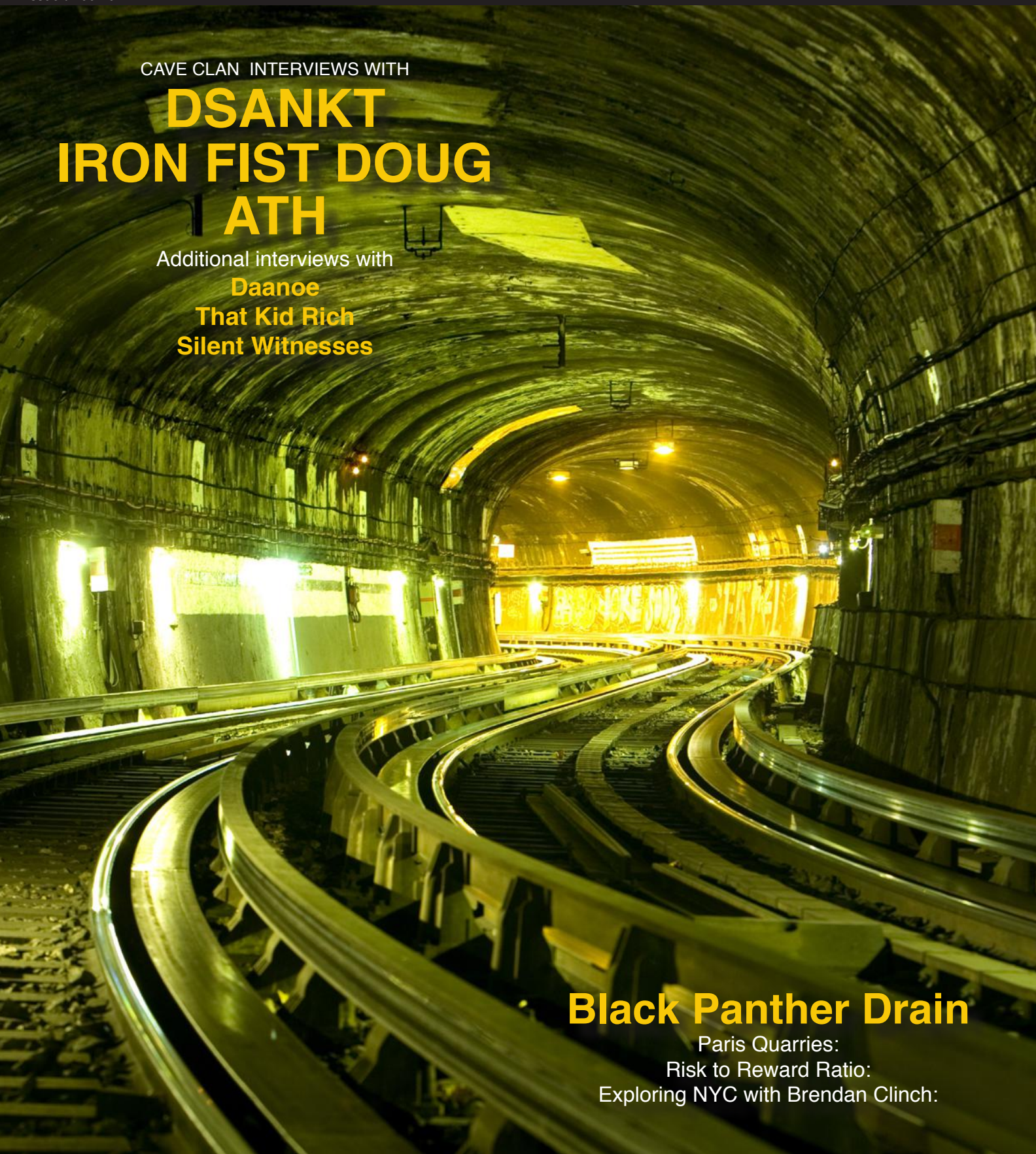
UE MAGAZINE
Issue three 2012

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CAVE CLAN INTERVIEWS WITH

DSANKT
IRON FIST DOUG ATH

Additional interviews with
Daanoe
That Kid Rich
Silent Witnesses

Black Panther Drain

Paris Quarries:
Risk to Reward Ratio:
Exploring NYC with Brendan Clinch:

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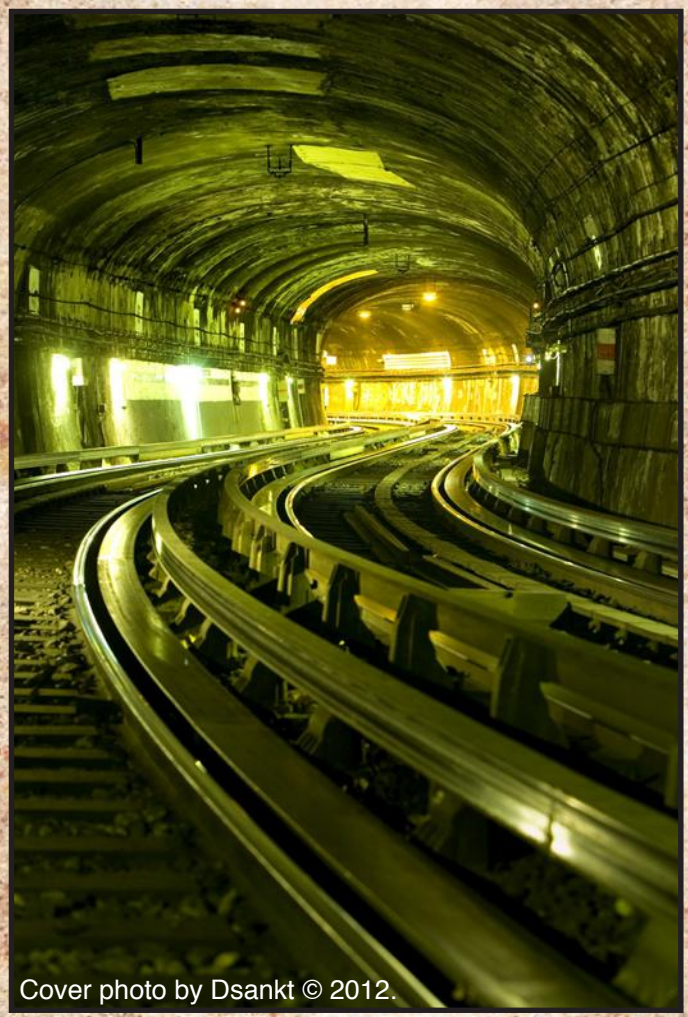
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Cover photo by Dsankt © 2012.

Thank you for checking out the 3rd issue of Urban Exploration Magazine! And a big thank you to everyone that contributed to help bring this issue alive. We are now on the look out for quality content for issue #4, so register for free to uemag.com and submit your explores for print consideration today. Thank you for your support.

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The sun's rays warm my skin, not a cloud anywhere to be seen in the sky as I walk down the busy jogging trail. My knee-high rubber boots get a strange leer from a few passing joggers. I arrive to the entrance of the drain, bust out my camera and tripod and pretend to start shooting the wildlife and surrounding nature. Once no one is looking, I make a break into the drain. The rocks are covered with seaweed and it makes for a very slippery dash in. Once in, I set up my headlamp and grab my torch. I fire off a few test shots to get my camera settings configured. In the back of my mind, I'm thinking, (Did anyone see me enter, if so are they calling the police right now, ah fuck it, time to shoot.)
The crashing sound of rushing water becomes deafening the deeper I descend. I turn a few corners and soon the entrance light is all but gone. For a brief second I turn off my headlamp and torch. Pitch black, so dark that I can't see my hand two inches in front of my face. I know I am the only one down here, and there's no such thing as C.H.U.D but I can't help from getting the creeps a bit while standing in the pitch black void.

I keep an eye on my timer I set once I entered. I need to make sure I have plenty of time to exit before high tide rolls in. I set up in several different locations taking over 90 long exposures. I mess around with a bit of light painting as well as some self portraits. Overall I explore for around two hours, at which that time, I begin making my way out. I notice the once flowing stream exiting the drain is now back washing in. Meaning the ocean tide is rising. Within 3 hours this tunnel will be 100% submerged under the sea water. It amazes me how fast this environment can become deadly.

I stop some 50 feet from the exit to take a few last shots. I am focused on my camera, when all of the sudden I hear a voice. It startles the shit out of me and I look up quickly. To my surprise, out pops a kid's head from the exit point. The kid is no more than 7 or 8 years old and I scare the hell out of him, way more than he did me. He jumps back, screaming bloody murder and makes a break for it. At this point my disbelief turns into straight up laughter. As I climb out of the drain, the kid is standing there with some Mexican guy on a bike. The kid screams out, "I told you there is a guy in there!" I have the biggest grin on my face, thinking of how strange this must be for them. I make small talk to feel the older guy out. Mostly to see if he's the kind of guy who will be calling the police on me. After a bit of chit-chat, I show the kid my photos and he is blown away by them. I also inform him on how dangerous it is in there and tell him to never go in unless with an adult.

I make my way down the jogging trail on my way home, covered in dirt, grime and slime. It's funny to see the hot girls faces that jog on by. Each one has a look of disgust, and for me, this helps set it in stone, that I am doing something that not many non explorers can or will ever understand.

UEmag Founder GERV-

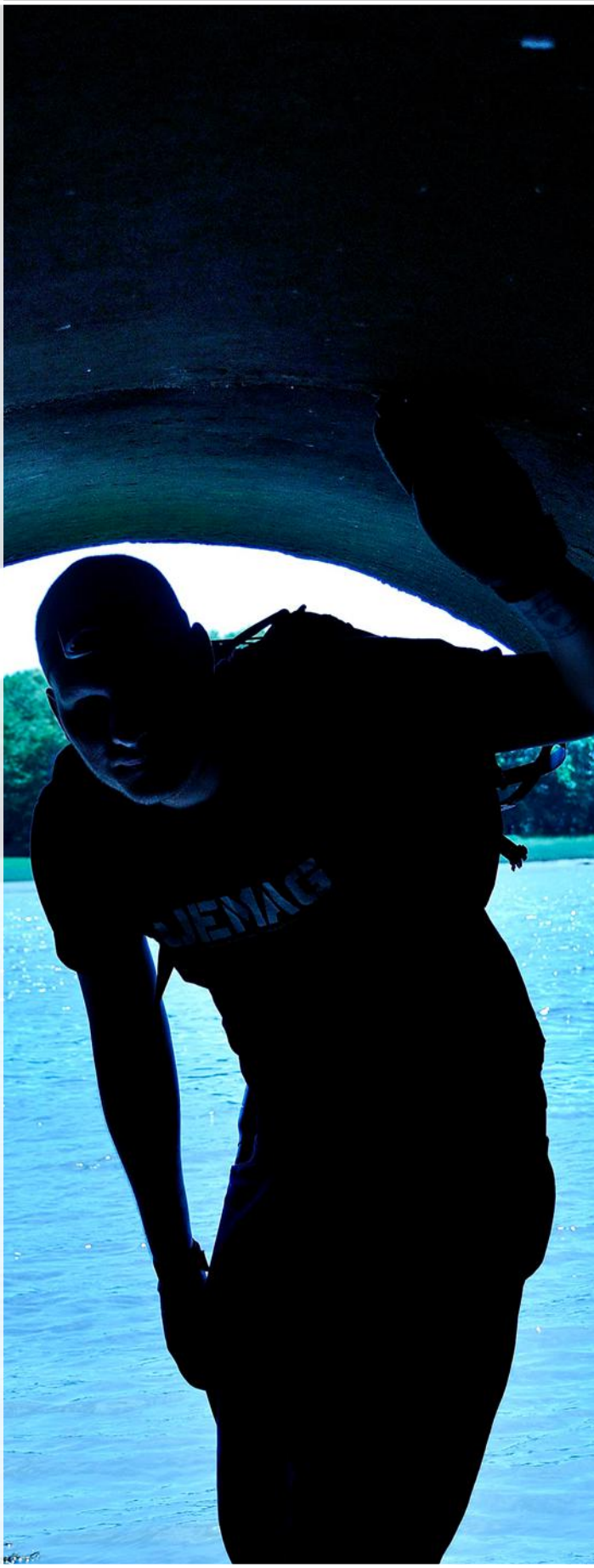
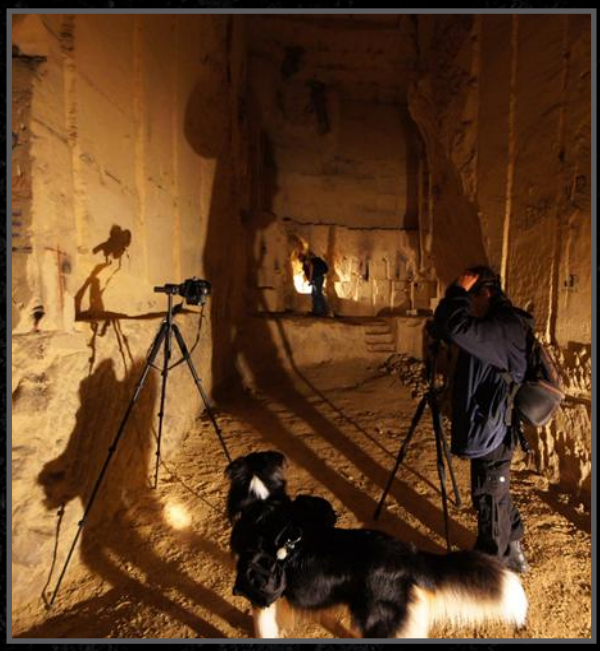


Photo by Gerv © 2012.


Photos by Dsankt © 2012


lego







Exploring with

First let me introduce myself. My real name is Alex Ries and I'm a 35 year old guy from Luxembourg. Above all I'm interested in all sorts of military explorations. It all began approximately 17 years ago with my first Maginot Line explorations. At this time I was equipped only with a small compact camera and I didn't have any idea of how to illuminate long galleries. In 2006 I created my web-site www.darkplaces.org which is intended to be a photo gallery of the whole Maginot Line. I am also interested in forts, mines, underground quarries…briefly everything underground.

I did my first "doggie" explorations with Popeye (the brown one), a Belgian shepherd belonging to my ex-girlfriend. This would have been around 2004. Now I am exploring with my 2 year old Australian shepherd Charly. I equip him with a cheap LED-headlight which I fix around his neck. Depending on where we go I also equip him with a harness so that I can easily lift him if this ends up being necessary. On this harness are often fixed two bags containing a first aid kit (for me AND for Charly), glow sticks, a rescue blanket, a little LED light, and a small amount of toilet paper. Honestly, Charly doesn't like this harness at all.







Charly

Article and photos by Alex Ries © 2012.

While exploring I always keep an eye on Charly. Quarries and dogs are pretty compatible – almost no dangers at all. Mines and bunkers, on the other hand, are much more demanding if you want to explore them securely with your quadrupedal companion. You have to take care of holes, cavities, gaps, and pits or even stairwells without railing or which are dilapidated. I once had to heave Popeye over a gap in a staircase. It is pretty difficult to keep in balance while you have to carry an furry overload of 30 kg. Fortunately Charly is a little bit lighter.

