

SECURIWAS?

By Miriam Hübl and Virginia Lui

Social Design - Arts as Urban Innovation

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Master Thesis

Title of Master Thesis
“SECURIWAS?”

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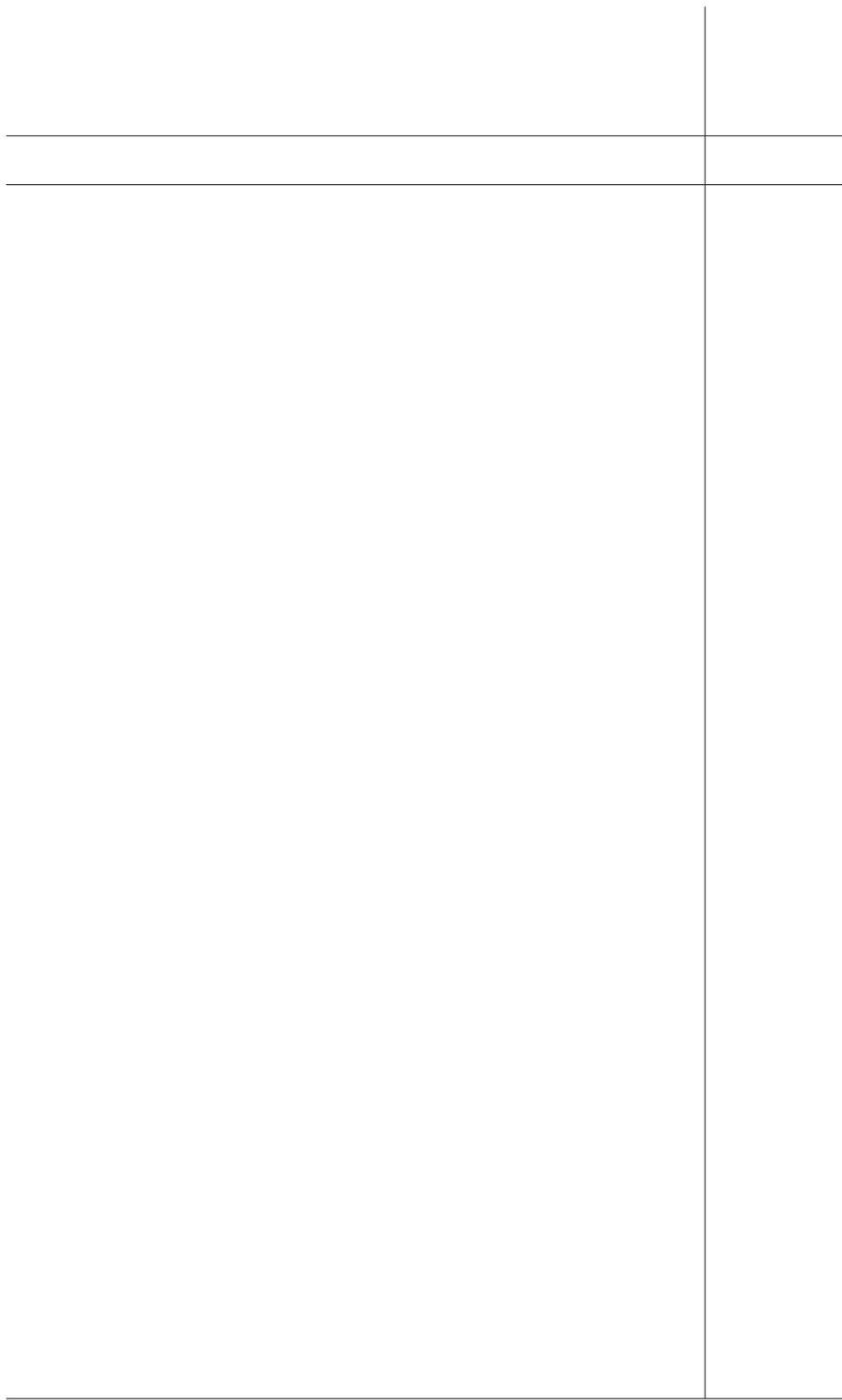
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Introduction

Introduction

This Master thesis deals with security guards as a symptomatic expression of radical changes on labour markets. The topic is surprisingly rich in implications for an abundance of connected topics: changing gender roles, the securitization of public space, the role of the body in labour relations or the function of uniforms. The image of a security guard watching streets, shops or buildings has become so familiar that their presence becomes largely unnoticed. Worthy of our attention, security guards magnify a variety of contemporary societal struggles. To approach this topic artistically seems to be even more fruitful than a purely scientific handling of the field. For in this way, it is possible to consider the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of their appearance, to be creative in communicating findings and to involve a broader audience into a collective reflection about the topic and where we stand as a society. In the course of this project we have thus made use of a variety of strategies at hand for social designers. We developed tool and strategies to approach security guards and engage into conversations with them about their work. We created means to translate complex theoretical thought into visual and interactive formats. The conditions and hardships of non-productive labour are mirrored in the photographic works “Body Behaviour” and an audio piece that convey melancholy and coercion simultaneously. The prominent yet often unchallenged positioning of symbols of masculinity and authority in public spaces are illustrated in the series “Uniform ” and “Uniform 2”. A collection of personal statements by security guards gives the depersonalised guards, often perceived as enemies or treated like commodities, a human dimension. By utilising a commercialised format to initiate interaction with the public, namely the selling of artworks/post cards, we pointed to the entanglement of security and consumption, which we are all part of. Last but not least, we confronted our audiences with uncomfortable questions concerning the state of society.

Social Design

What is social design? This was, and continues to be, one of the most vexing questions us as students of social design faced when beginning our two-year foray into this perplexing field. Given the transformations unravelling in our current era and the array of worldly dysfunctions, what role should artists and designers take? How might projects take presence? And how should one strategize new forms of participation that is in the utmost interest of its participants?

The definition of social design, we may claim, is fundamentally design with social efficacy that aims at challenging existing consensus and fomenting dissensus. A social design project can take the form of an intervention, exhibition, performance, artistic research or a “happening” in public, semi-public or private space. A project usually represents the disenfranchised and aims at subverting power structures. It may give voice to the silenced and agency to the weak or merely create platforms for the enunciation of social problems. A social designer is socially engaged with societal and political struggles. Social engagement, civic participation, co-creation, co-authorship, bottom-up strategies paired with top-down approaches, critical art practices and interdisciplinary work are some of the key terms utilized in this field. Projects intersect fields of the social sciences, geography, architecture, urban design, health and education. And finally, the practice of social design is ceaselessly political.

In a somewhat frenzied, collective fervour to renegotiate our own stance in society, social designers are confronted with a line up of problems and paradoxes. The innumerable obstacles and misunderstandings when working in foreign contexts spark questions on the viability of such projects. Our eagerness to permeate public space suddenly appears not so “public” after all as “public spaces are always striated and hegemonically

Social Design

structured” (Mouffe 2007, p.1). In what ways can projects gain presence when the very spaces that claim to offer “openness” and visibility to diverse political and social audiences are polemic and plural in nature? And if achieved, how then can projects be made comprehensible to seemingly disassociated audiences? Despite the lack of tools to measure impact, the commitment to social design as a socially responsible act remains certain. As cultural producers that maintain the conviction that art and society are interchangeable, new strategies of opposition need to be generated in order to be critical of socio-political conditions.

Upon concluding the two year masters with a portfolio of topics left untouched, we may have to acknowledge that “as much as artists, curators, institutions and other cultural workers and organizations endeavour to have an impact on the fundamental social, economic and other structural conditions...change can only happen at the micro-level” (Dector 2014, p.18).

This thesis covers one year of theoretical research and four months of practical work. It highlights major processes during this time and it by no means marks the end of the project. Although the topic of security is extensive and transgresses into many realms, this thesis is finely tuned to address the commodification of security guards through their highly symbolic functions. The methods developed in the project leading up to an exhibition and performance are actions that shape the beginning of our long-term commitment to the topic. Witnessing the ubiquity of security guards in cities around the world, it has never been a better time to delve into the chasm of security and to uncover its underlying meaning in an attempt to challenge its status quo.

Artistic Approach

One can argue that one defining distinction between the operation of theory and the practice of art is inherently in its language. The language of art contains potential to communicate, in relatively simplistic terms, a theory, critique or an argument to people who inhabit different social domains, ethnics and class strata. Often, it takes on a visual or experiential form that makes theory comprehensible and relatable. Consequently, an inevitable progression from our thorough theoretical research is to utilize artistic methods to convey theories from the social sciences to a wider audience.

The artistic approaches we developed during the course of the project moves away from traditional forms of social engagement, which typically involves active civil participation and co-production to indirect methods of observation followed by translation. In view of a thesis topic that primarily tackles the working conditions of security guards on a larger societal level concerning security in capital and labour relations, a model of participation through critical distance plays a crucial role in the formulation of a “critical platform of engagement” (Miessen 2007, p.2). The observational methods we have employed thereby foster collaboration from the outside, which “manages to add critically to pre-established power relations of expertise,” (Miessen 2007, p.4).

Our aim of the artistic approach is to bring the conditions of the new, precarious labour of security work to the forefront by developing visual and experiential tools of communication. It is our attempt to materialize theoretical discourse and create a setting to initiate further thought and discussion about exploitation on the labour market. The methods established deal with the embodiment of labour by security guards. Re-performance is used as a strategy to reveal the frequently overlooked aspects of the job such as the contradictions and hardships and

Artistic Approach

challenge the public’s preconceived notions of security guards.

Three stages were involved in the formation of the project: artistic research, translation and exhibition and performance. Artistic research constituted the link from theoretical research to observational research whereby visual sociological investigations were conducted on-site. Translation necessitated the artistic rendering of material taken from on-site research in order to sharpen the focus on critical aspects of the project. Exhibition and Performance featured the presentation of the artistic research through a site-specific performance made up of passive participation.

Theoretical Approach

This master thesis is highly influenced, even inspired by theoretical thought. This might sound surprising to the reader, since theory often has the reputation of being boring, dry or perhaps a necessary evil. But certainly, it is generally not perceived as something exciting or even a viable source of inspiration. This perception however, does theory wrong. In debates about theory, a central point is what one considers the role of theory and theoretical thinking to be. What often leads to the impression of theory as bulky and dry is when it is perceived as abstract constructs of thought, which are not in touch with reality anymore. Or when we think of theory as the exclusive work of intellectual professionals hiding in small university offices to develop self-referential chimeras, which are right to remain locked into their ivory towers. But this is not what theory is, or at least, it is not what it is supposed to be. Theory, –or perhaps better used in the verb form to underline the activity– theorizing always comes from the real world. In fact, theorizing helps us to make sense of what we see and experience out there in the world. Or as the political theorist Eva Kreisky puts it: “Theory should help to understand, interpret and systematize the complex diversity of societal and political phenomena” (Kreisky 2012, p.22, authors’ translation).

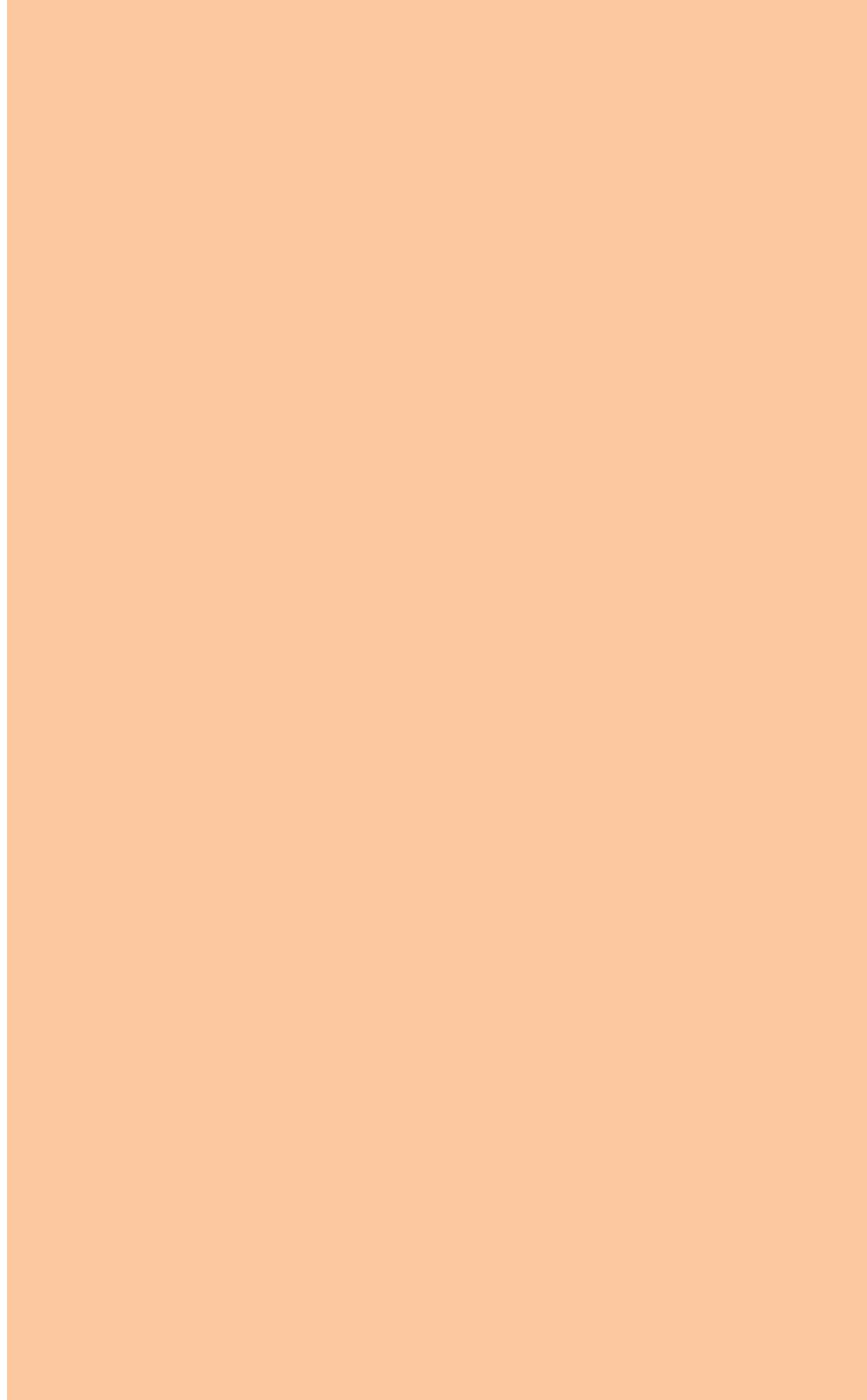
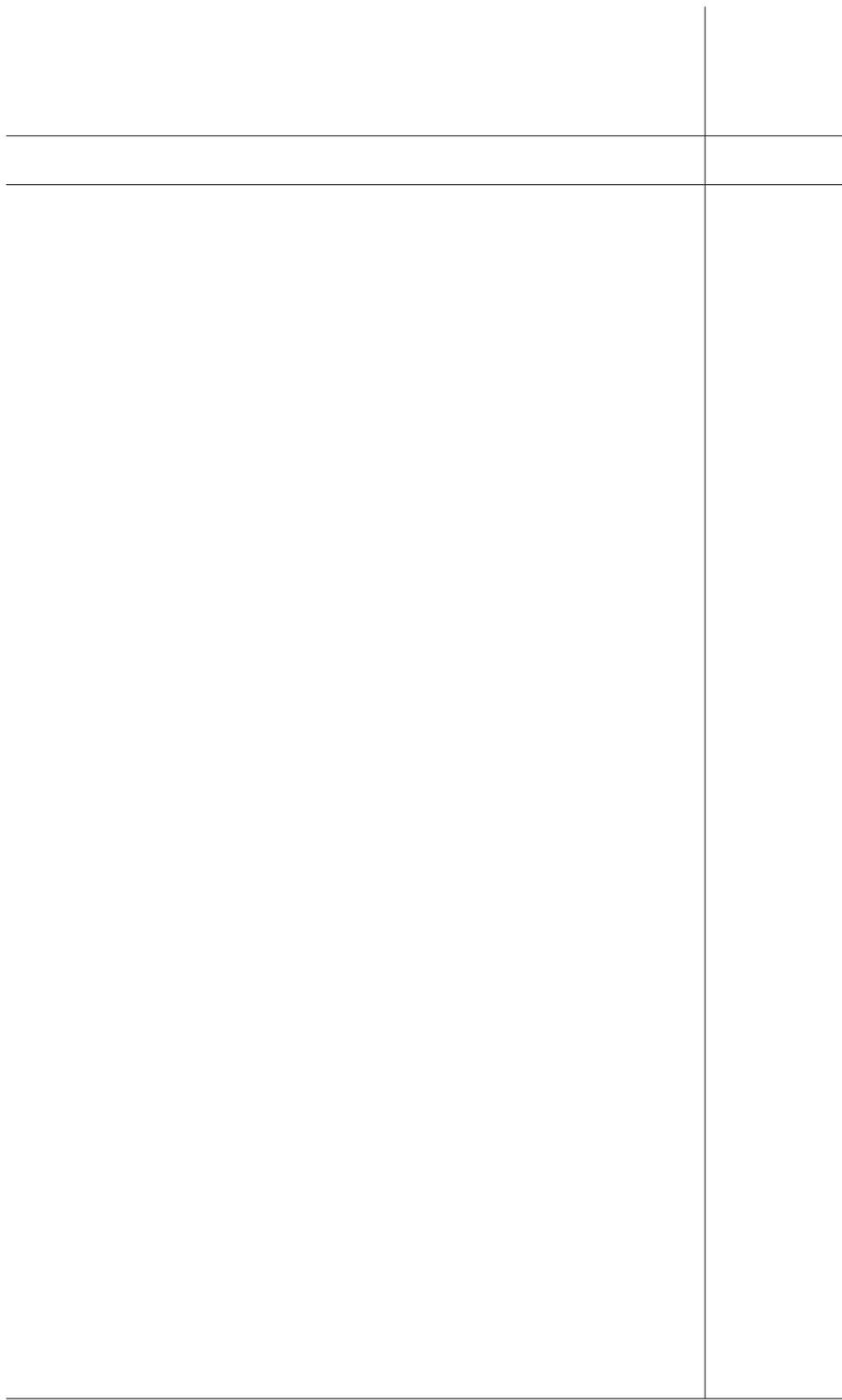
In the case of the project “SECURIWAS?”, first contact with the topic also arose from real life observations. The frequent contact with security guards at Miriam Hübl’s workplace left strong impressions on her. Something about the nature of the guards’ work just didn’t seem right. Even though none of the service jobs at this workplace were particularly meaningful or glamorous, for some reason the job of the security guards, which basically consists of standing around and watching the space, seemed more strenuous than other jobs. Strangely, it even seemed brutal. The following theory work conducted by us helped to transform an isolated observation into a theoretical

Theoretical Approach

examination. Theory on labour, security, masculinity and the role of uniforms allowed to situate an individual impression into ongoing discourses, which take power relations within society into consideration. In other words, theory helped to grasp an isolated phenomenon and integrate it into a bigger picture.

