

Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices

Introduction

The Open call for the ArtLeaks Gazette No. 4 “Demanding Justice: Social Rights and Radical Art Practices” was published in December 2015 and, because of personal and political challenges, it took us some time to publish this issue. Nonetheless, we believe that the theme of the publication is as relevant today as it was a year ago, and we would like to thank our contributors for their timely interventions and patience!

A lot has changed since the ArtLeaks platform was launched in 2011. Compared to the existential threats societies are exposed to today, the problems of the art world seem less important. We witnessed the rise of Trumpism, the establishment of right-wing governments in Europe and threats of global wars. A wave of aggressive commercialization has swept the art field, driven by the process of financialization, turning art into assets for financial speculation. Nevertheless, the climate of social disintegration and political confrontation also forged new forms of struggle and alliances. Art workers around the world contextualize their practice on another qualitative level, in a period marked by human rights, labor, anti-fascist and anti-war campaigns. They are trying to reconcile their artworks, texts, exhibitions, projects with a desire to act politically in line with these campaigns by blurring the lines between artistic, non-artistic and political activist types of work. Their strategies have taken the form of nonviolent actions directed at the museum and gallery system, the art market and even at local governments.

The fourth edition of the ArtLeaks Gazette is supporting art workers' campaigns, and with regards to their social (civil, economic and legal) rights, and demands for an increase in art institutions' responsibilities in upholding these rights. These responsibilities encompass struggles related to representing art workers' projects with integrity, treating their profession fairly and with respect, and remaining open to debates with art workers. While not all art workers' campaigns are united by the

same specific goals, as contexts and needs differ, they include increasing the representation of art workers' voices in art institutions and at the state level.

In addition to analyzing concrete practices and campaigns, this issue engage with relevant topics related to social rights, jurisdictions, legislatures and competences, in order to develop a critique of the neoliberal formats that have been for decades perpetuating across the globe. We decided to bring together those contributions which are able to question neoliberal realities, virulent nationalisms, and austerity regimes, considering not only overall conditions in the artworld but also local specificities.

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