

# Bergen Assembly

## PRESS KIT

Bergen Assembly 2019  
*Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*

Exhibition 5.9.–10.11.2019  
Opening Days 5.–8.9.2019

Events 5.4.–10.11.2019

Admission free

## PRESS CONTACT

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#bergenassembly2019

# Bergen Assembly

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About Bergen Assembly

# Bergen Assembly

PRESS INFORMATION

## FACT SHEET BERGEN ASSEMBLY 2019

### TITLE

Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead

### CORE GROUP

Conveners: Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler

### In collaboration with:

Murat Deha Boduroğlu

Banu Cennetoğlu

María García

Hiwa K

Katia Krupennikova

Viktor Neumann

Paul B. Preciado

Pedro G. Romero

Simon Sheikh

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa

### DIRECTOR

Ingrid Haug Erstad

### EXHIBITION

5.9.–10.11.2019

### OPENING DAYS

5.–8.9.2019

### EVENTS

5.4.–10.11.2019

### ADMISSION

Admission free to the exhibition and to all events

### ACCREDITATION

Press and professional visitors are asked to sign up for accreditation. Accreditation applies strictly to the individual applicant only and grants access to the opening days' programme as well as to the press conference. Accreditation will be possible on our website from mid May 2019.

To pre-register or for other enquiries regarding accreditation please email [press@bergenassembly.no](mailto:press@bergenassembly.no).

## EXHIBITION VENUES

Bergen Kjøtt  
Skutevikstorget 1, 5032 Bergen

Bergen Kunsthall  
Bergens Kunstforening, Rasmus Meyers alle 5, 5015 Bergen

Entrée  
Markeveien 4b, 5012 Bergen

Hordaland Kunstsenter  
Klosteret 17, 5005 Bergen

Kode 1 Permanenten  
Nordahl Bruns gate 9, 5014 Bergen

## INFO DESK AND GROWING ARCHIVE

Belgin  
Rasmus Meyers allé 3, 5015 Bergen

## EDUCATION AND MEDIATION

The education and mediation of the Bergen Assembly 2019 provides an approachable and inclusive entry point to the triennial. The education and mediation focusses on utilising the triennial as a place for exchange, offering the opportunity to share experiences and knowledges, seeking positions that were not foreseen and remain open to the unexpected.

To organise a group visit or book a tour, please email [daniela@bergenassembly.no](mailto:daniela@bergenassembly.no).

## PRESS CONTACT

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# Bergen Assembly

PRESS INFORMATION

BERGEN ASSEMBLY 2019, *ACTUALLY THE DEAD ARE NOT DEAD*

Bergen Assembly 2019, titled *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*, encompasses an exhibition and a series of events taking place at various venues in Bergen. At the centre of the project is a preoccupation with life – with an understanding of life beyond the binary oppositions of life and death, nature and culture, human and animal, subject and object, healthy and sick, past and future, and so on.

*Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead* examines how to redefine our alliances with those who are not presently living. The project proposes communicating with the spectres of the past and the future and taking responsibility for those who are no longer, or not yet, here. This responsibility defies the subjugation of life to the politics of death, ranging from the destruction of the material and idealistic basis of life for countless people, or the deadly rejection of refugees, to the destruction of the planet. *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead* revolves around the reclamation of life, fathoming the potential of artistic practices to imagine life differently.

Bergen Assembly 2019 is conceived by a group of twelve curators, artists, theorists, and activists. This core group develops the programme in the form of individual, shared, and overlapping projects to which it invites further artists and contributors from other fields.

Belgin is Bergen Assembly 2019's central working, meeting, and public space from April to November 2019. The venue at museum KODE 2 has not been publicly accessible for many years. It will not only host Bergen Assembly itself but is also open to the activities of local groups and initiatives.

# Bergen Assembly

PRESS INFORMATION

## ACTUALLY, THE DEAD ARE NOT DEAD

Introduction to the Bergen Assembly 2019 concept

By Conveners Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, the artistic directors or conveners of the upcoming Bergen Assembly, have invited these ten artists, curators, theorists, and activists to form with them the core group that generates the contents and formats of Bergen Assembly 2019 in a collective process: Murat Deha Boduroğlu, Banu Cennetoğlu, María García, Hiwa K, Katia Krupennikova, Viktor Neumann, Paul B. Preciado, Pedro G. Romero, Simon Sheikh, and Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa.

