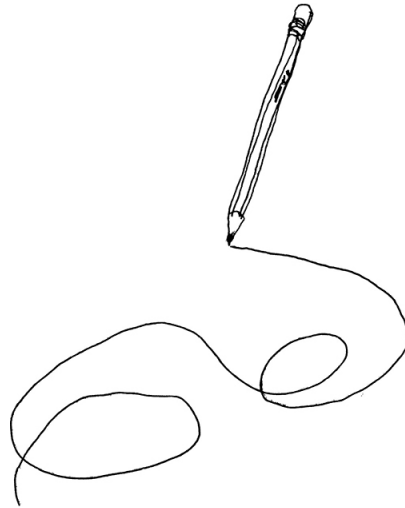


JOHN WATERS

MAKE

TROUBLE

Make Trouble



JOHN WATERS

Illustrated by Eric Hanson

ALGONQUIN BOOKS OF CHAPEL HILL 2017

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Make Trouble

About John Waters



John Waters was invited to
address a recent graduating
class of the Rhode Island
School of Design.

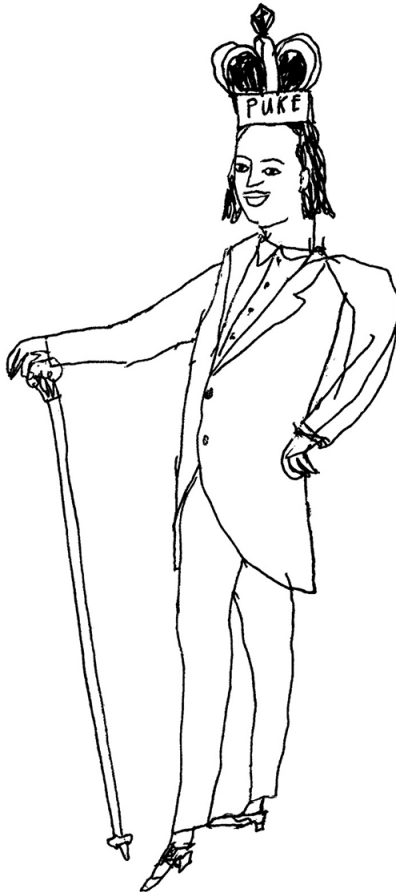
This is his speech.

I should say right off that I am really qualified to be your commencement speaker.

I was suspended from high school, then kicked out of college in the first marijuana scandal ever on a university campus. I've been arrested several times.



I've been known to dress in ludicrous fashions. I've also built a career out of negative reviews, and have been called the Prince of Puke by the press.



And most recently a title I'm really
proud of:

The People's Pervert

I am honored to be here today with my people.



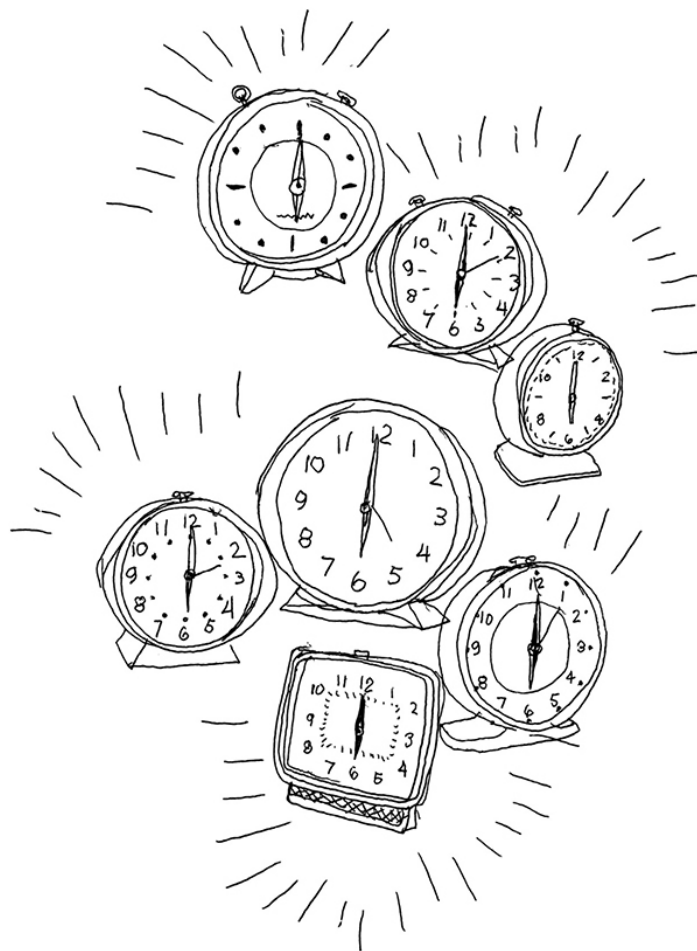
Okay,

I'M SUPPOSED TO INSPIRE YOU.

HOW'S THIS?

Somehow I've been able to make a living
doing what I love best for fifty years
without ever having to get a real job.

“But how can you be so disciplined?” friends always ask when I tell them my job is to get up every day at 6 a.m. Monday to Friday and think up insane stuff.

