

# FIELD GUIDE

TO THE

**B**EASTS



OF

# ART SCHOOL

An Illustrated Compendium by  
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# Introduction

Art school is a confusing thing. Like a forest of gnarled trees, bubbling bogs, and sunlit meadows all waiting to be explored, it contains challenges and rewards of all sizes. This book is an attempt to make sense of it.

Fantasy can be a helpful tool for navigating real life. Inspired by the D&D Monster Manual, this “Field Guide” characterizes many of the most formative experiences art school has to offer. Good, bad, and everything in between.

The advice in this manual should be helpful to any artist looking to further their craft. College isn't for everyone, and is not a requirement for being a lifelong student of the arts. But for those who prefer alternatives like community college, online resources, internships, workshops, or just making art for fun, these paths require navigation of many of the same ideas presented in this book.

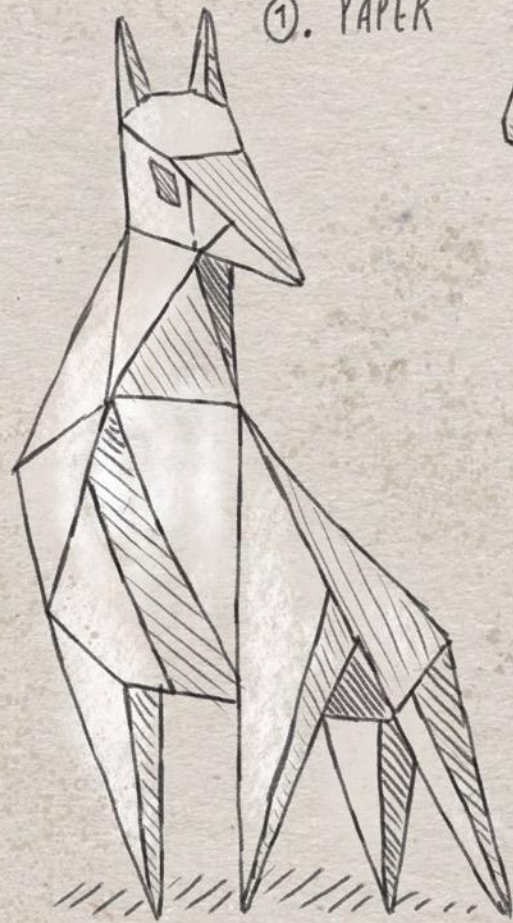
Countless adventures lie in wait beyond art school. The journey of creative growth never ends, and each artist must forge their own path. So make honest art, make temporary art, make bad art. Question your understanding of what all those terms even mean. But most of all, just enjoy the process.

# ASSIGNMENTS

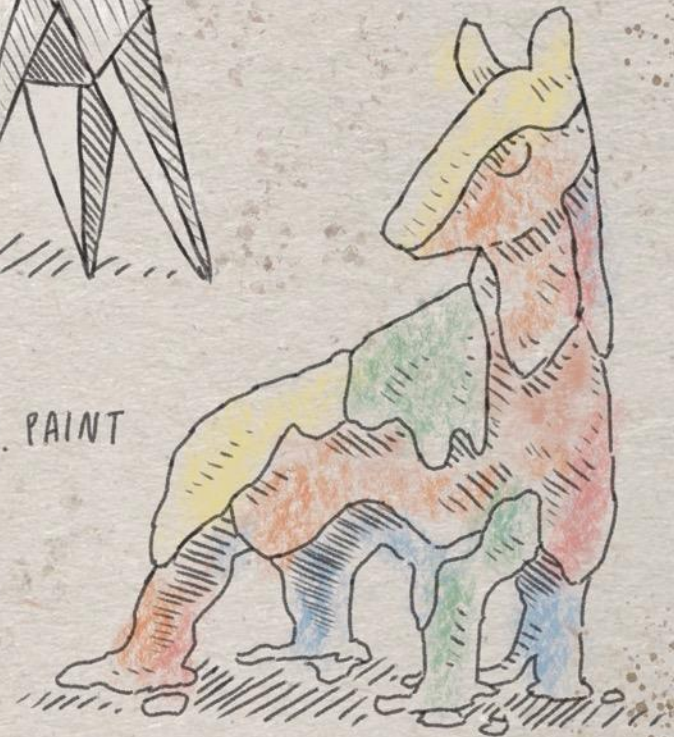
## - THE TAMED WOLVES -


A common class, always nearby. Made of various art materials. Will deal harm if left unattended, but once tamed with the help of a rubric, they become strong allies who can assist in battle against Critiques, Art Block, Unemployment, and more. Can be transported safely in a Portfolio.

- Try putting real effort into those "throwaway" assignments. You'll probably make something you're proud of, and advance your skills too.
- College students can spend anywhere from 2 to 10 hours weekly on homework for each class, so budget your time wisely! If you struggle with procrastination, try scheduling specific times for working and relaxing.



