

d.i.y. culture + autonomist technology, subversive prehistory + pioneer anachronisms, chaos theory +

HUNTER GATHERER

CrimethInc. Journal of Folklore & Folkwar

for artisans and

suecised paritised arts, outrageous sem-antics + an/ti/aesthetics + font fetishism = rhetorical tactics, folk science + martial science +



Racing around the fireball is a hunk of iron and mud on which flying fish are plucked from the air by Pacific Islanders while spam is sold in supermarkets.

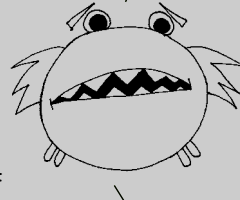
Satellites are shot into space to tell the weather to those on the ground; undaunted, children build and sail their own kites.

The lines are drawn!

Is it about d.i.y. culture, or d.i.y. cultures?



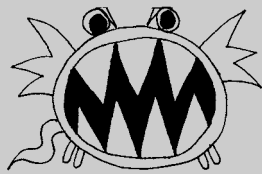
Can you write about the former without examples of the latter?



But aren't those examples just distractions from what people can do themselves? Think of punk rock, anarchism, and so on—don't they trap people in "doing themselves" what others have done, instead of coming up with their own answers, their own questions?

Or do they give people a voice to try out on their tongues until they can develop voices of their own? Isn't that the role of ritual and myth? Shouldn't we be looking to learn from our ancestors, even as we destroy and create everything anew? Don't you think someone has done that before, too?

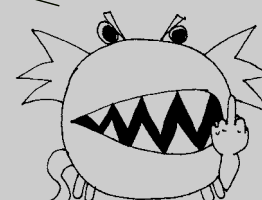
But don't the little subcultures people create today just act as diversions from the important project of undoing and rebuilding our entire society?



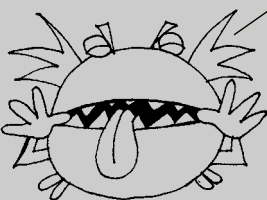
Or do they give us the practice we need for such a task? And for that matter—who says we want to rebuild a mass-based society, or that real life only takes place in the context of one? What if real life, for some of us, is what we make ourselves in our small groups, today as well as after your revolution?



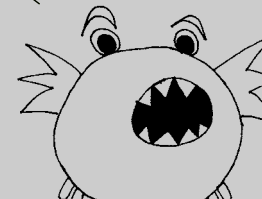
While the world around us is governed by forces beyond our control, is it possible to say you are free in any context? Is freedom something you can experience in fragments?



How can we speak about freedom at all, whether in the future or the present, without referring to the moments of it we do experience? Aren't those moments, and the initiatives that create them, always the most important part of life, on whatever scale they occur?



And how do you propose to make a journal about them, to celebrate the world of d.i.y. without making it something external to what real people do?



A Manifesto of Confusion to Make War on Nonsense!

A journal celebrating the decentralized, radically participatory do-it-yourself underground, mass-produced and distributed by a vanguard elite? A broadside emphasizing your capabilities by glorifying the adventures and achievements of a privileged few? A fable chronicling traditions of revolt, a pioneer expedition into the past, a retelling of time to rescue the future? History or story, legend or legerdemain, anthropology or propaganda?

These are tensions we cannot resolve here, tensions we care not to resolve. Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, paradox the dynamo of evolution¹. Where the contradictions are sharpest, the soil is the most fertile; and fertility is what we seek above all. Work out for yourself which of these roads you want to follow, if any—they all lead into terra incognita, and it's trailblazing you're after, right? Certainly nothing less will serve to make this enemy soil into the no-man's land we long to call home.

Burn every toy store and replace them with playgrounds,

the Editors/Gatherers

One hundred thousand years ago, the storyteller begins, your ancestors lived much as the folk you will read about in this journal do. They created and solved their problems together, in the process not only arranging for survival but also fashioning their world by attributing meaning to an overwhelming and alien cosmos.

Under capitalism, you too live in that alien, overwhelming cosmos, she continues, just as your ancestors did so long ago—but because you are inundated constantly with culture that is mass-produced for you, you forget that this creation and attribution of meaning is the central question of human life. Self-determination, let alone self-realization, is impossible without addressing this.

Find your way back to the wilderness, she urges, back to wildness—or rather, recognize that this is the Wilderness, this is not your "natural environment," this is the forbidding, inhuman, senseless dystopia your philosophers, unable to see beyond the insides of their own heads, have projected onto the Wild. Once you recognize that the important question for you is the same as it was for your ancestors millennia ago—how to impart meaning to such a place—you can begin to do so, and catch up to where they were.

The tale-spinner concludes her tale: When you set out on this journey, do not reckon yourselves modern primitives, but primitive post-moderns: the first of an ancient order. Imagine that you sow the seeds of a long-deferred future, seeds hundreds of thousands of years old.

We are the only ones currently working in meaning as a medium.



¹ Che Guevara had been declared completely unfit for military service by the Argentine army. Don Quixote, the most errant of knights, was conceived in the confines of prison. The first anarchists were aristocrats. "All power to the Workers' Councils!" demanded the famous advocates of the abolition of work. "I hate you," the lover swears. Solipsist artists speak to all, for all. Feminists fight to put an end to gender. Barricades which close streets simultaneously clear the way, as the vandal smashes glass out of tenderness—to make love is to make war. As Nietzsche wrote, you must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star.



DO-IT-YOURSELF CIVILIZATION

History is not something that happens to people—it is the activity of people. Culture does not dictate human behavior—it is the sum of human behavior. Technological progress is not a force of nature, either. There is no civilization without us civilizing, no capitalism without us capitalizing and capitulating. These are hard things to remember in the boss's office, let alone working the checkout line at Wal-Mart. The mass media encourages us to feel sentimental and proud of "our" achievements: the space shuttle soars, the disease is cured, the star gets the girl at the end of the movie. But sitting in theater or classroom seats, in front of the television or computer screen, alienated, exploited, bored, and disappointed by this self-destructing society, between calls for resistance, we begin to pose ourselves the next question: when our lives are in our hands, what do we do with them instead?

Liberty = Autonomy + Culture

Individuals cannot be autonomous—we are formed by relationships: without them, we do not exist. One cannot create meaning in a vacuum—neither can one be anything but at the mercy of and alienated by a meaning that arrives from on high. One must make meaning with others, cooperatively, for it to be meaningful. Likewise, freedom is not standing alone, "man versus humanity"—those who set out to "pursue their desires" as individualists neglect to consider that even those desires are socially constructed. Neither is freedom to be found in unquestioning "obedience to the law": we do that social constructing ourselves—those are our laws, whether we take credit for them or not. A free human being is not a law-follower or a law-breaker, but a law-maker and re-maker, a part of a tribe. "Ideology" is what we call a culture when we want to rebel against the limits it imposes; but escaping culture is equivalent to escaping existence, not becoming free in it.

So here it is in one sentence: *When we speak of liberty, we mean the creation of our own cultural context for life, which is necessarily collective; when we speak of autonomy, we mean the opportunity to do that creating without interference.*

Culture is made up of languages²: languages of words, of numbers, of concepts, of musical conventions, of aesthetic expectations, of solutions for problems, of answers to questions. Languages write our lives: they set the options whenever we make a choice, however free we may be in the selection. At the same time, it is our use of them that reproduces them, keeps them alive, makes them what they are, as they make us. Terms in languages work only because we hold them in common; language-writing is the ultimate collective activity, is the common denominator of all social activity. To be free of language is impossible in human relations—that universe as we know it is not only described by language, but exists as language. [*)]

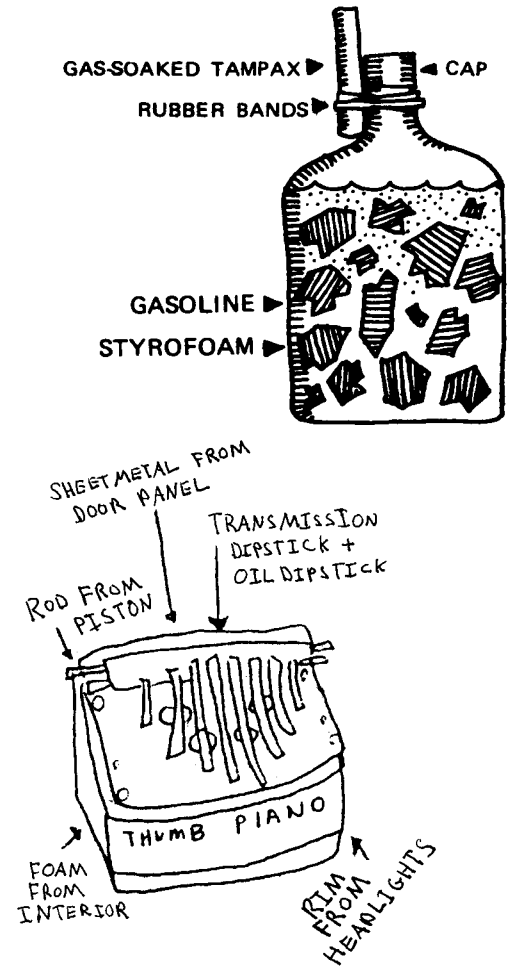
Yes, languages enforce their constraints upon us—or, more to the point, those constraints are us—but if we are the ones making those languages, we make ourselves: every time we alter or subvert a concept or expectation, we win our freedom, we make our freedom. Liberty is not a condition of being undetermined—that's impossible—but of doing the determining, or at least sharing it with your comrades³ and a trusted universe. It is in this constant redefining of terms, the ongoing creation and negation of forms and assumptions that freedom becomes possible—for those, at least, who take part. Therefore, if we're looking for liberty, we do best to take our stand with the ones challenging the languages that exist today,⁴ and with the parts of our lives in which we currently join in interactive culture.⁵

A cancer of mass-produced, impersonal, prefabricated culture threatens our species. A creature does not die "of" cancer—a creature dies by becoming cancer, when its cells begin reproducing sameness at the expense of diversity. A culture that sets up a million franchises with workers in matching uniforms executing identical tasks is a cancer out of control, a monster riding the humanity that gave birth to it into an untimely grave. We need a culture that is a dialogue, an interplay between us and the languages we think and speak and live in—not a monologue arriving out of a loudspeaker.

Fighting for this, we attack the average, deny the universal, and nurture the anomalous.

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² For an advanced exercise and an alternate account, reread this passage replacing "languages" with "stories."
³ In former times, culture was developed in tribal groups, on a small enough scale that everyone could participate.
⁴ Not with the artists or "postmodernists" who retain their modern roles as experts, nor with the radicals who play their predictable part as the loyal opposition of the established order—but with those who refuse and transform their social roles.
⁵ So yes, by all means, form another basement punk band—but do it in a way that challenges punk rock, or you'll be killing it, not keeping it alive!



Foraging versus agriculture, primitive versus civilized, culture versus nature, underground versus mainstream, avant-garde versus institution . . . these questions are not the point here. It is too easy to divide the world into rigid oppositions and take sides, as if no other approach were possible; the one who does this unquestioningly is truly the pawn of a language that sees only in binary. These terms function best in metaphors to get at what is free and unfree in human life, what is liberating and inhibiting in the possibilities before us; let's not trap ourselves in debating the particulars of any metaphor, but pursue the traces of poetry that, as in any language, exist between the lines: the truths hidden between the lies that words and all concepts, by their very nature as abstractions, necessarily are. Here, unconcerned for a precious instant with truth and falsehood alike (let alone with being proved "wrong"), against the protection racket of non-participatory culture and the mythology of fear and powerlessness that sustains it, let us create a counter-mythology of possibility. After all, the chief significance of any story is how it enables—or disables—the ones who tell and hear it.

[*) Some have argued—in lively and moving prose, no less—that language itself is the absence of freedom. They would oppose nature to culture and locate freedom in the former alone; we should be as suspicious of them as we are of those who would speak for or about Nature, as if the modern equivalent of the God would be masters once spoke for "Nature" and "culture" are themselves abstractions, anyway. (That is—terms in a language, in representations of people of language), like all dichotomies—breaks down under enough scrutiny. Do bees in a hive, who communicate with a language which evolves over time, have culture, or just nature? Just like us, the bees are their culture—this culture is something static and distanced by an automatic duty ("Weather Nature") because we view it from such a distance: that's culture shock in effect! What is natural is what we imagine and create: nature has no laws, only habits. Before language and the brain, natural origins and characteristics to language, it makes more sense to consider nature and culture two faces of the same dynamic force, and to see language as a manifestation of this. I declare my purpose in their being: that purpose existed before civilization and vanished with its arrival, have more in common than they would care to admit with the other maniacs who insist that freedom, impossible today, waits ahead for us around the bend of some utopian horizon. I believe that both of them share everything that is precious in life over some ultimate horizon, whether before or behind us, without troubling to explain how we are even able to conceive of that perfection without an example of it on hand. The revolution and the paradise after the revolution and can only be a hell before it is speechless in the face of the paradise discovered by a loving couple; the hard-line primitivist who writes of how magical everything was before the fall of grace is simply looking for a way to get back to the question of what matters right now. We would do better to orient our values around the contents of our own lives, what is possible in them; for if we can't begin our project of liberation from what we know, we can't all. To measure the value of any undertaking by whether it results in total world transformation is craziness, just as it is craziness to regard everything that exists in favor of everything that doesn't; the point is always what is happening, the means, not the ends at which we never do arrive, nor the beginnings we never knew. Freedom is made up of moments in the present or else it is indeed an abstraction, a mere ghost of language.

Circumstantial Evidence

The currency of experience, as every family knows, must be shared to become precious. We bring our stories and triumphs home to our hearts so we can celebrate ourselves and each other, and remember how worthless all those other currencies are.

From time to time, a postman would appear from among the trees to the West, staggering under a great load. The foreigner still received mountains of correspondence; he was bombarded with commercial offers, leaflets, catalogues, luxurious temptations from the consumer civilization from which he had defected.

On one occasion, he found in the mass of papers a special offer for a rowing machine. He showed it to his neighbors; the fishermen.

"Indoors? They use it indoors?" The fishermen couldn't believe it. "Without water? They row without water?" Their amazement increased. "And without fish? And without sun? And without sky?"

The fishermen told him that they got up every night long before dawn and put out to sea to cast their nets as the sun rose over the horizon, and that this was their life and this life pleased them, but that rowing was the one infernal aspect of the whole business. "Rowing is the one thing we hate," they all agreed.

The foreigner explained to them that the rowing machine was for exercise.

"For what?" asked one robust, sun-bronzed fisherman.

"For exercise," repeated the foreigner, and took a breath, preparing to describe how his countrymen rode elevators and escalators and moving sidewalks and subways and cars to the gym to work out on stairmasters and stationary bicycles, to tell of crash diets and plastic surgery and other forms of self-inflicted domestic violence, to detail the capital punishment that begins at birth—but thought better of it. "You know—rituals, customs, ceremonial rites."

"Barbarians!" The fishermen shook their heads. "from 'Alienation' as recounted by Eduardo Galeano in *The Book of Embraces*

Gathered around campfires and coffee machines and engines of broken pickup trucks, in the illumination of candles and faltering fluorescent lights and shimmering stars,

communities;

but we can tell by the very rarity of such records that they are not representative of what all human beings were doing in those days, let alone before—or today.

Let's speak of proportions again. The human race has been around for over one million years, but agriculture, let alone centralized culture, has only existed for about ten thousand: before that, we were all hunters/gatherers who let everything run wild, ourselves included. Even inside of the last ten thousand years, only a small minority of human communities have been as bellicose and coercive as this one—and even today, only a small part of human interactions actually express that violence and subservience. Thus we can see that, on every level, fighting, commanding, obeying comprise about one percent of human history. What about heartbeats, kissing, and picnics, then? Aren't those the heritage of our species?

When the question of human nature comes up, the programmed always point us to their history books to show that all human beings ever do is fight, command, obey. Before we look at those books, let's look a little closer at history itself: when they say history, which history do they mean? Time and space are both so vast that one could not hope to begin to record either in full: any record is inevitably selective in the extreme. Could one write a history of heartbeats, of kisses, of picnics? And yet aren't these, proportionately speaking, a much greater part of human history than anything in the history books?

Today we are in the belly of a hierarchical leviathan, which naturally tells the stories of other hierarchical empires as "the" history of the human race: contests for economic and political power, books of laws and philosophical rationalizing, the trivia of the lives of "great men." But the majority of human

We realized our new way of life tapped into a legacy much deeper and older than those of the bank clerks and college students around us. We were our own little cultural vessel, an independent tribal people indigenous to less than one acre of territory and subject to a rapidly revolving membership, but yet with customs and values that became as unique and ingrained as those of any ten-thousand-year-old clan. We passed down legends of our predecessors, established hunting grounds behind the grocery stores and campus dormitories, covered the walls with shadow paintings of our

riding taxi cabs and freight trains and ill-tempered donkeys, amateur storytellers relate what has happened in the world. These happenings happened recently or long ago, down the street or over the rainbow. They probably happened or might as well have happened or one can be positive never ever happened, but their virtue is that they happen every time they are told.

Faith is what makes things work. Faith means embracing your desire: knowing what you want, that it is good, that it will come true. Faith means relaxation—relaxation allows you to react and learn. Faith means intuition, means love, means strength. Faith is the engine of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The world is learned, loved, interpreted and adjusted through mythology: mythology is learned, loved, interpreted and adjusted through faith.

History As We Live It

We Are Continuously Giving Birth To Our Ancestors

I began to stay up later and later to find time and space for myself. At four in the morning, the city was deserted; at a quarter past five, birds strutted on the streets cars would monopolize two hours later. I walked there, too—it was a fairyland, an alternate universe in which this crowded, heavily policed district was my own domain, a measureless paradise such as Adam and Eve might have awoken in. My joy in it was so profound I almost wanted to rush out and populate it again with a new race of offspring.

