

# GALLERY 400

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**UIC** SCHOOL OF ART & ART HISTORY

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Tues–Fri 10–6, Sat 12–6

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Nice Work If You Can Get It**

June 27-August 2, 2014



Karina Skvirsky, *Gioconda*, 2007-2009, video, 7:40 min. (still).

June 13, 2014—Chicago, IL— ***Nice Work If You Can Get It***, curated by **Lorelei Stewart**, addresses the vital pocketbook issue of how citizens sustain themselves in today’s global economy. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, seismic shifts in our economic realities have forever changed our relationships to traditional concepts of labor, equity, and exchange. Believing in the potency of the arts and humanities to illuminate civic issues in our communities, Gallery 400 brings together eleven artists—**Arturo Hernández Alcázar, Ramón Miranda Beltrán, Melanie Gilligan, The Ladydrawers, Mary Lum, Yoshua Okón, Pocket Guide to Hell, Karina Skvirsky, Pilvi Takala, Ward Shelley, and Andrew Norman Wilson**—that investigate this changing landscape of labor. Exploring the legacies of industry, immaterial labor, service work, invisible labor and more, the artists featured in the exhibition articulate a variety of responses to the relationships between labor, economy, and politics.

**Ramón Miranda Beltrán's** work investigates a historical moment from the 1933 Chicago Teacher Revolt in simultaneity with the recent 2012 Chicago Teacher's Union Strike. **Arturo Hernández Alcázar's** *No Trabajes Nunca / Ne Travailez Jamais / Never Work* explores the dynamics of circulation and reassignment of value in the capitalist system by looking at the activity of rescuing and recycling valuable materials. **Melanie Gilligan's** video series, *Self-Capital*, centers on a personified Global Economy undergoing radical therapeutic treatment after her recent meltdown, suggesting the effects of the crisis are felt on the corporeal level. **The Ladydrawers** use data from original research conducted in the public realm by students, interns, volunteers, and supporters around the globe and transform it into comic books, strips, posters, postcards, games, and apparel. A product of this research and collaboration, *Our Fashion Year* is an in-depth series of comics journalism reports on gender and labor. Composed of paper bag fragments stamped with the name of the individual who oversaw their production and quality control on the assembly line, **Mary Lum's** *Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor* reminds us of the human element behind industrialized production and the objects we use on a daily basis. Shot on location at a Los Angeles Home Depot store, **Yoshua Okón's** *Octopus* focuses on the relationships among Guatemalan day laborers who at home fought on opposite sides of the Guatemalan civil war, yet in the U.S. are working side-by-side in their efforts to find employment. **Pocket Guide to Hell's** posters and ephemera document their labor history reenactments, while **Ward Shelley**, in *Work, Spend, Forget*, plots the 20<sup>th</sup>-century shift from production-oriented capitalism to consumer-oriented capitalism, connecting people and social movements in a complex and evolving organism. **Karina Skvirsky's** *Gioconda* explores the situation of recent immigrants who work long hours at menial jobs long after their emigration. **Pilvi Takala's** *The Trainee* reveals a spectrum of ways of looking after the odd member in a group, in this case a strange co-worker who disrupts workplace behavior patterns by spending her day doing nothing. **Andrew Norman Wilson's** *ScanOps* reveal issues of class, race, and labor through Google Books images in which software distortions, the scanning site, and the hands of the book-scanning "ScanOps" employees are visible.

*Nice Work If You Can Get It* is part of an ongoing series of exhibitions that explore shifts in industry and work, how and where economic exchange takes place, new models for sustainable economies, employment-driven migration, and relationships between place, work, and economic viability. A key component of this series is community involvement. Developed through partnerships with community organizations, labor unions, and artists, the relationships and dialogues with these groups will help guide forthcoming exhibitions and events.

#### **Related Programs:**

##### **Opening Reception**

**Friday, June 27, 5-8pm**

***Delano Manongs: Forgotten Heroes of the American Farm Workers*, screening  
Saturday, July 12, 2pm**

*Delano Manongs: Forgotten Heroes of the American Farm Workers* tells the story of farm labor organizer Larry Itliong and a group of Filipino farm workers who instigated one of the American farm labor movement's finest hours – The Delano Grape Strike of 1965 that brought about the creation of the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). While the movement is known for Cesar Chavez's leadership and considered a Chicano movement, Filipinos played a pivotal role. Filipino labor organizer, Larry Itliong, a cigar-chomping union veteran, organized a group of

1500 Filipinos to strike against the grape growers of Delano, California, beginning a collaboration between Filipinos, Chicanos and other ethnic workers that would go on for years.

***From Semis to Startups: Exploring Fulton Market's Changing Industrial Landscape, a walking tour with Emma Saperstein and Pocket Guide to Hell***  
**Wednesday, July 30, 7:00–8:30pm**

Join Pocket Guide to Hell and Emma Saperstein as they guide you through a tour of Chicago's Fulton Market. 7 sites will be activated to tell the long history of the Fulton Market/Randolph Street area, starting in the late nineteenth century and culminating with the recent period of change. Pocket Guide to Hell—coined after a quip from a visiting British labor leader around 1900—believes that in telling the story of Chicago, one is also telling the larger stories of life in a city and in nineteenth century America. Their guerilla walking tours are open to everyone, but are especially geared towards those that live in the city and want to know more about it. Pocket Guide to Hell's tours involve a strong narrative and primary research—from scrapbooks to interviews to newspapers—and all focus on some aspect of labor history, social justice, or true crime. All put accessibility first.

***Our Fashion Year: Unraveling the Threads Between the Garment and Sex Trades, lecture by Anne Elizabeth Moore***  
**Thursday, August 7, 6pm**

*Our Fashion Year*, an exploration of international women's labor in words and pictures, unravels the threads that weave together fast fashion and human trafficking in a brilliant series of full-color, non-fiction comic strips. What is the connection between the garment industry and the sex industry? What do brothel raids in Cambodia mean for your clothing budget? Why do one-seventh of the world's women work in the apparel sector? Why is sex work so reviled where neoliberal capital has the strongest hold? Why do international apparel companies produce clothing well beyond the means of consumers to purchase them, much less purchase them ethically? And how does the flow of capital particularly disadvantage women, everywhere in the world? Rarely are these questions asked—and never before have they been answered—in sassy, smart, full-color images by top comics artists and journalists of today. *Our Fashion Year* is an original approach to the unique questions that underpin contemporary global culture.

This presentation, by cultural critic and comics creator Anne Elizabeth Moore (the first in Chicago, following a worldwide Ladydrawers tour) will look at the process, form, and impact of the Ladydrawers' work on labor, gender, and compensation through the full spate of *Truthout* strips from the last year.

**Tours:**

Gallery 400 offers guided tours for groups of all ages. Tours are free of charge but require reservation. Please complete our online form (accessible at [gallery400.uic.edu/visit/tours](http://gallery400.uic.edu/visit/tours)) to schedule a tour of *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. For more information, or to discuss the specific needs and interests of your group, please contact us at 312 996 6114 or [gallery400@uic.edu](mailto:gallery400@uic.edu).

*Nice Work If You Can Get It* is supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; the School of Art & Art History, the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, University of Illinois at Chicago; and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency. The programming

and community engagement for this exhibition was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

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Founded in 1983, Gallery 400 is one of the nation's most vibrant university galleries, showcasing work at the leading edge of contemporary art, architecture, and design. The Gallery's program of exhibitions, lectures, film and video screenings, and performances features interdisciplinary and experimental practices. Operating within the School of Art and Art History in the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multidisciplinary exhibition.