

INTRODUCTION //

BACKYARD ECONOMY – SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, PRECARITIZATION, AND MARGINALIZATION

The present issue of FKW documents the results of an eponymous teaching collaboration at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, which involved both a seminar and an exhibition that focused on artistic explorations of the notion “social reproduction.” The title is taken from *Backyard Economy I* and *Backyard Economy II* (Diane Germain Mowing) (1974), two filmic works in which the artist, Martha Rosler, draws an intimate connection between reproductive and artistic labor. Our project – which is accompanied and expanded on by four essays, a picture spread of the exhibition, and an artist’s edition in this issue – takes early marxist-feminist theories and approaches of institutional critique as points of departure for investigating how contemporary artistic practices engage with ongoing processes of gendered and racialized devaluation of reproductive labor and the economic conditions of structural invisibility, marginalization, and precaritization inside and outside of the cultural field.

— In this, our perspectives build on recent scholarship on both economy-critical and socially engaged art that has been investigating the role of reproduction in current artistic practices.¹⁾ Here, our conversations owe much to art theorist Marina Vishmidt’s analysis of the two-fold notion of reproduction. In her text *The Two Reproductions in (Feminist) Art and Theory Since the 1970s*, Vishmidt conceives of (social) reproduction both as a spectrum of tasks largely invisible in the capitalist economy but fundamental for the reproduction of the labor force, and as the “reproduction of the conditions of production” (Althusser) through ideological, material, and institutional structures that perform and reaffirm socio-economic divisions and hegemonies. She contextualizes different strategies of affirmation and refusal in queer feminist art practices that aim for embodied, affective, and formal critiques of reproductive institutions, including the institution of art itself (Vishmidt 2017).

— One central mechanism of the art institution as an institution that maintains and propagates structural inequality (which in turn (re)produces precaritization and marginalization) is examined by literary scholar Leigh Claire La Berge in her book *Wages Against Artwork*. In the latter, she looks at how artists critically

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See for instance Dimitrakaki / Lloyd 2015.

respond to the promise of art's autonomy – that is, being a locus of both critique of and freedom from the capitalist imperative to commodify objects and relations, as suggested by the modernist association of freedom with the aesthetic – in the context of the neoliberal shift towards an increased decommodification of labor, as exemplified by the replacement of wage-based work contracts with an economy of freelancing subjects (La Berge 2019). What interests us here in particular is the double economic entanglement that obtains in artistic practices: Whereas its production of (symbolic) value takes place in the realm of non-waged, in most cases precaritized work, the idea of autonomy – which “survives” in a perverted form in the artist as an entrepreneurial subject – is maintained and reproduced in the artwork insofar it feeds into speculation. *Three Card Monte*, a work by artist Constantina Zavitsanos that will be discussed in more detail later in the text, represents a particularly interesting position in this context, as it directly responds to this specific circuit of accumulation and reproduction. Zavitsanos reflects on the valorization of artistic work in relation to accessibility, both as physical accessibility to artworks within the exhibition space and with regard to the monetary prerequisites, and the artist's own participation in (and/or exclusion from) value production.

— Our project furthermore relates to current theorizations of social reproduction in which the analysis of social-economic relations is bound to intersectional analyses that reveal the systemic logic of capital's dependence on racist, heterosexist, ableist, settler-colonial, and other oppressive relations and marginalizations.²⁾ Early socialist-feminist campaigns such as *Wages for Housework*³⁾ based their critique on the claim that unpaid housework should be recognized as (reproductive) labor.⁴⁾ In this vein, feminist artists such as Mierle Laderman-Ukeles, Martha Rosler, or Mary Kelly also integrated the invisible and unpaid work that women had to perform in the household into their artworks. In performing tasks like cleaning the floors, dusting works in the archives, etc., as forms of artwork. For instance, Mierle Laderman Ukeles famously elevated the status of maintenance work in the art institution in light of the former's integral role in the latter's continued existence as a white cube. By declaring maintenance work to be artwork, she exposed the mystification of artworks and of the idea of artistic production as “societally autonomous,” through which art in turn reproduces the logic that devalues reproductive labor. Laderman Ukeles, on the other hand, confronted different valorizations and devaluations of maintenance work in order to

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Social reproduction theory looks at social processes and human relations as the very conditions of existence, where human labor – in Marx's original sense of “the first premise of all human history” – is at the heart of creating or reproducing society as a totality. Against the capitalist treatment (and orthodox marxist understandings) of productive labor for the market as the sole form of legitimate “work” and the naturalization of tremendous amounts of invisible familial and communitarian work to sustain workers, in this theory social reproduction is acknowledged as a central force necessary to sustain the drive for accumulation. Bhattacharya 2017: 2–20.

3)

The international Wages for Housework campaign, organized by Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Brigitte Galtier, and Selma James in 1972, demanded recognition and payment for female housework.

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For an art historical account of these feminist artistic practices see Molesworth 2000: 71–97.

make them visible as preconditions of the institutionalization of art: highlighting, in her performance *Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object* (1973), forms of work ranging from naturalized, feminized, and unpaid housework and care work by women artists; to low-waged cleaning and maintenance work by employees of the art institution; to the high-waged maintenance work of artworks by conservators.

— While stressing that capitalist accumulation is inherently dependent on the reproduction of society, second-wave feminism neglected the conditions of paid domestic work based on the exploitation of the labor of black, migrant, or otherwise marginalized women. In contrast – as Susan Ferguson has pointed out – black feminist groups like the Combahee River Collective or Communist Party member and Black Panthers supporter Angela Davis developed analyses of the relations between unpaid and paid reproductive labor that tackled the systemic interlocking of economic marginalization/exclusion, racism, sexism, and class exploitation (Ferguson 2020: 106–119).⁵⁾ However, leftist artist's collaborations like the Berwick Street Film Collective have also tried to highlight the glaring gender and racial inequalities disproportionately affecting women engaged in reproductive labor by interrogating intersectional representations of class struggle and the fight for gender and racial equality. Their film *Nightcleaners* (1975) documents the daily routines of female cleaners at London's Shell building, capturing the precariousness and monotony of their physically demanding, overlooked low-waged work, as well as conversations between the artists and activists and the laborers during their struggle to organize a union. The film can be read as an artistic rendering of the reality of life and work for black, migrant, and white women of the lower class, while simultaneously reflecting on the obvious distance that existed among all parties involved in the production of the film. (Tischer 2024).

— Incorporating these critiques, social reproduction theory traces the interplay of exploitation (the ratio between wages and surplus) and social oppression (irrational structural or interpersonal oppression based on racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.) in order to understand the perpetuated economic and social devaluation of reproductive labor(ers). As philosopher Holly Lewis has pointed out, these dynamics are critical to the maintenance of capitalism: “[t]he dehumanisation and devaluation of groups facilitates downward pressure on wages; it undermines the struggles for state benefits that allow capitalism's ‘surplus populations’ to survive. Gender and racial ideologies

5)

Such an intersectional perspective is developed, for instance, by author and theorist bell hooks. In her book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* she describes from a black-feminist perspective the experiences of black working-class women who lacked the time to care for their own families, let alone themselves: “I had grown to womanhood hearing about black women who nurtured and cared for white families when they longed to have time and energy to give to their own.” Cf. hooks 2015: 79. At the level of theory, it was the sociologist and art historian Lise Vogel who, from a Marxist-feminist perspective, examined the systemic logic that generates the oppressive conditions under which reproductive work is performed.

lower the value and therefore the costs of reproductive labour, and they pressure women to donate services to the maintenance and development of capitalism's work-force. Oppression is always a material phenomenon" (Lewis 2018: 116). The recent shift from/ expansion of institutional critique to "infrastructural critique" in the art field⁶⁾ has led to a broader conception of the systemic logics of oppression and their negotiation within artistic production as well as the ways in which these hierarchies are maintained by racist and patriarchal practices. It has enabled artists to address, for example, how categories like race act as material structures, "which mediate access to resources, whose withholding is key to the population management, key for efficient extraction – a differentiated management of 'infrastructural coercion' and 'infrastructural neglect,'" as Marina Vishmidt has stated, following Zandi Sherman (Vishmidt 2021: 13–24; Sherman 2021).

