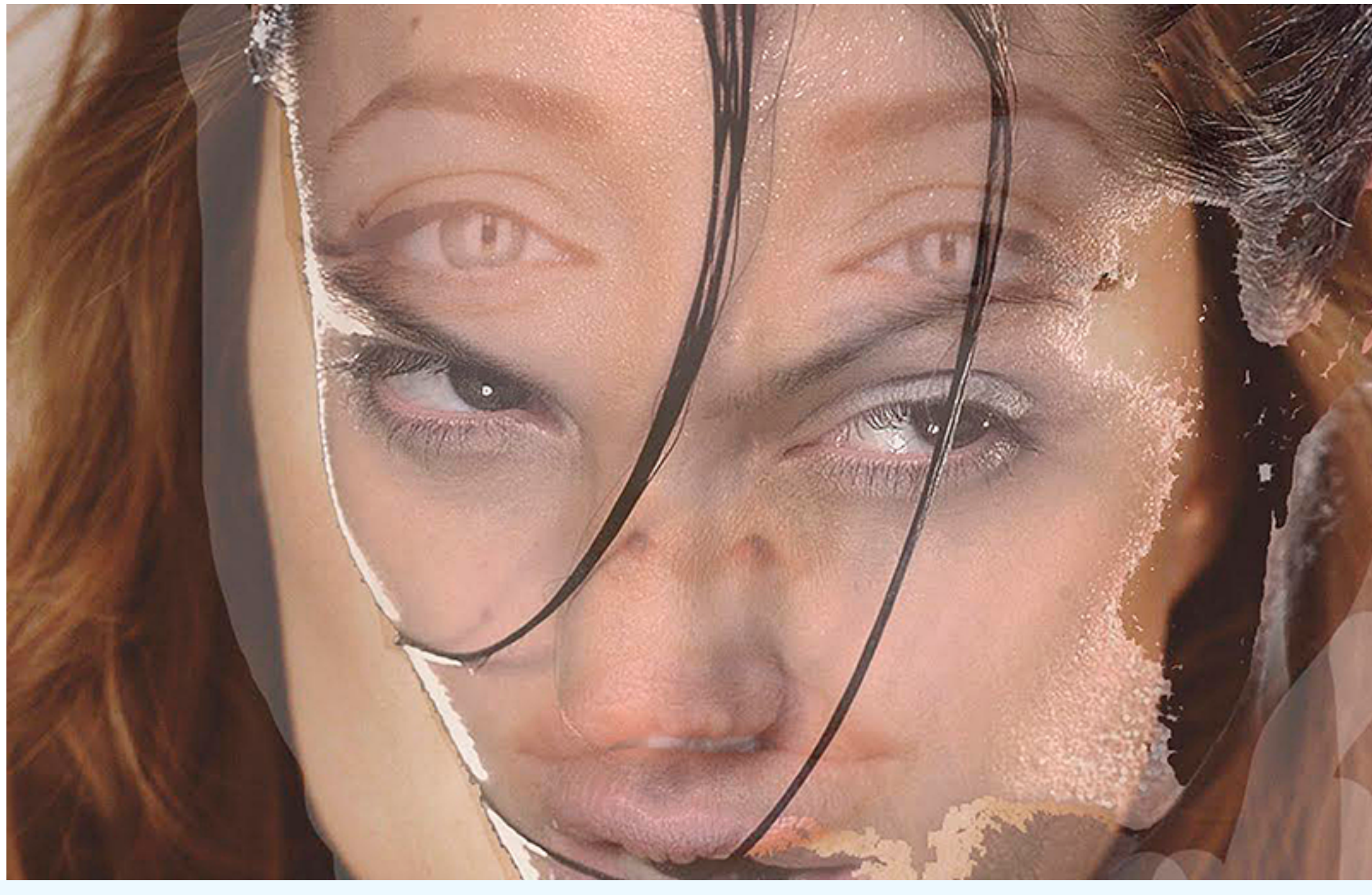


## August and All That Glitters: Project Space Festival, Berlin



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A work by Ella C., on view at Cave3000 during Project Space Festival, Berlin. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Ella C.

A review by *Louisa Elderton*

It's August, Berlin, 2018. The date looks strangely futuristic, even though it's now and our bodies are in it. We're sweating, I mean *really* sweating, endless beads condensing, trickling down bronzed skin making us shiny and wet. We're all glittering. Nearly naked. This summer is making up for the past two years of cooler climbs, middle months of chilled winds worth forgetting. We visit lakes; we let our limbs soak up the heat; we dance; we see the sunrise; we try to find time for work (work?); we experience art when our brains tire of resting, demand a little more. The Project Space Festival is here, now, every day of the week, every week of the month. From the first to last — and then, August ends.

