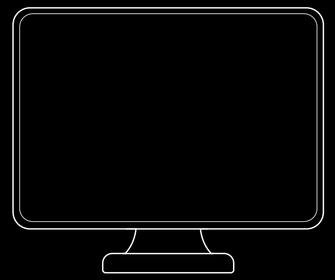
Trend Report 2026

by Flim

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EXPLORE THE ONLINE REPORT ↗

Flim

Mapping the new visual aesthetics

Flim is the living archive and creative platform for tomorrow's storytellers.

With 1.7M images and video cuts spanning global films, music videos, and ads, Flim captures creative shifts as they happen.

Over the past year, you've probably felt it too: boundaries dissolving, genres folding into one another, tools multiplying, and entire visual worlds appearing almost overnight.

This report follows those signals — mapping the movements that shaped 2025 and spotlighting the trends set to define 2026.

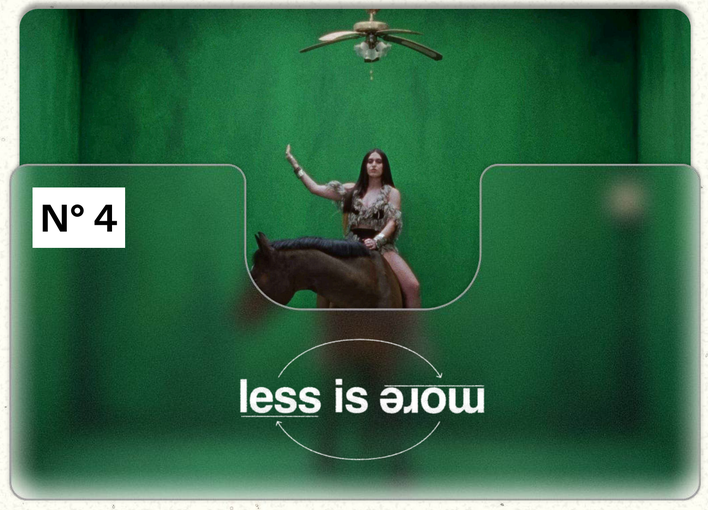
Each trend offers a lens on how today's creatives navigate the tensions of our time: sensory overload, collective nostalgia, and the evolving relationship between humans, machines, and nature.

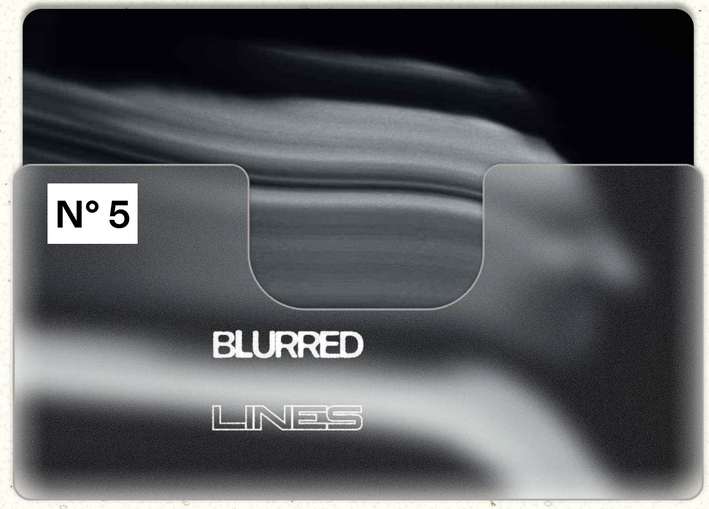
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ALTERNATIVE WORLD

TREND 01

N°1

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NEO SURREALISM

In a time of collective disillusionment, fantasy has become a refuge.

What began as playful nods to surrealist codes has evolved into immersive, poetic worlds where reality loosens its grip and visual language turns dreamlike.

SURREALISM
DREAMCORE
ESCAPISM
FANTASY
DADAISM

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗



THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

Surrealism has always offered a space for freedom, magic, and rupture.

From André Breton's manifesto to Jodorowsky's tarot-infused visions in The Holy Mountain (1973) or the dream-realism of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Memoria (2021), artists keep returning to imagery that resists logic and embraces intuition.

NEO SURREALISM



THE HOLY MOUNTAIN / ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY / 1973



MEMORIA / APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL / 2021

REVISITING TALES

The Princess and the Pea, Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood...

Once symbols of childhood innocence, those tales now return in darker form. This year's music videos twist these archetypes into stories where female protagonists reclaim power long denied to them.

FAIRYTALE CORE

PRINCESS CORE

FEMALE HEROINES

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗







THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

From Grimm to Perrault, fairy tales shaped Europe's imagination.

In Czech cinema especially, the tradition lives on through wintertime pohádky, populated by folkloric creatures and unsettling forests. Juraj Herz's Beauty and the Beast (1978) and Jan Švankmajer's Alice (1988) remain some of the most striking reinterpretations.

REVISITING TALES



ALICE / JAN SVANKMAJER / 1988



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST / JURAJ HERZ / 1978

KIDCORE *Nostalgia*

Building on last year's Balletcore, Kidcore nostalgia blends sweetness with something haunted. An aesthetic where childhood innocence meets an eerie sense of power.

BALLETCORE

NOSTALGIA

MAXIMALISM

DOLL CORE

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗



FOCUS

Lea Esmaili



DIRECTOR :

Lea Esmaili ↗

NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Trinkets ↗

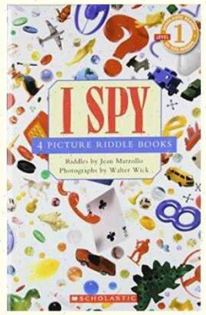
ARTIST :

Ashnikko ↗

RELEASED DATE :

2025

*“**In recent years, there’s been this very minimalist trend. But I’m drawn to the opposite: I love maximalism.** I love when there’s contrast, when there are lots of elements, lots of set design. Little nods and hidden details. It allows me to play with symbols, to build meaning. I think artists have a role in creating escape worlds, and for me, building a whole universe just feels natural.*



*With Ashnikko, we had the exact same vision. Her music video “Trinkets” literally means “accessory,” so we immediately clicked on what we wanted to create. We even shared the same reference: the I Spy books, filled with tiny objects arranged into intricate compositions. **I used stop motion for the first time to fully capture this effect, paying homage to the kind of ‘crafts’ that both she and I loved.**”*

WORLD Building

With AI expanding the boundaries of visual creation, entire universes can now be constructed, explored, and endlessly reshaped. World-building has never felt so vast.

AI ARTISTS

IMMERSIVE

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



FOCUS

YZA Voku



DIRECTOR :

YZA Voku ↗

NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Show Teaser ↗

ARTIST :

The Weeknd ↗

RELEASED DATE :

2024

*“Contemporary surrealism no longer emerges solely from the individual subconscious, but from a hybrid one: **a territory shared between my impulses and the opaque logic of the model.** I’m not sure whether AI shapes my practice or simply opens new cracks through which the imagination slips.*

*When I write a prompt or manipulate an image, I feel as if I’m laying down the laws of a universe that doesn’t yet exist. The machine introduces accidents, deviations, improbable creatures; I decide which survive. It becomes almost an evolutionary process. AI allows me to design spaces that exist only on the edge between the believable and the impossible, and it is on that edge that I try to let my work breathe. **Ultimately, the evolution is not in the software, but in my willingness to lose myself within it.**”*

VISUAL TECHNIQUE

SPLIT DIOPTER

Cinematography reinforces the sense of duality with the return of the split diopter.

This vintage technique keeps two planes in sharp focus within a single frame, evoking collage-like worlds or parallel realities. Today, it's often recreated digitally in post-production, blending classic craft with modern tools.

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



N°2
N°3
N°4
N°5
N°6

EMBRACING THE CHAOS

BRAIN Rotting

The “brain rot” has jumped from social media to screens, with an increasing number of videos using chaos as their visual grammar.

These videos feel like collages of raw internet footage as well as early AI image generations: absurd, fast-paced, unpredictable, often funny and violent at once.

