

Kanon-Fragen

# Freedom in the Bush of Ghosts – Conference

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

### → Vortragssaal

#### 4pm INTRODUCTION

Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara,  
Antonia Majaca

#### 4.15pm LECTURE

*The Many Meanings of Freedom in the  
Cultural Cold War*  
Patrick Iber

#### 5.15pm SHORT TALK

*Notes on the Legacy of the CCF*  
Anselm Franke

#### 5.30pm LECTURE

*Socialist Realism and the Concept of the Ideal*  
Angela Harutyunyan

#### Break

#### 7pm LECTURE

*American Tutti-Frutti*  
Technical Assistant,  
Museum of American Art in Berlin

#### 8pm SHORT TALK

*In Uncertain Terms: Hallucinating the Canon*  
Antonia Majaca

#### 8.15pm LECTURE

*The Black/Red Square Repeated: Echo,  
Perseveration or Renewal? Notes on the  
Reiteration of a Political Trope*  
Jaleh Mansoor

#### 9.15pm DISCUSSION

Angela Harutyunyan, Patrick Iber, Jaleh Mansoor  
Moderated by Antonia Majaca

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

### → Vortragssaal

#### 1pm INTRODUCTION

Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara,  
Antonia Majaca

#### 1.15pm FILM AND DISCUSSION

*Chronoscope 11pm*  
Alessandro Balteo-Yazbeck

#### Break

#### 2.45pm SHORT TALK

*The Exhibition as Medium*  
Paz Guevara

#### 3pm LECTURE

*The Living Arts of Ancient TV: Indian Culture and  
US Television, 1955*  
Alexander Keefe

#### 4pm LECTURE

*Episodes from Socialist Modernism in Yugoslavia*  
Nataša Ilić

#### Break

#### 5.30pm LECTURE

*One World through Art: Abby Weed Grey and  
the Parapolitics of Non-Western Art in the 1960s and 70s*  
Clare Davies

#### 6.30pm DISCUSSION

Clare Davies, Nataša Ilić, Alexander Keefe,  
Museum of American Art  
Moderated by Paz Guevara

#### 7pm LECTURE

*'The Colony is a Prison:' Richard Wright's Political  
Diagnostics on the Implications of Self-Government  
in the Gold Coast*  
Kodwo Eshun

#### Break

#### 8.30pm SHORT TALK

*Ghosts in the Bush of Freedom*  
Nida Ghouse

#### 8.45pm LECTURE

*Encounters with Masks. Counter-primitivism in 20th  
Century Black Art*  
Christian Kravagna

#### 9.45pm DISCUSSION

Kodwo Eshun, Christian Kravagna  
Moderated by Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse



All events are held in English and will be simultaneously translated into German.

Headphones are available outside of Vortragssaal.

The exhibition *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War* will remain open until 11pm on both conference days.

Entrance to the exhibition is included in the conference ticket.

4pm INTRODUCTION

Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse,  
Paz Guevara, Antonia Majaca

ANSELM FRANKE is a curator and writer based in Berlin. He is Head of Visual Arts and Film at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), where he curated the exhibitions *The Whole Earth, After Year Zero* (both 2013), *Forensis* (2014), *Ape Culture* (2015), and *Nervous Systems* (2016), among others. In 2012, he curated the Taipei Biennial, and in 2014, the Shanghai Biennial. Franke's exhibition project *Animism* has been presented in Antwerp, Bern, Vienna, Berlin, New York, Shenzhen, Seoul, and Beirut in various collaborations from 2010 to 2014.

NIDA GHOUSE is a writer and curator. Her ongoing writing project *Lotus Notes* has appeared variously in Mada Masr (Cairo 2014), *After Year Zero* (The University of Chicago Press 2015), ARTMargins (The MIT Press 2016), and Critical Writing Ensembles (Mousse Publishing 2016). Alongside *Parapolitics*, her current curatorial projects include *The Matrix of All Possible Narratives* (with Anselm Franke and Erhard Schüttelpelz, 2018) at Haus der Kulturen der Welt. She was director of the Mumbai Art Room from 2015 to early 2017.

