

SCRIP PERSPECTIVE

Laura Porter - Villa Albertine Candidacy

I've lived in France for over 16 years, received my PhD from the joint art/research doctoral program SACRe PSL in 2017. I subsequently held a fellowship with the Boston-based 'Center for Arts, Design and Social Research' in 2019-2020 (with group research residencies in Spoleto and in Kenya). Since then, I have been eager to return to the United States to carry-out material research, take footage and develop a storyboard around subjects that have long been central to my work – but this time through a more immediate vantage point and with feedback from actors 'on the ground.' I would be thrilled and honoured to join the Villa Albertine to begin this project towards a video-installation tentatively titled 'Scrip Perspective.' It attempts to describe a virtual economy from three distinct vantage points (food, currency, technology). I'm eager to work with an expanded community of interlocutors from the United States that could nourish many of these fields of research for years to come.

Through video, sculpture, and installation, my work considers modes of value production. With particular attention to the genesis of objects and tools as well as the role of the body in disposable economies, I articulate synthetic, organic, perishable materials into syntactic organisations. Forming small technological and nutritional economies that relay and repeat certain fragments, the installations often take the form of systems in the process of becoming animated.

My doctoral project from 2013-2017 titled 'Royal Secrets in the Queen's Body Fat' considered the role of the human body in economies of production and disposal - especially with food, plastic or ergonomic tools. It focused on how value is produced. The title was borrowed from an American microbiology study on royalactin (a component of royal jelly), and its use in the distinction between worker bees and queen bees, specifically how their system of production and division of labour derives its hierarchy from an expenditure in fattening bee larvae. In a similar way, economies of work and surplus value linked to body morphology often come into question in my artistic research.

My project for Villa Àlbertine is a new video-installation titled 'Scrip Perspective'. The residency time will be used to take video and sound footage, produce staged footage, work on the storyboard as well as material and installation research. It will be developed between New Orleans and Chicago – ideally during a 3-month residency, during which I will visit different actors in the American food and technology industries - from three distinct focal points outlined below.

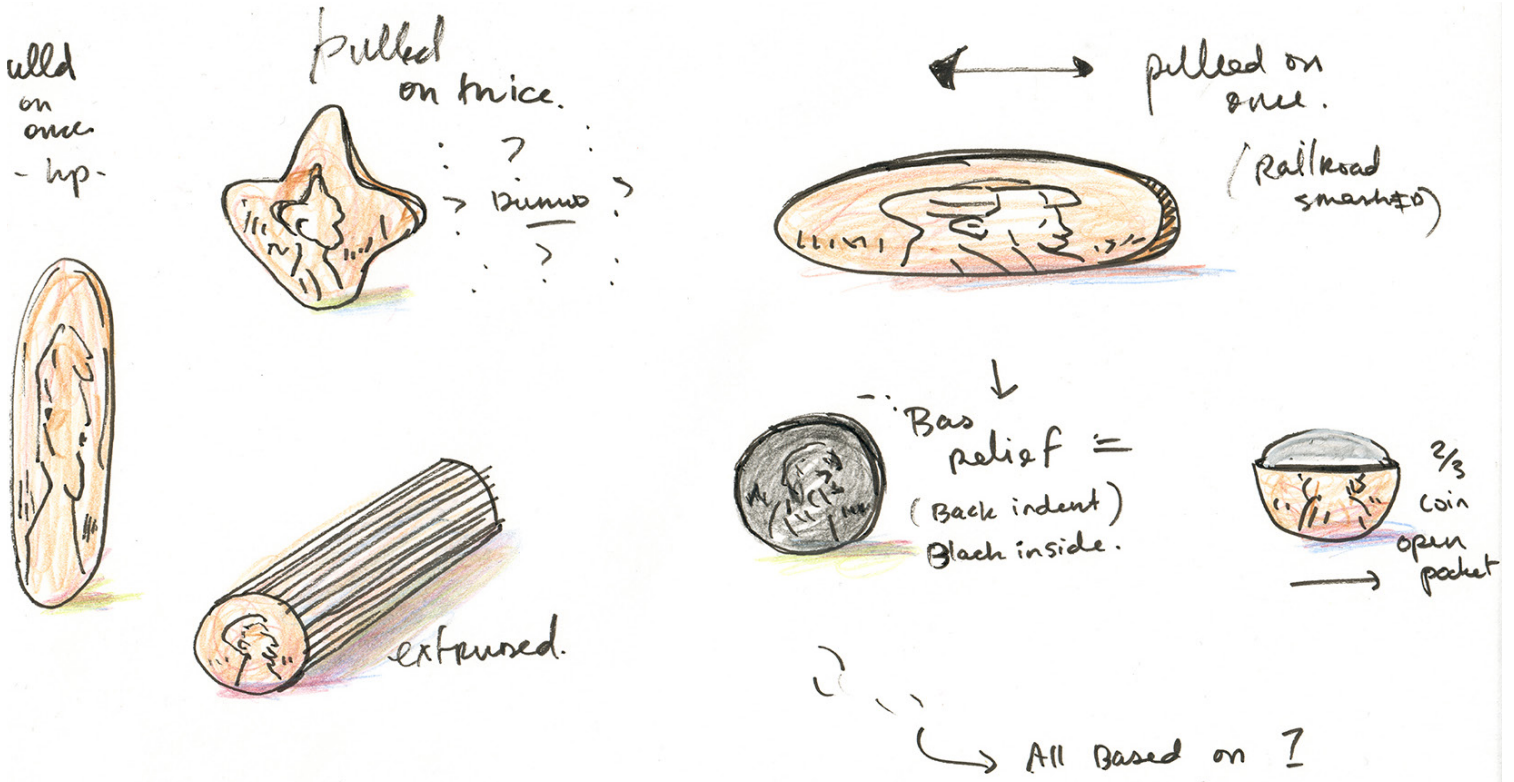
1. Food and Skeuomorphism :

