

The 14th Floor

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23 January – 18 February 2024

Casual Wanderer's Wake-up Call

Wandering through the wild streets of New York, I find myself seeking cosmic clarity amidst the outside chaos. I let the city guide me, following the mosaic sounds emerging from its hidden corners. As Manhattan appears in all its magnitude, flooding memories of my early years in the city collide before me. I feel different now. My body is stiff and my mind nebulous, constantly yearning for moments of escape. The gaze of others has become the new way to measure who I am. My father's words echo in my mind, "The ability to be surprised is easily lost in the density of time, kid." A quick feeling of melancholy runs down my spine. I buy a pack of American Spirit and an egg sandwich. I pause on a quiet corner and realize I have reached the East Village.

Before I can get lost in my thoughts again, a blonde guy and a ginger girl approach me searching for light. "It was incredible," he says to her, lighting up. "Between the figurative and the abstract, the compositions occupy a space where the human form is driven by an obvious visceral understanding of color, texture, and space." Nodding her carrot hair in agreement, the girl adds, "I found it deeply personal. The flowing lines, translucent colors, and cryptic elements invite introspection." They are so absorbed in their conversation that they hardly notice that I'm still there. I see myself from the outside joining their conversation. The girl suddenly looks at me with her big brown eyes saying, "You look like you need to hit The 14th Floor. It's insane. You'll love it." Before I can articulate my reticence the guy says "Dude, we can't spill the magic. You have to experience it."

I stand there in awkward silence. Only now I realize that I haven't heard my voice in hours. I attempt a smile while I gently put my unlit cigarette back into my pocket. They seem amused. I remain silent. They leave. I laugh at myself with kindness and start imagining what would this 14th Floor actually look like. It could be a dark room or a numerology reading for all I know. A gallery show?

Of course, it is.

I whisper to myself, 'Let's do this,' as I take the first of many steps into the unknown.

Text by Camilla Giaccio