

A dirt path leads through a dense forest of green trees and ferns. In the distance, a stone monument with several large boulders is visible. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text 'PARK PROJECT BERLIN' is overlaid in large white letters across the middle of the image.

PARK PROJECT BERLIN

A VIRTUAL MUSEUM

WWW.PARKPROJECTBERLIN.COM



A VIRTUAL MUSEUM
OF PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES
IN BERLIN AND BEYOND.

A GROWING ARCHIVE OF
VIDEOS

PORTRAITS OF PARKS,
THE PEOPLE WHO USE THEM,
THE ARTIFACTS YOU FIND THERE,
AND THE STORIES THEY TELL



WHY PARKS?

I think of parks as microcosms for our world today. They reflect the power structures of our cities.

Are the parks safe and utilized? Are they occupied by police, protestors, people without other means? Are they under threat, under surveillance, under water? Are they dotted with advertising, or playgrounds and cafes, or both? Are they full of nature and wildlife? Are they used equally by children and adults, for both play and relaxation?

While working on a documentary about the lack of investment in public transportation in the USA, I became curious about how different cultures value public space. Was the lack of investment into public transportation in the US related to the value of the individual versus the collective? Do other societies put a higher value on public space?

What I discovered while researching Berlin's public park system is, rather than culture, public space is a reflection of power.

We all want space.

Who gets access to this space and how it is used is less about a set of internal values, and more reflective of collective movements, economic forces and externalities like location and war. Berlin has the Volksparks because of socialist movements during the Industrial revolution. Berlin has parks in former building lots because the bombs of WWII. And it has long stretches of park ways left by the Berlin Wall which divided the city during the cold war.

In modern societies we tend to shut ourselves into boxes, be they offices or the virtual boxes of our phones.

More of us should enjoy our parks, where we can meet our neighbors, discuss our collective history and the legacy it left, improve our health, daydream about making our world a better place and appreciate nature.

Each video in this series is a part of this dialogue, examining a different facet of the parks and their role in our personal experience and collective story. And in a way, the videos are a way of giving power back to nature, sitting with nature in long, reflective takes.



TOPICS IN THIS SERIES

Nature | Conversations | History | Forest Baths
Trampolines | Art | Play | Travel

THE POWER OF NATURE

Nature is under threat across the globe. This threat isn't restricted to ocean islands, the Amazon or coastal cities. Climate change is already impacting forests in Berlin. Berlin has been working to manage these changes, shifting forest management for warmer weather. With news that both forest baths and viewing fractals found in all of nature improve health, we see an inherent benefit to parks that goes beyond beauty and to the heart of who we are.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES, told and untold

Berlin's public spaces provide a window into the history of power struggles in modern day Europe. From monuments to wars lost and won, remnants of French refugees, to figures of cultural heroes, much can be gleaned about the ideological struggles over time. Yet we miss many narratives: women's role in the suffragette movement; the role of Turkish and Vietnamese guest workers, and contextualization of colonial figures.

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

In recent history, the people of Berlin came together to save multiple parks, including Natur Park Schöneberger Südgälände and Tempelhofer Feld from development. Other struggles continue as people try to save spaces including Prinzessengarten and the urban farm in Kreuzberg.

THE POWER OF PLAY

We can't forget the power of play, joy and relaxation. One can see this in action in the parks across Berlin in all seasons, times of day and conditions of weather.



ABOUT THE FILMS

I consider each film to be a portrait, a portrait of a park. Together, they create a collage, a story of a place and time.

Can video create an experience? What happens if we slow our camera down rather than speed it up? Can we see our surroundings differently? Taking time to observe our surroundings, will it bring to light historical biases, as well as current blessings we have in our backyards, our urban public spaces? Can this method develop a new narrative for nature and public space.

PROCESS: My approach to filming parks in Berlin was a process of finding the perfection in imperfection. Rather than coming to parks only at their best, when the light was golden and the weather perfect, I set out to film the parks during different times of day, seasons and weather conditions. I aimed to find the beauty in everyday moments. As a filmmaker, of course I was looking for beautiful light and subtle movements. When does the light make the landscape flat? When does it make the leaves look like liquid? But it was important for me to come to a park as it is experienced by everyday people.

FILMING RITUALS: Filming the parks takes energy. It is more involved than arriving, pulling out a camera and taking a few images. For each park, I spend time breathing into the place. I observe what I see. I walk, maybe several times through the space before I start to film. I observe. When I am filming, elements start to appear that I didn't notice during my first encounter with a space. I feel my job is to observe, render images that somehow breath with life, and follow the thread of the elements that begin to speak to me through my camera.

