HAS A HISTORY WHEN IT COMES TO MUSIC AND THE ARTS, BUT WHAT MOST MAY NOT KNOW IS THAT THE CITY IS SLOWLY ESTABLISHING A NAME FOR ITSELF WHEN IT COMES TO FASHION.

A NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ATTEND VCU ARE FOUNDERS OF THE MANY STREET BRANDS IN THE AREA. CHILALAY IS AMONG THESE BRANDS THAT SWARM THE CITY, BUT WHAT SEPARATES THEM FROM THE FLOCK IS THAT THEIR CUSTOMERS CAN BUY A BRAND THAT OFFERS ART, FASHION AND CULTURE.

CHILALAY EXPERIENCE



The idea started in 2011 while smoking marijuana in a bathroom, which seems to be pretty suitable for the definition of the brands' name. Chilalay, which means having a relaxed state of mind, derived from a Washington, D.C. slang term popularized by the go-go band T.O.B. Their first design was a circle on the front with the brands name placed in the middle and gold stars dispersed along the sleeves.

They recently held their first pop-up art gallery during Richmond's sought-out First Fridays. Chilalay showcased twenty artists including VCU student Chris Lewis and local Sierra Smith. Along with bold statement art

pieces the brand launched their first public T-shirt collection. Thomas Grayer, product brand developer, said that previous and new customer's response to the launch was great and that the brand has sold over 100 shirts. This collection offered their consumer more of a variety when it came to design, in particular the collaboration T-shirt with local custom brand Earl Mack founded by creative director of Chilalay Zach Morris. The T-shirt design, "Addictions," incorporates two of the NBA's greatest players, Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant, in zombie-like illustration.

Prior to this launch, the brand had only offered private releases

that consisted of one shirt design in three different color options.

"Last year we weren't really putting out clothes and so this year we dropped our first line for the public and then doing two pop up shops within two months was kind of a big thing for us," Morris said.

The size of the space for the pop-up shop and their following has grown since their first shop a year ago. They have gone from a one-story space to a two-story space, which allowed them to incorporate equally their love for fashion and art. Chris Willis, second product brand developer, said because they have gained experience from last year's shop, this event was much easier to plan and the overall reaction from Richmond has increased.

The response has rocketed so much so that the brand is segueing into more intricate apparel pieces like shorts, jackets, button-up shirts and even suits. This new avenue of design is to be showcased in the 6th Annual RVA Fashion Week. Creative brand manager Nikko Dennis stated that the upcoming collection is more expensive, but it accurately reflects the direction in which Chilalay is headed.

"A lot of street brands are only doing T-shirts and hoodies, we are

trying to put together a full line," Dennis said.

To keep the momentum of Chilalay relevant while they prepare for RVA Fashion Week, the brand will utilize their Instagram in a way that reinforces their three pillars, but also engages their followers. They have designated days where they will post images, which portray a particular aspect of the brand. For example, Fridays will highlight local artists and their artwork, known as Art Fridays.

"We need to be the first name that comes to mind when you come to my city," said public relations manager Robert Chisley. This desire to gain popularity may come sooner than expected with the opening of their store in May. Consumers will no longer be limited to engaging with the Chilalay experience solely through pop-up shops and galleries, but soon buyers can become involved with the brand at their own leisure. The shop will be located on 6 East Broad St. and will continue to offer consumers a variety, where they can indulge in art, buy fashion, enjoy culture and have a reason to always come back.

STORY BY ALENA SYDNOR
PHOTO COURTESY OF CHILALAY



SAFARI INTERNATIONAL

"Selfless as the new selfish, and collaboration over competition," that's what The Safari International Brand (also known as SFRi Intl.) strives to promote. Launched by a group of highly visionary vanguards, this fashion line isn't to be mistaken for your usual streetwear.

"Most brands are based among the idea of self, clothes that say 'check me out, check my money out.' We wanted our brand to revolve not around the self but a message," said founder and CEO Pat Perez. The SFRi team includes a collection of VCU students including Grace Mutchler, Jin Lim, Mike Cuddehe, Collin Pin, and Zack Marney. Not to mention Perez's left and right wings, Photographer/Creative Director Devin Hein and Chief Branding Officer Maria Parenti. The brand was officially launched in November of 2011, and most of the proceeds go to wildlife conservatories to protect endangered species. With ties to the Defender of Wildlife as well as The Humane Society based in Washington, D.C., the label is designed to help specific organizations for specific species.

One of these species includes the Northern White Rhino in Africa, where interestingly only 4 of the existing 7 reside. Another is the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, inspired by the team's participation on "Project Perry" for The Central Virginia Parrot Sanctuary in Louisa County, who contacted Pat through the SFRi's Club at VCU. The club represents a body of environmentally conscious students who spread ideas and values of the brand, but is not solely inclusive to just animal-rescuing and promotes the going-green movement as well. The line also sells leather accessories that are 100 percent recycled from the meat industry in the Philippines. Other SFRi humanitarian efforts include helping victims from the Sedong Typhoon in Mindanao Island. Pat's mother is of Philipino descent as well as the Ambassador for the Philippines with The World Bank, so this disaster had a significant personal impact on him and his family. In 2012, SFRi cleared out their stock to help victims, 80 percent of them who were children. Pat headed to afflicted areas where he donated his line's T-

shirts as prizes for a student talent show called "Ecoville's Got Talent" held at Xavier University. After the trip, the company humbly restarted their line with \$0 in their inventory. Successfully, SFRi boosted its sales through events, trade shows, parties, and their online shop (which can be found at www.sfrintl.com). Their website reached its bandwidth and the site astonishingly crashed twice on the same week. Maybe it's because of all the good deeds they carry out, but the team seems to carry a lot of good karma for its business. Who knows, maybe their luck has to do with the amount of immense positivity everyone on the team exudes. When you're working with like-minded people and by a greater fortune they're also your friends, it creates an interesting environment for synergy.



"It's a democracy," said Devin Hein. "Pat, Maria and I decide on what we want to incorporate into a design. It's usually two versus one since it's three of us deciding. But it doesn't always feel like strict business because it can also be fun. I've gotten better at using certain programs and putting stuff out that I would wear." On collaboration, fashion guru Maria Parenti's standpoint was, "We're presented with a unique situation every time because all of these beautiful minds come together, but we have to reduce everything into one idea. There's a lot of momentum between all of us that's really exciting, and our

common goal is to make good art with good concepts and to have fun doing it."