PAZ GUEVARA is a curator, researcher, and author based in Berlin. Currently, she collaborates in the long-term project *Kanon-Fragen* at HKW. She contributed to *Past Disquiet* at HKW with research on Latin American artists and museums involved in the solidarity movement. Among others, Guevara has been co-curator of *In Other Words: The Black Market of Translations—Negotiating Contemporary Cultures* at NGBK (Berlin, 2012), the Latin American Pavilion at the 54th and 55th Venice Biennale (2011 and 2013) and *Comunidad Ficticia* in Matucana 100 (Santiago, Chile, 2009). For the 7th Berlin Biennale in 2012, she conceived the workshop *Curating in Times of Need*.

ANTONIA MAJACA is an art historian, curator, and writer based in Berlin as well as the research leader at the Institute for Contemporary Art at the Graz University of Technology. She contributed to numerous publications in the field of contemporary art and art history. Majaca instigated the aural intervention *Art of The Possible: Towards the International Antifascist Feminist Front* (with Angela Dimitrakaki and Sanja Iveković), and co-curated the discursive program *Women's Work in Revolt* for Documenta 14 in Athens (2017). Her recently curated conferences include *Knowledge Forms and Forming Knowledge—Limits and Horizons of Transdisciplinary Art-Based Research* and *Memorial For(u)m—Histories of Possibility*.

4.15pm LECTURE

*The Many Meanings of Freedom in the Cultural Cold War*

Patrick Iber

"Freedom" was one of the key words of the cultural Cold War. Anti-Communism worked to claim it, finding its opposite in Stalinism and never letting go of the association. Freedom became, in other words, both an ethical ideal and a piece of propaganda. But did "Cold War freedom" really have a stable meaning as it moved throughout the globe? In his lecture, Iber explores debates about artistic and political freedom in the early years of the cultural Cold War in Latin America, where the meaning of freedom shifted and bent across national spaces. Political conflict overtook freedom as an ethical ideal: freedom and its anti-thesis were available, but, as Iber will argue, the Cold War made their synthesis impossible for much of the world.

PATRICK IBER is Assistant Professor of Latin American history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago and has taught in various history and political economy programs at UC Berkeley and the University of Texas. His book *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (2015) won the 2017 Luciano Tomassini book prize from the Latin American Studies Association. It offers new interpretations of the major international cultural "front" groups of Latin America's Cold War: the World Peace Council, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Casa de las Américas.

5.15pm SHORT TALK

*Notes on the Legacy of the CCF*

Anselm Franke

5.30pm LECTURE

*Socialist Realism*

*and the Concept of the Ideal*

Angela Harutyunyan

Socialist Realism became an official doctrine and acted as a general cultural principle in the USSR in the early 1930s and persisted in various articulations until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Neither a style nor a form, Socialist Realism prescribed a set of ideological and content-driven imperatives to the sphere of cultural production. Yet Harutyunyan argues that Socialist Realism was haunted by the “ideal” as a double edged sword: on the one hand, it both transposed the Stalinist Dialectical Materialism to the sphere of aesthetics, and thus contributed to the totalistic understanding of all phenomena through a teleology of nature. On the other hand, it superseded this total subsumption. In her lecture, Harutyunyan pursues this argument by engaging with the debate on the ideal in Soviet philosophy, namely in the works of Mikhail Lifshitz and Evald Ilyenkov.

ANGELA HARUTYUNYAN is Associate Professor of art history and theory and head of the art history program at the American University of Beirut. She teaches courses in Modern and contemporary art and theory. She has published internationally on issues related to art and the public sphere, art historiography, cultural politics, and curatorial practices in the post-Socialist condition and in the Middle East. Harutyunyan has curated several shows, such as the exhibition *This is the Time. This is the Record of the Time* (with Nat Muller) 2014 at Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam and at AUB Art Galleries in 2015. Her book *The Political Aesthetics of the Armenian Avant-garde: The Journey of the ‘Painterly Real’* was published in 2017. She is editor of ARTMargins (MIT Press).

7pm LECTURE

*American Tutti-Frutti*

Technical Assistant,

Museum of American Art in Berlin

This is a story about (re)establishing modernism in post-war Europe through various exhibitions, beginning with the 1947 *Advancing American Art* organized by the State Department and ending with the *American National Exhibition* in Moscow 1959. It includes exhibitions of American Modern art organized by the MoMA International Program. Those were among the exhibitions that helped establish the common European cultural identity based on internationalism, modernism, and individualism. One such exhibition, titled *Modern Art in the USA*, after traveling to major European cities, came to Belgrade in 1956, then the capital of Yugoslavia. This was the first time that works by Gorky, de Kooning, Pollock, Kline, Motherwell, Rothko, etc. were exhibited in a socialist country. It also happened to be the last exhibition where Pollock appeared as a living artist.

