
UNFAIR MAIDEN #7
MATERIAL ISSUE

"GOOD LITTLE CONSUMER"

UNFAIR MAIDEN # : MATERIAL GRRRL

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I have a confession about myself, a fact which is increasingly difficult to reconcile with my beliefs and philosophies, and that is this: *I am a materialist!* I love material things, I love owning items, and I have an attachment to acquiring and saving material things.

BUT!!

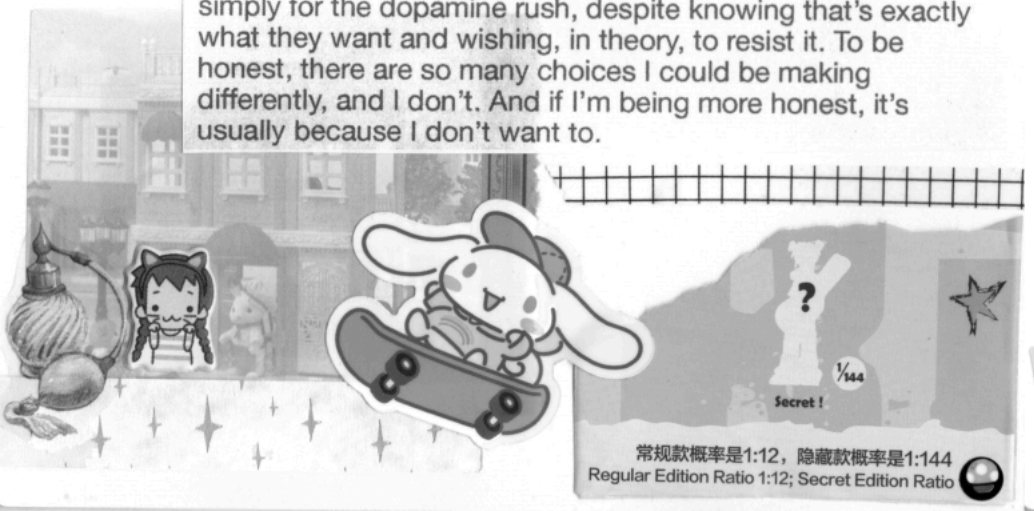
How can I be a materialist and still be an eco-anticapitalist? How can I be free from an endless cycle of labor exploitation when I am a willing consumer?

I often try to be a "good" materialist. I'm not a terribly lavish spender. I borrow items when I can. I make good use of packaging and discarded materials in my art. I recycle whatever I can in my area. I try to prefer individual artists and small/local businesses when I do purchase things.

GOOD BOY!!

CONFESSION:

But just as often I order things from Amazon-dot-hell. I buy items imported from places thousands of freight miles away. I spend money on Things instead of putting it towards saving for a way to break free from landlords, or donating it to people who could use this money for their basic needs, to people making the world a better place. And, at times, I buy things simply for the dopamine rush, despite knowing that's exactly what they want and wishing, in theory, to resist it. To be honest, there are so many choices I could be making differently, and I don't. And if I'm being more honest, it's usually because I don't want to.



The simple reason for this is because it makes me happy. I know there are many other things, immaterial things, in the world that can make someone happy; unfortunately for me I fear that as a person with severe depression, those other things are not always accessible. If a material thing brings me happiness in a moment of pain, isn't it worth it?

CHEER UP!

THIS, THAT, & THE OTHER

A more complex reading would, of course, look more closely at *why* material things make me happy. There's the usual things—a certain sense of control in a community and a society where I have very little. I cannot choose whether I am listened to or respected or correctly gendered or how the world is structured, but I can choose how to decorate my space. There's the fact that living and being reared in an environment that values material things makes materialism hard to resist. There's the fact that I love and appreciate art and beauty, and financially supporting artists by purchasing their work is a satisfying way I may attempt to express that appreciation. There's the fact that we live in a relentless push, an industrialized society who would destroy the future to make a dime today, so it's only natural I would seek a certain instant gratification when everything else is done with the short term in mind.

I've been loving cute things lately. Sanrio, pink stickers, little animals. Perhaps it's something about how now, as a grown trans man, I need not worry that liking cute things will make people see me as a "typical" girl like I did when I was a child. I'm still constantly misgendered, and I know it's my own fault since I'm not trying hard enough to pass. At least I can consume things that make me happy in myself as a full-gendered person.



Some of these decisions aren't exactly my "fault", more the result of operating under a system that exploits all its people, including me. There is really no such thing as ethical consumption under capitalism, but consumption is necessary to a certain extent. Yes, the consumption of the ultra-rich is far more destructive than my own—does that justify my level of consumption, or merely excuse it?

GIVING UP?

What makes this so difficult is that on both sides, the effect of purchasing something is so small that it's basically meaningless on its own. That is, purchasing one thing is not going to be the difference between be living or dying by my own hand. And similarly, purchasing one thing is not going to be the difference between worker exploitation and freedom, or environmental destruction and loving stewardship. And since purchasing the material thing is the more pleasurable option, that ends up being the tiebreaker.

TRAGEDY OF THE COMMERCE?

Somehow I feel I am not strong enough to be anti-materialist, and therefore I will never truly be able to be a punk anticapitalist, to live up to the likes of John Dishwasher (I'm sorry John, this life sounds horrible to me) and Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness.

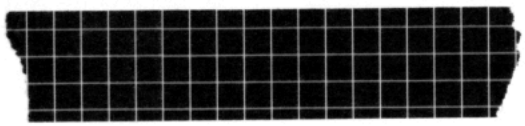


Finally, there's the meta-layer to all of this: what is the purpose of this exploration? Is it to change my behavior (in which case, I'd have to actually change)? Is it to refuse to change and instead wallow in guilt? To convince myself I have no need to change, or seek that validation from others?



I do want things to change. I want to be calm, stable, balanced. To make my decisions not in a purely impulsive-emotional way, but neither in a purely intellectual way. To ask myself not whether I should or shouldn't, whether it's right or wrong to be materialist, whether I am strong or weak, hypocritical or justified. But to ask instead, what will bring things into balance? How can material things support letting go of other things, immaterial things? (Or perhaps acquire them?)





All this (and more) is what I hope to explore in this issue. To be honest, this feels like a tall order—taller than any other issue I've made, but it's gotta be done. And what better time to do it then when I'm unemployed in an economic depression?



Things I Really Want:

- Manga
- Figurines
- Coffee mugs
- Stationery
- Lego sets



- Art prints
- New Wave clothes
- Tarot decks
- Zines



Things I Really Really Want:

- Time and energy and space for discovery, to study things for fun
- Peace and calmness to contemplate without sadness or hurry
- Creative freedom beyond the limits of economics
- Balance to find enjoyment in things besides the cycle of creation and consumption
- Release of depression, frustration, and stress
- Feeling and knowing that I am making things better for myself, others, and the world
- Trust in the beauty of the future
- Zines

META-LEVELS

I've been watching vlog-style YouTube videos where people discuss decluttering and their consumption, shopping, and material habits. After about fifty million of these, you start to pick up on a few similarities. One of the biggest is that before getting into the sections on their stuff and/or habits, there's an introduction in which the person will identify a Problem. The analysis of their stuff and/or habits is then an attempt to Solve the Problem.

When it comes to the stuff itself, common Problems I've heard identified include:

- stuff taking up too much physical space (overflowing shelves making it hard to access items or add more things)
- needing more space (mental or physical) to get new things they're currently interested in
- decision paralysis-too many things to decide which to use (especially common in the tarot sphere)
- stuff making their space feel unattractive to them
- general overwhelm at the amount of stuff they have

As for consumption behaviors, common Problems I've heard identified include:

- excessive purchasing for quick depression/anxiety/malaise relief (quick serotonin boost)
- hype/trend-hopping
- purchasing items and quickly losing interest
- bringing in new items just to fill space (often part of a "buy and declutter" cycle)
- purchasing "for the content" (buying things at least in part to make content about it--unboxings, hauls, reviews, etc.)
- "financial irresponsibility" or "spending outside one's means", sometimes connected to financial illiteracy and/or a fear of looking at their finances critically
- general lack of self-control or thoughtful decision-making around consumption

I don't mean to dismiss any of these reasons as invalid or foolish or "easy" problems-they're hard to recognize and even harder to change! In fact, there's a common undertone of guilt in many of these videos that I feel is often unnecessary and only serves to increase the tendency toward self-destruction. There's so much pressure from all sides when it comes to stuff and money. So I definitely don't want to add to that.

I am very proud that so many people are identifying and addressing when something has become a Problem for them. But sometimes I start to wonder if having a Problem is the most helpful way, especially for me, to approach the analysis of stuff and consumption habits. Because I don't think I have a Problem, and I would hazard a guess that there are also many others who don't. Certainly there are those who have a Problem and are in denial about it--I actually wonder this about myself a lot--but as far as I can tell, my relationship with stuff and my consumption habits is rather healthy. But I don't think that's any reason not to do some analysis anyway.

I wonder where the feeling that I need a Problem as my "why" comes from. Perhaps it's because a capitalist society rewards consumption, so we've collectively expected ourselves to need a valid reason to more closely examine our consumption behavior. Perhaps it's part of the Protestant-rooted values of punishment of excess that isn't money. Perhaps it's the push and pull of both.

