TILL CREMER

BERLIN ARTISTS. PHOTOGRAPHIC FIELD RESEARCH 2009–2014

Between 2009 and 2014, I completed the portrait series *Berlin Artists,* for which I photographed more than five hundred visual artists who lived and worked in Berlin at the time. The photographic work is based on conversations with the artists and, in stagings that were adapted to the individual person and the situation, explores their artistic practices and themes. My goal was to show the motivations and modes of expression of a wide range of artists through portraiture. I wanted to make visible their aesthetic and ideational explorations, while also highlighting the richness and internationality of contemporary art in Berlin. In the following, I will elaborate on my own artistic approach, on the genesis of *Berlin Artists,* its underlying processes, the backgrounds of selected portraits as well as their relation to one another.

MY OWN ARTISTIC APPROACH AND BACKGROUND

Through my artistic work, I aim to gain a better understanding of the world and myself. I work systematically, analytically, intuitively, and am unbiased as to the result. My works—photographic series, films, interactive installations—are experiments that take place in settings of my choosing which are meant to give access to the subject I am exploring. Experiencing my artworks will ideally engender epistemological processes. To illustrate my artistic approach and to facilitate the understanding of the visual language of my portraits, I would like to mention four staged still lifes from my early series *Da ist* (There is, 1997).

The first photograph (fig. 1.1) shows a brick that appears to be both immobile and falling; the second photograph (fig. 1.2) shows a liquid being poured and assuming the shape of a wine glass; the third photograph (fig. 1.3) is of the cast shadow of a bottle without showing the bottle; the fourth photograph (fig. 1.4) shows an unlit candle that nevertheless produces a glow. These images investigate the interrelationship between outside and inside, between perception and interpretation. The experimental series served to evoke images in the mind of the

__ 1.1: Till Cremer, Ohne Titel [Untitled], from the series Da ist [There is], 1997/2019, monochrome negative, digitally remastered, 24 × 36 mm. __ 1.2: Till Cremer, Ohne Titel [Untitled], Da ist [There is], 1997/2019, monochrome negative, digitally remastered, 24 × 36 mm. __ 1.3: Till Cremer, Ohne Titel [Untitled], Da ist [There is], 1997/2019, monochrome negative, digitally remastered, 24 × 36 mm. __ 1.4: Till Cremer, Ohne Titel [Untitled], Da ist [There is], 1997/2019, monochrome negative, digitally remastered, 24 × 36 mm.

viewer that would complement or question the pictures based on the viewer's subjective experience. The photographs provide a frame for personal experience that is meant to enable insight by disrupting viewing habits while simultaneously causing visual associations.

Berlin Artists includes documentary, staged, and allegorical pictorial information which, in subtle or direct ways, tells us something about the art and the personality of the portrayed artists. Elements of the compositions were deliberately chosen and staged in order to convey visual information.

GENESIS OF THE SERIES *BERLIN ARTISTS*

When, in the summer of 2009, I arrived at the idea of a portrait series about artists in Berlin, I had lived in the city only for a short time and did not possess in-depth knowledge of the contemporary art being created here. So how did it happen that I visited and photographed such a vast number of artists over the course of five years? In answering this question, I will describe the personal circumstances that were the artistic driving force behind this photographic field research.

My older brother and I were inseparable growing up. From early childhood on, we drew and painted together, created comics, figures, and fantasy worlds, all in an atmosphere of mutual inspiration. As a young adult, my brother developed a mental illness. My first photographic portraits are from that time: a sequence in black and white that shows him reading and drawing, his two main occupations. Prompted by me, he looks directly into the camera in one of the photos (fig. 2). In the subsequent years, my brother was caught in a spiral of suffering and painted many expressive paintings before he took his life in 2005, aged thirty-two. I lost the person who I had felt deeply, wordlessly connected to, who had understood me and whom I had understood.

Late in 2008, a teaching position brought me from the Rhineland to Berlin. The metropolis breathed informality and dormant potential. I sensed that in Berlin there was time and room for me to develop my own, free ideas. The distance to home allowed me to take a step back from the tragic event and to regain a sense of self. Also, after having worked in film production and as a freelance graphic designer for several years, I seemed to have instinctively found my way back to fine art in Berlin. Here, it seemed possible to live unconventionally and to have an artistic practice. The city's free-spirited atmosphere and its affordable rents attracted and continue to attract countless artists, especially of Anglo-American and Western European backgrounds. It felt like in no other place were there quite as many artists, that nowhere else was so much art being made and exhibited as in Berlin. Both then and now, shows open nearly every day. The exhibition calendar *INDEX Berlin,* or the handwritten lists by the French performance artist Turbo Jambon (fig. 3)—"omnipresent at art openings and other art events in Berlin"—give an
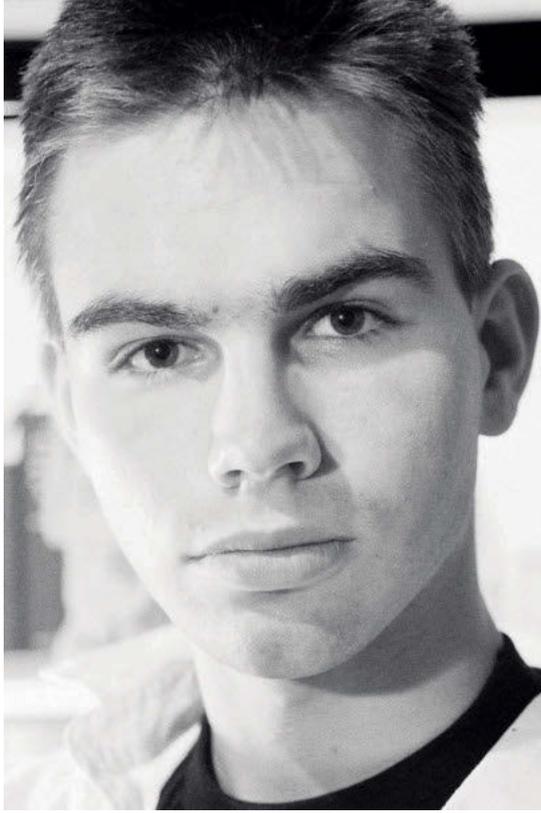
____ 2: Till Cremer, *Wolf Tankred Roger Cremer*, ca. 1993/2019, monochrome negative, digitally remastered, 24 × 36 mm.