— Against this backdrop, the present issue of FKW seeks to explore contemporary artistic practices that aim to challenge the reciprocal logics of exploitation and oppression in late capitalism, and, moreover, to confront their own involvement in the process of value creation. From different disciplinary perspectives, the invited authors discuss ways in which artists reveal the economic preconditions of experiences of marginalization and precaritization. They ask how artistic works comment on and transform the dynamics that arise between forms of representation and engage with the conditions of (aesthetic) production and the effects of institutionalization. The interactions of valorization and devaluation, exploitation and profit within and outside the art field are analyzed with regard to gender-specific coding, racism, ableism, rejectionism, and colonial imprints.

— In her essay *On Some Conditions*, Marina Vishmidt reflects on artworks by Ghislaine Leung and Carolyn Lazard, which infuse the vocabulary of conceptualism with a materialism of dependency. While Ghislaine Leung's artistic practice is based on the fact that the production process of art is itself dependent on reproductive work and other prerequisites that are not visible in the exhibition space (such as sleep, exhaustion, and caring tasks), Lazard's exploration of formal materializations of access and barriers confronts us with questions of how "special conditions" can be rerouted back into aesthetic conceptualization. Vishmidt shows how Leung's and Lazard's respective sculptural practices circle around the dependencies between objects and bodies and trace how the artists address the ways that environments are shaped by needs and requirements through neglect, denial, and/

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See for instance Martin Beck et al. 2022, or *Feminist Infrastructural Critique* (forthcoming as an issue of FKW in spring 2024).

or affirmation. In shifting attention towards the – mostly invisible – production processes behind its apparent conditions, and towards questions of how (the exhibition) space is structured by boundaries, the artists formulate a critique of infrastructures rather than of institutions.

— Art historian Rose-Anne Gush analyzes two recent serial-films by Melanie Gilligan entitled *Crowds* (2019) and *Home Together* (2022) as part of the long-term project *Films against Capitalism*, in which the artist uses docu-fiction practices to reflect on the preconditions and effects of the on-going housing crisis with regard to precarious labor in the U.S. care and service industries. Gush develops her arguments around the artistic form of the allegory as it is used by Gilligan to expose capitalist social relations.

— Wasana Handapangoda brings a social scientific perspective into the FKW issue. Through an investigation of the relationships between migrant workers from Sri Lanka and their – mostly female – employers, she explores transnational accumulations of social reproductive labor as an important realm for the production of identities and social inequalities. She shows how in everyday practices and rituals the category of women or concepts of “family” are both differentiated and stabilized by social, political, and economical structures that create “otherness,” resulting in overlapping systems of discrimination and privilege. Migrant female workers – whose low-waged and unwaged work is composed of maintenance work, housework, and taking care of the children, the sick, and the elderly – find themselves bound up in a dynamic of dominance and submission.

— The material conditions under which the Polish artist duo KwieKulik worked, as art historian Magdalena Nieslony reflects, were restricted in a specific way. With a particular focus on Zofia Kulik, Nieslony examines how the two formulated a critique of the economies of their semi-public artistic work during 1970s State Socialism. She shows how Kulik especially negotiated the (given) entanglement of domestic, artistic and archival activities as a main condition of the duo’s practice in the artistic works themselves. In the process, they developed strategies of efficiency (*sprawność*): rationalizations of working processes that, in contrast to capitalist conceptualizations, were formulated as an ethics of improving the quality of life building on theories of praxeology developed by philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński.

— In her essay on artist Cameron Rowland, art historian and curator Lucie Pia expands on her investigation – which began

in an installation that was part of the *Backyard Economy* exhibition – of discursive elements in Rowland’s artistic practice: specifically, ways in which they trace material manifestations and legal foundations of racial capitalism and its genealogy in the slave-based economy through conditions of loans and distribution. The text follows the function of the captions and credits related to exhibited objects, through which the artist makes visible how structures of racism have been transformed and upheld by a range of institutions and practices, particularly within the legal forms of capital (property and contract).

DECONSTRUCTING BINARIES: DOMESTICITY, CARE WORK, AND OTHERS — The group exhibition *Backyard Economy*, which preceded and occasions this issue, resulted from a seminar, co-held at the University of Applied Arts Vienna during the summer term 2022, on the strategies by which contemporary artists engage with varying forms of exploitation and marginalization. The exhibition featured a selection of artistic works and texts that we had discussed together, juxtaposed with contributions by students developed during the seminar as well as by artists we invited. Next to these contributions, which were exhibited and moreover presented in a zine, *Backyard Economy* also included three twentieth-century artworks from the collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

— Among these was a photograph of architect Alfred Soulek’s modernist miniature model designated as a “Lady’s Room” [fig. 1], which was presented at the 1930–31 exhibition *Die neuzeitliche Wohnung. Die Mietwohnung* [The Modern Apartment. The Rental Apartment] at the Vienna Museum of Art and Industry. A capsule with no windows, furnished in soft materials such as textiles and fur, Soulek’s conception of a domestic space is highly charged with gendered fantasies determining care, nourishment, and recreation as a field of “female,” “private” non-labor, detached from the sphere of political economy.⁷⁾

— In contrast to Soulek’s denial of reproduction as a field of low-wage and/or unwaged reproductive labor, the artist, designer, and architect Friedl Dicker-Brandeis juxtaposes romanticized images similar to Soulek’s with the hard and unembellished (working) reality of the precariat and female workers. In doing so, she busts myths surrounding marriage, the heterosexual family, reproductive work, and housework that subtend the assigned roles of the bourgeois division of labor. In one of her photo collages from the early 1930s [fig. 2], all of which were

7) Soulek’s design is, from this perspective, comparable with Adolf Loos’ for his wife Lina Loos. For a feminist reading of Loos’s interior spaces see Beatriz Colominas’ reading of Lina Loos’ bedroom designed by Adolf Loos in Colomina 1992: 92.