What would it look like if I simply desired to explore without the approach of "correcting" myself?

There's an anime OVA (straight-to-video miniseries) from the 90s I recently watched and loved called Golden Boy. If you're an anime person I guarantee you've at least seen clips (heads-up: not for kids!). If you want to know more about it, read Izzi Geckle's review for Anime Feminist and I basically agree with all of it. The main character, Kintaro, is a university dropout and job hopper who cycles around Japan, picking up different jobs as his own way of learning about life, society, and sexy anime babes.

What reminds me of it here is that Kintaro and I have very different lifestyles--I have an apartment full of furniture and material things, he travels with hardly any possessions other than a bike, sleeping bag, and a notebook. But ultimately I think we both want similar things--learning, exploration, and sexy anime babes (just kidding!).

That's really one of my life's main goals perhaps even *purposes*--to learn and to share what I learn. At times I think I've mistaken that for wanting "improvement", or worse, "perfection". And that approach is what for me has been a matter of finding Problems, most especially in myself (since then I had no one else to blame), so I could Solve them. I think I'd like to keep living in a place of exploration instead of Problems.

Material things of course aren't a requirement for doing so, but it's just as important for me (and other materialists) to know they aren't necessarily a detriment either. All an explorative approach requires is a curious and honest mind that doesn't turn away from a challenge. Understanding one's relationship with material things is perhaps just one more way for the mind to understand itself.

And for me, the explorative approach has definitely lead to more surprising and delighting results than constant Solutions.(After all, how could I have expected that making this zine about the material would lead to understanding my approach to life in general?!)

I think materialism-as in a strong affinity/appreciation for having material things--doesn't always have to include the shadow sides of overwhelm, greed, thoughtlessness, or any of the more specific Problems people have identified. It is possible to have not only a healthy relationship with materialism and consumption, but one that is actively illuminating parts of the self in a positive way. When done not from a performative lens (how can I make sure my items say the "right" things about me), but from an explorative lens (what can I learn about myself from my items), materialism is just another way of approaching the self. And like all methods of self-understanding, it requires honesty to do so properly, but it makes experience so much richer.





FINANCIAL ~~IR~~RESPONSIBILITY:

I know I have a tendency to think of financial responsibility as a rather rigid set of behavior--minimizing bills, paying immediately, and putting any and all leftovers in long-term savings, ideally invested to earn more money. Anything else is "irresponsible" because it's always better to save for some future need, or in capitalism's ~~lies~~ eyes, a "long-term goal", a.k.a. big spending (car, house, vacation).

(It is insane how capitalism hides the push for large purchases as "financial responsibility", especially when capitalists will gladly take a dollar today even if it means destroying our collective future).

The conventional wisdom on what constitutes financial responsibility is hardly better when it's so out-of-touch. It's based on a middle class that doesn't exist anymore. There's the 50-30-20 rule (needs-wants-savings) and many variations, but I've never seen anyone say it's "wise" to spend more than 60% of your income on needs. That includes housing, food, clothes, utilities, healthcare, transportation, everything. I honestly feel it's completely unrealistic to ask or expect anyone to spend that little on needs in this era. I have a graduate degree and seven years experience, and when I was employed I was spending almost 50% on my income on rent alone. (And that's to say nothing of people who haven't had the privileges I have and are even more grossly underpaid for their labor and hours of their lives.)

Conventional wisdom says reduce amount spent on rent, which I suppose I could do if I lived with more roommates, but having my privacy and my comfortable apartment with just me and my partner is worth the extra money to me. I would rather have my current place than live in a more crowded apartment but put more towards long-term savings. I don't think that's an issue of being irresponsible, it's about valuing the needs and desires of my present self and myself in the future equally. I guess you could say what was once considered reasonable to be a "need" a private apartment can now be considered a "want". Man I hate this country.

I want my money to bring me happiness. Yes, I know you're supposed to get that happiness by being rich and retiring early or doing some dream vacation or whatever, but I want a balance between short-term and long-term happiness. I don't think that's an issue of being irresponsible, it's about valuing myself now and myself in the future equally. If only it was easier to do both.

Of all the seven sins, I think my greatest struggle is with envy. Envy is a complex thing, really. It's so easily reduced to the "mean popular cheerleader who can't handle anyone being liked but her" stereotype, but there's a lot more to it than that. At least I hope there is or I'd really feel like a jerk.



Maybe it's easiest to try and start with what made me feel jealous. I'm actually really embarrassed to be printing them at all, but I feel like I need to be honest with myself so I can address it. (Please don't judge me for these impulses - they are often subconscious and I'm trying to work on them!)

I found out a zinester pal got an artist-in-residence deal. She's going to have a studio with free supplies and printing for a whole month. Hell yeah, right?

But a few thoughts popped into my head, all things I don't really believe and fly in the face of my core values. "She's not even that good" (false), "it's because the residence committee just wants to look progressive by having a trans person (mega false, I'm fucking trans myself dude, proof internalized transphobia is real), and "it's so unfair" (kinda true, but I'll get to that later). But ultimately it all came down to one feeling:

WHY ISN'T IT ME?

Maybe that sounds obvious, but that's the thing in common with all feelings of jealousy I have. More things I've felt jealousy over:

- When I found out a tarot YouTuber I follow is making a tarot deck (and again when it turned out to be incredibly successful for her)
- When my friend is pricing art commissions at $100+
- When I had to beg my parents for a dog for 12 years and then my sister asks for her own dog two months later and gets it immediately
- When zinesters get hundreds of orders for a $5 minizine
- When a YouTube friend who started after me already has more subscribers than I do (or frankly seeing a lot of people who have lots of subs or a successful Patreon or w/e)
- When I saw my friend's gorgeous handwriting

Let's think about that feeling of "why isn't it me". What does that really mean? Where does it come from? Drilling down, I think it's really a representation of a multitude of other feelings/harmful perspectives I'm holding in that moment of jealousy:

- Lacking self-esteem. Feeling as though I'm not good enough to have gotten something, or the fact that it didn't happen to me seeming like some sort of indicator that I'm not worthy of it
- Expectations. That I'm not good enough because I "could" do or get that thing if I really worked for it, therefore the only reason I don't have that thing must because I'm not working hard enough
- Self-pity. Mostly regarding depression - feeling like "if only I could do that, but I can't and will never be able to because I have depression", and pitying myself rather than accepting reality or trying to work with it (which, to be fair, is really hard to do)
- Perceived failure. That the fact I haven't done that thing means I've failed, because I want that thing but didn't get it or don't have it
- Perceived competition or loss. That someone else doing this thing is taking resources/opportunities away from me (based on the feeling/assumption/false conclusion that there is a limited amount of resources or opportunities)
- Unfairness. This is most often "perceived", as in it's not really unfair, or if it is there's no one at fault. My sister with the dog, maybe that's unfair. And some things are unfair, like the fact that the artist-in-residence thing has a limited number of slots. But someone else getting/doing something I'm not isn't automatically "unfair".

There's a ton of things that contribute to these perspectives, but one I haven't talked about much and I think is especially relevant is the narrative of "meritocracy", or that an individual's success (in terms of money, power, opportunities, etc.) are based purely/primarily on that individual's ability and effort. The implication, then, is that if one didn't become successful, it's their own fault for not working hard enough or doing things "right".

Meritocracy is widely understood to be a myth and yet is still extremely pervasive because it's so entrenched in American culture. Just think of how often people try to be encouraging/motivating by saying and believing "you can do anything you set your mind to".



So often meritocracy narratives become a way of ignoring that the things affecting you that are outside of your control and that society doesn't provide sufficient support to put everyone on an equal playing field. Basically, there's nothing literally 100% "stopping" someone unhoused from becoming a billionaire, but that an unhoused person could become a billionaire if only they'd "set their mind to it" or "put in the work" or whatever is so gross. It completely neglects the fact that people are ALWAYS better able to succeed if they're starting with greater support. And it's putting blame for everything in an individual's life squarely on them often for just BEING ALIVE.

There are a ton of papers and books on meritocracy and its failings (some of which are shockingly capitalist in nature). But one I like is "How meritocracy fuels inequality" by Michael Sandel, an overview of his own work "The Tyranny of Merit". This paragraph in particular is beautiful:

"We should begin by acknowledging that mobility cannot compensate for inequality. Any serious response to the gap between the rich and the rest must reckon directly with inequalities of power and wealth, rather than rest content with the project of helping people scramble up a ladder whose rungs grow farther and farther apart. . . we should focus less on arming people for meritocratic competition and more on affirming the dignity of work.

We should ask what policies would ensure that Americans who do not inhabit the privileged ranks. . . can find work that enables them to support a family, contribute to their community, and win social recognition for doing so."

There's also a YouTuber I love, Shawna Riparti, with really insightful commentary on consumption-related topics. (And she's becoming more and more leftist and I love it). The last chapter of her most recent video (at time of writing), "the dark world of sports betting", is SO good; though it focuses on gambling the points absolutely apply to other ideas of meritocracy:

"The danger is that gambling, and in other consumer systems, this [focus on individual responsibility] becomes a tool of the industry. When people lose and it's framed as a personal failure, rather than the predictable outcome of a carefully engineered system, that makes it socially acceptable to ignore predatory practices."

