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New Balance

METAL

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MARK JENKINS

IRONY AS A WAY OF SURVIVAL

Focusing on sculptural installations and using the street as a stage, Mark Jenkins explores the way people interface with their city. He is interested in the reactions of people and considered his installations

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cities. Collaborating with Demna Gvasalia, Jenkins finds similar visual proposals between both of them, highlighting irony as a centrepiece.

People often try to interact with your street installations and accidentally become the participants of this 'social experiment'. What is it like for you to see people interacting with your sculptures?

It's like an out-of-body experience since they're made from myself and wear my same clothes. I installed the first piece I did back in 2003 in a dumpster, and when the garbage truck came and took it away, it really felt like a life-sized voodoo doll. That's what got me hooked. Since then I've seen them hugged, set on fire, rescued, etc. Will make an interesting autobiography if I'm retired or jailed.

Your recent collaboration with Balenciaga felt so harmonious between both you and the label. Can you tell us more about it?

Demna came up with the idea of doing this project and for me it was really interesting because it takes the way people experience clothes on a different tangent. I mean it replaces the mannequin, but since it seems to be real, it also replaces the model – it's kind of a hybridization. On the other side, I like using non-traditional spaces open to the public.

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Your point of view seems similar to Demna's. How important is irony within your work?

I agree, it has the same feeling we're exploring but using different mediums, which is why a collaboration like this is working so well. But irony, this is the centrepiece. It's so multifaceted with humour, the absurd, but still with a poetic narrative – and the palette and moods are darker. I've learned depressed states aren't always black or grey, they can also be a dark purple or the colour of broken glass. So there is irony here because it

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Melancholy is a sort of texture but unlike happiness it can become more of a constant state. I'd probably diagnose my figures with dysthymia but I wouldn't jack them up on SSRI's (Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, antidepressant drugs). But I think humans have always had a good reason to be depressed given our circumstances, and it's just our inherent stability that allows us to cope with it, albeit sometimes that solution may be to live in a fantasy world – like me or people that believe in religion. That said hyper-melancholy could transition to clinical depression, which is not so good because you lose other textures like happiness and you become incapacitated. And in my work there is some degree of humour that saves it from this.

I personally find the suicidal figures the most appealing ones. They seem dark but also poetic. Was there a particular message behind it?

I'd say not messages but stories. The one figure floating in the river with the balloons coming out its back is a death to me, but with these helium balloons attempting to save him. These balloons are like friends who also try to help but get trapped. The other hoodie figure ready to swan dive off a ledge in Dublin was like Death aka the Reaper committing suicide. Death of death is -1 x (-1) = 1 = birth.

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Well said. I also feel that your figures tell us about the time we are in. It's almost like a sarcastic comment on our lives.

It pokes fun at the city, the removal of nature – some of these streets with trees that live in these little squares of soil. But we forget that under this there are roots and sewers and below them there is more soil, and subways, and Internet cables, and fossils, and ancient buried civilizations, and then magma and stuff. I studied geology in college; learning about the Earth is a good foundation to understand people and that time is an axis and our point on it is a pinprick. Unfortunately, the Earth is like a balloon that can be popped, or a hot liquid ball inside of a shell inside of a balloon, and cows and ocean are on top of it.

Some of your installations give a feeling of hopelessness and despair. Is it intentional? Is there any hope?

The main problem with the universe is that these spheres are too spread out. Think if your closest friend was as far away as the Moon. From this perspective we are quite lucky; we have such a wonderful circumstance compared to living on Mars. This for me would be hopelessness and despair and also I have no idea why people talk about needing to colonize it instead of focusing on repairing the Earth, which could include shock therapy to political leaders who want to abolish the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).

Speaking of EPA. In 2008 you collaborated with Greenpeace, creating realistic figures appearing to be homeless people but with plush polar bear heads. Can you tell us more about this project?

I came up with this idea to compare polar bears to homeless people and my friend had the idea to approach Greenpeace to do it, and they really went for it. It had a good social impact – messy. Some of the homeless people didn't like being compared to animals and removed a couple. The others were removed by the police and two were destroyed by guys in blast suits. So it was this absurdist extinction of polar bears that was the key point. It was covered by a lot of local media; it shut down streets, subways, even a school

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"Melancholy is a sort of texture but unlike happiness it can become more of a constant state."

You've received a lot of social critique for your work in general and this Greenpeace project particularly.

A lot of people think I set up the pieces with the intention of alarming people or activating a sort of body response as if police were white blood cells. But if anything, I think the police and these people are kind of an autoimmune disease. And this isn't a movie. If it was, I would sell popcorn on the streets.

Through your art you communicate with people on a psychological level. Is there anything new you learned about us?

More with social psychology, I'd say. And I've learned about the way people interface with their city. The way crowds form around these art objects, how conventional reality bends, how this can escalate. About people yes, but also about dogs, how they are disturbed and will lunge on the leash and bark at them. But they are also humanized.

I like that you used the word 'humanized'. It feels so accurate to your work. All these soulless figures somehow lead us towards the process of humanization.

I agree. Civilization strips the nature out of the Earth, which is our soul. You can see it clearly from above the way we cut up the earth into polygons, and in the night the entire city lights. We've turned the Earth into a sort of strange Christmas bulb. In years to come this bulb will become more and more blinged out until if falls off the tree like Humpty Dumpty, and we know the ending to that story.

What is your goal as an artist?

