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THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE



Salt of Salt-N-Pepa, earrings (circa 1990)

As one of the few female acts in rap's early years, Salt-N-Pepa rocked bling with the best of them: dookie chains, nugget rings, even gold teeth for a brief spell. But earrings like these gold bamboo-textured hoops were the rare feminine-coded accessories in a bizarre culture where even the most macho M.C.s wear necklaces and bracelets without apparent contradiction. "Women were trying to keep up with the men back then," says Cheryl James, better known as Salt. "Because it was their territory."

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THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE



Tyler, the Creator, "togo" pendant (2019)

While some rappers use jewelry to invoke their skills, or their divine or cartoonish, others take no further than their own metaphorical overtones. Rick Ross famously owns a chain depicting Rick Ross wearing a Rick Ross chain. Tyler has always filled his albums with shadowy alter egos; for his 2019 album, "togo," he commissioned this elaborate likeness in gold and diamonds from the Los Angeles jeweler Ben Baller. "I got it to see the visual aspect of the album in 3-D," Tyler says. "The screams and paper feel flat after a while."

8.13.23

THE HIP-HOP ISSUE

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Roddy Ricch, dinner plate pendant (2022)

To anticipate the obvious question: Yes, the fork and knife come off. Roddy Ricch has eaten fruit with them. They have caused problems at the airport on more than one occasion. "Hells times I buy jewelry and it just sits on my neck," says Roddy, who had this piece made by Elliot Elizante for celebrity his latest mixtape, "Feed The Streets II." "Practical as it may be, it's not everyday jewelry. He puts it on 'when I want to feel a certain energy, get back to a certain place. I'm in the studio wearing it right now.'"

