

insider

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OPPORTUNITIES ONLINE FOR ISC MEMBERS ONLY

The on-line version of Opportunities provides more current information than the print version. We hope you will visit the Opportunities section on the Web and encourage sculptors and colleagues who are not ISC members to join so that they too will benefit from this valuable information.

Web opportunities on <www.sculpture.org> are available to ISC members only. To enter the section you must use the user name and password. For more information, contact <isc@sculpture.org>.

To join the ISC, contact ISC / Membership at 609 / 689.1051 x301, fax: 609 / 689.1061, or email: <membership@sculpture.org>.

RESOURCE

Artists continue to fight for fair wages worldwide. In previous issues, we've discussed the victories and defeats of groups such as W.A.G.E. in New York and CARFAC in Canada. Continuing the series this month, we move to Northern Europe—specifically Sweden, Finland, and Estonia.

A new book, *Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice*, describes the problems and potential solutions to what the editors refer to as the “precarity of art workers.” Edited by three artist/activists—Erik Krikortz (Stockholm/Berlin), Airi Triisberg (Tallinn/Leipzig), and Minna Henriksson (Helsinki)—the book is a compilation of philosophical arguments, personal anecdotes, artist interviews, and artist projects, all linked together by the red thread of unpaid labor.

We begin with Sweden, which is known for its hugely successful social welfare programs. Therefore, it's surprising to learn that Sweden's artists still struggle to make ends meet. In 2009, the country passed the MU Agreement, which mandates that galleries and museums negotiate contracts with artists before displaying their work. The agreement also charts minimum fees for exhibitions based on the length and number of artists involved. Unfortunately, the MU Agreement has been a complete failure, with many galleries and museums finding loopholes to ignore the suggested fees and many artists afraid to ask for more while negotiating contracts.

In Finland and Estonia, the major problem lies in an accepted tradition of artists having to rent out gallery space to put on shows. In Finland, museums and galleries only pay artists a minimal “copyright fee,” and artists are expected to apply for

state-sponsored arts grants to cover all of their expenses, an onerous and hugely time-consuming affair.

In Estonia, public museums and galleries apply for grants themselves, but shows only last about 2 weeks each and grants are often limited. (Arts funding collapsed after the fall of the USSR, and many Estonians are still wary of public grants, which the communists only used to reward propaganda art.) Commercial galleries, on the other hand, act merely as exhibition spaces that artists rent out, with artists responsible for everything from promotion to set-up and takedown, to marketing their work.

Throughout the book, contributors point to successful models in Germany and France, where artists are treated more like professional workers and less like hobbyists. The second half of the book covers the history of art worker movements and includes a survey of organizations currently working on bettering the lives of artists in Northern Europe, including Reko, ArtLeaks, and Fokus Grupa.

Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice, edited by Erik Krikortz, Airi Triisberg, and Minna Henriksson. Available free on-line at <www.art-workers.org>.



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