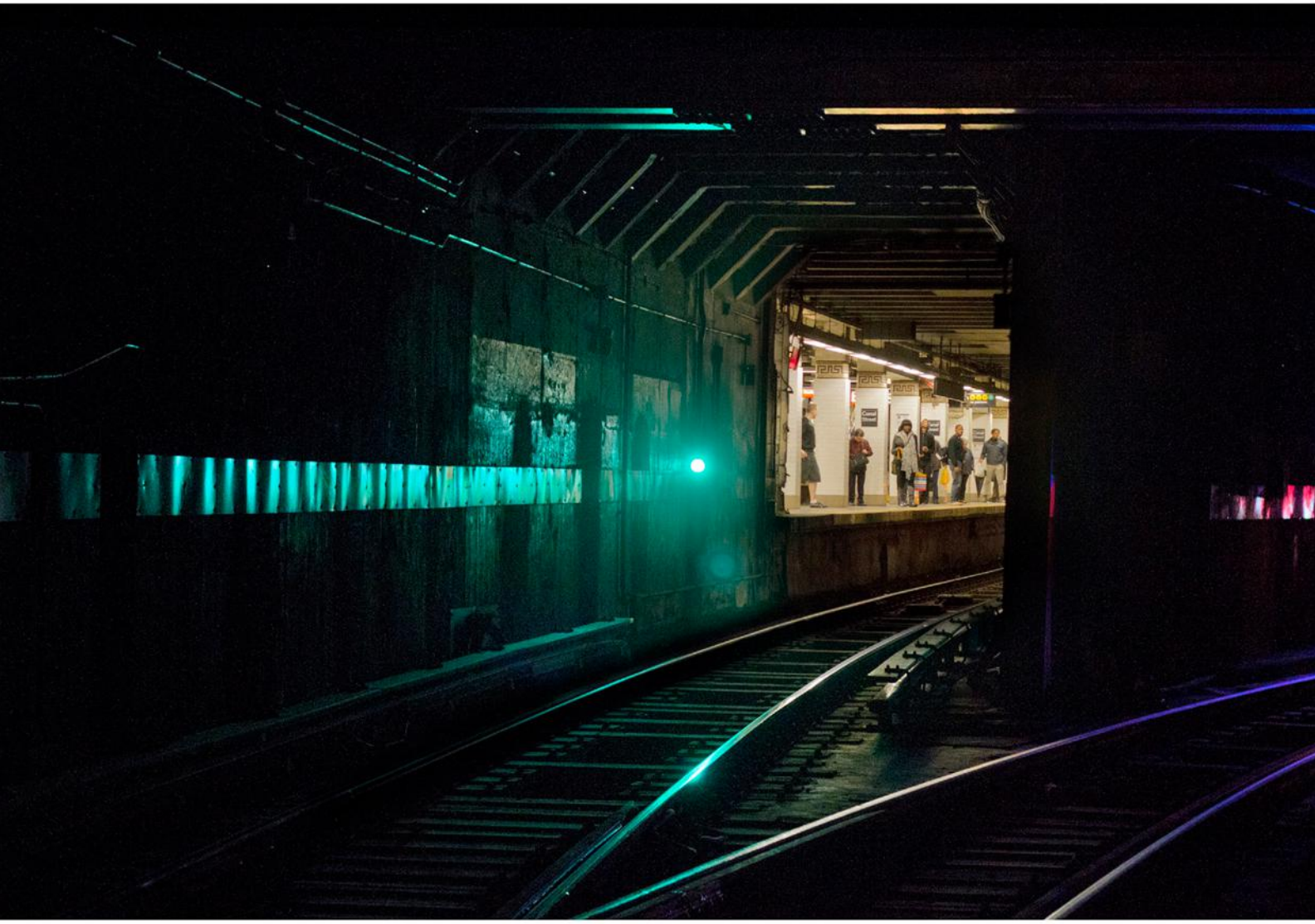
Charly executes essential commands almost perfectly. There are « stop », « wait », « come back », « sit/lay down », « go on », and « stay there/here ». An example for a dilapidated staircase and my main commands can be seen on Youtube HYPERLINK "http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X25z-iyH76U" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X25z-iyH76U . Next step is to equip Charly with a more powerful light and teach him to help me illuminate distant corners. Worth a try…

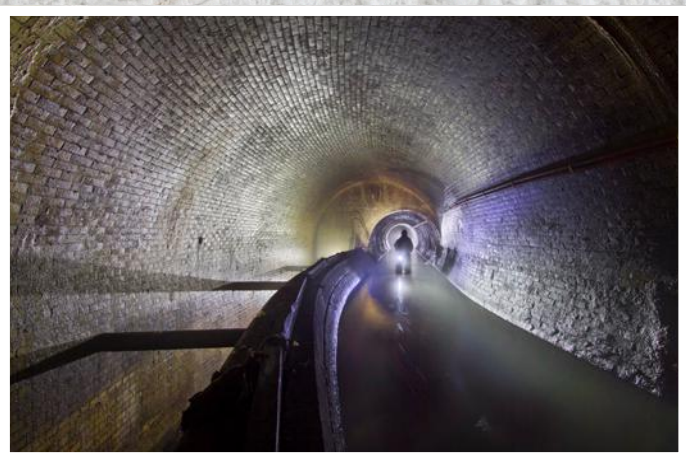
Alex

Exploring the Underground

with LOGAN HICKS

Photos by Logan Hicks © 2012

















DAANOE

Interview with Daanoe, Photos by Daanoe © 2012
Interview by Andre Govia

Q- Welcome to UE Magazine. First, could you help us understand what Urbex does for you and why it's important to you?

A- I still remember my first exploration very well; I was immediately hooked. Initially because of the tension, but I was also deeply impressed by the beauty of decay. Ever since I started it is no longer possible to drive somewhere without scanning the environment to seek out dilapidated houses. I often wonder what has happened there in the past. I love everything about Urbex; finding a beautiful location, the trip to it, trying to enter without being seen, and of course creating & editing the photos.

Q- Where in the world would you like to explore next and why?

A- I would like to explore in as many different countries as possible. Each country has its own beauty. The five photos that I have selected are all from another country. My favorite country so far is Italy, but I also have explored in Australia. Detroit is currently at the top of my wish list.

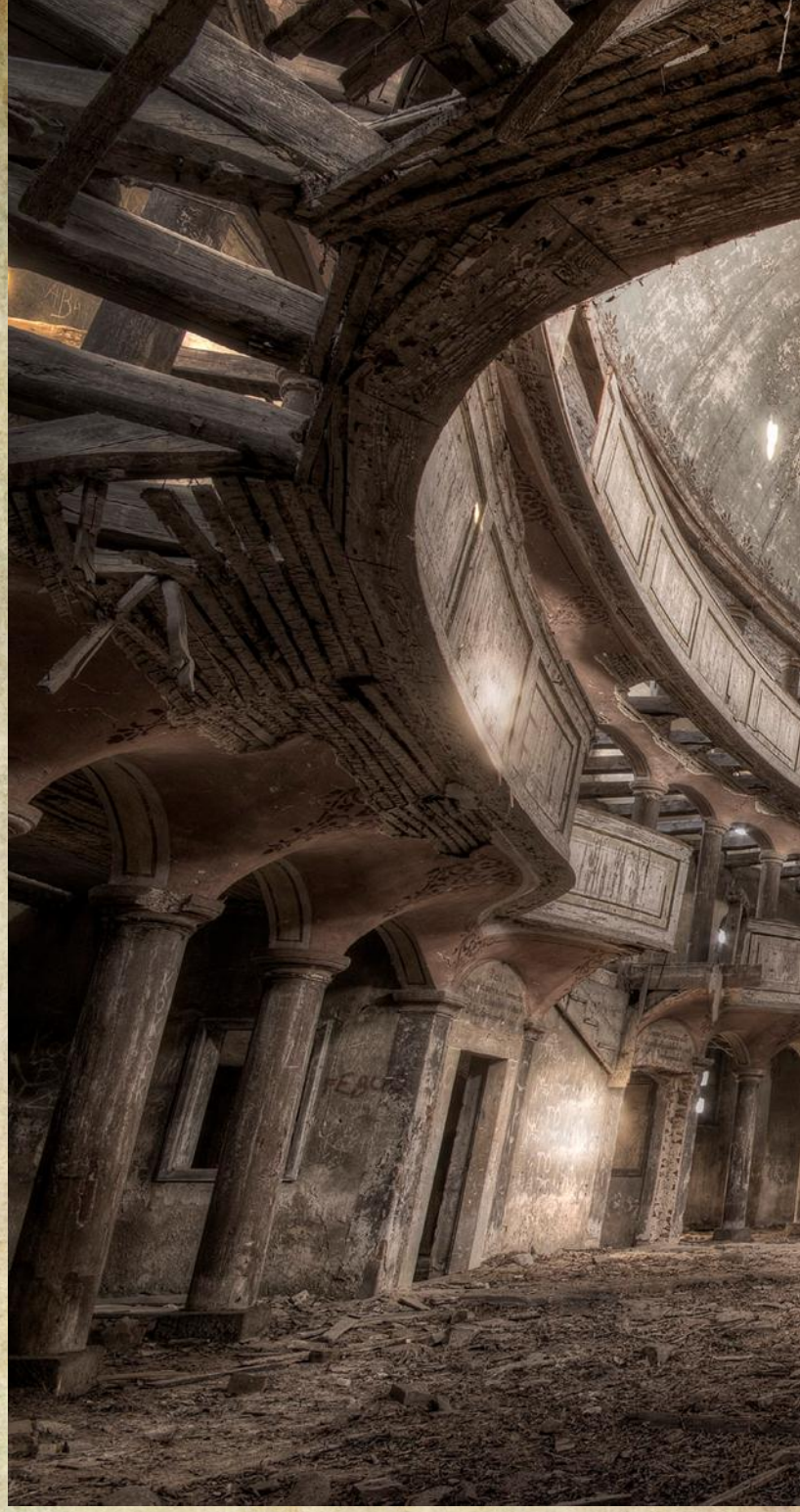
Q- What Urbex essentials are in the bag? Also, what you would never leave home without?

A- Aside from my camera, lenses, and tripod I always bring; a remote control, flashlight, lots of memory cards, a Leatherman multi-tool, gloves, and spare batteries. Recently I started bringing along a telescopic ladder. Of course I always take my phone, food, and drinks.

Q- Have you ever been caught and if so what was the outcome and what advice would you give to other explorers that get caught?

A- Once we explored a house in Belgium and suddenly the police raided with drawn guns! Two vans transported us to the local police station where we spent a few hours. At the beginning, the mood was aggressive and they asked us why we were taking pictures of the contents of other people's property, but a few hours later the cop and I were looking at my pictures on the internet. "Wow, that's cool!" he called out often. There was an official report, but I have never heard from them again. My advice if you get caught is not to run and to stay calm. Once they know what you do and why you do it, you may only get a warning.

Q- Any tips about getting the best from your photos in low light?



A- At slow shutter speeds I often use a flashlight to create accents.

Q- Finally, do you see a future in the art of abandoned photography for newcomers?

A- Sure! There are always new places to be discovered. Urbex is timeless...Thanks for reading my story! You can follow me on my website: www.daanoe.nl









Photo by Rusty © 2012



Black Panther Drain

Write up by Olivia Wolfe.
Interview with and Photos by Rusty © 2012.

Research yields some level of backstory behind a location and can be obtained through several avenues such as architectural information, firsthand accounts or historical insight. It's what draws us in for an explore and what brings these places to life. But sometimes we uncover a place with an ominous past, one more real than any Urban Legand has to offer, in which tragedy is the outcome and lives have been forever changed. So is the story behind this drainage system which sits below a park in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire in England. In the darkness below an unsuspecting town is where Donald Neilson, better known as The Black Panther, brought his life of crime to a new level. After a decade of eluding police he grew dissatisfied with the earnings of his crimes in robbery and turned to kidnapping in hopes of a much bigger payoff in ransom.

Late in the evening of January 14th, 1975 Neilson kidnapped a 17 year old girl from her bedrooom as her family slept peacefully in the next rooms. Blindfolded and gagged, the heiress of a wealthy bussinessman was thrown in the trunk of his car and taken underground into the depths of this abyss as her fate hung in the balance of a poorly written ransom note which had been left on her bed. Over the course of the next week her brother tried numerous times to connect with Neilson but each attempt failed due to miscommunication through confusing clues which led him to dead ends. The police were called in but at this point in time, kidnapping was a rare occurance which proved to be a hinderance to the police investigation with inadequate plans and an unorganized course of action. These two misfortunes subsequently led to the death and the eventual finding of the teen weeks later as she hung in the darkness from a small ledge with a wire noose around her neck.

Neilson, whether spooked by the manhunt or fed up with the games, had left her alone in the blackened pit, unable to be seen or heard from those trying desperatley to save her. Although he evaded capture for close to a year, he was eventually taken into custody during a fluke meeting with police. At the time of the incident, the two officers had no idea who they had come face to face with when they stopped him for looking suspicious as he was walking on a dim lit road late one night. He surprised the offices with a sawed off shotgun and forced one into the backseat and held the other at gunpoint, demanding they take him somewhere. Deciding they would not allow him to get away with it, the officers worked together to catch him off guard, securing the gun and stopping the car. Neilson was handcuffed and held until backup arrived.

His reign of terror had finally come to an end and in 1976, his time in court brought a guilty charge in which

he recieved five life sentences for the deaths of not only the girl but three others which occured during the robberies he had carried out over the years. In 2008 he requested his life term be lessened but was informed that the severity of his crimes combined with the chosen vicinity and nature of the girl's death demonstrated what must have been a terrifying and horrendous experience that displayed just cause for the sentence term to remain as it was. With his request denied he remained in prison until his death in 2011 from beathing complications relating to a diagnosis of Motor Neurone Disease after serving 35 years behind bars. Though he may be gone, the malicious tale of injustice upon such a young and beautiful life lurks beneath the surface, away from the light of the world and those unaware of what memories consume the depths below their feet.

Rusty Interview

Though he started out in abandoned buildings and factories, Rusty broadened his horizons through the years to include rooftops and underground locations. Through his ventures, his research and curiosity brought him to the entrance of a place held captive to a sinister past and I was granted the opportunity to spend some time with him as he told of his explore and the story behind it.

UEmag: Thank you for joining us on such an intruiging subject.

Rusty: Thanks for having me, the pleasure is mine.

UEmag: I understand you had this place on your list of explores for three years before you went. What drew you to it?

Rusty: There was another location not too far away from this drain and every time I searched online I found another story about this famous murder. I had to check it out.

UEmag: When you got there did you find access to the drain an easy or difficult task?

Rusty: The drain sits in a very public place so we chose to go at night so we wouldn't be spotted entering or leaving. Entry was only a slight challenge but not one we couldn't handle.

UEmag: What was it like spending time in the darkness? To be wandering in the very place that these events transpired?

Rusty: Entering the drain felt very claustrophobic. To know I was walking in the footsteps of such a twisted individual was a feeling that's hard to explain. Strange noises filled the drain which added a creepy feel to our plans. My good friend, Glenn went with me on this trip and we had arranged to take a shot down there with him dressed in clothes resembling what The Black Panther wore. Standing in the pitch black with only a torch for light was one thing but seeing my mate dressed like that was a disturbing experience.





UEmag: You mentioned that through your research you've come upon conflicting reports concerning the girl's death. What did you find?

Rusty: Reports claim that while she was discovered extremely under weight with her stomach completely empty she had not died of starvation and a broken neck, but rather from a heart attack. There's no way a healthy teenager died of a heart attack. I believe she died from starving because the police messed up the investigation and never found her for seven weeks, covering up that fact up by saying Neilson had gone back after he gave up on the plan for ransom and pushed her off the ledge to her death.

UEmag: Seven weeks is a rather long time to go by before she was found. Why do you think it took so long for them to get to her?

Rusty: There were a lot of mistakes made in the attempts at dropping the ransom money, which resulted in Neilson backing out. As police searched the park they missed some obvious clues which would have led them to her, including a piece of Dyno tape saying "Drop the money in the drain" and a torch found against a portion of bars along the drain that had clearly been tampered with.

UEmag: This crime took place 36 years ago, do you think that had anything to do with so many things going wrong both in the attempts at collecting the ransom and through the police investigations?

Rusty: Neilson was used to robberies up until this point so taking the girl was not something he was used to doing and no one really knew how to handle the situation when it occured. It's not like it is today. At the time that this happened, kidnapping was a rare circumstance, leaving the police uneducated and ill equipped in the knowledge of how to carry out a quick and responsive investigation. All of these factors worked against the girl and time finally ran out.

UEmag: After everything you've learned and uncovered along with spending time underground, do you ever plan on returning to this particular location?

Rusty: I pretty much covered the whole place while I was there, but I've been back once before to show a friend who was really interested in the place. The darkness and the history behind it does not bother me so yeah, I'd go back again.

UE mag: It goes without saying that the events that transpired beneath the gound were horrific and ended in tragedy. Lives were forever changed because of the choices of one man. Thank you for sharing both your experience and your spin on the history of a most unique location.



THAT KID RICH

Photos by That Kid Rich © 2012
Interview by Gerv

UEmag- Just to start off, why don't you tell me a bit about yourself in general and how you got into exploring?

Rich- Hey what's up? First off, I'd like to say thanks for the opportunity for this interview with UEmag. I'm That Kid Rich from NYC and I've been exploring for about 5 years now. I have always had an obsession with wandering and exploring abandoned and forgotten places since my much younger years, but it wasn't until about 2007 that I purchased a DSLR and started documenting my explores and the rest is history.

UEmag- What inspired you to make the jump into documenting your urban surrounding with photography?

Rich- Well I was inspired by many different photographers and what they were doing with documenting these locations, along with their point of views and compositions, these brought me into a whole new realm of exploring. It's no longer about just trespassing and exploring a site, it's about what it once was and the history behind the location. There's nothing like capturing the interiors and exteriors of a location that sooner or later will be gone forever!

UEmag- Currently, what kind of camera, lenses and gear do you use on a regular basis?

