

JUN 2023

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BY GUSTAVO CHAMS

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set assistant **ROENA ONG** photography assistant **TONY DIB** retouch **HELENA COLLINY***

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YNAÊ LOPES SANTOS | ZABRINA MATIRU



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COVER STORY

JAVICIA

Leila

photography **GUSTAVO CHAMS** *style* **LEILA BANI** *set design* **SONIA CAPRICERU** (LB ARTISTS)
beauty **ZABRINA MATIRU** *hair* **ERIN KLASSEN** *style assistant* **ROSEMARY FISHER-LANG**
set assistant **ROENA ONG** *photography assistant* **TONY DIB** *retouch* **HELENA COLLINY**





dress **Patou**
from Bacci's;
shoes **Versace**
from Mine & Yours;
ring and earrings
Kingdom Jewelry;
bracelet **Cartier**

*Actress Javicia Leslie's love for acting shines through as she talks about **doing her own stunts, the power of imagination, and what representation means to her.***

words by **HALEY SENSAVANH**

It's the 1990's and there's about to be a family gathering in Prince George's County, Maryland. For a young Javicia Leslie and her cousins, this meant one thing: the opportunity to perform.

"One cousin would be Chilli, another cousin would be T-Boz, and another one of us would be Left Eye. **We'd have family talent shows, and we'd be those different people,**" Leslie recalled. While dancing along to "What About Your Friends" by TLC might not have been the most monumental occurrence at the time, years later, Leslie marks it as an early example of her passion for performance.

Now primarily living in Los Angeles, Leslie's career has taken off. She starred as the lesbian daughter of a preacher on CBS's hit drama, *God Friended Me*, played the lead in Yvette Nicole Brown's romantic-comedy, *Always a Bridesmaid* and acted as a villain on BET's crime drama, *The Family Business*. **She also made**

history in 2020, after being cast as the first Black woman to portray Batwoman on the second and third season of the CW series, *Batwoman*. She not only reprised this titular role on *The Flash*, but starred as a new villain named Red Death too.

Through all these different roles, Leslie has been able to show off her range and the varying facets of her kaleidoscopic talent in acting. When asked about her favorite, Leslie said it was hard to pick just one.

"I love *God Friended Me* because it sent me to New York. That cast is probably the one I've remained the closest with throughout the years. *Always a Bridesmaid* was so much fun, because that was my first time doing a romantic comedy, and I grew up watching them. I really enjoyed *The Family Business* because I got to be a badass and I'm usually the good guy. Then coming over to *Batwoman*, breaking so many barriers and being such a huge representation was awesome."

Leslie said this historic casting gave her the opportunity to bring authentic representation onto TV screens around the world. She said, "Just by showing up on screen as a Black woman, I'm always representing my community." Leslie also called her time on *Batwoman* an "honor." She said, "No matter what, it's something that my future kids and grandkids and great-grandkids will be proud of."

Leslie also got to utilize her martial arts background when performing stunts on screen. She started practic-

ing Muay Thai in 2018, because her trainer at the time offered the course. Her older brother was also a semi-pro Muay Thai fighter. **Leslie's favorite stunts on**

***Batwoman* usually involved a harness. She said, "They would literally harness me, put a rope on my back and have a huge machine that pulls me up really fast out of the scene.**

I was able to see the whole city of Vancouver from the sky while hanging from this contraption they created."

Being able to do her own stunts and bring martial arts to the screen also gave her the unique opportunity to learn more.

Leslie said, "Our stunt team at *Batwoman* was absolutely amazing. They would always build off of what they knew I could do, and if I wasn't able to, they would teach me. Every single time we came on set, my stunt double Aisha would show me something that just made me sharper as an actor and as a martial artist on screen."



full look Archival Chanel
from Mine & Yours;
bracelet Cartier



dress **Catherine**
Regehr necklace and
earring set **Rachel**
Comey from One Of
A Few; shoes **Jimmy**
Choo from Mine &
Yours; gloves **Dries**
Van Noten





top Dries Van
Noten from Bacci's;
earrings, cuff and ring
Kingdom Jewelry

Leslie's hunger to learn more, do more, and know more extends past her time on set.

