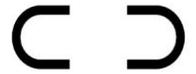


# Musée sentimental de l'ours de Berlin

Nschotschi Haslinger, Sathit Sattarasart,  
Anna Virnich, Jasmin Werner



*»I think there was probably a certain window of opportunity for the Musée Sentimental as such. I don't know if you could do the same thing today, with everyone knee-deep in the Internet. You can't equate the Musée Sentimental with the Internet on any level, not at all, but of course these connotations are a part of it, too. The difference is, with the Musée Sentimental it's primarily shaped by the visual element, and only afterwards by a cognitive view. On the Internet, everything is just flat goods—do people really get that? To be honest, I think it's something you could do again«*

*(Interview with Marie-Louise von Plessen, »You had the feeling that you're fishing, hunting, and gathering now,« 2011)*

The »Musée sentimental de l'ours de Berlin« is an attempt at setting up a temporary museum for the Berlin Bear. The project lays no claim to being complete or to pursuing any grand narrative; rather—following the example of Marie-Louise Plessen and Daniel Spoerri's Musée Sentimental—it seeks to link small individual stories with emotional values. The exhibition aims at developing a unique approach to the history of the Bärenzwinger, which is also closely interwoven with the city's history. The format arises out of the architecture and history of the place and takes a variety of approaches.

One possible starting point would be the founding of the city of Berlin. The city of Kölln, located on the Spree Island, was officially mentioned for the first time in 1237. In 1244 there was a reference to (Old) Berlin, which lay on the northeastern bank of the Spree. Recent archaeological finds show that there were housing settlements on both sides of the Spree as early as the second half of the twelfth century. The name Berlin is presumably derived from the Slavic term *br'lo* or *berlo*, which means swamp, bog, wet place, or a dry place in a wetland, combined with the suffix *-in*, which is common among Slavic place names.

Another would be the first time the Berlin Bear was used as a city coat of arms. In 2020, Berlin's heraldic animal celebrates its 740th anniversary: the first verified seal using bears dates from March 22, 1280. It was found on a guild letter by Berlin's furriers and depicts two armored bears with a raised paw each holding shields and facing in different directions, but gazing back at one other. The seal bears the inscription »Sigillum burgensium de berlin sum« (»I am the seal of the citizens of Berlin«). Some have assumed that the bear's status as Berlin's heraldic animal can be traced back to Albrecht I, also called »The Bear«, conqueror and founder of the Mark Brandenburg. This theory cannot, however, explain the Middle High German diminutive suffix *-lein* / *-lin*, which transformed the city's name into »little bear« (»Bärlein«). Indeed, the Berlin coat of arms is a classic »canting arms« that represents the originally Slavic place name visually as a »little bear«.

Yet another starting point would be the conversion of the former cleaning depot into today's Bärenzwinger, which first opened its doors in 1939. The idea of presenting Berliners with a living heraldic animal in a kennel was born in 1937 to mark Berlin's 700th anniversary. In search of a suitable location for accommodating the bears, Köllnischer Park was chosen. At the time, the green area around Märkisches Museum was set for redesign in any case, and, also probably due to the costs involved, the plan was to convert an existing street cleaning building (designed by Ludwig Hoffmann) into a bear kennel. The

Bärenzwinger was officially opened on August 17, 1939; it accommodated four bears.

In addition to its four artistic positions, the exhibition »Musée sentimental de l'ours de Berlin« presents a multitude of objects and ephemera that explore the history of the city bears in the Bärenzwinger and the representative function they've had over the past 80 years. The exponents range from a window taken from the Rotes Rathaus bearing the heraldic animal and the various ways the bears were interpreted in children's books and toys to objects of everyday life from the Bärenzwinger and actual physical traces of the bears. The exhibition departs, however, from the alphabetical narrative style that Plessen and Spoerri employed for their various museums. There are several reasons for this: first of all, the number of objects on display is much smaller than was the case with its forerunners; secondly, the categorization of the artworks would have been too much of an intervention; and thirdly, the Museum of the Berlin Bears also differs from its historical predecessor in terms of its subject and exhibition location: the Bärenzwinger houses a museum dedicated to itself, and is therefore also the subject of the exhibition. The works of art shown are part of this exploration of the Bärenzwinger. Generally, the works on display are always site-specific and operate within the terms of the location, but they have rarely made it their subject in such an explicit form.

03/05/2020 7–10 pm  
Artists' Talk with Nschotschi Haslinger and  
Anna Virnich

03/18/2020 7–10 pm  
TheorieMittwoch with Philipp Kleinmichel (in German)

04/04 + 04/05/2020 11 am–1 pm (ages 5–8) and 1:30–  
3:30 pm (ages 9–13) respectively  
Kinder-Workshop »Bärengefühle« with Laura Ameln

04/24/2020 7–10 pm  
»Der Berliner Bärenzwinger zwischen den Staats-  
systemen (1937–1995)« Lecture by Marie-Christin Krüger  
(in German)

05/01 – 05/03/2020  
Gallery Weekend Special

During the preparatory phase of her work, **Nschotschi Haslinger** delved deeply into the Bärenzwinger's history and the heraldry of the city coat of arms. This is particularly evident in the poses of the various animals within the group. The artist's choice of color was comparatively freer and adapted to the spatial situation in the Bärenzwinger's exhibition rooms. Haslinger takes the bears very seriously as entities and uses the individual figures and the way they're positioned in space to tell a story of trepidation and to allow viewers to empathize with the bears' suffering in captivity.

