

Goethe-Institut Curatorial Residencies Ludlow 38 is pleased to present *That you can't fight City Hall is a rumor being spread by City Hall*, the first institutional solo exhibition of the Swiss artist Ramaya Tegegne in the United States. Borrowing its title from the American writer, civil rights activist, and self-described 'black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,' Audre Lorde, this exhibition is an attempt to reconstruct the public art space as a space of dissident voices, where rules can be designed and followed collectively.

By quoting, borrowing, and reworking the practices of other artists, Tegegne's installations, videos, performances, and publications confront the established narratives of art history to reflect on the various social, historical, and economic contexts that make and unmake it. Interested specifically in the often unseen power relations that constitute the structural field of art, Tegegne's works test out new ways of collectively thinking through the dynamics of trust, intimacy, and sharing as possible forms of resistance.

For *That you can't fight City Hall is a rumor being spread by City Hall* Tegegne removed the permanent display showcase by artist Martin Beck and architect Ken Saylor which was commissioned by Goethe-Institut Curatorial Residencies Ludlow 38 in 2011. Engaging the threshold between artworks and display systems in his practice, Beck and Saylor's intention is to articulate their relationship to modes of emancipation and control in the development of the modern subject.

Dismantling Beck and Saylor's display, Tegegne herself draws attention to respective values embodied therein and sets the stage to think through naturalized institutional mechanisms and their historic connections to power structures of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. Her particular focus is on the limitations and possible registers of action and refusal structured around issues of gender, race, and class. Tegegne creates a scene of shattering and suggests to stay with the wound in order to create fragile affinities, the latter of which could be seen as the *modus operandi* of the exhibition and a possible way to think and act outside of 'the master's toolbox,' to use once more the words of Lorde.

Central to the exhibition are printouts of an email exchange involving the artist and the directors of an institutional body whose identities are blanked out. More than a year after the original exchange, Tegegne composed a final response that offers an analysis of the unspoken hierarchies and domination at play in this conversation. The artist tries to calibrate potential agency in the face of deeply rooted dependencies that determine confrontations with powers within precarious labor conditions, specifically for bodies marked as sexually and/or racially different. With this act of (self-)exposure, Tegegne aims at approximating both an abstract and real collectivity and to offer an

understanding of the ‘personal as institutional.’

In the back space of the gallery – further navigating the delicate thresholds between the private and public that characterizes the art sector – plays the recording of a private discussion between eleven contributing artists, initiated by Tegegne on the occasion of a group exhibition in a Swiss institution in 2018. The participants share experiences and recommendations regarding working conditions and, in particular, the question of the valorization of artistic labor. The discussion is transcribed in a publication produced in conjunction with and available in the exhibition. A set of five mobile chairs invite visitors to sit, listen, and exchange, and thus potentially alter the interpersonal dynamics that may be generated throughout the course of the exhibition. Tegegne’s revealing and exposing gestures in *That you can’t fight City Hall...* are in dialogue with her commitment to *Wages For Wages Against*, a campaign inspired by W.A.G.E. in the United States that aims for a general payment scheme for artist fees and building sustainable relationships between artists and institutions within Switzerland and elsewhere.

Ramaya Tegegne (Switzerland) has presented solo exhibitions at Istituto Svizzero, Milan (2019); Kevin Space, Vienna (2019); VIS, Hamburg (2018); Park View/Paul Soto, Brussels (2018); Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich (2018); First Continent, Baltimore (2017); Fri Art Kunsthalle Fribourg (2015); and Marbriers 4, Geneva (2014). Her performances have been presented at Kunsthalle Basel (2018), Kunsthalle Bern (2017), and the Swiss Institute, New York (2016) amongst others. She is co-founder of the bookshop La Dispersion in Geneva. In 2017, she launched the campaign Wages For Wages Against, for the remuneration of artists in Switzerland and beyond.

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