

Undeath

Piles



Ritual Booklet for Resellers*
& workers of secondhand economies

Table of Contents



What is **trash**? ————— 1

What is **trashwork**? ————— 2

What are **death piles** ————— 3

death piles are **colonial relics** ————— 4

transfusion prayer ————— 5

deathSells **death**Smells ————— 6

Rosary of pasts ————— 7

Gracias ————— 8

What is **trash**?

when we talk about '**trash**,' we're not just talking about the stuff you throw away. Trash is more than just old things we don't want anymore. It's about how and why stuff is classified to be treated as trash and how it moves around in space and time. The understanding that 'trash' is a construct that articulates power relationships is an important part of discard studies, as described by scholars like Max Liboiron.

as someone who resells, you know how some items are given new value while others aren't. Why is a Louis Vuitton purse more valuable in secondhand markets than a mochila Arhuaca or a Shein fanny pack? Which one will more likely end up in the coastines near Accra? This process shows power relationships, reflecting societal norms and hierarchies, as stuff and value get moved around following **patterns of worth and disposability of matters, things, people and life.**

as items lose value and move further away from centers of consumption, they are often treated more like raw materials, increasing the burden on those handling this waste. The secondhand market, including reselling, reflects these dynamics by determining what items retain value and what becomes waste, often reinforcing these global inequalities. Automation increases production efficiency, leading to greater waste and further ecological disruption. These processes not only harm the environment but also reinforce the colonial legacy of exploitation and inequality. **Understanding these ideas helps us see our role in this larger system of production and consumption as workers in secondhand economies.**

What is trash work?

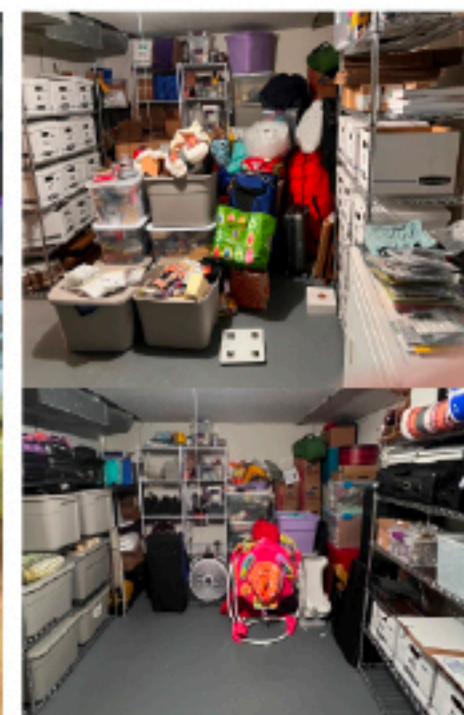
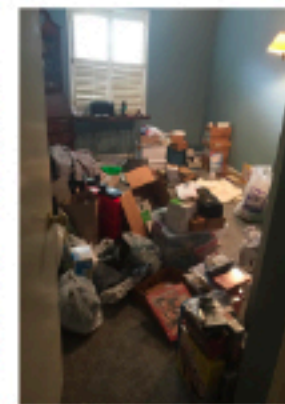
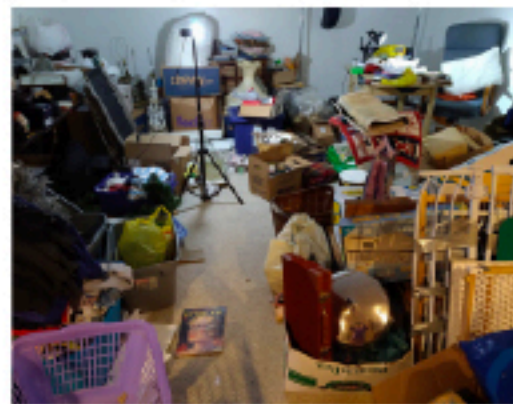
you might not think of it this way, but your work is a lot like being a waste worker. Just like how waste workers pick up trash, sort garbage, and manage landfills, your job in buying and selling used items is a big part of handling what people no longer need. Especially if you research them restore them or transform them, you are also doing some care work. When you sell secondhand clothes, used cars, vintage glassware or old electronics, you're taking things that might have been thrown away and giving them new life, altering their life/death cycles.

our role as secondhand workers is kind of a double-edged sword and we can acknowledge our we are embedded in capitalistic systems that currently drive eco and genocide. On one hand, we help reduce waste by keeping things in use. But on the other hand, this whole system we're a part of is built on overproduction and overconsumption. As secondhand workers, **we are in a unique position to look into these circuits of worth and discard, and can imagine how they can be different.**

Being aware of this can benefit our well-being and our work. Some of the animosity resellers experience is associated with stigmatization. We believe waste work is essential work and should be destigmatized and recognized as valuable, and so should be secondhand reselling.

