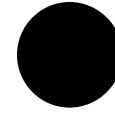


A central graphic featuring a large black vertical bar. The text "make art" is at the top, "at your" is in a central circle, and "day job" is at the bottom. Abstract geometric shapes, including a bar chart, a 3D bar, and a grid-patterned block, are scattered around the central elements.

make
art

at
your

day
job



The goal of this pamphlet is to help you make your own art while at your day job, getting paid; With that goal stated, any advice in here should not be applied without assuming the risks involved. If the possibility of losing your job is something that you can not have happen, none of the advice in this pamphlet should be followed.

In fact, none of it should be followed regardless. You might find it helpful.

ABOUT THIS ZINE

This zine may be full of mistakes and problematic material, and I'd like to hear any feedback you might have. If you want to submit something, give feedback, or help this thing evolve some other way,

Connect with me on IG: @earth.liberation.studio
Twitter: @EarthStdio
Or through email: earthliberationstudio@gmail.com

Words and art by me, B.Y.

Edited by Michael Guevarra.

Some comrades who contributed stories:

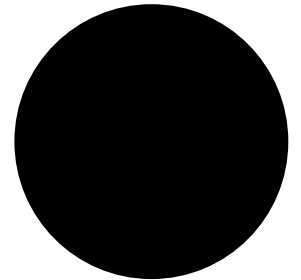
Ariel (IG: @magickariel)

Elizabeth Morris (IG: @elizabethmorrissart, artbyelizabethm@gmail.com)

YourHostKevin

Made in 2022, mostly at my day job.

No copyright.



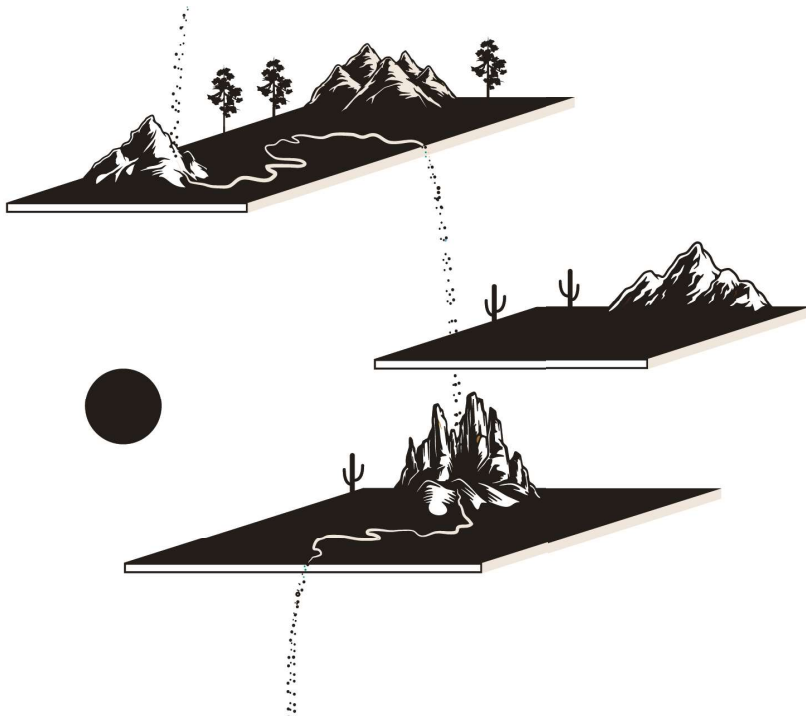
ORGANIZE YOUR COWORKERS

Your coworkers probably feel similarly to you. They want to work less and do more of what they love. Maybe they're also artists, and you could build an artist community within your workplace, giving support to each other throughout the work day. You can build with your coworkers the kind of environment that fosters all of your creativity. You can help each other with your projects. You can share your resources. You can create a text chain to warn each other of an incoming boss.

Then there's organizing — planning and taking action to help build a world where we're free from all this harmful, pointless work, and are able to live up to our creative potentials. Strikes and other disruptions are necessary in taking power back from the ruling class. As the capitalist system collapses, workers need to band together and build the system that will rise from it's ashes.

When the moment is ripe for organizing — for instance, when there's an egregious new policy, a lower-than-inflation raise, a cut to health benefits, an oppressive new schedule, etc. - we must seize the opportunity to organize and build solidarity. We may be tempted to sit it out and remain in our art caves, but remember that militant organizing is one of the only ways out of our wage prisons.

We all need to get free from this absolutely oppressive system. Until we can organize on a massive scale to abolish wage oppression in all forms, get free where you can. Get a little more free by making art at your day job, and don't feel guilty for a second.



