

VERDANT FOUNDATIONS:
EXISTING, FORAGING, AND ROAMING
WITHIN THE WILDERNESS

To entrust one's survival to the wisdom of nature is a brave, but nearly instinctual, desire. Sitting in synthetic structures, a restless energy builds and the rattle of the leaves speaks to our roots. The damp whispers of the forest air call to us to find comfort in their boughs and in their branches; in their soil and in their seed; in their waters and in their warmth. There are those souls among us who do not hesitate before answering nature's maternal beckoning. They embrace the challenge and, rather than view a lack of material comforts as an impediment, they see an

opportunity to discover their surroundings—and perchance themselves—afew.

To some, sleeping under the stars enveloped in a blanket of fog and calm feels more like home than resting upon a feather mattress. Isaiah Ryan and Taylor Catherine, also known just as the Ryans, realized the blissfully unfettered nature of not having a physical address and called the open road home. The two freelance photographers finance their lifestyle through wedding shoots and adventure assignments whilst treading lightly when exploring surrounding landscapes. The Ryans have traded the soundtrack of the city, with its resounding car horns and

the steady chattering of people, for the melodies of flora and fauna. Below tall trees and amidst the forests' shadows, the Ryans have found a home.

Family traditions guide those with a keen ear and an awakened mind further into the landscape to rediscover the ways of the old and craft traditional ways to suit the ever-evolving world of today. The very name of Lori McCarthy's Cod Sounds underscores the proclivity of our contemporary culture to walk away from the knowledge of our ancestors and the gifts of the land in favor of modern conveniences and familiar comforts. The cod sound is the air bladder that helps to keep a cod afloat throughout its aquatic life; the fisherman of Newfoundland and Labrador found nourishment in this simple and otherwise discarded part of the fish. The desirable flesh of the salt cod was sent out to the rest of the world to enjoy and experience. Along with the heads and the tongues of the cod, the fishermen lived from the monetary profit that fishing provided and from the pieces of their catches that no one else wished to consume. Cod Sounds offers culinary tours encouraging those outside of Lori's community to experience the treasure of sea sustainability, and the story of a people who possessed the imagination and will to find fuel in the discarded, the discounted, the detritus.

Finding ingredients in the bountiful wilderness of nature is a treasure hunt of viridescent and bronze hues; it is only logical that such vibrant colors hold equally as mesmerizing tastes and textures. The fragrances of

gathering sustains guests and provides year-round vitality, warmth, and flavor. The restaurant is honoring the past, living in the present, and remembering tomorrow, leaving some resources for the darker and quieter days of winter, of cyclical hibernation, of stillness.

Leftover coffee, river water, and burgundy berry juice drip from Obi Kaufmann's paintbrush. The artist gathers images and transfers their innate beauty to paper in his growing collection of trail paintings. His essays give textual witness to the ecological sights in which he lives. Nature is both his home and his source of meditation and guidance. Obi's form of transcendentalism keeps him connected to the land and to himself, and this connective tissue resonates in his art. A meal may lay in wait in the bushes in the form of a rabbit or a young grouse, but a lesson lies in the process and a portrait in the scene. Obi speaks of the coyote that is present in his character, underlining the instinctual foundation of his chosen way of life.

To some it is about creating tradition as much as following it. Though young in years, Christian Watson finds himself rediscovering ancient wisdoms and new, but constant, truths. His illustration company interacts with the commercial worlds of big brands and shiny slogans, but his tiny pencil-drawn sketches have a raw authenticity that is captivating and intimate. A collection of seemingly simplistic tattoos lends his personal touch to his family's naval traditions. He is just as much a part of the story as his ancestors. Christian travels the open road: he is listening for the stories in the dust and he is telling the woods of his ponderings. We are connected to the forest, to the rivers, to the clouds.

Living in the wilderness is not always romantic. There is a gritty reality found in the damp recesses of a forest where fungus grows in moist soil that assaults the nostrils and coats the hand. Nature can be as loud as the din of a city, but the melody differs in its honesty and authenticity. That city din is created by us; nature waits for us to listen. There is more to take from nature than majestic panoramas; there is a supply of foods and flavors among the flora and fauna. The hunters and gatherers that live among those aural vibrations are collecting both elements for dinner and knowledge to keep in store for tomorrow.

Behind the doors of an exclusive restaurant, Magnus Nilsson synchronizes his menu with the rhythm of the seasons. The chef relies on ingredients that slowly ripen across acreage covering Northern Sweden. The bounty of summer and autumn months is harvested and stored in preparation for a long and dark winter. The intentional energy and time invested in hunting and

Wildside captures the layers and rhythms of a life that does not yield to nature, but that coexists within its verdant realm. When the constructed comfort zone is left behind, we are asked to slow down and be a part of a journey much longer—and perchance richer—than our own timelines. To be human is to bear the mark of an adventurer, an explorer, a seeker. There is no specific skill set required: just the presence of a longing to embrace the wild both inside of us and surrounding us. ♦