

**ENGAGE** Projects

**Announcement for Immediate Release:**

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***THE RESIDUE OF LABOR***

CHRIS LARSON

Friday, April 8 - Saturday, May 21, 2022

**Opening Reception:**

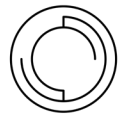
Friday, April 8, 2022, 6-8 PM  
401 North Paulina Street, Chicago



*"The residue of labor, which usually remains unseen, is a summation of minute tasks of everyday repetition that are required for production and equate to the steady degradation of once enduring objects, equipment, architecture, and communities."* — Chris Larson

ENGAGE Projects is pleased to announce *The Residue of Labor*, a site-specific exhibition by St. Paul-based multimedia artist Chris Larson. The exhibition will be presented across two locations: Larson will debut a primary, large-scale installation at an offsite warehouse in Chicago's West Town neighborhood (401 N Paulina St), in addition to a small presentation of works at ENGAGE Projects (864 N Ashland Ave). At the offsite location — a 10,000 square-foot warehouse in Chicago's West Town neighborhood — Larson's large-scale, site specific installation will include 55 recent works ranging from sculpture, video, drawing, painting, and photography, as well as an immersive work titled *Thread Room*. *The Residue of Labor* will be on view from April 8 through May 21, 2022, and will open with a public reception for the artist on Friday, April 8, 2022, from 6-8 PM, at the exhibition's offsite venue (401 N Paulina St).

Larson's ongoing work, *The Residue of Labor*, first began in 2018. Funded by the Guggenheim Artist Fellowship, *The Residue of Labor* is a culmination of Larson's longtime engagement with a defunct American garment factory in rural Tennessee that once produced clothing for brands such as Ralph Lauren, Burberry, and others. Utilizing the bygone factory as a point of departure, Larson creates an intimate yet immersive body of work from the forgotten materials and disused spaces within the factory, imbuing each with new life and meaning.



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Among the works on view in the exhibition are examples from Larson's *Thread Works* series. To create the *Thread Works*, Larson built a foot treadle-operated machine which wrapped canvases vertically in thread with both technological precision and the randomness of a human-generated frequency simulating the physicality of the foot peddle of a sewing machine. Although created by machine, Larson asserts his hand in each work, challenging the processes and mechanisms of mass production.

Using discarded employee time cards and thread recovered from the abandoned garment factory, Larson's *Timecard* series (2021) conveys the residue of labor by creating depth through layers of erasure. These works bear the weight of exertion in their charged materiality and fatigued treatment. Larson uses rotary tools to emulate the effacing of history by removing material on the surface of each piece, common throughout Larson's practice.

In this exhibition, Larson also presents the video work, *The Stillness of Labor* (2022). In the film, Larson's perspectival disorientation animates the banality of the labor that once took place within the factory. Recreating 12 full-scale rooms from the original garment factory, Larson emulates the utilitarian workspace while gesturing to the absence of the human body that was once integral to the space.

The largest work in the exhibition, *Thread Room* (2022) invites viewers to walk amidst thousands of shelved spools of thread. Arranged by color to create the impression of light filtering into a room, the installation functions as a library of labor that archives the great number of jobs unceremoniously taken from rural communities when garment labor became predominantly outsourced in the late 90s. The shallow shelving in Larson's design calls upon the factory's low basement ceilings, and the stacked spools offer a visual representation of workers operating within cramped quarters, creating an immersive experience for viewers.

Invested in the relationships between individual and architecture, body and machine, Larson contemplates the history of the American garment industry and human labor that has steadily faded from many rural communities. "The objects found in the factory magnify the complex relationships between intensive labor, working conditions, purpose and meaning, and what happens when these things disappear," Larson states. "[The residue of this space] aids in the investigation of class and identity, transcending their material function and pointing us toward answers of possibility."

