

# 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 seminar will be partly organized in collaboration with the course *Exploring the Expanded Field of Sculpture*, led by Raphaella Vogel, and will culminate in a joint exhibition project realized by both courses at the Fire Station at Monopol, revolving around the queer artistic practices of Berlin-based filmmaker Lothar Lambert and the late GDR artist Jürgen Wittdorf.

The students will participate in discussions, engage with texts, and counter-public exhibition practices by interdisciplinary artistic, curatorial, and activist initiatives, including Petra Gall, CADA, Just Above Midtown (JAM), Group Material, Botschaft e.V., and Peter Hujar. They will visit the archive of the Schwules Museum in Berlin and engage with the structure of a self-initiated queer institution that originated in a grassroots movement.

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 approaching exhibitions as site-specific, non-static, and situated beyond the white cube within the everyday spaces of the public sphere, taking the work of Lothar Lambert and Jürgen

Wittdorf both as a source of inspiration and as material for investigation. 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 combines thematic readings, student presentations, discussions, excursions, and studio visits, while collectively addressing the conceptual and organizational aspects of the exhibition project in the second part of each seminar. Students are not required to purchase a course reader. Texts and further reading materials will be provided by the professor.

## **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](mailto: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](mailto:j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)) or Maria Anderson-Long ([m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu](mailto: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 one classroom presentation and write one exhibition review or essay about an exhibition. The review/essay (3000 words) is due on May 15, 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. Each student is required to participate in in-class discussions and contribute to the collaborative work on the exhibition project.

### **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 (5000 words): 25%; Presentation: 25%; Participation: 50%

### **Schedule**

#### **Week 1: Introduction: Exhibitions as Counter-Public Spheres**

29/01, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Part I: 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: Introduction to the Exhibition Project (Joint Project with Raphaela Vogel's Course *Exploring the Expanded Field of Sculpture*): Lothar Lambert & Jürgen Wittdorf – A Display Story**

05/02, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Part I:

Screening: Lothar Lambert – *Ex and Hopp*, 1972, 56 Min.

Lothar Lambert – *Fucking City*, 1982, 89 Min. (Excerpt)

Readings:

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

Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.

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

Part II: Introduction to the Work of Jürgen Wittdorf

**Week 3: Exhibition And Archive Visit at Schwules Museum: Petra Gall's Photographs of the Women's and Lesbian Scene in Berlin (in Collaboration with Raphaela Vogel's Class)**

12/02, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Petra Gall

Readings: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 29–45.

Roman Kuhar, "The Heteronormative Panopticon and the Transparent Closet of the Public Space in Slovenia," in *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, ed. Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 149–166.

**Week 4: Just Above Midtown, Changing Spaces**

19/02, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Just Above Midtown

Watch:

<https://smarthistory.org/senga-nengudi-linda-goode-bryant-and-the-just-above-midtown-gallery/>

<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).

**Week 5: Crit Session on the Exhibition Project with Raphaela Vogel's Class and Studio Visit with Raphaela Vogel**

26/02, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45 / 18.00

Discuss how the student's works use conscious strategies of appropriation. Evaluate how effectively original image sources and archival material is translated into sculpture and exhibition architecture.

Student Presentation: Aspects of Counterpublic Spheres in Raphaela Vogel's Work

Readings: Raphaela Vogel, *The Fist Fuckers*, exhibition catalog (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2025)

**Week 6: Studio Visit with Lothar Lambert / Visit to the Museum Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Meeting with Director Natalie Bayer and Guided Exhibition: *Resistance and Dignity: Joint Struggles of Roma and Sinti after 1945* (In Collaboration with Raphaela Vogel's Class)**

05/03, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Lothar Lambert: Queer Underground Film as Artistic Method

Readings: Stefan Menche, ed., *Lambert Underground: 20 Filme von Lothar Lambert, Berlin 1971–1991* (Berlin, 1992).

**Week 7: Group Material – Exhibiting Otherwise During the AIDS Crisis**

12/03, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

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>

**Week 8: Exhibition Visit at Martin-Gropius-Bau: Peter Hujar / Liz Deschenes – *Persistence of Vision* (In Collaboration with Raphaela Vogel's Class)**

19/03, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45 Martin-Gropius-Bau, Niederkirchnerstraße 7

Student Presentation: Peter Hujar / Liz Deschenes – *Persistence of Vision*

Readings: Douglas Crimp, "Mourning and Militancy," *October* 51 (Winter 1989): 3–18.

**Week 9: Visit Jürgen Wittdorf Estate/Collection Boris Kollek (In Collaboration with Raphalea Vogel's Class)**

26/03, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Homoerotic Desire: Exhibitions on Jürgen Wittdorf, Including *Border Thinking and Striking the Border: Migratory Aesthetics and Counter-Public Spheres* (Kunstverein Hamburg, curated by Elisa R. Linn)

Readings:

Andreas Sternweiler, "Um Berührung zu Vermeiden. Über einige homoerotische Bilder von Jürgen Wittdorf," *Schwules Museum* (2004), English Translation.  
Sarah Schulman, *My American History: Lesbian and Gay Life During the Reagan/Bush Years*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 74-82.

**Spring Break (March 30, 2026 - Mon, April 6, 2026)**

**Week 10: CADA – Art & Exhibition Making as Public Intervention**

09/04, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: CADA

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/>

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

**Week 11: Clara Mosch/Botschaft e.V. – Collective Identity as Subversive Practice**

16/04, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Clara Mosch, Botschaft e.V.

Reading:

Edouard Compère, Marija Petrovic, and Stephan Koal, *Clara Mosch and Early Art Events in the GDR* (Berlin: KVOST / DCV Books, 2024).

Natascha Sadr Haghighian, "What's the Time, Mahagonny?," *e-flux Journal* 17,  
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/67365/what-s-the-time-mahagonny/>

**Week 12: Exhibition Visit at Neue Nationalgalerie: Brancusi**

23/04, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Brancusi: Introduction to the Work and the Exhibition

Readings:

MaryKate Cleary, "But Is It Art? Constantin Brancusi vs. the United States,"

*Inside/Out*, The Museum of Modern Art, July 24, 2014,  
[https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2014/07/24/but-is-it-art-constantin-brancusi-vs-the-united-states/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/07/24/but-is-it-art-constantin-brancusi-vs-the-united-states/)

**Week 13: Navigating the Xenopolis**

30/04, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

Student Presentation: Exhibition *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/>

**Week 14: Exhibition Install: Display & Spatial Arrangement at Monopol (In Collaboration with Raphaela Vogel's Class)**

07/05, Thursday, 9.30 – 12.45

08/05 Presentation of Final Exhibition Project at Monopol (Fire Station)

**May 29: Video Art at Midnight at Kino Babylon: Curated Screening of Lothar Lambert's Work**