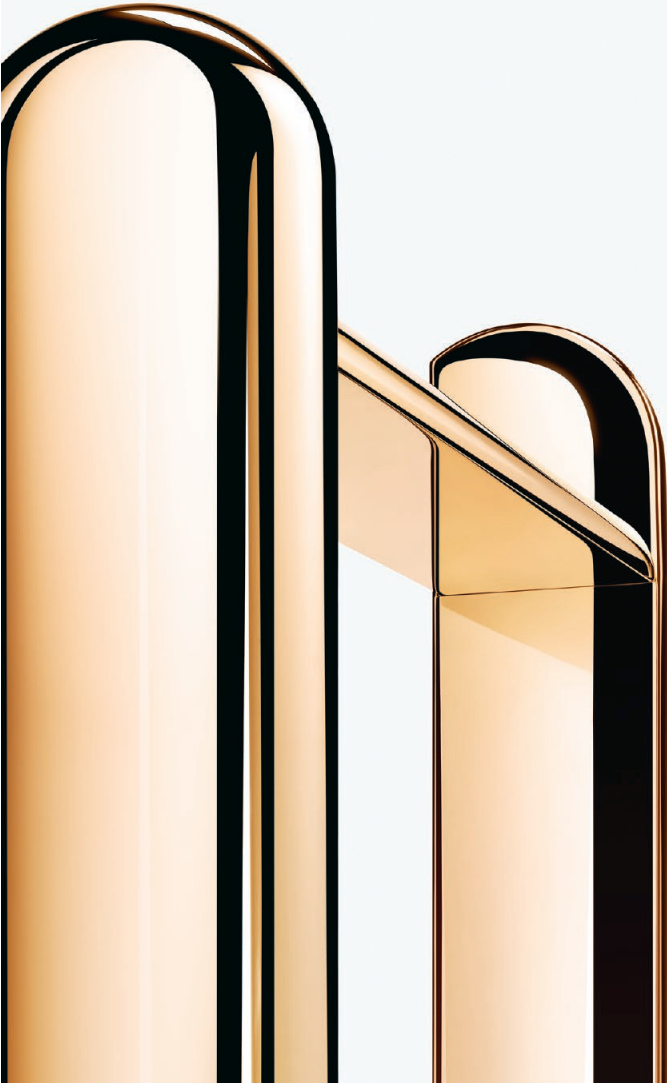


TRUE CONNECTION



TANK  
*Cartier*



# Dear readers,



Editors-in-chief rarely make the cover. Unless, of course, their name happens to be Alicia Keys. When we got together with the global superstar at the end of last year and came up with the inspirational brainwave of her guest-editing an issue of our magazine, one thing was certain: this issue was going to be different. A new look, an entirely unique signature paired with inspiring content and values that Mercedes-Benz and our brand partner Alicia Keys share out of a deep-felt conviction.

The theme of our collaborative issue came to us quickly: True Connection. To ourselves, to others, in sustainable harmony with nature. Through our guest editor-in-chief, we had the chance to meet amazing women such as her high school teacher Aziza Miller. What an emotional interview we had with the person who showed the 15-time Grammy winner very early on what empowerment really means in practice – a topic that is important to the She's Mercedes Initiative as well as to me personally. And last but certainly not least, Alicia Keys herself, who champions women's musical talent with her She Is The Music foundation. Acting responsibly – this value also connects the musician with Mercedes-Benz.

And we have even more for you to look forward to: stories surrounding two of our products told in an entirely new way. We start with a digital staging of the compact, sporty EQA from our all-electric Mercedes-EQ family in five sustainable cities. We also asked three crypto artists to create a special feature to present the EQS, our first all-electric luxury saloon, from their point of view. Discover our new models from a completely different perspective!

Enjoy your read!

Yours truly,

Bettina Fetzer

Vice President  
Communications & Marketing  
Mercedes-Benz AG

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Get connected with us! You can find She's Mercedes on LinkedIn and at @shesmercedes on Instagram. Go to YouTube to discover surprising and inspiring videos from the world of She's Mercedes.





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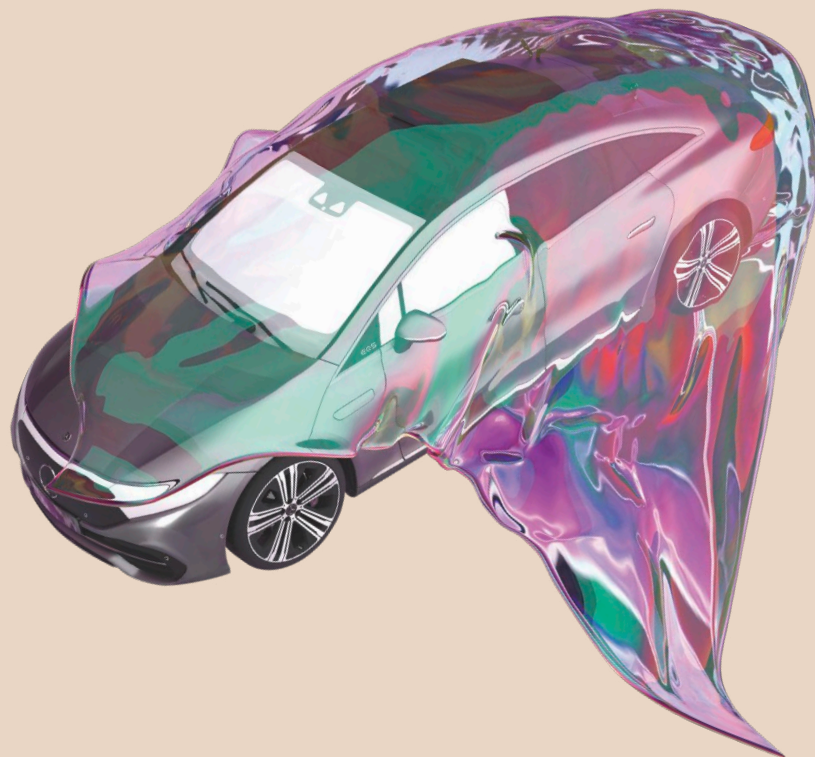
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Photos: Ken nedi Carter (2), Eva Baales, Leoor Wild, Gabriel Mendoza Weiss, Johanna Jaskowska



## Rebekka Reinhard



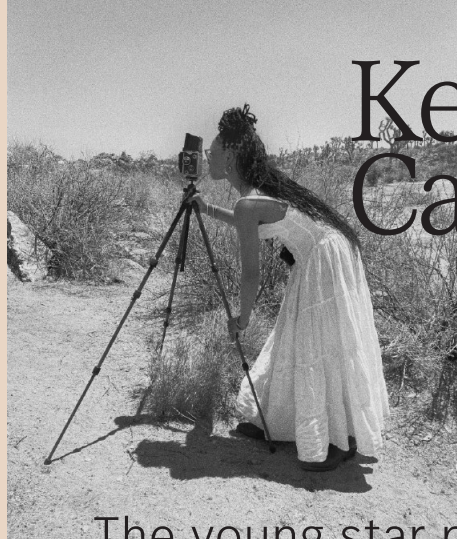
"I have a strong introverted side and this topic strikes a real chord with me," says philosopher Rebekka Reinhard, whose essay explores the power of introversion. "I want to encourage everyone who shares this trait to embrace their own inwardness – and inspire them to give voice to their thoughts!"

## Leeor Wild

Leeor Wild photographed kick-boxer Janet Todd for the article "Show of strength". Her goal? "To highlight Janet's power and athleticism," she says. "She happily went along with all my ideas throughout the shoot. Her confidence was a huge inspiration."



## Kennedi Carter



The young star photographer took photos of Alicia Keys exclusively for us, illuminating concepts that are important to the musician. "After talking with Alicia I wanted to capture the landscape and solitude – in the most positive sense." Carter travelled with the G-Class from Los Angeles to San Diego for the shoot. She cites her own three keys to happiness as love, spontaneity and vulnerability.

## Ciani-Sophia Hoeder

"When a group of people pool their energies, magic happens," says the Berlin-based author. She interviewed three young musicians from Alicia Keys' She Is The Music foundation about their turning points in life. Her own personal watershed moment was founding the "RosaMag" online magazine.







# MESSIKA

PARIS

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around the world.

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Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Guide to fuel consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and electricity consumption of all new passenger car models", which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH at [www.dat.de](http://www.dat.de).





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Chapter 1





# WELCOME TO MY WORLD








The world according to Alicia Keys: she shares her thoughts on what nourishes her inner landscape and creative ambitions with photographer Kennedy Carter. Carter's images of the journey capture the essence of the musical icon's pursuit of limitless possibility against the wild backdrop of the Southern Californian desert

Words by Alicia Keys

Photos by Kennedy Carter





“My biggest dream is to remain unlimited, in touch with that curiosity and passion, and to just continue to be overflowing with creativity”











“Silence really inspires me a lot. Meditation helps me to directly connect to myself”







“In writing, I finally found the courage to show my true colors.  
So I can block out the noise of the world and focus on my voice”



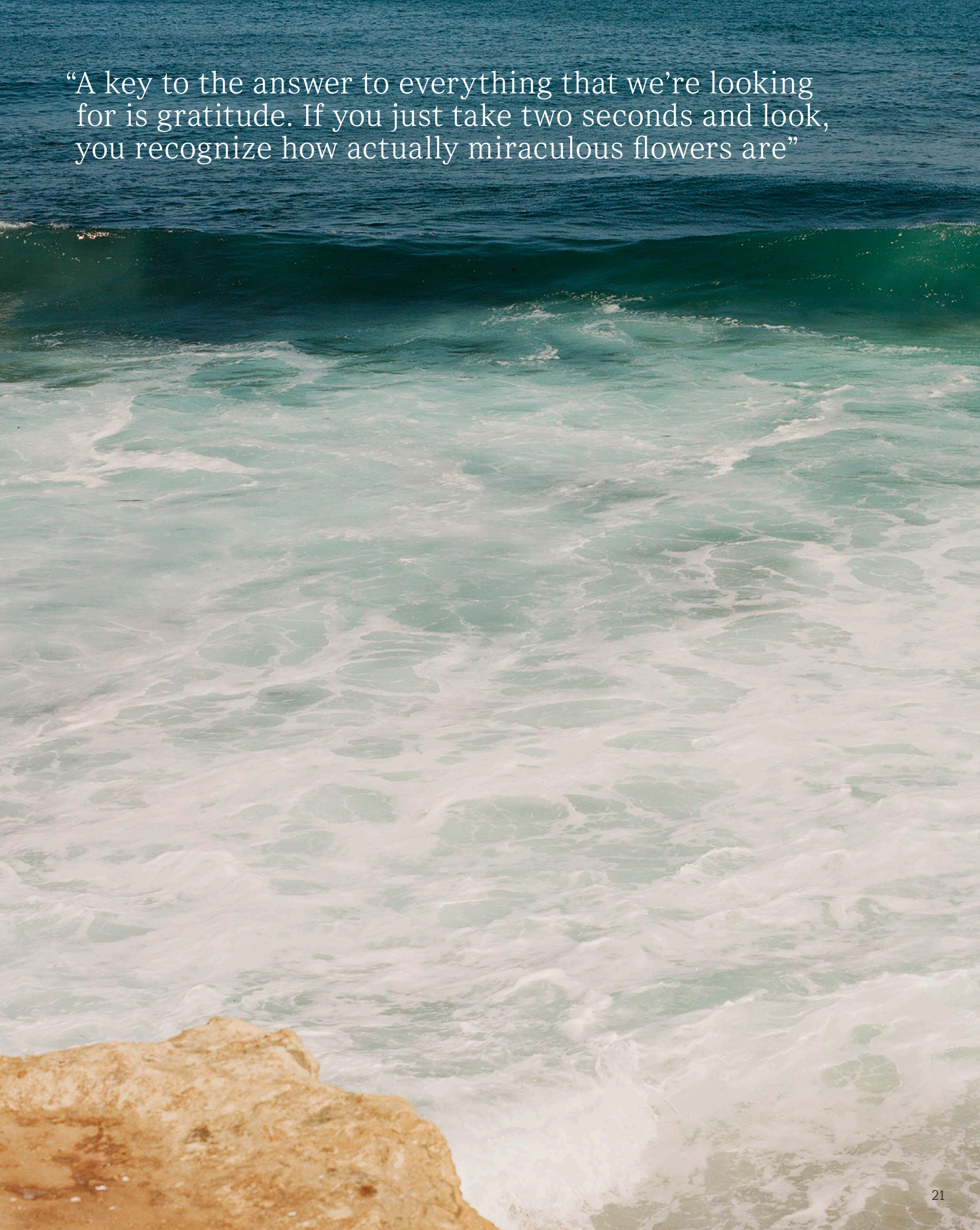








“A key to the answer to everything that we’re looking for is gratitude. If you just take two seconds and look, you recognize how actually miraculous flowers are”







“My deeply sincere intention is that we all find a way to freedom, however it feels – each person has an individual idea of it”











“I love the beach, the water, the sky. The emotions and feelings you get from those things really end up creating something from nothing. Like a melody, a song, something that changes people’s lives”





# *Life is a crazy, beautiful, challenging surprise, isn't it?*

*All of us have been changed so deeply and completely over the last year and a half and as we emerge from one of the most difficult times of our collective lives, I often find myself thinking about what I want to take into the future.*

## *I realize more than ever it's a choice.*

*The life we want to build for ourselves, for our families, is a choice.*

*Do I want to work so hard that I never see my family? Or do I want to create boundaries and honor them?*

*Do I want to travel at the feverish pace I once did? Or do I decide that not only for my well-being, but for the sake of the planet, I can be more conscious of the way I'm moving in the world?*