Photographs by Jessica Pathway for The New York Times

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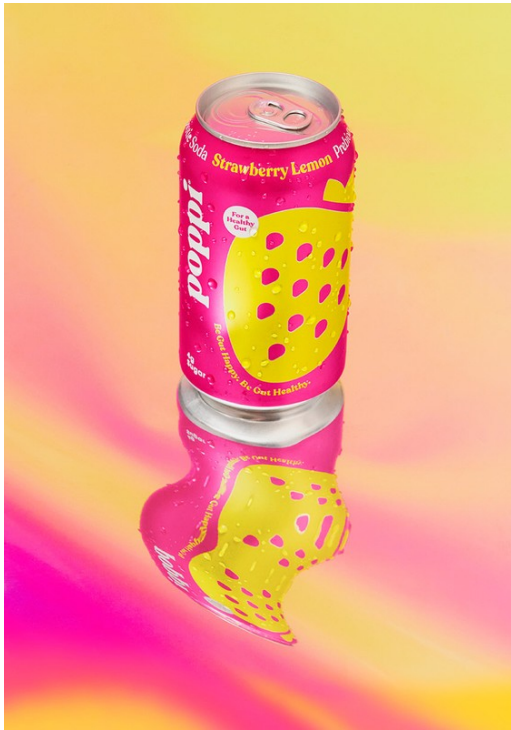
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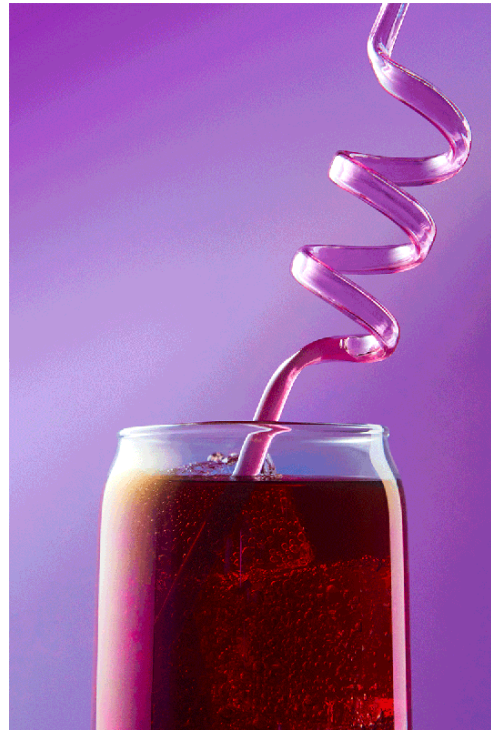
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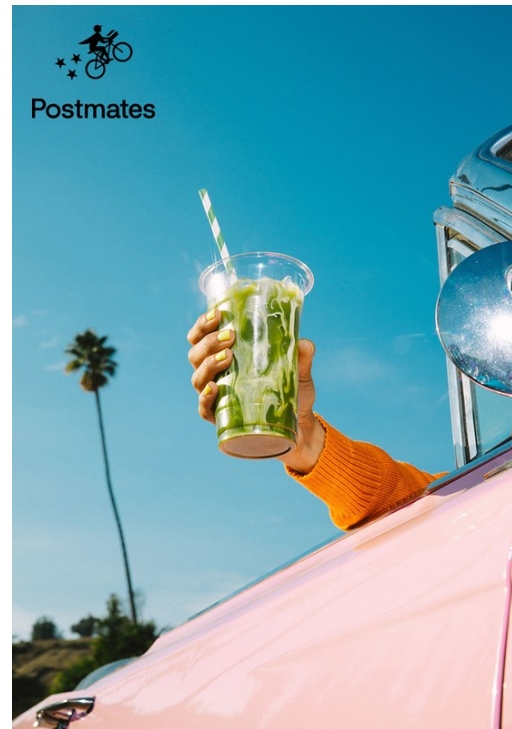
