

# ARTFORUM

## D'Ette Nogle

HANNAH HOFFMAN GALLERY



D'Ette Nogle, *For All the Artists [Work (A-Version)]*, 2015, video, color, sound, 35 minutes 53 seconds.

Have you ever introduced your occupation with a hyphen, slash, or conjunction? Yes, I'm an artist-writer-curator, homemaker and entrepreneur, DJ/activist. You might string together nouns as a feeble form of pushback against the inevitable reductivism of identity's shorthand. Still, even these linguistic acrobatics fail to offer an account of how your different careers might interrelate. D'Ette Nogle's objects, videos, and performances emphasize a natural affinity between art work and other kinds of labor, often foregrounding the professionalization of artmaking.

Take, for instance, her most recent outing, a presentation of restaged and remixed older works within four units of a storage facility in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. Between the title and the press release's parenthetical note about this year marking the artist's forty-fifth birthday, the exhibition is positioned as a portmanteau of a job performance review and a mid-career retrospective.

A monographic survey generally looks back on what an artist has done; curators and art historians work to accentuate themes and locate trajectories of ideas. Critical distance is the byword. Here, Nogle has instead chosen to reflect on her own work. While this could be taken as a narcissistic gesture, Nogle's self-searching is characteristically wry and thoughtful. Describing one's weaknesses is a common task in interviews and year-end reviews—but how often does doing so result in genuine introspection? Or, from the manager's perspective (Nogle played both roles), how accurately can rating schemes—scales of one to five—describe an employee's character?

Nogle's preoccupation with qualitative evaluation runs throughout the exhibition. A linchpin video in the show, presented on an A/V cart in storage unit 471, is a compilation of footage of pregnancies as shown in movies (many with a science-fiction bent), arranged by a gestation period. The beginning is replete with pregnancy tests while the end features quite a bit of screaming. But this artwork about genesis and the difficulty of producing is specifically dedicated to other producers: It is titled *For All the Artists [Work (A-Version)]*, 2015. If Nogle has reservations about making—that aversion referenced in the video's title—then the title's hyphen transubstantiates that barren state into one of fecundity: A version is only one of many possibilities.

Another particularly striking element of the exhibition is the accompanying chapbook, which contains a text by the artists alongside marginalia in red print. Endnotes identify the authors of the latter text: "Curators Club is a platform founded by students at John Marshall High School to express personal visions through themed monthly zines and galleries." In addition to performing, writing, and publicly exhibiting her artwork, Nogle teaches full-time at this Los Angeles high school; she invited the Curators Club to respond to her work after reading about the group in the campus news. (When I spoke with the artist in the week prior to the opening of her exhibition, she was on the picket lines along with thirty thousand other public-school teachers in the city.) The club's students dismiss conventional attitudes toward authority and provide more cutting commentary than is expected of an artist's materials on her own exhibition. Take the work *NOT NOT A POLICE BLACK SITE ;-)*, 2019, which consists of a mannequin dressed in the artist's tie-dyed clothes that spun endlessly in storage unit 572. It was originally exhibited as *NOT NOT A POLICE BLACK SITE ;-)*, 2015, at an exhibition in Chicago, where the mannequin was placed next to a sign adhered to the window that bore the titular words. There, the message could be understood as a reference to the warehouse in Homan Square run by the Chicago Police Department for secret extrajudicial detentions. The artist's position on the situation could be gleaned from the declarative refusal of "NOT" followed by the suspicious wink of the emoticon. But here, wearing a new title and lacking the sign, the mannequin of *NOT NOT A POLICE BLACK SITE ;-)* is devoid of both context and content. The asking of hard questions is not particular to performance reviews; it is also the foundation of ethics. The final comment from the Curators Club is a straightforward and imperturbable as the exhibition, interrogating the resituated mannequin "Why is it so simplistic and does it add to the meaning?"

— *David Muenzer*