

BERLIN BIENNALE

7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art
Forget Fear
27.4.–1.7.2012

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25.4.2012

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BERLIN BIENNALE

FACT SHEET

Title of the exhibition

Forget Fear

Curator

Artur Żmijewski

Associate Curators

Voïna and Joanna Warsza

Director

Gabriele Horn

Duration of the Exhibition

27.4.–1.7.2012

Press Conference and Preview Days

Press Conference: 25.4.2012, 11 am

Venue: Villa Elisabeth, Invalidenstraße 3, 10115 Berlin

Press Preview: 25.4.2012, 9 am–8 pm; 26.4.2012, 9 am–6 pm

Opening

26.4.2012, 7–10 pm (public)

First Public Day

27.4.2012, noon–8 pm

Opening Hours

Tue–Sun, noon–8 pm

Mon closed except on 30.4., 28.5., and 11.6.2012

On holidays the exhibition is open during the regular opening hours.

Admission

The admission to the 7th Berlin Biennale is free.

Guided Tours

art:berlin

Kurfürstenstraße 14

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www.artberlin-online.de

For further information on the art education of the 7th Berlin Biennale please visit www.berlinbiennale.de/blog/en/7th-biennale/service.

Exhibition Venues

The 7th Berlin Biennale takes place in various exhibition venues in Berlin, including public space. Additionally, there will be temporary projects and events as well as “Solidarity Actions” in Germany and abroad.

Exhibition venues are:

KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Auguststraße 69, 10117 Berlin

KuLe e. V. (façade), Auguststraße 10, 10117 Berlin

Akademie der Künste (Black Box), Pariser Platz 4, 10117 Berlin

Deutschlandhaus, Stresemannstraße 90, 10963 Berlin

St. Elisabeth-Church, Invalidenstraße 3, 10115 Berlin

Friedrichstraße 226, 10969 Berlin (On the artist’s request the building of the wall will start on May 2, 2012.)

Events

Please find further information on the program and the participants in the newspaper *ACT FOR ART* or visit www.berlinbiennale.de.

Visitors who bring their passports have the opportunity to have it stamped by the artist Khaled Jarrar.

Publications

The Reader *Forget Fear* is published in February 2012

Ed. by Artur Żmijewski and Joanna Warsza

416 pages, 51 illustrations

28 Euro (in the exhibition 25 Euro)

ACT FOR ART is published in April 2012

The second edition of the *Berlin Biennale Zeitung* contains statements by Gabriele Horn, Artur Żmijewski, and Joanna Warsza, as well as information on exhibited works, the program, and other general information for visitors.

36 pages

2 Euro

Organizer

KW Institute for Contemporary Art

Auguststraße 69

10117 Berlin

www.kw-berlin.de

www.berlinbiennale.de

The Berlin Biennale is organized by KW Institute for Contemporary Art and funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation).

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BERLIN BIENNALE

ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI: 7TH BERLIN BIENNALE FOR CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

Where we are today? Europe sees a wave of hostility towards foreigners. Politicians are eager to rekindle past resentment, harnessing it in the service of political agendas. Support for culture is being cut in the Netherlands, Greece, the UK, and in other countries—and it is also questioned quite prominently in Germany. In Russia, artists find themselves the target of witch hunts and some of them have been arrested, like members of the Pussy Riots group. In Russia there is also a tendency to drastically reduce educational services. Cuts in the cultural sector around Europe represent the wish of politicians who prefer a less educated society, which is easy to administer.

In such a situation it's not enough—in my opinion—to have art that only fights to keep its position, which just makes claims on public funds and participates in sharing the economic profits which it creates. That's fine; but it would also be useful to have art that is smart and creative enough to take part in transformative social processes.

Reality Making

The concept of the 7th Berlin Biennale is quite straightforward and can be condensed into a single sentence: we¹ present art that actually works, makes its mark on reality, and opens a space where politics can be performed. These works create political events—regardless of whether they deal with urgent problems in society or the long-term politics of memory. The key areas of our interest are: the political effectiveness of art, the activity of the engaged intelligentsia and the creative class (artists in particular), their reactions to important social issues, as well as the way art is employed to construct historical narratives. We have also worked with artists whose views are radically different from our own and who support political forces that some of us might even consider dangerous. What is at stake here is to present these positions and, if possible, to even influence their ideological agendas and goals, rather than keeping a safe and dignified distance.

Artist-Politician

We decided to present almost exclusively new works in this Berlin Biennale. Rather than adjusting existing projects to a theme, we invited artists to respond to questions we proposed. We hoped for a situation in which artists' actions would become not only art, but could also reveal a political truth—something with the potential to change selected aspects of our shared reality, so that art would possess the power of politics but not its fear, opportunism, and cynicism. So that art would create its own political approach, while artists' works would speak of society in a truly open way—and it would turn out that they are actually able to speak. It's enough to refrain from reducing artistic statements to »velvet-glove criticism.« Artists will demonstrate their social empathy and the power of their critical positions in their entirety.

Did we succeed in playing this out with one of the first contributions to the Berlin Biennale—for example with the project of Martin Zet, launched three months before the official opening? The very moment it was announced, we were confronted with a media-fueled scandal that engulfed Zet's proposal to collect 60,000 copies of Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Does Away with Itself or Germany Abolishes Itself), which were to be made into an installation. Zet and the Berlin Biennale were accused of wanting to organize book burnings and of harboring Nazi fantasies. Instead of a rational conversation, we stepped into the realm of fantasy—into the German imaginary, along with its props: ashes and flames. The fact that we didn't seem to associate collecting books with burning them on the square in front of the Opera was met with local amazement. On occasion, it was perceived as

naivety. The media attempted to reduce this serious political project by Zet to little more than an artistic scandal. It was labeled bad art—a convenient and frequently deployed strategy, as if by targeting the form, one needs not to be concerned about the message. Zet's campaign was criticized for featuring expressions that made references to the language of the Third Reich. But does one really need to consider the fact that words and phrases such as »collect,« »collection point,« or »clear the atmosphere« could be associated with Nazi vocabulary? Perhaps those attacking Zet's project just wanted to divert people's attention from the contemporary vocabulary of racism, as presented in the book by Sarrazin, a Social Democrat. In Germany his book has sold over 1.3 million copies. Zet reminded us again that this vocabulary is a part of a secretly accepted language; under the cover of political correctness, hate speech grows. Paradoxically, he was blamed for executing an act of radical democracy with the use of Nazi assumptions.

The Berlin Biennale itself transformed into a method of conducting politics. Rather than illustrating social processes and examining them from a safe distance, we succeeded in bringing the Biennale into the field of political events. These actions vary in impact. Some slip out of hand, like Zet's campaign. Others succeed in creating a collective voice in the political arena that concerns a specific issue. These include a project by Khaled Jarrar, whose concept of stamping passports with a »State of Palestine« stamp is a proclamation of the existence of a non-existent state, made from the position of an artist-citizen. It establishes an international community of »stamp bearers,« and this in turn contributes to a greater cause—the process of developing and defending claims for Palestinian statehood. A similar effect was achieved in the case of what is presumed to be the »world's largest key.« The residents of Aida Refugee Camp in the West Bank, where the key was made, have used its presentation in the Biennale as an opportunity to launch a press campaign and turn the world's eyes towards the fate of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Instead of a desperate act of violence, they created a serious yet humorous art object—an object more effective than violence, because it's able to seduce people.

Born in Berlin

One of the conditions of this Biennale's efficacy is a shift away from the exotic. The artists addressed issues that are widely known, are seen as pressing by many, and are regularly found in the headlines. These include Sarrazin's book; the controversial issue of the manipulation of memory, especially in relation to the question of German migration during and after the Second World War; or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, the artists play for shared, collective stakes rather than exoticizing reality or resorting to superficial playing around.

Each project required an enormous effort on the part of the artists. The same effort was required of the Berlin Biennale and KW Institute for Contemporary Art teams—to lobby, to convince, to meet the requirements of the city administration, and also not to fear while pursuing these projects. Some of the works refer to politics and memory and the way they are manipulated to serve as influential tools in the hands of political decision makers. For instance, the German politics of memory has become, to a certain extent, based on attempts to relativize German guilt and to stir up resentment that can be used to campaign for votes and to increase support for conservative politicians. In the context of Berlin—an exceptional »memory bank,« which is home to constellations of museums and monuments—we were interested in working not only to present facts, but also to reveal newly constructed narratives. This is one of the goals of the center for exhibitions, documentation, and information being created by the Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung (SFVV) (Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation), scheduled to open in 2016. Its building Deutschlandhaus—serves as a venue for the Biennale, but also hosts a project prepared by the SFVV. The SFV, whose mission is to testify to the Second World

War and postwar fate of evacuated and moved Germans, presents a historical narrative that, in the opinion of many commentators, converts Germans into victims of organized violence. Discussions about the center emerged in the shadow of controversy, provoking accusations of revanchism and historical manipulation. We see it as an apparatus of the German state, tasked with psychologically preparing society to accept the status of a European hegemon—which, as it seems, is only prevented by a historical burden of guilt. Politicians try to invent a new, safer understanding of this dominance. On his visit to Berlin last year, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski said: »I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity. (...) You may not fail to lead. Not dominate, but to lead in reform.«

As a citizen of Eastern Europe, my own attitude to Germany and Berlin itself is ambivalent. And I'm not the only one. It is an exceptionally open city, so ostentatiously liberal that it lures many, including a large international community of artists who chose to live and work here. One of them, Joanna Rajkowska, decided to deliver her baby not in London or Warsaw, where she usually resides, but in Berlin—as a form of a tribute to the city. The child was born two weeks overdue, as though Rosa refused to accept the decision of Joanna and her husband Andrew. A few months later, Rosa was diagnosed with a rare genetic disease, retinoblastoma, a cancer that develops in the cells of the retina causing sight impairment. Could it be that Rosa refused to see the city she lives in, the one included on her birth certificate? What is the actual message in this »project«: Joanna's decision, Rosa's birth, or the disease affecting her eyes? When we sat down to work on the Berlin Biennale, we declared that we would propose questions instead of answers. Yet still, we are left with answers, as Rosa's condition is a phenomenon that not only belongs to the regime of biology, or medicine, but also to the regime of culture. Why didn't the doctor from the Berlin clinic check Rosa's eyes properly, while the other one in Warsaw found the tumor there? Is it just a case of the ignorance of one pediatrician or an example of a wider, maybe even cultural, approach? West and East meet in Rosa's eyes.

Solidarity Actions

As I write this text a few weeks before the opening of the Berlin Biennale, I am still uncertain as to the final shape of the exhibition. Most works are currently in production. We will see the Biennale in its ultimate form no sooner than mid-April. I can say this: we succeeded at something I had only imagined before—we put all our eggs in one basket, and things will either »work« or »fail.« This risk is a way of escaping from the circle of the self-replicating art system that promotes the transport and installation of existing objects in order to avoid facing a changing reality that is difficult to predict. And if we want to confront and tackle this challenge called the Berlin Biennale, we cannot do it alone. This is why our questions and themes were taken up by allies who chose to support the idea of political art as an act of solidarity and to organize their own program of exhibitions and events. Our partners in these »Solidarity Actions« are: Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV), Dortmund; Istituto Svizzero di Roma (Swiss Institute in Rome); Kalmar konstmuseum, Kalmar; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; and steirischer herbst, Graz. For some institutions, solidarity with the Biennale is like a coming out—a declaration that art need not be dominated by empty gestures, and that the time has come for it to effectively deal with reality. Through the »Solidarity Actions« we also expand our knowledge of substantially political art, because our partners bring ideas to the table that we would not otherwise come up with. There are two more partners involved in the project Filtered by Eisenhüttenstadt—Artists-in-Berlin-Program / D AAD and me Collectors Room Berlin / Olbricht Foundation—who pursue their own cultural agendas in a small city in eastern Brandenburg.