For theory to fulfill its emancipatory potential, it must be derived directly from people’s everyday lives and problems. This is what David Harvey calls “bottom up theorizing” (Harvey 2005, p.66). To some humble extend, this is what we try to achieve with our master thesis: shedding light on a new type of exploitation on modern labour markets. In order to open a possibility of change, issues first need to become intelligible. The theoretical considerations found in this master thesis are supported by the work from various critical thinkers from the social sciences. These range from gender studies to security studies, neo-marxist theory and critical geography.

In the scope of this thesis, we take the freedom of not sticking to orthodox research or working traditions related to specific scientific or artistic disciplines. In an attempt to work across disciplines and get the most out of each, we dare to be creative in theorizing and rigorous in our artistic strategies. We communicate socially pressing issues to the public through the language of art. We use artistic strategies to add onto theoretical thought and let it point out aspects that would have remained invisible otherwise.



Artistic Research

The research phase of the project took the form of on-site observations of security guards and expert interviews. A total of 20 security guards were interviewed informally. The observations were documented with methods influenced by visual sociology.

Security

Theory

Security has become an important mode of politics. To frame political and societal issues as security concerns means to ascribe them with accelerated importance and priority. According to the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al. 1998), to securitize an issue means to circumvent political deliberation as well as social and even legal norms. An increased sensitivity towards potential threats to security has led to a general sense of insecurity, cultivated by a transnational guild of the “management of unease” (Bigo 2012, p.120). The growth of private security forces should be seen against the background of these general developments. The presence of security guards in cities has increased drastically in recent decades. The image of a uniformed person standing around on a public square or pacing in front of a shop has become completely normalized. However, these tendencies should be afforded deeper reflection. The security sector is of high societal importance because it is a growing labour market. It has been able to absorb parts of the labour force that faces unemployment due to the decline of the manufacturing sector. However, most of the employment in this sector only offers precarious working conditions. The presence of uniformed personnel might also influence the character of (public) spaces. What are implications of the normalization of uniforms and permanent policing? Furthermore, when privatized security is considered to be a normalised part of the neoliberal project, do societies become at risk of giving up democratic control over what is meant to order and police them? And finally, the close entanglement of the security sector with commercial interests produces “mass private property” (Shearing/Stenning 1981), which blurs the lines between public and private spaces. The project “SECURIWAS?” deals with a specific subtype of security guards, namely doormen, which guard commercial venues. The artistic approaches that were applied helped to further investigate the questions and analysis posed above.

Security

Method

The starting point to the practical component of the project began by identifying a bridge from theory to practice by conducting expert interviews. Knowledge from different perspectives was gained during these sessions.

Expert Interviews

Johann Beran:

A clinical industrial psychologist and coach specialized in treating work-related stress.

Max Edelbacher:

Former head of security, Austrian Police.

Method: Questions and topics were prepared beforehand that were discussed during the interview.

Theory: Open qualitative expert interviews

Location(s): Café and office

Tool(s): Sound recorder

Interviews with security guards

A total of twenty security guards were interviewed informally throughout the project. The interviews took place while they were on duty in various consumption venues in Vienna.

Method: Informal interviews with security guards while on duty

Theory: Open qualitative expert interviews

Location(s): Mariahilfer Straße, Kärntner Straße and Graben

Tool(s): Sound recorder

Security

Results

Johann Beran:

- Security guards are constantly on high tension causing a rise in stress hormones, which can damage the brain in the long run.
- An imbalance between high mental stress and low physical activity causes long-term health risks.
- Recommended to take breaks every few hours so the body can work off tension through physical activity.
- Mental training including breathing techniques and repeating a melody can help to lower tension.
- Waiting in the job is an active process causing high arousal levels.
- Humans process the visual cues of security guards as symbols of authority and security.
- Their duty is to prevent crime through their presence.
- Security guards are reduced to marketing packages that sell the message of power. This strips them of their humanity, which is psychologically damaging.
- Over-identification to one's company is common to feel that they are part of something important. This is artificial because it is unrequired and reflects low self-esteem.
- The uniform plays a symbolic role in generating the image of security and power.
- Uniform acts as identification codes that change the way the body moves. When worn, the security guard embodies the characteristics associated.
- An increase of theft, the war of terror, the gap between rich and poor has sparked an increase of security guards.

Security

Results

Max Edelbacher:

- Since 1945, public units through a centralized system only performed policing activities.
- In 1990 the minister of interior pushed the idea of private security influenced by the Anglo-Saxon system of policing.
- There is a complicated relationship between private and public security based on the quality of the workers and complexity in the exchange of data.
- Crime was on increase from 1989 when the iron curtain fell.
- Crime rates are dependent on multiple factors including migration, gap between the rich and poor, employment, moral and ethical standards and challenges in society in general.
- Therefore there is no easy way to measure the effect of private security by looking at crime rates.
- The reduced budget for the minister of interior was a push factor for the embracing of private security and the lack of resources from the police.
- Private businesses became responsible for their own security.
- There are 3500-4000 street robberies/year in Vienna.
- The uniform is the symbol of legal power.
- Private securities wear similar uniforms to the police to create a blurring of the differences and evoke an equal feeling of power.
- Security guards can be seen as human surveillance cameras preventing petty crime but not organized crime or terrorism. Their work is highly symbolic.
- Their effectiveness is not as high as it is expected.
- Although it is not practically oriented, women prefer to keep their long hair to keep their identity in a very male dominated sector.
- Masculinity plays a large role as people are more likely to

Security

Results

- respect a guard who appears bigger and stronger.
- The public expectations (subjective) of security guards in consumption venues is to provide security for the public and the shops.
- The objective perception is that security guards are there to secure the shops from theft or crime.

Public security	Private security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher wage • 2-3 years of training and education • Serving the community • Centralized policing system • More analytical work • Have more rights than the public • Higher competence in usage of firearms • Retired policemen often join the private security sector in management positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower wage • 3-6 weeks of training and education • Mainly services private businesses • Decentralized policing system • Limited analytical work • Have the same rights as the public • Lower competence in usage of firearms • High migration numbers

Security

Results

Statements from interviews with security guards

Uniform:

- „Der Körper in Uniform, das ist einfach was Anderes.“
„Die Uniform ist aber auch einfach praktisch zum Arbeiten.“
„Die Leute haben mehr Respekt vor der in Uniform, das merkt man auch, das ist eh logisch.“
„Wenn du als Security arbeitest, hat die Uniform natürlich einen psychologischen Effekt, wenn du mit den Leuten sprichst.“
„Die Uniform muss ich tragen. Immer. Warum? Keine Ahnung.“
„Ich muss immer genau diese Krawatte tragen, da kann man nix machen.“
„Normale Leute fühlen sich besser, wenn wir die Uniform tragen.“
„Es ist besser, wenn wir in Uniform herumspazieren.“
„Die beste Abschreckung ist, wenn die Polizei in Uniform herumspaziert.“
„Wir haben ein Uniform für die Winterzeit, weil wir lange draußen stehen müssen.“
„Unsere Arbeitgeber möchten, dass wir schwarze Anzüge tragen.“
„Den Anzug habe ich selber gekauft. Meistens bekommen wir sie von der Firma, aber die sehen nicht so schön aus.“
„Normalerweise müssen wir alle gleich aussehen.“
„Die von meiner Firma, die mögen, dass wir alle grau tragen.“
„Wir müssen gepflegt sein.“
„Das ist erste Bezirk und wir müssen gepflegt sein.“
„Ja natürlich macht es eine Unterschied Uniform zu tragen!“
„Manche Leute reagieren aggressiv auf Uniform.“
„Körperlich ist es nicht so angenehm.“
„Sicherheit in der heutigen Zeit geht vor.“
„Kriminalität ist überall, wir sehen das nicht, aber es passiert unter uns.“
„Manchmal ist es langweilig als Security Guard.“

Security

Results

- „Kunst und Security...das ist ein großer Unterschied!“
„Probieren Sie es! Es ist ganz einfach!“

Safety and Responsibility:

- „Ich mach', dass nichts passiert.“
„Die Kriminalität ist immer unterwegs.“

Relation to Employer:

- „Sie sagen dir wo du arbeitest und du sagst: Ich mach das!“
„Wenn du ein zuverlässiger Mitarbeiter bist, dann hast du keine Probleme!“

Gender:

- „Eine Frau als Security? Das weiß ich nicht, ob das geht...“
„Wir haben verschiedene Projekte und Frauen können zum Beispiel Portier sein.“
„Es gibt auch Frauen, aber ein bisschen männlich sein hilft auch.“
„Es ist ein bisschen gefährlich hier, darum arbeiten hier nur Männer.“

Time:

- „Wie lange ich Security bin? 20 Jahre.“
„Es ist ein bisschen schwer. Du musst die ganze Zeit stehen bleiben, 12, 10 Stunden.“
„Ich arbeite hier seit 7 Jahren im Sicherheitsdienst.“
„Es ist eine langweilige Arbeit, aber die Zeit vergeht.“

Hardships:

- „Der Job ist ein bisschen fad, aber es geht.“
„Die Winterzeit ist ein bisschen härter.“
„Wir sind immer draußen.“
„Mhmmm... es geht... Es ist ein bisschen eine harte Arbeit.“
„Es ist auch gefährlich, aber Etwas muss man machen.“

Security

Results

„Es ist auch gefährlich, aber Etwas muss man machen.“
„Aber kann man nicht sagen, dass es besonders Spass macht.“
„Als Portier machst du zwei, drei Runden pro Dienst und das wars. Sonst gar nichts.“
„Ich habe schon fast jeden Job probiert.“
„Wie lange ich das machen werde? Keine Ahnung. Vielleicht kommt ein besserer Job.“
„Jetzt, so als Nebenjob kann man das machen, dann passt es.“
„Es gibt so viele aggressive Leute, es ist auch gefährlich!“
„Stell dir mal vor: 12 Stunden stehen.“
„Ich glaube, es ist in jedem Job so. Sitzen kann man nur in der Pause.“
„Ich denke als Security, das ist keine gute Zukunft. Wenn du krank bist, oder so, dann kündigen sie dich.“
„Wenn du alt bist, zum Beispiel, wer nimmt dich denn dann als Security?“
„Manche Leute denken negativ über Securitys, das ist psychisch verankert. Aber ich bleibe höflich.“
„Ich persönlich hatte keine andere Möglichkeit.“
„Ich war Verkäufer. Aber jetzt momentan habe ich keine andere Arbeit gefunden und jetzt bin ich da.“

Other:

„Normalerweise dürfen wir nicht viel reden.“
„Vorher war ich bei der Polizei.“
„Ich bin sehr zufrieden, ich bin schon seit zwei Jahren hier.“
„Hier ist es super für mich! Es ist so viel los, du kannst mit Leuten reden und die Zeit vergeht schneller.“

Tasks and Activities:

„Dein Job ist nur schauen und melden, nix anderes. Es ist sehr gut.“

Security

Results

„Wir verprügeln niemanden.“
„Ich muss spazieren, schauen was los ist. Es gibt jeden Tag etwas Neues!“
„Nein, es passiert nicht viel. Nur manchmal.“
„Ich passe auf, auf dieses Geschäft.“
„Wir müssen alle 6 Monate schiessen gehen, es ist gesetzlich, damit wir üben können.“
„Halten, Massage machen, polieren.“
„Ich war 12 Jahre in Deutschland, 2 Jahre in Zürich und jetzt wieder zu Hause. Es ist überall dasselbe.“
„Der Job ist ganz leicht eigentlich, du musst nur schauen, dass alles passt.“
„Wenn was kaputt ist, dann melde ich es. Wenn ein Alarm losgeht, schaue ich ob es ein richtiger Alarm ist.“
„Wenn dich die Leute nach dem Weg fragen, da kann man nicht arrogant sein, oder?“

Labour

Theory

The nature of labour has changed drastically in the recent decades. While historically it has mostly been associated with physical activity, the growth of the service sector turned most employment into knowledge or service based activities. A large amount of labour has thus become immaterial and non-productive in the sense that labour does not result in a material product anymore. Another trend on labour markets has been the rise of precarious working conditions, defined by atypical working conditions as well as the lack of income and employment security (Standing 2014). Many workers who have lost their jobs with the decline of the manufacturing industry are facing the challenge of continuously worsening working conditions in the low-income segment of the service sector. The recent growth of supply in private security services can be seen as a symptomatic expression of these developments. Economically, the sector is of big importance because it has been able to absorb a large amount of former manufacture workers. The sight of security guards has become very familiar to most people in a way that they might not even notice them anymore. However, how securities work is very expressive of contemporary tendencies on labour markets. Franco Berardi (2012) notes that the era of “Semio-Capital” primarily produces commodities in the form of signs and symbols. Instead of producing tangible results, most labour in the service sector produces information, symbols and signs. Labour, thus has lost its materiality. This analysis applies perfectly to the function of security guards. They offer a symbolic service by embodying security, order and authority through their mere physical presence. Doormen, which were the specific focus of this master thesis, primarily serve to prevent theft in commercial venues instead of actively fighting it. Their work is thus highly abstract on the symbolic level –to represent authority and order– yet it is brutally banal on the physical level: standing, watching, pacing.

Labour

Method

The exploitative nature behind non-productive work can be witnessed through the observation of the activities of security guards on duty. For this reason, a method was established to thematise the body and its movements. Security guards were watched at fifteen-minute intervals during which all the visible body movements of the guards would be noted down. The starting and ending time of each session was also noted including the site of observation. By concentrating on the activities of security guards, the challenges that come with non-productive labour are highlighted. Boredom, lack of stimulation and limited body movement leads to a heavy focus and even a fetishisation of the security guards bodies as they struggle to uphold their role as symbols of authority and power.

The noted down activities were later taken into a studio to be read out loud and recorded. Sound pieces of the activities were produced that provoked a multitude of reactions in listeners. The activity protocol was understood as instructions and when heard, audiences would embody the piece by moving their bodies according to the movements that were being said. For others, it caused their imagination to run and visualize the security guards while working.

Method: Activities of security guards on duty were noted down at 15-minute intervals to be later recorded when read aloud in a studio

Theory: Activity Protocol

Location(s): Hofburg and Graben

Tool(s): Notebook, pen and sound recorder

Body

Method

With the interest in non-productive labour and the body as a heavily fetishized object for consumption, on-site observations of security guards were conducted to explore this concept further. The method utilized in “Body Behaviour” was developed with influence from visual sociology. The term visual sociology “refers to the use of visual tools (video, drawing and still photography) in the investigation of social phenomena” (Campion 2007, p.13). The method was employed to study the nuances and patterns of body behaviour in security guards.

Traditional sociology utilizes qualitative or quantitative methods of data collection to test hypotheses on social behaviour or society. Methods are based on empirical research, which comprises of the attainment of knowledge by means of direct or indirect observations. Concepts are proven based on the repeatability of results/data collected from research (Campion 2007). In this way, sociology creates data that reflects social developments in society.

Steering away from this empirical approach, visual sociology is a sub-discipline of sociology that is concerned with the visual dimensions of social life. Methods involve the use of all kinds of visual material to gather information and the application of cameras and recording devices for data collection. It is often pursued as a method to visually communicate sociological understandings to a broader audience. Reineke Otten is a visual sociologist who “records and assembles images and information to reveal society’s patterns and orders” (Otten 2017). In “Urban Daily Life”, Otten practices the research method “streetology” by photographing mundane objects and environments in urban spaces and then assembles them into an online catalogue. A typology of corresponding elements is produced which brings to the foreground visual patterns and overlooked details.

Body

Method

The method developed for the project “SECURIWAS?” incorporated the re-appropriation of “streetology”. By focusing on the body behaviour of security guards the unnoticed is brought to the fore. Sequenced photographs that capture security guards while working reveal the multi-layered dimensions of the job. Each guard is observed at fifteen-minute intervals at consumption venues, during which photographs are taken continuously with a mobile phone. Because the guards were not aware that they were being photographed, the photos depict them in their natural routines and body behaviours. The photographs were later studied meticulously to identify patterns and details.

