

ART TO STAY

Have a break! Enjoy your coffee

A SUSTAIN IT! art lab 25th to 29th April 2016





**The future we want
needs to be invented;
otherwise we
will get one
we don't want.**

Joseph Beuys



Documentation
of the artistic intervention

ART TO STAY
Have a break!
Enjoy your coffee

For a delightful and waste-free coffee culture
at Freie Universität Berlin

25th to 29th April 2016

TAKEAWAY COFFEE becomes ART TO STAY

Coffee provides both relaxation and an energy boost in our everyday lives. A quick coffee on the way to university or work is offered on every corner and drinking one has become an omnipresent habit and modern attitude towards life.

But the trend is not at all innocent: The number of consumers in Germany who use disposable coffee cups either from time to time or on a regular basis make up around 70% of the total number of coffee drinkers, according to a new report by the Deutsche Umwelthilfe. Every hour, 320,000 disposable cups are thrown away. This amounts to three billion cups a year. The production of these cups requires tens of thousands of tons of wood and plastic, as well as billions of liters of water (source Deutsche Umwelthilfe, link: http://www.duh.de/becherheld_problem.html). These resources mainly go to waste, because it is still a major challenge to recycle laminated and printed disposable cups. The careless throwing-away of plastic cups also results in littered streets, public spaces and natural environments.

These facts inspired those of us at the sustainability initiative SUSTAIN IT! to scrutinize this trend of disposable cups here on campus at Freie Universität Berlin. Fortunately, for our research, the Studentenwerk Berlin keeps a tally of the growing numbers of disposable cups sold since 2012. The main canteen's coffee bar alone accounts for 650 disposable cups a day going to waste – although the Studentenwerk promotes the use of porcelain cups and reusable cups and even charges an extra fee for the disposable cups.

In order to draw attention to this growing waste problem, we had the idea to develop an interactive art project together with three artists from Berlin. The project draws the attention of consumers to the environ-

mental problem of the takeaway trend and sensitizes them to enjoyable and waste-free alternatives. We combined different approaches such as photography (Susanne Wehr), sculpture (Ev Pommer), drama (Luzia Schelling) and science (Karola Braun-Wanke) and, with the help of 14 students, managed to create an art lab that received very positive feedback from within Freie Universität Berlin.

The temporary art intervention was part of the SUSTAIN IT! university days 2016. It also served as a supporting program for two conferences that simultaneously took place at Freie Universität Berlin. This enabled us to reach out to 2,000 people within one week; visitors participated actively in the art lab.

In this brochure we would like to showcase how our artistic intervention managed to promote sustainable consumption without finger wagging.

We hope you enjoy the read and find some inspiration!

Karola Braun-Wanke
Coordinator of SUSTAIN IT!

UPSIDE DOWN



ARTISTIC FIELD RESEARCH



I drink coffee, therefore, I am?!

We started our project with field research, collecting messages, attitudes and potential meanings behind the disposable cup phenomenon.

Why is the disposable cup so attractive to consumers? Practical reasons do not serve as a satisfactory explanation; since the Studentenwerk also offers porcelain cups and reusable “campus cups” and many consumers drink their coffee on the spot. To understand this phenomenon, we talked to around 150 coffee consumers, coffee providers and to the Studentenwerk Berlin, drank a lot of coffee ourselves and simply observed consumption patterns.

Results show that paper cups very often send positive messages like timesaving, mobility, enjoying flexible consumption, activity and spontaneity. This makes them the rendering of a modern and hip lifestyle. Additionally, discussions showed that takeaway coffee is a status symbol, representing the flexibility of the consumer who has to deal with multiple tasks in our

modern society. A disposable cup points to the importance of the consumer, who does not have time to drink and enjoy coffee on the spot. Drinking coffee on the go identifies the consumer as someone important.

However, some interviewees connected the cup with more negative messages like conformity, mainstream and a waste of resources and/or saw the growing flexibility trend as a manifestation of a society that is fixated on consumption and disposability in the spirit of profit maximization. These users showed self-criticism by confessing that they still use the cups for reasons like convenience or simply because the customer in front of them does the same, even though they are in principle against the cup because of its ecological consequences.



Art + Sustainability = ART TO TAY

Based on these observations, discussions and contradictions as well as on the growing consumption of disposable cups, we started our artistic intervention.

Our intention was to comment on the quick coffee trend both on a subjective and intersubjective level and to turn it upside down: we focused on the moment of indulgence and pausing. The quick consumption on the go was contrasted with an inspiring and sensual culture of pausing. The intervention focused on interaction and dialogue. This challenged us to confront the issue both from an aesthetic-artistic and an ecologi-

cal, consumption-critical perspective. We intended to reach out to as many people as possible. The art lab "Art to stay – indulging yourself again" consisted of three interlinked elements: the photo studio, the mountain of cups and the cup museum. Three artists from Berlin and a team of students helped to make the art lab a reality.