She said, **"I'm constantly taking classes or finding ways to learn to be a better performer, better artist, stronger artist and more empathetic artist."**

The program she's currently taking is Diana Castle's The Imagined Life in L.A. Leslie said the classes help her work on her imagination and how to tell every part of the story, from the way the scene might look, smell or feel.


After playing such a wide range of characters, Leslie continues to be open to all experiences. When asked about potential directors or actors she would love to work with, Leslie named one: Angela Bassett. Her priority? Working with up-and-coming members of the film industry.

"I'm a Gemini, so I don't necessarily have one role or one thing I want to try. Every day, I want to film in different countries, I want to work with different directors, I want to work with different casts."

Another legendary actress Leslie looks up to is none other than Eartha Kitt. Leslie described her as more than "just an actress, or a singer, or a performer." Kitt was outspoken and held views that were especially progressive for her time. She was a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, publicly criticized the Vietnam War, and supported LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage.



top **Lanvin**
from Bacci's;
skirt **Off White**
from Mine & Yours;
head scarf **Gucci**
from Mine & Yours;
glasses **Blim**



dress **Jean Paul**

Gaultier *from*

Mine & Yours; jacket

Ganni *from* One Of A

Few; *earring and ring*

Kingdom Jewelry

"I think my love for Eartha Kitt comes from the life that she lived. It's about being authentically who she was as a black actress in America; telling stories, and using her platform as an artist to protest."

Leslie herself is very passionate about supporting children in need. That's one of the reasons why she created the Chandler Foundation, a charity that supports sports equipment drives and backpack drives for students in underfunded school districts Accessibility to quality equipment was an issue Leslie faced firsthand as a track athlete growing up.

"I remember there wasn't any sports equipment for me to be able to play and learn new activities, in the way other schools in more financially healthy neighborhoods were able to. Having sports in your life allows for some people to keep out of trouble. That's what kept me out of trouble."

She adds that being in a position to give back and support her community makes her feel "very blessed."

On her days off, Leslie loves to take it easy at the Dime on Fairfax Avenue in L.A. Her attachment to this "low-key dive bar" began when she worked there after first moving to California. Leslie's drink of choice? A Casamigos Reposado on the rocks, if she "wants to dance and go crazy." But if she's in more of a "chill" mood, Leslie gravitates towards a classic Bourbon on the rocks. She's also a self-described foodie. Leslie described her go-to meal as "anything with seafood." She grew up eating lots of it

due to her upbringing in Maryland, adding that she loves crab cakes with mashed potatoes and any kind of greens. Leslie said, "I like shrimp so much, my friends call me 'Bubba' from *Forrest Gump* because I'm always talking about it."

Reflecting back on her career so far, Leslie said she's learned a lot just from experience. She offers three important pieces of advice for aspiring actors. First, is to stay local. She said, **"Start in your hometown so everything you do can be cheaper. You**

can get your self-tapes done for cheaper, you can get your headshots done for cheaper, your classes are cheaper, and more likely you're living in a more comfortable position financially than you would be if you moved to LA."

Secondly, Leslie said to never "stunt your growth." She does this by attending classes and reading voraciously. She said, "You got to get into a class. I'm still in class and I will stay in class, probably forever. **Reading is important, and it's not just about what you're learning. It's about constantly challenging your imagination.** So

while I'll read a book like *How to Stop Acting* by Harold Gustin or *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron, I will also read something that's fictional."

Lastly, she wants to remind young actors that "rejection is protection." She added, "Just be kind and gentle with yourself. A lot of times when you don't get something, it's because it wasn't for you. That's okay."