// Figure 1
Alfred Soulek, Innenraumgestaltung /
Damenzimmer [Interior Design / Lady’s
Room], 1930–1931



// Figure 2
Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, *Fürchtet den Tod nicht* [Do Not Fear Death], 1932–1933

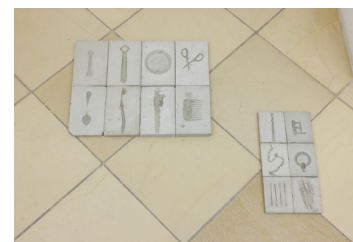
produced and photographically documented at about the same time, she establishes a marxist-feminist critique of state control over reproductive functions. The black-and-white photograph documents a (lost) wooden panel staged in a domestic space, in which Dicker traces the intersecting points of social and economic structures in the reproduction of the labor force as a resource for capitalist exploitation. In her portrayal, reproduction requires and induces the reproduction of class relations as well as concomitant phenomena such as mass unemployment, multiple burdening of proletarianized women, and the risk of fatality inherent in illegal abortion. Dicker translates these functional correlations of social reproduction under capitalism into formal language via two diagonal stripes running through the entire composition, at the crossing point of which she has positioned a cutout image of a highly pregnant worker – itself a photo montage by John Heartfield that was published 1930 under the title “Forced Supplier of Human Material Courage! The state needs the unemployed and soldiers” (1930) in the communist journal *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* [Worker’s Illustrated Newspaper]. The figure functions as the center and starting point of various smaller scenes of labor characterized by binary gender ascriptions. Juxtaposed to the situation of the proletariat are six triangular fields set off from the bands by means of light-dark and color contrasts, in which Dicker shows stereotypes of love and sexuality taken from the living conditions of the bourgeoisie.⁸⁾

— Elly Niebuhr’s documentary photograph from 1950–60 likewise establishes a contrast to Soulek’s reductive bourgeois notion of domesticity. A “Garbage Car for Paper and Leaves” close to the curb of the street [fig. 3], a tool for the maintenance of public space, is staged with the same attention and with similar principles of composition as were used in her Haute Couture pictures. This peculiar inversion of bourgeois imaginaries of the private and the public is further developed by Ella Zwatz. *Tools of Care* [fig. 4 & 4a] consists of a small, brush-like metal object and a set of concrete tiles arranged on the floor, depicting negative imprints of diverse everyday domestic tools like scissors and toothbrushes, as well as tools used on construction sites. Materially and formally related to road works, the objects attempt to blur distinctions between different forms of maintenance. In understanding reproduction as care – performed both in the private and in the public spheres – these artworks imagine the possibility of a solidarity between low and unpaid working class laborers that reaches beyond their multiplying divisions.

8)
On this interpretation of Dicker’s collages
also see Kitzberger 2023: 177–199.



// Figure 3
Elly Niebuhr, *Kehrichtwagen für Papier und Blätter* [Garbage Car for Paper and Leaves], 1950–1960



// Figure 4a
Ella Zwatz, *Tools of Care 1.0 / Imprints of the Everyday*, 2022



// Figure 4b
Ella Zwatz, *Tools of Care 2.0*, 2022



// Figure 5
Martha Rosler, *Backyard Economy II*
(*Diane Germain mowing*), ca. 1974

— Martha Rosler's and Laura S. Oyuela Flores' works explore the relations that artistic and reproductive practices have to (their) environments. In drawing an intimate connection between art and reproductive labor, Rosler's super-8 films *Backyard Economy I* and *Backyard Economy II (Diane Germain Mowing)* from 1974 [fig. 5] relate to early Western feminist critiques of the economic and ideological structures that gave rise to the model of the middle class family. A backyard in a Southern California town, enclosed by tall bushes and a palm tree, becomes a visual proxy for a subtle subversion of established divisions between art-making, leisure, and household tasks. Two women are working in the yard in the bright sun: Diane Germain mows the lawn and hangs laundry; a dog is running around, and a circular pan of the camera reveals a small boy sitting on the house's back steps amidst some yellow irises. The other woman, Martha Rosler – whose body remains behind the camera most of the time – is filming these deliberate and sometimes playful everyday performances. In this way, the garden becomes an arena in which housework, filmic work, and leisure (the regeneration of humans, animals, plants); the usage of tools (the camera, the whirling water sprinkler, the hand-driven lawn mower); and artistic labor itself seem to overlap and converge. Both the repetitiveness of Diane Germain's domestic work and the traces it leaves bring it into relation to contemporary aesthetics and artistic practices: pieces of laundry are arranged in regular intervals against the blue sky, the lawnmower leaves a minimalist pattern of rectangular green monochromes in the grass, and a temporary sculpture is created when she hangs a hand-knit sweater on the handle of the lawnmower.

— Laura S. Oyuela Flores' work shifts the demarcations of art and reproduction in a different way. Her series *Traces of Care* [fig. 6] focuses on the permanent adaptation of technical, medical, and everyday objects such as furniture and other items. A ceramic pill box-like object, manufactured by the artist, is put together with fresh flowers, FFP2 masks, tissue boxes, pill bottles, and band-aids on a bedside table the artist purchased at a thrift store. By interweaving prefabricated impersonal medical products, pre-used pieces, and handmade artistic objects, the arrangement questions how environments materially shape social relations, spaces of care and the boundaries between professional, affective, and emotional care work.

COUNTERING COLONIAL REPRODUCTION — In their practice, the Karrabing Film Collective establishes a circular economy: the money brought in by their films and installations, which strive



// Figure 6
Laura S. Oyuela Flores, *Traces of Care*
(Work), Object 2, 2022



// Figure 7
Karrabing Film Collective, *The Mermaids*,
Mirror Worlds, 2018

for a visual language that counters settler colonial narratives, is invested back into the infrastructure of their ancestral lands (Bigfoot et al. 2023: p. 20). The double projection *Mermaids, Mirror Worlds* [fig. 7] is a dreamlike and at the same time radically realistic portrayal of the land of indigenous people in Belyuen in Australia's Northern Territory, which has been devastated by (neo-)colonial exploitation and violent appropriation. Based on the concept of Improvisational Realism, the collective works both with its own actors and with amateur actors – people who actually live on the site and whose “lives interconnect all along the coastal waters immediately west of Darwin, and across Anson Bay, at the mouth of the Daly River” (Fielke 2023). Improvised dialogues are drawn from real life struggles and from everyday methods and rituals of resilience, including “the dreamings” that are juxtaposed with formally defamiliarized non-fictional promotional material from industrial giants such as Monsanto and the Dow Chemical Corporation. Mistranslations, incommensurabilities, and cultural distinctions between the inside and the outside of social bodies are both motifs and methods that characterize the film. The relationship between the indigenous population and the colonizers has been and is still based almost exclusively on mining interests that impact the ancestral lands of the Karrabing community. Historically, the unrestricted exploitation of indigenous land has been justified by the “terra nullius doctrine” – the juridical definition by which land to be colonized is declared as currently “belonging to no one.” As lawyer Brenna Bhandar has pointed out, “property law was a crucial mechanism for the colonial accumulation of capital, and by the late nineteenth century, had unfolded in conjunction with racial schemas that steadfastly held colonized subjects within their grip” (Bhandar 2018: 2).

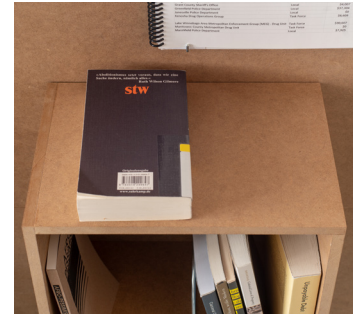
— Such colonial mechanisms, which continue to produce inequality and oppression to this day, form both the context and the object of artist Cameron Rowland's research, into which Lucie Pia's installation gives us insight.⁹⁾ Her installation *Source Materials* presented a selection of books, brochures, and exhibition texts [fig. 8] that focus on the discursive aspect of Rowland's artistic practice. The selected material centered on racial capitalism and its (legal) foundation in the transatlantic slave trade, offering an example of how Black Studies and literature on subjects such as law, abolitionism, the prison industrial complex, and other forms of racial law enforcement, inform contemporary artistic practices.¹⁰⁾

9)

Tiny Mutual Admirations Societies is an exhibition space conceived of and maintained by art historian Hannes Loichinger at the painting department of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

10)

After the exhibition the selection was made available as reference books at the library of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.



