

Today I Made Nothing

Front Desk Apparatus is pleased to present *Today I Made Nothing*, a group exhibition that considers the relationship between work and leisure, non-productivity and the negation of work, in a contemporary context in which people are perpetually available and continually securing their economy. Where the first part of the exhibition at Elizabeth Dee Gallery (which ran from July 27 – September 18) included works by Duncan Campbell, Alejandro Cesarco, Jay Chung & QTakeki Maeda, Tyler Coburn, Liam Gillick, Renée Green, Sam Lewitt, Jonathan Monk, Virginia Overton, Josef Strau, and Mika Tajima, the installation at Front Desk Apparatus is comprised of Harun Farocki's twelve channel video installation "Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades." The exhibition takes its title from Russian writer and poet Daniil Kharms, who adopted various pseudonyms and titles to critically engage and evade the positioning of a "singular" author and practice.

From factory workers to the labor movement, the Art Workers' Coalition to the proliferation of freelance professionals, artists' practices continue to be associated with varying forms of labor. But even with the rise of immaterial labor and the expansion of the periods of time during which one is potentially working, the amount of time spent at work does not have a direct corollary with increased levels of production: working less can actually result in getting more done. With times of production and research (or conception), becoming increasingly indistinguishable, the culture worker is often working when it might appear otherwise, even when at a casual lunch meeting or exhibition opening. Given that this process can also be reversible, repeated, or reduced to a set of instructions, art practice can be further separated from the act of labor—perhaps even positioned in direct opposition to the very idea of work—as a kind of non productivity that might best align itself with one aspect of art's history: that of doing nothing.

In Harun Farocki's "Workers Leaving the Factory," the artist assembled film excerpts spanning the entire history of cinema, each depicting people at the conclusion of their work day and leaving the site of their labor. Like the works in the exhibition's first phase that employ pre-existing or found materials, Farocki begins with history's first film, Lumière's "La sortie des usines Lumière" as a starting point. Much as Kharms wrote stories that refused to function as traditional, linear narratives, Farocki adopts the vocabulary of cinema to trace alternative lineages and histories of the site of production.

The question then is how do we take the models from the past and improve upon them, be they ones developed in the 1960s and presented by Robert Morris, Jean-Luc Godard or Herman Miller, or Guy Debord's even earlier declaration "Ne travaillez jamais," then echoed by the Italian Autonomists? By investigating the value of work and questioning what constitutes it today, can we develop ideas about how we might best replace the present post-Fordist neoliberal model with a better one, reclaiming both the governance of time as well as work itself?

Additionally, the exhibition is also accompanied by the second phase of Front Desk Apparatus's *The Library Project*, an initiative that focuses on editorial creation, independent publications and the position of writing and design in contemporary practice. In a filing cabinet in the Front Desk Apparatus office, a selection of readings pertaining to the exhibition, aims to employ the office context as a framework that acknowledges, uncovers and excavates the library's potential to generate concrete possibilities in the form of "living" research and knowledge production.

September 25 – November 06, 2010
Organized by Tim Saltarelli

Opening Reception
Saturday, September 25 from 6-8pm

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Thursday, Friday and Saturday 12 - 6 PM