...AND INTO AUTUMN

a second seasonal photo zine by Margaret Killjoy
Welcome to another over-priced personal zine and/or dirt-cheap photo book. My name is Magpie Kill-joy and I’m sort of a shy photographer.

Sometimes, the rudest thing you can do is pull out a camera. Particularly among my friends. In the mainstream world, photographing anything and everything you see is seen as a natural right. But in most radical cultures, it’s polite to ask, and asking isn’t just a formality; people often say no. The hobos and the freaks are used to the parasitic nature of photographers. They’re used to being co-opted by outsiders, and they’re not particularly about it. And to the anarchists, a photographer might be documenting something that is better left undocumented.

I dropped photography for more than half a decade because of things like this, and it’s been a slow process to get back into it. But I’ve come to realize that documenting ourselves, our world, and our struggles is important. We’re doing some beautiful things, and we need to let people know that. We can’t just keep ourselves hidden away, right? I think we’re onto something here: living adventurous lives, fighting oppression, treating each other as well as we can. That’s part of why I picked up a camera again.

But then again, most of the photos in this issue are just pretty photos of pretty things like caves and waterfalls. The world is an amazing, diverse, crazy place, and we need to stop destroying it.
I spent the height of summer, July and August, in Tucson, Arizona. The Earth First! Journal—a bimonthly paper that chronicles biocentrism and the resistance to ecocide—needed a short term editor (they always do, actually, you should consider it).

There’s an irony in defending the earth by sitting behind a computer for eight hours a day, but it’s not a hypocrisy. I spent my days writing, editing, doing layout, researching, interviewing, and generally doing anything that kept me out of the cursed summer sun. I don’t really know how folks stay active in 106° weather, to be honest.

But I had everything I needed to be happy and productive. I had friends, the best of whom brought me terrible, terrible, wonderful fantasy books almost every day. We had food from the trash and kick-downs from the co-op. We also had mice and houseflies and, when the swamp-cooler was acting up, mosquitoes.

But I felt like I was at the center of something. Passionate people, I’m telling you. The secret to life is to surround yourself by passionate people—it rubs off. Earth First! is kind of a mess, as a movement, full of in-fighting and nit-picking. But whenever things go down or blockades go up, people pull together and differences get put aside. Strangely, that’s one of the reasons we need to keep fighting: inertia. Helps us remember who our enemies are.

You kind of go a little loopy when you work in an office all day. I actually don’t know how people do it, day in and day out, particularly when you have a boss. As we moved into layout, during my second month there, beer-o-clock moved earlier and earlier. Houseflies aren’t nearly as annoying after a drink.
From what I can tell, most offices don’t let you drink on the job. Terrible shame. What’s more, most offices won’t let you stop whenever you want to race the chairs down the driveway. It’s no wonder the world is such a mess.

When I first moved to Tucson, I was kind of miserable. I wasn’t really into the heat. Visually, the dry, flat desert didn’t really do anything for me. But after about a week, the monsoons started and suddenly I understood why people like the southwest. Specifically, one sunset, sitting on my friend’s nearly flat roof (see, you can have a flat roof where there’s no snow to build up on it), watching the lightning over the mountains, only twenty miles distant. And when the storms came in, they turn half the sky one color, the rest another. The desert? It’s worth it.

We also had goats in the backyard. We were sort of housing them for a
homeless kid who hopped over our fence a few times a day to feed and walk them and whatnot. It was a curious arrangement.

One morning at five AM, I woke to a thundering of hooves through the backyard. I peeked out the window, and sure enough one of the goats had escaped and was running around like our yard was a racetrack. I went to go herd him back into his pen, and he walked into the house.

I don't make a good goatherd. At least, I'm not a natural.

After a half an hour or so, I coaxed him back into the pen and named him Papillon.

The day before I left, we drove up Mt. Lemmon and walked around a bit of Cascadia in Arizona. It turns out that the desert is full of sky islands: little isolated ecosystems at high elevation. Old growth Doug fir?

I turns out, I just needed to get to 2,500 feet to feel at home.
While I was busy sitting behind a computer, a friend was hiking through the desert with the group No More Deaths, leaving water for migrants. We were both playing to our strengths: they have emergency medical training, I uh, I publish things. I’m definitely not the one you’d want around in a crisis.

We drove from Tucson to Philly together, stopping for a few days here and there as we went. In a way, this is the worst way to see a place, when you’re only around for a night or two.

A different friend of mine, arguing against the itinerant lifestyle, put it like this: “If you want, you can walk every beach in the world. But it’s only once you stand still for fifteen minutes that the ghost crabs come out of their holes and scurry about, turning the beach into a living creature.”

And yeah, I prefer to stick around for a week or twelve, but we had places to be.

