

The New American Dream

I am investigating the consequences of capitalism that affect employee's lives as well as individual's roles within families. In my work, I aim to present issues of late capitalism¹ through exaggerated perspectives that capture the viewer. I hope for the viewer to engage and contemplate the piece rather than accepting it at face value. As a natural pessimist, my ideas are shown by negative aspects of late capitalism. I stay infatuated with this idea because I have seen these effects first-hand and can relate to them.

I believe in this system of late capitalism it is so easy to pick out its downfalls and put them up for observation in front of an audience. We all have anecdotes to a way it has negatively affected us whether it be leaving work to care for sick children and being threatened to be fired for it or general fear of loss of our job over minute things. I believe that is enough reason to prove that our suspicions of capitalism are not without warrant. If we feel so much insecurity with our jobs as we are just pawns for profit, there seems to be a bigger issue at play. While I recognize it is not all bad, I am making a conscious effort to focus on the bad to further the piece's intention: which is to make the viewer weary of their part in this system.

My ideas are presented through a large-scale painting to be meticulously detailed as a reminder of the dangerous sides of capitalism. The piece starts by telling a story of individuals being excited to become part of the workforce, spending their whole lives building up to it, however, after all this effort, what awaits behind it is a mostly corrupt landscape of problems. In the original intention of the piece, there was meant to be an interactive aspect in which I present viewers with two toy capsule machines. This would offer people a choice to participate in the very system I warn them about in the painting. By obtaining 50 cents from the viewer, the piece would offer up a small print in a capsule. By playing into this scenario, I am exploiting the very idea of consumerism just as is done in real life. Viewers would be encouraged to buy something they don't need just because they want to own more. As a last warning, the back of the print would contain business card information which encourages the idea of shameless self-promotion, which is often practiced in today's capitalistic affairs. Both seeing and reading pieces from other scholars has made me feel it is my duty as an artist to also make work that challenges social beliefs that are not truly for the betterment of all of society. It also begs a question of where artists stand in this while trying to make work: is it for profit or for purpose? I continue to investigate these ideas within my work, and they help keep me curious moving forward.

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