

BG

Press Kit
Berlin, 9.7.25

Monira Al Qadiri, SS Murex (Series), 2023. Lightbox Installation, 25 x 25 x 7cm, Photo: © Markus Tretter



Monira Al Qadiri

Hero

11.7.25–17.8.26

BERLINISCHE
GALERIE
MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART



Contents

Press release

P.3

Biography

P.6

Exhibition text

P.10

Handout

P.11

Press images

P.12

Contact

P.14

Monira Al Qadiri, SS Murex (series) (2023), Lightbox installation,
25 x 25 x 7cm, Photo: © Markus Treter



Monira Al Qadiri

Hero

11.7.25 – 17.8.26

Opening
Thur 10.7.25, 7 pm

The Berlinische Galerie presents “Hero”, a major solo exhibition by Monira Al Qadiri. The show focuses on her long-standing exploration of the sociocultural, environmental, and political dimensions of the global oil industry. Through a complex ensemble of sculpture, video, and painting, the artist examines how human activity has turned crude oil into an engine of prosperity, but also of exploitation, geopolitical interests, and structural dependencies—a raw material that is inextricably linked to demands for power, inequality, and colonial dynamics. At the centre of the exhibition is the oil tanker, which serves as an emblematic figure of our present. This floating behemoth represents a dying industry with a toxic legacy that continues to affect the oceans, the air, the earth, and ultimately our own bodies. The artist considers this monstrous vessel from an equally poetic and critical perspective—and reimagines it as the protagonist of a narrative about excess, power, and decay.

Al Qadiri’s installation comprises several, predominantly new groups of works. A recurring visual element is the colour red. It dominates the space and refers to the highly toxic biocide tributyltin (TBT), an anti-fouling agent added to paint in shipbuilding that has caused massive damage to marine ecosystems. In the artist’s work, this colour becomes a symbol of the contradictory nature of petrochemical products—oscillating between efficiency and destruction, comfort and contamination.

The “SS Murex series” (2023) marks the start of the exhibition: porthole-shaped light boxes display archive images of historic oil tankers, which are all named Murex—after a type of snail that was once a popular decorative object in the Victorian era. This name was given to one of the first modern tankers back in 1892; it was built by an oil company that originated from a family business in the seashell trade. In the decades that followed, hundreds of oil tankers were named after seashells and snail species.

The centrepiece of the main room is the monumental mural “Hero”, which portrays the side view of a gigantic oil tanker in dramatic shades of black and red. It radiates industrial power—simultaneously captivating and threatening—and provides a commentary on the strategic significance of crude oil in the geopolitical power structure. At the end of this exhibition space, the bow of a tanker emerges as a sculptural element: “Bulbous Bow” (2025), a large-format fibreglass sculpture, echoes the characteristic shape of the so-called bulbous bow—a feat

of technical engineering that reduces a ship's water resistance and improves its seaworthiness.

For the work "Seasons in Hell" (2025), eleven adapted tanker models are distributed around the room in a wave formation and function as narrators of geological and human history. The exhibition concludes with the new video work "Oh Body of Mine" (2025, 10 min.), in which Al Qadiri takes a closer look at a ship-breaking yard for decommissioned supertankers in Bangladesh. Dismantling these ships is an industry that is primarily located in countries of the so-called Global South. The majority of European ships are dismantled in the three largest ship-breaking yards, which are found in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Due to the numerous toxic substances involved, this is a complex and dangerous process that also results in the social and environmental costs being exported, too. Accompanied by an adaptation of Arthur Rimbaud's poem "The Drunken Boat" (1871), Al Qadiri's images depict apocalyptic-looking scenes and serve as a sombre conclusion to this multifaceted installation.

About the artist

Monira Al Qadiri (b. 1983, Dakar, Senegal) is a Kuwaiti artist educated in Japan. Spanning sculpture, installation, film and performance, Al Qadiri's multifaceted practice is mainly based on research into the cultural histories of the Gulf region. Her interpretation of the Gulf's "petro-culture" is manifested through speculative scenarios that take inspiration from science fiction, autobiography, traditional practices and pop culture, resulting in uncanny and covertly subversive works. She currently lives and works in Berlin.

Her solo exhibitions include "Deep Fate" (Kiasma Museum, Helsinki, 2025); "The Archaeology of Beasts" (Bozar, Brussels, 2024); "Benzene Float" (Halle Verriere, Meisenthal 2024); "Haunted Water" (UCCA Dune, China, 2023), "Mutant Passages" (Kunsthauus Bregenz, Austria, 2023); "Holy Quarter" (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2022); "Refined Vision" (Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, 2022); "Holy Quarter" (Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2020); "Empire Dye" (Kunstverein Göttingen, 2019); "The Craft" (Gasworks, London, 2017); "Attempts to Read the World Differently" (Stroom Den Haag, the Hague, 2017); "Muhawwil" (Sultan Gallery, Kuwait, 2014).

