

COWBOY BOOTS

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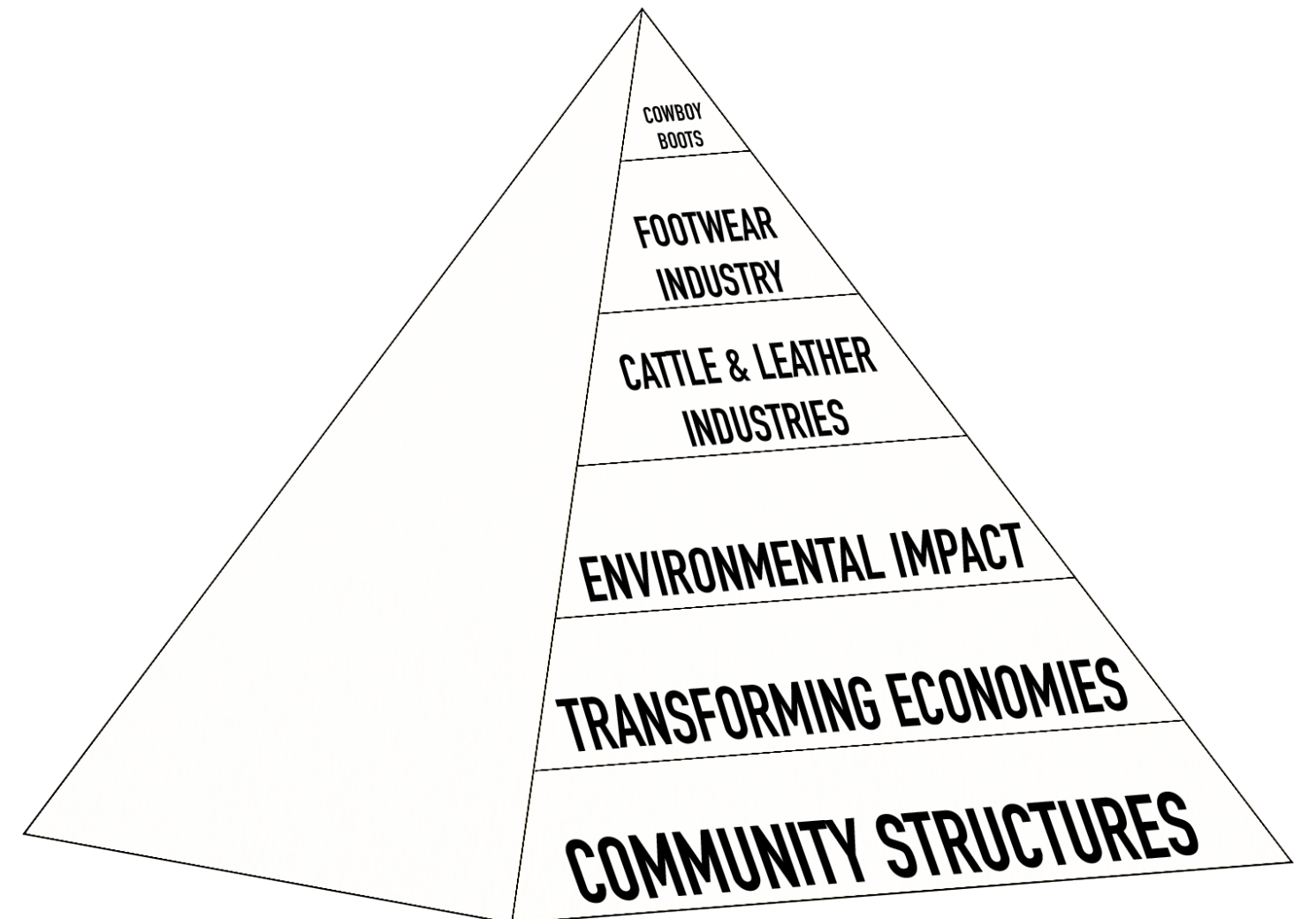
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HISTORY OF THE COWBOY BOOT

The design of cowboy boots cannot be attributed to a single individual. They were America's evolution of the riding boot and iterated upon a lineage of several designs that have global origins. Most closely related was the Wellington boot which derived from the Hessian boot - footwear worn by Hessian soldiers that featured scalloping around the top and often tasselling as well, but the influence of vaqueros on American cowboys cannot go unmentioned. While the Mexican riding boot does not as closely resemble the cowboy boot, the knowledge of the trade and many of the other worn garments and accessories came from the neighboring Mexican cattle ranchers known as vaqueros. The Wellington boot was also connected to battle; Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, commissioned his bootmaker to alter the design of the Hessian boot to be slimmer (and also removed the decorative elements), so that it could be worn under the pant leg rather than over. British patriotism over the Duke's military feats popularized the design, and it ultimately became the standard for the design of riding boots.

The cowboy came before the cowboy boot, so prior to their invention, those who worked with cattle wore the cavalry boots they were issued in the Civil War which were essentially Wellington boots. 1867 began the golden years of cattle driving; meatpacking facilities and railroads were perfectly balanced in scarcity and presence to require the efforts of cattlemen. The cattle drives that followed the Civil War are what sparked the desire for the design elements that resulted in the American cowboy boot. Cowboys were looking for more leverage in the stirrup and additional protection considering the nature of the work and terrain they traveled. Bootmakers along the Chisholm Trail began crafting boots with taller heels, rounder toes, and stronger insteps to meet these new desires, and several household names in the cowboy boot world - most still around to this day - were founded over the next several decades.

These peak times for the cowboy were short lived. By the early 1900's they found themselves at the margins of society with diminished purpose as railroads and the meatpacking industry expanded, removing the need for long cattle drives. The image of the cowboy and their lifestyle entered popular culture where it has since been retained. Those short few decades in the last half of the 19th century developed the Western iconography that became the dominant image associated with cowboy boots thereafter. The skills of the cowboy became a form of entertainment through exhibitions at national holiday celebrations with rodeos as well as traveling shows such as Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley's. This began the taming and moralization of the cowboy which set up their subsequent portrayals in film and television throughout the 20th century.

This disconnect from the life that cowboy boots originated from did have some impact on the decorative elements of the boots being made, but designs more in line with what would be considered traditional from bootmakers were still maintained which has some role in the endurance of these makers through the years all the way into the present day. Although there are a rare few individuals left today that would fit a more strict definition of a cowboy, there's an abundance of people who an encounter with would perfectly explain why the idea of cowboys has persisted in a sense that's more genuine than most Hollywood caricaturization. While the tactile offerings of cowboy boots is a selling point for some consumers - especially for those still working in cattle as well as many people in construction - a key value in these boots is what they're able to embody and preserve, particularly what is not easily seen or otherwise expressed. Regardless of any ties to history, ways of life, or popular culture, there is also a strong argument to be made for the boots' aesthetics alone. The cowboy boot market is projected to nearly reach \$2B USD by 2025 with a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.16% between 2017 and 2025. Cowboy boot sales have sustained through economic recessions, and the Southwest market is incredibly consistent with demand always persisting.



Late 19th Century - Early 20th Century (from the National Archives - archives.gov)



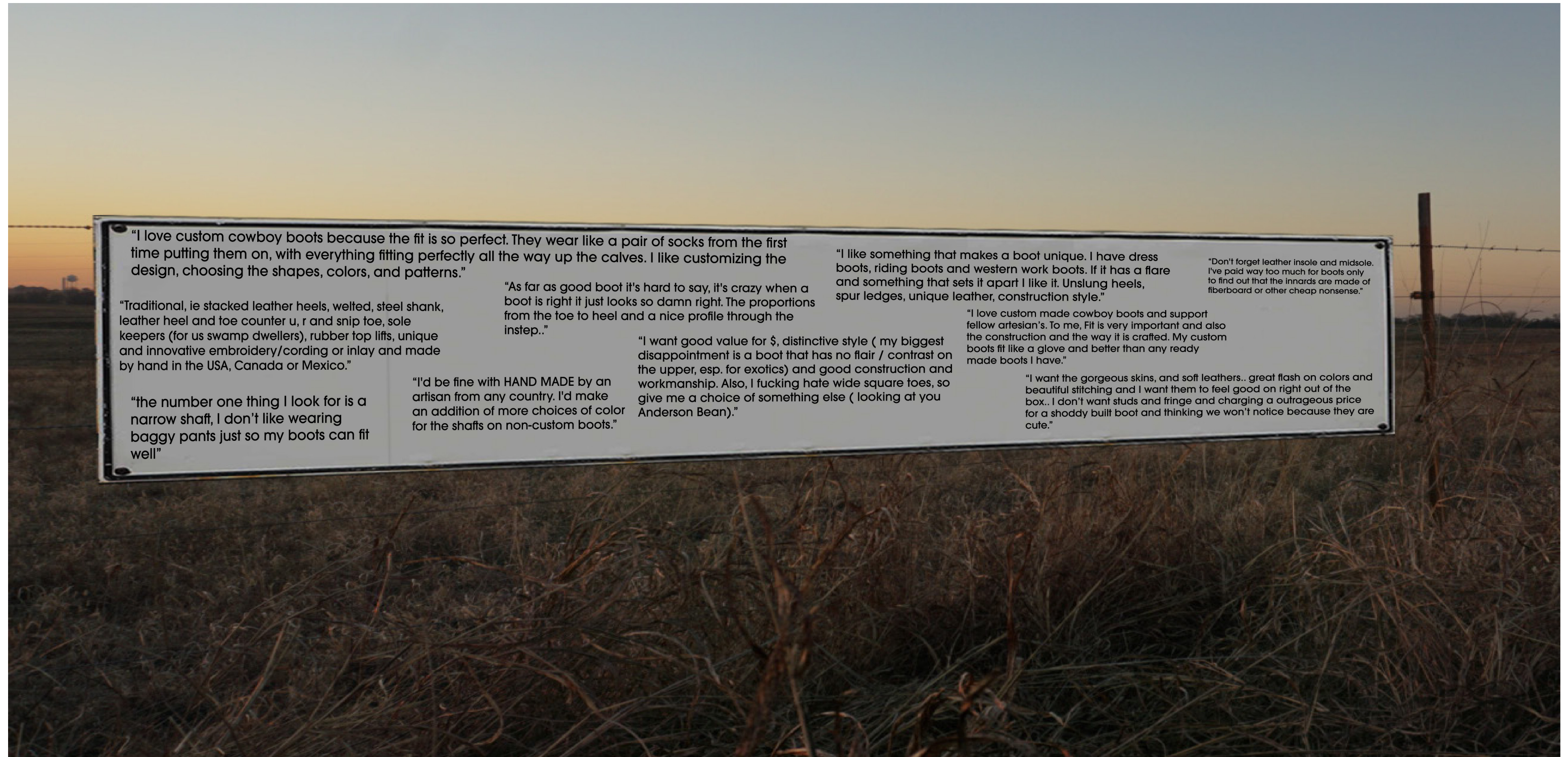
20th Century Hollywood



Entrance into high fashion

DIGITAL GRAFFITI WALL

This digital form of what would normally be a physical graffiti wall for participants to write on was executed by posting a series of prompts in online communities for cowboy boots asking people what they're drawn to and what they'd like to see more of in the market. This was intended to identify current trends as well as solidify the "canon" of cowboy boots. Several of the posts used the word traditional which backs up this idea of there being essential qualities in cowboy boots that must be retained on the market at all times. Additionally, multiple participants recognized custom made cowboy boots as being vastly superior to a mass manufactured boot. Some people even split their postings and literally separated what they wrote about custom boots. This research method further demonstrated the value of craftsmanship within this world. What is presented is a reconstructed form of the responses from their original forum format.



"I love custom cowboy boots because the fit is so perfect. They wear like a pair of socks from the first time putting them on, with everything fitting perfectly all the way up the calves. I like customizing the design, choosing the shapes, colors, and patterns."

"Traditional, ie stacked leather heels, welted, steel shank, leather heel and toe counter u, r and snip toe, sole keepers (for us swamp dwellers), rubber top lifts, unique and innovative embroidery/cording or inlay and made by hand in the USA, Canada or Mexico."

"the number one thing I look for is a narrow shaft, I don't like wearing baggy pants just so my boots can fit well"

"As far as good boot it's hard to say, it's crazy when a boot is right it just looks so damn right. The proportions from the toe to heel and a nice profile through the instep.."

"I'd be fine with HAND MADE by an artisan from any country. I'd make an addition of more choices of color for the shafts on non-custom boots."

"I want good value for \$, distinctive style (my biggest disappointment is a boot that has no flair / contrast on the upper, esp. for exotics) and good construction and workmanship. Also, I fucking hate wide square toes, so give me a choice of something else (looking at you Anderson Bean)."

"I like something that makes a boot unique. I have dress boots, riding boots and western work boots. If it has a flare and something that sets it apart I like it. Unslung heels, spur ledges, unique leather, construction style."

"I love custom made cowboy boots and support fellow artisan's. To me, Fit is very important and also the construction and the way it is crafted. My custom boots fit like a glove and better than any ready made boots I have."

"I want the gorgeous skins, and soft leathers.. great flash on colors and beautiful stitching and I want them to feel good on right out of the box.. I don't want studs and fringe and charging a outrageous price for a shoddy built boot and thinking we won't notice because they are cute."

"Don't forget leather insole and midsole. I've paid way too much for boots only to find out that the innards are made of fiberboard or other cheap nonsense."

CATTLE INDUSTRY

Seeking to understand the cattle industry today was a logical next step because this is the same industry that developed the design of cowboy boots, and this industry also supplies the raw materials for cowboy boots. Both the design and materiality originates from this piece of the puzzle. I had familiarity with a ranch located in Ennis, TX that raises American Wagyu beef, and having my sights set on a high end beef product in particular was deliberate. It was my hypothesis prior to any meeting that the high end product would translate to increased care in how the cattle are raised and most likely better environmental practices. I was fortunate to meet the head rancher and head chef within the company at an event where I was able to introduce my topic and areas of interest. An obstacle that eventually became an insight slowly revealed itself as I tried to bring a more formal interview into fruition - my interest in cattle and leather resulted in me being passed between the ranch manager and the chef who handles everything with the kill center. Both people figured the other would be more helpful to my project. While this was an early lesson for me to be even more explicit in what I'm looking for, it also demonstrated the degree of separation between these worlds that seem like they should be much closer. That distance is certainly an opportunity for improvement. I ended up coming across another American Wagyu rancher, and with a more clear explanation on my end that emphasized how they would be helpful, I was able to secure a meeting with the ranch manager at A Bar N Ranch in Celina, TX. From the interview, what was made abundantly clear was again an issue of separation. The lack of understanding that people have about where their food comes from has resulted in this industry being one that is consistently demonized, but most of that is largely due to an absence of honest awareness of what truly goes on or the full extent of the value created inside of this industry.

