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CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

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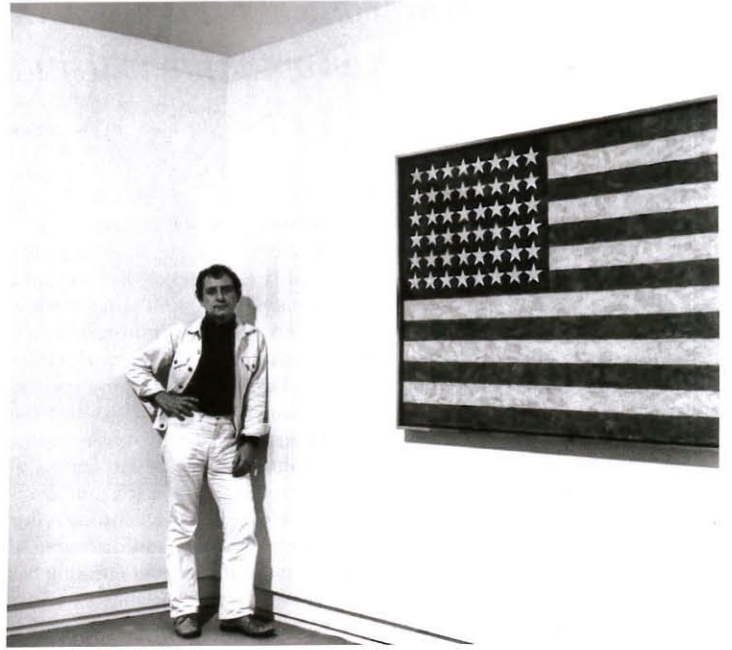
ARTISTS ON CURATING

THOMAS SCHEIBITZ *Enigma Variations*
Kaelen Wilson-Goldie **ON RUPTURE**
City Report **OSLO**

UK £5.95 US \$10 €10

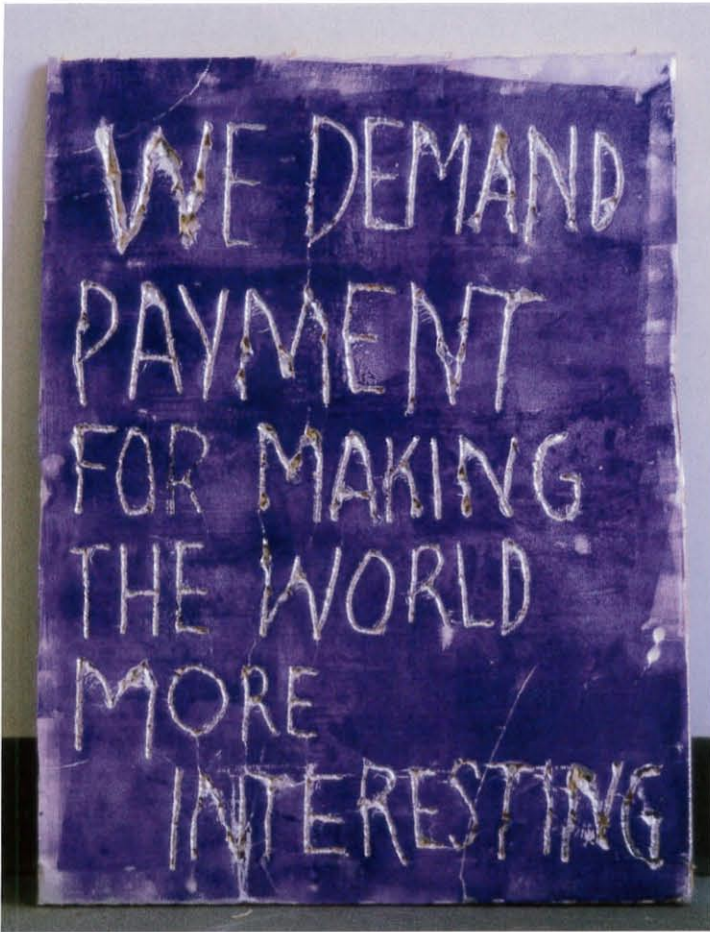


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Being Curated

Dan Fox invited eight artists and artist groups to reflect on their relationships to curators and curatorial discourse. Alongside responses from Ed Atkins, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Nick Mauss, Tom Nicholson, Paulina Olowaska, Slavs and Tatars and W.A.G.E., Daniel Buren reassesses his 1972 statement 'Exhibiting Exhibitions'



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W.A.G.E.
Poster for 'Consciousness Coffee Klatch', 2009,
NY Art Book Fair, MoMA PS1, New York

can't help but shake the feeling that we are all – every single one of us, from teacher to trapeze artist, financier to filmmaker – in the service industry. So instead of a puerile pitting of the curator versus the artist or vice versa, we believe it would be better to ask: 'Service to whom? To what?' For Slavs and Tatars, the service is to our region, Eurasia; to the public; to each other. But it is also, crucially, to the integrity of the commission and idea behind a project. Most of our work exists largely thanks to the commission of the curator and the accompanying institutions. Given the collective nature of our practice, we look to curators as we do to academics, gallerists and installation crews among others, as integral partners in an almost alchemical process, that allows for a series of thoughts to resonate spatially, formally, intellectually and affectively.

Slavs and Tatars' 'Behind Reason' is on view at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Germany, until 6th May and their 'Friendship of Nations: Polish Shi'ite Showbiz' opens at Presentation House, Vancouver, Canada, on 12 April and runs to 26 May.

W. A. G. E.

W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the General Economy) was founded by a group of artists, performers and independent curators who were brought together by a common sense of institutional exploitation. Independent curators – along with other cultural producers – provide a workforce within a multi-billion dollar industry from which others profit greatly. Like artists and performers, independent curators are often not considered as wage labour or subcontracted labourers, and relegated to fee categories that bear no compensatory relationship to the work we're asked to provide.

Last year, W.A.G.E. was invited by Tirdad Zolghadr to present a workshop with his graduate students at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. Together with the class, we made a list of curatorial responsibilities and duties:

- Research and development: seeing exhibitions, archival research, reading, email correspondence, studio visits and site visits.
- Conceptualizing an exhibition: proposal writing and commissioning art works, as well as working with artists to produce them.
- Fundraising: maintaining or cultivating donor relations, both socially and through submitting written proposals.
- Legalities: facilitating permissions, loans, insurance, contracts and visas.
- Mounting an exhibition: overseeing exhibition design and architecture with fabricators, writing and preparing wall texts and labels, organizing public programming, public relations, essay writing and catalogue design for publication.
- Ongoing administration: oversight, invoicing, designing and maintaining budgets, arranging shipping and managing labour from installation to de-installation.

If independent curators complete even half of the work on this list, then curatorial fees are symbolic figures. Since we have accounted for the actual labour being performed – the kind of labour that in any other context would be remunerated unless it were an unpaid internship – we are able to quantify and value it in terms of real wages. This should be done either in relation to other comparable forms of labour, or it could be a wage or fee calibrated to the cost of living.

The rise of the independent curator has an impact upon artists because it represents another mouth to feed from exhibition budgets. If artists and curators are pitted against each other in the battle for compensation, we have been divided; and if curators don't support artists by writing equitable artist fees into their budgets, we will have been conquered by a system that inherently denies the value of all cultural labour. ♡

W.A.G.E. is an activist group based in New York, USA, that focuses on regulating the payment of artist fees by nonprofit art institutions, and establishing a sustainable model for best practices between cultural producers and the institutions that contract their labour.



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Slavs and Tatars
Beyonsense, 2012, installation view as part of Projects
98, Museum of Modern Art, New York