Bergen Assembly, an international project of contemporary art taking place every three years in the Norwegian city of Bergen, originates from a critical approach to the biennial format. Against this background, the point of departure for the core group's work was the concept of *assembly* itself, which is critically examined both in terms of its political implications and in regards to aesthetic practices. What does it mean when a biennial (or in this case a triennial) is called an assembly? What expectations of art and the curators does this articulate? The focus is on the general frameworks and techniques of collective political or emancipatory action – and the questions *how, in what form* and *with whom* we intend to develop and shape these practices in the context of an art project.

Out of the discussion process three positions regarding the assembly – or the relationship between art and political action – have crystallised: the parody of political institutions through the inversion of their order (*Assembly of Idiots*); the exploration of the resistive and emancipatory potential inherent in the arts (*Doing Assembly*); and 'hauntology' – the integration of those who are no longer or do not yet exist within the living political present (*Assembly of Phantoms*). These three approaches will form the more or less tangible, overlapping undertones of Bergen Assembly 2019 (for more information see *Figures of Thought*, below).

## ACTUALLY, THE DEAD ARE NOT DEAD

As the writer and filmmaker Alexander Kluge says, it is a mistake to think that the dead are dead. He proposes listening and talking to them, sharing their experiences: for example in regards to long gone, buried and unused moments of possible emancipation that enable the imagination of another present and future. Phantoms or spectres, the not presently living, are important allies not only in the process of emancipation but, as philosopher Jacques Derrida states, in the struggle for justice: a justice-to-come (*à-venir*) which is

based on the recognition of and responsibility towards those who are no longer or not yet here, and who appear to require justice.

Bergen Assembly 2019, titled *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*, addresses the spectres, the appearances of the not presently living. It deals with our responsibility to the past (no longer) and the future (not yet). This responsibility is set against the subjugation of life to the politics of death. The politics of death deny the past and the future. They destroy the material basis of life for large portions of the population, approving and accepting the physical and social death of workers, the poor, or refugees. They hazard the survival of the planet, involving wars and weapons of mass destruction as well as violence against 'other bodies'. They are the roots of slavery and colonialism: the basis of Western capitalism.

Politics of death are behind the many lives that do not count and the deaths that are not mourned, those whom philosopher Judith Butler calls the *ungrievable* and political scientist Achille Mbembe the *living dead*. How to mourn collectively for the ungrievable? Mourning in Western cultures has the function of ensuring that the dead do not return. In contrast, *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead* calls for a form of mourning that evokes the return of these dead – for the sake of life.

## STRUCTURES

The programme of Bergen Assembly 2019 is conceived as a fabric of diverse temporalities and rhythms, scenes and formats, nodes and (thematic) trajectories full of rifts and returns, density and dispersion, visibilities and invisibilities. It focuses on long-term artistic projects that are based on far-ranging experiences of co-operation with local and international activists, groups, and communities and/or are long-term projects in the field of artistic research.

## FIGURES OF THOUGHT: ASSEMBLIES

### *Assembly of Idiots*

The word 'idiot' derives from the Greek *idiōtēs*, which can be translated as 'private person' or 'layperson'. In the Greek polis, the *idiōtēs* were originally citizens interested in politics, who spoke in the assembly and courts on their own initiative.<sup>1</sup> Later they were replaced and silenced by the *rhetor*, the professional speaker. Forced into the role of the laypeople, they retreated to the private sphere.

An *Assembly of Idiots* suspends the model of the political assembly in which the right to speak is hierarchised and delegated to professionals. It is an assembly of those whose concerns are regarded as non-political, that is, not of public interest. These are people who move on the margins of the political community. An *Assembly of Idiots* parodies political institutions by breaking open, inverting, and changing their structures of order.

Conversely, the question is raised as to what extent existing political institutions themselves – from the parliament to the construction of the nation-state and transnational political structures – can be described as parodies.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lene Rubinstein, 'The Athenian Political Perception of the Idiotēs', in Paul Cartledge et al. (eds.), *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

### *Doing Assembly*

Parody, understood as something that is able to change – to repeat and alter, double and distort – what it parodies, might be a central element of all emancipatory action. In this sense, parody would be at the core of a *Doing Assembly* that aims both to shape alternative spaces for political action and to change the existing conditions through the means, methods, and experiences specific to art, theory, and activism. How can the knowledge and experience of resistance and emancipation be shared among different social discourses, contexts, and realities? What languages, tools, and methods are available for achieving this and what conceivable alliances can be formed in the process? Any *Doing Assembly* concerns, in a very specific way, the questions of *how, in what form and with whom* we imagine political action.

