On March 7, 2020, the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation hosted a conversation with Anetta Mona Chisa to mark the closing of *Relational Economies: Labor over Capital*, an exhibition focused on the economic interdependencies that underpin our culture, both locally and globally. Chisa’s artworks and the exhibition itself posed questions that prompt an undoing of accepted ideas about wealth and status, proposing alternative models for attributing value in everyday life. Working in collaboration with Lucia Tkáčová since 2000, the two artists each graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, and have since worked together across a wide range of media including video, performance, and sculpture, often employing language and game tactics in their practice. Driven by a quest to reconcile the political with the aesthetic, their projects have been widely exhibited in numerous institutions internationally: at BOZAR, Brussels; Pałac Sztuki in Krakow, Poland; MNAC in Bucharest; Art in General in New York City; nbk Berlin; MoCA Miami; mumok Vienna; The Powerplant in Toronto; Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt; Taipei Biennale; Prague Biennale; Moscow Biennale; and the 54th Venice Biennale, among others.

I first met Anetta in 2006, when I was working at the International Studio Curatorial Program. She and Lucia were in New York City as artists-in-residence after being awarded one of the Young Visual Artists Awards (which was then administered by the Foundation for a Civil Society), which supported artists from Eastern and Central Europe... from the so-called Balkan region. During their six-week residency, I got to know their work and was amazed by their charisma as performance artists, how they're able to make critique seductive and playful, referring to the history of institutional critique, along the lines of Andrea Fraser, but with a unique sense of humor and their own form of social engagement. It's wonderful that the two of them could participate in the exhibition with their project that conflates the tradition of Spartakiada with class structure formations, that also operates as metric visualizations. The core of their collaboration involves reconciling politics and aesthetics, creating conditions in which a work of art helps formulate resistance and helps to initiate real social change, without forfeiting its aesthetic impact or letting it be instrumentalized, and at the same time, maintaining a kind of autonomy.

Anetta Mona Chisa: Thank you, Sara, for the introduction, and thank you for listening in this time of crisis. I'm going to start with work that is presented the show. Lucia and I made a selection of works that we felt connected with the topic of the exhibition here, relating to labor,
economies, capitalism and so on. The first work is comprised of collages, and is part of the series *After the Order*. Some of these collages have been reproduced as large scale vinyl prints, for this exhibition.

![Image Description: Tall narrow sections cut from larger photographs, each depicting a single person, have been collaged together to form a graph. Some are color and some are monochrome on a blue-lined, white graph paper background.]

In this image, the collage is structured as a chart, so it shows a sort of graph. We used graph paper, which is used to measure things and illustrate charts, as a background for making the collages. I included more of these collaged images in this presentation, because only four of them are on view here in the show. The technique of collaging is a little bit like making a new world, making a utopia, or dystopia. We used cutouts from different sources, from magazines, from books, from archival photographs, from advertisements, and so on. We merged them together, cutting and pasting, selecting different moments from reality and combining them into newly imagined worlds. In a single collage you can see multiple worlds merging together. And also different timelines, because we used contemporary magazines and photos along with vintage books, like the Spartakiada books. Spartakiada was a sports event practiced from the ‘30s till early ‘90s in the post-Communist bloc. It was invented by the Soviet Union as the “Red Sport International,” and was then staged by Czechoslovakia and other socialist countries as a mass physical movement, as a useful proletarian class instrument. They made these mass events to celebrate the regime. It was supposed to be a display of equality and happy living, of a unified and uniform class society. What was the most interesting was that very often the
formations of these mass events tended towards vertical compositions, suggesting hierarchies. For us, this moment became quite intriguing. Why would one represent a horizontal, all-are-equal, class-free society, through this “human tower” building – humans holding humans on top of each other. It reminds me more of social layers, of stratified societies as if they were saying that no society, no political system is class-free, or that there's always some sort of hierarchy. This observation was the departure point for a number of projects, one of them being this series of collages. The Spartakiada was held every five years, and the people would train for five consecutive years to prepare for the final performance. Each Spartakiada spectacle was performed by more than 700,000 participants, with an audience of two million people.