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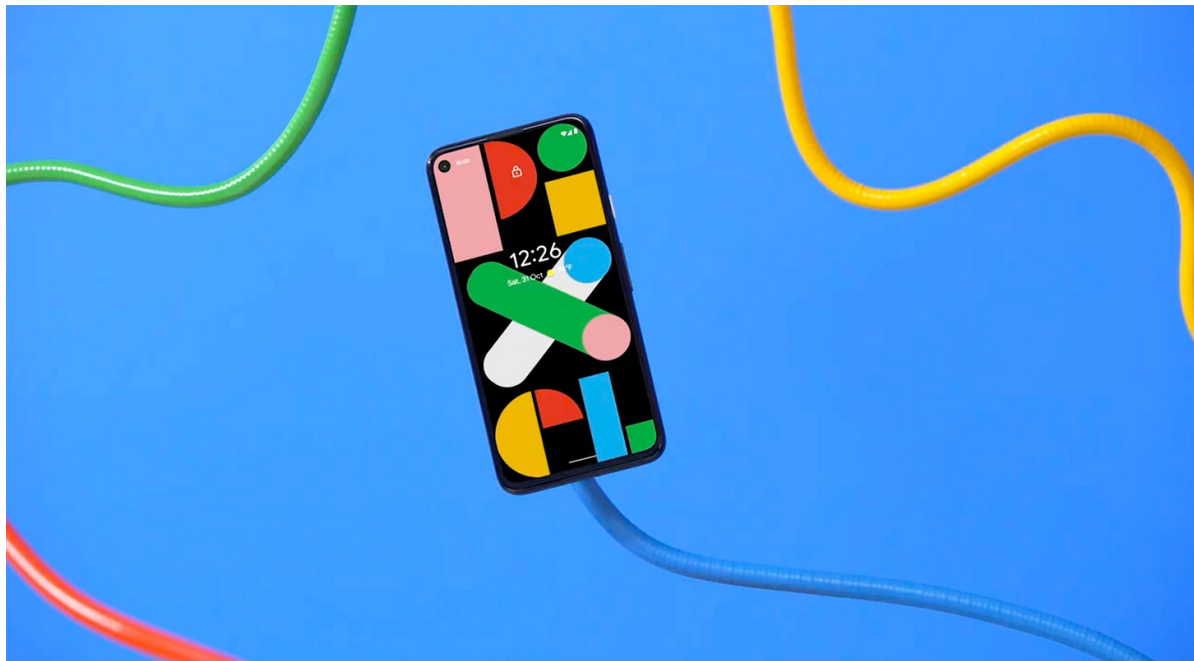
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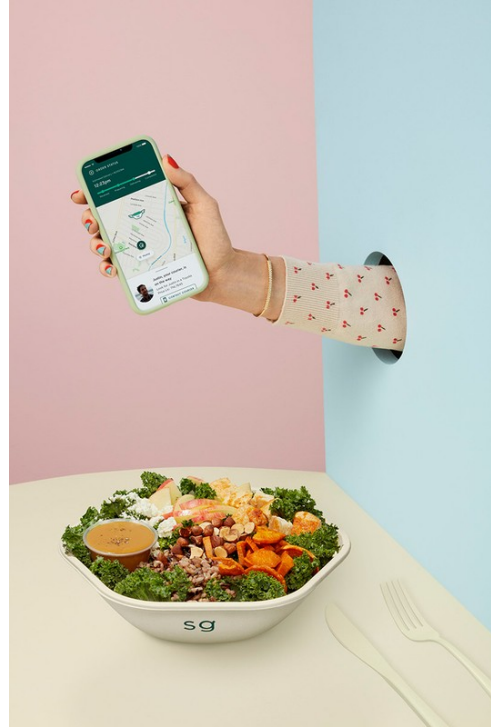
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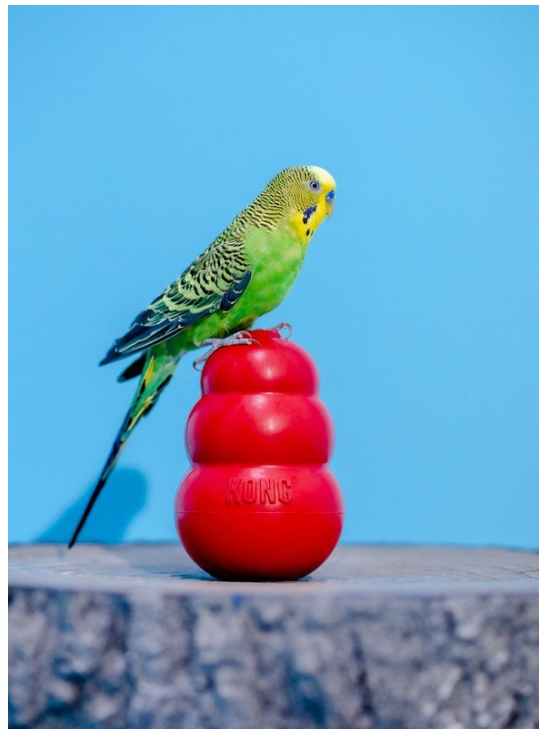
