

→ **We imagine a Persona!**

→ If she speaks up
she speaks for many of us

She speaks openly
about precarity

She points out unequal
payment and unpaid care
work without hesitation

When she feels exploited,
unseen, under pressure
to compete, or burned out,
she's aware she feels just
like the majority of artists

She starts to reflect on
the exclusions she performs
within the art field

→ Her work is political.
She knows that the roles
and positions she takes,
whether she compromises
or not, will affect the
whole field

She works in small groups,
which encourage her to
stand up for her political
demands

In negotiations with
curators, colleagues and
institutions she proposes
agreements which
guarantee fair and
respectful working
conditions

→ **Revolt,
she says**^{→1}

AG Arbeit is Tatjana Fell, Alice Münch, Inga Zimprich, Moira Zoitl. The AG Arbeit (Labor Group) was initiated as part of To Have and To Need ^{→2} (Haben und Brauchen) in February 2014. We approach artistic labour by beginning with our subjective experiences and interpreting them politically. We work with questionnaires, ^{→3} investigating the relation between artistic work, care work, paid and unpaid work, visible and invisible labor. In the course of our work we have paid attendance fees for those present during meetings. As a way to engage adequately in an ongoing dialogue ^{→4} on working conditions of artists between the Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs and artists living in Berlin, in 2014 we suggested the concept of a persona, a fictional character that could be performed by multiple artists, actors and activists. Starting with personal experiences, this persona could represent a communication partner to mediate and negotiate artistic working conditions, at the same time developing a subjective yet manifold voice of self-empowerment for us, as artists. When we imagine the persona, we think of a she, ^{→5} intervening during events, daring to voice her discomfort and hesitation, addressing precarity without reserve.

This poster is realized with the support of Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs as part of funding received by To Have and To Need in 2014. ^{→6} Previous members of AG Arbeit have been Ildikó Szántó, Ulrike Jordan, Naomi Henning, Hannah Kruse, Birgit Schlieps, Ute Weiss Leder, Karl Heinz Jeron and Friedrich Kuhn.

The art context is largely structured through informal bonds, acquaintances and relations. Many of us are afraid to fight against unfair working conditions. We fear not being invited again, being seen as difficult or as trouble makers. The art world depends on us being silent. If you speak up against inequalities, remember that you speak for many of us. Your engagement will encourage others to stand up for what is appropriate. Connect to others and share your observations.

In the art context, payment is divided up extremely unequally. ^{→7} Only a tiny fraction of artists make a living off their work. It is important to not conceal our precarity, our existential fears and our discomfort. ^{→8} Show others openly that you struggle. Talk about your other jobs. ^{→9} Do not keep up the image of the artist who lives for—and off—her or his professional recognition alone, as if payment doesn't matter. We need a basic income and the security other professions have.

Many of us do not produce saleable and object-based work, making payment even harder to negotiate. How much time do we spend on researching, preparing, documenting and meeting, none of which is paid for? ^{→10} We need to start making realistic work budgets. ^{→11} What do we consider as labor? ^{→12} What does our work really cost per hour? ^{→13} Stop cutting your artist- and curatorial work fees. Break the silence on money issues in the art context. ^{→14} Claim appropriate payment. ^{→15}

In the art field a lot of labor remains gendered and invisible, in maintaining spaces and infrastructures, attending meetings, writing minutes, applying for funding, summarizing results, communicating in group processes and motivating participants. This commitment in work groups—which provides the support and foundation for production—is often taken for granted. Mostly this work remains unpaid and often it is done by women. We should think about how results of collective work can be represented, how paid and prestigious positions can be divided more equally in groups, and how we can address inequalities in groups openly. Let's establish forms of presentation that involve more than one representative and integrate the different qualities of all group members.

