

**THINK  
CLEARLY**



**Annual Report 2021**

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# Divorce

2021 turned out to be an eventful year in many different ways, however, the defining through-line was the end of a 16-year long romantic relationship, legal separation and ultimately divorce.

I have always used the act of writing these annual reports as a way to process my experience, to shape it, to find meaning and as an attempt to own my own story. I've delayed writing and publishing this report because it has taken longer to work through things this year and to get enough distance, in order to be able to write something that I feel is appropriate to publish and share.

I haven't written about the breakup and divorce itself, because it is both too private and too raw. Instead I have decided to zoom out and reflect on the renegotiation of relationships: the romantic relationship is over, but we are still bound together by the children, so there's now a new kind of relationship being built. And at the same time, there are so many remnants of our time together, that are still important and enjoyable in my life, both in their own right, and as tokens of the many good things we had. Thus, this year's report is actually as much of a reflection on the things that perhaps haven't changed all that much. It's been rewarding to experience a level of peace with where I'm at, and I am proud to share this volume with you.

And as always there are photos and micro-stories throughout so feel free to browse quickly and just let your intuition guide you.

With love  
Mathias  
— Chairman of my life



Self portrait, January 2022, wearing the cheap and old bowler hat I also wore at our wedding in 2010 and frames without glass, bought in a vintage store during a trip to NYC in 2006.

# Uma and Futte

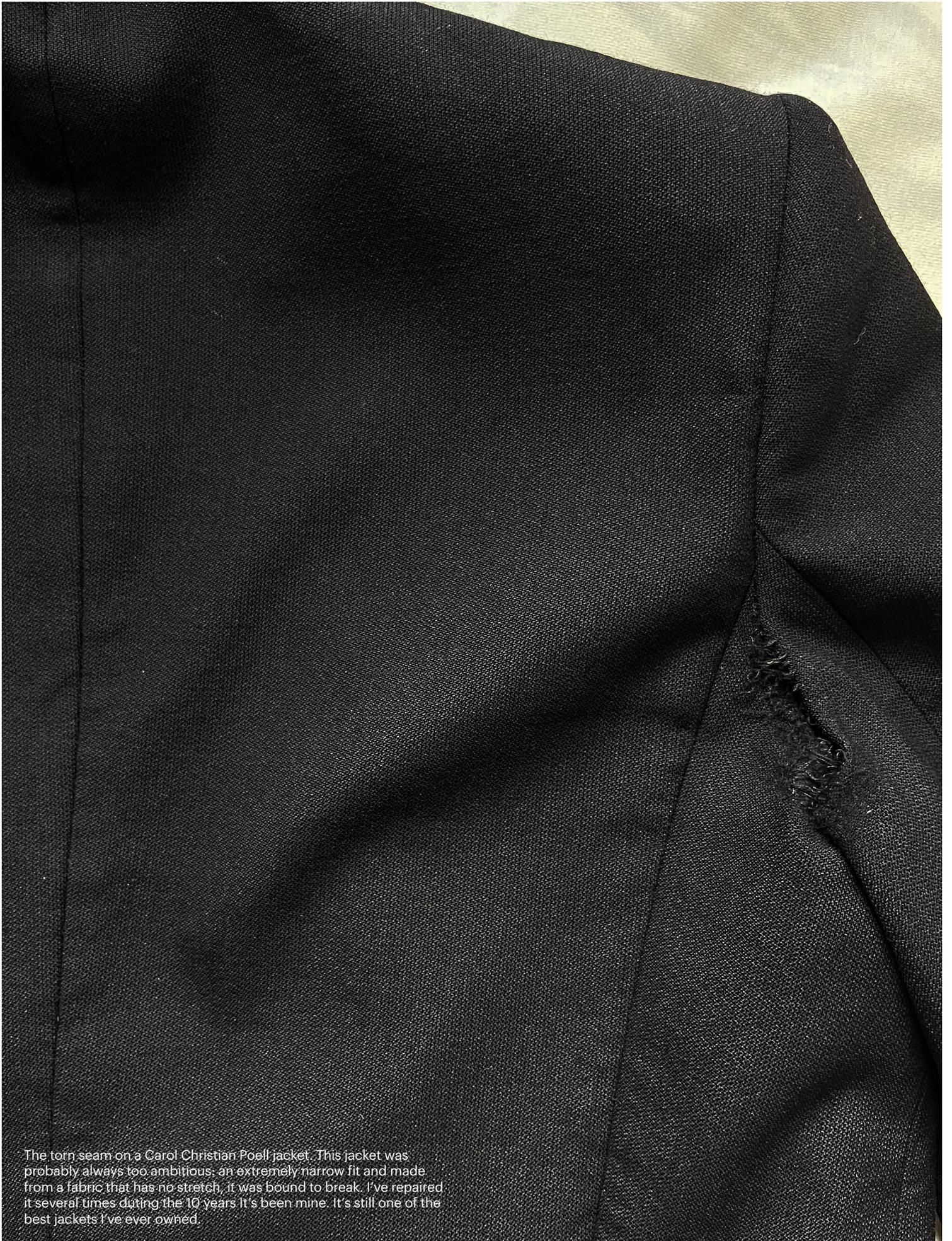




**Space to  
laugh and  
goof around**



All kids have been helping out in the kitchen. Here's Juno!



