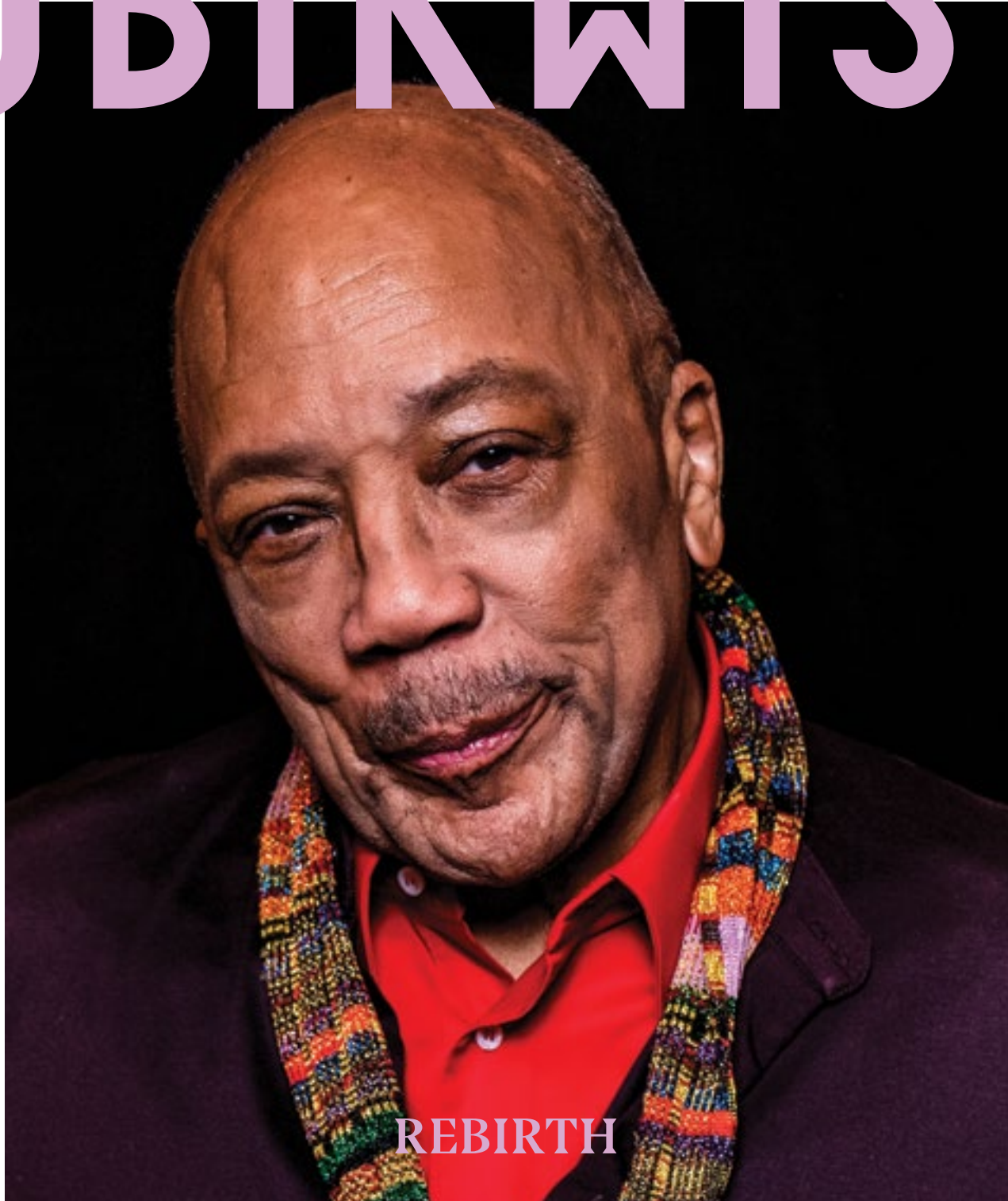


# UBIKWIST

#8



REBIRTH

QUINCY JONES • ADEPERO ODUYE • IRENE GANDY • AKIN OMOTOSO • LES NUBIANS • RES  
ADELINE • BILLY GERARD FRANK • TEDDY TINSON • CAMILA FALCÃO • ISABELLE BONI-CLAVERIE  
FREDERIC VIGUIER • KOHSHIN FINLEY • WANDA ORME • JULIE COCKBURN • NOEL W ANDERSON

