

The theme of my Blocker project is Street Art in Berlin and its relationship with social issues such as homelessness. When arriving in Berlin, I thought I would focus more on art itself, such as graffiti and murals. However, after exploring the city more and seeing how art is a tool used to express people's thoughts on socio-political issues, I realized the power art has in Berlin.

I decided to write more on socio-political topics when I blogged about homelessness and how Berlin addresses it. My Blocker project includes [pictures of the posters on homeless people in Berlin. One of the posters has a photograph of an older lady that says, "Ich schlafe nachts oft in der S-Bahn," which means "I often sleep in the S-Bahn at night." The other lady says, "Ich suche eine Wohnung," which means "I'm looking for an apartment." Interestingly, even though I live in New York City, where homelessness is a huge issue, seeing real people's experiences made it easier to empathize with them. Berlin did a great job enabling people to understand the impact homelessness has on others by showing what their daily lives look like. Instead, in the US, we have informative posters and billboards on homelessness, but to be frank, it lacks empathy.

For example, I included a picture of a billboard that reads, "For some, this is indoor advertising." implying that homeless people's "indoor advertising" is outside. Although the billboard does make people aware of homelessness, it intends to shame a non-homeless person. I don't get to empathize with the homeless, nor do I get a better understanding of who they are. However, the posters in Berlin are impactful because it invites people to understand the struggle of the homeless community, such as trying to find an apartment or sleeping in the subway station. These posters show how the homeless are trying to better themselves, which counters the narrative we give them, such as their laziness or they did it to themselves. We tend to forget that someone lives this lifestyle every day, and we only see a glimpse of what they go through. What's so powerful about these posters; it gives people an actual perspective of what homeless people go through as if they are having a conversation with us. Berlin not only uses art as a way to address socio-political issues such as homelessness, but it also allows us to be human beings by empathizing with others in situations that don't concern us.

I remembered a conversation with a friend who lives in Berlin and how it is difficult to find a place to live in Berlin because of its opportunities for international people. Still, it is disheartening to see the effects. After seeing these posters, I

connected that as more people who don't live in Berlin, including me, go there for unique opportunities; more Berliners lose a place to live.