Skeuomorphism is a technique used to ornament products with visual and auditory cues about their original qualities. In the food industry, the study of texture, flavor and sound camouflage is a major field of research - aiming to determine the adequate crunch, colour or texture to reassure or confuse expectations. My work sets out - not only to focus on contemporary techniques but also to relate them to older ones and above all, to consider current food industry standards differently. The project sets out to question current economies of value in the food industry that shape visual, auditory and textural expectations.

Through the prism of skeuomorphism, I would like to explore the imagery, sound and projections associated with food stuffs. How to render some of the taken-for-granted iconography strange again?

2. Currency as Material:

In the age of computer trading and cryptocurrencies that take stock of the history of fiduciary techniques, I'm interested in money as material - when it is tangible, weighable, minted, or hidden (see Nickel Coin, Float, Bust, Penny Perspective, No Spenders, etc. in portfolio). For Scrip Perspective, I would like to look at how cryptocurrencies are inserted into public spaces via Bitcoin ATMs - Chicago being one of the main hubs with over 170 of these machines. I will film footage at several of these locations - frequented by an agar-agar puppet.



3. 'Pro' and 'Indoor-Outdoor' Technology, especially concerning the body.

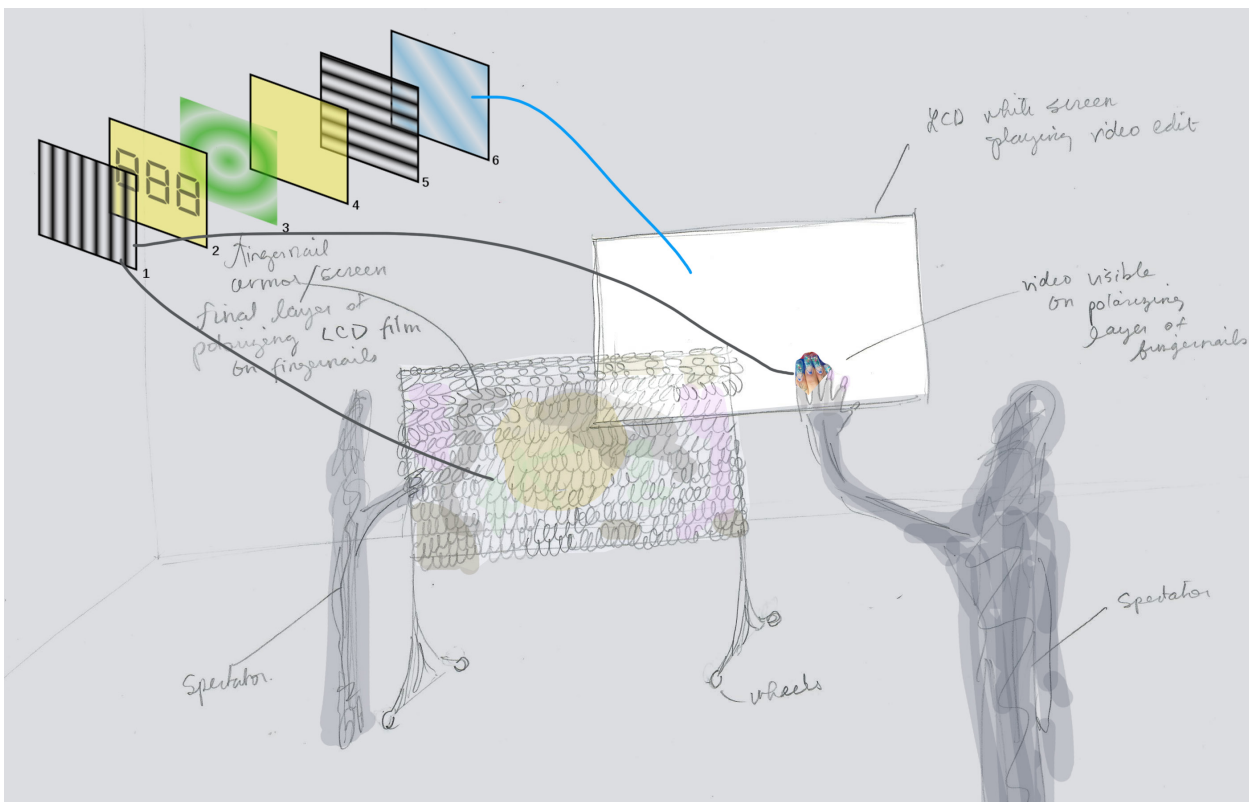
This thread considers the impact and consequences of technology - not only on a social scale, but on individuals, on bodies. How does a body become "Pro"? I'm interested in how language shapes the plastic industry from concepts like 'Pro' 'indoor/outdoor' to 'disposable' product lines. I will notably use disposable spoons for an expanded LCD video component of the installation on "spoon bending" - an age old tradition in the field of magic that has repeatedly attracted people claiming to have special powers.



UV filter applied to glasses and removed from polarized layer of computer screen.
source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2480089>



Laura Porter, studio - maille constituée de capsules ongles en plastique impression
UV - studio, 2022