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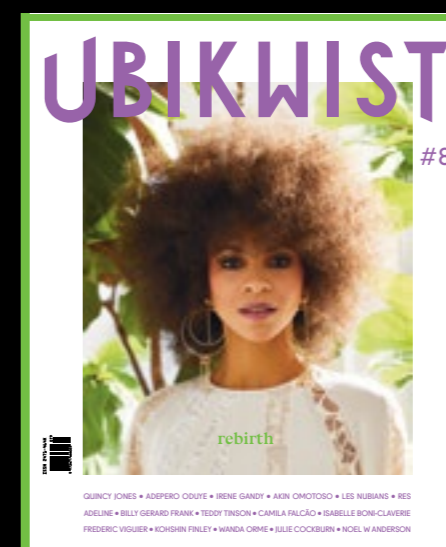
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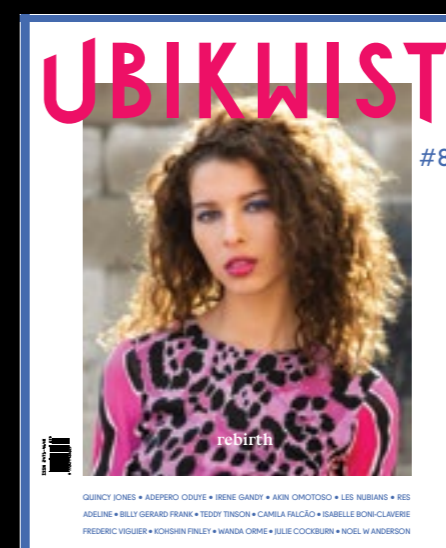
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PHOTOGRAPH: MATHIEU BITTON  
GROOMING: MELISSA ROGERS  
FOR BOY DE CHANEL  
SHIRTS QUINCY'S OWN  
SCARF BY MISSONI



COVER 3: ADEPERO ODUYE  
PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN WALTROUS  
STYLING: GIANNIE COUJI  
HAIR: NELSON VERCHER @ RITA HAZAN  
MAKE UP: MANAMI ISHIKAWA FOR UTOWA,  
STYLING ASSISTANCE: JALIESSA ST JOHN  
ADEPERO WEARS DRESS BY ZAC POSEN,  
TURBAN BY MARC JACOBS, EARRINGS & CUFFS BY LANVIN  
FROM ALBRIGHT FASHION LIBRARY

COVER 4: ADELINE  
PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN WALTROUS  
STYLING: GIANNIE COUJI  
HAIR: PASCALE POMA  
MAKE UP: PASCALE POMA USING ODIÈLE SKIN CARE  
ADELINE WEARS DRESS BY CHLOÉ  
EARRINGS BY LARUICCI

COVER 5: ALICE METZA  
PHOTOGRAPHS: MARCO PIANA  
STYLING: GIANNIE COUJI  
HAIR: SOPHIA PORTER FOR EXCLUSIVE ARTISTS  
MAKE UP: MELISSA ROGERS  
@ THE ONLY AGENCY FOR WE LOVE COCO  
ALICE WEARS DRESS BY JUST CAVALLI



COVER 6: MILANO NASU  
PHOTOGRAPHS: MINORU KABURAGI  
STYLING: HANA E UWAJIMA  
HAIR: KATSUMI MATSUO  
MAKE UP: YUKA WASHIZU  
MILANO WEARS JACKET AND SHORTS BY ISABEL MARANT  
EARRINGS BY DSQUARED2

