







WHO CAN'T HEAR MUST FEEL



L'HOMME NE PEUT VIVRE QUE DE FAÏN  
REGINA

My Angel Gabriel!

GABRIEL MOSES

REGINA

I longed for a baby son, my Prayers were  
answered, my Angel

As your Mum, my Angel, I hope you know  
how much I love you. Blessings the Lord has  
sent me. You are very gentle, humble and  
always smiling.  
A Prayerful Son with Compassion heart.  
I owe all my Gray Hairs to YOU!  
Shine on Son! I love you son!  
Stay Strong my Angel!

Jesus Christ is Lord!

## FOREWORD

### Gabriel Moses

From very, very young, my mum would speak life into me. She'd tell me how special I was and how if everyone was doing one thing, Gabriel you go do the opposite! It's one thing that stuck with me throughout my childhood. I fell in love with the concept of being an outsider. It's been the story of my life from my first day at school to now entering rooms as an adult. She'd always remind me of the Bible verse Joshua 1:3 where God says, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, I have made your territory just as I promised to Moses." It has influenced the way I carry myself. It means that I step everywhere with confidence, and as an artist it allows me to give my perspective to viewers unapologetically, and leave it up to them to catch up if they feel like it.

There's a word throughout my career that I scream at every opportunity, and it's "Regina!" It means queen in Latin, while still sounding like the name of a woman. It was my way of expressing gratitude to the women who shaped the way I see the world – that's my grandmother, mum, sister, my nieces – they all shaped my approach and my values, despite going outside and seeing or being around things that weren't necessarily good for me, they always allowed me to see life in pink. When you see these images, I want you to understand that I work from a place

of gratitude. I'm grateful for the opportunities, the trust, the angels that have come and gone in my life. It would be ignorant of me to believe that this is all by my power, because it isn't. My entire career has felt like a walk in the park, and I tell people I'd won the second I picked up a camera and gave my life some purpose, because I know how difficult it is to find that purpose and so many where I'm from spend their entire lives searching for that thing that wakes them up in the morning, so how can I complain? Till now, I work and dream like a child and just try to bring these things to reality. It's that same imagination that had me writing the craziest stories in primary school when asked by a teacher to write. I feel like life knocks the dreamer out of us, but I've stayed in touch with that madman that just wanted to do everything, and my life should be a testimony to that.

In this phase that I'm in right now, I understand all the accomplishments and the role I play in my community – as a Black artist entering spaces we ain't had much place in before, and I wear that like a tailored suit! I am now at a point where the legacy I'm trying to build has become an obsession, and God willing we continue to elevate while never losing sight of why we do this stuff!

## REAL IMAGES

### Federico Sargentone

You know I kept it for real / Walk around with it for real / You wanna bet that my money for real / For real? / For real.

— Lil Uzi Vert

For over a century, photographers and their apologists have argued that photography deserves to be considered a fine art.

— John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (1968)

I'm listening to seminal Italian rap crew Truce Boys' *Sanguè* while I'm writing this. There's no "advantage" for me in that song that will be used in this piece – that's what they say in their opening track "Nessun Riscontro" ("No comparison / No advantage"). In Italian, it rhymes.

Yeah. No advantage. Why would you assume we got some?

"No advantage" means that you've never asked anything back from your peers. "No advantage" means that you talk about stuff the people around you don't understand. "No advantage" means that you do stuff your friends, at first, don't understand. Can't understand. "No advantage" means that you're an artist and no one recognizes it. It means "fuck you," but it also means "okay."

I have nothing in common with Mr. Gabriel Moses on a superficial level. He's successful. He's blessed. He's plugged. He's through. We're almost the same age though. We like stuff. I like stuff. Living in microscopic Italian provincial towns ruled by pseudo-fascist youth, and getting through only by "liking stuff." Liking stuff was essential to escaping one's surroundings. "Liking stuff" meant you were part of what you liked. Stuff transitioned from object-like status to behavior-like status. Through "liking stuff" you'd become what you are now. What we are now. What Gabriel is now, I think. And it seems we have more in common now. Not that it's important.

There's a lot to be said about pictures. About their form and their implications; about their interpretation and their intention. We won't say much about pictures. "Pictures," only in England. "Picture" is drill, "image" is trap. "Picture" is Gilbert and George, "image" is Andy Warhol. I only think about Andy Warhol, someone told me. In my work, in my writing, in my attitude. But Warhol, for me, was an entry point into an impenetrable art world.

