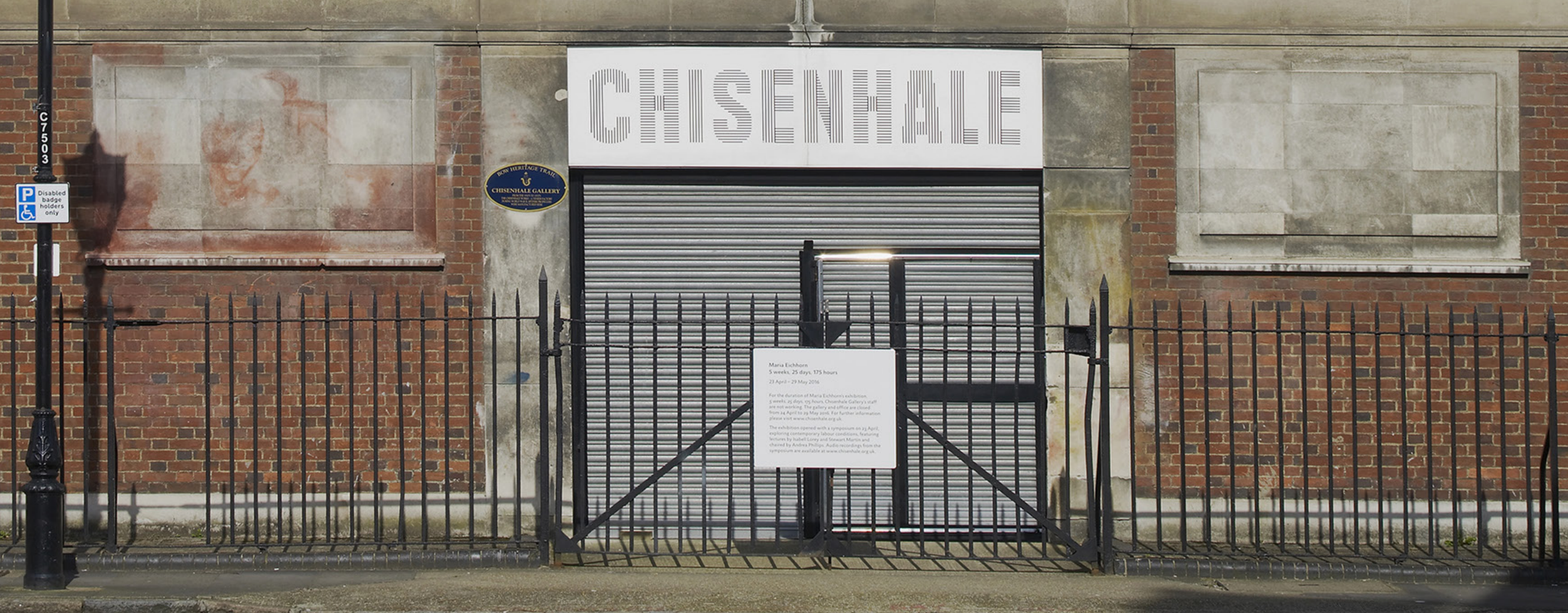
Maria Eichhorn

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours



Preface

Maria Eichhorn

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours

– Polly Staple

This online publication is produced on the occasion of Maria Eichhorn's exhibition *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* at Chisenhale Gallery, 23 April – 29 May 2016. It brings together an introduction written by Katie Guggenheim, Chisenhale's Exhibitions and Events Curator, and myself; an edited transcript of a discussion between Maria Eichhorn and Chisenhale's staff; specially commissioned essays by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin, and an interview between Eichhorn and Guggenheim.

The introduction sets out a background to Eichhorn's work, the genesis of *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* and its implementation. It also touches on a contextual framework for the project through reference to art historical precedents in conceptual art and institutional critique, and contemporary theories of immaterial labour and precarity within the visual arts sector and beyond.

The discussion between Eichhorn and Chisenhale's staff details the day-to-day operations of the gallery and the personalities of those involved. The eight members of staff represent the permanent, core team of Chisenhale in July 2015. Each person in turn gives a description of their role and responsibilities alongside highlighting their particular likes or dislikes in relation to their work.

The discussion reveals that the staff largely enjoy their work and are highly committed to it. The majority of the team went to art school and once practiced as artists or musicians. Repetitive tasks, intrusive emails and social media are identified as common bug-bears; effective time management and coping with the particular demands of an array of challenging projects are a concern. This is balanced with the desire to produce a dynamic programme and the pleasure of learning new things. The fast pace of production and the constant requirements of fundraising in turn appear to outweigh the time available for strategic thinking and artistic research.

This conversation with the staff is thrown into sharp relief with the knowledge that following the discussion, Eichhorn proposed *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* – a work exploring labour conditions and requiring Chisenhale's staff to withdraw their labour for the duration of her exhibition. On presenting her initial concept for (what was subsequently titled) *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, the participation of Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin was central for Eichhorn. Lorey and Martin were invited to deliver keynote lectures at a symposium and new essays for this online publication. These lectures and texts help articulate Eichhorn's interests and ideas, building on the work and offering the audience a set of navigational tools with which to approach the work itself.

Drawing upon her recent book *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, and considering its core themes in relation to Eichhorn's work, Isabell Lorey's text explores contemporary conditions of precarity within neoliberal life and work. Titled 'Precarisation, Indebtedness, Giving Time: Interlacing lines across Maria Eichhorn's *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*',

Lorey's thoughts on debt, trust, the gift and, crucially, their relationship to time, offer invaluable starting points from which to approach both Eichhorn's wider practice, and the ways in which her project at Chisenhale addresses 'the capitalisation of sociality' and 'today's politico-economic regime of precarisation'. Lorey asks, 'how can these economies be interrupted?' and 'might we be able to exit from accelerating indebtedness with more time?'

Stewart Martin has responded to Eichhorn's project with an essay that, in parallel to Lorey's, draws our attention to the complex questions raised by Eichhorn's project in relation to labour conditions within contemporary capitalist culture, prompting us to consider the wider implications of this act of the withdrawal of staff labour from Chisenhale Gallery for the duration of the exhibition.

Using the device of a three-act play, Martin identifies the roles of all the key players – from the staff to the public – and the structural components of the project – from meetings in preparation, to the staging of 'the event'. He touches on the powerful image of the closed gallery and the even more desirous image of 'an unseen realm of free time activities', concluding with an identification of the work on a political horizon as an 'exhibition of wages' and its even 'more radical plea for the value of not labouring and the waging of producing nothing'. Martin explores how *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* resonates both as an artwork and a philosophical enquiry and asks, 'how should we understand such gestures as responses to the predicament of capitalist culture today?', 'how do these artistic withdrawals relate to other instances of the withdrawal of labour?' and 'what disappears and what, if anything, appears instead?'[1]

Immediately following Martin's essay the reader will find '*5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* sign text'. This is a copy of an internal Chisenhale document compiling signs relating to Eichhorn's project to be placed across the communications and visitor information points for Chisenhale Gallery while the gallery is closed. The formats range, for example, from the text on the sign in front of Chisenhale's building to social media platforms such as Twitter or Instagram, to the automated reply to be sent out from staff emails. '*5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* sign text' gives just a small view into the administrative detail required to implement the project – and the labour involved – as well as revealing the dynamic of the project itself: we are all implicated here and *your* email will indeed be deleted.

Bringing this publication to a close, Katie Guggenheim's interview with Maria Eichhorn is an important record of Eichhorn's work in her own

1 See Stewart Martin, Symposium abstract, Chisenhale Gallery website, April 2016: http://chisenhale.org.uk/images/events/Speakers_Abstracts_Chisenhale_Gallery.pdf These questions were further raised in email correspondence between Stewart Martin and Katie Guggenheim, February 2016.

words. Conducted as a single 'Q&A' exchange over email and minimally edited, the discussion explores formal questions such as Eichhorn's logic for the title of the work, to her analysis of the day-to-day operations of Chisenhale Gallery; this is placed alongside Eichhorn's broader perception of austerity politics and the growing gulf between 'the poor and the rich'. With reference to *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Eichhorn proposes direct action, stating that she is 'interested in the fundamental possibility of suspending the capitalist logic of exchange by giving time and making a life without wage labour imaginable'.

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours is located within an accessible discourse – from the intellectual to the anecdotal, from academic enquiries into precarity to popular media debate about 'work life balance'. However, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* is largely about what you do not see. This enquiry into what is seen and what is not allowed to be seen – its allure as much as the profound social and political implications of who and what is represented – is a feature of all Eichhorn's work.

Eichhorn actively resists the dominant formal artistic trends recognised by the market and the broader production and consumption patterns of contemporary capital. It is important to remember that *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* is an artwork, and one operating in the public realm. The artwork operates through, and within, an engagement with the intellectual proposal it offers. By arresting a traditional viewing experience and the operations of the gallery, the work gives agency to both the viewer and the staff to activate the artwork on their own terms and is at once accessible and urgent.

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours is both a gift and a burden. Eichhorn presents a challenge – to Chisenhale's staff, its Board of Trustees, stakeholders, funders, partners and programme participants, but also to its audiences – to ask questions and reassess assumptions about work and leisure and the expectations we may have of arts organisations, artists and how we all work together. This also raises many interesting questions for audiences about the visibility of the work that the staff does as curators and administrators, how the impact of its withdrawal will be visible and how its impact can be measured.

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours has been an exacting and continuously surprising project to work on. It is an example of Chisenhale's commitment to exploring artistic enquiry to its fullest. We would not have been able to realize Maria Eichhorn's project without the support provided by Cockayne – Grants for the Arts and The London Community Foundation; Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V.; Shane Akeroyd; Nicoletta Fiorucci; and Helen Thorpe. I would like to thank all those organisations and individuals for their enthusiasm for and support of Eichhorn's commission and Chisenhale's programme. I would also like to extend special thanks to the visual arts and communications teams at Arts Council England and Chisenhale's media agency SUTTON, for their ongoing communications

advice and support. Special thanks are extended to Alice Rawsthorn and the Board of Trustees of Chisenhale Gallery for their guidance and support throughout.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the supporters and participants of the *How to work together* programme along with the project manager Victoria Lupton and co-directors Emily Pethick and Joe Scotland for contributing to the framework which enabled Chisenhale to initiate Maria Eichhorn's project. I would particularly like to thank Katie Guggenheim for co-producing *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* alongside Chisenhale's Deputy Director Isabelle Hancock; Chisenhale's Exhibition and Events Assistant, Kasia Wlaszczyk, all the Chisenhale staff and Lily Hall, the managing editor of this publication.

Finally I would like to thank Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin for their insightful essays and their participation in the *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* symposium, along with the symposium chair Andrea Phillips. It has been a great honour to work with Maria Eichhorn so closely and help realise her idea. Above all I would like to thank Maria for devising this important artwork to take place at Chisenhale, for her careful consideration of all aspects of the commission and her good humour throughout.

Introduction

Maria Eichhorn

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours
– Katie Guggenheim
and Polly Staple

Highly responsive to context, Maria 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 Gallery in July 2015, which included convening a discussion with Chisenhale staff exploring their working lives, Eichhorn has produced a two-part work examining contemporary labour conditions. The exhibition begins with a one-day symposium on Saturday 23 April 2016, addressing ideas raised by the project. The symposium features lectures by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin and is chaired by Andrea Phillips. The afternoon is devoted to a discussion with the audience, in which Eichhorn will also participate.[1]

At Eichhorn's request, the gallery's staff will then withdraw their labour for the remaining five weeks of the exhibition. None of Chisenhale Gallery's employees will work during this period and the gallery and office will be closed, implementing '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 neoliberal 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 has previously made a number of works that present an image of capital that calls into question systems of value, including that of the artwork itself. For example for Documenta 11 in 2002, she established *Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft*, a public limited company in which the company itself is the sole shareholder. Eichhorn stipulated that, contrary to the very purpose of the structure of the company, the capital that was initially invested cannot accrue value and doesn't belong to anyone.

Eichhorn's proposal for Chisenhale can also be read as a displacement of the labour of the artist and the artwork as work, onto the activity of Chisenhale Gallery and its employees. A precedent for this can be found in Eichhorn's 2001 exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern where she used her exhibition budget to pay for much-needed renovations to the building, leaving the galleries empty for the duration of the show. Eichhorn's own artistic labour was manifested through the labour of the builders and other contractors who undertook the work, and tangible and permanent improvements to the fabric of the Kunsthalle's building took the place of a formal artwork.

Historical precedents for Eichhorn's Chisenhale Gallery exhibition can be found in conceptual art and institutional critique in the 1960s and 70s.

1 This introduction draws upon the press release for *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*. At the time of publication, the text precedes and anticipates the symposium on 23 April 2016.

For his *Closed Gallery Piece*, first shown at Art & Project, Amsterdam in 1969, Robert Barry exhibited only a notice on the gallery's locked door, stating 'For the exhibition the gallery will be closed.' At Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1974, Michael Asher's removal of the partition wall separating the gallery's office from its exhibition space literally exposed the work going on behind the scenes. Eichhorn's proposal operates a similar conceptual gesture, but here she foregrounds the work of the gallery's staff through their absence.

As an artwork, Eichhorn's gesture builds upon the traditions of artistic withdrawal of labour established by the Art Workers' Coalition and Art Strikes in New York in the 1970s, which enabled artists to understand and articulate their positions as cultural workers. It also resonates with contemporary debates led by organisations such as W.A.G.E (Working Artists and the Greater Economy) and recent discussions about theories of immaterial labour, whose concerns include the articulation of definitions of work remuneration. However, Eichhorn proposes the withdrawal of labour as an artwork – rather than withdrawing her own artistic labour – and focusses on the salaried employees of Chisenhale Gallery.

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 therefore 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 symposium to contributing to conversations that develop around the work more widely. 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.