SR: Did it lead to electoral politics, or somebody coming into power? Was there any correspondence to political leadership?

AMC: There was a kind of choice of non-choice in the elections, and this was part of propaganda.

SR: Did you ever participate? I know you're a bit young...

AMC: I didn't participate because I grew up in Romania which had something different, it was called Daciada, which, like Spartakiada, was a counterpoint to the Olympic Games. The Olympics were considered a very aristocratic and bourgeois manifestation. For the communist manifestations in the Eastern bloc, they wanted to make something for the proletariat, so they chose Spartacus, who was the leader of the slaves, the low working class. That's why they named it Spartakiada. In Romania we had the national proletarian Olympiad – as I mentioned, Daciada – every two years and also a choreographed mass parade displaying patterns, slogans, and symbols, held every summer to celebrate the Party. Romania was not so much a Soviet satellite, it opposed Soviet hegemony, but it was Communist, in its own style.

SR: Your own brand...When I was researching this for the exhibition, I got the impression that participation was compulsory with several hundred thousand people participating.

AMC: That's right, but there were selections. You had to be good enough to qualify for the next year of training, there were many rounds of practice, they were practicing for five years before the final performance. Each year the choreography of Spartakiada was re-designed and then they started to train masses of people for it in the first year, while only the best of the best were selected to participate in the big stadium events.

For Lucia and I, these events were an interesting starting point from which to imagine new worlds: using all kinds of referents and systems we began to rearrange new situations in order to represent fictitious or ideal or dystopic versions of society. That's another piece within the series, which is also called-
SR: The same title.

AMC: Yes, it's another version of the project called *After The Order*, and it's a cake. This was an edible performative sculpture that is consumed by the audience. We performed it for the first time in 2011, in Bucharest, and we took as a point of departure this cartoon that we found, an image published in 1911, in a leftist American magazine, *The Industrial Worker*.

![Pyramid of Capitalist System](image)


[Image Description: People stand on different layers on an open architectural form. They are stratified according to rank. At the top of the structure is a bag of money. The image is in color from a cartoon in watercolor and gouache.]

It depicts the strata, the layers of the hierarchical capitalist system, in caricature. It was meant to mock, to criticize capitalism. In the image, money’s on top — that’s capitalism itself — and then the ruling class, the ones that govern and make the laws. Then the clergy, the ones that fool, following by militarized police, the ones that control by force, the bourgeoisie, the class that enjoys life, which is oriented towards material stuff and hedonism, and they eat for everybody. And then, at the bottom, the proletariat, the class that feeds all of those above.

I don’t know whether it’s a realistic depiction of capitalism, I guess there are many fallacies in the drawing itself. Also, the drawing was also actually inspired by another image, a sketch made by Russian anti-imperialists a couple of years earlier, which had a crown on top. But it was very, very similar to this one. They just exchanged the crown for a sack of money.
SR: As many of you know we were planning to make a cake in this formation and eat it today, but for a number of reasons we decided to postpone the performance until the end of this series of exhibitions, *Revolutionary Cycles*. What do you think this would look like in a contemporary kind of form? It wouldn’t be the same pyramid in 2020. Would people look the same? As we were talking to Chef Turi Scalora (the artist who was helping to realize the designs), we began to discuss how these figures would change between 1911 and 2020.

AMC: The cake would indeed look very different. It would possibly have more of a pear-like shape?

SR: Pear-shaped.

AMC: What's not even depicted in this drawing is another layer at the bottom, which is the lowest class. The ones that don't even have a job, the have-nots. The real have-nots...

SR: Perhaps we could call them the ‘un-working class.’

AMC: Also the top would probably be much thinner. I think the shape would look slightly different. We also discussed that it would be interesting to think of an update of the pyramid, in terms of race, age, gender, and other demographics, because this was clearly taken from this Russian, Caucasian depiction. They were actually representing themselves as a very uniform society racially. So that's the limit of what...

