BEYOND THE WALL: POST-SOCIALIST MUSEUMS IN THE FORMER GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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Since fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, museums of art across once-divided Germany have transformed into arenas where battles over the legacy of the socialist German Democratic Republic are fought, a symptom of the troubled process of defining Germany's post-Wall identity. The complex legacy of German reunification has positioned these cultural institutions as critical sites for coming to terms with the past of division and re-constructing a shared cultural heritage. Today, almost 35 years after reunification, Germany's museums have begun to reassess the artistic legacy of East Germany through a series of exhibitions that belatedly integrate East German art history into the canon of German modernism. This project closely analyses six cultural institutions that existed in the German Democratic Republic and the divided city of Berlin in order to understand their position as a bridge or threshold between the past and the present, the local and the global. Using a methodology and language developed from the work of the Polish art historian Dr. Piotr Piotrowski, this dissertation project examines the dialogue that develops between museological content (exhibitions, collections, publications, public events) and context (architecture, urban topography, embeddedness in historical, political, and social narratives) in these cultural institutions to better understand their function in the context of public space. This dissertation is based on an interdisciplinary and intercultural framework that ultimately addresses the question of how cultural institutions can be used as instruments of democracy in the present. By focusing on the exhibition of East German art in museums after reunification, my dissertation accounts for the complexity of expanding art history and reconceptualizing museum practice within a global

framework. At the same time, my study of museums as architects of Germany's cultural identity after the fall of the Berlin Wall underscores the dynamic potential and urgent need for cultural institutions to mediate the local and the global in our time and beyond.

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Preface

There are many people I would like to acknowledge and thank for their support, insights, and friendship in the writing of this dissertation and throughout my longer academic journey. The first seeds of this project were planted when I began my study of the German language under the instruction of Jenny Smith and Mary Bronfenbrenner in Ithaca, New York. These women were the first in a long line of German teachers who would use cinema, music, art, and museums to introduce me to the cultural traditions that became the focus of my research. I am grateful to Imke Meyer at Bryn Mawr College, Imke Brust at Haverford College, and Anja Schneider in Berlin for continuing this tradition. The most inspiring and challenging of these teachers was Ulrich Schoenherr at Haverford College. I am grateful for his fascinating personal accounts of the German Autumn, which made history real for me, for his patience with my lacking grammar skills, and for being the first person to ask me to consider doing a PhD.

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coevally with them, and for the many books, adventures, and translations we have shared over the last nine years. Likewise, I am extremely grateful to the Transatlantic Institute for East German Art, above all April Eisman and Frank Zöllner, for pushing my scholarship forward in a myriad of ways.

The University of Pittsburgh has been my intellectual home for the past six years. My community at Pitt extended far beyond the Frick Fine Arts Building: the faculty, staff, and students of the Slavic Department, the German Department, the Film and Media Studies Program, the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Jewish Studies Program, and the European Studies Center at Pitt all offered immense support, academic, emotional, and (occasionally) financial. Nancy Condee and comrades in the class "Neoliberalism and Cultural Production" offered a fascinating discussion every week on the events of 1989 and those of today; I am particularly grateful for the insights of Denis Saltykov, who is missed. The community of the course "Apparatus Theory" was instrumental in making me feel at home in the classroom again. I am also grateful to Ljiljana Duraskovic and the Summer Language Institute team at Pitt for instruction in the Serbo-Croatian(-Bosnian-Montenegrin) language and introducing me to the politics and culture of the region of ex-Yugoslavia, an unexpectedly fruitful pathway that continues to provide inspiration.

I was lucky to spend three years physically present in the Department of History of Art and Architecture where I experienced mentorship, growing pains, first-class scholarship, and comradeship. I am grateful to Jennifer Josten, Koyo Kouoh, and Ingrid Schaffner for providing myself and my course mates major curatorial opportunity and experience through the project *Dig Where You Stand* at the 57th Carnegie International. I am thankful for the amazing support of Karoline Swiontek, Linda Hicks, and everyone else who was part of the administrative team of the

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The events of 2020, which largely drove the shape and outcome of this project, propelled me to move to Germany full time. I am extremely grateful to Karin Goihl and the faculty of the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies at the FU Berlin for supporting my scholarship at an early stage, and to members of that cohort, as well as participants in Eric de

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1.0 Introduction: Behind the Mask

"Once [East Germany] stops being a separate, sovereign state, its art will change. But even if we preserve our sovereignty for a while longer, the art and the whole cultural scene will also change because the Communist system and the party are gone. However, please don't ask me how it will change, I am an art historian, not a prophet." – Peter Betthausen, former director of East Berlin's National Gallery, in an interview given six months before the official unification of Germany in 1990.[1]

"I had gone back to being myself. But my self did not exist." ― Christa Wolf, *Cassandra* (1983)[2]

In October 2017, the Museum Barberini in Potsdam, Germany opened an exhibition of art from the German Democratic Republic [the GDR, or East Germany]. Under the title *Hinter der Maske: Künstlern in der DDR* [*Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR*], the institution offered a novel perspective on cultural production from the socialist state which had existed in the eastern sector of Germany between 1949 and 1990. According to the exhibition's catalogue:

> Artists in the GDR were caught between providing a role model and retreating into seclusion, between operating within a prescribed collective and pursuing creative individuality. How did they reflect the way they saw their profession and their own take on the official mission to educate the public? This exhibition brings together works of art that… illustrate the critical gaze they turned upon themselves.[3]

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[1] Quoted in *ARTnews* (May 1990), 160.
[2] Christa Wolf was a prominent East German author; her novel *Cassandra* (1983), a retelling of the ancient Greek myth of the Trojan prophetess Cassandra, cursed by the god Apollo to speak the truth but never to be believed, reflected many of Wolf's own experiences as a citizen of the GDR, particularly in reference to repression, censorship, as well as issues of gender.
[3] Ortrud Westheider/Michael Philipp, eds. *Hinter der Maske. Künstler in der DDR, Katalog zur Ausstellung*, (Potsdam: Prestel Verlag, 2017), introduction.

The exhibition offered a curatorial re-orientation of the work of around 80 artists, presenting them as the self-expression of individuals rather than as an ideological reflection of the socialist state they were created in. The work of state-supported artists and dissidents were displayed side by side in the massive exhibition, which took up all three levels of the freshly reconstructed and newly opened classicist Baroque Museum-Palace Barberini, which had been modeled and named after the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. [*Figure 1*] Loans from private collectors, including Hasso Plattner, the software-developer billionaire and art collector who funded and founded the new institution[4], and public museums located across the whole of former East Germany were brought together to construct a multi-dimensional image of cultural production across all spaces and times of the 40-year socialist state.

This was no easy task given the complex function and reception of East German art in the thirty years since German reunification in 1989. Vilified, minimized, removed from public view and relegated to unreachable rural depots, written out of "German" art histories, and (intentionally) forgotten, East German art had long occupied a precarious and uncomfortable position in the post-Wende ["turning point," a term used to describe the changes surrounding 1989 in Germany] cultural landscape. The antagonistic posture thrust on this art in the aftermath of German

[4] The Museum Barberini was a project of Plattner, with an exhibition of East German art. According to an interview in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Plattner, who grew up just on the Western side of the German-German border, claimed that he was drawn to East German art because "first, I have always been interested in the work of former East German painters like [Wolfgang] Mattheuer and [Werner] Tuebke. I don't understand why they are rarely displayed in museums today. Therefore, I wanted to give them a **forum**. Second, in my new Museum Barberini, I wanted to consciously put the emphasis on East German art because I think people in East Germany were disadvantaged and even after the Wende, treated with injustice… I am excited that [my] works in the Museum Barberini will be in set dialogue with pieces loaned from [other institutions] and a direct comparison is constructed. And I think it's good that we in the museum can finally show how diverse and eclectic the art of the GDR really was." Plattner's use of the word "forum" in this context is particularly meaningful within the frame of granting a (new) agency to these works. Johanna Pfund, "Ein Forum für Künstler der DDR," Süddeutsche Zeitung (28. Oktober 2017) https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/hasso-plattner-ein-forum-fuer-kuenstler-der-ddr-1.3721954

reunification was amplified by a national exhibitionary culture that was constructed to affirm the cultural-political legitimacy of West German state ideology, which in the post-1989 moment had transformed into the values of the reunified nation.[5] The exhibition in the Museum Barberini, which ran from October 2017 until February 2018, offered a radical and divergent perspective on the art of East Germany, one which granted a new kind of publicly endorsed agency to the complex works and histories it displayed. The exhibition ultimately sought to produce its own form of political legitimacy in the frame of the shifting cultural landscape of Germany in 2017, a critical moment in which the aftershocks of the "refugee crisis"[6] and the rise of right-wing populism across Germany,[7] particularly in the "Neue Länder" ["new states"] of the nation, the region which thirty years prior had constituted the GDR, were particularly present and palpable.

While plans for a blockbuster exhibition of East German art to act as the first major exhibition of the new museum had been underway for several years, in the frame of this rapidly shifting societal panorama *Hinter der Maske* accrued both a new meaning and a pressing urgency within public discourse.[8] For the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the works of artists from all levels of relationship to the East German regime were embedded together into the official culture of the nation, entering as a cohesive art history for the first time, not only into the culture

[5] Andrew H. Beattie, *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany* (Studies in Contemporary European History, Vol. 4). (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), conclusion.
[6] "Refugee crisis" is placed in quotation marks to challenge Eurocentric employment of the term, which references the arrival of more than one million people seeking refuge in Europe in 2015 as the primary cause for concern and policy focus, while ignoring the systemic causes that led to this increase in arrivals in Europe.
[7] In the 2017 German Federal elections, the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which was previously unrepresented in the Bundestag, became the third party in the Bundestag with 12.6% of the vote.
[8] According to the exhibition's assistant curator Valerie Hortolani at the 2017 Transatlantic Workshop on East German art sponsored by the Transatlantic Institute for East German Art (Albertina Dresden, May 2017). Three much smaller exhibitions with works from a private collection had previously been held starting in January 2017 in the museum, but none of them enjoyed the scale and pomp of *Hinter der Maske* which acted as a de-facto museum opening.

of reunified Germany, but also into the European tradition of art.[9] This significantly broke with previous modes of displaying East German artistic cultures in German museums after 1989, which had almost always relativized the cultural production of the socialist nation in one way or another. This had been done either by setting art from within the spatial and temporal borders of the GDR in dialogue with art from other times, for example in the infamous exhibition *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* [*Rise and Fall of Modernism]* (Neue Museum Weimar, 1999), which provocatively juxtaposed East German art with art from the National Socialist era to draw comparisons between the nation's "two dictatorships,"[10] using art from East Germany as a negative foil for art from the Federal Republic of Germany [FRG or West Germany], a tradition that stretched back to the earliest days of national division and continues to be drawn on for comparative exhibition projects like *Art of Two Germanys / Cold War Cultures* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art /Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2009/2010), or employing it to intentionally contrast the state-supported and unofficial (dissident) cultures of East Germany in order to reinforce the image of East German official culture as an ideological straightjacket, for example in the exhibitions *Abschied von Ikarus* [*Farewell to Icarus*] (Neue Museum Weimar, 2012) and the later *Utopie und Untergang. Kunst in der DDR* [*Utopia and Demise. Art in the GDR*] (Kunstpalast Düsseldorf, 2019/2020), one of the few exhibitions of exclusively East German art held in former West Germany.

Here in Potsdam, this all changed: not only were works from all levels of the East German art world granted an equal amount of agency by being displayed together without the confines of

[9] Here I draw on the work of Piotr Piotrowski and Hans Belting, who both argued that European art, understood as "universal" in the frame of modernism, became a cypher for cultural production from the West and a way to reinforce its hegemony and central production within the construct of art history. The work of Belting and particularly of Piotrowski are a critical framework of this project and will be discussed at length throughout its chapters.

[10] The form, meaning, and reception of this exhibition will be discussed in greater length in Chapter 1.

division (whether internal or external, temporally- or geographically-bounded), but the exhibition itself was also granted a level of attention and prestige hitherto inaccessible to exhibitions of East German art. Produced under the sponsorship of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who also gave a speech at the exhibition's opening, *Hinter der Maske* was celebrated in the German press, an apparatus which had previously played a major role in casting East German art as the hazardous waste of art history, rigidly ideological and inferior in every way to West German art in the German/German "Bilderstreit".[11] "Is it permissible to like GDR art?" asked *Die Welt*, the fifth largest newspaper in Germany. The answer appeared to be a resounding yes: "The Museum Barberini in Potsdam shows it for the first time without the usual ideological blinders. The effect is breathtaking. Against dark eggplant-colored walls… [the works] look like Old Masters."[12] This comment helps to illustrate the complexities of both the shifting cultural-political position of East German art in 2017 (do the "ideological blinders" referenced in the text refer to the constraints under which East German art was produced, or the myopia of post-Wende Germany towards these works?) as well as the processes by which it was welcomed into the *Leitkultur* of contemporary Germany (linking it with the aesthetic legacy of the renaissance, the origin-point of European (western) modernism). In this moment, for perhaps the first time, East German art could become *European* art.

[11] "Iconoclasm" or "Battle of Images" – further historicization and discussion follows in Chapter 1.

[12] Elsewhere, reviews were equally glowing: "Although there have been a number of presentations of the art of East Germany, this one takes a different approach, dropping the ideological baggage and liberating the works, which are explained in their art historical context" proclaimed the Berliner Morgenpost; "The convincing methodicalness of this exhibition is due to the comparisons: not only to contemporary Western art, but also to forms, patterns, and inspirational sources of art history, which through adaption and transformation in East German art take on a contemporary force" according to the Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten. A selection of reviews are available here: „Behind the Mask: Artists in the GDR," Museum Barberini. Accessed December 2017. https://www.museum-barberini.de/en/ausstellungen/468/behind-the-mask-artists-in-the-gdr

In this dissertation, I contend that, along with several other coeval exhibitions of art across former East Germany, *Hinter der Maske* marked the beginning of a new wave of curating, exhibiting, and reevaluating the cultural production of East Germany, a necessary step in the frame of seismic shifts occurring across the region of the former GDR in the last five years [2017-2022]. These events, which include the changing political landscape of the region, the shift in memory culture that occurred around the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the (perceived) end of the Cold War, as well as the dynamic position of museums within the ever-expanding frame of the Global Contemporary, have contributed to a societal reevaluation of East German cultural production from the standpoint of the present, whether through constructing dialogue between that moment and our own, or through an intentional displacement or amnesia vis-à-vis the times and spaces of the former nation. As I will illustrate throughout the three chapters of this dissertation, East Germany occupies a unique and complex position within broader questions of East and West Europe; exploring its public spaces, art exhibitions, and museums will cast light on the role of culture within this paradigm, particularly in the frame of (former) Eastern Europe, where cultural institutions have occupied an urgently critical, albeit malleable role since the events of 1989.

Moving away from the broader socio-political questions that continue to haunt cultural production from the former GDR and towards the specific site of this new museum and exhibition in the context of Potsdam's urban center introduces the methodology that I will draw on throughout this project, namely a centering of the special function of museums in the region of former East Germany via the frames of their relationship to their urban setting, their architecture, their collections and exhibitions, and thus, their position within spatial and temporal currents: local, national, global, past, present and future. Returning to the strange comments made in *Die Welt* which compare the works of East German modernism displayed in Potsdam in 2017 to the

paintings of the Old Masters offers an initial point of entry: it echoes the expectation about what *belonged* in this particular space at this particular time. What did it mean then, to house in this museum, a reconstruction of a building built by Friedrich the Great, situated in the wealthy and historic city Potsdam, and constructed after the image of a 17th century Roman palazzo (which houses the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, the Roman collection of Old Masters paintings), works of East German modernism which carried one set of meaning in their original time and space and acquired another, rendered more complex and ambiguous, after German reunification? What new meaning and function did they accrue in this third context, displaced in both space and time? The answer to these questions, I suggest, can be found in a careful analysis not only of the museum's urban and historical context, but also of the exhibition's content and the viewer's experience of the world that emerges "behind the mask".

Potsdam is a significant and symbolic site for Germany's political history. The city, which borders Berlin, was once the summer residence of the rulers of the Kingdom of Prussia, who later became the leaders of Imperial Germany [1871-1918], and after the Second World War, the division of Germany by Allied powers into the four zones which would later transform into East and West Germany took place in Potsdam. The Museum Barberini was erected on the edge of Potsdam's Alter Markt, the central square of the city's old town and historic center. The square, which is ringed with palaces, churches, and monuments, was a spatial invention of Friedrich the Great, ruler of Prussia from 1740 until his death in 1786, and his architects during the second half of the 18th century; the square is based on international models, mainly from Italy and France.[13] [*Figure 2*] The square and its architecture were largely demolished by air raids during World War. The Museum Barberini itself is a precise reconstruction of the Palais Barberini, a stately mansion

[13] Friedrich Mielke, *Potsdamer Baukunst – das klassische Potsdam* (München: Propyläen Verlag, 1981).

constructed on the same site in 1771-72 and used for housing, cultural events, and municipal functions until it too was destroyed by Allied bombs.[14] Thus, the reconstructed Museum Barberini functions as a symbol not only of Prussia's pre-German unification desires to construct strong cultural links to Western Europe, but also echoes the will to reconstruct historical buildings, which is visible in the urban planning of both post-1945 West Germany and post-1989 East Germany.[15] The decision to open a major exhibition of East German art in this museological context seems strange and displaced within this puzzle of history and politics.[16]

Examining the content of the exhibition helps to elucidate its belonging to this site. Visitors to *Hinter der Maske* moved through the grand architecture of the first and second floors of the exhibition, confronted with works both foreign and familiar to connoisseurs of art from the "other" Germany, which were above all self- and group-portraits of the artists, revealing that what lay "behind the mask" was the unobstructed and insurmountable self. Whereas East German art is perhaps best known for its emphasis on the collective, familiar to all and any art influenced by Socialist Realism, these works insisted upon the agency of the individual within—or perhaps in spite of— that system. This emphasis seemed to clearly allow a resistance to, and a transcendence of the norms proscribed by the state, an entrance into the artists' psyche, even for the artists most deeply entrenched in the state system, as well as a push against the established reception of East German cultural production in the post-1989 milieu. The design of the exhibition reflected this cerebral and psychological climate, contrasting sharply with the uniformly gray and monotonous

[14] „About the Museum," Museum Barberini. Accessed December 2017. https://www.museum-barberini.de/en/museum/695/about-the-museum

[15] Philipp Oswald. *Building a National House in Monument* (e-flux Architecture and Het Nieuwe Instituut), January 2021. https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/monument/372745/building-a-national-house/

[16] Actually this was the first and only exhibition of East German art to take place in this institution in the five years since it has been opened, despite the emphasis placed on GDR art in the museum's publications and website.

aesthetic expectations of socialist material culture: the dark purple color of the walls described by *Die Welt* is significant here, as is the labyrinthian layout of floating display walls that demarcated the spaces of the exhibition. Perhaps what the strange combination of location, architecture, exhibitionary design elements, and displayed works offered here was precisely that: a re-orientation not only of the art and narratives on display but also the viewer herself in the frame of this rediscovery. The setting of these works within the greater contexts of the museum—the Alter Markt, the city of Potsdam, the nation of reunified Germany, the position of Germany in Europe, and in the frame of the global—can be understood as an attempt to re-write art history from the foundation, and to finally include the cultural production of East Germany, at least in its barest and most psychological moment, as part of this process too.

While examining the content and context of the museum allow us to situate its exhibition within broader art historical and societal trends, pinpointing its values (both intentionally and subconsciously constructed) as caught somewhere in the dialogue produced by these divergent narratives, it is through understanding the institution as part of a larger network, a single point in a larger constellation, that the power of the exhibition on the society that surrounds it emerges. The Museum Barberini, once an imperial palace, was transformed into a ruin during the Second World War; these ruins, condemned by East German authorities as representing both the imperialist and fascist pasts of the city, were demolished in 1948 after Potsdam became an administrative center of the East German state.[17] In GDR times, the space remained fallow. The values that had been previously embedded into the site through architecture were so antithetical to the beliefs of the socialist state that it appeared to necessitate a period of dormancy before any ideological transformation could occur, and so the site remained empty, only fulfilling its socialist

[17] „About the Museum," Museum Barberini.

potential through use as a green space and parking lot.[18] In 2005, 15 years after the official reunification of the two German states, the decision was made to revive the historic architecture of the site: the Palais Barberini was to be restored as faithfully as possible to the original, both in terms of its façade and its interior proportions and details.[19] From 2013 to 2016, this precise reconstruction, initiated and funded by the Hasso Plattner Foundation which today administers the Museum Barberini, was built, and the palace was opened as a museum in early 2017. While the complex past of this new museum at first appears singular, reflecting the historical and ideological conditions of the 20th century, when set into dialogue with broader networks of East German museological and urban histories, a Doppelgänger with a parallel past emerges: the Palast der Republik, a geometric, modernist structure of steel, concrete, and tinted glass built in the center of East Berlin in the early 1970s. This institution, which was opened to an international public in 1976, shared a pre-war history with the Palais Barberini: originally built as an imperial castle, it too was damaged in the final months of war and dynamited by the ruling party of East Germany as "an efficient, modern way to surgically remove the past."[20] While the fates of the twinned sites diverged during the era of socialism, with the Palast der Republik centered as one of the most important cultural-political sites in the GDR and the former location of the Palais Barberini remaining neglected and marginal, in the post-Wende present, both sites have been reconstructed to reflect their history through architecture and to embed the values of the (new or old, (re)unified) nation in which they stand into the urban space that surrounds them. While the Palast der Republik

[18] Still under the SED government, construction work for a municipal theater on the site began in 1989, although the fall of the Berlin Wall later that year stopped construction. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demolition of the shell in 1991, the Potsdam Theater was given its interim venue on the site until 2006 in the form of the so-called "Blechbüchse" (tin can). – Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 182.

and the memory culture that has developed around it following its demolition in reunified Germany in 2008 are the subject of the second chapter of this project and will be discussed at length there, the act of locating these two institutions in the same historical/historicizing network allows for them to speak in tandem and overcome the separated worlds they belong(ed) to. But it is not merely a parallel history of ideologically bound transformation that brings these two sites together: it is also the shared display of a set of sixteen paintings that connect the two buildings across time and space. An examination of these works in the scope of their exhibitionary framing(s) allows for a reading of this exhibition that reveals the location of the GDR in the present of the exhibition.

In the exhibition *Hinter der Maske*, these sixteen paintings were located on the third and final floor of the exhibition, which differed almost completely from what preceded it: stark white walls replaced deep purple ones, and two large rooms bare of any internal dividers broke from the maze-like structure previously employed. Not only did the exhibitionary context of the space assert itself in opposition to the rest of the exhibition, but so too, even more glaringly, did the content: rather than the lofty or encoded but always innate self-portraiture of the earlier exhibition, these two rooms presented sixteen large-scale works that spoke directly from the center of power in the East German state. One of these two rooms contained the works which had once constituted the "Galerie im Palast," the art holdings of the socialist nation's most representative building. Commissioned from and created by the most prominent of state supported artists during the third decade of the GDR, these works were collected for a permanent art exhibition in the Palast der Republik which opened in 1976.[21] Under the title *Dürfen Kommunisten träumen?* [*Are*

[21] Fritz Cremer, a sculptor famous for his memorial at the Buchenwald concentration camp, was chosen by the Ministry of Culture to help with the selection of artists. Cremer, a forward thinking artist whose work had often been censured by the regime for being too critical of state politics surrounding the erasure of fascism from within its own ranks, selected artists who—while state sanctioned—had begun to work with more creative freedom, departing from idealized and optimistic depictions of society. Cremer chose nine artists, including all members of the "Group of

Communists Allowed to Dream?] these works performed (in their original context) a self-conscious presentation of socialist utopia for the most global audience that could be found in East Germany.[22] This instance of their display, again in a palace of sorts, with an eerily parallel history to their previous home in Berlin, was the third time that the works had been reunited and displayed together since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Are communists allowed dream? Certainly. But what did they dream of? And how does this dream appear now, temporally and spatially displaced from the world these works originated in?

If the paintings in this collection offer any shared answer, it is one that is troubled by the facts of their re-display in the Museum Barberini. In the second room of this floor, across a small hall from the gallery of paintings themselves, a wall was papered with life-sized colored photograph taken of the interior of the Palace, creating a mirrored, dream-like space where the works in the neighboring room are reflected. The photograph, however, captures not only the works, but also the situation in which they were initially hung upon first display in 1976. [*Figure 3*] In this image, the sixteen paintings are represented as only one aspect of the space; they are treated on par with the decorative elements of the hall, creating an ideological Gesamtkunstwerk. In this context, art is stripped of its special aura, and, like the red leather sofas and glass lamps which once gave the space the nickname "Erichs Lampenladen" ("Erich's Lamp Store" after GDR

Four," the founders of the Leipzig School, Bernhard Heisig, Wolfgang Mattheuer, Werner Tubke and Willi Sitte, as well as their contemporaries Arno Mohr, Roland Paris, and Hans Vent. The other seven were nominated by the Minister for Culture, and included socialist-realist mainstays like Walter Womacka and Lothar Zitzmann. As artists, these men represented a broad spectrum in terms of age, place of study and career profile. These works were all commissioned for this gallery, under the very specific and bureaucratic rules of the Ministry for Culture, and therefore produced exclusively between 1973 and 1976 *for* the very specific site of the Palast der Republik. As such, the works act as an appendage of the structure, embodying its ideology. Following the mandate under which they were made, these works function as dreams, ideal landscapes that hold little desire of connecting with reality.

[22] More on this in Chapter 2 which focuses solely on the Schlossplatz, where the Palast der Republik stood from 1976-2008 but for now I will mention that it was a place that most visitors to East Berlin (whether from East or West) would come to and thus a main point of contact between East and West behind the Iron Curtain.

head of state Erich Hoenecker), they become part of the background upon which idealized socialism could be projected. This large-scale photograph is one of the most significant parts of the exhibition for thinking through the position of East German art as an integrated world: the contemporary viewer is able to come so close into entering this lost history, coming near to the to-scale image. In some photographs of the scene, it almost appears that viewers are able to transcend the boundaries between past and present, literally stepping into a gallery that no longer exists. [*Figure 4*] But no: we remain caught somewhere between the photographic simulacra of the gallery and the paintings themselves, now (stripped of their socialist context and displaced to Potsdam) no longer dreams of the possible future but images of a past that stagnate on the white walls of the museum. This is due to the context in which they are displayed: the museum itself, constructed from an ideology that these paintings pushed against, cannot bear their weight. Unlike what preceded on the first two floors, these works challenge the museum, built on the foundations of the west, and so these works are rendered impotent, frozen. Thus, through this display, what was once a dream has now been transformed into a memory; with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent destruction of the Palace der Republik, dismantling of the gallery, and demise of the state of East Germany, these works no longer point towards the future, but now are oriented towards the past. From this moment of tension, the first threads of my broader argument begin to reveal themselves: the orientation of the cultural institution itself played a critical role in the coming to terms with East German history in this particular historical moment. The museum has a critical role as a producer (or denier) of agency for this time and space**.** The story that this particular museum seeks to tell is thwarted by these paintings, which are invoked to produce the very "mask" that the exhibition is constituted against; a new narrative emerges in this context, one which necessitates a reading of the museum through all of its elements, conscious and

subconscious, in order to position it in society and locate its speaking voice. It is only through a convergence of exhibitionary content, museological and urban context, and the network that develops around the historical and present orientation of the museums of post-socialist East Germany, that a complex and complete narrative can emerge.

"A museum is a text," wrote the art historian Piotr Piotrowski in his landmark book project *Art and Democracy in Post-Socialist Europe*, an in-depth examination of art, cultural production, and museological institutions in Central and Eastern Europe in the frame of the profound political, social, economic, and cultural transformation of the region after 1989. "It functions as a special form of narration constructed and based within its own organizational structure, collections, and so on."[23] The function of a museum as a semi-autonomous construct with an internal organizational logic and exterior/outward-reaching structure that runs parallel to that of the broader society is a critical factor in understanding the difference that continues to exist, and is further produced, in the cultural emergent (East of) Europe today.[24] However, it is not only the intentional aspects (interior/content) of a museum that offer a narrative; often, the context—the architecture, structure, location, or history— speak in a parallel voice, as illustrated through the case of the exhibition *Hinter der Maske* at the Museum Barberini. In much of his work, Piotrowski examines these roles specifically within the processes of coming to terms with the (former) communist past that necessarily must have been done in the preceding 30 years in terms of these institutions' embeddedness in space. As Piotrowski writes:

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[23] Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 203.
[24] A note about naming practices: (East of) Europe (Grzinic)/Central Europe (Kundera)/the Former East (Badovinac?)/the Global East (Mueller)… each of these names carries with it a unique perspective, particularly in the frame of temporality and relationship to the local/global frames. In different chapters, I use different naming practices to embed the GDR within different worlds. Here, (East of) Europe is used to highlight the importance of Europe as a concept/construct within the questions being asked here.

> The question[s] I wish to pose concerning [these] art institutions ha[ve] to do with the significance of their locations and the meaning of hidden relations between the present, symbolized by contemporary art, and the past of the former communist regimes invoked by the museums' locations. Th[ese] question[s] interrogate whether such locations have a deeper significance beyond pragmatic considerations concerning the need to situate a Museological institution within an urban space and the context of existing architecture. Could we arrive at any conclusions using this proposition regarding the location of art within history as well as our relationship to it?"[25]

Thus, examining the museum institution on multiple levels simultaneously can cast light on both the function of culture in broader society, but also the links between spaces and times, self and other. Piotrowski's own perspective as an Eastern European art historian of Eastern European art is critical in the formation of his oeuvre and critical opinion. Through his many book, lecture, curatorial, and exhibitionary projects, all of which paid close attention to the art and art history of East-Central Europe, it becomes clear that he was a key voice in the introduction of East and Central European modern and contemporary art to a global audience. As stated by the jury of the Igor Zabel Award, the most prestigious for the study of East-Central European art history, which Piotrowski was awarded in 2010: "[Piotrowski's] main goal was to subvert the traditional geography of art that functions as a tool of subordination, and to offer the marginal position as an analytic advantage based on his conviction that 'the margin can reveal elements that are invisible from the center.'"[26]

Piotrowski's notion of writing "horizontal art history" is the starting point for this dissertation project. Intentionally constructed as an alternative to vertical or "universal" (i.e., western) art history, horizontal art history demands a revealing of the speaking subject in order to relativize and locate the source of the Western narration that drives art history. According to

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[25] Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 207.
[26] "THE IGOR ZABEL AWARD FOR CULTURE AND THEORY 2010" Igor Zabel Foundation, 2010. Accessed: September 2022. https://www.igorzabel.org/en/award/award-2010

Piotrowski, "the fall of communism in Europe, which coincided with a series of much more profound historic shifts, functioned as a catalyst for this project."[27] This methodology becomes particularly valuable when applied in the spaces of museums, where histories take a three-dimensional, accessible, and encounterable form of narrativization. However, the position of East Germany after 1989 offers a significant challenge to this framework: How, after all, can a horizontal art history be constructed when the real space it refers to has disappeared altogether, swallowed up immediately by the encroaching West in the moment after 1989? When the speaker can no longer locate her or himself in a space with no relation to its former world other than in the frame of "former"? After all, even in other nations that ceased to exist, like Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, new identities were formed in the wake of the disappearance of the old ones: the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro each have their own (art) histories today. But East Germany, itself visible in the shape of a no man's land between East and West, a threshold that can only be crossed but never occupied, has disappeared from the map, swallowed by the West. Thus, museums must necessarily work differently in this critical and endangered space.

The exceptional position of the former German Democratic Republic from the vantage point of the post-socialist present goes largely unexplored in Piotrowski's oeuvre. In the art historian's project *In the Shadow of Yalta,* which looked at modernist trajectories leading up to the moment of 1989, Piotrowski makes explicit reference to the GDR in the frame of socialist Europe, writing that "East-Central Europe is not the old Eastern Europe, although the latter is partly contained within its borders. Looking at the region from a strictly geographic perspective, East-Central Europe covers the eastern portion of the former Central Europe. Although it does not

[27] Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 56.

include Austria, it encompasses the eastern part of Germany."[28] However, in *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, the project which directly expands on and makes contemporary the work done in *In the Shadow of Yalta*, the space of former East Germany is summarily excluded, no longer part and parcel of "post-communist Europe" as Piotrowski understands it. Indeed, it is only in a discussion of the shape of museums in this new Europe that Piotrowski makes explicit reference to the fate of the GDR after communism, and only as a side note, although critically bound up with the construct of the museum:

> [Important culture institutions] include museums, which I will describe later, as well as contemporary art centres, such as the Centre for Contemporary Art at Ujazdowski Castle in Warsaw, which is the largest and the most active of such state-sponsored public institutions in post-communist Europe **(with the exception of the former GDR, which, due to its incorporation into West Germany, must be treated as a special case)**, or among private ones, the dox Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague.[29]

While Piotrowski's focus was often on his home country of Poland, his scholarship extended to touch deeply on every country once located behind the Iron Curtain, with one notable exception: the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. Why did Piotrowski not include this socialist state in his extensive research, how might it belatedly fit into, but also exceed, his readings of art and artistic practices in East Central Europe, and what shape does it take on in the aftermath of 1989? These questions are at the heart of this dissertation and will be an implicit frame for the project, explored through examining in three chapters, which expand from a local to a national to a global frame, several critical institutions that continue to culturally produce East German identity today. The task of situating this former nation within larger frameworks of post-socialist Europe through an in-depth exploration of its museums and public spaces is the ultimate aim of my project,

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[28] Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 8.
[29] Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 77.

which draws on, critiques, and expands beyond the ideas presented throughout Piotrowski's work to examine a region that has occupied a precarious and exceptional role since 1989.

Piotrowski's commitment to expanding the language, perspective, and orientation of art history is not limited to his most famous project of horizontal art history, but extends throughout his entire oeuvre, across many historical times and geographic spaces: from *In the Shadow of Yalta,* which constructed what Hans Belting called the "second voice" of art history to challenge the universal image of Western modernism, to his collaborative scholarly-curatorial project with Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius which led to a brief and unlucky period of directing the National Museum of Poland, and ultimately produced the book *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, in which the notion of the "critical" museum as a space that fostered democracy and dialogue between global and local was explored, to Piotrowski's understanding of 1989 as a moment of confluence for several paradigm-shifting events, which was given shape through projects like *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of the New Art Worlds* (ZKM Karlsruhe, 2013), to his largest contribution to art history, the survey text of East-Central European art worlds entitled *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*. In the three chapters that constitute this project, I will apply and expand framing techniques developed from Piotrowski's writing on museums in East-Central Europe after 1989 to the cultural institutions of former East Germany. Whereas for Piotrowski space is a deciding factor in reading these institutions, my argument is located in the specific spatio-temporal coordinates that constitute the former German Democratic Republic as viewed from the vantage point of contemporary Germany. This is particularly critical because, unlike many countries of the former Eastern Bloc, which changed name or precise borders after 1989, the GDR has disappeared completely off the map. Former East Germany offers a critical space from which to picture broad transformations in art history and museum studies in the

global era: simultaneously rapidly incorporated into the structures of western Europe and marginalized by them, the region's many layers of recent history offer a point of convergence for the tensions that have haunted cultural institutions in the last three decades. Through six institutional case studies, my project explores the shifting trajectory of museums (and the art history that underpins them) in the transition towards the age of the global contemporary. This consideration of how local, national, and global concerns appear in marginalized spaces will offer a new perspective on the function of art museums and their exhibitions in Germany since the *Wende*, as well as their place in the frame of the contemporary East-Central Europe from which they are frequently and intentionally excluded.

Museums occupy many roles at once. They are factories of representation, laboratories for living, dialoguing, researching, and producing (Clementine Deliss).[30] They are spaces where history is in stasis, stilled panoramas, sites which everything has the status of an event in the process of happening (Boris Groys).[31] They are institutions built on and from exploitation and exclusion (Fred Wilson).[32] They were vehicles to exercise new forms of power in the 19th century (Tony Bennett);[33] the arbiters of modern visual culture, in many cases blind to their own history (Mary Anne Staniszewski);[34] important political tools with revolutionary potential (Rebecca DeRoo).[35] Museums are both heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time (Michel Foucault)[36]

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[30] Clementine Deliss. *The Metabolic Museum*. (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2020)
[31] Boris Groys, *Art Power*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 69.
[32] Fred Wilson, and Howard Halle. "Mining the Museum." *Grand Street*, no. 44 (1993): 151–72. https://doi.org/10.2307/25007622.
[33] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. (Abington, UK: Routledge, 1995)
[34] Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998)
[35] Rebecca DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006, 199: 1968 as a dividing line for the role/values of museums à "in the aftermath of 68, previously shared assumptions and values could no longer be taken to ground a national cultural policy without prompting debate."
[36] Michael Foucault, Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité October, 1984; ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec)

and spaces that represent research, a new type of theory and are the chief agents of change (Maria Oriskova).[37] These various definitions of the museum and its tasks, written from and towards various spatial and temporal orientations, all suggest that museums are spaces of confrontation between inside and outside worlds; they are points of contact between the society that builds them and the individual that experiences them, an embodiment of the act of translation between objective and subjective, a space for the literalization of narratives of past and present, gateways towards the future.

The complex and unique situation of museums in East/Central Europe produces a puzzle from which East Germany, largely an exception in post-1989 rules about the region (politically, economically, culturally), cannot escape. In the three decades since German reunification, museums of art across the once divided nation have been transformed into arenas where battles over the legacy of socialist East Germany and its forty years of cultural production are fought. Early post-unity exhibitions, such as *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* in Weimar presented East German art as the hazardous waste of art history, rigidly ideological and inferior in every way to West German art. As scholar April Eisman has suggested, the so-called Bilderstreit ("image battle") of the 1990s can be understood as symbolically representing the struggle for defining Germany's post-wall cultural identity in the years immediately following reunification.[38] In recent years, museums across eastern Germany are finally addressing the rich history of East German art in its own right to varying degrees of nuance and success. These exhibitions cast light on the multitude of politics, styles, and voices that shaped the East German art world, as well as show the

[37] Maria Oriskova, *Curating EASTERN EUROPE and Beyond: Art Histories through the Exhibition* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014)
[38] April Eisman, "Whose East German Art is This? The Politics of Reception After 1989" in *New Research on East Germany*, ed. Marc Silberman, Imaginations Journal of Cross-Cultural Visual Studies, 8:1 (2017), 15.

many ways that contemporary artists working in the region today continue to be influenced by its complex past and insist on the continued importance of museums as spaces for coming to terms with the socialist past and constructing regional identities and cultural narratives in the present. At the same time, these exhibitions have collided with broader shifts in the society that surrounds them, changing and charging their meanings and adding a new level of urgency to the work they do. My dissertation considers several of exhibitions made between 2017-2020 and the museums that frame them in order to construct a history of the multiple meanings the display of East German art has taken on since reunification, to envision the complex role that museums of art as spaces where local and national identities are formed have assumed since 1989, as well as to situate these spaces in the frame of globalized and globalizing networks, looking at their future potential.

The first chapter of this project examines the continuity and rupture present in the exhibitionary content and framing of three regional museums located in former East Germany in the pre- and post-Wende moment. The work of artist Wolfgang Mattheuer, a state-supported artist whose sculptures mark many of the post-socialist institutions that have emerged in the shadow of the GDR, including at the Museum Barberini which opened this introduction, is foregrounded in this chapter as a metaphor, a starting point for the larger exhibitionary concerns that this project examines. In this chapter, a series of temporary and permanent exhibitions located in the cities and museums of Halle (Saxony Anhalt), Dresden (Saxony), and Leipzig (Saxony) are read to understand the spatial and temporal links they maintain to East Germany museum histories, and to situate them within broader networks of historicizing the GDR past. Using Piotrowski's notion of the "critical museum," an institution which actively questions its own structures through exhibitionary practices, these three institutions are mapped on to broader questions about the processes of historicizing socialist art in post-socialist Europe.

The second chapter of this dissertation focuses on a single space, the Schlossplatz in (former East) Berlin in order to examine the three politically and culturally charged buildings that have been constructed upon it in recent history. These three institutions, each of which serve the needs of the society that built them in different but intersecting ways, offer an embodiment of their values. In this chapter, I read the newest of these institutions through the lens of Piotrowski's essay "New Museums in New Europe," which uses the content and context of an institution to explain its work in relation to a broader urban and historical frame. I am particularly invested in utilizing this framework because it situates this institution, the Berlin Schloss/Humboldt Forum, which could be understood as a "new museum" in "new Europe," within a post-East German context and simultaneously inserts the new cultural institutions of former East Germany into the larger conversation about post-socialist European museums. Germany's former East is often excluded from studies concerning the legacy of cultural socialism in the former Eastern Bloc, including Piotrowski's work, because of its rapid post-Wall political, social, and cultural shifts, which could together be understand as a form of "westernization" due to German reunification in 1990. The disappearance of the lived reality of the state occurred at a speed that existed nowhere else in the former Eastern Bloc, making its material and symbolic traces important to explore in order to build on and expand Piotrowski's work. By focusing on the way that the demolished Palast der Republik remains and disappears on the Schlossplatz today, this chapter examines the absence and presence of the GDR in contemporary Berlin through the incomplete lens of memory culture.

