

Wanderlust

TRAVELS HERE AND THERE



WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
RANDY DUNBAR



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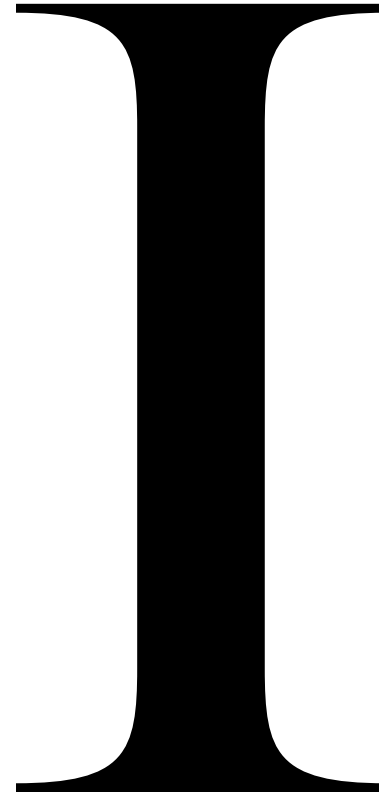
LOS ANGELES

Angel's Flight
Hollywood
City of Portraits

for Mary and Steve
who took me by the hand

special thanks to:

ZUKE OSHIRO
RICHARD VELASCO
PAUL BURDITCH
NIKI SMART
JOHN MILLER
JOHN SKALICKY



“It’s always best to start at the beginning.”
— Glinda of Oz, 1920

INTRODUCTION

My family rarely left the country. Other than some road trips to Tijuana, the National Parks, and Crestline, we never left the country. My brother, bless him, did stray off to Alaska to live for a time. That’s it.

At an early age, I did visit San Francisco and Palm Springs frequently, and after high school, trips to New York City were frequent. But it wasn’t until that first flight to Hawaii that the notion that travel could make you feel different happened.

It’s not easy to know just what it is because, until you’ve been there, you’re only speculating.

As I think about it, having grown up and still living in Los Angeles, despite that sojourn of eight years in New York City, I know this town, maybe too well.

A trip to Bali in the 90s convinced me that what I was seeking was “otherness,” something other than American culture. When a bare-chested woman was walking down a dirt road in Ubud with fruit on her head, I thought— I’m not in American anymore. Later, a bloody cockfight would cement that notion.

Heat and humidity could not wrest my love of traveling from me. I went to Bali. Australia, Europe, the Maldives, Mexico, Belize, and many other countries

I didn’t always have a camera. I missed what I am sure would have been an award-winning photo (Paris 2015, Vogue’s 95th Anniversary Party) and numerous other “moments” where people shifted, the light changed, or a car blocked the view.

Some pictures were taken with a 35mm camera—most with an iPhone, which in many ways is the better camera—certainly when traveling, it is the more convenient tool.

Traveling creates stories. All places have their stories, and the people you meet on a journey have their stories. We engage with a culture other than the one we know—language, cuisine, and dress come together to create a story vastly unique and, for many, wonderful. It can be arduous and boring (airports, delayed flights, and toll tickets from other countries), but the first exploration on the street will make it all worthwhile



ASIA

Japan

China

Honk Kong

Singapore

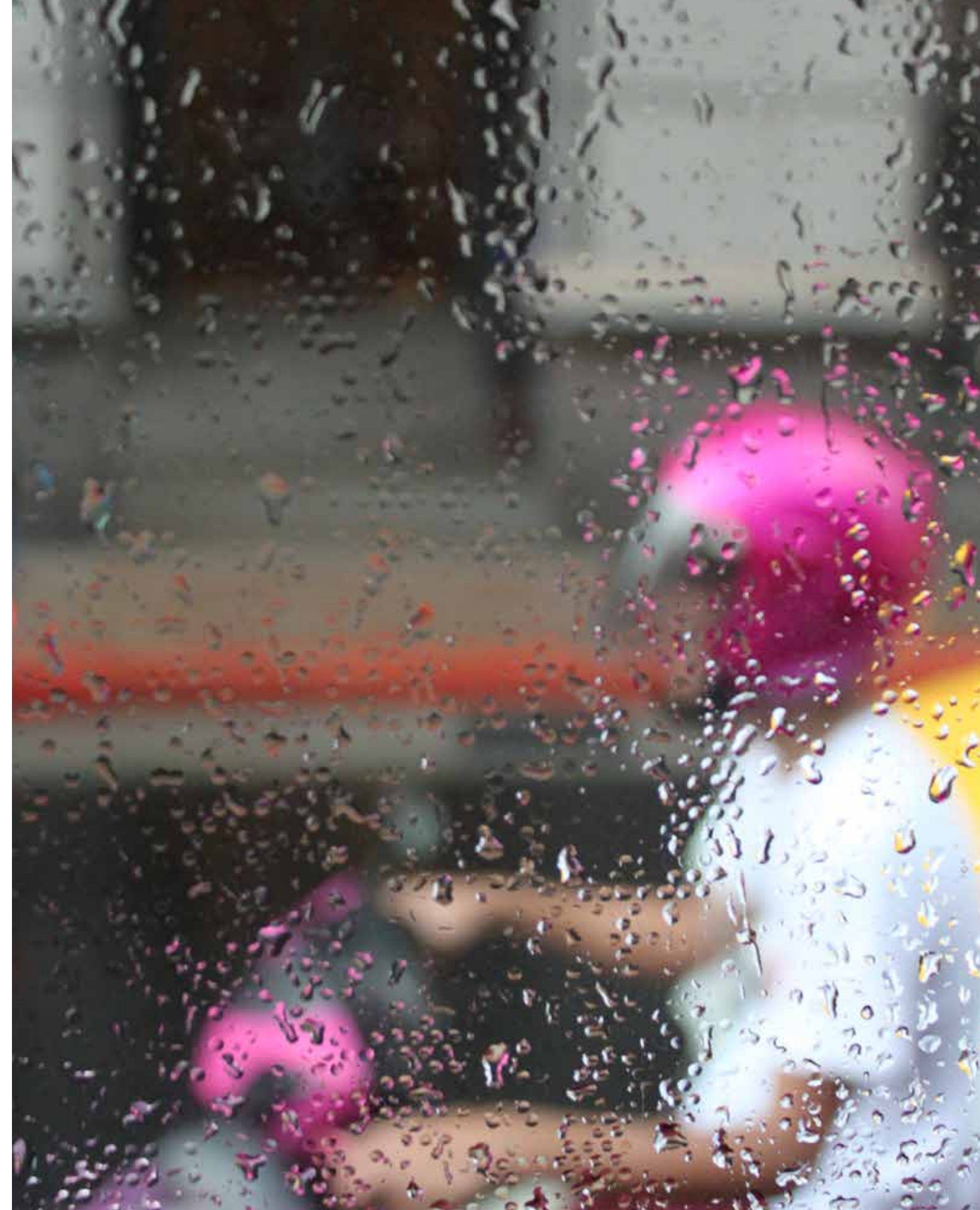
Taiwan

Thailand

Maldives



ASIA. The largest continent the world, with 60% of the world's population, there is a lot to visit. And no two countries are alike—the cuisine is unique to each country, the dialects, vastly different, even within the country.