For Gabriel I think it was Nike, technically. But I think it was Warhol too. Or someone close to that. In the sense that if you're not privileged, you're real. Real, as in what it means. As in real to people and things. In

the age of image hegemony, reality assumes a whole new set of connotations: real images are not manipulated, not technologically enhanced, not staged, or not performative. In the words of John Berger, writing in 1968: “We think of photographs as works of art, as evidence of a particular truth, as likenesses, as news items. Every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming and constructing a total view of reality. Hence the crucial role of photography in ideological struggle.” What Berger outlined in his classic book *Understanding a Photograph* is a conceptual paradox that is still applicable to today’s image-making: a photograph is a document produced by the author’s act of intentionality, a record of the world taken at a specific time, a fragment of a certain reality.

When Gabriel takes pictures they are visceral incantations that summon the specters of our own recollections. Through a lens that serves as both window and mirror he conjures a haunting, empathic relationship between subject and image, transcending the visual to embrace the emotional.

Memory, in Gabriel’s hands, is a mercurial force, a thread that weaves together the past, present, and the ever-shifting contours of the psyche. Each photograph is a resonant chord struck on the strings of human experience, invoking a kaleidoscope of feelings that transcend the boundaries of time and space. His subjects are not mere figures caught in a tableau; they are vessels, their essence distilled and encapsulated in the very atoms of the image. The result is a visual poetry that pulsates with a profound, almost spectral resonance.

Gabriel’s approach to image-making is an act of empathy – a ritual that invites the viewer not merely to observe but to participate in the emotional narrative. Through his lens we are drawn into profound communion with his subjects, experiencing their joy, sorrow, or vulnerability as if it were our own. His photographs are invitations to traverse the landscapes of the human heart, to navigate the labyrinthine corridors of memory, and to confront the fragility and resilience of the human spirit.

In an era where the digital deluge often desensitizes us to the world’s emotional nuances Gabriel’s work stands as a counterpoint, a reminder of our shared humanity. He compels us to confront the raw and tender underbelly of existence, to recognize that every life, every story, is a tapestry of memories and emotions. This is the case with his compelling film *Bal D’Afrique* for the Swedish beauty brand Byredo, in which a marriage is captured through the characters of an intimate, familiar celebration.

A mental image, by definition, is not real. A mental image is not a photograph, but a cognitive artifact. In Gabriel’s work, any image is a mental image – crafting narratives of people, identities, and bodies through the filter of memory. Scenes that reside in the realm of the real although constructed and purely intentional. In his work mental images become real not because

of their form, but because of their subjects, their own perfections and imperfections. “Painting is an art of arrangement: therefore it is reasonable to demand that there is some kind of order in what is arranged,” once again John Berger. “Every relation between forms in a painting is to some degree adaptable to the painter’s purpose.” This is how Gabriel, I think, operates. An act of arrangement.

Gabriel makes classics. Reverence and rebellion. He pays homage to the visual canon by channeling its elegance and familiarity, but then he takes an audacious leap into the avant-garde. He deconstructs the established, disrupts the traditional. “Images last longer than humans,” he said to me, as if his pictures are a testament to something bigger, something divine and not mundane, something that elevates the picture to a higher state. It’s as if his photographs become bridges spanning epochs. The thick grain in the (mostly) black-and-white music video for Little Simz’s “NOTHANK YOU,” for example, or in the extremely moving work of introspection that is *IJO*, is his way of conveying this approach to classicization in the formal arena. Again painting comes to mind – especially in the latter, which follows a group of young ballet dancers in Lagos, Nigeria. One is tempted to compare Edgar Degas’s ballet paintings to this film, but in Gabriel’s work the subjects are not aestheticized by the artist’s gaze as are Degas’s highly stylized, fetishized dancers. In *IJO* the cultural context is more important than the subject, or at least as relevant. The film’s storytelling thrives on the reinterpretation of a “classic” trope – that of the ballet dancers – although it is clearly infused with emotional layers that complicate a linear reading, rendering it a suspended image of intimacy.

Gabriel is self-taught. He didn’t come from an “art” environment but from South London. In South London he still is. And in an “art environment” he now is. Facts: at eighteen he was the youngest photographer to shoot a cover for *Dazed*. Gabriel wants to portray everyday people and their emotional worlds, he said. He juggles art and commerce with ease because he’s aware of how much certain commercial projects can amplify his vision and bring it to as many people and their emotional worlds as possible. Gabriel goes to the studio every day, but he doesn’t shoot pictures there. There he hangs out with his friends, family, and loved ones, every day. Thinking of images. Or pictures. Real things. “Images that last longer than humans.” Images that don’t Tik-Tok. Images that aren’t loud but that break silence. Images of people. Images that not only tell a story but make one. Images that are of today, of yesterday, and of tomorrow. Images that are painted. Images that are us. Mental images. Real Images.

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