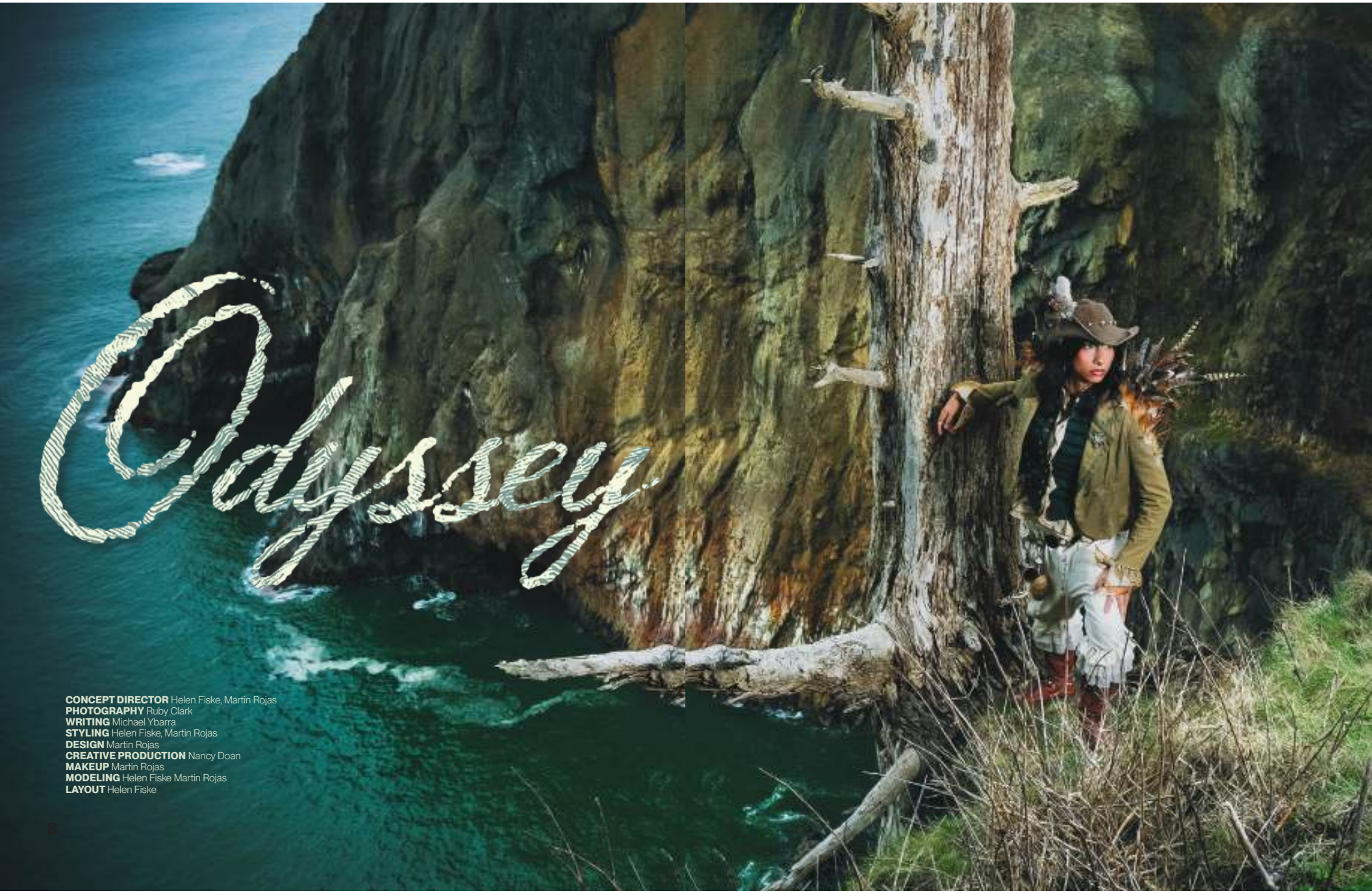


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"Five years after its conception, *Odyssey* is an ode to how far Lewk has come."

Perched upon a second floor balcony in San Marcos, Texas, our own version of Martin Rojas's and Helen Fiske's sublime Oregon crags, I asked Sydney Bynes, former Editor-in-Chief, where her career could have landed without Lewk Magazine. Amidst egotistical screaming mufflers and college student sidewalk chatter, she answered plain and simple.

"Oh, god. I don't think I would be anywhere without the magazine," she said. "I don't think I would [have] ever move[d] to New York and I don't think I would [have] ever worked for Vogue, CFDA, or went to the Met Gala."