Working at Chisenhale Gallery

A discussion between

– Maria Eichhorn and Chisenhale Gallery staff: Joel Furness, Katie Guggenheim, Tommie Introna, Emma Moore, Ioanna Nitsou, Laura Parker and Polly Staple,

8 July 2015

Maria Eichhorn – Artist
Joel Furness – Exhibitions and Events Assistant
Katie Guggenheim – Exhibitions and Events Curator
Tommie Introna – Offsite and Education Assistant
Emma Moore – Offsite and Education Curator
Ioanna Nitsou – Operations and Development Coordinator
Laura Parker – Deputy Director (Maternity Cover)
Polly Staple – Director

Polly Staple
By way of a brief introduction, we invited Maria to work on a project with us here at Chisenhale Gallery within the context of the *How to work together* programme. From the outset Maria was interested in taking 'how to work together' as a thematic or a question. We started by talking about the previous *How to work together* commissions at Chisenhale and how other artists had approached it. Céline Condorelli's commission in 2014 explored work and friendship, and in 2015 Ahmet Ögüt examined work and collaboration.

Maria would like to look at Chisenhale as an organisation, and how it works. An important part of this is to think about who makes up this organisation – Chisenhale Gallery – and the people who work here. Maria is interested to find out about you: who you are and what you do; and how the organisation fits together.

We would like everyone to introduce themselves. Please could you say who you are, what your job is and what you do within it, what you did before, and why you are interested in working here. It could also be interesting to think about what you like about your job and what you don't like.

Maria, do you have anything to add?

Maria Eichhorn
Yes, thank you. My starting point for thinking about this invitation was to consider the theme, 'how to work together', which you can also negate and ask how you *don't* want to work together. I like the idea of relating this question to the institution of Chisenhale itself. I could have visited each of you whilst you were working, but I thought it would be nicer to bring everybody together as a group and to initiate a discussion between you. It's also quite controversial to hold this kind of discussion. I like the way this live, group situation allows for the exchange of thoughts and ideas. So it would be great if you could all participate in our discussion, starting from your individual positions and experiences.

Laura Parker
I'm the Deputy Director at Chisenhale. My role has a number of different aspects: from day-to-day management of the office and building, to operations, which involves all sorts of issues like health and safety and risk assessment. Another aspect is human resources (HR) – dealing with recruitment, staff training and management.

A lot of what the Deputy Director role involves here is joining the different teams up together. I support Polly by being on top of what everybody's doing in the organisation, not just the people that I line manage. I also monitor and manage the finances – everything from drafting our budgets to being on top of day-to-day financial processes.

I do some work contributing to strategic development. Recently, I've been focussing on development and fundraising, working with Polly to implement the fundraising strategy. I manage key relationships with people such as Arts Council England, working closely with Polly and with our Board of Trustees. I also work with our landlord – Chisenhale Art Place Trust – who I have day-to-day contact with on an informal basis, but also more formally by attending their board meetings.

PS
That's a pretty comprehensive synopsis. What is your background?

LP
I come from an operational background. I don't have any training in visual arts, so I find it interesting that I've ended up working in a gallery. I started as a gallery manager – a duty manager role – and then moved towards more strategic management positions.

PS
And what is your training? Are you from theatre?

LP
No, I trained as a singer, a pianist and a guitarist. I studied music at university, and then when I finished my degree I got a job as a venue assistant. I then worked my way into gallery work. It's quite a weird pathway I guess, but what I've been trying to do for the past couple of years is to move away from an operational background. It's quite hard however, once you get into health and safety and risk assessment, to move into more strategic work: thinking about organisations beyond the nuts and bolts. That's what I'm trying to do.

PS
What do you like about your role, and what don't you like so much?

LP

I really like getting stuck into the big pieces of work. I actually enjoy writing funding applications because it enables you to get to know the work in more depth. In an operational role you often get involved with short tasks, one after another. I also quite like finance, in an analytical sense. It's interesting to get an idea of how an organisation works through looking at the finances. I don't like the operational tasks so much any more.

PS

What do you mean by 'operational'?

LP

Managing IT systems or office and building management. It's not because it's dull, it's just because when you've done it for a long time you get to the point where you think, surely I've done this enough already? Surely it's somebody else's turn? It's those short-term tasks – it's as if they never end.

ME

And what would you change about your working situation?

LP

I'd like to move away from repetitive day-to-day tasks and make more room for strategic thinking. Sometimes my day gets eaten up with responding to emails or various smaller tasks and I don't get time to plunge into strategic work.

Emma Moore

I'm the Offsite and Education Curator at Chisenhale. I work on the *Offsite* programme, producing artists' commissions that largely happen outside of the gallery and working with artists taking part in residencies with partner organisations. My job involves working with artists to develop their ideas, to manage these projects over a longer period of time, and to figure out where and how various public-facing activities might happen.

We've recently come to the end of one *Offsite* project in partnership with Victoria Park, which involved working with Travis Elborough, a writer who has been in residence with Chisenhale for nine months. I'm also currently working on a partnership with an organisation called Create, and with a London-based artist called Yuri Pattison. These projects overlap with each other, and we're in the process of developing a new programme for next year.

In parallel, the Education programme begins with thinking about the exhibitions in the gallery space and opens out into conversations and discussions that happen around them, including the talks programme that runs alongside each exhibition. I develop this with Katie and Polly, and in

conversation with the artists. For example, if there are particular people that the artist is interested in having a dialogue with, or if there is an academic or any other practitioner that they would like to invite to speak here, or if they'd like to run a screening programme. My job also involves connecting with communities through the Education programme. We visit local primary and secondary schools and they come to visit the gallery too.

What I like about working here is that I'm able to work across all age groups. I started working at Chisenhale three months ago. I previously worked as Assistant Curator of Public Programmes at Nottingham Contemporary. The public programme there was geared towards a university age group and I would often work with university students as part of the programme of events. What's really nice here at Chisenhale is that you get younger people coming to see the exhibitions. Overall I like working with people: whether that's artists, teachers or different groups. I like working with the speakers who contribute to our exhibition events programme and learning about their research. I like the idea that you're constantly learning while you're working. That's what I enjoy most about my job.

At the moment we're re-thinking the Offsite and Education programme, which requires a lot of headspace and time. So, similarly to Laura, I don't like it when I feel like I can't carve out a block of time for that because of all the little things that come up. That becomes a frustration. It's about managing time efficiently.

ME

What kinds of little things are these?

EM

Responding to emails, or sending an invoice off to George our bookkeeper to make sure that it gets paid. You think, 'I'll just do that first', and suddenly the day has disappeared with all these small tasks. It's better to structure your day so that, for example, you don't check your email between two and three o'clock, and give yourself that hour to work on a focussed task. Some things can actually wait. You don't always have to be immediately responsive. It requires discipline though.

ME

A friend of mine, an art historian, refuses to look at his emails in the morning because that's when he writes his texts. He has a time slot from five to six in the afternoon for his emails. He's very strict about it and, for him, it's very effective.

PS

People tend to check emails and do admin at the beginning of the day, but actually doing it at the end is better. And also not using your inbox as

your to-do list. Emails can be a tyranny… but striking a balance between big-picture thinking and immediate tasks can be difficult. For example, if you're in the midst of producing a commission or an event there will be tasks that have to happen immediately in order to keep the project moving. But you will be simultaneously planning ahead for the programme in a year's or two years' time.

ME

What would you like to change within your activities here, Emma?

EM

Ask me in six months time.

Joel Furness

I am the outgoing Exhibitions and Events Assistant. In fact this is my last day. I've been at Chisenhale for just over a year, and my role is part of the curatorial trainee programme. Traineeships have replaced internships here: now the role is paid and is a structured traineeship across one year. I assist Katie with the Exhibitions and Events programme – which involves producing the commissions and exhibitions in the gallery; the programme of exhibition-related events; the *21st Century* events programme, which takes place in the studio; and the *Interim* performance programme, which takes place occasionally in the gallery in-between exhibitions.

I help with all aspects of exhibition production: assisting artists with research if needs be, with funding applications, sourcing materials, or arranging travel and accommodation for research visits and installs. In the lead-up to the show I'll be purchasing materials, making sure the artist is happy with everything and trouble-shooting.

I also have communications responsibilities, collating the material that is sent out to press, and the interpretive material that you see in the gallery foyer: the vinyl and printed handout. I also update the website and social media.

Another part of my role is managing the staff who work on front of house at weekends. I work Tuesday to Saturday during exhibitions. It's my responsibility to pass on work for the weekend staff and to oversee them. I also set up openings and events, which ranges from recruiting volunteers in advance to setting out chairs and preparing AV on the day.

I'm trying to think if there's anything else that I'm missing.

Katie Guggenheim

Working on front of house?

JF

Yes, I've been working three days a week on front of house, managing that area, greeting visitors as they come in and making sure there are exhibition

handouts. It also involves making sure everything's ok with the show, ensuring that a film is running fine for example or just making sure it's clean and tidy, or jumping up a ladder and fixing the lights – keeping an eye generally on anything that might go wrong with the exhibition.

ME

So it's a huge job?

JF

There is a lot to the role, but some of the responsibilities are being re-allocated to spread the load. For example, Emma and Tommie, the new Offsite and Education Assistant, are taking over the programme of exhibition-related events, and Tommie has taken over my social media and communications responsibilities. There is also a new three day a week Gallery Assistant role covering the overall management of front of house, exhibition openings and events and recruiting and managing volunteers.

LP

Just as we've been saying about short- and long-term tasks, Joel is often dealing with immediate issues that come up, or with communications, which can be quite time-consuming.

KG

Joel, you've also been doing some additional tasks, like video editing for example, which have come up because of the nature of the projects we've been working on.

JF

Yes that's something I really enjoy about the role. Each artist's commission we produce at Chisenhale is unique and has its own issues: things that you have to be conscious of and shift what you're doing to accommodate.

KG

Everybody comes to the traineeship with different skills and experience. Would you like to say something about your background?

JF

I come from a practice-based background – I studied Fine Art – and I've had quite varied work experience. I've assisted several artists and that's something I've always enjoyed – being really close to an artist's project and working from its inception to the end. That's what really attracted me to the position at Chisenhale. Before I came here I did an internship at Gasworks, which was a curatorial trainee position, but I've also worked a lot in visitor services. I worked for two years at Barbican. I've had some publishing experience, interning at *Afterall* journal. I've also had quite a

lot of experience working on artists' moving image, and on film shoots too. Moving image work was my main interest as a practitioner.

PS

Would you like to talk about what you're going to do now?

JF

Yes, tomorrow I officially start my new job at Gasworks. I'll be the Programme Coordinator, which involves assisting with both the exhibitions and the residencies programmes.

ME

Where did you study?

JF

I'm originally from Durham in the north east of England, but I moved to London when I was nineteen. I did my Art Foundation and my Fine Art BA at Central Saint Martins.

ME

Do you still work as an artist?

JF

Not at the moment, no. I still research with the mindset of an artist, I suppose, but at the moment I'm working full-time and it's not manageable. I would like to continue making work, but I try not to think too much of there being a distinction between my modes of work. My interests inform my professional practice, but artistic practice is something that I will always keep an open mind about going back to.

ME

What have you enjoyed most about working here?

JF

Working closely with artists and their projects is something that I love doing. It's been fascinating to be involved with these projects all the way through. My favourite time is the install period of a show, when everything is happening. Chisenhale has a big gallery space and an artist can produce the most incredible things in there. It's always exciting to see what the artist will do with it. It's the same with the events programme. It's always so varied and I like it when everything's going on and you feel directly involved in the process. I've always enjoyed working in teams: I like the camaraderie, where everybody has to chip in.

PS
What about the things you don't like?

JF
I talked about the different pulls on the role… I enjoy the variety of the programme and how each project presents unique challenges. But maybe that speaks of the things I don't like so much: some of the more administrative parts of the role, and social media.

KG
Can you give an example?

JF
I suppose it's the tasks that keep me in the office when I'd rather be working on the production side of things. A lot of the communications material, the back and forth with editing and proofing, that sort of thing.

There are a lot of events here – some weeks we have two or three – and whilst you might not be working on them all there are quite a few late nights. I do enjoy them, but the events sometimes take it out of you. They can be quite stressful.

ME
Are there too many events?

JF
No, I wouldn't say so. It's an ambitious programme and events are tiring to run and to manage, but I wouldn't say there are too many.

ME
And social media, you mentioned that you don't like that?

JF
It's a repetitive task that I don't enjoy too much. I'm not a big fan of social media. For example, I am only on Facebook because I have to be in order to do this job. I don't really like having a presence online. I can see the benefits of it and I understand why people enjoy it, but it's not for me.

ME
So you've been responsible for Chisenhale's Facebook? Do you post something every day, or how does it work?

JF
Not necessarily, only if there's something relevant to the programme. There's a list of guidelines for our social media usage. For example, every time you announce an exhibition with a press release, or every time you put a new

event up on the website, you promote it on social media. We also promote partner institutions' activities: organisations in the Common Practice group, for example, or other galleries nearby.

ME

After the Nicholas Mangan talk that happened at the gallery yesterday evening, for example, did you post photos or documents?

JF

Yes. Documentation of events also goes on the 'news' section of the website. The website and social media go hand-in-hand.

PS

How many people here went to art school?

[Everyone puts up their hands apart from Laura]

KG

You did Laura, you studied music.

LP

I didn't go to an art school, I went to an arts university to do music.

ME

Where did you study, Emma?

EM

I did my BA in Fine Art at Dun Laoghaire in County Dublin, and an MA in Curating at Chelsea College of Arts in London.

ME

Do you still work as an artist?

EM

No, I was practising as an artist after university, but then became more interested in the curatorial side of things.

