



The Dog Leg Manifesto

Like a dog who is caught in an inescapable trap, exhausting all other reasonable alternatives, discovers the idea of breaking and separating its own leg from its body, we discover the idea that art, in order to retain its sublimity, should be chewed off from the commerce of our cultural body.

Part 1: Tell me where it hurts.

1A. This is not political

While we discuss a time in which Modernity gave way to Post-Modernity, which gave way to Contemporary as the de facto term for anything made between now and about 45 years before this sentence, the structures that support art and artists are full of tension and inadequacies. Prior to the last century, Art Manifestos addressed some of those tensions but were centered largely on addressing the shifting aesthetics and meaning. Modernism and the rise of capitalism brought political and economical reasoning to the Art Manifesto, which we believe was necessary as art was being ensnared by political and economic structures. These were the panicked and involuntary twistings of the trapped animal.

In our time, those structures are even more entwined and impossible to change. They can only be contained and their harm mitigated. Because of this, an Art Manifesto that is about politics is like a Dutch still life or the Vanitas genre—a grand old tradition that can be deeply admired, but will never return because it is passé. Art manifestos were useful before, as art subsisted on rebellion against paradigms. But in contemporary life, rebellion is absorbed by the paradigm. It is smothered before it blooms. We accept that to rebel is its own conformity. At best you can make a sensation, perhaps even push culture around a bit, but it will absorb your ideas, water them down, then sell them back to the people you were fulminating against.

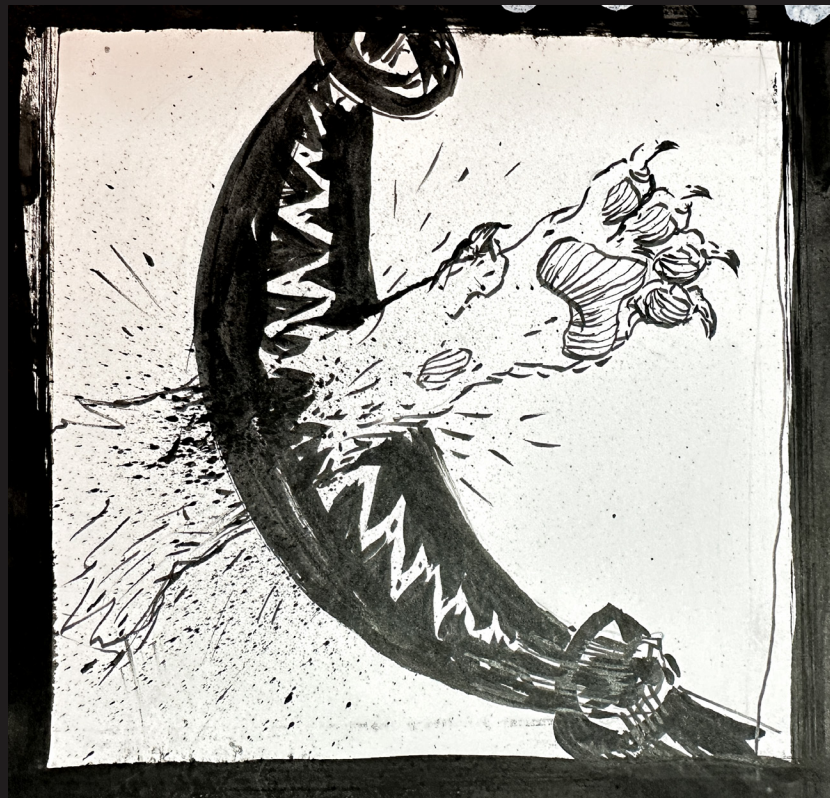


So, as the Dadas acknowledged that the word means everything and nothing, we acknowledge that this manifesto is already a part of the problem, and is vital to our progress (or perhaps useless). In this spirit we state that this Manifesto is NOT political. It implies that we believe politics to be the working arm of Capitalism and is overemphasized in our artistic and cultural lives. And this manifesto is critical of capitalism. Capitalism rules our decisionmaking and livelihoods as creatives, it animates the forces that we have allowed to bend us into unrecognizable adult shapes, it pushes our brushes around, and it changes our work to suit invisible markets.

"Over the past thirty years, capitalist realism has successfully installed a 'business ontology' in which it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business."

