

# Contemporary Art in Berlin

<b>Semester:</b>	Summer semester 2018
<b>Course instructor:</b>	Bonnie Begusch / b.begusch@gmail.com
<b>Subject area:</b>	Cultural Studies
<b>Credits:</b>	5 ECTS
<b>Time:</b>	Friday 14 – 16 c.t. (c.t. – starts at 14:15)
<b>Room:</b>	0323-26

## Course description:

What makes Berlin the art world's darling, and does it still live up to the myth? This course provides an introduction to contemporary art while simultaneously creating a framework within which to actively explore and analyze the city's rich and varied cultural offerings. Through readings, writing exercises, and field trips to galleries, artist-run spaces, studios, and private collections, students will gain a unique insider's perspective to Berlin's vibrant international art scene and the cultural issues shaping the city today.

## Learning objectives:

This seminar aims to make Berlin's contemporary art scene accessible and navigable for international students with little to no arts background, empowering them to continue discovering the city and critically engaging with work that is being produced and presented locally. Designed for students who are new to the city, the seminar also serves as a chance to use art as a lens through which to collectively explore various Berlin districts.

By the end of the course, students will:

- Gain a greater understanding of contemporary art.
- Develop critical, creative, and analytical skills in relation to work encountered.
- Gain familiarity with Berlin's art scene through active engagement and exchange with contemporary artists, curators, and critics.
- Develop a deeper understanding of local context and history while exploring aspects of the city's cultural life.
- Research, organize, analyze, and synthesize relevant information and determine how to best communicate it.

## Course requirements:

**This seminar is primarily structured around field trips:** punctuality and attendance are thus absolutely essential. Students will need to arrange their own transportation to field-trip sites, all of which are situated close to public transportation. Final grades will take into account the level of engagement and critical thinking demonstrated in discussions, presentations, and assignments.

The assessment portfolio includes 5 components, all of which are weighted equally:

1. **Regular Attendance and Active Participation.** This includes reading all assigned texts, completing homework assignments, participating in discussions, and being physically and intellectually present. Absences need to be excused in advance and backed up by a doctor's certificate.

2. **Close-Looking Response.** A revised, edited draft of an in-class writing exercise.

3. **Venue Presentation.** You will take responsibility for one of the art spaces we visit over the course of the seminar. This means conducting background research on the venue and exhibition that is currently on view and acting as a discussion leader and class resource. A sign-up sheet for this assignment will be available during our first meeting.

4. **Art Review.** Choose one of the following institutions to visit independently for an exhibition or event. Write a one-page art review of your experience, taking into account the work, the space, the location, the context:

*Berlin Biennale (opens June 9, 2018)*

*KW Institute for Contemporary Art*

*KINDL Centre for Contemporary Art*

*Schinkel Pavillon*

*Berlinische Galerie*

*Künstlerhaus Bethanien*

*Haus der Kulturen der Welt*

*Hamburger Bahnhof*

Further details about the form and content of the art review will be discussed in class.

5. Final: An **Interview Project** with someone active in Berlin's contemporary art world. This can be an artist, curator, art critic, gallerist, publisher, or collector. Details about the form and content of the final project will be discussed in class.

## Language requirements:

This course is conducted primarily in English, with possible tours or studio visits in German. Since readings, presentations, and writing assignments will be in English, a high level of

English proficiency (at least B2) is required. Some basic German (A-level) is recommended. A general knowledge of modern art history is useful although not necessary.

**Tentative Timetable (Based on 15 sessions. Semester dates: April 17<sup>th</sup> – July 20<sup>th</sup>):**

*\*This schedule is subject to change. Students will be informed of any new expectations, excursions, or deadlines in advance.*

*\*A number of classes are combined as double-sessions (4 hours long) in order to accommodate longer excursions.*

Session 1: 20.04.2018

Introduction to the class and logistics.

Reading: Excerpt from Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle (eds.), *What is Contemporary Art?*, Sternberg Press, 2010.

Hal Foster, "Contemporary Extracts," *e-flux journal*, 2010.

Session 2: 27.04.2018 **Excursion:** Sammlung Boros

Meet in front of Sammlung Boros (*Reinhardtstr. 20, 10117 Berlin*).  
In-class Close-Looking response exercise.

Reading: Isabelle Graw, "False Polarities and Economic Subtexts Art Good, Market Evil?," *Texte Zur Kunst*, May 6, 2015.