③. PAINT



A young man with dark hair, wearing a brown sleeveless tunic and black pants, stands in a lush green forest. He holds a sword with a wooden hilt and a silver blade. To his left, a large white dog is rendered in a low-poly, geometric style. In the foreground, a smaller dog is painted with vibrant, abstract colors: yellow, green, blue, and orange. To his right, a simple, brown, clay-like dog stands on a log. The scene is filled with soft, dappled sunlight filtering through the trees.

HOW CAN YOU CHALLENGE  
YOURSELF AS AN ARTIST?

WHAT DEFINES  
YOUR ARTISTIC  
"COMFORT ZONE"?

# EXPOSURE

-THE ENCHANTED RIVER-


A river as old as water itself, with a current that flows in both directions.

Those who drink from it gain knowledge of any existing art, past and present - and add to it some of their own.

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- Youth who have regular exposure to the arts are more likely to volunteer, register to vote, and hold a full time job.
- Art movements build on each other, often by intentionally subverting what came before. Countless contemporary artists working today can be discovered outside the classroom, through social media.
- It's true - the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.



An artistic illustration of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue sleeveless top and black pants, crouching on a mossy path in a lush green forest. To her right, a small stream flows over rocks, surrounded by tall grasses. Two thought bubbles are present: one above the woman and one in the lower right foreground. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and dense green foliage.

WHERE IS THE LINE  
BETWEEN STEALING AND  
INSPIRATION?

DOES ORIGINALITY TRULY EXIST?  
TO WHAT EXTENT?

# FREEDOM

-THE SKY GLIDERS-

A class of solitary wind spirits resembling large, glowing birds. Extremely friendly, they will come when called and carry you through the skies - but be careful not to ride too far! These beasts can quickly spiral out of control and leave you lost or stranded.

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- The newfound freedom of college can be exhilarating, but lack of discipline can bring trouble. For example, over half of college students are sedentary for 10+ hours a day.
- About 60% of college students drink alcohol to some degree. If you drink, always do so safely. Know your tolerance, record drinks with a tally or buddy system, and know the symptoms of alcohol poisoning.





IS TOO MUCH  
FREEDOM UNHEALTHY  
FOR YOU?



# CRITIQUE

-THE TWO-HEADED OWL-

A class as common as they are important. Often perched overhead, waiting to offer their wisdom. One head always speaks positively, the other deals in criticism. Can be either remarkably slow to speak or difficult to silence, so patience is a must in all encounters.

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- You should expect multiple rounds of written or oral critique for almost every assignment that you complete in college.
- The best critiques avoid simple value judgements like "it's good" or "I don't like it", they must also explore why. An artist should be prepared to justify any of their visual or conceptual choices.





WERE ALL YOUR CHOICES  
MADE FOR A REASON?

CAN YOU ACTUALLY  
HANDLE CRITICISM?

CAN ART BE  
MEANINGLESS?

WHY? WHY? WHY?  
WHY? WHY? WHY?  
WHY? WHY? WHY?

# MENTAL HEALTH

-THE VOLATILE COMPANIONS-

Mysterious animal spirits who form strong bonds with their masters.

They require varying levels of regular care, or may become irritable and dangerous. Taming them makes all other challengers easier to battle.

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- About 20% of adults in the US have some form of mental illness. In ages 18-25, that number is closer to 30%. The most common disorders are forms of depression and anxiety.
- Unfortunately, despite a growing need for counseling and specialized mental health services, therapy centers on and off campus remain understaffed.



ARE YOU CAPABLE OF  
BEING KIND TO YOURSELF?



# EXHAUSTION

- THE QUICKSAND PIT -

Deep pits of carnivorous quicksand, scattered throughout the forest. They ensnare anything too tired to escape, and drain them of all remaining energy. The higher your health when you encounter this trap, the more likely you are to avoid its grasp.

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It's very normal to get overwhelmed. But chronic exhaustion can cause serious, lasting health problems. Know the symptoms of burnout and reserve time every day to relax. Many colleges also offer affordable mental health services.



WHAT IS STOPPING YOU  
FROM PRIORITIZING YOUR  
HEALTH?



# FRIENDSHIP


-THE BINDING MIST-

A widespread mist which carries with it an aura of happiness. Enemies are rare in its presence, and those who wander into it rarely leave without company.

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- Having healthy social support has been shown to improve resilience to stress and improve mental health.
- A great way to make friends in college is by participating in extra-curricular activities. And if you're feeling brave, the dining hall is another good place to initiate conversations.





WHAT QUALITIES DO  
YOU REQUIRE IN A  
FRIEND?

ARE YOU A  
GOOD FRIEND?