# TUNING THE RABBIT EARS

“When did you know you were black?” is a question that is explored in the canon of African American literature. It has even appeared in Zora Neale Hurston’s masterpiece bildungsroman written in Southern dialect, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). In the novel, the protagonist Janie, recalls this tragicomic moment from her childhood where she scans a class picture and doesn’t recognize herself: “Ah was wid dem white chillun so much till Ah didn’t know Ah wuzn’t white till Ah was round six years old,” she proclaims. Artist Noel W Anderson asks the question as a point

of departure for his most recent body of work entitled *Blak Origin Moment*. It consists of lush tapestries and works on paper which debuted at the Contemporary Arts Center in Ohio and Dieu Donn  in New York City. The exhibition will be traveling to the Hunter Museum of American Art in October. In the series, Anderson updates this trope of “discovering” one’s Blackness by turning his focus onto political and social inequalities, examples of which he takes from American history, particularly those related to Black men, celebrity, and masculinity.



NOEL WEARS  
COAT BY NOSENSE  
SHIRT NOEL’S OWN

**Noel discusses his conceptually rigorous practice including the connections he’s made to his own Black origin moment**

**Tell me about your background.**

I’m from Louisville, Kentucky – the youngest of six. My father was a civil engineer and a Jazz enthusiast. My mother was a social worker and a principal. I have a BFA from Ohio Wesleyan University and two MFAs: one from Indiana University (in Printmaking), one from Yale (in Sculpture). I am a practicing artist and a full-time faculty member at NYU.

**How did your parents react when you told them you wanted to be an artist?**

I prefaced it. I said I wanted to be an athlete, too. I knew that the athlete thing wasn’t really going to work out... even though I am a stud. [laughs] But, they said, “OK, fine. You want to be an artist? Understand that that possibly could be a hard life...” But being sixteen and invincible, I thought: “OK! What is hard? I can do anything!” It has worked out okay thus far.

**And were you actively involved in sports?**

Yeah, I played high school and college football.

**It really manifests in your work, so it makes sense.**

Yes, I suppose the physicality and the interest in sports and... the Black spectacle has materialized in my work. I’m interested in all of that, but I’ve never considered that my fasci-

nation with beating the hell out of other men had anything to do with sports.

**I’m just saying!**

Yeah, I’m starting to see it now! There’s an ingrained brutality to football that’s hard to get out of your mind. I played for like 15 years.

**How did you pivot? When you told your parents that you wanted to be an athlete and do the art thing, did you really mean that?**

I wanted to be both, but I knew that the position I played – linebacker – was not professionally possible for someone of my height. You always have a fallback. But it didn’t mean I didn’t work for it. I worked extremely hard. That kind of rigor got me far, got me where I am today. I’m really appreciative of that.

**The discipline of being an athlete... So you went to undergrad on a scholarship?**

I don’t think it was necessarily the discipline of being an athlete. I also think it was due to the fact that my father was a very disciplined man. He was in the Army. As a civil engineer, you got to be disciplined to build buildings for the government. He went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in the 1950s... you had no excuse with him. So, I think that, paired with the structure of an athletic background, has contributed to what I have achieved thus far.



WO/MAN 4  
(SLY WINK),  
2017

**THE BLACK ARCHIVE IS BLACKNESS:  
IT ABSORBS EVERYTHING.**



JUST PRETTY, 2010-PRESENT



INVAGINATION, 2016-2017

**Where is the root of what you're interested in now?**

It must have come from my father. He was a man filled with imagination and ambition. But because of his time, having been born in 1926, he could only go so far.

**Well, he went to MIT during the Jim Crow era!**

That's true! He went to MIT.

**And he created a space where you thought a) you could do sports and b) art could be a fallback.**

Ha! That's true. He and my mother did create a hell of a territory for infinite progress.

There was no "can't." You never said that in the house – he got really angry when you said that.