Select group exhibitions include Sharjah Biennial 16 (Sharjah, 2025); Desert X Al Ula (Al Ula, 2024); 24th Biennial of Sydney (Sydney, 2023-24); 8th Boras Biennial (Sweden, 2024); Sharjah Biennial 15 (Sharjah, 2023); 15th Triennial of Small

Sculpture, Fellbach (2022); Asia Art Biennial, Taiwan (2021); Dubai Expo 2020 (2021); "Our World is Burning" (Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2020); "Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars" (MoMA PS1, New York, 2019-20); Asia Pacific Triennial (Brisbane, 2018); Lulea Biennial (Sweden, 2018); Athens Biennial (Athens, 2018). In 2022, Al Qadiri was featured in the Venice Biennale's central exhibition "The Milk of Dreams."

Accompanying events and outreach in English

Wed 16.7.25, 7 pm

Open Air Video Art and Artist Talk
with Monira Al Qadiri (in English)

Free admission, no registration needed.

Guided tours in English take place every Saturday at 4:15 pm. No extra charge to ticket-holders. No advance booking required.

Thu 4.12.25, 7 pm

Lecture Performance with Monira Al Qadiri
(in English)

Free admission, with online registration.

Press images

berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/monira-al-qadiri

Online tickets

bg.berlin/en/tickets

Social Media

#MoniraAlQadiriBG
#BerlinischeGalerie



Contact **Berlinische Galerie**

Sascha Perkins
Head of Communications and Education
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 829
perkins@berlinischegalerie.de

Paula Rosenboom
Communications
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 831
rosenboom@berlinischegalerie.de

Berlinische Galerie
Berlin's Museum of Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture
Alte Jakobstraße 124–128
10969 Berlin
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 600
berlinischegalerie.de

Admission 10€, concessions 6€
Every 1st Wednesday of the month
reduced admission for all
Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm
Tue closed

Contact **Press**

Karoline Köber
Communications & Strategic Consulting
Tel +49 174 53 54 165
mail@karolinekoeber.de

Biography

Monira Al Qadiri

Solo Exhibitions

2025

- Hero, Berlinische Galerie
- Burning Desire, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Sweden
- Deep Fate, Kiasma Museum, Helsinki, Finland

2024

- The Archaeology of Beasts, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium
- Holy Quarter, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia, USA
- Benzene Float, Halle Verriere, Meisenthal, Frankreich
- Siloed Beings, Bergson, Munich
- USURPER, Koenig Galerie, Berlin

2023

- Landscapes of Extraction, De Baile, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Floating World, ICD Brookfield Place, Dubai, UAE
- Haunted Water, UCCA Dune, China
- Mutant Passages, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria

2022

- Holy Quarter, Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain
- Refined Vision, Blaffer Art Museum, Texas, USA
- Behind the Sun, Digital Arts Resource (DARC), Ottawa, Canada

2021

- Monira AL Qadiri: IBB Video Space, Berlinische Galerie
- Diver, Art Gallery of Burlington, Ontario, Canada

2020

- Holy Quarter, Haus der Kunst, Munich

2019

- Empire Dye, Kunstverein Göttingen

2018

- Reservoir Bits, Circl Pavilion, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2017

- The Craft, Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon
- The Craft, Gasworks, London, UK
- Bubble, ACUD Macht Neu, Berlin
- Legacy, Athr Gallery, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- Muhawwil (Transformer), Virginia Commonwealth University, Doha, Qatar
- Attempts to Read the World Differently, Stroom, The Hague, The Netherlands

2016

- Melting the Sky, duo exhibition, 1x1 Gallery, Dubai, UAE

2014

- Muhawwil (Transformer), Sultan Gallery, Kuwait

2011

- The Tragedy of Self, Sultan Gallery, Kuwait

2010

- The Tragedy of Self, Harmas de Fabre Gallery, Tokyo, Japan

2009

- The Tragedy of Self, Tokyo Wonder Site, Tokyo, Japan

Group Exhibitions (selection)

2025

- Habitats, 16. Fellbach Triennial of Small Sculpture
- Wilds Uplands, Bradford, UK
- Notes on War and Peace, Gres Art 671, Bergamo, Italy
- Postcards from the Future, PoMo, Trondheim, Norway
- To Carry, Sharjah Biennial 16, Sharjah, UAE