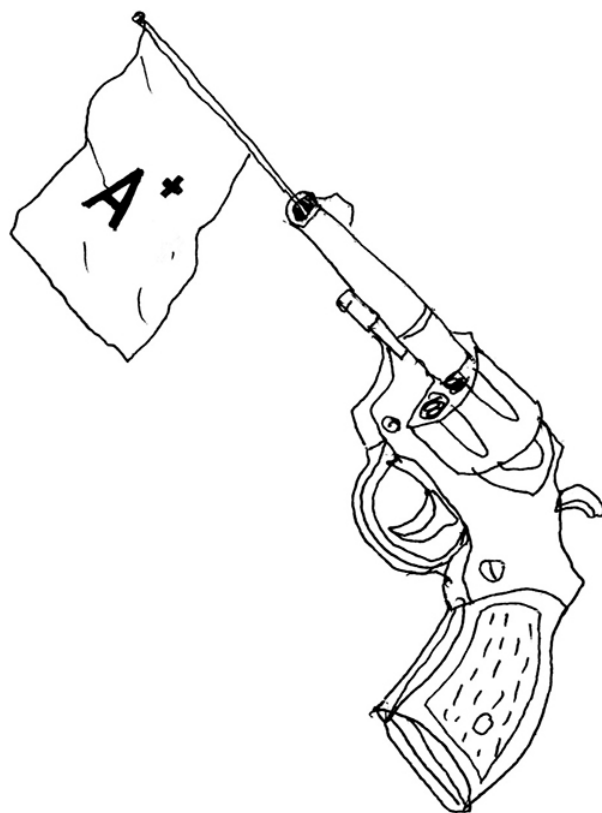


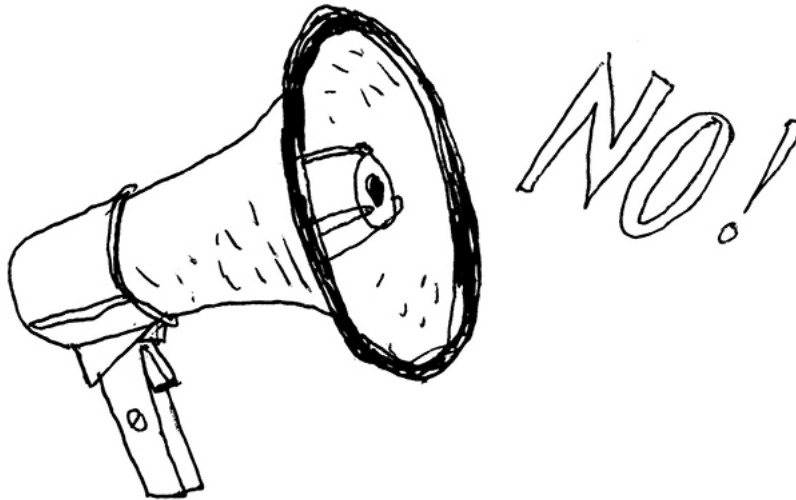
Easy! If I didn't work this hard for myself, I'd have to go work for somebody else. Plus, I can go to my office one room away from my bedroom in my own house dressed in my underpants if I want to.



You're lucky.

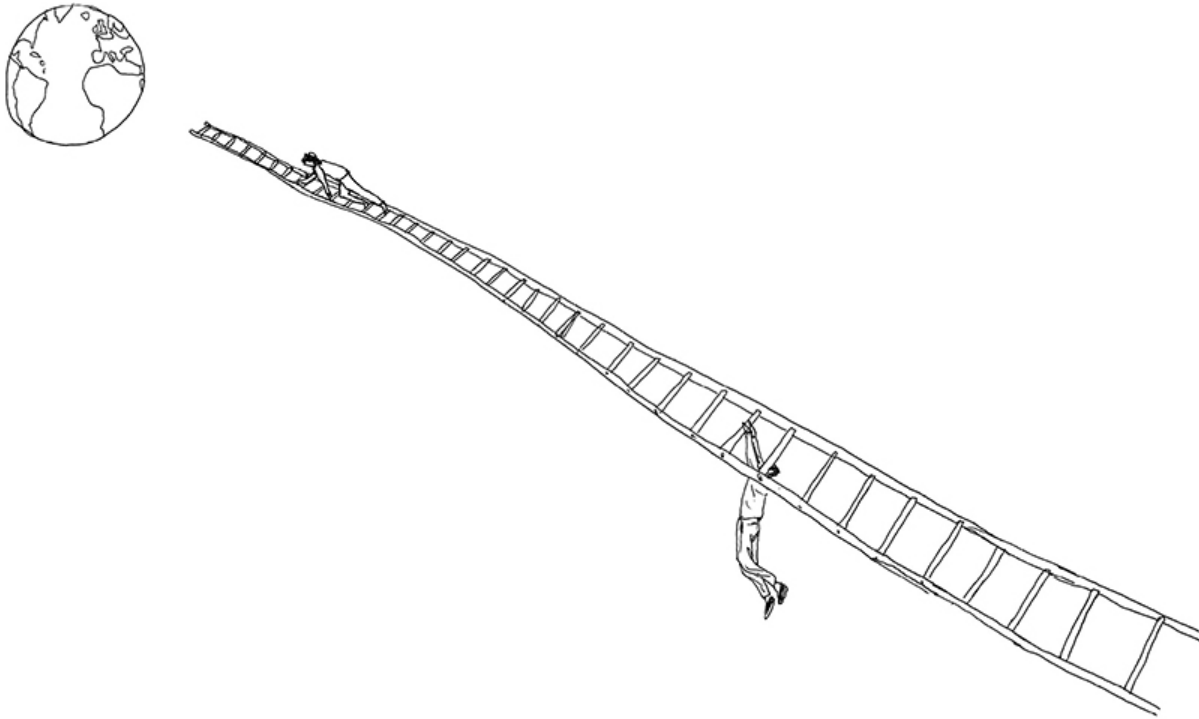
When I went to school, my teachers discouraged every dream I ever had. I wanted to be the filthiest person alive, but no school would let me. Today, you could possibly even make a snuff movie in college and get an A+.





