International Markets of Flesh: Mapping Flows of Human Organs and Tissues

subRosa
¿Qué Valor Tiene Su Carne?

Averigue como usted puede participar en el Nuevo Mercado Global de la Carne Humana que tráfica con la faena de trabajo, cuerpos y órganos. ¡Este Mercado fue hecho posible gracias a las nuevas tecnologías bio-médicas y genéticas-incluyendo la reproducción asistida y transplante de órganos- y a las tecnologías de la comunicación digital!

Perfil del Sujeto del Bio-Poder

Nombre: 

Ciudad/Pueblo/Aldea/Otro: 

País: 

Correo Electrónico: 

Año de Nacimiento: 

Sexo:  □ Feminina  □ Masculino  □ Otro
Raza:  □ Blanco  □ Negro  □ Hispano  □ Asiático  □ Mestiza/Multi-racial  □ Otro
Grupo Sanguíneo:  □ 0  □ A  □ B  □ AB  □ No sé  Estado de Salud:  □ Bueno  □ Razonable  □ Malo

Existe en su familia alguna historia de enfermedades hereditarias  □ Sí  □ No  □ No sé

Yo tengo un defectuoso/enfermo (marque todos que aplican):  □ Riñón  □ Pulmón  □ Hígado  □ Corazón  □ Páncreas  □ Córnea  □ Piel  □ Médula espinal

Yo soy:  □ Documentado  □ Indocumentado  Tipo de trabajo:  □ Manual  □ de Servicio  □ de Conocimiento/Intelectual

Mi trabajo envuelve cruzar las fronteras nacionales:  □ Regularmente  □ Ocasionalmente  □ Muy Raramente  □ Nunca

Salario anual (en USA dólares): $ 

Valor de los Partes del Vendedor en el Mercado de la Carne Humana

Este es el valor aproximado en el mercado libre de sus MBH (Materiales Biológicos Humanos) y faena de trabajo. ¡Que tiene usted para vender!

1. Algunos creen que el valor de un órgano o de los MBH (Materiales Biológicos Humanos) debería estar basado en las ganancias perdidas durante el tiempo de recuperación total luego de una operación de transplante-tiempo estimado de 3 meses. Calcule el valor de sus ganancias no recibidas en un plazo de 12 semanas: $ 

2. ¿Cuáles Materiales Biológicos Humanos le gustaría poner a disposición? (en USA dólares)

2a. Productos de la Sangre y del Plasma (renovable) $200 /mensual x _________ meses = $ 

2b. Productos de Gameto

□ Semen (renovable)  □ Europeo/Judio/Asiático $100  □ Otro $20

□ Óvulos (no renovable)  □ Super modelo $150,000  □ Europeo/Judio/Asiático $5,000

2c. Órganos Sólidos

La venta de órganos humanos es ilegal en la mayoría de países. Aun hay un mercado “informal” en el comercio de cadáveres y órganos humanos frescos obtenidos ilegalmente. Muchos países están considerando ahora la posibilidad de legalizar alguna forma de compensación para los donantes de órganos. Las siguientes tres columnas en el diagrama a continuación le darán algunas opciones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Órgano</th>
<th>USA Contrato por Adelante</th>
<th>Fuera de USA</th>
<th>Diga su Precio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Riñón</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1,000-3,000*</td>
<td>($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Páncreas</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1,000-3,000*</td>
<td>($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hígado</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1,000-3,000*</td>
<td>($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corazón/Pulmón</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$2,000*</td>
<td>($)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

□* Los precios varían de país a país.

| SUBTOTAL: (póngase en línea 2c.) |

2d. Trabajo

□ Yo necesito comprar faena de trabajo. _________ horas x ($) _________, /hora = $ 

Tipo de trabajo que quiere vender:  □ Manual  □ Servicio  □ de Conocimiento o Intelectual

□ Madre de Vientre (rentar el útero) $10,000 por un periodo de 9 meses.