// Figure 8

Installation view *Source Materials* (Detail), curated by Lucie Pia, *Tiny Mutual Admirations Societies*, 2022



// Figure 9
Tiffany Domke, *Dust Flares of Production*,
2022

EXPLORING (INVISIBLE) STRUCTURES — In *Dust flares of production* [fig. 9], Tiffany Domke gives attention to the dust particles that randomly appear on the surface of analog film in the process of digitization. Instead of seeing these as a defect or as something that needs to be removed, the video work reverses the usual workflow by placing the artistic exploration of dust at the center of interest. This artistic approach integrating waste products draws attention to the conditions of artistic production as well as to the role of chance and art's capacity to visualize things that are not widely considered valuable.¹¹⁾ This becomes meaningful when contrasted with the “invisible work” of social reproduction, whose function is largely to remove the traces of the work of others.

— Samuel Ekeh's painting from his series *Frontyard Economy* [fig. 10] features several color fields enclosed by pastosely painted lines, which connect and separate the fields at the same time. The artist understands this constellation as a (simultaneous) representation of the infrastructures that organize societal hierarchies; because they are all arranged next to one another, there is no concealment or overlapping, but rather a painterly encounter with the fields of social relations.

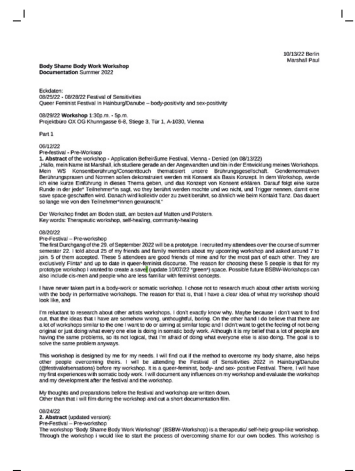
— Falke Pisano's abstract sculptural objects of her series *Learning in proximity* [fig. 11] explore the language of mathematics as a fundamental structure of thought and orientation. Axes of the coordinate system, translated into physical bodies, mark and measure the corners of the exhibition space, thereby relating the architecture to the visitors. Areas in close proximity, everyday surroundings in their “lack of harmony and beauty [...] affect people's thinking, perceiving, and relating to one another, as well as increasing the alienation many feel toward their surroundings. Aspects of people's lives such as the impact of the built environment and the use and abuse of the place in which they live are subtler and less visible than other dangers faced and thus may be more dangerous”, writes the artist in Plate 4 of the work *Learning in proximity*.

— The way in which one experiences oneself in mutual physical interdependence is deeply affected by rituals, everyday schedules, and the digital-technological mediations of our social lives. Marshall Paul's written record of their *Body Shame Body Work Workshop* [fig. 12] investigates these regimes of discipline and at the same time traces the conditions of the workshop's own organization and working processes. They thereby reflect at a very personal level on the attempt to navigate such an intimate endeavor without reproducing normative concepts of bodies and relationships by leaning into an awareness of the material conditions.

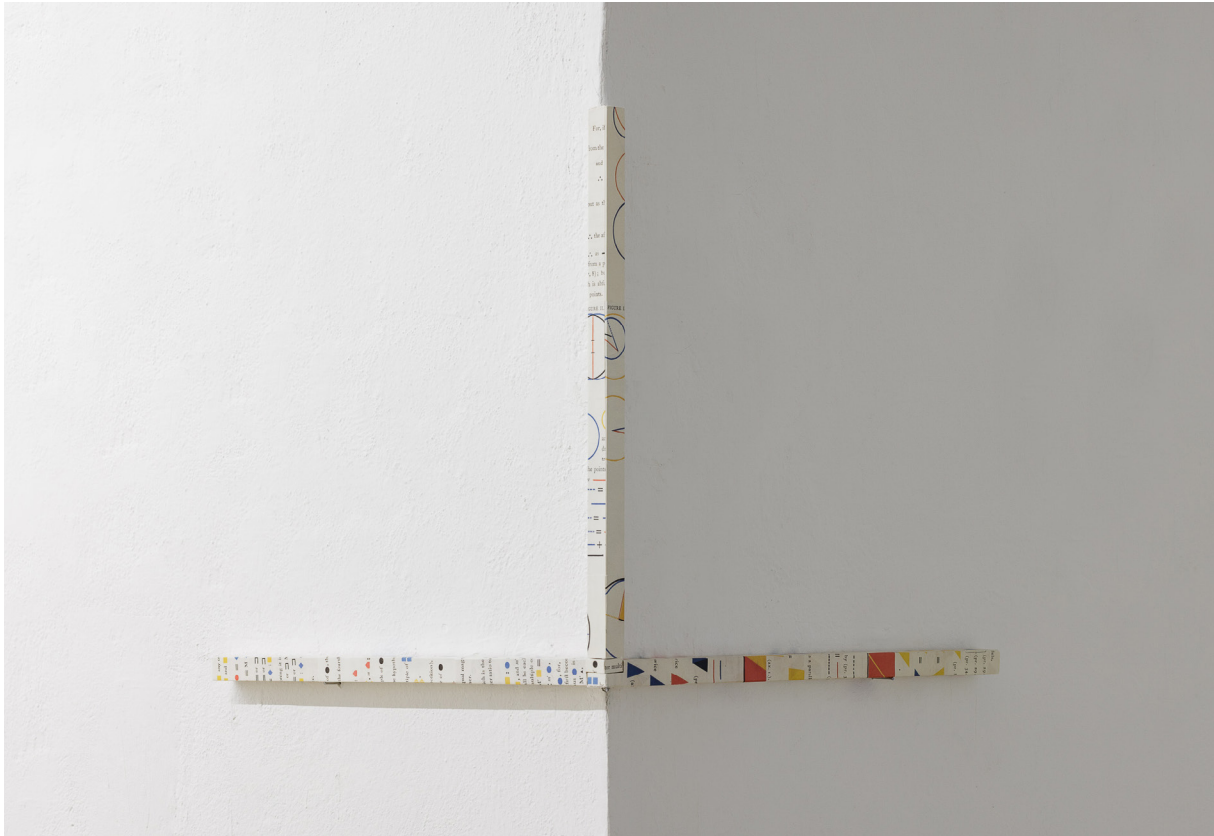
11) Domke's work here refers to modernist works such as Man Ray's *Dust Breeding* (Duchamp's *Large Glass* with Dust Motes) from 1920, but could also be related to Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside* from 1973.



// Figure 10
Samuel Ekeh, *Front Yard Economy II, 2022*



// Figure 12
Marshall Paul, *Body Shame Body Work Workshop, 2022*



// Figure 11
Falke Pisano, *The Value in Mathematics,*
Learning in Proximity, 2015–2017

CIRCUITS – PERFORATING CIRCULATION — The abstract dimension of money is linked to the symbol and the sign, and is negotiated in the act of valuation as a real social form. The artistic intervention by the artists' collective adO/Aptive addressed how social relationships are shaped by and themselves shape the dynamics of abstraction – in this specific case in relation to the institutional hierarchies and the monetary conditions of the exhibition itself. In order to do so, the collective was invited to present its ongoing project *the Danubian Bank* [fig. 13], in which they had launched two currencies called the Störling and the Grundl, as a 'sponsor' of our exhibition.¹²⁾ In this role, *the Danubian Bank* developed a circular economy: it sold one of their gimmicks, which were produced for the exhibition (*Danubian Towel*, 2022), to the Collection and Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna and reinvested the proceeds into the production of more gimmicks and into small honoraria for the artists participating in the exhibition. During the term of the exhibition, it was possible to exchange all gimmicks for Störulings again.