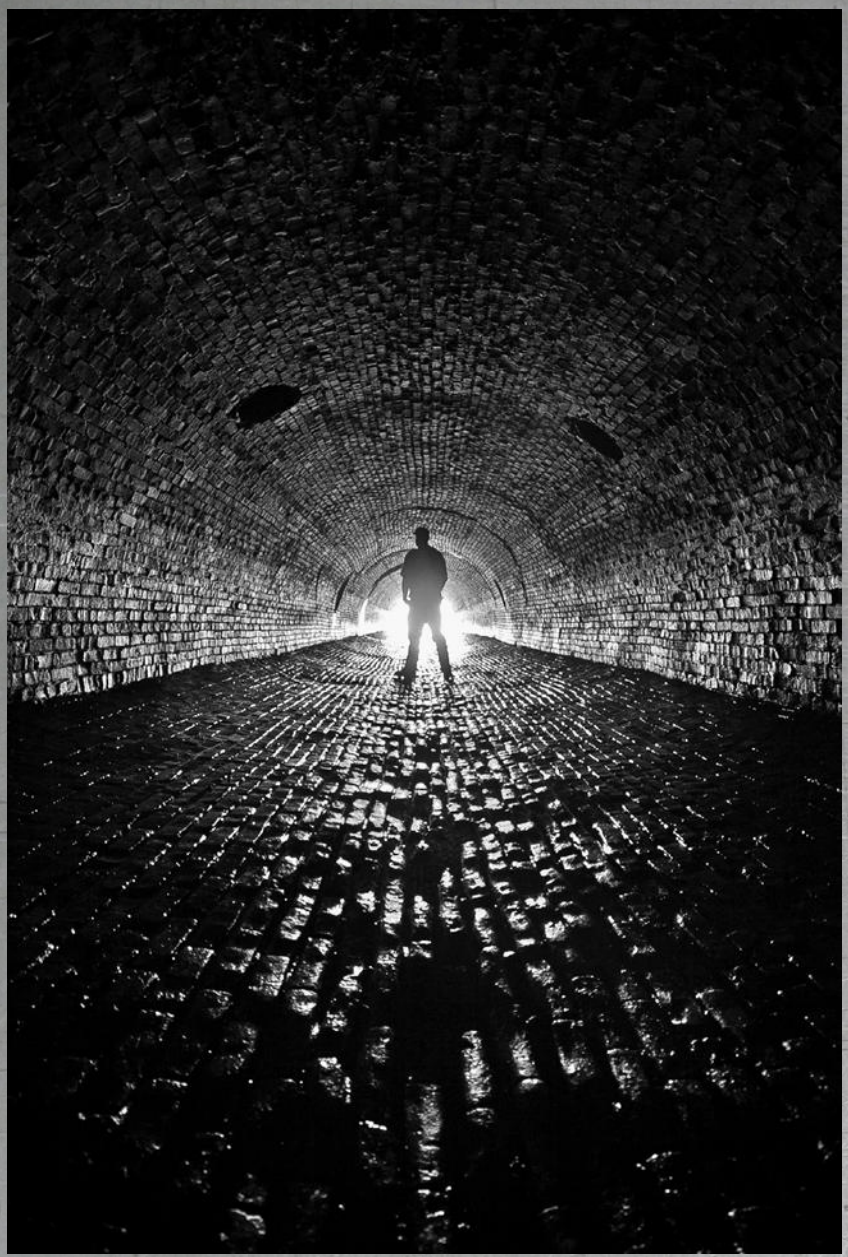
Rich- Currently I'm shooting with a Canon 50D and the several lenses I use on the regular include a Sigma 10-20 f5.6, Canon 50mm f1.4, Rokinon 8mm, Canon 28-135 and an Induro tripod.

UEmag- You've explored the greater NYC area quite a bit, what explore of yours sticks out in your mind as outstanding?

Rich- Honestly dawg, all explores are epic to me whether it is New York or across the pond as for the fact that they are all different and bring different things to make the particular explore outstanding. I roll with a top notch crew and that makes every explore one to throw into the books as epic. The greater NY area is dope and has much to offer as far as UE goes, but as for me I can't pick anything particular as outstanding because it all is!

UEmag- Do you find it easier to explore in the city or the outer boroughs - suburbs of the NYC area?

Rich- Actually that is a good question, it all depends on how you go about your city locations and if you have the proper intel and timing. Seems like all prime locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn are hit or miss as if you get









bagged, the whole terrorist thing comes into play depending on locations, if ya know what I mean – bridges, tunnels, etc. As far as the outer boroughs, it's pretty much all good - just gotta know what you're doing and how you go about it. Exploring in NY does have its stress factor as the other boroughs are a bit more relaxing depending on locations.

UEmag- I understand you have done some traveling overseas. Who are some of the guys you have met along your travels and what type of locations did you get into over there?

Rich- Yeah I flew overseas last year to meet up with the Mega Crew, and that crew consisted of epic explorers Andre Govia, il-Padrino, Rusty & Photoportee. It was a massive mission: three countries, seven days and many locations. It all started as soon as I landed in London and within a few hours we were exploring the legendary West Park Asylum in Epsom which was in the process of being demoed, but there was still plenty left to explore. WP was one of those places I needed to scratch off my list as it was just one of those epic locations! Andre, Rusty & myself hit up several other locations in England before heading over to Germany to link up with Padrino and Photoportee for the madness. We hit up many spots in Germany including Beelitz, Dessau Krematorium and some other locations and then we headed to Poland on the long stretch of the Autobahn for more pure epicness! Lack of sleep and crazy exploring lead to us naming this tour "The Excess Baggage tour" due to the bags under our eyes. Epic times, epic crew.

UEmag- Any final words or shout-outs?

Rich- Big shouts to my boys Urbandecay, Earthmagnified & Chriscreek. To all other fellow explorers: keep doing what you do and keep the killer work coming. Hope to meet a lot of you in the future for some missions. This is what we do, and it's what brings us together!



THE TRIBE

The Tribe, Article and photos by
Bradley L. Garrett © 2012.

Adventure is not outside… it is within.
-George Eliot

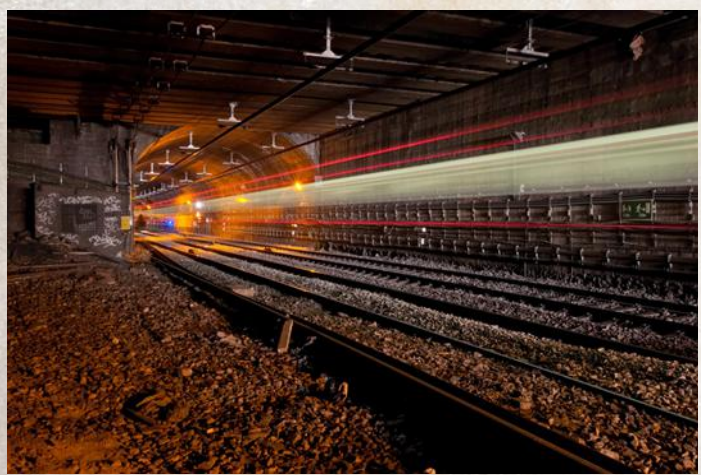
Last February, I completed the first PhD in history on urban exploration. The work (if I dare call it that) was four years in the making and throughout that time I met hundreds of explorers and snuck into countless locations across ten countries. It was an awakening for me. Since graduating, I haven't stopped exploring. I couldn't if I wanted to. The reason is simple. I think becoming an urban explorer is not so much a process of learning something new as it is a process of rediscovering something about yourself. In effect, I think we were all members of this tribe before we knew it existed. You remember the feeling the first time you saw an explorer's photo, picked up Access All Areas, or logged into a forum and realized you weren't alone in your bizarre obsession for snooping around.

Most articles thus far in UE Magazine have been stories of particular explorations or descriptions of locations. I love that stuff, but that's not what I'm going to do here. In this piece, I want to put forward some thoughts about the nature of our growing global explorer clan and, hopefully, invoke a little solidarity between us wherever we may be in the world in the name of pure undiluted adventure. I think that objective fits well within these pages from what I've seen so far as the first two issues have had a pretty wide cross-section.

Although urban explorers have been around as long as cities, it's clear from the way we share, connect, and communicate today that we are now a global community (I suppose we have been since the launch of the UER in 2002). However, while we may be connected over oceans and landmasses, we essentially still operate in small groups – this is the way exploration always has been. This is partly to do with the fact that small crews explore more efficiently and have less chance of getting caught, partly because exploration is a distinctly local process, partly due to (personal and state) politics and partly to do with the fact that we all have slightly different interests in terms of the places want to get into. For the record, I could spend the rest of my life doing live metro and skyscrapers and forget the rest. However, wherever we live, and whatever language we speak, whatever we might do at our day job, when someone throws up a sexy black and white from a live control room, a 20-second exposure in a metro tunnel with taillights streaming through it, a picture from inside a crane cab, a cheeky disposable snap of someone crawling out of a manhole, or a juicy print of a massive smoky-brick walled derelict power station shot on Velvia in the mid-afternoon sun, we all know that the score is…Too right.

However unsociable we might appear online, we can always tap the UE collective for new information or to meet new people, reform into new groups for particular goals; we are all always connected. In my thesis, I wrote





that the way we organize as a leaderless, decentralized and essentially anarchic group of both cooperating and competing bands is mirrored in hacker communities. The beauty of that asymmetry is that the form of who we are can never be discerned from a part. In other words, we are a community but we all have our own reasons for doing what we do. No single explorer can represent the aspirations of the global community and glancing at the community from afar tells you little about what exploration is in practice. It is a beautifully byzantine form of collective knowledge-building, where our individual and group desires feed into a solid, thriving, thrashing experience cache like a big communal treasure box we all have keys to. When locations or collaborations no longer suit our purposes or feed our desires, we open the box, rearm, regroup and reform for a new quest. Yet collectively, our various quests are rewriting the history of the urban environment.

As alluded above, the apparent discords between us sometimes come down to the division between exploration and infiltration crews, love for decay, an addiction to the adrenaline rush of the chase, willingness to take bigger risks or to spend more time pursuing virgin locations. Sometimes it's (stupidly I might add) simply differences in photographic techniques that divide us. Other times it's geography. More often than not, as Mr. Monster wrote in the last issue, it's our own petty internal politics that fracture us as a cohesive whole. I hope this has begun to change. Increasingly our parties are becoming large international gatherings: the annual International Drain Meet (IDM) that started in the UK and is now moving to continental Europe, the Clannies in Oz, or Mouser Week in MSP are great examples. These gatherings are always sick, relatively drama free and attract explorers from further afield each year. It's clear that when we finally divest ourselves from internet flame wars about access details and meet up in person to throw a rager in a derelict building or get smashed in a dingy sewer somewhere, the dividing lines between our "crews" and motives slip away quickly and reveal us for what we truly are: a global diverse tribe of modern adventurers who are collectively unstoppable. I challenge you to consider the importance of that statement.

As a case in point: last February, 70 or 80 explorers from all over the world attended the largest IDM in history in



the Antwerp Ruien, a drain seemingly built for masses. A few of us from London, primarily interested in infrastructural infiltration, went for a bit of pre-party mischief. By the time we showed up we had run countless miles of metro track, dodged more than one train after smoking spliffs and had been squirted by breast milk at an Amsterdam sex show right before sneaking into a new line being excavated under Central Station and crawling up to the dirt-churning tunnel boring machine at 3am. I had also ripped a surprisingly large chunk of skin off my shin falling in a brick-lined hole somewhere along the way and my shoe was full of crusty blood. We showed up to IDM battle-worn, dirty, wounded, stinking and unequivocally alive, and that my friends, as you know, is the only ticket you need to this party. We were welcomed home from our adventures, as always, by the world's finest, who relayed their own tales of urban exploration on the way to the gathering. The party commenced. It was by all standards the best in recent years thanks to the brilliant organizational skills of Dsankt, Ben, Joachim and Wouter. Next year's IDM will be hosted by the Brescia Under-



ground in Italy and knowing the hosts, it promises to be another party of epic proportions. I hope to see you there fellow nomads.

So here's the clutch: wherever we may live in the world, society has conditioned us to think that taking risks is foolish, that we should be embarrassed to try something we're not skilled at, that failure is not an option. This is fucking nonsense; just as trying to rigidly define exploration is nonsense. We all choose the way we interact with the world, in the same way we choose our crew; it's what makes our community different than work colleagues or families. We've all been adopted into this tribe of global explorers and what we have discovered together is more than a collection of "lost" places in the world; we have found what modern society has tried to bury, something that many of us buried within ourselves: a taste for adventure that has no price tag. In our tribe, we try risky things, we overextend our imaginations, we venture out to attempt the impossible and often we are pushed back, rebuffed. We try again. We sneak, we cry, we love, we fight, we drink, we party, we camp out, we break things, we learn, we dig, we build, we reveal, we make art; we experience what very few people in history ever will. In short, we live the lives we want to live, the lives people dream about as they sit behind their computers at work, scared that if they pee one more time today their boss will think they're slacking and fire them. Fuck that world! Urban exploration is more than events and places, it's a mindset. Widening our optics drives home a potential for urban exploration to go beyond a selfish pursuit for the self-obsessed addicted to ruin porn and masked-up tunnel shots to become a cognitive trigger that rewires us for creative worldly engagement all over again. Exploration is always a revolutionary activity because we are taking knowledge not offered. Urban exploration is knowledge theft; we are the Wikileaks of closed space.

As a community at the vanguard of spatial freedom, we have an obligation to continue to sap and smash the unnecessary social conditioning that has been drilled into us and to embrace our role in society as modern superheroes saving humanity from the insidious boredom of consumer capitalism. It's vital we continue to embrace mistakes, failure and desire, and to band together for our





common goal of revealing the parts of the world (and ourselves) hidden from view. We must, at all costs, continue to get drunk and pass out in sewers and abseil into things unnecessarily. I encourage you to re-embrace your carnal lust for discovery at this very moment, to continue to rediscover the imaginations and freedoms of childhood that were squeezed out of us by jaded teachers promoting corporate nationalism and "book learning"; I exhort you to go repair a derelict train and ride that fucker into the sunset with a howl. If the only route to the past is through thinking than the only route to the present is being. We must take full advantage of every minute because this is all we've got. A hundred years from now, we will all be dead and I assure you that on your way out, you're not going to regret the risks you take now.

Given that I have been a researcher studying urban exploration, I have always had to temper my language so as not to reveal my biases. Since I am amongst friends here in a publication essentially built for internal distribution, let me (continue to) say what I've always wanted to: the community that we have built together, and the collective achievements we have made together could define an age if we keep this up, in the same way graffiti and skateboarding defined the 1990s. As a global community, we have exposed more of the hidden urban world than wilderness explorers mapped out in the entirety of the 20th century. It is a grand accomplishment that is of course also a reflection of the way in which we collectively operate as a tribe, sharing information and divesting authority into the hands of everyone who wishes to step up the plate to begin unraveling the world around them. My final challenge to you is simple: go beyond urban exploration as a hobby and begin reshaping the world in our image, full of vivacious free space where "do not enter" signs become laughable.

There are no rules to this game except those we define within ourselves and amongst our friends. There is no wrong way to access or explore a location or to take a photograph. There are no off-limits spaces. Everything is possible. Despite the rifts that exist, and will continue to emerge, if we carry on growing as a community, one thing will never change that will drive us together again and again – the fundamental element of urban exploration: a desire for new adventures and a curiosity to reveal and experience the world around us in ways that feed directly into to the heart. No security measures, community politics, media coverage, or legislation will ever change that. If we remember this, we will always be part of this tribe because adventure is not outside…it is within. Explore everything.



Silent Witnesses

Interview with & Photos by Silent Witnesses © 2012
Interview by Andre Govia

Q1) What first got you into Urbex and how has this changed the way you take photos?

I love to take pictures while traveling; looking for the most beautiful and fascinating places on Earth. I also wanted some action. I have always been interested in history and that led me to the urban community. When shooting landscapes you're dependent on the weather and waiting for the right moment. In the urban photography style I've found the perfect complement to what I needed. It is more targeted because you have a compact atmosphere that you can put down.

Q2) What came first for you, the photography or the exploring?

I began with photography.

Q3) Tell us about what you pack in your bag for safety before each explore?

In my head I know exactly what I need, but I'm so chaotic that I often forget everything. I've managed to have never forgotten my camera, unfortunately sometimes the tripod ... that is a big problem!! Thank god I've never needed my forgotten first aid set.

Q4) What explorers inspire you at the moment?

People who are producing original Urbex photography with especially artistic style inspire me. There are also my friends and crew who I have contact with and go on missions. You know who...

Q5) What is your favorite explore to date?









A day I will never forget, myself and two friends went on an explore to a castle. If we could capture the decor we knew would be beautiful. When we arrived at the castle completely full of adrenaline and enthusiasm, we found a small window and inside we went. Another member of the crew found one of the neighbors and entered into a conversation; the man told a story of a woman that had the front door key and also managed the property. “That’s the easy option”, I was thinking when he started telling his story, suddenly the alarm inside the building went off. I helped the crew out the window again, and we sprinted away. The neighbors I had been talking with asked if they were my friends. I began to walk slowly away and then the walk became a fast run. We jumped in the car and picked up the last explorer on the other side of the village. He asked “who has my tripod?” Shit! It was still sitting on top of that window and his fingerprints are on it, he had to pick it up because he was already arrested the previous week at La Foret and could be linked again to trespass. We had no option but to return and collect the tripod like the Dukes of Hazzard! Alarms still ringing behind us, we drove like mad out of the village. No photos but a real mission I won’t forget.

Q6) Any advice you would give to new explorers?

Do not take it too seriously, before you know you’re addicted. Hahaha I love it! Treat properties with respect and steal nothing. Take photos and enjoy your explore.

Greetz Berrie Leijten (silent witnesses)



Photo by Precious Decay © 2012. Image was captured with Nikon D90 and Sigma 10-20mm, processed to HDR.



