



PRESS INFO

Never Again Art against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries

August 30 – November 17, 2019

opening: Aug 30, 7 pm

Museum on the Vistula
Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie 22

The exhibition *Never Again: Art against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries*, organized on the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, relies on three precisely determined focal points – Guernica and the 1930s, the “Arsenal” exhibition and the 1950s, contemporary art and (post-)fascism – to present the singular and distinctive tradition of anti-fascist art.

Although the exhibition features primarily historic materials and iconic artworks that shaped the form of anti-fascist and anti-war resistance, the questions posed by the show concern the contemporary era.

We search the rich anti-fascist history for answers to the question about the significance and force of this tradition today. We ask why anti-fascism – as a universalised experience and a peaceful foundation of social life – has lost its consolidating power? Do we no longer fear wars and violence as a fundamental threat to our existence? Did anti-fascism come to an end with communism, with which it was closely linked both in the 1930s and in the 1950s? And can it therefore be successfully pursued further within democratic traditions: liberalism, social democracy? Or is the struggle with fascism (neo-fascism, post-fascism) identical to the struggle with capitalism, which is the essence of the leftist anti-fascist tradition? Finally, how to recount the history of anti-fascism so that it inspires today’s social movements that aim to counter violence?

The exhibition concentrates on three moments in history. The first is the decade of the 1930s: we look at the most renowned anti-war painting, Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* from 1937, presenting the history of its creation and reception, which reflects in a distinctive and dramatic way the entanglement of art and politics since the 1930s. We also depict the international anti-fascist movement prior to the outbreak of World War II and its ties with the workers’ movement on the example of artists from the Weimar Republic, the Krakow Group and leftist movements in the United States. The second discussed period is the communist era in Poland, when anti-fascism and pacifism were given official prominence – this section of the exhibition concentrates primarily on the “Arsenal” – Polish National Exhibition of Young Visual Arts *Against War, Against Fascism*, held within the 5th World Festival of Youth and Students in 1955. The harnessing of anti-war stances by the communist propaganda apparatus of that era resonates until the present day in discussions concerning the traps and duties involved in the civic – or even downright political – engagement of artists. The

third focus of the show embraces today's approaches to fascism, which ceases to be treated exclusively as a historical ideological formation responsible for genocide, but is evoked in the context of the modern-day racist, misogynistic and violent narratives that prepare the ground for the catastrophes of the first half of the 20th century to happen again. A major role for that matter is also played by the crisis of the European Union, the greatest peace project in the history of the continent (a response to the events of World War II, driven by faith in humanism and universalism in the new political order), and by the sprawling wave of populisms.

Never Again. Art against War and Fascism in the 20th and 21st Centuries identifies iconic images and key aspects of the anti-fascist tradition throughout the above moments in history. We use images as a prism through which to portray the complexity of the anti-fascist stance and the variety of approaches to the problem: from political satire and testimonies of atrocities, to apocalyptic forecasts and visual propaganda, to more ambiguous abstract articulations of pro-democratic and anti-authoritarian content. We highlight the moments of self-reflection, the self-awareness of the entanglements of the anti-fascist movements, which are visible in seminal artworks, such as *Guernica*, or at moments of crisis, such as the "Arsenal" exhibition. We embrace studies on the history of images that accompanied the anti-fascist movements as a tool to understand today's stances and activities that define themselves as egalitarian and pro-democratic. We look at works by contemporary artists, such as Hito Steyerl, Nikita Kadan and Wolfgang Tillmans, in search of evidence of the continuity of the anti-fascist tradition, we ask about its effectiveness in the face of such phenomena as the acceptance of hate speech, post-truth, the escalation of acts of violence, the return of aggressive nationalism and populism. At the same time, we discern the weaknesses of such "safety fuses" of peaceful order as liberal democracy and the European Union.

What images are able to affect the imagination, organise resistance, initiate constructive community projects? Is it the language of critical art? Are these strategies that deploy the iconography of popular culture, fashion, enter the mainstream? We also ask about the role of propaganda – as a manner in which the work affects the viewers' emotions and attitudes, but also as a tool of civic pro-democratic mobilisation. We reconsider the very definition of fascism. Highlighting the differences between historical circumstances, aware of the deficits of the anti-fascist tradition, we seek contemporary, communicative and effective art that speaks against war, against fascism.

The exhibition presents works by such artists as – in the 1930s: Maja Berezowska, Alice Neel, Dora Maar, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Jonasz Stern, Leopold Lewicki, Sasza Blonder, Adam Marczyński, Bolesław Stawiński, Bronisław Wojciech Linke, Stanisław Osostowicz; – in the 1950s: Izaak Celnikier, Alina Szapocznikow, Jerzy Tchorzewski, Erna Rosenstein, Marek Oberländer, Jan Dziędziora, Jerzy Tchorzewski, Tadeusz Trepkowski, Waldemar Cwenarski, Wojciech Fangor, Andrzej Wróblewski, Xavier Guerrero; – today: Alice Creischer, Nikita Kadan, Forensic Architecture, Jonathan Horowitz, Goshka Macuga, Mario Lombardo, Mykola Ridnyi, Hito Steyerl, Marta Rosler, Raymond Pettibon, Wilhelm Sasnal, The Society of Friends of Maxwell Itoya and Wolfgang Tillmans.

