

AH226 Private and Public: The Sammlung Hoffmann and Berlin's Contemporary Collections

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This seminar offers a unique opportunity to take a deep dive into one of the most interesting and prestigious collections of contemporary art in Berlin: the Sammlung Hoffmann. Built by Erika Hoffmann and her late husband since the 1960s, she has made her collection public since the 90s, showing works by artists such as Frank Stella, Yayoi Kusama, Ana Mendieta, Marcel Broodthaers, Félix González-Torres, Isa Genzken, Wolfgang Tillmans, Miriam Cahn, Jimmie Durham, and many more. The collection is today displayed in changing presentations within the living and working spaces of Erika Hoffmann in a converted factory building in Berlin-Mitte. The seminar is organized in collaboration with Clara Meister, the collection's director. Most sessions will take place on-site, where we will engage in in-depth discussions of selected artists directly in front of their works and have access to the extensive library of the collection. It opens up the possibility of a deep dive into the artworks, spending more time with originals than is usually possible. Among our topics will be themes from the current presentation—the simultaneous existence of contradictory currents such as powerlessness and anger, hope and confidence—explored through both subjective, private and collective social as well as political dimensions. Additional points of reflection will include broader aspects of collecting and collection-building: How does a private art collection emerge, and how can it gain and maintain a public dimension? Throughout the semester, we will also visit other art collections in Berlin, including the Boros Collection, the Haubrok Foundation, and the Feuerle Collection.

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.

Please note that this course will not take place on campus. The majority of classes will be held at the Sammlung Hoffmann in Mitte (Sophienstraße 21; U8 to Weinmeisterstraße or S-Bahn to Hackescher Markt). This is a private residence.

Punctuality will be essential to the functioning of this course and will be considered part of the participation grade. **Repeated late arrivals will count as absences and will affect your grade.**

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.

Assignments and Assessment

Each student must write two papers and post occasional responses to readings onto a padlet link.

The mid-term essay (2000 words) is due on March 20, midnight.

The final essay (3000 words) is due on May 15, midnight.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your 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 will receive feedback for their course work during and at the end of the semester.

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:

Final essay (3000 words): 40%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 30%

Participation (including one classroom presentation): 30%

Schedule

Please note: Unless otherwise specified, classes will be held at the Sammlung Hoffmann, Sophienstraße 21; U8 to Weinmeisterstraße or M1/S-Bahn to Hackescher Markt

After spring break, some classes will be shifted to weekend sessions, as we will be visiting private collections that are only open to the public on weekends. Everyone will be informed about these visits in due time.

Weekly readings on individual artists will be sent out via google classroom.

Week 1

27. 1., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

Introduction to the 2025/2026 collection presentation “Snap out of numbness”

Week 2

3.2., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

narrowness / skin / death

Jenny Saville & Glen Luchford, Bruce Nauman, Nancy Spero, Wolfgang Tillmans, Miriam Cahn

Jimmie Durham, Arnulf Rainer, Chris Newman

Reading:

What They Are – A Conversation With Wolfgang Tillmans (2001) – American Suburb X

Nancy Spero, On Art and Outrage (selected quotes) (2010)

Nancy Spero, Picturing the Autobiographical War. An Interview with Robert Enright (2003)

→ Homework for next session:

Post a brief response (250 words) by Sunday evening (February 8, midnight) in response to one of the essays from next week’s readings here: <https://padlet.com/ghea21/sammlung-hoffmann-10c1mlbuphflpr69>

Week 3

10.2., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

numbness / war / monuments

Ernesto Neto, Nancy Spero

Miriam Cahn, Georg Herold, SUSI POP, Pipilotti Rist, Rebecca Horn, Dan Flavin, José Damasceno

Reading:

A Questionnaire on Monuments, October (2018)

Please read the following passages:

Lucia Allais 4-7

Noel W. Anderson and Andrew Weiner 8-11

Tania Bruguera 12-15

Tom Burr 16-21

Michael Diers 36-38

Sam Durant 39-42

Coco Fusco 58-60

Renée Green 61-62

Rachel Harrison 63-65

Andreas Huyssen 69-71

Silvia Kolbowski 72-77

Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall 111-114

→ Homework:

Post a brief response (250 words) by Sunday evening (February 15, midnight) in response to next week's readings here: <https://padlet.com/ghea21/sammlung-hoffmann-10c1mlbuphflpr69>

Week 4

17.2., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

nuances / grief / threat

Marieke Schuurman, Ernesto Neto

Marijke van Warmerdam, Jimmie Durham, Kimsooja

Astrid Klein, Ellen Gallagher, Gabriel Orozco

Reading:

Susan Sontag: Regarding the Pain of Others (2003) (excerpts)

Week 5

24.2., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

contact / letting go / balance

Susan Hiller, Teresa Murak, Marijke van Warmerdam

Carla Guagliardi, Andy Warhol

Reading:

tbc

Week 6

3.3., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

time / shelter / portraits

Marieke Schuurman, Ettore Spalletti, Ernesto Neto

Eduardo Paolozzi, Ernesto Neto

Reading:

tbc

Week 7

10.3., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

emptiness / imminence / tangency

Nicola de Maria, Nancy Spero

AK Dolven, Wolfgang Tillmans, Sigmar Polke, William Engelen

Reading:

tbc

Week 8

17.3., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

Individual work (and coaching/advising) at the Sammlung Hoffmann library on your midterm essays

Reading:
tbc

Week 9

24.3., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Hoffmann

Wrap-up discussion: How to curate a private collection? Which dialogues are opened between art works how does this change the way we look and interpret them?

Reading:
tbc

31.3. SPRING BREAK

PLEASE NOTE: After spring break, some classes will be shifted to weekend sessions, as we will be visiting private collections that are only open to the public on weekends.

Week 10

7.4.

Sammlung Scharf Gerstenberg (tbc)

Week 11

14.4.

Sammlung Feuerle (tbc)

Week 12

21.4.

Sammlung Boros (tbc)

Week 13

28.4., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Haubrok, Herzbergstraße, Berlin-Lichtenberg
Andreas Slominski

Week 14

5.5., 14.00 – 17.15 at Sammlung Fluentum (Clayallee 174, Dahlem) (tbc)