Rejection is Protection. Just be kind and gentle with yourself. A lot of times when you don't get something, it's because it wasn't for you. That's okay.



So what's next? Leslie just finished filming the pilot for ABC's new procedural drama, *HPI (High Intellectual Potential)*. It's a remake of the popular French show of the same name. Leslie plays one of the leads, named Daphne. She also has a thriller film that came out this past May, called *Double Life*. Leslie stars as Jo Creuzot,

the former mistress of a man who died under mysterious circumstances. She teams up with his widow to investigate his death and unravel secrets he kept from both of them. She's also in pre-production for a short film entitled *Ascension*, which she will not only star in, but also produce.

But something Leslie hopes is in the cards is a trip to Brazil. She said, "When I

was doing *Batwoman*, they were the ones that I was talking to online all the time. **As an African American person, a lot of us aren't taught about our community out there. So, shoutout to Brazil, it's freaking beautiful, the people are beautiful. Some of the most amazing, talented people come out of Brazil, I can't wait to go!"**



top **Dries Van**
Noten *from* Baccìs;
pants **Ganni** *from*
One Of A Few; *blazer*
Samsøe Samsøe
from One Of A Few;
Shoes **Jimmy Choo**
from Mine & Yours;
Earrings **Kingdom**
Jewelry



polo and skirt set

Marni *from Bacci's;*

earrings and ring

Kingdom Jewelry;

bracelet **Cartier**



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photography by **CAIKE MOLINA**
style by **DEIVID MORAES**
beauty and hair by **JESSYKA TOMMASI**
fashion editor **JONNATAS VISÉN**
text **BRUNA MACHADO**
model **MARCUS CECILIANO**
at **JOY MANAGEMENT**

SPEC TRUM

We have existed in the night for a long time, we are both light and darkness. An oscillating spectrum trying to understand its own viscera, its own comfort, its own heart. hybrid densities that dance together their colors, subtly unfolded in a body that survives and awaits its dawn.



shirt **Acervo do Moraes**
jewelry **Bossa Nova**
overcoat **Christian Sato**





shirt **Acervo do Moraes**
tie **Casaqueto**
short **Dod Alfaiataria**
jewelry **Bossa Nova**
coat **Christian Sato**
gloves and shoes **Acervo Ojo**



blazer and vest **Pierre Cardin**
shirt **Acervo do Moraes**
jewelry **Bossa Nova**







costume **Empório Armani**
overcoat **Jorge Feitosa**
jewelry **Bossa Nova**
gloves and shoes **Acervo Ojo**



JESU TON

*finds inspiration in the nature of the Algarve and in poetry
for her new EP.*

photography by **MARIA DALECHINA**



BLOOM introduces the first Portuguese language song written by the British artist.


words by **THAIS PIMENTA**

She was born and raised in London, England, but it was in Brazil that **Jesuton** saw her artistic career take flight. After a video of her singing in the streets of Rio de Janeiro went viral, she signed a contract with the largest national recording company in Brazil — Som Livre, launched two studio albums, two live albums and singles alongside performances at some of the biggest festivals in the country such as Lollapalooza and Rock in Rio. Even in evolution, it was during a period spent in Portugal that Jesuton directed her attention to reconnect with a deeply-held passion: poetry. In the bucolic region of southern Portugal, the Algarve — Jesuton refined the poetry that forms the EP *BLOOM*, as well as composing her first original song in Portuguese, the second language she has adopted as her own. Watch the video for *Florescer* (Live) and the full visual EP. Distributed by Believe, alongside the song *Florescer*, the EP *BLOOM* is formed by two poems (The Field and Leaf) that have versions in Portuguese (O Campo and Folha). Speaking to the inspirations for her artistic process, Jesuton reveals: “*The project BLOOM was inspired by the landscape of the southern Portugal, which has*

