

Bergen Assembly

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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.

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