

*Imagineering—(Re)activating the Photographic*

Klara Källström & Thobias Fäldt  
*Werker Magazine*  
Discipula

Curator: Lars Willumeit

This exhibition presents the work of three artist collectives that can be characterized as collaborative research platforms operating in the fields of contemporary photography, visual culture, and self-publishing.

Their artistic practice aims at the rethinking, reimagining, and remaking of photographic media, and of cultures beyond current mainstream paradigms of (re-)presentation. It also interrogates the relation between photography and history and their dominant narratives.

Using the concept of *imagineering*—a portmanteau of the words *image* and *engineering*—the title provides a way to connect the artistic strategies and concerns of these collectives. *Imagineering* here points to the constructedness of visibility or invisibility, and to the embeddedness of images within wider ecologies of knowledge, visibility, meaning-making processes, and the specific historical, politico-economic, and sociocultural contexts of their power relations.

The constellations of the exhibition constitute an attempt to enable, for the visitor, a conscious reframing of his or her own perception and meaning-making processes. They also make explicit the political investment inherent in photographic images and their uses and practices, and in the regimes of the gaze with its attendant politics of visibility.

*Imagineering* uses the exhibition space to create situations in which visitors are engaged so as to actively reflect some of the transformations, paradoxes, and ambivalences entailed in technological and cultural changes in photographic practice and its distribution and consumption. Consequently the institutional space becomes an arena of contention, as well as a laboratory for thinking together, about, with, through, and in photographic media—thereby enabling processes of visual literacy and collective image critique.

And yet all three collectives have very distinct thematic focuses and modes of operation:

**Klara Källström and Thobias Fältd** present a number of projects that reflect on notions of uncertainty and the act of seeing, in both the register of production and that of consumption. In their work, images found or produced by the artists are re-activated in new temporal, spatial, and material contexts. By this means they also manage to reflect on the role of emerging forms of the distributed and networked image, along with its hyperconnected and accelerated patterns of mutation and migration.

The theme of photography in relation to labor and visibility/invisibility, and of how to find forms of visual activism in the post-Fordist era, is at the center of the artistic practice of **Werker Magazine**. The collective's practice is based on self-representation, self-publishing, and image critique, taking inspiration from the international worker photography movements of the 1920s and '30s—but not in any nostalgic sense. The *Werker Magazine* installation focuses on how photography can also generate alternative modes of representation to counter the dominant ones spread by media: in this case by establishing counter-histories that undermine the hegemonic narratives and regimes of the gaze about the body of the young male worker.

The members of the **Discipula** collective often engage in the deprogramming and reprogramming of images. As such, they operate on at least three levels of photographic discourse: as producers of photographic images; as “para-photographers” who appropriate existing photographs to create narratives that reconfigure meanings through recontextualization; and as “meta-photographers” who create perceptual environments for the consumption of photographs under certain conditions and regimes. This enables self-reflection for the viewer, in terms of the perception process of an image itself, and of the biases contained in acts of seeing per se.

The installation *Werker 2—A Spoken History of the Young Worker* by *Werker Magazine*, which premiered at Krakow Photomonth 2016, was produced in collaboration with Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland, where it will be shown as part of the parallel events of Manifesta 11, entitled *What People Do for Money: Some Joint Ventures*.

Lars Willumeit