After Work: notes towards a work-less (playful) future

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Abstract

This paper takes as its starting point the current situation in regards to labour and protest within the context of the U.K. specifically in relation to Higher Education. After more than six years of working on precarious contracts (whilst also engaged with part-time PhD research) across numerous Universities, the author recently moved onto a permanent contract. My aim is to think through the possible ways that art and performance might offer alternatives to a life filled with work. I begin by looking at some specific examples of where artists have reflected on work and labour. In doing so, I am then able to move into an analysis of the exhibition After Work by Célline Condorelli (with Ben Rivers and Jay Bernard) held at South London Gallery between March and June 2022 to suggest possible futures of work and the way that it is presented in practice, a future that might push away from our current culture of over work and one that might shift to finding more space for leisure and play. These suggestions open up possible small solutions to much bigger problems. In addition, I will also draw upon In the Meantime, Midday Comes Around an international exhibition exploring the changes to work over the last decade. The exhibition was on show at Kunsthalle Wien between November 2022 and May 2023.

Introduction

In late 2022 a twitter account titled 'Birkbeck, University of Liberation' (now renamed 'Free Birkbeck') was set up in response to the proposed restructuring planned by senior management at Birkbeck, University of London,

that would involve the loss of over 100 jobs and destroy a number of the world-leading departments. Birkbeck is an evening University, aimed at mainly those who are already working in full-time employment. The proposed cuts are particularly significant to both this paper and to this sector more widely because of the damage they will do. The account offers possible solutions for an alternative University model. One post reads,

> Free Birkbeck (Birkbeck UOL). We all need to wrestle the sector off the claws of the managerial class. First step is to stop normalising their existence. The second step is demanding they step down. The third step is organisation in solidarity. (Cooperativism as praxis' 6 December 2022, 09.52 p.m. Tweet)

What is striking about this account (unlike other accounts set-up to resist such restructuring plans) is that it offers possible solutions and strategies for togetherness that remove the role and need for the managerial. Across the country, workers are taking action in order to resist worsening conditions, fighting for fair pay deals that keep up with inflation and protect against the cost of living crisis, and to stop job losses — from nurses to paramedics and ambulance workers, to train drivers, to university staff, to cleaners, to barristers, and beyond there is a crisis of / at work. Simultaneously we are all working harder, longer, and with less security. Our rights and our means to have a work / life balance are eroding and we feel guilty if we are not (or at least seen to be being) 'super busy'. Precarity is now the norm. As a point of departure, I wish to return to the 'Free Birkbeck' twitter account where they invite us to imagine the following. 'Crises as a site of opportunity. Crises as the chance to rethink the now, because the now has shaken out of place, because we can't afford to be complacent.' 6 December 2022, 09.52 p.m. Tweet.

I am using the example of the UK HE context here as a framing device and as a point of departure that is indicative of a wider contemporary work

culture. This context is particularly relevant given the scope of the journal and it also speaks to and allows me a way into a discussion about the relationship between labour and art making, and the experience of engaging with art and performance practices as a tool to imaging otherwise. This is, however, picked up again in the section titled Leisure Time / Play Time in which I discuss the phenomena of 'quitting'.

Work and Labour as Art / Art as Work and Labour

Work and labour have long been the subject of contemporary practice, and there is a wealth of scholarship spanning both contemporary performance and art including a 2017 'Documents of Contemporary Art' anthology published by Whitechapel Gallery titled Work. Mierle Laderman Ukeles is perhaps the most well-known artist making art that centres work, Ukeles famously became artist in residence at the New York Department of Sanitation. They created (amongst other things) performances, works on paper, sculptures, and a manifesto for maintenance art. The manifesto relates specifically to a proposed exhibition titled 'Care', that would have consisted of three different parts: personal — where the artist would perform household chores but in the gallery environment; general — this would consist of interviews with the public about maintenance and earth — refuse would be delivered to the gallery to be sorted and recycled (Steinhauer, 2017). Each element of the exhibition would question the audience's perceptions of maintenance and the labour associated with it.