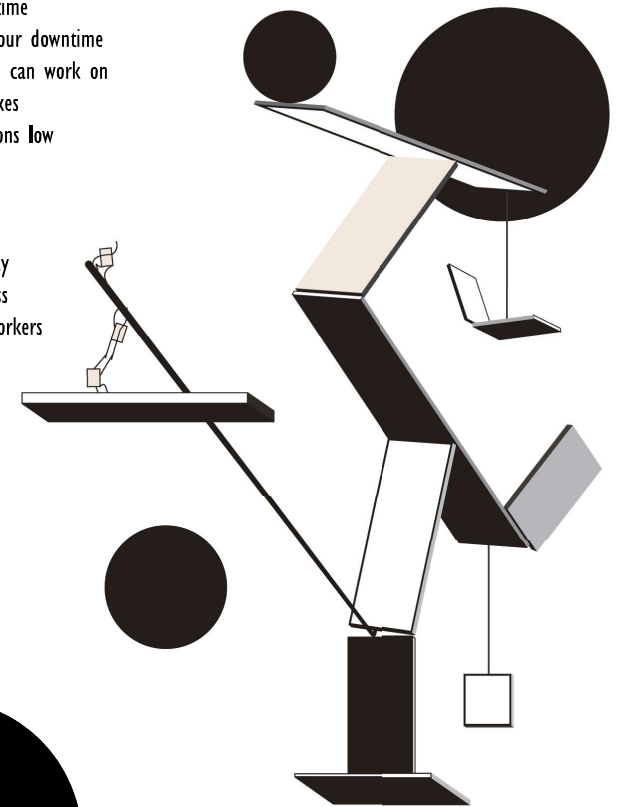
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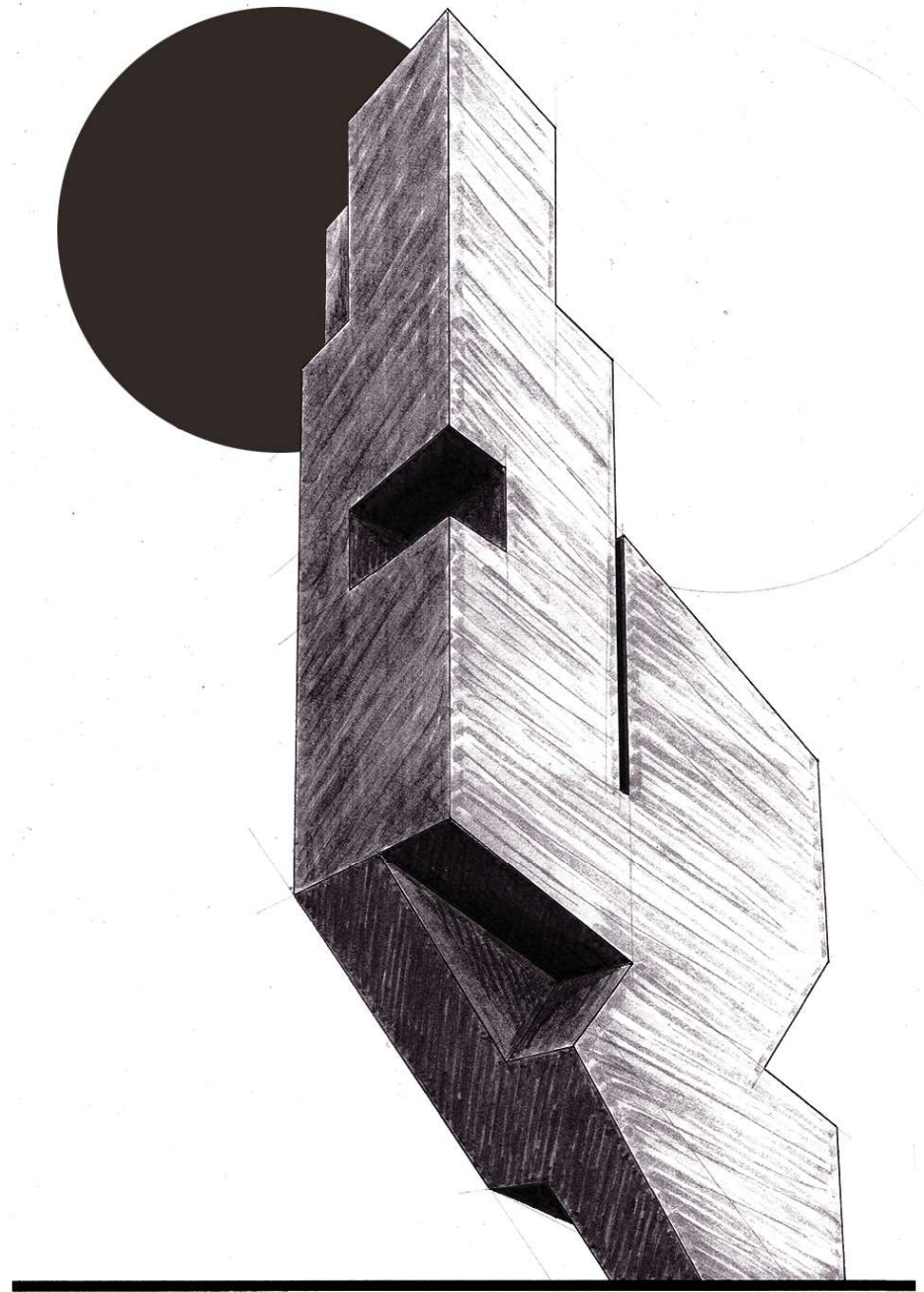
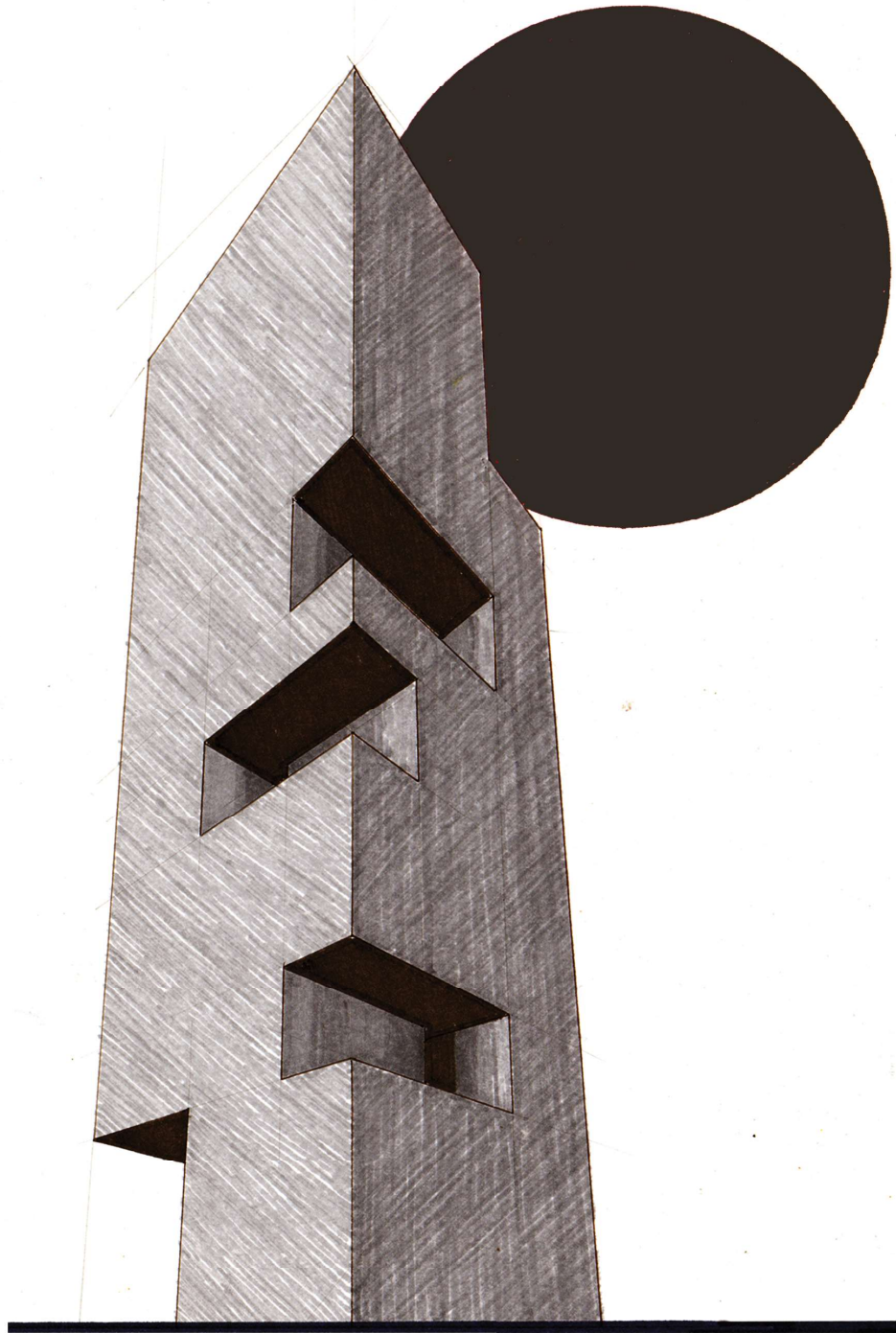
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I. FRAMEWORK



CREATE SOME PRIVACY

Nothing kills my creative flow like feeling somebody watching me. When it's busy at my job, finding that privacy is not easy. My work area is a fishbowl, with a glass door and interior windows into the adjacent rooms. During busy times, people pass through and gather in the adjacent rooms to use the laser cutters and 3D printers, and they can look through the interior window directly at my computer monitor and see what I'm working on.

I grab a fold out table from the shop and rotate my workstation 90 degrees, away from all of the interior glass. Nobody can directly see what's on my monitor. My excuse is that it helps me keep tabs on everything — the CNC machines to one side, and the laser cutters to the other. This gives me a lot more privacy to work on my art.

A few small adjustments or requests for rearranging (with an accompanying excuse) can get you some privacy to get in the zone.

ENROLLING YOUR BOSS IN YOUR PROJECTS

If you have a personal project that overlaps with your job, it might be possible to pitch the project to your boss, asking to work on it during work hours. You can say a personal project is good training for the real job, or something like that. Remember that once you've done this, your boss will most likely want to see your work at some point — which is why I personally don't go this route. My boss is not my audience, and I don't want to make anything with the thought of his opinion guiding my work in any way.

THE NEED TO MAKE vs THE DEMANDS OF CAPITAL

For artists, the need to make art is as real as the need to sleep.

If we can't create, things don't feel right. Something just feels off. Some of us get irritable and restless. Others might feel depressed, anxious, or even develop physical health problems. In the dying capitalist world where we need to work one or several more-than-full-time jobs in order to afford rent and groceries, our time to create gets swallowed up quickly. On top of the 40-60+ hours at our jobs, there's the unpaid commute, the grocery shopping, cooking, laundry, picking up kids from school, volunteering, and the whole world of things we need to do just to maintain ourselves so we can go to work.

Within this completely unnecessary hustle culture, finding the time to meet our creative need is not easy. It's a brutal cycle — a long exhausting workday leaves little to no time to make art, which creates more exhaustion and numbness. You've probably felt this frustration. You know you need to create to feel right, but there's no damn time, so you go about your daily tasks with your creative spirit starving, feeling restless and anxious. Capitalism is doing its best to keep us from fulfilling our needs, from realizing our potential as artists and human beings, and from being functioning members of our communities. To meet our needs as both artists and humans, we need to find ways of resisting capitalism.

Some capitalist-aligned professional artists will prescribe the hustle treatment: wake up an hour before your kids; use your lunch break to make art; don't socialize; don't make friends; get to making after a 12 hour shift; hustle harder; you're not hustling hard enough! And it's all your fault!

I say fuck the hustle treatment. I've never been able to fulfill my creative needs with these strategies. I've tried waking up an hour earlier, and just when I'm starting to tap into the creative zone, I'll look at the clock and, shit, I need to be on the road to work in 5 minutes. I barely made a scratch in what I wanted to make. So I tried even earlier — waking up at 4AM to get a solid 3 hours of art in before getting out the door by 7:30. This hustle led to losing a lot of sleep, which led to some serious burnout, which led to months of not making any art at all. Under the hustle treatment, my art suffered, and my relationships with friends, comrades, and family suffered.

You might have similar experiences. It does not mean you're lazy, and it does not mean that you're bad at time management. It just means that it's hard to cultivate a satisfying creative practice within the confines of capitalist work culture.

