

## **2. Motivatie / Motivation**

*Wat is uw motivatie om te reageren op deze open oproep (max. 200 woorden)?*  
*What is your motivation to react to this open call (max. 200 words)?*

Since its inception, FIG Projects has worked at the threshold between various practices and around a common territory: the city. The current mission and precedent trajectory of Extra City are in tune with our cultural and political approach, that considers the condition of the urban realm and the modes of production of space as a fertile terrain of encounter between numerous stakeholders. The forward-looking bravery that has characterized Extra City and the promise embedded in its current cultural dimension, demonstrated by the will to take risks with an open call, appeal to us as they resonate with our mode of operation. One aspect in particular is crucial: for Extra City art is not conceived as an autonomous activity, what instead seems to be the dominant protocol more and more dominated by the market, but rather as a critical agent, engaged with reality. We see ourselves, in our curatorial role, as facilitators of dialogue and exchange that can occur across differences of class, education, personal trajectories and identities. The format of the call is exciting to us as it allows to elaborate a proposal open to develop other time, reacting to the specific context of Extra City and Antwerp.

## **3. Beknopte samenvatting / Brief summary**

*Geef een beknopte Engelstalige samenvatting van het project (max. 60 woorden).*  
*Give a brief summary of the project (max. 60 words).*

The conditions of contemporary capitalistic development are constantly impacting in the organization of work and labour. Such dynamic field is translated in the re-articulation of space and time, which is opposed by novel forms of resistance. "Work / Labour – The Aesthetics of Resistance" proposes to explore how aesthetic and

cultural practices are engaged with the transformation of work, either by representation and critique or through new forms of mobilization of workers.

#### 4. Concept / Concept

*Beschrijf het inhoudelijk concept van het projectvoorstel met informatie over methodologie en format (onderzoeksproject, tentoonstelling, lezingenreeks, participatief project, ...), procesplanning, eventuele partners (indien van toepassing) en/of informatie over de betrokken kunstenaars (max. 800 woorden).*

*Describe the concept of the project proposal including information on methodology and format (research project, exhibition, lecture series, film program, participatory project, ...), planning, potential partners (if applicable) and/or information on artists involved (max. 800 words).*

“Work / Labour – The Aesthetics of Resistance” is conceived as a three years’ collaboration with Extra City around the conditions of “contemporary work”. The title is an explicit reference to the political novel “The Aesthetics of Resistance” by Peter Weiss that opens with a long dialogue between the main protagonists, three young men from Berlin, about the classic frieze of the Pergamon Altar, during the early years of the Nazi regime. The dialogue revolves around the fact that the figure of Heracles appears to be absent from the frieze, depicting the battle between giants and gods, a classical myth where Heracles was one of the protagonists. For the left-leaning proletarians, Heracles comes to represent the symbol of the oppressed, whom is almost never a subject of high art. In his novel, Weiss recognized a recurrent social feature of the period, that of the working classes visiting museums and cultural institutions as a means to achieve self-education and therefore to be culturally equipped for the future revolution to come.

“Work / Labour” would be developed following four intertwined axis: how work and labour are thought and represented in contemporary culture; what are the status and condition of work and labour within the arts; how the changes in production are affecting the territory of cities, with particular attention to Antwerp and its region, and which are the current forms of social and political mobilization of workers.

The proposal is conceived as a series of punctual activities that will happen at Extra City with a rhythmic cadence, during the period of the collaboration, and that will deploy a differentiated array of tools. Based on the conversation with Extra City and other stakeholders in the region (public and private institutions, universities and schools, civic associations, unions) and on the resources available, the events should, ideally, happen every three months and have each one a duration of 1-2 days. The formats will vary:

- 1) Speech acts. Seminars, lectures, round-tables, debates, and workshops, including local and international participants, aimed at exploring the topics around labour. Example: the notion of debt as organizer of the labour force, around the thinking of Maurizio Lazzarato or specialized embedding in the writings of Simone Weil.
- 2) Compressed festivals. Screenings, artistic performances and theatre plays, presenting either historical examples or contemporary practices. Example: Laurent Cantet, *Ressources Humaines*, 1999 or Jia Zhangke, *24 City*, 2008.
- 3) Single show. Installation of one work of art in the gallery spaces at Extra City, related to the topic, with collateral events organized around the work. Example: Jeff Wall, *Men waiting*, 2006 or Harun Farocki, *Workers Leaving the Factory in 11 Decades*, 2006.

- 4) Local explorations. This element is composed of three parallel components: commissioned works so as to document and represent the conditions of labour in the Antwerp region; guided visits to the places of work, past and present, and meetings with local organizations, activists and citizens. Example: Jota Izquierdo analysing the flow of merchandise and workers through the port of Antwerp
- 5) Accessible archive. All preparatory material, bibliography and result of each event will converge into an archive, accessible on site and through digital interfaces.

The organization and calendar of these activities will be a consequence of the initial phase of research conducted by FIG Projects in close dialogue with Extra City. Components of this part of work, such as conversations, brain-storming sessions and round-tables, will also become public elements of the whole initiative. The research will allow to refine themes and topics, identify contributors and create contacts with the local stakeholders. The activities will be conceived as a sequence of initiatives connected with each other, in order to build a body of shared knowledge. For instance, a seminar about the history of the representation of workers in painting could happen in occasion of the single show of the Jeff Wall's picture or a screening of the movie by Allan Sekula on shipment, *The Forgotten Space* can accompany a debate with local unions about the conditions of work in the port.

The main objective of this proposal is to contribute to the role of Extra City as a node of reflection on the situation of contemporary life, with a particular attention on the urban context. By proposing a three years' series of smaller events, the ambition is to encounter a diversity of audiences and interlocutors, so as to establish a sufficiently open platform on which other collaborations and projects could later emerge. The topic of how we work, what is our condition of workers and where labour is going seems to us a crucial angle from where to understand our human condition.