After months of enjoying this solitude, I was joined by first one, then a few friends, who started to stay up and walk with me. Surprisingly, this did not spoil the pleasure, but increased it: now I had a people with whom to share my world!

So late at night, we walked the streets of our Greensboro, North Carolina, across the asphalt on which automobiles drove by day. We didn't speak it aloud, but we knew that one day, when there were no more cars, all the inhabitants of this land would follow in our footsteps. This was our universe, extending before and behind us through eternity, and its past and future were as real to us as the industrial revolution was to the motorists. It occurred to me then that every people exists in a unique time continuum, planning for the future and interpreting the past in its light; and perhaps time itself is

selves with slingshots hunting police cars and with boltcutters gathering bicycles. Our hair began to fill up with bones and beads, our skin to be covered by safety-pin tattoos chronicling our adventures, our histories, our faith. One winter Sera was kept awake by scratching noises in her walls. Sprawled around the fire in the common room where we spent the cold, dark nights in animated conversation, and song, we held court and discussed the situation. To help us visualize our invisible housemates, Stef ventured a portrait of one in graffiti marker on the refrigerator ("We've never seen them," one of us would later explain to an outsider: "they look like this."). Surveying her rendering, we dubbed them the vermin. We drew vermin all over the house—and immediately thereafter, the scratching ceased. Jesting, and then almost serious, we concluded that we had discovered our totem animal: a totem which, properly attended to, would protect us from the other wild animals of this newfound wilderness. We decorated the whole house with depictions of vermin engaged in various activities analogous to the ones we engaged in, and when some of us left to roam the world, the vermin came with us. In Umea, the following autumn, ten thousand miles from our homeland, Stef, who had endowed every squat from Lisbon to Oslo with guardian vermin totems, received her first vermin tattoo. It was opposite the Amebix tattoo on her other leg. Reflecting on this, it seemed to me that this

No Future In Nostalgia

deep and broad and full enough to have room in it for all of these disparate histories. Perhaps we need not judge which one is "true" of the world, but instead admit them all as real for the ones who travel in them.

What the pundits say:

"In addition to shorter and more flexible hours and the more reliable safety net afforded by food sharing, foragers' labor was more satisfying than most modern work is. We awaken to the alarm clock—they slept a lot, night and day. We are sedentary in our buildings in our polluted cities; they moved about freely, breathing the fresh air of the country. We have bosses—they had companions. Our work typically involves one, or, at most, a few hyperspecialized skills, if any; theirs combined handwork and brainwork in a versatile variety of activities, exactly as the great utopians called for. Our commute is dead time, and unpaid, to boot—they could scarcely leave their campsites without experiencing an adventure of some kind. Life, for us, is chiefly a source of anxiety, and a source of retinue for insurance companies; for them, it was a feast—or perhaps, at times, a famine, but a famine nobler and more sensible than our greatest sufferings and achievements here in the condominium and the cubicle."

⁶ The politician says "today things are more the way they are than ever before," and the media agrees with him—don't fall for it!

difference than we can imagine, great multitudes of Atlantises, each with currencies and cosmologies unimaginable from this vantage point. Write your own stories of what our ancestors did—they're probably true—and use them to kindle the courage you'll need to live the stories you want. Tell those fables around the fire before the next great adventure your clan undertakes, be it transcontinental migration or anti-imperialist demonstration; whisper them into your lover's ear when he needs reassurance that he is not crazy for breaking ranks with this "global village" of cannibals. If anything is for sure, it is that your predecessors did the same!

Faith is what makes things work. Faith means embracing your desire: knowing what you want, that it is good, that it will come true. Faith means relaxation—relaxation allows you to react and learn. Faith means intuition, means love, means strength. Faith is the engine of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The world is learned, loved, interpreted and adjusted through mythology: mythology is learned, loved, interpreted and adjusted through faith.

"Tool-using primitive peoples were actually more accustomed to exercising their intelligence than we are—they were used to inventing their tools and solutions, while



was exactly the way our distant ancestors, in earlier ages of daily culture, must have identified and affiliated themselves. The latter tattoo was comprehensible to everyone from the tribal federation (i.i.y. punk rock) Stef hailed from, being a reference point given meaning by an international demographic of perhaps 100,000; the former tattoo was comprehensible to the perhaps thirty people of her immediate clan, with whom its significance had been created. Thus Stef's body attested to her involvement in folk culture on both a local and global scale." -testimony of "B-Dog" in Cedar Street Anth (rap/ology), volume 1

we, for the most part, simply receive them. Similarly, they were more practiced in the arts of enjoying life, as they weren't busy constantly struggling to catch up to the progress of their civilization. Joy, and wonder, and friendship were the centers of life, not survival—or else they would have developed their technological means more rapidly! Only today, in our world of enforced artificial scarcities and unbridled social change, are the nuts-and-bolts issues of mere survival the main focus."

"In that Golden Age, they lived as if they were gods, their hearts free from all sorrow. When they died, it was as if they simply fell asleep. The fruitful grainland yielded its harvest to them of its own accord—while they, at their pleasure, quietly looked after their works, in the midst of good things."

Circumstantial Evidence

"Universe had become such a home for us that we felt free and faithful. Faithful that tomorrow and tomorrow's tomorrow would supply as much nourishment and adventure to our clan of gatherers as yesterday and yesterday's yesterday. And it did.

On that day we reclined in the grass near the garbage can that played our host, and felt fear slipping away. It was that age-old fear that if we didn't work we would starve to death or go insane, and it seeped out of us into the warm grass beneath. And that lead-heavy effluvia was silently replaced by the serene notion that Universe meant to take care of us.

Thus the anthropologist, the sociologist, and the Greek poet (Hesiod, in 700 B.C., to be exact) celebrated the lifestyles of human beings immeasurably removed from them by time and space—but you could as easily replace the foragers, primitive peoples, and golden gods with, say, "trainhoppers" to make the passages refer to the present day. After all, why let dead people have all the fun? It does little good to glorify the past at the expense of the possibilities of the present, even though some do take a perverse pleasure in mourning their own lives before they are dead. There are people today living the lives these passages lionize, in cities and distant deserts alike!

And why stop at that change? Laud "trainhoppers" as a class, and anyone who has hopped a train will instinctively assume you're speaking about everybody but them. Deep down, no one ever feels included in any abstraction, in any genera(liza)tion. Praising one demographic implies a standard where there should be none, anyway. Why not rewrite all these passages

to death or go insane, and it seeped out of us into the warm grass beneath. And that lead-heavy effluvia was silently replaced by the serene notion that Universe meant to take care of us.

Universe made good on this promise that very afternoon when we noticed an art gallery reception with cake and to honor what is free, creative, independent about all human beings, especially those living now? Why celebrate the foragers of the distant past when people are foraging in the suburbs at this very moment? The everyday human still invents. Engage the trainhopper in all of us!

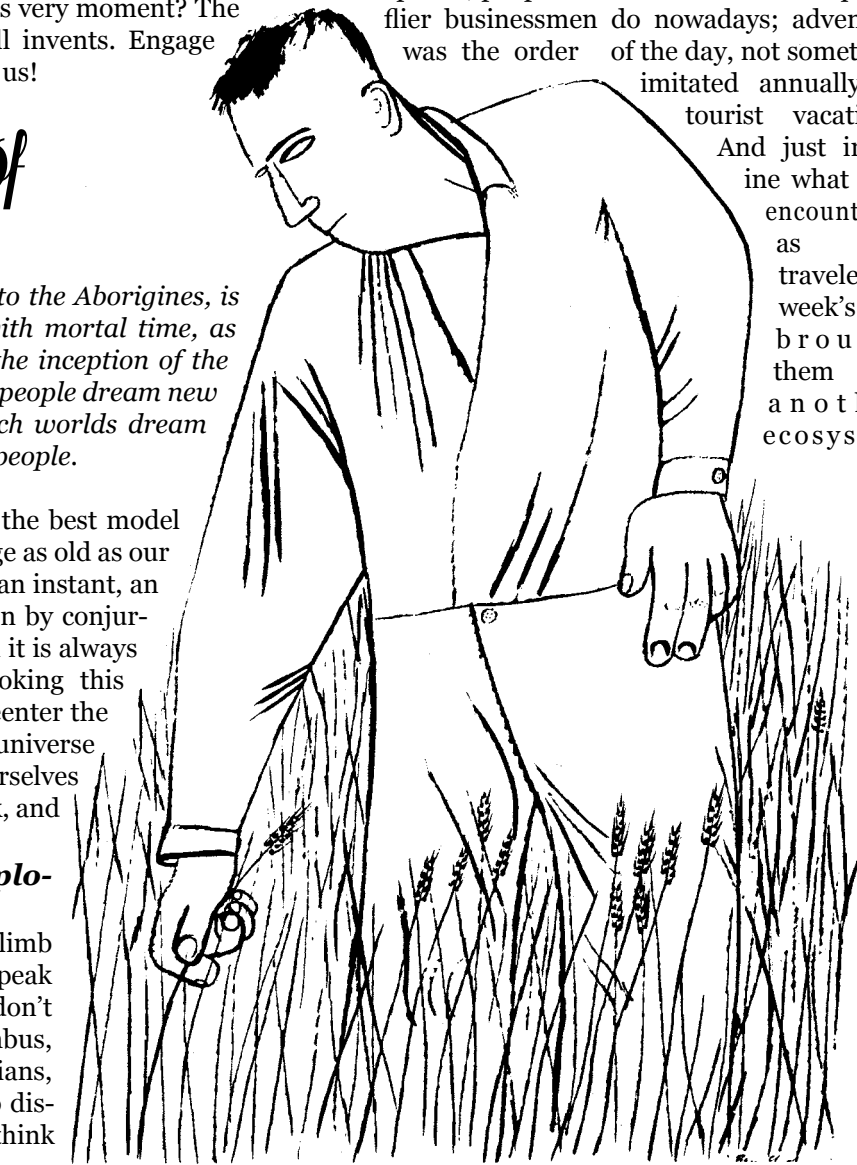
One Million Years Of D.i.y. Culture!

The Dreamtime, according to the Aborigines, is a time that runs concurrent with mortal time, as well as having taken place at the inception of the cosmos. It is the world in which people dream new worlds into being—and in which worlds dream themselves into being, through people.

That Dreamtime is perhaps the best model for our new mythology: a heritage as old as our species that can become new in an instant, an ongoing history we participate in by conjuring it, a time and space in which it is always the first day of Creation. Invoking this story, any time, any place, we reenter the Garden of Eden to invent our universe from scratch. So—to orient ourselves for looking ahead, let's look back, and thus around:

One million years of exploration and discovery!

The first human being to climb Mount Everest reached its peak 20,000 years ago. What, you don't believe it? Do you think Columbus, or Leif Ericsson, or the Phoenicians, for that matter, were the first to discover America, too? Do you think

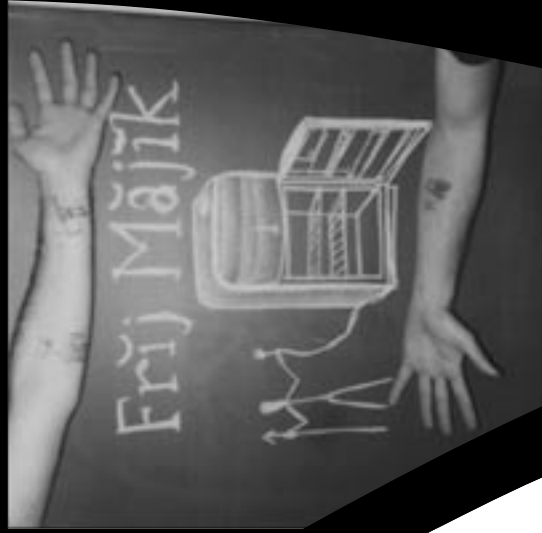


And just imagine what they encountered as they traveled! A week's trek brought them into another ecosystem

people really spent the first nine hundred and ninety millennia huddled in caves, motionless and terrified—is that how human beings reached Greenland and Hawaii from the forests of Africa? Imagine all the wondrous journeys we undertook in the past million years—expeditions and escapades that would be unbelievable to our historians even if they weren't invisible to their instruments. Remnants of these linger in our fairytales still.

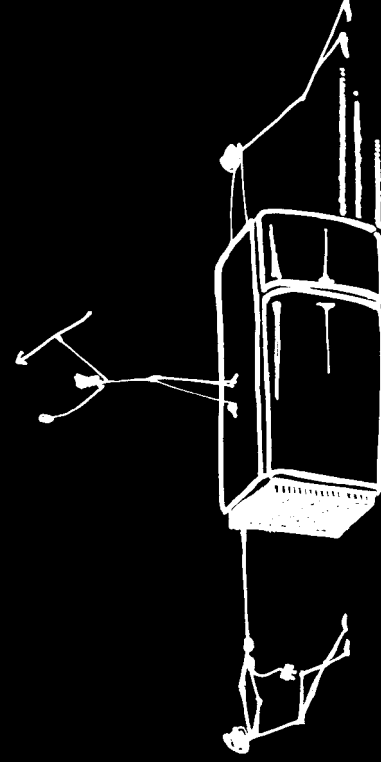
In prehistoric times, energy not expended on survival must have been employed as children camping still utilize it today: to devise and narrate stories, explore untrodden spaces, plot impossible voyages—and sometimes carry them out. Surely, unconstrained by apartment leases, border guards, or ticket prices, people traveled more than frequent-flier businessmen do nowadays; adventure was the order of the day, not something imitated annually on tourist vacations.

us took time to imagine the refrigerator of our dreams. We agreed that it was a white refrigerator with two doors: one a freezer, the other a refrigerator proper with shelves and drawers. We



wine. We stayed and stayed and found that we could have the uneaten vegetable tray and the picked-over plate of cheese. Feeling bold and beloved we imagined that Universe might like to give us a refrigerator that we could use to store our bounty. We discussed the idea and decided to make a formal request. We would use the same magical language of symbols and signs that Universe used to speak to us.

So humbly, and at first tentatively, we began a practice of visualization. Every day each of



(and, probably, economic system!), into contact with unfamiliar cultures and creatures—a far cry from the identical airports and hotels those unfortunate businessmen deem their natural environment. We still set out on such journeys today, wherever one of us goes off the map; hitchhiking for the first time from Amsterdam to Stockholm, exploring the disused train tunnel that runs through the darkness under Providence, Rhode Island, we cross paths with that woman who first ascended Mount Everest so long ago.

One million years of anarcha-feminism!

It's common knowledge that matriarchal societies preceded patriarchal ones—but "matriarchy" is simply an abstraction coined by unimaginative men to describe what they can only picture as the reverse of today's gender relations. Those were days when women knew themselves, days when they were known by all as creators, conceivers of life, bearers of the spirit world. The Amazons were only one of hundreds of tribes of powerful women who kept these mysteries alive by courage, cunning, and compassion. The Great Wall of China was built by patriarchal empires as a desperate defense against the Samartians, a nation of horsewomen who lived without masters and were buried in their armor; according to the (male!) historian Herodotus, a woman of their tribe would not take a lover for herself until she had slain a man in battle. The witches who followed their eighteen centuries later were keepers of the same secrets, as we are today when we share herbal alternatives to doctoral dogma or fill the streets on the 8th of March. We gather in woman-only spaces as our ancestors did at the dawn of humanity and rediscover our powers as they discovered theirs, guided by goddesses who have lost their names only to receive new ones. We still refuse any attempts to define or silence us, still devise and revise our own genders just as pre-historic transsexuals and transvestites did, still take each other fiercely and fearlessly in strong arms and gentle hands. As Sappho declared, in the words of Rita Mae Brown, *an army of lovers shall not fail*.

One million years of d.i.y. punk!

For over 50,000 generations, our ancestors didn't shave their legs or armpits or wear deodorant. They

offerings, its doors covered with drawings and pictures." -F.M. Dixon, as quoted by F.G. Markem in *Cage Match: Modern Magic versus Urban Legends*

To cast a spell, simply begin to act "as if": as if there are others who feel as you do, as if you are possessed of great powers, as

scavenged food like modern trashpickers do, traveled like hitchhikers riding rivers and hopping ocean currents around the world, celebrated life with folk music made by their friends, passed down folk culture they devised. You can bet some of them had dreadlocks, some homemade tattoos and scarification, some patches proclaiming their allegiances.

There used to be as many human beings in the world as there are punk rockers, now. When you consider our situation in that light, it's easier to trace the parallels between their lives and ours: where once there were saber-toothed tigers, there now are security guards; where later we fought Sumerian mercenaries, Pharaohs' armies, Roman legions to assert and protect our liberty, today we contest corporate conglomerates and so-called democratic governments. We were squatting caves before they erected buildings—we painted graffiti on those walls before sandblasting was invented—we were composing and passing on our own songs be-



envisioned our refrigerator as smallish and nicely styled with a chrome handle and perhaps an insignia embossed in its enameled metal face.

But soon we began to worry that our visions might not be enough. After all, Universe was rarely subtle about its gifts to us. So we began to draw our little refrigerator on our skin. We invented refrigerator movements and our movements became refrigerator dances; we danced our refrigerator. We made up refrigerator sounds and our sounds became refrigerator songs; we sang our refrigerator. Feeling proud of our game we made graffiti like cave paintings. In our paintings little people, successful in their hunt, dragged home refrigerators by their cords; we laughed our refrigerator.

And so our senses would not become dull, so our festivities would not drown out the very Universe we were appealing to, we walked the mazes of the town, we kept our eyes sharp and our noses to the wind.

It was on the third day that our festivities were interrupted by our object. It was a white refrigerator with two doors: one a freezer, the other a refrigerator proper with shelves and drawers. Our refrigerator was smallish and nicely styled with a chrome handle and a little insignia embossed into the enameled metal of its face. After an hour of scrubbing, a shine appeared on its surface.