The big point of all this is that the meritocracy narrative absolutely fuels jealousy, especially my own. All the attitudes I listed above (lacking self-esteem, perceived competition, etc.), the feeling of "why isn't it me" - these experiences are coming from tying success entirely to individual effort. I fall into comparing my success to others' and feeling as though I am "better" in some way and so "deserve" success more, and/or feeling like the fact I don't have (the same/greater) success is a purely personal failing. That is the meritocracy trap!

The beautiful thing, though, is that this means resisting jealously is also an act of resisting the meritocracy myth, resisting inequality, resisting false competition and resisting a system that empowers jealousy. By understanding that jealousy is the outcome of living under a system I fundamentally oppose, it becomes easier to remind myself that my jealousy is unneeded and unhelpful. I can transform jealousy into anger and action - not pointed against the others suffering under it, but against the system that oppresses all of us. Making this zine has been one way of doing that, and now I can reread it any time I'm feeling the mean green itch (gross) to remind myself what's <u>really</u> at play.

It feels a little silly to end once more with "it's not me, it's society", but like. . . it's true! And that also means I can fight it - and you can too.

The Little Treat

Exploring justifications for consumption under capitalism

Many people in anticapitalist spaces struggle to understand, rationalize, or justify their personal consumption and consumptive desires. Few if any anticapitalists are committed to the lifestyle of Diogenes in a pithos, myself included. The struggle is that if we are to live with any consumer goods beyond the barest minimum, how can we do so in a way that is also consistent with anticapitalism? Is it even possible?

This question is often asked in bad faith by anti-anticapitalists in an attempt to claim anticapitalists are inherently hypocritical, which frankly I find too ridiculous to rebut seriously. In short, advocating for change does not, can not, and will never require individual moral "perfection". Especially not when measured by those specifically working to halt that change.



That said, I do think most anticapitalists--heck, most people--would like to be living in line with their values to some extent. So I think it's a worthy endeavor for anticapitalists to examine their relationships to consumption and see if something can or should change. The first knot to untangle is what is meant by "consumerism" and just how it is linked to capitalism. Interestingly, the term "consumerism" was deliberately coined by Ford VP John Bugas in 1955 as a counter to critiques of capitalism--an attempt to shift responsibility away from business owners and government towards individual citizens by claiming the individuals, as consumers, were the only ones with true power. The capitalists were simply bowing to the whims of the public, and they became wealthy simply as a natural result. "How could the pursuit of wealth on the backs of the working class be exploitative? You're the ones buying all this stuff we make!" Similar perspectives had been argued for before then--always by the wealthy, by the way--using terms like "consumer sovereignty" (Carl Menger, 1871) and even "waste creatively" (Christine Frederick, 1929). These statements were very intentional counters to Marxism and anticapitalism which rooted themselves well in the image most Americans had/have of personal liberties. The message is that our economy works the way it does, for better or for worse, because "the people want it that way". If you argue with it, you're arguing with freedom.

This was actually a huge realization for me, because when understood in this context, it's easy to see the flaws in this claim. Claiming that consumerism is the fault of the consumer is itself a consumerist perspective, and specifically one that does not recognize or respect the situation consumers have been born into.

To go through just a few of these situations, there's first the central issue of worker exploitation. Workers are not receiving anywhere near value they are producing, and this has never been the fault of consumers. Companies like to pretend an increase in wages will lead to riots in the streets from consumers angry over price increases in products. This is to draw attention away from the fact that there would hardly need to be price increases at all if their CEOs and stock brokers weren't hoarding billions of dollars.

There's also the fact that there is very little transparency provided by or even required of companies, and there was even less back then (ever read The Jungle?). Even the government agencies that are meant to protect the interests of consumers are often incredibly lax. For instance, America doesn't ban the sale of products created using forced or child labor, despite that it would be within our power to do so. I don't think your average

consumer believes child labor is a good thing, but it's not their fault when they unknowingly buy products that used it. Or when the responsibility is put on individual consumers to find out themselves, if that information is even accessible to them.

And finally, there's the fact by being born into a capitalist society, we are essentially brainwashed from every angle at birth to behave as consumers in a way that benefits capitalists. Those at the top continue to have the most resources at their disposal to influence thought and behavior. There are many examples of this playing out, but one I always love is the "cerulean monologue" from The Devil Wears Prada:



"That blue represents millions of dollars and countless jobs, and it's sort of comical how you think that you've made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when, in fact, you're wearing a sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room from a pile of 'stuff'."

I guarantee many people, if given ample opportunity, encouragement, and education to truly question and understand their personal values and how they relate to society, would find they are more anticapitalist than they currently think. (Why do you think capitalists are so afraid of college philosophy classes?) Can we really blame the consumers for capitalism when they are merely following the path they've been trained for?

I think it is from understanding the roots of the term "consumerism" that the relationship between consumerism and capitalism becomes clear--the concept of consumerism was specifically created as a way of benefiting/ perpetuating capitalism by shifting the focus away from those in power and placing the blame for capitalism's exploitation on the powerless for somehow "wanting" it. In this context, it's actually a little gross that the term started being used to critique wastefulness, because it once again focuses its criticisms on the victims of capitalism and not its perpetrators.

Given all this, I think to be anticapitalist is also to be anticonsumerist in an economic sense--recognizing the falsehood in the assertion that consumers are the true controllers of the economy. This also means rejecting the idea that consumers, either on a societal or an individual level, are responsible for the atrocities of capitalism.



So where does that leave us? Even if no one is responsible, surely someone is still obliged to change things, or else we'd stay stuck in capitalism blaming consumers for their own exploitation forever. How do we know who is obliged to do what? And what does this have to do with personal consumption?

On the idea of obligation, it's tricky to require change while respecting the situation of capitalism's victims. I think it's not unfair to state that if one has the capacity to work for change in some way, then they are obligated to. In a sense, this means everyone is obligated because we all, as humans, have that capacity. But I do also think that those who have greater capacity also have greater obligation. It feels wrong to say someone is obligated to do something if they are genuinely unable, and if working for change is easier for one person than another, surely the burden of responsibility should be split in a way that accounts for that.

Multiple factors may contribute to one's capacity, and therefore obligation, to work for change. Some include:

- Basic needs. Food, housing, health, safety, etc. being sufficiently covered increases ones capacity. This includes mental health.

- Education. Not only skills that one has, but their knowledge on anticapitalism itself. I don't mean that everyone must have a college degree in theory, but if someone genuinely doesn't know what capitalism is or why it's bad, how can we require them to be anticapitalist?

- Support systems. People who are sufficiently supported by family, friends, community, etc. have greater capacity.

- Environment. Someone in a better political and environmental climate (one that is more supportive of them) has increased capacity. Additionally, someone with greater social/societal power and influence also has increased capacity.

- Wealth. People with greater wealth have increased access to all of the above. Therefore it's not necessarily the wealth itself that increases capacity, but what it has the power to do for the wealthy person.

Race, sex, gender, caste, and many other factors all intersect and impact the above as well. It's also important to note that the above factors are not "excuses", simply things that need to be acknowledged as having real impact on ones capacity. Finally, it is of course possible to work beyond one's capacity, but I question the sustainability of such efforts.

I think this approach works well because it is a privilege-centered approach. The focus turns from a sort of moral absolutism into an exploration of privilege, both one's own and others'. From this perspective, it supports efforts to make those with greater privilege more accountable without dismissing the potential impact those without privilege could have on pushing for change. It doesn't blame the victims of capitalism, but neither is it defeatist. I think it also provides some ideas for methods of working for anticapitalist change--one could work for change both by demanding accountability from those with great privilege and/or by increasing one's own or others' capacity to enact change through promoting education, political action, providing support systems, or contributing towards basic needs.

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on oneself or others for consumption is unhelpful and is likely to lead to burnout. The Little Treat argument is, at its core, a message of support.

To be honest, I've had mixed feelings about this argument. I've tended to agree with it overall, especially now after clarifying for myself the capacity/privilege-centered approach to obligation. The part I worry about is whether The Little Treat is used too frivolously as an excuse to avoid critically thinking about one's own relationship with consumption. Critics of The Little Treat argument certainly see it as a justification for needless consumption that goes against principles of anticapitalism. So let's take a closer look.

The key to the critics' response I think lies in the idea of "needless" consumption. It's safe to say all anticapitalists recognize it's impossible to abstain entirely from consumption; as a human with basic needs, you will always be consuming at least enough for those basic needs. The criticism is not on the consumption itself, but on needless or "non-essential" consumption. So what consumption counts as needless?

This is actually a tougher question than one might think, because one could argue that almost everything we consume is actually "needless". No one needs more than two shirts. No one needs furniture beyond a bed. No one needs food beyond like, rice, beans, and a vitamin supplement. (I realize the examples are a bit reductive, but you get the idea). Of course, when compared to food, something like a gold Rolex is very clearly needless, and I'm not arguing with that! But where is the line drawn? Is a third shirt needless consumption? Is a toy for a child needless consumption? What constitutes "need", and who gets to decide that? Does it vary based on environment? How?

