STREET STYLE

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“What are you passionate about?” It’s a question that gets thrown around in a variety of contexts: interviews, first dates, internship applications, etc. In these different contexts, we will answer the question differently depending on what outcome we are seeking. In an interview, obviously you’re passionate about the company. On a date, I’ll only talk about my truest passions if I feel like I can trust the person to take it seriously.

But, what are we passionate about when we’re alone in a room with no one to impress? What is plastered to the walls of your brain yearning to be realized? Whenever there’s a story that I need to write, I’m so blinded by that story that I can’t write anything else until I get that one story onto the page. For me that’s an undeniable sign that I’m feeling real passion about something. When a certain project pops into my head, it’s irresistible. The only thing that makes this type of project more exciting is if my friends can collaborate on it and their talents make the project even better.

I remember the first time that I held an issue of SHEI in my hands. I was on the fashion team and I had actually been asked to model for a feature about a Flint based sunglasses brand. I hadn’t been a part of conceptualizing the shoot or sourcing the clothing, but being able to run my fingers over the smooth cover and hug it to my chest was so meaningful. Three years later, I’m graduating as Editor-in-Chief and it’s impossible to tell you what it means to me to hold this specific magazine when I know every intimate detail about how it came into being. This is my last Letter from the Editor at SHEI and I put a lot of pressure on myself while writing it because I want it to mean something. Dedicating this letter to all of the people that contributed to this issue, in big ways and small, is the best way that I can think of to make it mean something.

If you look closely, you’ll be able to see all of the attention to detail and the big ways that team members contributed in each photoshoot. On page 6, “Noble Ornaments” brings us a beauty shoot that combines classically regal aesthetics of ornate jewelry and dramatic lighting with modern design and sharp photography. “Courtside” on page 32 took us out to the tennis courts in the snow where we used the saturated walls to frame the multi-patterned outfits that boldly mix sequins, stripes, and vibrant checkers. One small way that the Creative Director and I helped on this shoot was holding blankets to block the wind and keep the models warm (check out “Behind the Scenes” for proof).

For me, “Austere Ebb” on page 16 represents the truest form of our charismatic theme. The dancers in the shoot are all playing off of each other to channel passion through their bodies and movements. The dark hues are striking, but there’s a fragility to the way that the fabric moves that speaks to a softness in me.

A lot has been said about the print form in the past few years and I can’t tell you whether or when it’s going to die out for good. Although holding the final product, bound and glossy, is immensely satisfying, the value in this issue isn’t necessarily the physicality of it, but my experiences of its creation. Those are what I can hold onto forever, the same way that I would hold onto my beloved print issues.

Liv Velarde
Editor In Chief
There's something bittersweet about sitting down to edit for the last print issue of my time with SHEI. The last four years have brought the opportunity to learn from the perspective of others, and to witness the strength and vulnerability of the writers I get to work with every week. I've watched my team grow, and seen intense bravery exhibited in beautiful ways — together, we have learned to carefully observe the world around us, and to reflect on the most intimate parts of our identities.

In this issue, we conquer what it means to belong, to be passionate, to redefine how we approach relationships. Writing about a beach trip on an afternoon in July, with her “fingers sinking into the sand beneath [her], unsuccessfully looking for something to grip, something concrete,” Lauren Champlin reflects on the friendships that have inspired her to continue creating. Hannah Harshe thinks about friendship as well, and the pressure the people she loves often feel to place importance on relationships with men over their individual goals. Thinking about one of her favorite designers, Lily Marks discusses Gianni Versace’s fixation on glamour and opulence.

The pieces in this issue represent unique ways of looking at the world, and I hope you find yourself as captivated as I was.

Amber Mitchell
Features Editor
Earrings - Nordstrom
Chain in hair - Thrifted
Necklace - Amazon
Earrings - Amazon
Earrings - Nordstrom
Chain in hair - Thrifted
Top - Nordstrom
Lace top - Nordstrom
Crown - Amazon
Earrings - Amazon
Letting go has never been easy for me. I always held onto every fear, doubt, and insecurity. Like baggage, I carried them with me into each new friendship and relationship, putting endless amounts of pressure on both parties until the benefits of the relationship did not seem to outweigh the costs. It always came down to fear, I found. The fear of what it was costing me to invest in a new relationship with a new person that I would bring into my life who could potentially wreck it, potentially destroy the perfect shelter I’d built around myself.