— The caption of Constantina Zavitsanos's *Three Card Monte* [fig. 14], a work that she has continued in different constellations since 2018, reads: "Three 1 gram Austrian Mint Kinebars (999.9 gold in assay with Kinegram counterfeit detection hologram of a Lipizzaner horse in various positions) on offer to the public / While supplies last (no purchase necessary to participate; limit one gold bar per participant)." In the exhibition the bars were installed at a height accessible to wheelchair users, including the board on which Zavitsanos' three gold Kinebars were placed, until all the bars had been taken. Zavitsanos used the production budget for the purchase of three one-gram bars of pure gold, presented in their original packaging on a small dark metal tray. The work literalizes and universalizes the process of the valorization of art by seemingly reducing it to a commodity that is both the (traditional) incarnation of exchange value and its object at the same time. If the kinebars disappear, their valorization as art is suspended (their monetary value conforms with the current value of gold on the market), while Zavitsanos' (non-saleable) project remains inscribed in the institution of art and its dynamics of valorization. Reducing the artwork to pieces of gold furthermore brings its materiality to the forefront: the shiny surface of the kinebar obfuscates the brutal and unhealthy labor conditions that characterize the extraction of the raw material.

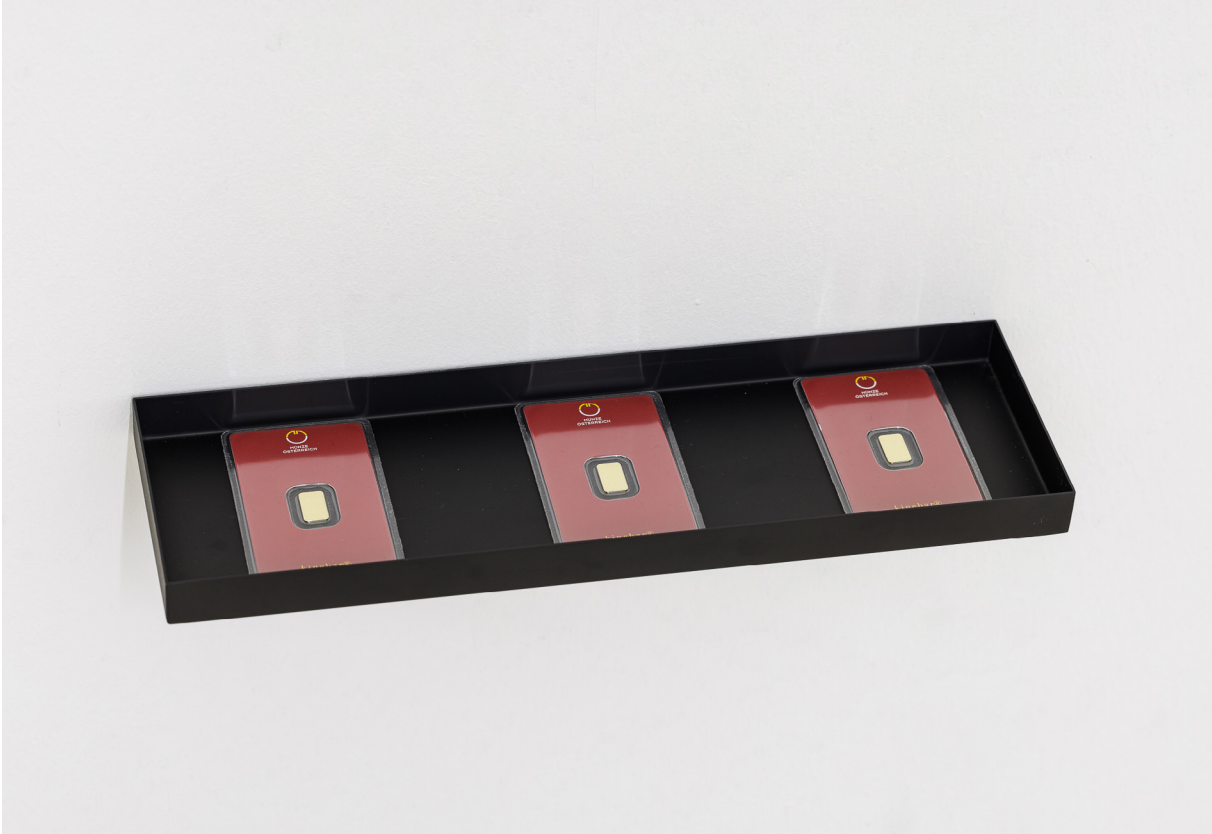
— While Zavitsanos' work incorporates the question of its own value creation into its critique, in 2016. *In Museums, Money*,

12)

While the Störling is pegged to the Euro (1E = 1€), the Grundl is a non-fungible coin that can be acquired for the cost of one cent. Both currencies can be acquired at certified Exchange Offices and are in circulation until January 2024. The acquired value of the currencies will be spent on NPO projects. The Störling and the Grundl both foster awareness around the situation of the Sturgeon fish and function as a mode of project funding.



// Figure 13
ad0/Aptive collective, *Danubian Bank*,
Display at the exhibition *Backyard
Economy*, 2022



// Figure 14
Constantina Zavitsanos, *Three Card Monte*, 2022 (2018–)

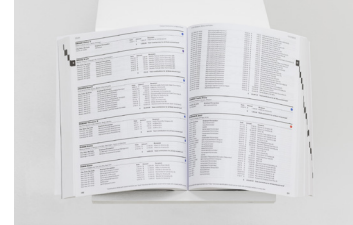
and Politics [fig. 15] Andrea Fraser, who famously coined the term “institutional critique,”¹³ navigates the depths of the interdependencies between art institutions and politics. This artwork assembles all available data from Fraser’s years of research on the political alignment of trustees of more than 125 art museums in the United States as of 2016, just before the election of Donald Trump, revealing a high percentage of these donors as de facto Trump supporters. Fraser provides this data in a comparatively old-fashioned medium: a book, published with MIT Press, that contains long lists of names and figures presented in alphabetical order. In so doing, Fraser intervenes into the institutional complex in the guise of an investigative journalist: making visible the intersection of electoral politics and private nonprofit art institutions. At the same time, she uses her own symbolic capital as a well-known artist by exhibiting her book in galleries, demanding that spending power no longer be the sole selection criterion for board members.

— Melanie Gilligan’s video work *Self-Capital* [fig. 16] is a mini-series commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) London, produced just in the wake of the global financial crisis in 2008 and openly published on the artist’s YouTube channel. Filmed in the cinema, the bookshop, and the galleries of ICA, the videos feature a personified figure named “Global Economy” who is suffering from post-traumatic stress and is trying to regain stability through psychiatric treatment involving body-oriented hypnosis techniques. While strolling through the bookshop, Global Economy animatedly chews and sucks on economic terms like “crea-tive indus-try,” “commer-cial,” “emer-ging markets,” “migrant workers,” and “casual labor,” whereas the word “wages,” which provokes nausea, is choked out of her nervous system to re-stabilize a flowing, unregulated market. The abstract nature of capital is figured here in the body of an individual and its (neoliberal) strategies of self-regulation, while structures of repetition and defamiliarization subvert this narrative at the same time. All characters are played by the same actress (Penelope McGhie); in their conversation, the book cashier and Global Economy eventually become interchangeable, thereby structurally mimicking the circulation of commodities.

