

Chisenhale Gallery presents the first solo exhibition in the UK and a new commission by Berlin-based artist, Maria Eichhorn. Highly responsive to context, Eichhorn's work operates within the logic of institutional structures, enacting changes through precise and visually minimal gestures. Her ambitious, large-scale projects often take on the mechanics of legal, social and financial processes, making permanent interventions that evolve over time.

Following a site visit to Chisenhale in July, which included a discussion with Chisenhale staff exploring their working lives, Eichhorn has produced a two part work examining contemporary labour conditions. The exhibition will begin with a lecture and seminar programme addressing ideas raised by the project. The programme will feature Isabell Lorey, a political theorist at the European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies in Berlin and author of *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious* (Verso Futures, 2015); and Stewart Martin, Reader in Philosophy and Fine Art at Middlesex University in London and member of the Editorial Collective of the journal, *Radical Philosophy*.

At Eichhorn's request, the gallery's staff will then withdraw their labour for the remaining five weeks of the exhibition. None of Chisenhale's employees will work during this period and the gallery and office will be closed, implementing leisure and 'free time' in the place of work. At the heart of the project is a belief in the importance of questioning work – of asking why, within our current political context, work is synonymous with production, and if, in fact, work can also consist of doing nothing. Eichhorn's conceptual gesture is an implicit critique of institutional production and broader neo-liberal patterns of consumption, but it is also an artwork that deals with ideas of displacement of the artist's labour and of the artwork as work.

Eichhorn's withdrawal of the staff's labour can also be viewed in the context of the financial precarity of the organisation and of the sector. As a proposition focussed on non-production and non-participation, her work directly blocks the entrepreneurial business models and participatory engagement agendas that publicly funded organisations in the UK are encouraged to embrace. As such, it presents a challenging and timely examination of a complex set of questions around contemporary labour conditions and their implications within the context of art but also more widely.

In order to realise Eichhorn's proposal and not compromise the ongoing operations of the organisation, Chisenhale Gallery's staff are required to carefully unravel their working structure and address important issues relating to responsibility, accountability and commitment – from the financial security of the organisation to the distinction between 'working' and 'personal' lives

within the artistic sphere. Eichhorn's project is, ultimately, a consideration of how we assign value to time. She explores this by questioning how capital shapes life through labour, but also through a critique of the notion of free time and the binaries of work and leisure.

The work is constituted not in the empty gallery but in the time given to the staff and what they choose to do with it. This commission presents multiple opportunities for audience engagement, from attending the lecture and seminar programme to contributing to conversations that will develop around the work. Eichhorn's project directly confronts audience expectations of the artist, the artwork and the gallery. It is an artwork that exists as an idea in the public sphere, operating by generating discourse, rather than through objects or images.

Newly commissioned texts by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin will be published online in April 2016 – on Chisenhale Gallery's website and as part of the *How to work together* 'Think Tank' – along with a transcript of a discussion with Eichhorn and Chisenhale Gallery staff, which took place in July 2015. Full details and booking information for the lecture and seminar programme will be available in February 2016.

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