My hypothesis about higher end beef proved to be both true and untrue. What was uncovered about the nature of the industry was the interdependence that ranches had on one another. The business operates on fine margins, and most ranchers cannot afford to raise cattle from start to finish, so they instead specialize in one phase of the life cycle. A Bar N Ranch is a rare exception that can take some of their cattle all the way from birth to harvest, but they also will sell or loan out cattle at various points in their life in order to keep operating above water. Each cow requires 7 acres of land to avoid overgrazing and still needs an additional 2500 pounds of hay and 350 pounds of a protein/fat source over the winter months when the grass is dead. About \$550 is spent a year on each cow to keep it alive, and A Bar N Ranch has about 2000 head of cattle. This is what demands that ranches work with one another, and what that results in is a really unique business environment. I can't say that the wagyu rancher cares more for his animals than a rancher that focuses on the animal at the stage of being 800 pounds, and often these two parties are going to take care of the same animal at different times in its life. My hypothesis was predicated on a view of the industry derived from a distorted reality. The truth of the matter is that the people in this business dedicate their lives to ensuring the welfare of these animals. Yes, with a goal to make money off of them. A desire for profit does demand they take care of the animals - the false depiction of overcrowded grow yards would not even be a profitable strategy, but the emotional relationships these people have with their animals are much more powerful. It's also not entirely fair to separate the emotional side from the aspect of making a living off of this honest work. It was recognized in the interview that the shortening of the distance between the end consumer and their local ranches would help with the margins as well as the issues of understanding.

Interview with A Bar N Ranch in Celina, TX

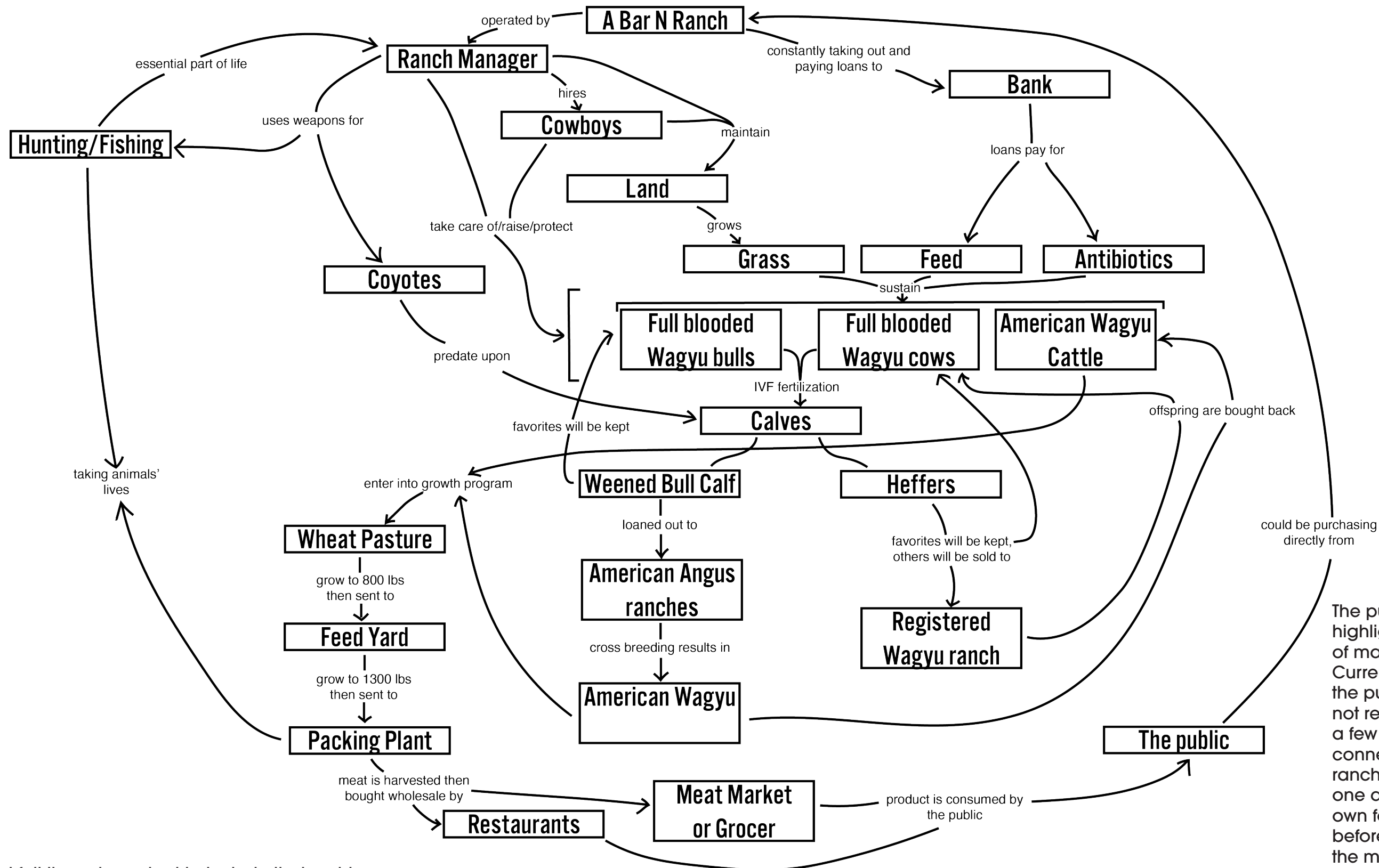


“There’s nobody in the world that loves animals more than most people who do what I do for a living.”

“The deal is honestly, one generation back everybody - my parents or most people were only one generation away from a farm or ranch. Now everybody is two or three and you kind of start losing touch with where all that stuff really comes from.”

“You basically live your life to keep these cattle alive, but also your ultimate goal is to kill them and make money off them so it’s a weird deal. And I understand why people don’t get it.”

“Talking about boots, everyday I do something different - I work in an office, I work outside, and I work horseback, so I have these ostrich skin if I'm straight office mode. If I'm going to be in and out of the office but not horseback, I wear these, or if I'm horseback I've got a pair of my Beck's boots that I keep my spurs on.”



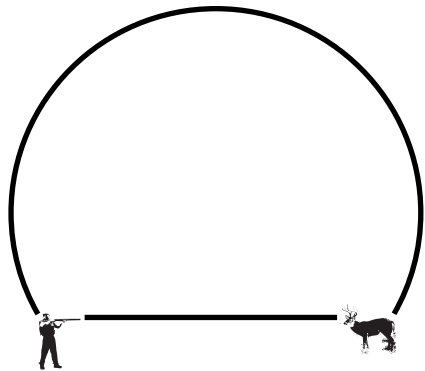
I felt it was important to include that on his rare days off, the rancher I spoke with seeks to be further in nature - camping along a river to go hunting and fishing. This is his form of a break which gave a lot of insight to the connection to nature, and it shed some light on the conceptual differences of harvesting animals you raise versus those in the wild.

The public's role in the industry was highlighted as having the capability of majorly shifting the dynamics. Currently, the last arrow that connects the public back to the ranch does not really exist with the exception of a few outliers. Without that full circle connection, the consumer and the ranch are the farthest away from one another. Consumers cook their own food at home less than ever before, and on those rare occasions the meat still passes through many hands before arriving at the market. The restaurant industry operates on extremely fine margins, and the beef industry does as well. If consumers bought directly from their local rancher, a lot of issues would be solved money-wise but also by increasing understanding.

OJIBWE DEER

HUNTER **A short film by Finn Ryan, *Hunting Deer: Sharing the Harvest.***

Coming off of the interview at A Bar N Ranch, I felt it was necessary to further investigate hunting and the process of taking an animal's life. I wanted to learn about this topic from indigenous people because of the deep rooted respect for nature as well as the ritual and ceremony involved which is something that is largely lost today in relation to food. I attempted to contact multiple tribes with the ambitious hope of being able to act as a fly on the wall during a hunt or harvest. The closest I got to this was a phone call with someone from the Nez Perce Fish and Wildlife Commission which is committed to preserving the land as well as the Nez Perce people's rights to it based on traditional teachings and cultural values. I encountered a lot of reluctance in the people I spoke with about being involved with my research, but I felt that this was rightfully so because there has been such an extreme and violent removal from the way of life that they still actively protect. There are larger contexts that complicate my position as an outsider regardless of any genuine inclination that I feel like I have about learning from their culture. In place of the unsuccessful primary research method, I came across a short film showing an Ojibwe deer hunter's journey from the hunt, to harvest, to leather tanning, to making art from the leather. This was in a lot of ways in support of the insights from the meeting with Cade by showing a more deliberately spiritual relationship with animals and harvesting. It also concisely demonstrated the depth in value offered in an animal's life. The following storyboard depicts the journey of Greg "Biskakone" Johnson through his hunt.



The two individual beings - deer and hunter - exist inside of a complex environment, and they become intimately connected at the moment of interaction where the deer's life is taken.



Biskakone notes that the journey out of the woods with deer is his favorite moment of the process - a sacred time. The deer is this glowing orb, radiating value as it's transported.

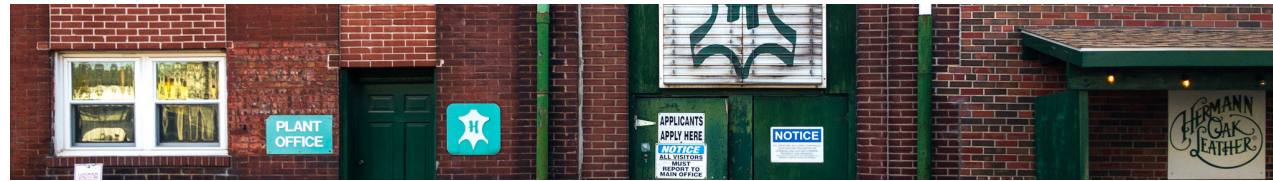


The animal becomes a source of sustenance, joy, sentiment, memory, and art for Biskakone himself and his community.

LEATHER

Leather is one of humanity's oldest practices that has been part of our lives since its discovery by ancient civilizations. Through trial and error, people reigned in a complicated chemical process to create one of the most important materials of human history. To this day the exact chemistry of leather tanning is not fully understood with scientific discoveries still emerging, but the process has been modernized in ways both good and bad. There's now more control over the final product including an increased understanding of the waste generated, and the speed of production that we are capable of today is astonishing although that has come at the cost of serious environmental impact. Cattle leather is a byproduct of beef production with packing plants sending hides to tanneries for conversion into leather, so connecting leather to the environmental concerns of the cattle industry is an unfair and inaccurate approach to assessing the qualities of the leather industry. The animal skins would still be harvested even without the leather industry, and there's still plenty of work to be done on the sustainability within the boundaries of actually producing leather. Almost all tanneries make their leather using chemical tanning agents, specifically chromium salts, in place of the traditional vegetable tannins. This shift has occurred not only because of the quicker production time, but also because the properties of chrome tanned leather differ from natural leather. Vegetable tanned leather is often stiffer, less uniform in color, and patinas over time while chrome leather is considerably more pliable and consistency is more easily achieved. The footwear industry is responsible for 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and within the footwear industry, leather is often the biggest contributor to the pollution caused. This can be attributed to the previously touched on fact that 90% of leather is chrome-tanned. The volume of shoes produced and purchased has led manufacturers to rely on the single day production of leather using toxic chemicals. Industry regulators such as Leather Working Group (LWG) most notably have stepped in to attempt to guide the industry onto a better path with stricter standards and initiatives to improve the effects of leather.

In my visit with Hermann Oak Leather, an American tannery established in 1881, we further discussed the differences between the two main types of leather. Hermann Oak solely produces vegetable tanned leather using tannins from mimosa and quebracho tree bark. The waste from Hermann Oak's leather production is limited to lime and some leftover tannins in the wastewater, and this minimized impact enables them to stay ahead of industry standards and mostly self-regulate. A key finding was that a key reason footwear manufacturers shifted to chrome leather was for its ability to be steamed. In manufacturing a shoe, the leather is shaped around a shoe form (last) which can be a lengthy steps, but steam pressing the material drastically cuts that time. Vegetable tanned leather will liquify if it encounters boiling hot water, so it requires the human touch. Aside from the environmental upsides of vegetable tannins, it is vastly superior to chrome leather when evaluated with regard to craftsmanship as opposed to industry efficiency. Not only does it require more craftsmanship to be used, but it has more to offer to the proper craftsman. The vegetable tanning process does not restrict the uniqueness of each individual hide, and instead it brings out those qualities moreso. When the hide is stabilized with natural materials it is in some ways still living, and the finished product that leaves the tannery will go through its own evolutionary process during its lifecycle. Vegetable tanned leather can endure more time, and it also becomes more desirable over time with the patina that occurs. This added depth to the material allows for opportunity in how it's treated which is where it comes back to the skill of the user. The business model at Hermann Oak clearly considers the classification of their clients as craftsmen, and that level of respect and care is mutual in both directions.



