

Ein Berlin Bericht – III

The New Year is fast approaching and with it the sound of fireworks exploding grows daily. It's somewhat startling to be woken at three in the morning by what sounds at first like gunshot, but after a week or so the bang! bang! fizzles into one's peripheral hearing. It's a well known fact that Berlin is the most dangerous of places to be during the *Sylvester* celebrations and I'm reliably informed that the most projectile ravaged area of Berlin is Wedding, where full body armour is generally advised if you're brave/stupid enough to leave your apartment.

By December the deep chill has set in, freezing every extremity insufficiently bundled. The layer of dry, powdery snow (so very different to London slush as we know it), alongside boosting the winter wonderland factor (go to Potsdammer platz for the ski-slope and psychotic elves) has the added bonus of making it just a little brighter during the day – a very welcome side effect.



Constructing the ski-slope for *die Winterwelt am Potsdamer Platz*

Once you've chipped the ice off of your handlebars and taken a schnapps or two to anti-freeze your organs it's time to get out and track down all those unmissable exhibitions...

So, starting in the north of town, head for the [Hamburger Bahnhof](#) which is home to various collections of contemporary art including, temporarily, the controversial [Flick collection](#). In the light-industrial area behind this are over twenty galleries including [Galerie Schuster](#), [Haunch of Venison](#) and [Edition Block](#) - which has an extensive collection of twentieth century artists' editions. If you're there for the openings this makes for a very easy gallery-hop.

Heading south, [Spruth Magers](#) is a must-visit. They have an impressive list of established and emerging artists on their books, and with several generous exhibition spaces you're bound to encounter something of note. The current Cyprien Gaillard show is truly *fantastisch* (fans of the animation 'Cities of Gold' will love the soundtrack to his film). From here, head down Friedrich Strasse until you reach check point charlie in Mitte. Close by is Zimmerstrasse, where you'll find another bunch of galleries and project spaces including [Daad](#), which hosts high-profile residencies for artists of various disciplines and has a constantly changing programme of events. Next door you will find the [Burger collection](#), which in September launched '[Conflicting Tales](#)' - a four-part project consisting of substantial shows and site-based works in various cities worldwide. Five minutes away, at Rudi-Dutschke Strasse 26 (formerly Kochstrasse) is a block of galleries on several floors around a Hof (courtyard). Here you will find, among others, [Galerie Michael Janssen](#) and [VW \(VeneKlasen/Werner\)](#). Currently at VW, Los Angeles based Aaron Curry and Thomas Houseago have installed their 'big boys' sculpture extravaganza (actually entitled *twofacetwo*) which is refreshingly and playfully butch. Following this at VW in January is the first solo show in Berlin of William.E.Jones – an American filmmaker whose not-to-miss film installation may be seen for a short time at [Swallow Street](#) in London.



Aaron Curry & Thomas Houseago *Twofacetwo*, showing at VW Galerie

A short walk away, on Lindenstrasse, is another block of galleries. By the time you've been up and down four flights of stairs (twice) you'll be well and truly ready for a *Brotzeit*. One more gallery to note in this area is [Meyer Reigger](#), who are currently showing Sebastian Hammwöhner's *It's All Mental*, involving a tidal wave of dirt and a colourful woolen 'tapestry'.

There are of course many more project spaces and commercial galleries all over town. Of most interest are [Temporäre Kunsthalle](#) on Unter den Linden, which is hosting large scale exhibitions curated by Berlin based artists. [The Neue National Galerie](#) - a stunning location architecturally - is currently hosting Thomas Demand's solo presentation (noteworthy not only for the poetic texts commissioned to accompany the photographs, but also for its elaborate exhibition design).



Mies Van der Rohe's Neue National Galerie

For those with a taste for the classical/ethnological, [Museum Insel](#) (museum island) is an impressive complex of major museums, including the Pergamon, which has on display an incredible collection of pieces from antiquity. It's possible to purchase a day ticket for Museum Insel, which renders the prospect of all that *kultur* a little less daunting and rather more affordable.

When you're done *looking* at stuff, you'll probably want to either pack it all in or start *making* stuff. Whatever medium you work in, you'll find materials don't come particularly cheap (film being the exception, comparatively). For general art supplies (including small amounts of sculptural materials), [Boesner](#), which is a nationwide chain, is fairly comprehensive. There are three outlets in Berlin – [see their website](#) for locations. For specialist/large amounts of wood, [Valentin](#), which is in the direction of Tegel airport, are helpful and good quality. If your German is up to scratch you can place orders over the phone and have your order delivered. For mega-store DIY, general ironmongery, etc both [OBI](#) and [Bauhaus](#) have branches all over town. Think BnQ with staff who don't run away – although it's good to have that phrasebook to hand – I once spent an hour grilling the staff of my local *OBI* until I located the angle grinding discs. [Modulor](#), at Gneisenaustr. 43 – 45, is an Aladdin's cave of model making, craft and art materials. From polystyrene eggs the size of small asteroids to sheets of reinforced card, cork, textiles and coloured plastics, they have more unusual materials than you could wave a very experimental stick at. Lastly, for lighting and film equipment hire, [Camelot](#) is the best quality at very reasonable prices. They have an online equipment list, but you can call them or even better visit them in advance to work out your requirements. You'll need your passport and they may ask you for a deposit if it's your first visit. One more tip: if you wish to hire furniture, props or clothing you should find that most places allow you to hire stuff for a tenth of the retail price (usually with a full deposit repaid on return). Considering the enormous range of vintage, antique and design stores in town this is pretty handy for shoots.

An Artists Phrasebook – Part III

Would you like to come up to the studio and see my etchings?

Möchten Sie ins Atelier heraufkommen und meine Radierungen sehen?

Big really is beautiful!

Gross ist wirklich schön!

Conceptually I feel the piece has more holes than a swiss cheese.

Ich finde, dass das Werk konzeptional mehr Löcher als ein Schweizer Käse hat.

I like this piece very much...are you familiar with his later works?

Ich mag dieses Werk sehr...kennen Sie seine späteren Arbeiten?

Post-modernism? Well, where shall I begin...?

Post-Modernismus? Na, woll soll ich beginnen....?

Yes, that's right, participatory. Yes, I know.

Ja, das stimmt, partizipational. Ja, ich weiss.

I intended to make a piece of auto-destructive art officer. No, the fireworks aren't mine, just the battery acid. My documents? Why of course...

Ich habe vor, ein selst zerstörendes Werk zu machen, Herr Polizist. Nein, die Feuerwerkskörper gehören nicht mir, nur die Batteriesäure. Meine Papiere? Nun, selbsverständlich. . .