

## Daniel Eisenberg's Artist Diary: The Unstable Object II

July 5, 2022



Film still from Daniel Eisenberg's *The Unstable Object II*

Step inside three factories employing radically different modes of production: one of the world's largest prosthetics factory, far removed in the mountains of Germany; a small haute-couture glove atelier in southern France, where each glove is made by hand; and a distressed jeans factory in central Turkey, where about 2000 pairs of jeans are produced daily.

Using techniques of durational observation, Daniel Eisenberg's (2012 Creative Capital Grantee) film *The Unstable Object II* reveals the deeper meanings of these objects and sites, and in our world where the nature of work is radically changing, allows us the time and space to consider our own place in the order of things. Premiering this week at FIDMarseille, the film reveals paradigms of contemporary production, organization, and labor.

Read on to hear from Daniel Eisenberg about his aims and approach in making this film. *FIDMarseille* runs from July 5–11, 2022 in Marseille, France.

We're living through a time marked by dramatic changes in the nature of work and labor. It wasn't long ago that most people defined themselves by their occupation, by how they made a living, by the work they did. In a world where full-time, well-paid work has become increasingly scarce, with people getting by with precarious, insecure and impermanent employment, the need to develop alternative criteria for social value or personal meaning becomes existential.



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The work we imagine or seek for ourselves is often not the same for those outside our familiar worlds. In most places, a factory job is still the ticket to financial security and self-respect, especially if that factory is located in the global south, or in fast-growing industrialized economies. But even there, robotics and artificial intelligence are rapidly being adapted to manufacturing and service industries, which means we're living amongst the last generations of factory workers, whose jobs will quickly be replaced by more predictable and cheaper technologies.



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My work has been largely motivated by a consideration of the document and the archive, its many valences and potentials. As the nature of work changes, it's increasingly important to document what will imminently disappear, aware of the aspects of labor that have defined our own historical moment.



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In the future there will surely be some conventional documents of how things were made, and perhaps the conditions of labor, available for study or research. But I'm quite sure there will be few records of the *time* of the factory, the *social space* of daily life, or the subtle relations produced within the working environment. Those aspects of work require time, a slowing down...something that I recognize may be difficult for most viewers, trained by contemporary media and the constraints of the clock to keep clicking, or to speed up their own production.



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*The Unstable Object II* is long and rigorous...three and a half hours in length, consisting of three individual factory portraits of over an hour each. Creative Capital gave me the opportunity to be intellectually ambitious with this project. Eliminating so many of the economic risks associated with a large, long-term film project, I was able to take more important *conceptual* risks, as well as take the time necessary to develop ideas that would probably be impossible to arrive at with the conventional pressures of production. You start asking yourself questions along the lines of... "what would constitute success for this work?" "What methods and approaches can I think through to produce new and different results?" "What can I learn from my materials that can be applied to the next stage of the work?" "What new structures can be produced from the materials?" It's a more iterative process, less dependent on initial ideas.



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The methodologies and economics of contemporary media production allow for new working procedures and forms. One approaches production with these new possibilities in mind. Formally, the film is meant to break apart into three separate feature-length films shortly after its initial release as a single, long film. And as material for installation, it does yet again something quite different, with an emphasis on spatial relations (I already produced an installation from the first factory that was exhibited at the Museum of Art and Design in New York and the Istanbul Biennial several years ago.) So, from a font of original digital source materials, multiple formal outcomes are produced. But as a single long experience, I think the film does something unique. I'm still old enough to remember leaving the cinema with my world changed forever. I looked at it the other day for the first time, alone in the theater, and it was an intense, quick, and transformative 3.5 hours...if that's still at all possible.



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I am interested in the way that extended, durational observation opens up thought, allowing experiences and associations to be produced by the viewer rather than the maker. It's a response to what I see as tired approaches and procedures that close down thought, and publicly perform unconscious prejudices, cultural biases, and unverified assumptions. Hopefully I've thought through my own positions enough to confront my own assumptions honestly, and with critical perspective.





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To artists working on a challenging project right now, I would urge finding the method that allows you to believe in the work, remain critically engaged with the questions your work raises, and take whatever time is necessary to work towards an intellectually durable, ambitious outcome.



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The ability to take one's time and think through the implications of every decision, large and small, makes the work stronger. It's a luxury only possible with the kind of support that Creative Capital gives. It's allowed a huge growth in perspective, of what I can contribute, and what the work's meaning ultimately might be.



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*The Unstable Object II* will premiere at FIDMarseille in Marseille, France on Friday, July 8 at 8:00PM and will also be screened on Sunday, July 10 at 2:00PM and Monday, July 11 at 9:30AM. Learn more about the film and Daniel Eisenberg.

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