Hermann Oak Leather Journey Map

UPSTAIRS

Packaged for shipment
Graded again for quality
Additional finishes (done by hand - dyes/finishes/milling)
Dry-split to desired thickness
Graded by weight/thickness again (after tanning process)
Trimmed then smoothed again
Leather begins being customized to order specifications by client

DOWNSTAIRS

Wastewater is treated to only contain small amounts of lime and tannins	
Leather is wrung, smoothed, then hang-dried	
Fatliquoring in drums (bleach/dye/finishes)	
Hides placed in vats with tannins (and water) for 2-4 weeks, going into stronger and stronger vats over that time	
Hides are delimed & bated (cleaned) with enzymes	Vegetable Tannins: Mimosa and Quebracho received from South America in powder extract form
Hides are leveled with splitter	
Excess tissue removed (fleshed) then weighed/graded	
Lime added to remove the hair and open fibers	
Soak hides in water to remove salt	
Water from local source treated for use	



The Golden Age of Homespun

This cornucopia of a book, *The Golden Age of Homespun* by Jared Van Wagenen, touches on three of my key areas of focus - farming, leather tanning, and shoemaking - and their role in society when a community had no other option than to be self-sufficient. The most important anecdote of the sections I read was a story of the man who invented a machine to peg the soles of boots in replacement of workers doing this job. "The man who made the wonderful machine that put so many folks out of business journeyed to the sole remaining shoemaker to have his feet measured for boots because the hand maker not only made boots, but made boots that would fit." Even the ones responsible for automation centuries ago had recognized the fact that there's nothing comparable to something truly handmade, and this sentiment was completely reinforced as remaining true today from the data collected on the digital graffiti wall. The book goes on to describe the role of the shoemaker in the world as something unmatched in its universality and necessity. Every community had a shoemaker at one point, but this is not the case anymore. A custom pair of cowboy boots is framed as a high-priced luxury that few will obtain. My belief is that it is actually correct to classify this as a luxury, but there was once a time when this luxury was enjoyed on a basis that did not have the limitations of class which we see today. We have been removed from that way of life through the structuring of our communities.



ST. CRISPIN

AND

ST. CRISPINIAN



PATRON SAINTS OF COBBLERS, TANNERS, AND LEATHER WORKERS

Italian Leather Consortium

The Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather Consortium is an organization that upholds the standards and knowledge of vegetable-tanned leather production across the region of Tuscany. The consortium ensures that only traditional and natural methods of tanning are used which is in protection of and out of respect for the generations of artisans that dedicate their lives to this practice, and by doing this, that commitment carries over to how the member tanneries impact the environment. The highly skilled methods required to make the leather have consideration for the tannery's impact engineered within them. The impact also goes beyond the environment into economic dynamics; the status of the artisan at the tannery is particularly noteworthy. Because of their skill, they are given the authority over each hide that they tan. By assessing the unique qualities of the individual hide, they autonomously decide what the end product will be, which in all cases is a luxury product, but it doesn't earn that label because of the price. Tuscan leather aligns with the most foundational criteria of luxury with its strict guidelines and empowerment of the craftsman, and it is exemplary of how luxury can shift an economy through a prioritization of value creation. Luxury - and Tuscan leather - is value creation at its greatest with holistic consideration of the lives, efforts, and story associated with the final product. Luxury brands who once earned their title and now abuse it have severely departed from these core principles of luxury, but there are instances such as this where it is still retained.

DIRECTED STORYTELLING

Quinn I hear antlers scraping a tree so I got real excited and I see him step out of the trees. Then he starts to walk right behind this spruce tree formation. When he does I pull my bow back and here's the thing. I have an older one so at the end of my draw it goes *ssss* when the bow strings get real tight you know. He spooked and took about two steps backwards but looked around and saw nothing. And he stepped out in front of me and I let it rip. The sound the arrow makes, it sounds like something smacks like if you ever hit your leg - that's the sound it makes when the arrow hits an animal. It literally *thwacks*. It's pretty cool. It's one of those things that as soon as you hear the arrow go, like oh shit. You feel a little rush, start shaking, like oh my god I just pounded that animal. Then you've got to do the fun stuff where you clean the animal and butcher it. I think I ate on that deer probably six months honestly. Got breakfast sausage out of it, steaks, hot sausage like hot links, and it was delicious. They're good tasting animals. What most people don't understand is every single hunter that buys a tag - everyone that buys a license, if you go and buy a fishing license or a some sort of combination of both, you are paying directly into the conservation of that animal in that state. Every time you buy ammunition, camo, anything that's hunting or fishing related, you get taxed at an 11% rate, and whatever the difference between that and the sales tax automatically goes to conservation, all of our national parks. What they don't understand is you take hunters out of the equation your predators, you know in Texas mainly coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions - I've never seen any black bears in East Texas but supposedly there are some. You know, if you feel bad, it's because you don't really understand how shitty of a beat it is to be killed by a coyote or bobcat or mountain lion. I mean really. The animal will die. A lot die from starvation. If it doesn't get killed by a predator it'll die from starvation eventually. They just don't die of old age. I mean they do but that's very very rare that an animal will die of old age. Usually they get old and they don't eat enough or they freeze in the winter. I'd rather see him get killed and eaten. They think it's utopia, and that's a lot of people that never, I hate to say it, but there's a lot of people that never experienced the outdoors. It is literally the most brutal place. I think people think animals are like their dogs or their cats or any of these wild animals are like pets. There have been a lot of cases of people walking outside trying to pet deer and they get not mauled but they get impaled pretty bad. And that's a defense mechanism they use against legitimate predators with real claws and real teeth and things that don't eat soy burgers. Those things are fucking killers out there and they don't mess around. They're going to do whatever it takes to kill the animal even if it means eating it while it's still alive. I think that's something that, you know you obviously don't want to hurt animals, you want them to die as quickly as possible. Even if you do kill the animal and it survives two minutes bleeding out, those two minutes are a lot better than fifteen, twenty, twenty five, maybe an hour for an animal to slowly die at the hands of the predator. Honestly I think what really drives me to go out there, at least for me it's never about the animal. I don't have to take an animal to be happy to hunt. If I'm out there hunting ducks in the morning, there's something about being outside when it's cold as shit, trying to stay warm throwing decoys in the water, and when the sun comes up it heats you up and allows you to shoot birds, but it's more than that. The sun starts coming up and you literally watch the entire world around you wake up, and you're literally the only thing there at that time. The only thing awake. And you slowly take in the trees moving, the birds moving, you hear the birds chirping. Then all the sudden you know the day has begun and you're in your own world. Anything you're sad about or let's say you've had a rough couple weeks, or you can't find a job, whatever your problem is. It's, when you're in the space it makes you realize you're not as important as you think you are. Your problems aren't as big as they really are because at the end of the day you're nothing but another animal just trying to survive, and the world is going to revolve no matter what happens. Worrying about these things doesn't help any. For me it's my entire stress relief. If I'd had a really bad week, I go and sit in a deer stand or I go and look for birds or I go fishing. As long as I'm outside, there's something about trying to connect with Mother Nature i guess. And I think a lot of people if they tried to hunt and kind of put their biases away, they'd find that it's more than just killing an animal. It's a special experience that you have to find on your own. There's a thing for everyone that allows them to relax and have their spirit calmed. It keeps me whole.

Huncho My cousins in Mexico right now, I was talking to my mom the other day, one of my cousins literally has two pairs of jeans. One for work and one to go out. That's all he can afford. Food wise I feel like they don't suffer hunger because our culture, rice, beans, we can go with that. Hunger is really not a struggle, but it's trying to come up in the world is a struggle because for one the government is corrupt to the bone and then if they see you're making a little money then everybody wants a piece of it. If you have a business you have to pay the cartel so your business doesn't get robbed like protection shit. My sister used to, she had a business, well she was in the silver business. She used to sell it then she got a note saying either you take your shop down or pay us, you choose, so she just decided to quit the whole thing. Not worth it. All my neighbors like the kids I used to play toys with, they're all either killed or in jail. Like the house right in front of my house, literally right in front of it, there used to be seven brothers. Now there's only two left out of the seven. It's also the chance of being at the wrong place at the wrong time is so high over there because they be killing people like midday. The other night we were all planning to go to my friend Sebastian - he lives in Anna, Tx. And we were like oh its a far drive whatever. I don't know why, I was like you don't have to go out just let me come. We'll stay, be safe at your house, we don't have to go out. He wanted to go out to Dallas, and I was like no I'm telling you, don't go out, just chill. I don't know why, I honestly don't know why. I just had that urge. I felt like something was going to happen. He went out and later I was, in my head, I wanted to call everybody that I know like are you okay, are you okay? But I don't know for no reason. The next morning we wake up, you know, where's Sebastian, where's Sebastian? His location went off and everybody was trying to look for him. I don't know where he's at. He got drunk, drove home, fell asleep, and flipped his car over. He went to jail. In my head I'm like I told you, literally just come over and let's just chill. Or he could have called someone. There's so many ways to prevent that from happening. Sometimes I do believe in fate because like this thing had to happen so that this could happen. It had to happen like I'm always thinking like damn what if I never came to the US? How my life would be - it had to happen. One thing I'm starting to believe in is like we're humans but what they say the most is we're souls. So like our body is an instrument that our soul uses. That's what I was thinking about last time - like we're souls that came down to experience human life. There's so much stuff that we could discover that our body could do, but for some reason like, you know, they come out with this new computer. Look at this new computer, so you're stuck trying to figure out what this new computer does. But when you have like a whole computer in you, you know, I just think that's crazy to me. It's true because I just be sitting there like damn, how much time could I spend in the sauna? How long could I run? I could do all this. People who do training. People who sit in ice for multiple hours and they just set their mind to it. Like literally super powers. We definitely have super powers in us but for whatever we reason we just you know. I'm a hippy. To me material shit, I mean I'm not going to lie. I love clothes. That's just, it's always been stuck with me since I was a little kid. But my mentality right now, is I'm the biggest hippy. Think about it we're just creatures living in a space rock paying for rent. That's all we are. We're just creatures living in a space rock paying for rent. I love camping. All the times I've gone to camp, it makes you think like damn, we really don't need houses and all that shit. I mean it's nice to have them, but if God put us here - I was watching this thing like all the houses are squares, floors, square units, everything's a square. That's how computers are, all the little square things. So we are living in a fake reality. This is our fake reality. The real reality is outside. There's different shapes. Like trees have different shapes, landmarks different shapes. That's where we're supposed to be at. If God put us here, it's not the ultimate thing to work your ass off and buy a car. Like VR, if you buy a VR what do you do? You go explore, you go to see everything you can do. I feel like we should be doing that, all humans, in real life. We should definitely be doing that just to see what we are capable of. Being out in nature has really opened up my eyes. You get to choose, you want to wake up today? What do you want to do today? You want to make money or just sit at home? You have to play the game right. Now I have feeling, like I want to be with my brother. I want to take him out fishing. I want to do shit. Like I'm more active. I'm more interactive with my family. Long drives. I love long drives because I just bump music and stare at the sky. The sky is so fucking beautiful. I do feel like we can find beauty in anything. There's beauty everywhere. I definitely want a kid. I just want to be 100% sure I'd be able to pay his college if he wants to go to college or not. Now, with all the knowledge that I have, I'm 100% sure I could make it out if I really wanted to. I can build a whole house by myself.

INSIGHTS

People are more inclined to care about their impact when they view it as a craft. The inclusion of skill in a profession, practice, or industry is a great motivator in people to feel concern over how their field is impacting the world. This was exemplified in the tannery I visited; Hermann Oak is ahead of industry regulations and self-regulates for the majority in regards to their environmental impact. They have been around since the 19th century and view what they do as protecting a tradition as well as their family legacy. By using natural materials to tan the leather, there is extra and skill required. There is an art to actually understanding and participating in the delicate science of the processes rather than giving way to automation via toxic chemicals which remove the need of intense human care. By requiring skillfulness, a more meaningful relationship between the person and their work is developed. Beyond the literal material benefits of natural tannins to the environment, having people that already care is a tremendous step in the right direction. An Italian confederation for vegetable leather, Consorzio Vera Pelle Italiana Conciata Al Vegetale, upholds these philosophies by standardizing the practices within the region to ensure the highest level of craftsmanship is going into their protected tradition.

The relationships between ranchers and their animals have an innate value in their dynamics alone. Simply put, they truly love these animals, but there are layers of complexity and intricacies in the way they feel towards them. The ranch manager in our interview acknowledged the peculiarities with the level of care he feels and the profit oriented outcome. It seemed that the money was very short in encapsulating the full value of what he does; there is more to it for him. There is certainly a connection to a shared heritage among people with the methods they use today to raise these animals. The rancher I spoke with told stories of how he protected his cattle from coyotes throughout the Texas winter storms earlier in the year and of the time he pitched a tent in the rain for a week to help cows give birth that were having trouble breaching. The simplicity of the relationship is something that should be celebrated, and the complexity is something that can be further unpacked to decipher some of the discrepancies in emotion toward this industry.

Cowboy boots are an adornment of survival, derive directly from the ritual of preserving life, and are an allegory for the American story. Cowboys have been participating in American history before they ever had that name, and cowboy boots were developed out of an iterative process that mirrors any formal design teaching today. Cowboys can be traced back to the Revolutionary War along with participation in every war thereafter for their role in the cavalry and supplying food to the American people. They have served as sustenance for Americans as well as active participants in shaping American history. Their more familiar form came out of strong influence from Mexican vaqueros, and the cowboy boots have a lineage of iterating on several variations of boot designs.

Synthesis of Directed Storytelling/Cattle/Leather/Bootmaking

From my series of directed storytelling, the common thread was a departure from our current constructed way of living. People are still seeking the frontier of the American West through acts like learning how to build their own homes and hunting for their own food. Cowboy boots are an object intertwined with the idea of opportunity, and they're allegorical for the American story. The cattle, leather, and bootmaking industries are all connected to America's history and by craftsmanship with the level of value increasing in accordance with the skill and knowledge of the maker.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Bringing the human and animal relationship more explicitly to the consumer in the products they encounter.

Progressing from the foundational heritage of the cowboy boot; creating new value rather than selling the value that was created before.

Finding new construction methods that enable the inclusion of craft at every step of the way.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION

The intervention I'm proposing for the continuation of this project into the spring semester is the development of a business plan, branding/ethos, and prototyping for a cowboy boot company that is vertically integrated - owning the land, cattle, leather tannery, and bootmaking facilities. The business will be positioned in the luxury market for its holistic approach to a heritage item, and the boots themselves will walk the line of being art objects. The cowboy boots will be treated as something that can be appraised considering the materials, construction methods, and connection to storytelling.

