

# BUNDESKUNSTHALLE

Media information

## WHO WE ARE

26 May – 8 October 2023

*Who We Are* takes a look at the present and past of the immigration society that makes up the Federal Republic of Germany, but which it has long resisted being labelled as such. Today, we have long since arrived in a post-migrant, post-colonial society. But is that all good? Do we live in a society where dreams of equal opportunities and legal security have become reality regardless of origin and skin colour? The recent past and the current debates clearly show us that aspiration and reality are still far from congruent. One question that is central is therefore that of the causes of structural racism in Germany – those of the past and those of the present.

The right to participation and protection against discrimination are enshrined in our fundamental rights. However, equal rights do not mean equal conditions: Origin, religion and culture can become a stigma. So what is the real state of justice in our society today? What deficits and achievements can we look back on – and where can the sector of art and culture position itself with regard to this? Identity has become the buzzword of our time. Origin or religion, social affiliation or sexual identity – all these categories can be understood as creating identity. At the same time, they are distinguishing features on which group affiliations are based and produce exclusion and relegation with the same mechanisms.

The pattern of discrimination that most continuously permeates our society is racism. Long taboo, it is now recognised as a structural problem. Slowly, but on ever broader levels, an awareness of social discrimination and privilege is emerging. A discourse that identifies the imbalance between the aspirations and reality of our democratic society is just beginning to emerge. The questions that are becoming more and more virulent concern above all those areas where the reality of our lives and the ideals of our society are drifting apart. If we do not want to be a racist society – why does racism have so much place in it?

Understanding art as the avant-garde of society also means perceiving it as a seismograph. More than ever before, contemporary art production addresses and questions its own perspective. The identity and world of experience of the artists is becoming an integral part of the way art is viewed. Above all, however, the institutions come into view: Who is heard and seen, who makes the decisions and how permeable are the power structures? The exhibition *Who We Are* also sets itself the task of critically reflecting on power structures and its own self-image together with artists.

Curators: Johanna Adam, Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock, Dan Thy Nguyen

Curatorial assistance: David Muñoz, Elizabeth Namwanje  
(Volunteers of the ICP - Intercultural Change Program)

Cooperation partner: DOMiD

(Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland / Documentation Centre and Museum on Migration in Germany)

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Festival

**THE [new] WE**

**Art and its institutions will belong to all of us.**

26 – 28 May 2023

Almost 50 years ago, 40 men and one woman met in the Steigenberger Hotel in Bonn to initiate the planning of an art gallery for the Federal Republic. At the same time, a promise was made in (West) Germany with the New Cultural Policy: Art and culture for all!

The two-day festival *THE [new] WE* brings together artists, activists and theorists at the Bundeskunsthalle to renegotiate this promise. All over Germany, cultural institutions are trying to involve the "super-diverse" society of their city in their programmes, audiences and staff. Together with experts and contemporary witnesses, we take stock of what we can learn from the past decades and what we need to correct. Together with the visitors, actors from the arts and culture will design future plans for a new democratisation of society: 4 panels and 2 performative assemblies on belonging(s) and communities in New Institutions, on diversity and diversity critique, on the history of democratic cultural politics(s) and on spaces and formats of assembly.

The festival is curated by Michael Annoff and Nuray Demir, in collaboration with David Muñoz and Elizabeth Namwanje.

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