In Chapter 3, the place of East German art and museum culture is examined in the frame of the "global contemporary." The notions of trauma, public spaces, and the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 are viewed through the lens of a museum of contemporary art, the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart in Berlin. Two exhibitions housed in the

museum 30 years apart help to elucidate the position of East Germany after 1989 as being caught somewhere between Eastern Europe and the Global Contemporary. This chapter centers post-East German experiences after 1989 by updating Piotrowski's understanding of the trauma that museums bear: while the author understands this trauma specifically in reference to the communist (i.e. pre-1989) past, I assert that it is possible for us to expand this definition to encapsulate also the trauma of the end of communism, i.e. the moment of 1989 itself. The final chapter of this project situates the space, time, and culture of the GDR, viewed from the vantage point of the present, as a critical threshold across which we must pass in order to enter the structures of Europe.

By addressing these questions and assessing the space of the GDR through the framework that Piotrowski provides in his oeuvre—ultimately concluding that this particular and unique region exceeds the frame of either East or West and moves beyond Piotrowski's scope—it is my hope that this dissertation will offer a new perspective on the function of art museums in Germany and the post-socialist world since 1990.

2.0 Chapter 1: The Step of the Century: Critical Museums in the "New" Germany[39]

"Ensure that the doors and gates of our exhibitions and museums are opened wide. Cultural assets in a state that is moving towards socialism are not only the reserved property of students and professors of culture, but they also belong to the whole people. Cultural workers should be honest and enthusiastic mediators between works of art and people. We no longer have museums where moths and rust eat away…our people and especially our youth should feel at home in our cultural and artistic places. Open these paths for them!" – Otto Grotewohl, the first Prime Minister of the GDR, in a 1958 speech on the occasion of the return of Dresden's art treasures from the Soviet Union

"We believe that the project of the critical museum, capable of taking an active part in public debates on fundamental issues of civil society, […] forms part of a larger struggle which transcends the boundaries of the art museum." – Piotr Piotrowski and Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* (2015)

"Museums as vibrant places for democracy, as places for enlightened debate, as places which inspire ideas—this is how museums should develop in the future." – Frank-Walter Steinmeier, current president of Germany, September 2020

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[39] Title makes specific reference two projects by Piotr Piotrowski-- *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum* (a collaboration with Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius developed in response to their brief period of leadership at the Polish National Museum in Warsaw) and "New Museums in New Europe" (chapter 6 of *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*)—which offer both a theoretical frame and starting point for this project.

2.1 The Century Stepper

At first, the bronze torso of the statue appears to float like a bulging helium balloon, four limbs belatedly anchoring it into space. These appendages initially appear out of sync, placed at random: an arm and a leg are bent at sharp 90-degree angles, the latter's disproportionately large foot encased in a heavy boot. The figure's right arm juts forward, metal sinews and tendons stretched taught until it is abstracted into almost pure geometry, a naked leg mirroring its scissoring reach from below. It is only when the body of the viewer confronts the body of the statue directly, head-on and in context, that a narrative emerges: this sculpture, positioned at the entryway to Leipzig's Zeitgeschichtliches Forum [Forum for Contemporary History], depicts a German body divided across the lines of German history. Situated in the real space of Leipzig's city center, the inflexible length of the statue's right arm is revealed to be the Hitlergruß, its left arm the clenched upward fist of communist solidarity. The work, which is named *Der Jahrhunderschritt* ["The Step of the Century,"] [*Figure 5*], folds a century of national ideological contradictions onto a single body, where the fascist Third Reich and the socialist German Democratic Republic are forced to cohabitate, intermingle, and bleed into each other, all historical boundaries removed.[40] In the words of the East German artist Wolfgang Mattheuer, the statue's maker: "A naked leg, reaching out far. A booted leg, a black arm with Heil gesture shooting from disembodied middle and a fist at the raised second arm make a raging figure out of four extremities. [...] What is this? Helpless rage?

[40] On the body's left side, the arm of socialist solidarity and the heavily booted fascist leg together form one half of a swastika, while on the right its naked limbs reach for a yet-unimagined future, perhaps of a time after this century has long faded. The sparse color of the statue furthers this confusion between two oppositional ideologies: red, a color associated with both the ideology of communism and appropriated by the National Socialists in an attempt to gain the cooperation of the working class, appears on several limbs, gesturing towards the malleability of its symbolism. Furthermore, the socialist GDR viewed the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany as the continuation of Third Reich fascism, so perhaps this could alternatively be read as a portrait of the two German states made inside the era of division.

[...] Chaos? Resurrection? Martial law? Loss of the center!"[41] These themes are embodied in the disappearing head of the Century Stepper—for what this statue ultimately represents is a man shattered and rebuilt as a fractal of history—which sinks heavily into his ruptured torso. His mouth has already been swallowed up, leaving only eyes, watching, *witnessing*, long after he has stepped out of the century that produced his fractured form and posture, and into the public space of post-socialist Germany.

Mattheuer is a figure worth special consideration within the frame of the 20th century, both as paradigm and omen. Born in 1927 in Reichenbach/Vogtland (Saxony), Mattheuer was drafted into the National Socialist Wehrmacht in the last year of the Second World War. After surviving internment by the Red Army, he relocated to Leipzig and enrolled as a student of painting at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst [Academy of Fine Arts, HGB], an institution which would mold his entire artistic career. Following his graduation from the HGB, Mattheuer joined the Verband Bildender Kuenstler der Deutsche Demokratische Republik [Association of Visual Artists in the GDR, VBK] in 1951/2, a step necessary to begin working as a professional artist in

[41] "Ein nacktes Bein, weit ausgreifend. Ein Stiefelbein, ein schwarzer Arm mit Heil-Geste aus körperloser Mitte schießend und eine Faust am erhobenen zweiten Arm machen aus vier Extremitäten eine rasende Figur. Was ist das? Hilfloses Wüten? Chaos? Auferstehung? Kriegsrecht? **Verlust der Mitte**!"-- *Wolfgang Mattheuer*: *Bilder als Botschaft – Botschaft der Bilder*. Hrsg.: Ursula Mattheuer-Neustädt. (Leipzig: Faber und Faber Verlag, 2002) 84/85. NB: It is curious that as an answer to the question of his figure's motivation, Mattheuer invokes Hans Sedlymayr's polemical-- and largely forgotten-- work, *Verlust der Mitte: Die bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit* or *Art in Crisis: The Lost Center* (1948), in which Sedlymayr, a member of the new Viennese School of art history (late 1920s/30s) and an early member of the National Socialist party claimed that not only was modern art in a crisis, but that this artistic crisis was a manifestation of the much deeper cultural and religious disintegration visible in post-World War II Austrian and German society, essentially re-producing the parameters of *Entartete Kunst*. The idea of the "lost center" would serve as a central trope in Mattheuer's work, including „Verlorene Mitte" und „Verlust der Mitte," two graphic works from the early 1980s that reproduced the limbs of *Der Jahrhundertschritt* floating freely in space without a center to draw them together. It is certainly worth further investigation in the frame of the availability and reception of Sedlmayr's work in the GDR.
Also the figure of Sedlymayr offers some interesting parallels to Mattheuer himself, who, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, became a popular figure with the Junge Freiheit circle, a right-wing populist newspaper (https://www.jf-archiv.de/archiv/17aa5.htm ; https://www.jf-archiv.de/archiv02/162yy43.htm).

East Germany.[42] Subsequently, he began teaching at his alma mater, first as an assistant (1953-6) then as a docent (1956-65) and finally as a professor (1965 until his retirement from the HGB in 1974).

Mattheuer had a significant influence on the content and form of teaching at the HGB, which was one of four academies of art in East Germany, and thus the shape of visual art in the GDR. Along with his colleagues Bernhard Heisig and Werner Tübke, as well as Willi Sitte at the Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule in Halle (Saxony-Anhalt), Mattheuer became one of the main representatives of the so-called "Leipzig School", a group of state-supported painters who by the 1970s had the most privilege, visibility, and legitimacy of any modern artists in East Germany. In the late 1960s, Mattheuer began exhibiting extensively across both East and West Germanys; he was commissioned by curator and sculptor Fritz Cremer to create a painting for the gallery of the East German Palast der Republik in 1976, and in 1977 took part in a controversial iteration of the documenta exhibition in Kassel.[43] Throughout the Honecker era of East Germany [1971-1989], Mattheuer's work evolved into a richly symbolic form of magical realism marked by

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[42] "The prerequisite for admission to the VBK was a completed artistic professional or university degree or the examination by one of the section leaders. After a status as a candidate, the admission as a full member of the association took place. Membership was existential for artists, as it represented access to the state art trade and the public awarding of artistic commissions was only made to members of the association. Furthermore, only members were entitled to work as freelancers, to benefit from a preferential tax rate and to use the commissioning system with its exhibition and sales opportunities. Likewise, only members were free to participate in the art exhibitions, trips, professional conferences, seminars and symposia organized by the association. The supply of artistic tools and materials, access to the association's own printing workshops, and the awarding of art prizes were also linked to membership. Membership in the VBK was an essential means of exerting pressure in order to be able to enforce a state art policy." – "Verband Bildender Künstler der DDR (1970 - 1990)," Akademie der Künste Archiv. Accessed June 2022: https://archiv.adk.de/bigobjekt/37005

[43] At documenta 6 to be specific, where the participation of artists from East Germany for the first time was met by significant protest by artists such as Georg Baselitz (who had himself been trained in and later fled the GDR) and Markus Lüpertz, whose works were to be presented in the immediate vicinity of the GDR artists and who withdrew their paintings due to the inclusion of artists supported by the GDR regime. Baselitz was a significant voice in the German/German Bilderstreit (more on this later in this chapter), and never shifted away from his position of vilifying East German state artists; in contrast, Joseph Beuys expressed interest in the work of the East German artists at documenta and allowed himself to be guided through the GDR section by the East German art historian Lothar Lang. Additional info from the exhibition *documenta. Politik und Kunst* (Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin 2021/22).

allegory and encoded yet ambiguous critique of the state he lived and worked in; his paintings were extensively displayed and collected throughout the 1970s and 80s in both the East and West.[44] In 1984, the same year he began work on *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, Mattheuer was awarded the East German National Prize for Art and Literature (First Class), the highest artistic award conferred in East Germany. Despite the potentially thorny subject matter of the sculpture it was received extraordinarily well by both the public and the regime.[45] After its initial display in Leipzig in 1985, East German state media widely circulated praise about the sculpture, including a quote by an exhibition visitor who claimed that "Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt* is a high point in the art of East Germany."[46] When a bronze cast of the work was shown at the 10th and final *Kunstausstellung der DDR* in Dresden a few years later, it was selected as the most important work of the national exhibition.[47] The events surrounding the development and reception of this work gesture not only towards Mattheuer's highly privileged and public position within the East German art system, but also towards the broader trajectory of artistic freedom in the GDR, including the loosening of thematic and formal restrictions which occurred in the final years of the state's existence.

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[44] He took part in the traveling exhibitions "Zeitvergleich" in West Berlin, Hamburg, Nürnberg and Munich in 1982, the 41st Venice Biennial in 1984, had major solo exhibitions in Leipzig and East Berlin throughout the 1980s, and his work was displayed in Mexico City, Lund (Sweden), Tokyo, and New York.

[45] The East German government frequently censored any art that made reference to the nation's National Socialist history, and in particular works that made equivalences between Nazi Germany and East Germany; Mattheuer's colleague Werner Tübke was in 1965 at the 7th iteration of the same exhibition expelled from the Academy of Visual Arts and sanctioned by the East German government for his painting *Reminiscences of J.D. Schultze III* (1965), which consciously layered historical and contemporary traumas by portraying the fictional Judge Schulze as a judgment on both the Nazi past of Germany and the fascist approach that was taken by the government in the GDR – more on this work and its contemporary display in section IV.

[46] Bernd Lindner, Das zerrissene Jahrhundert. Zur Werk- und Wirkungsgeschichte von Wolfgang Mattheuers Plastik „Jahrhundertschritt", in: Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe, 2 (2005), H. 2,URL: https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2005/4587, DOI: https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok-1999, Druckausgabe: S. 300-308.

[47] Ibid – furthermore, after the 1985 exhibition, two bronze casts were commissioned—one by the West German art collector Peter Ludwig and the other by the Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg (Halle), today the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, where it remains on display today.

Despite his success within the mercurial constraints of the East German system, Mattheuer did not subscribe to the straight-line of state ideology. As art historian Frank Zöllner notes, "Mattheuer was able to maintain a remarkable attitude towards 'his' state, the GDR. In 1974, for example, he resigned as a professor in order to work as a freelance artist again. Two years later he protested against the expatriation of Wolf Biermann.[48] In 1988 he resigned from the SED [the founding and ruling party of the GDR], and in the Autumn of 1989 he turned against the intellectuals who postulated a humane socialism as an alternative to the capitalist [Federal Republic of Germany]."[49] Granted immense privilege by the state, including the ability to travel and sell his art in the West (opportunities unimaginable to an ordinary East German citizen or artist), Mattheuer was also able to maintain a (semi) critical attitude towards the state without fear of major reprisal in his work, as long as this remained encoded to some degree. In much of his oeuvre, figures and themes are borrowed from a mythological past and used as a pathway to obliquely critique the present.[50] In another artistic strategy, visible in works like 1974's *Freundlicher Besuch im Braunkohlenrevier* [*Friendly Visit to the Lignite Mining Field*] [*Figure 6*], Mattheuer employs a surrealist language which is simultaneously abstract and formulaic in order to respond to the state's demands (in this case the integration of the artist and worker) through a visual language that defies the formal expectations of the state, refuting legibility. Mattheuer actively participated in the Montagsdemonstrationen [Monday Demonstrations] in Leipzig, the

[48] Biermann is a singer-songwriter, poet, and East German dissident, whose expatriation from the GDR in 1976 led to protests by leading East German artists and intellectuals. These protests are often cited as the „beginning of the end of the GDR." (Fritz Pleitgen: 25 Jahre Ausbürgerung Wolf Biermann. In. Fritz Pleitgen (Hrsg.): *Die Ausbürgerung. Anfang vom Ende der DDR. Wolf Biermann und andere Autoren*. (Ullstein, Berlin 2006))
[49] Frank Zöllner, Der Epochenmaler. "Zeit Online" 4. August 2017. https://www.zeit.de/2017/32/wolfgang-mattheuer-ddr-kuenstler-werkschau-rostock
[50] As exemplified by the Sisyphus trilogy housed in Dresden, which will be discussed in length in section IV of this chapter, or his time- and regime-spanning images of a fallen Icarus, which will make an appearance in the conclusion of this dissertation through the lens of the new art space DAS MINSK in Potsdam, which opened with an inaugural exhibition of Mattheuer's work, entitled *Der Nachbar, der will fliegen* (DAS MINSK, Potsdam, 2022/23).

precursor to the Peaceful Revolution that led to the collapse of the GDR, for which he developed another sculptural figure which speaks in the same visual vocabulary of the Century-Stepper: *Mann mit Maske*, the Masked Man.[51] Despite being condemned as either a "Sonntagsmaler"[52] or a propaganda maker for the East German state in the early years of German reunification, particularly by GDR dissidents and those who had fled the socialist state like Georg Baselitz, Mattheuer was able to successfully continue his artistic career in the post-1989 milieu, with exhibitions of his work held across the newly reunited Germany and Europe. This included several major retrospectives of his oeuvre in the museums of former East Germany.[53] Today, almost 35 years after 1989, many of Mattheuer's drawings and paintings continue to be utilized in many exhibitions across the reunified Germany to illustrate the complex role of the artist in East Germany, and several of the artist's sculptures have been integrated into critical public spaces of the New Germany, including two works in the art holdings of the Reichstag Building where the German parliament meets. This marks Mattheuer, like his most famous sculpture, as a single body onto whom the many complexities and contradictions of the 20th century can be layered, and as a prismatic lens through which to view the production and reception of German art during and after

[51] This work and its installation at the new Potsdam Kunsthaus DAS MINSK will re-appear in the conclusion of this dissertation.
[52] Literally a "Sunday painter" or hobbyist, as cited in Mattheuer's obituary in Die Zeit newspaper in 2004 (Ausgabe Nr. 17/2004)
[53] Kunstsammlung Chemnitz, 2002 and 2008, MDBK Leipzig 2005, Kunsthalle Rostock 2017, Das Minsk Potsdam 2022/23. Also perhaps worth mention is the retrospective of his work at the Museum de Fundatie in Zwolle, Netherlands in 2017/18. Critical to note that, of the four artists of the Leipziger Schule, Mattheuer is the most [monographically] exhibited in the post-Wende milieu (next to Bernhard Heisig who was a teacher of the artist Neo Rauch and is frequently displayed in this context); Werner Tübke is rarely exhibited beyond the context of his *Panorama* work and Willi Sitte only had his first solo exhibition after 1989 at the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in 2021.

the epoch of East-Central European socialism. The artist died in 2004 in Leipzig on his 77th birthday.[54]

Mattheuer's biography allows a recognition of the artist as a living, breathing translation of his *Jahrhundertschritt*: a body borne of the contradictions of the 20th century, somehow at once Nazi soldier when situated historically, East German state propagandist when viewed from the position of the West, and transcendent in the post-Wende milieu, when he insisted that the criticism legible in his paintings was aimed not just at conditions in the GDR but at the debacle of modern civilization in general.[55] Correspondingly, his oeuvre offers the opportunity to revisit and understand the "official" cultural production from East Germany as a complex, politically-diverse, and deeply ambiguous phenomenon. This reading refuses to accept the flattened role forced onto art from the GDR by the events of 1989 and the end of the East German state by museums, exhibitions, and cultural policies imported from the West. In this chapter, Mattheuer's work from the GDR era will be employed as a vehicle to return to the 20th century in order to explore the historicization and re-orientation of the East German modernism in several museums of art across the region of the former German Democratic Republic. This particular framing will transform these works into critical afterimages of the 20th century with an inherent, temporalized agency that produces links between the past and present, as well as the represented and real bodies that existed in both times, thus activating the institutions that contain them and allowing these spaces to be understood as critical sites for constructing local histories and canons. Rather than focusing

[54] Biographical detail from: Regina Haunhorst and Irmgard Zündorf, *Biografie Wolfgang Mattheuer*, in: LeMO-Biografien, Lebendiges Museum Online, Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, URL: http://www.hdg.de/lemo/biografie/wolfgang-mattheuer.html Last accessed on 08.02.2023

[55] Eduard Beaucamp, "A Plea for Existential Art" in *Wolfgang Mattheuer: Retrospektive. Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Skulpturen;* Eds.. Ingrid Mössinger, Kerstin Drechsel [Ausstellungskatalog Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, 27. Juli - 22. September 2002] (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann 2002.)

on the content of individual paintings or sculptures, I employ these works as a metaphor, a starting point for the larger exhibitionary concerns that this project examines.

Mattheuer's body of work, with its layering of potential political readings, its heavily encoded visual language that shares motifs across media, and its simultaneous invocation of multiple times—folding together the mythical, the historical, the everyday, the minute, the epic, and the contemporary—appears in every significant museum collection of East German art today. These works act as an apparatus through which another time and space—in all of its complexity and nuance— can briefly come into contact with the time of the viewer within and through the real space of the museum. The confluence of multiple temporalities emerges as a critical factor here: Mattheuer did not consider himself an artist, but rather a "politically-humanistically engaged *Bildermacher*,"[56] a term that emphasizes reception over creation. As Zöllner understands this comment, whether a work is really art is not decided by its maker, but by its audience; therefore a "Bildermacher" ("Image-Maker") only becomes an artist through the social approval of his audience and thus the judgement of posterity.[57] This does not, however, imply an apathy towards the present: the artist himself claimed that "the image maker cannot stay out of the dispute of his time. He must have the courage to intervene, even if it means scars and wounds," again echoing the form of the *Jahrhundertschritt*, whose torso is pockmarked with both wounds and scars, reflecting the many battles (real and metaphorical) of the 20th century.[58] Mattheuer's distancing of himself from the term "artist" indicates a positioning of the self as cypher rather than agent,

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[56] Reinhold Heller, „Get out of Your Box -- Conversations with Wolfgang Mattheuer and Reflections on his Imagery" in *Retrospektive: Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Skulpturen — Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz*
[57] Zöllner, Der Epochenmaler
[58] Reiner Diederich, *Ein Schritt aus dem „Zeitalter der Extreme". Über Wolfgang Mattheuer* Accessed June 2022. https://www-bildergespraeche-de.translate.goog/2019/11/05/ein-schritt-aus-dem-zeitalter-der-extreme-ueber-wolfgang-mattheuer/?_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=op,wapp

necessarily consumed at a distance and outside of the frame of the time he belonged to—thus lending credence to his employment here as a temporal marker. I suggest that Mattheuer's work, which historizes the contemporary and brings the historical and the mythical into the present of his viewer, opens up a place for simultaneously entering into a direct dialogue with the past and maintaining a critical distance from it, folding multiple and contradictory times together to produce a complex and multifaceted image of history. This directly parallels the work done by the museum as an institution: setting contemporary viewer and constructed past(s) into a direct dialogue in space through the strategies of collecting, preserving, interpreting, mythologizing, and displaying, and, in some cases, acting as a critical forum for multiple channels of interpretation and meaning making, all bound up in the web of the obscured ideology of the institution.

Just as museums inhabit specific times and spaces, reaching out into the past and future and beyond the boundaries of their spatial anchoring, so too does Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt*, which opened this chapter. Mattheuer's work is mired in its relational properties, following the tradition of sculpture in the former Eastern Bloc, where under the tenets of Socialist Realism the medium occupied a special role, being considered one of the most socially accessible and ideologically clear forms of artistic expression due to the doubled-potential of anchoring it in public space and its broad legibility by the masses.[59] It is in the sculpture's afterlife following the events of 1989 and the disappearance of the East German state that the work's special relationship to public space emerges:[60] whereas many ideologically-charged artworks have been removed from

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[59] Agnieszka Tomaszewicz. *Sculpture in Socialist Realism—Soviet Patterns and the Polish Reality*. Arts 11: 6. 2022. https:// doi.org/10.3390/arts11010006

[60] The East-Central European debates surrounding the spatial placement of public art has many parallels to debates currently taking place across the southern United States about Confederate Monuments, albeit the East-Central European ones took place at a markedly intensified speed following the crumbling of the Iron Curtain in 1989/1990; in Germany, these debates continue until this day, emerging and disappearing in surprising moments and with unexpected catalysts. See, for example https://www.bz-berlin.de/berlin/streitpunkt-karl-marx-grosse-diskussion-um-ein-denkmal-und-zwei-strassen ; https://taz.de/Streit-um-Thaelmann-Denkmal-in-Berlin/!5816644/

public display across East Central Europe—relegated to art depots in inaccessible rural sites[61] or moved to the margins of bustling urban spaces[62]—Mattheuer's *Step(s) of the Century* became embedded into the public sphere *after* the events of the Wende, in several spaces that point towards their critical function in the process of historicizing not only East Germany, but also coming to terms with the whole of the 20th century from the vantage point of the GDR. The sculpture's situation in Leipzig, critically anchored on the threshold between city and museum, the present and the past, contemporaneity and history, gestures not only to the work's role as bridge between two interconnected but separately constructed worlds, but also to the critical function taken up by the institution (construed broadly) that it stands sentinel in front of in terms of its temporal and spatial agency.

Seven iterations of this figure, none of them identical, step across contemporary Germany.[63] Spread across both halves of the formerly divided nation, they create a constellation of Century-Steps, marking sites which engage not only with the subject of the work (the 20th century, the German nation(s), the processes of constructing of history) but also the politico-historical conditions of the work's production. These sculptures, which belong to both public and private collections, are located in Berlin, Bonn, Oberhausen, Halle, Leipzig, Potsdam, and Vogtland; four are positioned in former East Germany, two in the former West, and one at the crossroads of these two worlds, in former West Berlin (once an island in the sea of communism). The same figure is used to tell many stories. It traces the artist's biography (he was born in Vogtland, and the agrarian

[61] For example the Kunstarchiv Beeskow in Brandenburg, which will be discussed in the conclusion to Chapter 2.
[62] As in the case of the Memento Parks near Budapest or the remaining statues of East German national heroes, which have been all but erased from the city center but continue to preside on the edges of the city—for example the Ernst Thaelmann statue located north of the Danzigerstrasse in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.
[63] Some are made of bronze, some iron; some are painted red, white, or black, some are unpainted; their sizes vary from human-like (Leipzig, Halle) to monumental (Potsdam).

region proved a picturesque backdrop for many of his paintings, including *Guten Tag* (1976)); it marks state-produced narratives of unification (in the former West German capital of Bonn and former East Germany's cultural center of Leipzig these sculptures mark the entrances to the two of the three state-run "houses of history" about the East German past and reunification); but most of all this body can be found in the places where East German culture is to be seen and taken special notice of (in Berlin in front of a bank's private collection of East German art; in the Ludwig Galerie Schloss Oberhausen collection, one of three major German institutions and drawn from the collections of Peter and Irene Ludwig, some of the earliest West German collectors of East German art; in Halle at the entrance to the permanent modernism exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg; in Potsdam, towering behind the locked gate to the courtyard of the Museum Barberini, the institution which opened this dissertation).

What these sculptures have in common beyond shared form is that they are all displayed in places that bridge the worlds internal and external to cultural institutions, creating a direct confrontation between the exterior and interior logic of the time as experienced and history as constructed. That these seven sculptures, each of which folds the trauma of the 20th century onto a single, aching body, are all located in liminal spaces, thresholds, points to their affective potential towards the body of the viewer: we exceed them, moving where they cannot, literally and figuratively, stepping into a world beyond the binaries of the 20th century, where the museum itself, an institution born of the desire to create order, must necessarily become active, questioned, and critical, in the space of East Germany in the aftermath of 1989 and after the end of modernism.

2.2 Cultural Temporalities in and after East Germany

This section offers a brief overview of the history, function, and orientation of museums of art in the region of (former) East Germany both prior to and following the Wende of 1989. It also examines temporary exhibitions of art, which were frequently held in spaces independent to the museum out of structural or ideological necessity, in order to explore the diverging temporal strategies of display internal and external to the logic of the museum institution. This background will allow an understanding of how the exceptional position of East Germany's museums—located on the fault-line between the former two Europes, spatially and temporally— offers a new set of challenges to their historical and contemporary positions, politics of identity, and the construction of local histories through their exhibitions. Additionally, this historical grounding will offer a basis for reading these institutions through the lens of the "critical museums" as theorized by Piotr Piotrowski. Particularly in the post-socialist context, these museums were shaped through internal and external pressures into critical agents in the public sphere, which in the present seek to actively take part in the maintenance of the local context in the face of a globalized/globalizing Europe. Before moving on to discussion of the new and necessarily "critical" shape of these museums in the post-Wende context, an examination of the history of East German museums and exhibitions is required to trace the arrival of these institutions in the realm of the contemporary.

The starting point of museums in the Soviet Occupation Zone [SBZ, 1945-52], later the German Democratic Republic [1949-1990], was, according to one source, "shocking:"[64] "Material

[64] „Erschütternd stellt sich uns die Ausgangsposition deutscher Kunstmuseen 1945 dar." As quoted in the chapter „Kunstmuseen und Kunstsammlungen in der DDR – Neubeginn und Tradition" in Gerhard and Ursula Stelzer, eds. *Bildhandbuch der Kunstsammlungen in der DDR*. (Leipzig: Prisma Verlag, 1985), 55-56.

and non-material debris [was] everywhere. Destroyed buildings, decimated stocks... Bombs and fires had destroyed most of the buildings and destroyed or badly damaged many works of art that had not been evacuated."[65] By the end of the Second World War in 1945 there was hardly a single museum in the nation that emerged unscathed; so much had been destroyed by bombs or fire, disappeared through vandalism and looting (which occurred not only during combat but also through the earlier actions of the Nazi regime, such as the official and unofficial confiscations of "degenerate" artworks), that the complete picture of what remained in museums' collections only became clear in the late 1950s. The parallel re-constitution of collections and re-opening of museums in East Germany took place mainly in the 1950s and 60s following the return of German "museum treasures" and documents from the Soviet Union, where they had been removed to after being commandeered by the occupying Red Army.[66] As then-Prime Minister of East Germany Otto Grotewohl suggested in a speech given on November 2, 1958 at the opening to the Berlin exhibition *Der Menschheit bewahrt* [*Humanity Preserves*] which displayed works from Dresden that had been (in Grotewohl's words) "rescued from spoilage and destruction" by the Red Army, this return signaled a fresh start and a new orientation for Germany's museums of art, and a radical break from the past: "Museen, in denen Motten und der Rost fressen, gibt es bei uns nicht mehr."[67] This historical moment was so significant that it led to an alternative periodization of museum histories in the fledgling state,[68] one which offered a point of contrast to museums in both Western

[65]"Materielle und ideelle Trümmer überall. Zerstörte Bauten, dezimierte Bestände… Bomben und Brände hatten die meisten der Gebäude zerstört und viele nicht evakuierte Kunstwerke vernichtet oder stark beschädigt." Ibid.
[66] This return actually occurred in two stages-- 1955/56 and 1958/59. Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch*, 56-7.
[67] As quoted in the first epigraph to this chapter: "*We no longer have museums where moths and rust eat away…"* Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch,* 58.
[68] "almost instantly, and in the long term… motivated our entire museum art and culture scene to such an extent and led to a new quality that one [must] distinguish between two main periods here: those before and those after the act of return." – ibid.

Europe[69] as well as in the rest of the Eastern Bloc. The starting point of institutional desolation in East Germany —which meant that no continuity was immediately possible— created the unique necessity to reevaluate the function of museums in socialist society, a condition that did not occur in such an all-encompassing way elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc.[70]

The return of these objects by the beginning of the 1960s led to a belated museological emergence from the shadow of wartime destruction, as well as a transition into a new level of national and international recognition: many collections were finally re-opened in their original sites, including the Albertinum in Dresden (re-opened in 1965), the Altes Museum (re-opened on the 125th anniversary of Schinkel's death on October 5, 1966) and Pergamon Museum, with its famous Altar, in Berlin.[71] 1968 saw the founding of the National Museum Council of the GDR and its inclusion in the International Council of Museums (ICOM, several years before West Germany recognized East Germany's sovereignty through the Basic Treaty of 1972), and 1969 marked the first and only inauguration of a "Museum Neubau" [new construction] in East Germany's 40 year history: the Kunsthalle Rostock on the Baltic Sea, which was established as an answer to the reconstruction of the Kunsthalle in the neighboring West German city of Kiel, and thus explicitly positioned as a bulwark against "west German imperialism through exhibition,"

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[69] Where the events of 1968 broadly marked the transition of museums from institutions with a singular aim, i.e. preserving and producing order, into spaces that could question and experiment, particularly in regards to the values and norms of the nation – Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum.* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Rebecca DeRoo. *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006).

[70] Although many East-Central European nations did have their collections looted during occupation either/both by the National Socialist or Soviet armies, particularly Poland, where efforts at restitution are ongoing and have taken on a new urgency in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/14/poland-to-ask-russia-to-return-paintings-looted-by-red-army-in-ww2), the demolition of Germany's museum institutions themselves produced this opportunity for a fresh start in an entirely new way that existed nowhere else in the Eastern Bloc.

[71] The Pergamon Altar dates back to the 2nd century BCE. It was transported to the Soviet Union after the Second World War and only returned to the GDR in 1958, at which time it was re-placed in what was at that time called the Antiken-Sammlung of the Staatliche Museen.

marking a major break from museological tradition.[72] By 1984, there were 65 museums of art in the GDR, with most located in East Berlin (18 institutions) and Dresden (11); the socialist nation contained around 700 museological institutions in total.[73] The aim of museums of art in East Germany was brought directly in line with the values of socialism: as the *Bildhandbuch der Kunstsammlungen in der DDR*, a catalogue of 85 cultural institutions in East Germany compiled in 1984 concludes, "[b]ringing art closer to the whole people and not reserving it for a small privileged class, making the treasures of our museums accessible and tangible to all peoples, to all humanity in the long term was, is, and will continue to be the primary concern of all museums and museologists [in East Germany]."[74] The foremost task of these cultural institutions was to provide physical space for the construction of a cannon that connected contemporary production in the socialist state to the "better" legacy of German history, offering an open and accessible space for people from all levels of society to come into contact with artworks[75], and ultimately reviving

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[72] Why was the Rostock to be the only Museum Neubau in the 40 year GDR history? Perhaps based on the emphasis on repairing structures that already existed in the GDR in order to use building materials for the major ideological goal of creating housing. According to the *Bildhandbuch*: "in all of our art museums and art museum foundations [Gruendungen] the reconstruction or adaptation of historical monuments that are in the care of monument preservation always took precedence over new constructions. So it is that to this day only the primarily exhibition-oriented Rostock Art Gallery, with its new building opened in 1969, has deliberately deviated from this practice (pp 56, column 2 paragraph 2). The Kunsthalle Rostock, located in the district of Rostock, the northern-most administrative region of the GDR (states were abolished in 1952 in favor of the imposition even more centralism and uniformity through stripping the traditional states of their identity but subdividing them into 14 districts) was conceived of in 1964 and opened five years later. Critically, this institution was constructed explicitly for reasons of foreign and cultural policy, and in direct response to West Germany: „Die neue Kunsthalle, die auf Beschluß des Präsidiums des Ministerrates vom 28.5.1964 aus außenpolitischen und kulturpolitischen Gründen projektiert wurde, **ist von hervorragender Bedeutung, um ein sozialistisches Gegengewicht zur bereits fertiggestellten Kieler Kunsthalle, die die revanchistischen Ideen der westdeutschen Imperialisten durch Ausstellungen unterstützt, zu schaffen**." The explicit positioning of the Kunsthalle Rostock as a bulwark against this "west German imperialism through exhibition" cements the calculated use of museums as an instrument of ideology, but also helps to illustrate their parallel-to-the-mainstream position in East German society, where they were apparently left out of the ideologically bound architectural (re)construction of the nation, except when deemed necessary weapons in the anti-fascist struggle.

[73] Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch,* 7.

[74] Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch,* 63.

[75] As illustrated by the Bitterfelder Weg, a program set at the 5th Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (1958) in order to facilitate "bridging the gap between art and life, between artists and the people." This was accomplished on one hand by creating artist "residencies" in factories and on collective farms, and on the other by intentionally bringing workers into cultural spaces through mandatory excursions. Efforts to follow the Bitterfeld Way culminated

German culture from its perceived imprisonment and weaponization by National Socialist fascism and its predecessor, western imperialism. In East Germany, these institutions were critical instruments of ideology but occupied marginal positions within the expressly political structures of the state, as evidenced by the lack of new buildings constructed for art museums throughout East German history. Additionally, the museum system of the GDR was subordinate to the Museums and Monument Preservation Department in the Ministry of Culture, which assumed political and professional control.[76] The equation of museums and memorials in the eyes of the Ministry of Culture suggests a backwards looking orientation set onto the work of museums, connecting the past and present through display strategies, but with little instrumentality for the future. The cultural orientation of the socialist nation in futurological terms emerges more clearly through *temporary* exhibitions, such as the 7th District Art Exhibition of the VBK Leipzig, which took place in highly politicized spaces that allowed the state to emphasize the contemporary nature of socialist culture.

In contrast to museums, which produced a long duration to construct historical continuity between the past and present, necessarily speaking in a language shaped by continuity, architecture, and place-making, exhibitionary culture in East German had much more immediate, future-oriented, and often explicitly political intentions. The particular temporality and heavy politicization of East German exhibitionary culture has its roots in the earliest history of the

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in the exhibition Sieger der Geschichte on the occasion of the 10th Workers' Festival of the GDR, which was held in Halle in 1968. Hartmut Pätzke: Von "Auftragskunst" bis "Zentrum für Kunstausstellungen". Lexikon zur Kunst und Kunstpolitik in der DDR. In: Eugen Blume, Roland März (Hrsg.): *Kunst in der DDR. Eine Retrospektive der Nationalgalerie*. (Berlin: SMB 2003), 317f.

[76] The Council for Museums and the National Museum Council were subordinate to this department. The latter coordinated cooperation with international professional organizations, such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Franziska Ida Neumann, *Westdeutsch geprägte Museumsleitung und kuratorische Praxis in den Kunstmuseen der neuen Bundesländer nach 1990: Erfolg und Aporie am Beispiel der Kunsthalle Rostock, des Staatlichen Museums Schwerin und der Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz* (dissertation), 46.

socialist nation: for the Soviet administration of the occupied territory that would become the GDR, all aspects of culture were understood as intrinsically political and thus made to serve as a vehicle of propaganda, either directly or indirectly (as was the case for the fine arts). This cultural-political philosophy was applied by Soviet ideologues across many of the USSR's satellite states and above all to East Germany, which required intense ideological rehabilitation in the immediate post-war period.[77] In light of the lack of museums in the fledgling years of East Germany due to their destruction in the war, exhibitions, frequently held in temporary spaces that had survived bombardment due to their marginal position or lack of industrial usage, were used as an early tool to promote and embed cultural-political values into the post-war Soviet Occupation Zone.[78] Only one year after the end of World War II, the first major art exhibition, the first *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung* was already held in Dresden. The decision to frame this critical first exhibition of a new nation in the ruins of a firebombed city gestures to the deeply embedded desire to reconstruct the urban space and cultural identity of the nation side by side and together. In the Dresden exhibition, emphasis was placed on art and artists that had been banned and persecuted by the Nazis, including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, George Grosz, Paul Klee, and Oskar Kokoschka; their work was juxtaposed with the new tradition of art in the Soviet occupation zone through the inclusion of works by contemporary artists who lamented the destruction of Germany through fascism. Two works worth consideration in this frame are Wilhelm Lachnit's *Der Tod von Dresden* (1945) [*Figure 7*] and Hans Grundig's *Opfer des Faschismus* (1946) [*Figure 8*]. Lachnit's work represents a weeping woman sitting bent over in

[77] David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany* (Stanford, CA, 1992).
[78] It is important to note here that exhibitions and museums were also employed ideologically in the future West Germany (then the French, British, and American Occupation Zones) where exhibitions like Advancing American Art, a traveling exhibition sponsored by the US department of state which traveled to South America and Europe from October 1946 onwards, were used to promote US cultures and ideologies.

the shattered red remains of Dresden, her son staring plaintively at the viewer from her lap. Behind her, a skeleton wrapped in a funeral shroud, perhaps the embodiment of death, mimics her posture; in the background, a red sun rises over a field of glowing rubble. This work can be read as an inverted Pietà, the son who has survived symbolizing both a rejection of rote religious narratives in the immediate post-war period, but also a tentative hope for the future. Grundig's work, on the other hand, takes up the position of victimhood, an inability to escape the past: Grundig, who was himself interned Sachsenhausen concentration camp from 1940-44, depicts two emaciated and supine corpses wearing the striped uniform of camp inmates. The body in the foreground, whose face is covered by his hand in an echo of Lachnit's figures, bears the red triangle[79] of a political prisoner along with Grundig's own prisoner number (18061).[80] The deeply personal work, which situates the viewer as the discoverer of violence (as fellow victim or perpetrator? This is unclear), also draws on Christian imagery to transcend the specific time and space that anchors it: according to Kathleen Schroeter, "both corpses are bedded on a gold ground, following medieval painting. There, it symbolized a divine, spatially- and time-free sphere; here, it elevates the depicted scene beyond a mere depiction of the experience: the painting becomes a memorial to the entirety of the victims, giving them back their dignity."[81] Both of these paintings, displayed together at the *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, drew on the language of a sober kind of post-war modernism which did not yet embody the present-future temporality of socialist realism but rather

[79] Which appears yellow in certain lights, clearly also seeking to commemorate Jewish victims. The artist's wife Lea Grundig, an important artist in her own right in East Germany and president of the VBK from 1964-70, was Jewish, although she was able to flee to Slovakia and later Palestine during the time of National Socialism.
[80] Kathleen Schröter: „Hans Grundig, Opfer des Faschismus (1946)". In: Ulrich Bischoff, ed.: *Galerie Neue Meister Dresden*, Band I, (Köln 2010),. 474.
[81] Ibid.

emphasized the relationship between the past and future from the vantage point of the anti-fascist Soviet Occupation Zone.

