



Press Release

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## New Cohabitation Professor: Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius

Die Hochschule für Bildende Künste–Städelschule is pleased to announce the appointment of Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius as its inaugural Professor for Cohabitation. He will join the faculty on April 1, 2022.

“By accepting to lead the inaugural class in Cohabitation at Städelschule, Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius will be pioneering the students into a new field of art dedicated to thinking architecture not only as a technical protocol, but as a social practice in dialogue with the natural environment” observes Prof. Yasmil Raymond, Rector of Städelschule and Director of Portikus who, as chair of the selection committee, decided together with the faculty and students on the appointment of the new professorship.

The Cohabitation professorship with an interdisciplinary thematic orientation towards future topics such as ecology and sustainability is new and is being established in this form for the first time at a German art school. The professorship is made possible by the "300-W-Stellen-Programm" from the "Hochschulpakt" of the Hessian Ministry.

“Städelschule has installed "Cohabitation" as a field of artistic practice to foster transdisciplinary processes in the arts that have an impact on the awareness for resilience and diversification. Our new Professor Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius has an extensive portfolio of visionary projects and a significant reputation, nationally and internationally in the field, his addition to our faculty will continue to strengthen our serious commitment to innovation,” added Raymond. “Städelschule is a powerhouse of creativity and independence, our students have a strong appetite for dismantling definitions and a high tolerance for experimentation and Foerster-Baldenius shares these values,” asserts Raymond.

“The Städelschule enjoys an outstanding national and international reputation, both nationally and internationally and can point to numerous outstanding teachers and alumni,” observes Foerster-Baldenius. “The freedom of thought and the endeavour to meet the students on an equal footing are reflected in the relatively broad scope for Städelschule. The size of the art school allows it to deviate from the usual academic structures and produces a fertile ground for playing outside the box and thinking critically about the creative process in relationship to the environment and the climate crisis.”

Vice-Rector Prof. Haegue Yang comments on the appointment, “The Städelschule has always been characterized by a pronounced pioneering spirit and this new professorship for Cohabitation is another evidence facing of today’s challenge in ecology, society, as well as art and architecture. Daring to coin a new definition of Cohabitation, Städelschule willingly offers a never existed pedagogical space, where a co-existence of human and non-human is contemplated, incubated and cultivated”. Yang expressed her expectation with a praise about the decision of the selection committee and commented further, “Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius’ highly esteemed international orientation as much as his grounded and visionary practice will plant ambitious seeds for current and future students and across generations.”

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## The new Professor

Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius is a performing architect, a hybrid between space designer and situation maker. As such in 2021, he won the golden Lion at the Venice Architecture Biennial with his collective raumlaborberlin. His work stands emblematic for an approach to architecture and urbanity that manifests a radical turn from a practice that serves the real estate market and the building industry towards a practice that plays a lead role in all current struggles and debates around a changing climate, sustainability, shrinking material resources and creating futures with all lifeforms on this planet. Foerster-Baldenius strives for transdisciplinary approaches in learning, making, and doing, he is a brilliant researcher, networker, and charismatic fighter for new forms of resilient urban practice. With him Städelschule will install a laboratory for cohabitation with the city of Frankfurt as its first and foremost testing ground.

He describes his vision for his professorship at Städelschule as follows: “The production of space has been disconnected to the production of buildings. Space is the product of social interaction, buildings are the products of the market. But architects today are not only jammed between these two diametrical understandings of their practice, they also have to take care of the carbon footprint, the origin of the invested money, the urban environment, non-human victims of their design, political power structures, and their own life. I believe that the path that leads through this jungle of parameters into more resilient architectural practices that search for joyful spaces of cohabitation, can only be found collaboratively. And I believe that the institution to develop models of education for the design of these must be an art school. I am looking forward to this exploration with the students at Städelschule.”

Foerster-Baldenius has studied architecture at TU and HdK Berlin and the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Copenhagen. He plans, draws and realizes installations and interventions in public space, makes scenographies, and dramaturgies for stages, squares and exhibitions and develops event and teaching formats. During the pandemic he realized, among other things, the construction of the *Sommerbau* for Künstlerhaus Mousonturm in Frankfurt and the *Third Space* for the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus as two temporary open spaces for analogue encounter.

He has won the Schelling Prize for Innovation in Architecture with his early work *Hotel Neustadt* and since then designed and produced, displayed, published and performed worldwide with growing attention. He has been a Professor at the Academy of Art, Architecture and Design Prague (VSUP), the Folkwang University of Arts Essen, the Royal Academy of Arts in the Hague and has worked in teaching positions in many other European Universities. He is also the founder, dean and board member of the Floating University an award-winning Nature/Culture learning Space in Berlin.

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The Hochschule für Bildende Künste—Städelschule has been under the sponsorship of the State of Hesse since 2019. Over its 200-year history, the art school has become synonymous with leading contemporary artists and has a strong reputation worldwide. Since its establishment in 1817, the Städelschule's profile has been renowned for its interdisciplinary combination of process-driven practice and experimental research and has an outstanding position among state art schools in Germany, of which three are in the State of Hessen. The Städelschule professors and alumni are regularly among the winners of major European art prizes. The latter include three Golden Lions (alumna Anne Imhof, 2017; alumnus Prof. Dr. Franz Erhard Walther, 2017; Prof. Tobias Rehberger, 2009) and a Silver Lion (Prof. Hassan Khan, 2017) as well as seven representations in country pavilions at the Biennale di Venezia between 2005 and 2017 (alumna Anne Imhof, Germany, 2017; alumnus Danh Võ, Denmark, alumna Flaka Haliti, Kosovo, and alumnus Simon Denny, New

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Zealand, all in 2015; and among our current professors alumna Haegue Yang, Korea, 2009; Gerard Byrne, Ireland, 2007; Willem de Rooij together with Jeroen de Rijke, Holland, 2005).

The Frankfurt-based Städelschule is the only art school in Germany with a Kunsthalle. Founded in 1987, Portikus is widely known as an important center for the presentation of contemporary art. It is a platform for both exhibiting emerging artists, showing in Germany for the first time, as well as renown artists working on site-specific commissions. As one of the few art spaces free of admission, Portikus has a unique role and responsibility in creating a communal space in the city of Frankfurt.

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