THE MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART IN BERLIN (MOAA) is not presenting art from a certain region, but is rather a conceptual practice and a quasi-institution that ironically reconstructs a certain historical museum model. It recreates landmark exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1930s and after WW II. Big MoMA shows such as *The New American Painting* toured Western Europe and thus installed a certain—American—image of Modern art. The MoAA reproduces these exhibitions by also copying masters such as Pollock, de Kooning or Rothko; it presents exhibition practices and art historical narratives, therewith deconstructing the canon of (American) Modern art.

## 8pm SHORT TALK

*In Uncertain Terms:**Hallucinating the Canon*

Antonia Majaca

## 9.15pm DISCUSSION

Angela Harutyunyan, Patrick Iber,

Jaleh Mansoor

Moderated by Antonia Majaca

## 8.15pm LECTURE

*The Black/Red Square Repeated: Echo,  
Perseveration or Renewal? Notes on the  
Reiteration of a Political Trope*

Jaleh Mansoor

The last decade has witnessed the recurrence of collective revolutionary will, relying on symbolic forms and icons now a century old, such as the Red Square in the Quebec student protests of 2012/13 or the Black Square in the protests following the death of Trayvon Martin. Why do newly politicized movements gain coherence and urgency through this reference? How do these bygone revolutionary histories come to be contained and summoned symbolically long after their historical passage? This talk will explore the parapolitical operations of a number of tropes generated by the revolutionary movements of the historical avant-garde, notably the monochrome. In order to trace the trajectory of form, Mansoor will explore the suppression and dismissal of these symbols during the Cold War.

JALEH MANSOOR is Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia and a historian of Modern and contemporary cultural production, focusing on twentieth-century European art, Marxism, Marxist feminism, and critical theory. Mansoor has been working on abstract painting in the context of the Italian Economic Boom of the 1950s and 1960s and international relations within the global dynamics of the Cold War. Her research is published in *Marshall Plan Modernism: Italian Postwar Abstraction and the Beginnings of Autonomia* (2016). In 2010, she co-edited *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, an anthology of essays addressing Jacques Rancière's articulation of aesthetics' bond to politics.

## 1pm INTRODUCTION

Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara,  
Antonia Majaca

## 1.15pm FILM AND DISCUSSION

*Chronoscope 11pm*

Alessandro Balteo-Yazbeck

The *Chronoscope 11pm* series uses footage from the *Longines Chronoscope*, an American television interview series that aired on the CBS network from 1951 to 1955. The program featured U.S. politicians, diplomats, foreign leaders, and corporate executives who discussed a range of political, economic, and foreign policy questions as well as petroleum resources with regard to the Cold War. As an early form of infotainment, the program's branding and packaging of ideas has many paradoxical forms of resonance with current political events. Balteo-Yazbeck reorders this source material to highlight the program's role as a sounding board for Cold War discourse. In this process, time becomes a palpable subject itself, superseding the immediate political discussion.

ALESSANDRO BALTEO-YAZBECK'S mixed media productions refer to historic conceptual art. His hybrid artistic practice stresses the notion of collaborative authorship and cultural authority by quoting the work of others and stepping in the curatorial realm. His entangled narratives are motivated by sociopolitical questions involving gaps in collective knowledge or misrepresentations in the public record, often focusing on the importance of propaganda as a political strategy. Since the mid-1990s, Balteo-Yazbeck's work has been shown internationally and is represented in various institutional and private collections worldwide.

## 2.45pm SHORT TALK

*The Exhibition as Medium*

Paz Guevara

## 3pm LECTURE

*The Living Arts of Ancient TV: Indian Culture and US Television, 1955*

Alexander Keefe

The New York Times marked Nikita Khrushchev's 1955 visit to India with an anxious analysis of the Soviet cultural influence in Asia, concluding that the US had fallen behind on the promotion of cultural exchange. The first part of Keefe's lecture on modern museums, media tie-ins, and made-up worlds takes a close look at two instances of a stereotyped India as presented on television, with a special focus on the starring role of Shanta Rao, who was once the cultural Cold War's most filmed and photographed representative of Indian dance. The second part of the lecture flips the teleplay, and ships the idiot box off to India—to the 1955 Indian Industries Fair in New Delhi, where the US pavilion featured a fully functioning TV studio and mock-up nuclear reactor.