Photo by sven h¸ttich aka John_Coffee © 2012. I found this strange scene in an old nursing home and i had to take a Photo. This awesome place is full of wheelchairs and nice architecture. We spent a few hours in this location until we realized that the owner lived in the Neighboring house. We decided to leave before the owner noticed us and called the police.

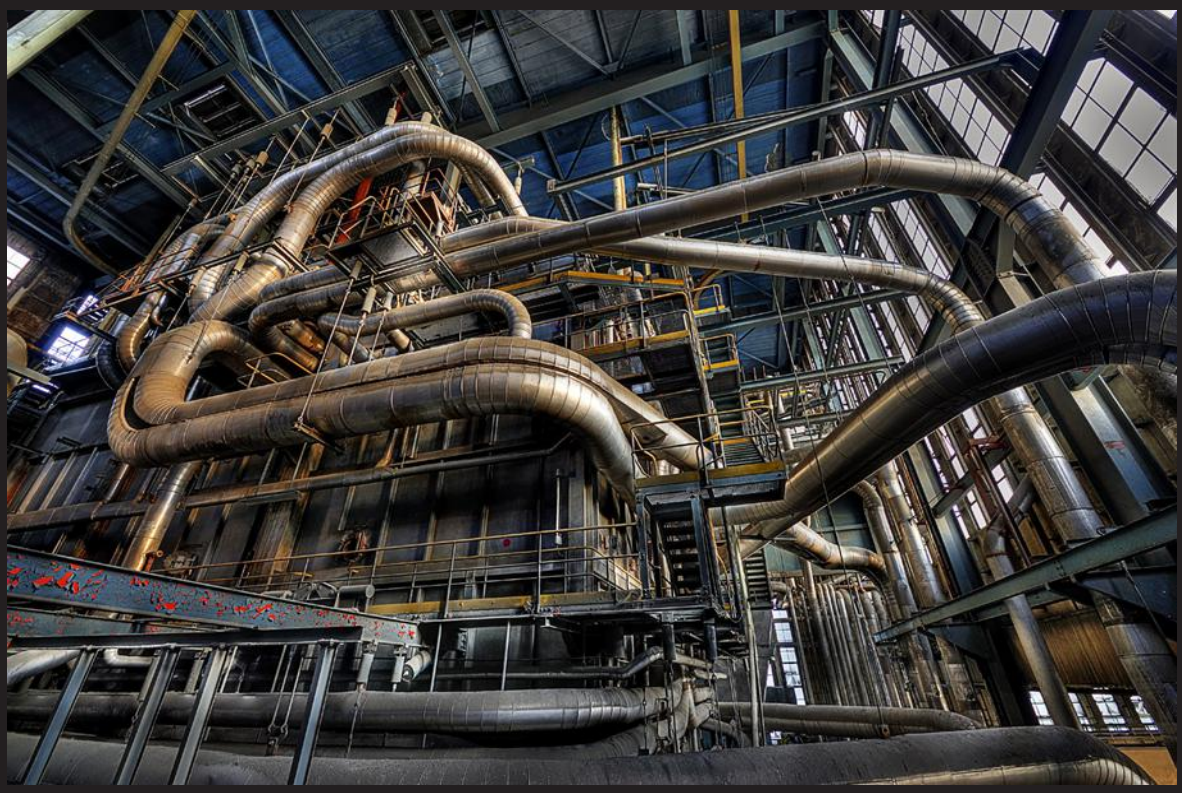


Photo by Oldskool 2012. This shot was taken on the Pro-Hobo European Vacation with a great crew. Keeping true to the tour title we spent the night in here.



Photo by Vadim Mahorov © 2012.



Photo by Richard Pennington © 2012.



Photo by Rodney M Albert © 2012. I Use a Canon Xti and a T3i. I took this photo at about 3:00 In the morning while waiting for the sun to rise one cold winter. Of all Kirkbrides I have visited, this was my favorite place to explore and will miss hiding out in the tunnels waiting for daylight.



Photo by Monique Duncan © 2012. “ As explorers we are also historians preserving pieces of the past. Sadly many American locations have been destroyed by people who think purchasing a can of cheap pressurized paint makes them “artists”. Finding this gem was an amazing surprise and the wheelchair was icing on the cake! Hate to report that since this photo was taken the artwork was ruined by someone who thought it “funny” no doubt to spray paint his eyes red.”

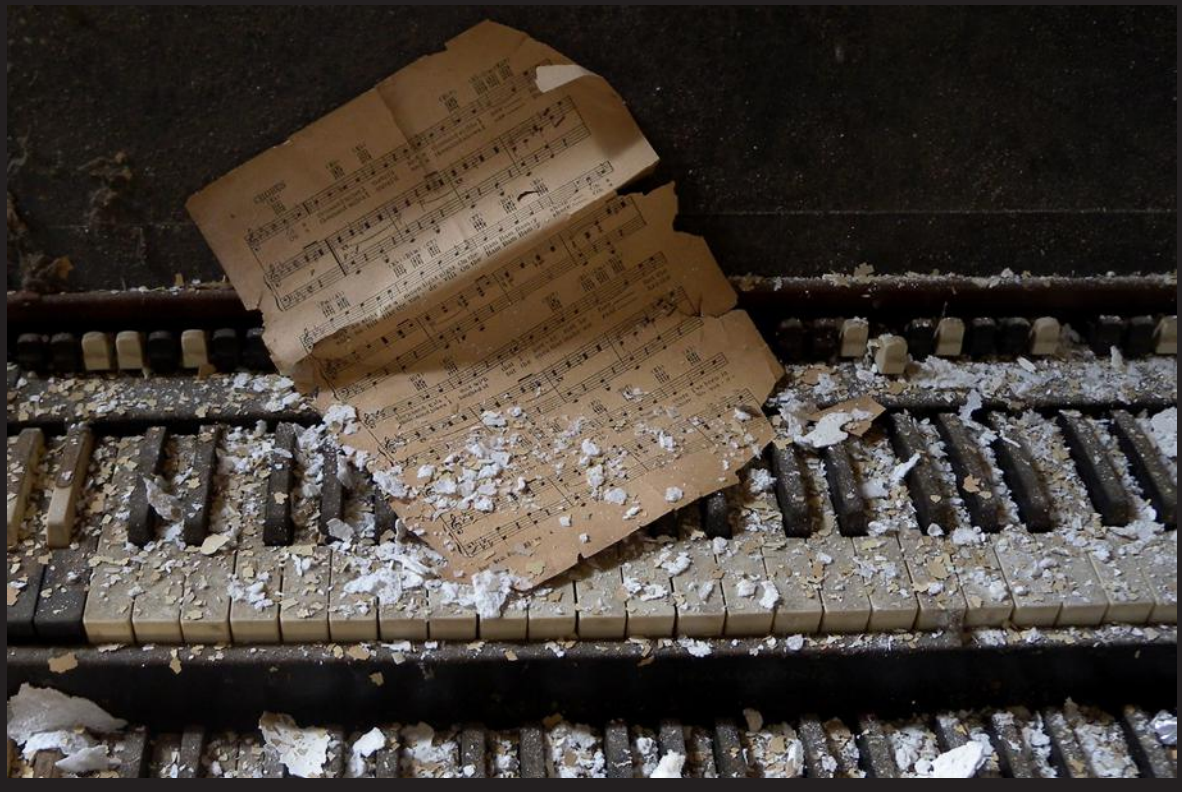


Photo by Peter Arnemann aka Captain Jack and The Stooges. In search of the lost Chord.

EXPLORING NEW YORK CITY



Williamsburg Bridge, Brooklyn tower.



Exploring an underground river.



Rooftop of an abandoned Psychiatric Hospital, Brooklyn.

Photos by Brendan Clinch © 2012. Interview by Gerv.

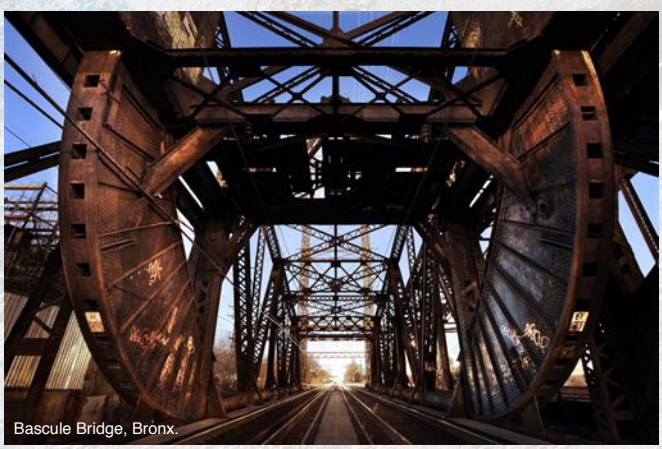
Q1: Tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into exploring?

For starters, I'm a Long Island native, born and raised. Before exploring I was heavy into skating and I dabbled in writing graffiti for a bit. For me exploring started back in early high school, taking trips out to Long Island's abandoned state hospitals. We would go at night and break in out of pure curiosity. I remember the feeling of pure amazement that something this massive can just be sitting here abandoned. Exploring back then consisted of getting high, throwing stuff off the roof, lying in morgue beds and getting freaked out, normal teenager stuff. This went on for some years. It dawned on me one day how shitty it would be if this place disappeared and I never took pictures of it. I started making day trips with the point and shoot, editing shots with vignettes and sepia tone thinking it was the coolest thing in the world. It all just kind of snowballed from there.

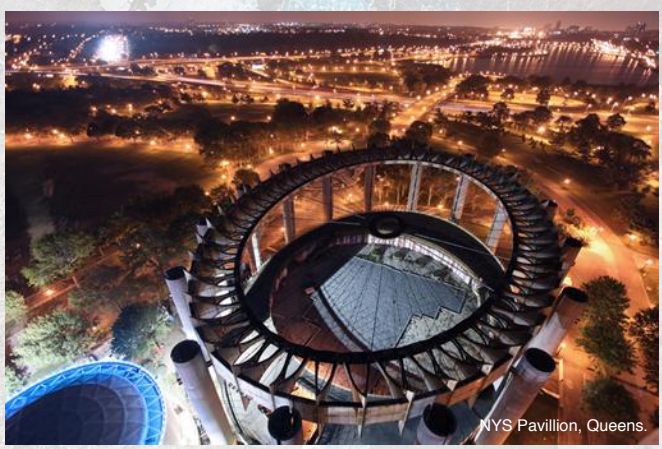
WITH BRENDAN CLINCH



Mass Burial Pit, Hart island.



Bascule Bridge, Bronx.



NYS Pavillion, Queens.

Q2: Do you think your skating and graffiti background played a role in getting you involved in the world of UE? If so, what kind of role did they play?

I think UE would have found its way into my life regardless, but I can definitely draw parallels between the cultures of skating, graffiti, and exploring. In particular, the experiences that come along with writing graffiti I find very similar to exploring. That same rush you get when you get into a place, the one you've had your eye on for the past week. They both involve creativity, planning, and effort, as far as choosing a location, figuring out how you're going to get in, then the satisfaction of actually pulling it off. Whether it's getting your name up, or posting your shot from the previous night's explore, for me it's kind of the same feeling. You did it…you got in. The harder it was to achieve the better. To this day, my favorite documentary out there is Style Wars. It documents the birth of graffiti culture in New York City in the 70's. I'd watch it when I was younger, then fiend to get out there and write. To this day I get that same feeling from watching it. That urge to get out there and mingle with the city's



Arthur Kill, Staten Island.

infrastructure. Highly recommend for anyone who hasn't seen it. Not as many, but skating and UE definitely have their similarities. With street skating in particular, it's that same feeling of freedom. The urban landscape is one big playground, where society's 'legal' boundaries don't exist. Nothing is off limits. You want to skate that marble ledge outside the hotel entrance, but the security guard is standing right next to it. Fuck it, you're going to do it anyway. Why? Because you can.

Q3: Coming from the NYC area, the birth place of graffiti art, how do you feel about graffiti in abandoned structures?

Graff comes in all shapes and sizes, and 99% of it I'm ok with. When someone intentionally ruins a great scene, just for the sake of ruining a shot, those are the people that need to be slapped. For the most part though, it doesn't bother me. Sometimes it can add to a shot. I know a lot of people that get bent out of shape when they see graff in an abandoned building. That's like getting angry because the roof is leaking or the windows are busted out. It's one of the many things that happen when a structure gets left to the elements. Inevitably people are going to get in, and graff artists are going to paint, just like we take pictures.

Q4: Your exploring covers a wide range of NYC's finest locations. What gives you the biggest rush or the greatest feeling of accomplishment?

Climbing bridges definitely ranks high on that list. The chances of getting caught are generally higher, along with the harsher penalties that would come along with getting caught. There's no talking your way out of it, and there's definitely nowhere to run, or hide for that matter. All of that combined creates quite a nerve-wracking, surreal experience when the time comes to actually go for it. The payoff is like no other though, especially in a city like New York. You do your research, pick a good time, then say

fuck it and hope for the best. That's really all you can do. That's a tough question though. Each different type of explore provides its own unique experience, each exciting and rewarding for its own reasons. The tunnels, the islands, they all have that heavy dose of adventure, which we're all so thoroughly addicted to.

Q5: What's the worst place you have explored in NYC and why?

Worst meaning sketchy? There's an abandoned train tunnel under the Bronx that's pretty effed up. It's flooded the whole way through with stagnant water and trash, and pocketed with people sleeping in little alcoves along the way. The limited ground that isn't submerged is covered with thousands of hypodermic needles, literally. Not a place you'd want to explore without proper footgear, or medical insurance for that matter.

Q6: What motivates you to get out there and get your hands dirty and are there any other explorers or photographers that inspire you?

There are many reasons why I love doing this, why I keep coming back. It's the adventure, the freedom of having no boundaries. It's the experience of accessing a space that's off-limits to the general public, in some cases which hasn't been seen in decades. There's also the photography end of it. The chance to document something that might not be around forever, or just capture a view no one ever gets to see. I find it all very intriguing. The city starts to make a lot more sense once you become familiar with its infrastructure. You start to understand the big picture of why things are where they are, how everything works as a whole. I am definitely inspired by other explorers/photographers, without a doubt. Every day people are out there raising the bar, getting into harder and more creative places all around the world. It's fun to be able to be a part of that. I've met tons of great people and amazing photographers over the years, all who inspire me every day. Big shouts to the NYC crew. Those guys from Detroit, and that girl up in Buffalo. The dude with the hot sauce and that other guy from Baltimore. Shouts to the Boston folk, and the Germany and England crews and everyone in between; you know who you are. Much love, keep on rockin'.



Deep under Brooklyn.







Alpine View Sanatorium

Alpine View Sanatorium
Article and photos by Andre Govia © 2012

After a long flight, Rusty Photography, Ivorbean, and I met with Martin Widlund for a mission to one of the hardest to reach abandoned sanatoriums we had ever explored. Ahead of the crew laid a 9 hour drive into the mountains on roads that I can only describe as spaghetti. This was our second attempt at this explore and we were not going to take another defeat. The year before, we had to postpone due to the snow season starting and that would prove too much of a risk for bear attacks and impassable roads. We drove along the snaking roads with breathtaking views all around. I remember thinking, at one point we might be the only people for miles around. After a short break at a shop for lunch we drove another hour to a ferry crossing that took us between the mountains and lasted 15 minutes. After that it was back on the road. Time was moving fast and we did not want to be arriving late due to the roads. We rounded one last curve and then it was time to go off-road and head still further up into the mountains on the narrow cliff top passes. We came to a dead-end with an old gate that we pushed open to get into the grounds of this most amazing abandoned sanatorium. We parked and entered via the shallow woods leading up to the buildings.

This place was far larger than I was expecting; we found an entry point and entered the main building. There were long dark corridors around the basement and an anti-suicide cage around the stairwell that was very old and sinister with deep green decay creeping down the walls. Wheelchairs in some of the rooms and wards were very unusual in style and made for great photo subjects. Then for me was the cream of the explore as we were in an abandoned sanatorium that had its own cable car! The only one in existence that we know about; it lead to the pickup point lower down the mountain and was used to collect supplies and transport patients. It makes one wonder what they were thinking while being taken up for long term treatment in the little cable cars.







“The year before, we had to postpone due to the snow season starting and that would prove too much of a risk for bear attacks and impassable roads. “

Martin was quite helpful and provided some history about the hospital; it was interesting to learn that patients here were fed a high fat diet and the hospital had its own pig barn where they made sure that the pigs had an extra thick fat layer before they were slaughtered. It was quite common for relatives to send food and treats in abundant quantities. This could have been due to the harsh winters with the temperature dropping down to 30 below zero most nights.

