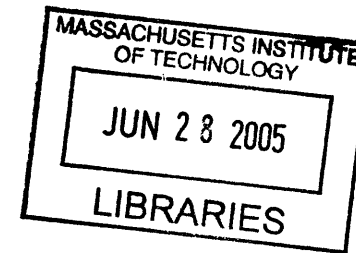


# A Culture of Appropriation: Strategies of Temporary Reuse in East Germany

by Michaela Heinemann  
Diplom-Ingenieur Architektur  
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
**Master of Science in Architecture Studies**  
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ROTCH

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## **Abstract**

**This thesis examines the possibilities of creative appropriation of existing spaces. It defines interstitial practices as both critical and imaginative forces that actively participate in the production of social space. Temporary interventions assert their topicality by inserting themselves into specific urban discourses in which they have the potential to act as cultural catalysts. Two recent festivals, *Volkspalast* (2004) in Berlin and *Hotel Neustadt* (2003) in Halle (Saxony-Anhalt), serve as case studies that exemplify different strategies of the temporary. Staged in buildings that were scheduled for demolition, both festivals address the gradual disappearance of “socialist” architecture and urbanism in the realm of the former East Germany.**

Thesis Supervisor: Mark Jarzombek  
Title: Associate Professor of History and Architecture



**A Culture of Appropriation:  
Strategies of Temporary Reuse in East Germany**





**Dedicated to my mother, Tatana Heinemannová**



## **Contents**

**Abstract 5**

**Introduction 12**

**Part One: Eviscerated Emptiness 15**

The time is now. The place is here. 18

From Palais to Palast and Back 21

Inside-out 25

Mocking the mock 30

**Part Two: Halle-Neustadt Plays 35**

Invading the 'modernist' ghost-town 38

Toolkit 41

◦ *Hotel Tuning* 41

◦ *Balcony Tuning* 43

◦ *Syntosil mol* 44

◦ *Espresso Bar Furniture* 47

◦ *Clubgolf* 48

Theatrical city as model 50

**Conclusion 55**

**Notes 60**

**Bibliography 74**

**Sources of Illustrations 78**

## Introduction

Permanence is commonly interpreted as a primary value of architecture. More than any other form created by human beings, architectural forms in their persistence seem to guarantee the continuity of human activity and to possess some kind of absolute meaning. However, there is no built structure that has not been transformed over time. More importantly, buildings are not destroyed only when a society recognizes them as worthy of preservation. It can therefore be concluded that not only are production and maintenance of the built environment socially determined but its destruction is as well. Nevertheless, these cycles of production and destruction of space create openings that allow interstitial practices to emerge. Does this “appropriatory” activity produce a meaningful space in its own right, or are practices centered on the reuse of these residual spaces too ephemeral to generate any architectural content?

I will argue that temporary spaces are indeed important sites of production, not only of opportunity but also of the provocation of dialogue about the very meaning of such space. Because of their transitory natures, interstitial practices are able to absorb the instability of social space more easily. In addition, these practices are often sites of negotiations over use and possession of space. “Appropriative” activity is theorized usefully by Henri Lefebvre, French theorist of urban space. For Lefebvre, appropriation is a function of lived space, that is, “dominated, hence passively experienced space, which imagination seeks to change and appropriate.” Lived space is a place of passion where the user/inhabitant encounters resistance, which inevitably involves conscious action and struggle. Entailing time, lived space can be qualified as “directional, situational, or relational because it is qualitative, fluid, and dynamic.”<sup>1</sup>



Fig.1 Berlin-Tiergarten 1947

Currently, Eastern Germany, including Berlin, seems to have become a laboratory for temporary appropriation and creative reuse as a result of both an extraordinary proliferation of newly “useless” spaces and a conspicuous absence of real economic pressure to develop them. I examine two recent festivals that exemplify this wide field of spatial experimentation. One is *Volkspalast*, the temporary re-opening of *Palast der Republik* in Berlin (2004), and the other is *Hotel Neustadt*, an international theatre festival that appropriated a vacant hi-rise in Halle-Neustadt (2003). With my two case studies, which are written as independent yet interrelated essays, I hope to show that new avant-garde practices evolve from these “appropriative” strategies. Focusing on exemplary appropriations of existing structures that have outlived their original purposes, I will demonstrate that this field allows for practices that cannot be meaningfully distinguished by a division into social, on the one hand, and artistic, on the other. In addition to community participation, appropriative strategies enable interdisciplinary collaborations that might inform, as Lefebvre noted, the “production of new spaces.”<sup>2</sup>



## **Part One: Eviscerated Emptiness**

From August 24<sup>th</sup> to November 9<sup>th</sup> 2004, a festival with the title *Volkspalast* ("People's Palace") was staged in the old *Palast der Republik* in Berlin. For the festival, a group headed by Philipp Oswalt and Amelie Deuflhard, director of Sophiensaele Theatre Berlin, was permitted to temporarily reopen the major monument of former East Germany, which originally housed the Parliament and a cultural center.<sup>3</sup> Inviting a great variety of performances from different cultural institutions of the city, the program of the festival entailed concerts, theatrical and dance performances, sports events, and installations. Furthermore, the present controversy surrounding the proposed demolition of the building and alternative perspective for its future were discussed during a conference, "Fun Palace Berlin 200X."

The festival's reuse project was premised on the idea of the palace as a void in the city, which could be temporarily colonized with a multitude of activities. This interpretation noticeably conflicts with the commonly advanced reading of the socialist palace as an ideologically burdened building – one with a built-in political content. Built by a repressive regime to satisfy its display purposes, the monumental structure is charged with meanings that are seemingly impossible to integrate with the new image of a unified Germany. This perception of the building as a disgraced monument is reflected in the persistent desire to erase it because it does not fit into the newly re-constructed history.<sup>4</sup> The ongoing discourse situates the *Palast* as the major target of city development agencies. The building is attacked for prominently occupying what is defined as the city's very center: the site of the former palace of the Prussian monarchs and the German emperors. In this quarrel about the development of the inner core, the city is often reduced to its purely visual aspects, and architectural production to the challenge of defining the city's coherent visual identity (*Leitbild* – guiding image). What possibilities are raised by temporary interventions such as the *Volkspalast* to contrast the prevailing politics of disappearance and image production in post-*Wende* Berlin?<sup>5</sup>





Fig.2 Volkspalast logo

In this study, I begin by examining the politics of squatting as an influential example of appropriation since the late 1960s and early 1970s. The strategy of the festival appealed in spirit to the practice of illegally occupying spaces for various purposes. In post-*Wende*<sup>6</sup> Berlin, the abundance of neglected spaces and the politics of its subsequent reuse provided the environment for a burgeoning cultural scene of which, in fact, many of the contributors to the festival were active participants.<sup>7</sup> Second, I will argue that the *Palast der Republik* occupies a discursive field that cannot be dismissed by any kind of intervention. How is the temporary operating in this contested space? In the third and fourth chapters, a discussion ensues about how the building is appropriated by alternative cultures. I will discuss two performances from the festival's program, which are of special interest for thematizing the site's history as well as its current state. The first is Sasha Waltz's dance piece *Dialogue04*, which addresses the *Palast*'s monumental aspects and questions its representation as an ideologically burdened building. The second is *Fassadenrepublik*, a polemical piece attacking urban spatial development politics presently at work in the city's central districts.

## **The time is now. The place is here.**

Squatting, the most radical form of temporary appropriation, emerged as a political and sub-cultural movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Spontaneous or planned squatting is based on the premise that space matters as a means of self-determination and collective action even if it is taken over only for a limited period of time. The generation of 1968 declared their “Right to the City” and squatted in universities, schools, and other public spaces to push their agenda; these were events that helped to popularize the idea of squatting and elevated it to the status of a movement. In the aftermath of 1968 the spread of the practice was sustained by a renunciation from the grand utopian schemes. The failure of the big revolutionary projects led to a more pragmatic understanding of change that was to be carried out more effectively if broken down into smaller units and produced through concrete projects promising immediate implementation.

Activists imagined squatting as an action in space, or, in other words, as an event.<sup>8</sup> The act of taking over involved real risk and the struggle of defending the space against its legitimate owners and the state that enforces constitutionally guaranteed property ownership. For the transgressions involved in the whole enterprise, squatting satisfied the search for authentic experience; an authenticity which was both temporal and spatial. The axiom that a building is “squatted for immediate use”<sup>9</sup> legitimized the movement socially and politically and sustained its event character in the long run. Squatting for its protagonists meant participating in an collaborative effort. In terms of inhabiting the spaces, it often amounted to an existential experience because the derelict houses lacked modern amenities such as heating, running cold and warm water, electricity, all of which is today considered standard.



Fig.3 *Palast der Republik*, 2004

How is squatting and squatted space conceived? Or rather, by virtue of being an ad-hoc activity: is it conceived at all? In its original form, squatting was not purpose-driven. To be successful, the “event” needed concrete preparation. But this by no means involved preconceived abstractions of space that overlay physical space in the way traditional planning does. Rather the intervention was thought of as a tactical move, as something that is “set into motion, without being clear what that thing is and what direction it is taking.”<sup>10</sup> But it might interfere with and change the course of planning because it produced facts ‘on the ground’ that had to be taken into further consideration. In this way, squatting had significant impact on city development in Berlin. Beginning at the end of the 1970s, activists together with newly arrived immigrants<sup>11</sup> reclaimed buildings in the district of Kreuzberg where large quantities of old housing stock were already scheduled for demolition to make way for state-sponsored housing projects in form of high-modernist apartment blocks. After tenacious fights and negotiations involving landlords, local politicians, city government, and development agencies, large parts of the neighborhood could be preserved, upgraded with the help of squatters, and revitalized.<sup>12</sup> As a result of this grass-root effort, community participation in planning processes was formalized and entered mainstream development and urban renewal policies.

Thus, it can be concluded that in order to “go on” and establish itself for a longer period, squatting had to convince society of its usefulness. To legalize its status, squatting needed to move on from tactics to strategy while offering something that could be used for bargaining. As a consequence of negotiations over spaces, it might also be necessary to give up a squat and look for new opportunities. Finding new open spaces implies knowledge of periodic cycles of development and neglect in the life of a city as well as fast identification of historically unique occurrences.

Reacting fairly quickly, many Kreuzberg squatters moved ahead to East Berlin in the first months of 1990 thus successfully using the greatest confusion after the collapse of the GDR to occupy a variety of vacant buildings in now central districts such as Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg, and Friedrichshain. Here the movement could consolidate itself effectively due to the previous abolition of private property in East Germany and the following slow process of re-privatization and property restitution.<sup>13</sup>

While squatting poses problems for planning and management of space because it undermines planner's positivist notions of efficiency and optimization, the effects of squatting have changed planning and helped to establish a thinking that is more strategy oriented. Reversely, squatting cannot defy mystification and the subsequent appropriation of the myth by city marketing and tourist industry.<sup>14</sup> In both cases, in Kreuzberg of the 1980s and Mitte of the 1990s, metamorphoses triggered by squatter and derivative movements produced new urban myths attracting both tourists and young urban elites to these sites. In turn, gentrification is used as an argument by alternative users to get access to inexpensive spaces from patrons who hope for a subsequent revaluation of their properties. Understanding the complex processes of devaluation and revaluation is knowledge that was certainly helpful in getting the *Palast der Republik* temporarily handed over and for putting up a festival of the scope of *Volkspalast*. Moreover, the sanctioning of the endeavor depended on a wide alliance of artists and other supportive people to establish the *Volkspalast* as a temporary autonomous zone and a space of possibilities.

## From Palais to *Palast* and Back



Fig. 4 Replica of the Stadtschloss, 1993

*Palast der Republik* is a building quite difficult to appropriate not only for its enormous scale but because it is literally and metaphorically occupying a critical point in both unified Berlin and unified Germany. Its specific social and historical identity as a socialist cultural palace and site of the parliament of the former East German state, GDR, added a political dimension to the temporary construction of an alternative space right in the contested city center. The building has been the subject of a heated discussion not only amongst architectural professionals but in the public at large during the last fifteen years. The future of the building, which is the single most emblematic structure built by the GDR, was debated on virtually every level of the society including the German parliament, the *Bundestag*, where after several hearings its demolition was finally decided in 2003.