Taiwan, 2011
Shot from a bus, scooters are a mainstream means of transportation. Very often one can see families of four all riding on a single scooter.





Amphoe Mae Wang - Chiang Mai, July 2, 2017







Four Seasons Resort / Chiang Mai

MALDIVES



Maldives, a 26-atoll chain of islands with powdery beaches, turquoise waters, and dreamy overwater bungalow resorts. But we stayed on the water, in a Four Seasons yacht—complete with a chef, scuba instructors, and a National Geographic photographer.

It was the first introduction to a Muslim country.

The Republic of the Maldives lies in the Indian Ocean, on the southern side of Sri Lanka. The islands sheltered in this archipelago are categorized into natural atolls, most of which remain uninhabited.

The Four Seasons Explorer, a 129-foot, three-deck catamaran, takes a maximum of 22 guests on a marine and cultural adventure into the undiscovered Maldives. The luxury live-aboard visits isolated reefs and virgin dive sites, uninhabited beaches, and secluded village communities.







Duomo Di Orvieto



EUROPE

Italy

France

Spain

Greece



Castro Pretorio

ROME

Europe is first and foremost an idea.

a n idea that was visited in the early 1970s as a small group of friends traveled to Europe. The first stop was the Netherlands. The red light district, the Rijksmuseum, and an unforgettable meal called rijsttafel. With a Eurorail pass in hand, we went from Belgium to Nice, Nice to Rome, Rome to Munich, and finally to England. There would be short detours: Dachau, Hamburg, and Venice. We were young. Europe was so foreign to a small group of Americans—there was an audible sigh of relief as we strolled into London and finally understood what people were saying.

It was a foray into adventure beyond the American shore. In a distant land of multiple languages, customs, and cuisines, we participated in each as only the young could.

It was different. Police with machine guns stood guard on street corners. We stayed in affordable palazzos with large tiled bathrooms and luxurious, heavy cotton towels.

Decades later, Europe still maintains a travel experience unmatched. Other than the tourist attractions, it is the people and cuisine that one most remembers. In Rome, cobbled streets detoured off to reveal a little restaurant, Osteria Del Gallo, so quaint and charming, you had to come back.

Driving through the hillsides of Tuscany, one can come upon Saturnia. Strategically located between Rome and Florence, Saturnia is a free mineral hot spring in the middle of nowhere. It is as close to a Fellini experience as you can get.

Rome calls, and you answer. Many trips to this capital city of Italy provide unique experiences: the Vatican, the Colosseum, the Fountains of Piazza Navona, the Trevi Fountain, and the Forum.

For us, we went old school—rented a scooter, braved the Italian traffic, and went places not usually found on the tourist map.

*“Arrivederci, Roma
Good bye, au revoir
Ti rivedo a pranzo a
Squarciarelli
Fettuccine e vino dei
Castelli
Come ai tempi belli che
Pinelli immortalò
Arrivederci, Roma
Good bye, au revoir
Ti rivedo a spasso in
carozzella
E ripenso a quella
ciumachella
Ch’era tanto bella e che
t’ha detto sempre no.”*
—Claudio Villa



“Italy has changed. But Rome is Rome.”
— Robert De Niro, American actor



THE DOORS OF ITALY

PARIS



*You come to Paris,
You come to play.
You have a wonderful time.
You go away.
And from then on,
You talk of Paris knowingly.
You may know Paris,
You don't know Paree.*

—Cole Porter

No city has been as romanticized as Paris.

It is the perfect backdrop for a fashion shoot, or a movie about fashion—indeed, Paris is the fashion capital of the world and rightly so—this is the city of the best fashion shows, the best designers, “haute couture” (which means high dressmaking), the most glamorous people and it is where the bikini was invented by the French automobile engineer Louis Réard and fashion designer Jacques Heim in 1946.

It is also the “city of light”, so named because it was among the first cities of Europe to employ gas street lights and historically, Paris was the center of The Age of Enlightenment.



Disneyland, Paris



Père Lachaise Cemetery

Cemeteries reveal much about a city, and Père Lachaise, the largest cemetery in France, is the last home to many: Peter Abelard and Héloïse, Molière, Eugène Delacroix, Jacques-Louis David, Georges Bizet, Frédéric Chopin, Honoré de Balzac, Marcel Proust, Georges Seurat, Oscar Wilde, Sarah Bernhardt, Isadora Duncan, Gertrude Stein, Colette, Edith Piaf, Marcel Marceau, Richard Wright, and Yves Montand, among others.

Built in 1804, it's moody. But not without its unique attractions, such as the grave of Victor Noir, a man who lost his life in a duel and was immortalized in a full-length, oxidized bronze statue with an erection.

In the 1970s, a myth began that rubbing the crotch and kissing the statue on the lips would bring women enhanced fertility and a blissful sex life. The effects of this myth on the statue—Victor Noir's lips and groin are shiny, while the rest of his body has the usual verdigris.

The same can be said of the tomb of Oscar Wilde. Today, the monument is viewed by thousands. A tradition has developed whereby visitors would kiss the tomb after applying lipstick to their mouth, thereby leaving a “print” of their kiss. The stone has also been covered in graffiti, almost exclusively letters of love to the author, but this is not as damaging as the lipstick kisses. Lipstick contains animal fat, which sinks into the stone and causes permanent damage.

Fitting for a man who, as actor Stephen Fry said, “Here's this man who believed when he died that his name would be toxic for generations to come. For hundreds of years, his work wouldn't be read. He would stand for nothing but perversion. Utter disgust at a society that couldn't bear people like him... His tomb is in Père Lachaise Cemetery, in Paris. It had to be restored because the polished stone on its surface had corroded through kissing. Thousands and thousands. Wouldn't it be allowed once to just wake him up for five minutes just to tell him that, then he can go back to sleep again?”