That was very long ago. Today our refrigerator is comfortable in the corner of our room, its shelves piled high with subsequent

fore the radiowaves were invaded—we met to reach consensus long before the first ballot was tampered with! When a few of us come together in any liberated, communal space to share those songs and stories and strategies, we are participating in the same tradition our ancestors practiced with their neighbors one thousand

Circumstantial Evidence

if you are the protagonist of a story with a happy ending, Universe is sensitive to your desire, is created by desire. When you search for your desire and present it to Universe, you are casting a spell. Typically for better or for worse, people use this power accidentally: the self-destruction of a relationship, an instance of good luck, a project undertaken with no initial resources except determination—for which all the essentials appear, one by one.^[]*

These are all great and wondrous occurrences, though no greater than we should expect from this world! But beware—a person spell-casting unconsciously is a baby with a machine gun. Look out.

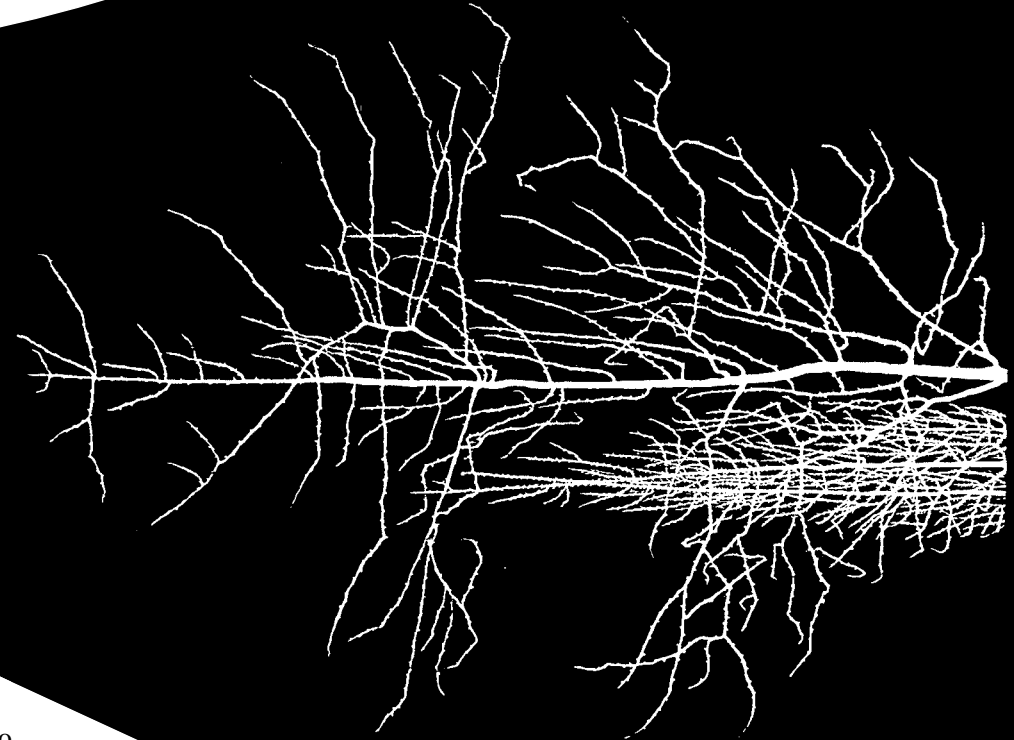
[]Undeniably, the best example of spell-casting in the specialists' book-history of the past few centuries is the life of Joan D'Arc. When Joan was fourteen, a year before she left the obscurity of her family's rural farm to join the French armies and lead them to victory in the name of God over the invading English, her village celebrated a local holiday with one of those cookouts at which old folks sit around drinking and reminiscing while youngsters run and wrestle and tell tales in the yard. Near the end of the evening, sitting in a bush with her cousin, young Joan confided her secret to him in the breathless seriousness with which children express themselves in such moments: in one year, she explained, she would leave the farm and lead the French armies to victory over the invading English, for she had been chosen by God. Many of us make and fulfill similar predictions about ourselves: we will one day have our own apartments and children, we will grow up to be writers or sing in bands, we will purchase new pairs of shoes. Would that we could visualize our greatness on the scale Saint Joan did!*

"While I was living in the woods I sort of invented some gods for myself," he says, and he laughs. "Not that I believed in these things intellectually, but they were ideas that sort of corresponded with some of the feelings I had. I think the first one I invented was Grandfather Rabbit. You know, the snowshoe rabbits were my main source of meat during the winters. I had to spend a lot of time learning what they do and following their tracks all around before I could get close enough to shoot them. Sometimes you would track a rabbit around and around and then the tracks disappear. You can't figure out where that rabbit went, and lose the trail.

Here is something people do: we gather experiences and express them in stories, we have so many stories that we tend to forget all but the highs and lows, we are fascinated by experiences that are strange and anomalous and call upon these to celebrate life.

Science discounts the miraculous and embraces the average. In a magic world, we dismiss the average and nurture the anomalous. The anomalous grows.

One can interpret Heyerdahl's project in the framework of Western civilization's supposedly linear development of knowledge and technology—he was simply adding to "the" store of human knowledge, albeit by returning to the lost lore of the past. But Heyerdahl himself tells it differently: in rediscovering the prehistoric lore of ocean travel, he felt a close kinship with the human beings who had made this same journey before, in a similar craft. Outside the linear timeline, men on Heyerdahl's ship and women on ships perhaps four thousand years earlier stood beside each other by night, gazing upon the same stars. Speaking proportionately, once more: even on excursions that end up in the history books like this one, what gets recorded is only one percent of the actual experience taking



"The happy hunting ground is out there still, full of brimming billabongs, a huge Fat and Juicy Place where the Kangaroos have no sense of smell and the Mulunguwas are benevolent."

-Waipuldanya, speaking with Douglas Lockwood, in *I, the Aboriginal* (copied down July 8, 2001, on a Greyhound bus with a counterfeited pass, just leaving the city of Philadelphia, thank heavens)

generations ago. We can claim one million years of d.i.y. culture and resistance for our heritage; the tyrants have to their credit only a few senseless wars and asinine inventions, the self-important treatises of a few rockstar ideologists, a handful of short-lived empires—which we've always eventually razed to the ground! The ruins of their failed nations, wrecked temples on hills where metropolises stood mere centuries ago, foreshadow the end they know awaits—our way stretches ahead of us infinitely, through the entire future of our species:

for as long as inhuman

man institutions are made up of human lives, there will be resistance, and afterwards there will be celebrations just as there are today. Our war can never be entirely lost; theirs can never be won.

One million years of folk science, folk medicine, folk everything!

Did you know—people two thousand years ago took birth control pills? They made them by boiling down the urine of female pigs. The early Egyptians, and those earlier than them in China and the Middle East, having not invented a process for making iron, fashioned iron tools from fragments of iron that arrived in meteors fallen from the sky (an Egyptian hieroglyph represented "heavenly iron"); the peoples of northwestern Greenland were still doing this less than two centuries ago—polar explorer R.E. Peary was shown three enormous meteorites which they had been visiting in yearly pilgrimages for centuries to obtain tips for their harpoons. And!—as Thor Heyerdahl

Here is something science does: it gathers experiences and expresses them as numerical data, it graphs the data and throws out the extremes of high and low (throws them out!) before averaging the rest and drawing conclusions based on those results.

-Ted Kaczynski, in his first interview from prison, published in *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire-Armed*

a better one, just as the snowshoe rabbits, but I never did get it done."

I invented a myth for myself: this was Grandfather Rabbit, the grandfather who was responsible for the existence of all other rabbits. He was able to disappear, that is why you couldn't catch him and why you would never see him. Every time I shot a snowshoe rabbit, I found myself saying "Thank you, Grandfather Rabbit." After a while I acquired an urge to draw snowshoe rabbits. I sort of got involved with them to the extent that they would occupy a great deal of my thought. I actually did have a wooden object that, among other things, I carved a snowshoe rabbit in. I planned to do

strated, several thousand years before the Roman Empire, human beings were able to circumnavigate the globe in wash-through bottom boats many hundreds of feet long; since solid-hulled boats became common, the expertise to fashion such crafts has been lost to all but a few isolated groups, but evidence suggests that the wash-through model was actually better adapted to ocean travel than its successor.

Proof remains at Stonehenge and on Easter Island that technology is not a singular force that develops in a straight line, that different technologies are always evolving and disappearing—the ones who insist that such marvels must be the work of aliens just reveal how colonized their imaginations are by modernist indoctrination. The folk-scientific method, as it is practiced today by every adolescent astronomer with a cheap telescope and a notebook of personal discoveries, has more in common with science as most human beings have practiced it than anything the books tell us about Archimedes or Einstein. Omnipresent cultural propaganda insists that the present is utterly unlike the past, glorifying the "unprecedented progress" of the present day as it simultaneously portrays that past as a golden age to which there is no return—but the technologies, medicines, arts of today have analogues dating back perhaps to the very beginnings of our species. No need to cling in fear to "modern technology" and the scant comforts it provides—this is the dark age, if there ever was one!

And again, the only question to ask is—what to do to make our own Enlightenment? How do we follow in the footsteps of those from the last one hundred generations who defected to make their own way through the world, leaving only cryptic messages scratched into trees behind them: Gone to Croatan . . .

Correspondences:

Thor Heyerdahl and other Folk Scientists, Folk Singers, Folk Warriors

When his colleagues insisted, on account of the vast distances involved, that similarities between the technologies and folklore of the ancient peoples of the Mediterranean, the Americas, and the Polynesian islands must be coincidental, Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl left the specialists' ivory tower to test their theory. He contracted reed boat builders from Lake Titicaca in Peru, among the only people in the world who still understand the complexities of such design, to fashion the kind of vessel those ancient peoples used, and set out with an international crew ("a Russian, an African, a Mexican, an Egyptian, an American, an Italian, and a monkey") to find out just how far they could sail in one. In this boat, the Ra II, they sailed almost effortlessly from Morocco to Barbados in only fifty seven days.



place. The other ninety nine percent consists of the kind of life held in common by all human beings.

Such correspondences between human activities past and present exist everywhere: A woman adjusts a recipe her mother passed down to her, as her predecessors did ten millennia before. German squatters decorate and defend their walls with fragments of broken glass, as their forerunners would have prepared for Roman attacks. Nomadic volunteers till organic farms as Celtic peoples did before them. An adolescent runaway beholds Paris with the same wide eyes Rimbaud did over a century earlier, perhaps as the first human beings to reach that site did at the dawn of time. A singer-songwriter discovers she can make her language her own, just as Percy Shelley did; both experience the same sense of wonder shared by the

"At night, when the tropical stars twinkled from the black sky and a myriad of phosphorescent plankton twinkled back from the sea, we too felt like gods on a flying carpet in the universe. There was nothing but us on the raft, surrounded by darkness and stars. We could well understand the pre-Incan artists who depicted Kon Tiki and other bearded and hook-nosed deities as traveling on serpents undulating among the stars, symbolically pulled along by bird-headed men while they themselves enjoyed pulling in fishlines that had hooked rays, sharks, or sea monsters. We too pulled in giant fishes. Aboard our balsa raft, real life became like a fairy tale. After all, this real life was a fairy tale. How else could one describe the fact that the twinkling plankton in the sea around us were the ancestors of the six of us who sat above water and looked down upon them?"

-Thor Heyerdahl in *Green Was the Earth on the Seventh Day*



"Since the time of his youth, Crazy Horse had known that the world men [sic] lived in was only a shadow of the real world. To get into the real world, he had to dream, and when he was in the real world everything seemed to float or dance. In this real world his horse danced as if it were wild or crazy, and this was why he called himself Crazy Horse. He had learned that if he dreamed himself into the real world before going into a fight, he could endure anything.

On this day, June 17, 1876, Crazy Horse dreamed himself into the real world, and he showed the Sioux how to do many things they had never done before while fighting the white man's soldiers."

—from Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*

Laughing and crying there in her office at the Academy, Zoltan said to his brilliant but anxious wife: "It used to be said of a man who had suffered a catastrophic setback in his life that he had been handed his head on a platter. We are being handed our heads with tweezers now."

He was speaking, of course, of microchips.

so just in time, it's . . .

Breaking the Silence with Folk Science!

reports and field notes from the Collaboratories

because it's never too late to reinvent the wheel



One day, a group of villagers paid a visit to her hut. They sat down on the grass mats on the floor, and one of them addressed her: "Ever since you came here, you have been asking us a lot of questions. Now we would like to ask you a question."

The speaker picked up a drinking glass, one of the few relics of her civilization she had brought with her. "Please," he began, politely, "how do you make this?"

"Oh yes, well," she stumbled, trying to collect the right words in their dialect to explain the process, "it's quite simple, really. You take sand and you heat it with fire, and then you mold the glass."

"Ah ha!" the villagers responded, enthusiastically nodding their heads as they passed the glass around their circle. "Tomorrow, after breakfast, we will meet on the beach after breakfast, and you can show us how to do this ourselves."

Her hosts understood none of the jumbled, incoherent protestations that followed. They did, however, understand her refusal. Thereafter, they let it be known throughout the village that the real reason for the anthropologist's presence among them had been revealed: she had been sent because she was an incompetent, incapable of the simplest crafts of her culture.



Bicycle mechanics and folk scientists Wilbur and Orville Wright test one of their inventions, with assistance from Dan Tate



A whole herd of crash test dummies aboard a modern jumbo jet flight with no idea how the damn thing works

It is important for the reader to understand that the examples of folk science our laboratories have produced are not just homemade tools with "practical" functions—they are chiefly about troubleshooting in the realm of wasted time and creativity. The Sub-Sub-Contra-Bass Blaster is a hand-crafted machine for creating inaudible bass tones, yes, but it is also a machine for snatching its maker from the jaws of boredom with a process of production that requires so much time and focus that there is nothing left for the usual suicidal fare of sleeping, eating, working, and being entertained. Resisting that predatory cycle is one of the greatest challenges facing human beings today, and it is no less formidable than being chased by wolves or gathering enough food to eat.

We in the West face two dilemmas: one in the problems we must solve to lead meaningful lives, and another in our doubt that contemporary problems are as serious and as worthy as the ones faced by our ancestors. But one *can* be bored to death. We jump off bridges just to have a taste of irrefutable meaning. We have been convinced that our depression, distraction, boredom, and frustration are adversaries less real, less honorable than hungry black bears or bubonic black plagues; but I declare that these things are mighty enemies.

Even outfitted with the most advanced apparatus of our age, *especially* outfitted with it, we are destitute. Poverty—this is very important—is not a material but cultural condition: that's why a hobo or unvanquished aborigine can be richer than a factory worker with full benefits. Poverty of goods doesn't trouble anyone rich in more important things; poverty of self and family, that's serious. This is serious! The background music in the shopping malls, even blasting out of our own car stereos, self-medicated, drowns out the songs in our heads, and we wonder why on earth we have tongues in our throats. They're for singing hymns, not "can I take your order please"! And the priests our muteness keeps in business, they are idiots—they know nothing about religion⁷. We must teach them about it!

We demand a Saint Kathryn who slipped from the jaws of school with desire afire in her arms, we search for Saint Kids hanging upside down from the overpass to decorate grey concrete, Saint Etta who ate the cake and loved it, loved it! Fuck you Kate Moss, fuck you Twiggy and Tommy Hilfiger. We pray to young Saint Aaron who risked everything, holding hands and dancing with Saint Paul. We wait for you, Saint You, reading this passage we compose in these moments of clarity, these stolen moments. May you find us when they have passed and we are in despair—and will you pluck us from the jaws of that beast? It is no less murderous than the Nature they say would starve us to death or the dragons of legend. The demons that we face are real, they are real.

There was a moment in our lives when no object or space or time suggested one use over another. As we grew up, we discovered that the sofa is not for building forts, the mall is not for skipping and singing; but that moment sometimes flickers back. It happens in times of disorientation and abandon. Believe it or not, you can get lost in a 17' by 26' room. You can unlearn a car with wrenches and saws.

There is an invisible world connected at the handle to every tool—use the tool as it is intended, and it fits you to the mold of all who do the same; disconnect the tool from that world, and you can set out to chart others. Every time we turn a tool back into an object, every time we turn a word back into a sound, we are unwriting the cosmos. We do not do this because we hate language, nor because we think we could or should be free of it, but because we love to invent it—for it is in the inventing that our freedom takes place. For tales of invention, read on.

-CrimethInc. Ohm Canon

⁷To refer back to the Neech again: "You say you believe in the necessity of religion [technology/the arts/academia/etc.]—be honest! You only believe in the necessity of police!"

Report #1: One Prehistory of Auto Re-Vision

“Incredulous, we set off to see if the earth was round and found that it was not.”

-Pippi Longstocking

Here are a few details of a particular folk scientific method as it evolved over the last six years. Folk scientists keep track of clues, stories. We've all been told that patterns will arise; I look for a moment when they don't. These moments (failures, incongruencies, problems) are the hot spots—signposts that suggest the next turn.

I try to express my process in stories. Here is a story now. It is a setting for what will come next. It starts in North Carolina, USA, my birthplace, in the squalid shack I rented from the owner of a Christmas tree farm in rural McLeansville, population 1,100.

Each time he visited my house, the propane man would survey the mess and tell me sternly, “I’m not supposed to fill tanks in houses like this without an inspection. They’d condemn it you know.” Then he’d grin and top off my tank as if he was enjoying the secret we kept, as if his house would not pass inspection either.

Making Visible the Invisible

Noone visits when you live that far out, and my housemates worked full time; so mostly I spent my days alone. This solitude fit well with my main activities: sculpture and yoga. The word yoga can be translated “yoke,” as in to yoke or connect the microcosmic self (the individual, the body) and the macrocosmic self (the spirit, the divine).

