

OH ECONOMY, UP YOURS!

Oh Economy, Up Yours! asks the seemingly simple question: What does the economy, and our critiques of it, look like?

Totalizing and fragmented, material and immaterial, consuming and reviled, the economy in numerous ways resists visualization. Though many spend their days working, the amount of media that explores these hours is remarkably slim. Depicting the broader effects of the economy, meanwhile, is a job often left to graphs and pie charts. The following program seeks to draw attention to and resist this evasiveness. While the films raise a range of issues – from examining how the body is implicated in economic production to enumerating how many slides you need in a PowerPoint presentation to make you sexy – their failure to present a cohesive picture of “the economy” marks its endemic slipperiness.

Mary's Cherries

Mika Rottenberg, 2003, 7:36 min (excerpt). In English.
Lives and works in New York.

The self-contained assembly line featured in *Mary's Cherries* – on which three women magically transform red acrylic fingernails into maraschino cherries – is as much a perverse ode to the “efficiency” politics of Frederick Taylor as it is a critique of them. In the film, real-life fantasy wrestlers perform a series of perfunctory tasks in an eerie, crudely constructed factory, taking occasional breaks to eat plastic wrapped hamburgers and to have a quick smoke. Amiable and relatively cooperative with each other, the workers seem not to question the utility of manufacturing a product worth less than the labour required to produce it.

Devil's Dairymaid

Kym S. Farnen, 2008, 8 min. Silent.
Lives and works in San Francisco.

In *Devil's Dairymaid*, a mysterious force lulls a daydreaming dairymaid into the forest, where she discovers a forgotten butter churn. Through the protagonist's orgasmic performance of quotidian labour, Farnen unsettles orthodox notions of the methods – and ends – of work. Yet, by eschewing precise references to any one time, space or “reality,” the film remains elusive. Is this a historical maiden, stealing time from work to get off? A modern-day goth in “work drag”? An unrealizable or undesired dream-possession?

K-Corea INC.K (section a)

Ryan Trecartin, 2009, 12:14 min (excerpt). In English and Spanglish.
Lives and works in Philadelphia.

Part corporate promotional video, part seedy reality television show, part confessional video log, *K-Corea INC.K (section a)* revolves around an unending series of meetings between various branches of the multinational company K-Corea INC.K. The employees,

who go only by their regional names (Global Korea, North America Korea, Mexico Korea, etc.), conform largely to a brand: each sports a trashy blonde wig and department store glasses and speaks manically, in a gratingly high voice, as if to suggest that to stop would mean to disappear. Part of an ongoing series of seven interrelated video works, *K-Corea INC.K* points toward the frenzied, almost nihilistic, energy that lies beneath neoliberalism's slick veneer.

The Quiet Storm

Jibz Cameron aka Dynasty Handbag and Hedia Maron, 2007, 9 min. In English.

Cameron and Maron live and work in Brooklyn.

The Quiet Storm examines the brutality inherent in encountering conventional overachievers. After a particularly unsettling run-in with an acquaintance that “has it all,” the winsome misfit Dynasty Handbag decides to escape external expectations by taking a vow of silence. Shot on a green screen, and using pirated Internet photos as backdrops and in the place of other actors, the film addresses the pressures that the capitalistic lifestyle asserts on individuals as well as the possibilities and limitations of individual resistance.

Stealing Beauty

Guy Ben-Ner, 2007, 17:40 min. In English and Hebrew.

Lives and works in Tel Aviv.

Shot illegally in various IKEA stores over two years (the artist is now banned from the chain for life), *Stealing Beauty* depicts Ben-Ner, his wife and two children self-consciously performing the nuclear family. After his son is caught stealing money at school, Ben-Ner is called upon to teach him a lesson. Drawing heavily on Friedrich Engels, Ben-Ner proceeds to lead his children through a series of parables about the glorious interdependence of family and capitalism. The film ends with Ben-Ner's kids – or as he puts it, his “investments for the future” – reciting a strident manifesto to the “children of the future.”

Charming for the Revolution

Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry, 2009, 11:35 min. In English.

Lorenz and Boudry live and work in Berlin.

In *Charming for the Revolution*, a house-wife-cum-dancing-fiend played by divinely greasy Werner Hirsch delivers a manifesto on our marriage to a “straight, white guy called the economy.” Hirsch's text is a wide-ranging bricolage, quoting manifestos from the second-wave feminist movement, Valerie Solanas's *SCUM Manifesto*, queer filmmaker Jack Smith's archive, and the filmmakers' own writings. Interrupting Hirsch's declarations is Hirsch's doppelgänger, a part-avian flâneur with a pet turtle, whose lilting presence suggests another, more enigmatic means of frustrating capitalism's unforgiving rush toward “progress.”

a film program curated by jess dorrance (2010)