SR: What would be.

AMC: Yes. We wanted to translate the drawing into a physical, material, edible form and so we modeled each layer with all its figurines. The idea was to make the object out of a material, which has a lot in common with the nature of capitalism itself: sugar. Sugar production started what we know as modern capitalism, all the exploitation, the plantations, the slavery, the colonialism, they all started with sugar production. Sugar was, at the very beginning, a food only for those in higher societal positions, because it was very scarce. But soon it became the opium for the masses, it was feeding the working class as an energizing and additive feeling, awarding them with a feeling of happiness and satisfaction. We all know this feeling – it penetrates the everyday language we use: sweet dreams, sweet life or dolce vita, home sweet home, sweetheart, etc. We connect all the positive things with the sweet taste.

This is the performance we did in Bucharest.
After the Order, edible sculpture performed in Salonul de proiecte in Bucharest, 2011

[Image Description: Artist Lucia Tkáčová cuts the tiered cake to give a piece to an audience member during their performance. The cake is covered with figures made from confectioners’ sugar. They depict kings and other rulers, and clergy of various religions.]

In the performance we shared the cake with everybody who was there, we made a huge feast out of this representation, this image of capitalism. The cake took a lot of time to make, because the figurines are painstakingly detailed. It took weeks to work on it and then, it was devoured in less than half an hour. It just dissolved in the crowd’s saliva.

SR: A feeding frenzy.

AMC: Yeah. So, in the end we arrived at this.
SR: The bones.

AMC: The bones, the very structure, just the skeleton of the whole cake. For one moment, the fetishistic nature of capitalist existence is exposed in the performance of eating its own image, somehow.

This is an older work called *Private Collection*, and it consists of a set of objects that we stole from different galleries around the world. We focused on the Western art world, the dominant world, on the galleries that had a certain level of worth, a say in the system of determining value. Galleries, as we know, create a value for the artworks, so we focused on art centers like Paris, Berlin, London, Vienna, New York, and Rome. We honed in on the richest, on the most relevant centers of art, and visited all the galleries on this list. From them, we took things to make a collection of objects.

![Image Description: This image contains two columns of items and galleries in white text centered on a black background.]

All these objects are actually very banal. Nothing of real value, they're all easily replaceable things of everyday life, but our primary goal was to disrupt the existing chain of artists, curator, galleries, collector, and to reverse, or to inverse, the whole logic of how the machinery of the art market works. So we were the ones choosing the galleries that we wanted to “own,” it was us subjecting them to the selective criteria we established, as we were creating our own collection. We actually imparted value on objects that had no value, no artistic value at all. It was a play on value, on different forms and different structures of power, since we, as artists,
don't really have much power or input into giving value to art. It's always somebody else who is deciding on your artwork's value.

Audience: I'm just wondering how you stole the toilet brush.

AMC: Oh! That was an easy one. Actually, most of the people didn't even notice all these objects were missing, but from David Zwirner we have an extension cable, which is signed “David Zwirner Gallery,” which is funny. Why would they sign this?

SR: David Zwirner Gallery. Did they know? I mean, did anyone ever comment?

AMC: Some did, a funny thing happened when we presented the first part of the collection—it wasn't that big at the time, but our gallerist from Vienna took it to an art fair. Many of the galleries that we “owned” came to the fair, and asked “why is my name here all of sudden?” Then, what was even funnier, was that some galleries came to our gallerist and asked her to get us to come steal from their galleries because they also wanted to be in the collection.

SR: So you created a sense of value through these petty thefts.

AMC: Exactly, it started to become a rite, because everybody wanted to have their gallery name advertised in the collection, they wanted to be listed there. I remember we got many notes from certain galleries. One gallery came and stole their object back from our gallerist’s booth at the fair, so then we went and stole it back again. It was a Viennese dealer, I can't remember his name.

SR: Georg Kargl?

AMC: Yeah, Kargl!