SFRi Intl. recently had a three-year anniversary celebration party at New York Deli, where their limited edition items quickly sold out, and recently opened up an office in Carytown. Throughout its voyage, the line has graced its presence around Richmond at Ambition Skate Company (which was the first shop it was featured in), Heads Up (location now known as Round 2), Active Soul, West Coast Kicks and Greenhouse Glass. Other locations outside of Richmond have included Townsend, Maryland, Nashville, Tennessee and the Bronx in New York City. After INK inquired about where he sees the business ending up, Pat said, "Honolulu, because it's in the middle of Australia and the United States. I see SFRi Intl. gaining prestige and exclusiveness nationally. There's a lot of longevity forecasted with the brand. My biggest mentors throughout all of it have been years of skateboarding, the creativity of my friends, and Brit Sebastian, HB, Aaron, Netta and the whole Haberdash team, who manufactures all our things." The lifestyle and message of the brand seems to be truly carried out by its members. Promoting the livelihood of other beings and run by people who abide by the brand's values, its collective entity is inspirational as it is infectious. This is a type of style I don't mind being trendy.

STORY BY YOORA LEE
PHOTOS BY DEVIN HINE

(If you would like to be a part of SFRi Intl. & learn more about how to be involved, contact Pat Perez at 703-987-5704 or check out their Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/sfrintl>).

REC LEAGUE



were a huge part of my life and the backbone of the values and morals that I base my life off of today. Rec League sports taught me how to be competitive, hard-working, diligent, and aggressive to achieve my goals. They also taught me how to be forgiving, kind, unselfish, and a teammate. All of these standards for life were subconsciously branded into my DNA and created the person I am today.

Ink: What is your mission?

SK: Rec League wants to blur the lines between high-quality street wear, well-tailored menswear and highly functional outerwear. We believe that with the right balance of material, color, design and construction methods we can create a nice bubble for us to relax in that doesn't heavily favor any of the three looks we are interested in.



Stuart King and Luke Fracher are team players that are introducing a new men's street wear to Richmond, with craftsmanship that is a combination of impeccable quality, tailored menswear, and functional outerwear. They are ready to introduce their brand "Rec League" With a lot of great effort and creativity people can come together to begin a new form of art. Collaborating with one another and enjoying the work that is being produced will give any team an advantage I'm really excited to see the growth of this new Richmond brand and the changes they will bring to the local fashion in Richmond. In an interview with one of the co-owners of Rec League, VCU graduate Stuart King speaks to us about the brand.

Ink: How and when was Rec League started?

Stuart King: Rec League was started halfway through 2013 after a disappointing attempt of a T-shirt company. I started to realize I wanted to be more hands-on with my work so I scrapped the t-shirt idea to create a brand that is entirely cut and sew. I started making a couple models of backpacks and grew into making more sophisticated outerwear and clothing.

Ink: What does Rec League mean?

SK: The name Rec League is an ode to the basketball courts and soccer fields that I spent all of my time on as a kid. Little league sports



in fashion-week runway shows along the coast, trade shows around the country, and a full collection of Rec League clothing made in large quantities being sold online and in local clothing stores.

Ink: Where does your inspiration come from?

SK: A lot of my inspiration comes from people watching around Richmond. I don't pay too much attention to worldwide trends so to compensate I work with what I have in the places that surround me. It's also great to have Luke as a source because he is constantly seeing and receiving inspirational clothing that comes into Round Two. We constantly throw ideas at each other for specific pieces until we can decide on a final look. I'm also very inspired by other young people like myself who are trying to create a name for themselves in Richmond. This includes other clothing designers as well as musicians, artists, young business owners, etc. Seeing people my age strive for something more pushes me to make every design special and exciting for the viewer.

Ink: Who is part of Rec League?

SK: The Rec League team consists of Stuart King, a recent VCUarts graduate, and Lucas Fracher, VCU alumni and co-owner of Round Two Vintage on Broad Street. However, Rec League could not exist if it wasn't for outside help from talented friends around the city.

Ink: Where do you see the brand in three to five years?

SK: In three years I want to see Rec League

STORY BY STEVEN RAMIREZ
PHOTOS BY DEVIN HEIN

I STILL LOVE HER

The preservation of hip-hop and b-boy politics



There is an obvious shift in direction when analyzing the birth of hip-hop and where the culture stands today, nearly four decades later. From MCs and breaking to tagging and turntablism, the four elements of hip-hop have developed as time moves forward. A gap between mainstream and the underground scene increases, as the OGs of hip-hop and the newcomers butt heads regarding the golden question: “What is hip-hop?” As times change and the culture transforms, this question is highly debatable.

David Cunningham, a junior at VCU, is a psychology and anthropology double-major. However, when he doesn’t have his head in a book, he dominates the floor as “B-boy Kwom.” His love for hip-hop emerged when he started breaking in 2007.

Seven years later, Kwom has a lot to say about the direction of the b-boy scene and the hip-hop community.

Cunningham, hailing from Virginia Beach-based crew “SMERC”, describe his earlier experiences as a rookie b-boy. “Not many people our age were breaking, especially in that area. We faced a lot of opposition from BOCA Crew and League of Extraordinary Bboys.” Although it was tough to be respected in the beginning, Cunningham emphasize the strength of his crew as a result of the hostility. For this reason, he stressed the importance of having a crew to always be there to back you up. Individually, a dancer may be dope, but there is strength in numbers. A strong crew is crucial towards success. The process as a whole is very tedious but the growth of each dancer is impeccable. SMERC is comprised of breakers from “Shaolin Masters” and “Every Ready Crew.” Cunningham recollected how he had to battle his way into Every

Ready Crew, like a gang initiation in a sense. This concept epitomizes how hip-hop once was. “We had to earn respect in order to earn our spot,” he stated. He and his crew diligently worked at perfecting their technique and style, practicing daily after school at his high school and at the Boys & Girls Club. Being young in a scene dominated by older pros made Cunningham train even harder, as he had a lot to live up to and a lot to prove. As a result, Cunningham and the rest of SMERC earned respectability not just in Virginia Beach, but throughout the breaking scene in the DMV area as time progressed. He still, of course, did it for the love of hip-hop, as all artists should.