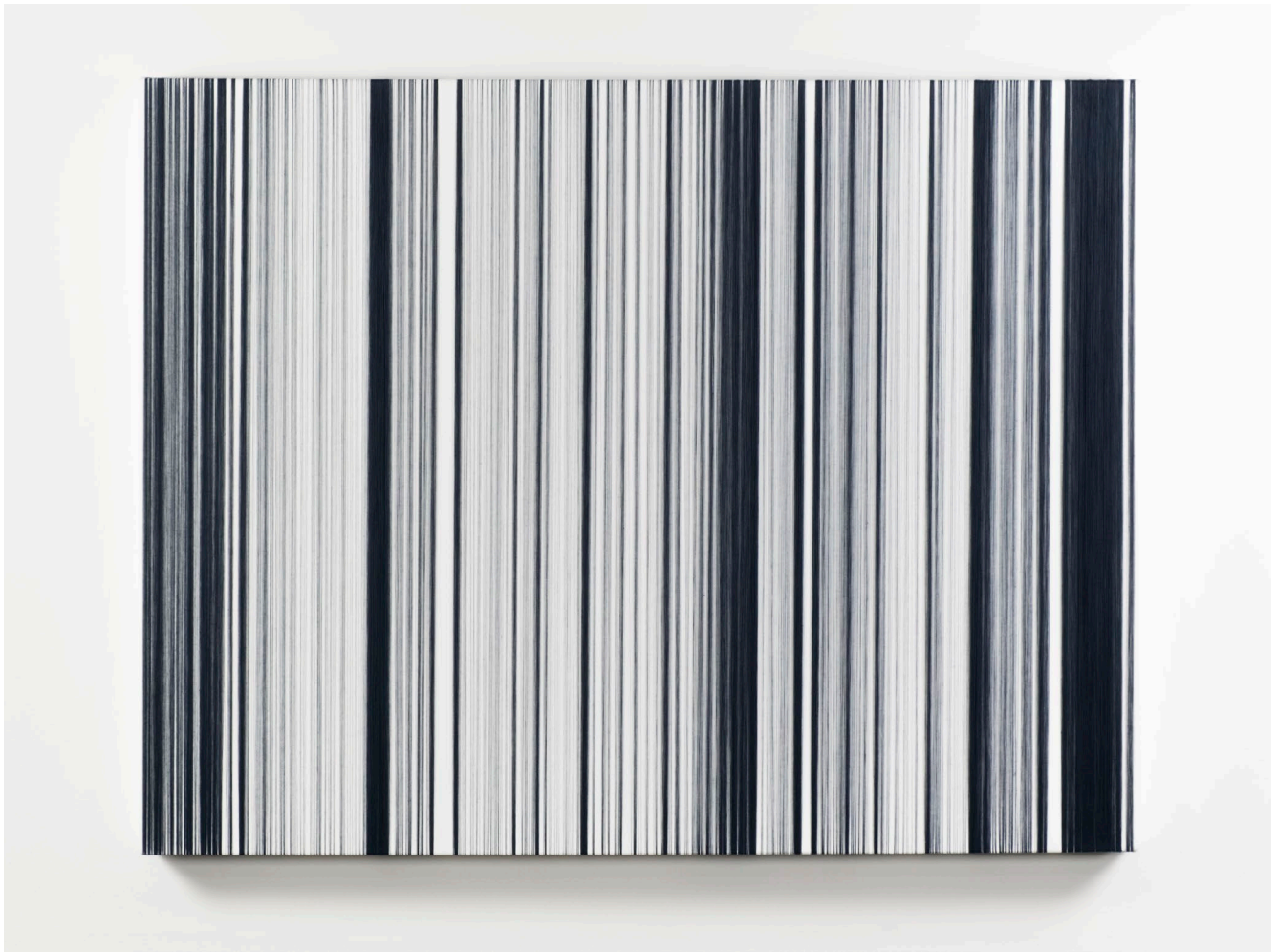
Chris Larson (b. 1966) lives and works in St. Paul, Minnesota, and is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of Minnesota. Since receiving his MFA in sculpture from Yale University in 1991, Larson has received numerous awards including a New Work Project Grant from The Harpo Foundation, a Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, and most recently, in 2018, a Guggenheim Fellowship. With his Chicago iteration of *The Residue of Labor*, Larson builds upon his oeuvre of contemporary installation, including solo exhibitions at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN, Katonah Museum of Art in Katonah, NY, The View Contemporary Art Space in Switzerland, and his work was included in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. In 2018, Larson's work was included in the 11th Bienal do Mercosul in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and a solo 10-year survey exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati. In 2019, he co-founded Second Shift Studio Space of St. Paul, a nonprofit residency program and gallery serving women and gender-nonconforming artists/makers/thinkers.

