

Galerie Uriel Kerestey

Pavlo Kerestey

Selected Press

In Conversation with Szuper Gallery

Uriel Kerestey

Free Exchange Magazine

10 May 2025

● Free Exchange

An Interview with Szuper Gallery

Uriel Kerestey

A discussion about puppets, proxies, and the responsibilities of artists during war.



An installation at the Folkets Park in Knislinge, used as the performance space of the Milvus Artistic Research Centre (MARC).
Courtesy of Szuper Gallery, 2025.

Szuper Gallery is an artist collective that originated out of a contemporary art gallery in Munich of the same name in the 1990s. Its members, Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey, have collaborated to create works that incorporate video installations, sculptures, paintings, and performances and have exhibited across Europe and North America.

A good idea of what Szuper Gallery is about can be gleaned from the artists' self-description of the original Munich gallery as "performative". That is, while running as a real gallery on paper, its programme and the operation of the gallery itself was intended to subvert the model that it followed *prima facie*. A notorious project was the installation of a glass lift in the Munich immigration offices, which ran as a changing exhibition space and subsequent archive for almost 20 years, showing works that explored the intersection between migration, bureaucracy and art. In general, this kind of Brechtian thinking underlies much of their work. It is also what makes it so interesting, given the innate political nature of the new forms of communication that define our age.

Full disclaimer, they are also my parents! I was fortunate to join them for a couple of days in the small town of Knislinge, which lies in the southern Skåne county of Sweden, where they are currently completing an artist residency at the Milvus Artistic Research Centre (MARC). This is where I was able to have the following conversation with Susanne, first about their residency, and then about the project they are currently working on, called 'Proxies'.

Can you describe the day-to-day experience of your residency in Knislinge?

Our residency is hosted by MARC, and our studio is based in an old Folkets Park (People's Park) — a type of public recreation space that used to be common in most Swedish towns and cities. These parks were originally created by the labour movement as spaces for political rallies and for workers and their families to relax, often featuring bandstands and stages for concerts and events. Working here gives us a lot of space — both physically and conceptually — to try out ideas for our new project. There's a certain resonance between the atmosphere of the park and the puppets and sets we're creating: the history of performance, gathering, and political expression embedded in the site seems to echo through the work as it develops.

Have you been able to engage with the local community or landscape in a way that has influenced your work, or the thinking surrounding your work?

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

We showed a draft version of our new project during the recent opening event at MARC, which gave us a chance to test the puppets and a new video we're developing. It was also a useful moment to see how audiences respond. MARC has a strong emphasis on performance and dance, which has brought an interesting perspective to the performative elements of our work. We also ended up dancing a lot during Frédéric Gies' performance at the event — which was unexpectedly joyful and energising. In terms of the landscape, we've been filming in the nearby woods and are hoping to shoot at a local black granite quarry. The quarry immediately reminded us of the stage set we created for our earlier piece *Ballet – Granit*, where we built rocks and boulders as part of an apocalyptic landscape. The quarry feels almost like a ready-made stage set, cut deep into the earth — we're now exploring how this site might resonate with the themes of *Proxies*.



Svarta Bergen (Black Mountain), a former granite quarry near Knislinge. Photograph by Uriel Kerestey, 2025.

You are currently working on a project called 'Proxies'. When I think of that term, I think of think about the idea of 'standing in' or mediating for someone else. Am I understanding the term correctly?

Yes, absolutely — that's exactly why we've chosen *Proxies* as the working title. We're developing a series of figure puppets that act as stand-ins or placeholders — for ourselves, for others, and for the complex roles people take on during moments of crisis or displacement. The puppets allow us to navigate and reflect on our surroundings in a slightly distanced, performative way. They are both surrogates and subjects in their own right: they carry traces of personal experience, but they also function as abstracted bodies through which larger questions about vulnerability, representation, and agency can be explored. In that sense, the idea of the 'proxy' becomes a way to think through questions of presence and absence, especially in contexts where direct representation feels too fraught or too literal. They allow us to approach difficult or politically charged material through gesture, staging, and metaphor — without claiming to speak for someone else.

Returning to the puppets. I think the idea of using puppets is quite interesting. Puppetry is of course an ancient performance form, but I can think of a couple of contemporary artists who have used puppets in different ways, such as Pierre Huyghe or Mike Kelley. However, the first thing that stood out to me after seeing your puppets for the first time is that they resemble you both. Is there a link between this choice and the concept of proxies 'Proxies'?

