

Petra Bauer and SCOT-PEP *Workers!*

13.04.19 — 30.06.19

Workers! is a new film by artist and filmmaker Petra Bauer and sex-worker led organisation SCOT-PEP.

It was filmed in the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) in Glasgow, a building rooted in workers' struggles for rights and political representation. During SCOT-PEP's one-day occupation of the STUC, conversations unfold that centre the voices of sex workers demanding to be seen as experts on their own work and lives. Within the film installation is a new banner by artist Fiona Jardine and SCOT-PEP, inspired by the traditional iconography and craft of Trade Union banners and tapestries.

Regular workshops held over three years supported the process of making the film. The group shared their daily experiences of work, political organising, and the structural challenges faced when trying to change the conditions for sex workers in Scotland. Watching films together and practically testing different representational strategies has been central to the development of *Workers!*. Through an ongoing process of listening and sharing ideas, Petra and SCOT-PEP were guided by the questions: how do you act politically when stigma prevents you from being public? How do

you create new images of sex workers organising without revealing the identity of those involved? What is regarded as work and who has the right to work? How has (women's) work been represented historically and what new strategies can be used for filmmaking today?

This collective approach is inspired by feminist film practitioners who emphasise making films *with* their subjects, not *about* them. Two historic films are used as a starting point for the new film: *Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent* (1975) by Carole Roussopoulos and collective Vidéo Out, that documents the occupation of a church by two hundred sex workers denouncing police harassment and dangerous working conditions; and Chantal Akerman's iconic *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), which depicts the daily routine of Jeanne as a mother, housewife and sex worker.

The project attends to contemporary conditions in Scotland and beyond, deploying film as a tool for exploring debates on work. Visit Collective's Library in the City Observatory for an archive of written and audio materials that expand on the process of making *Workers!*.

Petra Bauer works as an artist and filmmaker. She is concerned with the question of film as a political practice, and sees it as a space where social and political negotiations can take place. Recent exhibitions include: *Soon Enough: art in action*, Tensta Konsthall (2018); *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, Riga Biennial (2018); *Show Me Your Archive and I Will Tell You Who is in Power*, KIOSK, Ghent (2017); *Women in Struggles*, on tour to different Folkets Hus (People's Houses) in Sweden (2016–17); and *All the World's Futures*, 56th Venice Biennale (2015). Petra is an initiator of the feminist platform k.ö.k (Kvinnor könskar kollektivitet – Women Desire Collectivity).

SCOT-PEP is a sex-worker led charity that advocates for the safety, rights and health of everyone who sells sex in Scotland. They believe that sex work is work, and that sex workers deserve protections such as labour rights. Along with Amnesty International, the World Health Organization and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, they believe that the decriminalisation of sex work best upholds the safety and rights of people who sell sex.

COLLECTIVE

CITY DOME

1

Petra Bauer and SCOT-PEP, *Workers!*, film, 38 minutes, 2018. Produced by Collective and HER Film.

2

Fiona Jardine and SCOT-PEP, *banner*, 2018. Printed by the Centre for Advanced Textiles and Glasgow School of Art, sewing by Ashleigh Miller, workshops led by Mhari McMullan and Francis Robertson, and digital artwork by Maeve Redmond.

Supported by Creative Scotland. Edith-Russ-Haus, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Stiftung Neidersachsen, Outset Scotland Student Circle, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Royal Institute of Art (Sweden) and The Swedish Arts Grants Committee/IASPIS.

The film and associated research materials have now been acquired for the University of Edinburgh's Contemporary Art Research Collection and will be accessible to students and the public from summer 2019.