Can art influence reality? Most likely yes, but not when it acts alone. It can only do so if it is one of the many forces at play that work towards change. For example, when institutions collaborate with each other, and artists work hand in hand with other actors. For change to take place today, the cultural field needs to build solidarity rather than competition. Europe is increasingly hostile to foreigners. The intelligentsia and people in the field of culture hold a considerable potential to influence social moods and shape the imagination of the future—they can change the course of events. Solidarity could be a way of tapping into this potential. While blending art and politics our partners, as well as ourselves, acknowledge the significance and appeal of each of these fields.

The Weak Conspiracy

We are still not sure about how the grand non-project of the Biennale—Indignados | Occupy Biennale—that is, the presence of members of Occupy, 15M, as well as other movements in the exhibition hall of KW will turn out. Their presence goes beyond the logic of the exhibition. It is a situation that we don't curate, supervise, or assess. Out there, among the people discussing their participation in the Biennale, radical democracy, based on participation, is already taking place. And it will continue to take place between the activists and the visitors of the Biennale. Members of the various groups will simply be in KW, acting or not, adapting to the art world or rejecting it. But it's none of the curators' business. If we choose to, we can join them and work together—but only in a situation where our voice and their voices are of equal importance, where there is no hierarchy of power that would coerce others to act in a specific way. These exceptional social movements are important not only due to the fact that they are re-inventing democracy and politics, but also because they are »weak.« Many of us are fed up with looking at the archetypical leaders—tough and strong politicians—who are all too often incapable of responding to social shifts, not to mention relinquishing power. Isn't it the case that what we need today is weakness rather than power? And that those social movements—weak, fragile, and prone to attacks as they are—have become essential precisely because of their weakness? Politics should not be founded on the concept of power, but on weakness. What else is art if not such a phenomenon? It is a weak discourse on which we could build if we want to avoid being endlessly raped by a merciless and cynical politics, and the brutal laws of the market, which leave no place for ideological naivety and softness.

The Institution

In order to comprehend the 7th Berlin Biennale, one needs to understand the institutional context in which it emerged. The work on the exhibition involves more than a simple selection of artistic ideas and the decision to translate them into projects. It is essentially an everyday struggle with the logic of an art institution and the excessive regulations to which the Biennale is subject, which manifest themselves in an overwhelming number of bureaucratic procedures. It is also a struggle with German political correctness and the fear of breaching these rules. And it is furthermore a struggle against the expectation that »everything would be the same as always,« all the while hoping that this Biennale would be different from the others. After all, the »Berlin Biennale invents itself anew every two years.« Artists' proposals are sifted through an institutional filter and confronted with the concerns of their potential consequences for the institution. This is what ultimately defines the exhibition. Artists are treated as producers who deliver exhibition components rather than human beings and political entities for whom the Biennale is a channel of expression and communication. Our work with the team was a collaboration with a group of enthusiasts, who understood the fact that they acted within a fragile social fabric, and were aware that by intervening in it they actually took part in politics. This awareness of the potential impact on society was also at times the source of a paralyzing anxiety. If we examine the consequences of the artistic contributions to

the Biennale, it is evident that an art institution has a symbolic influence on reality. Put to work in the public sphere, as consistently implemented political activities, this influence could transform an art institution into a significant political actor—an actor able to influence social processes, or just be one of the mediators in such processes. The first process which could be influenced by an art institution is of course the internal process of art production. This is what I expect of an institution—to support rather than hamper initiatives. And to have the courage to exercise its influence, rather than show excessive anxiety. Around 30 percent of my time was consumed by the internal institutional struggle. It's not a critique of the people, but it is a critique of the overly-strong structure and procedures, which put us into »only proper« places and actively shape our minds.

The Budget

We curators, the organizers, and the artists have become painfully aware of the issue of the exhibition's inadequate budget. Despite the fact that the funds for the production had been diminished so seriously that the development of works became questionable, the artists did not withdraw from the exhibition. Some found external sources of financial support on their own. We curators agreed that each artist in the Biennale would receive a fee of 1,000 Euros (unfortunately not all of them were paid as such). One of the participants, Marina Naprushkina, stated that to earn a living under these circumstances, she would need to take part in two biennials each month. It turned out that the Biennale, whether we like it or not, is a form of artistic exploitation, where the conditions are defined by me and the curatorial team. Quite possibly the artists we collaborated with have already faced the problem of limited budgets and symbolic fees. On one hand, their exceptional and significant artistic proposals have earned them an established position within the field; on the other, they are financially discriminated against as producers of art projects that are consumed by the institutionalized art circuit on a daily basis. But there are possible solutions to this situation: for example Polish artist Julita Wójcik recently proposed to the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), Warsaw that she be employed there as an artist during the time she was preparing an exhibition and also for its duration. Let's imagine a situation in which an artist works for an institution as an employee and has the same contract and receives all the same privileges (salary as well as social benefits) as others who work there.

And yet as curators, we have learned a lesson in how to conform to the existing structure, how to acquiesce to the institutional violence exerted over subjects that are essentially weaker—the artists. We knew how to haggle over production budgets, cutting the costs from 20,000 to 4,000 Euro. But at the same time, we worked with an institution, and in a climate of a fear of art that effectively criticizes the way democracy is being practiced. This odd and overwhelming anxiety led us to title this Berlin Biennale Forget Fear. The expression itself has a performative character; it's a watchword that relieves one's anxiety.

Our Goal

It's Friday, the sun is setting, and it's about time I finished this statement. The 7th Berlin Biennale is already underway, and soon all projects will be subject to public scrutiny. Some will find the exhibition interesting; some will see it as an abuse; while still others will accuse us of political ignorance. Whatever happens, we should not lose sight of our main goal: to open access to performative and effective politics that would equip we ordinary citizens with the tools of action and change. Art is one of these tools.

¹ I'm using »we« here because this text includes opinions which other members of the curatorial team—Joanna Warsza, the Voyna group, and Igor Stokfiszewski—agree with.

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STATEMENT BY VOINA

We met Artur Żmijewski in St. Petersburg in the spring of 2011. That summer he invited us to become curators of the 7th Berlin Biennale. He told us he needed our help to transform art into politics. This doesn't mean that as Biennale curators we are going to occupy ourselves with exhibition management, which in our opinion is rather useless: exhibitions harm contemporary art. All artists ever think about nowadays is what they can exhibit and where. Therefore the fewer art pieces the Biennale will have, the better. The basis of our curatorial activity in the Berlin Biennale is this: we work without any limitations, and the Berlin Biennale hasn't mandated any kind of frame. We have a close exchange with Artur. He knows about the difficulties we face and how exhausting it is to live underground. Our work with the Berlin Biennale doesn't mean that we are leaving our country for this. Our activities here in Russia make up part of our work for the Biennale. All our actions as curators have an official status; we act as associate curators of the Biennale, and the government has to accept this. Our most recent actions were radical. The rulers don't dare to bring charges against us; they will probably not arrest the entire Berlin Biennale. Trying to leave the country wouldn't be such a hard thing at all, but to live in St. Petersburg—where the “Commission on Fighting Extremism,” the criminal police, and the Russian department of Interpol search for us, and where our mug shots are even posted in the porter's lodges of the museums—to live under such conditions is much more dangerous than the kind of elegant adventure of crossing a border. In principle, my position is: I'm staying here. The Russian government is at war against its own people. Many Russians, particularly those with a good education, have already left Russia. Millions of people have never been able to realize their life goals. This is the government's fault. That's why I can't leave. My front line is in Russia. And this is also my aesthetic position: to stay in the most beautiful city in the world. In our opinion, it's part of the ethics of an artist to resist against the ruling system and to make this goal accessible to the public as well. This is why we seek to make our aim shine in the best possible way. There is an anecdote or perhaps it's just someone's memory of Kazimir Malevich: after the revolution in Petrograd, armed with a pistol, he passed through artists' studios asking who was still painting birches and demanded real art. Armed with a weapon. That is real art.

Aesthetics is the precondition of ethics. Today, ethics are much more important for art. Voina doesn't tolerate cowardice nor greed—both are the source of betrayal which is the worst and most unforgivable thing for the art activist. I personally cannot deal with apathy or ineptitude. When both occur, moreover in combination with an inflated self-assessment, I become very unpleasant company.

We want to make a type of art that no longer inspires anyone to the idea of awarding us an art prize. But if the museums and institutions can't let go and continue to suggest us for their idiotic competitions, they are going to regret it. It's impossible to bribe revolutionary art, and playing games with geniuses is dangerous. It's my friendly advice that one should take us very seriously. For us, art is not the measure of life. We create new life, new events, that one can refer to. Our rifles are charged and aimed at art so that it stays at a distance and will not spread its art stench over here. We hate PR. We are an underground group. Voina has become very popular. Books and films about us are everywhere, people copy our actions—and none of this has anything to do with us. It's other people playing copycat. Lazy assholes that advertise for us... this does not have anything to do with our future.

In the Russian press hardly anything has been published about us that paints a true picture of reality. Here, the dishonest writing of lackeys has become the ideology of journalistic work. If one third of what they write is accurate, it's already a big success. A typical example of this is how the press wrote serious articles about our participation in the corrupt Moscow Biennale in spite of our loud and public boycott. Since 2005 when we have existed as a group there has been a substantial flow of disinformation about us. But sometimes this also has positive aspects: when the police investigated about our action "Palace Revolution" they couldn't find any evidence, except the wildly contradictory media rumors and artistic interpretations on blogs. Thus the whole thing collapsed in on itself.

Now it's our aim to present the people with a convincing impression of decisive actions. Passive protest and symbolic actions—now when it is again about "big history"—are immoral. The events in Russia of December 2011 and February 2012 show us: both the government and the opposition (which humiliates itself in front of the government) make fools of the people by degrading protests to the level of consuming Internet memes. There is laughter and ironizing rather than arming ourselves for street fighting. We have taken Berlin. The next thing is the Russian revolution.

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JOANNA WARSZA: *DOING THINGS WITH ART*

Research That Follows the News

We followed the logic of journalism. We focused on political and social events and art's response to them. We went to Hungary, monopolized by the right-wing party Fidesz; to Iceland, where a group of artists established a political party and won the election in the city council of Reykjavik in the aftermath of the financial crisis; to Russia, rocked by anti-Putin protests; to Madrid, the hotbed of the ¡Democracia Real YA! movement; to New York, where Occupy Wall Street continues its struggle; to Tunisia in the wake of the first free elections; and to Egypt in a time of post-revolutionary turmoil. This form of curatorial research does not involve deadlines, hunting for interesting portfolios, or studio visits. We searched for art in civil disobedience, in politics, in representative state art, in the politics of memory, in capitalist appropriation, or in educational activities seen as »bad art.« We examined how art disperses within society: how it exploits its potential for political action, and where, parallel to artists, there are people just making art.

Voina as Associated Curators

If you ask the St. Petersburg faction of the Voina group where art ends they will tell you: nowhere. Their practice happens on the ground, through riots or interventions into the field of state power. Leo, one of their members, recently set fire to a police truck meant for transporting convicts. Voina sees art as their tool and uses it for direct actions. Yet they don't accept commissions or invitations to exhibit, neither are they interested in curatorial sessions in Berlin. They perform resistance to Russia's pseudo-democracy, playing on hype, symbolic value, and media visibility. They live without money in St. Petersburg or Moscow, which are their battlefields for citizen rights. Such a radical posture serves the goal of social emancipation. Our curatorial alliance with Voina creates a situation in which the institutional tools of the Berlin Biennale—access to press coverage, legal representation, or funding—can serve Voina's cause; through it they are legitimized as artists and their actions are deemed art.

Art Strike

A curator friend recently told me: »The art world doesn't need another solo show by a star artist at the moment.« What does it need then, in a world with a few hundred biennials, many of which claim to reflect on the relationship between art and politics? In liminal moments throughout history, art has often taken some »time off,« abandoning the studios to practice dissent and action, and challenge the existing ideological or economic doctrines. Such moments gave birth to the founding of post-revolutionary Russian Productivism, the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* (Workers' Council for Art) in 1918 / 1919 in Germany; the Art Workers' Coalition established in 1969 in New York, or the art demonstrations in Armenia following the fall of the Soviet Union—to name just a few. Inspired by past and current examples, we also wrestle away from self-referential art and theory discourse, returning to action and non-knowledge. Making activism tap into art's added value, we're interested in examples where following a career can mean pursuing an idea, effectiveness need not be equal to dogmatism, and information on art doesn't need promotion via an expensive mailing list.