The torn seam on a Carol Christian Poell jacket. This jacket was probably always too ambitious: an extremely narrow fit and made from a fabric that has no stretch, it was bound to break. I've repaired it several times during the 10 years it's been mine. It's still one of the best jackets I've ever owned.



The lining of the same Carol Christian Poell jacket. I somehow really love that a jacket that is 10 years old can have these unmistakable signs of wear on the inside while looking sharp and perfect on the outside.

# Thread

We are seated for dinner. Across from me is a man named Stanley, who is wearing the same sunglasses now, as he did this morning in the church and in the afternoon when we were out sailing. I'm in Tallinn, the capitol of Estonia, because I've been invited to the wedding of Mary Jordan—a friend from NYC—and her husband Erik. It's August 2011, and I'm there with a good friend who has joined as my +1. The previous week I had been in Copenhagen to cover the events of fashion week. Between the fashion shows and parties and work I had gone for an evening run with one of my friends, around a very underdeveloped area. It was only five months ago that I had moved to New York, and at that time I of course had no idea that this area would eventually develop into a neighborhood called Ørestad, where I would end up living 10 years later. If anyone had told me this back then, I would have sworn that they were insane. Sitting at dinner in Tallinn, across from Stanley, all I knew was that my legs were still painfully sore from that evening run, because I had pushed myself too far. I've had a bad habit of doing that: Letting my willpower push through the sound of the natural warning bells of my body.

What's so wonderful about Stanley, is that in this moment, I know very little about him. Until this morning I had never met him. I only know his first name, and I figure that he is probably a photographer since he has been carrying two Leica cameras around all day. What struck me when I first saw him, was the casualness of how he carried those cameras. Young photographers who have recently invested in their first real camera, usually carry it around in a protective camera bag, hold it with care and are diligent to put the lens cap back on after each shot. Stanley had the two Leicas (~\$12,000 each) slung around his shoulder, dangling more like a purse. They were just a natural extension of him. And now he is sitting here with his mirror lens sunglasses in a dimly lit restaurant in Tallinn. With anyone else I would have found it obnoxious. But there is something about him that makes me love him, and while it will be another 10 years before I begin to really understand why he wants to cover his eyes, I instinctively feel that it's ok. It seems that he has earned the right to do so. At one point he alludes vaguely to the "things he has seen". Later, he actually removes the glasses and reveals his eyes. I don't recall what we were talking about. But it gives me

chills just to think about it. His soft and tender eyes, full of sorrow and longing, hidden behind those mirror lenses.

A few days later I'm in Berlin to visit Campbell MacDougal—the Canadian store owner I had met in Paris five years prior. He has relocated from Vancouver and his new store, Darklands, is a temple of the black avant garde clothing that came to dominate my wardrobe for a decade. I leave with a suit, unlike any suit I've had before: a Carol Christian Poell WIM COL/10. CCP garments are most often made from fabric that has been woven exclusively for CCP, and WIM is the name of such a fabric. COL/10 just means black. The suit is narrow fitting. The shoulders are intensely padded and sharp. And because the fabric is quite heavy, matte and a bit coarse to the touch, the whole thing is stiff and rigid and feels like armor. It's not comfortable the way sweatpants are comfortable. It is highly restrictive of movement, and you never forget that you are wearing it. But it gives me a kind of psychological comfort that makes it worth the sacrifice of comfort. Just like Stanley's mirror lenses shield his eyes, I feel like I'm shielded.

Back in NYC, I wear the suit a lot. But a few months later something happens. While trying to reach up for something, I hear the sound of something that tears. Did I just break my brand new suit? I take off the jacket and see that the seam which connects the sleeve to the torso has torn open near the armpit. I sew it back together the best I can. But I'm confused. Why did an expensive and supposedly high quality garment break so quickly? Why didn't they use a stronger thread? Determined to not let it break again, I make sure to make extra stitches. I'm making the jacket stronger. That's what I tell myself.

