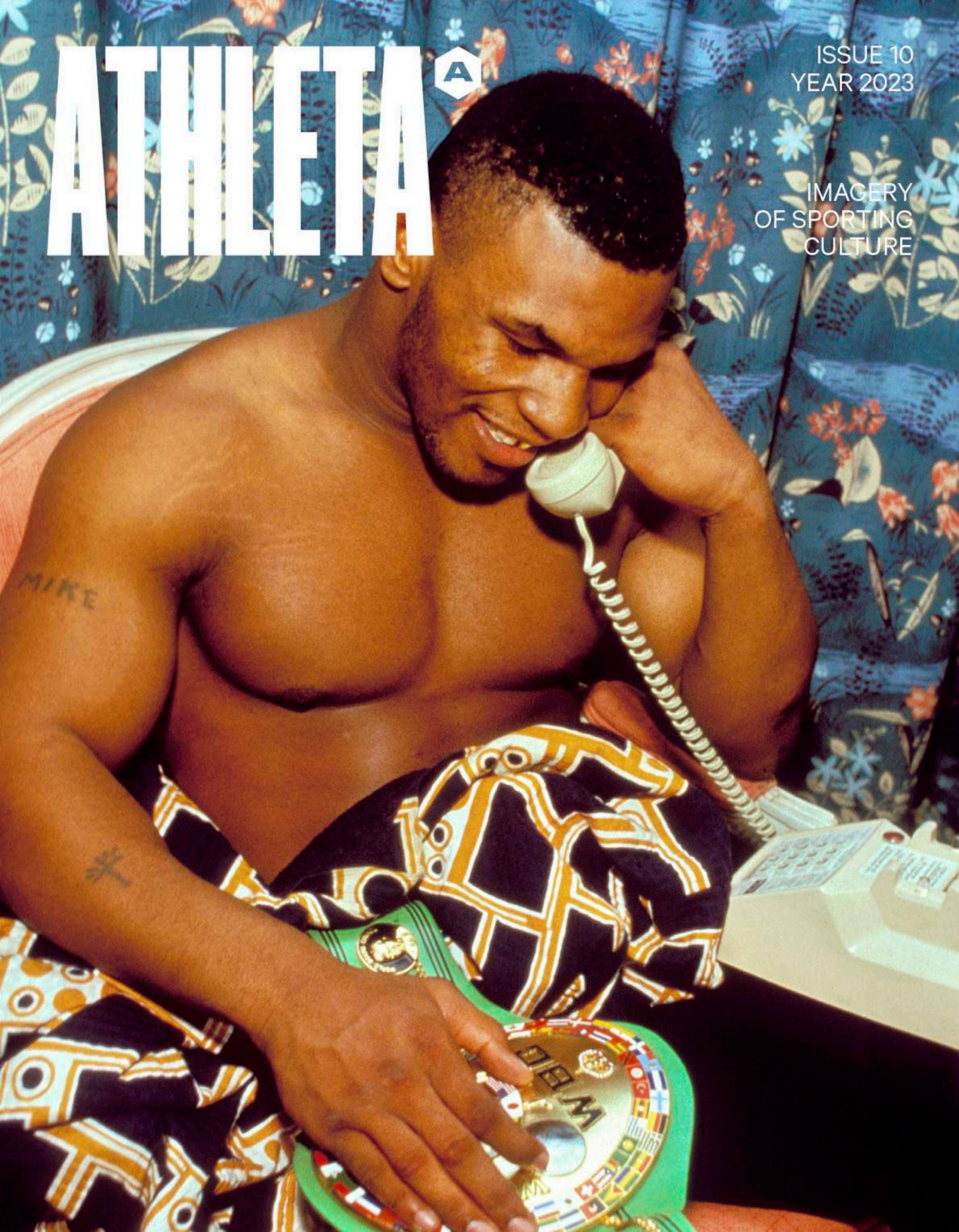


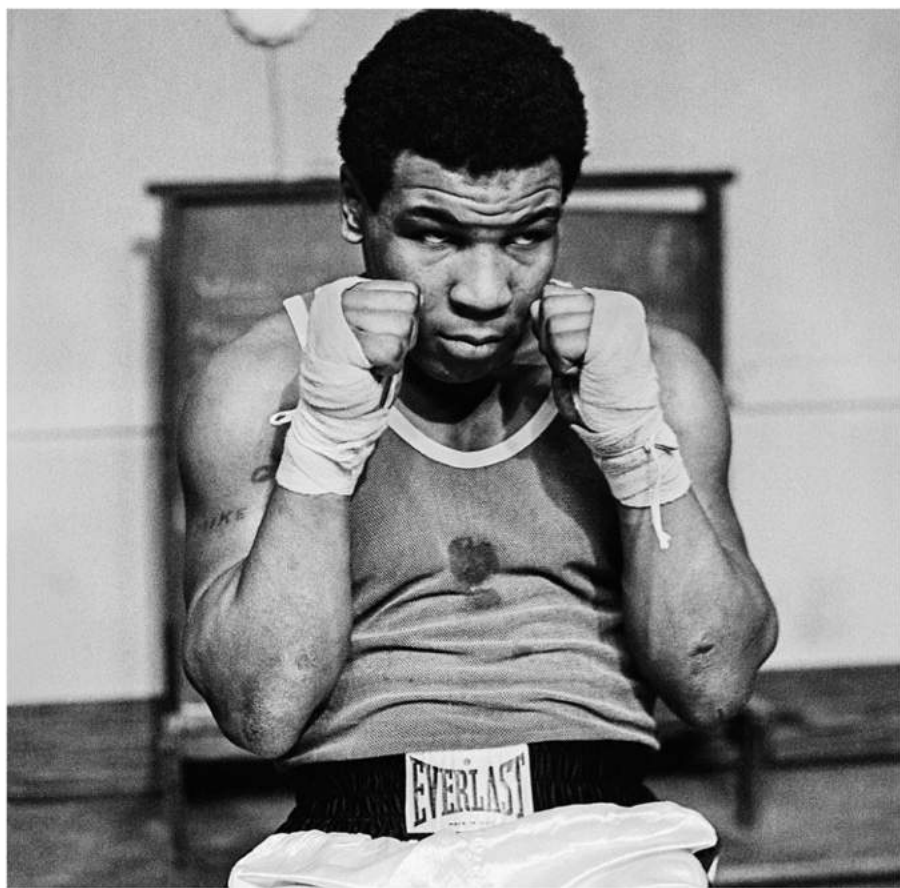
# ATHLETA



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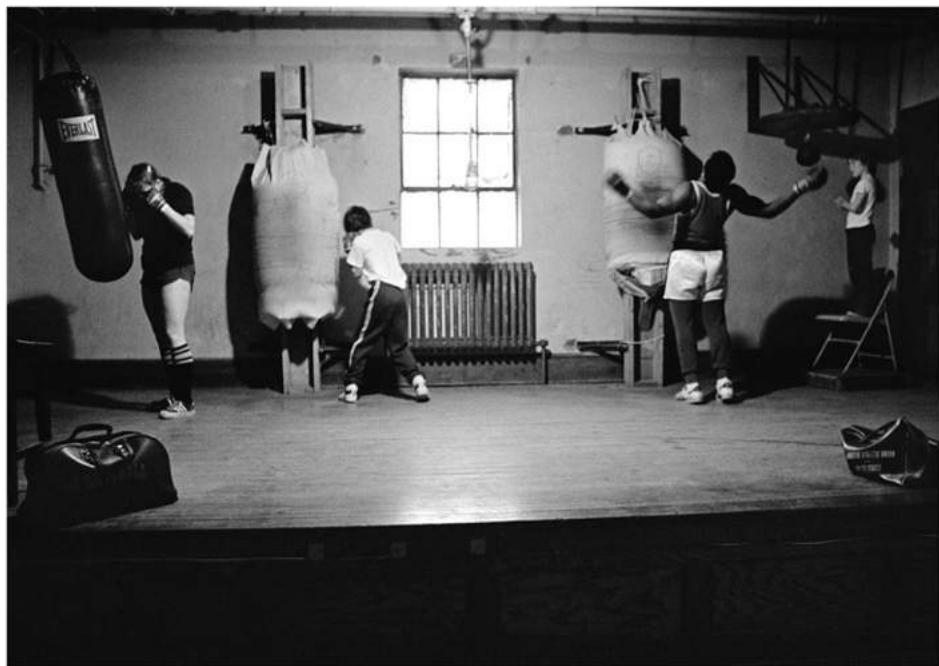


# BEHIND MIKE

Certain athletes tear down the logic of time and sport, etching themselves into a razor-thin firmament, where the divide between pop culture and sacred legend dissolves, giving way to the transcendental construct of legacy. While still under construction, **Mike Tyson's** legacy is unmatched. It's an extreme story of the irrational, **the noble art**, a psychoanalytic masterpiece composed of blinding lights and desolate shadows, a narrative and experiential roller coaster bereft of reference points but ever able to unleash emotions. Spanning heavens, hells, and redemptions, describing one of modern sports' most complex and enigmatic personalities is an impossible task. But we can observe, explore, and even understand it by diving into the biographical gallery of **Lori Grinker**, a New York photographer who met a teenage Mike in 1980 and left a tattered Tyson alone with his ghosts at the height of his success a decade later.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
LORI GRINKER

