Artists Featured in *La Villette*

This overview includes artists who were interviewed and/or whose performances or art were featured in the documentary.

**AG Geige** (an experimental rock band) was founded in 1986 in Karl Marx Stadt (now Chemnitz) and existed until 1993. Frank Bretschnieder, Torsten Eckhardt (a member until 1989, when he was replaced by Olaf Bender) and Jan and Ina Kummer founded the band as an experimental multimedia art project. They played electronic minimalist music with lyrics influenced by Dadaism, and their shows mixed projected 16mm films, paintings and imaginative costumes. They were also called “The Residents of the East,” in reference to the American avant-garde band The Residents. At first AG Geige played in clubs or at exhibit openings; after the Wall came down, they performed throughout Germany, as well as in Switzerland. One of their largest concerts took place during the Art Rock Festival in Frankfurt am Main in 1991. Their direct-sale record *Yachtclub & Buchteln* (1986) and cassette *TRICKbeat* (1989, later released on the Amiga label) were widely circulated. Filmmaker Carsten Gebhardt tells the story of the band in his 2012 documentary *Die AG Geige*. [aggeige.de]

**Allerleihrauh** (fashion performance) was founded in East Berlin in 1986 by fashion designers Angelika Kroker and Katharina Reinwald (a former member of the group *chic, charmant & dauerhaft / chic, charming & durable*). Their first collection—focusing on leather, which became their trademark—was successfully premiered in a 1988 multimedia fashion show *Das Ding aus Licht, Klang, Raum und Leder* (*The Thing Made of Light, Sound, Space and Leather*). The show was accompanied by the East German rock group Pankow and featured almost 100 models, most of whom were children of East German “bohemians.” The two designers split after this show. The next and last Allerleihrauh spectacle (*Spiel mit Erde, Feuer, Hall und Leder / Play with Earth,*...
Fire, Echo and Leather) was designed and directed by Angelika Kroker alone. Allerleihrauh was part of a vibrant East German underground fashion movement. It was featured in the 2009 documentary Comrade Couture – Ein Traum von Erdbeerfolie (Comrade Couture – A Dream in Strawberry Foil) by Marco Wilms, as well as in two exhibits: bohème und diktatur in der ddr (bohemia and dictatorship in the gdr, 1997) at the German Historical Museum in Berlin and In Grenzen frei. Mode, Fotografie. Underground in der DDR 1979-89 (Free Within Limits. Fashion, Photography. GDR-Underground 1979-89, 2009) at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Berlin.

Autoperforation Artists was an East German multimedia artists’ collective founded in Dresden in 1982 that existed until 1990. In their provocative live performances, they experimented with various materials—including blood and meat—and various media, including music, mime, and Super-8 film. The core members of the group were Micha Brendel, Else Gabriel, Rainer Görss and Via Lewandowsky; Ulf Wrede joined the group in 1988. The group disbanded in 1990.

Jürgen Böttcher/Strawalde (filmmaker, painter) was born on July 8, 1931 in Franken berg, Saxony. He studied at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts from 1949 to 1953. Because of ideological differences, he was blacklisted and thrown out of the Association for Visual Arts in fall 1961. Only in the 1980s was the originality of Böttcher’s artwork recognized. His paintings belong to important art collections, including those of the National Gallery in Berlin, Albertina in Vienna, Boston Public Library, Museum Ludwig in Cologne and Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. In addition to internationally known German museums, his paintings have been exhibited in Canada, France, Brazil, and Singapore. In 2012, the Lindenau-Museum in Altenburg hosted a retrospective entitled “STRAWALDE Jürgen Böttcher.”

