

# Fridge of sighs

The fridge lurks within our homes, issuing its silent directives: expressions of capitalism overproduction that appear in our lives as psychological compulsions.

Text by Christabel Stewart

*Play Fill the Fridge! instantly in your browser. Fill the Fridge! is a simple and relaxing casual puzzle game developed by Rollic Games. Organize the refrigerator space by laying out dozens of products in the correct order. Fill the refrigerator shelves with food, organize the space efficiently, and enjoy a fun and relaxing game. Begin by dragging products from the baskets into the compartments one by one. Refrigerate cans, milk boxes, fruits, vegetables, soda, and mineral water bottles, chocolate bar boxes, and other food until the baskets are empty.*

*Fill the Fridge!* is a sorting game for PC and mobile in which the player patiently restocks a fridge from a basket. It's a playable version of a popular genre of TikTok in which the viewer watches a (typically white, American, long-nailed) hand restock a home fridge in the manner of an extremely upmarket hotel: blueberries in small glass bottles, phalanxes of Diet Cokes. Both TikTokers and Instagrammers (and their critics, such as British teacher @shabazsays who parodies the genre's endless repackaging of packaged goods) contribute to a growing cult of aesthetically calming monotonicity.

Game developers are making the gamification of labour into part-distraction, part-competitive ritual, part-satire. Domestic survival is expressed in perfectionism: the organisation of cooking, cleaning and storing has increased in the age of late-capitalist social media as an oversharing pastime, hobby, entertainment, career – or career detour. The joy of repetitive tasks, the hierarchies of why they are done and who does them, the psychology of turning chaos into order (multiple products are available to make organisation ever more sophisticated, accelerating the aestheticisation of organisation and marketing to a newly professionalised job category, that of the “organiser”), suggests a desire for visible, quantifiable results. Methodical order leads to aesthetic transformation. Here the appliance is not a mere backdrop but a commanding presence – fill me, sate me – as a projection of capitalism's voracious appetite.

Several contemporary artists have tested the resolution of our abilities to exist inside the capitalist direction to overproduction and overconsumption. Each have all played with the aesthetics and meanings of “white goods” as articles of amenity and indulgence. Their works often ask the viewer to view their subject as it is, and codify a capitalist plenitude – of which the fill-the-fridge genre is only the most extreme version of all of our constant process of collecting, arranging and re-ordering.



**Gili Tal** has been working with the fridge as a mode for some years. In 2015 at Vilma Gold, London, she exhibited a room of part-filled fridges, showing quotidian items, mostly drinks. More recently, *The Bubblegum Police*, a two-person exhibition alongside Alan Michael at Hot Wheels London, hosted by New York gallery Jenny's, included a series of large fridge interior shots by Tal, such as "Big Silver Fridge (Naturalist Clutter)", and more with the same title again but with the subtitles "(Unrestrained Fantasy)" and "(Bucolic)". The imagery is large, but slightly obscured: a haze that replaces the closed fridge door but has the same function, to present the inaccessible, especially given the bourgeois allegory of the door. As artist Dan Mitchell wrote of Tal's fridge works in 2015, "In our daily reactive state, what it means to be modern is to have to deal with the exchange of one poison for another – this is the only rational remedy available for the constant conflict-ridden scenarios of non-living. Art under the conditions of the brutal restoration of neo-feudalism needs to have a form of integrity attuned to the struggle of building a life for the living."