

A REAL WORK OF ART

2nd – 20th September 2015

RAM Gallery

Kongens gate 3, 0153 Oslo, Norway

<http://www.ramgalleri.no/>

Featuring:

Corina L. Apostol (ArtLeaks), Federico Geller, Fokus Grupa, Nikolay Oleynikov (Chto Delat?), Iulia Toma

Curated by

Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić (ArtLeaks)

Opening program, 2nd September 2015

RAM Gallery, Kongens gate 3, 0153 Oslo, Norway

18h Promotion of the **ArtLeaks Gazette #3** and lecture *Art Workers Between Precarity and Resistance: A Genealogy* by **Corina L. Apostol (ArtLeaks)**.

18:30h Speeches by **Hilde Tørdal** (Norske Billedkunstnere / Norwegian Association of Visual Artists) and curators **Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić (ArtLeaks)**.

19h A mise-en-scene of *Circus Melodrama* - a sketch for a theatre fable for cultural workers, with the participation of the audience

19:30h music and drinks

A Real Work of Art - art, work, and solidarity structures

Although we live in a time of creative industries, which implies the emergence of a new proletariat of cultural workers, artistic work is not yet considered 'real' work. Artists and art critics alike nurture the utopian idea of artistic practice as a form of liberated, non-alienating work. Nevertheless, platforms like ArtLeaks and other initiatives publish 'Stories from the Production Line', to quote the famous title by the dramatist Heiner Müller, highlighting working conditions in the global art system, the corporatisation of art financing and the precarious livelihoods of artists, unpaid labour, problematic sponsors - all the problems that now plague the art world.

A Real Work of Art is less about the presentation of artworks and more about the organisation of art workers. The exhibition's 'raw material' consists of the experiences of artists who have tried to organise themselves into associations promoting improved working conditions for artists. Such initiatives are as old as the labour movement itself, and they can be said to form the backbone of today's positions and initiatives. The participating artists share important ideas about art and work, organisational structures and solidarity.

The aim of the exhibition is to generate a temporary 'hot spot' for these issues - one that can be useful for Norwegian artists and artist organisations who are grappling with cuts in public funding and other factors affecting the conditions for artists today.

Fokus Grupa, *I Sing to Pass the Time*,
pencil on paper, 38 drawings, 25x18 cm, 2011 - ongoing



I Sing to Pass the Time is an open sequence of drawings based on various documentations of political and/or legal actions carried out by artists and art workers throughout the 20th century. The drawings follow multiple intersecting and parallel lines of narrative dealing with the socioeconomic environments within which art operates – instead of the art-historical narrative. They expand and further the long-term research into “the politics of art” done by Fokus Grupa, each playing an important part in the overall narrative we are producing about the recurring social struggle of the (art) proletariat.

Fokus Grupa is an artist collective based in Rijeka, Croatia. Fokus Grupa concentrate on the relationship between art and its public manifestations in terms of working culture, aesthetics, and social and economic exchange values. Their work investigates the inherent power structures of the art-system. To this effect, they explore its economic, spatial and legal implementations. The collective tries to expand the boundaries of their artwork, using printed matter, films and installations, works on paper, discussions, workshops and texts.

Nikolay Oleynikov (Chto delat?), *4 Learning Flags, volume 1, 2011-* ongoing
The flags *Nikolay Chernyshevsky: Stay Rude, Stay Rebel, Camera-Mao: to Entertain, to Educate, to Inspire, Angela Davis: Knowledge is Power, Learn, Learn, Learn, and Fight Again,* were made as protest banners during the *May Congress of Creative Workers** in early 2011.



* "In Russia, the *May Congress of Creative Workers*, established in 2010 in Moscow, acts as an organizational frame for artists who feel the need to research the motivations, urgencies, approaches and strategies of cultural workers for survival, in the context of the tenuous production conditions in Russia and Ukraine - characterized by different levels of oppression, abuses of authority and even physical violations. Between 2010 and 2013, the Congress functioned as a tool for exercising the power to formulate grievances about particular working conditions, and working towards establishing structures and alliances to improve them." From: *Art Workers Between Precarity and Resistance: A Genealogy* by Corina L. Apostol

Nikolay Oleynikov is a Moscow based artist and activist, member of Chto Delat?, editor of the Chto Delat? newspaper, member of the editorial board of Moscow Art Magazine (2011), co-founder of the Learning Film Group and May Congress of Creative Workers, and member of the Arkady Kots band. Since 2013 Oleynikov is proud to be a tutor at The School of Rose (School for Engaged Art Chto Delat). He is known for his didactic murals and graphic works within the tradition of the Soviet monumental school, comics, surrealist-like imaginary and punk culture. Represented worldwide by his solo projects as well as with a number of collective activities, Oleynikov has had numerous

international shows including Färgfabriken, Stockholm; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris - MAM/ARC, Paris; Serralves Museum, Porto; Cittadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella; Museo dell'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato; Ammirato Culture House, Lecce; Lungomare, Bolzano; KOMPLOT, Bruxelles; X BALTIC TRIENNALE in Vilnius; KIBLA, Maribor; <rotor>, Graz; Welling School, London; State Tretyakov Gallery and Paperworks Gallery, Moscow.

Corina L. Apostol (ArtLeaks), *A Historical Timeline of Art Workers Struggles from the 19th Century to the Present, 2014*



The timeline consists of visual documentation of major figures, groups, syndicates, collectives and unions, presented together with research notes on what they achieved and why they are historically significant. This visualisation situates international artists' movements within the present-day cycles of struggles from around the world by connecting them with works of contemporary artists that have contributed to ArtLeaks' projects from 2011 until today.

Corina L. Apostol is Ph.D candidate in the Department of Art History at Rutgers University- New Brunswick. She is also a curatorial research fellow of the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union at the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum. She is a co-founder of ArtLeaks and co-editor of the ArtLeaks Gazette.

Iulia Toma, *ArtLeaks Bestiary*,
15 drawings, various size, 2013.



ArtLeaks Bestiary is part of the project *Circus Melodrama*, consisting of a text by Corina L. Apostol and a related series of drawings by Iulia Toma. The project is a sketch for a theatre fable written and drawn for cultural workers, based on everyday life in a family of orphaned wild beasts, including some endangered species, trying to live and work together in a circus. The text intercuts testimonies and debates from concerned characters discussing powerlessness and resistance in pre and post-revolutionary times, police brutality and lawlessness, and the role of managers and politicians who seek to neutralize their community. The melodrama unfolds in a burlesque, parodic style, confronting reality more sharply than any news-bulletin claiming objectivity. The text and drawings are based on the ArtLeaks archives that document the increasing abuse, censorship, repression and cooptation experienced by art workers around the world in the last five years. The audience is invited to perform the material on display, and imagine ways in which to change the stultifying destiny of art and culture in society.

Iulia Gabriela Toma is a mixed-media artist who explores means of aesthetic expression through textile, as well as photography, painting, installation and text in each work. Recently she has been focusing on social issues: feminism, women's rights, interpersonal relations of closed communities, the materiality of urban living, social justice, etc, expressing them in her own individual way. Toma builds a personal discourse that is expressively and aesthetically organized into visual and activist orientations, each time trying to place the balance between message and material at an ever increasingly elaborate level. She teaches in the Department of Art & Design, Textile section at the National University of Arts Bucharest, practicing pedagogy in harmony with her personal activity as well as with the innovation required for didactic activity within the artistic discipline.

Federico Geller, *Animal Assembly* and *The information you produce is for whom?*, comics, 27x700cm & 47x700cm, 2013-2014.



The comics of Federico Geller deal with basic issues of class consciousness: the problems of art workers struggle within the wider fight for the humanization of the species. They were produced for *(An)Other Art World(s)*. *Imagination beyond Fiction*, ArtLeaks Gazette #2 in 2014. Shake it!

Federico Geller studied and taught Biologic Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. He is a member of *Abriendo Caminos/La comunitaria TV*, a collective which endeavours to create communication tools (video, interventions, graphic material) for grass-roots political work and conjuncture situations. He also works in *Jeta Ka'i*, a team that aims to popularise biological knowledge and to discuss its technological applications and social consequences. Some of his designs and drawings have been shown in *ExArgentina/La Normalidad* (Berlin-Köln, Buenos Aires 2003-2006), *The Future of Reciprocal Readymade* (New York 2005), *Kollektive Kreativität* (Kassel 2005), *Pay Attention to Ham* (Köln 2008), *Que Viva la Diversidad* (Santa Fe, 2010), *Truth Is Concrete/Steirischer Herbst* (Graz 2012). Geller lives in Buenos Aires.