I later realized that I had built a facade of perfection with the pieces of myself I once found so reliable. I built it with my art—meticulously painted portraits, but too safe and structured. I built it with my independent nature that was based in feigned strength. I’d built my identity around my art, but as much as I tried to only let the positive qualities that stemmed from my passion define me—my patience, determination, and detail-oriented, idealistic, and observant eye—the negative attributes that I attempted to deny and ignore—my fear, obsession, and self-criticism—limited both my artistic growth and growth in my relationships.

Funnily enough, these were the thoughts that ran through my head on repeat that afternoon in July, my body sprawled out on a beach towel, my fingers sinking into the sand beneath me, unsuccessfully looking for something to grip, something concrete. I was invited by two of my close friends on a beach trip with a large group of their friends who I didn’t know. Upon arrival, I was terrified, unsure of how to present myself to new people, which version of myself they would like best. I was really good at that, putting on a face. Soon after, however, I found getting to know them easy, easier than it had ever been for me in the past. That day, we talked about indie music, contemporary art, the joys, struggles, and pains that came along with having a passion for creating.

Over the course of that summer, the summer before starting college, I spent almost every day with them, painting on picnic blankets in the park and taking bike rides and photo shoots at the beach. This group showed me what having a community truly meant. We were a community who support each other in the beginning of a new creative project, cheer each other on with every success, and console each other when we began to doubt our own abilities. Having this support system was instrumental to me starting college this past fall. I had a new-found confidence and comfort in the person I was, and I now carry that with me in every room I enter, every relationship I build, and every community I join.

In November, I fell in love. For most people, their first love is an exciting landmark in their lives, something to cherish and reminisce on, but for me, it became another source of worry. It frightened me how quickly our rela-
tionship developed, and I hated the thought that I was giving her too much, too soon. I felt small compared to her, my limited knowledge and experience giving her an unfair advantage over me. I worried that I was putting myself in a vulnerable position, giving her the upper hand, because she didn’t rely on me the way I relied on her.

It wasn’t until it was too late, however, that I realized that those threats were all imaginary. I viewed love and relationships like power dynamics rather than simple coexistences and interdependencies. I thought too far ahead and obsessed over and calculated every word and encounter when I should have just enjoyed it for what it was. Because when it was good, it was so good. I fell in love with her passion and enthusiasm for public health, her pride and love for Detroit. She taught me what it meant to have passion towards a cause, and I knew her heart would always be set on making positive change in Detroit and in the world at large. She didn’t shy away from her feelings, and she wasn’t afraid of addressing or communicating them. I saw her strength and her weakness, and I loved her for both.

I’ve always been a firm believer that people come into our lives for a reason. In the same way that our people influence our passions, our passions lead us to our people. I have never been happier with the art I am creating or with the person that I am than I am right now, and I’ve found that those go hand in hand. Through experiencing new friendships, love, and the loss of it, I’ve learned more about myself in the past year than ever before. Every limit was tested, every boundary was pushed, and as a result, I am a more open-minded and self-accepting person, one who learns and loves more easily and more openly than I did in the past. It all came down to letting go of fear. I’ve stopped playing it safe with the art I create. I can find a balance between the give and the take in my friendships and relationships.

For a long time, I wondered when I would find the friends who best suited me, and when I thought I had found my people, I wondered how I could know whether or not they were really the people I should have in my life? When these over-complicated questions plague my mind, I try my best to think about them in simpler terms: do the people I’m surrounding myself with uplift me? Do they inspire me? Do they push me and encourage me to work on myself and the things I’m passionate about? When I think back on the time I spent with my friends this summer, our painting picnics and beach excursions, on the new experiences I’ve shared with college friends, and on the time I spent with my first love, the first person to break my heart, I am met with only peace. I can find peace in the fact that I have people in my life who understand my passion, who understand my purpose, who push me to be my best self.