### *Assembly of Phantoms*

*When solidarity among the living exhibits cracks, then we are dependent on the solidarity of the dead* – Alexander Kluge (with Heiner Müller)

Important allies in the process of emancipation and the struggle for justice are those who no longer, or do not yet, exist – the ‘not presently living’ (Jacques Derrida) to which an *Assembly of Phantoms* is dedicated. As the German writer and filmmaker Alexander Kluge says, it is a mistake to think that the dead are dead. He proposes listening and talking to them, sharing their experiences: for example in regards to long gone, buried and unused moments of possible emancipation that enable the imagination of another present and future.

In his ‘hauntology’ (*Spectres of Marx*, 1993), the French philosopher Jacques Derrida argues for a ‘being-with the not presently living’: a being-with the spectre, which adheres to a different temporality, a ‘non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present’. It is about the recognition of and responsibility to the past (no longer) and the future (not yet) – as precondition for a more just world. For Derrida, this justice-to-come (*à-venir*) lies in the permanent breaking open and changing of the existing order, that is, in a genuinely parodic act.



## CORE GROUP MEMBERS

MURAT DEHA BODUROĞLU is an independent lawyer dealing with criminal law, human rights, intellectual property rights, administrative law, labour law and environmental law. He is part of the defence team of several ongoing criminal cases in Turkey where artists, cultural actors and others who question political developments in Turkey are imprisoned. Murat Deha Boduroğlu lives and works in Istanbul.

BANU CENNETOĞLU's artistic practice explores the political, social and cultural dimensions of the production, representation and distribution of knowledge, how this forms a society's collective thinking and is addressed in a society's ideology. In 2006, she established BAS, a project space in Istanbul focusing on the collection and production of artist books and printed matter. Recent solo shows include Chisenhale Gallery, London (2018), Bonner Kunstverein (2015) and Kunsthalle Basel (2011). Her work was presented at, among others, 10th Liverpool Biennial (2018), *Stories of Almost Everyone* at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018), documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), *The Restless Earth* at Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan (2017), 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014), Manifesta 8 in Murcia (2010) and the Turkish Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). In 2016, she was a guest at the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program. Banu Cennetoğlu lives and works in Istanbul.

HANS D. CHRIST and IRIS DRESSLER have been the directors of the Württembergischer Kunstverein (WKV) in Stuttgart since 2005. One of their priorities is the exploration of collaborative, transcultural and transdisciplinary practices of curating. They have presented solo exhibitions by artists such as Imogen Stidworthy (2018, with Katia Krupennikova), Alexander Kluge (2017, with La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, at La Virreina and WKV), Ines Doujak (2016), Pedro G. Romero (2012, with Valentín Roma), Teresa Burga (2011, with Miguel Lopez and others), Peggy Buth (2009), NOH Sonntag (2008), Daniel G. Andújar (2008), Anna Oppermann (2007, curated by Ute Vorkoeper) and Stan Douglas (2007, with Staatsgalerie Stuttgart). Recent group exhibitions include *50 Years after 50 Years of the Bauhaus* (2018), *Tito's Bunker* (2017, with Biennial of Contemporary Art Sarajevo, at Tito's Bunker in Konjic and WKV), *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2016, with MACBA, Paul B. Preciado and Valentín Roma, at WKV and MACBA), *Acts of Voicing* (2012, with a core group of twelve co-curators) or *Subversive Practices* (2009, with a core group of thirteen co-curators). At WKV they have created an open platform for the activities of local activists and artistic groups. Christ and Dressler both teach regularly and have published widely on contemporary art and its political and theoretical contexts. In 1996 they founded the Hartware MedienKunstVerein, which they directed until 2004.

MARÍA GARCÍA is a visual artist and independent researcher investigating the production and representation of territory through the articulation of hybrid narratives between image, writing and action. She curated *Machines for living: Flamenco and architecture in the occupation and eviction of spaces* in Palau de la Virreina in Barcelona (together with Pedro G. Romero and Valentín Roma, 2018). From 2015–16 she was Research Fellow in Residence at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. Her artistic work was presented at the Vienna Secession (2014), MUSAC in Leon (2018), and Fabra i Coats in Barcelona (2018), among others. María García lives and works in Barcelona.