ALEXANDER KEEFE is a writer and critic whose work has appeared in *Cabinet*, *Bidoun*, *East of Borneo* and *Artforum*, among others. In 2014 he completed *Sarkari Shorts*, a year-long online excavation of documentary films produced by the Government of India during the Cold War. Keefe did graduate work in Sanskrit and Indian studies at Harvard University and later taught as an Assistant Professor at Ohio University. A 2010 grantee of the Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant Program, he has also received a Fulbright scholarship for research in India and currently holds the Inaugural Alan Erasmus Fellowship in Unpopular Culture at NYU's Colloquium for Unpopular Culture.

4pm LECTURE

*Episodes from Socialist Modernism in Yugoslavia*

Nataša Ilić

The term Cold War does not only designate a historical period of the 20th century, it is also a shorthand for opposed ideological blocs. After the apparent victory of liberal democracy and the normalization of free market economy on the global scale, the opposing ideologies, which once divided the world, now seem to ferment the political landscape of liberal democracies from within. If art is a witness and protagonist of ideological confrontations, and an exhibition is a medium and tool of edification, then tracing the genealogy of abstraction in Socialist Yugoslavia might provide essential insights into the unique nature of ideological struggles and the position between and beyond the opposing power blocs. It is a story of a future that has already happened—at once a frightening nightmare and a hopeful promise.

NATAŠA ILIĆ is a curator, critic, and member of the curatorial collective What, How & for Whom/WHW, a non-profit organization for visual culture formed in Zagreb, Croatia in 1999. Since 2003, WHW has been directing the program of the city-owned Gallery Nova in Zagreb. Nataša Ilić has worked internationally in various contemporary art contexts. With WHW, she curated the 11th Istanbul Biennial in 2009 and the Croatian Pavilion for the Venice Biennial in 2010. Among others, the curatorial collective's international shows include *Collective Creativity* (2005), *Really Useful Knowledge* (2014), *Meeting Points 7: Ten Thousand Wiles and a Hundred Thousand Tricks* (2013–14), and *My Sweet Little Lamb* (2016–17).

5.30pm LECTURE

*One World through Art: Abby Weed Grey and the Parapolitics of Non-Western Art in the 1960s and 70s*

Clare Davies

In her lecture, Davies examines American collector Abby Weed Grey's involvement in promoting contemporary art from the Middle East and South Asia both within the U.S. and internationally over the course of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to amassing a significant collection of 700 works of non-Western art, Grey helped organize a series of internationally touring exhibitions including *Fourteen Contemporary Iranians* (1962–65); *Turkish Art Today* (1966–70); and *Communication through Art* (1964), three exhibitions that opened simultaneously in Istanbul, Tehran, and Lahore. She also sponsored the American section of the India Triennial of Contemporary World Art (1968). A 1972 exhibition entitled *One World Through Art* included over a thousand works from Grey's collection and was hosted at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. In her lecture, Davies examines some of the ways in which Grey helped to model the American involvement in the parapolitics of artistic exchange during the Cold-War era.

CLARE DAVIES is assistant curator of Modern and contemporary art, Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Her art historical research is focused on the histories of art practice in Egypt and the Arab world and on historiographies of non-Western art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After graduating in rhetoric, LGBT studies, and art practice, Davies completed her Ph.D in Egyptian Modern art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, and was subsequently awarded the inaugural Irmgard Coninx Prize Fellowship at the Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin. In 2014, Davies co-authored *Robert Morris, Object Sculpture: 1960–65* and writes regularly on contemporary art from the Arab world.

6.30pm DISCUSSION

Clare Davies, Nataša Ilić, Alexander Keefe,  
Museum of American Art  
Moderated by Paz Guevara



### 7pm LECTURE

*'The Colony is a Prison: Richard Wright's Political Diagnostics on the Implications of Self-Government in the Gold Coast'*

Kodwo Eshun

Although the first unpublished draft for Richard Wright's *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in A Land of Pathos* (1953) is catalogued by Yale's Beinecke Library as a "travel journal" the expansive text in fact entails a theoretical discussion of the enthusiasms and antipathies mobilized by Kwame Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party throughout Ghana's Gold Coast. This first draft complicates and arguably improves upon the final published version of *Black Power*. Wright's text situates the project of self-government in the Gold Coast within the wider project of the "redemption of Africa," the implications of which rethink the vocabularies and structures of linkages between totalitarianism, nationalism, modernization, anti-communism, chieftaincy, citizenship, and colonialism. Eshun takes up some of the unpublished draft's speculations and relates Wright's thought to positions of the Cold War culture that were debated throughout the political geographies of mid-century modernism.