The so-called “Palace of the Republic,” built between 1973 and 1977, united the parliament and a central people’s house<sup>15</sup> in one single structure. It was erected on the site where once a Hohenzollern palace stood whose ruins were destroyed in 1951 to create a central open space for mass demonstrations. Today, there are plans to reconstruct the Baroque palace (also called *Stadtschloß*, city palace). In order to justify this enterprise, the knocking down of the socialist palace is represented in the popular rhetoric as a kind of revenge for the *Schloß*’s demolition. The deeper issue with the building is that it was conceived as a sign of the sovereignty of the GDR.

The erection of *Palast der Republik* was decided in the moment when the state's independence was finally internationally acknowledged. For people still hoped that the division of Germany would be only temporary, these aspirations were contested by politicians in the other German state as the following statement of a member of the West parliament at the occasion of the building's opening in 1977 shows, "This building now emphasizes the usurpation of the Capital City functions by East Berlin. This demonstration of the East Berlin's illegal Capital City claims should not be silently accepted."<sup>16</sup>

In the light of this statement it becomes plain that the official closure of the *Palast der Republik* on the eve of the German unification was a politically motivated decision, an act that was symbolic of the definite regime change. Furthermore, the rushed dismantling of the building represented an attempt to make retroactive corrections to the "mistake" of the GDR as an episode of German history. However, the *coup d'architecture* could not easily be substantiated on cultural grounds since the unification contract demanded that "the cultural artifacts of the GDR had to be preserved." When the building was 'found' to be asbestos contaminated only a few days before unification, it was a welcome opportunity to avoid any kind of public debate and shift the matter from a byzantine cultural question to a less complex public health issue. This way the politically inevitable shutdown was effectively constructed as yet another East European environmental catastrophe, a sort of architectural and urban Chernobyl.

The *Volkspalast* festival was not the first temporary appropriation of the site. Although the *Palast* itself had been sealed off from the public since 1990, the "square" in front of the building, renamed as Schlossplatz, actually became one of Berlin's central fairgrounds. In addition to Christmas markets and beach volleyball tournaments, which were presented here seasonally, a cabaret theatre, the BKA Luftschloss, had its circus tent home on the square for

several years. Other temporary events, in contrast, aimed at ending the provisional state of the Schlossplatz, which many deemed inappropriate for the historical center of the city. In 1993, Wilhelm von Boddin, a business man with aristocratic roots, initiated and funded an exhibition on site that proposed to rebuild the old Hohenzollern palace. The show was enshrined in a full scale replica of the *Schloss* façade, painted on plastic tarps and occupying the *Schloss*'s original footprint wherever it was possible. This installation did not only turn architecture into a spectacle. It also appropriated the polemic potential of the temporary to polarize the Schlossplatz debate into an either *Palast* or *Schloss* discussion. The plans to replace the *Palast der Republik* by a reconstruction of former Prussian palace, however, are pending because sufficient funds for the project are missing. It took the organizers of *Volkspalast* more than two years to gain permission from the authorities to reopen the *Palast*. They had to mitigate the polarized situation by convincing *Schloss* proponents that they neither intended to preserve the *Palast der Republik* nor to stage a nostalgia show within its confines. The major obstacle to overcome, however, was that the building was owned by the state and that repurposing it would apparently contradict the parliament's earlier decision to replace the building. On the other hand, the advisory commission to the *Bundestag* (*Internationale Expertenkommission "Historische Mitte Berlin"*) had recommended to use the ruin for cultural activities until its final demolition.

The *Palast* itself could be more securely revisited because it had undergone a significant metamorphosis. Due to the asbestos removal, the building was stripped of all its interiors and newly exposed its bare structure of massive steel beams and concrete floors.<sup>17</sup> Instead of displaying the old socialist pomp, it now appealed to the contemporary minimalist sensibility. The disappearance of all surfaces and internal enclosures allowed the architects to aesthetize the emptiness of the building.<sup>18</sup>

As the architectural setting of the festival, the *Palast der Republik* was conceived as a space-frame or mega-structure similar to those utopian visions of buildings as cities that proliferated all over Western Europe during the 1960s. Huge scaffolding-like structures alternately spanning on top of or entirely replacing existing cities were part of a partly social, partly technological utopia. Envisioned as infrastructure rather than form they were supposed to function as flexible and open carriers for new forms of communal life.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the festival explicitly referred to these mega-structural fantasies as it included an architectural conference, *Fun Palace Berlin 200X*, dedicated to Cedric Price's Fun palace, a project which served as a score for many of these projects.<sup>20</sup>



## Inside-out



Fig.5 Waltz&Guests, *Dialogue04*

*I don't work from an abstract choreographic idea.*

*(...) I have a need to find imagery.*

Sasha Waltz<sup>21</sup>

The performance *Dialogue04* (Dialogues04) was Sasha Waltz's contribution to the *Volkspalast* festival. Like earlier *Dialogue* pieces by the Berlin-based choreographer, the show made virtue of a specific site by transforming the pre-existing situation into a stage for contemporary dance theatre. Inaugurated in the early 1990s, *Dialogue* is conceptualized as a series of improvisations programmatically set outside traditional forms of theatre to allow intensive and informal periods of close collaboration between choreographers, dancers, artists, and musicians.<sup>22</sup> For *Dialogue04*, Waltz and her company Waltz & Guests collaborated with the Slovenian choreographer Iztok Kovac. The accompanying music, Reinhold Friedl's *Xenakis [a]live!*, was a live performance of electronic music using Iannis Xenakis compositions as sound samples.<sup>23</sup> Not only the series' title *Dialogue(s)* also its plural form is program since, in fact, a multitude of dialogues evolves between dance and space, choreography and music, and, also, audience and performers.

Waltz describes the theme of *Dialogue04* as the "resettlement of an abandoned world in which old connotations of power and grandeur lost their meaning."<sup>24</sup> This resettlement by means of dance is an intriguing proposition as it exposes the re-appropriation of body and space as an interlinked phenomenon. "Any revolutionary 'project' today, whether utopian or realistic," Lefebvre wrote, "must, if it is to avoid hopeless banality, make the re-appropriation of the body, in association with the re-appropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its

agenda.”<sup>25</sup> Thus the question of the body is closely linked to the production of new forms of social space.

The performance was a montage of two parts which in terms of imagery and construction of the spectator varied greatly. In the first half, the ‘stage’ was set in the huge space that was formerly the central foyer and the space separating the parliament section from the Grand Hall. During the second part, in contrast, the performers made use of almost the entire expanse of the building. The hybridity of the piece suggests two readings: one temporal, the other spatial. On the one hand, it can be interpreted in terms of before and after, past and present. The discontinuity of the two parts is amplified as the experiences of the spectator is constructed in two contrasting ways. Spatially, on the other hand, the building of the *Palast der Republik* was intrinsically hybrid as its original program combined stately with popular functions in a very unique way. This programmatic hybridity, which is eminent in the overall articulation of the building’s architecture,<sup>26</sup> is taken up by the choreographers to constitute the basic narrative structure of the performance.

The first of the images sets the frame for the choreographer’s occupation with the body in the society, that is, the appropriation of the body by specific societies. With very little elements the first situation is constructed: a piece of lawn in shape of a square is laid out in the vast space of the foyer. This fresh green ‘carpet’ of almost soccer field size delimits the territory that the 20 dancers occupy while it situates the audience and musicians outside along its border. The lawn setting the stage for the performance carries different references. First of all, it alludes to sports and ‘physical culture’ at large, a notion that is underscored by the outfit of the dancers which resembles casual attire in white and blue.<sup>27</sup> The strong light equally distributed over the entire field is characteristic of floodlight as it is commonly used for the nightly illumination of



Fig.6 Waltz&Guests, *Dialoge04*

sports fields. Second, the grass appears like an initial vegetation (*Spontanvegetation*) starting to take possession of the bleak forms of the building that presents itself in a ruinous state.<sup>28</sup> Whereas the first allusion might evoke an imagery connected to the past, the idea of the ruin raises the question of the future of the building. This question is directly linked to the third suggestion which implies the lawn as the park that is planned to cover up the site of the *Palast der Republik* temporarily once the old structure has been razed to make space for a future building project.

The first association with gymnastics and sports is far from being an arbitrary one given the prominent role that “physical culture” occupied in the GDR. Although the *Palast* itself was not used for sports events apart from the bowling center it housed in the basement, exercise here is used in a metaphorical way. These activities prominently served the legitimization of power in socialist regimes. This kind of appropriation through the state was driven by the desire to discipline its subjects by controlling their bodies. A whole set of values was attached to “physical culture”: it was to display youth, health, and strength and associate these notions with the socialist state. Furthermore, politics of sports played an important role in the clash of the two Cold War orders. It sought after establishing hegemony in a small but highly visible area of competition between the systems.<sup>29</sup>

But Waltz’s thematic approach to the body in relation to this architecture, and to what this architecture supposedly stands for, does not attempt to reenact former socialist “physical culture” and resists symbolism. Her choreography rather diverts the forms of movement it borrowed from gymnastics. It takes up formalized figurations and movements and alters them significantly by either changing constellations of the dancers or by modifying the tempo of movements. In general, dance challenges the ordering project of exercising. Whereas

movements in gymnastics are formalized so that they can be repeated and objectively measured, dance is innovative in its attempts to push the expressive possibilities of the human body. These fundamental differences express themselves in the way space is created for and through both activities. Standardized movement demands standardized spaces generated by the universally applicable rules of the game and the optimizing effort of constituting comparable external conditions. In this sense, sports facilities are absolute spaces that can be transferred everywhere in the global context.<sup>30</sup> Contrastingly, dance is a way to interpret and re-interpret space. The ever-changing configurations between dancing bodies and their probing relationship with the surrounding produces a specific spatiality.

Waltz's choreography relates gymnastics to dance with a method comparable to the Situationist diversion. The way in which pre-defined movements are over-written has much in common with Asger Jorn's altered paintings (*peintures détournées*) just to cite one example. His paintings of the *Modifications* series were indeed over-paintings of secondhand canvases by unknown artists.<sup>31</sup> Through Jorn's intervention, paintings of arguable artistic merit which were acquired on flea markets, became subject of a creative re-cycling. Due to the playful make-over by a higher authority, the "real" artist, a product of visual culture is revalued and elevated to the ranks of art.

The second part of the performance varies greatly from the first one as it overthrows the soccer field's containment and expands the action all over the building. Due to the reconfiguration of the entire site as "theater," dancers and audience are invited to explore the enormous expanse of the building.<sup>32</sup> The audience reenters the building through the side entrance which originally was reserved for state leaders as their access to the parliament section. Beginning with the parliament, crossing the main foyer via a bridge and ending in



Fig.7 Waltz&Guests, *Dialogue04*

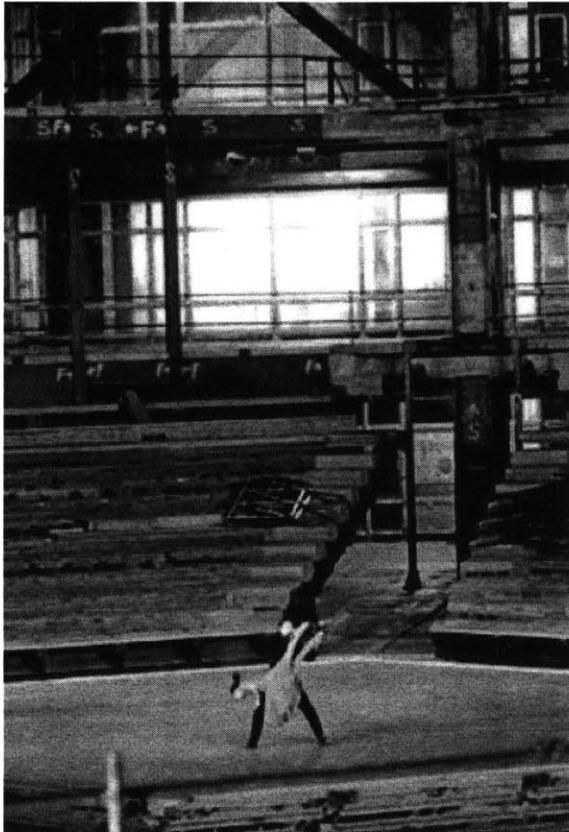


Fig.8 Waltz&Guests, *Dialogue04*

the Grand Hall that is situated on the opposite side, Waltz's choreography inscribes a circle in and around the building. Thus, she carefully choreographs a circulation impossible under the original conditions. The performance sets out onto a space travel that embraces the emptiness of the building by offering an uncompressed view of the scene. While being rid of the limitations posed by traditional theatre that tries to represent space on the stage, the performance needs the thread of procession that links dancers and spectators to repel the danger of being lost in space. It plays with the building's spatial possibilities of vertical and horizontal vision. In the closing scene, the distance between dancers and viewers is stretched to its extreme. This exploration of spatial depth by placing the body in the recession of space is one of the ways to negotiate the sheer size of the space.<sup>33</sup> When the audience is positioned far above on the edge of the Grand Hall while a single couple dances on the bottom of the its amphitheatre-like shape it is almost as if one would stand on top of a hill looking down into a valley. In order to come to terms with this spatial excess, Waltz reads the ruin as landscape.

Theatre as the place for spectacle configures the spectator's experience. The bipartite performance proposes two different approaches from which it extracts much of its narrative potential. First the centralized field of action settles the spectator along its the borders and confronts the seated body with the impossibility of fully grasping the simultaneous performance of the dance. In the following part, the spectator assumes an active role as part of the choreography literally following the unfolding performance on a pre-scribed path through the various rooms. The theater is re-defined as a contingent experience involving all parts of the body while traveling in space. By exposing the mechanisms of spectacle, Waltz invites the spectators to choreograph their own perspective on the ruin that since it has lost its original cultural identity can be appropriated in a new way.

## Mocking the mock

*Fassadenrepublik*, a second performance of the festival which I wish to examine more closely, is a game environment that parodies the politics official city development in the center of Berlin, especially its methods to promote certain building projects. The game is set up in the following way: the city with the name *Fassadenrepublik* (façade republic) is based on the addition of a basic module, a façade panel of three by three meters. To achieve a great variety of façade designs, the Berlin-based group Raumlabor, which collaborated on this project with Peanutz Architekten, announced an international design competition on their website a month prior to the opening. One hundred of the best façades were chosen by the architects and painted onto plastic tarps. For the installation, a major section of the first floor of the *Palast* was flooded, and the panels were set up as a labyrinth forming canals, all reminiscent of Venice, the lagoon and tourist city par excellence. The Venice experience was made complete with inflatable boats as the common means of public transportation.

Appropriation in *Fassadenrepublik* installation is problematized as the regime of the image, as the appropriation of the city for the tourist's gaze and, at the same time, as the impossibility to inhabit a purely visual construct. The setting of the game environment participates in the general trend of disengaging exterior from interior, of separating surface from content, a theme that is critical to the façade debates. The façade as the interface of a building defines its relationship to the interior. What happens when the façade becomes an independent element that does not have an "inside" to which it is giving some kind of formal expression nor an "outside" towards which it is facing? In the *Fassadenrepublik*, the facades become the element that turns the exterior into total interior. This world is almost exclusively generated by the repetition of this one element.

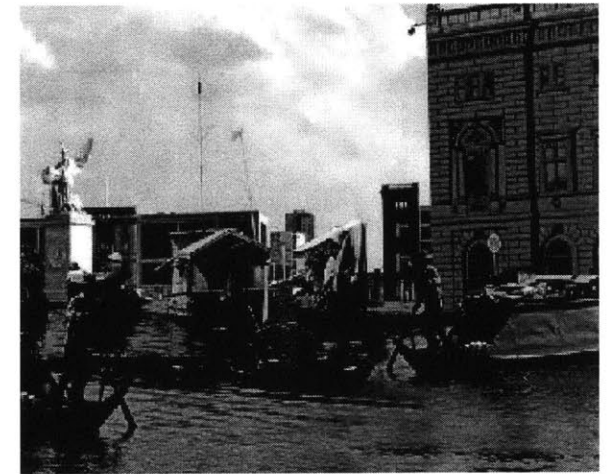


Fig.9 Raumlabor&Peanutz, *Fassadenrepublik*

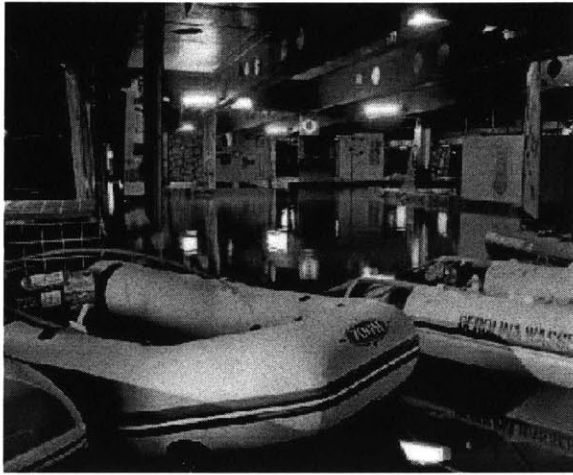


Fig.10 Raumlabor&Peanutz, *Fassadenrepublik*

The interior world of the façade republic is organized horizontally, in a sequence of chambers that is contained within a black box, all together bringing the interior worlds of video games to mind. The facades form navigable spaces and simulate houses whose functions are narrated by easily readable representational codes. The water and the chosen form of movement add elements of adventure for and interaction between the players.<sup>34</sup> In this city which is transformed into a game, emphasis is shifted from sight to action, which might also turn out to be the mere illusion of action like it is constructed in theme-parks.

The formula of the *Fassadenrepublik* is to simulate city and stimulate participation. With taking up a fetish of current city development, the façade, the installation especially mimics official practices of preparing reconstructions of lost buildings. With the project, the architects made use of the opportunity to place a polemical comment in spatial proximity to the Senate's most ambitious inner city projects. They thus used the protected space of the *Palast* as a carnivalesque zone, to suspend the existing order temporarily. Their critique is especially directed against the Berlin-specific proliferation of *Trompe l'oeil* installations, which are part of the big re-ordering project and are guided by an idea of the city as something defined by its image(s).<sup>35</sup>

Mock ups such as that of the Hohenzollern palace or Friedrich Schinkel's Bauakademie serve different purposes. Firstly, they are a means of populism pretending to make "planning" more tangible to laymen while actually implanting just one scenario as the only possible one. Secondly, the installations are fund-raising events that advertise the project to potential investors. Thus the belief in the power of illusionistic image exposes the essential weakness of the public planning authority, that is the lack of necessary means to impose any kind of grand style planning. Largely dependent on private investments for public tasks, architectural

choice becomes a question of taste and the stylistic preference of the financier. Projects like the replica of the palace façade are made for watching only as they constitute something that has no interior and, hence, cannot be experienced as actual architecture. Above all appealing to the tourist's gaze, image-building through façades is simulation of architecture that functions as visual "repair." It is supposed to re-enact the lost like a "prosthesis" of the city's body, and is charged with the hope that the "prosthesis" eventually becomes a limb again.<sup>36</sup> It is architecture as medium waiting to be materialized.

Raumlabor's work combines architecture with performance; a seemingly new and surprising combination. That performance art can have an impact on architecture documents Gordon Matta-Clark's statement: "I feel my work intimately linked with the process as a form of theater in which both the working activity and the structural changes to and within the building are the performance."<sup>37</sup> In the *Fassadenrepublik*, the process of both making architecture and operating the city is the performance. As animators, the architects instigated the audience to engage in common activity. Partly this audience consisted of tourists attracted by the unique opportunity of canoeing in a flooded building and, thus, ironically involved a group of transitory residents of the city – a group that usually does not perceive of itself as a community. Nevertheless, it is this group probably more than any other that indirectly influences the transformation of cities into feel-good and look-good environments. Becoming part of the theater, tourists in the façade republic were empowered to participate and produce their own piece of the city rather than turning the *Palast der Republik* as a symbol of the perished GDR into a mere tourist spectacle.



It is still too early to conclude exactly what the *Volkspalast* festival achieved. Some critics have expressed a great deal of optimism about its results stating that the project was a successful attempt to exorcize ideological ghosts by superimposing new meanings onto the disgraced building.<sup>38</sup> The proponents of the *Palast*'s demolition and reconstruction of the Hohenzollern palace seemed to push their agenda more fiercely than ever with the backing of politicians. This opposition holds that the owner of the building contradicts his own decisions by sanctioning and even funding such an appropriation.

In its own way, *Volkspalast* participated in the production of images. As a future vision, it introduced the metaphor of the *Palast* ruin as a possible *Fun Palace*, an ever changing machine that is entirely operated and controlled by its users. Obviously, the massive monumentality of the *Palast der Republik* cannot be equated with Cedric Price's diagrammatic framework. While Price's project remained a vision on paper, for good reason, the *Palast* is a structure that possesses its own physical presence and history. The question of non-control is likewise illusory since it is the programmers of the *Palast* who will finally choose which performances to include and exclude. Indeed, the selection of performances – most of which were from chosen from fringe culture and subculture – was criticized as not inclusive and popular enough. The selection was the main tool to distinguish *Volkspalast* from other less critical forms of using this space. Yet, it might happen that the festival paved the way for the spectacle it wanted to preclude. After the festival, it seemed to be more acceptable to use the *Palast der Republik*. It can now be appropriated, or rather rented, as a location that provides the atmospheric background for a multitude of events ranging from large scale business meetings and exhibitions to pop concerts. If the festival contributed to this new acceptance, *Volkspalast* might have indeed salvaged the building.



## **Part Two: Halle-Neustadt Plays**

This case illustrates the unusual intervention into a former workers' housing estate that, since the early 1990s, has become increasingly depopulated. Contrasting the prevalent scenario of decline and urban demolition, the artistic re-appropriation of one of the abandoned buildings was a spirited attempt to find ways to reinvent social space while generating a public awareness of the socio-spatial dynamics of the surrounding community. At stake here is the future of a modernist city, the functionalist and architectural heritage of the defunct socialist regime that once embodied a model of collective ideal society that became obsolete with the regime's collapse fifteen years earlier.

In September 2003, Halle Thalia Theatre held an international theatre festival in Halle-Neustadt, a new town and former socialist model city near Halle. As a major site of the festival, a former student dormitory, the hi-rise Slab A in downtown Halle-Neustadt, was reactivated as a temporary hotel. *Hotel Neustadt*, the name of both the hotel and the festival, became the thematic frame and stage for theatrical performances. The festival was co-funded by the newly established Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany, the city of Halle, and private sponsors. The organization team included two architects, Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius and Matthias Rick, which are associated with Raumlabor Berlin, the group that was working on a strategic development plan for Halle-Neustadt, *Kolorado*.<sup>39</sup> Thus they put into practice one of their proposals which called for municipal institutions such as theatres, museums, and universities to establish temporary spin-offs, the so-called satellites (*Kultursatelliten*), in the new town, which is generally considered a wasteland in terms of cultural activities.<sup>40</sup> With the assistance of theatre people and architects, local youth was invited to participate in the furnishing and operation of *Hotel Neustadt* as part of the program. They indeed succeeded in establishing a full-service hotel occupying the first eight out of eighteen floors in the existing the hi-rise building, with services such as a balcony mall with wellness center, a hair salon, an



Fig. 11 Thalia Theatre Hall *Hotel Neustadt*

indoor golf facility, a casino, conference rooms, and an underground night club.

The festival offered a complete tourist experience with happenings that were not limited to the hotel; from there it also emanated into the public square in front of the building and included the nearby train-station, the former nerve center of the entire city.

In the first chapter, I will look at the dialectical relationship between crisis and response. For that purpose, I will situate this kind of temporary intervention that is developing around the theme of urban demolition as a form of community-based theatre in the expanded field. In the second part, I will examine a selection of performances and their artistic strategies all of which were organized around the modernist city as subject matter. The expanded notion of performance implied here allows for artistic and non-artistic collaborations that will be discussed in the that chapter. Thirdly, I propose that Hotel Neustadt is seen by architects as a model for rethinking this city and as a cultural catalyst to trigger change without development in the conventional sense. What are the characteristics of this new model of envisioning the city? How does the temporary intervention position itself within the existing structures of both physical space and planning methodology? What kind of vision does the strategy imply for the future of Halle-Neustadt and other cities with similar crisis?

## Invading the 'modernist' ghost-town

To stage an international theater festival in Halle-Neustadt, a former workers' housing estate and an area recently hit by depopulation, sounds like an unconventional endeavor very likely to fail from a commercial point of view. What are the motivations of the theatre to take this step?

As a setting, Halle-Neustadt, a typical *Plattenbaugebiet*<sup>41</sup> of the GDR era, could not be more depressed. Since the collapse of the old regime, the city developed from a socialist model city into the prototype of a post-unification "shrinking" city.<sup>42</sup> Halle-Neustadt was the GDR's second largest new housing development exclusively built to accommodate more than 100,000 workers of the surrounding chemical industries and their families.<sup>43</sup> Produced with standardized technology, major parts of the new city rapidly grew out of the ground between 1964 and 1974.<sup>44</sup> Since 1990, the transformations in Eastern Germany have led to processes of de-industrialization and, subsequently, de-population in industrial cities and regions. Apart from this economical context, the abundance of certain types of apartments is related to the growth of housing options. Today, the formerly privileged new apartment complexes such as Halle-Neustadt are competing with the remodeled old town quarters and suburban housing. For these various reasons, Neustadt has lost about 30.000 inhabitants – one third of its original population – within the last fifteen years. Consequently, many housing blocks are vacant. To respond to this crisis, housing corporations started to demolish sections of their unneeded housing stock with the financial assistance of state programs.<sup>45</sup>



Fig.12 Foerster-Baldenius *Squatter's home*

Yet, the theatre by initiating the project wanted to address the social and emotional dimension of this crisis. “To go to Neustadt and to engage oneself there,” writes Annegret Hahn, director of Thalia Theatre Halle, “means dispensing with political commitment to the past. From the original privilege of having a home in Halle-Neustadt developed a stigma of having become a loser in a failed system. The future, if there really is one, lies in the old city, which also suffices for the future.”<sup>46</sup> Hahn highlights three points here. Firstly, the debate is politicized insofar as Halle-Neustadt’s identity is tied to the socialist regime with which nobody wants to identify today. Secondly, it is psychologized because whoever stays in or even moves to this neighborhood is stigmatized as someone identifying with the old system.

Thirdly, the loss of social support for Halle-Neustadt is played out in the dichotomy of new and old. It manifests itself in a drop of emotional and financial investment in favor for old Halle – a tendency representing a complete reversal of the pre-unification situation.<sup>47</sup>

With its move into Halle-Neustadt, the festival *Hotel Neustadt* attempts to adopt a strategy crucial to community-based theatre. By addressing community-specific issues, these performative forms hoped to trigger changes that would affect its participants, both performers and audiences. British theatre company director and writer Baz Kershaw attests that this notion of theatre as “cultural catalyst” is “predicated on the possible *usefulness* of theatre to particular communities. By tailor-making performances for known audiences these companies hoped to change those audiences in some way, however marginally.”<sup>48</sup> *Hotel Neustadt* is based on similarly general premises of the theatre’s efficacy. Moreover, it shares some of the characteristics with community-based theatre as it encourages collaborations with non-artists around a common theme, performs within and with the community, and emphasizes process such as workshops as much as final product.

The main issue for community-based performance, however, was to change the minds and, subsequently, actions of its participants, but not space. For example, Kershaw does not explicitly address the role of space in his study of radical theatre, nor does it seem to be addressed by the performances he describes. Space is mainly considered as the place where a particular community is localized. Furthermore, it plays a role as a setting or environment, hence as something external to the actual performance. In contrast, space, or rather the crisis of space, is the major concern of *Hotel Neustadt*. Reviving the idea of festivals as environmental form, the organizers called for embedded performances that were thematically related to the site. Given topics were: “life in a large housing estate and tower blocks;” “Halle-Neustadt;” “city shrinkage;” and “hotels.”<sup>49</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, the selected projects were also not rigidly limited to theatrical performances, but were performative interventions and installations in the widest sense. I’ve selected five of these performances that, on the one hand, illustrate a spectrum of works and, on the other, could be useful as tools beyond the actual festival.



## Toolkit

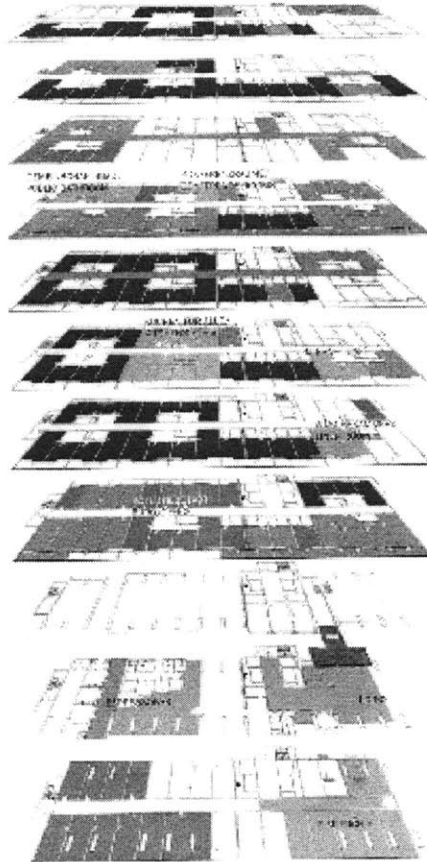


Fig.13 *Hotel Neustadt* Reactivated floors

*Hotel Neustadt* was the name of the theatre festival hosted in a vacant building. But it was also the name of a parasite hotel that occupied a host of rooms in a host structure, a former student dormitory. How did this unusual place for bringing together such different communities as theatre people, international artists, local youths, residents, and festival visitors, come into being?

### *Hotel Tuning*

The central aspect of the *Hotel Tuning* process<sup>50</sup> was the involvement of local teenagers into the project of creating and running a hotel. Underlying this approach is a concept of how identity is created. As Wolfgang Kil proposed, identification with a place emerges through participation in the shaping of the environment.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the involvement had also a symbolical dimension because youth as a permanent source of optimism was prominently featured in the urbanism of the city.<sup>52</sup> Assisted by Foerster-Baldenius and Mathias Rick from Raumlabor Berlin, a group of about a hundred teens took over the task of both designing the hotel rooms and assembling their interiors. Furthermore, they were responsible for decorating hallways, equipping the reception desk area, and for reactivating a former underground club in the basement of the building.

Each room of the ninety-two had its individual design. The designs are grouped floor-wise around common themes, such as landscape, noise, fear, feeling, community, luxury, and order. The cause for this diversity was less an anxiety of sameness than the idea that creative freedom of the individual designer needs to be preserved.

By offering a variety of possible outlets for individual creativity and occasions for participation, *Hotel Tuning* like many other of the performances and installations in and around the hotel are informed by Joseph Beuys' theories on social sculpture.

"Every human being is an artist," Beuys famously stated "because I am talking about the 'point of freedom' that exists within every individual."<sup>53</sup>

Improvisation is another aspect of this diversity. Many ideas developed under the circumstances of the tight budget which forced the participants to improvise and work with the means that were available.<sup>54</sup> Such found or donated objects often triggered thematic design ideas for entire rooms. Moreover, improvisation as the elementary virtue of the hotel, was also upheld in its material culture of that has its parallels in the stuff of theatrical productions.<sup>55</sup> Used were primarily color, paper, fabrics, donated and self-produced furniture, and recovered materials. Major and unbeatably cheap building material for the furniture were doors which were salvaged from buildings allotted for demolition. This mass produced door of the 1970s is a composed of a softwood frame, filled in with an inner core of honeycomb cardboard and has a surface of imitation wood that often bears the traces of its previous users. As a building material, it was easily to work with, yet its sandwich-like structure had to be considered as a design parameter. In the hotel, the doors reappear transformed into beds, chairs, benches, and desks furnishing the rooms and in various other installations.

Since the building had been vacant for several years, the reactivation of the building's infrastructure was a major challenge. Difficulties with reactivating plumbing and electrics exposed the fragility of infrastructural systems. They have to be in use permanently otherwise they become defunct. The official publication of *Hotel Neustadt* accounts for several floods and water damages due to *Slab A*'s pipes clogged by lime.<sup>56</sup> The hotel's provisoriness, of



Fig. 14 *Hotel Neustadt* Rooms

course, depended on the audiences' readiness to play along. There was no way to complain about non-operating elevators, or the absence of hot water. Also some non-standard elements like public warm showers and common kitchens demanded from the hotel guests to adopt at times a squatter attitude.

As for the Hotel's external appearance, some carefully placed signs communicated the temporary function of the hi-rise. Four large pictograms placed on the façade and neon signs located at the entrances of both the train station and the hotel indicated the intervention.<sup>57</sup> The hotel also introduced a complete tourist infrastructure with guided tours in the area, bike rental, and a gift-shop selling the own line of Halle-Neustadt souvenirs. With its restricted budget, the hotel called the population to donate domestic and decorative items such as towels, refrigerators, kitchen utensils, and plants for the hotel's equipment. Thus, the hotel improvisation served also as a generator for transactions and redistribution of things. This exchange was one of the strategies to establish links to the local population. Already in February 2003, the festival planning team had opened its office, ironically named "Fernost" (Far East), in the Halle-Neustadt train station to slowly adapt the local population to the upcoming artistic invasion.

### *Balcony Tuning*

Peanutz Architekten focused on the investigation of the balconies as the interface between private and public. Their *Balcony tuning* also identified the loggias in Halle-Neustadt as a major stage for individuality in the otherwise uniform environment of a housing settlement based on prefabricated concrete panel technology. Taking up this potential, the architects applied their method, tuning, which they define as the semantic reloading of objects and situations. The tuning series consisted of different parts: a balcony guide, balcony tuning consultations, and several tunings executed by Peanutz Architekten themselves in the Hotel Neustadt.

To begin with, the architects organized a guided tour exhibiting the most exemplary balconies in the area. Moving around with scooters, festival visitors were called upon to explore the diversity of decorations and usages. Inspired by their recordings of Halle-Neustadt balconies, Peanutz went on to offer public consultations assisting in both practical solutions for some of the common balcony problems and extravagant designs that would add pivotal use and display value. During these tuning sessions, more than a hundred visitors, who had never before consulted an architect, received an expert opinion on how to customize the mass-produced building element according to their needs and desires. Besides performing architecture as a special service to the local community, Peanutz also “tuned” some balconies for *Hotel Neustadt* events. A big flower heart dressed up a wedding pavilion (*The Wedding Celebration* by performance artist Diana Wesser and Perform S.) and a triathlon track compressed onto one single balcony (*platten man*) for the sportification, an extreme and fun sports event staged in and around the hi-rise.

### *Syntosil mol 25*

*Syntosil mol 25* is the name of an installation by the Swiss action group Syntosil that addressed loss of orientation. Disorienting the festival visitors was a challenging theme since organization and geometry of the former dormitory are simple: four bedroom apartments on both sides of a middle corridor. Occupying three of these apartments on different levels, the dada-inspired Zürich-based group set up a sequence of rooms, a labyrinth and an experiential laboratory, which were inhabited by a bizarre species called the “idiots.”<sup>58</sup>

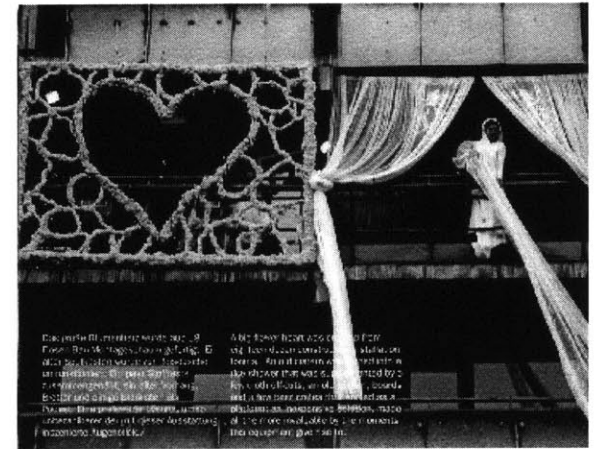


Fig.15 *Balcony Tuning*

### Sequence of spaces:

upper level: artificial garden as waiting room > Temple of Doors > straight corridor with 24 doors > slide > lower level: desk for distribution of helmets > laboratory of three rooms with organic forms

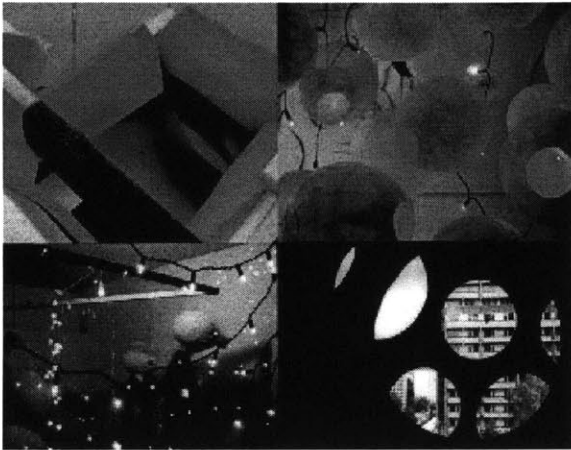


Fig.16 *Syntosil mol 25*

The first room called *Temple of Doors* was a labyrinth of honeycomb-like cells formed up by six doors, which filled two of the large bedrooms entirely. Transition between was made possible through partially opened sides of the hexagon. The labyrinth effectively disorients by breaking the orientation framework which is crudely based on the two body axes established by the front-back, and left-right relationships. Whereas the geometry of the building's architecture imposes an orthogonal grid onto the moving body, the installation successfully disorients this reference system by establishing an enclosure with six equal sides. After traversing no more than four cells, the spatial memory of the clear structure gets lost and the disturbed participant will try to reinsert the previous order by finding the way out. Additionally, the change of scale in the labyrinth has disquieting aspects. The size of the cells derives directly from the object that is forming its enclosure, the door, whose proportions, in turn, are directly related to the human body. Despite, or rather precisely for that reason, it generates the labyrinth's claustrophobic world. But *Syntosil* take the play with scales even one step further. Not only do they place the participant in a labyrinth formed by doors; they also recreate the door's own internal structure for the labyrinth resembles its very honeycomb core. This telescoping into the material structure of things will later be reiterated in the rooms on the lower level.

Another field of playful exploration is the confusion of the door's semiotic functions. Usually, a door marks the threshold between two separated rooms and can be operated in order to alternately open or close off this connection. In the installation, this relay mechanism is arrested. Some of the doors are just permanently opened to allow the passage from one comb to the other. Yet, their original meaning is still legible through the existence of the door handles. Along the same lines, the actual aperture from one room of the labyrinth to the other is not a door but a hole in the wall. That none of the doors in the installation is actually doing what it is supposed to do, becomes plain in the next room. The labyrinth leads into a long straight corridor that exaggerates uniformity by placing one door after the other. Syntosil's corridor is also an inverted panopticon device that contrast the uniform with the potentially interesting object.<sup>59</sup> Peep-holes that are inversely built into some of the doors give visual access to enigmatic worlds behind them. This inversion of inside and outside humorously exposes common voyeurism of collective housing arrangements, a setting where doors often have eyes and ears to record every step of the neighbor and in which security devices turn into means of social control.

Through another hole in the floor, a slide leads to the lower level.<sup>60</sup> Here, an "alchemical laboratory" is installed which has to be explored with "focusing helmets." Each of the following three rooms has walls decorated with organic forms and sphere-shaped and illuminated objects that are suspended at its center. Taking up the main theme again, loss of orientation occurs here as a loss of scale, or more precisely, as the simulation of the simultaneous existence of different scales which enables the viewer to telescope from micro to macro level. The body, the only obstacle to the fluid telescoping experience, has to be manipulated and therefore equipped with imaging technology, the sphere-shaped helmet. In the last room, the view is filtered several times through both the helmet device as well as through a series of

perforated walls. These open the prospect onto another hi-rise vis-à-vis which, shockingly, looks exactly the same as Slap A: mirror, alchemy, or *déjà vu*?

#### *Espresso bar furniture*

Another fifty doors were reworked into furniture for the dormitory's former espresso bar as it was revived as festival canteen. A Raumlabor team designed, executed, and, subsequently, even operated the bar that is located on ground floor level.<sup>61</sup> Its big windows that open onto square had been barricaded with wooden panels during years of abandonment. Situated at an important public intersection next to a passage that cuts through the building and that shapes the bar's angular floor plan. Main elements of the new espresso bar design are furniture, color, and several objects such as the bar and lamps. Although using the same cheap materials as other interventions, as well as found installations, the interiors are unified in an eclectic retro-look attesting to the architect's signature.

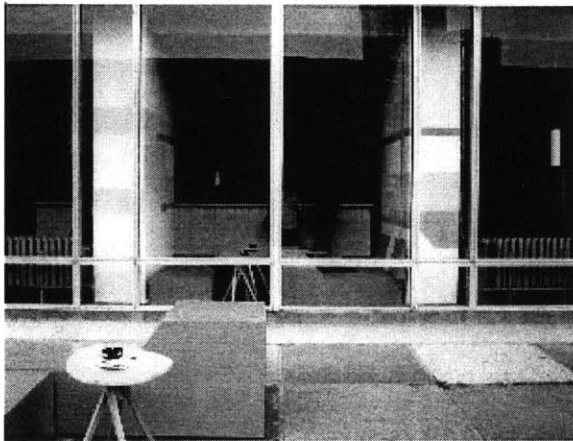


Fig. 17 *Espresso bar*

For their design, the architects employed the formal language of modernism, although not without ambiguity. They position themselves towards modernism by taking a contextual approach and developing their design within and with the existing space thus acknowledging the validity of modernist principles and themes.<sup>62</sup> The seating areas (*Sitzmöbel*) take up a modernist trope, the fluid landscape. This element was conceived as a band that is contextually folded around the row of freestanding concrete piers along the window front. On the one hand, there is a continuity of the element, which, on the other, is broken down into a modular system based on the dimensions of the doors which were used as the material.

In each of the bays, which are shaped by the deeply inwards projecting piers, the modules occur in different configurations to create a variety of situations.<sup>63</sup> To pronounce the logic of the band, the pieces are carried out as closed boxes; a design decision that bestows the furniture with a immobile solidity.

This tectonic reinterpretation of furniture turns the announced dynamism into rhetoric. Instead of being truly mobile and allowing for the participatory reconfiguration of the “users,” the situations are determined by the architects. The furnishing is similarly ambiguous in its relation to the temporary. While the material of the furniture itself suggests temporariness, its treatment is rather careful than spontaneous. The modules are well-executed: all panels have a 45° bevel cut so that their edges are invisible. Thus, the architectural landscape a miniature displays the architects’ care about advertising their skills.

### *Clubgolf*

Christoph Brucker’s *clubgolf* was a mini-golf course installed in the game zone of the hotel. The 19-hole parcours, distributed over several apartments, was entirely made of domestic items that were harvested from the abandoned apartment blocks. In the tradition of the *objet trouvé*, Brucker repurposed objects such as wall units, furniture, pipes, computer monitors, carpets, and shovels. As homage to Marcel Duchamp, even a pissoir was included. Like Kyong Park’s project proposal *The Slide and Sportification*, also *clubgolf* envisaged leisure activities as a possible future use for the apartment blocks.

*Clubgolf* was an interactive installation. For a test arrangement of this type, it is important that it is shown in a non-museum environment because an institutional setting would prevent most people from actually using it.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, each hole was accompanied by an explanation





**4**

## SOFA

Für den vierten Abschlag muss man den Unterschrank der Schrankwand besteigen, um von dort den Ball hinüber zu einem Sofa zu schlagen, in dessen Eckelement ein einmontierter Spülbeckenablauf der Aufnahme des Balles dient. / For the fourth tee one must climb the base of a cupboard in order to hit the ball from there to a sofa, in whose arm a washbasin drainpipe serves as the hole.

Fig.18 *Clubgolf*

card to assist the reception of the piece. On each tag, there was information on teeing ground and putting object, recommended fairway, bounds, and hazards. For example, hole 4 (sofa) read in the following way: “For the fourth tee, one needs to climb the base of a wall unit in order to hit the ball from there to a sofa, in whose arm a washbasin drainpipe serves as a hole.”<sup>65</sup>

Brucker calls his approach towards found objects conversion, which is a conceptual method of reinventing them based on an investigation of their structural and aesthetic qualities. The artist notes that an open-minded view towards the object and the ability to recognize the unnoticed sides and characteristics of things are prerequisites for this kind of modification strategy. There is no object that could not be put back into use again.<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, Brucker’s selection does not display a specific aesthetic preference. It is rather an eclectic collection of what could be found on site. The famed wall unit “Type Leipzig,” pre-*Wende* center piece of numerous East German living rooms ends up next to a clearly first-wave post-*Wende* corner sofa, as it probably did in real life. Similarly, the “Fernost” was redecorated by the artist with the abandoned interiors of the former Chinese restaurant “Peking Ente” (Beijing Duck). Here, the anteroom became the festive highlight of the festival planning office. Heavy red curtains and carpets are contrasted with dark brown planking. These fake wooden elements adorned with golden dragons were removed from the ceilings of the restaurant and instead mounted on the walls. If Brucker identified this room as the germ of Hotel Neustadt, can we in turn see Hotel Neustadt as the germ for a new Halle-Neustadt?

## Theatrical city as model

Theatricality is a means of estrangement that transforms life “into a spectacle,” both on stage and in reality. With its intervention into the existing Neustadt, the fictional hotel attempted to trigger a “metamorphosis of the real, the habitual, the ordinary into the theatrical”<sup>67</sup> The theatrical as a form of estrangement of life is manifest in various aspects in the *Hotel Neustadt* project.<sup>68</sup>

Firstly, artists were not only present as performers in Halle-Neustadt. During the preparation and the festival, the artworld temporarily inhabited the hotel fiction thus deliberately blurring the boundaries between art and life. In order to animate life in the “real” city, artists intermingled with actual residents and became catalysts for new vitality due to their faculty to see things anew. Secondly, theatre as the apparatus for theatrical productions makes its infrastructure available in order to enable and sustain the hotel’s fiction in a playful way. In the hotel, the theatrical machine is often used for unintended purposes. The theatre’s backstage staff plays various roles such as those of make-up artists, contractors, and bellhops. The theatre workshop facilitates building (Hotel tuning, Espresso bar), the assistant director becomes the coordinator and problem-solver on site, and the make-up crew operates the wellness area. This offering of services lies within the concern of performance-oriented social art of the 1990s.

Thirdly, the work on the hotel – the public staging of building activity – is itself, theatrical. Gordon Matta-Clark noted that the relation of building (and un-building) to performance was “process as a form of theater in which both the working activity and the structural changes to and within the building are the performance.”<sup>69</sup> Noise of air hammers, delivery of materials

and furniture, and the publicity of the gestures of making in the former train station, on the public square in front of the hotel, and on the hotel's balconies are meant to signal to the Neustadt's population that something is happening. The direct involvement of the community added another dimension to the process. Foerster-Baldenius, coordinator of the youth project and self-described performing architect, emphasized workshops as a setting for the work with non-professionals. Within this framework, the public making of architecture includes animating activity and coordinating the participative effort of design and execution as part of the performance.

Various participants have described Hotel Neustadt as a city. Kyong Park, artist from New York, called it a "hi-rise favela" interpreting Hotel Neustadt not only as a city but as a specific model for a new city (favela) that juxtaposes the old one. "It [Hotel Neustadt] is a city without a master plan," he writes, "a new city within a dying city, a temporary city within a long-term city, a nomadic city within in static one. The hotel attracted the missing elements of Halle-Neustadt."<sup>70</sup> Also for the group Raumlabor Berlin, who was commissioned to develop a plan for Halle Neustadt, the hotel served as a prototype intervention, which in contrast to conventional planning could be implemented immediately because of its limited duration.

What is being proposed here is a double strategy, which Park characterizes as "participatory interaction between artists and population" and simultaneity of "bottom-up and top-down movements." On the one hand, the theatrical city allows for various scenarios to be acted out, because each intervention has only a limited duration. The various temporary situations can be tested and evaluated and, subsequently, either corroborated or replaced by a better strategy. Unlike conventional planning, which is transmitted by means of verbal signs and plans, the interceding scenarios are communicated non-verbally.

The masterplan would be replaced by a dramaturgy of urban events similar to the conception of the Hotel-Neustadt Show where the different performances in the hotel were experienced on different trajectories through the building. Other examples are the opening ceremony of the festival, or the surprising appearances such as the stilt performers (Grotesk Maru), the hotel bear, the Night Sauna, and the performance of the station cleaning team.

On the other hand, the hotel/city wants to generate an example for alternative attitudes towards space. The project attempts to initiate a process of “appropriatory” activity based on participation of the population. This proposal could be imagined much like Walter Benjamin’s description of what he calls a porous city where “building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades, and stairways. In everything they preserve the scope to become theater of new, unforeseen constellations. The stamp of the definitive is avoided. No situation appears intended forever, no figure asserts its ‘thus and not otherwise.’”<sup>71</sup> What Benjamin depicts is an admittedly romanticized situation in which building/architecture comes into being as function of spatial practice, through the activity and action of the city’s inhabitants who can continuously adapt it to their changing needs. These architectures include more temporary forms such as additions, encroachments, decorations, or nomadic elements. *Hotel Neustadt* exhibited some strategies that resemble this approach and encourage local activists to copy them. Moreover, it also uses its license as an artistic project to do things that are denied in “real life.”

There are different obstacles to mutable space. Firstly, there is a mental barrier, which prevents even many home-owners from making major changes to their homes. Secondly, Peanutz’s balcony research revealed that there are many regulations imposed by housing companies, which effectively limit the range of possible interventions. And finally, Halle-Neustadt’s

modernist urbanism, as conditioned by functionalism, is a major hindrance. Functionalism as the early twentieth century ideology of rationally planned cities and buildings, was a deterministic doctrine based on the scientific analysis of the needs of the society. Still today, such built structures are too rigid to accommodate individual and changing needs because of the building materials used and the minimalism of most designs.

*Hotel-Neustadt* was something like a development aid beyond a mere managerial scheme to tackle the city's crisis. The project sought new purposes for the hi-rise and attempted to initiate new developments. The initiative was celebrated by its participants and local media as a great success for creating more awareness for the situation, on the one hand, and a positive vision, on the other.<sup>72</sup> The festival triggered several follow-up projects. First of all, a group of high school students who had been organizing a basement party space in *Hotel Neustadt*, took over the name "Fernost" after the festival for an ongoing party service and have plans to continue the enterprise professionally after receiving their high-school degrees.<sup>73</sup> Kulturblock e.V Halle-Neustadt, a Neustadt based artist collective founded in 2002, took up the festival idea and invites artists on a regular basis to develop works specifically related to Halle-Neustadt. Since 2003, the group has also championed the conversion of the Neustadt train station into an exhibition venue for contemporary art (*Kunsthalle*) to salvage this important landmark from demolition. Lastly, an exhibition of the work of the city's former chief architect, Richard Paulick, was held on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Halle-Neustadt in 2004. The show accounts for the rediscovery of the architectural value of Neustadt's original plan.

In 2004 as well, Halle applied for the title "European Cultural Capital 2010," using a concept that took as its theme the duality of the city and the model character of the ongoing urban transformations. On its tour of the applicant cities in Germany, the jury also visited Halle-

Neustadt. Although Halle was not chosen as a final candidate in the competition, it was generally agreed that basing their campaign on the phenomenon shrinkage and urban redevelopment was a courageous step for a city with such rich a rich cultural heritage. Major impulses for the future will result from the city's participation in the IBA *Stadtumbau 2010* (International Building Exhibition "Urban Redevelopment" in Saxony-Anhalt). Following the tradition of building exhibitions, the latest IBA, which is organized by the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, supports a network of cities in Saxony-Anhalt helping them to develop their individual paths of urban redevelopment and to promote internationally the expertise that has been gained in the restructuring process. The participation of Halle-Neustadt in this program will enable Raumlabor Berlin to continue the implementation of its Halle-Neustadt *Kolorado* development plan. As part of the IBA 2010 initiatives, the Thalia Theatre will return to Neustadt in September 2005 to hold an International Summer School.

## Conclusion

Cultural activities have become increasingly important in the era of globalization because they help cities to position themselves in the global urban networks. Due to the mobility of capital in the global economy, cities are competing against each other for resources and new investments. Whereas earlier cities were shaped by the growth of industries, they now need to become the source for new economic developments themselves.<sup>74</sup>

Today, the most visible of these “new urban economies” are those based on cultural and leisure activities.<sup>75</sup> International art-related events, such as the “Cultural Capital of Europe” initiative<sup>76</sup> and periodic large-scale art-exhibitions, are important elements of this economy. These events, for example, allow for the transfer and bundling of funds to improve infrastructure. A further tangible effect is the event-related increase in tourism. Intangible benefits include media attention and publicity for the city, gains in planning competence, and intensified networking among cultural and civic institutions – all of which have a positive impact on the image of the city and the urban development in the longer term. Such improvements contribute to the innovative climate in the city, which in turn is seen as the basis for additional growth as it becomes a center for informational and knowledge-rich sectors of the new economy.<sup>77</sup>

Both *Hotel-Neustadt* and *Volkspalast* used the logic of the art event to attract visitors to specific sites and to propose new purposes for buildings that have lost their original function. Although both festivals used similar strategies, one was linked to the problem of shrinkage and the other to the preservation of an important monument. The contexts of the appropriations on their part triggered different reactions.

*Hotel Neustadt* opposed the idea that demolition is a solution. Dictated by pragmatism, demolition creates no new infrastructure except for a specialized industry. These acts of un-building may even lead to additional mental and emotional problems for the people in the affected neighborhoods, especially if these processes are not counterbalanced by positive gestures. On the contrary, the perforating city needs to be positively appropriated for several reasons. Firstly, shrinkage today is produced by depopulation; especially by migration of highly qualified people to the western parts of Germany. The more people leave, the greater the chances that the downward trend will reinforce the emptying of the city, despite demolition of vacant buildings. Related to this depopulation is a decline in the quality of urban life and space, both interrelated factors that are interpreted as key aspects of competitiveness in the age of globalization. Thirdly, there is the danger that the residual spaces will be overtaken by destructive forces such as radical rightist groups. For all these reasons, the production of positive images is crucial to prevent further weakening of the position of this shrinking city.

Accordingly, the city officials of Halle, unlike Berlin's municipal authorities, invited artists to re-appropriate the abandoned spaces for the festival. *Hotel Neustadt* offered a set of cultural strategies for reinterpreting the negative connotations associated with depopulation, vacancy, decay, and urban demolition. The theatrical intervention showed that urban redevelopment triggers new social and artistic practices if it is approached with imagination.



On the one hand, urban demolition is staged as a spectacle. On the other hand, art projects emerge around demolition and possible preservation. Farewell rituals such as parties in and for buildings scheduled demolition are forms of celebratory consumption that allow participants to experience ruination as something positive.<sup>78</sup>

Although perforation in Halle and Berlin is the outcome of different phenomena, it imposes the same constraints on planning conventions. Wolfgang Kil describes a paradigm shift for the architectural profession, from planning based on growth to subtractive processes, trends that lead to more landscape and less architecture. For a young generation of architects, this means that almost no commissions for new buildings will be available in the future. Instead, they will have to accompany the cities' transformations and plan un-building processes.<sup>79</sup> Studio Urban Catalysts adds that the tasks of the profession are currently shifting from designing spaces for a given program towards re-programming existing architectural hardware.<sup>80</sup> In the future, idea developers with social fantasy will be needed,<sup>81</sup> and temporary appropriations will indeed become an important place of experimental reprogramming. The temporary appropriation of the hi-rise proposed a set of conversional techniques that, if adopted by architects could bring new developments. Bruckers *clubgolf* is one example of how the city could reinvent itself without external pressure to develop. Ideas for reuse such as new leisure activities in former apartment buildings could be taken up and developed professionally.

Unlike Halle, Berlin is not a peripheral city but one that in the past fifteen years has tried to become a global player. With its primary focus on large corporations and the attempt to lure some of them to transfer their headquarters to the city, Berlin often overlooks itself as an already attractive and innovative place. Moreover, even without a growing economy, there

is the obsession to fill in the open spaces in the city's fabric. The plans for reconstructing the *Schloss* are emblematic of this desire. Instead of preferring large prestigious projects and thereby disposing future resources, the city should create the best conditions to sustain home-grown innovation, which often comes from the margins. *Volkspalast* showed how these open spaces could be preserved and used at the same time, and how bridging the waiting period could even be fun.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), p.42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.166-167.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the history of the project: Philipp Oswald, at that time director of the EU-funded research group Urban Catalysts, spearheaded the idea of re-opening the *Palast der Republik* after the asbestos removal. An exhibition, held in November 2002, introduced the plan to a wider public and presented concrete program ideas by a variety of invited cultural institutions of Berlin. The following year, the association “Zwischen Palast Nutzung - Freunde und Förderer e.V.” successfully organized the first guided tours in the empty building. For the organization of the festival in summer 2004, Oswald teamed up with Amelie Deuflhard, the artistic manager at Sophiensaele in Berlin-Mitte. Sophiensaele is an independent theatre founded by Sasha Waltz and Jochen Sandig in 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Possibly, the question of eradication is even more complex as it does not simply want to stamp out the traces of the past. In fact, iconoclasm anticipates the inevitable loss of the building’s original meaning in the future. According to Albert Speer’s appraisal, the ideological message of architecture would not last more than fifty years. He believed, that even his architecture for the Hitler regime would ultimately be judged based on aesthetic criteria only. (Bernhard Leitner, “Albert Speer, the Architect,” In: *October* 20, 1982, p.16) The relative ease with the reconstruction and reuse of Nazi architecture as government buildings in the new German capital of Berlin seems to concede Speer’s point. Stalinist architecture is no exception in this process since the Stalinallee (today Karl-Marx-Allee) in former East Berlin was carefully restored as well after 1990.

<sup>5</sup> I am borrowing a concept by Ackbar Abbas, which he originally used to describe post-colonial politics of history in Hong Kong. See: “Building on Disappearance: Hong Kong Architecture and Colonial Space.” In: Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and Politics of Disappearance*. (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 63-91.

<sup>6</sup> *Wende* is the most commonly used expression for the 1989/1990 events in Germany. It is best translated with “switch,” or (regime) “change.”

<sup>7</sup> Raumlabor, a loose network of architects, grew out of a group of diploma students of Daniel Libeskind and Matthias Sauerbruch who set up a studio space in a former butcher shop in Almstadt Str. in Berlin-Mitte. One of the architects associated with this group, Benjamin Forster-Baldenius, realized his first interventions together with and for a former squatter community in Prenzlauer Berg, Lychener Str. 60, while Peanutz Architekten made their mark with situational tunings and furnishings of temporary spaces such as the Yaam Club on the riverfront in Berlin-Treptow. Oswalt researched phenomena of temporary use and theoreticized them in his alternative morphology of Berlin (*Berlin: Stadt ohne Form: Strategien einer anderen Architektur*, München; New York: Prestel, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> It is impossible to speak of one squatter movement. The movement was shaped by local dynamics where ever it appeared. Moreover, it is historical in the sense that its goals are redefined over time. The following quotes are taken from the book by Johan Sjerpstra, *Cracking the movement: Squatting beyond the media*, Translated from Dutch by Laura Martz, (Autonome Media, New York, 1994). It is also published online under <http://thing.desk.nl/bilwet/Cracking/contents.html>. The book, written by an author from Amsterdam, is a rare piece of literature from within the squatter movement, which was inherently anti-intellectual as it “abandoned the intellectual atmosphere in order to explore, in place of French theory, their own space.” It was written as a response to distortions produced by mass media-coverage of squatting events.

<sup>9</sup> Sjerpstra, *Cracking the movement: Squatting beyond the media*, page number unknown. (<http://thing.desk.nl/bilwet/Cracking/squatting.html>)

<sup>10</sup> “Talking over the squat, its preparation and execution, the hookup of the telephone for the alarm network, the collective home repair jobs, keeping police or landlords out of the way - that was all part of such an event: a slow, unsurveyable, gradually accelerating series of meetings with people about whom you found out nothing else except that they would show up in the event it was necessary. These unexpected convergences released the energy with which the craving for the event was transformed into actions.” Ibid., (<http://thing.desk.nl/bilwet/Cracking/special.html>)

<sup>11</sup> A specific migration from West Germany added considerably to West Berlin’s revolutionary spirit. In the decades before 1989, the city was a prime destination for draft dodgers due to its special status as demilitarized zone.

<sup>12</sup> The Kreuzberg squatters called themselves *Instandbesetzer* which is a pun combining *instand setzen* (German for “to repair”) and *Besetzer* (German for “squatter”).

<sup>13</sup> For a study on the influence of property restitution on post-*Wende* urban development in Berlin’s inner-city districts, see Hartmut Häußermann; Birgit Glock; Carsten Keller, “Die sozialen Konsequenzen der Restitution von Grundeigentum in Deutschland und Polen.” In: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, 11. Jg., Heft 4, 2001, pp. 533-550. A good source written in English is Elizabeth A. Strom, *Building the new Berlin: the politics of urban development in Germany’s capital city*, (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> In the case of Berlin, two standard examples account for the appropriation of alternative sites by city marketing to fabricate the new myths of city. One is the Kunsthaus Tacheles, a department store ruin situated in the triangle formed by Friedrichstraße and Oranienstraße in Berlin-Mitte, both of which are increasingly prestigious and well-trodden streets. Originally squatted by artists, its remains are now a well-marketed tourist landmark described in all city guides. Secondly, it was the Loveparade, originally a private birthday party taking over the public space of a major street (Kurfürstendamm), that became for years international figurehead of Berlin’s hip techno and youth culture eventually not only attracting visitors from all over the world but also high rank local politicians.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of cultural palaces in the GDR in the 1950s and their role for the articulation of the state iconography aligned to the ideological and aesthetic principles of socialist realism, see: Ulrich Hartung, *Arbeiter- und Bauertempel: DDR-Kulturhäuser der fünfziger Jahre. Ein architekturhistorisches Kompendium*, (Berlin: Schelzky und Jeep, 1996). The same author also wrote a well informed article on the *Palast der Republik*, see: Ulrich Hartung, “Zwischen Bauhaus und Baroque: Zur Ästhetik des Palastes der Republik,” In: *kunsttexte.de - Fachzeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte im Netz*, 1/2001-1, [www.kunsttexte.de/download/denk/hartung.pdf](http://www.kunsttexte.de/download/denk/hartung.pdf). See also: Simone Hain; Stephan Stroux, *Die Salons der Sozialisten: Kulturhäuser in der DDR*. (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Unknown author quoted in Strom, *Building the new Berlin*, p.71. Strom’s translation of a speech quoted by Lothar Heinke in: “Vom ‘Palast der Republik’ zum ‘Balast der Republik’?” In: *Der Tagesspiegel*, 27 March 1993, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> There are marks on the building’s steel beams that indicate the location of separation walls and cladding. This mapping suggest reversibility of the evisceration process. In fact, much of

the immobile original interior was archived.

<sup>18</sup> At an early stage, large scale photographs of the empty interior, which were on display at the “Zwischen Palast Nutzung” exhibition, promoted this aesthetic. On the other hand, parts of the *Palast*'s original interiors had been sacked by the club culture after the building's closure and survived in the retroactive chic decorations of their hang outs (e.g. WMF, Club der Republik).

<sup>19</sup> The visions oscillated between the poles of social and technological utopianism. Examples are the designs of Buckminster-Fuller (USA); Archigram's Walking City (Great Britain); space-frames by Yona Friedman; the l'architecture oblique Claude Parent & Paul Virillio (France); Constant's New Babylon (Netherlands), and Superstudio (Italy). The Centre Pompidou (1973-78) in Paris by Piano/Rogers is indebted to these ideas. Rem Koolhaas' diploma project at the Architectural Association (AA) in London, *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* (1972), is a horizontal strip design based on a provocative reading of the Berlin Wall as mega-structure. That the idea has not completely lost its utopian edge showed a recent design: the design scheme by THINK (Fred Schwartz and Rafael Vinoly amongst others) for the WTC design competition proposed a high-rise scaffolding-structure to house a World Cultural Center.

<sup>20</sup> Price developed this project, which was never executed, together with British director and theatre reformer Joan Littlewood.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in: Robert Hilferty. “Dance-Theater's New Act: Waltz's sensation-causing *Körper*.” *New York Magazine*. November 18, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> The variety of buildings chosen for the *Dialogue* series illustrates Waltz's range of interest in architecture. More important though is that the performances have a quasi ritualistic function as they mark a special event either in the existence of the building or in the life of her dance company. In 1995, the first *Dialogue* was staged in the Hackesche Höfe in Berlin-Mitte, a mixed use complex clustering around a number of courtyards, before its reconstruction and subsequent enactment as tourist attraction. Four years later the company relocated to Schaubühne theatre in the western part of the city but not without giving a farewell performance (*Dialogue '99/I*) in Sophiensaele, the theatre which Sasha Waltz had founded as the headquarter for her company. Unlike Sophiensaele, at home in a defensive red-brick building that was built by a worker's union, Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum, site of *Dialogue*

'99/II, is a piece of contemporary architecture which has a very strong signature of its architect. *Dialoge '99/II* had the opportunity of exploring the then empty building before its official inauguration.

<sup>23</sup> In my descriptions and interpretations, I am widely relying on visual documents as well as on rare newspaper reviews (Katrin Bettina Müller, "Sashas Tanztheater-Laden", In: *Tageszeitung* Berlin lokal Nr. 7466 vom 20.9.2004, p. 23; and Birgit Rieger, "Dialoge 04," Weblog: <http://dosto.kh-berlin.de/~marcella/index2.php?id=71>, 19 September 2004). Additionally, Remo Lotano's oral account of the performance provided missing pieces to the puzzle.

<sup>24</sup> My translation of "*Von der tänzerischen Wiederbesiedlung einer verlassenen Welt, in der die alten Konnotationen von Macht und Größe ihre Bedeutung verloren haben.*"

<sup>25</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp.166-67.

<sup>26</sup> This division of functions is expressed in the basic diagram of the building which is showing the two centerpieces, parliament and Grand Hall, articulated as two halves that are separated from each other by the main foyer. Externally, this major theme is emphasized by the two cubic volumes projecting out of the otherwise hermetic body of the building. Architecturally, they form white marble-clad bands that clasp around the bronze glass façade like brackets.

<sup>27</sup> In order to make up two complete soccer teams, twenty dancers and two choreographers, Waltz had to recall former dancers of the company, which, as a side effect, transformed the whole event into a reunion.

<sup>28</sup> The metaphor of grass growing over ruins, of new life emerging from the old derelict forms, highlights the nice ambiguity of this ruin: is it still in process of building or is it already disappearing? Also another performance, Ruedi Häusermann's *Richtfest* (topping-out ceremony), suspended the process of ruination for a moment and declared it being in the state of raw-building again.

<sup>29</sup> Most people perhaps still today remember the small country GDR by the top ranks it occupied in the medal tables of world championships and Olympic games.

<sup>30</sup> Henning Eichberg, "Thinking Contradictions: Towards a Methodology of Configurational Analysis," In: Knut Dietrich (Ed.), *How Societies Create Movement Culture and Sport*,



International Seminar, June 21-24, 2001, in Copenhagen, (Copenhagen: Institute of Exercise and Sport Sciences University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Jorn's *Modifications* were exhibited at the Rive Gauche gallery in Paris in 1959, shortly after the constitution of the Situationniste Internationale. From: Elisabeth Sussman, (Ed.), *On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: the Situationist International, 1957-1972*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press ; Boston, Mass.: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1989), p.22.

<sup>32</sup> Logistically challenging, the about 1000 spectators had to be split into smaller groups, which were guided through the building in intervals. In the course of the second part, the audience had to wait outside, reenter, and exit again. Finally, it reentered the building for an epilogue: a Chinese soup kitchen installed next to the green field where on long tables producers and spectators gathered after the performance. This commonplace tied the event together and highlighted the simultaneity of pre-performance, performance and after-performance.

<sup>33</sup> Many of the festival's performances grappled with the monumentality of the building. A sense of agoraphobia became apparent in the works that attempted to fill the space. Some were mass events where the space seemed to control the user. Exemplary are events like *Le Bal Moderne* and the exhibition of the Chinese army of terracotta warriors (on display in the *Palast der Republik* before the actual festival).

<sup>34</sup> The water's reflectiveness in the project confirms the primacy of sight. However, it also displays the architects' occupation with water and its usability in the city that informs other projects of the group such as *Bad Ly* (temporary public pool, Lychener Str.60, Berlin, Summer 1999) and *Club der Nichtschwimmer* (river bath, Graz, 2003). The flooded façade republic also shows their excitement with engineer's prophecies. According to feasibility studies, the demolition of the Palast's could drastically change ground water levels and thus damage surrounding monuments.

<sup>35</sup> How aggressively the right architecture of the city is promoted in imagery, could be seen in the so-called Downtown Master Plan (*Planwerk Innenstadt*), drawn up by in 1996. The accompanying illustrations make clear what architectural appearance is desired thereby obviating the conventional neutrality of zoning plans.

<sup>36</sup> Oddly enough, von Boddin's 1993 palace mock up has effectively altered expectations as even most proponents no longer demand the reconstruction of the actual palace but of its façade. Since the *Bundestag* decision from July 2003 which called for the reconstruction of the façade, the term *Schlossfassade* is firmly established in the common parlance.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections" (Interview by Donald Wall, 1976), In: Fabozzi, Paul F., *Artists, critics, context: readings in and around American art since 1945*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002), p.282.

<sup>38</sup> Wolfgang Kil states that "this friendly 'attack' [*Volkspalast*] from the subculture freed the building from the weight of ideological attitudes. A new, young generation, unburdened by old East-West polarisations, showed that it was capable of nonchalantly usurping the very core of the new capital. With this, the iconoclastic phase could come to an end; old scores no longer had to be settled by destroying 'guilty' buildings." From: Wolfgang Kil, "Post-Communist or anti-modern?: Models and motivations for planning in Berlin after 1990," conference paper given at *Cities after the Fall: European Integration and Urban History Conference*, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, March 2005, and published on the conference website: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ces-lib/kil.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *Kolorado* is Raumlabor's strategic development plan for Halle-Neustadt. It was the winning entry for the *StadtUmbau Ost* competition in 2002. According to *Kolorado*, the entire area of Halle-Neustadt is subdivided into fields, which should be developed in individual ways. The name of the project alludes to a popular brand of mixed candies named *Colorado* with different tastes, shapes, and colors. Raumlabor's proposal was published in: *arch+ 166/167*, Dec 2003; *Quaderns de Arquitectura*, May 2004; and in: Jesko Fezer; Mathias Heyden (Ed.), *Hier entsteht: Strategien partizipativer Architektur und räumlicher Aneignung*, (Berlin: b\_books, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Although planned as a complete city for a population of 100.000, Halle-Neustadt lacks any major cultural institutions. A cultural center, which was originally envisioned as the center piece of the planning, was never realized. For the original proposal, see: Joachim Bach, "Das Kulturzentrum Halle-Neustadt: Studie zu Programm und Gestaltung," In: *Deutsche Architektur*, Oktober 1969, pp.602-607). The failure of the project is exemplary for the antagonism of socialist and bourgeois culture in the GDR cultural politics. Since the 1950s, the *Kulturhäuser* were regarded as key elements in the formulation and production of socialist culture, which primarily addressed workers and, in a limited way, farmers. This type of cultural centers

was built next to factories and was usually a multi-purpose building. (Hartung, *Arbeiter- und Bauerntempel: DDR-Kulturhäuser der fünfziger Jahre. Ein architekturhistorisches Kompendium*, 1996) However, the Kulturzentrum Halle-Neustadt was envisioned as a *Kulturforum*, that is a composition of specialized building types, such as a concert hall, a theatre and a library, which are grouped around a central plaza. Sited in the center of the new downtown, Halle-Neustadt's Kulturzentrum was representative of the bourgeois idea of the cultural institution as civic center. It thus resembled more of the Lincoln Center in New York, Hans Scharoun's Kulturforum in Berlin, or Alvar Aalto's town centers than of a socialist *Kulturhaus/Kulturpalast*. Raumlabor addressed the immanent lack of cultural institutions in Halle-Neustadt in their *Kolorado* plan and proposed to win over Halle's cultural institutions to establish temporary spin-offs, the so-called satellites (*Kultursatelliten*), in the new town. In: Raumlabor, *Kolorado* brochure, 2003, p.72.

<sup>41</sup> A *Plattenbaugebiet* is a residential neighborhood built exclusively with prefabricated concrete panel technology.

<sup>42</sup> A "shrinking" city is a city that loses substantial parts of its population within a relatively short period of time. The phenomenon is a huge economical and social challenge for the affected cities and their governments. The phenomenon questions the urbanism, which is traditionally focused on growth. The term "shrinking", a translation of the German *schrumpfen*, had been coined around 2000 when the discourse appeared in German academia. Amongst the first who thematized the shrinkage was a group of diploma students of Dutch professor Kees Christiaanse at TU Berlin, which was working on different case studies mainly in Eastern Germany. *Shrinking Cities* was also the title of an exhibition organized by P. Oswalt in collaboration with different institutions such as the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation. It was held in 2004 in KW, Klaus Biesenbach's Kunstwerke in Berlin. The exhibition presented research on and ideas for a selection of contracting cities: Detroit (US), Liverpool/Manchester (GB), Leipzig/Halle (GER), and Ivanovo (RU). The comparative research also tried to relativize the extent of the phenomenon pointing out that it does not only happen in Eastern Germany but everywhere around the world due to either de-industrialization or rationalization; both are processes that render large amounts of work force redundant. However, this decline is extreme in Eastern Germany because it appears all over the former country at the same time and should be interpreted as a specific aspect of the German unification process.

<sup>43</sup> The origin of the new city is closely linked to the *Chemiedreieck*, the so-called triangle of chemical industry, located south of Halle. The arrival of the chemical industry was a relatively recent phenomenon. The factories of Leuna (1916/17) and Buna (1937) were founded during

and before the two World Wars of the twentieth century to produce new synthetic materials. The foundation of Halle-Neustadt (originally called Halle-West or *Chemiearbeiterstadt*) in the early 1960s was the attempt to solve the housing crisis in Halle, which the war industry had triggered. Planned as an independent city, Halle-Neustadt was originally restricted to workers from the chemical industries to offer them a improved living situation as compensation for the bad working conditions in the factories. Modern apartments and a better supply with goods than normal were used as recruitment tool. Halle-Neustadt's privileged status was also conditioned by anxiety of worker strikes, because Halle and the surrounding industrial sites were the major site of the 1953 uprisings.

For Halle's role in the uprising of June 17, 1953, see: <http://www.17juni53.de/karte/halle.html> (17 May 2005).

<sup>44</sup> For contemporary accounts of the planning and construction of Halle-Neustadt, see: Richard Paulick, "Die städtebauliche Planung für den Aufbau der Chemiearbeiterstadt," In: *Deutsche Architektur*, April 1967, pp.203; and the entire issue of *Architektur der DDR*, Juni 1974.

<sup>45</sup> The financial program, however, is not advertised as funding for demolition. The funding is linked to the federal program for city redevelopment, *StadtUmbau Ost*, which requires cities to present an overall development plan to legitimize demolitions.

<sup>46</sup> Annegret Hahn, "Vorwort/Preface," In: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theater Halle (Ed.), (Berlin: Alexander-Verlag, 2004), p.33.

<sup>47</sup> During GDR-time, the dichotomy of new and old was pushed to the extreme in the dual city of Halle. Whereas Halle-Neustadt was built as a parallel city for 100.000 inhabitants according to modernists ideals of light, air, and sun (and central heating) on the outskirts, the old core of Halle (founded 1200 years ago and thus one of the oldest German cities) was widely neglected. Both cities were separated by a river valley (Saale Aue) and connected by an elevated highway. With the event of the collapse of the GDR, the conditions and ideologies that had privileged Halle-Neustadt were not valid anymore. The unification of Germany reversed the urban development: the old town rebuilt and the new one neglected. At the same time, Halle-Neustadt, which before 1990 had been an independent municipality, was incorporated into Halle.

<sup>48</sup> Emphasis by Kershaw. Baz Kershaw, *The politics of performance: radical theatre as cultural intervention*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p.3.

<sup>49</sup> Cora Hegewald, "Theater-Visionen/Theatre Visions," In: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theater Halle (Ed.), p.254.

<sup>50</sup> The term *tuning* was adapted from Peanutz Architekten. Tuning describes their method of improving situations and objects by adding some extra value to them. More explanation later under *Balcony Tuning*.

<sup>51</sup> Kil is proposing a "hands on" identity, which is opposed to image-based forms of identity production. Wolfgang Kil, "Identität entsteht durch Aneignung," in: Ulrich Schwarz (Ed.): *Risiko Stadt*, (Hamburg: Junius, 1995), pp.141–145.

<sup>52</sup> The row of five slabs in the center forms the *Stadtkrone* of the city. The hi-rises originally housed student dormitories and married symbolically workers with intelligentsia. They also represented a source of continuous self-rejuvenation for the city. Thus, the staging of Hotel Neustadt in one of the abandoned dormitories is of symbolical importance.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Beuys, In: J. Benthall, *Science and Technology in Art Today*, (Thames & Hudson., London, 1972), pp.22. Translated from:

*Joseph Beuys: Jeder Mensch ein Künstler*, Gespräche auf der documenta 5; aufgezeichnet von Clara Bodemann-Ritter 1972, (Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein, 1975).

<sup>54</sup> This way of working prefers *techne* (art, skill, craft) over technology (*techne* + reason). While skill enables to adapt to the circumstances of a given situation, possibilities for arrangement are somewhat more limited through technology. The latter first needs to create the conditions under which it can perform well. Best example for an environment almost completely shaped by technology is Halle-Neustadt itself.

<sup>55</sup> Improvisation was one possible intersection of art and life in Halle-Neustadt since it is a technique that is by no means new to the residents of the city. Actually, it is the rediscovery of a virtue that was deeply rooted in the GDR's economy of scarcity. Improvisation had its outlets in the contact with technology and building and was most prominently displayed in the lovingly maintenance of the *Trabant*, the pathetic East German car. Another example are the private gardens (*Schrebergarten*) with their dachas, which offered retreat from places like Halle-Neustadt. Whole sets of transactions had to be made to acquire rare materials and to get one of the sought-after construction professionals. According to GDR law, only electric had to be done by a certified professional; all other crafts were executed by people themselves. Related to the phenomenon of improvisation was the high value assigned to

everything material. Basically, there was no junk. Everything was potentially valuable and was stored until it could become the resource for something new, or a bargain traded for something else.

<sup>56</sup> To fix the lime problem, the toilets in the hotel were flushed for months prior to the opening.

<sup>57</sup> Here, note especially the manipulation of the “Halle-Neustadt” sign at the entrance of the train station. The replacement of the “e” in the word Halle by an “o” creates a new meaning (*hallo* is the German word for “hello”).

<sup>58</sup> See: <http://www.syntosil.ch/> and <http://www.syntosil.ch/def/index.php?mol25> (18 May 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, translated from *Les Mots et Les Choses*, (New York: Random House, 1970), p.319.

<sup>60</sup> In Syntosil’s installation, there are two holes to establish horizontal and vertical connections between the apartments. Other than Gordon Matta-Clark, Syntosil was confronted with 20 cm of reinforced concrete, which made actual perforation difficult. These difficulties are summarized in Foerster-Baldenius’ play “The Hole,” in: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theatre (Ed.), p.310.

<sup>61</sup> The *Espressobar* team included Anne Schmidt, Frauke Gerstenberg, Irina Jurasic, Francesco Apuzzo, and Jan Liesegang.

<sup>62</sup> The original design of the espresso bar, however, was less overtly modern. In the old design, all fixtures were executed in brickwork.

<sup>63</sup> The furniture is based on a modular system, which has parts established by a few vertical and diagonal cuts.

<sup>64</sup> Silke Feldhoff, *Duchamps Ur-Urenkel, Beuys’ Enkel. Object trouvé, Schachspielen und Soziale Plastik in der Kunst der 1990er Jahre*. On: [http://www.uni-weimar.de/vlv/ausgabe.php?use\\_db=vlv7&id=621](http://www.uni-weimar.de/vlv/ausgabe.php?use_db=vlv7&id=621) (19 May 2005).

<sup>65</sup> Christoph Brucker, "Clubgolf," in: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theatre (Ed.), p.320.

<sup>66</sup> Walter Benjamin first discovered a similar method of treating outmoded things in the Surrealist's work with found objects. He noted that "no one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution – not only social but architectonic, the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects – can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism." Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism," in *Reflections*, Peter Demetz (Ed.), (New York: Schocken Books, 1978). Cited in Pamela M. Lee, *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p.184.

<sup>67</sup> Silvoja Jestrovic, *Theatricality as Estrangement of Art and Life in the Russian Avant-garde*, *SubStance* 98/99, 2002, p.42.

<sup>68</sup> This form of theatricality, though, has nothing in common with the scenographic tradition based on perspectival vistas as an ordering tool, which was a major idea in urbanism from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

<sup>69</sup> Gordon Matta-Clark, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Building Dissections" (Interview by Donald Wall, 1976), in: Fabozzi, Paul F., *Artists, critics, context: readings in and around American art since 1945*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002), p.282.

<sup>70</sup> Kyong Park, "Moving Cities, Moving Nations," in: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theatre (Ed.), p.121.

<sup>71</sup> Walter Benjamin; Asja Lacis, "Naples," in *Reflections*, Peter Demetz (Ed.), (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p.166.

<sup>72</sup> The media attention was significant. Reporters from a local newspaper (MZ - Mitteldeutsche Zeitung) and a radio station had moved into the hotel and broadcasted daily news from the festival. In: Wolfgang Kil, *Luxus der Leere: vom schwierigen Ruckzug aus der Wachstumswelt*, (Wuppertal: Verlag Mueller und Busmann KG, 2004), p.125.

<sup>73</sup> Heidi Pohle, "Fernost macht die Party," <http://www.halle-neustadt.info/artikel204.html>, (18 May 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Aspa Gospodini, "European Cities in Competition and the New 'Uses' of Urban Design," in:

<sup>75</sup> Mc Neill & While list the following four “new urban economies”: agglomeration economies; informational and knowledge-rich economies; technopoles; and urban leisure economies. D. Mc Neill; A. While, “The new urban economies,” in: R.Paddison (Ed.), *Handbook of Urban Studies*, (London: Sage, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> Cultural Capital of Europe was initiated in 1985 as main tool of cultural politics within the European Community./Each year, one or two selected cities receive funding for exhibitions, performances, and concerts. For the chosen city, the initiative bears development potential similar to Olympic games and world expositions, but it is entirely focused on culture. Since the 2004 expansion of the EU, there are discussions in Germany to introduce a similar initiative on the national level.

<sup>77</sup> From the evaluation of Graz - Cultural Capital of Europe 2003. In: M. Gruber; P. Schleich; M. Steiner; and G. Zakarias, “Graz 2003: Retrospektive Betrachtungen und Längerfristige Chancen,” Johanneum Research Forschungsgesellschaft mbH – Institut für Technologie- und Regionalpolitik, *InTeReg Kurzanalyse* Nr. 01-2004. On: <http://www.joanneum.at/>, (18 May 2005).

<sup>78</sup> Some examples for demolition related art projects and rituals are: *spacewalk* (Forst, 2003), *Dostoprimschatjelnosti* (Berlin-Hellersdorf, 2003), and *superumbau* (Hoyerswerda, 2003). Kil cites one event, a party in the Interhotel Warnow in Rostock, that literally consumed the building. Former employees and visitors gathered to celebrate a last party in all rooms of the hotel. In the course of the party, the hotel’s furniture was put on auction and its vine cellar was emptied (Kil, *Luxus der Leere*, p.121). Similar house parties were staged in Berlin before the remodeling of buildings (Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg, 2002). An example for a preservation initiative is Andrea Knobloch’s *Rundkino Dresden* (2003, [www.rundkino-dresden.de/](http://www.rundkino-dresden.de/)).

<sup>79</sup> Kil, *Luxus der Leere*, p.104.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.





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## Frequently used websites

A-matter online publication: <http://www.a-matter.de/>

Bauhaus Dessau Foundation: <http://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/>

Hotel Neustadt: [www.hotel-neustadt.de](http://www.hotel-neustadt.de)

LEO - online dictionary German-English: <http://dict.leo.org/>

Peanutz Architekten: <http://www.peanutz-architekten.de/>

Raumlabor architects network: <http://www.raumlabor-berlin.de/>

Shrinking Cities Exhibition: <http://www.shrinkingcities.com/>

Sophiensaale Theatre: <http://www.sophiensaale.de/>

StadtUmbau Ost: <http://www.stadtumbau-ost.info/>

Thalia Theatre Halle: <http://www.thaliatheaterhalle.de/>

Volkspalast documentation: <http://www.grussmarcella.de/>

Volkspalast festival: [www.volkspalast.de](http://www.volkspalast.de)

“Zwischen Palast Nutzung - Freunde und Förderer e.V.”:  
<http://www.zwischenpalastnutzung.de/>



## Sources of Illustrations

Fig 1: Landesbildstelle Berlin

Fig 2: Volkspalast website

Fig 3: Spiegel online

Fig 4: Source unknown

Fig 5-10: Volkspalast website, [www.volkspalast.de](http://www.volkspalast.de)

Fig 11-18: *Hotel Neustadt*, Thalia Theater Halle (Ed.), Berlin: Alexander-Verlag, 2004.