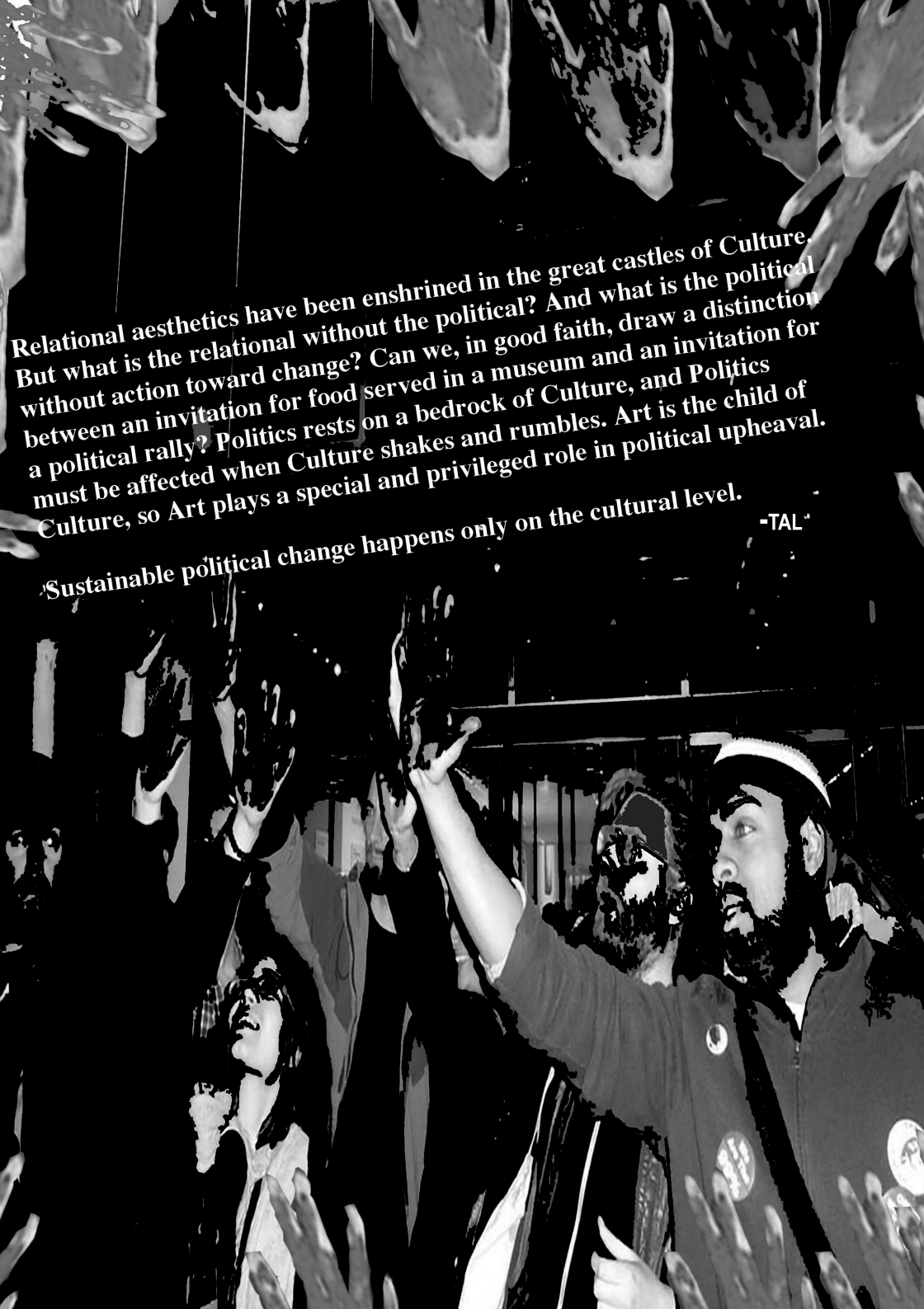


OCCUPY

MUSEUMS

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Relational aesthetics have been enshrined in the great castles of Culture. But what is the relational without the political? And what is the political without action toward change? Can we, in good faith, draw a distinction between an invitation for food served in a museum and an invitation for a political rally? Politics rests on a bedrock of Culture, and Politics must be affected when Culture shakes and rumbles. Art is the child of Culture, so Art plays a special and privileged role in political upheaval.

Sustainable political change happens only on the cultural level.

