

PRESS INFORMATION

DIFFRACTIONS—Transforming

13.09.2024 – 05.01.2025

PRESS RELEASE

On 12 September, Kunst Raum Mitte will open with the exhibition *Transforming*. It is part of the DIFFRACTIONS programme, which uses various research processes to create new relationships between the history and the building of Kunst Raum Mitte. The exhibition will be accompanied by performances and an open studio by artist Anna Zett.

With Jesse Darling, Green Papaya Art Projects (Norberto Roldan & Joaquin Roldan), Robert Lip-pok, Minh Duc Pham, Katrin Steiger, Pam Virada, Anna Zett (Research Residency), exhibition display by Martha Schwindling.

Curated by Natalie Keppler & Agnieszka Roguski (Artistic Directors Kunst Raum Mitte)



Design: Sibel Beyer

DIFFRACTIONS 2024 takes up Kunst Raum Mitte's processes of transformation as 'thinking through each other' (Karen Barad) of different levels of time and their compositions. A diffraction, the bending of waves at an obstacle, unlike a reflection, does not reflect a concrete counterpart, but makes the overlapping of impulses perceptible. It is about breaking through linear and hierarchical orders. How is the history of a place written? And how do affects, materials and gatherings inscribe themselves in these histories?

The exhibition *Transforming* places the spatial, material and historical relationships of Kunst Raum Mitte, formerly galerie weisser elefant, in new contexts. Founded in 1987 in East Berlin, the municipal exhibition space was renamed Kunst Raum Mitte in 2024 by the Department of Art, Culture and History in order to look back on the gallery's history under new auspices and to link it to current debates. *Transforming* presents contemporary positions and combines them with artistic and curatorial research processes. As the first artist in residence, Anna Zett will provide insights into her research. The knowledge that emerges is never objective and does not represent a unified history, but takes place as an interrelation that connects past, present and future, sometimes speculatively.

The exhibition counters the economic and media exploitation mechanisms of the present – and of the Mitte district in particular – by activating resistant and immaterial structures.

CURATORIAL TEXT

When the history of a place is in continuous flux, the constants of time and space shift. They form alliances, link various forms of knowledge, and tell different stories. The voices and tones that emerge during this process are diverse and not always in tune with each other. They speak of connections, inequalities, and changes.

DIFFRACTIONS 2024 stages an “interference pattern” (Karen Barad) of the various layers of time and their compositions. In contrast to reflection, diffraction, the bending of waves at an obstacle, does not reflect a concrete counterpart but instead makes the overlaps of impulses tangible. It breaks through linear and hierarchical orders. How is the history of a place written? And how do affects, materials, and gatherings inscribe themselves into these histories?

Against this background, the exhibition *Transforming* recontextualizes the spatial, material, and historical relationships of the place formerly known as the *galerie weisser elefant*. Founded in East Berlin in 1987, the municipal exhibition space was renamed Kunst Raum Mitte by the Department of Art, Culture and History in 2024 to look back on the history of the gallery with new perspectives and to link it with current debates in a pluralistic urban society. *Transforming* presents contemporary artistic positions and connects them with artistic and curatorial research processes, setting them in relation to one another. As the first researcher in residence, the artist Anna Zett will offer insights into her work. The knowledge that emerges is never objective and does not represent a unified history, but rather unfolds as a process of relating and connecting the past, present, and future in a partly speculative manner.

The exhibition challenges the forces of commercialization and gentrification mechanisms of the present—particularly those in the Mitte district—by activating resistant and immaterial structures. It makes historical material accessible through an exhibition display developed by Martha Schwindling, including invitation cards, photos, posters, and documents. These materials reveal how the place was shaped by the move from Almstadtstraße to Auguststraße, as well as by the political regime of the GDR in the 1980s and the media and aesthetic conventions of that time. These historical and geopolitical components, in turn, create relationships with related contexts. By exploring deviant and invisible aspects, the exhibition opens up contemporary perspectives that question power structures, especially through implicit and everyday actions.

Agnieszka Roguski & Natalie Keppler

POSITIONS

Jesse Darling, *Epistemologies II*, 2024

Archive folders, concrete

Dimensions variable



Jesse Darling, *Epistemologies 2*, 2022, Kunst Raum Mitte. Foto: Jannis Uffrecht.

In Kunst Raum Mitte, binders are scattered across the floor in a seemingly random manner—without labels but clearly used. They contradict their intended purpose: the administration, organization, and preservation of knowledge. The untouchability of objective standards, with which content is classified as factual, gives way to an almost dystopian and dysfunctional ambiguity about the past or future purpose of these objects. *Epistemologies* thus questions the conditions under which knowledge is produced, collected, and archived, breaking the images and categories that underlie them. In this context, things lose their lightness, forming new (de)formations of history.

