

Maria Eichhorn

04.14.16



View of "Maria Eichhorn: 5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours," 2016. Photo: Andy Keate, Chisenhale Gallery

Maria Eichhorn makes exceptionally subtle works—minuscule gestures with magnificent reach, and consequences—that highlight the limits of institutions, and perhaps even art itself. Here, the artist discusses the preparation involved for her solo exhibition at the Chisenhale Gallery, her first in the United Kingdom, titled "5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours," which opens April 23 and runs through May 29, 2016. By closing down the gallery completely for the duration of the show and stipulating that no staff be available during this period, Eichhorn upsets notions surrounding time and labor connected with artistic production and capitalism.

RESEARCH, EXPERIENCES, AND VARIOUS KINDS OF REFLECTION lead me to ideas. In this case, my engagement with time and the way it's defined in relation to labor led me to the creation of this piece. My show at the Chisenhale Gallery is a way of giving time back to the staff who work there. When they accept this offering, without their wages being suspended, the work will emerge. Jacques Derrida states in his book *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1991) that "to give time, the day, or life is to give nothing, nothing determinate, even if it is to give the giving of any possible giving, even if it gives the condition of giving." Proceeding from this thought experiment of Derrida's, I want to interrogate the possibility of suspending the capitalist logic surrounding the notion of exchange and try to make a space in life sans labor a reality, by returning time to those who lack it, or who need it.

The *Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft* (Maria Eichhorn Public Limited Company), 2002, which I established on the occasion of Documenta 11 and is still in existence, relates especially well to this current project. It is an entity that possesses its own stocks and belongs to no one—the money originally invested in it, a little over \$56,000, is not allowed to accrue in value. My Chisenhale piece has been conceived in a similar spirit—again, underscoring that "time" belongs to no one and should somehow be reevaluated, or even extricated from contemporary economies.

That the exhibition space and gallery offices are closed is just a spatial consequence of this gesture—these are, after all, the areas where the staff pursues its labor. The institution itself and the actual exhibition are not closed, but rather displaced into the public sphere and society. A sign will be affixed to the Chisenhale gate explaining all of this, and additional information will be made available on the gallery's website, its social media, and so on. An automatic e-mail reply written specifically for this exhibition will also include a message stating that all incoming e-mail will be automatically deleted and that said recipient cannot be reached until after the close of the exhibition. When the gallery's employees come back to work, there will not be a great deal of e-mails waiting to be dealt with, thankfully.

The first reaction to my proposal? Hearty laughter. Then the Chisenhale's director, Polly Staple, and I met one on one and discussed the project intensively for about three hours. After that, Katie Guggenheim, the curator of exhibitions and events, got involved. The three of us went back and forth for a long time, analyzing and reanalyzing every single facet of this work. I am entirely grateful to both of them for making this project possible.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

— As told to *Himali Singh Soini*