

Press Kit

***The Opposite of Now:
Artistic Paths to a Different Present***

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Press release
3 September 2026

JMB opens anniversary exhibition ***The Opposite of Now:*** ***Artistic Paths to a Different Present***



Design: Magma Design Studio

From 4 September 2026, the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) will present its anniversary exhibition, *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a Different Present*. With the present day as their starting point – often experienced as oppressive and without alternative – twelve artistic projects offer counter-visions against the status quo: historically rooted, new, or individual. They invite visitors to explore their own imaginations; to become aware of limits and flaws, and awaken buried potential.

The Opposite of Now is the highlight of the JMB's anniversary program. The art projects it showcases have all been developed especially for the anniversary exhibition – by Yael Bartana, Andrea Büttner, Chto Delat International, Arnold Dreyblatt, William Forsythe, Dana Kavelina, Alexander Kluge, Daniel Laufer, Ari Benjamin Meyers, Alona Rodeh, Eran Schaerf, and Dor Zlekha Levy. To spark their projects, the museum gave each artist a copy of a 1964 radio debate between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the *Possibilities of Utopia Today*. Both philosophers were of Jewish descent and had to flee Germany to avoid persecution by the Nazis. Both agreed that the existing order must undergo a complete change. While we cannot completely “color in” a better alternative, we can sharpen our senses to better detect the direction in which it can be found.

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The Opposite of Now takes on this reference to totality. The works investigate the idea of complete change as a subjective experience and a collective goal. Andrea Büttner, Arnold Dreyblatt, Alexander Kluge, and Daniel Laufer link their works to messianic traditions, to the concepts of return, hope, and redemption that in the Jewish experience has so often been entangled with adversity and persecution. Ari Benjamin Meyers reminds us that renewal is always possible. All of the singers in his *Choir of the Time Astronauts* are over the age of ninety. They will repeatedly rehearse in the exhibition space, always starting anew. Dana Kavelina from Ukraine, the Russian artists' collective in exile Chto Delat International, and Dor Zlekha Levy and Yael Bartana from Israel reflect on the function of utopian thought in the midst of crisis. Eran Schaerf commemorates the writer Jacqueline Kahanoff and her idea of Levantinism, a forgotten model for the coexistence of majority and minority cultures on the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean, a model that can be recombined in any place. Finally, William Forsythe's choreographic instructions demonstrate that it is unsettling to break with accustomed practices and often we fail, but it is nevertheless achievable by every one of us.

Hetty Berg, director of the JMB, says: "Our exhibition makes a clear statement about the relevance of artistic interventions for societal debates. The JMB is celebrating twenty-five years as a space for reflection and dialogue. The perspective of the Jewish minority, which over the course of history has had to withstand many unbearable present times, is one of the exhibition's starting points. *The Opposite of Now* calls for a turnaround, an opposite, a better life for all."

The exhibition opening this evening will include a speech by Wolfram Weimer, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. Ahead of the opening, Minister of State Wolfram Weimer said on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Jewish Museum Berlin: "Since its founding, the Jewish Museum Berlin has been one of the most important cultural institutions in our country: it is a place where we engage in dialogue, where we come together and where we learn. It is a place that is continually adapting to new realities and a place that shows how freedom and diversity are not a provocation, but rather the very foundations of an open society. How lucky we are that this institution has been with us for 25 years. Its work represents a significant contribution to the success of our shared project of a free and peaceful country."

The exhibition was in large part made possible by the support of the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the FRIENDS OF THE JMB. Further support was provided by the Aventis Foundation, the Berliner Sparkasse, the foundation Stiftung am Grunewald, and Artis.

The catalogue *The Opposite of Now* (in German and English) will be published by Hirmer Verlag (280 pages, museum price: 39.90 euros, in stores: 45 euros. With contributions by Inke Arns, Hetty Berg, Diedrich Diederichsen, Sergio Edelsztein, Julia Friedrich, Shelley Harten, Mario Kramer, Yael Kupferberg, Elad Lapidot, Christoph Menke, David Riff, Benjamin Seroussi, Maayan Sheleff, Tal Sterngast, Joseph Vogl, and Cécile Wajsbrot.

The exhibition was curated by Julia Friedrich, Director of Collections and Exhibitions at JMB, and Shelley Harten, JMB Art Curator.

Duration: 4 until 10 Januar 2027
Location: Jewish Museum Berlin, old building, first level
Admission: 10 euros, reduced rate: 4 euros

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Up-to-date information about the exhibition and accompanying program can be found at
[The Opposite of Now | Jewish Museum Berlin](#)

Images are available for download at
[Press Images of Current Exhibitions.](#)

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Factsheet

The Opposite of Now ***Artistic Paths to a different Present***

Exhibition dates	4 September 2026 to 10 January 2027
Opening Hours	Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–6 pm mondays closed and on 12 & 13 September (Rosch ha-Schana), 21 September 2026 (Jom Kippur), 14 November 2026 (Award Ceremony for the Prize for Understanding and Tolerance) and 24 December (Christmas Eve)
Location	Jewish Museum Berlin, old building, first level
Admission	10 euros, reduced rate: 4 euros, free for children and teens under the age of 18; time-slot ticket required: https://tickets.jmberlin.de/
Website	https://www.jmberlin.de/en/opposite
Social Media	instagram.com/juedischesmuseumberlin tiktok.com/@juedischesmuseumberlin facebook.com/jmberlin linkedin.com/company/juedisches-museum-berlin youtube.com/jmberlinTube #TheOppositeOfNow, #GegenteilVonJetzt
Exhibition space	800 qm
Exhibition curator	Julia Friedrich and Shelley Harten
Project management exhibition	Gelia Eisert and Deniz Roth
Curatorial assistance	Atoscha Grünwald
Exhibition design	Schroeder Rauch, Berlin (Mira Schroder, Nicolas Rauch, Moritz Zielke)

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Creative design advertising
campaign

magma design studio GmbH & Co. KG
(Anna Cairns, Flo Gaertner)

Participating artists

Yael Bartana, Andrea Büttner, Chto Delat International, Arnold Dreyblatt, William Forsythe, Dana Kavelina, Alexander Kluge, Daniel Laufer, Ari Benjamin Meyers, Alona Rodeh, Eran Schaerf, Dor Zlekha Levy

Exhibits

Installations combining various media, video installations, audio installations, large-scale light and sound installations, photographs, glass works, woodcuts, prints on various media, sculpture, drawings on relief

Catalogue

Exhibition catalogue in German and English, published by Hirmer Verlag, 280 pages, museum price: 39.90 euros, in stores: 45 euros. With contributions by Inke Arns, Hetty Berg, Diedrich Diederichsen, Sergio Edelsztejn, Julia Friedrich, Shelley Harten, Mario Kramer, Yael Kupferberg, Elad Lapidot, Christoph Menke, David Riff, Benjamin Seroussi, Maayan Sheleff, Tal Sterngast, Joseph Vogl, and Cécile Wajsbrot.

Accompanying programme

3 September
Opening of the Exhibition
Welcome remarks by Hetty Berg, Director JMB, Wolfram Weimer, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, and the exhibition curators Julia Friedrich, Director of Collections and Exhibitions JMB and Shelley Harten, Curator of Art;
followed by a DJ set with Josiane, Natural wine and sparkling wine bar by Weinhandlung Suff, Food by Golda Deluxe

4 September
Esperoj
Artist talk with Dor Zlekha Levy, featuring Laila Mazal Yenishen

24 September
Counter-images and Counter-times
The philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman in conversation with literary scholar Sigrid Weigel

13 October
JMB Book Club featuring the novel *The Books of Jakob* (Die Jakobsbücher) by Olga Tokarczuk
Hosted by Monika Sommerer, director JMB Library, and Lothar Quinkenstein, translator

15 October
Factual Truth and the Impossible: Judaism and Utopian Thought
Lecture by Omri Boehm

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	4 November JMB Book Club Featuring <i>The Future</i> by Naomi Alderman Hosted by Monika Sommerer, director JMB Library, and Lena Kugler, writer and scholar of literature and culture 22 + 29 November <i>Superheroes – (Re)activating the World</i> Performance by the ACADEMY Stage Art School 26 November Zukunftsmusik #4 – <i>Beyond Time</i> with students of the Barenboim-Said Akademie, with singer Tehila Nini Goldstein, and pianist Yael Kareth 3 December <i>The Power of the Messianic: Alternatives to the Present</i> Conversation with Vivian Liska and Gertrud Koch (in German) Complete programme for the exhibition at a glance: https://www.jmberlin.de/en/exhibition-opposite-of-now#info-panel-opposite
Educational programme	- <i>Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel</i>: A play-based educational programme for children and adults in the exhibition: https://www.jmberlin.de/en/exhibition-opposite-kids-trail - Open Workshops for families with children aged seven and over, in German, English and Hebrew: https://www.jmberlin.de/en/workshop-what-if - Guided tour by the curators: https://www.jmberlin.de/en/curators-tour-the-opposite-of-now - Public Guided Tours: in German https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-german in English https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-english in Hebrew https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-hebrew - in Russian https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-russian - in Ukrainian https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-ukrainian
Digital feature/ online feature	- AI-powered media application in the exhibition M.O.O.N. (<i>My Opposite of Now</i>) invites visitors to reflect on their personal conception of the <i>Opposite of Now</i> and to explore it through dialogue with the AI – also available as feature on the JMB website: www.jmberlin.de/en/moon

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Accessible offers

- The exhibition opening will be interpreted into German Sign Language (DGS)
- Guided tours for blind and visually impaired visitors:
<https://www.jmberlin.de/en/guided-tour-the-opposite-of-now-for-blind-people>

General information on accessibility in the exhibition can be found at <https://www.jmberlin.de/en/opposite#accessibility>

Fundings

Made possible by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the FRIENDS OF THE JMB, with further support from the Aventis Foundation, the Berliner Sparkasse and the Stiftung am Grunewald, as well as Artis

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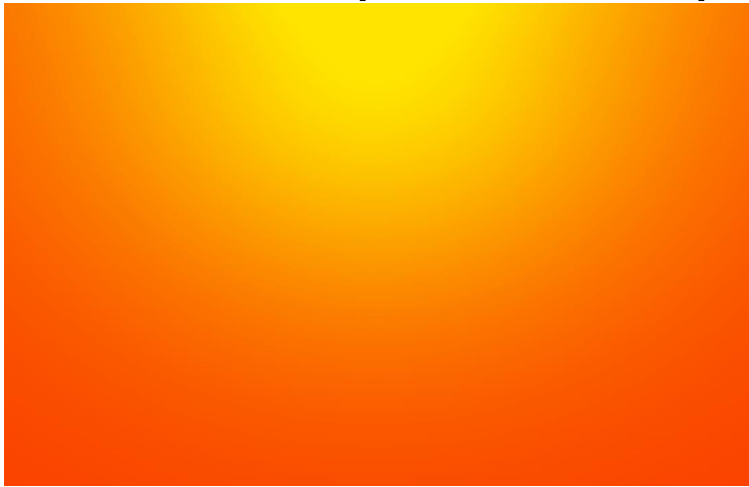
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Press release
3 September 2026

What If Everything Were Completely Different? A playful exploration of the Jewish Museum Berlin's anniversary exhibition with the *Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel*



Design: Magma Design Studio

From 4 September 2026, the new game *Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel* offers visitors of all ages a simple and stimulating way to explore the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a Different Present* at the Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB). Ephra, a Berlin-based organisation of art education, developed the game specially for the exhibition, which is the highlight of the JMB's twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations. The game can be played by all visitors until the exhibition ends on 10 January 2027.

The *Ephra-Trail* leads visitors right through the exhibition, inviting them to find their way into the artworks in an independent, playful, and inventive spirit. At the start of the trail, participants receive a bag to accompany them on their quest for clues. At the artworks, they encounter figures, sentence openings, and other elements of the game that they can collect and take along with them. Those components come together in the *Story Wheel*, located in the *Room for Reflection* at the middle of the exhibition. There, children and adults are invited to share in storytelling, playing, and probing the question: What if everything were completely different?

The *Ephra-Trail* takes its inspiration from the *carrier bag* theory of human evolution proposed by feminist author Elizabeth Fisher and followed up by Ursula K. Le Guin in her short essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*: the idea that humanity's first tool was one in which other things could be collected and carried. For Le Guin, that is how science fiction works as well.

The game *Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel* encourages detours and digressions – collecting, sharing, and communicating, thinking things through and imagining possibilities together. As such, it puts the exhibition's impulses into practice. The twelve artworks created for *The Opposite of Now* respond to

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the unsettling crises of our time by seeking paths into a different present. They ask about the power of individuals and the community to imagine a better life for everyone.

Ephra is a nonprofit organization carrying out projects and research in the field of cultural education. Its innovative work creates an interface between children and art, breaking down barriers to children's participation in culture. Ephra's projects are designed to foster democracy and emotional education through art.

Inspired by the *Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel*, the JMB will offer an open workshop format in the *Room for Reflection* on selected days during the exhibition. The workshop is intended for families with children aged seven and above. Working with art educators, participants create fabric tote bags to carry away their memories of the museum visit. The workshop facilitators speak German, English, and Hebrew. On Family Sundays, participation is free. On the other workshop days, there is a charge – in addition to the museum admission (free for children and young people under 18) – of €6, reduced rate €3. Further information and the full calendar of events can be found here:

[Workshop | What If Things Were Different?](#)

Exhibition dates: 4 September 2026–10 January 2027
Location: Jewish Museum Berlin, Old Building, Level 1
Admission: €10, reduced rate €4, free for children and young people under 18

For the latest information on the exhibition and its accompanying program, visit [The Opposite of Now | Jewish Museum Berlin](#).