*Do I have to pack my schedule to the max with back-to-back zooms and phone calls where I can barely sneak in a lunch, or do I want to create space for my creativity, my health and peace of mind?*





*And as we see the world around us becoming more violent, unjust and full of unrest, what part do we want to play in learning more, DOING more to expand beyond our own four walls and preconceived ideals? How can we redefine our own worlds and the stereotypes we've been taught? What do we want to teach and show our children? And how can we bring diversity and growth into our homes, our businesses, our spending habits and our lives?*

*There's a lot on my mind.*

*But I know it all comes down to choices. We get to choose who we want to be and what life we live.*

*We don't have to accept what's always been. We can write, create, dream the future.*

*We are important, we are powerful! And that ridiculous voice in our head that tries to convince us otherwise is NOT real. In fact, I believe that voice is the insecurities that have been inherited from the people closest to us. It's not their fault, they inherited it, too!*



*At some point, we have to make a choice and decide who we want to be!  
Do we want to be a person who spent our whole life wishing we would have tried that crazy idea we talked ourself out of or invested in the thing that has been a dream of ours since we were a little girl?  
Or do we want to let the voices in our head win?*

*I've been there! I always thought everyone knew more than I did, I always thought that I had to listen to the ones with the most experience.  
I thought I had to get approval from everyone else and be validated by every opinion.  
I thought someone else had the more creative ideas, or the better strategy, or the better business plan, or the better solution, but NO!  
I realize it's ME, it's inside me!*

*And all I had to do was  
to choose to trust myself.*

*To believe in my capacity, my capability, my wisdom, my (dare I even say) genius! I had to trust and believe in myself and now that I do, I truly don't trust anyone else more than myself. Of course, I have people whose opinion I respect and thoughts help contribute to mine but ultimately, it's me.*



*Ultimately, it's you.*

*And we have everything we need  
Right here. Inside.*

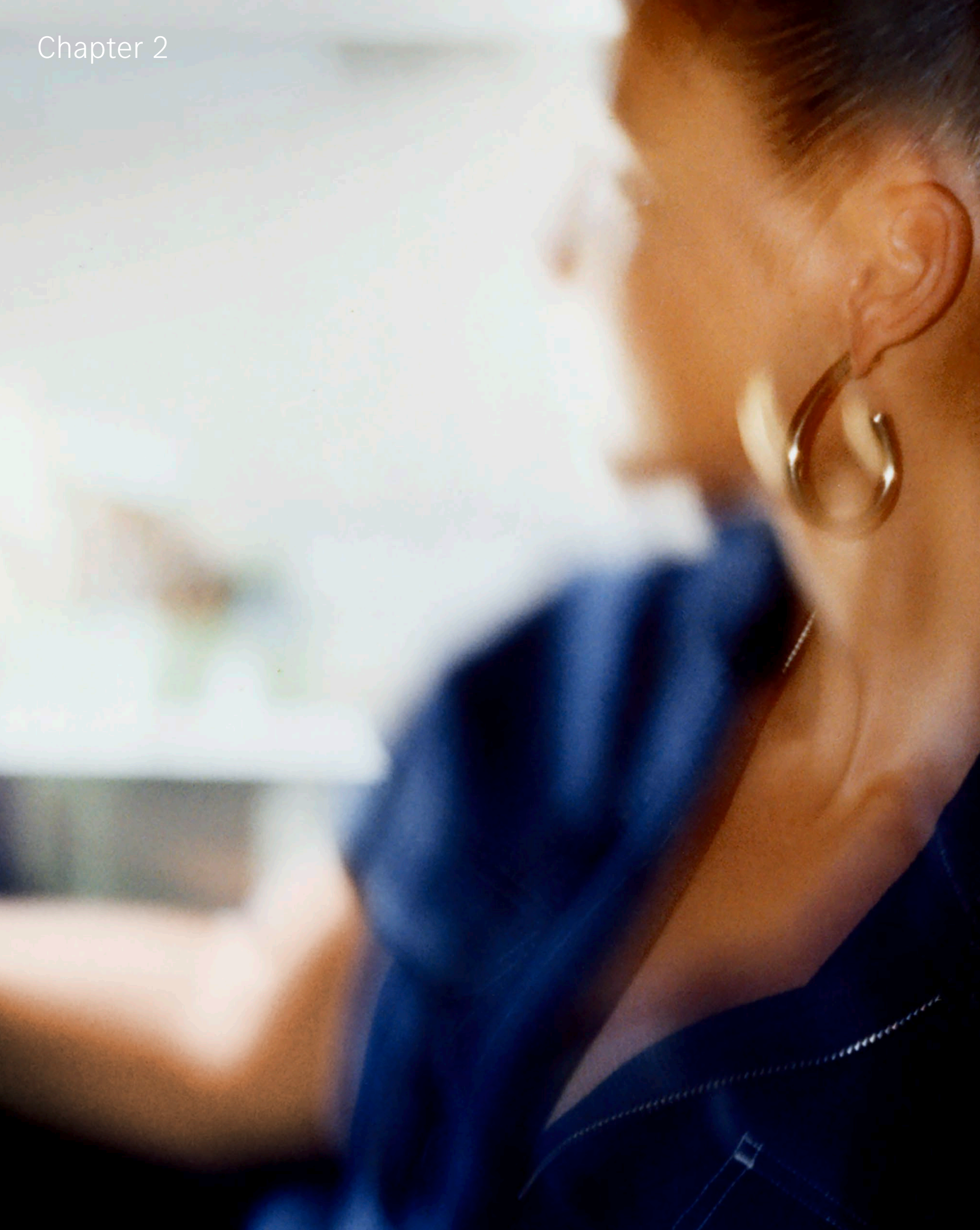
*So look no further  
Because there she is  
And whatever life she wants  
She can have.*

*Look no further  
Because there she is  
And whatever dreams she has  
She can manifest.*

*The choice is yours.  
I hope you CHOOSE you!*

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. L. L.' or similar, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.









# JOURNEY TO MYSELF

Photo: Kennedy Carter







# “THE ACCESS WITHIN US IS UNLIMITED”

Always staying true to yourself, poised and authentic: almost no other musician embodies these values like Alicia Keys. And the world star is honest about how challenging that can be. In this interview, Alicia looks back on her great successes and toughest battles ... and shares her dreams with us



Alicia, you are currently celebrating the anniversary of your award-winning debut album “Songs in A Minor”. What comes to mind when you think about yourself back then as a 20-year-old newcomer?

This crazy girl on the street quickly rose to become the biggest thing on the American R&B scene. What did all that do to you?

In your autobiography “More Myself”, you describe your mother as a role model in terms of courage.

How do you keep your authenticity in the entertainment industry, where you are certainly not an outsider?

At the same time, you caution that the entertainment industry can be dangerous.

Because it feels good to say no?

More than anything, how excited I was. When the album came out, I went out and bought 15 copies. It was a thrill. I went out onto the street, handed them out to strangers and asked: “Have you heard this? You’ll love it!” They didn’t even know who I was, just a crazy lady handing out tapes!

I especially remember the battles I had to fight when people were trying to mould me into someone different than I was. That girl was very tough and strong-minded. She knew what she liked and what she didn’t. On the other hand, she was also vulnerable, insecure and inexperienced. But I felt really strong because I held on to myself, and that is probably the hardest thing to do in life.

She taught me not to be taken advantage of. You know that people will take from you as much as you let them take. Business people are always about marketing and sales. It takes away the soul. I learned that early, and it’s a big one.

There is a tricky space between business and art. It’s a delicate, special thing. On the one hand, you are striving for creativity and truth, while on the other you have to figure out how to get people to actually buy into it. For me, it’s about building a true connection that people can believe in. Music in particular creates so many genuine opportunities for this.

It can be very shallow. That is dangerous because you can lose yourself if you are trying to keep up with the expectations of others. Especially when it comes to selling something – whether it’s a film, a song or a play. That is why I fought so hard to make sure that I really wasn’t changing myself. I could not live like that. I had to struggle through it, but now I feel solid just being myself.

I had to learn how to do that first! I didn’t want to let people down or lose opportunities.



In 2006, your day-to-day life had become overwhelming and you travelled to Egypt after the death of your beloved grandmother. You write that at first you didn't dare to leave this "fairy tale" that your career had become. What made you take time out?

You give young female artists much-needed support with your She Is The Music initiative, founded in 2019 to promote young female talent in the music industry.

From that point of view, you must be glad to be mother to two boys: Egypt, 10, and Genesis, 6.

As an entrepreneur, you've tried out new genres, like founding the Soulcare lifestyle and cosmetics brand in 2020.

And no doubt you've already got some new plans in the pipeline?

You have to listen to your inner self. We are not conditioned this way. Children are taught: "Do this because I said so." We grow up without knowing what our intuition is. It took me a long time to allow myself to take my inner voice seriously and to set boundaries and create space for myself. I can actually create my own schedule. For a long time, I did not know that I could do this. And it took me to the place where I realised that I would be hurting myself if I didn't. I implemented those things, and it really has changed my life.

I love to be the big sister. Because I know how difficult it is when you can't talk to anyone about your life in show business. It can be really hard finding your tribe – people who actually care about you. When you're young and starting out, it can be so hard to protect yourself. This is especially true for women.

I don't know if it would have been easier to have had daughters. I think, though, that there is a reason why the woman who created "Girl on Fire" and "Superwoman" went on to have two sons – so that she can help them navigate how to become men and treat women with respect. I often think about that for my boys.

I feel like I created a new way to connect with people! A beautiful conversation about how to take care of yourself without feeling guilty about it.

I'm more creative than I've ever been. My dreams and my ability to dream are only getting better. Society tries to make us think that you have a peak in your career, and there is a limit over you. I truly disagree with that! To this day I see mothers, daughters and grandmothers at the same show. It is amazing to me! I created what I wanted – no limits. The access within us is unlimited. I am really excited about all the things I am even yet to dream.



Insight into the backstage area: when Kennedy Carter visited Alicia Keys for us she snapped this vibrant still life.





“For me, it’s  
about building  
a true connection  
that people  
can believe in.  
Music in particular  
creates so  
many genuine  
opportunities  
for this”



What do you do when fate, your fellow humans or self-doubt slow you down? Hayley Arceneaux, Marie Bockstaller and Mehret Mandefro all found ways to turn impediments into inspiration





# Hayley Arceneaux

She survived childhood cancer to bring hope to others – soon as the youngest American to ever visit space

Text by Josefine Klatt

When Hayley Arceneaux visited NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas with her parents and brother in 2001, she had never imagined launching into space herself one day. But the awestruck ten-year-old could see the allure of becoming an astronaut. Just a few short months after the family trip, however, she got an unexpected diagnosis: bone cancer, a tumour above her left knee.

What followed was more than ten chemotherapy sessions and an operation to remove her knee and parts of her femur, which were replaced with a titanium prosthesis inside her leg. She developed a close relationship with the staff at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee during her course of treatment. And as soon as she recovered, she made a decision: This is exactly where I want to work when I grow up. "Last year I landed my dream job as a physician assistant at St. Jude," the 29-year-old says today. "I take care of inpatients with leukaemia and lymphoma. Being there for these brave children is my whole purpose in life. They inspire me every day."

A couple of months ago when Arceneaux received a phone call with the extraordinary offer to take part in Inspiration4, a charity-based tourism space mission, she initially had trouble believing what she heard. But then she began to see it as a unique opportunity. "I usually follow my heart when making decisions, but in this case it felt like fate," says Arceneaux, who will be on duty as the crew's medical officer. "I'm so honoured to go on this mission, knowing that we

will be raising money for cancer research to make a difference and find a cure." Her decision to commit to the adventure is partly in honour of her father, who died of cancer a few years ago. Scheduled to start on 15 September, the training for the mission has required intensive preparation including a series of stress tests, emergency training, practice getting in and out of her spacesuit, and space mission simulations.

Entrepreneur and pilot Jared Isaacman is financing and leading what will be the world's first all-civilian space mission. Raising funds for research at the children's hospital is a matter close to his heart, and the target is ambitious – 200 million dollars, about half of which he is donating from his private fortune. There are three other seats on board besides Isaacman's own, one of which he gave to staff from St. Jude Children's Hospital and one he donated to a raffle to raise funds for St. Jude. Each crew member represents a particular pillar in this "Mission: Possible". In Arceneaux's case, it is "Hope," because the endeavour is about so much more than just orbiting the earth as the youngest American and the first astronaut with a prosthesis. "It's an honour to represent patients going through cancer treatment and those who have survived and to be able to show them what life after cancer can look like," she says. "Anything is possible – and the sky is no longer the limit."



# Marie Bockstaller

She gave up a career as a scientist to follow her passion for pastries. Embodying appreciation is her raison d'être

Text by Josefine Klatt

Veering away from a mapped-out career path can be scary – or absolutely fulfilling. French-born Marie Bockstaller studied psychology and neuroscience in Munich, had received impressive grants from renowned research institutes and pharmaceutical companies, and was about to embark on a stellar career in neurochemistry. “It all looked great on paper, but it felt wrong,” she says. So she quit and started working for a food start-up. She loved her work there despite all the overtime hours. “My boss understood how to deal with people and motivate them,” she says. It was an approach that Bockstaller later came to adopt as an entrepreneur.

When she became pregnant in 2017, she decided to complete a remote apprenticeship as a pastry chef, a dream that she would never have allowed herself in the past. “If you’re good at something at school, that becomes the path you’re supposed to follow. But then I did something for no better reason than because I felt like it,” she says. Aged 27 at the time, she worked full time, hit the books and baked at night – then passed the exam a few weeks before the birth of her daughter in France. During her parental leave, Bockstaller wondered how things would pan out afterwards. Would anything “real” ever come out of the confectionery thing? The notion of appreciation lingered in her mind as well.