In her book Working Aesthetics (2019) Danielle Child describes a distinction between labour and work that draws on the writing of Raymond Williams. She notes that 'work is our most general word for 'doing something'; however, the term tends to now refer to regular paid employment, that is, 'I'm going to work'. Labour was more historically associated with hard physical toil and pain, referring to manual and productive work (and,

of course, childbirth)' (3). The term work may be most appropriate to describe the kinds of jobs that many people now undertake (especially in the arts and culture sector) where the work engaged often fits into the category of 'immaterial labour', the kind of labour that does not produce a material product. Maurizo Lazzarato highlighted that within immaterial forms of labour, the worker is required to have their own subjectivity at the centre of the work that they do,

> The worker is to be responsible for his or her own control and motivation within the work group without a foreman needing to intervene, and the foreman's role is redefined into that of a facilitator. In fact, employers are extremely worried by the double problem this creates: on one hand, they are forced to recognize the autonomy and freedom of labor as the only possible form of cooperation in production, but on the other hand, at the same time, they are obliged (a life-and-death necessity for the capitalist) not to "redistribute" the power that the new quality of labor and its organization imply. (135)

This creates an environment where workers are working 'socially' (in the sense that part of the job is to work together) but they are also working against and in competition with each other — and where working becomes a performance of emotional labour. Self-organisation also means self-monitoring, and monitoring of others. This creates a feeling of pressure of knowing that we should be busy, but busy doing what? As noted by Professor of Work and Organisation Peter Fleming 'our jobs now become something very intimate to us, especially when it relies upon our social aptitudes, creative energies, and emotional intelligence to make things happen' (192). So, we are no longer exhausted by the physicality of the work that we do, but also by the need to be social. One of the central examples in Child's book is Rimmini Protokoll's Call Cutta in a Box (2008-12). The performance is described by the company as an international phone play, where the audience

member is directed to a specific room or other location with a sketched map. Inside the location there is a phone ringing, on the other end is a call centre worker in India who usually 'sell credit cards or insurance over the phone to people on the other side of the globe' (2008, no page). The performance then begins as a conversation between the audience member and the performer / call centre worker (or actor-worker). Unlike other examples in the book, Child notes that Call Cutta performs labour rather than 'engaging in productive labour' (94). Those who perform in the work (the callers) are not trained actors but have instead answered an advert for a job. The 'actor-worker' (a term coined by Shannon Jackson in 2011) is asked to play themselves in the teleplay (they use their own names and images); they are required to create a bond with the audience member asking personal questions. At the end of the performance if they have engaged fully the pair will have 'shared a cup of tea, conversed, eaten and danced with, and seen the person on the other end of the call' (96).

Call centre work is a clear example of immaterial labour. The work that is conducted does not produce a material product, but rather it produces an encounter (although these encounters are rarely wanted by the person receiving the call). Call Cutta in a Box cleverly uses the format of a call centre and the notion of immaterial labour to shift the audience members perception of this type of work. It uses the format to try to do something different, that is to create a bond between the audience member and the 'actor-worker'. Although this bond may be superficial, it also raises questions about the role of work and labour within our lives. Calling a stranger's home, or a stranger at home or at work, to try to sell them something is a crossing between 'private' life and capitalism. This performance reminds us that the person on the end of the phone is also a person, doing a job, trying to make a living. The performance is also a highlighting and pointing to the kinds of labours that are involved in this kind of role – it becomes a microcosm of

contemporary work.

Olivia Plender's 2013 installation Self-direction Lounge commissioned by Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (HOK) Oslo, where 'the installation is a play on contemporary working environments and the language of workplace psychology' (2013: no page). There is a key shift of focus here however, this is not about the labour of another (no one is performing for you), but instead about the audience's relationship to labour and work. As Plender describes, 'Several themed areas (or zones) are divided by screens, so that the office becomes a stage or set, in which performance can be measured' (no page). The use of office furniture connotes well-trodden cultural references to post-Fordist work and connect it to other cultural products in a similar vein (Mike Judge's Office Space (1999), for example). Plender notes that the work is a comment on the 'individuals happily instrumentalising their creativity, striving for personal growth and self-actualising whilst accepting less and less job security' (Plender, 2013). These observations speak to what Fredric Lordan observes in Willing Slaves of Capital (2014) that the ideal worker is one who gives themselves fully to that of the organisation for which they work and 'the goal is reached when employees, "moving entirely of their own accord" and without needing to be further co-linearised, strive in the organisation's direction and bring it their power of acting unreservedly as a perfectly voluntary commitment' (123). What these works have in common is a sense of bringing to the fore contemporary experiences of labour and our willingness to give ourselves over to our work with ease. In different ways, both Rimini Protokoll and Plender use that labour in the work, and they both offer critiques of that labour – one uses human encounters to do so and the other uses an encounter with objects.