The art field is largely based on national and cooperative funding. Nation-states invest money in their representation at international fairs. We need to always be aware which umbrella our work is shown and distributed under. We have come to accept thinking of exhibition-making as the result of curatorial selection processes along thematic and national categories. But the criteria often fundamentally essentialize, reduce and instrumentalize artistic practices to serve dominant racist, national and capitalist goals. Let's deconstruct more fiercely the formats the art market proposes, in order to stop contributing seemingly radical content in exploitative and racist production forms. ^{→16} Let's dare to question the imperialist implications of the Western art market. Asking critical questions in our exhibition pieces is not enough! We need to work structurally.

Class, race and nation are big issues in the art field. Most of us have a white middle-class background, having been raised in a wealthy climate, often without serious economic pressures. Let us be clear: our white, middle-class perspective continues to function as the normative framework for any discussion about art, despite how often we travel abroad, attend biennials or create critical exhibition projects. This will

remain the norm unless we actively change this. ^{→17} The fact our position is privileged means we must actively deconstruct this normative power, to reflect the exclusions we perform. It demands we gain insight into structural exclusion in the art context. ^{→18}

The art field performs many exclusions that are neither admitted nor thought out. People with limited mobility, people who need facilitation, translation or people who are simply not part of our networks are often not considered when we organize events. Choosing accessible locations and meeting times, offering assistance and child-care and critically examining our invitation policy can reduce barriers and allow people who want to participate to do so. Mothers and single parents are often quickly driven out of a competitive field that requires flexibility and mobility, that requires travelling to exhibitions, symposia and residencies. ^{→19} ^{→20} Making an end to last minute night shifts and to limitless self-mobilisation will help people to know their limits, too.

As artists we are used to investing in our own work, hoping that one day we'll be rewarded with stable careers. Being an emerging artist doesn't mean we'll arrive somewhere. ^{→21} We cannot be young, dynamic and flexible all the time. Even many established colleagues have trouble making a living for the longer stretch. What will sustain us, once we have to care for others, for kids, friends or the elderly? Due to our precarious income our pensions will be below subsistence-level. Ageing is an issue rarely addressed and we are uncomfortable confronting it within the art field. How do we envision working as older artists and how can we change conditions so they meet our needs? Let's face ageing as artists in solidarity and let's speak about it openly.

In Berlin, where funding is scarce, many of us have opened self-organized project spaces and initiatives to create platforms and opportunities for our work. Our commitment creates valuable structures to develop and practice alternative forms of work that respond to our needs more adequately. At the same time, we have to keep in mind how these increase the pressure to work without payment, accept precarious exhibition opportunities and accept visibility as our only reward. Let's make payment, the spending of resources and equal division of labour a regular issue in our self-organized contexts. ^{→22} Let's stop fueling the art market with our free labour. ^{→23} Let's insist on appropriate conditions so we can truly invite and collaborate with our colleagues. ^{→24} In addition to our precarious work as artists, art organizers and art workers, many of us commit to work for better working conditions in self-organized groups. Do not leave this unpaid advocacy to only a few. Show your solidarity and join.

In AG Arbeit we reflect on working conditions in the art field and point out those situations and conditions we feel uncomfortable with. Sharing our perspectives with colleagues is essential as a way to start changing these conditions. Working in small regular groups helps us to encourage each other for the long haul.

In AG Arbeit, we start with our personal experiences. What we experience is political. Though we do not always dare to stand up immediately for our needs or voice our critique, to share our doubts and desires in public, we work to make our demands heard. We created a persona who speaks for us and yet draws her voice from our subjective knowledge—to open up a framework for action. ^{→25} Let's come up with more proposals, concrete proposals, ^{→26} to remake the art field each day.

^{→1} AG Arbeit refers to Julia Kristeva's book *Revolt, she said* published in 2002 by Semiotext(e). By linking to the '68 March Revolution in France, Kristeva states: 'Revolt, as I understand it—psychic revolt, analytic revolt, artistic revolt—refers to a permanent state of questioning, of transformations, an endless probing of appearances.'