Press images are available for download at [Press Images for Current Exhibitions](#).

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Press Images for the Exhibition *The Opposite of Now* *Artistic Paths to a different Present*

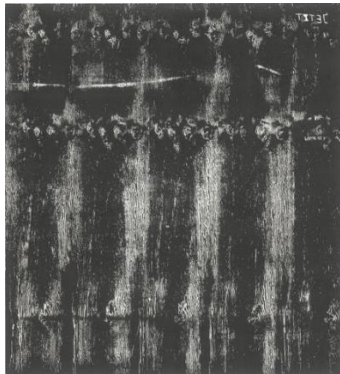
Runtime: 4 September 2026 – 10 January 2027

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The press images are available for download at
<https://www.jmberlin.de/en/press-images-current-exhibitions>

Object Images

Image	Caption	Credits
	Yael Bartana, <i>The Birds</i> , video still, 2026	Courtesy of Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam; Sommer Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv; Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan; Petzel Gallery, New York; Captain Petzel, Berlin and Cecilia Hillström Gallery, Stockholm
	Ari Benjamin Meyers, <i>Choir of Time Astronauts</i> , 2026	photo: Anna Tiessen

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Andrea Büttner, *Jetzt (Now)*,
woodcut on paper, 153,2 x 135
cm, 2025

photo: Andrea Büttner © VG
Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Alexander Kluge, *How Walter
Benjamin Explained the Weak
Messianic Power to Bertolt
Brecht*, video still, 2018

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Kluge



Dana Kavelina, *It Can't Be That
Nothing Can Be Returned*
video still, 2022/2026

Dana Kavelina



Dor Zlekha Levy, rehearsals for
the audio installation *Esperoj*
with the Musrara Student Choir
for Contemporary Music,
conducted by Laila Mazal
Yenishen, February 2026

photo: Dor Zlekha Levy



Chto Delat International,
*A Comprehensive Self-
Organized Amateur Expedition
in Search of Losses and
Discoveries*, project photo,
2026

photo: Chto Delat

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Daniel Laufer, *Echoes of Tomorrow*, video still, 2026

Daniel Laufer © VG Bild-Kunst,
Bonn 2026



Ari Benjamin Meyers, *Choir of Time Astronauts*, 2026, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin,
photo: Roman März



William Forsythe, *Backwards*, 2026, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin,
photo: Roman März



Dor Zlekha Levy, *Esperoj*, 2026, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin,
photo: Roman März



Yael Bartana, *Generationship*, 2024/2026 and *The Birds*, 2026, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin,
photo: Roman März

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Alona Rodeh, *Above and Beyond*, 2013/2026, Installation views CCA Tel Aviv

Alona Rodeh © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Arnold Dreyblatt, *reverse_time*, Berlin, 2026–2027, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin, photo: Roman März; Arnold Dreyblatt © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Eran Schaerf, *Through the Color Prism, and What Jacqueline Found There*, 2026, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin, photo: Roman März; Eran Schaerf © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2026



Ephra-Trail and Story Wheel, from the exhibition *The Opposite of Now: Artistic Paths to a different Present*

Jewish Museum Berlin, photo: Roman März

Einleitung

Julia Friedrich

Shelley Harten

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Introduction

Julia Friedrich

Shelley Harten

DE

Als die ersten Überlegungen aufkamen, mit welcher Ausstellung das Jüdische Museum Berlin sein 25-jähriges Bestehen feiern sollte, war niemandem zum Feiern zumute. Der 7. Oktober 2023 lag wenige Wochen zurück, der Gaza-Krieg hatte begonnen, und die Debatte darüber, wie sich Jüdinnen und Juden in Deutschland dazu verhalten und wie die Mehrheitsgesellschaft sich zu ihnen verhalten sollte, wurde bereits erbittert geführt. Der Krieg in der Ukraine schien schon damals kein Ende zu nehmen. Das Gefühl, sich in einer ausgeweglosen Situation zu befinden, lähmte das Denken. Eine Besserung, zumindest Erleichterung schien kaum vorstellbar, und die weiteren Entwicklungen – Trumps Wiederwahl, der Aufstieg der Rechtspopulisten, neue Kriege und verschärfte Krisen – haben die düstere Stimmung nur bestätigt.

Selten also war unser Bedürfnis nach einer anderen Gegenwart, einer Überwindung des bestehenden Zustands, so groß wie heute. Und selten war es so schwer, sich auch nur die allerersten Schritte auf dem Weg dorthin vorzustellen. Dieser Widerspruch ist der Ausgangspunkt der Ausstellung „Das Gegenteil von Jetzt“, die das Museum nun zu seinem Jubiläum ausrichtet. Die zwölf eigens entwickelten Projekte könnten dazu anregen, einem bedrückenden Status quo andere Vorstellungen entgegenzusetzen: geschichtlich überlieferte, neue und eigene. Sie laden

das Publikum ein, die eigene soziale Vorstellungskraft zu erkunden, ihre Grenzen und Beschädigungen wahrzunehmen und vielleicht auch ihr verschüttetes Potenzial wachzurufen. So unterschiedlich die Werke sind, alle beschäftigen sich mit utopischem Denken als einer Praxis im Hier und Jetzt, die auf einen besseren Zustand abzielt. Diese Praxis verschwindet nie. Aber sie verändert sich, sie hat eine bestimmte historische Gestalt. In unserer Ausstellung erscheint sie als subjektiver und kollektiver Versuch, in einer Situation, die als zunehmend ausgeweglos erscheint, dennoch nach Auswegen zu suchen. Die Perspektive der jüdischen Minderheit, die im Lauf ihrer Geschichte vielen unerträglichen Gegenwarten standhalten musste, bildet eine Grundlage. Die Ausstellung fragt nach einer Umkehr, einem Gegenteil, einem besseren Leben für alle.

Das Museum hat den Künstler*innen die Aufnahme eines Radiogesprächs von 1964 an die Hand gegeben, in dem Ernst Bloch und Theodor W. Adorno die „Möglichkeiten der Utopie heute“ diskutierten (der Text ist hier abgedruckt auf S. 40–61).¹ Die Philosophen jüdischer Abstammung hatten aus Deutschland fliehen müssen. In ihrem Denken reagierten sie auf den Zivilisationsbruch, die Ermordung der europäischen Jüdinnen und Juden, und blieben dennoch dem sozialen Fortschritt verpflichtet. Einig sind sich Bloch und Adorno darin, dass sich das Bestehende im Ganzen

Einleitung Introduction

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EN

As we began our discussions about what kind of exhibition the Jewish Museum Berlin should put on for its twenty-fifth anniversary, none of us was in the mood to celebrate. It was just a few weeks after October 7, 2023; the Gaza war had begun, and a bitter debate was already raging over how Jews in Germany should respond to it, and how the majority society should act toward them. Even then, it seemed as though the war in Ukraine would never end. Our minds were paralysed by the sense of being in a hopeless situation. An improvement, or at least some relief, was hardly imaginable, and subsequent developments—Trump's re-election, the rise of right-wing populists, new wars and worsening crises—have only confirmed the gloomy mood.

Rarely has our need for a different present, for overcoming the existing state of affairs, been as great as it is today. And even imagining just the very first steps on the path toward that has rarely been so difficult. This contradiction is the starting point for the exhibition *The Opposite of Now*, which the museum has now mounted for its anniversary. The twelve specially developed projects may inspire us to counter a stifling status quo with alternative visions: those handed down through history, new ones, and ones of our own. They invite the public to explore its own social imagination, to perceive its flaws and limits, and perhaps

also to summon up its buried potential. As diverse as the works are, they all engage with utopian thinking as a practice in the here and now, aimed at a better state of affairs. This practice never disappears. But it does change, for it always assumes a specific historical form. In our exhibition, it appears as a subjective and collective attempt to find ways out of a situation from which there increasingly seems to be no exit. The perspective of the Jewish minority, which throughout its history has had to endure many unbearable presents, forms a basis. The exhibition calls for a turnaround, an opposite, a better life for all.

The museum began its preparations by providing the artists with a recording of a radio debate from 1964 in which Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno discussed the *Possibilities of Utopia Today* (the text is given on pp. 40–61).¹ The philosophers, who were both of Jewish descent, had been forced to flee Germany. In their thoughts they reflected on the rupture in civilization and the murder of the Jews in Europe, while remaining committed to social progress. Bloch and Adorno agreed that the existing order must undergo a complete change. And while a better future cannot be written out in detail, a sense of the direction in which to seek it can be acquired.

In the exhibition space, this conversation has been juxtaposed with a quotation from Hannah Arendt,

ändern müsste. Das Bessere lässt sich nicht im Einzelnen „auspinseln“, aber das Gespür für die Richtung, in der es zu suchen wäre, lässt sich schulen.

Im Ausstellungsraum steht diesem Gespräch ein Zitat von Hannah Arendt gegenüber, die ebenfalls von den Nazis ins Exil getrieben wurde und in den folgenden Jahrzehnten immer wieder Herrschaft und Gewalt in den Blick nahm. Arendt beharrt, allen noch so fatalen Zwängen zum Trotz, auf einem Gestaltungsraum, der prinzipiell gegeben ist und keiner Generation verschlossen werden kann:

Weil jeder Mensch auf Grund des Geborensseins ein *initium*, ein Anfang und Neuankömmling in der Welt ist, können Menschen Initiative ergreifen, Anfänger werden und Neues in Bewegung setzen.²

Mit dieser Begabung zum Anfangen, die den Menschen zeit seines Lebens nicht verlässt, fängt auch die Ausstellung an. Der Komponist Ari Benjamin Meyers hat einen Chor zusammengestellt, dessen Sänger*innen mindestens neunzig Jahre alt sind. Der „Chor der Zeitastronauten“ wird in den Ausstellungsräumen proben, seinen Klang und sein Programm finden. Meyers Arbeit fragt nach dem Verhältnis von Erfahrung und Erfindung, Vereinzelung und Zusammenhang, Schöpfung und Fragilität. Der Chor wird kein Konzert geben,

sondern immer weiter proben, immer wieder anheben. Der zur Begleitung verwendete Blüthner-Konzertflügel gehörte der Pianistin Helga Bassel, die ihn 1936 mit ins Exil nach Südafrika nahm. Ihre Tochter Tessa Uys hat ihn dem Museum geschenkt, sie hoffte, dass er weiterhin gespielt wird. In Vitrinen liegen persönliche Gegenstände: Meyers hat die Teilnehmer*innen gebeten, etwas mitzubringen, das sie auf einer Reise ins Weltall bei sich haben wollten. Sie haben zudem Musikstücke oder andere Tondokumente ausgewählt, die sie auf goldene Schallplatten pressen lassen würden, wie sie im Jahr 1977 den Raumsonden Voyager 1 und 2 mitgegeben wurden, um extraterrestrische Zivilisationen mit der Menschheit bekannt zu machen.

Der „Chor der Zeitastronauten“ wird zehnmal proben. An den anderen Tagen wird sein Gesang über Raumton eingespielt. Auf einem Röhrenfernseher, einem Modell aus den 1960er-Jahren, das wie ein Astronautenhelm geformt ist, läuft eine Dokumentation, in der die Sänger*innen zu Wort kommen.

Mit dem Wechsel zum nächsten Raum bewegt sich die Ausstellung vom Allerfernsten zum Allernächsten, vom Weltraum zum vermeintlich Evidenten, dem eigenen Körper, aus dem sich aber keine Gewissheit ziehen lässt. Der Choreograph William Forsythe hat zwei Handlungsanweisungen („Instructions“) in den Rundgang eingefügt. Die eine hat er in die Nähe

who was also driven into exile by the Nazis and in the decades that followed repeatedly focused her mind on power and violence. Arendt insists that however dire the forces of coercion, there is room for manoeuvre, which in principle already exists and cannot be denied to any generation:

Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected.²

The exhibition commences with this gift for beginning, which never deserts a person throughout their life. The composer Ari Benjamin Meyers has assembled a choir whose singers are all in their nineties. The *Chor der Zeitastronauten* [Choir of the Time Astronauts] rehearses in the exhibition galleries and arrives at its own sound and program. Meyers's work explores the relationship between experience and invention, isolation and connection, creation and fragility. The choir does not give a concert, but continues to rehearse, raising their voices again and again. The Blüthner grand piano used in the event belonged to the pianist Helga Bassel, who took it with her into

exile in South Africa in 1936. Her daughter, Tessa Uys, donated it to the museum in the hope that it would continue to be played. In addition, personal belongings have been put on display in showcases: Meyers asked the participants to bring something they would want to have with them on a journey into space. They have also selected pieces of music or other audio recordings which they would like to have pressed on a golden disc, like those sent on the Voyager 1 and 2 space probes in 1977 to introduce extraterrestrial civilizations to humanity.

The choir will rehearse ten times. On the other days, a recording of their singing will be played over speakers. A documentary featuring the singers is on show on a vintage vacuum-tube television from the 1960s shaped like an astronaut's helmet.

