

ARTNEWS

FOR HER NEXT SHOW, MARIA EICHHORN IS GIVING GALLERY STAFF FIVE WEEKS OF VACATION

BY *Andrew Russett* POSTED 04/14/16 1:32 PM

Let me tell you, I thought I was having a pretty chill afternoon here at the offices of *ARTnews* in New York, just sending a few emails and getting some writing done at a leisurely pace. But then I caught wind of Maria Eichhorn's next show, at Chisenhale in London, and wow, the staff at that gallery are going to be having an even more chill working experience. They're not going to be working!

To explain: Eichhorn, who is known for elegantly and ingeniously altering the typical operation of commerce and labor in the art world, will stage a one-day symposium on the opening day of the exhibition, April 23, and then she will send the employees home. As a press release puts it: "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."



The title of the show, which runs through May 29, is the total amount of free time that the work (no pun intended) provides those employees, "5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours."

There are some delightful precedents for this kind of gesture, particularly Michael Asher's storied *Closed Gallery Piece* (1969), which shuttered galleries as an exhibition. (Asher did it at three different galleries at the time, and it was [reprised in New York at Specific Object in 2011](#).) Chisenhale mentions that one. One could also think of Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance 1985–1986 (No Art Piece)*, for which he went on strike, neither making nor looking at art for a full year.

For Eichhorn, the core of the piece seems to be about time—how it is used, how it is measured, and how it is valued. As the release for the show states, "The work is constituted not in the empty gallery but in the time given to the staff and what they choose to do with it."

It sounds like the gallery staff is going to have to do a bit of preparatory work for their vacation, though: "In order to realize Eichhorn's proposal and not compromise the ongoing operations of the organization, 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 organization to the distinction between 'working' and 'personal' lives within the artistic sphere."

A big thank you to White Columns masher Matthew Higgs for [sharing news of this show on Instagram](#). He asked in the caption: "Could this exhibition tour?" For the sake of overworked and underpaid curators everywhere, here's hoping.

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