

THE ILLEGALITY OF FREEDOM

Date | 11/11/2016 - 12/11/2016

Venue | Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Main Building, Schillerplatz 3, 1010 Vienna
Aula and Room M13

Participants | Milica Tomić, Marina Gržinić, Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, Lidija Krienzer-Radojević, Elke Krasny, Nenad Romić aka Marcell Mars, Jelena Vesić, Jelena Petrović, Karen Mirza, Brad Butler and Övül Ö. Durmusoglu.

Concept | Jelena Petrović

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The symposium *The Illegality of Freedom* brings together political, theoretical and artistic insights and practices, in order to investigate the false dichotomy (choice) between *legality* and *illegality* when considering political, economic and any other socially constitutive element of today's global (permanent) war. *Freedom* appears at this point as a fundamental and arbitrary notion of neoliberal society, the notion that justifies the state of war (consisting of all local/global social crises). The actual means of democratic defense of humanity, such as: military interventions, austerity measures, refugees' policies, humanitarian aid, migration laws, human rights, etc., are discursively and ideologically based on the meaning of 'freedom'. These means (co)produce the neoliberal mechanisms of global governmentality, as well as the permanent state of crisis, conflict and terror. Following art-theory practices, about the relation between il/legality and freedom, the symposium challenges the safe zone of ideological thinking and interrogates images, policies and interventions of the permanent war today in search of the political articulation of resistance beyond this false dichotomy. Departing from September 11th, 2001 and the beginning of the war on terror, as declared by the Bush administration, the symposium will focus on common grounds between artistic practices and critical thinking about the urgent and difficult subjects of il/legality, resistance, and social utopia while considering the meaning of freedom in the context of the permanent war.

The Illegality of Freedom will open with **Milica Tomić's** lecture-performance, CONTAINER, on Friday, November 11th 2016, at 18.00h. CONTAINER is an ongoing art project about the state and presence of the permanent war (on terror), which uses forensic means of reconstruction of crimes, to reveal existence of the global war and its il/legality within every particular context where it is possible to (re)construct conditions of the same war crime.

The symposium will continue with lectures, talks and discussions the following day, from 9.30h to 17h on Saturday, November 12th 2016. The first session, *What Does Freedom Stand for Today?*, will be introduced by **Marina Gržinić** who will discuss the relation of freedom to necropolitics, waste, nation-state, sovereignty and subjectivities in order to question the contemporary idea of freedom. Lidija Krienzer-Radojević will problematize how the concept of 'freedom' creates the neoliberal state and shapes its political economy (through controlling, repressive mechanism of protecting, intervening, helping etc.), while **Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei** will talk about the idea of the statelessness and illegality focusing on the different editions of the project, *New World Summit*.

Following this project, which explores the field of art as a space to re-imagine and act upon a fundamental practice of democracy, the next session, *The Politics of Resistance by Other Means*, interrogates the meaning and means of social resistance, critical way of thinking, doing, educating, and organizing outside the neoliberal concept of 'legality'. Reflecting on the meaning of the commons and different forms of historical and contemporary violation, **Elke Krasny** will raise questions about unsettling resistance. The forms and formats of resistance will be further discussed by **Jelena Vesić** who will introduce the notion of political baffling and the state of *bafflement* as an act of freedom, as a right of the disprivileged, powerless and deprived in confronting the violence of power. **Nenad Romić** (aka **Marcell Mars**) will close this session by presenting the project *Public Library/The Memory of the World* which uses art, Internet, and social webs as (infra)structures to create the universal space of free exchange of common/global knowledge.

The utopian hacker ethic of universal sharing, which is the trigger for a previous online book-sharing project, opens questions of possible social utopias and its limitations when it comes to the actual meaning of (being) illegal. The session, *Art and Resistance Beyond the Social Utopia* will be introduced by **Jelena Petrović** and will continue with a conversation between **Karen Mirza** and **Brad Butler** about their artistic practice of non-participation, which often implies the schizophrenic position around the question: *What does it mean to be/to act illegally today?* The symposium will conclude with reflections by **Övül Ö. Durmusoglu** on the common battleground against racist, misogynic and colonial conditions of everyday life under the state of permanent and global war. The day will end without final remarks, but rather with emergent questions about resisting acts of creating, doing and ultimately living.

The symposium is organized within the frame of the Endowed Professorship for Central and South-Eastern European Art Histories. A co-operation between ERSTE Foundation and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.