These questions are valid, but I don't think there are any clear answers. Therefore, I don't think need/needlessness is an appropriate basis for determining the morality of individual consumption.
Some may say the morality of needless consumption depends on the means of acquisition--buying secondhand is moral, buying new is immoral, etc. I won't get too far into it, but the basic trouble is that thrifting, while it has many benefits, still doesn't solve many (if any) of the problems that buying new has. (For a tiny peek into this, check out this article: https://www.earthday.org/unraveling-the-impact-of-thrifting/). Given that, it feels strange to draw the line of morality there as well.

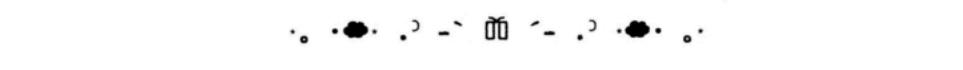
This talk of morality of consumption actually reminds me of an ethical philosophy called "effective altruism". It's based on/highly influenced by the essay "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" by philosopher Peter Singer in 1971. The essence is that we have a moral obligation to provide charity to others in greater need as long as our sacrifice wouldn't be as bad as what others are experiencing. Think of it this way--there are starving people, it is worse to starve than to live without a new car, so people are morally obligated to give their new car money to starving people instead. That's the gist of it, anyway--a rather utilitarian view of morality.

> If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.[1]

There are many interesting responses to this article, some I agree with more than others. One response is from John Arthur in 1984, and while I don't necessarily agree with every argument, I think it does well pointing out that there are other things that need to be accounted for in questions of moral obligation, such as fairness, justice, and respect for certain rights. He concludes by saying that in order for a moral code to be rational, it needs to also be practical. The line that stands out the most is "Rules that would work only for angels are not the ones it is rational to support for humans."

To me, this feels very similar to what "The Little Treat" is getting at--we're not morally perfect, if there even is such a thing as moral perfectionism. We are ourselves human beings who have our own human desires. We cannot be obligated, by ourselves or others, to behave in a supremely self-sacrificing way. That's just not how humans work, and for morality to require that would be impossible and pointless.

(If you're interested in reading more, both Singer's article and Arthur's response can be read for free here: https://food.unt.edu/arguments/singer_arthur.pdf)



It is because of all the complexities in Singer and Arthur alone, to say nothing of so many other discussions on morality in philosophy and political-economic theory, that I wonder if we're asking ourselves the wrong questions about individual consumption. I don't think it's very effective, much less provable, to ask whether individual consumption is morally "right" or "wrong". It's a question that lacks nuance and perpetuates the idea that individual consumers are the ones responsible for capitalism.

Instead, when exploring individual consumption, I think it's more valuable to ask ourselves things in a way that honors our privileges or lack thereof, that allows for flexibility as well as agency. We can do this by asking questions in a capacity-centered way. Some questions we can ask ourselves:

- In what ways does my individual consumption affect my or others' capacity to enact change?

- In what ways can I increase my capacity for change, or use my current capacity more effectively? How does consumption relate to this?

- Would I (could I?) feel more supported by using my wealth in different ways?

- Am I more or less dependent on consumption than I would wish to be? Can I work towards getting joy/support in other ways?

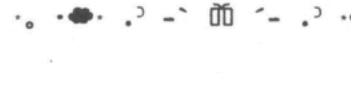
This approach allows us to get a clearer picture of multiple factors that may be at play, allowing us to reflect thoroughly and honestly on our relationship with consumption. It doesn't require or presume any particular outcome--one could find that less, greater, or simply different consumption would increase their capacity for change. Plus, I don't think approaching questions of individual consumption in this way excuses people at the top--we can demand that as people with greater capacities they fulfill their obligations for change.

Finally, I think there's one more thing that needs to be acknowledged: exploring these questions is labor. It is absolutely difficult work, most especially because it is resistance. Capitalism does not want you to question things at all, especially capitalism itself and the tools and narratives it uses to perpetuate itself. Oppressive systems are not oppressive by accident--they are designed that way as a way of perpetuating themselves for the benefit of the few that hold power in that system.

Finding the "best" ways to dismantle these systems is difficult. Every question begets more questions--how effective is "dollar voting" or other efforts of anti-consumerism in bringing about positive change? Does that positive change include societal shifts towards anticapitalism, or just towards a possibly-fictional ideal of "ethical consumerism"? It is absolutely critical to allow yourself moments of rest between this labor. And you do not need to feel guilty for being a morally-imperfect human born and living under an oppressive system.

When it comes to The Little Treat, I guess I fall on the side of "yes, as long as". I ultimately agree that I don't consider individual consumption to be a moral issue, but I do think one can utilize their individual consumption habits thoughtfully in a way that supports their true goals, both for themselves and others. I think the approach of The Little Treat argument is more useful because it's coming from a place of kindness and recognizing power dynamics at play, but I don't think using it in a defeatist or nihilist way is effective on either an individual or a societal level.

I suppose one could classify my view as "mindful consumption", but done in a way that specifically encompasses an anticapitalist end goal (rather than some idea of "proper" but still capitalist use of individual wealth) and a disbelief in the claimed existence/impact of consumer sovereignty. But ultimately, it is still a view that fully accepts Little Treats.




New sets
TRADER JOE
PAYMENT CARD PURCHASE TRANSACTION
CUSTOMER COPY
HELLO KITTY
LEGO Friends
music
MATERIAL GIRL
Madonna
can i
be a
material
grrrl?
GINTHER
HONDA
11
GOODYEAR
TAMIYA

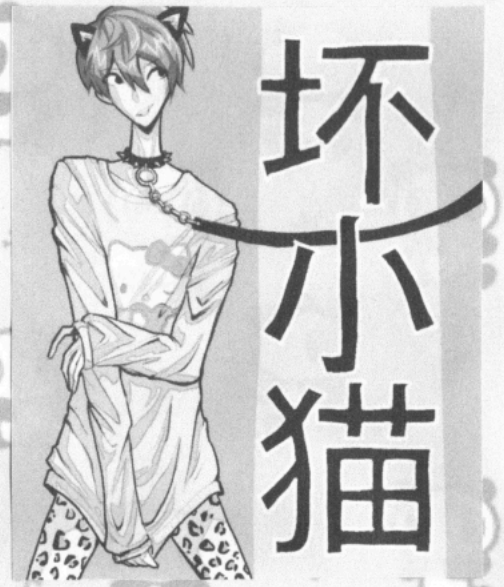
Introducing this issue's cover artist:

KELLY PLASMA

a.k.a. onlytrichromatic!

Kelly is such an inspiring artist who motivates me to be one half as playful and uninhibited in my own work. I love Kelly's colors, patterns, angles, fashion, subjects, but most of all I love that Kelly has been getting perpetually more confident <3

Please enjoy this EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!



Hi! What's your name and what species are you?
Hi!!! My "name" is Kelly and I'm a human (a meat machine).

Please describe your aesthetic in very Aesthetic terms (-core suffix optional)



I have a hard time describing stuff in such a way but I'll try! I guess my "aesthetic" is just like if you threw all the things I love in a blender and then poured out some chunky grey smoothie. Throw in rainbow glitter, an anatomy textbook, some hentai, and a Pokemon game cartridge in to replicate.

Do you have favorite objects?
Yes!! I have a grey-and-black striped hoodie that I wear most days (I know thats mildly disgusting). I have had this habit of latching on to one hoodie my entire life haha. I am also very enamoured with my CD collection.

Anything you're very tempted to Purchase right now?
...Honestly I can't think of anything >.< I guess I'm always ALWAYS tempted to buy coffee when I'm out but I try to control myself.

Dude seriously, how are you so prolific? You make and share so much art all the time I'm jealous :O
I truly have no idea. I make no effort to do so I think I'm just a little bit unhinged :3. Making stuff is like my reason for living or whatever and it takes up pretty much all of my free time.

Capitalism?
Eugh. Capitalism kills art but art fights back.

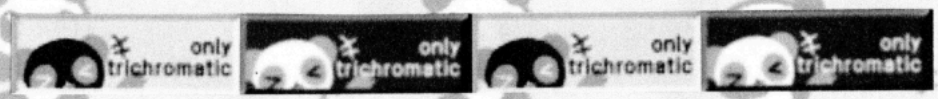
Will you fight? Or will you perish like a dog?
I WILL FIGHT LIKE A DOG WOOF WOOF WOOF.

Copyleft, am I copy-right? >:3
Fuck yeah bro. Art is made to be spread like a disease.

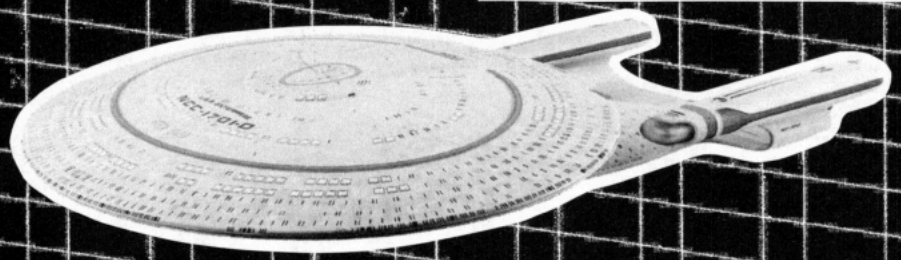
Anything special you're working on that future zine readers should keep an eye out for?
I'm currently working on a comic titled "Misfortune of the Prince"! Depending on when this is published the first couple chapters might even already be up! I think it's very fun. Very evil ero fun.