THE PHOTO STUDIO – a stage for individual moments of indulgence

OUR CONCEPT



THE MOUNTAIN OF CUPS – a monumental sculpture of disposable cups



THE CUP MUSEUM – a staging of drinking vessels



Building the cup installation

THE MOUNTAIN OF CUPS



A monumental sculpture of disposable cups

The ceiling-high sculpture made up of about 30,000 disposable cups was the art lab's eye-catcher and served as a communicative sluiceway.

The location of the sculpture, right in the foyer in front of the main canteen and the coffee bar, was chosen strategically. Everybody in the foyer had to pass the installation. The sculptor Ev Pommer designed the bold sculpture and installed it together with students in the center of the foyer of the university's "Silberlaube" building complex. It mirrors the consumption of coffee cups at this venue one to one: the number of cups used for the mountain corresponds to just 45 days of coffee cup consumption in the canteen and the coffee bar (as calculated by the Studentenwerk).

Reactions of passers-by showed that the cups in their artistically arranged concept had both a puzzling and a disturbing effect. Many visitors stopped to learn more about the mountain of cups. This curiosity and the pause from the university routine opened a dialogue. Visitors could learn about the background of the art lab.

We intentionally chose a multi-dimensional sculpture. On the one hand, it visualizes the superfluous material and the enormous amount of waste at the location, making it tangible and enabling a critical and self-reflexive analysis of the consumption trend. At the same time, the installation was a purely aesthetic and expressive structure that fascinated passers-by with its arrangement, structure and monumentality.

We only used overproduced or misprinted cups, which were stock remainders. The producer donated them to us because they were unsellable. Information panels further informed the visitors about the cups, background, statistics and facts about disposable consumption in Germany.





Building the cup installation

THE CUP MUSEUM

The cup museum acted as a connecting element between the mountain of cups and the photo studio

The exhibition consisted of a collection of different drinking vessels – from precious Meißen porcelain to camping dishes, children’s cups, advertisement cups and soup and feeding cups, exhibited on round bar tables. Explanatory signs attributed a fictitious history and function to each cup, emphasizing its unique value. This museum-like setting elevated every single cup from an everyday item to a precious unicum that transports history over time.

A staging of drinking vessels

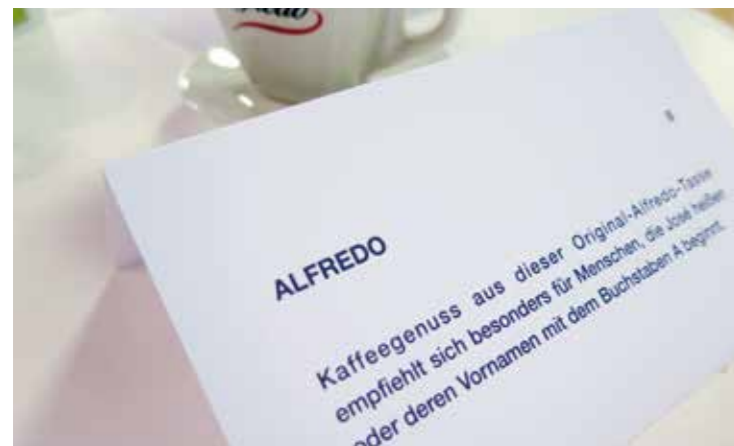
Therefore, the cup museum was the center of approach and dialogue. Guests could engage with the art intervention without any commitment, strolling through the exhibition and reading about the fifty different cups’ histories.

The actress Luzia Schelling played a coffee addict and museum guide and inspired guests in her charming way to become part of the art lab. Once the guests found

their favorite cup, they were invited to enter the photo studio to capture their own, unforgettable moment of indulgence in a portrait. Schelling advised visitors on which cup to pick for the picture and discussed a waste-free and indulgent coffee culture with the visitors.