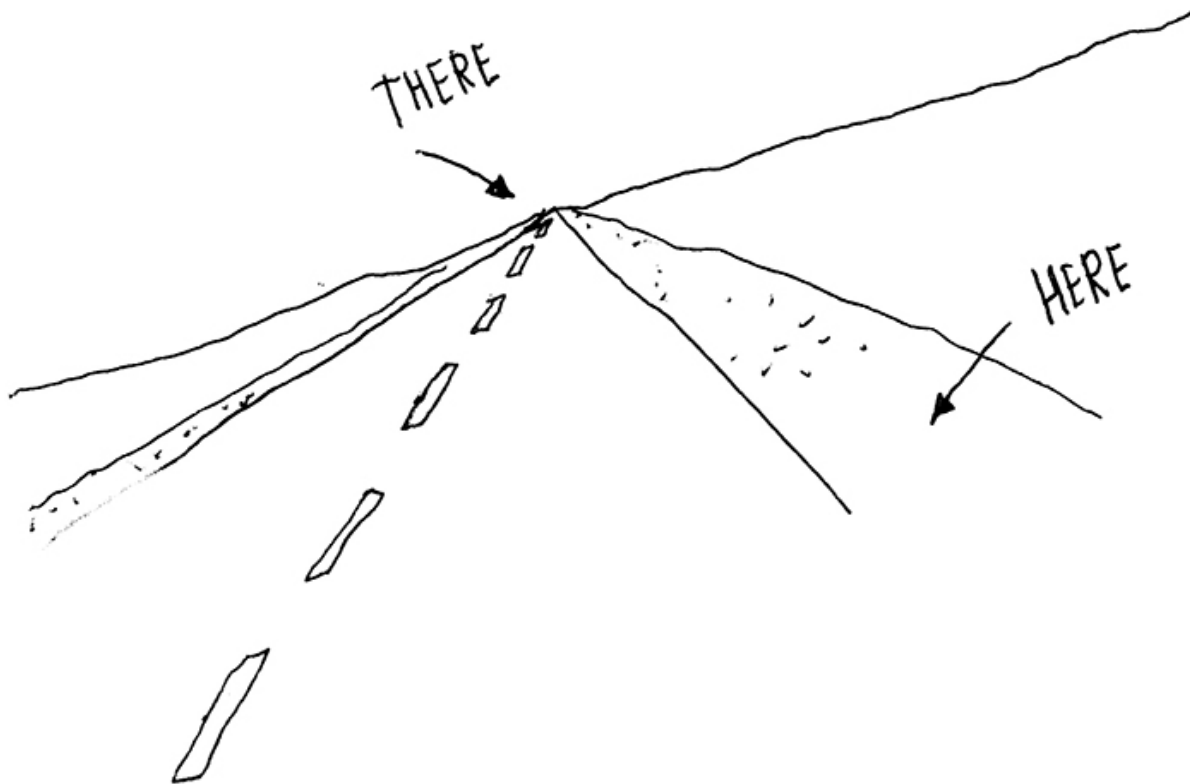
Hopefully you have been taught never to
fear rejection in the workplace.

Remember, a “no” is free.



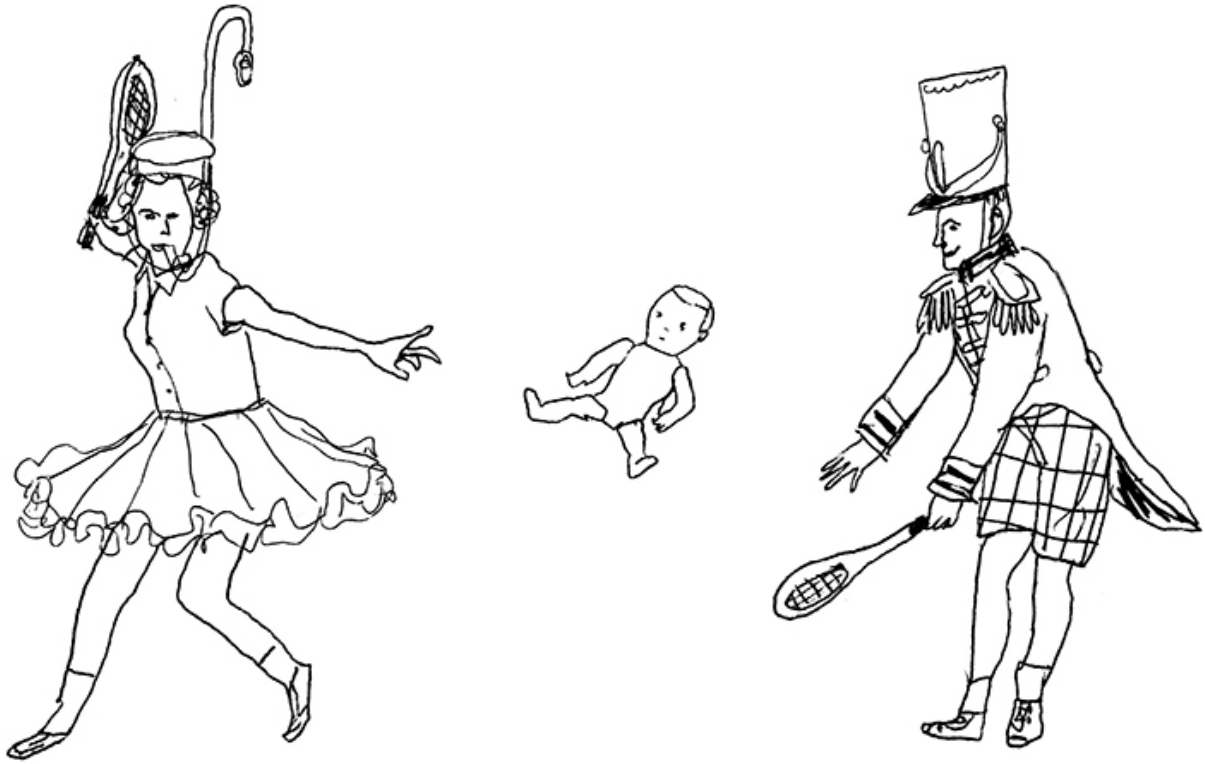
Ask for the world and pay no mind if you are initially turned down.

A career in the arts is like a hitchhiking trip: All you need is one person to say “get in,” and off you go.



And then the confidence begins.

Of course, play is equally as important to your education as work.



And in the fine arts, play is work, isn't it?



What other field allows you to deduct as business expenses from your taxes gangsta rap, Gaspar Noé's movies, even vintage porn as long as you use it for research?

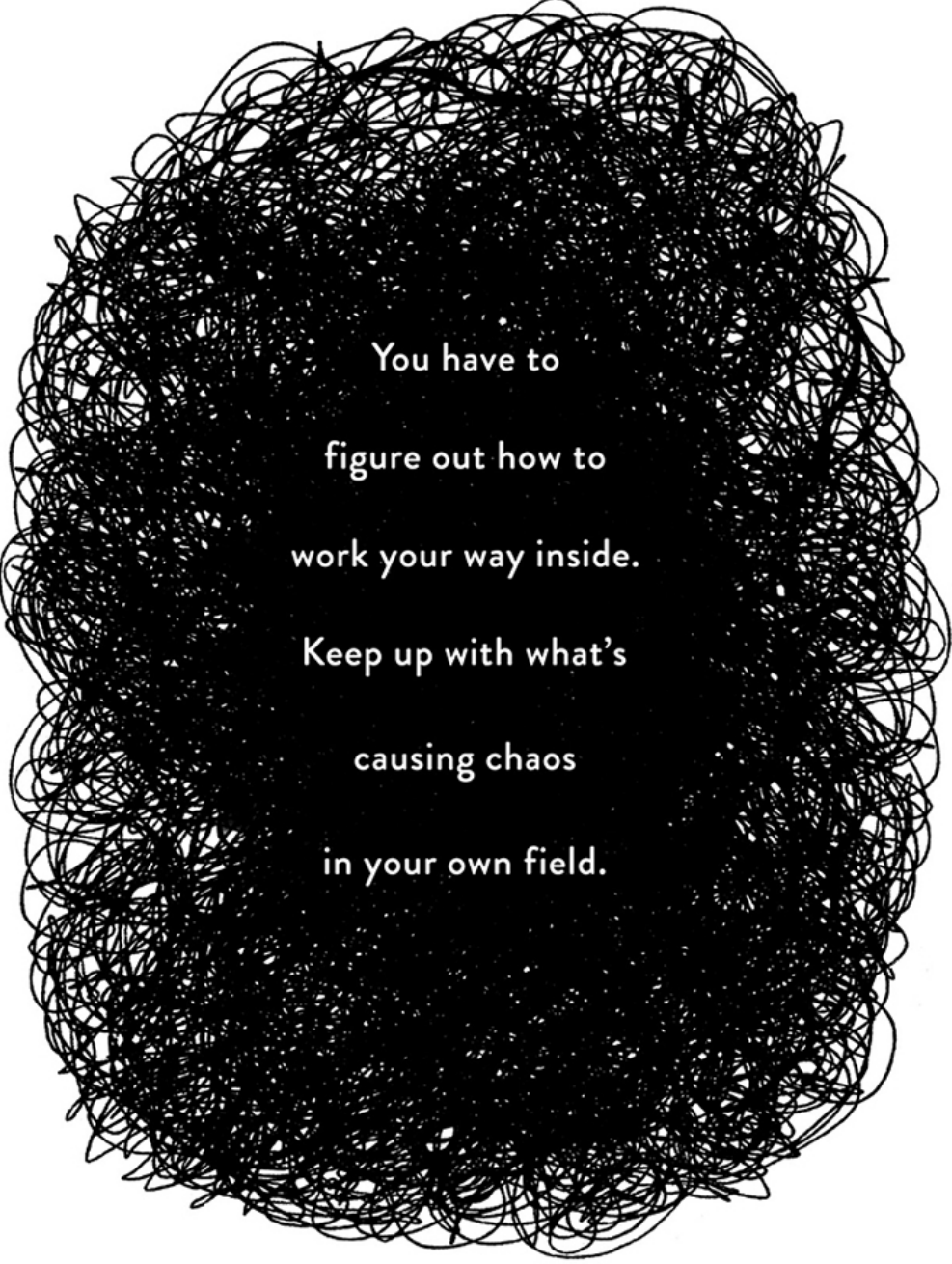


REMEMBER: you must participate in the creative world you want to become part of.

So what if you have talent?

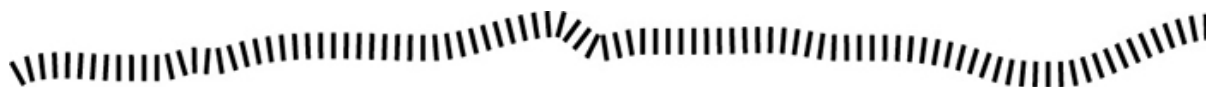


THEN WHAT?



You have to
figure out how to
work your way inside.
Keep up with what's
causing chaos
in your own field.

If you're a visual artist, go see the shows
in the galleries that are frantically
competing to find the one bad
neighborhood left in Manhattan to open
up in.



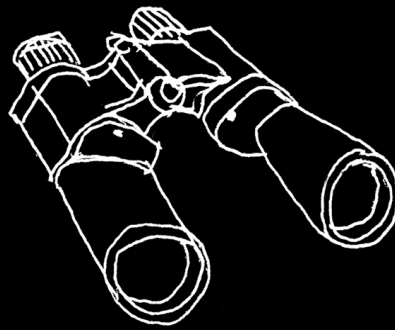
Watch every movie that gets a negative
review in the *New York Times* and figure
out what the director did wrong. Or right!



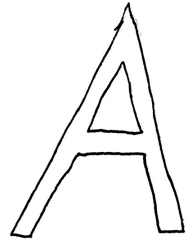
Read, read, read!



Watch people on the streets.



**SPY,
BE NOSY,
EAVESDROP.**

A large, stylized outline of the letter 'A' in a simple, hand-drawn font.

nd, as you get older, you'll need youth spies that will keep you abreast of new music that nobody your age has heard of yet or body-piercing mutilations that are becoming all the rage—even budding sexually transmitted diseases you should go to any length to avoid.



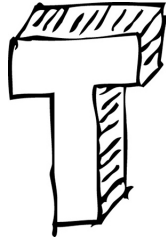
ever be like some of my generation who say, "We had more fun in the sixties." No, we didn't! The kids today who still live with their parents (who haven't seen them in months but leave food outside their bedroom doors) are having just as much fun shutting down the governments of foreign countries on their computer as we did banning the bomb.

• •
Today may be the end of
• •
your juvenile delinquency,
• • •
but it should also be the
• • • •
first day of your new adult
•
disobedience.

These days, everybody wants to
be

AN OUTSIDER,

politically correct to a fault.



hat's good. I hope you *are* working to end racism, sexism, ageism, fatism. But is that enough? Isn't being an outsider sooo last year? I mean, maybe it's time to throw caution to the wind, *really* shake things up, and reinvent yourself as a new version of your most dreaded enemy:

THE INSIDER.

Like I am.

HA!

The final irony—a creatively
crazy person who finally gets
power.

