

Raquel Frieria

ONE YEAR WOMEN'S PERFORMANCE 2015-2016



This project investigates the immaterial, unpaid and unquantifiable work done by women: it visualizes—and at the same time recognizes—the tasks considered domestic or care work. These tasks are usually manipulated to establish professional hierarchies, and especially in the European context they disfigure certain dimensions of collective subjectivities including gender.

23.02 – 20.05.2018

[LA VIRREINA]
CENTRE
DE LA IMATGE

Ajuntament de
Barcelona



One Year Women's Performance 2015–2016 is a project inspired by the action of *One Year Performance 1980–1981* by Tehching Hsieh, where the Taiwanese artist took a photo of himself dressed in a uniform after clocking in each hour for a year, alluding to the impossibility of quantifying artistic work according to standard labour parameters, and reminding us that the artist's production comprehends twenty-four hours a day. That is, the boundaries between art and life are fragile every day, and sometimes, non-existent.

In contrast, Raquel Frieria's twelve female citizens comprise a certain feminine and collective figure. For a month, each of these women "clocks in" and takes a photo of herself after completing a task in her own home that is considered domestic or care-taking work. Moreover, she makes audio recordings of the times when said work extends beyond the material dimension, for example, the time dedicated to planning activities or being available at occasional gatherings at the home, in essence, documenting the non-quantifiable nature of the larger part of her responsibilities.

With *One Year Women's Performance 2015–2016*, Frieria shifts a work in art history to revisit it from a gender perspective and the problems of the current economy. She looks into the unpaid work realised by women, visualising and recognising all these essential tasks for our personal development throughout our lives and for the work of the capitalist machine. In another sense, the project gives proof that, in the European context, where the production of the immaterial reigns, certain dimensions of the collective subjectivities, among them, gender, are manipulated for the purposes of establishing hierarchies among different professions, in this case, between artistic work and domestic or care-taking work.

The domestic and care-taking labour (DCL) encompassed in this exhibit is unpaid work carried out primarily by women in nearly every corner on the planet. This is labour that the heteropatriarchal system in which we live has naturalised as “women’s work”, representing a burden for women as well as an intensification of the time that is the basis for the feminisation of poverty.

This work is absolutely necessary for people’s lives and comprises very diverse activities. Some jobs are better known as domestic labour—cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, shopping, etc.—; others, more regularly referred to as care-taking, are more directly associated with people and encompass a multitude of emotional, relational, companionship, direct care and other aspects. The third kind of tasks have to do with home organisation and management.

The purpose of this significant grouping of activities is to raise and take care of people and keep them healthy, emotionally stable, give them emotional security and the capacity for relationships and communication. Each one of these characteristics go far beyond simple biological survival. Work that is absolutely necessary since each and every one of us lives in a body with vulnerable psyches that require various types of care throughout the cycle of our lives. Work, specifically, that manifests a specific particularity: it is absolutely necessary—more than any other work, including those without remuneration—for life to continue.

Yet moreover, this work plays a vital economic role for the capitalist system: it provides a workforce for much lower than its value cost because it produces unpaid work, which constitutes a significant part of company profits. The exploitation performed by the economic system of women’s work thereby constitutes one of its working foundations without which it could not survive.

We therefore understand the reasons why, despite being the axis for human existence, domestic and care-taking labour has been made invisible, bereft of value and social recognition. It had to remain hidden and be naturalised for men to be able to maintain their status as gatekeepers for remunerated work and so that the economic system could continue and be sustained thanks to the millions and millions of unpaid hours of work performed daily by women.