idea of the established Berlin art world as well as of the countless independent initiatives and project spaces.[1, 2]

This unique environment helped me pursue my desire for artistic expression; it inspired me to portray artists in Berlin, to explore and record their work in photography. The loss I suffered paradoxically gave me the courage and the perseverance necessary for this long-term project.

Gal. Wedding	7.10
Ife, talk	7.9
Kl. Humboldt Gal @ Ahlewn	2-8
Kunstraum Bethanien, talk	7.
Gal. TZB	7.9
CIO, lecture	7.
HH Bhf, conf.	3.8
Ha Weldsee, talk	7.30
NGBK @ Hellersdorf	7.
PSF, Genthiner 36, talk	6.630
Gal. Poll, Gips 3	6.3
Peters Barenbrock Gal, Ludwigkirch 8	6-8
Stella A Gal., Gips 4	7.5
Display, finiss.	6-7
Sanos, talk	7.10
Frauenkreise, finiss.	7.9
Aperto, music perf	6.9
Info Cafe Blu Paris, Molkenmarkt 1	7.12
Vender Club House, Bismarck 103	8-11 7.30 10.30
Kunstbli	7.30 10.30
Zwingli Kirche	7.10
Schaufenster, talk	7.11
Tier	7.9
Wome	7.9
Vilem Flusser Archiv, talk	7.9
Hopscotch	7.1
Glockenraum, talk	7.10
Bras Bot., Walli 57	7.10
Gal. Eigenheim, perf	7.9
BcmR	7.9
Myer's Hotel	7.3
Dane, talk	7.
EEP, Liegnitzer 34	6.9
Pullman Schweizerhof, Budapester 25	6.10
Strasse 55, closing, Simpson	6.9
Abury Showroom, K Kunst	6.12
Kiembe, finiss.	4.30-7
Die Remise, finiss.	2.9
ICE, symp.	7.12
Gal. Nord	7.
Studio Baustelle	7.9
Meistersaal a. Postdamer pl.	7.1
Project Room LC	7.8.30
Studio R	7.3
Böhmischer pl.	7.1
Horse Bar	7.10
Babette	7.10
Weine 58	7.8
Kulturschöpfe	7.10
Berliner Berg	7.10
Schule f. Gestalt.	7.8
Willi Tones	7.10
F3	
BcmP / Gal. Kremers / Jelon Gal.	
Georg Embess, Rauch 11 / hace	

Weserhalle	7.6
NBK	7.
Schinkel Pav. @ Salzufer, englishe 21	perf 8.12
Air Berlin Alex, Prinzen 35-38, perf	5.7
Tempelhof. Feld.	6.7
Videoart @ 12, screen	12.-
48 Std. Neuk.	6.9
JR Gal., Goethe 81	7.
Gal. Dittmar, August 22	6.-
Sinnos	7.12
Dine @ CAPO, 4th fl., Rigaer 22A (J30)	6.30-12
Seeds of sound, Lohmühlen 66	8.-
Apartment Proj.	8.915
Grand Soulad	7.30 - 10.30
Prachtwerk, Ganghofer 2	7.
Zwitschermasch.	7.
Studio Klaus Hu	7.
Umspannwerk, Richard 20	7.
Neuk. Arcaden	7.
Neon Kunst	7.
Disconnect Store	7.
Bible a mikrobes	7.10
FKK	7.10
Walden	7.11
OtO Artspace	7.1
Luise Catucci Gal.	7.-
Emser 116 HH	6.12
Gal. i Körnerpark	6.-
Kunstraum Bethanien	11-7
askeodo	9-12
Gelegenheit	9-10
Funck Raum	8.30 9.3
Oblomov, pop.	8.3
Lissi Teilor	8-11
Kulturkirche Neodemos	8.12
ausland	8.10
das Kapitel, talk	8.11
Fincen Neuk.	8.10 30
Gal. Toolbox	7.30 12
Ostfriesland	7.10
Sprechsaal	7.10
Gal. U-Art	7.4
Kunstverein Neuk.	7.1
Retramp	7.1
Kindl	7.11
Wild Teles Bar	7.11
Gal. Bauchhund	7.5
Collective Gal.	7.5
Fortune Wetter	7.5
Polymedia Pony hof	7.
graumalerei	7.5
Käthe Kollwitz Mus., Fasanen 24	7.11 30
SUBTEL	7.12
Bravo @ KW	
Urban Spree	

—— 3: Turbo Jambon, handwritten list of art events in Berlin, June 2019, ball pen on paper, detail, 29,7 × 21 cm.

PHOTOGRAPHIC APPROACH AND EQUIPMENT

An aesthetic question posed itself at the beginning of my endeavor: How and with what camera did I want to take my pictures? I did not have a production budget. Professional DSLR cameras were expensive and their resolution limited. Analogue SLRs, however, were affordable. Also, using film offered painterly aesthetics, a physical project archive, and practically limitless resolution. I decided to work with analog photography.