**You mentioned earlier that you have an MFA from Yale. Yale is known to be an incubator for many Black artists who are successful and established.**

(At the beginning) I was a bit of a tough case because I didn't want to open myself up to people. It took me a while to trust that the professors had my best interests at heart. Sam Messer was real supportive, Rob Storr at the time was extremely supportive. Jessica Stockholder was real supportive, even though I wasn't always the most receptive... but that was my own stuff. But I always loved Rochelle Feinstein and Daniel Bozhkov. They were supportive of what I was trying to do.

I also took courses outside. I took courses in performance studies because I had a lot of energy. I've always had a lot of energy. I thought the quickest way to use the energy was through my body. If I could do that in real time, real space, I could access people's emotions and psychological states a lot faster than objects proper. I ended up taking classes in theater and the history of performance, like, performance theory coursework. I learned a lot about what I was interested in. I also took coursework on German philosophy. It really aided in understanding subject-object dualism.

I learned how to build self-confidence within a certain kind of structure. It really helped a lot... to get over the fear. No fear!

**How did the question "when did you know you were black?" become a mode of inquiry in your work?**

So, we're responding specifically to the *Blak Origin* work that I'm doing right now, the current series?

**Exactly.**

Well, there are a few moments. I read a quote in this book once, something by Pope. L (conceptual artist), who I love, who said something like, "Black folks have an origin. You always have a moment; we have an origin."

Also, one of my favorite philosophers, Paul Mooney (comedian who wrote material for Richard Pryor) says, "You gonna get that nigga wake up call. Everyone gets his nigga wake up call." The first time I ever had that happen, I was in the first grade. A classmate, a White girl, said, "Oh, no, you're Black!" I said, "No, I'm Brown." And she said, "No, you're Black." And I think that was the first time I was made conscious of it. That's the old German, Hegel – you're defined from without. Someone had to tell me.

It doesn't get limited just to race. I mean, aren't women consistently reminded that they are women? Every day, you're reminded. You always have your origin moment. What do you think?

**I'm thinking about what this means – is it pejorative? Like, how dare you call me a woman? How dare you call me Black?**

Yeah, it depends.



PASSING: ESCAPE OF MICHAEL BROWN, 2017



**One is indoctrination. The other is a matter of fact.**

It is. The indoctrination, it's woven into what is the American identity.

Black people have a way of enduring. It's another thing I draw on – the enduring – in my practice. This is not my father or mother instilling in me a rigor, athletics instilling in me a rigor or structure... the Black inheritance is that. It is an endurance to deal with people's shit. Eat it, suck it up, and deliver it back with a smile.

Black folk are the most forgiving and, maybe in some regards, forgetful in the world. But we do understand one thing that I actually think is woven into our DNA – we survive. We don't live all the time, but goddammit, we survive. And I think that is one of the main things that I bring into my practice – in this studio, I'm gonna survive in my work.

**Speaking of fabric literally, could you explain the connections you've made between that mode and the history of jacquards, the tapestries that you're working with right now?**

So I start off with a primary source, which is usually a photograph. The photographs come from a ton of sources: history books, FBI files, (etc) that I find in my research. And then I work with weaving guilds in the South and in Europe. They literally weave the images into tapestries called jacquards. And I'm really drawn to the history of the jacquard tapestry because...

**They're actually woven?  
Not superimposed?**

Right. The image itself is actually woven. It is not an image printed on fabric. The distinction being that if it is woven, it is actually the object, it is the ground upon which anything can be manipulated. If it's being printed on fabric, it can be removed. The image is woven: that is the original thing. That's key. The key is, for us, to start thinking about the image itself, or the images we base our own subjectivities on.