Bynes is a principal example of what one can achieve with Lewk as their teacher. She was part of the original management team, scrappy and eager to travel an unexplored path and create a new fashion community in San Marcos.

Under her guidance, along with cofounders Amaya Aztecatl and Gabriella Garcia, Lewk created its first issue, a completely digital and free to view endeavor. Members posed in one room of the Family and Consumer Sciences building at Texas State University for all its content.

In as little as two years, Lewk established itself as a leading force in the Central Texas fashion community. With each issue, members exceeded expectations time and time again.

Five years after its conception, Odyssey is an ode to how far Lewk has come.

Rojas and Fiske, days before travelling for Lewk's first out-of-state photoshoot, captured exactly what they wanted Odyssey to be.

"It's kind of a love letter," Rojas said. "It's coming from a place of gratitude... This is issue 10. This is a big milestone that we've reached that a lot of magazines don't reach."

What better way to chronicle Lewk's history than to depict themselves as explorers at the edge of the world.

Rojas's olive and off-white styling almost blends with the Seaside Beach cliffs behind him. He is a mixture of pilgrim and pirate, characterizing Lewk as a captain on the uncharted waters of its tenth issue. In this way, Lewk is the breathing version of the Wanderer in Casper David Friedrich's 1818 painting Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, and Rojas's boots allude to Lewk's readiness to traverse the unknown.





If Rojas is Lewk as the Wanderer, Fiske steps out of John Gast's American Progress. She anthropomorphizes Lewk as a new kind of Columbia, the woman carrying telegraph line through America's amber waves of hill country. A Columbia uplifting diversity instead of homogenizing fashion, unlike Gast's version who drives out cultural difference in the name of Manifest Destiny. Her silk skirt flows towards the earth in cascades as she stands on a pedestal built by countless Lewk leaders before her.

Together, they represent the pinnacle of Lewk's development. They are not the first pioneers. They will not be the last. They are the latest layer of Lewk's ever-evolving Russian doll, a new branch sprouting off the precipice of its progress.

"We literally wanted to show all the hard workers that came before us," Fiske said. "[The ones who] have propelled us into this significant position, where we get to lead a very successful magazine that has been built up by two generations of leaders."

Embellishments perform this purpose. Feathers over shoulders and scalps liken Lewk to a bird in flight. It may rest on the branches and roots grown by leaders past, but it is unafraid to lift off again, to rise higher and higher in its creative potential. As Lewk reaches new heights of elevation, the air becomes thinner, but its lungs inevitably adapt. Its voice becomes stronger.

However, Lewk's strength can become daunting. Bynes said, "It should just get better and better and better and better, and y'all are doing that," but this means Lewk must push itself further to outperform.



"They are not the first pioneers. They will not be the last..."





"...with each new issue, Lewk creates a greater challenge for itself, not a cage."



Calm and collected, Rojas and Fiske said with each new issue, Lewk creates a greater challenge for itself, not a cage.

"I think every issue we discover those borders that we put [up] for ourselves could be expanded," Rojas said, and Fiske shares this sentiment.

"After we realized the possibilities are endless, we pushed our team to think… the sky's the limit, basically," she said.



"I think every issue we discover those borders that we put [up] for ourselves could be expanded..."







On the sand and stones of Cannon Beach, Rojas and Fiske encapsulate Lewk at the start of each issue. It stands at the brink of a dark ocean, and, rather than turn away from a new summit to climb, it terraforms the creative path beneath its feet, embarking on a new voyage.

Fiske looks siren-esque, singing Lewk's song of love to fashion, its lifeblood and lover, improving its composition, editorially, every issue. Rojas's turtle shell, almost hidden on the cliffs, finally rears its head, reminiscent of Aesop's illustrious fable. While Lewk churns its editions out in a two-month period, careful consideration and planning goes into making each season a success. After all, Rome was not built in a day. Countless hands mold the magazine with patience, and each new issue is Lewk's collective child, the culmination of its ancestors, carrying its legacy forward. An apex on an apex on an apex.

Like Rojas's and Fiske's feathers, Lewk continues reaching for the stars at the edge of an unknown frontier, ripe for discovery. With each laborious issue, it refines its creative vision, distilling, purifying, and compressing its creativity into an increasingly dazzling gemstone. Lewk, with hands blistered and bleeding, carves notches in the infinite apex called creative progress. It honors all the legends who came before in its story, and, just as Fiske and Rojas do, stands poised and hungry, ready to p
on everything yet to come.

"...Lewk continues reaching for the stars at the edge of an unknown frontier, ripe for discovery..."