Method: Sequenced photographs of security guards taken in 15 minute intervals

Theory: Visual sociology

Location(s): Mariahilfer Straße, Kärntner Straße and Graben

Tool(s): Phone camera

Body

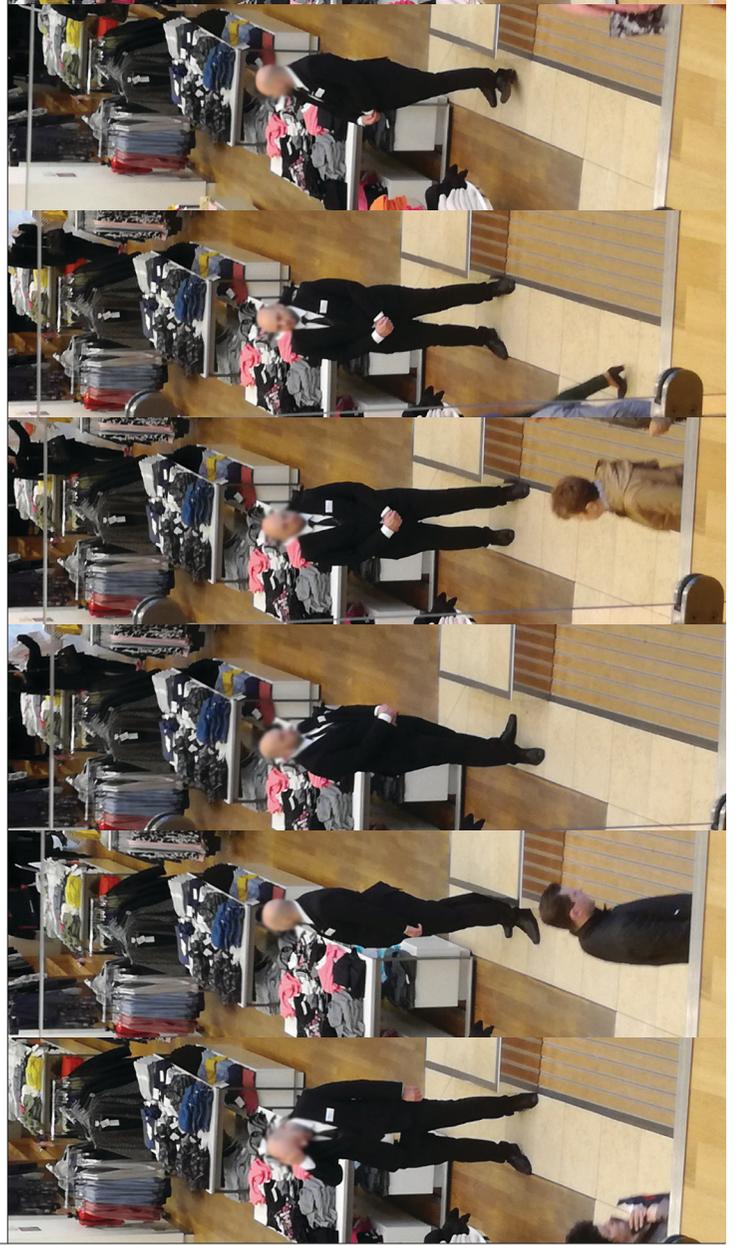
Results



Security guard, Peek & Cloppenburg
Kärtner Straße, 15:12, 13.04.2017

Body

Results



Security guard, Peek & Cloppenburg
Mariahilfer Straße, 12:11, 06.04.2017

Body

Results



Security guard, Saturn Marienhilfer Straße,
10:47, 06.04.2017. 2017

Uniform

Theory

Uniforms are strong objects of visual communication. In Franz Kafka's novel "Before the law" the sight of the gate keeper's visual appearance is enough for the man to understand that he is dealing with higher powers and he thus refrains from even trying to enter the halls of law. Uniforms come from state-related and male dominated institutions like police forces and military. The core values of such institutions –discipline, authority and strength are communicated both inwards and outwards through uniforms. Within groups, uniforms function to de-individualize their carriers and to create a collective body instead (Rafaeli/ Pratt 1993). To the outside, uniforms communicate the values of the institution they are meant to represent. Any aesthetic reference to the uniforms of armed state forces can be seen as an attempt to draw from the values associated with them. Private security services also make use of these functions of uniforms. There is great variety in the models which are used: depending on the setting, the uniforms will either look militant and aggressive (like a soldier) or restrained and decent (like an intelligence agent). In any case, the uniform plays an important role in the symbolic work of security guards who "perform" security. Another aspect of wearing a uniform is to represent masculinity. While the precarious labour conditions of security labour do not allow for an association with male role models connected to financial stability and success, the security guards' uniforms seem to offer alternatives to that. Although security guards are very restricted in their ability of law enforcement, their visual appearance draws from the powerful attributes associated with police and other armed forces. Security guards' performance of power and authority in the role of the protector is further supported by their outfits: the uniform. The notion of masculinity in the security sector thus seems to be reinforced by the usage of the uniform, which is associated with the hyper-masculine institutions of military and police.

Uniform

Method

The uniform of security guards in concurrence with their conspicuous presence plays a vital role in the shaping of the image of authority and control. As an extension of the body, the uniforms not only acts as a marker to differentiate the guards from the public but they also create an atmosphere of surveillance.

When a security guard puts on his/her uniform, they psychologically embody the very symbols that isolate them. They become engulfed into a set of standards and values that visually communicates their identity as belonging to the group he/she is representing. The security guard as a marketing package who sells the image of authority becomes “enveloped inside a company packaging, that it is virtually impossible to break through ... to have any kind of interpersonal exchange” (Hendry 1995, p.87). The individual in turn becomes stripped of his/her identity and assumes the functioning formal code of the profession.

This artistic research focuses on the aesthetics of security guards, notably the visually palpable elements (uniform, walkie-talkie, gun, badge, tie, alarm device, etc.) to examine their function and significance. Observations of uniforms and accessories were noted down during on-site research at multiple consumption venues. The aim of the research is to investigate the hidden language behind uniforms in the construction of power and security.

Method: Variations in uniform and accessories were noted down during on-site observations

Theory: Uniform study

Location(s): Mariahilfer Straße, Kärntner Straße and Graben

Tool(s): Phone camera, notebook and pen

Uniform

Results

Ear set

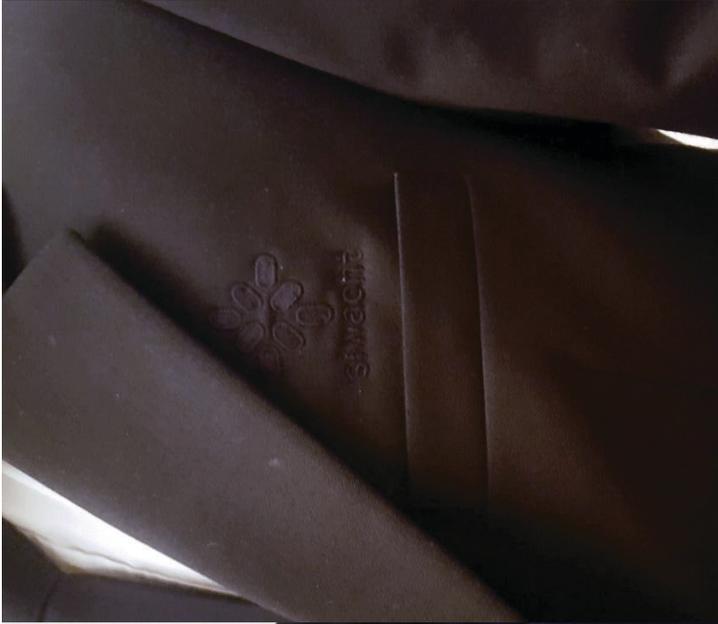


Walkie-talkie



Uniform

Results



Company logo on blazer



Badge

Uniform

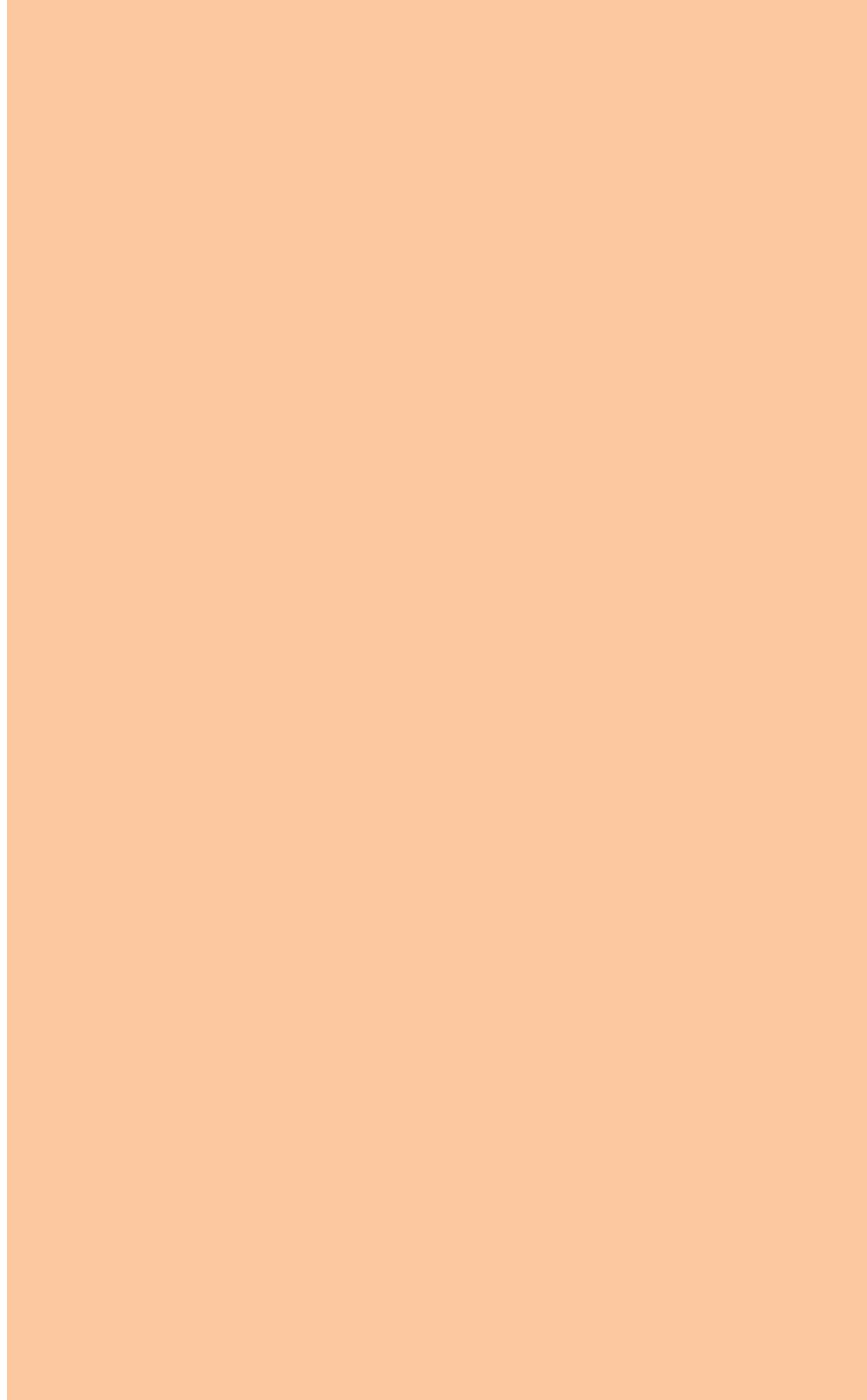
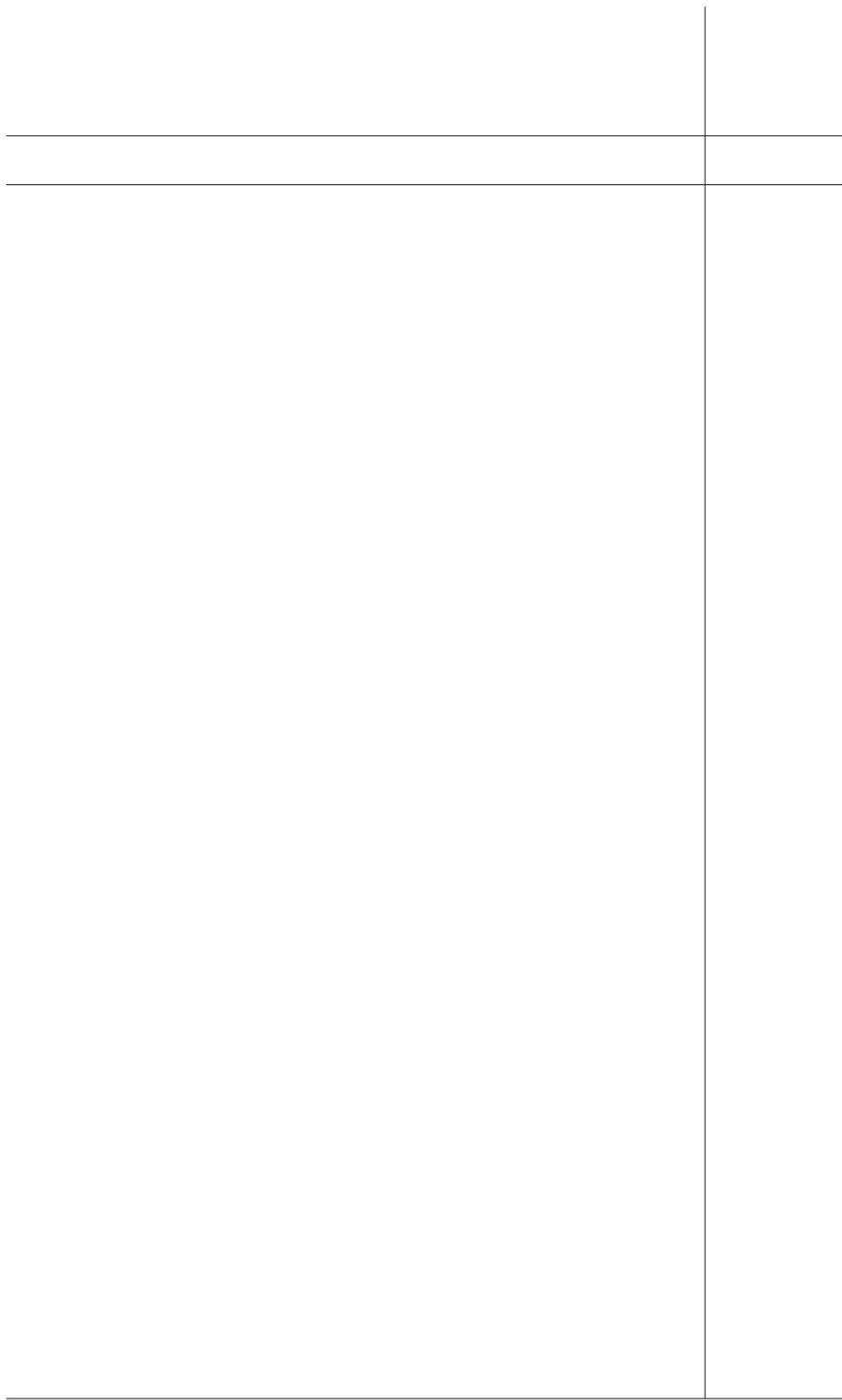
Results

Suit uniform



Tie





Translation

To visually highlight details of body in its role as a signifier of security, an artistic translation of the material collected from on-site observations was necessary. Body behaviour, activity and uniform were re-performed in a neutralized setting that brought small details to the fore.

Statements

Method

Statements taken from interviews with security guards were artistically framed to give them significance. In order to highlight the importance of what was being said, each quote deserved the same attention and was visually presented equally. Some statements reveal security guards' struggles in the job while others express their satisfaction. The guards also had a lot to comment on regarding their uniform and its symbolism. Sixty-nine statements were chosen for the exhibition and performance that deal with time, gender, relation to employer, safety and responsibility, tasks and activities and uniform.

Method: Statements of security guards from interviews are artistically translated

Theory: Statements

Location(s): Mariahilfer Straße, Kärntner Straße, Graben and Wien Mitte

Tool(s): InDesign

Statements

Results

„Es ist ein bisschen schwer. Du musst die ganze Zeit stehen bleiben. 12, 10 Stunden.“

„Ich mach', dass nichts passiert.“

Statements

Results

„Wenn du als Security arbeitest, hat die Uniform natürlich einen psychologischen Effekt, wenn du mit den Leuten sprichst.“

„Die Uniform ist aber auch einfach praktisch zum Arbeiten.“

Activity Protocol

Method

Developing from the activity protocol introduced in the artistic research, time is given specific attention as a way to reveal the invisible aspects of the work of security guards. The body movements of security guards were recorded on-site with a sound recorder that was later transcribed to be re-performed and re-recorded in a studio setting. Pauses indicate the length between each action and are synchronized to real-time. The activity protocol developed is linked to slices of time. The result is an effect where time is experienced at first hand. The heavy focus on the motion of the body paired with the extreme slowness of time exemplifies the exploitation that lies within non-productive labour. Space and time is equally magnified as the motion of every activity is experienced in its extreme slowness. Anticipation is built as the audience is forced to wait for the next move.

The topic of labour and time relativity is explored in the work of artists such as Lee Wan. In the artwork “Proper Time” exhibited in the Korean Pavilion at the 2017 Venice Biennale, Wan interviews multiple labourers over a period of five years. Using Einstein’s’ proper time theory, the artist quantifies the labour of people’s’ jobs relative to the cost of a single meal. The results are a series of clocks with the hands configured to multiple speeds. On each clock, the names of the individuals and their job titles are displayed. The faster the hands spin, the less time/ labour it takes to work for a single meal. Similar to the activity protocol, time in Lee Wan’s work is relatively stretched and compressed. As anticipated, the clock that stood for the security guard was moving exceptionally slow. Both works force the audience to endure time in an experience that is likened to the perseverance of labourers.

When listening to the activity protocol, it also becomes apparent that the work of security guards becomes reduced to

Activity Protocol

Method

their physical presence as symbols of security, authority and power. Activities such a pacing, standing, looks right, looks left become recurring actions illustrating restlessness, high inner tension and sometimes, even boredom. The artistic methods of recording, transcribing, re-performing and re-recording as a form of embodiment is therefore effective at drawing attention to the invisible aspects security guards’ work by focussing on time and activity.