Seven years later, there have been quite a few changes prevalent in the b-boy scene. “Younger cats popped up and didn’t face the same opposition as we did, so they didn’t have the same strength as us,” Cunningham

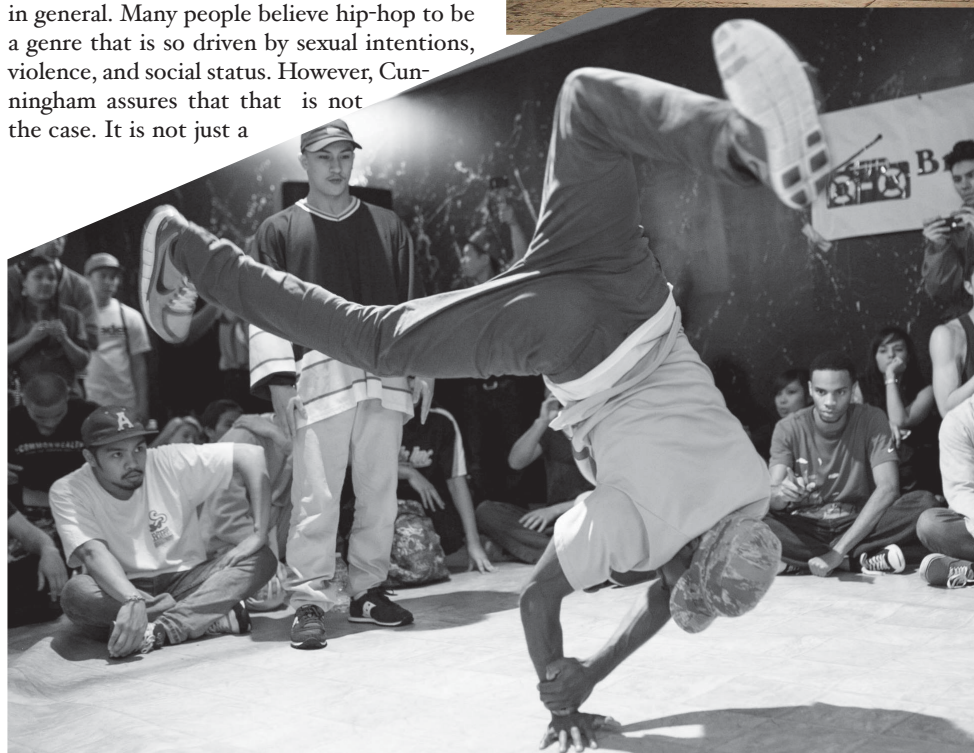
said. He describes the shift between the b-boy scene when he first started breaking, and how easy it is now for newcomers to join the movement now, seven years later. The generational change plays a key role in the development of the hip-hop culture. As new faces appear on the scene, the community shifts as these new faces bring something new to the table and may shift the culture into either a positive or negative direction. "This concept is true across the board for all four elements. As new rap artists steal the spotlight, we hear less of Wu Tang, A Tribe Called Quest and KRS One, and more of Drake, Lil Wayne and 2 Chainz. The Lir Kim of the 1990s has been supplanted by the Nicki Minaj of this generation. Turntablism, originally coined as the "Ones and Twos" is replaced by MacBook Pros and downloadable DJ programs. Graffiti is still relevant, but the unity and vibrancy of the culture has notably decreased." Cunningham attributed this revolution to the advancement of the media and internet accessibility. "People aren't connecting on a direct level with the people around them anymore, Cunningham stated. "There is no sense of regionalism. Instead of connecting with people close to me who may be valuable resources, we reach out to others who have no ties to our community whatsoever. If I'm having a b-boy jam and I need a graphic designer to make a flyer for me, why would I ask someone who lives in Maryland to design the flyer when I can find someone in my hometown who is just as good but may not have as much reputability. It is my responsibility to help build him up and get his name out there. We have to build with each other."

There are many misconceptions that surround the breaking scene as well as hip-hop in general. Many people believe hip-hop to be a genre that is so driven by sexual intentions, violence, and social status. However, Cunningham assures that that is not the case. It is not just a

genre of music or style of dancing, it is a lifestyle. Specifically focusing on the element of breaking, Cunningham explains the art of battling and the purpose behind cyphers. "Battles are meant to call someone out and handle your business on the dance floor. When you call someone out to battle, you are basically saying, 'I love this more than you' or 'I don't want you dancing anymore.'" Conflict doesn't always have to end in physical violence. There may be tension between individuals or specific crews, but, for the love of hip-hop, breaking is the best way to settle it. As for cyphers, the atmosphere is much different.

While battling often holds a negative connotation, cyphers are meant to bring other dancers together. "When we cypher, we are basically saying 'We all love it and let's appreciate it together with good music and a good time,'" Cunningham explains.

Cunningham has high hopes for the future of the b-boy scene. Much like hip-hop music, he said the divide between mainstream newcomers and the underground, which appreciates the originality of the culture and strives to preserve its raw components. He expects



the mainstream to become so big that it eventually separated and disappears. "Mainstream hip-hop won't even be considered hip-hop anymore. It'll turn into something else." "Breaking has turned into something that is more superficial rather than out of love for the hip-hop culture. Cunningham described the club scene and how people don't even really dance anymore. Whereas, on the opposite extreme, b-boy jams are just about dancing. It's only about the dancers and less about having a good time and socializing. Cunningham expressed his concern for the future and said, "I want jams to be jams again. I want to be able to just have a good time rather than always competing and focusing on winning something as the main objective. There shouldn't be a separation between the spectators and the dancers. There should be good music playing, and not just break music. It should be a party again."

STORY BY AILA SHAI CASTANE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF STICKY RICE
PHOTOGRAPHY

GRAFFITI

Richmond has come to be known for its vivid and candid building walls often covered in murals and graffiti. From Broad Street to the Fan to Carytown and Shockoe Bottom, walking down the street is often like walking through an art gallery. With so much to look at, murals and graffiti are often looked at as similar things. In reality they are two different forms. Graffiti is something that Richmond artists do not simply do to defy the law but as a way to express themselves. They form an underground community beyond the idea of vandalism, a community that the creative and artistic minds cultivate. The created great displays which inspire many different reactions when people walk by and see it. Graffiti is a widespread movement that many students have found themselves a part of.

I had the opportunity to speak with communication arts student Michaela Lewis and Dayne Heit, VCU communications arts graduate, who, around this time two years ago, found themselves in the face of the law for doing what many find as an outlet and a way to express themselves. The two give their take on life before during and after their run in with authorities for putting up graffiti in the area, and how things have turned themselves around for the better in terms of their art.

INK: What got the both you started doing graffiti?

Michaela Lewis: (Points to Dayne) Dayne was my influence getting into graffiti ...