Yes, very much so. The puppets are deliberately made to resemble us — or versions of us. They are not exact replicas, but lookalikes, slightly distorted or stylised. This resemblance creates a slippage between the real and the performed, between presence and substitution. That's central to the idea of *Proxies* — these figures are standing in for us, but also for broader roles, or ideas that we're trying to work through in the project. The use of puppets lets us externalise things that might be difficult to express directly — it gives us a kind of aesthetic and emotional buffer. There's also something disarming and strange about seeing yourself as a puppet: it allows for a shift in perspective, where humour, discomfort, and vulnerability are all in play at once. By performing through these figures as doubles, it becomes a shared, ambiguous space where personal and political narratives can intertwine.

Did you create them yourself?

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

We made the puppets ourselves. The process was quite intuitive and sculptural — we didn't start with a fixed plan or design, but instead let the forms emerge through making. We made a wire and wood structure, using epoxy clay, fabric, combining traditional string puppet-making techniques with a more improvised approach. Because they are based on our own bodies and clothing, the process also became a kind of self-portraiture, but one that's fragmented and a bit distorted. Building them ourselves is important — it allows for a physical, tactile engagement with the figures and gives us space to reflect on what it means to construct a 'proxy'.

You both have a strong personal connection to Ukraine. Is this something that comes up in this work? I ask especially given that you seem to have been working on this project since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

One of the starting points for Proxies was a radio interview I listened to early in the full-scale war. It was on Radio Eins – Der Talk, where the publisher Jakob Augstein interviewed the Ukrainian writer Tanja Maljartschuk. I found the conversation deeply unsettling. I transcribed it in its entirety, not because it offered clarity, but because it captured something symptomatic about how parts of the German and European left were responding to the war. Augstein's insistence on pacifism, empathy, and dialogue quickly revealed itself as a way to avoid responsibility, especially in light of Germany's historical and moral obligations toward Ukraine. Critics have since pointed out the emotional imbalance of the exchange. As one article in *Übermedien* aptly put it: "Bitte fühlen Sie sich doch in mich ein, wie ich mich nicht in Sie einfühle." ("Please empathise with me, while I refuse to empathise with you.") It was a striking example of how ideological pacifism can become a shield for inaction — a refusal to acknowledge violence unless it fits within pre-approved moral frameworks.

This wasn't an isolated case — it echoed a broader pattern across segments of the German and European left, where long-held ideals of pacifism were used to deflect any real engagement with the violence unfolding in Ukraine. Francesca Melandri captures this dynamic with brutal clarity in her novel *Kalte Füße* (Cold Feet). Her line "Die Welt wie wir sie kannten war nur eine Kulisse. Jetzt ist sie wieder so hart wie Stahl." ("The world as we knew it was only a backdrop. Now it is once again as hard as steel.") speaks directly to the collapse of comfortable illusions - something that I think many in Western Europe have struggled to fully confront.

As a German artist working closely with Ukrainian collaborators, this tension is very present for me. There's a constant reckoning with my own position — historically, culturally, and politically. I'm aware of the privilege and safety from which I observe events that have deeply affected people I care about and work with. Proxies emerged in part from that discomfort, from the need to find a form that could hold ambiguity, that could stand in the space between witnessing and acting, between empathy and complicity. Working with puppets doesn't offer answers, but they do allow us to approach questions of displacement, war, and historical responsibility with a kind of embodied honesty. They are fragile, awkward, partial.



Szuper Gallery (Susanne Clausen and Pavlo Kerestey), *Proxies*, 2025. Image © the artists.

So you mentioned Francesca Melandri's *Cold Feet* and its influence on the conceptual foundations of *Proxies*. Has this shaped the visual language of the work as well? I am thinking in this work, but also perhaps your drawings.

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

Yes, absolutely. Cold Feet didn't just resonate with me conceptually - its tone, its structure, and its insistence on reckoning with history have all informed how I approached the drawings for Proxies. Melandri's writing weaves together personal memory, national trauma, and historical research, and I found myself responding to that method through drawing: not by illustrating events, but by using drawing as a way to slow down, obscure, and reimagine historical material.

The drawings are black and white ink renderings based on a range of photographs — some historical, some imagined, and some personally significant. They include archival images, news photos, and visual fragments that hover somewhere between fact and fiction. Rather than reproducing the photographs directly, I use drawing to interrupt them, to erase or exaggerate certain elements, to impose another layer of interpretation. The result is a kind of friction between memory and distortion, between image and imagination. I think of them as visual proxies — they stand in for something real but unreachable, something that resists complete representation.

