

DOC
SEPTEMBER

25, 2022

Kassel

DOCUMENTA
FIFTEEN

JUNE

18

Press Release
Kassel, June 23, 2022

ARTISTIC DIRECTION ON DISMANTLING “PEOPLE’S JUSTICE” BY TARING PADI

documenta fifteen, against many odds, opened with a week full of joy, hope, exchange, and great atmosphere for the whole city of Kassel. For this we need to thank the whole documenta team, lumbung artists community, and everyone who has visited us since last week to render all of our collective efforts and the practicing of collective governance worthwhile. Our deep gratitude goes towards the many people who have welcomed us, visited and celebrated documenta fifteen with open eyes, hearts, and minds. This goes especially to the wonderful people enabling this exhibition in various functions, everyone from vendors to guards.

It is then with regret that all these efforts and great art works are now overshadowed by the case of Taring Padi’s *People’s Justice* (2002) that spiraled out on Monday, June 20, 2022. It culminated with the work being covered and then taken down a day later upon the request of documenta’s Supervisory Board, in conversation with documenta’s CEO. The truth of the matter is that we collectively failed to spot the figure in the work, which is a character that evokes classical stereotypes of antisemitism. We acknowledge that this was our error. In consultation with Taring Padi we are in support of the decision to take down the work in relation to their principles and values: to work in close contact with citizens in respect of differences, including every ethnic group and religion.

We apologize for the disappointment, shame, frustration, betrayal, and shock this stereotype has caused the viewers and the whole team who has worked hard alongside us to make documenta fifteen a reality. Also the pain and fear in those who looked at the figure, be it in person at documenta fifteen or reproduced by various media outlets covering this story. We acknowledge the feelings also in people working for the media and at documenta who in the past six months have defended us from unfounded accusations and smears.

This imagery, as we now fully understand, connects seamlessly to the most horrific episode of German history in which Jewish people were targeted and murdered on an unprecedented scale. It comes as a shock not only, but specifically to the Jewish community in Kassel and in all of Germany which we consider as our allies and which still live under the trauma of the past and the continued presence of discrimination, prejudice and marginalization. It also is a shock to our friends, neighbors, and colleagues for whom the struggle against all forms of oppression and racism is an existential element of their political, social, and artistic vision.

DOC MENTA JUNE 18 SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 FIFTEE Kassel

We take this opportunity to educate ourselves further about the atrocious history and present of antisemitism and are shocked that this figure made it into the work in question. This collectively made banner is referring to Indonesia's legal and social unresolved dark history since 1965 during the Orde Baru (New Order) era.

We want to use this moment to say that we hope that all of our works have not been in vain, just like the work of our supporters and collaborators is not in vain. documenta fifteen is about so much more.

We are very grateful for the constructive criticism and solidarity we have encountered by so many people in Kassel, in Germany, from institutions and partners. We also want to point out, however, that many of the attacks against us were not done in good faith. We feel that many of the accusations against us were made without trying to first engage in open exchange and mutual learning.

We are here to stay and determined to keep this exhibition open against all odds. We are here for open and sincere conversation, self-education, and collective learning. We are here as humans with our failures, shortcomings, strength, and courage and we will stay as long as possible to invite and facilitate critical and joyful dialogue with those who accept us as equals.

We would like to continue the dialogue with those who sincerely supported us, believed in us. We would also like to continue being in conversations with the general public, visitors, and local grass-root initiatives to whom our works speak.

Press Contact

Johanna Köhler
Head of Communications and Marketing
documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH

Henriette Sölter
Head of Press
documenta fifteen

T +49 561 70727-4030
presse@documenta.de
www.documenta-fifteen.de

DOC  **MENTA** JUNE 18 —
SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 **FIFTEE**
Kassel

documenta fifteen is organized under the auspices of documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH with the City of Kassel and the State of Hessen in their capacity as shareholders.

Funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation). Funded by the Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media).

The lumbung network is supported by Goethe-Institut.

Main partner of documenta fifteen: Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe (Savings Banks Finance Group), Volkswagen AG