# PORTFOLIO


- BAG OF HOLDING -

Bottomless bags in which Assignments and other personal projects can be stored. Building a large portfolio will help in your negotiations with Networking and will repel Unemployment.

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- A good professional portfolio will demonstrate breadth and expertise. It should show your artistic strengths, so be picky about what you include. And be patient! Portfolios take a long time to build.
- Portfolio formatting varies by trade and by school. Research and apply the portfolio expectations for whatever specific career, contest, or university you're interested in applying to.





CAN  
YOU DEFINE  
YOUR ARTISTIC  
STYLE?

HOW DO YOU  
SEPARATE  
GOOD AND BAD  
ART?


# DEBT

-THE DEAL MAKER-

A particularly fearsome foe for many students. You must make a deal with him to enter the forest, and he may follow you for a long time after you leave. He has strict principles and cannot be outsmarted.

- Just one year of tuition from a public US university averages \$10-12,000 for in-state students. Out of state tuition is usually upwards of \$25,000. Room+board, supplies, and transportation can double these costs.
- 8 in 10 Americans say they've made serious personal sacrifices to pay off their loans.
- Before turning to loans, consider full or dual enrolment at a community college, scholarships, grants, and filling out the FAFSA to improve chances of getting aid.





IS A DEGREE  
WORTH THE COST?

HOW WILL YOU  
PAY ME?