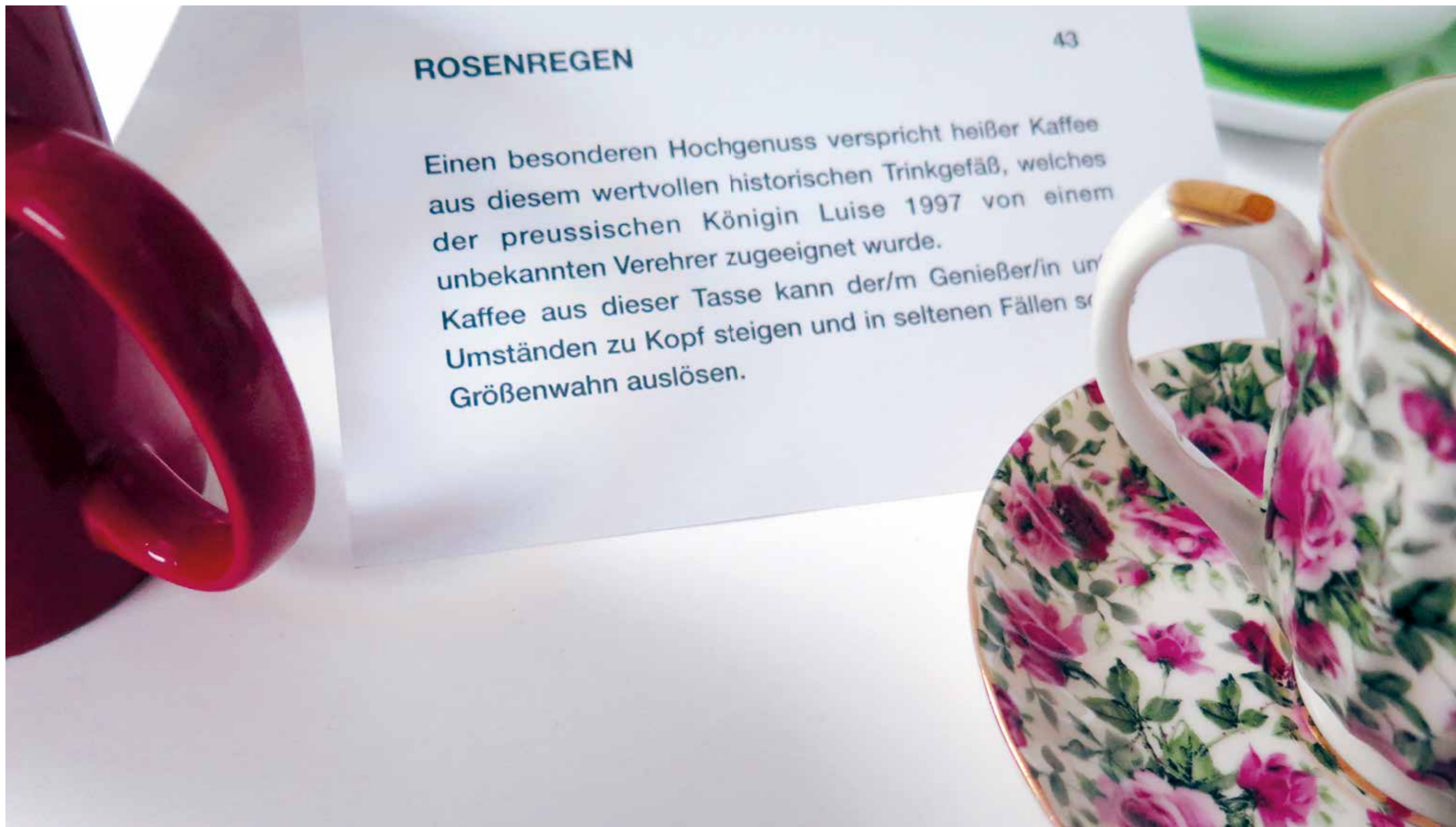
THE CUP MUSEUM – a connecting element between the mountain of cups and the photo studio



ROSENREGEN

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Einen besonderen Hochgenuss verspricht heißer Kaffee aus diesem wertvollen historischen Trinkgefäß, welches der preussischen Königin Luise 1997 von einem unbekanntem Verehrer zugeeignet wurde. Kaffee aus dieser Tasse kann der/m Genießer/in unter Umständen zu Kopf steigen und in seltenen Fällen sogar Größenwahn auslösen.



THE PHOTO STUDIO



A stage for individual moments of indulgence

The photo studio was widely visible on its stage. It acted as a location for self-presentation, a place to take pause and indulge. As the third and core element of the art lab, it acted as a spatial antithesis to the mountain of cups.

In upcycling disposable cups we created an atmospheric room for transformation. The paper cups acted as the background scenery for the pictures. The photo models and their cups contrasted both in terms of message and optics. The “coffee addict” led the guest to their chair in the photo studio, where they could have a chance to get accustomed to the lamps. Students brewed fresh coffee on-site and ensured the overall

well-being of guests. During the indulgent coffee moment, we played music that was matched to every individual cup: from the pioneer song “Our Home” for Margot Honecker’s mocca cup to Joan Baez for the flower power cup, every drinking vessel had its own sound. This resulted in a very relaxed and often exuberant mood.







Portraying indulgence

To immortalize the moment of coffee indulgence, participants set themselves up with their favorite cup on stage and decided how they wanted to be portrayed.