Ioanna Nitsou

I am currently in-between roles, shifting from Operations and Development Coordinator to Development Coordinator. I assist Laura with office management but I now spend most of my time on fundraising through our benefactors programme and editions: management of sales and production. I also work on our 'Allied Editions' stand at Frieze Art Fair in partnership with six other public London institutions: Whitechapel Gallery, South London Gallery, Camden Arts Centre, Serpentine Galleries, Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) and Studio Voltaire. Since 2011

Frieze has donated a stand to us, as not-for-profit institutions, to raise funds for our programmes through the sale of artists' editions.

I studied art at the National University of Arts Bucharest, and then moved to London to do an MA in Cultural and Creative Industries at King's College. I started working at Chisenhale as an intern three years ago. One of the things that I have enjoyed about my time here is that my role has shifted over time: I'm now getting into development and learning about philanthropy. Some people think development is about learning how to raise money. I see it more as understanding people's psychology: how to strategically interact with people. That's what I find most interesting.

Do I have to talk about the things I dislike? It's a small team at Chisenhale and we work together all the time. There's no way around it and it's enjoyable. But one thing that I didn't like whilst I was working on office management was that it was more about resolving other people's problems than working with them.

LP

That's definitely something I've found, from an operational background. You're the person that solves the problems.

IN

It's satisfying when you finally fix something, but it's less collaborative than working towards an event or an exhibition. I enjoy that more because it brings me closer to people. I think that's why I enjoy development. There's more space for working with people.

PS

Are you also saying that if you're learning something new, then it's interesting for you?

IN

Yes exactly, and in my new role I'm trying to set aside time for that.

When you're working on admin tasks you can lose sight of the bigger picture. Like Joel, another aspect of working here that I like are the in-between times when one show ends, there's a hectic install and then within two weeks there's something new up. That's the moment that it clicks: we're working to make a show and we're all doing it together. That's really good.

ME

Could you give a concrete example of one of your development projects?

IN

I started by assisting with the database: working on guest lists and arranging correspondence, renewals of benefactors' payments. I was the person organising production behind the scenes, whereas now I have more face-

to-face interaction with people. I like going to events and advocating for the gallery.

PS
You're also now asking people for support.

IN
Yes, on the renewals of individual benefactor donations.

ME
Do you enjoy that?

IN
Yes, though I'm still learning. It's a process. It's about building my knowledge and confidence, and the sensitivity of how you approach people. There are stages to building up a relationship with benefactors and everyone behaves differently.

ME
And do you like this job?

IN
Yes. Although if it were for a different cause, if it was for profit, I wouldn't do it. I enjoy working with artists, which I do more of now that I'm working on the production of editions.

ME
I know some institutions work with a main sponsor who supports the institution by almost 50%. Do you also have a main sponsor or is it many small amounts?

IN
We have a few individiuals or organisations who support particular programmes, such as Nicoletta Fiorucci, our headline exhibition supporter, or Bloomberg and Outset who have supported the *How to work together* programme in the past. Although this 'headline' support is only a percentage of each programme, never the full amount it may cost to produce it. That will still need to be raised from other sources. So largely it is small amounts from individuals within the Patrons programme, or those supporting particular commissions.

It's difficult to raise corporate sponsorship or engage really large-scale donations such as you describe because we are a small gallery and the big names want big institutions. We also apply for support from charitable trusts, foundations or national agencies, and Arts Council England are our biggest funder, but I don't work on those relationships.

Tommie Introna
I started one month ago, assisting Emma with Offsite and Education projects. I fill a similar broad role to Joel in the sense that I assist with the running of the Offsite and Education programme. I'm also taking over responsibility for exhibition events and social media.

ME
Do you like social media?

TI
I like Twitter. I'm not really a Facebook user but I've got it now... I'm brand new here so I'm still learning about the programme and the organisation. My background is in art practice. I don't know if it's because I'm younger than everyone else but I still imagine myself as an artist, or at least, that's partly how I identify what I do.

ME
So you are still an artist?

TI
I want to believe so. I've started moving towards education and projects within institutions. I think they're interesting spaces for production and for working with different groups of people. So that's where I'm coming from, though it's still fluid at the moment.

EM
Could you say more about why you're interested in working on the education side of things? Since you've started you've already done quite a lot on your own initiative. For example, re-thinking how we describe what we do in conversation with teachers, parents and guardians; thinking about how to talk about the exhibition and making it a useful resource for them.

TI
I've enjoyed thinking about how we can improve or change the way things work. I've been thinking about communication with educators and teachers and parents and about how to do that effectively and usefully for them, whilst remaining true to the institution's ideas about how we speak about and present art.

KG
You've also been re-thinking the activity guides. During Nicholas Mangan's install you came up on the roof and took photos of the solar panels that powered the AV equipment in the exhibition, whilst they were being installed. You said that you thought that's what kids would want to know about.

TI

Yes. What I've gathered about Chisenhale so far is that it's really engaged with the practice of art and sharing modes of practice, and that being an important key to understanding what art is. Art is something that's practiced rather than something that's passively experienced. I think that relates to education by allowing kids – or anyone – to experience what it means to make a show, what it means to be a practicing artist, how artists make work in different ways. That's what I'm interested in. Most of us come from an art background and there's something about that magic – about making a show – that's exciting.

PS

You also took part in a long selection process for the *Stop Play Record* project.

TI

Yes. We're making two new films with two young artists, Ayo Akingbade and William Glass. Ayo is from a filmmaking background and William is from a more artistic background. The selection process was interesting and also quite difficult. We're about to start developing workshops and crits with them.

ME

Why was it difficult?

TI

It's a new initiative and the details are still being figured out. There were two categories –beginner and intermediate – which were very loose. We had very accomplished people applying for beginner and not so accomplished people applying for intermediate. The age group for applicants was 16 to 24 years, which is an enormous range in terms of your development and understanding of making work. It was very difficult to judge people alongside each other: someone who's doing a degree versus someone who's doing GCSEs at school.

There are several different partners working on the project, which made the selection process a bit easier. We approached it by asking 'Who would we want to work with at Chisenhale?' and 'Who would benefit from working within Chisenhale?' There were people whose work we liked but felt might work best with one of the other organisations. That relieved some of the pressure.

PS

The project is with six organisations.

TI

Yes – Kingston University, ICA, Space, Dazed, New Contemporaries and Chisenhale; supported by Arts Council England and Channel 4.

I'm happy and excited about working on the project. I'm a trainee, so I'm trying to figure things out and learning all the time. For example, I'm learning about managing projects and scheduling, working with budgets and things like that. It's all a learning process. That's why I'm here.

JF

You've highlighted the fact it's a traineeship, which is something that I didn't really mention. I've learnt so much being here. It's called a traineeship but you're a member of staff. It's a unique chunk of work experience, and a generous opportunity for Chisenhale to offer... It equips you with amazing skills – you learn a hell of a lot!

LP

Something to note about Tommie's role is that, like Ioanna's, it was previously three days a week. It's now full-time and we've balanced the responsibilities between the two trainee positions.

It's a traineeship so there has to be space for learning. Equally, these are two roles that the organisation relies on.

ME

Is this your first job after art school?

TI

No, I graduated two years ago and I've worked in a few different places. I worked at the Serpentine Gallery, and I've also worked for artists.

ME

Why did you stop working at the Serpentine Gallery?

TI

I was working at front of house, which for me wasn't so interesting.

LP

What did the role involve?

TI

The Serpentine Gallery is much larger than Chisenhale, so I worked on visitor services and that was it. There was a very clear hierarchy between departments. Something that I've liked so far here is that because it's small it's very collaborative. Other people have mentioned this already, but I'm enjoying engaging across different areas and working with everyone in the organisation in different ways. That's a limit within a larger organisation,

especially when you're working in visitor services. That's more or less why I left.

ME
Did you apply for the job here?

TI
Yes.

LP
Along with over a hundred other people. Every year there have been several hundred applications for the trainee positions.

TI
It's a unique programme. Very few organisations offer a training position at this level: one that's paid and is full-time for a year.

LP
A lot of organisations have been slower to stop offering unpaid internships. There are legal obligations around this now, but I think for Chisenhale, it's about how important these roles are to the organisation and that they shouldn't be internships.

ME
So these positions are traineeships rather than internships, because they're important to the institution, and Chisenhale values them as such?

PS
Yes, they're jobs. With an internship you're not paid.

ME
Do you have interns?

PS
No. We have volunteers who help with some events.

LP
We don't rely on volunteers to run the organisation. That's the key thing. For a long time a lot of organisations were relying on volunteer staff, particularly on front of house, which is risky because volunteers can't offer so much commitment. It's just not a stable way, or a moral way, of running things.

PS
There's an attitude within the art world, and particularly in the commercial

sector, that it's ok to work for free – that you're lucky to be there because you're working in an environment that you are passionate about and it's very competitive.

There has been a lot of campaigning, certainly in the public sector, about the need to pay people properly. We took a policy decision in 2013 not to run unpaid internships. It's ethically inappropriate not to pay people properly. But equally, it's about productivity: about how the organisation can grow and develop, and be more sustainable.

KG

It's also a lot of work to train new staff. The turnover for internships was three to four months, so we'd have three or four new people a year, whereas with the traineeship we have one person for a whole year.

LP

The trainees also get more out of it because they have a much deeper experience. They have much more time to find their way, figure out what they like doing and what they're interested in.

ME

When you presented this to your Board, how did they react?

PS

It was about communicating that we needed more staff and to pay everyone properly. Everyone works very hard at Chisenhale, often at full tilt, but the organisation needs to be healthy and we have to continuously monitor our high production values and the sheer number of projects we produce against our staff capacity and fundraising capabilities. For example, our Board and our audiences see our output and it all looks great. But if the staff are all exhausted and unhappy, then it's not working. It's an ongoing issue and is one of the struggles that we have as an organisation.

KG

I'm the Exhibitions and Events Curator at Chisenhale. I manage Joel – soon to be replaced by Kasia Wlaszczyk – and our Head Technician, Mark Couzens who works freelance. I've also been managing Pip Wallis, who has been with us on a six month curatorial placement, supported by the Australian Council for the Arts.

I work with Polly on all aspects of the Exhibitions and Events programme, from contributing to research for the programme and working from the beginning of each artist's commission, through to the production and installation of the work in the gallery. I'm responsible for realising the programme, so that involves fundraising – writing grant applications, proposals to individual benefactors or sponsorship in-kind – working with

partners, managing budgets, managing production, negotiating visas for people to come over, shipping logistics… It's very varied, depending on the nature of the commission.

I also manage the installs, so I have to know exactly what everything in the gallery is, how it's working, from the wiring through to being able to talk and write publically about the conceptual content of the work. I was, until very recently, also responsible for the Exhibition Events programme, programming the events and talks that run alongside the exhibitions. Now I'm not doing that, which means I can actually enjoy the events, which is great.

I also manage the *21st Century* programme. These are events that are separate to the exhibitions programme. They include discussions, presentations and performances. We're developing the programme at the moment, and next year it will focus on commissioning new, event-based work by London-based artists. There will be a series of six events, with a little more money, a higher profile, and the commissions will include an online element too. I'm also responsible for *Interim*, which is a programme of performance commissions that take place in the gallery.

I've been working here for three years and I was just trying to count the number of exhibitions I've worked on. It's between fifteen and twenty exhibitions, three *Interim* performances and lots of *21st Century* events.

I studied Fine Art at Central Saint Martins. My surname – Guggenheim – is a legacy of that, because I changed it as an artwork in my second year at art college, in 2003. After I'd done that, I felt like I couldn't really do anything else. I still think it's quite good, as an artwork. But it is a little bit difficult to live with sometimes.

ME

You changed your name?

KG

Yes, by deed poll, which is the legal way of doing it in the UK. It's a legal agreement with yourself. I kept my first name but changed my surname, to Guggenheim. I named myself after the museum. It was my last work as an artist. After that I became more interested in organising exhibitions. I worked with a peer group of friends from college and organised lots of exhibitions. I was also involved with an artist-run space called Auto Italia. I used to work with the same artists quite regularly. Someone once described working with me as being like doing an MA, which I thought was quite nice.

PS

What do you think they meant?

KG

I suppose he was referring to the way that I created structures for artists to work with over time. Like a magazine I started called *Monaco*. I was trying to think through the problem of being a young artist working at the bottom of this enormous ecosystem, which is not structured to your advantage. I was trying to work with the means that we had to enable artists to get the most out of the experience of making and showing work, so that it wouldn't just be a one-way system, so that they would have feedback. I made an exhibition in the artist Martin Creed's flat, because I used to work for him. It was a series of exhibitions by a different artist every evening for a week. I invited one of the other artists to write about each show, so there was a written response to what they had done. I made websites for everything because I thought it was important for artists to have a presence on the internet. That was something that seemed quite valuable at that stage.

PS

One thing you haven't mentioned, which is a big part of your job here, is communications.

KG

Oh, yes. I write the press releases and then adapt those texts for other purposes.

LP

Like fundraising applications. You also do quite a lot of that.

KG

Yes, well, the applications usually come first. I'm the main point of contact for media, although since the end of last year we've been working with a media agency SUTTON. They do a lot of the direct media liaison but I'm in regular contact with them. I also oversee the work that the trainee does with communications – working with our designers to produce email invitations and vinyl signage, preparing copy for newsletters and e-flux mailouts. I also used to oversee social media, but as Joel explained, Emma and Tommie are now responsible for that.

I've worked in the art world for quite a long time – at commercial galleries, like Maureen Paley, and I worked for Martin Creed for a few years, as I mentioned. I also studied curating at the Royal College of Art, directly before I worked here, and worked freelance at Tate Modern on the Tanks programme in 2012.

ME

How did you come to work here? Did you also apply?

KG

Yes.

ME

And there were hundreds of applications, like the traineeships, of course?

IN

Yes, I remember. I had to file them.

ME

Why did you choose Guggenheim as your last name?

KG

I was interested in the power dynamic between a young unknown artist and an art institution, particularly one that is like a multinational corporation. The Guggenheim is interesting because it's a brand, but it also originates from a person's name. I think if you try to change your name to Starbucks it can be refused.