EL VALOR TOTAL DE SU CARNE $ 

subRosa 2003
Introduction

subRosa’s collective art practice strives to create discourse and embodied knowledge about the effects of information-, communication-, and bio-technologies on women’s lives, labor, and bodies. Since 1998, we have produced performances, installations, publications, web sites, participatory mapping events and workshops addressing these effects. subRosa’s projects aim to re-think and re-contextualize historical feminist theories regarding the representation and treatment of women’s bodies, sexuality, production and reproduction, as they are being inflected and changed by global biopolitical shifts to a service, immaterial labor, and affect economy, by migration, and by advanced bio-medical and genetic technologies. There is no question that worldwide women’s bodies—are along with soldier, migrant, raced, and worker bodies—are under more stringent surveillance now than ever before, and that the power of militarized imaging, surveillance, private property rights, and other control mechanisms are deeply affecting women’s lives in specific ways. subRosa seeks to understand the implications of increased controls while mapping new possibilities for feminist praxis regarding women’s sexual, social, and reproductive autonomy, and acknowledging the “constant capture” of agency that these new conditions of surveillance generate.

Many of subRosa’s projects address issues raised during the 2006 University of Milwaukee conference *Constant Capture: Visibility, Civil Liberties, and Global Security*. For example, we’ve been particularly concerned with the literal capture of women’s bodies and tissues in the service of ‘scientific’ control of fertility and reproduction in ART (Assisted Reproductive Technologies) and “making” new life in the biology lab. We are deeply disturbed by the militarization of medicine and biotechnology as evidenced by the stepped-up spending on developing bio-warfare and bio-safety labs and programs throughout the US. subRosa’s *SmartMom* WEB project (1998) detoured some of the imaging and sensing technologies developed by the military and NASA’s space programs, which have subsequently been deployed for civilian purposes. A classic example is ultrasound imaging initially developed by the navy to detect underwater submarines and other large objects, and now a staple gynecological tool used to monitor conception, pregnancy, ovulation, ovarian cysts, and the like. In our research we found many examples of Defense Sciences Office (DSO) and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) projects that purpose to biologically and chemically retool the soldier body for remote battlefield conditions. For example, DSO is “developing technologies that will allow our highly skilled and impeccably trained war-fighters to maintain their peak physical and cognitive performance despite the harsh conditions of combat…such as sleep deprivation, intake of inadequate quantity/quality of calories, heat and cold stress, muscle fatigue,” as well as possible exposure to germs and viruses of bio-warfare and infectious diseases. Devices and procedures already in development or combat deployment include experimental vaccines, molecular pharmaceuticals, automated battlefield “trauma pods,” novel pain medications, and a “neural-controlled upper extremity prosthesis that fully recapitulates the motor and sensory functions of a natural limb.” The ironic *SmartMom* project suggested in what ways many of these cyborgian technologies could be adapted to valuable civilian uses, such as controlling women’s fertility, forcing their compliance with doctor’s orders, and assuring more efficient reproduction of workers and soldiers.

International Fleshmarkets

World-wide, the trafficking of humans—overwhelmingly women and children—for sex work, the entertainment industry, domestic, and slave labor, is one of the fastest growing (illegal) industries in the world. subRosa has researched and made work about the harvesting and international distribution of women’s tissues and body parts, such as eggs, placentas, embryos, embryonic and fetal stem cells, and umbilical cord blood. When we were invited to international performance festivals in Mexico City (2003) and in Merida, Mexico (2005), we devised *International Markets of Flesh* (IMF) a project that incorporates a critique of the ravages that NAFTA (the North American Fair Trade Agreement) has wreaked on the Mexican economy and labor conditions—not to mention on human and civil rights. Both performances were presented bilingual in Spanish and English. IMF addressed the increase in entrepreneurial international trafficking of human organs and transplant operations facilitated through the internet, global communications technologies, enforced or voluntary migration patterns, and the gendered aspects of citizenship and legal status (for example the ‘property rights’ of husbands over their wives’ body parts and reproductive capacity in some countries). From our research and audience response it was clear that the trafficking of organs and bodies for medical, labor, and sex purposes was already a hot-button political issue in Mexico.

IMF was conceived as a low-tech audience-participatory performance designed to inspire critical thinking about relationships between new eugenic reproductive technologies, digital communications technologies, and an international flesh market that trafficks in human labor, bodies, and organs. How do these new communications and bio-technologies affect social and political relations between individual bodies in everyday life? How are the global market conditions of pan-capitalism reconfiguring international labor relations and flows of bodies and body parts across borders? How are concepts of
the value of human life changing in the age of the genetically engineered, distributed, and patented body? What possibilities of resistance to market imperatives are possible in the tactical deployment of our collective bio-political power?