Ten years have passed since I made that repair. In those ten years I've also repaired other garments. But I still didn't understand why seams would break. I still have the black CCP suit, and it is still one of my absolute favorites. I still love the way it defines so clearly and definitively the boundary between me and the world around me. It's well worn. The lining reveals a decade of loving use. As much as I love it, I know it won't last forever, and this past year I worked with a local tailor in Copenhagen to create a new suit for me. A new armor. It was a very different process from picking out an existing suit at Darklands in Berlin. I met with the tailor almost ten times, to discuss the idea for the suit, to look at fabric, to take measurements. To try on the jacket and trousers again and again, with the tailor making minor adjustments

between each visit. We would discuss all the little choices and options. I still prefer a very heavy and rigid fabric and a narrow fit, which is at odds with each other. Let me explain. Seeing how he worked, how he talked, and how he argued for why certain things had to be done in certain ways, I began to understand his worldview: as a tailor he must have the deepest respect for the fabric. Why? Because the fabric is the most expensive ingredient, and it's the one thing he can't repair. All the seams can be fixed or changed. But if the fit is too narrow, the fabric too rigid and the seams are too strong, then the fabric will wear out much too soon, or even tear and break. It wasn't just in what he said. I could feel it. Just imagining the unnecessary strain on the fabric was somehow painful for him.

It turns out that there's a great reason for using thread that isn't too strong: because we can't prevent the wearer from potentially stretching too far, and thus damaging the garment, and because we want to ensure that the garment can be repaired, we make the seams with a thread that is intentionally designed to break long before the fabric tears. So when my jacket tore 10 years ago it did what it was designed to do. Because I stretched too far, it was bound to break. The seam broke in order to preserve the fabric.

I can't help but wonder how my life would have played out differently, if I had learned this lesson sooner. Have I been trying to hold together a relationship by using stronger thread? And by doing so, have I damaged my own fabric beyond repair? Or is it like the CCP jacket, which from the beginning was too ambitious and bound to break? It's all so new and I don't have clear answers. But when I look at my three children, I can easily forgive myself for trying with stronger thread. Perhaps in the fabric of life, those unrepairable tears are what makes us who we are.

## **Epilogue**

While researching this annual report I looked up Stanley Greene. As it turns out, he died in 2017. *Time* Magazine did a beautiful series about him and his work: [time.com/stanley-greene](https://time.com/stanley-greene)



Dior Homme coat from 2006. Worn hundreds of times and still looking great.



Lining of Dior Homme coat from 2006 showing signs of wear.

# A coat

It's really hot outside. It's summer in Paris, and I'm here on vacation with my girlfriend. We didn't plan it this way, but it just so happens that it's fashion week for menswear. The year is 2006 and in the past year I've developed a bit of an obsession with men's fashion. I particularly love the aesthetics of Hedi Slimane who has dominated the scene with his Dior Homme line of slim fitting suits and coats. Now I'm standing outside the headquarters of Jean Paul Gaultier, waiting in line and hoping to get into this season's fashion show. My name isn't on the list. But I ask anyway, and pretend that there must have been a mistake, but alright. I never had a power face. Who am I kidding? I wait anyway. The real press arrives. I see journalists in high heels and short dresses get out of black SUVs and walk in. I'm wearing jeans and a red and white shirt. There are a few others who can't seem to get in either. Probably students or something. At the last minute the guards suddenly let us in anyway. We hurry inside and find a few empty seats in the back. The music pumps. Lights are flashing. It's exhilarating. I made it into a fashion show.

We walk around the city. Stop at cafes and share meals and look at cool stores. I don't speak any French. I can't pronounce any of the words and I find it hard to just navigate the metro. But we are having a good time together.

After my surprise success getting into the Jean Paul Gaultier show, I decide to try my luck a second time. This time I'm more ambitious: Raf Simons is a cool and very respected avant garde designer, slowly coming out of obscurity in 2006, and his show is listed at a somewhat remote location a bit outside the city centre. With no invitation and my name certainly not on any guest list, I venture out to the place. On the train I notice a man in black boots, black jeans, a black t-shirt and with thick rimmed black glasses. He gets off at the same stop as me, and I use all my courage to ask him if he is also going to the Raf Simons show. Sure he is. I'm relieved that he speaks English and we walk together. His name is Campbell and he's from Vancouver, BC and I confess that I don't actually have an invitation to the show. He says he never gets it anyway, but he has a store and says he will just tell them that I'm with him.

Seated on long benches we wait for the show to begin. On the front row I notice a particular journalist from the *New York Times*, that I've been reading a lot from. Her name is Cathy Horyn and it's because of her that I've learned about Raf Simons. Campbell tells me about several cool places in Paris that I should check out and writes down addresses in my notebook in almost legible cursive. Among the places is L'Eclaireur. They have multiple locations but his favorite is the one on Rue Herold. I promise to send him an e-mail after I've visited. The show isn't really that great or inspiring. The clothes seem rather meh, but I'm having a great time. After the show is over and we are finding our way out, I walk up to Cathy Horyn and tell her that I appreciate her writing.