As a filmmaker, Böttcher studied directing at the German Academy for Film (now “Konrad Wolf” Academy for Film and Television Potsdam-Babelsberg) from 1955 to 1960. He then worked as a director at the DEFA Studio for Documentary Films until 1991. Far from the DEFA documentary mainstream, Böttcher made over forty aesthetically provocative films influenced by his experience as a painter. Despite the recognition he received, his career was marked by problems with the authorities. His first documentary, Drei von vielen (Three of Many, 1961), a portrait of three amateur painters in the evening class he taught, was banned and not shown until 1988. His only
narrative feature film, *Jahrgang 45 (Born in ‘45, 1965)*, which was inspired by Italian neo-realism and has attained cult status among cineastes, was also banned. Most of Böttcher’s documentaries reflect his artistic interests. *Kurzer Besuch bei Hermann Glöckner (Hermann Glöckner: A Brief Visit, 1984)* is a portrait of one of the most important East German representatives of the constructivist art movement. The three films in his experimental trilogy *Verwandlungen (Transformations, 1981)* merge his talent as a filmmaker and painter, as they document on 35mm his overpainting postcards of three well-known paintings. His two full-length documentaries—*Die Mauer (The Wall, 1990)* and *Konzert im Freien (A Place in Berlin, 2001)*, both considered masterpieces by critics—also juxtapose history and art. Since 1994, Böttcher has shot video diaries, some of which he has shared with audiences. Böttcher lives in Berlin. [strawalde.de]

**Micha[el] Brendel** (multimedia artist) was born in 1959 in Weida, East Germany. From 1980 to 1982, he interned as a set design assistant at East German television, while taking evening classes in painting and graphic design at the Academy of Arts in Berlin. From 1982 to 1987, he studied set design with Günther Hornig at the Academy for Visual Arts in Dresden. He joined the multimedia artists’ group *Autoperforation Artists* in 1983 and was a member until it disbanded in 1990. Since the 1980s, his artistic photographs, installations and created objects have focused on experimenting with meat, bones, blood and skin. Critics have described his art as an intersection between anatomy and sculpture, medicine and art. His work has been exhibited at important international museums, including the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne (2010); Austrian Museum for Applied Arts, Vienna (2009); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2009) and the New National Gallery in Berlin (2003). The Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris also own some of his works. He lives and works in Berlin and Hohendorf. [micha-brendel.de]

**[Joachim] Hamster Damm** (comics artist, set designer) was born in 1965 in Saalfeld, East Germany. From 1986 until 1992, he studied set design with Volker Pfüller at the Academy of Art in Berlin-Weissensee. He has worked as a set designer, director and comics artist. In 1993, he joined the Neubrandenburg Kammertheater as a set designer, while also working at theaters in Berlin, Cottbus and Graz. Since 1997, he has been a guest set designer at the Schauspielhaus Bochum, Theater Aachen and the Berliner Ensemble, where he worked with Robert Wilson. In 1999, he presented his first version of the *Wassertheater (Water*
Theater) at the World Theater Festival in Berlin. In the following years, he expanded on the idea of a mobile theater and founded the project Fluchtkunst (Art on the Run), which put on performances throughout Germany, including at the documenta XII in Kassel. Damm has taught at the Academy for Performing Arts in Berlin and the Academy of Art in Berlin-Weissensee. Together with his mother, Sigrid Damm, he has published two books: as a photographer, Tage- und Nächtebücher aus Lappland (2002); and as an illustrator, “Geheimnisvoll offenbar” – Goethe im Berg (2009). [hamster-damm.de]

Peter Dittmer (media artist) was born in 1958 in Potsdam. From 1984 to 1985, he studied painting and graphic design at the Academy for Performing Arts in Dresden. In the following years he worked as a dramaturg, set designer, and director. At the end of the 1980s, he started focusing on audio and video performances, working on sound installations, sound objects, and works for computer from 1989 to 1992. Since then, Dittmer has experimented with his installation project in progress, Die Amme (The Nurse), which unites art, technology, and communication. In 2010-11, he participated in “Sounds. Radio–Kunst–Neue Musik” (“Sounds. Radio–Art–New Music”), an exhibit that explored radio as an artistic medium; it showed at the n.b.k. in Berlin (2010) and at the ZKM|Museum für Neue Kunst in Karlsruhe (2010-11). [dieamme.de]