On the recommendation of the head of the photography workshop at the Braunschweig University of Art, where I had studied, I acquired a Mamiya 645 with a special 4:3 aspect ratio.[3] Using this medium format camera, an additional small-format camera, and a number of different lenses, I started out by taking black-and-white and color test photographs of artist acquaintances.

This pilot study led to several fundamental decisions that significantly influence the aesthetics of my photographs: I decided to work exclusively with light-sensitive standard lenses, reversal film, continuous light, and to shoot solely hand-held in the portrait format. For what I had in mind, using color film seemed indispensable as an information medium. To illuminate the artists and to be able to take pictures without a tripod, working more responsively, I required an extra light source, a 1000-watt halogen spotlight with 3400 Kelvin. It was only by inter-acting and working intuitively that I was able to create intimate moments, capturing an open, at times self-forgetful expression in the artists' eyes. I reduced motion blurring by keeping my exposure time to a maximum of one two-hundred-and-fiftieth of a second. My need to move freely and to act immediately led me to work-ing with a technologically scaled-down concept. This, however, put high require-ments on the film material: To compensate for the dim light often found in the spaces in which I photographed, I exposed ISO 400 films at ISO 1600, ISO 200 films at ISO 800. This in turn required a maximum push processing of the films by two stops.[4] The resulting photographs have more grain, a steeper gradation curve, and therefore less detail in shadow and light. As a result of this method, areas that in the originals would be black sometimes appear dark brown or dark blue. Addition-ally, the different color temperatures of the local lighting—blue, green or yellow— mix with the warm white of my lamp. The images' resulting analog and experi-mental aesthetics is characterized by precisely the soft, painterly quality I sought.

Since I realized my portrait series exclusively with my own resources, I needed to work economically and use only one roll of film per person, whenever possible. This quantitative limitation imposed by the use of film meant that I could take fifteen concentrated shots of each person, usually trying out two or three different angles and motifs.

CHOOSING THE ARTISTS

Having answered the technical questions, I was faced with the next challenge: How would I arrive at a compelling range of artists for my project? My intention was not to simply follow the mechanisms of the art market or to portray only established artists, whose names I could have easily researched by looking at pertinent events, institutions and publications. Rather, I was interested in a broader spectrum of professional visual artists: people who—against all odds—dedicate themselves to artistic searching. I was going to work on creating a comprehensive picture of this group of people, one that paid no heed to their age, origins, personal background, practice, or position in the art market.

Therefore, my core strategy for selecting artists was to ask those already photographed to recommend further artists. To get started, I researched several people who ideally would differ in terms of their age, origin, and practice.

Karin Sander's group exhibition *Zeigen: Eine Audiotour durch Berlin* (Showing. An Audio Tour through Berlin) at Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin (2009) was one of my sources.[5] The exhibition project comprised 566 contributions by artists living and working in Berlin, from which I chose around thirty. Furthermore, the cultural center Künstlerhaus Bethanien, at my request, kindly sent me the contacts of their current artists-in-residence in their international studio program.[6] Connections from the circle of the Braunschweig University of Art complemented my list.

Among the people I photographed in December 2009 were both emerging and established artists, including Roland Stratmann, Christian Hoischen, Guy Zagursky, and, starting in January 2010, Käthe Kruse, Alicja Kwade, Ulrike Mohr, Annika Hippler, John Bock, Nezaket Ekici, Hans Hemmert, EVA & ADELE, Thomas Eller, Isabell Heimerdinger, Alexej Meschtschanow, Jonathan Monk, Anselm Reyle, Joep van Liefland, Damien Deroubaix, Via Lewandowsky, Gunna Schmidt, Matthias Bitzer, Ingo Gerken, Tatjana Doll, Frank Nitsche, Patrycja German, and Howard McCalebb.

Many of the artists recommended friends with whom they had gone to art school as well as colleagues with whom they shared a gallery, a studio, or an artistic orientation, who were from the same generation, the same country or city, or whose work they appreciated especially. As an example, figure 4 shows the recommendations of EVA & ADELE, Thomas Rentmeister, and Thomas Scheibitz. Figure 5 shows two paths of recommendations that began with Thomas Eller. Eller recommended, among others, Tatjana Doll, who in turn recommended, among others, Isa Melsheimer. Melsheimer referred me to one single artist—Martin Städeli—saying that the Swiss-born artist had an exceptional studio full of papier-mâché figures. On the recommendation of Eberhard Havekost, I photographed Heidi Specker, who also referred me to only one artist: Wawrzyniec Tokarski, her studio neighbor. A number of artists were referred multiple times. Figure 7 shows, for example, that Lisa Junghanß was recommended four times: by EVA & ADELE, Klaus Jörres, Cornelia
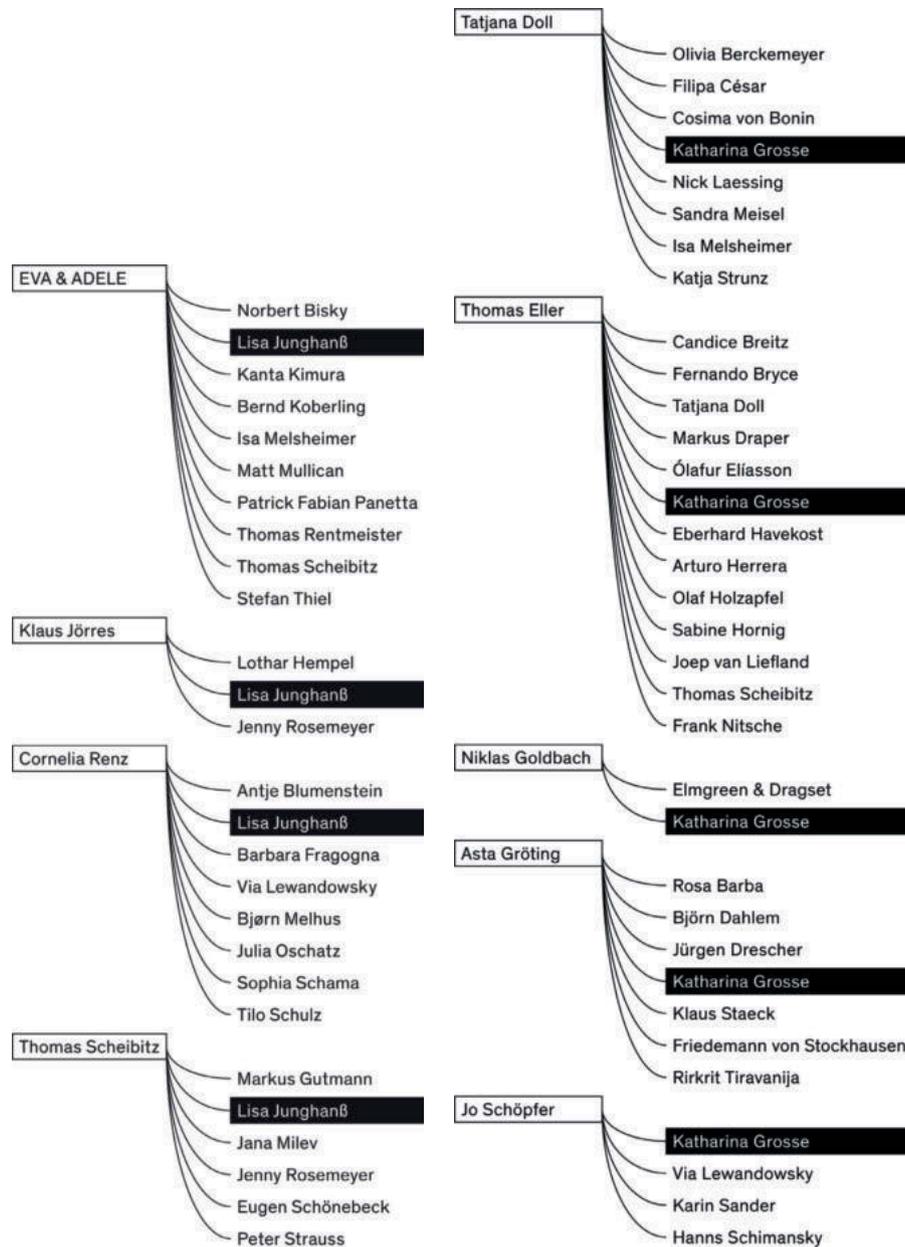
Renz, and Thomas Scheibitz. These examples go to show how I entered different circles through a few people and how I was able to explore the ramified, overlapping, and coinciding networks of these professional and social interrelations.

I continued to add names of people I researched myself to my rapidly growing list. My most important sources in this respect were the art fairs Art Forum Berlin (1996–2010), art berlin contemporary (2008–2016), Gallery Weekend Berlin,[7] Künstlerhaus Bethanien, the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program,[8] Autocenter – Contemporary
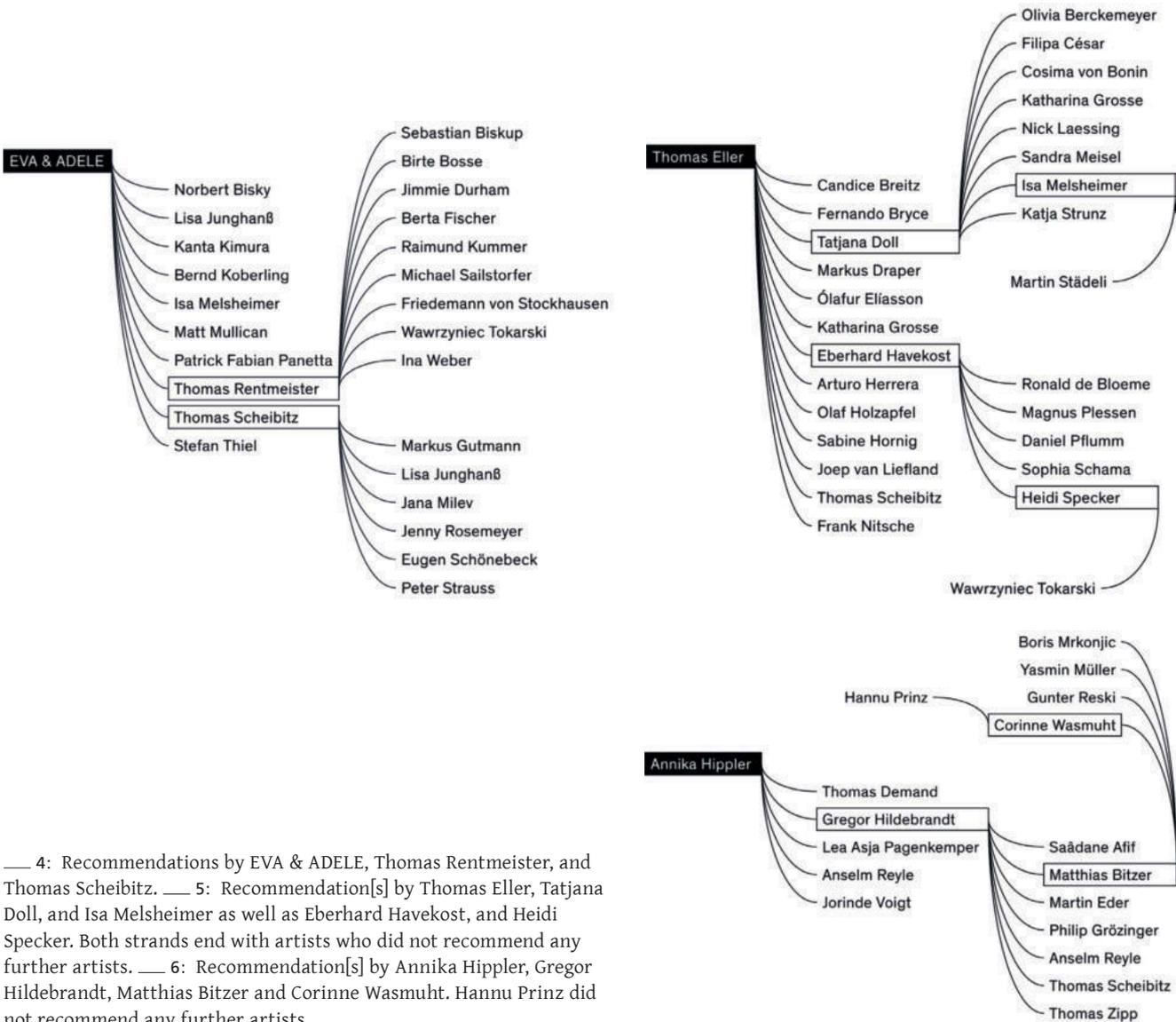
___ 4: Recommendations by EVA & ADELE, Thomas Rentmeister, and Thomas Scheibitz. ___ 5: Recommendation[s] by Thomas Eller, Tatjana Doll, and Isa Melsheimer as well as Eberhard Havekost, and Heidi Specker. Both strands end with artists who did not recommend any further artists. ___ 6: Recommendation[s] by Annika Hippler, Gregor Hildebrandt, Matthias Bitzer and Corinne Wasmuht. Hannu Prinz did not recommend any further artists.

