There is talk of an unprecedented culture of protest emerging on a global scale, of new forms of disobedience and indignation. This new culture of protest frequently resorts to strategies coming from the field of art (performance, happenings, etc.), which has resulted in a growing interest of political theory in contemporary artistic strategies. At the same time, a surprising re-politicization of debates in art discourses can be observed, especially as more and more explicitly political functions are assigned to current artistic practice. Beyond a politicization of art and an aesthetization of politics, this event seeks to focus attention and problematize a neuralgic concept highly discussed and addressed in recent decades, but which has rarely become the subject of its own resistance.

‘Resistance’ is first and foremost a term that comes from physics, by designating a property of disposition. To its original meaning, a moral category has always been added: what actively resists opposes a natural course of things and develops an opposing force that is normatively occupied. Therefore, its Latin root, resistentia, not only refers to something that remains constant ( sistere), but increases this consistency in perseverance (the prefix re- means the intensification of action). Already in modern times we experience the assimilation and instrumentalization of the concept of resistance through the various revolutions in the 18th century, along the successive anti-colonial struggles since the beginning of 19th century, as well as in the discussion of a ‘right to resistance’, inaugurated by Henry David Thoreau.

Facing a general discourse of resistance so fashionable today, resulting from the logics of late Capitalism, capable of neutralizing all kind of counter-force by their integration within the system, it is necessary to ask ourselves: how does the critical potential to say ‘no’ participates on the questioning rather than in the consolidation of an official discourse of resistance in which art is also responsible? Struggling between a rhetoric of ‘no’ and one of a ‘no to rhetoric, both the artistic and the political fields are equally spaces for debate. Nonetheless, it remains important to specify more precisely what their respective critical forces and agonality consist of. In this sense, the event aims to contribute to a better understanding of the different logics of resistance and to a critical look at the complex relationship between aesthetics and politics today.
Friday, September 13th
University of Bern
Fabrikstrasse 2 E, Room vR 003

13:30 Welcome and introduction

14:00 Keynote Lecture by Nadia Radwan (University of Bern): Concealed Visibilities: Sameness and Resistance in Contemporary Art

15:10 Ayse Zeynep Pamuk Suleri (University of Zurich): Silence as resistance: absence, forgetting and remembering in contemporary art from Turkey

15:50 Juan José Santos (Autonomous University of Madrid): The Resistant Body

16:30 Coffee break

16:45 Serjara Aleman (University of Lausanne): Emancipatory Art? ‘Women Taking the Streets: Urban Art and Community Activism in Lima, Peru

17:25 Megan McShane (Fulbright): Adela Jusic: Transnational Avant-Garde Issues in the Former Yugoslavia and Contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina

18:15 Dinner and transfer to Reitschule (Neubrückstr. 8)

20:00 Artist presentation by Kendall Geers at Reitschule

Saturday, September 14th
University of Zurich
Rämistrasse 59, Room RAA-E-30

10:30 Keynote Lecture by Jaime Vindel (Complutense University of Madrid): What is art able to?: Politicized art between institutional criticism and instituting power

11:40 Annatina Aerne (University of St. Gallen): Palm tree whispers and mountain escapes: Artistic strategies against environmental overuse in Latin American contemporary art

12:20 Fiona Siegenthaler (University of Basel): Resistance, Adaptation and Co-optation: Artists between ‘no’ to rhetoric and the rhetoric of ‘no’ in Africa and beyond

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 Keynote Lecture by Oliver Marchart (University of Vienna): Agitating, Propagating, Organizing. Activist Art and the Spontaneous Ideology of the Art Field

15:40 Katharina Brandl (University of Basel): Rhetorics of Realism? Contemporary Gaming Cultures and Socially Engaged Art Practices

16:20 Charlotte Matter (University of Zurich): “What’s to Be Done About Art?” Strategies of Refusal around 1968

17:00 Transfer to la_cápsula (Stauffacherstr. 119)

18:00 Artist presentation by Nancy Garin at la_cápsula

20:00 Dinner