

Same Histories

Artist: Matei Bejenaru

Opening exhibition: 23.02.2019
starting with 18.00h

23.02 – 04.04.2018

Spinnerei Leipzig / Anca Poterasu Guest Gallery Space

Matei Bejenaru's artistic approach involves an in-depth questioning of social values and shifting paradigms in systems of economic production, mentalities and lifestyles. Working with photography, but also video, performance and installations the artist is preoccupied with the ethic of representation in his numerous documentary projects alongside a continuous interest on how the photographic images are formed and how they inform our world.

The solo-show *Same Histories* features two series of Matei Bejenaru's works, spanning over a time period of five years during which Romania became a part of the European Union in 2007. The installation work *Enlarged Clothing* (2005) and the selection of photographs from the *M3: Work, Memory, Movement* (2008 – 2010) continue to map out a recognizable story to recent international debates on work migration and the exploitation of cheap labour.

In 2003, Romania was the leading European exporter of textiles to the EU market, with most of the clothing production taking place under the "Lohn system", which took advantage of the low labour force costs and the remaining industrial infrastructure of the former communist regime. With Romania entering the European Union in 2007, the Lohn system of production continued to extend to other, more cost-effective areas in Europe regarding the labour force, to countries such as Ukraine or Republic of Moldova. Through the *Clothes Enlargement* art project, Matei Bejenaru devised an algorithm which shows how large the clothes should have been in rapport with more equitable pay at the time.

In search for better work conditions, better salaries and opportunities, many workers from Eastern Europe left their countries to work abroad. Matei Bejenaru's photographic works from the M3 series have a well-defined documentary value, but they also explore types of representation of labour, avoiding the propagandistic approach exercised during the communist regime in Romania, for example. The works reveal the pitfalls in understanding labour in the past and its ongoing consequences now. By tracing nowadays living conditions and work environments Matei Bejenaru draws attention over the way that history keeps either repeating or continuously creating the same instances, in need of a lucid contextualization amidst formal movements and migration processes.

Matei Bejenaru is a visual artist who lives and works in Iași, where he teaches photography and video art at the "George Enescu" University of Arts. In his projects, through photography, video, performance and inter-media installations, he analyzes how the ways of economic production, technological knowledge, mentalities and lifestyles have changed in the last two decades in the post-communist countries. His latest projects focus on visual poetics and the materiality of the photographic medium.

Selected solo exhibitions: *Galerie d'Art & Essai de l'Université Rennes 2 (FR; 2018-2019); The National Museum of The Romanian Peasant (RO;2018); Galeria Aparte, Iasi (RO;2018); Anca Poterasu Gallery, Bucharest (RO;2016); tranzit.iasi (RO; 2013); The Artery Gallery, North Adams, Massachusetts, USA (2012); Contemporary Art Gallery of the Brukenthal Museum Sibiu (RO;2011); Galerie ERSEP Tourcoing (FR) (with Yves Robuschi, 2009);*

Offspace Gallery, Vienna (AT; 2002) ; Kulturkontakt Gastatelier, Vienna (AT; 2002).

Selected group exhibitions: *The National Museum of Contemporary Art (RO; 2018 - 2019); Orient, travelling exhibition presented at Kim? Laikmetīgās mākslas centrs, Riga; BOZAR, Bruxelles; Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej Bunkier Sztuki, Cracovia; Timisoara Art Encounters Biennial (RO; 2017); Camera Plus – Biennial for Contemporary Photography, Iași (RO) ; Maskinuset, Grängesberg, Sweden (SE; 2016); Salonul de Proiecte, Bucharest (RO; 2016); Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Berlin (DE; 2015); The National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest (RO; 2015); Timisoara Art Encounters Biennial (RO; 2015); Korea Foundation Seoul (2015); Summer of Photography Bruxelles (BE; 2014); Athens Biennial (GR; 2013); ICA London (GB; 2011); Mucsarnok Museum Budapest (HU; 2010); The Drawing Room London (GB; 2010); INDEX Stockholm (SE; 2010); Salzburger Kunstverein (AT; 2009); Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2008); Futura Art Center Prague (CH; 2008); Prague Biennial 3 (CH; 2007); Tate Modern London (GB; 2007); NGBK Berlin (DE; 2007); Museum for Contemporary Art Belgrade (SRB; 2005); 49th Venice Biennial Venice (IT; 2001); Poznanski Factory, Lodz (PL; 2001); Ludwig Museum, Budapest (HU; 1997).*