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DIY UTOPIA

CULTURAL IMAGINATION AND THE
REMAKING OF THE POSSIBLE

Edited by **AMBER DAY**



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At first glance, contemporary popular culture, filled with bleak images of the future, seems to have given up on the possibility of positive collective change. Below the surface, however, alternative culture is rife with artist-led projects, activist movements, and subcultural communities of interest that seek to spark the collective imagination and to encourage hunger for alternatives. More playfully self-conscious than past utopian movements, today's are often whimsical or ironic, but are still entirely earnest. Artists invite us to re-author city maps, or archive individual ideas for the future, while maker collectives urge us to rethink our relationship to consumer goods. All seem to have grown out of a similar do-it-yourself ethos and alternative culture. One of the central conflicts informing these case studies is that while it remains immensely difficult to envision anything outside of the current system of consumer capitalism, there is nevertheless a powerful desire to take it apart in piecemeal ways. We see the longing for new social and political narratives, new forms of communion and sociability, and new imaginings of the possible, longings that are currently unmet by mainstream culture, but that are taking expression in myriad ways at the local level. Taken as a whole, this collection examines what our grand ideals and playful daydreams tell us about ourselves.

This volume showcases the creative practices and collectively imagined worlds that constitute, in Day's words, 'homemade strivings for utopia.' Contributing to the nascent field of DIY studies, these explorations illustrate the intimate connections between art and politics, between Utopian visions and material practices of maker culture. (Megan Boler, professor at the Department of Social Justice Education, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto) About the Author Amber Day is associate professor in the English and Cultural Studies Department at Bryant University