

Labours of Love, Works of Passion: The social (re)production of art workers from industrialisation to globalisation

Angela Dimitrakaki, University of Edinburgh

Kirsten Lloyd, University of Edinburgh

A term that emerged in feminist thinking in the 1970s, 'social reproduction' refers to the 'labour of love' traditionally performed for free by women in the home. Despite the crucial role it plays in sustaining and replenishing the working population, this work is usually excluded from accounts of 'production proper' and the economy at large. In viewing its worth as other than economic, this labour of love connects with accounts of artistic labour which is also seen as simply 'self-rewarding'.

Arguably, the *values* associated with a gendered sphere during the rise of modern art and 19th-century industrialisation have transferred to artistic production within the 21st century finance- and service-led economy. Is art, then, the exemplary case study in the socio-economic order of feminised labour widely encountered in globalisation? How might we connect this to the thesis that artistic critique led to precarious labour (*The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005 [1999])? And, do the above compel a rethinking into what connects modern and contemporary art?

Alex Fletcher (Kingston University) and **Elisa Adami** (Royal College of Art)

Social Reproduction/Post-production in Numéro deux

This paper explores the theme of social reproduction in the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, focusing primarily on *Numéro deux* (1975), which attempts to 'think the home in terms of the factory'. Correspondingly, in her 1981 text *The Arcane of Reproduction*, Leopoldina Fortunati describes the sphere of reproductive work as 'a photograph printed back to front. As a mirror image of the process of commodity production'. In reading Godard and Miéville's audio-visual images through the conceptual tools supplied by Fortunati and other theorists of social reproduction, we seek to analyse the complex ways through which the former attempt to represent (visualise and articulate) 'the hidden abode' of reproductive work – from housework to sex work – as well as reflexively problematise such representational strategies and theories of labour/work (and the latter's connection with care and love) more generally. Furthermore, we will develop an observation made by Hito Steyerl: that the sphere of reproductive work can be thought as formally analogous to the space of post-production in film/video editing. We will do so via an investigation of the editing room in Godard's and Miéville's work – a space that becomes increasingly visible from *Numéro deux* onwards— as well as its gendered dynamics: the long history of female film editors from Esfir Shub to Vertov/Svilova and Straub/Huillet. To what extent can conceptualising the structurally obscured social character of work and its gendering through the darkened space of the editing room help us to historically rethink the modes of production and reproduction of both film/art and capitalism?

Elke Krasny (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)

VALIE EXPORT's Transparent Space: A radical feminist curatorial manifesto

This paper focuses on VALIE EXPORT's glass cube *Transparent Space* (2001) and its operation on the double level of the artistic and the curatorial. A public artwork in the city of Vienna, *Transparent Space* is also a site where art by other women can be exhibited. Although the City of Vienna Women's Department, the work's commissioner, calls this public artwork a celebration of

women's hard-won visibility, I argue that *Transparent Space* makes visible primarily the precarious conditions of much feminist artistic and curatorial production. *Transparent Space* requires maintenance and curatorial labour, which the City of Vienna Women's Department originally failed to acknowledge. *Transparent Space* exposed the lack of a maintenance infrastructure/resources and the politics of distribution. Since 2001, artworks realised in *Transparent Space* have depended on a 'labour of love' offered on the promise that emerging women artists would benefit from being associated with a famous feminist artist. The capacity of women-run art spaces to perform the reproductive labour necessary for the work's endurance and activation is both honoured and captured here. *Transparent Space* can be seen as a critical feminist curatorial manifesto, exposing the conditions and ideologies of neoliberal urban transformation and governance and especially the processes of attracting and harnessing women's labour – specifically, the labour performed through adhering to the politics and economies of self-organised women-run art spaces. *Transparent Space* thus renders visible the complex relation between the representation of politics, access to resources as well as visibility and the gendered ground of the 'labour of love'.

Danielle Child (Manchester School of Art)

De-mystifying Labour in Contemporary Art History: Unproductive labour and social reproduction

In Marxist thought, art is often categorised as 'unproductive labour', that is, labour that is outside the capitalist mode of production. Similarly, social reproduction is not explicitly considered as directly productive labour (in the sense that it does not produce a commodity). Through this assignation, social reproduction (domestic, reproductive and familial labour) and artistic labour become allies. However, since the 'neoliberal turn', managers have embraced labour models, adopting the distinct traits of artistic (Boltanski and Chiapello) and socially reproductive labour, culminating in the categorisation and subsequent analysis of 'affective' and 'immaterial' labour (Hardt and Negri, Lazzarato) within the contemporary mode of capitalism. How, then, can we rethink the relationship between unproductive labour and art today? Responding to the call for an alternative art history with an embedded social reproduction, this paper will explore the connection between social reproduction and art through returning to Marx's categories of 'productive' and 'unproductive labour' from *Theories of Surplus Value* (1863). The discussion will take as its examples works that reference both socially reproductive and productive labour, before the 'neoliberal turn' (such as Hunt, Harrison and Kelly's *Women and Work: A Documentation on the Division of Labour, 1973–75*) and within the contemporary period (Rimini Protokol, *Call Cutta in a Box, 2008–10*). Whilst work and life are becoming increasingly blurred under neoliberal work models, this paper stresses the importance of making the subject of labour, and its associations with class, visible within art history.

Beth Capper (Brown University)

The Erotic Life of Racism Management: Lorraine O'Grady's Mille Bourgeoisie Noire

This paper provides an expanded genealogy of social reproduction by tracing the 'erotic life of racism management' through the circuits of black feminist performance and theory. Following Sharon Patricia Holland's account of racism as a simultaneously quotidian and erotic practice, I consider how black feminist performance artists have rendered and contested the everyday labor of managing racism within both US feminist art movements and art institutions more broadly. In particular, I focus on the antagonistic performances of Lorraine O'Grady's avatar *Mille Bourgeoisie Noire*, who staged interruptions in the early 1980s New York gallery scene clad in a dress made of white gloves, whipping herself with a cat o'nine tails, and reciting poems that chronicled the racism inherent in art institutions. Building on Marxist feminists who have argued that social reproduction is a terrain of struggle that inheres within and against the sexual and racial divisions of labour, I

contend *Mlle Bourgeoisie Noire* (along with artists Adrian Piper and Howardena Pindell) registered 'racism management' as a form of social reproduction and erotic labour that black artists must refuse even as she performed an-other imagination of black feminist social reproduction. Furthermore, this paper recalibrates historical genealogies of feminist bodily performance in order to illuminate the always already sexualised and erotic labour of the black female performing body. In so doing, I intervene in contemporary theorisations of the tangle between artwork and sex work to consider how forms of racialised erotic labour forged in slavery have endured as afterimages in black performance.

Manon Gaudet (Carleton University)

'There is always tea and cakes': Collecting and negotiating female-settler identity in the domestic sphere

Mary Weekes's (1884–1980) home is at the heart of her collection, now at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Canada. Local Indigenous women arrived with beadwork for sale – perhaps, Weekes mused, because 'there [was] always tea and cakes'. In this ideal domestic space, Weekes valued beadwork as the product of a labour of love. She felt that a woman fashioning garments for her family expressed 'the love of her heart' in each stitch; meanwhile, pieces intended for sale to settlers lacked sentiment and thus 'true Indian feeling'. In spite of her distaste for the tourist market, Weekes asserted her colonial right to possession. She did not benefit economically from her collection but employed it in her efforts to negotiate her identity and nurture tolerance among settler youth. In so doing, Weekes exchanged one labour of love for another. Indigenous women's domestic help freed Weekes from her domestic obligations. She invested time in her collection as an alternative labour of love. While Weekes valued beadwork for the labour Indigenous women performed for their families, she also participated in a colonial structure that commoditised and displaced Indigenous women's social reproduction. The contradictions inherent in the Mary Weekes collection reveal the importance of social reproduction to settler-colonial art history. I propose that the domestic exchange of female labour in settler society complicates conventional critiques of colonial collecting as aggressive. The question at stake is how to reclaim Mary Weekes's collection as a labour of love without discounting the simultaneous violence of settler-colonialism.