Looked at through three distinct but crisscrossing prisms (Food and Skeuomorphism, Currency as Material and "Pro" technology), my projects for the residency consider modes of value production. The three projects will ask: living amongst these 'quantifiable' multitudes, what are the kernels from which these standards emerge?

My work tends to borrow and question diverse techniques. As a result, I've had the opportunity to collaborate with people from various fields and have notably collaborated for many years with the performing artist and philosophy teacher, Valentin Lewandowski on the scenography, costuming and object design for his various performances since 2014. This collaboration led us to experiment in short video narratives that drew out common threads from both of our practices. In the past 10 years, we've made numerous video-installations together that sequence discreet, singular objects at a small scale and focus on sound and the mediated voice as a prism for perception and estrangement.

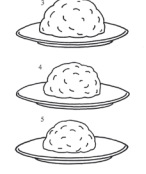
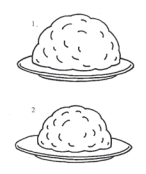
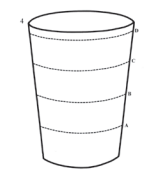
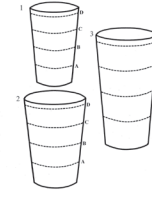
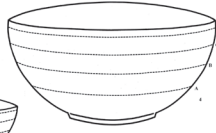
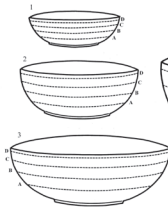
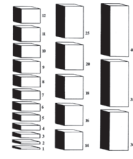
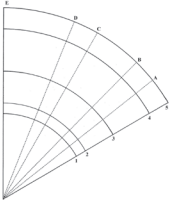
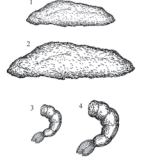
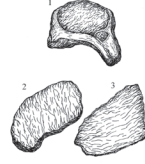
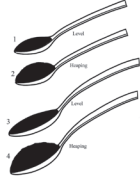
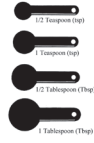
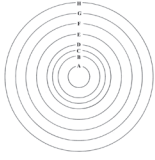
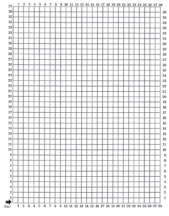
I've known for a while that I wanted to develop my next video project in the United States but my reason for choosing Chicago and New Orleans started out as a personal intuition. In several previous works (including my thesis) I've come back to a leaflet from the 80s developed by researchers from the University of Chicago called "The Food Amounts Booklet – Keep this near your phone!" It is a booklet of bitmapped clip-art drawings and diagrams developed for quantifying food intake from recall and description. It still circulates as a standard in U.S. dietary studies. First developed for the DISC study (Dietary Intervention Study in Children) carried out from 1985-1999 in New Orleans, Louisiana, by researchers from the University of Chicago, the project aimed at assessing "the feasibility, acceptability, efficacy, and safety of dietary intervention in free-living children ages 8-10 with elevated low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels."

