

## The Resonant Museum. Exploring participatory methods in/through/with Berlin museums

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Winter Semester 2023/24: 16 October 2023 – 17 February 2024

### CATEGORY

Museums and Archives

### COURSE STRUCTURE

Block seminar

Detailed schedule:

20.10., 12-14 c.t.

10.11., 12-14 c.t.

17.11., 12-18 c.t.

01.12., 12-18 c.t.

15.12., 12-18 c.t.

02.02., 12-18 c.t.

09.02., 12-16 c.t.

### Place

Room 0323-26, Hausvogteiplatz 5-7

### COURSE LANGUAGE

This course will be taught in English and German, including the readings. We will do several site visits, our interlocutors might only speak German. **We thus recommend you only attend the class with a B2 level of German.**

### Language requirements

(Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

English B2

German B2

### TARGET GROUP

International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

## **CREDITS = 5 ECTS**

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes.

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Museums are political spaces, because they always include some, whilst excluding others. Whose history is told in the museum? Who feels comfortable, at ease there? Who even goes there? In this seminar, we want to explore how museums in Berlin respond to the request that they should be more 'inclusive', 'diverse', 'participatory', or 'democratic'. Put differently, we will explore Berlin's museum landscape in order to understand how museums negotiate the relationship with their outside, how they resonate with society. By visiting different museums, encountering people who work there, we will ask: How is curatorial work defined? How do museum workers understand and work with key practices like participation, mediation and education? Which methods do museum workers employ?

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to equip students with an in-depth understanding of participatory museum practice, to acquaint them with key projects and stakeholders in Berlin's museums landscape and enable them to read, understand and critically reflect on the most recent theoretical and empirical research in the field.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

### Knowledge

- Understand, describe and identify the core theories of participatory museum practice
- Provide an overview of recent theoretical and empirical developments in the field of critical museum studies
- Identify key

### Academic/Transferable Skills

- apply theoretical reflections on participatory museum practice on examples of such work

### Methods

- use basic interview techniques - what is a good question? how to lead a productive research discussion/conversation?
- exhibition analysis and project evaluation - how to measure and evaluate 'participation' in museum practice

## READINGS

*Note: We will divide the readings depending on the sessions at a later stage of the planning.*

Adele Chynoweth, Bernadette Lynch, Klaus Petersen, and Sarah Smed (eds.) 2021: Museums and Social Change: Challenging the Unhelpful Museum. New York: Routledge.

Beatrice von Bismarck: Das Kuratorische. Leipzig: Spector Books.

Carmen Mörsch, Angeli Sachs and Thomas Sieber (eds.) 2017: Ausstellen und Vermitteln im Museum der Gegenwart. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Carmen Mörsch (ed.) 2009: Kunstvermittlung. Zwischen kritischer Praxis und Dienstleistung auf der documenta 12. 2, 9–33. Zurich: Diaphanes.

Kazeem, Belinda, Charlotte Martinz-Turek, and Nora Sternfeld (eds.) 2009: Das Unbehagen im Museum: postkoloniale Museologien. Vienna: Turia + Kant.

Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell (eds.) 2019: Museum Activism. Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Sternfeld, Nora 2018: Das radikaldemokratische Museum. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Susanne Gesser, Martin Handschin, Angela Jannelli, and Sibylle Lichtensteiger (eds.) 2014: Das partizipative Museum. Zwischen Teilhabe und User Generated Content. Neue Anforderungen an kulturhistorische Ausstellungen. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

## ASSIGNMENT INFO

### Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- We expect students to hand in a **written assignment** of 4-5 pages (Times New Roman, 12, 1.5 spacing) engaging with the question: How does museum x define and practice curatorial work? This assignment will be based on analysing 1) the transcript of the conversation with a curator/mediator in the museum 2) the institution's programming (exhibition and education programme)

Additionally, students will have to respond to the following question in written form:

- 1) What surprised you most with regards to our visits in Berlin museums?
- 2) Why did you choose to engage with museum x?

- 3) How do you relate the Berlin museum visits in our seminar to museums in your home context?

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

## Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

## YOUR INSTRUCTORS

**Diana Mammana** is a cultural anthropologist and curator, currently working in the curatorial team at Gropius Bau Berlin as an outreach and education manager. She aims to provoke different forms of knowledge production in the museum space. Her curatorial and educational work takes on ethnographic features. She uses approaches of multimodal anthropology to produce a variety of findings that can be placed in museum environments and elsewhere in the city. She is one of the co-curators of Spoiler Aktionsraum and part of the curators group a.p. (all purposes) whereas she is developing and exploring ways of research driven curatorial and educational practices in contemporary art. She studied European Ethnology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Cultural Sciences at Universität Leipzig and Pedagogics at the University of applied sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt.