PS

Would you like to answer the 'likes and dislikes' question?

KG

I really enjoy the variety of my job – like the fact that I've absolutely no idea what you're going to do for your exhibition, Maria – that's exciting. I really enjoy working with artists. I like the challenge of making things happen with a limited budget and limited resources. And the fact that I need to learn a new set of skills for every project. It's very challenging. I enjoy the element of theatre in exhibition-making as well. The gallery space holds a theatrical tension or charge that is interesting to me.

Things I don't like… Well, I do like the chaos to a degree but not when I feel like I can't do my job well because there isn't enough time. There are a lot of responsibilities within this role and sometimes I can't do everything as well as I'd like. I miss the chance to reflect. I'm so close to what I'm working on that I feel that sometimes I lose critical distance. I don't get the time to digest, think and follow through, and I don't get time to research things thoroughly or engage that side of my brain very much.

ME

Why is that?

KG

There's not enough time because we're always in production. It's a very production-heavy job. Production is interesting too, but it takes over.

ME

Do you do too many shows or too many events? Or, why?

KG

I think that we should be doing as much as we can. It's just getting the balance right. I always tend to push everything to the maximum. I think Polly does too.

PS

But do you think it's also about the way we work at Chisenhale, largely on commissioning new work, and the nature of producing artworks rather than bringing existing artworks together?

KG

Yes, they're totally different ways of working.

PS

A lot of energy goes into making a new artwork happen from scratch, which is different to coming from the perspective, say, of making a thematic show.

KG

It's about the fact that you're working with people, you're working on a relationship as well, building confidence and trust. If an artist loses trust then that's a disaster. It's the most important element and it takes a lot of energy.

PS

But is that desire for reflection and distance also perhaps a fantasy? I think about that as well. You'd always want more time to research. So is it, then, about doing a different type of work?

KG

Yes, if you compare this job with that of a museum curator they have academic research built into their job description. They're producing knowledge in a different way. We produce knowledge when we produce artworks, whereas they're producing knowledge in relation to a collection or a period of art history.

ME

So all of your shows at Chisenhale are new commissions?

PS

Yes. And that's our remit: to work with artists who haven't had a similar scale first presentation in a UK gallery, and to produce a new body of

work. From supporting the artist in working out what the project could be, to fundraising for it, bringing in partners, making it happen and engaging audiences…

ME
Why don't we move on to you, Polly?

PS
I'm the Director of Chisenhale Gallery. I'm responsible for the artistic programme, the finances, the operations and the running of the gallery as a whole. Although obviously these elements of the job are then managed by staff, I'm ultimately responsible for...

KG
Everything.

PS
A large part of my job is fundraising. I probably spend about 75% of my time fundraising.

ME
75%?

PS
Yes, I'd say so. But it takes all sorts of forms. You said something interesting earlier Ioanna, which is that fundraising is about psychology. I often think about it as audience development. When I started working at Chisenhale in 2008, although we are a registered charity and public funding was dwindling, we didn't have any individual supporters, so I initiated our Benefactors Programme. It's important to keep building our audiences and developing new relationships, but always through the programme. I like connecting with people, and when it works, it's great. So the fundraising also goes hand in hand with brokering new partnerships with other organisations, and resource-sharing. A lot of the time I might be initiating those relationships.

I also, of course, spend time researching artists, thinking about the work that we could be doing here and the artists we could be working with and devising the artistic programme. I do this in discussion with the team. I work closely with the artists, on the planning and production of their projects and, for example, installing the exhibitions. The satisfaction of the job largely comes from the programme. I enjoy making things happen, for example if I'm interested in an artist's work and then I can realise a project with them, and bring that to audiences – projects that wouldn't necessarily have happened otherwise – that's exciting and rewarding. We're often planning a long time in advance. So it's a lot of thinking in the future –

imagining projects coming to fruition in two years' time.

As a publicly funded gallery we have a responsibility to audiences. 27% of our funding is public money, so there is a degree of accountability in everything we do. I think about the range of people we are engaging with, as well as the range of work that we're presenting in the programme, and the values of the organisation as a whole. It's an interesting challenge – thinking about the different audiences we have, whether it's the people who live in our street who may be generally informed but see us as their neighborhood gallery, or a specialist art professional in São Paolo who experiences the gallery remotely but sees us as part of an international dialogue. And then thinking about how you can connect these audiences. I find that interesting, and that's part of the job too.

I essentially oversee all the aspects that everyone has spoken about, driving deadlines and making sure the detail is attended to. I also work with our Board of Trustees, and there's a certain amount of public advocacy. So, there's a whole spectrum.

IN

You also travel quite a lot.

PS

Yes. The programme is international and Chisenhale has an international profile, so it's important to serve that as well. That also ties back into fundraising because we have people who support us who are not necessarily based in this country.

ME

75% fundraising is amazing. So much! And you are also fundraising, Ioanna?

IN

We work on it together. It takes up a lot of my working day, as well as personal time. For example, when you go to an opening and you're still representing the gallery. You can't clock out and say, 'I'm just going to chat'. You're always conscious of the fact that you're working. You will often see people who are supporters of the gallery.

LP

What's quite different about working in an arts organisation is that it becomes difficult to separate your job from your life. I see people on the tube on the way home and think, 'they're not going to think about work when they get home'. But that's not how it works in arts organisations, which has always interested me.

EM

Because what you enjoy outside of work is probably going to see a show, or you want to attend a talk because you're interested in that personally, but also professionally. The line becomes blurred.

KG

Working relationships with artists are personal relationships and they extend beyond the gallery. A lot of my friends are artists and curators, and so my friendships with them are affected by my job here. Even in a social situation people will think of me in relation to Chisenhale. But I do have friends outside of the art world. I think that's important!

ME

But still I think it's unbelievable that when you go to an opening privately you cannot separate your personality from the job. Isn't it difficult? Is it not most extreme in your case, Polly?

PS

Yes, but I don't mind that.

ME

Work that never stops and takes over the whole personality, the whole person?

PS

But being the director of an institution like Chisenhale is a public position. Then, I have parts of my life which are very private. I take weekends and holidays. There are ways to recharge your batteries.

The situation in the UK, to go back to fundraising, is very particular because so much public funding has gone. Sometimes the way that we work, in terms of the people who support us, particularly individuals, is closer to the network of relationships that a commercial gallery may have. For example many of our patrons are collectors. A museum's relationship to individual supporters is also complex because it may often be in relation to acquisitions for the collection, for example.

I'm also thinking about colleagues in American institutions, who are on call a lot of the time. The UK is starting to follow that model. Of course, they're paid much more over there...

TI

They only have about 10 days' holiday though.

ME

How much holiday do you have?

TI
28 days per year.

PS
A point that has interested me today in our discussion is everyone having gone to art school, and their relationship to being artists themselves. I always think that Chisenhale, particularly because it was founded by artists, has a very particular relationship to art and its production: an ethos perhaps that comes from having understood the perspective of being a practitioner. As opposed to colleagues of mine who haven't been to art school but are curatorially or historically trained, and so have a different relationship to thinking about artworks and artists.

ME
In Germany museums only employ people who are academically trained. They would never hire an artist. At small institutions, I suppose it is easier to apply as an artist to get a job?

PS
It's not so much that artists are applying for these jobs per-se, but it's rather about the way that the staff here understand the process of making an artwork or putting on a show. They approach their work from the perspective of having been to art school. It's not something we particularly speak about, and so that's what has struck me today. Everyone around this table understands, from practical experience, what it means to put on a show.

JF
Everyone is implicated in that process.

PS
Yes, they can't get away from it.

KG
Especially right now, in this conversation.

ME
But without the fundraising work that you do, this institution wouldn't exist?

PS
No.

ME
So it's your obligation to fundraise?

PS

Yes. Our regular funding from the Arts Council is at the core of this. We are a National Portfolio Organisation and we apply for this funding on a three year basis, which is awarded on the basis of a funding agreement tied to us committing to achieving the Arts Council's objectives. Our current Arts Council funding is £164,000 and our annual turnover is approximately £600,000 which we fundraise for in its entirety from a range of other sources.

We could only apply for more Arts Council funding if what we proposed was tied to their further strategic funds, which they release each year. These are tied to very specific objectives and you usually have to match fund from other sources.

KG

Like *How to work together*.

PS

Yes. Like *How to work together*, which is tied to a specific 'capacity building' objective for arts organisations. The Arts Council would never now be the sole funders of an artistic project or institution.

There is a broader conversation here about the state of the public sector in the UK. Within a neoliberal context entrepreneurial activity is regarded as a strength. At institutions like Chisenhale we become our own worst enemy. We show that we can raise money, through individual giving or editions for example, we show that we can be less dependent on public funding, and as less of that money is available it is seen as less necessary to us. Although it is. It's self-perpetuating, because we're all trying to survive and do good work at a level that attracts individuals to support.

Last year I was thinking, could we commission just one show for an entire year? How could we present that to the Arts Council or to any other stakeholders and funders? Evaluation is tied to meeting fundraising targets and collecting audiences figures. Your value is measured by your audience figures. The question, however, is whilst you might have a lot of people coming to the gallery, are they having meaningful experiences?

KG

Yes – it's quantitative, not qualitative. You could have hundreds of people who came into the gallery just to use the toilet and didn't engage with the work at all, or one person who had a life-changing experience.

PS

The bottom line with Arts Council funding is that it is worked out annually at a cost per head of your audience. That said, the Arts Council also recognise that the activity at Chisenhale is specialist and performs a particular function within the arts ecology. The limits of our scale and our

location are also one of our strongest features. For example, we are never going to have to achieve the same audience targets that the Serpentine or the ICA do, because we're smaller and because we are not in the centre of the city. The particular way that we work is recognised by the Arts Council as talent development, as an 'incubator space'.

KG

We'll work with artists at Chisenhale and then a few years later a larger institution will work with them. If we didn't give them that initial visibility then the larger show might not happen.

PS

Quite literally. Perhaps this would be a good place to draw the conversation to a close, unless anyone would like to add anything, or ask any final questions?

[All agree to finish here]

ME

Thank you to all of you. It has been very interesting for me.

PS

Thank you for listening.

ME

Maybe we should do something with this conversation. I think a lot of interesting questions came up.

PS

I agree. Thank you everyone.

Precarisation, Indebtedness, Giving Time

Interlacing Lines across Maria Eichorn's *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*

– Isabell Lorey

To have no time, to tirelessly do more at once, to become increasingly flexible, to constantly change goals, plans, preferences – and to earn less and less. All this characterises neoliberal work and life. And furthermore, it describes central aspects of subjectivation in an economy of debt.

To accept jobs at minimal or no wage at all; to work, precariously and indebted, in and with institutions that demand precisely this – even the most progressive ones; to put up with de-waging in the present only because it is imagined as speculation with oneself in a secure future of abundant cultural capital… A personality shaped by moral and financial debt, a personality doubly indebted in this way is both an effect and a linchpin of today's politico-economic regime of precarisation, which reveals itself in an extreme form in the cultural and academic field, but extends far beyond it.

How can these economies be interrupted? Might we be able to exit from accelerating indebtedness with more time?

Debt and Knowledge

In contemporary capitalism, we are experiencing a diffusion of work into life and at the same time an increasing de-waging of work. Wages are sinking, while hours spent working are on the rise. Working time no longer covers only tasks that are paid, but tends to encompass all social doing.[1] Work is becoming excessive and simultaneously negated as work that should be paid, especially when it comes to creative and cognitive work. The neoliberal ideology of 'life-long learning', with its activating force, has extended the time of education beyond school and university degrees. The promise of learning something while at work legitimises the non-payment of that work, not only for the institution in which it is performed. Especially in the Anglo-Saxon world it has become normal for the 'learner', too, to become not only more and more financially indebted, but also to incur moral debts for the duration of one's increasingly long education. As if one were to owe something to the particular institution, because skills are trained. The interlacing of knowledge and debt characterises central aspects of contemporary modes of production.

Wageless Production

Knowledge and therefore also communication and creativity were only able to become productive thanks to a fundamental change in modes of production, that is, in how commodities and services are made, how work

1 Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious*, trans. Aileen Derieg, preface by Judith Butler, London/New York: Verso, 2015; Isabell Lorey, Klaus Neundlinger, 'Kognitiver Kapitalismus. Von der Ökonomie zur Ökonomik des Wissens. Einleitung', in Isabell Lorey, Klaus Neundlinger (Eds.), *Kognitiver Kapitalismus*, Wien, Berlin: Turia + Kant, pp 7-55

is organised, and how capital accumulation occurs. This transformation can be observed from the 1970s. With the crisis of Fordism, activities that were not traditionally understood as work, and were therefore not considered in terms of economic rationality, became increasingly relevant for the composition of the labour force. Forms of knowledge and activity have gained significance that previously were allocated not only to the cultural and artistic field, but above all to women in the reproductive sphere, such as affective labour.[2] These are activities that are in demand today primarily in the service sector: creative, affective, and communicative activities.