Moving on to the next room, the exhibition shifts from the furthest reaches to right up close, from outer space to the supposedly self-evident—one's own body, which nevertheless fails to give any real certainty. The choreographer William Forsythe has incorporated two instructions into the exhibition circuit, one near the beginning and the other at the end. In a statement (p. 112), Forsythe relates these works to the discussion between Bloch and Adorno, which he sees as a debate about the path that should be taken, in this case a way out. Bloch regards the potential for utopias as

des Anfangs gerückt, die andere ans Ende. In einem Statement (S. 112) bezieht der Künstler diese Arbeiten auf das Gespräch zwischen Bloch und Adorno, das er als Auseinandersetzung um den richtigen Weg begreift, der in diesem Fall ein Ausweg wäre. Bloch sieht das utopische Potenzial im Jetzt verankert, etwa in Tagträumen, im „Noch-Nicht-Bewussten“, das bereits auf eine bessere Zukunft gerichtet ist. Adorno insistiert hingegen auf der „Negativität“ des Utopischen. Ließe es sich ans Bestehende anschließen, bliebe es ihm verhaftet, es wäre nur seine Fortsetzung.

In diesem Streit schlägt sich Forsythe auf Adornos Seite. Seine Anweisungen führen in einen „negativen Raum“, der sich nicht ausmessen lässt. Die erste Installation „Backwards“ fordert dazu auf, sich einige Schritte von einer Sitzbank zu entfernen, die Augen zu schließen und rückwärtsgehend zurückzufinden. Eine durchaus beängstigende Aufgabe. Schon beim ersten Versuch stellt sich heraus, dass sie fast unlösbar ist. Aber versuchen lässt es sich trotzdem, immer wieder: Auch das stellt sich heraus. Vielleicht geht es nicht ums Ankommen, sondern um die Bewegung, eine tastende Umkehr. Im großen Unbekannten lassen sich nur kleine Schritte machen, aber es bedarf auch nur kleiner Schritte, um ins große Unbekannte zu geraten. Diese Arbeit ist eine Schwelle. Es braucht Mut und Vorsicht, um sie zu überschreiten und zu den

folgenden Werken – und schließlich Forsythes zweiter Installation – zu gelangen.

Licht und Härte zeichnen **Dana Kavelinas** Film „It Can't Be That Nothing Can Be Returned“ aus. Er spielt in einer strahlenden Zukunft und blickt zurück auf den Krieg, den es dann längst nicht mehr gibt. Aber die Erinnerungen gibt es noch, die Traumata, denn in dieser Zukunft kehren die Toten, wenn sie es wollen, zurück ins Leben. Es wird möglich sein, die Atome ihrer Körper, die verstreut sind in der Erde und in den Wolken, zurückzuholen und erneut zusammenzusetzen.

Kavelina, die unter widrigen Bedingungen im ukrainischen Lwiw arbeitet, hat diesen Film 2022 produziert, in den Monaten nach Beginn des russischen Angriffs. Sie zeigt ihn nun erstmals außerhalb der Ukraine, in einer überarbeiteten Fassung, konzentriert auf die Szenen, die ihr noch relevant erscheinen. Mit seinem radikalen Szenario – einer wahren Makro-Utopie – lotet der Film die Grenzen utopischen Denkens aus. Er gibt auf den Krieg, dessen Rückkehr selbst unvorstellbar schien, eine Antwort, die die Vorstellungskraft aufs Äußerste anspannt: Die Toten werden wieder leben, weil nichts verloren ist und alles wieder an seinen Platz gerückt werden kann. Es zeigt sich aber, dass in dieser großen Einheit neue Widersprüche entstehen. Mit den Toten kehrt auch das Leid zurück,

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anchored in the present, such as in daydreams or the “not-yet-conscious,” which is already directed toward a better future. Adorno, on the other hand, insists on the “negativity” of the utopian. If it were to be linked to the existing order, it would remain bound to it and would be simply its continuation.

Forsythe takes sides with Adorno in this dispute. His instructions lead the visitors into a “negative space” that cannot be measured. The installation, *Backwards*, invites the viewer to take a few steps away from a bench, close their eyes, and find their way back by taking steps in reverse. A daunting task. Already on the first attempt, it is apparent that this is almost impossible. But one can try, over and over again, as also becomes clear. Perhaps it is not a matter of arriving, but of the movement itself, of a tentative reversal. Only small steps can be taken in the great unknown, but it also only requires small steps to arrive there. This work is a threshold, which takes courage and caution to cross in order to reach the next works—which conclude with Forsythe's second installation.

Light and harshness characterize **Dana Kavelina's** film *It Can't Be That Nothing Can Be Returned*. It is set in a radiant future and looks back on the war, which by then no longer exists. But the memories, the traumas, still do, because in this future the dead, if they wish, come back to life. It will be possible to retrieve the

atoms of their bodies, which are scattered in the earth and clouds, and put them back together again.

Kavelina, who produces her work under adverse conditions in Lviv, Ukraine, made this film in 2022, in the months following the start of the Russian invasion. She is now showing it for the first time outside Ukraine, in a revised version focused on the scenes she still considers relevant. With its radical scenario—a true macro-utopia—the film tests the limits of utopian thinking. It offers to the war, whose return itself seemed unimaginable, a response that stretches the imagination to its utmost: the dead will live again, because nothing is lost and everything can be put back in its place. It turns out, however, that new contradictions arise within this grand unity. Along with the dead, their suffering returns as well, as a memory that can be erased from their personal memory on request and fed into a memory bank of the collective, which thus becomes able to investigate the causes of violence and suffering. But how is one to live with the perpetrators, with the dead who have also killed? Must the slain live alongside their murderers? The film offers a response to this too, but it is an uncertain one (the perpetrators must relive the memories of the victims). Even after redemption, there is much that remains unredeemed.

als Erinnerung, die auf Wunsch aus dem persönlichen Gedächtnis getilgt und in einen Speicher des Kollektivs eingespeist wird, das so die Ursachen von Gewalt und Leid erforschen kann. Wie aber mit den Verursacher*innen leben, mit den Toten, die selbst getötet haben? Müssen die Erschlagenen mit ihren Mörder*innen leben? Auch darauf hat der Film eine Antwort, aber sie fällt unsicher aus (die Täter*innen müssen die Erinnerung der Opfer durchleben). Selbst nach der Erlösung bleibt vieles unerlöst.

Auch der jüdisch-polnische Augenarzt Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, um den es im benachbarten Raum geht, suchte nach einer Rettung im Konflikt. Er erfand 1887 im damaligen Russischen Kaiserreich die internationale Sprache Esperanto (übersetzt: Hoffender). In seinem Heimatort Białystok litten die Menschen unter ethnischen Spannungen und gegenseitigen Anfeindungen. Wie in der Hymne „La Espero“ (Die Hoffnung) beschrieben, sollte diese leicht zu erlernende Sprache den Menschen neben ihren Muttersprachen als gemeinsames Werkzeug dienen. In einer interaktiven Klanginstallation interpretiert **Dor Zlekha Levy** die Esperanto-Hymne neu, und zwar gemeinsam mit Mitwirkenden von der Musrara-Kunsthochschule in Jerusalem, einem weiteren Kriegs- und Krisengebiet. Die Komposition „Esperoj“ (Hoffnungen) untergräbt mit polyphonen, nicht hierarchisch geordneten

Klängen das Genre der identitätsstiftenden Lieder und damit auch nationalistische Tendenzen, die dem Frieden entgegenstehen. Rufe sind zu hören, aber es wird auch geflüstert. Mal bilden die Klangereignisse ein Durcheinander, mal harmonisieren sie. Der Künstler lädt die Besucher*innen ein, sich in einen Kreis zu setzen und zuzuhören. Jede Person, die den Zirkel betritt, trägt zur Klangfülle bei. Es scheint, als wäre man Teil einer veränderlichen Gemeinschaft, die versucht, den richtigen Ton zu finden und ins Gespräch zu kommen.

Um Sprache geht es auch in **Andrea Büttners** Holzschnitten. Sie fixieren Wörter und Sätze, allerdings in spiegelverkehrter Schrift. Das weist auf das Druckverfahren hin und damit auf die Präsenz des Kunstwerks selbst, das ja nicht allein etwas abbildet, sondern auch etwas ist. Die Sätze scheinen die Grundlagen dieser Arbeit auszusprechen. Auf dem einen Blatt stammen sie von Bloch: „I am. But I do not have myself. Hence only we are becoming.“³ Mit „becoming“ ist das Werden oder Wachsen angesprochen, also der Prozess, den das einzelne Bild gerade abschneidet, der Holzschnitt sogar im wörtlichen Sinn. Ein anderes Blatt zitiert aus dem 4. Buch Mose: „Ich sehe ihn, aber nicht jetzt“. In der jüdischen und christlichen Tradition kündigt diese Stelle die messianische Zukunft an, in Büttners Spiegelung gewinnt sie einen höchst

The Jewish-Polish ophthalmologist Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, who inspired the subject of the next room, also sought salvation in the midst of conflict. In 1887, in what was then the Russian Empire, he invented the international language Esperanto (“the hopeful one”). His hometown of Białystok was beset by ethnic tensions and mutual hostility. As described in his anthem *La Espero* (The Hope), this easily learned language is intended to serve as a common tool for people to use alongside their mother tongues. In an interactive sound installation, **Dor Zlekha Levy** reinterprets the anthem together with participants from the Musrara School of Art and Society in Jerusalem, another region affected by war and crisis. The composition *Esperoj* (Hopes) uses polyphonic, non-hierarchically arranged sounds to subvert the genre of songs aimed at forging identity and nationalist tendencies that stand in the way of peace. Calls can be heard, but also whispers. At times the sound events create a turmoil, at others they harmonize. The artist invites visitors to sit in a circle and listen. Everyone who takes a seat adds to the volume of the composition. It is as if one is part of a shifting community trying to find the right note to strike up a conversation.

Language is also the prime concern in **Andrea Büttner's** woodcuts. Her prints capture words and sentences, albeit in mirror-reversed script. This points

to the printing process and thus to the presence of the artwork itself, which does not merely depict something, but is also a thing in its own right. The sentences she has taken seem to articulate the foundations of this work. On one sheet they come from Bloch: “I am. But I do not have myself. Hence only we are becoming.”³ “Becoming” refers to the process of growing or emerging into being, the process which the individual image cuts off squarely, quite literally in the case of the woodcut. Another sheet cites the Book of Numbers: *Ich sehe ihn, aber nicht jetzt* (I see him, but I do not see him now). In the Jewish and Christian traditions, this passage heralds the messianic future, but through Büttner's mirror reversal it assumes a highly contradictory meaning: seeing remains for the moment blind, while the present remains for the moment absent. This is difficult to imagine, although somewhat easier within the reference systems involved here: religion, art, social utopias.

The decisive factor is the word “now,” which is all that is needed for the three remaining sheets. It also plays a major role in the second part of this installation: a display case containing white glass pestles (or glass bones), with one of the five letters of the word *Jetzt* (Now) fused to the interior (or marrow) of each of the individual pieces. Evidently the letter runs throughout the entire length of the glass, but it is only legible

widersprüchlichen Sinn: Das Sehen bleibt vorläufig blind, das Präsenze vorläufig abwesend. Das lässt sich schwer denken, wenn auch etwas leichter in den Referenzsystemen, auf die es hier ankommt: Religion, Kunst, soziale Utopie.

Entscheidend ist das Wort „Jetzt“, mit dem sich die drei übrigen Blätter begnügen. Es spielt eine Hauptrolle auch im zweiten Teil dieser Installation: einer Vitrine mit weißen Glaskolben (oder Glasknochen), in deren Inneres (oder Mark) je einer der fünf Buchstaben des Wortes „Jetzt“ eingeschmolzen ist. Offenbar die ganze Länge entlang, aber lesbar nur, weil es – wie beim Druck – einen Schnitt gab, dessen Kante das verborgene Zeichen preisgibt. Büttner hat den Ausstellungstitel „Das Gegenteil von Jetzt“ ins Gegenteil verkehrt: Das Jetzt wäre demnach nicht das Gegenwärtige, sondern ein Versprechen, das vielleicht gegeben wurde und sich vielleicht nicht erfüllen wird. Etwas Zerbrechliches, es lässt sich nicht abbilden, aber im Kunstwerk andeuten.

Auch der Philosoph Walter Benjamin, der sich 1940 auf der Flucht vor den Nazis das Leben nahm, fasst die „Jetztzeit“ als etwas Versprochenes und Erwartetes auf: als einen messianischen Augenblick, in dem die Menschheit ihre vermeintlich abgeschlossene Geschichte aufschließt, um alle unerfüllten Ansprüche einzulösen. Der im Frühjahr 2026

verstorbene **Alexander Kluge** berichtet in einem kurzen Film von einem (fiktiven) Gespräch zwischen Benjamin und dessen Freund Bertolt Brecht. Während dieser fortschrittsfroh dem „Pursuit of Happiness“ folgt, blickt Benjamin zurück auf die Vorfahren, deren Leid die Heutigen verpflichtet. Denn alle Lebenden verfügen über die „schwache messianische Kraft“ zu versöhnen, was den Toten angetan worden ist. Brecht überlegt, wie sich die „Richtungen“ der beiden revolutionären Pfeile beeinflussen. Vielleicht verstärkt sich die Wirkung?