Audience: I just think it is a wonderful concept. When did you make this piece, and did you go forward with the methodology you employed here with other works?

AMC: Well, we started to do it in 2005.

SR: The date on the work is 2008.

AMC: That's the date of its presentation, but the work itself, we started to collect in 2005. And, we continued it for maybe five years, and then we decided, okay, we should stop stealing.

SR: So it was getting old?
AMC: It was working with a stereotype of Eastern Europeans coming and stealing from the West, plus as Eastern European artists, we had no art market, no powerful artists, we had no real voice. So, we took the liberty to rack it up, to do ourselves justice, in some sense.

I just wanted to show how we decided to display the objects. This was a big question, we have a whole collection and what do we do with it? So, we highlighted the displays. In order to create an aura for the objects and the collection itself, we wanted to give it a generous, museum display. In this case it became an archaeological site. We built the display into the floor, which we covered with a thick glass on which visitors could walk. The installation was reminiscent of archeological findings. On another occasion, we displayed the objects as if they were in a museum vitrine, as precious objects that you cannot touch. At the same time they're very banal, like the toilet stuff...

Audience: I think this is all very interesting in terms of theft and galleries. In terms of what happened after the Second World War, in terms of what...

AMC: Exactly.

Audience: ...was stolen from private collections or private citizens.

AMC: Thank you for mentioning that, because it references the colonialist desire to collect. There's this aspect of colonial collectors with a pronounced desire to have, to bring things home. Yeah, there's a chain of references that come into being...

SR: So it's appropriate during the Armory Show week. Buy, sell, steal, et cetera.

AMC: Yeah.

Either Way, We Lose is another work we did some time ago. It's an inflatable sculpture. We worked a lot with fists, for a long time. We liked it because it's a symbol for civil disobedience, protest, revolution, and resistance. All kinds of groups of people, with various contradictory political tendencies, use the fist as a symbol appropriated for their endeavors. The iconic image of a raised fist.

[Image Description: An inflatable fist with red nail polish is fitted tightly into a narrow storefront-like gallery space. It is lit internally and photographed at night.]

We wanted to work with the fist, so we re-created it as a huge inflatable sculpture that we imprisoned in a constricted gallery space. This was at a space in Brussels that was called Sorry We're Closed, and it measured three meters in all directions. You couldn't go in, but it was always visible from the street, and so we made it specially for that room. That's why the measurements give it the appearance that it almost fits, but not quite comfortably into the space itself. We wanted to squeeze it into a confined, un-free place, to imprison it in an institution, in the gallery. It hinted towards the unfortunate fate, or karma of this political gesture, alluding to the fact that it always penetrates pop culture, fashion, movies or other popular things. We wanted to question whether we really need an image to represent resistance, revolution, protest, struggle for change, or whether they can work without that? Do symbols control people, or do people control symbols? We had so many questions concerning the fist itself, as a symbol for change and power. We were disenchanted with all these open protests that were very quickly being commodified, or even appropriated by the exploitative system, while they didn't lead to much change. We were asking ourselves constantly, how do we do these things? Because raising your fist doesn't really help, they see you, they knock you out, and knock you off. Shouldn't we be more invisible in order to really make a meaningful social change? There were a myriad of questions we were permanently dealing with...
SR: More recently, there has been a range of visible protest, there was the Colin Kaepernick taking a knee, right? And not only is that replicated by others taking the knee, the whole thing is appropriated by Nike.

AMC: Yeah, exactly. So, how can we protest? It's not an invitation to resign or to surrender, it's more a question, how can we invent new models of resistance, how can we do it otherwise? This work is suggesting that maybe the fist is not the way to do things today. Maybe there's another way.

SR: As artists, have you participated in activism or kinds of mass movements? Here in NYC, around 2011, there was a lot of engagement from the left side of the art community with Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Arts and Labor, Occupy Museums. And so sometimes I question why is it being aestheticized. Is art when combined with activism being aestheticized? But I do think that there are cogent, hybrid practices where activism is integral...

