

CARSTEN HÖLLER

SEPTEMBER 2026

FLY ON AMANITA



PASSAGE

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CARSTEN HOLLER

Carsten Höller (b. 1961, Brussels) is a German artist whose practice draws on his scientific training to explore perception, human behavior, and altered states of consciousness. Trained as an agricultural scientist and former research entomologist, Höller has developed a body of work that invites viewers to question their experience of reality through situations that oscillate between experiment, play, and uncertainty.

Since the early 1990s, he has created immersive installations that provoke states of disorientation, exhilaration, and doubt. His celebrated slides, carousels, mirrored environments, sensory devices, and participatory experiments transform spectators into active participants, challenging conventional distinctions between observation and experience. Central to his practice is the notion of the artwork as a catalyst for alternative ways of perceiving and understanding the world.

Höller has maintained a longstanding interest in the social and psychological dimensions of human interaction. His scientific background also informs numerous works involving animals, plants, and psychotropic mushrooms, recurring subjects through which he investigates the boundaries between nature, culture, and consciousness.

Often associated with the artists who redefined participation and experience in the 1990s, including Pierre Huyghe, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Andrea Zittel, Höller has developed one of the most distinctive practices of his generation. His work has been the subject of major exhibitions at Tate Modern, London; the New Museum, New York; Fondazione Prada, Milan; Centro Botin, Santander ; Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan; Hayward Gallery, London; MAAT, Lisbon and Hamburger Bahnhof Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart Berlin, among many others. His works are held in major international collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; Fondazione Prada, Milan; Nationalgalerie, Berlin and LUMA Foundation, Arles to mention a few. He has participated in numerous international biennials, including Venice, São Paulo, Berlin, Lyon, Gwangju, and Sharjah. Höller lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden.