Die „Kriegsmaschinen (nach James Ensor)“, die Kluge mithilfe von künstlicher Intelligenz – seiner „virtuellen Kamera“ – im zweiten Teil der Installation ins Bild setzt, beziehen aus der Überlappung von Zukunft und Vergangenheit tatsächlich eine subversive Kraft. Auf den ersten Blick könnten sie für neue Schrecken technologischer Kriegsführung stehen, auch für das bedrohliche Potenzial künstlicher Intelligenz. Aber sie sind eigentümlich bizarr ausgefallen, verzerrt, dysfunktional. In den Halluzinationen der KI erkennt Kluge etwas Überraschendes und Befreiendes: Die Technologie greift auf alte Bildmotive zurück, auf verschüttete Bestände, mit denen sie den Krieg aus dem Tritt bringt. Die abschließende Bildtafel zitiert einen Satz des Politikers Egon Bahr: „Ginge die Kunst in die Wirklichkeit, wäre für den Krieg Platz im Museum ...“

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because—much as in printing—a cut has been made leaving an edge that reveals the concealed letter. Büttner has turned the exhibition title *The Opposite of Now* into its opposite, making of *now* not the present but a promise that may have been made but will perhaps never be fulfilled. As something fragile, it cannot be depicted but may be hinted at in the artwork.

The philosopher Walter Benjamin, who took his life in 1940 while fleeing the Nazis, also conceives of the *Jetztzeit* (now-time) as something promised and anticipated: as a messianic moment in which humanity opens up its supposedly concluded history in order to fulfill all of its unmet claims. **Alexander Kluge**, who died in the spring of 2026, recounts in a short film a (fictional) conversation between Benjamin and his friend Bertolt Brecht. While the latter is full of optimism about progress and preaches the “pursuit of happiness,” Benjamin looks back to the ancestors, whose suffering places an obligation on people today. Because the living possess the “weak messianic power” to atone for what has been done to the dead. Brecht ponders how the “directions” of the two revolutionary arrows influence one another. Perhaps they mutually amplify the effect?

Kriegsmaschinen (nach James Ensor) [War Machines (After James Ensor)], which Kluge visualizes in the second part of the installation with the aid of

artificial intelligence—his “virtual camera”—derive a truly subversive power from the overlapping of past and future. At first sight, they represent the new horrors of technological warfare, and also the perilous potential of artificial intelligence. But they have turned out to be curiously bizarre, twisted, and dysfunctional. Kluge discerns something surprising and liberating in the hallucinations of AI: The technology picks up on old visual motifs, on buried archives, with which it throws war off balance. The concluding panel quotes a sentence from the politician Egon Bahr: “If art were to enter reality, war would find its place in the museum...”

The two works that follow tackle the messianic from a specifically Jewish angle: as an active expectation of a redemptive end of days that may never come to pass. This is a profound and contradictory concept that can develop by installative means at the museum, as in a rehearsal room. **Daniel Laufer's** video installation *Echoes of Tomorrow* follows the story of a fictional female art student at Isenburg Castle, the seat of the Offenbach University of Art and Design. She discovers that this was once a site of the Frankists, an eighteenth-century Jewish messianic movement that revolved around Jakob Frank, the movement's leader until his death, when he was succeeded by his daughter, Eva Frank. The Frankists believed that they had first to fall into a vale of lawlessness and sin, into the

Die beiden folgenden Arbeiten greifen das Messianische in einem spezifisch jüdischen Verständnis auf: als aktive Erwartung einer erlösenden Endzeit, die vielleicht nie eintreten wird. Ein tiefgründiges und widersprüchliches Konzept, das sich im Museum installativ entfalten kann wie in einem Probenraum.

Daniel Laufers Videoinstallation „Echoes of Tomorrow“ folgt der Geschichte einer fiktiven Kunststudentin im Isenburger Schloss, Sitz der Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach. Sie findet heraus, dass hier ein Standort der Frankisten war, einer jüdisch-messianischen Bewegung des 18. Jahrhunderts um Jakob Frank, deren Führung nach seinem Tod von seiner Tochter Eva Frank übernommen wurde. Die Frankisten glaubten, erst in ein Tal der Regellosigkeit und Sünde, der totalen Umkehrung gesellschaftlicher Konventionen, fallen zu müssen, bevor eine Erlösung stattfinden kann. In der Realität ihrer Zeit eröffnete dieses Modell Eva Frank als Frau gesellschaftliche Freiheiten, einen Ausbruch aus dem einengenden Jetzt.

In Laufers Schwarzweißfilm verschwimmen die Zeiten, Räume überlagern sich, und es wird für die Betrachtenden zunehmend schwieriger, zwischen der Protagonistin und der Messiasfigur Eva Frank, Realität und Fiktion, Mythos und Geschichte, Film und Ausstellungsraum zu unterscheiden. Der Film geht in den Museumsraum über, Kulissenteile von den

Dreharbeiten in Offenbach – Ziegelwandpaneele mit den Zeichen der Frankisten – treten aus der filmischen Projektion in die Wirklichkeit. Die Besucher*innen können dem Beispiel der Protagonistin und vielleicht auch der von ihr gespiegelten Eva Frank folgen, nach Auswegen suchen, nach Zeichen einer Gegenwelt, deren Realitätsgrad unklar bleibt. Als überlieferte jüdische Imagination aber hatte der Frankismus seine eigene Realität und Wirkungsgeschichte.

Der Exodus in **Yael Bartanas** Film „The Birds“ steuert ebenfalls auf die Erlösung zu. Ein Raumschiff, der Struktur des kabbalistischen Lebensbaums nachempfunden, soll die Erde verlassen, damit eine neue Zivilisation aufgebaut und dem Planeten eine Auszeit von Krieg und Zerstörung gegeben werden kann. Das Unternehmen hat sowohl utopisches wie dystopisches Potenzial, es könnte einen Ausweg für die Menschheit bedeuten oder das ultimative Scheitern. Eine Armee der Umkehr begleitet diese Reise. Soldaten, die ihren Dienst verweigern und sich von den Zwängen des Territorials befreien, entwickeln aus dem Pessach-Seder, der rituellen Nacherzählung des Auszugs der Juden aus Ägypten, eine moderne Version, die eine Befreiung imaginiert. Inspiriert von einer mittelalterlichen Niederschrift des rituellen Texts, einer Haggada, die Juden mit Vogelköpfen darstellt, setzt Bartana die Pessach-Geschichte in ein neues Licht.

total reversal of social conventions, before redemption could occur. Caught in the realities of her time, this model opened up social freedoms for Eva Frank as a woman, offering her an escape from a present dictated by social constraints.

In Laufer's black-and-white film, timelines blur and spaces overlap, making it increasingly difficult for viewers to distinguish between the protagonist and the messianic figure of Eva Frank, between reality and fiction, myth and history, film and exhibition space. The film spills into the museum gallery: pieces of scenery used for filming in Offenbach—brick wall panels bearing the symbols of the Frankists—step out of the cinematic projection into reality. Visitors can follow the example of the protagonist and perhaps also that of Eva Frank, whom she mirrors, searching for ways out, for signs of a counter-world whose level of reality remains unclear. Yet, as a handed-down Jewish imaginary, Frankism had its own reality and history of impact.

The exodus proposed by **Yael Bartana's** film *The Birds* also presents a scenario of redemption. Modeled on the structure of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, a spaceship is designed to leave Earth to build a new civilization and grant the planet a respite from war and destruction. The undertaking has a both utopian and dystopian potential; it could signify a way out for

humanity, or its ultimate failure. An Army of Defection accompanies this journey. Soldiers who lay down their arms and free themselves from territorial constraints develop a modern version of the Passover Seder—the ritual retelling of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt—that creates an imaginary of liberation. Inspired by a medieval manuscript of the ritual text, a Haggadah depicting Jews with birds' heads, Bartana casts the Passover story in a different light. The combination of the soldiers' uniforms and the bird heads—probably employed by the medieval illustrator to circumvent the prohibition on idolatry—creates a surreal quality. Bartana draws further on *The Birds*, the ancient Greek comedy by Aristophanes which envisions a new society in the heavens and questions the roles that the community assigns to its members.

A break with attributions also takes place in the neighboring room: what if the Western Wall were a nightclub, or the nightclub a hallowed place? In *Above and Beyond*, **Alona Rodeh** has employed packing cases in the museum to reconstruct the Kotel—the last standing wall of the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, and a central place of prayer for Jews. Light pulses through the cracks in the wall in sync with rhythmic music, which is composed from physically generated sounds such as whistling, stamping, and hand-clapping. The work is a response to the

Die Kombination der vom mittelalterlichen Illustrator wahrscheinlich wegen des Götzverbots eingesetzten Vogelköpfe mit den Soldatenuniformen gewinnt in dieser Inszenierung eine surreale Qualität. Die Künstlerin knüpft an „Die Vögel“ an, die antike griechische Komödie des Aristophanes, die eine neue Gesellschaft im Himmel entwirft und die Rollen infrage stellt, welche das Gemeinwesen seinen Mitgliedern zuschreibt.

Ein Bruch mit Zuschreibungen findet auch im benachbarten Raum statt: Was wäre, wenn die Klagemauer eine Diskothek wäre oder umgekehrt die Disko ein Ort des Erhabenen? In „Above and Beyond“ baut **Alona Rodeh** die Kotel, die letzte erhaltene Stützmauer des antiken jüdischen Tempels in Jerusalem und ein zentraler Ort des Gebets für Jüdinnen und Juden, mit Umzugskartons im Museum nach. Licht pulsiert durch die Spalten der Mauer, synchron mit einer rhythmischen Musik, die aus körperlich erzeugten Lauten wie Pfeifen, Stampfen und Klatschen zusammengesetzt ist. Die Arbeit ist inspiriert von dem israelischen Intellektuellen Jeschajahu Leibowitz, einem orthodoxen Juden, der nach dem Sechstagekrieg 1967 eine nationale Profanierung der Klagemauer angeprangert hatte: Sie solle am besten gleich in eine Disko umgewandelt werden, eine „Diskotel“. Rodeh nimmt Leibowitz' Polemik beim Wort. Aber sie überlegt auch, was passiert, wenn die Wirkkraft der Kotel von der Stadt

Jerusalem entkoppelt wird. Tatsächlich ist die Verortung Gottes im Judentum nicht gleichbedeutend mit der Lokalität des Tempels. Rodeh bezieht die Bedeutung der Praxis ein – eine durch Menschen aktivierte Nähe zu Gott, die sich überall herstellen lässt. Die Künstlerin fragt, ob die Kotel ebenso wie die heiligen Bücher der Tora in der Diaspora auf Tour gehen könnte. Vielleicht könnte sie in der Subkultur, einer gesellschaftlichen Parallele zur jüdischen Minderheitenkultur, eine neue Gemeinschaft hervorbringen, die inklusiv ist und divers.

Auch die folgende Arbeit fragt, was Menschen miteinander bewirken können. „Was tun?“ lautet die deutsche Übersetzung von **Chto Delat**: Die Gruppe exilierter Künstler*innen aus Russland hat ihren Namen von Schriften der Revolutionäre Nikolai G. Tschernyschewski und Lenin übernommen. In ihren Arbeiten sucht sie nach künstlerischen Wegen aus einem repressiven System, das die Freiheit aller bedrängt und damit auch die eigene künstlerische Praxis. Der hier gezeigte Film erzählt von einer Expedition der Gruppe von Hamburg nach Orgov, Armenien. Während verschiedener Reparatur-Aktionen an Hamburger Erinnerungsorten empfängt die Gruppe unverständliche Signale einer „Doomsday Radio Station“. Hier ließe sich ein Bezug zum Radiogespräch von Bloch und Adorno herstellen, das der Ausstellung einen Rahmen vorgab. Welche

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Israeli intellectual Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an Orthodox Jewish philosopher who, following the Six-Day War in 1967, denounced the national profanation of the Western Wall, saying one should simply turn it into a disco, a “diskotel.” Rodeh takes Leibowitz’s polemic at face value. But she also considers what happens when the Kotel’s power is decoupled from the city of Jerusalem. In Judaism, contact with God is not in fact dependent on the locality of the Temple. Rodeh focuses on actual meaning of the practice—finding closeness to God through personal activation, which can be performed anywhere. With this, she asks whether, like the holy books of the Torah, the Kotel could tour around the diaspora. If it were perhaps located in a subculture—a social parallel to Jewish minority culture—it could give rise to a new community that is inclusive and diverse.

The following work also asks what can be achieved by working together. “What is to be done?” is the English translation of **Chto Delat**—a group of exiled artists from Russia who took the name from the writings of the revolutionaries Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky and Lenin. In their art projects, they seek ways out of a repressive system that threatens everyone’s freedom, and, with that, their own artistic practice. The film shown here recounts an expedition that the group undertook from Hamburg to Orgov in Armenia. While

they were carrying out various repair actions at sites of remembrance in Hamburg, the group received a series of incomprehensible signals from a “Doomsday Radio Station.” A connection could be drawn here to the radio conversation between Bloch and Adorno, which laid down a framework for the exhibition. What signals can still be received from the 1960s? And what do visitors make of them? In its search for the mysterious transmitter, which has been active since the Cold War, Chto Delat finds an abandoned radio telescope and a huge, broken, unfinished solar collector in Orgov. The group members attempt to receive the signals by using their own bodies as antennas, and invite visitors to take a seat on a specially constructed bench and try the same.

The tour round the exhibition leads from Chto Delat back to the room with the pieces by Alexander Kluge and Andrea Büttner. All of the works in this small inner circuit of the exhibition project the past into a speculative future, thereby opening up the present. They point to a room for manoeuvre in which something can be redefined and given new shape. Laufer’s engagement with the Frankists sees potential in breaking the rules; Bartana’s reinterpretation of the medieval Haggadah transposes an ancient rite into outer space; Rodeh’s literal realization of Leibowitz’s polemic advocates a reassignment of the Kotel; and Chto Delat’s excursion

Signale aus den 1960er-Jahren können noch empfangen werden? Was können die Besucher*innen mit ihnen anfangen? Auf der Suche nach dem geheimnisvollen Sender, der seit dem Kalten Krieg aktiv ist, finden Chto Delat in Orgov ein verlassenes Radioteleskop und einen riesigen, kaputten, nie zu Ende gebauten Sonnenkollektor. Unter Einsatz ihrer eigenen Körper als Antennen versuchen sie, die Signale zu empfangen, und laden die Besuchenden dazu ein, auf einer eigens konstruierten Bank einen Platz zu finden, um es ihnen nachzutun.