AMC: We dealt a lot with criticism in our artworks but also directly, like for instance by being often picky about where we exhibited or who we work with. We should not validate and decorate the problematic causes, so we refuse to decorate, sometimes.

SR: Thank you for being here then, for considering this show to be more than mere decoration.

AMC: Happy to be here...

This project is titled *Things In Our Hands*, and is a series of objects cast from melted Euro coins. I want to show you a little bit of the process, just quickly. We had about 60 kilograms of Euro coins which we melted in a melting pot in a foundry workshop. It is illegal by the way to destroy currency. We casted the melted coins into molds of imprints of our hands...

SR: Squeezing.

AMC: Yes.

SR: Metal.

AMC: Like the hands holding matter. What resulted was a series of objects that were very ergonomic, very good to hold in your hands, reminiscent of hand axes, of prehistoric tools that people can really use. The idea was to give money function, because, as we know, money doesn’t have a function, it is a contractual thing with fictional value. There aren’t many things that you can actually do with coins or banknotes, so we said, let’s make them work somehow, let’s give them a function. Let’s use them as instruments, let’s think of... money as useful material. Another facet of the project was to present the value of the material they are made of as opposed to their value as money.
SR: What is it worth then? Is it worth more as material or currency?

AMC: It depends because if you take €2 coins, then it is worth more as currency. If you take a one cent, it's more expensive to produce the coin, 1 cent actually costs 1.5 cents. If you changed all your money into 1 cent coins, you would increase your wealth substantially. In some cases, money is worth more as material, in other cases...

SR: It's worth more in currency. I see, interesting.

AMC: Yeah, and with paper money, the material's even cheaper, but they’re worth much more than the metal ones. We wanted to think about money as something that we can really utilize in times of need. We wanted the cast objects to simultaneously refer to fossils of the past and fossils of the future. To point back to a time when money was not an issue yet. We’ve only had the coin system for 3000 years, so it's a young thing in our existence. Paper money has only been around for circa 300 years, so it seems very normal, but it's actually very new. We wanted to go back to a time when the money did not infect human collaboration, and also to allude to a future where money will not be needed. Perhaps to apocalyptic times when we will need tools for daily survival, not money...

AMC: With those coins, we were making an effort to bridge different, deeper times than we are used to thinking of in terms of money.

SR: Can I ask a question about this project? In 2010, the artist Dread Scott did a performance in Wall Street, called Money To Burn. In it, he walked through the alleys and streets around the Wall Street area, just calling out "money to burn, I've got money to burn." He had money taped onto, attached to his clothing. He then invited people to burn the bills into a bucket on the street. It was symbolic of all the money that's lost on a daily basis in the stock exchange. It was right in front of the stock exchange. He was there, not pulled over but pulled aside by the police, and there was this little discussion about whether or not... they wanted to arrest him but they didn't really have clear enough evidence of a crime... it wasn't clear what was going on, was he and others defacing or destroying currency? Which is illegal.

AMC: It is illegal.

SR: So did you have any problems with this?

AMC: Fortunately not yet. Nobody has reported us, but we didn't do it as a spectacle.

SR: It wasn't publicly done.

AMC: It wasn't public, it was exhibited but it was not in this provocative manner. Though it is still an illegal act and punishable.
SR: Have you sold this? How have you had for selling it?

AMC: Yeah...

SR: To a buyer.

AMC: They're very expensive.

SR: So it's very valuable.

AMC: Yeah... there's another funny thing about the money. By destroying money, you actually alter the value of all the remaining money in circulation. So you raise the value of the currency. It's called the quantity theory of money, so it's a good thing to make us all equally slightly richer. Somehow, destroying the money might have a homeopathic impact on us.

Audience: I believe there's a parallel between destruction of the cake, and the destruction of the money, so obviously there's a something going on there. You found a new way to use or create the money. The cake, it was destroyed. So if you had the opportunity to recreate a new cake, because like you say with the fist, there has to be a different way. You create a new different way here. What would your cake look like... if you were to destroy that tier but in a, in a realist way. Because there are black and white areas with capitalism and communism, and neither of them worked. If there has to be a different way, what would be your way to express that?

