

CRAFT

CRAFT is an art collective that focuses its reflection on the practice of art as labor, collective authorship, function, precarious condition, leisure, transformation of matter within production processes, and the fictional distinctions between art and craft, original and copy.

DESTAJOAKKORDARBEIT

On this occasion the collective will produce by hand a textile design in a live action in which the idea of work as an ethical, moral and hygienic measure will provide the conceptual content and the rhythm of a sound piece will dictate the cadence of the work. The collective has invited Roy Meuwissen (HO/CA) to define the content of the textil piece and Doris Steinbichler (AT) to modify the "se compran colchones" ad by María del Mar Terrón (MX) that will provide the cadence.

CRAFT is:

Manuela Picallo Gil was born in Austria, lives and works in Vienna and Burgenland. She uses the field of tension between inclusion and exclusion on a linguistic level in order to question social and own categories through multimedia objects, works on paper and installations. As an archaeologist of her own biography, she deals with her heritage, the effect of past events in the present, taking up the relationship between country and city, with three areas of interest: work, faith and language. her focus is on sensitive, individual and collective memory, often using participatory action and the method of oral history. Furthermore, her works predominantly move in the field of gender/sex diversity, identity and sexuality, which has parallels to the second focus of her work: social marginalization through the media, where by image and language are exploited to exclusion. Her Works have been showed in Austria, Germany, Italy and Mexico.

<http://manuelapicallogil.com>

Oscar Cueto was born in Mexico City, lives and works in Austria. He holds a TransArts MA of the University of Applied Arts Vienna. His work elaborates narrative exercises and reflects on the mechanisms that construct the notions of history, knowledge, memory and identity. Cueto's projects are developed flexibly in a wide variety of techniques, ranging from drawing to performative installations that can be walked through, manipulated or played with to provoke audience participation. His works have been exhibited in several countries and are part of various collections in museums, public and private art institutions. Since 2017 Cueto has been inviting curators and artists to Austria to collaborate with his nomadic anti-museum MUME / Museo Mexicano.

<http://www.oscarcueto.com>

Guest artist for this edition: Doris Steinbichler (AT/MX), Roy Meuwissen (HO/CA) and María del Mar Terrón (MX)

Doris Steinbichler was born in Austria, is a performance artist and vocal sound improviser. In the nineties she was in charge of Epicentro, an author's gallery that was a pioneer in Mexico in the promotion of non-objective art. Her work deals with aspects of social conscience, personal and gender introspection with strategies of relational art and the use of expanded techniques of sound, photography and projected image. Awarded in Mexico with a Performance Art Award 1993 (X'Teresa, Arte alternativo) and Arte Radiofónico 2001, she was founder and organizer of the week-long radio festival "Remediar - La Bienal No Oficial de Radio" (2001) and of the expanded film and analog projection collectives "Trinchera Ensemble" (Mexico, 2004) and "4shrooms" (Austria, 2007). He has participated in numerous international performance festivals and meetings, among the most recent in Gorizia (Italy, September 2022), Pärnu (Estonia, July 2022), Kassel, (Germany June 2022). In addition she founded in 2019 the festival Resist! In 2019 she was included in the exhibition "Arte Acción en México 1970- 2014, by MUAC Mexico (Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo). 2021 a critical review of her work was made at the ICM Vienna



(Cultural Institute of Mexico). 2022 participated in the Festival "Overlapping Kassel", an event parallel to Documenta fifteen, Kassel, Germany.

<https://www.doristeinbichler.com>

Roy Meuwissen Roy Meuwissen was born in the Netherlands and currently lives and works between Mexico City and Western Canada. His work encompasses both still and moving image making, sculpture, design, writing and content curation. Originally trained as a painter, he composes spatial montages typically presented as installations using lens-based as well as traditional media, objects and typographic text. The politics of absence, displacement, migration and invisibilization figure substantively in his work. Other recurring themes include power, precarity and risk, recursion and abstraction. Meuwissen holds a BFA from the Alberta College of Art & Design and a MFA from the University of Windsor, both in Canada. His work has been exhibited in Canada, Europe, Mexico and the United States.

<https://cargocollective.com/roymeuwissen>

María del Mar Terrón was born in Mexico, and is the voice of "Se compran colchones", a sound announcement that has become part of Mexico City's popular culture. It was originally recorded on a cassette in 2005, at the request of her father, Marco Antonio, who is a fierroviejero. It has now spread to almost all fierroviejeros in the city, as well as in other Mexican states, and María is popularly nicknamed Niña de fierro or Niña del fierro viejo. The recording was registered, but its authors do not benefit economically from it. It is used by most of the fierro viejo collection cars. Mr. Terrón stated with satisfaction that "using this recording feels good because in some way you are doing your bit to keep these people working". María del Mar's voice has been remixed to create songs, phone ring tones and has even been used in series and movies set in the city, such as Cindy la Regia or Chingolandia. For March 8, 2021, the feminist collective Fieras Fieras published a remix in which they rewrote the lyrics of Se compran colchones for "Se buscan, personas, aliadas, guerreras, (...) en contra del fierro viejo que abundaa".

https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Se_compran_colchones

CRAFT

...always work, go to church, do right, respect those in authority over you...¹

Arbeit Macht Frei is a German phrase meaning: "Work makes you free". The slogan was first used by the Nazis in 1933 and later appeared over the main entrance gate of Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps. The decision to display the motto so conspicuously at Auschwitz seems to have been intended neither literally nor as mockery—as a false promise that those who worked to exhaustion would eventually be released—but rather as a kind of transcendent declaration that self-sacrifice in the form of endless labor brings about a kind of spiritual freedom. All the signs were prominently displayed, doubling as sinister admonition and moral imperative, and their psychological impact on prisoners and staff was tremendous.