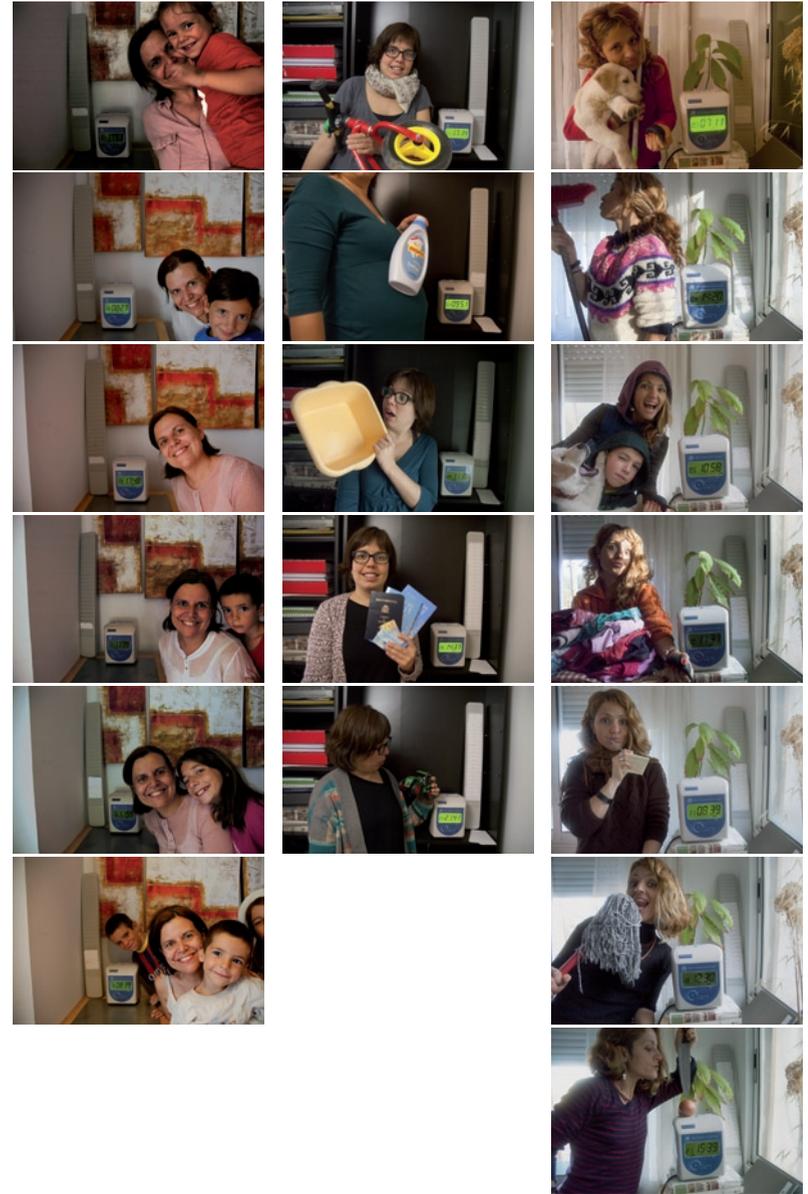
The concealment of this work is also reflected in its absence from statistics. The indicators most frequently used in economics, such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment statistics, do not include unpaid work in the home. For a few decades now, surveys on the use of time have become more and more generalised. These offer qualitative information about the time the people dedicate to different activities. The results show that the time that women dedicate to DCL is nearly double the time dedicated by men, and furthermore, that the time the entire population dedicates to DCL is greater than the time they dedicate to paid work. Relevant information which was not available until now.

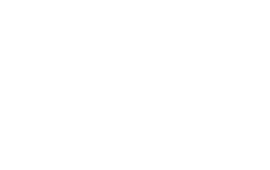
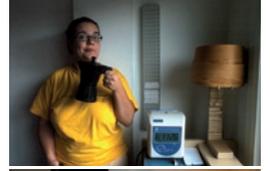
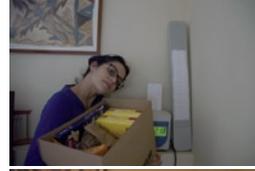
However, time does not exist on its own. We perceive it given natural phenomena—day and night, summer and winter—, or because of the growth and/or ageing of living beings. It is here that its quantitative dimension becomes a social construction through which time has been split and counted by minutes, hours, days, years, and so on, using clocks and the calendar. This quantitative dimension does not allow for the perception of activities more distinctive of and more in kind with the nature of work carried out in the home, particularly care-taking activities, with its subjective and emotional connotations that suggest relationships

and perceptions, for example, or activities that are not performed during a specific time, or which require a larger intensification of time. This is the reason why researching qualitative methodologies is necessary in order to have information directly from people about these aspects of time that fall outside the quantifiable orbit more in kind with the nature of market work.

Ultimately, recuperating DCL, making it visible and positively valuing it is a matter of justice for women and of social justice for humanity. In view of a model of bad development whose aim is the private accumulation of capital, feminism envisages the transition to a system centred on “sustainability of life” where the aim is the lives of people, though not as a women’s issue, but instead as a collective responsibility, and where unpaid work in the home becomes a central activity.

Cristina Carrasco







“Before lunch on Monday, a girl went out to play, but she couldn’t play because it was washing day. She washed like this, she washed like that. She washed like this, she washed like that. I saw her wash like this, like that.” And so the Spanish children’s song goes. The situation repeats the whole week long. The little girl is unable to simply play on any day, or perhaps her activities are considered a game, something so simple that it deserves no special recognition.

One Year Women’s Performance 2015–2016 by Raquel Frieria is a response to *One Year Performance 1980–1981*, the project by Tehching Hsieh, an artist of Taiwanese origins. In the original work, Hsieh reflected on the separation between life and art by creating daily documentation. In Frieria’s work, the documentation is carried out by a group of women and demonstrates the difficult (lack of) separation between work and family life. In this manner, Frieria shows us all the activities that women do as part of the reproductive sphere and shows us that they have no productive recognition—not even socially—, remaining excluded from the system of labour. I suppose that having sung songs like the one that starts this text makes us appropriate these tasks as our own.

One Year Women’s Performance 2015–2016 is constructed within the framework of *Feminizing Art History*, a series of works that are the response to iconic performances by men in the history of art, and which somehow beckon to Raquel Frieria for her response to questions of gender. The dialogue that Frieria establishes with the original pieces springs from the will to initiate a conversation within art history; it asserts the role of women and explores the possibility of rethinking the established canons, one based not on negation, but addition. This act makes the potency of performance clear as a tool for

the present: once we have understood its immaterial and unique nature, each replay becomes a re-invention, an adaptation to our needs according to a context—historical or physical—and to a personal situation.

