

## INTERVIEW // STAYCATION MUSEUM



Photo courtesy of Staycation Museum

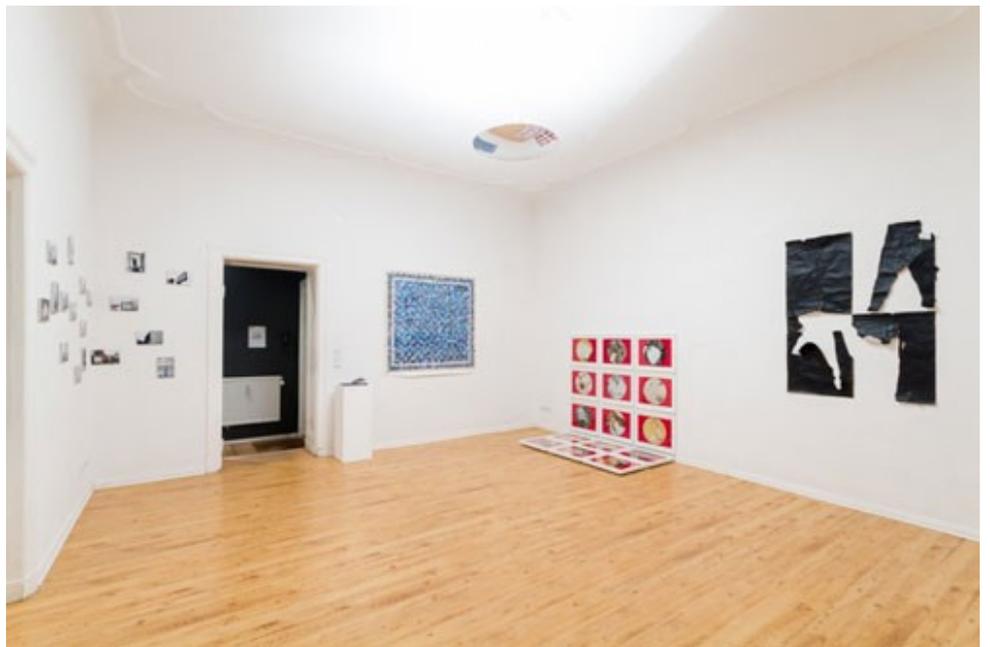


Photo from the exhibition *EXCHANGE* courtesy of Staycation Museum

I recently had the pleasure of being introduced to **Ben Busch** through a mutual friend. He invited me to an opening and quickly we started talking about the various projects we've been working on. Ben is an architectural designer, **photographer** and curator from Kansas City/Omaha. Outside of his design work for F101 Architekten (currently he's designing a 2,000 seat theater in Hamburg!) he works with Daniel Böpple and Peter Rickert of Staycation Design, "a multidisciplinary office that focuses on architecture and design, from large scale planning to furniture." (per their **website**) at **Staycation Museum**, which serves as an open space for Staycation Design to

feature works of art, performances and installations. Recently Ben and I corresponded through email about Staycation to get a more indepth understanding of their practice and history.

### ***1. When did Staycation Museum open?***

Staycation Museum was established in Berlin in early 2012 by directors Daniel Böppe, Benjamin Busch and Peter Rickert. The board of directors inaugurated the Museum at a public opening gala on April 20th, 2012, which featured three immersive environments installed by the each of the directors.

### ***2. How did the idea for Staycation Museum come about?***

The idea for Staycation Museum originated from a common desire to engage the diverse community of Berlin-Neukölln, a traditionally working class neighborhood increasingly populated by artists and intellectuals which has in recent years been brought under the spotlight of gentrification. Having previously collaborated on architectural design projects, I joined forces with Daniel and Pete, both owners of Staycation Design at the time, to animate their storefront office space with a program emphasizing immediate spatial temporality. (The names Staycation Design and Staycation Museum draw from the practice of staycationing, in which people enjoy the delights of their hometown through the lens of a vacationer, all without the necessity for long-distance travel or excessive expenses.)

### ***3. How does Staycation operate in terms of process?***

We practice a collaborative administrative approach, where our individual strengths are exploited for the various tasks required to run a project space, including among others developing exhibitions, managing events and maintaining public relations.

### ***4. How did Staycation Museum get involved with Neue Berliner Räume/vise versa?***

Before the formation of Staycation Museum in 2012, **Neue Berliner Räume** was invited to utilize the office space of Staycation Design to run two temporary exhibitions (**Oddities** and **And Like This You Keep Them Alive / On Love**). During the same period, Staycation Design hosted exhibitions and events focused on art (**Gallery Fist**, **Fridolin Full: New York**, and **Christmas Staycation / spellbound**). We learned from the practice of Neue Berliner Räume, which served in part as inspiration for the advancement of our own curatorial agenda.



Christmas Staycation Flyer. Image courtesy of Staycation Museum.