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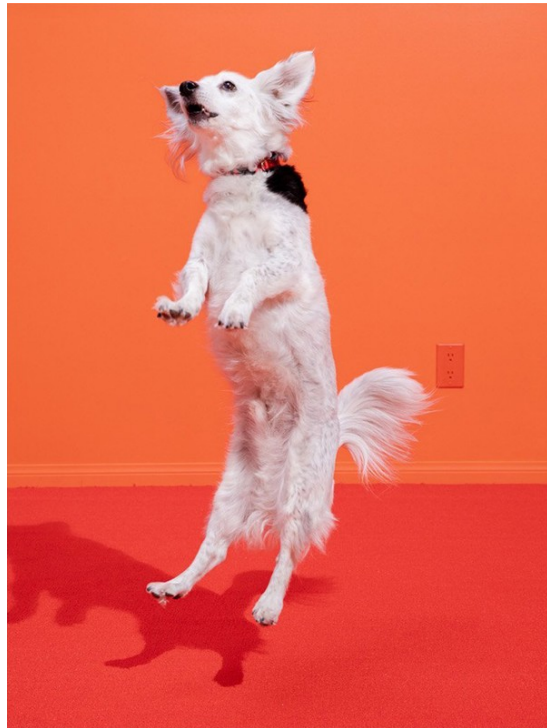
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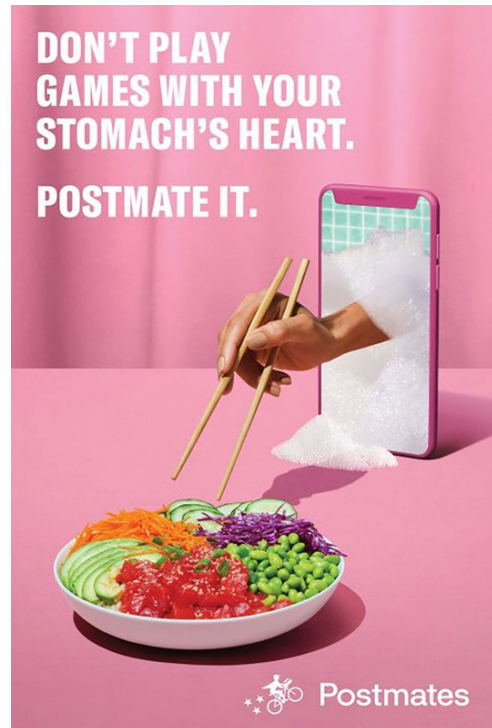
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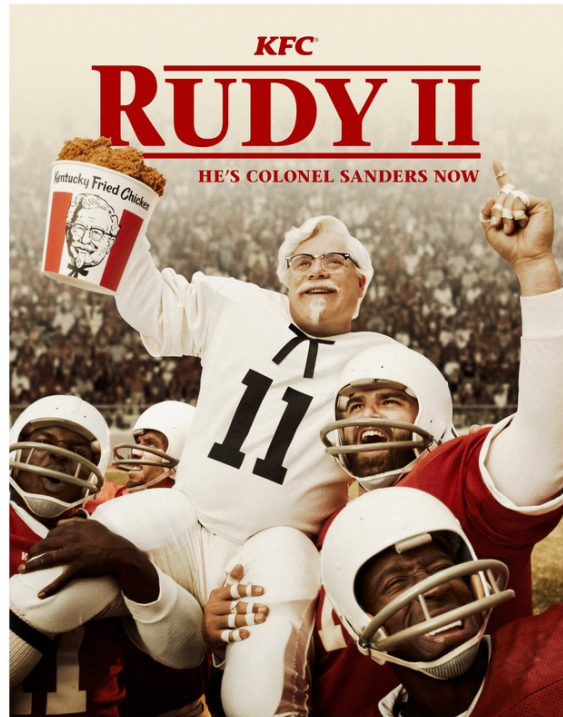
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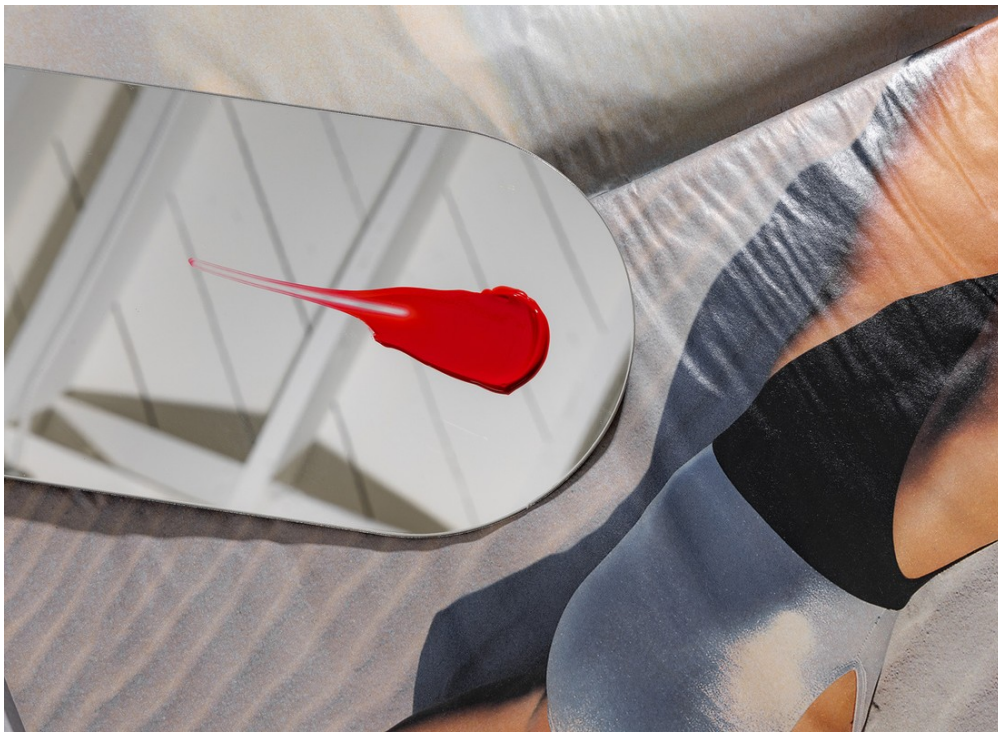