You've spoken about Proxies as a performative project involving puppetry and video. But I understand you're also developing a series of drawings as part of the installation. Could you tell us more about that?

The drawings are a significant part of Proxies. They add another layer to the work, quieter but persistent, where themes like memory, dislocation, and historical responsibility are processed visually through layering, obscuring, and repetition. A key influence on this aspect of the project has been Francesca Melandri's *Kalte Füße* (Cold Feet). What struck me about the book is how she blends fact and fiction, personal narrative and historical reflection, to interrogate the assumptions of a generation — my generation — who came of age in what felt like a relatively 'carefree' time in Europe, the so-called end of history.

Melandri doesn't just critique external systems; she interrogates her own position, acknowledging that her perception of the world has shifted in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. That shift, the recognition that reality has changed, that historical violence is no longer something abstract or safely distanced, really resonated with me. I found myself asking similar questions about my own practice, about what forms are adequate, or even possible, when confronting this new urgency.

The drawings emerged from that space. They're all in black ink, sometimes dense and scratchy, sometimes fluid and almost erased. They begin with photographs, both real and imagined: historical images, found sources, fragments that have stayed with me. But I don't reproduce them faithfully. Instead, I rework them until something else appears, something more ambiguous, more haunted.



Susanne Clausen, *Untitled*, 2024. Image @ the artist.

Are there particular images or photographic sources that have shaped your drawings in Proxies? How do you select or respond to these images?

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

Yes, many of the drawings in Proxies are based on photographs — some historical, some personal, and others found in unexpected places. The process of selecting them is intuitive, but I'm drawn to images that hold tension or ambiguity, something unresolved, difficult to read. One source, for example, is a photograph of Margret Zimmermann walking a tightrope over the ruins of the bombed-out Haymarket in Cologne in 1946, which I found in an article by Yuliya Komska in Cabinet magazine. Another is a documentary image from Stuart Brisley's performance Before the Mast at Domobaal in London in 2013, a still that reflects his sustained engagement with historical conflict and political crisis, and the way performance can both hold and disturb memory.

Some of the most personal sources are family photographs taken in East Prussia and Königsberg in the strange, quiet-seeming years of the late 1930s and early 1940s — unassuming on the surface, yet deeply fraught in the context of the Third Reich and the war unfolding. These are images of a place that no longer exists. One photograph shows my mother and great-grandmother inside a Danish refugee camp after fleeing over the Baltic Sea, a quiet domestic moment underpinned by displacement and fear. These aren't necessarily images that the viewer needs to recognise or decode, but they're important in my own context. They inform how I think about inherited memory, and my own reflection on what pacifism means, not as an abstract ideal, but as something shaped by loss, survival, and a shifting historical awareness.

These images, whether public or private, are not used as illustrations. Through drawing, I revisit them in ways that obscure, disrupt, or reimagine their content. I'm interested in how drawing can hold contradiction, how it can act as both a gesture of intimacy and a means of distancing.

You've spoken about drawings and puppets as part of Proxies. Are there other visual elements that will shape the final installation?

Pavlo is currently developing a new series of paintings that will play an important role in how we navigate the space of the installation. While the final layout isn't fixed yet, we're thinking of the paintings not just as individual works but as part of a set, something that helps build the environment in which the puppets, drawings, and video sit. These paintings draw on the visual language of talk show, radio, and TV studio settings. They reference those familiar staged spaces where dialogue, opinion, and performance blur and which have become so dominant during the war. We've been watching these talk shows constantly at the start of the war, they offer a strange mix of theatre and inertia, where the same questions are asked again and again, often without resolution. Pavlo's paintings capture that atmosphere, the stylised lighting, the artificial perspectives, the surface-level neutrality of those sets that claim to present truth but are always performing something.

In that sense, the paintings aren't backdrops, but part of the conceptual core of the project. They speak to the tension between spectacle and seriousness, between public discourse and personal stakes. They also link back to the puppets — suggesting a kind of stage or framing device, but one that is unstable and coded.

Did a group of artists eerily predict the Ukrainian crisis?

Jake Wallis Simons

CNN World

16 October 2014

Did a group of artists eerily predict the Ukrainian crisis?

Jake Wallis Simons, for CNN

3 min read · Published 6:52 AM EDT, Thu October 16, 2014



Ukrainian Art Now

4 of 8

Ukrainian Art Now — This painting, "Kids Fighting Friend," was created by Pavlo Kerestey in 2007. It depicts the sort of internecine violence that was to erupt in the country seven years later.

