

Gastarbeiter 2.0 explores migration, working conditions, and class between Germany and the former Yugoslavia



Image: Gastarbeiter 2.0

Exhibition

Gastarbeiter 2.0: Arbeit Means Rad

April 13–June 16, 2024

Opening: April 12, 7 pm

Press preview: April 12, 11 am

Please register at presse@ngbk.de

Gastarbeiter 2.0: Arbeit Means Rad opens at nGbK am Alex on April 12. A multimedia exhibition, a publication, and a program of accessible outreach events explore migration, working conditions, and class between Germany and the former Yugoslavia. Based on the experiences and activities of twelve artists from the former Yugoslavia, who live there, in Germany, or between the two regions, *Gastarbeiter 2.0* opens up a space for a recontextualization of the guestworker topos, offering postcolonial, post-migrant, and feminist views on these phenomena. While the title itself refers to the former program of temporary migrant employment in Germany, the subtitle uses wordplay to denote work-migration relations – the German term “Arbeit” and the Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian term “rad” both mean “labor.”

Gastarbeiter 2.0: Arbeit Means Rad is a curatorial project centered on ideas of power-labor relations, migration, and precariousness. It takes a transhistorical look at Germany's and ex-Yugoslavia's economic, political, and cultural dependencies.

The selected works are organized around four diverging views of the term "Gastarbeiter" and presented through four curatorial nuclei: Transfer, Symbiosis, Alienation, and Body.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a rich program of guided tours in German, English and Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian (BCMS), performances, a workshop, and a transdisciplinary publication. The outreach program takes accessibility as its main focus, offering guided tours for signers by and for the deaf and hearing impaired (German Sign Language), the blind and partially sighted, and in Leichte Sprache (easy language).

Artists: Kemil Bekteši, Jelena Fužinato, Alma Gačanin, Adrijana Gvozdenović, Nadežda Kirćanski, Siniša Labrović, Dejan Marković, Nikoleta Marković, Mila Panić, Amir Silajdžić, Bojan Stojčić, and Jelena Vukmanović

nGbK work group: Hannah Marquardt, Andrej Mirčev, Adna Muslija, Bojan Stojčić, Jelena Vukmanović

About the Works

In her durational artistic project "Who is Adrian Lister" **Adrijana Gvozdenović** constructs a fictitious persona of fluid identity. Through discursive and performative forms, the artist uses this persona as a platform to problematize various phenomena of contemporary society. In her work "Arbeitsraum/Ausstellung: Who is Adrian Lister?" Gvozdenović creates a temporary working space inside the gallery, which she uses as a place of gathering and exchanging ideas. In a performative lecture, she discusses Adrian Lister as a worker, theoretically deconstructing the phenomenon of a marketable alter-ego.

With the series of drawings "Standard Operating Procedure" and the photography "The Good Life," **Alma Gačanin** reflects upon the experience of "nomadism" conditioned by work. A former flight attendant, she records moments from life after working hours, thus establishing a dialogue between the quality of leisure time and working conditions. Deconstructing the invisible labor conducted as "innocent working on oneself," Gačanin highlights the omnipresence of capitalism's imperatives in everyday life.

Amir Silajdžić, a craftsman who creates neon installations for other artists often exhibited in Germany and other EU countries, presents a cycle of sculptures called "24 variations of Fritz Cola." Made from melted glass bottles of Fritz Cola, these sculptures resemble pop-art objects while reflecting the contemporary relationship between artistic work and craft. Since Fritz Cola is unavailable for purchase in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it subtly establishes a relationship between the German and ex-Yugoslavian markets.

Bojan Stojčić's video performance “Die Deutsche Turnkunst” gathered one hundred participants, all of them migrants, to perform simple gymnastic exercises designed by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the father of modern gymnastics, who used them as a way to strengthen the national spirit of young people at the beginning of the 19th century. Bodies, recorded in public space almost as sculptural forms, take on an absurd dimension. With their bodies, migrants perform the body of the nation they want to belong to, suggesting a different value that human bodies have – one that is not marketable.

Dejan Marković's work “Aptiv Syndrome” adopts a neo-colonial approach to the Balkans and the exploitative working conditions which have physical illnesses of the workers as one of their ultimate consequences. By sublimating the embroidery technique and materials produced in the factories of foreign corporations in the south of Serbia, Marković criticizes the working conditions and class relations arising from the interdependence of Germany and Serbia.

Jelena Fužinato's work “Builder's Daughter: Everything is Peachy” is the second iteration of her performative installation. Consisting of scaffolding constructed by hired workers and of drawings placed above it, this installation functions as a nomadic art piece. Constantly changing its position in the gallery space, the installation, on the one hand, blocks the entrance and, on the other, serves as an obstacle in the space, questioning the accessibility of art and cultural institutions to the immigrant working class.