I want to reinstate the meaning of luxury, the importance of beauty, and the recognition of craftsmanship.

I want to create products that have the complexity of emotion felt by the ranchers, the full weight and respect of the animal's life, and the greatness of the leather workers contained within them making these hidden values fully available to the consumer.

I want to create a business that is supported by a community rather than a global supply chain.

The deliverables I'm considering are a business plan, a pair of cowboy boots handmade by myself with leather that I tanned, visual content that establishes the aesthetics of the brand, a written piece that outlines the culture of the company, and a final presentation that demonstrates this business's ability to affect a community.



APPENDIX

Preliminary Work

List of Stakeholders:

Ranchers
Farmers
Cattle
Bootmakers
Designers
Machine repair mechanics
Cowboy boot wearers
Luxury consumers
Tanneries
Transportation/shipping company
Grocers/butchers
Beef product consumers
People who identify with the American Southwest
Retail/salespeople
Corporate workers
Land owners
EPA
Neighbors to these facilities
Local WSC
Competitors

40 Starting Questions:

How many cowboy boots are sold every year?
What's the average sale price of a cowboy boot?
What's the most expensive cowboy boot brand currently?
How are cowboy boots perceived?
Do young people wear cowboy boots?
Do bootmakers care where their leather comes from?
What makes leather high quality?
How did ancient civilizations make leather?
Is a sustainable tannery scaleable?
Does USDA Prime beef or Japanese Kobe beef yield better quality leather?
Do the current "best" tanneries use chromium or vegetable tannins?
Can synthetic ever be sustainable?
Why hasn't there been a true American rival to LVMH?
What types of cattle farms are the biggest culprits of environmental impact?
Can cowboy boots replace dress shoes?
How quickly can a fully handmade cowboy boot be produced?
What is the origin of the cowboy boot?
Where did the iconic top stitch styling derive from?
How does the bootmaking process connect to the culture of cowboy boots?
What do cowboy boots represent?
How do people feel about the American Southwest?
How does the desire for frontier life still exist today?
What is the tactile advantage of cowboy boots?
What are the different types of waste generated

from using vegetable tannins?

How can waste from the leather tanning process be made productive?

What industries rely on leather tanning and vice versa?

What are the various factors that affect the characteristics of leather (color, stiffness, etc)

What machinery is an absolute necessity for leather tanning (how primitive can it get)?

What's the most ethical way to take the life of cattle?

What's the ideal age for cattle to be slaughtered?

What happens to the beef and the leather if the cow lives longer?

Where is whole animal use presently practiced and how common is it?

How many pairs of shoes does the average person go through in a lifetime?

How do the animal hides get from the ranch to the tanneries currently?

Can cowboy boots become treated like couture/ jewelry with appraisals?

What are the problems that cowboy bootmakers are currently facing?

What do consumers of cowboy boots want from bootmakers?

What is the difference between craft and luxury?

How can customization be scaled?

What are the most iconic cultural moments involving cowboy boots?

History of the Cowboy Boot

Geitz, Rebecca. "Roach Killers and Shit Kickers: Life and Times with Cowboy Boots." Order No. 1506015, Indiana University, 2011. <https://login.libproxy.newschool.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/roach-killers-shit-kickers-life-times-with-cowboy/docview/920873610/se-2?accountid=12261>.

"In order for there to be a cowboy boot, there must first be a cowboy. The earliest known use of the term "cowboy" was during the American Revolutionary War, when Loyalists stole cattle from Whigs in attacks that both depleted the supplies of the Patriots, and bolstered the British troops (Fishwick, 78). Although today the cowboy is an American hero representing freedom and integrity, at the time of the Revolution, cowboys were on the side of America's oppressors. Over time, and in a country that was yet to be the United States, cowboys grew from another tradition, that of the Mexican vaquero. Certainly, some of the early Anglo cowboys stole cattle from Mexican-owned ranches on both sides of the Rio Grande, but naming them "cowboys" was likely not because they were cattle thieves like the Tories, but because the word "vaquero" literally means "cow man" in Spanish, and the vaqueros taught the Anglo cowboys how to be cattle people. For the purposes of this paper, vaquero will refer to the Mexican cattleman, and cowboy will refer to his Anglo counterpart.

The Texas cowboys' cattle are a breed all their own, just like the men who drive them. The longhorn is a combination of different, but ultimately Spanish cattle strains, with its distinctively shaped horns that stretch out to almost comic lengths, and longhorn cattle developed along with cowboys. In 1541, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado brought a herd of 500 cattle to go with him as he searched for fabled cities of gold. His intent was not to have them reproduce and populate the present-day United States, but he brought them as food for his 336 European co-explorers and the hundreds of Indians he brought as guides. Certainly some of these cattle escaped the herd, as they are wont to do, especially when they stampede, and they helped populate the area with feral cattle. Another group of cattle was brought in 1685 by French explorer René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, who intended to land at the mouth of the Mississippi River, but instead overshot and ended up in Lavaca Bay, which is about halfway between present-day Galveston and Corpus Christi. Perhaps some of the earliest drives from Mexico to Texas were from General Alonso de León, governor of Coahuila, Mexico who took four expeditions from 1687 to 1690. According to legend, De León left a bull, a cow, a stallion, and a mare at each river crossing. Not only did de León leave cattle to populate the area, he also began the San Francisco and Santa Maria missions, the first in Texas, to which he brought an additional 200 head of cattle from south of the Rio Grande (Gard, 4-5). With the furthering mission endeavor, more cattle needed to be rounded up or driven from Mexico into South Texas. A large drive in 1721 brought more cattle to Texas, and within three decades, the areas of South Texas along the San Antonio and Guadalupe rivers were full of not only thousands of cattle, but horses, goats, sheep, and the vaqueros who managed them (Campbell, 60). By 1770, the mission of Espiritú Santo, near Goliad, boasted 40,000 head of cattle (Gard, 7). At this point, ranching was developing at the South Texas missions, and the cattle drive was soon to pick up.

While one group of "cowboys" was terrorizing Americans during the Revolutionary War, the Texas vaqueros were busy helping the Americans win the war for their independence. In 1779, Louisiana Governor Bernardo de Galvez brought cattle from ranches near San Antonio to feed Spanish troops assisting in the colonists' revolution. Texas vaqueros herded between ten and fifteen thousand head of cattle from Texas to Louisiana during the war, providing one of the earliest examples of a prolonged and repeated cattle drive (Campbell, 78).

Under Mexican rule, the ranches of South Texas grew in both number and size. When the Texas Revolution came in 1836, many ranchmen, both Mexican and Anglo, left their large ranches to fight in the war, losing many cattle in the meantime. Without stockmen to watch over them, the cattle were left to their own devices and wandered off from the herds. Veterans of the revolution, as well as other settlers, took advantage of this situation, and began rounding up these unbranded, feral cattle to claim as their own (Gard, 8). It was in these years after Texas independence that Mexican vaqueros came to be outnumbered and outdone by Texas cowboys, as they were now frequently called. It seems fitting that the white cowboys would take the

Anglicized version of "vaquero" as their name, as these Texas cowboys had learned riding, roping, trailing, and branding from the vaqueros, and in the years after Texas independence, cowboys had the chance to improve upon their horse and cattle skills and work with cutting horses to develop the cow-hunt, which would lead to the formal roundup, and later, the American sport par excellence, rodeo (Gard, 13).

As his skills improved, the Texas cowboy soon went to work driving cattle not only along moderately well-established trails from Texas to Louisiana, but during the years before the Civil War, Texas drovers brought herds as far North as Chicago, and even West to California after gold was struck in 1848 (Campbell, 297). Between the Mexican and Civil Wars, prices on cattle slowly rose, starting at eight to ten dollars for a fat cow in the years after Texas annexation in 1845, going up to twenty dollars a head in 1860 in the New Orleans market. Prices outside of South Texas in particular were higher than within the state, where maverick cattle ran free for the taking by anyone with "a rope, a branding iron, and the nerve to use them," (Gard, 8).

Initially, the Civil War created a demand for Texas beef, but when the United States took over the Mississippi River in 1863, the demand dried up and so did the drives. Because the war had taken men from the ranch and range, many more cattle fell away from their domestic herds as cowboys were no longer there to wrangle them. At the close of the war, Northern markets had been depleted of their cattle stock, which had been used to feed Union troops. Because of the thousands of mavericks on the Texas range, cattle in Texas were selling for three to six dollars a head, but Northern slaughterhouses were paying thirty to forty dollars for fat longhorns (Campbell, 297). Not only had the war taken men from the range, it had also diverted men and resources away from any effort to build railroads through Texas, and any movement of cattle had to be on the hoof and horseback from south to north. As nascent as the cattle drive was, in 1866, drovers brought 250,000 head of cattle north from South Texas to a railhead at Sedalia, Missouri (Campbell, 297). Although there were early cattle drives, the era of the cowboy did not truly begin until spring of 1867, when Joseph McCoy opened up the railhead at Abilene and therefore, the Chisholm Trail, which was the major thoroughfare that brought cattle from south of San Antonio to Kansas (Gard, 70). As there were no railheads in Texas to take beeves to Northern markets, cattle would need to be driven to hubs with railroad access, typically in Kansas or Missouri. Initially, cattle were rejected by Kansas and Missouri residents as the cattle brought with them a livestock disease known as "Texas Fever," which the Texans called "Mexican Fever." Texas Fever is contracted from ticks, which the Texas longhorns carried. The longhorns were immune to this disease, but it affected nearly every living thing in locations north. Reacting to the loss of their native livestock, angry mobs met many of these early drives and refused to let the cowboys deliver their cattle to Kansas. Laws were soon enacted to keep longhorns out of Kansas, regulating where the drivers could pass without reprisals. Joseph McCoy needed to find the appropriate loopholes or a location that was suitable as an end point for the drives. McCoy settled on Abilene, Kansas, but technically, the Statute of February 26, 1867 set the cattle driving boundary at a point sixty miles west of Abilene, firmly putting McCoy's trail in a zone where Texas cattle were not legally welcome. As the area was so sparsely populated, no one enforced the laws in regard to McCoy's trail (Gard, 65).

Parts of the Chisholm trail had been run by drovers for the years before McCoy built Abilene into a cow town. One early cattle driver was Jesse Chisholm, the man for whom the trail was later named. Born in 1805 or 1806, Chisholm was half Scotch, and half Cherokee. Because of his heritage and upbringing, Chisholm could speak many Native American languages and was in great demand as a guide and interpreter. Chisholm drove cattle and goods along parts of the trail many times before his death in 1868, after which the trail came to be named for him. Although the Chisholm name is the one that stuck, the trail was also sometimes referred to as the Kansas Trail, the Abilene Trail, or McCoy's Trail (Gard 72-75). The Chisholm Trail would continue to bring large herds of cattle to Abilene over the next couple of decades, but the great trail driving era along the Chisholm was mostly over by 1884, as the advent of barbed wire and building of railroads changed the entire face of the great plains. By 1887, the northern ranges were overstocked, the price for cattle had gone down, and trails were becoming overgrown with grass as the longhorns' advances slowed (Gard, 260). Homesteaders began to erect fencing and railways grew increasingly common, thus breaking up the open range and ending the era of the cattle drive and along with it, the cattle driving cowboy. While some cowboys did drive cattle along shorter routes, maybe fifty to one hundred miles from ranch to rail, the days of the long cattle drive were over almost as quickly as they had begun. What remained was a world without the adventure of the open range and the cowboy had to find a way to maintain his lifestyle in light of its demise.

With long range cattle driving over and done, the cowboy focused his attention on the spectacle and skill that comes with rodeo. The earliest rodeo customs occurred on Mexican-owned haciendas, performed by vaqueros and charros (Najera, 3). As they continued to teach their Anglo counterparts, the vaqueros transmitted rodeo customs to the white cowboys, who continued to show off in contests against one another to show which ranch had the best horsemen. As the rodeo continued to solidify, and turn from custom to ritual, official events like Buffalo Bill's Wild West show began to develop (Stoeltje, 244). The date chosen for this and other rodeo events was typically July fourth. These rodeo events "emphasized the familiar, paid homage to the past, and fused the local and western with the national and American," (Stoeltje 1989, 250). By associating rodeo with Independence Day, rodeo organizers exalted the cowboy's performance to that of a national sport. Americans came to celebrate their independence by observing cowboys exert power over animals and each other, and throughout the West, we celebrated our nation's birthday with rodeo. By associating the two, rodeo and the United States, we come to a point where the cowboy is the national hero, and his reputation of strength, honesty, and valor become trademarks of the American West.

Cowboy boots today come in all sizes, shapes, and styles. They come with tall tops of eighteen inches or more, average tops of twelve or thirteen inches, short tops of ten inches, and ultra shorties or "pee wees" at seven or eight inches. Toes come in roach killer toes (best for trapping a pest in a corner), snip toes, square toes, wide square toes, J-toes, R-toes, D-toes, French toes and fowler toes. Heels are anywhere from one to two inches, the average modern boot heel settling right around one and a half inches high. They are pieced together in four-part construction with vamp, counter, and quarters or sometimes the more artistic triad cuts. Leathers range from the "domestic" calf, buffalo, and goat, to the exotic ostrich, alligator, crocodile, elephant, hippopotamus, giraffe, kangaroo, stingray, shark, lizard, and caiman. Other leathers, like anteater and sea turtle, are no longer made due to government restrictions, but they both make fine boots and older pairs can be found in personal collections or at resale shops. Non exotic leathers can be hand or laser tooled, stonewashed, destroyed, or "used" to create modern looks and unique shades. On top of such leathers sometimes go elaborate embroidery depicting multicolored flowers, horseshoes, hearts, birds, and wings. Nestled into such embroidery one will find rivets and pyramid studs, as well as grommeted or glued Swarovski rhinestones.