The conceptual history is such that a painter would make a painting, or small cartoon of the image. Then the patron would come and say, "I want that to be bigger, I need it to be woven into a tapestry." So all of the sudden the painting has become a tapestry, creating a relationship. And then the painter says, "Well, I could make more money if I take this one painting and have it mass-produced into a print." So now the painting has gone through three iterations: the painting, the tapestry, and the print. All of the sudden, it could also be the photograph if we think about... (William)

Talbot and also the daguerreotype. So we have four iterations of one image that all spawn out of these moments of inter-circulation. And then I realized that Jacquard influenced computer and screen information, such that Charles Babbage, an Englishman, found Jacquard's binary code's structure. Babbage is who we now consider the "grandfather of computers." I thought to myself, well, every time I'm staring at a computer screen, or anything that is analogue or digital, it has this relationship to the tapestry.

My interest in the Jacquard tapestry really gets connected to how all of those disciplines – whether it's the painting, the print, photograph, sculpture of tapestry – get collapsed into one object. Such that when you come into the space and experience the object, the ambiguity of its origin – whether it's woven, whether it's photographic – it's totally up in the air. Even if the image itself is not stable, the material and the boundaries between the materials are not stable either.

**It's another metaphor for Black origin. It's not stable, it's ambiguous. You try to pin it and it slips away.**

That's right! Once they weave it, they send it to me and I rework it by hand. I brush the surface, pick the surface, pull the nap, stain, dye, collage... All I'm really trying to do is destabilize the image into the ground. The images I seem to choose specifically project Black masculinity in a specific distorted light. And people seem to base their own subjectivities, their own cultural meanings, social meanings against those images that they think are true – and I just don't think they're true. So if I can make a weaving of an image that everyone thinks is true and then rough up the surface and destabilize the image, then I can put into question the implicit or assumed stable meaning of those images.

But there's a funny thing that happens. When you look at them, they kind of wobble. The images warp, literally warp. I do all that before I send them to the weaver. I do that for a reason. When I was a boy in the 80s, we had a television in the corner of the kitchen – it had rabbit ears. Being the youngest, you're the one who does all the grunt work. So I would have to go up to the TV when the image wasn't stable, when it was moving, and I'd hold the rabbit ears in place. My electric energy would stabilize the image. But me being the trickster that I am, I realized that if I moved in one direction, I could make the image move. So when you look at some of the tapestries, in relationship

to screen culture, the images are distorted. That's just the kind of history I have with images – they were never really stable... on a literal, material level. So why should we treat them as such?

**It seems to me that you're teaching us a kind of literacy – a different way of reading images in looking at your work.**

Really? How so?

**If you don't tell me that these three tapestries (a triptych in his studio) are the same image, I have to really learn how to read the images. I have to focus on what you added and subtracted to understand the relationships between the images.**

I would argue that, actually, you already know how to read it. You just don't know you know. I say people are experiencing this phenomenon every day – especially because we're such a screen culture.

I'm trying to tap into something that's already in us. The aspect of weaving as a mode of communication is timeless. Weaving and using weaving as a function – clothing, cloth – it's an early text. This manner of literacy, I think it's implicit to our community.



TURNED ON HAIR, 2010-PRESENT

**THE KEY IS, FOR US,  
TO START THINKING ABOUT  
THE IMAGE ITSELF,  
OR THE IMAGES WE BASE OUR  
OWN SUBJECTIVITIES ON**



HE'S MEAN! HE NEEDS RAVEN!, 2010-PRESENT

My sense is that we've actually lost our comprehension of that form of literacy. I'm actually trying to recover that. And there are a few things within the work that I'm trying to recover that I think are in us. I'm trying to find ways to tap it, to provoke it to the surface.

**I'm also noticing this dichotomy, because there are so many... you're exploring political and social implications of Black masculinity and manhood... comparing lynching as it relates to Black men and comparing it to professional sports, for example.**

I'm trying to make those time jumps. I believe that there are structural recurrences that I've located in images, that tell us that the things we think have resolved themselves haven't ever really resolved themselves. I also think it recurs in terms of – you said this so brilliantly – a lynched Black figure in 1865 has a structural relationship to a basketball player in 2005.

