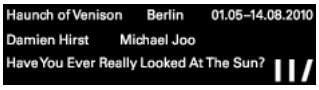

Michael Werner

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SCENE & HERD

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Exile on Main St.

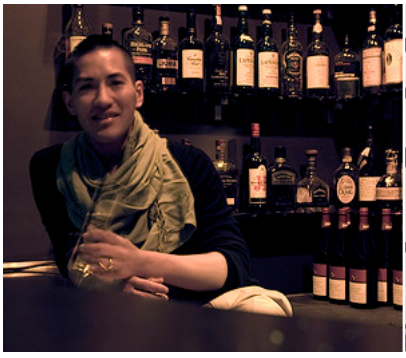
BERLIN 05.06.10

Left: Gallery Weekend Berlin organizer Michael Neff with AXA ART's Stefan Horsthemke. Right: Artist Ken Okiishi, dealer Alex Zachary, and artist Nick Mauss in line for the Bode Museum. (Photos: Trevor Good)

IN A CITY that seems to eat, breathe—nay, *live* art year-round, the idea of a Gallery Weekend seems conspicuously commercial, if not clunkily redundant. (As a friend put it, "Isn't every weekend a 'gallery weekend'?") Granted, it does have the civic advantage of luring the rest of the art world to town, thus concretizing an abstract place-name typically preceded by "lives and works in"—at least for a few nights. And, for those who actually do live and work here, it serves as a reminder that, while Berlin may well be historicized one day as having been the capital of artistic production in the early twenty-first century, it remains at some remove from being the capital of the art market.

Of course, those aware of this are also likely to be cognizant of the numerous openings and events taking place *outside* of the official program of openings at forty of Berlin's powerhouse galleries. For us, the weekend began on Thursday night at the mysteriously titled group show "33 115 68" at Exile, the space run by the charismatic artist Christian Siekmeier. The exhibition consisted of an eclectic collection of objects and drawings by Carola Deye, Haris Epaminonda, Nschotschi Haslinger, Adrian Hermanides, Katharina Marszewski, and Stefanie Popp, and it posed the question (according to the press release) of "how much we really have to know in order to approach and decipher a piece of art." This privileging of intuition and aestheticism over the conceptual would set the tone for the weekend, and it also seemed to fit the practices of many members of the Berlin artistic elite who turned out at the opening, such as expat musicians Joel Gibb, front man of the Hidden Cameras, and Snax, who were seen discussing an upcoming collaboration. "I'm going to play keyboards at a few Hidden Cameras shows," Snax said, when pressed for details. "Joel wants an all-gay touring band for Europe."

The official weekend kicked off on Friday, with so many openings and parties crammed into one night that even the most ambitious spectator couldn't hope to attend but half. Indeed, given Berlin's sprawling geography and lack of a centralized gallery district, one suspects that the greatest beneficiaries of Gallery Weekend were the city's taxi drivers. I did much better than I thought—and even managed most of it by foot, to take advantage of the pleasant weather—making it to at least a dozen openings before having to rejuvenate with Vietnamese soup in Mitte. Standouts included the massive Cecily Brown show at Contemporary Fine Arts, Nick Mauss at Galerie Neu, Andreas Gursky at Sprüth Magers, Matthias Dornfeld at Galerie Ben Kaufmann, and Jitka Hanzlová at Kicken Berlin.



Of course, if there's one thing that Berliners love more than art, it's partying, and one suspects that the