-TAL-

What is gold?

gold is the earth like the human body is the earth

the human body is mostly water

water is an ancient and transforms constantly into different forms

Gold is the make-up of of the human body too

people decided that gold had more value than some other things

partly due to its flexibility of transformation - it is pretty too

and that is maybe why people thought of "owning" it

'ownership' is not reality - ownership is a lie

if people think they can own things they will buy things

but what is not mentioned in the final equation

=

if people commodify they will be commodified

but life has much more to offer than just some stuff to buy

people are gold

maybe they can figure that out



HOW CAN ART AND CULTURE BE CARED FOR, INTERACTED WITH, AND EXPANDED UPON, AS A COMMONS?

In the current system much of our culture is preserved, protected, commoditized, professionalized and compartmentalized in "public" institutions. The current institutions of power are deeply entrenched in the market-driven economy, which manipulates value and limits exchange to those methods controllable under the terms of profit making priorities. This creates an art world based on ownership and speculation rather than the open access, shared management and an agreed upon fair value of the commons. A similar framework has been built up around our shared common wealth - such as knowledge, creativity and ideas. How can we begin to experiment with the intangible borders that have been created: poke holes or kick through - to access those things hovering just on the other side.

Art world commoditization leads to the separating out of artists and art through art school, the gallery system, museums and cultural institutions. Art and creativity are encouraged to be autonomous, unconnected from daily life, most people are considered as audience. Art is experienced as belonging to a buyer, institution or donor, something to be passively consumed, not as something belonging to us all. In this way art is separated out in order to commodify and safeguard as something that can be stolen rather than something to create together.

This systemic professionalization and compartmentalization begins early, as children we enter the world loving to draw, experiment with noise and move in unprecedented ways yet this is allowed to squander. Within a few years later we learn to conform, creativity is defined in ways amenable to the system. This definition continues to become even more tight and slick. Within the capitalist construction this ends with the concept of the art star. This glamorization of artists leads to a system in which artists are willing to exploit themselves, self censor, put on blinders and sell themselves while they try to attain the unattainable goals dangled about through media manipulations.

What if we all, as artists, created with the assurance that art was not something to be compartmentalized and professionalized into something we needed to sell or something we need to create a barrier of individual ownership around? This can perhaps best be explored through an inquiry of absence. What would the world look like if art and culture were not considered a luxury item to be bought, owned, sold and speculated on for profit? What if we could freely build upon our cultural capital unencumbered by copyright or even the idea that we could "steal" ideas or creativity? What if more than anything else we were encouraged to see all that had come before us as belonging to everyone, not something to be sequestered, exploited or colonized? What would we create if we saw our ideas and creativity as a flowing, shifting endless bountiful sea in which everyone is encouraged to swim, take a drink or distill and irrigate the land, as opposed to the current way of finding the source, trying to contain it and then divvying it out selectively to keep others from quenching their thirst, submerging themselves or floating on its border with the air? What if when we created we did not do so to forward our own name or ideas or indeed even considered anything as ownable but as rather as something we were opening up access to that already belonged to all. Many generations of culture in large overlapping systems of ideas do belong to everyone equally. Creative acts are always done collaboratively building and bolstering the work and ideas of the whole.

-MARIA

How does art function in today's society?

Art has been colonized by powerful interests since the 1970s. The world of aesthetic experience, especially the visual domain, has provided a powerful tool for corporations to ensure consent among their client-base of potential customers. Surface and spectacle can instantly capture the imagination of millions of individuals plugged in to the latest media technologies, and thus they stand at the front lines of a war over our ideas, values, and practices. Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, speaks of today's "attention economy" in which corporations compete for "eyeballs." This entails the heightened importance of marketing strategies focused on image and design that have effectively monopolized artistic innovation, and secured its powers of influence in the seductive realm of advertising. A poor artist using paint on canvas hardly stands a chance to capture the attention of an audience in the face of the ubiquitous and endless stream of images flowing from the Jumbotrons in Times Square to the smartphones in our pockets. To speak of 'art' is to speak of the 'cool,' the 'fashionable,' the 'marketable.' Once upon a time art held a critical sway, staving off 'culture' from 'commerce.' Now the two are indistinguishable, united in the hegemony of corporate chic. Art and culture, part of the dwindling last remnants of our commons, are in a state of crisis.