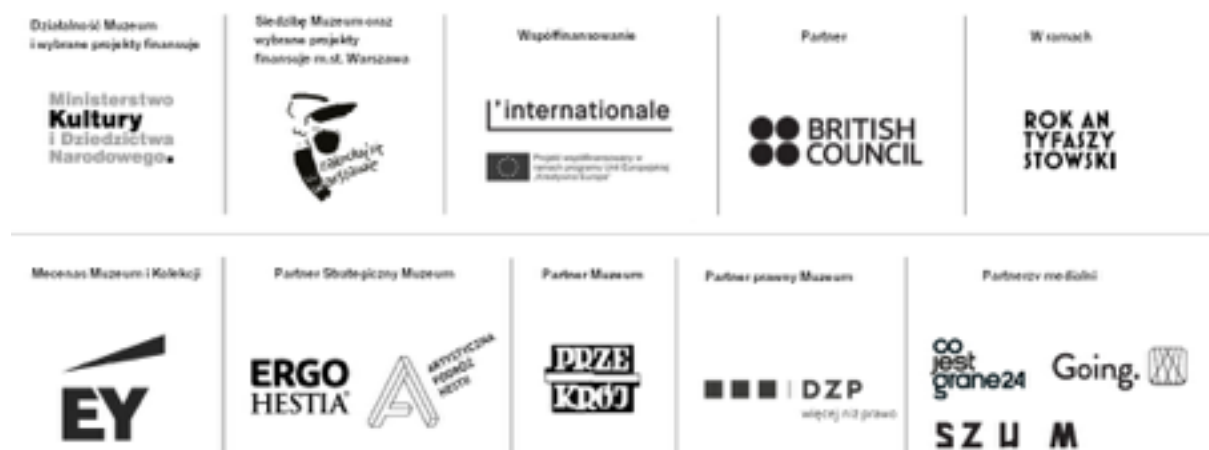
ONLINE CATALOG: neveragain.artmuseum.pl

The exhibition is held as part of the Anti-Fascist Year, a country-wide initiative of public institutions, NGOs, social movements, collectives, artists and activists. The goal of the Anti-Fascist Year is to commemorate the struggle of historic anti-fascists and to oppose the presence in the public sphere of post-fascist movements and those that endorse fascist ideas, discourses and practices.

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The show is also part of Our Many Europes, a project of the museum confederation L'Internationale, co-financed from the funds of the EU Creative Europe Cultural Programme. The members of L'Internationale: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MHK A), Antwerp; Moderna galerija (MG+msum), Ljubljana; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Barcelona; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw; SALT, Istanbul and Ankara; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid as well as their partners: National College of Art and Design (NCAD), Dublin and Valand Academy (University of Gothenburg) jointly carry out more than forty public projects (conferences, exhibitions, workshops) between 2018 and 2022.

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EVENT CONNECTED WITH THE EXHIBITION

INTERNATIONALISM AFTER THE END OF GLOBALISATION

October 25–26, 2019

MUSEUM ON PAŃSKA STREET (PAŃSKA 3, WARSAW)

Responding to the recent revival of the fascist threat, the summit will play the dual role of a conference and a plenary session.

The delegates will meet in Warsaw not only to review but also to develop theoretical and practical responses to the current crisis, which calls for new modes of connecting on an international scale to challenge the combined forces of fascism, neoliberalism, and ecological disaster, seeking forms of artistic internationalism embedded in the ongoing democratic struggle for climate, economic, gender and racial justice.

The conference beginning on 25 October 2019 will critically review neoliberal globalisation in order to move beyond it. This practical and theoretical ambition is driven by the hypothesis that the rise of the far right heralds an end of the globalist project, and consequently those forms of artistic internationalism that have been tightly integrated with global capitalism. This disruption implies the need to look beyond capitalist realism, an aesthetic, existential and social project that has supported capitalist hegemony by deflating both political and artistic imagination. The crisis engenders the evolution of old institutional forms and the emergence of new ones that facilitate civic engagement, are socially useful and align with political forces aimed at reviving democracy and countering fascism. During the conference, a dozen speakers, academics, artists and activists from all over Europe, will share their theoretical and practical insights to prompt public discussion and prepare the ground for plenary sessions.

Following the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach, the aim of the summit is not only to reflect upon the failures of globalisation, but to revisit internationalism as an unfinished project. To facilitate this process, the second day of the summit, on 26 October, will be self-organized, aimed at collective strategizing on an international scale. The programme of plenary sessions and workshops will be created in situ by the gathered delegates, who will present proposals for future actions and discuss their implementation in working groups.

The summit is open for all, but registration is required, to facilitate communication and organization of sessions. Please register here: zapisy@artmuseum.pl. In case of any inquiries, please contact pawel.nowozycki@artmuseum.pl.

The summit is being held within the framework of L'internationale, a confederation of European museums, and the Anti-fascist Year, a nationwide series of cultural events organized to support anti-fascist struggles by hundreds of institutions, collectives, and individuals across Poland to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War and the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazism.

Curators: Jesús Carrillo, Sebastian Cichocki, Kuba Szreder

W ramach

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