Combining the two, she developed the idea for Modern Bakery using the slogan “instead of flowers,” and redefined the world of business gifts. Her concept: handmade biscuits in lovingly designed boxes that bosses could give to their employees to mark a range of occasions. For this Munich resident, showing appreciation is synonymous with the concept of New Work.

She initially ran her business as a one-woman operation, renting space in bakeries to produce her madeleines to order, and taking care of the website, sales and marketing. She quickly ran out of time for creative development, though. So she looked for small bakeries and commissioned a workshop for disabled people to take over the packaging process. During the pandemic, the now 32-year-old further outfitted the boxes to include personal voice messages that can be accessed via QR code. In this way, companies can reinforce their relationship with their employees from their home offices too.

Even though things are going well, Bockstaller wants to sell her business, preferably to someone who shares her vision and wishes to expand on it. In the meantime, she has developed her own partner and mentoring programmes to help others step into self-employment. Motivating people is what drives her and the gift that she hopes to pass on.



## How I found my way









# Mehret Mandefro

Because she reaches more people with films than with research, this doctor combines both – with the aim of achieving a more just society

Text by Caroline Whiteley

“The reality is, I don’t think you’re going to get this.” These were the discouraging words that Dr Mehret Mandefro received from a colleague when she asked for advice about applying to a prestigious scholarship programme that few doctors at her level had ever received. The scene unfolds in “All of Us”, the 2008 documentary starring Mandefro’s career-defining quest to uncover how issues like systemic racism and poverty contribute to the spread of HIV. Not only would she go on to receive the grant, but the documentary would also set the Harvard-trained physician and anthropologist on her path to becoming an award-winning filmmaker who brings “visual medicine”, as she calls her unique stories, to the big screen.

Leaving the medical field behind to become a full-time creative might seem like an unusual choice. But Mandefro has built a bridge between both worlds, drawing from her interdisciplinary background to fulfil the mission of achieving a more just society through gripping tales. Today, the Ethiopian-American filmmaker describes “All of Us” as an “Aha!” moment in her life, when she realised that the stories people shared with her were too important to be heard by just a small audience. “You can publish academic papers and maybe ten people will read them,” she says. “Or you can make films and have a real public conversation.”

But how does one bring societally relevant themes to the screen in such a way that they become award-winning films? An example being “The Namesake”,

based on the novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri, which played a role in influencing Mandefro. Storytelling is the key component and a defining characteristic of living in the African diaspora, says Mandefro, who grew up in the US. “I fell in love with stories listening to my family and trying to understand a place I had a connection to that I had not physically seen at the time.”

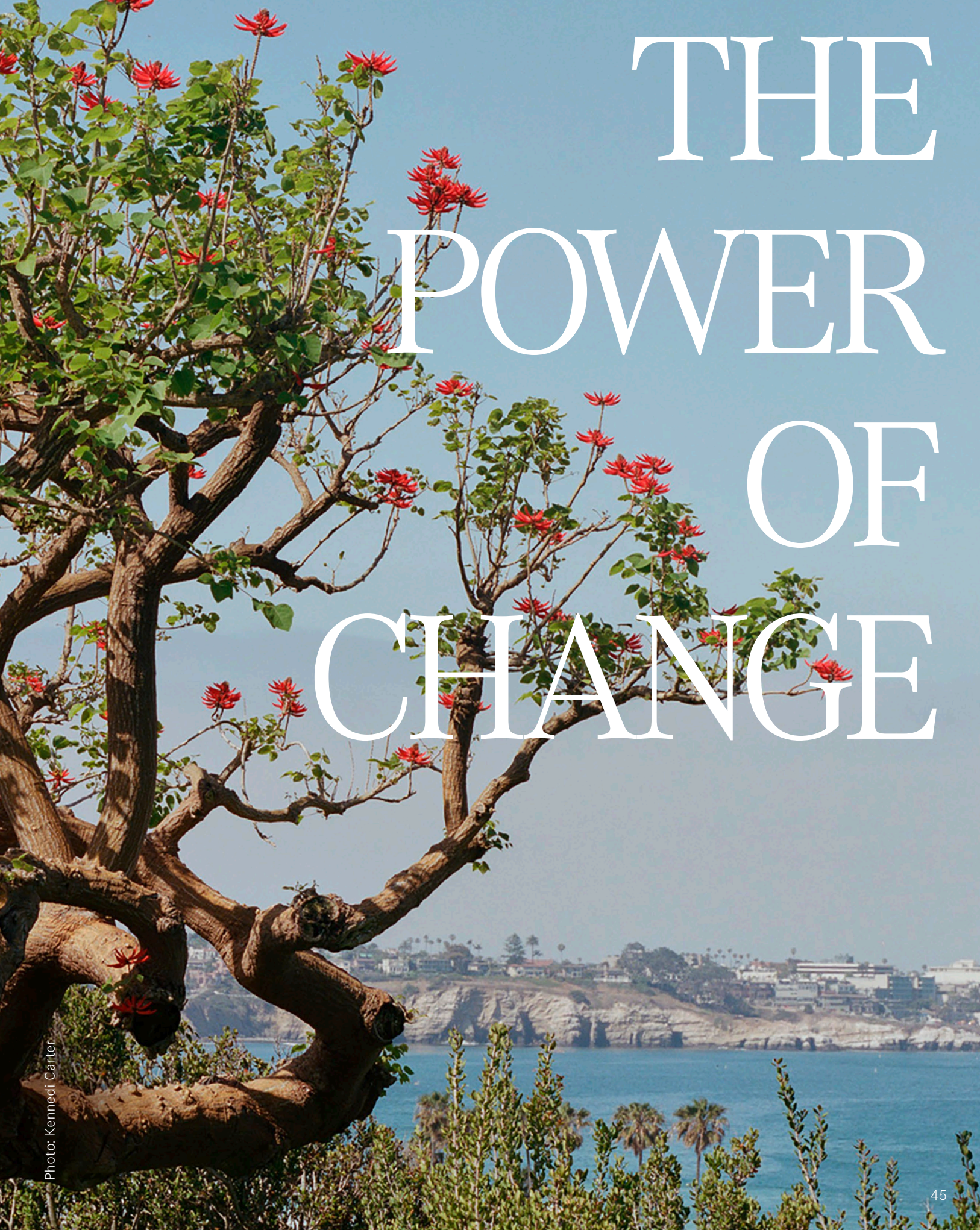
Five years ago, however, she returned to her Ethiopian roots. She has since split her time between New York, where she leads the production company Truth Aid, and Addis Ababa. There she works as the executive producer and director of Social Impact at Ethiopian entertainment channel Kana TV. She is also a founding member of Ethiopia Creates, a multidisciplinary organisation that advocates for Ethiopia’s creative economy.

Embracing change is a central theme in Mandefro’s career. “If you stay open, life becomes this freeing place. You start to figure out and learn about yourself instead of holding on to what everyone else expects of you,” she says. Mandefro also masters the challenges of treading unfamiliar ground thanks to the support of trusted people like her producing partner Lacey Schwartz Delgado and Alicia Keys. With them and other creatives, she produced the Emmy-nominated documentary “How it feels to be free” about Black women in the entertainment industry. “I’m a firm believer in connecting with friends and like-minded people, because they are the ones with whom you can actually move mountains,” she says.







A large, gnarled tree with red flowers in the foreground, overlooking a coastal town and the ocean.

# THE POWER OF CHANGE

Photo: Kennedy Carter



Text by Verena Richter  
Photos by Leeor Wild and Eva Baales





# SHOW

# OF

Kick-boxer Janet Todd and artist Caroline Denervaud have one thing in common: they are constantly in motion. While one moves around the ring powered by her physical strength, the other's movements are dance-like, flowing motions on her canvas. Two different ways of expressing inner strength

# STRENGTH







Flowing transitions:  
the two women captured  
in typical movements.  
Denervaud painting with  
her whole body,  
Todd about to strike





Attack and defence: Todd  
and Denervaud follow  
intuition rather than intellect  
while in action

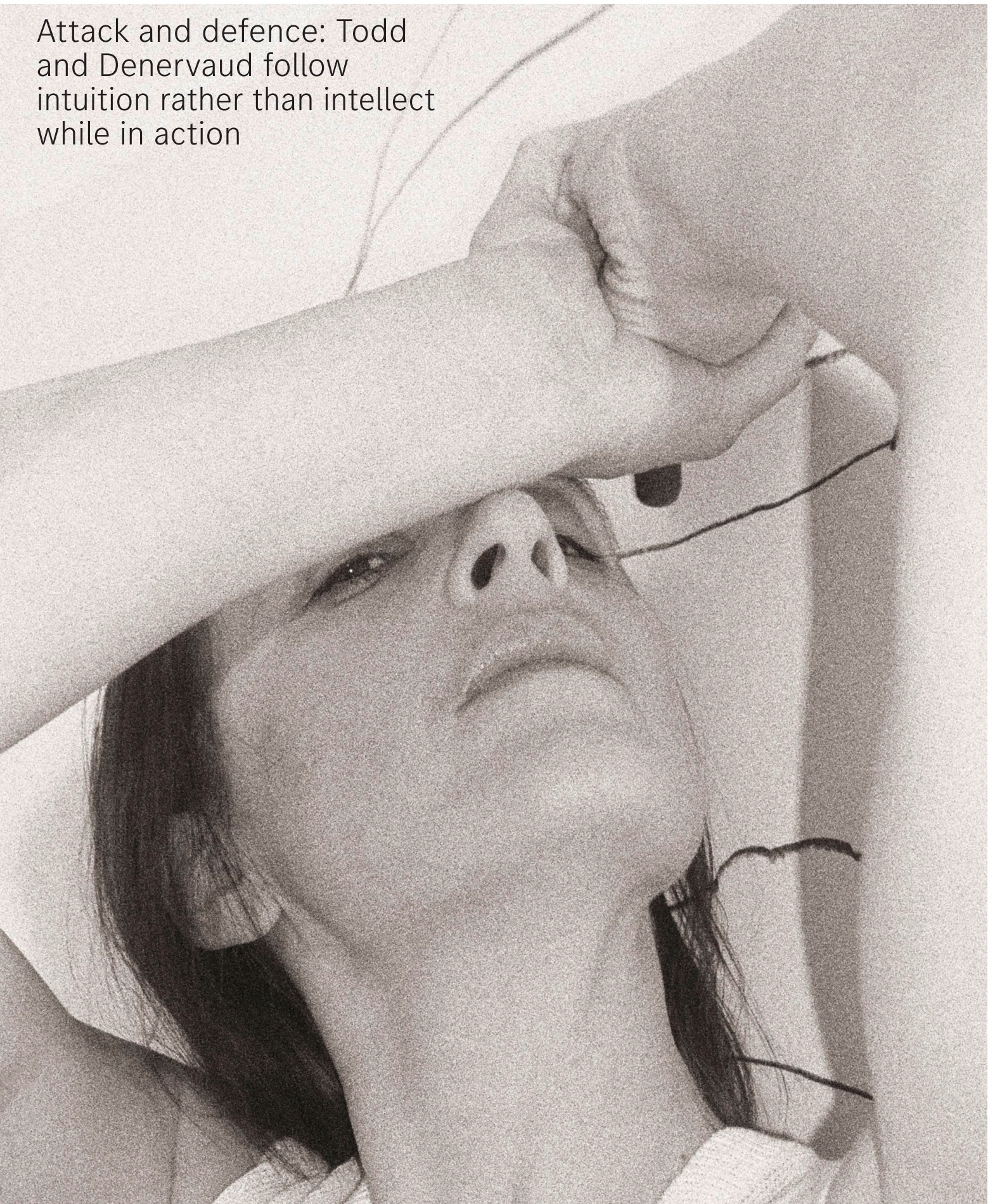






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Hair and make-up: Ciara Maccaro





Photographed for "SZ magazine"





# Caroline Denervaud combines her two passions: dance and painting



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Hair: Sachi Yamashita  
Make-up: Samuel Ruffin Hendrix

“I think with my knee,” Joseph Beuys once revealed. Meaning that artistic thinking has little to do with the linear logic of the mind. The dancer and painter Caroline Denervaud also leaves it to her body to sort out much of what others try to solve with their heads: “I can express myself much more clearly through movement than through words,” explains the 42-year-old. She felt this as a young girl and, after graduating from high school, moved from Lausanne to London to study expressive dance at the Laban Centre: “When I was younger, I loved the rigour of classical ballet. But over time I began to focus on quite the opposite: on letting go. I found a way to be myself.” She was happy. At least, for a year. Then she fell during training and injured her knee so badly that she had to give up her dream. “It wasn’t just my body that was injured, but my ego as well.”

Her goal had been ripped from under her. It was difficult to readjust her compass. First she dropped out of her studies at the Paris Academy of Art after two years, then she tried the Studio Berçot fashion school. Nothing spoke to her the way

art did. She continued to paint, but would not let others see her pictures. She had also started dancing again: “I realised that it doesn’t take a degree to be a dancer. We all have movement in us: we’re all human beings.” And again, her words reflect Beuys’ dictum: “Every human being is an artist.”

Caroline Denervaud fused her talents together and finally began to present her work to the public. She lay down on a canvas on the floor, a pencil in her hand, and began to draw while dancing: “It was a revelation.” Suddenly everything made sense: the dancing, the painting, the fashion studies. “What I wear on the canvas plays a huge role.” A black hoody becomes the form itself; a white dress takes on traces of colour in the course of her work. She does not listen to music: “It would have too much influence on my movements.” So, how does she know when the drawing is finished? “I feel it. When I dance, it’s as if my mind is switched off.”