Art Berlin (2001–2018),[9] and the final project at Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin (2010), curated by John Bock.[10] Between 2009 and 2014, I compiled more than eight hundred names—an image of the Berlin art scene at the time that had largely drawn itself.

Tatjana Doll
- Olivia Berckemeyer
- Filipa César
- Cosima von Bonin
- Katharina Grosse
- Nick Laessing
- Sandra Meisel
- Isa Melsheimer
- Katja Strunz

EVA & ADELE
- Norbert Bisky
- Lisa Junghanß
- Kanta Kimura
- Bernd Koberling
- Isa Melsheimer
- Matt Mullican
- Patrick Fabian Panetta
- Thomas Rentmeister
- Thomas Scheibitz
- Stefan Thiel

Thomas Eller
- Candice Breitz
- Fernando Bryce
- Tatjana Doll
- Markus Draper
- Ólafur Elíasson
- Katharina Grosse
- Eberhard Havekost
- Arturo Herrera
- Olaf Holzapfel
- Sabine Hornig
- Joep van Liefland
- Thomas Scheibitz
- Frank Nitsche

Klaus Jörres
- Lothar Hempel
- Lisa Junghanß
- Jenny Rosemeyer

Cornelia Renz
- Antje Blumenstein
- Lisa Junghanß
- Barbara Fragogna
- Via Lewandowsky
- Bjørn Melhus
- Julia Oschatz
- Sophia Schama
- Tilo Schulz

Niklas Goldbach
- Elmgreen & Dragset
- Katharina Grosse

Asta Gröting
- Rosa Barba
- Björn Dahlem
- Jürgen Drescher
- Katharina Grosse
- Klaus Staeck
- Friedemann von Stockhausen
- Rirkrit Tiravanija

Thomas Scheibitz
- Markus Gutmann
- Lisa Junghanß
- Jana Milev
- Jenny Rosemeyer
- Eugen Schönebeck
- Peter Strauss

Jo Schöpfer
- Katharina Grosse
- Via Lewandowsky
- Karin Sander
- Hanns Schimansky

—— 7: Multiple recommendations of the same artist at the example of Lisa Junghanß. —— 8: Multiple recommendations of the same artist at the example of Katharina Grosse.

It was never my intention to depict the full spectrum of artists living and working in Berlin, which back then already counted at least five thousand individuals.[11] Rather, my series aimed to give an inspiring and communicative insight into contemporary art in Berlin and to document some of the social, aesthetic, ethical, and ideological aspects of the time and the culture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SELECTED PORTRAITS

To get in touch and to set up a meeting, I contacted the artists by e-mail. I explained that I was working on a series about Berlin artists and that I wished to create portraits that would convey some of the aesthetic or thematic aspects of their artistic personalities. In order to do so, I explained, I would like to meet them in places connected to their work. In the majority of cases, I received a reply and it was seldom that I was turned down. If I did not get any answer at all, I would try again later (my serial e-mails may occasionally have ended up in spam folders.)

Usually, I met the artists in their studios, where we would talk about their current projects, I would look around and ask questions about their working method, about existing works or works in progress and their backgrounds. I tried to create a visual connection between the information obtained from these conversations and striking elements or features found in the studios. The chosen angles aimed to help the respective artistic approaches, themes, or processes enter the picture as compellingly as possible and focused on the artists' expressions, aiming to show them in natural, uncontrived poses.