In their heavily politicized temporalities, these works, which were displayed alongside artworks by Grosz, Dix, Kokoschka, Kirchner, and others, did not seek to produce a continuity with Weimar Republic era modernism, but actively broke with it, revealing the true aim of this exhibition: to justify a campaign *against* modern art which was formalized at the first cultural conference organized by Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Socialist Unity Party of Germany, SED], which coincided with the Dresden exhibition. The SED, reflecting the Soviet line on modernism as Western decadence, denounced the formalism and reactionary tendencies of the German art in the western Occupation Zones, demanding instead a German art that was democratic in content and national in form.[82] This early exhibition in Dresden offered a model which would be implemented throughout the history of East Germany: exhibitions were frequently coupled with political change in order to further intertwine the realms of culture and politics, and to use the political, contemporary focus of these exhibitions to implement shifting ideological beliefs. Another exhibition that took up this work of immediacy, illustrating the freeze/thaw model of artistic freedom in the East German state[83], included the Ulbricht-era exhibition *Junge Künstler/Malerei*, held at the Academy of Arts in East Berlin in September 1961, only one month

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[82] Cora Sol Goldstein, "Before the CIA: American Actions in the German Fine Arts (1946–1949)." *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (2005): 747–78. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24915107. 753

[83] East Germany's initially open attitude towards modernism was complicated by the "formalist debates" of the late 1940s, in which the quasi-state apparatus publication *bildende kunst* declared a realistic style necessary for the coming together of arts and politics. In the early 1950s, the formalist debates intensified to call for optimism in the arts, wholly rejecting the legacy of earlier leftist/socialist artists like Käthe Kollwitz, whose "pessimistic" style preceded the victory of communism and therefore were to be replaced by a utopian-oriented Socialist Realism based on the Soviet model. This enforced model peaked with the death of Stalin in 1953, leading towards a "New Course" with a warmer reception for modern art with communist sympathies, such as the work of Picasso. The rest of the 1950s saw periods of thaw and freeze; Khruzhchev's acknowledgement of Stalin's crimes led to thaw, Hungarian uprising in 1956 led to a freeze and the Bitterfelder Weg program in 1959 shifted the path of the arts again, bringing artists and workers together and intensifying the straight-jacket conditions under which art had to work in East Germany.

after the construction of the Berlin Wall. This exhibition purported to showcase the new "breathing room" that the construction of the Berlin Wall had opened for artists, displaying for the first time in a state-sponsored context complex, modern paintings that were neither overtly ideological nor optimistic, including those of Wolfgang Mattheuer and his comrades in the Leipzig School.[84] The varied location of these temporary exhibitions, which were frequently held in Messegelände [trades-fairgrounds], art schools, open exhibition areas (such as the Fučíkplatz in Dresden), and of course, in the case of the most official of these exhibitions, like the annually-occurring *Allgemeine Deutsche Kunstausstellung*, in museums, echoed the desire of the state to integrate socialist culture into all aspects of life; no longer reserved for academics, the doors of all exhibition spaces were opened wide to accommodate, educate, and indoctrinate as broad a public as possible. Thus, the temporality of exhibitions emerges as the deciding factor that produced difference between the political power of (con)temporary exhibitions and the historicizing might of the museum: while museums connected the past with the present through the production of a far-stretching canon, the embedding of art into a longer architectural durée by reconstructing rather than building new museums, and using contemporary art to invoke a selected history that justified the state's existence, exhibitionary culture took place in a much more explicitly political fashion, exchanging the long duration of the museum for more immediate pace that reflected a more accessible, everyday temporality, and reflected the values of the state in the short rather than long term.

[84] Two other examples worth mentioning in terms of the politicized nature and immediacy of this display form are the 7th Art Exhibition of the Leipzig District of the Verband Bildender Künstler, held in 1965, which led to restrictions on these new freedoms after reference was made by state artists to the National Socialist past of the country, and the East German participation in documenta 6, held in Kassel in 1977, in which the GDR government selected, curated, and showed works from state-sponsored artists which illustrated the increased internationalism of art and artists under Erich Honecker.

After the events of 1989, East Germany's museums, once the centers of power and the spaces for writing societal narratives and constructing local identities, were relegated to positions on the margins of the reunified society. Despite the "Peaceful" Revolution of 1989 and the end of the bipolarity of the two post-war German states,[85] the process of German reunification proved to be more difficult than most had believed in the initial euphoria surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall, particularly for the citizens of former East Germany, especially those, like the artists of the Leipzig School, who had been aligned with the regime.[86] The aftermath of 1989 called the many institutions—economic, social, political, cultural, memorial—of East Germany into question,[87] and while museums, as vehicles of soft power, were able to avoid the immediate systemic overhaul faced by the political, economic, and historical cultures of East Germany, they were in many ways altered by these events. Yearly statistics collected by Federal Republic of Germany's Institut für Museumsforschung [Institute for Museum Research, IfM] show an immediate and marked decline in visitors to museums across the "neue [Bundes]laender" (the official name for the re-integrated states of East Germany): in 1990, there were 23,306,918 visits to East Germany's museums, nearly

[85] Paraphrasing Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, the introduction of *Bilderstreit und Gesellschaftsumbruch: Die Debatte um die Kunst der DDR im Prozess der deutschen Wiedervereinigung*. eds Karl Rehberg and Paul Kaiser. (Berlin: B&S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2013)

[86] Bilderstreit und Gesellschaftsumbruch. Intro. -- As Timothy Garten Ash contextualizes in *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1993), "The turn of events [surrounding German reunification] left the Church and the opposition activists who had led the October revolution curiously disconcerted. **For their starting point had always been that they did not want reunification**. Rather, they wanted to work for a better a genuinely democratic German Democratic Republic. [These activists, artists, and intellectuals] did not regard the Federal Republic as the best of all possible Germanys."

[87] In his book *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany*, Andrew H. Beattie asks: "Who was the victor in this struggle? Not only the western anti-communists but also the GDR opposition to the SED" The author argues that later the issue became less about justice and accountability and more the production of an "inner unity" of the nation, so East German history has to be placed into a national context. From Andrew H. Beattie *Playing Politics with History: The Bundestag Inquiries into East Germany* (Studies in Contemporary European History, Vol. 4). (Berghahn Books: New York/Oxford, 2008). Preface.

25% less than were recorded in 1989 when 32,169,610 visits were made.[88] The IfM ascribes this dramatic decline mostly to the shifting political and economic landscape.[89] Despite the many and varied reasons for the decline in patronage to East German museums after 1989, they shared a fate of uncertainty; as the IfM concludes in a report about the future of East Germany's museums after 1989 "[f]or many museums, especially political-historical ones, it is not clear in what form their continued existence is ensured."[90]

Because of the heavily politicized nature of art and art institutions in East Germany, it comes as no surprise that they shared the uncertain fate of political-historical museums as described by the IfM. The first decade of reunification was marked by a period of immense confrontation over what function art and artists from the German Democratic Republic should have in the newly unified Germany. During this time, museums were transformed into the arenas where battles over what role, if any, East German art and artists should play in helping to define Germany's post-wall cultural identity. This battle over the legacy of East Germany took place on several levels in the art world, and had multiple symptoms: indeed, as Eckhardt Gillen has suggested, in many ways debates surrounding cultural politics came to replace debates about real politics, paralleling the position of exhibitions as politically reactive spaces in the East German

[88] Heft 36: Erhebung der Besuchszahlen an den Museen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für das Jahr 1991. Berlin 1992 (80 S.). ISSN 0931-7961 Heft 36 -- https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/institut-fuer-museumsforschung/forschung/publikationen/zahlen-und-materialien-aus-dem-institut-fuer-museumsforschung/

[89] In a survey taken by 719 museum directors across the former nation, 442 (91.9%) pointed specifically towards the following economic and political reasons: absence of visitors from other Eastern European countries, unemployment, and access for the usual visitors to new and previously inaccessible travel destinations. 116 museums, or 24.1% of those surveyed, suggested that the increase in or introduction of entry fee caused the decline; 64 museums (13.3%) pointed to a decrease in institutional operational budget; 63 museums (13.1%) to the closure, in whole or in part, of the institution. This trend was not limited to museums, as the survey suggests that this decline can be seen in other cultural spaces of East Germany, including theaters and libraries.

[90] Heft 36 – "Für viele Museen, insbesondere für politisch-historische, ist jedoch unklar, in welcher Form ihr Fortbestehen gesichert ist."

state.[91] Even the term "GDR art" itself became contentious as questions, shaped by the West German culture of coming-to-terms with the National Socialist period, emerged about whether real art could be produced under the constraints of a one-party dictatorship. One of the first major moments of this debate occurred in 1990, when Georg Baselitz, an artist who had been trained in Dresden before fleeing East Germany for the West in the late 1950s, claimed in an interview with *Art Magazin* that in the GDR there had been "no artists" at all: "No painters. None of them has ever painted a picture ... No jubilant painters, just assholes."[92] Debate raged when questions emerged in the Berlin House of Representatives about whether this "art" should be hung in the modern Neue Nationalgalerie, and continued via a series of exhibitions in the 1990s, above all *Auftrag: Kunst*[93] (1995) at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, which sought to produce direct links between art in the GDR and USSR to show how art was to be used as a means of propagating a Stalinist understanding of society.[94] The so-called "Bilderstreit," or the battle of images[95], reached an initial peak with the exhibition *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* [*Rise and Fall of Modernism*] (1999) when the West German curator Achim Preiss sought to present the whole art history of the 20th century and, through exhibitionary design and curatorial choices, ended up

[91] Rather than asking any real questions about the different developments of the two German societies & what they could learn from each other, the possibility of constructing a new constitution, or what a common future could possibly look like, **debate on the different images and art works in East and West between 1990 and 2009 turned out to become a pseudo-debate, a substitute for a real political debate in Germany. From: Eckhart J. Gillen, "The German Bilderstreit. The Inter-German controversy about the value of the East German art." *Groniek* 47, no. 203 (2017).**

[92] Rehberg, *Bilderstreit und Wiedervereinigung*, 123 – Gerhard Richter, who like Baselitz had been educated in Dresden before he left for the West, agreed with Baselitz's assessment.
https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783839435120-016/html

[93] I translate the title of this exhibition as *[Com]Mission: Art*, a play on the term "Auftragskunst" or "[state] commissioned art."

[94] "Einführungstext Auftrag: Kunst," Deutsches Historisches Museum. Accessed: May 2022
https://www.dhm.de/archiv/ausstellungen/auftrag/ausstellung.htm

[95] Interestingly, "Bilderstreit" is also the German word for iconoclasm/iconoclastic controversy—used for example to reference the Byzantine Iconoclasm

conflating the art of the National Socialist period and that of the GDR, causing a major scandal.[96] The exhibition took place in the former East German city of Weimar—"home to Schiller and Goethe, founding place of the first German Republic, and… walking distance from the concentration camp Buchenwald"[97]— in several institutions dispersed across the city, including in the city's museum-nee-castle and the Halle der Volksgemeinschaft, part of the Gauforum complex that had been constructed during the National Socialist era as a center of propagandistic and administrative power. *Aufstieg und Fall* started a broader discussion about the role that East German art should play in reunified society which played out (and continues to play out) in the German press, leading to decades of derision towards cultural production from the GDR.

The German-German Bilderstreit as a phenomenon offers many salient parallels to the exhibitionary culture of the GDR, which I have argued was more immediate and more politicized than museum exhibitions, which took place along a longer duration and with distance from the immediate present.[98] Additionally, in an echo of the freeze-and-thaw model of artistic freedom in

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[96] "A couple of artists [including Neo Rauch] wanted to withdraw their paintings from the show. A fistfight even erupted between two artists and the curator! Another artist sued and the art show became an issue to be dealt with in two courts." Barbara Wobert, "De-arranged places: East German Art in the Museums of Reunified Germany." In *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*. Vol. 19, No. 1 Spring 2001, 57.; while these two periods are often referred to as the "two German dictatorships," especially when viewed from the West, the outcry in the media and amongst young East German artists, many of whom, like Neo Rauch, had never practiced in line with the state but were still included in the exhibition as a flattened representation of East German state art, caused the exhibition's early closure. In addition to the context in which these works were presented, documentation from the exhibition shows that paintings from GDR state artists like Mattheuer, were displayed covered by gray plastic sheets, while works from Hitler's Germany were kept in prestigious frames.

[97] Wobert, "De-arranged places," ibid.

[98] Chronology of critical exhibitions for historicizing East Germany, developed with the help of Frank Zoellner – to be developed in the event that this dissertation becomes a larger book or teaching project:
Auftrag Kunst, DHM Berlin 1995
Deutschlandbilder, Berlin 1997
Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne, Weimar 1999
Wolfgang Mattheuer : Retrospektive, Chemnitz 2002
Kunst in der DDR, Berlin 2003
Kunst und Kalter Krieg, Berlin 2009
60 Jahre, 60 Werke, Berlin 2009
Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures, LA/Nürnberg/Berlin 2009/10
Abschied von Ikarus, Weimar 2012

East Germany, the Bilderstreit continued unevenly onward in reunified Germany, especially when viewed through the frame of museum collections and their role in constructing local identities for the newly unified Germany. As Karl-Siegbert Rehberg traces in the essay "Bilderstreit und Wiedervereinigung," 2003 saw the massive success of the exhibition *Kunst in der DDR* [*Art in the GDR*] at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, which became a flop when it later travelled to the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, West Germany's former capital; in 2009 the debate reignited, this time around the exhibition *60 Jahre 60 Werke* at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, when curator Siegfried Gohr wrote that the GDR was 'an aesthetic zoo with no resonances outside of Germany'; in the same year, the new director of the Museum Ludwig Schloss Oberhausen, an institution administered by the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation, returned all East German works to their origin sites in Leipzig, systemically 'cleansing' the Oberhausen collection.[99] While these events captured significant media attention, the controversy fizzled out as exhibitions closed, and political, economic, and historical questions about the GDR and its legacy took the limelight, pointing towards the frenetic and multi-faceted characteristics of German-German reunification. Eight years later, the Bilderstreit would flare to life again, this time in Dresden in a case which will be discussed at length in the second half of this chapter.

It was not only cultural production itself that faced a reckoning in reunified Germany, but also the institutional frames that surrounded it. Despite their suddenly marginalized position in post-Wende society, the museums of former East Germany could not escape the paradigm shift of

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Hinter der Maske, Potsdam 2017
Wege der Moderne, Halle 2017/2020
Point of No Return, Leipzig, 2019
Utopie und Untergang: Kunst in der DDR. Düsseldorf, 2019/2020.
Palast der Republik: Utopie, Inspiration und Politikum, Rostock, 2020.

[99] Rehberg, *Bilderstreit und Wiedervereinigung*, 125.

integration into the [West] German museological system, as illustrated by the "Blaubuch," a federally supported inventory project of "cultural lighthouses" or culturally important sites in the states of former East Germany. This "Blue Book" is intended to serve as a cultural identification tool and to emphasize the importance of the East German cultural landscape for the overall German and European cultural heritage. Of the twenty-four museums listed in the Blue Book, several will be discussed in the second half of this chapter: the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale) and the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (including the Albertinum and the Galerie Neue Meister), as well as the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig.[100] This project was inaugurated in 2001, in direct response to the Weimar Bilderstreit: the introduction to the 2006 edition of the text notes that "since reunification, the German government has been able to pay special attention to the cultural landscape in eastern Germany, which had been neglected for so long. As before, the renewal and preservation of cultural assets in the new states is a priority for the federal government."[101] This supposed neglect, however, was not an effect of the East German state, but rather of the process of reunification itself when these spaces suffered a loss not only of visitors and a crisis of meaning, but also of their central, narrativizing and identity-forming position in society. According to the most recent iteration of the Blue Book (which is updated yearly), this

[100] Interestingly, the Kunsthalle Rostock is not one of these lighthouses, despite a seeming necessity. Throughout the 1990s, changing directors, a lack of funds for modernization and exhibitions, and the absence of visitors brought the exhibition house turbulent years in which both the reputation of the house was at stake and its raison d'être was questioned. While the lack of visitors was a surprising effect of reunification felt across museums in former East Germany, the Kunsthalle Rostock's situation was unique in that the museum made the decision to become private in 2009 rather than be funded by the state, a decision that has led to an emphasis on the display of East German art (for example in the recent exhibitions "Palast der Republik: Utopie, Inspiration, Politikum" and "Perspektivwechsel", an exhibition in dialogue with the (former West German) Kunsthalle St. Annen in Lübeck). Director Joerg-Uwe Neumann has drawn considerable parallels between the immediate post-Wende legacies of the Kunsthalle Rostock and East Berlin's Palast der Republik (see Chapter 2).

[101] "Seit der Wiedervereinigung ist die Bundesregierung in der Lage, sich besonders um die Kulturlandschaft in Ostdeutschland zu kümmern, die so lange vernachlässigt wurde. Nach wie vor hat die Erneuerung und der Erhalt der Kulturgüter in den neuen Ländern für die Bundesregierung Priorität." Paul Raabe, ed. Blaubuch 2006 Kulturelle Leuchttürme in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringen (Berlin: Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, 2006)

project was founded out of the conviction, which was also foregrounded in the Unification Treaty, that art and culture were a foundation of the continuing unity of the German nation despite the years of division. Despite differing developments in East and West, both “halves” of German cultures "make an independent and indispensable contribution in the process of the state unity of the Germans on the way to European unification. The position and reputation of a united Germany in the world depend not only on its political weight and economic performance but also on its importance as a cultural state."[102] Through this project it is possible to understand that these museums, once a powerful tool in their own right which acted on their local frame, are now understood as critical not only for broader national development, but also international processes of European unification. This democratizing function is increasingly critical to the role of museums broadly in Germany, particularly in reference to the rising populism and complex political conditions seen currently across the nation but particularly in the former East. As German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier proclaimed in a speech at the Martin Roth symposium in September 2020, when the future of Germany’s museums was in a precarious position due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shuttered national borders, “museums as vibrant places for democracy, as places for enlightened debate, as places which inspire ideas—this is how museums should develop in the future.”[103] However, this politicized project of democratization runs the risk of orienting museums towards national and global concerns rather than local ones, leaving a discontinuity between their historical legacy and current function—a gap that forces these museums into a new shape vis-à-vis their local frames.

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[102] Ibid.
[103] Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Videobotschaft zur Eröffnung des 2. Martin Roth Symposiums. September 7, 2020. https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2020/09/200907-Martin-Roth-Symposium.html

2.3 The Critical Museum

The art historian Piotr Piotrowski's notion of the critical museum was developed to describe the transformation of museums from staid institutions grounded in the order-producing and exclusionary politics of the 19th century into critical agents within the public sphere, institutions capable of taking a stance on key societal issues, and active actors in the process of developing democracy, particularly in the spatial and temporal borders of post-socialist East-Central Europe. The concept was first developed and employed in 2009, when Piotrowski and his collaborator Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius were offered the opportunity to direct the Polish National Museum [of Art] in Warsaw, an institution which was suffering at that time from difficulties including underfunding, a loss of popularity with visitors, and a hangover from the bureaucracy of socialism.[104] The aim of their intervention ultimately centered on problematizing the idea of a "national" gallery by using the internal logic and structure of the institution to cast light on the shifting notion of the "nation:" these cultural institutions, which had, in the 19th century, been constructed to embody and uphold the values of the state, occupied an entirely different position in the present, stripped of the power that had once defined them, located in nations that looked nothing like the ones which they were originally built for.[105] This re-positioning of the national context was particularly critical in the post-socialist moment, which offered the chance of a cultural self-determination and identity construction from the inside that had been denied to Poland and other countries in the Eastern Bloc during the era of socialism; in the aftermath of this moment, a new kind of museum was necessitated to grapple with the conditions

[104] Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotr Piotrowski (eds.), *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*. (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2015). Introduction.
[105] Piotrowski, "Making the National Museum Critical" in *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 137

of the present. Piotrowski and Murawska-Muthesius employed a number of critical strategies in order to attempt to reconnect the museum with the society that surrounded it, and to reposition the museum on the maps of Warsaw, Poland, and Europe. These strategies included "deflecting" the power of the masterpiece,[106] challenging the linear approach of display in order to expose the museum's invisible power over history, and re-hanging the permanent galleries of the institution to speak in dialogue with, rather than in dependency on, the (West) European canon, an approach closely connected with the concept of a "horizontally" oriented art history. Critically, as Piotrowski suggests in a chapter for the book project *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, these strategies could only be carried out due to the specific spatial-political vantage point of the institution, which is located on the "margins" of Europe where it had the potential to take up an experimental and challenging posture in reference to the global—in a sense granting these institutions a novel position of privilege for the purposes of critique.

For Piotrowski, temporality became the major tool of carrying out this critique within the frame of the museum: through intervening in the linear narrative presented in the museum by juxtaposing exhibits from different galleries in enshrined spaces dedicated to specific historical moments, and by centering the position of the curator, revealing the museum's historical narrative as a consequence of individual and subjective curatorial choice rather than the outcome of historical inevitability, as well as by subverting the duration of the museum by shifting the dialogue from a hierarchical one between the spectator and the curator to one between curator and curator,

[106] K Murawska-Muthesius: "Masterpieces are not given, but constructed by museum exhibition and academic art history textbooks." From "Masterpieces and the Critical Museum" " in *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*, 120.– in short, if an artwork has not been consistently reproduced and widely written about in major western art-historical journals, it does not have the chance to acquire the status of a masterpiece no matter its formal or contextual qualities.

"since it is they who produce knowledge and are responsible for exhibitions,"[107] forcing a kind of immediacy and contemporaneity onto the long duration and bureaucratic space of the institution. Ultimately, the aim of Piotrowski and Murawska-Muthesius' project was twofold: to make visible and tangible the power structures that underpin the institution of the museum (understood broadly) by removing the seamless cloaking device that hides them (linearity, duration, permanence, the confusion of interior and exterior logic), and to imbue museums on the margins (of the West, of Europe) with a new kind of power after and beyond this act of revealing, a power that museums in the centers, "slaves of their status, hostages of their commercial success," could never take on without their complete destruction.[108] Thus, despite Piotrowski's unfortunately brief tenure at the National Museum, which ended in 2010 after he resigned following the museum's Board of Trustees rejection of his ideas for the further development of the museum,[109] his larger project of re-orienting cultural institutions critically vis-à-vis their own position within national narratives offers a model for how those museums in East-Central Europe that are depreciated and marginalized can become active actors—and speak with increasingly loud, autonomous, and critical voices—in the process of European democratization. This critical positioning is necessary for any concrete move into a future where museums might begin to fulfill the utopic role outlined in Steinmeier's speech.

Piotrowski's notion of the critical museum offers a salient parallel to the contemporary situation of museums in post-socialist eastern Germany, the former German Democratic Republic.

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[107] Piotrowski, "Making the National Museum Critical," 141.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Although some have argued his departure had to do with the Board of Trustee's problems with the controversial exhibition 'Ars Homoerotica' which grappled with one of the most sensitive topics in Polish public debate at that (and this) time, homosexuality. Regardless of the true reason for Piotrowski and Murawska-Muthesius' removal, it is clear that their conception of the museum was at odds with national values, whether cultural or social, revealing Poland as a precarious space for the application of these methods despite its fortuitous marginal position.

These spaces, which were once the producers of temporalities that upheld the political and social narratives of their nation, have since 1989 become subjects of a different and externally imposed temporality; they have transformed from an offensive to a defensive posture, from central to marginal in regards to the writing of history, as illustrated by the complex pathway of the Bilderstreit and the peripheral position imposed through the "Blue Book," which foregrounds the national and international, over the local. In the era of East Germany, these institutions were (re)constructed and employed to uphold national values and ideals, their source of power deeply rooted in politics. The special position of these institutions, which have had to radically re-orient their stance since 1989, grants them the opportunity to take up a critical posture towards the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany, asserting their now-altered power from a marginal position, a space on the threshold. In some cases, this is achieved by simultaneously preserving and updating past structures and logics, working polyphonically, and in others by insisting on a local frame that defies contemporary desires for a globally interconnected world mediated by the museum. However, troubling the application of Piotrowski's theory of the "critical" museum to these spaces is their time: Piotrowski's critique centers on the function of national museums, museums in which the official time of the nation is produced in spaces upheld by its power. Despite their marginal position on global maps, they are at the center of the societies they speak to and for, in time with them. In East Germany, this context is necessarily shifted, as made clear by our tracing of the fate of these institutions after 1989: these museums have been displaced from the producers of national temporality to its subject, re-cast as lighthouses guiding visitors through the vast unknown of a nation that only exists in the past tense. What can a national gallery mean for a nation that no longer exists in space, but continues to speak in temporal terms?

The next section of this chapter grapples with the way that three museums in sites of particular cultural significance in former East Germany—the Kunsthalle Moritzburg in Halle/Saale (Saxony-Anhalt), the Galerie Neue Meister of the Albertinum in Dresden (Saxony) and the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (Saxony)—draw on divergent strategies that run parallel to Piotrowski's work in Warsaw, whether through permanent (Halle, Dresden) or temporary (Leipzig) exhibitions. However, while the time and space invoked in Piotrowski's theorization of the critical museum project is directed entirely inwards and towards the present, aimed at the interior logic of the institution,[110] the unique set of circumstances that emerges in the space of the former GDR relies on a different spatial and temporal orientation, one that mirrors the position of Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt* on the threshold between museum interior and museum exterior, acting as a bridge between the two worlds and multiple times. The critical position of these institutions within public space and public discourse, as signified by the Bilderstreit, illustrates the position they necessarily took on in the decades following 1989: less margin and more threshold between past and present, self and other. Furthermore, while Piotrowski's notion of the "critical museum" is useful in understanding the special power of these spaces, at the same time it is critical to remark that these institutions enjoy a level of support (financial, political, in the frame of the art world) that is owed to their position in contemporary Germany, one that exceeds the situation described in Piotrowski's text of the Polish National Museum. This already hints at the ambiguous position of former East Germany as a space that intersects with both East and West, broadly construed, but whose unique history and contemporary identity alienates it from both. The space of the former GDR thus appears through its museums as a liminal space, a lost

[110] With the exception of the museum's "marginal" position vis-à-vis Europe and the global, although this has less to do with connections towards these broader spheres and more about the ability of the institution to speak for itself in these frames.

identity that refuses to disappear entirely, existent in a space and time unlike anywhere else in East-Central Europe; thus, the dialogue constructed between the museum's content (what it holds) and context (what anchors it in space and time) emerges as pressing concerns, and as two differently oriented temporal strands that intersect in the institutional frame. This chapter will conclude by using another work of public art, one which takes on a parallel position to Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt* that opened this chapter—the work *Die Berliner Botschaften* by Silvia Klara Breitwieser—to position the "critical" museums of former East Germany within the puzzle of space and time produced by the end of the nation that built them and ultimately, necessitating a new way of thinking about their position in post-socialist public space.

The first two sections of museological analysis in this chapter consider the permanent exhibitions of modernism in two museums located in former East Germany: the *Wege der Moderne* exhibition of the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in Halle an der Saale (Saxony-Anhalt) and the Galerie Neue Meister, situated in the Dresden Albertinum (Saxony). While both exhibitions are situated in institutions which share a number of common features, including historical, architectural, and art historical orientations that stretch far beyond the temporal boundaries of East Germany, each of these exhibitions utilizes the lenses of continuity and rupture in unique ways that help us to locate their divergent museological strategies in reference to historicizing the East German past in an explicitly local (whether understood spatially or temporally) frame. Furthermore, both museums employ strategies that allow us to understand them as responding to Piotrowski's notion of "critical" museums, active actors in the development of their local context, although, as these sections will illustrate, their local concerns, and thus narrativizing strategies, diverge. In contrast, the third section of part IV examines the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (MdbK), located in the former cultural center of East Germany, a city which was the epicenter of the first protests

that led to the eventual dissolution of the state after 1989. Unlike the museums in Halle and Dresden, the Leipzig museum has no permanent collection of modernism, and underwent a period of homelessness following (and even due to) the events of the Wende. In this institution, East German art is presented through a fluid presentation mode of subsequent temporary exhibitions, with a constantly shifting focus, emphasis, and perspective, which allows the museum to employ its collection to directly engage with and to critique the present—paralleling exhibitionary strategies in East Germany—and using the reconstruction of the museum itself as a way to work in dialogue with post-socialist society. This chapter considers a blockbuster exhibition of East German art held at the MdbK, entitled *Point of No Return* (2019), which understood East Germany in purely temporal terms, in order to situate the museum's attitude towards local history and examine the function of temporary exhibitions in the frame of the critical museum as proposed by Piotrowski. In what follows, I will use the work of Wolfgang Mattheuer, the artist whose sculpture *Der Jahrhundertschritt* opened this chapter and whose work appears in each of the exhibitions I name, as a vehicle to explore the critical contours of each museum and its attendant exhibition. Mattheuer is the ideal candidate for use in this analysis because of his concrete yet ambiguous relationship to the various iterations of the German nation he inhabited. As a self-professed "Bildermacher," his work functions as a temporally displaced marker of these societies, reflective rather than embedded despite his role as a state artist. His official position in East Germany, however, is also critical to this paradigm because it situates him at the center of the power structures he comments upon. In this broader constellation, Mattheuer's works take on the position of threshold, reaching both inside and outside of the institution and allowing these spaces to be

read through the interconnecting frames of history, architecture, position in urban space[111], exhibition construction and meaning, and reception.

2.4 Museum Analysis – Halle, Dresden, Leipzig

2.4.1 *Wege der Moderne*, Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale)

The Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in Halle, an economic and educational center in central Germany along the Saale River, is located in a four-wing palace complex from the early 16th century. Abandoned as a residence after the Thirty Years' War [1618-48], the castle remained a ruin until 1904, when the Städtisches Museum für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe [Municipal Museum of Arts and Crafts] was established in the destroyed south wing. Under directors Max Sauerlandt and Alois J. Schardt, the museum became a regional hub for contemporary art before and after World War I, its collection holding works by El Lissitzky, Franz Marc, Oskar Kokoschka and Lyonel Feininger, who had a studio in the gate tower of the castle from 1929-1931. However, with the seizure of power by the National Socialists, the burgeoning Moritzburg collection came under threat. Schardt, the director from 1926-1935, fought to maintain the modernist holdings of the museum, and was subsequently removed from his position; his regime-sanctioned successor restaged the museum from November 1935 onwards, displaying only a chronology of art until

[111] Although the question of urban space is less pressing in this frame, as these dispersed East German cities form their own constellation of meaning – location within Germany is important here, location vis-à-vis a center is more critical within discussions of Berlin, as will appear in chapters 2 and 3.

around 1900 in the central space of the castle and displacing the art of modernism to a "special presentation" in the attic. In July 1937, the first wave of modernist works from the museum collection were confiscated as "degenerate" art; in August 1937, the remaining inventory of modern art was confiscated.[112] 147 paintings, watercolors and drawings in total were confiscated.[113] The city of Halle survived the Second World War almost unscathed and with an intact historical center.[114] The museum, which is situated on a small hill on the western edge of the city center and had served as an air-raid shelter for citizens of Halle, remained open until the end of the war.

The city of Halle fell into the Soviet Occupation Zone following the Potsdam Conference of 1945, and the immediate emphasis for the Moritzburg in this period was placed on re-acquiring confiscated works of art, building up a collection of new modern art that understood itself in the tradition of the lost collection, as well as integrating modernist (anti-fascist) works from the period 1933-45, a task led by curator Gerhard Händler and supported financially by the Ministry of Public Education.[115] However, the post-1948 Formalist Debates vilified the canon of German critical leftism as pessimistic and not in line with the utopian ideology of the new state, and Händler was soon forced to flee to West Germany. Despite this, his imprint is visible in the shape of the museum today: not only has the intention of re-collecting much of the art that was lost been (and continues to be) realized in the post-Wende period, but the exhibition labels of the work in the permanent collection catalogue the complex provenance of "degenerate" art throughout the 20th century,

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[112] From July 19, 1937, numerous paintings that had belonged to the collection were included in the propaganda "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich, and many were later sold abroad by the NS-Regime.
[113] Christian Philipsen, Thomas Bauer-Friedrich (eds.): *Bauhaus Master Modern. The Comeback* (EA Seemann Verlag, Leipzig, 2019/20.)
[114] Halle, with a population of over 210,000, was the tenth largest city in Germany and the largest Nazi city spared from allied bombing.
[115] "Sammlungs-Geschichte: Langer Weg in die Zukunft," Mitteldeutsche Zeitung. https://www.mz.de/amp/kultur/sammlungs-geschichte-langer-weg-in-die-zukunft-2440338

situating them as markers of not only their time of production but of the 20th century as whole.[116] The relationship between cultural politics and the museum is laid bare through this open staging of history, already allowing viewers to understand that the museum positions itself as not a neutral and ahistorical site but one that has, and continues to develop along the lines of society.

After German reunification in 1989, the former Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg became the property of the newly readministered state of Saxony-Anhalt and it has since been evaluated as a nationally important cultural institution, thus included in the Blue Book of Cultural Lighthouses. This evaluation resulted in increased funding by the Federal Government, which led to major architectural restoration of the castle between 2005 and 2008, producing a light and open structure of steel and glass within the old walls of the historic castle.[117] The strong contrast of the heavy masonry of the original building with the transparent, modernist glass walls, visible from both inside and outside the building, creates a sense of temporal confusion as viewers move through the space; through architecture, the building manifests multiple coexisting temporalities, its exterior paralleling the work done in the interior of the museum. [*Figure 9*] Despite the renewed attention and funding from the federal and state governments in the post-Wende era, the institution continues to place a heavy emphasis on the local frame in terms of content, as exemplified in the temporary exhibition *Sittes Welt* [*Sitte's World*], the first comprehensive retrospective on the work of the vilified painter Willi Sitte (who worked at the Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule Halle) held in more than 30 years, which took place in the winter of 2021/22.

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[116] For example, „Wassily Kandinsky: Abstieg, 1925, Aquarell und Tusche auf Papier, 48,4 x 32,2 cm, erworben 1929 von der Galerie Neue Kunst Fides, Dresden, 1937 als "entartet" beschlagnahmt, 2017 durch Vermittlung von Christie's, London, zurückerworben mit Unterstützung der Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung, der Kulturstiftung der Länder, der Saalesparkasse und des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt, Kulturstiftung Sachsen-Anhalt, Kunstmuseum Moritzburg Halle (Saale)"

[117] Paul Raabe, ed. B*laubuch 2006 Kulturelle Leuchttürme in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt und Thüringe*n. (Berlin: Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, 2006), Halle.

This long history is important to consider because of the influence it has on the shape of the permanent exhibition of the museum, which is named *Wege der Moderne: Kunst in Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert* [*Paths of Modernism: Art in Germany in the 20th Century*]. This exhibition was first inaugurated in 2017 before being expanded significantly in 2020 to include art of the German Democratic Republic. *Wege der Moderne* occupies the entirety of the museum's first floor and is separated into four temporally-delineated but interconnected paths, or "Wege": Art in the German Empire 1900–1918, Art in the Weimar Republic 1919–1933, Art in the 'Third Reich' 1933–1945 (all opened in 2017) and Art in the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR 1945–1990 (opened in 2020), although within the real physical space of the museum, the exhibition is divided into two major areas: Art before 1945 and Art After 1945. [*Figure 10*] These two spaces are separated by a (nearly) empty corridor through which viewers necessarily must enter before stepping into the exhibition's display rooms. This spatial divide of the exhibition suggests a specific historical orientation for the collection: rather than positioning the cultural policies of Nazi Germany as the moment of ultimate rupturing discontinuity for the arts in Germany, as was done by both German states in the post-war period, the official art of the Third Reich is carefully linked with earlier modernist periods and works, including art of the Weimar Republic. On a surface level, this reproduces the ideological-cultural values of Western Marxism which saw the decadent modernism of the early 20th century as an ideological preparation for fascism.[118] However, this

[118] To paraphrase Georg Lukács in "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline" – "The very partial and problematic interest with which expressionism is honoured by fascism can certainly not suffice to awaken expressionism from this death. The fact that the fascists, with a certain justification, see expressionism as a heritage that they can use, only seals its tomb the more firmly. Goebbels accepts expressionism, and also the validity of the 'new objectivism' (which is again instructive), but he rejects naturalism, which 'gets distorted into environmental description and Marxist ideology', i.e. he maintains artistic continuity only with the art of post-war imperialism. He justifies this in the following interesting way: 'Expressionism had healthy beginnings, for the epoch did have something expressionist about it.' If words do have any meaning, and with Goebbels this is not always the case, this means that he thinks of the expressionist abstracting away from reality, the expressionist 'essence', in other words expressionist distortion, as a method of portraying reality, as an adaptable means for fascist propaganda. The upside-

explicitly historical binary of before/after 1945 is problematized through exhibitionary design: visitors to *Wege der Moderne* enter the museum's first floor through a heavy, rounded stone staircase, which imparts the claustrophobic sense of being weighed down by the building and its history before entering into the light, airy and open white corridor-void which can be understood to represent the year 1945, both as a singular historical moment (year zero) and as a key bridge between the multiple paths of modernity. Rather than moving in a linear fashion through the internal logic of the art historical canon, viewers are positioned to begin in a moment of rupture, forcing them, like many of the artworks displayed in the exhibition, out of historical time and into a new time shaped by and in the structure of the museum.

Throughout the first half of the exhibition, time emerges the primary tool of the pre-1945 nexus of the museum: it is present in the simultaneous visibility of the structure's old and new walls [*Figure 11*] and in the explicit separation and yet enforced interconnection of multiple periods between 1900 and 1945, both of which are visible from all points of the exhibition's interior due to the incorporation of gaps and windows in the floating display walls, which almost take up the position and shape of artworks themselves. [*Figure 12*] It is the eye of the viewer rather than their body which takes on a primacy in this space, allowing for a visual bleeding-together of multiple times, artificially separated by the museum walls and structures of art history, further deconstructing and even physically rupturing the logic of linearity; critically though, these windows and thus this slippage only exists between the Weimar and National Socialist rooms, creating an inextricable link between the two times and two histories. While the eye of the viewer

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down justification that reality had something expressionist about it, shows the way in which myth-making idealism has subsequently proceeded. The expressionists themselves took their creative method only as a stylizing grasp of the 'essence'; the mendacious demagogue Goebbels identifies this method with the reality itself." **First published** as "*Größe und Verfall des Expressionismus*," in: *Internationale Literatur*, no. 1, 1934, pp. 153-73 (in German), t**ranslated** by David Fernbach.

allows for an uncloaking of the museum's self-positioning as a seamless narrative structure, it is through the body that the logic of history is destroyed. A final critical moment of temporal disruption in this "Art before 1945" section of the exhibition takes place through the literal pathway viewers take through the exhibition, problematizing even the name of the exhibition: because viewers necessarily begin in the moment of 1945, they move through the first half of the 20th century backwards, going from National Socialist art to Weimar art to art of the German Empire.[119] The straightforward causality of history is demolished by the viewer's body as it moves through and activates the space; we first experience history as a retrospective, rather than future-oriented, movement. It is also significant that because of the circular pathway of the exhibitions, viewers who have experienced the canon backwards through the 20th century must walk forwards through it to enter into the East German nexus, gesturing towards the constructed and fabricated nature of history itself, a rejection of historical materialism. [120] We are forced to move through the stream of history twice, with and against, backwards and forwards in relation to its current. The building blocks which construct our societal narratives are here uncoupled, displaced, demolished, and finally rebuilt in a critical orientation towards the notion of history itself.

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[119] On a third visit to this institution, I noticed an elevator which transports viewers to begin at the moment of 1900—rather than making my point moot, I think that this has interesting implications for the relationship between physical mobility and access to history—who is using the elevator? How do they experience the exhibition in a different way? This will come out in the next few pages but should also be mentioned here: the next section of the exhibition, the GDR art nexus, is inaccessible to those who cannot climb stairs.

