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Life In Berlin: Apartment Project And The Berlin Project Space Festival

By LILY KELTING • AUG 4, 2016

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From an exhibit in the Apartment Project, "WHO KNOWS WHERE WE ARE" by Aykan Safoglu, Borge Kantürk, Evrim Kavcar, Gökce Süvari, Gümüş Özdes, Merve Ünsal, Selda Asal, and Sevgi Ortac.

ANDRÉ WUNSTORF



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Don't call it a gallery – the Apartment Project doesn't have white walls or regular exhibitions; they're not out to make money and the work can't be bought or sold. Like Berlin's other project spaces, the Apartment Project isn't an exhibition venue; it's not a theater; it's not an institution at all.

So, what is a project space?

"A project space is a room where you can make a project – so stupid and so easy," says Project Space Festival co-director Marie-José Ourtilane. This simple concept – the project space – forms the backbone of Berlin's independent and experimental art scene. "The thing is, it's also a non-commercial project. It's a place where you can experiment with many forms of art – of doing things with people or with communities."

For each of the 31 days of August, the Project Space Festival highlights a different project space in Berlin. The first, the Apartment Project, fits this description perfectly – it's experimental and non-commercial. For their event, the Apartment Project presented a short, unpolished, and hard-to-classify lecture-performance. And it's communal – really communal. Apartment Project founder Selda Asal explains:

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“We are squeezing each other, but it is a good climate. Producing together twenty-four hours – living together – is also different here. Nobody has different rooms; we are all sleeping in the mezzanine in a hochbett. We cook together, we write together. Because of that, the production is also different.”



An exhibit in the Berlin Project Space Festival.

CREDIT ANDRÉ WUNSTORF

This experimental, live-work collective arrangement of the Apartment Project was founded in 1999 in Istanbul. In 2012, Asal moved the space to Neukölln. She says that the new location reminds her of Istanbul in the 90s.

The question of location is actually key to the festival. Many of the spaces involved are nomadic or temporary, squeezed into RVs, abandoned spaces, or storefronts on temporary leases. The festival HQ is a grassy plot next to Theaterhaus Mitte – the co-directors calculated the geographic center between all 31 venues and chose this empty space to set up shop. Maybe empty is the wrong word: According to festival co-director Heiko Pfreundt, nowhere is empty. It’s just a matter of seeing what’s there.

“It’s sometimes said that project spaces are on the periphery, which is not what I’m thinking,” says Pfreundt. “The center’s not museums and galleries. What we try to investigate is our position between the periphery and center. My belief is that project spaces are closer to the center than most people expect.”

You can see the work being done in the [Apartment Project](#) at Hertzbergstrasse 13, 12055 Berlin Neukölln.

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