WHAT IS THE COST OF AFFECT?

TEXT AND ARTWORKS BY CHO

During a recent visit in Brazil, Myriam was taken by Cho's exhibited artworks at the Palácio das Artes in Belo Horizonte, which made us want to include it in this issue. The following text, written by Cho, contextualizes his use of cash registers' receipts to talk about labor, value, temporality, and affect.

During the two years I worked as a cashier in downtown São Paulo, various experiences printed the thin film of routine, creating unease toward the normalized reality of the workplace. Issuing hundreds of receipts during long shifts, serving difficult customers. It is ironic to realize that the person mediating the exchange between products and money simultaneously becomes the product of a monetary exchange.

Coming from an immigrant family, I believed that hard work would be the path toward the financial stability needed to give meaning to everyday life. For that reason, I devoted myself intensely to my job. On my days off, I was no one, just a body in maintenance for the next workday. The desire for upward movement dissolved in the urgency of the present: thinking about the future seemed futile.

A decade later, while in art school, a latent unease about the dynamics of labor and survival began to guide my artistic research toward thermal paper. I started creating my own receipts, printed with texts, codes, and images that arise from affective experiences, and contaminate the standardized format of this object, resulting in a different kind of receipt: a document that bears witness to human experience.

What once symbolized subjugation has become a sign of an entire mass of disposable workers. A fragile material whose pigmentation is highly ephemeral. The endurance of the work depends on its constant reproduction—a repetitive and insistent gesture by the artist so that the piece continues to exist. Yet each print is destined to fade within a few months, marking the passage of time on its surface.

To linger before a receipt is an act of subversion against its original function. If these precarious objects represent and attest to our disposable existences within the corporate system, transforming them into something meaningful and precious affirms the value of our own bodies.

Thermal paper: thermosensible. A mass-produced, practical medium of instant printing. Sensitive to a heat that does not burn, but leaves a mark.

In many formal work environments, being sensitive is seen as an undesirable trait. These spaces of systematic dehumanization create processes of hardening, stripping individuals of their humanity and, consequently, of their sensitivity.

It is a challenge not to let violence make us cold—or worse, complicit. Now, more than ever, being sensitive is a revolutionary act. Sensitivity resists the normalization of violence within these systems; it preserves our humanity and keeps our gaze clear amid the dynamics of everyday life.

The cost of saying "good morning" with a smile.
The cost of severe vitamin D deficiency.
The cost of varicose veins from standing too long.
The cost of not being able to watch your own children grow up.

My artistic practice seeks to issue proofs of these various transactions: receipts for what we offer from our humanity every day. ■

Cho is a transdisciplinary and relational artist who investigates human behavior under different contexts of dehumanization. Born in São Paulo to Korean immigrant parents, he addresses themes such as formal labor, everyday life, and memory to build connections between his personal experience and that of others. Frequently using symptomatic objects resulting from a mass-production flow—such as receipts and textile waste—he constructs poetic narratives about these materials, seeking a closer relationship with the public.

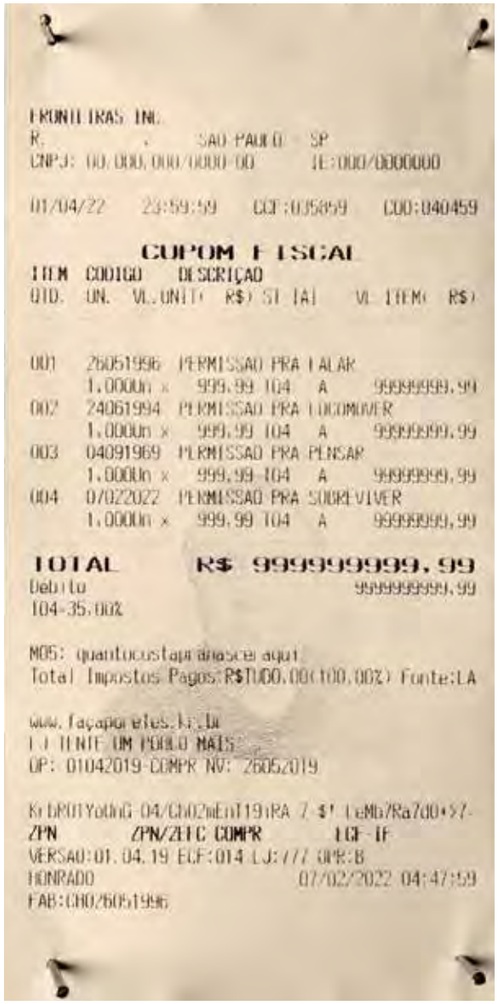
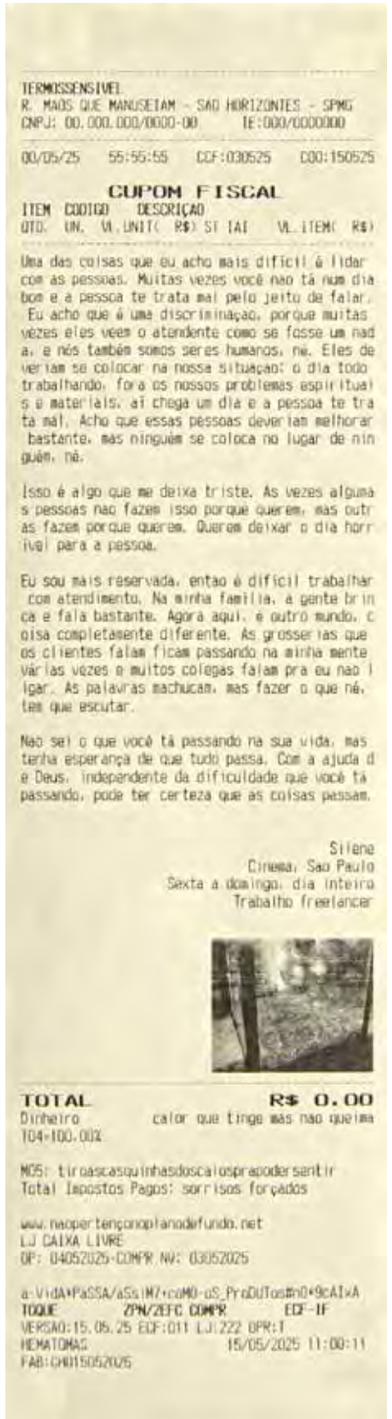