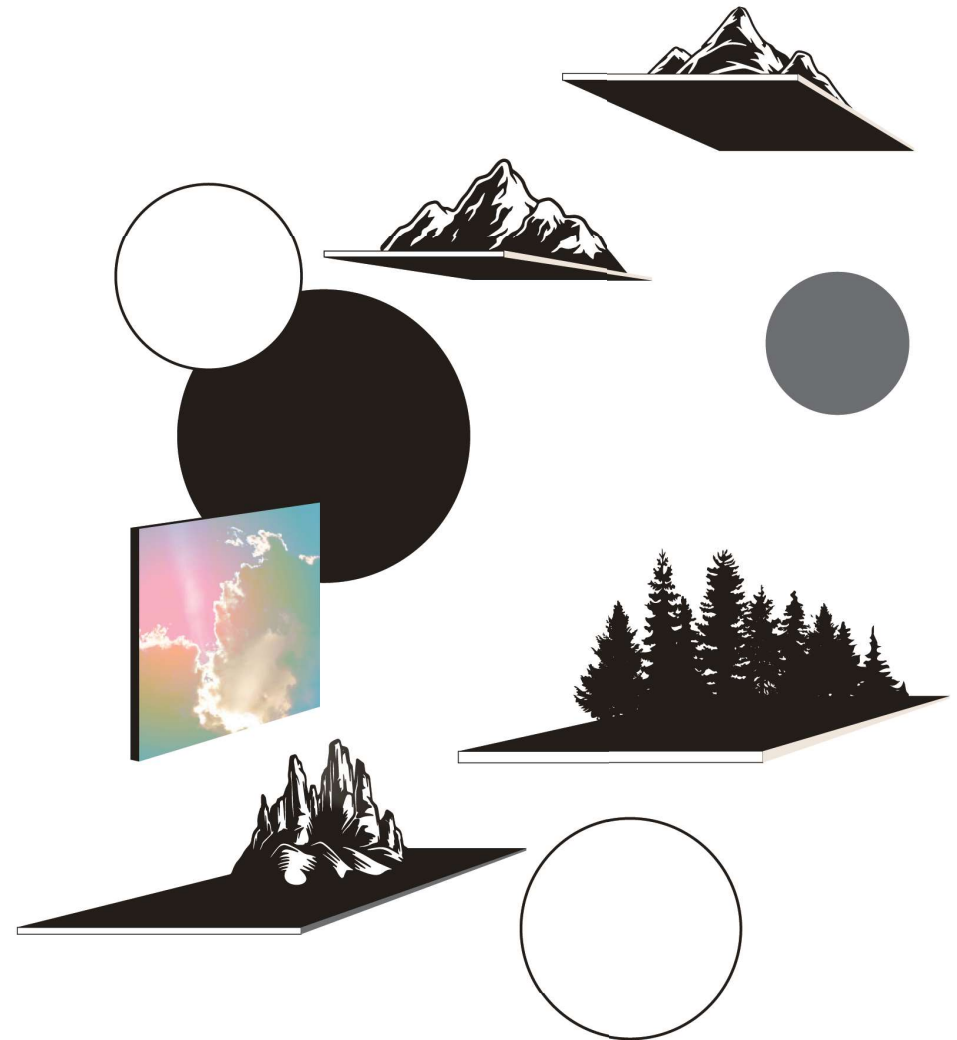
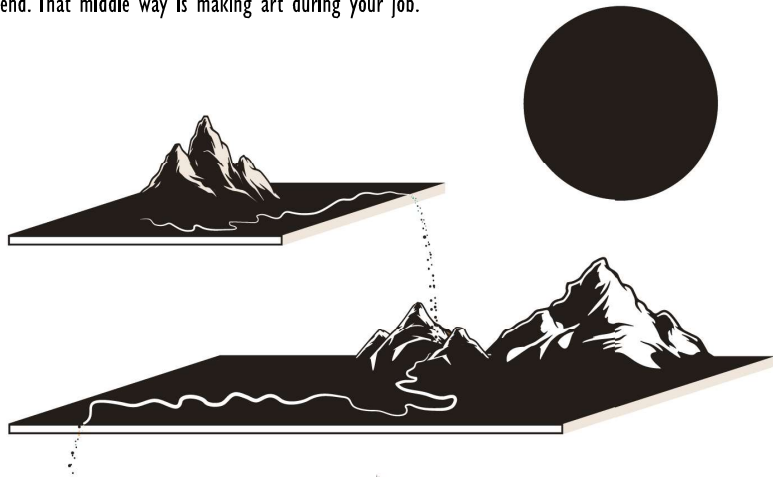
SHOULD I JUST QUIT?

So how do we find the time to meet our creative needs? Quitting your job might seem like the only way. The dream of quitting and paying your bills through your art can seem very liberating. I'm not here to talk you out of quitting, but I want you to consider all of your options. There might be an easier way...

Maybe you're ready to quit and pay the bills with your art. I for one, am not. My art practice just isn't there yet. I'm still figuring out what my art wants to be, still developing my craft and style. My art just isn't ready to hold the weight of supporting me and my family. It's not ready to generate the income necessary to pay for the insane cost of being alive. My art practice gives me a lot of life, and turning it into my income feels like it will stifle my creativity.

So instead of quitting, I'm building up my art practice while I'm at my job, while I'm getting paid to allegedly do other things. The steady wage is helpful in developing my art practice, because financial pressure isn't placed on the art. I'm also in a stage where I want complete creative freedom to make whatever I want to make. I don't want clients or commissions interfering with my creative process — not right now, anyway. For now, I want to feel the breath of pure creation in every piece I make. This could change next month; but for now, I don't want any sort of financial pressure on my creative process. So that means I'm keeping the day job.

I don't want to talk you into living your creative life in fear and financial anxiety; I do want you to consider what's best for your art. Will your art be able to flourish under the burden of paying your bills? Maybe for you, it will. Maybe that's the kick you need, and it's the right choice to take the plunge and see what happens. If you're not ready to quit, I'm here to explore the middle way — between complete wage servitude to a soul-crushing job on one end, and a full-time career as an artist with all its financial pressures on the other end. That middle way is making art during your job.



PAID TIME OFF

Use every single one of your paid days off. Make art, feed your creative soul with adventures, or take yourself on art excursions. Do some research on your state laws and company rules for PTO.

VACATION DAYS

The most obvious form of PTO, but the most annoying to get approved in a lot of cases. I've been told by my boss numerous times that I can't take vacation. So instead, I go straight to HR with my requests if he denies them — not that HR is an ally, but at least they acknowledge that they are legally required to let you use your PTO.

SICK DAYS

I almost prefer sick days to vacation days because I can use them without begging. Use them all. I live in California, where in most cases, state law prohibits a company from investigating or asking about a paid sick day. See if your state provides any protection and if your company is going to try to require a doctor's note. Doctor's notes can also be fabricated insanely easily, so don't let that deter you.

BEREAVEMENT

Here's the wild one. In some places, you can get 5 days off if an immediate family member passes, and one day for a friend or distant relative. Some of us might be worried about the karma involved with lying about a lost loved one, so obviously only do what's comfortable for you. If you've already lost some loved ones, your new job doesn't necessarily know that. Don't tell them. Then if you need to, you can whip it out. "My grandfather passed away," doesn't need to be a lie. Sure, he passed away 20 years ago, but you still need the time off right now.

Regardless of how many living grandparents you have, guess what? You have all four. And we're very sorry for these real or fictional grandparents, but their days are numbered. If this is too dark for you, make up fake names and life stories for these grandparents. Use their fictionalized deaths as you see fit.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET ANONYMITY

Be careful with what you share online, particularly regarding your PTO. Never let your boss find you on social media. If you're using your government name, it's very easy for your company to find you online and see what you've been up to. I use a pseudonym online, to ensure that my company can't find me. Even then, what I do with my PTO does not get shared on social media.

A NOTE ON PRIVILEGE

Before we really get into it, let me point out some of my own privilege, so you can have a better idea of whether you want to dismiss any or all of this.

I'm a white man, which gives me the most systemic privilege in our white supremacist, patriarchal culture. A lot of what I write might stink of privilege. I don't doubt for a second that because of my race and gender identity, there is a world of macro and microaggressions that I avoid on a daily basis while I make art under my boss' nose. I'm able to do this without much of a fallout, largely because of my privilege — my managers just seem to trust me, continuing to treat me like the expert even though I do very little actual work. That's privilege; the managerial class is primed to be more trusting of whiteness and maleness. The less white you are, the less male you are, the less privilege you probably have in your workplace, because our global capitalist hegemony was built for hundreds of years on the foundations of white male supremacy. And that shit is buried deep in everyone, especially the ruling class who sign our paychecks and fund our projects.