My practices of yoga and of art often traded thoughts. One of the (many) things yoga offered was a different language for the structure of my body; a language of tension and energy rather than compression and objects (see footnote: *The Myth of Compression and Tension*).

In my sculpture I tried to make visible the esoteric structures I was discovering on my yoga mat. The sculptures were large steel and concrete abstractions full of high-stakes balance and potential energy. I would work on these pieces three and four hundred hours each. When I showed my friends who were not “artists” what I had done, they would look long and be impressed, perhaps they would see beauty, but they never had much to say. I began to think that the sculptures, having been made in solitude and inspired by solitary practices, were for me alone.

After three years of this isolation and a lot of satisfying work, I felt the need to connect my practice to other people. I imagined a new yoga, a yoke still but this time between myself and others: Social

Yoga. It would be a practice of creating contacts, interactions and flows between myself and a social body. Machines, experiments, toys and musical instruments began to emerge from my shop: and they did new things that my solitude never had.

Social Yoga: Behavioral cutups

In a surrealist cutup, written text is randomly cut and recombined in search of new meaning. The resulting randomness exposes the perverse structure of rationality and habit that governs creativity.

Behavioral cutups use the same method on personal or social text. A favorite method for integrating such a practice is to choose a mundane part of life and attach some stipulation to it. This brings awareness to the action and makes it a fertile ground for new experiences. If you have ever chosen a dietary restriction, this may sound familiar—food cutups can raise consciousness about source and content of food, as well as tamper with the social institution of eating and thus put you in new situations. This is just a whiff of what is possible.

Mystics have employed behavioral cutups for thousands of years. In addition to dietary regimens, they have practiced mimicry of animals, rituals of exhaustion, deprivation and pain, the use of intoxicants, ecstatic dancing, public nudity and other taboo acts, years of ceaseless standing followed by similar years of sitting. These are time-honored techniques for independent learning.

Cutup One: “Claiming Pittsburgh”

Finished with my days as a hermit, I decided to move to a place I had never been before, and not just geographically: my whole life was to change. As I drove to Pennsylvania, I decided I needed a plan for precipitating and observing these changes. Thirty miles outside of Pittsburgh, I arrived at a solution. For my first month in this new city I would not urinate indoors.

I called the game “Claiming Pittsburgh,” referring to the way animals mark and claim territory. Ironically, in the contemporary urban setting one who must piss outside lays claim to nothing and risks punishment to boot. This situation forced me to constantly observe my new world with an eye for private spaces, hiding places. I became oriented in a special way because of this.

For this cutup I recorded the time, place and circumstances of each piss:

#17. 6:15pm Thursday, 8-24-00:

I wandered into a tidy encampment under the East side of the Schenley Bridge. It featured a sofa, an easy chair, a coffee table and a mountain of soda bottles. It was where I had seen the man peeing on Tuesday afternoon moments after I arrived and marked my first territory. I deliberately set out to piss on his spot out of an (unrequited) sense of camaraderie, but when I saw the living room I had to reconsider. As territory markers, sofas and coffee tables trump piss. The spot is his. Grasping at straws, I skulked further down the hill and, in a quixotic but satisfying gesture, claimed the railroad tracks.

#27. 7:45pm Saturday, 8-26-00:

I passed a feral cat and a fat woodchuck on the way into a little thicket on the embankment across the road and over the rail off the North West corner of Ween Hall. I found an entrance to the steam tunnels, a thick metal door left open in the side of the hill. I pissed there so I could remember to come back at night

#66. 9:01pm Sunday, 9-3-00:

I was pacing back and forth, anxious and irritated from the day-long drive back from a wedding in Asheville. It was strange and liberating not to have anyone expecting me. All the repressed energy from the long sit was awakening fast. I had to climb.

I unloaded my stuff and ran off to

play roof tag. Daughtry was my first idea but it looked too easy. The UC? I found a window open on the third floor, but new buildings don't have good roofs—so I was off to claim the CFA. I squeezed out of an attic story window and plopped onto the wood of the scaffolding. I was just in time to catch the tail end of sunset; a sooty orange nebula was fading to steel gray. Steel gray is the darkest it ever gets in Pittsburgh. Tonight



the sky is trimmed rust red where it touches the city; a galvanic reaction between dissimilar worlds.

I climbed from the scaffolding onto the pitched metal roof and began crawling up on my belly. I imagined that the two helicopters roving around the city were patrolling for me. But there was no such sport: it was just me and the building versus gravity, a worthy but predictable opponent. Even the people walking on



sidewalks posed no threat; people don't look up. Wholly unchallenged, I found my spot right along the ridge of the roof and, in full view of an unsuspecting city, claimed the CFA.

Cutup Two: “You Gotta Eat”

I gave this truism my best shot, but after three days of not eating there wasn't much left in life. So the question changed: “If I must eat (find shelter, wear clothes, get from place to place), how can it become interesting? How can I attach cunning, possibility, and magic to my shameless addictions?”

For month two in Pittsburgh I would not pay for food. This prompted a new orientation. I mapped the rhythmic cycles of my area's wasted resources. My nose became keener . . . literally. I spent a lot of time walking. Gradually I got used to picking trash in public and eating after people.

I never considered myself a very intuitive person, but I developed a certain intuition about what food was safe and what was not. Every so often food that seemed fine would creep me out so I'd throw it back with no questions asked. This strategy worked: I never got sick. Which of the “five senses” is that? At the end of that month, I was able to calm my parents by reporting a weight gain of four pounds, good health and a sense of intuition where before there had been none. And of course, I haven't paid for food much since.

Behavioral Cutups became a method for uncovering the adventure, unexpected potential and possibility hidden within activities that are normally shrouded in habit. I began to extend this idea about transforming banal activities to the transformation of common objects.

Project: Bi-Cycle Re-Mix

Chris and I made a bicycle into a record player by locking ourselves into a room with a bunch of ingredients: tools, fasteners, a bicycle, records, scraps from around the building, food and water. We found that our little room quickly became organized around our processes: food and water in one corner, trash and the shit bucket in the opposite one. It was enlightening to live with all of our byproducts for a few days: we felt like yeast.

It was also important how this seclusion limited our choices. The sealed room prevented us from running to the hardware store to solve a problem. We were forced to switch from the consumptive mode, in which solutions are selected, to an inventive mode in which solutions are produced.

It took us fifty hours before we played our first record. By this time, the realities of the world had started to look pretty negotiable. If there is adventure hidden in habit and a record player hidden in a bicycle . . .

My little cousin asked me why the sun doesn't fall down: we looked at a picture of the solar system and asked which way was down. Here is a myth that rearranged my approach to the universe and made new things possible.

Appendix: The Myths of Compression and Tension

There once was a time when people sensibly assumed that Universe was flat. By every indication Universe consisted of layers: Sky on top, Earth on bottom. Furthermore, everything that rose above the surface of Earth did so in the form of a stack. Mountains, animals and pillars alike were all piles of material ultimately resting on foundation Earth. These were compression structures: one part pressed on another part until the pressure reached the earth. Compression guided our design of structures. Compression structured our thoughts, as well.

Gradually humans learned more about Universe and decided that the world was not a flat slab. It was a round planet that orbited the Sun. If Earth was orbiting the Sun, it certainly wasn't sitting on anything. And so the idea of compression structure, the stack, was supplemented by the idea of tension structure, gravity. Gravity was an invisible and ubiquitous set of “cables” tying objects to one another. The tension of gravity ties Moon to Earth and Earth to Sun.

Compression suffered another blow when it was decided that everything in Universe was composed of tiny particles called atoms. Atoms are not unlike planets and stars: none of these particles actually touch one other. Like planets and stars, atoms are held together (and apart) by invisible tension.

These discoveries changed Universe from a place of compression to a place of tension. Stone pillars and pyramids became minority structures occurring in a small zone of the vast range of scale between micro and macro.

This paradigm shift is only just taking hold in structures of our thought. But this shift does not occur in the matter of the universe, it occurs in the way we describe our experience of it. It is a shift in language, but the language we use to describe the universe goes on to serve as a model for what is possible within it. The flat earth is just as present today as the round earth. Few people think the earth is flat, but many think from a flat earth notion of structure, both physical and conceptual.

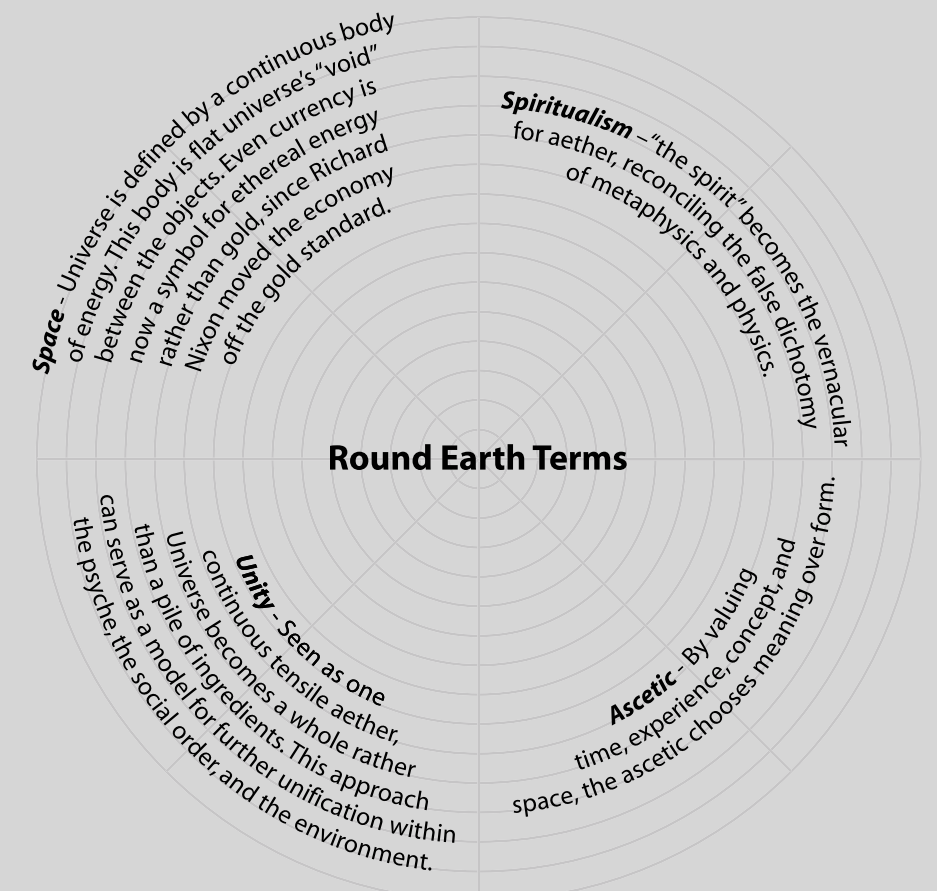
Flat Earth Terms

Matter - Universe is defined by discontinuous particles: atoms, planets, gold coins, etc.

Materialism - Because objects are held as the essence of Universe, they are viewed as the dwelling place of meaning.

Separation - Because of the focus on particles and objects rather than the “negative space” around them, flat universe is viewed and handled as if it were many separate bits rather than a continuous whole.

Aesthetics - A connoisseurship of objects that focuses on nuances of appearance.



Report #2: Automobile Re-Vision

Cutting Up the Road Trip: Epic Travels in a Tiny Brick Room.

Here is the procedure for an experiment we organized involving a 1985 Saab 900 turbo that had belonged to a friend. The car had been pronounced terminally ill by its long-time mechanic and given three weeks to live. That is—she decided she'd rather dance to it than drive it.

Procedure:

For the two weeks starting May 26 and ending June 8, 2001, five collaborators will be confined to a 26' by 20' [squatted] room with an automobile, food, water, fasteners, adhesives, tools, makeshift sanitation and documentation equipment. Everything that begins in the room will end in the room with the exception of:

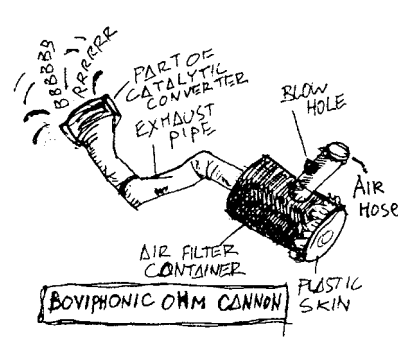
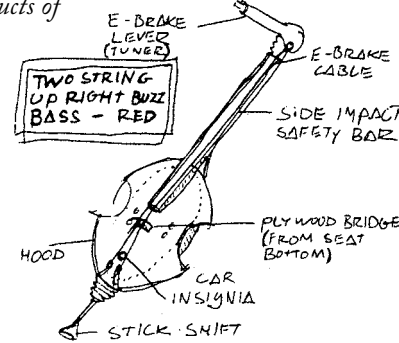
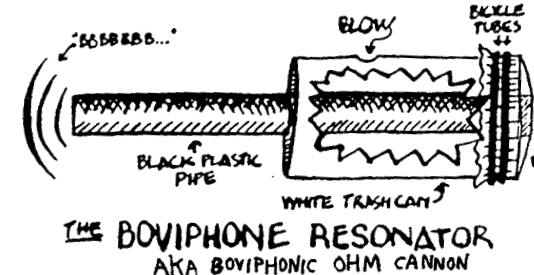
- Heat, light and air - flowing in and out
- Electricity - flowing in
- Web-cam data - flowing out

- While in the room, the group will dismantle the car and make its parts into musical instruments; music will be written and rehearsed on the new instruments; video footage will be shot and edited into a documentary video; words and images will be collected for a 'zine.
- On June 8 the collaborators will emerge to perform music, show the video, and distribute the publication in as many venues as possible.
- On June 11 the group will empty and clean the room, then disband.

Journal entries:

“... We all met at my place at 7:00 this morning, packed up the car and (thank god it started!) shoved off for a two week road trip. By 7:30 am we had traveled eight and a half miles, more than enough driving for one day. We idled briefly in front of a small brick building before driving through its double doors. With a turn of the key, the car's engine went quiet for the last time and our travels began...”

Don't be fooled: Alchemists were—and are—mystics unconcerned with the economic value of lead and gold. The science of Alchemy was first developed



the new world we had claimed. They would be inconceivable in the terms of the outside world...

Yet, inevitably, we made drums, basses, didgeridoos, thumb pianos, slide whistles and little percussion tools. Even the mechanical drum machine was derivative of instruments we had seen. But didn't we use the instruments to make music that was a pure expression of a hermetic society? As it turns out, no, the music we made could only be a strange hybrid between the circumstances we choose and the music we had heard and made all our lives...

We rearranged the world like a DJ cuts and mixes recordings to make them live again. The recordings, realities and habits that seem predetermined and non-negotiable, become subject to manipulation and change when we remix our world.

Another Kind of Road Trip: When we travel are we in search of the unfamiliar? Is it the unfamiliar in our surroundings or in ourselves? What happens when traditional modes of travel no longer provide us with the unfamiliar? One thing we can do is travel in place by making the familiar unfamiliar.

“... Our building never stood still. In it we roamed through the rain of one region into the cold of another. Through the open roof and our one window we met a world increasingly foreign as we became a world of our own.

Our open roof would seem to show us the same sky through the leaves of the same six trees. But as we traveled, Pittsburgh's black-orange midnight was left behind for the ultraviolet glow of a late morning that promised to soak us all day. And it did. The next day we drifted under a sunny gap in the clouds. We climbed up to the old I-beam structure to be closer to the sun.

On the West side of the building a plate door with an expanded steel window was our only outside human contact. Through our window we saw blazing hot streets, pedestrians sweating in shorts, motorists with windows rolled down and windy dogs sticking out all over. All of this while our massive brick walls kept us cold and our flywheel trees made the long-gone rain coast on for hours. The incongruity between out and in proved our suspicions and confirmed the gap between worlds. Nevertheless, we dragged the whole scene with us as we went: windowless

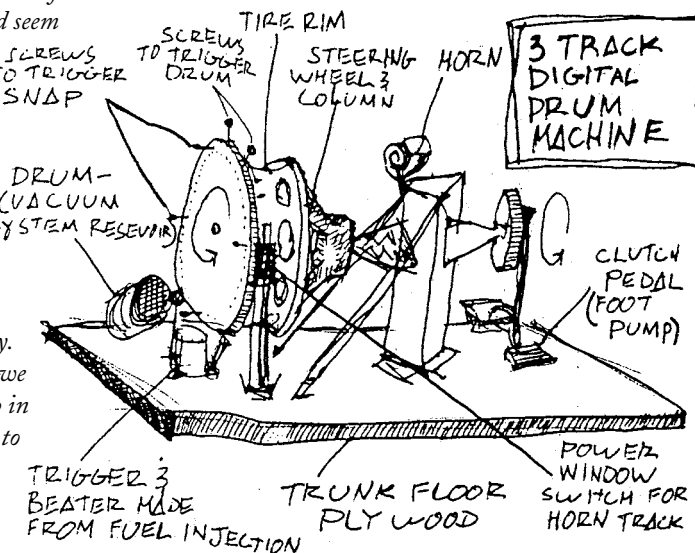
corrugated steel architecture, pavement, phone poles and litter all followed. A huge hospital building with emergency room dock was inertia-free and hot on our tail. Ambulances screamed and ran hot just to catch up and deliver their goods.

Even the inside of our building transformed: one moment a living room with stories in the air, the next a deafening garage, a dining room, a studio... seconds later we stumbled into a house of worship with high walls and a ceiling fresco of living green.”

Necessities: Of all the things that were going on in the room, people liked to come to our window and ask us the simplest question of all: “If you're locked in where do you go the bathroom?”

