

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas



Frederick Kiesler, *Abstract Gallery* (looking south), Art of This Century Gallery, New York, 1942

Course Description: Exhibitions are practices of spatial and cultural construction, where architecture, display, and narrative intersect. The city of Berlin offers an unparalleled site to explore how exhibitions negotiate between art, architecture, and the shifting conditions of cultural and institutional practices. Through site visits to museums and galleries across Berlin, students will engage directly with exhibition practices in situ. Comparative case studies will be paired with the on-site visits to explore how curatorial and artistic strategies respond to specific urban, architectural, and institutional contexts. Students will develop critical tools for analyzing exhibition design as a cultural, spatial, and political phenomenon. Emphasizing questions of space, power, and representation, the seminar approaches exhibitions as architectural constructs that mediate between artistic practice, institutional frameworks, and the city.

Alongside these site-based explorations, the course will comprise lectures, in-class discussions, and exercises. Students will develop a critical vocabulary and visual literacy for analyzing exhibition spaces, curatorial strategies, and display aesthetics. Readings will include key texts on exhibition histories, museology, spatial politics, and the broader cultural dimensions of display and representation.

Attendance and Participation: Your active participation in discussions and site visits is an essential part of this course and directly supports your performance on related assignments. Each class at TU will include a lecture component, followed by either a group or small group discussion and in-class activities. Engaging thoughtfully during these sessions and during our visits is key to both your own learning and the shared experience of the group.

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

If you find it difficult to speak up in discussions, please do not hesitate to schedule an office meeting with Kristina Lovaas in advance. We can discuss strategies for participating in a way that feels comfortable and productive for you.

Site Visits: When we visit a museum or gallery, please plan to arrive ten minutes early. We will always meet in the entrance area near the ticket counter. From there, we will begin our tour together. Before each visit, Kristina Lovaas will send an email confirming the address and meeting details; this information will likewise be on ISIS.

Reading: There is no required textbook for this course. All readings for the week will be uploaded to ISIS and should be completed by the time of our class meetings on Wednesday. Some readings will be more challenging than others. Please feel free to discuss this with Kristina Lovaas if you would like alternative readings, additional context, or further reading. When a reading feels difficult, use it as a starting point: explore its examples further, analyze the pictures, and bring your findings into our discussions.

ISIS: All readings, the most up-to-date version of the syllabus, PowerPoint presentations, and term sheets will be uploaded to ISIS. Announcements about lectures, exhibition openings, and new articles will also be posted there.

Sickness and Attendance: If you are unable to attend class due to illness, please email k.lovaas@tu-berlin.de in advance. Your first absence will be excused.

If you are sick on the day of the final presentation, you must provide an official doctor's note to receive an excused absence. Without a doctor's note, the presentation will receive an automatic grade of zero.

Contact:

Kristina Lovaas
k.lovaas@tu-berlin.de

Tutor: Pietro Mellano
p.mellano@campus.tu-berlin.de

Office hours:

A 706, Monday: 10:00 – 12:00 and 13:00 – 16:00

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

Date	Time	Location	Plan	Class
14.10.2025 Tuesday	14:00 – 16:00	A 703	Course Introduction and overview of the syllabus. In class discussion: Introduce yourself and share an example of an exhibition you visited when you were younger that left an impression on you.	1
22.10. 2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: The Ideal Museum: Why Do We Have Museums? Reading: Tony Bennett, <i>The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics</i> (London: Routledge, 1995), "The Formation of the Museum," pp. 17–48 Optional Reading: Andrew L. McClellan, "The Musée du Louvre as Revolutionary Metaphor During the Terror," <i>The Art Bulletin</i> 70, no. 2 (1988): 300–313.	2
28.10.2025 Tuesday	14:00-16:00	Schinkel Pavillon	Guided tour: Issy Wood: <i>Magic Bullet</i> by Lina Louisa Kraemer	3
29.10.2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: Museum as Ritual: the Body, the City, and the Museum In-class exercise: What does the ritual of visiting a museum look like? How have we learned these behaviors? Together, we will create a list of the "unwritten" rituals and rules that structure how we move, look, and act within museum spaces. For the exercise we will break into small groups and then come together for a larger discussion. Assignment: Take the list of official and "unwritten" rituals and rules of museum behavior that we have come up with in class, and organize them into different categories. Write 3-5 sentences about your choice of organization. This assignment is worth 8 points, and it is due on 3.11.2025, to be submitted via ISIS. Your class participation is part of the grading. Reading: Carol Duncan, <i>Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums</i> (London: Routledge, 1995), excerpt "The Art Museum as Ritual," pp. 7–20	4