[120] Taking on in a sense the same posture that Walter Benjamin describes in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" when he discusses Paul Klee's (an artist featured frequently in the Halle collection) work Angelus Novus in the frame of historical materialism: „Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt. Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen, worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor uns erscheint, da sieht er eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist dieser Sturm." – Walter Benjamin: Über den Begriff der Geschichte (1940), These IX

The final work of this "pathway," which marks both entrance and exit to the pre-1945 exhibition is necessary to mention here as it embodies much of the viewer's strange experience of time in the first exhibition space: Karl Hofer's *Kassandra* (1936). [*Figure 13*] The work shows the pale, placid, veiled figure of Cassandra, the Greek seer, represented with dark, unseeing eyes; her right hand is raised to her forehead, her palm turned out to the viewer, her left-hand wavers before her breast. This critically placed painting, which is typical of Hofer's expressionistic, solipsistic image-world, was made in the precarious moment of 1936 and takes on a different meaning based on the viewer's temporal experience of the exhibition. As the first painting viewers come into contact with when they first enter the pre-1945 section, it seems to speak from the position of the painter himself, a staunch opponent of Nazi ideology even before the National Socialists reached power, who was defamed as a degenerate artist as early as 1933.[121] As we leave the exhibition, the position and identification of the painting shifts: now we are Cassandra, burdened to know a history that we have no power over, one we cannot change. The idea of vision, so critical in the previous exhibition, is activated here once again as our gaze meets her seeing-but-unseeing eyes.[122]

After tearing ourselves away from Cassandra's gaze and out of the pre-1945 nexus but before entering into the fourth "pathway" of the exhibition, Art in the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR 1945–1990, viewers again enter into the corridor-void representing 1945, where they are confronted for the second time by the single work that occupies the space: an iteration of Wolfgang Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt.* [*Figure 14*] Placed again on a threshold (this time between two times), this statue takes on the quality of a mirror. This sculpture signals the collapse

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[121] Andreas Hüneke: Karl Hofer und der Nationalsozialismus, in: Wolfgang Ruppert ed.: *Künstler im Nationalsozialismus. Die "Deutsche Kunst", die Kunstpolitik und die Berliner Kunsthochschule* (Böhlau, Köln 2015)
[122] Next to the painting, a cabinet with confiscated ceremonial goods from the Jewish community of Halle is presented without much contextualizing information. What is the relationship between these objects and the prophetess? No comment is made by the museum.

of the 20th century onto a single body—in this case not the body of the artist but that of the viewer as they move through the exhibition—and works in tandem with the Cassandra painting that opens the pre-1945 nexus, particularly through the visual synchronicity of the bent and raised arms of the two figures, as well as the identification with the body of the museum visitor, to illustrate what is at stake not only in history, but in the space of the museum. In many ways, the sculpture's position in Halle shares the logic of its twin which opened this chapter and is located only 30 kilometers away in the city center of Leipzig: however, whereas that sculpture connects two separate but interconnected *spaces* (city and museum), this one applies the same logic, but to the realm of the temporal, ultimately suggesting the simultaneous interconnectedness and incongruity of these times and piercing the previously impermeable linear logic of the museum.

Whereas the interwoven threads of time are the tool employed through the first half of the exhibition, the post-1945 exhibition, which takes up only 300 square meters in total and is framed by a purely modernist architecture, uses space as its primary tool: first, the visitor must alight a small staircase, creating a new and disconnected level in the museum, to enter into a space framed by free-standing walls which lend the space a maze-like quality. [*Figure 15*] Just as the first section invokes the layering of multiple times through architecture to disorient and displace the viewer, this section uses place, producing a kind of metaphor for the shifting boundaries of East Germany and the position of the arts in the new nation through the viewer's body. When standing in the exhibition it is impossible to view the whole space from any single vantage point, just as Mattheuer's sculpture suggests it was impossible to view the 20th century from the inside. It is only when the viewer ascends to the next level of the museum, taking on the orientation of the museum itself as a force of canon construction, acting on the past from the standpoint of the present, that

they can step out of the maze, look down, and take in all of East German modernism as a complete and interconnected body. [*Figure 16*]

Like the pre-war nexus, the post-1945 room is divided into thematic sections: "Links to Classical Modernism and the Formalist Debate," "Struggling with Socialist Realism," and "Opposition to State Imposed Realism," though these boundaries are made much more fluid and diffuse through their thematic rather than temporal anchoring than those presented in the earlier section, and the labyrinthian quality of the exhibition design is used to show the overlap and contemporaneity of all of these different trajectories. Beyond the *Jahrhundertschritt*, one other work by Mattheuer hangs in the space, helping to illustrate the overlap between these boundaries: 1965's *Kain*, which was first displayed at the 7th Leipzig District Exhibition. [*Figure 17*] This biblical story of fratricide has the potential to be read as a metaphoric portrait of the two Germanys— the agrarian Abel, representing East Germany in conflict with his vicious and greedy brother Kain representing the West— and this work takes on a transformative potential meaning when viewed in the context of the *Jahrhundertschritt*; whereas previously the sculpture has been read as a portrait of Germany *in time*, now it becomes a spatial image of the nation, folding the two Germanys, socialist East and fascist (when viewed from the East) West, onto one body. Critically, *Kain* is placed here in dialogue with another work: a version of Werner Tübke's painting from the same Leipzig District Exhibition: *Memoirs of Dr. jur. Schultze II* (1965) [*Figure 18*], a work that caused immense uproar due to its linking of the GDR with the Third Reich and led to the end of Tübke's career as a modernist painter. The choice to display these two works together, which in their last meeting caused immense disruption to the GDR art system, both rehashes and shows the futility of history, reproducing a historical exhibitionary space rife with trauma and ambiguity of meaning for the contemporary audience to physically enter into.

While this analysis seeks to examine specifically East German art in post-GDR museums, *Wege der Moderne* in Halle can be understood as a critical museum for the construction of societal narratives pertaining to its socio-political anchoring not *because* of its collections of East German art (which are admittedly rather paltry compared to the other museums this chapter will explore – Halle was never the cultural center that Leipzig and Dresden were) but because of the ruptured temporal frame that is built around it, particularly through the first half of the museum's permanent collection. This frame calls into question the notion of history as a neutrally constructed phenomenon; instead, as its title suggests, there are many potential pathways of meaning through which to interpret history. In this frame, the museum's own authority becomes problematized. The central figure of Mattheuer's *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, which correlates to multiple intra-museum dialogues, including parallels to the architecture of the space, embodies this caustic perspective towards history and the institutions that construct it.

2.4.2 *Galerie Neue Meister,* Albertinum, Dresden

Similarly to the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg in Halle, the history of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden began in the 16th century with the collections of the Saxon electors. Repeatedly expanded and reorganized, the ruling dynasty gradually presented the collections of various specialized museums from the 18th century onward. Today, the art collections are housed in 15 museums in and around Dresden. One of these is the Albertinum, a former armory (a site with interesting parallels to the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin) which was converted into a museum building in the late 19th century. *[Figure 19]* The Albertinum was badly damaged during the destruction of Dresden in February 1945 and its art was "transferred" to the Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War, not to be returned until the late 1950s. In 1965, a

critical year for the shaping of modernist narratives in East Germany[123], the Albertinum re-inaugurated the Galerie Neue Meister, which today holds around 300 paintings from the 19th and 20th centuries, focusing on German romanticism and realism, impressionism, East German art, and contemporary German art. This museum too has a surface-level critical orientation towards the spatial and temporal currents of the past, which is made explicit in its opening wall text, which claims that "walking through the Albertinum is like leafing through a three-dimensional standard work of art history from the Romantic period to the present day: here, painting meets sculpture, East meets West, and today meets tomorrow."[124] Thus the museum positions itself as a crossroads, a space of dialogue, and a forum for these currents—in short, a threshold, the shape taken on by critical museums which seek the production of a new history in this specific region after 1989. As will be illustrated later, however, this desire becomes problematized when confronted with the local context of the institution.

As with the museum in Halle, there are many canonical works in the permanent exhibition in the modernist nexus of the Albertinum where viewers familiar with the canon of German (art)

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[123] 1965 marked both the 7th Art Exhibition of the Leipzig District of the Verband Bildender Künstler, an exhibition critical to the formation of the Leipziger School, specifically through the display of Werner Tübke's work *Reminiscences of J.D. Schulze, III*, "an explosive work that established Leipzig as a centre for painting in the GDR" but also created a real political problem for Tübke. (Claudia Mesch. Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germanys. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008. 110.) April Eisman draws a direct connection between the emergence of this new "pessimistic" style, which was viewed as a threat by authorities and condemned in the press, and the inauguration of a period of extremely repressive cultural policy at the Eleventh Plenum of the SED Central Committee, which took place a few weeks after the exhibition closed. April A. Eisman, "East German Art and Culture Politics: An Introduction" ART/WORK Six Shorts (Amherst, MA: DEFA Film Library)((https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/sites/default/files/East%20Germany%20Art%20and%20Cultural%20Politics%20An%20Introduction.pdf -- This "freeze" extended beyond the boundaries of the visual arts, also critically leading to the banning of *Die Drahtharfe*, a book of poetry by singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann, who was branded a class-traitor by the SED and blacklisted. Biermann's persecution by the state would have significant consequences for the arts in East Germany over the next decade.) This period of restriction, which lasted from 1965 until Erich Honecker replaced Walter Ulbricht as head of the SED in 1971, was one of the longest in East German history. The tension between the binaries of triumph and trauma in the German Democratic Republic was made plainly visible in both the artistic and political fallout of the exhibition.

[124] „Austellung: *Kunst von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*." Albertinum. Accessed: March 2022 https://albertinum.skd.museum/ausstellungen/dauerausstellung/

history feel obliged to pause and look: Otto Dix's *Der Krieg (Triptychon)* [The War (Triptych)] from 1929/32, a triptych that resembles an altar in both shape and grandiose subject matter is one. [*Figure 20*] In the harried, hazy landscape portrayed by Dix, life and death are folded together as soldiers, rotting corpses, and skeletons fill up the entire four-panel pictorial plane. Painted more than a decade after the end of World War I, which Dix himself had fought in, the work is deeply bound up in the Germany of its making: a new subjectivity deeply-rooted in Dix's left-wing politics simultaneously marks a break with the pre-World War I past in which war was understood as a spiritual cleansing of society, a belief undone by the mechanization of war between 1914-1918, but also casts a wary eye towards the future during a moment of rising fascism in Germany. This work is located on a floating wall in the center of the exhibition; on the wall's other side, facing away, hangs Hans Grundig's *Das Tausendjährige Reich (Triptychon)* [The Thousand-Year Reich (Triptych)] (1935-38), another triptych, deeply influenced in form and content by Dix's earlier painting[125], whose mawkish colors seemingly depict a carnival and a bombed out ruinous city at once presenting a clearly political mockery of Hitler's vision for Germany.[126] [*Figure 2*1] These two works have a common history of display in Dresden: they were paired in the 1946 *Allgeimeine Dresden Kunstausstellung* in the immediate aftermath of war and, according to their wall labels, both were acquired by the East German Ministry of Culture for the specific space of the Albertinum—Grundig's work in 1958 and Dix's in 1968. In a sense, this history allows us to

[125] Beyond the thematic similarities of the two works, which both portray a kind of apocalypse, share a critical formal quality: both have predella, or lower panels, a common feature of altarpieces. Grundig was deeply influenced by the work of Dix who was a professor at the Dresden Academy of Arts where Grundig studied -- Olaf Peters Hans, *Grundig und Otto Dix Künstlerische Positionsbestimmungen nach 1945* Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Gesellschaftsanalyse und politische Bildung e. V. https://www.hans-und-lea-grundig.de/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/peters_vortrag_Hans-Grundig-und-Otto-Dix.pdf

[126] Grundig was arrested shortly after the completion of this painting along with his wife, the Jewish artist Lea Grundig. After six months of imprisonment, he was freed, although in 1940 he was interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp until 1944.

read these works in an entirely new way, producing a new category of "masterpiece" based not on the artist or the formal or thematic content of the work, but rather on their shared display history and the dialogue produced through this. Here, the past and present of the Second World War are folded on top of each other through these two paintings, which almost touch but, as they are located on different sides of the same wall, are blind to each other. I invoke these two paintings, which form a kind of compass point at the very center of the Albertinum's modernism nexus, both to give an outline of the museum's bold curatorial strategy of re-staging elements of past exhibitions, and to show the way that East Germany, a state established in direct opposition to fascism, is already gestured to before its starting point, interrupting the linearity of the canon: as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Grundig was one of the most important artists in the first decade of East Germany, and his inclusion early on in this collection gestures towards the continuity in time between past and present, something that is foregrounded again and again in the Dresden exhibition.

Despite the continuity between different shapes of the exhibition itself which is scaffolded throughout the exhibitions, the Dresden collection is clearly more interested in the act of creating dialogue between times than producing a new local canon in the way that the museum in Halle does; this is visible as early as in the first room of the New Masters collection, where a work by the Viennese Actionist painter and performance artist Hermann Nitsch—1961's *Kreuzwegstation* (or *Station of the Cross*) [*Figure 22*]—is set in the center of a room of art with classical and religious motifs, including Friedrich Matthai's (1777-1845) *The Murder of Aegistus* (1805/06) and several works by Caspar David Friedrich, who lived and worked in Dresden for more than 40 years and remained a critical and founding figure in the art history of East Germany. Nitsch's painting, which is made from the artist's blood and dispersion paint on burlap, though displaced in terms of time and media, relates to these works through its invocation of the inherently intertwined

categories of violence (passion), blood, and religiosity. These loose thematic connections, disruptions that are almost free associations, drive much of the narrative of the collection, which always ties the time of the museum to the aftermath of the Second World War. Perhaps one key reason for this can be understood through viewing the museum through the lens of the local: the city of Dresden, a major center for Nazi Germany's rail and road network, was virtually destroyed by allied bombs in February 1945. Even today, almost 80 years later, the city remains marked by this violence, particularly in and through the Frauenkirche at the center of the city, which integrates original pieces and material from the bombed-out church into the reconstructed facades. The temporal interplay continues: in a room full of landscapes, Wolfgang Mattheuer's 1985 oil painting *Hallo! Ich fliege* ("Hello! I'm flying") [*Figure* 23] acts as interlocutor: the work is almost expressionistic in its use of light, a vast green and blue landscape with a young boy, dressed in yellow and leaning towards the viewer, at the work's center. Long shadows are cast by the fence (a frequent motif in the work of Mattheuer) to his left, conjuring a sort of darkness that hints at the contours of the Berlin Wall. Clear through these varied breaks in the narrative structure in the museum is that rather than using these moments of disruption in the historical narrative to point towards a better future, they instead gesture towards the interconnectedness of our present and past. This strategy of intervention is precisely one that Piotrowski took up in his desired re-shaping of the National Museum of Art in Warsaw, drawing works from different times together to question the internal logic produced by the museum. In Dresden, however, this takes on a new essence because of the historical continuity of the collection itself, as previously referenced through the Dix/Grundig nexus: an exhibition description from 1984 shows that the vast majority of works on display in the gallery today in 2022 are the same that were on display in the mid-1980s, and indeed, they are hung almost in the same thematic order and rooms:

> Twelve paintings by C. D. Friedrich... In addition to Friedrich's works, 14 paintings by C. G. Carus, six by E. F. Oehme and ten by the Norwegian J. Ch. C. Dahl deserve special mention... Dahl... The art of the German late romanticism is represented with eleven works... The paintings of the New Objectivity and especially those of the veristic direction occupy a large space. Nine paintings by O. Dix, of which the war triptych achieved world fame, and eleven works by H. Grundig with the triptych *The Thousand-Year Reich* form the summit achievements of this section, which further included paintings by C. Felixmueller, C. Hofer, A. Kanoldt and early works by B. Kretzschmar, O. Nagel, C. Querner, W. Rudolf and A. Frank, who was murdered by the fascists in 1945. The department of the art of the German Democratic Republic begins with the harrowing painting W. Lachnit's *The Death of Dresden*. Paintings such as *The Vogtland Lovers* by W. Mattheuer, W. Tübke's *Sicilian Landlord with Marionettes*, W. Sitte's *The* Survivor and B. Heisig's *Prussian Soldier Dance*, further works by R. Bergander, E. Hassebrauk. J. Hegenbarth, B. Heller, P. Michaelis, O. Niemeyer-Holstein, Th. Rosenhauer testify to the diversity and breadth of the art of socialist realism...[127]

The maintenance of specific works and curatorial groupings made from and in the East German era in the present is a shock in the context of the re-writing and re-construction narratives that were so prevalent in the immediate post-Wende decades. However, this preservation, particularly of works made within the GDR period, is a construct, not a direct continuation of the institution's history and orientation, but rather forced on the basis of a rather recent and politicized event, which it is important to contextualize here before discussing the collection itself: the renewal of the German-German "image battle" in 2017 based on the paintings that hung in this very gallery. While most of the polemics of the Bilderstreit were aimed at the East from a starting point in the West, this iteration of the Bilderstreit took on a novel directionality: this time, both aimed from and towards the (former) East. In a scathing article in the Sächsische Zeitung, a regional daily newspaper published in Dresden,[128] the art historian and curator Paul Kaiser (a specialist in East German art) again re-ignited the Bilderstreit with claims that in the Albertinum, "with a brute

[127] *Bildhandbuch*, 310-14 – see appendix for original German.
[128] Sächsische Zeitung was established in 1946. The paper carried the subtitle Organ der Bezirksleitung Dresden der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands ("organ of the Dresden Regional Administration of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany") from 1946 to 1990. The paper was privatized in 1991.

gesture and quite without justification . . . the art historical epoch between 1945 and 1990 was disposed of from the exhibition collection into the depot."[129] He accused the director of the Albertinium, Hilke Wagner, a West-German born museologist, of removing the vast majority of East German artworks from public view, of having a colonialist attitude towards East German art and insisted that she "wanted to teach East Germans how to see."[130] While Kaiser, a key figure in the construction of East German art exhibitions today, is infamous within East German art historical circles, his comments took on a life of their own in the particular political context of Dresden in 2017, which had seen the emergence of the xenophobic, anti-Muslim, and right-radical group "Pegida" (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamicisation of the Occident) in 2014 and the rise of the party "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) in the subsequent years, and soon the Albertinum found itself at the center of a renewed and bitter debate about the function of East German art in a changing reunified German society—albeit this time from an explicitly local perspective rather than a national one. To settle the dispute, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen that administers the museum finally invited the public to a "Bilderstreit mit Blickkontakt" ["Image battle with eye contact"] in November 2017, where 16 experts from the fields of art, science, and politics discussed and addressed the questions of the more than 500 audience members. This attempt had the parallel effect of forcing a renewed focus on East Germany *as a whole* in the museum collection (also highlighted in the museum's programming) but also foregrounding the local frame in other aspects of the institution to tell the story of Dresden as an exemplary location for the arts of the twentieth century. Thus, we can understand the re-presentation of historical displays of artworks not as a critical decision on the behalf of the museum, an active decision to

[129] Paul Kaiser, *Wende an den Wänden* in Sächsische Zeitung. 18. September 2017, S. 24.
[130] Ibid.

present the museum as a space that transcends the temporality of society, but rather as a response to the demands of a society which, out of loss, nostalgia, or derision, seeks to maintain its local frame. Rather than a forum for democracy, the Albertinum shifted into a forum of populism, reflecting the tension between the inside and outside of the cultural institution in the specific time and space of Dresden, 2017.

The East German nexus of the Albertinum's Galerie Neue Meister takes up two rooms, constructing an entirely new temporality, one without the disruptions present in earlier rooms of the gallery. While arranged in a more chronologically straightforward way than the collections of the Moritzburg (i.e. no architectural confusion through context), there are certainly parallels in the temporal periodization: works from the Ulbricht era of the GDR, most reflecting on the local context through images of the firebombing of Dresden and its aftermath, are collected in the first room, acting as a sobering threshold: works worth particular note here include Wilhlem Lachnit's *Der Tod von Dresden* (1945) and Hans Grundig's *Opfer des Faschismus* (1946). The temporal boundaries of this space exceed the immediate post-war period however, extending to the early 1960s with some works by Werner Tübke, Theodor Rosenhauer and Jürgen Böttcher (Strawalde), which address themes close to the heart of the formalist debate era of East Germany: family portraiture (*Kind auf gelbem Stuhl* (1948) by Rosenhauer and Böttcher, *Mutter mit Kind* (1956)) and global communist solidarity (Tübke's *Requiem* (1965)). These works offer the unknowing viewer a mirror of their expectations of what East German art should look like: either gloomy in color (Tübke, Rosenhauer) or theme (Lachnit, Grundig), and if neither of those, then flirting with the boundaries of socialist realism (Böttcher). This room reflects audience expectations, seeming to cement them, before shattering them with the wholly unexpected and complex image of East German art on display in the next room.

Following the straight line of chronology, the next room contains works from the Honecker era of East Germany: a time of loosened restrictions, (relative) artistic freedom, and, especially for privileged artists, like those in the Leipzig School, to develop a more ambiguous artistic vocabulary. In the case of Mattheuer, this new freedom took the form of reaching back into the distant past for metaphors, and then combining them with the visual language of the present. Three of his works, all interrelated by the invocation of the figure of Sisyphus, hang together in this second room. According to the Greek myth, Sisyphus is condemned to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain, only to have the rock roll back down to the bottom every time he reaches the top, in an endless and futile task, which offers any number of metaphors for the position of both the artist in East Germany and the modern subject. Each of these works, however, views the narrative from a different temporal standpoint, and at a different point in his story: the first, *Die Flucht der Sisyphos* [*The Flight of Sisyphus*] (1972), [*Figure 24*] positions Sisyphus, here wearing blue jeans and a white vest with workers boots, running down a hill with the boulder chasing him; the second painting, 1974's *Sisyphos behaut dem Stein [Sisyphus Hews the Stone]*, [*Figure 25]* presents Sisyphus as an artist, in the process of creating the boulder; in the last painting of this series, *Der übermütige Sisyphos and die Seinen* [*The Arrogant Sisyphus and his People*, 1976)] [*Figure* 26] Sisyphus is doubled, both part of the anonymous crowd and barely recognizable in the background of the painting, pushing a pebble toward the mountain top. The ambiguity present in *Kain* (1965) returns when we try to read these paintings; their interpretation rests entirely on the perspective and orientation of the viewer vis-à-vis the state.[131] Mattheuer himself has suggested that these

[131] Reinhold Heller writes that "[Mattheuer's] images do not refer only to the situation of the former GDR but rather he intends them to have more universal application in their message. His use of mythological figures such as Prometheus, Icarus or Sisyphus follows his desire to project meanings applicable beyond the geographical and temporal situation in which he found himself, to reach into past and future as well as around the globe in a utopian gesture of communication." – "Get out of Your Box -- Conversations with Wolfgang Mattheuer and Reflections on

specific works can be seen as on the theme of man and work, with Sisyphus as a symbol of both the futility/unpredictability of labor, but also and equally characterized as sacrilegious, resourceful and skillful.[132] I am not so interested in discussing what these paintings meant for Mattheuer in his own time and space, but in understanding what they mean when transposed together into the space of the post-socialist museum in Dresden. In order to do that, we must examine the larger context of the paintings; not only are they displayed within a network of late East German art, with a broad and occasionally dissenting gaze (including Kurt Dornis's *Zweite Schicht* (*Second Shift*) from 1986, which problematizes the doubled role of woman in East Germany), but they are also set directly in dialogue with a single work of art from post-Wende Germany: Katharina Sieverding's *Deutschland wird deutscher* (*Germany becomes more German*) from 1992. [*Figure* 27] Created in the cultural-political milieu of the Maasricht Treaty, which heralded a new stage in the process of European integration and is the founding document of the European Union, the billboard-esque work made up of four panels shows its titular phrase projected over an image of the artist with her face threatened by knives. Critically, this work presents East Germany on the threshold of a new Europe, marking its entry into the realm of the global but at the same time reinforces the idea of the national within the international. By juxtaposing this work with Mattheuer's paintings—as another disruption, this time spatial rather than temporal— the curatorial nexus allows East Germany to enter into the frame of the global, ultimately problematizing not only the idea of the nation, but the museum as an appendage of its power. This takes on a new and ironic salience in the frame of the Albertinum's recent history: unlike in Piotrowski's critical museum, which acted

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his Imagery" in Ingrid Mössinger and Kerstin Drechsel, eds. *Wolfgang Mattheuer: Retrospektive. Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Skulpturen*, 63.

[132] Jutta Held, "Mattheuer in Conversation" in Ingrid Mössinger and Kerstin Drechsel, eds. *Wolfgang Mattheuer: Retrospektive. Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Skulpturen*, 51.

against the desires of the state, this collection ultimately conceded to the demands of the local framework and is now bookmarked somewhere between a literal reproduction of the past and a future lost to populism: (Ost)Deutschland wird Deutscher. In this new milieu, the figure of Sisyphus, who Mattheuer represents thrice—as worker, as artist, as citizen—takes up the position of the Bildermacher: one who speaks not only to the society he is born to, but one who transcends into a new historical moment, still burdened with a task whose completion is impossible.

2.4.3 *Point of No Return*, Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig

In contrast with the first two institutions that this chapter has considered, the Museum der bildenden Künste (Museum of Fine Arts, MdbK), which is located in Leipzig, the cultural hub of former East Germany, does not currently contain a permanent display of its post-war modernist holdings. Instead, its vast holdings are frequently re-presented in new orientations and with malleable focuses in temporary exhibitions. It is important to note that this model of display only emerged after 2017; prior to that, the MdbK did maintain a fairly standard permanent collection of East German art on its second floor that emphasized the Leipzig School.[133] From 2017 onwards, the museum has housed exhibitions of East German art including *Leipzig: A Universe of Images. 1905-2022* (2021/22), *Point of No Return: Transformation and Revolution in East German Art* (2019, the subject of this section), *GDR on Walls: Young perspectives on painting in Leipzig since 1949* (2017), as well as several monographic exhibitions dedicated to artists like Bernhard Heisig, Arno Rink (both in 2018) and Norbert Wagenbrett (*In Front of the Mask*, 2020, perhaps an ironic play on *Hinter der Maske* from the Museum Barberini or a response to the ongoing COVID-19

[133] Evidenced by a research trip to Leipzig during research for my MA paper in May 2016.

pandemic). In addition to this emphasis on the art of East Germany, the MdbK Leipzig also shows exhibitions that both highlight the local framework of the city (*Underrated: Female Artists from Leipzig around 1900* (2022); *Contemporary Art from Leipzig* (2021)) and the city's links to the global contemporary (mostly predicated along either artists who were trained in or influenced by the local HGB academy of arts or those who share a similar socialist (art) history)). In short, the MdbK Leipzig is a consummate regional museum of art with a special focus on both local and global currents but with little programming aimed at broader German national trends– distinctly different from the other institutions I have previously invoked.

The Museum der bildenden Künste was, in contrast to the museums in Halle and Dresden, not founded by the rulers of the region but by bourgeois citizens. Two groups, the "Verein der Kunstfreunde" (founded in 1828) and the "Leipziger Kunstverein" (founded in 1837), decided to establish an art museum in and for the city that would display privately acquired art in a public gallery. The inaugural exhibition took place in December 1848 in the Moritzbastei— the only remaining part of the ancient town fortifications of Leipzig, built as a bastion in the early 1550s and the first in a series of temporary spaces the museum would occupy throughout its history— and displayed about one hundred collected and donated works of primarily contemporary art of the period. The institution's initial success and growth through donations from Maximilian Speck von Sternburg[134], Alfred Thieme[135] and others led to the decision to erect a separate building for the museum, now known as the Städtisches Museum; this was facilitated primarily through Adolf Heinrich Schletter, a silk-goods merchant and art collector, who promised to transfer his collection

[134] Maximilian Speck von Sternburg (1776 – 1856) was a wool merchant and art collector from Germany, as well as one of the co-founders of the Leipzig Kunstverein.
[135] Alfred Thieme was a German industrialist and art collector from Leipzig. He donated much of his collection, also known as the Thiemeschen Sammlung, to the Museum der bildenden Künste.

to the city on the condition that a new building be constructed for this purpose. The Italian Renaissance style building, located on Augustusplatz, was inaugurated on December 18, 1858 and held 200 works at first, expanding both in terms of architecture and holdings (incorporating, for example, the collections of art historian Fritz von Harck, as well as from the families Lampe, Doerrien, Demiani, Clauss, Goeschen, Roemer, Haertel and von Ritzenberg[136]). This early history of the collection is included here because it helps to gesture towards an important point of continuity in the history of Leipzig, one that marks this city as historically different from Dresden or Halle: rather than a seat of princely or imperial power, Leipzig has, for almost a millennium, been the seat of a major trade fair, which began in 1165 and continued beyond two World Wars and German division, and is still ongoing today, reflecting an international and business-minded urban character that has long been reflected in the city's museum.

By the early 20th century, the museum had transformed from a space purely devoted to the contemporary moment and the collections of its patrons and into a more traditional shape of museum: while it boasted a strong collection of the works of Leipzig's prodigal son Max Klinger, as well as a collection of expressionist paintings by Max Liebermann and Max Slevogt, it had also developed a focus on Old German and Early Netherlandish art of the 15th and 16th century and Dutch portraiture from the 17th century. Like the other museums mentioned previously in this chapter, the collections of the Städtisches Museum were ransacked by the National Socialist dictatorship; 280 works of primarily expressionism, by artists including Oskar Kokoshka, Max Beckmann and Emil Nolde were confiscated and either displayed in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition of 1937 or sold. On the night of December 4, 1943, the building was destroyed by a British air raid; while a large part of the holdings had previously been moved to safety in the Leipzig area,

[136] Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch*, 498.

several famous works including Friedrich Preller's *Odyssee-Landschaften* cycle, were destroyed in the ensuing fire.[137] After the destruction of the first real museum building on Augustusplatz, the museum began a 61-year history of various temporary arrangements, including the former Reichsbank in Petersstraße in 1945 followed by the Dimitroff Museum nee Reichsgericht in 1952, where the collection remained until after the Wende. Despite the quasi-homelessness of the collections, it is significant that, even in the 1980s when the building was still located in an interim space, one to which it did not truly belong, it was still identified as belonging "next to the collections in Berlin and Dresden as one of the most meaningful art museums in the GDR" due to its extensive holdings.[138] In addition to the rich collections of the museum, the *Bildhandbuch der Kunstsammlungen in der DDR* identifies it as a one of the most important "exhibitionary spaces" in the nation, emphasizing not only the quality of the institution's permanent exhibitions but its temporary ones as well.[139] This established a character that continues until today, establishing the museum in its contemporary form as one of the most important spaces for temporary exhibitions in the former GDR.

After the decision to relocate the Federal Administrative Court to Leipzig in May 1992 following the Wende, the museum had to move again in August 1997 to an interim location in the Handelshof. The collection could only be shown to a limited extent in these temporary premises. In the mid-1990s, the city decided to give the museum its own home again. On December 4, 2004, exactly 61 years after the destruction of the Municipal Museum on Augustusplatz, the new museum building on the former Sachsenplatz was opened. The new glass and steel cube-shaped

[137] Ibid.
[138] "Neben den Berliner und Dresdener Sammlungen zu den bedeutendsten Kunstmuseen der DDR" Stelzer, *Bildhandbuch*, 499.
[139] "Mit grossen Sonderaustellungen profilierten sich das Museum zu einem wichtigen Ausstellungszentrum." Ibid.

museum building cost 74.5 million euros and was designed by architects Karl Hufnagel, Peter Pütz and Michael Rafaelian; today, it rises from the historical city center of Leipzig, a pronounced temporal disruption that reminds visitors of the complex history that the works contained in the museum—and indeed, the institution itself as a concept—have borne witness to. [*Figure* 28] Today's collection includes approximately 3,500 paintings, 1,000 sculptures and 60,000 drawings, works that span from the Late Middle Ages to the present, maintaining its early focus on Old German and Early Netherlandish art of the 15th and 16th century, as well as expanding its lens to include vast holdings of Italian art from the 15th to 18th century, Dutch art of the 17th century, French art of the 19th and German art from the 18th to 20th century. Important parts of the collection are works by Dutch and German Old Masters like Frans Hals and Lucas Cranach the Elder, Romantics like Caspar David Friedrich, and representatives of the Düsseldorf school of painting such as Andreas Achenbach. A separate floor is dedicated to a comprehensive display of works by Max Klinger and Max Beckmann. In the field of Modern Art, the museum focuses on the local frame, with all generations of the Leipzig School represented in a series of malleable display methods and exhibitions.

Point of No Return, one such exhibition that focused on the spatial frame of East Germany in the moments surrounding 1989, was announced in 2018 as a project of Paul Kaiser with Christoph Tannert, a well-known curator and critic from Leipzig who had lived and worked in former East Berlin and who currently directs Kreuzberg's Künstlerhaus Bethanien, and Alfred Weidinger, an Austrian art historian and artist who at that time directed the Leipzig Museum. The decision to curate a blockbuster exhibition of modern and contemporary East(ern) German art, was clearly a reaction to the renewal of the Bilderstreit in Dresden as well as a marker of a significant anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall:

> "Thirty years after 1989, it is time to look at the peaceful Revolution in the GDR and the social upheaval in eastern Germany from the perspective of the visual arts. "Point of No Return" displays more than 300 works of all styles from 106 artists, on approximately 1,500 square meters. As the symbolic center of the Peaceful Revolution, Leipzig is predestined for Germany's first major exhibition on this theme, which can be regarded as the most significant exhibition in the 30th anniversary year of the Peaceful Revolution."[140]

This excessively historical orientation of the Leipzig Museum—a "symbolic center" which was "predestined," to show "the most significant exhibition" of a year that marked 30 years of German reunification— seeks to identify the museum wholly with the city in which it exists, attempting to position the MdbK itself as a major player in the breaking open of the Berlin Wall. Here, we already stumble across one of the major strategies of the exhibition: using modes of identification to bring the viewer closer to the moment of 1989. Ultimately, this exhibition (which was open for only a little over three months and closed a week before the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall) sought to do the permanent, canon building work of the institution through an exhibition that was only open for a little over three months by drawing on a purely temporal mode of being, as already suggested in the exhibition's title.

But what constituted *the* point of no return? Was it the revolution itself? The pressure building behind the dam of the wall before its moment of bursting? Or its aftermath, the battlefield in which Kaiser saw himself still mired? The layout of the exhibition helps to clarify. Viewers enter into a large, open space at the very top floor of the museum, which resembled both gallery and living room. Works, mostly paintings, from the period 1980-1990 lined the white walls of the space while the room's center was occupied by the East-West German artist Via Lewandowsky's

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[140] "Point of No Return Wende und Umbruch in der ostdeutschen Kunst / Transformation and Revolution in East German Art 23/07 — 03/11/2019" Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Accessed July 2019 https://mdbk.de/en/exhibitions/point-of-no-return/ -- the first reason is less openly mentioned except in exhibition texts by Kaiser which continue to rail against the "colonialist attitudes" of West German curators towards East German cultural production today (Point of No Return Catalogue, 22).

work *Berliner Zimmer (Geteiltes Leid ist Halbes Elend)* ["Berlin Room[141] (A sorrow shared is a misery halved)"] [*Figure 29*]. A living room set of typical made-in-the-GDR furnishing (including an iconic Multifunktionstisch /MuFuTi) has been sliced through and divided—even splitting the parrot that sits on a chair into two pieces—necessarily recalling the contours of the Berlin Wall. This iteration of the work, made in 2002, was created specifically for this exhibition in Leipzig. When the artist originally made his work, the kind of East German furniture he used as his medium was available at every thrift store for only a few Euros; now it has become popular and fashionable, much rarer to find and more expensive to purchase. This work links the immediate post-wall moment with the present, showing us how much our conditions, even in the heart of the East, have changed, despite the void that still marks the presence of the wall that once stood. For Lewandowsky, the point of no return is the moment his saw sliced through the furniture, whether in 2002 or 2019: the whole becomes divided, dysfunctional; even if stitched back together, its value is gone. Placed next to this "set," helping to maintain the suggestion of a living room is a small television playing a work from Peggy Meinfelder, one of the youngest artists in the exhibition. Born in 1975, Meinfelder was barely a teenager when the nation she grew up in ceased to exist. This work, named *Rieth/Zimmerau 1989* (the names of two neighboring towns in Thuringia and Bavaria that for forty years fell on different sides of the inter-German border), shows the first moment of border crossing through the medium of a shaky VHS recording: the East German Riethians walk towards the town of Zimmerau, where a band is playing and signs of welcome are held up. Despite the happiness of the scene, the melancholy inherent to this work is

[141] A "Berliner Zimmer" is a distinctive feature of many Berlin apartments of the mid-19th century; it is a large room with only a single window that connects the front house with the side-wing of a building. In Lewandowsky's work we can understand this as a reference to the very specific and particular situation of Berlin during the pre-1989 period, as well as a linking of architecture and urban space.

made present through a distortion of the sound of the video. [*Figure 30*] Meinfelder herself grew up in Hildburghausen, less than 20 kilometers from the Bavarian border. For her, this moment of first contact proves the point of no return, the break between childhood and life as an adult. Meinfelder's work can be found throughout the exhibition, for example the striking work *Westpaket.* [*Figure 31*] *Westpaket* (2006) literally unpacks one of the packages full of consumer goods sent across the border by West German citizens to family members on the other side of the Berlin Wall, literalizing the leftover identity of capitalism's "Other." These works use their media to convey nostalgia, but there is always a sadness, an ending point, predicated by the act of viewer consumption (watching to the end, eating) that haunts her pieces. Ultimately, the exhibition does its best work in making clear that for each work it contains, there is a different point of no return; there is no center, only margins. This is echoed in the layout of the exhibition, which constructs broad thematic nexuses in each room with titles like "Wendeschleife" (reversing loop), "Prägedruck" (literally embossing or stamping, but here applied metaphorically) or "Niemandsland" (no man's land). Each of these spaces situates the point of no return as a different time, place, or catalyst, transforming history into plurality. This becomes plainly visible in works like Wolfgang Petrovsky's *Eingekochte Zeit* ("Cooked Time" or perhaps better translated "Time Boiled Down") [*Figure 32*], six glass jars in which the artist between 1990-1994 cooked and preserved East and West German flags. Here, time itself becomes a consumable, if unappetizing, object.

The work of the second-generation Leipzig School artists is limited to one small room at the end of the exhibition. Under the thematic title "Quo Vadis?" or "Where are you going?,"[142]

[142] The phrase originates from the Christian tradition regarding Saint Peter's first words to the risen Christ during their encounter along the Appian Way.

these works express the disorientation and confusion that occurred with the events of 1989; this is particularly clear in Willi Sitte's painting *Erdgeister* (*Earth Spirits* from 1990) [*Figure 33*], which shows a group of socialist realist sculptures, naked and cast in dark metal, along with the nude body of the artist himself (who was known for integrating erotic imagery into state-supported works) planted, like trees, upside down into the earth. Their feet stretch towards the sky, but their heads have disappeared, been buried. There are two sources that I suggest this work is quoting: the upside-down figures are a clear reference to the work of Georg Baselitz, one of the harshest critics of East German state artists, who was best known for his inverted paintings, which he began making as early as 1969. The other reference this makes is to Wolfgang Mattheuer's *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, a body left behind, its head swallowed. For Sitte, perhaps the most reviled artist of the Bilderstreit, this work positions the end of socialism, as signified by the demolished statues, as the point from which there is no return, nowhere to go. Mattheuer's contribution to this exhibition is the work *Ausbruch (Panik II)* ("Outbreak/Panic II") [*Figure 34*], made between 1988-89, and normally housed in the Reichstag Building. The work, which was made at the beginning of the Monday Demonstrations that would lead to the end of East Germany, represents a mass of women, men, and children, cast in shadowy darkness, pushing through a small door, and moving across the canvas, towards the viewer. They are hunched, panicked, driven only by a desire to escape—but from what? Could Mattheuer, an active participant in the Monday Demonstrations, a precursor to the Peaceful Revolution, see the end coming, transferring it with oil onto canvas? But where are his subjects running? To the West (as the orientation of the work seems to suggest)? Quo vadis? Whatever the destination, upon which each of the figures has their eyes glaringly fixed, it appears terrifying. Ultimately, the location is abstracted, unimportant. What Mattheuer presents

in this work is a moment on the threshold where the past has been forgotten and the future is unclear: an allegory for the last moments of the GDR, a temporal threshold between two times.

How did this exhibition in Leipzig embody the notion of the critical museum, a museum which attempts to embed itself into society as a speaking, and not only preservationist, voice? I suggest that it is in the act of de-centering, de-coupling, and maintaining the identity of the GDR long beyond its political ending (as with the invocation of young artists like Meinfelder, Frenzy Hoehne, and others) creates an alternative temporality, shifting the power onto the audience to identify with a specific point of no return and thus enter themselves into the puzzle of the past—pluralistic, undefined, and at strong odds with the world external to the museum. This work is reflected in the relationship between the exhibition and the museum which houses it: unlike the other institutions discussed in this chapter, the MdbK building in Leipzig has no architectural connections to the past, whether of the city or of the museum itself. The glass box rises, transparent and modern, out of the core of the historic city center, presenting itself as external to the history it incapsulates. Again, the body and eye are divided through the tension between institutional content and context: whereas we are able to travel in time with our eye, our body remains firmly situated in the space of a museum which guides us through a past it never experienced. The collection and the space that houses it emerged on different sides of the point of no return, casting the viewer's body as the threshold that ties the two incongruous elements together through the act of experience. Thus, the museum itself transforms into the kind of lighthouse that is described in the "Blue Book," albeit one that concretizes its identity on its own terms and not through the framework of the federal government. Leipzig, the "Messe-Stadt," a site of international exchange and meeting even during the era of European division, no longer works along spatial boundaries, but this time along temporal ones, signaling that the point of no return can take place in the present

too, in the moment of exiting the museum and stepping out, changed, back into the public space of post-socialist Leipzig.