CHAOS CORE

INTERNET FOOTAGE

EARLY AI GEN

UNCANNY VALLEY

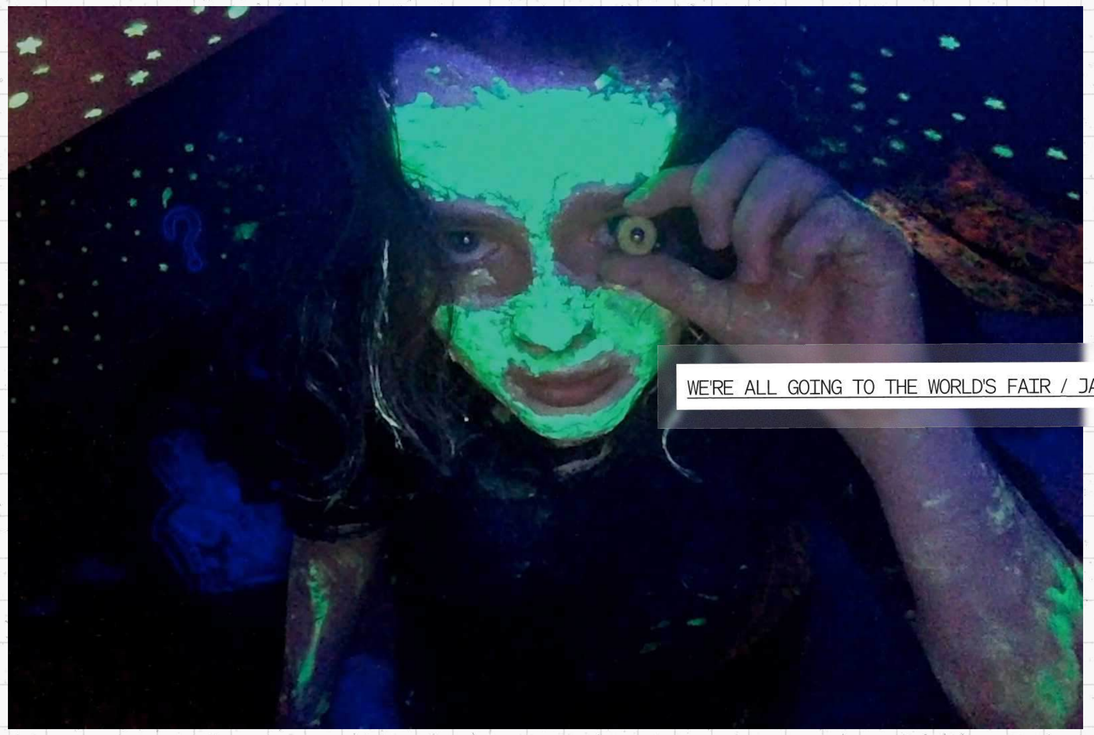
GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

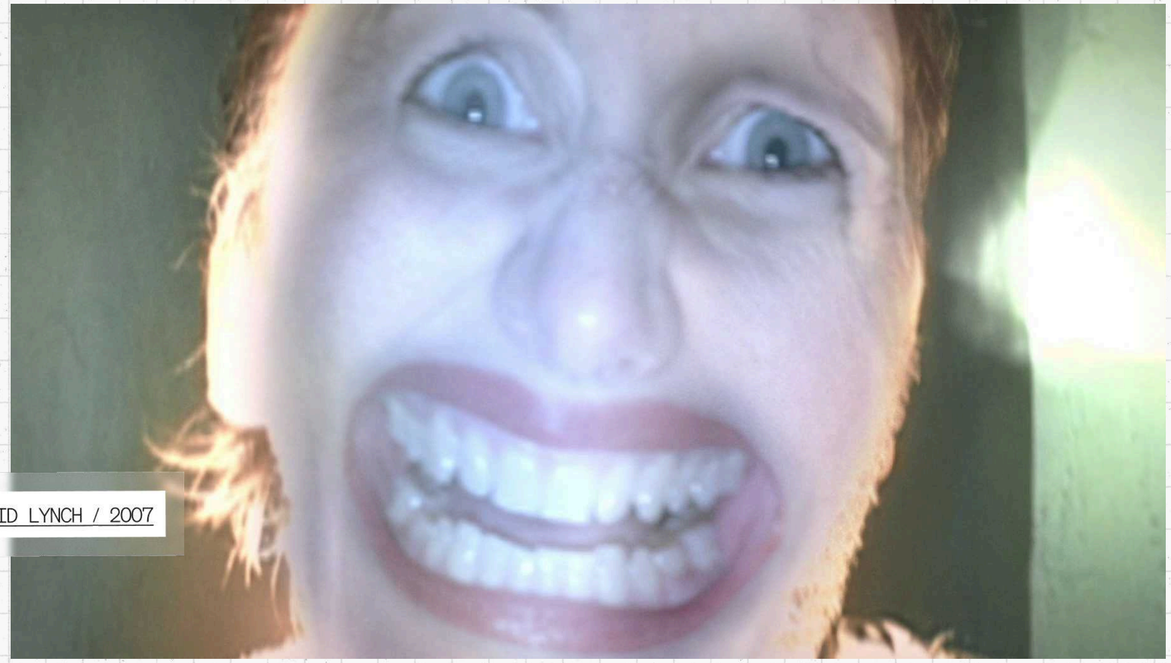
The internet is a strange place to be. Since the early web, virtual spaces have been home to all sorts of bugs, glitches, and oddities.

Cinema has long interrogated this relationship to images: Jane Schoenbrun explores the ambiguous intimacy of virtual life in We're All Going to the World's Fair (2022), while David Lynch pushed self-distortion to haunting extremes in Inland Empire (2007).

BRAIN Rotting



WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE WORLD'S FAIR / JANE SCHOENBRUN / 2022



INLAND EMPIRE / DAVID LYNCH / 2007

FOCUS

Carly Gibert



EMBRACING THE CHAOS

DIRECTOR :

Carly Gibert ↗

NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Multiple medias ↗

RELEASED DATE :

2025

“When I make music, I always picture the video in my head. Until recently, it was difficult to bring that vision to life because I didn’t have the resources. But with AI generation, ***I suddenly have the freedom to realize it, and the possibilities feel limitless****. You have an idea, and you can materialize it with almost no resources. My computer is all I need to translate my ideas into the world.*

I also love the slightly ‘fake’ quality of early AI-generated images. I try to recreate that intentionally in my videos, because I’m drawn to visuals that don’t look too realistic. I’ll ask the AI to make something resemble a video game, so I can land on that fine line between what’s real and what’s not. ***I find that tension fascinating, that gently unreal feeling, as if the whole thing were a dream.”***

QUIRKY CASTING

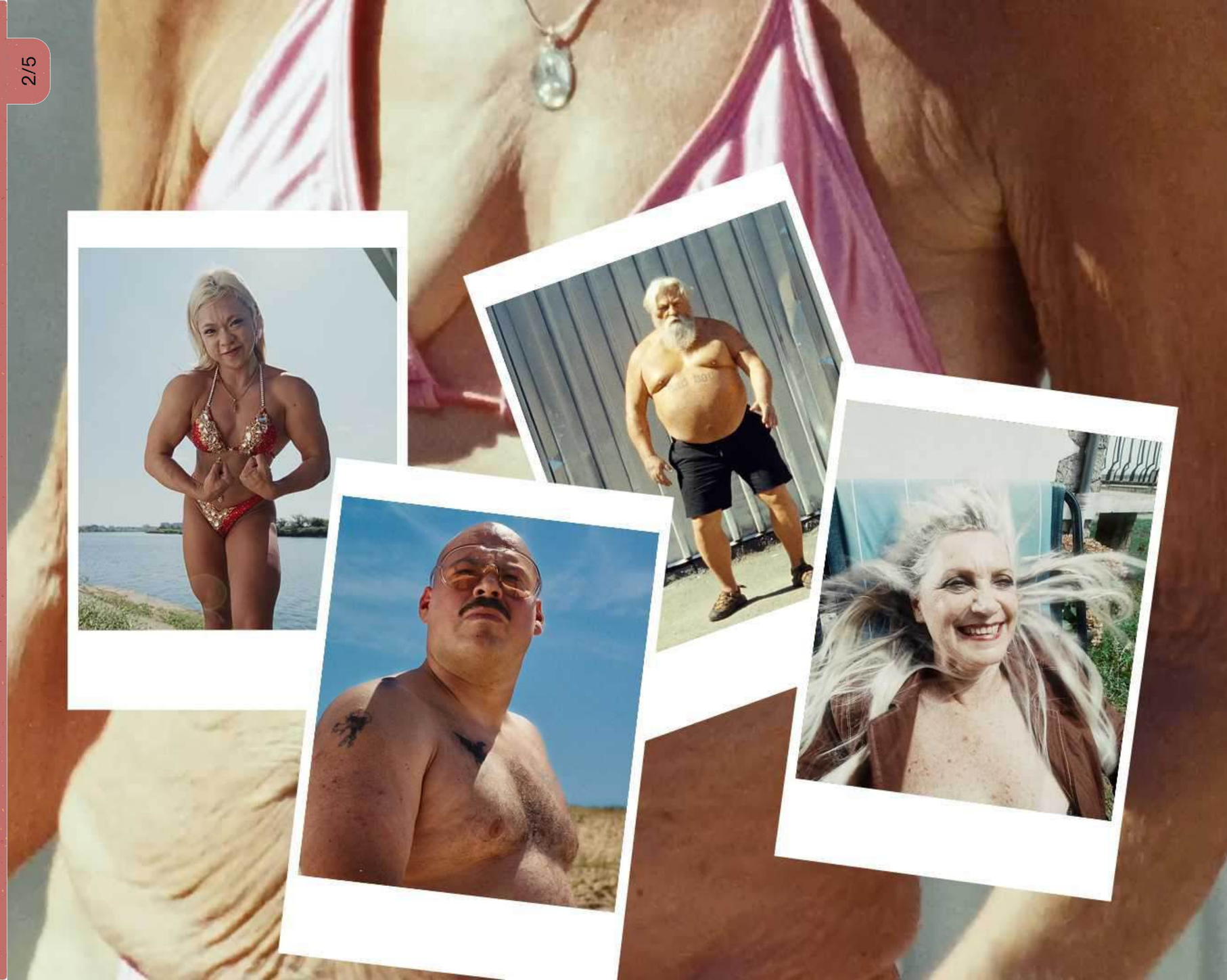
This appetite for the unconventional extends to casting.

