

The Art–Labour Relationship in Contemporary Art (Vilnius, 9–10 May 24)

Vilnius Academy of Arts and Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius (Lithuania), May 9–10, 2024

Deadline: Oct 31, 2023

Lina Michelkevičė

Call for contributions to the conference “The Art–Labour Relationship in Contemporary Art in Central and Eastern Europe, 1991–present”, organized by the Institute of Art Research, Vilnius Academy of Arts, in partnership with the Contemporary Art Centre Vilnius.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the restoration of democracy in Central and Eastern European countries, radical changes in all spheres of life were accompanied by equally remarkable changes in artists’ working practices and conceptions. Eastern bloc countries, especially the former USSR members, rushed to embrace art practices and art histories they missed under the control and censorship of now collapsed regimes. New art forms and strategies (performance, installation, public interventions, collaborative practices, media art) flourished, and conceptual acuity and organisational competencies grew in importance next to professional artist’s skills, often even overshadowing them.

As observed by sociologists, the free-market economy reform and institutionalisation of democracy in European post-socialist countries coincide with more general changes in the capitalist system. These changes were marked by the rapid transnational accumulation of capital, the introduction of information and communication technologies in most areas of business and everyday life, and the acceleration in the pace of change in the labour market, which became more and more reliant on flexible, interchangeable, and episodic employment. The theme of labour – one of the most politicised and subordinated themes in visual arts in socialist countries, became again a subject for some artists who aimed to reflect the new economic, political, and social conditions of their practices. This self-awareness manifests itself both in new approaches to the subject of labour in works of art and in critical rethinking on the ways artists organise their work.

Although the conference focuses on the art–labour relationship in Eastern and Central European contemporary art since the 1990s, such a focus goes well beyond these temporal and geographical contexts, as newly emerged forms and meanings of artistic labour encourage us to look for comparisons or theoretical influences in other economic, political, and cultural environments. The conference invites questions about the changes in the representation of labour in contemporary art, the theoretical assumptions, and developments of the art–labour relationship, the identity and social self-understanding of artists, and the state of production of artworks – materials, tools, skills, and forms of labour division and authorship.

Topics of interests include but are not limited to:

- Artists' organizations in transition from socialism to capitalism
- Organised labour in contemporary art: subcontracting, artist-run organisations, collaboration
- Reflection and critique of labour in works of art
- The return of craftsmanship in contemporary art
- Managerialism as artistic strategy
- Automation of labour and art production
- Artists' professional identity and relation to non-art workers
- Professionalism vs. deskilling
- Process of art production and post-production, preparatory material, and leftovers
- Making labour public: representation of artist at work
- Etc.

Keynote speakers:

Josefine Wikström (Assistant Professor of Dance Theory, Stockholm University of the Arts)
Lars Bang Larsen (Head of Art & Research at Art Hub Copenhagen (AHC)) & Søren Andreasen (Artist, Copenhagen)

Scientific Committee:

Caterina Preda (University of Bucharest)
Edgaras Gerasimovičius (Vilnius Academy of Arts)
Harry Weeks (Newcastle University)
Katalin Krasznahorkai (Brandenburgische Gesellschaft für Kultur und Geschichte)
Lina Michelkevičė (Vilnius Academy of Arts)
Marquard Smith (University College London / Vilnius Academy of Arts)
Pascal Gielen (University of Antwerp)

Proposals for 20 min presentations in English should be submitted by October 31, 2023, by filling the C F P f o r m a t <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf12j4-IXw8B50pAZSaVUpNcE6L1nLPvLMUxRJWXwMg5-Ya-w/viewform>.

For any further questions please contact the conference conveners Edgaras Gerasimovičius, edgaras.gerasimovicius@stud.vda.lt, or Lina Michelkevičė, lina.michelkevica@vda.lt.

Reference:

CFP: The Art–Labour Relationship in Contemporary Art (Vilnius, 9-10 May 24). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 18, 2023 (accessed Sep 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/40082>>.