KODWO ESHUN is a lecturer in contemporary art theory at Goldsmiths, University of London, Visiting Professor at Haut Ecole d'Art et Design in Genève and co-founder of The Otolith Group. He is the author of *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction* (forthcoming in 2018), *Dan Graham: Rock My Religion* (2012), and co-editor of *The Fisher Function* (2017), *Post Punk Then and Now* (2016), *Militant Image: A Cine-Geography* (2011), *Harun Farocki Against What? Against Whom* (2010), and *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective 1982–1998* (2007).

### 8.30pm SHORT TALK

*Ghosts in the Bush of Freedom*

Nida Ghouse

### 8.45pm LECTURE

*Encounters with Masks. Counter-primitivism in 20th Century Black Art*

Christian Kravagna

During the last 30 years, there has been much debate about Western practices of collecting, displaying, and describing non-Western art objects. Anthropologists, artists, and art historians have criticized these practices and attacked them as manifestations of a Eurocentric colonialist worldview. Whereas the literature on the reception of "primitive art" in *white* Modernism is extensive, the relevance of traditional African art for the formation of Black Modern art and culture is still under-exposed. While it is usually supposed that African art has been displayed in Western museums for a *white* audience, Kravagna looks at encounters of Black artists with African sculpture in such institutions. The reception and usage of African art objects has been of crucial importance in the cultural production and political interventions of Black artists in Europe, Africa, and America throughout the 20th century.

CHRISTIAN KRAVAGNA is an art historian, critic and curator, focusing on postcolonialism, migration, art, and politics. After several guest professorships in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, he is now professor for Postcolonial Studies at Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna. From 2005–2014 he was artistic director at Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt (with Hedwig Saxenhuber). Some of his curatorial works include *Migration: Globalisation of Cultural Space and Time* (2003), *Planetary Consciousness* (2008), *Living Across: Spaces of Migration* (2010), and *Ghosts of the Civil Dead* (2016). Kravagna published in *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Springer-Hefte für Gegenwartskunst* and others. His book *Transmoderne: Eine Kunstgeschichte des Kontakts* (*Transmodernity: An Art History of Contact*) was published in 2017.

### 9.45pm DISCUSSION

Kodwo Eshun, Christian Kravagna

Moderated by Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse

In Amos Tutuola's second novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), the young protagonist is running away from slave-catchers when he accidentally crosses the border of reality as he knows it. His flight from bondage, however, does not earn him freedom. Rather, he finds himself in an absurd, liminal world of speaking symbols and delirious phantasms, in which the entire regime of meaning-production constantly shifts.

*Freedom in the Bush of Ghosts* is a conference accompanying *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, an exhibition tracing how the many meanings of Modernism were deployed in the struggle for cultural hegemony during the Cold War. It treats the history of one of the CIA's secretly funded front organizations, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), to consider the ideological contradictions and moral ambiguities of advocating freedom and transparency by channels that are themselves removed from democratic accountability. The "bush of ghosts" in the conference title refers to a place beyond orderly sense, a realm outside public knowledge, where one's relation to the world breaks down and is founded anew. Examining the ideological echoes of the Cold War through cultural debates, the conference gathers artists and historians to reconsider the political appropriation of aesthetic form and engage the spectres of modernism as they shape-shifted in the course of the twentieth century.

Saturday, December 16, 3–5pm  
*Cityscapes Berlin East/West*  
Kids&Teens filmscreening

What image did the two parts of the city invent for themselves during the so-called Cold War? 35mm short films show different points of view of East and West Berlin. The event is conceived for children, but open to interested adult audiences. Admission is included in the day ticket.

→ [hkw.de/parapolitics](http://hkw.de/parapolitics)

All presentations and lectures will be on view in HKW's Mediathek: [hkw.de/media](http://hkw.de/media)

Part of *Kanon-Fragen*

Haus der Kulturen der Welt is a division of Kulturveranstaltungen des Bundes in Berlin GmbH (KBB)  
Director: Bernd Scherer  
General Manager: Charlotte Sieben



John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10  
10557 Berlin  
[hkw.de](http://hkw.de)

Das Haus der Kulturen der Welt wird gefördert von



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung  
für Kultur und Medien



Auswärtiges Amt