



Jenny Schlenzka's New Vision for the Gropius Bau

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Press Release

A Place for Exchange, New Collective Experiences and Close Collaboration with Artists

Jenny Schlenzka aims to open the exhibition house to a wider public. She plans to closely collaborate with artists on further reinforcing it as a place for encounter and playful interaction with art. Alongside contemporary and modern art exhibitions with broad audience appeal, the programme will include performative and interdisciplinary formats that activate all the senses, reaffirming the Gropius Bau as a place where a diverse public can come together for exchange. Here, the pressing issues of our time will be artistically and speculatively presented and debated from a variety of perspectives. The leitmotif of the programme is Schlenzka's curatorial and institutional practice, which centres artists, making them, their perspectives and their work the point of origin and reference for all programming and thematic considerations.

“Over nearly 20 years of practice, I've always believed in the ideas of artists. Their ability to harness the unknown and their fearlessness in the face of change make them particularly important at our present moment. The central issues of our time – climate change, global migration movements, populism and the transformation of knowledge production through artificial intelligence – cannot be tackled let alone resolved from the perspective of a single discipline. We need approaches that combine diverse expertise, ways of thinking and points of view: in other words, artistic approaches. In that spirit, the Gropius Bau team will work together with artists long-term, beyond individual projects, developing programming, designing exhibition and event formats and co-creating the exhibition house.”

– Jenny Schlenzka, Gropius Bau Director

Artists in Focus

Schlenzka invites artists to curate exhibitions and experiment with conventional exhibition formats in order to offer new subjective perspectives on supposedly well-known positions. An expanded Artist-in-Residence programme invites artists not only to make work in several studios on the second floor of the Gropius Bau, but to actively shape the exhibition house from within. Like in-house directors in theatre some of these artists will help define the Gropius Bau profile for years to come.

Play, Experience, Encounter

In the radical openness of play beyond rules and purpose, pure experience takes centre stage, allowing for moments of encounter, friction, negotiation and, yes, irritation. Play thereby becomes a model for artistic practice at the Gropius Bau and a mode of experience and reception that allows visitors to break free from pure viewership and the usual rules of visiting an exhibition.

The Place: Past and Present

An additional programme focus is the extraordinary history of the building and its direct surroundings, which will be made tangible through artistic interventions. Overlapping traces of different powers, ideologies and their violent manifestations have been leaving their marks on the site since 1881, the year the Gropius Bau originally opened as a museum and school of decorative arts.

German colonialism is as much a part of the history of the site, which also used to be the location of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (Royal Museum for Ethnology), as its proximity to Gestapo head-quarters during the Nazi era.

In hardly any other public building were the scars of the Cold War so visible, shaping the long period between the building's destruction during the Second World War, its re-opening in 1981 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. To this day, worlds collide in the immediate vicinity of the Gropius Bau. Making these worlds perceptible and allowing the walls of the exhibition house to become more permeable to them, is a major focus of the new programme.

Biography

Berlin-born curator Jenny Schlenzka, who specialises in contemporary art, has been Director of the Gropius Bau since September 2023. Prior to that, she spent more than 20 years in New York City, where she ran Performance Space New York from 2017. During her time there, she worked with Donna Haraway, Juliana Huxtable, Mette Ingvartsen, Ligia Lewis, Renata Lucas, Tiona Nekkia McClodden, Sarah Michelson, Precious Okoyomon, Sondra Perry and Underground Resistance, among others, integrating artists into all facets of the institution.

Before heading Performance Space, she developed new exhibition formats for performance at MoMA PS1 in Queens, including the acclaimed Sunday Sessions, a weekly, free-of-charge live programme that brought together artists such as Cyprien Gaillard, Kim Gordon, Chao Fei, Anne Imhof, Joan Jonas, Ragnar Kjartansson, Jutta Koether, Mårten Spångberg, M.I.A., Pope.L, Pussy Riot and Wu-Tang Clan. Prior to that, she served as the first ever curator for performance at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), where she helped building the Department of Media and Performance Art.

Schlenzka's curatorial and institutional practice centres artists, making them and their work the point of origin and reference of all programming and thematic considerations. She sees contemporary art as a discursive space where current social challenges are being negotiated. Schlenzka's passions lie in creating impactful exhibitions of contemporary and modern art with high audience appeal and developing performative and trans-disciplinary formats, which she will further expand at the Gropius Bau.

Dialogue with and openness to a diverse public is a major priority for her: all Berliners should feel excited about visiting the exhibition space – with or without their kids, with or without a degree in art history. Schlenzka's approach is defined by a curiosity and openness that continually places contemporary art in dialogue with current cultural and social challenges. She lives in Berlin with her two children.

Informationen and Contact

Press Images

A selection of press images is available for media coverage in our press section (gropiusbau.de/press). The images can be downloaded and used free of charge prior to and during the project period. Please note that images may not be cropped, overprinted or modified.

Please note that only installation views may be photographed in the exhibition. If you plan to take individual photographs of works, including close-ups, they must be approved by the artwork's rights holders.

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Press Contact

Birgit Schapow, presse@gropiusbau.de
+49 30 254 86 – 384

Opening Hours

Gropius Bau

Monday to Friday 12:00–19:00
Saturday / Sunday / public holidays 11:00–19:00
Closed on Tuesdays
24.12.24, 31.12.24 closed

Tickets

Tickets can be purchased on site at the Gropius Bau and in our online shop: gropiusbau.de/tickets

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