Der Rundgang durch die Ausstellung führt zurück in den Raum mit den Arbeiten von Alexander Kluge und Andrea Büttner. Alle Arbeiten in diesem kleinen Binnen-Parcours der Ausstellung projizieren die Vergangenheit in eine spekulative Zukunft und öffnen damit die Gegenwart. Sie weisen auf einen Spielraum hin, in dem sich etwas neu bestimmen und gestalten lässt. Laufers Beschäftigung mit den Frankisten sieht Potenzial im Regelbruch, Bartanas Re-Interpretation der mittelalterlichen Haggada versetzt einen alten Ritus ins Weltall, Rodehs wörtliche Umsetzung der Polemik von Leibowitz plädiert für eine Umwidmung der Kotel und Chto Delats Exkursion schlägt neue Funken aus den postsowjetischen Trümmern. Erneut kommen die Besucher*innen an den Glasknochen Büttners vorbei, die als künstliche Relikte die

formbare, eher gemachte als vorgefundene Zeit selbst sichtbar machen.

Eben diese zeigt im folgenden Raum **Arnold Dreyblatt**, wenn auch in einer gänzlich anderen Anordnung. Der Künstler bezieht sich auf ein Kapitel in Franz Rosenzweigs „Der Stern der Erlösung“, einem Hauptwerk jüdischen Denkens im 20. Jahrhundert. Seine Installation besteht aus drei Monitoren in einem abgedunkelten Raum; in der Mitte dieses Dreiecks stehen die Betrachter*innen. Zwei Dreiecke, übereinander geschoben zum Davidstern, geben auch die Struktur von Rosenzweigs Buch vor. Die Spitzen des einen stehen für die Begriffe Gott, Welt und Mensch. Die des anderen für Schöpfung, Offenbarung und Erlösung, also für etwas Vergangenes, Gegenwärtiges und Künftiges. Dreyblatt greift die zeitliche Dimension auf, wenn er auf den Bildschirmen die – in Verse zerlegten – Sätze Rosenzweigs von drei Sprecherinnen unterschiedlichen Lebensalters vortragen lässt. Ein entscheidendes Wort lautet „Zwischen“: Es bezeichnet eine im Grunde unmögliche Zeit, die der gegenwärtige „Augenblick“ nicht erzeugen kann, auch wenn er „zwischen“ Vergangenheit und Zukunft seinen Ort haben müsste. Aber er hat keinen Ort, weil er „pfeilschnell“ verfliegt.

Das Museumspublikum könnte allerdings wahrnehmen, dass es tatsächlich im Zwischen steht,

conjures up electrifying ideas from post-Soviet ruins. And visitors pass once again by Büttner's glass bones, which, as an artificial relic, give visibility to the malleable nature of time itself—a time that is made rather than found.

It is precisely this that **Arnold Dreyblatt** displays in the next room, albeit in a completely different setting. Dreyblatt references here a chapter from Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*, a seminal work of twentieth-century Jewish thought. His installation consists of three monitors in a darkened room that form a triangle around the viewers standing at the center. Two further triangles, superimposed to form the Star of David, also convey the structure of Rosenzweig's book. The points of one triangle represent the concepts of God, the world and humanity, while those of the other triangle represent creation, revelation, and redemption—things past, present and future. Dreyblatt engages with the temporal dimension by having three female speakers of different ages recite Rosenzweig's sentences—rendered into verses—on the screens. A crucial word here is “between,” for it denotes a fundamentally impossible time that the present “moment” cannot produce, even though it ought to have its place “between” the past and the future. A mere moment does not stay still, though; it vanishes in a trice.

The museum audience may notice, though, that they themselves are standing betwixt and between, between the narrators, the sentences, and the listeners. Dreyblatt has staged the opposite of the moment, a “station” at which Rosenzweig's philosophy condenses into a collective sensory experience. His installation is called *reverse time*, because here time is conceived from the future, which “draws everything toward itself.” Yet the future is the time of redemption. Adorno also states that we must regard things “from the standpoint of redemption.”⁴ Even though this is an impossibility for human beings, the maxim urges us not to let the present rush past, but instead to deem it in need of redemption and identify its “cracks and fissures.”⁵

In the final room, **Eran Schaerf's** *Through the Color Prism, and What Jacqueline Found There* reminds us of some of these cracks. The artist has laid out posters on the floor depicting books: the personal library of the Israeli publicist Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–1979), as imagined by Schaerf on the strength of her writings. The books are grouped on the posters according to the social conflicts with which Kahanoff occupied herself: gender relations, the aftermath of colonial rule, and the relationship between the state and minorities. The intellectual model of an “amateur” (Schaerf), a person who loves reading and takes in every

zwischen den Sprecherinnen, den Sätzen und inmitten derer, die sie hören. Dreyblatt hat ein Gegenteil des Augenblicks inszeniert, eine „Haltestelle“, an der sich Rosenzweigs Philosophie verdichtet zu einer kollektiven sinnlichen Erfahrung. Seine Installation heißt „reverse_time“, weil die Zeit hier von der Zukunft her gedacht ist, die alles an sich „heranreißt“. Die Zukunft aber ist die Zeit der Erlösung. Auch bei Adorno heißt es, Denken müsse die Dinge „vom Standpunkt der Erlösung aus“⁴ betrachten. Das ist keinem Menschen möglich. Aber die Maxime fordert dazu auf, das Jetzt nicht vorbeirauschen zu lassen, sondern als erlösungsbedürftig wahrzunehmen und seine „Risse und Schründe“⁵ zu bestimmen.

An einige dieser Risse erinnert uns im letzten Raum **Eran Schaerfs** „Through the Color Prism, and What Jacqueline Found There“. Der Künstler hat auf dem Boden Plakate ausgelegt, die Bücher zeigen: die Bibliothek der israelischen Publizistin Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–1979), von Schaerf anhand ihrer Schriften imaginiert. Die Bücher sind auf den Plakaten gruppiert entlang der sozialen Konflikte, mit denen sich Kahanoff beschäftigt hat: Geschlechterverhältnisse, die Folgen kolonialer Herrschaft, das Verhältnis von Staat und Minderheiten. Das intellektuelle Modell einer „Amateurin“ (Schaerf), einer Liebhaberin des Lesens, die alle erdenklichen Einflüsse verarbeitet,

schlägt auch auf die Sache durch, die sie zu ihrer eigenen macht: auf das Konzept des Levantinismus, das Kahanoff dem Zionismus entgegenstellt. Es bezieht sich auf die Koexistenz der Menschen in der Levante, am Ostrand des Mittelmeers, die mit dem Aufkommen der Nationalstaaten ein Ende fand. Aber Spuren haben sich erhalten, in Israel etwa bei Nachkommen misrachischer Jüdinnen und Juden, die lange vor den zionistischen Einwander*innen in der Gegend lebten, in einem Nebeneinander von Mehr- und Minderheiten, das sich von Ort zu Ort anders zusammensetzt.

Levantinismus ist also nicht nur Gegenmodell zum Nationalismus, sondern Modell eines Austauschs von Differenzen. Kahanoffs Bild dafür ist das Prisma, das Einheiten fragmentiert und die Fragmente wiederum verbindet. Schaerfs Installation schickt die Besucher*innen nicht auf den Weg von Lewis Carrolls Alice „Through the Looking Glass“ ins Land der Gegenteile. Sondern auf Kahanoffs Weg: *Through the Color Prism* ins Land der Gegenstücke, die sich aneinanderfügen, ein Ganzes ergeben, das brüchig bleibt und beweglich. Die Plakate erinnern daran, dass das ein einigermaßen gewöhnlicher Vorgang ist. Man muss nur lesen, die eigenen Konflikte auf andere beziehen, Vertrautes zerlegen, Neues anbinden.

Die Ausstellung endet mit **William Forsythes** zweiter „Instruction“, der Aufforderung: „Attempt to walk

conceivable influence, also resonates with the subject she made her own: the concept of Levantinism, which Kahanoff contrasts with Zionism. It refers to the coexistence of peoples in the Levant, on the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, which came to an end with the emergence of the nation states. But traces have survived, as for instance in Israel among the descendants of Mizrahi Jews who, long before the Zionist immigrants, lived in the region where majorities and minorities coexisted in compositions that varied from one place to another.

Levantinism is thus not merely a counter-model to nationalism, but a model for an intercommunion of differences. Kahanoff's image for this is the prism, which splits units into fragments while at the same time linking the fragments together. Schaerf's installation does not send visitors down the path that Lewis Carroll's Alice took in *Through the Looking-Glass*, into the land of opposites. Rather, it sends them down Kahanoff's path, *Through the Color Prism*, into the land of counterparts that fit together, forming a whole that remains fragile and fluid. The posters serve to

remind us that this is a fairly common process. We must simply read, relate our own conflicts to others, tease the familiar apart, and connect to the new.

The exhibition concludes with **William Forsythe's** second instruction: *Attempt to walk without rhythm*. If the first—*Backwards*—demands courage in order to enter the “negative space” without due prospect of arrival, the second might seem quite formidable. It is essentially the same challenge, but this time more abstract and thus far more radical, because it already commences before the physical experience begins. Walking without rhythm first requires a pause for thought, a plan, mental preparation. What is walking without rhythm like? How do I go about it? Is there a solution, or more than one, or none at all?

In other words, here imagination is called for prior to action—imagination before the production of a solution. The work makes no statement as to its aims or its possible content. It stops at that point. It is up to us to venture forth. An attempt is always possible, even if success proves otherwise.

without rhythm“. Wenn die erste – „Backwards“ – nach Mut verlangt, um den „negativen Raum“ ohne Aussicht auf ein Ankommen zu betreten, so könnte die zweite geradezu überfordernd wirken. Es ist im Grunde dieselbe Herausforderung, aber sie fällt hier abstrakter und damit weitaus radikaler aus, weil sie noch vor der körperlichen Erfahrung ansetzt. Ohne jeden Rhythmus zu gehen, das setzt zunächst eine Überlegung voraus, einen Plan, eine gedankliche Vorwegnahme. Was wäre

Gehen ohne Rhythmus? Wie stelle ich das an? Gibt es eine Lösung, mehr als eine, überhaupt keine?

Mit anderen Worten: Vor der Produktion ist hier die Imagination gefragt. Vor dem Herstellen einer Lösung das Vorstellen. Worauf es sich richtet, welchen Inhalt es hat, dazu trifft das Werk keine Aussage. Es bleibt an dieser Stelle stehen. Losgehen müssen wir selbst. Der Versuch bleibt möglich, selbst wenn das Gelingen unmöglich wäre.

1 Ernst Bloch/Theodor W. Adorno, „Möglichkeiten der Utopie heute“. Rundfunkgespräch mit Horst Krüger, Erstausstrahlung: Südwestfunk (SWF), 6. Mai 1964. Zu hören unter https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_w5E2-ABxyQ. Publiziert unter: Etwas fehlt ... Über die Widersprüche der utopischen Sehnsucht,

in: Rainer Traub/Harald Wieser (Hgg.), Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch, Frankfurt am Main 1975, S. 58–77.

2 Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, München 1981, S. 166.

3 Im Holzschnitt in englischer Sprache. Bloch schreibt auf Deutsch: „Ich bin. Aber ich habe mich nicht.

Darum werden wir erst.“, in: Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main 1985, S. 13.

4 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, Frankfurt am Main 1989, S. 333.

5 Ebd., S. 334.

1 Ernst Bloch/Theodor W. Adorno, *Möglichkeiten der Utopie heute*. Radio debate with Horst Krüger, first radio broadcast: Südwestfunk (SWF), May 6, 1964. Listen to it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_w5E2-ABxyQ (German only). Published under: “‘Something’s Missing.’ A Discussion Between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of

Utopian Longing,” in: Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature. Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes/Frank Mecklenburg, London/Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 1988, 1–17.

2 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago/London, 1958, 177.

3 Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985, 13; translation

cited from Ivan Boldyrev, “Ernst Bloch,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2025 Edition), Edward N. Zalta/Uri Nodelman eds., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/bloch/>

4 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott, London: Verso, 1978, 153.

5 Ibid.

Ari Benjamin Meyers

**Chor der
Zeitastronauten**

Der Chor der mindestens Neunzigjährigen hebt ab ins All, singend, voller Zuversicht und Entdeckergeist.

Ari Benjamin Meyers hat seinen *Chor der Zeitastronauten* gebeten, persönliche Objekte mitzubringen, die auf dem großen Flug im Gepäck sein müssen. Vorerst liegen sie noch in Vitrinen. Der Chor wird kein Konzert geben.

DE

Aber er wird immer wieder neu ansetzen, immer weiter proben, begleitet auf einem Flügel, den die Pianistin Helga Bassel 1936 mit ins Exil nahm. Falls Sie Glück haben, probt der Chor heute ein von Meyers für ihn komponiertes Stück. An den anderen Tagen hören und sehen Sie eine Aufzeichnung. Im Fernsehen laufen außerdem Interviews mit den Zeitastronaut*innen.