The type of job I have is also part of my privilege. The nature of my job allows me some amount of autonomy to make art. I've worked the last 5 years at a small college for architecture. I work in the woodshop, helping students learn the woodshop tools to build their architecture projects. There is an ebb and flow to the workload; it is very, very busy around midterms and finals, but the rest of the school year is pretty quiet; that's the time when I really dig into making art. Your job might not offer this amount of downtime or autonomy, or any amount (we'll dig into some possible strategies for creating downtime later).

Another level of privilege is my housing and marital status. I live in Los Angeles in a rent controlled apartment with my partner who manages all of our money. My partner enjoys that kind of thing, and I enjoy that she enjoys it because I can't stand the thought of money. My method of dealing with money is to not spend it and then stress out when I have to spend it. It's not a good method. Having a partner who is good at managing money frees me up even more to fuck around with art and not be career-oriented or even money-oriented. Again, that's a level of privilege.

If this pamphlet is infuriatingly privileged to you, you can throw it in the recycling. I've tried to come at this from a class perspective, but class is also layered with race, gender, and other identity struggles. Take what works for you from this pamphlet, and leave whatever doesn't. If anything seems problematic, reductionist, excessively privileged or just cringe, I'd love to hear your thoughts on it — shoot me an email or a DM (info on last page).

WASTING COMPANY TIME IS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

Being a good worker at your job is not a virtue. With most jobs under capitalism, what you produce at your job is either completely pointless, or it's harmful to yourself, your community, and the planet.

I can look back at my past jobs and see a pattern of destruction. When I was 18, I worked in a small rural architecture office. I would go out and survey land planned for development. Forests, fields, streams, entire ecosystems, all to be bulldozed and replaced by flimsy McMansion homes for the upper middle class. Today, many jobs later, 95% of what I produce ends up in a dumpster within 6 months. The other 5% gets to the dumpster eventually. The waste from this production is a fine polyurethane dust (microplastic) that blows into the air at the slightest breeze, into our lungs, into storm drains, to the river, and into the ocean. The best case scenario is that the toxic dust makes it to a landfill where it can leach into the groundwater and poison us for generations to come.

Your job may not be as tangibly toxic as the ones I've held, but you can probably list a few ways that your job creates harm. Jobs in the tech industry rely on exploiting our brain chemistry to get us addicted to the products. Jobs in the food industry end up feeding us poison to turn a profit. Jobs in retail need to sell us as much of what we don't need as possible. Jobs in media and advertising get us to believe that we do need all those things that are actually poisoning our bodies and degrading our spirits. The capitalist drive to endlessly extract and produce has colonized the entire planet and changed the climate to a point where it may no longer be livable within our lifetimes.

Work in itself is not inherently bad; work has been necessary throughout human history to survive, to provide and to care for our communities. When it aligns with our values or fulfills some real need, work feels good. It's work under late capitalism that is uniquely bad for us and each other. Jobs under capitalism serve to feed capitalism's need to constantly grow, extract, produce, destroy; and it's for no real reason at all.

So, if you buy into the idea that doing good work at your job produces more harm for people and the planet, then it follows to understand that doing LESS work at your job produces LESS harm. Doing less work, and then doing something actually beneficial — like organizing, or ART! — can balance out the harm you're forced to produce as a worker.

To add to how useless and destructive our jobs can be, most of our work can be done in far less than 40 hours. Think about the amount of time at your job that you're actually productive. 30 hours? 10 hours? 4 hours? Why do they force us to work 40-80 hours a week when most of the work can be done a lot faster? Whatever their reasons (I have some ideas), it's time to resist that oppression of our time.

When you waste time at your job, investigate how you feel. Look for any guilt that comes up. The ruling class relies on us feeling guilty for wasting company time. Let's dig into that guilt.

MAKE EXCUSES.

Your boss asks, what have you been working on today?

Well, you've been working on art, but you can't say that. Have something in the quiver. What do you have a better understanding of than your boss, and can you convince them that that's the reason for the hold up with the work?

We grew up taught that excuses were weak. I love excuses. They get me what I need. Here are some of my go-to excuses when I need them.

SOFTWARE / TOOL ISSUES

You know your tools better than your boss. You know their issues, their problems, their shortcomings. Software update that mixed badly with your computer's antivirus software? Great. Software license issue that you had to work out? Cool. Tool needed repair to ensure a precise job? Sounds good to me.

CHANGE ORDERS

My go-to excuse is change orders. A client, or another manager, or whoever, said that the project needed a change. There should be some truth to this, somebody at some point requesting a change to something. The amount of time it takes should be wildly exaggerated, and because your boss actually doesn't know how to do your job, you can convince them that of course it took that long.

If you can avoid excuses, that's ideal. It's easy to get them mixed up, or get caught up in them. If you can truly get a full day's work done in 1 hour, enough to please the bosses, perfect. If, however, they start asking questions about the work that you've done, be ready with some good excuses.

Let me reiterate something from earlier: never throw a fellow worker under the bus when you need an excuse.

HAVE A FALLBACK

I always keep an actual work project out in the open to give the appearances of doing my actual job. When it's computer work, I always have some obvious work minimized, to pop up anytime my manager walks past. When it's physical work (woodworking, etc.), I've got some other shop project I'm working on out front.

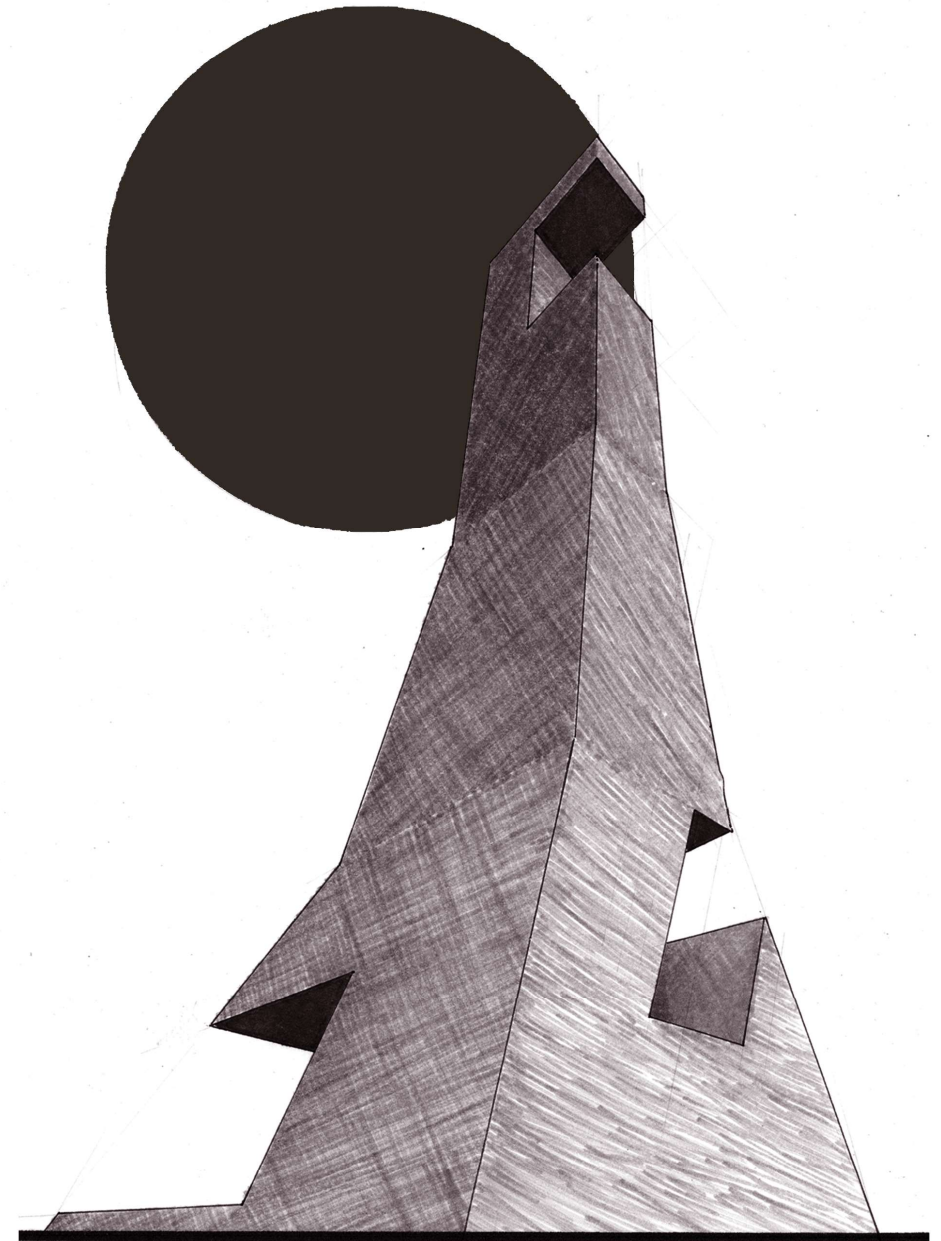
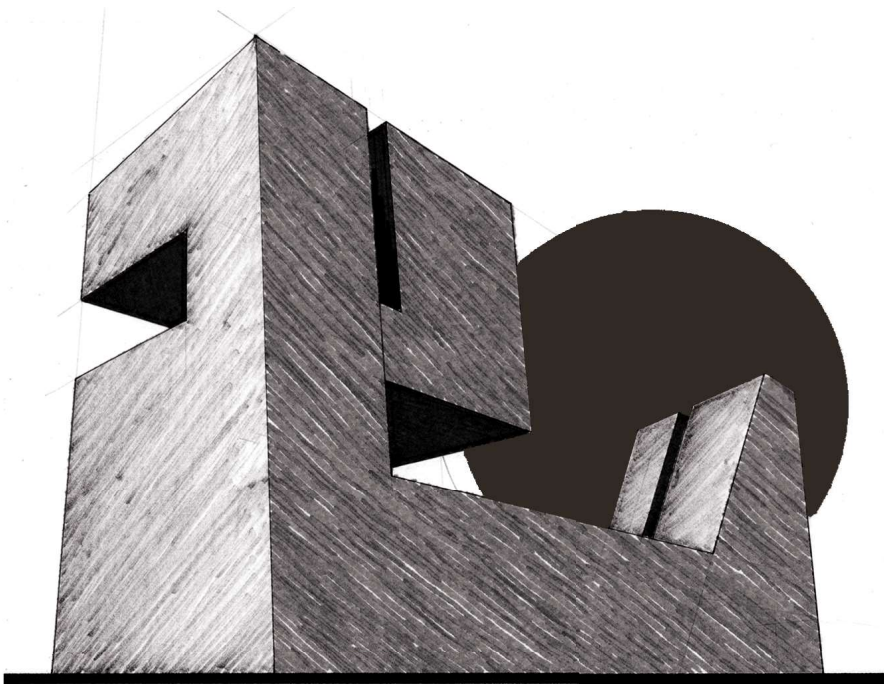
SET THEIR EXPECTATIONS LOW