HIWA K's sculptures, videos and performances draw on personal memories to explore the tension between the individual and the collective and to tell stories of ongoing global crises: war, migration and the effects of neoliberalism and colonialism. His work often involves participatory dimensions and collaborations with a wide cast of players. Recent solo exhibitions include S.M.A.K. Museum of Contemporary Art, Ghent and Kunstverein Hannover (both 2018), KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2017), De Appel, Amsterdam (2017), Konsthall C, Stockholm (2015) and Serpentine Gallery, London (2010). Hiwa K's works have been included in major group exhibitions at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), New Museum, New York (2013) and Manifesta 7 in Bolzano (2008), among others. In 2016, he received the Schering Stiftung Art Award, as well as the city of Kassel's Arnold-Bode-Preis. Hiwa K lives and works in Berlin.

KATIA KRUPENNIKOVA is a curator and art critic. She is a docent at MA HKU, Utrecht and a part of the curatorial team at V-A-C foundation, Moscow. Through her projects Krupennikova attempts to transform existing social and political constructs into critical artistic models, within which existing relations can be mimicked, criticised, distorted, displaced and revised. In 2015 she won the Akbank Sanat International Curator Competition. The exhibition *Post-Peace*, intended to take place in Istanbul, was censored by the host institution; it subsequently opened in an extended form at Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart (2017) and at Nest in The Hague (2017). In 2013–14 Krupennikova worked at the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw. Her recent projects include *Dialogues with People*, a solo show by Imogen Stidworthy co-curated with Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler at Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart (2018–19) and *It Won't Be Long Now, Comrades!*, co-curated with Inga Lāce at Framer Framed, Amsterdam (2017). Katia Krupennikova lives and works in Amsterdam.

VIKTOR NEUMANN is an art historian and curator. He has curated exhibitions and projects for institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Bildmuseet Umeå, Kunstmuseum Bonn, National Centre for Contemporary Arts in Yekaterinburg, The Kitchen in New York, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart and Gdańsk City Gallery. He was Curatorial Assistant for documenta 14 Public Programmes (2017), Assistant Curator for the 3rd Moscow International Biennale for Young Art (2012) and a Helena Rubinstein Curatorial Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program (2015–16). He has held a number of international lectureships, including a periodical engagement at the Institute for Time-based Media at the University of Arts in Berlin since 2013. He has been a contributor for periodicals such as Flash Art magazine and Starship Magazine. Together with Paul B. Preciado, he is co-curator of *The Parliament of Bodies*, currently collaborating with the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw and the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne. He has been awarded the upcoming \*Kurator stipend by the Gebert Stiftung für Kultur 2019–20. Viktor Neumann lives and works in Berlin.

PAUL B. PRECIADO is a philosopher, curator and activist in the fields of gender and sexual politics. He is the author of *Countersexual Manifesto* (Columbia University Press, 2002), *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics* (The Feminist Press, 2013) and *Pornotopia* (Zone Books, 2014), for which he was awarded the Sade Prize in France. Preciado teaches Philosophy of the Body and Transfeminist Theory at Université Paris VIII-Saint Denis and at New York University. He has been Curator of Public Programmes at documenta 14 (2017) and Head of Research as well as Director of the Independent Studies Programme (PEI) at MACBA in Barcelona. He has curated numerous exhibitions and interventions, such as *The Passion According to Carol Rama* at MACBA and others (2013–16), *IM/MUNE* at Emmetrop in Bourges, *Cuir International* at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (both 2011) and *PornPunkFeminism* at Arteleku in San Sebastián (2008). He is the curator for the Taiwanese Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019). Paul B. Preciado lives and works in Paris.

PEDRO G. ROMERO works across the fields of art, theory, literature, film, music, theatre and dance. He is an art and literature critic, publisher, essayist and flamenco expert. Since 2000 he has been working on the ongoing Archivo F.X., linking documents of anticlerical iconoclasm during the Spanish Civil War with avant-garde and contemporary artistic positions, and on Máquina P.H., realising various formats of artistic collaborations in flamenco performance. Romero's projects have been presented at, among others, documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel (2017), 31st Bienal de São Paulo (2014), Manifesta 8 in Murcia and Cartagena (2010), the Catalan Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009) and SculptureCenter in Long Island City (2008). He has written numerous choreographies for flamenco dancer Israel Galván and curated exhibitions such as *Poesía Brossa* at MACBA in Barcelona (together with Teresa Grandas, 2017–18), *Tratado de Paz* for DSS2016 in San Sebastian (2016) and *The Spanish Night: Flamenco, Avant-Garde and Popular Culture* at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid (2007). Pedro G. Romero lives and works in Seville.