this beautifully unstructured feel to it — full of life, rambling expanses that stretch as far as the eye can see, and all kinds of unexpected colours. The 2020 pandemic brought my attention sharply to the present moment and my immediate location like never before. The collective pause made me travel internally and revisit things I had written over the years. What I found really made me reflect — I had poured so much of myself into these texts and continued forwards doing other things without so much of a backwards glance! There was so much to unpack and examine. Over the past decade I had written about my encounters with life’s fundamental questions, particularly the transformations that we go through: attachment and letting go — in all of their technicolour complexities: bittersweet, anguished, victorious. I saw that I had written about starting over from nothing (again), as well as those otherwise unremarkable days when you finally just get to come up for air. The poems I found spoke just as much about the moments that are so beautiful and light, they carry you — as well as the moments where it seems that the darkness has no end.”







The artist shares that her love affair with the written word is an old one that has withstood the test of time: “Probably even before music, my first passion was for language, for words. I loved to read, I loved to write endless adventure stories with a friend at school, in a little notebook that we would pass between us. Nowadays, whether it’s the desire to capture an everyday moment on paper, or to organise my thoughts in the middle of a crisis — the impulse to create paintings with words that faithfully represent these evasive emotions and experiences is just as strong as it ever was.” Can we expect a book in the pipeline? “*Who knows...*,” she says with a smile.

ABOUT JESUTON

With just over a decade of artistic career, Jesuton, the British singer songwriter, daughter of a Jamaican mother and Nigerian father, has a trajectory in the music industry that reads like a fairy tale: she was discovered by renowned TV presenter Luciano Huck in 2012 when a video of a live performance in the streets of Rio de Janeiro went viral. From there - nothing was ever the same again, launching three albums with *Som Livre: Encontros* (2012), *Show Me Your Soul* (2014) and the first of original self-penned songs, *HOME* (2017), which brought her to the stages of *Lollapalooza*, in 2018.

Commanding a visceral and emotive timbre that demands attention, Jesuton cultivated a firm position in the national scene, sharing stages and studio time with consecrated Brazilian stars from Seu Jorge to Marcelo D2, aside from performing at the *Multishow Awards*, in a duet with Ana Carolina. Playing in concert halls and festivals across the country, highlights included *Festival de Verão de Salvador*, in 2013 and *Rock in Rio*, in 2013 e 2019, as well as *Casa da Música*, Portugal (2018).

"My work is my channel of communication with my ancestors and it is how I connect with who I need to be," notes the singer songwriter, who prepares new releases for 2023 and 2024, beginning with an EP that mixes music and poetry, *BLOOM*.





be my
Baby

photography by **JOHNNY MORAES**

style by **MARCIO BANFI**

beauty and hair by **MAXI WEBER**

beauty assistant **LUCAS QUEIROZ**

photo assistant **LEFTEL STUDIO**

backstage **INGRID ALVES**

models **IARA, ODA CAIRU and NAIA DELMAR**

at **JOY MANAGEMENT | CONTRASTE**





dress Casa Juici



dress **Oscar De La Renta**



dress **Alexandre Herchovitch**





dress Casa Juici





Archival

Culture and knowledge: The

RIO, *negra*

words by

YNAÊ LOPES SANTOS

Adjunct Professor at the Institute of History at UFF

WANIA SANT'ANNA

Associate producer of the film "Rio, negro."

People and their communities are the main source of cultural formation, they are the ones that inspire creative processes, the formation of knowledge and knowledge in its multiple forms through time and generations. Black communities and people in Brazil have done this, their own culture, impregnated by an unquestionably African heritage and, under the dominance of violence, the marks of slavery.

The intentional deprivation of freedom that the transatlantic slave trade imposed on thousands of Africans for almost four centuries is a stain that in the Americas, and especially in Brazil, forged and re-signified the original culture of our African ancestors and bequeathed us an culture Afro-Diasporic and Afro-Brazilian.