When work is increasingly based on cognition, knowledge, communication and affect, there is a tendency for the whole person to become labour power, body and intellectual capabilities included. Working time becomes living time. The productivity of this form of work consists of the exploitation of existing and the making of new subjectivities and social relationships. Subjects and their capacities to socially interact become both the resource and product of the new paradigm of political economy. Subjectivation and social relationships can be made valuable in this sense primarily by means of and in communication.[3] The exchange of knowledge, intellectual and affective cooperation thus becomes decisive for the production of surplus value. With this, both the strategic meaning of traditionally material and machinic means of production and the classical logic of investment in industrial capitalism lose significance. An array of their productive functions gets transferred onto the living bodies of the labour force.[4] In cognitive and communicative capitalism, these new means of production of machine-bodies are central cruxes for a specific dynamic of scarcity. Rather than products, secure employment contracts are in limited supply; precarisation is becoming the motor of productivity.[5] Investments are made less in job creation and more in the expansion of digitalisation and increasing share values. More and more, new service-based production takes place without wage or social security. The creative, communicative, and affective capacities of workers, which tend to be formed outside of paid employment settings, get appropriated in companies and institutions as work that is usually unpaid.[6]

2 Precarias a la deriva, *Was ist dein Streik? – Militante Streifzüge durch die Kreisläufe der Prekarität*, trans. Birgit Mennel, Vienna et al.: transversal texts 2014; Emma Dowling, 'Love's Labour's Cost: The Political Economy of Intimacy', February 2016, http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2499-love-s-labour-s-cost-the-political-economy-of-intimacy

3 Gerald Raunig, *Dividuum. Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution. Vol. 1*, trans. Aileen Derieg, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2016

4 Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Finance Capitalism*, trans. Kristina Lebedeva, Jason Francis Mc Gimsey, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2011

5 Isabell Lorey, 'Autonomy and Precarisation', trans. Aileen Derieg, in Nico Dockx, Pascal Gielen (Eds.), *Mobile Autonomy. Exercises in Artists' Self-Organisation*, Amsterdam: Valiz 2015, pp 39-52

6 Lorey, *State of Insecurity*, pp 73-90

Another important aspect of this scarcity is time. With the excessive extension of working time, the potential wealth of non-waged working time appears only as lack. When one's own personality and social relationships are made productive, it becomes more and more difficult to interrupt work as a refusal or strike. Individuals find themselves in a dynamic of disciplinary self-governing, which secures not only productivity, but also obedience.

When sociality is made productive, it is not easy to grasp everyday social activity as work that must be paid. This contributes to the widespread belief that what is fun need not be paid. More and more people do not consider communication and the exchange of knowledge to be work. Self-precarisation is spreading like a virus.[7]

Governing through Precarisation

With the expansion of this de-waging mode of production based on communication, knowledge, and affect, a form of governing has been established that does not legitimise itself by guaranteeing social protection and security for the majority of citizens, but is rather characterised by social insecurity and precarisation.

In *State of Insecurity*, I draw distinctions between three dimensions of the precarious.[8]

The first dimension, *precariousness*, denotes – in a manner similar to the designation in the work of Judith Butler – the dependence of every form of life on the care of and reproduction through others; on connectedness with others, which cannot be shaken off. Bodies remain precarious and need environments and institutions that provide security and support. The second dimension corresponds to the hierarchisation of this necessity. I call historically specific forms of insecurity – which are politically, economically, legally, and socially induced – *precarity*. These forms of insecurity are upheld by modes of governing, relations to the self, and societal positionings that in turn shape the third dimension of the precarious, which – drawing and expanding on Michel Foucault – I call *governmental precarisation*.

Governing through precarisation means that the precarious are no longer solely those who can be marginalised to the peripheries of society. Due to the individualising restructuring of the social welfare state, the deregulation of the labour market, and the expansion of precarious employment conditions, we currently find ourselves in a process of the normalisation of precarisation, which also affects larger portions of the

7 Isabell Lorey, 'Governmentality and Self-Precarization: On the Normalization of Culture Producers', trans. Dagmar Fink, Lisa Rosenblatt, t*ransversal: 'Machines and Subjectivation'*, November 2006, http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en

8 Lorey, *State of Insecurity*

middle class. In this normalisation process, precarisation has become a political and economic instrument of governing. At the same time, people continue to be legally, economically, and socially marginalised and excluded through structural inequality, through precarity, which means that they are less protected than others or that protection is altogether denied them.[9] This becomes apparent in the various Western democracies with simultaneously occurring processes of economic and financial border elimination on the one hand, and border creation to ward off global migration on the other. Legal status and mobility are being hierarchised in order to facilitate extreme forms of exploitation. Through the dismantling and restructuring of collective security systems, individualised risk management is demanded of all, regardless of gender, class or origin. According to societal and legal positioning along the scale of precarity, however, this takes shape in very different ways.

Social security and therefore also social reproduction are being increasingly de-collectivised; they are again being privatised, but this time handed over to the self-responsibility of the individual and capitalised. As a result, more and more people are only able to fund retirement provisions, healthcare and education by taking on debts. At the same time, for many who work in low-wage or unpaid positions in the field of art and academia, making oneself productive leads directly to indebtedness.

Precarisation and Indebtedness

Precarious living and working conditions and the privatisation of protection against precariousness are conditions of both a prospering financial capitalism and its concomitant debt economy. This economy is based on the expansion of productivity that involves less work in the traditional sense than subjectivation. A subjective figure is needed to assume responsibility, to take on debt, and to internalise the risks both as guilt and as debt: a personality that is doubly indebted and responsible for oneself. This personality plays a decisive role in enabling and stabilising neoliberal governing through precarisation and insecurity, for there is no longer an outside of debt. Everybody is indebted in one or another way: ‘If it is not individual debt, it is public debt that weighs, literally, on every individual’s life, since every individual must take responsibility for it.’[10] As Maurizio Lazzarato reminds us, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have expressly linked the debt economy with morality, that is, with specific modes of subjectivation. In the Christian genealogy, becoming indebted cannot be separated from burdening oneself with guilt.

9 Judith Butler, *Frames of War. When Is Life Grievable?,* London/New York: Verso 2009

10 Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man. An Essay of the Neoliberal Condition*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2012, p 38

According to Nietzsche, incurring debt results in guilt through the promise to repay creditors. The indebted person promises to continuously behave in such a way that they are able to give back what was given to them, so that they can pay back their debts.[11] In the debt economy, this financial exchange constitutes subjectivation. The obligation to pay back debt corresponds to that disciplinary self-governing that ensures not only subjectivising and social productivity, but also compliance. To place one's behaviour at the service of repaying debt means to place life and sociality at the service of debt and to make oneself even more governable.

Precarisation means dealing with the unforeseeable, with contingency, acting without being able to predict what the near or distant future will bring. It is precisely this ability to deal with contingency that is exploited by the loan contract, preventing agency that might start something new or refuse to work under the given conditions: precarious work without free time. The exchange must go on, even if a financial exchange based on a promise of return requires something decidedly paradoxical of the indebted person: in their precarisation they must estimate something inestimable, namely, the future. '[T]o view the future as the present and anticipate it',[12] as Nietzsche formulates, means not only controlling the future in the present, but also keeping precarisation under control – yet doing so primarily on behalf of the creditor.

In self-precarisation, however, this paradox of calculating the incalculable is reversed, the temporality of debt is fantasmatically inverted: by investing the self in what is supposedly one's 'own' future, by de-waging the doubly-indebted personality in the present, debts are incurred preventatively. The fantasy of shaping the future means accepting precarisation in the present. For the illusion of a predictable and better time-to-come, self-precarisation appears to be a necessary investment above all amongst the European middle classes. What is abandoned in this projection of a future is the agency that might start something new in the present.

Starting something new, taking action, as Marx already pointed out, requires forces that emerge from sociality, from relatedness with others, from precariousness: trust in oneself, in others, and thus in the world.[13] And it is precisely this trust – this ethical relationship – that gets exploited by credit and indebtedness, resulting in distrust. 'Trust, the condition for action, becomes universal distrust, turning into a demand for 'security''.[14]

11 Ibid., p 30
12 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality and Other Writings*, trans. Carol Diethe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, p 36
13 Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, p 56-7. Marx argues this in his essay, 'Comments on James Mill', https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/james-mill/
14 Ibid., p 57

Institutions that Spread

As the figure of the indebted person spreads, public spending for art and education institutions is increasingly reduced, making their funding more and more dependent on private donors and fundraising. The exchange relation that comes with this manifests in the 'modulation of creativity',[15] the framework in which all areas of the institution are evaluated: from attendance numbers to publication rankings and online clicks. When productivity develops primarily through communication and the making and maintaining of relationships, this productivity must be not only constantly on display, but also counted and thereby made measurable. In this way, a supposed equivalent is constructed against which funding can be assessed, and which must be permanently produced and productive. Individuals become subservient to this end, including their relational capacities. In this logic of exchange, the production of the social extends the concrete place of the institution and thus the place of work.

It encompasses not only – as at Chisenhale Gallery – the social relationships to donors, but also to artists, neighbours, and between members of staff. This capitalisation of sociality also encompasses the countless places and networks that extend beyond the gallery space. The institution spreads in the socialities of those working within it. Future donors, artists, attendees could be found anywhere. In line with the capitalisation of knowledge, affect, and communication as well as of the whole person and social relationships, the individuals constantly make the institution: at every exhibition launch, at every party, in many 'private', everyday situations, through electronic communication from home. The socialities of the whole staff become part of institutionalisation; the institution is lived such that it can be capitalised. Each employee is, with all of their social capacities, responsible for the perpetual process of institutionalisation, which does not escape the logic of repaying the loan. Working time becomes living time, each worker, with their affects and communicative capacities, remains permanently indebted to the donors. Along with this comes the constantly increasing acceleration of production, the calculation of sociality according to efficiency criteria, the lack of time to do something other than produce countable sums of loan repayment.

If capital exploits all social activities and therefore life itself, however, this does not mean that, in turn, resistance is no longer possible, no other living practices, no other modes of passing time. As the debt and finance economy increasingly enjoys access to all social activities through measuring and evaluation, a break with the concomitant partitioning of time becomes necessary. We need time, a time of break, one in which the general mobilisation can be stalled, a time that suspends the time of debt

15 Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge. Industries of Creativity*, trans. Aileen Derieg, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2013, p 109

and exploitation. An idle time.[16] This break in time would need to be more than the subjective refusal of work. Another mode of living time is required, one that takes back the social wealth that is commonly produced. 'To re-transform money into available time', as Lazzarato writes, 'to transform wealth into possibility, not only struggle but also new processes of subjectivation are needed.'[17] A common exodus; a common refusal to be governed in this way and simultaneously subjectivised as capitalisable; a refusal to economically instrumentalise affects and relationships. This would also be an exodus from all forms of masculinist economy.

Giving Time

What does it mean to need time? Not more time, but another time? Where does this time come from? Can it be given? Can it be possessed?

Maria Eichhorn's artistic work for Chisenhale Gallery essentially consists in the giving of time to gallery staff. Yet this gift alone does not appear to be enough – only when the staff takes the time, when everyone suspends work while they continue to be paid, can Eichhorn's conceptual work begin to form. And more: to take the given time can also become a break with the economy of debt.

But does one not first need to have time, in order to give it? In his considerations on time, gift and credit, Jacques Derrida emphasises that it is not a matter of possessing time itself. Rather, the word 'time' characterises those things 'with which one fills it, with which one fills the form of time, time *as form*. It is a matter, then, of the things one does *in the meantime* [cependant] or the things one has at one's disposal during [pendant] this time.'[18] Only that which is *in* time can be transferred into equivalences between gift and return. The gift is not time itself; it is, in time, merely *part* of the economic circulation that claims a gift in return. Time itself belongs to no one: it can be neither given nor taken. This is why it cannot be economised, it does not allow itself to be exchanged. To give time always tends to be excessive, generous.

'To give time, the day, or life', writes Derrida, 'is to give nothing, nothing determinate, even if it is to give the giving of any possible giving, even if it gives the condition of giving.'[19] To give life cannot be repaid. It is not a particular gift, but rather one that suspends equivalence. Forgiveness is not possible. Care and support, which make survival possible, can be excessive gifts that suspend economic calculus, interrupt exchange, and

16 Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2015, p 246
17 Ibid., p 251
18 Jacques Derrida, 'The Time of the King', *Given Time: I Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, London, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1992, p 3
19 Jacques Derrida, 'The Madness of Economic Reason: A Gift without Present', *Given Time*, p 54

break with equivalence. If there really *is* gift, then, according to Derrida, it opens the circular process of exchange, because it opposes the levelling measure. It 'turn[s] aside the return in view of the no-return', departs, remains 'aneconomic', and thus allows the impossible to begin.[20] In departing, the gift interrupts participation, it refuses to be part of it, and gives departure. This is similar to the way in which Hélène Cixous suggested to rupture the masculinist gift economy in the 1970s. To give a gift that demands no return means, for Cixous, 'making a *gift* of departure, allowing departure, allowing breaks, "parts", partings, separations […], time leaps'.[21] It is about a capacity to lose hold and let go: to wander around, to risk the incalculable, the unforeseeable, that which cannot be anticipated. The gift that breaks with equivalence, with the debt economy, evokes a leap in time. It allows for a becoming-precarious in the present, without credit into and for the future. To fly.

To give time without return, without debt, means to give time as a gift, to make it a present, to make it present. Time becomes present and as a present it expands. To give time means to expand the present.

However, for the gift to remain free of debt, without equivalence, for the gift to suspend exchange – as Derrida postulates in a thought experiment – recipients may not take or recognise the gift consciously. Ignoring the (possible) debt is insufficient. Recipients may not perceive the gift even once, and if they might, then they must forget it completely.[22] If the recipient 'recognises it *as* gift, if the gift *appears to him [her] as such*, if the present is present to him [her] *as present*, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift',[23] for this already indicates an equivalent at the symbolic level. Further, the gift may not be received in any way.

According to this dictum, Maria Eichhorn's act of giving time would need to take place without an audience, there may be no reception of the work as a gift, the gallery must remain closed, all communication suspended. But if, with all this conceptual framing, her giving time is nonetheless recognised as artistic work, then the gift will be reintegrated into economic exchange and will – according to Derrida's thought experiment – no longer have been a gift. For, strictly understood, a gift is only a gift when it is not present as a gift. This would mean, however, that the gift could never break with the economy of debt. It would never be independent of the exchange of debts, because as soon as there is a gift, according to this dictum, it would bind and obligate the others, place them in debt. In this sense there

20 Derrida, 'The Time of the King', p 7
21 Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 7 (1981) no.1, pp. 41-55, here 53, emphasised by Cixous.
22 Derrida, 'The Time of the King', op. cit., pp. 15-20
23 Ibid., p 13

can be no pure gift without debt.[24] Even as generous a gift as love would entangle (itself) in debt. Gift on its own appears impossible.

