

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT, MONEY & JOBS

The Sculptures Embodying Women's Unpaid Work

9/12/2019 by **SHEILA WICKOUSKI**

While U.S. women average more than four hours of unpaid labor in their homes and in their communities each day, U.S. men are only clocking a little more than half that amount, according to studies from senior gender expert Lucina Di Meco, Williams College Professor of Economics Lucie Schmidt and other experts. This is just one of the gendered economic disparities driving the works in [Counting the Hours](#), an art exhibit currently open at the Code & Canvas Gallery in San Francisco.



The + sign signifies an hour that Renée Stout, one subject of "Counting the Hours," did paid labor; her unpaid hours are instead embodied in wire frame boxes, which are less visible and weighty.

Sawyer Rose doesn't just re-count the statistical facts of the inequality that working women face, or their disproportionate labor load, in the pieces she's showing in *Counting*. She

translates that data and those stories gleaned from real life working women into sculptures and wall art that portray the physical, emotional and practical effects of their work load.

Her large-scale installation sculptures are built using real-life work data collected from female-identifying workers from all walks of life and from across the U.S.—women of diverse ages, ethnicities, orientations, working roles and socio-economic statuses.

Renée Stout, an African American sculptor and contemporary artist who still struggles with keeping up with her paid work plus all the unpaid tasks required to run her business and her life, and Dawline-Jane Oni-Eseleh, an African American art teacher working in Oakland, Calif. schools, at nonprofits and wherever she can get a gig to help make ends meet, are two of the women whose work lives are embodied in the exhibition. The hours clocked by America Young—Latina Hollywood stunt actor and coordinator, filmmaker, voice-over actor, director and mom and the Co-President & Founder of The Chimaera Project, a nonprofit that supports and advocates for female-identifying filmmakers—also take shape.



Renée Stout holding some hours' worth of her paid and unpaid labor markers.

For each woman featured, Rose has created a large-scale sculpture that serves as a visual representation of their paid and unpaid work hours and accompanied it with a photographic portrait of the subject. Rose's goal is to help explain some of the most hotly debated current labor issues: the gender pay gap, unequal representation of women in leadership positions and the “double burden” of women in the workforce who are also caregivers.

“I portray each woman bearing the burden of her unpaid hours in a real, physical way,” Rose says. “The stories in *Counting the Hours* may not represent your particular situation, but they definitely depict the lives of many women you know and love, women who work with you or for you.”

Counting the Hours, a sculpture exhibition that shines light on women’s unpaid work, is open from Sept. 19 to Nov. 2 in San Francisco. Opening reception is from 6 to 9 p.m. on Sept. 19. On Saturday and Sunday, October 26 and 27, the exhibition will host a weekend-long public participation event at which visitors can add their own work/hour data to a community-produced data visualization tapestry.