The choir of people aged ninety or older lifts off into space, singing, full of confidence and a spirit of discovery.

Ari Benjamin Meyers has asked his *Choir of the Time Astronauts* to choose personal objects that they absolutely must have with them on the journey. For now, these items are still in their showcases. The choir will not perform a concert. But it will start over again and again, endlessly rehearsing, accompanied on a grand piano that pianist Helga Bassel took with her into exile in 1936. If you're lucky, today will be one of the days on which the choir is rehearsing a piece composed for them by Meyers. On other days, you'll hear and see a recording. Interviews with the time astronauts also air on a nearby television.

EN

William Forsythe

Backwards

**Attempt to walk
without rhythm**

DE

Das Museum hat den Künstler*innen die Aufnahme eines Radiogesprächs an die Hand gegeben, in dem die Philosophen Ernst Bloch und Theodor W. Adorno 1964 die „Möglichkeiten der Utopie heute“ diskutierten. (Zu hören und lesen im *Denkraum* in der Mitte der Ausstellung.) Während für Bloch das Utopische bereits in der Gegenwart aufscheint, betont Adorno, es müsse etwas Anderes und Unvertrautes sein. Zwei Handlungsanweisungen des Choreographen William Forsythe vermitteln praktische Erfahrungen mit dem Unvertrauten. Hier die erste. Sie fordert uns auf, rückwärts mit geschlossenen Augen den Weg zu finden. Die zweite schickt uns aus der Ausstellung ins Leben mit der Aufforderung, „ohne Rhythmus zu gehen“. Wie lässt sich das anstellen? Wie auch nur vorstellen? Wir müssen es ausprobieren.

EN

The museum provided the artists with the recording of a radio conversation from 1964 in which philosophers Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno discussed *Possibilities of Utopia Today*. (You can listen to it or read it in the *Room for Reflection* in the middle of the exhibition.) While for Bloch the utopian already shines through in the present, Adorno stresses that it must be something other and unfamiliar. Two sets of instructions from choreographer William Forsythe offer practical experiences with the unfamiliar. Here is the first: it challenges us to find our way walking backwards with our eyes closed. The second sends us out of the exhibition and back to our everyday lives with the demand that we “walk without rhythm.” How can that be done, or even imagined? We have to try it.

Dana Kavelina

**It Can't Be That
Nothing Can Be
Returned**

DE

Wie lässt sich der Krieg überwinden, der Tod umkehren? Diese Fragen stellt der Film von Dana Kavelina, einer Künstlerin, die unter widrigen Bedingungen im ukrainischen Lwiw arbeitet. Kurz nach Beginn des russischen Angriffs entwarf sie ein utopisches Szenario: In der Zukunft versuchen die Menschen, die Ursprünge der Gewalt zu verstehen. Dank einer hochentwickelten Technologie können sich die Toten des Krieges für eine Auferstehung entscheiden. Ihre traumatischen Erinnerungen können aus dem persönlichen Gedächtnis entfernt und von allen erforscht werden. Für Kavelina ist dieser Film so wenig abgeschlossen wie der Krieg. Er entwirft das Modell eines radikalen Neuanfangs, einer gewaltfreien Zukunft, in der aber fundamentale Fragen – etwa die nach Schuld und Vergeltung – noch gelöst werden müssen.

EN

How can war be overcome and death reversed? These are the questions asked in the film by Dana Kavelina, an artist working under adverse conditions in Lviv, Ukraine. Shortly after the start of the Russian invasion, she conceived a utopian scenario: In the future, people are seeking to understand the origins of violence. Thanks to a highly sophisticated technology, those who died in the war can choose to be resurrected. Their traumatic memories can be removed from their personal consciousness and studied by everyone. For Kavelina, this film is no more completed than the war itself is over. It sketches the model of a radical new beginning, a nonviolent future, but one in which fundamental questions—such as those of guilt and retribution—still remain to be solved

Dor Zlekha Levy

Esperoj

DE

Es ist fast unmöglich, zwischen verfeindeten Gruppen eine gemeinsame Sprache zu finden. Das bewegte den polnisch-jüdischen Augenarzt L.L. Zamenhof 1887 zur Erfindung der internationalen Sprache Esperanto. Seine Hymne *La Espero* (*Die Hoffnung*) wird hier von Dor Zlekha Levy gemeinsam mit einer vielfältig zusammengesetzten Gruppe von Musikern neu interpretiert. Gemeinsam wollen sie den richtigen Ton treffen und die Einförmigkeit herkömmlicher Nationalhymnen überwinden. Die Komposition *Esperoj* (*Hoffnungen*) ist ein vielstimmiges Klangereignis. Seine Länge und Komplexität hängen von der Zahl der Zuhörer*innen ab. Wenn mehr Personen dem Kreis beitreten, wird der Klang dichter und voller. Der Versuch, miteinander ins Gespräch zu kommen, gewinnt an Kraft.

EN

It is all but impossible to find a common language between hostile groups. That is what inspired Polish-Jewish ophthalmologist L.L. Zamenhof to devise the international language Esperanto in 1887. Here, his anthem *La Espero* (*The Hope*) is given a new interpretation by Dor Zlekha Levy in collaboration with an eclectic group of musicians. Together, they seek to strike the right note and overcome the uniformity of traditional national anthems. The composition *Esperoj* (*Hopes*) is a polyphonic sound event. Its length, tension, and complexity are dependent on the number of listeners. When more people join the circle, the sound becomes denser and fuller, reinforcing our experience of voices seeking to enter into conversation with one another.

Denkraum

Room for Reflection

Wir hasten oft gedankenlos von einem Moment – von einem *Jetzt* – zum nächsten. Dieser Raum lädt zum aktiven Tagträumen ein, zur Ausschau nach einem *Gegenteil*. Alle sind eingeladen, sich mit den „Möglichkeiten der Utopie heute“ zu beschäftigen: dem für diese Ausstellung zentralen Radiogespräch von Ernst Bloch und Theodor W. Adorno aus dem Jahr 1964. Was teilt uns dieses Gespräch heute mit?

DE

Entwerfen Sie mit Hilfe von M.O.O.N. – der Ausstellungs-KI *My Opposite of Now* – Ihr eigenes Gegenteil von Jetzt. Vertiefen Sie sich in Texte von Autor*innen, die das Konzept der Ausstellung und die Kunstwerke beeinflusst haben. Junge Besucher*innen können die „Bausteine“ der Ausstellung in das „Geschichten-Rad“ einsetzen und so eine neue Erzählung erfinden.

We often rush thoughtlessly from one moment—one *now*—to the next. This space invites us to actively daydream, to be on the lookout for an *opposite*. All are invited to engage with *Possibilities of Utopia Today*, the radio conversation from 1964 between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno that is central to this exhibition. What does this conversation have to say to us today?

EN

Construct your own opposite of now with the help of M.O.O.N., the exhibition's AI chatbot, *My Opposite of Now*. Delve deeper into texts by authors who influenced the exhibition's concept and its artworks. Young visitors can insert the exhibition's “building blocks” into the “story wheel” to create a new story.

Alexander Kluge

Wie

Walter Benjamin

Bertolt Brecht

die schwache

messianische Kraft

erklärte

Kriegsmaschinen

(nach James Ensor)

DE

Selten stand das Gespräch zweier großer Denker unter einem so schlechten Stern: Der Dramatiker Bertolt Brecht und der Philosoph Walter Benjamin befanden sich auf der Flucht vor den Nazis. Bald drohte Krieg von allen Seiten. Und doch sprachen die beiden über die „schwache messianische Kraft“, die den Menschen gegeben ist, um sogar die gescheiterten Hoffnungen einzulösen. So stellt es sich Alexander Kluge vor. Er spinnt die Unterhaltung fort und zeigt: Brechts und Benjamins Denken bleibt von hoher Dringlichkeit, weil es in Gefahr und größter Not auf Gegenkräfte vertraut. Eigentümlich bizarr sind Kluges *Kriegsmaschinen (nach James Ensor)* ausgefallen. Der Künstler hat sie mit künstlicher Intelligenz konstruiert: Deren Halluzinationen bringen den Krieg aus dem Tritt.

EN

Rarely has a conversation between two great thinkers been more ill-starred. Playwright Bertolt Brecht and philosopher Walter Benjamin were fleeing the Nazis. War soon threatened on all sides. And yet what the two elected to talk about was the “weak messianic power” that is given to human beings so that they can redeem even shattered hopes. This is how the scene is imagined by Alexander Kluge. He spins the conversation onward and shows that Brecht’s and Benjamin’s thinking is still urgently relevant, since it places its trust in counterforces in a situation of danger and deep distress. Kluge’s *War Machines (after James Ensor)* are eccentric and bizarre. The artist constructed them using artificial intelligence; AI’s hallucinations throw war off its stride.

Andrea Büttner

Jetzt

Jetzt

Jetzt

**I am. But I do not
have myself.**

**Hence only we are
becoming.**

**Ich sehe ihn, aber
nicht jetzt**

Jetzt

Wir können uns vom Bestehenden fortbewegen, zumindest in Gedanken. Aber wohin geraten wir dann? Vielleicht in das Zwischenreich, das Andrea Büttners Tafeln in Spiegelschrift ausschildern. Auf einem der Drucke – in englischer Übersetzung – Sätze Ernst Blochs: „Ich bin. Aber ich habe mich nicht. Darum werden wir erst.“ Auf einem anderen ein Vers aus der Tora: „Ich sehe ihn, aber nicht jetzt“.

DE

Das ist höchst widersprüchlich: Das Sehen bleibt vorläufig blind, das Präsente abwesend. Auflösen kann den Widerspruch nur die Zeit. Bloch beschreibt sie als ein „Werden“, der Tora-Vers als ein Warten auf „ihn“, den Messias. Seine Ankunft wäre der Augenblick der Erlösung, der plötzlich da ist: „jetzt“. Das Wort „Jetzt“ ist auch in Büttners Glaskolben eingeschmolzen. Es steckt darin wie ein Versprechen, an den Schnittkanten tritt es zutage.

We are capable of moving away from the existing order, at least in thought. But where does that lead us? Perhaps to the in-between realm for which Andrea Büttner provides the signposts with her prints, in mirror writing. On one of them are statements by Ernst Bloch in English translation: “I am. But I do not have myself. Hence only we are becoming.” On another is a verse from the Torah: “I see him, but I do not see him now.” This is quite contradictory: seeing, for the time being, is blind; the present is absent. The only thing that can resolve the contradiction is time. Bloch describes it as a “becoming,” the Torah verse as a waiting for “him,” the Messiah. His arrival will constitute the moment of redemption, which is suddenly there: “now.” The word “now” is also melted into Büttner’s glass pestles. It lies within them like a promise, coming to light at the cut edges.

EN

Daniel Laufer

Echoes of Tomorrow

DE

Im Isenburger Schloss – dem heutigen Sitz der Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach – lebte Eva Frank (1754–1816), die erste und bis heute einzige weibliche jüdische Messiasfigur. In Daniel Laufers Film erfährt die Kunststudentin Lena von dieser außergewöhnlichen Geschichte. Sie folgt den Spuren der Frankisten und entdeckt eine messianische Bewegung, die das Zeitalter der Erlösung mit einer radikalen Umkehr gesellschaftlicher Konventionen einleiten wollte. Nur so konnte eine Frau als Heilsbringerin verehrt werden. Ein Leben jenseits fester Regeln versprach Freiheit, einen Ausbruch aus dem einengenden Jetzt. In seiner Installation lässt Laufer Zeiten und Räume ineinanderfließen. Lena wird zu Eva Frank, das Museum zum Schauplatz ihrer Vorstellungskraft.

EN

Isenburg Castle, which today houses the Offenbach University of Art and Design, was home to Eva Frank (1754–1816), the first and, to this day, only female Jewish messiah figure. In Daniel Laufer's film, the art student Lena learns of this extraordinary history. She follows the traces of the Frankists and discovers a messianic movement that sought to usher in the age of redemption through a radical reversal of social conventions. Only through such a reversal could a woman be revered as a bringer of salvation. A life beyond fixed rules promised freedom, an escape from the confining and constraining now. In his installation, Laufer dissolves the boundaries between different times and spaces. Lena turns into Eva Frank, and the museum becomes the stage for her imagination.

Yael Bartana

The Birds

DE

Unser Planet braucht eine Pause – von uns, die wir Krieg und Zerstörung bringen. Deshalb soll eine neue Menschheit im Himmel entstehen. Yael Bartana entwirft ein Raumschiff, das viele Generationen ins All tragen wird. Es hat die Form des kabbalistischen Lebensbaums: in der jüdischen Mystik das Symbol einer harmonischen Ordnung, die zerbrochen ist und von den Menschen wiederhergestellt werden muss (*Tikkun Olam*: die „Reparatur der Welt“). Den Anfang machen Soldat*innen, die dem Krieg den Rücken kehren und die Pessach-Geschichte des Auszugs aus Ägypten zum Fahrplan ihrer Reise machen. Bis heute wird diese Erzählung jedes Jahr an Pessach gelesen. Eine mittelalterliche Handschrift, die mit Vogelköpfen illustriert ist, hat die Künstlerin zu dieser Arbeit angeregt – zur Vorahnung einer künftigen Gesellschaft über den Wolken.