2024

- Ten Thousand Suns, 24th Biennial of Sydney, Australia
- Poetics of Power, Kunsthaus Graz, Austria
- Siren Songs, Villa Medici, Rome, Italy
- Layers, Loops, Lines, 8th Boras Biennial, Boras, Sweden
- Desert X Al Ula, Ai Ula, Saudi Arabia
- Rayons Jouet, Hangar Y, Paris, France
- Rewilding, Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel, Switzerland
- The Bird Show, ERES Foundation, Munich
- Humain Autonome, MAC VAL, France

2023

- Our Ecology: Towards a Planetary Living, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- After Laughter Comes Tears, MUDAM, Luxembourg
- Noor Riyadh, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Eintauchen in die Kunst / Diving into Art, Museum unter Tage, Bochum
- Antefutur, CAPC Bordeaux, France
- New Visions, The Henie Onstad Triennial for Photography and New Media, Høvikodden, Norway
- Sharjah Biennial 15: Thinking Historically in the Present, Sharjah, UAE
- So it Appears, ICA Richmond, Virginia, USA
- Prendre Corps au Monde, CAC Passerelle, Brest, France

2022

- The Milk of Dreams, The 59. International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
- Is it Morning for You Yet?, 58. Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, USA
- The Vibration of Things, The 15th Triennial of Small Sculpture, Fellbach
- Devonian (Public Sculpture), Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- Super Futures, Selfridges x Reference Festival, London, UK
- Space for Kids, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria
- Pattern Recognition, Kunstpalais Erlangen
- Made in X, Kunsthalle Extra City, Antwerp, Belgium

- Blue Assembly: Oceanic Thinking, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, Australia
- Fossil Experience, Prater Gallery, Berlin

2021

- Feeling the Stones, Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennial, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Dubai Expo 2020, Dubai, VAE
- Phantasmopolis, 2021 Asia Art Biennial, Taipei, Taiwan
- Experiences of Oil, Stavanger Art Museum, Stavanger, Norway
- Sharbaka: Entanglement / Attunement, New York University, New York, USA
- Thinking like an Octopus, or: Tentacular Grasp, Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen
- Oil: Horror and Beauty in the Petrol Age, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg
- The Sun Machine is Coming Down, Berliner Festspiele, Berlin
- Living Content: Under Pressure, Mobius Gallery, Bucharest, Romania
- A I S T I T I | Coming to our Senses, Taidehalli, Helsinki, Finland
- One Escape at a Time, Seoul Mediacity Biennale, Seoul, South Korea
- Studio Berlin, Sammlung Boros and Berghain, Berlin
- Sunrise | Sunset, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin
- Guangzhou Image Triennale, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China
- Ruhr Ding: Klima, Urbane Künste Ruhr, Recklinghausen

- X is not a Small Country, MAAT, Lisbon, Portugal
- Dark Mofo Festival, Tasmania, Australia
- Rising Festival, Melbourne, Australia

Performances

2022

- Suspended Delirium, Theater Commons Tokyo, Shibaura House, Tokyo, Japan

2021

- Suspended Delirium, robotics performance in collaboration with Raed Yassin, Berliner Festspiele, Berlin

2019

- Phantom Beard, Aichi Triennial, Nagoya, Japan
- Phantom Beard, Kunstenfestival-desarts, Brussels, Belgium
- Phantom Beard, premiere, Wiener Festwochen, Wien, Austria

2017

- Feeling Dubbing, Theater der Welt Festival, Hamburg
- Feeling Dubbing, Kunstenfestival-desarts, premiere, Brussels, Belgium

Residencies

2023

- AIUla artist residency, Al Ula, Saudi Arabia

2018

- RAW Material Company, Dakar, Senegal

2016 - 2017

- Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2012

- Ashkal Alwan (Lebanese Association of Plastic Arts), Home Workspace Program, Beirut, Lebanon

2010

- The Watermill Center, New York, USA

Curating

2017

- Lasting Impressions, Thuraya Al-Baqsami retrospective exhibition, Sharjah Art Museum, UAE

Lecture Performances & Talks

2021

- Effeminate Pharaoh, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium

2020

- Dark Genesis, Haus der Kunst, Munich

2019

- Petrochemicals in Purgatory, The Influencers, CCCB, Barcelona, Spain

2018

- The Trans-Pacific Plant, Tashweesh Festival, Beursschouwburg, Brussels, Belgium
- American Century: The End, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

- The Gardening of Ghosts, RAW Material Company, Dakar, Senegal

- The Petro-Historical Complex, Nuqat, Kuwait

- The Petro-Historical Complex, CIRCL Pavilion, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

