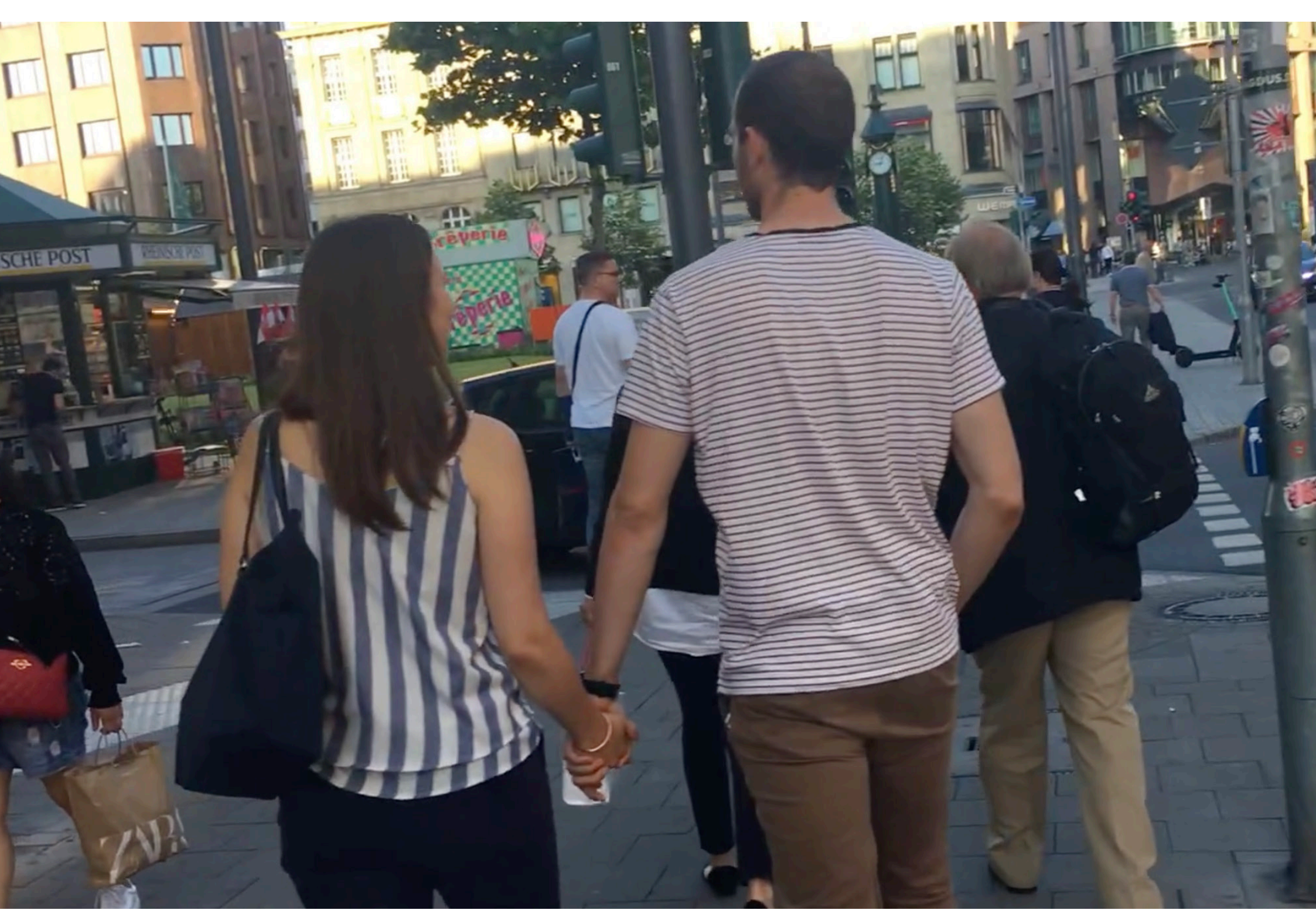


## *Reisebilder*









You desperately need a beautiful evening gown, a new business suit, an iPad – or a just a delicious cappuccino?

Welcome to the popular lifestyle world of the Kö-Bogen! “See and be seen” at the hot spot Kö-Bogen is bringing more and more people to the new vibrant heart of the state capital Düsseldorf. International trends by renowned top brands and insider tips have their home here. In the unusual staging of displays in the curved show windows in Daniel Libeskind’s architectural ensemble, exciting inspirations are created for shopping fans and urban strollers from around the world, with brands like Apple, Tesla, Breuniger, Windsor, Unique, Porsche Design, Sansibar, Hallhuber, Twin Set, Rüschenbeck and many more. The Kö-Bogen is not only “A Paradise for Ladies” as in Émile Zola’s well-known “shopping-spree” novel, but also a paradise for all people, who love beauty and are inspired by it.