The first L'Eclaireur store we go to is amazing. From the street we enter into a little ante room where someone is sitting at a desk. But then a door slides open and we can proceed into the store itself. My girlfriend picks out a black woolen coat. She says I should try it on. It's strange to try on a winter coat on a hot summer day in Paris. But this isn't just any coat. This is a Dior Homme coat. It has two rows of buttons on the chest, three buckle closures and a belt. The store clerk is friendly and seems to wink at me, almost as if he's flirting. I look in the mirror and I can't believe it. It looks incredible. I feel incredible.

We also visit the other location on Rue Herold. A big green door. No sign. Just a tiny little buzzer. Unless you know what you're looking for, you'd never guess that behind the door is an eclectic selection of expensive garments. We press the buzzer and after a few moments the door swings open and reveal a dark grotto-like store. But I can't stop thinking about the Dior coat. And the next day I return to buy it. I feel cool using my platinum Mastercard, and it feels like summer can't be over soon enough so I can start wearing it.

It's now been 15 years since that trip to Paris. I still have the coat, which became the first item in a collection of winter coats. I've worn the coat frequently, and yet it's hard to tell. It looks pristine at first glance. It's a mystery to me, how a garment like this can be so durable, when so many other garments seem to wear out, fall apart and just start looking bad. It's not been repaired once. And the fabric looks fresh. And while I'm no longer in a relationship with the woman who picked the coat and encouraged me to try it on, I'm still left with a beautiful, tangible and useful artifact, which retains a bit of that original mystery that I find in all the greatest pieces of clothing.

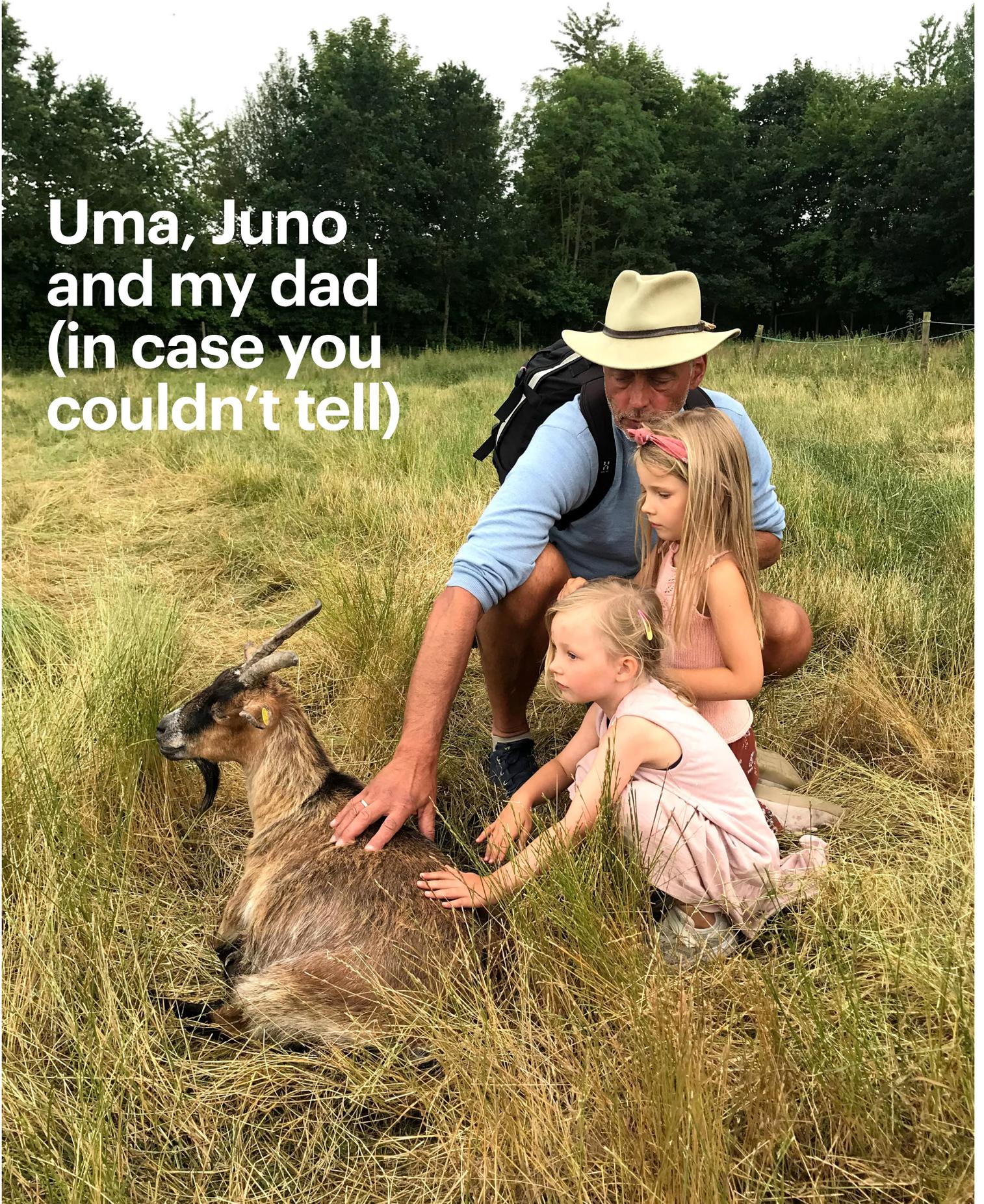
### **Epilogue**

Campbell MacDougal later became a long time collaborator. He moved to Germany where he opened his second store called Darklands Berlin. Darklands influenced my wardrobe for the next 12 years, and in many ways still does.



