

**Exhibition** 29 October 2014 – 9 February 2015  
Sabatini Building. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

# Really Useful Knowledge



Straub & Huillet. *En rachâchant*, 1982. 35mm film transferred to video, b&w, sound, 7 min.  
Courtesy )Intermedio(

How societies define and distribute knowledge indicates the means whereby they are structured, their dominant social order, and their degrees of inclusion and exclusion. The exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge* looks into diverse procedural, non-academic, anti-hierarchical, grass-root, heterodox educational situations primarily occupied with the transformative potentials of art.

The exhibition develops through a number of recurring themes evolving around the relationship between the artist and social change, the dialectic embedded in images and the visual realm that can generate political action, and the tension between the perceived need for the active involvement of art and the insistence on its right to be “useless”.

The notion of “really useful knowledge” originated in workers’ awareness of the need for self-education in the early 19th century. In the 1820s and 1830s, workers’ organizations in the United Kingdom introduced this concept to describe a body of knowledge that encompassed various ‘unpractical’ disciplines such as politics, economics and philosophy, as opposed to “useful knowledge” proclaimed as such by the business owners, who some time earlier had increasingly begun to invest in the advancement of their businesses by funding the education of workers in ‘applicable’ skills and disciplines such as engineering, physics, chemistry or mathematics. Whereas the concept of “useful knowledge” operates as a tool of social reproduction and a guardian of the status quo, “really useful knowledge” demands changes by understanding the causes of exploitation and tracing back its origins within ruling ideology. It is a collective, emancipatory, theoretical, emotional, informative and practical quest that starts from acknowledging what we do not yet know.

While looking back to the class struggles of capitalism’s early years, the title of the exhibition suggests inquiry into “really useful knowledge” from a contemporary perspective. The exhibition is set against the backdrop of an ongoing crisis of capitalism, and of revolts and attempts to oppose it on the structural level, and it starts from two crucial notions - materialist education and critical pedagogy. To address new social inequalities and conflicts triggered by attempts to limit the distribution of and access to knowledge, *Really Useful Knowledge* reiterates the necessity of producing sociability through the collective utilization of existing public resources, actions, and experiments, either by developing new forms of sharing or by fighting to maintain the old ones, now under threat of eradication. The exhibition looks into the desires, impulses and dilemmas of artistic engagement in historical and current progressive political practices, and the ways these are embodied in education.

Exhibition organized by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía within the framework of “The Uses of Art,” a project by the European museum network L’Internationale

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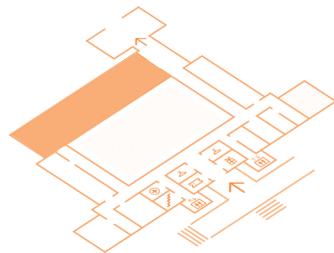
**l’internationale**



Cultura

## Sabatini Building

1<sup>st</sup> floor, room 103



## Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

### Sabatini Building

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### Opening hours

Monday to Saturday

and bank holidays

from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays

from 10:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

complete Museum visit,

from 2:15 to 7:00 p.m.

visit to Collection 1 and

a temporary exhibition

(check Website)

Closed on Tuesdays

Visitors are kindly asked

to clear the galleries

15 minutes before closing.

[www.museoreinasofia.es](http://www.museoreinasofia.es)