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3-8 July 2022 TRINITY FINE ART Documenta Presents an Invigorating

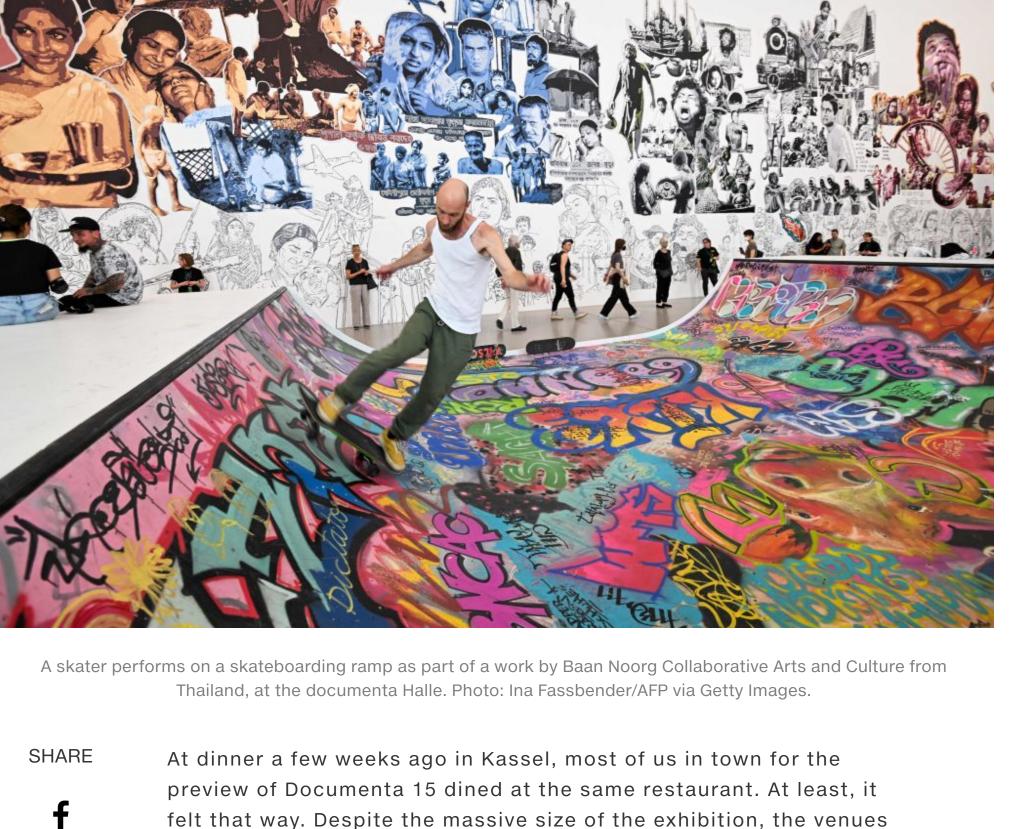
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Market

Alternative to a Market-Driven Art World. Maybe That's Why the Industry's Establishment Has Largely Dismissed It Scandal aside, I was surprised by the intolerance shown by the art market establishment. Kate Brown, July 1, 2022

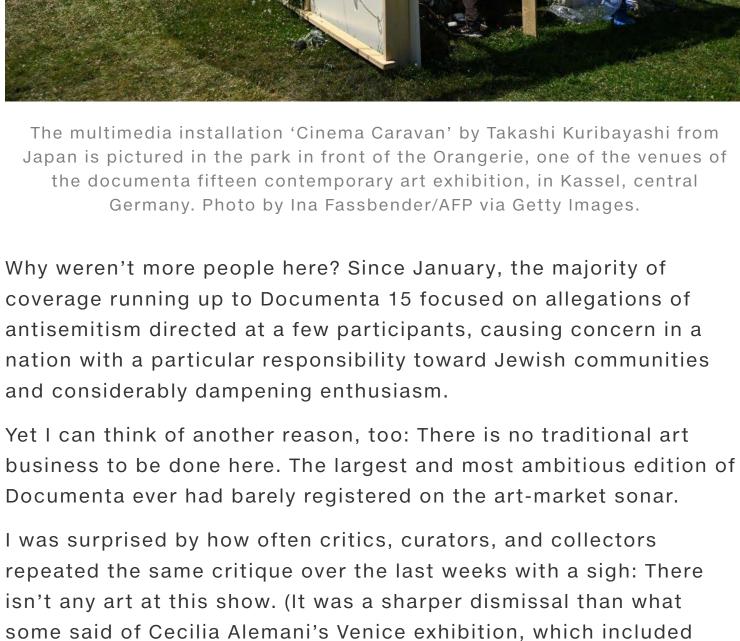




"I cannot believe more museum people are not here," one German museum director, who'd just come from Basel, told me. Most people on the Rhine told the director they were not "bothering" with this year's exhibition, one of the most prestigious in the world.

exhibition, my social media was dominated by glossier dispatches

from Basel, Hydra, and Menorca.



many female creators, like Josephine Baker, who do not fit neatly

surprising comment for an exhibition that features contributions

from more than 1,500 people who understand themselves, in most

instances, to be artists. Indonesian collective Ruangrupa carefully

from around the world to take part; each collective invited further

concocted a decentralized curatorial concept, inviting 50 collectives

participants. Curatorial autonomy was broken, like bread, into small

into the classical understanding of the term "artist.")

bits to share around.

