

Richard Ibghy and Marilou Lemmens

The installation *Is there anything left to be done at all?* (2014–2016) by the Québec-based artist duo Richard Ibghy and Marilou Lemmens, documents what might happen if the “compulsion to produce for the sake of productivity were suspended.” A six-minute documentation video provides a glimpse into their process as the artists and four participants work without set objectives, concentrated on making stuff look or sound like “art.” As in their other works, Ibghy and Lemmens not only challenge the imperatives of capitalist productivity; their critique responds to the specific context within which they are working, in this case, a production residency in a media arts organization.

In *Theatre from the Jungle* (2018), a reference to the 1906 novel by Upton Sinclair titled *The Jungle*, the artists collaborate with a group of twelve individuals recruited from Brandon Manitoba’s hog processing plant. In this three-part installation, the artists explore broader labour and migration trends, drawing from the physical and psychic experience of the workers. In the first part of the piece, the workers reenact the movements associated with their tasks on the production line; in the second, they share their stories, in a reaffirmation of individuality. The installation concludes with videos of the workers reading excerpts from *The Jungle*, a novel that exposed the harsh working conditions of migrant workers in early industrial Chicago and led to important social reforms. Evocative of Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed form, the techniques used by the artists allow the workers to observe themselves in action, gain perspective on their working conditions and labour rights, and consider ways of transforming the reality in which they are living.

In the installation titled *The Prophets* (2013–ongoing), the artists make light of the blind faith put on economic analysis and forecasting, by presenting a brightly lit table displaying nearly five hundred 2D and 3D graphs, handcrafted from everyday materials. Here, Ibghy and Lemmens are invested in representing the infinite permutations of life-affirming activities, while critiquing their reduction into absurd, soul-numbing ratios, commonly used to describe socio-economic realities, processes, and values.

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