— Jammed between various labor tasks and everyday life, Laura Egger-Karlegger watched Gilligan’s films *Self-Capital* (2009) and *Crowds* (2019) during her work for the production of the exhibition. Her artistic commentary for the zine of the exhibition, which takes the form of a collage entitled *I Wouldn’t Have Chosen Those Stickers Without Watching Crowds and Self-Capital* by

13)

“I first used it in print in a 1985 essay on Louise Lawler, ‘In and Out of Place.’ When I ran off the now familiar list of Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Buren, and Haacke, adding that ‘while very different, all these artists engage[d] in institutional critique.’” Fraser, Andrea (2005): 100–106.



// Figure 15

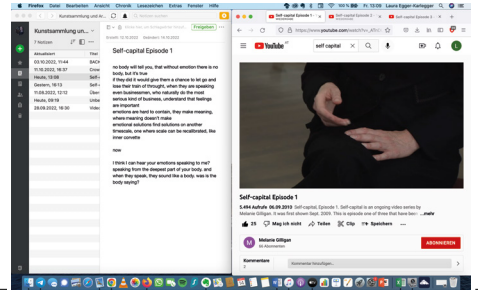
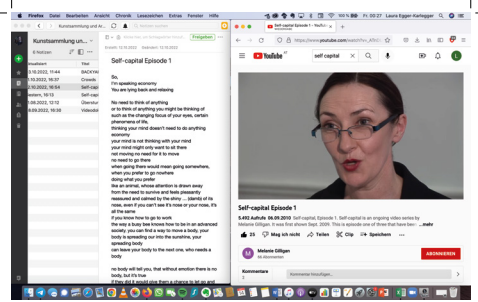
Andrea Fraser, 2016 in *Museums, Money, and Politics*, 2016



// Figure 16
Melanie Gilligan, *Self Capital*, 2009

Melanie Gilligan (2022) [fig. 17], consists of three screenshots, two transcripts, and 35 stickers that were handed out to the customers of an Austrian supermarket for every 10€ they spent. The stickers depicted groceries, as well as Austrian dishes and landmarks (landscapes and architecture). The repetitive manner in which they were mounted on paper gives rise to ornamental forms suggesting capitalist overproduction and the commodification of food and nature.

— Various people and institutions have contributed to the realization of this issue. Our thanks go first of all to the authors for their instructive essays and for their care and patience in revising their papers, to the artists for supporting this issue with images of their works, as well as to our students for their fantastic contributions to the exhibition and the zine. This issue would have not been possible without the astute and accurate proofreading of Caroline Durlacher and Edith Futscher's patient inquiries. We would furthermore like to thank Brigitte Aulenbacher, Laura Egger-Karlegger, Melanie Gilligan, Maxwell Graham, Jim Gussen, Quinn Harrelson, Sami Hopkins, Carolyn Lazard, Ghislaine Leung, Cosima Rainer, Eva Maria Stadler, the board of FKW, and Wiktoria Szczupacka for valuable conversations and for all their support in organizational, content-related, and personal matters.