To say, again and again, that there is no art strikes me as a

Visitors watch the video installation Walemba - The story of the wanzo wa Mikub' of the 'Centre d'Art Waza at the Fridericianum during the first preview day at the documenta 15 modern art fair on June 15, 2022 in Kassel,

Germany. Photo: Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images.

Documenta, its curators, and some its participants, who—to use the

Yet, beyond this, I also noticed a quietly simmering intolerance for

Headlined "an art exhibition without artists," Meier writes that the

"platforms, archives, workshops, agencies and publishers, activists,

queer groups, and women's organizations" on view in Kassel are not

What makes a "real" artist? For many of the collectives invited to

Documenta this year, making a living selling art is not an easy or

particularly urgent task. Their practices are wound up in creative

living and community building, rather than producing collectible

Ruangrupa's repudiation of star-spangled artist lists. Philipp Meier's

This decentralized *modus operandi* has proven to be a harmful

accountability vacuum when it came to offensive antisemitic

portrayals of Jews by one of the most prominently featured

review of the show in *Neuer Zuricher Zeitung* put it bluntly:

artists. He was far from the only person I heard say this.

collectives, Taring Padi. There is valid outrage directed at

favorite term—collectively failed on this front.

objects.

What does this kind of expression look like? One successful example is the Wajukuu Art Project, a community-based group in Nairobi's Mukuru slum, on view at the Documenta Halle. Its members help keep children off the street by generating employment opportunities through art production and sales.

A visitor looks at a work by Wajukuu Art Project from Nairobi at the documenta Halle, one of the venues of the documenta fifteen contemporary art exhibition, in Kassel, central Germany. Photo: Anton Roland Laub/AFP via Getty Images.

At Documenta Halle, their installation is entirely covered with rippled

metal and includes soundscapes from the neighborhood and dreamy

figurative paintings by collective member Ngugi Waweru. Recreating

collective's work. Nearby, a skate ramp and an active, open-for-all

printing press transformed an otherwise stiff gallery into an avant-

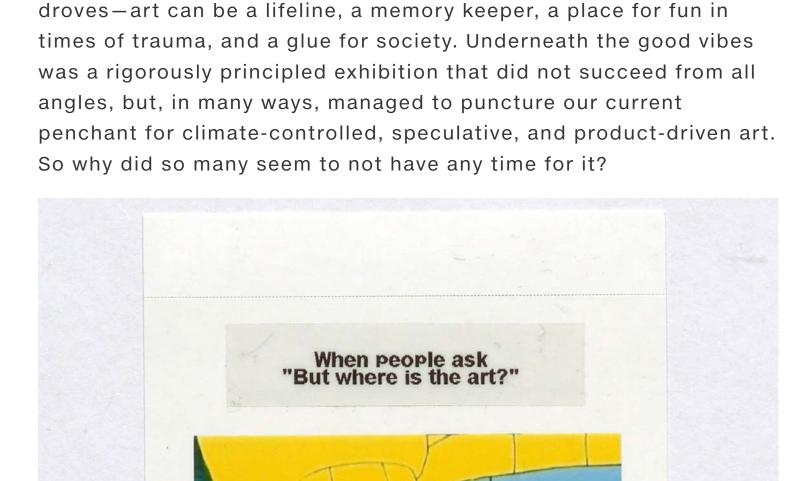
The message of this exhibition was clear: Art must be more than

surplus value and object creation. Ruangrupa's show proved this in

the ambiance of Mukuru heightens the poignancy of the entire

garde clubhouse.

entire week.)



A postered version appeared around Kassel of a meme created by Cem A. artist and curatorial assistant for Documenta 15. Courtesy of Cem A. aka @freeze_magazine. Design in collaboration with Malte J. Richter. Where's the Art? One table over from us at that restaurant, Paris-based dealers Alex

Mor and Philippe Charpentier were hosting a dinner for the Beiruti

filmmaker Marwa Arsanios. Whereas Venice is an endless buffet of

gallery dinners and parties, here, there were only maybe a couple.

(Miraculously, I did not hear from a single public relations firm the

Arsanios is one of a small handful of artists in the show with any

Western notion of an art market. (There were also German artists

individual collectives, not by the curators Ruangrupa themselves.)

