

Acknowledgements

Kristiina Lahde

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Claudine Hubert

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In and Out of Order

Kristiina Lahde

curator Claudine Hubert

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OBORO
www.oboro.net

📍 4001, rue Berri, local 301, Montréal (Qc) H2L 4H2 📞 514 844-3250

In and Out of Order recontextualizes a piece Kristiina Lahde created in 1999—the same year she got her first email address—along with a selection of new works, activating a conversation about the evolution of systematic processes into the digital realm. Kristiina Lahde's work is concerned with repetition, memory and labour, as expressed by the accumulation of repeated gesture. Through what she calls a geometric reorganization of everyday objects and materials, Lahde proposes a subtly counter-capitalist approach to object-making, where the labour involved is disproportionate to any measure of efficiency in producing commodities.

To remake *I Love You*, Lahde has painstakingly handwritten these three words on thousands of Post-it notes. Arranged in a grid on the walls of OBORO's entrance hall, they envelop the viewer with their yellow glow upon her arrival. True to their intended purpose, each note is at once a reminder and a message. In making "I love you" a pattern, Lahde points to the relationship between the time we allocate to work, leisure, life and love. At the moment of this writing, a quick Instagram search shows 31,491,669 posts and counting for #iloveyou. Revisiting *I Love You* in the era of the hashtag underscores the absurdist task of writing each note by hand.

Inside the gallery, the eye is drawn to a celestial figure on a black wall. Each of the sculptural objects placed on the oval form of *Circulate* is constructed from salvaged library filing cards destined for a University of Toronto recycling dumpster. Lahde retrieved boxes and boxes of these cards, each crossed out with a pencil, presumably to indicate that its content had been digitized, becoming superfluous. Using the diagonal pencil markings as guides, Lahde assembled the cards into a range of ellipses, from entirely open to completely flat. We could think of these ellipses as F-Stops, akin to the iris of a camera. As such, the elements of *Circulate* speak to the proliferation of image-making, lenses focused on their own obsolescence. Typewritten Dewey decimal system numbers float around each unit, their meaning entirely re-arranged within a shape reminiscent of a black hole. Bringing our attention to this analogue process of classifying books, Lahde is creating slow imagery, a counterpoint to instantly-composed and consumed image-making found online. Further referencing office work, a long stack of file folders climbs along a wall like a tall column. The outline of each file folder (also salvaged) was rigorously traced on the object itself. While these markings can be seen as a sign of erasure, like redacted letters, they also give weight to the file folders and point to methods of categorizing and sorting. Many of us who witnessed the evolution of classification from physical cabinets to computer desktops will remember the different ways in which operating systems proposed organization of folders, from staggered to stacked to free-floating, in an effort to visualize how information can be contained.

Throughout her career, several of Lahde's works have been rooted in an obsession with numbers and an interest in diverting and transforming measuring tools. *Zeroes and Ones* is a series of framed etchings of two rulers, the first, the familiar straight ruler—the one—and the other, an imaginary circular ruler—a zero—seemingly unruly inside their frames. Side by side, their intended function is transformed and points to the basic coding system that has allowed the mass transformation of communication (and everything else). On the adjacent wall hangs a deflated geodesic dome also made of small metallic rulers, as if the elemental building blocks of an architectural form. However, unlike the structural integrity of a true Buckminster Fuller dome, the math here doesn't add up. Similarly to the way in which the arrangement of *I Love You* Post-it notes leaves blank spaces through the grid, revealing uneven walls and crooked floors, this structure collapses and bends under its own weight. *A Sequence of Lines and Links* suggests that organized systems all have their limitations.

Kristiina Lahde's work bridges analogue and digital; handmade and industrial; the emotional with the calculative. We live these apparent oppositions in our daily lives as devices increasingly demand our time and attention, and uttering three simple words to a loved one can be seen as one more task on a to-do list. Lahde's artworks ask: what is the meaning of a single gesture and how does it connect to a broader organization of matter in space and time? Through the meticulous processes of ordering and reordering analogue materials, Lahde proposes a speculative perspective on obsolete or invented objects. The resulting sculptural wall works reflect on the complex methods that exist within the digital realm. Borrowing from techniques of craft and mechanical labour, where the production is precise and monotonous, her work speaks to the inevitable fallibility of structures.

Claudine Hubert

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