In Capitalist Realism (2009) Mark Fisher noted the ways in which work, and life had become inseparable from one and other as 'capital follows you when you dream. Time ceases to be linear, becomes chaotic, broken down

into punctiform divisions. As production and distribution are restructured, so are nervous systems' (34). This articulates the impact that work has on our lives. The problem of work and life balance is further articulated by Fleming who states that 'we begin to live with our work and it with us. And this pressure is certainly exacerbated in today's climate when the only thing that worries us more than our jobs is the thought of not having one' (192). As we have shifted away from a work culture of physically demanding tasks, these have instead become mentally demanding. This is especially true in precarious work, something that is rife within the art and culture sector with many working on freelance and zero hours basis – the work is often in the finding of work in the first place, as Fisher continues, 'periods of work alternate with periods of unemployment. Typically, you find yourself employed in a series of short-term jobs, unable to plan for the future' (34). Since the time in which Fisher and Fleming were writing these issues have continued to be exasperated, as evidenced in the introduction to this paper. This raises a number of significant questions. How then can we imagine a future of work where there is more space for leisure? Or a future of work that allows us to move towards sustainable models of food production, care, and energy when we spend all of our time either at work or working at getting work?

After Work

Célline Cardolloni's *After Work* (2022) is a body of practice that takes as its starting point a commission from South London Gallery to create a playground for Draycott Close, Elmington Estate in Camberwell (close by to the gallery) that consists of 'carousels, climbing frames and colourful surfaces… developed over several months with architect Johnny Cullivan, children and residents' (South London Gallery). It was part of a wider and ongoing collaborative project between the gallery and local housing estates. The exhibition is made up of elements connected to the playground and audiences to the

gallery are somewhat transported there. The exhibition brings the outside in (as pictured below); there are sculptural elements that can be sat on, and it seems as though they can be played with — although within the setting of a gallery there is always some level of reluctance to do so. This is in keeping with official statements about the work 'the exhibition explores themes of labour, play and public space while investigating the relationship between exhibition making and public art, reflecting on the artist's interest in connecting the gallery space to the outside world' (South London Gallery). In one room of the Old Fire Station the artist has erected some metal framework positioned towards a video projected on the wall in front of it. The frame consists of multiple areas to sit, one deckchair like seat exists, alongside other options for people to lean on. The frame and floor are painted in pastel colours that promote a feeling of calmness and relaxation; the larger chair is similar to that of a beach chair (see Figure 1). The area creates a feeling of leisure, a space to stop and relax. Leisure time exists separate from work time (although, interestingly, it is interconnected and somewhat tied up to neoliberal models), the exhibition, not least through its title, highlights this. Pil and Galia Kollectiv argue that,

> Defined primarily in terms of one another, the modern notions of work and leisure serve to sequester daily experience from this fearsome loose pleasure that cannot coexist with the developed bourgeois ego: leisure time existing as time spent outside the office or factory and work functioning as a desired space – a catalyst for the manufacturing of wealth (2005: no page).

Indeed, the fact that we are not outside playing in the playground draws to our attention the work that has gone into making the exhibition, perhaps it also reminds us that by being inside the gallery we are still partially 'at work', as to engage with art requires a certain amount of associated

labour. This also highlights questions around who gets to enjoy leisure time and who has access both to the time needed to be taken out of a working day and the time taken to enter the exhibition and to engage with the work. Even though the gallery is open over the course of the weekend, this supposed designated period of free time is not so to many, for those who may have to work shifts, those with various and sometimes challenging caring responsibilities and those who may have to take up extra hours at work and overtime in order to meet the hellishly high costs of living (especially so in Zone Two South London). There is a link between the importance of leisure time (and access to it) and the argument for a Basic Income. Such an income would allow for all members of society to manage their working life in such a way that they could potentially only work what they were comfortable to do and allow them the opportunity and possibility of engaging with other non-work related activities, without the constant fear of not having enough money to survive. The approaches to Basic Income are wide and varied but I am inclined to side with Kathi Weeks' (Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies) argument for a 'minimal liveable income regularly remitted as a social wage, paid unconditionally to residents regardless of citizenship status, regardless of family or household membership, and regardless of past, present, or future employment status' (575). I return to the question of Basic Income in my discussion on the exhibition In the Meantime, Midday Comes Around.