We immediately recognized this coded speech and would give them a coded answer.

“... We use a bucket. The system is called Humanure. We shit and piss in a five gallon bucket. After each use we add a layer of sawdust. So, by an act of renaming, 'waste' becomes wealth: after we leave the room, Etta will compost it and use it in her garden. Not only does it not stink, it barely has an odor at all. It's going to seem wrong to get out of here and shit into clean tap water...”



Suffering for Art: Visitors sometimes misunderstood our circumstances as hard or painful! Some of this came from the fact that we didn't “get to” take showers for two weeks. Part of it came from the idea that it is human nature not to get along with one another. Folks would often ask through our window: “Aren't you all going crazy in there?”

“... We had put out word that on the morning of the 8th, people were invited to come help us celebrate our exodus. But after falling in love with our circumstances, leaving didn't seem like such a cause for celebrating. Moments before we were to emerge, we changed our minds. We began to play our instruments, building from a whispser up to out and out chaos, then threw open our doors and let our friends come in because... Aren't you all going crazy out there?”

Report #3: Bear Shaped Kisses: Civic Angioplasty for Heart Broken Towns

Angioplasty - A medical procedure for treatment of a heart attack. A tube is fed intravenously into a blocked artery. A tiny balloon at the end of the tube is inflated to open the artery. When the balloon is removed blood can flow freely.

Civic Angioplasty - A treatment for urban ennui. A space, empty of desire or creativity, is suddenly filled with these and more. The space is just as suddenly emptied leaving a (more) conspicuous absence, a kind of newness, a sense of possibility.

We can disrupt our existence in the world by deliberately placing ourselves in physical or emotional jeopardy. Disruption reminds us that we need the elements of surprise and risk to drag us from the comfort and complacency of our living room couches. Even corporations use such tactics, in the form of and creative leadership seminars and ropes course retreats [on which strangers set out together in a fabricated wilderness stocked

with man-made obstacle courses], to lure and coerce their middle management into trusting one another and the company through a single moment of disruption. But what does risking failure and embracing permanent disruption have to do with pharmaceutical research?

Here is a ropes course we designed. It began with thousands of feet of painters' plastic and packing tape and a desperate desire to transcend an education

scenario that had become clogged and dysfunctional, a scenario that kept us all snoozing dangerously in our comfort zones. We had begun to question the academic context in which we were operating, where specialists lectured to a snoozing and passive audience about facts or performed music that the audience could not understand. What do you do in an auditorium equipped with heavy maroon curtains and rows of folding chairs? For that matter—what do you do at a demonstration in a city square, where everyone carries signs communicating political jargon and recites chants?



Why can't the demonstration in the city square become a place where kite-flying gives expression to the ideas on the picket signs? As “lecturers,” how could we initiate a game of soccer in the auditorium, instead of lecturing ourselves? I realized that had acquired many conditioned expectations for the formats and codes we use to communicate. The expectations I

brought to a lecture in an auditorium or a protest in a city square had clogged the arteries of possibility, dulled my connection to life's potential. But there was no way out: in a matter of days we were to take the stage and deliver a lecture on contemporary art. A lecture. We were haunted by this image: 500 students sitting in an auditorium maintaining the trip school had put on them. And wouldn't we, “the experts,” be just as responsible for this distance and complicit participation? The whole scenario would be confined to the nowhere-land between real learning on one hand and total rejection on the other (wild children playing soccer in the rows, taking the stage and drowning out our words). It seemed that we already knew the ending if we were to deliver a “lecture” within the context of the auditorium. We had to do something to reinvent spontaneity: for we knew the world only becomes ours when we can never know or predict the ending. Of course, it was the only possible solution. We made a fifty-foot-long inflatable teddy bear and hid it in a custom-made collapsible podium. We began lecturing and showing slides like the specialists in art we were pretending to be, then, at the shivering climax of boredom, at the height of passivity, of non-participation, we flipped the switch.

Inflatable Bombs You Can Blow Up Again and Again!

You'll Need:

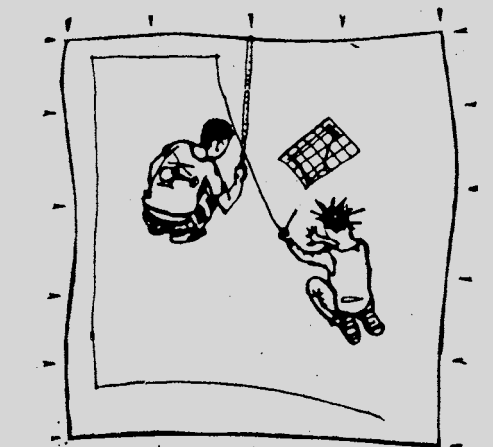
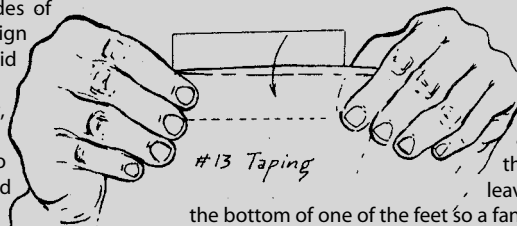
- 1.) Plastic painter's tarp. This is available at any hardware store. Rolls of plastic should indicate the weight (2 mil, 4 mil, 6 mil, etc.) on the package. 2 mil is lightest and most compact, 4 mil is bulkier but more durable. You should never go heavier than 4 mil. Plastic tarps vary in the size; we suggest acquiring the largest rolls possible (20' x 200' is good): that way you will have less piecing together to do when making the largest panels of your inflatable.
- 2.) Clear 2" packing tape. Don't go budget on this, get the name brand stuff—Scotch, 3M, etc. Start with around 4 rolls. Avoid anything that says “EasyTear”—that means it is weak.
- 3.) 1 box fan. Any 2-speed box fan will do the job. Don't think that you're going to need an industrial fan to inflate a huge sculpture, the only requirement is constant air flow. (I once saw a table top fan inflate a 50' sculpture.) The advantage of using a bigger fan is faster inflation time. Because we needed our teddy bear to inflate in around 2 minutes, we used something slightly beefier than a box fan.
- 4.) A large flat space, preferably inside. This is the most difficult thing to come by. It is helpful if one of your collaborators is connected with a school, because a gym or auditorium stage is ideal.
- 5.) A pattern. The most readily available patterns are found in stuffed animals. Every office of the world explodes with unwanted stuffed animals, so that shouldn't be a problem. You may want to create your own pattern, but this requires extra skills. If you are excellent at sewing, you'll know what I mean. If you chose this route, make a model first.
- 6.) Tape measure. 7.) Permanent marker. 8.) Scissors. 9.) Utility knives, x-acto knives, or razor blades.

Instructions:

- For our demonstration, we will be using a teddy bear, because of its availability. There are plenty of simpler shapes to make, for which all these instructions still apply.
- 1.) Begin by making a small drawing of your teddy bear. It doesn't have to be spectacular; you'll just need a picture for reference after you cut up the bear.
 - 2.) Measure the length, width, and height of the stuffed animal. Write the measurements down on your drawing.
 - 3.) Carefully cut off all the appendages right along the seams and put them in a safe place.
 - 4.) Pull the stuffing out of the torso and cut each seam so that the pieces lay flat like pieces of a puzzle.
 - 5.) Label each piece so that you know exactly how they fit together. Indicate on your drawing where each piece goes. Do not skip this step: when all your pieces are cut apart, they will be very hard to recognize and easy to mix up, lose, etc.
 - 6.) Repeat this labeling process with all the appendages.
 - 7.) On 1 inch graph paper (you may have to make this grid yourself with a pencil and ruler) trace the individual labeled pieces of the bear. These tracings will serve as your blueprint when you lay out the shapes on the plastic.
 - 8.) Now decide how large you want to make your inflatable and compute the relative proportion between the length of your small teddy bear and the length that you want your inflatable. For example, the teddy bear we used was about 8 inches long; to enlarge it to 40 feet, we made each square inch of our blue print grid equal to five square feet of plastic.

- 9.) Unroll and unfold your plastic; if you want to be especially careful in your craft, you may make a grid of 1 foot marks along all four sides of your floor so that you can easily align the uncut plastic. Make sure the grid you lay out is square (90 degrees).
- 10.) Armed with your blueprint, permanent marker, and tape measure, transfer your small plans onto the plastic. With care you should end up with a very close (scaled up) duplication of the shapes on your graph paper.
- 11.) Label the pieces as you cut them out so you can remember how they fit together and to which parts they belong.
- 12.) When all of your pieces are cut out, tape them together. I suggest doing the parts (torso, arm 1, arm 2, etc.) separately. When you have completed all of the pieces, assemble them into your final shape.
- Taping: The most labor intensive part of the project.**
- 13.) We have developed a system of taping in pairs while seated on the floor. Person 1 tears pieces of tape into 6 to 12 inch pieces (12 for seams that are straight, 6 for seams that are curved). Person 2 holds the two pieces flat together like two pages in a closed book. Person 1 applies the tape lengthwise onto one piece of plastic, so that 50% of the width hangs over,

- then folds the other 50% over onto the other side. While Person 1 is tearing off more tape, Person 2 squeezes the seam to make sure it is tight.
- 14.) When assembling the inflatable, leave a space in the bottom of one of the feet so a fan tube can be built. This hole will also allow you to go inside the inflatable to finish the final seams.
- 15.) Tape the fan to the designated hole, or to an extension tube if you wish to make one. Be extra thorough with your taping; this will be a high-stress connection.
- 16.) Inflate your teddy bear by turning the fan on high. IMPORTANT: once it is fully inflated, turn the fan to LOW. When your bear inflates for the first time, seams will pop open—this is normal. Leave the bear inflated and, with one person inside and the other outside, add patches that are the shape of each hole. Remember, holes are not necessarily a problem; the fan will constantly be pumping in air, and that air has to go somewhere. If you want to leave some holes, just reinforce them with tape. We found that the older our bear got, the better her seams became: maybe tape gets stickier with age.
- 17.) Your giant inflatable sculpture can roll up to an amazingly small size, and weighs very little. Recruit help for this step: the more people you have the tighter your inflatable will pack.
- 18.) Your final instructions: become a secret agent, stalk your city in disguise looking for lifeless spaces (they're everywhere): public parks, street corners, town squares, corporate campuses, municipal lobbies, children's play grounds... Now pack up your giant teddy bear with a fan and extension cord, take it to your spot, and blow it up. Blow it up as if it were a bomb. Make it an occasion. Dress up. Claim credit under a false name. Be legendary.
- Make art that is an event, then steal away in the confusion. Hammer out reports, dispatch bulletins: you are a phantom, a heroine, a soldier, a pillar of your community.



We flipped the switch and, like the fiery oration we wished we had the power to deliver, our bear erupted through the panels of the podium and spilled over the invisible wall of the stage. Like no lecture the dismal auditorium had ever seen, it washed over the audience, touched their bodies and displaced them bodily. Did sheer displacement drive the students onto the stage, or did the chaos make them desire that position? Was it their first taste of unpredictable possibility, in a space that had always worn the same mask yet revealed a different face when they commanded it to do so? Perhaps one and then the next. One way or the other, they came. When they came, they came as participants: they interacted with our bear, peered through her translucent walls into her body, the chambers and tunnels forming fat teddy bear legs and arms as big as a house. There was a roar of conversation, speculation, questions. Could they have ever been that involved with our words and paragraphs?

For the rest of the summer, the bear became the totem and tool of our class, an extension of our bodies. With her, we could become small enough to fit in a suitcase, then, without warning, expand to fifty times our size. Like expert cardiologists, we examined the city looking for constricted spaces where life did not flow. We made surprise attacks in these places: “like angioplasty!” we decided, the medical procedure for opening a clogged artery using an intravenous balloon. By the time we left a street corner, the heart-attack site of legal restriction and social congestion had been transformed. Now one could go back and taste the absence of a big ridiculous bear: it had become an empty place, a space of possibility, of potential where once clogged arteries now flowed with life’s blood.

We listened to the wild children rumbling in our guts. We found our equal ownership of the world together. We took the world as our own by entering into it knowing we could never predict the ending. We took risks, and failed—but found that failure had become something very different, and we embraced it. We learned to manipulate our conditioning with elaborate schemes. We learned that we could manipulate everyone else’s conditioning, too, and that we could offer these manipulations as a gift to the world. We were on a crusade asking others to own the city with us. We learned to see things we had not seen before: for example, the town had supplied hundreds of outdoor outlets without us ever asking! We discovered that extension cords came in black, and so our semi-permanent installations of power were hidden and ready for use.

After gifting our bear too many times to tell, we decided to offer her services once more for good. We searched the city for its most hopeless place, and found desperate need in the center courtyard of the downtown Municipal Complex. Are cops and magistrates not the most needy of citizens?

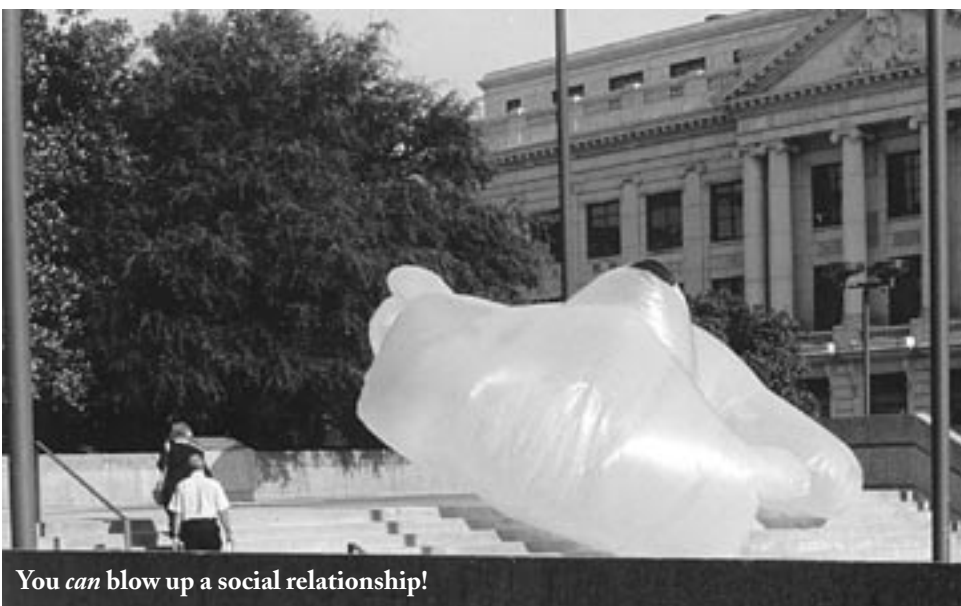
Wrapped tightly with her fan and packed in her suitcase, our bear arrived just before sunrise that Friday morning so that the changing shifts could feel her blessings and grace. Hours later we would dispatch the following message from the public library four blocks away:

5:00AM, Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

The horizon was just beginning to bruise to a blackish purple in anticipation of a new day. All over Greensboro fast food dives and greasy spoons were rolling out the morning’s ration of buttermilk biscuits.

Our hearts were with you as our red pickup truck sputtered to a nervous halt in front of Greensboro’s downtown courthouse and police department complex.

Adrenaline grabbed the wheel. Supplies were ferried through a gauntlet of fierce mercury-vapor lights. Within seconds a power outlet was located and tapped. Blades began to churn the air. Gradually, for the witness of believers and non-believers alike, a fifty-foot long teddy bear was deployed and abandoned by your faithful CrimethInc. Operatives D’Arc and Galston.



You can blow up a social relationship!

Appendix: paraSITE

An example of another application of the inflatables idea, as formulated by a New England folk scientist.

parasitism is described as a relationship in which a parasite temporarily or permanently exploits the energy of a host.

paraSITE proposes the appropriation of the exterior ventilation systems on existing architecture as a means for providing temporary shelter for homeless people.

parasites live on the outer surface of a host or inside its body in respiratory organs, digestive organs, venous systems, as well as other organs and tissues.

The *paraSITE* units in their idle state exist as small, collapsible packages with handles for transport by hand or on one’s back. In employing this device, the user must locate the intake ducts of a building’s HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning) system.

frequently a host provides a parasite not only with food, but also with enzymes and oxygen, and offers favourable temperature conditions.

The intake tube of the collapsed structure is then attached to the vent. The warm air leaving the building simultaneously inflates and heats the double-membrane structure.

but a host is certainly not inactive against a parasite, and it hinders the development and population growth of parasites with different defense mechanisms, such as the cleaning of skin, peristaltic contraction of the digestive apparatus, and the development of antibodies.

In April of 1997, I proposed my concept and first prototype to a homeless man named Bill Stone, who regarded the project as a tactical response. At the time, the city of Cambridge



had made a series of vents in Harvard Square “homeless-proof” by tilting the metal grates, making them virtually impossible to sleep on. In his book, *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis describes a similar war on homelessness in Los Angeles. He lists a series of these hindrances throughout the city:

“One of the most common, but mind-numbing, of these deterrents is the Rapid Transit District’s new barrel-shaped bus bench that offers a minimal surface for uncomfortable sitting, while making sleeping utterly impossible. Such bump-proof benches are being widely introduced on the periphery of Skid Row. Another invention, worthy of the Grand Guignol, is the aggressive deployment of outdoor sprinklers. Several years ago the city opened a ‘Skid Row Park’ along lower Fifth Street, on a corner of Hell. To ensure that the park was not used for sleeping—that is to say, to guarantee that it was mainly utilized for drug dealing and prostitution—the city installed an elaborate overhead sprinkler system programmed to drench unsuspecting sleepers at random during the night. The system was immediately copied by some local businessmen in order to drive the homeless away from adjacent public sidewalks. Meanwhile restaurants and markets have responded to the homeless by building ornate enclosures to protect their refuse. Although no one in Los Angeles has yet proposed adding cyanide to the garbage, as happened in Phoenix a few years back, one popular seafood restaurant has spent \$12,000 to build the ultimate bag-lady-proof trash cage: made of three-quarter inch steel rod with alloy locks and vicious outer-turned spikes to safeguard priceless moldering fishheads and stale french fries.”

parasites respond to this defense by anchoring themselves with hooks and suckers onto skin, or digestive mucous membrane, and by developing protective devices and substances which lessen defensive capabilities of their host.

