

The Good Wills of America (2024)

I came to Los Angeles through a back alley door, pushed by the sense that I had exhausted all possibles in N, and urged by a romantic mishap from which I was determined to outshine. My story isn't one of passion, ambition, and excess — When I moved here, I had no specific goal in mind. My one hope was that this country would become a new vessel for all my empty promises: a place to fix the past versions of myself I had failed to become and the futures I still wished to see. Until then, I always had itchy feet. This time, I embraced normalcy: took an office job, signed a lease, bought a 4Runner, and drove my way. I was ready to enjoy the sparseness, the flat, the cute, the subtle summer variations that lull the city to sleep. Before, I often felt the urge to dissociate until I realized it would turn me a puppet for external shareholders. Now, I was done fighting those obstacles. They say you reveal yourself by shedding masks over time to uncover a hidden core. The country didn't strip me down; it dissolved me. To become from here, I peeled back my skin until nothing punk-poor remained. I gulped my passion for friction, swallowed deep down. I rounded off my edges. I listened to the peeping cop in my head, whispering at every turn. I embraced passive assertivity. I made space for the fragmentation of my attention. I scattered my energy between Zoom calls, Sunday organic markets, good credit ratings, halfway conversations, and dating apps. I tucked my private dust dreams under the bed, trading them for a magnified social persona. I am not a bastion of resolve; against foes and pressures, I'm open to change, and I won't be crushed. Playing different won't protect you in times of collective corporate delulu. I was lying on the side of a bed the other day with a pretty French girl — she smelled like soap and margaritas. She played with my hair, then said, 'You're nice, but I can't see your face.' Some eyes and faces are wide open doors leading to landscapes; mine is a fence. And because desiring something always involves the uncertain transformation of the current state of things as they are, I'd rather accept the slow work of positive self-erasure than chase after change. Repressing my private fantasies in favor of collective ones helped me engage more with others: I am no longer ruled by the fear of vulnerability or attachment.