**5. It's interesting to think about Neue Berliner Räume and Staycation Museum in contrast. Conceptually both deal with the function of location, but approach it through a different lens. Neue Berliner Räume's perception is especially relevant for today, in terms of how we (our generation in particular) have learned to function in the world nomadically. Specifically, it's interesting to see nomadism used ideologically. Do you think this is a new mode of working with art, specific to our time?**

We are a nomadic generation. While our motivations for geographical and cultural re-situation are diverse, ranging from environmental disaster, financial necessity, and civil rights issues through touristic indulgence, it is true that we are subjects constantly moving through global space. Nomadic curatorial initiatives like Neue Berliner Räume tap into the widely recognized precarity of artistic practice on many levels, from the pragmatic nature of their program to the diverse locations and themes expressed therein. By liberating their exhibitions from a single location, Neue Berliner Räume effectively exercise a spatial practice that is truly contemporary in its interdependent relationship with our uprooted network culture. Neue Berliner Räume create temporary palaces, places of ritual and healing, in settings familiar to us all: Zwischenräume (interstitial/intermediate spaces, or, spaces in between).

**6. What were your original intentions when you established Staycation Museum? Was it to show design work only or was it created as a platform for multiple mediums?**

Since the beginning of my collaboration with Daniel and Pete, Staycation Museum has been an open platform for various forms of

experimental exhibition and performance. While we directors are professionally invested in the necessarily technical practice of architecture, a majority of the exhibitions and performances at Staycation Museum have dealt with space in an abstract way. For example: one of our earliest events was **Color Explosion** by artist group artransfair, in which museumgoers donned handmade canvas outfits and freely decorated their and others' outfits in an artistic turned childhood dream space. To quote our website: "Staycation Museum leads an exhibition and performance program leaning heavily into the spatiotemporal, sensual, phenomenal, meat-spatial realm." By embracing radical space-use paradigms, we allow for the emergence of speculative interpretations of what space is and what it can be. By opening our doors to the public, we execute a social practice that invites guests to participate in the unfolding of new realities.



Photo by Janina Reinsbach, courtesy of Staycation Museum

### ***7. How do you seek out artists?***

Following a successful call for submissions announced in January, 2013, to which many friends and individuals unbeknownst to us responded, we made a selection of proposals to fit our curatorial agenda for the year. It was important to us that all potential exhibitors would share a common starting point, democratically allowing them to offer clear exhibition concepts and plans for their realization. More and more, there have been happy exceptions to the submission process. We have offered the space to external artists and curators who directly engage us with their visions. One of our most invigorating collaborations has been with the Fulbright Program, which has hosted an annual Berlin exhibition of scholarship recipients with us for the last two years. Recently, we have taken a more deterministic approach,

continuing to accept proposals and inviting individuals and groups to join us. Exhibitions and events are voted upon and require a majority to be realized.

### **8. How has Staycation Museum evolved since 2012?**

At the outset, we had no way to anticipate what challenges or rewards would come. As architectural practitioners—technicians and businessmen—with a common desire to engage the greater community through spatial experimentation, our training lacked much of the knowledge necessary for such an endeavor. However, with the support of friends, collaborators, and the public, we were able to establish not just a platform but a community centered around the exploration of social, urban, artistic, and otherwise phenomenological space. All our exhibitions dealt with spatial relations in one way or another. However, some stand out as being truly stimulating. In her performance **ALL CATS ARE GREY**, **Alison Halter** removed our sense of sight and navigated the space of the room allegedly in the nude, effectively braking down the interpersonal space between performer and audience member. **Domain X Gallery** asked a series of fundamental questions about the gallery as a typology while assuming a post-ironic corporate aesthetic, inviting guests to make virtual exhibition proposals in the form of taking a survey. The interactive installation **Playing the Field** by **Eric Schaefer** and **Nicholas Houde** invited passersby of the gallery to participate in the ephemeral production of sonic space. Video installations **Jurassic Mentoring** by **Maximilian Schmötzer** and **Mindscape #2: Home** by **Lucia Kempkes** and **Brittany Gould** dissolved temporal barriers, in the former through the exploration of technology and deep time and in the latter through the blending of geographic and social space. **I am not a figher... I am a lover** by **unfun** imported an object from the rural vernacular, a Jägerstand (hunting stand), into the white room, and **Pure Finder** by **SAVELLI + SCHREIER** collapsed urban space into exhibition space through its installation of more than 20 shopping carts found abandoned on the streets of Berlin.

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Jurassic Mentoring Trailer

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Trailer for Jurassic Mentoring via Staycation Museum

SAVELLI + SCHREIER, *Pure Finder*, 2013. Photo courtesy of Staycation Museum.**9. Where do you see Staycation going in the future?**

I would describe my participation in Staycation Museum as an exercise in agonistic collaboration. It has been a lot of work, negotiation, and compromise, and it has produced positive and tangible results. For better or for worse, the project space has a startup-esque nature: it began with an undeveloped concept, gained traction in large part thanks to social media, and was itself highly performative from the get-go. Because we unfortunately no longer have access to the exhibition space that was used since 2013, we have sublimated into digital space. Perhaps we will follow a route similar to nomadic curatorial initiatives, or perhaps we will find a new permanent space. It's also possible that Staycation Museum will continue its existence only in archive format. We are currently investigating ways to proceed and are open to ideas.

## LIKE STAYCATION MUSEUM ON FACEBOOK

~ Stay tuned for more on Ben Busch. I'll be doing a follow up profile about some of his independent projects in the near future. ~

~ Special thanks to Ben for the interview and to **Eric Stephens** for introducing us. ~