Courtesy the Saatchi Gallery, London



(CNN) — To the outside world, the crisis in Ukraine seemed to come out of nowhere.

Cast your mind back to the days before everything changed. Before the revolution; before the downing of MH17; before the Russian tanks rolled into Crimea. Who could have possibly foretold how events would unravel?

But for a group of Ukrainian artists, the violence of 2014 was no surprise. They had been warning of the impending unrest for years – through the medium of visual art.

"It really is uncanny," says Nigel Hurst, the CEO of the Saatchi Gallery in London, which is hosting a new exhibition of Ukrainian artworks.

"If you look at the art created in the years before the crisis, it is hard not to come to the conclusion that these artists had a sort of weird foresight. It's as if they had a crystal ball."

Predicting the future



The exhibition teaches us a lot about warmth, openness, and resilience of the Ukrainian people.

Nigel Hurst, CEO, Saatchi Gallery, London

The exhibition, titled *Premonition: Ukrainian Art Now*, is the biggest of its kind in the world, and will run until 3 November.

Some of the artworks will make the hair on the back of the neck of even the most cynical observer stand on end.

Maxim Mamzikov's 2012 painting, "Beach," shows people relaxing by the sea – while behind them a paratrooper is landing in the surf.

A series of photographs called "Mother of Cities" by the artist known as Napsrom, which was created in 2005, envisages the burnt-out shell of the national museum in Kiev. Only the façade is left; the rest of the building is a charred, overgrown ruin.

A spine-chilling 2012 painting by Vasily Tsagolov depicts a crowd of protesters with pitchforks, running side-by-side with skeletons. It is titled "Ghost of Revolution."

Last but not least, Victor Sydorenko's 1996 painting envisages a scenario that is eerily similar to the events of 2014, with a group of people watching an explosion. Its name? "Invasion".

Prophetic images



It's as if they had a crystal ball.

Nigel Hurst, CEO, Saatchi Gallery, London

Other artworks seem to prognosticate the unrest in a more metaphorical way, conveying a palpable sense of unease, concern about the fragility of the country, and fear for the future.

The centerpiece of Sergey Bratkov's series of photographs called "Ukraine", for example, is a picture of a foreboding, dark cloud hanging over the landscape. It was created in 2013, a year before the unrest.

Pavlo Kerestey's "Kids Fighting Friend," painted in 2007, depicts one teenager stoning another while a gang of onlookers cheers him on.

And Mariia Kulikovska's installation "Untitled," from 2012, is comprised of a fractured section of road with smoke seeping ominously through the cracks.

Hope for Ukraine

Yet despite these macabre images, Hurst says that the exhibition is underpinned by optimism.

"A good number of the works are uplifting, using bright colors and witty references to Western pop culture and Soviet iconography," he says.

"Overall, the exhibition teaches us a lot about warmth, openness, and resilience of the Ukrainian people, and expresses a huge hope and aspiration for their country."

It can only be hoped that the artists are as justified in their optimism as they were in their fears.

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

At the beginning of a movement was a scandal

Peter Suchin

Frieze Magazine

10 October 2002

FRIEZE

At the beginning of a movement was scandal

Lenbachhaus Munich, Germany

P

BY PETER SUCHIN IN REVIEWS | 10 OCT 02



'Museums', observed Theodor Adorno in *Prisms* (1981), 'are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture.' 'Am Anfang der Bewegung stand ein Skandal' (At the beginning of the movement was a scandal), curated by Susanne Clausen and Alun Rowlands, considered the conventions and effects of the museum, its forms of definition and its dissemination of social and political values. By inserting the work of some 20 contemporary artists into the Lenbachhaus, one of Munich's major historical collections, they opened up patterns of aesthetic and ideological consumption within and around the museum for critical examination.

Broadly speaking, two approaches were here put into play: a reinvigoration of the historically important but arguably 'dead' works that this particular collection comprises, and a broadening out of how the museum might today be perceived, utilized and evaluated. The fact that these two strands were not mutually exclusive was demonstrated by Kaye Donachie's *Enlightenment* (2002), a compact installation of six small canvases depicting the esoteric spaces of Masonic ritual and exchange. The central painting reproduces the pose found in a well-known photograph showing Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky engaged in an evidently Masonic handshake, while other pictures similarly record easily recognizable aspects of 'The Craft'. In presenting Freemasonry as an élitist discourse ghosting that of Modernism, Donachie reminded the viewer that, while art is frequently regarded as an enlightened occupation, its most celebrated practitioners often rise to prominence through clandestine but influential networks and connections.