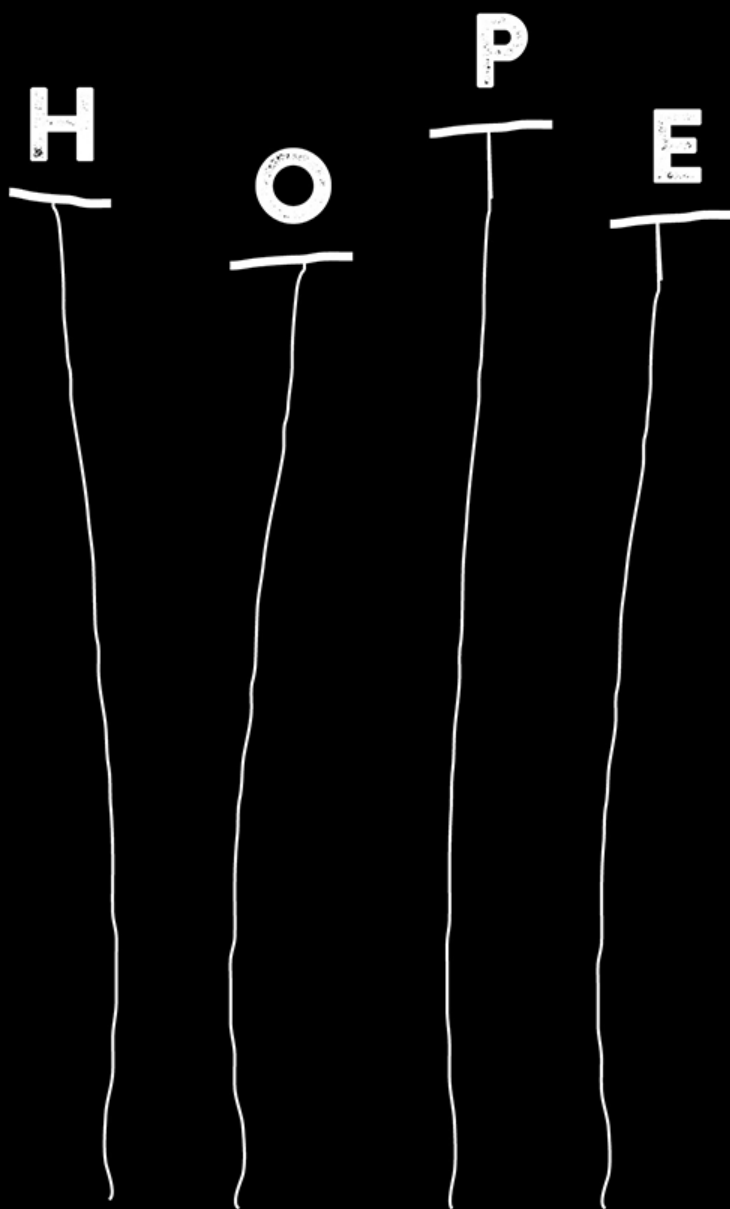
Think about it: I didn't change. Society did.

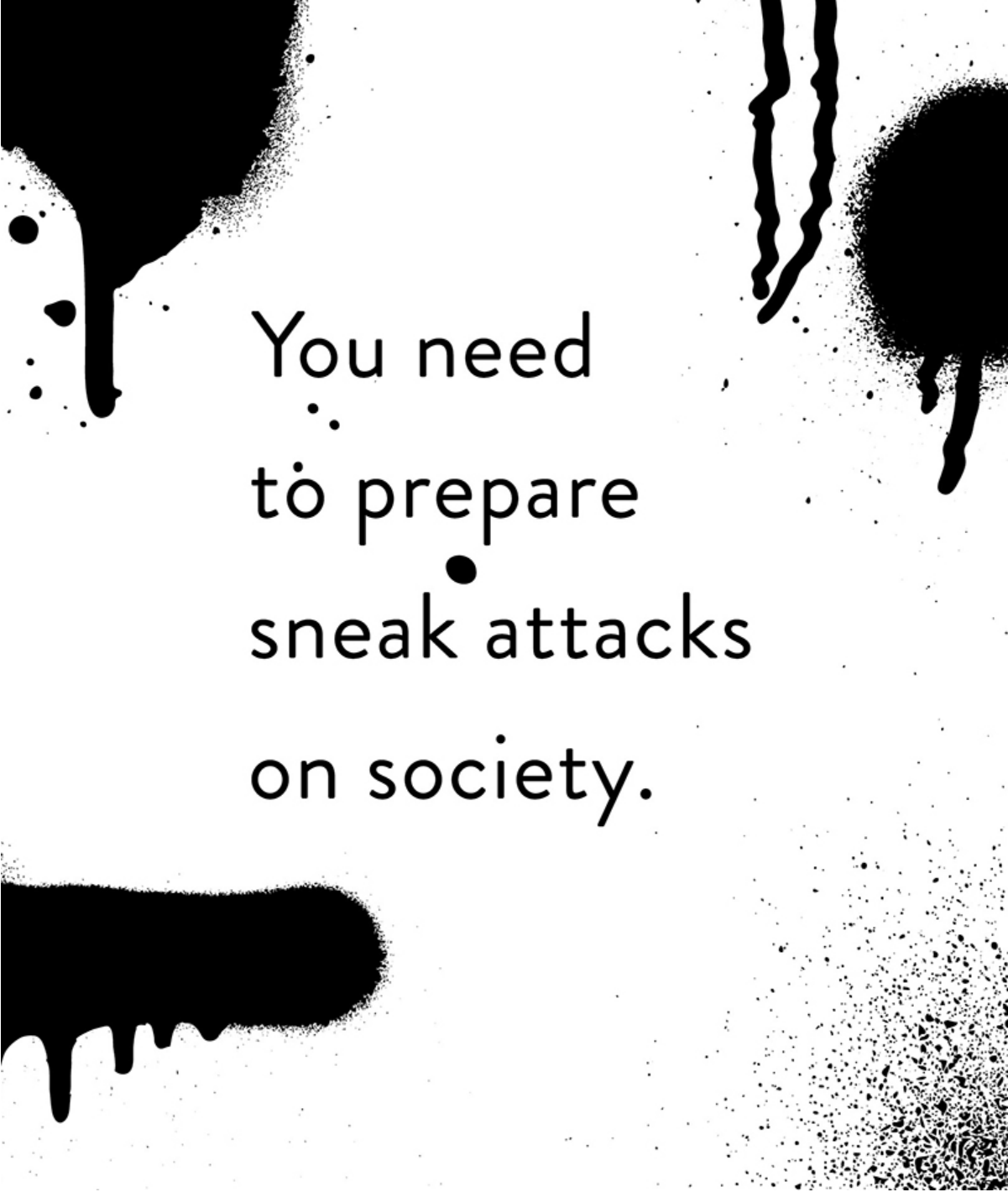
Who would have ever thought a top college would invite a filth elder like myself to set an example to its students?