By Lauren Champlin
Layout by Mackenzie Schwedt
Cape - Gal Meets Glam Collection
Dress - Nordstrom
White blazer - Lord & Taylor
Lace top - Urban Outfitters
Bottoms - Nordstrom
Black Dress - Nordstrom
What comes to your mind when you see a gold Medusa head? Or when you hear Drake rap “Versace, Versace, Versace…”? At least one of these descriptors must ring true: gold, grandeur, extravagance.

In 1997, fashion lost its most passionate designer and most unique executive. The Versace empire was at its peak, with Gianni’s death on the heels of one of his most successful fashion shows. His influence still lingers today as fashion continues to draw on his signature presence in the industry.

Gianni Versace’s fame and brand grew quickly in the mid-90s with the simultaneous rise of the supermodel. Supermodels were not nameless runway walkers; they became recognizable by society and the media as an image of ideal beauty and obtained large sums of wealth for modeling. “The supermodel is the creation of a media eager to promote a familiar and beautiful face. A supermodel mingled publicly with the rich and famous. She was cited in gossip columns, appeared on television talk shows, and partied at the trendiest nightspots.”

Versace’s fashion shows became star-studded Hollywood stomping grounds, with dozens of Gianni’s A-list friends in attendance. This changed the landscape of fashion shows as well as the modeling industry, and contributed to the increasing acclaim runway models received. They now had names and faces, were even celebrities themselves.

The original five supermodels of the 1990s, known as “The Big Five,” started off the decade on British Vogue’s iconic magazine cover starring Naomi Campbell, Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, and Tatjana Patitz - shot by Peter Lindbergh.² It was Gianni Versace who sent these models down his runway in their first group appearance in his Autumn/Winter 91/92 collection. The effects rippled through the industry as these five became the faces of a unique and powerful Versace luxury.³

Numerous factors were at play in creating the grandeur image that has come to define the brand. Gianni’s costume-like designs and innovations solidified the association of his name with opulence. Versace drew from the rich history of Italy as inspiration in his use of metals, beads, and bright colors. The presence of ornate gold motifs closely resemble medieval ar-
chitecture: wrought iron gates, stained glass windows in medieval cathedrals, and Roman mosaics. Gianni’s gowns fused the ancient and modern by experimenting with classical patterns. He embedded motifs from the ancient Graeco-Roman art world in his work; the most profound example is the iconic Versace Medusa.

Gianni Versace derived his initial idea for the Versace Medusa from the Roman mosaics that decorated his hometown of Reggio Calabria, Italy. The Greek myth of Medusa characterizes her as selfish and boastful about her beauty as a mortal, which caused the goddess Athena to turn Medusa into a monster with snakes for hair. She graces perfume bottles, sunglasses collections, and jewelry. Her sensual allure and proud vanity captures the essence of the ideal Versace woman, whose gaze lingers in a seductive way. In 1981, Gianni Versace noted that the Gorgon [Medusa] is just like his woman: “aggressive and fatal, able to seduce you with a glance.”

The Medusa emblem contributed to the growing reputation of Versace as a brand that embodies deviance. Anna Wintour once wrote, “Armani dresses the wife and Versace dresses the mistress.” When asked if this quote was accurate, Donatella, the Versace Group’s current Vice President and Chief Designer, replied: “Yes, I love this allocation of roles. Mistresses have much more fun than wives do.”

In keeping with the theme of decadence through the use of gold, one of the most influential milestones of his career was Gianni’s creation of oroton in the early ‘80s. Oroton is a metal mesh fabric that drapes fluidly around the body. A feat like oroton proved that Gianni could transform just about any material. This advanced his image as a prodigy to the public.

The Oroton dresses that defined his runway shows have reappeared in the present-day at the 2018 Heavenly Bodies Met Gala, as well as in the months-long Heavenly Bodies museum exhibition. At the gala, Kim Kardashian West wore an Oroton body hugging gold gown adorned with intricately beaded crosses, an almost identical version of the original Gianni Versace 90s-era oroton gowns with religious motifs. The pieces that stood in The Costume Institute’s spring 2018 Exhibition - Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination included a gold oroton gown with a large cross that continued down the entire front of the dress from the very top of the high neckline. The exhibition emphasized fashion’s continual engagement with religion, specifically Catholicism, and how religious motifs have intersected with art throughout history. The dresses in the collection are reminiscent of Gianni’s special relationship with gold in the ancient classics. Through inventions like oroton, a daring and excessive use of gold became synonymous with luxury under Versace’s umbrella.

Another glimmer of oroton appeared at Versace’s Spring 2018 Milan Show, with “a supermodel reunion of epic proportion” in which the Versace brand brought back the “Big Five.” In an emotional evening, these now middle-aged women emanated the nostalgia of decadent ‘90s fashion in a tribute to Gianni Versace, who changed their lives and the use of gold in clothing design.

The opulence of Versace lures us in from all angles, whether we saw it on Cindy Crawford in 1990’s runway shows, in the 2019 Kith x Versace collaboration starring Bella Hadid, or on hip-hop group Migos at the 2018 Heavenly Bodies Met Gala. When we see Versace we can’t quite look away; we’re immediately drawn into a bright, decadent world. The theme of beauty and luxury in excess that dominates high fashion was started by the Versace brand, with Gianni as the leader.

Gianni’s passion was everything for the company. His daring designs that emphasized gold and mixed with bright colors showcase but a sliver of the love he held for self expression. Fashion is the most important and direct medium of individuality. Versace enables individuals to find themselves and allows for exploration of their multifaceted personalities. Versace made it cool to be your daring self, which is essential to fashion today. Authenticity is rare in the tech era, but Versace can make us forget this as a mechanism and inspiration for artistic expression—no matter how daring we want to be, there is always a Versace piece to express it. If only it was affordable.

By Lily Marks
Photos by Kenzie King
Layout by Carly Lucas
Yves St. Laurent design at the Heavenly Bodies exhibit at the MET.


Christian Lacroix design at the Heavenly Bodies exhibit at the MET
Friday night, my Uber driver asked what I would do if I were to meet “Mr. Right” at the party he was driving me to. I was sitting in the passenger seat wearing a sparkly lavender dress that was meant for someone probably six inches shorter than me. My instant thought was, Wow, that would suck.

I had bought my dress for $17 off of some girl on Facebook, which is way out of budget for me, but I was willing to make the sacrifice in order to feel hot for ten minutes. That was the plan: to stay at the party for exactly ten minutes. I wanted to look good for a picture to post on Instagram, and then go home and wash off my makeup and rewatch old Michigan basketball games until I fell asleep.

My Uber driver was rather distraught by my evening plans, because, of course, I had neglected to account for the possibility that my future husband was waiting at the party. Silly me! What kind of twenty-year-old woman goes to a party under the presumption that she won’t meet the love of her life?

“If he’s really ‘Mr. Right,’” I said out loud, in response to my driver’s infinitely important what-if, “he can wait until tomorrow morning. I really don’t want to stay out tonight.”

The car pulled up onto South University and I thanked the driver as I

“WOW, THAT WOULD SUCK.”
stepped out onto the icy sidewalk. *Wait,* I realized, grabbing the material of my dress and pulling it down over my thighs. *I have stuff to do in the morning. I should’ve said tomorrow evening.* I was intending to spend tomorrow evening finishing up my literature review for my research methods class so that I would have time Sunday to go home and watch the basketball game with my family. Besides, if I were to meet “Mr. Right” tonight, what would I do with him when I’m ready to move to a big city and chase my goals? Unless he can fit in a carry-on bag, I really can’t see myself having space for a man any time in the near future.

As the Uber drove away, I pulled my dress down and walked in the direction of the party. I decided to shake off the entire conversation. *How about I just don’t meet Mr. Right?* I thought. *How does that sound, Uber driver?*

My grandma told me on Christmas Eve that she was impressed by all the relatives who insisted on asking me “what are you going to do with that?” when I told them my major. I, on the other hand, wasn’t particularly thrilled with the question (partially because I don’t know the answer).
When my grandma was in college, though, nobody ever bothered to ask her what she wanted to do with her degree. People asked what she was studying, but the assumption was that women would never actually have to use their degrees because they were expected to find husbands who would make enough money for the both of them.