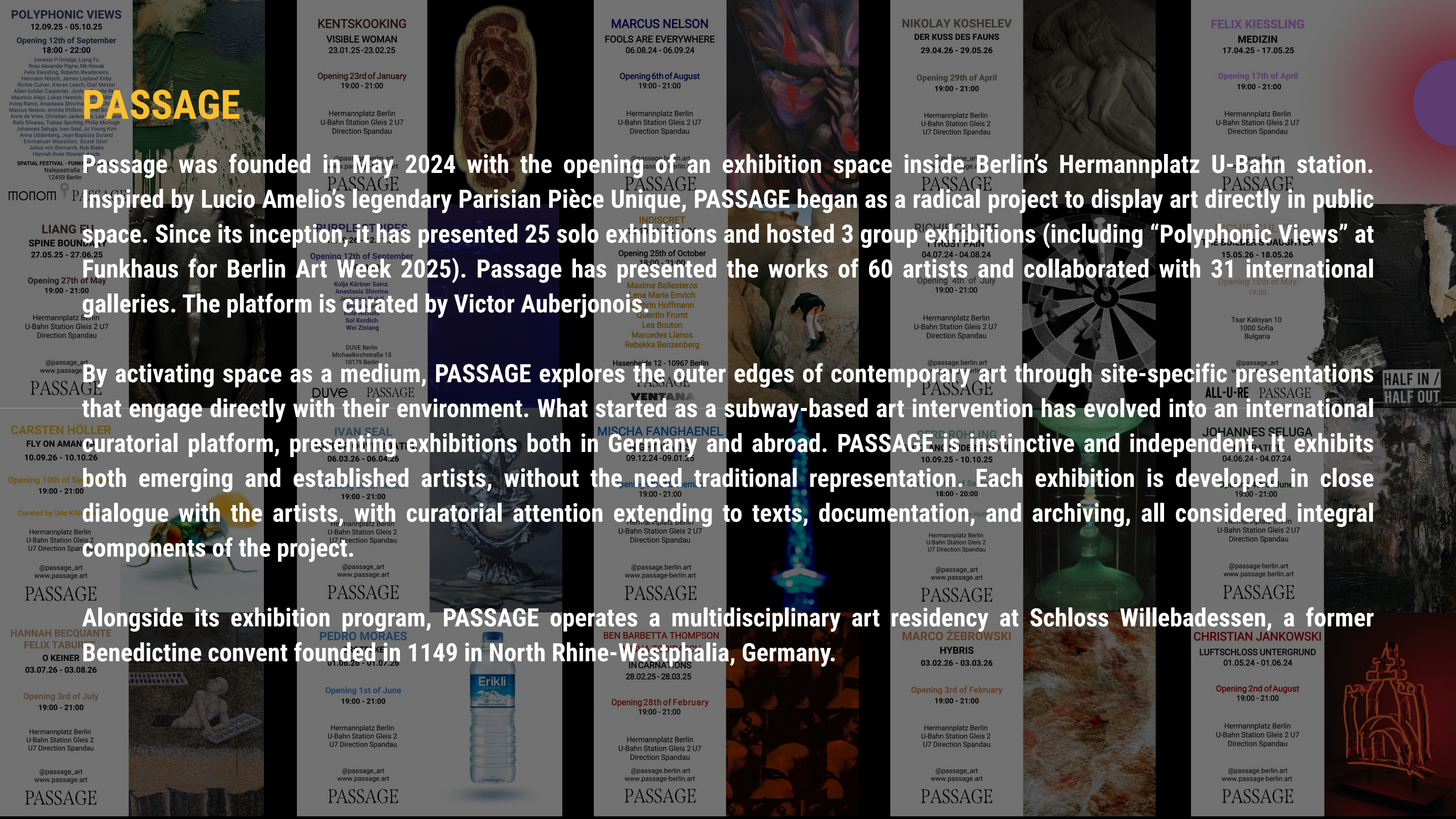
UDO KITTELMANN

Udo Kittelmann (b. 1958, Düsseldorf) is a German curator and former museum director and one of the most influential figures in contemporary exhibition-making. He directed the Kölnischer Kunstverein from 1994 to 2001 and the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt from 2002 to 2008. From 2008 to 2020, he served as Director of the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, overseeing its major institutions including the Alte Nationalgalerie, Neue Nationalgalerie, Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart among others.

Known for an artist-centered and interdisciplinary approach to exhibition-making, Kittelmann has curated numerous major international projects. In 2001, he curated Gregor Schneider's *Totes Haus u r* for the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which was awarded the Golden Lion for Best National Participation; in 2013, he curated Vadim Zakharov's *Danaë* for the Russian Pavilion.

He has since developed major exhibitions internationally for institutions including Fondazione Prada, Fondation Beyeler, Fundación Botín, and, more recently, *What a Wonderful World - An Audiovisual Poem* for the Julia Stoschek Foundation in Los Angeles. In summer 2026 he joined the Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin and its team.