This kind of argumentation, however, misunderstands time. In giving time, time is not the gift or the present in the present. To consider time as a gift and to claim that there is no gift on its own, that a gift in this sense does not *exist*, because it cannot be without exchange,[25] divests the gift of presence. At stake in this understanding of the existence of the gift is an understanding of 'giving' and 'being present', understood in the Hegelian sense as an immediate moment in the present tense, as being-present, which is only a point or a moment that immediately disappears and becomes past.

If to give time cannot mean to give time itself, and thus, time is not the gift, then giving time signifies leaving time for something, giving time to do something. In the case of Maria Eichhorn's artistic work, this *something to do* is not work, not the activity that is performed as part of wage labour and the division of tasks, with a view to maintaining the art institution. But what if a(n artistic) work such as Eichhorn's consists in giving time to do something other than activity that spreads the institution? And what can it mean to stop working when the work at stake encompasses the whole person and their sociality and subjectivation? When individuals practice the institution – including and beyond their institutional work in the narrow sense – when they become the institution, when the institution spreads into their subjectivation, when social relationships are economically productive and instrumental? Every conversation, every smile can mean capital, symbolic or monetary – both for the persons who maintain contact with the staff and for the individuals who make up the staff, especially for those without fixed contracts, and their CVs.

Does Maria Eichhorn succeed with her artistic work in gifting time that is simply free, at one's own disposition, free time, paid holiday? Does the artistic work of giving time not utilise precisely the economic dynamic of gift and return, in which the gift is always time in the sense of a deferral until re-payment?

The artistic gift expands this giving time of credit in an exceptional manner, and stages the deferral between the gift and its recognition as a gain in time for the duration of an exhibition: 5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours. This duration itself is the time gain that Eichhorn gives to the staff. Even though the staff remains indebted and will not, despite the gain in time, fully suspend the practices that spread the institution, because

24 Ibid., p 15

25 Translator's note: The German original reads, 'weil es sie nicht ohne Tausch geben kann' [literally: because it cannot give it (the gift) without exchange]. The English translation of 'nicht… geben kann' as 'cannot be' does not preserve the double meaning of the German *geben* as *give* and *be (exist)*.

these are much too lived, the staff's non-working does in a certain sense interrupt exchange as it had been taking place. For this doing during the relinquished time constitutes the artistic gift of time, which demands no return from its recipients and cannot be perceived by an audience.

Even if work in and for the gallery is not interrupted because of resistance, but rather at the artist's request, and can be suspended without obligation or further instruction while still receiving full pay, this suspension of return within exchange in the cultural field can be more than the staging of a gain in time. Even if exchange in the cultural field persists through the symbolic recognition of the artistic work as return, it is possible that the practice of giving and taking time is received and that art economies are exceeded, that this practice becomes excessive and incalculable and suspends the production of equivalence in such a way that return can no longer be estimated.

In order to understand the meaning of giving time, we must think differently about the now, and therefore also the present: moving away from a point and towards a process, an expansion; not as a temporality of being, but of becoming. If giving time means a non-capitalisable gain in time for recipients, then the gift that makes (a) present escapes the immediate moment and expands the present – it becomes presentist, but not oriented towards a future.[26] The future is nothing but a strategy of governing by precarisation and indebtedness in the present. In the normalisation of precarisation, it becomes apparent precisely in the crisis of the debt economy that there is no future. At the same time, a new present is opened up in which people concern themselves with how they want to live now.[27] The capacity to depart in the present, to start something new, means to become precarious: to take off in a leap in time, or as Walter Benjamin says, to prepare to leap under the free sky: presentist becoming-precarious. This presentist that grows out of precarisation does not devalue or ward off commonly shared precariousness and the resulting connectedness with others. In this sense, giving time and taking (one's) time can become the beginning of the presentist impossible, which can be transformed into common political practices. This would mean an exodus from regulatory and scarcity-producing regimes of time, which ensure compliant functioning and pressure to act through constantly increasing acceleration, in which never enough time can be gained to care for oneself and for others, to reflect with others on forms of living together, and to give new form to ways of living together.[28] The impossible

26 Isabell Lorey, 'Presentist Democracy: Exodus and Tiger's Leap', trans. Aileen Derieg, June 2014, http://transversal.at/blog/Presentist-Democracy.
27 Valentina Desideri, Stefano Harney, 'Fate Work: A Conversation', *ephemera. theory and politics in organization*, vol. 13 (2013) 1, pp. 159-176, here p 168
28 Lorey, 'Autonomy and Precarisation'

would be possible: a viral expansion of the experience of gaining time, to have non-capitalisable time available in a way that is self-determined and permanent, to develop new relationships to time, and new forms of organisation. ‘It is no longer a struggle merely to reduce working time, but rather for an entirely new streaking of time as a whole’.[29]

To do something other than work, other than spreading the institution into socialities, other than reducing and repaying debt, requires that the economic measure of equivalence be exceeded; the incalculability of a social economy of existence. Exodus from the logic of the debt economy, from the reproduction of equivalence, from the loan that must be repaid, however, does not at all mean to no longer take on debt, to shake off all dependency – as if that were possible. Rather, it is a matter of ‘giving’ exuberantly without worrying about measure. In the break of time, the dominant debt economy is suspended and what we have in common can begin to expand: (social) debt.[30] This makes it possible to excessively incur debts without paying, without relief, and to begin in the middle of connectedness with various others, with queer debts, to make off, to take off, to escape.[31]

Translated from the German by Kelly Mulvaney.

29 Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge. Industries of Creativity*, p 159

30 ‘Through debt we are currently told how to relate to each other’. Desideri/Harney, ‘Fate Work’, p 164

31 On queer debts, see Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, London: Minor Compositions 2013; Raunig, *Dividuum*

A gallery closed in spring

On Maria Eichhorn's

5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours

– Stewart Martin

The framework for this text has been written already. It would be redundant to reproduce it but for the fact that we are invited to experience, to respond to, even to enjoy the redundancy it enables.

> *The exhibition will begin with a one-day symposium on Saturday 23 April, addressing ideas raised by the project. 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.*[1]

Further details could be added, but they would remain incidental to the simplicity of the form, both abstract and insistent. It is not ornate or mysterious, interesting or absorbing. It is clear and austere. If one looks at it directly, one finds oneself transfixed and lost within its unresponsiveness. But it also enables one to look away and to occupy oneself with whatever else lies in its precincts. It is a stage that promises not to distract from the activities it stages. But keeping this promise is left to the actors.

The framework is a setting rather than a script, allowing the actors to write their own or improvise, but it includes a sequence of acts and an allocation of roles or masks, which will inflect whatever is said. Without knowing anything about what the actors will say until they say it, we already know the role they will be playing when they speak, the mask they will be wearing. The main roles are: 'the staff', 'the artist', 'the intellectuals' and 'the public'.

Act 1

The first act is set in a gallery. But this is only the central location for a range of peripheral sites – offices, studies, studios, libraries, other galleries. In fact, these sites cascade into the distance, both spatially and temporally, and appear in the gallery as if in a slideshow.

'The artist' plays the leading role in this act, but less through the quantity of her lines than how they outline the other roles and the acts in which they will be given a part. Her performance is that of a playwright, muted but authoritative. 'The staff' and 'the intellectuals' are invited to play their roles more or less as they would in any case, and a large part of the act is given over to what they do. Whatever the vagaries of these roles and how they interact, what is clear is that 'the public' is left waiting in the wings. Occasionally they are addressed from the stage, at first almost inaudibly and then with the loud blast of the artwork's public announcement, followed by its echoes. The resonance of their responses builds throughout the first act, but the grand entrance of 'the public' onto the stage is yet to come.

1 From the introduction to Maria Eichhorn, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Chisenhale Gallery, 23 April – 29 May 2016: http://chisenhale.org.uk

The act is dominated by preparations. This work is the general setting: the place of work. There are scenes of meetings, of discussions and proposals, of decisions requested and reached, scenes of phone calls, emails and texts being written and rewritten.

This act is very, very long. Meetings go on for hours, decisions take days to reach, texts take weeks to write. Run sequentially, all the scenes would last far longer than 5 weeks, 25 days or 175 hours. It contains some fascinating moments, but, as a whole, it is far too boring to entertain an audience.

The whole act is set in the dark. The scenes are difficult to make out, obscure to all but those directly involved in them. Edited highlights will be replayed in the bright light of the second act. The transcription of the discussion with 'the staff' will be the primary exhibit. But this will only offer a glimpse into the dark recesses of the first act. The discussion itself, as a scene from this act, is reduced to what appears in the light of its published transcription. The scene in which the transcription itself is prepared will be, likewise, reduced to the moments fixing its public appearance, disappearing within this appearance. The same will be true of the texts by 'the intellectuals', their public appearance casting their preparation into darkness. The darkest scenes turn out to be those overcast by the light thrown over them.

The illumination of this dark world of preparations proves to be surprisingly deceptive. But it invites us into a realm that we know surprisingly well. The experience of all the work that disappears from view in the result, or results in nothing, is tediously familiar. Who hasn't already seen the scene in which 'the intellectual' stares at the computer screen for hours, rewriting and deleting the same bloody sentence, again and again, before deciding to leave it out altogether or, worse, stick with the original. We only have to close our eyes in order to see the afterimages of what will appear, the negative scenes in which another artist or artwork or intellectual was proposed.

Then there are the obscene scenes that our desire and fear project wildly into the darkness.

Act 2

The second act is set in an empty gallery. A symposium is taking place. The brilliant lights of publicity have been turned on – albeit filtered by the entrance fee.

'The intellectuals' have been given the leading role in this scene. They have been enlisted by 'the artist' and will appear as her agents. If they turn against her they will appear traitorous. 'The artist' will appear herself an agent of her artwork, an orchestrating role regardless of how little she says. The role of 'the intellectuals' is further determined by their position between 'the artist' or, more importantly, her artwork, and the other roles

of ‘the staff’ and ‘the public’. The freedom expected of ‘the intellectuals’ will be constrained therefore by this role of mediation, by the constraints on them from taking over the other roles.

This scene is oriented towards an event, the unwritten drama or dialectic between the roles, and this event might even be seen as the horizon intended by the artwork, the content it intends to frame. But the scene will also be oriented by a set of already written scripts, primarily the texts by ‘the intellectuals’ and the transcript of the discussion between ‘the artist’ and ‘the staff’. These scripts anticipate the event, but they do not realize it, since the real drama is not a reproduction of what already exists; not an imitation, but an interaction, a political activity, which only exists between actors. The reading of these texts by ‘the intellectuals’ or ‘the staff’ will only delay or pause the interaction. The planned symposium, with its allocation of roles, is an impoverished form for this activity, but does not exclude it. The scripted play is its image, relieving the contemplator from interacting.

While the discussion with ‘the staff’ can offer an image of interaction, however tentative, the monologues of ‘the intellectuals’ cannot. Both kinds of text can offer an image for contemplation while also offering a product, a tool, which can be taken up, tried out or put to work, or which can be disregarded. These functions determine how the work of the texts relates to the work of art and its own functions. Insofar as the artwork promises to be a framework, the texts can stand within it, contentedly or not. They can accept its form and take on the role of its content. Or they can try to refuse it, claiming a form unto themselves, or even a form that would contain the artwork.

The austerity of the work of ‘the artist’ displays a capacious generosity to the work of ‘the intellectuals’ and ‘the staff’. It withdraws into the background, allowing them to say what they want, more or less. But it remains the background of whatever they say. A text seeking to confront the artwork is mocked by its indifference and shamed by its generosity. This is compounded by the obligation to the other roles, to offer works that will enable interaction, not disable it. Insofar as this interaction is the content that is ultimately intended by the form of the artwork, a text’s discontent with its framing will appear selfish unless it dedicates itself anew to this content. This demands that the text does not distract interaction in the contemplation of its internal drama, or foreclose interaction in an act to which there can be no response, or displace interaction by demanding further labour or works.

The austere work activates its users, its contemplators or the interaction besides it, by closing itself off from these activities, liberating their independence through the independence of the work. It does not attempt to absorb them into the work itself. It even releases contemplation to be self-absorbed. The ideal work would have no effect whatsoever, except for the fact that such a work would activate nothing. Even the plain effect of its

indifference must engage those whom it would disengage. The rich work is effective and engaging. It offers itself to users, contemplators and actors as a realm in which their activities take on a displaced form. But this activation is a displacement nonetheless, absorbed into the inactivity of the always already completed work. The ideal of the incompletable work would be endlessly absorbing. For the rich work to be really activating, it must possess its own qualities of disengagement, of austerity. This is how these works can work together.

Act 3

The third act is set outside a closed gallery. The setting is split: on one side is the free time and leisure of 'the staff', on the other, the closed gallery itself.

'The artist' and 'the intellectuals' have been given nothing to say in this act. It is not that they have no lines, but that their lines have been already written, in the texts and recordings from the symposium, which now speak for them automatically.

'The staff' play the leading role now, even though they too have nothing to say. They too have automated their speech in the discussion text, which will work continuously for them, without them having to lift a finger. But this text says only what they did before the exhibition started, not what they will do during the exhibition. The discussion text offers an exceptional exhibition of the role of 'the staff' before the start of the exhibition, but says almost nothing about what they will do in their free time. We see only what they did and what they will not be doing. An inhibition is exhibited.

Exhibited are activities that are normally inhibited, hidden from view: the preparation, the facilitation, the maintenance, all the work that reveals the exhibition and conceals itself therein in order not to obscure the view. Here, abnormally, the artwork inhibits an exhibit that would inhibit these activities, instead exhibiting them as its subject matter. This is what the discussion text exhibits. But this exhibit still stands under the sign of its inhibition. Exhibited is what will not take place. The artwork does not make an exhibit out of all this inhibited work by, for instance, opening the offices to view or displaying the renovation of the building. In fact, the artwork subjugates these activities to a more literal inhibition: their suspension. They are suspended in an exhibit that pictures an ideal work, one that would work without the need to continuously work for it. This is a norm of the work of art, which this artwork's abnormality radicalises.

