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Berlin's Gallery Weekend Forges Path to Success

Huma Bhabha
VW (VeneKlasen/Werner), Berlin
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by Alexander Forbes

In its 10th year, the “weekend” in Gallery Weekend Berlin’s name was something of a misnomer. While May 1 (Labor day in Germany) was set out as a down day between previews on Wednesday and the main event, most galleries stayed open, rightfully anticipating that international collectors hungry for an early bite of the best work would come knocking. So, by the time director Maïke Cruse mounted the steps of a World War Two Rosinenbomber (Raisin Bomber) to give her welcome speech for Gallery Weekend’s 1,200 person dinner held in the former Tempelhof airport’s arrivals hall on Saturday evening, many had been roaming the city for four days already, with one more still to go.



Installation View, Huma Bhabha,
VW (VeneKlasen/Werner), Berlin

Then again, with 50 galleries participating officially, and easily as many more worthy shows on view in the city, any less time would have been far from sufficient. Although 2014 didn’t top the record for the most to take place during Gallery Weekend, the continual growth of Berlin’s dealers and their artists means that overall exhibition quality is indeed at a new high point this year.

The gallery marathon began on Wednesday. And, when tackling Gallery Weekend, it’s advisable to start with subtle work first: Geta Brătescu, Huma Bhabha, and Wolfgang Laib were at the top of that list this year. Works at the octogenarian Brătescu’s third exhibition with Barbara Weiss span four decades. It’s a gem that truly called for fresh eyes.

Bhabha shows all new work produced while at a residency last fall at Berlin’s American Academy at VW (VeneKlasen/Werner), Michael Werner and Gordon Veneklasen’s Berlin project space. The works continue Bhabha’s long-running thematic concerns but are more playful in their breadth of materiality. Bhabha seems to have caught the Berlin bug, having a particularly prolific period while in the city: “It just happened that I was inspired, I had a lot of time, and I had no distractions, so I ended up doing a lot of work.” she said.