

Tech, Please!

Anna Wiener reports on start-up culture from the inside

KAITLIN PHILLIPS

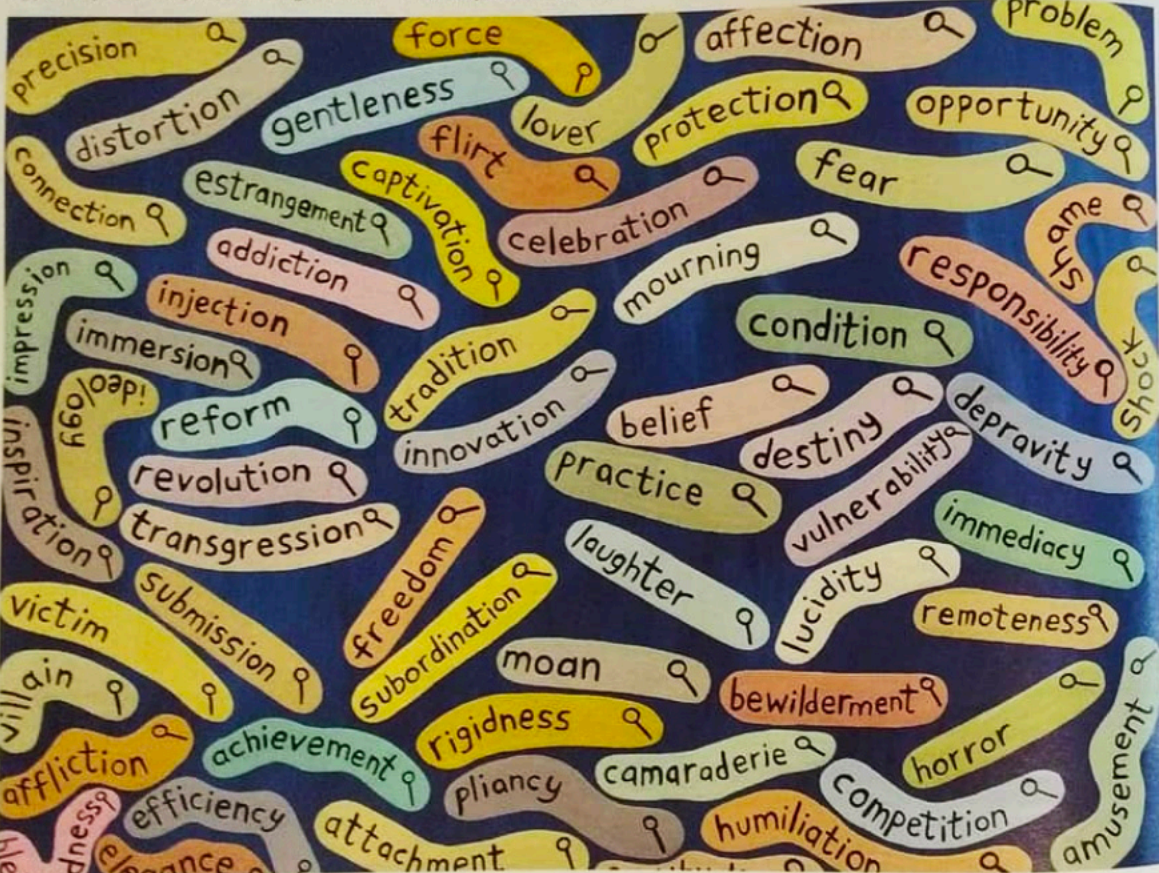
UNCANNY VALLEY BY ANNA WIENER. NEW YORK: MCD/FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX. 288 PAGES. \$27.

The best pieces of long-form journalism are those where you get the sinking feeling the subject has no idea what the point of journalism is. No inkling that a salacious story is better than a puff piece. No fundamental understanding that a writer, at the end of the day, is only going to make her career if she exploits her subjects, even if it's just to expose their bad personalities or unkempt apartments. It thrills to read a story that no one wants written about themselves. Whether you are party reporting or writing profiles, you can always find something unethical to

dispensable; her memoir is anything but. If Silicon Valley had seen her potential, she would not have become one of the finest, most assured writers about the internet today. I read it in one sitting, overcome with the eerie sensation that my own life was being explained to me. This is a book about how in the past ten years Silicon Valley has built the very "scaffolding of everyday life." Packed neatly in its pages is a primer on start-ups and the unicorn boom that birthed everything from Uber to Venmo, an investigation of incompetence, ambition, patriarchal impulse, and entitlement run amok,

multiple times a day. They wanted to be sticky—stickiest... Most of the company was under the age of thirty, and we had been raised on the internet. We all treated technology like it was inevitable." (When she mentions this phenomenon to a colleague, he shrugs it off, noting, "We already call our customers 'users.'")

Our desire to have the internet—and thus our lives—explained back to us by millennial women is a thrilling trend. Where Jia Tolentino has cornered the user experience (what it feels like to scroll through Instagram), Wiener ventures into



Becky Brown, Search, 2018, acrylic on paper, 12 x 17".