It starts on day one.

Here's the mistake I've always made when starting a new job. The first day, I'm excited to show up and do something new for a change. Thank god, this job won't be like the old one! This one'll be the good job I've been waiting for. The boss even seems cool! I'm going to prove to them that it was a good idea to hire me. I'm going to work super hard today, and probably stay late too. I need to prove myself to them.

Two weeks later, the job is, of course, just another job, and I'm already bored with it. The mistake I made was spending these past two weeks hustling, giving my 100%. What I should have done was give 50% max.

If you give them your all on day one, they'll expect the same on day 2. If you give 50%, they'll expect that. You can make micro adjustments in your pace and quality based on any 'feedback' you're given, but hold the line! You'll want to use your full potential for your art, not for your boss. Odds are, the 'merit based system' will give you the same raises regardless of you giving your all or not. Hell, the company might even get more out of you in the long run (a chilling thought), because you'll be that much less sick of their bullshit after a year or so.

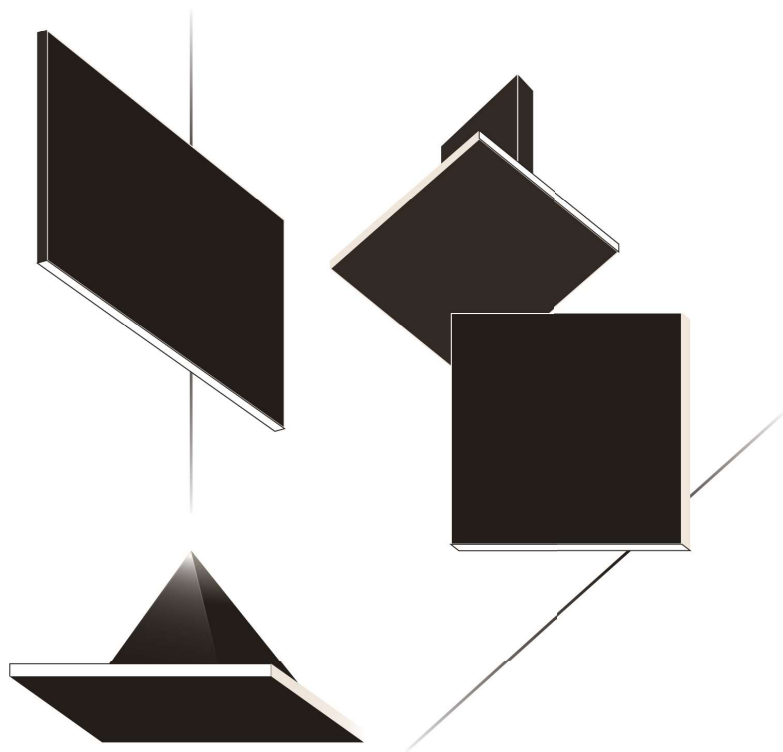


THE CAPITALIST GUILT COMPLEX

When I first started making art at my day job, I was working in an architecture office. I started making art because I was depressed and incredibly bored, spending 10 hours a day in front of a computer in a tiny, dimly lit office with only one coworker and the boss. I finished my work quickly most days, but was demanded to stay in that office in front of that computer monitor, waiting for directions from the boss. So in the downtime, I started making little sketches on photoshop. Making art secretly behind the boss' back gave me back some of my joy. Each day stopped feeling like an insurmountable pit of despair. I even left the office some days feeling excited to be alive.

But I also felt guilty. I felt like I was stealing, lying, being inauthentic. My evangelical christian upbringing was flaring up, making me feel ashamed and dishonorable. These feelings were caused by some core beliefs that were buried deep in me by a lifetime of puritanical capitalist propaganda.

Most of us have some level of these puritanical capitalist beliefs, which lead to guilt when we're not being good little workers for our rulers. I want to take a look at those beliefs. I want to try to rewire those beliefs, away from serving capital and towards serving our art and our communities.



WORK ON WHAT YOU CAN WORK ON

Once you've gotten away from your manager and created some downtime, you still won't have complete creative freedom at work. Depending on what your medium is, you'll have to make certain adjustments to adapt to your workplace and schedule. Obviously, you may not be able to work on a large painting at your office job, or practice your instrument at your restaurant job, or rehearse a dance; but you might be able to make digital edits to a painting, write, manage your website, etc. I mostly work on digital pieces at my job, because it's the easiest to conceal what I'm up to. A comrade of mine uses Powerpoint to make surrealist collages. Another sketches elaborate drawings in their notepad in between meetings. Another comrade invents games to play with his coworkers in the warehouse.

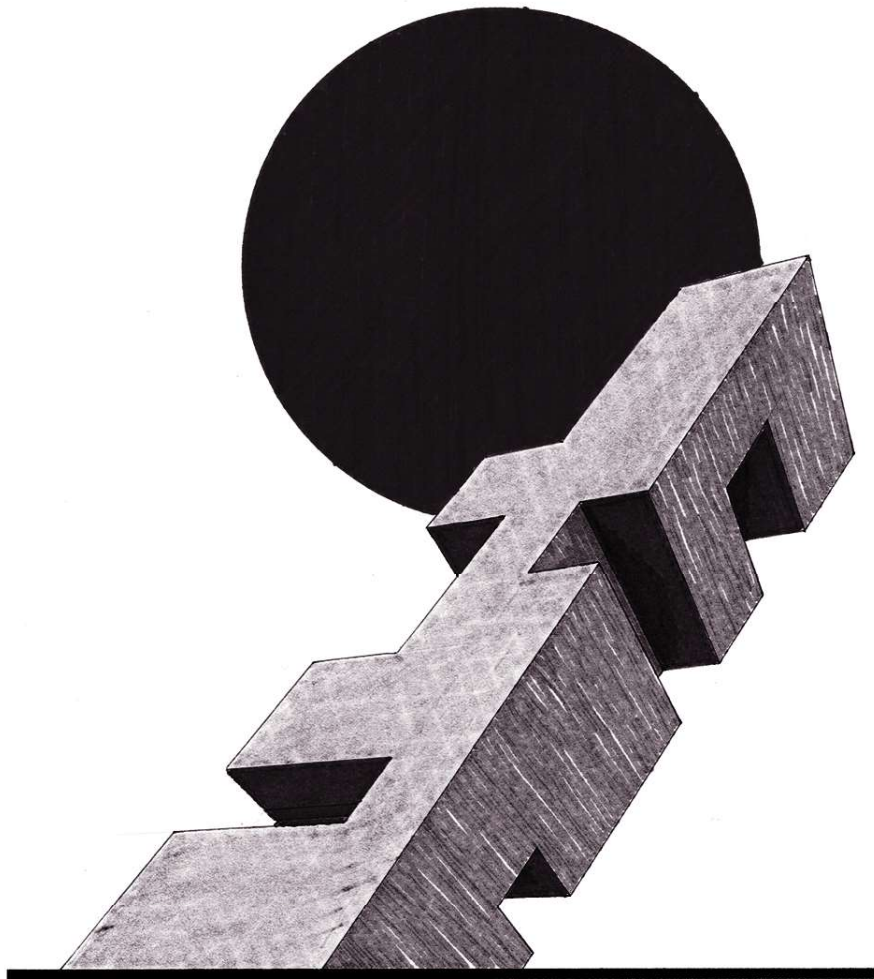
Use what you have available to you, but also be on the lookout for ways to expand your toolbox. Can you come up with a reason for why your work computer needs the Adobe Suite? Maybe you need to make images for a presentation, or you need to make signage. Make those requests. There was a time where I wanted to make a giant 3D relief map of the west coast of the north american continent, but I needed a certain software to create the machining code. So I had my company buy that software, using a work project as an excuse for why I needed it. Your I.T. person might be able to help you in this area. Get to know them. I need I.T.'s permission to install anything at all, including fonts. Luckily I've got a comrade in one of the IT staff, and they give me a hand when I need it. I bring them donuts occasionally.