SIMON SHEIKH is a curator and theorist. He is Reader in Art and Programme Director of the MFA Curating at Goldsmiths, University of London, a correspondent for Springerin, Vienna, and a columnist for e-flux Journal. Recent publications include the anthologies *We are all Normal* (with Katya Sander, Black Dog Publishing, 2001), *Knut Åsdam* (monograph, Fine Arts Unternehmen, 2004), *In the Place of the Public Sphere?* (b\_books, 2005), *Capital (It Fails Us Now)* (b\_books, 2006), *On Horizons* (with Maria Hlavajova and Jill Winder, BAK, 2011), *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989* (with Maria Hlavajova, MIT Press, 2016) and *Curating After the Global* (with Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds and Mick Wilson, MIT Press, 2019). He is currently working on a book about art and apocalypse entitled *Its After the End of the World*. Simon Sheikh lives and works in Berlin and London.

EMMA WOLUKAU-WANAMBWA studied Literature at Cambridge University and Art at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. Formerly a participant in the LUX Associate Artist Programme and a researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academie, she is currently a doctoral candidate in Fine Art at the University of Bergen and Convener of the Africa Cluster of the Another Roadmap School. Wolukau-Wanambwa works in a wide range of media, formats and contexts. Recent / current exhibitions include: 62nd BFI London Film Festival (2018), *Women on Aeroplanes* at The Showroom Gallery in London and Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (both 2018–19), 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2018), *A Thousand Roaring Beasts: Display Devices for a Critical Modernity* at Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo – CAAC in Seville (2017) and *Kabbo Ka Muwala* at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Makerere University Art Gallery

and Kunsthalle Bremen (all 2016). Her essay *Margaret Trowell's School of Art or How to Keep the Children's Work Really African* has recently been published in *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa lives and works between London and Bergen.

# Bergen Assembly

PRESS RELEASE 25.3.2019

## BERGEN ASSEMBLY 2019 OPENS NEW SPACE AND BEGINS PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Bergen Assembly 2019, *Actually, The Dead Are Not Dead*, begins its public programme on 5 and 6 April 2019 with two introduction days and the opening of Belgin ['bælgən], a new space in Bergen's city centre.

Not publicly accessible for many years, the glass ground-floor connecting wing of museum KODE 2 served for a long time as the institution's storage and restoration workshop. From April to November it will become the central working, meeting and public space of Bergen Assembly 2019.

This space will develop its infrastructures, programmes, and profiles successively and in dialogue with international guests and local communities: Belgin is conceived from the very beginning as a shared space, which does not only host Bergen Assembly itself, but is open to the activities of local groups and initiatives.

The space's name refers to the Turkish singer Belgin Sarılmışer (1958–1989), who adopted the alias 'Bergen' after the Norwegian harbour city. Bergen was famed in the 1980s as the 'Queen of Arabesque'. Her husband threw nitric acid in her face during one of her performances, blinding her in one eye. Nevertheless, refusing his violent attempts to silence and domesticate her, she continued performing using her glamorous hairstyle to cover her injury and established herself as *Woman of Agony* in the limelight of an ever-growing following. Fatally shot by her husband in 1989, she has remained a complex symbol of sorrow and emancipation in Turkey to this day.

The introduction days of Bergen Assembly 2019, taking place both at Belgin and its neighbour Landmark, comprise talks, debates, performances, and screenings introducing first aspects, concerns, formats and aesthetics of *Actually, The Dead Are Not Dead*. It will discuss the notion of assembly, the emancipatory potentials of art, aspects of sharing knowledge and experiences, and what it could mean if the dead were actually not dead.

With contributions by Daniel G. Andújar, Bergen, Stacy Brafield, Capital Drawing Group, Hans D. Christ, Ines Doujak/John Barker, Iris Dressler, Ruth Ewan, Magdalena Freudenschuss, Lottie Hoare, Julio Jara, Hiwa K, Alexander Kluge, Multitati (Tatiana Palanca), Nora Landkammer, Viktor Neumann, Andrea De Pascual (Pedagogías Invisibles), Daniela Ramos Arias, Karin Schneider, Simon Sheikh, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, and others.

