

# ÜBER LEBENSKUNST INITIATIVE FOR CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

How do we define "good living" given the global ecological crisis? This question, which is relevant for everyone no matter what social group they belong to, was the central thematic focus of **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** (on the art of living), an initiative project of the Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. In a multi-part programme, the project explored through art the profound changes our planet is undergoing – in performance, visual art, music, discourse and literature. **ÜBER**

**LEBENSKUNST** brought together actors from widely varying disciplines to identify existing strategies and to develop and test out models of sustainable living fit for day-to-day life. In 2011, **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** turned the city of Berlin into a showcase for artistic projects that brought together culture and sustainability with an event series, campaigns, urban installations and the festival itself from 17 to 21 August.



Motives for the Festival posters, Fotos: Michael Ebert-Hanke, Design: novamondo

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## ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

The **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** initiative project aimed to take the reality of climate change, which is still abstract for many people, and relate it to the decisions individuals make in their day-to-day lives and to make it more tangible as part of our social responsibility. How will I get to the office today? What will I eat? What will I wear and where do my clothes come from? Each and every individual can change the world and still meet his or her own needs by doing away with routines and reshaping everyday life. This goal requires an alliance to be forged between the realms of art, science, politics and civil society so that new habits can be developed and learned as part of a cultural shift that everyone participates in. They are the key to the art of sustainable living at the beginning of the 21st century that has both a local and global dimension.

## FOR A SUSTAINABLE QUALITY OF LIFE

**ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** sought out contemporary models of sustainable living in artistic and cultural initiatives – with imagination and sensuality. The project looked at the concrete worlds the city's inhabitants live in. Working together with artists, scientists and activists, projects were developed in the areas of food production, mobility, resource consumption and education. These projects show that sustainable living doesn't mean having to make do with less, it means having more: a quality of life that doesn't harm the natural environment and heightened awareness and prudence in how we deal with resources in our day-to-day lives. Challenging familiar standards and needs will no longer be seen as a call to downscale but as an opportunity to find new ways of looking at the world.

## PROGRAMME

In keeping with the principles of sustainability, **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** focused on Berlin and its inhabitants. This metropolis with residents from 190 countries is a symbol of a model city for the art of sustainable living at the beginning of the 21st century.

The project, which ran over two years, was launched in April 2010 with a CALL FOR FUTURE that received submissions for more than 850 project ideas. In 2011, **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** turned the city of Berlin into a showcase for artistic projects that brought together culture and sustainability: An international jury selected 14 **ÜBER**

**LEBENSKUNST.Initiatives** which received support for one year at various locations throughout Berlin.



Collection station for bottles – an **ÜBERLEBENSKUNST**.Initiative by Steffi Stangl.  
Copyright: Sebastian Bolesch

Other projects came up with strategies for sustainable living using food, mobility and fashion as examples: a pantry (**VORRATSKAMMER**) with food from the region around Berlin, new models for urban mobility and stories about pieces of clothing and the people who wear them. [>Vorratskammer/Pantry](#) and [>Further Activities](#)



The pantry during the Festival. Copyright: Joachim Loch

The **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST.School** educational programme, which was jointly developed with the Institut Futur of the Free University of Berlin, brought the issues of culture and sustainability to classrooms throughout Germany and the national committee of the UN Decade "Education for Sustainable Development" added this project to the official measures in the national action plan. [>ÜBER LEBENSKUNST.School](#)

With a festival in August 2011 that presented all of the individual projects, **ÜBER LEBENSKUNST** also reflected on the practice of creating contemporary culture and thus about itself. The festival

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sought new ways and formats of conveying culture between art and day-to-day life at both the local and global levels. [>Festival](#)



Walden – a performance night during the Festival ÜBER LEBENSKUNST.  
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In the run-up to the festival, the ÜBER LEBENSKUNST.Klub brought together actors from the realms of art, culture and sustainability. In addition, there were many readings, discussions and concerts in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt under the auspices of the ÜBER LEBENSKUNST project. [>Further Activities](#)

## GUIDE FOR SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL PRODUCTION

The ÜBER LEBENSKUNST project pursued a strategy of climate neutrality. In addition to a scientific-technical analysis that captured the project's "carbon footprint", an environmental life cycle assessment was conducted that proposed projects to offset the unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions generated throughout the course of the ÜBER LEBENSKUNST project. Consultants from the Öko-Institut e.V. were accompanying the overall project, providing scientific and technical advice on sustainable management and project implementation ([>Life Cycle Assessment](#)). Based on the experiences with the ÜBER LEBENSKUNST project, a guide was created for the sustainable management of art and cultural projects and events which relates to the Berlin-Brandenburg region. [>Guide](#)



imbaueinbau – architectural intervention by FAT KÖHL Architects in the lobby of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt during the Festival. Copyright: Sebastian Bolesch

ÜBER LEBENSKUNST was a project initiated by the German Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

The German Federal Cultural Foundation funds and initiates cultural projects of national interest and international magnitude within the scope of federal competence. It also develops its own programmes which explore current issues concerning our society and its cultural dimension. The impact of climate change and the global environmental crisis are among the most urgent, long-term issues we are facing today. For this reason, the Federal Cultural Foundation established the programme ÜBER LEBENSKUNST in 2009 which examined perspectives of economic and social restructuring that could lead to a sustainable way of life and investigated, which role culture can play in such a process. The Federal Cultural Foundation allocated a total of 3.5 million euros to fund the project until 2012.

The Haus der Kulturen der Welt is an experimental center for international contemporary art. It also takes up central social themes such as migration and cultural diversity. During the past twenty years, it has developed and initiated international co-operation projects in the fields of art, film, music, performance, literature and the production of knowledge. Its name is programmatic, suggesting that the questions of culture and justice triggered by ecological crises can be grasped and solved only in global contexts. The Haus der Kulturen der Welt is located in the centre of Berlin, not far from the city's lakes and forests, the River Spree and the Tiergarten. For the Festival ÜBER LEBENSKUNST it was transformed into an exhibition, learning and play center designed to provide sensual access to the theme.



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# ÜBER LEBENSKUNST INITIATIVE FOR CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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## DIRECTORS

**Hortensia Völckers** Artistic Director, German Federal Cultural Foundation

**Dr. Bernd M. Scherer** Director, Haus der Kulturen der Welt

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## PROJECT OFFICE - DIRECTION

**Andrea Peschel**, Head Coordinator

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## DRAMATURGE

**Janek Müller** Curator, Director

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## CURATORS

**Detlef Diederichsen** Head of Performing Arts Department, Haus der Kulturen der Welt

**Paula Marie Hildebrandt** Political Scientist, Curator, and Urban Researcher

**Jenny Jungehülsing** Political Scientist and Consultant

**Janek Müller** Curator, Dramaturge, Director

**Valerie Smith** Head of Visual Arts Department, Haus der Kulturen der Welt

**Dr. Susanne Stemmler** Head of Literature and Humanities Department, Haus der Kulturen der Welt

**Matthias von Hartz** Director International Hamburg Summer Festival

**Florian Wüst** Film Curator, Artist

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## CURATORS OF THE ÜBER LEBENSKUNST SATELLITES ABROAD

**Ravi Agarwal** (New Delhi) Artist, Activist

**Angelina Davydova** (St. Petersburg) Journalist, Environmental Activist

**Laymert Garcia dos Santos** (São Paulo) Researcher

**Sam Hopkins** (Nairobi) Artist, Environmental Activist