Cathedral of Seville

SPAIN

“Any reasonable, sentient person who looks at Spain, comes to Spain, eats in Spain, drinks in Spain, they’re going to fall in love. Otherwise, there’s something deeply wrong with you. This is the dream of all the world.” – Anthony Bourdain

Barcelona

Figueres

Seville

Granada

Bilbao

Madrid

Sitges



or many, Barcelona is the first stop when visiting Spain. With a vibrant art scene, unique Catalan culture and food, and stunning architecture, Barcelona is the perfect starting point.

It is the tallest religious building in all of Europe, and indeed, it towers as an icon in the city: the Sagrada Família. Designed in 1882 by Antoni Gaudí, an architect who did not live to see the completion of the project, he was, in fact, struck by a tram, and because he looked so much like a beggar, he did not receive adequate care; he died in 1926. They buried his body on the underground level in a tomb, and visitors from any part of the world can see it whenever they visit. Gaudí's tomb is held in the chapel dedicated to the El Carmen Virgin. The Sagrada Família is special, as are many churches in Europe, but here, the light, the vault,



and the sheer quirkiness of the design create a unique experience.

To the north of Barcelona is Figueres, a town an hour away by train. It is home to the

Dalí Theatre Museum, the largest surrealist object in the world. It is located in the former Municipal Theatre, a 19th-century construction destroyed at the end of the Spanish Civil War. On its ruins, Dalí decided to create his museum.

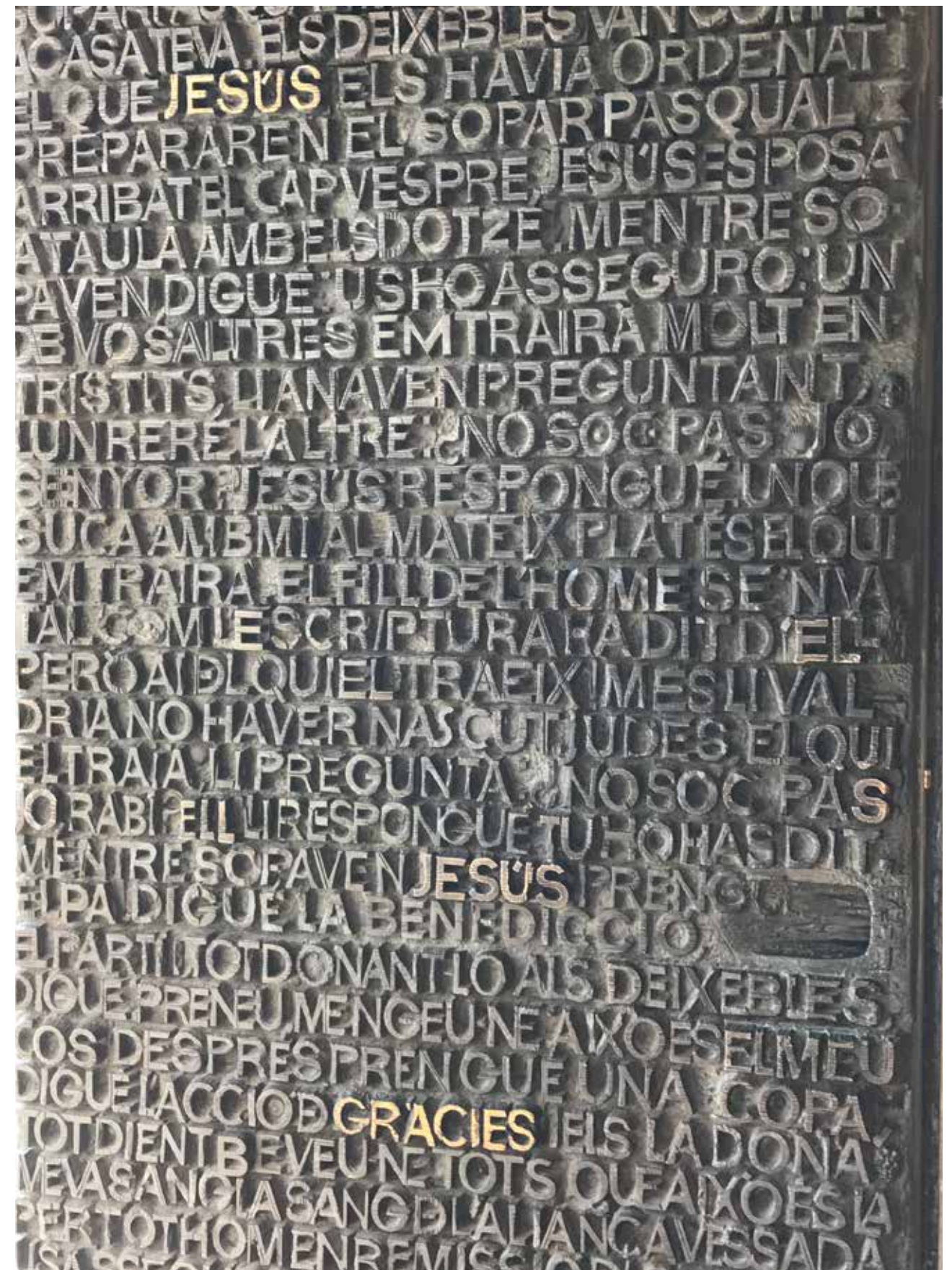
An hour from Figueres will get you to Portlligat, Dalí's summer home, which, as expected, is surreal.

On another trip to Spain, we drove or took a train from the southern point of Cadiz to the northern point of San Sebastián.

Arriving in Madrid, one can sense the bustle of a large, populated city. The capital of Spain, it is home to nearly seven million people.

Staying at the H10 Villa de la Reina, which is in the center of Madrid, is the perfect starting point for adventures north and south.

*Basilica of La Sagrada Família. Passion facade. Flagellation of Christ (1987).
Josep M Subirachs, sculptor.*





Starting out, we head to the roof of the shopping center El Corte Inglés Callao, where, if and when you can find a table, you order a drink and watch the Spanish sunset.

The drive from Madrid delivers an easy ride through “Man of La Mancha” territory, Toledo. Rusted metal sculptures along the hills reveal Don Quixote and Rocinante, his horse, as indicators that you too are on a journey.

Then, there is Granada, home to the Alhambra. The Alhambra is a breathtaking palace and fortress complex located in Granada, Andalusia, Spain. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most famous examples of Islamic architecture in the world. The name “Alhambra” is derived from the Arabic words “al-qal’a al-hamra,” which mean “the red fortress.”

The Alhambra’s origins can be traced back to the 9th century, when a small fortress was built on the site. However, it was during the reign of the Nasrid dynasty in the 13th and 14th centuries that the complex was expanded and transformed into the magnificent structure we see today.