2.5 Critical Museums in the New Germany

Botschaft – Die Berliner Botschaft – Ein Trajekt (1996/97) [*Figure* 35] is a work by the German artist Silvia Breitwieser which materializes along two intersecting streets in the Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg.[143] *Die Berliner Botschaft* [which can be translated either as "The Berlin Embassy" or "The Message from Berlin"] is made up of 32 sign-objects, elongated white rectangles with black lettering on both sides and a smaller rectangle attached beneath. Mounted on battered silver masts, these 32 sign-objects, each of which bears the name of a museum of art in the old and new states of the Federal Republic of Germany, echo the shape of the street signs that mark each corner of the city. But rather than orienting pedestrians in real urban space, decoding the city's pathways, these symbols take on a much more complex task: situating the viewer within a network of spaces and times, producing a new map of the cultural identity that has emerged in the aftermath of the *Wende*, the turning point, embodied through the nation's museums.

In April 1996, Breitwieser (born 1939 in Krefeld (formerly West Germany)) sent letters to thirty museums of art from both halves of the formerly divided nation, proposing to include their

[143] Once a margin, one of the poorest neighborhoods in West Berlin, enclosed on three sides by the Berlin Wall, today's Kreuzberg bears little resemblance to the Kreuzberg of the 1980s or 1990s; scaffolding peels away from redeveloped brick buildings to reveal shiny startups where there were once immigrants, artists, draft-dodgers, punks, etc. In many ways, Kreuzberg represents the fate of Berlin as a whole in the aftermath of the Wende.

institution in this "museum without a building," as she described her project.[144] "Your contribution," she wrote, "will help determine how groundbreaking, fantastic, fictional, real, unreal or surreal this EMBASSY OF MESSAGES [BOTSCHAFT AUS BOTSCHAFTEN] will turn out to be." Breitwieser asked the leaders of each institution to send to her an essential message about their institution, shaped by the guiding questions of "Does a museum need to have a message?" "Can a museum be a message [or embassy]?" "What vision did the museum have [in the past], and what vision does it have now?" and finally, "What future do you see?" The answers she received are embossed on one side of the sign-objects, often with a date or name attached (in the case of a citation by a formative figure for the institution).[145] On the other side of the sign, facing the street, is the name of the surveyed institution, with a telephone number attached in case viewers would like to pose these questions themselves.[146] The three institutions considered in this chapter were among the surveyed sites, although only the museums in Halle and Leipzig responded to Breitwieser's request for information.[147] This produced the following signs:

Staatliche Galerie Moritzburg Halle (0345/37031): "Zwischen Expressionismus und Mattheuers Jahrhundertschritt. Einheit des Künstlerischen" [Between Expressionism and Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt*. Artistic Unity.]

Kunstsammlung Dresden Galerie Neue Meister (0351/4914-622): „Die Dresdener Angst vor der Moderne/Was ist los mit Dresden?" [Dresden's Fear of Modernity/What's Wrong with Dresden?]

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[144] Silvia Breitwieser, Letter Template. Kuenstler*innen Archiv der Berlinische Galerie, Accessed January 25, 2023.
[145] Frequently the "future" of culture is transmitted through a quote pulled from an artist of significance for the collection; for example, the Sprengel Museum in Hannover answers in the voice of Kurt Schwitters (born in Hannover in 1887) "Beziehungen schaffen/Am liebsten zwischen allen Dingen der Welt!" (Create relationships/preferably between all things in the world!").
[146] Many of these no longer work, marking a break between the time the work was made and when it is experienced by the viewer.
[147] In cases where the artist received no answer from the institution, she would often attach a cheeky message in her own words, using silence as another mode of communication. This was the case in Dresden, as will be discussed in the main text, but also took shape in institutions like the Museum Abteiberg in Monchengladbach ("Im West(en) nichts neues? No message!"), the Staetishe Museen Kunsthalle Rostock ("Ostsee-Biennale und? No message!") and the Museum Ludwig in Cologne ("Die Köllner Szene meldet sich nicht. No message!").

Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig (0431/21699-0): „Fortune und Zukunft: Neue Horizonte! Auch ohne Haus“ [Fortune and Future: New Horizons! Even without a home][148]

Through these signs, a kind of continuity can be visualized between the liminal function and uncertain identity of these institutions in the period immediately following the Wende, when the work was made, and their shape and concerns today, as examined through the exhibitions at the center of this chapter. At the same time, the work binds these voices of the museum into a larger network of German museums speaking in a dialogue, together, after 1989. The work was previously installed outside of the Kulturforum, one of the key art centers of former West Berlin, and was viewed by the artist as a ”Botschaft aus Botschaften, eine Kunsthalle ohne Dach und Fach, ein transparentes Museum der Zukunft” [an embassy of messages, a Kunsthall without a roof or fixed subject, a transparent museum of and for the future], taking on a new meaning in the shadow of the rapidly reconstructed Potsdamer Platz that signaled a new Berlin and a new Germany; it later moved, for one day, to the courtyard of the Berlinische Galerie when it was located in the Postfuhramt on Oranienburger Strasse, in former East Berlin, symbolically spanning both sides of the Berlin Wall.[149] While Breitwieser’s work is today firmly anchored in the former spaces of West Berlin, positioned today outside of the Berlinische Galerie, an institution critical for writing the modernist history of the city of Berlin and a space that is deeply bound up in the politics of

[148] This quote directly gestures to the homelessness of the museum in 1996; as Dr. Jan Nicolaisen writes to Breitwieser in a letter dated April 4, 1996, “Der Spruch bezieht sich konkret auf die ungewisse bauliche Situation des Museums, das sich seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg im ehemaligen Reichsgericht befindet. Nun wird in absehbarer Zeit das Bundesverwaltungsgericht aus Berlin einziehen, so dass für das Museum ein Neubau unumgänglich ist.“ Kuenstler*innen Archiv der Berlinische Galerie, Accessed January 25, 2023.

[149] The symbolic border crossing done by the work is made clearer in its first iteration; *Die Berliner Botschaft* is actually the second work in Breitwieser’s series of “Botschaften.” The first was entitled *Die Potsdamer Botschaft* and was originally conceived for permanent installation in front of the “Kunsthalle Potsdam,” a museum initiative project in neighboring Potsdam that never came to fore; this first iteration of the work, which takes on an entirely new meaning due to its very different relationship to the public space that frames it, will be discussed in the conclusion of this project.

Berlin[150], it is located not far from the former site of the Berlin Wall and thus critically gestures towards the function of all of these spaces—the museums I have named in this project, the museums named in the signs—for the production of a post-Wende identity that is constructed in and spoken from the cultural institutions of the newly reunified nation.[151] The positioning of these spaces as *Botschaften* or embassies further cements their position as not only active agents within these processes, but also as spaces that play an equal role in nation building as their political, economic, and social counterparts. At the same time, this work uses the language of the city, street signs, to pull the desires of the past, the experience of the present, and the question of the future into the same space, linking up the real space of the city with the imaginary, re-written, and produced space created in the museum. In a very real sense, we can understand Breitwieser's work as speaking in the same visual language of the work that opened this chapter, Wolfgang Mattheuer's *Der Jahrhundertschritt.* However, in the frame of post-socialist Germany, the emphasis shifts from the body of the individual, the body of the subject, to public space itself: it is both frame and actor, space of continuity and site of disruption. Museums themselves, the version of public spaces where histories and identities are most clearly constructed, as illustrated through the history of museums and temporary exhibitions in the GDR, take on the position in the 21st century, after the Wende, the point of no return, that bodies took on the 20th. They are the century-steppers, producing a new time and space for us to exist in. At the same time, these works can be read as responding directly to the kind of cultural projects emergent in the immediate post-1989 moment in Germany, particularly cultural-political ones like the "Blue Book." Where that project

[150] The Berlinische Galerie is administered and owned by the Federal State of Berlin.
[151] Breitwieser made this work in 1996/7, even before Berlin was reconfigured again into the capital of the nation, but it was inaugurated in its current location, outside of the Berlinische Galerie, in 2006 according to the archives of the Berlinische Galerie (accessed 25.01.2023).

draws on the metaphor of the "lighthouse" to cast light only on the cultural institutions of the former GDR, positioning them as a space of darkness before Western intervention, this work uses the metaphor of the street sign to produce an interconnected map of museums across the entire nation, regardless of their point of origin. Both metaphors share the idea of guiding, leading, but where the "Blue Book" works from above, a light beaming down from an obscured source, *Berliner Botschaft* works at eye level, bringing the body of the viewer, and not only their eye, into the picture. Placed outside of the Berlinische Galerie, this offers a new map of the reunified nation, not constructed through politics but rather through the spaces and times of culture.

In the essay "Making the National Museum Critical," Piotr Piotrowski remarks that the idea of a nation, both broadly and specifically construed, is radically different in the present than when most Museological institutes that were meant to uphold them were founded**.** Nowhere is this truer than in the former space of the German Democratic Republic, where the former nation's museums are a rare space where its voice continues to speak, and its agency continues to be visible. As I have illustrated in this chapter, time is a critical tool of each of these spaces: in Halle, its disorienting power on the past produces a frame for the present; in Dresden, the setting of multiple times in dialogue through the juxtaposition of works allows a critique of the museum from inside of its walls, freeing it from the demands produced by local spaces; and in Leipzig, the temporary exhibition, a tool for immediacy and reaction, uses a multitude of times together—*points* of no return—to create a constellation in which we can find our own position and gain our own footing. Temporality, the foundation upon which the museum as an institution is constructed, the scaffolding upon which it produces its power, can be appropriated here in the space of former East Germany, where it is not continuous but rather subject to external forces and pressures. Beyond the abstract notion of exhibitionary time, real time (political time, social time, economic time)

emerges as a crucial factor too in these spaces: 2017, the renewed moment of the Bilderstreit, this time in Dresden, acted as a catalyst for the production of all of these exhibitions. It is only by reaching into their own pasts, reconstructing their own times, that these spaces are able to finally assert their own identities.

Critical museums respond to what their society demands of them—in Piotrowski's case in Poland they necessitate a break with the past, an exit from the power structures of the 19th century that constructed them through a series of different exhibitionary strategies. In the post-socialist museums of East Germany, on the other hand, it is not only a forward-looking time that museums necessitate, but rather a reflective temporality that holds the past and future in its gaze simultaneously, allowing the viewer's body to act as a bridge in the present moment that connects them. Additionally, the spatial aspect of these museums takes on an entirely new meaning in the frame of former East Germany: they become actors in building public space, producing continuity there between the past shape it took and the future shape it will take. This is epitomized in the work of Silvia Klara Breitwieser, as well as Mattheuer: two artists who bridge two centuries, both positioning the museum as a critical vector in building our time and our spaces in which ever present that we might occupy.

3.0 Chapter 2: The GDR Never Existed: De- and Re-Constructing Socialist Narratives on Berlin's Schlossplatz

"This palace is to become a house of the people, the site of conscientious deliberations, the supreme representation of the people in our workers' and peasants' state, a place of important congresses and international meetings. Our socialist culture will find a home here, as will the cheerfulness and sociability of the working people." - Erich Honecker at the opening of the Palast der Republik on April 23, 1976[152]

"As a new type of museum, the Humboldt Forum must fulfill many functions. It should be a meeting place for Berliners and guests from all over the world. It must become an intellectual leader in international social debates. This includes dealing sensitively with Germany's and Europe's colonial past. On the other hand, it is important to attract broad segments of the population with its exhibitions and events.... In addition, it will enrich the architectural center of Berlin via the reconstructed facades of the Berliner Stadtschloss." -- Elisabeth Motschmann, CDU/CSU Press Release on July 19, 2021

The castle will restore the familiar image of Berlin, make the historic center complete, heal the cityscape. Its reconstruction will make Berlin once again the beloved Athens on the Spree. This will create a counterpoint to the mass-produced, modern quarters of the city's center. – Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V. 1992

[152] See appendix for original German versions of and further contextualization for epigraphs. These four quotes, which each point to a different institution constructed or envisioned on the same site in Berlin, show the intersecting and diverging values and intentions embedded into each building.

The ~~castle~~ *palace* will restore the familiar image of Berlin, make the historic center of Berlin ~~complete~~ *more complex, but also more livable*, heal the cityscape. Its reconstruction will make Berlin once again the beloved ~~Athens~~ *cultural metropolis* on the Spree. This will create a *forward-looking* counterpoint to the ~~mass-produced, modern quarters~~ *masses of historicizing new buildings* in the city's center. -- Förderverein Palast der Republik e.V. 2021

3.1 Die DDR hat's nie gegeben

„DIE DDR HAT'S NIE GEGEBEN" ("The GDR (East Germany) Never Existed"): this proclamation, scrawled in thick white letters on a crumbling wall in the center of Berlin, was captured by the German photographer Arwed Messmer as part of the documentary project *Anonyme Mitte* [*Anonymous Heart*] in 2008.[153] [*Figure 36*] The words, and the decaying wall that frames them, invoke in the photograph a juxtaposition of architecture and language which orients the viewer in space and time through a conscious layering of presence and absence. Architecture situates us within a specific spatial urban topography: framed by the neo-baroque columns of the Neuer Marstall to the left and the red form of the Bauakademie, which disappears into the horizon

[153] Messmer's project is devoted to documenting the central part of Berlin from 1989-2009 and constructed of numerous panoramic cityscapes largely devoid of people based on 1,500 large-format negative images taken by photographer Fritz Tiedemann between 1948-1953 at the request of the municipality of East Berlin in order to document the rebuilding of the city after the Second World War. According to Florian Ebner, "the juxtaposition and cross-fading of these two periods of time [produce] a sharply delineated picture: the ongoing destruction of the past, whether it be as a consequence of war or of an ideological rejection of what has gone before, [leading] to the facelessness of the present, to the *anonymous* heart of the German metropolis." Much of Messmer's work engages with the history and aftermath of divided Berlin; Messmer was born in West Germany but collaborates with the former East German writer Annett Gröschner on most projects (including *Anonyme Mitte*) to intentionally offset the western hegemonic domination of the framing of former East in contemporary Germany. Arwed Messmer, *Anonyme Mitte/Anonymous Heart*, (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2009), 175.

on the right, the image slowly reveals its location on Berlin's central Schloßplatz. Temporality is more oblique, and ambiguously surfaces through language. The emphasis on the absence of East Germany through textual negation produces a split temporality, which both precedes the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in 1949 and follows the state's dissolution in 1990, allowing viewers to read this image as a collapse of multiple times on and in a single space and calling into question the notion of a progressive historical continuum. In this image, the aftermath of Allied bombs and Soviet occupation, which cumulatively destroyed 80% of Berlin's center, is folded on top of the transformation of the once-divided city into a permanent construction site after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a space where national identity was rebuilt alongside architecture, contributing to the production of a new time in which the East German state and its ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) was merely a forty-year dream, or nightmare depending on who is looking. Here words again make present what has been made absent through demolition: the final erasure of the German Democratic Republic occurs on the Schloßplatz, the site which once defined the state on its own terms and through its own symbolic means. In this image, the re-emergence of the East German state through its negation reveals the powerful potential of absence when thinking about and reasserting the agency of the GDR within the realm of memory in the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany.

While carefully separating the strands of time and space allows this image to be read as a symbolic portrait of absence, it is in the coming together of these frames that the complexities of the maintenance of the real presence of East Germany on the Schloßplatz unveil themselves, and what is at stake in this image is revealed. Messmer's precise architectonic framing of this ruin plays with the notions of maintenance and erasure, remembering and forgetting, through an invocation of the Neuer Marstall to the left, where in the present Prussian, socialist, and post-

Wende histories are carefully layered and balanced,[154] and the disappearing form of the Bauakademie to the right, where the East German past has been fully erased in the post-1989 moment in favor of pure historical reconstruction.[155] The ruinous wall at the center of this photograph occupies a space somewhere both between and beyond the binary poles of remembering and forgetting as symbolized through framing architecture.

Applying the doubled-frame of time and space reveals that what initially appears as a wall in Messmer's photograph—simultaneously crumbling and visually impenetrable, necessarily mirroring the contours of the Berlin Wall after 1989— is actually the foundation of a what was arguably the most iconic and recognizable building in East Germany: the Palast der Republik. The Palast der Republik ["Palace of the Republic"] was constructed between 1973-76, at the beginning of the Honecker era of the GDR, and functioned as the East German state's architectural embodiment of its socialist values. *[Figure 37]* By presenting the East German state's idealized

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[154] At the Neuer Marstall, which once sheltered the Royal equerry, horses and carriages of Imperial Germany and today functions as the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin, multiple histories are rendered simultaneously visible. Prussian origins and contemporary function are layered with the building's use in the GDR era as the exhibition space for the Akademie der Künste der DDR which is signified through the inclusion of two bronze reliefs on either side of the structure, inaugurated in 1988 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the November Revolution. The literal maintenance of memorial culture from East Germany into this façade acts as what Pierre Nora called "lieux de memoire," those places where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself," the places where the capital of collective memory condenses and is expressed. Pierre Nora. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520.

[155] Designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, the architect of the Altes Museum and the nearby Friedrichswerder Church, the Bauakademie was constructed in 1799 as a school for the training of architects. The original Bauakademie was one of many Berlin buildings damaged during the Second World War; unlike many other buildings, it was partially restored in the early days of East Germany before it was demolished in 1962 to make room for the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a socialist-modernist structure which was in turn demolished in 1995 after plans to rebuild the Bauakademie were solidified in reunified Germany. In Messmer's image, we are privy to neither historical reality nor contemporary reconstruction: rather, the red of the Bauakademie that glimmers atemporally in the background of his photograph is actually a giant poster that recreated the original exterior view of the Bauakademie from 2004-8 in order to impart a sense of continuity and scale onto the site before reconstruction began. What at first appears to be historical reality, reconstruction, is actually a simulacrum with a lost original; the reality of history negates symbolism. As of 2021, ground has broken on the reconstruction, which promises to invoke "as much Schinkel as possible" on the site, which is visible from Museum Island, and will function as an architectural museum, workshop, and forum. Within the span of less than 80 years, the structure has been damaged, reconstructed, demolished, replaced, simulated, and again reconstructed, leaving no trace of its past as an East German governmental building.

architectonic vision of itself as a ruin, Messmer again collapses history and memory, the spaces where power is enacted in real and symbolic form. Official and collective (unofficial) memory are collapsed in the framing of this image, where the collective desire to remember, given voice through language that has emerged outside of official channels (and indeed, illegally, in the form of graffiti), pushes against the official act of demolition, a violent form of intentionally forgetting what has been inscribed onto Berlin's urban topography. The words shift the focal point of division from the path of the Berlin Wall in 1989 to the Schloßplatz in 2008, from a spatial divide to a temporal one: whereas the Berlin Wall divided space, acting as the most potent symbol of the forty-year German/German division (and standing in for both European and global division), the wall in this image asserts its symbolic power through an invocation of time, collapsing "before" and "after" East Germany to produce a shared national time in which the socialist state never existed. Ultimately, this image suggests that after 1989 the division of Germany is no longer a spatial condition but rather a temporal one.

The positioning of post-socialist Europe as a temporal condition rather than a spatial one, delineated along the boundaries of East and West, offers an alternative mode of reading history, one is polyphonic and multidirectional rather than privileging the voices of the victors of history. This orientation is visible in projects like "FORMER WEST," a long-term, transnational research, education, publishing, and exhibition project which grapples with the repercussions of the political, cultural, and economic events of 1989 for the contemporary condition. The project, which was housed at the BAK, basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht (NL), used the tool of "formerizing" to critique the hegemonic structure of the West from a vantagepoint that was rooted in time rather than space:

> If the 'former East' emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War in 1989, its western geo-political counterpart—blinded by the (seemingly default) victory of neoliberal

> capitalism—has widely failed to recognize the impact of these massive changes upon itself. The so-called West has continued to think and act, symbolically and realistically, as 'first' among what were supposed to have become equal if heterogeneous provinces of one world. One wonders precisely why then, when there is a 'former East,' there is no 'former West'?[156]

These questions and this temporal positioning are at the center of the work of the Sovietologist and political philosopher Susan Buck-Morss. In her essay "Theorizing Today: The Post-Soviet Condition," Buck-Morss suggests that following the revolutions of 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet hegemony, the "post-Soviet condition" has come to extend beyond the borders of old Eastern Europe and become a universal historical experience:

> If I speak today of the 'post-Soviet condition,' it is to say that 'post-Soviet' refers to an ontology of time, not an ontology of the collective. Post-Soviet is a **halfway time**, when we have recognized the inadequacies of modernity but are still too dependent, too underdeveloped to leave it behind… the post-Soviet condition does not apply to a curio of specimens who presently inhabit the former Soviet Union or define their situation as unique. This is not about 'failed modernity' or collective culture difference based on linguistic specificity. Rather: we are all post-Soviet. We are to understand this situation as our own.[157]

Buck-Morss's text, published in the same year that Messmer's photograph was made, and in the same year that the FORMER WEST project began, argues that the end of the Cold War has led to the collapse of the binaries that upheld modernism and created a globally shared time in transition between modernity and what came after; modernity was predicated upon the binary tension between communism and capitalism, and the failure of one ultimately disrupted and destabilized the other.[158] In her earlier book project *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, Buck-Morss lays the

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[156] "About," Former West. Accessed January 2022. https://formerwest.org/About -- FORMER WEST took place between 2008—2016, and was led by Maria Hlavajova and Arjan van Meeuwen. Piotr Piotrowski was a research advisor for the project from 2008–2012.
[157] Susan Buck-Morss. "Theorizing Today: The Post-Soviet Condition." *Log*, no. 11 (2008): 23-31. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41765180, 30.
[158] That 2008 was the starting point for all of these projects gestures towards the instability of the world order following the Great Recession and the failure of capitalism two decades after the end of the Cold War.

foundation for this argument, suggesting that following the events of 1989, the modernist notion of history has betrayed its subjects, rendering the driving force behind industrial modernism, the desire for a utopia, a failure. The only recourse in the time after modernism comes with embracing the ruin it leaves behind: "Rather than taking a self-ironizing distance from history's failure, we—the "we" who may have nothing more nor less in common than sharing this time—would do well to bring the ruins up close and work our way through the rubble in order to rescue the utopian hopes that modernity engendered, because we cannot afford to let them disappear."[159] This is the work that Messmer's photograph and the larger project that it is a part of is undertaking: presenting the ruins left behind after the failure of 20th century ideology, framed between memory and history, and beginning the work of bringing his viewer close to the rubble in order to begin the work of digging through it and rediscovering the kind of utopian desires that emerged after its first destruction.

The city of Berlin, the site where Messmer's photographic project takes root, is a locus of transition between modernism and what came after: the Wall that ran through it for almost thirty years was in many ways the most salient symbol of the division between the two binary poles of modernism. With its destruction, the 20th century symbolically came to an end. However, despite East Germany's dissolution and (re)absorption into the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (West Germany) in 1990, it is not the time of the West that East Germany entered but, as Buck-Morss posits, a shared time *after* the West, asserting a final moment of agency as it pulled its western fraternal twin with it into the time after modernism. Through this reading, the proclamation centered in Messmer's photograph takes on a new meaning: the East German state was rendered

[159] Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 68.

non-existent not through its political ending, but rather through the collapse of modernism and its driving desire for a utopia. In East Germany, this desire for a utopia was literalized through an architectural construction on the Schloßplatz after 1976. What initially appeared as a wall in Messmer's photograph is actually the foundation of this representational building, upon whose ruins the very existence of East Germany is denied. The Palast der Republik, a modernist structure with far-reaching political, cultural, international, local, and symbolic implications, embodied all of East Germany's desires of self-representation for its unique identity, a literalization of the state's desire for a utopia.[160]

Berlin is a city that reveals its secrets slowly. Its many layers of accrued history necessitate those who seek to read it to take up the approach of an archeologist, digging through the strata of memory to uncover the multiple, divergent, and contradictory pasts that are often folded in on the same site or object.[161] Remembering and forgetting are the currency of history here in a city pierced through by memorials, monuments, and museums. The Schloßplatz itself, located in the center of the city where it bridges the lofty late Classicism and Neo-renaissance architecture of Museum Island with the working-class history and Wohnhochhäusern of the Fischerinsel, is one of many sites in Berlin where power has been collected and layered. [*Figure 38*] Since the earliest days of Berlin, this square has been used as a changeable symbol, in flux with history. This chapter examines of the ways that the legacy of East Germany, whose Palast der Republik stood on the

[160] The notion of utopia has always exerted an orbital pull on the city of Berlin, particularly in the 20th century. From the social housing projects of the late Weimar period to the attempts to renew the city into "Germania" during the Third Reich to the reconstruction of the demolished city in a socialist model, this utopia has taken on many faces. But, as contained in Thomas More's (the originator of the term) construction of the term "utopia," reminds us, the word comes from the Greek ou-topos meaning 'no place' or 'nowhere.' Each of these iterations of a "Berliner-Utopie" has been pushed to the margins, erased, forgotten, demolished, in the face of the image of utopia that comes afterwards.

[161] For a non-exhaustive list, see: Cobbers, Arnt. *Abgerissen! Vom Anhalter Bahnhof bis zum Palast der Republik—Verschundene Bauwerke in Berlin. (*Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2015/19)

Schloßplatz from 1976 until its demolition in 2008, appears and disappears on the same site today, drawing on the site's function after 1989 to position it as a critical space for writing history (both local and global) today, as well as posing questions about the temporal and spatial strata it inhabits. Through an examination of the Prussian, East German, and post-unification architectures and ideologies that dominated the Schloßplatz, this chapter will examine the relationship between memory and history, presence and absence, time and space, within a key area of Berlin's urban topography. By analyzing the Museological strategies invoked in the historicization and maintenance of the Palast der Republik and its traces within the contemporary Humboldt Forum/Berliner Schloss, the structure that today dominates the Schloßplatz, this chapter seeks to understand how one of the great symbols of East Germany functions as a space of remembering and forgetting in the post-socialist era and what its contemporary display says about dis- and re-placement here. As this chapter will illustrate, the former site of the Palast der Republik is a critical site for thinking through the production of a new time after socialism, one that is simultaneously global and local, where absence and presence emerge as pressing modes of uncovering, viewing, and coming to terms with the past.

3.2 Berliner Schloss, Palast der Republik, Humboldt Forum

Messmer's photograph was put on display as part of the exhibition *Palast der Republik: Utopie, Inspiration, Politikum* at the Kunsthalle Rostock in 2019, one of a small handful of exhibitions in the last thirty years that has grappled with the complex past of the East German

representational building.[162] The work was presented as one third of the photographic triptych *Rückbau: Das Verschwinden der Geschichte. Berlin 1949/2008* [*Reconstruction: The Disappearance of History. Berlin 1949/2008*]. Together, the three photographs that make up this work can be read as a collapse of all times into one in the real and symbolic space of the Schloßplatz: the first image, which opened this chapter, shows the present, caught between history and memory. The second photograph, a black and white image of the bombed-out shell of the original Berliner Schloss taken in 1948 and appropriated by Messmer from the archive of East German state photographer Fritz Tiedemann, uses ruin to unambiguously exhibit the past. [*Figure 39*] In the third image, a mound of dirt on an otherwise empty site uses the promise of construction, unframed by the burden of history, to orient itself towards the future of the Schloßplatz. [*Figure 40*] The titular disappearance of history as a polyphonic, layered concept onto the rigid reconstruction of a singular narrative of the past is illustrated in this final photograph: to the left of this image, the former East German State Council building disappears into the mound of rubble, signifying an ever-progressing historical lineage whose future remains ambiguous.[163] Taken together, this triptych of images explicitly centers the Schloßplatz as a critical site for the construction of temporality in Berlin, both before and after East Germany. That the Palast der Republik itself, the subject of the exhibition, is all but rendered invisible within the temporal arc

[162] Other exhibitions focused on the Palast der Republik (or aspects of it) include *Duerfen Kommunisten Traeumen? Die Bilder aus dem Palast der Republik* (Deutsches Historisches Museum (Berlin), 10 February – 19 March 1996), the third floor of *Hinter der Maske* (Museum Barberini (Potsdam), 2017) and the special exhibition *Palast der Republik* (DDR Museum (Berlin), September 10, 2020 – April 5, 2021). The exhibition *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* (Weimar, 1999) also drew on paintings from the gallery, but, as described in Chapter 1, only employed these works as a point of comparison with National Socialist art production.

[163] During the GDR era this building incorporated Portal IV of the demolished Royal Palace into its façade, integrating into its historical identity the Karl Liebknecht proclamation that is depicted on the façade of its neighbor, the Neuer Marstall.

of these images is perhaps a first gesture at the inherent atemporality shared by the notions of modernity and utopia, for which the Palast der Republik sought to position itself as the pinnacle.[164]

The exhibition at the Kunsthalle Rostock in which these photographs were presented together is worth note because it was intended to pose the question of what the afterlife of East Germany looked like through the important lens of the Palast der Republik—both to those who had experienced the functional symbol first-hand and those who, like curator Elke Neumann, were trying to "remember something, that one has never experienced."[165] Opened on the eve of what should have been the inauguration of the Humboldt Forum,[166] the exhibition viewed the fate of the Palast with a measure of compassion, or at least on its own terms, as a space that symbolically represented the desire for a utopia "behind" the Berlin Wall. Joerg-Uwe Neumann, the acting director of the institution, suggests that the Kunsthalle Rostock, the only art museum Neubau constructed in and for East Germany (as discussed in Chapter 1, section II), rather than Berlin, was the ideal place to resurrect the Palast because of the demolition that threatened both buildings as symbols of East German culture after German reunification:

> [T]his, the only new museum building in the GDR, opened in 1969 and faced a similar fate [to the Palast der Republik] at least once in its recent history. Before our association took over the artistic management of the museum in 2009, the Rostock city parliament was seriously debating closing the Kunsthalle. Despite ambitious exhibitions and ever new concepts, the museum had been losing more and more of its importance since 1989, as evidenced by declining visitor numbers.[167]

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[164] Messmer's photographs are large, dominating, and lend a haunted historicity to whichever space they are displayed in; another example of this is in the Berlinische Galerie, an institution which positions itself critically towards the two Germanys, in the form of the work Pariser Platz, 21. April 1951, another photograph appropriated from Fritz Tiedemann's archive (which is located in the Berlinische Galerie) by Messmer (https://berlinischegalerie.de/sammlung/sammlungsbereiche/architektur/fritz-tiedemann/)

[165] Elke Neumann, „Inspiration und Erinnerung", in *Palast der Republik: Utopie, Inspiration, Politikum*, (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2019), 12.

[166] June 2019 -- the inauguration of the Humboldt Forum was delayed several times, due to both construction issues and the COVID-19 pandemic.

[167] Joerg-Uwe Neumann, "Einleitung" in *Palast der Republik: Utopie, Inspiration, Politikum,* 8.

The loss of meaning that Neumann describes as occurring at the Kunsthalle Rostock after 1989, a fate which almost all East German cultural institutions faced, draws clear parallels to the afterlife of the Palast der Republik, a building which had both governmental and societal importance in East Berlin but lost all power, including symbolic power, immediately following the Wende. The exhibition in Rostock ruminated not only on the construction, function, and ultimate fate of the Palace, but also the special power on society that it exerted during its existence: archival photographs and material objects, including specially-designed furniture, crockery, sign-posts,[168] and paintings from the original building's gallery of ideologically imbued art were displayed alongside documentation of the space after closure and contemporary art that grappled with its legacy in post-socialist Germany, re-constructing an identity for a state and symbolic structure that no longer existed.

I invoke this exhibition in order to gesture to the particular relationship that has emerged between the Palast der Republik and the Schloßplatz after reunification. As this chapter discusses, this relationship is necessarily defined through the notion of displacement. The interplay between making a demolished history present through the intentional displacement visible in Rostock, and the absence of East Germany through an erasure of its architecture and symbolism on the Schloßplatz, as illustrated in Messmer's photograph, reveals the complexities borne by German cultural institutions and their exhibitions within the puzzle of the re-surfacing of East Germany in post-socialist Europe. The displacement of the East German past, whether in space (from Berlin to Rostock) or in time (as Messmer's photograph illustrates), is bound up with the act of replacement. After the 2008 demolition of the Palast der Republik, supposedly due to the presence

[168] These signposts which guided visitors through the massive building have their own set of symbolic meanings and will be discussed at length in the penultimate section of this chapter through their new display on the Schlossplatz.

of asbestos within the structure, the site stood dormant for several years, transformed into a grassy meadow while plans for the future were drawn up and debated.[169] But both within history and urban topography, there is little room for a void, and this lack was soon filled with an abundance, local time and space traded for further-flung and globally oriented ones. In particular, colonial histories, which have minor historical connection to the Schloßplatz, have come to dominate the site today, furthering the complex links between dis- and re-placement and the centering of societal values. The notion of the post-colonial, a category of ever-increasing visibility in Germany, particularly in relation to the provenance of the nation's museum collections and the processes of historicizing the Herero and Namaqua genocide (1904-08) in what was then the colony of German South West Africa. The question of how to integrate these histories into German memorial cultures, which developed primarily in West Germany in the late 1960s surrounding the Holocaust, has cast a spotlight on the Humboldt Forum, the supposedly de-colonized ethnological museum which today stands on the Schlossplatz as part of the reconstructed Berlin Stadtschloss. In particular, this layering of multiple pasts on the site once occupied by the Palast der Republik has raised questions about the capacity of German memory culture, as it takes shape in museums, to grapple simultaneously with multiple complex histories. Although the focus in this chapter is on the socialist past of the site, the issues of coloniality and post-coloniality that are raised here are an important frame to my argument and an important pathway of inquiry in their own right. Before exploring this intersection between socialist and colonialist histories on the Schloßplatz today, it is important to unpack the past political and cultural trajectories of the site, a space where multiple histories have the potential to come to the surface.

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[169] Brian Ladd. "East Berlin Political Monuments in the Late German Democratic Republic: Finding a Place for Marx and Engels." *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 1 (2002)

Almost since the founding of the city of Berlin—at first as the twin cities of Alt-Berlin and Cölln—the space of the Schloßplatz has played a central role in the construction of urban history, societal values, and local identity. Within this frame, architecture has been consistently used as a mode of expressing and cementing the state's political power, while the culture housed within offers a bridge between *rulers* and *ruled* in the form of an idealized and externally oriented identity.

3.2.1 Berliner Stadtschloss and Kunstkammer (1443-1918/1945)

In 1443 Duke Friedrich II, the second Hohenzollern ruler of Brandenburg, laid the ground stone for his new castle on the Cöllner Spreeufer, its architecture combining the allied but separately administrated cities on either side of the Spree River into one. The generations of Hohenzollern rulers that followed all left their mark on the castle, casting it as a space which served the shifting real and symbolic needs of the Prussian dynasty; by the 18th century, the structure had evolved into the baroque style by which the Berliner Stadtschloss is best remembered today. *[Figure 41*] This stylistic shift, which included the addition of the historically significant Eosander Portal, was undertaken primarily by Friedrich III as Elector of Brandenburg in his striving for "royal dignity," and mirrored the vectors of power which led to his being crowned King in Prussia as Friedrich I in 1701 as well as the increasing centering of Berlin as a site of power within German narratives.[170]

The linking of real and symbolic, or material and metaphoric, power on the Schloßplatz is significant for this discussion because of its echoes in the Schloss's Kunstkammer, a cultural space

[170] Kitty Kleist-Heinrich, *Das neue Berliner Schloss: Vom Stadtschloss zum Humboldt Forum*. (Berlin: Bebra Verlag, 2019.)

which offers a lens through which to view Prussia and Germany's burgeoning colonial power and increasing interest in the "New World." *[Figure 42]* The earliest inventories of the chamber, made in 1603, shows that it held objects from all areas of nature, as well as human and scientific devices.[171] Destroyed during the Thirty Years' War and rebuilt by Elector Friedrich Wilhelm in the late 17th century, the collection became a repository of both objects of significant value and materials that required specialized knowledge to decipher, including antiquities, ethnographic curiosities, natural history specimens, and other scientific objects.[172] Access to the collection was at first limited to the ruler and his audience, but influenced by the model set forth by other European monarchies the collection opened to a limited public at the end of the 18th century. [173] This "Europeanization" of the collection continued as Berlin became a frequent stop on the Grand Tour in the late 18th century. The early 19th century saw the Kunstkammer's collections further enlarged through the acquisition of objects accrued during colonial-era exploration, particularly from Alexander von Humboldt's travels in the Americas.[174] The space of the Kunstkammer thus offers a lens through which to view Prussia and Germany's burgeoning colonial power and increasing interest in the New World. The appointment of Alexander's brother Wilhelm von Humboldt as a curator of the Kunstkammer helped to further the space's commitment to the collection and display of objects looted, or "sourced" from colonies. However Wilhelm von Humboldt's enlightenment era belief in the power of museums to foster moral edification among

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[171] Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. „Königliche Kunstkammer.*"* Accessed April 2021. https://www.sammlungen.hu-berlin.de/objekte/-/7614/

[172] Eva Giloi. *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany: 1750-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47. Critically this foreshadows the function of the reconstructed Berliner Schloss several centuries later, particularly in the Humboldt Forum exhibitions "Humboldt Labor" and the integration of the Ethnologisches Museum into the structure.

[173] France (Luxembourg gallery opened by Louis XV in 1750, planned to turn the Louvre into a national museum in the following years), Britain (British Museum opened to a restricted public by 1759); throughout the German states, important collections of art were made accessible to scholars and artists.

[174] Giloi, 57.

the populace ultimately led to the re-distribution of the fine art from the Kunstkammer's collections in 1830, which became the bedrock for Berlin's public museums including Schinkel's Altes Museum.[175] Emptied of much of its original collection, Friedrich Wilhelm III's Kunstkammer placed a new emphasis on the acquisition of colonial objects.[176] However the increasing popularity of municipal museums across Europe led to the final re-distribution of these collections, particularly to the Neues Museum and Ethnologisches Museum and the dissolution of the Kunstkammer in the Schloss.[177] The ultimate significance of the Kunstkammer was in its utilization of material and objects to produce narratives for the state in an era of global exploration and colonialism, producing a direct link between the Stadtschloss as a site of European colonial power and the way this power radiated outward, acting on the spaces it colonized. While Germany's colonial enterprises were limited in scope in comparison to nations like Italy, Spain, France, and Great Britain, the late 19th century saw the settlement and control of German East Africa (present-day Burundi, Rwanda, the Tanzania mainland, and Mozambique), German West Africa (present-day Cameroon and Togo), and German South West Africa (present-day Namibia).[178] The last region has become increasingly centralized in contemporary discussions about Germany's responsibilities towards its former colonies, particularly in reference to the

[175] Ibid, 61.
[176] Friedrich Wilhelm III's commitment to ethnography is visible in his acquisition of Ferdinand Deppe's Mexican artifacts, the funding of Heinrich Lichtenstein's acquisitions from Captain Cook's estate and the Bullock Museum, creating the foundation for Berlin's Egyptian collection and creating a space of display for Alexander von Humboldt's voyages to South America.
[177] The Ethnologisches Museum Berlin was originally founded in 1873 under the name Koengliches Museum für Voelkerkunde. Its roots lay in the 17th century Royal Kunstkammer, from which it drew many of its foundational objects; the Egyptology collection at the Neues Museum draws similarly from the collection of the Kunstkammer.
[178] In addition to African colonies, the German Empire also had limited colonial presence in the Pacific and China. However, for the purposes of later discussion, it is important to acknowledge that the Kingdom of Benin (today southern Nigeria) was not colonized by the German Empire, but rather the British one.

colonial-era atrocities against the Herero and Nama people between 1904 and 1908 which was finally officially recognized as a genocide in May 2021.[179]

As Berlin and Prussia became increasingly central to the national political narrative with the unification of Germany in 1871, the representational might of the Stadtschloss increased, coming to a climax at Eosander's Portal IV from whence, on August 1, 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm II announced Germany's entry into the First World War; four years later from the same spot, in the shadow of Germany's loss of in World War I, Karl Liebknecht proclaimed the nation a free Socialist Republic, symbolically ending the monarchy and stripping almost 500 years of Prussian representational power from the Schloßplatz.[180] This symbolic devaluation continued during the Weimar era as the castle was transformed into a marginal space of culture; in 1921 the Kunstgewerbemuseum and the administration of the Prussian Krongutverwaltung moved in.[181] During the National Socialist period the building stood present but stripped of political and symbolic power, largely ignored by Hitler who viewed the neo-baroque architecture as un-Prussian and un-German, until the castle was hit by a bomb in May 1944 and nearly burned to the ground in February 1945 as the war drew to a close.[182]

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[179] Marina Adami, "Germany recognizes Herero and Nama genocide" *Politico*, May 28, 2021 https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-recognizes-colonial-herero-nama-genocide/

[180] Germany's loss of World War I also effectively ended its colonial enterprises, which were stripped from it and redistributed as part of the Treaty of Versailles. There is much debate about the degree of mythologization of Liebknecht's decree—Berlin artist Daniel Theiler explores this in his work on Portal IV (http://portaliv.de/)

[181] Kitty Heinrich-Kleist; the building was also used as a teaching space for Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (later Humboldt Universität).

