



# FROM SYDNEY TO BERLIN

After a playful conversation with a mutual friend in a Berlin bar, Dominik Mersch and Patrick Ebensperger decided to try out a gallery swap between their Sydney and Berlin spaces. **Danielle Chenery** checks it out.

**FROM JULY 10** to August 16, Dominik Mersch Gallery in Rushcutters Bay and Galerie Patrick Ebensperger in Berlin are attempting an unprecedented venture: a globe-spanning gallery swap.

In 2013 both galleries experienced growth and relocated to fascinating new spaces: in Berlin, Galerie Patrick

Ebensperger moved into a former crematorium in Wedding, while Dominik Mersch Gallery embraced rustic charm, setting up in a sky-lit loft and redeveloped sail maker's workshop in Sydney's Rushcutters Bay.

Dominik and Patrick were introduced through a common artist, Clemens Krauss, several years ago. They became friends first and found they had a common approach to their work, and similar goals. The idea for the gallery swap came later.

Dominik suggested the swap to Patrick about a year ago and it progressed from there. "I told Patrick we should try out the gallery swap. Sydney has the magic, so he was inspired straight away. It was a win-win," he says.

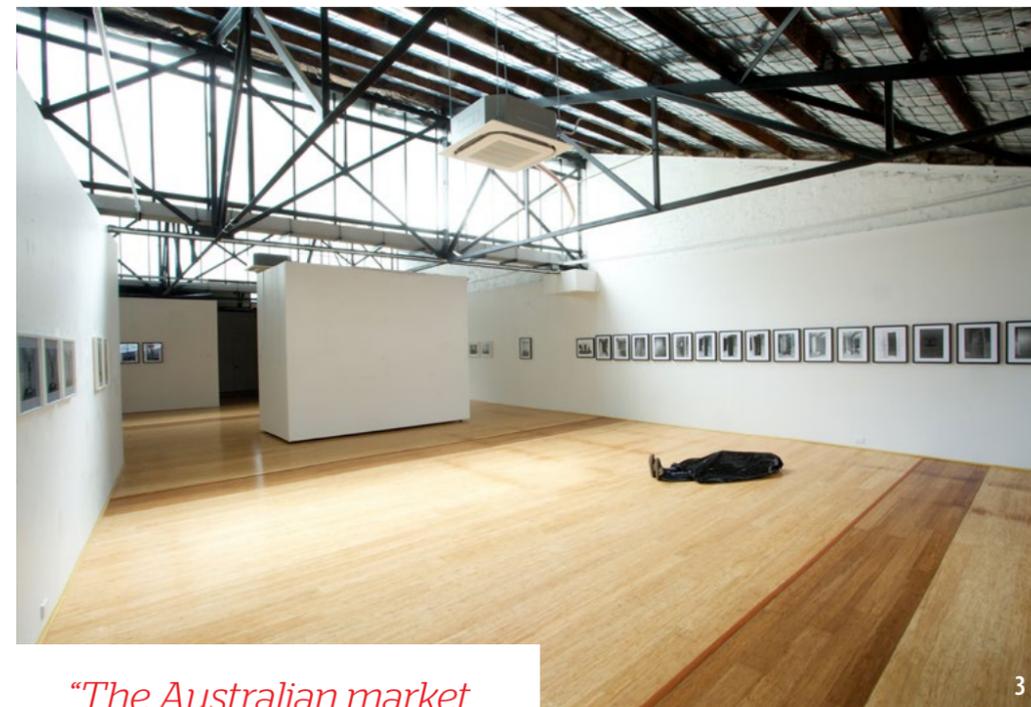
"We started planning the gallery swap

about one year ago," explains Mersch. "There were lots of logistics to organise, but a lot of fun journeys involved as well. Going to Berlin was a particular highlight – seeing Patrick's new space in real life was fantastic," he says.

Berlin has a thriving art scene and is the place to be to get among modern art. "I go back and forth to Berlin every six months. A lot of my artists are living in Berlin. They are not necessarily German, but it is such a hub for artists," he adds.

"Along with New York and Beijing, Berlin is among the top three places to go for art. It's also super affordable – the cost of living is relatively inexpensive."

Mersch explains that he and Ebensperger come from very different backgrounds. Before getting into the arts,



*"The Australian market is very open-minded and responsive to new ideas and artists."*

Mersch was an engineer who completed a PhD in artificial hip joints, while Ebensperger is a lawyer. Although art has always been Mersch's passion and he's been an art collector for 25 years, it took health issues for him to realise "money isn't everything" and a career in the arts was his true calling. "It's important to do what you love," he says.

In 2006, Mersch decided to move to Sydney after working in London for three years. He spent his first six months undertaking market research, and saw that while European artists had representation in the United Kingdom, they weren't being represented in Australia.

"The Australian market is very open-minded and responsive to new ideas and artists," he explains. Spotting this as an opportunity, in 2007 Mersch established his gallery in Danks Street, Sydney, and began showing European artists such as Elger Esser (landscape photographer), Clemens Krauss (painting, video and installation artist) and Stephan Balkenhol (sculptor).

Mersch's life change certainly paid off. In 2009 the Danks Street gallery expanded to 180 square metres, which was double its original size. That year he also developed the Dominik Mersch Gallery Award in collaboration with the



1: Galerie Patrick Ebensperger in Berlin. 2: Hajnal Nemeth, Totaled black BMW E39 Sedan in red light, 2011. 3: Dominik Mersch Gallery in Sydney 4: Lucas Davidson, 'Another self Portrait', 14-channel video installation. 5: Jon Cattapan, Masked Group XXXVI, 2014, monotype.



Sydney College of the Arts to support emerging artists.

The expansion continued in 2013, when Mersch moved his gallery to McLachlan Avenue, Rushcutters Bay, doubling in size again to 360 square metres.

The focus of Mersch's gallery is still to introduce international artists to Australia, and vice versa, which helps to explain the gallery swap.

"The first show runs for four weeks, but we want the swaps to occur more often – every second year or so," says Mersch.

"It's interesting for our Sydney clients to see different artists, and Patrick has absolute freedom to do whatever he wants with his artists here in Sydney."

The duo is very excited about the swap and Mersch says they don't know anyone else who is undertaking a similar venture.

Both gallery owners look set to benefit from embracing this partnership across international borders, as will the wider art community. After all, the process of sharing knowledge, culture and art is inspiring for all who embrace it. [O]



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