



## David Roberts Art Foundation launches its Curators' Series with *At Your Service*, curated by Cylena Simonds

**Exhibition dates: 17.04.2009– 27.06.2009**

**Opening Reception: 16.04.2009 from 6.30pm**

The David Roberts Art Foundation is delighted to launch its Curators' Series with its first guest curator, Cylena Simonds. The Curators' Series aims to support international curators with unique and experimental vision by commissioning projects for the Foundation. Cylena Simonds, an American curator based in London, will present the group exhibition *At Your Service*.

*At Your Service* engages the concept and dynamics of the service and hospitality industries in today's political and social climate and brings together a wide range of artwork from emerging international artists.

Simonds writes "*Economic migrants in Britain (as well as the rest of Europe) have changed significantly over the past 50 years. Yet what they have in common is that their first, and often only, points of entry into employment are via the service industries. Many contemporary art practices engage in or reflect services that challenge our perceptions of who performs the roles of host and guest.*"

*At Your Service* examines aspects of service industries such as building construction, cleaning and catering as a way of addressing concepts of belonging, patterns of migration and the less-than-distinct roles of host/guest and native/foreigner. The artworks investigate themes within service labour such as routine, invisibility and the mundane. Juxtaposed with these works are projects that explore the notion of contemporary art practice as a service to the public, asking us to examine the kinds of interactions, expectations and desires we take on.

The work in *At Your Service* ranges from sculptural objects to photography and video as well as featuring specially commissioned performances taking place both within the gallery and in public locations. The Foundation is glad to have contributed to a number of these productions. Gaia Tedone, Assistant Curator, David Roberts Art Foundation, assists Cylena Simonds with the exhibition.

The exhibition is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. The Foundation would also like to thank Rokeby, London and Seventeen Gallery, London for their assistance. The David Roberts Art Foundation is proudly supported by the Edinburgh House Estates group of companies.



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### **Nada Prlja (Based in UK)**

Having lived in Sarajevo, Skopje and London, for more than a decade in each place, Nada Prlja avoids defining herself as belonging to a single nation. This unsettled condition defines her practice. Prlja's work deals with the complex situations of inequality and injustice in societies in transition, ranging from political and economic to religious issues. Using different media, her projects are multi layered and 'site, space or condition specific'. The main aim of her work is - through the 're-appropriation' of the art (or art-systems) - to provoke reaction and activate, affect, and modify other, parallel, socio-political systems in society. For *At Your Service*, Prlja will present work from her ongoing series exploring sweat shop labour in the garment industry, this time focusing on the situation within the UK.

*Bring back the Peatbog Soldiers* is a newly commissioned audio installation featuring the hidden sounds of garment sweatshops recorded from locations within London. Titled after one of Europe's best-known protest songs, Peat Bog Soldiers was written, composed and first performed in a Nazi concentration camp by the prisoners themselves.

#### 'Aliens Within.Ltd' 2008–09

Nada Prlja's work addresses complex situations of inequality and injustice within societies in transition. Bringing behind-the-scenes sweatshop labour in the garment industries to the foreground, *Aliens Within.Ltd* displays a clothing rail with mass-produced T-shirts yet the anti-immigrant slogans are handpainted by the artist.