Jesse Darling's (*Oxford, UK) multi-disciplinary practice considers how bodily subjects are initially formed and continuously reformed through sociopolitical influences. JD draws on his own experience as well as the narratives of history and counter-history. The works recontextualize man-made objects to reveal their precarity. In 2023, he was awarded the Turner Prize 2023 by the Tate. Most recently, he exhibited his works at Eastbourne Tower (2023), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023) and Modern Art Oxford (2022).

Norberto Roldan & Joaquin Roldan (Green Papaya Art Projects), *Altar of the Undivided (Altar des Ungeteilten)*, 2024

Everyday objects, remnants from the building's past, food from the global North and South
Dimensions variable

Norberto Roldan, *100 Altars for Roberto Chabet (The Berlin Series)*, 2024

Assemblage of personal items and apothecary, vintage postcards and photographs, found objects from flea markets, and boxex from Muji
Dimensions variable



Norberto Roldan, *100 Altars for Roberto Chabet (The Berlin Series)*, 2024, Kunst Raum Mitte. Photo: Jannis Uffrecht.

For their participatory installation *Altar of the Undivided*, Norberto Roldan and Joaquin Roldan draw on the 'anito', a Filipino belief in animism. Their altar of worship in the inner courtyard of Kunst Raum Mitte creates a moment of initiation and transformation within the space. Through this ephemeral installation during the opening days, the artists create a place where threshold states are met with solidarity, understanding, and humanity.

Altar of the Undivided encourages reflection on why people come together and invites participants to help shape the altar by writing down their thoughts on how collective processes can bring about change. The altar is accompanied by a specially composed soundtrack by Joaquin Roldan.

Altar of the Undivided is a collaboration between musician Joaquin Roldan and multimedia artist Norberto Roldan of Green Papaya Art Projects, an independent art platform in the Philippines. **Joaquin Roldan** is the co-founder of Don't Tell Nanay (DTN) in Manila, a collaborative space that encourages young artists to explore art without fear of judgment. **Norberto Roldan** initiated the VIVA EXCON Biennial in 1990 and co-founded Green Papaya in 2000 in Manila. Thanks to the Matschinsky-Denninghoff Foundation under the umbrella of the Berlinische Galerie, Green Papaya has been awarded a collective grant and both artists are in Berlin as fellows of the Visual Arts Section of the 2024 DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program.

Robert Lippok, *Material Auguststraße 21*, 2024

Eight-channel sound installation, 17:20 min

Media player, loudspeaker, audio amplifier, aluminum discs, sound transducer, ceramic objects



Robert Lippok, *Material Auguststraße 21*, 2024, Kunst Raum Mitte. Photo: Jannis Uffrecht.

Robert Lippok exhibited in the basement of the former *galerie weisser elefant* on Auguststraße back in 1998. For *Material Auguststraße 21*, 2024, he developed new site-specific sound recordings of the in-between-spaces of the building, focusing on the transitions between interior, exterior, and surrounding areas in response to the sound installation from that time. These recordings listen to the stories embedded in the architecture. The sound bodies, which transform, amplify, and distort the vibrations as loudspeakers, were produced in collaboration with Jörg Kinzelmann in the ceramic workshop of the Farbklang art school in the basement of the building. With this expansive sound sculpture, Lippok emphasizes the unifying function of the staircase and highlights subtle everyday practices

such as hearing, listening, or eavesdropping as a social element that structures our community.

Robert Lippok's transversal artistic practice is characterized by his work in the costume department of the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin, his studies at the Hochschule für Kunst und Design Berlin-Weißensee, and the band projects “Ornament und Verbrechen” (1983) and “To Rococo Rot” (1995-2014). Lippok (*East Berlin, GDR) experiments with different music technologies, found objects, and self-made instruments. His works have been shown at the Palais de Tokyo, Neue Nationalgalerie, Hamburger Bahnhof, Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Haus der Kunst in Munich, Gropius Bau, and at the 60th Venice Art Biennale (2024), among others.

Minh Duc Pham, *Miss Reminiscence*, 2024

Ceramic, glaze

Dimensions variable



Minh Duc Pham, *Miss Reminiscence*, 2024, Kunst Raum Mitte. Photo: Jannis Uffrecht.

Multiple ceramic objects in the form of orchid blossoms are distributed along the walls of the Kunst Raum Mitte. Small and inconspicuous in color, they appear to individually adapt to the room's structures. The tension of the work lies in this subtle beauty: the blossoms form connections, create relationships, and simultaneously compete with one another. Orchids, whose shape resembles a vulva and whose name derives from the Greek word *orchis* (testicles), symbolize queerness and migration. As a dispersed assemblage, the abstract flowers embody memories that are often diffuse and shifting, thereby defying clear historical interpretation but at the same time continuing a possible future of queer stories.