The system by which the device attaches or is anchored to the building is designed to allow the structure to be adaptable. The intake tube can be expanded or tightened to fit the aperture of the vent through an adjustable lip, made possible by elastic draw-strings. Hooks are attached to the metal louvers for reinforcement.

there is tension between a host and its parasite, since the host endeavours to get rid of the foreign body, while the parasite employs new ways to maintain the connection with the host.

The connection of the inflatable structure to the building becomes the critical moment of this project.

From February 1998 until April 1998, I built seven prototypes of the *paraSITE* shelter and distributed them to several homeless people in Cambridge, among them Bill Stone, George Livingston and Freddie Flynn, who worked closely with me on the design and production of these units. Most were built using temporary materials that were readily available on the streets (plastic bags, tape).

While these shelters were being used, they functioned not only as a temporary place of retreat, but also as a station of dissent and empowerment; many of the homeless users regarded their shelters as a protest device, and would even shout slogans like “We beat you Uncle Sam!” The shelters communicated a refusal to surrender, and made more visible the unacceptable circumstances of homeless life within the city.

For the pedestrian, *paraSITE* functioned as an agitational device. The visibly parasitic relationship of these devices to the buildings, appropriating a readily available situation with readily available materials, elicited immediate speculation as to the future of the city: would these things completely take over, given the enormous number of homeless in our society? Could we wake up one morning to find these encampments engulfing buildings like ivy?

This project does not present itself as a solution. It is not a proposal for affordable housing. Its point of departure is to present a symbolic strategy of survival for homeless existence within the city, amplifying the problematic relationship between those who have homes and those who do not have homes. This is a project that was shaped by my interaction as a citizen and artist with those who live on the streets.

(For assistance in building your own parasitic guerrilla housing device, contact Mjrakowitz@aol.com)

Report #4: Okupa Tu Tambien

Where there is a ruin there is hope for a treasure . . .

Traveling through the underbelly of Barcelona, I saw the same graffiti everywhere: *Okupa tu tambien!* I learned it meant, roughly, “You can squat, too.” I wanted to believe it—but it’s one thing to squat in a city already full of squatters, and with a long history of successful occupations to boot. Could it happen just anywhere, even in the small town I came home to?

In the end, it was a combination of longing, exuberance, bravado and sheer necessity that led us to the door of our own ruin, a shaky-looking little house in a quiet residential neighborhood. For weeks we’d been looking for a place to live, rent-free; we’d already sent out lines of inquiry in every conceivable direction, and we were beginning to exhaust the supply of friendly couches. So when we found the cottage—empty except for a mountain of discarded clothes, a room full of smashed electronics, one hungry cat, and manic graffiti scrawled floor to ceiling across every wall of the house—we didn’t stop to ask questions, we just moved in.

Our house didn’t look all that stable from the outside, or the inside. The foundation appeared to be made from concrete poured into plastic buckets; mold was creeping over every porous surface, and the toilet had been thrown out the front door, where it lay leaking shit onto the bricks. But if you squinted up your eyes and looked a certain way, you could see it



all just a little differently: there were herbs already growing in the garden, the roof wasn’t in bad shape, and in summer the trees would be full of birds. If you looked, you could already see everything the place could be, instead of just what it was. That was the view we decided to take, and we started renovating.

We roamed the street on foot, by bike, in borrowed and stolen vehicles, gathering what we needed, scavenging supplies from other abandoned buildings and unsuspecting corporations. We found that paint stores and building suppliers were delighted to support our low-income housing rehab project once we gave them an official-sounding name, and thrift stores would happily make donations to youth-led social projects. Meanwhile we got rid of all the ballast that anchored the house to its former life as a delapidated rental property; we tore out a shuddering old electric heater and replaced it with a woodstove somebody was giving away, and built a new composting toilet out of five-gallon buckets and sawdust. We hauled mountains of trash back to the bins behind the strip mall,

where most of it probably came from in the first place, and filled up the local free boxes with useful junk. We asked our friends for a thousand favors, which everyone knew were gifts to a very uncertain potential reality, and enlisted as much help as we possibly could. When we didn’t know how to install the chimney, we traded a home-cooked meal and two bottles of wine to some construction-worker friends who were passing through town; our neighbor, a carpenter, brought over his tools and helped us hang weight-bearing shelves on our paper-thin walls. When we didn’t know what to do, we asked somebody who did, and when we couldn’t find anybody who knew, we made it up.

Once we decided to move in, we didn’t bother sneaking around; in that neighborhood, we knew we were going to be seen, sooner rather than later, so we just acted as though the house belonged to us. Which it



did, in deed if not in law; we knew that we belonged there, and we hoped our certainty would communicate itself to everyone else. Rather than trying to hide the fact that we were there illegally, we let the neighbors know what we were up to, and tried to make friends as fast as possible. Our house-cleaning and renovations spoke volumes about our intentions, but we also went out of the way to get to know people and integrate ourselves into



the neighborhood—we were quick to lend or borrow tools, to share our (dumpstered) bread or ask questions about their gardens or cats or kids. By the time the absentee property-owner came around, most of the neighbors were on our side. Instead of shouting through a locked door, we had him in for tea and scones and explained all the reasons our occupation benefitted him (maintaining the property, deterring vandalism) as well as our politics behind squatting (why rent is exploitative, why land should belong to the folks who use it.) Surprisingly, he agreed with us, and we struck a deal to keep maintaining the

property in exchange for his payment of water bills and property taxes.

Of course it didn’t last forever. These things never do. But what matters isn’t the start and the finish—the house used to be empty and still is, I started out homeless and ended up the same way. It’s what happened in between. In those four short months, we changed as much as the house did. Very quickly, our hard work became play—shared between us, the lifting and

hauling and scrubbing that should have been exhausting labor was transformed into a raucous game, and we were transformed along with it. We became house-painters, electricians, gardeners, and tool-acquisition specialists; as word spread about the place and people came by to see what was happening, we became amateur folklorists and tour guides as well. We became ourselves, hard at play, and we were drunk on all of it, on sheer stubborn insistence that it could be done, even though we knew that we could potentially lose it all any day. Legally, we didn’t have a leg to stand on; we were squatters, the lowest of the low, and while we liked to think of ourselves as healthy, useful bacteria digesting societal waste, in the eyes of the law—in spite of our success—we were parasitic

leeches. But this house didn’t exist in the realm of laws and practicalities, or at least not only there. Invested with our the energy of our dreaming and the sweat of our hard work, it began to live another, secret life, a life of potential realized.

I ride my bike past that place now and see the sagging roof and weedy garden and boarded up windows. But sometimes when I tilt my head I can see what it was, with-candlelight seeping out under the curtains, smoke trailing from the chimney and the sound of a guitar—and I know that place didn’t go anywhere except underground, under my skin. It’s still there, waiting.

Report #5: The Mendenhall Guerilla Art Strike

Glass flows. In window panes and perfume bottles it is forever shifting, gently, slowly, imperceptibly, obeying the memory of its liquid state or perhaps listening to the deep majestic rumble of the lava rivers that cooled four billion years ago into the rock that became the sand that became the lump of hot glowing glass than became the bottle in your hand. When I was a little girl, no more than three or four, I discovered a corner of my bedroom window where the glass had pooled like that against the frame. If I pushed my toybox across the room and climbed up on it I could rest my forehead on the glass and look out through that one wavery spot in the window at a back yard and fence and trees that never existed any other way. Where the everyday yard lay still and flat, this yard—heaved up and down, trees bending and shimmering, fences sawing like accordions, clouds rocking back and forth on invisible runners, high peaks and deep shadowless hollows appearing all around the swing set like miniature Himalayas. I wanted to be there. I imagined what it would be like to roll down the slopes, to lie on my back in the hollows, to ride the trees, to float on the top of the billowing grass. I was heartbroken with nostalgia for a place I had never been. Even though I was already learning a little bit about despair, I would still run out of the room across the kitchen and out the back door as fast as I could in hopes that this time, this one time, I could get there before that lovely other back yard hid itself again in the sober motionless contours of the everyday world.

One Sunday morning not long ago I decided to take a walk. It was a day or two before the end of the year, a bright late December day, warm enough for just a sweater and a scarf. For some reason I walked away from the direction of the park where I usually walk; I walked up the street to the train tracks. When I came to the end of the street I kept going, around the corner of the warehouse and down the weedy bank to the double tracks that run into infinity in either direction. I sat down on the bank and took out my little black notebook. “I feel like Ulysses,” I wrote. “The old thought: I could just get up and walk out. Now I’m sitting with my back to the known universe, sun falling through the weeds, and in front of me someone has lettered in black paint on a junction box: THE THINGS YOU’LL NEVER GET BACK 1) TIME 2) REGRET. What will I know when I am done with this walk, whenever that turns out to be? One thing I already know—every other time I’ve sat here I’ve been filled with longing and restlessness. Now I’m simply here. I’m going to walk east now, out of time, out of regret and into whatever I find.”

The first building I passed was the lumber company with its long black cinder block wall. The wall hadn’t always been black—it used to be a graffiti wall, a kind of people’s art gallery where some of the most beautiful graffiti in town was layered on. Sometime last year our local police began cracking down on graffiti, and for some reason that particular wall became their target. The owner of the lumber company had given permission for the painting, but instead of letting it be the police threatened the owner with a fine; in the end the artists themselves brought buckets of black paint and brushes down to the railroad tracks and painted the whole wall black, which is how it remained. I kept walking. Walking on railroad tracks on a December morning two days before the turn of the new year is an act of meditation. It takes concentration to find the right stride, but when you do it’s as though your legs have become independent engines, have become wheels or churns or pistons carrying you forward without any intercession from the rest of you. I walked through downtown, past the backs of buildings, across familiar streets at unfamiliar angles. I have lived in my town for 22 years but I was walking through a town I had never seen before. I began keeping an inventory in my little notebook of the things I passed:

A black and white movie poster on the ground, torn and dirty—one man standing,

one man lying down, both in suits, each pointing a shiny gun at the other/A railroad car stopped on a siding, its porch cushioned with scraps of foam rubber/A shady little hollow beside a small stream, all carpeted with new grass and yellow police tape snared in the bushes/Long clumps of hair falling out of a burst garbage bag/A baby pacifier, blue and white checks on the mouthguard/An

angry woman in a black wig. “Watch out, they’ll take your social security number and keep all your money. That’s what she did. Bitch.”

I kept walking. I walked out of the outskirts of town, into the country where flocks of birds pecked at the bare fields and laundry flapped on the line. I began to wonder how I would get home, wondered how long I had been walking, wondered where I was.

And all the time I kept thinking about the wall. It made me angry. In my mind’s eye I saw a very different kind of wall, a wall with pictures on it surrounded by gold picture frames like a proper art gallery. And then I didn’t just imagine it, I saw it—I could almost feel the wall shift from the thinking part of my brain to the deeper, believing part of my brain where things that haven’t happened yet already feel like memories. The wall that I saw didn’t exist yet, but it did, in Dreamtime, the way

the tree is in the seed is in the fruit is on the tree. It was beautiful, the gold frames looking sober and important against the black wall, the pictures themselves detailed and various. I didn’t doubt for a moment that it would happen. And it did.

When I was in college I had three good friends. We ate breakfast together every morning, we took walks together in the twilight and broke off branches of weeping cherry to take back to our rooms, we shared bottles of shampoo and sweaters and books. We talked

seriously about silly things and made silly jokes about serious things. One afternoon in late spring near the end of our sophomore year we were sitting in my room together reading and sewing and drawing, no one saying much, when someone started to sing. The window was open and the air smelled of new grass and wet earth and when we grew quiet we could hear the soft descending notes of a mourning dove. Our song didn’t have any words, just four voices that wound in and out of each other and caught each other up and climbed over each other like stairsteps and sank to a vibration and then died away.



It was dinnertime and we put down our books and pencils and went downstairs. Now we’re in our 50s, or at least three of us are. Two years ago Alice took her little sailboat out into Duxbury Harbor on a windy October morning and shot herself in the head, leaning far over the edge so her body would fall into the sea. Pei Loh lives in Minnesota with her husband and her son, who has something like cerebral palsy, although no doctor has ever been able to make a diagnosis. Mara lives in New Jersey with her third husband and her heartbreakingly beautiful daughter, just coming into adolescence herself. I live down the street from the train tracks and think about walls. Each of us is, I suppose, outwalking time and regret.

But reclaiming the wall was like that afternoon singing in my room. Everyone I talked to about it in the next weeks understood it right away. Everyone saw it. We picked a night in early February and once we had the time set it seemed as though whatever we needed came to us. We had no picture frames, and then we had dozens. We didn’t have any paint and then we had stacks of half-used cans of house paint, rifled out of friends’ basements and garages. We needed brushes; we had brushes. We needed Liquid Nails to attach the frames to the wall; we had Liquid Nails. People we didn’t even know came up to us and said they had planned the art they were going to put on the wall. We met at my house late at night and made our plan. At 1:00 in the morning I had nearly two dozen people in my yard and in my kitchen and on my porch, sitting on the living room sofa flipping through magazines, synchronizing watches in the half light of the back yard, shaking flashlights to see if the batteries were good, hunching into coats and scarves against the late winter nighttime chill.

The first team went down at 2:00. The things we had worried about—getting caught, running out of paint, some overlooked technical snag—began to dissipate. I sat on the porch quietly talking to a few friends, watching the time, listening to the sleepy rustle of

birds beyond the dark porch screen. We, the second team, went down at 2:45. We were met at the end of the street by one of our number, posted there with a walkie-talkie to sound a warning if trouble came. All was clear; she spoke quietly into the walkie talkie and waved us on. I passed around the corner of the warehouse and paused at the top of the bank, looking east. The silhouette of the highway bridge in the distance and the dark bulk of buildings framed the denser blackness of the tracks; peering into the darkness I could just see the intermittent flicker of flashlights and in that second I knew that everything was going to be all right. As we scrambled down the bank, the first team passed us going up to the street get the paints out of the van. We had spent the previous afternoon dividing up the supplies into four milk crates, each with jars of white and red and yellow and green and blue paint, brushes, rags, and water. Some people had brought pictures already prepared for wheatpasting inside the frames. One person brought his spray paints and nozzles, neatly packed in a little black bag like a salesman’s sample case.

We spoke very little, just picked a spot and went to work. Among all the people there—more than two dozen now—I was the only one who had forgotten to plan what I would paint on the wall: my imagination had taken me only up to the moment when I stopped on the darkened bank and realized that it was really happening. Now I was in new territory, in the part of the map where the edges of the continents take on speculative uncertain shapes and curlicue monsters plow perfect pen-and-ink waves.

I had brought some tubes of acrylic paint and a tinfoil pie plate, and in the chancy beam of my small flashlight I laid out a perfect art class colorwheel of paint. As I picked up my brush the night condensed into a tight knot of solitude around me; to either side of me I could hear the deep silence of people working in their own solitudes. I painted almost at random, inscribing a face, a neck, eyes, nose, mouth, hair, dabbing colors in long brushy streaks. I stepped away for a moment and was startled to discover that I had painted a self-portrait of sorts. Abashed, I stopped. Looking up and

down the wall other people were stepping backwards into the dark, looking at what they had done. How can I describe it? In two hours we had made something where there was nothing. But it didn’t feel as though we had made it, exactly. It was almost as though we were archaeologists digging down the seven layers of Troy—no, past Troy, past the black paint, past the graffiti, past the cinderblock, into the heart of the wall itself, into the heart of the earth, into the dreaming molecules before the earth, into the generous void of the universe. We had simply dreamed into being something that was there all along. Oh reader, it was lovely.

Don’t go looking for the wall. It didn’t last more than a week: it’s black again, black and blank, and really, that’s exactly how this story should end. The art on the wall was too lovely to last, too precious to simply grow tattered and weather-stained, to disappear in plain sight into the everyday background of the railroad tracks. The wall has returned to Dreamtime, has floated away into the past and lies shimmering in the future. And there will always be other walls.



Report #6: Dancing With Ghosts

A Memoir of Tribal War

If we are to stand a ghost of a chance of surviving the increasingly imminent catastrophe our culture is hurtling toward, we must learn to adapt to new habitats. We must be able to migrate with the seasons, to intermingle with unlikely allies and long lost cousins, to hunt for opportunities to gather momentum as if our lives depended on it. This is a true story about a time when we did some of these things with a measure of success.

We received a spectral smoke signal of nybbles and bytes requesting our presence in the cold plains of Oneida, New York. Not knowing what to expect, our hearty band of improbable and impermissible white wanderers from the flatlands of the South journeyed to the snowy plains of Oneida. Following directions hastily and poorly translated over an obscure pay phone, we came onto a stone longhouse, the home of the Onyota'a:ka, the traditional Oneida of the Standing Stone. We pried open the heavy wooden doors, and peered inside.

A mighty elder, Clanmother Maisie Shenandoah of the Oneida, greeted us with open arms and a broad smile. A powerful woman, she had seen generations come and go, and she feared that this would be the last to live in freedom. She explained that this thirty acres land we were now on—and the homes upon it—were the last of the sovereign nation of the Oneida people, subject to no law except their own. This proud people and their land were under assault from without and within (as they still are⁸). One of their own had gone to Harvard, gotten himself a business degree, and incorporated the tribe as a corporation, building a financial empire spanning mid-state New York. Oneida Nation Inc.—an independent fiefdom with its own laws, its own taxes, its own courts, its own (mostly white) police, with Judge, Jury, Executioner,



was dancing up a storm. They absolutely refused to allow us to remain mere spectators, grabbing us hand in hand until we were all dancing side by side, some of us with considerably less skill than others.