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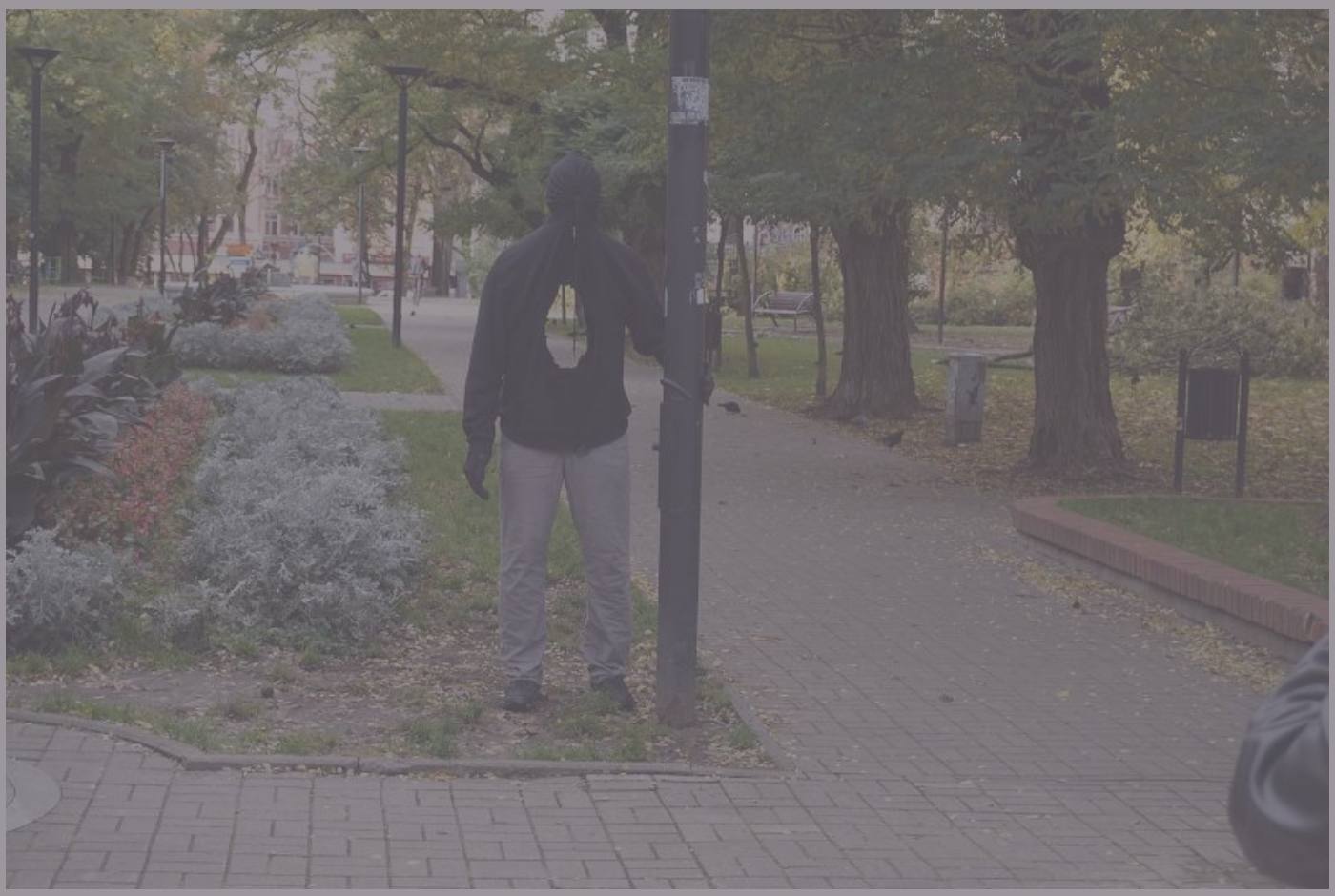
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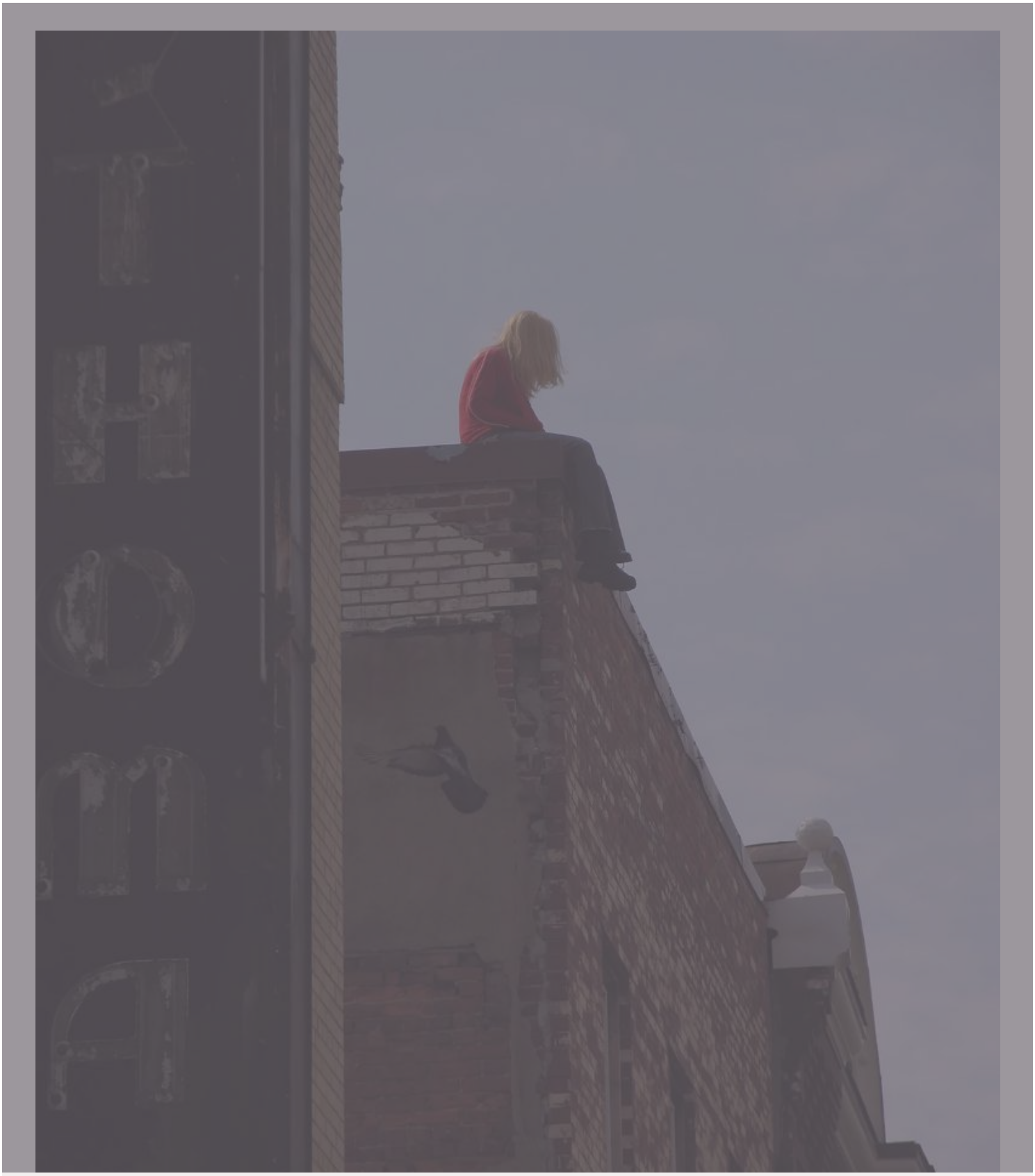