**Margareta von Oswald** is a socio-cultural anthropologist and curator, based at the Centre for Anthropological Research for Museums and Heritage, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research is concerned with museums and difficult heritage, asking how museums can be truly democratic places that effect change. She is currently the Curatorial Research Fellow of Mindscapes, the Wellcome Trust's international cultural programme which aims to support a transformation in how we understand, address and talk about mental health. In her recently published book *Working Through Colonial Collections. An ethnography of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin*, she discusses the possibilities and limits of engaging with colonialism in ethnological museums. Other recent, open-access publications that she both edited with Jonas Tinius are *Awkward archives. Ethnographic drafts for a modular curriculum* (Archive books, 2022) and *Across Anthropology. Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial* (Leuven University Press, 2020).

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

Christmas Break from 25 December 2023 and 5 January 2024

### Session 1: Introduction

20.10.2023, 12h-14h

In this session, we will introduce the seminar, its programme, and get to know each other. We will introduce our book, "The Resonant Museum. Berlin Conversations on Mental Health" (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2023), and the work at Gropius Bau that led to the book. We will then do different exercises to get to know each other in the seminar.

## **Session 2: Key concepts**

10.11.2023, 12h-14h

We work on core concepts related to participatory museum practices, and discuss the theory and practice of museum making today. Together, we will define our common research questions for the site visits.

## **Session 3: Visiting Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum & Berlinische Galerie**

**17.11.2023, 12h-18h**

### *Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum*

Each district in Berlin holds a district museum. The Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg is arguably one of its most embedded ones, working since decades in close cooperation with those who live in the neighbourhood. We will visit the museum's permanent exhibition and meet one of its curators and discuss the challenges and opportunities of participatory museum work in a district museum.

### *Berlinische Galerie*

The Berlinische Galerie gives itself the task to "collect, preserve, display and investigate modern and contemporary art made in Berlin." How does its staff work with the diverse scene of art and cultural production in Berlin? How do they select who to collect and exhibit? We will visit the Museum and discuss with one of its curators.

## **Session 4: Visiting Brücke Museum & Haus am Waldsee**

**01.12.2023, 12h-18h**

### *Brücke Museum*

Since 2017, the Brücke Museum has become a singular place for art and education in Berlin. In its new programming, mediation and education have taken a central role. We will visit the museum and talk to its curator for outreach about the challenges and opportunities of working with education and participatory methods in this small museum, housed in Berlin's outskirts.

### *Haus am Waldsee*

Since 2021, Anna Gritz directs the Haus am Waldsee. The Haus offers a platform for artists who live and work in Berlin and have already achieved significant international standing. The content of the programme covers a wide spectrum from the visual arts, design and architecture all the way to artists working with sound and composition. Particular emphasis is placed on dialogue, not only between the visitor and the works of art but also between visitors of all generations, artists and scientists.

## **Session 5: Visiting Haus der Kulturen der Welt & Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin**

**15.12.2023, 12h-18h**

### *Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin*

The Museum of the City of Berlin has six different sites, and ambitious plans for the future: By 2028, a new cultural district will have emerged with the Märkisches Museum and the Marinehaus at its centre. We will visit the Foundation's showcase exhibition at the Humboldt Forum - Berlin Global - and will meet members of the curatorial team in order to discuss what is planned, and how the process envisages to include Berliners in the conception, making of, and running of the new cultural quarter.

### *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*

Since June 2023, the large cultural institution Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) has a new director, programme, and curatorial team. We will visit the HKW and will meet representatives of the curatorial staff in order to understand how education and mediation works at this newly opened exhibition house.

**Deadline assignment: 01.02.2023**

**Session 6: Student presentations and conclusion**

**02.02.2023, 12h-18h**

Based on the assignment and individual engagement with one site, we will discuss the different visits and work through one of the seminar's main questions, namely: How do the different museums define and practice curatorial work? How do the understandings of curatorial work differ or resemble each other?

**Session 7: Conclusion and evaluation**

**09.02.2023, 12h-16h**

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

### **in case of online sessions**

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

## **EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES**

**Preparation for lively discussions:** be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

**Assignment:** complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

**Commitment:** pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

**Academic guidelines:** Comply with academic integrity policies. **Plagiarism** in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course. See **ZSP-HU** (Fächerübergreifende Satzung zur Regelung von Zulassung, Studium und Prüfung der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **§ 111** (Täuschung).

**Attendance policy:** Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

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The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 08 August 2023