The Alhambra is composed of several distinct areas, including the Alcazaba (the fortress), the Nasrid Palaces, the Generalife, and the Medina (the residential quarter). The complex is surrounded by imposing walls and towers, providing a defensive structure that overlooks the city of Granada and offers stunning views of the surrounding landscape.

The Nasrid Palaces are the highlight of the Alhambra, showcasing the pinnacle of Islamic architectural and artistic achievements. These palaces feature intricate stucco work, beautiful tile patterns, ornate arches, and serene courtyards. The most famous of the palaces is the Palacio de los Leones (Palace of the Lions), with its iconic courtyard centered around a stunning fountain supported by twelve marble lions.

Another notable feature of the Alhambra is the Generalife,



***“This is the dream of all the world.
The dream is to live in Granada. You
know, work in the morning, have a
one-hour nap in the afternoon, and
at night go out and have that life.
Go out and see your friends and eat
tapas and drink red wine and be in a
beautiful place.”***

— Anthony Bourdain

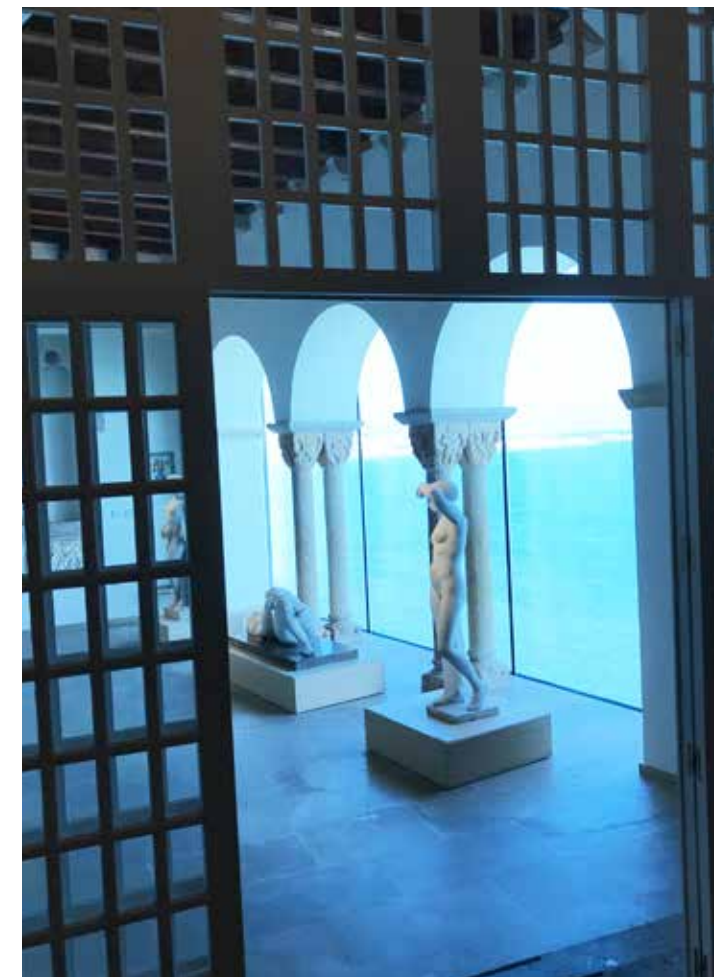
a lush and peaceful garden retreat located adjacent to the palaces. It consists of beautifully landscaped gardens, picturesque courtyards, and pavilions, providing a tranquil escape from the opulence of the palaces.

Throughout the complex, visitors can also admire the detailed calligraphy, geometrical patterns, and inscriptions that adorn the walls, reflecting the rich artistic and cultural heritage of the Islamic civilization.

The Alhambra’s architecture combines Islamic and Andalusian influences with elements of Spanish Renaissance and Gothic styles that were added after the Christian Reconquista. The blending of these diverse influences creates a unique and captivating aesthetic.

The Alhambra attracts millions of visitors every year, and its timeless beauty continues to inspire and captivate people from all over the world. It stands as a testament to the rich history and cultural exchange between civilizations, as well as a symbol of the

artistic and architectural achievements of the Islamic world. If there is magic in this world, this is where it is.

