

For Immediate Release, contact [lia@participantinc.org](mailto:lia@participantinc.org), 646-492-4076



*A new job to unwork at*

Curated by Andrew Kachel and Clara López Menéndez

**RESIDENCY AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS: August 23 - 31**

Amelia Bande (with susan karabush, Neyza Honore, Jenno Snyder, and Tina Zavitzanos), Coop Fund, JoAnn Elam, Kevin Jerome Everson, Karl McCool, Lise Soskolne (W.A.G.E.), and Kathi Weeks

**EXHIBITION: September 9 - October 14**

Opening reception: September 9, 7-9pm

Goldman Club (Aliza Shvarts and Emanuel Alborg), Tehching Hsieh, Devin Kenny, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Wes Larios, Fred Lonidier, Dylan Mira, Karin Schneider, Kandis Williams of Cassandra Press

**PARTICIPANT INC**

“Performativity describes [the] turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a ‘pure’ opposition, a ‘transcendence’ of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure.”

- Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*

As an activity that is perhaps as widely shared as it is varied in character, what potentials are latent in *work* as a ground for reconsidering entrenched social, political, and economic relations?

Work is fundamental in shaping beliefs and subjectivities, life chances, and daily routines. With the advent of industrialization and capitalism, work—in whatever shape it might take—has been consistently mobilized by Western cultural and religious traditions as a means for attaining personal fulfillment and participating in society. We work to survive, but we also work to belong. In light of economic programs of privatization and austerity (i.e. the prioritization of individuation over collectivity), the proliferation of freelance economies, and wholesale reevaluations of the role of creative labor in society, the breadth of activities understood under the broad umbrella of work is expanding. The division of the day into equal periods of work, leisure, and rest, which has roots in the Industrial Revolution, seems an increasingly quaint ideal in an era in which the boundaries between these categories are often either difficult to define or non-existent. The ubiquity, compulsory nature, and performative enforcement of work makes it a surreptitious and remarkably efficient ideological mechanism. It is precisely for these reasons that work proffers a crucial site of resistance—a contested terrain in which counter-ideologies and practices can and do take shape.

We draw on the concept of *unwork* as a wry subversion of work. The term was originally put forth by Valerie Solanas in *SCUM Manifesto* (1967), which called for women’s active and systematic destruction of the patriarchal power system by dismantling its labor force, disobeying its laws, and destroying its infrastructures. This form of sabotage involved the use of particular forms of work based on their potentials to redistribute, repurpose, and upend structures of domination and private profit: “SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; SCUM telephone operators will not charge for calls ... SCUM will unwork at a job until fired, then get a new job to unwork at.” Channeling raw frustration and rage, Solanas’ feverish reimagining of work’s intended flows and ends entails a short-circuiting of the power relations inherent in the concept of work, distilling its destructive potentials into a politics of commoning and care. In the absence of the power to reject it altogether, *unwork* is a means of gaining agency—however tenuous, however temporary—over the things we do as work.

Judith Butler describes performativity as both a technology of control and a potential site of transformative rebellion: an opaque and continuous procedure through which language materializes in our bodies and the environment. Words, forged in the cradle of power, are the “inevitably impure” material through which critical strategies may nevertheless develop. Recognizing work as a similarly complicated site of potentiality, the artists and curators of this exhibition approach work as both an activity and their subject matter—at best

transforming and re-appropriating specific labor experiences, although perhaps at the cost of turning ourselves into our own best exploiters. Across the vast spectrum of what “work” describes in this particular context (including conditions of artistic labor in the field of contemporary art, precarious freelance work and the gig economy, collaboration, municipal and skilled manual labor, and the vicissitudes of urban life), these artists elaborate speculative and subversive approaches to labor, seizing its emancipatory potential in order to alter and obstruct its psycho-social processes of domination.

*A new job to unwork at* is the continuation of ongoing research that examines the ideological consequences of work in shaping our identities and experiences of the world. This research was initiated by Andrew Kachel and Clara López Menéndez in 2013 and has developed in a multiplicity of formats including art exhibitions, research residencies, academic seminars, and intensive workshops. The first public iteration of the project was presented in Spring 2016 at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in Los Angeles, in the shape of a research group and event series. Its second iteration in Winter 2016-17 took the form of an exhibition and symposium at Artspace in New Haven. The current presentation of *A new job to unwork at* consists of a series of public programs at Participant Inc in August 2018, continuing alongside the exhibition through October 2018.

Please visit [participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org) and [anewjobtounworkat.tumblr.com](http://anewjobtounworkat.tumblr.com) for more information.

All events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.

Image: Karin Schneider, *Sabotage*, 2017. CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco. Courtesy of the artist.

**AC/E** ACCIÓN CULTURAL ESPAÑOLA *A new job to unwork at* is made possible the support of Acción Cultural Española AC/E through the Programme for the Internationalisation of Spanish Culture (PICE) in the framework of the Mobility grants.