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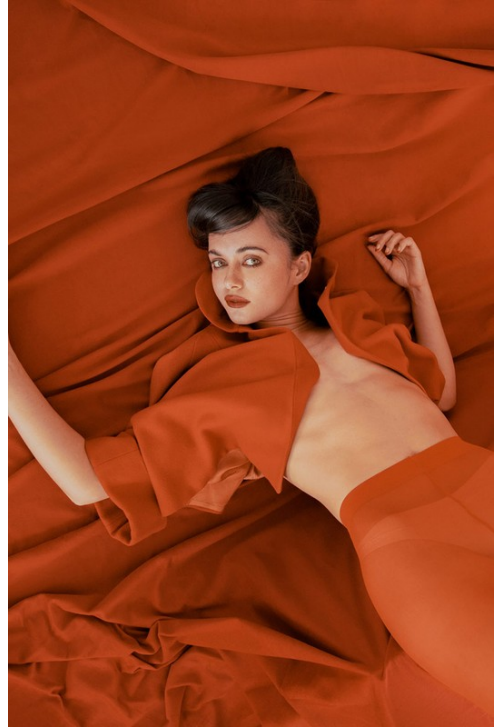
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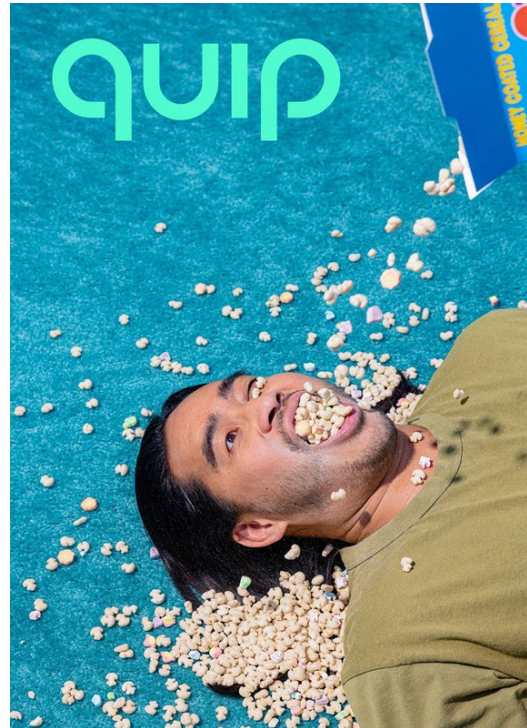
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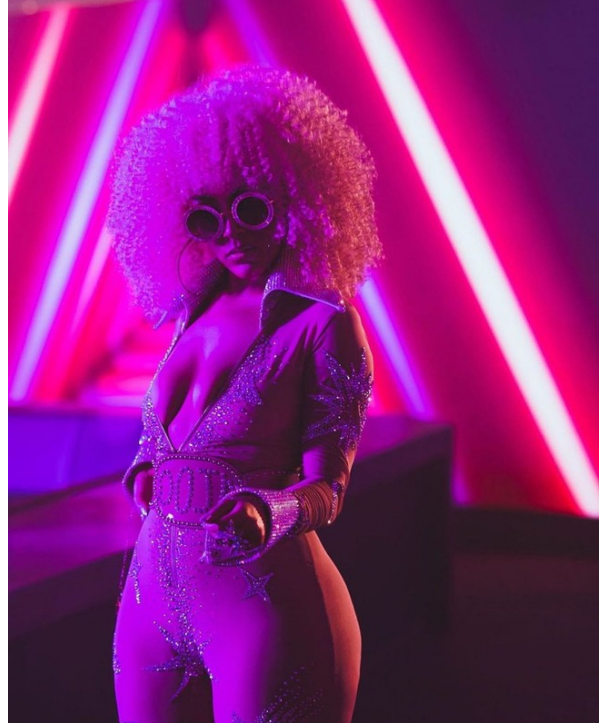
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