Today's variety of boots is almost overwhelmingly impressive, but cowboy boots come from humble beginnings. It is hard to say exactly where the cowboy boot as we know it today began, but several types of boots can be counted as predecessors. The Wellington boot, made popular by the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, in 1810, featured a low stacked leather heel of one inch, a square or slightly rounded toe, side seams, and leather pull tabs. It was typically black or brown leather with no stitching. An earlier boot is the Hessian boot, made popular in England around 1785 by Germandandies. It featured a deep "V" shaped scallop in the top of the boot, which the cowboy boot later adopted. Cavalry boots were tall topped, but typically taller in the front than they were in the back, and they featured a low heel. While Wellington and Hessian boots may have been influences on the cowboy boot, the strongest influence is probably from the cavalry boot, which many cowboys returning from the front lines of the Civil War, only to jump in the saddle, wore on early drives. Its tall tops helped protect the leg from brush or errant horns, although the heels on the cavalry boot would stand to be improved upon by at least another inch.

"Ornamentation in the form of stitching did not become heavy and common until after the turn of the century. H.J. Justin is credited as one of the first bootmakers to use ornamental stitching on the tops of boots. What bootmakers such as Justin soon learned was that the more the stitching on the quarters, the less the tops of the boots sagged and irritated the leg of the cowboy (Farman, 12). Eventually, stitching would be added to the vamps as well in Fleur-de-lis shapes known as a toe medallion or toe bug. The usefulness of such stitching would later be asserted by Enid Justin, founder of Nocona Boots, who, faced with governmental restrictions on materials during the second World War, claimed that the quarter stitching and toe medallions were essential to the proper fit and function of a cowboy boot, and in fact, boots would become misshapen without such stitching (June, 37)."

Courtney, David. "Texas is the State of the Cowboy Boot. but the History is More Complicated than You Think." Texas Monthly, 12, 2019, <https://login.libproxy.newschool.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/texas-is-state-cowboy-boot-history-more/docview/2320050839/se-2?accountid=12261>.

"For utilitarian reasons, horsemen from time immemorial have favored sturdy, high-shafted foot coverings. Genghis Khan and his marauding Mongol army wore leather boots, and so did medieval Moors, Hungarian hussars, and the vaqueros of old and new Spain. Eighteenth-century German soldiers wore smart-looking calfskin Hessian boots with tassels and a V-cut scallop at the front top of the shaft. Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington, did away with the foppish decoration and popularized his namesake Wellington boot. Wellies, in the feedlot and grocery lot, endure still.

What we know today as the cowboy boot is a distinctive offshoot of all those styles and cultures. It arose at the zenith of the great cattle drives—between 1866 and 1890—when cowboys started asking cobblers for boots with a slimmer design, higher heels, more rounded toes, and a sturdier instep than were available at the time. Higher heels, often slightly underslung, stayed in the stirrup better. Rounded toes were roomier. And sturdier insteps made for an altogether sturdier boot. A bootmaker in Coffeyville, Kansas, near the terminus of the Chisholm Trail, began supplying Texas cowboys with such boots in the 1870s. Interestingly, as many as a quarter of working cowboys during this period were black, most of them former slaves. And Richard King had his "kineños," families of vaqueros he'd recruited from Mexico, working the herds of his sprawling South Texas ranching empire.

Meanwhile, H.J. "Big Daddy Joe" Justin, who hung his shingle in 1879 in Spanish Fort, in Montague County, right on the Chisholm, and Sam Lucchese, who founded Lucchese in San Antonio, in 1883, were shoeing Texas cowboys too. Over the ensuing decades, notable bootmaking outfits emerged all across the state: Tony Lama Boots, founded in El Paso, in 1911; Little's Boot Company, founded in San Antonio, in 1915; M.L. Leddy's, founded in Brady, in 1922; the Nocona Boot Company, established in Nocona by Big Daddy Joe's daughter Enid Justin in 1925.

And though the cattle trailing game faded away with the advent of barbed-wire fencing, the expansion of railroad routes, and changing economics in the beef trade, the romantic—and whitewashed—image of the Wild West cowpoke took hold in countless books, movies, and radio shows. Between the late thirties and late sixties, Hollywood's most popular genre was the western. The likes of Gene Autry and Roy Rogers became the faces of the tradition.

Riding that wave of popularity, cowboy boots became fashionable among non-cowboys. And fancier than they had ever been before, with elaborate stitching, brighter colors, and ever more intricate inlays and overlays. Where a lone star had once sufficed to decorate the shaft of a boot, there were now multiple stars, as well as images of cacti, six-guns, lightning bolts, and so on. The first big moment of cowboy boots on fashion runways came during the "Texas chic" movement of the eighties, when Dallas ruled the TV screen and Urban Cowboy ruled the box office."

"wellington boot." In Dictionary of Eponyms, edited by Martin H. Manser. Chambers Harrap, 2004. https://login.libproxy.newschool.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/cde/wellington_boot/0?institutionid=601

"The wellington boot was originally a leather boot which covered the front of the knee and was cut away at the back. Nowadays the wellington is a waterproof rubber boot, without fastenings, that reaches to the knee. The boot is, of course, named after the British soldier and statesman Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (known as the Iron Duke; 1769-1852). Wellington is known for his victory against the French in the Peninsular War (1814) and, with Blücher, for the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo (1815). He served as prime minister (1828-1830) but his opposition to parliamentary reform led to his resignation. He was commander-in-chief of the British army (1827-1828; 1842-1852)."

Moore, Jacqueline M.. Cow Boys and Cattle Men : Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900. New York: New York University Press, 2009. Accessed December 20, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

“By 1900, many people had come to see cowboy skills such as riding and roping as simply decorative. As one former cowboy noted, “the expert roper and rider, is admired only for his skill, and not for his usefulness.”¹ As the frontier became more settled, the cowboy of old had become more of a public spectacle than ideal worker. Denison, Texas, near the Red River and the Shawnee Trail, had been as wild, if not more so, than Fort Griffin in its early years; but even by 1876, genuine cowboys were a rare sight in that town. At the age of nineteen, cowboy Rollie Burns worked for a Denison butcher in the off-season, who attracted customers by getting Burns to ride a wild steer on Main Street.² By the mid- to late 1890s, large trail herds were rare enough in Abilene to cause a teen-aged Wirt W. White to describe the cowboys that came past town with 3,500 head of cattle almost as exotic beings.³ The people who came out to see Burns ride a steer or the cattle herd in Abilene were already nostalgic for an imagined past that they had read about in novels or seen in Wild West shows. Ironically, the heroes of the Western, at the very time Owen Wister's *The Virginian* was published in 1902, were in reality discredited to the cattlemen and townspeople of the West.⁴ As historian Dee Garceau argues: “In the late Victorian mind, cowboys were drifters, morally suspect and socially crude.” But cowboys were also avid readers of dime novels and participants in Wild West shows, and by the 1920s, when most cowboys began writing their memoirs, their defense was to embrace the myth of the dime novel heroic and genteel cowboy and claim it as reality, ironically glorifying middle-class ideals of masculinity in the process.⁵

Why Westerns had such appeal at the end of the century and how the cowboy became the knightly hero and aristocrat of the plains is a somewhat complicated question. Most historians see the popularity of the Western as a reflection of nostalgia in the face of an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society. With the 1890 census declaring that America no longer had a frontier, and with historian Frederick Jackson Turner theorizing that the frontier had made America strong and given it democratic values, many Americans speculated that the country would grow weak.⁶ Teddy Roosevelt, among others, saw the frontier as capable of making men and held up cattlemen and cowboys as the sort of virile specimens of masculinity Easterners would do well to emulate. “They have shown the qualities of daring, endurance, and far-sightedness of eager desire for victory and stubborn refusal to accept defeat, which go to make up the essential manliness of the American character.”⁷

Young boys who grew up reading dime novels with Western heroes also credited men in the West with a kind of supermasculinity. Owen Wister believed that the changes that took place in the 1880s and 1890s in America marked a decline in the nation's morals, and idealized the cowboy as a “wellspring of national regeneration.”⁸ Literary scholar Jane Tompkins has argued that the emphasis on masculinity in the Western itself is what made them so popular, as they reflected a backlash to the rise of the New Era woman, active in public affairs and the workplace and dominating reform activities. The late nineteenth century seemed over-feminized to many, and the Western was the perfect antidote.⁹ In truth, all of these factors combined to make the Western immensely popular in the late nineteenth century, and in the process elevated the cowboy from scoundrel to hero.

More than anyone, William “Buffalo Bill” Cody was responsible for rehabilitating the image of the cowboy. Having been a frontiersman and scout, if at least briefly, and earning fame for a colorful fight with an Indian in the wake of Little Bighorn, Cody began a career on the stage telling larger-than-life stories about his alleged exploits, eventually moving on to a more elaborate format that was similar to the traveling circuses that were popular at this time. He staged the first of his Wild West shows in North Platte, Nebraska on the Fourth of July in 1882. The show involved approximately a thousand cowboys competing in riding and roping events, and from that Cody went on to create one of the most successful traveling shows in the world. One of the reasons for his success was that he tapped into white middle-class anxieties about the influx of immigrants, the end of the frontier, and the decline of masculinity by presenting an image of unique American white male virility existing in the West. While black and Hispanic cowboys were featured equally in his show in early years, Cody eventually reduced them to weak stereotypes in contrast to the manly Anglo cowboys, who always saved the day.”

Digital Graffiti Wall Responses

“I love custom cowboy boots because the fit is so perfect. They wear like a pair of socks from the first time putting them on, with everything fitting perfectly all the way up the calves. I like customizing the design, choosing the shapes, colors, and patterns.”

“Aside from custom boots, sizing is a f***** nightmare, I'd really like to see sizing more streamlined. It's wild to me that I can wear a full size difference in one bootmaker to the next. Also if you're a custom maker you should offer a more affordable version that's not “hand made to size” and based more off a brannock size on a more general last. M.L Leddy in Texas offers something similar to this but they have 0 website support. As far as good boot it's hard to say, it's crazy when a boot is right it just looks so damn right. The proportions from the toe to heel and a nice profile through the instep. For instance the Lucchese “7” toe is instantly recognizable for me, they do a 7 toe better than any other maker and I can't even tell you why. I've been wearing cowboy boots my whole life, me and my dad share a love for nice boots. When he passes I'll keep his boots and relast them to my sons size and hopefully my son will do the same for his son (or daughter). Also as a maker what do you think you could do better than current makers in the market? Especially with the shift to outsourcing factories in Mexico and “designers” calling themselves makers? I look at Dust Bowen as really pushing the cowboy style to the younger generation but also bringing extreme quality.”

“Traditional, ie stacked leather heels, welted, steel shank, leather heel and toe counter u, r and snip toe, sole keepers (for us swamp dwellers), rubber top lifts, unique and innovative embroidery/cording or inlay and made by hand in the USA, Canada or Mexico.”

“I'd be fine with HAND MADE by an artisan from any country. I'd make an addition of more choices of color for the shafts on non-custom boots.”

“Don't forget leather insole and midsole. I've paid way too much for boots only to find out that the innards are made of fiberboard or other cheap nonsense.”

“the number one thing I look for is a narrow shaft, I don't like wearing baggy pants just so my boots can fit well”

“I want good value for \$, distinctive style (my biggest disappointment is a boot that has no flair / contrast on the upper, esp. for exotics) and good construction and workmanship. Also, I fucking hate wide square toes, so give me a choice of something else (looking at you Anderson Bean).”

“I just want more tan colored boots. Not enough out there”

“What I look for in a boot is quality traditional construction and quality hides. More trivial things I look for are good color on the hide, nice top stitching. I wish boot makers would start offering larger sizes, accompanied with a larger shaft circumference. I wear a size 15EE and it's pretty slim pickings for ready made boots. I spent \$2,000 on custom and made to order boots in the last 18 months. I bought one pair of Tecovases and a pair of Lucchese and had to return them both because I couldn't pull them over my calf. I would like to try boots from Heritage boot co. and Hondo but they don't offer my size. My grandpa and country music got me started on boots. My grandpa always wore boots, he bought me my first pair in the 2nd grade, it was pair of Justin's with a black vamp and red shafts.”

“I like something that makes a boot unique. I have dress boots, riding boots and western work boots. If it has a flare and something that sets it apart I like it. Unslung heels, spur ledges, unique leather, construction style.”

“I'm new to boots, so my opinion will matter the least among all the folks I've been learning from here. I live in the NW where tall heeled cowboy boots aren't the norm. So I've cautiously entered the boot world with brown ropers and then some “plain” to many tan and brown cowboy boots. So my use case is different because I'm a desk jockey and I'm wearing boots purely for the style and comfort. So I guess I'd like to see more traditional / classic looking boots with rounded, pointed or snip toes, solid stitching and interesting stitch patterns. Maybe some more color options for shafts, but nothing over the top. I also like the 1.5-2” stacked leather heel, leather insole and outsole. Probably a bit boring to many, but I like to just have the boots make a more subtle statement.”

“Speaking to your question from a woman's view.. I appreciate a woman's boot as ‘well made’ as a guys .. I want the gorgeous skins, and soft leathers.. great flash on colors and beautiful stitching and I want them to feel good on right out of the box.. I don't want studs and fringe and charging a outrageous price for a shoddy built boot and thinking we won't notice because they are cute.. Dan Post has respect for women..

I just bought some Kangaroo black Cherry DP's and they are amazing .. Feel like heaven on my foot.. So take a look at some DP's . Style, quality n comfort.. Sigh... I've always worn cowgirl boots.. at sometimes more than others in my life.. I wear them all the time now..”

“Another cowgirl here... yeah toss the feathers and fringe and all that shit Give me the gorgeous skins the guys have. Currently on the hunt for some elephant that is ethnically sourced. I don't want to size down on a man's boot only to have it still sliding around on my foot. Our feet are different and not just smaller and the last should reflect that. My fav brand is Lucchese cause they fit me well. I have a high arch. I've always worn boots. For me it's about the attitude as well as the style. Some people just aren't cool enough to wear cowboy boots!”

