The female body has been a motif in Sarmento’s works since the 1970s. Though it looks whole, First Easy Piece is a concatenation of fragments, since even the figure itself was made with a machine that scans the body layer by layer, and so the final sculpture is a reconstruction made of hundreds of thin slices. In 142 Silicone Leftovers, the body of a woman, in the form of the silicone molds that Sarmento used to make his 1999 sculpture A Human Form in a Deathly Mold, is also presented in pieces. Each part hangs from a hook like those found in butcher shops. The uneasiness provoked by First Easy Piece is augmented here. At first the sculpture appears to be merely a group of abstract shapes hanging from hooks. It is only upon closer inspection that one disturbingly recognizes various parts of the body.

The works in the show draw together different references and objects to create a juxtaposition that is conceptual but also literal. Each results from an accumulation of seemingly diverse elements—a fragmented collection of notes, thoughts, and objects—that allude not only to other pieces in the show but also to previous works by the artist. In a Duchampian gesture, Sarmento takes these different elements as if they were readymade themselves and represents them almost as found objects. But is the body also a readymade—a leftover from some previous process of production? Sarmento asks us to consider this possibility too.

—Filipa Oliveira

HØVIKODDEN, NORWAY

“Arbeidstid”
HÅNE ONSTAD KUNSTSENTER

The current leadership of the Hanne Onstad Kunstsenters has repeatedly repudiated the idea that art can stand isolated from the society that surrounds it. Recently, for instance, we saw a multipart project about education, “Learning for Life.” The center’s summerlong show “Arbeidstid” (Work Time) explored historical and contemporary notions of labor. The exhibition included pieces by fourteen artists and groups, and was accompanied by the publication Living Labor, edited by the exhibition’s curator, Milena Høegh-Sørensen, with writer Cora Fisher. More a freestanding component of the exhibition than a catalogue, this playfully organized collection of essays and artist projects served as an instructive introduction to the show’s topic: our increasing tendency to allow labor to govern life.

“Arbeidstid” was shown in two rooms separated by a passageway, a challenging set of spaces only partly unified by the show. Ironically, the space dominated by several red surfaces seemed to welcome you with an inviting “go”; the other, dominated by a green wall, signaled “stop.” The dominating “positive” green of Olivia Plender’s Self-direction Lounge (all works cited, 2013) was indicative of this installation’s strong sense of alienation. Patrons partly obstructed the way into a barren, depressing landscape of generic workplace furniture, representing the “fun, flexible” post-Fordist headquarters inhabited by “creative” office workers encouraged to set their own hours. An arrangement of the art center’s own obsolete office equipment (including analog phones with speed-dial labels naming actual employees past and present) was stashed behind yet another partition, reminding us that the present institution, too, has had to adapt to new, demanding regimes of labor conditions.

Across the hallway, both Michala Paludan’s installation Sykbus and a proud 1970s-era workers’ banner, borrowed from the Labour Movement Archives and Library of Oslo, were in bright reds. Sykbus allowed the viewer to sit herself in a red-fabric-clad cube and become immersed in the artist’s selection of material on feminist labor struggles of the 1970s, drawn from libraries and archives in Oslo and Copenhagen and presented as slides accompanied by female voice-overs. Stepping inside the installation was like being transported to another time; the feel of the coarse textiles, the wooden/oregano color scheme, the slide projectors, and the cushions for floor seating were all, perhaps, pointers from Paludan to the fact that this very air is the anachronistic is an indication, said to say, of how sociopolitical issues of gender and labor are commonly seen in Norway today, despite their continued relevance.

Several moments in the show foregrounded the human presence behind the ostensibly dry facts and statistics of archival material. One felt this, for instance, in the corporeal intensity lent Paludan’s study chamber by the very heat and whirr of the projectors. Another take on this connection was Richard Dhyr and MariLou Lemmens’s The Prophets. Here, abstract economical contents of graphs and diagrams were shaped by hand into frail miniature sculptures. In the air above them hovered an original labor movement banner from 1902 reading (in Norwegian) 8 HOURS FOR WORK, 8 HOURS FOR REST, 8 HOURS FOR WHAT WE WILL. Such rights are now taken for granted in Norway, one of the few nations to escape the recent financial crisis, and one in which this year’s centenary of women’s right to vote sometimes feels more like a mandatory exercise than a really heartfelt commemoration, as that right, too, is now perceived as a given by many citizens. But elsewhere in the West today, workers living with increasingly casual and contingent employment are demanding more work rather than less. It’s nice to see an art institution attempt to publicly confront our apathy.

—Johanne Nordby Wern

AMSTERDAM

Katja Mater
MARTIN VAN ZOMEREN

From the very start of her career less than a decade ago, Katja Mater has ventured further and further into the borderlands of photography. For her latest show, “Interior A—J,” she constructed a wooden “room” inside the gallery that echoed the shape of its interior almost exactly. This seemingly redundant installation was necessary because Mater wanted to record as if looking through the walls from outside the going-on inside the space—namely, the process of painting the gallery’s walls in four layers, starting with blue and ending up with silver, with the aid of ten cameras—and she would not have been able to complete the complex installation required for this equipment within the actual walls of the gallery.

It is hardly surprising that Mater decided to use the entire space. Her pictures have consistently tested the boundaries of photography in the modernist sense, pushing both space and time to the absolute limit. In recent years, her usual procedure has been to paint multilayered, geometric abstractions—sometimes on a flat surface and sometimes in one corner of a room—which she photographs in different stages of com-