Love you!
luv u 2! <333

Make sure to check out Kelly on **onlytrichromatic.neocities.com <3**



Sentimentality, Subjectivity, Star Trek, & me



Take any theme and I probably have a tragic backstory to fit it, nine times out of ten about my mom. As it happens, I have a few on the theme of material items.

One of the earliest I can remember was in all likelihood an honest mistake, but it still sticks with me. When I was a kid we had a black cat named Sam. We also had a red blanket, sort of velvety, that he particularly liked to cuddle in. One afternoon (after Sam had died), I came home from school and the red blanket was not where we'd left it. I asked mom what happened to it and she said she'd thrown it away. I was crushed because it wasn't just a blanket, it was Sam's blanket. It was so long ago that I don't remember my mom's exact response, but I remember asking if we could get it back and she said she threw it away in a dumpster away from our house. I highly doubt she was very sympathetic. I looked through all the old diaries I still have but unfortunately didn't find mention of the experience. (I hope you appreciate what I went through to try, though. I cried for like three hours reading through those things).

I did find this nugget from a diary written around age 12 or 13:

I think I'm a real packrat because I cry every time that mom or dad throws something out or give something away that I've had ANY attatchment to whatsoever.

That may have been in reference to the red blanket, but it could have been something else. I guess I've always had a strong sentimentalism for material things. And it seems even at that age I was stigmatizing that in myself. I think it's because my mom was always doing sudden, angry declutter sweeps of the house, calling us spoiled and throwing things out without input. For her I think our stuff all represented money she could have spent on other things, or maybe it was some internalized shame about not being "put together"? Who knows, and I'm certainly not gonna ask.

I feel somewhat alone in my attachment to Things among most of my living family members. I was freshly 18 when Dad died, and about three weeks after at his funeral (a "celebration of life" party held when I did not feel like celebrating) my mom put out a bunch of his stuff out to give to people as a "token" of him to take home. It included his clothes, tae-kwon-do trophies he'd won, some stuffed animals and action figures and other trinkets he kept in his nightstand. They're not necessarily things that one would want to keep forever, but I hated that mom was so quick to get rid of any of his things. In hindsight I really wish I'd fought more with her on it, because I would really love to have some of his hoodies to wear around the house and remind me of him (especially his Klingon hoodie). I spent the whole time staying near the items, and eventually it hurt too much to see people picking through them like it was a yard sale and I hid in the basement.

Another scarring moment from said party: one of mom's friends came up, picked up one of Dad's hoodies, and said to me, the grieving child, "I'm going to give this to the man who keeps breaking my heart." I'm still bewildered about that one.



My aunt does understand how I find Things special. When my boyfriend and I were moving cross-country, we stopped overnight for a couple days to visit her. We had been living in my grandma's house until a bit after she died (that's a whole story in itself), and Grandma'd had a rose bush transplanted from her mom in her garden. I'd tried to take cuttings from the bush so I could keep growing it, but none of the cuttings took and I had to leave it behind. I was telling my aunt about this, and immediately she reaches up to a spider plant on her mantle and plucks off a pup. She says, "this plant was given to me by an old friend; I know it's not your great-grandma's roses but at least you can have a plant that's been passed down with lots of love."

I still have the plant we grew from that pup; it's about 5 1/2 years old now and it's absolutely gigantic.

* *

There's something about how objects take up Space that feels important to me. I really love the idea of shrines, of special places that deliberately take up physical space as a way of honoring something.

By holding onto my grandma's tea kettle, my dad's Worf action figure (and what little else I managed to save), I'm allowing them to continue taking up space in my life. I think that's what felt especially cruel about my mom--like my dad was gone and now she was kicking him out of her life.



She did the same with me, actually. Mom kicked me out of the house when I was 16. Eventually I went to live with my grandma out of state, and naturally I couldn't bring a lot of my things with me. Luckily, my dad was still around to protect them. Unluckily, my mom decided one day while he was at work to pack as many of my things as she could fit in two big boxes, ship them to me, and throw out the rest. (A few of my old things I'd already packed up and left in the crawl space, which is how I now have my old journals). I didn't even realize at the time why that hurt so bad. Later it became clear: it was like she was kicking me out again. I couldn't take up any amount of space in her home or life or anything, even through objects.

None of this is new information to me. But recognizing this still hasn't seemed to eliminate the guilt I experience for liking material Things. Is it that I feel guilty for taking up Space? I've been sitting on this question for a while and I still don't have a complete answer.

* *

I do often feel as though I need to justify my attachment to or desire for Things in some sort of purely objective way, something that no one could argue against without being so clearly irrational that there's no way you could push back. In most areas of my life, actually, I seem to want to be Objective. I want to be seen as objective, rational, intelligent, someone whose perspective is valuable because they are Logical. More than that, even, I want to be able to see myself as objective, because if I am objective then that must mean that I'm making the correct decisions--as in, the most inarguable. I have a perfect, built-in defense for any decision I make, whether defending it to myself or others--it's the most Logical choice.

Subjectivity is, definitionally, illogical. But it is beautiful.

My partner and I have been watching Star Trek: The Next Generation recently (it's actually the first time I've watched a Star Trek series). The android Data is a supremely logical being, but even he recognizes ~~and~~ value in the illogical human experience, and seeks to learn and often emulate it himself—exploring it in part through art, writing, and the care of his cat Spot, all elements of the human experience I too strongly value. Data, an android with no need for anything bigger than a broom closet in which to stand by until his next task, still chooses to adorn his quarters with Mondrians and bonsai trees.



Meanwhile Spock's father Sarek is (spoilers) experiencing a degenerative disease, Bendii Syndrome, that attacks, among other things, his emotional control, which as a Vulcan is in effect an attack on his entire identity and being. In the show it's clearly meant to represent Alzheimer's disease, and I don't suggest that my interpretation is at all the "real" story. But the severe emotional outbursts, being wrecked with emotion to the point it causes extreme physical and mental pain—for humans, this feels like it would be the result of a lifetime of emotional suppression, or subjective experience. Subjectivity may be "highly illogical", but to treat it as therefore less valuable or less important is not only dismissing a fundamental part of the human experience, but doing so has the capacity to inflict pain.

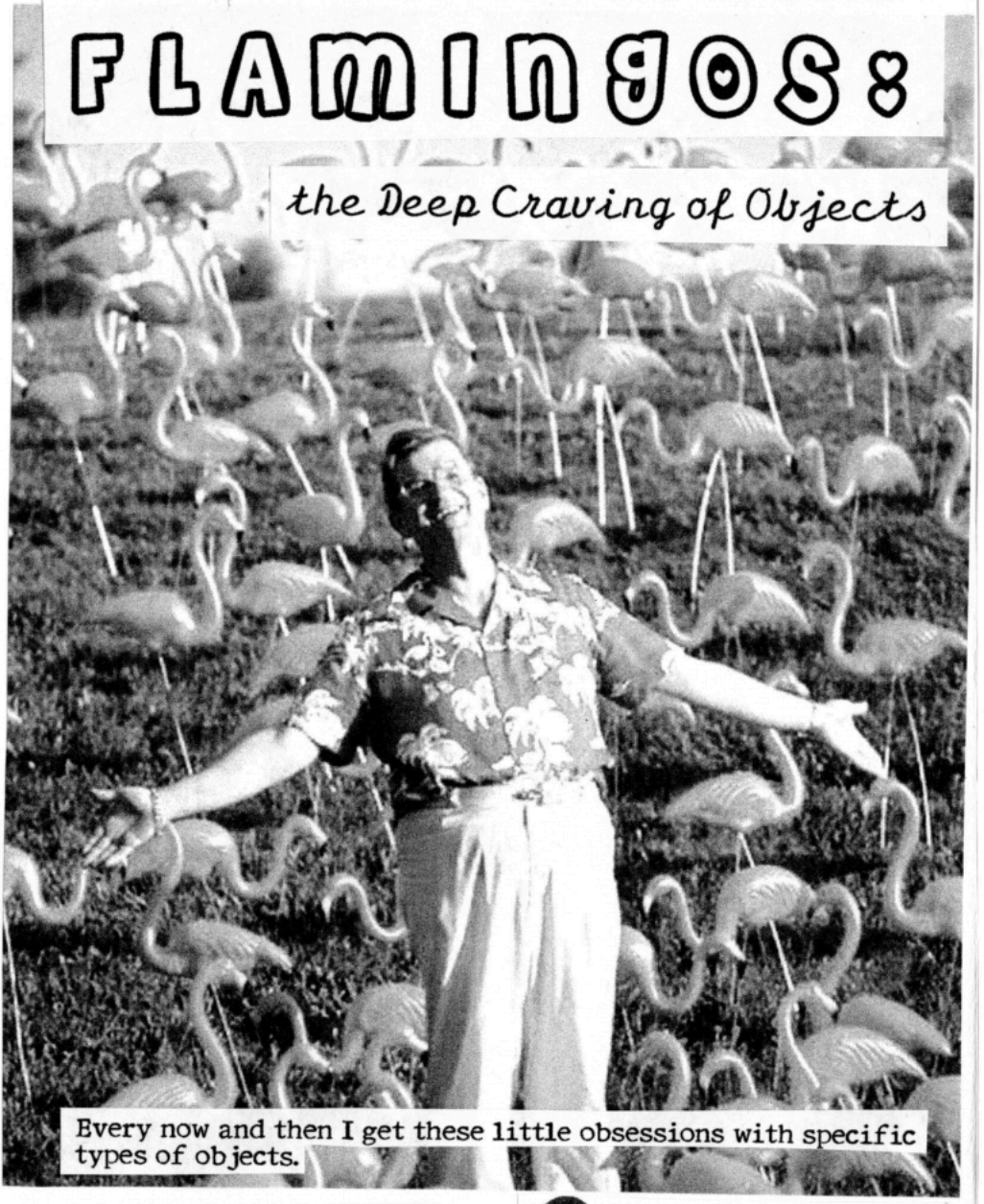
My own attachment to Things may be subjective, but the experience of attachment to Things is, I think, very objective because it is very Human. Certainly the fact that I felt a special attachment to the red blanket was subjective, because if my mom had felt how I did there's no way she would have thrown it in a dumpster. But my mom has certainly been attached to items herself. She would have felt pain if I'd thrown out something she cared about. And I may indeed be more sentimental over objects in general than others—than my mom, certainly. But that doesn't ~~need~~ mean it needs to be somehow "justified" in an objective way, because the experience of subjectivity is, itself, already an objective part of humanity. Honoring my subjective desires to keep certain things (within, ironically enough, reason) doesn't need to be justified further.