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

3.11.2025 Monday	12:00-16:00	Humboldt Forum	Guided Tour: Introduction to the building. After the tour, students will work in pairs. Each pair should select one exhibition room, photograph it, and take notes on five objects displayed within the space (position, size, lighting). Bring your photos and notes to class on 5.11.25, where we will discuss your findings in relation to the assigned reading.	5
5.11.2025 Wednesday	11:00 – 13:00	A 703	Lecture: The Metabolic Museum In-class exercise: Working in small groups, create a new section to Clémentine Deliss' <i>Manifesto for the Post-Ethnographic Museum</i>. Groups will then present their reflections to the class, discussing how these ideas might reimagine the function of ethnographic museums. Assignment: Each group will designate one member to submit the group's collective new section proposal. Please type and upload your final list to ISIS, including the names of all group members. This assignment is worth 8 points and is due 11.10.25. Active participation during group discussion will also be considered in your grade. Final project preparations: Each partnership should make an appointment with Kristina Lovaas for 12.11.25, to discuss the exhibition space they have chosen for their final project. The groups will have to present this during our next TU class on 13.11.25 Reading: Clémentine Deliss, <i>The Metabolic Museum</i> (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2020)	6
11.11.2025 Tuesday	14:00 – 16:00	Hamburger Bahnhof	Guided Tour: Petrit Halilaj and Klára Hosnedlovás with Charlotte Knaup	7
12.11.2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: Installation Art: From the <i>Proun Room</i> to Olafur Eliasson In-class exercise: Working in small groups, students will identify the tools artists and curators used, historically or in the last exhibitions we saw, to create active audience engagement and immersion. Each group will analyze how spatial strategies such as	8

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

sightlines, circulation, scale, and viewer positioning shape participation and perception within an installation. Groups will briefly share findings and discuss how these techniques transform the viewer from observer to participant.

Student Presentation: We will have a short presentation on the exhibition space your group will work with for their final presentation. Please be ready to explain your choice briefly.

Assignment: Submit a list of ten tools or strategies used by the artists or the curators in the installation your group discussed. For each tool, include a short explanation (2–3 sentences) describing how it creates audience engagement or immersion within the space. This assignment is worth **8 points** and is due on 18.11. 2025, to be submitted via ISIS.

Reading: Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), Chapter 1, pp. 60–88

(Optional) Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October*, vol. 8 (Spring 1979), pp. 30–44

18.11.2025 Tuesday	14:00 – 17:00	Fleuntum + CCA	Guided Tour 1: Jordon Strafer: <i>Dissonance</i> with Raoul Klooker at Fleuntum, Guided Tour 2: Lukas Luzius Leichtle: <i>Eindringling</i> with Fabian Schöneich at CCA	9
19.11.2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: Do Stones Have Memory? Building Reuse In-class exercise: Structured debate The class will be divided into three groups: ● One third will argue for architectural intervention and transformation. ● One third will argue the building should be protected as a historical document. ● One third will argue it should be demolished to reject its ideological past. Assignment: Write a one-page outline or 300 word response of an argument reflecting on	10

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

the in-class debate and on David Chipperfield's text "*Is the Building Guilty?*" (2017). If you choose the outline should include three main points, each supported by two examples or explanation of the three points. Choose a building we have either visited this week or discussed in class, and develop an argument on whether it should be transformed, protected, or demolished. Your response should consider how architecture can both preserve and reinterpret collective memory through reuse, transformation, or erasure. This assignment is worth **8 points** and is due on 24.11. 2025, to be submitted via ISIS.

Readings: David Chipperfield, "Is the Building Guilty?" (2017)

(Optional) Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin" (1903)

24.11.2025 Monday	14:00-16:00	Berlinischer Galerie	Guided Tour: of Raoul Hausmann with Dr. Thomas Köhler	11
26.11.2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: The Surrealist Practice of Display: The 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition	12

In-class exercise: Using the exhibition models as a site of experimentation, students will work in small groups to design a model installation inspired by the 1938 *International Surrealist Exhibition*. Each group should incorporate one or more "Surrealist strategies:" chance encounters, assemblage or found object, mirror or reflection, sensory distortion, juxtaposition, or string.