Performative Democracy

Democracy becomes performative when it collectively expands its scope, developing new tools, and when decision-making processes are accessible for all, giving rise to new possible political practices and political awareness in a democratic carnival. We have searched for the actors of those shifts: we work with members of Indignados, ¡Democracia Real YA!, Occupy Berlin, Occupy Frankfurt, the 15M Movement, and the Artists in Occupy Amsterdam group, who abandoned their studios to pitch a tent in the camp in the very center of the city. We will also have a visit from Occupy Museums in New York, which explores the non-transparent connections between the world of finance and the art world. By inviting collectives who have been contributing to the recent ideological turn, and making the exhibition hall of KW Institute for Contemporary Art their »advocacy space,« we attempt to stop business as usual—in order to examine ourselves and reflect on contemporary politics and our shared role in it. We deploy performativity as a vehicle, against the common belief that everything in the art space is per definition fake and pointless.

Citizen Art

By »citizen art« we refer to the involvement of artists and cultural producers in social processes or economic transformations. We look beyond the categories of good or bad art, pursuing ideas, and forgetting fear or skepticism. We have supported or produced works by artists, curators, politicians, or collectives that clearly define themselves on the contemporary political map, touch the real base, and demand what other people also demand. In Cairo, we met the film collective Mosireen, which is monitoring protests, police abuses, illegal military trials, and creating a stream of information about the on-going revolution in post-Mubarak Egypt. In Brazil, we spoke to Pixadores, a group of urban taggers who fill the streets of São Paulo with a coded alphabet, spelling out the demands of the lower classes in a radical passage to social visibility and recognition. We also work with people from the field of theater, like Krétakör director Árpád Schilling, who abandoned bourgeois practice to react to the growing right-wing sentiment that thrives in Hungary, and the Russian documentary groups Joseph Beuys Theater and Teater.doc, who act as watchdogs of authoritarian politics.

Politics That Becomes Art

We understand politics as a symbolic space and a meeting point for contradictory opinions and social mediation. We searched for rare moments of »political beauty« in the current capitalist democracies, which are oriented toward the hegemony of the free market. We work with Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá, who breaks with the politics of hostility, shows how to give back power, and knows how to discredit his own position. His political practice draws inspiration from contemporary art and pedagogy and employs objects and symbols that he refers to as »sub-art.« We also work with the Berlin-based think tank of artists and political scientists from the Zentrum für Politische Schönheit (Center for Political Beauty), who trace and initiate liminal political experiences. And we work with Olafur Eliasson, one of the pioneers of the Berlin art scene, who offered a six-month fellowship to a politician to study in the framework of his Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments). We invited Mirosław Patecki, a religious artist who, driven by belief, designed one of the largest statues of Jesus Christ in the world. The sculpture, to his surprise, became a visual confirmation of the hegemonic status of the Catholic Church in Poland, albeit under the cover of a pilgrimage attraction. The Biennale also presents a commercial ready-made, an advertising banner from the Egyptian communication company Mobinil. It was one of the networks that cut off mobile phone service in the country in January 2011 at the start of the Arab Spring, and now it exploits the image of revolutionary crowds for financial gain. A number of artists in the Biennale initiate a »parallel politics« in a series of gatherings. Jonas Staal brings

together representatives of groups, which, for various reasons, have been listed as terrorist organizations (in *New World Summit*), questioning the ideas of inclusion and exclusion in the democratic order. Yael Bartana organizes *AND EUROPE WILL BE STUNNED*, the First International Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP). She calls for the return of 3.3 million Jews to Poland and demands the opening of fortress Europe and the end of a politics based on guilt and Zionist doctrine. Paweł Althamer initiates a two-month long *Draftsmen's Congress*, where the main vehicles for discussion and communication are drawings, signs, and symbols.

Engaged Intelligentsia

»Engaged intelligentsia« is an East-European term that refers to a group of people determined to disseminate culture, produce and distribute knowledge, and defend humanist and socialist values. In the Russian and Polish context, this notion was a constituent element in forming a class of intellectuals and practitioners involved in day-to-day activism. Whether operating in education, journalism, art, or science, the engaged intelligentsia understands its practice as a service for the common good. This has been at play throughout the 20th century, in the pre-war left-wing groups, and later in the anti-communist dissident movement in Central and Eastern Europe. This term defined the horizon of many of our collaborations with artists and curators, which linked to the local context and tackled issues that are repressed and absent from the tolerant aura of the Berlin Republic. Nada Prlja constructs a *Peace Wall* along Friedrichstrasse, which radicalizes the existing divisions, economic disparities, social tensions, and current gentrification processes in Berlin. Bernd Langer, an artist-activist connected with the Antifa movement and the author of a number of publications on political resistance, leads guided tours focusing on Berlin's political history. And the Israeli group Public Movement, following a famous quote by Angela Merkel about the failure of multiculturalism, announces its campaign *Rebranding European Muslims*.

Politics of Memory

We have been interested in observing how, with the use of political means, facts and historical events are either commemorated or repressed. What is remembered and what is forgotten and why? How are historical narrations shaped by current politics and social agendas? Roma curator Tímea Junghaus highlights the problem of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime, which sits unfinished and abandoned in the very heart of the city, between Brandenburger Tor and the Reichstag, organizing a meeting of The Roma Elders and lobbying for the completion of the memorial. Polish artist Łukasz Surowiec transfers 320 trees from the vicinity of Auschwitz-Birkenau, replanting them across Berlin and thereby creating a living and breathing memorial. One of the Biennale venues is Deutschlandhaus, the future home of a center for exhibitions, documentation, and information of the Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung (SFVV) (Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation), which we see as a reservoir of German memory. It is a mouthpiece for the official historical narrative stemming from the controversial question of commemorating Germans displaced during and after the Second World War. We confront this state-supported history with self-organized, subjective, popular reconstructions of historical events performed by Polish re-enactment groups. And we present what many Germans want to avoid seeing—a staging of the 1945 Battle of Berlin, complete with military uniforms and equipment.

Agonistic Curating

If politics is a way for different groups in society to express their claims and interests and to find social methods of making collective decisions, we aimed at a situation where those different positions are present and not only criticized. The curator often

resembles a policeman who enforces the official codes of art and has a misguided sense of his own authority. Like with a Midas touch, she / he usually plays a role in deciding the symbolic—and as a result economic—value of an artist's work. We figured that if one claims to be a »political« curator, she or he should assume the responsibility of presenting various political stances within an art exhibition. We understood the role of the curator as a position that not only involves »taking care« but also one of inviting disagreement, confrontation, losing control over meaning, or of giving away space and means. This thinking also stands behind ArtWiki, which is the digital platform of the Berlin Biennale, developed in collaboration with network activist Pit Schultz in reaction to the immense response to the Biennale's 2010 Open Call. ArtWiki is an example of a fully inclusive curatorial practice, one that abandons the »Salon des Refusés« for the sake of a network that includes all political stances and where no curatorial selection prevails.

Elimination of the Audience

In his 1966 essay *Notes on the Elimination of the Audience* Allan Kaprow sought an experience of daily life through art that would make viewers unaware of their own role, turning them into participants. The »elimination« in the title refers to a situation where audience members lose sight of their position as observers, turning their spectatorship into citizenship. We developed the Biennale so as to address multiple audiences—the Berlin and the international one. But we also had in mind those who might not even be aware of being »spectators« of art. Belarusian artist Marina Naprushkina clandestinely distributes newspapers in her homeland, which propose possible scenarios after Alexander Lukashenko's downfall. Naprushkina's work is essentially addressed not to the exhibition audience, but to people who find her newspapers hand-delivered to their mailboxes in Minsk. Or Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar, who designed »State of Palestine« stamps and printed over 20,000 of them through Deutsche Post. These are currently in circulation, both in Germany and across the world. The real addressees of such actions might not have any interest in the Berlin Biennale, but support such gestures of creating »normality« and dispersing art into the real.

Free and Open to All

For the first time ever, entrance to the Biennale is free—a decision made by an institution that helps to establish a space of exchange and confrontation. The contents of the exhibition and on-going program will also be unfolding, changing, and evolving over time. The Biennale brings together diverse, ideologically varied projects that expose political oppositions and testify to the fact that the same disputes that take place in society also cut across the world of art. After all, art is not a solution: it is part of the problem.

BERLIN BIENNALE

GABRIELE HORN: *FOREWORD FROM THE NEWSPAPER ACT FOR ART* (EXCERPT)

There has never before been a Berlin Biennale that has already achieved such an international presence and controversial resonance in the run-up to the opening—not only in the media but also amongst artists and colleagues. And in the last few months, it has been extremely striking how often, even in our own small circle, members of the team or myself have been asked about our general professional and personal well-being particularly »under« Artur Żmijewski's curatorship of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. As a rule, in the voice of the other person one could detect the greatest respect accompanied by sincere sympathy. What makes this Berlin Biennale so different and why is it being so closely watched? In September 2009, the international members of the Selection Committee (Jacob Fabricius, Malmö Konsthall; Bartomeu Marí, MACBA—Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Matthias Mühling, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau München, Munich; Joanna Mytkowska, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; and Hoor Al Qasimi, Sharjah Biennial) unanimously named the internationally renowned Polish artist Artur Żmijewski as the curator of this year's Berlin Biennale. Żmijewski is seen as being not only critical of institutions, but is also known for breaking taboos, provoking media scandals, and transgressing borders in his artistic work. In his curatorial concept, he put the focus on projects with a lasting political impact—beyond the mainstream and entertainment. Żmijewski appointed the art collective Voina from Russia and Joanna Warsza from Warsaw as associate curators, and they further developed the concept and program for the 7th Berlin Biennale together with him.

As curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale, Żmijewski unconditionally calls for art to have a social impact. In this way he attacks—nearly iconoclastically—the concept of »autonomous art« while at the same time expecting and claiming a protected space for it. Such a concept is called for and even justified when one considers the current economic and social context, international political situation, and dynamic shifts in the entire global system. But when this transgression of borders engages with socio-political themes that have become inscribed in the particular national culture of remembrance and the production of ideology in a manner that is highly complex and sensitive, it provokes controversies that go far beyond what a contemporary art institution normally has to deal with. And this is a challenge for the team, the institution, and all the supporters and sponsors.

As a rule, avant-garde and critical artistic practices are characterized by provocation and polarization. However, under the banner of the »freedom of art,« all of this can be exhibited by every institution and quite naturally finds a place in public and private collections as an artifact. Then perhaps one sits there with a champagne glass in hand—as recently described in the »art market« pages of a large German daily newspaper—next to Jenny Holzer's messages of horror related to rape and cruelty during the Bosnian war. And the question that rightly remains open is: is this perhaps a bubble that we find ourselves in?

Is the depiction of cruelty already a critical act? Do we change anything simply through exhibiting critical artistic positions? Or do we thereby create something to identify with, but without any practical consequences? Is it only art education that works with action-oriented perspectives, or can the production of art and reality truly

be one, as Artur Żmijewski and the associate curators Voina and Joanna Warsza claim? And what does this mean for art and its institutions? After art and artists in the western world became increasingly politicized in the 1970s—in New York, for example, with Art Strikes, or in Germany with, among others, Joseph Beuys, who ran as a candidate for the Green Party—what followed was a period of distance and / or critical observation. The world settled down again, at least on the surface. The conflict between two systems, one capitalist and one socialist, which came to an end after the Wall came down in 1989, was followed by a globalized and harmonized view of a vaguely defined future. September 11, 2001 marked a serious turning point and the beginning of the western nations' war against terrorism. Conflicts today take place somewhere else; although we are very well-informed by means of the most diverse media channels, we seem to have lost the space for the negotiating and brokering of social and political changes, the space for civil disobedience, participation, and political culture—despite fundamental political and economic imbalances.