We stopped at Carlsbad Caverns, a national park in New Mexico. A part of me hates touristy caves, touristy parks, tourism in general. But this place is so beautiful. It has the largest open cavern room in the western hemisphere, and the place just drools with unique and wonderful things. So yes, there are handrails, and guards to keep people from screwing the place up. It’s worth it.

Unpictured, the place has 500,000 bats that come out of the cave at night.
Austin, Texas also has a ton of bats. We saw them too.

And Austin has Treasure City, an anarchist-run thrift store. I used to be a purist for free stores (still like them, of course), but by charging, just a little, Treasure City isn’t as intimidating a place for folks outside the anarchist scene. And their explicit purpose is to raise money for Books to Prisoners and other projects.

We left and drove to New Orleans, a frightening place filled with drunken idiots—and bizarre graveyards that truly look like cities of the dead. And crappy apartments of the dead.

From there to Asheville, North Carolina. “Where punks go to eat meat and have babies,” it’s been said. I’m not sure if they meant it as slander or not, but you can’t go wrong with radical DIY families. My friends’ baby learned to play drums before he learned to talk.
I spent about three years of my life attending major counter-summit demonstrations. That is, some particularly odious element of corporate globalization would meet, and a motley assortment of labor activists, anarchists, environmentalists, and the like—I myself included—would rise up to confront it. Tactically, I was never part of any of the winning fights (the most famous of which being the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999). I showed up, time and time again, only to be beaten back by the whole armed might of the militarized police state.

But strategically, we didn’t fare so badly. Across the globe, globalization has been widely discredited. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are largely a shambles, and localization is on the rise. Direct action protests were a major part of this, though we didn’t really know it at the time.

I’m not entirely sure what happened, but the anti-globalization movement lost steam. Some say it was 9/11, some say the Iraq war. Whatever it was, the counter-summit demonstration went into hibernation.

But with the recent financial crisis—and the looming spectre of environmental catastrophe—the stakes have never higher. The powers that ought not be are trying to resurrect globalization as they scramble to hold on to their power.

Long story short, when they announced that they where holding the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh, I wasn’t alone in coming out of retirement. It’s never been more
important to show that corporate and governmental solutions are no solutions at all. They’re trying to solve capitalism with more capitalism, and it won’t work.

The G-20 is the “group of twenty,” a collection of nineteen of the world’s strongest economies (the twentieth being the EU). They gather together to pretty much literally determine how they should go about continuing to rule the world. It’s like if a thousand of the US’s richest people got together and made all the decisions for everyone else. (Which is, of course, more or less what happens.)

Protest organizers planned two major events. On Thursday, an unpermitted march would leave with the intention of directly confronting the convention center that held the world’s finance ministers, while on Friday, a permitted parade was to be held. By and large, all of the protesters attended both events.
The local government in Pittsburgh spent months waging a propaganda campaign against the protestors. The media was full of news that anarchists were going to throw poop at people. Which would have been laughable, except that people believed it.

But the story that came out of the protests is a different one, one that doesn’t actually involve poop at all. It’s a story of the police pulling out all the stops, turning
dogs and sound-cannons on protestors, shooting tear gas in residential neighborhoods, and sweeping up quite literally random people for arrest. It’s a story of police doing all of that and yet failing in almost every way.

The police failed to contain the unpermitted march, which went on through the entire day and into the night. They failed to prevent rioters from doing thousands of dollars of damage to corporate chains. And
capitalism is the crisis
but we are an image of the future

they make other people fight their wars.
we fight for ourselves, each in our own way.

they meet in private to get power over us.
we want everyone to get free, and talk openly about
how we can do it together.

they solve disputes with police and prisons.
we work through our problems with each other
instead of just locking people up.

they say everyone has a chance to be rich.
we think it’s disgusting how much dignity is lost in
search of the almighty dollar.

starting this summer let’s fight back for real
they failed at convincing the people of Pittsburgh that they were the good guys. The only thing they managed to do was, through sheer force of numbers, keep us away from the convention center. Instead, they drove us into neighborhoods, which they ran through, terrorizing.

Thursday night proved the climax of the protests, but I wasn’t there. While I slept, college students ran riot, destroying corporate storefronts and fighting the police. It’s easy to paint rioters—particularly college students—as aimless and misguided, perhaps drunk, but their choice in corporate targets reveals a focused, legitimate rage.

They next day, we dutifully marched into an overwhelming police presence along the permitted parade route. There are people who think this sort of protest is important. Folks believe that by focusing on non-confrontational tactics, they’re
able to bring out larger numbers of people, and that these larger numbers will translate somehow into a greater impact on the general public and on policy-makers. They seek legitimacy.