Dayne Heit: I mean Picasso, Diego Rivera, which made a lot of headway for making murals. I think for me it's seeing a blank canvas on a wall, knowing how big that space is, knowing what you can do with that space, and being able to project your work on something that's bigger than life. I saw a movie called "Exit Through the Gift Shop" about Banksy and the graffiti movement that happened with this guy. I don't agree with what was happening in the documentary, but something I enjoyed was that there was the thought that you are not allowed to do this type of art. I've never been told that I'm not allowed to do art. To be told not to do it, got me going. Then the idea that someone can't tell you where your art should go or what you should do with it. But to have the ability to

pick a spot where you want your art to go and have people who are walking by and get to see it all the time. Was a cool thing for me, I also liked that there's also no elitism. You don't have to pay. You don't have to be a private member to the gallery. You don't have to buy anything. It's like, I get to show my art, without permission. Which is the bad part because it's illegal, I get I get to show people my art without people asking. They got to see it without knowing any better. They're not really looking for art but all of the sudden it just creeps up and bites them. That's what really turns me on about it. It's really an explosive form of art. It really can jump out and punch somebody who's not really looking for visual stimulation. It will just catch them and turn something totally bland like an empty white wall into a colorful landscape, that's expression, if you do it right.

ML: I like that. (Chuckles) They weren't asking for art but they got it.

DH: I know you have to ask permission but where I was with graffiti. I did a lot of research, and there's a method to graffiti. You start off with tags. Then people tag over your tag with their name, but you can't just simply tag over the name. You have to do one up. You have to put up a full block letter name. So for example if I tag my name. Then people are walking by and they get to see Dayne all the time but if somebody doesn't like that. Say Michaela doesn't like it she can put their name over it but you have to block letter it. So you put something over it, but it has to be one better. So, it's like the competition in that. Which really is amazing it's like an underground competitive art making. Though it isn't allowed, I've never been afraid to do art. But this was the first time I was afraid to do something. Do art. (At that)

INK: Can you explain the incident that happened on March 16, 2012?

ML: Sure. We were running around. We were at an abandon part of town. It was totally isolated ...

DH: I took Michaela out. I was trying to be cool. I wanted to show her an exciting time without spending any money, without getting drunk and without doing drugs. I re-

ally wanted to show her something that I was doing in secret that no one knew about. She calls it running around but running around was really the last resort. So I drove over to the spot. I had my backpack with all my cans, with my blacks, whites, oranges, and greens. You know I was really prepared for not making a mural, but for putting my name up and putting my name out there.

ML: From our perspective the place that we went to was a very abandoned part of town. To us it really looked like no one cared about it. There was a big graffiti wall already up.

DH: Yes, and I was taken there by other graffiti artists that said that that spot was a designated area. You know there's rules. I've never tagged anywhere on campus, I've never tagged anywhere in my neighborhood; nor anywhere in any residential area. I've never tagged anything that was of use but what I didn't realize every building is owned by someone.

ML: Yeah the thing is they were trying to sell the building. Even though it was already covered in graffiti we got in trouble because the guy was trying to sell. So he got really frustrated with us. We didn't go with any bad intention but the fact we got sentenced with destruction of property with intent to destroy. It wasn't like we were going to burn down the building, really got me.

DH: So anyways I thought I was really cool. I put up a tag. Then I took Michaela over to one of the tags that I had previously done on the wall that I hadn't filled in. So I said, "Michaela, why don't you fill that one in." So I was watching her. Then all of a sudden coming down the street was my worst fear, a cop car. So he put his spot light on. I put down the backpack, down with the cans in it. When shined his light it lits up the both of us in the alley.

ML: So we ran down the alley to some railroad tracks. But you know I was kind of out of shape, so we stopped and went down some stairs to hide. While we were hiding Dayne was saying he heard a heat seeking plane. But I was kind of like were teenagers why would they have heat seeking planes to come after us—but in fact they were looking for us.

DH: After 20 minutes, I just stood up and cooperated, and asked the police was everything okay. Immediately they handcuffed me. The one thing they didn't do was read me my rights. The cop pushed me up against the fence, "What the hell is your problem, what the hell is your problem." is all I got. They immediately started grilling me, in addition to Michaela. They brought in more cops, there was about six not including the graffiti detective and the paddy wagon.

ML: At first they told us that if we cooperated then they would let us go. But then, they took us in, in a paddy wagon, and turned on us saying that we would have to get a \$2,000 bail.

DH: They put us in a paddy wagon and took us over to be interrogated they put us in two different interrogation rooms. Next, thing I know we we're face-to-face with detective Cunningham. It was like a murder investigation. She would say, "Be honest with me, I have sway in court." Then she would go and say, "You know I really like your graffiti." After she came out with pictures, of graffiti that she had taken pictures of in the area, saved up from

however long, and asked me which ones were mine. I was honest and told her which ones were mine and which ones weren't. Then she tallied them all up. Instead of me saying I'm not going to say anything until I speak with my attorney, I was honest. Then she brought us to the processing room to be processed. We got to the processing at 11 p.m. and didn't get to the holding cell until 2 a.m. The cop who put me in handcuffs also took me to the magistrate. They had me in front of a judge on a tv screen. As, I was waiting for the magistrate to come on the screen, the cop that arrested me was cool and relaxed with me saying man I see your nervous and shaking I can see it in your face but you know you've cooperated and all that. But then when the magistrate came on completely changed, his attitude changed and he threw me under the bus. He listed a load a crimes saying that I should get \$5,000 bail. Then the magistrate stepped in saying you know we should take it easy he looks like a good kid how about \$1,000 bail. Then the cop is like okay cool. It was really strange.

ML: I felt like they totally turned on us. I know it is their job but it felt like betrayal.

DH: I had to hire an attorney because I thought I was going to prison. You know community service and to paint over the property I understand but all this was a lot. So I hired a guy for \$5,000, and on the court date, he didn't even show up. So I really had no representation. Michaela and I had to have two different lawyers because of conflict of interest, and her lawyer was there every step of the way. So when we went to court the owner was saying he wanted \$10,000. Our lawyer was saying he's doing the best he can but really come to find out wasn't doing anything. Our lawyer ended up saying no, \$5,000 between the both of them is good. We both had to take out financial aid and loans to pay off our fines. I still have to pay off my bill from the semester before I graduated

ML: It put us in serious debt.

DH: Then we were in every paper, the Richmond Times, and some other things.

ML: What frustrated me is that they could publish these articles without conviction. They told our names, address, where we went



to school. I don't see how that's not a breach of right, maybe when you're convicted but until then I don't feel that it's appropriate to publish.

DH: Having people say, "hey I saw you in the Gotcha! Magazine" was another humiliating thing. The only regret in my entire life is taking her out that night and having her there. The funny thing is the graffiti is still up and driving by the area, and still seeing that the graffiti hasn't been painted over is shocking to me.