GOAL: My initial plan was to film every week for one year, to capture video in every district of Berlin, and to record conversations of people I meet during my year. I did not have a specific goal for the footage once it was captured. But as the year went on I developed ways of presenting the material, including short videos, installations and writings. I plan to continue filming beyond Berlin.

THE FILMS

BERLIN

AHRENSFELDE | people's park, ALEXANDER PLATZ | taking a line for a walk, ANNIMERIL BAUER PLATZ | benches, ARENSWALDER PLATZ | dreaming in place, STEINE OHNE GRENZEN | stones without borders, BERLIN FROM ABOVE | on the s-bahn, CORNER PLAYGROUND | trampolines, DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly, ERNST THÄLLMAN | who is this man, FAULER SEE | summer forest bath, FEZ BERLIN | changing times, GARTENPLATZ | an autumn impression, GARTENPLATZ | trampolines, GRUNEWALD | autumn forest bath, GRUNEWALD | spring forest bath, GRUNEWALD | forest dune, MARZAHN | encounters, LEISE PARK | quiet park, NATUR PARK SÜDGELÄNDE | nurture-nature, TRÄUMEN VON EINEM BESSEREN ORT | dreaming of a better place, PEKINGERPLATZ | trampolines, PFAUENINSEL | peacock island, SCHILLER PARK | poet park, SCHLOSS PARK | reflections, SPANDAUER FORST | autumn mushroom forage, SPANDAUER FORST | wild boars, SPANDAUER FORST | fall forest bath, STADTPARK LICHTENBERG | seeing orange, DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly, SÜDPANKE | fake palms, TEGELER FORST | tegel forest bath, TEGELER FORST | listen to the trees, TEMPELHOF FELD | tempelhof airport, MONUMENTS | war and peace, MONUMENTAL | it wasn't yours, TIERGARTEN | moving monuments, TIERGARTEN | spring blossoms, Tiergarten SOVIET WAR MEMORIALS | around berlin, Park SOVIET WAR MEMORIALS | around berlin, TREPTOWER PARK | war and freedom, VOLKSPARK FRIEDRICHSHAIN | clean up, FREILUFTKINO | open air cinema, VOLKSPARK HUMBOLDTHAIN | why am i here, VOLKSPARK REHBERGE | openings, WASSERTURM | trampolines, WEISSENSEE | on ice, FEZ BERLIN | changing times

OUTSIDE BERLIN

EVERGLADES | man and nature, JOHANNAPARK | remembering, KRZWY LAS | the crooked forest, MÜNCHEN EISBACHWELLE | surfing munich, RÜGEN | movement and stillness, RÜGEN ALTEFÄHR | baltic benches,



HISTORY

Before televisions and billboards, statues and buildings served up the advertising of the day. From the moral tales of mythology and religious iconography, to reminders of nationhood and images of human strength and power.

In Berlin, placards and explanations are placed by old Soviet monuments. The Wall has many interactive reminders of what happened when Germany was split. Yet other monuments including Prussian remnants are given little or no context. These, too, are broadcasting former ideals, hopes, dreams, losses, gains and remembrances.

FILMS

MONUMENT SERIES -

TIERGARTEN | moving monuments

MONUMENTAL | it wasn't yours

MONUMENTS | war and peace

ERNST THÄLLMAN | who is this man?

PAPPLEPLATZ | monument for money

SOVIET WAR MEMORIALS | around berlin

DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly

ARENSFELDE | people's parks

PFAUENINSEL | peacock island

SCHLOSS PARK | reflections

SUDEPÄNKE | fake palms

TEMPELHOFER FELD | tempelhof airport

TREPTOWER PARK | war and freedom

VOLKSPARK HUMBOTHAIN | why am i here



NATURE

Being in nature feels good. Now scientific studies show measurable health benefits from spending time in nature. When standing on grass or sand our feet receive negative ions from the earth which reduce inflammation, cortisol levels, pain and calm the sympathetic nervous system. Breathing in the forest air also has been shown to lower cortisol levels. But new studies show that you can also gain benefits from looking at nature. Just looking at the geometric patterns only found in nature, fractals, improves cognitive functioning.

So watching these videos can be good for you! But I also hope the profiles inspire people to get out into their own local parks.

Citation: <http://www.naturemixvideo.com/fractals-and-health/>

FILMS

VOLKSPARK REHBERGE | openings
GRUNEWALD | forest dune
STADTWILD | wild city animals
NATUR PARK SÜDGALÄNDE | nature-nurture
LEISE PARK | quiet park
RÜGEN | movement and stillness
TIERGARTEN | spring blossoms
FRÜHLING | signs of spring
SPANDAUER FORST | autumn mushroom forage
SPANDAUER FORST | wild boars



FOREST BATHS

Berlin has 29 district forestries within the city limits. Although you don't have to be deep in the forest to gain the benefits of a forest bath. You can find clusters of trees in larger parks of many cities. Go stand there, relax and breath. If you can't find a patch of trees, watch these videos. You can gain benefits even without the tree chemicals.