Raquel Frieria's reply also incorporates a desire to share other realities, always close by, which are no less existent for being invisible—or being made invisible. For this reason, Frieria develops her work rooted in the feminist practices of care-taking and listening. This project has been envisioned as part of a network, and its richness is found in the moments that nourish the processes and content of her works. These are singular moments in which collective work and *sisterhood* become the protagonists. And this is another key element for comprehending this series within Frieria's work: a shift takes place in which the artist transforms from being an artist to existing in relation with the other people who participate, since her practice can only be understood in collaboration with others. Embarking upon this kind of artistic production process entails the exercise of generosity: the act of collaborating, intrinsic to them, involves accepting a loss of control over the final result. The social and natural forms of experience that foster these styles of working provide us with the aesthetic and intellectual framework in which knowledge is produced, a knowledge which is located and exists within the multiple relationships that sustain it. Frieria, as the leader of the piece, is able to mark its point of departure, but the results are unpredictable, which also means accepting not just a shift in authorship, but also its own fragility.

This style of working also questions the conception of the work itself as a finished product and breaks with the neoliberal idea of the here and now. When we venture sharing with others, the time required to enact the work is multiplied, becoming open to the needs and

desires of the others, and turning into a shared time. This is a complex and extensive temporality which involves accepting, on the one hand, the need for care-taking and dedication, and thereby generating a space of respect and listening. On the other hand, it involves accepting that these dynamics, once put into motion, are difficult to halt. We can stop participating in them, stop documenting them, stop experiencing them, but, in many cases, they continue to exist within the people who inhabit them and who nourish them further on than the artistic work. These working processes tend to be accompanied by a delocalisation with respect to the artistic medium that they generate. They do not take place in the institution or the study, but are instead developed in spaces that have a close relationship with the daily lives of the participants and all others involved. In the case of *One Year Women's Performance 2015-2016*, this project takes the lives, homes, cars and surroundings of the participants, and crosses through them in a process of self-knowledge and shared experiences.

If the richness of the work is found within the processes, due to their open and undetermined nature, due to their continued growth through experience with others, they also entail the difficulty of transmission: how can a moment of encounter be transferred, alive in the set photo that frequently is the exhibit? To begin, accepting this extensive temporality means that what is expressed responds to a given moment in time in the work process but on very few occasions to the final result of the piece, if it ever does come to pass; and that what is demonstrated are free interpretations of that which is experienced and responds to the needs of the moment. In this manner, we could say that Frieria's work exists in two ways: in the exhibit space as a formal summary of the story told, and in the life of the person who forms

part and embodies the processes that fuel it: voluntary processes that, through their participation, share their lives with us and invite us to reflect upon our own. One type of artistic practice that questions the institutional-ity that sustains it by its procedural and immaterial nature: the works are not set photos to be shown, but grow over time and with experience.

Specifically, Raquel Frieria's work exists in the desire to show our intimate reality and, based on our encounters with other people, makes us question ourselves about not only the economic system in which we live, but also the structure by which the tales that sustain and condition it are constructed.

Soledad Gutiérrez

Public programme directed by Raquel Frieria, Blanca del Río and Lucía Piedra

Remember When

10 April, 7 pm
Virreina Lab

The aim of this activity is to provide a critical analysis on the construction of an exhibition narrative, its condition as a naturalised practice by museum institutions and its actual need and effect on the exhibition's meaning.

Participants: group 1 of women participating in the project together with the curator Soledad Gutiérrez

Who's Counting?

15 May, 7 pm
Virreina Lab

Reproductive work—also known as “domestic and care work”—today functions as the basis of the capitalist system. Production cannot exist without reproductive work. Yet despite its importance, it is not taken into account in any way in the country's official economic indicators—GDP, unemployment rate, annual growth rate, labour statistics, etc. How, by whom and from where are the tasks associated with reproductive work visualised, articulated and recognised?

Participants: group 2 of women participating in the project together with the economist Cristina Carrasco and students of economics and art history

This project began in 2015 as part of *Ne travaillez jamais*, an exhibition curated by Blanca del Río, Mariella Franzoni, Lidia González, Antonella Medici and Lucia Piedra for Galeria ADN Platform

Curator: Valentín Roma

Participants: Carol Webnberg (July 2015), Claudia Murcia (August 2015), Fina Aluja (September 2015), Júlia Solé (October 2015), Júlia Sánchez (November 2015), Agustina Bassani (December 2015), Gemma Molera (January 2016), Aina Serra (February 2016), Naia Roca (March 2016), Lali Camós (April 2016), Priscila de Castro (May 2016), Francisca Duarte (June 2016)

With the support of the feminist collective Hora Bruixa

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Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday
and public holidays, noon to 8 pm
Free entry

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