“I like simple boots with historic toes. While I do have a pair of ABs with the square toe, I love my Beck Boots with the classic French toe. I think a lot of boots are too flashy and while I get that for a lot of people that's what they want, the simple saddle tans, russets, blacks, are a lot harder to find in a quality boot. Boots used to be made for work and now they're made for show and you can tell in the quality of the leather, the “craftsmanship”, etc. I think a simple, plain Jane cowboy boot with a classic toe style like maybe a French toe with some nice stitching on the top of the foot (can't recall the name), a nice, well made shaft and good pull tabs or pull holes would sell well. I also look for a Goodyear welt on my boots. I don't want something that can't be resoled. I also tend to only buy US made products. It means a lot to me to support domestic business in a world market that's ever growing. There's just a touch of pride in knowing that someone from the same country as you took the time and effort to put something together. As I said, less flash. Boots are meant to be worked in, but that doesn't mean they can't be nice. In my mind, simplicity is beautiful as far as boots go. It's all about finding the balance between functional and too flashy for anything other than special occasions. A lot of people interested in cowboy boots have multiple pairs, but that's not possible for a lot of folks, especially when they're custom. One pair should be able to be worked in while still being able to be dressed up should the need arise. Goodyear welts and US made are another thing I'd like to see. I've had US made Justin's and Redwings and they just weren't good quality boots. At all. Thorogoods were about the best I've had as far as that goes along with AB. I'd also like to see bigger sizes. Most people seem to only want to make up to a 12, but as someone who wears a 14B, that obviously doesn't work. I'd also like to see narrower sizes too. I've worn cowboy boots all my life. My first few pairs were the brown Justin ropers. I'd get a new pair every year for Christmas because of how fast I grew. I'd wear them until they fell apart.”

“I love custom made cowboy boots and support fellow artesian's. To me, Fit is very important and also the construction and the way it is crafted. My custom boots fit like a glove and better than any ready made boots I have.”

“For me, I'd really love to see a western boot with a real Vibram outsole.”

“I love double stitched soles and artful stitching on the shaft in a cool design / pattern.”

“I also like a double stitch on the welt.”

Cattle Industry (A Bar N Ranch Interview Transcript)

We either lease our bulls at a rate we come up with or we sell our bulls to other ranchers and buyback calves. Generally from a high end beef like an Angus, we buy back those calves then put them in our beef program and join up with our cattle and that's how you get what you get at the restaurants. To raise the amount of bulls I need to raise, I have like 80 head of full blood wagyu cows - those are registered that come all the way from Japan. You can trace the lineage all the way back to Japan. Well if I breed those with AI (artificial insemination), say there's 80 of them, if I only have a 90% weaning rate, once I get them all bred, stuff happens, things die, about 90% of those will have live calves on them, but only half of those are bulls. Then only a certain percentage of those are actually going to turn into good enough bulls. For my program to work, I need to make so many bulls a year so that's why we came up with our IVF program.

The margins in this business are very very narrow, especially right now with processes and stuff. You've got to watch everything. The margins are so fine. We're unique in that we're a ranch but we're also a business. Most ranches, it cost a lot of money, so we're calving right now. We calf September, October, and first part of November and then we calf March and April. Once one of those calves hits the ground until the time you get any money back in your pocket for us is two years. That's a long time to invest in cattle especially when anything can happen, you know with the ice storm last year, all kinds of stuff. Most ranches can't afford to, and it took us a long time because it's kind of a slow growing process. You can't afford because we've got bank notes out and all kinds of stuff. The bank needs to be paid twice a year, but most ranchers whenever they wean a calf they generally can't afford to keep it longer down the spectrum. Typically a rancher that I sell bulls to, they wean a calf then sell it to somebody then it goes to another chain in the supply chain. A lot of people put them on wheat pasture. You've got your cow-calf raisers then they wean a calf and it goes to what you consider a grow yard or a wheat pasture. So with that, that means I'm going to take a weaned calf, take it off its momma, and generally 6-8 months of age then I'm going to try to grow it up to get to maybe 800 pounds or so. The grower will buy it try to get it to 800 lbs, then he sells it to a feed yard. The feed yard takes it from 800 pounds to 1300 pounds and finish it out. And he sells it to a packing plant. What we have done, we have taken all the middle men out. We are start to finish, and try to capture most of that money. It takes up a lot of money to do that. We'll start breeding december 10, it's a 273 day gestation, so basically by the time I breed her and until the time that animal hits the ground and then gets harvested is almost three years. Now wagyu are a little bit different. They take about six months longer to feed out.

Numbers are huge in this business. Overhead is massive, you've got tons of equipment, tons of overhead. I mean feed bills are ridiculous. I spend \$350,000 a month on feed. It's one of these deals that the bills are massive. So most people, once you wean a calf they say hey I'd like to put them on a wheat pasture and let them gain and I can make more money because it's all about pounds. But the bank is calling in a note so maybe I sell half of them and pay the bank off then I put the other ones out and they can make a little bit more money. That's why you have people that have their sections of the industry.

So everything on this ranch except for those over there in that corner are what we call registered wagyu cattle. In this part of the world it takes about 7 acres per cow for the year, and you still feed them about 2500 pounds of hay and about 350 pounds of a protein and fat source. It's pretty expensive. These cattle are the one going to the sale right here, so these cattle are confined to this smaller pen because people when they buy cattle, nobody wants cattle that are skinny. So we keep them in here and keep them on feed. I'll have them in here for about two weeks, but other than that my cattle are out and what people would consider free range. Now, again, this is where people don't know, people have really came after our industry really hard, and they just don;t even understand it and they still talk shit about it. So are my cows free range, yes my cows are free range. They have all this pasture, they have plenty of pasture. Does it look like they're overgrazed or overstocked? No it doesn't. My cows are in really good shape. They're fat, they're happy. Just on my cows, I spend about \$550 a cow a year just to keep it alive. It gets more expensive every year. Like this year, feed prices because of corn - corn has gone through the roof - my feed bull has gone up a quarter of what it was last year. I was buying protein last year for \$2.93 and this year it's \$3.77. I just contracted 550 ton, and that's just for the ranches. This is what, people don't know what they're talking about - the intricacies of the industry. So yes my cows are free range, they're out here they move around, we just try to rotate them around and keep grass under them. Once they get, like these cows will stay on

this place until they die or until they won't have calves anymore. Their calves, once you wean them, like I said most people sell them, but we keep them. Those calves get weaned and they're out on pasture. They have full feed waiting for them. Once they get to a certain age then I'll send them to wheat pasture. Generally it's out in West Texas big country out there. What everybody talks about as far as free range goes - and I don't know where this factory farming bullshit came from I don't really understand it, it doesn't make sense to me. It's not cost effective to run cows the way people try to portray factory farming. Most of the time that's like a feedlot, and we have cattle on a feedlot because it's the most efficient way to get cattle fat, but they're not out there on top of one another either. That might have happened, whenever someone takes one of those pictures, it might be like some shit happened and they make it out to be whatever. All these cows in here back on your right, I've got 52 head on this pasture and it's 693 acres. Most people don't know that. Those cows right there they've got calves on them and they're going to wean at 600 something pounds and they're still really fat and look really thick. I could probably put another 8 cows over there maybe. This year was a really good year as far as grass and rain goes. You can easily overgraze and it costs more to feed your cows than the grass does. Grass has protein and fibers in it and that's what feeds your cattle. If you notice your yard at your house, you were cutting it once a week and almost needing to cut it twice a week, but now I haven't cut my yard in two weeks. They'll eat it down through the winter, whatever is left, but that's when you have to go feeding them protein, fats, and hays. Basically november to march, if we're lucky in Texas only four months, basically everything our cattle get is fed to them. Some people have two dogs and complain about feeding them twice a day. Well I've got 2000 cattle and we feed them 30 pounds of hay and 5 pounds of cake a day for at least four months.

You have industry standards like I was talking about earlier. 87% is kind of like your calf crop every year, so I have 100 cows, by the time I wean my calves I should be 87 or higher. It doesn't matter if there's a major deal like that ice storm, yeah that killed a couple more cows and calves than normal, but the numbers at the end almost every year end up being the same. It's a weird deal like coyotes are a big issue. That was the issue with the ice storm, it wasn't really the cold. Whenever stuff gets that cold things get hungry and they want to stay warm. Well the coyotes, I killed like 8 coyotes off that place last year. I mean there's shitloads of them. Predators are a big issue. Probably on these three places right here it's one of my biggest issues. It's unbelievable how much they put into all this stuff.

The cool deal about these wagyu, the longer you feed them, the better they get. But the problem is margins are narrow. We have a break even point right now of 24 months. Right now it costs me about \$120 more a month to feed one of those fat cattle like that. So if I went two more months that's another \$240, and the restaurants just don't pay you. That's the problem. Margins are so thin on the restaurant side on the sales side that it just doesn't make sense unfortunately. If I'm selling to individuals - what would be great - I'll be honest with you - what would be great, it would fix all these problems if people in the cities would just start buying from their local ranches directly. They could get together in their neighborhood and say hey let's go split a cow. The problem is no one likes to cook at home anymore - everyone is lazy, but a family of four could survive off of one cow per year. If you were a wealthy person and wanted the wagyu, well it's not that big of a cost when you actually break it down to what you spend on food. If you wanted grass fed or grain fed or whatever you can go with all that stuff. The problem with the grass fed in this area is that it's really hard because all the grass dies. Most grass fed, like 90% of grass fed beef - I don't nitpick against people in my own industry because we all need to be on each others team - but the biggest issue is that 90% of that grass fed beef is coming from South America. They've allowed people to basically not label things correctly so it looks like at the stores that it's from the United States. That's been a big issue, is the labeling. It's a really bad deal. Sometimes I feel like our own government is out to get us on some of this stuff. It's pretty obvious what they're doing here and this is what I do for a living right, so I spend 95% of my time paying attention to what's going on in my industry. I'm not about to go into the bootmaking industry or whatever industry and tell people what to do or how to run that shit.

Talking about boots, everyday I do something different - I work in an office, I work outside, and I work horseback, so I have these ostrich skin if I'm straight office mode. If I'm going to be in and out of the office but not horseback, I wear these, or if I'm horseback I've got a pair of my Beck's boots that I keep my spurs on.

We're getting ready to get into what we call fall works which in Texas starts in november. To work everything we've got will take us about a month. Depending on where we're going we'll meet every morning about

5:15 up there and we'll have a crew. We have what you call day workers, so you just hire a bunch of cowboys. My head guy is single so we built a bunk room in his house. They all bunk up in there, and these big ranches out West they have like bunkhouses for their cowboys. Around here guys come from hour, hour and a half and we work daylight to dark. Well they don't need to be driving an hour and a half home and getting up at four o'clock in the morning, then driving an hour and a half back, so we'll bunk them all up in his house. They don't get paid much. I pay a day worker \$150 a day, and they bring their horses. One, they love what they do, and two they're training horses while they're getting to work, so that's where a lot of them make money is training horses and they'll sell. I've got to the point where I've decided I'm too old to be training horses. I've got a couple good horses that I can get on or I can put my daughter on and I don't have to worry about it anymore. I'm pretty confident in who I am now. I don't feel like I need to be as tough as I used to think I need to show everybody how tough I was. In this part of the world it's very very tough to find a good crew. I'd say in this part of the world there's two guys, my guy in my group and there's another guy that sure enough run some cows and they know what they're doing. Most of my cowboys come from Decatur.

Longhorns do have some benefits. They can basically live off of anything. They can figure out a way to make a living off of concrete. That's why they were so instrumental in Texas in its early days. I used to use longhorns back before I did this. I'd turn out Charlay bulls which are big white bulls. Charlay bulls are known for pounds, and so you could turn them out on these skinny longhorn cows, and basically I had a big lease out in Seymour, TX. This place you had to gather it with a helicopters. It was that big. Like you couldn't gather it with horses. And these cows, you're talking about wild. I only went out there twice a year. You just turn them out and forgot about them. You can't do that with a regular cow, but a longhorn you can do that. If you buy a registered longhorn it might cost you \$10,000. If you go to a sale barn to buy a longhorn it might cost you \$300. That's kind of the difference in that game, but it's kind of just a whole crazy deal. They can survive anywhere, and that's a really good trait, but as far as meat quality goes

I kill one animal a year for my family, one for my dad, my mom, got my brother, brother-in-law, so I keep all them pretty well fed the best I can. I've got some friends and stuff; I'll sell to them for pretty cheap. We sell some individual stuff to people like a lot of my full blood because I don't really have a full blood beef program just because the money wasn't there for us - we couldn't find it. So I do sell about 25 head a year of full bloods to individuals.

I'm going to take my tent and throw it up and camp out. I've got some wagyu and last night I got it all seasoned up. I'll get me a fire going and throw it over that and cut it up real thin and put it in tortillas and that's what I'll eat tonight. Get up in the morning and I'll deer hunt, bow hunt in the morning then I'll probably fish a little bit in the afternoon and then go back to the deer stand. Whatever I end up with tomorrow, if I kill a deer, I'll probably eat some backstrap or ribs. Or if I don't kill a deer I'll probably eat some meat or fish and then I'll have to get up and go to work the next morning. That'll be my little 36 hours to myself.

The antibiotics deal is such bullshit, and the growth hormones and all that stuff. It's all stuff that hurts our industry because it's basically been manipulated to the masses in my mind. Like the antibiotics, yeah I don't want to eat an animal that's been doctored in within - in the industry you're not allowed to kill an animal that's been doctored with antibiotics within 100 days. Well how come it's okay for me to give my five month old daughter an antibiotic if she's sick, but if I have a cow that's sick you want me to let it die? Doesn't make sense. Then growth hormones, well growth hormones are things you put in their ear. It helps them grow faster which helps us get them out the life cycle faster and helps us cheapen everything up, so it should be good for all people. There's more hormones in one stick of celery than there is in six ounces of beef. Now we don't use any growth hormones, and we'll only use antibiotics on cattle that are sick. I understand like hey we don't want you to feed antibiotics which is an understandable deal which nobody really does or very few people do. There's just been a lot of stuff that's been demonized by the media, and people that don't really know the industry. But it's an interesting deal, it's kind of weird - it's almost funny. We care more for our animals than most people would realize, but we also have this very - we're closer to the actual cycle of life than most people see on a daily basis. We see things, we understand, it saddens us. I've got a guy that works for me that's cowboy through and through, amazing, but he can't - like it really bothers him. And it bothers all of us, but he wears it on his sleeve. And we just see this stuff, and like well I'll see a cow that's really sick. You can see a cow and know if she's going to make it or not. You're talking about putting her down, well it's the humane thing for me to do to take her out, put her out of her misery.