**Your exploration of Black masculinity as it manifests in history or popular culture: you're looking at police brutality, you're looking at historical figures that are complex... like Michael Jordan, Jack Johnson, Jesse Jackson.**

When you look at images of certain men that the public has proposed as leaders or saviors, a lot of the ones I seem to be interested in are soul fuck ups – not just flawed, they're failures. They're just really good at, right now, keeping up the scrim of success.

Black men need to be reborn more than Black women. Black women are the ones who rebirth us. I don't know what to make out of that yet.

**It just occurred to me that there is a lot of exploration, or even performance, of masculinity in Hip Hop. But you never really talk about or address that. Are you influenced by Hip Hop at all?**

Sure! I just don't really care for Hip Hop images. Another artist already tackled those, and he cornered the market. I'm not really interested in following in his footsteps.

**I want to talk about your *Ebony* pages. You spend a lot of time with them – palimpsest as kind of a metaphor for the Black experience. Can you talk about your process, the *Ebony* pages, what role they play in your practice, and what do they represent?**

When I was in grad school, I used to order all these older *Ebony* magazines from the 70s in bulk. I realized, after reading a lot about one of my favorite artists, Robert Rauschenberg,

that I could pull one of those Rauschenberg, de Kooning moments and erase the father's image. By which I mean, I could figure out how to physically erase inked images that were printed in *Ebony* magazines. As a result, I started my initial investigation, or exploration, into the Black archive. What does it really mean to get rid of the image that the Black archive starts with? By which I mean, you can take any page from an *Ebony* magazine and literally erase it to the ground – which happens to be the color of bone – as well as the trace of some of the images that were there.

**A palimpsest.**

Right; a palimpsest. Once I erased the image, I start to build an image that I create on top of it. Then I can erase that and build another image on top of that. Because, like you're suggesting, as much as I want to claim – and that's probably the point – an archive or an origin, you can't really find it. It's constantly getting printed, erased, printed, erased. And it allows me a lot more leeway and imagination with what we can define, or what we can include, in the Black archive. Because the Black archive is not just limited to Black people. The Black archive is Blackness: it absorbs everything.

There is something really beautiful about starting with an *Ebony* page that's been stripped to the bone. By which I mean all of the image has been erased, except for the trace. The trace is important, don't you think?

**The trace is everything.**

Why?

**This is what I'm trying to get at, this metaphor for who we are. Yes, we're descendants of the African continent, but we're distinctly different. While there is still a similarity, it's not the same. And also the study that I'm so fascinated with that suggests DNA stores memory. As far as we are away from it, it's still within us: a trace.**

Those are the things that get traced on you. Isn't that the endurance we're talking about? The endurance that was woven into us during the Middle Passage, and the shore, and before, is a thing that we really carry with us, and we don't realize it.

**And what is the significance of using pages from *Ebony* magazine in order to explore that?**

At least in my childhood, *Ebony* was an archive. We would get *Ebony* magazine, *JET* magazine, and *Crisis* once a month. And I realized that was one mechanism of teaching

what Blackness was at that time. When you gain insight into the way the world functions, you realize that that is also a flawed archive, that they may not be telling the kind of stories that you want to tell. So, you use that paper as a grounds to tell the story you want to tell. We are inherited people.

**Yes, we are. So we've talked a lot about rebirth already, thanks for that since that's the theme of the issue. I want to talk about rebirth, i.e., Renaissance, i.e., how living and working in Harlem has inspired or influenced your work, if at all.**

I feel like I'm home. As a result of feeling like you're home, which is Harlem, it reduces the fear in trying to reach for something or try new things, because everyone is going to love you regardless, anyway. The soul and the energy that is Harlem, there is a soul and energy that no other place in the world has. It's like a spiritual ground, man. You get off the train at 125th... OK, that's it, let's get it!

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**THE ASPECT OF WEAVING AS A MODE OF COMMUNICATION IS TIMELESS.**



DIE LEITUNG, 2016-2017

SPORTSMAN, 2016