Brazilian culture has this unavoidable origin and, very importantly, we also have the marks that racism and racial discrimination imposed and continue to impose on the knowledge generated by the Afro-descendant community. Until the date of the abolition of slave labor, in 1888, Brazil was the colony in the Americas with the highest volume of trafficked slaves — 4 out of 10 Africans torn from the African continent were forcibly destined for our current territory, totaling something like 3.6 million of people deprived of their freedom, dignity and humanity.





2

KODAK PORTRA 400

43

KODAK PORTRA 400



2

2

KODAK PORTRA 400

43

KODAK PORTRA 400



2

2

KODAK PORTRA 400

43

KODAK PORTRA 400



2

Creation and black knowledge in Brazil are part of our history and our history, in its plurality and vigor, needs to be known, recognized and exposed as a source for the formation of new perspectives on the past, present and future. It is necessary to open our minds to other possibilities of seeing and being in the world and that is what the film *Rio, Negro*, directed by filmmakers Gabriel Barbosa and Fernando Sousa and produced by Quiprocó Filmes, in a very original initiative by *Casa Fluminense*, civil society organization that presents the film, which is based in the city of Rio de Janeiro and is dedicated to debating and proposing public policy solutions for the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro.

Some might ask why *Casa Fluminense* took on this challenge of supporting a documentary that aims to bring to the big screen the past of a territory like Rio de Janeiro and its surroundings, with the organization focused on the elaboration of new policies for the disorders of today? But that is precisely what makes “Rio, Negro” a charming production: reviewing our past is a necessary task to understand that today’s challenges have an origin — as a solution and also as a problem. New narratives demand new perspectives.

The heart of Africa

That was how some European travelers described the city of Rio de Janeiro at the dawn of the 19th century. And it was not for less. A quick walk around the city was enough to find crowds of African men and women doing a wide variety of jobs.

However, this beating African heart was linked to one of the greatest crimes against humanity: the transatlantic slave trade. If Rio de Janeiro was an African and black city, the great explanation for this lay in the weight that slavery exerted in the city (in particular) and in Brazil (in general).

The dependence that was created between the work carried out by enslaved people (Africans and their descendants) and the function-

ing of the city was such that, throughout the 19th century, Rio de Janeiro became the largest slave-owning city in the world. And since modern slavery was a racialized institution, being the largest slave city in the world also meant being a black city par excellence.

It is curious to think that throughout the 20th century, the image that was built about Rio de Janeiro completely shifted from its black and African essence, experience and urbanity. The Rio de Janeiro sung in Bossa Nova, stamped on postcards, considered the wonderful city par excellence, was invented despite its blackness which, at most, is taken as a folkloric anecdote or romanticized by samba and carnival.

And don’t get us wrong. Samba and Carnival are fundamental and, if understood in their complexity, they help us to see more carefully the particularities and vicissitudes of this Rio, which was and continues to be black.

