

AH 318 Spaces of Appearance: Exhibitions as Counter-Public Spheres

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

The seminar addresses curatorial practices in relation to counter-public spheres and spaces of representation. It moves between curatorial theory and exhibition-making and unfolds around specific conceptual frameworks and types of material: artifacts, ephemerals, archival material, and theoretical concepts such as Hannah Arendt's "space of appearance" and José Esteban Muñoz's "disidentification." In the former, Arendt states that space is not constituted by physical certainties or redefined functions but created through actions. On the other hand, "Disidentification" draws up a strategy that has the potential to work both within and outside the dominant public sphere.

The students will participate in discussions, engage with texts, and study exhibitions and curatorial concepts such as *Echoes of the Brother Countries* (2024), Simon Njami's *Xenopolis*, and counter-public exhibition practices by interdisciplinary artistic, curatorial and activist initiatives, including *Just Above Midtown* (JAM), *Group Material*, and *Botschaft e.V.* They will visit the archive of the Schwules Museum Berlin and the ruins of the Franciscan monastery church, Klosterruine, which serves as a cultural venue open to the public. The industrial architecture of the former Monopol Distillery in Berlin Reinickendorf will form the backdrop for an exhibition and curatorial assemblies for momentary "gestures of speech and action" (Arendt) that challenge the architectures of state representation and institutional subjectification. Here, the students will develop curatorial strategies for reproducing, restaging, and reenacting selected materials—including artifacts, performances, everyday objects, poetry, documents, and photography—and will create an exhibition display. The seminar will test the thresholds of representational paradigms and spatial hierarchies by thinking exhibitions site-specifically, non-static, and beyond the white cube in the everyday of the public sphere. How can exhibitions negotiate the relationships between spectators and participants, majoritarian and minoritarian forms of representation and speech through disidentification, and contribute to the construction of a "counter-public sphere" (Muñoz)?

Each week, the seminar is divided into two parts. **Part I** focuses on **discourse, readings, student presentations, and discussions**. **Part II** addresses all conceptual and organizational aspects of the exhibition project and group work.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment & Assignments

Each student must give a classroom presentation, write an exhibition review or an essay about an exhibition, and will also be graded on the final exhibition project. The review/essay (3000 words) is due on March 13, midnight. The essay should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your exhibition reviews/essays can be discussed in individual tutorials.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

The grade breakdown for this seminar will be as follows:

Exhibition review or essay (3000 words): 25%; Presentation: 25%; Participation: 50%

Schedule

Week 1:

28/01, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Part I: Introduction: How Can Exhibition-Making Evolve Beyond the White Cube and Dominant Public Sphere?"

Homework:

Consider an example of an exhibition you have visited, or a historic one, in relation to the question above.

Readings: Irit Rogoff, "Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture," in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*, ed. Gavin Butt (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 117-133.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 189-192.

Part II: Introduction to the Exhibition Project and Organization

Form groups and assign responsibilities and tasks: concept development, selection of works and materials, budget considerations (transportation, insurance, and installation), text production, marketing and promotion (flyer, poster)

Elisa R. Linn will provide a brief introduction to the presentation topics and assign them to the students. Together, we will review the checklist for exhibition organization, which will be distributed in class.

Week 2:

04/02, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Part I: What Defines a Counter-Public Sphere?

Form a group of three, read the text by Nancy Fraser, and discuss it together. Then, present your ideas.

Readings:

Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

Maria von Osten, "A Platform and Some Projects: Postgraduate Program in Curating, Zurich," *On-Curating*, no. 9 (2011), <https://on-curating.org/issue-9-reader/a-platform-and-some-projects-postgraduate-program-in-curating-zurich.html>.

Exhibition Example: Terre Thaemlitz, *Reframed Positions*, Halle für Kunst Lüneburg, Volksbühne Berlin, Callies Berlin.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 3:

11/02, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: Botschaft e.V.

Part I: Readings: Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2014) 198-191.

José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (University of Minnesota: Minnesota Press, 2013), 5-33.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 4:

18/02, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: Just Above Midtown, Changing Spaces

Watch: https://smarthistory.org/senga-nengudi-linda-goode-bryant-and-the-just-above-midtown-gallery/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ0NGZ5J74I>

Reading: Thomas (T.) Jean Lax and Lilia Rocio Taboada, eds., *Just Above Midtown: Changing Spaces*, in collaboration with Linda Goode Bryant, with contributions by Eric Booker, Brandon Eng, Thelma Golden, and Linda Goode Bryant (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2022).