Objects themselves may not be objectively "necessary" things, and there may not always be a "justification" for them. And it's of course not necessary to have objects in order to preserve memory or love, such as for one who has passed on. But objects are useful for exploration of the human condition, incidentally that very thing Star Trek is all about. There are other ways to explore it, and in fact there are methods that are very deliberately object-less. But maybe the fact that I seem more personally attached to objects than other members of my family just means that objects are My preferred method for exploration. I love art. I love objects. I love how meaningless things have the capacity to become meaningful through subjective perceptions. And I think that's not something I need to be guilty about. Quite the opposite--I think it's worth exploring.



THIS HOUSE NEEDS MORE FLAMINGOS:

the Deep Craving of Objects



Every now and then I get these little obsessions with specific types of objects.

I guess you could say it's like when someone sees a new show and it's all they can think about and they constantly compare everything to it, imagine cozy coffee shop AUs, etc.



Boots, 'with the fur'
@afraidofwasps

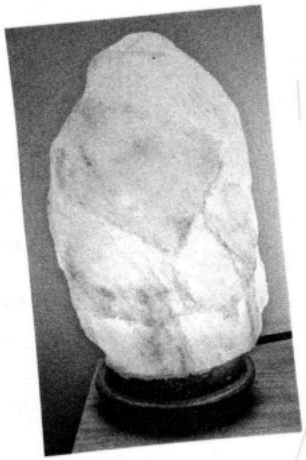
Guy who has only seen The Boss Baby, watching his second movie: Getting a lot of 'Boss Baby' vibes from this...

For me it's not really with characters but like, Things. It's like a craving to acquire something specific. It's rarely if ever a "brand" or specific product, but they are usually things one could buy. And I'm pretty sure it's not like a trend response or impulse, because some of these infatuations will last for actual years until they've been satisfied. For instance...

Beanie Lizard/Snake (bought 2022)

You know these guys, they were kinda like knockoff Beanie Babies with iridescent specks? The most common were geckos but I like the snakes more because they remind me of door snakes you use to keep the cold out.





Salt Lamp (bought 2020)

Probably the most "practical" of all these, and yet the thing that took me over three years to allow myself to purchase.

↑
I actually have Two now





Schlumbergera Cactus (bought 2022)

A genus of non-spined cacti commonly referred to as Christmas Cactus. Mine blooms twice a year! This time I'm fairly certain my obsession was triggered by an old episode of my favorite anime, Case Closed: "Prickly Past".

Stamp-Surround Rubber Stamp (bought 2024)

I don't really know what to call these but basically it's a rubber stamp that you stamp onto an envelope, leaving a pattern specifically designed to compliment the mailing stamp.





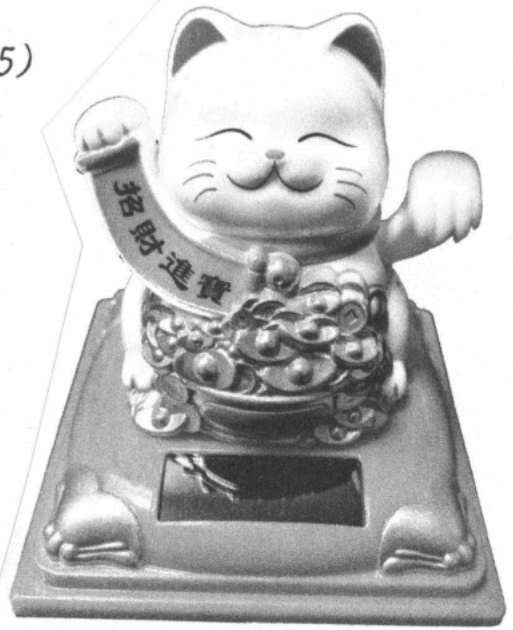
Teapot (bought 2024)

I don't drink enough tea at once to necessitate a teapot, but for some reason I had a craving for a teapot. Now that I think about it, I also experience this lasting craving with food. And then as soon as I have it once the weeks or MONTHS-long craving is gone.

Is that normal? This happened for me with smoked salmon, pineapple, oats, chocolate, arugula, red pepper, hot sauce, & cream. (Not all at once!)

Lucky Cat (bought 2025)

Okay, it's with lucky cats that I really tried to satisfy this craving with anything but a purchase, mostly out of stubbornness. I collected digital .gifs and photographs, I tried making my own out of clay at a library program, and even ended up getting a Lego lucky cat kit because my partner loves Legos and would certainly appreciate the bricks in the long-run. But they just never felt right. I finally caved and walked downtown to the Asian mart that, lo and behold, had some of these guys, and I was finally satisfied.



On the one hand, I don't like how this all seems so much like a capitalism-trained desire to consume, purchase, acquire. On the other hand, I do think I'm approaching these cravings consciously. I think about budget (rarely a big issue for me since these items tend to be inexpensive), I imagine where it would live in my home, I look for what I really want, I give it time to make sure it's not just a passing fancy.

On the third hand, I wonder if I'm just telling myself all that to justify my own vacuous materialism.

Is it bad to want an object, not just as an impulse but as a long-term desire? Is there such a thing as long-term desire, or is it just many impulses over and over again? Is it a betrayal of my values or vision for the planet? Is deriving pleasure specifically from the ownership of an object a capitalist attachment?

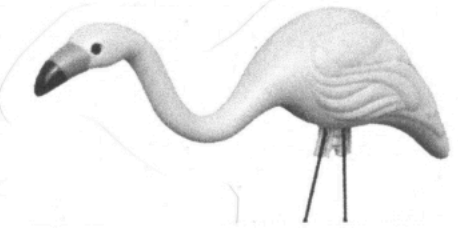
Even if it is, I do get a lot of joy from these objects. I still smile every time I see my lucky cat waving at me. After craving it for months after watching a video by BrutalMoose, I got a little gadget called the Moo Mixer. It's basically a plastic cup with a battery-powered stirrer, advertised for making chocolate milk. I was so happy every time I used it, I'd even moo at it just sitting in the cupboard! (It's unfortunately broken now.) I'd start singing to the tune of Moon River:

"Mooooo Mixer, wiiiider than a mile..."

My partner Sean occasionally experiences similar object obsessions, songs included. For several months he wanted to get a bagel slicer, a single-use item that's ultimately just as unnecessary as a Moo Mixer or a teapot for us, but now that we have one he lights up every time he uses it. Just now he started singing:

"Bagel guillotine, I love you
Bagel guillotine, I'm rooting for you
We're praying for you ev-e-ry day..."

I know I shouldn't be so hard on myself. I'm not Catholic, I don't need to be lugging guilt around like this. Still, sometimes I wonder if I should be more devoted to ascetics than aesthetics.



...My next cave-in will definitely be a lawn flamingo.

I don't have a lawn or anything, I just really like them. I have had this lawn flamingo fixation for at least like six months now.

Wesley & KonMari!

~The most magical tidying method ever~



No doubt you've heard of the KonMari method of tidying, or at least the single part that western audiences parrot—"spark joy". That is, when choosing what items to keep or get rid of, you should keep only those things that "spark joy". It's been joked about, ripped off, idealized, criticized, and all the other things that (often fairly) happen to life-advice methods in America. I'm not a fan of regimented methods or philosophies that claim to be the only solution you'll ever need...