[182] Svetlana Boym. *The Future of Nostalgia*. (New York: Basic Books, 2001)

3.2.2 Palast der Republik and Galerie im Palast (1976-1990/2008)

At the end of the Second World War, the Schloßplatz fell into the constructed boundaries of the Soviet Occupation Zone, later East Berlin. With the founding of the East German state, the castle was permanently and immediately closed by the ruling SED party; where Hitler viewed the building as one that rejected German values, Walter Ulbricht, the first leader of East Germany, saw a structure that embodied Prussian militarism and by extension fascism. In a 1950 speech, Ulbricht explicitly connected the architectural potential of the Schloßplatz with the ideological values of socialism, declaring, "Our contributions to progress in the area of architecture shall consist in the expression of what is special to our national culture; the area of the Lustgarten and the Schloss ruin has to become a square for mass demonstrations which will mark the will to build and to fight expressed by our people."[183] Later that year, the ruins of the old Schloss were demolished with dynamite borrowed from the Soviets and the site was used as a parade-ground before the decision was finalized to build a representational structure there, drawing on and subverting the use of the site during the Prussian past.[184] If demolition of the ruined castle offered an efficient way to surgically remove the past, then the new building constructed on the Schloßplatz gave East Germany the opportunity to stage its contemporary values through architecture. The Palast der Republik, a modernist geometric structure of steel and concrete with bronze tinted glass windows, was built on the Schloßplatz between 1973-76 according to Western architectural standards of the time. Built in a thousand days by masonry brigades from across the

[183] Brian Ladd, *Marx and Engels*, 95.
[184]The resultant structure intentionally referenced and subverted Prussian history through architecture, making explicit allusions to the symbolic structure of the destroyed castle with the People's Chamber erected on the site of the former Royal chamber – displacement emerges as an important theme here.

East German state, the Palast embodied the clear desire to bring together idealized socialist values with modernization, already positioning the "exemplary socialist construction site" as an expression of the desired utopia within the workers' and farmers' state.[185] Critically, this structure did not strive towards the towering architecture of the Fernsehturm (1969), located on the nearby Alexanderplatz, nor the hasty and rigid contours of the Berlin Wall, built without warning on the night of August 13, 1961 as an attempt to express the state's power in architectural form, controlling the flow of bodies in and (more importantly) out of the state; these two structures can be understood as an expression of the architectural values of the Ulbricht era. In contrast, the Palast der Republik, one of the first major constructions of the government of Erich Honecker, the second and final leader of East Germany who emphasized improving the standard of living within the state over the construction of monuments, sought to bridge the monumental and the everyday. The building housed the plenary chamber of the GDR, but was only secondarily a government building, also containing two large auditoria (one of which could hold up to 5000 spectators), art galleries, a theater, 13 restaurants and cafes, a bowling alley, a post-office, a beer tavern, a wine bar, and even a discothèque.[186] It intentionally subverted Prussian history through architecture, making explicit allusions to the symbolic structure of the destroyed castle with the People's Chamber erected on the site of the former Royal chamber.[187] The Palast der Republik, which stood from its opening in 1976 until its demolition in reunified Germany in 2008, positioned itself as a realized

[185] Boym 187.
[186] Moritz Holfelder, *Palast der Republik: Aufstieg und Fall eines symbolischen Gebauedes.*(Berlin: CH. Links, 2008), 18.
[187] Boym, Ibid.

space of utopia in East Germany, a showcase of the best of East Germany for an international audience.[188]

Reading the Palast der Republik as the pinnacle of modernism and vector of realizing the mass utopia that drove socialism is also visible through a space of unintentional continuity between the Prussian and East German buildings on the Schloßplatz: the Galerie im Palast.[189] *[Figure 43]* Sixteen paintings, commissioned from state-supported artists specifically for the site, were collected on two levels in the foyer under the title *Dürfen Kommunisten träumen?*[*May Communists Dream?*] [190] These paintings, made by artists including Wolfgang Mattheuer, Bernhard Heisig, Lothar Zitzmann, Willi Sitte and Werner Tuebke, were commissioned to showcase the diversity of modern art in East Germany in a moment of thawed restrictions, positioning the works as the culmination of communist dreams throughout history. As an official text about the gallery, published in East Germany in 1977, explains: "In terms of content, [these works] take up fundamental questions of life. It is about the great historically significant theme of the forward striving and dreaming of communists, about taking up all progressive traditions of human history and about the readiness to face the demands of the times without reservation."[191] While the visual appearance of these sixteen works offered a perspective on the "breadth and variety" of East German art, together they worked to take up the themes of progressive tradition,

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[188] The building was so significant that it featured on the highest valued of East German Ostmarks: the 100 Mark der DDR banknote. The blue coloured note shows a portrait of Karl Marx on the front, and the back displays the Palast der Republik as seen from the Unter den Linden boulevard in East Berlin.

[189] This gallery, its paintings, and afterlives are touched on in the introduction to this dissertation through their display in the 2017 exhibition *Hinter der Maske* at Potsdam's Museum Barberini.

[190] The name, apparently taken from a quote by Lenin, already betrays some of the more interesting aspects of the collected works, made by state-supported artists: rather than using a verb which signifies desire or choice, the insistence on "*dürfen*" [to be allowed to] already has an ironic relationship with the subject matter. The title functions as a satiric appropriation of what the Western world must have thought of communism (at least in the minds of socialists), which is certainly significant considering that the *Palast* was one of the main points of contact between East and West behind the iron curtain.

[191] Heinz Graffunder und Martin Beerbaum, *Der Palast der Republik*. (VEB E.A.Seemann Verlag Leipzig 1977), 43-50.

forward marching history, and socialist society.[192] May communists dream? Certainly. But what did they dream of? The answer to this question seemingly emerged not through the content of the works themselves, but rather through the context of the works' display: a modern, open space that brought together the socialist government, its people, and the broader international communities. A utopia built out of steel and glass, centered in the rebuilt capitol of a nation was positioned, geographically and politically, as a bulwark against the imperialist West: the Palace of the Republic.

Ultimately, the fate of the Palast der Republik was tied to that of East Germany. On the 40th anniversary of the GDR's founding, protests took place outside of the building as politicians and dignitaries celebrated everlasting socialism inside; only one month later, less than a mile away from the Schlossplatz, the Berlin Wall was torn town. The vote to dissolve the German Democratic Republic was one of the last to take place in the Volkskammer of the Palast der Republik. In 1990, asbestos was discovered in the walls and the decision was made to demolish the building. Many former East Germans believed that the Palast der Republik was closed because of asbestos but ultimately destroyed because of the demands of the victorious Western capitalist ideology which, like the GDR before it, sought to re-write history through the demolition and construction of architecture.[193] What was presented as a utopian dream in the gallery of the Palace became a memory already in the early years of reunification.

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[192] "Breadth and variety" quoted from Erich Honecker

[193] Many very interesting parallels can be drawn here between the fate of the Palast der Republik and that of the West German Internationales Congress Centrum—opened three years after the PdR, the ICC has also been found to be contaminated with asbestos (a common building material in the 20th century which is not dangerous as long as it remains undisturbed). However unlike the PdR, the ICC remains standing, albeit generally closed to the public. In 2021/22, it has had various interim uses, such as offering the site for the Berliner Festspiel's project "The Sun Machine Is Coming Down," transforming into a COVID-19 vaccination center, and most recently acting as a housing space for displaced people from Ukraine.

3.2.3 Reconstructed Berliner Schloss and Humboldt Forum (2003/2021-)

The path towards the reconstruction of the Royal Palace which has stood on the Schloßplatz since 2021 was a complex one that reflected many of the dynamics of post-Wende Germany. Already in 1993, a mock-up of the baroque facades of the Palace was superimposed atop the closed Palast der Republik in a citizen-driven effort to see how the reconstruction would look as part of the city picture. This first attempt, which was led by a group of former West Germans organized under the name "Förderverein Berliner Schloss," signified the post-Wende desire to re-build the historical core of Berlin in an attempt to find a unified national identity, or at least to reconstruct a shared national history. In their founding statement from 1992, the group repeatedly sought to position the future potential of the Schlossplatz as a return to something that had been lost in the interceding years—an act of "healing," of return:

> "The castle will restore the familiar image of Berlin, make the historic center complete, heal the cityscape. Its reconstruction will make Berlin once again the beloved Athens on the Spree. This will create a counterpoint to the mass-produced, modern quarters of the city's center."

On November 13, 2003, the Bundestag resolved to tear down the shell of the Palast der Republik, which had for 10 years functioned as a temporary arts space, and to rebuild the baroque facades of the Berliner Schloss. In 2008, Italian architect Franco Stella won a contest to design the final form of the reconstructed structure which would integrate a new façade on the eastern side of the Schloss, breaking away from a pure historical reconstruction. While the Humboldt Forum, a constellation of museums and initiatives housed within the reconstructed Berliner Schloss, was funded through public means (including the German government, the Berlin city government, the Berlin State Museums, and Humboldt University), funding for the reconstruction of the building's exterior facades was collected by private agents, most notably Wilhelm von Boddien the founder

of the Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V.[194] The building, which opened on July 20, 2021, today positions itself as a representational building for how the Bundesrepublik Deutschland seeks to orient itself towards both past and future. *[Figure 44]* Former Cultural Minister Monika Gruetters' comments at the opening ceremony for the building are especially relevant here: Grütters framed the Humboldt Forum and the reconstructed castle that framed it as a "gift" for the Federal Republic of Germany, which would grant Berlin its old center back. She claimed that the network of institutions in particular would function as a stage for a productive "Streitkultur" (cultural of debate) and that it would be a space where the public could openly confront and come to terms with Germany's colonial past. The East German past of the site remained barely touched upon in Grütters' inaugural remarks; rather than invoking the Palast der Republik, the politician referenced the site's brief period of lying fallow as the "crater" left behind by socialism, positioning socialist history as a natural disaster. Grütters concluded her speech by critically positioning the Humboldt Forum as the single most important site for the construction and presentation of Germany's identity in the 21st century for both a global and a local audience. This contemporary orientation is signified in architectural terms through the disruption of the purely historical reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss with the inclusion of a "modern" façade on the building's east side,[195] as well as in many of the exhibitionary spaces that form the content of the Humboldt Forum, particularly those that grapple with Germany's colonial history.[196] The painstaking accuracy of the main façade detailing

[194] There have been a number of controversies surrounding the façades connection with right-wing politics, whether through donors (Ehrhardt Bödecker) or aesthetics (the golden orb and cross that adorns the roof of the structure becomes the globus cruciger, or Reichsapfel in German: an explicit symbol of Christian global domination dating from the 11th century, which has been deployed as an emblem of power by various European monarchies, including Prussia's.) – more on this in chapter conclusion.

[195] It is certainly significant here that in different literature the Eastern façade of the structure is alternately referred to as "modern" and "contemporary;" of course these terms mean very different things but their casual juxtaposition seems to suggest a time "after" [what?].

[196] Five exhibitions opened with the inauguration of the building in July 2021: Berlin Global, Humboldt Labor, Schlosskeller, Geschichte des Ortes (all permanent) and schrecklich schön. Elefant – Mensch – Elfenbein

and ornaments[197] of the former Prussian royal house contribute to the production of a building that is material, symbolical and functional, fomenting a renewed interplay of memory and history on the Schloßplatz.[198] [*Figure 45*] The reconstruction of the building is a key actor in the project of politicizing the memory of East Germany by cauterizing the modernist struggles of the 20th century in favor of a clean, surgical link to German history prior to 1918. Through architecture, the past and present are carefully sutured together, returning a "lost" identity to the Schloßplatz, seeking to intervene in the process of constructing yet another new national identity, this one in and for the age of reunified Germany.

The historical orientation of the reconstructed Schloss closely follows architectural trends in post-unity Germany. Many buildings have been reconstructed in Germany to reflect their pre-World War II architecture since 1989; Mark Jarzombek identifies in particular the reconstruction of several historically significant city centers in the former East, including Dresden and Leipzig, in the post-1989 milieu.[199] What makes the reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss an especially significant site for expressing post-Wende values is revealed on the structure's East side with the inclusion of the Humboldt Forum, a post-ethnographic institution which seeks to enter the new Berliner Schloss into a dialogue about Germany's role in the globalized world. [*Figure 46*] The

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(temporary). Critically, the controversial Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum of Asian Art were not opened with the building, but rather later in Autumn 2021.

[197] The building's golden ornaments and historically accurate façade detailing—including an army of cherubim, a flock of eagles, and a forest's worth of oak leaves— were broadly paid for through solicitation of donations from the public, led by Wilhelm von Boddien, one of the earliest supporters of the re-construction and the chief executive of the Friends of the Berlin Palace (founded in 1992); one publication by Friends of the Berlin Palace promises that with a donation of €50 or more, donors names will appear by large electronic projection on the ceiling of the tunnel vault and donating between €100.000 and €999.999 will earn "diese großzügigen Spender" a plaque with their name in the "highly-frequented" foyer of the building, while a donation of over €1.000.000 guarantees donors a chamber named in their honor. As of November 2020, more than €105,000,000 has been donated by the public exclusively for the facade detailing.

[198] These concepts all stem from Pierre Nora's concept of *Lieux de Mémoire*; key here is the *will to remember*, which layers collective memory onto historical sites.

[199] Mark Jarzombek. "Disguised Visibilities: Dresden/'Dresden.'" *Log*, no. 6, 2005, pp. 73–82. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41765063. Accessed 20 Feb. 2021, 74.

architecture of the Humboldt Forum, a clean façade of natural stone permeated by rows of dark windows, disrupts the historical flow of the building, plunging the building into a space of hybridity and contemporaneity, rather than pure reconstruction.[200] The Humboldt Forum promises to function as a modern museum which will house Berlin's Non-Western art collections. A 2002 resolution of Germany's parliament stipulated that the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin should move to the Humboldt Forum in the center of the German capital.[201] The institution brings the collections of Berlin's Asian Art Museum and Ethnological Museum together, transferring them from their post-war location in Dahlem (a distant suburb) into the very center of Berlin, signaling a contemporary desire to include non-European narratives within public institutional memory. This shift marks the transformation of Museum Island as a space for European culture to one that displays the totality of world culture. Critically, the Schloßplatz will not be denied a history; here, the local socialist histories are intended to be replaced by far-flung colonial ones reaching in multiple directions as can be viewed through both architecture and the cultural institutions housed there. Ultimately what makes the Humboldt Forum project different than any other re-constructed, hybridized, or demolished site in post-unity Germany is the attempt to displace the socialist past and to replace it with a globalized, post-colonial future that it itself displaced into the frame of Berlin's center.

The reconstruction of the major Berlin landmark has fostered debate not only about the city's orientation to its own history, but also about the ways in which Germany continues to come to terms with its (short but brutal) colonial past, particularly in reference to the repatriation of

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[200] Philipp Oswalt, "Building a National House in Monument" *e-flux Architecture* and Het Nieuwe Instituut, January 2021. https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/monument/372745/building-a-national-house/

[201]Viola König. "Zeitgeist and Early Ethnographic Collecting in Berlin: Implications and Perspectives for the Future." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 52 (2007): 51-58. Accessed April 27, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20167739.

objects which were looted during the era of exploration.[202] In many ways, this scrutiny mirrors broader institutional debates about imperialism, ownership and the return of stolen goods taking place on both European and global levels. These difficult conversations have provided a backdrop for the collections of Western museums since the 1980s, even emerging as a "soft power" function of political discourse within Europe itself, as in the case of the Elgin Marbles which the European Union has asked the government of the United Kingdom to return to Greece in order to secure a post-Brexit trade deal.[203] Ethnological Museums in particular have been the subject of these conversations, their collections and methodologies often at odds with contemporary European humanist values, as illustrated in the recent work of Bénédicte Savoy, Felwine Sarr and Clementine Deliss.[204] The Humboldt Forum is the most recent of a series of museums across western Europe which have taken to simultaneously ideologically "renovating" their collections and modernizing the institutions which hold them; alongside the Musée de l'homme in Paris, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika near Brussels, the British Museum in London, and most recently the Grasse Museum in Leipzig, the renovation of the Humboldt Forum exposes the trend of re-configuring institutional content in order to produce a new societal

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[202] The debate about the ownership and display of colonial objects in the Humboldt Forum is perhaps best summarized through the discussion between Hermann Parzinger, President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, and Hamburg historian Jürgen Zimmerer, published in July 2019. In this sometimes-tense conversation, Parzinger and Zimmerer debate the establishment of the Benin Dialogue Group, a group founded to negotiate the display, potential return and future loan of the stolen Benin Bronzes, as well as the question of who should take up the "burden of proof" in reference to ownership of colonial objects and the imperialist legacy of Alexander von Humboldt himself. See: https://www.zeit.de/zeit-geschichte/2019/04/humboldt-forum-kolonialismus-hermann-parzinger-juergen-zimmerer

[203] Adam Payne. "The EU will tell Britain to give back the ancient Parthenon Marbles, 'brutally removed' from Greece over 200 years ago, if it wants a post-Brexit trade deal" Business Insider. March 2, 2020. https://www.businessinsider.com/brexit-eu-tells-uk-elgin-parthenon-marbles-greece-trade-deal-2020-3?r=DE&IR=T

[204] In 2017 French President Emmanuel Macron commissioned two academics, the art historian Bénédicte Savoy and the economist Felwine Sarr, to advise him on how French museums should move forward with the maintenance or restitution of goods stolen during the colonial era. Eight months later, the pair delivered a report with a shocking verdict: France should permanently and immediately restitute all art taken from sub-Saharan Africa "without consent" during the colonial era. See: http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf for the full report.

narrative and a new way of memorializing the past. In the era of globalization, the former colonial powers of Europe are publicly re-writing their colonial histories through exhibition. The space of the Schloßplatz, mirroring the orientation of the Kunstkammer in the late 18th century, is once again facing the process of Europeanization and pushing even further into the realm of globalization, moving away from the unique and dense local history of the site itself and towards broader narratives produced in the European Bloc.

The questions which emerge at the Humboldt Forum take on a new dimension in a German context because of the nation's complex culture of remembrance; within this paradigm Germany's colonial past occupies a murky space in collective memory, often reduced to a footnote in history. As German Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Grütters and Bundestag member Michelle Müntefering have suggested, "for many decades, colonial history has been a blind spot in European and German culture of remembrance."[205] The folding in of two conflicting and divergent cultural narratives onto a single site, where imperialist architecture will house the spoils of colonial domination, has raised a myriad of questions about how contemporary Germany desires to publicly shape its attitude towards its troubled colonial heritage in an era which has seen the nation battling rising populism, grappling with the aftermath of the refugee "crisis," and, most recently, challenges to the image of a globalized Europe with shared values and open borders. The construction of the Humboldt Forum has created space for thinking about the need for a new kind of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ["coming to terms with the past"] inherent to processes of self-presentation in Germany and Europe today, one that is able to bridge narratives from the local and the global frames.

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[205] Monika Grütters and Michelle Müntefering. „Eine Lücke in unserem Gedächtnis" Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/kolonialismus-und-raubkunst-eine-luecke-in-unserem-gedaechtnis-15942413.html December 15, 2018.

Through this brief historical investigation of the multiple pasts that have coalesced on the Schloßplatz, the many layers of power and culture that have found a home there, it is clear that it forms, and has always formed, in Berlin's center a critical site for the building of societal narratives and values, and the intentional construction of history through architecture and the display of both art and objects. The interplay and tension between framing architecture and framed content is revealed a critical aspect of the site in all iterations. Both colonial and socialist histories have been present here, the crucial converging of "otherness" on the site gaining visibility through displacement in space (colonial) or time (socialist), their histories continuously re-written to perform and uphold vectors of power. This overview of the ideological history of the Schloßplatz seeks to illustrate the important currents of power and culture that have long underpinned the site; architecture in particular emerges as a critical form through which ideology becomes real and applicable to a population, forging memories and centering values. Today on the Schloßplatz, the Prussian past with its links to colonialism has been resurrected once again through the act of architectural reconstruction while, through its absence, the past of East Germany slips further into memory. If we understand the Palast der Republik to be one of the most important symbols of the East German state, its condemnation and destruction necessary for a transformation of the site and by extension the city into the era of reunification, what can the present-day existence of the site tell us about the act of remembering? How does the East German past appear and slip away in Berlin of the present and how does this lead to the production of a new, global time constructed retroactively in the German capital?

3.3 Remembering and Forgetting East Germany

Within the particular historical paradigm of Germany, and in particular its capital of Berlin, the act of remembering takes on a new urgency. The frame of memory studies, developed in West Germany and Western Europe in the 1970s and 80s, has been built around the negotiation of official and collective processes of remembrance, caught between the state and society.[206] Germany's relationship to memory is particularly complicated and, and at moments, contradictory: its contemporary culture of memory centers on Nazi Germany and the role it played as perpetrator of the Holocaust, as well as the ongoing responsibility to bear the burden of this memory so that history does not repeat itself. Within a specifically European context it has been suggested that Germany's continued coming-to-terms with the past is bound up with the future of European democracy.[207] However, the politics of remembering become troubled by the fact of East Germany's existence, both in the socialist state's emphasis on remembering the Third Reich in and on its own terms (and for its own purposes, paralleling the alternate modernism its arts offered) and in the official post-unity folding in of Germany's "two dictatorships": Nazi Germany and German Democratic Republic. Despite the inherently European situation in which the field of memory studies was founded, its continued emphasis on the perspective of the West re-produces and enforces difference between (former) East and West, complicating its application to post-communist Europe and troubling the production of a new, shared time after 1989.

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[206] David Clarke with Ute Woelfel, "Remembering the German Democratic Republic in United Germany" in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, eds. David Clarke and Ute Woelfel (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2011)

[207] Stated by Jorge Semprun in 1994, as quoted in *Orte des Erinnerns: Gedenkzeichen, Gedenkstätten und Museen zur Diktatur in SBZ und DDR*, ed. Anna Kaminsky. (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2016)

As Andreas Huyssen has suggested, it seems as though the entire 20th century was marked under the sign of historical trauma.[208] Corporealized in Mattheuer's *Jahrhundertschritt*, the image of the body, fractured by trauma and yet still whole, can be understood as a metaphor for both national and international historical experience of the 20th century. This trauma, rooted in the inconceivable destruction of the Second World War and deepened by the subsequent division of the single Germany into two ideologically rival states, was clearly visible in the developing postwar cultures of both Germanys, where strong and adversarial cultural policies were necessitated to break with the specific mode of the weaponization of culture that took place under National Socialism. By 1950 art itself had become embroiled in the politics of the Cold War, taking up the ideological positions and formal qualities of its ally-occupiers.[209] The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany) officially founded in 1949, used cultural sovereignty to help shape its political legitimacy as a fledgling democracy, but it was not until the 1960s when the FRG grew beyond the confines of a western protectorate, a bulwark in the Cold War confrontation, that an autonomous public culture truly developed.[210] Critically, this culture can be understood as developing from the fertile grounds of trauma and guilt, linking the personal and the societal: Joseph Beuys' self-mythologization of downfall and resurrection, Gerhard Richter's blurred paintings of his own family photographs and thus history, and Anselm Kiefer's heavily texturized canvases of encoded sigils which often confuse the positions of perpetrator and victim. As Aleida Assmann writes in her landmark study *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar*

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[208] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 8.
[209] Berlinische Galerie, "Kunst in Berlin" Accessed November 2021 https://berlinischegalerie.de/ausstellung/kunst-in-berlin-1880-1980/
[210] Frank Trommler, "THE CULTURAL LEGITIMACY OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC: ASSESSING THE GERMAN KULTURSTAAT." *Gray Humanities Program Series*, Volume 6, 1999. Introduction. https://www.aicgs.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/kultur.pdf

Identity, "the repressive and complicit silence regarding historical guilt [from World War II] lasted into the 1960s in West German society and was only broken by representatives of the younger generation, the so-called 68ers. This generation not only initiated the process of critically examining German guilt but acted as a leading participant in constructing monuments, developing ideas for museum exhibits, producing films, and engaging in other forms of public memory culture."[211] While the memory culture of West Germany was (and is) problematic at best, and dangerously self-centered at worst, it played an immensely important role in the development of both West German visual artistic cultures and cultural identity, as well as the development of these categories after the Wende. Elsewhere in her text, Assmann cites the work of Bernhard Giesen, suggesting that historical experiences are processed in one of two ways: either as a euphoric high point of a collective self-overcoming or as a profound disgrace and humiliation.[212] If we understand West Germany as, at least on some level, occupying the latter category, then it is especially worthwhile to consider how the former mode of processing historical experiences offered a genesis-point for the East German state and its culture.

Perhaps no better phrase describes the East German regime's self-positioning towards the traumatic past than the formulation "Our Goethe, your Mengele."[213] As Rudy Koshar describes, "in this simple juxtaposition, the GDR appropriated the progressive traditions of German culture as represented by Goethe, and left the memory of Auschwitz and the gruesome medical experiments carried out on camp inmates by Josef Mengele to a still culpable West German

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[211] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.
[212] Ibid, Introduction.
[213] Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 189.

political culture."[214] Anti-fascism, a direct rejection of the immediate past, was, in essence, the raison d'etat of the GDR; as the East German historian Walter Wimmer argued in 1984, "anti-fascism… belongs to the strongest traditions of the DDR. It forms a constituent element of our socialist state."[215] However J.H. Brinks notes that the historical tradition of anti-fascism was hardly universal in the fledgling GDR: "Although hardly 1 per cent of the East German population consisted of veteran antifascist resistance fighters, this group formed the leading ideological elite. It was this same group that proclaimed itself Sieger der Geschichte [victors of history]."[216] Because the founding myth of the GDR was that of antifascism, it comes as no surprise that a strong memory culture had already developed in the state by the 1950s to grapple with the recent past.[217] However, East Germany's culture of memory was not built around the remembrance of the perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust, as was the case later in West Germany, but rather surrounded the remembrance of the fight against fascism, positioned as a heroic struggle which led to a socialist victory. In East Germany, memory was weaponized by politics to legitimize the hegemony of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands.[218] The Holocaust itself played a limited role in East German memory culture, and it wasn't until 1990, in the last year of its existence, that the East German state officially articulated its shared responsibility for the Holocaust.[219] Traces of the explicitly anti-fascist East German memory culture continue to exist in reunified Germany, particularly visible through a few select figures (including Rosa

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[214] Ibid.
[215] W. Wimmer, " Geschichtliche Wurzeln des Werdens und Wachsens unserer Republik,' *Einheit*, no. 2, 1984, 105-10, 109.
[216] Brinks, J.H. "Political Anti-Fascism in the German Democratic Republic." Journal of Contemporary History 32, no. 2 (April 1997): 207–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/002200949703200205, 209.
[217] Courtney Glore Crimmins, "Reinterpreting the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park after 1990" in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic.*
[218] Kaminsky, *Orte des Erinnerns*, 11.
[219] Ibid.

Luxemburg, who actually occupied a contentious spot in East Germany), but as the former nation's streets are renamed and its memorials to the worker's movements removed,[220] despite its closeness in time, the East German past slips further away from the forefront of the official memory culture of unified Germany.[221]

More complicated than the role of memory in East Germany is the memory *of* East Germany after its dissolution. Charles S. Maier has juxtaposed the "cold" memory of communism in Eastern Europe with the "hot" memory of the Holocaust to show the inverted relationship between temporal distance and affect.[222] While the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in terms of the Holocaust took place belatedly in both Germanys—in West Germany the initial emphasis in the 1950s was placed on remembering resistance fighters and victims of war on the German side, with the Holocaust only emerging and eclipsing the frame in the shadow of 1968—the official coming-to-terms with the GDR occurred almost immediately following the Wende: already in 1992, two years after East Germany had officially ceased to exist, the Bundestag commissioned the first inquiry into the history and legacy of the SED's dictatorship.[223] During the first decade of reunification, the debate about historicizing East Germany centered on the administrative and political processing of the Stasi and its informers, collapsing the entire forty-year history of the

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[220] A key example of the renaming of streets is visible in the renaming of several streets formerly called "Ernst-Thälmann-Straße" after East German national hero Ernst Thälmann, the leader of the Communist Party of Germany during the era of the Weimar Republic, who was subsequently arrested and murdered by the Nazis at Buchenwald Concentration Camp in 1944: several of these streets, including ones located in Leipzig, Magdeburg, Dresden, and East Berlin, were renamed in the period between 1990 and 1991; interestingly the streets in Leipzig and Magdeburg had been both called "Adolf-Hitler-Strasse" until they were renamed in the GDR period, reflecting the turmultousness of historical consciousness. Thälmann also provides an interesting example in the case of the question of removing statues: a massive bust of the communist leader which is located north of Danziger Strasse in former East Berlin has been at the center of these debates for a number of decades, and its future is still undecided.
[221] Barbara Koenczoel, "Reinventing a Socialist Heroine: Commemorating Rosa Luxemburg after Unification" in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*
[222] Charles S. Maier, "Memory Hot and Cold. Memory of Fascism, Memory of Communism", *Le Débat*, vol. no 122, no. 5, 2002, pp. 112.
[223] Andrew H. Beatty, "The Politics of Remembering the GDR: Official and State-Mandated Memory since 1990" in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*

state into a top-down perspective read through the lens of dictatorship, producing tension between official and collective memory which crystalized in sites like the Palast der Republik.[224] David Clarke and Ute Woelfel suggest that this was a weaponization of memory through which primarily Western commentators sought to de-legitimize not only the East German state but socialist ideals in general, which can be seen as an attempt to try to breathe new life into western capitalism after the fundamental shift in history provided by 1989.[225] This decade-long critical orientation towards the socialist past was mirrored in art historical and Museological contexts through the Bilderstreit and exhibitions like *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* (Weimar, 1999).[226] While the memory of East Germany has become more nuanced in the decades that followed, particularly in historical perspectives of *Alltagslebens*, or the everyday, what is at stake in these debates are the alleged consequences of a particular kind of relationship to the GDR past and its projected effects on the future shape of German national identity, expressed in terms of values and attitudes.[227] Indeed, inherent to the strategy of folding together of the "two German dictatorships"—fascism and communism— is the desire to represent the GDR in such a way as to bolster acceptance of the form of democracy achieved by the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany. Read through the lens of Buck-Morss's "post-Soviet time" the desire to rapidly remove the East German past to legitimize the current Federal Republic of Germany can be understood as a desire to uphold the logic of modernism, maintaining the possibility of a utopia through capitalism as long as its opposition force is preserved as such. The topographic reduction of East Germany into mere

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[224] The contemporary Turkish-German artist Daniel Theiler's recent work, particularly the short film "Top Down Memory" and the book project "Reconstructing Tomorrow" elucidate these fascinating aspects further.
[225] David Clarke with Ute Woelfel, *Remembering the German Democratic Republic in United Germany*. There are many interesting parallels here to questions of revising democracy through the framework of NATO during the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. I hope to explore these questions more in depth in a future version of this project.
[226] Chapter 1 features a brief chronology of key exhibitions in the historicization of East Germany art in post-Wall Germany with special emphasis on the Weimar exhibition.
[227] *Orte des Erinnerns*, 11.

traces—in Berlin most potently through the now-permeable Berlin Wall which does not offer a troubled reading of history, but rather further reduces the East German state to its ending, reproducing the moment of 1989 through its fragments—is a strategy of intentional forgetting rather than drawing on memory to enter into a new time.

In the present, remnants of the Berlin Wall, scattered in now-permeable sections throughout the city, function as the most salient memorial to the East German state in the German capital. As Anna Kaminsky traces in her edited collection *Orte des Erinnerns: Gedenkzeichen, Gedenkstaetten und Museen zur Diktatur in SBZ und DDR*, funded by the Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur [Federal Foundation for the Coming to Terms with the SED Dictatorship], the memory of the East German state is inextricably linked with the persistence of the Berlin Wall. The project lists 270 spaces within the boundaries of Berlin where East Germany is remembered. Most of these correlate directly with the existence of the Wall: through its maintained presence at sites like the Berlin memorial at Bernauerstrasse and East Side Gallery, through its legacy of death as marked by the Errinerungszeichen für die Todesopfer an der Berliner Mauer [memorial markers for the victims of the Berlin Wall] where attempts to cross the Wall were made, or through its absence, as is the case on the Mauerweg, where the negative shape of the Wall, rendered in nature, cuts through the city. The foregrounding of the Berlin Wall—built overnight by the East German government in August 1961 and officially designated the "Antifaschistischer Schutzwall" [anti-fascist protective wall]—in the city's narrative of remembrance is an action that reduces the legacy of East Germany to its official politics and "Diktatur" status, contributing to the erasure of the complexities of the 40-year state. It is nearly impossible to think about the Palast der Republik without thinking of the Berlin Wall; these two structures, constructed one mile and 15 years apart, operate as diametric poles of representation.

This symbiotic relationship is refracted in the contemporary existence of both historical structures: today, the Berlin Wall has been transformed into a fragmented memorial, which, stripped of its power, continues to act as the most salient reminder of East Germany in the once-divided city, while the Palast der Republik, whose fate was quickly decided in the weeks following the Wende, exists as little more than a trace in a structure built to erase and replace its memory for a different audience. The complex relationship between the Berlin Wall and the Schloßplatz is made officially tangible through plans for a memorial; in addition to the reconstructed castle, the Bundestag has resolved to build a national monument to the (fall of the) Berlin Wall, the *Freiheits- und Einheitsdenkmal* on the Western side of the building: the monument, which will appear as a 55-meter, 330-ton glittering steel wing, is designed for engagement with the populace, reflecting the initial burst of collective activity in the first demolition of the Wall. [*Figure 47*] The memorial can hold up to 1,400 people at any one time, but it needs at least 20 people to get it to move.[228] The decision to place this memorial at the site of the former Palast der Republik rather than at the Berlin Wall or another site of reunification illustrates that the Schloßplatz is not only the site where the political reality of East Germany ended, but where it symbolically will end too.

As this chapter explores, symbols of the state are enmeshed within urban topographies throughout the former East, often rendered invisible, transformed into ruin, or limited to traces sapped of all but the barest power, but still enacting a form of (a)historicizing agency, following Buck-Morss's claims about the maintained power of the East after its end, and after the end of modernism. Thus, it is no longer in its "real" political existence that East Germany maintains a form of agency, but rather in its culture, its architecture, and its monuments—both intentional and unintentional, glorifying and vilifying—that East Germany continues to act in the present through

[228] While the Freedom and Unity Memorial was supposed to be completed in 2019, construction is ongoing today.

an undeniable assertion of its memories. While questions about the relationship between agency, urban topography (space), and memory extends beyond the borders of the once-divided capital city of the German Democratic Republic, and indeed beyond the boundaries of Germany and into the borderlands of Eastern Europe, Berlin offers a particularly compelling space for crystalizing the doubled memory of Germany 1945-1989 from the vantage point of the present. The rapidity of its thirty-year transformation from the capital of the GDR into a center of European cultural and political power is certainly one reason for the identification of Berlin with the history of modernism and the 20th century itself. But perhaps more pressing are the many conflicting and incompatible histories that are layered here, and the contradictions inherent to both the city's memory and the ways that its past(s) have been remembered.

The undoing of national trauma and the removal of its traces position the new Berliner Schloss as a site shaped by a desire for a different past, creating a marked difference between it and other loci of the city center: the "American style" reconstruction of Potsdammer Platz, the enshrined East German modernist architecture of Alexanderplatz, the carefully maintained tension between the technological progress and ruin at Zoo-Garten. However, the reconstruction skips neatly over forty years of German/German division, producing the opportunity to re-build from the ruins of Nazi Germany not in the socialist German Democratic Republic but rather in the Federal Republic, asking how Germany's capital would have looked under the domination of Western European capitalism and maintaining the frame of modernism. The reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss after the *Wende* re-writes German history from standpoint of the victory of capitalism over communism, producing a monument to the victory of West Germany over East Germany in 1989 and the subsequent domination of neo-liberal Western capitalism. Together with the Memorial to the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the reconstructed castle will work to further link the

pre-1918 history to the post-1989 present, engendering a displacement of the socialist history of the site but maintaining the modernist binaries between capitalism and communism through erasure.

In the book project *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, Piotr Piotrowski describes a museum as a text, one which constructs a narrative through its organizational structure, collections, exhibitions, and architecture. [229] The notion of reading a museum through the aspects that constitute its existence is of course an established mode of understanding its contribution to the society it is built in and for. However, for Piotrowski, the inadvertent identity that a museum takes on due to its architectural character and its external relationship to the urban space that surrounds it offers a productive way of understanding the narrative it produces on a level that exceeds the kind of intentional, cloaked historicizing work done by the internal aspects of the institution, aspects which were centered in the first chapter of this dissertation. Taken together, the interplay between the museum text itself (which I call the museum's content) and what frames that content (what I name the institution's context) creates particular ideological meanings and functions together as the symbolic expression of a museum.[230]

Piotrowski employs the notions of content and context in his project in order to construct the dialect of "traumaphilia" and "traumaphobia," situating art museums in post-communist East Central Europe in relation to their traumatic past via the spaces and narratives they inhabit and construct. Institutions like Estonia's Kumu kunstimuuseum (KUMU), which Piotrowski cites as a key example "traumaphilia," attempt to actively address and work through, rather than exclude, the past trauma of communism. This is visible above all the content of the KUMU permanent

[229] Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Reaction books, 2012). Chapter 6: "New Museums in New Europe," 203.
[230] Ibid.

collection, which integrates Estonian Socialist Realism, marking it as a local, rather than Soviet, phenomenon and thus reclaiming a national art history. In contrast, and as a key example of a "traumaphobic" institution, Piotrowski cites the Romanian Muzeul Național de Artă Contemporană al României (MNAC), an institution which is set on the forgetting and displacement of the trauma associated with the past. Such traumaphobic institutions refuse to address the problematic of the post-traumatic (post-communist) condition of the present; their attempts to forget are often driven by a desire to enter the realm of the global contemporary, but the act of intentional forgetting or overlooking excludes them from the project of contemporaneity because of the very global/local frame upon which it is constituted.[231] This, according to Piotrowski, is the case in Bucharest, where national histories are replaced by global ones through exhibition, undermining even the architectural grounding of the institution.[232]

As one of the major historians of modern and contemporary art in post-communist Europe, Piotrowski makes these important comments in reference to a number of "new museums in new Europe,"[233] museums that have emerged in the area formerly located "behind" the Berlin Wall since the events of 1989, which are necessarily shaped by a traumatic relationship to their national identity, urban site, and even institutional history.

This frame of trauma is richly evocative and deeply tempting when thinking about the Humboldt Forum: the Humboldt Forum is surely a new museum in a new Europe, an institution which seeks to re-historicize and re-orient Germany from the moment of the present, above all

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[231] See: Zdenka Badovinac, *Comradeship: Curating, Art, and Politics in Post-Socialist Europe* (New York: ICI, 2019) and Terry Smith, *Art to Come* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019)

[232] The MNAC is located in Bucharest's Palace of the Parliament, a key site for the construction of local identity after the Revolution of 1989. I will be visiting the institution with the Piotr Piotrowski Foundation for a week in June of 2023 and hope to develop a broader dialogue between German institutions and traumaphobic museums based on that visit.

