

**“History is not the past”**

Digital assembly of the Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism  
Podcast series and online formats  
Publication starting June 18, 2020

Within the scope of the exhibition titled “Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow,” a multi-stranded program titled “Assembly” will take place. The program will first be realized as a series of digital offerings in June 2020 and then continued in the summer of 2021 as an event open to the public.

As the name suggests, “Assembly” is intended as a place where as many members of a community as possible can come together, gather, and engage in dialogue to jointly craft ideas of democratic coexistence, symbolizing an approach to political action that is founded on cooperation.

The program will focus on the importance of remembrance to the status of democracy. Remembering the disasters of the war, the Holocaust, and the Nazi dictatorship, the responsibility derived from historical experiences, and also the freedom and security that have been achieved/developed since 1945 is a key aspect of the democratic self-image in Germany, Europe, and the wider world. As the Nazi history recedes farther and farther into the past and our society becomes one of immigration, new forms of remembrance are needed to encompass the full range of society, reflecting all ages, origins, and experiences. At the same time, new threats to the stability of democracy are on the horizon, fueled by policies of exclusion and hate and calls for an end to remembrance.

“Assembly” takes as a guiding theme a quote from the American writer James Baldwin: “History is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. We are our history.” Baldwin described how interpretations of history can be used as tools to separate and marginalize people. But keeping memory alive, with all the multiple strands involved, also has the potential to build bridges and create affiliations and identities that transcend national boundaries.

“Assembly” creates a communicative space – online in 2020 and then, in 2021, as a public program in the forecourt of the Nazi Documentation Centre – to explore the relationships between history, the present day, and the future from an interdisciplinary perspective.

**Podcast series**

The centerpiece of the digital “Assembly” program in June of this year will be a podcast series titled “History Is Not the Past,” which will collect contributions and discussions from scholars, journalists, curators, artists, writers, and musicians. In light of the current measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the series offers an opportunity for collective thought about present-day issues and future scenarios at the intersection of history, society, and culture, despite physical distancing. The series opens up a multifaceted associative field that links the question of collective handling of historical experiences with what they mean to a democratic future. As we look to shape society for the future, it is crucial

to bear the past in mind, as German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier stressed once again at the event marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Germany's liberation from National Socialism, which could not be held as a collective act of remembrance this year: "There is no end to remembering. There is no release from our history. If we do not remember, we will lose our future."

The podcast series will be released daily from June 18 to 28, with 11 episodes in all covering a broad range of topics. **Max Czollek** and **Michael Brenner** will discuss historical and current notions of solidarity and the integrative power of narratives that embrace multiple perspectives. **Armin Nassehi** will evaluate present-day social transformations and the political potential of alliances throughout society. **Roger Cohen** and **Mirjam Zadoff** will offer a global look at the shift in political discourse as a result of populism, emotional mobilization, and interconnectivity among right-wing extremist movements, but also at new forms of solidarity, grief, and trauma, and the chance to build transnational, collective memories. **Leon Kahane** and **Fabian Bechtle** will devote their episode, "Forum on Democratic Culture and Contemporary Art," to issues of aspirational identity in the present-day understanding of culture while calling for a critical review of cultural codes. **Kübra Gümüşay** and **Juliane Bischoff** will explore the extent to which language reflects society, thereby both limiting participation and opening up opportunities to participate. Digital life and virtual networking will play a role in two conversations, one between **Georg Diez** and **Nicolaus Schafhausen** and the other between **Sahana Udupa** and **Florian Hartleb**. Diez advocates a democratic digital civil society where technological means open up new paths toward autonomy and co-determination. Udupa and Hartleb, for their part, plan to examine the threats posed by radicalization on the Internet and the online dissemination of right-wing extremist thinking. Links between anti-Semitism and racism and the possibility of building an inclusive culture of thought will take center stage in the discussion among **Charlotte Wiedemann**, **Stefanie Schüler-Springorum**, and **Sonja Zekri**. The extent to which history and remembrance are inscribed on the built environment will be the topic of discussion for **Stephan Trüby** and **Paul Moritz Rabe**, who plan to consider "right-wing spaces" and the former forced labor camp at Neuaubing, along with another contribution by **Christiane Wolf** that considers the example of the former Nazi "Gauforum" site in Weimar and the area's redesign as a cultural and memorial site. A critical historical look at the documenta event and the resulting institutional responsibility for the documenta Institute that is currently under development will be the focus of the discussion between **Nora Sternfeld** and **Christian Fuhrmeister**. Art in the public sphere will serve **Ken Lum** and **Paul Farber**, in the context of their "monument lab" in Philadelphia, as the starting point for examining and collectively shaping societal representation. Interdisciplinary cooperation and the dialogue between the arts and scholarship are key aspects of curatorial practice for **Clémentine Deliss**, whose contribution will be dedicated to exhibition and research projects in the context of post-social and cultural anthropology collections. Dialogue and responsibility between different generations will also play an important role in the discussion between **Luisa Neubauer** and **Doron Rabinovici**, who will talk about the future of democracy and engagement within civil society from the perspective of their personal experiences.