Furthermore, the film that is projected, and somewhat dominates the space points towards the labour involved in creating the playground and the subsequent artworks. The film, created in collaboration with Ben Rivers and Jay Bernard documents the process that went into the creation of the playground. Scenes flip between building work, the bringing in of materials and resources, and larger depictions of construction industry — diggers working on the side of a hill, stones being jet washed and cut which are

juxtaposed against more 'natural' figures, footage of a fox moving around and people moving through the surrounding area. The playground structure emerges through this. The film (see Figures 2 and 3) shows the process and the coming into being of the playground, it draws to the fore the labour involved in the making process. It also draws us away from the space that the viewer is in, reminding us again that we could / should be outside playing, running about the way that the fox is. Upon visiting the exhibition, my embodied experience was one of reluctance. The structure made me want to engage on a playful level, but I was resistant, instead choosing to 'respect the art'. I found myself wanting to sit in the chair, but unsure if I was allowed, I spent time walking around the space, looking for approval to do so. The space was relatively small and there were not many other people present, so there was nobody to follow. My visit to the gallery was made possible because of work commitments. I visited on a day that I was down in London for work, I had come a day earlier and stayed with friends. I was worried that a gallery assistant would see me and tell me off for sitting in the chair, or for leaning on the railings. The environment did create an emotional synaesthesia of sorts, this was largely down to the pastel colours that created a calming feel, the space also had a smoothness to it added to the sense of a leisurely experience — my time off work was nonetheless being spent productively. However, the exhibition did seem removed from the playground, a divide existed between art gallery visitor and housing estate resident. Two experiences exist between those who can and do have access to the leisure time to enter the gallery (on days off or after / before work) and those who do not enter the gallery and experience the work outside. But perhaps this is the point, the exhibition does not just point to experiences of labour and work, but also pushes you to think about what you could be doing instead of working (a thought often rendered unimaginable).

Fig. 1: View of the larger seat as part of the sculpture.

Fig. 2: Film still with footage of the playground.

Fig. 3: Further footage of the playground.

Leisure Time / Play Time

In recent years, there has been a growing movement relating to 'quitting'. This is something that is particularly pertinent for many doctoral and early career researchers especially within the arts and humanities; the prospect of never actually being able to get a secure job after years of studying and hard work has become enough for people to say enough. The damage that precarity does to health (both mental and physical) is so severe that for many it is no longer viable to keep working towards a seemingly impossible goal of what Lauren Berlant describes as 'the good life'. There is a growing body of writing about this that is categorised as 'quit lit' — not just the kind of writing that is designed to make you stop drinking – but writing about stopping working. An example of this is an article written by Francesca Coin titled 'On Quitting' in which she seeks to examine,

> the impact of the neoliberal academie on subjectivity. In the neoliberal university, subjectivity is caught into a web of conflicting expectations. On the one hand, it is expected to live up to high standards of competition. On the other hand, the body experiences competition as a celebrated form of self-abuse. In this context, quitting is not merely about resigning an academic position. It is a symptom of the urge to create a space between the neoliberal discourse and the sense of self; an act of rebellion intended to abdicate the competitive rationality of neoliberal academia and embrace different values and principles. (705)

Although Coin is writing from a North American perspective, the issues are still present within UK academia too, where over work and unequal payment and precarity is also rife — quitting therefore can be seen as rebuttal to this. It is common too for artists to experience precarity, with many taking on a 'portfolio career' which is a nicer way of saying, a selection of short-term contracts and jobs, often employed only as and when required.

The idea and use of the word quitting speaks to the arguments put forward in post-work theory. In 'The Post-Work Manifesto' Stanley Aronowitz, Dawn Esposito, William DiFazio and Margaret Yard argue that,

> The very premise of a nonwork future evokes a split second, gut-wrenching shock of the inconceivable. The conventional wisdom has elevated work to the status of a holy mission, even as labor productivity, generated by technological progress, makes possible a future without endless work. Western civilizations are fated by historical circumstance to be addicted to a culture of labor. Sometimes it's hard to discern whether the initiating stressor for living on borderline of "making ends meet" is fear of starvation from losing a job or fear of going to Hell and suffering eternal damnation. Such is the massive cultural guilt of nonwork. (71)

This demonstrates the fact that we are now wedded to our work. This text was written over twenty years ago, and connection to our jobs and the work / life balance has deteriorated even further — we are now constantly able to check into our work emails wherever we are. The idea of leisure time has been encroached upon even further. Even when we engage in leisure activities we are often distracted by our work, checking in to see what is going on, or if we have been contacted. To return to After Work, how could the idea of free time or leisure time been pushed even further, perhaps the exhibition itself could have been created as an indoor playground, without the contextualising of the labour that went into it. However, I would argue that that labour should not be overlooked, it would be somewhat disingenuous to suggest that within a gallery there could be a complete move away from work — the visitor team would still need to be present (and working), the artist's labour has gone into the work, and it highlights the fact that there is labour in engaging in play and leisure (meaning that the audience would still be performing labour).