But the leading role of 'the staff' in this third act is not their role in the first act and before. It is what they will now do, now that they do not need to work for the gallery. We have no idea what this will be and we are not promised that we will see it. 'The staff' has not been asked to account for themselves at the end of the day with an exhibit of their free time activities and its outcomes. The artwork does not only show us the hidden realm of working for exhibition, but invites us to see an unseen realm of free time

activities. These activities, rather than the jobs of ‘the staff’ or the closed gallery itself, constitute the hidden chamber into which the desire of ‘the public’ is invited by veiling it from view. These activities are included in the artwork’s plan, but not planned. The artwork exhausts itself in securing the conditions for their release on full pay. This is its self-sufficiency, its enclosure and openness, its jealousy and generosity. The only limit to its generosity is its generosity itself. The artwork does not seek to appropriate the fruits of the staff’s freedom. They are given their freedom without conditions, save the condition that it is given, not instituted in a free act.

‘The public’ now floods the scene, but most of what they say will not be recorded. Out of the flood, however, bobs a vociferous new role, ‘the critics’, who will attempt to inflect the light of publicity and mediate between ‘the public’ and the artwork. ‘The critics’ have two masks readily at hand for this job, ‘the agent’ and ‘the provocateur’. Through one or other, or both at the same time, the hushed voice of ‘the public’ will be spoken over.

The closed gallery itself stands in the background to all this, somewhat serenely. It is shut, but it shuts no one out – except perhaps the poor soul who has misunderstood the exhibition listings. Those who would make a visit in any case risk idolatry. Vandals risk iconoclasm.

The closed gallery will take on an ambivalent existence. It will exist actually and insistently as a gallery that is not open, not exhibiting, not working. It is not only an idea or a lie without basis in fact. The closed gallery may appear as a redundant building or a shut door, but even if these prove to be appearances – even if the building still can be accessed, still houses some activity – ‘the staff’ will not be staffing it. This is its ultimate closure, not the closed door itself. For the staff to continue working would constitute the lie. The gallery will be closed essentially to ‘the staff’.

In another sense, the closed gallery will exist as a peculiarly insistent representation – that of the framework text. While not the closed gallery itself, and not sufficient to represent all that this closure will bring into existence, this representation is clear enough to convey the sense that one grasps what it represents, that nothing would be gained by going to see for oneself.

The framework text is matter-of-fact, literal. It is not imaginative, even though it remains an image. Moreover, the matter-of-factness of the text imitates the matter-of-factness of the thing itself, the operations organising the symposium, closing the gallery, releasing the staff from working, etc. And these operations are not images. Therefore, the residual images invoked here are rendered transparent and bound to a reality that would displace them.

However, these operations and their reality will be remote for anyone not directly involved. They will be seen from a distance, as both out of reach and yet in focus. We may not be able to see the operations closing

the gallery, but we can form an image of them. The more invisible these operations, the less there is to see by going to visit the closed gallery, the more complete this image is from the reality that would displace it.

The image of the closed gallery is possessed by an extraordinary power. It is certainly powerful enough to overwhelm the distinctive features of the representation from which it derives. The rigorously crafted operations are essential to distinguishing the artwork from familiar works – above all other gallery closures by 'the artist' herself or by other artists in the past – thereby marking its originality, both its modernity and its tradition. But this distinction is faced with making its mark in a far greater scene than these familiars. It faces the inspiration of a profound imagination, which recognises in the closed gallery an image of its most compelling urges: the desire to see what has been banned, and the desire to be liberated from this compulsion; the desire for wealth without work; the desire to do something else or to do nothing at all… The image of the locked cabinet; the veil more fascinating than what it veils; paradise; the adventure or the holiday, or the holiday without end…

The image of the closed gallery can be easily grasped, not because it is clearly represented, but because it is already understood by a vivid and profound intuition, infusing the image with a significance exceeding its signification. This intuition is not itself an image, but an imaginative capacity, which recognises an image as its reflection and production. The capacity of an image to inspire this imagination lies not within the specific features of the image itself, but in how these features enable the imaginative capacity to invest itself in them. The greater this investment is in a specific image, the more this image appears to contain imagination. But this is a deception, demonstrated by the profligacy with which imagination transfers its investments.

The artwork abstracts from this imaginative world, its plethora of urges and images. It does not represent them, feed them or absorb them; neither does it distract them. Rather, it excludes them. But, in being excluded, they are also left to themselves and their own devices. Abstraction becomes the mirror of whatever they want. This is the artwork's asceticism and hedonism. This imagination would only be disciplined if it were absorbed by the abstraction itself – as if it saw itself in the mirror itself rather than what it reflects. This would transfix it.

The ambivalent existence of the closed gallery will obtain a further and decisive twist by the extent to which it will still function, still work. The gallery's electronic spaces will remain open. And there will be much to see: the framework text, the texts by 'the intellectuals', the discussion with 'the staff', an interview with 'the artist', the recordings from the symposium; and all opening onto the network of other exhibits from the gallery's past work, especially its *How to work together* project, which this exhibition completes rather than arrests.

The objective character of these texts, the extent to which they stand out from the work that prepared and produced them, will now come into effect and do the work that their reification enables. Their disdain for the work preparing them, even when it took the form of flattering this preparation, will now liberate the need to carry on working. But it is not just the closed gallery's objectivity that enables them to stand out: it is their automation. The gallery is not so much closed as automated. The 'out of office' replies informing you that your calls will not be returned, that your emails will be deleted, inform you above all that the machine is working, so take the day off. This closed gallery is an automated factory in which no one needs to work.

The publicity still works. Indeed, the publicity is liberated from the mundane world of its address and inhabitants. 'The public' are not actually barred from entering the gallery, since there is nothing to see there in any case. They are enabled to visit all there is to see, whenever they wish. And the artwork gives itself to them in a mental image that they can take away and enjoy at their leisure.

The degree to which the gallery is conserved through its closure will come as a disappointment to those seeking to tear down the system, or at least the thrill of it. We are not invited to the gallery's self-destruction. Neither are we invited to its occupation by autonomous workers. And their absence is not the result of a strike. All these actions are invoked and revoked by the conservative dimension of the artwork.

But this revocation does not only refuse these actions; it also recalls how they are already active in the conservation of the artwork. The closed gallery reproduces a classical function of the work of art: to produce a work that endures beyond the labour that produced it, liberating those contemplating it from the burden of its production. The appropriation of this contemplation by a ruling class transformed its pleasures into the spoils of war. But the struggle to emancipate labour into an activity of aesthetic delight is burdened by the extent to which it already accepts defeat and settles for a peace in which all are condemned to an aestheticised labour. Winning the peace demands re-appropriating the enduring works too, and, with them, the activities and idle pleasures they enable.

The closed gallery conjures up one of the most powerful myths of this struggle against the leisure class: the self-annihilation of the work of art; the self-dissolution of its most prized commodity. This is a spellbinding riddle: that the work of art would annihilate itself without making its self-annihilation into a work of art; that the work of art would be liberated from commodification without commodifying this liberation. The riddle has become overfamiliar without being solved, thereby completing its spell. Breaking the spell would require a society that does not reproduce itself through commodification; a society in which the work of art does not need to sacrifice itself in order to prevent its appropriation.

This closed gallery returns to the riddle, exhibiting the commodification of its liberation in the wage labour that produces its propertylessness, and in the wage labour it then releases. Its exhibition of wages is a riposte to the unwaged labour saturating the artworld and the world outside, a plea for this labour to be valued. But it is also an altogether more radical plea for the value of not labouring and the waging of producing nothing. Labour is liberated from wage labour: and yet the spell of the wage remains binding. Free time remains reserved as a prize for wage labourers, and the wage remains compensation for their expropriation from common wealth. The gallery is not turned into an autonomous workplace, but an automated one. The gallery is not made into common property but common expropriation. The gallery is closed to 'the staff' in order to give them a break from the fact that it is always closed to them.

A work of art cannot institute the common wealth that promises to break this spell. The more it tries, the more its inability shows through, and the more cruel the distortion of its best intentions. But a work of art that does not even try is worthless from the start. And so too is the response that knows only these inabilities. Common wealth is a common work.

Curtain

The first act is nearly over. The endless labour of preparation is about to vanish into the visibility of its end, the enduring work that will take the place of its preparation and clear a place for acts two and three: its interaction with other works, or the interaction of actors besides these works, or the contemplation of this scene in whole or part, or the abandonment of it altogether. Its use in further labour is not planned, but cannot be ruled out. In any case, the horizon of potentiality opened by the labour of preparation is just about to be closed, opening a new horizon of actuality. The fictions of anticipation are about to be exposed to the truths of fulfilment.

Interview with Maria Eichhorn – Katie Guggenheim

Katie Guggenheim

Perhaps we could start with the title of your exhibition, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*? What does this refer to?

Maria Eichhorn

The title refers to the duration of the exhibition – to the number of weeks, days and hours, to the time, therefore, in which the full time, permanently employed Chisenhale Gallery staff members will not work for the gallery during my exhibition.

The amount of time becomes concrete in the title from unit to unit of time, moving from the general to the specific. It is not a matter of equivalents (because 5 weeks consist of 35 days and 840 hours), but of differentiations. *5 weeks* represent the total duration of the exhibition. This time representation refers to and includes both working time and free time. Weekends, evenings, night-time, etc., are accounted for.

The time representation *25 days* encompasses the working days affected by my exhibition. Because the staff do not work on the weekend, the Saturdays and Sundays (10 days in total) are excluded here.

The representation *175 hours* ultimately indicates the pure working time, wage labour. This amount of time refers concretely to the working time that has been transformed with the exhibition into non-work inside of work. The title therefore contains the thematically and formally relevant time representations involved in the exhibition.

KG

You proposed this project in September 2015 following a site visit to Chisenhale Gallery, in which you convened a meeting with the staff to discuss their working lives. Do you find the situation of the employees at Chisenhale representative of working conditions in the arts, or of society more generally?

ME

Of course, the specific working conditions in each place should always be considered, and these depend on many factors: political, social, cultural, legal, geographical, sociological, economic, programmatic, individual, etc. Where is an institution? Who runs it? How is it financed?

The general working conditions in a society are also influenced by many factors, in particular by the tension between work and unemployment. In what country? In which working area? In a factory, a university, an office, a household, paid and unpaid work? etc. The situation in the case of Chisenhale is both representative and non-representative with respect to the working conditions in the field of art in the United Kingdom and beyond. It appears that Chisenhale is in a financially precarious situation. As with all organisations of its scale in London, Chisenhale is vulnerable

to Arts Council cuts and is also highly dependent on fundraising from individual benefactors. If we think of society as a whole, there are overlaps that must be closely examined and investigated. Isabell Lorey depicted this very clearly in her text. She writes that '[i]n contemporary capitalism, we are experiencing a diffusion of work into life and at the same time an increasing de-waging of work.'[1]

KG

How does your impression of the working conditions in London compare with your impression of those in Berlin, where you live?

ME

Working conditions in London are rougher than in Berlin. To stay on the subject of working conditions in the art field and in particular at Chisenhale: from the interview with the staff, which I held for research purposes and is published here, it became clear that almost everyone works on fundraising. Art institutions in Berlin generally enjoy better financial support from the state and are financially more independent from private sponsors and the art market. A number of mutually dependent fundamental questions take shape in the discussion. To only name a few: Operations and Development Coordinator Ioanna Nitsou assists Deputy Director Laura Parker with office management but now spends most of her time on fundraising through the benefactors' programme and editions: management of sales and production. A large part of the Director Polly Staple's job is fundraising: she probably spends about 75% of her time fundraising. Only 27% of Chisenhale's funding is public money.

Working time flows into fundraising, leaving less time for important things like artistic research and time to reflect, as you mentioned in our discussion. Furthermore, this kind of activity absorbs the whole person. Ioanna, for example, mentions in the discussion: '[Polly and I] work on [fundraising] together. It takes up a lot of my working day, as well as *personal time*. For example, when you go to an opening and you're still representing the gallery. You can't clock out and say, "I'm just going to chat". You're always conscious of the *fact that you're working*.'[2] Work does not stop. Later in the discussion, Polly names a further problem: 'There is a broader conversation here about the state of the public sector in the UK. Within a neo-liberal context entrepreneurial activity is regarded as a strength. At institutions like Chisenhale we become our own worst

1 See Isabell Lorey, 'Precarisation, Indebtedness, Giving Time -Interlacing Lines across Maria Eichhorn's *5 Weeks, 25 Days, 175 Hours*', in this publication, p 39

2 Ioanna Nitsou, 'Working at Chisenhale Gallery – A discussion between Maria Eichhorn and Chisenhale Gallery staff: Joel Furness, Katie Guggenheim, Tommie Introna, Emma Moore, Ioanna Nitsou, Laura Parker and Polly Staple, 8 July 2015', in this publication, p 33. Italicisations, for emphasis, are Maria Eichhorn's own.

enemy. We show that we can raise money, through individual giving or editions for example, we show that we can be less dependent on public funding, and as less of that money is available it is seen as less necessary to us. Although it is.' Without the fundraising work you all do, this institution wouldn't exist.

KG

Why did you propose this artwork for your exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery? Would you have proposed the work for an exhibition at a larger institution?

ME

This work can be rendered in any institution. It is mostly diverse experiences, research endeavours, and considerations that lead to an idea. In this case it was my engagement with *time* in connection with current labour relations in society and in the cultural field.