Afterwards she fills in the outlines with paint. However, first she has to make sense of the picture: “Figuring out what is the top and bottom, then selecting the colours.” A process that is at the same time both intellectual and intuitive: “Sometimes one colour enhances another, sometimes it diminishes it. It’s all about balance.” About the outer and inner harmony. Showing not only how we move, but what moves us.



## Janet Todd feels completely free when practising martial arts



She wears her long hair austere-ly tied back. Her name is embla-zoned in white letters with a golden background on her burgundy shorts: Janet Todd. She bobs up and down in the ring, barefoot. Her right foot moves forward, and her knee shoots out. A cheer from the crowd. But Janet is not at all distracted. The kick-boxer and two-time Pan American Muay Thai Cham-pion keeps her calm despite being tensed, ready to pounce.

“I started with apparatus gymnastics,” says the 36-year-old. She grew up in Hermosa Beach, a sunny town south of Los Angeles, climbed trees as a child, played on the beach and plunged into the thundering waves. As she got older though, her free time became ever more scarce: “Every weekend I was taking part in a different competition.” That’s why she swapped the balance beam and parallel bars for a cheerlead-ing outfit when she moved up to high school. “Finally, I could get

back to doing what you’re sup-posed to be doing as a teenager.” Browsing through shopping malls, going to the cinema and partying. “At the time, I really just wanted to be like everyone else,” Todd recalls. Through martial arts, she came to understand how great it is to be different, to have the talent to do what very few can: “This self-assurance gives you the courage to stand up for yourself and for what you need.”

Her hand swishes like a sword onto her opponent’s upper arm. The two women whirl around and clasp each other. “It’s called clinching,” says the athlete later as she reviews her fight on video. Clinching is a Muay Thai tech-nique that is frowned upon in kick-boxing, for example. “As is using the elbows.” And another differ-ence: kick-boxers wear large mitten-shaped boxing gloves, whereas Muay Thai fighters wear narrow finger gloves: “This makes it much harder to protect the face,” she explains.

She discovered Asian martial arts through a fellow student in college, where she was study-ing aerospace engineering: “The field appealed to me because you can invent something within a certain set of rules that is actually not possible because of that very set of rules.” A paradox perhaps? No, she sees it as creative. Transcending borders, something she knows from sport.

“I struggled with the narrow gloves to begin with. I had no idea how much I would have to change my technique to avoid getting hurt,” Todd says today, looking back. It resulted in a somewhat painful defeat. But that’s exactly what she loves about Muay Thai: the constant challenge it throws at her. “You keep learning, you keep seeing your progress and you know: no matter what I’m up against, I can do it.” Both in the ring and outside it in everyday life. “You become more confident, more calm, more commanding.” And in turn, a better fighter. After all: “You only win when you are in the right frame of mind.” And even if you lose, you gain something else: the ability to deal with defeat. “This makes you mentally stronger.”

Todd is convinced that the mind really is mightier than the body. Except in the ring. It has no place there. “No, there is no room for thought in the ring. The body must have learned everything it needs beforehand and then instinctively do what feels natural. And these are the moments where I feel ultimate freedom.”







# THE GENTLE

# FORCE

*Louder, higher, further: they say that's the only way to achieve your goals. But in fact, only those who cultivate their introverted side, reflecting calmly, with empathy for themselves and others, can forge their path to success without compromising their values.*

*What helps along the way? Presence, lightness, love – and a little craziness, writes philosopher Rebekka Reinhard*



The world has never been louder. People are talking and chatting everywhere – on talk shows, livestreams, video calls. And the world has never been so full of people so willing to thrust their faces into the camera at every opportunity. It's showtime! Show 'em what you've got, be shrill and quick-witted. Anyone still hesitating to label themselves an influencer, keynote speaker or chief evangelist is more than likely training for it in a course on public or charismatic speaking. After all: you don't seem to get successful and significant without a big mouth, presentation skills and a knack for networking. "Here I am!" screams from every corner. But who or what is this "I"? Often it's nothing but a random brand. Individuality and diversity are very much in vogue. But in fact, only one type of individual seems to own the world: the extrovert. They are talkative, active, sociable and assertive – qualities that today are considered a prerequisite not only for a successful life, but a happy one. "We're told that to be great is to be bold, to be happy is to be sociable," says leadership expert and negotiation trainer Susan Cain in her book "Quiet: The Power Of Introverts In A World That Can't Stop Talking" (Crown). But are happiness and success really only bestowed upon those who speak the loudest?

A philosopher's job consists largely of thinking, reading and writing. I took up this profession because I am, by nature, unadventurous and unsociable. I am rather introverted. I feel uncomfortable in groups. I usually find quiet and calm more appealing than anything noisy. I don't need to have music or podcasts flowing through my ears all the time either. Like all introverts, I am sensitive to external stimuli. I love being alone. Nevertheless, I can exist quite well in this world. I have learned to find my voice and have a presence. In my own way.

According to Susan Cain – also an introvert – there is a widespread cultural bias against quiet "inwardness". There is a preconception that where self-marketing takes precedence over self-awareness, where presence and leadership are in demand, introverts don't stand a chance.

The assumption is that introverts are not energetic or courageous enough. Wrong! You only have to look back at history to find some personalities who are considered introverts, but who powerfully raised their voices. Where then did their courage come from? From within. They had "success", not in spite of, but because of being introverted. Because their spontaneous decision to rebel could mature. That also applies to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the leader of the Indian independence movement. Gandhi was a rather quiet person. As his autobiography says, for a long time he was too shy to speak in public and preferred to write down his thoughts. He valued dialogue over being right and wanted to listen and resonate, especially with his opponents. His famous "passive resistance" was far from passive – it was extremely progressive. It was based on the insight that much more can be achieved with kindness and patience than with prejudice and brutality.

Introversion is a gentle force, and it has lost none of its relevance. Success and happiness, as we all know, are not just the spoils of the battle for the most followers and the biggest profits. We are truly successful and happy when we pursue our goals without compromising and cramping ourselves; when we are allowed to be ourselves – and to continue developing. Towards the noise ... or towards the quiet. Just as introverts can learn from extroverts, extroverts should also allow themselves a healthy dose of introversion every now and then.

I believe that we women have a natural disposition towards introspection and self-reflection. In the end, we all carry a gentle force within us. We are not always bold and dominant (nor do we want to be). We can be loud and tough – or as reserved and empathetic as the circumstances require. What we need today to simply exist and truly live in harmony with our values is less



Life is paradoxical and full of surprises. Darkness can become light, impotence can become force, invisibility can become presence

## Presence.

pressure to succeed and more humanity. We need voice and presence to resist: against gender inequality, against climate change, against social injustice and racism, each in their own way. The virtues necessary for this can be found within ourselves.

When you are in the here and now, you learn to see things again and again in a new and different way. You are mindful, alert, listening, observant. You resonate with the world, feel its good and bad vibes. And you accept them (for the time being, at least). When we take time to think, feel and mature in the here and now, the moment of action comes naturally. Effortlessly. Then we feel connected to the world. Then even the quietest and shyest among us will dare to say “no” and mean it. As Gandhi already knew: behind every real “no” is a fervent “yes” that you want to protect and bring to blossom for good reasons.

## Lightness.

This is the natural ally of the here and now ... and she wears a smile on her lips. If you want to overcome the gravity in your life, the gloom, the burdens that lead to impotence and anger, then get into the habit of allowing yourself some craziness from time to time. I’m serious. Since time immemorial, having a crazy side has stood not only for madness, but also for inspiration and creativity. It means musing, dreaming, and engaging with what-ifs. It is the tool of lightness. You need a sense of reality to exist in this world. But you also need a good sense of what is possible in at least equal measure. You can do anything – now, or maybe a little later. Life is paradoxical and full of surprises. Darkness can become light, impotence can become force, invisibility can become presence. Each of us is a visionary, a leader, a philosopher. You too. Go crazy!



# Love.

Everything is connected to everything else. Without the here and now, there is no lightness. Without love, there is no freedom – and no strength. We have learned most recently from the pandemic that being “free” and “strong” does not mean putting on a big show and asserting one’s ego. It is to see that the most important value in this world is love and to put this into practice. Love does not begin with “I”. You don’t love when you want someone or need something. Success. Happiness. You love when you feel connected. With women, men, children, with every single living being, every plant, every stone. That is not dramatic. That is the truth. The love that you have within you and share with the world is, so to speak, at the core of the gentle force. Because only this gives you the courage to declare war on the most powerful enemies that we all face. Indifference. Impotence. Cruelty.

Hey, everybody, listen up: If we share  
these virtues with the noisy world,  
we can celebrate silence in its very midst.  
Doesn’t that sound great?



The moments in life that require change are always challenging, though clarity often follows. We spoke with three up-and-coming musicians from Alicia Keys' She Is The Music foundation about how they used personal and social upheavals to develop creatively

# TURNING

# POINTS





# “My biggest enemy was myself” Bria Adams



Bria Adams struggled to find her professional focus before she got involved with She Is The Music. But the programme helped her let go of external validation and tap in to her passion for music. In the process, she found her way back to herself.

**She's Mercedes** At what moment did your life change fundamentally?

**Bria Adams** It was a concentration of events. My college was very competitive, but when it came time to apply for jobs I was getting rejected. It discouraged and unsettled me. I thought: What is wrong with me? But it wasn't a personal failing – I just wasn't acting for the right reasons.

**Interviews by Ciani-Sophia Hoeder**

**She's Mercedes** What was driving your decisions?

**Bria Adams** I was trying like hell to squeeze myself into positions and titles that didn't suit me. I didn't understand what was best for me until the opportunity arose with She Is The Music. Only then did I realise: This is it!

**She's Mercedes** Where did this lead you?

**Bria Adams** Today, I work as the assistant to the senior vice president of TV Music at ABC Signature, a production studio under the Disney Television Studios unit of Walt Disney Television. When my mentoring programme ended, Cynthia Sexton, the global co-chair of mentorship who is responsible for film and TV at She Is The Music, called me. When she heard that I had no firm career plans, she organised the interview.

**She's Mercedes** It sounds like you've arrived. With a few detours, of course.

**Bria Adams** Yes. I've been singing since I was seven years old. Somehow I had forgotten this passion. And that's why my path didn't run in a straight line. Today, I know that my turning points were my signposts. My biggest enemy was myself. Because I did things just for external validation. Now I put my energy into projects that I really want to do and that bring me genuine joy.



Taylor Monét Parks, aka Tayla Parx, is a singer, Grammy-nominated songwriter and actress. The 28-year-old knew early on that she wanted to be both a businesswoman and a creative force. Her grand vision: to change the music industry for good.



She's Mercedes How do you feel about your life at the moment?

Are things calm or in motion?

Tayla Parx Right now, I find myself in the middle of some amazing developments. It has a lot to do with my industry. Over the years, I have been very much aware that creative people were often not treated with any respect when it came to the business side of things. It's been on my mind for a long time. Eventually I started to do something about it, and now I know that I have the power to create change. I want to change the music industry for good.

She's Mercedes That's a big challenge you're setting for yourself. How will you go about doing this?

Tayla Parx I work differently than publishers have in the past. I treat the artists as equals. I want to make sure that they can make a living from their art and even build their own business. Great talent is being driven out of the industry, and that has to change.

She's Mercedes What makes you a good choice for musicians looking for a publisher?

Tayla Parx I've walked that path. I've lived through all that. And I want to make it work better. Most publishers don't make music. They sell it. I do both.



“It has to get uncomfortable from time to time so that you grow beyond yourself” Tayla Parx



She's Mercedes How has this process shaped the way that you view yourself in this role?

Tayla Parx If this realisation hadn't grown in me so early, I would be like most other creative talents: I would have had precious little control over my business. As a publisher, I have autonomy and control over my life like never before. I have built the career I always dreamt of – and more. It also inspires others when they see me in this capacity. That in turn spurs me on even further.

She's Mercedes Do you think that your own process inspires others to follow a similar path?

Tayla Parx Many people come up to me and say that I have changed their lives. They write to me telling me that they can now buy a house or have been nominated for a Grammy.

She's Mercedes That's a lot of people who have gone through transformational change, then. Why do you think these kinds of changes are important?

Tayla Parx It has to get uncomfortable from time to time so that you grow beyond yourself. That's the meaning of life.



She's Mercedes What has been the most important turning point in your life?

Joy Nesbitt There have actually been a few. But musically, it was the experiences of spring 2020. In March, we were sent home from university because of Covid-19. I was in my first year and I didn't know when I would be coming back. Then Breonna Taylor was murdered in Louisville ...

She's Mercedes In March 2020, the paramedic was shot dead in her apartment by a police officer.

Joy Nesbitt That shook me to the core because it seemed almost like nobody cared.

She's Mercedes Why did you get the impression that no one cared? Because there was so little media coverage?

Joy Nesbitt Yes. I felt that Black women's lives were more expendable than those of others. I asked myself: Why am I here? What should I be doing and how can I use my work for this? I had created music before, but writing helped me cope with all the experiences of that summer. Still, I needed creative exchange. This led me to direct a number of plays specifically to include People of Colour. To give us our own space.