This booklet of rituals is meant to dig into our relationships with these cycles of value through our labor as resellers.

What are death piles



As a reseller, you may be familiar with Death piles. But have you thought about what they mean?

Death piles are cummuli of energy, labor, matter, value (and loss of value). They are products of 'accumulation by dispossession', a concept developed by David Harvey. Fast fashion relies on exploiting labor, water, and land in the global south, dispossessing communities of their resources. But in the global north, they also act like **dispossession by accumulation**: the burden of their excess holds the potential of loss for secondhand workers.

death piles are colonial relics

Death piles represent loss in many ways. Many resellers and secondhand workers end up donating their death piles, losing money on their investments. But there are other, more subtle kinds of loss at play.

When resellers talk about their death piles, we see a sense of 'loss' as the piles feel like stagnant potential. Amassed as clutter, the singularity and value of things is blurred. They become closer to 'trash'. In their non-listed state, things don't follow the imagined flows of money and time. Organizing a death pile provides relief, but the death pile re-emerges.

Death piles hold latent value that is frozen. And in being frozen, is loss. It's not just that time is money, but **time will be money**. This is the 'death' of these piles, where latent money lies until it's put back into economic circulation through the work of secondhand laborers. This never-ending **work debt** grows with the death pile.

Many resellers blame death piles on improper systems, mental health, 'laziness,' or a shopping addiction. However, death piles are systemic to this business and the ecosystem of fast fashion & consumption. Accumulation happens in private homes in the global north, making these pockets of loss tangible. The group's motivation to 'organize and list' helps temporarily, but the loss as potential returns or reappears somewhere else.

Death piles are colonial relics, remnants of a system thriving on exploitation and uneven resource distribution. What do these structures of affect tell us about our relationship to time, money, and labor in secondhand?

transfusion prayer

we
acknowledge the
profound contradictions of
our labor under the yoke of capital.

This ritual, invoking past-present-future times when making does not equate production, is a conscious act of defiance against the alienation from our labor under capitalism.

We recognize that our labors reanimate the commodities that fuel the capitalist engine, but also open up potentials for its transcendence. This prayer serves as a reminder of the inherent value of our labor and its capacity to reshape the world.

Let this act be a testament to our unyielding resolve to challenge the oppressive structures of colonial capital, to reclaim the fluids of our labor from the depths of commodification and accumulation.

Let the rituals of work provide spaces for affirmation of our collective power to forge new worlds where liberation is shared by all and not by the few who expropriate times, dreams, lands and life.



deathSells deathSmells

Select garments previously worn by individuals whose aromas you wish to capture. In a quiet space, lay out the garments and focus on your intention to distill their unique scents.

Begin with one garment, hold it close, and deeply inhale its scent, concentrating on the essence of the person who wore it.

Rub a small, absorbent cloth over areas of the garment most likely to retain the wearer's aroma.

Place the cloth in a sealed container and repeat the process for each garment, collecting individual scents.



In a separate bowl, prepare a base solution of distilled water or unscented alcohol.

Immerse the scented cloths in the base solution, letting them steep to infuse the liquid with the collected aromas.

After several hours, remove and gently squeeze the cloths into the solution to extract every essence.

Strain the infused solution into a clean spray bottle, ensuring no residue is transferred.

Hold the vintage button rosary, focusing your intent on connecting with the spirits of its past owners.

Touch the first button, close your eyes, and silently call out to the spirit who once used it. Listen intently for any responses, words, or feelings that might emerge from the connection.

Move to the next button, repeating the call to the spirit associated with it.

Stay open to any sensory or emotional messages received from the spirits.

Continue this process, touching each button and inviting communication from the beyond.

With each connection, acknowledge and mentally note the messages or sensations received.



Rosary of pasts

Gracias

In the grasp of your hand, let the garment be a tangible manifestation of the human and non-human labors inscribed in its very fibers.

Acknowledge the spectral presence of others, the ghostly essence of value that haunts this garment.

Circulate around the room, mimicking the ceaseless flow of capital that moves this garment from producer to consumer, a cycle of exploitation and exchange.

Call forth the names of the laborers - the weavers, the dyers, the seamstresses - their unseen hands a chorus in the grand opera of capitalist production.

Call for the names of its carriers, sellers, buyers, wearers, sorters. Inhale deeply, drawing in the labor of the past, the exhalations of workers entwined in the garment's fabric, a miasma of exploitation and exertion.

Speak to the garment, acknowledging your role in this cycle of commodification, a cog in the vast machinery of capitalist exploitation.

As you raise the garment, envisage the chains of commodity fetishism that bind it, a microcosm of the capitalist system that values profit over people.

Place the garment in its new abode, a symbolic act of reifying the commodity, perpetuating the cycle of use and exchange value in the marketplace.

Wish the garment a good journey in its transitions through otherworlds. A little piece of you will travel with it.