- You Send Me, March Meeting: Active Forms – futurism panel discussion, Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE

2017

- American Century: The End, Gasworks, London, UK

- Face, Virginia Commonwealth University, Doha, Qatar

2016

- The Beautiful Sadness, Kampnagel Theater, Hamburg
- The Color of Polycarbonates, Global Art Forum, Art Dubai, UAE

2015

- Apocalyptic Aspirations, American University of Kuwait (AUK), Kuwait

2014

- Alien Nation, New York Universität Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Do you follow? Art in Circulation #2, ICA-offsite artist's talk, London, UK
- Myth Busters, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria

2013

- Decadence in the Gulf: Experiments in Motion, Exeter University, UK

2012

- Neo-Japonisme: Evolution of the Japanese Contemporary Image, Saint-Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon

2010

- The Beautiful Sadness, Hiroshima City University, Japan

2009

- The Beautiful Sadness, Tokyo London, UK
- Myth Busters, Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, Austria

Prizes and Awards

2022

- Triennial award of the Triennial of Small Sculpture, Fellbach

2019

- Nominated for the Future Generation Art Prize, Kiev, Ukraine

2018

- Nominated for the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Ammodo Tiger Shorts, The Netherlands

Commissions

2025

- The Children of Smokeless Fire, Wild Uplands, Bradford, UK

2024

- W.A.B.A.R., Desert X Al Ula, Saudi Arabia

2022

- Zephyr, five permanent public sculpture, Art22 – Qatar Museums, Doha, Qatar



- Devonian, Hayward Gallery,
London, UK

2021

- Chimera, permanent public
sculpture, Dubai Expo 2020.
Dubai, UAE
- Suspended Delirium, Robotics
Performance in Kollaboration
with Raed Yassin, Berliner
Festspiele, Berlin

2019

- Phantom Beard, Theater
Performance, Wiener Fest-
wochen / Kunstenfestival-
desarts / Aichi Triennial
Co-Commission

2018

- Romanesco Dream, public sculp-
ture, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- DIVER, Video, Asia Pacific
Triennial, Abu Dhabi Art, Ware-
house 421, Durub Al-Tawaya,
UAE

2017

- Feeling Dubbing, Theater
Performance, Kunstfestival-
desarts, Brussels, Belgium
- Alien Technology II, public art
commission, Northern Spark
Festival, Minneapolis, USA

2014

- Alien Technology, public art com-
mission, Arab Fund for Arts & Cul-
ture (AFAC), Dubai, UAE

Exhibition text

Monira Al Qadiri intensively examines the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of the oil industry. Her works shed light on the connections between crude oil as the leading fossil fuel of the twentieth century and the rise of consumer capitalism.

Al Qadiri has developed several new groups of works for the Berlinische Galerie. The central motif of the exhibition is the oil tanker: Not only a gigantic means of transportation on the world's oceans, but also a symbol of power-political interests, global inequality, and ecological crises. Its monumental presence tells of an industry that enables a comfortable lifestyle while simultaneously destroying the planet. Despite the emerging shift towards renewable energies, the toxic legacy of oil continues to be felt: in the sea and in the air, in cities, infrastructures, and even in our bodies.

Monira Al Qadiri (*1983 in Senegal) grew up in Kuwait. She completed her doctorate in Japan and currently lives in Berlin. Her work has been featured in major international exhibitions, including the Venice Biennale "The Milk of Dreams" (2022), and in solo shows such as "Mutant Passages" at Kunsthaus Bregenz (2023), "The Archaeology of Beasts" at Bozar Brussels (2024), and "Deep Fate" at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki (2025).

Handout

1 SS Murex, 2023

Plexiglass, light boxes, C-Prints

One of the world's first modern oil tankers, SS Murex, was named after a spiky seasnail found on the ocean floor. Built by the founder of an oil company, the name reflected the family's earlier trade: buying and selling decorative seashells, a Victorian-era trend. This naming sparked a tradition—hundreds of oil tankers were later named after seasnails. "SS Murex" presents illuminated ships' portholes, offering views of transoceanic movement. Archival images show murex-named tankers with toxic red hull paint—silent destroyers of deep-sea life, mirroring the legacy of fossil fuels.

2 Hero, 2025

Acrylic paint on wall, 6 x 25 m

The work positions the oil tanker as the exhibition's lead character. It is placed in the spotlight: A monstrous vehicle that embodies a century of mobility, trade, and globalization, as well as global inequalities and the climate emergency. Rendered at roughly one-tenth of the scale, the tanker radiates industrial power—simultaneously captivating and threatening—while asking: Where does the world stand in the story of fossil fuel — and how long should this 'Hero' remain on stage?