I'm still exploring colors. I'm also exploring short term car rental with ShareNow. That's fun!

**Uma, Juno  
and my dad  
(in case you  
couldn't tell)**





Frozen



Noah has really found the joy of reading.

# Roller skating at the school





See more photos at [www.gademode.dk](http://www.gademode.dk)

# Red shoes, part II

Last year I wrote about making a pair of red shoes. A crazy and stupid and tedious and absolutely amazing project, which perhaps more than anything else, helped me work through a life crisis. You can read the full story in the 2020 annual report.

Now it's been a year and a half of wearing the shoes. And I love them more than ever. I love every day that I put them on. And out of the shoes I rotate between during the week, they are the ones I look forward to wearing. The two pairs of black boots, the green shoes, the blue shoes (that I made this past year), and my assorted sneakers are fine for the other days. But it's the red shoe days where I feel most alive. And now the hard effort of last year is coming back and paying aesthetic dividends. The fact that the shoes were first dyed, which created a deep warm and slightly burgundy red, before being painted over with a layer of tomato red leather paint, has created the most amazing patina. As the paint is scratched off, it reveals the subtle darker red underneath, creating an effect I couldn't have wished for. See the front page of this report.

Now I have a pair of shoes, bought almost 17 years ago in New York during my first visit to the city that would later become my home and the birth city of all three children, on the first vacation with the woman whom I'd later marry and now also divorce. They got their red color during a life crisis which in many ways was tied to the gradual decline of our marriage. They are simultaneously the symbol of the hope of young love, the grief of a broken dream, the potential for renewal and reinvention and the durability of life in the face of adversity. And they look awesome.

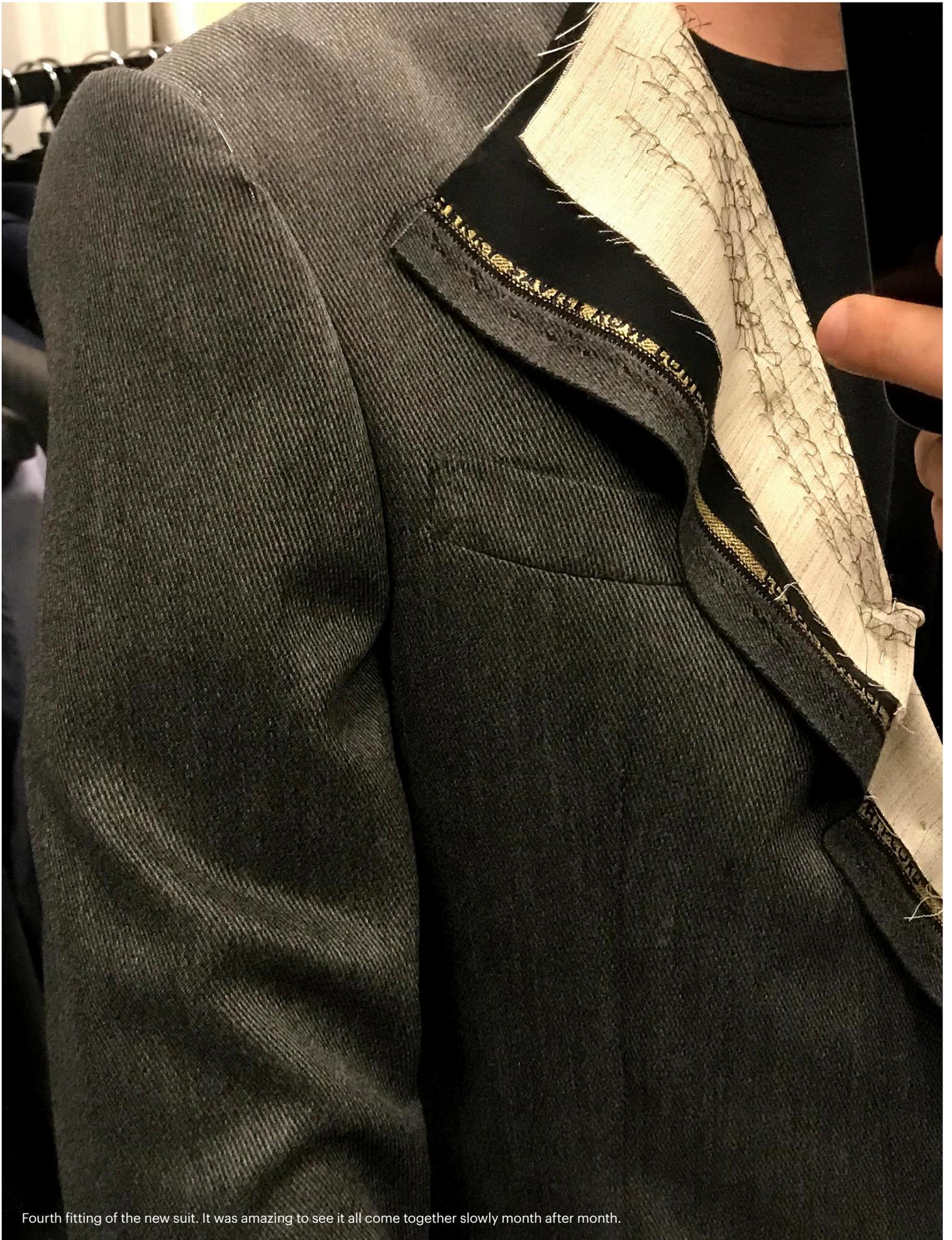
Looking at them through a camera also brings back another memory: my first exhibition as a photographer called Signs Of Time. A very small show that was about bringing the aesthetics of decay, that I had fallen in love with in NYC, back to Denmark and framing it, and giving it attention. It was, by all measures, an unsuccessful show. The reception was attended by friends and family only, there were no write-ups even the smallest local newspaper, and I sold only two of the eight photos: one to my parents and one to my in-laws (I wonder if they still have that photo hanging on their wall now.) And yet, this fascination with patina and decay has endured. And when I think about that unsuccessful show, those photos are still some of the artworks I'm most proud of.



