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Harmony Korine's New Book, Explained by Harmony Korine
The director, artist, and all-around creative chaotician released his first ever monograph.

Abraham Martinez



Portrait by Ari Marcopoulos

At a time when many would describe their relationship with America somewhere between “single” and “it’s complicated” Harmony Korine, 45, appears to still be in a honeymoon phase with the Land of the Free, describing his relationship with America as “Very nice—I feel relaxed; the people are sweet,” the director cum artist said in an email.

But Harmony Korine’s American romance is not your average love story—in fact, it could be the tumultuous backdrop to an award-winning biopic. Born to an Iranian-Jewish father—an immigrant—Korine was born in Bolinas, CA, was raised in a carnival, attended a “progressive school” and once he moved to New York during his teenage years, would attend cinemas alone to take in the work of masterful directors like Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Alan Clark, who would later go on to serve as his earliest mentors. Among other eccentric and grim aspects of his life, Korine ultimately finds pleasure in the simple things. When asked what his eye is usually first drawn to, Korine’s multi-part answer was not the least bit surprising: “A green Grapefruit Topo Chico bottle. The old dude in [a] speedo who rollerblades into traffic in Key West. Women who wear curlers in their hair to weddings. People with webbed toes.” Nice!

There’s no denying his cultural impact, either. Korine has helmed an arsenal of seminal films like *Kids* (1995), *Gummo* [1997], *Mr. Lonely* [2007], and *Spring Breakers* [2012], and created loads of artwork (you might recall this viral news story that involved a stolen painting of his back in 2015). It was only a matter of time, then that Korine’s career would make its way into a

book titled *Harmony Korine: Monograph*. It's a no holds barred look at Korine's creative process published by Rizzoli. It features numerous personal notes, film reels, and screenplays from his arsenal, but the indisputable highlight are pages filled with his art, organized neatly into chapters.

Teetering between the realms of art and film is a balancing act Korine performs with grace and abandon. "It all comes from the same place," but, he continues, "movies take a lot of personal life force. I enjoy the process mostly when I'm finished and I have a moment to reflect [whereas] art is much more enjoyable to make. There is nobody breathing down my neck saying I shouldn't use the color yellow."

The book not only marks a pivotal moment in Korine's winding road of a career trajectory, it poses questions about art, culture, and taste. Rarely are creatives afforded the ability to translate the same gravity of talent into other modes but Korine makes it look easy. How exactly? "I ignore mostly everything," he says. "I don't think about much, to be honest—I gulp a glass of cough syrup and go. I try to just make it entertaining." In that last endeavor he succeeds, and the man shows no signs of stopping.

Starting September 11, Korine will be the subject of a new exhibition at Gagosian gallery titled BLOCKBUSTER — an homage to the elusive VHS tape and the once-great video rental store chain that existed long ago in the century B.N., or 'Before Netflix.' Come 2019, his first film in seven years, *The Beach Bum*, starring Matthew McConaughey, Zac Efron, Isla Fisher, and Snoop Dogg will hit theaters. But until then, we luckily have his monograph to tide us over, and in an act of utter generosity, Harmony Korine agreed to walk us through one piece from every chapter of his tome.

Buckle up, kids.



*Underground America GATEKEEPERS (2013) in Korine's studio, Nashville, TN.
Oil, latex, house paint, and spray paint on canva.
s 82 x 71 inches (208.3 x 180.3 cm).
Private collection.*

"Underground America"
Gatekeepers (2013)

What were you thinking about as you created it?

How much I love Taco Bell and how great their Cool Ranch Dorito shell is.

Where did the inspiration come from?

From drinking an iced jug of Cherry Mountain Dew—it would make me feel invincible.

What does the piece mean to you?

It means the whole story is perfect. It means that it is all written in the stars. Lost but not forgotten.



*Experimentation and Mistakism THE REWINDER, 2013.
Acrylic on VHGS tapes 22 1/4 x 16 1/2 inches (56.5 x 41.9 cm).
Courtesy Gagosian Gallery, New York.*

"Experimentation and 'Mistakism'"
***The Rewinder* (2013)**

What were you thinking about as you created it?