WHAT DOES ART HAVE TO DO

What does art have to do with anything? Art and creativity have been part of building nearly every social movement in history. OWS is no exception. The framing of that creativity as art does not seem important, until we wish to package it in some way. I think part of what Occupy Museums is doing is challenging how art and culture are packaged, bought and sold in our current society. As far as I am concerned some of the most provocative creative action in the last ten years has been a result of the last six months at OWS. Will that be framed as art? Some of it will (and has), but most of it will not be. At the end of the day, who cares? What matters is that it happened and that we got to live it.

-BLITHE

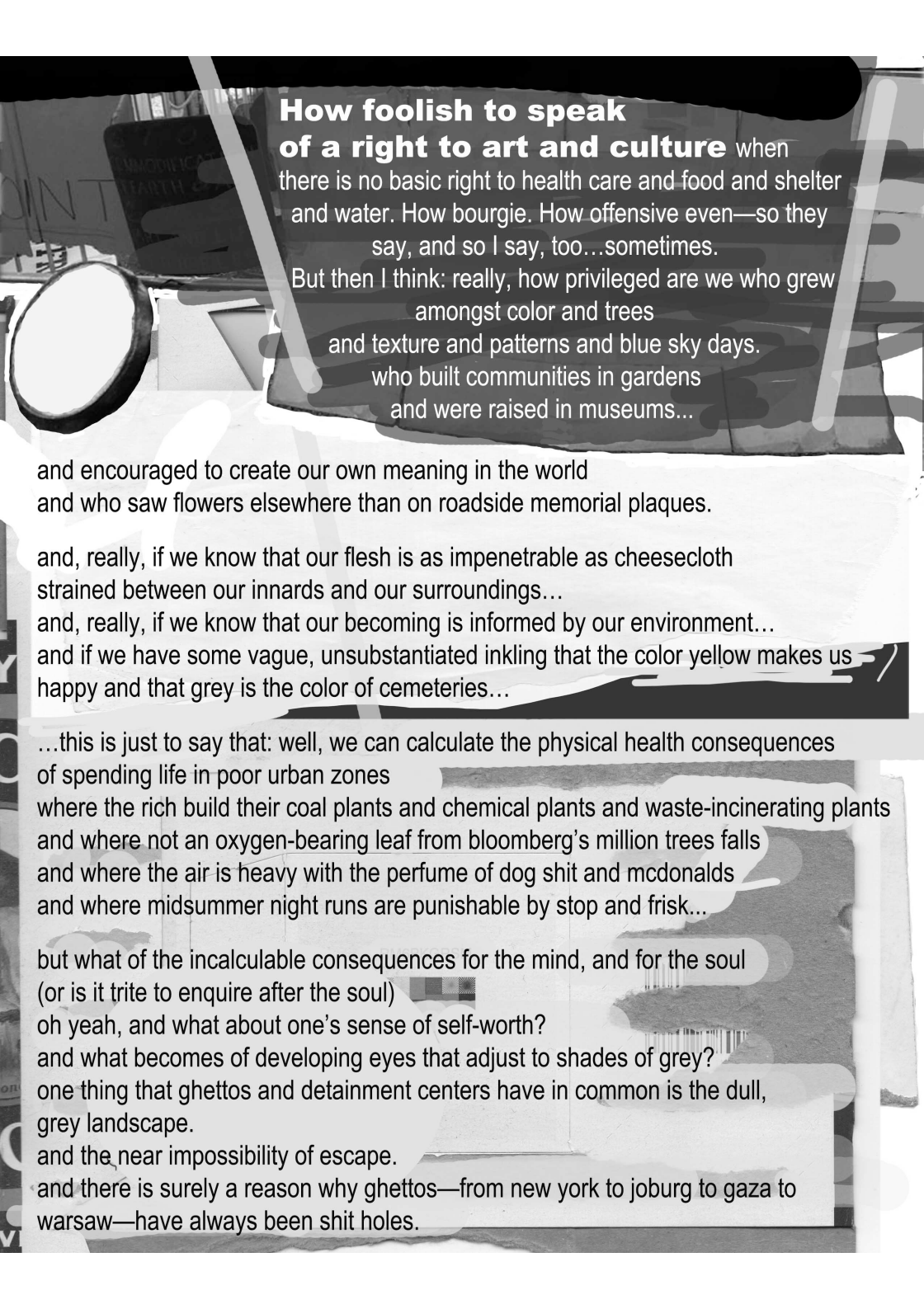
HOW DOES ART FUNCTION IN TODAY'S SOCIETY?

