

Elena Hiatt Houlihan



ELENA HIATT HOULIHAN

Challenging the 9-to-5

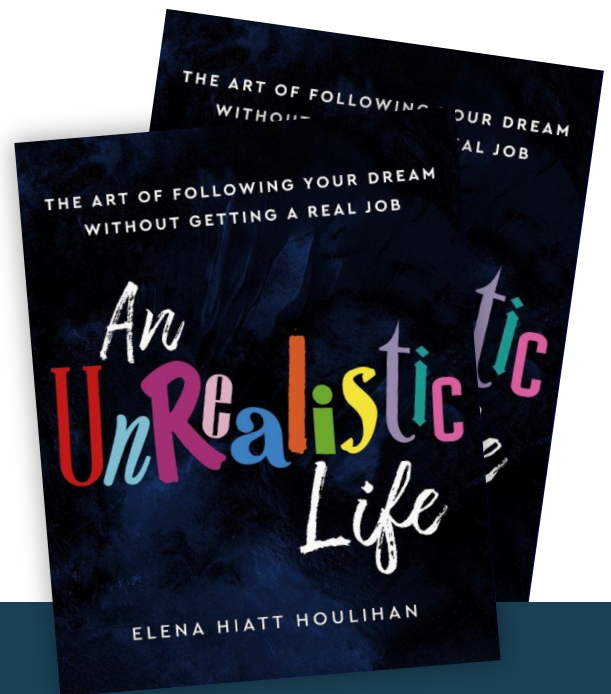
Why would Elena, a nearly-broke artist, leave her studio in Pittsburgh to connect with two women photographers in London? Because her brothers had told her that her lifestyle was “simply unrealistic,” and she was on a quest. Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher had spent 35 years capturing the ceremonies of African tribes, and Elena wanted to know how they did it. If *her* life was unrealistic, surely there were others who doing what they loved without getting a real job. She vowed to find them.

Once her intention was clear, fascinating people appeared. Traveling solo from Pittsburgh to Paris, Buenos Aires to Borneo, Elena collected stories of people who were following their passion outside the confines of the nine-to-five. Eddy Harris, a Blackamerican writer, canoed solo down the Mississippi and lived to write an acclaimed book. Rhoda Lurie imported artifacts from the Sepik River clans in New Guinea and designed clothing in Bali. Misael, a muralist, is covering the walls of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico with his visions.

The result, twenty years in the making, is an illustrated memoir, *An Unrealistic Life: The Art of Following Your Dream without Getting a Real Job*, which braids her journey as an artist with profiles of these dynamic creatives.

Elena currently lives part-time in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico and travels nomadically publicizing her new book, *An Unrealistic Life*.

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