"The massive contrast between Venice and Documenta wasn't an

A completist viewing of this show is impossible. Multiple artists'

sight. Wall labels, which were strikingly hard to find, left you to

works are presented as holistic installations with not a floor plan in

Hito Steyerl and Henrike Naumann, but they were invited by

accident," an exhibiting artist told me.

guess which work belonged to whom.

The multimedia installation by The Nest Collective from Kenya resembles a dumpsite in the park in front of the Orangerie. Photo: Ina Fassbender/AFP via Getty Images.

ready" during the preview, a fact that didn't seem to be the slightest

A New York critic shouted over karaoke music that "nothing was

concern for the artists in the show. "Documenta is worried about

day one but we're not worried about that," an artist from the

Trinidad collective Alice Yard told me. The collective will show

various works throughout the show as they are made. Another

group, Britto Arts Trust, set up a Bengali kitchen garden that will

present the food of 100 nationalities over 100 days—the running



of confidence," Jason Farago wrote in the New York Times.

Even still, while the biennial world operates outside of the art

market in many ways, the two are actually a lot more intertwined

than many care to admit. Dealers often end up footing the bill for

work in these supposedly un-commercial events—in large part

because they believe it will pay off down the line.

Visitors walk through the rotunda at the Fridericianum during the first

curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev claimed to have "gone outside"

represented by Marian Goodman Gallery. "If you're going to turn the

What is so novel is that Documenta 15 does just that. After dinner,

several of us attended an outdoor party hosted by the Indonesian

Lumbung was everywhere and, by and large, a totally contagious

feeling. It emanated from both energetic live events and carpeted

rooms with bean bag chairs where some viewers felt comfortable

Despite Documenta's thoughtful repudiation of the Western art

working for private collectors assured me they were going to tell

market, a few engaged collectors came anyway. Two curators

platform Gudskul, a collective of collectives holed up on the backlot

of the Fridericianum Museum. Their encampment is an open-concept

the market," more than a third of the artists on view were

page, then turn the page," Saltz scolded.

kitchen by day and a karaoke bar by night.

enough to take a nap.

very lumbung.

A (Nearly) Missed Chance

think it wone?

go after visiting Art Basel. And while there may not be the same volume of traditionally appealing artworks co-produced with mega galleries, Ruangrupa has created the online <u>Lumbung Gallery</u>, an alternative economic model that allows collectors of all stripes to engage with the work presented there. The curators recruited Beat Raeber and Martin Heller, co-founders of The Artists, a platform launched last year for artists who do not have

gallery representation. Five percent of all The Artists' sales go into a

pot that gets distributed among all the platform's participants. The

Artists is part of a wider trend in some corners of the art industry to

move towards something more like mutually beneficial partnership—

Atis Rezistans / Ghetto Biennale from Haiti at the Saint Kunigundis Church, one of the venues of the documenta fifteen. Photo by Anton Roland Laub/AFP via Getty Images.

The artists and collectives receive 70 percent of the revenue; the other 30 percent goes to gallery operations and a common pot for all exhibitors in the show. "We're trying to create an ecosystem where all the returns go back to the artists, into the collectives, and into the community," Raeber said.

museum-quality contract that includes the conditions and recommendations for the artwork's future life. Some objects on offer are traditional: Three vibrant large-scale paintings by Gaza-based artist Mohammad Al Hawajri, invited by the Palestinian collective A Question of Funding, are available for

€200,000 each.

example, decided to raise money to buy back 30 acres of land in Java situated between Nike and Puma factories. Institutions and private collectors are very interested, said Raeber. (Recall that Tate <u>acquired its first "custodianship"</u> of a Mayan artwork last fall.) Raeber does not consider this proposition to be anti-market, but something else, something new—a breath of possibility that courses

Others are more conceptual. The collective Jatiwangi Art Factory, for

Much of the show's accomplishments are understandably in the shadow of a horrific blunder. One can only hope there is still time to discover these bright and shining possibilities in Kassel. We've never needed them so much.

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preview day at the documenta 15. Photo: Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images. Is the Documenta difference the fact it is well funded by the government, to the tune of €43 million? In a usual year, not really. When writing about Documenta 13, Jerry Saltz noted that while

their patrons to come to the show at some point. Alain Servais and Uli Sigg were in town, and mega-collector Qiao Zhibing planned to

The Artists, working together with Ruangrupa, have found a way to adjust this model to suit the divergent Documenta cohort. Artworks are priced not based on capricious market conditions but on actual production value and real costs of living. Works are being listed throughout the next 100 days in the Lumbung Gallery, which you can access throughout the show by QR codes attached to those wall texts.

This utopian vision requires a lot of legwork, and the roll-out has been, in the way of this Documenta, a slower burn. Much of the work will be uploaded over the next 90 or so days. Each one comes with a

through much of this show. "People are more open to parallel ecosystems right now," he said.

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