NO Rethoric(s). Versions and Subversions of Resistance in Contemporary Global Art

International Workshop
Workshop Global Studies | GS
Organized by: Sara Alonso Gómez, Isabel Piniella and Elena Rosauro
Date: Fr, September 13, 2019, 1:30 - 6:15 pm, 8 pm artist presentation
Sa, September 14, 2019, 10:30 am - 5:00 pm, 6:00 pm artist presentation
Room: Fr, vR 003, University of Bern, Fabrikstrasse 2 E
Sa, RAA-E-30, University of Zurich, Rämistrasse 59
ECTS: 1
Registration: By September 13, 2019 to virginia.holzer@cgs.unibe.ch and in KSL:
https://www.ksi.unibe.ch/ (Login with UniBe-Account, search with title)

Workshop Content and Objectives

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 almost two centuries ago.

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.

Keynote Speakers

Olivier Marchart, Universität Wien
Jaime Vindel, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Nadia Radwan, Universität Bern