Minh Duc Pham's *Miss Reminiscence* is part of a group of works on Vietnamese contract workers in the GDR, together with the works *Fountains of A High Mountain* and *A Sweet Dream* (2024), as well as *12 Percent – Giờ ăn đến rồi!* (2022/23). Pham (*Schlema, Saxony, DE) is an artist living in Berlin. He works in the fields of visual and performing arts and explores the topic of identity

in the context of gender, race, and class. His works have been exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Leipzig, the Stadtmuseum Dresden, the Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, and most recently at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin.

Katrin Steiger, *HOT*, 2023

Digital print on cotton satin
321 x 642 cm



Katrin Steiger, *Hot*, 2023, Kunst Raum Mitte. Photo: Jannis Uffrecht.

Katrin Steiger, *Dorit / 03 White*, 2023.

Lace ribbon, cotton yarn
117 x 8 cm

HOT (2023) is a transformation from one aggregate state into another. Katrin Steiger converts graffiti on a concrete garage wall into a soft, textile wall relief. The shimmering, blurred spray paint drawing on a smooth background transforms into a flowing corrugated metal wall, suggesting the presence of another room behind it in the converted Kunst Raum Mitte. As a result, the interior and exterior spaces, along with the signs of the graffiti, begin to overlap in their ambiguity and codes. The district of Hohenstein-Ernstthal on the Sachsenring was assigned the license plate *HOT* after reunification. Here, the graffiti is reminiscent of a youth migrating from the small town in the 1990s and of a translocal subculture. Katrin Steiger works performatively with her own collection of everyday observations and the material archive inherited from her grandmother, who died in Weimar.

Katrin Steiger (*Schmalkalden, Thuringia, GDR) is a Berlin-based conceptual artist whose experimental work operates between observation and transformation to explore aspects of performativity and participation in everyday life. Her works have been exhibited at the Marburger Kunstverein, EIGEN+ART Lab Berlin, Haus am Horn Weimar, HfG Archive Ulm, Kunsthaus Erfurt, and Ars

nica in Linz, among others. Since August 2023, Katrin Steiger has been teaching at the Kunsthochschule Weißensee at the Chair of Experimental Design.

Pam Virada, *the room I entered was a dream of this room*, 2024

Digital print on fabric, table, glass balls, dust, ephemera, text, reading/performance

Dimensions variable



Pam Virada, *the room I entered was a dream of this room*, 2024, Kunst Raum Mitte. Photo: Jannis Uffrecht.

A round table, shiny satin fabric, an astrological birth chart, and glass balls full of dust: Pam Virada creates a ghostly atmosphere with *the room I entered was a dream of this room*. The minimalist setting creates space for speculation about the room's future destiny and evokes hauntings from its past. The dust collected by Virada from the building's attic bears witness to the forgotten material deposits of the past. Its ephemerality points to the future. The work resonates with the fleeting randomness of dust which, in this context, becomes a currency of time, making visions tangible that allow the space to take on a life of its own and underlining its fictional character.

Pam Virada (*Bangkok, TH) is an artist based in Amsterdam. She explores the intersections between the cinematic and the temporal, navigating the ghostly forces and intimate stories within domestic spheres. Through mixed-media installations and moving images, Virada reconfigures existing contexts and narratives, investigating the themes of impermanence and intimate turmoil in spatial arrangements, objects, text, and expanded cinema. Her work has been shown at de Appel in Amsterdam, the Aranya Art Center in Qinhuangdao, Nova Contemporary in Bangkok, and Meno Avilys in Vilnius, among others.

Research Residency: *Rituelle Assoziation* with Anna Zett

During her two-month research residency (September and October 2024) at Kunst Raum Mitte, Anna Zett will investigate forms and practices of 'ritual association' – performative events that are formally, affectively, and physically concrete, but remain open on the level of meaning. She examines performative actions from the late period of the GDR, drawing parallels to Chinese performance art from the upheaval years of 1989/90, which is currently being received anew in China against the backdrop of advanced censorship.

Anna Zett (*Leipzig, GDR) is a Berlin-based artist. Her analytical, sensual, and narrative practice questions dominant structures of meaning and creates space for open dialog, intensive encounters, and free association. In 2018, Zett began exploring her own Eastern perspective through research in the Berlin Archive of the GDR Opposition. Zett's work is shown in self-organized spaces and institutions such as the Serpentine Gallery London, Berlinale Forum Expanded, Berlinische Galerie, Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin, Whitney Museum New York, Goethe Institut Beijing, and at Manifesta 14 in Priština (2022).