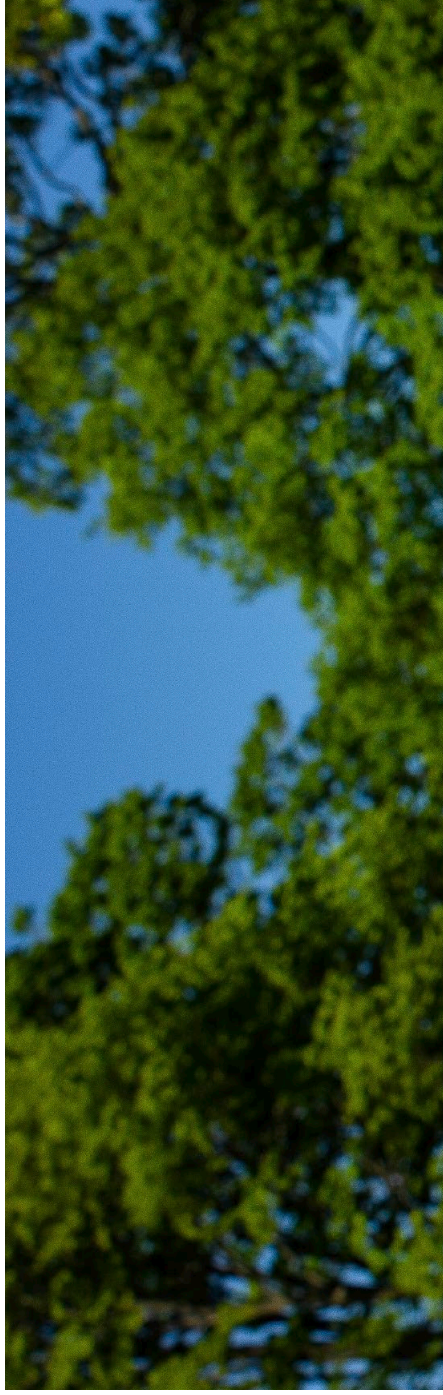
She's Mercedes So you took these new insights and changed your trajectory?

Joy Nesbitt Yes, without these experiences and the mentorship I received as a songwriter with She Is The Music, I would never have had this profound experience. My life would have been very different. I would have stayed at college, then graduated and looked for a steady job. It wasn't until that summer that I saw the impact of art activism.

She's Mercedes How would you describe this impact?

Joy Nesbitt Music and theatre empower people, shining a light on those who would otherwise be left in the shadows. That changes perspectives, which is what I want to spend my career doing. Now I'm headed abroad in September to attend the Dublin Academy of Dramatic Arts and work on my two passions: directing and music. I know it's just the beginning.

Joy Nesbitt had planned on taking a traditional career path after concluding her studies in social anthropology at Harvard University. But within just a year, the 22-year-old has changed course completely. Her new dream will lead her from the United States to Ireland, where she aims to create work that inspires change.





“Music and theatre empower people, shining a light  
on those who would otherwise be left in the shadows”  
Joy Nesbitt





What if our cities  
were to become  
more sustainable?

In her images,  
Nicole Wu dreams  
of a better future,  
and one that now seems  
almost within grasp.

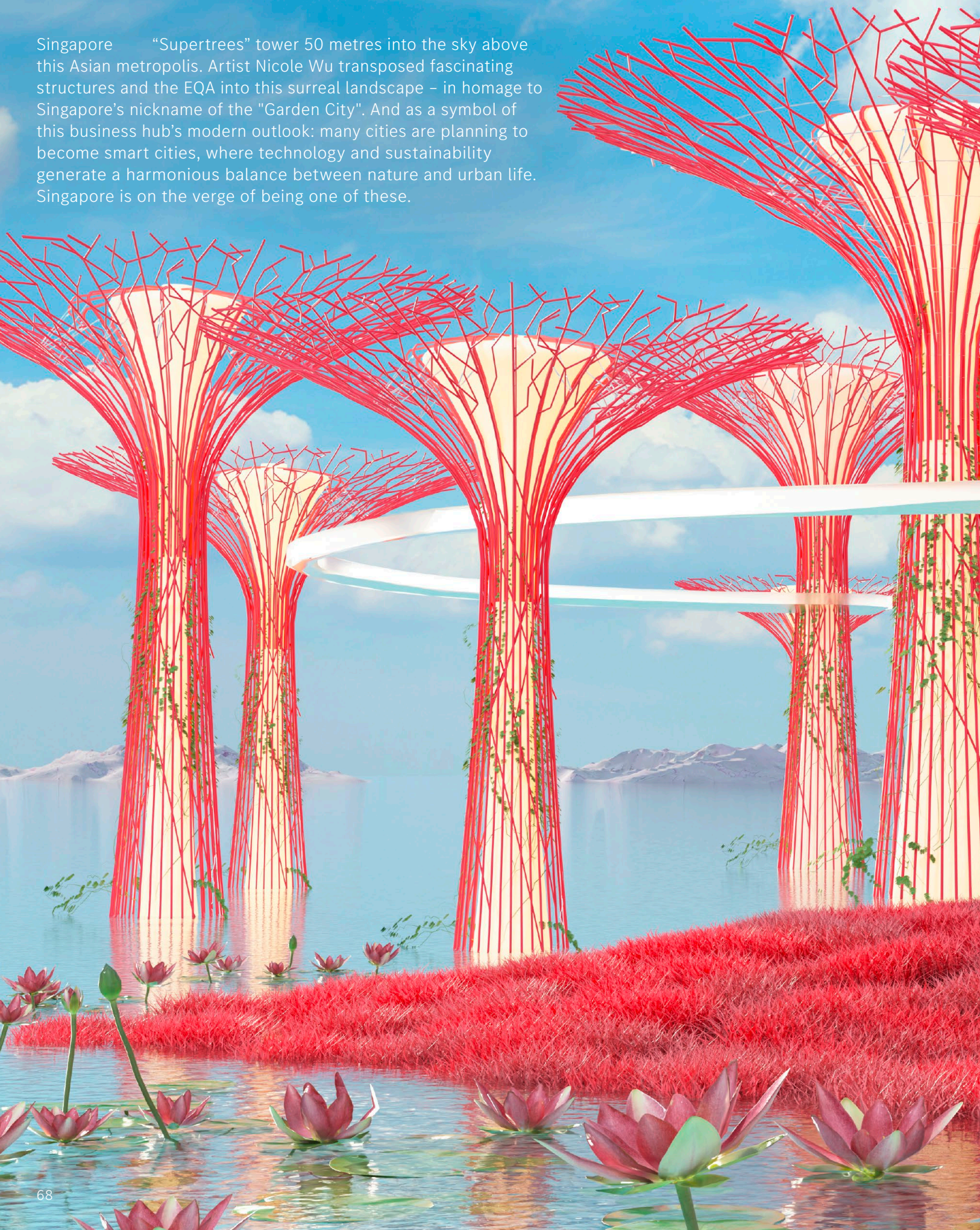
In focus:  
the all-electric EQA







Singapore “Supertrees” tower 50 metres into the sky above this Asian metropolis. Artist Nicole Wu transposed fascinating structures and the EQA into this surreal landscape – in homage to Singapore’s nickname of the “Garden City”. And as a symbol of this business hub’s modern outlook: many cities are planning to become smart cities, where technology and sustainability generate a harmonious balance between nature and urban life. Singapore is on the verge of being one of these.





Her image worlds fuse desire with reality: digital artist Nicole Wu staged the EQA for She's Mercedes in places where sustainability has long since been more than just an aspirational vision. Also because that is where electromobility is experiencing its breakthrough

## Nicole Wu

Nicole Wu uses her computer to place a brightly shining moon at the viewer's feet. The floor of this virtual space is covered with sand. Its oases, gardens and waters are bathed in luminous pastel colours: the 22-year-old opens up a world with surreal juxtaposition for us, where nothing is quite as it seems. And yet it could so easily be.

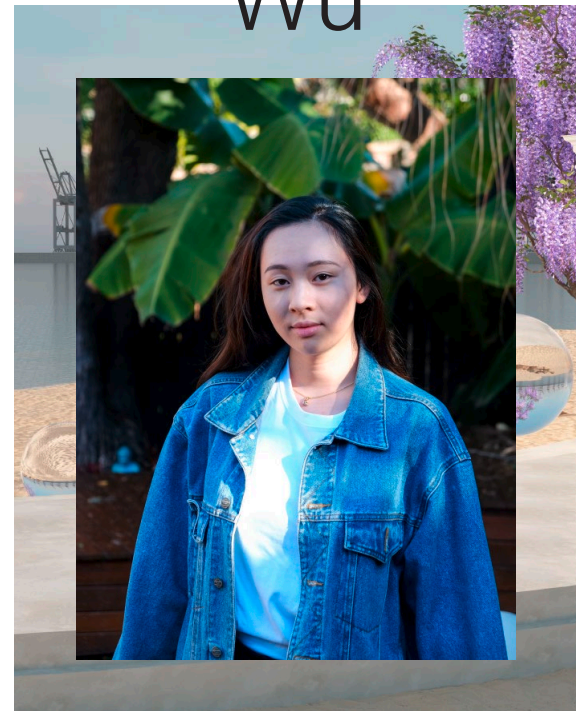
We immediately recognise the cities and their world-famous icons: the cranes in the port of Hamburg, the Shanghai skyline, the elegant suspension bridge spanning the Tagus in Lisbon. But something seems out of place – and needs to be out of place, the artist thinks. That's why she places the electrically powered EQA centre stage of her imaginatively reshaped worlds: "My artworks are my dream of a better future, one that seems to be within reach. I am an optimist."

The five cities presented here are already bringing their progressive concepts to life – each in their own different way. A crucial part of this urban future is electromobility and what it stands for: no local emissions and near-silent drive.

Both improve the quality of life. Yes, there are more green spaces, but the smart use of technology is also an essential element in the city of tomorrow.

We are at a threshold. Sales of electric vehicles such as the EQA are growing more than ever and are more desirable than ever because they combine a number of crucial aspirations of our time: sustainability, driving pleasure and luxurious design, safety and comfort.

What has long been mere fantasy is now real and technically feasible. This gives rise to new perspectives: to be able to achieve your material aspirations – but with mindfulness and true consideration for our environment. And for those with whom we share our lives in the city or in the country: our friends and family. Let's go on a journey with Nicole Wu ...

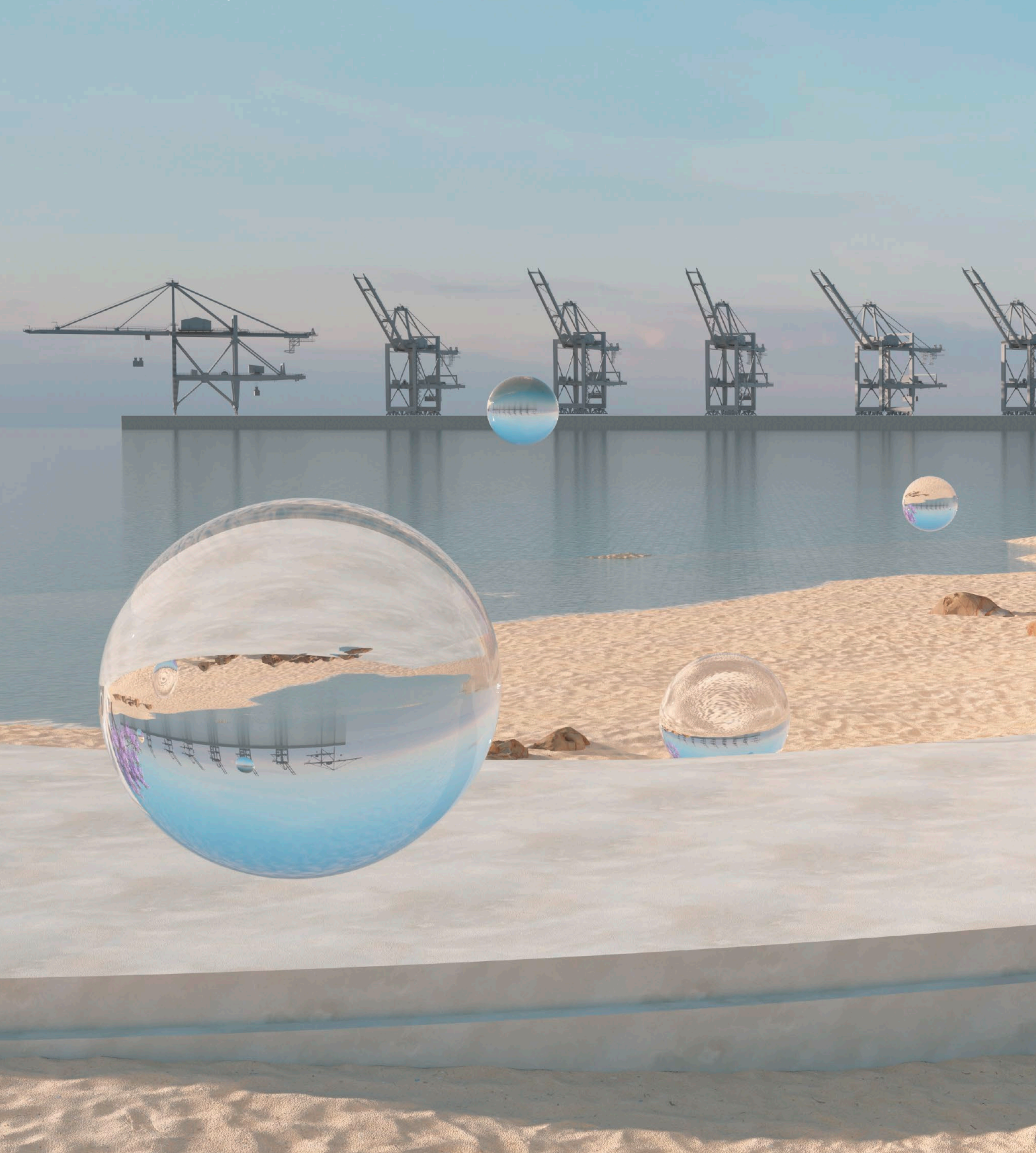


### Digital services from Mercedes-Benz

Experience the seamless support your Mercedes-EQ model offers for everyday electric life: the Electric Intelligence navigation system plans the fastest route to your destination based on current range and power consumption, route topography and weather conditions. The system can also react dynamically to changing circumstances, for example in a traffic situation. The Mercedes-Benz Mercedes me Charge service also opens up access to an international charging network. Find out more at: [mbmag.me/mercedesme](https://mbmag.me/mercedesme)



Hamburg      The sun shines down on the Elbe beach, with the harbour cranes in the background as a light breeze wafts through a historic archway behind which the new EQA is parked: Nicole Wu stages Hamburg as a city of light and lightness. The weather may not always be as perfect as the Australian imagines, yet she skilfully captures the relaxed, sustainable lifestyle of this city, which has the most electric cars in Germany.













Shanghai      An imposing array of skyscrapers is the distinctive backdrop to this Chinese megacity. But immerse yourself in it and you will see its traditional side. This is what Nicole Wu visualises in her vision of Shanghai, where the EQA fits in seamlessly. The vibrancy of the metropolis, its innovative spirit and ambition to become more and more sustainable are also evident in its mobility: there is more pure e-mobility on the road here than in any other city.







Melbourne Dotted with parks and awash with greenery: the Australian metropolis always fills one of the top positions in rankings of the world's most liveable cities. This is the perfect environment for locally emission-free vehicles like the EQA. All the more so because Melbourne aspires to be CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral by 2050 and is therefore installing more charging stations for electric vehicles. Cycle paths and footpaths are also being expanded. Wu expresses her optimism about her birth country by setting white clouds in the city sky – just as she often sees from her apartment.







**Lisbon** The Portuguese capital's flair comes from the light-footed elegance with which it learns from its history to shape its future. Long considered one of the most stylish cities in Europe, the EU Commission awarded Lisbon the title "European Green Capital" in 2020. Nicole Wu depicts its seductive modernity by staging the EQA in front of the Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia, or MAAT for short – a symbol of the progress made by this pearl of the Atlantic coast.



**City tour** The EQA is the ideal everyday companion on the lively streets of any dynamic metropolis. After all, the first fully electric compact SUV from Mercedes-EQ combines sportiness, efficiency and comfort. It is available in three different performance levels. As part of the Mercedes-EQ vehicle family, the EQA also provides a foretaste of the progressive design that reflects what this sub-brand stands for: a clear focus on the future and a sense of responsibility. Find out more at: [mbmag.me/EQA](https://mbmag.me/EQA)









Photo: Elliott Jerome Brown Jr., courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim



# AHEAD

# OF

It wasn't always clear that she would become one of the world's most sought-after art dealers. But Mariane Ibrahim never considered giving up. Now she's begun a meaningful new chapter of her success story with the opening of her second gallery in Paris

Text by Verena Richter

# HER TIME





Zohra Opoku, "Re, cry out, let your heart be pleased by your beautiful truth of this day. Enter from the under-sky, go forth from the East, (you) whom the elders and the ancestors worship. Make your paths pleasant for me, broaden your roads for me (so that) I may cross the earth in the manner of (crossing) the sky, your sunlight upon me." 2020, screen print on linen, thread, 156 x 255 cm. Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim.



She had a difficult start in Seattle. Just like Jimi Hendrix, she says, who couldn't get a foothold in his hometown and only later found his niche in London. "Yet my first exhibition in Seattle was a great success," recalls art dealer Mariane Ibrahim. "My paintings were sold out!" But the flow of visitors thinned out after her gallery opening in 2012. "The exhibitions that followed were disastrous," she says. Nevertheless, Ibrahim was convinced that she was doing the right thing: providing a platform for artists with an African background.

It was something she had already tried in Paris as an artist agent. "Ten years ago the city wasn't ready, though," she says. "It was still very much stuck in classical modernism." In the United States, on the other hand, where President Barack Obama had taken office, the industry was on the cusp of change. It was the

perfect time for Ibrahim to make a go of it there – all the more so when her husband was offered a job in Seattle. In her first years as a gallery owner, she did everything herself, from painting the walls to framing and packing the art. She kept everything going somehow. "I gave myself one last chance," she says. Ibrahim went to the Contemporary African Art Fair in London, where she had a second Jimi Hendrix moment. People raved about both the art she was showing and her skill as a gallery owner. But the real breakthrough came in 2017, when her gallery won the award for best stand at the New York Armory Show. She was showing works by Zohra Opoku, an artist with Ghanaian and German roots who screen-prints photographs on traditional African fabrics and obscures the faces of her subjects behind things such as palm leaves. In this way, she asks the viewers: Who is this person? And who are you?



Ruby Onyinyechi Amanze, "ada + windows + motorcycles over birds [two small pools]".  
2021, graphite, ink, photo transfer, acrylic, pva-coated papers, 164 x 180 cm.  
Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim.



These are the same questions that have preoccupied Ibrahim all her life. Born in New Caledonia, a French archipelago in the South Pacific, she moved with her parents to Somalia when she was four years old, before the civil war forced them to move to France, near Bordeaux, five years later. “In Somalia, it was quite normal for me to walk around outside. I visited my cousins, my aunts. And when I came back from my excursions in the evening, my mother knew exactly where I had been. I felt safe because everyone knew me,” she says. But in Bordeaux, things could not have been more different. There, she hid in the house. “Beyond our four walls, everything was strange and dangerous. I didn’t know my way around and I was teased at school because I dressed differently,” she says. It took time to get to know the norms of her environment and to dare to make contact properly. And even then, she preferred to move within her immediate family circle. “We protected each other,” she says. When she went to London to study communications and marketing, she still stayed close to relatives. Ibrahim was never truly on her own until a semester abroad in Quebec, Canada. “An experience I would recommend to everyone,” she says, recalling that it was a formative time with students from all over the world. “They came from Norway, Colombia, Germany, Somalia. Being foreigners together made us the same. I learned that it didn’t matter where you came from, but where you were going. Because that is yours to decide.”

After her studies, Ibrahim moved to Paris, where she suddenly found herself right in the midst of the French art scene. “As a child, I had hardly any contact with art,” she says. “The only pictures we had were in my parents’ photo albums.” So she was all the more surprised when she first saw photographs by Seydou Keïta, a Malian artist from Bamako whose black-and-white portraits from the 1960s are celebrated worldwide. Ibrahim wondered why Keïta had become famous, while the photographer who had captured the images of her parents had not. That was when she had the realisation that the creator of an image is a decisive factor. This was also the moment that she knew she had to become a photographer herself. “The power of the images fascinated me,” she says. The psychological effect was also compelling, though it was precisely this factor that dissuaded her from pursuing a purely creative path professionally. “When you create images, you also have to deal with the image of yourself as an artist. In the process, I realised that I am not only a creative person, but also

a businesswoman,” she says, adding that she got the latter from her grandmother, a plantation owner in northern Somalia. “She had to assert herself in a male-dominated world her whole life,” Ibrahim says, describing her grandmother as the only family member who truly understands what she is doing today.

The more Ibrahim interacted with her artist friends, the clearer her goal became: to open a gallery to represent them. And because that hardly seemed possible in Paris, she seized the opportunity when her husband received the job offer in Seattle. She stuck to the plan of wanting to open doors for both art and artists, though she was advised to first gain experience in local galleries. “I did the exact opposite, though. I started my own right away,” she says. When the gallery was finally gaining momentum after two years of hard work, it came time to rethink the location. It needed to be somewhere more central and better connected to other art hubs, and Ibrahim decided on Chicago two years ago. And why not New York? “Too predictable,” she says. Plus, Ibrahim likes Chicago’s diversity. “A third of the people living here have Latin American roots, another third African.” She is certain that Chicago will be the next big thing. So it seems auspicious that Simone Leigh, a Black artist from Chicago, will represent the US at the Venice Biennale 2022.

Change is also afoot in Paris, where Ibrahim has now opened her second gallery after leaving a decade ago. “It’s become introspective,” she says. “The structures and the people have become more open.” And the gallery has already marked its first success: One of her artists, Vienna-based Ghanaian Amoako Bofo, has scored a cooperation with Dior and seems to be on every designer’s mood board right now. “He is figurative and abstract at the same time,” she says. “The man paints with his fingers! His shadows seem alive. And his colours have something almost material about them.” When Ibrahim speaks about the artists that she represents, she often becomes rapturous. But when it comes to her hopes for the future of African art, her words are plain: “That it is no longer called African art.” Then what should it be called? “Well, simply art.”





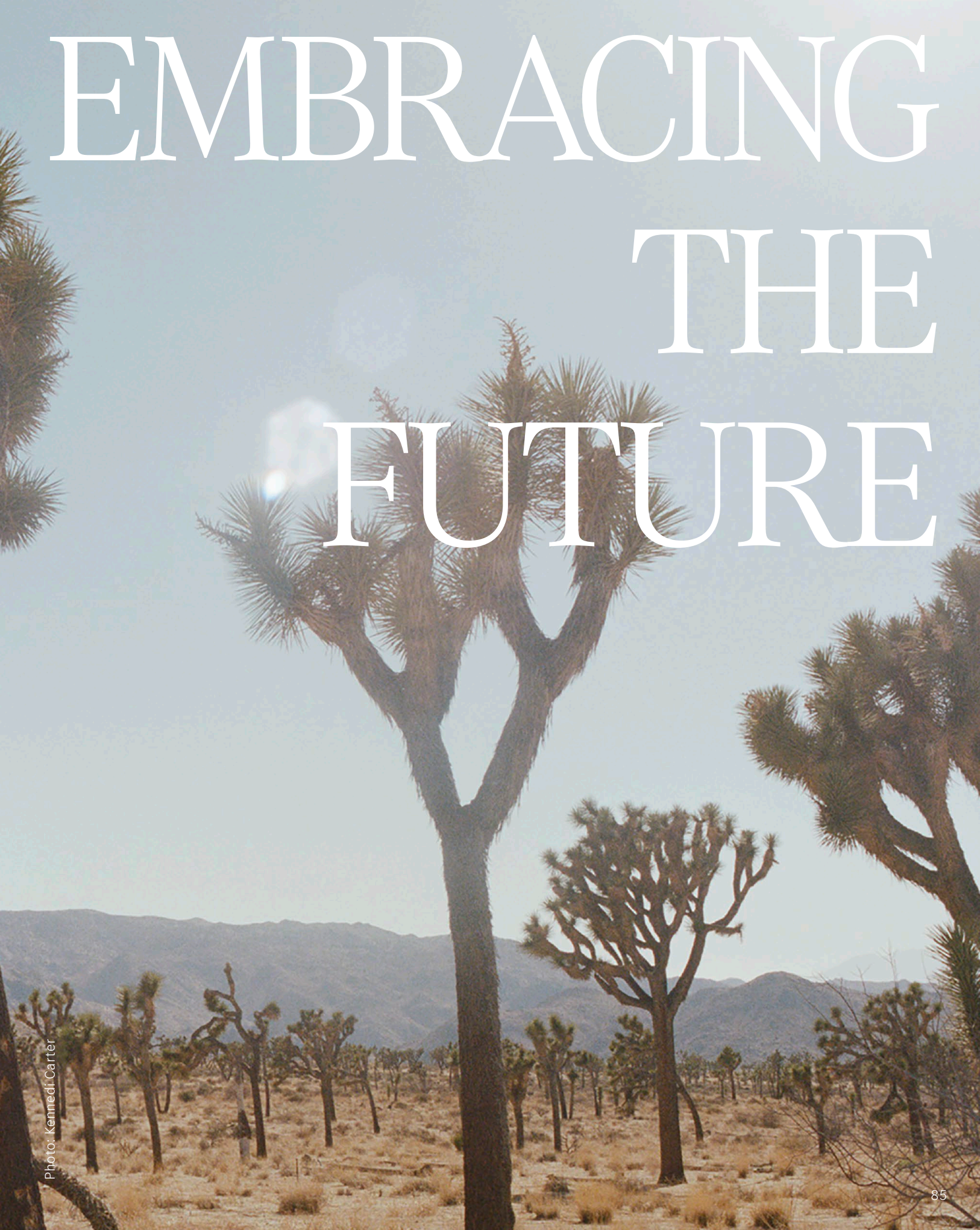
Amoako Boafo, "Green Ivy Dress".  
2020, photo transfer and oil on canvas, 210 x 184 cm.  
Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim.



## Chapter 4







# EMBRACING THE FUTURE



Where the mobility of the future and artistic avant-garde meet: crypto artists Johanna Jaskowska, Serwah Attafuah and Krista Kim are constantly rethinking the interplay of technology and creativity through their work. For She's Mercedes, they have placed the EQS centre stage in their art... and show us electromobility as we have never seen it before

# ADVE OF A NEW ERA

Artwork by Johanna Jaskowska,  
Serwah Attafuah and Krista Kim  
Essay by Anika Meier  
Portraits by Hendrik Lakeberg



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Johanna Jaskowska's work "Top Coat" on the theme of "Future" stages the EQS enveloped in an iridescent plasma.



