



INTERVIEW by Michaela Nolte

At the beginning of the 21st century, Berlin is one of the most attractive art capitals in the world. Not least because of the new and latest art galleries that contribute to this reality, which combines innovation and experimental work with a high degree of professionalism, thus creating a fertile foundation for current and future trends. At the same time they stand for the changed signs of a changing art market. As a new art trade fair, PREVIEW BERLIN has set for itself the goal of offering an intense view into this vital scene together with its multi-layered and international connections. This is an interview with its founders concerning their reasons for creating it as well as the pleasure they take in art as a mediator between communication and commodity.


PREVIEW BERLIN HAS AS A SUBTITLE “THE EMERGING ART FAIR.” WHAT IS THE MEANING BEHIND THIS PHRASE?

Kristian Jarmuschek We want to address people who are on the make as gallery owners, as artists but also as collectors. So that’s why our goal is to offer another venue for presenting contemporary art. That is to say, we want to help define what a gallery can be like today.

Rüdiger Lange This is one of our focus points: inviting both artists as well as gallery owners to our event because they reflect contemporary society.

Kristian Jarmuschek In Berlin of all places. It’s also of course what people have come to expect. New art and new initiatives and discoveries. What we claim to have is a high level of competence in presenting these interesting platforms. This is a totally different orientation than, say, the Art Forum, which of course is a trade fair that happens to take place in Berlin. We like to see ourselves more as a local initiative direct from Berlin.

Rüdiger Lange And this leads to a totally different dynamic. Although it’s true that the Art Forum being the large event that it is first paved the way for our own trade fair. In this respect, we consider the PREVIEW as a kind of addition to it. We explicitly show new galleries and projects which in part did not exist one or two years ago. Because they can’t meet the Art Forum’s acceptance criteria, they can’t have their works displayed there.



Tobias Kuttner Another important thing to consider is that this is a low budget trade fair. We ourselves don't want to make any money from it. So we have the opportunity of offering stands at such reasonable prices that it's become possible for certain galleries to participate which normally would not have even considered doing such a thing. Or certain projects can be presented that would not be viable elsewhere because of the high financial risk involved.

AS INITIATORS OF PREVIEW, YOU ALL BELONG TO A YOUNGER GENERATION BUT YOU COME FROM DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT WHICH AT FIRST GLANCE DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE MUCH IN COMMON.

Rüdiger Lange loop – raum für aktuelle kunst (loop – space for current art) is a hybrid model, in which I can use my skills as a curator as well as the commercial experience that I have working with artists. We saw the need to help open up a new market for reasonably priced art – this is how we interface with art.

Tobias Kuttner KUTTNER SIEBERT is represented at both the ART FORUM as well as PREVIEW and that mirrors our program, which consists of established trends and artists, which we are building up. The work that goes into this project contains a lot of positive energy precisely because of its heterogeneous structure.

Ralf Schmitt Exactly. I see myself as an artist. Kristian and Tobias are the gallery owners. Rüdiger works as a curator.

Rüdiger Lange ...as a mediator.

Ralf Schmitt Okay, as a mediator. With these different approaches we are able to integrate much more than with a one-dimensional team. Förderkoje® is a registered trademark that offers services and goods. Additionally, we run an art gallery and organize symposium events and table talks. However, we are also involved in the maintenance of beauty and the accommodation of guests. But, for me, Koje means more than anything else the practice of art.

Kristian Jarmuschek For Jarmuschek und Partner (Jarmuschek and Partner) there has always been an interest in initiatives, in which galleries and projects link up with one another. Especially to realize how current Berlin is and how it is perceived by others. I really like all the things this media platform contains and how we've created it through PREVIEW, which at the same time represents a competitive situation. The circles that will be encouraged by it are very lively and productive.

Rüdiger Lange It's already an independent model of production that can be analytically elaborated upon. But this is best done when the trade fair is over.

THE WORD PREVIEW IMPLIES BEING ABLE TO SEE WHAT IS COMING IN ADVANCE. DO YOU WANT TO, SO TO SPEAK, BEAT THE MARKET TO THE CHASE?

Tobias Kuttner It's not about being commercial and showing something that will guarantee a profit in five years. We want to present trends and artists that have the potential to be successful. Not just in the market but also on a general artistic level.

Rüdiger Lange We're trying to be like a seismograph to detect what is current in the greatest sense of the word, what's being traded and being produced. We also know that we logically cannot judge everything but that at least we can place it at the public's disposal. In the context of this open system, collectors, gallery owners, visitors and artists will be able to participate in this common event – and everyone can contribute his or her potential to it.

HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO SHAPE THIS OPEN SYSTEM IN ADVANCE?

Ralf Schmitt For instance, by selecting the group of people in charge of running the event. There are four founders and originally the gallery owner Jette Rudolph also belonged to our group. Unfortunately, she had to leave the organization but she continues to help us by supporting our lobby work. We've also asked for advice from other gallery owners and curators. So we've created a system of consultants that will also be expanded in the future so that we won't be left to stew in our own juice but instead will be able to increase the number of suggestions we receive.


Rüdiger Lange The recommendations, however, were not enough in and of themselves. We first had to wait until the applications had actually come in.

Kristian Jarmuschek ...because our trade fair is limited to 46 stands and there's also the fact that there were more people interested in participating than we could accept.

Ralf Schmitt The formal application also required you to make a concrete suggestion for a presentation.