In his artistic practice, **Sathit Sattarasart** pursues various threads ranging from sculpture and installation to his own curatorial projects, all of which share an intensive exploration of the respective location or context in which they are to be later shown. One of these threads is the »pedestals« series, which consists of pedestals he designs for works by other artists for the purposes of exhibiting them. This can be meant in a very physical sense, but also takes place on a non-material level. For the Bärenzwinger, Sattarasart developed two new »pedestals«. Unlike their predecessors, these are dedicated to two objects that are not works of art. Resting on one is a small sculpture atop a colored sheet of acrylic glass. The sculpture is a model that was made for the purpose of fabricating a taxidermic specimen from Schnute, the last surviving female bear in the kennel. The proportions of the pedestal correspond to the bear's body size and the relationship to the interior of the cage in which the pedestal is placed. Its position, the distance the viewer needs to stand at to view the work, and its color are references to a sense of privacy that the artist tries to create for the sculpture. The second pedestal is immaterial and incorporates bear fur from the Bärenzwinger's last two bears, Maxi and Schnute, into a narrative.

For her installation, **Anna Virnich** has worked with various organic materials to create an arrangement of leather, wax, and fragrance, all of which react to the physical absence of the bears. Each of these materials performs a different function. While the leather indicates the bears' physical dimensions, the wax is the color of skin and exudes a strong sense of vulnerability. Lastly, on an olfactory level, the scent occupies the room which the bears also occupied for a long time, but whose odor has evaporated as far as the human sense of smell is concerned. The choice of fragrance is also based on the location and reflects the type of storytelling about memory that is explored throughout the entire exhibition.

For the »Musée sentimental de l'ours de Berlin«, **Jasmin Werner** has developed two installations on the outdoor terraces that resemble scaffolding sections and allude to the history of the Berlin City Palace. The visual component of the works contains various reflections in the windows of the City Palace and the Palace of the Republic such that they transcend time to tell the story of a city in transition, caught between political systems, a process the Bärenzwinger also experienced as a city monument, although it was not subjected to the same type of drastic physical change. The shape of the work's two towers frames a reference to the tallest building in the world—the Burj Khalifa in Dubai—into whose steel structure steel elements from the Palace of the Republic were also incorporated.

Exhibition & events curated by  
Jan Tappe and Julia Pomeranzewa  
Ulrike Riebel and Hauke Zießler

Grafik: Viktor Schmidt  
Übersetzung: Andrea Scrima  
Produktion: Carolina Redondo  
Produktionsassistenz: Juan Saez, Juan Nazar

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## Artists

### Nschotschi Haslinger

Nschotschi Haslinger (\*1982 in Eitorf) is an artist working at the interface of sculpture and drawing. Recent solo exhibitions include »Der geheime Dienst«, Zero Fold, Cologne, »Die untere Welt«, Overbeckgesellschaft in der St. Petrikirche, Lübeck, »Introesque«, Exile, Vienna (all 2019), »Das gestohlene Lied«, Galerie Genscher, Hamburg, »Apropofola«, Kunstverein Kjubh, Cologne (both 2018). In addition, her works have been shown in numerous group exhibitions including »When the Sick Rule the World«, GR\_und, Berlin (2019), »May the Bridges I burn light the Way«, Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018), Simonow Collection, Kunsthalle Bozen, Bolanzo (2016) and »Ruhe-Störung, Streifzüge durch die Welt der Collage«, Marta Herford, Herford (2013). She lives and works in Berlin.

[www.nschotschi.de](http://www.nschotschi.de)

### Sathit Sattarasart

Sathit Sattarasart (\*1979) is an artist whose works are mostly about how things come to be, while he is focusing on art related subjects, material, process and structure of things, he also works with various subject matters from politic to everyday life scenario. Sattarasart's works have been included in several international exhibition, among them, Asian Film & Video Art Forum at MMCA, Seoul (2015), Home Stories at KfW Stiftung, Frankfurt am Main (2013), Move on Asia at ZKM, Karlsruhe (2013), Busan Biennale 2006. In 2017, Sathit Sattarasart graduated (Meisterschüler) from Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste from the class of Professor Tobias Rehberger and currently he lives and works between Berlin and Bangkok.

[www.sathit-sattarasart.com](http://www.sathit-sattarasart.com)

### Anna Virnich

Anna Virnich (\*1984) graduated in 2013 from Braunschweig University of Art, Germany. Recent solo exhibitions took part at Schering Stiftung (2019); Arratia Beer, Berlin; Galerie Nathalie Halgand, Vienna, Art-O-Rama, Marseille (all 2017); Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City (2016). The artist furthermore recently contributed to group exhibitions at Hunt Kastner, Prague (2018), Centre d'Art Contemporaine Chanot, Clamart, France; Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City (both 2017). Anna Virnich lives and works in Berlin.

[www.annavirnich.de](http://www.annavirnich.de)

### Jasmin Werner

Jasmin Werner (\*1987 in Troisdorf) lives and works in Cologne. In 2016 she completed her studies at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main. Her works have been shown in solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Braunschweig, Braunschweig (2018), Gillmeier Rech, Berlin (2017), M.I / mi1glissé, Berlin (2016), and RM, Auckland (2014) as well as in group exhibitions at Braunsfelder, Cologne (2018), Saaloon, Brussels (2018), and the Folkwang Museum, Essen (2017). In 2017, Jasmin Werner completed a residency at the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul.

[www.jasmin-werner.de](http://www.jasmin-werner.de)