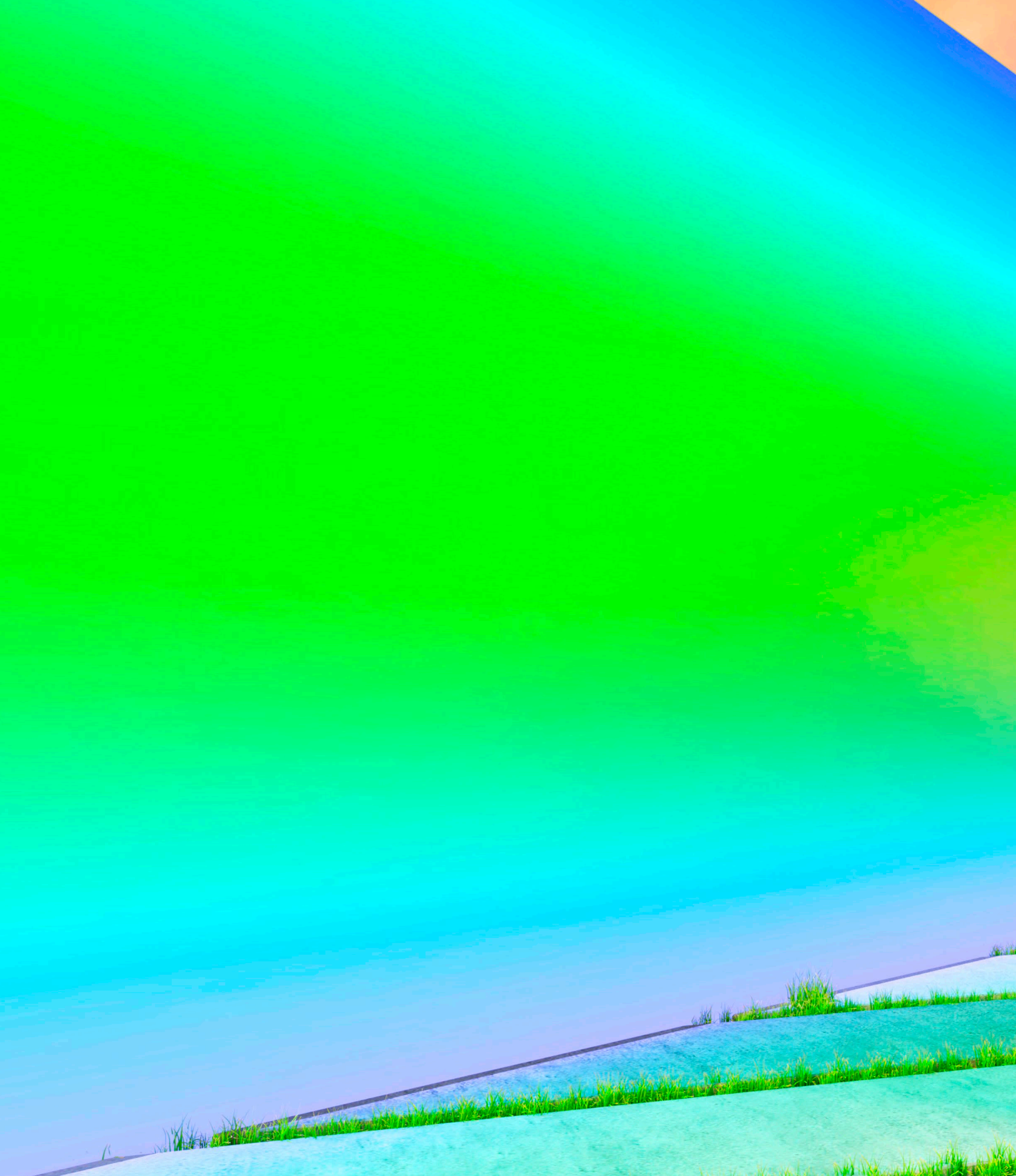






Serwah Attafuah has the EQS floating gracefully over a street of tulips on a distant planet. "Environment" supplies the theme for her work "Antheia 2021".









The original of Krista Kim's "Continuum" installation changes colour. She staged the EQS in front of it for our "Luxury" theme.



# Johanna Jaskowska



The future fascinates her. “When you take a look into it, you get to invent things that cannot exist in our present,” says Johanna Jaskowska. “The fun of my work is that I can create something new. Pushing boundaries, breaking rules, reshaping them.” This is what the French artist does best. In the process, she also explores the new possibilities technology offers and blurs the dividing line between the real and virtual worlds.

Her digital face filter Beauty3000 for Instagram is a perfect example. It was rapidly shared millions of times on the platform and makes your face look bronze-coloured – as if covered by an iridescent plasma-like layer. Megastar Billie Eilish was just one person who was captivated by it. The musician commissioned Jaskowska to develop a face filter exclusively for her.

She also cloaks the EQS in a plasma-like surface for She’s Mercedes, in its own version of her face filters. The vehicle gradually emerges from underneath – a symbolic new beginning. The modernity and technological complexity of the Mercedes-EQ electric luxury saloon fascinated Jaskowska: “Mercedes-EQ has developed a car that seems like it couldn’t exist today.”



Admire Johanna Jaskowska’s iridescent plasma in motion: the QR code will take you straight to her work “Top Coat”.

# Serwah Attafuah



“I like the idea of taking a concept with a female connotation, such as a field of flowers, and making it surreal,” says Attafuah. You can experience her work “Antheia 2021” digitally.





# Krista Kim

It would be fair to describe many of Serwah Attafuah's works as dreamy wastelands. She mostly places young women in positive-looking worlds – using vibrant colours and floating elements such as planets. These surreal landscapes are places that Attafuah likes to visit in her daydreams.

The daughter of a graphic designer and an artist, she learned to paint with a brush and edit images digitally at the age of six. The Australian also taught herself 3D art technology. It was “a natural progression from painting to digital art” for Attafuah. She now has a huge library of files and textures to draw on.

She staged the EQS under the theme of “Environment”. Rather than a desert landscape, she depicts a street of tulips, a positive association from her childhood. Inspired by science fiction, she transposes the vehicle to another planet. The lack of gravity there makes the EQS float. The planet also represents a glimpse into the future: “I want to create a happier vision of our world: greener and more sustainable.”



Krista Kim's creative superpower? Her intuition. The Canadian hones this even more by meditating twice a day. “This routine influences all my artistic decisions,” she says. She also makes her voice heard on a social-philosophical level. “Art and philosophy need to be balanced in a digital society. That's important,” she says. Her wish, first and foremost, is that technological innovations benefit people.

This humanistic kind of thinking also comes through in the artist's take on luxury – the subject of her work for She's Mercedes. “Luxury for me is about combining cutting-edge technology and artistry with the goal of enhancing well-being – values that EQS also embodies.” This kind of thinking combines aspiration with empathy.

Something that is also evident in her presentation of the EQS: the luxury saloon appears to be transparent, making it sculptural and intriguing, but also restrained in an elegant way. “It is important to me that both my children live in a world of beauty, well-being and transcendence,” Kim explains.



Krista Kim is currently touring the world with her “Continuum” LED wall. It can also be seen online from everywhere with its changing coloured strip of light.



# New freedoms in the art world: crypto-art expert Anika Meier on the NFT phenomenon

Little more than a year ago, no one would have imagined that the whole world would suddenly be looking at crypto art – a new art movement that is produced and exhibited digitally. Nor that crypto creatives would suddenly find themselves as well-known as, or attracting the price tags otherwise reserved for Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst. And the scene still hasn't quite got used to the fact that galleries and auction houses have now been supplemented by marketplaces on the internet. What's more, they fulfil both functions at the same time.

The three letters NFT (short for non-fungible token) stand for a watershed moment in the art world unlike any seen for quite some time. The NFT is stored on the blockchain. Artists can register digital artworks on online trading platforms for a fee and link them to a specific token that certifies its uniqueness. Thus, even the digital world has a forgery-proof, digital original. What this means for the market is that digital art

can now be collected like paintings or sculptures in the analogue world.

NFTs are sold on marketplaces called Nifty Gateway, SuperRare and Foundation, which can be accessed by anyone who signs up. These work in a similar way to eBay: the highest bidder wins the auction. Click and buy. This may sound unspectacular at first sight, but it changes everything for artists and challenges the industry because creatives can now offer their work directly to the buying public. In theory, galleries could become a redundant link between creatives and collectors. Platforms also allow creatives to reach a global audience at the drop of a hat, unlike galleries which are anchored to a specific location. All this opens up a new democratisation of the art world – up to a point. Big marketplaces like Nifty Gateway and SuperRare are curating the selection of artists too. In the end, this makes them the new gatekeepers. However, they do not come from the established art world; they make their own

rules and take many more artists onto their books than a gallery would. Plus, in the new system, the artists become creatives, PR agents and marketers in one. This is different from being represented by a gallery that takes everything out of the artist's hands – except the art. So theoretically, all you need for a career as an artist is access to one of the marketplaces for crypto art and inspirational ideas. Auctions are followed on social media channels such as Instagram or Twitter. The successful NFT artist Beeple, for example, has at least two million followers on Instagram and thus just as many potential buyers.

Crypto artists such as Johanna Jaskowska, Serwah Attafuah and Krista Kim (illustrations on pp. 87-89, 90-91 and 92-93) have also found fame through social media and interact directly with their community as a matter of course. Jaskowska, for example, became famous on Instagram almost by accident. She experimented with face filters for



Instagram and struck a chord with a generation looking for new means of digital expression with her Beauty3000 filter where users can put a virtual, shiny cover over their face. It beautifies the face in a digital way that was previously unheard of. It launched a career that made her famous and paved the way into crypto art together with other artists such as Serwah Attafuah and Krista Kim.

The art world is still bemused by the fact that people collect works that do not hang on the walls as physical objects. But this is precisely where the potential of digital art lies. NFTs live in their own wallet on the smartphone – similar to the wallet app we use for train or admission tickets. Collectors thus have the option to share NFTs publicly and open their own digital museum. Digital art is currently mostly viewed on smartphones or computer screens. The day when they can also be experienced in space may not be too far away. And that could well be the next phase that the art world is moving toward.



## On board with a pioneer: the EQS

The EQS is the first all-electric luxury saloon from Mercedes-EQ; the brand is redefining an entire vehicle segment with this model. The EQS has an inspiring and unique fusion of technology, design, functionality and connectivity. And with a range of up to 780 kilometres (according to WLTP) and an output of up to 385 kW, the EQS also satisfies the demands placed on a progressive saloon in the S-Class segment in terms of driving characteristics.

The sensually pared-back exterior is based on an elegantly stretched arc that runs from front to rear. The iconic and innovative design language not only makes the EQS unmistakable, it also follows a purpose: it allows for maximum aerodynamics and a spacious interior. Designers were challenged with breaking completely new ground for the interior design: its impressive MBUX Hyperscreen, for

example, which spreads out before the front-seat occupants across the entire width of the vehicle. In addition to the sheer size of the screen, the high-quality, detailed finish also creates a distinctive “wow” effect. This is not just reserved for the interior: the EQS has a wide range of fascinating innovations. For example, the saloon redirects energy recovered through recuperation to charge the battery while driving. And optional sensors can even be integrated to open the door for the vehicle owner when they approach their EQS.

Delve into the fascinating world of the EQS at: [mbmag.me/eqs](https://mbmag.me/eqs)

EQS 580 4MATIC  
Combined electricity consumption  
(kWh/100 km)<sup>1</sup>: 20.0-16.9  
Combined CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km)<sup>1</sup>: 0

EQS 450+  
Combined electricity consumption  
(kWh/100 km)<sup>1</sup>: 19.1-16.0  
Combined CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (g/km)<sup>1</sup>: 0

<sup>1</sup> More information on the testing procedures can be found on page 8





Photo: private

“We follow creativity  
wherever it goes”



Ann Mincieli met Alicia Keys by chance 23 years ago. The two friends have worked closely together ever since. The world-renowned sound expert gave us insights into her work, and their profound connection

At 11:01 a.m. New York time, Ann Mincieli appears on the screen and promptly apologises for the one-minute delay. Wearing a dark top with her hair down, she sits in a windowless room with low ceilings and classy brown decor. I'm guessing she's at Jungle City Studios, her celebrated sound studio in the heart of Manhattan. Or maybe she's in the Los Angeles recording rooms to work with Alicia Keys?

Ann and Alicia have been working together for 23 years, most famously earning joint Grammy awards for "The Diary of Alicia Keys" (2003) and "Girl on Fire" (2012). About ten years ago, they co-founded Jungle City Studios. Together the powerhouse creative duo also developed one of the world's best-selling piano plug-ins, software that faithfully reproduces the sound of Alicia's studio grand piano. In 2018, they started She Is The Music, a foundation that aims to uplift women in their industry. Ann herself is not only a successful producer, but also a trained sound engineer who builds studios all over the world. She has worked with Jay-Z, Whitney Houston, Mariah Carey, Prince and many other megastars.



You have been making music with Alicia Keys for a long time. What's it like working on her songs?

Alicia composes, writes and produces all her music herself. She splits the process into three phases: writing the song, arranging the music, and then mixing the sound. I believe that she is one of the most authentic artists out there because she does everything on her own and stays true to herself.

What exactly is your role in the production of the albums?

For one thing, I am her project manager. Alicia loves to work with other people. Every producer, every musician brings in new workflows, new software, new instruments. Part of my job is to be ready for all that. When you write your own music as an artist, arrange the songs, sing, play the piano and keyboards – that's a lot to handle. I take the pressure off her by managing the details – from the instruments to the technology to the documentation. And then there's the fun part.

Which part is that?

When we decide which musicians and producers to work with. And when I help shape the sound with my technical plug-ins or analogue devices, for example. The special thing about working with Alicia is that she often records vocals and piano together. That means I have to think laterally and find unconventional solutions. Above all, I have to be ready to capture that moment of genius in perfect quality at any time during the sessions. I know Alicia's way of working like the back of my hand, but her album recordings are adventures and you never know what's going to come out of it. There are no rules. Because we follow creativity wherever it goes. That's the beauty of my profession.

You took singing lessons from Mariah Carey's mother, Patricia Carey, and are learning to play the guitar with David Bowie's former guitarist Carlos Alomar. How important for you is it to master the craft of music?

