

CREATIVE LOAFING

There's No Business

Contemporary exhibition examines the life of the company drone

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Is there a human being alive who can't relate to Michael Aurbach's sculpture "The Administrator," a room pimped out like a soulless, bureaucratic torture chamber? Like a set piece from Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, Aurbach's full-metal installation is a vision of Work-as-Hell.

Every surface is covered in steel, from the boss/inquisitor's desk to the office walls that virtually scream "escape is futile!"

On the administrator's shelf is a box of "shoe lifts" to testify to a fragile ego in need of a boost. And instead of a desk ornamented with family photos, there are mirrors to reflect back the administrator's bottomless narcissism. The work's power is its universality: Worker bees from Wal-Mart to the Whitney have probably all played mouse to the executive cat depicted in Aurbach's set piece.

The immediate impression of the group show *What Business Are You In?* at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center is of artists wiping the sweat off their brows over their narrow escape from the stultifying death-house depicted in Aurbach's homage to the hierarchy and pretense of "real" jobs. This enormously clever and intensely fun show features 11 artists who see labor as both something to be avoided and as an inevitable feature of the artist's life.

While Aurbach tackles a universal notion of work, many of the *What Business Are You In?* artists give viewers a front-row seat on their own peculiar - often deeply psychological - workplace issues. Lucy Kimbell uses simple ink diagrams placed

directly on the gallery wall and her own singsong Julie Andrews voice heard on CD players hung nearby to express the various levels of insecurity, snobbery, doubt, fear, etc., involved in making art.

John Salvest is another artist who has a clean, sparse aesthetic packed to the gills with wonderfully layered insights. In "Stalactite," distracted, bored labor is expressed in a pyramidal formation of gum stuck to the bottom of a school kid's wooden desk. Salvest takes up the workaday grind again from a more grown-up perspective with "Paper Trail," in which the words "endless possibilities" are spelled out in ropes of shredded office paper. The piece expresses another kind of 9-to-5 ennui in which the promises and dreams of the corporate mantra take the form of mind-numbing busywork. The phrase "endless possibilities" begins to sound as sinister and disingenuous as the one above Auschwitz: "Work Will Set You Free."

Some of the best work in *What Business Are You In?* is concentrated in the Contemporary's main galleries, including the perversely slick sculptures by Jason Irwin, which parody the Vegas-style grandeur of corporate lobbies and offices as stage sets for some sublimated chest-beating. In Irwin's slick-but-hysterically cheapo combination of shiny acrylics, fake wood laminates and corporate logos sporting jungle cats, an idea is conveyed of proud, fierce Fortune 500 carnivores.

And the art world is hardly immune from such bluster or the commodification of people. In 2003, artist Andrea Fraser cut to the heart of the artist-customer transaction by agreeing to have videotaped sex with a collector in a performance/transaction valued at almost \$20,000. Two video works by Fraser in *What Business Are You in?* make the same point in less subversive ways.

The culture industry lampooned by Fraser in her videos can be as hierarchical and oppressive as any boardroom. And it can treat what artists do as just another marketable product. The scariest possibility artists such as Carey Young and Lucy Kimbell mull over in *What Business Are You In?* is not their escape from the workplace's clutches. It is an inability to see their labor in any terms but economic.

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What business are you in? The question sounds easy enough. But for some businesses, the answer isn't as straightforward as you may think. The best way to zero in on exactly what business you're in is by taking time to craft a mission and vision statement. Consider Amazon. It began as an online bookstore. How will the business make money? You may think this would be the most elementary of all questions. But in reality, many start-up enterprises fail to formulate a business model—a fancy term that means how they'll make money. There was even a time, in the early days of the online world, when people dismissed the very notion of a business model as something from the old economy. If you build a website that's cool enough, the thinking went, success will follow. One of the hardest and most important business questions is deceptively simple. What business are you in? Here is why it's so important. And the right answer is usually anything but obvious. Peter Drucker. What business are you in? This seems like a stupid question. I assure you that it is not. In every Brand Pyramid workshop I ask this seemingly innocuous question: What is x (insert name of your company or organization)? Rarely are the answers easy, clear, consistent or useful. Underneath this question is the need to have answered the question of what business you are in. Just thinking over the past few weeks' workshops, this seemingly simple question was hotly debated by people who came into the meeting thinking they knew. You are someone who is very reliable. You are responsible and people always know that they can depend on you to get any and all jobs done. You are good at being patient and staying calm even in stressful situations. Once you put your mind to it, you are able to do incredible things, even when others doubt you. This business would allow you to showcase how great you are at managing things. Click below to share your results. Bakery. Bakery. You are someone who is very artistic. You have a creative-mindset and opening a bakery would allow you to express yourself with sweets and treats. You are th Business is either an occupation, profession, or trade, or is a commercial activity which involves providing goods or services in exchange for profits. Profits in business are not necessarily money. It can be a benefit in any form which is acknowledged by a business entity involved in a business activity. To make things clearer, let us divide the business definition into business entity definition and business activity definition. Contents.