I've been filming "forest baths" in Berlin. The forest bath was developed in Japan, where stressed out workers travel to a forest outside of Tokyo and sit quietly among the trees as a form of outdoor meditation. When filming forest baths, I walk through the forest in search of spaces that feel and look peaceful. I then set up my camera and film each stop for about a minute, trying to capture the subtle movement of the trees and sounds of the forest. Part of the beauty of the forest is the light falling through the leaves, the various gradations of color and the movements of the branches which I look to capture with my camera.

FORESTS OF BERLIN

Bucher Forst | Grunewald | Düppeler Forest | Fauler See | Jungfernheide | Müggelberge | Plänterwald | Spandauer Forst | Tegeler Forst | Wuhlheide

FILMS

TEGELER FORST | tegel forest bath
KRZWYW LAS | crooked forest
SPANDAUER FORST | fall forest bath
FAULER SEE | summer forest bath
GRUNEWALD | spring forest bath
GRUNEWALD | autumn forest bath berlin style



CONVERSATIONS

In choosing which parks to film, I wanted to film in all the districts with a mix of well-known and unknown parks. For my conversations, I wanted to speak to a variety of people - those who grew up in Berlin and those who moved here more recently, people of different backgrounds, ages, and experiences with the city. We talked about parks, about life in Berlin, and about history both general and personal. I have woven snippets of these conversations throughout many of the videos, building a narrative of Berlin as seen through the people who live here today.

FILMS

VOLKSPARK REHBERGE | openings
TRÄUMEN VON EINEM BESSEREN ORT | dreaming of a better place
STADTWILD | wild city animals
TEMPELHOF FELD | tempelhof airport
STEGLITZ ENCOUNTERS | the people
DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly
NATUR PARK SÜDGALÄNDE | nature-nurture
FREILUFTKINO | open air cinema
VOLKSPARK FRIEDRICHSHAIN | clean up
LEISE PARK | quiet park
TIERGARTEN | spring blossoms
WEISSENSEE | on ice
ARENSFELDE | people's parks
SOVIET WAR MEMORIALS | around berlin
VOLKSPARK HUMBOLTHAIN | why am i here
ARENSWALDER PLATZ | dreaming in place
BERLIN FROM ABOVE | on the s-bahn
SCHILLER PARK | poet parks
TREPTOWER PARK | war and freedom



TRAMPOLINES

The trampolines of Berlin are quite hidden. It is easy to pass by them without realizing they are there because they are often flush with the surrounding sidewalk.

These are not the freestanding trampolines one sees in large open backyards, where one can jump high or flop down and look up at the sky. Rather, these are at ground level, small squares or circles, often in a set of two or four. You can sometimes see small children bouncing on them or jumping from one to the next.

I've been collecting sitings and creating a small trampolines of Berlin database.
<https://parkprojectberlin.com/trampolines/>

FILMS

ANNEMIRL BAUER PLATZ | trampolines

WASSERTURM | trampolines

PEKINGER PLATZ | trampolines

EKENSUNDER PLATZ | trampolines

LEOPOLDPLATZ | trampolines

GLEISDREIECK | trampolines

CORNER PLAYGROUND | trampolines

ALEXANDERPLATZ | trampolines

GARTENPLATZ | trampolines



ART

This category includes collaborations with other artists along with short observational films.

Collaborators include:

- Adeline & Anaïs Poulet, French photographer and dancer
- Amy Klement, Berlin-based performance artist
- Gundula Friese, Berlin-based photographer
- Leander Reininghaus, Berlin-based musician
- Marion Ruault, French experimental musician
- Winston Lau, Hong Kong-based performance artist

FILMS

ALEXANDER PLATZ | taking a line for a walk

BENCHES | take a seat

BERLIN FROM ABOVE | on the s-bahn

DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly

GRUNEWALD | forest dune

MONUMENTS | war and peace

STEINE OHNE GRENZEN | stones without borders

TEGELER FORST | listen to the trees

TRÄUMEN VON EINEM BESSEREN ORT | dreaming of a better place



PLAY

Judging from the parks, Berliners old and young enjoy play. In addition to the trampolines, you can find slides, swings, ping pong tables, seemingly hand-carved creatures for children to climb. Many parks have walls available for painting graffiti. If you get hungry after your play you can often find a cafe or food kiosks inside the park.

