

Bellies collective
Proposal for Hangar X

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1. Who is Bellies?

Bellies was officially established in early 2019 as a collective of friends, many of which happen to be musicians, artists, and creative practitioners, creating events together. The core premise of the collective is creating a strong, intimate, yet open and ever expanding community built on long-term personal ties, interdisciplinary collaborations, and what not. In hindsight, we could call our methods diy rave community values for the 21st century.

The collective organizes concerts and parties, puts out a zine, and organizes regular meet-ups as well as peer-to-peer open critiques. But it also spans beyond the momentary events in a network of support that, for instance, organized to shop for friends with weaker immunity during the height of corona lock-down, branches out to above mentioned creative collaborations between the individuals, and offers space for discourse. Even though a heavily expat community, the Bellies collective has always been very invested and engaged in the local, Berlin alternative culture. It has especially strong ties to the Neukolln neighborhood, where most of our events happen. We have also, among other things, supported the Loophole club in its struggle to survive, as we see it as one of the safe harbours of independent creatives, and one of the three founding members, Magdalena Jadwiga Härtelova, runs an open gallery showing international artists out of her bedroom at Kottbusser Damm. The collective has many collaborative ties to other diy and independent initiatives fostering slow, sustainable, autonomous community building powered by arts, such as the SOUP Archive experimental fashion, Trust Issues booking crew, Tennis Bar and Internet Explorer Records, and more.

The Bellies collective has no official membership, it is a moving structure of friends. Practically, the events are organized by the three founding members, curator and social practice artist Magdalena Jadwiga Härtelova, and musicians Josh Cowgill and John Broback, together with different members of the collective, depending on their interests. This creates a fluid hierarchy where responsibility and accountability is transparently assigned, but discussion on and re-making, re-imagining, of power structure is exercised on a regular basis.

To read the past Bellies zines, see: <https://www.mjhartelova.com/archivezines>

To see list of selected past events, see: <https://www.mjhartelova.com/archiveconcerts>

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2. Proposal for Rave Community Values Re-Re-Imagined

As an event-focused collective, now more than ever, we struggle to find (legal) space to gather. To be able to take part in the Hangar X space would provide us an opportunity to keep growing our community, keep up our regular events, but also, for us to give, expand, inspire and to be inspired. We would like to have an opportunity to gather once a month, to organize our peer-to-peer critique every odd month (for instance) and launch our loose series of events around diy rave community values every even month.

About peer-to-peer-critique: The open, peer-to-peer crit is a format Bellies have launched in the fall of 2019. It is an event that encourages people to share their creative practice, receive feedback, and together learn how to talk about art in its many forms. Each event presents three artworks, mixed so they represent different media -from electronic music tracks, to poetry, to short film, to visual art, to performance. They are selected from an open call so that they cover a wide range of artistic expressions and forms, as well as approaches to what is considered art. Bellies doesn't subscribe to the traditional Western notions of "professionalism" and rather seeks experimental openness, depth, and complexity. The artworks are then shown to the audience, without introducing the author or any context. One by one, they are discussed, first by a "panel" of two invited members of the collective, to start off the conversation, then the discussion is opened to the audience. The space of the conversation is actively and intentionally set so that it encourages diverse reactions, prevents usurpation of time and attention by individuals, and shows that we are all "experts" in ways, more than capable of forming and presenting notes on art. The experience with the peer-to-peer crit has been overwhelmingly positive so far. Much feedback has noted the empowering potential of learning together how to talk about art and how the diverse backgrounds of the collective members and the audience that gathers around Bellies events has provided feedback much more complex, interdisciplinary, and supportive than traditional academic or institutional environments.

About DIY rave community values program: The rave community values program would be a new, loose series of events circling around the potential of party and live music culture to bring together and organize towards inclusion, solidarity, and communal politics. During the quarantine, the founding members of the collective have researched on and built their own sound system, portable via cargo bike. It's name is Mitzi. As a tool to gather around, Mitzi has already proven essential to our capacity to organize safe, outdoor parties (our only possible way of gathering at the moment) as well as a tool of outreach and connecting (for instance, when Mitzi made possible the Actual Drag Race event raising money for the Berlin drag community). The rave community values program for the Hangar X would like to build and expand on that. In this framework, we would like to organize: a workshop sharing our skills and knowledge of building the system; a discussion on outdoor and other creative ways of (semi-) legal party gathering; film screenings of rave documentaries; reading groups of critical texts around rave history and culture, including radical thoughts on the complicated racial past of rave music and its possible, more inclusive and open futures; live music performances; guest lectures and workshop, etc, etc. During those, we would like to think together about the different diy rave values, how they manifest, how they resonate with the contemporary radical political organizing, as well as to think about the problematic and toxic parts of the club culture and how to fight them, and, last but not least, the possible strategies of resistance against capitalism connected to the rave community building and sharing. In other words, we would like to collectively, creatively re-imagine the rave as a better community for the current moment.

Ideally, we would like to produce a range of material from this (year-long?) program, including zines, videos, and audio recordings. We would like to collaborate with the other participants of the Hangar X

space on these programs and put them in the broader context of other cultural and political activities happening in Neukölln and beyond.

3. Space Engagement

Together with the nearly pop-up character of the Bellies events, happening often at different spaces and having to rely on diy tactics and space creating, comes Bellies' modularity and flexibility. At Hangar X, we would like to operate in a similar manner, to keep re-configuring, expanding and contracting as necessary.

We would like to store the portable sound system (currently comprising of a subwoofer, top cabinet, and a kick bin, powered by a deep-cycle 12v battery) at the hangar space, available under simple peer-to-peer contract conditions to other initiatives in the space. In collaborations with local designers and architects, we would like to create, throughout the year, a further diy modular system that could serve for seating, staging, and exhibiting at once, taking into account the specific requirements of underground organizing in Berlin. Also because all Bellies live music events aim to include collaborations with visual artists.

Depending on the event, we would like to expand to, at times, a significant part of the main hangar space, the outside, the shared rooms for a more intimate atmosphere, as well as to go out to the Neukölln streets when appropriate.

As Bellies is a collective including members of a variety of other initiatives, it is safe to assume that our engagement with the space could bring on further events and programming, such as the clothes and self-creating workshops organized by the SOUP Archive, ambient sleepovers by Bellies friend Diane Barbé, political organization with Der Neuköllner and Migrantifa Berlin, poetry evenings by Bridge, and much more.