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 5:

25/02, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Exhibition and Archive Visit: Schwules Museum Berlin: *FUCK GENDER. Fotografien von Annette Frick aus der Sammlung Schwules Museum*

Student Presentation: Schwules Museum

Readings: "HIV/AIDS in the Context of a Queer Institution: The Schwules Museum, Berlin," *Journal of Memory Studies*, Vol. 16(1) (2023): 146–153, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/17506980221143697?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Watch: <https://brooklynrail.org/event/2021/03/04/curatorial-activism-part-4/>.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 6:

04/03, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: Group Material

Readings: Julie Ault, ed., *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010).
Doug Ashford, "Abstraction as the Onset of the Real," *Transversal Texts*, September 2010, https://transversal.at/transversal/0910/ashford/en?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 7:

11/03, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: CADA (Colectivo Acciones de Arte)

Readings:

Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Art That Lives: On Colectivo Acciones de Arte (CADA)," *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 124 (2021), https://www.textezurkunst.de/en/124/julia-bryan-wilson-art-lives-colectivo-acciones-de-arte-cada/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Fernando Balcells, "CADA: Art and Life, Chile," *Artlink* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): *The South Issue: New Horizons*.

Week 8:

18/03, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: *Xenopolis* curated by Simon Njami (2015)

Readings:

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, "On est ensemble et Ça va waka: Some Thoughts on Navigating the Xenopolis," in *Curating as Anti-Racist Practice*, ed. Natalie Bayer, Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński, and Nora Sternfeld (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 255-268.

Gauthier Lesturgie, "What Is Home?" *Contemporary And (C&)*, https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/what-is-home/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 9:

25/04, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Student Presentation: *Echoes of the Brother Countries*, HKW (2024); *There Is No There There*, MMK Frankfurt am Main (2024)

Readings:

Boris Buden and Lina Dokuzović, eds., *They'll Never Walk Alone: The Life and Afterlife of Gastarbeiters* (Vienna: transversal texts, 2018)

Echoes of the Brother Countries – Reader (EN), ed. Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin: Archive Books, 2023).

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 10

01/04, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Lecture: Sung Tieu

Sung Tieu is a Vietnamese-born, Germany-based artist who participated in the exhibition *Echoes of the Brother Countries* (2024). She will discuss the self-organizing strategies of citizen-led foundations at the dormitory complex Gehrenseestraße 1 in Berlin Alt-Hohenschönhausen. This complex was primarily used to house Vietnamese contract workers before, during, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Part II: Exhibition Project

Week 11

08/04, Tuesday, 14 – 17.15

Exhibition Visit: *Vaginal Davis: Fabelhaftes Produkt*, Martin Gropius Bau

Student Presentation: Vaginal Davis

Reading: Vaginal Davis, "My Womanly Story," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 38, no. 2 (113) (2016): 80–88.

Spring Break

Week 12

22/04, 14 – 17.15

Exhibition Visit: Kate Newby at Klosterruine Berlin

Readings:

Joanna Warsza and Patricia Reed, eds., *A City Curating Reader: Public Art Munich 2018* (Munich: Public Art Munich, 2018).

Rhea Nayyar, "Berlin Senate to Slash Arts and Culture Budget," *Hyperallergic*, https://hyperallergic.com/971253/berlin-senate-to-slash-arts-and-culture-budget/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Week 13

29/04, 14 – 17.15

Exhibition Install

Week 14

06/05, 14 – 17.15

Final Wrap-Up And Student Presentation: S.a.L.E. Docks

Readings:

Marco Baravalle, "On the Biennale's Ruins? Inhabiting the Void, Covering the Distance," *On Curating* 46 (2020), https://www.on-curating.org/issue-46-reader/On-the-Biennales-Ruins.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

Marco Baravalle, "Italian Blow-Up: Building Counter-Hegemonic Social Art Machines Against Reactionary Populism," *FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, no. 12–13 (2020), <https://field-journal.com/issue-12-13/southern-eastern-europe/italian-blow-up-building-counter-hegemonic-social-art-machines-against-reactionary-populism>.