EN

Our planet needs a break—from us, as bringers of war and destruction: we need to found a new humanity in the heavens. This artwork thus sets its sights on founding a new humanity in the heavens. Yael Bartana has designed a spaceship to carry many generations into outer space. It takes the form of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life—in Jewish mysticism the symbol of a harmonious order which is shattered and must be restored by human beings (*tikkun olam*: “repairing the world”). The first to embark are soldiers who turn their back on war and take the Passover story of the Exodus from Egypt as the roadmap for their journey. To this day, this narrative is read every year during Passover. A medieval manuscript illustrated with birds’ heads inspired the artist to create the work, which foretells a future society above the clouds.

Alona Rodeh

Above and Beyond

DE

Die Klagemauer – hebräisch „Kotel“ – in Jerusalem ist ein zentraler Ort des Gebets für Jüdinnen und Juden. Die Künstlerin baut sie mit Kartons im Museum nach. Aus den Spalten im Gemäuer, dort, wo im Original Zettel mit Wünschen platziert werden, pulsiert Licht synchron mit einer Musik aus Klatschen, Pfeifen und Stampfen. Die Arbeit ist inspiriert von dem israelischen Intellektuellen Jeschajahu Leibowitz, einem orthodoxen Juden, der nach dem Krieg von 1967 eine Profanierung der Klagemauer kritisierte: Sie solle am besten gleich in eine Disko umgewandelt werden, eine „Diskotel“. Rodeh nimmt Leibowitz’ Polemik beim Wort und kehrt sie doch um. Sie inszeniert einen Ort des Tanzes und einer Gemeinschaft, die inklusiv ist und divers.

EN

The Western Wall in Jerusalem—“Kotel” in Hebrew—is a central place of prayer for Jewish people, where visitors tuck slips of paper inscribed with their wishes into crevices in the wall. The artist has recreated it in the museum using cardboard. Light pulses from the crevices, in sync with music made up of clapping, whistling, and stamping. The work was inspired by the Israeli intellectual Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an Orthodox Jew who criticized the Western Wall’s profanation after the 1967 war, remarking that it might as well be turned into a disco—a “discotel.” Rodeh takes Leibowitz’s polemic at face value and yet turns it on its head, creating a space for dancing and for a diverse, inclusive community.

Chto Delat International

**A Comprehensive
Self-Organized
Amateur Expedition
in Search of Losses
and Discoveries**

DE

Ein geheimnisvolles Signal verstört in Hamburg eine Gruppe von Amateurfuncker*innen – Mitglieder der russischen Künstlergruppe Chto Delat, die im Exil arbeitet. Seine Quelle ist die berüchtigte „Doomsday Radio Station“, die auf einer alten sowjetischen Militärfrequenz sendet. Kündigt es eine Katastrophe an? Die Gruppe begibt sich auf die Suche. Ein zweiter Sender, das „Radio der Ahnen“, lotst sie in die Berge Armeniens zu einem Orakel: einem verlassenen Radioteleskop. Hier durchläuft die Gruppe eine Reihe von Prüfungen und vergisst dabei die Fragen, die sie stellen wollte. Überhaupt scheint das Gedächtnis zu verblassen. Aber eine letzte Übertragung gibt es ihnen zurück: „Antuni“, ein armenisches Volkslied, arrangiert vom Komponisten Komitas. Eine Klage der Obdach- und Heimatlosen, für Chto Delat auch ein Appell an die Solidarität: „Bewahre mein Herz vor der Dunkelheit.“

EN

A cryptic signal unsettles a group of amateur radio operators in Hamburg—members of the exiled Russian artist collective Chto Delat. Its source is the notorious “Doomsday Radio Station,” broadcasting on a former Soviet military frequency. Does it herald catastrophe? The group sets out in search of answers. A second transmitter, the “Radio of the Ancestors,” guides them into the mountains of Armenia to an oracle: an abandoned giant radio telescope. There, the group undergoes a series of trials—only to forget the very questions they had come to ask. In fact, their memories seem to dissolve. But one final transmission restores them: “Antuni,” an Armenian folk song arranged by the composer Komitas. A lament for the homeless and the exiled, it becomes, for Chto Delat, a call for solidarity: “Keep my heart from growing dark.”

Arnold Dreyblatt

reverse_time

DE

Der Stern der Erlösung (1921) von Franz Rosenzweig ist ein Höhepunkt jüdischer Philosophie. Zwei Dreiecke, übereinandergelegt zum Davidstern, bilden die Struktur. Die Spitzen des einen stehen für Gott, Welt und Mensch. Die des anderen für Schöpfung, Offenbarung und Erlösung, also für Vergangenes, Gegenwärtiges und Künftiges. Arnold Dreyblatt greift die zeitliche Dimension auf, wenn er Rosenzweigs Sätze von drei Frauen unterschiedlichen Alters sprechen lässt. Das Museumspublikum steht inmitten dieser Stimmen und Zeiten, im „Zwischen“, wie es bei Rosenzweig heißt. Im Grunde ein unmöglicher Ort, eine „Haltestelle“ im fliegenden Wechsel der Augenblicke. Dreyblatts Installation heißt *reverse_time*, weil sie diesen Wechsel von außen betrachtet: von der Zukunft her, der Zeit der Erlösung, die alles Geschehen an sich heranzieht. Wie sähe unsere Zeit aus, wenn wir so auf sie blicken könnten?

EN

Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* (1921) is a high point of Jewish philosophy. Two triangles, superimposed to form a Star of David, make up its structure. The points of one triangle stand for God, world, and humanity, those of the other for creation, revelation, and redemption—that is, for past, present, and future. Arnold Dreyblatt addresses the temporal dimension by having Rosenzweig's sentences spoken by three women of different ages. The museum's visitors stand in the midst of these voices and times, in the “between,” as Rosenzweig calls it. It is a fundamentally impossible place, a “station” in the fleeting succession of moments. Dreyblatt's installation is entitled *reverse_time*, because it observes this succession from without—from the future, the time of redemption, which draws all events toward itself. What would our time look like if we could view it in this way?

Eran Schaerf

**Through the
Color Prism, and
What Jacqueline
Found There**

DE

Eran Schaerf hat eine imaginäre Bibliothek zusammengestellt: die Sammlung der Autorin Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–1979), auf Plakaten anhand ihrer Schriften gruppiert. Kahanoff setzte sich mit großen Konflikten auseinander, mit dem Patriarchat etwa oder den Folgen kolonialer Herrschaft. Sie war eine „Amateurin“, eine Liebhaberin des Lesens, die vieles miteinander verknüpfte. Das prägte auch ihr wichtigstes Thema, den Levantinismus. Damit erinnerte sie im jungen Staat Israel an etwas Älteres: an das Zusammenleben der Menschen in der Levante, am Ostrand des Mittelmeers, in einem Nebeneinander von Mehr- und Minderheiten. Levantinismus ist also nicht nur Gegenmodell zum Nationalismus, sondern Modell eines Austauschs von Differenzen. Kahanoffs Bild dafür ist das Prisma, das Einheiten zerlegt und die Fragmente aneinanderfügt.

Sie können die Plakate gerne mitnehmen.

EN

Eran Schaerf has assembled the imaginary library of a real person—author Jacqueline Kahanoff (1917–1979)—grouped on posters on the basis of her writings. Kahanoff grappled with major conflicts, including the patriarchy and the consequences of colonial rule. She was an “amateur,” a lover of reading, who made connections between many different topics. This also distinguished her most important subject—Levantinism. With it, she recalled something older in the young state of Israel: the coexistence of human beings in the Levant, on the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, with majorities and minorities living side by side. Levantinism is thus not merely a countermodel to nationalism but the model of an interchange of differences. Kahanoff’s image for this is the prism, which breaks down larger unities and puts the fragments together.

Please feel free to take the posters with you.



Hetty Berg

Director of the Jewish Museum Berlin

Hetty Berg has been director of the Jewish Museum Berlin since April 2020. For more than thirty years, she worked at the Jewish Historical Museum and at the Jewish Cultural Quarter in Amsterdam.

She began her work there as a curator in 1989. In the course of her career at the museum, she curated more than thirty temporary exhibitions and was responsible for the conceptual development and production of five permanent exhibitions. In 2002, she was appointed manager and chief curator at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, which expanded in 2012 and became part of the Jewish Cultural Quarter. In addition to the Jewish Historical Museum, the quarter includes the Children's Museum, the Portuguese Synagogue, the Hollandsche Schouwburg Memorial, and the National Holocaust Museum.

Hetty Berg was born in The Hague in 1961. After training as a dancer for four years in London and Amsterdam, she studied theater in Amsterdam. While pursuing her career, she earned a master's degree in management of nonprofit organizations in Utrecht. Hetty Berg is a member of numerous academic advisory boards and committees. From 2016 to 2020, she served on the Dutch National Ethics Committee for Museums, and from 2007 to 2013, on the board of the Association of European Jewish Museums. Since 2020, she has been a member of the board of trustees of the following organizations: the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe Foundation, the House of One, and the Ernst Reuter Foundation for Advanced Study. Since 2024, she has also been a member of the Dutch Commissie Verweesde Joodse Roofkunst (Committee on Orphaned Jewish Looting Art), and since 2026, she is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Berlin University of the Arts.

Her work and research interests focus on museum studies, Jewish cultural history, and Jews in the Netherlands. She has published numerous books and essays on these subjects and is coeditor of *Site of Deportation*, *Site of Memory: The Amsterdam Hollandsche Schouwburg and the Holocaust* (2017), *Waterlooplein: De buurt binnenstebuiten* (2020), and *Reappraising the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (2021).



Dr. Julia Friedrich

Director of Collections and Exhibitions at the Jewish Museum Berlin

Julia Friedrich has been Director of Collections at the Jewish Museum Berlin since March 2022 and Director of Exhibitions since January 2023. She is responsible for the Museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions, as well as for the various specialty areas of the collection, for the archive and library, and for collection management.

Friedrich's previous post was at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, where, after completing a traineeship, she served as Head of the Graphic Arts Collection from 2006 to 2022. She also managed the Haubrich Collection, and has curated numerous exhibitions of modern and contemporary art, featuring artists such as Jo Baer, Otto Freundlich, Pablo Picasso, and exile researcher Günter Peter Straschek.

Julia Friedrich studied art history at Freie Universität Berlin and Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam. She received her doctorate from the University of Hamburg in 2008 for a dissertation on Gerhard Richter's *Gray Pictures*. She has published a number of works on the subject of artists and the social function of art, with a research focus on art politics and collection practices in post-war Germany.



Dr. Shelley Harten

Curator of Art, Jewish Museum Berlin

Shelley Harten has been a curator of contemporary and modern art exhibitions as at the Jewish Museum Berlin since 2021. Since 2025, her role extended to curator of the museum's art collection. Harten has curated numerous exhibitions, including *Rehearsing the Spectacle of Spectres* (2023), *Maya Schweizer: Sans Histoire* (2023), *Paris Magnétique. 1905–1940* (2023, in cooperation with mahJ Paris), and *Yael Bartana – Redemption Now* (2021), the artist's first large-scale solo exhibition in Germany. In 2022, she curated the Israeli Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, presenting *Queendom*, an exhibition by the artist Ilit Azoulay.

Shelley Harten studied history, ethnology, and political science at Freie Universität Berlin and Ohio State University. She received her doctorate in art and cultural history *summa cum laude* from Freie Universität Berlin and was awarded the Freie Universität Berlin's Hedwig Hintze Women's Promotion Prize for her doctoral thesis on Israeli visual high arts, *The Hebrew Orient*.

Harten has also taught at the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg. Her recent publications include the catalogs *Yael Bartana – The Book of Malka Germania* (2021) and *Ilit Azoulay – Queendom* (2022) as well as essays such as 'Sun, We'll Lock You Up in a Concrete House!' *Mischa Kuball's res.o.nant* (2019) and *Israeli Art History and Israel Studies* (2020). Her expertise includes contemporary art, transcultural and intercultural art history, as well as the interdisciplinary fields of history, cultural studies, and art history.

JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN

Yael Bartana

Yael Bartana (born in 1970 in Kfar Yehezkel, Israel; lives and works in Berlin and Amsterdam) is an artist, filmmaker, and photographer. In her films, installations, photographs, performances, and public monuments, she explores utopias and dystopias and examines how social orders and collective identities emerge.

Bartana views her works as “pre-enactments”: as an observer of the present, she intervenes in history and political narratives to imagine the future and challenge power structures. Her works envision possible societies and alternative forms of coexistence—often in the form of public rituals, ceremonies, and collective gatherings. In doing so, they repeatedly draw on Jewish and Israeli themes and interweave historical and contemporary experiences with visionary scenarios. In this way, art becomes a space where social possibilities are tested and visions of the future are reimagined.

Bartana gained international recognition, among other things, for the film trilogy *And Europe Will Be Stunned* (2007–2011), which imagines a possible Jewish return to Poland. In 2021, the Jewish Museum Berlin presented her retrospective *Redemption Now*, featuring a commissioned work about a messianic arrival in Berlin. In 2024, her work was on view in the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

The exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin features Yael Bartana's video *The Birds*, as well as her work *Generation Ship* and the print *The Ten Spheres of the Generation Ship Light to the Nations*.

JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN

Andrea Büttner

Andrea Büttner (born in 1972 in Stuttgart; lives and works in Berlin) is an artist. She studied fine arts at the Berlin University of the Arts, as well as philosophy and art history in Tübingen and Berlin, and earned her Ph.D. in 2008 from the Royal College of Art in London. She has been a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich since 2024.