3 Bulbous Bow, 2025

Fiberglass, 300 x 212 x 206 cm

This sculpture shows the part of the hull that engineers design to cut wave drag. It is usually hidden just below the waterline. By isolating the bulb from the rest of the vessel and positioning it at eye level, the artist highlights the ambivalence of this efficiency-enhancing tool:

Although it reduces fuel consumption, this saving is used for an even greater exploitation of resources.

4 Seasons in Hell, 2025

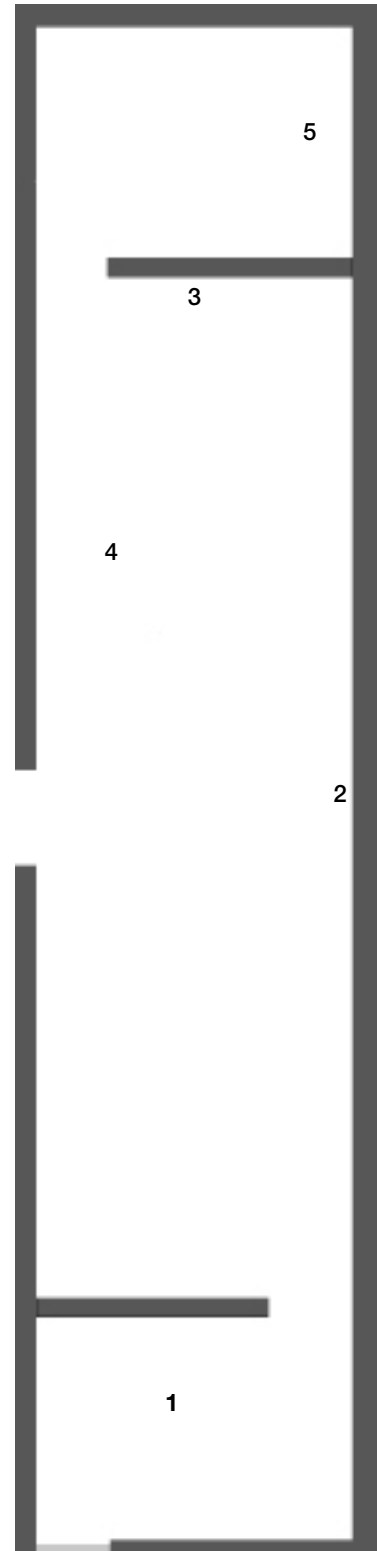
Installation of 11 tanker models

The work presents eleven hand-made model tankers. Their toy-like scale feels harmless, yet each one stands in for a real super-tanker—three football fields long and able to haul millions of barrels of crude. Replacing corporate logos, every ship bears a fragment from Arthur Rimbaud's 1873 poem "A Season in Hell".

5 Oh Body of Mine, 2025

HD video, sound (10 min.)

Shot in the ship-breaking yards of Chittagong, Bangladesh, the film tracks decommissioned super-tankers as they are beached, cut open, and dismantled by hand. A spoken adaptation of Rimbaud's "The Drunken Boat" (1871) drifts over the imagery, its visionary voyage now reversed: the vessel has reached shore only to be dismembered. Here, the costs of global trade are exposed —pollution and precarity are outsourced to the Global South, while wealth goes elsewhere. The film closes the exhibition on a note of reckoning: every tanker's epic begins and ends with oceans, resources, and human lives pushed to the breaking point.



BG

Press images



Monira Al Qadiri, SS Murex (Series), 2023, Lightbox Installation, 25 x 25 x 7cm, Photo: © Markus Tretter



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Installation view „Monira Al Qadiri. Hero“, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Roman März



Portrait Monira Al Qadiri, Berlinische Galerie, Photo: © Harry Schnitger



Contact **Berlinische Galerie**

Sascha Perkins
Head of Communications and Education
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 829
perkins@berlinischegalerie.de

Paula Rosenboom
Communications
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 831
rosenboom@berlinischegalerie.de

Contact **Press**

Karoline Köber
Communications & Strategic Consulting
Tel +49 174 53 54 165
mail@karolinekoeber.de

Contact **Programme**

Christine van Haaren
Head of Education and Outreach
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 836
haaren@berlinischegalerie.de

Katrin-Marie Kaptain
Education
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 837
kaptain@berlinischegalerie.de

Berlinische Galerie
Berlin's Museum of Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture
Alte Jakobstraße 124–128
10969 Berlin
Tel +49 (0)30 789 02 600
berlinischegalerie.de