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# *ELLE* MULLARCHYK'S ESCAPE ROUTE

By DANIEL SCHEFFLER

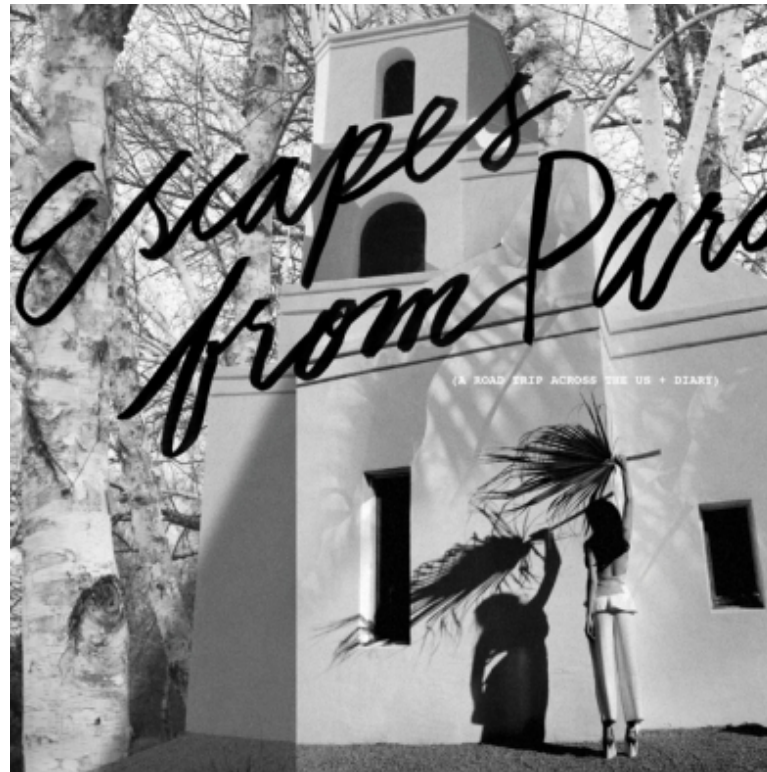
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Sometimes all it takes to get the creative juices flowing is a change of scenery; and in former model and longtime New Yorker Elle Muliarchyk's case, that meant a road trip. Muliarchyk has worked on her latest project, "Escapes from Paradise," a series of mostly black-and-white, diary-style self-photographs, for the past year. The project took her across the US, dressed in Chadwick Bell's spring 2013 collection, shooting herself in a purposive "film noir" style.

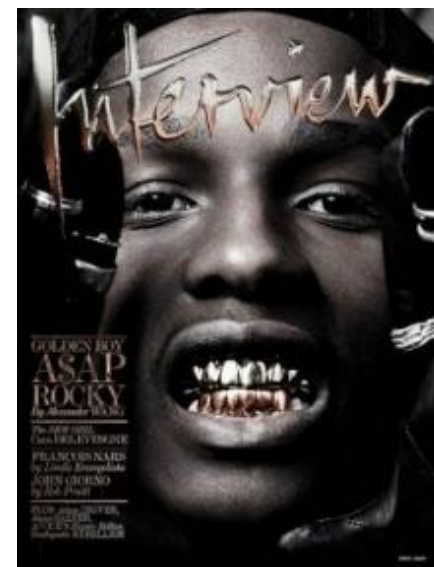
The work has [been transformed](#) into an interactive online experience that incorporates an original music score, GIFs, a fictionalized diary written by Anne B. Kelly to accompany the photographs, and the photos themselves. In the East Village coffee shop Everyman Espresso, we sat down with Muliarchyk to discuss her escape.

DANIEL SCHEFFLER: Who are you, exactly?

