

# ONE MORE DAY

*'Emmalee Bauer of Elkhart worked for the Sheraton Hotel company in Des Moines until she was fired for using her employer's computer to keep a journal which recorded all of her efforts to avoid work. "This typing thing seems to be doing the trick," she wrote. "It just looks like I am hard at work on something very important." And indeed she was. Her book-length work hits on something fundamental about wage labor and the spectacle, namely the separation of labor from desire. One works not because one particularly wants to, but for the wages, with which to then purchase commodities to fulfill desires'.<sup>1</sup>*

A historicised *mansplaining* haunts Patterson's performance work. Endless references to the schema of the heroic, able-bodied, upright, homo sapien are alluded to. The assured swagger of Pollock, Klein and Burden ghost him. But it is from the embodied perspective of the precariat that Patterson performs.<sup>2</sup> This precariat — in the 'overdeveloped' world anyway — is likely to be a cultural worker, civil servant or artist in residence who engages in hybrid forms of labour, within part-time, freelance, and (always) overtime work.<sup>3</sup> This precariat is the thoroughly networked and worked-through body of contemporaneity — the pulverised subject who occupies the fragmented meme-culture-quagmire of now.

The American reality TV show *Dash Dolls* chronicles the daily life of a group of young retail workers employed by the Kardashian's Hollywood fashion brand 'Dash Boutique'.<sup>4</sup> The fashion brand outlet provides a fluorescently lit backdrop for the retail workers' familial dramas, romances, interpersonal failings and career aspirations to unfold. Retail work aside, it becomes obvious that the performance of heteronormative desires encased in legibly gendered and racialised bodies is the real work of these 'dash dolls'. And it is this reality TV logic that might ghost our own worlds too, where, under the arch of brand loyalty, it is ones very own desiring production or the *performance* of ones life-world that is being subsumed under the sign of capital and integrated into a totalised market sphere. No wonder Jan Verwoert wrote that we no longer just work, we *perform*.<sup>5</sup>

After completing his three-month long residency in Titirangi at the McCahon House, Patterson began to chronicle, in writing, his life back at work at the Auckland Central Library. Scrawling handwritten notes on scraps of paper and translating them into word documents, his writing records, by the hour, details of his working life via a jumble of embodied and subjective states. Accounts of banal work tasks, emails, dealings with angry customers, jokes with staff members or being moved almost to tears by a country song, are all written in an undifferentiated pitch. Rendered in this stylistic monotone — just like being overcome by tiredness or swallowed by an opiate haze — his writing's flatness is affective. There is something molecular, something larval, bubbling away under this flat surface, shoring up a latency or potential coursing through the body of the everyday. But Patterson's writing also captures the bitter sweetness of work-life; of the everyday as both a situated and embodied site of praxis, and a space of wilting agency, as one waits and longs for the day to be over. I remember reading somewhere while working my own banal teen job at a winery that, at work, when a day seems to go so slow, life begins to seem far too short.

One thing that can be noted from reading Patterson's accounts is that the library as emblem, institution or duty bound civic entity is only the sum of its many minor and rearranging parts. Where it is really the stupid jokes, discussions of TV shows, blueberry muffins or the barely perceptible affective states coursing through a worker, that constitute the body or the whole of an institution. Similarly, the library never functions as a site of intended use alone: it is also a shelter, a meeting point, a wifi outlet, a place to sleep. It is then through its unintended uses, through dysfunctional and adaptive actions, that an institution might be shaped too.

In his writing, Patterson draws from the renewed traction that immanent, embodied and situated styles of writing are getting at present. But this interest in the diaristic also relates to his wider, ongoing body of work in which he draws and performs from the mundane space of daily life. Writing acts as a double agent within the everyday, or rather to doubly perform as a library worker and an art worker. It is through this hybrid that the precariat also emerges in Patterson's work. In this emergence, it is not so imperative to discern between where art and life might join or part, but more so to understand where certain kinds of work might end and certain kinds of life might begin.

**Bios:**

Campbell Patterson works and lives in New Zealand.

Born in Turanganui a Kiwa, George Watson currently lives in Auckland and is working towards a Masters at Elam School of Fine Arts.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mckenzie Wark, *The Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages out of the Twentieth Century*, Verso, 2013, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>The term precariat comes from the merging of the word precarious and proletariat to describes emergent forms of labour under neoliberal capitalism where, lacking the means of production, a social class must sell their labour to live, whilst suffering from the condition of precarity through lack of job security, intermittent employment or underemployment. See: "Precariat", accessed 16 November 2015 <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precariat>>

<sup>3</sup>McKenzie Wark coins the term 'overdeveloped' world in his article for DIS. See: Mckenzie Wark, "Digital Labour and the Anthropocene", in *DIS Online*, accessed 16 November 2015 <<http://dismagazine.com/disillusioned/discussion-disillusioned/70983/mckenzie-wark-digital-labor-and-the-anthropocene/>>

<sup>4</sup>*Dash Dolls* is an American reality television series that premiered on the E! cable network, on September 20, 2015. The show is a spin-off of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. The series features a group of young female employees, referred to as Dash Dolls, working in the upscale Dash boutique in Hollywood which is owned by the Kardashian family.

<sup>5</sup>Jan Verwoert, "Exhaustion & Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressures to Perform", A pamphlet for the exhibition *Art Sheffield 08: Yes and No and other options*, 2008.