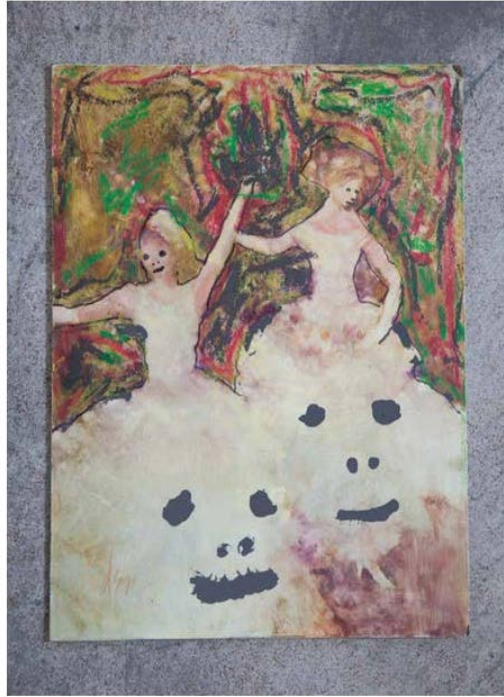
I was thinking my shoes are too tight because I'm wearing generic socks.

Where did the inspiration come from?

From when I was a teenager and I was robbed for my skateboard by a Cholo in a Kroger parking lot outside Las Vegas in the middle of spring.

What does the piece mean to you?

It means I'm the only person I know.



*Personal Myths UNTITLED, 2015.
Crayon and acrylic on wood board.*

"Personal Myths"
Untitled (2015)

What were you thinking about as you created it?

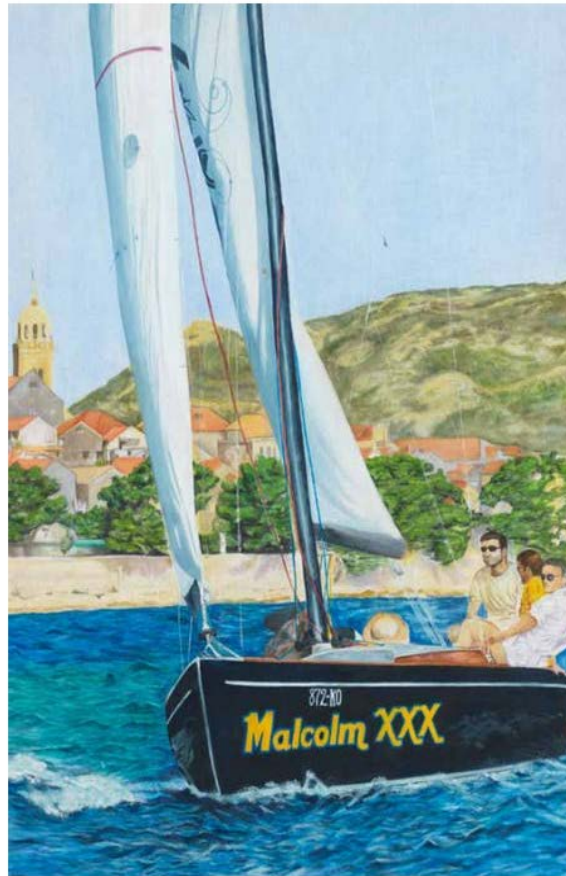
I was thinking I need to buy a gallon of that Daiquiri Ice Sherbert from Baskin Robins to keep the good vibes flowing.

Where did the inspiration come from?

I remember I made this without inspiration.

What does the piece mean to you?

Not much.



*Sex and Drugs MALCOLM XXX, 2017.
Watercolor on linen 54 x 36 inches (137.2 x 91.4 cm).
Collection of Larry Gagosian*

"Sex and Drugs"

MALCOLM XXX (2017)

What were you thinking about as you created it?

I was thinking how many douche bags go on boats. But I also love boats. I was thinking I'd love to have a boat called Malcolm XXX and sail it to Cuba.

Where did the inspiration come from?

From when I was a boat captain in the late 80s in Pensacola, Florida.

What does the piece mean to you?

It means this life is the greatest life we have. And then we all sail on.

"Harmony Korine Discusses His Films"
Spring Breakers

Can you explain to us how this scene in Spring Breakers came to be? What's the story behind it?

It came about in rehearsals and then evolved during the shooting of the scene. The girls turned the tables, they were more hardcore, game recognizes game, three kids caught up in the trap, but it was always about love, and that psychotic glint in the eyes—the smell of the ocean outside and the dripping menace that lurks in the bay and under the palms.