Examples of shots for which nothing about the site-specific situations was changed are the portraits of Lothar Hempel, Ulrike Ottinger, Hans Hemmert, Boris Mikhailov, Reynold Reynolds, and Bettina Krieg. Ulrike Ottinger (fig. 12) stands in front of a shelf holding labeled boxes of slides and packaged photographic paper, attached to which is a rolled-up projecting screen. This archive makes reference to her media: photography and film. Boris Mikhailov (fig. 14.1) sits in a black leather armchair in front of a black background. The shot appears like a classic portrait. In fact, a black *molleton* was affixed to one of the living room walls, in front of which Mikhailov presumably took self-portraits, a circumstance which I used for my composition. With an aura created by backlighting, Reynold Reynolds (fig. 14.2) stands, slightly off-center, in front of a plant in a room that seems antiquated. In the background one can make out wooden furniture, a cage, framed pictures, cables, tools as well as a somewhat inauthentic-looking stone wall. This apparent basement room was a set for his piece *The Lost,* which he was working on at the time.[12] Bettina Krieg (fig. 15.2) sits in a three-dimensional drawing, its appearance as a sphere the result of the viewing angle of the photograph. She is in the midst of her artistic cosmos, surrounded by black-and-white drawings and image objects. In this photograph, the aesthetics and technique of her art as well as the symbolism

of the portrait are immediate and palpable. Hans Hemmert (fig. 13) stands in the middle of his studio. In the foreground, one sees a desk with everyday objects: a water bottle, stacked papers, books. In the background, there are two sculptural objects, contrasting strongly with the white wall with photos, a drawing, and a rounded, white shape behind them. One of the sculptural objects consists of a branch over which a bright yellow bag-like shape is draped loosely. The other construction has a sawhorse as its base, to which a thin wooden beam is attached vertically with two screw clamps, hanging over the end of which is another yellow bag shape, which in turn is protected by an open black umbrella. This construction and Hemmert's physical posture oddly correspond. To me, this mysterious parallel between artist and work makes this portrait one of the most fascinating in the series.

In certain cases, I would suggest gestures and poses as a means of generating or intensifying a visual message. Examples here would be the portraits of Frank Nitsche, Ingo Gerken, and Alexej Meschtschanow. Ingo Gerken (fig. 10.1) leans against a wall onto which he has taped the outline of a house. The roll of tape encloses his left wrist like a massive bracelet and connects him to his wall drawing in a spatial and temporal sense. Gerken's serious expression emphasizes here the delicate irony that often accompanies his minimalist formal language. Alexej Meschtschanow (fig. 10.4) stands, his arms crossed behind his back, in front of a hulking metal sculpture that seems to be a substitute for his own concealed arms. The image makes reference to sculptural works in which Meschtschanow combines photographs, objects and pieces of furniture with prosthesis-like metal constructions. The head of Frank Nitsche (fig. 9) rests on a pedestal made of beverage cans and stickers—things he has collected on his many international journeys ("The only luxury he grants himself [my translation].").[13]

In order to underline features and characteristics or to evoke certain associations in the viewer's mind, I occasionally asked artists for personal items to be integrated into the image. A photograph of EVA & ADELE, for example, shows them both holding an old teddy bear, which they got from their bedroom after I had asked them if they had any personal object around that could be included in the picture. Also, spontaneous suggestions made by the artists often inspired me to create playful, performative scenes. Examples here would be the portraits of Patrycja German, Nezaket Ekici, and Jonathan Meese, all of them working, among others, in the medium of performance. Patryjca German (fig. 10.2) wanted to be in the nude for the portrait, as she is in her performances. I asked her if she would pose in her sunny bedroom like Sandro Botticelli's *Venus* (1485/1486) so as to underline her self-expression. I carefully arranged her shoes and clothes at her feet. Nezaket Ekici (fig. 15.1), for her portrait, put on a dress covered with long quills. At my request, she stood on her desk, backlit by the open window. Her hands, which she moved slowly over her body during the shot, are prevented from touching it by the quills. Jonathan Meese, without batting an eyelash, tied on a Snoopy apron, donned

—— 9: Till Cremer, Frank Nitsche, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 15 September 2010
#allegory #inspiration, from the series Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color
reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm.

a sun helmet, and picked up and held in his arms one of several wooden horses that were standing around. I photographed him wearing this outfit, standing among several paintings.

Multiple exposures were used when, as in the case of Mattias Härenstam (fig. 10.3), there was a lack of expressive visual reference points in the location or when it was required for other reasons related to the artists' themes and processes. Härenstam's working space, for example, was set up with a shelf and a desk, where he was editing a film, the dark and surreal atmosphere of which I tried to express with an equally unreal portrait.

Some artists had very specific ideas for their image. In those cases, I put my own ideas aside and respectfully realized theirs. Examples here are the portraits of Astali/Peirce (fig. 16.1) and Cécile B. Evans (fig. 16.2).

Most of the photo sessions lasted one or two hours, sometimes several. The shortest encounter was the one with Ólafur Elíasson. After a tour through his multi-story studio by one of his assistants, I was given a fifteen-minute slot to shoot. Anselm Reyle, too, showed me his studio first and then gave me exactly half an hour to stage him in his "production line." When I worked with Käthe Kruse, by contrast, we spent several hours together. For one of the shots, we hung a Japanese-inspired fabric print of hers on a living room wall we had cleared, using it as a

___ 10.1: Till Cremer, Ingo Gerken, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 2 September 2010 #allegory #subject, Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ 10.2: Till Cremer, Patrycja German, Berlin-Gesundbrunnen, 28 September 2010 #allegory #subject, Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ 10.3: Till Cremer, Mattias Härenstam, Berlin-Friedrichshain, 13 April 2011 #allegory #subject, Berlin Artists, 2011/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ 10.4: Till Cremer, Alexej Meschtschanow, Berlin-Weißensee, 10 August 2010 #allegory #subject, Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm.

___ 11: Till Cremer, Lothar Hempel, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 13 December 2011 #material, Berlin Artists, 2011/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ 12: Till Cremer, Ulrike Ottinger, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 22 March 2013 #medium, Berlin Artists, 2013/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm.

background, while she dressed in an outfit to match, complete with a Japanese handbag. For the portrait of Annika Hippler, who uses laser beams as an artistic medium, I worked with multiple exposures. In a dark room, I successively photographed different patterns she cast on the wall with a laser before I took a picture of her lying on the floor.

