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As of February 5, 2019 / Subject to change

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# Press Release Berlin, January 10, 2019

## Press Contact

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### **KW Institute for Contemporary Art presents its winter/spring program 2019**

KW Institute for Contemporary Art launches its winter/spring season 2019 with the comprehensive solo exhibitions by artist David Wojnarowicz, theater director Reza Abdoh, and curator Frank Wagner. With the presentation of three profound AIDS activists, KW continues its investigation of "the body," particularly its political usage.

**David Wojnarowicz**  
*Photography & Film 1978–1992*  
February 9 – May 5, 2019  
Opening: February 8, 2019, 7 pm  
Curator: Krist Gruijthuisen

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992) came to prominence as an artist, writer, and activist for the rights of the queer community in New York's East Village of the 1980s, actively embracing all kinds of media and forging an expansive range of work both fiercely political and highly personal. The exhibition at KW will be the first to solely concentrate on Wojnarowicz's photographic and filmic work. It will present over 150 works including photographs, test prints, silkscreens, 16mm and super-8 film, and collaborative video works.

**Reza Abdoh**  
February 9 – May 5, 2019  
Opening: February 8, 2019, 7 pm  
Curators: Bidoun (Negar Azimi, Tiffany Malakooti, Babak Radboy), Krist Gruijthuisen

Reza Abdoh whose plays were immersive, confrontational, and often shocking, spoke forcefully and eloquently to the ugly political realities of the 1980s in America, particularly the Reagan administration's refusal to acknowledge the AIDS crisis. At this time, Abdoh became one of the most compelling figures in American avant-garde theater. Near the end of his life in 1995, he insisted that he didn't want his plays to be restaged. Traces of his work were to be found on videotapes passed around experimental theater circles, many of which serve as the basis of the exhibition at KW.

**TIES, TALES AND TRACES**

**Dedicated to Frank Wagner, Independent Curator (1958–2016)**

**February 9 – May 5, 2019**

**Opening: February 8, 2019, 7 pm**

**Curators: RealismusStudio of nGbK (Christin Lahr, Isabelle Meiffert, Ulrike Riebel, Vincent Schier, Susanne Weiß)**

Frank Wagner (1958–2016) gained reputation for his early, groundbreaking and internationally acclaimed exhibitions on critical art, AIDS, gender, and LGBTQI\* topics. In 1988 he curated the first European exhibition on AIDS in Berlin, which was controversially discussed at that time. He took on a pioneering role and created new dimensions to the politicization of the private sphere. The exhibition at KW is primarily based on art works and documents from the estate of Frank Wagner and commemorates his curatorial work in a broader context.

The three solo exhibitions will be complemented by a **public program** in which workshops, readings, symposia, among others, not only commemorate the work of David Wojnarowicz, Reza Abdoh, and Frank Wagner, but will also directly address the present and the current discussion about and challenges of HIV/AIDS.

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The exhibition project *David Wojnarowicz, Reza Abdoh, Frank Wagner* is funded by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin. *David Wojnarowicz* is generously supported by the KW Friends, P·P·O·W Gallery, New York, Coleção Moraes-Barbosa, and Mariana and Adam Clayton. *Reza Abdoh* is co-produced with MoMA PS1, New York, and generously supported by the Marina Kellen French Foundation, Coleção Moraes-Barbosa, and Casper. *Frank Wagner* takes place in cooperation with the RealismusStudio of the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) and Between Bridges.

Siegessäule is media partner of the exhibition project *David Wojnarowicz, Reza Abdoh, Frank Wagner*.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is institutionally supported by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe, Berlin.

# David Wojnarowicz

## *Photography & Film*

### 1978–1992

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992) came into prominence in the East Village art world of the 1980s, actively embracing all media and forging an expansive range of work both fiercely political and highly personal. Although largely self-taught, he worked as an artist and writer to merge a sophisticated combination of found and discarded material with an uncanny understanding of literary influences. First displayed in rough storefront galleries, his work already gained national prominence at the very moment. Diagnosed with HIV in the late 1980s his work became resolutely and fervently political at a time where the AIDS epidemic was cutting down a generation of artists. From the late 1970s until his death in 1992, Wojnarowicz produced a body of work that was as conceptually rigorous as it was stylistically diverse.