^{→2} To Have and To Need (Haben und Brauchen) is an informal platform for discussion and action founded in 2011. It advocates the recognition and preservation of a self-organised artistic practice that has grown out of the specific historical conditions in Berlin. Haben und Brauchen's manifesto (January 2012) goes beyond individual artists' interests and makes connections to debates around the commons, precarious economy, urban development and housing policy as well as the shifting notions of labour in contemporary society. www.habenundbrauchen.de

^{→3} During the workshop *Assembly for Art Workers* we used our questionnaires to approach the topic of labor with the participants. artleaks.org/2014/09/02/art-workers-assembly-and-opening-in-berlin/

As an example for an inquiry into working conditions of cultural workers, please see the 'Short Analyses of the Workers Inquiry Investigation' conducted in Belgrade and Novi Sad by Bojana Piškur and Đorđe Balmazović at: schizocurating.wordpress.com/2014/04/30/a-short-analysis-of-the-workers-inquiry-investigation-by-bojana-piskur-and-djordje-balmazovic

^{→4} As a response to continuous demands to open up a cultural-political dialogue about the situation and future of the production and presentation of contemporary art in Berlin, the Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs commissioned To Have and To Need and bbk berlin to develop a dialogue concept. The proposed concept for dialogue with AG Arbeit's contribution, namely to develop a persona addressing precarious working conditions, can be found here: www.habenundbrauchen.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/HuB_KonzeptDP_Sept2014_dt-en.pdf

^{→5} We chose this pronoun to relate to our main identification in the group and to point at gendered and invisible labor in the art field. Precarity in the art field affects all gender, Inter*, Trans* and Cis and coincides with other structural exclusions, for example racism.

^{→6} Subsequent to the rejection of realizing the dialogue process proposed by To Have and To Need, the Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs granted To Have and To Need 5000 € of public funding, designated for archiving and publishing results of its dialogue-oriented working process. This resulted in the relaunch of To Have and To Need's website with editorial content produced by all working groups. This poster is AG Arbeit's contribution to this project. AG Arbeit's work is financed through the support of the Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs with approximately 900 €.

^{→7} According to a survey conducted in 2011 by *Artists' Interaction and Representation (AIR)* almost a third of visual and applied artists earn less than £ 5,000 a year from their creative work. 57% of the 1,457 respondents said that less than a quarter of their total income was generated by their art practices and only 16% of them paid into a private pension fund. www.hencilla.co.uk/unions/a-n/a/r

^{→8} *Precarious Workers Brigade* is a UK-based group of precarious workers in culture and education who call out in solidarity with all those struggling to make a living in this climate of instability and enforced austerity. The PWB's praxis springs from a shared commitment to developing research and actions that are practical, relevant and easily shared and applied. precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com

^{→9} *Arts & Labor* is dedicated to exposing and rectifying economic inequalities and exploitative working conditions in the art field through direct action and educational initiatives. By forging coalitions, fighting for fair labor practices, and reimagining the structures and institutions that frame the work as artists, Arts & Labor aims to achieve parity for every member of the 99%. artsandlabor.org

^{→10} The TIME GRANTS Campaign on initiative of bbk Berlin demands long-term basic funding which supports the different production phases of a diverse sphere of artistic practices. zeitstipendien.de/en/about-en

^{→11} In long-term negotiations with the City of Berlin, bbk Berlin was able to secure an honoraria of 500 € for all participating artists in the exhibition *based in Berlin* in 2011. This was, compared to the exhibition's funding budget not at all appropriate but celebrated as a first step. As bbk states, this was the first time that artist fees have been paid in an exhibition organized by the federal state of Berlin. nGbK (Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst) established to pay artist fees in 2014.

