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Image Essay by Aurora Chisté

Swimming for the Change You Want to Make

Who Are These Entrepreneurs—and Why Are They Under Water?

Everyone in these photographs is an entrepreneur, most in the San Francisco Bay Area. I met a few through TheGlint, including co-founder Damian Madray, who appears in two photos here. He and others founded TheGlint in 2012 as a “social experiment,” says its website, in a San Francisco mansion where “entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, poets, engineers, and other creatives” lived together for nine months. As Roseann Cima in *Slate* frames “the idea behind TheGlint”:

What if you could live at TED? If you could have your morning coffee with the most galvanizing voices in technology, entertainment, and design, would you be more driven to do something great? Especially knowing you would have to report back to them when you got home for dinner?

The experiment, which has also been described as a “heroes accelerator,” drew so many people that it had to shut down as a communal work and living space. Damian Madray’s “Manifesto” on TheGlint’s website notes that it “succeeded and failed in many ways,” and that it’s now a venue for art salons.

Before TheGlint, I came up with the idea for “Entrepreneurs Under the Water” with some friends at Blackbox Mansion, the model for entrepreneurial co-houses or “accelerators” in Silicon Valley. In 2010, that’s where we shot the first pictures in what became many photographs over the next few years.

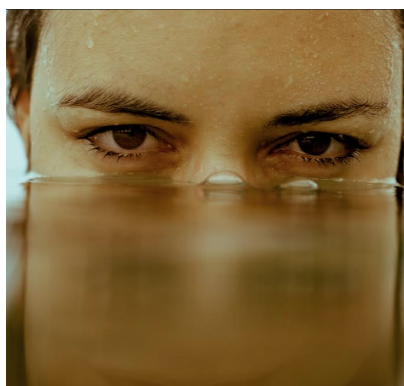
All the subjects in these pictures are friends, and at the time, they were launching their first startups. I decided to picture them underwater to represent the spirit of entrepreneurship: challenging the impossible, just as living underwater is impossible for human beings. Entrepreneurs challenge what already exists and try to innovate by creating new solutions. For me, water represents a discomfort zone for most people—a place where entrepreneurs and creative artists live. All the subjects in these photos re-create normal situations (eating a strawberry, reaching for eyeglasses), overcoming the discomfort of posing underwater.

Here’s a list of the entrepreneurs in this image essay, in order of appearance:

- Photos 1 and 2: Philipp Berner, CTO and founder of KeepSafe (San Francisco)
- Photos 3 and 4: Damian Madray, CEO and founder of Hunie, TheGlint (San Francisco)
- Photo 5: João Batalha, CEO and founder of Oranki (Mountain View)
- Photo 6: Aurora Chisté, CEO and founder of Hack for Big Choices (Palo Alto)
- Photo 7: Mandeep Waraich, working on a tech startup (Mountain View)
- Photo 8: Paulina Arreola, founder of Lavadero (Mexico City)

Publishing Information

- [TheGlint](#) [4] and “[The Manifesto of TheGlint](#)” [5] by Damian Madray.
- “[Room with a Viewpoint: A Web 2.0 Commune at TheGlint](#)” [6] by Anisse Gross, *The Bold Italic*, May 31, 2012.
- “[What the Failure of TheGlint, a Group Home for Idealist Techies, Says About Silicon Valley](#)” [7] by Roseann Cima, *Slate*, September 18, 2012.
- “[Blackbox Mansion Is Playboy Mansion for Geeks](#)” [8] by Hermione Way, *TNW*, April 25, 2011.



Aurora Chisté, a perennial vagabond, moved from Italy to San Francisco seven years ago. While in San Francisco, Aurora has pursued her passion for social entrepreneurship, education, and growth. She is currently CEO and co-founder of [Hack for Big Choices](#) [9], a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create a global movement that empowers people to solve local problems related to health care, design and technology, and education.

Aurora says she lives between two worlds, the online and offline ones. She uses her camera to travel between the worlds, telling stories about them. Her photography is inspired by Henri Cartier-Bresson's famous definition: "To photograph is to put on the same line of sight the head, the eye, and the heart."

For more "Entrepreneurs Under the Water" and other images, see [Aurora Chisté's Flickr photostream](#) [10]. You can also follow her on Twitter [@TwittAurora](#). [11]

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[4] <http://theglint.com/>

[5] <https://medium.com/@themadray/the-journey-to-redesign-heroism-continues-7cdd9732885e>

[6] <http://www.thebolditalic.com/articles/1908-rooms-with-a-viewpoint->

[7] http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2012/09/18/theglint_what_the_failure_of_the_group_home_for_idealists_says_about_silicon_valley_.html

[8] <http://thenextweb.com/video/2011/04/25/the-playboy-mansion-for-geeks-blackbox-mansion-is-silicon-valley-accelerator/>

[9] <https://www.facebook.com/HackForBigChoices>

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