KW Institute for Contemporary Art is pleased to present the exhibition *Photography & Film 1978–1992* that will be the first to solely concentrate on Wojnarowicz's photographic and filmic work. It will present over 150 works including photographs, test prints, silkscreens, 16mm and super-8 film, and collaborative video works. Afterwards the exhibition will travel to the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver (CA).

Alongside the exhibition, the short film *Fear of Disclosure* (1989) by Phil Zwickler and David Wojnarowicz as well as the essay document *Self-Portrait in 23 Rounds: A Chapter in David Wojnarowicz's Life 1989–1991* (2018) by the French photographer and filmmaker Marion Scemama will be shown in the framework of the anniversary program *Panorama 40* of the Berlinale's *Panorama* section.

# Biography

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992) grew up in Red Bank, New Jersey (US) in difficult family circumstances. At the age of sixteen, he left school and lived entertainingly on the street. After hitchhiking many times across the US and living for several months in San Francisco and Paris, he settled in New York's East Village in 1978. By the late 1970s he had, in his own words, "started developing ideas of making and preserving an authentic version of history in the form of images, writings and objects that would contest state-supported forms of history." As a member of the first wave of East Village artists, Wojnarowicz began showing his work during the early 1980s in such now-legendary spaces as Civilian Warfare, Club 57, Gracie Mansion, Fashion Moda, and the Limbo Lounge. He gained prominence through his inclusion in the 1985 Whitney Biennial, and was soon showing in museum and gallery exhibitions throughout the United States, Europe and Latin America. His works are in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The Estate of David Wojnarowicz is represented by the P·P·O·W Gallery, New York. David Wojnarowicz died in New York in 1992 at the age of 37.

## Public Program

5/4 and F.R.DAVID *Black Sun*  
Performance and book launch  
8 February 19, 10.30 pm  
Venue: Pogo Bar  
Please RSVP at [reservation@kw-berlin.de](mailto:reservation@kw-berlin.de)

Marion Scemama: *Self-Portrait in 23 Rounds: a Chapter in David Wojnarowicz's Life, 1989–1991* (2018)  
Berlinale film screening (Panorama 40)  
9 February 19, 7 pm  
Venue: Berlinale, Zoo Palast 2, Hardenbergstraße 29A, 10623 Berlin  
Tickets via Berlinale website

Phil Zwickler and David Wojnarowicz: *Fear of Disclosure* (1989)  
Berlinale film screening (Panorama 40)  
13 February 19, 11 am  
Venue: CinemaxX 8, Potsdamer Straße 5 / Eingang Voxstraße, 10785 Berlin  
14 February 19, 7.15 pm  
Venue: Ort: Arsenal, Potsdamer Straße 2, 10785 Berlin  
Tickets via Berlinale website

The Berlin Sessions:  
Reading David Wojnarowicz  
15 March 19, 8.30–10.30 pm  
Venue: Eisenherz bookstore, Motzstraße 23, 10777 Berlin  
In English

*ITSOFOMO (In the Shadow of Forward Motion) (1989)*

Multimedia performance by David Wojnarowicz and Ben Neill

Performed by Ben Neill and Don Yallech

26 April 19, 8 pm

27 April 19, 6 pm

Venue: KW, Main hall

*Ektachrome Archives*

Performance by Lyle Ashton Harris

2 and 3 May 19, 9 pm

Venue: Volksbühne Grüner Salon, Linienstraße 227, 10178 Berlin

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Tickets via Volksbühne website

# Reza Abdoh

In collaboration with MoMA PS1 New York, KW presents a solo exhibition around the work of the late Iranian theater director Reza Abdoh (1963–1995). Over a career that spanned twelve years, Abdoh pushed his actors—and audiences—to their limits. His aesthetic language was relentlessly, recklessly inventive, borrowing from fairy tales, BDSM, talk shows, raves, video art, and the history of avant-garde theater. The hallucinatory dreamscapes he produced spoke forcefully and eloquently to the ugly political realities of his time—from government-sanctioned racism to the Reagan administration's refusal to acknowledge the AIDS crisis to warmongering at home and abroad.