...except for this one! I am a HUGE fan of Marie Kondo and her KonMari method! And to be perfectly honest, I think anyone who makes fun of it or doesn't like it hasn't actually read her book or done the method properly!

I first discovered her in 2017 when browsing the local library and happening upon the newly-published manga edition of her seminal work: "The Life-Changing Manga of Tidying Up: A Magical Story", illustrated by Yuko Uramoto. I wasn't in a position where I felt overwhelmed with stuff by any means, or even felt like I had "too much". But I've always been interested in tidying and organization content almost as an extension of decorating. It's all just another way to make your space your own.



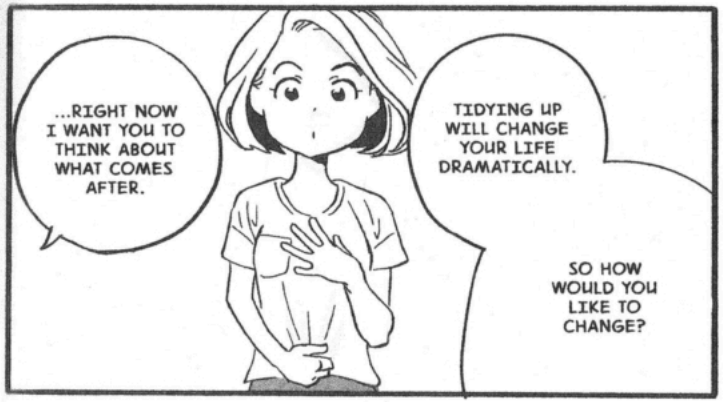
And so, even with no plans or immediate need to employ her tactics, I thoroughly enjoyed—no, more than that, fell in LOVE with the KonMari method. I immediately went back to the library to check out and read the original book "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up", the sequel "Spark Joy". Years later I found and read "Joy at Work". (That one was super weird because it was interspersed with chapters by an American professional organizer with an extremely different method to Kondo, which definitely felt like the decision of a publisher who did not understand Kondo and thought she would be too hard a "sell" in America on her own).

As I mention in this zine, my experiences with tidying have always been surrounded with guilt, shame, and moralizing. I don't think that's unusual in America since our society has such a complicated relationship between consumption, class, and appearances. KonMari provides such a drastic shift in narrative. Right in the beginning, tidying is framed as something meant to create the life YOU want to live. This is actually the first part of her method to get flattened, which is a real shame because it is the most magical part!

The first step of KonMari is to **visualize your ideal lifestyle**. The focus is not on what your house looks like, or how to conform to what an organizer is claiming to be the ideal, or even to think about the stuff at all, but just to picture how you want to live. What you want to do in your home. How you want to feel. Things you like doing, things that make you happy. How different this was from what I'd lived! How novel! How positive! How beautiful!





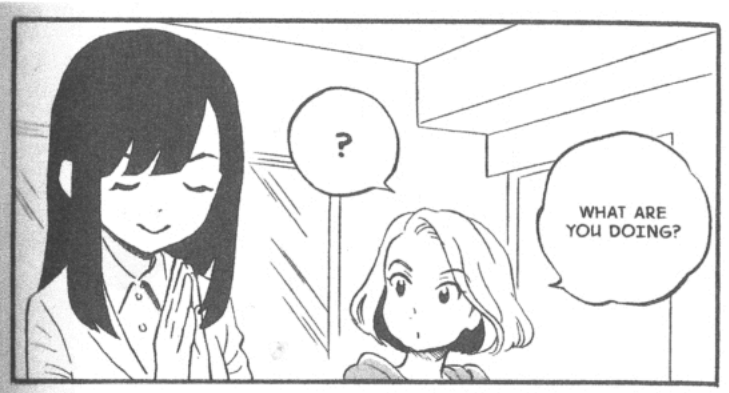




(My idea lifestyle started by thinking about how I want to use my non-work time for doing activities, whether hobby/life activities or just cooking, cleaning, and connecting with my space. I want my life to feel like more than just working and recovering for work. On following the rest of KonMari's prompts, it became more and more clear what my truest wish was—ultimately I want to be happy where I am now, not for a hypothetical different or future location, house, or time in my life. This was a huge realization for me given how many times I've dreamed about living Elsewhere!)

Here's another beautiful part of KonMari: thanking the items you're discarding. The whole attitude of treating items with respect and honor as a way of treating **yourself** with respect and honor—this is so representative of my style of materialism! There's so much wisdom you can gain from relationships with the material if you're willing! And getting in touch with that wisdom helps you have a harmonious relationship with your items (even while you tidy) because you're highlighting and respecting that relationship. P.S., I also particularly like her method of waking up books!









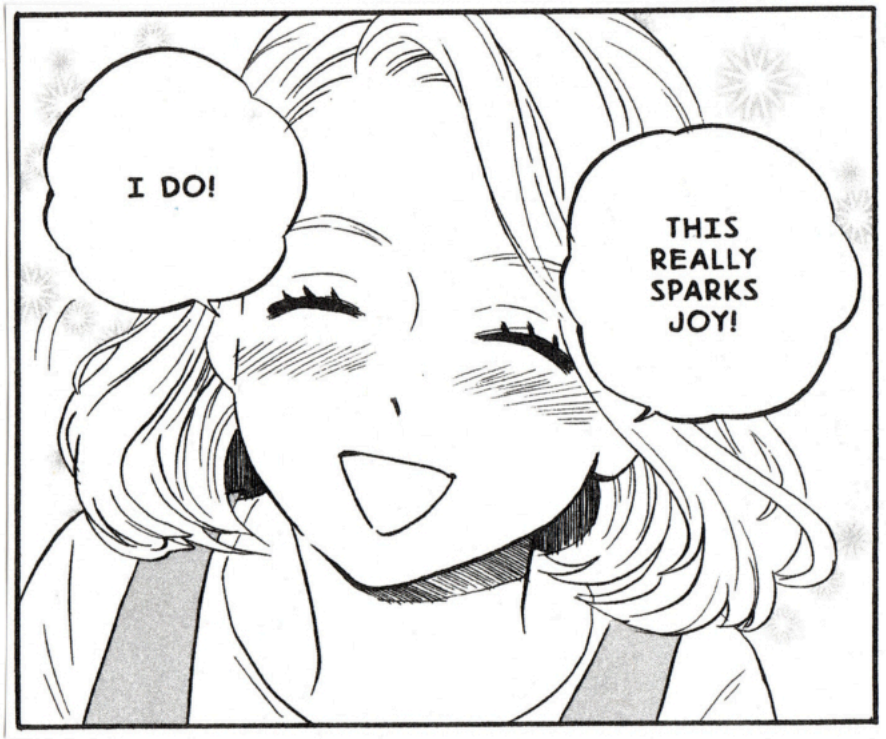


The hardest category for me to tidy was books. In particular I had a lot of nonfiction books on progressive subjects that I never got around to reading but felt like I "should" because they were (likely) in line with my values—titles like Postcolonial Astrology by Alice Sparkly Kat, Anarchist Approaches to Crime and Justice from Dysophia, etc. I'm sure these books have great things in them, but funny enough, I think looking at them often felt demoralizing instead of empowering. Like I would inevitably be forced to grapple with the topic by reading this book because I owned it, as opposed to allowing my natural curiosity to lead me to reading on these topics when I was ready. I love browsing the library and often come home with progressive nonfiction, so letting go of some of my titles was my way of trusting my future self to continue learning no matter what. It's been months and months and I still feel great looking at my bookshelf now!

KonMari is also great not just for tidying, but for deepening the relationship one has with items they already own. After actually doing the KonMari method this year, I've been reminded of how much love and appreciation I have for the things I own that **do** spark joy, even down to the littlest things like all of my forks now being my favorite or being grateful for every scrap of collage paper because I am excited to make it something beautiful. I've always hated advice about gratitude/counting your blessings because it felt so dismissive of real emotions. But KonMari has fostered such **authentic** love and appreciation for the material objects in my life. How tranquil!

So whether or not you're seeking to tidy, I highly recommend reading Marie Kondo's books. It's not only great as a tutorial with tidying techniques, but the whole philosophical approach to understanding one's relationship with owned items is such a valuable challenge to typical narratives of materialism. It's balanced and honest, thoughtful and non-judgmental—everything I'm trying to do! This is why it's so important to see her approach as a whole, and why I'll never forgive American publishers, talk show hosts, and mass media for ignoring all but the catchy, sellable phrase "spark joy". It's so much more than that—not just joy in items, but joy in self-knowing.

So WHAT DO YOU THINK? DO YOU LOVE KONMARI'S METHOD TOO??



Lessons I've Learned from Material Things (both having them and letting them go)

Gentleness and treading lightly
taking care of things so they last, treating objects with respect as well as the earth and the resources used to make them

Generosity
recognizing the ability to make others happy, both friends and strangers, with the material. doing so thoughtfully, lovingly, and often

Resourcefulness
appreciating what I have enough to creatively make use of it as it is (perhaps this is learned from the limitation rather than the material, but all material things are limited, so it was bound to happen)

The depth and breadth of human innovation
seeing the material result of our ability to think and work, collaborate and create, to stand on the shoulders of giants. from intricate machines to simple tools, all becomes a dazzling show of human innovation and creativity

Finding beauty in all things
being with an item through many stages, watching it gain scratches and nicks and dirt and holes and so many more physical badges of love and use, becoming more and more beautiful

Positive remembrance
my desire to save items from dead relatives is really a desire to protect, remember, and honor them. though the items are not required, they are a means of renewing that commitment every time i interact with these items.