In a capitalist society we define ourselves according to our labor, not our ideas. Yet work is a multivalent concept informed by different and contradictory cultural, social, ideological and religious perspectives. Despite the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist models of production in many parts of the world beginning in the 1970s, our notions of what constitutes work and its ethical implications have changed little in the interim. Wage labor, while often redundant in the sense of David Graeber's concept of 'bullshit jobs', is still generally regarded as respectable and necessary in order to achieve and maintain social visibility. What have changed significantly are the types of activities included under the rubric of work. As Franco "Bifo" Berardi has written, the rise of post-Fordist modes of production takes the mind, language and creativity as its primary tools for the production of value.

"Se compran ... colchones ... tambores ... refrigeradores ... estufas ... lavadoras ... microondas ... o algo de fierro viejo que vendan!"

Her voice echoes daily throughout Mexico advertising the purchase of mattresses, washing machines, refrigerators, drums and stoves. In a 2016 interview in *El País*, María del Mar Terrón explains how the now ubiquitous recording of her voice came to be. Her plaintive singsong delivery betrays wariness beyond her years, given that she initially made the recording for her father in 2004 when she was ten years old. Since then, it has been sampled hundreds if not thousands of times by other scrap metal vendors across the country, as well as for more esoteric purposes in innumerable recordings by DJs, musicians and sound artists.

While the recording has become an iconic fixture within the soundscape of Mexico City, her circumstances have changed little in the intervening years, having continued to experience precarity for want of better economic opportunities. "We are going through a rough patch," she tells the journalist euphemistically, "but we are putting a good face on it," thereby glossing over her life of poverty and continual uprooting.

This colloquialism invokes the unmistakable voice of authority, ideological dogma polished with the veneer of common sense, internalized and ventriloquized through del Mar Terrón herself. Such truisms, abundant in many languages, waylay hope for the future while instilling conformity, diligence, pride and suffering in its place. Work, don't complain, and be grateful for what you have even if you have nothing.

Lacking the means to control dissemination of the recording has meant that she has never earned anything from it. But who owns her voice if she herself does not? Having no agency means that her labor

¹ This sample from a Ku Klux Klan speech appears on the electro-industrial dance track *Sensoria* by English industrial/post-punk music pioneers Cabaret Voltaire. *Sensoria* was the first single from their sixth full-length studio album entitled *Micro-Phonies* (Some Bizarre/Virgin), originally released in 1984.



is effectively free, owned by everyone except her. How ironic then, if indeed language is a primary tool nowadays for the production of value, that she has never been in a position to profit from her labor.

"We are going through a rough patch, but we are putting a good face on it."

During the pandemic many ideas about improving working conditions were debated, but few were implemented seriously since most were seen as impediments to business-as-usual, profit-driven priorities. Still, in lockdown it was the labor of working people, not capital, whose services were morbidly exalted and recognized as essential.

Neoliberalism recasts all individuals as entrepreneurs in a zero-sum game, living an aleatory and precarious existence, gambling their way towards a supposedly better future of increasingly diminishing returns. In the neoliberal reality we currently inhabit, everyone enjoys the 'freedom' to 'perform' their individuality, with the caveat that this independence is no longer supported by collective solidarities, but is based instead on 'investing' in oneself, both economically and holistically.

Naturally, del Mar Terrón's existence falls entirely outside this reality. For her, performing as a clown at parties is not a celebration of her individuality, but another means to make ends meet—more work in order to live.

In English, scrap metal collectors are sometimes colloquially referred to as scrappers. But scrapper also means fighter or fierce competitor. This informal designation signals the negative aspects and consequences of her family's predicament, lives continually afflicted by economic impoverishment, forced to soldier on in order to earn a living.

In the accompanying music video for *Sensoria* by Cabaret Voltaire, a young girl—presumably the daughter of the fire and brimstone preacher who carries her on his shoulders in the beginning of the clip—is seen waving a placard that reads: "My father will heal you with love" while he administers faith healing to a lost soul on a desolate street corner.

Recorded in the post-industrial north of England, the video echoes del Mar Terrón's precarious reality, though not her optimistic spin on it. Cabaret Voltaire were formed in Sheffield which played a crucial role in the Industrial Revolution, with many significant inventions and technologies having developed in the city, especially in the steel and silver-plating industries, which use iron as raw material.

In the spirit of bygone labor solidarity movements and the naïve girl in the video-clip waving her placard, CRAFT Collective have produced a banner with del Mar Terrón's words emblazoned across it to reflect on these ideas of work as moral, ethical and hygienic endeavor. They have also invited Doris Steinbichler to modify the recording by María del Mar Terrón in a live sonic intervention onsite at Horror-Error.

Roy Meuwissen
Mexico City, 2023