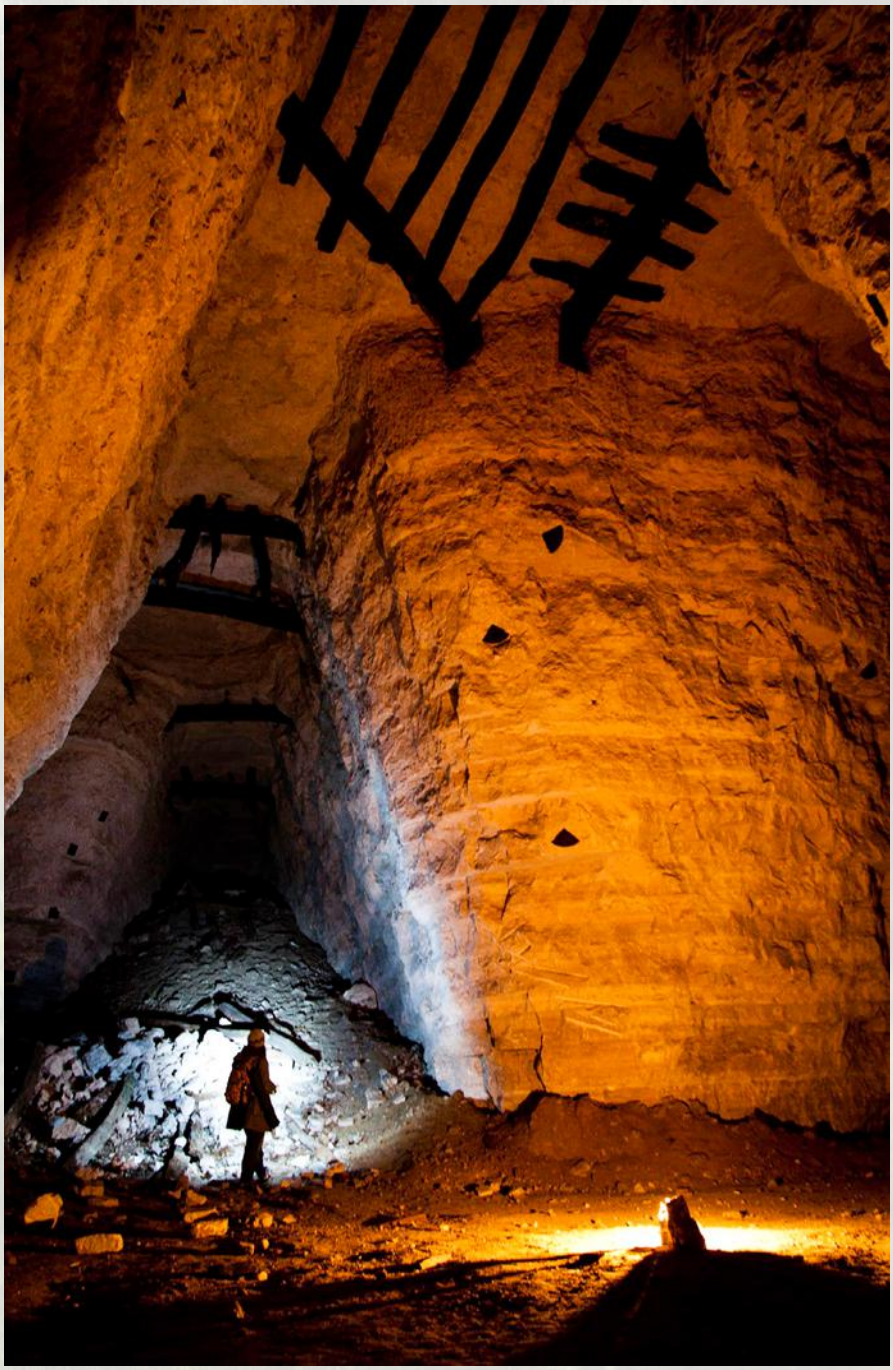
The complex was built in 1902 and a major rebuild was done in 1937 to keep the units up to date. In 1994, the doors were closed and the sanatorium has been abandoned since and left to decay. The reason for building the sanatorium in the mountains in such a hard to reach place was said to be its dry climate, pine forest and the thin mountain air. It was a recipe believed, in the old days, to cure people with tuberculosis. It was located at high elevation and in a climate that, at the time, was considered an “immune zone” against the disease. One of the cures they used here was making sure the patients got enough air daily. This meant that they would lay outside in their beds during both summer and winter, well-packaged in bags of reindeer skins. They were placed under a huge canopy along the entire south wall and this canopy prevented rain and snow from entering their air spaces. Around the hospital there was a large park with roads where patients who were strong enough could exercise. The location turned this place into a rather private and closed society. The sanatorium even had its own post office and this helped the people here establish a completely separate social life away from the rest of society. Definitely not the type of place you would want to end up. Old photos, taken during winter, show up to 8 nurses in one bed just to keep warm. Our trip to this wonderfully harsh sanatorium ended as night was drawing in and that was our signal to get out of the area and find somewhere to stay for the night before the next part of this alpine mission.

PARIS QUARRIES

Article and photos by Cyril © 2012

Most people interested in urban exploration are familiar with the existence of the Catacombs of Paris. Between you and me, there are much better spots. Since the fifteenth century, rocks have been extracted around the French capital leaving hundreds of quarries. For almost ten years, I have been exploring it with some friends. There are the wet and dirty ones, ones covered with white sand, a huge cathedral-sized one, one flooded with clear water, and many others. Today, most of them are abandoned, but some are still used as mushroom beds, breweries, shelters, or used by farmers to store potatoes.

We are also “surface” explorers, but below the ground there is more; you can quickly get lost, run out of light, or become injured. Planning each expedition becomes pretty exciting. We have to find an entry point and get a map of the place (if one exists). Since locations are often quite far from Paris, we leave for the day, with salami, cheese, beer, and good wine (hum, it sounds like a French cliché, doesn’t it?). Of course, like the rest of urban exploration, there are amazing and forgotten places to discover.





The first uncommon quarry we saw was Le Puiselet. The whole quarry is made of very fine white sand. The galleries don’t have classic walls and ceilings, they look more like organic shapes and you can see huge rooms (10m high). It is splendid and remains my favorite. Some of the quarries are a bit dangerous, especially good to appease the Indiana Jones inside us. When the oxygen level falls down to 14%, exploring a quarry feels like climbing a mountain; your photo equipment turns into a big backpack of rocks. When the batteries of your O2 meter are as empty as your bottle of red wine, the perfect reflection of a quiet underground lake becomes







highly misleading. You can easily turn around and get lost in a 10 square meter area. To prevent the houses built above some quarries from sinking miserably under the macadam, a few are back filled with a kind of concrete. Due to the lack of oxygen, it is drying very slowly, and under a stable and solid gallery you can find one meter of the grey and viscous mixture. You shall not pass, said the Master of the Quarry. Sometimes, we have to adapt our moves to the specifications of a quarry. We are usually walking, and if needed, we can bike, swim or sail with plastic canoes designed for small children.

The funniest thing is to discover relics of former uses of the quarries. We found armored trucks stored here by the OTAN since the 60's; these were left almost untouched for 50 years. In another one, we saw dozens of test tubes of shiitake spores packed in old Chinese newspapers that were used to grow mushrooms in the 90's. Deeper inside, there was an old seismology lab full of hand-made glass instruments. We've also found old Citroën FWD cars from the 30's, a wooden confessional upholstered with red fur, customized with sex accessories, volutes, busts and castles directly carved in the rock, a vintage syringe and needles in the remains of a military hospital, a statue of Buddha covered with concretions, water droplets falling right in a bottle of beer that had slowly transformed into a large stalagmite, and a young boy stealing potatoes and carrots from a farmer's stock…mom asked!

Definitely so many things happened and are still happening underground around Paris...



Dsankt

Photos by Dsankt © 2012
Interview by Gerv

UEmag: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into exploring in the first place?

DS: I'm DS; heartless, arrogant, elitist and a bit of a cunt if you believe the generous compliments of my friends. I'm Australian by passport but roaming by choice. There are rumors circulating that as a baby I burst out the pink chatière sporting a headtorch and Asian baby face. While there is, of course, some truth to this, a stronger influence on my exploring nature was the childhood Satanists with whom I descended the featureless concrete storm drains so prevalent in the Australian suburbs. The purposes of these descents to light candles and use black markers stolen from school to draw crude pentagrams in attempts to gain favor with the Dark Lord. Pretty quickly I realized the path to true evil was in business, politics, a real church or the Cave Clan, Australia's premier exploring group. I ran the Brisbane Cave Clan branch for a while and with hard-hitters like ekweleks and q-x we clobbered our way up the amateur rankings pretty quickly. By 2006 I'd pushed off from convict shores seeking out guys like Steve Duncan, Michael Cook and Shane Perez, the internationally fearless and bold. Shortly after I joined the assorted bunch of bellends commonly known as the Pro League and smashed out a lot of decent adventures you might have heard of.

UEmag: Do you still draw pantagrams?

DS: My artistic side evolved, thankfully, and I moved onto photography, though I retained a certain fondness for drawing dicks and have my fair share of stylish dick varieties under my belt. Winged dicks, fractal penii, cubist dicks, you get the general idea and I'd rather not give away my secrets, ya know?

UEmag: Can you tell us a bit about the Cave Clan, around what year did you become a member and how are things going for the clan nowadays?

DS: The Cave Clan is one of the oldest and certainly the largest (dis)organized exploring group in the world. Since the mid-eighties they've been killing it in Australia though of late they've gone underground and nobody really knows how active they are anymore. I joined the fledgling Brisbane branch in 2001 and we destroyed Brisbane top to bottom. This was before exploring became anywhere near as popular as it is today so we owned the city; it was just us and the graffiti writers. They were great years, less politics, less bullshit, non-stop craziness, fresh finds and not a single email asking about making a TV-series.

UEmag: Tell us a bit about SleepyCity. When was it founded and what's it all about?

DS: Sleepycity started as dsankt.com, a set of static HTML galleries in ~04, and then grew into the beast you see today. I was inspired by the works of Siologen and Trioxide and decided to share my own photos,







without any particular goal. Since then I've moved away from simply posting galleries of photos and towards stories and narratives of our adventures. I'm no great writer but I'm intrigued by stories of adventure and think as a community we need to write those we participate in. We've proven we can churn out thousands of similar photos of the same places, so some decently written words from places like adventureworldwide.net are a breath of fresh air in a stale scene full of painfully contrived over-processed gasmask photos.

UEmag: I.D.M 2012. Where was it held and what kind of shenanigans took place this year down there?

DS: For now it's sufficient to say it was the wildest, most out of control drain meet yet. 100+ dirty ass drainers, black tie suited and booted; beyond drunk, loose and loud crammed into Antwerp's sewer system. Full sound and lighting set the stage. The draining community is pretty tight and the IDM is the perfect chance for everyone to get together. Next year is going to blow the manhole covers 100 feet in the air. I'll not shame anyone else with tales of drunken embarrassment, but I chugged sewage laced champagne from a rubber boot and spent the next week as a parasite host, shitting ass-milk and munching antibiotics.

UEmag: Have you been hit with a lot of spooge geyser bukkake while exploring drains? What's the nastiest thing that's happened to you when exploring?

DS: In the smaller tunnels the pipes from the houses dump straight into the tunnels and they erupt like little geysers all the time. Thankfully I've not been bukkaked yet. I was down in Italy recently exploring some of their amazing sewers and we had a 500m crawl on hands and knees through the flow, with little puffed up jellyfish-like tampons bobbing past our faces. My waders were leaking a little and I had on plastic kitchen



gloves which did absolutely nothing. It was pretty nasty, but at least the 'water' wasn't covered by a layer of congealed cooking fat and dead rats like you see in London. Down in the sewers you learn to take comfort in what you're not finding.

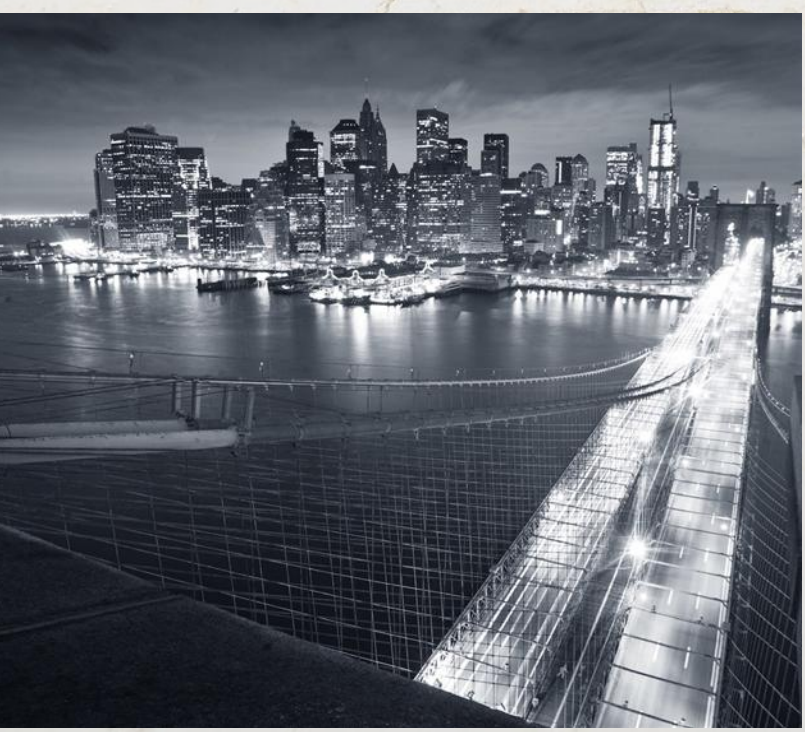
UEmag: Strangest place you ever slept?

DS: I've slept on rooftops, in gardens, in underground rivers, on national monuments, in abandoned motels, Nazi military bases, in bridges but the highlight is certainly also the most miserable. I don't recall what hellish notion spawned the idea but we hit Oslo in the middle of winter for a weekend with nowhere to stay and figured we'd just work it out like we always do. It was about -25c outside and we ran down the active metro tracks after service to one of the old abandoned stations. We spent the night taking photos and finally bedded down in our -10c sleeping bags as the service started. The station sits on live track, which carries 4-5 lines, so the trains were clanking through every few minutes and despite being thoroughly exhausted we just couldn't sleep through it. It was certainly my worst pseudo-hobo experience, like some kind of concentration camp where you'd just shut your eyes and start to sleep then be ripped awake. It was horrid at the time, but like the best travel experiences, it's pretty funny in retrospect and I'd do it all again.

UEmag: Where in the world has exploring taking you; cities, countries?

DS: Forty-five countries and too many cities to bother counting. There's so much to do in the world, most of it beyond the realm of what we considering exploring; it would be a shame to limit it. I get asked often how I do it...easy: don't waste your hard earned dollars on buying useless consumer shite but keep it for the important stuff - like traveling the world to break the law.

UEmag: Of all the traveling and places you have explored, what place stands out in your mind as pure awesomeness and why?







DS: It takes years of work to peel the onion that is the modern city. Layer by layer you can take a city apart, from the roofs, the abandoned buildings, the sewers, drains, metro, telecom tunnels…just going deeper and deeper until you know the city inside and out. Eventually you begin to feel you've mapped every nook and cranny. We took Paris apart at the seams but then a single discovery opens up a dozen more and you feel as if you're starting all over again. It's endless! Cities likes Paris, London, New York, Minneapolis; they can consume you and drive you mad with all the possibilities. These are the places I love; ones where you can lose yourself in the city, where you can go out every night and find something new, endless adventures. Most of these adventures have come from hitting infrastructure, yet so many people stop at the abandoned buildings and never really move into infrastructure, but our cities are all overflowing with it, all waiting to be taken.

UEmag: What's next? Any future trips planned out?

DS: I've been told I look to the future too much, thinking of tomorrow before today is even done, booking the next trip before I've even returned from the current. There are so many plans in the works but I'm not one to announce them, I'd rather come back and tell people what I've done than big mouth myself about what I'm going to do. That said though, I expect we'll see a closer relationship between travel and urban exploring, as people start going further away and further from their comfort zone in search of new places and new thrills. I've been traveling and exploring for six years now and I'm seeing it catch on more and more. It's the future in my opinion, why be confronted by boring euro police in your own country when they could be machine gun wielding Iranian military police? Makes it more fun don't ya think?

UEmag: Any final words of wisdom?

DS: No grand wisdom here, except that life is very short and death is terrifyingly long. Drains…go in them.











IRON FIST DOUG

Photos by Doug © 2012
Interview by Gerv

Q1:Why don't we start off with you telling us a bit about yourself as an explorer and in general?

I've always been into the underground! I tried getting a group together during the 80's but everyone just seemed interested in smoking joints and writing AC/DC on the wall.

I met up with a school friend in 1985 and together with his brother we started exploring the drains and tunnels of our area of Melbourne. More than a quarter of a century later and we've moved on from our side of town to the whole of the town... state... country... world! Well…world is a bit of an exaggeration, however there are so many great Cave Clan members exploring around the world - maybe they would have done it without the Clan, but I think the group showed them that there is a scene out there. Nowadays the Cave Clan explores any type of Urbex location from as far down to as high as possible. Personally, I have only explored outside of Australia once - in 2001 in Paris, Vienna, Germany and the Netherlands.