ArtLeaks, 5 textile banners, 170x140cm, 2011-2015.



ArtLeaks is a collective platform initiated by an international group of artists, curators, art historians and intellectuals in response to the abuse of their professional integrity and the open infraction of their labor rights. In the art world, such abuses usually go unnoticed, but sometimes events bring them into sharp focus and therefore deserving of public scrutiny. Only by drawing attention to concrete abuses can we underscore the precarious condition of cultural workers and the necessity for sustained protest against the appropriation of politically engaged art, culture and theory by institutions embedded in a tight mesh of capital and power.

ArtLeaks Gazette



The ArtLeaks Gazette is an artistic and political publication produced by core members of the platform. Through the Gazette, ArtLeaks stresses the urgent need to seriously transform art workers' relationships with the institutions, networks and economies involved in the production, reproduction and consumption of art and culture. ArtLeaks pursues these goals through developing a new approach to the tradition of institutional critique, and through fostering new forms of artistic production that might challenge the dominant discourses of criticality and social engagement that tame and contain creative forces. While in the ArtLeaks Gazette No. 1 (2013), ArtLeaks sought to bring awareness of the challenges and obstacles of the contemporary art system as an initial, necessary first step in enacting meaningful transformations, with the ArtLeaks Gazette No. 2 (2014), ArtLeaks

aimed to move beyond exposure and breaking the silence, towards ways of engagement –or what it means to be an agent of change in the art world today? What are the conditions and possibilities of alternative art worlds? How can we engage and use our imagination, avoiding at the same time the traps of utopian thinking? The topics of the ArtLeaks Gazette No. 3 (2015) are related to building coalitions, re-unionizing in the art world and finding strategies to cooperate with other social actors (social movements, academic community, workers struggles, etc).

Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić are Belgrade-based artists whose artistic practice comprises working with drawing, text, video and photography. Since 2002 they have been developing a joint artistic and curatorial practice, exploring the overlapping space between art and politics. In their artistic work they focus on social and economical conditions of reproduction, unveiling in a provoking way the contradictions of today's societies.

Their curated exhibitions includes: *I Will Never Talk About the War Again* realized in Färgfabriken in Stockholm (2011) and in Kibla, Maribor (2012); *The Perspectives, Part 1 - The scope of political practices of moving images today*, Tulca, Galway, Ireland (2011); *On Use Value of Art*, Babel Art Space, Trondheim (2010); *Queer Salon*, Cultural Centre of Belgrade (2010); *Balkan Exotic*, Ondrej Brody & Kristofer Paetau, Cultural Center DOB, Belgrade (2009). They were initiator of the project *Call the Witness - 2nd Roma Pavilion* at the 54th Venice Biennial and co-authors of artworks within the collective *Chto Delat?* Vladan Jeremić is co-founder of the ArtLeaks. Their works are in the collection of MUDAM, Luxemburg, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid. Rädle & Jeremić recent exhibitions include: *Mundus vadit retro*, Kibla, Maribor; *Red Winter, Deep Sites*, LevArt, Levanger; *To the Square 2, Perpetuum Mobile*, Checkpoint Helsinki 2014; *Between Worlds II*, Kraljevic Gallery, Zagreb; *Places of memory - Fields of vision*, Contemporary Art Center of Thessaloniki; *Absolute Democracy*, Rotor, Graz; *Oktobar XXX, 15*. Pančevo Biennial, Serbia; *The Housing Agenda*, Cable Factory Gallery and Ateneum Museum, Helsinki and La maison Folie Wazemmes, Lille; *Moving Forwards, Counting Backwards*, MUAC, Mexico City.

Raedle & Jeremić were invited as guest curators at LevArt (project space Levanger) and RAM Galleri (Oslo) in 2015 as part of an ongoing project collaboration between the two institutions. Financial support for this project was provided by the Arts Council of Norway and Nordic Culture Point. Preliminary research for this project was done during a residency by the artists at The Nordic Artists' Centre Dale.