

## Holistic time in wandering value

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How can we understand contemporary production in its present hyperbolic state? Duchamp's fascination with the overabundance of material goods during the boom period of capitalism focused on the thing in itself. He valued the objectness of the readymade, void of production, it evokes Bacchus springing fully formed from Zeus's thigh, objects appear as if out thin air. His appropriation of the commodity only considered the artist's labor of "transforming" the object into artwork. Gimhongsok working in a period when capitals strain to find productive form of material investment it has transformed the populace into a 24/7 workforce and still cannot find an ample sites to deposit itself in society. Gimhongsok's concern begins at the point of consumption but then ricochets back through the process of production to prob the very value of time.

The series 'Hourly Art' critiques the ever expanding art world and its constant necessity for visibility and exhibitions in multiple cities that overlap into form of simultaneity – constantly visible like the trap of a panopticon. In this glare, where the demand for artwork is increasing, it tries to compress the required time needed for the production and yet the necessary time to make a mark on paper has not changed even if its value has. In 'Hourly Art' Gimhongsok captures the quantity of time itself, and refashions a correspondence between time and value while avoiding claims of a finished product. The artist invites various individuals to take up simple tools such as a marker, ballpoint pen or tape and work for set periods of time on repetitive mark making, noting the time of labor Comparing *Untitled(8 hours, Mr. Cheon)* and *Untitled(11 hours, Mr. Han)* both drawings that involve repetitive cross-hatching with a black marker, the difference in time however is evident in the denser forest of marks from the additional labor. By revealing the duration, Gimhongsok begins to re-establish the corollary between between time and labor which shakes off the mystic shroud and exposes one of the tenants of capitalism – surplus value.

At a moment of unyielding production in the art world the figure of the artist is akin to a composite leviathan, overseeing a small army of assistants or employing professional production firms to form part of what Gregory Sholette terms the 'dark matter' of the art world.<sup>1</sup> Gimhongsok pulls away the veil on this invisible labor in artistic production and puts forth the problematic of the value form in art. While the value of time has long since de-moored itself from any qualitative basis in art – if it ever even existed - work and life have bound themselves into an ever indistinguishable subjective order. Answering emails at all hours is now routine and the notion of work time or being ready for possibility for work, has inserted itself into every waking moment. Pushing against this totality Gimhongsok makes evident the time of labor and the name of the worker, personalizing a transparent outsourcing. In the gallery context one is left to one the corresponding value between the share of labor of the named workers, the artist, and the price of the work. Here the artist takes the role of capitalist capturing the surplus value of the labor (assuming they were paid at all) – the difference between the value of the product and the material consumed in its making that reveals the true cost of labor – to highlights the question of work and its value. As capitalism has intensified the problematic of surplus value has grown into an astronomical rate of inequity, exposing a large fault-lines in the asymmetrical system.

Yisho Bahc was similarly confronted with a transformative moment at the start of rapid expanse of capitalism and the art world. When he appropriated the phrase of Joseph Beuys 'Creativity=Capital' and undertook its translation, Bahc recognized the coming interchangeability of art and the economic development across the globalized field. Yet just as critical the act of 'translating' points to the dominance of what has come to be considered immaterial labor and its central role of creating value in this stage of capitalism. Yet its immateriality or knowledge labor is in contrast to its form which still requires physical labor. If artists assistants form part of the dark matter of the art world than translators are the maintenance workers of knowledge production. By making his translation transparent Bahc alluded to the important role of maintenance, both immaterial and concrete, as providing an essential foundation for the present order but through its central role also has the capacity to undo the whole structure of power itself.

Transforming the act of maintenance into art has become the life long practice of Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Beginning with Maintenance Art Manifesto in 1969, Ukeles set out contest the notion of constant production and put forth a paradigm of holistic practice taking into account care and maintenance against an endless cycle of development. This text, radical in its anti-avant gardism, posits the potential of a different type of art making that foregrounds the labor itself. In 1973, invited by the curator Lucy Lippard, Ukeles undertook a series of maintenance performances in a museum. Securing rooms, conserving artwork and cleaning the museum. In *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance:Outside*, she washed the marble staircase that led up to the museum, an act that also takes the form of a symbolic cleansing ritual. The washing is done not in the dead of night but rather in front of the public as a means of integrating labor, life and art.

In the *MOP* series, Gimhongsok teases apart this unity to place it back into tension. Highlighting the the present conditions of 'flexibility' otherwise known as precarity in the labor market Gimhongsok employs temporary labor to refashion the tools of maintenance for production. Workers utilize mops to mix paint on the surface of the board over an

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1 Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 2011.

hour or two until Gimhongsok sees the work materialize. The artist again foregrounds the labor relation and the instruments of their everyday use to re-tool abstract painting – a genre usually vacant of politics – into a salient form of critique.

With the present economic regime of capitalism at a tipping point, its present trajectory could be heading for what Jacques Camette called a state of “generalized lunacy” where “capital realizes everything [human beings] desire (normal or abnormal), but human beings cannot find themselves and enjoyment continually lies in the future. The human being is carried off in the runaway of capital, and it keeps going.”<sup>2</sup> In our techno-infused present this scenario seems to be an uncanny reading of a not too distant future wherein the conditions are already under development. Gimhongsok practice puts forth an alternative future based on a humanized form of the present wherein enjoyment can both be present and critical. Exhorting an ecstatic resistance his work engenders a joyful irreverence, one that aims to abolish a present order and secure a future ripe with possibility.

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2 Jacques Camette, *The Wandering of Humanity*, Seattle: Wormwood Distro, 2009, p. 10