I love the international stuff - I am a bit of an armchair explorer when it comes to the international scene (whereas I hardly ever bother reading about Australian exploring), but I'm a Cave Clan man, it's what kept me involved in urban exploration. I tried to grow the Clan so the location lists kept growing and it worked - too well almost. In the last four years I have moved out of the city (lots of new locations to find and explore,) turned 40, got married, purchased a house and had two children... so my priorities have changed, but I still have something to do with the Clan every other day.

Q2: Take us back to 1985, what first sparked your interest in the underground and what was your first drain explore like? Can you recall any features about the drain or details of the explore itself?

The area that I lived in was bordered by 2 creeks and a river so I'd regularly seen drain outlets as a kid. They intrigued me. I saw them as huge question marks. I started going in drains when I was 12; at first with friends from school and then a few years later with Woody and Sloth. My first memory is of a low drain that ran under our school. I'd heard of sections in the tunnel... The Bend,

The Rocks and The Split. I had to see these features! On my first lunch break of my first day of secondary school it was a hot day so I got a group of friends and we went up the drain. We only had a cigarette lighter or two. I found it amazing; the concrete drain smell, the sounds of my friends giggling, looking back at the entrance and seeing their silhouettes, then reaching The Bend and heading into total darkness. My senses were experiencing something new and it was great. Then someone let out a scream and we all blindly, frantically took off towards the entrance screaming and laughing at the same time as our shoes and clothing, that we carefully kept dry on the way up, ended up soaked in drain gunk. I ran out of the pipe and couldn't stop. I slipped down the ten meter slide outside the front. I stood up totally soaked, green sludge all over my brand new pants and shirt, the knees of my pants were ripped and bloody. I looked up at the others and smiled- I was hooked!

In the end I visited the drain hundreds of times. The Rocks weren't a cool rock section, it was just a section where a bunch of rocks dammed the water and forced you to do the splits. The Split was, you guessed it, where the 5ft pipe turned into two 2ft pipes. I loved that pipe but little did I know that things were going to change - change to the level that I wouldn't even cross the road to see the drain that got me hooked. I've now done side-pipes that are way better than my first drain.

Q3: 1985 is way before the internet and resources such as Google Earth, Bing Maps, or any other online drain database. How did you, Woody and Sloth go about searching out and finding so many amazing drains to explore back then?





The three of us would choose an area to search. At first it was obvious creek endings and then just random waterways or linear parks that we spotted in the street directory. As a bonus is was surprising how many abandoned buildings and structures were located near creeks and rivers. I was the one that was obsessed so I found that it was easier to do a lot of the searching on my own.

The main reason I wanted the Cave Clan to grow was – it quickly became obvious that new members generally equalled new locations and as the group spread out of the northern suburbs of Melbourne to the rest of the city and then to the other capital cities, there were more and more people searching obvious creek endings, random waterways and linear parks that they had spotted in their street directory. To me finding these hidden tunnels were part of the fun. We would turn a bend of a creek and see a huge outlet… a huge question mark… it was the best!

Nowadays you send an email or do a 10 minute Google search and your exploring is planned for the next month… you miss out on so much of the fun.

Q4: How fast did the Cave Clan grow in the early years and how did new members get enrolled? Are there any requirements or standards?

In the 80's the membership rose very slowly. How we gained members from 1986-1989 was to leave messages

in tunnels around the city. These messages would give details on how to get to a section called The Pillars in our local drain. At The Pillars we would have a message board where people would arrange a date to come back and meet. Obviously this took a long time and on one or two occasions we missed a message and made some explorers that had travelled long distances a bit upset. Although it took a long time to gain new members this way, the percentage that became regular long term members was quite high. These people were already going into tunnels so they weren't total newbies. They had already gone to a fair bit of trouble just to meet us.

We also put message bags up the more popular drains. These message bags consisted of some photocopied sheets of photos and locations as well as an audio tape of us talking about how good exploring is and stuff like that. This worked really well. In 1990 we got a PO Box and started putting up stickers around our city and other capital cities. This worked well and the membership started to grow.

Up until the late 90's membership was pretty much based on how well you got on with people. After that the websites and emails came along and it became easy for people to contact - many would say too easy. Half the emails were something like – "please send info". In 1996 it was apparent that the scene (Cave Clan had moved on from mainly being drain explorers to general urban explorers) was getting too big to be totally unregulated. As nice as "Take Only Photographs, Leave Only Footprints" sounds, it's not really practical – it works for decent honest folk, but it's all the others that weren't totally decent that was the issue. So the Cave Clan had a 20 Year Revamp and we set up a Code of Ethics that forms a large part of what is expected from new (and older) members, but it still really comes down to DON'T BE A DICK!

Although the Clan is one, each branch has their way of dealing with membership. It's harder to get into certain branches and membership is affected by how many locations that city has to explore. Canberra, Perth, Darwin & Hobart are capital cities where it is hard to keep a branch active. The main thing is that the Clan is open to new members. There are some people who join the Clan and then want to lock everyone else out. This is not what the Clan was set up for.

Q5: Back in the 80's and early 90's, were you into documenting your explorations with photographs or video? If so, what kind a camera(s) were you using?

To be honest, we were just spending so much time finding and doing stuff that comparatively we didn't take many photos. We were a bit paranoid to put films in to be developed and we just weren't keen enough to pay $15 to get a film developed to find out only 2 of the photos were any good. There was no comparison between photography and exploring in the 80's.

I used a Polaroid camera for a couple of years, which was an even more expensive way of getting average photos but it cut out the problem of us needing to pick the photos up. I suppose you need to realize that this was long before the Cave Clan you know today. We were 16 year-olds and didn't tell family or friends. It was very secretive and when I put my first film in and the guy behind the counter said, "Ah, you're the tunnel guy" I nearly left the photos behind and ran out of the shop.

Over time we started taking more photos but they were all snapshots. Any video was hurriedly shot with someone's uncle's borrowed video camera. When I first saw someone set up a tripod on an expo I have to admit that I was very inpatient and frustrated. To me it was as irrelevant as someone sitting down on the ground and playing with Lego blocks. Ha, ha, it's a quarter of a century later and I still think the same thing (sorry to all the offended photographers out there). There were a few photographers that joined the Clan in the 90's. Matt Netthiem has done quite well doing photography in the movie industry and Ash Gilberston is a recipient of the Robert Capa Gold Medal. Then the likes of Siologen and Dsankt came along. These guys love to take a good photo, however they were all true explorers.

[I tend to find that so much of the photos you see nowadays look the same. I find looking at photos with no one in them more like looking at a calendar and pretty much nothing to do with exploring. Don't get me wrong, I'm into art and I like to do some armchair exploring, but I just don't think photography should hold people up from exploring.]

Q6: Are you at all interested in the history side of exploring? If so, do you spend any time researching about the many great places and drains you explore?

I am into the history, however we "white-ies" have only been on this continent for just over a couple of hundred years and we tend to demolish places pretty quickly after they become abandoned. I obviously really enjoy the underground side of urban exploration, however if I was to do an all-time top ten then half would be above ground. I love old prisons, power stations, hospitals, lunatic asylums and the like and there is a lot of history in these places. I know most of the history of the drains in my state and the general history of many of the major drains in Australia but apart from a handful of drains in Sydney and a couple in other main cities, the history of most of the other tunnels revolves around what the waterway was originally called and when it was put underground. The Maze is one of the best drains in Australia and I can tell you that in 1860 the local council referred to the area as, "Ex Umbrian Solem" - Out of the shadows into the light. The Aboriginals referred to the area as Boroondara



- “Place of shade”. It seems that they knew something us “white-ies” didn’t because now 80% of the waterway is a great place of shade.

Q7: What makes The Maze drain stand out as an outstanding drain in your eyes? What do you enjoy to see when draining?

The Maze is amazing (sorry, I couldn’t resist)! I suppose like any drain you may, and probably will, get sick of it, however the whole system can be done in half a dozen different trips. Siologen says it’s the most frequented drain in the world. The canal that joins Upper Maze, The Lower Maze & The Slide is worth an explore on its own. There are some neat underpasses and if you are into graffiti pieces there are regularly new ones. On a nice day the chances are you will meet someone in the canal or The Maze.

The Maze is a good drain for a wander, explore or to get down and dirty with some hardcore ‘splorin’. You very rarely get the chance to say, “Jeez, I’m sick of this shape” although you do get over the redbrick pipe. There are waterfalls, splits, loops, redbrick, bluestone, concrete and a variety of unique shapes. The outlet is pretty cool as is its most upper reaches where, although it’s not really the done thing, you can have some fun with people up in the real world. Considering it’s a metropolitan drain, there are plenty of ways in via manholes and retarding basins. It pretty much has three inlets and 2 outlets. And it has an exploring history - when I used to run the new explorer’s expo (usually about 20 or so people that had contacted the Cave Clan in previous months would come along) there were so many sections that just prompted my next spiel. There is so much graffiti (writing not art) throughout the system.

Just about everyone that does The Maze loves it. Most people that have only done it once have just done the main bigger easier sections. It takes a few more visits to conquer her. Another great thing about The Maze... on a warm summer’s day it’s just a great place to chill and have a few beers.

Q8: Can you tell us a bit about Il Draino? What its all about and what year you started publishing?

The first issue was released on July 16, 1989. Issue #87 is due out in August. Like just about everything back in the Cave Clan those days, it started as a bit of a joke. It was a bit of a shit-stir. It was very in-house as there were only about a dozen or so of us at the time. It was a photocopied newsletter (a zine). As the Clan grew so did Il Draino. There were quite a few years where Flert worked at a color printing shop and photocopied them in color so they looked comparatively snazzy. Some issues got up to 48 pages long and included everything you needed to be in the Clan - location lists, new locations found, expo reports, details about new members, and a stack of regular columns. Nowadays with the internet it’s not so much a newsletter as just a zine - part written by me (the silly stuff) and part submitted by members (the interesting part). It really still is in-house so I tend to only distribute it to members.

There was a 5 year period in the 2000’s where I only made a rather boring Clannies special each year, but then a few years ago I decided to start making a few issues a year so as I might make #100. The Clannies specials included the results of our awards night (The Clannies) and a heap of stats and stuff like that. The other two issues are much more light-hearted. Il Draino is still pretty rough, nowhere near as neat or well-made as UEmag.

Q9: From watching a few of your videos posted online, The Clannie awards look like a hell of a good time. Can you share with us a bit on how they got started? What kind of awards are given out and over all what’s it like to attend?

I was sitting at home in 1989 having a few drinks with Cougar (the explorer, not the Bourbon) talking about how the Cave Clan was growing (I think we’d just hit the 20 member mark) and that we needed to set up some regular social functions. A TV advert came on for our national TV awards, The Logies then a bit later an ad for the Oscars came on. The light bulb started glowing. The way I remember it the whole thing was a bit of joke. We had had a few drinks and the bullshit was flowing... “And we could have nominations... and a host... and all



the members would vote". It only took us a few weeks to get The First Annual Cave Clan Clannies Awards up and running - and the whole night was a joke. Plastic ten-pins painted silver were used as trophies. The awards ranged from Most Wasted Explorer to Best Singer While Intoxicated. There were awards that were taken more seriously such as The Gold (for the member who put in the best overall year). Some awards only last a few years while others have been around almost since the start - Best First Year, Biggest Coward, Most Hardcore (AKA Goes Furthest), Dodgy Crashout (for people who fall asleep at Clan functions and get punished), Best Team Player, Best New Find, The Kodak Moment (for photos that show the Clan in action) and more. There are 25 in total. Some don't even go to people such as, The Maze Award (for the best drain), Best Alternative (for best non-drain location), Best Feature among others. It's hard for me to explain what it's like to be at the Clannies. This year was the first one I've ever missed, and I really missed it. It's the major event on the Cave Clan calendar. Members come from all over the country for the night and international explorers are starting to plan their trip around being in Melbourne for the Clannies. It's nice to have a few hundred people in a drain who all pretty much have one thing in common – exploring. Most people seem to really enjoy it... until the fireworks start :) The next Clannies will be the 25th. I'm sure Cougar would be as proud as I am of the achievement if he was still alive.

Q10: Can you share with us some of the better Dodgy Crashouts you have been a part of? What kind of punishments are we talking about?

I'm not sure how the Dodgy Crashout became such a big part of the Clan. It's something most people would expect to see in teen college movie than an urbex scene. I suppose that is the point – the Cave Clan is a very social group. If you last for longer than the three year I-wanna-'splore-everything-'n-shit period then the chances are you are going to have social links to the Clan and someone will draw a cock and balls on your face while you're sleeping.

I made a short clip about 25 years of Dodgy Crashouts in the Cave Clan. I played a big part on most of the Gilligan Crashouts. It was probably me spray-painting side-burns on his face, putting spaghetti, pizza crusts and shaving cream on his head or salt in his ears, but this guy brought it on himself – he was the Crashout Master! He could fall asleep on a stage in front of the speakers while a band was playing – one band actually changed the lyrics of a song and based it around Gilligan.

Crashouts continue to happen regularly in the Clan however they are a bit more soft nowadays. I don't think an eye-brow has gone missing for more than a decade, but if you fall asleep at a Clan event then you risk getting covered with graffiti and stickers. I generally don't fall victim to Dodgy Crashouts however I did wake up smelling of mint a couple of years ago. Since then the smell makes me feel sick! I vaguely remember a heap of people trying to get me out of the neighbor's veggie patch and me telling them, "Nah, I'm good here".

Q11. Have you had any close calls when out draining, as far as you and the Clan member's safety? What kind of dangerous situations have you guys encountered?

We're generally pretty good. Everyone that explores drains for long enough is more than likely to have a near miss sooner or later. I could probably list about 8 misses with a few of them getting a bit hairy. We once got chased out of a drain by a cloud of noxious steam. It forced us back and followed us up the manhole shaft. It was like something out of The Simpsons. As I was getting the lid off I could smell this disgusting stink getting into my lungs. I jumped out of the way the others flew out of the shaft coughing and sputtering. It turns out it was probably hot water from a hospital that entered the drain via an illegal hook up so it probably wasn't that bad, but it scares the shit out of you when you're in a drain and not expecting it!

I have a few "When It Rains ~ No Drains" clips online. One of them shows a bit where I got this massive manhole off in the middle of a road - it was only a mixture of pure fear and adrenaline that saw me get the manhole off. What made it worse was that as we could hear the water coming, I was on the ladder under the manhole and I could see the faces of Bob & Pablo just pleading





for me to get the manhole off. To put it into perspective, this tunnel had a series of waterfalls and drops so each time the water went over an edge it got louder. When we first heard it there was hardly any water where we were located and we could hear each other at a whisper. Just before I got the manhole off we were screaming at each other and couldn't hear over the sound. The manhole was in the middle of the road and when I finally got it up a car was coming towards me. I knew if I put the manhole down I would not have the strength to lift it again. Luckily the manhole was at a stop sign and the car was slowing down (I wonder if they are still telling the story at dinner-parties - these three men wearing white overalls climbed out of the road in front of us and started shouting, "Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!"

The problem was that we had become complacent. We knew rain was on the way but we decided to go in anyway. We were caught between waterfalls so we had to get out or at least above the flow of water. I'd say with kids the concern is lack of experience. With regular explorers it's complacency.

Q12: Any advice to up-and-coming explorers?

If I was to give up-and-coming explorers some serious advice, it would be: do not take it all so seriously. There are a lot of explorers out there that take it way too seriously, or that seem so paranoid that I wonder how they can enjoy doing what they do. Having said that, in some parts of the world it is hard to be as relaxed when exploring, but if you can, just take it easy and enjoy it. Don't get complacent! When it rains, no drains. Keep some donuts handy to bribe the police. Come to Australia!

Q13: Doug, it truly has be an honor to conduct this interview with you. Thank you for your time. Any famous last words or shout outs?

It's been fun. I probably took the questions way too seriously… but oh well. Thanks for having me. Famous last words? Ask not what your big drain can do for you, but what you can do for your big drain… no not really.

Everyone should keep on doing what they are doing. When we started there was nothing on the internet. A quarter of a century later and there is an internet and people are worried that the scene has gotten too big and that locations are being trashed because too many people know about them. Nothing much has changed (except for September 11 which I almost managed to avoid mentioning for the whole interview).

Cheers
Doug.

ATH

Interview with Ath, Photos by Ath © 2012. Interview by Gerv



Q: Why don't we start off with you telling us a bit about yourself in general and how you got involved in exploring?

Cheers Gerv, well, I'm a 31 year old male and I work as a computer technician in Melbourne, Australia. I enjoy music production (hip-hop and electronic), I collect vintage synthesizers, and also dibble and dabble in amateur photography and astronomy, but my real love is exploring big tunnels and in particular, drains!!!