See? There's hope for
everybody.

H O P E



The image features a white background with several large, abstract black ink splatters and drips. One large splash is in the top left, another in the top right, and a third in the bottom left. The drips are thick and irregular, creating a sense of movement and chaos. The text is centered in the middle of the page.

You need
to prepare
sneak attacks
on society.

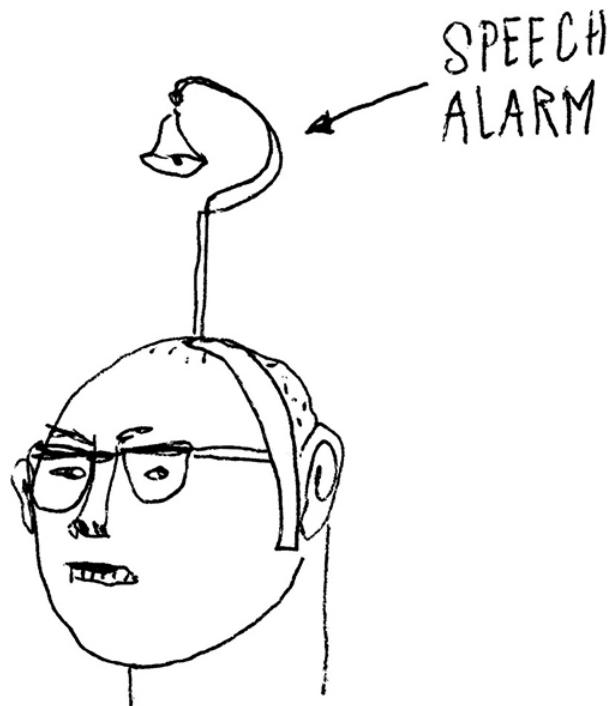
Hairspray is the only really devious movie I ever made. The musical based on it is now being performed in practically every high school in America—and nobody seems to notice it's a show with two men singing a love song to each other that also encourages white teen girls to date black guys. *Pink Flamingos* was preaching to the converted.

But *Hairspray* is a Trojan horse: it snuck into Middle America and never got caught. You can do the same thing.

Listen to your political enemies,
especially the smart ones, and
then figure out a way to make
them laugh.

Nobody likes a bore on a soapbox.

Humor is always the best defense *and* weapon. If you can make an idiot laugh, they'll at least pause and listen before they do something stupid . . . to you.



Refuse to isolate yourself. Separatism is for losers.

Gay is not enough anymore. It's a good start, but I don't want my memoirs to be in the gay section near true crime at the back of the bookstore next to the bathrooms. No! I want it up front with the best sellers. And don't heterosexual kids actually receive more prejudice in art schools today than the gay ones? Things are a-changing. It's a confusing time.

TRIGGER

|||||

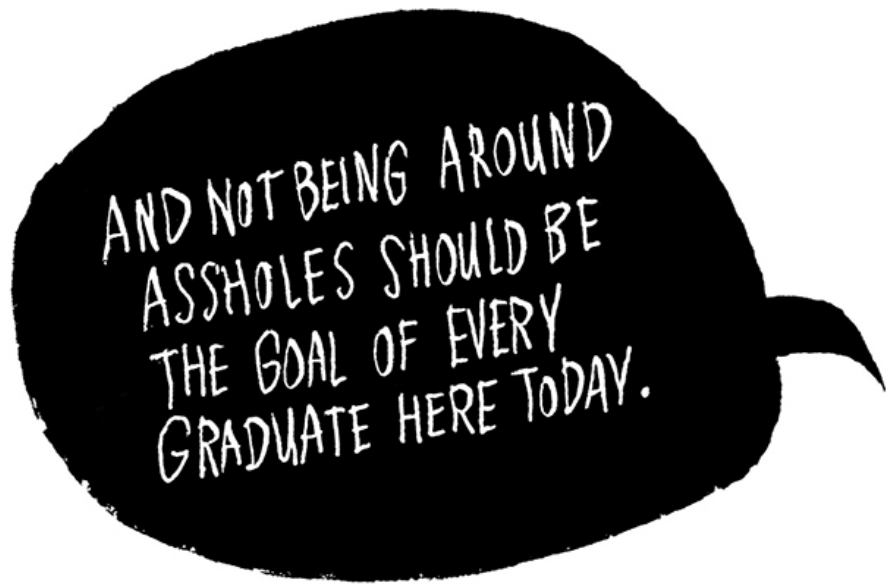
This might be time for a trigger warning—the amazing concept I’ve heard about in which you’re supposed to warn students if you’re going to talk about something that challenges their values. I thought that’s why you *went* to college. My whole life has been a trigger warning. But you have been warned. So the trigger warning is in effect, and now back to the prepared speech.

|||||

WARNING

Don't hate all rich people. They're not all awful. Believe me, I know some evil poor people, too.





I'm rich! I don't mean money-wise. I mean that I have figured out how to never be around assholes at any time in my personal and professional life. That's rich.

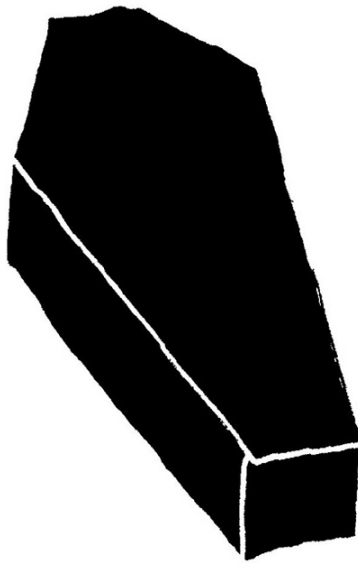
It's okay to hate the poor, too, but only the poor of spirit, not wealth.

A poor person to me can have a big bank balance, but is uncurious, judgmental, isolated, and unavailable to change.



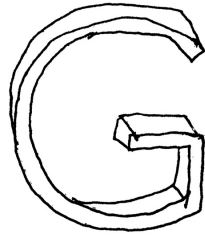
I'm also sorry to report there's no such thing as karma.

So many of my talented, great friends are dead and so many of the fools I've met and loathed are still alive. It's not fair, and it never will be.