^{→12} Launching research grants in 2015 the Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs acknowledged research as a significant aspect of artistic production. www.berlin.de/sen/kultur/foerderung/foerderprogramme/artikel.329625.php

^{→13} At a very high-priced conference organized by FAZ Forum on 'Collecting and Curating', Julia Kurz and Anja Lückenemper laid out the time and effort needed to prepare their lecture, for which they were initially not meant to be paid. To articulate their position they used the method *Future Archive*. In consequence they were the only speakers offered a lecture fee retroactively. thefuturearchiveblog.wordpress.com

^{→14} YES! Association addressed finances in their work *Financial Statement*. YES! is a separatist association for art workers whose practices and activities are informed by feminism with an intersectional perspective. YES!'s goal is to overthrow the ruling system of heteronormative, patriarchal, racist and capitalist power structures by putting into practice a structural redistribution of the access to financial resources, space and time within the art scene. For more, see: www.foreningenja.org/om www.foreningenja.org/en/nyhet/english-financial-statement-march-11-2012

^{→15} *Attending workshops like Julia Lemmler's Let's talk about money!* (Wie viel ist meine Arbeit wert?) which took place at Alpha Nova Gallery in 2015, can help us insist on demanding equal and fair payment.

^{→16} *Gulf Labor* is a coalition of international artists working to ensure that migrant worker rights are protected during the construction and maintenance of museums on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, UAE. www.gulflabor.org

^{→17} The conference *Vernetzt euch!*, a cooperation between Bündnis Kritischer Kulturarbeiter_innen and Interflugs, which took place on October 10th and 11th 2015, aimed to bring cultural practitioners together to share visions and strategies against discrimination in the artistic and cultural scene. www.vernetzt-euch.org/konferenz

^{→18} The feminist gallery Alpha Nova organized events and exhibitions focusing on everyday racism in the art field. The exhibition and event series 'Precarious Art: Protest and Resistance' focused on the structures of capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy and white supremacy in their entanglement and interaction. www.alpha-nova-kulturwerkstatt.de/projekte

^{→19} *Cultural ReProducers* are an evolving group of active cultural workers who are also parents. This site is for anyone interested in making the art world a more inclusive and interesting place by supporting arts professionals raising kids. www.culturalreproducers.org

^{→20} Parenting artists in Ireland have connected to form the *Mothership Project*, discussing the impact of having children in the art context, from patriarchal art institutions to topics such as visibility, working part-time and precarity. themothshipproject.wordpress.com/

^{→21} *Bioswop* is a cv-exchange platform. The idea is to provide curriculum vitae, bios, resumes for mutual utilisation and borrowing as well as basic elements of CVs for assembly. People can provide their CV for this purpose. In the case of use, the person can be informed that their CV or parts of it has been borrowed by someone. bioswop.net

^{→22} W.A.G.E. (Working Artists And The Greater Economy) draws attention to economic inequalities that exist in the arts and takes action to resolve them. They initiated the W.A.G.E. Certification Program to establish and guarantee standards of minimum compensation and organizational support for artists in the non-profit arts economy. www.wageforwork.com

^{→23} *Carrot Workers (UK)* is a London-based group of current or ex-interns, cultural workers and educators. Carrot Workers undertake participatory action research around voluntary work, internships, job placements and compulsory free work. They aim to understand the impact they have on material conditions of existence, life expectations, subjectivity and the implications of this for education, life-long training, exploitation, and class interest. Recently, the group has affiliated with the Precarious Workers Brigade. carrotworkers.wordpress.com/about/ precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/about

^{→24} *BBK (Bundesverband Bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler)* works for fair working conditions and issued a guideline for artist fees in exhibition contexts in 2014. www.bbk-bundesverband.de

^{→25} We are inspired by YES! Association's staged performances of the fictional character Lee H. Jones. For more, see footnote ^{→14}.

^{→26} *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 infringement of their labor rights. In the art world, such abuses usually are hidden. ArtLeaks aims to draw attention to concrete abuses in order to underscore the precarious conditions of cultural workers and the necessity for sustained protest. ArtLeaks mobilizes against the appropriation of politically engaged art, culture and theory by institutions embedded in a tight mesh of capital and power. www.art-leaks.org