[233] Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 202-221; this chapter was the starting point for my thinking about this dissertation project.

through the means of architecture. The trauma left behind by the GDR clearly casts a long shadow over the institution: indeed, the socialist past that once dominated this site had to be completely demolished in order for a symbol of the reunified Germany, complete with an exhibitionary form of re-written memory culture, to be built in its place. As Philipp Oswalt notes of the transition between the Palast der Republik and the Berliner Schloss, this refusal to remember was done intentionally, with an express political aim:

> The process of reconstruction was carried out rigidly and without compromise. First, despite recommendations by the committee of experts, no effort was made to determine whether or how parts of the Palast der Republik, which was located on the designated and former site, could be integrated into the new building… with a less ideological perspective on the history of the German nation, there would have been no question that the Palast der Republik should have been preserved, at least in part. Nevertheless, the Bundestag even tolerated cost overruns for its planned demolition in order to rule such an option out.[234]

What initially appears to be an entirely traumaphobic posture by the reconstructed Berliner Schloss actually helps to elucidate the complex dynamics of remembering and forgetting that take place in the former spaces of East Germany and points to the weakness of Piotrowski's binary of traumaphilia/traumaphobia when it is applied to the spaces and times of the former German Democratic Republic. Mirroring the work done by Arwed Messmer's photograph that opened this chapter, the negation of the building in the political realm draws more attention to it, and it becomes more present through its absence. Furthermore, despite the seemingly traumaphobic politics of non-preservation taken up by the Berlin Senate, the orientation of the Humboldt Forum, which constitutes the Eastward facing façade of the structure, within a specifically East German urban topography that surrounds the Schlossplatz, made particularly present by the towering

[234] Oswalt, *Building a National House*.

television tower at Alexanderplatz, which is reflected in the large, dark windows of the Humboldt Forum, points towards to an inability to overcome and forget this past.[235]

What is particularly critical in this puzzle is the unconscious confluence of the post-socialist and post-colonial pasts that take place in the spaces of the Humboldt Forum. Reading the Berliner Schloss project through the lens of trauma is not an end in itself but is critical as a means precisely because it makes visible the two modes of historical trauma intersect here: on the one hand, the traumatic past of colonialism, which the Humboldt Forum seeks to unpack and excise; on the other, the neglected past of socialism, which boils dangerously below the surface. Here, a major shortcoming of German memory culture, namely an inability to grapple with multiple pasts at once, is revealed. Although the binary of traumaphilia/phobia cannot be completely mapped onto the specific cultural topography that has emerged around German memory culture—first developed to come to terms with the Holocaust and the past of fascism, later applied to the "second" dictatorship of Germany, the GDR—the method that Piotrowski employs to read these institutions, namely his emphasis on the meaning of the hidden relationship between the present (the content of museums) and the past (invoked by the institution's context), offers a new layer of meaning for the Berliner Schloss project in its own right, and a critical way of understanding the institution's relationship to its socialist past. While the Humboldt Forum's unconscious but inescapable orientation towards the trauma of the socialist past is revealed in its spatial orientation (including its urban setting, its architectural traces, which I view as a form of spolia, and its relationship with the body (of the state, of the viewer)), its content relies on a temporal frame,

[235] Questions of the relationship between the museum and its (traumatic) past will be explored in more depth in the final chapter of this project, which looks at a different institution in Berlin that existed on the no-man's land between East and West for forty years; however, in this chapter, I draw on Piotrowski's argument to use the building blocks of reading museum interior and exterior in a novel way which help to elucidate the complex dynamics that play out on the Schlossplatz.

which mitigates the trauma of the communist past by folding multiple pasts (including the socialist, the colonial, the Second World War, and the aftermath of all of these moments), and their attendant traumas, together and often shifting the burden of piecing it together to the individual viewer in the form of traces or bodily encounters. When these frames are collapsed, as illustrated in the exhibition *Geschichte des Ortes*, one of the many exhibitions that forms the Humboldt Forum, it becomes clear that despite the millions of Euros and attention placed on the Schloßplatz in the last 30 years, the site and its new building continues to occupy the same liminal position introduced by Arwed Messmer's photograph that opened this chapter, one that can only be transcended through a conscious layering of present and absent, conscious and unconscious, histories. Thus, the case of the Berlin Schloss moves beyond the traumatic binary described out by Piotrowski. This both mirrors the exceptional, excluded situation of the GDR within the frame of post-socialist Europe and necessitates a new way of understanding the trauma of the past in this frame: while the socialist trauma is consciously done away with, the trauma of an absent post-socialist remembrance continues to assert itself within the complex post-1989 global nexus.

3.4 Time and Space on the Schlossplatz

Susan Buck-Morss identifies 1989 as a critical moment because it produced "a fundamental shift in the history map that shattered an entire conception of the world on both sides," marking the end of the 20th century in both a symbolic and a real sense.[236] While she positions this ideological paradigm shift and its attendant production of a new and globally shared time (at least

[236] Buck-Morss, *Dreamworlds and Catastrophe,* xi.

between the former East and West) as centered in European history, the effects of 1989 were not limited to Europe and the Global North but rather touched all parts of the world. As Piotr Piotrowski, Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg have observed, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc intersected temporally with the demolition of the Apartheid system in South Africa. In their formulation, this led to the breakdown of the politically engineered asynchronicity that had first been produced by colonialism.[237] Ultimately, these events fueled the emergence of post-colonial and post-socialist studies, which borrow methods and language from each other and remain inextricably intertwined 30 years after 1989. Thus, the "post-Soviet", or in the terms of Piotr Piotrowski and Zdenka Badovinac, "post-communist"/"post-socialist" condition of contemporaneity is a temporal rather than spatial situation. It describes a universal and historical moment of global contemporaneity instead of being limited to the geo-political spaces that were formerly located "behind" the Iron Curtain.

Modernism's center/periphery model, upon which the East/West, South/North relationships were built, was shattered by the events of 1989, creating a globalized world with multiple centers in dialogue and ultimately relativizing the West. This global transformation shifted the orientation of art history, which emerged and was constructed within the frame of modernism; as Hans Belting suggests in his text *Art History After Modernism*, art or art history is not over, but "both in art and in the discourse of art history, we can foresee on the horizon the end

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[237] This is the key argument in the large-scale project *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds* "Globalization and Contemporary Art" – Peter Weibel: "colonies were never an end in themselves but always a means to increase wealth of the mother country"; "Modernity, and by extension modern art, were part of European expansion, part of the expansive universal ideology, part of historical capitalism's ideology of progress. Eurocentric culture as part of the capitalism world system that arose around 1500 in Europe is increasingly being questioned in the colonized countries. Contemporary art in the global age addresses the opportunities for a gradual transformation of the culture of this capitalist world system and the attendant difficulties and contradictions as well as the opportunities for developing an understanding of other cultures and their equality…" All quotes from Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel, editors. *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds.* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013)

of a tradition whose familiar shape had become, in the era of modernism, canonical."[238] Belting's work rejects a guiding model of an art history with internal logic in the era of the global contemporary; rather one method becomes multiple methods, and one history, several set in ever-evolving dialogue. The shifting orientation of museums, institutions upheld by the guiding logic of art history and its attendant modernism, is one critical symptom of this transformation. This shift is perhaps most visible within the transformation of ethnographic museums after 1989. These museums, which in the Western world are rooted in the 16th and 17th century history of cabinets of curiosity as well as 18th and 19th century industrial fairs, are overflowing with colonial spoils, as can be seen in the case of the original Berliner Schloss's Kunstkammer. Clémentine Deliss's recent text *The Metabolic Museum* reimagines the ethnographic museum as a living public space. The former director of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt writes, "I began to recognize the museum as a complex body with a severely ailing metabolism, afflicted organs, and black cannels of circulation… the metabolic museum is the aim of the post-ethnographic museum—to be a healthy living institution."[239] The direct comparison of the sickened human body which Deliss employs is significant here and offers many parallels to both Svetlana Boym's writing about using architecture and urban planning as a mode of socialist resolution of a fascist, sickened German city, and also the Association of the Berliner Schloss's language of architecture as "healing" a city center tainted by modernism.

Deliss's text, which was published in 2020, is particularly significant in this context because it gestures to the delayed speed at which the process of coming to terms with the colonial past is taking place in Germany's museums. The processes that Deliss describes are in Germany

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[238] Hans Belting. *Art History After Modernism.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 7.
[239] Clemetine Deliss, *The Metabolic Museum*, (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2020) 18.

implicitly bound up with the re-construction of the Berliner Schloss and the incorporation of the Humboldt Forum. The reconstruction has fostered major debate about not only an abstract coming to terms with the colonial past, but also about the acquisition, display, restitution, and future of a group of specific objects: the Benin Bronzes from the Edo Kingdom. Much has been said in the last twenty years about the proper place of these objects, with dialogue ramping up as the opening of the Humboldt Forum came closer, and indeed within the last weeks before opening the decision was made to produce a schedule to return all of the objects to their origin country of Nigeria and the soon to be built Edo Museum of West African Art in Benin City.[240] The Humboldt Forum is positioning itself (and being forced into this position) on the forefront of this discussion in a German context; following the debate surrounding its display of these objects, other ethnological institutions in Germany have closed to renovate their collections. Leipzig's Grassi Museum, in particular, offers a successful model for how these kinds of museums, predicated on the foundation of colonial collections and hegemonies, might use contemporary art as an intervention and a way of moving towards a more just future. In Leipzig, exhibitions like *Berge Versetzen* [*Move Mountains*], an attempt at participative restitution collaboratively made by Tanzanian artists Rehema Chachage and Valerie Asiimwe in collaboration with the German artist collective Para, replace histories of the Global South with European ones in the prison of the museum, producing works like *The Vault* (2021), where the summit stone of Germany's highest mountain was removed by the artists and held hostage in the reparation process for Mount Kilimanjaro's peak (in present-

[240] The debate about the ownership and display of colonial objects in the Humboldt Forum is perhaps best summarized through the discussion between Hermann Parzinger, President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, and Hamburg historian Jürgen Zimmerer, published in July 2019. In this sometimes-tense conversation, Parzinger and Zimmerer debate the establishment of the Benin Dialogue Group, a group founded to negotiate the display, potential return and future loan of the stolen Benin Bronzes, as well as the question of who should take up the "burden of proof" in reference to ownership of colonial objects and the imperialist legacy of Alexander von Humboldt himself. See: https://www.zeit.de/zeit-geschichte/2019/04/humboldt-forum-kolonialismus-hermann-parzinger-juergen-zimmerer

day Tanzania, formerly part of the colony of German East Africa), which was taken by colonial geographer Hans Meyer in 1889 and gifted to Kaiser Wilhelm. [*Figure 48*] "Only when Kilimanjaro's summit stone has been returned will the peak of the Zugspitze be restored to its original place."[241] This kind of tit-for-tat reparative action shows the potential of contemporary art to grapple with the complex dynamics that emerge out of the spaces that house it. Unfortunately, contemporary art plays less of a role in the Berliner Schloss and thus, the objects it holds take on a subconscious, unmediated dialogue, intentionally taken out of a global dialogue by the frames of the individual institutions that manage them. While the post-colonial is placed at the center of the Humboldt Forum and Berliner Schloss, made explicitly visible through exhibitions and programming, the post-socialist frame, the remembering of the Palast der Republik and the society that built it, takes place on a subconscious level, one built into the museum's context and marginalized in its content: one which above all uses a multiplicity of temporalities and their coalescence as its tool.

The separate and collapsing frames of time and space offer critical modes of reading the reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss and its attendant Humboldt Forum in reference to the appearing and disappearing legacy of East Germany. A spatial orientation reveals itself through the institution's context; as previously discussed, its inscription into Berlin's urban topography shows a clear traumaphobic orientation marked by an unconscious inability to forget. The building is located in a central plaza in Berlin, across the Spree River from the Marx-Engels-Forum, a park created by authorities in the German Democratic Republic in the final years of the state.[242] Ludwig Engelhardt's larger-than-life statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels cast in bronze dominate

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[241] Artist statement from Grassi Museum, viewed September 2022.
[242] Brain Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 197.

the site. [*Figure 49*] These statues do not face the reconstructed baroque facades of the structure, but rather the natural stone and glass windows of the building's eastern side, which is marked with the branding of the "Humboldt Forum" but critically bear no direct reference to the Palast der Republik. Read together with the *Freiheits- und Einheitsdenkmal* that promises to appear in the near future and is located on the Berliner Schloss's west side, across the building from the Marx and Engels statue, the Humboldt Forum becomes situated in a constellation of modes of thinking through the past fomented by its urban context rather than by what it holds. Unlike the clear-cut examples invoked by Piotrowski of the Romanian MNAC (located in Bucharest's former People's Palace) and the Estonian KUMU (located in an entirely modern structure with no links to the surrounding urban topography), the building on the Schloßplatz is neither purely a historic reconstruction nor a contemporary tabula rasa, but rather a jigsaw puzzle constructed from pieces of both with a conscious aesthetic and architectural unity between the disparate parts.[243] Stripped of context, the Eastern side of the structure takes on an almost void-like, atemporal quality, escaping categorization and historical belonging, acting as a buffer between the two disparate pasts of Prussia (symbolized by the reconstructed facades on the North, West, and South sides of the building) and East Germany (represented by the topographic surroundings to the East of the Schloss) and forcing them out of direct dialogue.

The atemporal eastern facade also faces Alexanderplatz, a public space that was constructed in the era of East Germany and remains important today. Here, we glimpse another thread of unconscious memorial to the East German past in the new building engendered through space: the large, dark windows of the Forum, which were ostensibly created for the transparency

[243] Lines wrap around the building continuously, and although stylistically different, the pattern of three large windows on the first, second, and third floors, with a small turret window on the fourth remains consistent across all four facades.

they impart to objects from Germany's colonial past, produce a mirroring effect which reflects the landscape of the East German urban center to passing visitors. If one can look beyond the natural façade of smooth stone, the windows offer a kind of portal into the past, or a future that never was. The three baroque facades of the structure were constructed to create a conscious continuity with the totality of Berlin's Museum Island; in this single side that faces away from Museum Island, transparent and reflective glass rather than solid and opaque stone becomes the tool for transmitting memory. This is especially significant because glass was a critical tool of the Palast der Republik itself; the modernist aesthetics of the colored glass and concrete structure were frequently noted for their reflective quality, even drawing the nickname "the house of a thousand windows."[244] Their reflective quality is captured in British artist Tacita Dean's film *Palast*, which is comprised of a sequence of still shots angled at the reflective surfaces of bronze-mirrored windows. [*Figure 50*] Dean's tightly cropped shots capture the surroundings of the Palast, rendered ghostly through reflection, as the sun slowly sinks over Berlin. In a text accompanying the film, Dean has written: "It is the building that always catches and holds the sun in the grey centre of the city: its regime-orange reflective glass mirroring the setting sun perfectly, as it moves from panel to panel along its chequered surface, drawing you in to notice it on your way up the Unter den Linden to Alexanderplatz."[245] These same reflections are maintained despite the destruction of one building and the reconstruction of another; they offer an unintentional and ghostly memorial to the demolished Palace, reflecting its historical existence and agency. [*Figure* 51] I would like to think of these reflections as an ephemeral spolia, a negative without a photograph, signified without signifier, reflecting, and working unconsciously and diametrically to the content of the institution.

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[244] Tacita Dean, *Berlin Works* (Cornwall: Tate St Ives, 2005), 22.
[245] Ibid.

Whereas the context of the institution is predicated on an unconscious yet inescapable relationship to the socialist past that surrounds it, temporality is heavily drawn on through the museum's content, particularly in the exhibition *Berlin Global* which is presented by the Humboldt Forum as the central piece of the narrative it seeks to construct about the multiple links between Berlin and the world.[246] *[Figure 52]* The exhibition is spread across 4000 square meters, almost the entirety of the building's first floor, and shows Berlin's many connections with the world through an investigation of history, identity, and culture. Visitors begin in a room called "Thinking the World" and move on to an introductory space entitled "Berlin Images"—pictures of the city across its long history. Rooms with individual themes then follow: Revolution, Free Space, Boundaries, Entertainment, War, Fashion, and Interconnection.[247] Berlin Global is both the most highly publicized aspect of the Humboldt Forum, beyond the re-constructed façade of the castle itself, and it is also the clearest site for viewing the institution's desire to be an agent in the production of contemporary values and identities. This is fostered through the mandatory wearing of a tracking device in the form of a watch-like wristband (again, gesturing towards the temporal engagement of the exhibition), which traces visitors' pathways between the individual themed rooms as they are asked to make decisions like "Borders Protect Me" or "Borders Exclude Me".[248] Through this, the binaries of modernism, once pictured as East vs. West, communism vs. capitalism, are heavily entrenched within the structure of the exhibition itself, transforming the

[246] This exhibition is curated by and from the collections of the Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, which administers five institutions that grapple with Berlin's history in different time periods.
[247] Stadtmuseum Berlin, „BERLIN GLOBAL: Berlin Ausstellung im Humboldt Forum." Accessed January 2023. https://www.stadtmuseum.de/museum/berlin-global
[248] A complete list of choices: „I want to help the world" vs. "I want to help my community" (Thinking the World); "My city should take care of its residents" vs. "My city should be open to the world" (Berlin-Bilder); "I'm ready for change" vs. "I protect what we have" (Revolution); "I share free spaces" vs. "I make free spaces my own" (Free Spaces); "Borders protect me" vs. "Borders exclude me" (Boundaries); "I like to have fun" vs. "I consume consciously" (Entertainment); "Weapons Protect" vs. "I'm in favor of disarmament" (War).

visitor's body into the divided Berlin. These decisions are explicitly linked with the political, economic, military, cultural and individual values of society. There are seven value-decisions for viewers to make as they walk through the 4000 square meter exhibition. Each decision produces a cheerful "ding" from the wristband, which has at the entrance been programmed with your name and language preference [the value decisions are in English and German]. Caught somewhere between the limited binary system of modernism and a space where not carefully looking out for value-decision can cause one to accidentally enter a doorway that opposes one's values, the play between invoking history to remind us not to forget the past and transforming the idea of a real past into a consumable fantasy, tensely emerges throughout the large and technologically rich space. The exhibition culminates in a series of screens, not unlike digital check-in kiosks at airports, where audience members return their wristband to receive in return a printed-out receipt that shows the tracking of one's decisions through the creation of four categories: Equality, Freedom, Tradition, Security. *[Figure 53]* This interactive aspect of the exhibition gestures to a decisive mode of identity construction in the 21st century: by invoking German history and positioning the viewer at the apex of a series of choices which are simultaneously historical and contemporary, viewers are sorted by their level of adherence the four values that in many ways underpin German and Western societies today. Our identity becomes constructed in reference to the contemporary German state, our bodies transformed into surveilled objects. Wearing a tracking watch is not optional.

The temporal strategies of the exhibition become especially apparent in the spaces where inside and outside come into the closest contact. Each window in *Berlin Global* is framed by two stationary binoculars; when viewers look through the lens and into the city, they are confronted with views from the same position in various moment of the site's past—Prussian, Post-War, East

German, Aftermath. *[Figure 54]* Whereas a binocular is generally a tool used to travel in space, bringing subject and object closer, here it is transformed into a kind of time machine, bringing us closer to multiple times. Interestingly, the work of Arwed Messmer, whose image of the ruined Palast der Republik opened this chapter, is heavily featured here. This strategy directly reflects the curatorial strategy of the exhibition as a whole, as illustrated in the "Boundaries" nexus. Unlike most of the rest of the exhibition, this room is mostly empty, with several *viewfinders* set up over a large map of Berlin. In the center of the room, a group of four objects invoke boundaries drawn from Berlin to the outside world: a grabber fork from the 18th century, used to capture men fleeing the city to avoid military service in the Prussian army is displayed beside a map of colonial Africa in 1911 after a treaty was signed between France and Germany, the engraved charm bracelet of an unknown Jewish girl acquired by the Berlin City Museum in 1939 along with 5,000 other silver objects belonging to former Jewish residents, and finally a brick from the first stage of the Berlin Wall, constructed overnight in 1961. *[Figure 55]* The act of presenting these works together serves to relativize and lessen each individual historical trauma. Within intentionally preserved and presented memory, which we can understand as relaying official memory because of the close alliance between the Humboldt Forum and the Federal German government, East Germany occupies a space that equals the colonial era or the Third Reich; there is no new construction built in its memory, and no exhibition devoted to an unpacking of its past. It is in the spatial memory presented and carried over by the context of the space (rather than by its content) that East Germany begins to re-assert itself once again as something that cannot be forgotten, paralleling the interplay between official and unofficial currents of memory.

Time is also apparent in other content-based aspects of the institution, including Stefan Sous's work *Time Machine*, commissioned for the space and hung directly outside the entrance to

the exhibition *Berlin Global*. [*Figure 56]* The work consists of 66 clocks which are all set at different times and are labeled with the names of cities, some still accessible—Dresden, Jerusalem, St. Petersburg, Rome—some only existent in memory, or whose names have changed with time—Konigsberg, Constantinople, Calcutta, Danzig. This work, which bridges exhibition to architecture, gestures to what is perhaps the most important use of time in the institution: the re-writing of history in reference to Germany's colonial past. In Sous's piece this work is done by laying bare time itself as a tool of the colonial, one which can rename, overwrite, and erase. The incorporation of the Ethnologisches Museum and Museum of Asian Art into the structure seeks to both foreground Germany's contemporary commitment to making amends for its actions as a colonizer, but also augment Museum Island into a space where all histories can speak. While examining the threads of time and space allow us to picture the differing orientations of content and context, it is in their coming together in the dispersed exhibition *Geschichte des Ortes* that the complex position of East Germany reveals itself most clearly. The exhibition, made up of a video panorama and 35 "Spuren" (traces, clues) of the past which are dispersed across the 30,000 square meter exhibitionary space. [*Figure 57]*

Language first introduces us to this collapse of the temporal and spatial: the German name for the exhibition's content, "Spuren," is explicitly spatial, transforming the site into a kind of map, a treasure hunt for viewers to uncover its varied past.[249] Critically, this exhibitionary strategy is translated into English, the second language of the Humboldt Forum, as "Flashbacks," an expressly temporal mode of naming. This already hints that the exhibition works differently along local (German) and global (English) lines. These "flashbacks" are dispersed across all four floors of the Berliner Schloss, taking on a quality of spontaneity or disruption that transports viewers temporally

[249] This is also done in the title of the exhibition itself à Geschichte (temporal) des Ortes (spatial).

throughout the long history of the Schloßplatz, interrupting their sojourn into the constructed binary of past/present that emerges from baroque architecture and contemporary exhibitionary practice. Paralleling the strategy of display in "Berlin Global," these traces are not limited to East Germany, although it is in the reincorporation of objects from the Palast der Republik that the East German past is most obviously visible in the space; alongside objects like an Iced Coffee Cup from the Milk Bar of the Palast der Republik, which is strangely located on the actual roof of the structure, exposed to the elements, these traces also include historical objects from different origins, like a plate from the 5th century or a silver ship-model once owned by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Using a map, visitors must actively engage through the act of looking/seeking to find these objects that offer material proof of what has come before; in a symbolic sense, we are given the agency to uncover for ourselves aspects of a world lost to the present and thus construct our own meanings through them. But many of these traces are ultimately rendered powerless by their displacement, as becomes especially apparent in the case of the salvaged signage system from the Palast der Republik which is displayed on the building's first floor between the Humboldt Labor and the Berlin Global exhibition. [*Figure 58*] This system, designed by Klaus Wittkugel, has been rendered out of time and out of space. It is significant that the clock is permanently frozen at 9:15, whether PM or AM; the building itself opens at 10AM and closes at 8PM, meaning that the clock is never on time for its audience, gesturing towards the inaccessibility of entering this particular past in any authentic, immersive sense. Similarly, the spatial orientation provided by the sign system, including arrows that point towards the Palace's theater, bowling alley, beer salon, and youth meeting point, do not signify anything beyond the surface level display of design, for none of these rooms exist anymore, and the signage system has been dislocated from its original standpoint in the Palast der Republik, transforming it into a map without a territory. The desire to

represent the Palast der Republik through its ephemera strips it of any serious historical consequence and place.

Two works from the former Galerie im Palast make further reference to the socialist history of the site: Lothar Zitzmann's *Weltjungendlied*, a red-toned work which shows the real and abstracted bodies of youths from around the world coming together in a dance configuration [*Figure 59*] and Wolfgang Mattheuer's *Guten Tag, [Figure 60]* a depiction of a family strolling above an industrial city brutally engulfing the countryside. Zitzmann's work is located within the "Entertainment" nexus of the Berlin Global exhibition, which focuses on the use of the Palast der Republik as a site of leisure rather than a political construction. *[Figure 61*] Its reduction to a consumable piece of entertainment is foregrounded by its curatorial context, which include its orientation as the backdrop to one of the only seating areas in the whole space of the exhibition (facing away from the work) and its lighting by original lamps from the Palast der Republik, which a nearby sign notes are available for purchase in the museum's gift shop. What once literally illuminated the architectonic and painterly representation of East Germany's dreamed utopia has now been transformed into an object of consumption, rendering this entire nexus of recollection as neutered. Zitzmann and Mattheuer's works were previously displayed together, along with 14 other works in the Galerie im Palast; their isolation here transforms what was once a dialogue of many voices about the dream of communism into a single representational narrative that was never intended, perhaps mirroring the flattened narrative of East Germany that emerges in the majority of the reconstructed Berliner Schloss and in many contemporary German societal narratives.[250] However this reading is complicated by *Guten Tag:* Mattheuer's work occupies a more complex

[250] David Clarke with Ute Woelfel, "Remembering the German Democratic Republic in United Germany" in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic* and Andrew H. Beatty "The Politics of Remembering the GDR: Official and State-Mandated Memory since 1990" in ibid.

position, located on the second floor of the structure and displayed as one-third of yet another nexus of representation of the Palast der Republik, which in this instance also includes a broken piece of the relief from the outside of the Volkskammer in the Palast der Republik, which was cut into forty-three pieces when it was dismantled in 1998, and a surveillance monitor from its extensive security system. *[Figures 62, Figure 63*] While these two latter objects make explicit reference to the political reality of East Germany in its own time, the content of Mattheuer's work refuses categorization.[251] The depicted family walk through an imagined landscape that escapes the boundaries of East and West[252]; they exist within the frame of modernity, but their precise temporal belonging is ambiguous. The painting's flanking objects in the displaced nexus of the Palast der Republik bridge the content-context divide, bringing together the internal (monitoring system) and external (relief) in a collapsing the spatio-temporal frame and reproduce, if only for a moment, the complex reality of life in East Germany.

Mattheuer's work is located directly outside of the exit of the Ethnological Museum housed in the Humboldt Forum, the first work that confronts viewers when they leave the new institutional housing for Berlin's colonial-era collections. The location of the work between on the one hand the nexus produced by the relief from the exterior of the Volkskammer and the surveillance system and on the other the re-evaluation of Berlin's holdings of art from the Global South, now re-oriented in a post-colonial present, allows it to function as a bridge in both space and time, linking East German histories with multiple colonial pasts, and also allowing the viewer to imagine a new

[251] Wolfgang Mattheuer (1927-2004) was one of the four best-known artists in East Germany, a founder of the Leipziger Schule, and, despite his state-support in the GDR, a complex artist whose work often subverted the ideologies of the state. Two of his sculptures, *Der Jahrhundertschritt* and *Mann mit Maske* offer the frame for this dissertation.

[252] This is especially important because Mattheuer as an artist placed great emphasis on real spaces in his paintings, usually representing either his place of birth, Vogtland, or the city he spent most of his life, Leipzig. This painting depicts neither.

kind of museum: one where the margins finally stand in the center of power in this city, reimagined from the vantage point of the present. This final moment in the museum, which visitors encounter just before they turn to exit the momentous space, offers a potential moment of real historical re-writing and interconnection, showcasing two histories side-by-side on their own terms, and the potential to produce a new kind of memory culture which works on the past and future simultaneously. But exiting the building, which necessitates a confrontation between the body of the viewer and the reconstructed architecture of the Prussian palace, shatters this moment of quiet reflection. The frame and what it contains are at odds, producing continuity only when actively sought; memory culture is employed as a tool of power, which offers a diversity of voices only when spoken through the mouth of the hegemon. This can only be overcome when we can recall the lesson learned from Messmer's photograph: East German contemporaneity in the aftermath of 1989 is not forgetting, but rather is learning to live in the ruins of the modernity it shattered.

3.5 Die DDR hat's ~~nie~~ doch gegeben[253]

Despite the completion of the reconstructed Berliner Schloss and the opening of the Humboldt Forum in the summer of 2021, the "healed cityscape" of Berlin continues to be disrupted by ongoing contention surrounding the present and future of the Schlossplatz. Groups like Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum (CCWAH) have staged protests, including on the inaugural day of the institution, against the "feigned criticality" of "Berlin's

[253] The GDR (East Germany) did~~n't~~ exist after all

newest landmark."[254] They claim that the Humboldt Forum takes part in a kind of neo-colonial gaslighting project, ultimately concluding that the institution has been (re)constructed on the foundations of colonialism and cultural supremacy.[255] CCWAH is also concerned with the implications of the institution's reconstructed historical facades, for example who funded them and what political views these donors might hold. These concerns are illustrated in the case of right-wing donor Ehrhardt Bödecker, a major funder of the façade reconstruction, whose openly antisemitic and right-radical views has necessitated his name and image being removed post-mortem from central plaques in the building.[256] These concerns are further visible in the aesthetics of the reconstructed castle itself: the golden orb and cross that adorns the roof of the structure is understood by CCWAH as the Reichsapfel, or Globus cruciger, an explicit symbol of Christian domination dating from the 11th century, which was deployed as an emblem of power by various European monarchies including Prussia. Taken together with the re-inscription of the cross's base with a quote attributed to Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV— "All in heaven and on earth and beneath the earth should kneel in the name of Jesus" – CCWAH reads this undertaking as fully undermining the polyphonic, dialogue-based, and diverse strivings emphasized in language of public and governmental support for the reconstruction of the building, and instead centering traditional, Christian, western values in the center of an increasingly diverse Berlin. The group weaponizes the language of the builders of the Berliner Schloss, and more broadly, the West, against itself as

[254] Noëlle BuAbbud, "Nightmare at the Mu-se-um: An Inter-view with Coali-tion of Cul-tur-al Work-ers Against the Humboldt Forum," Berlin Art Link, Feb. 5, 2021 https://www.berlinartlink.com/2021/02/05/interview-coalition-cultural-workers-against-humboldt-forum/

[255] CCWAH is only one in a long list of groups that has opposed the construction of the Humboldt Forum due to its imperialist orientation. As they state on their website, "CCWAH acknowledges and supports organizations that have long been active in resisting the Humboldt Forum, including Decolonize Berlin e.V., Berlin Postkolonial, No Humboldt 21, Decolonize Berlin Alliance, AfricAvenir, AFROTAK TV cyberNomads and Barazani."

[256] Jörg Häntzschel, *Humboldt-Forum: Genug der Ehre*. Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 3, 2021. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/humboldt-forum-ehrhardt-boedecker-spende-1.5455766

a medium of their refusal to condone this new cultural institution. A poster campaign from 2020 titled "I refuse to participate" circulates posters that state "I refuse to participate because I don't want to be added to 42.000 Quadratmeter Vielstimmigkeit, Austausch und Diversitaet." The hybridity of German and English, as well as the negation of the explicitly centered values of the institution, pose questions of who is speaking, and on whose behalf. The slogan of the group, "Tear it Down! And Turn it Upside Down!" reproduces early demands of the victorious West vis-à-vis the Palast der Republik itself, but takes this a step further, demanding not only the destruction of the building, but also of the society and history that built it.

Another group that works along the lines of mimicry and appropriation to critique the memory politics embedded on the Schlossplatz today is the Förderverein Palast der Republik e.V.. Since early 2021 this group of activists and artists have demanded the reconstruction of the Palast der Republik on the site where it formerly stood. They too subvert the language of the institution as a tool of uncovering and dismantling its power, laying bare the hegemonic ideologies that underwrite it:

> The ~~castle~~ palace will restore the familiar picture of Berlin, ~~complete~~ make its historic center more complex but also more livable and heal the previously wounded cityscape. Its reconstruction is making Berlin once more the much-loved '~~Athens~~ Cultural Metropolis on the Spree'. In this way a counterpoint is being created to the ~~mass-produced modern areas~~ historicized reconstruction of the city's centre.[257]

By quoting and openly editing the statement first put out in 1992 by the Förderverein Berliner Schloss, the group gesture towards the malleability of words, architecture, and power itself. Furthering the critical appropriation of the actions of the Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V., the group has claimed in a recent interview that there is a possibility for rebuilding the façade of the

[257] „Fordern" Foerderverein Palast der Republik eV. Accessed May 2021. https://palast.jetzt/#fordern

Humboldt Forum in the shape of the Palast der Republik precisely because "it also worked this way with the castle."[258] What is particularly interested to consider here is the parallel position that the two groups take on as they release these interconnected statements: in 1992, when the Förderverein Berliner Schloss sought the reconstruction of the castle, the East German building that had been consciously constructed to forget the Prussian past dominated this site. In the present, the reconstructed Prussian castle, which is enhanced with a (western) modernist façade that bears no resemblance to the (eastern) modernist architecture that stood here previously, has also been weaponized to forget the past it replaces. By consciously centering the lost GDR past in the same position that the castle found itself more than 30 years ago, Förderverein Palast der Republik opens up the space for thinking about potential futures that evade, resist, and even expropriate the mechanisms of capitalism. However, in contrast to the Förderverein Berliner Schloss, the Förderverein Palast der Republik is not seeking the complete erasure of the Prussian past of the site. Rather than a complete reconstruction of the Palast der Republik, they demand that a single façade be rebuilt and embedded into the Berlin Schloss, pushing the new institution away from the binary model of capitalism vs. communism that emerged during the Cold War, and towards the kind of utopia that had the potential to emerge immediately following the reunification of the two Germanys: a space of hybridity, of diversity, of dialogue-- essentially the future that the Humboldt Forum claims to desire for itself, albeit actively shaped by the pasts that the new museum seeks to forget. The aims of this group directly refute the claims presented in Arwed Messmer's photograph

[258] „Die Mitte komplexer machen" Interview with Ortrun Bargholz and Clemens Schöll, November 9, 2022. https://taz.de/Ideenwettbewerb-fuer-den-Schlossplatz/!5890488/ Interestingly, the founders of the group, who were born in 1989 and 1994 respectively, never experienced the Palast der Republik in its own time and space; their desire to rebuild something they never experienced mirrors comments by Elke Neumann (born in West Germany) cited earlier in this chapter in regards to the exhibition about the Palast der Republik set in Rostock.

in the opening of this chapter: instead, they insist that die DDR hat's *doch* gegeben (East Germany did exist, after all).

The desire to rebuild the Palast der Republik, at least in part, attempts to re-center the exhibitionary context of the socialist building in Berlin's center, would reflect not only the spatial expansion of Berlin's Museum Island that in part justified the placement of the Humboldt Forum and its ethnographic museum, but also a temporal one, including the time of East Germany, of the Eastern Bloc, even of communism, into the constellation of museums that use the tools of time and space to produce a history for the present. But what of the content of the Palast der Republik, which, in its present shape, only appears on the Schlossplatz as traces of the past, fractured and incomplete? While the sixteen works from the Galerie im Palast, some of the most important official images produced in East Germany, have been moved to the archives of Berlin's Deutsches Historisches Museum (a re-categorization which can be understood as shifting them from the category of art into the category of historical artifact), the question of the category they belonged to, namely East German commissioned public art, still remains open. These types of works, which decorated not only the halls and salons of the Palast der Republik, but also all manner of institutions in the GDR, including hospitals, train stations, schools, governmental buildings, as well as rest homes, training centers, business offices, guest houses and cafeterias, have occupied a precarious and marginal position since the end of East Germany. As I state in Chapter 1, these works were vilified, minimized, removed from public view and relegated to unreachable rural depots, written out of "German" art histories, and (intentionally) forgotten: a history for which the fate of the Palast der Republik acts as a microcosm. But unlike the Palast der Republik, these works couldn't simply be destroyed, and their maintenance required a new solution. In 1990, on behalf of the last Ministry of Culture in the GDR, the works of art whose purchase had been financed by the GDR

Cultural Fund were collected in all districts of the former GDR and sent to Beeskow Castle, a soon-to-be-converted cultural and educational center in Eastern Brandenburg, close to the Polish border. Herbert Schirmer, the last Minister of Culture in the GDR, became the first head of the institution. In 1995, the administration of the Oder-Spree district converted a warehouse near the castle into a secure and air-conditioned picture depot for the 20,000 works of art in total at the time from the states of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg and Berlin. [259] In 2001, the state of Brandenburg decided to transform this collection into the "Kunstarchiv Beeskow." While this archive was not set up to be a publicly accessible museum, a parallelly constructed museum in the neighboring city of Eisenhüttenstadt, housed exhibitions for the archive.[260] In 2021, collections from the two institutions merged to form the Museum Utopie und Alltag [Museum of Utopia and Every Day Life], which uses visual and material culture from the GDR to cast light on the tension between aspiration and reality, the idealized socialist concept of society and real everyday life. This institution illustrates what existed between the lived reality and utopic desires of East Germany, dedicating itself to the contradictions of culture in the 40-year history of the state. Rather than giving in to the demands of memory culture—which views the GDR either as a dream or nightmare—spaces like the Museum of Utopia and Every Day Life and the Kunstarchiv Beeskow produce a spectrum that reflects the complex reality of East Germany. The intentional spatial separation of these buildings, which work directly in contrast to the institutions of the Berliner Schloss and Humboldt Forum which are layered onto the same space, creates room for these narratives to exist like orbiting planets in a solar system, individual yet interconnected worlds, allowing for a cacophony of memory cultures rather than a singular, imposed one.

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[259] Thuringia, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt all administer their own state collections.
[260] "Kunstarchiv Beeskow," Museum Utopie und Alltag. Accessed December 2022. https://www.utopieundalltag.de/ueber-uns/#geschichte

In July 2022, under the steam of the 9 Euro ticket (a response by the German Federal Government to the war in Ukraine and the anticipated energy crisis in Germany), I took a regional train from Berlin to the town of Fürstenwalde before boarding a rickety bus that drove me through the sunflower filled fields of Brandenburg to the town of Beeskow to visit the archive. Beeskow was only located 71 kilometers away from Berlin but going there felt like traveling in time back to East Germany. When I reached the archive, a friendly but gruff research associate took me through a large, airy room full of work that I had never seen before: works from across the Northern GDR including endless paintings of Stalin, some minor work by members of the Leipzig School, even a painting by Neo Rauch that had been featured in the exhibition *Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne* in Weimar and not displayed publicly since. At the end of our tour, I asked the research associate if she had been to the Humboldt Forum, and what she thought of their treatment of the East Germany past. She scoffed, telling me that several of her colleagues been offered leadership, curatorial, and advisory positions in the new institution but they had all turned the offers down; it would be too much of a betrayal of their own past. As I left the archive, waiting at the dusty train station for almost an hour for the small bus to return me to Fürstenwalde before I could board the train that would take me back to Berlin, I reflected on the literally marginalized position that this work and the frame that contained it had to occupy in order to maintain a measure of autonomy, and an East German voice that didn't have to speak in the language of the West to make meaning.

The Kunstarchiv Beeskow and the Förderverein Palast der Republik e.V. offer two very different responses to the issue addressed in the exhibition "Geschichte des Ortes" in the Humboldt Forum. On the one hand, Beeskow embodies a kind of maintenance of content through displacement, a removal to a new context that reproduces the old one—Beeskow really feels like East Germany—while the Förderverein Palast der Republik e.V. seeks a recreation of context,

displaced in time but anchored in space. Both of these projects offer their own vision for the future, whether one mired in using the local to avoid the global or one that draws on the global in order to center the local firmly within the frame of dialogue. In any case, these different responses to the puzzle of the East German past offer up two opposing visions of the museum that both embody their own kind of utopia. However, when thinking about the shape of the museum within this dialogue, it is critical to consider a third shape of museum: the European ethnological museum. This kind of museum, a major driving force behind the institutions emergent in this chapter, works by displacing, in space or in time, or maybe both, in order to preserve. These institutions do this same action, although they are bound in with the local context that is inescapable whether one desires to forget (Schlossplatz) or seeks to remember (Beeskow). However, in a present which is increasingly seeing the return of looted goods from European museums to the spaces and institutions of the Global South, the notion of displacement in order to remember has become unsustainable, untenable. This highlights the complexities of memory culture when more than one memory is at stake: the holding of more than one memory—whether of the socialist past or the colonial, the GDR in its glory or its aftermath—becomes troubled by the frame of the museum when content and context are at odds.

It is also here that the driving questions behind this chapter begin to emerge: what makes this particular city, and its newest institution, such unique and important sites for viewing the collision of the post-colonial and post-socialist frames? Why does the Schloßplatz, one of many sites in Berlin, Germany, and Europe with a long and complicated history, matter? And finally, why does East Germany, and specifically East Berlin, constitute such an exceptional site within post-1989 national narratives? As urban historian Brian Ladd has noted in his book *The Ghosts of Berlin*, it is its uniquely politicized landscape, its uncertain national identity, and the weight of its

memories that makes Berlin fascinating; "the reunification of Berlin and of Germany in 1990 has forced Berliners to make many decisions about what to build and what to preserve. The impulse to preserve or to destroy—whether motivated by nostalgia, desire for prestige or for legitimacy, or even economics—reflects deep-seated beliefs about historical identity."[261] The Humboldt Forum and Berliner Schloss project exposes the links between the de- and re-construction of architecture alongside societal values and identities in the present. Berlin, as the only divided city in Europe during the Cold War, has its own unique culture of memory, which is both enmeshed in and external to German and European cultures and narratives. Critical to this cultural of memory is the function of the Schloßplatz, a site that both represented and exceeded the symbolic boundaries of the socialist nation. East Germany's forty-year development did not produce the same conditions that created a rift between Eastern and Western Europe; the Palast der Republik, which once stood on the Schloßplatz, was a site that connected, rather than divided, the two tentatively connected German cultures during this era. While the Humboldt Forum and reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss attempts to erase this history, upholding Western European cultural hegemony, it remains firmly grounded in this history which surfaces again and again despite attempts at its erasure. The re-writing process that it fosters in regard to colonialism necessarily extends to the socialist past as well, producing on the Schloßplatz a site of continued encounter and exchange between disparate pasts.

