

NEWS

No smoke without fire: Documenta 14 unveils first work in Kassel

A smoking chimney billows for the start of the quinquennial event

by JULIA MICHALSKA 1 3 April 2017



Daniel Knorr's Expiration Movement (2017) is the first work to be unveiled for Documenta 14 in Kassel (Image: Bernd Borchardt)

After months of secrecy, the public is finally being given its first glimpse of Documenta 14's exhibition programme with the unveiling of a work in Kassel, Germany. The installation by the Romanian-born, Berlin-based artist Daniel Knorr marks the beginning of the prestigious quinquennial contemporary art exhibition, which this year is split between the cities of Athens and Kassel. It kicks off in Athens on 8 April (until 16 July) and in Kassel, where it was founded in 1955, on 10 June (until 17 September). The full artist list has so far been kept under wraps and some artists thought to have signed non-disclosure agreements.

Expiration Movement (2017) will turn one of the towers of the Fridericianum – the show's main exhibition venue in Kassel-into a chimney, from which smoke machines will blow white smoke during the opening hours of the show in both Athens and Kassel. "The idea is that it's the opposite of inspiration," Knorr says, "It's a moment of letting go." The smoking chimney is also meant to refer to the signal that a new pope has been elected, Knorr says, as well as the "conclave of Rothwesten", a secret meeting held near Kassel after the Second World War that resulted in the creation of the Deutsche Mark. The artist intends the work to remind viewers of the Nazi's burning of books and the chimneys at concentration camps. "But [smoke] is also a sign of freedom," he says of his multi-layered concept.

To cover some of the costs of the work, Knorr has produced artists' books that he will be selling at the show. "Documenta doesn't have the money to produce a work that is so expensive, so I tried to find a solution," he says. The artists' books continue the theme of archaeology that he has explored in his previous work. For the books, which he has already produced in ten other countries, Knorr scoured the streets of Athens looking for everyday objects. His discoveries included a 22-millimetre gun, a gun holster, childrens' drawings from the 1930s, but also more common objects such as empty coke cans and business papers. Some of these will go on show at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens this week, while others will be pressed into 16cm x 23cm books.

The books will be on sale at both Documenta venues, and for those looking for a bargain, they will be priced at €79 in Athens but €99 in Kassel. "Everything is cheaper in Greece," Knorr says.