

The Choice of a Zygote Artist

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Irresistible Wonder

When the opportunity of “Optional Practical Training” is offered, there aren’t really any options. I can’t focus on art when survival demands I beg for “practical” labor.

As a zygote, I was offered no womb to grow.

When will I be born?

When will my work deem “related”?

Who decides when a zygote artist emerges?

And why must I wait to be born?

My Zygote Artist Declaration

I am a zygote artist, not yet born. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) decrees that I, an F-1 student, may seek Optional Practical Training (OPT), a temporary employment authorization “directly related” to my art degree. I may labor part-time (at least 20 hours weekly) or full-time, provided it’s “directly related.” I cannot just make work; it’s not “employment.” I cannot only join a residency; it’s not “authorized.”

All jobs must be art-world-approved, pitting me against art history, curatorial, cultural studies graduates with roots I lack. My art practice is framed as an addition—a labor squeezed between the hours of survival, a side effect of compliance. Seeking professional development, I compete with “emerging artists,” those who already possess recognition and presence.

Which confirms: I am a zygote artist.



You are either a Zygote Artist or a witness.

Either way, you are all here. We want to know: what role can you take in this shared, confounding, and still/possible reality?

Eligibility Requirements for Zygote Artist

A Zygote Artist is a non-born creative entity in the gestational phase of cultural production, whose existence is governed by the following conditions:

- Must not yet be born as an artist in any officially recognized jurisdiction.
- Must exist in a suspended state of emergence, orbiting institutional orbitals such as “recent graduate,” “(un)paid intern,” “art worker,” or “cultural laborer.”
- Must not have achieved “emerging artist” status as defined by institutional funds, open calls, or awards.
- Must carry within them the desire to be born—a yearning that is both ineffable and bureaucratically inadmissible.

Note: Residencies, exhibitions, and fellowships may contribute to your perceived artistic development, but do not count toward OPT compliance. Conceptual labor is not a form of authorized presence.

If you are a Witness, you have seen what systems do to people. You’ve felt the static. You’ve held the question: WHAT NOW?

TAKE AWAY When you show up to view art, what do you want to take away?

TAKE AWAY When you read about others’ experiences, what do you want to take away?

TAKE AWAY Are takeaways more about the people who give it, or take it?

TAKE AWAY What should be the take away from questioning what take aways are?

TAKE AWAY Is the opposite of “Take Away” “Bring Close”?



Scan to submit your takeaway