Else Gabriel (multimedia artist) was born in 1962 in Halberstadt, East Germany. She was trained in religious music and studied set design at the Academy of Arts in Dresden. In 1982, Gabriel co-founded the Autoperforation Artists until 1990, when it was disbanded. Since 1988, Gabriel has worked with Ulf Wrede in various art projects in all media, as of 1991 under the name (e.) Twin Gabriel. Their art has been exhibited in Berlin, London, Chicago, Beijing and Rome. Beside her own artistic work, Else Gabriel has taught at various art schools in Germany, including at the Saar Academy for Performing Arts in Saarbrücken (2007-09), the Kassel Art Academy (2005-06), and the Hamburg Academy for Visual Arts (1997-2004). Since 2009, she has held a professorship in the free arts and sculpture at the Academy of Arts in Berlin-Weissensee. She lives and works in Berlin. [twingabriel.de]

Conny Hege (dancer) was born in Naumburg, East Germany. She studied classical ballet at the Dance School in Leipzig from 1975 to 1980. After graduating, she joined the pantomime group at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. In 1985, she enrolled at the Academy for Performing Arts in Berlin and at the Academy for Theater in Leipzig, where she studied choreography. At the La Villette exhibition in Paris in January 1990,
she presented her solo performance étude 89. In 1991, she returned to Paris with a full-evening’s solo performance. Conny Hege has worked as a dance teacher and choreographer since 1988. Besides her own artistic work, she taught dance movement at the Academy for Film and Television in Potsdam-Babelsberg from 1988 to 1994, and has worked as a dance teacher and choreographer for children and young people.

**Volker Henze** (painter, graphic artist, sculptor) was born in 1950 in Halle, East Germany. He studied at the Halle Academy for Industrial Design from 1969 to 1970 and studied painting with Gerhard Kettner and Lothar Zitzmann at the Academy of Visual Arts in Dresden from 1973 to 1977. Henze moved to Berlin in 1980, where he pursued his career as a painter. His works are now in several prestigious collections, including at the National Gallery in Berlin and the Berman Museum at Ursinus College. Henze has taught at a range of art schools, including evening classes in Hohenschönhausen Berlin (1999-2004) and at the Art Academy in Berlin-Weissensee (2001-04). From 2004 to 2006, he held a professorship in painting at Dortmund University. Since 2007, he has been a consultant for the Akademie für Staatliche Museen Berlin. Volker Henze continues to live and work as a painter, graphic artist and sculptor in Berlin. [volker-henze.de]

**Klaus Killisch** (painter, visual artist) was born in 1959 in Wurzen, near Leipzig. He studied painting with Heinrich Tessmer and Dieter Goltzsche at the Academy of Arts in East Berlin from 1981 to 1986. His work has been shown in many international exhibitions, including at the Museum of Modern Art New York (2012), the Tokyo Art Museum (2011), the Museum of Young Art in Frankfurt/Oder (2009), the New National Gallery in Berlin (2003), the Folkwang Museum in Essen (2002), the Goethe Institut in Washington D.C. (2002) and the Biennale in Venice (1990). Killisch co-founded the multimedia project *playin’* in 1990 and has recorded numerous CDs and performed many live concerts as part of this project. Klaus Killisch has lived and worked in Berlin since 1986. [killisch.com]

**Via Lewandowsky** (multimedia artist) was born in Dresden in 1963. He studied set design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden from 1982 to 1987. In those years, he was also a member of the *Autoperforation Artists*. Lewandowsky made his first Super-8 film in 1985. He moved to West Berlin a few days before the Wall opened. During the 1990s,
Lewandowsky received a grant as an artist-in-residence at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in New York City. Besides numerous one-man exhibitions—from Vienna and Amsterdam, to New York—he has also taken part in many group exhibitions, among them the *documenta IX* exhibit in Kassel and *Das XX. Jahrhundert: Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland* (Art of the 20th Century: A Century of Art in Germany), which took place in Berlin in 1999. Since 2000, Lewandowsky has created exhibitions that juxtapose art and science, or explore the issues of migration and politics. In 2008, he was involved in an exhibition on the migration of German Jews to Istanbul for the Jewish Museum in Munich. For the Jewish Museum in Berlin he created the *Galerie der verschwundenen Dinge* (Gallery of the Missing Things), and in 2011 he was involved in the exhibit *Heimatkunde* (Notion of Home) at the same museum. [vialewandwosky.de]