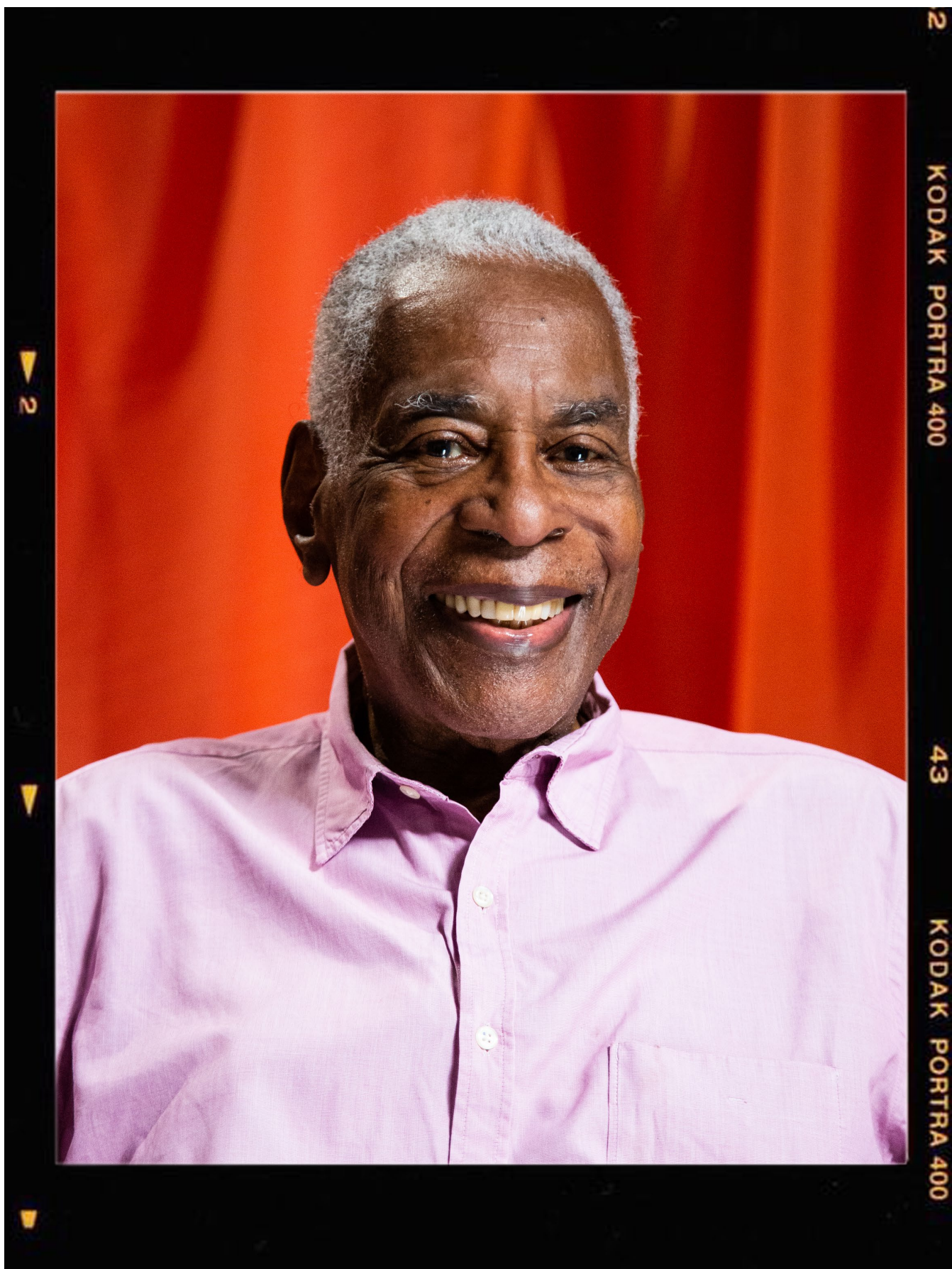
But, why was the black Rio of yesteryear sublimated, giving way to the construction of a city that is recognized for its natural exuberance and the alleged cordiality of its people (deeply whitened)?

This is one of the questions that “Rio, Negro” helps us answer.

Assuming the historic blackness of this city is getting in touch with a facet of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil that we are not used to dealing with so directly: the positivity with which Rio de Janeiro is coated is part of a political decision organized within of the assumptions of racism. And this choice is based on the tacit silencing of the ontological blackness of this city. It is not a question of completely removing the black population from the history of Rio de Janeiro, but of transforming it into a landscape of this city. Far from being recognized as plural and dynamic historical subjects, blacks in Rio de Janeiro were portrayed as part of “this marvel of scenery”.

The film “Rio, Negro” is, therefore, an invitation for us to recognize the black population for what it was: a social actress who built the many layers of what we call Rio de Janeiro today. Be it the enslaved Africans and their descendants who built a good part of the material and symbolic culture of Rio, be it the workers who organized the country’s first union associations, be it the sounds and drums that set the rhythm of work and rest in that city, be it the seizure of power by black sailors who almost took over the federal capital.