Older, eccentric, or atypical faces take center stage, bringing fresh humanity and unpredictability.

UNCONVENTIONAL

ODD BEAUTY

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗



X-TREM ANGLES

Camera work mirrors this chaos: unusual POVs, shots tethered to moving objects, and erratic motion are on the rise, revealing angles we've never seen before.

BODYCAM # POV # IMMERSIVE

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗



FOCUS

Edgar Esteves



DIRECTOR :

Edgar Esteves ↗

NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Still with the smoke ↗

ARTIST :<

Vic Mensa ↗

RELEASED DATE :

2025

"What I've learned is that audiences don't care about the gear — they care about something that feels fresh, original, and alive. I've been on huge sets where our "big boy" camera system died mid-take, and the iPhone was the only thing that saved the day. ***The gear isn't the look. The look comes from how you use it, how brave you are with it.*** *Shooting on a phone gives me a kind of freedom most traditional setups don't.*

Still With the Smoke was a mix of preparation and pure instinct. ***The POVs come from thousands of hours spent perfecting shots and experimenting with VFX.*** *When you truly understand how the two work together, it pushes you to chase new angles and new ways of seeing a moment.*

Filmmaking is becoming more elastic, more personal, and more accessible. *The lines between film, music, commercial, and social content are disappearing. The future is DIY at a high level. The future is filmmakers breaking rules with whatever tools they have. And the future is storytelling that moves culture, not budgets."*

CLONES

A new fixation is emerging: duplicates. Music videos and ads increasingly feature replicated characters, multiplying in uncanny formations.

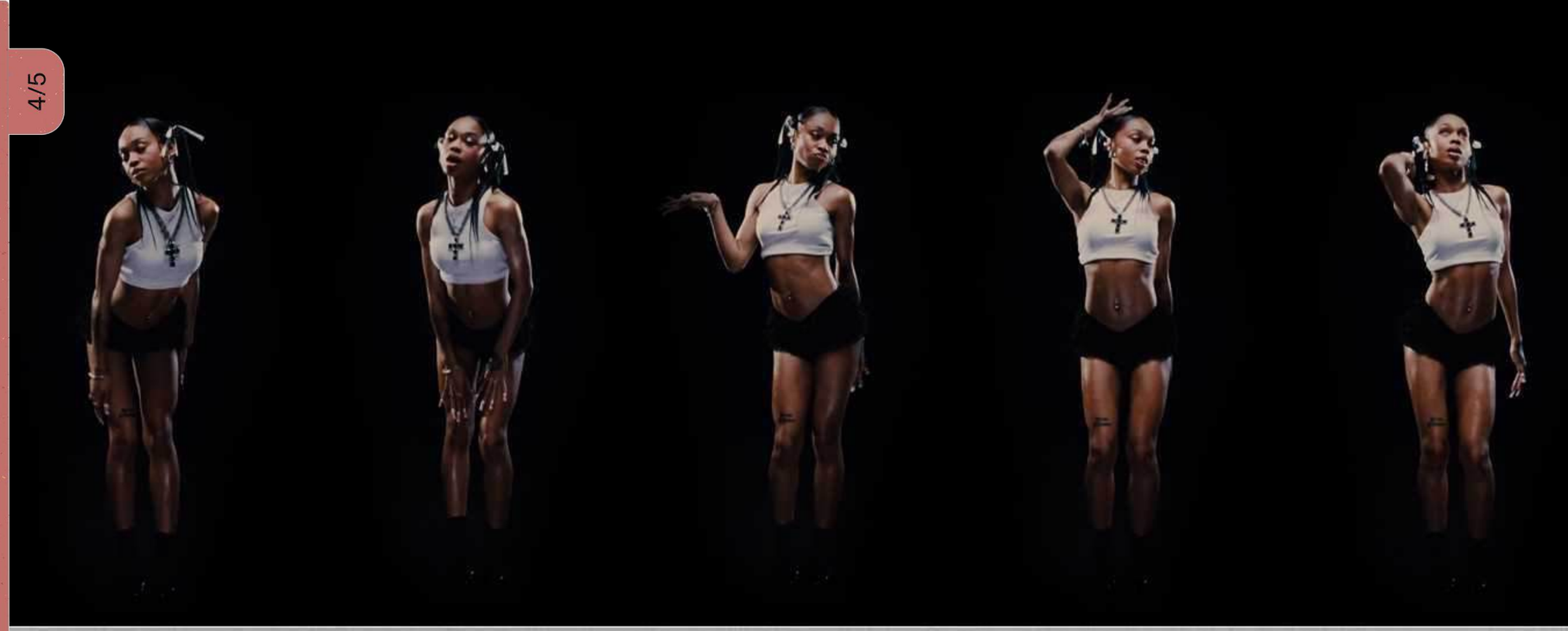
Fueled by today's deepfake tools, these cloned identities are both accessible and artistically tempting.

MULTIPLICITY

DOPPELGÄNGERS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE





COLLECTIVE SCENE

A recurring visual motif that keeps popping up is the collective scene. Diverse groups of characters, each absorbed in their own micro-actions, coexisting within a single frame — reflecting our desire for connection in a fragmented society.

CHARACTERS
CANVA
MAXIMALISM
ORGANIZED WILDNESS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



VISUAL TECHNIQUE

LATERAL & CIRCULAR TRACKING

Long lateral or circular tracking shots continue to emerge accross visual work. The camera glides from person to person or holds steady as characters move in circular paths, transforming chaos into choreography.

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



here come the Creeps

N°3
N°4
N°5
N°6

creepy romantic

A gothic breeze is blowing. Inspired by Nosferatu, Poor Things, and the resurgence of romantic horror, this aesthetic merges sensuality, religious iconography, and haunted femininity.

DARK FANTASY
ROMANTIC GOTHIC
RENAISSANCE
HAUNTED

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗









THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim.

From Mary Shelley to Ottessa Moshfegh, Gothic literature has long been populated with haunted manors, shadowy turrets, and drifting veils.

Its world of lace, gowns, and velvet has inspired generations of filmmakers, while women writers have used it to portray female characters on the edge—like Anne and Lore in Don’t Deliver Us from Evil (1971) or the mother-daughter duo in Singapore Sling (1990), hiding darker secrets.



DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL / JOËL SÉRIA / 1972



SINGAPORE SLING / NIKOS NIKOLAIDIS / 1990

Dark Nature

Nature in this world feels raw and unsettling: dark, mysterious, lit with harsh contrasts and uncanny colors.

This aesthetic draws inspiration from artists like contemporary photographer Briscoe Park.

NIGHTCORE

NOCTURNAL MYSTERY

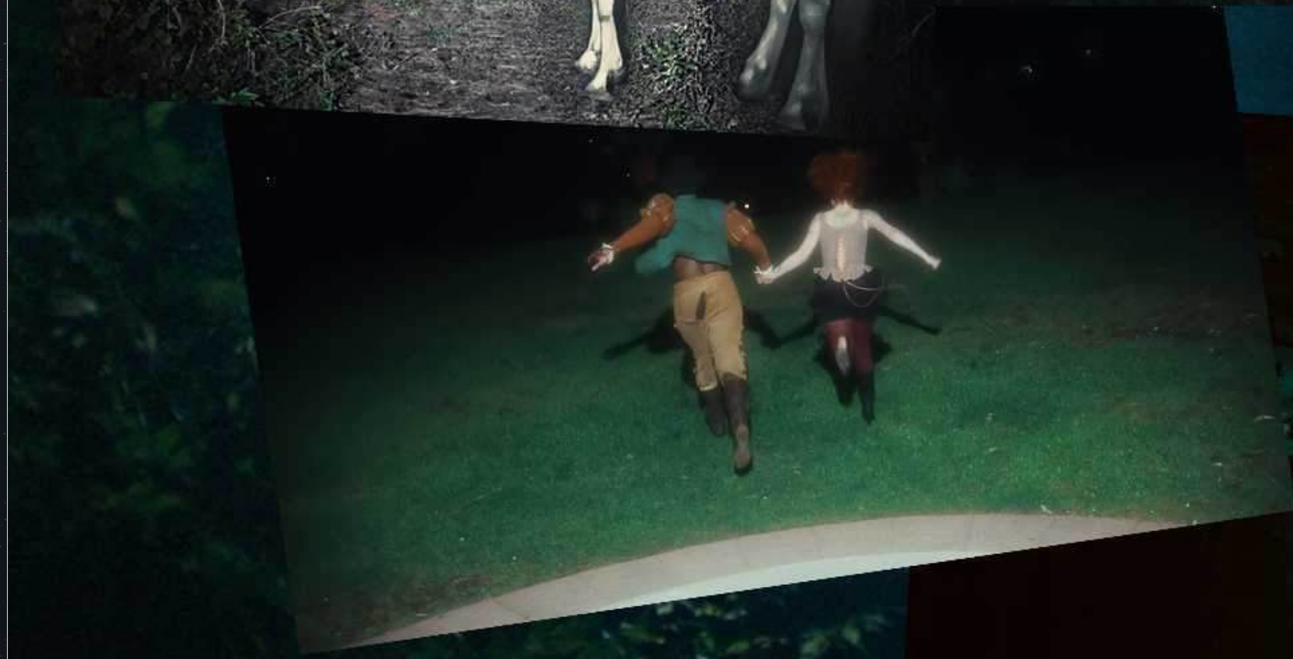
HIGH FLASH

CONTRAST

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗









FLESH MUTANTS

The uncanny extends to the body itself, with hybrid, mutating forms—wings pushing through skin, animal traits merging with human flesh.