**Helga Paris** (photography) was born in 1938 in Gollnow (today Goleniów, Poland). She is a self-taught photographer who began her career in East Germany in 1967. One of the GDR’s leading photographers, Paris became known for her portrait series: of the banned punk scene in East Berlin (1981-1982); of people at Berlin pubs (1975); and of garbage men (1974). The series *Häuser und Gesichter* (Buildings and Faces) features photos she took of architecture in Halle from 1983 to 1985. This series was banned by East German officials because it showed buildings falling into disrepair; it was not exhibited until 1990, after the fall of the Wall. In 2003, Paris’ series of self-portraits, *Selbstbildnisse 1981-88*, was shown at the National Gallery in Berlin and attracted a great deal of attention. Her work has been shown all over the world, including as part of the 2009 exhibition *The Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in spring 2009. Helga Paris lives in Berlin.

**Sandow** (rock band) was founded in 1982 in Cottbus, East Germany, and named after a part of the city. Their experimental music was part of East Germany’s alternative subculture throughout the 1980s. After German unification, Sandow’s ironic single, “Born in the GDR,” became controversial when fans misinterpreted it as nostalgia for East Germany (*Ostalgie*). After many successful tours and CD releases, the group disbanded in 1999, but in 2005 the four current band members—Tilman Fürstenau (cello, bass), Chris Hinze (guitar), Kai-Uwe Kohlschmidt (vocals, guitar, lyrics), Lars Neugebauer (drums)—announced a new start.
for the band and in 2007-08 toured with spectacular success. The band is also features in the 1988 documentary *flüstern & SCHREIEN* (*whisper & SHOUT*), released by the DEFA Film Library. [sandow.de]

**Hanns Schimansky** (painter) was born in 1949 in Bitterfeld, East Germany. He studied agriculture at the University of Rostock from 1968 to 1972 and worked in the grain industry for five years. His interest in painting started while he was in school, when he took evening classes. Graphic artist Gerhard Kettner discovered and promoted his talent; in 1977, Schimansky won a scholarship for a master class with Kettner at the Academy of the Arts in Berlin. Since 1998, Hanns Schimansky has held a professorship in painting at the Berlin Art College. He lives in Berlin, has exhibited at prestigious museums in Germany and elsewhere, including in France, Sweden, and the USA. [galeriekondeyne.de]

**Agnes Wegner** was born in 1966 in Rostock. From 1987 to 1989, she headed a youth club in Berlin-Köpenick, before studying art history and political economy in Berlin from 1990 to 1997. Parallel to her studies, she took on freelance work for the Freundeskreis Künstlerhaus Bethanien and the Berlin Gallery Art-Acker. For many years, Wegner worked as Peter Dittmer’s artistic producer, and helped him to present his work in the 1990 La Villette exhibition in Paris. She has worked in various capacities for a wide range of arts events, including: Berlin International Film Festival; the *Berlin-Moscow/Moscow-Berlin* 1950-2000 exhibit; the arts and culture program during the FIFA Soccer Worldcup; and the *documenta XII* exhibit in Kassel. From 2008 to 2010, she was the head of exhibitions at the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin. Wegner was the business manager of the project ÜBER LEBENSKUNST and, since July 2012, has been the business manager for the Humboldt Lab Dahlem.

**Trak[ja] Wendisch** (painter, sculptor) was born in 1958 in Berlin. From 1977 to 1982, he studied painting with Dietrich Burger and Bernhard Heisig at the Academy for Design and Book Art in Leipzig. He has worked as a freelance painter and sculptor in Berlin since 1982. In 1985, he attended a master class with graphic artist Gerhard Kettner at the Academy of Art in Dresden. Wendisch has worked on international projects in Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. His works have been included in important exhibits, such as *Kunst der 80er in der DDR* (*GDR Art of the 1980s*) at the Museum für Bildende Künste in Leipzig (2012) and *Kunst in der DDR* (*Art in the GDR*) at the New National Gallery in Berlin (2003). Trak Wendisch continues to live in Berlin. [trak-wendisch.de]