Jelena Vukmanović's work “October 2020 – March 2024” consists of dozens of empty white envelopes. In these envelopes, the artist has received notes and letters from various administrations and bureaucratic institutions over three and a half years. Materializing the invisible work behind the migration process itself, Vukmanović deals with bureaucracy as an inevitable precondition for labor. As the process of obtaining a visa or work permit implies migrant worker's legal uncertainty, the invisible bureaucratic labor is also presented as the cause of these workers' precariousness.

Kemil Bekteši's multimedia work “Sofra Shqiptare,” a continuation of his years-long research project “My dad loves me so much he let me be an artist,” deals with the consequences and advantages of his family's migrations. Using installation and wall drawing to map the work-related connections within Berlin's Kosovar community, the artist focuses on empathy and solidarity as working preconditions.

In her work “Südost Paket,” **Mila Panić** uses bus wheels as a synonym for migration. Playing with the fact that such wheels are often used to hide smuggled goods and foodstuffs (coffee, sugar and cigarettes) in them, Panić presents those goods as artifacts of an intimate connection with home and everyday life in the country of origin. “Südost Paket” is followed by a stand-up performance by Mila Panić. Bringing into the gallery space a still unrecognized art form, she reflects the daily life of immigrant workers from the Balkans.

Nadežda Kirćanski presents two artworks: the series of drawings “the beautiful paintings” and the site-sensitive installation “and for when do you need that.” Through the series of drawings, Kirćanski uses visual representations to criticize manifestations of contemporary

value systems. However, with the temporary migration of the artist from Serbia to Western Europe, the drawings of dinar banknotes are replaced by Euro banknotes. The installation – formally drawing inspiration from film set design, a “non-artistic” work Kirćanski had to take upon to make a living – uses stretched tapes to present the antagonism between art and existence.

Nikoleta Marković questions the existence of the working class today through visual-linguistic communication and the form of a graphic novel in her work “Daily Struggles.” Establishing a dialogue between her own class and working position and the position of construction workers, whose work on the reconstruction of the facade she observed daily, Marković focuses on the relationship between silhouette and window, conceptually equating them with the relationship between workers and ideology.

The performance “Work on yourself” by **Siniša Labrović** uses movement to ironize the capitalist imperative for continuous work on the physical, intellectual, and emotional preparation of workers. In doing so, it calls into mind the fact that a large number of ex-Yugoslavian immigrants were and are employed in positions that entail physical labor.

Program

Friday, April 12, Opening

7 pm, performance *Builder's Daughter: Everything is Peachy* (setting up), Jelena Fužinato

7:30 pm, opening speeches (with translation into German Sign Language)

8 pm, performance *Work on yourself*, Siniša Labrović

8:30 pm, Antifa Choir

Saturday, April 27 (Gallery Weekend)

12–1 pm, guided tour with Bojan Stojčić (in English)

1–5 pm, gathering *Arbeitsraum/Ausstellung: Who is Adrian Lister?*, facilitated by Adrijana Gvozdenović

Saturday, May 4

1:30–3 pm, guided tour with Jelena Vukmanović (in Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian)

3–6 pm, workshop *Conversation and workshop with the first Gastarbeiter generation*, by Nikoleta Marković

Thursday, May 16

4–5:30 pm pm guided tour in German easy language with Hannah Marquardt, David Permantier and Hildegard Wittur

Saturday, May 18

2–3:30 pm, guided tour for visually impaired and blind people with Emmilou Rössling and Silja Korn (in German)

4–5:30 pm, guided tour with Andrej Mirčev (in German)

Friday, May 24

4:30–6 pm, guided tour in German Sign Language with Dana Cermane

Saturday, May 25

12–1:30 pm, guided tour with Andrej Mirčev (in German)

2–6 pm, gathering *Arbeitsraum/Ausstellung: Who is Adrian Lister?*, facilitated by Adrijana Gvozdenović

Saturday, June 8

4–5:30 pm, guided tour and artist talk with Jelena Fužinato (in German)

Friday, June 14, Closing Event

7:30–8 pm, performance *Builder's Daughter: Everything is Peachy* (dismantling), Jelena Fužinato

9 pm, stand-up comedy with Mila Panić (in English)

Winter 2024

presentation of the accompanying publication

All events take place at nGbK am Alex.

For further information, please visit: ngbk.de

nGbK am Alex

Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 11/13, 10178 Berlin, 1st floor (access via escalator)

Opening hours: Tue–Sun 12–6 pm, Fri 12–8 pm

Free admission

Accessible with wheelchairs and strollers

Funded by the Senate Department for Culture and Community.

In partnership with Ambasada gUG (Berlin) and Gallery Manifesto (Sarajevo).

Press images are available for download [here](#).

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