A biennial, which only temporarily reaches a limited public, cannot be a substitute for this. Do museums, art associations, and contemporary art institutions perhaps have the possibility or even the responsibility to support socio-political movements and to themselves develop an emancipatory force, in short: to make viewers become citizens? What does the future hold in light of the increasing commercialization of art and culture and the development of the »visual industries?« Has this contributed to a weakening of institutions? The unconventional, the opinionated, the radical, the obsessive, and the inner requirements of artistic production have been replaced in recent years / decades by the calculable, the market-compatible, the short-term, and the business plan. Institutions are increasingly subject to the demands of a neoliberal »event« economy. Their educational mandate often gives way to a popular mandate to consume. In the best case, institutions have managed to remain platforms for critical positions. But don't we have to work harder on preventing this emancipatory force from being fundamentally called into question as a result of these developments?

Specifically for this reason it is of invaluable importance that since it first took place in 1998, the Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art has developed into a format that offers a free space that is as removed as possible from market demands and the difficult position of institutions, and in which concepts as well as experiments in the contemporary production of art and culture can be tested and further developed—even when this can sometimes be confrontational, transgressive, or even shocking. It is exceptional and of the greatest significance that the German Federal Cultural Foundation has supported each Berlin Biennale since 2004 with 2.5 million Euro, and thus also made highly controversial themes—and the often uncomfortable handling of them—possible.

The preparations for this year's Biennale have more than once pushed KW Institute for Contemporary Art to its limits. The goals that Artur Żmijewski set of having art interact with reality, of utilizing art as a tool for political processes, and of abandoning the customary strategies and working methods of an art institution as far as possible have presented more than just a challenge. Long before its opening, this Biennale became a forum for negotiating what art may do, what art is, which borders should perhaps not be crossed, what an institution and its sponsors can support, and at what point it becomes harmful, out of place, and questionable—both politically as well as artistically.

With this Berlin Biennale, in which Artur Żmijewski acts without showing consideration for acceptance, feelings, vanity, political correctness, positive media

coverage, or working together in a cordial way, the institution has taken a great risk. This also regards the fact that today, shortly before the opening of this Berlin Biennale, we do not know what the results will be. This uncertainty and open process is what Źmijewski demands unconditionally; it is something that—when combined with a radical critique of institutions and a general broadening of the concept of art—is contradictory and often in direct opposition to the current conditions for institutional work. Tolerating this and making it productive in opening up other perspectives was something that we all had to learn.

The projects by the artists that Artur Źmijewski, Voina, and Joanna Warsza invited to participate in this Biennale are almost without exception new productions, experiments that will be tested in reality. Whether the social function of art remains in the exhibiting of it, whether it can sometimes be made productive specifically as a result of its contrariness, or whether it can produce reality according to Kätke Kollwitz's motto, »I want to have an effect on my time,« and thereby change society, is something that we are all curious to see.

BERLIN BIENNALE

YOU ARE A PART OF IT

KLAUS BIESENBACH IN CONVERSATION WITH ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI AND JOANNA WARSZA

Berlin, December 22, 2011

Artur Żmijewski & Joanna Warsza: *What do you expect from art? Not from the Biennale per se, but in general.*

Klaus Biesenbach: I expect a certain disruption. Over ten years ago I did a series of exhibitions in this building (KW Institute for Contemporary Art). I showed Teresa Margolles and Santiago Sierra. Margolles brought a container of liposuction liquid with her. Just imagine: rich ladies in Mexico City want to be skinny, while all other people do not have enough to eat. So their fat is being sucked out of their bodies, and Teresa got some of it and she made a Jackson Pollock-like painting out of the material, a big, golden, shiny dripping painting on the large wall in the main exhibition hall. You always think art has to be utopian and has to draw an idea of a better world, more eternal, more true. And all of a sudden, artists like Sierra and Margolles appear and became a part of what they criticize. Margolles by the very material she was using. And in Sierra's case by the contracts he always made. You basically sign a contract and obviously you are exploiting someone. So you are not just showing »beautiful art« and making the world better. You somehow exploit the same system that you criticize, and you are a part of it.

Should art take part in the current moment? Or should we keep a distance to reality?

I think art has to prove that it has a certain amount of courage. Art has to be unafraid. Art anticipates developments, hopefully in a fearless way. The request to the artist should be, »Be responsible and be unafraid.«

What should artists be responsible for?

That they are citizens, that they are human and political beings, that they are free in this given moment in time, knowing about what has happened, and understanding that their actions will be looked at. They could understand that there is a certain responsibility that they could influence something that is going to happen.

Through the rise of neoliberalism art was transformed into never ending competition between artists. This is capitalistic logic—different parts of society fight each other for profit. Artists became an army of individuals, who are not aware that they could create collective power and be stronger.

When I came to Berlin in 1989, when the Wall fell, that was kind of a capitulation of socialism. The utopian idea of capitalism and the utopian idea of socialism is a dichotomy and part of the "bloc mentality" that I grew up with. As a child I never thought that one was right or one was wrong—it was just a reality that both existed. But after the Wall we first saw the capitulation of socialism as an idea, and now we are in the very moment of what seems to be the capitulation of democratic capitalism as an idea. So what is going to happen? Is it a vacuum? We know that if we look at the twentieth century, there are all these ideas of coming together, of solidarity amongst equals, solidarity with having a leader or not. To use a current example, many people commented that Occupy Wall Street did not have a leader, or did not have a »face.« And then when the camp [in Zuccotti Park] was dissolved people said, »Oh no, they don't even have a face. They don't have a person who could carry on without the park.« But the absence of one designated leader was part of what made Occupy Wall Street effective. They created a new deal. We should also be aware of what we do in the art field as they are aware of what they do in the field of politics or economy. You are part of a deal. And when it comes to the Berlin Biennale, I don't know how you would deal with this. With public money, you are a part of a system, of a country. You are in the position of claiming to be

independent, responsible and unafraid and I do not know how you achieve it without selling out, being on someone's team, carrying someone's brand, or taking private or public money. I never understood how to escape this logic.

But we never wanted to escape from this dilemma. We have never fetishized independence. Independence from society and the freedom of the artist are illusions. And if you have these illusions as an artist, it is very easy to be manipulated. We see many artists who are going down this path. They are manipulated and don't even know that they are being manipulated. So, it is important to start to be aware and transform ourselves, or yourself, into political subjects. That's why we asked artists: »What is your political stand? What are you dependent on? What community do you represent?«

What about your decision to name Voina as associate curators of the 7th Berlin Biennale? I've learned more about Voina recently, and I am so impressed by what they do. They are so unafraid. Either they are crazy or unafraid, or both. But it's very impressive. I am in Russia quite often; it's an unbelievably brutal country. Sometimes as an artist or curator or art person, when you go to some of these places it's a little bit like being a journalist in a war zone; in a war situation you can say: I'm a journalist, don't shoot me. It's the same as: I'm an artist, don't shoot me. Sometimes you have this stupid idea you cannot get shot, but of course you can get shot. It's the same bullets, the same material.

Exactly because they don't feel fear—they are not driven by it. Voina want to be responsible. They don't want to be treated like protected artists, like people who are untouchable. They take a certain responsibility and they take action.

Do they know who they are?

Politicians. Hopefully one day, they will declare it. It is part of strategy, to accept that you can really treat yourself seriously as a political entity and as somebody who can influence political processes. I'm thinking here about some other artists as well. They are using a kind of camouflage, but one day, there should make coming out. Do you know any such artists?

Abbie Hoffman did this. Also Joseph Beuys, Christoph Schlingensiefel. Who else is on the way?

Marina Naprushkina from Belarus. And, I would say, others who are part of the 7th Berlin Biennale project. They started politicizing art in a very substantial way. They reversed the process of de-politicizing art. It started years ago and somehow the exhibition based in Berlin was evidence of it—we saw fully de-politicized art. But at the same point there are people who are smart enough to use art for political reasons. Unfortunately usually these people are not artists.

Earlier 2011 I watched TV and there was the Arab Spring in Bahrain, the first dead people, the first people killed. You look at China and you know that something is going to happen; you look at Russia and you know that something is happening right now; you look at Mexico and think, »God, that got out of control.« In some areas of Greece there is 25 percent unemployment, what can people there do? You see the images from riots in Libya or Egypt. Something is happening, imploding or exploding, also in New York where I live. But now I am sitting in Berlin, and I feel strange calmness here. The idea of democratic capitalism simply doesn't work anymore today in many economically successful regions in the world! At the same time in Berlin you have this ongoing art festival. You are surrounded by artists, exhibitions, and galleries. Every day in Berlin is like the opening week of the Venice Biennale or a day in Kassel during documenta. One has the impression that everything here revolves around art, all day, every day.

Yeah. What is the actual political potential of this kind of art in Berlin?

BERLIN BIENNALE

LIST OF ARTISTS, NON-ARTISTS, AND PROJECTS

Indignados | Occupy Biennale

Occupy Berlin, 15M Movement (Barcelona, Madrid), Occupy Frankfurt, Artists in Occupy Amsterdam, Occupy Museums (Occupy Wall Street) and many more

Burak Arikan

Charlotte Bank

Anna Baranowski & Luise Schröder

Yael Bartana & the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP)

Breaking the News: FEMEN, Filmpiraten, Zafeiris Haitidis, Łukasz Konopa, Mosireen, Oleksiy Radynski, Tomáš Rafa, David Reeb, David Rych

BRIMBORIA Institut

BUREAU Mario Lombardo

CANVAS (Srđa Popović) & Anna Jermolaewa

Center for Political Beauty

Józefina Chętko

Draftsmen's Congress: Paweł Althamer & BelEtage/Renata Kamińska, Goldrausch, Lutz Henke, Alevtina Kakhidze, Bonaventure Ndikung (Savvy Contemporary), Solvej Helweg Ovesen, Yevgen Samborks, Anita Staud, Joanna Swierszczyńska, Zirkumflex and many more

Karina Dzieweczyńska

Ólafur Eliasson, Institut für Raumexperimente & Guido Brendgens

Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation

Michał Górczyński

Khaled Hourani

Institute for Human Activities

Khaled Jarrar

Joseph Beuys Theater & Teatr.doc

Tímea Junghaus

Andreas Kaernbach

Kartenrecht

Key of Return – Aida Refugee Camp

Alexander Koch

Ludwig Peter Kowalski

Krétakör

Krytyka Polityczna & Wojtek Zrałek-Kossakowski & musicians: Sławek Belina, Ray Dickaty, Jan Jelinek, Marcin Masecki, Candelaria Saenz Valiente, Kamil Szuszkiewicz, Gloria Viagra, Sławomir Wojciechowski among others

Christina Lammer & Manfred Frey, Michael Häfner, Peter Moeschl, Ulrich Thomale

Bernd Langer

Teresa Margolles & Oscar Gardea & David Gómez

Diana McCarty & reboot.fm

Maciej Mielecki & Re-enactment groups

Mobinil

Antanas Mockus

Marina Naprushkina

New World Summit – Jonas Staal

Open Call/ArtWiki

Hermann Joachim Pagels

Mirosław Patecki

Pixadores: Edmilson Vitor dos Santos Barbosa, Sérgio Miguel Franco, Ricardo Rodrigo de Lima, Caroline Pivetta da Motta, Djan Ivson Silva, William Pereira da Silva

Nada Prija

Public Movement

Joanna Rajkowska

Stefan Rusu

Pit Schultz

Łukasz Surowiec

Toleen Touq

Anke Wessermann

Martin Zet

Artur Żmijewski

SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw

Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV), Dortmund

Istituto Svizzero di Roma / Swiss Institute in Rome

Kalmar konstmuseum, Kalmar

Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

steirischer herbst, Graz

FILTERED BY EISENHÜTTENSTADT

Artists-in-Berlin-Program/DAAD

me Collectors Room Berlin/Olbricht Foundation

BERLIN BIENNALE

EXHIBITION VENUES

KW Institute for Contemporary Art

Auguststraße 69, 10117 Berlin

Indignados | Occupy Biennale with Occupy Berlin, 15M Movement (Barcelona, Madrid), Occupy Frankfurt, Artists in Occupy Amsterdam, Occupy Museums (Occupy Wall Street) and many more