When the dance came to an end, an old man with white hair pulled two of our band off to the side. “Did you bring baseball bats?” he asked. We weren’t sure what he meant, so we said that we were “ready for whatever it took,” an equally coded answer. He then started telling us stories, about bingo parlors burning and Mohawk revolts, about the first winter snow and about Ray’s mother’s facelifts. After considerable mystery, he left us with a simple message: “Gringo Windshield.”

Ray Halbritter was going to enter the thirty acres to hold a meeting of his cronies in an ancient longhouse that he

God, and State wrapped up in one man: Ray Halbritter.

Known among the locals as “No-Face Ray” for cursing the ways of the Oneida and declaring himself against all sanity and tradition “Chief for Life,” Ray is attempting to develop this pocket of land, the thirty acres of the traditional Oneida, the last remaining sovereign Oneida land. Women have been evicted by Ray’s private “Housing Inspectors,” and seen their houses bulldozed before their children’s very eyes. Shopping malls will soon rise up, following the pattern of twisted and terrible progress familiar to any denizen of Western capitalism and civilization. If you stand on the edge of the thirty acres, you can already see the future—a giant casino, sprawling across the land like a bloated carcass. A call to arms. Soon.

Ray’s private army was patrolling the thirty acres, and we were told that the official explanation for our presence was an invitation to a tribal dance. Dancing it was. One by one, all the Oneida families of the thirty acres piled into the little longhouse, and with them they brought a never-ending procession of all sorts of food and drink. After a rousing meal, one of the older men stood in the middle of the room and began chanting in a tongue my ears could not comprehend, a sound rich with dignity beyond compare. Children lined up behind his booming bass voice, providing a brilliant treble. Soon the entire room, except for us white folk,



had closed to the community long ago. His private army of goons was to be there to strike fear into the locals’ hearts. In the morning the old man’s words rang true. A small line of us in full black bloc regalia surrounded the larger crowd of traditional Oneida, who were for the first time in years going to contest Ray openly. We prayed that our threadbare patches of anarchy and punk would protect us from bullets. Ray scurried into the longhouse at our approach, and his goons tried to arrest one of our burly black-masked friends. I screamed “Let him go!”

Magic.

Ray’s police did let him go. We were shocked. Since we weren’t Oneida, Ray’s police had no legal right to arrest or even touch us. Bristling with badges, guns and clubs, they just told us to leave. We began laughing in their faces and mocking them. “Police? You aren’t even real police! Come on, just touch me!” “So how does it feel to beat up women in front of their children for a living?” “Don’t feel so high and mighty now, do you, boy?”

The traditional Oneida were delighted, and began joining in the taunts. Under

cover of the commotion outside, they sent their children through the back door of the longhouse. Inside, Ray and the world he represents found themselves an emperor without clothes, as little children ran around in the meeting openly defying him and giggling at his self-important madness. Soon, the commotion got so out of hand that the local city police showed up, along with reporters—an unheard of event in Ray’s territory. The traditional Oneida took the police and reporters aside, showing them their home videos of Ray’s police beating women and destroying their homes. Smiles broke out on all our faces when Ray turned tail and fled. The ice that separated us from the Oneida began to break.

There we stood, two tribes—one ancient and the other new—united against

a common enemy. The ancient tribe was fighting for survival, and, unlike our ancestors at Wounded Knee, we turned our backs on allegiance to race, nation, or any other fiction, to join them in arms. This alchemy released magic—police unable to police, children ridiculing kings. The Oneida’s struggle against extinction goes on, as does ours. Let us hope it goes on together, as we realize the possibilities of tribal alliances that can overcome our loneliest moments and the impossible odds. In the end, we are not ghosts from the past, but ghosts of the future. Let us dance—together.

“Here we are, the dead of all time, dying once again, only now with the object of living. You have to get out of yourself to save yourself.”
—masked spokesperson of the black bloc, Chiapas, Mexico

⁸ Their struggle continues today. To get in touch with the Oneida, contact:

ONYOTA'A:KA PEOPLE OF THE
STANDING STONE
PO Box 450
Oneida, NY 13421
315-363-2304 (ask for Maisie)
www.oneidasfordemocracy.org

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Art Exhibition: Graffiti Art Exposition at Sofia Bergrum, Stockholm, Winter 2002

This is the notorious exhibition that was closed down by the city after one day for the debatable offense of giving space to artists working in a style developed by vandals. Public outcry forced the city to recant and allow it to proceed as planned, and consequently “Legalize Art,” the organization backing the show, was able to collect quite a bit of political capital for their campaign to persuade Stockholm to open walls for legal graffiti art. Members of the organization, such as one spokesperson who describes himself as a one-time tagger turned art-school hopeful, insist that graffiti is a serious art form, one of the “fine arts.” All this, of course, begs the question of what graffiti actually is.

It felt strange—but perhaps it was not so strange—to hear people who attended the exhibition assessing and sometimes disparaging the artwork on purely aesthetic grounds. Were this artwork viewed on the streets where it was developed, aesthetics would probably take a back seat to other considerations. After all, graffiti art has always been separated from other visual arts by a gulf of context; it is that context which differentiates it. One can take aesthetic ideas developed by graffiti artists and introduce them to the world of state-sanctioned fine arts, but in doing so one has not made graffiti legal, but rather simply made legal art imitating graffiti. In the graffiti world proper, on the other hand, which will exist as long as there is private property, aesthetics are inextricably tied to context, and often subordinate to it.

Graffiti itself is as old and varied as walls; this exhibition simply drew upon its most recent incarnation in the arena of pop culture. Like booming sound systems, graffiti as we know it emerged as a means for the dispossessed to assert themselves in an environment in which everything from rented tenements to the billboarded streets ostensibly belongs to another class. The tagger reclaims this environment by proclaiming her defiant existence—legal or not, desirable or not—on every unguarded surface; the appearance of the tags themselves matters less than the sheer fact that they appear. Over time, graffiti artists have improved and explored their craft, flaunting skills as a way to celebrate their indomitable existence. White kids from the cultural desert of the suburbs, who gather like vultures around every expression that still holds life, have taken note, and modern graffiti culture and aesthetics have become widely known; but all along, it has been the social context that gave graffiti its identity, not aesthetics.

This context of transgression and affirmation also makes graffiti precious to people outside both the underclass and the graffiti anti-/establishment. If you venture into the unused stairwells, maintenance closets, and elevator operating rooms of some of the buildings of Muir College at the University of California at San Diego, you will find walls thick with scribbled stories and pictures. For over three decades, lone students and vagabonds have gone there to write out diary entries and poetry they would never share in person; there are cartoons, confessions, lengthy exchanges spanning years, even love affairs carried out between writers who never met. Gathered in an exhibition or displayed on a legal wall, these obscene limericks, clumsy proclamations, and naive meditations would elicit impatient groans at best; experienced on location by a participant, this secret world can be breathtaking.

Unlike participation in the “fine arts” as defined by capitalist society, the role of graffiti artist is readily accessible to anyone who can get away with it. The illegal nature of the medium makes fame and status undesirable outside of small circles of enthusiasts, and the artwork is made in defiance of commercial concerns rather than in service to them—in contrast to the elite few—“professional artists” who are able to make a living by outselling their competition into waitressing jobs. Perhaps in Sweden, which still retains some vestiges of the social support system governments of wealthier nations developed in the 1960’s to offset popular unrest, it is not absurd for the average young

person to dream of going to art school and becoming an artist; but in the rest of the world, only the independently wealthy can consider this as a realistic career path. As the demands of the “free market” bend all societies to the model pioneered by the United States, even Sweden is bound to become inhospitable for would-be artists from outside the privileged class. Legal “graffiti” walls can only be a superficial concession to quiet the radical demands of the masses (“we don’t want one wall, we want the whole bloody city!”)—and, worse, a step towards the institutionalization, specialization, and commodification of a folk art form. The time is ripe for a culture offensive extolling insurgent, participatory forms of art such as *illegal* graffiti.

And so I put forth my own proposal for a graffiti exhibition that will truly celebrate what is vibrant and vital about the medium. It will be called the Graffiti Expedition, and it will be open to all applicants. The event will be promoted in and outside graffiti bomber circles a few months in advance; on the preceding night, submissions will be received through email in the form of anonymous communiqués announcing where pieces have been put up, according to the method already perfected by the Environmental Liberation Front. The next day, the legal representatives of the exhibition will lead all the patrons on an expedition around the city, to ooh and aah over the courage immor(t)alized in acrylic on the highway sign by the overpass, the witty addition to the billboard advertising malt liquor, the one hundred matching tags recklessly bringing Main Street to life. Next time Legalize Art or an organization like them sponsors an exhibition or political campaign, such a counter-event could provide the perfect complement: it would stress the subversive heritage and power of graffiti, while simultaneously offering the city an alternative that would make the reformists’ proposal seem more palatable—pressuring the city to heed their demands, just as Malcolm X’s uncompromising stance reinforced Martin Luther King’s non-violent activism, just as, generations ago, the extreme demands of anarchists forced governments to parley with reformists fighting for the forty hour work week.

In the meantime, let’s hope the money made from this exhibition—for by its end half of the pieces had been sold, at prices ranging from 400 to 10,000 kronor—will be put towards more spray cans and ski masks, not art school tuition, so our new generation of artists can practice and present on the streets where they belong. Viva graffiti! *Illegalize art!*

Skate Video: “Boob,” by Big Brother

So much depends on a red painted curb. And in a puddle next to it, a washed out Polaroid of a regulation living room scene: TV, VCR, coffee table, Ché poster, bookcase. Nothing

remarkable here, might as well skate down to Deluxe, buy that new pair of Vans.

But Polaroid says, “It’s what you *don’t* see that always eludes you.”

Huh? You snap back, “Who do you think you are with this inscrutable fortune cookie shit?”

But you might as well take a second look, right? Pictures hardly give up the truth—just another image without a story? Sucks to think, maybe one day you’ll be one of them. So you give it a second chance. But this time it’s not what you see, but what the photographer saw. Or, rather, it’s what the blindfolded photographer didn’t see.

A blind guy took this?

“No,” says the Polaroid, “he wasn’t blind . . . not normally.”

Our Polaroid tells a story of her siblings in that litter of ten exposures:

“More than a year ago, we were together in the dark warmth of a blindfolded guy’s pocket trying to piece it all together. Each of us contributed a story while we waited for the next exposure. The eldest shot (of a face being bandaged at a kitchen table) said something about a completely blindfolded trip to Washington DC. The younger ones, always the radicals, had protest images. They recounted scene’s of George W.’s inauguration: streets full of anonymous multitudes, uniformed police, frosty weather, the blindfolded guy on the street passing flyers out for a pirate radio station.

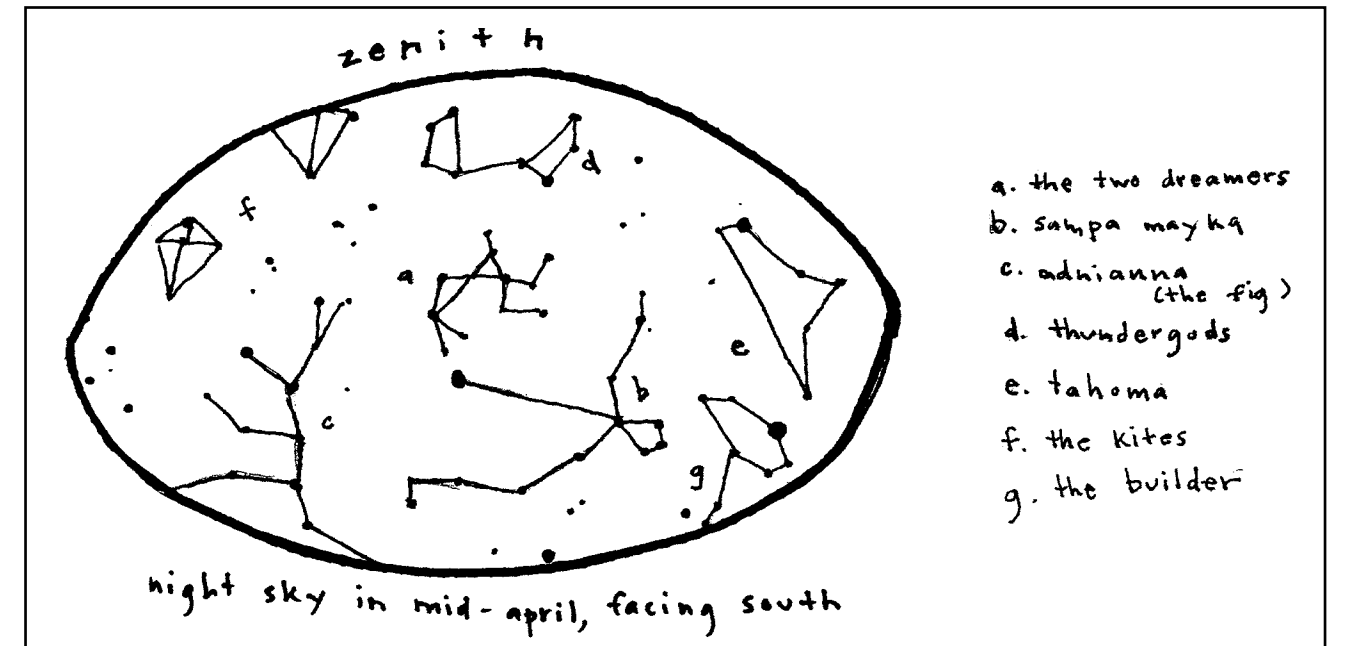
“Being blindfolded can mean getting away with a lot,” she supposes.

“Then there were the monument shots: pictures of the blindfolded guy in front of the Lincoln memorial, ambling along on the national mall, with the Ken Snelson sculpture in front of the Hirschorn Museum, in each image with the same Mona Lisa smile. The youngest shot had the advantage of being around for bandage removal back at the same kitchen table.

“They argued a bit about the why of the whole thing. The radicals explained some Marxist theory, the artists copped it as a performance . . .”

But the puddle Polaroid had her take. She overheard it while developing on the coffee table of that regulation living room:

“A handful of people were watching a skate video: Big Brother’s “Boob.” As a service, Blind Guy’s pal was describing the scenes to him out loud. There’d be a few minutes of skating followed by fifteen minutes of adolescent stunts (dude dressed up in a gold jumpsuit running around Hollywood Boulevard, etc.) Why so little skating in a skate flick? But



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blindfolded guy, sipping on a bowl of vegan chili, turn out to be quite the thinker. He got all animated at the description of the video. Like a blind oracle he told a tale:

“A philosopher had this theory: *art realized itself in 1963*. But the process started a century before with the proliferation of the camera. Painting wasn’t the same after photography. Pulling off a faithful rendition of a bowl of fruit or a portrait of some rich fuck didn’t mean so much if a camera could do the same. So painting had to find its own meaning.

“In 1963 Warhol made something identical to the thing it stood for: his ‘art’ Brillo box was just a Brillo box. So then, since a certain tiresome perfection had been achieved, perfection could be laid aside.

Art was obligated to nothing. After that it just blew up. In the 70’s people did all sorts of crazy shit. You could nail yourself to a Volkswagen, can your own shit, walk the great wall of china, all with no obligation to the traditional forms. As you can see in this video, today skating is no different.

“A long time ago a bunch of surf rats, wanting some action during downtimes, took roller skates, you know with metal wheels, ripped them apart and screwed them on planks of wood. In the 60’s everything blew up: clay wheels, the first mass-produced decks, *the first skate contest was in ’63!* In ’65 it all collapsed due to shitty mass-produced products and paranoid parents. It didn’t catch on again until urethane wheels and sealed bearings in the 70’s.

“Skating mixed its surfing roots with concrete, and viola! the skatepark was born—a multi-million dollar business. All was groovy . . . well, at least until the early eighties, when the parks closed and skaters were thrown out to the streets. Suddenly you had to redefine yourself. Street skating (you know, what you did in the parking lot before the park opened) was all you had. So we atomized into secret pool societies and gangs at backyard half-pipes. We scattered into the streets, changing them. Where they saw dull functionality, we saw infinite possibility: a parking lot, bad corporate art, hand rails, a red-painted curb—the city was never the same.

“Street skating spread all over the world; more skaters were experimenting, contributing—even as companies were profiting. Nothing was impossible: vertical walls, handrails, ollies higher and farther than anyone could imagine. The skateboarding industry fed off of it and encouraged it. Three companies made millions. Even when they collapsed, things went on: the dinosaurs died and others just took their place.

“But skating hasn’t changed much over the last seven years. Look at a deck from ’95 and one from today—what’s the difference? Compare two videos from then and now. The tricks aren’t that different.

The distinguishing characteristic of a traditional folk game is that although it has rules, they are not written. Nobody knows exactly what they are. The players have a tradition to guide them, but must settle among themselves the details of how to play a particular game.

In the ‘80’s and ‘90’s decks went from flared tails and small noses to the standard double kick-pill shape with variations. Street skating was well on its way to becoming what it is now—technical, polished. We’ve reached the end of history, but skate companies don’t want you to know. You’re feeding the machine, see—they churn out new products and pros every year, cheap decks that break, cruddy wheels that get flat spots. Some kid turns pro and becomes another cash cow. If

I’ve seen somebody do a phat kickflip to 5-0 handrail grind to 360 kickflip down a flight of 100 steps about, oh, let’s say 500 times, what’s next? Well, when skating left the parks and came into the streets, it started us down a path that’s carried us to the logical conclusion: we can do whatever we want. Do a technical trick or an old school trick, or just carve around . . . or not, it doesn’t matter.