Fig.1



Fig.2


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Uma das coisas que eu acho mais difícil é lidar com as pessoas. Muitas vezes você nao tá num dia bom e a pessoa te trata mal pelo jeito de falar. Eu acho que é uma discriminaçao, porque muitas vezes eles veem o atendente como se fosse um nada, e nós também somos seres humanos, né. Eles deveriam se colocar na nossa situaçao: o dia todo trabalhando, fora os nossos problemas espirituais e materiais, aí chega um dia e a pessoa te trata mal. Acho que essas pessoas deveriam melhorar bastante, mas ninguém se coloca no lugar de ninguém, né.

Isso é algo que me deixa triste. As vezes algumas pessoas nao fazem isso porque querem, mas outras fazem porque querem. Querem deixar o dia horrível para a pessoa.

Eu sou mais reservada, então é difícil trabalhar com atendimento. Na minha familia, a gente brinca e fala bastante. Agora aqui, é outro mundo, coisa completamente diferente. As grosserias que os clientes falam ficam passando na minha mente várias vezes e muitos colegas falam pra eu nao ligar. As palavras machucam, mas fazer o que né, tem que escutar.

Nao sei o que você tá passando na sua vida, mas tenha esperança de que tudo passa. Com a ajuda de Deus, independente da dificuldade que você tá passando, pode ter certeza que as coisas passam.

Silene
Cinema, Sao Paulo
Sexta a domingo, dia inteiro
Trabalho freelancer

TOTAL R$ 0.00
Dinheiro calor que tinge mas nao queima
T04=100.00%

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Fig.3

One of the things I find most difficult is dealing with people. Often, you're not having a good day, and people treat you badly because of the way you speak. I think it's discrimination, because they often see the attendant as if they were nothing, and we're human beings too, right? They should put themselves in our shoes: working all day, dealing with our spiritual and material problems, and then one day someone treats you badly. I think people should do better, but no one tries to put themselves in someone else's shoes.

That's something that makes me sad. Sometimes, people do it without wanting to, but others do it because they want to. They want to make the other person's day horrible.

I'm more reserved, so it's hard to work in customer service. In my family, we joke around and talk a lot. Here, it's a different world, completely different. The rude things customers say keep going through my mind, and my colleagues tell me not to mind them. Words hurt, but what can you do. You have to listen.

I don't know what you're going through in your life, but have hope that everything will pass. With God's help, no matter how difficult things are for you right now, you can be sure that everything will pass.

Silene
Movie theater, São Paulo
Friday to Sunday, all day
Freelance work


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Eu também trabalho em um cinema, e nao é fácil. A gente lida com os clientes e é complicado.

O problema é que os clientes acham que têm razao de tudo, e a gente sempre tá errado. Tem cliente que chega aqui com um mau humor, e joga na cara da gente, e a gente tem que aguentar, nao podemos falar nada. Mas depois de sair do trabalho eu falo sim, hahaha

Concordo com você, Silene. Completamente. Mas fazer o que, né?

Eu tô em BH faz 5 anos, vim aqui pra estudar. Ano passado me formei em aviaçao civil. Logo logo vou poder trabalhar com o que eu gosto!

Tem que ter coragem, mas o atendimento ao público nao é fácil. Tem cliente educado também, nao só mal educado. É só fazer o melhor de você.

Ester
Cinema, Belo Horizonte
13h às 21h30
Trabalho intermitente, 14 dias por mês

TOTAL R$ 0.00
Dinheiro calor que tinge mas nao queima
T04=100.00%

MO5: tiroascasquinhasdoscalosprapodersentir
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Fig.4

I also work at a movie theater, and it's not easy. We deal with customers, and it's complicated.

The problem is that customers think they're always right, and we're always wrong. Some customers show up in a bad mood and take it out on us, and we have to put up with it—we can't say anything. But after I leave work, I definitely talk about it. hahaha

I agree with you, Silene. Completely. But what can we do, right?

I've been in Belo Horizonte for five years; I came here to study. Last year I graduated in aviation. Soon I'll be able to work with what I really like!

You need to have courage, but customer service isn't easy. There are polite customers too, not just rude ones. You just have to do the best for yourself.

Ester
Movie theater, Belo Horizonte
1:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Intermittent work, 14 days per month

All artworks by Cho ///
Fig.1 *Frontiers* (2022), 8×16 cm, thermal print on thermosensible paper.
Fig.2 *Guardian Angel* (2025), 8×16 cm, thermal print on thermosensible paper.
Fig.3 *Thermosensible 8 (Silene)* (2025), 8×20 cm, thermal print on thermosensible paper.
Fig.4 *Thermosensible 18 (Ester)* (2025), 8×20 cm, thermal print on thermosensible paper.