If all you can work on is the business side of your art practice - sending emails, responding to messages, or reading through contracts, that's great — those are all things that need to be done, so doing them at your job is absolutely beneficial to your art. If all you can manage is doodling in a pocket sketchbook during a long bathroom break, that's a lot better than nothing — that might be all you need.

CHECK THE EASY BOXES

What are the things you could get written up for? Make sure NOT to do those things. Show up on time. Time is the first thing bosses will use against us. To most bosses, showing up on time means you're a good worker. They don't really know what you do or how you do it, so showing up on time might be all you need to do to get the bosses off your case. Get the easy, obvious work done. Focus on the work that your boss can see, the things you know they'll ask you about. You can put off the less obvious and visible work for later.

Other easy boxes include keeping your work area clean and responding to emails (even the pointless ones).



REWIRING OUR VALUES

Some of the following might feel wrong to you. It might feel manipulative, extremely selfish, or just plain morally wrong. Hold those feelings as they come up, and inspect them. You might, after inspecting them, hold on to them and dismiss what I'm writing. That's good; find what works for you. Nobody should be listening to me anyway.

WORK ETHIC

Your boss does not deserve your work ethic. Your boss exploits you for the value you create; the harder you work for them, the more you are exploited. You will not be rewarded for that hard work. This becomes more true the less white and the less male you are. There is no merit based reward system. We're not struggling because we're not working hard or smart enough. We're struggling because capitalism is in collapse and the ruling class is squeezing the last dregs of value out of the earth and the working class.

Work ethic is a little dance we have to do for the bosses so they don't fire us. We all have to dance that little dance. Dance as much you need to in order to get your boss off your case; devote your true work ethic to your art. When it comes to your art, you are free to apply whatever motivational, self-help, or discipline in service of your art. Don't let your boss steal your work ethic; that's for you, your art, and your community.

TRUST

We're told to be trustworthy. To what end? Again, to be exploited.

Trust can be a key ingredient to achieve the freedom you need to make art at your job. Your manager needs to trust you enough to get off your case, giving you flexibility to toggle between work and art.

Your boss needs to trust you enough to let you alone. This trust might come along with getting work done, but in my experience, it usually comes when your boss feels respected. Bosses need to feel respected. It's gross, but I try to tell my boss he's doing a good job regularly, and praise him whenever I can. It's really gross, especially because he's a horrible manager, as most managers are.

When your manager starts leaving you alone for long stretches of time, it's safe to assume you've won some trust. Take that trust and use it to break out of the box they force you to be in. They had it coming.

I once had a coworker that buttered up anyone in a position of power. He brought flowers to HR. He praised management publicly in group emails. He thanked the head directors for bringing him on whenever he had a chance. Then he would disappear for hours at a time during his shift, every day. It took him a full year to get fired, because he won the trust of the higher-ups by making them feel good about themselves.

HONESTY

You might have a hard time lying. That's not a bad thing. Honesty and transparency with our loved ones is critical in healthy and mutually beneficial relationships. Honesty is a good thing to practice — but you can practice in other places other than your job. Being dishonest to your boss might be a really good strategy to get yourself free to make art at your job.

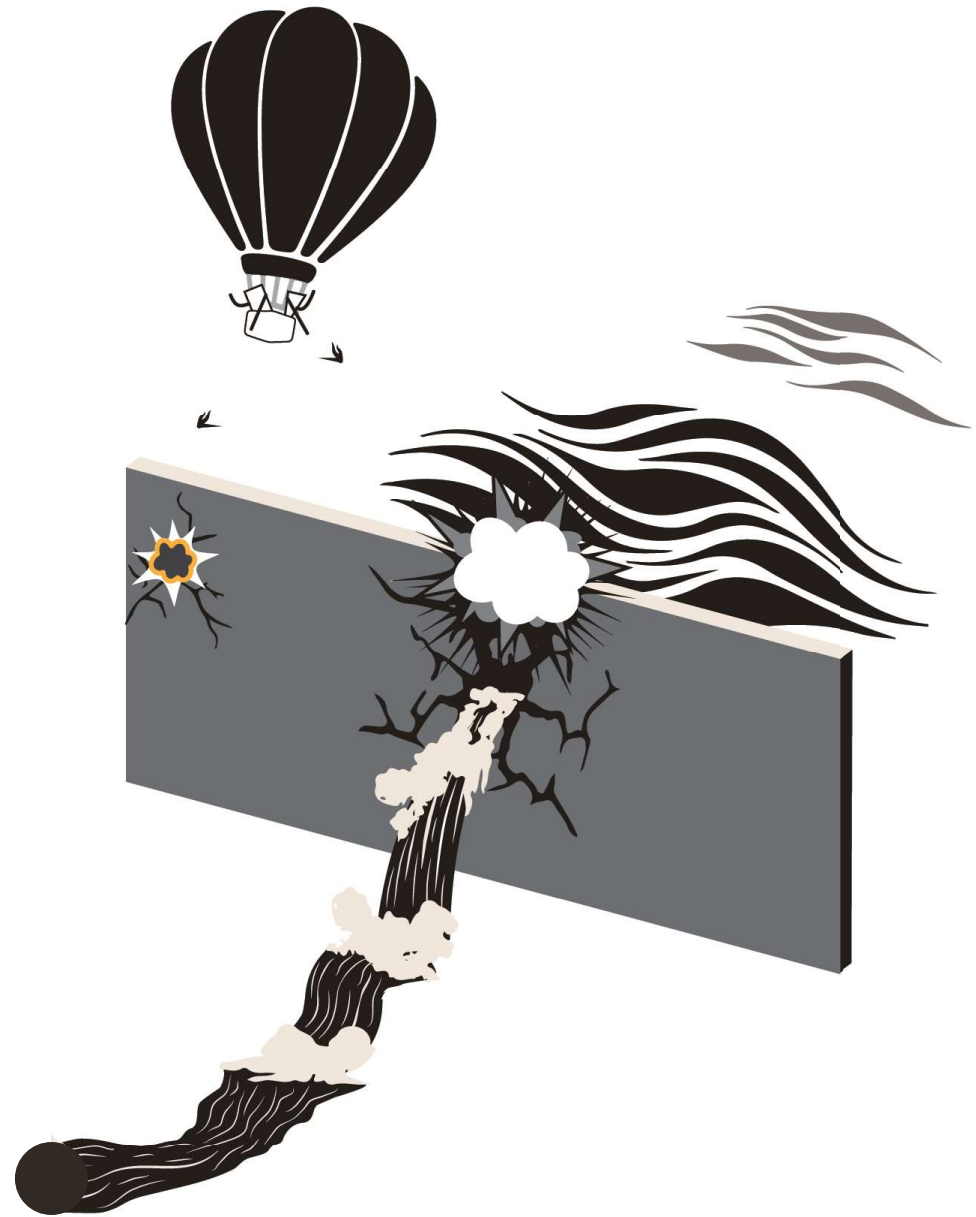
INTEGRITY

This is a wild one - integrity is the idea that we should bring our full, whole, authentic selves wherever we go, to always give our best effort and bring our best intentions. I fully believe we ought to have immense integrity toward each other — toward the movement, liberation, our comrades and partners. I do not believe we need to have integrity toward our jobs and bosses. Especially if they are exploitative and/or abusive — and nearly all of them are.

