

## **Introduction: Free Money**

In the last week of May in 2016 I received an email from the head of the art department of Reed College. It stated that the faculty had reconsidered their decision in funding internships and were awarding me with a grant of \$1900 to pursue my project. At the same time I closed a successful GoFundMe fundraiser for \$1000 to move me to Los Angeles (thanks again everyone).

My project was to work with a music aggregate in Los Angeles and write articles on emerging artists in the area that would be distributed to their rather large audience. I didn't do the assignment. Here's my list of reasons:

-the money was barely enough to keep me afloat, much less in a state to do extra, unpaid work (as opposed to spending my time trying to get a job to make rent after this money runs out)

-my contact at the aggregate is flaky as hell and didn't take this project seriously, so I stopped taking it seriously

-all the artists who are worth interviewing (aka not naive bourgeois scumbags without any relevant or worthwhile criticism of anything) are too busy just trying to survive

This writing is an attempt to disclose a dense series of simultaneous narratives that all happened at once in lieu of the assignment. I believe that it should at least come close to something that fits the intended outcome (the Reed grant requires that I submit a piece at the end of my internship). It is impossible to write in perfect chronological order. It is even less likely to make any sense.

## **Narratives: No Big Pictures in LA**

I spent the money on the half of a deposit, rent, wifi and food with my roommate, Matt Dell. I spent the fundraiser money on the following month. The true investment was living with Matt. Matt is a booking agent that spends most of his time engaging with music in some way. His curatorial ability and sociability made him well aware of musical (and thus cultural) phenomena.

I won't act like I was fully aware of how deeply and quickly Matt could throw me into the part of Los Angeles that I would come to care so much about. When I arrived I had a plan informed by a naive worldview of artists working in their studios with spare time to talk. I had a worldview of a clean, organized system that had accessible aspects that could be made visible and brought to light with an email and a meeting over coffee.

I was met with the most beautiful cacophony of organic social activity that I have yet to traverse and understand. Organic social activity is what happens when people are doing whatever they want. This means not at work, not in school, not at church. It means that productive shit happens in the free time of people who work to eat.

Matt knew about parties. I thought the word “party” only referred to someone notifying friends that they would be gathering in a certain place at a certain time where alcohol and music were to be consumed. I was right, in the same sense that I was right in thinking that Los Angeles was a “pretty big city, how big could a city be?” After a handful of these events it started to seem that people have always been aware of the simplicity of doing a lot with a little bit of money. I don’t know how else to describe it. Every event was different, but they were almost always loud, cheap, and dark. They were usually east of mid-city. Usually the parties that I didn’t care for (sour grapes: can’t afford the cover) were west of mid-city. Mid-city is not downtown. If I live in Koreatown does that mean I live in mid-city?

Late at night on our fire escape Matt would relay lists of names of people who made music, organized music, promoted music, managed musicians or just listened to a lot of music. He would talk about them as individuals, each with their own identities and pursuits in life. The big picture was out of the frame. It was too big to make generalizations. There was just too much happening.

I would always begin to feel anxiety in these conversations. I wasn’t doing enough. My school gave me all this money and I’m spending it all on just perpetuating my pointless existence. I want to do something that I care about, but I can’t just start right away. This internship is bullshit. How did I ever think I could just figure out which artists to even interview? I need a job or else I won’t be alive much longer. If I get a job that’s going to be who I am forever.

He would always comfort me in the idea that this is reality, this is what people do with their lives, some of it is really cool. I spent a lot of my time talking to as many people as possible at these parties. These people are usually good people. What is a friend? Someone that I’ve known for a long time who has consistently supported me no matter how useless I am? I know that the word applies to more than that, I just don’t know how far it goes. Well, I made a bunch of friends and they’re all great.

I needed to fight my social anxiety. It worked. There are so many artists here! They are all listening to the music that interests me! A lot of them make music too! Maybe it’s finally time to fully disregard the definition of art that the Catholic church laid down centuries ago: painting and sculpture, separate from music.

It was because of friends that I am here. As if that wasn’t enough it was friends and a few emails sent to fellow alumni that I began the month-long process of being hired at the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art to do exhibition/audiovisual tech. I realize that I’m really, really lucky. Nobody else in my hometown neighborhood was doing something like this, much less finishing school.

Regardless, the waves of classist self-doubt crashed over me every day. Social mobility is a joke. I’m working a service job to sustain myself while I wait to be clerically available for work at the museum. When I run out of money I’ll just be the guy who’s always asking for money. I haven’t seen any movies or read a lot of books. My childhood was spent developing ways to light fires and/or kill ants. If I make art and nobody sees it then it might as well be the same masturbatory self-centered garbage that many white men are making, and even they have the

ability to at least inform people about something because they are being exhibited. If I made art about killing ants would it be shown?

None of what I'm doing matters. I'm basically just partying and networking out here. I'm not even good at partying because I suck at drinking. What will the Reed faculty think when they realize that their reconsideration was a mistake, that they funded the first few months of just another laborer in the workforce that makes richer artists look smarter than they actually are?

### **Conclusion: Fuck It**

I don't care anymore. If Reed sues me for wasting their money they'll ruin my life. That's just another item on the list of "things that could easily happen to me that would definitely ruin my life due to my financial insecurity," alongside injury, being late to work, general social failure, getting arrested, and/or the eventual earthquake that sinks the whole city into the ocean.

But please, Reed, don't ruin my life. At least I told the truth. I could've just lied and published articles about nonexistent artists. Even worse, I could've just written about artists who turn out to be naive bourgeois scumbags without any relevant or worthwhile criticism of anything (most successful artists).

How the fuck does someone get a show? How does that even happen? Whose dick do I have to suck to get a solo exhibition in Los Angeles?

One of the friends I made wants to throw an art show with me, an exhibition that hopefully encourages people to take advantage of readily available virtual technologies to enact cultural change. One of the friends I made wants to create a show that perforates the distinguishability of art openings and tailgate parties. They're really the same thing if you think about it.

This is probably how authenticity is produced, isn't it? Doing my own thing. I'll take it, it's all I can do, it's all I've got. Thanks again to everyone who gave me money. I'm doing my best not to ask for anymore. I'm sorry you have to watch me struggle. I'll try my best to succeed, whatever that means. Maybe it means throwing a really good party where people like me can make friends.