INK: I know you were saying that it has made you afraid to do art. Has it stopped your passion in any way to do art and express yourself in that way?

DH: Before graffiti I was confused about what I wanted from art. I found something in graffiti. I got in trouble and it brought a wedge between two types of persons, which happened to be our teachers because they were the closest adults that we had at the time. I had the dean of the department tell me that I suggest you to withdraw from class now because you're not going to be able to pass when you're in jail. I started crying. Like, I'm a grown man.

Then I had another teacher that I'm still friends with tell me, you know this is a learning lesson, slow down. It was probably the best advice that I could have gotten. I wanted to be seen as the superstar artist and the first exposure I got was VCU criminal, destructor of property. It really hurt me and I got offended, people took it the wrong way. From then on I've been trying to prove myself in other ways. I got really lucky after it all happened I was given the opportunity to do a 70-foot-long long mural, with permission, I got paid. It was very redeeming for me. I'm still with Michaela (my girlfriend). We had just started dating at the time of the incident.

A religious zealot is what I want to be with my art. Doing this article has helped charge a lot of things that I let die. To have it brought up at this time is really nice. It's helped me look back and realize how much I've learned from the incident. Even though I now realize that you need permission to put up graffiti, I still don't look at it any different.

INK: What other ways have you found to express yourself?

DH: I draw. I draw a lot more now. I guess

when you go to school to be taught how to be professional in the field of art, especially in the professional field, you have a lot to do, you have to build your resume, your blog, your website. All these different things that I've been focusing on the get my foot in the graphic design profession and get paid to do this. It happened recently. I'm really happy!

INK: Has this caused you all to lose support from your family when it comes to you and art?

DH: For me it has.

ML: For me it hasn't. My family didn't look at it in terms of art, but in terms of a mistake that I made that caused me to have a run in with the law. So my family is definitely still supportive of my art.

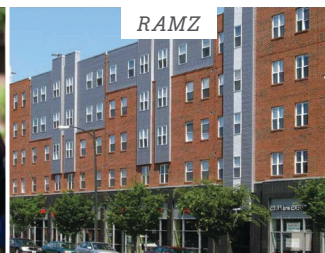
INK: Where can people see your work do you have a website or a blog?

DH: Yes, I do I have a blog and a website Michaela does as well.

INTERVIEW BY MYRIAH MCREYNOLDS

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COME DARKLY NEAR: CREW INSIGHTS



A behind the scenes shot of the crew setting up to film. From left, cinematographer Nicholas, Tyler Stevens as the character Landen, assistant director Cristina, director Charlie, and production designer Brian on the far right.

In an emerging generation of artists, VCUarts' film department is beginning to stand apart from the crowd. Working in what is in general a highly competitive field for young people, and a so-called "boys club" in mainstream media, filmmakers today must work harder than ever to make themselves noteworthy amongst their peers and the public. In that respect, the film department's junior class is currently doing just that with their upcoming project.

At the beginning of the year, juniors are assigned to collaborate on a twenty minute short film that is screened at the end of the second semester, with a plot they all anonymously vote on. With distributed roles and assignments, all students were given an opportunity to experience team dynamics in the workplace and collaboration of ideas, which is a sometimes rare in a fairly independent field. The result of the class of 2015's filmmaker's collaboration is proving so far to become a poignant, and well-crafted piece about a missing high school student called Come Darkly Near. Sitting in on their project class on a Monday morning, I interviewed some members of the crew and saw some roughly edited clips of what's to come in the film's premiere. Here they allowed me a look into their work thus far.

According to Marissa Bolen, the lead editor on the film, the scenes are slightly at this point in production, and need a good deal of work before finalization, but even this work is extremely promising and has strong visual appeal. When asking about inspiration for the film's plot and events, the crew tell me a lot of it is pulled from personal experiences. For instance, a school scene of a sign in a fence made of red solo cups spelling out, "Find Harper" comes directly from production designer Brian Hoeg's high school experience of a missing peer, for whom fellow students made

a similar sign.

The plot actually follows the people who closely surrounded Harper, the missing girl, rather than focusing on her. The themes greatest to the film are based in the methods in which people interact and deal with loss, according to Charlie Belt and Dakota Allen, the director and writer. Producer Elizabeth Williams added to this, saying, "There's a lot of focus on this sense of duality on people, like in their actions versus their real feelings, as well as perception of someone versus the reality."

The story follows five people in who know Harper, played by VCU Theatre major Molly Kauffman, including her father, her younger sister, her best friend Landen, played by another theatre major, Tyler Stevens, and one of her teachers. Each scene is devoted to a subplot that describes how each character is dealing with the circumstances around this event. All of the actors involved, from the teacher to the little girl who plays Addison, provide realistic portrayals of community members in true mourning, and the subtle interactions played out between them as they heal is nearly mesmerizing. Through complex characters, ephemeral mise en scene and cinematography, and fast paced editing, the result thus far seems to be deeply emotional, and it's hard not to get caught up in the scenes.



Editor Marissa on the set, helping create the previously described sign in the fence of the high school, shot locally at writer Dakota's previous school in Mechanicsville.

When I asked them what they'd like the takeaway for their project to be for the viewers, Charlie said, "We want the characters and the viewers to feel the same. If the viewer can experience empathy with the characters, understand emotions and humility, then we've done something right." The crew added to that thought, commenting that they provide moments of hope, though there's always an uncertainty of what will happen. And to them,



Photo of the film department's junior class, and the crew of Come Darkly Near.

that's how a realistic film is, and how real life in general is portrayed. Elizabeth summed up that train of thought succinctly, saying, "We don't realistically know everything, so why would a film tell you?"

The premiere is scheduled to be held at the Byrd Theatre in Cary Town, on May 3rd, just before the school year ends. Beginning at 2:00PM, the event will feature a variety of work from the department in addition to the actual film itself. Producer Tori Sharpe elaborated that so much extra material is included in the premiere to really provide viewers a look at all the hard work the crew has put into this film over a year, and show the "literal blood, sweat and tears that went into every part of this project." There will be several short films created by the crew members being shown before the film begins, as well as a feature afterwards and a huge amount of behind-the-scenes footage of the film students at work during the filmmaking process. There is a theme of women's safety underlying the event, and domestic abuse awareness. Charlie's mother owns a company, Ripple Effect Images, which raises awareness for these issues, and they will most likely be incorporated into the premiere. It is not yet determined to be final, but the students would like the proceeds this film brings in to go towards funding organizations that help women and survivors of abuse.



(Chris, in charge of lighting the film, preparing a room for a shoot.)