Bergen Assembly 2019's core group members Murat Deha Boduroğlu, Banu Cennetoğlu, Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler, Katia Krupennikova, Viktor Neumann, Simon Sheikh, and Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa will be present during the introduction days.

Bergen Assembly 2019

*Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead*

Introduction Days and Opening of Belgin

Talks, debates, performances, screenings, music

Admission free, in English

FRIDAY, 5.4.2019

5.30pm–9.30pm at Belgin

Rasmus Meyers allé 3, 5015 Bergen

10pm–1am at Landmark

Rasmus Meyers allé 5, 5015 Bergen

SATURDAY, 6.4.2019

11am–9.30pm at Belgin

9.30pm Bar Belgin

Rasmus Meyers allé 3, 5015 Bergen

A schedule of the introduction days activities is provided at [www.bergenassembly.no](http://www.bergenassembly.no).

Bergen Assembly 2019 Announces Its Core Group and Title

ACTUALLY, THE DEAD ARE NOT DEAD

Exhibitions and Events: 5.9.–10.11.2019

Opening Days: 5.–8.9.2019

Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, the artistic directors or conveners of the upcoming Bergen Assembly, have invited ten artists, curators, theorists and activists to form with them a core group that develops the contents and formats of the Bergen Assembly 2019 in a collective process: Murat Deha Boduroğlu, Banu Cennetoğlu, María García, Hiwa K, Katia Krupennikova, Viktor Neumann, Paul B. Preciado, Pedro G. Romero, Simon Sheikh, and Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa.

The members of the core group conceive the programme in the form of individual, shared and overlapping projects to which further artists and contributors from other fields will be invited. The projects include workshops, “parliaments,” film screenings, performances, discursive programs and exhibitions. These take place at different times and in different locations in Bergen.

Bergen Assembly originates from a critical approach to the biennial format. The point of departure for the core group’s joint work towards the 2019 edition is the concept *assembly* itself, which is critically examined both in terms of its political dimensions and aesthetic practices. What does it mean when a biennial (or in this case a triennial) is called an assembly? What expectations of art and the curators does this articulate? The focus is on the general frameworks and techniques of collective political or emancipatory action—and the questions *how, in what form* and *with whom* we intend to develop and shape these practices in the context of an art project.

Out of the discussion process three positions regarding the assembly, or the relationship between art and political action, have crystallised: the parody of political institutions through the inversion of their order (*Assembly of Idiots*); the exploration of the resistive and emancipatory potential inherent to the arts (*Doing Assembly*); “hauntology” — the integration of those who are no longer or do not yet exist within the living political present (*Assembly of Phantoms*). These three approaches will form the more or less tangible, overlapping undertones of the Bergen Assembly 2019.

Phantoms or spectres, the “not presently living” (Jacques Derrida), are important allies in the process of emancipation and in the struggle for justice—which is always a justice-to-come (*à-venir*, Derrida) based on the recognition of and responsibility to the past (no longer) and the future (not yet). As the writer and filmmaker Alexander Kluge (in dialogue with dramatist Heiner Müller’s spirit) says, it is a mistake to think that the dead are dead. He proposes listening and talking to them, sharing their experiences: for example in regards to

long gone, buried and unused moments of possible emancipation that enable the imagination of another present and future.

The Bergen Assembly 2019 titled *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead* addresses the spectre, a “being-with” the not presently living (Derrida). This attention paid to the dead—to our responsibility towards those who are no longer or not yet here—is also understood as an act of rejecting reigning necropolitics, the subjugation of life to the power of death (Achille Mbembe). Necropolitics deny the past and the future. They destroy the material basis of life for large portions of the population, approving and accepting the physical and social death of workers, the poor and refugees. They hazard the survival of the planet, involving wars and weapons of mass destruction as well as the violence against “other bodies.” They form the roots of slavery and colonialism: the basis of Western capitalism.

Necropolitics are behind the many lives that do not count and the deaths that are not mourned, those whom Judith Butler calls the *ungrievable* and Mbembe the *living dead*. How to mourn collectively for the ungrievable? Mourning in Western cultures has the function of ensuring that the dead do not return. In contrast, *Actually, the Dead Are Not Dead* calls for a form of mourning that evokes the return of these dead: for the sake of life.