The level of engagement with the artists depended on how much time they had, how open they were towards me and on the material available in their studios. My goal was always to grasp the essence of the respective artistic personality in a manner that was both analytical and empathetic, and to playfully bring this to life in the photograph.

After five years and more than five hundred encounters, I took my last shots for *Berlin Artists* in the fall of 2014. On October 13th, I portrayed the painters Isa Schmidlehner and Jin Lie with their newborn child. That same year, production of the photographic film I was working with ceased altogether.[14]
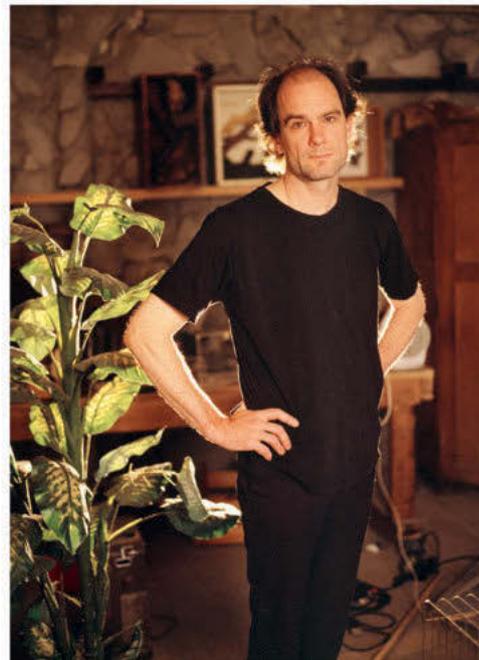
——— 13: Till Cremer, Hans Hemmert, Berlin-Wedding, 25 March 2010 #process, Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ——— 14.1: Till Cremer, Boris Mikhailov, Berlin-Wilmersdorf, 8 July 2014 #setting, Berlin Artists, 2014/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ——— 14.2: Till Cremer, Reynold Reynolds, Berlin-Pankow, 4 July 2012 #setting, Berlin Artists, 2012/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm.

___ **15.1**: Till Cremer, Nezaket Ekici, Berlin-Mitte, 25 February 2010 #subject, Berlin Artists, 2010/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ **15.2**: Till Cremer, Bettina Krieg, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 29 June 2012 #subject, Berlin Artists, 2012/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ **16.1**: Till Cremer, Astali/Peirce, Berlin-Mitte, 27 April 2012 #suggestion, Berlin Artists, 2012/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm. ___ **16.2**: Till Cremer, Cécile B. Evans, Berlin-Mitte, 1 April 2011 #suggestion, Berlin Artists, 2011/2019, color reversal film, digitally remastered, 4.5 × 6 cm.

LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PORTRAITS

In the meantime, I analyzed and grouped the images of the series according to subjects and formal attributes. Similar to using social media hashtags, I tagged the portraits with one or several keywords to identify unconscious or conscious intentions along with external commonalities. In doing so, I realized that the complex work was becoming more accessible to me. The nearly unmanageable abundance of portraits was becoming workable and articulated; the portraits' statements were becoming more pronounced and their connections to one another more visible.

The portrait of Frank Nitsche (fig. 9), for example, was tagged with the terms "allegory" and "inspiration" to designate the allegory of traveling (his source of inspiration) which the picture expressed for me. The word "allegory" also describes my intuitive intervention, a suggestive visual symbolism that was meant to amplify what was already there, intensifying it ironically or even making it visible in the first place.

In the case of Ulrike Ottinger (fig. 12), I used the term "medium," as this aspect of her artistic work is the one that is most prominently conveyed by the photograph. The portrait of Lothar Hempel (fig. 11) foregrounds the material with which he works and is consequently tagged with "material." The image of Hans Hemmert (fig. 13) may best be described with the word "process." This term spans a variety of images that document a given state of production, and which thus convey very diverse information. Boris Mikhailov (fig. 14.1) and Reynold Reynolds (fig. 14.2) are each shown in the "setting" of their own artistic production, which is the tag I used for them. The portraits of Nezaket Ekici (fig. 15.1) and Bettina Krieg (fig. 15.2) make reference to the theme or the subject of each of their artistic practices and are therefore tagged with "subject."

The photographs of Ingo Gerken (fig. 10.1), Patrycja German (fig. 10.2), Matthias Härenstam (fig. 10.3), and Alexej Meschtschanow (fig. 10.4) likewise make reference to the themes or subjects of these artists' practices but at the same time they are allegories. My system allows me to tag these stagings with "allegory" and "subject," and they are linked to the portraits of Ekici and Krieg as well as to that of Nitsche.

Astali/Peirce (fig. 16.1) and Cécile B. Evans (fig. 16.2) had very particular scenes for their portraits in mind. The artist duo wished to be photographed with a screen and a Styrofoam ball, crouching in a built-in wardrobe, while Evans in her portrait lies in bed with a cigarette. Portraits that are the result of concrete suggestions such as these were grouped under the term "suggestion."

Quite a few artists used their art objects to conceal their faces. This formal commonality led me to label this group of images with the simple term "mask."

Assigning keywords to the portraits allowed me to access the pictures through a level of comparability; it created subject-related connections and opened the images for a *studium* (in the sense used by Roland Barthes) regarding their messages.[15]

EMPIRICAL DATA

From the beginning, I listed the names of all artists—both those whose names I had researched and those who had been recommended to me—on my website, which also showed a selection of portraits while the project was still ongoing. After one year, the list of names and photographed people had become so extensive that I chose to develop a database-supported system to keep track. The website (no longer public today, instead serving me as a tool and an archive) included the names of all artists—those already photographed, those recommended to me, and those whose names I had researched myself—some portraits, as well as the city districts and dates of those photographs, and the photographed artists' date and place of birth. For a limited time, the portrayed artists could access their data to make additions or corrections. Several images from the series, including the production data and information about the artists, as well as an ever-growing list of photographed artists were consistently accessible to the public.