The body becomes an unstable surface, echoing ORLAN's work and the tragic monstrosity of The Elephant Man (1980), resurfacing in The Substance (2024).

HYBRID

SUBDERMAL IMPLANTS

DERMAL MORPHING

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



FOCUS

Loïse Hulin



SFX MAKEUP ARTIST :

Loïse Hulin ↗

RELEASED DATE :

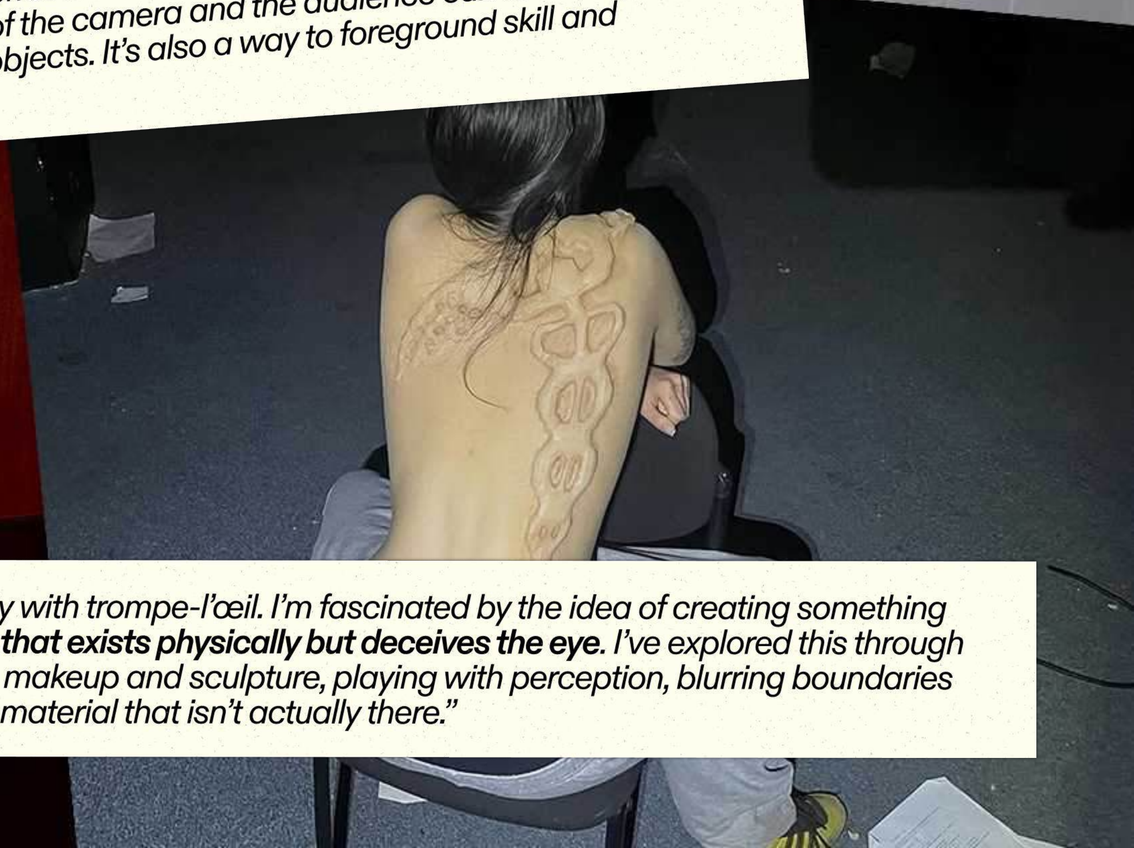
2025





"I believe the shift toward "craft" aesthetics reflects a desire for materiality in a world that has become overwhelmingly digital. ***The imperfections of handmade effects carry an authenticity that digital tools can't always replicate.*** *Practical effects also tend to create more convincing illusions, simply because something real exists in front of the camera and the audience can feel it, especially when actors physically interact with tangible objects. It's also a way to foreground skill and craftsmanship.*





I've always worked extensively with trompe-l'œil. I'm fascinated by the idea of creating something that is real yet fake: ***an object that exists physically but deceives the eye.*** *I've explored this through faux wood treatments in both makeup and sculpture, playing with perception, blurring boundaries and conjuring the illusion of a material that isn't actually there."*

DECAYED CLOWN

Linked to last year's Rococo revival, the figure of the clown also reappeared. Not the polished, colorful kind, but the tragic and slightly decayed version. A haunting symbol of both excess and vulnerability.

DECAY
EXCESS
CLOWN CORE
CIRCUS COLORS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

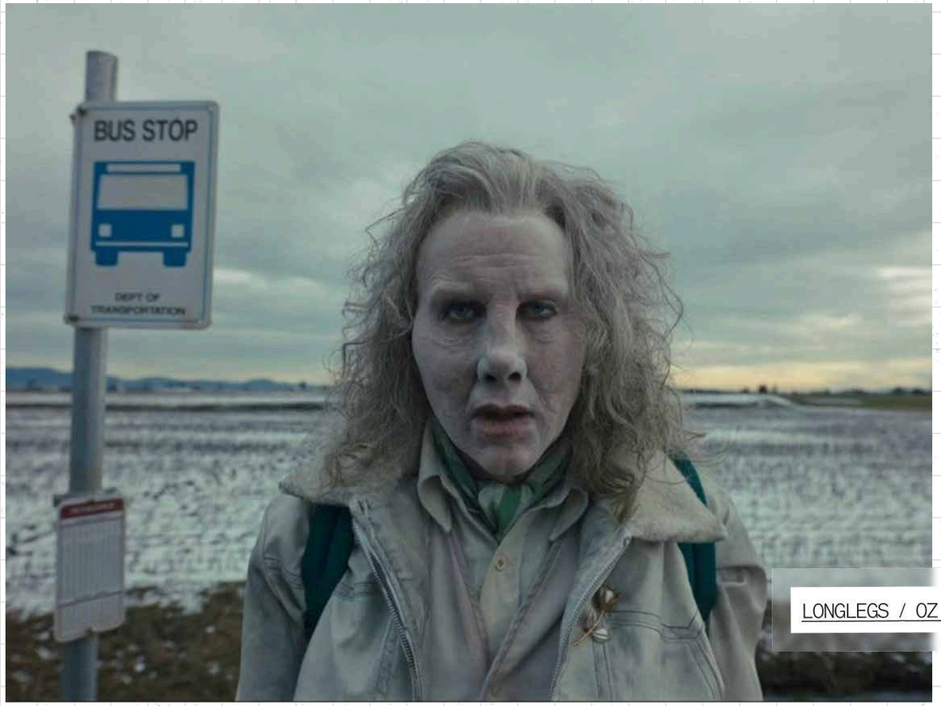
ON THE RISE



THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

Cinema has long been fascinated by the clown, and recent years have amplified the figure's darker side.

From Stephen King's Pennywise to the unsettling performances of Nicolas Cage (Longlegs, 2024) or Amy Madigan (Weapons, 2025). Their half-erased makeup becomes a metaphor for lost innocence and exposed identity.



LONGLEGS / OZ PERKINS / 2024



WEAPONS / ZACH CREGGER / 2025

DECAYED CLOWN

crafted PUPPETS

Very recent music videos have brought back “puppet” figures: striking, rough-hewn masks that evoke a handcrafted aesthetic, even when the effect is entirely digital.

MASKS # HANDMADE # PUPPETS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



TREND 04

LESS IS MORE

less is more

less is more

Nº4

Nº5

Nº6

Minimalism

1/4

In contrast to the maximalist chaos, another current moves quietly in the opposite direction.

Some of the most striking works of the year rely on radical simplicity: an empty stage, one subject in focus or a single source of light.

MINIMALISM

COLOR BLOCK

ONE COLOR

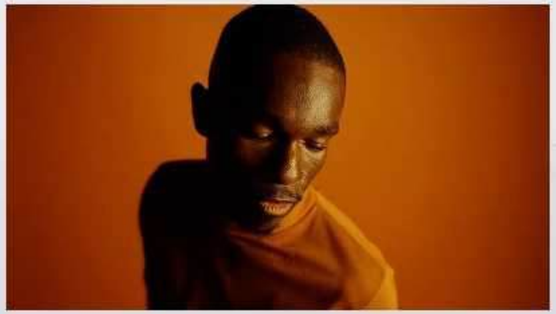
GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

less is more











less is more

Scale Model

The set shrinks to a single studio stage, swallowed by darkness, focusing all attention on the performers.