**LAMBENT**  
FOUNDATION

The Andy Warhol  
Foundation  
for the Visual Arts



National  
Endowment  
for the Arts  
arts.gov

RF  
SHELLEY & DONALD RUBIN  
FOUNDATION



**Council on  
the Arts**

PARTICIPANT INC's exhibitions are made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Archiving and documentation projects are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

PARTICIPANT INC receives generous support from the Ames Family Foundation; Artists' Legacy Foundation; Michael Asher Foundation; The Greenwich Collection Ltd.; Marta Heflin Foundation; The Ruth Ivor Foundation; Jerome Foundation; Lambent Foundation of Tides Foundation; Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; FRIENDS of PARTICIPANT INC; numerous individuals; and Materials for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/NYC Department of Sanitation/NYC Dept. of Education.



PARTICIPANT INC is W.A.G.E. Certified.

PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES, ground floor. Subway: F to 2nd Avenue, Allen Street exit; or JMZ to Essex/Delancey.

PARTICIPANT INC is wheelchair accessible from the street and has wheelchair accessible non-gender-segregated bathroom facilities. We welcome service animals.

[participantinc.org](http://participantinc.org)

**PARTICIPANT INC**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Aug 23, 6-9pm

### *Punching Songs Together*

A musical performance by Amelia Bande  
With susan karabush, Neyza Honore, Jenno Snyder, and Tina Zavitzanos

*not all questions have answers, but every doubt has at least a song we can  
make and sing together.*

*this collective musical experiment wants to hold a joyous space for lyrical  
loudness.*

*join us for a celebration of unknown melodic outcomes, hesitant vibrations and  
rhythmical fears.*

Suggested donation. No one turned away for lack of funds.

Aug 26, 2-5pm

Sep 16, 2-5pm

### Coop Fund

Coop Fund members will host two workshops that give a basic introduction to  
Coop Fund, detailing how it was started, and how it operates now. Refreshments  
will be provided.

All are welcome to attend. If possible, please RSVP in advance to:  
coopfundcooperative@gmail.com.

Aug 29, 7-9pm

### *Everyday People and Company Line*

Curated by Karl McCool

JoAnn Elam, *Everyday People* (Rough Cut), 1978-90, 22 min

Kevin Jerome Everson, *Company Line*, 2009, 30 min

A screening of two films, which explore the connections between everyday life,  
work, and community. With her work-in-progress, *Everyday People*, left  
unfinished at her death, JoAnn Elam documents her experiences as a postal  
worker, as well as those of her coworkers, proposing an “avant-garde film with  
a working class... ideology.” In *Company Line*, Kevin Jerome Everson similarly  
combines documentary and experimental film practices, as city employees and  
former residents narrate accounts of the “Company Line,” one of the first  
predominately Black neighborhoods in Mansfield, Ohio, located close to an old  
steel mill.

Aug 31, 7-9pm

### Kathi Weeks and Lise Soskolne (W.A.G.E.)

A conversation between Kathi Weeks, Professor of Gender, Sexuality and  
Feminist Studies at Duke University and author of *The Problem with Work:  
Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries*, and Lise  
Soskolne, artist and core organizer of Working Artists and the Greater Economy  
(W.A.G.E.), a New York-based activist organization.

Sep 16, 2-5pm  
Coop Fund

Coop Fund members will host the second of two workshops that gives a basic introduction to Coop Fund, detailing how it was started, and how it operates now. Refreshments will be provided.

All are welcome to attend, but please if possible rsvp to [coopfundcooperative@gmail.com](mailto:coopfundcooperative@gmail.com) in advance.

Sep 30, 7-9pm  
Rafa Esparza, Tezcatlipoca Memoirs

Tezcatlipoca Memoirs is a collection of mixed media documentation of collaborative and performance work shared alongside a live Google Maps cruise through Ricardo Flores Magon, Durango; the hometown my parents Maria and Ramon Esparza migrated from to the USA in the early 70's. Tezcatlipoca refers to the Nahuatl's philosophy of ancestral memory; an embodiment of knowledge I engaged in my earliest performance work. Tezcatlipoca Memoirs is a time traveling machine I'll use to expound on the matrix of labor I've invested my creative practice in over the last few years to build "community", create access in cultural spaces, divert their resources, expand discourse, and re-member neglected yet important histories that form part of the audiences I'm strongly considering in my work.

Oct 12, 7-9pm  
GLQ Journal Launch

A reading to celebrate the publication of *GLQ* special issue *The Queer Commons*, co-edited by Gavin Butt and Nadja Millner-Larsen. Participants will share short excerpts from their contributions and the archives of queer commoning that their work draws upon. Material will be presented from the archives of Wages Due Lesbians and Black Women for Wages for Housework, Act Up's needle exchange initiatives, the queer organizing efforts at Istanbul's Gezi Park, the sexual undercommons of New York's legendary Clit Club. Featuring Ashon Crawley, Christina Hanhardt, Evren Savic, Arlen Austin, Clit Club contributors (including Julie Tolentino).

Oct 14, 7-9pm  
Valerie Lynn Werder, *A Notable Fiction*

*A Notable Fiction* is a theatrical performance (and Antigone for the digital age) based on undercover Wikipedia editor Vera Syuzhet's excursions into the site's comments forums. The performance critically examines terms of legibility and notability in an online public sphere, asking: does the writing of history always amount to the writing of fiction?