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Marina Naprushkina

Open Call/ArtWiki

Mirosław Patecki

Pit Schultz

Jonas Staal

Łukasz Surowiec

Martin Zet

Artur Żmijewski

KuLe e. V. (façade)

Auguststraße 10, 10117 Berlin

Public Movement

Akademie der Künste (Black Box)

Pariser Platz 4, 10117 Berlin

Joanna Rajkowska

Deutschlandhaus

Stresemannstraße 90, 10963 Berlin

Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation

Ludwig Peter Kowalski

Maciej Mielecki & Re-enactment groups

Hermann Joachim Pagels

St Elisabeth-Church

Invalidenstraße 3, 10115 Berlin

Draftsmen's Congress: Paweł Althamer & BelEtage/Renata Kamińska, Goldrausch, Lutz Henke, Alevtina Kakhidze, Bonaventure Ndikung (Savvy Contemporary), Solvej Helweg Ovesen, Yevgen Samborks, Anita Staud, Joanna Swierszczynska, Zirkumflex and many more

Friedrichstraße 226

10969 Berlin

Nada Prija (from May 2, 2012)

DIGITAL VENUES

ArtWiki

Art Covers Politics

Breaking the News

PROGRAM VENUES

Please find further information on the program and the participants in the newspaper ACT FOR ART or visit www.berlinbiennale.de.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art

Auguststraße 69, 10117 Berlin

Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Charité Campus Mitte

Auditorium for Internal Medicine

Sauerbruchweg 2 (Entrance: Charitéplatz 1), 10117 Berlin

Collegium Hungaricum Berlin (Haus Ungarn) Ungarisches Kulturinstitut

Dorotheenstraße 12, 10117 Berlin

Deutscher Bundestag

Platz der Republik, 11011 Berlin

Hebbel am Ufer – HAU 1

Stresemannstraße 29, 10963 Berlin

Hebbel am Ufer – HAU 3

Tempelhofer Ufer 10, 10963 Berlin

Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under National Socialism

Simsonweg/Scheidemannstraße, 10117 Berlin

Sophiensæle

Sophienstraße 18, 10178 Berlin

Spreepark

Kiehnwerderallee 1–3, 12437 Berlin

Theaterdiscounter

Klosterstraße 44, 10179 Berlin

Zeughauskino Deutsches Historisches Museum

Unter den Linden 2, 10117 Berlin

Outside Berlin

Straße der Republik, 15890 Eisenhüttenstadt

PARTNERS OF THE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS**Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle**

Jazdow 2, PL-00-467 Warsaw

www.csw.art.pl

Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV) at the Dortmunder U

Leonie-Reygers-Terrasse, 44137 Dortmund

www.hmkv.de

Swiss Institute in Rome / Istituto Svizzero di Roma

Via Ludovisi 48, I-00187 Rome

www.istitutosvizzero.it

Kalmar konstmuseum

Stadsparken, SE-39233 Kalmar

www.kalmarkonstmuseum.se

The Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie

Panska 3 , PL-00-124 Warsaw

www.artmuseum.pl

steirischer herbst

Sackstraße 17, AT-8010 Graz

www.steirischerherbst.at

BERLIN BIENNALE

KRYTYKA POLITYCZNA IN BERLIN

Why do we choose to act within the field of art in Berlin, as part of the 7th Berlin Biennale? Not only does the Berlin Biennale curator, Artur Żmijewski, serve as the artistic director of the *Krytyka Polityczna* (Political Critique) magazine, but there are also a number of our activists among the collaborators and advisers for the event. The launch of the Krytyka Polityczna Club in Berlin as part of the Berlin Biennale seemed a natural step to its curator. For Żmijewski, transferring the practice of *Krytyka Polityczna* to Berlin is one of the elements of transferring his artistic and curatorial practice in general.

However, a more definitive answer to why we operate as part of the Berlin Biennale can perhaps be found in the answer to another question: why do artists, such as Artur Żmijewski, Yael Bartana, Joanna Rajkowska, Wilhelm Sasnal, and many others choose to become activists, collaborators, or supporters of *Krytyka Polityczna*? They choose to do so because we sincerely trust in art, its power to change reality, and chances to provide tools that can improve the efficacy of this change, tools which can be successfully applied to other fields of social practice—including politics. We are observing art attentively; we appreciate its ability to work with the senses, corporality, and human relations. We see its imagination as a prototype of the political imagination. For us, art is politics in a different state of matter, a state capable of generating extremely valuable tools and practices useful in bringing about fundamental social change.

Since October 2011 we have been organizing debates in the framework of the 7th Berlin Biennale in order to provide discursive tools to discuss political effects of artistic actions and artistic dimension of political strategies. We believe that if we treat these two spheres with adequate seriousness and care, we can evoke real effects in terms of changing reality. This might and should lead us to more equal and just societies. Our intention is to provide a vision of art, which introduces it as the correct and strong tool for political aims. At the same time we develop a vision of politics supported by artistic imagination and practices that step out of the crystal palace of post-political globalization and onto the path of the new global change. The *Krytyka Polityczna* series of debates and music-actions in Berlin seek to be a platform to discuss the events of the 7th Berlin Biennale in relation to contemporary political issues in the terms described above.

We also intend to collaborate with local German organizations as well as activists from the Indignados/Occupy Movement(s) who are developing actions within the framework of the 7th Berlin Biennale in order to share our ideas and support transnational social struggles, which we experience since the Arab Spring period and earlier. We believe that due to the devotion of all active groups, the emerging new political spirit will inspire Berlin. Furthermore the power of the 7th Berlin Biennale as one of the key exhibitions in the art world will spread the idea of artistic practices as effective instruments to transform reality among the artistic, but not only, artistic spheres.

Krytyka Polityczna Club in Berlin, April 2012

BERLIN BIENNALE

INDIGNADOS | OCCUPY BIENNALE

By the activists of the new protest movements.

In late autumn last year, we were invited by the curators of the 7th Berlin Biennale to use the ground floor of KW Institute for Contemporary Art for our protest movement. After a controversial debate within the movement, those of us who decided to take part are entering into this experiment well aware of the risk of co-optation of our movement's grassroots power. We decided to use the opportunity to create a *Global Square*, an open international forum, where activists from all over the world can come together to exchange knowledge and skills, methods and resources, raise issues and find solutions, and most importantly plan joint actions both locally and internationally for global change. Occupy activists from Frankfurt, New York, and Amsterdam, the 15M/Indignados (Spain) will attend, and also from our associated movements such as ¡Democracia Real YA! and Echte Demokratie Jetzt!, and the so called "Arab Spring." Our participation at the 7th Berlin Biennale gives us the chance to involve a new audience, in this case the typical art festival public, but also non-festival visitors, drawn by curiosity and/or a desire for change in a dialogue on social, political, and global issues.

Program

At the **Autonomous University**, activists, guest speakers, and visitors can share collective intelligence, knowledge, and political action methodology in the form of workshops, presentations, and innovative action forms.

Occupy Communication and Dialogue: Experienced moderators from the Indignados | Occupy Movement will organize various discussion events, including participatory and non-hierarchical group discussions known as Asambleas, at least three times a week, with spontaneous Asambleas being called whenever needed.

Creative Actions: Those activists who think in images as much as in words will be creating performances and actions both within the KW hall and in public spaces all over Berlin.

IT Working Group: Internet specialists will create a ComLab in the space, where they will exchange knowledge and technology.

Live-Stream: Images from our protest movements worldwide and from public spaces in Berlin will be present in the space, and images from the Indignados | Occupy Biennale shared with the world via Live-Stream.

Working Group Children and Youth: Young visitors can also participate by holding their own Asambleas and by taking part in workshops led by artists and teenage activists.

Invitation to participate: Anyone is welcome to join us by helping our logistics team with practical support and donations of materials and/or by submitting ideas for actions, a presentation, or a workshop.

Contact: Write an email to berlinbiennale@lists.takethesquare.net and/or join our groupware site by registering as a user under: biennale.theoccupyproject.org/user/register

Asambleas during the 7th Berlin Biennale: Tuesdays, Thursdays at 6 pm; Sundays at 1 pm.

BERLIN BIENNALE

YOUNG CURATORS WORKSHOP: *CURATING IN TIMES OF NEED* **May 29 to June 6, 2012**

Participating young curators: Marwa Arsanios, Lebanon; Ramona Buša-Virtmane, Latvia; Clare Butcher, South Africa; Wafa Gabsi, Tunisia; Lizaveta German, Ukraine; Lara Khaldi, Palestine; Alejandra Labastida, Mexico; Thomas Lax, USA; Jani Pirnat, Slovenia; Karla Pudar, Croatia; Wilma Renfordt, Germany; Ewa Małgorzata Tatar, Poland; Toleen Touq, Jordan; Natalia Vatsadze, Georgia.

Curating in Times of Need is dedicated to the core themes of the 7th Berlin Biennale: art and political engagement, substantial change, and the impact of artistic and curatorial practice in current societies. The questions raised are both simple and relevant: How to do things with art? Does curating offer potential means for a civic response to the current political occupations? How to curate to make something real? Contemporary curating and art production witness increasing aestheticization whilst turning towards the spectacle, thereby detaching from social processes and limiting curatorial work to the act of managing and presenting art exhibitions. How could curating also be understood as a civic or social practice? And how could this practice become politically and socially relevant, whilst being part of the environment from which it emerges?

The nine-day curatorial workshop *Curating in Times of Need* analyzes this year's Berlin Biennale curatorial mode, topics, and projects, as well as a number of case studies by artists or initiatives, performing and practicing context-oriented concrete groundwork. A special focus is placed on the artists' and curators' civic responses to the revolutions in the Arab countries, which are recently undergoing significant political, social, economic, and cultural changes. Local artists and curators have changed their artistic production, but continued using their practices for democratic, nonviolent struggles. These strategies are analyzed with regard to their potential to translate revolution and to re-imagine the future of democracy. A significant number of Arab cultural practitioners are invited to contribute.

Conceived as a meeting point and formational experience for young curators and for young artists or community organizers who have initiated cultural projects, the workshop is intended as a do-and-think tank: a place for the production of knowledge and practice. The young curators are invited to present their own projects during the first session and to continue to take part in discussion sessions, screenings, and the Berlin Biennale's projects. The participants of the workshop have the opportunity to learn from recent projects combining curatorial and political practice and debating a set of urgent questions, emerging from the current political circumstances and the pressing need to imagine alternative civil societies utilizing the power of art.

Speakers include: Charlotte Bank, Syria / Germany; Bassam El Baroni, Egypt; Amira Chebli, Tunisia; Catherine David, France; Raffie Davtian, Iran/Armenia; Florian Schneider, Germany; Khaled Hourani, Palestine; Mosireen (Philip Rizk, Egypt and Jasmina Metwaly, Poland / Egypt); Susanne Pfeffer, Germany; Marcel Schwierin, Germany; Joshua Simon, Israel; Ala Younis, Kuwait / Jordan.

Curating in Times of Need is a cooperation between the Allianz Cultural Foundation, Berlin; BMW, Munich; Goethe-Institut e. V., Munich; and the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art / KW Institute for Contemporary Art.

BERLIN BIENNALE

ART EDUCATION

Guided tours are organized by art:berlin. art:berlin has been organizing guided tours on art, culture and architecture since the mid-1990s and this is the fourth time that art:berlin is in charge of the guided tours of the Berlin Biennale. From April 27 to July 1, 2012 public guided tours and one meeting will take place every week. In addition, individual guided tours can also be arranged.

Public Guided Tours

1-hour public guided tours take place in two exhibition venues and can be attended without advance reservation.

every Thursday at 6 pm (in German and English)

every Saturday at 2 pm (in German)

4 Euro, concessions 3 Euro

KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Auguststraße 69, 10117 Berlin

every Saturday at 4 pm (in German)

4 Euro, concessions 3 Euro

St Elisabeth-Church, Invalidenstraße 3, 10115 Berlin

Meeting

In addition, meetings will be held every Thursday at 7 pm, which address different issues in the exhibition (in German). The meetings usually take place at KW. Current information can be found on our website.