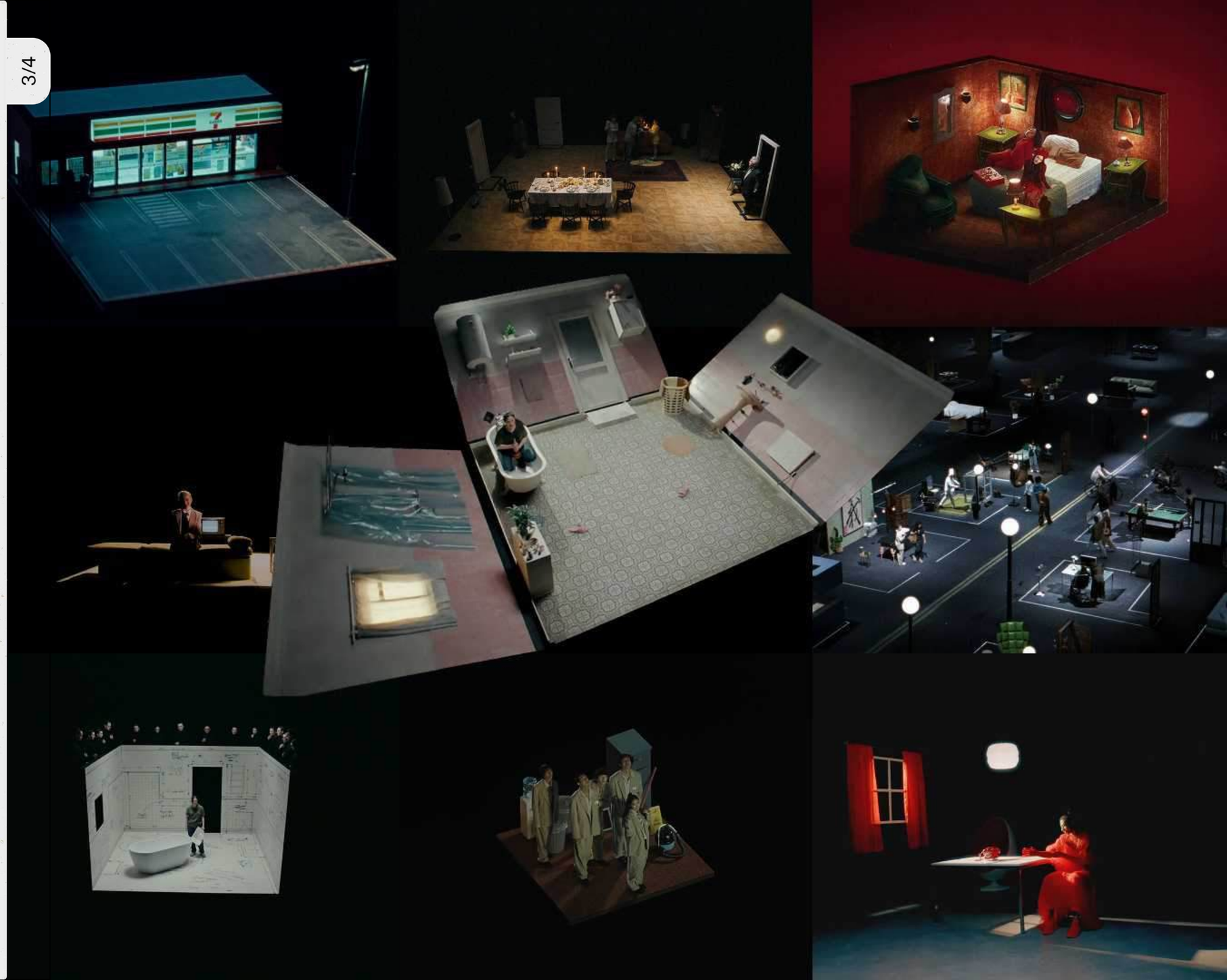
STUDIO

MINIATURE

SCALE MODEL

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



Empty Room

Box-like sets continue to proliferate across productions, creating a visual language that is both minimal and subtly absurd.

BOX

LIMINAL SPACE

STATIC PLAN

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



less is more

Corporate Liminal

This aesthetic of absence echoes in liminal corporate spaces: vacant ’90s and 2000s offices, sterile corridors, and other “non-glamorous” environments.

Directors revel in the absurdity of inhabiting these characterless spaces.

90’S

OFFICE CORE

COLD COLORS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE









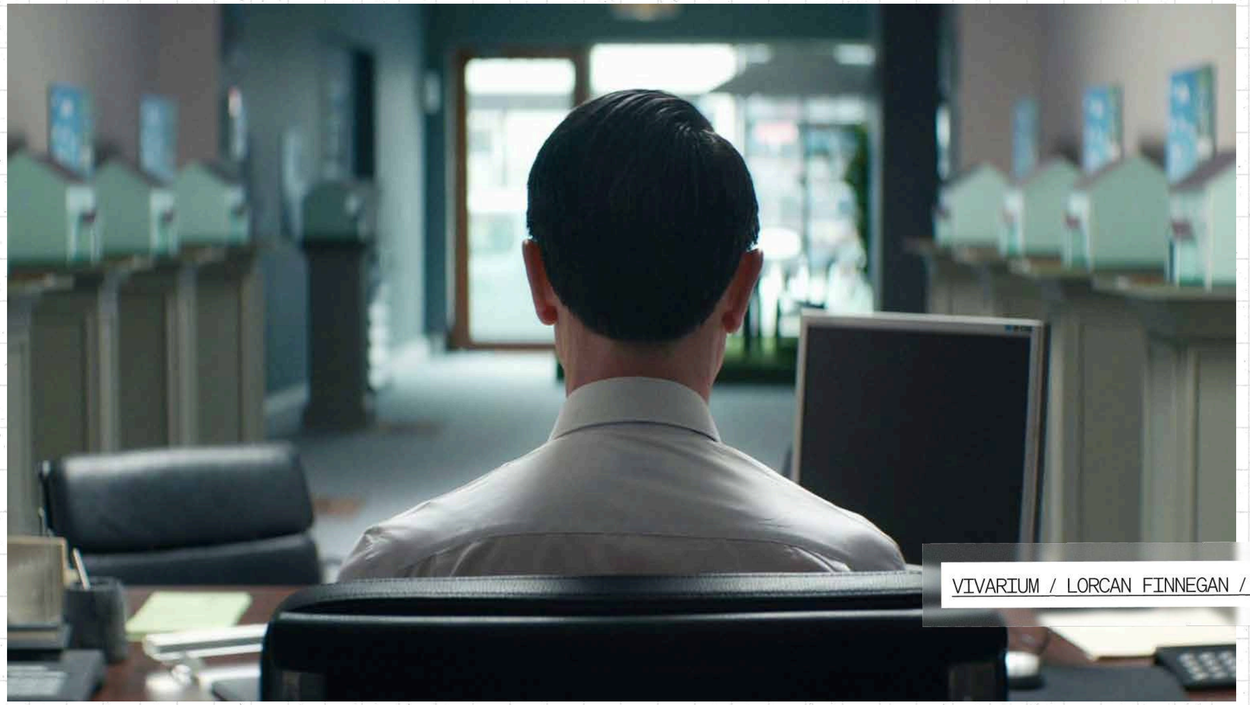
less is more

THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

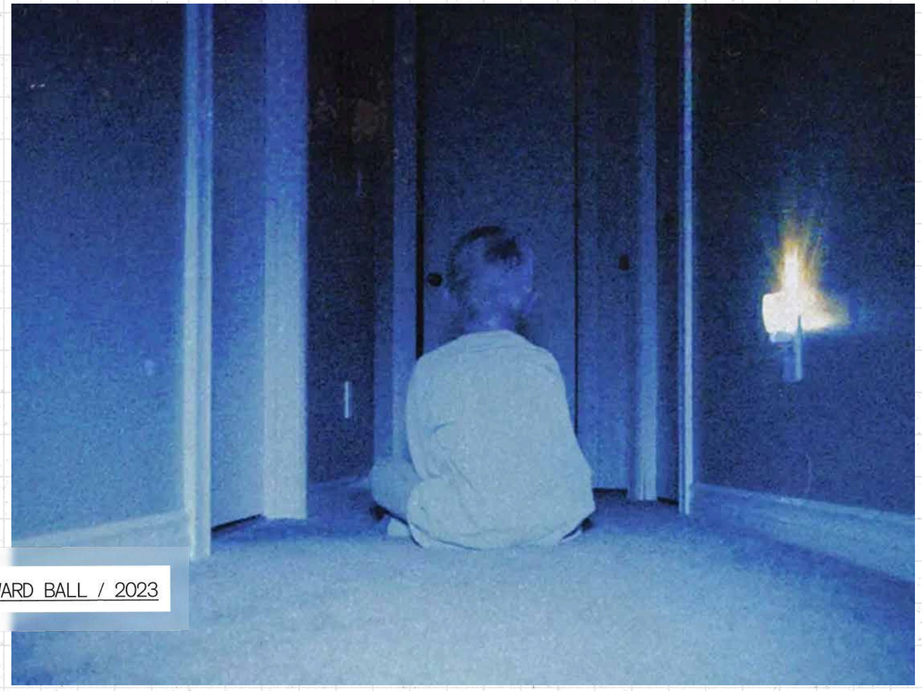
Vivarium (2019) showcases the unsettling potential of liminal corporate spaces. Vacant offices and sterile corridors hide societal anxieties behind their sanitized surfaces.

Skinamarink (2023), on the other hand, transforms the familiar home into a nightmare. Doors appear where there were none, windows vanish, and everyday spaces become threatening.