Rüdiger Lange We then examined, discussed and selected everything in the context of a jury together with our project manager Martin Rinderknecht. Also there was a competition of ideas concerning the way our trade fair was going to be run.

Kristian Jarmuschek The impulse for this system was once again the idea of creating a network. This is one more concise difference to the way that a company typically runs a trade fair. One of our main initiatives is seeing to it that the interest and the engagement in our trade fair is not borne by us alone. We're lucky that Berlin has an established group of collectors that feels disposed toward us. But there are also established galleries that have come forth with recommendations or have established contacts with customers at the Art Forum and at other trade fairs. This networking, which we wanted in the first place, is what we're experiencing now. I can



notice this already when I talk to customers and people who have been following the gallery work we've been doing. Of course, there are many residents of Berlin who have an interest in seeing to it that their city continues to develop as a site of artistic creation – from an economic point of view as well. They see here an opportunity to engage themselves beyond just purchasing art.

Tobias Kuttner Last but not least PREVIEW has a very international dimension because of this. Berlin of course is a main focus but in total nine European countries and the USA are represented. Besides this, there are also projects like Mama Showroom, Rekord and White Trash Contemporary, a network between Hamburg and New York. All these projects differ from classical galleries.

Rüdiger Lange And what the project is all about is already clear from its name. The lack of the person's name who is running the project is also to be noted...

Tobias Kuttner ...and also the fact that some of the exhibitors are not necessarily commercially oriented. And this is also the exciting aspect about it all. That there are models that are not acting in conformity with the market.

Rüdiger Lange But I think that we and many other participants do in fact have a traditional understanding of what a trade fair is all about.

Kristian Jarmuschek And, after all, we've continued the trade fair because the initiative last year was also a total commercial success.

THE BERLINER LISTE THAT YOU HELPED INITIATE AND INFLUENCE IN THE PAST YEAR.

Kristian Jarmuschek Exactly. But to return to the discussion about its commercial aspect, I'd like to say this: a sense of satisfaction quickly arises from all the commitment that's being put into PREVIEW. This event is worthwhile even just considering its very presence here because Berlin as a place of artistic creation enjoys this potentially high level of attention. And then it also perhaps makes sense on the whole considering all the selling of art that will take place. I'm continuously being surprised by all the people who already know us. But this is of course the time and place when collectors and buyers first come into contact with each other. A lot of those who were on the Berliner Liste last year have told us they'll be coming back again because of the positive experiences they had.

THE LISTE STILL EXISTS....

Rüdiger Lange Yes, that's true. But we wanted to continue developing the model and there were differences concerning what its content should be. The dynamic process of course is an essential part of our idea and of our work. That part of our identity we contributed last year. Now we've used our know-how to create PREVIEW.

Kristian Jarmuschek Also, when we were choosing the location for our trade fair, we wanted to make sure that was adequate space for exhibitions.

Tobias Kuttner Which we were able to succeed in doing. The Backfabrik, the building we are using, has a unique charm and elegance which we have taken advantage of to create a clear and lucid presentation space. Its architecture is oriented towards classically designed stands. The stands are basically the standard size. At the same time, our location offers a certain sense of intimacy that enables the public and the artists to come into closer contact with another.

Kristian Jarmuschek To this extent, we regard ourselves as an alternative with regard to the way art is presented in the art market. The idea is to eliminate the hurdles that trade fairs themselves represent as well as the financial barriers and the acceptance criteria associated with most trade fairs. Thus, we want to make it easier to access the art market – for artists and their agents but also for potential customers. It's for this reason that we developed the PREVIEW dinners as part of our program, for which we have been fortunate enough to have experienced collectors like Heiner Bastian and Dieter Rosenkranz as advisers. The idea once again is to establish a connection to people who are simply interested in art in and of itself. Also, due to the fact that Berlin has a tradition of having older collectors, there are not so many young collectors of art. Yet there's enough money in the city for this situation to change.


THEY AREN'T ABLE TO ACCESS THE ART SCENE?

Kristian Jarmuschek Here we already have a contradiction between, on the one hand, there being a great interest in art and, on the other hand, the complaining about there not being enough collectors. We're trying to counter this. With an offering that will help overcome the fear of entering the art market and that will encourage people to trust their own opinions and to buy art and also to become part of the contemporary art scene in Berlin.

Rüdiger Lange For this very reason, our evening events are frequented by people coming from different backgrounds: younger and older collectors as well as businessmen and politicians whom we can perhaps have an impact on by introducing them to the world of collecting art. And naturally also curators and mediators of art, journalists, artists, gallery owners...

Kristian Jarmuschek The people attending our trade fair will not only be able to visit the different stands. They'll also have the chance to take part in some of the interactive events.

Rüdiger Lange This is the sense in which we mean that our trade fair is also a forum. The people attending the PREVIEW dinners will first be lead on a tour through the trade fair so that they'll have a chance to see what's going to be shown, what's available and what's currently being discussed. At the end of the tour, there will be a question and answer session



where the art itself can be discussed but also questions concerning the artists themselves or whether certain works have already been purchased. This of course is one of the advantages of Berlin: that such things are possible here.

Ralf Schmitt This is why we've been working so intensively on putting together these table talks in such a way that the same people won't always be there at the same time. We're hoping to get some interesting, mixed groups of people that are just as heterogeneous as PREVIEW itself is.

Translation | David Lynch, Berlin