

Dear Professor Dr. Andreas Hoffmann, Managing director,
Documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH,

We, the remaining members of the Finding Committee after the recent resignations of our esteemed colleagues Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger and Ranjit Hoskote, announce hereafter our collective resignation from this honorable task. Be assured that we have not taken this step lightly and that we do so with a very heavy heart.

Above all, our decision was not an easy one, because we are well aware of documenta's historically grown, enduring international significance and resonance, and even more so on a personal level, because we can all associate past projects with insights and eye-opening experiences. It is this very conviction that led us to resign out of grave concern for the future of documenta.

If art is to take account of the complex cultural, political, and social realities of our present day, it needs appropriate conditions that allow for its diverse perspectives, perceptions and discourses.

The dynamics of the last few days, with their unchallenged media and public discrediting of our colleague Ranjit Hoskote, which forced him to resign from the Finding Committee, make us very doubtful if this prerequisite for any coming edition of documenta is currently given in Germany. Art requires a critical and multi-perspective examination of its diverse forms and contents to be able to resonate and develop its transformative capacity. Categorical, one sided reductions and over-simplifications of complex contexts threaten to nip any such examination in the bud.

documenta has a long tradition of open-minded and intellectually responsible discourse. From the very beginning, the time and place of its institutional foundation after World War II pointed to one of documenta's defining political principles: to constantly renegotiate the world through the lens of art and with explicit awareness of the unimaginable horrors that ideological blindness makes possible.

We do understand that in view of its past, Germany has distinct social and political responsibilities. The great sensitivity towards all anti-Semitic tendencies bears eloquent witness to the extent to which the nation has internalized this responsibility. The ongoing fulfilment of this very responsibility deserves the greatest appreciation, especially now, when alarming signs of deep-rooted anti-Semitism are once again making themselves felt around the world.

At the same time, however, this awareness of special responsibilities runs the risk of being misused for opinion politics in order to suppress undesirable approaches and their broad and open discussion right from the start. Instead of debate and discussion, over-simplification and

Simon Njami, Gong Yan, Kathrin
Rhomberg, and María Inés
Rodríguez

Documenta Resignation Letter

prejudgments are thus all too easily substituted.

It is this emotional and intellectual climate of over-simplification of complex realities and its resulting restrictive limitations, which has been prevalent since documenta15 and especially against the background of the current crises our world is facing, that makes it impossible for us to conceive of a strong and signal exhibition project, and consequently to allow for a responsible continuation of the selection process to determine a curatorial concept for documenta16.

In the current circumstances we do not believe that there is a space in Germany for an open exchange of ideas and the development of complex and nuanced artistic approaches that documenta artists and curators deserve. We do not believe that any acceptable conditions can be created in short term and consider it to be disrespectful of documenta's legacy to simply remain content with the current situation.

Therefore, we respectfully resign from the Finding Committee of documenta16.

Sincerely yours,
Simon Njami, Gong Yan, Kathrin Rhomberg, María Inés Rodríguez
November 16, 2023

X