

**Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens: *Is there anything left to be done at all?***  
**Trinity Square Video, Toronto**  
**April 12 – May 12, 2014**  
**by Aryen Hoekstra**

In the 1950s, it seemed increasingly likely that we were only a generation or two away from a fully functioning robot workforce. Over the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, early science fiction's prophecies of submarines, planes and rockets were materializing as real, operational technologies. The apparent ease with which these formerly fantastic novelties were being realized spurred further speculation about how humanity's future condition might better be shaped. It was at this time while automation was in its infancy, with its promise of increased efficiency and decreased expenditure, that forward-looking groups such as the Situationists and Yippies concluded that we would soon wholly abandon the obligation of labour once and for all.

There was a fleeting moment when it seemed that this was a collective desire, but it didn't last. This utopian enthusiasm was soon re-routed to embrace the ends of productivity and the conversation around work dramatically shifted to view labour as an inherently moral quality that required unwavering valorization. Ever since then, those who have advocated for a decreased workday or extended weekend have been vilified as unproductive and unpatriotic. However, in *Is there anything left to be done at all?* Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens take up this now-resistant stance of a nearly lost era, wherein large-scale poetic projects were dreamable and a more egalitarian society seemed just on the horizon.

Arranged across the lobby and rear exhibition spaces within Trinity Square Video, Ibghy and Lemmens' exhibit presents the detritus of unproductivity, revealing the artists' radical laze. *Is there anything left to be done at all?* follows a month-long production residency at tsv in which Ibghy & Lemmens invited artists Justine Chambers, Kevin Rodgers, Rodrigo Marti and Ryan Tong to aid them in removing the expectation of quantifiable results from their work processes. This proposition is a difficult undertaking and the danger in attempting to show the abstract dis-order of the creative process is that, if successful, its actualization risks shedding the allure of its obscurity. The exhibition takes the form of a struggle with that question. How does an artist exhibit their creative process without formalizing it?

Within tsv the vestiges of this purposive purposelessness are made manifest as *ad hoc* sculptural assemblages combining simple materials found around the gallery or purchased nearby. In the lobby, a neatly folded moving blanket is discreetly placed at the base of a plinth around which wooden fragments from previous installations, renovations and strikes have been arranged. Its vague composition resists the label of 'sculpture' and could easily be mistaken for refuse from an artist's studio, though to describe what is exhibited as unfinished is to once again fall into the trap of having expectations. Instead, what is shown lacks finish precisely because it is aimed toward no end. In its indeterminacy it attempts to remain in the sphere of pure means, unveiling the immanent potentiality that lies within the process of creation.

On the floor, propped against a wall and adjacent to the lobby plinth, leans a flat screen monitor that shows a video of the artists and their collaborators sitting on the same floor, absorbed in an extended break before returning to motion. In the rear gallery too, audio and video documentation show the hosts and their invitees gathered around similar sculptural assemblages that maintain a suspended state of flux, continually being re-edited, re-arranged and re-considered. Treated as objects themselves, the monitors and screens upon which these acts play out form a constellation of documentation—not staged, but simply



Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens, *Is there anything left to be done at all?*, 2014, video installation  
PHOTO: JOHN G. HAMPTON; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

recording the imprecise goings-on of a willing group of collaborators. Little of what is shown in the videos remains in the gallery; only the least recognizable items are still present. Instead, the attendant technologies are replacement props, their arrangement enduring as provisional and already predisposed to future manoeuvring and reimagining. At the show's end much will be packed away, discarded, or wrapped in blankets to be taken elsewhere; the elements will be returned to their pre-action state and once again open to subsequent meandering explorations.

The commercial art world has long favoured the practices of artists who are productive enough to satisfy the demands of the marketplace. This propensity has seemingly increased since the global financial meltdown as the purchasing of emerging artists' work has on occasion been shown to yield potentially greater returns on investments than nearly any other speculative strategy. This pressure on younger artists to produce recognizably saleable work encumbers the space necessary for exploration through which generative discoveries might occur. The project within Trinity Square Video delineates a territory in which these aimless investigations may again emerge, revisiting and expanding upon a conversation to which Ibhgy & Lemmens have remained committed throughout their career. The suspension of any decisive conclusion in *Is there anything left to be done at all?* assumes the utopian stance of those early science fiction writers, and in so doing undermines the privileging of resolution in relation to labour, instead proposing a low-resolution alternative to a high-definition global economy.

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Richard Ibhgy & Marilou Lemmens, *Is there anything left to be done at all?*, 2014, video installation  
PHOTO: JOHN G. HAMPTON; IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS



## **The Hypnotic Show: Raimundas Malašauskas and Marcos Lutyens Kunstverein Toronto & Gallery TPW June 12 & 13th, 2014 by Penelope Smart**

I am one of about thirty in the small gallery room. We're here to experience *The Hypnotic Show*. After a brief introduction by the organizers, we lie down on the floor. I close my eyes, tentatively. My arm nearly touches someone's leg, my head rests in close proximity to my neighbour's face. As I'm trying to relax, a session of group hypnosis begins: *the soft curtain of your lashes slowly blurs out the world around you, closing slowly and slowly now*. A soothing voice moves into a rhythmic narrative of fantastical scenarios and objects. Surprisingly, it is easy to focus and my mind does not wander away from the brightly-coloured beach that morphs into an exotic bird, or a forest meadow that produces an opalescent box. Eventually, it is time to snap out of it. A half hour of listening to someone narrate surreal imagery among a group of silent strangers is awkward, interesting, and at times pleasant.

*The Hypnotic Show's* name is an important misnomer: it is not really about being hypnotized. Not, at least, in the popular sense of the term in which people, in an altered state of consciousness, lose control over their own mind and become slaves to responses not their own. *The Hypnotic Show* is intended as an art exhibition. In the words of the project's creator, Lithuanian curator Raimundas Malašauskas: "it is an exhibition curated in the mind of an audience." Participants see and encounter visual imagery and objects via the power of suggestion, "seeing" and interpreting the visual information in the mind's eye. Since 2008, Malašauskas and his key collaborator, hypnotic therapist Marcos Lutyens, have performed - or realized - *The Hypnotic Show* in various iterations and venues internationally, including at high profile events such as DOCUMENTA(13) and the 55<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale.

*The Hypnotic Show* landed in Canada for the first time as the launch event of a new artist-run centre called Kunstverein Toronto. Kunstverein is a German word which translates to English as "artist association." In operation since 2009, Kunstverein is, at present, a franchise signature for an international network of artist-run centres in Amsterdam, Milan and New York. Toronto is now home to the first Canadian version, co-directed by Toronto-based curator Kari Cwynar and artist and designer Kara Hamilton. The duo has created a mandate in line with the aims of their far-flung partners, stating that Kunstverein Toronto, currently without a fixed address, is "dedicated to experimentation, discussion and hospitality in art." In line with their alluring and ambiguous mandate, Cwynar and Hamilton's initiative went public by hosting three sessions of group hypnosis, or "cognitive exhibitions," borne from the minds of artists Maryse Larivière, Tamara Henderson, and Angie Keefer. Each artist was invited to submit a piece of writing to Malašauskas and Lutyens. In three separate events, Lutyens performed or delivered each artist's words, im-