Method: Activities of security guards on duty were recorded at 15-minute intervals synchronized to real-time

Theory: Activity Protocol

Location(s): Mariahilfer Straße, Kärntner Straße and Graben

Tool(s): Sound recorder

Activity Protocol

Results	
4.50 pm outside Wagner. Standing. Watching. Hands in front.	0.01
Adjusts sleeve	0.28
Watching right and left. Facing shop.	0.34
Hands in pocket	1.13
Steps back one foot. Standing	1.26
Looks down	1.36
Watching left and right	1.51
Pacing forward	1.58
Standing	2.03
Watching left and right	2.22
Steps left foot back. Standing	2.37
Touches headset	2.51
Observing left and right	3.30
Turns head right. Turns head left	4.01
Turns head up for a stretch	4.13
Looks right. Looks left	4.24
Looks right. Checks time	4.32
Observing right and left	4.49
Steps back two steps. Checks behind	5.23
Steps forward two steps. Standing	5.33
Scratches head	6.11
Steps forward one step	7.00
Steps back two steps. Checks behind. Pacing	7.24
Standing. Observing left and right.	7.42
Scratches nose	7.51
Adjusts gloves	7.58
Steps back. Checks behind. Pacing	8.04
Steps back one step	9.28
Standing observing left and right	9.33
Scratches head with left hand	10.26
Hands in pocket. Standing. Observing left and right	11.22
Takes one step back. Standing. Observing left and right	11.32
Takes gloves off. Drinks water	12.14
... continues	

Activity Protocol

Results	
0.03	3.12 pm Kaernterstrasse outside Peek and cloppenburg.
	Standing. Watching
0.33	Hands in front
1.12	Pacing. Arms behind.
1.21	Pacing in a circle
1.49	Standing
2.05	Pacing
2.12	Standing
2.21	Pacing
2.24	Standing
2.33	Pacing
2.38	Standing
2.46	Pacing
2.56	Standing
3.07	Pacing
3.12	Standing
3.26	Hands in front. Checks phone
3.33	Does something on the phone
5.10	Watching
5.17	Pacing
5.20	Gives customer directions. Helps customer
5.48	Standing
5.53	Swinging from one leg to the other. Standing. Arms in front
6.24	Looks right
6.28	Turns body right
6.37	Pacing in a circle
6.48	Standing
7.02	Pacing. Standing. Arms in front. Holds hands
7.14	Pacing
7.42	Standing
7.42	Watching right to left
7.58	Gives customer directions
8.07	Pacing
	... continues

Activity Protocol

Results	
10.47 pm Saturn in Gerngroß Pacing	0.02
Standing, arms folded to the back	0.15
Watches shop employee	0.24
Move arms to front	1.02
Moves arms to back	1.30
Two steps forward	1.36
Standing, watching shop employee work	1.42
Pacing	1.56
Watching shop employee work	2.08
Watching	2.14
Pacing	2.22
Checks time on watch	2.59
Watches shop employees work	3.27
Looks at TV screen inside shop	3.40
Pacing	3.56
Looks right	4.02
Folds arms behind back	4.24
Puts hands into pockets	4.47
Checks time	5.03
Talks to shop employee	5.06
Folds arms behind back	5.50
Spins something in hand	5.58
Pacing	6.35
Looks up to ceiling	7.24
Puts hands into pockets	7.51
Spins phone in hand	7.59
Hands into pocket	8.20
Folds arms behind back	8.35
Pacing	8.53
Checks time	9.40
Scratches Nose	9.59
Yawns	10.34
Scratches Neck	10.42
... continues	

Activity Protocol

Results	
0.06	12.11 pm Peek & Cloppenburg
0.10	Yawns
0.12	Standing
1.23	Hands crossed in the front
1.26	Looks left
1.33	Looks right
2.41	Adjusts tie
2.58	Crosses hands in the front
3.02	Walks two steps back
3.06	Looks into the shop
3.12	Turns frontally
3.25	Hands crossed in front
3.58	Swings body from left to right slightly
4.20	One step back
4.27	Changes standing position
4.53	Touches Belly
5.13	Fixes suit
5.34	Yawns
5.58	Turns to street
6.23	Lifts eyebrows
6.34	Looks at leaving customers
6.42	Bows forward, looks outside shop
6.54	Changes standing position+looks
6.59	Touches Belly
7.03	Rests hand on Belly
7.35	Looks outside onto the street
7.56	Looks at two customers entering shop
7.59	Looks left
8.03	Looks right
8.15	Looks left
8.21	Customer asking something
8.31	Talks to customer
8.50	Changes standing position
	... continues

Body Behaviour

Method

In order to move beyond direct spectacle, to highlight the body and the fetishisation process in the work of security guards, an artistic rendering of the on-site photographs proved necessary. Photographs of the guards were retaken in a decontextualized setting with Virginia Lui re-performing their body behaviours. Before taking each photograph, the postures and gestures of the security guards were meticulously studied. The photographs were taken in a neutral setting where black clothing against a white backdrop created an excessive focus on the body to reveal states of bodily tensions and emotional expressions. Fidgeting, restlessness and other forms of resistance became recurring actions contrasted against the stereotypical stances expressing authority, which are commonly utilized. The body as a fluid image begins to uncover signs, patterns and symbols that suggest tensions between expectations and reality in a struggle to uphold an image of security.

The practice of re-performance is a common strategy used by many artists who endeavour to shed light on the often invisible, unnoticed aspects of work. Although acting from the standpoint of maintenance art in the context of feminism, Mierle Laderman Ukeles in her 1970 performance “Touch Sanitation Performance” re-performs the body behaviour of sanitation workers while carrying out their daily duties. By embodying their actions in the name of art, Ukeles manages to “dignify the labour most people see as undignified” (Scott 2016). Other examples where artists have used re-performance as an agent to challenge pre-conceptions are Amy Spiers and Olle Lundin.

By moving from the logic of sociological research to a performance based visual logic, the mimicry of the human body is dissected. Space and time is equally magnified and intensified in a sequential narrative with each photograph depicting the movement of security guards at a moment in time. A seemingly

Body Behaviour

Method

homogenous photographic series at first glance, the images invite the audience to engage with the photos more intimately.

The Body Behaviour series depicts impressions of static states, which makes things visible beyond normal sight. Each photograph becomes a mini-event that is dramatic for its own sake. Varied states of restraint, restlessness or distress thus become a spectacle for contemplation and analysis. The ambiguity of some gestures may evoke curiosity and propose a reflection on what messages the bodies are performing.

Method: Sequenced photographs of the re-performance of the body behaviour of security guards.

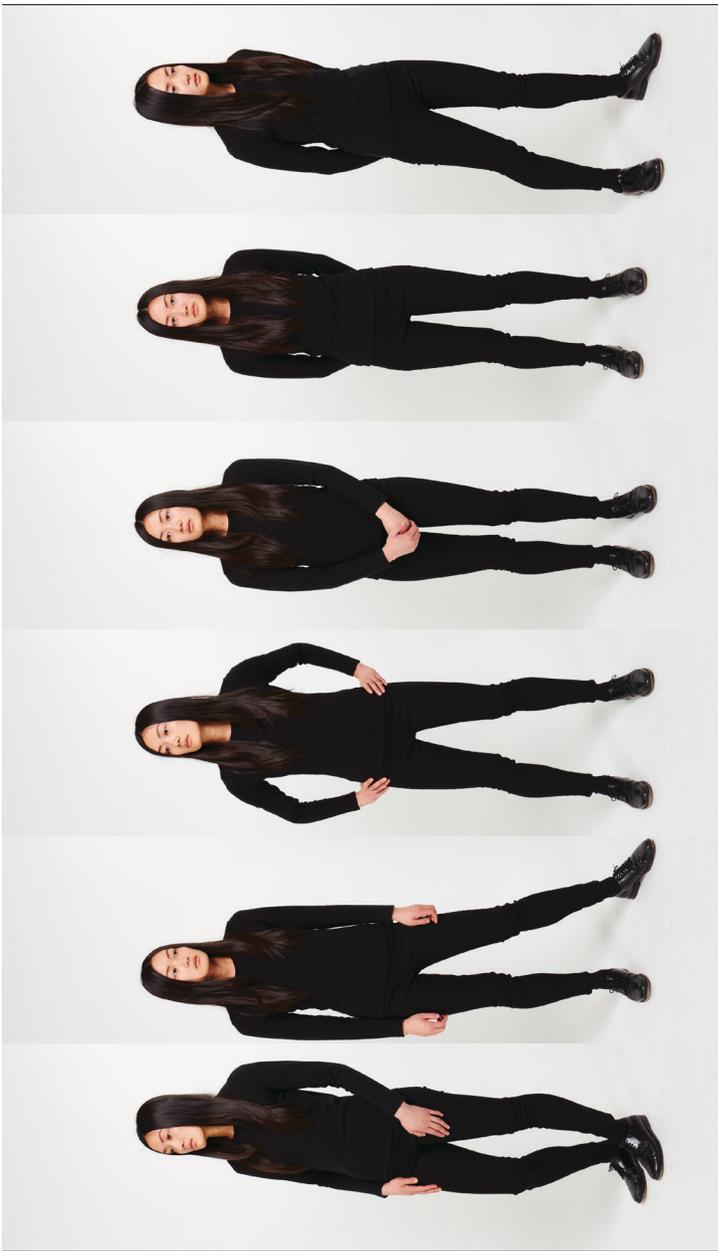
Theory: Re-performance and embodiment

Location(s): Photo studio

Tool(s): Camera

Body Behaviour

Results

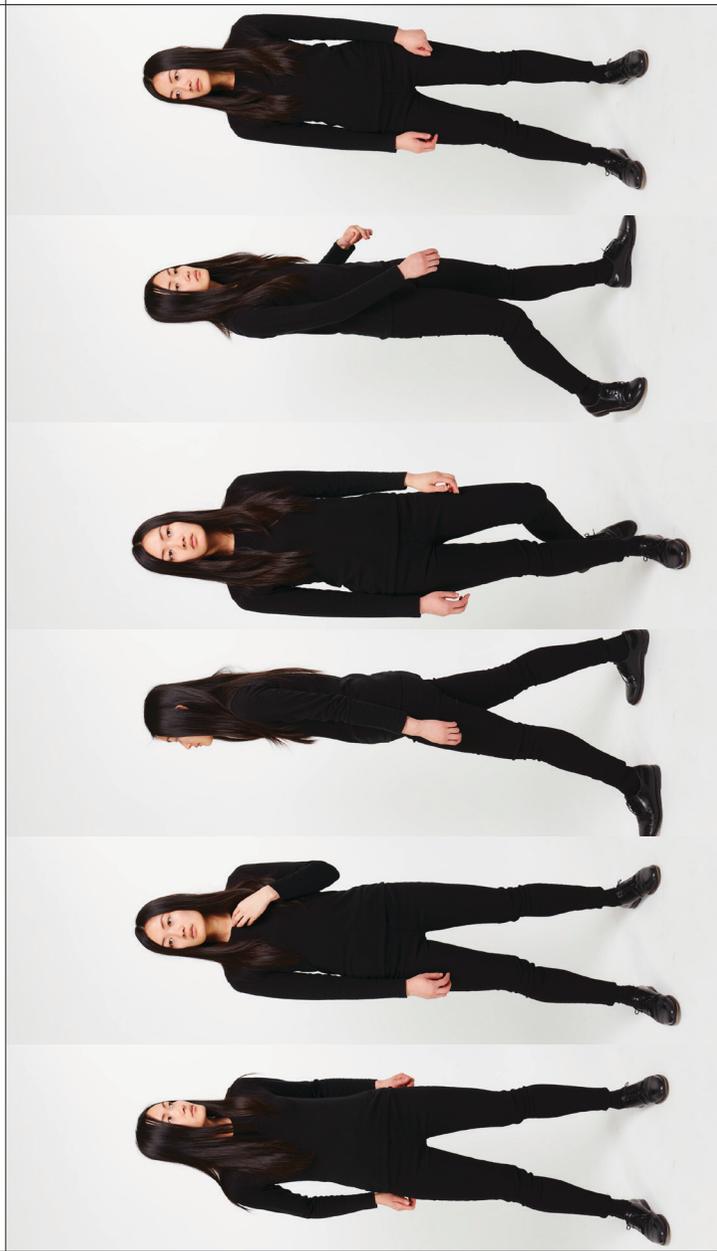


Body Behaviour, Saturn Mariahilfer Straße,
10:47, 06.04.2017. 2017 6/27. Photograph

TRANSLATION

Body Behaviour

Results

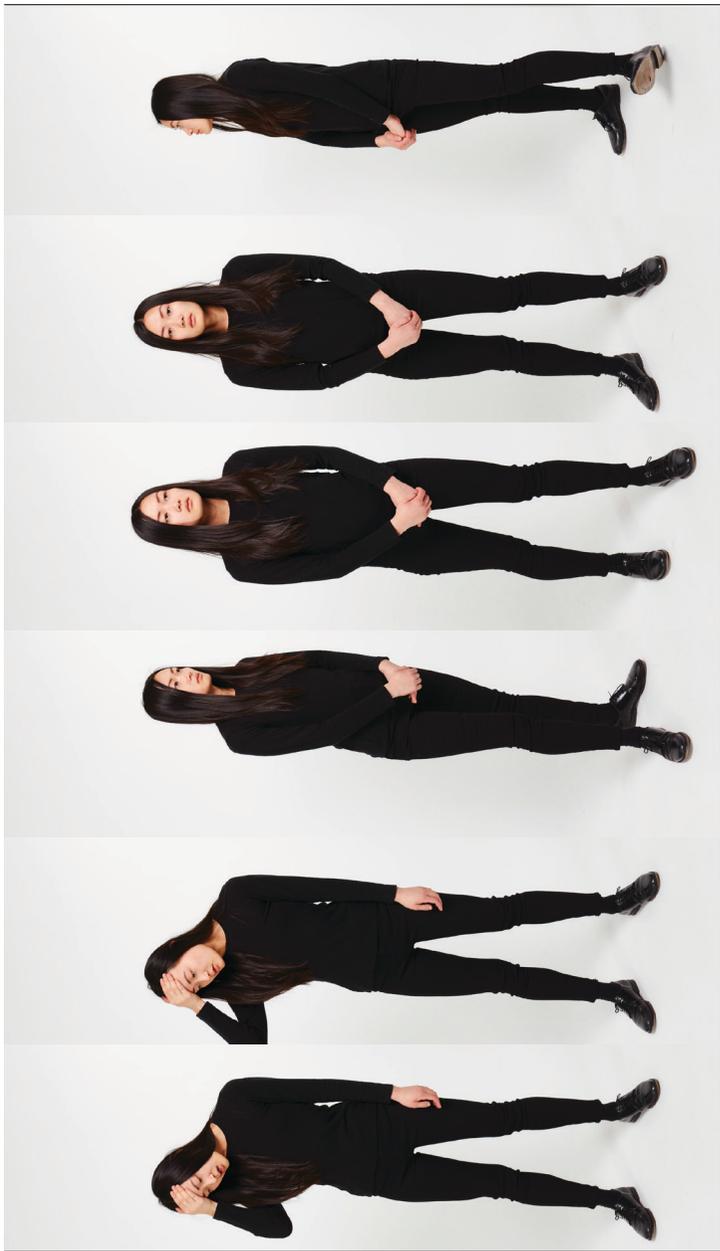


Body Behaviour, Peek & Cloppenburg Kärntner
Straße, 15:12, 13.04. 2017 6/27. Photograph

TRANSLATION

Body Behaviour

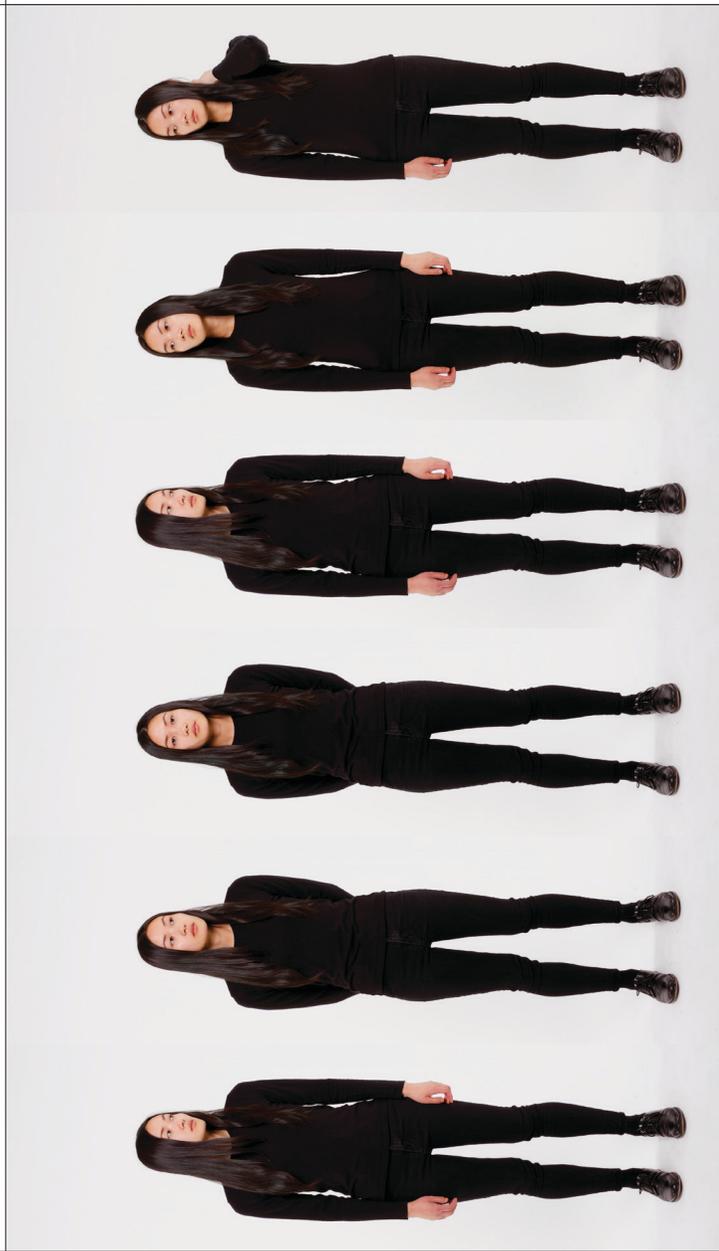
Results



Body Behaviour, Peek & Cloppenburg
Mariahilfer Straße, 12:11, 06. 04. 2017 6/27.
Photograph

Body Behaviour

Results



Body Behaviour, Fendi Kohlmarkt, 12:11, 01.06.
2017 6/27. Photograph

Uniform

Method

Two uniform studies were conducted to inquire into the function of uniforms as deliberate mechanisms utilized to forge the representation of security. Using her own body to test the capacity of uniforms, Virginia Lui undergoes a series of unnerving transformations that portray her immersion into the figure of a stereotypical security guard. Notions of identity, masculinity and femininity are questioned as she moulds into a commodity that sells the image of security. While there are various designs of security uniform, what is examined in this study is an interpretation of the uniform worn by guards observed in the earlier parts of the project. The suit is a common outfit worn by security guards working in consumption venues. They typically indicate elegance and order.

In “Uniform 1”, the activity of getting dressed is stretched to reveal the layers in a security guards’ outfit. The extracted activity illustrates the moment when symbols of security in the uniform begin to take form. Details such as the way hair is worn, the headset and badge play a significant role in constructing this image. The strong masculine aspects of the job are epitomized, as Lui resembles less and less like a woman and more and more like a man. She undergoes a process where the slow stripping of her identity and femininity shapes her into a symbol. In a seemingly violent procedure, she is commodified and emerges as a product to be visually consumed by the public.

“Uniform 2” investigates the role of accessories in the formation of an symbol expressing authority through subtraction and addition. In this series, the jacket, badge, hair, headset, alarm and tie are taken in and out of photos. The differences are minute and understated. Attention is demanded from the viewer to notice the subtleties thereby prompting a deeper engagement into the details behind the construction of the image of power. As the viewer becomes increasingly intrigued, so do the questions

Uniform

Method

and the multitudes of meanings that loom.

Results

Uniform 1:

This series depicts the role of the uniform in the process of de-individualisation and de-feminisation.

Uniform 2:

This series depicts the function of accessories in the construction of the image of security through subtraction and addition.

