

Werker Collective

A Gestural History of the Young Worker, Print Punch

May 10 - May 25

Ellen de Bruijne PROJECTS is pleased to present an exhibition of Werker Collective's work *A Gestural History of the Young Worker, Print Punch* (2023).

A Gestural History of the Young Worker is a long-lasting project that attempts to reconstruct histories of the oppressed. Images and documents for this project have been gathered collectively from a variety of visual sources such as propaganda and glossy magazines, museum and library archives, grassroots documentary photography, and paraphernalia found in flea markets. Presented together, these pictures create an image of the worker as queer; the radical emancipative struggle of the worker is aligned with activist practices of LGBTQ+. Highlighting these analogies, Werker Collective creates a utopian image of synthesis of work and desire.*

A Gestural History of the Young Worker, Print Punch (2023) is a series of double-sided screen prints conceived as a fundraiser to support the maintenance of the collective, its archive and its expanded community. The series was created during Werker's *Public Research Residency: On Erasure and Invisible Labour* at Looiersgracht 60 in Amsterdam in March 2023. It has been produced as an on-going research into alternative economic models in the art world to support collaborative art practices. The conversation surrounding this model is based on fair remuneration and redistribution of resources for artists, communities, collectors and galleries and takes in consideration the larger ecology in which collaborative art practices function in the art world. Accompanying the launch of the publication *Werker 2 — A Gestural History of the Young Worker* (2023), co-published with Spector Books, 30 numbered and stamped copies of the publication are distributed together with an original artwork by Werker Collective.

Together with the presentation of the series of artworks *Print Punch* (2023), the audio work *A Gestural History of the Young Worker, Condition report* (2023–Ongoing) will be on display at the gallery. Condition report displays the unassembled elements of the original installation on the gallery floor. The separate elements of the installation reference the act and formation of a condition report, a process undertaken after each exhibition or transport of an art object into a new space. The sound installation is based on transcribed

conversations surrounding experiences of the artists as queer workers under challenging conditions of labour and censorship, since the first conception of the artwork in Yekaterinburg (Russia) in 2019 until its most recent presentation at Gropius Bau in Berlin (Germany) in 2023.

*in collaboration with Georgy Mamedov.

WERKER is an art collective operating at the intersection of labour, ecofeminism, and the LGBTQ+ movements, advocating for an image critique of daily life to analyse what becomes visible and what remains hidden or silenced in different political contexts. The collective, initiated by Marc Roig Blesa and Rogier Delfos in Amsterdam in 2009, released ten issues of a publication called WERKER MAGAZINE. Since then, WERKER has explored a variety of media, including installation, performance, video, sound, textile, digital publishing, and has also developed community projects, reading groups, cine-clubs, radio podcasts, and publishing workshops.

Taking inspiration from Der Vereinigung der Arbeiter-Fotografen (the association of worker photographers), a group of politicised photo-clubs that emerged in Germany in the 1920s, WERKER follows in the footsteps of the first socialist photography experiments in the USSR, which extended to Europe, the United States, and Japan. Their methods revolved around self-representation, self-publishing, image analysis, collective authorship, and counter-archiving.

Under the name WERKER COLLECTIVE, they engage in producing media from below with students, cultural workers, self-organised unions of domestic workers, undocumented migrants, in support of anti-eviction activists, feminist groups, LGBTQ+ communities, and people with neurological or functional diversities. Through these workshops, WERKER COLLECTIVE weaves an intersectional and transnational network of allies, reactivating oppressed histories, and investigating worker's solidarity through collaborative artistic practice.

Since its foundation, WERKER COLLECTIVE has collaborated with numerous artists, activists, researchers, and unions on various projects in schools, museums, and archives. These collaborations form WERKER's ecosystem, including Activestills, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Casco Art Institute: Working for The Commons, Centre Culturel Populaire Palentes Orchamp (Groupes Medvedkine), Centro de Arte 2 de Mayo, Der Arbeiter-Fotograf, Dutch Art Institute, Georgy Mamedov, International Institute of Social History, Jo Spence Memorial Archive, Manifesta 14, Silvia Federici, Mayday Rooms, Mokum Kraakt, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Niet te Koop, Photography Workshop, Rijksakademie van Beelende Kunsten, Sindillar: Sindicato de Trabajadoras del Hogar y los Cuidados, S.M.A.K, Susoespai: Creació i Salut Mental, Stedelijk Museum, Steve Edwards, Sonsbeek 20–24, Tate Modern, The Showroom, The Voice of Domestic Workers, and We Are Here.