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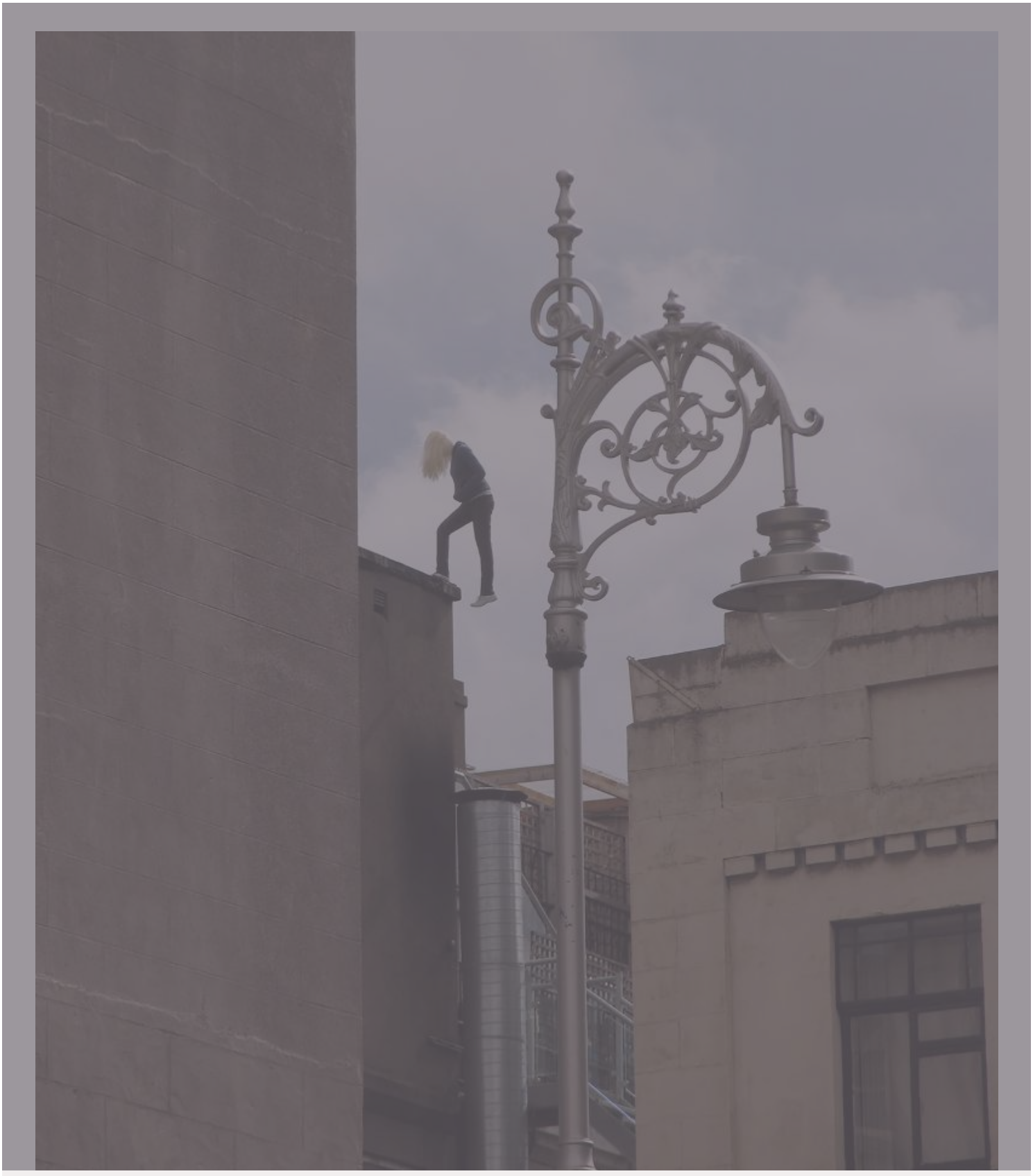
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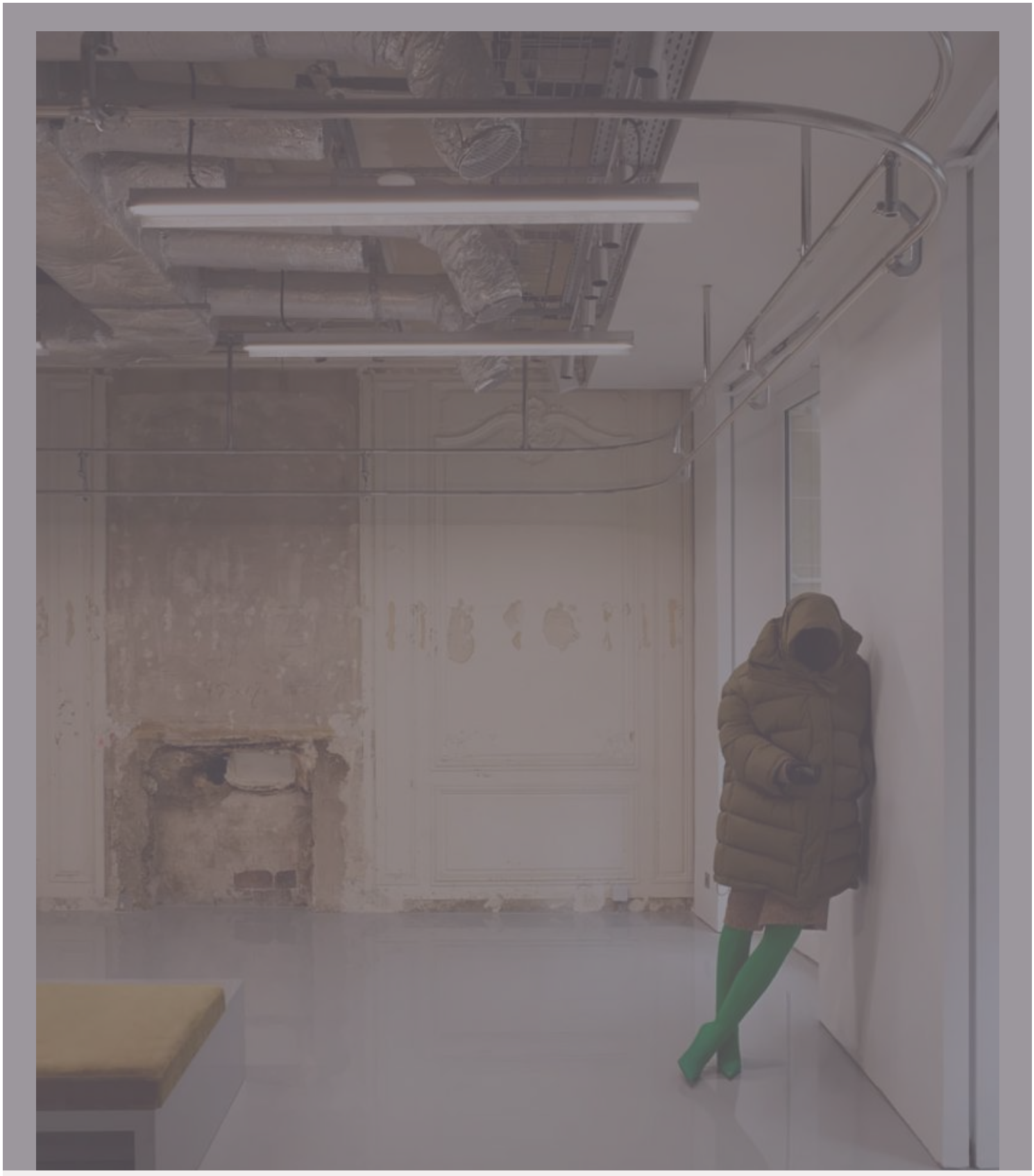
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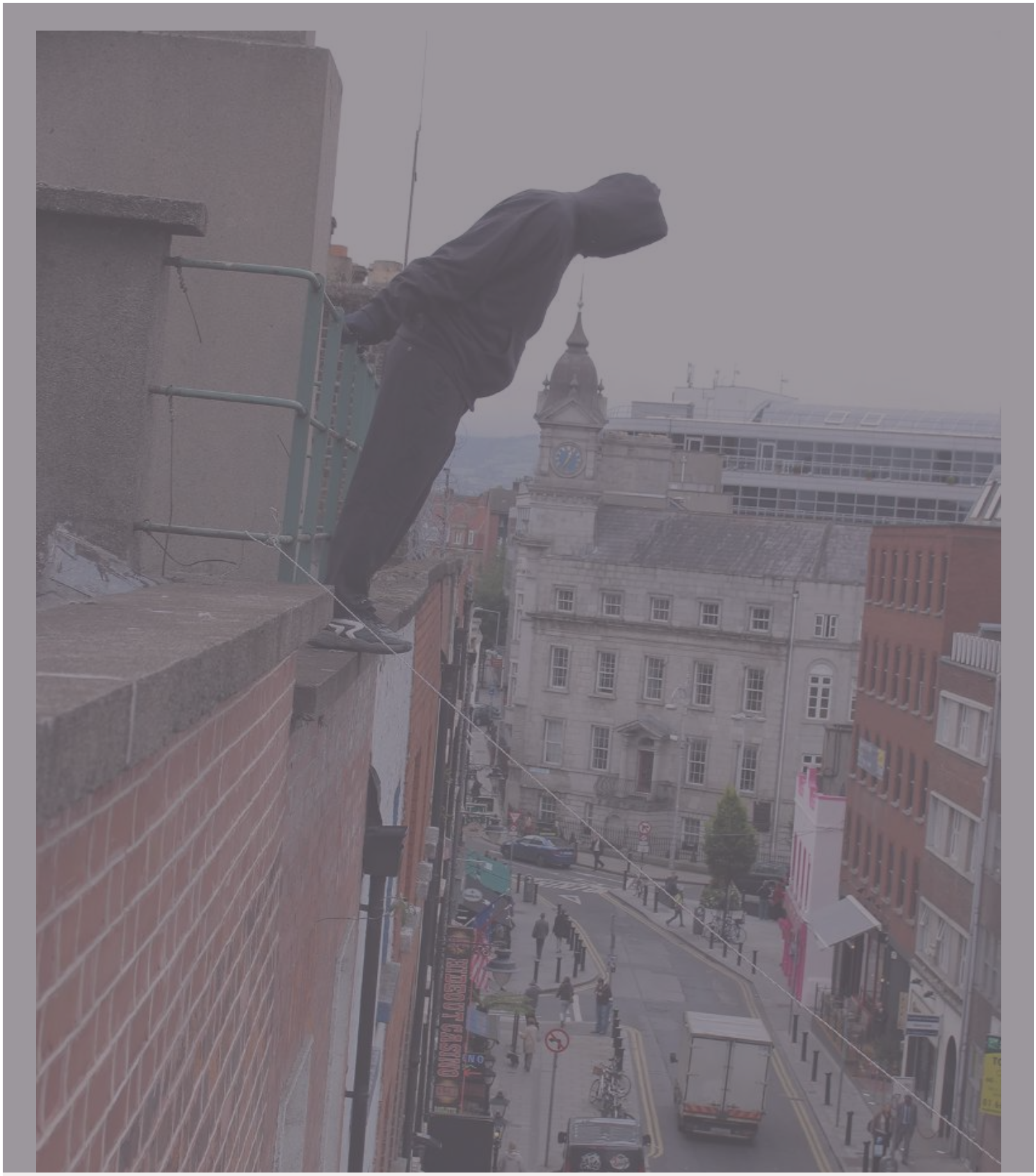
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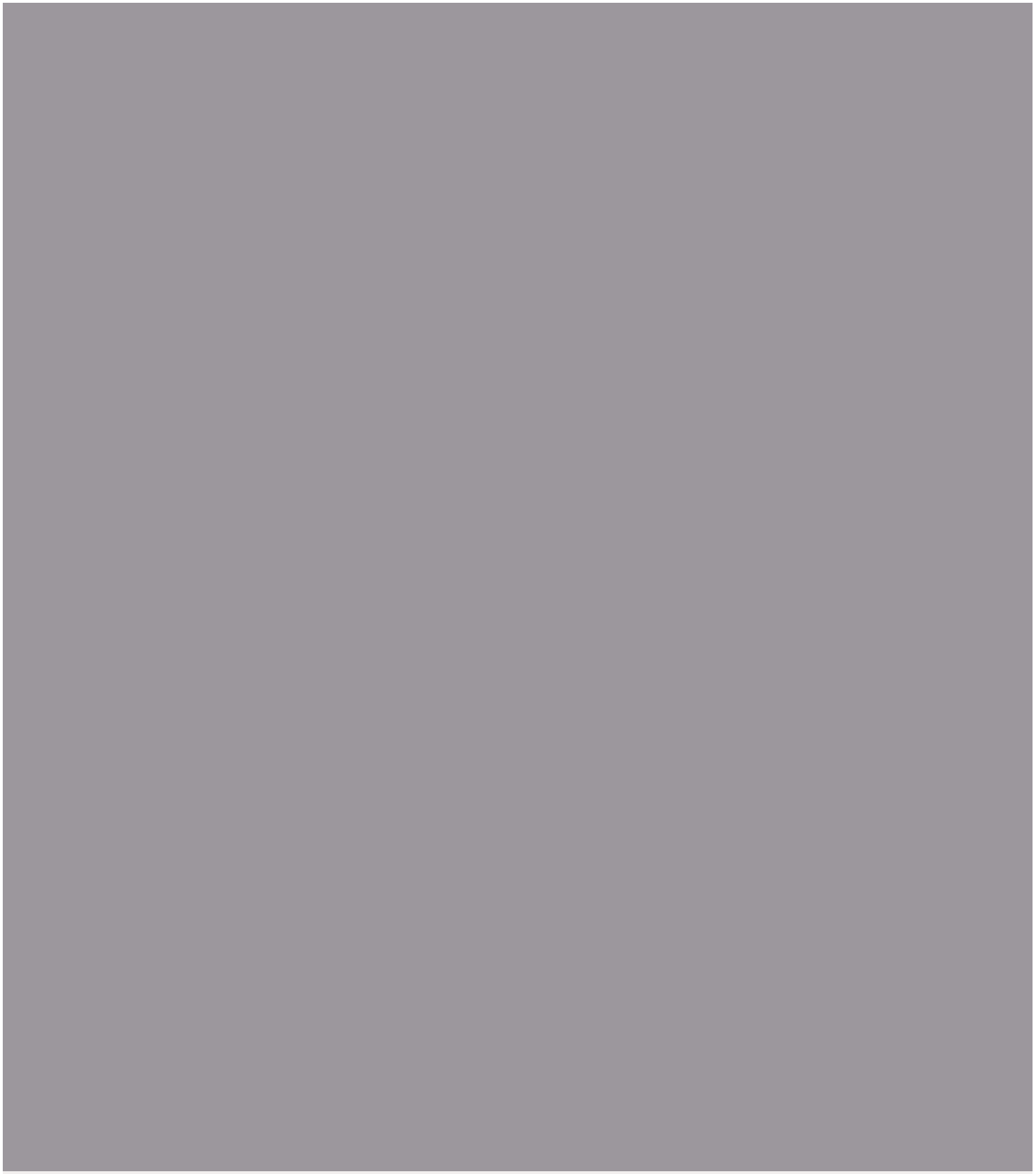
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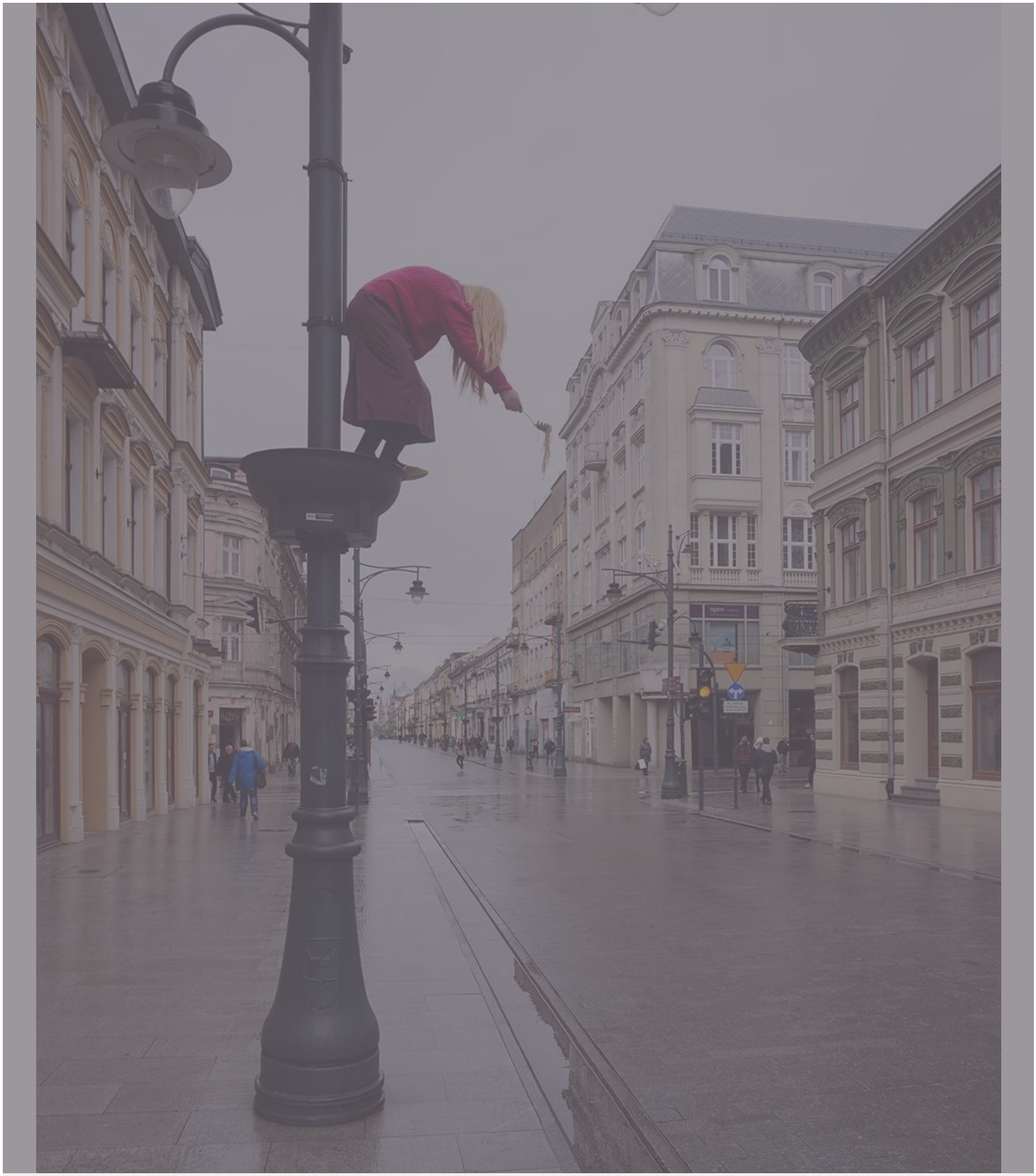
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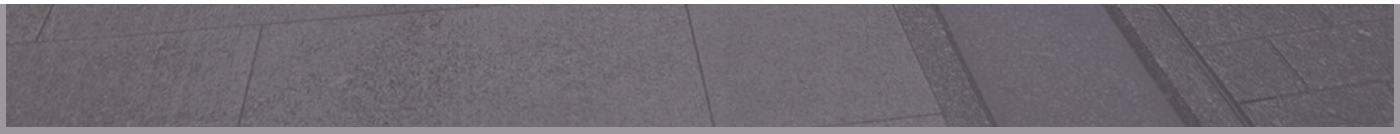
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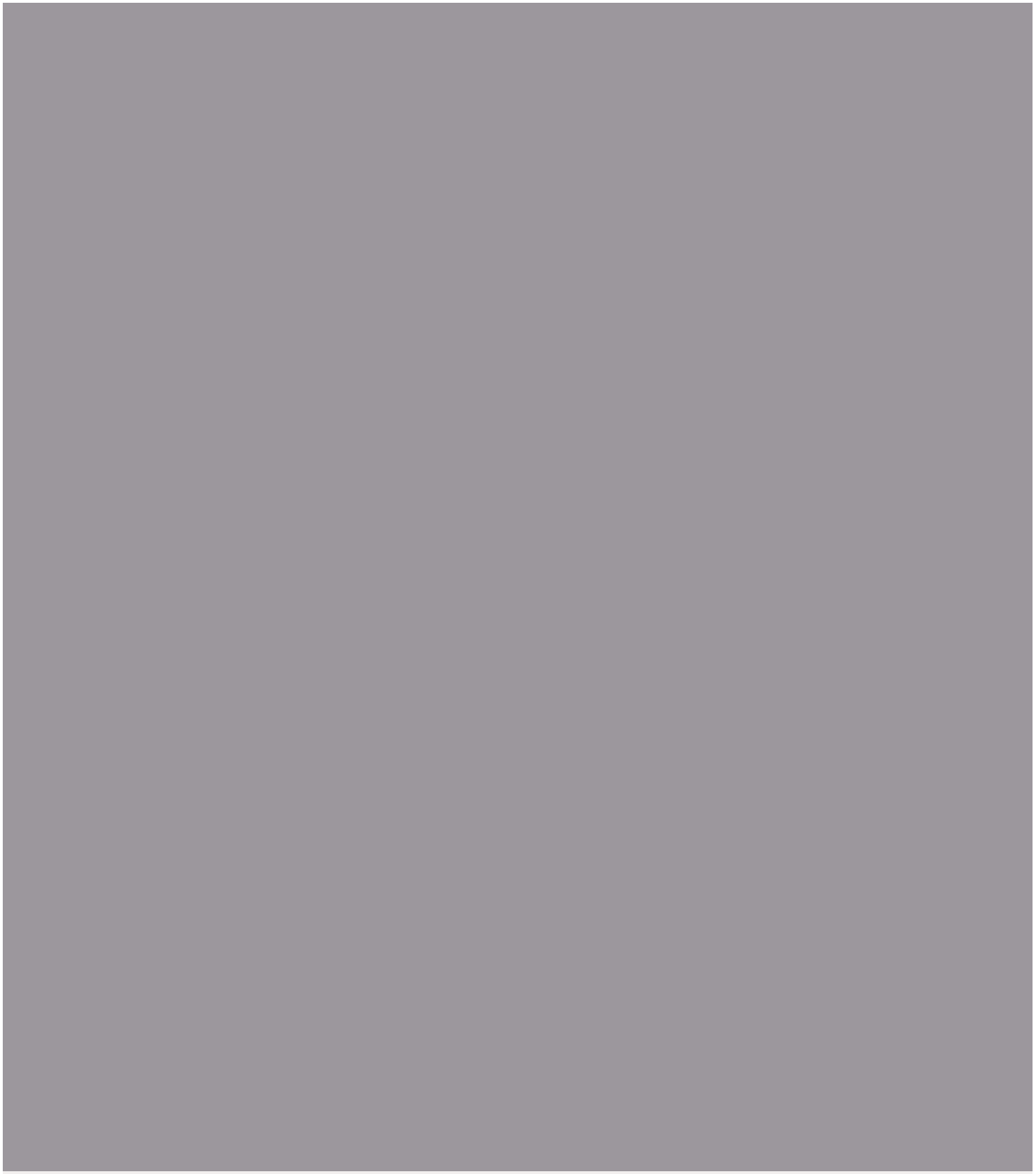
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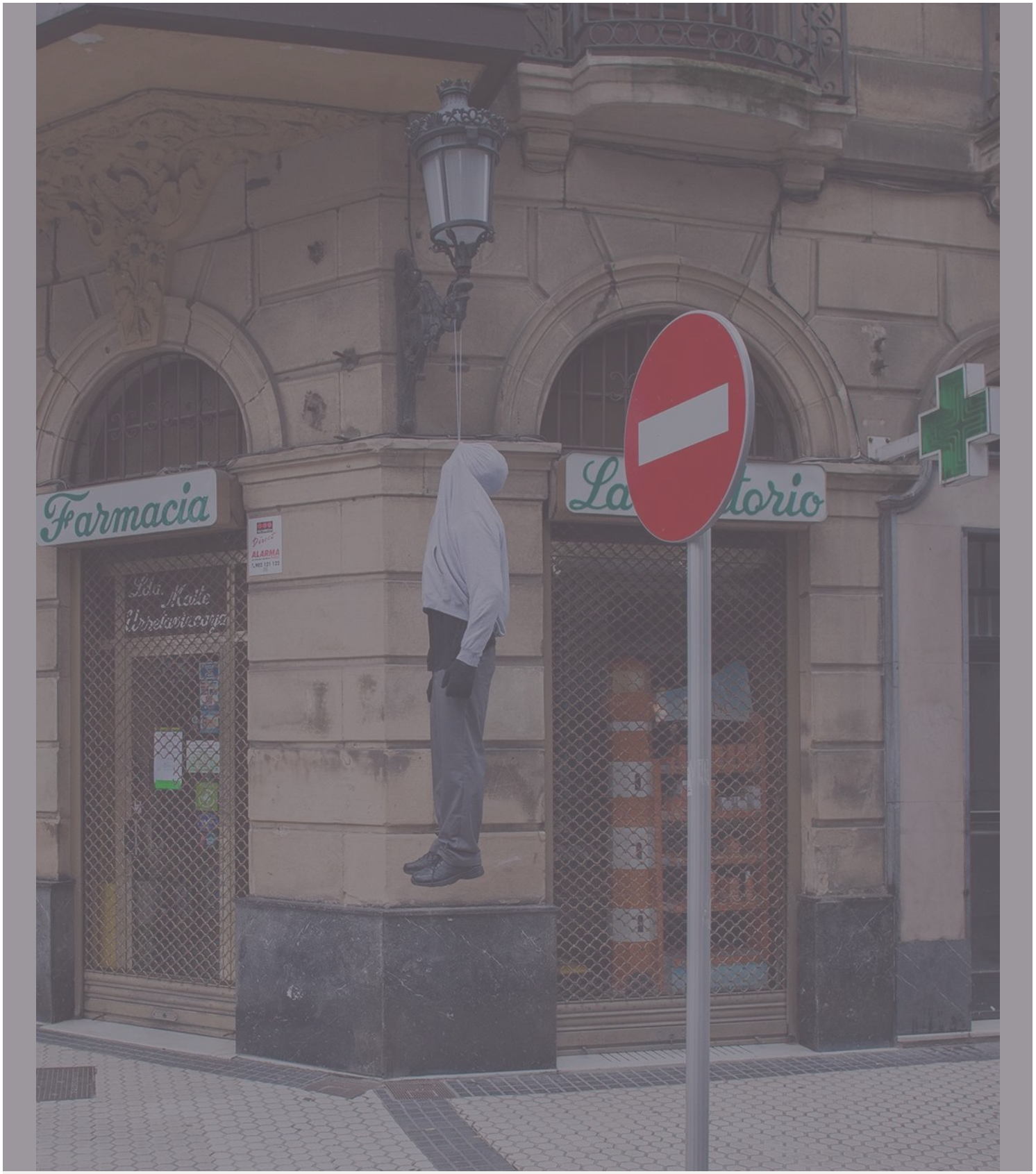
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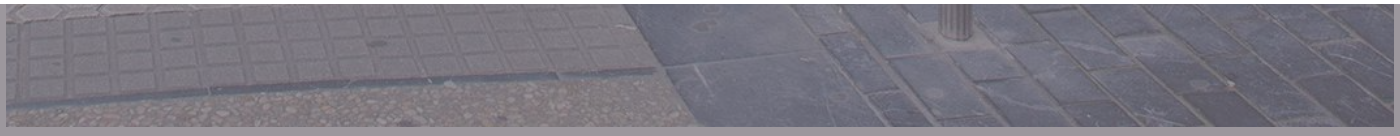
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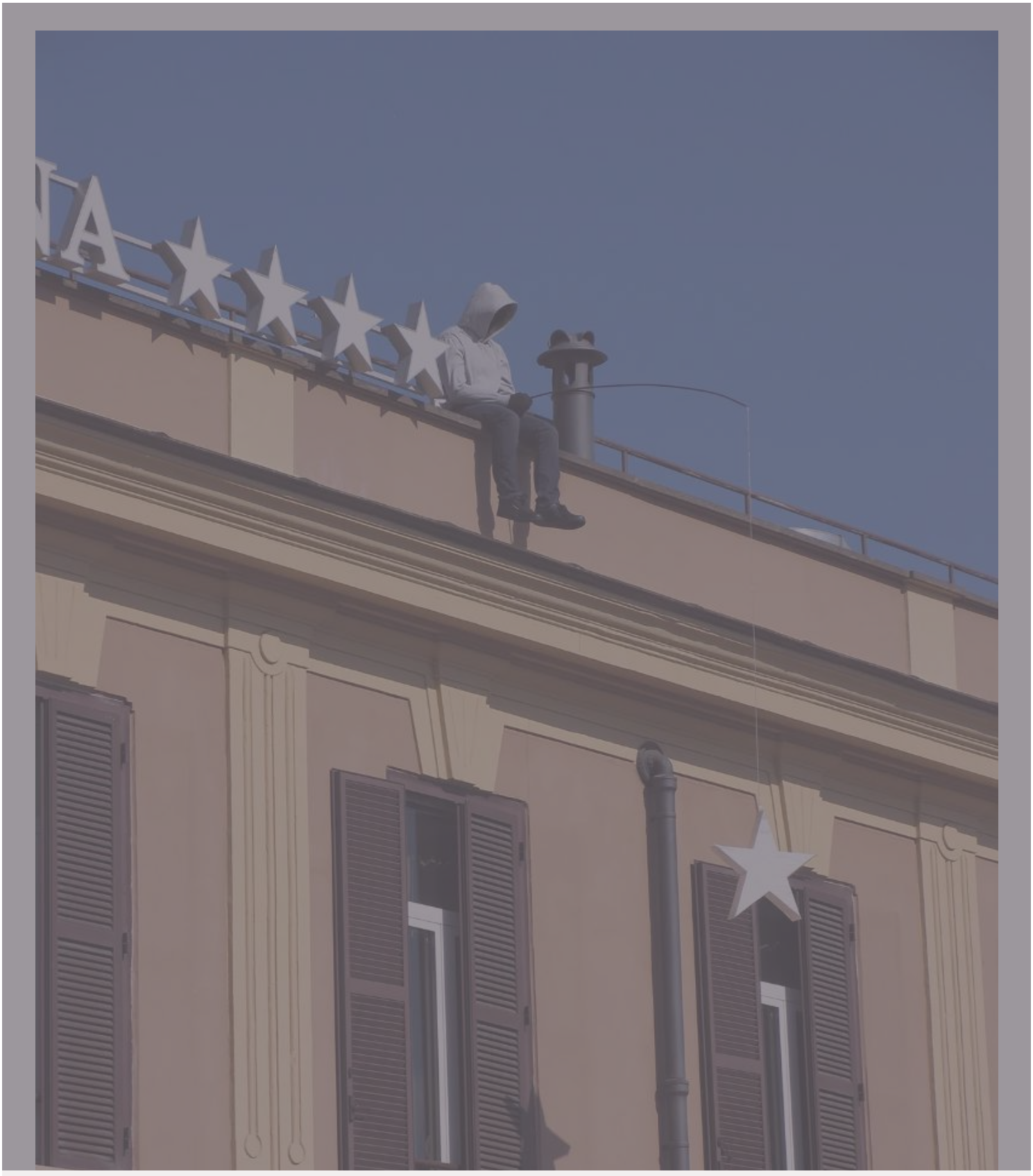
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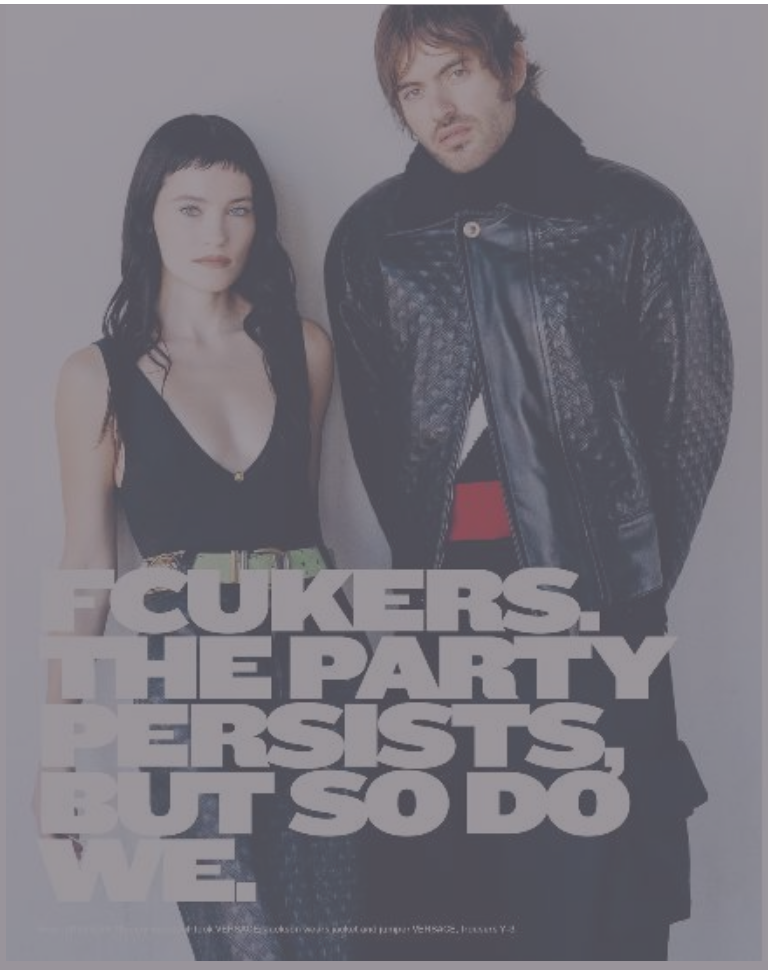
Words
David Valinsky