AMC: Well there are many, much smarter people are trying to figure this out, so I don't really have an answer. Many anthropologists discuss or question the universally accepted idea, that only a vertical system, political, economic, can work. And they give some examples of kinship-based or kinship-oriented societies, and also altruists like, mutual altruists and stuff like that. Apparently, there were tribes and communities that live like that still exist. So... I'm pretty sure there is a way to do it, but it's very hard to implement.

SR: So you mean, hugely mutual altruism, and kinship.

AMC: Mutually altruistic, yeah. Kinship-orientated, that is just doing good for the other, because you know that the other will do good for you.

Audience: In a sense this relates the idea of another way, which is demonstrated in this piece by Stefanos Tsivopoulos which is called Alternative Currencies: An Archive And A Manifesto, where you have these ways of direct trade. Or ways of creating direct value and exchange, in a society that is based on exchange, I mean it is a kinder way as it is very confrontational, because you have to face the person in order to give them what you're willing to give, I think it creates a more equitable way of approaching it.
SR: And you can tender what you might need.

Audience: Exactly.

SR: Yeah. It's pretty distant now, at this point, how currency separates these, these in stages.

AMC: Yeah.

SR: Or depersonalizes the system.

AMC: Okay, *When you're Adibas and you're dreaming of becoming Adidas* is another piece related to money. We have a love-hate relationship to money, as you can imagine, it's not good to not have currency, but it's also important to have it. In this piece, the banknotes came under scrutiny, because banknotes are, as I mentioned, cheap and useless pieces of cotton paper. Particularly with absurdly high financial value. What interested us was that these cotton papers are carriers of information, a type of mediated human touch. The banknotes circulate through many hands, and each of them leaves some trace, each hand leaves a trace so, notes carry skins cells, disease, germs, viruses, but also, shit, spit, piss, drugs. These substances are all found on money in laboratory testing. Every banknote out there has traces of these substances. So they're very contagious, and...


Theater play written on 388 €5 banknotes.

[Image Description: Photograph of a stack of five Euro notes. The one on top says “3211 people like this.”
The stack is looming forwards in the image.]
SR: It’s an argument for BitCoin or electronic money.

AMC: For example, in the UK, the police stopped testing banknotes for drugs, because every new banknote after being released into circulation for one week, is infected with narcotics and other substances too. So this is mediated information. All paper money carries messages as substances. Can we use them as carriers for something else? For new messages that we make, and spread them thus into the world? So, we came up with the idea that we should write a theater play, and that we should activate it by spending money, by releasing marked banknotes into circulation. Everybody could become a performer in any place so we didn’t need a stage or actors in order to perform the play. Every person that got hold of a banknote became a performer. We commissioned a theater play from a Moldovan playwright, Nicoleta Esinencu to write a text as separate lines, each of them was transcribed on a separate banknote. What you see here is just a couple of banknotes I extracted from the piece. Esinencu wrote a story based on a real event that happened in Moldova, which was all over the media. A father used an axe to cut off his son’s fingers, because he stole money from his father’s pocket. He wanted to teach him a lesson. This horrible story was everywhere. The playwright used this real event as a point of departure, and she made up a fictional story based on this boy, his life trajectory after this incident in a society which was very corrupt and money-oriented. Moldova is a young state, formerly part of the Soviet Union, where poverty and corruption are still considered a major issue. Then we transcribed the play on paper Euro and looked for a man who had his fingers cut off, in order to record a libretto for the theater play. When the money was spent, it was sent into circulation, so it may still be out there, but once banknotes are considered destroyed or defaced, they are removed from circulation. By now many of them have probably ended up in banks, or in shredders. This man performed all 400 banknotes by exposing them with his hands in front of the camera. We used €5 banknotes because they are the most accessible unit of paper money. People of all classes can possess it, so there’s an equal chance for everyone to get hold of it. The text on each banknote is connected to the previous one, forming a chain of narration, but we also wanted each sentence to stand alone, to have meaning as a solitary item because this was how they would end up...

