

Kimberly Bradley, Berlin  
*Bohemian glam*

The dad was Tino Sehgal. The pregnant pause was, weirdly, reminiscent of his art. But that it was Sehgal wasn't weird at all. I often see the artist in everyday places, as I do other Berlin artworlders who've become household names and happen to live nearby in Berlin-Mitte. Olafur Eliasson sometimes bikes past. Isabelle Graw often emerges from the yoga studio as I go in. Omer Fast lives a block away. And when the silver-haired Klaus Biesenbach is in town, it's easy to spot him walking along Auguststrasse, the street he helped gentrify, then stopping into a place like Pauly Saal, a year-old fancy restaurant across from Kunst-Werke, in the company of one or other famous person who definitely doesn't live here (any more), like Marina Abramović.

It's been interesting to observe that the previously scrappy, defiantly counterculture and anticelebrity Berlin artworld has evolved into its own art-celebrity solar system; one with veterans (old: Baselitz, Katharina Sieverding; new: Eliasson, Sehgal), visiting returnees (Rirkrit Tiravanija, Biesenbach) and newcomers. Douglas Gordon just bought two buildings near Potsdamer Strasse with studios and offices for himself and people like Kasper König. Matt

Mullican has had a studio here for about a year (see 'Gentrify This', *ArtReview* January & February 2013). A few months ago, Tomás Saraceno moved from Frankfurt into a studio next to those of Thomas Demand and Tacita Dean (though apparently they're all moving out soon: gentrification).

OK, Kippenberger definitely had his groupies when he briefly lived in Berlin; during the 1980s, the Neue Wilde painters were also rock stars (come to think of it, Hans-Peter Adamski walks his Dalmatian past my house every day, but I only recently found out who the artist is), but all of this had an insider chic that could have only existed before the brave new world reflected by artforum.com's openings-and-parties column, Scene & Herd. As for the post-Wall generation, it's reassuring that Eliasson, Elmgreen & Dragset and Jonathan Meese lived here long before Berlin became so cool and they became so famous.

The newer art stars have come for different reasons (love, a spouse's job, a DAAD fellowship), but many stay because, they tell me, it's easier to 'breathe' here than elsewhere ('breathing' likely meaning cheaper studios and labour, and less pressure, since their galleries are elsewhere).

But while it's wonderful that some art stars have settled in, upping the ante and inspiring – and employing – the emerging generation, the higher-end influx is noticeable and, in a city that's always been so deliciously low-key, a little scary. Mixing celebrity culture and art too much in this day and age can lead to icky things (Jeffrey Deitch's MOCA is a far cry, with the emphasis on 'cry', from Warhol's factory).

Luckily Berlin is far from both of those scenarios. The vast majority of its luminaries have, after all, made their most visible big breaks in other places (the Tate's Turbine Hall seeming to be a big starmaking machine for Berliners), and the city tenaciously hangs on to its laidback image. The question is simply how long that easy-breathing feeling can last when what was once a bohemian reality and is now a bohemian myth finally morphs into complete commercialisation. Speaking of which, James Franco recently had a show at the new Peres Projects space, and the German press (and the maidens of Neukölln) jumped all over his comment that he'd 'like to live in Berlin'.

If he does, I have a feeling he'll be a big hit with the new crowd that one now hears humblebragging in American English at group shows in cool temporary spaces. Me? I'll stick with my daily encounters in the 'hood, and dream that the one really big artist who was supposed to move here, Ai Weiwei, will someday be allowed to do so. For Ai, even I'd become a groupie.

**On a recent visit** to the playground with my small daughter, a knit cap came flying through the air, just missing her as she swung on the swing. Following the cap was its owner, a boy. Running after the boy was a man, who stopped dead at the swing (so as not to get smacked in the head, I would assume). Our eyes met in a moment of friendly parental tension, then he bounded off.