In 'The Decline and Fall of Work' Raul Vaneigem argues that,

> The same people who are murdered slowly in the mechanised slaughterhouses of work are also arguing, singing, drinking, making love, taking to the streets, picking up weapons and inventing a new poetry. Already the front against forced labour is forming; its gestures of refusal are moulding the consciousness of the future. (52)

Although first published in France in 1967, (a year before the May 1968 Paris uprisings that saw mass civil unrest including protests and general strikes) the words and the state of labour conditions echoes in 2023. Although much time has passed, the sense of a resistance forming is strong, although perhaps the same feelings of hope are less prevalent. Despite advances in technology, the shift away from production and manufacturing

to immaterial labour, not much has changed. We are still wedded to work and unable to get away from a culture where we are defined by it. Throughout the Covid pandemic there was talk about changes to the way that we worked, how being able to decide how and where we worked would mean more time for things outside of work. This talk seems to have instead turned towards people once again being scared of losing their jobs and for fighting for better pay and conditions; there seems to have been no revolution of work, only more deterioration and attacks on our rights.

Perhaps, we could begin to consider art and performance practices that explore non-work as 'gestures of refusal' of contemporary experiences of labour. This position is demonstrated in the previous example of After Work. It is also true for In the Meantime, Midday Comes Around (2023) a past exhibition at Kunsthalle Wien. The exhibition seeks to address such questions as 'how did it come about that we don't work to live but rather live to work, and that we can scarcely imagine other forms of living?' (Kunsthalle Wien, 2023) through the presentation of artworks and engagement activity that places unemployed and no work futures at the centre. The exhibition title and theme were inspired by 'a quote taken from a seminal sociological study on unemployment from the 1930s called Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community' (2023). The study was of a local Vienna suburb that was largely impacted by the 1929 world economic crash that saw the whole area become unemployed (Kunsthalle Wien, 2023).

I did not see this exhibition live and therefore my experience of it is somewhat different to that of After Work, in that I do not have that embodied knowledge of being there, I have not been able to engage with the works and I am unable to comment on the way that it made me feel. However, I want to reflect here on some of the artists that I know were included in the work, to think about how they have addressed the issues to do with post-work and no-work in order to extend my arguments around a basic

income and to think more about a post-work future and its connection to what Kate Soper terms 'an alternative hedonism'.

In the Meantime, Midday Comes Around was curated by What, How & for Whom who are a collective of curators who are the now artistic directors of the Kunsthalle Wien. Their name is taken from the basic questions for any economic organisation that must consider what, how and for whom. The collective from Croatia are interested in curatorial projects that ask important questions in relation to recent historical events. In this case, the questions are connected to our dependency on work and the culture that surrounds this. The opening event of the exhibition included a range of performances, readings and musical performances by some of the artists displaying work. There was also an accompanying series of events that ran for the duration of the exhibition titled 'What to do After Work?' that acted as a public intervention and numerous questions were explored including, 'what holds society together if we 'abolish' work or if it takes care of itself?, how would we cooperate and take care of eachother?, could we make our lives freer? And what activities will we find meaningful and what will sustain collective identities?' (2023: no page).

In thinking about these questions, we can turn to some of the works that I discussed earlier in the literature / practice review section of this essay. For example, the work Call Cutta highlights our need to make connections with people that stem beyond our working relationship to them. The fact that outbound call centre work demonstrates a form of immaterial labour is important to reflect on here when thinking about how we use it to identify ourselves. So often, we introduce ourselves to someone new, and ask what it is that 'they do'. Of course, we do not mean what they do with their free time, but rather what they do that is 'worthwhile'. This becomes a somewhat tricky and problematic question when what you do might not be how you wish to recognise yourself or how you want to be known (though I don't as-

sume that call centre workers don't have pride in what they do), perhaps the questions raised by the exhibition are concerned with what else do you do as well or instead of working? And then, how would we organise ourselves in such a way based on the use of our free time, would it be easier to make connections with people because of this?

