

## Berlin Art Fairs | German Expressionism

BY SAMEER REDDY September 30, 2009 10:55 am



Images courtesy of the artist and Christopher Grimes Gallery “Tokyo Story (Schindler Studio House),” 2003, by Veronika Kellndorfer.

London, Milan and Paris may be in the midst of fashion madness, but in Berlin, predictably, it’s art that has taken center stage recently, as the city played host to two major fairs last week. The bigger one was [Artforum](#), featuring blue-chip galleries like [Spruthe Magers](#) and [Max Wigram](#) exhibiting in the grand Deco setting of the Messe Berlin fairgrounds. Standout artists on display include [Ronnie Bass](#), represented by the New York-based gallery [I-20](#); Bass scored, directed and starred in his own music video, which offered a satirical take on the retro aesthetic of 1980s New Wave and New Romantic bands. Another name to watch is the conceptual photographer [Veronika Kellndorfer](#), represented by [Christopher Grimes Gallery](#) in Santa Monica, Calif. Her work bridges gaps between photography, architecture, painting and installation.



“Eames House,”

2005, by Veronika Kellndorfer

At the smaller [ABC Art Berlin Contemporary Fair](#), the 64 local and international galleries participating shifted from the oversize sculptural format of last season to a more contained installation approach. The artists presented their work, inspired by a vision for a public art project, on a table designed by the famed German architect Egon Eiermann, whose functionalist constructions rank among the country’s most distinctive. Both established and emerging talent were on display: [Werner Reiterer](#)’s “Draft for an Altar” featured a small neon halo, a cellphone and a note saying, “Will be back in 5 min. -God,” while [Henrik Hakansson](#)’s “Buried Tree/Buried Forest” embedded a bonsai tree in the Eiermann table, transforming the surface into an architectural model, while harmonizing the design’s utilitarian roots with an element of organic poetry. Seen together, the works on display underscored an intense spirit of exploration that was intended more for an audience of authentic art enthusiasts than for those looking for something to decorate their living room.

The pair of fairs symbolize Berlin’s evolution beyond bohemia and its attempt to establish a market toehold while maintaining its street cred. Considering the turbulent state of the world art economy, it seems like the right time for a new paradigm, and judging from the past week, Berlin might be the best place to embody this spirit of change.