Parents, now it's time to talk to
you.





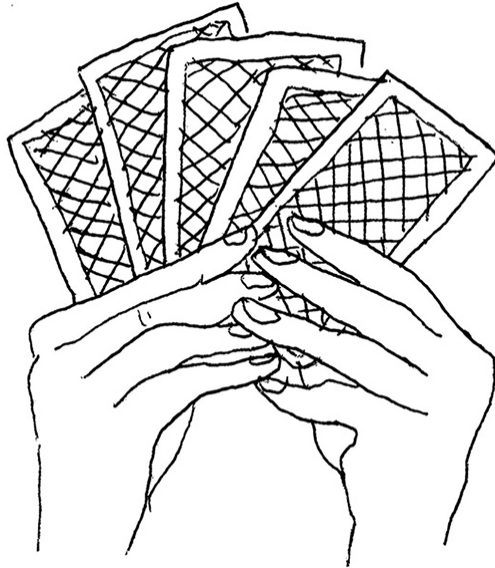
od, these kids can be brats, can't they? Entitled little bastards. Do they think you're made of money. Can't they give you a second to adjust to such social changes as sexual reassignment surgery, horn implants, and the political rights of the adult-baby community?

And, young adults, maybe today
is the day you

STOP

blaming your parents for every
problem you've ever had.

Whining is never appealing
in a college graduate.



Yes, it's a drag you were kept locked in a
cardboard box under their bed and
whipped daily with a car aerial, but it's
time to move on. We've all been dealt a
hand. Deal with it!

And, parents, vice versa:
You don't get to order up
your kids, either.





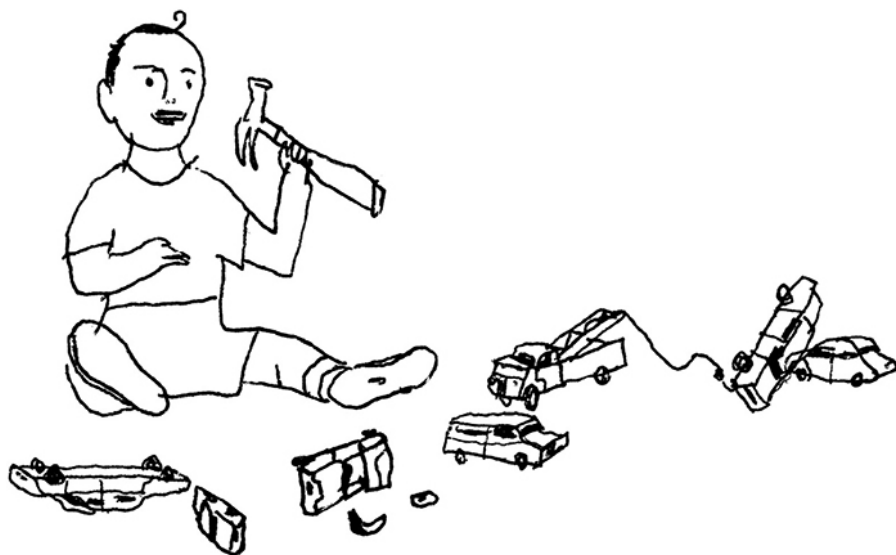
Maybe your daughter did tattoo her entire face. Well, work with what you got! Think positively: maybe she'll open a fancy tattoo parlor in Paris.

I'm touched to sometimes see distraught parents bringing their angry and defiant teenage children with them to see my spoken-word show in a last-ditch effort to bond. At least both sides are trying.

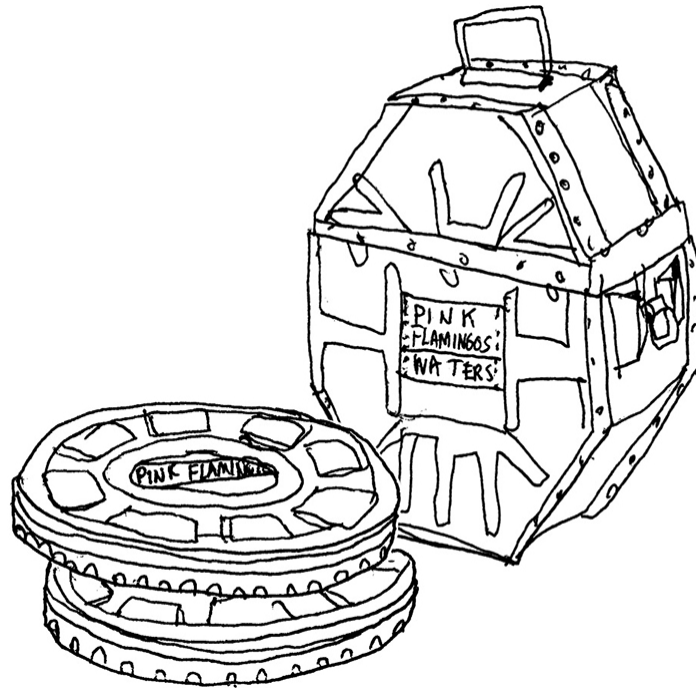
The truce of maturity will come
to families if every member is
patient.



I often look back in wonder at how understanding my parents were. Dr. Spock didn't have a chapter in his child-rearing book on how to handle your son if all he wanted to do as a child was play "car accident." Yet my mom took me to junkyards as a toddler and let me wander around fantasizing ghoulishly.



My dad even lent me the money to make *Pink Flamingos*, and I paid him back in full—with interest. But, looking back, did I really expect him to be thrilled that I had made one of the “most vile, stupid, and repulsive films ever made,” as *Variety* called it?



My parents made me feel
safe, and that's why I'm up
here today.

That's what you should try to do for your
kids, too—no matter *where* you get your
children these days.



CONTEMPORARY ART'S JOB IS TO

WRECK

WHAT CAME BEFORE.