I grew up in the outer suburbs of Melbourne in the 80's and back then the best way to keep one occupied was to ride BMX bikes around the local neighborhood. I used to ride my bike down to the local stormwater canal with my friends and had always enjoyed following creek systems around on bike paths and riding through flood waters. I guess in a way I've always been fascinated with waterways and exploring my local area. It wasn't until I was 14 years old that I actually ventured into a drain. My main motivation for entering drains back then was to smoke weed with my mates without being pestered by teachers, parents, and the police. That soon changed though and my initial motivation for entering drains (e.g. getting high) became a secondary motivation for going in them. My curiosity about what may lay further up the tunnel quickly grew and each time I visited a drain I became determined to go further up the tunnel than upon my previous visits.
I became obsessed with finding the 'end' of one particular tunnel in Melbourne's southeast and me and my best mate at the time 'Mr. Giles' returned to this drain every weekend for several months before moving on to find other drains to explore. We would venture further and further into this system, which I later learned was known to The Cave Clan as 'Dwellers Tomb' (it's named after a group known as the 'Drain Dwellers' who eventually became a part of The Cave Clan and this is how the tunnel got its name). It's an amazing system and still remains one of my favorites. It taught me so much about the nature of 'draining' including how to open manhole covers from underneath and how to navigate different shapes of tunnels without slipping and things like that. With its archways, stairways, chambers, numerous shape changes, and junction rooms which are made from bluestone, redbrick, and concrete it taught me so much about the basics of the 'sport'. It has two main branches and runs for roughly 8km (approx. 5 miles). So in many ways, this was my 'education drain'. There





was a lot of Cave Clan related messages sprawled on the walls of this tunnel network and I had always been fascinated by the group. Whilst I had never met anyone in the Cave Clan and knew very little about them, I had known of their existence from a young age but I always thought of them as an underground society who live in drains, chop people's fingers off and perform satanic rituals as opposed to a group who 'explore' drains for fun. That was about to change though...

Q: Can you tell us a bit about how you met and joined the Cave Clan. When did you find out that they were not a drain dwelling satanic society?

When I was about 16 years old I met an explorer in a drain who claimed to be a member of The Cave Clan. He told me his name was 'Big Ears', I was amazed at how 'normal' this guy was (aside



from the fact that he was in a drain and went by the name 'Big Ears'). He must have been in his mid-twenties at the time and after chatting briefly about the Cave Clan he told me he was a school teacher and in one fell swoop my previous beliefs of a Satan-worshipping cult came crashing down and I realized that the Cave Clan weren't a group of creepy dudes who lived in the drains, just creepy dudes who explore them! I was pretty surprised







to learn this and hoped to one day become a CC member myself. From the ages of 19-24 I had no desire to explore drains. Everyone I knew who used to be into draining had grown a little older and perhaps wiser. One night I found myself sitting at my computer staring at the screen of a well-known search engine thinking to myself, "I've got the whole world at my fingertips in the form of the internet, yet I can't think of anything to look up!" Whilst pornography did come to mind, I eventually thought, "I wonder what the Cave Clan is up to these days and if they still exist?" Sure enough their website was still current and up-to-date and had a means to contact them.
After a bit of armchair exploring (particularly at dsankt.com -now sleepycity.net-, I'm sure you know the site I'm referring to), I sent the Cave Clan an email asking if I could come along to a 'New Ex-

plorer's Expo' (which is a regular event held by the Cave Clan designed to meet with new prospective members and drain curious types). Admittedly, it took the Clan 6 months to reply to my email, but I eventually got to explore a drain with the clan and to top it off their annual 'Clannie Awards' night was the following week and n00bs like myself were invited to come along! Whilst nervous, I was really excited to be able to witness a Clannies so soon after I'd popped my 'Clan Cherry'. That was back in 2006, the year that saw Sydney Cave Clan member 'Curly' win the Gold Clannie. The Clannies is a massive party located in a huge underground chamber just outside of the City Centre. This alcohol-fueled social event gave me a great insight into just how big the member base is and also how friendly everyone is. I knew from that night onwards that a lot of fun was going to be had in the years to come.





Q: Where has exploring taken you? What cities and countries have you traveled to in the name of exploration?

Being the financial mess that I am, I am yet to leave the shores of Australia for anything. I've never had the urge that so many do to leave the country until I started exploring. With Urban Exploration receiving more attention and having a larger online presence in recent years, I have had the ability to see some crazy stuff online and in Urbex zines that have made me cum in my pants. The River Fleet, Confluence, everything etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. are all places that I can only drool over (until I win real big at the Roulette table). I have been to most cities within Australia and also done my fair share of mines and water tunnels in regional areas of AUS. Prior to joining the Cave Clan I had never been to Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart, or Brisbane and





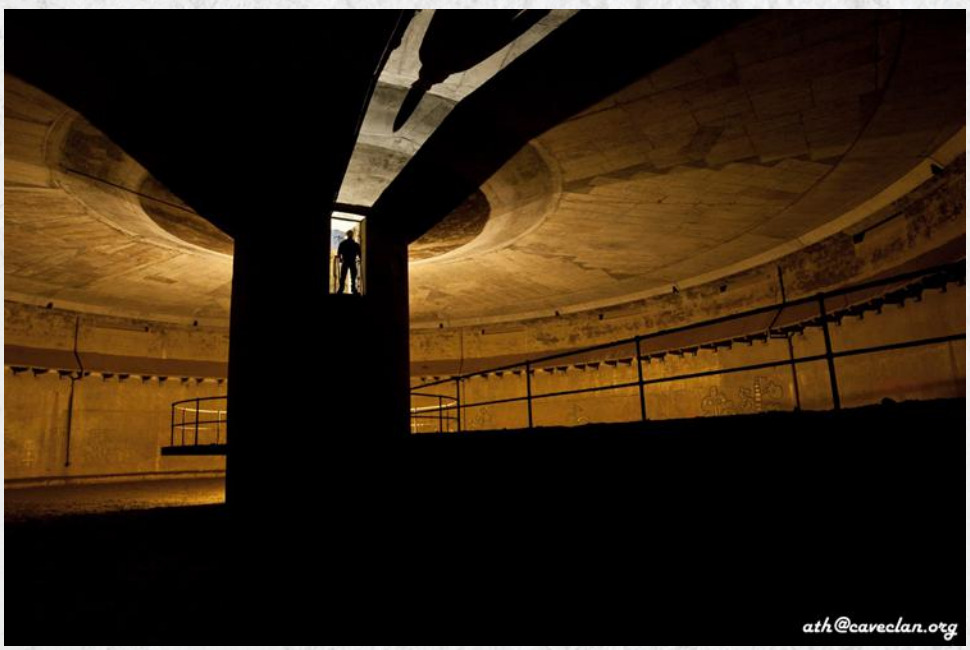
I can happily say that I'll return to these awesome cities again and again in the years to come. I went to Sydney for the first time about 6 years ago and have returned 4 times since, Hobart I've been to twice and Adelaide and Brisbane twice solely for the purpose of exploring. As a result, I know very little about the 'above ground' attractions of these cities since I've really only ventured there to splore!

Q: It has been a great honor to conduct this interview with you Ath, thanks for your time. Any last words of wisdom or shout-outs?



The pleasure is all mine mate! Words of wisdom?

Ummm, if I could say one thing before I bail, I'd say treat all with respect and be nice to your mother (unless she's a bitch, in which case, don't). Don't let elitists put you down; you'd be amazed where a little empathy can take you. Big shout-out's must go to my hetro life mates Pip, Ken See, Mr. Giles, Luke, Pizzy, Doug, Metawaffle, Black Duck, and Scarecrow. I continue to learn from you guys. You guys are true legends. Thanks for the good times. Many more await us!!! Hello to Siologen, Dsankt, Little Mike and anyone else pushing the boundaries. Whether you like it or not, you guys never cease to inspire me, keep it up (alright, I'm just name droppin' now. I'll stop).



I'd like to give a big shout-out to all Cave Clan members world-wide…past, present, and those who have departed to the big drain in the sky. Big ups to all urban explorers doin' their thing, keeping locations safe from vandals, and documenting past eras (sorry if I forgot anyone!).

Anyways, I'm off to the Golden Torch Award's now. Thanks for your time Gerv/UEMag!



Photo by Derek Dallow © 2012. ‘The Face of Decay’ For this shot I used a Nikon D700 with a 50mm Prime Lens wide open and took five exposures for merging to HDR later. I loved the ‘Face’ of this car, hence the name. The car had a great slant to its resting place and beautiful decay on the body work..



Photo by sj9966 © 2012. “Take a seat” Built in 1922, closed as a cinema in 1964, afterwards it was used as a Bingo hall unil it finally closed for good in 1979. This cinema still has many original features intact. The upper tier seating was in fantastic original condition.



Photo by Meastro © 2012. “Piscine du Mai” This used to be a small public swimming pool. The roof of this building could open so that the pool area turned into an outdoor pool. The pool was built around 1980 and closed about 22 years later because of the lack of interest. I did this exploration along with Brrr Urbex.



Photo by Ill-Padrino © 2012. “¡Glorious Timesî” We started in the middle of the night to arrive as early as possible since it is located on a rather busy street and we didn’t want to catch any attention. Fortunately it was raining cats and dogs and so the streets were rather empty when we got there.



Photo by Rana X © 2012. This image was taken from the top floor of one of the hundreds of buildings spread over 10,000 acres at a Army Ammunitions Plant. We woke not long after dawn on a brisk morning in January and took endless overgrown deer trails to get onto the property.



Photo by UrbexClown © 2012. This is most of the Danish urbex crew. I did this shot in an underground gathering around Christmas time 2 years back :) Top guys and gals that I love exploring with!



Photo by Fudge © 2012. Bunker drain meet in England with PaulPowers as Mario exiting the drain.



Photo by Timster1973 © 2012. Taken in abandoned manor house in the music room. Canon 5D Mark 2, Canon 100mm IS USM F2.8L Macro lens. Manual focus with liveview on details of organ stops 3 exposures, and warming filter added in CS5. 3 exposures meaning 3x Bokeh!



As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

Article By Cheri Sundra
Photos by Kevin Brett, Jennifer O'Malia, Katherine Rogers © 2012.

People either hate urban explorers or love them. Those who don't understand, think of us as flakey thrill-seekers, climbing in and out of venues where we don't belong, and places other people would avoid completely. But there seems to be a growing awareness by the public that something more is actually going on with this loosely collective group of individuals, risking life and limb to capture moments in time ignored by society. As America lurches onward into its age of industrial decline, and communities find themselves littered with more abandoned structures than they can economically deal with, urban exploration is growing



Photo by Katherine Rogers

in popularity as both a hobby, and an all-consuming passion. My first real opportunity to explore connected me to some of the experts of this discipline. They come from all walks of life and age groups, and they approach the task with a seriousness that I would attribute to something more like brain surgery than a group of thrill seekers just looking for their next adventure.

Our location was the kind of stuff that urban exploration dreams are made of, the Scranton Lace Factory, located in Pennsylvania. That Sunday morning, after signing waivers, we were allowed inside with the owner's blessing, which is a rare occurrence in the world of exploration. The Scranton Lace industrial complex, now in the process of redevelopment, included bowling alleys, a gymnasium/theater, a barber shop, an event size kitchen, employee showers and an infirmary. Scranton Lace manufacturing spanned two centuries of American history. Apparently, the company made some risky investments and mid-shift in 2002, the employees of Scranton Lace were sent home, never to return again. What remained was a ghost-like museum of lace-making, now covered in dirt and grease, left at mid-production within the 2.5 story 19th century looms, creating a sight and experience that none of us will ever forget. Since our visit, those looms have been dismantled and sold as scrap as part of the renovation project underway to convert the structure into an apartment/business complex. To the local community, the abandoned factory is legendary. When former First Lady, and current Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, refers back to her working class roots in the industrial town of silk mills and coal mines, she is talking about Scranton, where her grandfather started working at Scranton Lace at the age of 11.

The locals like to romanticize that the industrial complex included bowling alleys. But the truth is, the owners of Scranton Lace would have understood the benefits of early 20th century corporate welfare because it took employees away from meeting in groups to form unions outside of the company. Once abandoned, breaking in to use those infamous bowling alleys became a kind of underground hobby for some, even resulting in one arrest. On the day that we gathered to explore, you can bet that it was the most popular room in the facility! While bowling, I convinced a few of my explorers to participate in an interview in an attempt to understand the driving motivation behind urban exploration.

Kevin Brett, an artistic soul, is a professional photographer. When asked what draws him into photographing an abandoned building, he responded, "The main reason that I like to explore these empty places, is to capture artistically conceptual images that echo something beyond the obvious. Subject matter like this is unique in itself. Decay cannot be created it has to happen over time."

Jennifer O'Malia, a graduate of Temple University's photojournalism program spends a lot of time photographing abandoned mental hospitals. She admits that she is drawn in by the adrenaline rush produced by being somewhere that most people won't go. Jennifer also says, "I love the history of the places, the architecture, the way they show the demise of today's economy, and the change in how we now treat people with psychological disorders and mental handicaps." Katherine Rogers, studied printmaking at Kutztown University. Katherine is drawn to urban exploration by a love for discovery, "I greatly enjoy turning corners, opening doors, peering in rooms and seeing something for the first time. The aesthetic part is in the appreciation and capture of things that are broken and neglected, and how time and the elements have changed

them."

Erik Hummel is a documentarian who studied Culture and Communication at Ithaca College and is working on a feature length documentary about urban exploration (http://lifeindecay.com/). Erik says his love for urban exploration initially came from the experience. "We used to explore more for the thrill and adventure", Erik admits, "It was more about the rush of darting through the woods, hiding from cops and security, and some very close calls. Once we got into the buildings, it was very surreal walking through those cavernous underground tunnel systems, or turning a corner and finding a morgue or caskets, or simply opening up some drawers and finding old files from when the place was still in operation. Not until recently did we realize the potential these places have aesthetically."

I asked how they were each introduced to urban exploration. Kevin recalled exploring an abandoned farmhouse back in the 1970s. Jennifer says that she has been visiting abandoned locations with different family members since she was a child. She recalled, "As I got older I didn't do it so much. I had no idea that urban exploration existed as a culture or a way of life. After exploring a popular abandoned mental hospital a few times, I decided that if this place exists there must be others! I started Googling, found many forums dealing with UE and from that point; I networked with a few people. "

Katherine's childhood passion played a huge role. "When I was young", she said, "I wanted to be a paleontologist because I loved finding things in the dirt, so I have enjoyed discovering things my entire life. After investigating a couple of miscellaneous houses in my area during my school years, the seed had been planted. In 2004 I stopped with a friend at the spur of the moment to explore an abandoned coal breaker. I was struck by the immensity and complexity of that place. I knew this was something I needed to keep doing. I had no idea that there was a subculture dedicated to it. Since then my interest has become an integral part of my life rather than a casual hobby."

Erik's initiation into UE started when he was a little older, "The first time I went exploring, I was told by some friends about an old "castle" that sat in the middle of the woods close to our hometown. After a couple times at the "castle", which was actually an old stone church, we heard about an insane asylum that sat only half an hour away from us. We started reading about the history behind the place and I was instantly fascinated. The atmosphere was very surreal and creepy. I loved it! This is when I discovered the term "Urban Exploration", and realized that there was an actual community involved. After that we started looking into more places, and driving further to get to them. Then we started planning long weekend trips around exploring multiple places, and decided that we should document these experiences, and now here we are filming a feature length documentary."

The most touching aspect about urban exploration is often the human element—the artifacts left behind


Photo by Jennifer O'Malia


Photo by Jennifer O'Malia

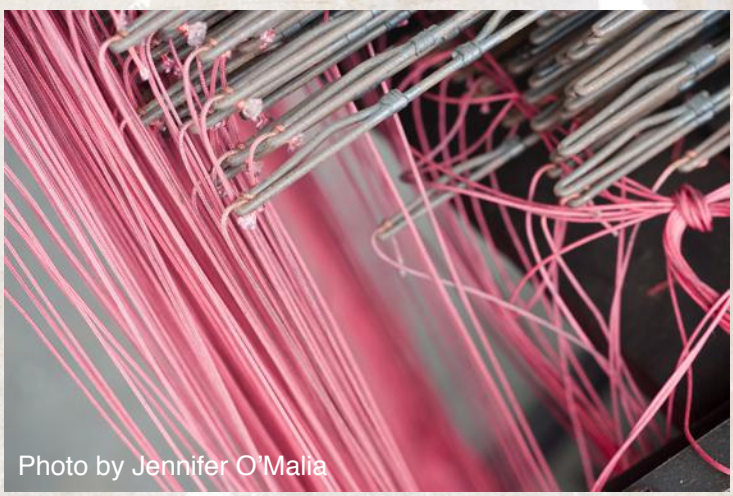

Photo by Jennifer O'Malia


Photo by Kevin Brett

by the people who used to live, work, play and worship in these now abandoned and forsaken places. I asked these experienced explorers about the impressionable items that they have found. Kevin said, “An early 1900’s leather and stainless steel full leg brace from the polio era and a burnt cross in an abandoned asylum set to be torn down and has been.”

Jennifer responded with, “I have found patient records, autopsy photos, patient teeth in jars, body parts, equipment, photographs, and clothing. The fact that these items, remain in vacant buildings saddens me. They should have been removed and stored properly so that family members could get them instead of rotting away for years.”

