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Press information

Digital Assembly: History is not the Past

Within the scope of the exhibition titled “Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow,” a multi-stranded program named “Assembly” will take place in two parts, starting in June 2020. The program will first be realized as a series of digital formats in this year and then continued in the summer of 2021 as a public event in the forecourt of the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism.

The program focuses on the importance of remembrance to the status of democracy. Remembering the disasters of the war, the Holocaust, and the Nazi dictatorship, the responsibility derived from historical experiences, and also the freedom and security that have been developed since 1945 is a key aspect of the democratic self-image in Germany, Europe, and the wider world. As the Nazi history recedes further and further into the past and our society becomes one of migration, new forms of remembrance are needed to encompass the full range of society, reflecting all ages, origins, and experiences. At the same time, new threats to the stability of democracy are on the horizon, fueled by policies of exclusion and hate and calls for an end to remembrance.

“Assembly” takes as a guiding theme a quote by writer James Baldwin: “History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.” It describes on one hand how interpretations of history can be used as tools to separate and marginalize people. But on the other hand keeping memory alive, with all the multiple strands involved, also has the potential to build bridges and create affiliations and identities that transcend national boundaries.

Podcast series

The centerpiece of the digital “Assembly” program in June of this year will be a podcast series titled “History is not the Past”, which offers thoughts and discussions about present-day issues and future scenarios at the intersection of history, society, and culture. As we look to shape society for the future, it is crucial to bear the past in mind, that without remembering, we will lose our future.

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Concept: Juliane Bischoff, Nicolaus Schafhausen, Mirjam Zadoff

A new podcast episode will be released daily from June 18 to 28. Episodes will be available via the Documentation Centre website and common podcast platforms.

Further online formats

Alongside the podcast series, there will be further online contribution such as a Zoom discussion between Khalil Muhammad and Mirjam Zadoff on June 18 (in cooperation with the Amerikahaus Munich and the Bavarian American Academy), a writing workshop with Lena Gorelik, a live Zoom performance in cooperation with Schauburg Munich on June 29, and an online publication by artist Sebastian Jung available through www.Eiswetter.eu

Exhibition openings as part of “Tell me about yesterday tomorrow”

An exhibition highlighting the life and work of artist Harald Pickert (1901–1983), who survived six years of internment in concentration camps, will be presented at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte from June 2 through July 29. Based on his observations of the trial of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) before the Higher Regional Court of Munich Sebastian Jung designed a relief for the façade of the court building which will be presented to the public in late June 2020.

Outlook for 2021

In the summer of 2021, the “Assembly” program will be continued in public space for which the forecourt of the Documentation Centre will become a platform for discussion, performance, and musical and cinematic contributions. An outdoor structure that serves as a stage, discussion forum, and place to spend time will be created specifically for the program.

The digital “Assembly” takes place in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education. Tell me about yesterday tomorrow is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. The project is part of the culture program related to Canada’s Guest of Honour presentation at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2020. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada.