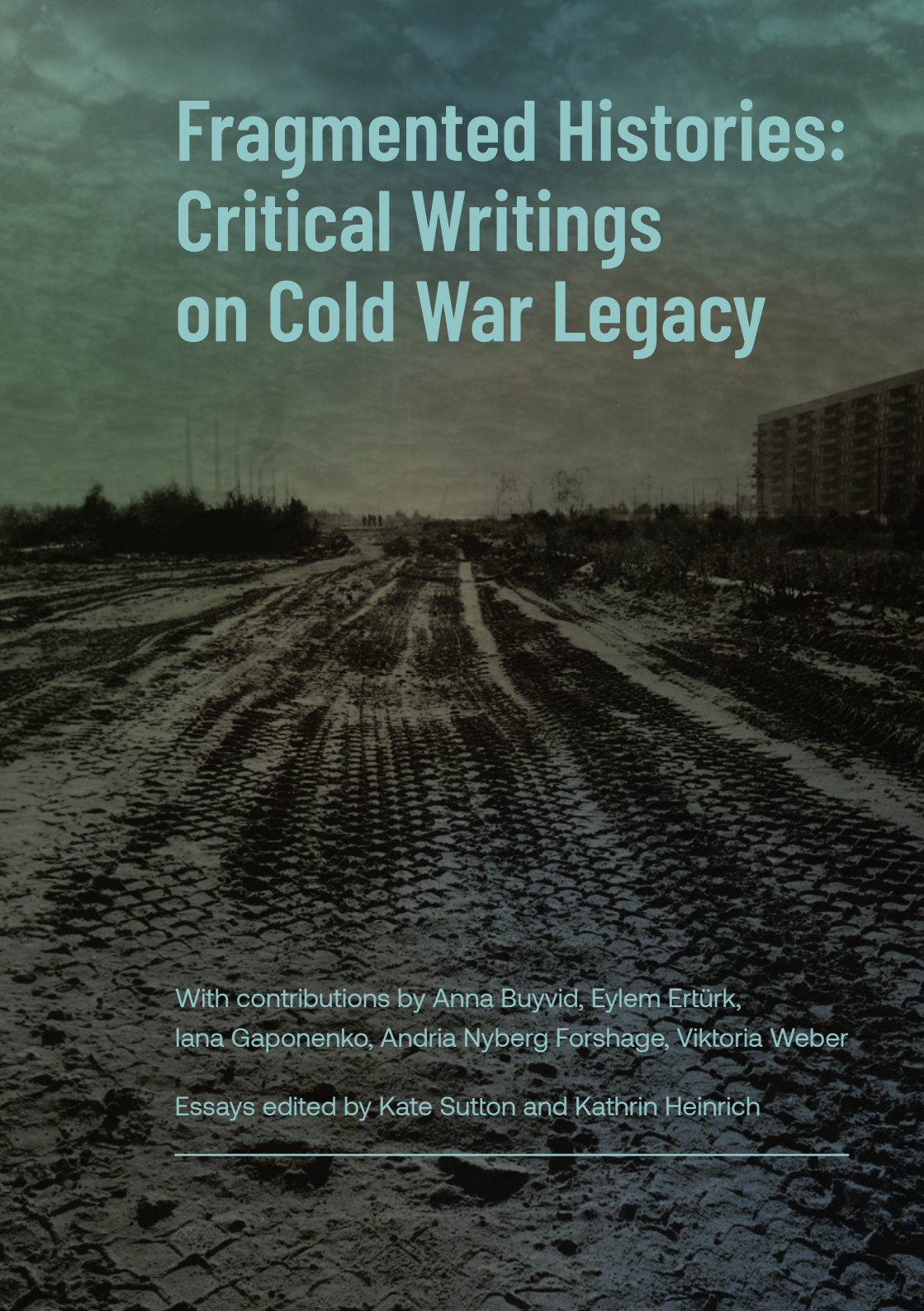
Fragmented Histories: Critical Writings on Cold War Legacy



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Essays edited by Kate Sutton and Kathrin Heinrich

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The publication features the critical writings produced during the Training in Art Criticism held on November 11-12, 2024, as part of the Creative Europe project *(In)Visible Traces. Artistic Memories of the Cold War*.

The project is realized by BLOCKFREI and hosted by DAS WEISSE HAUS.

Training in Art Criticism, DAS WEISSE HAUS, November 2024.

Documentation of the visit to the exhibition “Forms of the Shadow,” Secession, November 2024.

Nevena Janković

Art Criticism Training Program – (In)Visible Traces. Artistic Memories of the Cold War

As part of the Creative Europe project *In(Visible) Traces: Artistic Memories of the Cold War*, the Art Criticism Training program was a two-day intensive workshop designed to equip five emerging art critics, curators, and cultural professionals with the tools to critically engage with Cold War-era cultural heritage. Selected via an open call, participants gathered at DAS WEISSE HAUS in Vienna on November 11–12, 2024, to explore the intersection of art, memory, and politics, deepening their understanding of the cultural legacies of the Cold War.

Led by experienced art critics **Kate Sutton** and **Kathrin Heinrich**, the training combined theoretical discussions, hands-on writing exercises, and site visits. Participants explored Cold War-related landmarks in Vienna, including the Red Army Soldier monument at Schwarzenbergplatz, and attended the *Forms of the Shadow* exhibition at Secession. The program also featured a guest presentation by artist, researcher, and curator Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair, who introduced her recently published book *Performing History: Public Commemoration of World War II in the Context of the Russo-Ukrainian War*. Through discussion and analysis of her video work, participants reflected on artistic interventions that challenge historical narratives.

A key outcome of the workshop was the production of critical texts by each participant, refined with mentorship and editorial support. These writings were subsequently published on the dwhX platform of DAS WEISSE HAUS and the BLOCKFREI website.

Program Structure and Methodology

The training adopted a multifaceted approach, integrating historical context, critical theory, and practical writing techniques. The program followed a structured progression, beginning with conceptual discussions and culminating in applied critical writing.

Prior to the workshop, participants submitted a draft text (up to 1,000 words), enabling mentors to provide preliminary feedback. This ensured that discussions during the training were focused and personalized.

The **first day** of the program emphasized Austria's historical framework, examining themes of neutrality, occupation, and the long-term cultural influence of Cold War politics. This provided a foundation for analyzing Cold War artistic production beyond rigid ideological divisions.

Later that day, participants engaged with Ekaterina Shapiro-Obermair's artistic and curatorial practice, discussing her book and analyzing her video work, which directly relates to the workshop's themes. The session encouraged reflection on how contemporary artistic interventions challenge and reshape historical narratives.

The day concluded with participants presenting their draft texts, engaging in group discussions, and receiving mentor feedback. This interactive exchange fostered critical dialogue and helped refine their writing for publication.

The **second day** of the program focused on the craft of art criticism, ethical considerations in writing, and refining participants' critical texts through feedback sessions.

The morning session began with two lectures by the program's mentors, offering insight into contemporary art criticism and its evolving landscape. Kate Sutton's presentation, *Amateur Hour: The Deskilling of Art Criticism*, explored shifting attitudes towards expertise in art writing, questioning the changing role of the critic in today's cultural sphere. This was followed by Kathrin Heinrich's session, *Ethics and Economy of Art Writing*, which addressed key challenges in the field, including conflicts of interest, journalistic integrity, and the precarious conditions of contemporary art writing. Both discussions encouraged participants to reflect critically on their own practice and the broader structures that shape the profession.

In the afternoon session, participants took part in the writing and editing process, refining their texts based on mentor and peer feedback. This hands-on session emphasized strengthening arguments, improving clarity, and structuring critical essays effectively.

To further contextualise their writings, participants explored key representations of Cold War cultural memory, including the Red Army Soldier monument at Schwarzenbergplatz and the Forms of the Shadow exhibition that was on view at Secession at the time of the training. These visits served as case studies for analyzing how historical narratives are constructed, interpreted, and challenged through artistic representation. Discussions at these sites deepened participants' understanding of the intersection between history, politics, and contemporary art.

The program concluded with final reflections, allowing participants to discuss their texts and share insights gained throughout the workshop. By the end of the two-day program, they had sharpened their critical writing skills, expanded their perspectives on the role of art criticism in shaping historical and cultural discourse, and broadened their professional networks.

Documentation of the visit to the exhibition "Forms of the Shadow," Secession, November 2024.

Marlen Matus, from the series “Civilisation”, 1976-1979, gelatin silver print,
courtesy of Konstantin Matus

Anna Buyvid

Wrapped in the (Iron) Curtain.

Closed systems can develop in an unpredictable way. With the notion of (artistic) freedom becoming ever more relevant in today’s global context, it is useful to review experiences of art scenes in countries that may lack the infrastructure for contemporary art and to discover the social possibilities of alternative art movements and self-organised initiatives in suppressed political environments.

Take the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, opportunities for the circulation of contemporary art were limited. While Post-Wall scholarship has done much to establish the divides between the “Official” and “Unofficial” art scenes in Moscow and Leningrad, one important and often overlooked phenomenon was the alternative tendencies of photo clubs. In the Soviet realm, photography was considered a lesser art form. It mainly served its direct, documentary task. For a short period during the early Soviet years, there was space for formal experimentation. Major figures including Alexander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky pushed the limits of the genre, developing a body of abstract photography. Soon these efforts would be suppressed. With the growth of totalitarianism, photography’s main task was to observe and capture a select reality. Official Soviet photography was rapidly turning into a dream factory, filling the pages of newspapers with happy milkmaids and enthusiastic miners. Sots-realism (socialist realism) became the predominant style. After all, the propaganda machine depended upon it.

At the same time, photography was one of the few creative formats capable of cutting through a large number of the limitations imposed by the system of official/unofficial art matrix, particularly during the period of Khrushchev’s Thaw–a time of relative cultural and political openness in the Soviet Union. Held as distinct from other fine arts, photography was not welcomed into official exhibition spaces and certainly not into museums. There were two paths available for professional photographers: reportage or technical illus-

tration. For amateurs, however, photography became wildly popular, spreading through the USSR via a network of photo clubs.

It's hard to imagine today, but in the mid-century USSR, a person with a photo camera was typically perceived as a menace–an onlooker, a spy, a peril. Spy mania was one of the unified cultural phenomena of the Cold War, both in the West and East. In Soviet territories, photographers would be easily labelled as a threat. In 1954, when Henri Cartier-Bresson became the first Western photographer to be admitted to the Soviet Union, he was followed by governmental agents everywhere he went. The same was true with Howard Sochurek and the Dior models who posed for him in Moscow in 1959. Street photography was a risky genre in the USSR, and many street captures were, in fact, semi-staged, "official", propaganda-friendly visions.

Certain photo clubs—though not all—could issue membership cards that provided a sense of legitimacy if a random photographer was deemed suspicious and stopped by police or reported by alert citizens. More than this protection, however, these clubs, which were typically established within local trade union organisations or state enterprises, offered a sense of community, a space for socializing, for the borrowing of equipment and printing rooms. The first photo club in the USSR was established at the Vyborgsky DK (Vyborg House of Culture) in Leningrad in 1953. By the 1970s, amateur photography had gained significant popularity. Some photo clubs had grown into sizable organizations, with hundreds of members. A few photo clubs, like Moscow's Novator, which was established in 1961, were even allowed to participate in international forums and competitions. As in many cases, this creative network allowed governmental agents to watch and observe the community from both inside and out, now hiding behind the lens of an amateur photographer.

The state's control over photo clubs was mainly noticeable during their semi-professional exhibitions. As the general public grew more attuned to even the self-organised and small-scale exhibitions tucked in the corridors of the Houses of Culture, local agents and censors were required to check the content and "zalitovat" the exhibit. A term originally used in the USSR to refer to text, it referred to the necessity to certify with the Glavlit censor when obtaining permission for publication.

The popularity of non-official photography eventually led to the formation of experimental and alternative photography groups within photo clubs. This was particularly fascinating, as most members had no art education and came from various STEM backgrounds. They were neither professional photographers nor professional artists. They worked mainly intuitively, with extremely limited access to information, especially to the Western visual culture, trying to grasp what is now known as contemporary photography.

Established in Ukraine during the Soviet period, two influential photo clubs eventually acquired the status of schools. The Kharkiv School is still active and is probably the most renowned today because of its key figure, Boris Mikhailov. The other prominent association was the Dnipropetrovsk School, established within the photo club Dnepr (Dnipro), founded by Marlen Matus in 1978. It has left a continuing imprint on contemporary photography in Ukraine today, particularly in its influence on exploring alternative artistic forms.

Dnipropetrovsk (currently Dnipro) was a large industrial Soviet Ukrainian city with an (un)certain cultural narrative. In art circles, it is primarily known today as the hometown of Ilya Kabakov, but more generally, it is known as the location of one of the most brutal specialized psychiatric hospitals in the USSR, where dissidents were sent to be "treated". It was also a "closed city"–a city of metallurgists and military industry that was not only cut from the Western culture, like any other place in the USSR, but also from advanced cultural life within the country. Even ideologically friendly Eastern Bloc culture couldn't access the city. Dnipropetrovsk was officially claimed as the homeland of then communist leader Leonid Brezhnev, and the censorship was suffocating. The development of the photo club Dnepr was a bold step. Young people who enrolled with the photo club were interested in different aspects of photography, as opposed to the Sots-realistic images promoted by official media, like Soviet Photo magazine. These young amateurs formed an artistic underground, pushing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable in the Soviet art scene.

The Dnepr photo club generated a network of photo clubs around Soviet territories by organizing exchange exhibitions with other clubs. The postal service offered a way to cut through the borders, enabling artists to present photographs outside the country in various photo salons, mainly in the

Eastern Bloc. Marlen Matus, the leader of the Dnepr photo club, applied this same method to produce exhibitions within the country. In 1979, the first all-Union exhibition organized to celebrate Metallurgist Day."Man and Metal" received 1,560 works by post from all over the USSR. It might seem an odd choice of topic for an association that was a cradle of alternative practices, but to some extent, it was a necessity to keep up an "appropriate" appearance in the eyes of local inspectors. This was an opportunity to breach the double Iron Curtain of the closed city, and Dnipropetrovsk photographers quickly made the most of it to establish relationships with photo clubs all over the country.

Photography from the Baltic States, especially the Lithuanian school, was highly valued among Soviet photographers. Influential figures such as Aleksandras Macijauskas and Antanas Sutkus promoted different perspectives far from those approved by propaganda. Their photographs showed real people and real emotions, unlike the overly glossy happy faces of shock-workers, emphasizing personal over ideologically right. The level of freedom in Baltic countries, which were "attached" to the USSR only in 1940, was significantly higher than in the rest of the country. The censorship in Soviet Baltic states was less vigorous and even allowed the creation of the first official union in 1969: the Lithuanian Society of Art Photography. For members of the Dnepr photo club, connection and exchange with Baltic photographers allowed artists from the closed city to receive a slice of freedom by mail.

The unique conditions shaped in the Dnepr photo club in the early 1980s led to the formation of the clear stylistic language outlined today as the Dnipropetrovsk Photography School. Researchers tend to define this style as combining pictorialism with elements of reportage. Yet, what makes this pictorial language rather distinct is its emphasis on personal expression. Heavily influenced by the visual narratives of Andrey Tarkovsky as they channelled the isolation within the environment of the huge industrial city, photographers associated with the Dnipropetrovsk School explored daily life through the lens of the alienated spectator. For them, photography became a tool in an attempt to philosophically interpret reality.

While the stages of development of the Dnipropetrovsk Photography School had impressive potential because of the distinctive context of the closed city, this encapsulation also led to internal conflict and the school's eventual dissolution. Like a pressure cooker, closed systems can make rigid formations, but they can also transform into terrariums, fostering fragile ecosystems that can't thrive outside the particularities of their environment.

Marlen Matus, from the series "Civilisation". 1976-1979, gelatin silver print, courtesy of Konstantin Matus

"Fall From A Balcony" (2018/2020) Eylem Ertürk, Edition 1/20. Handmade book, indigo print, photographs overpainted with ink.

Eylem Ertürk

The Political Balcony as "Difficult Heritage"

I stand in the middle of a square, my face turned to the past, my heart to the future. This is about time. The encounter of my ephemeral body, my existence counted in years, with the monumental building and its permanence in centuries. This is about space. The space of the square, the street, the building, the balcony... My body is the face of the square; the balcony is the face of this colossal building. It speaks to me from above; I look at it from below. The sound of the fragile glass brings back the past, to the public, to the space. I listen to the voices of all those who were silenced. I am seized by the voices. I walk away and disappear in the distance. The balcony stays and expands over time.

These are my immediate feelings during my first encounter with an infamous historical site in Vienna in 2018. It is a balcony, in fact: the *Altan*[1] of the *Neue Burg* at Heldenplatz, built in 1881 as part of the castle for the imperial family. On March 15, 1938, a few days after the Nationalist Socialists seized power in Austria, Hitler stepped out onto this very balcony to give the infamous *Anschluss*[2] speech to around 250.000 people.[3] After the end of World War II, Heldenplatz gradually became a kind of symbol for how the country, the public and the media dealt or did not deal with the memory of 1938. This balcony of the imperial palace has increasingly been referred to as taboo, a site laden with troubling memories –to use Sharon MacDonald's term– as a "difficult heritage" for the public and administration after 1945. It is currently administered by the *Burghauptmannschaft* Österreich –the public entity

1 The word Altan, coming from the Venetian *altana* –also *alto* in Italian or *altus* in Latin, meaning high– indicates the space of a larger terrace supported by columns or walls from the ground. *DWDS*, s.v. "Altan," accessed June 10, 2024, https://www.dwds.de/wb/Altan. Although its architectural construction is different, the function is mostly similar to the common use of a balcony.
2 Annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany.
3 Haus der Geschichte Österreich, "A History in Pictures of the Neue Burg Terrace: VIP Box, Orator's Platform and Taboo Balcony," accessed June 10, 2024, https://hdgoe.at/altan_geschichte_en.

in charge of the protection of the architectural heritage of Austria– which keeps it closed to the public, citing "structural and security deficiencies."[4]

The public balcony has a long history of political use, spanning generations, geographies and architectural traditions. Initially an aspect of medieval fortresses, the balcony turned into a place of public address in town halls in Europe. It was later associated as a setting for religious figures and royal families to address masses in the square. Myriad paintings and photographs capture the images of imperials and the church, delivering proclamations from the balconies of monumental buildings. In our collective visual memory, we have the British Royal Family appearing on the balcony of Buckingham Palace or the pope giving his blessings to the Christian community on a balcony.

As a publicly visible, privately accessible place, the balcony's most public moment is possibly the performance of a political figure–what we now call "the balcony speech." Following royal traditions, the early authoritarian regimes of twentieth-century Europe took advantage of this architectural fixture, re-animating the well-established imperial balcony as a legitimising framework, a space that represents, justifies, and sustains an image of hegemonic power in collective memory. This trope was further entrenched with the developments in photography and print media in Europe. It is perhaps the infamous Adolf Hitler who fully exploited the public nature of the balcony for political propaganda. From 1933 until his death in 1945, he made extensive public appearances on the balconies of governmental buildings and town halls and, occasionally, inherited imperial palaces. In archives, news agencies, and image banks, we can still find numerous photographs of him appearing on the balconies of *Reichzkanzlei* in Berlin and *Führerbau* in Munich or massive platforms, such as the Nuremberg Rally Grounds.

In *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (2009), Sharon Macdonald provides a detailed investigation and discussion of the struggles in dealing with the remaining architectural heritage of the Nazi regime. Macdonald uses the term "difficult heritage," which I borrow –in my research on *The Politics of the Balcony in Contemporary Art*– to discuss the inheritance of the political balcony as a symbolic space of power. In contrast to heritage sites of consensus and celebration of valued histories,

4 Benedik, "Der schwarz-weiße 'Hitlerbalkon'," 130.

"difficult heritage" deals with places that have the potential to disrupt social narratives of identity and memory today. The *Altan* of the *Neue Burg* wields this potential through its materiality (the monumental architectural space imprinted with an imperial legacy), continuity (accumulated use, reuse and reinterpretation of this space for hegemonic purposes) and controversy (different perspectives and conflicting ideas as to what to do with it).

As Gustav Wollentz discusses in *Landscapes of Difficult Heritage* (2020), the architectural remains of troubling histories do not necessarily store their memory with a singular and fixed meaning. Instead, they are part of an ongoing process of becoming in connection to the present.[5] Difficult heritage is uncomfortable, disturbing, and unsettling memories that are hard to deal with. Still, these sites are "potentially so good to think with critically and ethically" towards finding "anti-redemptory, anti-monumental and anti-heritage"[6] solutions of memorialisation. Considering the public balcony as an inherited space, bearing the intangible, difficult heritage of royal, religious and authoritarian regimes based on imperial infrastructures, how can we imagine its reuse without perpetuating the same ideologies or the visual order of hegemonic power?

https://videopress.com/v/QK5MjoUF

"Fall From A Balcony" (2018/2020) Eylem Ertürk, Edition 1/20. Handmade book, indigo print, photographs overpainted with ink.

5 Wollentz, Landscapes of Difficult Heritage, 12.
6 Macdonald, Difficult Heritage, 192.

Coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the *Anschluss* speech in 2018, the House of Austrian History (hdgö) commissioned *The Voices* (2018, Vienna) to the Scottish artist Susan Philipsz as a site-specific sound installation dealing with issues of memory and coming to terms with a troubled past at Heldenplatz. The four-channel sound installation, the sound of four glasses played twice a day at Heldenplatz, stands for the voices of those who were silenced during the Holocaust. It created a simple and abstract audiovisual counter-space through fragile, subtle, but precise sounds in contrast to the accumulated visual memories. The work extended the attention from the balcony to the square, creating "a tangible tension precisely through its quiet presence."[7] Invited to consider the balcony in her work, the artist was "careful not to replicate the experience of a single voice,"[8] thus disseminating the voices in the square in an attempt to dissolve the symbolic space of the balcony. The subtle yet subversive artistic strategies shift the focus from the visual to the audio in terms of medium, from the perpetrator to the victim in terms of perspective, and from the singularity of the balcony to the plurality of the square in terms of space. We are left with the voices and shadows of the past –the figures and forms in the continuous use of a place for the proclamation of, struggle for, and protest against power.

7 Sommer and Haus der Geschichte Österreich, *The Voices*, 15.
8 Philipsz, *The Voices*, 54.

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Iana Gaponenko

Documenta in Kassel: Instances of Cold War "Othering"

Withdrawal from the international exhibitions happens not only at the personal initiative of the individual artist, but also on the level of government, especially when servicing established ideological narratives, such as the Cold War. The Cold War period relied upon homogenization and generalization as methods to reshape cultural policies around binaries of East-West opposition, both in politics and arts. Whereas the Western Block introduced abstraction as a symptom of freedom in art, social realism was inherited by the communist Eastern Block as a means to illustrate shared histories and values. This same social realism was promoted in Germany after the war as a counterweight to freedom, but during the war was part of a state discourse. The first documenta exhibition was launched in Kassel, Federal Republic of Germany, in 1955, as a showcase for more abstract tendencies, offering a Post-war revival of the historical avant-garde, which had been suppressed during the war.

As an exhibition on a former FRG territory, documenta initially embraced Cold War tensions between "West" and "East" and their respective "otherness", placing abstract art in opposition to social realism[1]. Art historian Christian Kravagna has called this "the modernist desire for difference"[2]. As if following such an urge, Harald Szeemann, the Swiss curator appointed to lead the fifth iteration of documenta show in 1972, attempted to include social realism from the USSR and China into his project in Kassel. He failed for several reasons: not only because his proposal was born during the most

1 East may also be understood here as a double orientalist term: for example, Eastern Europe as the Other towards the West and Soviet Far East as the Other inside the USSR. For more see: Tlostanova, Madina. *Can the post-Soviet think? On Coloniality of Knowledge, External Imperial and Double Colonial Difference. Intersections 1*, no. 2 (June 2015): 38-58.
2 Kravagna, Christian. *The Preserves of Colonialism: The World in the Museum*. 2008. Source: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0708/kravagna/en. Date of inquiry: 9 November 2024

heightened phase of the Cold War and was rejected at the last minute by the USSR, but also as a consequence of his mishandling of the transcultural translation and contextualization of the social realist art from Moscow and Leningrad. This emphasis on otherness underlines bias on both edges of the axis and reproduces again the ideologically established binaries between abstraction and realism, as if between freedom and propaganda.

If every exhibition's inclusions imply exclusions, then what are the conditions and consequences of these exclusions? Szeemann's idea to include Soviet social realism provides a case study to elaborate on what Beatrice von Bismarck has described as "the misconception leading to its non-integration and the projections and prejudices on the sides of the two Germanys as well as of the Soviet Union which took part in the construction of an Eastern 'Other'"[3]. This text attempts to analyse how this desire for difference in Kravagna's sense was unfolded during documenta show in the 1970s, and by doing so, it explores the complicated relationships between documenta curators and Soviet art, addressing the very nature of othering as a mutual affliction and the act of withdrawal as a gesture of soft power. This case study may also be considered as one of the multiple contributions to the parallel historical analyses of peculiarities that contributed to the conditions around documenta 15, which was curated by the Indonesian collective ruangrupa in 2022.

During the Cold War era, the USA and the USSR were competing for cultural hegemony in Europe and globally. In that same period, Kassel and Dresden were also waging an internal cultural war. In 1946, Dresden, then part of the German Democratic Republic, hosted the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* (General German Art Exhibition). Almost a decade later, Kassel (as part of FRG) launched the inaugural documenta. According to art historian Werner Haftmann, the first four documenta exhibitions were intended to proclaim abstract art as the universal language for "Western" values like freedom of speech, human rights, and democracy, in tacit confrontation to the Soviet Union and social realism as a tool for influencing socialist societies[4].

3 From the private feedback from Prof. Dr. Beatrice von Bismarck on the initial version of this text in 2024

4 Bang Larsen, Lars; Blume, Dorlis; Gross, Raphael; Pooth, Alexia; Voss, Julia, Wierling, Dorothee (Hrsg.). *Documenta. Politik und Kunst*. Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museum. Prestel Verlag, München, 2021

The complex history of the East-West confrontation in the European context is already evident in the sheer physical proximity of Kassel to the Iron Curtain, whose border was only 35 kilometers away. This position as a Western city in the middle of Germany made Kassel a unique setting for this kind of exhibition as a literal meeting point. And yet, as social realism was generally considered to be an inferior aesthetic product, documenta did not invite any artists from across the Curtain until its fifth edition. Harald Szeemann was the first to propose orchestrating an exhibition that, for the first time, included realism in a broad sense, under the arch title "Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today".

At the beginning, negotiations between Kassel and Moscow proceeded quite fluidly. In November 1971, documenta 5 CEO Karl Fritz Heise received an oral agreement regarding the exhibition of Soviet social realism from Vladimir Kuptsov at the Soviet Embassy in Bonn. In December, Kuptsov had a conversation with Szeemann. As a final step, in early 1972, the director of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden Klaus Gallwitz was sent to visit the two largest national collections of Soviet art—The State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the State Russian Museum in Leningrad—on behalf of Harald Szeemann. Together with local art historians, he formed a list of Soviet artworks for the documenta exhibition[5], but several months before the opening, the Soviet Union rejected any participation at documenta[6].

One can only speculate on the reasons for this withdrawal, as no formal rationale for this decision was provided. Perhaps USSR officials took umbrage at the idea that these masterworks would be exhibited alongside displays dedicated to "kitsch" and "pornography". Maybe they were not interested in

5 The full selection list from the State Tretyakov Gallery included: Pavel Korin Kukryniksy *Artists' Portrait* (1958), Mikhail Nesterov *Sculptor Mukhina's Portrait* (1940), Aleksandr Deyneka *Future Airmen* (1938), Aleksandr Deyneka *Outskirts of Moscow* (1941), Semyon Chuikov *Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzstan State* (1941), Yuri Pimenov *New Moscow* (1937), Yuri Pimenov *Wedding on Tomorrow's Street* (1962), Georgy Nissky *Moscow Suburbs* (1957), Fyodor Reshetnikov *Pour Paix* (1960), Aleksandr Laktionov *A Letter From the Front* (1947), Aleksandr Laktionov *Portrait of Cosmonaut V.M. Komarov* (1967), Vladimir Serov *The Winter Palace is Captured* (1954), Boris Nemenski *Mother* (1945), Ivan Kosmin *Portrait of Nadezhda Krupskaya* (1933), Aleksander Samokhvalov *Girl with a Ball* (1933).
Selections from the Russian Museum included Nina Veselova *Portrait of Chairman of Collective Farm M.G. Dolgov* (1959), Arkady Plastov *Gathering Potatoes* (1956), Aleksandr Gerasimov *Sculptor's Portrait*, Geliy Korzhev *Lovers* (1959).

6 By the time of the publication the author has requested Tretyakov gallery archive online, but a personal appearance is required on site to find possible traces of the internal correspondence in Moscow. Also, such refusals could have an oral form only (i.e. by telephone call from the authorities).

rethinking the overall role of realism in art and visual history in general from the "Western" perspective. Now, more than a half century later, reviewing these withdrawn, but not rejected, artworks provides insight into the specific perception of realistic visual art from the "East" in the "West". Was it a misconception or a lack of cultural diplomacy, or both?

Perhaps an answer lies in an earlier exhibition proposal. Before Szeemann's documenta, in 1960, under the influence of Otto Nagel, the GDR-based art historian Heinz Lüdecke from the Akademie der Künste der DDR (Academy of Arts of the GDR) in East Berlin came up with a counterproposal for the documenta exhibition which he called *Dokumenta der Menschlichkeit*, or *documenta humana*[7]. Under the ideological influence of the Soviet Union's social realism, Lüdecke's list of artists for this "humanization" of the initial documenta show was intended to abandon abstraction. Instead, he proposed to bring to Kassel works by social realist artists who glorified Russian history, like Valentin Serov, or orientalist painter Vasiliy Vereshchagin. For Lüdecke, humanism was possible through the "united power of the working class and its allies, as well as the rising forces of the colonial folks"[8]. Yet, he excluded from the proposal any abstract non-representational art, such as futurism, cubism, or surrealism. And even if Lüdecke's proposal failed to generate a response, it showcases the complex orientalizing and othering narratives around the documenta. Both the *documenta humana* proposal in 1960 and the proposal for Harald Szeemann's fifth edition of documenta in 1972 aimed to establish a very generalized and biased dialogue of binaries between what was considered to be free Western abstract art and the so-called propagandistic social realist art.

Soviet artworks in Gallwitz's selection for documenta 5 were the brightest examples of social realist paintings. They glorified Soviet popular culture, sport, agriculture, and state-mandated displays of multinationalism. The selection also included some quasi-pacifist and feminist-oriented artworks, though this could be a reflection of the steep decline in the male population after the Second World War. Feminism was understood as a perverted Soviet interpretation of strong women who still served as secondary members of society, trying to raise children alone during and after the war.

7 Lüdecke, Heinz, Decho, Roselene. Berlin, 22 July 1960. Paper, typescript; 29.7 × 21 cm. Berlin, Akademie der Künste: Drake 60, 1-4
8 Pooth, 2021

Some selected artworks echoed Soviet propaganda during the Second World War. Among them, one finds Pavel Korin's *Kukryniksy Artists' Portrait* (1958), which depicts three famous caricaturists producing satirical posters in support of the Soviet Army[9]. Another painting selected for documenta 5 from the Tretyakov Gallery was Mikhail Nesterov's 1940 *Portrait of V.I. Mukhina*, the female sculptor who rose to fame as the author of *The Worker and the Kolkhoz Woman* (1937), the enormous statue exhibited at the Paris World Fair the same year. This monument still stands at the VDNKh park in Moscow and appears throughout mass culture, including as the title screen for Mosfilm.

Among the other requested loans from the Soviet Union to Kassel, there were plenty of other portraits of women, such as Ivan Kosmin's painting depicting Vladimir Lenin's muse and wife, titled Portrait of *Nadezhda Krupskaya* (1933), who was a revolutionary and an early ideologist for communist education, or Aleksander Samokhvalov's striking *Girl with a Ball* (1933). The latter depicted a Soviet sportswoman, romanticizing the image of early Soviet athleticism. Semyon Chuikov's *Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzstan State* (1948) portrayed a teenager from one of the USSR's many national republics. Kyrgyz people were representatives of another ethnicity in the Soviet Union and forced with cultural assimilation under the guise of communism. As the only art historian who served as a director of the Tretyakov Gallery and, at the same time, as a leader of the Communist Party's Department for Propaganda, Polikarp Lebedev later hailed Chuikov's painting as encapsulating the image of a person who followed the "bright communist idea" and thereby representing all indigenous people, "who became free with the help of the October Revolution"[10].

Another artworks initially chosen for documenta 5 that were created after the Second World War included Fyodor Reshetnikov's *Pour Paix* (1950), a painting captured European anti-war sentiment—which he knew from newspapers—through an image of five children writing the French word for "Peace" on the wall. Similarly, Aleksandr Laktionov's *A Letter from the Front* (1947) elicits mixed sentiment in its depiction of a family gathering where

9 A few years later, the same trio of artists drew caricatures of Ribbentrop, Heß, and other Nazi leaders at Nuremberg. Later, their sketches served as the basis for their extensive work called *Accusation. The Nuremberg Trials* (1967).
10 Lebedev, P. *Portrait art in post-war time. Russian Soviet painting.* Editor: N.I. Matveeva. Moscow: Soviet artist, 1963.

the long-awaited letter from a soldier was read aloud and publicly. Another reference to the war can be found in Boris Nemenski's *Mother* (1945). The woman on the canvas appears conspicuously without any children, but she keenly observes three Soviet soldiers who have fallen asleep after a battle. In West Germany, these artworks could only be read as a vivid reminder of the country's recent military past.

Other artworks in the proposal glorified the hope of communistic ideas offered. This is true of Laktionov's *Portrait of Cosmonaut V.M. Komarov* (1967) and Deyneka's *Future Airmen* (1938). Both were probably chosen as symbols for the Soviet pride inherent in the Space Program and the national aerospace industry. Similarly, Pimenov's *Wedding on Tomorrow's Street* (1962) could have functioned as an artwork embedded with an almost tangible socialist hope for a better future during the so-called "Thaw" under Krushchev.

The history of exhibitions can also be written from the perspective of unrealized projects. In the case of documenta, Harald Kimpel has recently analyzed several other such incidents, cancellations and withdrawals most often due to "insufficient funding, technical realisation problems, hypertrophic artistic ambitions, official requirements or safety concerns"[11]. He analyzes these projects as future-oriented that may result in their potentiality into more than one documenta show: so many projects were excluded that they could easily form another exhibition. Boycotting and withdrawal as strategies have also often been applied against specific censorship or external pressures influencing diplomatic or artistic replies. The Soviet Union's refusal to participate in the fifth documenta could be construed as a symptom of tense times, another front in the ideological conflict between the communist agenda and the program of cultural events in different countries financed by US intelligence[12]. What kind of neutral narrative space would be able to serve as an adequate host in these conditions? Could we imagine a reincarnation of the proposals in the form of an interview with the custodians of the Tretyakov Gallery and Russian Museum? As von Bismarck writes, any "exhibition has both its own 'anachronistic quality', making it a historical eye-witness, and a potential that remains in effect across different time periods, connecting

11 Kimpel, Harald. *UTOPIE documenta. Unrealized Projects from the History of the World Art Exhibition*. Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2015
12 For more see: Mühlmann, Heiner. *Der Kunstkrieg. Das Haus der Deutschen Kunst, die Documenta und die CIA-MoMA-Connection*. Paderborn, 2014; and Franke, Anselm; Ghouse, Nida; Guevara, Paz; Majaca, Antonia. *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*. Sternberg Press, 2021.

them"[13]. The possibility of recontextualizing postponed exhibitions in a constantly changing environment of the present, and recovering them from the oblivion of the past could possibly help to rewrite existing and established Cold War narratives about Soviet and post-Soviet art. Could never-realized exhibition proposals, formed under the ideological umbrella of the Cold War heritage, shift political paradigms by being realized? Such ghost-exhibitions from the past would be haunting the present and continuing to promise the chance of influencing the future.

If we imagine reassembling this show now, which constellations shall we create to mediate it? Can we reveal the social life (according to Arjun Appadurai) and cultural biography (according to Igor Kopytoff) of those exhibitions as well as of the artists as participants of the show from a contemporary perspective? What kind of curatorial visa should we obtain then to re-enter this in-between historical space?

Rasha Salti and Kristine Khoury's exhibition *Past Disquiet*, the latest iteration of which was shown in Paris's Palais de Tokyo in Spring 2024, could serve as an example of a successful curatorial revisit of an exhibition originally intended to be staged in 1978[14]. The 2024 show not only tracked the ideological obstacles and censorship following the International Art Exhibition for Palestine in the 1970s, but also provided a remedial time-distant perspective on the conditions under which political circumstances may become both the reason and the implications of established art narratives.

Never-realized exhibition proposals can at least show, if not artworks themselves, then the peculiarities of political and cultural infrastructures at certain times. This text seeks to question the monopoly of Western knowledge production about the art of the "Other" and unearth the Cold War orientalist projections of Western scholars and curators which are relevant up to these days. Indeed, a curatorial revisioning project is needed that would change the future perspectives on post-socialist artists and their descendants currently inhabiting a post-Soviet space.

13 Bismarck, von, Beatrice. *The Devil Wears Historicity or, The Look of Provocation: When Attitudes Become Form–Bern 1969/Venice 2013*. Documenta studies #07, July 2019
14 Khoury, Kristine. Salti, Rasha. *Past Disquite*. 2024. Source: https://themarkaz.org/past-disquiet-at-the-palais-de-tokyo-in-paris/ Date of inquiry: 25 November 2024

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List of figures and scans of archival documents from documenta archive with the description (the scans are here):

docA_AA_d05_V0060-251, docA_AA_d05_V0060-252, docA_AA_d05_V0060-253: Letter of Harald Szeemann dated 18 May 1971 to the Ministry of culture of the USSR in Moscow with an initial proposal to participate in Documenta 5 in Kassel. Courtesy of documenta archiv

docA_AA_d05_V0063-033: Letter from Harald Szeemann to Klaus Gallwitz dated 28 September 1971, briefing which artworks to choose in Moscow for Documenta 5 in Kassel. Courtesy of documenta archiv

docA_AA_d05_V0063-030: Letter from Klaus Gallwitz to Harald Szeemann dated 29 October 1971 from his trip to the USSR to select artworks. Courtesy of documenta archiv

docA_AA_d05_V0063-029: Curatorial selection of Soviet artworks by Klaus Gallwitz to be shown at Documenta 5 in Kassel. Courtesy of documenta archiv

docA_AA_d05_V0061-042, docA_AA_d05_V0061-043: Record of phone correspondence dated 29 November and 3 December 1971 between Vladimir Kuptsov, secretary of USSR Embassy in Bonn, and Harald Szeemann, where Kuptsov expresses the initial agreement of the USSR to participate in Documenta 5 in Kassel. Courtesy of documenta archiv

Semyon Chuikov. *Daughter of Soviet Kyrgyzstan State*. 1948. Oil on canvas. 120x95 sm. Inventory number 27723. Courtesy of State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Mikhail Nesterov. *Portrait of V.I. Mukhina*. 1940. Oil on canvas. 81x75 sm. Inventory number 26668. Courtesy of State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Installation view. Photo: Lo Birgersson. Courtesy of the artist and Göteborg Konst

Andria Nyberg Forshage

The Postdomestic Monument

In 2023, Gothenburg inaugurated a monument purported to be the first in Sweden dedicated to the LGBTQI+ community: Conny Karlsson Lundgren's *Gläntan* (*The Meadow*). Recombining elements from the city's queer past into an open space at the Esperantoplatsen square, it is careful to trace movements through time and urban history over the past three quarters of a century. In a series of subtle dislocations of the norm, the monument takes us, as the 1960s gay radical slogan would have it, "out of the bedrooms and into the streets." Or rather, it puts the bedroom out onto the street, becoming what I am drawn to call a *postdomestic* monument.

I am appropriating the term from Paul Preciado's work on Playboy architecture as Cold War pornotopia. In this sense, the postdomestic indicates the mutations undergone by the domestic and public spheres—and in turn, subjectivity and sexuality—in the United States as Fordism turned into post-Fordism. While *Gläntan* might not disrupt or even enliven the grey Gothenburg streets enough to be feted as a pornotopia, the gay and queer lives and battles it restages coincide with the period from late WWII until the post-Berlin Wall 1990s, and its innovative form is inseparable from this historical situation.

Unlike monuments commemorating great men or sublime objects, *Gläntan* represents domestic interiors. Each of the three layers of pink stone or concrete that make up the monument is shaped into a 1:1 reproduction of a floorplan, each from a now-vanished space in the city. The base, in pink bricks laid at an odd angle to the paving, refers to a dancefloor from the 1980s and 90s-era gay nightclub Touch. The second layer copies the floor of a kitchen from a lesbian feminist collective from the 1970s. It closed as late as 2017 and has since been converted into condominiums. The third is a bedroom from a now-demolished flat belonging to one "Josefine," where queer and trans people would gather in secret before Sweden decriminal-

ised homosexuality in 1944. On top of this final layer lies three pillows sculpted in marble, made from 3D-scans of pillows gifted by local queer people.

It is theatrical but low-profile. It suggests a stage or a wide, almost empty plinth. Its horizontality, geometric shapes, and public orientation invites comparison to a likely inspiration: the 1981 *Homomonument* in Amsterdam. However, unlike the political symbolism and queer abstraction of that work's pink triangles, the use of architectural references and 3D replicas of everyday objects in *Gläntan* indicate instead a kind of hyper-figuration, a kitchen-sink, photogrammetry-realism. The referents of the floor plans no longer exist, so the work becomes a layered map at the same scale as the territory, but without a territory. The struggle for recognition that it memorialises seems to have been mostly won, within a liberal frame, and the monument's existence is a testament to that. But when no events are using it as stage, the simulacrums of dancefloor and bedroom stand still, empty, and exposed to the outside. Almost like tombs of themselves, awaiting reuse and revival.

When Félix Gonzales-Torres put images of unmade beds and pillows on billboards in 1990 (*Untitled*), signaling both queer intimacy and loss during the AIDS crisis, private life entered the public through a play on commercial mass-communication formats. In Karlsson Lundgren's work, commissioned by the city of Gothenburg after an LGBT Council initiative and a long consultation process, the dialogue is instead implicitly with urban and interior planning. This situates the monument squarely in Sweden's modern history. Other LGBT monuments in Western Europe, such as the *Homomonument* in Amsterdam, or Elmgreen + Dragset's 2008 *Monument to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism* in Berlin, have focused on the ways that queer life has been disrupted, torn apart and targeted for elimination by state violence, not least under fascism during WWII. This is understandable, particularly as recognition and restitution for these crimes has been–and in many cases still is–way overdue.

Karlsson Lundgren instead platforms social movements and private lives, making *Gläntan* a monument to the power of queer life to disrupt and reinvent normative social reproduction. The stage for these struggles, as part of the societal mutations of the post-war era, is the welfare state. Having stayed officially neutral during both rounds of 20th-century imperial warfare in Europe (though aligned and complicit with Germany up until the end of WWII), Sweden escaped devastation. It could emerge intact as a modern industrial nation with strong social-democratic welfare programs, projecting an image of progressivism and continued neutrality during the Cold War. Building on functionalist social engineering, its emphasis laid on biopolitics over geopolitics, and on soft power within a still-capitalist and militarised framework. Here the state takes the domestic as its proper subject, in both senses of the word: the home, and the domestic as the opposite of foreign affairs. Their conjuncture was epitomised in the notion of the People's Home (*Folkhemmet*). As the gay movement went from liberation to pride, it both challenged this ideal and became part of its institutions.

Gläntan's public interiors offers space to celebrate how LGTBQI+ people have rebelled against this notion of the nation as home and home as nation. They did so by turning their homes into places for other forms of life and by making homes elsewhere. Outlawed queer clandestine meetings in bedrooms (sexual, social, and political), feminist and collectively self-organised kitchens rather than nuclear families, and dance floors not only as spaces for entertainment but rather as nodes for (never uncomplicated) community, pointing the way to an emancipatory overcoming of the split between private and public. At the same time, capitalism itself has blurred these limits while nonetheless maintaining private property. Biopolitical governance means domestic life is public policy, to be optimised, represented, and made productive, such as in postwar Sweden – including gay and queer life in so far as assimilation has been possible. At the same time, now and since the 70s, neoliberalism means public functions are increasingly sold off and privatisated.

If *Gläntan* is read as a postdomestic monument, it seems to straddle the line between exceeding the domestic, and domesticating excess. In either case, its sexual and subjective interiors appear at a remove from foreign issues, as public domesticity. However with intensifying imperial warfare, militarism, and racist far-right politics pushing for a return to supposedly traditional households around Europe, including in Sweden, this postdomesticity, developing during the Cold War and becoming generalised after its end, already seems possible to historicise, indeed to memorialise. From the vantage point of the home as a stage for the self, one could wonder how these layered pasts will look from the future.

Lawrence Weiner, “SMASHED TO PIECES (IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT)”, 1991, language + the materials reffered to. Installation view, Esterházypark flak tower, Vienna, 1991. Photo: Christian Wachtler. © Lawrence Weiner/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Viktoria Weber

Brutal Forms–Fragile Memories

Zerschmettert in Stücke (im Frieden der Nacht) / Smashed to pieces (in the still of the night). In November 1991, artist Lawrence Weiner painted these words on the flak tower in Vienna’s Esterházy Park. They would remain there for twenty-eight years, until *Haus des Meeres* decided to remove them and replace then with a phrase in a similar typeface, but featuring its own branding. Weiner’s intervention first appeared as part of *Wiener Festwochen*. The artist’s decision to inscribe this particular phrase on the tower seems counterintuitive: After all, while the tower in Esterházy Park may linguistically advert to the destruction implied by war, most of its sister towers in Berlin and Hamburg have indeed been “smashed to pieces”.

On September 9, 1942, Adolf Hitler himself ordered the construction of the flak towers in Augarten, Arenbergpark, and Esterházypark to protect the Viennese city centre in what was then Nazi Germany. The regime had previously built three pairs of towers the year before in Berlin (in Volkspark Humboldthain, Volkspark Friedrichshain, and Tiergarten) and, following that, two pairs in Hamburg (in St. Pauli and Wilhelmsburg). A flak tower pair typically consisted of a command tower (*Leitturm*) equipped with radar technology to provide targeting data to its gun tower (*Gefechtsturm*), which housed anti-aircraft artillery. Due to their questionable military value even at the time of completion, the towers, which had flat roofs and often cubic or cylindrical form, primarily served as air-raid shelters, with self-sufficient power and supplies of drinking water. For the Viennese population, they became frequently visited sites during those years of war when daily life was structured by air raids. In the aftermath of the war, Vienna, Berlin, and Hamburg had to decide how to treat these remnants of wartime architecture and the legacy of conflict embedded within them.