It helps me understand a song's arrangement. Musicians have a particular way of communicating, so playing an instrument myself gives me the ability to better interpret their language.



How does that look in the studio?

As an example, Alicia might say: “I’d like a nice clear guitar tone for that.” And I know straight away what she means, can select just the right instrument from my collection and say: “Here, let’s try this one.” Or we want a loud distorted sound – and then my Gibson guitar comes out of its case.

Jungle City Studios is known for marrying vintage equipment with the latest technology. Why have you taken this approach?

We wanted to create a place that musicians would travel to when they want to be especially creative. One of the first bands was Dreams Come True from Japan. Since then, we’ve hosted many other fantastic clients such as Beyoncé and Ariana Grande. The studio isn’t down in the basement, but in a pent-house that overlooks Manhattan. It takes acoustic treatments made of special, sound-absorbing acrylic that acts like windows to make this possible.

That must have taken a great deal of effort. What inspired you to invest so much?

When we opened the studio about ten years ago, the industry had changed. Suddenly, larger-scale streaming became widespread, so record labels had to discover ways to secure their very existence. Some simply left New York. I wanted the city to rediscover its place as a musical hot spot again! And that’s another reason why I mix new technology with the old. Much of the music we love comes from the ‘60s and ‘70s. In those days, people sat in a room and actually played together. Nowadays, the human touch has often been replaced by software – whether it’s image-editing programs or audio tools.

Where did you acquire your vast knowledge of the musical landscape?

I am still learning all the time! Young sound engineers are often mainly interested in creating beats. I always advise them: Keep developing so that you can do everything. In the end, hard work and knowledge are what will get you to the top.

Still, women seem to have a much tougher time in the industry. Only two percent of music producers are female.

That’s why we founded She Is The Music. Our global foundation offers a song-writing camp, a mentorship programme and a rapidly growing database of women in the music industry. Female composers, photographers, PR experts and so many others.



How does the organisation help close the gap?

People get used to calling contacts they're comfortable with, who are often men. We get women more involved. At the same time, we show them how things work in the industry. Everything's like the Wild West at the moment: engineers write songs, songwriters produce, producers mix sounds. Everyone pitches in together, from the consumer to the producer. It really is a whole new world. Everything is possible as long as you can do as much as possible.

You've been working with Alicia for almost 23 years. What was it like at the beginning?

We met for the first time in the lift at Quad Recording Studios. Alicia had been signed as a songwriter there when she was 13. By the time we met, she was 18. She had a small setup in her flat in Harlem and we started doing sessions there.

How have you managed to keep your relationship strong over such a long time?

She was always the kind of artist and producer I dreamt of working with. And I was the sort of sound engineer she wanted to work with. We helped each other develop, we have grown together. It started in a basement and spanned all the way to her performance on the baseball field of Yankee Stadium for the 2009 World Series!

What do you appreciate most about Alicia? And what does she value in you?

Her generosity. For example, if someone releases a song before it's ready, I get angry. She stays calm even in tough situations. On the other hand, I like to get Alicia out of her comfort zone and have adventures. I'll suggest: Let's build a studio in our bus and drive across the country. Let's sit in the rainforest and make music. Let's learn this new technique. We perfectly complement each other.



“I like to get Alicia out of her comfort zone and have adventures. I’ll suggest: Let’s build a studio in our bus and drive across the country. Let’s sit in the rainforest and make music. Let’s learn this new technique. We perfectly complement each other”



# They shape our world, dare the unknown, kicking off

Finance mentor Bola Sokunbi

“I have always been encouraged by the idea that my work has a positive impact on other people around the world. That I can motivate them all to take care of themselves makes me extremely proud”

Photo: Caroline Beffa



# something new: portraits of five pioneering women

## First mover



When it comes to money, Bola Sokunbi brings up her mother as a role model without any hesitation. She affectionately calls her the “hustle queen”; for that, read “capability queen”. In her early 30s, Sokunbi’s mother went back to college. Afterwards her career really took off and she worked as an investment banker, among other things, and supported her daughter financially during her studies. But Sokunbi’s yearning for economic independence grew. After college, she saved 100,000 US dollars within three years. How did she do that on an average income?

It wasn’t easy, Sokunbi admits. “To put aside about half of my salary, I sacrificed a lot. Sometimes I just wanted to go out and spend some money. But I kept focused on my big goal. Having a nest egg gives me some inner peace. It’s one hundred per cent worth the short-term restrictions.” Her blog, which she started just to document her progress and keep herself motivated, grew into a whole community. Today, Clever Girl Finance is

one of the largest private online platforms for financial services for women in the USA. The main thing her customers value: Sokunbi and her team communicate with them as equals – any question at all genuinely can and should be asked. The 40-year-old has long since become self-employed – partly because she can better manage her time between work and family.

The fact that her life model works well is shown, among other things, by her success: Sokunbi’s third financial book, “The Side Hustle Guide”, has just been published. One of her pieces of advice is: “Be clear about exactly what you want to achieve and why. The ‘why’ is your motivation not to give up.” Above all, she wants to be a good example for her children – exactly as her mother was for her.



Leadership visionary Karin Rådström

“For me, respect is the key word. I do not look ‘up to’ or ‘down to’ anyone. I believe everyone in the organisation is equally important and can contribute to building a better future”





## First mover

After a long break, she is once again regularly taking her place on the sliding seat of a rowing boat. Karin Rådström, twelve-time Swedish rowing champion, enjoys the meditative feeling of gliding across the Neckar in Stuttgart – the engineer's new home. She has been a member of the Board of Management of Daimler Truck AG since February and is responsible for Europe and Latin America and the Mercedes-Benz Trucks brand.

Two traits from her earlier sports career, as well as stamina, are key to doing this job: mental toughness and team spirit. "By constantly pushing the limits during training, I realised I was always capable of more than I had expected," says the 42-year-old. "In a team boat, I learned that if we are going to perform, everyone in the team needs to be fit – both physically and mentally. It is the same with a leadership team."

The mother of two attaches particular importance to the exchange of ideas: creating

trusting relationships requires people to be open about their strengths and weaknesses, and to talk honestly about obstacles and challenges. As a Swede, she is used to flat hierarchies and sees herself mainly in the role of mediator and sparring partner. "I want to build a culture where decisions are taken by the people with the expertise – not by some manager."

The director has her sights set on her goals. As well as promoting diversity in the company, this includes driving sustainability forward. "I want to change the transport industry for the better," says Rådström, and explains how: "Technologically, we will pursue a dual-track strategy, with both battery electric trucks and fuel cell trucks. Our ultimate goal is to have CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral transport on the road by 2050, and for our main fleet to be CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral in Europe, Japan and the US by 2039." The former athlete has long since proven that she has what it takes for a marathon effort like this.



Powder revolutionary Jo-Maren Witte

“My vision is to bring more sustainability into everyday life. Most people want to live more eco-friendly, but don’t quite know where to start to actively change everything. I want to give them some support here”

Photo: Marco Witte



## First mover



It was 2018 on a beach in Thailand when Jo-Maren Witte felt a shampoo bottle from Germany nudging her feet. “I thought: How does rubbish from all over the world actually get here?” says the 27-year-old. This was the moment she became fundamentally aware for the first time of the damage that plastic waste causes globally. Promptly came the thought: I want to change that. Witte, then working as a technology consultant for a large management consultancy, invented an innovative powder to replace a solid bar of soap or other packaging. Her brainwave: only own a single shampoo bottle and mix the granules yourself at home with water. This would save a huge amount of single-use plastic. This is because powder needs less packaging than other care products that consist largely of water.

Witte is convinced that powders are the force that drive the way to a sustainable future. The shower gels and shampoos you create from it feel just like conventional products.

She contacted countless suppliers and refined the products together with chemists to turn her idea into reality. It soon became clear: many raw materials are only available as liquids. Witte therefore relies on fully natural ingredients that are dry and can therefore easily be pulverised.

In autumn 2020, the Berliner gave up her job to devote herself entirely to her start-up. The online shop went live in December 2020. She calls her brand Levy & Frey. Her team now consists of seven people working in a chic old building in Berlin. Jo follows some valuable advice from her father when it comes to expanding her start-up: “Only hire someone if you can see yourself going out for a glass of wine with them.” And that still holds good today: “Dad was right! I need people around me who understand me, who I feel comfortable with – and who share my vision.”



Community ambassador Amy Denet Deal

“Being a mother has changed me a lot. I had to really question myself and clarify just what I want to leave behind for the world. Nowadays, I give a lot to our community. The most important things are the things we do for others”





## First mover

Sometimes you have to go back to your roots to discover how you want to shape the future. This is how it was for Amy Denet Deal. The 57-year-old comes from the indigenous Diné people, but was raised by adoptive parents. While searching for her biological mother, she came to the realisation: she would have to go to the Navajo reservation, which covers parts of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico, to truly understand her culture. She gave up almost all her possessions, reduced her life to the simplest things. “I spent a lot of time in nature, listening to the land and the people. That made me so much happier than being at the top of the career ladder.”

Years before, doubts about her job as a designer for a well-known sportswear brand were already beginning to surface. “I took my daughter to the farm camp in the morning so she could learn how to tend the land. Back at home I was working on designs for a fast fashion brand and felt like a terrible mother.” Years later, in 2015, Denet Deal founded her

label 4Kinship (previously Orenda Tribe), breathing new life into old textiles, for example by re-dyeing them. This is how she creates unique new pieces. Serial productions are a rarity. It is very important to her to work sustainably.

But Denet Deal sees her true vocation in her commitment to the Diné community. Last year, she raised over 800,000 US dollars for the people on the reservation through various activities, for example a benefit concert with folk singer Jewel. Denet Deal is currently working to construct a skate park in the Two Grey Hills region for a community that lacks sports facilities and meeting places. “We wanted to do something that would help the children with their mental and physical well-being after being isolated by the pandemic,” she says. Community is not just a word for her. It’s a whole attitude towards life.

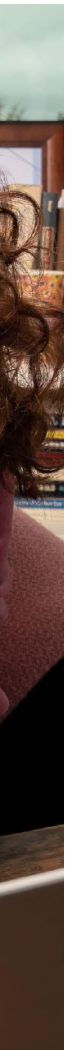


Professor of Cybernetics Genevieve Bell

“I’m an anthropologist, so I always look to the human aspect first and foremost: What will technology feel like in ten years’ time? And how will we create a safe and humane world with this?”







## First mover

As a child, she wanted to be a firefighter. Her teenage plan was to become Prime Minister of Australia (“Why not, actually?”). At that time, she lived with her mother, a well-known anthropologist, in Aboriginal territory, sometimes without electricity and running water. That was where she discovered her own love of anthropology, which she deepened later at university after moving from Down Under to the United States.

It was there that the anthropology professor, now 53, surprisingly began her global career in technology. The computer giant Intel sensed new markets beyond the chip and semiconductor industry and offered Bell a job in 1998. She was to investigate what people expect from computers. To be a bit more precise, “They wanted to know from me what makes women tick. ‘All three and a half billion?’ I asked. ‘Yep,’ said my bosses, ‘that would be great,’” she recalls.

She advises young female computer scientists, who

are still amongst almost exclusively male colleagues in Silicon Valley and the artificial intelligence world, to fully exploit their exceptional role. It’s not just the tech industry that listens carefully to what Bell says though. She calls herself a “storyteller”, explaining to techies and managers what makes consumers tick, and educating politicians – including the Australian government – about the dreams and fears that new technologies inspire.

The director of the 3A Institute and the newly established School of Cybernetics at the Australian National University has also been awarded the Order of Australia for “distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or to humanity at large.” Does she understand that her contemporaries nevertheless fear that they are not smart enough for artificial intelligence? “I’m delighted to be working with great people who have only one thing on their mind: making a difference,” replies the futurist gleefully. “If you long for a better future, you have to create it.”



# “My way of thinking changed”

Pianist Aziza Miller had to work hard to gain her self-confidence. Later, as a music teacher at the school attended by Alicia Keys, she showed young talents how to believe in themselves



But then I stopped assuming that I couldn't teach singing simply because I hadn't been trained in it. Instead, I saw voices as natural instruments, sometimes hearing a violin, sometimes an alto saxophone. An unusual approach, I admit, but my students improved under it! It was especially impor-

Aziza Miller is a pianist and composer from New York. After completing her degree in music education, in 1975 she became the musical director for jazz singer Natalie Cole – making her one of the first women to hold such a position in the industry. She went on to earn national acclaim teaching young musicians at the Professional Performing Arts School.

“I was an intern. Young, naïve and sensitive. Then my way of thinking changed. I used to play piano in New York clubs and one night a man asked for my number – as it turned out, truly out of professional interest! Through him, I landed a piano rehearsal with jazz singer Natalie Cole. It went so well that not only did I accompany her that one time on the piano, but went on to write and conduct for her for several years as her musical director. I never had much self-confidence before then. My teachers were technically good, but for the most part they just told me what I would never become: a classical pianist.

Later, I spent a long time as a music teacher at a state school that was considered to be difficult. Sometimes I thought I couldn't handle it.

tant to me to show them that they can believe in themselves.

I was lucky enough to be able to select my own students. I first saw Alicia when she sang a short solo at her school. She must have been 13 years old. I immediately recognized her talent, as well as her sincerity and passion. She was so effervescent and curious! We even recorded together on the weekends. I told her, ‘Alicia, I know that you deserve to be out there.’

My students were my musical daughters and sons. We trusted each other, cried together, laughed together, and discussed the violence and inhumanity in the world and what we could do to make it right with our songs. I never thought I could be a role model for Alicia – or anyone else, for that matter. I always just did what was right for me.”



## THE REOPENING OF THE YEAR



Tegernsee



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