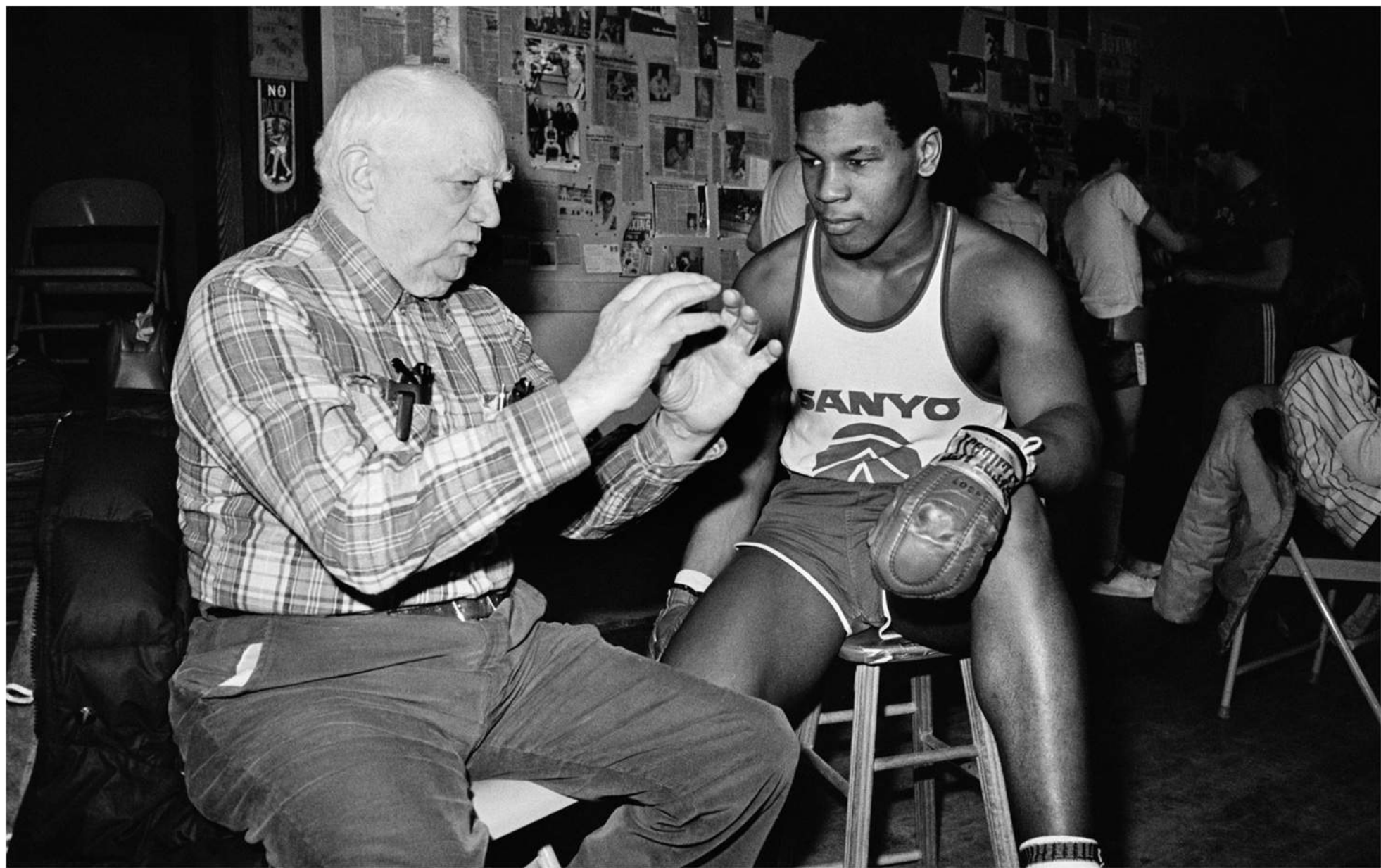
INTERVIEW BY  
GIANMARCO PACIONE



LORI GRINKER



BEHIND MIKE







— You've had the opportunity to shoot various title matches, magnetic moments with cult status. What kind of vibes did you feel on those occasions, and what were some of the situations you got to observe?