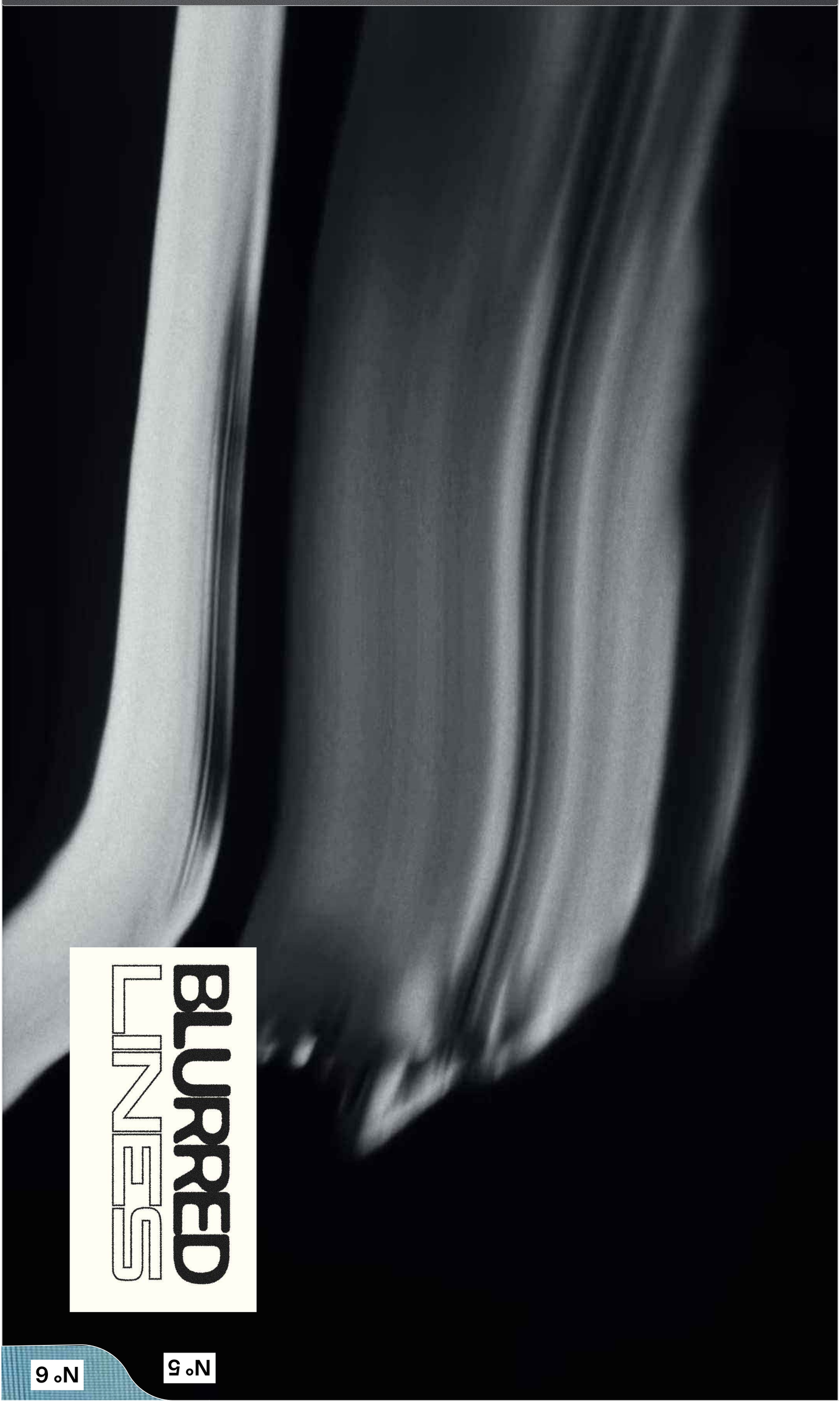
Corporate Liminal



VIVARIUM / LORCAN FINNEGAN / 2019



SKINAMARINK / KYLE EDWARD BALL / 2023


BLURRED
LINES

BLURRED LINES

GLOWY BLURRED

In a world saturated with clarity, distortion helps create symbolic distance with reality.

Glow washes images in softness, giving light a spiritual halo and turning scenes into dream-states.

DISTORSION

DREAMLIKE

GLOW

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗





VISUAL TECHNIQUE

GLITCH STRETCH

Pixel stretching creates hallucinatory motion, making the digital surface itself part of the storytelling.

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

BLURRED LINES



BLURRED LINES

3D SCAN

A new frontier emerges with 3D mapping and digital warping: real-world environments are scanned and reconstructed.

Characters move through these spaces like avatars, inhabiting virtual-reality worlds where the line between the real and the digital blurs.

3D # MAPS # GAMING # VR

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



BLURRED LINES

THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

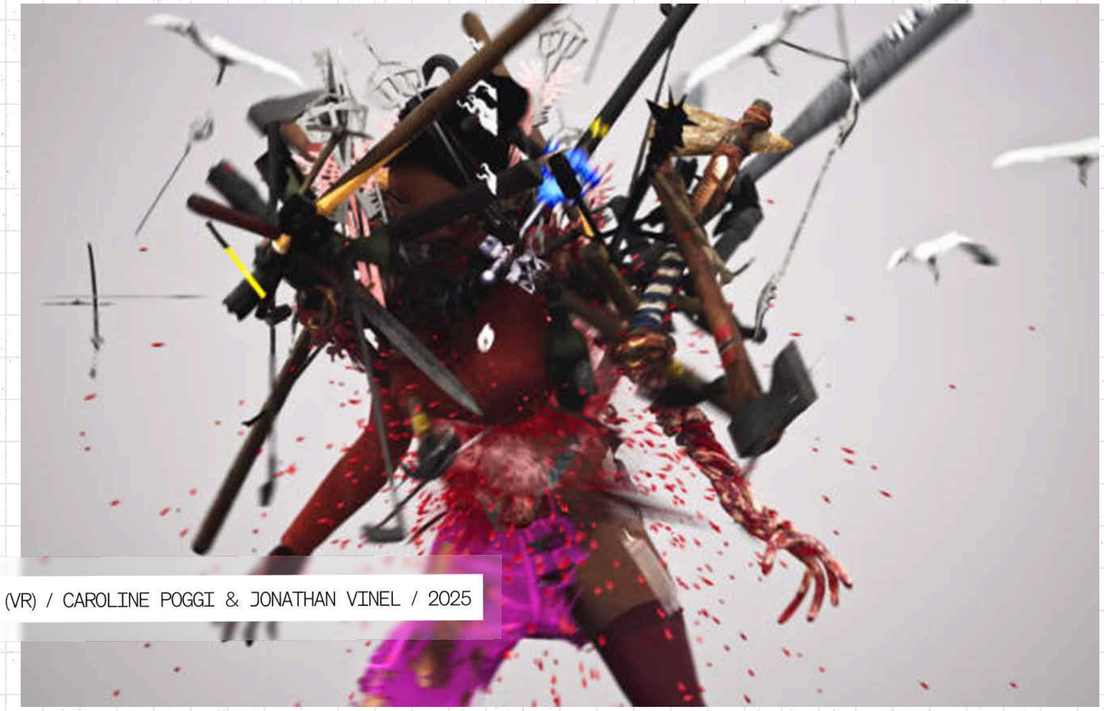
In 2025, the Cannes Film Festival held the second edition of its immersive competition, further legitimizing new media—VR, AR, AI, and video mapping—within cinema.

Directors Caroline Poggi and Jonathan Vinel stand out on this experimental frontier, blending video-game aesthetics with traditional filmmaking in Eat the Night (2024) and pushing it even further in The Exploding Girl (2024).

3D SCAN



EAT THE NIGHT / CAROLINE POGGI & JONATHAN VINEL / 2024



THE EXPLODING GIRL (VR) / CAROLINE POGGI & JONATHAN VINEL / 2025

FOCUS

Cho Gi-Seok



DIRECTOR :

Cho Gi-Seok ↗

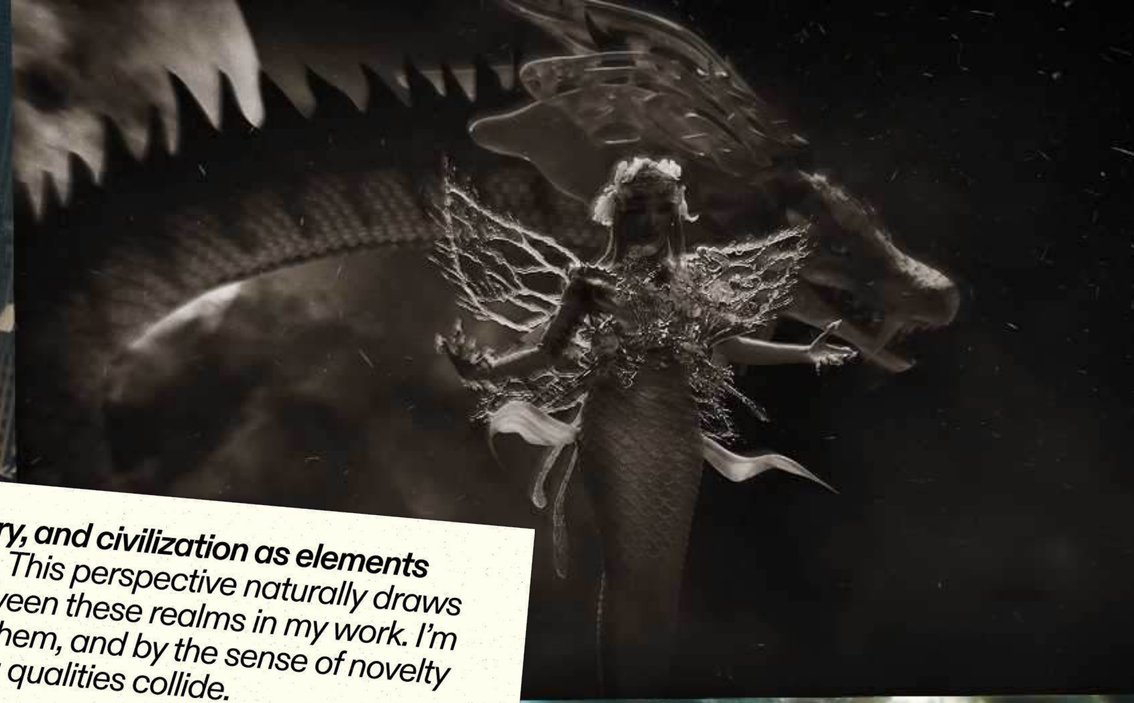
NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Multiple medias ↗