Methods: Photographs taken wearing different representations of uniform

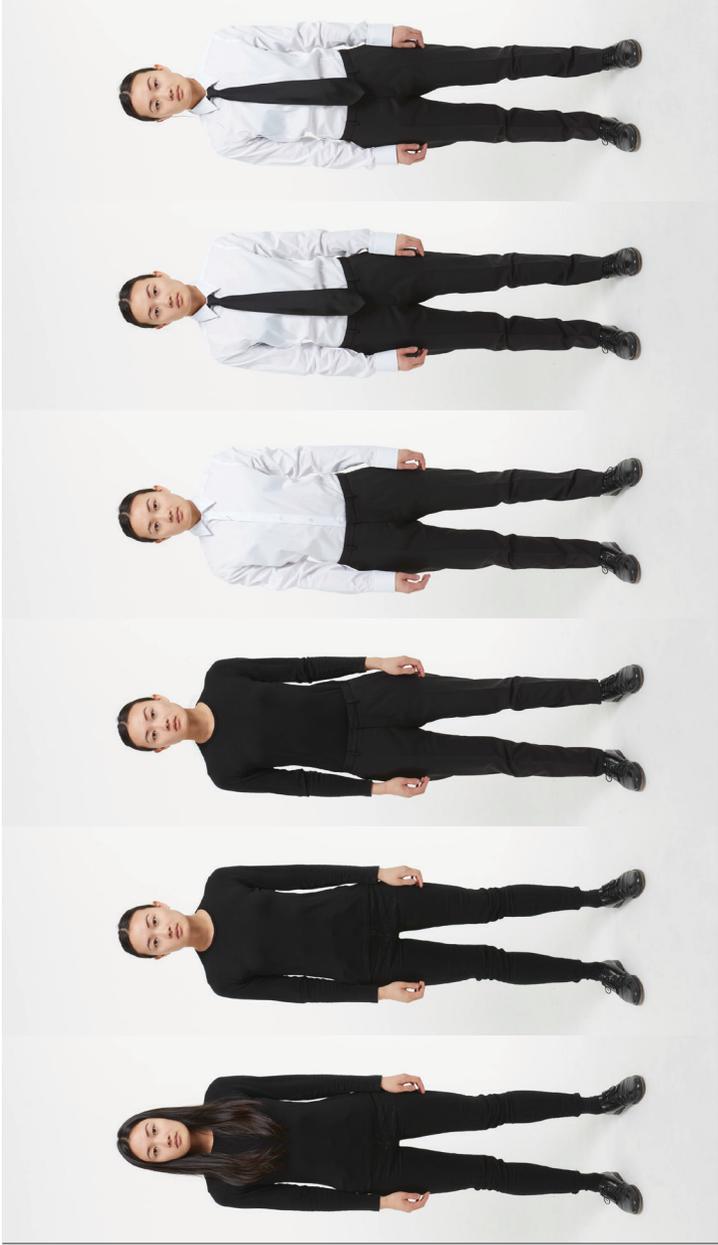
Theory: Re-performance and embodiment

Location(s): Photo studio

Tool(s): Camera, suit, headset, alarm device, jacket, badge, hair tie, shirt, tie and shoes

Uniform

Results



Uniform 1. 2017. Photograph

TRANSLATION

Uniform

Results

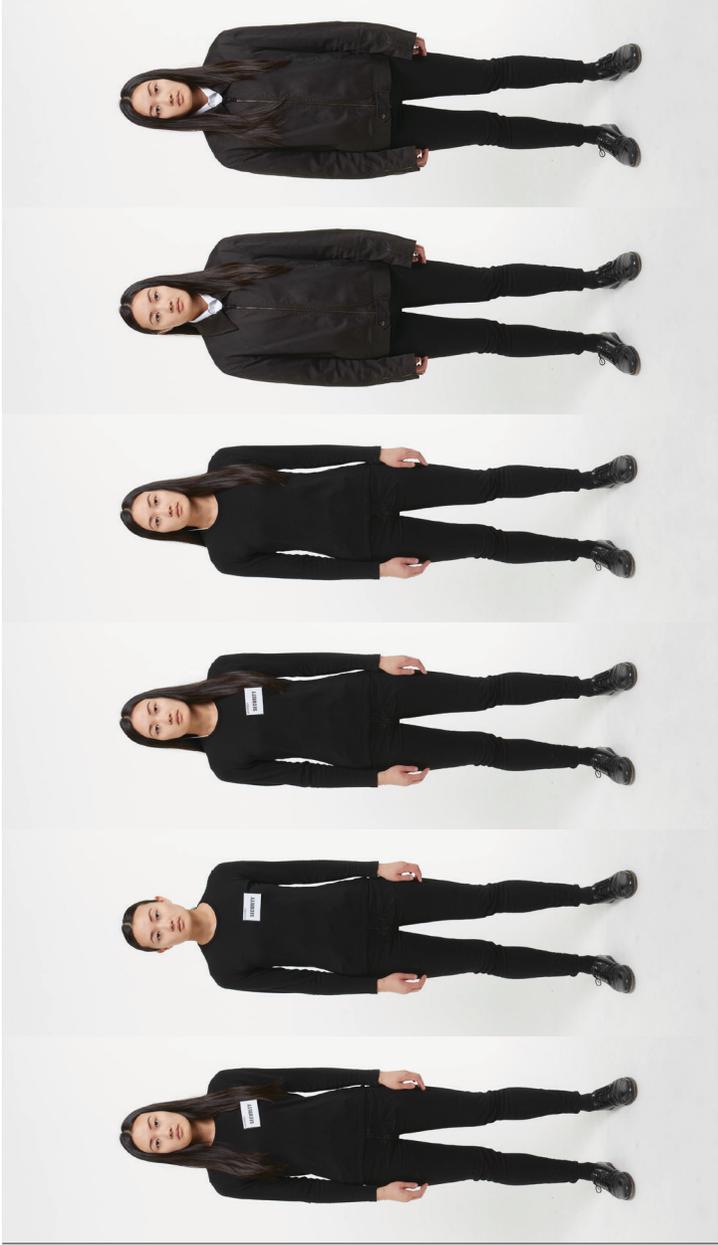


Uniform 1. 2017. Photograph

TRANSLATION

Uniform

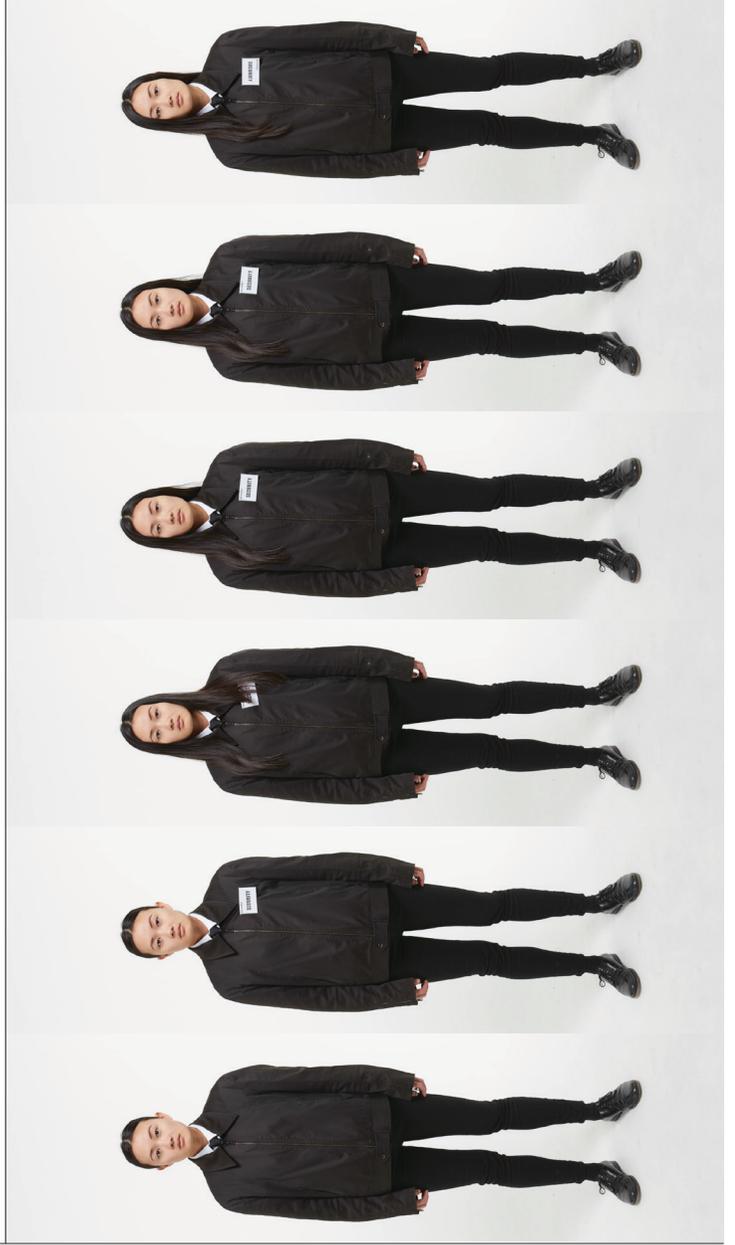
Results



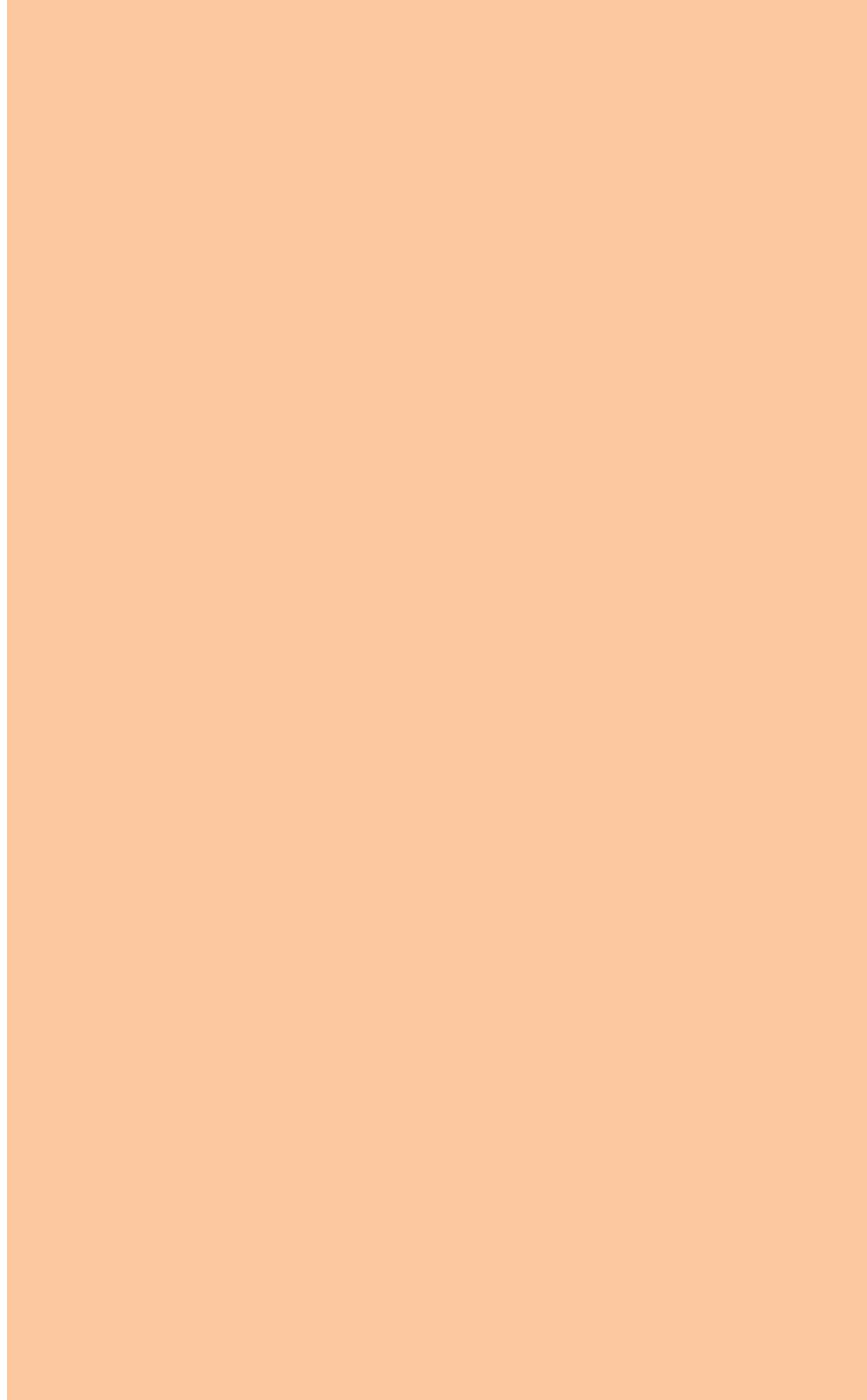
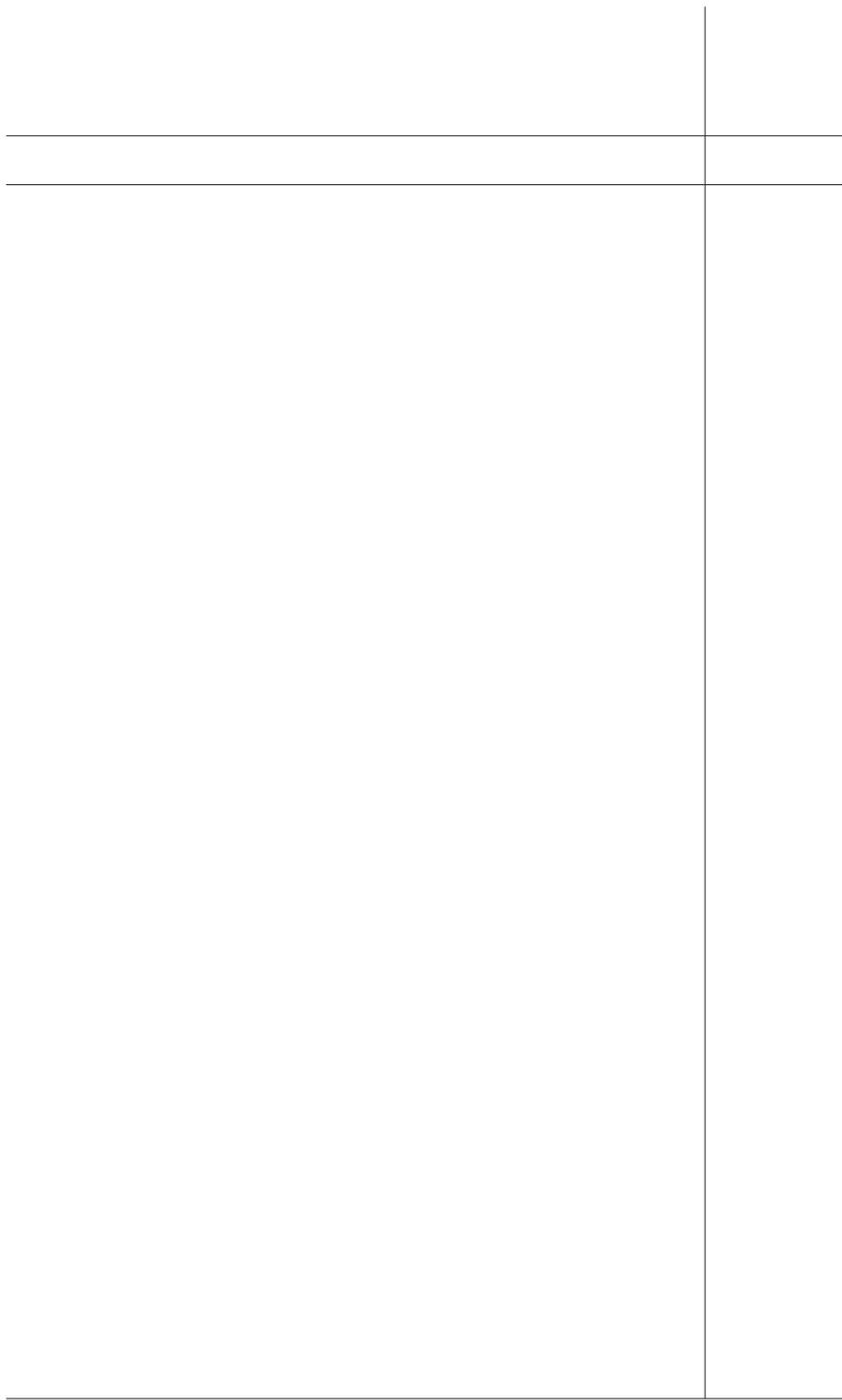
Uniform 2. 2017. Photograph

Uniform

Results



Uniform 2. 2017. Photograph



Exhibition and Performance

The following action was one possible way to bring the discourse about security guards to a broader audience. The methods utilised are subtle but suggestive. Multiple layers are involved to formulate an encompassing experience.

Exhibition and Performance

Method

Formats of exhibitions have seen a turn from their traditional interpretation into a decentralized and discursively dispersed cultural field. As Draxler puts it, the “exhibitionary” and “discursive” categories of art practice has emerged and exhibitions now include “ways of arranging and presenting objects or displaying information; ways of addressing, assembling and guiding people; and ways of interacting symbolically with those objects or information via conversation, education, marketing or critique” (Draxler 1986, p.49). With this in mind, the presentation of the artistic research took a natural turn into the language of an exhibition and performance that initiates public engagement through carefully thought-out presentation formats.

The exhibition and performance of “SECURIWAS?” took place in Kunsthaus Wien from the 29th of May to 1st of June 2017 as part of the “No Hope No Fear” residencies organized by the department of Social Design – Arts as Urban Innovation of the University of Applied Arts Vienna. A display shelf was installed circulating the walls of the exhibition space carrying postcards of three Body Behaviour series and two Uniform series (1 and 2). Transforming the photographs into postcards was an artistic choice to re-enact the process of commodification analysed on security guards. The public was invited to interact with the postcards by taking them off the shelves to reveal personal statements of 20 security guards, which were pasted on the walls. The statements were taken from recorded on-site interviews with multiple security personnel. They were also shown on each corresponding postcard. Miriam Hübl, acting as Jennifer Hermes, was seated on a table during the exhibition opening hours. The name of Miriam Hübl was changed in order to perform the role of the salesperson more adequately. On the table was a price list, receipt book and a cash register that acted as props for the performance. When the public approached her, she invited them to buy a postcard from the

Exhibition and Performance

Method

shelf and engaged them in a discussion on the topic. Whenever a postcard is bought, a transaction process took place where Jennifer Hermes would write and stamp the receipt, place the postcard into a bag, take the money from the buyer and give back the change. The Activity Protocol was also played in the background through loud speakers to evoke a sense of the duration of securities labour. The arrangement of the exhibition made space for the content (the commodification of security guards) to be performed. The approach to the exhibition as a discursive tool created an experience that challenged how audiences relate to security guards. The statements and photographs of certain poses sparked curiosity and questions.