The photo artist Susanne Wehr and the sculptor Ev Pommer took turns taking pictures of the different poses: moments of quiet indulgence, playful posing, flirting with the camera and apparently spontaneous snaps. In five days, they took 1,800 pictures of 500 very different people who celebrated drinking coffee as a form of art, undertaken both in groups or alone.

The portraits depicted people with their related cups in a personal space. This pausing and indulging in front of the disposable cup scenery created an unforgettable moment in the now, contrasting with the quick 'to go' consumption trend.



HAVE A BREAK!



















Takeaway photo – photo to stay

After shooting, the best picture was printed twice on-site. The guest could take one of these “portraits with a cup” home to remember the unforgettable moment of indulgence.

The second copy stayed in the art lab and became part of a steadily growing photo exhibition that collected individual moments of indulgence and presented them in the university’s foyer. With the portrait photos, the circle is closed: starting from a paper cup as a status

symbol that seems to up-value the consumer, this was contrasted with the portraits, showing moments of indulgence with the favorite porcelain cup that express the real uniqueness of each personality.



THE EXHIBITION



A LOOK BACK

Art to stay – ready to pause

The student initiative SUSTAIN IT! had already critically engaged with the coffee 'to go' trend in 2012 in a participatory art lab called "Art to stay – ready to pause". Read more here:

http://www.fuberlin.de/sites/sustain/files/2012_hochschule/Art_to_Stay_Doku.pdf 2012



THE ROADSHOW

Recommended for imitation!

Our experience with the interactive art lab shows that participants are willing to question their consumption patterns. They are open to rediscovering the indulgence of coffee in a porcelain cup and, in future, will consider opting for one of the many recyclable or reusable cup alternatives. Participants praised the positive and dialogue-oriented approach in particular. According to them, we managed to win over guests for a waste-free and decelerated coffee culture without wagging fingers.

This brochure is intended to inspire and motivate other (educational) institutions to follow our example. SUSTAIN IT!'s concept is reproducible in other locations – both indoor and outdoor – and can be adapted in cooperation with SUSTAIN IT! and the artists involved to correspond to different target groups. In the spirit of sustainability, we will gladly make our 40,000 disposable cups available.



OUR TEAM



From top left to bottom right
(Some people of our team are missing!)
Luzia Schelling
Lisa Huttenlocher
Karola Braun-Wanke
Carolin Bergmann
Mirja Schoderer
Laura Fischer
Ev Pommer
Maxi Schrunner
Melanie Thie
Tobias Kalt
Susanne Wehr

IMPRINT

Artistic concept

Karola Braun-Wanke | Coordinator of SUSTAIN IT!
Ev Pommer | Sculptor
Luzia Schelling | Actress
Susanne Wehr | Photographer

Realisation

Karola Braun-Wanke | SUSTAIN IT!
Ev Pommer | Sculptor
Luzia Schelling | Actress
Susanne Wehr | Photographer

SUSTAIN IT team

Malina Austen, Carolin Bergmann, Roxane Bradaczek, Lea Dabbert, Laura Fischer, Lisa Huttenlocher, Tobias Kalt, Joanna Mitchell, Lisia Mix, Anne Schindhelm, Maxie Schrinner, Mirja Schoderer, Luana Strauss, Melanie Thie

Portraits of indulgence

Susanne Wehr & Ev Pommer

Photos and documentation

Susanne Wehr, Karola Braun-Wanke, Luzia Schelling Tobias Kalt, Ev Pommer, Carolin Bergmann

Layout

Susanne Wehr, pictures-paradise.de

Text

Karola Braun-Wanke, Luzia Schelling

Editors

Tobias Kalt, Bettina Tacke

Organizers / Implementation / Coordination
Initiative SUSTAIN IT!, Freie Universität Berlin

Technical support

Christian Mühlbach, Carpenter
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SUSTAIN IT! is an open platform for dialogue and activities for everybody who wants to shape Freie Universität Berlin's future with project ideas. Cooperative activities and seminars follow a dialogue- and action-centered approach and promote inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation and the interlinkage of science and teaching, campus and region.

The overarching goal is to actively co-shape the transformation process for more sustainability within and beyond the university. Within the scope of SUSTAIN IT!, students and staff members offer regular interdis-

ciplinary and interactive seminars and (art) activities, enabling a discussion of local and global questions regarding our future. To reach out to as many university members as possible, the initiative works with participatory tools. In 2010, students of different departments and members of the Environmental Policy Research Center and the Field Office for Sustainability and Energy founded SUSTAIN IT! to promote dialogue on sustainability and contribute to an improved cooperation and networking of sustainability actors within and beyond Freie Universität Berlin.



fu-berlin.de/sustain-it

