

Labour of Love

Economies of care in contemporary art

The Glucksman
University College Cork

Artists: **Maarten Baas**, **Liesel Burisch**, **Colin Crotty**, **Viola Fátyol**, **Laura Fitzgerald**, **John Halpin**, **Mikhail Karikis**, **Dion Kitson**, **Danica Knežević**, **Jamie Martínez**, **Amelia Stein**, **Caroline Walker**.

Curated by **Fiona Kearney** and **Katie O'Grady**.

Labour of Love presents Irish and international artists who explore the responsibility and reality of labour in contemporary society, and how the burden of unpaid and low-paid work might be made visible through art, to direct attention to services that are often overlooked, undervalued, and hidden from public view.

With a particular focus on the care economy, this exhibition considers how the physical and emotional wellbeing of people is enabled in our society. Domestic, health, hospitality, rural and industrial maintenance rely on the provision of regular and often thankless tasks, provided with great care by people whose activities underpin our daily lives. **Labour of Love** invites you to notice and reflect on the nature of these endeavours and the value of this work within the wider economy.

The exhibition begins with **Liesel Burisch's** *Minutes of Silence*, a moving image work that portrays people in short periods of silent contemplation across work, education and leisure settings. Burisch's video portraits highlight how different kinds of congregations can come together in a communal expression of respectful pause, inviting viewers to enter the show with regard for all parts of society.

Caroline Walker's lithographs and oil paintings also pay tribute to daily activities, capturing the humdrum chores of female homeworkers amidst the changing hues of natural and artificial illumination. Walker elevates these unremarkable tasks through a painterly technique that deftly records the passage of light and time, as well as the beguiling detail of the women's work. In **Jamie Martínez's** terracotta sculpture series *My Mother's Labour* the artist pays homage to his mother who worked as a house cleaner and undocumented immigrant in the United States. Martínez imbues household utensils with worshipful praise, adorning a vintage iron, dustpan and brush with clay and Mayan glyphs that allude to his pre-Columbian ancestry as well as his mother's personal story.

In **Danica Knežević's** photographic series *Being Home*, a quiet reverence resonates through a home filled with the apparatus of assisted living. These thresholds into the artist's personal life explore the visibility of where and how care occurs. **Amelia Stein's** *Laundry* depicts a pile of

bedclothes, an ordinary mass of domestic labour composed into a monumental presence through its central staging within the photographic image. The powerful black and white picture becomes a poetic tribute to the lives and labour of the Magdalene victims, Irish women abused in workhouses run by the Catholic Church until the 1990s.

Colin Crotty's three pink-hued oil paintings tenderly present rural healthcare workers providing comfort to a family of asylum seekers, an older woman and a young mother, capturing the diverse care the nurses provide in their everyday activities. **John Halpin's** work *Joanna* combines photography and 3D rendering to create composite virtual environments that challenge scale and reality and confronts the notion of an archetypical housewife by enlarging the subject to tower over her suburban neighbourhood.

Dion Kitson's sculpture *III Communication* portrays an engineer fixing wires in a cabinet that supports a network of global communication. Working on his knees with his back to the viewer, the telecommunication worker is an anonymous, quiet presence who labours to keep our world connected. The simple act of listening is central to **Mikhail Karikis' I Hear You**, a multiscreen installation focusing on carers to non-verbal people. By highlighting these caregivers and their work Karikis also challenges who is visible and who is heard. This work positions listening as an act of mutual compassion and is a hopeful affirmation that communication is always possible.

Viola Fátyol's installation *Kisses, I'm in a hurry* is a tribute to the artist's mother, who would bring carefully wrapped plastic food boxes to her child in Budapest. This ongoing parenting was accompanied by personal messages such as that of the title of the work. In **Laura Fitzgerald's Rural Stress (Landini)** a large tractor made from welded steel occupies the gallery space alongside playful marker drawings of rural tasks and activities. Fitzgerald's wry humour points to the absurd, familial dependency of agricultural life. The exhibition closes with *Sweeper's Clock* by **Maarten Baas** a real time projection of two men brushing lines of street rubbish to form hour and minute hands, their painstaking toil sweeping the very time of day away. This gruelling clockwork movement highlights the humble requirements necessary to keep contemporary society going through waste, infrastructure, domestic and care management; the commonplace labour of love celebrated throughout this exhibition.

Labour of Love is supported by The Arts Council Ireland, University College Cork and private philanthropy through Cork University Foundation.