SR: How it would end up in the world.

Theater play written on 388 €5 banknotes.

[Image Description: This photograph depicts two five Euro notes. There is a map of Europe and an aqueduct on each. One is directly over the other. The text on the top one is “she asks you to get her corn puffs from the cafeteria and you get her chips instead.” The text on the bottom one reads “and the teacher to teach you a lesson, tapes your mouth.”]

AMC: Exactly. Whenever you get one of these, you’re becoming a performer without knowing it. You can read it out loud or just give it to somebody else who might just ignore it. You’re becoming part of the play by simply having it. The play is tells a story about corruption, about how one can buy everything, how we buy jobs, political positions, escape from crimes we’ve committed, everything.

SR: So my question was about magic. Because earlier in the video there is mention of a hex.

AMC: The magic formula in the play is “krex-pex-fex.”

SR: Correct, krex-pex-fex, and it's like a spell. And I think there's a lot of magic in your work. More like a kind of conjuring of maybe the supernatural. Or, like a threat.

AMC: I think it's getting more and more magical.

SR: And why is that?
AMC: Because it's fascinating how much magic there is in everyday things, in what we use and what we do, but we don't realize that. For example, language itself is a proof for magic. I can just talk, and make you happy or sad, with whatever I say. In an instant, I can transform a situation, it's a transformative tool and so are other things, like money and books, which we also have a lot of. So that's why I think the magic is with us, even if we're not superstitious. I think we have to acknowledge the power of magic in everyday life. And yes, to recognize it.

SR: With this piece, *Either Way, We Lose*, it's kind of like, if you're looking for new forms of protest of transformation, maybe it matches. What comes after the kind of failure of activist gestures, or those gestures being co-opted by the market.

AMC: Yeah, another more explicit example of working with magic was having a fortune teller reading *Das Kapital* and using it as a tool to foresee the future. Maybe you remember that because it's an old piece.

SR: I'll have to come back and include that in another show.

AMC: We have a series of works made with books, or about books, or departing from books, using books in various ways, translating them into various materials. This is one of the “translations” we did. It's called *All Periods in Capital* and it's actually a material translation of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. We took the whole book and counted all the sentences and all the periods after each sentence, so what you see here is a material version of each period in the entire book, which amounts to 22,591.

*All Periods in Capital, 2007*
Clay, acrylic paint, plastic bag

[Image Description: A plastic bag containing tiny painted clay black balls depicting periods.]
SR: Like beads standing in for periods.

AMC: They're all painted black and we put them in this commonly available bag, so we have here a black and white object referring to black text on white background. We enacted the making of these globules as a performative gesture, during which we measured time, counting the working hours, alluding to Marx's idea that value depends on working hours. We spent 90 working hours materializing this one book, rendering it physical.

*The Prophecy of Things* is a project about screens, which are, well, magical for me, again. It is a series of photographs of broken iPhone screens. Why screens? Because screens represent something that we spend a vast majority of time looking at, they're very captivating. But we never see the screens themselves, we always see what they mediate, so it's a mediated image that they bring to us, they impart, they channel. We were interested in the material aspect of the screens, and why don't we see it, why are they so self-effacing. When they are off we only see our reflection in them, they are a black mirror. When they are on, we just see what they show us as, an interface, what they mediate. No matter how far or close the information travels from, it's always there with us on the screen. We liked to think about the screens. We gathered a lot of discarded iPhone screens and we reconnected them to electricity. They started to glow, displaying a variety of beautiful patterns, an abstract language suddenly liberated from all meanings and all content. We found it fascinating the different world they have, the freedom of pixels and everything that “lives” in it.

Photographs of broken smartphone screens.
[Image Description: Photograph of abstracted and geometric patterns in black, pink lines in a variety of colors.]