For those of us brought up in the art world, we know that there is a process of validation that places a value on art that gives us mobility and visibility, and makes certain types of creative expression popular and recognizable. I came of age thinking that this was how art was defined, and in a practical sense, the majority of the time that is true. What OWS has reminded me, and perhaps even convinced me of, is that art is part of our society in a fundamental ways that are extremely powerful and entirely unrelated to the art world. We don't need institutions to tell us what art is and how it should be made, because it happens all the time, on a level that is just as interesting than what is shown on museum walls. This idea is not new by any means, but for me it took OWS to become real. If we can separate the value of art from the art world, then this question ceases to become very relevant. I think that is one potential outcome of our current social movements.

On a more basic level, art has economic function in today's society beyond the buying and selling of objects. Attracting artists has become a strategy for bringing up real-estate values and changing the economic makeup of neighborhoods. Art and artists are often used by city developers to create divisions between people and displace communities. Art is never neutral, and artists have their role to play in capitalism. It is time to for a political reckoning.

-BLITHE

WITH OCCUPY WALLSTREET



How foolish to speak of a right to art and culture

when there is no basic right to health care and food and shelter and water. How bourgeois. How offensive even—so they say, and so I say, too...sometimes.

But then I think: really, how privileged are we who grew amongst color and trees and texture and patterns and blue sky days. who built communities in gardens and were raised in museums...

and encouraged to create our own meaning in the world and who saw flowers elsewhere than on roadside memorial plaques.

and, really, if we know that our flesh is as impenetrable as cheesecloth strained between our innards and our surroundings...

and, really, if we know that our becoming is informed by our environment...

and if we have some vague, unsubstantiated inkling that the color yellow makes us happy and that grey is the color of cemeteries...

...this is just to say that: well, we can calculate the physical health consequences of spending life in poor urban zones

where the rich build their coal plants and chemical plants and waste-incinerating plants

and where not an oxygen-bearing leaf from bloomberg's million trees falls

and where the air is heavy with the perfume of dog shit and mcdonalds

and where midsummer night runs are punishable by stop and frisk...

but what of the incalculable consequences for the mind, and for the soul (or is it trite to enquire after the soul)

oh yeah, and what about one's sense of self-worth?

and what becomes of developing eyes that adjust to shades of grey?

one thing that ghettos and detainment centers have in common is the dull, grey landscape.

and the near impossibility of escape.

and there is surely a reason why ghettos—from new york to joburg to gaza to warsaw—have always been shit holes.



**Art is not a mirror
to hold up to the world
Art is a hammer
to shape the world
- Bertolt Brecht**

Gold & Silver is not money! Aristotle understood that money is a form of social exchange. The artist Joseph Beuys called this process social sculpture and proclaimed that all people are creative in the way that they live their lives. Art is an intensified form of social exchange: more specific, at times poetic. But intensity and creativity are not limited to artists, it belongs to all People; it cannot be separated from our daily activities. Creativity is our Commons, Art is our Commons. Limiting creativity is limiting social exchange; limiting creativity is denies liberty. It is a form of oppression: the tyranny of the 1% over the 99%. If a person is not creative in their job then they are a wage slave. If a person lives in poverty, then their creativity is limited to subsistence shopping.

The people of Iceland know that money is a social exchange

The people of Iceland are enlightened

The revolution has started in Iceland

The people of Iceland refused to pay their debt
instead they arrest bankers

be enlightened google Iceland

We call on the spirit of the Illuminati
Ben Franklin, Voltaire, Rousseau
the spirit of the Enlightenment
the spirit of the American & French Revolutions
the first revolution for
Universal Human Rights

Now in the 21st Century we call
For a Renaissance of the Enlightenment
Occupy Society, Occupy the Economy,
Occupy Sustainability Environmental
Our planet in balance, our world harmony
The spirit of all things universally
all people equally



WHAT IS THE COMMONS AND WHY SHOULD ART BELONG TO IT/IN IT??

The proliferation of new communicative forms requires a rethinking of the role and value of cultural producers. New platforms allow us all to generate content for an incessant conversation taking place online. Social media, crowd sourcing, and open source technologies allow for unprecedented involvement. As our technology improves, we find this conversation becoming seamlessly interwoven with our lived experience.

As an example of how far we have come, debates now rage over what some call "The New Aesthetic," which promises the "eruption of the digital into the physical." But far from being a threat to traditional modes of cultural production, these new technologies have enabled almost anyone to generate content and share it with everyone else. They are eroding traditional barriers for entry for everyone, including musicians, filmmakers, and fine artists. Even more radically, however, as our culture becomes more clearly a plaything of the masses, new technologies are eroding a long-held faith in the professionalization and distinction of the artist.