The architect of all eight pairs of flak towers was Friedrich Tamms, who worked under the direction of Albert Speer, in his capacity as Minister for

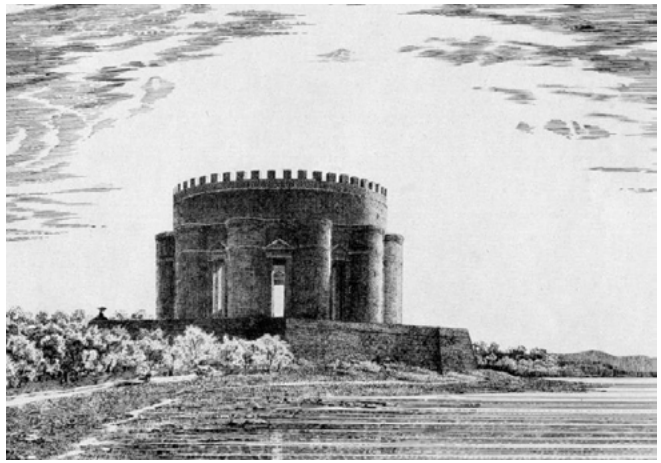
Armament and War Production. The two architects had already known each other since their student days at boththe Technical University of Munich and the Technical University of Berlin. Tamms claimed that the design and form of the towers were left to him; however, sketches from September 1941 appearing to show the gun towers from the first generation[1] are attributed to Hitler himself.[2] Typologically, the buildings draw inspiration from the Castel del Monte in Apulia, which was constructed in 1240 under Frederick II (1194–1250).[3] This connection accentuates the ideological parallel to the Nazi regime, which viewed the rule of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in general and the absolutist tendencies of Frederick II specifically as the historical legitimisation of German dominance. The towers3 iconographic resemblance to fortified castles with platforms and bastions solidified the regime's claim to power and its supposed superiority. In keeping with this ideology, the towers were largely built by forced labourers and prisoners of war.

Castel del Monte, n.d. Photo: n.a., Pieler, E. (2002). *Wiener Flaktürme: Untersuchung zur Klärung der Nutzungsmöglichkeiten im Auftrag der Magistratsabteilung 18; gekürzte Zusammenfassung der Arbeitsergebnisse*. Magistratsabteilung 18 – Stadtentwicklung und Stadtplanung, p. 7.

1 In total there are three building types for these gun towers, which differ in their layout and form. The third generation especially resembles medieval fortified castles.
2 Wille, V. (2008). *Die Flaktürme in Wien, Berlin und Hamburg*. Geschichte, Bedeutung und Neunutzung. VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, p. 25.
3 Ibid. p. 25.

It is clear that this resemblance was not incidental: In Tamms' article "Die Kriegerehrenmäler von Wilhelm Kreis" [The War Memorials of Wilhelm Kreis], published in 1943 in the journal Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich [Art in the German Reich], a design for a memorial near Warsaw at the Vistula can be seen as a derivative of the Castel del Monte.[4]

This parallel points to the suspected, initial intention to eventually repurpose the flak towers as war memorials. The towers that survived the aftermath of the Second World War and the tensions of the Cold War have indeed served as memorials, but not in an intentional manner. They do not glorify war and violence but, with their bare presence, warn of the atrocities not only of warfare, but also of the violent ideologies that fuel such conflicts. While the towers in Vienna remain integral components of the urban landscape, only remnants of the flak tower in Humboldthain in Berlin survived.The former flak tower in Volkspark Friedrichshain in the Soviet occupation zone was demolished between 1947 and 1949, and its rubble used to form the foundation for the park's artificial hill. The flak tower in Tiergarten in the British occupation zone was destroyed a decade later in 1957, leaving no remains.



Wilhelm Kreis, Draft for a War Memorial at the Vistula, ca. 1942. Photo: Pieler, E. (2002). *Wiener Flaktürme: Untersuchung zur Klärung der Nutzungsmöglichkeiten im Auftrag der Magistratsabteilung 18; gekürzte Zusammenfassung der Arbeitsergebnisse.* Magistratsabteilung 18 – Stadtentwicklung und Stadtplanung, p. 7.

4 Pieler, E. (2002). *Wiener Flaktürme: Untersuchung zur Klärung der Nutzungsmöglichkeiten im Auftrag der Magistratsabteilung 18; gekürzte Zusammenfassung der Arbeitsergebnisse*. Magistratsabteilung 18 – Stadtentwicklung und Stadtplanung, p. 7

Outlining the contexts of Vienna and Berlin helps to understand the different fates of the flak towers: Shortly after the end of World War II, Austria underwent a brief phase of denazification, during which members of the Nazi regime's elite were identified and imprisoned. However, with the onset of the Cold War, priorities shifted: the societal reintegration of 'former' Nazis coincided with the need to create new bogeymen. Due to the efforts of Western forces to hinder the spread of socialism in Austria, legal measures against local Nazi officials and devotees stayed limited with courtproceedings being the exception. All too often the perpetrators with a stark anti-communist stance ended up being recruited by Western intelligence services.

Like Berlin, Vienna had been divided into four occupation zones by the Allies in May 1945. The signing of the Austrian State Treaty in May 1955 led to the dissolution of Vienna's occupation zones and the withdrawal of Allied forces, at a time when Berlin had not yet started construction on the wall that would separate East and West. While Germany went through a continuous state of cathartic purging, the dominant sentiment in Austria was shaped by the amnesia offered by the victim myth – a pattern of argumentation framing the *Anschluss* as a military aggression and hence Austria as the first victim of Nationalist Socialist policies – and the foggy promise of neutrality. In this spirit, Austria willfully cultivated an identity as a 'cultural' nation, placing particular emphasis on the legacy of the Habsburg monarchy. Not only did this affiliation serve to distinguish Austria from Germany, but it also largely ignored the local antisemitic sentiment exhibited by key figures like Viennese mayor Karl Lueger at the turn of the century or Engelbert Dollfuß, during the period of Austrofascism (1933- 1938). To speak of denazification in the Austrian case is a euphemism at best. This has been made abundantly clear through the 'Waldheim affair,' an incident in which Kurt Waldheim, former officer of the Wehrmacht and SA volunteer, became first Secretary General of the United Nations and then president of Austria.

With the current political climate following the Nationalratswahl on September 9, 2024, and a shocking election result of 28.8% for the far-right FPÖ as the leading party, the question arises of how effectively the flak towers operate as involuntary monuments of past evils. Lawrence Weiner's intervention, *Zerschmettert in Stücke (im Frieden der Nacht) / Smashed to pieces (in the still of the night)* sent an admonition against oblivion floating above the city. During Waldheim's time in office, Weiner's work questioned the history not only of these wartime artefacts but of Austria's past more generally. In his characteristic style, the artist dismantles the interplay of language and meaning, emphasising the viewers' agency in interpreting the warning. His work occupies a space between poetry, painting, and sculpture, allowing multiple layers of meaning depending on the context.[5] One potential connotation is an association with the 1938 pogroms. However, Weiner stated that this was never his intention, ironically asserting that the truth of the statement remains valid in any context.5 This means the text could provoke the viewers to think about the presence of involuntary war monuments, about glass shards on the streets of Vienna, burning synagogues in November 1938, or perhaps the fallout from Austria's persistent performance as victim. When Weiner's piece on the flak tower in Esterházypark was removed, someone sprayed it on one of the towers in Arenbergpark, inscribing it into the cityscape once again. Hopefully, the artist's words keep evoking agency for those who live in the shadows of the brutalist towers and beyond.

Flak tower in Arenbergpark, 2024. Photo: Viktoria Weber.

5 Buchloh, B. (2022) *Lawrence Weiner (1942-2021). Benjamin H. D. Buchloh on Lawrence Weiner.* Artforum.

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(IN)VISIBLE TRACES. ARTISTIC MEMORIES OF THE COLD WAR

BLOCK FREI

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DAS WEISSE HAUS