

PETRINE.

fields harrington

indefatigable

15.10.2024 — 14.12.2024

fields harrington is an artist whose main material is ideas. His practice is not only anchored in and developed through a somewhat traditional style of academic research – teased out of close readings, writing, and teaching – but the very subjects of his work question how knowledge is constructed and transmitted. For the past decade, harrington’s practice has focused on highlighting the social, political, historical, and economical conditions surrounding the production of empirical data in the domain of science. Through sculpture, performance, video, image-making, and essay-writing, harrington illustrates how racist ideologies or the shapeshifting but nevertheless enduring financial logic of slavery – which in their respective zeitgeists were normalized to the point of invisibility – materially influenced the invention of scientific instruments and production of ‘hard truths’, that in turn have been used to uphold and perpetuate such systems of oppression.

indefatigable, harrington's first solo show in Europe, builds on the artist’s ongoing inquiry into the politics of extraction and exhaustion – or rather, the type of inexhaustibility that characterizes labor under what Nick Srnicek has coined ‘platform capitalism’, and how the performance of laboring bodies is alternatively captured or erased. The exhibition features two distinct but entwined oeuvres: a series of DIY air-conditioners and a suite of grainy 35mm chromatic photographs of parked electric bicycles belonging to delivery workers across New York City.

The eleven photographs on view are but a narrow selection from the hundreds the artist has taken over the past year. During the pandemic the presence of app-based delivery workers on lithium-ion powered bikes widely proliferated, shifting the landscape of the city’s streets, and contributing to frequent accidents in which these already marginalized workers are left appallingly without recourse or protections from contracting platforms like Uber. After witnessing one such accident himself, harrington began to see the very infrastructure of the city’s bike lanes differently. What for harrington, a regular cyclist, was just a convenient way to commute to work or meet friends, for the delivery worker was their office space, “a corridor of unrelenting labor, joining one task to another, one day after another.” Marking a return to photography, the medium harrington first began making art with and one which he considers accordingly extractive and immortal in its capacity for inexhaustible reproduction, this series of photographs captures the vehicles – extensions of the laboring body – in rare moments of rest. In the two large photographs that bookend the exhibition, twinned bicycles lean against each other affectively, personifying these tools in the image of the hyper-present yet completely anonymous humans who use them.

petrine

29 rue des petites écuries

esc. B, étage 1, gauche

75010 paris

web petrine.fr

contact info@petrine.fr

tel +33 6 09 81 36 01

insta [petrine__paris](https://www.instagram.com/petrine__paris)

The lithium batteries, adorned in these portraits with stickers of religious iconography and other personal touches by the riders, come to symbolize a global system of labor exploitation, in which both gig-economy workers and lithium miners, occupying opposing poles of the supply chain, are entangled in a vicious circle of relentless extraction to fulfill technological and consumer demands. As harrington writes, the “delivery riders, governed by impersonal algorithms, navigate urban streets as avatars reduced to data points, while miners, working under hazardous conditions in regions like Chile’s Atacama Desert, extract lithium essential for powering the e-bikes and smartphones that sustain the gig economy. The system dehumanizes workers, reducing them to disposable units of productivity.”

In contrast to the silent, resting bikes, the sculptures in the exhibition fill the space with a ceaseless, low hum. In the center of the gallery, a motley of 9 colorful coolers echo the arrangement of the 9 single bike portraits on the facing wall. These DIY air conditioners—crafted from recycled coolers from Leboncoin, fans, and aluminum pipes—continuously generate cold air, reminiscent of gig work’s never-ending cycle. Unlike conventional air conditioning units, these ‘swamp coolers’ reveal the ingenuity and cost-cutting adaptations made by agricultural communities to contend with oppressive heat and increasingly challenging environmental conditions. The installation is structured along the formal and metaphorical concepts of the grid and the current, drawing parallels between electrical and social media grids, the circulation of air, migration and capital, and the relentless flow of energy and data in our current global economy. Like the multicolored fringes attached to the exhaust pipes of the coolers, harrington’s deceptively straightforward photographs invite us to consider the bleak reality of gig-economy labor, and obliquely make visible the anonymized human workers who comprise the fungible labor force that upholds our culture of convenience.

indefatigable is curated by Mélanie Scheiner, with gratitude to Julius Woeste.

sfields harrington (b. 1986), lives and works in Brooklyn. harrington has held solo exhibitions at Kaje, Brooklyn, USA (2023); Y2K Group, New York, USA (2021); and David Salkin Gallery, Chicago, USA (2020). Selected group exhibitions include Lunch Hour 74-1288th St. Glendale, New York, USA (2024); Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin, DE (2023); Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, USA (2023); and MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, USA (2023).

petrine

29 rue des petites écuries
esc. B, étage 1, gauche
75010 paris

web petrine.fr
contact info@petrine.fr
tel +33 6 09 81 36 01
insta [petrine__paris](https://www.instagram.com/petrine__paris)