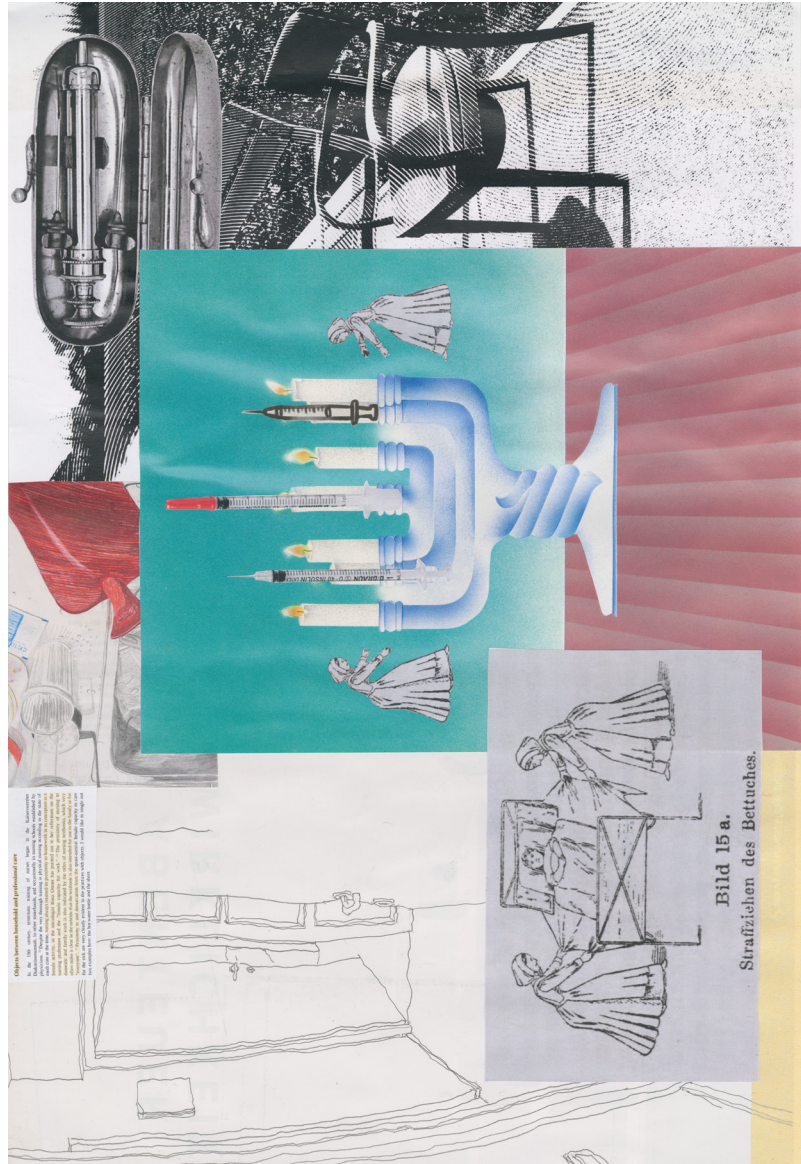


LAURA EGGER-KARLEGGER

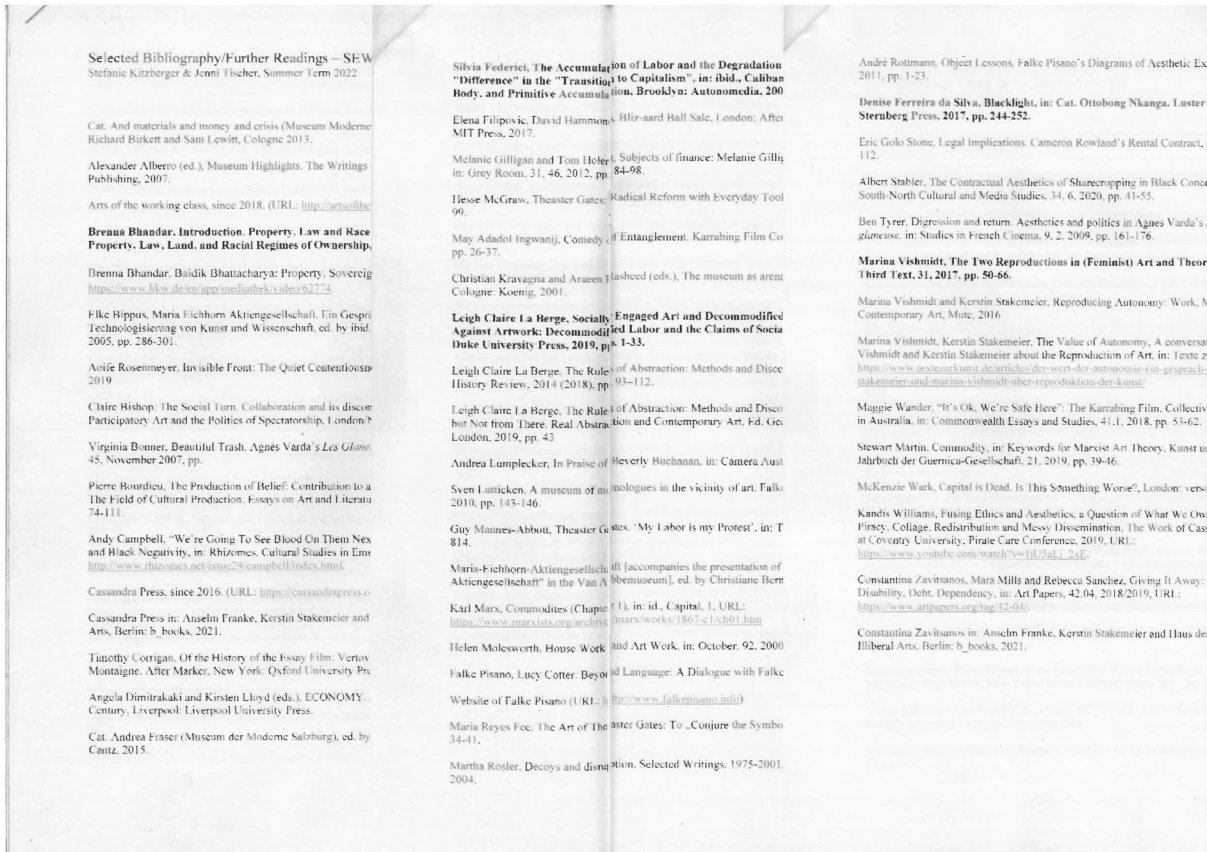
// Figure 17
 Laura Egger-Karlegger, *I Wouldn't Have Chosen Those Stickers Without Watching Crowds and Self-Capital* by Melonie Gilligan, 2022



// Figure 18
Backyard Economy, Exhibition view, 2022



// Figure 19
Laura S. Oyuela Flores, *Traces of Care (Work)*, poster, 2022



// Figure 20
Bibliography (zine excerpt), *Backyard Economy*, 2022

Socially Engaged Art
and Decommodified Labor

Artists and their artworks circulate in strange economies. Many artists desire a wage, payment often seems elusive; when they reject the payment system, their rejection offers no guarantee that money will not be attracted to their work. In this book I examine socially engaged artists and their relationships to the wage form. I describe a collection of artists who address their own or other artists' lack of a wage to ground their method of artistic social engagement and, indeed, to critique our economic present. Sometimes this art thematizes its economic concern: Cassie Thornton, an artist who works on debt, invites other artists to construct "debt visualizations," verbal and imagistic collages of the consequences of a wageless life. Sometimes the art effects a change: Renzo Martens creates art in institutions that attempt to transform wageless Congolese farmers into money-making artists. At still other times such art allegorizes the lack of a wage: Tracey Riley's pigeon-based performances and Koki Tanaka's child-oriented enactments both use as their subjects those among us who cannot be wage-d: animals and children.

Two anecdotes from contemporary art illustrate well how artists themselves understand their own economic possibilities and limitations. The first concerns Caroline Woolard, an artist I write about in chapter 2. While speaking at a panel on artists' pay during Bushwick Open Studios in 2015, Woolard was asked to comment on the possibility of artists' resale rights. At a most century-old idea, such rights enable artists to continue to make money if their artwork is resold after its initial purchase, much as authors retain the right to new editions and translations of their texts through copyright protection. The audience nodded in seeming agreement at the idea; it was the first concrete proposal of the event, after all. Woolard then responded: "I've never sold any art. I don't know many artists who have ever sold anything. Most art will never sell and most artists won't make money from their art." If one does

DECOMMODIFIED LABOR AND THE CLAIMS OF
SOCIALY ENGAGED ART

Leigh Claire La Berge

Backyard Economy

SEW - Stefanie Kitzberger & Jenni Tischer
Di, 9-12.00 (bi-weekly), SR 23, VZA 7
jenni.tischer@uni-ak.ac.at / stefanie.kitzberger@uni-ak.ac.at

economy (n.)
oikos/ops (i.e. "household management")
oikos; "house; household; home")
vōu (i.e. "manage; distribute; to deal out; dispense")
oikonomia ("household management")

The title of this seminar, *Backyard Economy*, is borrowed from a video series by Martha Rosler (1974). Rosler's work refers to the intrinsically economic determination of social reproduction. Associated with women, children, pets, plants, care and regeneration, this domain is usually regarded as "private" and therefore unjoined from the political economy. Proceeding from Rosler's work and its foundations in Feminist accounts of the 1970s that challenged this dichotomous conception, our course will explore contemporary artistic engagements with allegedly "subordinate" aspects or "marginal" actors of the economies of global capitalism. Accompanied by discussions of selected texts we will analyze art works that not only address economic inequalities and exclusion thematically, but also critically examine the aesthetic and material conditions of their own practices within the institution of art. Beyond a comprehension of notions such as (social) reproduction, (private) property and value as well as a discussion of their intersections with class, gender, race, (neo)colonial imprints and environmentalist perspectives, we will thus specifically be concerned with questions of representation as well as with art's continued intricate relationship with political activism.

Kindly note that the seminar is co-taught by Jenni Tischer and Stefanie Kitzberger. In terms of practicability please register for both courses entitled 'Backyard Economy'. You can get grades either for an academic practice or for a practice that combines academic and artistic approaches. Classes will be held in English, however, you can hand in your papers both in English or German.

Course requirements:

- attendance (you may miss no more than one class unexcused)
- active participation
- on-time submissions

Assessment criteria (you can choose between two options):

Academic practice

- preparation of the assigned readings, readiness to engage in discussion in class
- analysis and presentation of one of the selected artworks (10 mins max)
- written seminar paper (ca. 25.000-30.000 characters incl. footnotes; excl. appendix)

Artistic + academic practice

- preparation of the assigned readings, readiness to engage in discussion in class
- analysis and presentation of one of the selected artworks (10 mins max)
- development and presentation of your own artistic work (situated in the contexts of the seminar; 10 mins max)
- written seminar paper (English or German, 10.000 characters incl. footnotes; excl. appendix)