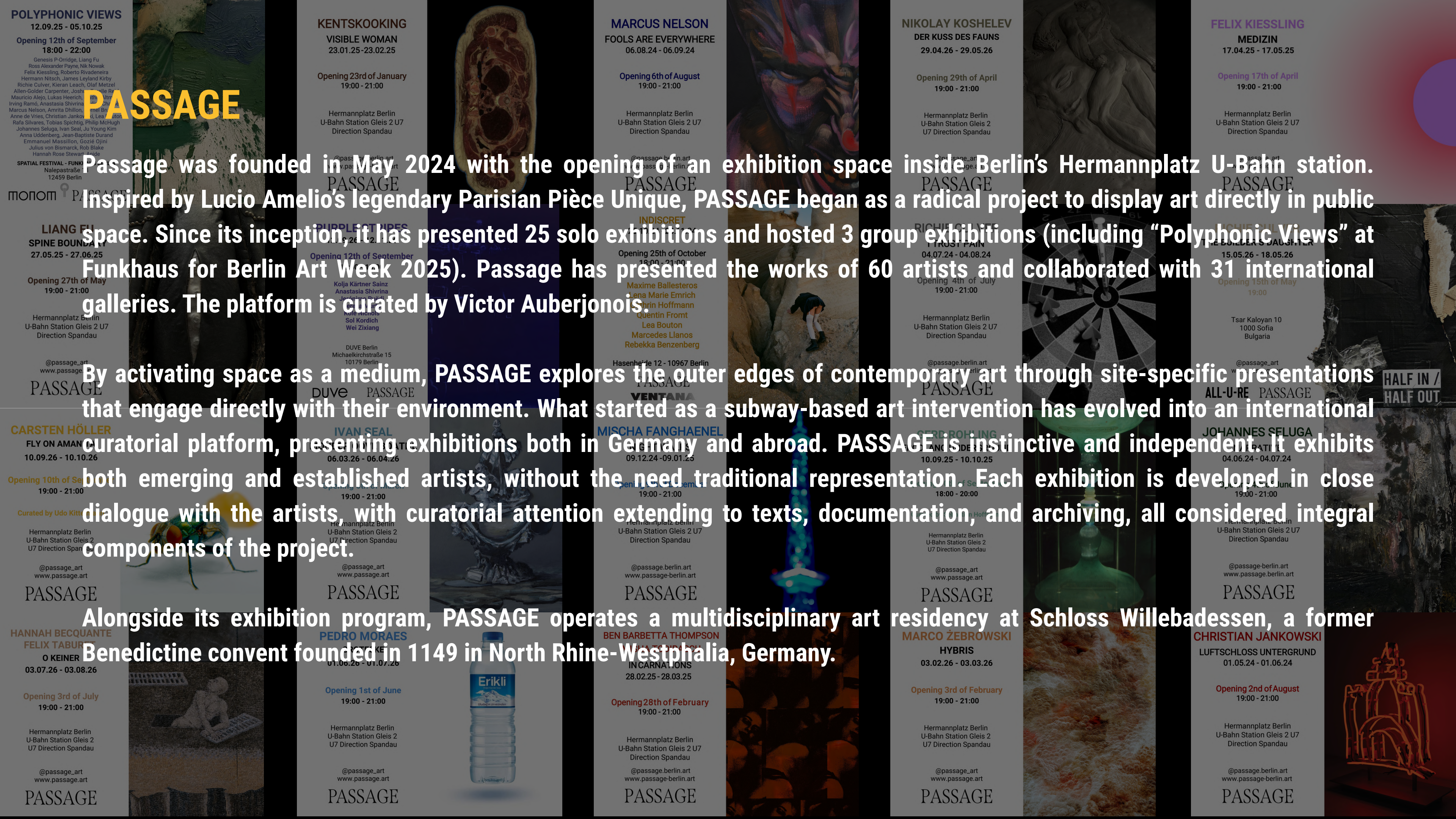


PASSAGE

Passage was founded in May 2024 with the opening of an exhibition space inside Berlin's Hermannplatz U-Bahn station. Inspired by Lucio Amelio's legendary Parisian Pièce Unique, PASSAGE began as a radical project to display art directly in public space. Since its inception, it has presented 25 solo exhibitions and hosted 3 group exhibitions (including "Polyphonic Views" at Funkhaus for Berlin Art Week 2025). Passage has presented the works of 60 artists and collaborated with 31 international galleries. The platform is curated by Victor Auberjonois.

By activating space as a medium, PASSAGE explores the outer edges of contemporary art through site-specific presentations that engage directly with their environment. What started as a subway-based art intervention has evolved into an international curatorial platform, presenting exhibitions both in Germany and abroad. PASSAGE is instinctive and independent. It exhibits both emerging and established artists, without the need for traditional representation. Each exhibition is developed in close dialogue with the artists, with curatorial attention extending to texts, documentation, and archiving, all considered integral components of the project.

Alongside its exhibition program, PASSAGE operates a multidisciplinary art residency at Schloss Willebadessen, a former Benedictine convent founded in 1149 in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.



FLY ON AMANITA

FLY ON AMANITA presents a new video installation by *Carsten Höller*, curated by *Udo Kittelmann*, at *PASSAGE* in Hermannplatz, Berlin. The opening takes place on 11 September, 7–9 pm, as part of Berlin Art Week. The exhibition remains on view through 11 October.

The work features a green bottle fly performing within a pristine white environment. The insect cleans itself, approaches a pale orange jello drop, feeds, enters an altered state, recovers, and flies away. The sequence loops endlessly, somewhere between scientific observation and 90s music video, laboratory experiment and choreography.

Trained as an agricultural entomologist, Höller has long worked at the unstable boundary between scientific experiment and artistic experience. Flies recur throughout his practice as organisms whose behaviour raises questions of perception, instinct, and consciousness. Mushrooms, particularly *Amanita muscaria* - for which Höller is perhaps best known, function as agents of transformation, dissolving the certainty of ordinary experience.

Known as the fly agaric, *Amanita muscaria* has long occupied a space between folklore, ritual, and toxicology. Traditionally, pieces of the mushroom were soaked in milk to attract and intoxicate flies, the origin of its common name. Drawn to the sweetness, the insects consume the liquid, become disoriented, lose control of their movements and, if the dose permits, eventually recover. Höller's video isolates this simple biological encounter, letting it unfold with clinical precision while quietly inviting comparison with human behaviour.

Presented in Hermannplatz, where addiction is part of the everyday urban landscape, the work acquires an unexpected resonance. The fly cleans itself, consumes, surrenders, recovers, and begins again. The loop offers neither judgement nor redemption; it simply repeats, exposing addiction less as spectacle than as rhythm, a cycle of desire, release, and return.

There is another layer. The fly appears to seek not merely intoxication but the altered condition itself. The possibility of pursuing an experience for its own sake, of desiring a second-order state of consciousness, has often been considered a uniquely human capacity, shared perhaps only with dolphins. Whether the fly truly experiences such a high remains unknowable, and Höller leaves that uncertainty unresolved, allowing projection to become part of the work.

FLY ON AMANITA (2025), oscillates between experiment and fiction, humour and discomfort, biology and psychology. What begins as the observation of an insect becomes a reflection on compulsion, pleasure, and the fragile mechanisms that govern behaviour, revealing how little may separate instinct from choice.









PASSAGE

Hermannplatz

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