There is no Rio de Janeiro that is not a Rio Negro. And it’s past time for us to tell and learn from these stories.





Kendall Bessent

An intimate view of his own 'Black Mecca'

words by CARLOS MOSSMANN







Atlanta-born, "Black Mecca" photographer Kendall Bessent produces art related to his love for his hometown, and the people who live there. Although he is only 20 years old, Kendall has quickly become known in the photography world for his portraits that show everyday reality, beauty, and black culture. Growing up in Georgia, as a teenager he would go out around Atlanta with his mother and enjoyed taking pictures with his iPhone or iPad. It was she, his mother, who first showed interest in his artistic eye and gifted him, as a teenager, with his first camera. But Kendall felt he needed to try other careers and the camera sat idle for two years.

He went to Georgia State University to try business, but as soon as he realized he would have to study accounting, he switched to law. That didn't last long either. As soon as he heard his professor talk about how difficult the course would be, he realized that to study law he would have to love it. He didn't hesitate and, on the same day, he changed to photography.

It was the path indicated by his heart that best suited his interests and reason. Not the course, but photography. He left college and followed another path. He decided to move to Brooklyn and dedicate himself to photography full time. Since then he has dedicated himself to personal projects and has been increasingly recognized in the professional world. With authentic images, his work follows an editorial, ar-

tistic line, much influenced by fashion. The choice, as he says, is always to raise the issues of black culture and show its beauty in new ways.

His inspirations are artist friends and those who came before in the black movement, besides classic movies like *Baby Boy*, *Friday*, or more recent ones, like *Queen & Slim*, where, the first time he watched it, he identified himself with a scene where the character fries fish in a melted pot. The scene was composed in a way that created an experience that could be part of his own everyday life, and that is what he loves.

Kendall loves his people, he loves his city, his community, and he loves photography. These interests and passions come together in a single purpose. It is what excites and thrills him. His photographs capture his culture and tell his and his community's stories "for themselves," as he says. That is his desire.

We spoke with Kendall to learn more about his work and his creative process.



How did you end up in this market that is so competitive and full of talents? What are the obstacles?

I would say an obstacle for me is finding my footing in this industry. Being so young and new into the industry its really intimidating sometimes because you don't know everything, everyone or all of the ropes. I look up to my older peers as an example that i should follow.

Many people with already established careers or in formation are lured by photography and change their paths. What brought you closer to this language? What keeps you in this pathway as a form of expression?

Being able to create and tell a story without words. Im a person who's very quiet and i don't really engage in conversation a lot. So i love having the ability to visualize what I want to say and being able to convey in a way that others understand.

It is clear to notice the emphasis on

black culture in your job. How did the term Black Mecca came up?

The term Black Mecca is what i used to describe the city i grew up in which is Atlanta, Georgia. Its just a place of great prosperity for people who look just like me. Being a kid and witnessing the great achievements by Black people really showed me the sky is the limit.

It is sad to say so, but we know that racism is deeply present to this day, what were your main hardships when starting a career?

I have yet to experience direct racism in the photo world, probably because I choose to surround myself with people of a similar mindset of mine. However at the end of the day, I create art for my people. I create to tell our story, so I turn a blind ear to any negativity.

How do you see your success on themes that bring visibility to the black culture before the hostile and violent

scenery of the country?

I made a promise to myself that I wouldn't engage in Black trauma. I find it very revolting sometimes. I choose to create art that celebrates the happiness, love, and strength with in my people. We are so much more than what this country does to us.

What is the essential profile of a photographer? Does this profile changes according to the photography area?

Creativity and determination should be synonymous across all areas

Tell us some of your photography goals in the future.

My goal is photograph all of my idols. I have a very dynamic group of people that I want to work with. Other than actually photographing people, I really want to inspire the younger generation under me to pursue arts, and of course make my mom happy.







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JAVICIA LESLIE

BY GUSTAVO CHAMS

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