

THE REMAINS OF 100 DAYS... documenta and the Lenbachhaus starting July 19, 2022

In 1955, the first documenta took place in Kassel. In 2022, sixty-seven years later, the fifteenth edition of the exhibition will be presented. For a long time, the 100-day exhibition was regarded as a reliable status report on the art of its respective present and had a lasting influence on the programs and collections of the art museums of the Federal Republic of Germany. At the same time, it has always been an important motor of institutional critique: What was discussed, collected, and exhibited was, and still is, often initiated by the documenta. This influence is also clearly documented in the exhibition history of the Lenbachhaus. Our last project for example, *Group Dynamics – Collectives of the Modernist Period*, would have been inconceivable without Documenta11, curated by Okwui Enwezor.

Today, the history of the documenta and its founding myth are viewed critically. In recent years, especially the continuities from National Socialism to the young Federal Republic have been the subject of research, as well as of the comprehensive exhibition *documenta. Politics and Art* at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. The documenta has also since been stripped of its status as the “most important exhibition of contemporary art in the Western world.” Nevertheless, with all its contradictions, it remains to this day one of the most interesting exhibition projects, characterized by changing curatorial teams. Thus, despite all the crises, the documenta has established itself as an institution and has continually updated itself by defining new claims, tasks, and strategies.

documenta and contemporary history

Probably the most striking examples of the interaction between the documenta and its sociopolitical context were the reaction of student reform movements in 1968 with 4. documenta (1968), the geopolitical upheavals in the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence with documenta X (1997), the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 with Documenta11 (2002), the war in Afghanistan with dOCUMENTA (13) (2012), and the austerity policy of the European Union and the effects of the war in Syria with documenta 14 (2017). Curating means, in the best sense, an engagement with contemporary aesthetics and political relevance. Already the first documenta, with its interpretation of the postwar order, the East-West conflict, had provided a direction of impact from which German museums derived their agendas in subsequent years. Regardless of how strongly the documenta exhibitions were or are criticized, it is thus obvious that the influence on museums—direct or delayed—was and is far-reaching.

It seems almost obvious that museums have been able to use their continuity to reflect the documenta's multiple pioneering roles. Thus, despite all the criticism of the respective individual concepts of the documenta editions, it must be acknowledged that the museums have become more interesting and relevant as a result of this reflection.

documenta and the Lenbachhaus

Now, on the occasion of documenta fifteen in 2022, the Lenbachhaus is presenting the exhibition *The Remains of 100 Days... documenta and the Lenbachhaus*. A selection of significant works from all documenta exhibitions from the first edition in 1955 to the fourteenth in 2017 documents which works "of 100 days" have remained visible in a museum collection. Taking the Lenbachhaus in Munich as an example, the exhibition reveals what a powerful resonating body the documenta has been in the Federal Republic's museum landscape up to the present. To this day, the Lenbachhaus has had a particularly close connection to the documenta. As early as 1955, important works of art from the inner circle of the Blue Rider group were at the center of the project in Kassel. Today, paintings such as Gabriele Münter's *Still Life in Gray* (1910), Franz Marc's *Deer in the Snow II* (1911), and Wassily Kandinsky's *Parties diverses* (1940) are among the works on which the international reputation of the Lenbachhaus collection is based. Important works from the Lenbachhaus' Blue Rider collection were also featured at II. documenta (1959) and documenta III (1964). With Fritz Koenig's sculpture *Large Votive K* (1963/64) and Asger Jorn's painting *They Never Come Back* (1958), the Lenbachhaus made its first acquisitions from the contemporary art segment of the early documenta exhibitions. From the political orientation of 4. documenta (1968), Öyvind Fahlström's large panorama on the Vietnam War, *Live Curve 2 (Snowfield)* from 1967, entered the Lenbachhaus collection. From Joseph Beuys's first appearance at the documenta, we present *Queen Bee I* (1947–52), from the Lothar Schirmer Collection.

The strategy of purchasing entire series or groups of related works from the documenta continues to this day. Thus, an entire room of four "shaped canvases" by Ellsworth Kelly from DOCUMENTA IX (1992) entered the Lenbachhaus collection. From dOCUMENTA (13) (2012), two significant installations can now be found in the Lenbachhaus: Ceal Floyer's *Till I Get It Right* (2005), and Tejal Shah's *Between the Waves* (2012), as well as part of Thomas Bayrle's wall relief *Carmageddon* (2012). Most recently, documenta 14 (2017) left its mark with paintings by Miriam Cahn and sculptures by Nevin Aladağ. The Lenbachhaus has, however, also been a lender to the documenta. For documenta X (1997), for example, the curator Catherine David borrowed Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* (since 1962) and programmatically placed it at the center of her exhibition in the Fridericianum in Kassel.

One thesis would be that the documenta had, and still has, a great influence on the Lenbachhaus and certainly on the entire museum landscape of the Federal Republic

of Germany. For the Lenbachhaus, the intersection is clear and can be almost exclusively read through works by Western European and North American artists. Thus, another thesis could be that the different thematic focuses of the documenta exhibitions were broken down to the clearly narrower collection policies of the respective museums. Okwui Enwezor's Documenta11 is an example of this. The opening up to art production from countries that had previously hardly been represented at documenta, initiated by him, was not reflected in the collection of the Lenbachhaus for a long time. It was only through a donation in 2020 that Tejal Shah's *Between the Waves*, the first "documenta work" by an artist who does not live and work in Europe or the USA, came into the house.

Curated by Matthias Mühling, Eva Huttenlauch, and Dierk Höhne