ELLE MULIARCHYK: I am an artist working with photography and film. I use—and constructively abuse—fashion as my medium, because I consider it as one of the greatest vehicles of communication in our society. Fashion is our mask, but it's also a membrane that filters the information between our inner and outer worlds. I want to study and test our relationship with superficiality, as I believe we can use it to make our lives more exciting and inspiring. I also strive to always fill my work with beauty and dreams.

SCHEFFLER: I want to know more about your career so far. Give me some details of what you've been up to and how you found a place for your creativity.

MULIARCHYK: As a model, I would secretly take self-



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portraits in the changing rooms of luxury fashion boutiques. *The New York Times* [exposed](#) my obsession through an article and exhibition. I met amazing people who had their finger on the pulse of art and fashion and the skeleton keys to these exclusive universes. I collaborated with Neville Wakefield [on a series of photos of] saints in churches dressed in contemporary fashion and designer Bella Freud, daughter of painter Lucian Freud. Their insight and encouragement helped me find my own vision.

SCHEFFLER: Tell me about the photos you took in changing rooms all over the world. What was your thinking at the time?

MULIARCHYK: I wanted to create beautiful images with things I couldn't afford, but it grew into something else. Through this process I discovered fashion, and its magic, for the first time in my life.

SCHEFFLER: How have your Eastern European roots infused your work?

MULIARCHYK: I am obsessed with pagan mysticism, the folklore and fairy tales.

SCHEFFLER: How long have you been in New York, and what made you choose the city?

MULIARCHYK: Twelve years. It's the only city where you can make your dreams come true despite your background or personal history.

SCHEFFLER: What has been a career highlight for you?

MULIARCHYK: That would be my latest project, "Escapes From Paradise." The world around fashion is so delicious,

intriguing, and multi-sensory. It expands beyond a photograph, which I always felt as the 2D prison for my ideas and passion. I love sharing stories, and I also love music and books. "Escapes..." encapsulates all the things I love. Thanks to this project and the journey I finally found my language and direction; though it's only my first draft. I hope people will find it magical and inspiring.

SCHEFFLER: How did you conceptualize the project?

MULIARCHYK: I had visited Chadwick Bell's studio while he was working on his Spring '13 collection, and the woman he had envisioned inspired me. I saw her as a 2013 Georgia O'Keeffe: a modern girl and an artist who escapes the crazy New York City to find clarity in the desert and in nature. I decided to literally become the woman Bell had dreamed up. I wanted to test the "Dream Machine of Fashion" on my own skin.

SCHEFFLER: Tell me more about the process and how you have achieved the desired results.

MULIARCHYK: I traveled across Utah, Arizona, and the East and West coasts taking self portraits wearing Bell's collection. I would shoot mostly at night in the middle of nowhere—with not a soul in sight for miles. My images were simultaneously inspired by my collaboration with [Anne B. Kelly](#), a writer who turned the entries from my road trip diary into a fiction story, which you see alongside the photos. I worked with a [composer](#) to create an original soundscape evocative of my journey. Finally, art director [Jacob Wildschioedt](#) helped me put the photos, story and music into a multimedia online gallery. And so it feels like a road unfolding in front of you, or you can curl up with it in bed as with a book.

SCHEFFLER: What is your greatest aim with your work? And how do you feel about fashion in 2013?

MULIARCHYK: Fashion is being presented to us in an intimidating non-inspiring way. I want to reinvent the experience of fashion. I want to prove that it can be truly magical and empowering—the way I discovered it in the changing rooms.

SCHEFFLER: Any photographers you simply adore?

MULIARCHYK: [Araki](#).

SCHEFFLER: What's on your bedside table?

MULIARCHYK: My Bible is a book called [The Constant Choice](#), about making good versus evil decisions in your life, by Peter Georgescu. As a teenager in 1950s, he escaped hard labor camps in Romania, to eventually become one of the greatest businessmen in America. A must-read for anyone in our business.

*FOR MORE ON ELLE MULIARCHYK AND "ESCAPES FROM PARADISE," PLEASE VISIT THE PROJECT'S [WEBSITE](#).*