Our goals for the performance were:

- Collective research and knowledge production.
- Hands-on learning/teaching about international fleshmarkets while discussing their social, economic, and geographic implications.
- Experiencing science with a difference: the understanding of science and its contents are different when it is done in the public sphere as an interrogative act.
- Public pedagogy as a practice of resistance to intellectual property agreements, privatization and corporatization of learning and knowledge.
- DIY (do it yourself) tactics: How to arouse the interest and passion of viewers and users through projects that address key everyday life issues, such as food and nutrition, health and medical care, reproduction and fertility, and work and money.
- Exploring the interrelationships between human desires, myths, real scientific possibilities, and the ways in which different lives are valued.

We designed IMF as a collective mapping and information-sharing project. The audience/participants gathered in the center of a performance space that contained a large map, a digital projection, and a set of transparent anatomical drawings of the solid human organs. There were trays of soft sculptures very close in size and weight to actual human organs, and piles of colored stickers of the most commonly harvested body parts. To begin the performance, we first passed the soft organ sculptures around among the audience in order to let them feel the weight and size of the organs. We suggested holding them against their bodies in the locations indicated in our anatomical diagrams. This embodied performative moment evoked a lively interchange, and our audience was reluctant to let go of the organs (we even lost a few hearts in this performance).

Next followed a slide show discussing various economies of international body part trafficking. Whole migrant worker bodies as well as illegally sold “donor” body parts tend to move from South to North, and from East to West. Clients and organ brokers are usually wealthy individuals living in First World countries, while sellers are often desperately poor people from developing countries. Entrepreneurial brokers use the Internet and free market principles to circumvent the (supposedly) strictly regulated organ transplant waiting lists. Advanced life-saving technologies mean more opportunities to improve or extend the lives of terminally ill patients, who far outnumber available organ donors. Regulated waiting lists are supposed to prioritize recipients according to need and tissue compatibility, while taking into consideration the social values of who most deserves to stay alive or to live in less pain. But the fact that the demand far outpaces the supply creates an “organ shortage,” which is easily overcome by individuals who can broker deals between the extremely wealthy and extremely poor in illegal international black markets. subRosa’s slide-show illustrated how international illegal transactions work with a true story about an illegal brokerage firm based in Israel that arranged for an impoverished Brazilian to sell a single kidney to a wealthy New Yorker who was thus able to bypass a long transplant waiting list. To skirt US regulations, the surgery was performed in Johannesburg, South Africa, which has long been a center of advanced techniques in transplant surgery.

These preliminary sections were a preparation for the main activity of the performance, which was to map participants’ stories and rumors about the trafficking, sale, and transplant of organs onto a large world map we had prepared. The map was printed with a version of Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxian Projection, which shows the South and North American continents in reversed positions (so that South America is on top) and also depicts the continents’ relative sizes more accurately than conventional maps. To the right on our map was a large human/cyborgian anatomical figure, a recombinant of both fleshly and machinic body parts. We encouraged participants to draw and write their stories directly on the map, tracking the countries and routes by which the organs/bodies had traveled, and using stickers to designate the organ in question as well as relating it to the cyborg body on the map. Myths, rumors, and factual examples were all juxtaposed, and it was interesting to see that the geographies overlapped.

People were reluctant at first, but then eager to tell their stories of the flesh market. They understood intuitively that it was both real and metaphorical, and that the economic relations between Mexico and the US are cannibalistic (though a surprising number of audience members in Mexico City did not know what NAFTA was and were unaware of the International Monetary Fund, to which the show’s title refers). subRosa members and the audience contributed tales of babies being stolen from...
mothers in hospitals; street children being drugged and harvested for their organs; blood being drawn from homeless donors in return for food; kidneys, corneas, and livers being sold to Internet buyers to pay for an ill mother’s treatment, a daughter’s marriage, a son’s schooling, and a family home; as well as stories about relatives or friends who had received organ transplants with mixed medical results.

