



ART FORM

Shop looks at the cutting-edge galleries and exhibitions attracting art lovers from around the world

The vibrancy of Berlin's contemporary art community is an international drawing card and the German capital has become a hub for ex-pat artists and gallerists opening new exhibition spaces. While Berlin has established itself as the axis of the European art scene, Germany as a whole is becoming more and more significant as an active arena for artists worthy of global attention.

'No more sugar for the monkey' was the name that curator Christopher David chose for the show that he organised with Emilie Trice and Jochen Kooper in Stattbad, the guerrilla gallery they are developing in a former early 19th-century swimming complex in Wedding.

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The exhibition of over 40 artists earned that title because, as David explains, 'there is no more money or other sweet stuff hyping up the art world any more'. However, lack of hype didn't stop the exhibition from becoming a vast critical success and a destination point for Berliners, propelling Stattbad to open an even more ambitious second show. 'Urban Affairs' featured 45 graffiti and street artists from 10 countries in the biggest and most comprehensive urban art exhibition in Germany's recent history.

'The recession is the best time to curate shows,' says Trice, manager of Berlin's Wilde Gallery and a sometime freelance curator. 'The expectations are readjusted to revolve around the art itself and not its assigned value. The



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Above: Urban Affairs show at Stattbad



value is now in the work in front of you and not in comparison to the prices set in London or New York. The value is being determined here and now.' Seconding this assessment is Berlin-based critic Oliver Frank: 'Germans are known for their solid business sense and strong attention to quality. Berlin is hip and cheap but part of the appeal for the international community interested in coming here is joining the German art scene.'

Even at events explicitly geared to generate sales such as international art fairs, the intellectual wealth and influence of established German galleries is much in evidence. The 14th Artforum Berlin takes place in September, one of Europe's leading art fairs where more than 130 galleries will present their programs. Although the fair includes galleries from around the globe, it admirably showcases Germany's many

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Above: David Nicholson 2007 *Untitled*. Oil on wood

Above: Maud Piquion Gallery

Above: David Nicholson *Melancholia*. Oil on Wood

striking and significant exhibition spaces.

Among the most highly anticipated booths will be Düsseldorf's über-hip Sies + Höke gallery, the venerable Galerie Eva Winkeler from Frankfurt and Munich's Barbara Gross Galerie. Established in 1988, that historic space was one of Europe's first galleries devoted entirely to women artists. Gross introduced Europe to leading feminist figures such as Eva Hesse, Kiki Smith and Louise Bourgeois. And her gallery continues to be a pacemaker as one of Europe's foremost platforms for artists working in new media.

The presence of these bellwether spaces in Berlin for Artforum will provide powerful role models for some of the fledging galleries now earning attention in Germany's capital, particularly those headed by ex-pat dealers determined to take root in Berlin despite today's economic challenges.

'With art, it is like having kids,' declares Maud Piquion, the French-born director of her eponymous storefront gallery on Berlin's Brunnenstrasse. 'There is never a good time to give birth to them, but we still need them. Having a gallery is not easy, the same as starting a family. In both cases you have to know what you are doing and what you are getting into.' With risks in mind, Piquion's gallery focuses on a mix of German and non-German artists. 'I decided to move to Brunnenstrasse and develop my program,' she says. 'And so here I am with a freshly opened gallery that is named after me!'