

Me Vs. Nikola Tamindzic

An interview by Elisa Contessotto

Could you talk me about your project “Fucking New York”?

It’s a tongue-in-cheek observation of love New Yorkers have for their the City — it’s often said that when you live in New York, New York is the most important relationship in your life. So, in this intense relationship, what about sex? What would “screwing” New York City actually look like? Most New Yorkers know all too well what getting screwed by the City is like on first of the month, when rent is due, but yeah — the idea is to push this notion to absurdity.

The project began as an extension of my fashion photography work, but soon took on a life of its own. It then broadened to include different genders, races, heights, sizes, and so on. The project also further evolved into distant, almost architectural, slightly-removed from reality, quietly sensual photographs — their flow broken up by in-your-face closeups, and an occasional overtly humorous shot.

America’s #1 photo publication, PDN, said that *“the uncanny/unreal city feeling the images evoke are reminiscent of surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico’s plazas, punctuated with David Lynchian humor”*— and I consider that a great compliment.

When you plan a photo shoot, do you structure everything or do you leave a lot open for improvisation when everyone gets together?

You should go into a shoot with a very clear idea of what you want to do — and especially if it’s for a client, you should have storyboards ready. But it’s really important to also leave space to improvise. For example, with *Fucking New York*, the overriding idea is always there, and it keeps both me and the model focused. And then we improvise around that theme. Another series I’m working on, *AVANT-HARD*, is all improvisation — accidents are an absolutely integral part of the concept.

So at the end of the day, it’s about a mix of structure and improvisation that’s most appropriate to what you’re doing, and who you’re doing it for.

Do you have any particular dream jobs that you’ve been dying to do?

I keep thinking I should join Anthony Bourdain's team, have great food and some adventures in faraway places. It certainly seems like a fun way to challenge myself, and do a very different kind of work.

What are your plans for the future?

So many things are happening right now.

First, there's a lot of work left finishing *Fucking New York*: I always thought of it as a very inclusive series, in the sense that it should represent different genders, body types, skin colors, social groups and so on. I started it with fashion models, but right now it's expanding.

Then, a series I mentioned earlier, called *AVANT-HARD*: large-scale works made without a camera, submerged in encaustic wax, exploring the interesection of physical and abstract, sex and violence, fear and humour. There's a teaser online already: www.avant-hard.com.

Then there's also a book being prepared, hopefully coming out through Harper Collins in 2015. It started as a photojournalistic job for The Daily, where I had to retrace Hunter S. Thompson's steps during the writing of *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*; but then the project took on a life of its own, separate from the article, and turned into a series called *Heat (Those Were the Days and Now These Are the Days)* — an exploration of Las Vegas now & then.

There's also an investigative project based on life of Nikola Tesla, which should take me to some interesting places, from Serbia and Croatia, through New York, Canada, and California. Hopefully I'll be able to begin work on this project this summer.

So all of these diverse projects then feed back into my fashion and portrait work, which are really the main focus of my work. It's what I believe is most important — be open to new things and new influences, always challenge yourself, always make yourself step out of your comfort zone. I'm incredibly excited about what the next five years will bring.

How do you see the future of photography?

It the not-too-distant future, we'll be able to shoot images using our own eyes, and beam images straight into a person's head — no cameras and no screens. Hope this happens in my lifetime!

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