*-Mark Fisher
Capitalist Realism*

While critical of the market forces that define artistic success, we seek to step off the political road—to follow the elephant tracks left by societies before the complexity of these structures made them inevitable conclusions.



1 B. What, me market?!

Today, being an artist means also being a marketer, a publicist, an agent, an accountant, an office manager, a promotional videographer, a communications department, a market researcher, and running a shipping room. Leaving aside that most of these jobs are antithetical to the requirements of artmaking, every one of those jobs in any other discipline is considered a full-time career—complete with medical benefits and a retirement plan—for someone who has never picked up a brush. The atelier has been replaced by the art marketing seminar and the YouTube channel. The hashtag. The salon has been replaced by the Comment Section, and everyone is invited.

We are dissatisfied with the current iteration of assessing and prescribing artistic value. Artmaking is too precious of an activity to be considered and processed in only one way. Because of Modern Art, Postmodern Art, Contemporary Art, Reproducible Art, (and all other schools of Art pretty much since the invention of the camera) the potential of meritocracy has been corrupted, and subjectivity and commerce have created a closed system. In response artists have spent the last century scrambling backwards up the hill of “conceptual” art, just to keep their pants from getting wet along with the rest of society. This was a relationship that became codependent, then abusive. Two spouses keep beating themselves for long enough, and you will inevitably end up with million dollar bananas and the new-age mystification of mediocrity through art statements and supportive institutions that propagate elitism while the rest of the population looks on in confusion, disgust and indignation—powerless to change it. We say that you can keep your poisons and your Phantom Threads.

“After World War II, the United States emerged as the world’s superpower. American companies like Cities Service and Esso, which had once been regional businesses, became international corporations. They adopted abstract names like ‘Citgo’ and ‘Exxon’ to give themselves world-class status. Since multinational giants couldn’t have little pictures of red barns or weeping clowns in the lobbies of their Bauhaus buildings, Abstract Expressionism emerged as the world’s most overrated form of interior decoration.”

-Brad Holland

Express Yourself - It's Later than you Think

The only logical response to a system that is so closed off—that has grown an incurable cyst around this most vital human organ—is to remove the organ from the damage.

1C. You solved your own problem with AI



Midjourney prompt: "classical painting of a dog with its leg caught in a metal animal trap" (14 of 168)

We recognize that AI is a worthy successor of the "Creative Economy".

We assess the term "Creative Economy" as an oxymoron.

The aspiration to be a component part of the "Creative Economy" is not why we got out crayons as a child.

The "Creative Economy" is a pile of ants—decomposers in the crust of human expression, trading in the language of visual structure and principles of design, and commodifying and warping the magic of storytelling for financial gain—watched over by locusts, paid kingly sums to translate it all into data, with no personal risk.

The "Creative Economy" cannot be overturned, and AI is better suited than a human for its goals.

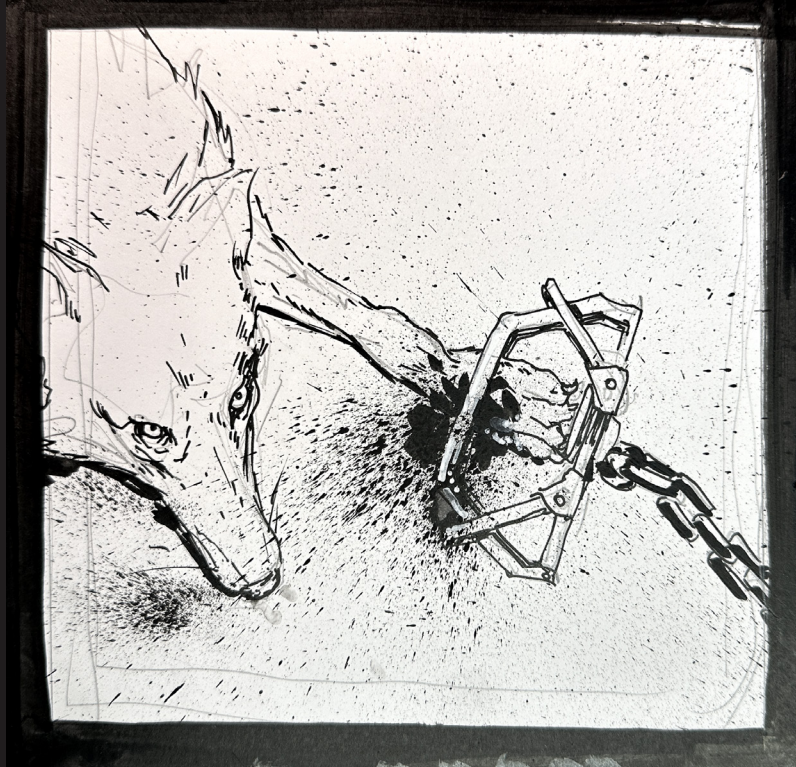
We recognize that this is bad news for almost everyone who has a "creative" job.