Where do you go and what do you see and how can you choose and what even is a project space, anyway? (The rhythm of the art trail.) Somewhere away from the white cube, with its slick walls and floors, with women who look well paid while being sucked dry along with everyone else (except the men of course). Little old shop fronts, now reused; people's living rooms; small spaces around corners, down alleys and up stairways. You'll find them there. They're independent, doing their own thing, each one taking its turn, every twenty-four hours. Or at least 30 of them are: galleries specially selected for this occasion. Neukölln through Kreuzberg and Mitte and up and up, and East and West, and all the way from Charlottenburg to Pankow. Let yourself see the city while you wander around the art map.



CNTRM | temporary project space. Photo: Joanna Kosowska



View from OMSK Social Club's Performance at Kreuzberg Pavilion during Project Space Festival, Berlin. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Piotr Pietrus

Maybe you weren't there, dear reader, but you might be able to imagine yourself in these project spaces: CNTRM, a former gatekeeper pavilion, 7 metres squared (stretch out your arms to touch the walls of concrete, metal and glass); 11m2, another small surround, previously a porter's lodge; SPEKTRUM, different cultural communities converging at the door of a sharp corner; x-embassy kissing goodbye to the former Australian embassy of the GDR, a spiral staircase spinning you into their setting; and East of Elsewhere, perched between places, marking its own spot, a living room not quite here, neither there, where friends gathered for a year to make collective magic. Now they've moved on; the Project Space Festival was the last month of their rental contract. So it goes. Yet not off to the Slaughterhouse.

There's too much to talk about, really, so let's focus on the latter, zoom into their story. Three friends who started something: Clementine Butler-Gallie, Fred Simon, Camilla McHugh, hailing from the UK and San Francisco, all looking for something new. *At the beginning we wanted to do some small shows and then it sped up, more and more people were coming and the community was building. There was something about the environment of it: not just a gallery but also an apartment that attracted people. It was also our home, and it meant the relationship with the artist was this really intense period of getting to know them and their process.*

*shadow <<play>>*, the title of their last show looks like a button waiting to be pressed into action. The states of ephemeral and permanence, fleeting and fixed are the focus, as their event brings together performances by seven artists, diptychs that move from the project space into the park opposite, a raised mound that beckons the crowd into the night. Knowing that this is the final exhibition in this space they wonder: *What could last beyond our tenancy?* What might remain in the park, even if their bodies have to move beyond the living room to live elsewhere, once again?



View from East of Elsewhere's exhibition during Project Space Festival, Berlin. Photo: André Wunstorf



Daniel Kokko performing at East of Elsewhere during Project Space Festival, Berlin. Courtesy the artist. Photo: André Wunstorf

Rishin Singh's poems are a diary, stretched, seeking out memory and its artificiality. *The silence of floorboards echoes your departure*, he says. How can process change the moment in your head? Is there a difference between sound and memory? Inside the gallery, words are etched out on a mirrored surface where you can see yourself — after all, what are we without language? — and on the mound outside, letters are formed from dough and hang as words in the trees, waiting to become bird feed. Sometimes, no sooner than you say something, it is lost to the ephemeral ether. Unless you're Theresa Reimann-Dubbers, whose four-speaker sound installation rustles through the trees, a monotonous reading of her voice speaking the data that Facebook has accumulated during her eleven years in service of the site, recently deleted. Friends names and phone numbers, IP addresses, locations, events, dates, hosts and whether she's attended or not. She says: *This was a monument of my deadened Facebook identity, reduced to a text package at the end; it's about the inconsistencies in the ideas of ephemeral and permanent, alive and not alive in the digital.*

These artists traverse the line between how we remember and forget. A diary inscribes events into a kind of permanence precisely for the reason to get thoughts out and move on. Cleanse. Somehow as humans we're preoccupied with 'forever' — a means of living on somewhere, evading death — though really we're small utterances in time and our words and movements are folded back into nature. And as for the diary of Facebook: it's an echo chamber into which people shout about their lives, views and politics, thinking they are being heard while, really, data is being accumulated to help understand, shape, control.

Ending the evening naked under the fading sun, artist Daniel Kokko pours iodine over his body, staining skin with streaks of brown, echoes of the glass shards that marked him when he smashed a glass table with a hammer, inside. Interested in trauma, what is permanent and what is temporary, he holds a toolbox full of objects, blades and screws, invites the audience to pick pieces — a confrontational pursuit. How do we mark ourselves, visibly or not, and what is unleashed, what is purged?

Release. It's hard to say goodbye to August, to let it go. As with East of Elsewhere, where *the intensity was really beautiful and always changing*, things come to a close: months, festivals, project spaces. They're often momentary, making something out of the present, bringing people together, building communities, making stories and then releasing them upon the warm breeze blowing from the park into the autumn sky.



Exhibition view, of „KUNSTBUTTER“ at LAGE EGAL Berlin. Photo: Joanna Kosowska