Although the project was not participatory in the conventional sense, it compels the public to engage in the commodification of security guards in the most habitual and familiar possible manner: by buying postcards in a museum. The action of buying postcards as “performance” or “art” alludes to the penetration of art into the ordinary routines of daily life. What is it that I am buying? Is it art? A postcard? A security guard? By blurring the boundaries between commodity, art and security guards, ambiguity and uncertainty arises in an attempt to challenge our notion of consumption and its ethics. In this way, the exhibition and performance was capable of problematizing normative social and political conditions through passive participation.

Method: Exhibition of photographs in the form of postcards that were then sold in a performative action.

Theory: The discursive and the “exhibitionary”

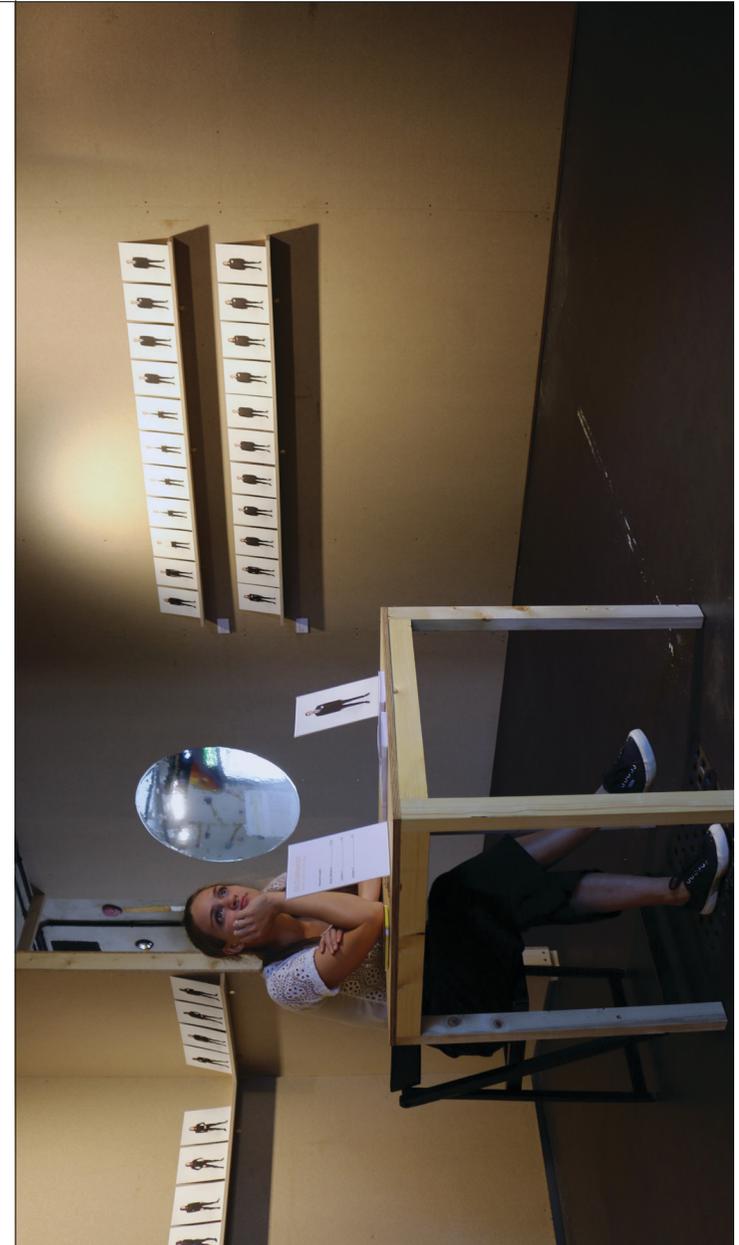
Location(s): Kunsthaus Vienna

Tool(s): Shelves, table, stamp, receipt book, price list, postcards, statements of security guards, Salesperson (Jennifer Hermes) and cash register

Exhibition and Performance

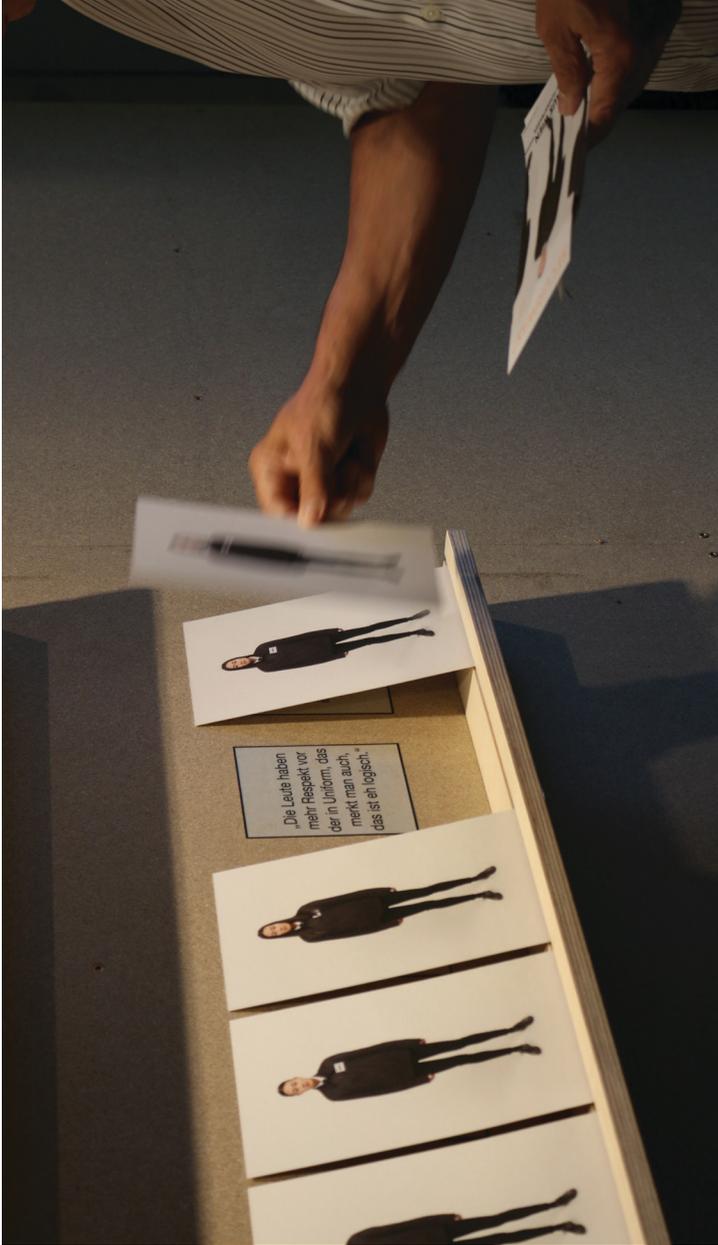
Results

Miriam Hübl acting as salesperson Jennifer Hermes



Exhibition and Performance

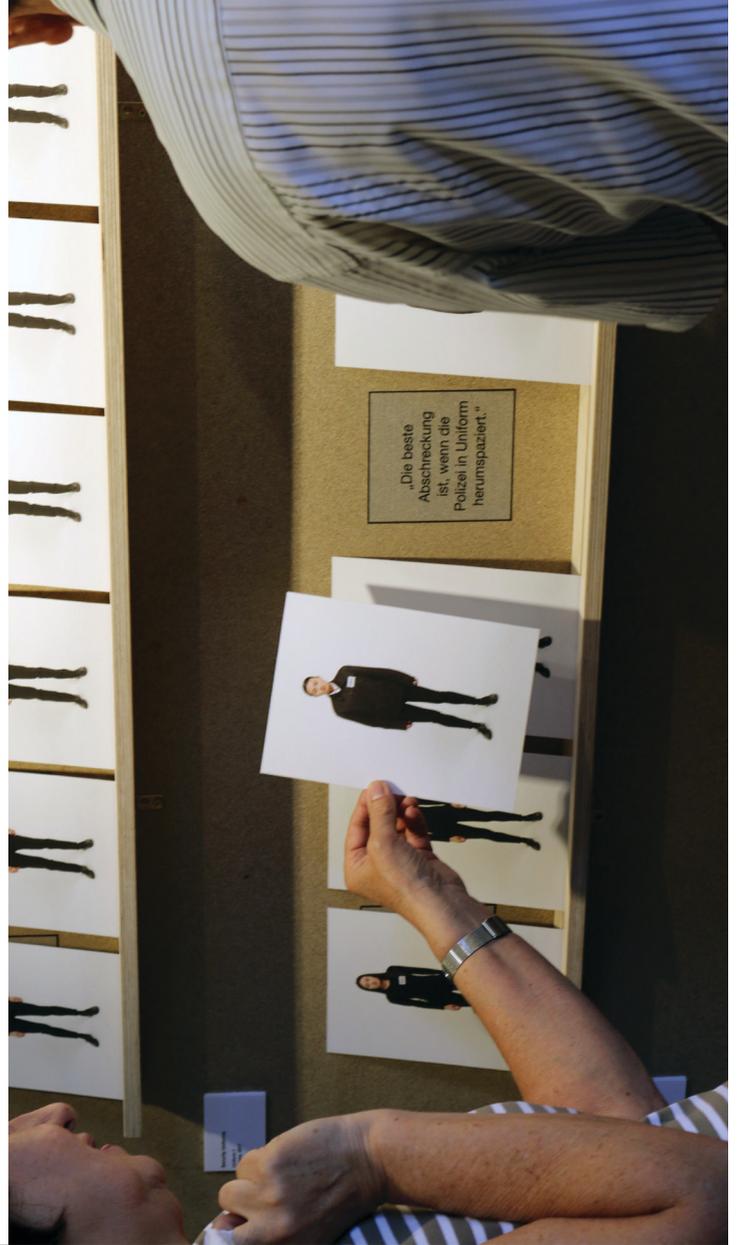
Results



A visitor lifting the postcards to reveal the statements behind

Exhibition and Performance

Results



Once the postcards were bought, the statements remained uncovered for the duration of the exhibition and performance

Exhibition and Performance

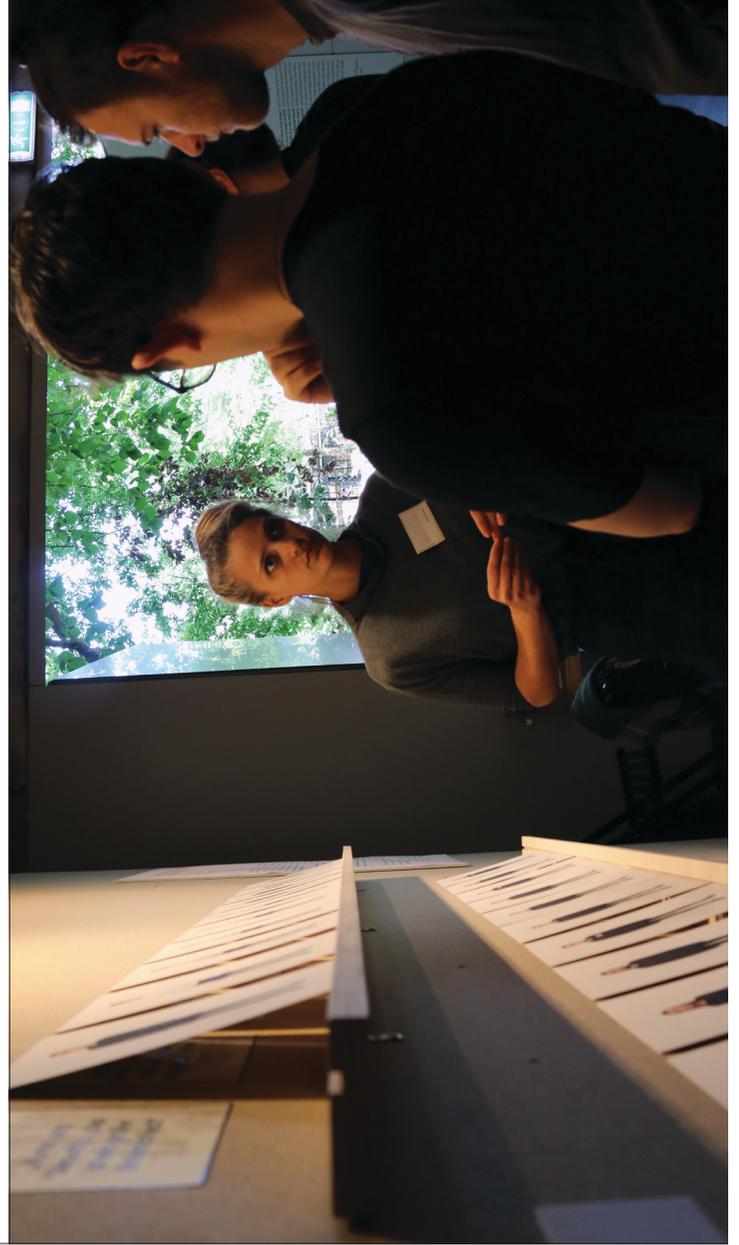
Results



Jennifer Hermes explaining the project to visitors

Exhibition and Performance

Results



Jennifer Hermes explaining the project to visitors

Exhibition and Performance

Results

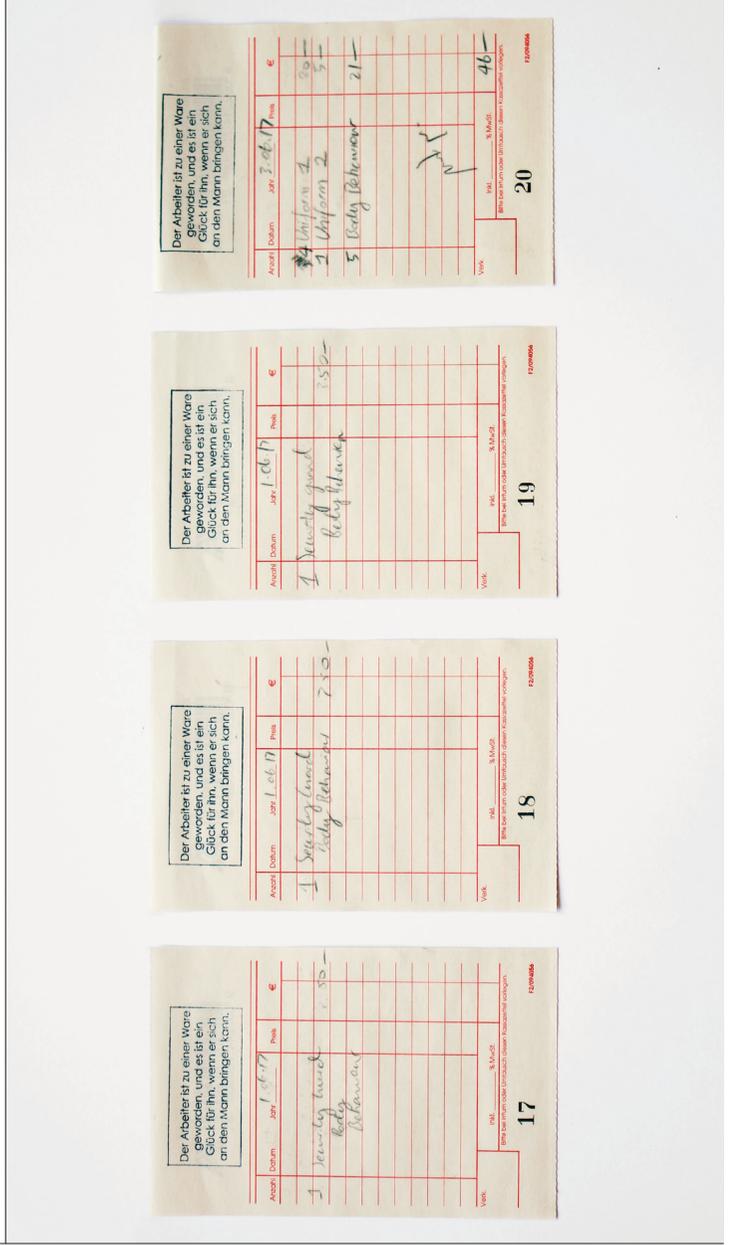


Stamp and ink pad. Photograph.
 "Der Arbeiter ist zu einer Ware geworden und es ist ein Glück für ihn, wenn er sich an den Mann bringen kann"

Exhibition and Performance

Results

Receipt copies from transactions. Photograph



Exhibition and Performance

Results



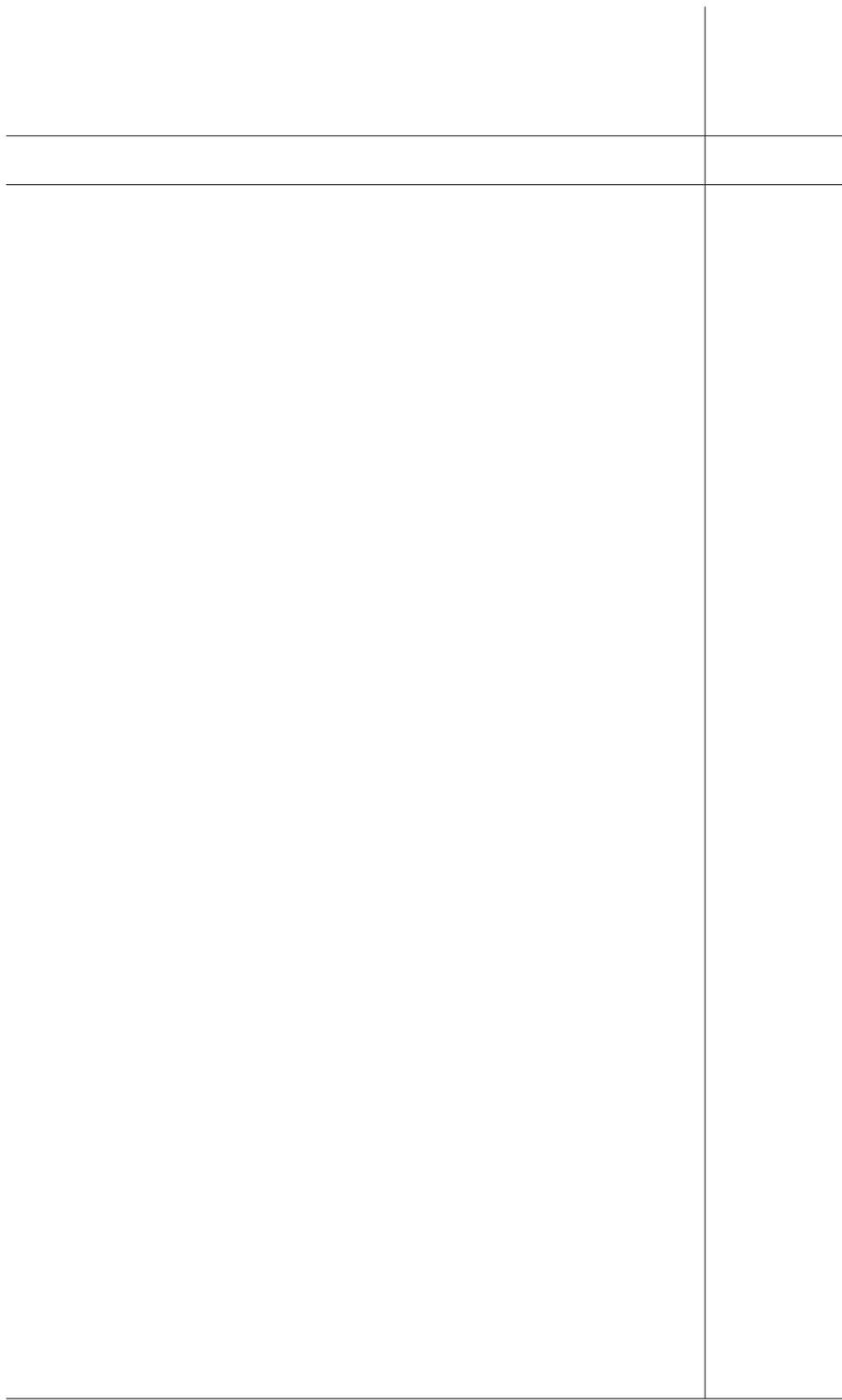
Photo series "Uniform 1" as postcards 1/69
(front). Photograph

Exhibition and Performance

Results



Photo series "Uniform 2" as postcards 1/69
(back). Photograph



Outlook

This section covers reflections on the project, its implications, what can be reappropriated or improved. It also provides an outlook of future strategies on how to artistically communicate the topics of security and labour to the public.