We have no answer for this except to say that the Steam Drill was bad news for John Henry and we know which we would prefer to be. It feels good to swing a hammer.

AI champions the result, Dog Legs champion the process.

"Drive better results with A.i. "

*-Every Company
Every third email in my inbox*



Part B: How we chew.

B1: No process hashtags

The Situationists described the futility of wriggling to escape, and where they decided to turn to the purposeful creation of experiences within the structure, that awaken a sense of internal authenticity in order to rouse you to acknowledge the absurd, we turn to the solitary monastic beauty of creation; unconstrained from judgment, market influence, and the audience.

Dog Legs will post no process. We identify process as the most sacred and unique part of artmaking, so we no longer will give it away in the exchange of unstable value and the pursuit of attention or proof of merit. Showing process cheapens the potency of a work, and of an artist. To be present in the moment of making art—not in some minimizing corporate-complementary definition such as a “flow state”, or paying your “10,000 hours”—is more akin to a sacred experience, undefinable. It is Walter Benjamin’s “aura” perhaps, or the closest that we can get to embodying it. Dog Legs are tired of squandering this moment for slight recognition in the din of internet noise. When we spend more time within this moment, our work gets better. The process is the only aspect of an artwork where the artist can reliably find satisfaction.

Magicians who explain their tricks—while satisfying to the curious and the initiate—can never be as great as the trick performed.

“None of the activity stolen by work can be regained by submitting to what work has produced.”

-Guy Debord
The Society of the Spectacle

B2: Now taking applications.

We reject the idea that an artist must also be their own marketer, agent, hustler and booster. We reject the long tail of commerce and the short tail of collective social memory.

The internet once provided a way to connect with an audience across space and time. The informational web (web 1.0) was more useful and satisfying for artists than its current incarnation. This iteration has become the main tool for getting work seen, and has simultaneously diminished the opportunity to do so by creating algorithmic barriers and paywalls. Decentralization was the last new potential benefit for people provided by the internet, but unfortunately it has devolved into cryptocurrency and Digital Apes, supposedly new “products” twisted by venture capitalists. They mirror the old landscapes—albeit in lower resolution.



Dog Legs don't seek to overturn the structure of the art world. That is futile, and some of us freely engage in it, but if we are to focus on the making of art, we invite others to take up the related tasks. We gladly share generously in any profit, if other parties take up the necessary evils of engaging in the conventional structure of art business. This is standard in many creative industries but less so in the lower strata of art. It only takes one shift in thinking to see that there is a dormant oil boom for those who don't swing a brush, in being the bridge between art and the people who may appreciate and admire it. We challenge you to get out there and connect these artists to their audience.

Dog Legs are confident that you can do the selling and marketing better than we can. And if you see a little gleam in us now, think of how much we may grow if you provide the time to focus and improve.

B3: results

AI's process is opaque, and useless when determining its success according to our values. AI is result-oriented, and driving results is antithetical to our work.

Results are the unfortunate by-product of assessing any segment separated from a process. Artwork is started and then completed—a series of works are created and developed—and so there will always be results. We tolerate this idea, but never make it the point.

When the thought of where a work will hang and who might buy it comes creeping into the process, we know it's time to take a smoke break.

The Dog Leg approach does not exclude political art or social art. We seek to question and devalue the accepted standard relationship and process for artists. Political art is vital and it needs an audience, so its process requires some level of promotion and broadcasting. Dog Legs seek only the part of the process that brings them satisfaction.





**This manifesto does not preclude the audience.
We don't put them first.**

**This manifesto does not preclude success.
We turn success inward.**

**This manifesto is not against technology.
We love the smell of linseed oil and the scratch of a pencil.**

Created as an exercise in potential futility 2024/25

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