For my lecture at the symposium *Artist Complex. Images of Artists in Photography*, I analyzed the collected data about the artists. The oldest artist is Bob Rutman (b. 1931), the youngest is Kato Six (b. 1986). In the most strongly represented age groups (1966–1978), women make up 42 percent, in the older ones (1965–1931) 31 percent, and in the younger ones (1979–1986) 43 percent. The average percentage of women is 40 percent. More than 270 of the photographed artists were born in Germany, more than twenty in the United States, more than fifteen in France, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom respectively, more than ten in Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden respectively, six in Australia, Canada, and Spain respectively, and three in Russia and Turkey respectively. Artists born in Eastern Europe are represented only marginally. Except for a small number of individuals from Israel, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea, artists from African and Asian countries as well as from South America figure only occasionally in my project. Twenty-four percent of the artists were located in the Kreuzberg district, 14 percent in Gesundbrunnen (many in the Uferhallen, a studio complex threatened today by gentrification),[16] 12 percent each in Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg, and 9 percent in Neukölln. In the districts of Französisch Buchholz, Lichterfelde, Tegel and Wilmersdorf, I photographed one person in each case, and in the periphery of Berlin, in places such as Finsterwalde, Gerswalde, and Neuendorf im Sande, I also photographed one person in each case.[17]

AN ATTEMPT AT CONTEXTUALIZING *BERLIN ARTISTS*

Berlin Artists is an anthropological and photographic field research, an artistic experimental system that builds on three process levels.[18] I see the selection of the artists as the first level, in which the threads of recommendations spread out horizontally, ramified, and developed connections. The path that unfolded as a result of my chosen methodology was unknown to me at the beginning of the project. The empirical data that resulted convey a sense of the social composition of Berlin's art scene. The meetings with the artists are the second level, in which the work grew vertically and, creating time capsules of its own, produced specific, individual content. The artistic outcome of each encounter could not be predicted and required an open, mindful approach on my part. Whether or not a compelling image was created depended very much on how open-minded the artists were. My photographic approach—the third level—was a creative, productive experiment, the results of which, unlike in digital photography, were not instantly accessible and often surprised me. This element of unpredictability and artistic experimentation, to me, is precisely what lends analog photography its appeal.

While every portrait can be considered in its own right, it is only in their entirety and systematic juxtaposition that the individual pictures of my organically grown, long-term project manifest their full force and significance.

Translated by Elfi Seidel

NOTES

1   https://www.indexberlin.com. Accessed on January 22, 2021.

2   Cf. "Turbo Jambon @turbojambon," https://www.instagram.com/turbojambon. Accessed on March 19, 2019.

3   Medium format cameras with the rectangular format of 6 × 4.5 cm are often smaller and lighter and allow for images in portrait and landscape format. The most common format in medium-format photography is 6 × 6 cm.

4   Push processing in analog photography refers to a film developing technique that increases the effective sensitivity of the film being processed. Cf. "Push processing," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Push_processing. Accessed on March 5, 2020.

5   Cf. Karin Sander: *Zeigen: Eine Audiotour durch Berlin von Karin Sander,* exh. cat., Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin (Cologne: Walther König, 2009).

6   https://www.bethanien.de. Accessed on March 25, 2019.

7   https://www.gallery-weekend-berlin.de. Accessed on April 16, 2019.

8   Cf. DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program, ed., *50 Jahre Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD. Die Jahre 1988–2013* (Berlin: DAAD, 2013).

9   Cf. Maik Schierloh, Joep van Liefland, eds., *Autocenter – Space for Contemporary Art Berlin* (Berlin: Distanz, 2014).

10 Cf. John Bock: *FischGrätenMelkStand*, exh. cat., Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin (Cologne: Walther König, 2010).

11 Cf. Hergen Wöbken, *Studio Berlin II* (Berlin: Institut für Strategieentwicklung, 2011).

12 Reynold Reynolds, *The Lost*, 1933/2013, HD video, 110 min/7-channel HD video installation, loop.

13 Bernhard Schilz, "Exklusiver Hausbesuch bei einem Superstar: Dresdens

(un)bekannter Meister Frank Nitsche," *Bild* (September 15, 2011): https://www.bild.de/regional/dresden/kuenstler/exklusiver-hausbesuch-bei-dresdens-weltweit-erfolgreichen-kuenstler-frank-nitsche- 19969972.bild.html. Accessed on April 22, 2019.

14 Fujifilm FujiChrome Provia 400X and Kodak Ektachrome E 200 color reversal films 120.

15 Roland Barthes, *Die helle Kammer: Bemerkungen zur Fotografie*, trans. Dietrich Leube (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 33–37.

16 Cf. Helke Ellersiek, "Gentrifizierung in Berlin: Uferhallen-Künstler fürchten Verdrängung durch Investoren," *Der Tagesspiegel*, no. 23216 (August 25, 2017), 7.

17 Cf. Patrick Wagner, *Wo Berlins Künstler leben* (Hamburg: Statista, 2018): https://de.statista.com/infografik/15168/verteilung-der-berliner-kuenstler-nach-stadtteilen. Accessed on April 17, 2019.

18 Cf. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Experimentelle Serialität in Wissenschaft und Kunst," in Olaf Knellessen, Giaco Schiesser, Daniel Strassberg, eds., *Serialität: Wissenschaften, Künste, Medien* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2015), 68–77.

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