Outlook

Reflection

When projects come to an end, they enter a phase of evaluation and reflection. While having reached certain goals, most projects are never entirely finished and always leave space for improvement. This is also true for our master thesis, of course. While we are content with many aspects of the project, there are others that need further improvement in order to unfold their full potential.

First, it is important to point out that within the scope of one semester, time is a very limited resource. We frequently had to scale down our own visions and expectations to what is feasible within four months. Furthermore, the topic is extensive since it touches upon a variety of different subtopics. This meant that we had to develop a narrow focus in order to reach results. That also means that we had to discard a lot of aspects, possibilities and ideas throughout the course of the project. On the content level, we focused on doormen, which is a specific job profile within the group of security guards. Their specific job features the aspects of non-productive labour and the entanglement of security and consumption most prominently. Focusing on other security guards, like the ones policing semi-public spaces like train stations for example, would have led to equally interesting, yet different analyses and thus outcomes. This might have raised more questions about risk management in neoliberal social settings, the militarization of public space or the quality of privatized policing. Due to the richness of the field, however, those different aspects can only be explored one after the other.

In terms of executing the project, the situation is similar. We had to discard many ideas or postpone them to a different point in time. They are too many to list, but we will sketch one to give an impression of where the project could have gone and

Outlook

might go in the future. When thinking of performative formats, we envisioned making the hardships of non-productive labour experienceable by utilizing the activity protocols we recorded. The audience would have been asked to read the activity protocol into a microphone in a synchronized way –meaning that they would have to go through the phases of complete inactivity too– into a microphone on a stage setting. Without their knowledge, the activities that they read out loud would have been used as commands by a performer dressed as a security guard at a different location. This action would have emphasized the aspects of alienation and authority, while making the hardships of the jobs comprehensible by experiencing it first hand.

Instead, we chose a very subtle approach. Instead of scandalizing the harsh social realities of exploitation, commodification and fetishisation we tried to make it approachable by showing what it is: a day-to-day reality. This is why we used the setting of a gallery space, performatively as well as materially framing the project in a context of consumption. We believe we have been successful in showing the diversity of individuals behind the homogenising imagery of the uniformed security guard. This was achieved by placing quotes from interviews with security guards behind the displayed postcards as well as on the backside of each postcard. The blunt statements evoked compassion, laughter, or melancholy in the audience and thus made the topic relatable. We also are content with the artistic strategy of re-performing the body behaviour of security guards in a neutralised, simplistic photographic translation. This brought the fetishisation of the human body to the forefront, which otherwise goes widely unnoticed.

What is of most importance probably, is that we succeeded in initiating a collective process of reflection starting with the audiences we were engaged with. From the responses, we could

Outlook

tell that people started to reflect on an issue that usually passes them unnoticed. “I never thought of it that way”, “That’s true, I never even noticed them”, “It must be such a boring job”, were some of the more frequent reactions. Visitors of the exhibition made critical comments about the proliferation of uniformed persons in public space or reacted in affirmative ways “If I had a shop, I definitely wouldn’t hire her as a security guard”. Beside these successful aspects, we do acknowledge that we could have been more successful in reaching a larger audience. In order to achieve that, the formats of expression also need to be adapted. The following section will sketch out some possibilities on how that could be accomplished.

Prospects

In order to push the project further, our main interest is to move into various realms to address a broader audience. Of course, by changing the context, questions such as in what format to present in and to which audience become crucial decisions that involve the re-appropriation of the previously presented material to adapt to its new setting. One obvious limiting factor of the clean, “white box” setting of galleries and exhibition spaces is an artist’s restricted access to broader audiences which is essential to artworks that happen in the form of social engagements. The uncertainty also lies within the trade-offs artists are caught in whereby the emancipating and liberating essence of social projects are only executed in the very prescribed conditions of the gallery.

“Going public”, typically a social designers course of action, is a visible trend amongst artist who claim to be “politically and socially active”. Artists who work in public spaces are rethinking how art might gain presence and reach wider audiences under a territory that appears less hegemonically structured than galleries. While on the outlook, public spaces seem “open”

Outlook

and unimpeded by the hierarchical forces that govern private spaces; the “public” in public space is inherently contradictory. With these obvious paradoxes in mind, we believe that “going public” does not offer immediate solutions to the forms of engagements we wish to achieve and it also undesirably embodies restrictions in expression, articulation of ideas, form and materiality of any action. However, it does provide an ample space to extend the subtle forms of participation we imagine, to attract new audiences and to bring security into an arena where security is most experienced.

The language for an experimental action in public space takes the form of a performance to address the conditions of security that are invisible to the public.

One of the photos from the series “Uniform 2” is printed to life-size proportions in a figure that is mobile. Virginia Lui, dressed as a security guard, will perform the duties of the guards in different areas of public space. During breaks, she will replace herself with the life-sized figure. The presence of a paper security guard will possibly provoke high public attention and questions to its existence. It might also communicate the symbolic character of the job in an exaggerated manner. Some might not notice it at all due to the normalised presence of security guards proliferating public space. Experiments to collect a multitude of reactions will take place by positioning the figure in different public zones.

This performance offers a dominantly visual consumption of security guards unlike the previous exhibition and performance where the boundaries between aesthetic consumption and our criticality towards security agencies are blurred. Our aim is to highlight the symbolic function of the labour of security guards by displaying its replaceability through a paper figure. We are interested in the reactions that are provoked and what thoughts

Outlook

and feelings are evoked through this false, yet strikingly actual representation of security.

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Biography

Virginia Lui

Virginia Lui is a Sydney born multidisciplinary designer and artist. She studied architecture at the University of Sydney and worked as an architectural designer at Neeson Murcutt Architects and Sou Fujimoto Architects before studying Social Design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She has worked on projects dealing with urban design and rights to public space, migration and multiculturalism, right-wing populism and security guards. Her work attempts to initiate cross-cultural/social dialogues amongst different actors in society.

Miriam Hübl

Miriam Hübl is a social scientist and radio producer. After she studied political sciences in Vienna and Copenhagen, she set out to find more opportunities for applying the acquired knowledge. She sees urban space as a dense microcosm of societal conflicts and the layers of power structuring society. She uses art and artistic strategies to introduce theoretical knowledge into the real world and to put thought into action.

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Public Performance:

Performing artist: Virginia Lui

Video: Miriam Hübl

Activity Protocol:

Performing artist: Virginia Lui

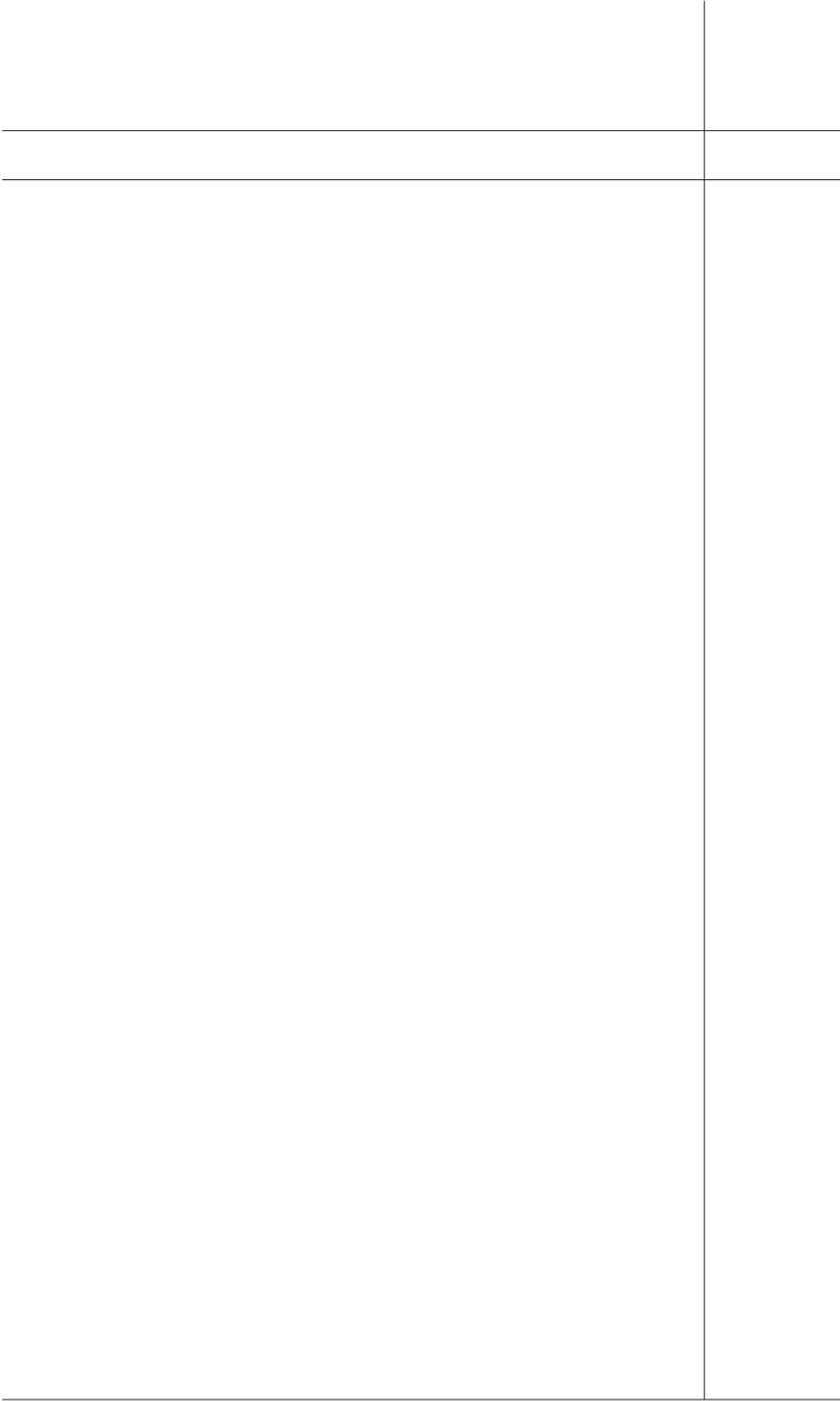
Sound: Miriam Hübl

Design concept: Virginia Lui & Miriam Hübl

Graphic design: Virginia Lui

Photographs: Virginia Lui & Miriam Hübl

Text: Virginia Lui & Miriam Hübl



Theory Booklet: Masculinity and Uniform

This section will focus on the gender dimensions of the security-labour nexus. By looking at the somewhat martial appearance of security guards, it becomes evident that ideas of masculinity play an important role in these types of jobs. This theory section will elaborate in more detail on how changes on the labour market, gender roles and the need for symbols of security correlate.

The crisis of labour simultaneously is the crisis of masculinity (Gesterkamp 2004, p.24). Professional identities play a crucial role in the definition of archetypical gender identities and vice versa. So when labour markets change radically – and the transformation to service sector labour markets pushed forward by automatization and digitalization is nothing less than radical – effects on workers' identities are not surprising. Let's start by looking at the link between workers' identity and labour first to see what makes humans identify through their labour in the first place.

Historically speaking, labour has always had very negative connotations. The etymology of the word gives away what people must have seen in it: a necessary evil. In emancipation from aristocratic rule and feudal structures, merchants and craftsmen created new institutional structures like the guild system, which allowed for new ways of thinking about work (Monnier 2005). The protestant ethic prevalent in the development of early capitalism discursively connected good faith with the will to work. This changed the connotations of labour from being a plight to a virtue. Laziness and idleness were doomed unethical, even profane (Bierwisch 2003). This tendency was preserved through the 20th century despite varieties in specific configurations of the image workers throughout the different historic phases like socialism or fascism (Monnier 2005). In the way modern capitalist societies are structured today, labour is a focal point of individual and collective life. It is hard for us to even imagine a social collective detached from the labour dimension because our very idea of human beings is intertwined with their position on a market. "For the whole of the modern era, people's worth has been measured by the market value of their labour" (Rifkin 1995, p.xviii).

If this can be said about western societies in general, it is even more true for the relationship between men and labour. Men's identities are historically more associated with wage-labour because of the binary division of life into the segments of public and private sectors, which expelled women into the private homes. The prototypical worker, therefore, is male. There is a distinct prototypical image of masculinity, which has come into crisis since the 1970's. The so-called "golden age of capitalism" created the powerful imagery of the relationship between masculinity and wage labour, which we can now witness dissolving. This era describes the post war economic boom in the western world and Japan, defined by exceptionally high employment rates accompanied by a fordist working culture. Stable employment and relatively high income lead to high levels of consumption and life stability. Most importantly, it was the historic moment of the emergence of a middle class which became one of the

most central reference points in political discussions ever since. These specific labour conditions were key elements in the structuring of society: public life, gender roles, family models, etc.

Alongside the dominant lifestyle preconditioned by the conditions on the labour market, a corresponding interpretation of masculinity developed. Connell and Messerschmidt (1987), coming from the field of gender studies, formulated the concept of "hegemonic masculinity". This describes a set of practices, role expectations and identities, which facilitate and legitimize male dominance in society. Hegemonic masculinity is a normative concept in the sense that even though most men do not live up to it, it is an accepted ideal. "It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, p.831). Hegemonic masculinity is defined to a large extent through employment status and access to financial resources. The "golden era" made it possible for many men to take on the role of the family's sole breadwinner and allow for the "luxury of a stay-at-home wife" (Gesterkamp 2004, p.22) This family model offered a role to identify with and find pride in.

Since the neoliberal turn of the 1970's, the post-war model came into crisis and with it, so did the roles it had to offer to men. Ever since, labour is becoming more and more precarious. Precarity is generally defined as a social situation lacking in predictability, job and income security as well as the lack of social status (Standing 2011, p.17). As a result, there is a steady decline in jobs providing sufficiently high income to serve a whole family. Alternative forms of employment like self-employment, part time and temporary jobs are replacing full-time employment, which used to be the norm (Höyng 2004, p.9). This in turn leads to the loss of socio-economic status and irritations regarding gender roles (Gesterkamp, 2004, p.23).

One of the segments flourishing within this precarious sector is security-labour. Interestingly, what seems to be the case with security guards is that alternative signifiers of masculinity are invoked within the job. As if to compensate for the role of the breadwinner, which is less and less feasible because of the lack of job and income security, masculinity is performed through alternative role models. The most dominant role appears to be the one of the loyal protector: the guard protecting a shop, protecting a gated community, guarding the social order. Instead of protecting the family through financial stability and safety, a more archaic interpretation of masculinity related to physical defence is

recalled. The most archetypical “protector” is closely related to the protective functions of the nation state: the military and police. Hence, it also doesn’t come as a surprise that private protectors also make use of a distinctive mark of those protective functions: the uniform. The role of the protector offered in the job of a security guard –together with the outfit of a uniform– has interesting implications both for questions of gender identity and the potential of labour related collective action.

The changes on the labour market towards precarious service sectors, the termination of the balance of interests between capital and labour prevalent in the “golden era” and the growing insecurity that comes with it, has strong effects on the whole spectrum of society. However, it was working class men that were affected on various levels at the same time. Not only were their material interests endangered, but simultaneously the foundations of the prevalent ideals of manhood were threatened (Gesterkamp 2004, p.24).

It is important to mention that women were relatively less affected by this process because they were already marginalized on labour markets. The ideal of a woman at the time was primarily related to the private sphere –the house and the home. Struggles on the labour market thus had fewer direct effects on the life reality and prevalent gender stereotypes of women. In general however, the most precarious segments of labour markets were always and still are served by women (Gesterkamp 2004, p. 25). What is new now is that with the general worsening of the situation on job markets, men and women need to compete within this segment (Gärtner/Schwerma 2004, p. 51f.)

As described in the theory booklet on security, the security sector is growing intensely. The reasons for that are manifold. One possible explanation of sector’s success could be the fact that it offers masculine identities that can be adapted by (primarily) male workers who are deprived of the access to masculinities connected to financial stability and the role of the breadwinner. The role of the protector, then, offers a rich compound of signs and signifiers to draw from. In the context of the nation state, for example, the image of the male protector has had a long tradition. Research in visual politics has analysed a repeating pattern of visual communication that equates the nation state with women, which needs to be protected from foreign intrusion (Wenk 2007). The image of men as the protector suggests strength and power. Through the invocation of men’s alleged ability to protect, the addressed group is offered a meaningful and important function in society. By establishing a direct connection between the nation state and a desirable gender identity, men’s loyalty to the nation

state is reinforced and reassured (Wenk 2007, p.166). The functionality behind this can be abstracted from the nation state and transposed to other contexts. What is essential to this process is the trade-off between protector and protected entity: the protector is afforded with meaning and a function, which is directly derived from the protected entity. This produces a loyalty towards the protected entity because the protectors’ status is depended on the protected entities’ existence. Of course, people’s’ identities are complex and do not rely on one dimension only. But since identities are so strongly defined by people’s position on the labour market, it seems reasonable to say that the opportunity to receive a position of importance and power through a job will be of strong interest for many workers. Especially, when other forms of societal appreciation –financial stability or a respected job– get more and more out of reach. The job of a security guard provides exactly that. Men, caught up in precarious working conditions are offered the role of the protector which carries the connotations of traditional masculinity –power, authority, respect. Paradoxically, those were the precarious working conditions that led to the crisis of masculinity in the first place. The offer of even more archaic interpretations of masculinity then appears to be a compensation, even a pacifier for an otherwise deteriorated precariat.