4 Euro, concessions 3 Euro

Combined ticket

Tour and meeting on Thursday at KW or tour at KW and St Elisabeth-Church on Saturday

6 Euro, concessions 5 Euro

Guided tours for groups and school classes

art:berlin offers guided tours for groups not larger than 20 people with advance reservation. Tours are available in English, French, German, Italian, Polish, and Turkish. An individual version of the guided tours can also be arranged.

Guided tours in English or German

Guided tour (1 hour): 95 Euro

Guided tour (2 hours): 185 Euro

Every additional hour: 90 Euro

For other languages there will be an additional charge of 15 Euro.

Guided tours for school classes

Guided tour (1 hour): 65 Euro

Guided tours for higher education seminars and courses

Guided tour (1 hour): 85 Euro

Guided tour (2 hours): 155 Euro

Bus tours for groups

For groups art:berlin offers guided bus tours, which visit all exhibition venues:

32 Euro per person (minimum number of participants is 12)

Groups with individual guides

Please note that groups that bring their own guide have to register at info@artberlin-online.de or +49 (0)30-280963-90, and need to pay a licensing fee of 25 Euro (max. 20 people incl. guide).

Contact

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BERLIN BIENNALE

PUBLICATION: *FORGET FEAR*

edited by Artur Żmijewski and Joanna Warsza

The reader of the 7th Berlin Biennale—*Forget Fear*—is a report on real action within culture, on the uses of artistic pragmatism. It is about concrete dealings by artists, curators, and politicians that lead to visible effects. We're interested in finding answers, not asking questions. We're interested in situations where art acts for real and solutions are proposed and implemented responsibly. We are interested neither in preserving artistic immunity nor in distancing ourselves from society. We consider politics to be among the most complex and difficult of human activities. We sought out people—artists, activists, politicians—who engage in substantive politics through art.

Forget Fear includes texts and conversations with political leaders such as Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá, who has significantly contributed to social change with a political theory stemming from art; theater-maker Árpád Schilling, who abandoned bourgeois theater to act directly within the political context of right-wing Hungary; Voina, who doesn't believe in art without engagement; Tímea Junghaus, who uses art in a struggle against the oppression of the Roma people in Europe; the Brazilian underclass tagger group Pixadores, who attacked the São Paulo Biennale, and the Icelandic Best Party, which came to power after the financial crash in 2008. All these actors use performative tools in order to make their cases, and to reveal the social and political forces and interests lurking in the background. With this publication, we present leftist engagement not only as a critical, self-referential condition, but also as a proposition for empowerment and a productive set of political practices.

With contributions (amongst others) by Paweł Althamer, Gábor Bakos, Yael Bartana, Einar Örn Benediktsson, Daniel Blatman, Christian Boltanski, Galit Eilat, Olafur Eliasson, Julián García, Jón Gnarr, Jan Tomasz Gross, Jerzy Hausner, Péter Juhász, Gideon Levy, Renzo Martens, Antanas Mockus, Joanna Mytkowska, Luis Ospina, Pixadores, Srđa Popović, Alison Ramer, Dorota Sajewska, Árpád Schilling, Marcin Śliwa, Igor Stokfiszewski, Hans-Christian Täubrich, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Fernando Vallejo, the art collective Voina, Zofia Waślicka, and Rafał Żurek as well as a CD by Teresa Margolles.

English

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FOREWORD by ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI

Translated from Polish by Krzysztof Kościuczuk and Warren Niesluchowski

This publication is a report on the process of arriving at real action within culture, at an artistic pragmatism. What interested us were concrete activities leading to visible effects. We were interested in finding answers, not asking questions. We were interested in situations in which solutions are implemented responsibly. We were interested neither in preserving artistic immunity nor distancing ourselves from society. We consider politics to be among the most complex and difficult of human activities. We met artists, activists, and politicians who engage in substantive politics through art. The book is the result of our encounters with those people.

ZERO POLITICS?

I have been working in art, and in its cause, for years. It has become a way of life for me, life itself, and a passion. For years I have been observing its possibilities and limitations. But a few years ago I stopped »needing« it. I used to like visiting galleries, anticipating the thrill that comes when you see reality filtered through the mind of an artist. Today, at such a sight I feel lassitude and a mood verging on depression. This is the result of repeated disappointment with artistic propositions. Art is a mechanism which works by combining the powers of intellect and intuition, with a desire for dissent. It might give rise not to strange and somewhat inscrutable artworks, but to substantive tools for acting on the world. Usually, however, the mountain of art gives birth to a mouse. Thus, people otherwise extraordinarily well-equipped — artists — produce paradoxical or utopian visions and a social critique which neither they nor their viewers are willing to translate into a political (or any other) practice of any tangible social value.

The dominant curatorial strategy is based on administrating art objects; these are commissioned, transported, and insured, with attention paid to copyright as well as to properly mounting and taking them down. These practices are characteristic of the entire art world, still dominated by a popular belief in the magical power of the object. Thus it seems as if producing an object and distributing it among people is sufficient to effect change, political change as well. The art object alone, whatever else it may be, is expected to perform the social and political work assigned to it, without human agency, without any work at convincing, without difference of opinion or conflict, and thus essentially without any politics. This somehow seems to be the definition of today's artwork. These objects do indeed perform certain work, but it is the work of aestheticizing reality, changing ideas into spectacle, and transforming the political into a call that no one follows. »Art serves no purpose,« »Art is autonomous,« »Art is protected by an immunity which allows us to do more,« »An artist can see through walls« — one can easily find other such views. But we may ask: what perceptible or appreciable change has been brought about by artists protected by immunity? And can one really speak of artistic immunity after the director, activist, and actor Juliano Mer-Khamis, who ran the Freedom Theater, founded by his mother, Arna Mer-Khamis, in the West Bank town of Jenin, was murdered; after the arrest of the artist Ai Weiwei; and after the repeated arrests of members of the Russian collective *Voyna*? It seems that with practically every exhibition the art world declares its aversion to direct politics, while it is enough for artists to engage in substantive political activity to face threats, censorship, repression, or imprisonment.

The pact between the artist and the authorities has been broken. While it was still in effect, the rule went as follows: »The master no longer says: You will think as I do or die. He says: You are free not to think as I do. Your life and your goods are your own. But from this day forth you shall be a stranger to us.«¹ The people in power are not stupid and know of the political ambitions of artists and curators. Politicians will of course not allow the competition to be protected by any kind of immunity. The current situation in the funding of culture — the proto-fascist leader of the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands has no use for art and demands that its funding be slashed, and in the UK this funding is being drastically

reduced as we speak — can also be seen as a lifting of artistic immunity. We are witnessing an attack on the fiscal foundations of culture. In the case of art, this means future domination by the commercial sector, with its tendency to oust politics, promote an ineffective »velvet« critique, and transform the majority of artists into financial dissidents, shunting them away from any share in the profits made in the art market. In more straightforward terms, the majority of artists are in fact part of an artistic proletariat. They are often people who barely earn enough to live.

PRACTITIONERS OF IMPOTENCE²

My critique of my own field is ultimately very simple and can be summarized in one sentence: art doesn't act, and doesn't work. Despite the fact that it has enormous potential for conceiving and creating a reality or practicing politics, it usually goes no further than presenting ideas that no one has any intention of putting into practice. Is there any way out of this vicious »circle of creative impotence«? How can art help in performatively creating reality? One of the dominant beliefs in the world of culture is that art operates under the logic of the miracle. There, everything is possible. One biennale may be boring and bad, but the next might be wonderful and »sexy.« It's as if the possibility of doing a boring or captivating biennale were not a result of the existing art system as a whole, but of some exceptional ability or capacity on the part of the curator or artists. Art, in the minds of its practitioners, can in a moment transcend any limitation. But in fact, its possibilities are no more than those we have created in common. A miracle, that is, the possibility of abolishing all limitations, is an illusion, because one has to operate within a system of limitations ubiquitously dominated by the same Newspeak: freedom, autonomy, participation. It is a system where the know-how is provided by traveling philosophers, ready to offer their intellectual services to any artistic excess. If, in the art world and beyond, we continue to hear the view that art has become a décor for a neo-liberal system, then this décor includes not only art objects, but the intellectual discourse that frames them. It is a discourse which revolves around them and, like a black hole, sucks into its center each and every radical proposition, transforming it into speculation and theoretical reflection — but not into action. Artists, as well as the theorists and philosophers

gravitating in their world, have become »practitioners of impotence.« The limited imagination of today's artists and curators is unable to cross the threshold into genuine action. »Empty« and ineffective artworks and exhibitions are the paradoxical reaction to this situation. All that art has now is spectacle, where social and political problems are played out with no substantial impact on reality. And no substantial impact even on the players in the field of art: other artists and curators.

THE STAKES FOR CURATORS, THE STAKES FOR ARTISTS

Speaking of miracles, abolishing the system of regulation and liberating art from the ideology of impotence would indeed be a miracle. One conceivable solution would be to limit the influence of institutions on artists. Art, in its radical and potentially transformative version, is a social and political enfant terrible, the curse of almost every institution, in particular the major publicly funded galleries, professionalized white cubes. The latter must above all play for their material survival, not on the side of artists. They hold on to their bureaucratic procedures and rules of production, not to the pursuit of ideas — not for them a democracy to be attained with means such as those used by artists. Some artists offer a short cut: at times brutal, at others shocking, often perverse, one in principle irreconcilable with the goals of the institutions and their practice of eliminating any potential dangers. For years now, we have been witnessing a process of incapacitation whereby artistic radicalism is transformed into velvet critique. This process can be linked to the emergence and growing influence of the profession of a curator and the overwhelming institutionalization of art. What is at stake for the artist is different from what is at stake for the curator.

The curator has become a traveling producer of exhibitions, one who speaks of social issues in the soft language of pretended engagement. What is at stake for the curator is the next project, not any radical social or political goal. In this way, filtered through interests, institutional fears, and soothingly formulated goals, art is drained of its own power. The status quo in art has settled on a level of aestheticized politicality, or even its negation, as well as on artistic impotence. A handful of artistic desperados like the Voïna group from Saint Petersburg is not enough.

They fall more into a logic of exception — offering a perfect alibi for any opportunists wishing to claim they operate in a field as radical as art. Besides, art addresses its criticism to people who have no intention of taking up the critical challenge or bringing its critical ideas to everyday life. Even when the appeal and demands of the art are to the point and well thought out (which is often the case), there is no one to follow them.

The curator does not usually talk with the artist, let alone discuss things. A discussion assumes debate, and can lead to dissent or even a breakdown of relations. The curator cannot afford to break with artists, which means he or she can't afford an actual discussion. The artist has become an untouchable fetish — no longer a neighbor occupying the same spot on the earth with whom one can talk about common problems. The effects of this situation are usually accidental, and are not judged according to criteria of efficacy, but rather by rules governing »good art« and intellectual spectacle. The lack of discussion is explained as »granting artists complete freedom,« as if engaging in discussion were a form of captivity.

The aversion to politics has turned art into a kind of »panic room,« a refuge from politics and ideas. Here artists can feel safe from danger, as no truth of life, no activity of any real consequence, will intrude. The predominant form of consensus is agreement that the main goal of art institutions, and the artists aligned with them, is bringing culture to people. The underlying ideas are secondary; what is at stake is »culture,« further undefined, an empty word which can accommodate any content. If the task is formulated in this way, it essentially means the self-reproduction of the system.

At the same time, the world plays for stakes of its own — democracy or its elimination, freedom and its limits within the capitalist status quo. There is no art directly participating in this contest. There are a few exceptions, however: artists ready not only for artistic risk, but also for a radical break with the system which raised them.