And why should this not be the case? Art and culture affect us and belong to us all, after all. Culture is our inheritance, our lineage. It is the ocean of meaning we are all forced to swim in. Culture, like the internet is an incessant conversation. Furthermore, as participants, it is not within our abilities to limit this conversation and we are all enriched when we enable more involvement. -TAL

Commons is not synonymous with "public," which has become an abstracted way to think about everyone who lives in a city or everyone who reads a newspaper. The commons can be public, but they are specifically about the spaces and resources shared by a community. There is not just one commons, but also a network of commons. Art currently belongs to an elite community inside of galleries, gate kept by MFA programs, and evaluated by sales values. We want art to circulate in other commons. Why are there lots of artists, but no art in Red Hook, Brooklyn? Why is there lots of art, but few artists in Chelsea, Manhattan? Art has been segregated from other cultural commons that are not based on finance and elite membership. If art is about articulating meanings, critiques, symbols, and possible and current worlds, then every commons will can use art, produce art, and view art.


COMMONS

ART

-MAX

TRANSFORMATION TRANSFORM YOUR PERSPECTIVE WHAT IS THE COMMONS AND WHY SHOULD ART BELONG TO IT INIT??? WHY DO I OCCUPY MUSEUMS??

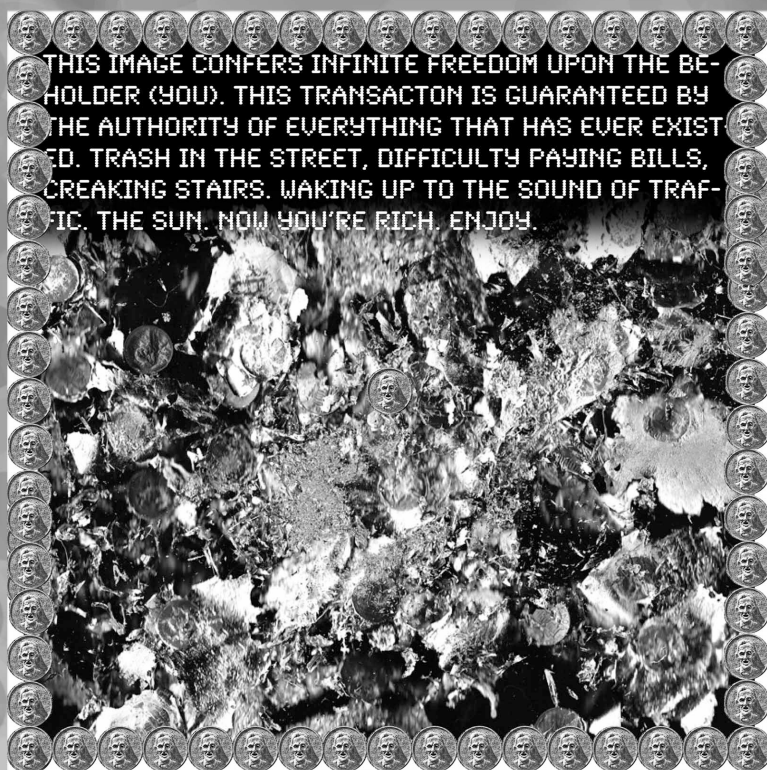
IT HAS EVERYTHING AND NOTHING TO DO WITH MUSEUMS. IT HAS EVERYTHING TO
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THIS PICTURE GUARANTEES
VIEWER (YOU) A NEVER-ENDING ABUNDANCE OF CREATIV-
ITY UPON INITIAL VISUAL CONTACT. YOU ARE NEVER TRULY
STUCK, IT'S FLUID. THIS DOES NOT PRECLUDE MOMENTS OF
ANGER, BOREDOM, AIMLESS HORNINESS OR FACEBOOK AD-
DICTION. THIS MEANS ADVENTURE AND CERTAIN DEATH.
JUST DO YOUR BEST. THIS TRANSACTION IS COMPLETE.



THIS IMAGE CONFERS INFINITE FREEDOM UPON THE BE-
HOLDER (YOU). THIS TRANSACTION IS GUARANTEED BY
THE AUTHORITY OF EVERYTHING THAT HAS EVER EXIST-
ED. TRASH IN THE STREET, DIFFICULTY PAYING BILLS,
CREAKING STAIRS. WAKING UP TO THE SOUND OF TRAF-
FIC. THE SUN. NOW YOU'RE RICH. ENJOY.