# Bergen Assembly

PRESS RELEASE 12.12.2017

IRIS DRESSLER AND HANS D. CHRIST ANNOUNCED AS CONVENERS OF THE BERGEN ASSEMBLY 2019

*What is and what constitutes an assembly? Where does it take place, and where does it not? Who appears in it, and who doesn't? Who forms, enables, convenes, abrogates, or forbids it? Can an assembly be enacted, exposed, designed, danced, chanted? Can it be silent, invisible, unexpected, or even passive? What are the techniques and what are the aesthetics of assembly? What makes it emancipatory and political, and what turns it into an act of repression? What would we call a fake assembly? (Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ, conveners of the Bergen Assembly 2019)*

Bergen Assembly is a perennial model for artistic production and research that is structured around public events taking place in the city of Bergen every three years. It responds to the perceived need for alternative temporalities of art production and experience in an oversaturated information culture where attention itself is increasingly commodified and under pressure. To this end, Bergen Assembly outlines a model for a slowing down, so as to enable alternative time frames and relational economies.

Bergen Assembly is very pleased to announce Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ, directors of Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart, as the conveners of the third edition. Under the working title *Bergen Assemblies 2017–2019* they conceive this edition as an open, collective, and decentralized project that operates and appears in various densities between 2017 and 2019. The assemblies take place in the form of workshops, gatherings, actions and public programs; ultimately culminating in a large-scale international event in Bergen.

The internal research and working processes of the upcoming edition—which Christ and Dressler consider as much a part of the project as the public manifestations—will be conducted by a core group of international artists, curators, activists, and theorists from various fields. While the role of the conveners resembles that of a curator, it also distributes curatorial agency to each member of the core group. The conveners will also collaborate closely with various local partners.

Dressler, Christ, and their core group will use the notion of assembly as their point of departure, in order to look at the forms and formats which are directly related to the institutions and regulations of the (nation-) state, as well as those surpassing, and possibly challenging, this state. While the nation-state is generally represented by parliament and freedom of assembly, organized through a set of laws and rules that define its legal and illegal forms, the forces that challenge these institutions are often related to open, informal, illegal and/or involuntary forms of gatherings between—to phrase it on a very basic level—“bodies” appearing in public spaces, whether they be physical or virtual in nature.

Haakon Alexander Thuestad, director of Bergen Assembly, shares his enthusiasm about the upcoming edition, stating that the exploration of what an assembly might mean to a multitude of heterogeneous (and sometimes imperceptible) bodies is significant on both an aesthetic and political level. Iris Dressler and Hans D. Christ: “We are very much looking forward to exchanging ideas, developing working processes, and forming assemblies with local and international artists and theorists in Bergen.”

Bergen Assembly was developed in response to a proposition by the municipality of Bergen that the city should establish an international biennial for contemporary art. The subsequent 2009 Bergen Biennial Conference event discussed the question “To biennial or not to biennial?” with curators, artists, and academics from all over the world, and was followed by *The Biennial Reader* (Hatje Cantz/Bergen Kunsthall, 2010)—to date the most comprehensive publication on the history and practice of biennials or regularly occurring exhibitions and events in a global perspective. The first Bergen Assembly in 2013, *Monday Begins on Saturday*, was convened by Ekaterina Degot and David Riff, manifesting in a multi-venue exhibition and publication. The latest edition of the triennial was led by the artistic directors Tarek Atoui, the collective *freethought*, and the collaboration PRAXES in 2016.

# Bergen Assembly

PRESS INFORMATION

## ABOUT BERGEN ASSEMBLY

Bergen Assembly is a perennial model for artistic production and research that is structured around public formats taking place in the city of Bergen every three years. Bergen Assembly's flexible model is reinvented for each edition, responding in particular to a need for alternative temporalities of art production and experience within an oversaturated information culture, where attention itself is increasingly commodified and subject to pressure.

Bergen Assembly originated from the Bergen Biennial Conference in 2009, which was a response to a proposition by the municipality of Bergen to establish an international biennial for contemporary art in the city. The conference discussed the question "To biennial or not to biennial?" with international curators, artists, and academics, and was followed by *The Biennial Reader* (Hatje Cantz/Bergen Kunsthall, 2010)—to date the most comprehensive publication on the history and practice of biennials or regularly occurring exhibitions and events in a global perspective.

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