Anarchists, by and large, are more interested in confrontational tactics, on creating a social rupture for the purpose of directly liberating the participants in the struggle, and/or to force the State into revealing that is, when it comes down to it, just another gang of bullies.

I don’t really think that either of these tactics are effective, personally. At least, on bad days I don’t. On good days, I realize that there’s no way to be certain which tactic is appropriate at any given time.

But I believe in confrontation with the State because, well, because it’s the ethical thing to do. The State is protecting the bastards who are eviscerating the earth and decimating the poor.
When it comes down to it, this isn’t about tactics, about winning the hearts and minds of the populace. It’s just, well, resistance. Perhaps it’s just impotent rage, I don’t know.

We marched, escorted and flanked by police at every step, into downtown. The national guard was out, in case the police didn’t look military enough.

But there’s a sort of beautiful vibrance that picks
up in a crowd when it’s surrounded by the police. I don’t know what to ascribe it to. The singing, dancing, chanting, and screaming is so visceral in these situations, at least sometimes. Other times, it’s just pure terror.

That night, the police returned to the campus where the riots had been. They weren’t about to let anyone get away with anything again.

A small crowd gathered, inspired
by or curious about the previous night’s festivities. Some folks took it upon themselves to play duck-duck-goose (or anarchist-anarchist-cop, as some call it). But the police took it upon themselves to set up an absurd police state.

They slowly enclosed the whole of the campus, bringing out the dogs and sound-cannons and teargas for another go, but there was no protest. There were slow, scared crowds of students who were
beat, gassed, and arrested for literally no reason.

I was punched in the back by a cop as I made good my departure. And I left none too soon; when I turned and looked, the police lines closed and let no one else escape. They blocked off the dorms, refusing to let students in or out of their homes.

Later, on YouTube, I saw about a dozen cops force an arrested student to pose with them for a photo, like they were on vacation and the kid was some prize-winning fish.

The police are so good at this. Well, they’re good at enacting police states. But what they’re really good at is being such complete and total bastards that everyone left the protests mad at them, instead of at the world finance ministers.

The police are a distraction, and they’re an effective one. I fall for it myself, all of the time.

A lot of people from a lot of different camps have come to conclusions about the
protests in Pittsburgh. It was a victory, some people say, because the police failed to keep us off the streets. Or perhaps we failed, because we didn’t shut down the meetings.

Myself, I don’t know. I doubt we won or lost. The best we can really say is that we survived. We’re anarchists: we’re going to fight “The Man.” He needs to be fought, and it’s important to be brave.

I came away a little bit inspired and a little bit traumatized. But I don’t feel like I won anything.

If we had a victory, it might have been the police overreaction on Friday night. There are now thousands of college students who won’t forget that the government, when push comes to shove, cares not a whit for their freedom or welfare.

The police announced “this is an illegal assembly,” and a young man with a megaphone read the first amendment. There’s actually no such thing as an illegal assembly, same as there’s no such thing as an illegal book. The nuance, of course, is that these aren’t “rights” that are guaranteed to us by our benevolent government. The government can grant free speech no more than it can grant the right to breathe. It’s simply a part of life. I fight for it like I would fight for air.
part four: Ithaca, NY

After the G-20, I went to Baltimore for the release of my book *Mythmakers & Lawbreakers: anarchist writers on fiction*. Then I piled up some friends and books into my van and did a miniature, slow-paced book tour of the east coast. My last stop was Ithaca, New York. Ithaca is famous, of course, for those obnoxious bumper stickers you see on hippy cars: “Ithaca is Gorges.”

Turns out it’s true. A ten minute walk from downtown can bring you to any number of breathtaking ravines and waterfalls.

I’ve spent too many autumns on the west coast recently, I realized. The west coast has old growth, but the east has the fall. Everywhere I drove and walked and looked, the hills were golden and fiery.

This is the sort of beauty I took for granted when I was a child. People have this theory that kids are somehow more in touch with nature and beauty, but I just don’t think it’s true. At least it wasn’t for me. When I was a kid, beauty bored me. The sunset held no majesty. I wouldn’t have spent an hour entranced by the black bark and golden leaves of a deciduous tree. I would have been reading, or playing games.

My host took me to several of her favorite places, including old run down buildings overlooking a flooded waterfall and a tunnel blasted out years ago for a long-gone ammunition factory.

We went out at midnight, the night before I left, and I set up my camera for thirty to sixty second exposures. I love this way of slowing down the process, forcing myself to actually remember to enjoy the lovely evening air and such like that.
I'm glad I live my life the way I do, itinerantly. There's a lot of trash you can talk about it, and of course what works for me wouldn't work if everyone did it. But the world wouldn't work if everyone did any one thing. For now, in my life, I'm a traveler.

A good collection of resources about traveling, mostly through a crust-punk lens, can be found at http://www.squattheplanet.com


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