I was there when Mike won the title for the first time. It was incredible to witness those moments in the hotel room with his co-managers. While everyone was busy celebrating, Mike was just looking at the belt, and then he called Camille. I think it was hard to realize that he'd just become the youngest heavyweight champion in history. At big fights, switching between the locker room and the ring was difficult because organization and timing forced you to choose one or the other. My access to Mike was not absolute, and as time went on, the restrictions increased. I didn't attend his famous parties, even if I wanted to. No one wanted those evenings on record. Mike was flung into an insane world: once while I was at the house in Catskill NY, he was checking his answering machine messages and there were many from girls wanting to meet him. Cus used to talk to him about dating, trying to give him confidence, because Mike was so shy...

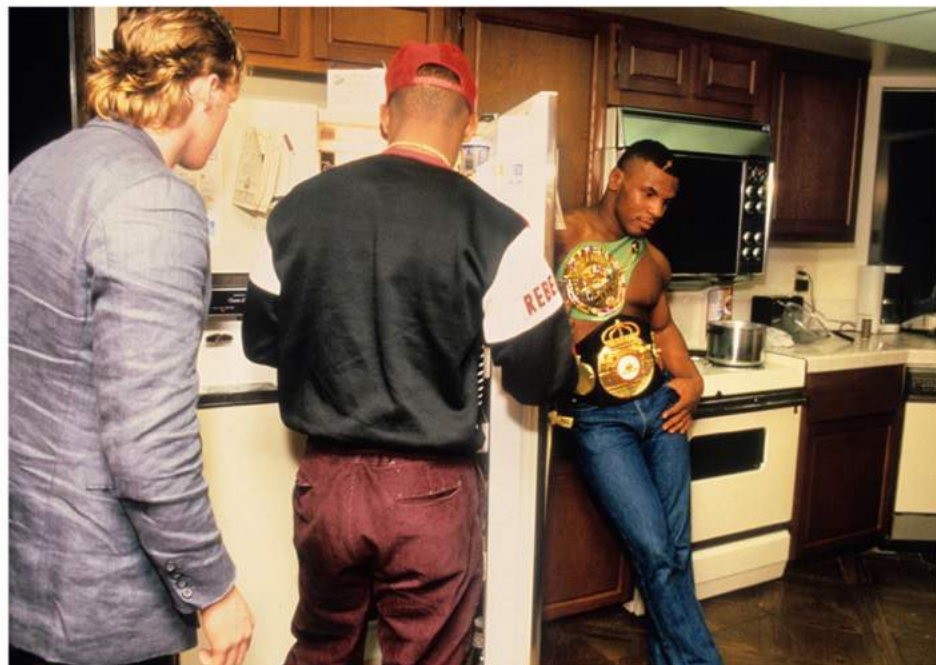
— After meeting that young, shy Mike Tyson, what was it like to watch him shift and sink into that downward spiral? And what was it like to watch him rise from his ashes?

When he rose to global stardom, everything changed. First, he was surrounded by family. Then, people with questionable intentions started to show up. I recall an example of this process. In '88, Jim Jacobs, Mike's longtime manager, died. I came to LA for the funeral and then had a meeting with Don King. Mike said he wanted to accompany me. Don King had not paid me for a job

I did for him, and Mike got him to write me a check on the spot. As we left the office, he told me he'd never sign with him. He went back on those words a few days or weeks later. It was a rough time. This constant negative tension loomed over him: everyone was using him, and the outcome seemed inevitable. During that time Mike grew increasingly unapproachable, so I drifted away and worked on projects that had nothing to do with boxing. He lost everything in the coming years because of his choices, but now it looks like he's made a good life for himself, and that's great. After many years, we had a reunion for a shoot commissioned by Rolling Stone. That's when I told him about the book I planned to publish, 'MIKE TYSON.'

— The myth of Mike Tyson is bound to last forever, and surely, your images will play a key role in passing down that legacy. How does that make you feel?

We're talking about a period of my life I wouldn't want to be the definition of my entire career. I'm equally proud of other projects and reporting. Of course, it's great that Mike's myth continues to reverberate and, at the same time, connect with new generations. Right now, for example, I'm in Newburgh, a small city overlooking the Hudson River in Upstate New York. There's a very artsy restaurant there that attracts people from the entire community. It plays an important role, because this area has fallen on hard times, and there are some obvious social problems. The owner (a long-time Tyson fan) asked if he could put up a picture of Mike. After a few days, he told me that all these young girls were stopping to admire that shot, literally going crazy over Tyson. He can't figure out how he's still so popular among teenage girls who hadn't even been born during his heyday... And it surprises me, too. I guess he really does hold a place in history no matter when someone was born.



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