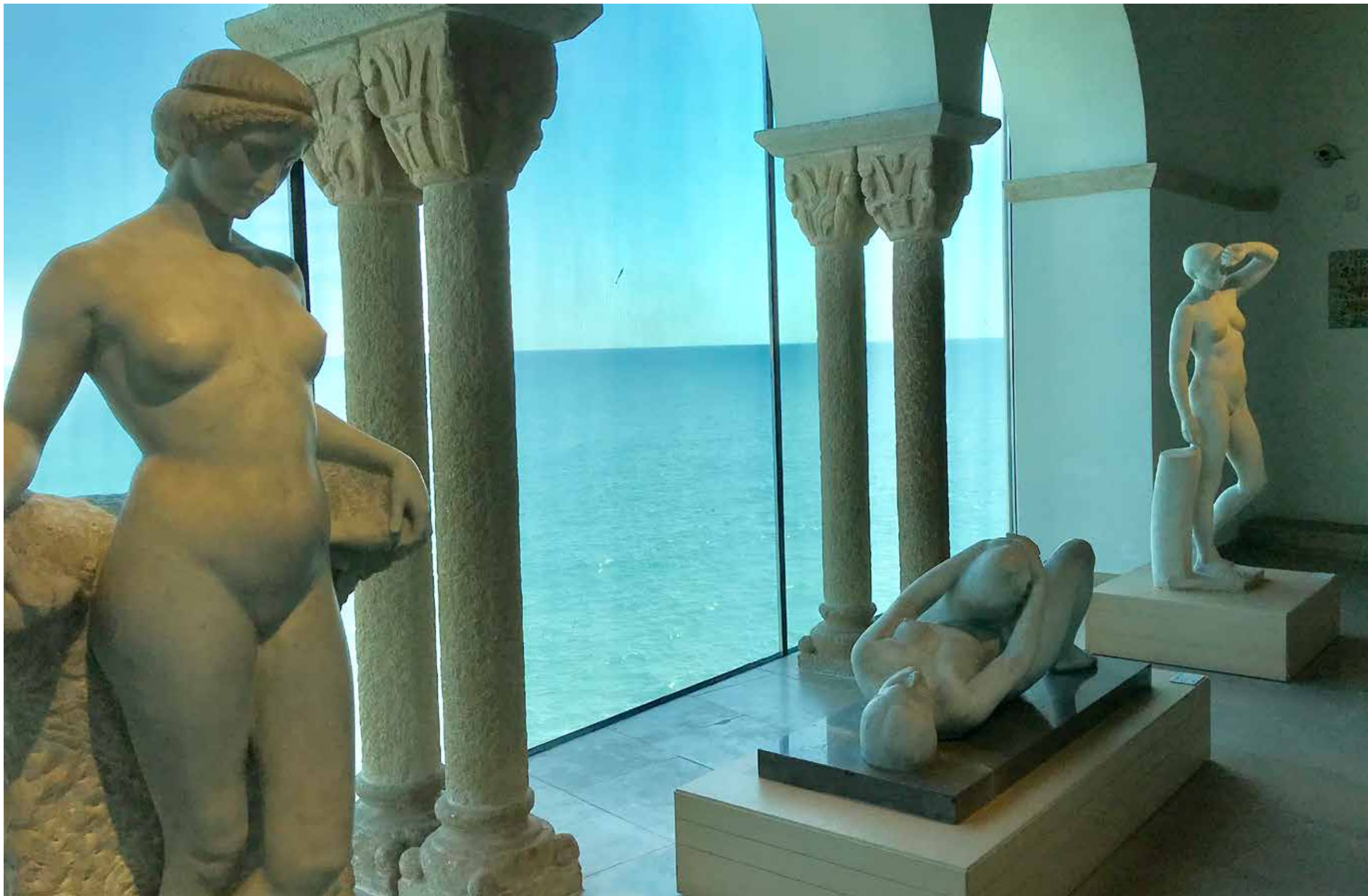


SITGES

A quick train ride from Barcelona, Sitges, a town about 35 kilometers southwest of Barcelona in Catalonia, Spain, is renowned worldwide for its film festival, carnival, and LGBT+ culture.

And it is beautiful.

While most people are shopping and dining at Calle 1er de Maig (Street of Sin), a visit to the Cau Ferrat and Maricel Museum may be one of the most physically beautiful museums in the world. Its windows look out to the Balmes Sea, providing a bank of natural light.



***The
Cau Ferrat and
Maricel Museum***
was the home and
study of artist and
writer Santiago
Rusiñol, one of the
most important figures
of the Modernisme
movement in
Catalonia. It is one
of the three museums
in Sitges located on
the shores of Sant
Sebastià beach.



CAIRO

Then there is Cairo. The first impressions came quick: the buildings were all the same color, and there is a bustle unlike many cities—maybe it is the 10 million people trying to cross the street. Not a liquor store in sight.

Thousands of taxis jockeyed for position in a smog-filled haze, accompanied by the staccato of cigarette smoke darting from car windows.

The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities was across the street from the hotel. The architect of the building was selected through an international competition in 1895, which was the first of its kind and was won by the French architect Marcel Dourgnon. The museum was inaugurated in 1902 by Khedive Abbas Helmy II and has become a historic landmark in downtown Cairo, home to some of the world's most magnificent ancient masterpieces.



At some point in being a tourist in Egypt one gets round to asking the question: Why are all the statues so similar and so perfect?

The artwork on the walls, “sunken relief” drawings all have idealistically drawn hands and feet. The males figures are lean, athletic and smooth. Created in 6th millennium BC and the 4th century AD, they served a few purposes, but generally to honor royalty.

When asked about the athletic nature of the statues, we were told that most Egyptian statues are idealized versions of the person portrayed.

Art was not intended for visual appreciation, but rather served functional and propagandistic purposes.

A system of guidelines and grids was used to put everything into proportion.

Copying the art or texts of predecessors was how artists often composed new works. The Egyptians had a great reverence for the past and repeating it was more common than creativity.

In fact, we were told that the royals were likely out of shape as they had servants to tend to their needs.

Everything on display is extremely well preserved.





[wanderlust]



The Great Pyramid of Giza

One night in Cairo at the Hilton Hotel, we caught a glimpse in the distance of what appeared to be a pyramid. Indeed, it was. The next day, after yet another hectic drive 11 miles to the south, we arrived at the Great Pyramid of Giza.

Like an aging movie star, it was remote and familiar. The ubiquitous tourist trade was in ample supply—camels, horses, tours, even carriages. The guides are aggressive as haggling over prices ensues.

Finally, you are off for a short tour around the pyramid and surrounding areas.

There is a surreal quality as the images of the Pyramids have been seen in dozens of Hollywood movies. As you shift your gaze, you see the Great Sphinx in the distance. The Sphinx is the oldest known monumental sculpture in Egypt and one of the most recognizable statues in the world. The archaeological evidence suggests that it was created by ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom during the reign of Khafre (c. 2558–2532 BC)

There is a moment when, if you stand or sit still on your horse or camel, you breathe in the history of something created in 2570 BC. It's an overwhelming sense locked in the imagination. And just like that, it ends.



NILE RIVER

To get to the Nile River cruise boats, one must get to the city of Aswan. It is a 600-mile journey that requires four hours by plane or nearly 13 hours by train. Of course, we chose the train.

The journey begins in Cairo, where one begins at the Ramses Train Station. As the train arrived, people packed onto it in an alarming manner. With local stops at each stop, the train grew lighter.

We wanted to see what a first-class lounge would be like on an Egyptian train. The first-class coach should really be called the smoking car because, as there was no alcohol, smoking cigarettes seemed to be the point of this lounge.

The sleeper car was decidedly comfortable.

We met some interesting passengers, had a perfectly good night's meal, and when we woke around 7 AM, it was a completely different world outside the windows.

The train heads south along the Nile. The Nile is the longest river in the world, measuring 4,132 miles. It starts at Lake Victoria and empties into the Mediterranean Sea. This is a river with a vast history, and one senses that as the window



to the right reveals men walking carts filled with sugar cane and dead animal carcasses laying on the sandy shores of the Nile. It is as if time has stopped. In some ways, it has...

Welcome to Aswan.

Aswan is a smaller version of Cairo. To be sure, there is a McDonald's, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and likely any day, a Starbucks, but for now, it is a popular city that sits on the Nile, with a substantial amount of river boats. Aswan is the "jewel of the Nile." Pink and gray

granite thrusts upward through the Nubian sandstone, forming mountains, cliffs, and jagged outcrops. There are countless mosques; there is also Archangel Michael's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, a towering cathedral in Coptic architecture—the architecture of the Copts, who form the majority of Christians in Egypt.

Security is a way of life in Egypt. In Cairo and in places like the Coptic Church, security runs high. Armed guards and blockades can be found at many hotels, including this Coptic church. But retail and restaurants flourish in the city of

Aswan—it is only until late one afternoon on a Friday that the azan, the call to prayer, can be heard by countless speakers throughout the city. These callers, called muezzinine, are a cacophony of sounds. It becomes a surreal moment in a backstreet hotel as the soundtrack shifts, the sun sets, and we are surely not in the West anymore.