Crew Spoken With: Charlie Belt (director), Charlie Belt (director), Nick Scarpinato (head of cinematography), Marissa Bolen (editor), Dakota Allen (writer), Brian Hoeg (set design), Tori Sharpe and Elizabeth Williams (producers), and Paige Snider (sound)

ARTICLE AND INTERVIEW BY CAROLINE ZEMP
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CHRISTINA O'CONNELL
AND THE CDN FACEBOOK PAGE

DRAG QUEENS OF RICHMOND

The white light hits your face. You are almost blinded for a minute and then your ear-drums vibrate as her anthem comes through the speakers. She appears from behind the curtain tapping her foot and shaking her head to the beat of the music. Her silhouette moves behind her and gives her an aura of delight. Walking down the stage, she throws up her arms and screams, “How the hell are we feeling tonight?”

A type of performer that has been taboo through the centuries has been given more headlines and coverage recently thanks to the American show “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” which premiered on the TV station Logo on February 2nd, 2009. There has been a growth in the Drag queen community because of this show and it has opened a lot more opportunities for individuals to be themselves and to support local performers. Each season has online casting calls, and each contestant submits an audition tape in hopes of becoming “America’s next drag superstar.”

Drag queen artists in Richmond are put to the test similarly to the way RuPaul does his casting. There is amateur night at a few different clubs in Richmond, where a drag queen can do her first performance; if she wins, she is asked to come back and compete against other contestants. At the end of the night there is an announced winner and some type of prize. These individuals take on a lot of responsibility, from acting and self-expression, to finding out their identity as a performer, makeup, hair, costume design, choreography and of course mastering a song and lip-syncing. Impersonating women for entertainment comes with a lot of practice, skill, time, dedication and money. It all starts with support from the local LGBTQ community and other people that attend drag shows to support the local drag queens through money, love and being at their shows.

Drag queens have a message that says it’s OK to be yourself no matter how others make you feel — just be who you want to be. There are two local drag queens that have been able to entertain and also connect to a younger audience. VCU student Alex Saady and his “Drag Mother” Brandon Horton both have worked hard in the local LGBTQ community to have a strong drag personality and to send a message to people that it is OK to be yourself. They both do local shows at different venues and are

both active in doing the drag ball at VCU. Alex has been performing for a little over a year and Brandon has been performing for about five years. They both have a different sense of style and are admirable to watch grow. Alex used to be in theater so he has some experience in performing arts. He goes by Vivienne Hardwood when he is in full drag. Brandon started doing drag after he entered an amateur competition and he has never turned back. When performing he goes by Michelle Livigne, and his drag personality wants to let people know that there is more than one form of drag and each performer has a different talent to bring to the stage! “We’re here to have fun, and to let you know you’re only as free as you let yourself be,” Brandon said.

The equal rights movement for the LGBTQ community was started by this fearless group of performers and activists. Drag queens became a symbol of the fight for equality and freedom of speech. It was a lot more difficult back then for people who wanted to express themselves. For example, in the 1950s the US State Department under Joseph McCarthy said that homosexuals were part of a subversive group which included the communist party. A new group of activism throughout the 1950s & ’60s sprung into action in order to fight for equal rights. The fight had to be done quietly; people would be arrested or let go from a job if they were suspected of being homosexual. The Mattachine Society, formed in 1950 in Los Angeles by Harry Hay, circulated information through posting flyers about certain trails of people being arrested and undergoing police brutality.

In 1969 there was a turning point. In Greenwich Village, a local bar called the “Stonewall Inn” catered to the LGBTQ community, including, of course, drag queens. Police raids would happen frequently, with arrests and beat-



downs; one night in June, police came in and attempted to raid the bar as usual, but this time the regulars had a plan: As the officers entered the building, patrons barricaded them inside, and over three days of rioting the LGBTQ community held up eight blocks of the city. The word of the riots spread through underground organizations; what had been a quiet assimilationist movement had turned militant. Activism like this throughout the years has helped to shape the community and give more people freedom of identity. Today there are a lot of activist groups internationally, such as GLAAD, GetEqual, IFGE and many many more, which support the LGBTQ community.

The drag queens are a part of American history and they are still around today, though maybe more put-together and competitive. They are a symbol of freedom of speech and identity. They have helped to push and form a more diverse community through their hard work, talent, and extensive amounts of practice. To all the drag queens of yesterday and today, thank you.

STORY BY STEVEN RAMIREZ
PHOTO BY SARA CLARKEN

CRAFT AND CULTURE FOR EARTH DAY



The sun is coming back! After our various trials and tribulations over the winter we are finally on the road to recovery. Along this road is a stop that we all need to hit, though: the Green Unity Earth Day Bazaar. This event occurs every year, bringing the best of a culture fair right to our doorstep. On April 22, various vendors of environmentally friendly and aesthetically engaging goods will decorate the little plaza behind Pollack Building and next to Hibbs Hall. In order to get everyone excited and give you a preview of what is to come, INK caught up with one of the event planners for the bazaar, Jessica Shim.

INK: What is the Earth Day Bazaar?

Jessica Shim: The Rams Community Bazaar (RCB) is a local market that Green Unity and Rams Community Bazaar host every semester – once in the fall, and once in the spring. In the fall, we do a smaller, market-based Fall Bazaar, and in the spring, we do the Earth Day Bazaar, which is an entire festival with a market, information tables, workshops, and interactive activities that everyone can participate in. This year's bazaar will take place on April 22, on Earth Day.

INK: How long has it been going on?

JS: The bazaar began in 2011 with the Earth Day Bazaar.

INK: Who has participated in the bazaar in the past?

JS: There have been many vendors participating in the bazaar in the past, including VCU organizations such as the OAP and Ram Bikes, who do free bike repairs on campus. And stu-

dent vendors such as Tereza McInnes who sells crocheted goods — they're so cute! She is actually helping out with the market side of the bazaar this year. She's been at the bazaar every time before this one. We also have community vendors such as Sneed's Nursery with plants and Common Threads with upcycled clothing and accessories.

INK: What kind of vendors do you plan to have this semester?

JS: We are not locked down on the vendors yet, but we plan on having many of the same vendors as last time, including Tereza McInnes, Common Threads and Hannah Chartok.

INK: Who can be involved?

JS: Anyone in the community selling anything sustainable, jewelry, crafts, food, etc., can be involved in the market side, and anyone (or) any organization interested in informing others on sustainability and anything green can participate in the workshops side. If you're interested you should email ramsbazaar@gmail.com.

INK: Do you have anything new planned for this semester that people may not have seen before?