This is furthermore supported by the usage of one of the strongest signifiers of masculinity: the uniform. Uniforms are strongly associated with the ordering organs of states: the police and military, which are male-dominated institutions. Culturally speaking, the primary effect of uniforms is deindividuation and the production of a homogenous group (Rafaeli/Pratt 1993), which is key to the organizational structures of the military and police. “No matter what sort of uniform it is –military, civil, or religious (...) to put on such livery is to give up one’s right to act as an individual (...) What one does, as well as what one wears, will be determined by external authorities“ (Lurie 1981, p.18). However, uniforms are not only found within the police and military but in any kind of disciplining institution: monasteries, schools, asylums, etc. (Foucault 2016). Discipline is communicated through uniforms in two directions: inwards and outwards. On one hand, uniforms work to discipline the people wearing them. On the other hand, they have the reciprocal effect of communicating to the outside (Rafaeli/Pratt 1993, p.46). The discipline and order practiced within police academies, military barracks and monasteries is conveyed to outsiders through the uniform. Thus, it can be said that uniforms operate as materialized translator of discipline. As a medium of communication, the uniforms’ symbolic language is canonized: considering their background in military and police forces, uniforms that aesthetically allude to these institutions communicate authority, power and

legitimacy. This also applies to the uniforms of security guards. Although security guards are very restricted in their ability of law enforcement, their visual appearance draws from the powerful attributes associated with police and other armed forces. Security guards' performance of power and authority in the role of the protector is thus further supported by their outfit: the uniform. The notion of masculinity in the security sector thus seems to be reinforced by the usage of the uniform, which is associated with the hyper-masculine institutions of military and police.

As it is clear now, gender roles play a high significance in the security-labour nexus. Traditional male role models have come under threat through the continuous precarization of labour markets. The growing security sector, which is a symptom of these precarization processes in itself, offers alternative masculinities to the "victims" of precarization. As a form of compensation for the hegemonic masculinity of the "golden era"—the financial stability to be the sole breadwinner of the family—workers are offered the role of the protector here. This is partly expressed and supported by the usage of uniforms in security firms. Considering the potential for the collective action of workers—the foundation of negotiation power for workers interests—the specific form of masculinity offered to security guards seems to be counterproductive. The relationship of loyalty towards the employer, which comes with the role of the protector could be seen as an extra layer of dependency. There is a risk that this might further impede the collective action of workers in a field where solidarity is already exacerbated by the structural obstacles produced by individualization and precarity.

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Theory Booklet: Security

This section will discuss the topic of security. As ambiguous as this term is, it needs specification straight away. Security will be described as a discursive concept which can have different meanings and can be used strategically in politics. Keeping these considerations in mind, the section will go on to discuss security as expressed by security guards. This part will focus on the role of security guards in relation to public and private spaces and the society in general.

Security is an ambiguous term. In itself, it does not have a universal meaning that would allow for a coherent application of the term outside of its specific context in time and space. This adaptability the term is also what makes its appropriation so opportune for various political agendas. The scientific discipline explicitly investigating the arena of “security” is called Security Studies. Mostly populated by political scientists and sociologists, the field started to gain ground in academia in the context of the cold war. Originally invested in security on the state level – the threat of war or dangerous dynamics of arms races, for example (eg. Kenneth Waltz) – the field soon opened up to consider concepts of security no longer exclusively framed as state’s security. Constructivist approaches entered the stage to question the state-centrism of Realist research designs. “Poststructuralists, Feminists, Post-colonialists, Critical Constructivists and the Copenhagen School argued in favour of seeing security as a discourse through which identities and threats are constituted rather than as an objective, material condition” (Buzan/Hansen 2009, p. 243). The so-called Copenhagen school focused on the close connection of security and the pursuit of political aims. In what they called the process of “securitization”, Buzan et al. (1998) described the deliberate framing of a political issue as a subject of security in order to curtail political debate, accelerate the pace of decision making processes and potentially violate what would otherwise be seen as social and even legal norms.

“The way to study securitization is to study discourse and political constellations: When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to make an audience tolerate violations of rules that would otherwise have to be obeyed? If by means of an argument about the priority and urgency of an existential threat the securitizing actor has managed to break free of procedures or rules he or she would otherwise be bound by, we are witnessing a case of securitization.” (Buzan et al. 1998, p.25)

What is of vital importance here is the insight into the potential of a discursive construction of security, hence also the construction of a sense of insecurity in order to pursue certain interests. These might be of political, ideological or economic nature. Ever since the 9/11 attacks and the beginning of the Global War on Terror, more and more sectors of politics are framed as security-politics (Buzan/Hansen 2009, p.226ff.). Those events, according to Didier Bigo, serve as the legitimizing factor for a global trend towards intensified security measures: “The USA has propagated the idea that there is a global ‘in-security’, which is attributed to the development of threats of mass destruction, thought to be derived from terrorist and other criminal organizations and governments that support them” (Bigo 2006, p.47). Bigo attests the emergence of what he calls a

transnational alliance of “managers of insecurity” (Bigo 2007, p.391). This guild of “managers” consists of military and police, politicians, bureaucrats, intelligent services and the like. The “management of unease” (Bigo 2012, p.120) profits from a growing sense of insecurity, which creates incentives for them to further support this tendency. Security is thus framed in purely positive terms: “As the threat is reappraised, security now has an entirely positive connotation, while the negative overtones linked to its impact on freedom are swept aside. Rather than considering security as a process, one forgets its consequences and is led to think that ‘more security is a good thing’ (Bigo/Guittet 2011, p.492). While primarily focussing on state related actors, Bigo also points how private actors (in the form of technology companies and security firms) enter the field of (in)security. Security has thus also become an interesting and profitable market: the “stock exchange of fear” (Bigo 2012, p.119).

One needs to think within this broader context of security politics when approaching the topic of privatized security. As this, alongside the dimension of the precarization of labour markets described in the theory booklet on labour was the discursive framework, which paved the way for the growth of the security sector in politics, economy and society. “Indeed, in a society increasingly sensitized to risk and the need to consume, security becomes imbued in all social relations, intimately connected to the mystification of commodities and policy (Neocleous 2000 in Rigakos 2008, p.30).”

By looking at the security sector as a job market, what becomes apparent is a number of defining features. For one, the security market is growing at a fast pace (van Steden/Sarre 2007). G4S, for example, employs 585.000 people and is thus one of the largest private employers worldwide (G4S, 2017). In Austria, the security sector had an annual turnover of €200 million in 2001 and was increasing by 2-3% per cent per year (van Steden/Sarre 2007, p.227). The sector also plays an important economic role because it has been able to absorb a big share of the post-industrial labour force, which was laid off when most of the manufacturing industry was outsourced to other parts of the world and western economies were increasingly dominated by the service industry. The security sector primarily holds jobs for low-qualified workers, often under precarious working conditions. Unsurprisingly, the sector is thus mainly served by segments of the work force that are already marginalized in other respects: migrants, low educated, older workers (van Steden/Sarre 2007). The services provided by security firms are very diverse: From guarding private or public property, securing public or semi-public spaces like train stations, conducting security checks at airports, as well as money transports, etc. This

master thesis focussed on a specific group of security guards, namely those visible in public and semi-public spaces. The next section will shortly discuss a relatively obvious effect of the growing presence of security guards, which could be called the securitization of public spaces. Then, a subtler liaison will be scrutinized: the relationship of security and consumption. This will shed more light on one specific group of security guards: so called doormen. As will be argued, their role is so strongly connected to their commercial surroundings that they even appear to be “guardians of consumption”.

Securitization of public space:

After the resurgence of terrorist attacks in Europe, city authorities have felt the urge to create a sense of safety for citizens and tourists. This –and the rise in supply of security products– has led to an increased presence of security guards in urban areas. “The deployment of “city guards”, “street wardens” and “ambassadors” in city centre areas has been an instrumental part of recent strategy to make the city a more attractive and safer place” (Crawford 2008, p.168). Whether people actually feel more or less secure when the presence of uniformed personnel in public space is increased cannot be generalized. The effectiveness of this strategy will always depend on the specific situation and has to be analysed on a case to case base (Goold et al. 2010). What should be kept in critical consideration, however, is the normalization of militarized appearances in civic space that this strategy entails. When a militarized imagery of public space is becoming the norm, are societies at risk of being less sensitive towards the framing of other aspects of social life in militarized and securitized ways? Another point that makes this tendency particularly interesting is the fact that privatized security forces are partly providing services which were traditionally state duty. “Growth in the private security sector is seen as indicative of a growing sense of insecurity in society, and as both a cause and by-product of the State’s surrender of its monopoly on policing” (Goold et al. 2010, p.4). Thus, the growth of security services can be understood as an expression of neoliberal statehood, which is outsourcing more and more of its traditional functions to the private sector. Indeed, privatization is not unique to security services. It can also be witnessed in other core state functions like education, welfare and medical care (Rigakos 2012, p.260). What is particularly problematic in the case of privatized security services however is that in democratic societies ordering or policing functions usually demand some sort of democratic legitimization and control. In the case of privatized security, this kind of democratic responsibility is absent. The regulation of the sector is thus organized decentrally through self-regulation, civil and criminal liability and so forth. The potential risk of this becomes clear in the various tragic incidents

of the misuse of power and force by security guards (eg. Wright 2011, Lewis 2011)

Security and Consumption:

The specific focus of this master thesis has been on one type of security guards: doormen. They are hired to guard commercial avenues: super markets, fashion stores, jewellery stores etc. Usually, doormen are positioned at entrances and exits of shops, or close to them. Their task is to prevent theft, contact police authorities in cases of attempt and guarantee the general order. Doormen also often serve as a first contact person for customers by giving directions. From observations and interviews with doormen it became clear however, that most of the working time is not covered by the actual tasks ascribed to them. What has thus raised the specific interest in them was exactly the striking reduction of the laborious activity to an almost exclusively symbolic function. This in turn has raised questions about the intensification of exploitation in this specific labour-relation due to the commodification of the security guards and a fetishisation of their physical bodies. These aspects are discussed in more detail in the theory booklet on Labour and the body. In this section we want to focus on a different dimension however, namely the concurrence of security and commercial interests. The figure of the doorman is also interesting because this function seems to be a perfect metaphor for the mutually beneficial relationship of the rise of private security forces and commercial interest. That is to say, privatization of public spaces supported the expansion of private security forces. Shearing and Stenning (1981) termed privatized public spaces – quasi-public spaces– “mass private property”.

“By this they refer to facilities that are owned privately but to which the public has access and use, such as shopping malls, entertainment stadia, leisure centres and recreational grounds. The growth of “mass private property” has seen greater amounts of “public spaces” located on private property and policed by private security companies. This important societal development has provided private corporations with the legal space and economic incentive to do their own policing” (Crawford 2008, p.166).

The concurrence of public spaces and spaces of consumption thus creates cities that have been described as “mall without walls” (Graham/Marvin 2001). The blurring of borders between consumption and public spaces can then also lead to confusion concerning the responsibility of security guards. To avoid misperceptions about the function of doormen: they are not there to protect the people but rather to protect property and private assets from people (Goold et al. 2010, Van Steden/Sarre 2007).

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Theory Booklet: Labour

This section deals with current developments on labour markets, focussing on the continuous precarization of labour. Security guards are considered a symptomatic expression of this tendency. Using the example of security labour, this section then discusses exploitation and commodification in labour relations. These are intensified through an extreme form of non-productive labour and the fetishisation of the worker's' body.

Since the 1970's, the service sector is growing intensively worldwide. A report by the World Bank shows that service jobs already accounted for almost two thirds of the world's GDP by the mid 1990s (World Bank Report 2012). The tendency of "tertiarisation" is generally considered to result from technological innovations in machination, automation and most recently, digitalization, which replace human labour force. Up until recently, labour force expelled from the agricultural and manufacturing sectors was absorbed by the service sector, which has therefore been seen as the future of modern labour throughout the recent decades (Rifkin 1995, p.xvii). While there is whole range of job profiles in the service sector demanding high educational specialization (eg. informatics, management,...), the vast majority of jobs in the service industry are low-qualified and thus under constant threat of being replaced by the next technological innovation waiting around the next corner.

"The information and communication technologies and global market forces are fast polarizing the world's population into two irreconcilable and potentially warring forces – a new cosmopolitan elite of "symbolic analysts" who control the technologies and the forces of production, and the growing number of permanently displaced workers who have little hope and even fewer prospects for meaningful employment in the new high-tech global economy" (Rifkin 1995, p.xvii).

The harsh polarization of the labour force developing under current labour conditions was the focus of the "OECD Employment Outlook"- study, published in June 2017. One main finding was that while jobs in the high qualification as well as the low qualification segment grew, jobs for middle qualifications are in decline (-17% in the past two decades in Austria, for example). At the same time, the real incomes of middle and low qualified jobs have stagnated (OECD 2017, p.6). These developments in the low qualification segment of labour markets result in what has been called the "precarization" of labour. As a result of the imbalance of power between capital and labour, the precarization of the labour market has become a serious issue, especially since the 1990s. "While some new jobs are being created in the US economy, they are in the low-paying sector and generally temporary employment" (Rifkin 1995, p.4).

Precarious labour conditions are generally defined by the lack of income and employment stability, the lack of predictability and individual security, perpetuated by low income and suboptimal working conditions. While the post war working conditions were producing "(...) workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes of advancement, subject to unionization and collective agreements" (Standing 2014, p.15), workers under precarious labour conditions lack these characteristics. "The combination of employment insta-

bility and income vulnerability defines the economic precarity of the precariat" (Wright 2015, p.161). Often, those affected by precarious labour conditions are also marginalized in other respects like age, migration background or low skill qualifications. "It is really the intersection of economic precarity with political marginality that most sharply creates a boundary dividing the precariat from the working class." (ibid. p.158) Yet, the precariat is partly build up from highly qualified, young people, stuck in low or unpaid internships and temporary employment contracts (Standing 2014, p.29). The security business as one of the booming sectors within the precarious service sector economy is also representative in this sense by employing workers from both of these groups. Considering that the latter group has very different job perspectives and is effectively also equipped with better opportunities on the labour market, they will not be conceded with too much attention within this thesis. Instead, the focus will be on the workers that have to cope with the labour conditions long term because they have no or only limited alternatives on the labour market.

Workers in precarious labour conditions are prone to fall victim of exploitation because of their lack of collectivization and bargaining power (Power 2012, p.8). However, from a marxist perspective a moment of exploitation is inherent to all labour relations because employers create a surplus from the workers labour (Wright 2015, p.11). This moment of exploitation is intensified through the process of the commodification of labour. "Commodification" describes a process of turning something into a product, which was originally not considered to be one.

"Capitalism treats as commodities many of the fundamental elements within the web of life that are not produced as commodities. This applies to labor, to all of what we often refer to as "nature" as well as specific forms of our social existence (most obviously money, but also such features as culture, tradition, intelligence, memory, as well as the physical reproduction of species).(...) The "commodification of everything" infects every aspect of daily life" (Harvey 2005, p.87).

If labour can be commodified, what does this mean in respect to a type of labour which lacks a key defining element of work: productiveness? In the case of security guards, the prime task of their work is accomplished on the symbolic and preventive level. Unlike manufacturing workers or even supermarket cashiers who must fulfill clear tasks by creating products or executing some sort of activity, the work of security guards is basically reduced to their physical presence. Security labour is thus both non-productive and immaterial.

Franco Berardi (2012) calls the predominant form of work in the digital age

“Info-labour. The immateriality of this labour causes an intense form of alienation of workers from their work. This seems to be true for security labour as well, with the one difference, that the worker’s body actually becomes more important as it is stripped from a productive or material activity which could be performed. To describe this world in which labor is less and less material, Franco Berardi coined the term of “Semio-Capital”:

“I propose the concept of semio-capital in order to describe a form of social production which is essentially focused on the production of signs, of “semio”. I don’t mean that all forms of social production are semiotic. I know that shoes and cars and houses are produced too. But everything is more and more translated into signs. Everything is more and more replaced, on the economic level, by a semiotic form of production” (Berardi 2012, p.1)

The job of a security guard, and in a more extreme form, the job of a doorman, appears to work according to this logic. Their labour consists of producing signs and symbols by means of their physical presence and through their bodies. The guards bodies are the medium of the communication of signs: of strength, authority and order. Of course security guards are officially assigned tasks like watching the customers, guarding a shop, checking the customer’s bags, etc. Nevertheless their main function (as opposed to the usage of security cameras or alarm systems, for example) seems to be a symbolic one. The sheer importance of the guards appearance in communicating these signs and symbols creates an excessive focus on the physical body. Taking an object as what it communicates instead of what it actually is, is called fetishisation.

Security as a political concept can be said to have become an object of fetishism, and Steven Spitzer (1987) has argued this convincingly elsewhere. What the observations conducted for this master thesis suggest, however, is that the combination of an extreme form of non-productive labour, “doing nothing”, and the task of fulfilling a symbolic function through the physical body that is visible in security guards, leads to a fetishisation not only of security, but also of the security guards bodies. When labour becomes purely symbolic and the symbols are transported by means of the body, labour and the body conflate. If labour was a commodity before, the worker will now become a commodity himself-or herself. This can be argued to further intensify the exploitative moment of labour relations. Furthermore, the fact that labour and the worker’s body merge in the figure of a security guard might shift potential labour related struggles into the arena of the worker’s body because there is no outside dimension to labour anymore.

cial struggles in the neoliberal configurations of economy and society (Kreisky 2006). Hence, generally it could be said that the body becomes de-materialized (ibid. 236) in the post-industrial age of semio capital as it is relieved of the hardships of physical labour. As security guards show, the body is immediately given a new role, the role of semiotic communication. In this way –and the figure of the security guard communicated this with utter harshness– the worker’s body as a fetishized object remains painfully material.

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The project “SECURIWAS?” deals with security guards and how the booming sector of private security brings the conditions of new and precarious labour to the forefront. By taking the presence of guards in cities for granted, the contradictions and hardships of these kinds of jobs remain invisible. Critical questioning about exploitation on the labour market is needed to reformulate demands for solidarity.