



“we have one enemy and that is ice”

In the Fall of 2018 I sat on a block of ice for 10 hours until an impression was left on the ice block. The action was done on the stoop of my apartment in Sunset Park. Over the 10 hours it took to make the impression I sat and did nothing else.

This extension of time that is needed to make indentations on the ice block is at odds with the immediacy we expect from current impression-making devices. The time photography has needed to make an impression has gone from hours to fractions of seconds. This has satisfied an ever increasing desire for going faster and faster. But how can you speed up a body's impression on ice without inducing a fever?

I volunteer at the The Sanctuary Coalition's pro se clinic as a Spanish-English translator helping undocumented immigrants work on their asylum applications. The title of the piece is a quote the leader of The New Sanctuary Coalition made during one of the meetings. Ice, ICE or Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the federal agency charged with detaining, prosecuting and deporting 'illegal' immigrants. Many detained by ICE are put in 'la hielera' (the ice box). For extended, indefinite periods of time migrants are exposed to extreme cold temperatures with nothing to do but sit on a hard bench and shiver. “we have one enemy and that is ice” is an act/ sit-in in solidarity with immigrants and a protest of the inhumane and racist policies and acts carried out by the American political system and their overly-zealous enforcing agencies.

In the early 20th century Frederic Tudor began carving frozen New England lakes into big ice blocks and shipping them to Cuba, India, Australia, China and South America to sell to white colonial elites. The European elites would put the ice into their drinks to cool themselves down from the year long tropical heat they were unaccustomed to. The big white American blocks of ice became a soothing and comforting aid to colonial forces until the advent of electric refrigeration later in the 20th century. Our current use of ice cubes in drinks stems from this colonial practice. Like mooning, there is explicit vulgarity and irreverence in the act of pushing an impression of my ass of onto the smooth white block. Even after ten hours I am not able to penetrate it or break it but I can definitely etch my ass on to it.

“we have one enemy and that is ice” is closely tied with Paradox of Praxis 1, a piece by Francis Alys where he pushed a block of ice until it disappeared. Alys performed under the rubric: “sometimes making something leads to nothing.” My interest was in finding a way to do the opposite--to make by doing nothing. My aim was to create a form by doing nothing, nothing of value with my brain or body just sitting and letting time pass. Praxis means: practice, as distinguished from theory. The paradox Francis Alys is presenting in pushing the ice block until it is nothing is that he performs an action that leads to nothing, whereas running parallel to that action, the theory forming

the action is doing something. “we have one enemy and that is ice” is an experiment in what happens when the relationships between theory, practice and product are inverted and placed into the social justice setting.

I sat on the ice the same month in which the UN released a landmark report on global warming. The report detailed the consequences the rise of a few degrees in global temperatures will have on our planet and on people if we do nothing to change our consumption. The receding coastlines of the North and South poles are evidence of the stress humans are placing on planet earth. As a collective body our recalcitrant posture towards the environment--our inability to stop leaning so heavily into it--is disastrously changing the planet.