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

If Donachie's provocative tableau suggested that the works surrounding it - by Klee, Kandinsky and their contemporaries - should be reconsidered in a more questioning light, FlatPack 001's Presence: Cultural Excavation No. 5 (2002) interrogates the dark and mysterious, in the form of the curious shape found on the cover of Led Zeppelin's seminal 1976 recording Presence. FlatPack 001's contribution consisted in part of a poster packed with suggestions as to what the black void might actually be, its central form a spiral of text, an iridescent ripple of conflicting projections. To speculate on popular culture within the confines of the museum was an interestingly tacky approach. It implied that, if the museum is to maintain a seriously meaningful existence, it must be open to values and agendas quite distinct from those that informed it during the 18th and 19th centuries.

This challenge to the decorum of museum aesthetics was further extended in two video pieces, Inventory's Coagulum (2001) and Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz's The Berlin Wall Still Exists (1996). Inventory are tracked in the act of a collective rugby-scrum crawl down London's Oxford Street, encountering in their awkward, edgy *dérive* a po-faced posse of shopping centre security guards clearly intent on dispersing the gathering at any cost. In the case of Brener and Schurz we are shown a grainy black and white image of two or three figures whitewashing a section of the Berlin Wall, obliterating it to the point where it can no longer be distinguished against the rough and ready speckle of the tape. There's a kind of desperation in this act of framed erasure, a whiting-out in order to bring into play those politically vivid voices, incidents or ideologies frequently, if often ineptly, kept at bay.

Another video piece, the Szuper Gallery's Good Morning Mr Bloomberg (1999), documents an exchange between four neatly suited artists and an influential collector. Attention is focused on the civilized gestures involved in the commercial acquisition of art objects: the opulence of the collector's apartment is prominently displayed, hand and body movements are careful and restrained, wine politely sipped, and glances casual but controlled. Placed within the preserved apartment of the Lenbachhaus' benefactor, a highly successful 19th-century portrait painter, Good Morning Mr Bloomberg could be read as a sarcastic commentary on the artist as a complicit and uncritical victim of corporate collecting and business-as-usual art world bravado.

It is hard to find a show these days to which Liam Gillick does not contribute something. His The Winter School (1996), a text relating to a 1971 critique of Documenta 5, is a fictitious account of a gathering whose actual details are not on record. To some extent this work is a model of possibilities, a kind of microcosm of the exhibition as a whole.

'At the beginning of the movement was a scandal' tried to take the measure of the museum, expand its borders and puncture its sometimes pompous façade. After all, if museums are in the business of preserving the dead, someone needs, now and then, to insert a little life.

Preview

Robert Clark and Jessica Lack
The Guardian
16 October 2014

The Guardian

Preview

Hetain Patel And Ellen Bell, Leicester | Simon Patterson, London | Szuper Gallery Artist's Studio, London | Gary Stevens, London | Figuring Space, Leeds | Chris Evans, Birmingham | We The Moderns, Cambridge

Robert Clark and Jessica Lack

Sat 20 Jan 2007 01.06 CET

Szuper Gallery Artist's Studio

London

Since last April, several artists have created site-specific exhibitions at this Victorian Knightsbridge apartment, and now it's the turn of Szuper Gallery (aka Susanne Clausen and Pawlo Kerestey). Known for subversive activities in the world of espionage and corporate trading, they're a law unto themselves and here present their history as a shady commercial gallery and their connections to the Post-Soviet Mafia. This video depicts actors rehearsing for an interview that never happens - it's a deconstruction of a performance, and leaves us in the dark about the intrigue behind the so-called Szuper Gallery.

JL

• Flat 1, 64 Pont Street, SW1, to Feb 25

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

System C.R.A.S.H!

Sally Weale

The Guardian

17 November 1999

Galerie Uriel Kerestey

info@urielkerestey.com

urielkerestey.com

The Guardian

System C.R.A.S.H!

That's Creating Resistance to Society's Haemorrhoids, the title of a new exhibition of artwork on corporate life. But what do artists know about the nine to five?

Sally Weale

Wed 17 Nov 1999 01.00 CET

Take a look around your office. Does everyone look busy? Are they really busy, or just sending each other emails, criticising colleagues and complaining about management? Do they constantly talk about how awful work is, and how they wish they could leave, but never do? This is what the modern British workplace is all about, according to CRASH!, organisers of a new art exhibition at London's ICA.

