

## I would prefer not to

Anu Ramdas, Eva Koch, Trine Mee Sook Gleerup, Jan Bäcklund, Kristoffer Ørum, Marie Koch Kjærgaard, Peter Birkholm, Johanne Skovbo Lasgaard, Andreas Albrechtsen, Marie Thams, Hour Projects, Herman Melville and KLD Repro

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Exhibition period: August 19th – December 9th 2017

The time of production, commodity-time, is an infinite accumulation of equivalent intervals. (...) In this social domination by commodity-time, "time is everything, man is nothing, he is at most the carcass of time" (*Poverty of Philosophy*).

Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle.

Time has become a scarce commodity. There is never enough of it, it seems. This is why time is precious; why it is something we try to save.  
In today's Western societies our method for saving time is efficiency and the attempt of getting the most out of our day. If you have the means you can even buy yourself more time.

The consequences of this understanding of time permeate through all aspects of human life. At the work place, economic discourses of growth and acceleration guides efforts to optimize our work efforts. Our free time is packed with experiences; offers of entertainment, information and activities at our fingertips. Even sleep is no longer just a state of rest but a means to secure continued and increased performance. When are we ever actually off and not controlled by time?

*I would prefer not to* is an exhibition in which we try to take back time from an economic understanding of the phenomenon. Throughout the exhibition period we will ask what can emerge from preferring not to and doing nothing, from boredom and laziness, from the meaningless and non-functional. We promise to slow down, stretch and waste time. We will procrastinate, hesitate and dilly-dally.

The exhibition not only borrows its title from Herman Melville's short story *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* from 1853 but is also inspired by the passive resistance that is inherent in the statement. *I would prefer not to* is a sentence uttered by the story's main character Bartleby in response to his boss' repeated requests; a polite refusal to do his job that grows into a rejection of any form of production or even consumption. Bartleby has since become an exemplary for exerting free will and protesting structural and societal demands of self-discipline disregarding one's own needs. By rejecting demands that are so reasonably expected of him to follow, his behaviour escapes the logic of modern society.

We turn to art and artists as our companions in this conversation because art is both praised and criticized for being without use value. Again and again the same debate arises about whether or not the arts are worth taxpayers' money. It seems to be a phenomenon that escapes logic and evades conventional measures of value. It is both essential to a society and unnecessary. It can be sold at astronomical prizes and escape economic circulation. Art is paradoxical – a cliché, no doubt – but still a valid observation. It has the potential of being a waste of time, of money or some other form of excess. For this exhibition we have invited a group of artists not because they necessarily escape economic circulation, but because there are elements within their practice, their work process or the art itself that escape an economic sense of time.

The exhibition *I would prefer not to* is not static but will develop throughout the exhibition period like an organism growing and transforming with time. This generates an exhibition in which there is space for extension and movement, for adding and subtracting works of art, for regretting or for changing the context in which the individual art works are placed and for approaching them from different perspectives.

meter is a non-profit exhibition space centred around curatorial experimentation. The first two years are dedicated to creating exhibitions that take an investigative and critical stance towards society through art and artistic practices.

Supported by

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