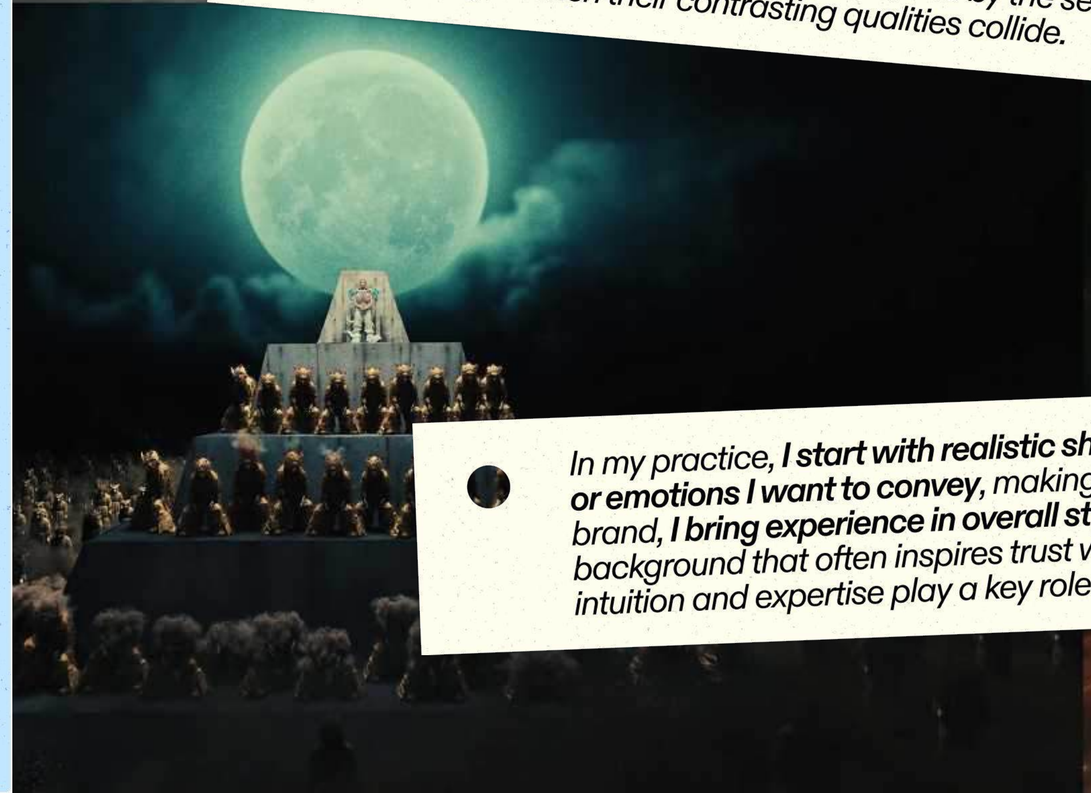
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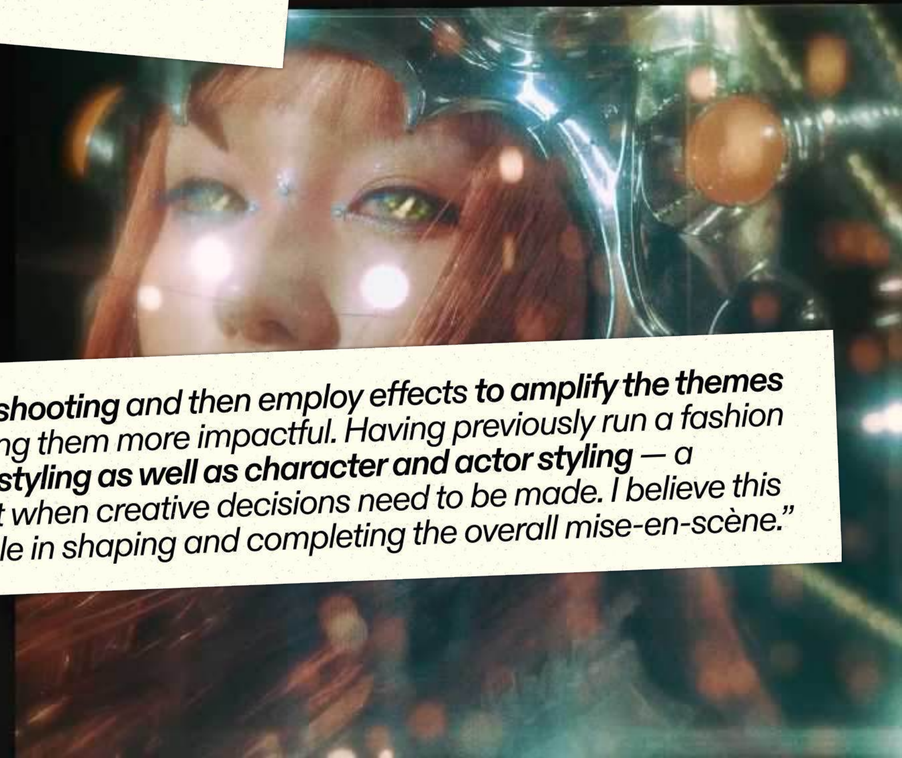
2025





"I see nature, technology, machinery, and civilization as elements ***that coexist in the world around us.*** *This perspective naturally draws me to explore the relationships between these realms in my work. I'm fascinated by the tension between them, and by the sense of novelty that emerges when their contrasting qualities collide.*





In my practice, ***I start with realistic shooting*** *and then employ effects* ***to amplify the themes or emotions I want to convey,*** *making them more impactful. Having previously run a fashion brand,* ***I bring experience in overall styling as well as character and actor styling*** *— a background that often inspires trust when creative decisions need to be made. I believe this intuition and expertise play a key role in shaping and completing the overall mise-en-scène."*

BLURRED LINES

IMPOSSIBLE STAIRS

Inspired by Escher, virtual architecture now bends physics: labyrinths, looping staircases, and impossible spaces come to life through post-production.

ESCHER'S MAZE

LABYRINTH

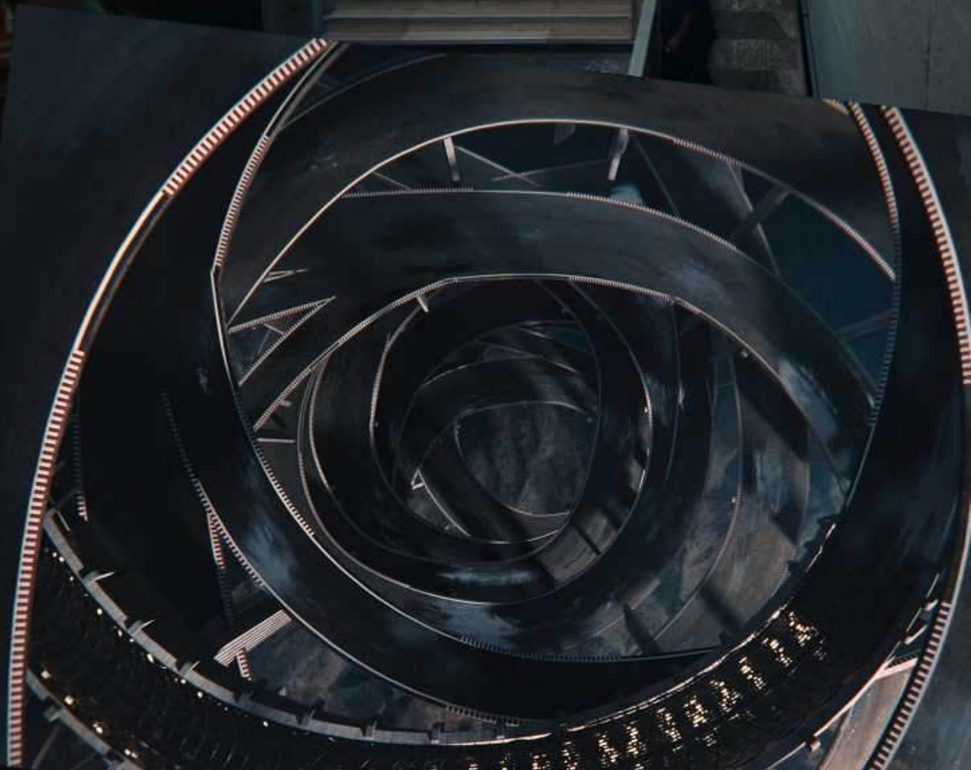
INFINITE LOOPS

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE








Back to Basics

VHS Resistance

As filmmaking keeps pushing further into hyper-technology, the pull toward analog grows stronger. Filmmakers are turning to VHS and early camcorder textures as a deliberate counterpoint, embracing flaws as a new form of sincerity.

