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***thinkshop!**
WORK / LABOR (*and genius*)

INTRODUCTION

When I moved to Brooklyn I had \$700. I had no place to live. I didn't have a job or any interviews. (I do not recommend this) I did have an MFA from a school of misfits who's practiced past time was denouncing the very thing we were studying. SOMEHOW. I was able to get a proper job after declaring in my thesis my goal was to NEVER have a proper job. The truth is I got scared and quieted my rebellious ethics to work in commercial design (this is really the only kind that exists in NYC). My day jobs were primarily in the motion design industry supplemented by occasional branding work.

I DID NOT HATE IT. Sometimes I really liked it.

***Here, I will tell you a story about a cool studio that I freelanced for, who's work and creative team I highly respect...*

Taking the advice of Virginia Woolf (who, consequently, I share a birthday with) I have also managed to maintain "A Room of One's Own." This room is a shared studio space in Greenpoint, a hip/Polish neighborhood in northern Brooklyn. This is where I do most of my "laboring." I've made lots of crazy shit over the past 2.5 years. None of it has made me a dime.

This arrangement worked out ok until about 2 weeks ago.

***Here I will tell you a story about the practice of "pitching"*

The economy is tanking. Or has tanked. There is no doubt these are troubled times. Everybody is beginning to accept this fact as we hear a growing number of stories and statistics feeding hysteria into the public conscience. Detroit has long been an amazing relic in honor of industrial capitals failure (or death?). Will Wall Street become the same? (probably not but what if?) This seems as good a time as ever to evaluate the classic capital/communist question, what does it mean to work? And why do we find it so important anyway? Most importantly, what does it mean to be an artist in a market driven society?

Historically, times of economic recession have been a great asset to the arts. Why?
Because we get laid off.
Because we have time now.
Because we are forced to be creative due to limited resources.
Because nobody is buying.

As we usher in an age where we may find ourselves less distracted by "work" and with more time for "labor" I promote fully and completely embracing this downtime to cultivate our inner "Idios Daemon." It could be a blessing in disguise.

***Did you guys really want to make cat food ads anyway?*

GENERAL PROJECT SCHEDULE:

3.16

Read:

"The Labor of Gratitude," excerpt from *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde

"Late Bloomers," by Malcolm Gladwell, published in *The New Yorker*

Talking points:

Think of a moment when art transformed you. When you decided to dedicate your education to art/design.

Construct your own examples of work and labor from your personal experiences.

"Creativity is automatically devalued every time there is an advance in the technology of work."

-Lewis Hyde

How does Hyde's observation reside in an art/design context? Critics, theorists and more have often heralded the "democratization" of media and technology as an asset to culture...

thoughts? Think of blogs, youtube, user generated content, reality television, mash-up music, DJ's, sampling, desktop publishing, etc... what other examples are there in contemporary culture and historically?

How do the two types of "genius" that Gladwell pinpoints relate to/contradict/support/etc.

Hyde's concept of "genius?" What type of "genius" do you think you possess? Or is your genius something different?

"How can we ever know which of the failures will end up blooming?" – Malcolm Gladwell

This is a loaded statement. Let's discuss. What are the implications of this question, particularly in a market driven society?

The subtitle of "Late Bloomers" asks "Why do we equate genius with precocity?" Gladwell doesn't exactly offer an answer to this. So what do you think?

Aside from the methods outlined in the essay are there any other ways you can imagine to support the growth of your "genius?"

3.17

Discuss:

Talk about ideas presented in the readings.

Introduce:

Formal component of project.

LABOR. This is your passion so I expect to see amazing, beautiful things.

3.18

MORE LABOR.

Crit/meet:

Talk about your work/ideas. I am prepared to fall over with amazement.

DEFINATIONS

WORK: Work is what we do by the hour. It begins and ends at a specific time and, if possible, we do it for money. – Lewis Hyde

Productive or operative activity; employment, as in some form of industry, esp. as a means of earning one's livelihood

LABOR: Labor on the other hand, sets its own pace. We may get paid for it, but it's harder to quantify. – Lewis Hyde
to strive, as toward a goal

GENIUS: In the ancient sense, an internal spirit that each person obtains at birth. Your personal potential and guiding spirit, that which you labor for and develop throughout your life.

IDIOS DAEMON: Ancient concept of personal spirit, an internal "genius" which can be cultivated and developed throughout life and labor.

ART: the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance; any field using the skills or techniques of art (**this includes design, graphic design)

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PART 2: MAKE SOME SHOES! (FORMAL COMPONENT)

STEP ONE

Try this process: Write a list of everything you love. Think of this as an object/concept exercise (don't write "my brother" or "my dog" we aren't talking about interpersonal emotional love, rather things that excite and motivate you) it can be anything, hooded sweatshirts, chocolate chip cookies, beautiful typography, great friends, kids shows from the seventies, rusty cars... etc. Try to be as specific as possible. Take consideration of this data. What does it tell you about your genius?

STEP TWO

Write a one-sentence mantra, a promise, a verbal contract with your genius.

*This is mine (for now):
"Good luck electronically visualizing your future."*

It doesn't have to make literal sense or be dogmatic (it can be if that feels right to you). This statement can evolve and change as you grow. We are concerned with the present. RIGHT NOW. What is your statement?

STEP THREE

Use this statement as your project brief and inspiration. Take into consideration the concepts we have been discussing and reading about. Using "labor" (i.e. doing something you love, that does not feel like "work") create a formal document that symbolizes your genius. The actual outcome of your working process can be literally ANYTHING. This creation should be made through the process of labor and be symbolic/iconic.

Let's use me as an example: I love music, playing music and making noises has never once felt like work. However I have labored at this for almost 15 years.

****Now I will tell you a story about a band tryout.*

The punch line is I might create a new electronic noise making devise to record some wacky sound design to symbolize my genius.

This is what your creation should embody:

The residue of devoted labor

A formal/symbolic testament to your genius that can be revisited or reused (think of the examples I showed)

What is the residue of your labor? What is the documentation of your labor? People make zines, release records, make typefaces, write essays, make clothes, invent desserts, write code, these are all "GIFTS" to their genius. What is your gift?