I digitally visited the Koesnigsalle—or Kö, to the locals—because I was in Portugal, on an outwardly glamorous but inherently flawed vacation. Visiting a sick friend, who is always sick in some kind of way.

The images Philip sent made it really seem like there was no Coronavirus.

The thing is I'm sick too—lately I'd been feeling that I didn't bother to exist or not.

I felt the same alive or dead.

“The world feels more alive than I.”

- A note from my journal.

So I wanted to make something to feel good.

About shopping malls.

Kö-Bogen is the shopping mall designed by Daniel Libeskind.

To do a show in a shopping mall. What the fuck is this? During a pandemic?

What is shopping?

My friend and I went to the beach and she was like, “I'm always shopping,” when we were collecting shells.

(It isn't enough just to reproduce something, or to make something in a washy watercolor, or to retype out your journal).

It made sense to go somewhere virtually, even with the threat of letting my colleagues down.

The thing that gets mixed up is subjectivity. Where you are walking, where I am walking through your eyes.

It makes sense to displace subjectivity like this.

Philip sent me a video walking through the train station and up onto the street.

He left his headphones with the mic on by accident and I could hear him breathe and swallow.

I was touched by how close I felt to him.

People hold hands, adjust their masks, walk their dogs. They congregate, seeking the shade, loosely, sporadically.

I suppose what I asked him to do was pretty shitty, because one shouldn't film people in public without asking.

Heinrich Heine was a writer, he made *Reisebilder* (“Travel Pictures.”)







The last time I was in Dusseldorf it was with a new friend, Carla. We wanted to work on a project together, and she thought a good idea to see if we could get along would be to spend a few days together. So we met for the first time in Dusseldorf, we stayed at her friend's place, but ended up getting an Air BnB which was shared with up to ten other people, whom we never saw. The building it was in was unfinished. There was "nice-looking" common area, and one bathroom, and then, down a long hallway, seven or eight rooms. All of the doors were closed; some of the lights were on, and one could hear soft voices from behind them. Half of the building was still under construction. I had a dream that all of the people in the rooms came out at once into the living room. I took a bath, the open window was directly below the train tracks. The trains thundered by, and I was afraid to leave the bathroom, that one of the ghostly tenants would emerge.







‘ “What I want to do in the *Ladies’ Paradise*,’ Zola wrote in his notes, ‘is to write the poem of modern activity. Hence, a complete shift of philosophy: no more pessimism, first of all. Don’t conclude with the stupidity and sadness of life. Instead, conclude with its continual labor, the power and gaiety that comes from productivity. In a word, go along with the century, express the century, which is a century of action and conquest, of effort in every direction.’ Despite the destruction of many of the traditional little family shops, *The Ladies’ Paradise* is a hymn to modern business, a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit.”













Without work, the day stretches out like a cat.

For the first five days, because of Corona, I am quarantined in my friend's villa. She leaves me food by the door as if I am one of the animal visitors to her house in the Algarve:

A seagull, or one of four street cats

Pisser (or Ladyboy),

Cartoon Cat,

Chili, or

Salami (named for the perpetual open wound on his chest).

I am constantly reminded here of beach vacations I had as a child.