My artistic work for Chisenhale Gallery consists in giving time to the staff. Once the staff accept the time, once work is suspended while staff members continue to receive pay, the artistic work can emerge. 'To give time, the day, or life', writes Jacques Derrida in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1991), 'is to give nothing, nothing determinate, even if it is to give the giving of any possible giving, even if it gives the condition of giving.' Departing from Derrida's thought experiment, I am interested in the fundamental possibility of suspending the capitalist logic of exchange by giving time and making a life without wage labour imaginable.

KG

Are there any rules about what staff can or cannot do while they are not working? How have you defined work and free time for the purposes of this project?

ME

The only specification is that there is no specification.

KG

The exhibition proposes a situation that brings to mind a labour strike, but it differs from a strike because a strike reinforces the value of work and production through its absence, and in this situation you have created an absence or lack as the artwork itself. How do you think this exhibition relates to the current conditions of austerity and contemporary labour relations in the UK and across Europe?

ME

Work is suspended [*ausgesetzt*], temporarily interrupted, thus becoming

the focus of attention. It becomes exposed [*ausgesetzt*] to the gaze, to attentiveness. The term *aussetzen* [to suspend, to expose, to abandon, to find fault with, or to strike] becomes active, operative and effective in its multiple meanings. Work is abandoned [*ausgesetzt*]: given away, brought to a different place and left to itself there, surrendered to the influence of somebody or something. To find fault with [*aussetzen*] work under these conditions means to question, or to critique it. *Aussetzen* can also mean 'to strike'. When a passer-by comes by the closed door of Chisenhale Gallery and reads the sign on the fence, it could occur to them that a strike is taking place here. But this strike is not chosen, rather, I have imposed it.

Strikes are mostly held for higher wages and better working conditions. Why is there a strike here? The Chisenhale staff have every reason to strike; maybe not due to low wages, but due to the lacking support of the public authorities. This is how art is privatised and disappears into the arsenals of the sponsors and the rich.

The tax money paid by the community flows instead into areas that the majority of citizens don't want to support: armaments, wars, nuclear energy. The rich receive tax benefits, while the budget for social expenditures is cut more and more.

Armaments expenditures are increasing globally. As has been widely reported in the news recently, while almost 600 billion dollars were racked up for the arms industry in 2015 in the United States, the US Republicans have simultaneously blocked Barack Obama's proposal to increase the minimum hourly wage to over 10 dollars; a policy that would have protected the weakest on the labour market.

With respect to austerity, the UK and the countries of Europe are certainly not to be lumped together. Austerity politics and working conditions differ from country to country. What is obvious, however, is that the gulf between the poor and rich continues to grow in Europe and around the world. Why is it still not possible to distribute resources in such a manner that all people can live well? Why is it not possible to let those work who want to work – and not make those work who cannot or do not want to work – and secure a sufficient basic income that is the same for all?

KG

There are some interesting parallels between *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* and the exhibition that you made in 2001 at Kunsthalle Bern, where you used the production budget to pay for much-needed renovations to the building, leaving the galleries empty for the duration of the show. For the audience, your own artistic labour was manifested through the labour of the builders and other contractors who undertook the work and these tangible and permanent improvements to the fabric of the Kunsthalle's building took the place of a formal artwork. What was the motivation behind this gesture and do you see a relationship to your exhibition at Chisenhale?

ME

After conversations with the employees, managers, etc. of the Kunsthalle and the Kunsthalle association as well as archival research, I discovered revealing links between the historical development of the Kunsthalle and the association, the condition of the Kunsthalle building, the property on which the Kunsthalle stands, and a non-amortised loan, and I realised how these links mutually condition one another. These insights – in the sense of an investigative approach – were what I wanted to convey to the public with my exhibition.

The exhibition, *Das Geld der Kunsthalle Bern / Money at Kunsthalle Bern*, consisted of three parts: an historical analysis of the economic context of Kunsthalle Bern, and two applications deriving from this which referred to the Kunsthalle's property relations. Materially, it consisted of a series of renovation projects, a talk followed by a discussion, and the production of various printed works that I designed: invitation card, poster, catalogue, and share certificates.

The Kunsthalle was mostly empty, because the renovations were to take place, insofar as possible, outside of opening hours (it was not a display or 'performance' of workers). Nevertheless, it did happen that certain zones were closed off when dangerous tasks needed to be carried out during opening hours: when equipment or materials remained standing around; or when noises from the areas not open to the public (attic, storage rooms, etc.) indicated that activities were taking place there.

The third part of the exhibition at Kunsthalle Bern, the new issue of share certificates, tended towards a fundraising action. The yield from this action goes completely to the Kunsthalle association. It serves to increase the equity capital.

KG

Where do you think the work is located in your exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery? Is it in the empty gallery and the sign on the gate outside explaining the reason for the closure, the symposium and the conversations that develop around the work, or in the free time that you have given to the Chisenhale staff?

ME

In all these places. The exhibition consists of the staff members not working; that I give the employees time, and that they accept the time. That is, they suspend [*aussetzen*] their work while continuing to be paid.

That the exhibition space and the office are closed is a spatial consequence of the fact that these are the places where the staff primarily attend to their work. The institution itself and the actual exhibition are not closed, but spread into the public sphere and into society. So, a sign will be fixed to the gate in front of the gallery with information about the

exhibition. In addition, further messages are available, on the website, in social media, etc. The automatic email response, written especially for my exhibition, includes information about the exhibition as well as a notification that incoming emails will be automatically deleted and it will not be possible to reach recipients again until 29 May 2016. When the staff return, they will not have an excessive amount of emails to attend.

KG

We could have employed temporary staff to keep the gallery open for your exhibition while the regular staff are not working. Why did you decide not to do this and for the gallery to be closed during your exhibition?

ME

Nobody should be in the gallery spaces or working there during my exhibition. In a certain way the building should also calm down and have time off, not work. These spaces should also not be used or made available in other ways. Not rented for profit or otherwise capitalised. My exhibition is also taking place *in* the Chisenhale Gallery spaces.

KG

For documenta 11 in 2002 you established *Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft*, a public limited company in which the company itself is the sole shareholder, and you stipulated that, contrary to the very purpose of the structure of the company, the capital that was initially in-vested could not accrue value and did not belong to anyone. What interests you about this model, which inverts many of the most basic facts about our contemporary neoliberal situation? Do you see a relationship between this work and your exhibition at Chisenhale?

ME

The *Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft* owns its own shares and belongs to no one – or, that is to say, to everyone. *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* is similarly conceived so that the time itself does not belong to anybody. That is, time cannot be economised, it does not allow itself to be exchanged and it breaks with the law of equivalence.

KG

This work has a very real impact on the lives of the employees of Chisenhale and some of its implications are very personal. Will you ask the staff about what they did with their free time and the impact that this had when they return to work?

ME

The employees are not assigned any tasks by me. They should do nothing

other than not work for Chisenhale Gallery. That is my only specification.

In conclusion, a personal note: this has been an extraordinarily involved project to work on together. We met each other multiple times, talked on the phone, and spoke intensively about the project. You, Katie, and Polly, you two formulated many questions that I answered, added new points on my end, which in turn raised new questions that we discussed back and forth for so long until we had thought through all aspects for the realisation of the work. I am very thankful to you two for making this project possible. I also would like to wholeheartedly thank the entire team.

KG

We have really enjoyed working with you, Maria. Thank you very much.

Maria Eichhorn interviewed by Katie Guggenheim via email, April 2016.
Eichhorn's answers are translated from the German by Kelly Mulvaney.

5 weeks, 25 days,
175 hours sign text

This is a copy of an internal Chisenhale Gallery document compiling signs relating to Maria Eichhorn's project to be placed across the gallery's communications and visitor information points while it is closed.

Sign on the gate in front of the entrance

Maria Eichhorn
5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours
23 April – 29 May 2016

For the duration of Maria Eichhorn's exhibition, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Chisenhale Gallery's staff are not working. The gallery and office are closed from 24 April to 29 May 2016. For further information please visit www.chisenhale.org.uk.

The exhibition opened with a symposium on Saturday 23 April, exploring contemporary labour conditions, featuring lectures by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin and chaired by Andrea Phillips. Audio recordings from the symposium are available at www.chisenhale.org.uk.

<u>On the website homepage (links to the page with info about the exhibition)</u>

Maria Eichhorn
5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours
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Automatic reply to emails

Maria Eichhorn
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I cannot read your email. Your email is being deleted. Please re-send your email after 29 May 2016 when I am back in the office.

For any matter requiring an urgent response until 29 May, please contact: 5weeks25days175hours@chisenhale.org.uk. This email account will be checked every Wednesday and any urgent emails will be dealt with as promptly as possible.

Enquiries relating to Chisenhale Gallery's building should be directed to Andrea Davidson of Chisenhale Art Place Trust: andrea@chisenhale.co.uk

Media enquiries should be directed to Hannah Gompertz of SUTTON: hannah@suttonpr.com

Answerphone

Thank you for calling Chisenhale Gallery. For the duration of our current exhibition by Maria Eichhorn, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Chisenhale Gallery's staff are not working. The gallery and office are closed from 24 April to 29 May 2016. For further information please see www.chisenhale.org.uk.

For any matter requiring an urgent response until 29 May, please email 5weeks25days175hours@chisenhale.org.uk (all the numbers are digits). This email account will be checked every Wednesday and any urgent emails will be dealt with as promptly as possible.

Enquiries relating to Chisenhale Gallery's building should be directed to Andrea Davidson of Chisenhale Art Place Trust who can be reached on 020 8981 1916.

Media enquiries should be directed to Hannah Gompertz at SUTTON. She can be reached on 020 7183 3577.

Otherwise, please call back after 29 May.

<u>Noticeboard in Chisenhale Studios' entrance (for artists in studios upstairs) one week in advance</u>

Maria Eichhorn
5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours
23 April – 29 May 2016

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Saturday 23 April, 11am – 5pm
The exhibition opens with a symposium on Saturday 23 April, exploring contemporary labour conditions, featuring lectures by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin and chaired by Andrea Phillips. Audio recordings from the symposium are available at www.chisenhale.org.uk.

If you need to get in touch with the gallery between 24 April and 29 May, please send an email to 5weeks25days175hours@chisenhale.org.uk. This email account will be checked every Wednesday. For anything urgent please speak to Andrea Davidson.

Facebook

Maria Eichhorn
5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours
23 April – 29 May 2016

Post invite image of front of building with sign and the following text:

For the duration of Maria Eichhorn's exhibition, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Chisenhale Gallery's staff are not working. The gallery and office are closed from 24 April to 29 May 2016. For further information please see www.chisenhale.org.uk.

Twitter

For the duration of Maria Eichhorn's exhibition Chisenhale staff are not working. Gallery and office are closed 24 April – 29 May 2016.

Instagram

Chisenhale Gallery
Maria Eichhorn, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, 23 April – 29 May 2016
www.chisenhale.org.uk

Post invite image of front of building with sign and the following text:

Maria Eichhorn
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23 April – 29 May 2016

For the duration of Maria Eichhorn's exhibition, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*, Chisenhale Gallery's staff are not working. Therefore the gallery and office are closed from 24 April to 29 May 2016. For further information please visit www.chisenhale.org.uk.

The exhibition opened with a symposium on Saturday 23 April, exploring contemporary labour conditions, featuring lectures by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin and chaired by Andrea Phillips. Audio recordings from the symposium are available at www.chisenhale.org.uk.

A new publication including commissioned texts by Isabell Lorey and Stewart Martin; a transcript of a discussion with Maria Eichhorn and Chisenhale Gallery staff; and an interview with the artist is available to download for free at www.chisenhale.org.uk.

#MariaEichhorn #5weeks25days175hours #howtoworktogether

Maria Eichhorn lives and works in Berlin and Zurich. Recent solo exhibitions include the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver (2015) and Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Seth Siegelaub: Beyond Conceptual Art*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; *to expose, to show, to demonstrate, to inform, to offer*, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; *Wohnungsfrage*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; *Take me (I'm yours)*, Monnaie de Paris, Paris; and *All the World's Futures*, 56th Venice Biennial (all 2015).

Recent publications include *In den Zelten 4 / 5 / 5a / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 9a / 10, Kronprinzenufer 29 / 30, Beethovenstraße 1 / 2 / 3 (1832 bis / to 1959) > John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10 (seit / since 1959), Berlin*; which accompanied the exhibition *Wohnungsfrage*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin 2015; and 'The Indelible Presence of the Gurlitt Estate. Adam Szymczyk in Conversation with Alexander Alberro, Maria Eichhorn and Hans Haacke', in *South as a State of Mind*, #6 (documenta 14, #1), Kassel, (Autumn/Winter 2015).

Isabell Lorey is a political theorist at the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp) in Berlin, and member of the editorial board of the publication platform *transversal texts* (transversal.at). Currently she holds a professorship at the Institute for Political Science, University of Kassel. She taught at several European universities as a guest professor of political theory, social and cultural sciences, feminist and postcolonial theory. In 2003 she was a founding member of the feminist and activist group 'kleines postfordistisches Drama' (kpD).

Her texts and books are translated into several languages. She publishes on the precarization of labour and life in neoliberalism, social movements, the critical theory of democracy and representation, and political immunization. Lorey is the author of *Immer Ärger mit dem Subjekt* (1996), *Figuren des Immunen. Elemente einer politischen Theorie* (2011), *Die Regierung der Prekären* (2012), and recently published *State of Insecurity. Government of the Precarious* (2015), with Verso. transversal.at/bio/lorey

Stewart Martin is Reader in Philosophy and Fine Art at Middlesex University in London and member of the Editorial Collective of the journal, *Radical Philosophy*.

Colophon

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5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours

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Working at Chisenhale Gallery: A discussion between Maria Eichhorn and Chisenhale Gallery staff – Joel Furness, Katie Guggenheim, Tommie Introna, Emma Moore, Ioanna Nitsou, Laura Parker and Polly Staple has been transcribed and edited from a recorded conversation that took place at Chisenhale Gallery on 8 July 2015.

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Colophon

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