

TOGETHER A PART



LAUNCH GALLERY

RED RUBBER ROAD IS A COLLABORATIVE AND PERFORMATIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC DUO, FORMED BY PHOTOGRAPHERS ANAHÉLL & NATHALIE DREIER. USING THEIR BODIES AS A TOOL FOR SELF EXPRESSION THEY EXPLORE THEMES OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS. THEIR MOST RECENT PROJECT TOGETHER A PART CREATED VIRTUALLY UNDER THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE PANDEMIC FEATURED IN THE LATEST LOUPE ISSUE. I DISCUSSED THE PROJECT FURTHER WITH THEM, AS WELL AS THEIR INTERESTS IN THE FALSE REALITIES OF VIRTUAL INTERACTIONS, AS WELL AS THEIR NEW EXPLORATION IN TO VIRTUAL COLLABORATION.

How did you initially begin collaborating and form Red Rubber Road?

We've known each other since we were pre-teens and taking photos together has always been a part of our relationship. Throughout our adolescent years, we would take self-portraits together to document our corporeal changes and bodily desires. So working together developed gradually and organically. Looking back, a lot of our early work already had a performative aspect to it, which was the foundation of Red Rubber Road, the collective we officially founded in 2015.

Could you share with us your process of collaborating and creating each image and performance?

Our work usually develops through a spontaneous and interactive process, we immerse ourselves in a location and see how it influences us. Most of our work revolves around the theme of human relationships. We've known each other for a very long time, during which we observed our relationship with one another and with others so we have gained interesting insight that we explore through performative visuals. A lot of these concepts are initially developed in an almost non-verbal way, the research and conceptual work usually comes after the first images have already been created as the ideas mature and develop. On and off set we bounce a lot of ideas back and forth and the shooting process usually transforms our initial ideas into something different as we interact with each other and our surroundings. We both like to experience physical intensity and push ourselves while shooting, not only to get a good photo, but also to create new memories together.



From Together A Part ©Red Rubber Road

What are the main concepts that have developed from your observations and relationship with each other?

Identity is one of our core concepts, and we explore the way personal identity shifts and merges within relationships and how new identities form. There are also aspects of our work that aim to make the viewer question what is "real" or what is an illusion. Long-standing relationships often are the perfect mirror of just how subjective our perception is and how we create the "reality" that we, perhaps subconsciously, choose to see. The passage of time also plays a role in our work and we investigate how it affects our physicality and our psychology. This can best be observed when you view the development of our work over time.

Over the 5/6 years you've been collaborating together how have you seen and experienced Red Rubber Road and your collaborative relationship develop?

During our long-standing friendship, we have collaborated on various photographic projects together and Red Rubber Road was born when we really started integrating role play into these photos. Over time, we have become more and more of an entity and our themes have also become more defined. For instance, we currently explore the general theme of relationships a lot. We also have started to prioritise our work together and to collaborate more than when we first started.



From Together A Part ©Red Rubber Road

How has this adjusted more recently during the pandemic and collaborating virtually?

During the first lockdowns, we spent much more time in front of our computers and much less time in nature. We were both in lockdown in different countries and working within the constraints of our new reality helped us come up with new ways of working together. Over distance, we developed the series Together A Part: Extending The Physical Through Virtual Interaction. In this self-portrait series shot between Berlin-Zürich, we interact and merge with each other through a screen. By blurring our identities within these new parameters, we aim to mirror the sometimes cunning deception of digital interaction in relationships and intimacy. It was eye-opening to discover the limitless possibilities of shooting together even while being physically apart and this opens new possibilities for future collaborations that we possibly wouldn't have thought of if it weren't for the pandemic. Ultimately, working on this project together helped us stay sane and connected even though we were physically separated.

Could you describe a bit more about the cunning deception of digital interactions in relationships and intimacy that you're aiming to reflect in Together A Part?

When we interact digitally with someone, we can choose to only show a specific side of ourselves, the side we want to show or who we want to be. This is similar to photography. But, even when we have the best of intentions and use technology to simply stay in touch with each other and share our lives like we would do when we are physically together, one cannot help but notice the sides that are lacking. When COVID 19 first hit, we were on the phone or on video calls with each other so much and yet with time it became clear to us that without having someone in front of you, there will always be a certain longing – not just for human touch but simply for physical presence.

We are both fascinated by the blurring of lines between realities, and digital interaction seems to open a lot of space for us to play with this question.



From Together A Part ©Red Rubber Road

Together A Part feels different to your previous works in that it also feels quite emotive, which I assume is a reflection of the frustrations and restraints of the pandemic. In what ways has this period influenced your relationship and approach to collaborating together?

When the pandemic started, we were meant to be travelling together and we were really looking forward to spending time with each other shooting for Red Rubber Road in rural Spain. Instead of that, we both found ourselves in quarantine in different countries and we started exploring new collaborative options. Of course, this was a difficult time for us and working remotely was also very new to us. In some ways, these images expose our emotional state caused by being physically apart. Being able to connect with each other through a screen and even fuse our bodies together in the images without ever being physically in the same space has an absurd aftertaste that enhances the strange reality that we've all been subjected to.

At the same time, working on this project remotely gave us insight into possible new ways of working together even while being physically apart and this is something that could definitely influence our work in the future.

An aspect I really enjoy in your projects and something that's often shield away from is the playfulness explored through the form of your bodies. Could you tell us a bit more about your interest in using your bodies as a performative tool in this way?

Our bodies are one of the most accessible tools for self-expression and we can use ourselves in ways that transcend human identity. The best thing about using our bodies is that we don't need to rely on anything else, we can just jump into a landscape and begin to create. Since we photograph ourselves, we have complete freedom to do whatever we want, our only boundaries are our own. We are always looking for new ways to use our bodies to create uncanny narratives and this is a physically intense and playful process, indeed.



From Together A Part ©Red Rubber Road

What aspect of Red Rubber Road has been your favourite to collaborate together on?

The best thing about working together is being able to spend a lot of time with each other and to share the creative process. We mostly enjoy immersing ourselves in landscapes and experiencing physical intensity together. Since we both do this as a team, we can share the laughs, the pain and the excitement that ultimately create new common memories.

Together A Part seems to have formed a new chapter for Red Rubber Road, will you continue to work on Together A Part and produce work virtually in this way?

Shooting Together A Part opened our eyes to the endless possibilities of working together remotely. We are very excited about entering the digital landscape more and more and our upcoming work will reflect that.

Thank you both for discussing Together A Part with me, I look forward to seeing what comes next from Red Rubber Road!

MEGAN WILSON-DE LA MARE

Megan is an artist and writer based in Devon. Her main interests centre on family, place, and human behaviours. She is also Online Editor for Loupe, and curates the seasons of online features.

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RED RUBBER ROAD

Red Rubber Road is a collaborative and performative body of work by the photographic duo AnaHell and Nathalie Dreier established in 2015. These self-portraits portray both artists interacting and merging with one another and their surroundings in a powerful embrace of the unusual and the carnal. With their bodies, they compose reflections on intimacy and the boundaries of the self within relationships – the stages in close bonding where entities and identities mingle to the point that their existences blur and their own borders disappear.

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