Accepting secret parts of myself
it is hard for me to accept my beliefs in magic and superstitions, and even harder at times to allow my mind to rest about them, but the material provides a safe space for me to explore such things, through play with lucky items, tarot cards, art and journaling

To take up space and stand up for myself
as a body i take up 5'4", but as a self i need to take up more space. allowing my things to be a physical extension of myself means i am being a present, expressive person. finally, here in my own space, i am chipping away at the need to be invisible in the face of people with authority, rightful or most especially otherwise

materialism 2.0

MESSAGE

There are so many standard definitions of "materialism" & absolutely NONE of them get the attitude and beliefs I have towards the material!!

03840 800M (Rev. 2/80)







Typical definitions immediately paint a bad picture of materialism by declaring a materialist valves the material over the "good" things:

In everyday usage, a value system privileging wealth, possessions and/or bodily pleasures over ethical or philosophical values.

From: materialism in A Dictionary of Media and Communication »

1. uncountable noun
   Materialism is the attitude of someone who attaches a lot of importance to money and wants to possess a lot of material things. *Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary.*

1. a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

"they hated the sinful materialism of the wicked city"

Oxford Languages

Russell W. Belk conceptualizes materialism to include three original personality traits:[2]

- *Nongenerosity* – an unwillingness to give or share possessions with others.
- *Envy* – desire for other people's possessions.
- *Possessiveness* – concern about loss of possessions and a desire for the greater control of ownership.

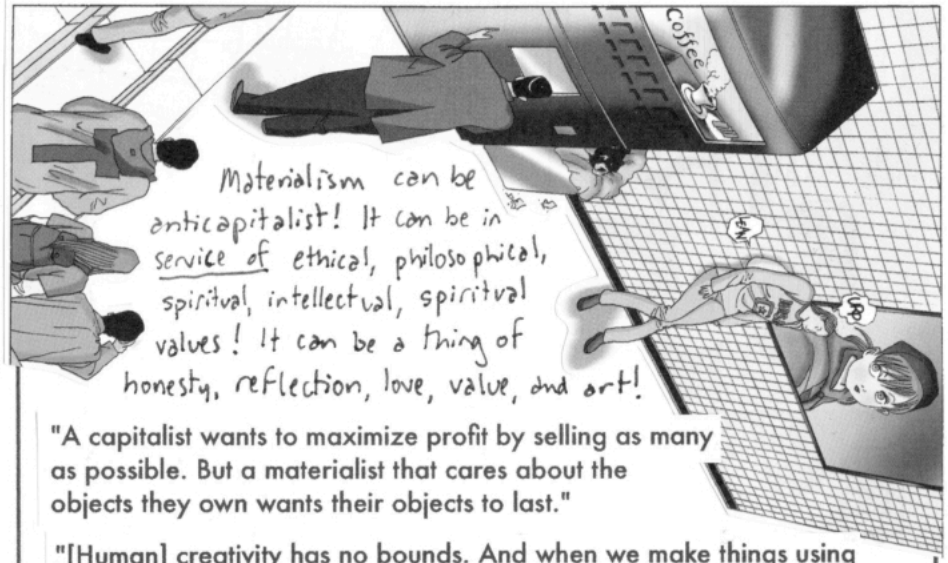
Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

"Materialism is a philosophical concept that emphasizes the importance of material possessions and physical comforts over spiritual intellectual values."



J.T. Franklin Murphy

But materialism doesn't have to mean this! This is not why I feel I am a materialist!



"A capitalist wants to maximize profit by selling as many as possible. But a materialist that cares about the objects they own wants their objects to last."

"[Human] creativity has no bounds. And when we make things using that creativity, those objects become an extension of us. And when we acquire those things from others, we're essentially connecting to the creative extension of another person."

—Materialism (is actually kinda great) by Kristen Leo

"The words 'ecology' and 'economy' come from the same root, the Greek *oikos*, meaning 'home' or 'household': i.e., the systems of relationship, the goods and services that keep us alive. The system of market economies that we're given as a default is hardly the only model out there."

"We humans must consume, since we are animals to whom the gift of photosynthesis was not given... What would it be like to consume with the full awareness that we are the recipients of earthly gifts, which we have not 'earned'? To consume with humility? We are called to harvest honorably, with restraint, respect, reverence, and reciprocity."
—*The Serviceberry*, Robin Wall Kimmerer

"Everyone has the right to own such property as meets the essential needs of decent living, that helps to maintain the dignity of the individual and of the home, and shall not be arbitrarily deprived of it." — A draft based on a statement from Chile that should have been used!

"The concept of property rights ~~may~~ ✓MUST also include certain social and cultural rights and contribute to their realization."

—The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (Article 17)
Alfredsson & Eide (1999)

This is a definition of materialism that I feel connected to, rooted in anticapitalism and human rights, art, and essential dignities of our species:

Valuing positive, ethical relationships with material objects as a way of better understanding the self and supporting revolutionary values

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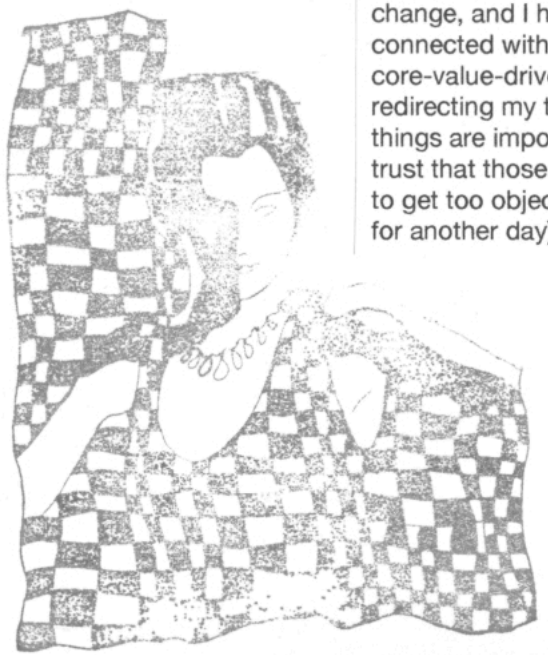
- Reclamation of the means of production
- Right-to-repair and build-to-last
- Public domain and copyleft
- Ecological economics & gift economy
- Steal Something From Work Day

ROOT VALUES:

- Empowerment & Accessibility
- Compassion & Empathy
- Integrity & Justice
- Reflection & Honesty
- Exploration & Curiosity
- Human rights
- Art, beauty, & creativity
- Universal prosperity



UNFINAL thoughts:



I said at the beginning that I wanted things to change, and I have changed a few things. I've connected with my approach to the material in a core-value-driven way. I've found ways of redirecting my thoughts. I've accepted that some things are important to me and I've been able to trust that those things are good things at large (not to get too objective about morality, but that's a topic for another day).

Sometimes I do worry that I'm trying to convince myself of things as justification for actions I would have taken anyway, rather than determining my actions based on some sort of purity of reason. I have to remind myself that I don't think there is such a thing as purity of reason. Considering where my conclusions come from is at least starting to become aware of the biases at play.

This is one of those zines that has gone on and on and on for me. I think I didn't realize just how big of a topic this was for me. I mean, my gender issue was half this length; how could I have expected anything would be more complex than that, haha! If you've stuck with me through all this text, I salute you.

Usually when I finish a zine, it's because I get a feeling that it's done and I have nothing more to say on the topic for the moment. In this case, I feel like there is no end, so I'm ending because I am itching to share these thoughts and see what people think.

Before I go, though, I do wish to encourage you to think critically about your own relationship to material things, consumption, desire, etc. within the structures we live under. I think it can be easy for anticapitalists to put off doing so because doing so can be so fraught with guilt. Guilt doesn't help, but neither does avoidance. And if you feel like your relationship has become problematic for you, it's okay. This shit is complicated and our society is built around encouraging toxic relationships with the material. It's not your fault for falling victim, but that doesn't mean you can't get help. I've probably repeated something like this a million times right now, but I had to keep coming to this realization because it's so radical to me: you CAN find ways for materialism to not only be tolerated in your life, but for it to *actively support your anticapitalist work*. And that involves detangling. Sometimes repeatedly. Sometimes 100 brush strokes a night. But you too can have fabulous, flowing, radical hair.

(...wait, what was I talking about?)

THE END! for now...

stuff i'm reading:

"Animists are people who recognize that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others."
— Graham Harvey, animist scholar

"Whenever I tell people that we were already casually looking at places to move in a few months, they say it was a blessing in disguise. Fuck you, my house burned down."
— "Empty — collected thoughts" zine by maria

"When we consider how small after all the cup of human enjoyment is, how soon overflowed with tears, how easily drained to the dregs in our quenchless thirst for infinity, we shall not blame ourselves for making so much of the tea-cup."
— Okakura Kakuzō
"The Book of Tea"