Paperwork: Administrative Practice in Contemporary Art

Reflecting on artists' interventions into administrative frameworks

June 4–September 6, 2019

Opening Reception:
June 4, 2019, 6–8pm

Gallery Hours:
Tuesday–Friday
12–6pm

Sandra Erbacher, *Euroflex*, detail from *The Return of History*, 2019, print from archival installation display, 60 × 40 in. (152.4 × 101.6 cm). Courtesy of the artist

Tali Keren, *New Jerusalem*, 2014-15, video stills from multi-channel video installation and performance at Jerusalem city hall, 25 min. Courtesy of the artist

The International Studio & Curatorial Program announces the opening of *Paperwork: Administrative Practice in Contemporary Art*.

In focusing on administrative systems, procedures and codes, *Paperwork: Administrative Practice in Contemporary Art* reflects on artists' attention to the ways we are all immersed in bureaucracy in everyday life. Emphasizing notions of emancipation and playful resistance, as opposed to disempowerment, artists intervene into the frameworks of contracts, corporate practices, operation research and automation, among other tools of administrative management and production.

Conceptual art of the late 1960s and 1970s often produced an "aesthetics of administration," a de-personified approach to looking at daily bureaucracy. The Conceptual artists' turn towards information-gathering, as a dematerialized way of making art, fed into the rise of institutional critique, in which artists challenged the social, economic, and political systems of art institutions.

Artists in *Paperwork* include Jesse Chun, Sandra Erbacher, Tali Keren, Amalia Pica and Pilvi Takala, whose work interrogates bureaucratization of this political and cultural moment, in ways that resonate loudly with Theodor Adorno's assertion of a "totally administered world." They insert themselves into real-life systems as artistic strategies, often as organizers or performers. Ranging from video to research-based and archival installations, the works in the exhibition together form a cogent overview of the bureaucratic procedures all around us, which are so pervasive they often go unnoticed.

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Sandra Erbacher foregrounds a series of desks produced in the 1980s by Ensslin, a German company, given names such as Euroform, Euroboss and Euroflex, conveying optimism and cultural hegemony of the European project. She juxtaposes images of the "Eurodesks" with images and texts that depict the current reality of Europe in the throes of Brexit, the migrant crisis, and the strengthening of neoliberal market economies. Erbacher questions Europe's hegemonic ideology and interrogates the idea of truth in the context of corporate and government administrations.

Also included in the exhibition are selections from Amalia Pica's *Joy in Paperwork* (2016) series. Numbering more than 1,000 pieces, these works on A4 paper incorporate bureaucratic stamps from all over the world. Pica had difficulties travelling while in the process of securing a British passport, and *Joy in Paperwork* is informed by her own hurdles to obtain citizenship. Using repetitive gestures to mark the paper—sometimes forming recognizable shapes—Pica subverts the tools of bureaucracy to produce lighthearted works.

Jerusalem City Council is the site for Tali Keren's *New Jerusalem* (2015), a "bureaucratic musical performance." The artist was interested in the city's twenty-first century municipal plan, which was never officially authorized but nonetheless implemented. A "united Jerusalem" is outlined in the plan, as the capital of the "Jewish-democratic" state. Keren commissioned a cantor to sing the plan at city hall, and this video is presented with a second video of text documentation of responses by key objectors to it. This performance gives a renewed platform to the plan, and creates a different medium by which to consider bureaucratic legal language.

Pilvi Takala has often intervened in work environments to reveal their power dynamics. In *Stroker* (2018), Takala reenacts the two weeks she spent posing as a wellness consultant in a London co-working space, where she was hired to literally provide touching services to employees to boost their mood and productivity. This personal gesture amid an otherwise bureaucratic environment confuses the workers and underscores the absurdities of trying to solve social issues by administrative means.

Through digital manipulation of various passports and immigration documents—largely drawn from her family archives—Jesse Chun appropriates and reinterprets the imagery and language of administration. In *Landscape* (2019), the watermarks of various passport pages are transformed into large-scale landscapes of unidentifiable lands. Pixelated and re-contextualized, and devoid of the national markers and traveler's data, they are shown alongside *Forms* (2016), a series of works in which Chun's personal collection of immigration forms are reimagined into erasure poetry, thereby subverting the power and function of bureaucratic language.

Artists Biographies:

Tali Keren (born 1982, Jerusalem) is a media artist living in Brooklyn. Her performances, videos, and installations focus on the formation of ideology, violence, and political identity. Keren's work has been featured in recent solo exhibitions at Eyebeam, New York; MINI/Goethe-Institut Curatorial Residencies Ludlow 38 New York; and Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv.

Sandra Erbacher (born 1978, Germany) lives and works in New Jersey and New York. Erbacher has exhibited nationally and internationally, at Atlanta Contemporary Art Center; Chazen Museum of Art, Madison; Parisian Laundry, Montreal; SPACE, Portland; and Five Years, London. Her work is included in the Fidelity Investments Corporate Art Collection.

Pilvi Takala (born 1981, Helsinki) is an artist living and working between Berlin and Helsinki. Her video works are based on performative interventions in which she researches specific communities to process social structures and question the normative rules and truths of our behavior. She has exhibited work at MoMA PS1, New York; New Museum, New York; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Kunsthalle Basel, Manifesta 11, Zurich; and the 9th Istanbul Biennial, among others.

Jesse Chun (born 1984, Seoul) is an artist living and working in New York, who examines legal and historic documents, linguistic pedagogies, and records of cultural memory. She uses text, digital media, sound, sculpture, and publishing to examine languages of bureaucracy, power and place. She has had exhibitions at the Queens Museum; Brooklyn Academy of Music; and Bronx Museum of the Arts, all New York, among others.

Amalia Pica (born 1978, Neuquén, Argentina) lives and works in London. She has recently exhibited work at Cc Foundation & Art Centre, Shanghai; Perth Institute of Contemporary Art; and the 12th Shanghai Biennale, among others.

About ISCP:

Founded in 1994 and celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, ISCP is now the fourth-largest visual arts residency program in the world and a global leader in the field of visual arts residency programs. ISCP supports the creative development of artists and curators, and promotes exchange through residencies and public programs. Housed in a former factory in Brooklyn, with 35 light-filled work studios and two galleries, ISCP is New York's most comprehensive international visual arts residency program. ISCP organizes exhibitions, events and offsite projects, which are free and open to all, sustaining a vibrant community of contemporary art practitioners and diverse audiences.