For more than 20 years, Büttner has been exploring themes with religious connotations, such as shame, poverty, labor, and ritual practices. In addition, she examines the relationship between the Enlightenment, art, and feminism; the social impulses of the Arts and Crafts movement; and historical connections between the Nazi state and the environmental movement. In doing so, she is interested in the question of how alternative values, forms of coexistence, and notions of community can emerge. She combines social and ethical questions with aesthetic and art-historical perspectives.

Her works include woodcuts, paintings, photographs, videos, installations, screen prints, textiles, and glass objects. Traditional techniques such as woodcut become media through which she reexamines societal notions of value, labor, and community. Büttner's work opens up spaces for alternative perspectives on what is considered valuable, visible, or communal.

Her works have been exhibited internationally, including at Tate Britain, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, and the Kunstmuseum Basel, as well as at documenta 13 and the São Paulo Biennial.

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Andrea Büttner created the three woodcuts *Now*, as well as the woodcuts *I Am. But I do not have myself. Hence only we are becoming* and *I see him, but not now*. Also on view are her glass objects *Now*, developed specifically for the exhibition.



Chto Delat International

Chto Delat (Eng. What Is to Be Done?) is a collective of artists, critics, philosophers, and writers founded in St. Petersburg in 2003 (founded in 2003 in St. Petersburg; fled to Germany in 2022). The name refers to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863) and Lenin's political treatise of the same name (1902). From the very beginning, the collective has combined artistic practice with political theory and social engagement.

Chto Delat views art as a space where social issues can be collectively addressed, and new forms of action can be explored. Through collective and interdisciplinary processes, the collective produces videos, plays, installations, murals, publications, workshops, and public projects. These focus on solidarity, collective organization, and the possibility of social change. Participatory formats and documentary theater create situations in which alternative forms of community and political practice become conceivable.

Following the forced emigration of numerous members as a result of political persecution and their opposition to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the collective continues its work as Chto Delat International. In Berlin, the *Chto Delat Emergency Project Room* was established as a space for artistic exchange, education, and collaborative practice.

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Chto Delat International is presenting the video installation *A Comprehensive Self-Organized Amateur Expedition in Search of Losses and Discoveries*. The exhibition design is a collaboration with ZIP Group.



Arnold Dreyblatt

Arnold Dreyblatt (born in 1953 in New York City; has lived and worked in Berlin since 1984) is an installation and performance artist, composer, and musician. He studied composition, comparative musicology, and media art at Wesleyan University and Buffalo State University in New York, under the guidance of Woody and Steina Vasulka, Alvin Lucier, and La Monte Young, among others.

In his interdisciplinary practice, Dreyblatt combines sound, media art, performance, and installation. He develops his own compositional techniques, instruments, and tuning systems, and works with resonance, repetition, and microtonal sound structures. Another focus of his work is archives and historical documents, which he views not only as testimonies to the past but also as material for new artistic and social perspectives.

Dreyblatt brings archives to life in performances and installations, transforming their contents into open, associative forms. He is interested not only in what has been handed down, but also in how new ideas can emerge from existing material. With *Protocols of the Future* (2018), he created a utopian artwork that explored the possibilities of future artistic practice. In 2021, his memorial *Die Schwarze Liste (The Black List)*, commemorating the book burnings of 1933, was unveiled on Munich's Königsplatz.

Arnold Dreyblatt created the video and sound installation *reverse_time* for the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

William Forsythe

William Forsythe (born in 1949 in New York; lives in Vermont) is a dancer and choreographer. As director of the *Frankfurt Ballet* (1984–2004) and founder of *The Forsythe Company* (2005–2015), he had a lasting impact on contemporary dance. His choreographic work builds upon classical ballet and explores its possibilities at the intersection of movement, space, and time.

At the heart of his practice is an examination of the structural and organizational principles of choreography. His works combine the techniques of classical ballet with experimental approaches and extend choreographic thinking beyond the stage. Movement thus becomes the starting point for spatial, sculptural, and participatory works. In addition to stage productions, Forsythe creates performances, films, installations, and digital projects.

In his *Instructions*, Forsythe transfers choreographic thinking to the audience in the form of instructions for action. These open up situations in which familiar movement sequences can be interrupted, reversed, or recombined. The *Instructions* make the body and its perception the starting point of an open-ended process: The focus is not on a predetermined choreography, but on the possibility of continually re-experiencing movement, space, and one's own position, thereby exploring alternative forms of action and perception.

His works have been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at the Venice Biennale (2005, 2009, 2012, and 2014), at the MMK—Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main (2015), at the Sesc Pompeia Cultural Center in São Paulo (2019), and at the Kunsthaus Zürich (2021).

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, William Forsythe has curated *Choreographic Instructions Backwards* and *Attempt to Walk Without Rhythm*.



Dana Kavelina

Dana Kavelina (born in 1995 in Melitopol, Ukraine; lives and works in Lviv) is an artist and filmmaker. She works primarily with animation and video, but also with installation, painting, printmaking, and text. After studying printmaking at the National Technical University of Ukraine in Kyiv, she developed a personal, poetic visual language in her work to explore experiences of war and violence.

Kavelina focuses in particular on the individual experiences of people affected by war. In doing so, she explores the subjective expression of historical experience and the gaps and contradictions between individual and collective trauma. Her works combine documentary and narrative elements, revealing how history is experienced, remembered, and rewritten from different perspectives. At the same time, her poetic and animated visual worlds open up spaces for alternative conceptions of the past and the future.

Kavelina gained international attention, among other things, with her animated film *About Mark Lvovich Tulpanov, Who Spoke to Flowers*, which explores the consequences of the war in the Donbas through personal stories. Her animated film *Grey Earth* runs at the Kyiv Biennial at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin until 13 September.

In the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Dana Kavelina's film *It Can't Be That Nothing Can Be Returned* is being presented in a version newly edited for the exhibition.

JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN

Alexander Kluge

Alexander Kluge (born in 1932 in Halberstadt—died 2026 in Munich) was a filmmaker, writer, screenwriter, and media producer. As a co-founder of the New German Cinema, he played a pivotal role in shaping its development beginning in the 1960s. After studying law, history, and church music, he initially worked as a lawyer before turning to film and literature. Among his most influential figures were Theodor W. Adorno and Fritz Lang.

Kluge's cross-media body of work includes films, literary texts, television productions, essays, and installations. As a member of Group 47 and a student of Adorno, he was closely connected to postwar literary and intellectual culture as well as Critical Theory. His essayistic approach combines documentary and fictional elements and brings together different perspectives, stories, and media. Kluge viewed art and media as means of making social connections visible and rethinking the political public sphere.

Utopian ways of thinking played a central role in this: Kluge was interested in humanity's ability to imagine different social conditions and to develop possibilities beyond the status quo. "Utopia keeps getting better while we wait for it," is a frequently quoted statement by the author. His work for television also aimed to create new forms of independent cultural and political public discourse. In 1987, he founded the production company dctp.

Kluge's work has received numerous awards and has been exhibited internationally. He created numerous installation-based works for his solo exhibition at the Museum Folkwang in Essen (2017).

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Alexander Kluge selected the AI-generated prints *War Machines (after James Ensor)* as well as the video *How Walter Benjamin Explained the Weak Messianic Force to Bertolt Brecht*.



Daniel Laufer

Daniel Laufer (born in 1975; lives in Berlin) is an artist. From 1998 to 2005, he studied at the Braunschweig University of Art, under Birgit Hein, Marina Abramović, and Walter Dahn, among others.

In his video, installation, and painting works, Laufer explores the aesthetic and technical conditions of image-making. In doing so, he combines film and digital media with traditional forms of visual art and draws on historical techniques of illusion and projection. His large-scale installations interweave video, language, text, painting, and performance into intermedia productions in which perception and narrative are constantly reorganized.

Laufer disrupts the linearity of narratives and interweaves past, present, and future into a temporally permeable order. This creates open spaces of possibility in which familiar notions of time, perception, and reality are called into question. Viewers are actively drawn into this process and invited to question their own perspectives and explore alternative forms of perception and thought. His works thus function as spaces in which not only images emerge, but other realities also become conceivable.

Laufer has been awarded grants and prizes. In recent years, he has presented his work in numerous exhibitions worldwide, including at MoMA PS1 in New York (2004), KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin (2011), the Kunstmuseum Bonn (2013), and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt (2022).

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Daniel Laufer created the video installation *Echoes of Tomorrow*.

JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN

Ari Benjamin Meyers

Ari Benjamin Meyers (born in 1972 in New York; lives and works in Berlin) is a composer, conductor, pianist, and artist. He studied at the Juilliard School in New York, Yale University, and the Peabody Institute in Baltimore.

At the heart of his artistic practice lies the question of how music can be reimagined as a performative, social, and time-based medium. Meyers explores the structures and processes of collective music-making and develops forms that go beyond the classical concert format. In doing so, he transforms the relationships between performers, audience, and space, turning music into a place of exchange and collective experience.

His body of work includes performances for the stage and museums, sound installations, concerts, as well as three operas—including a commissioned work for the Semperoper Dresden—and a ballet for the Paris Opera. His works create situations in which collective action and musical practice are reorganized. In his more recent projects in particular, Meyers explores collective forms of music-making in public spaces as well as issues related to the environment and climate change. Music thus becomes a medium for exploring alternative forms of coexistence and opening up new social and spatial possibilities.

He gained international recognition in 2007 as the musical director and conductor of the exhibition *// Tempo del Postino*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Philippe Parreno, at the Manchester International Festival. For performances, sound installations, and concerts, he has collaborated with artists such as Tino Sehgal and Anri Sala, as well as with the bands Einstürzende Neubauten and Chicks on Speed. Following 7 October 2023 he adapted his work *The Name of This Band Is The Art (Tel Aviv-Yafo)* for the Center for Contemporary Art in Tel Aviv in 2024.

In the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Ari Benjamin Meyers founded the *Choir of Time Astronauts*.



Alona Rodeh

Alona Rodeh (born 1979 in Ben Ami, Israel; lives and works in Berlin) is a visual artist and set designer. She studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Her interdisciplinary practice encompasses video, sculpture, wall works, light and sound installations, theater design, artist books, and public art.

Rodeh works with virtual and physical space, developing immersive environments in which light, sound, movement, and architecture are interwoven. Drawing on her experience in stage design, she creates large-scale, time-based scenarios that navigate between real, utopian, and dystopian spaces. In her research-based work, she explores, among other things, the relationship between security, architecture, and urban planning, as well as the cultural and social meanings of light and darkness.

Rodeh is interested in how oppressive or everyday situations can be transformed into poetic encounters and new spaces of possibility through artistic interventions. Her works challenge conventional notions of how public spaces are designed, lit, and used. As a dark-sky activist, she also explores the night as a distinct space of experience and organizes night walks. Darkness serves as a starting point for rethinking perception, orientation, and forms of community.

Rodeh presents her work both within and outside institutional spaces. Her solo exhibitions have been shown at venues including the Salzburger Kunstverein (2019) and the Kunstmuseum Gelsenkirchen (2024).

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Alona Rodeh has installed her work *Above and Beyond*.

JÜDISCHES MUSEUM BERLIN

Eran Schaerf

Eran Schaerf (born in 1962 in Tel Aviv; lives and works in Berlin) is an artist, author, radio playwright, and filmmaker. After studying architecture in Israel, he attended the Berlin University of the Arts. His works emerge at the intersection of language, fashion, mass media, and the built environment, and include installations, films, radio plays, and publications.

Schaerf explores how reality is constructed through language, images, and forms of media communication—and how it can be reimagined by altering these elements. In his works, the boundaries between fact and fiction blur. Historical and contemporary political narratives are interwoven, fragmented, and reassembled. In doing so, Schaerf develops complex narrative structures that open up different possibilities for storytelling and perception.

His artistic works create interstitial spaces in which alternative narratives can emerge, and different times, voices, and realities come into relation with one another. In this way, the construction of reality itself becomes an open field of experimentation. He also engages with concepts of so-called “culture of remembrance” and is co-editor of the anthology *Ein jüdischer Garten* (Hanser Verlag, 2022).

Schaerf participated in documenta IX in Kassel (1992) and the Venice Biennale (2011). He created a series of films in collaboration with the philosopher Eva Meyer. In 2013, he received the Käthe Kollwitz Prize from the Berlin Academy of Arts, of which he has been a member since 2016.

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Eran Schaerf designed the poster series *Through the Color Prism, and What Jacqueline Found There*.



Dor Zlekha Levy

Dor Zlekha Levy (born in 1990 in Israel; lives and works in Tel Aviv) is a multimedia artist who works with audiovisual installations, video art, and live performances. Sound is the central element of his artistic practice, and his works are often created in collaboration with female musicians.

Zlekha Levy explores history and cultural heritage, focusing in particular on forgotten Arab-Jewish voices and stories. His works bring these perspectives into the present, recalling encounters and examining them from a contemporary viewpoint. He combines sound, image, and space to create immersive experiences in which historical traditions are not only conveyed but can also be re-experienced and reimagined.

Based on intensive research, Zlekha Levy develops site-specific, large-scale audiovisual installations for historic sites, national parks, and public spaces. He is interested in how artistic spaces can facilitate encounters between different stories and perspectives. His works create situations in which visitors are invited to search together for alternative ways of coexisting in a present marked by conflict. The past is not understood as a closed chapter of history, but rather as a starting point for new connections and visions of the future.

His work has been exhibited at venues including the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2017) and the Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem (2018); screenings have also taken place at Ars Electronica (Linz, 2013) and the ICA London (2018).

For the exhibition *The Opposite of Now* at the Jewish Museum Berlin, Dor Zlekha Levy developed the interactive audio installation *Esperoj*.