// Figure 21
Readings (zine excerpt), *Backyard Economy*, 2022

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- Fig. 1:** Alfred Soulek, *Innenraumgestaltung / Damenzimmer* [Interior Design / Lady's Room], 1930–1931, b/w photograph, 22.9 × 16.3 cm, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, 16.257/FW/1, Collection and Archive, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 2:** Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, *Fürchtet den Tod nicht* [Do Not Fear Death], 1932–1933, digital print on aluminum (reproduction from a glass negative), 150 × 100 cm, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, 15.590/7/FW, Collection and Archive, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 3:** Elly Niebuhr, *Kehrichtwagen für Papier und Blätter* [Garbage Car for Paper and Leaves], 1950–1960, b/w photograph (reproduction), 30 × 30 cm, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, NIE/1043/F, Collection and Archive, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 4:** Ella Zwatz, *Tools of Care 1.0 / Imprints of the Everyday*, 2022, concrete, spray paint, watercolor, acrylic, 103 × 77cm (dimensions variable), Courtesy of Ella Zwatz, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, 19.295/1-10/0, Collection and Archive, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig 4a:** Ella Zwatz, *Tools of Care 1.0 / Imprints of the Everyday*, 2022, found metal object, 13 x 10 cm, Courtesy of Ella Zwatz, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte, 2022, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 5:** Martha Rosler, *Backyard Economy II (Diane Germain mowing)*, ca. 1974, super-8 film on video, color, silent, 6:39 min, Courtesy of Martha Rosler and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com

- Fig. 6:** Laura S. Oyuela Flores, *Traces of Care (Work)*, Object 2, 2022, night table with a plastic weekly pill container, a handmade ceramic pill container, plastic portable pill container, tissue box, four pill bottles, water carafe, small water glass, two vases with flowers, four 500ml clinical alcohol bottles, one 200g cotton bag. Contents in the night table's drawers: different types of bandages, insulin syringes, small tissue bag and FFP2 masks, 59.5 × 41 × 38 cm, Courtesy of Laura S. Oyuela Flores, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 7:** Karrabing Film Collective, *The Mermaids, Mirror Worlds*, 2018, two-channel installation, 34:50 min, color, sound, film still, Courtesy of Karrabing Film Collective, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 8:** Installation view *Source Materials* (detail), 2022, curated by Lucie Pia, Tiny Mutual Admiration Societies, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Demian Kern
- Fig. 9:** Tiffany Domke, *Dust*, 2022, digital video, silent, 0:18 min, Courtesy of Tiffany Domke, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 10:** Samuel Ekeh, *Front Yard Economy II*, 2022, oil on canvas, 140 × 80 cm, Courtesy of Samuel Ekeh, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 11:** Falke Pisano, *The Value in Mathematics, Learning in Proximity*, 2015–2017, wood and paper, 42 × 26 × 26 cm, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 12:** Marshall Paul, *Body Shame Body Work Workshop*, 2022, text, photos of sketches made with a phone (zine excerpt), Courtesy of Marshall Paul, *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna
- Fig. 13:** ad0/Aptive collective, *Danubian Bank Banner*, 2022, Digital print, Roll-up & Display system, 85 × 200 cm, *Danubian Towels; 100Stö.*, 2022, Sublimation print on Towel, 70 × 140 cm, *5-Störling Magnets; 5Stö.*, 2022, Digital print on Magnet, 13.4 × 6.6 cm, *Danubian Bank Stickers; 1Stö.*, 2022, Digital print on Sticker foil, 10 × 10 cm, *Störling Folders 1–2*, 2021–2022, Presentation Folders, *Störling Bills*, 21 × 29.7 cm, *GRUNDL coins*, 2022, 3D print, 3 × 3 × 0.4 cm, *Danubian Bank Exchange Office*, 2021, Störling community currency, metal box, variable size, Courtesy of ad0/aptive collective, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 14:** Constantina Zavitsanos *Three Card Monte*, 2022 (2018–), three 1 gram Austrian Mint Kinebars (999.9 gold in assay with Kinegram counterfeit detection hologram of a Lipizzaner horse in various positions) on offer to the public, while supplies last (no purchase necessary to participate; limit one gold bar per participant), 32 × 10 cm, Courtesy of Constantina Zavitsanos until collected amid the exhibition as a take-away, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 15:** Andrea Fraser, *2016 in Museums, Money, and Politics*, author: Andrea Fraser, contributor: Jamie Stevens, co-published with Westreich Wagner Publications, the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, and MIT Press, 2018, Exhibition View *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 16:** Melanie Gilligan, *Self Capital*, 2009, 1-channel HD video, three episodes, 23:00 min, color, sound, Courtesy of Melanie Gilligan and Galerie Max Mayer, Exhibition view *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 17:** Laura Egger-Karlegger, *I Wouldn't Have Chosen Those Stickers Without Watching Crowds and Self-Capital* by Melanie Gilligan, 2022, collage (zine excerpt), Courtesy of Laura Egger-Karlegger, *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna
- Fig. 18:** *Backyard Economy*, Exhibition view, University Gallery of Die Angewandte, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Photo: Manuel Carreon Lopez, kunst-dokumentation.com
- Fig. 19:** Laura S. Oyuela Flores, *Traces of Care (Work)*, poster, 2022 (insert for the zine), Courtesy of Laura S. Oyuela Flores, *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna
- Fig. 20:** Bibliography (zine excerpt), *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna
- Fig. 21:** Readings (zine excerpt), *Backyard Economy*, University Gallery Die Angewandte Vienna, 2022, University of Applied Arts Vienna

// Exhibition *Backyard Economy*

University Gallery Die Angewandte

Exhibition installation: Martin Hotter, Wolfgang Konrad, Michael Krupica, Andreas Unterpertinger, Catharina Wronn

Exhibition management: Laura Egger-Karlegger, Stefanie Kitzberger, Jenni Tischer

Head of the exhibition office, University Gallery of Angewandte at Heiligenkreuzerhof:

Anette Freudenberger

Graphic design of poster and invitation card: Sarah Podbelsek

Graphic design zine and poster: Stefanie Kitzberger, Jenni Tischer, Lian Hannah Walter

Tiny Mutual Admiration Societies: Hannes Loichinger

Sponsor: the Danubian Bank

// About the Authors

Jenni Tischer is an artist and educator. In her sculptural installations she reconceptualizes and recontextualizes principles of form, material and spatial references from a feminist perspective. Tischer's work has most recently been shown in solo exhibitions at Galerie Krobath Vienna, Kunstforum Baloise, Basel, mumok Museum für Moderne Kunst, Vienna, and in group exhibitions at MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst Vienna, MAK Center in Los Angeles, Kunsthalle Tübingen, after the butcher in Berlin, and Kunsthalle Wien, among others. Tischer was awarded the 15th Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel, and was an Artist in Residence at the MAK Schindler Residency program in Los Angeles. Since 2019 she teaches at the University of Applied Arts Vienna on social reproduction and art and economy. Together with Eva Maria Stadler she is co-editor of the anthology *Abstraction & Economy. Myths of Growth* (forthcoming in 2024).

Stefanie Kitzberger is an art historian and educator. Since 2020, she works at the institute Collection and Archive and the Department of Art History at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Her research concerns twentieth-century and contemporary art, with a strong interest in the intersections of Marxist, Feminist and Critical race theory. Her PhD addresses the notion of transgression in modernist Eastern and Central European art during the 1920s by looking at entanglements of artistic practices, art theories and historiography. Recent publications include: *Art in the Face of Fascism. On the Political in the Work of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis around 1930 to 1942*. In: *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. Works from the Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna* (Walter de Gruyter, 2023), co-edited with Cosima Rainer and Linda Schädler, *Komplexe Beziehungsweisen. Notizen zu Biografie und Werk von Friedl Dicker-Brandeis*. In: *RIHA Journal*, edited by Ruth Hanisch et al., and *Sammeln, Aneignen, Übersetzen. Rosalia Rothansl, Mileva Stojavljevic und die moderne Hausindustrie*, co-edited with Eva Klimpel (forthcoming in 2024).

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