Berlin has playgrounds everywhere. I see them in pockets of land between buildings, on empty corners, in parks and public squares. There are ping pong tables in parking spaces and strips of unused road. There are also skate parks, soccer fields, climbing walls, swings, pathways for rollerblades, running and kiteboards. And one rollercoaster.

Within the city of Berlin, there are over 80 lakes, two rivers, and three canals. Depending on where you are and the time of year you can swim, skate, sail, cruise, paddle, bird watch, walk, bike ride, drink coffee or beer, or just put down a blanket and hang out with friends or sit and read.

FILMS

MÜNCHEN EISBACH | surfing munich

MARZAHN | encounters

TEMPELHOF FELD | tempelhof feld

FREILUFTKINO | open air cinema

WEISSENSEE | on ice

ARNSWALDER PLATZ | dreaming in place

SCHILLER PARK | poet parks

GARTENPLATZ | an autumn impression



TRAVEL

Inspired by my experience in Berlin and intrigued by the contrast of parks elsewhere, I started filming parks outside of Berlin, during my travels. Initially I planned to only film parks within an easy bus/train ride from Berlin. However, I have expanded my filming to include cities outside of Germany and even Europe. For each city I encounter, I take the same approach. I pick a park that interests me in some way (proximity, history, beauty, etc) and film the elements that interest me in the moment. Later I find the theme by looking at the footage and researching the background of the park in more depth. This collection will continue to grow over time. [Currently in process, films from Queens, New York and Mexico City.]

FILMS

EVERGLADES | man and nature
KRZYWY LAS | crooked trees
JOHANNAPARK | remembering [Leipzig]
MÜNCHEN EISBACH | surfing munich
RÜGEN ALTEFÄHR | baltic benches
RÜGEN | movement and stillness

VIDEO INSTALLATIONS

TAKING PARKS TO THE PUBLIC

I like the idea of sharing this work in different contexts, moving the parks to the people or bringing new voices into the parks through video and sound. So I've been sharing installations in and out of parks, on walls, on bodies, in tents and under trees.

HOW DO WE LOVE THIS WORLD | if mushrooms could talk and trees could hug, site specific tour-based sound/video installation, coming 2020

SIANA | [un]natural transitions, sound/dance/video installation, Sprechsaal Gallery, Berlin, June 6, 2019

BENCHES | new moon in Marseille, video installation, part of A FULL MOON NIGHT, Videodrome 2, Marseille, France, May 5, 2019,

KÖRPER UND HELDEN | bodies & heroes, photo/video Installation, part of 7 Boards fo Skills, Im Grüner Bereich, Neukölln, Berlin, January 6, 2019

DIE LUST AM FLIEGEN | the desire to fly, sound/video/photo installation, Lilienthal Park, Lichterfelde, Berlin, September 9, 2018

PUBLIC FIGURES | making of Berlin & MOVING MONUMENTS | tiergarten, video instllation, part of Zwischen den Gipfeln | Between the Peaks, PremArts, Kreuzberg, Berlin, April 26-28, 2018

BERLIN FROM ABOVE | on the s-bahn, video installation, participant in Fensterflügel Ausstellung, Projektraum Ventilator 24, Kreuzberg, Berlin, December 8-16, 2017



ABOUT LAURA

Please don't ask me about my favorite park. This series is not about parks. It is about the **idea of a park**. It is about parks as they relate to nature, people and power dynamics.

- Laura J. Lukitsch, creator of Park Project Berlin

In 2017 I was new to Berlin. I had been exploring Berlin by bicycle. My solo explorations were always accompanied by parks. As I rode past them, they gave different impressions, sharing different personalities. Some were wild, some were manicured, some had large playgrounds and others wide open spaces.

I was captivated by their variety but I was also thinking about the importance of public space, the impact of economic and political shifts which were privatizing parks in other countries, and the fragility of nature in a warming world.

In the fall of 2017 I started filming. This is a virtual archive of a year of filming the parks of Berlin, every week, from September 2017 – November 2018. It also includes new works after 2018 as the project has expanded within Berlin and beyond.



BIO

Laura J Lukitsch is a filmmaker, video artist and story consultant. Her work creates spaces to experience different perspectives of our collective stories. Her first feature documentary, *Beard Club* (2013) is a film about the social politics of facial hair. *Park Project Berlin* (2017-ongoing) examines our public realm. Laura's interest includes social change, the power of intersectional narratives and ways of bringing new voices into mainstream consciousness. Laura is the host of, *This Beautiful Shot is Not an Accident*, a podcast about the creative process, storytelling and social change.

PARK PROJECT BERLIN

CONTACT INFORMATION

llukitsch@gmail.com

+49 (0)152 0450 8772

www.parkprojectberlin.com

www.laurajlukitsch.com

www.globalperformancemedia.com