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Another way to read it is along the lines of Hobbes, having lost little of its currency. On the contrary, and in case you had any lingering doubts, let appointed authorities reassure you one more time that thanks to their “clear-eyed outlook [...] the world is not a ‘global community’ but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors, and businesses engage and compete for advantage.”⁴ Since said “arena” by extension entraps everyone everywhere, so does this status quo of a community,⁵ which not too long ago had been declared the “gospel of mutually shared selfishness.”⁶

One (2010) is among a number of videos conceived by Sagri during the so-called Great Recession, a time the artist largely spent in its very epicenter, New York City (but also with interludes in her hometown of Athens and various other places). In this connection it’s worth noting that Sagri, not unlike the aforementioned spurious coffee drinkers maxing out on free Wi-Fi, began to use YouTube not out of a sudden urge to follow the company’s erstwhile catchcry to “Broadcast Yourself,” but to park and archive parts of her moving-image work on the platform, free of charge—a matter of convenience rather than genuine enthusiasm, while nevertheless supplying user content, there for the taking.

HYMBRO (2007), a conceivable name for any novel venture, depicts a kind of microanthropology of the body’s extremities choreographed as capital acting out capital. A pair of hands repeats gestures that seem as basic and productive as they are hocus-pocus, representing a potentially financialized cycle of apportioned units of time. Another video is titled and actually functions as a *Screen Saver* (2008) and extends from *HYMBRO* (2007) in that all we get are dopey contractions and expansions of the querying words “Are you ready?” flitting across the screen. Both the disembodied words and hands reappear in *Summer Apartment* (2008). A floor plan of a four-bedroom apartment complete with a porch suggests the deliberation of suburbia, while the overlaid suspenseful chords don’t portend well for the anxious new dweller.

“She was dead. She was alive. She was good. She was worried about the future. She taught herself. She was dead, and she was alive after all...” The female voice-over’s oracular findings in *Summer Apartment* are of a taut circularity that renders the perpetual rat race indistinguishable from perpetual resurrection, encapsulating the very American loop of the comeback and can-do-ism, ironically contingent on submission—the stuff out of which collective myths and promotional pitches alike are borne. (God gave me the power/grit/strength/determination to carry on/endure/overcome/rise again/aim high/succeed—repeat.)

SALOON (2009) transposes this numbing circularity to a kind of free association about ordinary forms of wage labor. Various clip art of generic commodities to standardize, quantify, administer, and consume materialize more or less re-enchantedly on the screen, as does a composite of representative professionals (a nurse, a gardener, a realtor, a receptionist, a house painter, a bank teller, a chef, and so forth). Clipped mentions of “double whisky, unmovable furniture, plane departs, plane arrives” together evoke the lowest common denominators of a mental image picturing a banal work-leisure continuum, distinguished here by “saturated repetitive compactness,” which, simultaneously, aptly describes the looped sequence on view.

Daniel Horn

ADS FOR AIR

According to public data, 2009 was the year that spoiled Starbucks’s otherwise beautifully progressing revenue curve since the beginning of the millennium.¹ Already in the following year things appeared to have been back on track. While simply reflecting the US’s ostensible economic rebound of 2010 (effectively that of its top-tier citizenry), this “improvement” may have been due to the introduction of free Wi-Fi at their US branches, thus directly profiting from—as the company itself let it be known at the time—“its role as an office for the unemployed.”²

Unemployed Office Role. The latter value begs closer consideration, for Starbucks’s *raison d’être* is evidently not that of a government agency for the unemployed. The company merely exploits this assumed function in order to maximize profit during times of a system-wide slump. Yet the company isn’t the sole actor in all this, since the assumed-customers’ minimum consumption patronizing of the coffeehouse forms the mutualistic symbiosis resurrecting this java-themed *Lehrstück*.

And so, the gently swaying red curtain that makes up the hypnotic background footage of Georgia Sagri’s video *One* (2010) transmits the central role of the stage. The smell of drama hangs in the air, polluting the way to heaven while lost, probably unemployed souls await salvation—or at least a little show of empathy, or a coupon for a reinvigorating power smoothie. “Keep on swallowing the fifteen hour part-time... jobs without benefits in exchange for coffee...” a caption reads. “Your life is my death” reads another one. It’s a two-fold pronouncement at minimum: yours and mine, a community’s, society’s, and so on. The caption resembles the stream of consciousness or a curse, with an apathetically existentialist if not eschatological vibe (depending on your persuasion) that goes something like this: The mere ubiquity of the dejected and medicated discredits the idea of actualized progress or of god manifesting as a force of good and welfare. (Baristas are said to occasionally use their rushed lunch breaks to cry.)³

Sunday Stroll Undone and Redone (2016)