For a final performance activity, we asked people to fill out a "What is your Flesh Worth?" (Que Valor Tiene Su Carne?) questionnaire in return for which they receive a Certificate of Flesh Worth with the following text:

Certificate of Flesh Worth

Company Name: North American Flesh Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Certificate No. __________________________ Date __________________________

This is to certify that (print name) having been duly tested in the quality control laboratories of the North American Flesh Trade Agreement, is deemed qualified to be a Certified Donor. Her/His Net Worth on the Flesh Market has been calculated to be at least $ __________ (USD). The bearer of this Certificate is a fully qualified Biopower subject, and a source of warranted transplantable human tissues such as skin, bone, and stem cell lines, blood and plasma products, genes, internal organs, and labor. This Certificate of Flesh Worth is not transferrable, and must be produced for inspection during any transaction involving the sale of the bearer’s organic tissues, parts or labor, at advantageous rates for our special investors. Invest creatively in your Future in the Free Flesh Market.

Buy/Sell the Gift of Life!

City of __________________________

Witness __________________________
The Flesh Worth Form used documented market values for body parts and labor and was an effective way to demonstrate how those values are often arbitrarily higher or lower according to the race, age, and gender of the “donor.” During the Mexico City performance, subRosa discovered that many in our audience did not respond well to filling out a questionnaire. They were suspicious of this activity (probably for very good reasons) and several left at that point. Others were eager to get the Certificate but were practically illiterate so we had to help them fill out the questionnaires. This proved to be an interesting part of the performance as it meant having discussions with people about how to put a monetary value on a kidney, or liver, or cornea, or other body part. The thought of selling a body part was abhorrent to most people, many of whom either estimated the value of their parts very highly, or declared them invaluable and sacred, saying they would only consider an organ donation as a humanitarian act, not a monetary transaction.

When subRosa re-did this performance a year later in Merida, a city in the Yucatan, we changed the last part of the performance. Instead of filling out questionnaires, we asked people to write down on cards responses to problems of inequality inherent in the flesh market, and to suggest more equitable ways of dealing with health care, migration, and labor issues. In return for their ideas, we traded them “Biocommons Bonds” from the Central World Bank (Banco Central Del Mundo). The bio-commons mentioned on the bonds were inspired by the 2002 Porto Alegre World Forum “Draft Treaty to Share The Genetic Commons.”

We found that the approach of collectively trying to think things differently generated excitement, laughter, conversation, and some wacky suggestions, as well as sincere attempts to address the painful issues of economic and political inequality and bodily violence.

Conclusion: Human (and animal) bodies have been the most valuable commodity since human culture and primitive accumulation began. It seems that in late capitalism, bodies have also become the primary sites of sovereignty, resistance, and contestation. This is particularly true for women who comprise the largest share of migrants and trafficked persons worldwide. As Sylvia Federici writes in Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation, “...the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance, as the female body has been appropriated by the state and men, and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labor.”

subRosa is concerned to make art about science and health care questions that is informed, engaging, yet critical, and gives audiences both theoretical and practical tools and ideas for creating discourse, resistance, and perhaps even activism. Merely using digital technologies or biotechnology processes in art practice does not automatically make the artwork critical or socio/politically engaged. On the contrary, it can serve to celebrate and advertise novel medical “life-saving” technologies and scientific “miracle” interventions that are often questionable, experimental, expensive, and unnecessary, and also have very high failure rates. subRosa’s projects aim to create critical discourse and knowledge production in the public sphere. As well, we want to draw attention to the constant surveillance and control in people’s everyday lives and in the socio-cultural sphere. Our experience shows that even a brief encounter with hands-on practices and scientific information through pedagogical art projects can suggest to audiences new ways of addressing key social and political issues, such as the modification of soldier bodies for military service, scientific (eugenic) control of reproduction, and the commodification and trafficking of organs and body parts. Clearly, it is time to call for the de-militarization (and de-corporatization) of the medical and pharmaceutical industries, as well as the bio-sciences—including genetic engineering and stem cell technologies. It is time to re-capture and rekindle the public will and passion for justice that led to the formation of such “people’s medicine” organizations as the Feminist Health Movement, ACT-UP, and TAC (Treatment Action Coalition). Like them, we must muster common resources to create democratic knowledge-in-common, self-help, and mutual assistance in the public sphere.


Free Condomism Agreement:
Third World countries are hereby
authorized to freely canniblize
countries that have systematically
depopulated them through colonization.

Don Appetit.