The Sanctuary Sun Boat IV is a contemporary, chic, sleek boat with heavy art deco influences. There are 36 standard cabins, two presidential suites, and two royal suites. We are greeted as we enter the plank by the entire staff, who offer refreshments and introductions. We are divided into groups and assigned an English-speaking tour guide, who will accompany us to the various temples along the way. Afternoon tea will be served. Every night an activity is planned—tonight, after a gourmet dinner is served, we watch as traditional folkloric music and a “whirling dervish” perform.

As one looks around, it becomes clear that this journey invites all kinds of people—local Egyptians, a London-based Sufi businessman with his family, an elderly couple from Scotland, a couple from Cape Cod, a Brazilian opera singer and her daughter, and an Egyptian family with their California-based son-in-law. The staff is attentive, occasionally too attentive, but the dinner, which is buffet-style, is a nice start to this ride up the Nile.

Back in Cairo and ready to set sail for America. We are booked on a flight to Moscow. Leaving Cairo was quite unlike anything—security measures, repeated luggage checks, patdowns, and another luggage check as one boarded the plane. It’s five and a half hours to Moscow. We will not have a layover with no time to visit the city. Instead, we opt for a two-hour “nap room” and a five-minute shower at Moscow Sheremetyevo Airport.



Right:
Aswan Sheyakha Olah,
common retail outlet
on the streets.
In Edfu, a class visit to the
Temple.



SHOPPING IN ASWAN





MEXICO

*Short flights, great
food, wonderful
people, Mexico
is an easy
destination from
Los Angeles*

*Mexico City
San Miguel Allende
Isla Mujeres
Cancun
Holbox
Tulum
Puerto Villarta
Playa del Carmen
Cozumel
Guadalajara
Tijuana*





Mexico

“The lazy lights are pretty, we may end up in Mexico City”

—Paul McCartney

f

requently, we are asked, “Is Mexico safe?” which is ironic considering... But let’s leave politics for the pundits and Facebookers. Mexico is literally a feast of places to visit. From Los Angeles, Mexico City is a three-and-a-half-hour plane ride costing under \$300. Hotels, restaurants, and museums abound and are all reasonably priced. The people are extremely friendly. Due to its rich culture and history, Mexico ranks first in the Americas and seventh in the world for the number of UNESCO World Heritage

Sites. One of those is Miguel San de Allende, located 170 miles from Mexico City and a 10-hour drive from the US border. While the outlying areas of the town and municipality have changed over time, the historic center remains much as it was 250 years ago. The layout of the center of the city is mostly a straight grid, as was favored by the Spanish during colonial times. However, due to the terrain, many roads are not straight. There are no parking meters, no traffic signals, and no fast-food restaurants. And we are thankful for that. There are weddings by the hour, initiated by the callejoneada, a wedding parade that’s customary in San Miguel. The parade has a mariachi band and a donkey with tequila shots. Welcome to Mexico!

We have traveled to the west side of Mexico, where you will find Puerto Vallarta, a resort town on Mexico’s Pacific coast in Jalisco State. It is known for its beaches, water sports, and nightlife scene. Its cobblestone center is home to the ornate Nuestra Seora de Guadalupe church, boutique shops, and a range of restaurants and bars. El Malecón is a beachside promenade with contemporary sculptures as well as bars, lounges, and nightclubs. Made famous by American film director John Huston. Even though John Huston had

visited the town when it only had a few thousand souls in 1929 while navigating up the Pacific coast on one of his innumerable trips to his beloved Mexico, plus another time while scouting for locations for Typee (a movie he never shot), not much had changed when he came back in the early 1960s with a new movie project, “*The Night of the Iguana*,” and a location for the set called Mismaloya, tipped off by a local entrepreneur. The small town flourished with tourists, especially Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who had a house in town where they would fight, drink, make love, and make up. This is considered part of the so-called “Mexican Riviera,” a term coined by the Princess Cruise Line.

On the other side of the continent is the Mayan River. This is a stretch of Caribbean coastline on Mexico’s northeastern Yucatán Peninsula. It’s known for its numerous all-inclusive resorts, such as those in the town of Playa del Carmen, and its long beaches. To the south, Tulum is home to yoga retreats and the preserved ruins of

an ancient Mayan port city, perched on an outcrop above a white-sand beach. You could include Cancun, which on the “American side” is about as Las Vegas as a tourist attraction can get. Be warned—you will be dogged and hassled until you relent and enter an establishment. But if you travel a short distance south, you will come to Playa del Carmen. A party town, this is also where you can get aboard a boat and head to the island of Cozumel. Going further south, you will find Tulum, a town that sits on the Caribbean Sea. Here, you can experience a cenote—a sinkhole—and there are many. In Tulum, you can experience the Castillo, or castle, which is perched on the edge of a 12-meter limestone cliff, overlooking the Caribbean coast. Negotiating its

steep steps is best done sideways, a fact that will assert itself on the way down. There is something magical about the place, and upon setting foot on the warm white sands of the Caribbean, it is hard not to jump into the sea. And you will. No matter which coast or inland destination you choose, Mexico provides a unique experience for any traveler.

When we think of Mexico, we think, “So much, so close!” Anywhere you look, Mexico has offerings like a few other countries.





SALTON SEA

It is a place best seen in black and white.

Desolate, abandoned, and humid, the Salton Sea is the land that time forgot.

There is a sulfuric odor that typically shows up when the mercury and humidity are high and levels of hydrogen sulfide spike in the Salton Sea.

It is a 60-mile trek south on Highway 86.

Past Date Palms and towns with names like Mecca are a drive into the neo-noir film world of arid, barren landscapes dotted with motor homes, abandoned junk, and ghostly relics of a time now gone.

Billed as “Palm Springs-by-the-Sea,” restaurants, shops, and nightclubs also sprang up along the shores. The lake enjoyed immense popularity, especially among the rich and famous, as movie stars and recording artists flocked to the area. From Dean Martin to Jerry Lewis, Frank Sinatra, and the Beach Boys, the lake became a speedboat playground.

However, the Salton Sea’s bright lights would quickly fade in the 1970s, when the sea’s water level began rising after several years of heavy rains and increasing agricultural drainage. Shorefront homes, businesses, resorts, and marinas flooded several times until the water stabilized in 1980 after a series of conservation measures to reduce field run-off. However, for the many resort areas, it was too late. The salt and fertilizers in the run-off had accumulated to such a degree that they had reached toxic levels, which began a cycle of decay. As the algae fed on the toxins, it created massive amounts of rotten-smelling matter floating on the surface of the lake and suffocated many of the fish.





