

A Changed Inauguration

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The Mouvement Des Entreprises de France is a nationwide employers' federation founded on 27 October 1998, when it replaced the Conseil National du Patronat Français (CNPF). It represents over 750,000 French businesses of every size and in every sector (industry, commerce, services).

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Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail.

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Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens.

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Confédération Générale des Cadres.

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Force Ouvrière.

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Confédération Générale du Travail.

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Union Nationale Inter-professionnelle pour l'Emploi dans le Commerce et l'Industrie. The UNEDIC is one of the components of the French social security system. Its role is to ensure payment of unemployment benefits. It is financed by contributions from employers and employees. The UNEDIC agreement is revised every three years by a joint commission with representatives from the employers and employees unions (respectively, MEDEF, CGPME and UPA, and CGT, FO, CFDT, CFTC and CGC). These "social partners" work out and sign the accords which,

On 15 September 2003, the Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers inaugurated their building after two and a half years of closure for renovation work.

The programme of this inaugural day was changed because of the very tense political and social situation nationwide after a summer that had witnessed a growing movement by workers in the artistic sector.

The movement, a response to the planned reform of the unemployment benefits system for artists and technicians in pressure from the MEDEF,¹ grew and grew, becoming more radical when an outline agreement was signed on 26 June last between the employers' federations and a number of unions (CFDT,² CFTC³ and CGC,⁴ but not FO⁵ and the CGT,⁶ which are the majority unions in the audiovisual and performing arts sectors), then amended on 8 July and ratified on 6 August by the government.

The reform of this specific system, which has become more generally known as "intermittency", bore on appendices 8 and 10 of the UNEDIC agreement,⁷ where it has been organised since the 1960s, and which takes into account the nature of artistic activity by offering a salary that covers all the work that is done outside periods of actual employment.

The reform was prompted by the growing deficit of the unemployment funds for the intermittents due to a doubling in the number of beneficiaries over ten years. It was estimated by MEDEF at about 840 million euros in 2002, but this sum needed to be reassessed because the calculations did not take into account the contributions of the permanent employees in the sector, who still make payments, or the 100,000 contributors who had not attained the threshold of 507 hours that would enable them to benefit from intermittent status.

The outline agreement, which foresees a shortening of the contribution and payment periods, would eventually exclude nearly a third of those currently entitled, often the most fragile members, those for whom the system of solidarity was invented, while failing to address its dysfunction. The big public and private TV companies, the big production companies and big cultural institutions like the Opéra de Pa-

ris, which organise their budget by using intermittents in order to avoid the constraints of short-term contracts, are making the shortfall greater but are not penalised by the law.

This protest movement (and its propositions) brought to the fore a number of issues and questions that we set out to actively address by organising a day of briefings and discussions, where artists, activists, intellectuals and politicians offered a range of views and perspectives.

Among the overlapping questions raised were both the emergence and preservation of a multiple and independent cultural sector, and the growing insecurity of all forms of work.

The Laboratoires collaborate with artists from all kinds of disciplines, representing a great variety of economic and social realities, and the Intermittents du Spectacle are part of their economy. This space, financed by local and national government, is viable only with the involvement of these artists and technicians.

Although we are concerned by the defence of the rights that are now under threat, this was not the avenue of thought we wished to explore. Our concern was more the place and role of culture, art and artists in society today, which current cultural policy is tending to reduce to a round of festivals in which a few big structures produce “excellence”, and in which criteria leading towards aesthetic homogenisation are pushing for greater cost-effectiveness.

Here we have chosen to print transcripts of the interventions by Sabine Macher, an artist in residence at the Laboratoires, and by one of the guest speakers on the day, Maurizio Lazzarato, a sociologist and member of the coordinating committee for the intermittents and the professionally insecure in Île-de-France.⁸

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must be approved by the government in order to be implemented. For an agreement to be valid, it must be signed by the majority + 1 of the unions (the employers' unions represent 50%).

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The coordinating movement for the intermittently and insecurely employed in Île-de-France represents both unionised and non-unionised professionals. It was set up on 28 June at the initiative of Les Précaires Associés de Paris after a meeting at La Villette with intermittents from the performing arts and audiovisual sectors (theatre, dance, music, circus, plus television, radio and cinema), teachers, the unemployed and others concerned by professional insecurity and social rights.