Even after several decades and lots of progressive legislation, this attitude is disturbingly pervasive on college campuses and beyond. In my personal experience, most of my female classmates have at least considered whether they will pursue a career or stay home to raise a family (both valid and respectable options), while most of my male classmates haven’t once considered that they could be stay-at-home dads one day. Although this social norm might appear harmless, it manifests in the way women and men are treated on college campuses.

The concept of a “Mrs. degree”, or the idea that women should attend college simply to find a husband, might seem a million years old, but the pressure on women to meet their future husbands at college hasn’t completely dissipated. Even if we choose to reject the notion, it’s still there, like a stale stench lingering throughout college campuses, passed on from generation to generation.

Over the summer, the long-lost stretch of time that consisted of melting ice cream and reading books on the docks at Bandemer park, my best friend met a boy. We talked about him as if we were going to be graded for participation in the discussion, analyzing him and weighing his pros and cons. My friends and I are so used to living passionately that we tend to give our whole hearts to things that don’t deserve it. During the academic year, we stay up late each night reading research papers where we have to look at all evidence with a modicum of skepticism; why not analyze a boy with the same kind of scrutiny?

After she had gone on just a few dates with the boy, I sat my friend down and asked her if she saw herself with him for the rest of her life. I don’t know what compelled us to have this conversation, except that we were raised in a cultural context that conditioned us to believe we had to. He would be graduating soon and we had to decide if she was going to follow him wherever
he ended up, or if they were going to break it off here and now. We decided that he was her happily ever after. I’m sure if my Uber driver had been there, he would have applauded.

But here’s the thing: my friend wanted to go abroad, attend grad school, and pursue a career. This boy had plans of his own, and when they decided to stay together, the assumption was that they would be following his path, not hers. She acquiesced because she was in love with him. Isn’t it weird how you can do exactly what someone else wants you to do and convince yourself it’s a compromise?

When they eventually broke up, I drove my friend home from Ann Arbor so she could cry in the comfort of her childhood bedroom. We drove in a painful silence, until something overcome me and I decided to ask, “Are you excited?”

My best friend sniffs, and in a voice still damp with tears but full of enthusiasm, she says, “Dude. You have no idea how excited I am.”

For this reason, I celebrate when my best friends go through breakups and I cringe when my Uber driver asks me about Mr. Right. After staying out at the party for a total of twelve minutes, I find myself on my living room couch wearing my softest pair of Nike sweatpants. For me, this is the perfect Friday night: no makeup on, a mug of hot chocolate, and a basketball game on TV that I already know Michigan’s going to win.

When I check Instagram, people are still posting photos from the party I left. For a moment, I remember my Uber driver’s concern for the state of my love life. I zoom in on the background of different photos, trying to determine who exactly I would’ve ended up marrying if I wasn’t at home watching basketball right now.

I pull my fuzzy white blanket around me and sip my hot chocolate. Imagine if I had met someone tonight, I thought. Man, I really dodged a bullet on that.

By Hannah Harshe

Layout by Elizabeth Marics
1. Safety pin jewelry - Thrifted
2. Two-piece floral outfit - Louben
3. Hand earrings - The Getup Vintage
4. White boots - Urban Outfitters
5. Crewneck - American Apparel with hand embroidery
6. Checkered skirt - ASOS
7. Orange vest - Fransa
8. Monte Marte Blouse - Nicole Taylor
9. Reflective pants - Dollskill
10. Face earrings - Kina & Tam
11. Belt - Thrifted
12. Maroon shoes - Missguided
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Sweater - MSGM
Shoes - Nike
Coat - Hutch
Shoes - Doc Martens
Sweater - Zara
Skirt - Topshop
Shoes - Sears
Dress shirt - Calibrate
Sweater - Nordstrom
Jeans - Urban Outfitters
Shoes - Adidas
T-shirt - Banana Republic
Sequin dress - ASOS
Skirt - Tory Sport
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Photo Editor Mackenzie King on the set of “Austere Ebb.”

Editor-in-Chief Liv Velarde and Creative Director Paige Wilson blocking wind on the set of “Courtside.”

Fashion Editors Elena Odulak and Alana Valko styling a model on the set of “Noble Ornaments.”