JS: We are planning a one-of-a-kind Earth Day festival this semester. We have had many other Earth Day festivals, each one unique in its own way. This year, we are adding a new, workshop-based information table system where students and the community will be able to attend workshops by the vendors or information tables. We also switch around logos every semester to get students involved in the bazaar, and this year we have a really cute logo designed by Ethan Pope, a sophomore in the graphic designs program. If you volunteer for the bazaar, you will get a free shirt, which is exciting.

INK: If you had to tell someone why they should go what would you say?

JS: It's going to be so much fun! There will be interactive games, workshops, and an etsy-esque market and it is a wonderful, local way to celebrate Earth Day. It will be held right on campus on the Commons Plaza and Park Plaza, so it's easy to stop by and support your community.

INK: Thank you very much. We can't wait to see the bazaar!

JS: Thanks.

INTERVIEW BY BRANDON GEIB

If you would like to discover more about the Earth Day Bazaar and keep up to date on the event please visit their facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ramsbazaar>.

The fact that medical students cut up cadavers is no secret to anybody living in the modern age — with rapid scientific and medical advancements it comes as no surprise that dissecting human bodies is a regular process that anybody being educated in the medical field must undertake. But while the fact of the matter isn't so surprising, for many medical students the alarm — or perhaps humility — that comes with seeing the human body lain on a table like any other lab rat is.

Dr. Richard Krieg, a UCLA graduate and current professor of anatomy at VCU, is no stranger to this alarm; he deals with students who encounter their first cadaver's on a yearly basis, and is witness to an all too familiar transition of shock to professional, medical treatment. "Some of them worry about the fact that it was a human with feelings and with all the things that go with being a human being, but I think that they transition from that to the point that it becomes something (for them to learn from)," Krieg said.

It becomes a much more a traumatic experience if you think of it as someone you might have known in your lifetime. For that reason alone, Dr. Krieg explains, when it comes to the subjects of a gross anatomy lab, anonymity is essential.

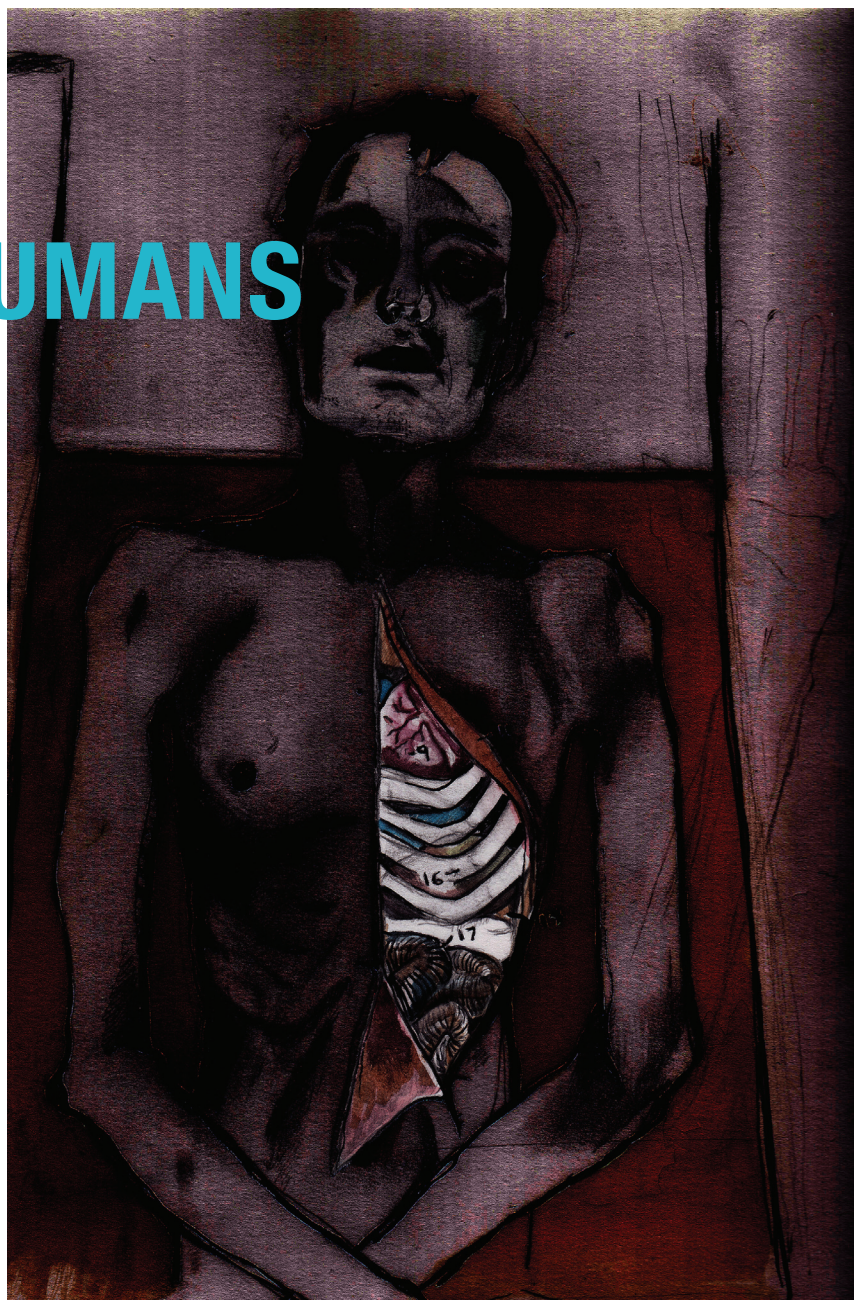
The bodies are transported from West Virginia — the more remote the area the lesser the chance of recognition — and the person's information is rigidly restricted; occupation, age, cause of death; strictly no names. Medically, the bodies' sense of liveliness is taken care of, too; with the blood drained and the body covered in fixatives and draped in mausoleum, any sign of human scent or warmth is masked by the strong cadaver scent and color. Think cleaning chemicals and a kind of patchy red iodine.

The act of preparing the cadaver sounds almost like a ritualistic act — if it weren't for the name of science — with the draining and the draping resembling the ancient Egyptian's treatment of the dead, which, coincidentally, was also dissection of the human body began.

Although scientific discovery and human knowledge has come a long way since then, our tendency towards sentimentality and the need for spirituality hasn't. Dr. Krieg brings to attention a student ritual that used to take place when VCU controlled the cadaver disposal. "Before we started getting our bodies from out of state and we had to return them, they sort of became ours, we had them created and we had a burial service for them," Krieg said. "The students came to the burial ceremony and described how grateful they were for the people to donate their bodies and how important it was to help them with their education, as if they were physically helping them."