Even AI-generated work now mimics this organic warmth, confirming analog authenticity as its own aesthetic category.

Back to Basics

VHS # FRICTION # TEXTURES

AUTHENTICITY

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗



FOCUS

Ben Cole



Back to Basics

DIRECTOR :

Ben Cole ↗

NAME OF THE MEDIA :

Sexy Is Hot Cute ↗

BRAND :

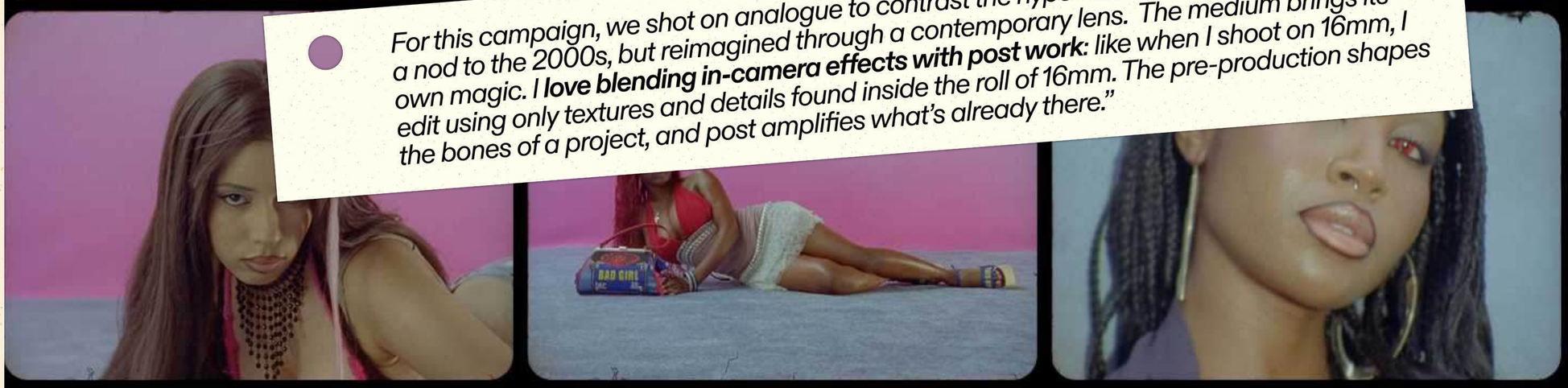
Jeffrey Campbell ↗

RELEASED DATE :

2025







*"Technology is racing forward, revealing new tools and ways to create. But with that access comes a renewed appreciation for the imperfect, the tangible. I'm fascinated by this analogue revival: **today's tools are being used to breathe new life into old-school techniques**, answering a real craving for imperfection.*

*For this campaign, we shot on analogue to contrast the hyper-futurist soundtrack. The film is a nod to the 2000s, but reimagined through a contemporary lens. The medium brings its own magic. I **love blending in-camera effects with post work**: like when I shoot on 16mm, I edit using only textures and details found inside the roll of 16mm. The pre-production shapes the bones of a project, and post amplifies what's already there."*

THE ARCHIVIST EYE by Flim

Back to Basics

On screen, 1980s nostalgia, fueled by Stranger Things, has brought back the VHS aesthetic, complete with static, snow effects, and RGB pixel banding (Videodrome, 1983).

Meanwhile, the Y2K revival channels DV camera footage, with raw images, low color depth, and high contrast (Dancer in the Dark, 2000).

VHS Resistance



VIDEODROME / DAVID CRONENBERG / 1983



DANCER IN THE DARK / LARS VON TRIER / 2000

Organic LENS

Productions shot on actual film keep resurfacing, celebrating analog textures, visible grain, and a more organic, human approach to cinematography.

Scenes fill with bodies, natural light, and intimate interiors, creating a feeling of deeply lived-in authenticity.

VISTAVISION

GRAIN

INTIMACY

NATURAL

GO TO THE MOODBOARD ↗

ON THE RISE



Takeaways

A snapshot of the currents driving 2026 forward



AI tools

enable the creation of entire visual universes, pushing imagined worlds toward greater scale, freedom, and strangeness.



Bodies mutate

and transform through digital cloning, organic distortion, and crafted forms.



Social media habits

shape filmmaking language, with chaotic, scroll-like visuals where collective scenes dissolve into fragmented attention.



Digital scanning & modeling

reshape set design, turning real spaces into flexible, dimensional environments.

N.B

*As technological tools continue to proliferate and AI-generated content keeps flooding the landscape, we expect a new wave of productions that **deliberately embrace low-technology,** simplicity, and **a distinctly human touch.***



THE ERA OF PERFECTION IS OVER

The next chapter belongs to experimenters.

In this shifting landscape, creators need more than tools:
they need a space to explore, reference, and experiment without sacrificing time or vision.

Flim is that compass.

FLIM.AI

Flim

THE CREATIVE SIDEKICK
BUILT FOR STORYTELLERS

Flim

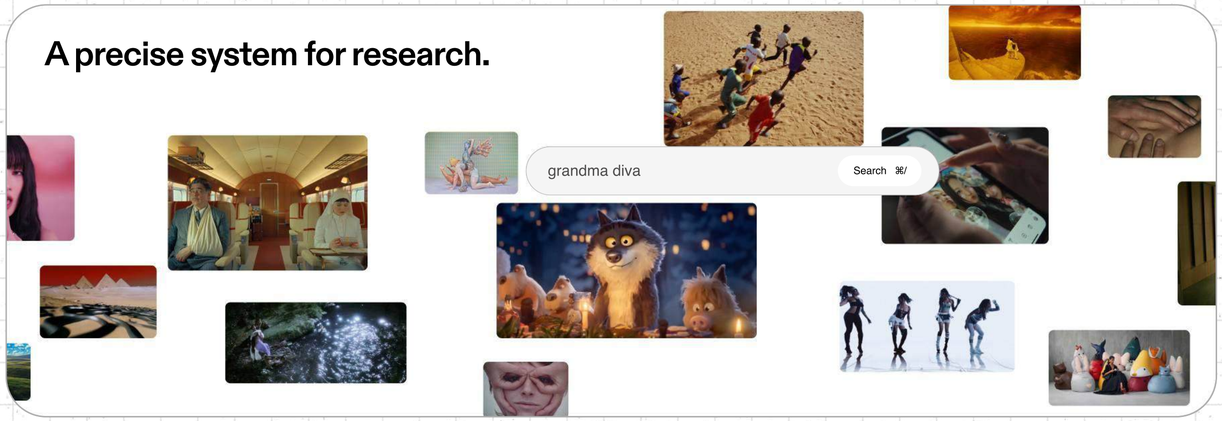
By revealing the full archive of visual creation and giving you the tools to build upon it, Flim helps you design the future of visual storytelling.

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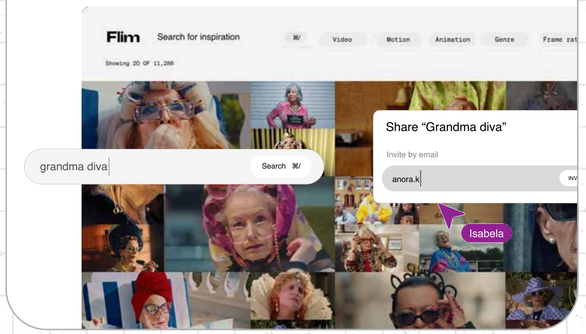
GET 30% OFF WITH THE CODE:

TRENDREPORT

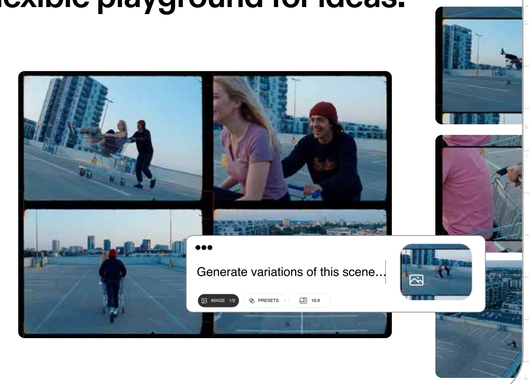
A precise system for research.



A companion at every stage of the creative process.



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Flim is more than a platform. It's a

GLOBAL COMMUNITY
OF TOP CREATIVE TALENT

filmmakers, designers, and artists shaping the future of visual storytelling.

With members in over 50 countries, we're driving visual culture forward across all continents.

Flim

Submit your latest work directly to us for a chance to **be featured on Flim** and on our social channels.

SUBMIT YOUR WORK HERE ↗

And who knows?
Your work might even find its way into **our next Trend Report.**



























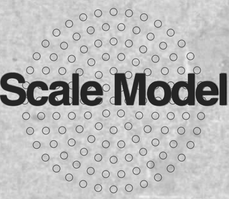


































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