MONO LAKE

is a saline soda lake in Mono County, California, formed at least 760,000 years ago as a terminal lake in an endorheic basin. The lack of an outlet causes high levels of salts to accumulate in the lake which make its water alkaline.





Angels Flight

LOS ANGELES

C

reated in 1901 as vertical transportation for the Bunker Hill area of Downtown LA, it has been moved, rebuilt, and featured in at least forty movies.

There are two trains, named Olivet and Sinai, that run in opposite directions on a shared cable, travel at a 33 percent grade for 315 feet, and last about two minutes.

Rain in Los Angeles was once a rare commodity. And it changes everything. In itself, LA cannot be called a romantic town, unlike Paris or the European Venice. But when it rains, the streets shimmer, the sky grows moody, and the smell—its own intoxicating version of a confluence of oil, dirt, grass, salt, air, and oranges—lingers in the air.

That was the night this was shot.

The pavement has a gleam, and the buildings reveal their architectural details once hidden in dust and dirt.

The venerated Palm Trees with their windsway, those exotic symbols of another time and place, were brought to town in 1932 for the Olympic Games. It is the Mexican palm that lines the streets, part of an old \$100,000 city-wide beautification project. There are 150 miles of boulevards. The project employed over 400 workers from an unemployment relief program.

And, on the nights of the rare Santa Ana winds—the shift in the air, the spellcast of positive ions circulating—we dance.



Hollywood

CALIFORNIA

“No dream ever entirely disappears. Somewhere it troubles some unfortunate person and some day, when that person has been sufficiently troubled, it will be reproduced on the lot.”

—Nathanael West, *Miss Lonelyhearts*

a city on the edge—from early childhood, the threat of the “big one” (castostrophic earthquake) has hung over the city like an enduring fog. It has always felt like the price to be paid for living in something like paradise—for that is what LA is like most of the time. Now, add to the mix unending bad traffic, parking restrictions that require a substantial IQ to understand, humidity, and finally rents that resemble our neighbor to the north, and it is fair to suggest that this is a city in decline.

Then there’s Hollywood. Actually, only one studio is in Hollywood (the iconic Paramount Pictures), and the rest are located on the outskirts of Hollywood. What poses as Hollywood is the tourist attraction, Hollywood and Highland, complete with heavily decorated elephants. A detail of the main courtyard of the center, Babylon Court, was modeled after the famous Babylon set from D.W. Griffith’s silent epic “Intolerance.” Oh Hollywood. Just to the south of this attraction is the actual Hollywood Boulevard, where, unlike what the Kinks song said, you are not very likely to see any movie stars, but you will see an array of characters in costume, ranging from Spiderman to Willy Wonka, who work in costume for tips. Without a rumble, unbeknownst to the pedestrians on the street, a subway beneath the street stops at Hollywood and Highland on its way to the next tourist attraction, Universal Studios. To the east of Hollywood and Highland, the landscape is littered with tourist attractions: wax museums, the Guinness Book of Records, and Scientology.

It’s not glamorous—it has the sheen of a carnival attraction without much attraction—but souvenirs abound with a flurry of cheap signage, all indicating that you have been here.

↔ *filming Gangster Squad, Park Plaza Hotel*

LOS ANGELES

CITY OF PORTRAITS

Now, everyone's a photographer.

Back in 2002, the first so-called selfie was taken. History has it that in 1839, a young Robert Cornelius took a self-portrait in his front yard—and even this is controversial, though the information comes from the Library of Congress. Regardless, one thing that is a fact is that now everyone can be a photographer—are they a good photographer? That is left to the eye of the beholder.

One way or another, we like to look at faces. Historical, celebrity, family, even instructional (there was a time in Driver's Ed that they showed horrible accidents to provoke the good driver in you), the photograph persists as a small machine that captures time and memory.

Like us, the photograph will fade with time.

The average photograph will last 100 years and will likely fade in 50.

Like a memory, it depends on where you keep it.

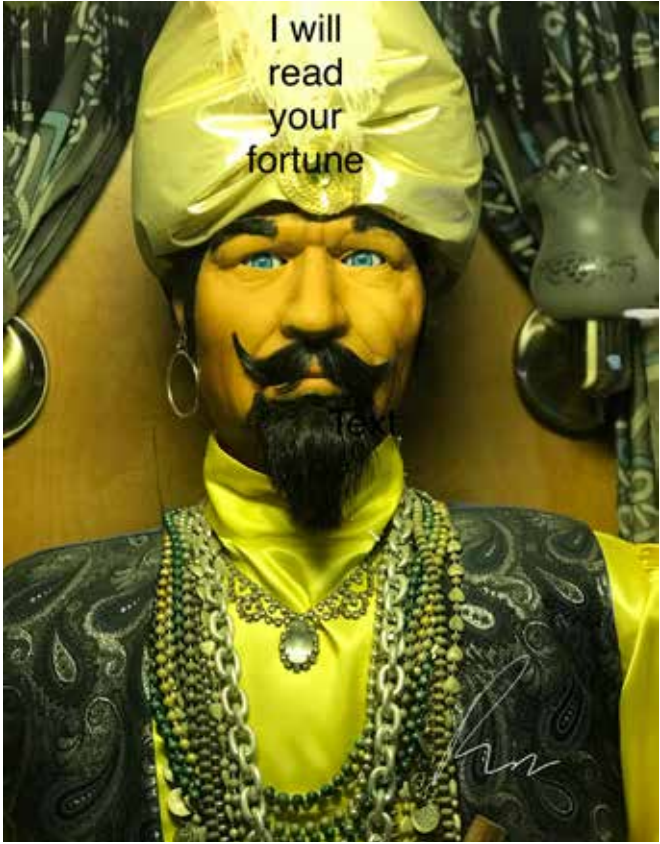
We forget that the camera, especially the digital phone camera, was not always there. There was a time when making pictures was expensive and slow. Tri-X film, the coveted black and white film with fast grain, cost around \$12 and about the same amount to develop—for 36 images.

In 1976's *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, alien Thomas Newton is capable of transmitting translucent images without equipment. The first working digital camera would not appear until 1981. All of which suggests that it's an evolving art, and it also means that unless you carried a camera before that, you didn't capture the moments. Like you can now.

And AI? Like the introduction of the Internet in 1993, it will be, for a time, a wild west. It is a tool and should be viewed as such. There will be abuses, scandals, litigation, and debate about its purpose and its effect. But it will not go away.