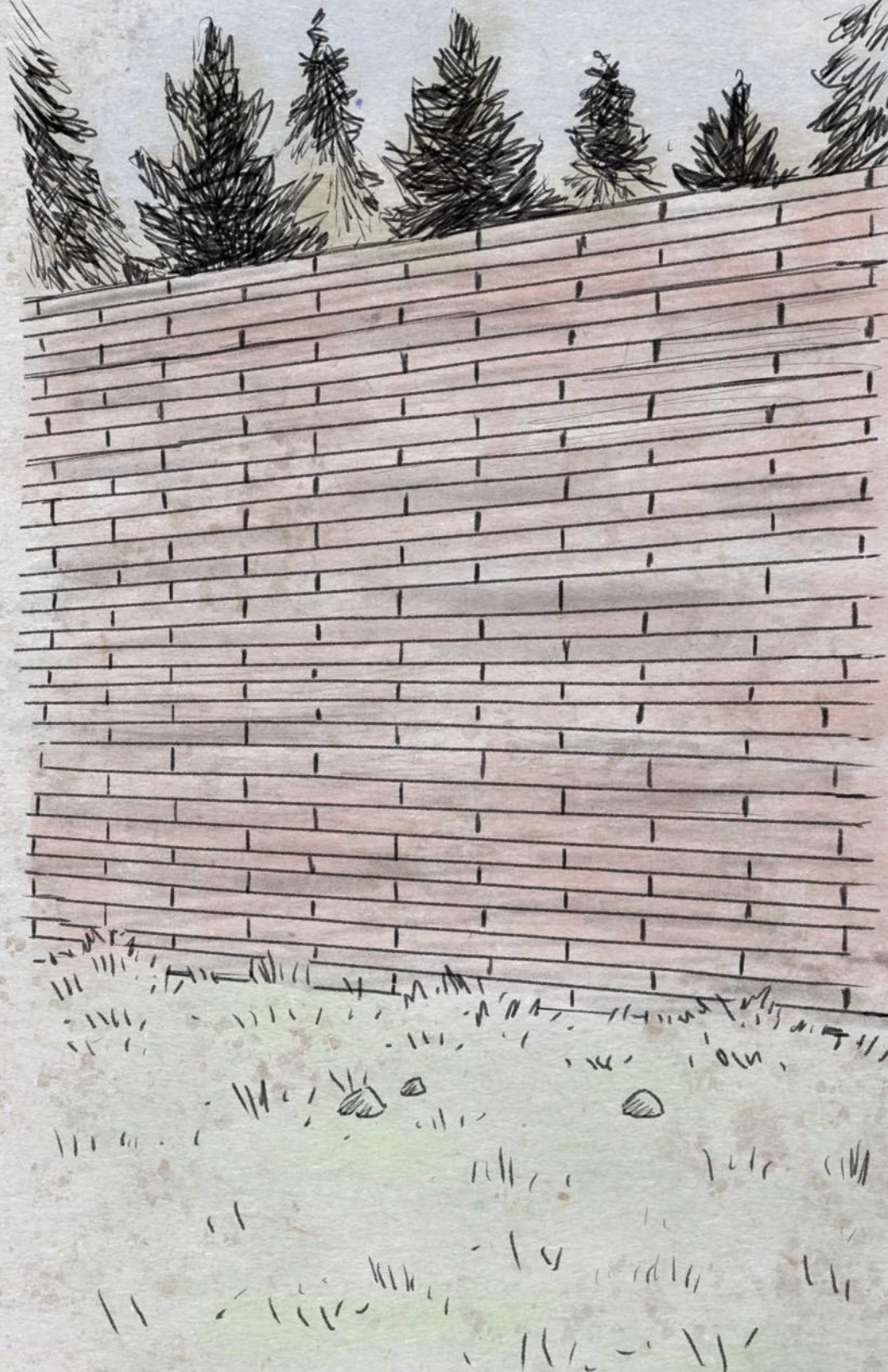
# ART BLOCK


-THE FEARSOME OBSTACLE-

Throughout the forest, you'll find impasses of many forms. They may manifest as a large pit of snakes, a stone wall stretching for miles, an entire dungeon, and more. However, they're always conquerable. Patience, rest, friends, and creative problem-solving are invaluable tools for this challenge.

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There are many exercises to help get past creative blocks of all kinds. Try freewriting, looking at things that usually get you inspired, doing a master study, or just waiting it out.





WHAT USUALLY HELPS  
YOU COME UP WITH NEW  
IDEAS?

WHAT QUALITIES OF  
YOUR WORK MAKE IT FEEL  
LIKE A SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

# NETWORKING

-THE WEB WEAVER-

A giant arachnid with a warm smile. Approach her with respect and maybe a gift or song, and she'll bestow a strand of silk from her web to help you on your way. With her connections, you'll go far!

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- In a recent survey of 15,000+ professionals, over 80% said networking was important to their career success.
- 70% of people in 2016 were hired at a company where they had a connection.
- "Weak ties" are as important as strong ones! A Stanford study found acquaintances are crucial in networking, as they're more likely to have different social connections. Spend time meeting people from diverse industries!





WOULD YOU SACRIFICE  
HONESTY FOR  
LIKEABILITY?

WHAT WILL YOU  
DO IF YOUR  
EFFORTS RESULT IN  
NOTHING?




# ELITISM

— DEBT'S HENCHMAN —

A one-eyed creature in a golden suit, feet hovering just above the ground. Extremely shrewd and self-serving, he can offer you riches and power - but only if he has something to gain from it.

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- After subtracting the average amount of student aid, 7 of the top 10 most expensive universities in the US are art schools. Higher education is increasingly inaccessible.
  - The socioeconomic status someone is born into tends to be where they stay. Financial instability is strongly correlated to worse health and much more.





DO YOU REALLY  
CONTROL YOUR  
LIFE?

HOW MUCH  
OF YOUR SUCCESS IS  
ATTRIBUTABLE TO PRIVILEGE  
INSTEAD OF DIRECT EFFORTS?

# BIAS


## -THE GATEKEEPERS-

cloaked in darkness, they preside over entryways. When not trying to keep people out, they're making big promises of power. But be careful not to do business with them, as there is always a high cost. Exposing them to light may cause them to shrink away.

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- The US is 63% white, but arts graduates are 81% white. Further, the US is about 12% black and 18% Hispanic, but these groups only comprise 4% and 6% of US arts graduates, respectively.
- The top 18 museums in the US showcase artists who are 85% white and 87% male. The worst represented group is women of color - 20% of the US population but just 1% of the artists in major collections.





DOES IDENTITY  
ALWAYS IMPACT  
ONE'S ART?

HOW ARE  
YOU BIASED  
AGAINST OTHERS?

# UNEMPLOYMENT


-THE LURKER-

An amorphous blob with undying hunger. When nearby, it lurks in the shadows, ever present in your peripheral vision. It will target anyone, but particularly the vulnerable and isolated. Once absorbed, it's difficult to escape without help from those on the outside - so try to have friends at your side when this beast is near!

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- Only 10% of arts graduates nationally make their primary earning as working artists.
- Art degrees do tend to result in lower paying jobs.
- Of working artists, only 16% have arts degrees. About 40% have no degree at all.
- Even if you don't end up working in an art-related field, the knowledge and growth obtained through your studies will influence how you interpret and move through the world. Once an artist, always an artist!





DO YOU  
REALLY WANT TO  
TURN YOUR PASSION  
INTO A JOB?

# CREATIVE GROWTH

## -THE ANGEL-

A beautiful cloud of bright, swirling colors. Though its appearance can be scary, it is a gentle being. It can be summoned through any manner of creative expression, and takes offerings of art in exchange for skill improvement and clarity of mind.

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- An experienced artist is likely to consider composition, color theory, texture, detail, values, story, context, and much more. But a beginner should practice these skills one at a time, and add them into their later work once familiar.
- Iteration is your best friend! The first version of an idea is rarely the best.



WHAT HELPS AND  
HINDERS YOU TO GROW  
CREATIVELY?





And at the end  
of it all...



...There's so much more to come!



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