

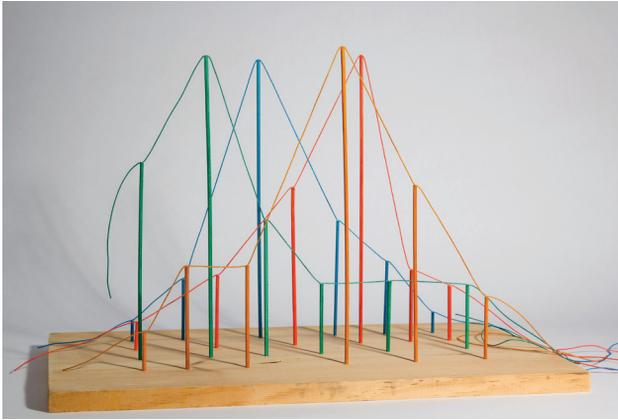


Richard Ibgby & Marilou Lemmens

Each Number Equals One Inhalation and One Exhalation

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JANE LOMBARD GALLERY



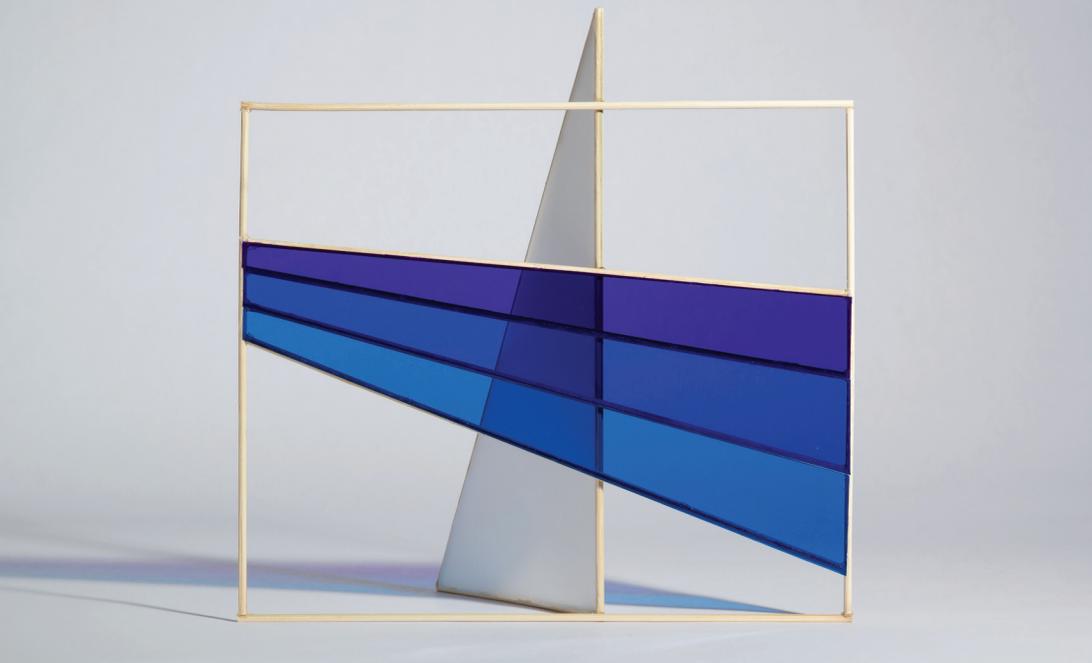


Introduction

I first encountered the enthralling and wonderfully idiosyncratic artwork of Canadians Richard Ibgby and Marilou Lemmens at the Montreal Biennale in 2014. On view was *The Prophets* (2013-2015), a signature work in that exhibition and a standout as well when reprised in an expanded version for the 2015 Istanbul Biennial. A long wooden table displays miniature, apparently abstract sculptures made from string, wire, bamboo sticks, colored acetate, and other materials. With shaped sections of acetate arrayed on thin sticks, and other spindly constructions made of sticks and bits of material, these sculptures are playful and delightful yet also suffused with considerable thought and they involve copious research. They are based on economic data, forecasts, graphs and charts in scholarly journals, anything from "*Four Possible Steady State Paths of Growth*" to "*Payoff from Butterfly Spread*," which you read on handwritten signs. Melding art and economics, abstraction and political upheaval, historical analysis and future prognostication, these precarious mini-sculptures subtly suggest that all those authoritative economic forecasts may well prove flimsy and ephemeral in an unruly future.



