

Bergen Assembly

PRESS RELEASE 10.12.2018

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.

For further information, please contact:

Henriette Sölter
Head of Communications

Emilio Sanhueza
Communications Coordinator

press@bergenassembly.no

www.bergenassembly.no
www.facebook.com/bergenassembly
www.instagram.com/bergenassembly
www.twitter.com/bergenassembly
[#bergenassembly2019](https://twitter.com/bergenassembly)