It's like looking into the subconsciousness of the machine. Something not intentionally programmed, but rather something free of numbers and codes. There's no digital manipulation, just images of the screens roving in various patterns and showing those to the world.
This is an installation we did with the screens. We selected a few photographs of screens and printed them on big glass plates, which made them look exactly like augmented screens. Then we built this immersive space with them. Each screen is two-meters high, so when you enter the room you really feel a little bit like Alice in Wonderland coming into this land of big screens and looking through the glass, at what's on the other side.

![Image Description: Photograph of room where five large abstract screens line the walls in a variety of geometric and abstract patterns. On the floor coming from each image and spreading across the floor are black cables, on top of which are crystal balls placed randomly.]

SR: Through the looking glass into an alternate dimension.

AMC: Yeah. Another thing that is really interesting about this abstract work is that our brain has the tendency to find meanings and known patterns in any abstract, random image, no matter where they see it, whether it’s the clouds in the sky, or tea leaves in our tea water. It is called pareidolia. It is what many fortune-telling techniques are based on, because we continually tend to decipher all kinds of abstract imagery as something complete, that we recognize, that we know and are familiar with, and could be a sign for something. These beautiful abstract patterns open so many worlds and doors into new worlds. In the installation, we used cables and crystal balls to recognize the visionary or prophetic dimension of the screens, their potential to be prophetic tools.
The fluidity of the cables and the fluidity of the screens served as another analogy that we brought forth in these tapestries. The technique of weaving is also based on codes, zeroes and ones. Weaving is a binary code older than the computation system. The same code that is used in programming was used for millennia in weaving. Here we translated code-free pixilation into tapestries.

SR: So you took a bunch of broken phones and plugged them in and eventually-

AMC: Yeah, initially we got a lot of discarded screens, hundreds of them. They were all dead, not working, no cables to attach them to electricity, no software, nothing. So we worked with an assistant to find a way to revive them.

SR: Have you had the experience, where you really smash your phone badly, and then suddenly it has some ornate design?

AMC: Yeah, I always find it beautiful.

SR: It's beautiful, except it's like...

AMC: Useless.

SR: It doesn't do anything.

AMC: The last piece I will show is also connected to the screens, it's a video called Manifesto of the Liberated Pixel.

SR: Perfect.

AMC: The video is recorded footage with no digital manipulation or animation, except for the sound and the editing. It is very tempting to see it as a computer animation, but it is just the movement and the flickering of the physical screens as they were reacting to electricity. One can’t see this life in the photographed screens, but it is obvious here how lively they behave.

SR: Thank you.

I declare myself to be a liberated pixel. I am powerful, beautiful and free. I am an agorist. I'm acting consistently for freedom and in freedom. I want to create a new justification for my existence and autonomy. I am a world in myself. I am the virtuality of materiality turned into materiality of virtuality and back. I allow myself to be me, I'm true to myself. I'm not interested in being a version of something else. I release myself from past and future. I live in a spartan-like simplicity, knowing nothing of the codes, numbers, meaning, content and the grandeur of other herds of slave-pixels. I allow myself the freedom to float free and to make mistakes. I give myself
the freedom to be less than perfect. I vacate my state in favor of data-free-self, randomness and anti-representation. I found freedom in the age of confusion. The chains that bound me fell away. I chose the path of abstraction. I am liberated of intention, un-cerebral, unburdened, no strings attached. I want to decorate, beauty must conquer the lust for order. Order is ugliness. Anarchy is beauty and beauty is anarchy. I live within my means. I keep my liquidity and remain nimble-minded. I take the right to be a supernatural being. I exist and I do not exist at the same time. I intersect anarchy with spirituality. I am an extended now, a prophetic hallucination of singularity. I am a tool for divination, a novel insight into the world. I take the role of a prosthetics for the imagination covering the realm between unconsciousness and oblivion. I am the only way to trigger a proper revolution.

Click here to view the entire Manifesto of the Liberated Pixel on Vimeo