For the DISC Cholesterol study, a day's worth of food, vitamin, cholesterol intake by a child of age 7-8, was estimated using this manual to explain recalled food intake (usually nightly over the phone). Data was being produced from what was remembered and described while leafing through and referring to these drawings of thickness, circles, wedges, spoons, mounds, thighs, meats over the course of a 12-year food monitoring experiment.

The study involved a cohort that I joined at age seven to learn about (and hopefully change) my blood cholesterol levels. New Orleans was known to have the highest obesity and cholesterol levels in the country. We were taught how to identify and modify fat and cholesterol intake. Monthly 'results' dinners would encourage progress based on the crunched numbers from the compiled food diaries and weekly blood cholesterol results.

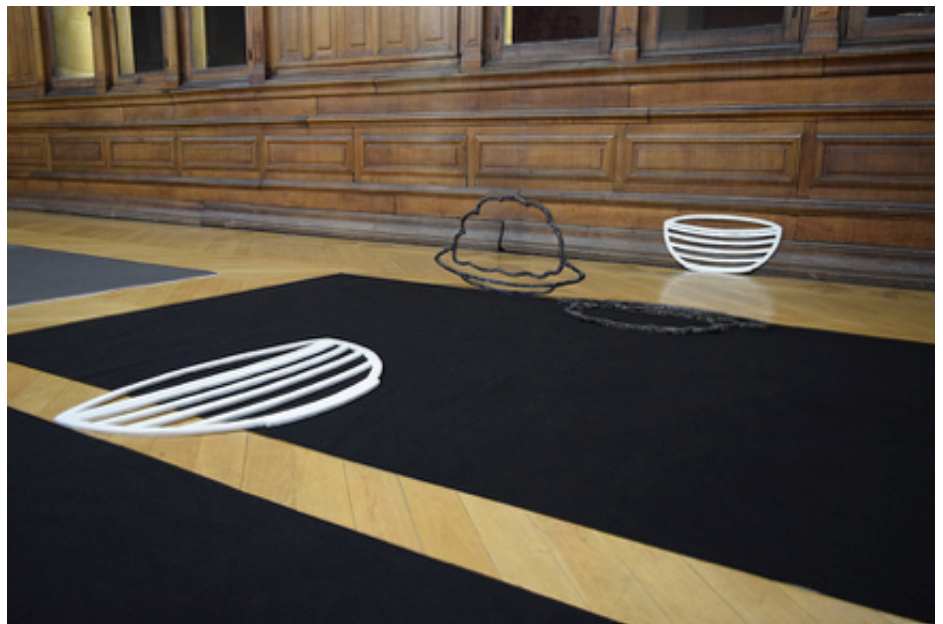
The relationships I had with researchers from the University of Chicago have underscored my artistic practice in strange and unseen ways and led me to leave Louisiana. Since I've never been to Chicago and have long looked up to this city as a beakon or "measure" of truth, I thought that a back-and-forth between the virtual iconography that these two cities provide (over 30 years later) would be fertile grounds for developing a new storyboard around a subject that remains central to my work - Food and Quantification. Since currency and technology have become a focal in my practice as well (from the vantage point of an economy's impact on an individual body). I then began delving into the cryptocurrency projects that are emerging in Chicago in particular. It is precisely a project about making sense of the many scales and extensions of information that an individual contends with - how they get chewed up and metabolised into discrete things - how they go.

Chicago has the midwest's largest cryptocurrency mining facilities and I would like to visit and see how elements of these facilities could be drawn into the video footage.



Food Amounts Booklet

Please, keep this near your phone.



Ceramic sculptures at Palais des Beaux Arts, 2016



Food amounts booklet at Gallery Escougnou Cetraro Gallery vitrine 2016