Now like at the harvesting plant, they have that stuff so set up now, those cows walk in there and before they can even blink, their lights are out. They don't even know what happened. They've got this hydraulic driven deal and it knocks them out. It's just one of those things that you grow up with. You know I've got a cow out there that's got a calf stuck in her just breached and its backwards. I mean hell I was counting a bunch of heifers last year, and I lived for a month in a barn over there basically in a tent underneath the barn because I bought a bunch of heifers that were supposed to be bred with angus bulls and they were having a real bad problem calving. Well I had to be there to pull all these calves out of their mommas because they were getting stuck and both of them were going to die. You basically live your life to keep these cattle alive, but also your ultimate goal is to kill them and make money off them so it's a weird deal. And I understand why people don't get it. But also it's really hard to explain like I'm a big hunter and fisher. And that's also hard to explain to people. Hunters are probably, as far as conservation goes of animals, hunters are the biggest conservationist. It's hard to believe that somebody out there killing animals is a conservationist. It's a weird deal, it really is and I understand that. However, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. For example, the BLM, bureau of land management for the government, they manage a lot of wild horses and burros and all that kind of stuff on public lands. They had a pretty good set up between the ranchers and the wild horses. You had this BLM lease as a rancher and you can put cattle here and you can put them up in the mountains for the winter or whatever. Then some people who had no clue about it started complaining - and the squeaky wheel gets the grease. They were killing horses and burros every year to keep the population correct. Well then, they said well we better not do that because these people know about it now and they're complaining about it. So then you don't do it and then what happens is like this guy over here. The grass gets overgrazed and the animals are starving to death. Would you rather shoot them in the head and the animals just die or would you rather them starve to death? If you had the option yourself what would you rather do? Starve to death slowly in the cold or would you rather be shot. And they try to capture a certain amount of these things and sell them every year, but nobody wants a wild horse. That's kind of the deal with conservation. I don't ever name animals or do anything like that, but yeah there's always calves every year where you know I like that one better than that one, and you get an attachment to them. But you also understand the circle of life and the way things work, and it is your life. I mean that's what I've done since I was born basically. And so it is what it is. There's nobody in the world that loves animals more than most people who do what I do for a living. The deal is honestly, one generation back everybody - my parents or most people were only one generation away from a farm or ranch. Now everybody is two or three and you kind of start losing touch with where all that stuff really comes from. If you really knew where it came from then- it's kind of like all this fake meat and all that stuff. Oh it's healthy, well shit look at all the ingredients on that stuff. You know what comes in beef? Beef. I don't know. Interesting times.

Leather Industry

<https://www-science-direct-com.libproxy.newschool.edu/science/article/pii/S0959652621035289?via%3Dihub>

“Waterproofed vegetable leather is desired for its “greenness” in front of chromium-tanned waterproofed leather. However, conferring waterproofing capabilities to vegetable tanned leather maintaining light color and a soft touch is a fact of great concern for leather goods producers. Sustainable and technical requirements are currently demanded by high-quality brands in order to pass the threshold established by Leather Working Group (LWG) initiatives to earn their environmental audit seal. The research work has focused on testing various mineral salts and hydrophobic products compatible with vegetable tanned leather. According to the obtained results, acrylic copolymers along with zirconium salts are necessary to achieve the desired leather properties.” TAKEAWAY: Vegetable tanned leather does not always mean fully natural, and/or this is article is the birthplace of another example of “greenwashing”

Orthmann, A., 1945. Tanning processes. (Chicago): Hide and leather Pub. Co. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015070515575&view=1up&seq=3&skin=2021>

“MANUFACTURE of leather is one of the most fascinating and intriguing of all industrial processes. The various uses to which leather is put demand properties covering a wide range of physical characteristics. Many of the properties cannot be obtained excepting after long periods of experimentation.

The Old School tanner prepared leather according to a rule of thumb procedure. The results obtained were, however, a forerunner and a foundation upon which the modern tanner bases his results. The Old School tanner was not assisted by the science of today but had to rely upon his meager knowledge of processes handed down from father to son. Only after painstaking experimentation was he rewarded with results that were satisfactory. His faith in science was abetted by progress made in other industries where chemists constructed formulae which produced uniform products day in and day out. One of the outstanding industries thus assisted is iron and steel, followed by rubber, ceramics, etc. This caused the tanner to engage the services of the chemist so that he too could install systems of control to assure a uniform product.

A keen interest on the part of the practical man in the science of leather manufacture is manifested in his attendance to conference of chemists where such matters are discussed. Usually he leaves such a conference with a bewildered mind and finds it difficult to fit any of the things discussed into his daily routine.

The development of the industry by the practical tanner is nothing short of a miracle. To establish the proper procedure for each stage of tanning required an enormous amount of work and no doubt a great loss in the form of and leather. Thus, he set the stage for the present-day chemist, and gave him much valuable information which not only the tanner, but the present-day chemist also uses as a basis for further experimentation and scientific exploration.

The very fact that there are so many possible combinations of materials to use makes leather manufacture rather a complicated process. Thus, one tanner may claim that soft leather is made in the beamhouse, another may say that it is made soft by the application of the proper fatliquor. Both may be correct and both get the result they desire. This may apply to any of the various stages through which leather passes. Much depends on the flexibility of the process as to whether or not a plant can produce a diverse line of leathers which can be used for a number of purposes. It is obvious that if one beamhouse and tanning process can be used for producing a number of leathers it is by far more desirable than to have a different beamhouse and tanning process for each kind of leather.

The literature lacks a comprehensive work on practical tanning processes, one that can be read and appreciated by the practical as well as the technical man. It is with this thought in mind that the author endeavors to fill that void. The author's long experience in the field, his close association with practical men over a period of many years lends weight to his ideas as to the kind of information they desire. Appreciating this desire, this work is confined to processes that are practical and useful.”

Kennedy, D., 1857. *The Art of Tanning Leather...* (Boston): Baker & Godwin, printers. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t3fx7z62v&view=1up&seq=20&skin=2021>

Ma, Jianzhong, Na Yang, Yun Li, Dangge Gao, Bin Lyu, and Jing Zhang. "A Cleaner Approach to Tanning Process of Cattle Hide Upper Suede Leather: Chrome-less Polycarboxylate/montmorillonite Nanocomposites as Tanning Agent." *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 28, no. 29 (2021): 39014-9025. doi:10.1007/s11356-021-13324-8.

"Research on reduction of chromium pollution in tannery has been studied extensively. Recently, there are two directions of research into an eco-friendly option to tanning process (Musa et al. 2010). One is chrome-free tanning method, such as utilizing titanium or amino acids (Krishnamoorthy et al. 2012). The other one is the combination tanning method, such as tannin extract and its combination with aluminum (Madhan et al. 2006), oxazolidine (Li et al. 2011), or glutaraldehyde (Madhan et al. 2007). However, the biggest drawback of chrome-free leather is that it cannot achieve the quality of chrome tanned leather. There are other methods using less chrome or based on enhancement of chromium uptake. It was observed that oxazolidines could decrease the dosage of chrome tanning agents by about 37.5% (Sundarapandiyan et al. 2011). Fathima et al. (2011) have developed a chrome saving approach and studied a combination tanning system with tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulfate and chromium as main materials. In recent years, the greener tanning process of split suede leather had been studied. Ma et al. (2014) reported a cleaner production method of split suede leather that nanocomposites (PDM/ZnO) were applied in tanning and retanning process during suede leather making, which can effectively reduce the amount of chrome tanning agent. Chrome-less tanning process does not require any changes to the wet-finishing process and can achieve high performance of resultant leather."

Wu, Xiaohui, Xihuai Qiang, Dou Liu, Lidong Yu, and Xinke Wang. "An Eco-friendly Tanning Process to Wet-white Leather Based on Amino Acids." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 270 (October 10, 2020). doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.122399.

"Chrome tanning has dominated in leather production up to now, while facing a significant challenge in terms of chromium and neutral salts. Therefore, greener and eco-friendly chemical material was explored and applied to tanning process in this research, in order to solve the problem of chromium and neutral salt pollution. The tanning process was optimized about tanning agent dosage, tanning temperature and time. The hydrothermal stability, physico-chemical and morphological characteristics, yellowing resistance were investigated in novel no-pickling tanning process for crust. And the eco-friendly impact of prepared materials and novel tanning process were also evaluated by biodegradation and environmental impact assessment (EIA). The results indicated that the hydrothermal stability of tanned leather for N, N -di-(4,6-dichloro-(1,3,5)-triazinyl)-2,6-diaminohexanoic acid (L-Lys TCT)/2-(4,6-dichloro-(1,3,5)-triazinyl-2-amino)-3-(4-(4,6-dichloro-(1,3,5)-triazinyl-2-oxy)-phenyl)-propionic acid (L-Tyr TCT)/N, N -di-(4,6-dichloro-(1,3,5)-triazinyl)-2-amino-5-guanidyl pentanoic acid (L-Arg TCT) satisfied the basic demand of leather, and mechanical properties met the standard requirements for shoe upper. The scanning electron microscopy analysis further confirmed this point, which showed the regularity of grain and the evenly distributed fiber bundles. Meanwhile, the wet-white leather for L-Lys TCT has good yellowing resistance. Due to environmentally friendly L-Lys/L-Tyr/L-Arg TCT and no-pickling tanning process, the evident lower in five days' biochemical oxygen demand (BOD₅), chemical oxygen demand (COD), total solids (TS), dissolved solids (DS) and suspended solids (SS) content were studied from EIA. The eco-friendly materials and cleaner tanning process can promote the sustainable development of the leather industry and reduce hazardous impacts on ecological environment."

Tünay, O., I. Kabdaşlı, D. Orhon, and G. Cansever. "Use and Minimization of Water in Leather Tanning Processes." *Water Science and Technology* 40, no. 1 (07, 1999): 237-244. <https://login.libproxy.newschool.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/use-minimization-water-leather-tanning->

[processes/docview/1943246604/se-2?accountid=12261](https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/use-minimization-water-leather-tanning-processes/docview/1943246604/se-2?accountid=12261).

"Minimization of water use and reuse applications within industry has recently gained importance within the context of water conservation efforts. The leather tanning industry is one of the subject industries due to large amount of water to be disposed of together with a high pollution load. The leather tanning industry has a complex structure in terms of materials, processes and manufacturing practices. Therefore a systematic approach is required to assess water use practice. In this study, bovine leather processing was taken as an example. An extensive study was conducted as on-site evaluations and questionnaires in the Istanbul Organized Leather Tanning District to assess water use practices, patterns and minimization trends. Results of the study were discussed and important aspects of water minimization practices have been pointed out. © 1999 IA WQ Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved "

He, Qiang, Kai Yao, Danhong Sun, and Bi Shi. 2007. "Biodegradability of Tannin-Containing Wastewater from Leather Industry." *Biodegradation* 18 (4) (08): 465-72. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10532-006-9079-1>. <https://login.libproxy.newschool.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/biodegradability-tannin-containing-wastewater/docview/742645653/se-2?accountid=12261>

"Tannins occur commonly in the wastewaters from forestry, plant medicine, paper and leather industries. The treatment of this kind of wastewaters, including settling and biodegradation, is usually difficult because tannins are highly soluble in water and would inhibit the growth of microorganisms in activated sludge. The objective of this study is to investigate biodegradability of tannin-containing wastewaters, so as to characterize the pollution properties of such wastewaters and provide a reference for their biological treatment in wastewater treatment plants. The research was typified by using the wastewater collected from vegetable tanning process in leather industry. A model was developed to describe the activated sludge process, and the biodegradation kinetics of vegetable tanning wastewater (VET wastewater) was studied. It was found that the biodegradability of tannin-containing wastewater varies heavily with the content of tannins in wastewater. The biodegradation of VET wastewater with tannin content around 4,900 mg/l occurred inefficiently due to the inhibition of tannins to the activated sludge process, and only 34.7% of biodegradation extent was reached in 14 days of incubation. The optimal biodegradability of VET wastewater was observed when its tannin content was diluted to 490 mg/l, where the COD and tannin removals reached 51.3% and 45.1% respectively in 6 days. Hence, it is suggested that a proper control of tannin content is necessary to achieve an effective biodegradation of tannin-containing wastewaters in wastewater treatment plants."

Laurenti, Rafael, Michael Redwood, Rita Puig, and Björn Frostell. "Measuring the Environmental Footprint of Leather Processing Technologies." *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 21, no. 5 (October 14, 2016). doi:10.1111/jiec.12504.

"The selection of materials and manufacturing processes often determines most of the environmental impact that a product will have during its life cycle. In directing consumption toward products with the least impact on the environment, measuring and comparing material alternatives with site-specific data is a fundamental prerequisite. Within the apparel and footwear industry, some famous brands have recently been basing their advertising on the claim that vegetable-tanned leather is more environmentally friendly than chromium-tanned leather. However, there is a lack of scientific research assessing and comparing vegetable- and chromium-tanned leather in a wider context than the toxicity of chromium. To fill this gap, this study measured and compared the carbon, water, and energy footprint of vegetable and chromium leather processing technology and intermediate processing stages in 12 selected tanneries in seven different countries worldwide. Each tannery proved to be very individual, and therefore attempting to perform this type of analysis without simply producing meaningless generalities is a challenge for companies, researchers, and regulators. The variability in results demonstrates that secondary data for the tanning phase should be utilized with caution in a decision-making context. The use of primary data would be advisable for life cycle assessment studies of leather goods. No significant differences were found in the footprint of vegetable and chromium leather processes, but these are only indicative findings and need confirmation in further studies. An important area needing investigation is then how a fair comparison can be made between renewable natural materials and nonrenewable materials used in both leather-processing technologies."