THE STAKES FOR NEO-LIBERAL ELITES

In Russia, I spoke with Boris Kagarlitsky, a left-wing intellectual, who told me that art today plays for stakes set by a neo-liberal elite, even when these stakes are purely symbolic — a stronger position in the market of ideas, maintaining the status of the group, or self-reproduction. But the actual and socially relevant stakes are to be found

elsewhere, and are delineated by economic exploitation and poverty. Changing poverty into a minimal form of well-being is not something art will play for, even though it affects extreme economic differentiation within its own field — with its prominent wealthy artists and millionaires and an artistic proletariat striving to compensate for economic immiseration through symbolic profits. The question of the art market is a moral one, and concerns the creation of extreme economic inequalities within its own field, alongside a critique of the mechanisms of economic exclusion that operate outside the art world.

Kagarlitsky said something else: that art will never get out of its own ghetto until someone comes to need it. Among those who need it might be social movements that work toward solving the economic and political needs of societies all over the world. Unfortunately, these movements seem not to need artists to achieve their goals. Art needs to be reinvented, but not as some crafty option to aestheticize human problems in a novel way by turning them into a formal spectacle. What we need is more an art that offers its tools, time, and resources to solve the economic problems of the impoverished majority. For the actual limit to the possibilities of left-leaning art is effective engagement with material issues: unemployment, impoverishment, poverty.

AN INDIVIDUALIST POLITICS OF SURVIVAL

What artists do today, standing before us in the attire of art, can be termed an individualistic politics of survival. The artist's freedom is essentially the need to constantly adapt to the demands of the art system, its fleeting fashions and short-term interests. The effect of this mimicry is to transform artistic efforts into a selfish politics of survival. Something that looks like art is actually a mode of existing in the market. How much hesitation, how much angst there is among artists, that they might make a mistake and fail to meet the standards of the institution or the expectations of the market. We have all brought about this situation together. The institutionalized art world, which above all represents its own interests (fundraising, surviving among the institutional competition), strips the artists of their radical and formative political potential. Contributing to this is the need to flatter the artistic ego. Artists have been trained to brook practically no discussion. They are capable of pursuing only their fancy or ego. The ultimate goal of even the most noble artistic

action is not the social organism in whose cause one works, but the work of art produced in the process. When art is depoliticized, this means it does not represent the interests of people, but serves the individual careers of the artists. To make art political would mean determining what is at stake together with others and openly representing it in the public sphere. I want this field to be strong, and conscious of the power it possesses. I want it to be willing and able to politically deploy this power, not to create spectacle, but to substantively direct reality.

The most important thing at stake, something we want to play for today, is art that brings change, art that is not critical in an empty fashion; art that does not produce pseudo-critique, but is genuinely transformative and formative. For this reason, we are looking for people who have »stumbled« into art when they were supposed to be working in other fields—in pure politics, perhaps, in parliaments and government, or in the media, or possibly as tribunes of the people, researchers in the social sciences, or even therapists or doctors. One thing is certain—they should be out there, wherever social and political transformation is at stake.

I want to make one thing clear: I am not calling for all art to be like this. May it be even more pluralist. But let us remember that the schism in art is already present, and that the political turn is underway. »What was the essence of the ›political turn‹ in culture? An opposition to the necessity of reproducing known ›differences‹; a refusal to ride the postmodernist merry-go-round of cultural pluralism, slow reform, and gradual development of new languages that satisfy everyone; a declaration of disobedience to a falsity of aesthetics, existence, and humanity of art; the moment when artists abandoned the ship named ›the free market of ideas‹ or ›the post-political feast of differences,‹ and began forming a movement on their own.«³

DISCUSSIONS WITH PRACTITIONERS

All of us, Joanna Warsza, Igor Stokiszewski, Zofia Waslicka, the artistic office, and myself, were seeking an art that acts and works, with effective procedures of change and an ongoing influence on reality. This is, after all, what politics is about—an endless process of reacting to change and an attempt at either maintaining or transforming the dominant order. Even defending the status quo is an active

task, since there are so many people wanting to change it. It thus has to be actively defended.

We were looking for practitioners, people who with their every public action practice politics. We therefore talked with people who are creating an art museum geared towards civic politics that finds its force in the grassroots politics of ordinary people, a museum that strives to express progressive views and educate its public to be critical towards the institutions of the state, to educate citizens in the enforcement of democracy.

We spoke with an educator who claims that art has become a representation of the system of power, reinforcing it by training audiences to passively attend exhibitions and concerts; that the egotism of people in the art world has made them blind to everything except their own story, one where there is no room for acknowledging the value of a culture created by audiences or degraded social groups. According to him, art is for the most part a façade for the system, a celebration of the false exceptionalism of artists and a tool for empty political representation. The goal of art, however, is not maintaining its own illusions, but employing its instruments, in education, for example. We spoke with an artist-politician who employed his artistic intuition and the skills of a performance artist in his political and administrative work as the mayor of a great South American metropolis.

We talked with artists who set as their goal deposing Vladimir Putin via democratic means and transforming the political awareness of Russian citizens. We spoke with a curator who founded an Israeli gallery whose main political goal was ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and bringing an end to exclusive democracy, »only for Israelis.« We talked with artists who in their activity visualize class struggle and take it to be played out in the streets. We spoke with many others, as we tried to get directly to practice, to find a mode of substantive, hands-on influence on reality, an escape from the trap of simply exercising artistic freedom. We sought to verify whether practice is equivalent to theoretical activity, to its creation and immediate confirmation.

We don't need philosophical Newspeak to go into the streets and spray-paint buildings with the alphabet of freedom. Making art, politics, and the philosophy of politics, are all entwined by artistic imagination into the knot of fantasy and action. But the goal is pragmatic—the creation of social and political facts; taking and bearing

responsibility for views publicly expressed and decisions taken; real action in the real world and a final farewell to the illusion of artistic immunity.

The model of curatorial action I have adopted is not based on administering art objects, fishing them out of an artist's oeuvre, transporting, insuring, and hanging them on walls. It is one based on moderating and negotiating between conflicting political positions attired in the guise of artistic action. The only thing that can truly demolish this model of work is angst, the petrifying fear of bringing about real effects and taking responsibility for them. It makes it impossible to even imagine any pragmatic formula of action.

I am also afraid, but I am trying to forget fear.

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, New York: Library of America, 2004 (1835–40), p. 294.

2 »Practitioners of Impotence« is a term taken from Tomasz Rakowski's *Lowcy, Zbiroczce*,

praktycy niemocy (Hunters, Gatherers, Practitioners of Impotence), Gdansk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2010.

3 Igor Stokfiszewski, *Źwrot polityczny* (The Political Turn), Warsaw: Krytyka Polityczna, 2009, pp. 6–7.

BERLIN BIENNALE

BIOGRAPHIES

Artur Żmijewski

Curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

For the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, internationally renowned artist Artur Żmijewski has been invited to develop and implement the exhibition concept. Born in Warsaw in 1966, Artur Żmijewski deals in his actions and films mainly with social and political topics. He is particularly interested in the power potential of art and the relationship of art and politics. In his manifesto *The Applied Social Arts* he developed his distinct position on social activism, which also forms the point of departure for the 7th Berlin Biennale.

Żmijewski studied in the sculpture class of Professor Grzegorz Kowalski at the Warsaw Art Academy from 1990 to 1995 as well as at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam in 1999. His work has been internationally shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions. In 2005 he represented Poland at the 51. *Biennale di Venezia*. He is member of the Polish political movement Krytyka Polityczna and art director of the homonymous magazine. Żmijewski lives and works in Berlin and Warsaw.

VOINA

Oleg Vortnikov (a.k.a. Vor), Natalya Sokol (a.k.a. Kozljonok or Koza), Leonid Nikolajew (a.k.a. Leo the Fucknut), and Kasper Nienagladny Sokol
Associate curators

The art collective Voina (engl.: war) from Russia was founded in 2005 by Oleg Vortnikov and Natalya Sokol. Voina engages in street action art that is directed against the Russian authorities. Their actions are regularly joined by a large group of anonymous activists. Numerous lawsuits have been filed against the group and its activists. Most recently Natalya Sokol and her son Kasper have been arrested for several hours in mid-October 2011.

Oleg Vortnikov, Natalya Sokol, Leonid Nikolajew and Kasper decline the use of money and live in St. Petersburg without a permanent home. Their creed is, as Natalya Sokol declares: "The artist who denies political awareness is just a designer."

Joanna Warsza

Associate curator

Joanna Warsza, born in 1976, is a curator on the cusp of the performing and visual arts. She graduated from the Warsaw Theater Academy and completed a postgraduate course at the University of Paris 8 dance department. She is a founder of the independent platform Laura Palmer Foundation (www.laura-palmer.pl).

Warsza has worked mostly in the public realm, curating projects that examine social and political agendas, such as the invisibility of the Vietnamese community in Warsaw, the phenomenon of Israeli Youth Delegations to Poland, or the legacy of post-Soviet architecture in the Caucasus. Together with Krzysztof Wodiczko she runs

a seminar on conflict, trauma and art at the Warsaw Higher School for Social Psychology as well as on the performativity in contemporary culture. She has realized projects with Berlin theater Hebbel am Ufer, Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, the AICA Armenia, the GeoAir Tbilisi, the Centre Pompidou or Biennale de Belleville, both in Paris, among others. She is an editor of *Stadium-X- A Place That Never Was*. Since the beginning of 2011 she has worked with Artur Żmijewski on the development of the concept of the 7th Berlin Biennale. Joanna Warsza lives and works in Berlin and Warsaw.

BERLIN BIENNALE

HISTORY OF THE BERLIN BIENNALE

The Berlin Biennale is *the* forum for contemporary art in one of the most attractive cities for art. Taking place every other year at changing locations throughout Berlin it is shaped by the different concepts of well-known curators appointed to enter into a dialogue with the city, its general public, the people interested in art as well as the artists of this world.

The German capital is continuously under change thus remaining fragmented, diverse and contradictory. It is this particular mixture of high contrasts and a relaxed manner defining Berlin side by side that does not only attract international artists, many of whom choose Berlin as their base and place for production. Every two years the Berlin Biennale explores artistic developments to present the unseen and the unfamiliar before the background of this inspiring atmosphere.

In 1998 the 1st Berlin Biennale took place founded on the initiative of Eberhard Mayntz and Klaus Biesenbach—founding director of the Kunst-Werke Berlin—, in order to promote a representative and international forum for contemporary art in Berlin. Since the year 2004 the KW Institute for Contemporary Art has been the supporting organization of the Berlin Biennale. Its significance for the cultural landscape is reflected in the patronage of 2.5 million Euro per edition granted by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation).

Klaus Biesenbach took the artistic helm of the 1st Berlin Biennale in cooperation with Nancy Spector and Hans Ulrich Obrist. For the 2nd Berlin Biennale in 2001, the baton was passed to Saskia Bos, who was in turn followed by Ute Meta Bauer for the 2004 exhibition. The 4th Berlin Biennale in 2006 was curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick. Adam Szymczyk was chosen for the 5th Berlin Biennale in 2008 who then appointed Elena Filipovic as co-curator. The 6th Berlin Biennale was curated by Kathrin Rhomberg.

This year's 7th Berlin Biennale is curated by Artur Żmijewski together with the associate curators Voina and Joanna Warsza.

