

BERLIN BIENNALE

PRESS RELEASE

10th Berlin Biennale successfully concludes with more than 100,000 visitors

Berlin, September 10, 2018

“Addressing history in the present is to speak to a future unknown. We cannot immediately understand, in relative opacity, how the events of the present will affect our futures. This unknowing, however, should not stop us from undoing what has become obsolete.”

Gabi Ngcobo, *DEAR HISTORY, We don't need another hero*, foreword to the 10th Berlin Biennale publication *We don't need another hero*

The 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art successfully came to an end last Sunday. Recognized as a cultural institution of excellence and funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation), it was held at five exhibition venues in Berlin over a three-month-long running time from June 9 to September 9, 2018, and had over 100,000 visitors. Titled *We don't need another hero*, the 10th Berlin Biennale presented over 150 works by 46 artists and collectives, including numerous commissions.

Curated by Gabi Ngcobo with a curatorial team composed of Nomaduma Rosa Masilela, Serubiri Moses, Thiago de Paula Souza, and Yvette Mutumba, *We don't need another hero* confronted the incessant anxieties perpetuated by a willful disregard for complex subjectivities. Thinking and acting beyond art, the contributors did not provide a coherent reading of histories or the present of any kind in the biennial. Like the Tina Turner song which the title references, the 10th Berlin Biennale rejected the seduction of savior narratives. Instead, it explored the political potential of the act of self-preservation, refusing to be seduced by unyielding knowledge systems and historical narratives that contribute to the creation of toxic subjectivities.

The 10th Berlin Biennale took place at four permanent exhibition venues: Akademie der Künste at Hanseatenweg, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Volksbühne Pavilion, and ZK/U – Center for Art and Urbanistics. Through a coproduction with HAU Hebbel am Ufer, HAU2 served as a site for two performances as well as a multi-day exhibition project with discursive events and seminars. The exhibition venues were chosen not only because of their historic relevance but also because of what they represent today.

With close to 100 events that were regularly fully booked, the 10th Berlin Biennale garnered much attention from audiences. The public program of the 10th Berlin Biennale, *I'm Not Who You Think I'm Not*, was launched one year before the opening and set the tone in a first event in July 2017 that took place in collaboration with the independent educational initiative Each One Teach One (EOTO) e. V. This was followed by further events—not only in Berlin, but also in Johannesburg, ZA, and Nairobi, KE. In the various formats within the framework of the public program, the 10th Berlin Biennale disavowed assumed beingness and know-hows and proposed a refreshed grammar for facing the present.

A special focus of this edition of the Berlin Biennale was the wide-ranging mediation program, which created opportunities for encounter, exchange, and uncertainty. Organized in experimental and engaging formats, the mediation program offered a space for processes of learning and unlearning and for addressing blind spots. Artistic and participatory methods were the tools used to foster interaction between participants, works of art, the curatorial team, and exhibiting artists as well as the neighborhoods surrounding the venues. There were numerous cooperations with social and educational organizations in Berlin and beyond.

The 10th Berlin Biennale was accompanied by a catalogue designed by Maziyar Pahlevan who also created this edition's overall visual identity. It offered comprehensive material on participating artists as well as texts by Binyavanga Wainaina, Bongani Madondo, Jota Mombaça, Maryse Condé, Peggy Piesche, and the curatorial team. The guidebook, a companion publication to the catalogue, provided condensed information for 10th Berlin Biennale visitors.

Two curatorial projects were initiated within the framework of the 10th Berlin Biennale: *Strange Attractors*—a curatorial publication project by Nomaduma Rosa Masilela with a specially designed reading room at KW—united artist contributions and archival material. The contributions engaged with notions of cosmology, relationality, and scale. The *School of Anxiety*, conceived by Serubiri Moses, took the form of workshops with public presentations in Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Berlin. It was an unteaching environment focusing on subjective anxieties.

Established in 2006, the Curators Workshop took place again on the occasion of the 10th Berlin Biennale. Antonia Majaca and Sohrab Mohebbi were invited to rethink and expand its format. The ten-day gathering was comprised of daily *Crit Sessions* with fifteen contributors and invited guest speakers involving analyses and discussions about the curatorial decisions, conceptual constellations, and individual artworks of the 10th Berlin Biennale, in addition to close readings of alternate discursive concerns.

The curatorship for the 11th Berlin Biennale in 2020 and the members of the international selection committee will be announced this fall.

Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art

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