Helena Reckitt (Goldsmiths)

Now Can We Go? Refusal and labour in the art world

Social-reproduction theory demands that attention be paid to the mostly overlooked and undervalued people, activities, and things that generate and sustain life. This paper explores what such a shift in focus might mean within the art world. It looks at a range of tactics and strategies being developed across curatorial, artistic and critical projects: from activist efforts that question the art world's reliance on dubious corporate money and private donors, to reformist efforts to agitate for improved working conditions for arts employees and arts workers, and exhibition practices that generate vast carbon footprints. Highlighting debates around affective labour and resistance, the argument begins from this question: what would it look like for arts workers to refuse to provide the excess surplus emotional as well as physical work, upon which the art system has for too long depended? Exploring possible answers, I reflect on the collective project 'Now You Can Go' that I developed with a group of feminist curators and researchers in London in 2015. Inspired by the process of 'deculturation' that Italian feminist Carla Lonzi (1931–82) staged at successive moments in her life, the project explored Lonzi-esque tactics of affective withdrawal. In reviewing 'Now You Can Go' – from the issues it raised to the behind-the-scenes dynamics it

entailed – I question how the programme approached the issue of affective withdrawal, especially given its demands on work that was largely unpaid, self-valorising and potentially self-exploiting.

Barbara Mahlknecht (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)

The Labour of Curating: Curating as Service, Curating as Care

Curating could be defined as immaterial labour encompassing tasks such as conceptualising, organising, coordinating. Moreover, 'knowledge production' has increasingly gained visibility in debates on the curatorial (as for example witnessed in the writings of Irit Rogoff). At the same time, curating is deeply embedded in, and working with, materialities. This paper explores whether, in building and caring for social relations, sustaining and renewing structures and providing services for artists, institutions and the public, curators engage in a range of tasks that bring forth the *material* ground of maintenance and care. Arguably, a significant amount of curatorial work could be described as 'reproductive labour', which, according to some feminist theorists, challenges the distinction between material and immaterial labour. Drawing on the materialist feminist critique of the 1970s (including that of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Silvia Federici) that elaborates on the centrality of reproductive labour for the accumulation of capital, I suggest that discourses on the curatorial emphasising immateriality disregard that curating engages in the creation and maintenance of 'social forms and relations of cooperation and sociality' (Isabel Lorey 2011). This paper then examines the notions of 'maintenance,' 'care' and 'service' in the context of artistic/curatorial projects informed by materialist feminism and its emphasis on the complex articulation of social reproduction labour. My case studies include Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Manifesto for Maintenance Art. Proposal for an Exhibition 'Care'* (1969) and 'Informationsdienst' [Information Service], a mobile archive of 90 contemporary female artists, conceptualised by Tine Geissler, Sandra Hastenteufel and Ute Meta Bauer in 1992.

Manual Labours (Birkbeck University)

Theories of not Complaining: Compliance, coping and caring

This paper focuses on the past year's exploration of *The Complaining Body* through the practice-based research project *Manual Labours*. The paper explores the findings and analysis of an expansive investigation into the physical and emotional affects of complaining, receiving complaints and not being able to complain in the context of work. The paper draws on ethnographic case studies of call-centre workers in a Borough Council, commuters on a train station platform and staff dealing with complaints in a university alongside three commissions that have responded to this project by Sarah Browne, Hamish MacPherson and Ivor Southwood. The emotional labour involved in receiving and managing complaints, the social and cultural conditions of complaining, and the affect of not complaining all have repercussion on the body as a site of resistance, absorption and expulsion. Drawing on the work of Ahmed (2004), Goffman (1959) and McDowell (1997), the paper explores the normative discourses of the good, healthy, productive body which are disrupted by the complaining body. We have found that this sick body is often having to perform a healthy, happy and uncomplaining body by internalising the complaint. This research explores the stories of how and why the complaining body is performed, silenced and internalised. The analysis of our research has been particularly influenced by Sweta Rajan-Rankin, whose work on emotional labour, embodied practices and call-centre workers brings a key gender analysis to our study, enabling us to reflect on these findings, methodology and the future direction of the research.