

21 MAY 2019

INTERVIEW: ARTSPRING

BY ANNA-LENA WERNER



artspring 2019 / KEP Raumforschungslabor at Schönhauser Allee Arcaden, Photo © Ralph Bergel

Anna-Lena Werner: Julia and Jan, with artspring you are organising one of Berlin's largest open-studio events and an extensive one-month art festival in all parts of Pankow. Its first edition took place in 2017 — which reasons led you to initiate **artspring** in the first place and how did your collaboration come about?

Julia Brodauf & Jan Gottschalk: We were actually working together on other projects, but the idea of organizing an event based on open studios has been around for a while. We had the impression that the art scene in the district of Pankow was falling apart, while individual artists are struggling with the same challenges: because of the lack of exhibition facilities, the artists in the district are not very visible, and at the same time their workspaces are a sought-after property in the real estate market. There was and still is a risk of the artists slowly being pushed out of the district, if they would not become visible. So we wrote a concept for the first artspring weekend and found support in the project funding by the Cultural Office. The artists also reacted very positively and made already the first artspring weekend an event marathon, which we had not expected in advance. It was then clear that we could not just let that energy evaporate again, and that's how the series came to be.

ALW: All events are located in Berlin's district Pankow, including Prenzlauer Berg and Weißensee. Why did you choose to focus on these districts exclusively?

JB & JG: It is the district in which we live and work. Although the studio community Milchhof e.V. is officially located in Mitte, because the district border runs along the street. The artists who work here are more likely to orient themselves in Prenzlauer Berg. Julia's studio is located at the Goldleistenfabrik in Weißensee, at the other end of the district. Although we regularly have inquiries from studio communities in other districts, we do not feel we can cope with an extension of the festival at the moment.



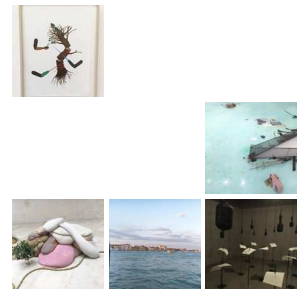
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ACADEMY
ART FAIRS
EXHIBITIONS
THOUGHTS

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artspring spots 2019 / "Der dritte Raum" at Sepp Maiers 2raumwohnung, artist © Peter Mueller

- ▼ 2019 (4)
 - ▼ May (1)
 - INTERVIEW: ARTSPRING
 - ▶ April (1)
 - ▶ February (1)
 - ▶ January (1)
- ▶ 2018 (14)
- ▶ 2017 (15)
- ▶ 2016 (22)
- ▶ 2015 (25)
- ▶ 2014 (38)
- ▶ 2013 (61)
- ▶ 2012 (44)
- ▶ 2011 (24)
- ▶ 2010 (1)

ALW: On the 1. and 2. of June visitors will be able to access more than 300 artists' studios from all the districts within Pankow. You are both artists yourself — how would you describe the community of artists based in Pankow?

JB & JG: In Pankow several communities coexist. For example, there is the art scene that emerges from the former East German scene with a tradition of several decades. Another world is the one made up of graduates of the Weißensee School of Art. There are also many international artists, who want to network in the district and participate in the phenomenon of Berlin. And much in between - the art scene is quite diverse and very idiosyncratic here.

ALW: Your event takes place in an insecure time regarding Berlin's local politics supporting artists. Many have lost their studios, or are faced with losing it within the next 2 years. How has this development affected Pankow's art scene?

JB & JG: You can notice this development is already. Some of the studios participating in artspring are in serious danger of closure. The studios at Schönhauser Allee 69, for example, are going to be vacated and converted into apartments. The Kunsttagen Pankow in the Pestalozzistraße are located in a prefabricated building, which is also to be converted into high-priced flats. The Australian Embassy (East) in the Grabbeallee is struggling to maintain with the help of the district, but the artists' leases are renewed on a monthly basis only. So, no concentrated work is possible. The workrooms in the Goldleistenfabrik have increased by 50% this year. Such stories can be heard everywhere - if the conditions do not improve, the art scene will undoubtedly be eroded and wandered off.



artspring 2019 / Opening artspring Festival, Pop Up Shop at Schönhauser Allee Arkaden Photo © Andrç Wunstorf

ALW: You have arranged several unconventional venues, where films, concerts, readings, performances and exhibitions are shown. One venue, the pop up shop, is located in the shopping mall at Schönhauser Allee Arkaden, where each day during May a different artist will be on site. What happens in this showroom?

JB & JG: In the artspring store you can get the catalogue and further information material on many of the participating artists. Each day the store is occupied by different artists from the district, who each bring their own things – so you can see something new every day or get into conversation with new people. From time to time, performances take place.



artspring 2019 / Exhibition Opening "artspring dezentral" at the Zeiss planetarium, Photo © Andrç Wunstorf

ALW: Both, at the Zeiss planetarium and the Janusz-Korczak-Library, you arranged the exhibition "artspring dezentral" with artspring participants. Did you have a curatorial or contextual lead in this project? What was the idea behind bringing all those artists together in one show?

JB & JG: The idea of bringing the participating artists together in an original exhibition is to create an image. The studios and workrooms are scattered, as the district is very large. We found it important to create a place where the work is visible together and in dialogue with each other. For organisational reasons, there are two venues this year - each with their own quality. We leave it to the participating colleagues to decide if and what they want to exhibit. The challenge is then to compose the works that have come to be together, which sometimes brings completely new aspects to the individual works

to light and is a lot of fun.

ALW: Carola Grimm und Antje Materna organised a program of experimental films, which is being shown at the Cinema K77 in Prenzlauer Berg throughout May. What is the focus of this program?

JB & JG: Also in the case of the cinema program, we worked with what the artists proposed to us. Carola and Antje have seen all the material and created exciting evenings out of it. The two events this week are contrary: On Thursday run two longer, narrative films by Berthold Bock and Konstantin Bürger. At the end of the artspring nale on Friday there will be a whole series of short films. Film screenings are also available elsewhere in the event program, for example in the studio of Beate Spitzmüller.

— in cooperation with artspring —

artspring berlin 2019 means: around 300 artists in the district of Pankow, Prenzlauer Berg and Weissensee open their studios to visitors on 1st and 2nd of June. Numerous events are held throughout the month of May, and the artspring store in the Schönhauser Allee Arcaden is open as an information and meeting place run by participating artists every day. There is also the festivalnewspaper with information on all participants available. Further information at www.artspring.berlin



artspring founders Julia Brodauf & Jan Gottschalk, photo © Andrç Wunstorf

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