

Homo Economicus is the title of a two-part group exhibition at Cabinet Gallery and Mehringdamm 72, Berlin which looks at the relations between art and labour through an exploration of political economy. The artists at Cabinet are Ayreen Anastas & Rene Gabri, Pavel Büchler, Zachary Formwalt, Franck Scurti, Andreas Siekmann and Mona Vătămanu & Florin Tudor and unnamed others.

Those at MD72 are Art & Language (with The Red Krayola), Bernadette Corporation, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge, Andrea Fraser, Luca Frei, Golden+Senneby, John Knight, Mladen Stilinović, Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor and Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

The term Homo Economicus, or economic man, is derived from a classical model of economics developed by amongst others Adam Smith, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill. It posits a so-called 'rational' or self-interested actor whose primary function is to utilise and maximise all possible things, situations and others for its own benefit, well-being and prosperity. As the subject of free market economics under capitalism, this 'essence' of man is to be understood as paradoxically 'natural' and socially constructed, suggesting a historical determinacy overlaid with a kind of economic realism. This destiny then, although ostensibly beyond the reach of ethics, is arguably the ethical subject position of modern times, the essence of the political as the force behind the (social) conditions of production.

At Cabinet, the works on view visualise or materialise the role of economics in relation to art, the artist or to labour in general, picking it apart through the production of individual or collective histories. The exhibition reflects upon the temporal insurgence of the unequal spatial occupations of neo-liberal capitalism as its focus, with its attendant programme of post-Fordist operations of financialization, deregulation, privatisation and the production of debt as modes of capital accumulation.

For the exhibition at MD72, the term Homo Economicus is strategically imposed upon a group of works that either point to or embody junctures of economic realism focusing upon the role of the artist and/or her labour. It problematises the very definitions of and between aesthetic labour and the role of the artist herself: the self-employed, creative worker whose life and production are her work.

By looking at various institution-critical productions, the 'work' of both exhibitions is then to reflect upon the convergence of artistic labour with the persistence of so-called 'Homo Economicus' as a corpse – the ethical subject – under the decentered regime of zombie capitalism, with its

transnational flows of capital, and what possible political consequences and political resistances this horizon might engender.

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