
Berlin

Markets are going through difficult times, and the pressure can be felt everywhere; yet many younger galleries in Berlin refuse to have their enthusiasm curbed, or even affected. As each new generation of artists finds champions among contemporaries, gallerists and writers, each will also develop a new collector base. Perhaps not to past levels, but in a city where overheads are considerably lower than in many other metropolises, this is not so much of a concern, particularly as big business had mostly been confined to international fairs anyway.

As before, these exciting younger galleries are found outside the well-known clusters, and they again form part of a rolling gentrification process. Simone Lüling and Kirstin Strunz run their gallery, Cruise & Callas, on Köpenicker Strasse, in an area that has developed from a dire inner-city neighbourhood to a nightlife hotbed, but is not yet claimed by the art scene. Nearby, Kai Hoelzner's gallery overlooks kebab shops and drug dealers, and on Kurfürstenstrasse, meanwhile, only a few yards away from brothels and streetwalkers, Tanya Leighton has been presenting a powerful programme of works by conceptual and minimalist artists across the generations.

On Brunnenstrasse, in Mitte, where the scene is considerably more established, there is no sense of decline. At the time of writing, Klemm's was presenting Ulrich Gebert's *Life Among Beasts*, abstracted environments and landscapes squeezed into birdcages. The gallery will be expanding this autumn with a private showroom and further offices in a back building. Next door Alexander Koch from Berlin, Nikolaus Oberhuber from Vienna and Jocelyn Wolff from Paris have joined forces and opened Koch Oberhuber Wolff in a purpose-built structure by Arno Brandhuber. Not everything is finished yet, and the entrance via a lofty staircase is only provisionally secured, but on the inside an amazing space opens over two floors, lit through the opaque glass front, with a further exhibition space in the cellar. The opening exhibition, running in three parts until 15 January, boasts the somewhat arduous title *Antirepresentationalism* and deals with social and conceptual approaches to art. It is a geographically specific view on a Leipzig school that developed alongside the more prominent figurative painting, with a lot of documentary material, as in Clemens von Wedemeyer's filmic studies concerning prefabricated housing developments, and musings about art and its presentation, as in the installations of Tilo Schulz.

Art here is less an object than an idea, and perhaps this is a result of recent economic developments. In any case, the upshot of it is that the smaller and more theoretically minded younger galleries espousing it are captivating their audiences, while the older ones struggle to revitalise their lost markets.

words *AXEL LAPP*