Reza Abdoh was already one of the most compelling figures in American avant-garde theater when he died of AIDS in 1995 at the age of thirty-two. Near the end of his life, Abdoh insisted that he didn't want his plays to be restaged. Traces of his work were to be found on videotapes passed around experimental theater circles, many of which serve as the basis of the exhibition at hand. The exhibition at KW around Abdoh's work is co-produced with MoMA PS1, where it was on display from June 3 to September 3, 2018.

## Biography

The Iranian theatre director Reza Abdoh (1963–1995) was born into a wealthy and well-connected family in Tehran and grew up during the gilded age of the Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In the wake of the 1979 Revolution that led to the deposition of the Shah, young Abdoh and his two brothers moved to Los Angeles. At the age of sixteen, he published his first book of poems with Vantage Press, the largest vanity publishing company in the US. In the following years, Abdoh directed many theater plays and films from which the audience was shocked and fascinated. He developed an aesthetic language borrowed from fairy tales, BDSM, talk shows, raves, video art, and the history of avant-garde theater. Reza Abdoh passed away in May of 1995. He was hospitalized the very day when rehearsals were to start for what would have been his last play, *The Story of Infamy*, which was never produced.

# Public Program

*Revisiting Reza Abdoh*

Theater workshop

10 February 19, 1 pm

Venue: Volksbühne Grüner Salon, Linienstraße 227, 10178 Berlin

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Please register at [besucherservice@volksbuehne-berlin.de](mailto:besucherservice@volksbuehne-berlin.de).

In English

*Revisiting Reza Abdoh*

Selected play readings and discussion

11 February 19, 9 pm

Venue: Volksbühne Grüner Salon, Linienstraße 227, 10178 Berlin

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Tickets via Volksbühne website

In English

Screening and Q&A with Adam Soch and Cathrin Mayer

*The Blind Owl* (1992) by Reza Abdoh

*Reza Abdoh: Theatre Visionary* (2015), documentary by Adam Soch

4 April 19, 7 pm

Venue: Volksbühne Grüner Salon, Linienstraße 227, 10178 Berlin

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Tickets via Volksbühne website

In English

The Berlin Sessions:

In conversation on the work of Reza Abdoh

10 April 19, 7 pm

Venue: KW, 3rd floor

In English



# ***TIES, TALES AND TRACES*** **Dedicated to Frank Wagner, Independent Curator (1958–2016)**

The exhibition *TIES, TALES AND TRACES* commemorates the work of curator Frank Wagner, who died in 2016. Wagner gained a reputation for his groundbreaking and internationally acclaimed exhibitions on critical art, AIDS, gender, and LGBTQI\* topics. Wagner, who described himself as *Independent Curator*, often brought artists to Berlin before their international breakthrough and supported the realization of their projects with remarkable commitment. With the exhibition *David Wojnarowicz – Ein Gedenkraum / A Memorial Exhibition* at KW in 1992/93, Wagner commemorated the oeuvre of David Wojnarowicz, who died of AIDS in 1992 and whose work he exhibited multiple times. Through his cross-institutional projects and his negotiating skills, Wagner was a respected and tireless agent of the Berlin art and cultural scene, succeeding in promoting and connecting protagonists with the most disparate approaches. His independent, project-based activities allowed him to remain flexible as a curator, but also brought him a life of financial uncertainty. Nevertheless, Frank Wagner succeeded in resolutely pursuing his political examination of social relations, everyday violence, racism, colonialism, fascism, homophobia, and marginalized sexuality with sensitive radicalism. Through art and his own experimental curatorial approach, he provoked uncomfortable conversations and tried to address people beyond the art world. He took on a pioneering role with early exhibitions on political discourses of the body, gender issues, sexuality, and AIDS, giving new dimensions to the politicization of the private sphere.

The exhibition at KW is primarily based on art works and documents from the estate of Frank Wagner. It commemorates his curatorial work in a broader context while giving an insight into his complex work.

*TIES, TALES AND TRACES. Dedicated to Frank Wagner, Independent Curator (1958–2016)* is an exhibition by the KW Institute for Contemporary Art, curated by the RealismusStudio of the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK) in collaboration with Between Bridges. The RealismusStudio consists of Christin Lahr, Isabelle Meiffert, Ulrike Riebel, Vincent Schier, and Susanne Weiß. The complementary exhibition at the project space Between Bridges will be curated by Wolfgang Tillmans and Eugen Ivan Bergmann (February 1–March 16, 2019).

