

Non-silent Protest - Haus of Commons

This is the first episode of Haus of Commons. A format that undertakes a collective inquiry into identifying the various current social movements and aims to foster connections between these splintered groups.

For this episode, we had initially intended to expand the idea of “Silent Protest”, asking what channels to activate or reactivate in times in which we can’t be out on the streets. This was during a time in which we were avoiding public space almost entirely. It was important for us to assert how silence out on the streets does not mean that we are remaining silent about the social issues the pandemic was magnifying. From the very beginning, Silent Protest was not a demand to mute our voices, but to orient ourselves to the sounds of protest which grow louder as public life calms down. However the protests and rebellions of this past week have shown how “Silent Protest” had been an unserving title for our conversation all along. We needed to rehearse into our own vocabulary what has always been true: that silence is complicity.

To give context to this episode: Nonsilent Protest was borne from a performance evening organised by Kate Brown, Lauryn Youden and myself last year called “Soft Politics”, held at Oranienplatz on a sweltering summer evening. We were drawn to Oranienplatz because as a site, it makes apparent how history woven from the relation of incidents, is constantly written and rewritten, where the ghosts of past events still haunt. The gravel area and surrounding grass and shade-giving trees make for a gathering place, a wide avenue is lined with benches as if the middle area were a stage for those passing by. A canal used to run through it. Now only a fountain remains. It was a protest camp and center of resistance for refugees until they were forcibly removed in 2014. No shred of this trauma remains—it was washed away. Sites like Oranienplatz remain open to connotation in being activated, borrowed and used, yet their presence materialise and bear witness to history.

Some 30 days later, when we were recording our conversation for this show, we were all completely avoiding public space, except for the fractal groupings we saw in parks, and individuals hurrying through the streets to run their most urgent errands. We were missing being out in public, rubbing against other bodies, catching the soundwaves from unknown vocal cords, confronting the randomness and risk of being exposed to others. We needed to reactivate our bodies and voices as political bodies and voices, when we couldn’t be among others.

Now, a month after our recording, all of this seems like a distant reality. We are finding ourselves among crowds again to stand in solidarity against systemic racism. We are seeing daily updates from the ground across the U.S., where protesters are claiming their rightful space to fight against the oppression, violence and inequality that subtends capitalist economies, Western ideals of democracy, as well as liberal designs of freedom. Systems that entangle all of us, demanding that all of us work at dismantling them.

Against our first reaction to not broadcast at all, we decided against burying our own voices, because we believe that it matters how we relate to our past processes of thinking, particularly if it allows us to point to our own blind spots. Taking responsibility also means we need to revisit our motivations, see how the relations

that brought us to write, move and think are changing, and caring for this change.

We want to offer this one hour of airtime as an hour of decompression, a moment to lay your body down to rest, to recharge by sharing our soundwaves and collect the energies boiling underneath your skin. You will hear a conversation between Lou Drago, Pedro Marum and myself in which we discuss and expose our fraught, ambivalent, incoherent thoughts as we tried to make sense of the situation at the end of April. Our voices are interlaced and interspersed with audio recordings collected by Natalia Domínguez Rangel as part of her series “Acoustic Ecologies”, where she asks people from around the globe to record their cities, towns, villages or neighbourhoods and interpret the way they are listening through the days of social distancing.

While you’re listening to this show, we would like to foreground that our Black siblings are dying at more than three times the rate from the coronavirus than whites, not least because they make up the majority of frontline workers in social and care roles. The lack of diagnostic testing and treatment is compounded by centuries of socio-economic and political oppression, not least through environmental racism. We want to use our voices and our platform however small to amplify, to radically unsilence ourselves, because we won’t allow for Black, queer-feminist and anti-capitalist protests to be drowned out by the vacuum that silence creates.

Resources

<https://www.blackbrownberlin.com/>

Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland – ISD-Bund www.isdonline.de

Each One, Teach One www.eoto-archiv.de

Antirassistisch-Interkulturelles Informationszentrum e.V. www.aric.de

https://secure.actblue.com/donate/bail_funds_george_floyd

Anti-Racism Resources www.ally.wiki, bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES

Black Lives Matter Berlin <http://www.blacklivesmatterberlin.de/georgefloyd-and-actionable/>

Black History Month Library <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0Bz011IF2Pu9TUWlxVWxybGJ1Ync>

Black Revolutionary Texts:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/18y0_2wm85L113fVWYdgljq9uullmlb13

<https://blacksocialists.us/resource-guide>

Against right-wing extremism in Germany:

<https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/themen/>

In remembrance of Oury Jalloh:

<https://initiativeouryjalloh.wordpress.com>

Using your voice, if you can't be out on the street:

<http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory>

Contributors

Lou Drago is a Berlin-based artist, curator, writer and radio producer/ DJ. Drago is a founding member of XenoEntities Network Berlin, a collective who focuses their research on queer, gender and feminist studies and their interactions with digital technologies. They curate and produce, Transience, a monthly show on Cashmere Radio, Berlin that focuses on experimental, ambient and experient music that aims to offer anxiety relief to its listeners. Drago's recent research is concerned with finding ways to coalesce all of those who fail or refuse to fit the neoliberal mould in an attempt to reunite what we have witnessed to be an increasingly fractured Left. Aware of the role identity politics have played in dividing the Left, Drago navigates between their commitment to gender abolitionism and other xeno-feminist desires and a politics of Radical Sociability that aims to enact an intersectional affinity based politics. They have shown work, curated shows and spoken on panels across Europe and internationally.

Pedro Marum is an artist, curator, writer and DJ based in Berlin. In their practice marum explores the relation of digital technologies in gender, queer and feminist politics, having particularly focused on cybernetics, surveillance and capture technologies, clubbing culture and alien-phenomenology. Marum initiated Rabbit Hole in 2011, a Lisbon-based collective and artistic platform of creation, experimentation, and curation. They were film programmer and producer at Queer Lisboa, as well as co-curator of the section Queer Focus. Marum is a founding member of XenoEntities Network and as a DJ and organiser, they are one of the founding members of the party Mina and co-head of the music label Suspension, being involved in creating queer safe spaces of rave, focusing on raves as spaces for ecstatic collectivity and to practice politics of care, such as mutual aid and harm reduction. They have performed, lectured and curated projects across the world.

Natalia Domínguez Rangel is a sound artist and music composer, currently living and working between Amsterdam and Vienna. Her work connects architecture, in situ installations, acoustics and technology. She is interested in how sound affects and resonates with an audience physiologically and psychologically, and how space makes us think of time, duration, medium, acoustics and architecture; exploring how sound can be a source of both pain and pleasure.

Nonsilent Protest is organised by **Steph Holl-Trieu** on behalf of Ashley Berlin, an independent, non-profit exhibition space founded in 2013. Nonsilent Protest is generously supported by Berlin Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa and organised by Steph Holl-Trieu on behalf of Ashley Berlin, an independent, non-profit

exhibition space founded in 2013. For now, remaining closed to the public in a Hinterhof on Oranienstraße.