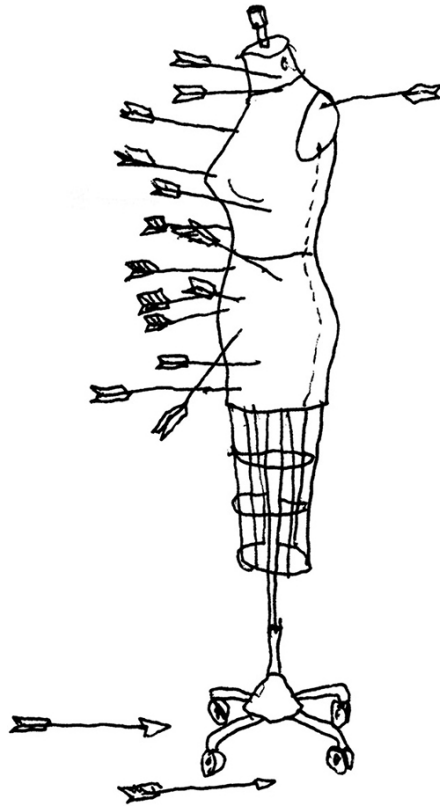
Is there a better job description than that to aspire to?

Here's another
TRIGGER WARNING
and pardon me for swearing:

Go out in the world and fuck it up
beautifully.

DESIGN

clothes so hideous that they *can't* be
worn ironically.



HORRIFY

us with new ideas.



OUTRAGE

outdated critics



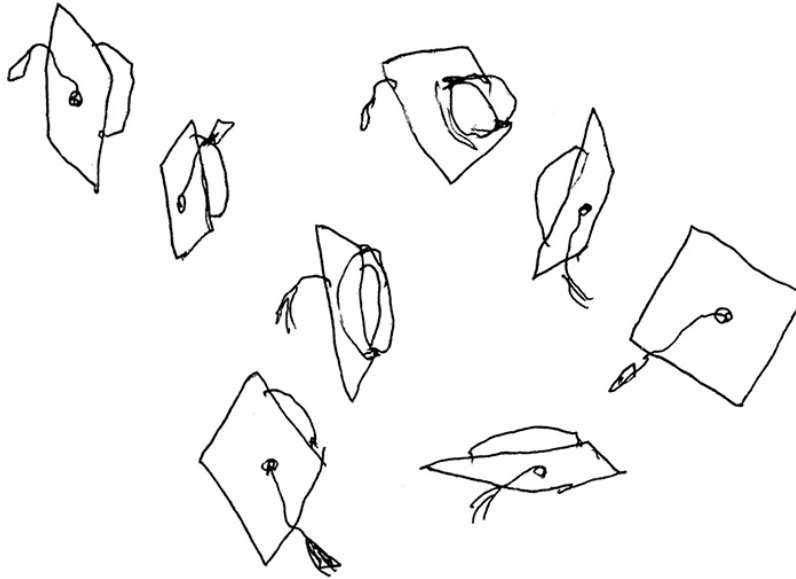
USE TECHNOLOGY

for transgression, not lazy social living.

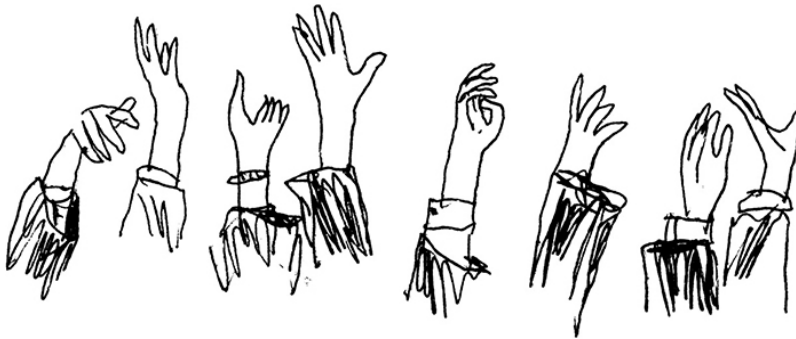
MAKE ME

NERVOUS!

**AND FINALLY,
COUNT YOUR
BLESSINGS.**



You got through college. You didn't
commit suicide, OD, or have a nervous
breakdown, and let's remember the ones
who did.



It's time to

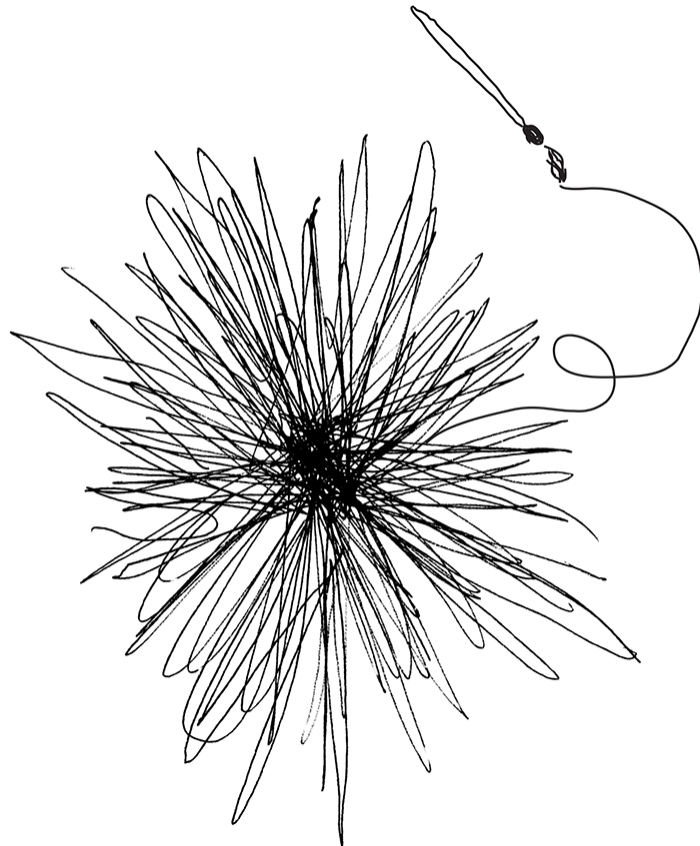
get busy.

It's your turn

to make trouble.

But this time in the real
world. And this time from
the inside.

Thank you very much.





JOHN WATERS is a filmmaker, writer, actor, and visual artist best known for the films *Pink Flamingos*, *Serial Mom*, and *Hairspray*, which was adapted into a long-running Broadway musical. The author of seven books, among them the *New York Times* bestsellers *Carsick* and *Role Models*, he performs his one-man, spoken-word shows regularly in the United States and abroad. Waters lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Please visit maketrouble.com for more information.



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