Real-time audio editing and recording, performance, February 2, 2016, variation of 2hrs

MIDDLE:

Sunday Stroll Undone and Redone (2016)

Glass, paper, plastic, wood, aluminum, Taos Taupe flat finish paint, eight overhead projectors on eco-lock non-slip rug, five painted wooden pedestals with Taos taupe flat finish paint

BOTTOM:

STAGED (2016)

Lambda print on photographic paper, LED lights 89 × 134 cm

Installation views

SculptureCenter, New York



SALOON further doubles as a promo of sorts for Sagri's on-line curatorial project by the same name. The notion of the (artistic) advertisement is made more explicit in the two clips produced in 2009 for the artist Asher Penn's now-defunct online magazine *100%*, whose editorial output has since returned to print in the form of his publication *Sex Magazine*. The clips—equally titled *100%* (2009) and *100% CAT* (2009)—emphasize Sagri's temporary act as the artist-as-brand-ambassador while, due to the largely uneventful script (a close-up of her mouth uttering the product's name; a shot of the artist power-napping with a cat), they disappoint the contemporary artist's purportedly new vanguard role in creating the "highest form of expression," and producing "authentic context" for the "experience economy."⁷

It's easy to overlook that these works were made at a watershed moment, just before proper visual-creative-networking tools like Instagram took hold on a mass scale. Those apps take for granted—indeed are premised on—not only the once détourned prospect of investing, marketing, and promoting each other instead of "real" celebrities and influencers, but moreover the virtually real-time caricaturing of political and racial struggle to sell a soft drink. This recent-past is further palpable in *Happy Ending* (2009), named after the Lower East Side venue, which at the time used to be a hangout for the artist and her circle but has since undergone drastic rebranding, recognized mostly now, according to more recent patrons, for representing "the worst that New York can put forward."⁸ As viewers, we're on the outside and don't get to see much besides a slipshod slow-motion scene of people hanging out at the bar, overlaid with interpersonal snippets of nightlife, all of it bathed in 21+ crimson. It's just that, maybe.

The political momentum of avant-gardes had, at one point, been defined precisely as "requiring a number of people to do nothing, [...] transforming social life into art" by "set[ting] salvation through the group against salvation through works,"⁹ turning upside down, as it were, the more customary and continually reanimated idea about art to radically bear on "real" life, or however one wants to call any version of a flawed social contract. At times thematically and formally linked, Sagri's videos all share an emphasis on such abstract notions as "community" and the fluctuating "roles" it comprises, excerpting and amplifying their inherent incertitude and vicissitude, if not outright illusiveness and neurosis. In that regard, YouTube seems to have been a natural habitat for these works to air and circulate all along.

- 1: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266466/net-revenue-of-the-starbucks-corporation-worldwide/>
- 2: Claire Cain Miller. "Aiming at Rivals, Starbucks Will Offer Free Wi-Fi." *New York Times*, June 14, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/15/technology/15starbux.html>
- 3: Ben Hillier. "The Global Grind: Capitalism through Coffee." *Redflag*, April 2, 2014. <https://redflag.org.au/article/global-grind-capitalism-through-coffee>
- 4: H.R. McMaster and Gary D. Cohn. "America First Doesn't Mean America Alone." *Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426>. My emphasis.
- 5: Gregory Sholette. "Delirium and Resistance after the Social Turn." *FIELD, a Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, no. 1 (Spring 2015), 96.
- 6: This kind of argument adheres to the tradition of a Situationist critique of neoliberal consumer society, for example by Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem.
- 7: Rachel Somers Miles. "Collaboration Validation: The Brand, the Artists, and Generation Authentic." *Huffington Post*, December 6, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/advertising-week/collaboration-validation_b_11779148.html
- 8: "Happy ending is rude, racist, homophobic, and xenophobic. The bouncer at the door (long hair with hat) hugged a guy with a 'Make America Great Again' cap and let him in..." Yelp review by Henry C., posted on June 17, 2016. <https://en.yelp.ch/biz/happy-ending-new-york-4?start=40>
- 9: Denis Hollier (ed.). *The College of Sociology (1937–39)*, xiv. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988.



Thank you Rodin (2016)
Part of the performance series *Live Portfolio 2011–2016* (2016)
Performance,
December 16, 2016, 6–8pm
Installation view, National Gallery in Prague
TOP:
Ads for Air (2017)
Score of 8 videos (2007–2010)
One (2010), 49'59"
Screen Saver (2008), 2'43"
Summer Apartment (2008), 3'51"
100% (2009), 2'24"
100% CAT (2009), 0'34"
HYMBRO (2007), 2'43"
SALOON (2009), 2'40"
Happy Ending (2009), 2'10"
Solo exhibition at Zollikerstrasse 249, Zurich