Assignment: Take photos of your group model exhibitions and write 200 words about your model exhibition. This assignment is worth **8 points** and is due on 2.12. 2025, to be submitted via ISIS.

Reading: Herbert Bayer, "Aspects of Design of Exhibitions and Museums," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 4, no. 3 (1961), pp. 257–270.

Claire Grace and Kevin Lotery, "Artists Design Exhibitions: Introduction," *October* 150 (Fall 2014), pp. 3–8

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

2.12.2025 Tuesday	14:00 – 16:00	Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi	Guided Tours: Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi , Esther Schipper, Schiefe Zähne, KOW, Galerie Molitor, Noah Klink, and ChertLüdde	13
3.12.2025 Wednesday	10:00-13:00	A 703	Lecture: <i>Inside the White Cube</i> Reading: Brian O'Doherty, <i>Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 7–34 Stefanie Bürkle, <i>Studio + Laboratory: Workshops of Knowledge</i> (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2018) pp. 14 -22, 27-29	14
08.12.2025 Monday	10:00 – 13:00	Pergamon	Guided Tour: Pergamon	15
10.12.2025 Wednesday	10:00 -13:00	A 703	Lecture: Staging Antiquity: The Politics of Display In-class discussion: What might a more critical or contemporary display look like? Take either the example of the <i>Pergamon Altar</i> or the <i>Temple of Dendur</i> and map how spatial design, labeling, and architectural framing construct narratives of history and identity. In-class exercise: Map the museum types represented in our visits and those chosen for final projects. We will sort them into building typologies and note key spatial features. Please bring one printed A4 photograph of your chosen exhibition space. Readings: Alina Payne, “Portable Ruins: The Pergamon Altar, Heinrich Wölfflin, and German Art History at the Fin de Siècle,” pp. 168–189	16
16.12.2025 Tuesday	14:00 – 16:00	Georg Kolbe	Guided Tour: <i>Liaison</i> : Georg Kolbe, Herbert List, Harry Hachmeister, Jens Pecho und Maurice Béjart	17
17.12.2025 Wednesday	10:00 -13:00	A 703	In-class exercise: Use the time during class to work on your final presentation and get feedback.	18
14.1.2026	12:00 – 17:00	A 703	Final Presentation	19

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

Wednesday

Final Presentation: Exhibition Space Archive and Analysis

Due Dates:

Project proposal (space selection): **11.11.2025** (in class)

In-class presentation and submission (PDF / printed portfolio): **14.01.2026**

Final Project: For the final project, each student will select a Berlin exhibition space that was not visited during the semester. The task is to research, document, analyze, and reimagine the space, demonstrating that the exhibition space is never neutral but always embedded within historical, ideological, institutional, and spatial conditions.

The final project will consist of empirical material such as documents, images, and visitor observations, alongside an analytical framework that incorporates diagrams, readings, and theoretical references. This will be combined with research done on the space chosen. Each project will be structured through **seven of the ten components** described below, combining written, visual, and analytical work. The final project should integrate and reflect the ideas developed throughout the course in the readings, lectures, and in-class exercises.

Components: Each student will select **seven** of the following **ten modules**. Please, don't focus purely on what might be the least time-intensive or most straightforward module, but rather focus on how the modules you select work as a whole and demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the themes we have worked on in class, and your engagement with the institution of your choice.

1. Timeline and Institutional Genealogy

Create a list of at least 15 pivotal dates in the exhibition space's history, from its founding or site origins to current transformations. Provide brief annotations (1–2 sentences) for each date. Where possible, connect these dates to architectural interventions, curatorial shifts, or institutional redefinition.

2. Exhibition Review

Write a 300-word review of the current exhibition. The review should address spatial experience, display logic, and visitor trajectories. In the review, analyze at least two artworks in detail. When relevant, situate the exhibition within the context of previous shows in the same space or within the artist's broader practice.

3. Photo Archive

Gather 20 images documenting past and current exhibitions (from archives, institutional websites, or your own photographs). If you are doing the exhibition proposal, include an exhibition by the same artist or on the same topic that has inspired you. Include MLA-style captions (artist, title, date, exhibition) and organize them in a clear "visual appendix" in the PDF.