Smithson, Daltrey & The Neighborhood  
Door, New York, 2009



My beloved grandmother at the reception for Signs Of Time in February 2010.



Fourth fitting of the new suit. It was amazing to see it all come together slowly month after month.

# Tailor

I'm going to see my tailor. I like using the possessive form. He isn't just "a tailor." Or "the tailor." He is *my* tailor. That's how I say it. This didn't happen overnight. I sought him out after we moved to Copenhagen. I knew I was interested in having a suit made for me, but I wanted to make sure that he was legit. At first I asked him to repair some old pieces. He fixed an old coat where the fabric had torn in several places. He also replaced the lining of another coat. And then he fixed the elbows on a jacket. It was that third time, where his magic revealed itself to me, and I was brought to tears when I saw the result. He has also told me the story of how he, as a child, had been helping his father, who was also a tailor. I decided that this guy would be the one.

So today I'm going to see him in order to set in motion the process for making the suit. We are meeting outside of normal opening hours so it's just me and him in the workshop. We talk about the possibilities. It's mostly just me talking about all my ideas and wishes. For a moment the world revolves around what I want. When you are making a bespoke suit, pretty much anything is possible, unlike made-to-measure. In a made-to-measure suit one person takes your measurements, and then someone else turns those measurements into a pattern, which someone cuts and others sew together. At each step there's a risk of loss of information, so outside of endless fabric, lining and button choices your options are limited. In a bespoke suit, there's only one tailor. It's the same person who takes the measurements who also makes the pattern, cuts it, makes it and remakes it. I want a hidden pocket on my sleeve where I can fit my metro card. I get to have it my way. It's a welcome break for me. These past weeks have been wild and turbulent, and yet it's nothing compared to what's ahead of me. As we discuss fabric choices, I'm still unaware that before this suit is finished I will be divorced. What I know, is that the woman who at this point in the story is still my wife, has spent the past few weeks in the hospital, while I've been home alone with the kids and I've started a new full time job. It's early April.

Because of Covid and lockdown, I've been working from home, which has made family logistics a lot easier.

I've never taken any paternity leave. Because we were in the US when our children were born, I got only two weeks off, and at the time we didn't feel that we could afford to go without my income. I've of course tried to do my share of the housework, but I've never really been the captain of the home ship.

That, however, has changed in the weeks I've been alone with the kids. Because I had no idea how long she would be away, I somehow knew that our old ways and habits wouldn't be sustainable anymore. I had to change how things were done at home, so I finally put on the captain hat and took charge.

I asked for help from friends and neighbors. I changed the norms around how we eat, where we eat and when we eat. Slowly and persistently I changed the way I did bedtime with the kids. Previously we had stayed in the room with each child until they were fully asleep, so with three kids it was a long process that required at least two adults. But carefully and gradually I made it possible for the kids to fall asleep on their own, and in turn I made it possible for myself to run the household on my own, without any help from friends.