It's an unsettling concept — just as the cadavers began to sound less and less like people,

DEHUMANIZING



they are awarded a service fitting for any regular funeral ceremony. Krieg put this down to respect and the undying amount of it that exists for the people that donate their bodies to science.

VCU nursing student Alexandra Davis has an attitude that echoes Krieg on this. Amidst the fear and excitement of first encountering a cadaver, she says that respect was stressed with the upmost importance.

"Since the first day of lab, our professors stressed the importance of not taking pictures of the cadaver, even if we just wanted to so we could study later," Davis said. "This is respect. We appreciate their donation to science."

While VCU no longer holds a cremation ceremony — the bodies must be sent back to their supplier in West Virginia — the notion of appreciation still exists among the students and faculty alike.

For the people who donated? Their funeral service, burial and plot are all paid for — the chance of a family member being able to reclaim the body once it has been used is slim, though this doesn't seem to deter the donors. While Dr. Krieg has experienced rejected cadavers due to a surplus of body donations, the reward of contribution he says, is sating enough; "Like donating your organs, like donating your cornea, like donating your kidney, like donating your heart — by donating your body you can donate it to six or seven medical students' education and in 100 percent of cases they are going to appreciate that."

STORY BY REBECCA METCALF
ILLUSTRATION BY MOLLY SWYERS

ALBUM REVIEWS

BY DANIEL RHOADS



Sun Kil Moon / Benji / Rating: A

Racking my brain for the proper word to sum up Sun Kil Moon's latest record, I found myself circling one that's been made flat and almost meaningless from overuse: special. "Benji" is a special record. It's like nothing I've ever heard before, not because it rearranges my conception of song or breaks some kind of new ground. Listen to "Benji" once, and you will know Mark Kozelek, better probably than 95 percent of your friends on Facebook. For this record, Kozelek has opened himself up completely and totally. This can be heavy. Eccentricities, faults and fears take center stage. He's a strikingly tender guy, sensitive in the most literal way. Like Bonnie "Prince" Billy, and countless other folk-music depressives he's inherited his place in the world from, the darkness of human existence weighs him down and shows itself to him around every corner, tempering an obvious love of life with a contrasting but equally powerful fear. The songs are hardly songs at all, more essays, written without concern for length of verse or terseness of phrase, without hooks or choruses or anything that would, conventionally, get them stuck in your head. But it happens: Each track relates a tragedy, and each provides an insight into a corner of Kozelek's mind. I find myself drawn in again and again, the impact of individual turns of phrase growing at dangerous levels with every listen. Don't overlook this.

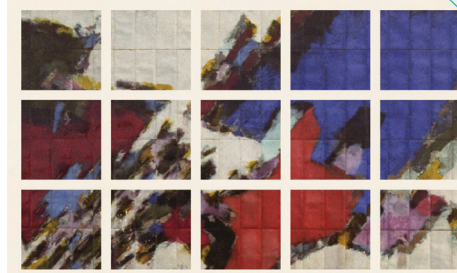


Angel Olsen / Burn Your Fire for No Witness / Album Rating: A

Once or twice a year, a record comes out that doesn't defy categorization but that dares you to try to put it in a box. Angel Olsen is an incredibly exciting artist. She's shaped her music into something that is entirely her own. It's basic rock and roll that couldn't be sung by anyone else. The pace of this record is fantastic. There are a few heavy, slow songs on here that will all but bust you open, but just when I feel like "White Fire", a pain-soaked epic that puts Leonard Cohen to shame, is going to knock me on my face, Olsen shoots right back in with "High & Wild," grooving pianos and flawless vocal sauntering undoing all the sad. This kind of emotional yo-yo-ing puts the listener at her mercy, and it's not such a bad place to be. At a point in the year when my list of "favorite songs" is skeletal at best, this album is ditching the pack and clutching at least three slots for itself.



Real Estate
Atlas



Real Estate / Atlas / Rating: B

Real Estate's last record, "Days," has grown slowly in my head over the past couple years into one that I couldn't imagine living without. I went into it a skeptic, ready to dismiss the simplicity, the prettiness, as surface-level dullness, but they got to me quick. "Days" was an easy-going masterpiece, possessing the effortless swagger of a band unconcerned with being cutting edge and fully content with doing exactly what it is they've always done. A new Real Estate album, then, is a tricky proposition. How could a band like this possibly change, and yet, how could they stay the same without losing relevance? The difference between "Days" and this new record, "Atlas," is almost impossible to grasp. They have all the same ingredients. The band is the same band, just as tight, just as laid back. But something's missing; there's a spark that simply isn't here. Maybe it's that these songs are more concrete. The melancholy is more pronounced, the lyrics more straightforwardly about real-people things. With "Atlas," Real Estate have cleared the haze a bit. They may have accidentally brushed away their mystique.

Speedy Ortiz / Real Hair EP / Rating: B-

This is a pretty straightforward equation: If you liked Speedy Ortiz's record from last year, "Major Arcana," you're going to like "Real Hair." To their credit, their formula has become well-defined and cemented here. Sadie Dupuis has crafted a singular sweet-snarl croon, and, like before, the guitars play the part of her dancing partner. The resulting sound is cyclical and mesmerizing, but cyclical and mesmerizing in a way almost indistinguishable from the material on their last release. These four songs sound like outtakes. Not that they're bad. In fact, they're all actually pretty good. My only complaint is that the EP lacks a track with punch like "Cash Cab." Otherwise, this is not a step forward, nor a step back. It's utter stasis.



NEVER



Left: Field dress by Jesse Kamm at Verdalina | Bracelet by Maslo Jewelry | Right: Sweater by NFP Studio at Verdalina | Necklace by Maslo Jewelry | Shoes are model's own

MORE

Photos by Sara Clarken | Styling by Maria Parenti and Alexandra Mitchell
Hair and Makeup by Steven Ramirez | Modeled by Monika Burbridge



Dress by Pas de Calais at Verdalina | Shoes by Pedro Garcia at Roan | Necklace by Maliso Jewelry



Top by Isabel Marant at Roan | Skirt by Isabel Marant at Roan | Bag by Proenza Schouler at Roan | Necklace by Maiso Jewelry | Shoes are model's own



Top by Roland Moret at Roan | Pants by QL2 at Roan | Shoes by Pedro Garcia at Roan | Necklace by Malso Jewelry



Dress by Proenza Schouler at Roan | Shoes are model's own





Sweater by NFP studio at Verdalina | Necklace by Malso Jewelry