METAL 55

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Words by Jonathan Davis
Photography by Ice Pong
Styling by Francesca Cavalcanti

Fcukers are Shanny Wise and Jackson Walker Lewis, two friends who started making music in New York because it sounded like a good way to spend their time. Preferably music they could play at the parties they were already going to. Somewhere along the way, a lot of other people decided they wanted to be at those parties too.

There are bigger stages now, fewer nights off, and considerably more time spent in airports. Neither seems especially interested in devising a philosophy around any of this. But every band needs an origin story, and theirs involves a man skiving off work.

Jackson Walker Lewis got the hoodie from a thrift stall in an empty lot across the street from the bar where he worked. Pianos, Lower East Side, sometime in 2022. He would tell his boss he was going for a coffee and then see how long he could stay gone before the phone rang. Navy blue, red lettering, FCUK across the chest, slightly too short in the body. It now hangs as a relic on Shanny Wise's wall, and they've agreed that if things go badly, it goes on eBay.

"Ö", their debut album, arrived in March on Ninja Tune after being written in a fortnight in Los Angeles at three songs a day, and it has since carried them through Coachella, a Harry Styles stadium run in Brazil, and most of the American festival circuit.

Jackson Walker Lewis grew up in Los Angeles raiding his father's expansive, Anglocentric record collection, from Madness to Sublime, the Stone Roses to The Beat, Happy Mondays to Primal Scream. Shanny Wise grew up in New York on reggae records, then also found Sublime, learning the basslines off records made two decades before she got to them, and found solace within the aural embrace of doo-wop and rocksteady.

Hair: Alondra & Andrea Hernandez
Makeup: Megan Kelly
Photographer Assistant: Ava Lassalette
Stylist Assistants: Giusi Diella and Katya Farrage

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Caminar entre reflejos

Sobre la retícula de travertino del Pabellón Mies van der Rohe de Barcelona, casi trescientos cincuenta paneles de vidrio dibujan un laberinto que altera la percepción del espacio.

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Twenty minutes, two dancers and an embrace that can’t break. A nearly lost dance returns in a sensual test of endurance at Lisbon’s Alkantara Festival.

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Mariko Mori – All That Shines

A Three-Decade Retrospective Brought to Light

The celebrated artist's major retrospective in Tokyo traces three decades of a creative practice shaped by Buddhist cosmology, pop culture and a fascination with what technology can make visible

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Victor Ruiz Colomer – Llum LED

El espacio disociado

El artista juega con los recorridos y los límites de la Fundació Joan Miró en su nueva exposición: un recorrido sin mapas que transforma Espai 13 en un territorio abierto a nuevas posibilidades.

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Utanhole

Images of an Uneasy Reality

Through unsettling imagery and delicate aesthetics, the Japanese artist examines how innocence and violence can coexist in the images that shape our perception of reality.

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Art - Music November 13, 2026

Tehran Contemporary Sounds Festival 2026

A Weekend of Close Listening

A weaving loom goes electric, Abdullah Miniawy takes the mic, and a Tehran street crowd sounds like water. Spend 13 to 15 November listening differently in Berlin.

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Music - Interview November 20, 2026

Kara-Lis Coverdale

Finding Peace in Changing Forms

A sauna, a sacred space and a sound that terrifies. After Biennale Musica, we talk about the emotional cost of performing music written years earlier.

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Patta x Eastpak

The Classic, but with a Little Extra

This new collaboration arrives in the form of a six-piece collection celebrating freedom, optimism and those who live on the move.

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Music November 20, 2026

Biennale Musica 2026

Arriesgar da sus frutos

Por segundo (y último) año, Caterina Barbieri ha hecho un gran trabajo al proponer nombres radicalmente diferentes entre sí que nos ayudan a entender todas las formas que puede tener la música.

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Chanel Beauty Holiday Makeup Collection

Pure Light, Pure Winter

Snow-covered landscapes, crystalline light and golden sparkle meet in a holiday collection inspired by Gabrielle Chanel's winters in St. Moritz.

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Fashion November 20, 2026

Belgian Fashion Awards 2026

And the Winners Are…

Antwerp honoured ten talents across Belgian fashion, from Matthieu Blazy at Chanel to emerging designer Abdel El Tayeb and graduate Stan Peeters.

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Music November 20, 2026

mikey

A Heartbreak on Repeat

Copenhagen duo mikey pair ethereal harmonies with pitched-down drums and dusty arpeggios on “when the light is on”.

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Fashion November 20, 2026

New Balance y Rosalía

Un jueves de reparto en el Raval

Se abre el telón. El camión, perdón. Sale Rosalía y empieza a repartir zapatillas. ¿Cómo se llama la película? “Thank you, Barcelona”.

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Music November 20, 2026

Simple Things 2026

Plugged In, Switched On: Press Play

METAL got boots on the ground to give you the scoop: Cobrah's sensual set featured Coucou Chloe, Hannah Diamond hit the cellars.

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Film - Interview November 20, 2026

Olivia Colman & Alexander Skarsgård

Husband Material

In this interview, we get to talk to two of the most celebrated actors about “Wicker”, their new movie, and discuss having fun on set, prosthetics, and how they choose their roles.

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Music November 20, 2026

Ọ̀ké

Making Space for Himself

After years of exploring different sides of himself, Ọ̀ké reconnects with his Yoruba roots on “Àrà,” carving out a creative world entirely on his own terms.

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Mags November 19, 2026

METAL Magazine N°55

It's the End of the World as We Know It and I Feel… Fine?

Our new issue is out now and available in our online store. It asks how we keep creating amid uncertainty, and how pleasure, humour and beauty help us resist.

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Fashion November 19, 2026

Our Weekly Rundown

The Week in Fashion, in Four Takes

Saint Laurent will bring Le Smoking back to its French ateliers, designers are questioning SSENSE's product images, and the new Bond has us thinking about tailoring.

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Music - Interview November 19, 2026

Michael Cloud Duguay

The Architecture of Decay

Cloud Duguay explores the afterlife of sacred spaces, recording in churches where organs risk falling silent and preserving them as playable digital instruments.

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Photography - Interview November 19, 2026

Diego Ibarra Sánchez

¿Qué queda después de disparar la última bala?

El fotoperiodista, premiado en el World Press Photo 2026, insiste en que debemos “luchar para ganar el relato”. Reflexionamos con él sobre dolor, apatía, redes y el derecho a la educación.

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The Lady Dior 2027 Campaign

Like Mother, Like Daughter

In Sam Rock's intimate portraits, Rihanna and her daughter Rocki bring a fresh perspective to the iconic handbag and to what it means to be a woman.

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Film - Interview November 19, 2026

Markus Schleinzer

Everything Is Performance

The director of “Rose”, Austria’s Oscar submission starring Sandra Hüller, discusses women who passed as men to survive, his use of silence and what awards mean to him.

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Music November 18, 2026

MIRA Festival 2026

Quince años al frente de la vanguardia

Arca, Shygirl, ear, underscores, Max Cooper y Nicola Cruz pasaron por el festival barcelonés, donde las pantallas importaron tanto como lo que sonaba sobre el escenario.

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Film - Interview November 18, 2026

Sandra Wollner

Grief Through a Very Long Lens

What does grief look like when the universe keeps turning? In Cannes winner “Everytime”, it surfaces in impossible sunsets, private worlds and the strange relief of laughter.

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Fashion November 18, 2026

Trends in Womenswear

The Prevailing Elements in S/S 2027

A Bottega Veneta coat edged in white fringe and an Erdem skirt propped up by feathers show how designers used familiar details to build volume and movement.

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Music - Review November 18, 2026

Jane Remover – Frailty (Deluxe)

The Sound of Growing Up

Five years later, the deluxe version of the album revisits the artist's chaotic, deeply personal debut, revealing how much has changed while preserving the emotions that started it all.

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Music November 18, 2026

Vot

Against All Odds

On “Ethereal Calls”, Vot pairs operatic vocals with industrial electronics and asks how much of the path we follow is ours to choose.

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Film November 17, 2026

L'Alternativa 2026

Lo que queda en pantalla

Barcelona reúne más de doscientas películas en un festival y abre la conversación con sus cineastas. Once días para descubrir qué pasa cuando el cine de autor se sale del guion.

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