**Further contributors include** Lena Gorelik, Dota Kehr, Michaela Melián, Willem de Rooij, Maya Shenfeld, Niels Beintker, and others.

A new podcast episode will be released daily from June 18 to 28. Episodes will be available via the Nazi Documentation Centre website and common podcast platforms.

### **Further online formats**

Alongside the podcast series, the digital “Assembly” program will also feature further contributions on the website and via the social media channels of the Nazi Documentation Centre, including a Zoom discussion between **Khalil Muhammad** and **Mirjam Zadoff** on June 18 (in cooperation with the Amerikahaus Munich), an online writing workshop with writer Lena Gorelik from 6 to 8 p.m. on June 22, 23, and 25 (for information and to register, please visit [buchung.nsdoku@muenchen.de](mailto:buchung.nsdoku@muenchen.de)), a live Zoom performance of the play *Haram* in cooperation with the Schauburg München theater on Facebook at 7 p.m. on June 29, and an online publication titled **eiswetter.eu** (available from June 10 through [www.Eiswetter.eu](http://www.Eiswetter.eu)) by artist **Sebastian Jung**, who has captured his observations on living with the corona crisis in drawings and texts over the past few months.

### **Exhibition openings as part of “Tell me about yesterday tomorrow”**

The Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism will be presenting a selection of drawings, etchings, and contemporary documents by artist **Harald Pickert** (1901–1983) at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte from June 2 through July 29 as an associated exhibition. In the cycle titled “Die Pestbeulen Europas. Naziterror in Konzentrationslagern, 1939-45” (Buboes of Europe. Nazi Terror at Concentration Camps, 1939–45), Pickert captured the terrible experiences and traumas of the nearly six years that he spent imprisoned at concentration camps. The exhibition offers insight into the life and work of the painter and graphic designer.

Artist **Sebastian Jung** attended the trial of the National Socialist Underground (NSU) before the Higher Regional Court of Munich and made pencil sketches of the proceedings. The drawings created in the courtroom, which revolve around the steps in the proceedings and those involved, served as the templates for a relief measuring two by four meters that was installed on the façade of the court. It will be presented to the public in late June 2020.

An accompanying publication for the exhibition titled “Tell me about yesterday tomorrow” will be released in the fall of 2020.

### **Outlook for 2021**

In the summer of 2021, the “Assembly” program will be continued in public space under the title “We Are History.” The forecourt of the Nazi Documentation Centre will become a platform for discussion, performance, and musical and cinematic contributions.

An outdoor structure that serves as a stage, discussion forum, and place to spend time will be created specifically for the program. Designed as a public meeting point, the program will be

# NS-Dokumentationszentrum München

Munich Documentation Centre  
for the History of National Socialism

as inclusive and accessible as possible, with a wide range of options intended to reflect the diversity of the local community.