

MODEM

SPACE FOR CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND ARTS



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MODEM - SPACE FOR CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND ARTS

Berlin has a new space for contemporary music and art: the former *Kraftwerk Mitte* (power station Berlin-Mitte). With its ca. 23,000 square meters, MODEM will provide a space for large-scale exhibitions and will be a platform for the creation and presentation of new music, experimental performance, as well as for sound and multi-media installations. A space for collaborations between music, art, architecture, and film: a space for new art forms.



KRAFTWERK MITTE

The power station on Köpenicker Straße is not another typical industrial ruin demanding to undergo cultural transformation; more than this, it is an empty container full of potential where the activities of Berlin's creative scene can be brought together, a space for the unexpected: a *situation*. It is a sequence of tall, open halls, surprising vistas, bunker-like passages and sudden chasms, an "imagination machine", generating the power to explore possibilities.

We aim to shape these qualities, but also to preserve them. We do not want a sterile arts center over-sanitized to death, nor another multifunctional complex with all possible technical refinements; we want a place as playful, agile, and anarchic as the city's creative scene with intelligent and flexible lo-tech architecture.

The various links, interconnections, and collaborations, so characteristic of Berlin, between makers and producers in the fields of visual art, experimental music, film, fashion, and performance, can be intensified here; the power station as MODEM will connect and re-transmit the city's creative potential.

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CENTER FOR NEW ART FORMS

MODEM's programming will emphasize current art and experimental music. The discussions about creating a large-scale exhibition space for Berlin, temporarily on the Schlossplatz, or permanently at another location in Berlin have made one thing clear: the city urgently needs a new space for contemporary art, not least to show the work produced by the many international artists now living in the city. The Hamburger Bahnhof and Kunst Werke cannot shoulder this burden alone; the Martin Gropius Bau, with its over-elaborate apparatus and antiseptic atmosphere has long since become passé as a site for contemporary art. Berlin needs a site where an experimental program can be pursued with relish, presenting the newest developments alongside established artists and which also has the spatial capacity for large, exceptional projects, comparable to the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall.

There is even less room in the city for contemporary music than for contemporary art; it migrates between festivals, concert halls, and fringe venues. Just as overdue in Berlin as a *Kunsthalle* is a site where new music, electronic music, and experimental music, as well as contemporary music-theater and performance can be seen, heard, and experienced.

MODEM will be able to combine both functions (exhibition space/ performance space) and will thereby be able to facilitate collaboration between musicians and artists, composers and curators, theoreticians and practitioners at an entirely new level. Particular attention will be paid to new, genre-bridging art forms. MODEM sees itself as a site for production; artists from all the various fields will be brought together for the express purpose of creating new work here.

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PLUG-IN

At the same time that the plant was built in the early 1960s, the London-based Archigram group around Peter Cook designed *Plug-In City*, a mega-structure in the form of a both roomy and gigantic framework into which mobile units (Plug-Ins) for all sorts of purposes and needs could be slotted, moved, and removed. Nothing was predetermined; everything was to change according to the changing needs of its users. Around the same time, Constant Nieuwenhuys in Amsterdam was working on *New Babylon*, an urban landscape branching out rhizome-like that was to cover existing cities, resting on columns and pillars. The “sectors” of New Babylon form one endless, convoluted spatial continuum, a tangle of levels and passages, joined by struts and braces. The interiors are neither fixed nor defined. Rather, space is redefined over and over again by “homo ludens,” drifting through the labyrinthine passages, determined solely by creativity and the power of his imagination.

New Babylon and *Plug-In City* are paradigmatic of MODEM. Its reinforced concrete construction forms the fixed framework, the mega-structure; everything else is free, flexible, and variable. The labyrinth and free extensive space are already there. The cranes, too, an indispensable detail in the drafts for *Plug-In City*, are ready to lift the modules of future use to their respective locations.

Defining the artistic goals for MODEM, the first project to be shown in the former power plant will be *Megastructure Reloaded*. The exhibition, co-conceived with European Arts Projects, will officially open MODEM.

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KUNSTHALLE

The “Plug-In” idea and the recourse to situation-based concepts of space will continue to determine MODEM’s artistic direction beyond the opening exhibition. Different levels of the building can take on varying functions, which themselves may operate as autonomous units. These levels are also metaphorical: MODEM will not just function architectonically but as a kind of ideal support structure for the creation and realization of ideas.

The future Berlin Kunsthalle, for which a permanent home is needed, would have as a “plug-in” in MODEM optimal conditions and an outstanding context. An entire 2000 square meter floor (approximately 100x20 meters with an 8 meter high ceiling) stands ready and available; nearby is space for offices and administration, storage, as well as a freight elevator and crane. Large-scale projects could be realized in MODEM’s main hall.



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TRESOR

The motor powering MODEM is Tresor. This legendary club has made its new home here after leaving the basement of the former Wertheim department store in Leipziger Strasse. Back in the early 1980s Dimitri Hegemann, founder of the club, was already bringing artists from diverse fields together for the Atonal Festival. Now, together with his colleague Fabian Lenz, he has positioned the club as the nucleus of MODEM. The connection between the club-scene and the art-scene has for years been vigorous: Berlin is particularly famous for it. MODEM will now be bringing them directly together, very much in the spirit of Joan Littlewood's and Cedric Price's *Fun Palace*. MODEM will be a playground for the arts.



REDUX ORCHESTRA: ENSEMBLE IN RESIDENCE

REDUX ORCHESTRA is the ensemble formed around Ari Benjamin Meyers. Half rock band, half chamber orchestra, Redux Orchestra, whose members represent a diverse range of musical genres, has proven itself through its performances to be one of a kind. MODEM will not only be the new residence of Redux Orchestra, but here the highly outdated concept of the concert will be redefined. The orchestra's rehearsal room and studio will become a laboratory enabling flexible, spontaneous work. Through the proximity to the various artists working in MODEM, and to Tresor, collaborative evenings will be created in which music can be played live, experienced and explored in connection with installations and performances. The club/concert series 'Club Redux', in which the Redux Orchestra brought pioneers of minimal music together with the club and electronic scenes, will be continued and expanded in a specially created space: The Reduxroom.

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ARTISTIC DIRECTION OF MODEM

The artistic directors of MODEM are Ari Benjamin Meyers, composer, conductor, and director of Redux Orchestra and Markus Richter, curator for European Art Projects. The programming will be developed in close coordination with Dimitri Hegemann, initiator of MODEM.

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OFFICIAL OPENING / INITIAL PROJECTS

By autumn of 2008 the ground-floor, with its total area of ca. 3,500 square meters, will be renovated. In 2009, the renovation will continue in other areas of the building, with projects being realized at the same time on the ground-floor of MODEM.

In September 2008 the major exhibition project MEGASTRUCTURE RELOADED will open, curated by Sabrina van der Ley and Markus Richter, and supported by Hauptstadtkulturfonds (Capital Culture Funds). Coinciding with the opening of the exhibition will be a special event to celebrate the official opening of MODEM- Space for Contemporary Music and Arts.

The second large-scale project is planned for Spring 2009: CONCERT FOR SEVEN SPACES, an "exhibition" that will bridge and connect the time-based performance mode of a concert with site-specific installations and architectural interventions. This project will be curated together by the artistic directors of MODEM, Ari Benjamin Meyers and Markus Richter.