Session 3 & 4 (Double-Session): 04.05.2018 **Excursion:** Galleries in Schöneberg

Meet in front of Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie (*Schöneberger Ufer 61, 10785 Berlin*). Galleries we visit may include Isabella Bortolozzi, Esther Schipper, Arratia Beer, Blain/Southern, Guido Baudach, Future Gallery, Tanya Leighton, Supportico Lopez, Klosterfelde, Supportico Lopez, Aanant & Zoo, Kunstsaele Berlin.

\*Homework due: Edited version of last week's Close-Looking response.

Reading: Dorothee Richter, "New Art Market(s) and forms of capital," *On-Curating* 20, October, 2013.

Kimberly Bradley, "City Focus Berlin: Potsdamerstrasse," *ArtReview*, January 2013.

*\*\*Extra Credit: Visit MISS READ: The Berlin Art Book Fair at Haus der Kulturen der Welt this weekend. May 4-6, John Foster Dulles Allee 10, 10557 Berlin, Free entry.*

Session 5: 11.05.2018 **Excursion:** Artist-run space in Neukölln

Meet in front of HORSEANDPONY Fine Arts (*Altenbrackerstr. 18, 12053 Berlin*).

\*Homework due: 4 questions for the gallery directors.

Reading: Ryan Thayer, "Based in Berlin: Policy Proposals for Living and Working," *Temporary Art Review*, January 8, 2016.

**Session 6 & 7 (Double-Session):** 18.05.2018 **Excursion:** Galleries in Mitte

Meet in front of Galerie Nagel Draxler (*Weydingerstr 2-4, 10178 Berlin*). Galleries we visit may include Galerie Nagel Draxler, Galerie Neu, Neugerriemschneider, Kunstverein am Rosa Luxemburg Platz, Sprüth Magers, KOW.

Reading: Liam Gillick, "Contemporary Art Does Not Account for that Which is Taking Place," *e-flux journal*, 2010.

**Session 8 & 9 (Double-Session):** 25.05.2018 **Excursion:** Galleries in Kreuzberg

Meet in front of Soy Capitan (*Prinzessinnenstr. 29, 10969 Berlin*). Galleries we visit may include Soy Capitan, König Galerie (St. Agnes), DAAD Galerie, Klemm's, DUVE Berlin, Galerie Barbara Weiss, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, NGBK (Neue Gesellschaft der Bildende Kunst).

Reading: Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube" in: Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (eds), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, 2005.

**Session 10:** 01.06.2018 **Excursion:** Studio Visit TBA

\*Homework due: 4 questions for the artist.

Reading: Hito Steyerl, "Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life" in: *The Wretched of the Screen*, Hito Steyerl, 2012.

**Session 11:** 08.06.2018 **Excursion:** TBA

Discussion of final project. One-on-one meetings about final project ideas.

\*Homework due: Brainstorm 3 ideas for people you would like to interview. Write a paragraph-length pitch for each: Why do you want to pick their brain about art in Berlin? Is there a specific aspect or issue you want to focus on?

Reading: Selection of interviews with Berlin-based practitioners (TBA).

**Session 12:** 15.06.2018 **Excursion:** n.b.k. (Neue Berliner Kunstverein)

Meet in front of n.b.k. (*Chausseestr. 128-129, 10115 Berlin*).

\*Homework due: Art Review assignment.

Reading: "To Have and To Need (Haben und Brauchen) Manifesto," January, 2012.

Session 13: 22.06.2018 **Excursion:** Studio Visit TBA

\*Homework due: 4 questions for the artist.

Reading: TBA

Session 14: 29.06.2018 **Excursion:** Galleries in Wedding

Meet in front of Savvy Contemporary (*Plantagenstr. 31, 13347 Berlin*).

Reading: Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, "The Globalized Museum? Decanonization as Method: A Reflection in Three Acts," *Mousse* 58, April, 2017.

Session 15: 06.07.2018

Final Interview Project due. Student presentations.

Reading: TBA

### **Literature:**

*\*Additional articles concerning individual exhibitions or current cultural issues/events may be shared with the class online.*

#### Required Readings (available via Moodle):

Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle (eds.), *What is Contemporary Art?*, Sternberg Press, 2010.

Kimberly Bradley, "City Focus Berlin: Potsdamerstrasse," *ArtReview*, January 2013.

Elena Filipovic, "The Global White Cube" in: Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (eds), *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, 2005.

Hal Foster, "Contemporary Extracts," *e-flux journal*, 2010.

Liam Gillick, "Contemporary Art Does Not Account for that Which is Taking Place," *e-flux journal*, 2010.

Isabelle Graw, "False Polarities and Economic Subtexts Art Good, Market Evil?," *Texte Zur Kunst*, May 6, 2015.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, "The Globalized Museum? Decanonization as Method: A Reflection in Three Acts," *Mousse* 58, April, 2017.

