

Berlin felt like a green relief after London. The city somehow manages to seem so relaxed while at the same time having energy; there is something pleasing about living in a major city and still being able to see the stars. Berlin is spoilt for space at the moment, which seems to take the pressure off city living.

It is taking time to get a feel for the different areas of Berlin, which is made up of sections that are like separate villages. Mitte, where I am staying, is very trendy and is pleasant to walk around, but seems to serve as an international meeting point and maybe nothing deeper. You somehow feel that artists might be choosing other areas to actually work in. However it is stuffed with galleries, many of which are very new, indicating something about the pace at which art is changing hands or at least being bought in Berlin by visiting collectors. I get the impression that west Berlin is becoming the favoured location for those wishing to make a permanent home here. Kreuzberg is a popular area in the west. It has a couple of trendy streets - Bergmannstrasse and Oranienstrasse but there are also plenty of streets which you feel are perhaps more genuine.

I arrived during the art fair season. They had fantastic venues: a disused BGV garage, a Post handling office and an air-hanger. Kunst Salon was the first I went to. I was surprised by its freedom; there were numerous 'off the wall' installations (many figurative) and an overall boldness to the work. The artists showed willingness to experiment with the space and considerable ambition. In comparison Preview and Liste both felt more conventional and somehow a bit dry because of it. However they had a professionalism and a clear function of selling work.

The public galleries are similarly spoilt for space and host enormous collections. The Museum fur Gengenart is currently showing the 'Preis der National Galerie fur Junge Kunst' (a sort of a baby Turner Prize). It seems to be a part of a conscious move to show contemporary work in public galleries. Damien Ortega is one of the nominees this year, also has a solo show at Daad Gallery.

The Berlinische Gallery is another massive space for contemporary art and is currently showing work from Berlin based artists. It is the current curator's last show at the gallery and she has brought together artists both originally from Berlin and those who made it their new home. The show has an interesting function as it is about the city where it is being shown. Collectively the work suggests how the city has changed and how it connects or compares with other cities.

'Walk' is one of the exhibitions at the Kunstlerhaus. It is a collection of work that subtly documents cities and includes work by Frances Alys, Janet Cardiff, Vito Accontchi and Tom

Burr. These are pieces used as a background for a recent walking project for Berlin. It was presented as an interactive piece, which is something I am finding frequently in the work here. The Kunstlerhaus, <http://www.bethanien.de> is also an international residency centre for artists and musicians. Most artists there are on a year-long residency programme and seem to frequently have open studios. Another international residency centre is in Leipzig <http://www.liap.eu> that I would like to visit. I was told it has amazing studio spaces and that Leipzig is particularly interesting for painters.

Aside from residency centres, it seems that Berlin is at the moment a relatively easy place for artists to move. There are so many new people in the city that there really are few barriers. Most strikingly there is optimism here, which may be because people are able to move here to pursue an ambition. Many move to Berlin as it is possible to start their own small businesses and galleries. I feel that while this is true at the moment, things are changing. Next time I will say more about costs of renting, areas to look at and the smaller galleries.

I wanted to add here a few recommendations of places to go:

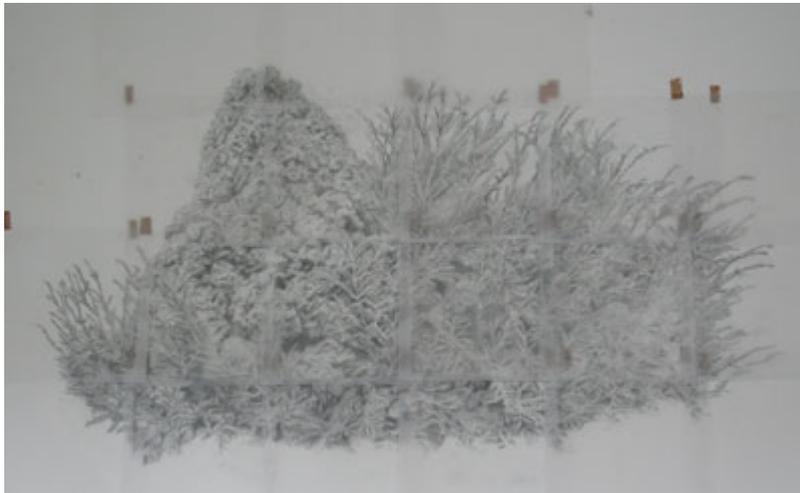
- Boxhanger Platz, Friedrichshain, good Flea Market on Sunday.
- Austria, Bergmanstrasse 30, for good food, Knudel (which are gigantic dumplings) and Schnitzel
- Trinkteufel, is an interesting bar on the corner where Adalberstrasse and Naunystasse meet.



Waiter, Schwedter Strasse, 9, still from digital video.

The waiting dogs are filmed until the owner returns for them. I like the thought that there is an unspecified amount of time that passes for the dog and which is ended by the return of the

owner. They mark a point of separation where it becomes necessary for the man and dog to part. It is a temporary state and the waiting dog is constantly expectant of the owners return.



Bush Drawing, graphite, tracing paper

Bush Drawings are from graveyards where each grave has been planted with several conifers and they overtime grow together to make bushes which have the shape of both types of tree. These are similar to the photographs of the plants growing on top of other plants where the different species grow together.