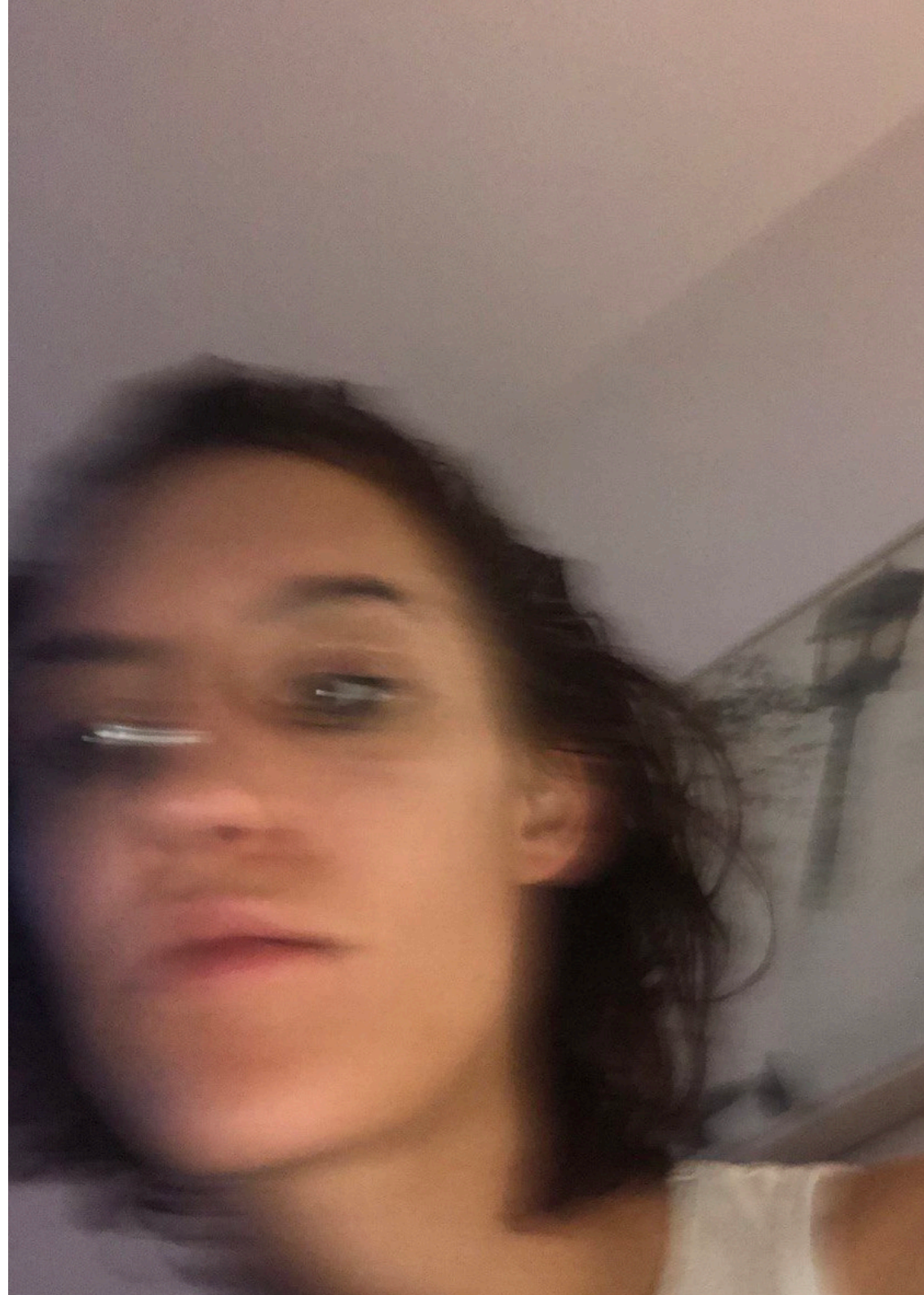
At 9 pm I remember well the boredom, in a sweltering hot room, reading dime novels from the rental house like they were the Bible, listening to Mandy Moore.

Thinking about when we shared a stew and a woman came up to us and said we were a handsome couple, and I asked you if that had ever happened to you before, and you said yes, it had.

*The department store played a leading role in the marketing of lifestyles that simultaneously demarcated and blurred class distinctions, encouraging everyone to aspire to a middle-class way of life.*

*Whereas, for the working class, the displays of luxury were signs of their own misery, of the fact that the new social wealth which their own labor was producing had become the source of their impoverishment...*













PATRIZIA PEPE



*I'm aware that nobody will answer, but that's not important, as long as Ivan's phone is ringing in the darkened apartment, I know its exact location, the ringing is intended as an announcement to everything in his possession: I'm calling, it's me. And the heavy deep armchair will hear it, where he likes to sit, suddenly dozing off for five minutes, and the closets and the lamp over the bed where we lie together and his shirts and suits and the underwear he'll have tossed on the floor so that Frau Agnes knows what she has to take to the laundry. Ever since I've been able to dial this number, my life has finally stopped taking turns for the worse, I'm no longer coming apart at the seams, no longer getting into troubles I can't get out of, I'm not progressing anymore nor am I swerving from the path — because I hold my breath, stopping time, and call and smoke and wait.*



























The sky is filled with stars.

My friend and I, we ran, across the beach in an ecstasy I haven't experienced since I was a child. We cartwheeled, dug our hands into the sand, and just ran, the waves crashing, the sun setting, we cried out wild and jubilously.

She laid down on her back in the sand.

I just wish things were normal, she said.

We still had the shore, and the sea.

The surfers rode the gentle humped waves, only silhouettes, all pointed towards the horizon.

The seagulls waited in one corner to colonize the beach once we left, kicking their feet around in the sand, not making much noise.

The beach was on the side of a cliff. The young couples doted on each other with ease and languid movements.

Another friend said, distractedly, I like how oil and sand mix.

He described a fifty something man photographing either his son – or his boy-friend – and how this man looked great, befitted by this combination. The point of this story was not the odd couple, but the combination of sand and oil, in defense of tanning as a practice.

The pleasure of a white sheet after a swim.





Sofia Leiby  
2020



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