Dorothee Richter, "New Art Market(s) and forms of capital," *On-Curating* 20, October, 2013.

Hito Steyerl, "Art as Occupation: Claims for an Autonomy of Life" in: *The Wretched of the Screen*, Hito Steyerl, 2012.

Ryan Thayer, "Based in Berlin: Policy Proposals for Living and Working," *Temporary Art Review*, January 8, 2016.

"To Have and To Need (Haben und Brauchen) Manifesto," January, 2012.

### Bibliography:

- Hans Abbing, *Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*, Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Pierre Bourdieu, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, Polity Press, 1991.
- Sol Calero, Iman Issa, Jumana Manna, and Agnieszka Polska, "Statement by the shortlisted nominees of the 2017 Preis der Nationalgalerie," *e-flux journal*, 2017.
- Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund, *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity and Contemporary Art*, Sternberg Press, 2017.
- Ben Davis, *9.5 Theses on Art and Class*, Haymarket Books, 2013.
- Knut Ebeling, *The Contemporary Condition. There is No Now: An Archaeology of Contemporaneity*, Sternberg Press, 2017.
- Andrea Fraser, "L'1%, Ce'st Moi," *Texte Zur Kunst* 83, 2011.
- Alison Gerber, *The Work of Art: Value in Creative Careers*, Stanford University Press, 2017.
- Isabelle Graw, *High Price, Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, Sternberg Press, 2010.
- Isabelle Graw, "Isabelle Graw on 25 Years of Texte Zur Kunst" interview with Hili Perlson, *artnet*, November, 2015.
- Isabelle Graw, "The Myth of Remoteness from the Market / Notes on Berlin's Rise as an Art Metropolis," *Texte Zur Kunst* 94, 2014.
- Sarrita Hunn, "Studios Made of Sand", *Exberliner*, May 18, 2017.
- Koalition der Freien Szene, "10 Points for a New Cultural Policy," 2013.  
<http://www.koalition-der-freien-szene-berlin.de/2013/05/01/independent-art-coalition/>
- Maurizio Lazzarato, "The Misfortunes of the 'Artistic Critique' and of Cultural Employment," European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, 2007.
- Maria Lind and Olav Velthuis (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Its Commercial Markets: A Report on Current Conditions and Future Scenarios*, Sternberg Press, 2012.
- Sebastian Lütgert, "Down And Out In All The Wrong Places (Berlin 2010)," *e-flux journal*, 2010.
- Suhail Malik, "Forever Young: A Short Guide to Some Paradoxes of Contemporary Art," *ArtReview*, February 2015
- Pierre-Michel Menger, "Artistic Labor Markets and Careers", *Annual Review of Sociology* 25, 1999.
- Valerie Moser, *Bildende Kunst als Soziales Feld: Eine Studie über die Berliner Szene*, transcript Verlag Bielefeld, 2013.
- Juliane Rebentisch, "The Contemporaneity of Contemporary Art," *New German Critique* 42, February, 2015.
- Gregory Sholette, "Glut, Overproduction, Redundancy!" in: *Invisible Labour: An Art/Work Reader*, 2014.
- Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, Pluto Press, 2011.
- Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Hito Steyerl, *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, Verso, 2017.
- Christoph Tannert, *Berlin Art Scene*, Becker Joest Verlag, 2014.
- Marcus Verhagen, *Flows and Counterflows: Globalisation in Contemporary Art*, Sternberg Press, 2017.
- Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meaning of Prices on the Market for Contemporary*

*Art*, Princeton University Press, 2007.

Hergen Wöbken (Institut Für Strategieentwicklung), "Studio Berlin II: Studie zur Situation Berliner KünstlerInnen," 2010.

Tirdad Zolghadr, *Traction*, Sternberg Press, 2016.

#### Additional Resources:

##### **Websites**

Index Berlin ([www.indexberlin.de](http://www.indexberlin.de))

Berlin Independent Guide ([www.bpigs.com](http://www.bpigs.com))

Berlin Art Link ([www.berlinartlink.com](http://www.berlinartlink.com))

##### **Art Magazines**

Texte Zur Kunst

Frieze

Spike Art Quarterly

Artforum

Mousse

##### **Book Stores**

Pro Qm (*Almstadtstr. 48*)

Motto (*Skalitzerstr. 68*)

Buchhandlung Walther Koenig (*Burgstr. 27 / Invalidenstr. 50-51*)

Bücherbogen (*Stadtbahnbogen 593*)

b\_books (*Lübbenerstr. 14*)