

STUDY GROUP

ON NECESSARY WORK

WITH

ADELITA HUSNI BEY

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST



Miniature by Pierart dou Tielt illustrating the Tractatus quartus by Gilles li Muisit (Tournai, c. 1353). The people of Tournai bury victims of the Black Death. ms. 13076 - 13077 fol. 24v. Pierart dou Tielt (fl. 1340-1360)

Study Group Dates: The study group will take place in four three-hour sessions, held simultaneously in New York at the New School Gallery and in Melbourne at Buxton Contemporary and live-streamed:

In Melbourne: Friday 18th February, Friday 11th March, Friday 18th March and Friday 1st April 9am – 12pm Australian EST.

In New York: Thursday 17th February, Thursday 10th March, Thursday 17th March and Thursday 31st March 7-10pm EST.

Application Deadline: 5pm Thursday 4th November

On Necessary Work is a four-day study group organized by Adelita Husni Bey and the Department of Drawing and Printmaking, Victorian College of the Arts, with support from the Centre of Visual Art at the University of Melbourne. Co-presented with the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School. Adelita Husni Bey is a 2020-2022 Fellow at the Vera List Centre and a 2020-2022 Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts.

In the context of post-pandemic reckonings, the idea of labour as an unpaid debt represents itself as that of a heroic sacrifice remunerated by applause.¹

At the time of writing Melbourne has been in a strict lockdown for 252 days and under 1500 people have died in its municipality. Meanwhile, New York, which began gradually reopening in July 2021, confronts a decline in cases but a death toll that has surpassed 55,000. This study group will help us reflect on international strategies and protocols in response to COVID 19, underpinned by previous pandemics, ideologies and infrastructures. By engaging voices with different experiences of the current pandemic across distant geographies the group will explore how material conditions have been reconfigured for workers, especially those who hold "reproductive" functions in society.

VCA and Adelita Husni Bey jointly propose a study group to run over the course of four sessions on the concept of "necessary work" as a cipher for what underpins and normalizes capitalist production in crisis, following a Marxist-feminist understanding of reproductive labour. On this occasion we will also study the language used in protocols that insist on the necessity of work during the pandemic by assigning "critical" status to certain infrastructural and industrial sectors by shifting risk, coded as "responsibility" to the workers. For instance, we will explore the guidelines issued by the US government on the 19th of March 2020, which state that: "in a critical infrastructure industry...such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply...you have a special responsibility to maintain your "normal work schedule."

Structure:

The first hour of each session will be dedicated to a guest speaker presentation followed by a Q&A and will be open to the public. During the second part of the event Adelita Husni Bey, supported by Alex Martinis Roe (VCA) will offer exercises to embody and develop a somatic relation to the text assigned by the guest speaker in the more intimate setting of the study group. Study group participants will have read the texts in advance.

Application:

Applications from VCA undergraduate and post-graduate students are welcome. Please register your interest by writing a brief text, recording a short audio file, or sending an image describing why you would like to take part by **5pm Thursday 4th November** to alexmartinis.roe@unimelb.edu.au

Adelita Husni-Bey is an artist and pedagogue interested in anarcho-collectivism, theater, law and urban studies. She organizes gatherings, produces workshops and exhibition work focused on using non-competitive pedagogical models through the framework of contemporary art. Working with activists, architects, jurists, schoolchildren, spoken word poets, actors, urbanists, physical therapists, athletes, teachers and students across different backgrounds her work focuses on articulating the reality of collectivity under capitalism. Exhibitions include: *Maktspill* Bergen Kunsthall, 2020, *Chiron*, New Museum, 2019, *Being: New Photography*, MoMA, 2018, *Dreamlands*, Whitney Museum, 2016, *The Eighth Climate*, 11th Gwangju Biennale, 2015. She is a 2012 Whitney Independent Study Program fellow, a 2020-2022 Vera List Center for Art and Politics fellow and has represented Italy at the Venice Biennale of Art, 2017 with a video installation rooted in anti-extractivist struggles. She currently teaches at Cooper Union, New York.

Here is a link to learn more about her work: <https://www.artforum.com/print/201806/adelita-husni-bey-75536>

¹ Angela Mitropoulos, *Pandemonium, Proliferating Borders of Capital and the Pandemic Swerve*, 2020, Pluto Press