College makes everything seem certain for the art-inclined. It prepares you for the real world, but at the same time gives a false sense of security as it also shelters you from reality. It’s so easy to offer unflinching answers to questions such as ‘What are you gonna do after graduation?’ in a classroom full of young idealists. College students sometimes tend to be oneironauts floating around in the lucid realms of consciousness, where pigs could fly and everything is possible. But reality sets in when you find yourself cleaning tables or making cafe lattes that fuel the outlandish conversations of the hipster intelligentsia. Quotes from people you admire, the books you’ve read and all the movies you’ve watched are all that supply resolutions to your post-college quandaries, and you realize how unoriginal you are— a cheap reproduction of a masterpiece. Perhaps out of self-pity, you might eventually find yourself contemplating a faustian bargain— your soul in exchange of success in your preferred industry, or  maybe even just a few extra dollars to get you out of a ramen diet.

Art is the human need to express the abstractions of imagination and emotion. It does not have a set formula for success. The thought of art as a fluid entity-- taking the shape of whoever creates it, is comforting but at the same time intimidating, especially if you take art beyond its personal function and into commercial territories where it becomes subject to other’s people’s judgment. Who would have thought that Duchamp’s L.H.O.O.Q, the mustached Mona Liza—a brazen act of protest against the art institution, would ironically become a celebrated artwork? But would Duchamp’s art have been recognized at all if he wasn’t already famous? If you did exactly the same thing, do you think it would be easy for people to imagine it hanging in a gallery, or would they see it more appropriate for a flea market bargain selling for five dollars? That thought would make you wonder what you need to do to succeed in this field when you don’t know where your planned career is headed at this point. You might someday find yourself washing dishes or begging in the streets, or perhaps you’d find yourself donning a necktie one day—that condescending corporate noose you have long abhorred to wear. But who knows, you also might just end up seeing everything unfold like the way you wanted it to.  It’s strange though, that to most artists, their eagerness to earn money, is still mostly due to their need to keep making art.