



Main Space

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Relief Support

Hannah Enkel, Alize Zorlutuna, and Anni Araujo Spadafora

Curated by Amber Landgraff

January 30 – February 21, 2015

The exhibition *Relief Support* brings together artists Hannah Enkel, Alize Zorlutuna and Anni Araujo Spadafora to discuss how moments of intimacy and support are necessary when speaking about work and labour. The show is intended to provide a thinking through of how we build support structures and spaces. How can we collectively come together when dealing with the ways in which we may find ourselves and our laboring bodies taken advantage of, exploited, and under-represented? At its core, the pieces included in the show are intended to reflect on and provide moments of relief in a conversation about work where problems often feel insurmountable, and where we, as individuals, feel like we face that struggle alone.

Precarity encourages a particular kind of vulnerability, and yet, for many workers, the instability and uncertainty that come with a precarious work environment are an ongoing way of life. Young workers, those who work in the service industry, women, and people of colour often find themselves in positions where their emotional labour is held hostage in exchange for a working environment that marginalizes, exploits, or makes invisible the work of their bodies. These days it seems, it is not enough for us to do a job well, we also have to love doing it, or at the very least perform a convincing semblance of that love.

Where are the moments for relief? Hourly wages make the hours spent performing a job significant, and even in situations where there might not be enough work to do, constant occupation is expected. A productive worker is one who can account for every minute of

their time. However, when there isn't enough work to go around, that occupation becomes less productive, the worker must make ongoing attempts to find anything at all to do. Occupation again becomes a form of performance, as one cannot afford to admit that they don't have any meaningful work to do when they are shift workers and are paid by the hour.

This performance is exhausting, and often doesn't end with the end of the workday. A lack of long-term stability means that we are constantly searching for work, and searching for the experiences that will make us competitive prospects for a limited number of jobs. We are a workforce that, in many ways, never stops working.

Alize Zorlutuna's installation *labour for the horizon* offers an exchange of Zorlutuna's emotional labour for the labour of participants. These exchanges take place in a secluded, meditative and comforting space surrounded by a macramé hanging. The knots tied in the hanging become a visible sign of the time and labour spent by Zorlutuna in building that comforting space. Crawling into Zorlutuna's installation and spending time with the ambient sounds from a video projection of water and a measuring tape being pulled across the horizon line adds to this feeling of comfort, Zorlutuna has created a space where worries can be left behind, even if just for a little while. Participants are invited to share their own labour, which is negotiated with the artist in exchange for a conversation about family, love/heartbreak, intersections of identity, or their mental or physical health. Zorlutuna will create a reflection of the conversation that will be added to the installation over time. While Zorlutuna is not a therapist, she is drawing attention to a kind of support that frequently takes place. Giving value to the emotional labour that goes into this kind of dialogue by requesting a one-to-one

exchange of labour, Zorlutuna "acknowledges the informal means through which we support each other."¹

Across from Zorlutuna's installation, Hannah Enkel has created a visual catalogue of tools and uniforms borrowed from many women that she knows, titled *Our Self- Made Uniforms*. The women include Esther Veens, a Social Worker and Resource Parent for the Children's Aid Society, Sarah Davigno, a Piano Tuner, Hailey McCron, a Nanny, Shannon

¹ Alize Zorlutuna's artist statement, 2015.

Veals, a Business Owner/House Cleaner, Joele Walinga, a Server/Artist, Erica Podlowski, a Sous Chef/Baker, Anni Spadafora, a Barista/Artist, and Sarah D'Angelo, a Barista/Artist. Enkel also includes items that reflect her own labour as a Domestic Worker and Skin Care Product Producer. As Enkel explains, "Women's labour is often invisible, and work that is done by women is not celebrated or valued as real work [in the same way that men's labour is]...our culture celebrates men's labour and their tools, while minimizing and erasing women's labour."² By creating a visible collection of the tools and uniforms that these women wear when performing their work, Enkel has created a careful catalogue of these women's labour. The tools and clothes are not new items, but their use is visible through wear and tear, drawing attention to the time spent working. In this way, the collection can be viewed as a representation of the labour performed by the owners of the items.

Anni Araujo Spadafora's sound installation *Basta Basta* started from a reflection on Roberto De Simone's 1976 modernist opera *La Gatta Cenerentola*. Speaking to Spadafora about the work, she describes two songs in the opera that are performed by a chorus of laundresses. In one of the songs they sing together about their labour as they wash, and in the other they sing about their bodies and sex. The combination of these songs brings attention to the fact that labour is something that is performed by our bodies, similarly to sex, and is something that can be celebrated together, performed as a chorus, an outpouring of relief. To create a similar feeling of this space of relief, Spadafora has created a mix tape, with overlapping sounds including an interview with her roommate Fran about her job as a waitress, environmental sounds including the sound of water washing an indigo cloth (a part of the installation), as well as clips from the opera of the laundresses singing.

The feelings that are reflected in the exhibition are feelings that are real for many of us, and that's what makes the works in *Relief Support* so remarkable. There is a beauty in seeing the generosity of the artists as they build support structures, offer their own emotional labour, draw attention and give value to the labour of others, and create a space for a joyous outpouring of relief that is much needed is a powerful thing.

² Hannah Enkel's artist statement, 2015.

The final work in the show is a collaborative work made by Spadafora and Enkel. One of the first things seen when entering the space is a giant denim work-shirt with a patch that reads, “When this shift ends.” *Relief Support* asks us to think about the time that we spend working, the kind of work that we perform and whether there are alternative ways for us to work together. Enkel and Spadafora’s statement, “When this shift ends,” is a significant one for a precarious workforce that never stops working. When this shift ends, I will take some time for myself to experience relief.

-Amber Landgraff

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