There's a boomer concept of integrity I've come up against many times in my life — that everything is practice for everything. The integrity you demonstrate at your job is practice for the integrity you'll bring to your relationships, your community, and so on. I'm sure the bosses love this idea, especially when we give the best hours of our day to them. Why not use this concept against them: practice being free from capitalism at your job, and you'll be more free from capitalism elsewhere in your life.

The above traits and beliefs are important in our relationships and movement building, but they do not apply to abusive, exploitative relationships. Your relationship to your job is an exploitative one. These traits, when used in the workplace, are used as a cudgel by management against workers. You're accountable to them, but not them to you. Where's their integrity? If they had any integrity, all of the surplus value you create would go directly back to you. Why should you have integrity towards them? Sure, you can act like you do — and you should — but to what degree you actually hold your integrity is entirely up to you. I prefer a minimal amount, enough to make management happy enough to leave me alone. The movement, my art, and my relationships can have my full integrity, honesty, trust and work ethic.

I'm not going to try to pressure anyone into breaking any sort of moral code they have; I just ask that we inspect our moral codes for their programming. Who wrote these moral codes into our consciences? Parents? Teachers? Bosses? Puritans from the 17th century? Sunday school teachers who went full Q-Anon back in 2020? And who are our moral codes serving? My guess is that our virtues have been twisted and used by the ruling class to have us better serve them. Can we rewire our moral codes to serve our communities above our bosses? I don't know; but maybe you could at least rewire your moral code to get yourself okay with making art at your day job.



CREATE MORE DOWNTIME

There could be strategies for carving out more downtime, depending on your job. Here are some possible tactics to carve out some more time:

ASK FOR HELP AND GIVE HELP TO COWORKERS

Many hands make light work. Your coworkers are probably interested in a little more downtime as well, so create an environment where you can all work together to help each other get a little more free.

REFER TO YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION TO GET OUT OF TASKS THAT DON'T FIT WITHIN IT.

If a task falls outside of your job description, sometimes all you have to say is "this isn't in my job description." This might prompt them to write up a new job description for you. You don't necessarily have to sign off on the new one.

ACTUALLY WORK HARD

It's painful for me to write this... but if you can put your head down and get your work done quickly, that could be a viable strategy to get down time. Work hard, then slack. That was my motto as a grocery store cart boy. I would go lay down on the grass and sketch after running all the carts inside as fast as I could.

USE CODING AND AUTOMATION TO CREATE SHORTCUTS WITH COMPUTER TASKS.

I've found ways of 'automating' parts of my job through a minimal amount of coding that I learned on youtube. The time it takes me to program a CNC job has gone from one hour to about 15 minutes. Is there anything you could automate in your job?

NEVER TELL YOUR BOSS ABOUT YOUR SHORTCUTS

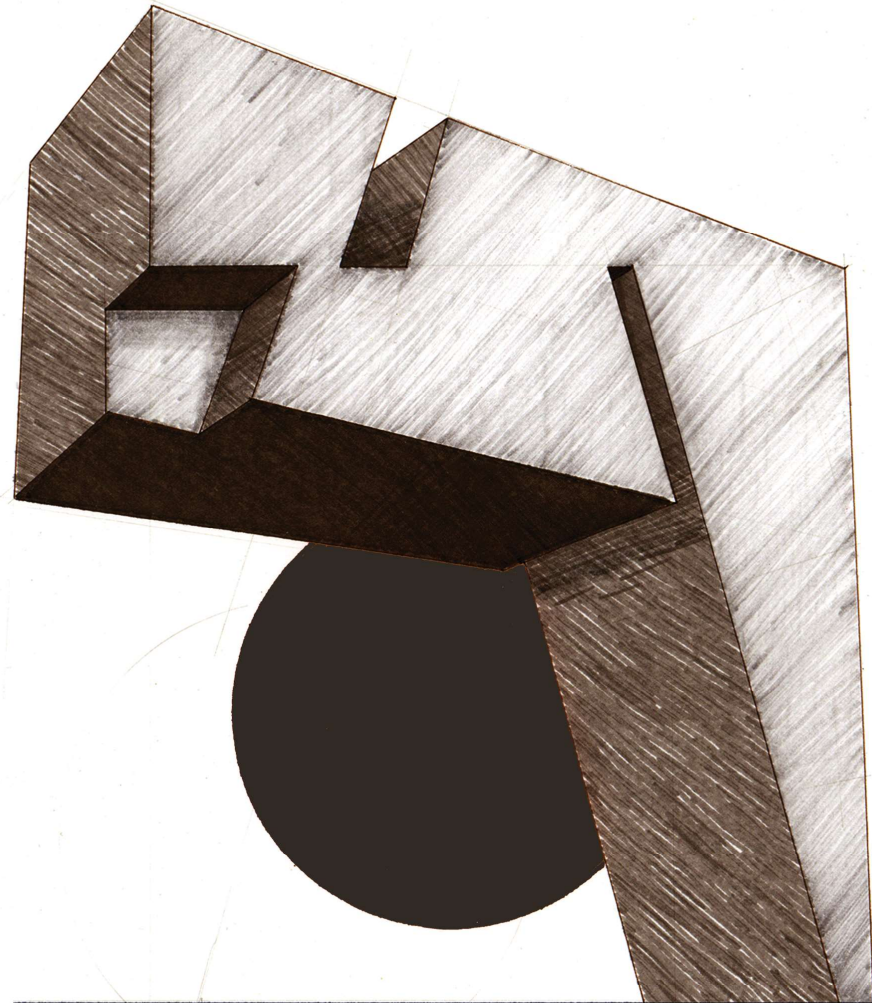
The bosses will want to claim those 30 minutes of downtime you've created by being good at your job. Don't let them know your strategies.

BE MILITANT WITH YOUR DOWNTIME

Here's where some of that old school discipline can come in.

Take the downtime more seriously than you take your job.

Creating art gives you more life and rest than scrolling on social media, so develop a discipline or use your phone's screen time settings to block social media apps while at work, so you can use the time instead to make art.



GET AWAY FROM THE MANAGERS

This is the most important element in making art at your day job. Managers exist to keep you busy with menial tasks and busywork. So, you need to do whatever you can to get managers as far out of the picture as you can.

Here's how I managed to do it:

In December of 2021, almost a dozen members of my immediate family caught COVID, and my father passed away. I took the month off work to travel back to Pennsylvania and help pick up the pieces. When I got back to LA in January, my sister-in-law had a baby. Out of sheer exhaustion, I asked my boss to be moved temporarily to the night shift for a week so I could just catch up on some sleep. This was a very unconventional request, but given my life circumstances, my manager reluctantly allowed it.