“But, even better, we don’t have to limit our creativity to when we’re on our decks. Skating opened our eyes to possibilities—now the streets have a secret meaning: nothing is forbidden, everything is permitted! We hit those streets again like we did when the parks closed, and this time we don’t even need the equipment.

“So now here’s a video of people joking around, pulling off crazy stunts and taking unimaginable risks in solemn public spaces—and there’s no skateboards involved! You don’t need a skateboard to skate, just like you don’t need a canvas to make art—now you can do anything, challenge yourself in any way you desire or imagine, even visit a strange city blindfolded.”

You take a look at the Polaroid again, stick it in your pocket. Maybe you won’t go to Deluxe after all. Instead, you want to go to the beach to stare at the sea—because you know the possibilities are as real and mysterious as that water.

Compact Disc: “Insurgent Selections for Battery and Voice,” by the Infernal Noise Brigade (*Post World Industries*, 1122 E. Pike, Dept. 949, Seattle, WA 98122, U.S.A.)

This is a particularly clear-cut example of the tensions between immediate and mediated musical experience. As I understand it, the Infernal Noise Brigade includes some musicians who had been in more conventional bands before—bands that wrote songs, recorded albums, performed conventionally, as artists for spectators—and in this experiment, they presumably wanted to break out of that model and make music that could confront listeners more directly, that could be an unanticipated and uncategorizable disruption of their environment. They have performed primarily at massive protests (in Seattle, during the 1999 W.T.O. meetings, for example), or in surprise marches, and resisted the commodification of their music and the social role of musicians/specialists as best they could. That this CD, a mummified relic of the immediate experience of a few of their performances, has been released, attests to the persistent seductiveness of the social “default setting” of musical production, if to anything.

So yes, these percussion pieces, with scattered vocals and samples, make for good listening, in the confines of a domestic setting—but that’s as far removed from the adrenaline-pumping adventure of a street confrontation between pigs and a guerrilla marching unit as the sky is from the sea. You can’t expect simply listening intellectually (or, worse, absent-mindedly) to these or any rhythms to carry you away—at the very least you have to dance to them, improvise your own motions to fill them out in space.

Better yet—if you do indeed desire a purely receptive yet profound listening experience, try this: Go to the nearest trainyard, and hop on the back end of a grainer car on a leaving train—one of the ones with the little hole for trainhoppers to hide and ride in⁹. Climb in this hole, and listen: as the train picks up speed, wheels pounding over the tracks, near-deafening rhythms will fill your ears. Listen into that quickening pulse: you’ll hear a thousand drummers beating great casks and metal barrels, each with a unique cadence, swiftly accelerating to velocities impossible for any human arms. Pick out the layers of wild rhythms laid over each other, the sudden accents, the changes; take them to heart, make a music for yourself especially out of the parts that at first sound overwhelming and unintelligible. Then—hit the streets, whether in the thick of the next mass demonstration or in the dead of a hot August night, with a percussion device, and, with your life on the line, play back to the world what it taught you.

It’s a safe bet that at least some of the players in the Infernal Noise Brigade followed this prescription—but that alone will do you as much good as Chet Baker’s tribulations and transgressions did his polite, bourgeois audiences. Music, like everything else, has to be lived, not consumed, to be magical.

⁹ To do this safely, order the second D.I.Y. Guide from the Fucken Urban Pirates department of Crimethinc. (cash or stamps postage donation to P.O. Box 2133, Greensboro, NC 27402, U.S.A.), and read Isabell’s excellent introduction to the subject.

Call for Submissions

We are composing an anarchist cookbook of recipes for actions, situations, tools, and adventures. Please contact us to contribute your own knowledge and experience. For more information, and examples of the format, visit www.crimethinc.com/cookbook.

Obviously, the instances of individuals doing-it-themselves referenced here are derived from one specific context of d.i.y. culture, the one from which the authors hail. There are as many of these contexts as there are stars in the sky¹⁰. A d.i.y. paper from any other community would necessarily include different particulars and prioritize different questions. All the more reason for others to make and share their own, and for you to seek out those that already exist—the sooner, the better! That said, relating our own experiences and perspectives does not necessarily constitute an abuse of whatever privileges we may have—does it?

¹⁰ The diversity of d.i.y. cultures does indeed appear to vary in proportion to the air and light pollution obscuring the stars of the night sky, the more diversity, the less industrialized monoculture, the more stars visible, the more different stories about where those stars came from and what they mean to us . . .

an incomplete reading list could include Amy C. Edmondson’s A Fuller Explanation: The Synergetic Geometry of R. Buckminster Fuller (Design Science Collection), Fredy Perelman’s Against His-story, Against Leviathan!, several of Thor Heyerdahl’s books including The Ra Expeditions, Joe Kane’s Savages, Cracking the Movement: Squatting Beyond the Media by ADILKNO, zine entitled 949 Market chronicling the life cycle of a public squat established in downtown San Francisco for four months of the year 2000 (contact Zara, 3288 21 St. P.M.B. #79, San Francisco, CA 94110, U.S.A.), Linda Montano’s Art in Everyday Life, Teaching “Sam” Hsieh’s How to Turn a Sewing Machine into a Sound Recording Device (and One Hundred Other Pre-Apocalyptic Leisure Activities), Rebecca Schneider’s The Explicit Body in Performance, Colin Turnbull’s The Forest People, Carl Sandburg’s Rootabaga Stories, a book called Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americans, and . . .

for this experiment, the Crimethinc Workers’ Collective included: Tak, Liz, Mark, Asi, Scott, Kate, Brian, Hib, Harry, Stef, Darby Some of the true stories of exploration and experimentation described herein may beggar belief. At least four of them, however, have been documented on video: the Mendenhall/Mendenhall guerrilla art strike, the Oneida solidarity action, and the bicycle-to-record-player and automobile-to-musical-instruments think tanks. Copies of these video documentaries are available for the incredulous, or for those giving presentations on the theory and practice of folk science; contact the Crimethinc, Atlanta address for more information.

PENULTIMATUM: Publish the next issue of Hunter/Gatherer!

An open letter to the reader, a challenge, a double-dog-dare:

To publish the next issue of this journal, you will not need permission, but you will need initiative and ideas. You will not need a degree or a license, but you must grant yourself a certain degree of artistic license. You won’t need an apartment or a car, but it might help to borrow a semi-permanent address for receiving mailorders and feedback. You won’t need to know anyone who was involved in making this issue, but it will help to have your creative friends offer perspectives and inspiration. Contrary to superstition, you need not be independently wealthy, but you will need to be rich in time and patience to raise money for printing and postage (assuming you cannot arrange for these by other means) by selling advertising or organizing fundraising events or robbing gas stations. If you want to use the printing company we used for this issue, call them at 800.800.7980; they charged us \$3,000, which we raised by selling punk records and collecting donations, to make 35,000 of these. If you have any questions, or need the addresses of distributors and so on, write us at the address on the back.

To get in the spirit of the thing and be sure you have something to offer others, it might also help to devise and undertake a vision quest. Perhaps you could:

- Cross a vast body of water in a vessel of your own making.
- Carry with you all the trash that you produce over a period of months.
- Teach yourself to navigate your neighborhood with your eyes shut. Make a map of that neighborhood.
- Punch a hole in a can of paint and take a walk around town drizzling a record of your path. Use this method to chart your movements on foot over a period of weeks.
- Learn to recognize all the edible and medicinal plants that grow in your region. Try surviving on them alone for a month.
- Find an old typewriter. Spend an entire day copying down your thoughts as continuously as they appear, without looking back. Spend another day reading everything you thought.
- Ask your grandmother (or oldest living female relative or role model) to teach you her favorite song from her youth; design and construct an instrument perfectly suited to playing this song.
- Expand and refine the private vernacular you have already begun developing with your friends. Write a story or poem for them utilizing and demonstrating its fullest potential.
- Compile a list of axioms from your own experience: It is good luck to toss garbage over the fences of the wealthy. If your van breaks down in South Carolina, expect seven months of misfortune. When you see a police officer struck by his own tear gas canister, make a wish.
- With your itinerant friends and pen pals, establish an alternate postal underground. Send parcels from hand to hand across continents.
- Enter an abandoned building with only food and water. Spend a week there composing an on-site puppet show extravaganza using only materials found on-location. Leave to flier. Return to perform.
- Comb the environment you live in for places which have natural musical potential: the rail on the bridge that rings when pounded, the train tunnel with the perfect echo acoustics. Compose a symphony from these sounds, in a series of movements. One evening, take your friends from site to site to perform the symphony in sequence.
- Take a well-known tool—for this example we’ll use a toaster—and turn it back into an object. Take it far from the kitchen, perhaps to a mountaintop or an abandoned grain silo. Say its name continu-

ously for thirty minutes: say it fast, say it slow, spell it out, sing it to the tune of your favorite childhood song. Now take it with you to the bank. Wear it as a shoe. Run a mile in it. Exhausted, curl up with it for a long nap. Remove one of its shiny panels and write a letter upon it to a friend with whom you have lost touch. Invent a dozen other uses for it, and utilize it thus until these are habitual. Now toast seems so strange.

-Squat one of those vast 24-hour supermarts for a few days. Conduct experiments, play games, graze on food in your “pantry,” find a quiet corner to sleep. Consider who organized this place and to what purpose. Pick a neglected category of items (green plastic things, paraphernalia of insecurity, materials not produced by slave labor, etc.) and, cartload by cartload, establish a new section for it. Use stationary to write letters to friends, use the phone to invite them over. Throw a party (guests need not bring food or gifts). Take a disposable camera off the shelf; after taking some unusual photos, repackage it as a gift to its future owner. Add to this list of things to do as the days go by and your derangement intensifies.

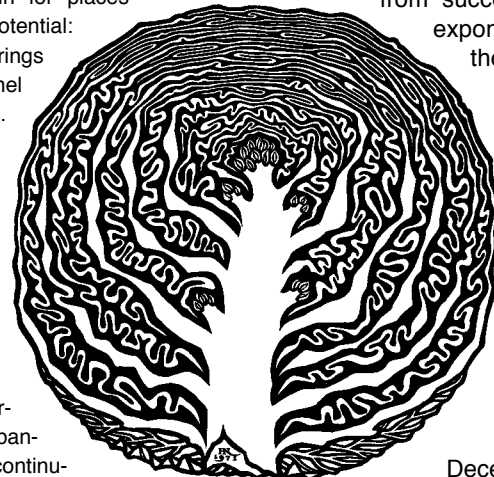
-Go to a public place where you can set up camp and establish yourself there, be present. Bring a project. It will have to be a project that creates ripples of notoriety—rumors should spread about your presence. People will approach with stories for you: give them time, listen. You, above close friends, will be told of injuries, secrets, dilemmas, desires. Do not try to solve problems or offer advice: your role is to hold the stories as if you were a hiding place. Your visitors will return to sort through them, to make amendments and new deposits, to revisit old ones. They will offer you food. Occasionally they will ask about your life—but remember, they do this only out of politeness and habit, for they know that you are a magic person, you have a project. As your relationships grow your needs will be increasingly met by the offerings of your visitors. These gifts carry with them the power to cast spells on their behalf. Heal them, make them well.

-Concoct and carry out your own rites of passage. Invent a series of games to play with your friends, and announce a month during which you will change your own lives in preparation for the following year of changing the world. Examples could begin with elaborate scavenger hunts and conclude with a sequence of challenges: Starting at noon Friday at Danielle’s house in the placid suburbs, who can get arrested first? [This particular example is tailored for the privileged children of the bourgeoisie; there are other equivalents.] Who can write the most fantastic novel? [This is how Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein was written—it was her first.] If the world were to end tomorrow, what would you do today? OK, on the count of three, go do it. What do you fear most of all? For the final exam, confront it, live through it. The ones who survive will be ready for anything.

-Don’t just talk about those crazy ideas you have. Carry them out. Live like fire so the ones who come after can model the mythologies they’ll need out of the smoke you left hanging in the air. These are all projects which have been and can still be successfully undertaken. You don’t want to leave all the excitement to professional archeologists, aborigines, vanished ancient peoples, and other inventors/explorers, do you? Oh, and—if you feel guilty about “wasting” so much time when you “should be” fighting capitalism, community organizing, etc., don’t fret—your capabilities in everything from succoring to streetfighting are increased exponentially every time you step outside the circuit your life has become. Try it, you’ll see!

If our crackpot scheme succeeds, there will be 35,000 copies of this first issue of Hunter/Gatherer, and 35,000 versions of the second. If we make a version of that second issue ourselves, we’ll be happy to share it with any of you—but only in trade for your own versions.

For a readership of authors, an audience of performers, a constituency of anarchists, -C.W.C. Central Committee for Decentralization (Local 252)



Appendix: Skateboarding and the New Games

My friend teaches preschool and I was harassing him a little about the way children’s games and eventually sports should be called “Ideological State Apparatus for Beginners.” He said I was paranoid. Our conversation ended in a messy chart which is re-presented here in its edited form.

Games For Beginners, That They May Never Stop Beginning—or, Making the Rules is Part of the Game.

Limits: This chart rests on the assumption that competition is something salvageable. This comes from our experiences both inventing new games and attempting to play established ones. That most games focus on competition is certainly worth some attention too—but that’s another chart entirely.

Assumption: Whether watching or playing, even uncle Ike prefers a game that is an even match. A blowout is no fun for the winners, the losers, or those watching.

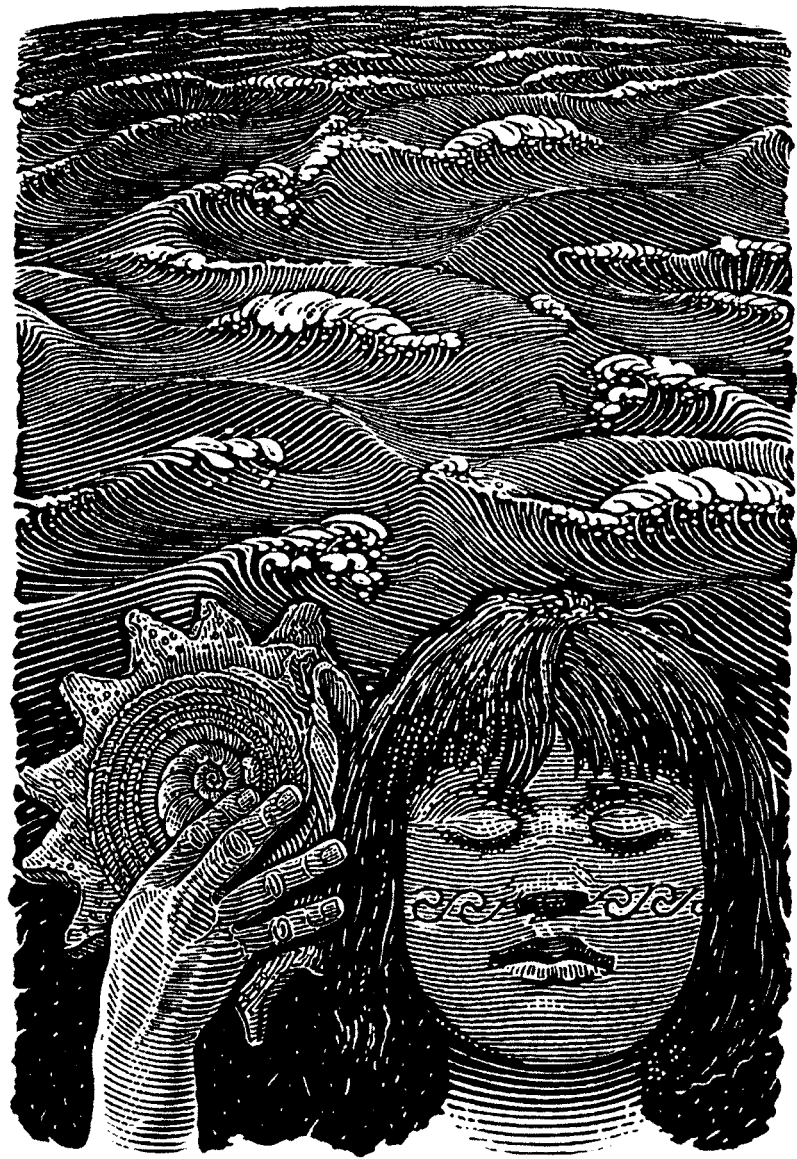
Thesis: Games go about trying to be even in different ways.

1. Old games (“sports”) – the rules are sacred, the players are subject to selection or rejection. Players that are best suited to the rules (erroneously called “the best players”) are the ones who get to play. The game is a close match.

2. New games – players are sacred, rules are subject to selection or rejection. Rules that privilege certain players throw the game off balance and make it no fun. The rules are adjusted. The game is a close match.

Example: Take basketball. Imagine an uncoordinated but poetic new basketball player asking the ref. if she could improvise rhymes instead of dribbling while moving with the ball. While that would be really fucking cool, in the sports establishment she can just plain forget about it.

Application: Right fork—get rid of player-selecting games like hockey, protest at sports events, get beat up by jocks. Left fork—get on with game-making where players select the rules. Let that process teach and reinforce the idea that rules are only worth a damn if they serve the players well. Make that double for laws, traditions, dances, recipes, music, language and science and culture.



What didn't get said:

An aging automechanic lovingly strokes his sleeping wife's hair.

A boy fits a razor blade to the vein in his wrist.

A naked girl touches one toe to a freezing river, and laughs.

A dancer collects herself to give the final performance of her career.

A silver crescent, worn on a necklace, passed down through the generations
to a grandmother who now has no heirs.

The wonder of it—the moon in eclipse—the fugitive squats on the cliff at
dawn, peeing into the mist, counting blessings mathematics cannot.

And you want to say that everything is politics?

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