# Biography

Frank Wagner (1958–2016) studied art history, philosophy and literature at the Freie Universität zu Berlin. Since the early 1980s, Wagner has played a decisive role in shaping the profile of the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK), one of the most important art associations in Germany, and its curatorial collective RealismusStudio which has since served as his starting point and discursive environment. He curated numerous international exhibitions, among others on critical art, AIDS, gender and LGBTQI\* topics—long before these topics were part of common social discourse. Frank Wagner, who described himself as *Independent Curator*, not only brought artists with a strong socio-political agenda to Berlin, he also supported them with remarkable intensity in the realization of their projects. In the course of his career, he has exhibited over 900 artists. Frank Wagner died in June 2016 at the age of 58.

## Public Program

Curators' tour with Christin Lahr and Vincent Schier  
17 February 19, 3 pm  
5 May 19, 3 pm

Guided tours with former companions  
28. February 19, 7 pm  
3., 17. and 31. March 19, 3 pm  
14. and 28. March 19, 7 pm  
11. and 25. April 19, 7 pm  
14. and 28. April 19, 3 pm  
5 May 19, 4 pm

### *KONTEXT(E) BERLIN*

Symposium with Leonie Baumann, Monica Bonvicini, Pola Sieverding, Wolfgang Tillmans, Dr. Ingrid Wagner, Claudia Wahjudi, and others  
23 February 19, 1–7 pm  
Venue: KW Studio

### *WAS BLEIBT / WHAT REMAINS...?*

How to approach a curatorial legacy and estate?  
Symposium with Dr. Beatrice von Bismarck, Claire Grace, Dr. Martin Heller, and others  
13 April 19, 2–7 pm  
Venue: KW Studio

### *REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS*

Symposium with Julie Ault, Dr. Julia Friedrich, and others  
Saturday, 4 May 19, 2–7 pm  
Venue: KW Studio

# Mediation

## Free Guided Tours

During the opening hours our visitors can ask to be accompanied through the exhibitions in different languages by our guides. With the opening of the new artistic program under the directorship of Krist Gruijthuisen in January 2017, these individually guided tours are offered for free under the KW education and mediation program.

## Guided Group Tours (more than 10 persons)

60 Minutes

max. 25 people or class size

70 € / reduced 50 €, plus reduced admission fee/person

Guided tours can be booked in german and english.

For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Duygu Örs, [do@kw-berlin.de](mailto:do@kw-berlin.de) or +49 30 243459-132.

# Upcoming Exhibitions

**Pause: Emma Hedditch (After Ian White)**

18–19 May 2019

Curator: Mason Leaver-Yap

**Schering Stiftung Art Award 2018**

**Anna Daučíková**

7 June – 18 August 2019

Opening: 6 June 2019

Curators: Anna Gritz, Cathrin Mayer

**Image Bank**

22 June – 1 September 2019

Opening: 21 June 2019

Curators: Krist Gruijthuijsen, Maxine Kopsa, Scott Watson

**Heike-Karin Föll**

*speed*

22 June – 1 September 2019

Opening: 21 June 2019

Curator: Maurin Dietrich

**Pause: Every Ocean Hughes (After Ian White)**

24.–25 August 2019

Curator: Mason Leaver-Yap

**Berlin Art Week: Joint Ventures**

11 – 15 September 2019

Opening: 10 September 2019

**The Making of Husbands:**

**Christina Ramberg in Dialogue**

14 September 2019 – 5 Januar 2020

Opening: 13 September 2019

Curator: Anna Gritz

**Hreinn Fridfinnsson**

28 September 2019 – 5 January 2020

Opening: 27 September 2019

Curators: Krist Gruijthuijsen, Andrea Bellini

**Kris Lemsalu**

28 September 2019 – 5 January 2020

Opening: 27 September 2019

Curators: Maurin Dietrich, Cathrin Mayer

**KW Production Series:**

**Andrea Büttner & Rachel O'Reilly**

Fall 2019

Curator: Mason Leaver-Yap

# Partner

Senate Department  
for Culture and Europe



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## SIEGESSÄULE

Media partner: Siegessäule