EFA Project Space, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Presents:

to a being other than myself

Michelle S. Cho
Julia Gladstone
Jennifer Renée Green
Enrique Morales
Emilio Martínez Poppe
will owen
Guava Rhee
He-myong Woo

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EFA Project Space,
Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts
323 West 39th St, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10018

Gallery Hours: 12pm - 6pm
Opening Reception: Friday, August 5, 6pm

Writing in 1844 that capitalist society estranged workers not only from the product of their labor and the act of production, but also from their very humanity, as well as from their fellow workers, Karl Marx remarked the capitalist mode of production resulted in humans appropriating labor and its products “to a being other than myself” in the process becoming alien: “hostile, powerful, and independent” of their fellow human.[1] Yet, as Marx and others before and after him have demonstrated, such relations are but one facet of humanity, equally defined by the capacity for inquisitive altruism, mutually beneficial interdependence, and compassion.

The artists in this exhibition untangle these forms of sociality through sculpture, photographs, and video works that oscillate between questions of alienation and contingency, alternating between direct engagement with group dynamics and poetic meditations on belonging. Enrique Morales's large-scale installation uses salt bricks to produce a non-functional pathway in the gallery, taking into consideration how such a utilitarian form implies shared destinations, boundaries, borders, and goals, while Julia Gladstone's sculptural interventions—a kneeling chair and a roving piece of laminate imitation floor—animate human-made forms, resisting the force of human utility with their own forces of desire. In Michelle S. Cho's sculptures, flattened sheets of pewter—a material whose value is contingent on the intervening mediation by craftpersons—are molded into an oblique, iridescent stack, modeled after found scrap rubber from tires, transforming refuse into new commodities. Similar forms of manipulation are deployed by will owen, whose sculptures repurpose steel rods to form a bundle of warped barbells, a static testament of human ingenuity.

Individual relations are teased out in the context of group dynamics in Guava Rhee's autobiographical video work that combines 3-D animation and desktop video editing and details her experience as an immigrant from South Korea and the pressures to succeed within American society vis-à-vis learning “good” English. He-myong Woo's sculptures invoke the rituals of burial and mourning in the context of Korean displacement during and in the wake of WWII, while his photo collage combines fictive and real imagery from his exiled hometown in North Korea, shifting our understanding of social belonging away from the frames of nation and state. Social architecture is explored in the work of Jennifer Renée Green examines the contemporary political status of lesbianism in an interview performance and invites viewer participation through an archive focused installation, while Emilio Martínez Poppe’s photographic views of urban Philadelphia, taken from the interior offices of its Water Department building, considers the scope of social architecture in the context of municipal and civic services. Taken together, these divergent practices allow for new understandings of the forms that alienation takes today, and how such estrangements may yet be overcome.

to a being other than myself features work by the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School MFA Class of 2022 and is co-presented by EFA Project Space and the UPenn MFA Department, with funding from the Sachs Fund for the Arts, the UPenn MFA Department, and the UPenn Student Council.