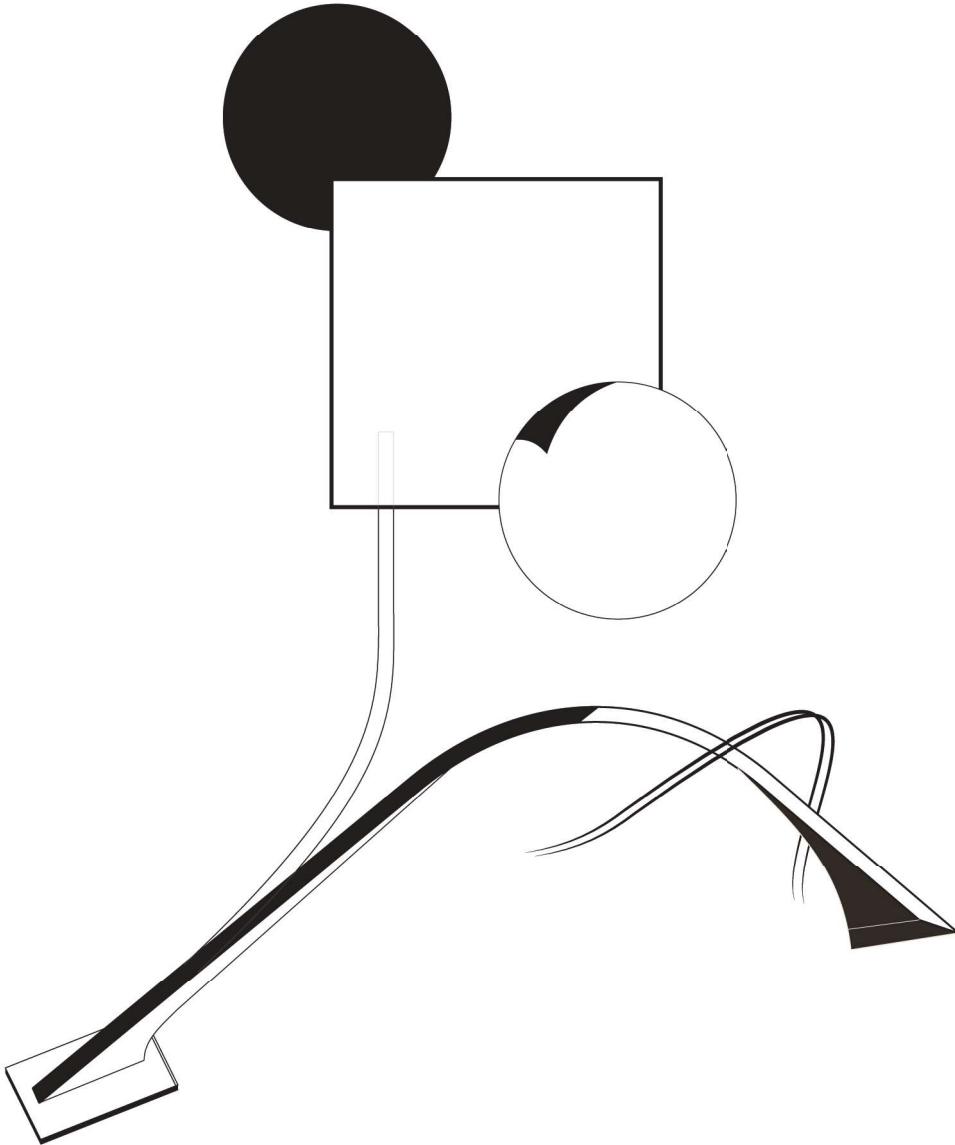
I came in at 3pm and my manager left at 5pm. I had just one other coworker in a different area of the shop. This was during the big omicron surge in January 2022, so work was even slower than usual. I just had a long stretch of the winter night to do anything. So I got to work. I popped open Illustrator and started on one of the ideas I had during the previous awful month. A week passed, and my boss asked if I could come back to the day shift. I said I couldn't. The family with the new baby still needed a lot of help. Which was a little true, but not really anymore.

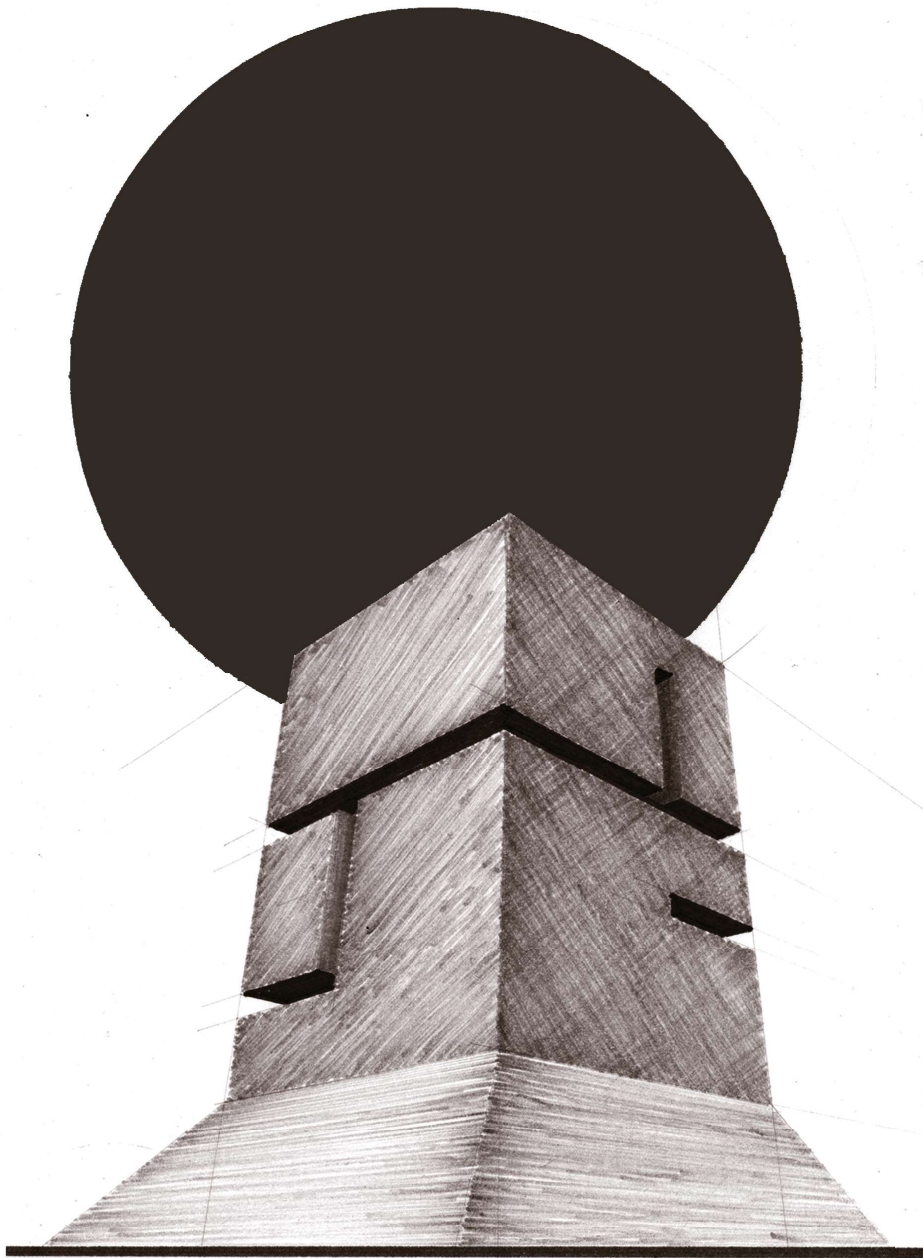
After a while, my manager dropped any requests for me to work days. I'm permanently on the night shift. My workdays consist of working really hard during the 2-3 hours of shift overlap with my manager, giving the appearance of being a great worker. The minute he leaves for the day, I get to work on art.

Here's the thing about managers, bosses, directors, etc.: Most of them have very little understanding of how to do the actual work. Even though I spend upwards of 6 hours each shift making art, my manager has no idea, so long as I keep some amount of production flowing. For all my manager knows, I'm hard at work my whole shift. Your manager might be just as clueless. Most of them are. Use this incompetence to get yourself free.

Another strategy my coworkers and I use is getting the manager to go on a home depot run. We keep a running inventory of things we might need for the job, and never give him every item at the same time, saving some items for the next time. That frees us up for a good 2 hours each time.

What do you have in your toolbox for getting the managers out of your hair? Is there any life event — real or fabricated — that you could use to switch your shift or workspace away from management? Are there any reliable times where you know your manager will be away from you, (in meetings or whatever it is that managers do)?





SOME CODES OF CONDUCT

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR BOSS, NOT YOUR COWORKERS.

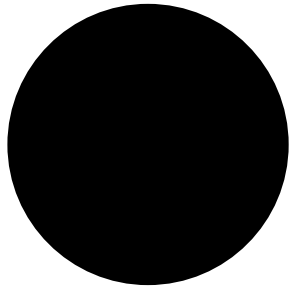
When utilizing your downtime to make art, make sure you're not making your coworker's jobs more difficult, or creating more work for them.

NEVER THROW A FELLOW WORKER UNDER THE BUS

If there comes a time where you have to explain yourself for how little work you've done, never blame or implicate a fellow worker. All blame should be aimed at technology (the software update messed up the file!) or the capitalists within your workplace, ideally the owners, but managers and other higher-paid bureaucrats can also be the target. If it's too much of a stretch, fall on your own sword. Make something up about how things have been hard at home, your partner's been having a rough mental health season and that's led to a lot of sleepless nights or something like that. A manager might trust you more after taking blame for something.

ALWAYS SERVE THE STRUGGLE

If you're really feeling good about the situation you've created — you're making a lot of art, everyday, and getting paid to do it — the workforce is still drowning. Unionization efforts can lead to all of us getting better working conditions, and any anticapitalist, artist or no, needs to join that effort. It can be tempting to sit back and coast, enjoying the studio you've carved out at your job, but the fight is always against the capitalists. If you make less art in a week because you've built solidarity with your fellow workers, that's a win. Movement first. If your art serves the movement, even better.



II. TACTICS

Now let's dig into some tangible tactics for getting free to make art at your job.

Tactics for making art while on the clock will vary wildly from job to job. Each of us will have to figure out the best course of action given our own circumstances. This section will outline some tactics; use them if applicable, ignore them otherwise, and as always, don't listen to any of this.