Examples of some of the works on display in the exhibition include Congress of Idling Persons (2021) by Bassem Saad which is a film work that looks at multiple recent worldwide catastrophes, protests, examples of humanitarian and mutual aid, and Palestinian outside status and mixes this with recent worldwide movements and protests such as Black Lives Matter (2021: no page). The work explores the relationships between these moments and how they connect to people and the act of togetherness that forms acts of resistance and protest, the work is a film that focuses on five 'interlocutors' who play themselves as well as other characters, the action is centred around the speech and movements of the different performers who operate and connect to a specific landscape. A second work by the same artist Suppose that Rome is Not a Human Habitation (ongoing) is a series of image and text works that are centred around different sites where 'the occupants are considered peripheral to the city, the nation-state, and wage relation' (no date). Both works document the ways that people operate against the normative constructions or the status-quo of an environment, either through the places they reside and the way that they navigate those environments or through how they resist or challenge the specific order of a place. Also in the exhibition was a work by Arts of the Working Class titled Weapons of Choice (2022) which is a series of flags that deal with issues to do with work, unemployment, and employees rights and use lyrics from specific songs that address this, for example 'we built this city'. The flags also function to raise questions around community and nation and challenge the idea of the use of one flag in order to represent a whole

country or nation. Instead, it suggest s that connections and communities are often smaller and multiple and each of the flags represents a different 'Gemeindebauten' in Vienna, which is a specific area of social housing.

The exhibition demonstrates the need and desire to think differently about our relationship (and somewhat addiction) to work and where different kinds of communities can and do exist that are not wedded together as a result of work and working relationships. I want to now return to the question of basic income, on top of the call for there to be a basic income that would help to reduce peoples over work (and equip people with the means to maintain themselves to a decent level that would allow them to live a healthy and fulfilled life without having to worry relentlessly about money) there is also a wide spread call for a reduction in working hours — with no loss of pay. Philosopher Kate Soper discusses this in the book Post-Growth Living when she notes that 'in the UK, the New Economics Foundation has for some time been advocating a shift to a twenty-one-hour work week, and arguing its benefits in terms of lowering the carbon footprint, reducing unemployment, improving well-being, and promoting better childcare, co-parenting and more equality between sexes' (97). This demonstrates the ways that working less has a positive impact beyond just allowing people the chance to experience to enjoy art and performance.

Allowing ourselves space and time to play, for leisure activities (that are not themselves tied to capitalist spending or feed into capitalist models of self-care) is a form of resistance against neoliberal modes of work and labour. It becomes about saying no to productivity, to being useful. It pushes back against the 'cultural guilt of nonwork' (71), but can art galleries / institutions be a space where this can be facilitated? What would need to happen for galleries to become a space of play and resistance? I would argue that Celine Cardolinni's work begins to make strong steps towards this, offering a space and the means for playfulness and leisure to be en-

acted. This is also demonstrated through the works that are exhibited in In the Meantime, Midday Comes Around although, the question around what we could / should be doing instead of working are raised slightly differently there and are less about playfulness but instead are more about world building as an alternative strategy / approach to how the world is currently being managed.

Conclusion

This paper has been a space to think through the potentiality of art as a way to rethink our relationship to work. Throughout, I have highlighted more questions than I have been able to answer. What is clear is that there is still no way of modelling a new dynamic between work and life. Likewise, it is also clear that there needs to be a change; there are many issues that I have not been able to raise here that would benefit from us slowing down, being more together and enjoying moments of play and leisure. What is apparent however, is that there is a potential within art and performance to allow these moments of play. As art (like pretty much everything else) is now so tied up with being useful and productive that we have lost an ability to be playful. Even in my own reading of After Work I was trying to think about what it could be doing, and how it could be doing it, what change could an exhibition truly bring about. However, what I have learnt from this is the importance of embodied experience in relation to art, and allowing yourself to have the means to intuitively respond, to enjoy the colours and the textures, and to feel the smoothness (or the roughness) of an environment. And if this were to be translated into an experience of working cultures then perhaps we could start to think about what our bodies need to have a healthy relationship to work as our bodies are a site of protest — for example, when we strike, march, our bodies are performing politics. So perhaps playing (and leisure activities) is a politics of resisting productivity.

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