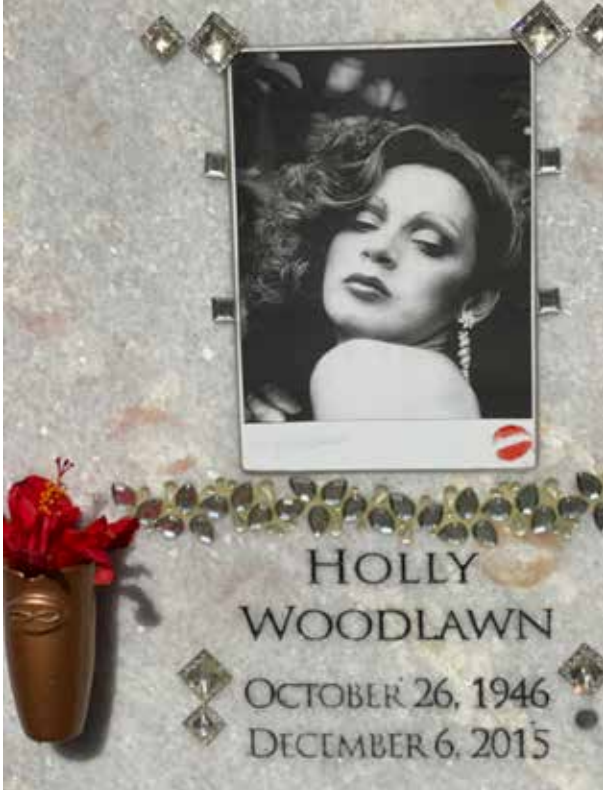
had to grow up here to know it’s a myth, a legend, and yet—people come from faraway places to visit and see the Hollywood sign.

The best thing about Hollywood and Los Angeles is that they were both built in the 1930s. It has the allure of art deco and a Cedric Gibbons set. A facade, to be sure, but Beverly Hills really does have beautiful mansions. The ocean is near, the desert is close, and there could be snow on the mountains behind you.

For long-time locals, we recall the Bel Air fires of 1961, earthquakes (especially the February 9th, 1971), riots, gas station lines, smog, and an ever-changing landscape.

There was a time when we went to a dump on the side of a hill to drop off large, bulky items. That is now the Getty Museum off the 405. That is LA.

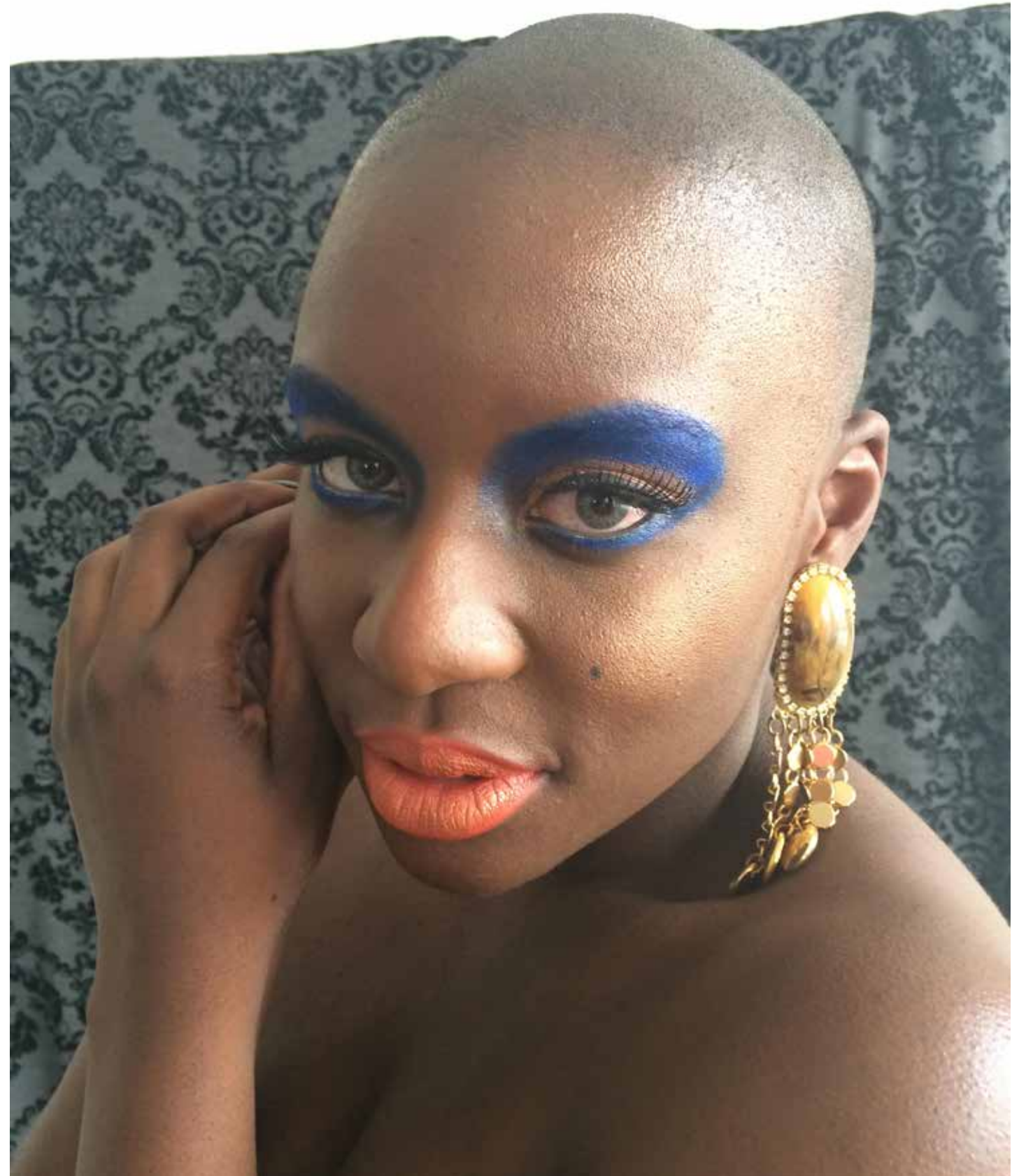
And yet, a persistent beauty lingers in the little detours from the mass freeways; little streets off Beachwood Drive such as Cheremoya, Graciosa, and Hollyridge Drive feel like another country. There is a moment when you leave the Hollywood Sign in Beachwood Canyon and the view suddenly opens up to a lake in the middle of the hills. Built in 1924, the Hollywood Reservoir, or Lake Hollywood, is a stunning example of the contradictions of the city—a city at once horrid with banal strip malls and yet a beautiful postcard sits in the glens of Hollywood.



Urban Light Assemblage by Chris Burden



So
[wanderlust]



*“All these places had their moments
With lovers and friends, I still can recall
Some are dead and some are living
In my life, I've loved them all.”*
—John Lennon



Wanderlust



TRAVELS HERE AND THERE