Ibghy and Lemmens now present almost 50 small sculptures from their series *Each Number Equals One Inhalation and One Exhalation* (2016-on-going). While we initially perceive them as abstract sculptures with captivating forms, colors and textures, they materialize graphical representations (like diagrams) from the mid-19th century to the present concerning human productivity in multiple disciplines, including economics, psychology, scientific management, Fordism (the system of mass production associated with the Ford Motor Company in the early 20th century), and Taylorism (an early 20th century methodology for production efficiency). The innovative and deft Ibghy and Lemmens have a special, even magical way with their makeshift materials, including wood, thread, wire, metal and acetate. With one especially enchanting sculpture, semitransparent blue, green and red rectangles seemingly float on a structure made of just a few sticks. The title tells us that this work is actually a *Diagram of the Revised Layout of a Group of Operations*. Another stick structure with attached blue, green, and yellow rudimentary geometric shapes involves *Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Team Performance*. Ibghy and Lemmens excel at content-laden abstraction, and their delicate and endearing sculptures often seem at odds with the type of information conveyed, be it coffee point placements in a research facility or a record of work on 15 locomotives. This graphical information is at times alarming, reducing humans to their labor, asserting efficient labor as an overarching goal, and presenting humans as manipulatable components in systems of production.



Another sculpture featuring light blue, darker blue, and purple bands and an upright gray triangle, all attached to thin sticks, surprisingly concerns *Ventilation Requirements for Solitary Workers Given the Available Volume of Room Air*. This work is exceedingly lovely, but its message is distressing. Managers were studying how much air and ventilation “solitary workers” required in order to be most productive, almost as if these workers were lab mice in a science experiment. In an era of radical income inequality, when capital is sanctified and labor is often under assault, Ibgly and Lemmens’s sculptures are particularly apt.

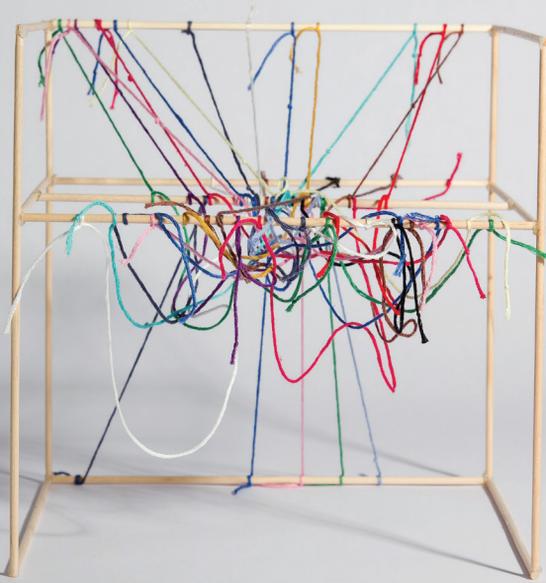
Also on view is the video *Real failure needs no excuse* (2012), an excellent work that prefigures the two series of sculptures coming later. In an abandoned Glasgow, Scotland office, you see quick shots of Lemmens as she repeatedly improvises rickety structures out of whatever is at hand, like chairs, a fan, cardboard, plastic pails, boards, parts of a desk, and what have you. Sometimes these structures look absurd, and sometimes they topple. At other times they remain intact and look startlingly wonderful (and very sculptural). In a forlorn place once defined by focused labor, Lemmens is an obsessive, endlessly productive worker of sorts, just one engaged in eccentric and mysterious labor that has no discernable purpose or goal.

Gregory Volk



Based in Durham-Sud, Canada, **Richard Ibghy & Marilou Lemmens** have developed a collaborative practice that spans across multiple media, including video, performance and installation. They have exhibited at the XIII Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador (2016), the 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015), La Biennale de Montréal (2014), Manif d'art 7: Quebec City Biennial (2014), Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury (2014), La Filature, Scene Nationale and La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse (2013), Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway (2013), Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow (2012) and 10th Sharjah Biennial (2011).

Gregory Volk is a New York-based art writer and freelance curator who contributes regularly to Art in America and to numerous other publications. He is also associate professor in the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Works in order of appearance:

dimensions variable
wood, string, metal, colored gels and ink

1. *Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Team Performance*
2. *Organizational Chart Showing the Influence of Work Design on the Operations of the Enterprise*
3. *Higher-Order Moments of Technical Efficiency*
4. *Distribution of Average Output in USA Metropolitan Areas*
5. *North-South FDI Flows in General Equilibrium a la Solow*
6. *Diagram of the Revised Layout of a Group of Operations*
7. *Ventilation Requirements for Solitary Workers Given the Available Volume of Room Air*
8. *Circulation Route, Projected Teams and Total Workplace at Google Berlin*
9. *Agricultural Output Index (1848-1957)*
10. *Real Value Added per Hour Worked*

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