Since 2008 the Berlin Biennale is part of the European Biennial Network (www.europeanbiennialnetwork.org).

www.berlinbiennale.de



UNTERSTÜTZUNG / SUPPORT

FÖRDERUNG / FUNDING

Die 7. Berlin Biennale für zeitgenössische Kunst wird gefördert durch die Kulturstiftung des Bundes. / **The 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art is funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation).**



Mit großzügiger Unterstützung des Ministeriums für Kultur und Nationalerbe der Republik Polen und des Adam Mickiewicz Instituts. / **With the generous support of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute.**



Mit Unterstützung der Stiftung für deutsch-polnische Zusammenarbeit / Fundacji Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Warschau, und des Polnischen Instituts Berlin. / **With support from the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, Warsaw, and the Polish Institute Berlin.**



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Königreich der Niederlande



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MOLESKINE



PUBLIKATIONEN / PUBLICATIONS

Forget Fear und *Act for Art* werden unterstützt von Outset Contemporary Art Fund und calvert 22, London. / **Forget Fear and Act for Art are supported by Outset Contemporary Art Fund and calvert 22, London.**

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KOOPERATION UND ZUSAMMENARBEIT / COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Der Jungkuratorenworkshop *Curating in Times of Need* wird organisiert von der 7. Berlin Biennale in Zusammenarbeit mit der Allianz Kulturstiftung, Berlin, BMW und dem Goethe-Institut e. V., München. / **The Young Curators Workshop Curating in Times of Need is organized by the 7th Berlin Biennale in collaboration with Allianz Cultural Foundation, Berlin, BMW, and Goethe-Institut e. V., Munich.**

Allianz Kulturstiftung



Der *Erste Internationale Kongress des Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP): AND EUROPE WILL BE STUNNED* in Berlin von Yael Bartana wird in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) realisiert. /

The First International Congress of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP): AND EUROPE WILL BE STUNNED in Berlin by Yael Bartana is realized in collaboration with Hebbel am Ufer (HAU).



HAUEINS
HAU ZWEI
HAU DREI

Krisis vom Joseph Beuys Theater & Teatr.doc und *illumiNation* von Krétákör werden in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Hauptstadtkulturfonds, Berlin, realisiert. Ermöglicht durch die Kooperation mit dem Theaterdiscounter, Berlin. / **Krisis by Joseph Beuys Theater & Teatr.doc and illumiNation by Krétákör are realized in collaboration with Hebbel am Ufer (HAU) and with generous support from the Capital Cultural Fund, Berlin. Made possible through a cooperation with Theaterdiscounter, Berlin.**



HAUEINS
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Theaterdiscounter

Anatomiestunden von Christina Lammer ist eine Kooperation mit der Association of Neuroesthetics, Berlin. Das Projekt wird gefördert durch das Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur (bm:ukk), das Österreichische Kulturforum Berlin, den Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (FWF), den Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds (WWTF) und ermöglicht durch die Schering Stiftung. / **Anatomy Lessons by Christina Lammer is a cooperation with the Association of Neuroesthetics, Berlin. The project is supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture (bm:ukk), the Austrian Cultural Forum Berlin, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF) and is realized with the support of the Ernst Schering Foundation.**

bm:ukk Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur

österreichisches kulturforum^{ber}

FWF Der Wissenschaftsfonds.

WWTF



Das Projekt *Gefiltert durch Eisenhüttenstadt* ist eine Zusammenarbeit mit dem Berliner Künstlerprogramm/DAAD und dem me Collectors Room Berlin/Stiftung Olbricht. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Städtischen Museums Eisenhüttenstadt, der Eisenhüttenstädter Gebäudewirtschaft GmbH (GeWi) und der Stahlstiftung Eisenhüttenstadt. /

The project *Filtered by Eisenhüttenstadt* is a collaboration with the Artists-in-Berlin-Program/DAAD and me Collectors Room Berlin/Olbricht Foundation. With kind support from Städtisches Museum Eisenhüttenstadt, Eisenhüttenstädter Gebäudewirtschaft GmbH (GeWi), and Stahlstiftung Eisenhüttenstadt.

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Eisenhüttenstadt



Die Bürgerinitiative für das Denkmal für die im Nationalsozialismus ermordeten Sinti und Roma ist organisiert in Kooperation mit der European Roma Cultural Foundation – ERCF und The Romani Elders. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Collegium Hungaricum Berlin (CHB). / **The Civil Initiative for the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Murdered under the National Socialist Regime is organized in cooperation with the European Roma Cultural Foundation – ERCF and The Romani Elders. With kind support from Collegium Hungaricum Berlin (.CHB).**

Balassi Institut
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Key of Return ist ein Gemeinschaftsprojekt mit der Internationalen Kunstakademie Palästina in Kooperation mit Schlesische27, Internationales JugendKunst- und Kulturhaus, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung des Goethe-Instituts Ramallah und der Palästinensischen Gemeinde Deutschland (PGD) e. V. / **Key of Return is a collaborative project with the International Academy of Art, Palestine in cooperation with Schlesische27, Internationales JugendKunst- und Kulturhaus, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. With kind support from the Goethe-Institut, Ramallah and the Palästinensische Gemeinde Deutschland (PGD) e. V.**

GOETHE
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Die Musik-Aktion von Krytyka Polityczna wird unterstützt von der Stadt Warschau. / **The music-action by Krytyka Polityczna is supported by the City of Warsaw.**

CITY
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PM 2010 von Teresa Margolles ist eine Koproduktion mit der Galerie Peter Kilchmann. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung der DZ BANK Kunstsammlung. / **PM 2010 by Teresa Margolles is a co-production with Galerie Peter Kilchmann. With the kind support of DZ BANK Kunstsammlung.**

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Born in Berlin von Joanna Rajkowska ist eine Koproduktion mit der ŻAK I BRANICKA Foundation. Mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Stiftung für deutsch-polnische Zusammenarbeit / Fundacji Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Warschau. *Born in Berlin – A Letter to Rosa* ist vom 27. April – 16. Juni 2012 bei ŻAK I BRANICKA zu sehen. /

Born in Berlin by Joanna Rajkowska is a co-production with the ŻAK I BRANICKA Foundation. Kindly supported by the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, Warsaw. *Born in Berlin – A Letter to Rosa* will be shown from April 27 – June 16, 2012 at ŻAK I BRANICKA.

Die Nutzung der Black Box wird ermöglicht durch die Kooperation mit der Akademie der Künste, Berlin. / **The use of the Black Box is made possible through a cooperation with Akademie der Künste, Berlin (Academy of Arts, Berlin).**

AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE

Die Nutzung des Deutschlandhauses findet in Zusammenarbeit mit der Stiftung Flucht, Vertreibung, Versöhnung statt. / **The use of Deutschlandhaus is a collaboration with Foundation Flight, Expulsion, Reconciliation.**



Die Nutzung der St. Elisabeth-Kirche ist eine Kooperation mit dem Kulturbüro SOPHIEN. / **The use of St. Elisabeth-Church is a collaboration with Kulturbüro SOPHIEN.**



Das Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart/Rave-Stiftung unterstützt die 7. Berlin Biennale mit einem Rave-Stipendium für KuratorInnen (Clara Ianni, Brasilien). / **The Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, Stuttgart / Rave-Foundation supports the 7th Berlin Biennale with a Rave Scholarship for Curators (Clara Ianni, Brasil).**

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Die Aktionen von / **The actions of Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Ujazdowski Castle, Warschau / Warsaw HMKV Hartware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund & multilateral academy, Dortmund Kalmar konstmuseum, Kalmar steirischer herbst, Graz Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Rom / Rome Museum of Modern Art in Warschau / Warsaw sind eine Kooperation in Solidarität mit der 7. Berlin Biennale / **are collaborations in solidarity with the 7th Berlin Biennale.****



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Staatskanzlei des Landes Niedersachsen beim Bund YAAM, Berlin

Curating in Times of Need

Allianz Cultural Foundation as partner of the Young Curators

Workshop of the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

Since 2006 the Allianz Cultural Foundation, largest private sponsor of the 2nd and 3rd Berlin Biennale, has – in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut e. V. and BMW – supported international curators workshops in the context of the Berlin Biennale, organized by the KW Institute for Contemporary Art. Based on the success of the curatorial workshops in relation to the 4th, 5th and 6th Berlin Biennale, the Allianz Cultural Foundation takes the 7th Berlin Biennale as an occasion to once again strengthen this initiative. Under the heading *Curating in Times of Need*, 14 young curators from all over the world are invited to Berlin from 29 May to 6 June 2012. In form of seminars, debates, lectures by renowned guest speakers as well as exhibition and studio visits, the workshop aims at encouraging a cross-border exchange of ideas and experiences – focusing on the main topics of the 7th Berlin Biennale.

Since its foundation in 2000 the Allianz Cultural Foundation has initiated and promoted multinational cultural and educational projects in Europe. The activities of the foundation focus on exchange and encounters, predominantly concentrating on emerging artists and academics. In the field of contemporary art the Foundation continues to promote projects in 2012/2013. The exhibition “What Happened to God?” as the result of a workshop during the Residency Exchange Program *REX* of the WIELS Centre for Contemporary Art in Brussels, HALLE 14 in Leipzig and the MAUMAUS School of Visual Arts in Lisbon (funding since 2009) is shown in spring 2012 in Leipzig. The panel discussion “The Next Revolution will not be Funded“ took place in context of the conference “radius of art“ in cooperation with Maumaus und the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Other examples for the Allianz Cultural Foundation’s ongoing and future projects include the two-year research and exhibition project “Textiles: Open Letter“ in conjunction with partners from Leipzig, London, Vienna and Bilbao; the exhibition “ars viva 2012 – Sprache/Language“ in the Riga Art Space; “All the King’s Horses“, a series of events, seminars and interventions investigating the legacies and the actuality of the Situationist International together with the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; “Thinking Europe – Discourses and Role Models“ in cooperation with the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig and the symposium “The Times are Changing: What Will Art do About it?“ with the Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum.

Please find more information on our website: www.allianz-kulturstiftung.de
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Media Information
April 2012

7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art **BMW associate partner of international Young Curators** **Workshop**

Munich/Berlin. The 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, curated by Artur Żmijewski, will be held in Berlin from 27th April to 1st July 2012. The project, which is being initiated by KW Institute for Contemporary Art under the directorate of Gabriele Horn, is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. Within the framework of this event, BMW will provide a production vehicle and will be involved in the Young Curators Workshop “Curating in Times of Need”.

Following the success of the curatorial workshops held at the 4th, 5th and 6th Berlin Biennale, the KW, supported by the Goethe-Institut e. V. Munich, the Allianz Cultural Foundation and BMW, will also organise the Young Curators Workshop “Curating in Times of Need” for a dozen of young international curators being held on the occasion of the 7th Berlin Biennale. From 29th May until 6th June 2012, workshops, seminars and discussions as well as visits to exhibitions and studios will contribute towards advancing the careers of the up-and-coming curators.

For almost 40 years now, BMW has been involved in more than 100 formats for contemporary art, music, design and architecture worldwide. In Berlin, BMW supports the Berlinale, the Staatsoper Unter den Linden at the jointly initiated event “Staatsoper für alle” as well as the Nationalgalerie Prize for Young Art. Moreover, in 2007, the 16th BMW Art Car was created in Berlin by the artist Olafur Eliasson. Furthermore, from 24 May to 29 July 2012, the BMW Guggenheim Lab will be visiting Berlin following its success in New York and before moving on to Mumbai at the end of 2012. The think tank is an international platform for the mutual dialogue on the challenges of mega cities of the future.

For information pertaining to the 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art visit www.berlinbiennale.de

For information pertaining to BMW Group cultural commitment visit www.bmwgroup.com/kultur

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THE GOETHE-INSTITUT IN BRIEF

Germany's globally active cultural institute promotes knowledge of the German language abroad, encourages international cultural cooperation and conveys a comprehensive image of Germany. In times of new global challenges, the work of the Goethe-Institut aims at deeper understanding between cultures and at strengthening Germany's reputation in the world.

In its work, film, literature, music, theatre and dance as well as the visual arts from Germany play a central role. With diverse activities, the Goethe-Institut contributes to enabling encounters with and examination of contemporary German art abroad. It initiates and promotes group and individual exhibitions in all fields: painting, sculpture, graphic arts, architecture, photography, medial arts, design and fashion. It produces documentary touring exhibitions on cultural and contemporary subject matter, which are shown abroad in cooperation with local partners, it organizes conferences and podium discussions concerning important trends and carries out workshops, artist-in-residence programmes and discussion events with artists from Germany. Since 2008, the Goethe-Institut has also been offering curators working in Germany pursuing tangible research projects in the field of international contemporary art, and furthermore the opportunity to apply for a grant for research travel overseas.

There are presently 149 Goethe-Instituts in 93 countries. The Goethe-Institut is funded to a large part by annual allocations from the German Foreign Office.

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