Katherine said, “Anything made to fit around the human form leaves an impression on me, such as gloves, coats, chairs, shoes, things that were personally worn or used by someone. Those are the remnants of the human element to these buildings.” She recalled, “An old coat from the 40s/50s that had been (and still is) hanging up for at least 40 or 50 years on a wall that is falling over. Since it is on a hanger, the coat remains straight, while the wall and floor are falling apart. The fact that it was hung by a human hand at one time, hanging it up for the last time, perhaps unknowingly, blows my mind.”

Erik had responded with an experience resembling something from a movie set, “On one of my first explores we found a room in a hospital filled with leg braces and prosthetic wooden legs. It was like something out of a horror movie.” He also said, “I’ve found personal belongings of hospital patients such as children’s toys, photographs, letters, clothing, etc. When you really think about it, you start to realize that these things used to be part of someone’s life and could have been very meaningful to them at one point.”

Kevin also added, “The personal items left behind are always moving, but I have to say the single most impressive thing for me is the amount of overall waste.” I asked them to tell me about their favorite finds from our day at the Scranton Lace Factory. Kevin liked a tally notebook left undisturbed since the last record taken in December of 2002. Jennifer and Katherine were impressed by the looms with the lace still attached to them. And Erik’s pick was the bowling alley, complete with all of the required accoutrements, including score cards, lane wax, bowling shoes, balls and pins. We all acknowledged that it was a privilege to get to explore this facility with permission. “With permission, the exploration is much more relaxed and thorough because one is not keeping an eye out and trying hard not to be seen”, Kevin stated.

When asked if Urban Explorers should be prosecuted if caught trespassing, the respondent’s reactions were mixed. Kevin said that he supports the rights of property owners to protect themselves. Katherine said, “I think since our intentions are good we should be treated a bit differently, and perhaps be subject to lesser punishments.”

At this point, I was thinking about critics of urban

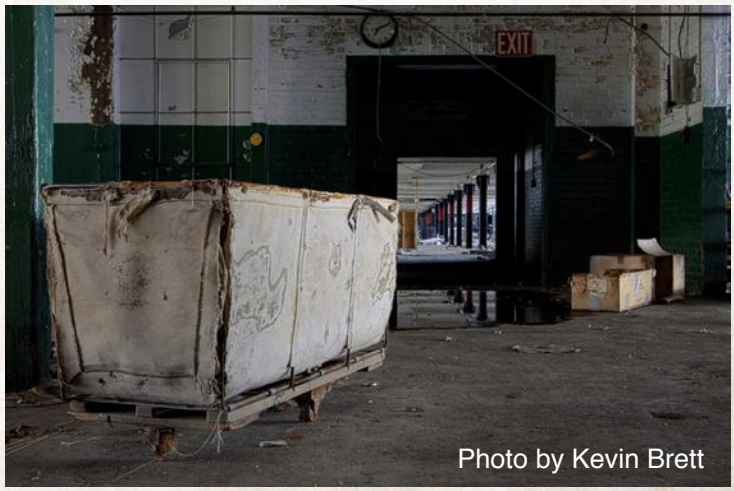


Photo by Kevin Brett


Photo by Kevin Brett


Photo by Kevin Brett


Photo by Kevin Brett

exploration art, especially those who say that it has no value. Obviously, these four people are passionate about their artistic creations inspired by the abandoned buildings that they explore. I decided to dig a little deeper into their individual motivation.

Erik replied, “I want to capture these beautiful images while they still exist. Some of the architecture of these buildings is simply amazing; they don’t build structures like these anymore. I’ve seen pictures and films that really capture these breath-taking places from other explorers that are truly astonishing. I’m trying to capture a moment in time that will most likely soon be forgotten. Once the doors closed on some of these places, people just forgot about it; but to previous generations, these places were known as homes or workplaces. Many people worked long hours in the now forgotten coal breakers, factories, and industrial parks. Many people put on their uniforms and tried to make a difference every day at these overcrowded hospitals, reform schools and insane asylums. And many people spent most of their lives wandering the long hallways, eating in the dining halls, dreaming of one day being set free, only to leave the institution through the tunnels that lead to the morgue. It’s the thoughts and memories like these that I want to be able to tell society--a history that has been forgotten or pushed under the rug.”

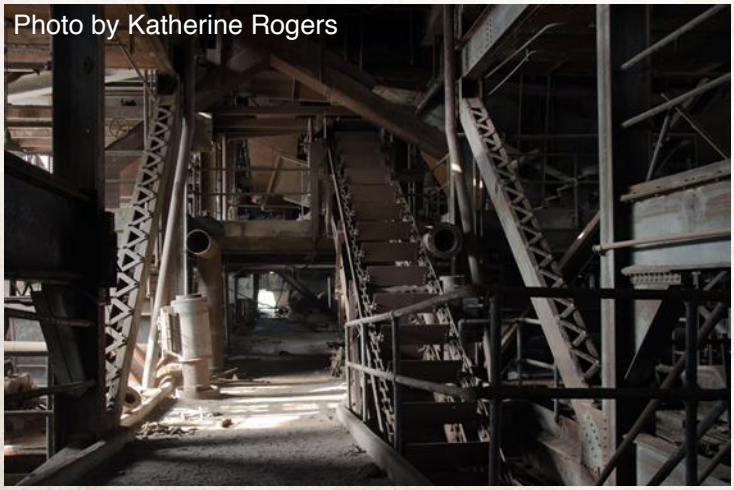
Jennifer says that she is driven to record these forgotten places because most of them will become repurposed or torn down. She explains, “I want people to get the feeling of being there from looking at my photographs. A lot of the time I close my eyes and imagine that I am the patient or the nurse. I want to convey the sadness or happiness of the place. I want to capture the beautiful architecture of these places and the fact that they are still standing after many years of neglect to show how well they were built and how solid they are compared to modern architecture. A lot of these places could have been used for many things if they were cared for properly but instead the states just let them sit and rot.”

Katherine’s motivation involves the ancient battle between man and nature. “I am very interested in the way man bulldozes land, erects huge facilities that mass produce huge amounts of products, the company declines, leaving the building silent, nature slowly moves in and retakes what was hers in the most quiet and subversive of ways,” says Katherine, ”I am trying to capture what this process looks like….and show that no matter how much we carve up the earth and try to establish ourselves it always finds a way to show us that we are temporary.”

In terms of being beneficial to society, Katherine says, “Society can see inner workings of these places and gain an appreciation and an awareness of those that worked in them, and suffered in them. It can help them realize that what they see as an eyesore really has a story and, oftentimes, great historical significance behind it. I think it can remind people how crucial it is to keep memories, personal and historical, alive; that


Photo by Katherine Rogers


Photo by Jennifer O’Malia


Photo by Katherine Rogers

forgetting can mean the disappearance of something important."

Kevin's motivation and the essence that he is trying to capture are one in the same, "My motivation for exploring abandoned locations is artistic capture and representation of not only the place itself and its' history, but the energies that echo through the spaces from the people that left part of themselves behind." He further explains, "I am trying to create artwork that not only tries to connect to the viewer personally from experiences of their own, but also to express simply what it is to be human as individuals and as a society."



Ademan

Photos by Ademan © 2012
Interview by Gerv

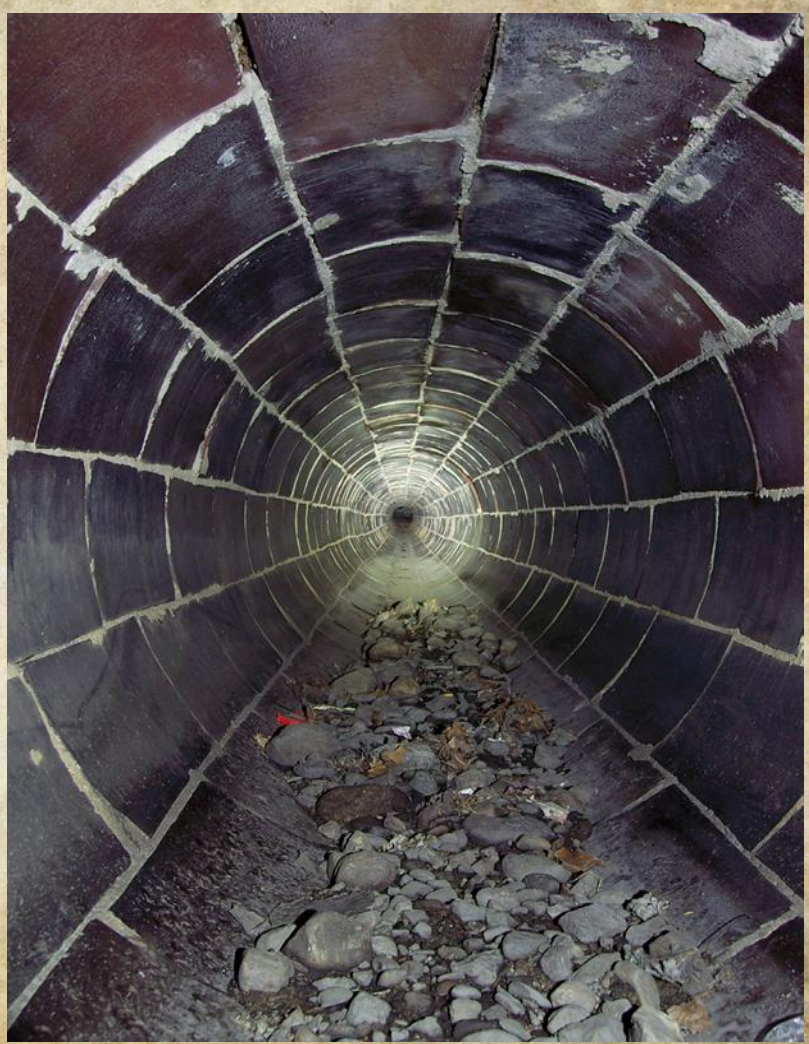
Q1: Let's kick it off with you telling us a bit about yourself in general and how you got into urban exploration?

I'm Ademan. I'm the guy behind Abandoned Dreams. I was a poor kid from a dead industrial city. Breaking into abandoned buildings was something to do for free. I didn't even start shooting these places until about 2006, when I started the Abandoned Dreams blog. Drains, bridges, and cranes came shortly after that.

Q2: What type of locations hold your interest most and why?

I've always been a fan of anything underground and anything height related. Being somewhere less traveled and seeing things even most explorers haven't seen is always fun; plus, they normally produce far more interesting views.

Q3: What kind of camera do you shoot







with and are you big into the photography side of exploration?

Haha, I shoot with a piece of junk Kodak Easy-share DX7630. Exploring for me is about the experience. The photos are normally a result of whatever mood I'm in that day.

Q4: Can you tell us a bit about Abandoned Dreams? What's that all about?

It started off as a group of local kids who all used to like UE. They've all since left and some others have joined, but Abandoned Dreams is pretty much just a title for a blog nowadays. There are 5 people left that I still call Abandoned Dreams members (Cambria, Meister, Turrel, Clahhhkie, and myself), but we don't all get together nearly as much as we should.

Q5: Any good exploring stories you care to share with us?

There were those times we played Marco Polo with security from different rooftops...that time the ATF needed our help, because we knew the layout of the abandoned mill that burned down better than they did...that time we watched the battleships sail in from the top of the Braga Bridge. There are far too many exploring stories to even get started.

Q6: Say the first thing that comes to mind after each word.

Sewer= When?
Obama= Meh
Troll= Neon green hair
2012 end of the world= Doubtful.
Safety= Sometimes

Q7: Where has exploring taken you thus far in life and what's in store for your future?

The editor of a local, well known newspaper found my website and did a story on us a few years back. Since then, I've been freelancing for that paper.

Q8: Any final words of wisdom or shout-outs?

Shout out to the Abandoned Dreams kids that have stuck with me this long, as well as anyone who enjoys my work, also to Gerv and the rest of the UEMag crew for this opportunity. Words of wisdom-Explore everything!

RISK TO REWARD RATIO

Article and photo by Gerv © 2012


Photo by Gerv © 2012

At times urban exploration can be a very dangerous activity. As we explore we run into all kinds of harmful and sometimes potentially deadly environments. This is also true of life in general. In fact, more people get injured or killed each year while driving to the corner store, yet driving to the corner store is accepted as a safe thing to do by almost everyone on earth, except agoraphobics. It is safe because it is something we have been doing from day one, first with our parents and then on our own. It becomes an everyday event and a necessary one if you need some toilet paper. This goes to prove that there is the feeling of safety with routine and experience and the more experience one holds the more confidence he or she will operate with. But if one becomes too confident or complacent he or she could run into a bit of trouble. It's a fine line that must be balanced and maintained to upkeep your risk to reward ratio. I say YOUR, because it's all up to you.

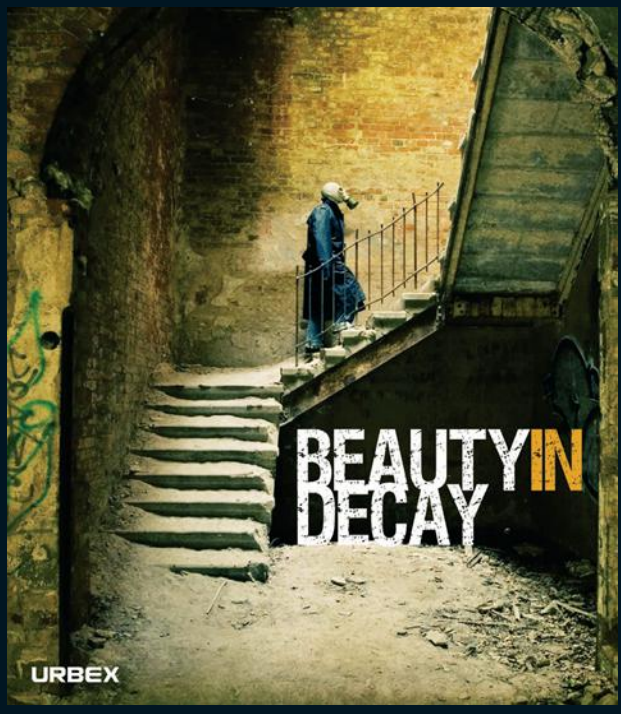
Think back to when you were a kid. The first time you jumped that fence with the No Trespassing sign on it. Your heart was beating fast, you were sweating and your knees felt weak. Over the fence you went, into the DO NOT ENTER lands. Maybe it was just your neighbor's back yard or the construction company down the street from your house, nonetheless it was unexplored by you and so you went, most likely with your friends or siblings. Think back to what motivated you to explore as a kid, to jump that fence for the first time. Maybe it was a local legend, a dare from school mates or just the drive to see the unseen. You knew that you could get caught, arrested, suspended or get a good old fashion ass kicking, but this did not stop you. The simple reward of going beyond your confront zone, and the rules written on the sign were more than enough to compel you. Today you're all grown up and if you're reading this, it would be my guess that you're still jumping fences that they say you shouldn't. Today the stakes are higher if you're caught, especially after 9/11. No more slaps on the wrist. Possible fines or even jail time are not unheard of for urban explorers nowadays. So what's the reward? That's up to you as well. I have been fortunate enough to meet some of the great urban explorers of our times and what I have found is that they come from all walks of life. They are your taxman, your local bar tender, a mother of 3, a school teacher or even your nurse. Each and every one of them have their own reason and rewards for why they explore, but we are all bound by the risk to reward ratio and we all have to gauge our own comfort zones.

Just as when you where a kid, it's healthy to push your comfort zones, but one must do so honestly and true to themselves. Nothing is more dangerous than not being honest with yourself about how you feel and what you think. Don't be ashamed if you're not feeling confident enough to run down the live subway tracks dodging oncoming speeding rail cars. This is something that takes a lot of time and experience to work up to. You may want to try going underground first, minus the speeding passenger cars, maybe draining or perhaps an abandoned transit tunnel. For all you know, you may not be interested in underground explorations at all. But don't knock something until you try it and most importantly don't knock others for exploring things you're not into or are afraid of. There is no one great subject to explore, there are many.

Educate yourself by talking to others and doing a bit of research on the locations you wish to explore. There is so much out there to learn and I am always learning from every explorer I meet. Don't be ashamed to admit you're not informed or new to something as we all are at one point. Keeping an open mind to what others have to say and share with you could save your life or lead you to a great time. Not being receptive to others will only hinder your safety and your friendships. On that note, treat your friends' safety as if it was your own and never leave an urbexer behind. You go in together you should all come out together.

Overall it is up to you to be honest with yourself. For you to pan out what the rewards are, to push yourself forward. Always keep the risk to reward ratio in mind and you will be exploring responsibly. And remember... explore at your own risk.

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Just who decides which doors are closed in our world and whose interests do they serve? Do we wish to be kept in the dark, permanently safe, free from either harm or adventure?

For all of us there is a deep attraction to be found in opening these doors. They open a rift in our collected experiences and throw new light on the boundaries we've all been forced to accept.

The strange thing then is not that Urban Explorers exist; it's that the rest of us have forgotten that we are Urban Explorers too.

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