Pam Virada, *the room I entered was a dream of this room*, 2024. Reading performance with Johanna Ekenhorst. Photo: Juan Saez.



Opening Kunst Raum Mitte, 12.09.2024. Photo: Juan Saez.



,Green Papaya Art Projects, *Altar of the Undivided*, 2024. Activation during opening on 12.09.2024. Photo: Juan Saez.



Opening Kunst Raum Mitte, 12.09.2024. Photo: Juan Saez.



Natalie Keppler (left) and Agnieszka Roguski, Opening Kunst Raum Mitte, 12.09.2024. Photo: Juan Saez.

TEAM

Kunst Raum Mitte is an institution of the Department of Art, Culture and History in the Mitte district of Berlin.

Agnieszka Roguski & Natalie Keppler (Artistic Director)
kuenstlerischeleitung@kunstraummitte.berlin

Katrin Winkler (exhibition management and infrastructure)
katrin.winkler@ba-mitte.berlin.de

Annika Reketat (Programme Coordination and Curatorial Assistance KRM / CAMPI Fellow)
annika.reketat@ba-mitte.berlin.de

Elias Pietsch (Communication and Public Relations / CAMPI Fellow)
elias.pietsch@ba-mitte.berlin.de

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PROGRAM

DIFFRACTIONS unfolds in three interlocking thematic sequences:

Collecting & Un/Learning, Commoning and Transforming

Commoning

29.8.2024 Open-air screening featuring films by Julia Charlotte Richter, Mykola Ridnyi, Anna Zett

28.10.–31.10.2024 Foto-comic workshop with Dina El Kaisy Friemuth

Transforming

12.09.2024
18:00 – 21:00 Exhibition opening DIFFRACTIONS–*Transforming*

12. & 14.09. *Altar of the Undivided*, Activation with Green Papaya Art Projects (Norberto Roldan and Joaquin Roldan)

the room I entered was a dream of this room, reading performance by Pam Virada, with Johanna Ekenhorst

12.09.–13.09.2024
16:00 Guided tour with Raoul Zöllner as part of Berlin Art Week

14.09–15.09.2024
13:00 & 16:00 Guided tour with Raoul Zöllner as part of Berlin Art Week

12.–15.09.2024 Open studio with Anna Zett (Research Residency)

Collecting & Un/Learning

25.10.2024 Studio exhibition und „Rituelle Assoziation“ with Anna Zett (Research Residency)

27.10.2024 ELEFANT: Performative exhibition with Lissy Willberg, featuring the Class for Performative Arts, Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig (HGB), with Isabel Lewis

27.10.2024 Talk „Affective Archives“ with Isabel Lewis and Yon Natalie Mik

01.12.2024 Walk with Rainer Görß, Untergrundmuseum

08.02.2025 Talk with Clare Molloy & Susanne Sachsse

MEDIATION

Our exhibition guides are present in the exhibitions during regular opening hours. Visitors are invited to approach the guides with questions, talk to them about the exhibitions and exchange perspectives.

There will also be curatorial guided tours of the exhibitions. We provide information about the dates on the website, in our newsletter and on Instagram.

ABOUT KUNST RAUM MITTE

Kunst Raum Mitte is a municipal exhibition space organised by the Department for Art, Culture and History of the Mitte District Council. Since 1987, contemporary artists have had the opportunity to present their work in the former Galerie weisser elefant - first in East Berlin and later in the reunified city.

In 2024 the municipal institution was renamed Kunst Raum Mitte by the Department of Art, Culture and History. The new name is intended to further open up the gallery's concept to contemporary discourse and the art of a subsequent generation, and to link it to current debates about a pluralistic and diverse urban society.

The Department of Art, Culture and History maintains institutional exhibition spaces in the neighbourhoods of Berlin Mitte. These include four other well-known art venues with their own profiles and programmes of contemporary art: the Bärenzwinger, the Galerie Nord, the Galerie Wedding - Raum für zeitgenössische Kunst and the Klosterruine Berlin. The district's galleries are members of the Berlin Municipal Galleries Association.

Opening hours: Tue – Sun: 11:00 – 19:00
Free admission

Directions and address: Kunst Raum Mitte
Auguststraße 21
10117 Berlin
U Weinmeisterstraße, S Oranienburger Straße

Kontakt: Annika Reketat
Tel. +49 30 28884455
E-Mail: annika.reketat@ba-mitte.berlin.de

Instagram/Facebook @kunstraummitte

info@kunstraummitte.berlin
www.kunstraummitte.berlin