4. Contextual and Urban Map

Create a one-page visual and textual layout mapping the surrounding neighborhood, including transit connections, nearby institutions, pedestrian flows, and local amenities

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

such as cafés, restaurants, and parks. Annotate the map to highlight spatial relationships, proximities, and possible tensions between the exhibition space and its urban context.

5. **Building Typology and Architectural Adaptation**

Identify the building type, what the building was originally designed for, and explain how its original purpose continues to influence its current state. If it was always intended as an exhibition space, trace how subsequent architectural modifications have changed or remained the same for the exhibition logic of the space. Provide a two-page visual document together with written text that explains how the building's form frames and informs curatorial decisions.

6. **Spatial Mapping**

Produce a floor plan or diagrammatic overlay illustrating circulation, axes, sightlines, and thresholds within the exhibition space as it currently hangs and/or your proposed exhibit. Use Herbert Bayer's *Diagram of Field of Vision* as a conceptual reference. Create two diagrams, format them clearly on the page, and include a short written explanation of how each diagram functions and what spatial relationships it reveals.

7. **Visitor Ethnography**

Conduct field observations of how visitors move, pause, and interact within the exhibition space. Write approximately one page of notes and commentary, connecting your findings to readings such as Carol Duncan on ritual and museum behavior.

8. **Comparative Study**

Choose a second exhibition space (in Berlin, Europe, or globally) that shares a curatorial approach, spatial strategy, or similar building typology. Write a 300-word comparative analysis or present three pages of visual notes and diagrams that draw connections between the two spaces.

9. **Applied Reading**

Select one course reading or one you have discussed with Kristina beforehand to use as a theoretical lens for analyzing your chosen exhibition space or proposed exhibition. Include at least one relevant quotation and a 200-word interpretation showing how the text informs or challenges your understanding of the site.

10. **Exhibition Proposal**

Develop a conceptual proposal for a new exhibition in your chosen space that responds critically to its history, architecture, or institutional identity. Include a 300-word curatorial statement.

11. **Work List for the Exhibition:** Create a work list for your proposed exhibition. For each artwork, include: artist name(s), title, date, medium, dimensions, installation requirements (if relevant)

12. **Floor Plan for your Exhibition Proposal:** sketch or spatial mapping of where works would be installed. This can be cutouts on a floor plan, a Photoshop or Illustrator file, or a quick sketch.

Final PDF Submission: The final submission should take the form of a visually cohesive and professionally designed PDF portfolio that compiles all seven components of the project. The document should demonstrate both critical and visual coherence, showing a balance between research, analysis, and presentation.

Practices of Display: Berlin Exhibition Spaces

Fine Art Project MA (EN)
WiSe 25/26
Prof. Dr. Stefanie Bürkle
Kristina Lovaas

The portfolio must open with a cover page including both students' names, the project title, the course name, and the semester, followed by a table of contents that clearly outlines the structure and page numbers of the seven selected components.

All images, diagrams, and archival materials must include captions and proper citations in MLA style. A bibliography should be included at the end. The layout should reflect an awareness of spatial composition on the page, balancing text, image, and negative space in a consistent rhythm throughout.

The final PDF must be submitted as a single file to **k.lovaas@tu-berlin.de** by **16.01.2026**.

Final Presentation: Each student will deliver a ten-minute PowerPoint (or similar program) presentation followed by five minutes of discussion. The presentation should introduce the exhibition space, provide a brief overview of its history, context, and current exhibition, and present two to four of the project components that best illustrate the pair's analytical and visual approach. Instead of reproducing the PDF of your final project, the presentation should translate the research into a clear and visually engaging format meant for a presentation.

Grading Breakdown: The course is graded out of **100 points**. Grades are based on small assignments, group assignments, active class participation, and the final project and presentation. The point breakdown is listed below.

8 points: Small assignment: *"Unwritten" Rituals and Rules of Museum Behavior* (due **03.11.2025**)

8 points: Small assignment: *The Metabolic Museum* (due **11.11.2025**)

8 points: Small assignment: *Active Audience Engagement* (due **18.11.2025**)

8 points: Small assignment: *"Is the Building Guilty?"* (due **24.11. 2025**)

8 points: Small assignment: *mid-term presentation for final presentation* (due **02.12.2025**)

10 points: Active class participation throughout the semester

10 points: Final presentation (**16.01.2026**)

40 points: Final project (due **16.01.2026**)