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Luxury

Wagenen, Jared. The Golden Age of Homespun. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018. Accessed November 26, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

"The man who made the wonderful machine that put so many folks out of business journeyed to the sole remaining shoemaker to have his feet measured for boots because the hand maker not only made boots, but made boots that would fit...The modern representatives (of shoemakers) are an almost immeasurable remove from the primitive craftsman of three generations ago who, out of home-tanned leather, hand-twisted flax, wax-end, and wooden pegs, and over a last which he himself had made, shaped the boots and shoes for his patron. I am sure that of all our folk crafts that there is none more ancient, more necessary, or more universal than the trade of which St. Crispin is the patron saint. Its votaries once flourished not only in every township, but almost in every school district." (194)

"It must be that tanning leather is one of the most ancient arts. It is in a way something decidedly more than merely a handicraft. The maker of grain cradles must be a most accomplished worker in wood, but after all, his task was one where his work was open and always beneath his hand. In it there was nothing of the occult or mysterious. But the tanner, though perhaps he only dimly comprehended it, was carrying on a traditional technique dealing with complex and little understood processes representing the accumulated experience of a long line of predecessors. Like the making of cheese or the baking of bread, his art was dependent upon certain chemical reactions which he could hardly be expected to understand or explain but which he had learned to control. Above almost any other vocation, his procedure was based upon time-honored rules of thumb." (182)

"Everything he needed in his craft was obtainable at hand. His work seemed satisfactory and sufficient in his time. In those halcyon days of the rural handicrafts, the farmer was not only fed and clothed from within his own fence lines but he and his family went shod in footgear derived from his livestock. In early winter he killed a cow or heifer to furnish beef for the coming months... (The hide) was carried to the community tanner. From it the entire family was outfitted with boots and shoes" (183)

"The old-time tanner's work was to a considerable degree seasonal. It was late fall or early winter when most of the farm butchering was done, and most of the tanner's raw material came to hand. Just as the miller's almost universally tolled the grain which came to his mill, getting every tenth bushel in lieu of cash payment for grinding, so tanning was most commonly done on shares. The finished leather was equally divided between the farmer and the tanner. Thus the tanner from time to time accumulated a stock of finished leather which could be taken to some center of trade and sold for cash. Note, however, that no money had passed between him and the farmer, which again shows that the pioneer economy was based largely on a wide system of share and barter, and the amount of cash in circulation was unbelievably small." (185-186)

"It was often a year from the time the hide was brought to the tanner until the finished leather was ready for delivery...I am told that modern tanning has almost wholly substituted chemicals for hemlock bark and that warm tanning liquor and other short-cut methods have reduced the time required to a small fraction of the old period. Indeed, I have just read that it is now possible to convert a fresh cowhide into finished leather within eight days. Modern tanning is doubtless fast and efficient, yet when we come to consider real leather quality - softness, strength, and durability - there is at least a very general belief (in which I am glad to share) that the product of the old-time art was superior." (189) INSIGHT: sustainability isn't real, only quality/truth/greatness. The baseline economy was stable but I don't care about staying there or some bs communist ideals, let's move forward onward towards something better. Nature requires balance/lows/suffering/progress/resilience. Nature isn't utopia. "Two generations ago, it would have been easy to find greybeards who could have told in authentic detail of the procedure followed in the days when competent experts were tanning leather in the crossroads tanneries scattered everywhere over our farm country. Today, it is hardly possible to assemble any precise account of the primitive tanner's lore. Within my lifetime, definite memories have become only fading tradition." (189)

CONSORZIO VERA PELLE ITALIANA CONCIATA AL VEGETAL. "Sustainability" The Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather Consortium. 2021. <https://www.pellealvegetale.it/en/sustainability/>.

1. Made in Tuscany: The Genuine Vegetable Tanned Leather Consortium is based in Tuscany, along the banks of Arno river, between Florence and Pisa. The associated tanneries operate in symbiosis with

the environment thanks to a production district that is cutting-edge, both in terms of technology and organization.

2. Quality controls: By joining the Consortium, tanneries agree to undergo periodic verification of compliance with the Production Regulations. The controls are entrusted to an independent certification body: I.CE.C – Institute of Quality Certification for the Leather Sector.

3. Metal free: The production process of our associated tanneries is metal-free, and it always has been, thanks to the raw materials linked to the centuries-old history of vegetable tanning. Traditional and natural products are used in a production process which respects the precepts of sustainability and circularity.

4. No animal is killed for its skin: The raw hides used by our associated tanneries derive from the slaughter of cattle destined, from the outset, to the food sector and they come from European farms which comply with EU legislation on animal welfare. The associated tanneries create value from by-product of the food industry, addressing the problem of waste disposal.

5. Natural raw materials: The leather is tanned using natural plant - based tannins. As opposed to synthetic products, tannins come from renewable sources and are valued for their antioxidant, antibiotic and antibacterial properties.

6. Environmental certification: The Tuscan Tanning District is the only district in Italy certified by EMAS (Eco - Management and Audit Scheme), a tool promoted by EU to encourage the implementation of responsible environmental strategies.

7. Social Responsibility: The Consortium applies the guidelines of the standard ISO 26000 and its trademark Pelle Conciata al Vegetale in Toscana puts at the center the respect for the environment and human rights, transparency and legality.

8. Compliance with the standards: The Consortium fulfills all the European and Italian norms. It constantly strives to ensure the protection of human health, the conservation of animal and plant species, the protection of the landscape and the architectural, artistic and cultural heritage of its territory.

9. Work ethic: The Consortium and all the associated tanneries ensure compliance with current regulations in the field of health, safety in the workplace, contracts and wages without discrimination of gender, ethnicity or religious belief.

10. Circular economy: The associated tanneries use centralized consortium treatment plants, controlled by competent bodies that ensure the correct treatment and purification of tanning wastewater. According to the principles of circular economy of recover - recycle - reuse, the waste from the various processing steps is turned into useful raw materials for other supply chains.

Ojibwe Deer Hunter

Ryan, Finn, dir. Hunting Deer: Sharing the Harvest. Featuring Greg “Biskakone” Johnson. 2014; Wisconsin: The Ways, 2015. Film. <https://finnryan.com/2014/11/22/hunting-deer-sharing-the-harvest>

Directed Storytelling

Quinn

I hear antlers scraping a tree so I got real excited and I see him step out of the trees. Then he starts to walk right behind this spruce tree formation. When he does I pull my bow back and here's the thing. I have an older one so at the end of my draw it goes *ssss* when the bow strings get real tight you know. He spooked and took about two steps backwards but looked around and saw nothing. And he stepped out in front of me and I let it rip. The sound the arrow makes, it sounds like something smacks like if you ever hit your leg - that's the sound it makes when the arrow hits an animal. It literally *thwacks*. It's pretty cool. It's one of those things that as soon as you hear the arrow go, like oh shit. You feel a little rush, start shaking, like oh my god I just pounded that animal. Then you've got to do the fun stuff where you clean the animal and butcher it. I think I ate on that deer probably six months honestly. Got breakfast sausage out of it, steaks, hot sausage like hot links, and it was delicious. They're good tasting animals. What most people don't understand is every single hunter that buys a tag - everyone that buys a license, if you go and buy a fishing license or a some sort of combination of both, you are paying directly into the conservation of that animal in that state. Every time you buy ammunition, camo, anything that's hunting or fishing related, you get taxed at an 11% rate, and whatever the difference between that and the sales tax automatically goes to conservation, all of our national parks. What they don't understand is you take hunters out of the equation your predators, you know in Texas mainly coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions - I've never seen any black bears in East Texas but supposedly there are some. You know, if you feel bad, it's because you don't really understand how shitty of a beat it is to be killed by a coyote or bobcat or mountain lion. I mean really. The animal will die. A lot die from starvation. If it doesn't get killed by a predator it'll die from starvation eventually. They just don't die of old age. I mean they do but that's very very rare that an animal will die of old age. Usually they get old and they don't eat enough or they freeze in the winter. I'd rather see him get killed and eaten. They think it's utopia, and that's a lot of people that never, I hate to say it, but there's a lot of people that never experienced the outdoors. It is literally the most brutal place. I think people think animals are like their dogs or their cats or any of these wild animals are like pets. There have been a lot of cases of people walking outside trying to pet deer and they get not mauled but they get impaled pretty bad. And that's a defense mechanism they use against legitimate predators with real claws and real teeth and things that don't eat soy burgers. Those things are fucking killers out there and they don't mess around. They're going to do whatever it takes to kill the animal even if it means eating it while it's still alive. I think that's something that, you know you obviously don't want to hurt animals, you want them to die as quickly as possible. Even if you do kill the animal and it survives two minutes bleeding out, those two minutes are a lot better than fifteen, twenty, twenty five, maybe an hour for an animal to slowly die at the hands of the predator. Honestly I think what really drives me to go out there, at least for me it's never about the animal. I don't have to take an animal to be happy to hunt. If I'm out there hunting ducks in the morning, there's something about being outside when it's cold as shit, trying to stay warm throwing decoys in the water, and when the sun comes up it heats you up and allows you to shoot birds, but it's more than that. The sun starts coming up and you literally watch the entire world around you wake up, and you're literally the only thing there at that time. The only thing awake. And you slowly take in the trees moving, the birds moving, you hear the birds chirping. Then all the sudden you know the day has begun and you're in your own world. Anything you're sad about or let's say you've had a rough couple weeks, or you can't find a job, whatever your problem is. It's, when you're in the space it makes you realize you're not as important as you think you are. Your problems aren't as big as they really are because at the end of the day you're nothing but another animal just trying to survive, and the world is going to revolve no matter what happens. Worrying about these things doesn't help any. For me it's my entire stress relief. If I'd had a really bad week, I go and sit in a deer stand or I go and look for birds or I go fishing. As long as I'm outside, there's something about trying to connect with Mother Nature I guess. And I think a lot of people if they tried to hunt and kind of put their biases away, they'd find that it's more than just killing an animal. It's a special experience that you have to find on your own. There's a thing for everyone that allows them to relax and have their spirit calmed. It keeps me whole.

Huncho:

My cousins in Mexico right now, I was talking to my mom the other day, one of my cousins literally has two pairs of jeans. One for work and one to go out. That's all he can afford. Food wise I feel like they don't suffer hunger because our culture, rice, beans, we can go with that. Hunger is really not a struggle, but it's trying to come up in the world is a struggle because for one the government is corrupt to the bone and

then if they see you're making a little money then everybody wants a piece of it. If you have a business you have to pay the cartel so your business doesn't get robbed like protection shit. My sister used to, she had a business, well she was in the silver business. She used to sell it then she got a note saying either you take your shop down or pay us, you choose, so she just decided to quit the whole thing. Not worth it. All my neighbors like the kids I used to play toys with, they're all either killed or in jail. Like the house right in front of my house, literally right in front of it, there used to be seven brothers. Now there's only two left out of the seven. It's also the chance of being at the wrong place at the wrong time is so high over there because they be killing people like midday. The other night we were all planning to go to my friend Sebastian - he lives in Anna, Tx. And we were like oh its a far drive whatever. I don't know why, I was like you don't have to go out just let me come. We'll stay, be safe at your house, we don't have to go out. He wanted to go out to Dallas, and I was like no I'm telling you, don't go out, just chill. I don't know why, I honestly don't know why. I just had that urge. I felt like something was going to happen. He went out and later I was, in my head, I wanted to call everybody that I know like are you okay, are you okay? But I don't know for no reason. The next morning we wake up, you know, where's Sebastian, where's Sebastian? His location went off and everybody was trying to look for him. I don't know where he's at. He got drunk, drove home, fell asleep, and flipped his car over. He went to jail. In my head I'm like I told you, literally just come over and let's just chill. Or he could have called someone. There's so many ways to prevent that from happening. Sometimes I do believe in fate because like this thing had to happen so that this could happen. It had to happen like I'm always thinking like damn what if I never came to the US? How my life would be - it had to happen. One thing I'm starting to believe in is like we're humans but what they say the most is we're souls. So like our body is an instrument that our soul uses. That's what I was thinking about last time - like we're souls that came down to experience human life. There's so much stuff that we could discover that our body could do, but for some reason like, you know, they come out with this new computer. Look at this new computer, so you're stuck trying to figure out what this new computer does. But when you have like a whole computer in you, you know, I just think that's crazy to me. It's true because I just be sitting there like damn, how much time could I spend in the sauna? How long could I run? I could do all this. People who do training. People who sit in ice for multiple hours and they just set their mind to it. Like literally super powers. We definitely have super powers in us but for whatever we reason we just you know. I'm a hippy. To me material shit, I mean I'm not going to lie. I love clothes. That's just, it's always been stuck with me since I was a little kid. But my mentality right now, is I'm the biggest hippy. Think about it we're just creatures living in a space rock paying for rent. That's all we are. We're just creatures living in a space rock paying for rent. I love camping. All the times I've gone to camp, it makes you think like damn, we really don't need houses and all that shit. I mean it's nice to have them, but if God put us here - I was watching this thing like all the houses are squares, floors, square units, everything's a square. That's how computers are, all the little square things. So we are living in a fake reality. This is our fake reality. The real reality is outside. There's different shapes. Like trees have different shapes, landmarks different shapes. That's where we're supposed to be at. If God put us here, it's not the ultimate thing to work your ass off and buy a car. Like VR, if you buy a VR what do you do? You go explore, you go to see everything you can do. I feel like we should be doing that, all humans, in real life. We should definitely be doing that just to see what we are capable of. Being out in nature has really opened up my eyes. You get to choose, you want to wake up today? What do you want to do today? You want to make money or just sit at home? You have to play the game right. Now I have feeling, like I want to be with my brother. I want to take him out fishing. I want to do shit. Like I'm more active. I'm more interactive with my family. Long drives. I love long drives because I just bump music and stare at the sky. The sky is so fucking beautiful. I do feel like we can find beauty in anything. There's beauty everywhere. I definitely want a kid. I just want to be 100% sure I'd be able to pay his college if he wants to go to college or not. Now, with all the knowledge that I have, I'm 100% sure I could make it out if I really wanted to. I can build a whole house by myself.