Exhibition Locations:

ENGAGE Projects @ 864 N Ashland Ave, Chicago, IL 60622

Off site warehouse @ 401 N Paulina St, Chicago, IL 60622

For further information, please contact [info@engage-projects.com](mailto:info@engage-projects.com)



*Yale Blue, 2020*  
3 miles of found Yale Blue Ralph Lauren  
industrial garment thread on found white Ralph  
Lauren Polo  
37 x 48 x 3.5 in 94 x 121.9 x 8.9 cm



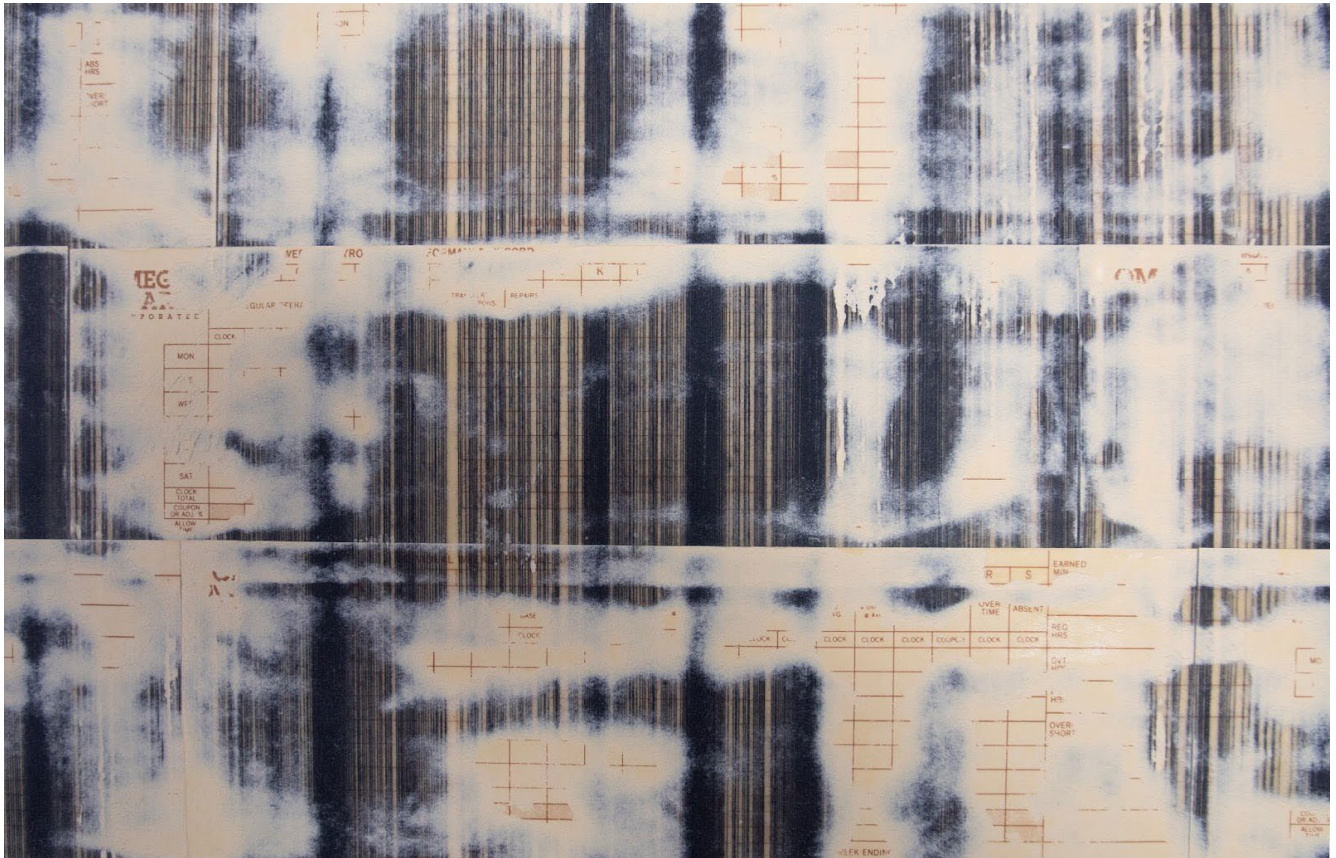


*Thread Room, 2022*  
96 x 120 x 288 in 243.8 x 304.8 x 731.5 cm



*Timecards #10, 2021*  
found factory time cards, Ralph Lauren  
industrial garment thread  
72 x 72 x 3.25 in 182.9 x 182.9 x 8.3 cm





*Timecards #10, 2021*  
detail  
found factory time cards, Ralph Lauren  
industrial garment thread  
72 x 72 x 3.25 in 182.9 x 182.9 x 8.3 cm



*The Stillness of Labor, 2022*  
4K Video, TRT: 8:49