Traditionally the worlds of work and art have not had much to do with each other. Artists have been seen as separate from the rest of us; work, in the nine to five sense, has not been a primary activity or subject for them. They busy themselves putting dead cows in formaldehyde while the workers do the serious business of earning money. The irony nowadays, of course, is that the artist putting a farm animal in a tank of preservative earns more than the entire staff of your local Sainsbury's.

The worlds of work and art are no longer mutually exclusive. They are interested in learning from and exploiting each other, and the aim of the ICA exhibition is to hold up a mirror to the modern workplace.

To give you a flavour of what to expect, the CRASH! policy statement goes like this: "1990s corporate 'lifestyle' culture has spawned a useless generation of kitsch fetishists and facile careerists. Content has given way to irony, while the culture of the workplace... continues to erode the existence of our day-to day lives." It continues: "Britain runs on bureaucracy, memos and circulars - shifting money from one company to another to the benefit of shareholders and nobody else. The soft surfaces of the office, the hum of the PC and the partitions that segregate the workers both reinforce and express our alienation."

Galerie Uriel Kerestey
info@urielkerestey.com
urielkerestey.com

The ICA exhibition is not all polemical. There's a piece by a team of artists called Szuper Gallery which looks at internet trading of stocks, futures and bonds - artists will be trading live from an office in the gallery, trying to turn a £5,000 donation into a fortune. Ben Kinmont's Promised Relations is a collection of contracts devised by and for artists, and there's even a temping agency, called The Art of Work, set up by artist Rachel Baker, to provide casual work for artists.

Baker, who has worked in market research and telesales, says that far from being detached from the workplace, artists are constantly having to confront the issue of work - most, after all, have to do some form of it in order to fund their art.

"On the whole there is an antipathy towards employing artists as normal workers or temps - people consider artists to be unemployable. But work is becoming more and more of an issue. Avoiding it is very, very difficult. The artist has opted not to subscribe to the conventions of the workplace, but that's now less of an option."

As a result, artists are increasingly using the workplace as material. "When I was temping I would find myself fairly bored. So it became interesting to exploit my situation as a temp and find ways of using that in my art practice. I keep coming across more and more artists who are doing that."

Baker is also interested in the way business learns from and exploits the arts; for example, managers now learn theatre skills to improve their powers of communication, while architecture, art and design increasingly play a part in the way offices look and operate. "There's no doubt that creative industries such as advertising pilfer from the art world," she says.

"The Young British Artists used tactics that were very business-oriented: they used marketing tools to promote an art movement. Previously the world of art has tended to be anti-work, now it has more of a function in the workplace - consider someone like Charles Saatchi."

Matt Worley, one half of CRASH! (Creating Resistance to Society's Haemorrhoids), was inspired to put on an exhibition about corporate culture after a two-year stint from 1993 to 1995 working in the record library of the BBC.

"When I worked at the BBC, what struck me was that it was completely somnambulant. People were falling asleep at their desks. All they did was talk about leaving, but they never left."

"We're not criticising the workers themselves, but the work structure. It's a critique of the structure of capital," says Worley, who now teaches history at the university of Reading.

He and Scott King, former art director of i-D magazine and the other half of CRASH!, were also interested in the blurring of boundaries between work and home life. With the growth in home-working, live/work spaces and flexitime, work is becoming all-invasive: it can no longer be left at the office.

"At the start of the century people were envisaging a future with a three-hour working day - the rest of the time would be leisure. But it's gone completely the other way. Even leisure is now part of the corporate structure," says Worley.

Emma Dexter, ICA director of exhibitions and co-curator of the show, says that half the artists taking part in the exhibition have 'serious' jobs.

"Traditionally artists have done quite boring jobs to fund having a studio; now, working in new technology, they can have quite well-paid jobs. And their own private work and the work they do in the public realm cross over much more."

Carey Young, one of the exhibitors, also works as an IT consultant with a large multinational corporation. The roles of artist and businessperson inspire and feed each other. "They are assumed to be separate, but they've merged," says Young, whose ICA piece is a video of a performance at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, in which she gives a skills workshop on corporate communication.

Young fizzes with enthusiasm when she talks about the artist as cultural entrepreneur. "The most far-sighted business organisations use artists as skilled communicators who are able to think laterally and provide them with different ways of seeing their own business."