What we wear is part of how we negotiate our relationship with the world. When wearing a beautiful gown to a party, you can both stand out in the magnificence of it, and at the same time show respect for the premise of the party: the festive vibe created by everyone putting in a little extra effort. The same with a suit or sweatpants—depending on the context you are in, you are negotiating the relationship by showing either respect for the expectations or by rejecting norms and insisting on your independence. Each day you decide how much you want to play along and how much you will stand out, and in turn what you are taking responsibility for.

When you buy clothes that are already made, someone else has taken responsibility for the way all the choices are put together. The fabric, fit, pocket placement, and many other tiny details. You only get to decide if you take it as it is, or reject it, and look for something else amongst the near infinite racks of an average department store. When making a suit with a tailor, you become responsible for many of those choices. It's liberating that anything is possible, like my little sleeve pocket, but at the same time it's also overwhelming because it's hard to fully

comprehend the consequences of each tiny choice. It was only once the suit was finished that I could see that the pockets had been placed too low to my preference. They are now placed on my hips instead of near my waist. This affects the whole silhouette, and it's not something you can simply change. This made me sad. And there were nobody I could blame but myself. It was my responsibility.

In those weeks while I was alone with the kids, the most fundamental shift I made, was that I began to take more responsibility in the relationship with the kids. Instead of giving them more options and choice, I gave them less choice. This wasn't popular at first. They had become so used to having influence on many things at home. But quickly I could see that they also relaxed. The burden of responsibility became lighter for them.

Just like with the suit, this change didn't happen over night. With the suit, I had to come in for several fittings where we put on the half-finished garment to see and adjust. Tiny adjustments. With the kids it required many small but persistent attempts. And many times I've been disappointed that something didn't work out as I wished. But unlike the pockets on my jacket, the relationship with my kids is open to endless re-negotiation. No mistake is final. And it is in this relationship the most important change has happened.

It has nothing to do with the suit, other than the fact that it happened at the same exact time: during those weeks where I was alone with the kids, I went from being their butler to becoming a real father for them.

As I renegotiated the relationship with my outfit through my tailor and renegotiated my relationship with my wife both before and through the divorce, I've seen how my relationship with my kids has changed. The result is that the greatest gift of 2021 has been the new foundation for how I relate to my our children.



Noah, July 2021. The first time he tried using an axe to chop wood was in 2018, at this exact location.



I had the honor of running a workshop with the whole team at Organic Basics in the fall of 2021.



Remaking the kitchen. Hanging the drawings was a quick solution to cover up the holes in the wall after my ex wife had moved out. But we all liked the look of it so much that it has now become permanent.



Uma in the snow. January 2021.

# Angels

I struggle with my faith a lot. I say that I believe in God and Jesus. I wrote about that last year as well. I go to church regularly. And I pray, at least somewhat regularly. At times I've felt touched and moved to tears. Other times I don't feel so much. At times I feel like I can put my beliefs into words and somehow make sense of it, at least momentarily. Other times it seems futile to even try. I catch myself often defaulting back to a view of the world where I'm at the center, my own greatness being the source of all the good things that happen. I forget to be grateful. And just as I've taken credit for it all, I get hit by something. That's when it would have been so wonderful if I had been able to maintain a more humble perspective. Where I'm not at the center. Where I don't blame myself for everything that goes wrong. In those moments it helps me to go to church. It helps me regain the perspective. And then as soon as I am feeling better, it seems that I abandon God once more. I still go to church, but I don't hear the words the same way when I'm feeling well. It doesn't reach me. I idolize my own independence, and I say to myself that "I'm grateful that I'm just so much better than everyone else." I know it sounds awful. But that's essentially what I do. That's the struggle of my faith.

However, there's something that happened last year, which doesn't seem to evaporate whenever there's sunshine in my life. Something happened, where I don't default to taking credit for myself. Where my humility comes naturally. Because last year I needed help. I needed a lot of help and a lot of support, both emotionally and practically. And I needed it often and I needed it at all hours. And in all these moments of desperation there was an army of angels that came to me. Not spirits or ghost or anything supernatural. Just humans, who showed up from all directions, at all times, as if sent from a higher power. They seemingly worked shifts. It was extraordinary.

I've tried to explain this to people who are defiantly atheist (side note, one of them lives and acts out such a deeply christian ethos, but just can't accept the whole language and mythology) and they of course try to explain it away. Surely I must have built all these relationships myself, they say. Surely, this should be explained by the goodness of the people who came to help, and not by some mystical God in heaven

who commands a bunch of so-called angels around. And it's true that I have built many relationships through the years. With effort and consistency. And it's true that each of the people who came to help me were good people, acting out of love. But. That's just not enough to explain how it felt for me. The sheer quantity of people and effort they each put in. The quality of the help and guidance, in small and practical steps. A rational explanation just doesn't add up for me.

There's no proof in my experience that angels are real. No hard evidence. No smoking gun. My point is also not that it's impossible to try to explain it away through other causal mechanisms. What interests me, is that this is a situation, where my rational brain, and the parts of me that continually struggle with my faith and my belief and my quickly evaporating humility, defaults to gratitude for the angels. This is a situation where I, despite my doubts and reservations and complications, just seem to find it more natural to believe in angels. To put it more simply: here's a situation where it's easier for me to believe in angels than to believe in a more logical and scientific explanation.



**One of the best things I did for my lockdown work life was to setup a studio in our basement where I could close the door and have a dedicated workspace.**

# Me we & us

My language is changing. Back in 2005 the words 'we' and 'us' meant myself and my girlfriend. We went on a vacation to NYC in 2005. We moved in together in 2006. We got married in 2010. We moved to NYC in 2011. Then we had our first child and for events that happened after 2013 this 'we' and 'us' also included our son. We moved to a bigger apartment. We went on a trip to Denmark. More kids came along and the 'we' grew. When we occasionally did things separately I'd make that clear in my language. The kids and I went to the playground. Me and the kids were home alone. In 2020 we all moved to Copenhagen.

After the divorce the words have been redefined. Using the words 'we' and 'us' when referring to recent and present events just means me and the kids. We went to visit my sister. My brother came to visit us. For historical events prior to the divorce the 'we' can still refer to all five. However, I also notice that when I tell my own story to people I have recently met, I sometimes avoid using the 'we', because when I say 'we moved to NYC in 2011' they might ask who that 'we' refers to and suddenly I have to explain that it was my wife at the time and we just got divorced. Not that any of this is secret. It's just one of those moments where the conversation hits a heavy subject a little too soon. So I will just say "I moved to NYC in 2011."

I still don't know what this all means. Perhaps it doesn't really mean so much. It's just something I notice. These little recurring moments where I'm forced to reckon with the change and impact.



When you're in a life crisis you don't need to always re-invent everything. Simply do what all other middleaged men do: get a bicycle, some lycra and become a MAMIL. I spent years trying to avoid such a cliché, but this year it was a life saver. I embrace it. And I don't mind the laughs. I find it laughable too. But it works.

# Tinder

I've never been on Tinder before. But here I am, excited and terrified at the same time. I create a profile, add a photo. Loading. Will I be able to handle this? Am I attractive? A divorced father of three—probably not so much. The very first person that Tinder shows me is a woman who smiles, my doubts evaporate, and my first thought is “I could marry her!” I'm hooked!

I have no idea what I'm doing. And at the same time, there's something so deeply familiar. Networking, meeting new people, telling your story and hearing someone else's, and letting the conversation happen, was such a core discipline in my daily life in NYC. I've missed that. Now I'm getting it, just through the context of Tinder and with the strongly implied dating frame and expectations related to that. Alright.

The first match. Chatting. Ticklish. Exciting. Shall we meet for coffee and a walk? Today? It's my first new date in 17 years. It's Sunday around noon. It's so wonderfully innocent and yet incredibly exciting. We go for a long walk and the conversation flows. Wind. Sun. She's tall. I notice that her eyes are roughly in the same height as the horizon. Three hours have flown by. We agree to meet again.

Dating is a new chapter that I'm excited to venture into.

I've added  
some color  
to the home.  
This warm  
yellow  
makes me  
happy.



# Paint

I've bought a bucket of warm yellow paint, a roller and some masking tape. I want to give my home some life. Some color. To break the monotony of the white walls and ceilings. I've never painted a wall in my life before, but a friend has talked me through the basics, and assured me that I can always just paint it over again if I don't like the result. But before I even get to the result, there's the act of painting. And it turns out that I enjoy it. I get lost in the manual work. The focus. Time flies.

While dating can be exhilarating, and I've experienced a great sense of liberation in that, there's another kind of freedom that I am even more curious about. That's the freedom of being able to be alone. To be by myself. And remaking my home has been a practical way to begin to engage with this. To make my home a place that feels true to me, and where I feel at ease. I've painted several walls in different colors, bought new furniture, rearranged things. I've experimented with keeping things very clean and clear and organized. And I've experienced with letting more chaos persist. I don't think there's a right balance between order and chaos. My aim is to learn how to notice when things feel right and when they don't. And just notice it. Notice when I feel the chaos is too much. And let it be for a bit. Or when the burden of trying to keep it all so very clean feel Sisyphean and pointless.

I think my primary goal for 2022 is to practice being more at ease with being alone.

# Me, my siblings and my dad ~1994



I didn't expect this year. And I don't know what I'm really hoping for in the year ahead. As I am typing this, it is already the end of May. But I will keep getting up in the morning to see what the day has in store. Keep praying. Keep forgiving. Keep asking for help and and keep offering to help others. Keep writing and keep listening, to myself and to others.



I made another pair of colored shoes. The red remain my favorite pair.

**Thank you for being part  
of my life.**



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