Ultimately, the significance of this chapter is in its showing that former East Berlin functions outside of the frameworks of both former Eastern and Western Europe; singularity in time and space emerges here. This particular site, where so many pasts have crystalized in architecture and objects framed inside of it, slips between the binaries of capitalism and

[261] Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, 6.

communism, post-socialism and post-colonialism, remembering and forgetting, casting light on the complexities of the East German past of the Schlossplatz: a history that can be displaced in time but remains, embedded and unmovable, in this space, in a sense embodying all of the utopic potential of the future. Perhaps in time the Berliner Schloss will be torn down too, and this latent past will again flourish to the derision of the histories that are centered in the present. At the same time, the site represents the complexities of situating East German histories in the web of memory culture of contemporary Germany, doing the kind of work in an institution that was done in the structures of history after 1989. A key example of this is the treatment of the 9th of November in Germany, the date of several significant events in German history known as "Schicksalstag" or "Day of Fate." The 9th of November saw the execution of Robert Blum in 1848, the end of the monarchies in 1918, the Hitler putsch attempt in 1923, the Nazi antisemitic pogroms in 1938 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Despite the significance of this last event for the reemergence of a reunified Germany, the German national holiday is celebrated on the 3rd of October, the official date of reunification out of respect to the victims of National Socialism. In the essay "The Political Beauty of the 9th of November,"[262] Max Czollek, an East German born author with Jewish roots, writes that "November 9th has become the date of a happy roller coaster ride of emotions in the 20th century – the pogrom night of 1938 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 mark the low and high point of the steel construction of a historical narrative, at the end of which everyone gets a photo strip upon which you can see the faces of your own family in free fall."[263] Czollek's words also draw on the medium of photography, like Messmer, to picture the relationship between past and present, allow meaning to accrue in time the way it does in spatial terms in Berlin's center.

[262] Max Czollek, *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (Munich: Hanser Verlag 2020), 140.
[263] Ibid.

The questions of remembrance that emerge around this date help to elucidate the complexities of remembering more than one history in the same breath, or on the same site. While the Humboldt Forum seeks to do this work, digging through the ruins of modernism to display multiple histories side by side, the framing Prussian architecture of the building makes clear who is writing this history. On the Schlossplatz of the present, the tension between inside and outside, content and context, maintains the tensions between official and unofficial histories, continuing to divide Germany's populace between those who remember and those who are remembered.

4.0 Chapter 3: After the Wall: Between Eastern European Modernism and the Global Contemporary

"Nobody has any intention of building a wall." -- Walter Ulbricht, First Chairman of the State Council of East Germany, June 15, 1961. The Berlin Wall was built overnight, without warning, on August 13, 1961.

"Berlin is the best shooting location for their movie – a series of overlapping images; Berlin is a kind of reality studio hastily set up by two world powers, a Hollywood composed of set pieces from the hottest European history, a Prussian- Protestant- Socialist Cinecitta made up of parade avenues, back courts, office centres, villas, museums, railroad networks… On this turntable, which, wedged between Eastern and Western Europe, will soon become the German capital, they are the first to awaken with that new dizziness that is so characteristic of the transit artist who has long since become the normal type in other places. In our climes, they are the first returnees from the long nightmare called History." – Durs Gruenbein, *Transit Berlin*, 1992.

"There is no doubt that the historico-geographical coordinates of Central Europe are in a state of flux, that we are experiencing both historical and geographic transformations, that we are between two different times, between two different spatial shapes." – Piotr Piotrowski, *The Grey Zone of Europe*, 1999.

4.1 After the Wall

It begins with silence, almost nothing, then the hiss of static gives way to the sharp rhythmic clang of metal hitting concrete. The single drumming tattoo broadens, multiplies, transforming into a symphony of pitches falling like raindrops. Listening closely, it is almost possible to imagine the movements of the individuals making these sounds: one throws their whole weight into the action, producing a heavy, low, even noise; another taps timidly, as if afraid by what their progress might result in. There are voices in the background too, although words cannot be made out.[264] A moment of pause, and then onto the next track: this time, all hesitancy gone. There is something industrial here, metal clashing against concrete over and over, no pause, no break, no time for breath. Then, as suddenly as it started, it ends.[265] A weighty cadence takes its place. The gap between sounds broadens, deepens: the tool is now markedly heavier, harder to lift and swing, but it eats away at its target more quickly, cutting more deeply. Uneven, unceasing, two axes moving at once, sometimes lining up and sometimes clashing. These steady, dispassionate tones continue for 17 minutes.[266] Next, the noises take on an oscillating tone, like we are hearing them underwater. They echo, alter, mutate, scrambling for rhythm, for purchase like a climber clattering up a wall before gravity can catch up with them. Jangling and metallic, they eventually relax into something that resembles a beat, bleeding into the next track seamlessly: [267] here, the sound resembles footsteps, and a circular pathway begins to emerge. While the idea of the meeting of concrete and

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[264] Lutz Becker, *AFTER THE WALL* **– *Potsdamer Platz***. Strong atmosphere. It is the basis of the installation. Hammering and distant voices. Accessed May 2022. All sound files can be heard here: https://www.randian-online.com/np_announcement/after-the-wall-a-sound-sculpture-by-artist-lutz-becker/

[265] Lutz Becker, *AFTER THE WALL – Invalidenstrasse*. Dramatic close-up percussion of hammers. Accessed May 2022

[266] Lutz Becker, *AFTER THE WALL – Checkpoint Charlie.* Heavy percussion. Massive rhythmical sound bundles. Accessed May 2022

[267] Lutz Becker, *AFTER THE WALL – Brandenburger Tor*. Relaxed, regular beats quite close. Accessed May 2022

metal still remains, the violence has faded, the target has become too small to strike. In the last moments of sound, one gets the sense that an action is being prolonged, extended, long after its meaning has ended, evaporating into mere echoes.[268]

These sounds, five recording of the noises made by the falling Berlin Wall, echoed through the city of Berlin for several months in late 2000 and early 2001 as a sonic memorial created by the artist Lutz Becker. By that time, the Wall itself had been demolished for a decade: it was first rendered inert through a misinformed public announcement by Günter Schabowski, the SED party leader in East Berlin, during a press conference on November 9, 1989, and was officially dismantled by the East German border troops that had once guarded it on June 13, 1990, only a few months before the official (legal) reunification of the two Germanys. In the interceding months the Wall (does it still count as a wall if it fails to enclose or divide?) was gradually eroded by hundreds of people who attacked its concrete fortifications with hammers and chisels. Nicknamed *Mauerspechte* [wall-peckers, a play on the German word for woodpecker], they used various tools to chip away at the remainder of the Wall, transforming the history of the 20th century into a tangible object, a memento to keep or to sell, to put on display in a home or museum exhibition. It was the sound of their actions that Becker transformed into the work *After the Wall*, which consisted of a montage of archive recordings made by the Sender Freies Berlin at the Berlin Wall in the weeks following the 9th of November 1989.[269] [*Figure 64*] The sound montage included recordings made at Potsdamer Platz, along the Invalidenstrasse, at Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate—all significant sites for the division of Berlin—transmitting an endless loop of

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[268] Lutz Becker, *AFTER THE WALL – Night.* End piece with dominant echos. Accessed May 2022

[269] Sender Freies Berlin was the public radio and television service for West Berlin from 1 June 1954 until 1990, and for Berlin as a whole from the date of German reunification until April 30, 2003. On May 1, 2003 it merged with its East German equivalent Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg to form Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, in another example of the belated choreography of reunification on the cultural/media scene.

hammering, knocking, and breaking that did not commemorate the existence of the Wall as much as its end, its aftermath, its gradual disappearance. Ten years later, at the end of the millennium, the noise of small pickaxes chipping away at cement, the cacophony of individuals grinding away at history, echoed again through Berlin as countless bodies transgressed the former border, moving away from the city center and towards the Hamburger Bahnhof where Becker's work was installed. The Hamburger Bahnhof: Museum für Gegenwart[270] was at that time a recently opened contemporary art institution that itself was a marker for the aftermath of German/German division due to its position along the former no man's land between East and West Berlin, offering another locus of division which paralleled the sites where the Becker's recordings were made. The Berlin Wall, once located directly across the narrow Berlin-Spandau Ship Canal from the location of the new contemporary art museum, returned to the Western bank of the canal as part of the exhibition *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*. In the installation of his work at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Becker employed a displaced temporality to create a bridge between two different spatial shapes of Berlin: before and after the fall of the Wall that had stood from 1961—1989 and that metaphorically bifurcated the whole world through the allegory of Berlin's urban topography.

[270] Until late 2022 the Hamburger Bahnhof was known as the Museum für Gegenwart (Museum **for** the Present); it has recently been renamed as the "Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart" (National Gallery **of** the Present), signaling a temporal concretization of Berlin's five national galleries and the new era for the museum, marked both by the leadership of curators Sam Bardaouil und Till Fellrath and also a shifting orientation for the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz), which Berlin's cultural senator Claudia Roth has suggested in December 2022 should be renamed to "express the cosmopolitianism of cultural goods" and move away from the Prussian context (Roth: „Was haben Andy Warhol und Joseph Beuys mit Preußen zu tun?"). Unsurprisingly, this decision has led to major debate about cultural heritage in Germany. See: https://www.zeit.de/news/2022-11/15/hamburger-bahnhof-wird-nationalgalerie-der-gegenwart?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F ; https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/politik-inland/claudia-roth-will-die-stiftung-preussischer-kulturbesitz-umbenennen-82362328.bild.html

After the Wall. Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe (1999-2001) was one of the first major surveys of European post-communist art. It debuted at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, Sweden in 1999, subsequently travelling to the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, Hungary in 2000 before concluding at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in late 2000 and early 2001.[271] Curated by Bojana Pejic, David Elliott and Iris Mueller-Westermann, the groundbreaking exhibition shed light on visual arts, film, photography, and video works made in Eastern and Central Europe as well as the Newly Independent States [NIS] of the Former Soviet Union in the mid-1980s until 1999 [the exhibition's present]. In collaboration with the cultural ministries of the countries involved as well as the Soros Cultural Center[272], the project took the form of an exhibition, a book, and a symposium. Rather than working chronologically or emphasizing the national identity of the artists (an impossible task in the frame of shifting European borders in the 1990s), it was organized along thematic lines. This allowed for an understanding of the region once located "behind" the Berlin Wall not as a geo-political construct but rather as a fully developed world where shared and interconnected values, motifs, and ideas together produced a cohesive and tangible artistic culture.[273] The exhibition used works from 115 artists originating from 22 countries—or, in the words of curator Bojana Pejic, 21 and one half post-communist countries, in reference to the GDR[274] -- to produce a complex, polyphonic, and multifaceted image

[271] The exhibition was supposed to travel on to a fourth iteration in the USA (at the MoMA) but this never materialized.
[272] Several SCCA (Soros Centers for Contemporary Art) were established in Eastern Europe during the early nineties by the American philanthropist, investor, and political activist George Soros. The SCCA was an institutional mechanism of the post-socialist transition, and its primary role was the modernization of the artistic discourse in the former socialist countries and the republics of the former USSR.
[273] Bojana Pejic, and David Elliott, eds. *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post- Communist Europe (Volumes I & II)*. (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999)
[274] "*After the Wall* was an art exhibition produced in 21 and one half post-Communist countries. By "a half" I mean the GDR, which became reunited with West Germany." Bojana Pejic. *East of Art: Transformations in Eastern Europe: "What Comes After the Wall?"* ArtMargins, March 2003. Accessed May 2022. https://artmargins.com/east-of-art-transformations-in-eastern-europe-qwhat-comes-after-the-wallq/

of the shape of art "after" the Wall in the region that had once been located "behind" it.[275] The particular local framing of each iteration of the exhibition infused particular meanings into it: in Stockholm, emphasis was placed on the historical "context" of the exhibition,[276] while in Budapest the focus was on the exhibition's location within the East-West stretching networks of the Ludwig Stiftung which funds the Hungarian Museum Ludwig.[277] At the Hamburger Bahnhof, the exhibition took on a unique orientation vis-à-vis the frame of the local, specifically in terms of the connection between institution and the city itself, which evolved due to the specific space and time of Berlin at the end of the millennium, a novel relationship which becomes clearly visible and tangible through the frame of Becker's sonic memorial.

Becker's contribution to this exhibition was situated at the entrance to the contemporary art museum, which had opened in Berlin five years prior. The work *After the Wall* welcomed viewers to the eponymously named exhibition and offered anomaly as first impression: Becker was the only artist from outside of the boundaries of the former Eastern Bloc, speaking from a purely Western perspective, who was invited to participate in the exhibition.[278] The sense of

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[275] I use quotes around the spatial and temporal terms delineating the existence of the Berlin Wall and invoked in the museological texts to question the idea of standpoint and perspective. As Martin Mueller wrote in his text "In Search of the Global East": "The East is always elsewhere: when I ask in France, the East is in Germany; when I ask in Germany, the East is in East Germany; when I ask in East Germany, the East is in Poland; when I ask in Poland, the East is Ukraine… a continuous displacement of signifieds attached to the signifier of the East. 'The East' is thus thought of as a floating signifier, a signifier without a fixed signified…" (Martin Müller, *In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South*, 2020, Geopolitics, 25:3, 734-755, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2018.1477757) To reduce the East to a single time and space beyond the Berlin Wall gestures to the flattening perspective of the museum.

[276] As chief curator Bojana Pejic writes in a reflective essay: "When we approach any such a project dealing with non-Western art we usually (over) use the term "context." Namely, the presumption is that art from non-Western regions could not be understood unless we, curators, know the "context" in which it is produced." – Pejic, *"What Comes After the Wall*"

[277] The Ludwig Museum is one of three institutions that together form the Müpa (Művészetek Palotája) Budapest. It is also one of seven museums that bears the name of the Ludwig Foundation. Most of these institutions are located in Germany—in Aachen, Oberhausen, and Cologne—and have been previously invoked in the first chapter of this dissertation in reference to Wolfgang Mattheuer's statue *Der Jahrhundertschritt*.

[278] In addition to Becker's work, seven other (now) German (formerly East German) artists were included in the exhibition: the sound and light installations of Gunda Förster, which related directly to the museum architecture; a series of beautiful and dangerous sculptures by Via Lewandowsky, which examined death as "the place where

incongruity produced by the background of the artist continued into the form of the work itself: walls are normally silent, mute, but at the moment of its destruction the Berlin Wall gained a voice, one which was amplified and maintained beyond the moment of the speaker's disappearance through Becker's work. Through this sonic memorial, the desire to demolish was transformed into the will to preserve, maintain, and remember in the liminal space of post-socialist Germany. Critically, these sounds, excavated from the local landscape, were not only heard in the exhibitionary terminus of Berlin, but also across the whole of Europe: between departing Berlin as the action of demolition and arriving back as the will to remember, enclosed in a sonic memorial, these sounds crossed and re-crossed the former boundaries between the constructs of East and West[279] as they moved from Stockholm to Budapest to Berlin along with the exhibition which shared their name. Their inclusion in this exhibition reframed a critical local moment as a European one, transmitting the end of the divided Germany in aural terms across the continent it had once symbolically bifurcated, ultimately arriving back in a Berlin that looked very different than the one they had left.

The moment at the center of Becker's work, the fall of the Berlin Wall, has frequently been characterized as a moment of blissful unity, the end of the Cold War, and the start of a new era of globalization and international cooperation: in art historical terms, 1989 has been framed as the

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freedom ends and biological destiny begins"; a series of photographs of nature by Olaf Nicolai; drawings and sculptures of animals attempting to fly, taking up the much-cited and precarious position of Ikarus by Ulf Puder; Neo Rauch's painting Vergnügungspark, which grapples with the imperfect nature of memory; Tilo Schultz's curatorial intervention (featuring four works by Dominique Gonazles-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno, Nathan Coley, Kristof Kintera and Antonia Simmons); and finally Frank Theil's photographs of the Friedrich Engel's Guard Regiment from 1990, which offered parallels to the system of public surveillance cameras that had recently been installed in Berlin. Pejic, *After the Wall*.

[279] Here it is critical to assert that the area most commonly referred to as "Eastern Europe" did not exist as such before 1945. The notion of real difference between Eastern and Western Europe was first produced by the allied powers at the Yalta Conference in the last year of World War II; thus, the concept of Eastern Europe can be understood as one that is defined through temporality as much as geography. -- Piotrowski. *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 17.

end of modernity and its binaries of East and West, and the beginning of a contemporary era with truly global potential.[280] Photographs and newsreels taken on the night of November 9, 1989 show an exuberant populace breeching the Wall, waving the (West) German flag, and embracing as they sing the German national anthem for the first time in decades without the stain of shame. However, this moment was not joyful for everyone. Writing from West Berlin, the Afrodeutsch[281] poet May Ayim surveyed her surroundings with dismay in the poem *Blues in Black and White*: „a reunited germany/celebrates itself in 1990/without its immigrants, refugees, jewish & black people/it celebrates in its intimate circle/it celebrates in white."[282] For many Black and brown Germans, as well as the Gastarbeiter ("guest workers") who had come to West Germany from North Africa, Yugoslavia, and above all Turkey, and to East Germany from the Eastern Bloc as well as other socialist nations like Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, and Cuba, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked an era of increasing racist and xenophobic violence, which culminated in events like the Hoyerswerda riots (17-23 September 1991, Saxony (former GDR)), the Rostock-Lichtenhagen riots (August 22-24, 1992, Rostock (former GDR)), 1992 Mölln arson attack (November 22, 1992, Mölln, Schleswig-Holstein) and the 1993 Solingen arson attack (May 28–29 1993, North Rhine-

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[280] Hans Belting, *Art History After Modernism*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[281] "Afrodeutsche" (Afro-Germans) is a term that refers to people of sub-Saharan origin who are citizens or residents of Germany; today the term "Schwarze Deutsche" (Black Germans) is more commonly used due to the strong differences and backgrounds of the Black community in Germany. However May Ayim (1960-1996) identified with the term Afrodeutsch, so I follow her model and use it here.

[282] More May Ayim, from *German Fa(r)therland*: "In the days immediately following November 9, 1989, I noticed that hardly any immigrants or black Germans were to be seen around town, at least only rarely any dark-skinned ones. I wondered why not many Jews were about. I ran into a couple of Afro-Germans whom I had met in East Berlin the previous year, and we were glad to have more chances of getting together now. Moving around alone I wanted to breathe in a bit of the general enthusiasm, to sense the historical moment and share my reserved joy. Reserved because I had heard about the imminent policy-tightening regarding immigrants and asylum-seekers. And further, like other black Germans and immigrants, I knew that even a German passport did not guarantee an invitation to the East-West festivities. We sensed that along with the imminent intra-German union a growing closing off from outside would ensue—an outside that would include us. Our participation in the celebration was not invited. *The new "We" in "this our country"—Chancellor Kohl's favorite expression—did not and does not have a place for everyone*." May Ayim, *Blues in Black and White: A Collection of Essays, Poetry, and Conversations* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 48.

Westphalia). As Max Czollek suggests in the text *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, this moment was also challenging for the Jewish communities of East and West Germany, who saw in the reunification of Germany a reminder of the historical conditions that had produced the National Socialist regime and the Holocaust.[283] The re-formation of the center produced new margins.

In the parallel perspective of former East Germans, now demoted to the "other" Germans, the pain produced by the presence of the Berlin Wall and the division it symbolized became replaced by a new kind trauma of in its absence. According to Kirsty Bell:

> The momentum that led to the fall of the Wall continued in a series of rapid-fire decisions which set the two halves of Germany on a track towards unification that in retrospect seemed inevitable, but which in reality had the effect of quickly closing up gaps of opportunity—eradicating the very desires for freedom for which the *peaceful revolution* had been fought. Almost 1.2 million citizens sign a petition entitled 'For our Country', drawn up by a group of East German signatories... It proposed an independent GDR, the development of a society of solidarity rather than 'selling out our material and moral values' in a takeover by the Federal Republic of Germany. Despite this, on 18 March 1990, in East Germany's first free elections since 1949, a resounding majority of the East German population vote for unity. In July currency reform is introduced… and on 3 October a formal ceremony is held to celebrate the unification of Germany. This was not the new start that many were dreaming of before the Wall came down, but in less than a year it had become reality. [284]

The sound of the falling Berlin Wall that was incapsulated in Becker's work can thus be understood not a noise of pure elation, as perhaps could be pictured from the vantage point of the West, but also a sound of deep loss for the unrealized dreams and desires of German socialism (literalized in the chipping off of chunks of the wall which would ironically be (and continue to be[285]) sold off as yet another product of capitalism), as well as a warning bell harkening terror for "outsiders" living in Germany. Thus, we can understand the accrued meaning and reception of Becker's work

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[283] Czollek, *Gegenwartsbewältigung*, 141.
[284] Kirsty Bell, *The Undercurrents: A Story of Berlin* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2022), 247.
[285] I purchased a piece of the Wall encapsulated in a postcard at the Tränenpalast, an important site of movement between East and West Berlin, in 2021.

as varying greatly based upon the standpoint and identity of its audience, and its employment as the opening work of the exhibition *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* as serving to gesture towards the ambiguity of the moment of 1989 and as offering a way to pose questions about the shape of the world that the aftermath of the Berlin Wall had produced. Through the inclusion of Becker's work, the museum was transformed into a site where these multiple contradictions became layered and visible: a space of identity construction and re-writing history in a finally reunified nation, but also a site of trauma, of folded and contradictory perspectives and experiences. Whereas the Berlin Wall existed in one Germany, the Germany of modernist binaries, of Cold War divisions, Becker's work existed in another Germany, a liminal, post-socialist Germany, a space caught in a moment of transformation somewhere between Eastern Europe and the global contemporary. In this work, the sounds of the shattering Berlin Wall act as a bridge that metaphorically link the space of Central Europe, the grey zone between East and West that emerged and concretized its identity after 1989, and the space of the global museum at the end of the millennium.[286]

I invoke Becker's work and the frame of the exhibition *After the Wall* to open this chapter as part of the broader context in which to situate the institution which is today known as the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart as a critical space for the city of Berlin, the nation of reunified Germany, and a global(izing) Europe. The Hamburger Bahnhof is an institution that presses directly up against the spatial and temporal boundaries of East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic; officially opened as a museum of contemporary art in a newly reunified Berlin/Germany in 1996, the site's long history had been previously marked by multiple uses,

[286] Here I am understanding the concept of the Millennium not in purely calendric terms, but rather as marking the transition between the period of modernism and contemporaneity, as described by Piotr Piotrowski in his essay "The Grey Zone of Europe," published in the catalogue for "After the Wall."

moments of deep interconnection with the city and nation, as well as an extended period of hibernation on the no-man's land between the two Berlins during the era of division. To which of these Berlins, these Europes, does this place belong? Or does it, like so many museums and public spaces that emerged out of the conditions of 1989, belong to the global? How has its orientation shifted in the interceding years, along with our own standpoint in history, and how is this reflected in exhibitionary programming and institutional place-making? I am interested in asking these questions in order to understand the position of the ghostly (not present but neither fully absent) East German state in the context of contemporary institutional framing in Germany today. Which Europe did, and does, the former East Germany belong to? What spaces and times does it continue to occupy? What is its cultural function today within the currents of the Global Contemporary? How is the trauma of the past and the desire for a better future transmitted today in its museums? In short: what is the future of East Germany?

This chapter investigates these questions through the frame of several intersecting notions from Piotr Piotrowski's oeuvre which crystallized in the contemporary cultural institutions of Berlin at the end of the millennium. The notions of "horizontal" art history, the relationship between the institution and its (necessarily traumatic) past, and the links between the cultural institution and its urban frame are used to excavate the rich history of the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart [National Gallery of the Present]. In addition to exploring the urban site, history, and architecture of the museum, this chapter will examine in depth the exhibition *Hello World: Revising a Collection* (2018), which takes part in the re-writing, globalizing project of both horizontal art histories and global contemporary ones 30 years after German reunification. By focusing on this critical exhibition, which sought to reorient the museum vis-à-vis the world, this chapter will explore the boundaries (temporal, spatial, political, historical, cultural) produced

by the global museum between multiple worlds in order to locate East Germany and Berlin in the post-1989 milieu. This chapter continues the broader project of this dissertation, namely drawing on, expanding, and exceeding critical ideas developed by Piotrowski in order to situate East Germany within the frame of East-Central European and global cultural production, and ultimately seeking an answer to the question of where and when (i.e. in which space and time) we can locate East Germany and its public spaces "after" the Wall. However, embedded in the desire for globality, for contemporaneity, is a desire to forget the contradictory trajectories of modernism, of local histories in their complete and complex whole. Thus, the desire to enter into the public spaces of post-socialist Germany requires a negative posture vis-à-vis the past, leaving the role of East German art out of the time and space of the contemporary, a fate unique to this place. As this chapter will ultimately conclude, it is only with the shift of broader global trajectories vis-à-vis public life and spaces, such as the one that took place with the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020, that allow these latent histories to reassert themselves in new and pressing ways.

4.2 The Hamburger Bahnhof – A National Gallery of the Present

The Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart is located on the boundary of the Berlin districts of Moabit (former West Berlin) and Mitte (former East Berlin). The public space that surrounds it, once a no-man's land that brushed against the Berlin Wall, has since been transformed into "EuropaCity," an urban development area that emerged coevally with the renewal of Berlin Central Station [1995/8 – 2006] and the rapid privatization of the city center, especially in the spaces left fallow in the wake of the construction of the Berlin Wall. The contemporary art museum exists within a constellation of historic and renewed buildings and spaces, all touched by

the legacy of the Berlin Wall: to the north, the Invalidenfriedhof, one of the oldest cemeteries in Berlin and a resting place for soldiers of the Prussian Army, which was transformed into a site of active (rather than passive) death during the existence of the Berlin Wall when it took on through its neighboring position the role of the "death strip"[287] and still today contains some concrete fortifications from this period; to the east the Invalidenpark, a green space that contains the fountain-sculpture *Sinking Wall* (Christophe Girot, 1996-98) [*Figure 65*], which acts as a double memorial to the Gnadenkirche, whose ruins were demolished by the East German state in 1967, and to the "disappearance" of the Berlin Wall; to the south the medical school Charité, where corpses of victims of the Berlin Wall were taken for autopsies, and the Hauptbahnhof (formerly the Lehrter Bahnhof), which was isolated by the 1961 construction of the Wall. The Hamburger Bahnhof itself, which was located on what was both the geographical and ever-shifting political boundary between the East and West Berlins, and only opened as the "Museum for the Present" in 1996, has been a passive spectator to all of these histories, immersed, latent, in the complexities of the local spatial-temporal frame.

The nomenclature of the Hamburger "Bahnhof" refers to the building's original function as a terminus of the railway line between Hamburg and Berlin, which first opened in December 1846. *[Figure 66]* The station could not keep pace with the increasing volume of railway traffic in the newly unified Germany of 1871, and was closed in 1884, later re-designated as a museum of transport in 1904.[288] During the Second World War, the building sustained severe damage and in the subsequent division of Germany, it remained unused for decades, occupying the place of an

[287] The "death strip" was the belt of sand- or gravel-covered land between the two main barriers of the Berlin Wall. It was constantly under surveillance by guards in watchtowers, who could shoot anyone they saw trying to escape.
[288] „Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart," Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Accessed August 2022. https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/hamburger-bahnhof/ueber-uns/profil/

administrative no-man's land caught between two conflicting ideological currents. In 1984, ownership of the building was transferred from East to West Germany in a strategic exchange and the collections of the transport museum were equally divided between museums in the two states.[289] The building was properly reopened after initial renovation work for Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987, coevally with the nearby Lehrter Bahnhof[290], when the transit exhibition *Journey to Berlin* was held in the temporary space, marking the first time it had been used as a museum in over forty years.[291] The parallel opening of these neighboring institutions suggests that the Hamburger Bahnhof had, at least in the minds of West Berlin authorities, a critical potential for the construction of West Berlin's autonomous identity: whereas the re-opening of the Lehrter Bahnhof (later the Hauptbahnhof, or Central Train Station) represented the potential for new international connections for the once-isolated city-state of West Berlin, the Hamburger Bahnhof took up this work symbolically and in temporal terms, linking the contemporary existence of the neighboring station with a larger narrative of Berlin's transit history and thus producing connections to and relevance for the wider world. It was not until 1988, when the state of West Berlin transferred the former train station to the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation which administers Berlin's state museums, that an extensive reconstruction began and plans to open a museum of a new style were made.[292] In November 1996, on the freshly reunified boundary between East and West Berlin, the building was opened as a museum of contemporary art, which expanded significantly in terms of its architecture to accommodate the long-term loans of the

[289] The strategic exchange of land was a common strategy in Berlin, and one which will emerge again importantly in an interesting parallel later in this chapter between the Berlin state government and CA Immo, an Austrian Real Estate company.
[290] Then under the control of the administration of West Berlin and renovated at a cost of about 10 million Deutschmarks
[291] Helmut M. Bien, *Die Reise nach Berlin (Katalog zur Ausstellung im Hamburger Bahnhof 1987)* (Berlin: Verlag Siedler W J 1987)
[292] „Hamburger Bahnhof," Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, which were exhibited at the museum from 2004 until 2021 and during that time were the artistic basis of more than 20 exhibitions.[293] The former dispatch warehouses located behind the main building were renovated and the resulting structures, which became known as Rieckhallen, increased the exhibition space to approximately 10,000 square meters.[294] Today the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, situated in an institutional frame once located in the former no man's land between two enemy states, now houses one of the largest and most significant public collections of contemporary art in Germany. [*Figure 67*]

Despite the clear desire of the authorities of reunified Berlin to transform this once-forgotten station into a cutting-edge space for contemporary art in post-Cold War Europe, the architecture of the institution does not adhere to the provocative and spectacular architecture trends that represent what Nicolas van Ryk famously named the "Bilbao Effect" in the German newspaper Die Welt to describe the symbiosis between blighted urban spaces and high-profile museums. [295] Instead, the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart maintains the historical architecture of the train station. Its façade is still marked with a stone engraving that marks it as the "Verkehrs- und Baumuseum," [Transit and Building Museum] and with no fixed sign proclaiming the building's new title and function. [*Figure 68*] Visitors to the institution must first pass through a low, wrought-iron gate which divides the bustling square in front of the Hauptbahnhof, Europlatz, from the quiet garden of the museum, before entering into a dispersed

[293] Partly because of the uncertainties about the future of the Rieckhallen, which will be discussed in section 5 of this chapter, the renowned collection of the entrepreneur Friedrich Christian Flick had been removed from the Rieckhallen. The loan was controversial because of the Nazi past of Friedrich Flick, who as an armaments entrepreneur profited from forced laborers during National Socialism.
[294] „Hamburger Bahnhof," Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
[295] Niklas van Ryk: Der Bilbao-Effekt. Welt, 6. Oktober 2007, last accessed on 14. Dezember 2020.

sculpture courtyard of sorts that marks the entrance to the museum (this is the place that *After the Wall*, Lutz Becker's artwork, played from in 2000). Only a few works populate this space in the present, some only temporarily or altered in response to local or global issues: an iteration of Robert Indiana's most famous sculpture, made from COR-TEL steel, entitled *Imperial Love* (1966/2006), stood here during the renovation of the Neue Nationalgalerie (2015-2021), linking the two state-run institutions, as well as modern and contemporary art histories, and Dan Flavin's green and blue fluorescent light installation *Untitled*, which has decorated the façade of the institution since its opening, has recently been switched off for the first time to "[respond] to current developments and [send] a signal during the ongoing energy crisis" until March 2023.[296] The simultaneous maintenance and malleability visible in the institution's historic façade gestures towards the maintained importance of contemporary art in the city of Berlin as a way to link the past and present, and as an interconnected, relevant, and politically-oriented phenomenon.

Two further works in this portico-like courtyard hint at the institution's spatial histories: since 2019, the artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset's sardonic work *Statue of Liberty*, an original concrete segment of the Berlin Wall which has had a 24 hour ATM set into it, offers a cheeky, post-modern confrontation of the two ideologies that once dominated this site; according to the artists, the work is "a memorial to German separation, a monument recalling the lost time of infinite possibility directly after the fall of the wall, and a warning about the selling off of history and the city."[297] [*Figure 69*] The ATM doesn't dispense cash in any form, offering perhaps another layer of critique towards the digital future in a city infamous for its culture of *Bargeld* (in German,

[296] "Hamburger Bahnhof Flips the Switch on Dan Flavin's Light Art" Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Published October 18, 2022, Accessed November 2022. https://www.smb.museum/en/whats-new/detail/hamburger-bahnhof-flips-the-switch-on-dan-flavins-light-art/

[297] "elmgreen & dragset insert 24-hour ATM onto concrete segment of the berlin wall" Design Boom. Accessed November 2022. https://www.designboom.com/art/elmgreen-dragset-atm-concrete-berlin-wall-06-24-2019/

the word for debt and guilt is the same, which perhaps explains the societal distrust of credit cards).[298] Pushing the work of the *Mauerspechte* to its limit, the work by Elmgreen & Dragset produces not only a constellation with public artworks and memorials across the once-divided city of Berlin, but also with the history of modernism, presenting their work and the world it acts as a warning to/against, as the culmination of all of these histories.

Finally, standing directly in front of the entrance to the Hamburger Bahnhof is a work with clear links not to Berlin's division but the cultural aftermath caused by it: Georg Baselitz's *Volk Ding Zero* [*Folk Thing Zero*] (2009), a three-meter-tall blue sculpture that, again speaking in the language of art historical tradition, mirrors the gesture of Rodin's famous work *Le Penseur*. [*Figure 70*] Baselitz, a figure who played a critical and antagonistic role in the ignition of the Bilderstreit ("there were no artists [in East Germany], there were only assholes") uses the provocative language of "Volk" and "Zero" to juxtapose the National Socialist period and its aftermath (often referred to as year zero in Western art historical parlance, particularly in reference to the Düsseldorf-based artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, and Günther Uecker) with the moment of 1989.[299] Furthermore, the expression "Wir sind das Volk" was a common political slogan shouted

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[298] Interestingly, this work has a clear formal and historical parallel to another famous work of public art in Berlin: the sculpture *Zwei Beton-Cadillacs in Form der Nackten Maja ("Two Concrete Cadillacs in the Shape of Naked Maja")* by Wolf Vostell which was erected in a roundabout along Kurfürstendamm, the commercial center of West Berlin, in 1987 to commemorate Berlin's 750th anniversary—an event for which the Hamburger Bahnhof building was also reopened as a museum of transit—and which shows two Cadillacs bursting through a concrete wall, presumably a representation of the Berlin Wall. Vostell's intention was to expose the "24-hour dance of motorists around the golden calf," to which he alludes with the title, which is modeled after the Goya painting *La maja desnuda* (1797–1800); in their updated version of the sculpture, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset have replaced the car with an ATM, shifting the golden calf into a representation of individualized capitalism. Notably, while Vostell's work has been described as "the most controversial sculpture in post-war Berlin," the inauguration of "Statue of Liberty" at the Hamburger Bahnhof was an unironic celebration of gentrification awareness featuring speeches by members of the artworld from across Germany. Ibid. See more on Vostell's work here: -- https://www.berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ueber-den-bezirk/kultur-und-wissenschaft/skulpturen-und-denkmale/artikel.155638.php

[299] Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, *Master of Reinvention.* Apollo, November 2012 *https*://gagosian.com/media/gallery/press/2012/3d3af32fa556f00ce3940482c73a5e6a.pdf

during the 1989/1990 Monday demonstrations in the GDR to protest the regime. Baselitz's work guards the space between two portals that invite visitors into and expel them from the museum, whose white façade is punctuated by two square turrets, the right one marked by a clock which serves the double purpose of gesturing towards the punctuality of the train station and reminding us of where we stand: in the present. Together, the works in the courtyard of the contemporary art museum draw clear parallels to national art historical trajectories, placing the Hamburger Bahnhof squarely at their pinnacle, but notably emphasizing narratives that intentionally disregard the East German past, whether through an inversion of its symbolism (the Berlin Wall becomes permeable through a machine that literally dispenses capital, and not even functionally) or by drawing on an art history and language that intentionally negates the East German state in the face of the contemporary.

Entering into the museum, the sense that one has stepped into a train station of sorts intensifies, although it is clearly not a station that seeks to transport us in spatial terms, but one that works in temporal ones. Large steel arches curve above the historic hall of the space, producing an airy, glassy arc that dwarfs the viewer in comparison and mirrors the familiar architectural shape of German train stations. [*Figure* 71] This space is usually reserved for momentous installations, as in the case of a recent Katharina Grosse exhibition (*It Wasn't Us*, June 2020 - January 2021), or self-contained, immersive sculpture-based exhibitions that often draw on the space to make meaning (*Fat to Ashes*, April 2021 – September 2021 or *Church for Sale*, November 2021 - June 2022). It is connected to the Rieckhallen, the converted shipping hall which maintains its historic steel skeleton facade, by means of a transom, a green-tiled hallway that resembles Berlin's many metro stations, including a plaque that identifies this stop as the "Hamburger Bahnhof" and copious graffiti put there by decades of museum visitors. [*Figure 72*] The linking of the present of the

museum and its past as a train station is further cemented by the exhibitionary layout of these Rieckhallen: a long, spine-like corridor offers multiple points of entry into different exhibitionary spaces, each with differing themes, artists, and orientations, depending on the exhibition. Each threshold takes the viewer to a different destination, whether in space (global) or time (history). The final platform or "last stop" in this space is Bruce Nauman's permanent, site-specific architectural piece *Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care* (1984), which was installed permanently in the Hamburger Bahnhof in 2010, transforming into a site-specific work of art for this place. [*Figure 73*] Four black corridors, lit by dim orange lights, approach each other in the shape of a cross; viewers who enter this space become first aware of the movement of their bodies as their feet move across a grate-lined floor, producing both harsh noise and awareness of the pit which seems to extend into the earth endlessly below. In contrast, the darkness of the spaces forces the overworked eye of the visitor, at the end of the museum, into a space of adjustment and uncertainty. This rather nihilistic and despairing work is a jarring end to the trajectory of the space of the Rieckhallen, which contains a series of temporary exhibitions that draw on the museum's borrowed collections: whatever connections were forged between the self and other, the artist and their audience, this museum and a network of cultural institutions worldwide, throughout the exhibition now ends in a moment of solitude and a presentation of the human condition as an ultimately singular, solipsistic fate. We are reduced to just a body in a void; to continue the metaphor of the train station, our destination is our biological fate. At the same time, this work has the potential to be understood as a representation of the museum itself, a laying bare of its mechanisms: a constructed space which exists both independently from and in constant relation to the world.

Although Nauman's void-like installation is the furthest-flung work of the institution, a return to the historic hall of the museum necessitates a final encounter with another work, one which previously appeared along the long corridor that connects the many spaces of the Rieckhallen, but in the guise of a structurally necessary design element: Richard Artschwager's *No Exit* from 2009. [*Figure 74*] This installation work, which marks the "spine" of the Rieckhallen, an empty space of potential connection, is made from over forty hanging lights installed along the 300-meter-long corridor. This work is significant, particularly in the frame of Nauman's installation, because of the reflection it offers on the unreliable act of looking. When viewers enter into the Rieckhallen, they see nothing at first that marks the glowing circles as anything other than regular lamps; however, when leaving the space in the direction of the historic hall of the museum, the viewer sees that each lamp has been marked with the word "EXIT." In many ways, this work ironically comments on the work done by the museum: what is initially understood as guiding and illuminating is, at the end of the museum's narrative revealed to be a construction where there is no escape, "no exit," from the artificial, constructed, internal logic of the institution, which in turn acts on the society around it. Working together with Nauman's void, which takes its subject as the body of the viewer rather than his or her gaze, these works push against the transportive potential engendered by the contemporary museum space: Nauman's room appears to be a passageway, but is only a dead end, and Artschwager's work uses a repetition of the term "exit" to deny us one, transporting us instead back into the historical architecture of the museum building. Together, these two works invoke the body and the eye as separate entities that are at odds with each other in the space of the museum, revealing the cultural institution itself as a space where the logic of the exterior world no longer applies. Nauman and Artschwager's installation works are some of the few permanent pieces in the museum's collection.

The relationship between the architecture of the Hamburger Bahnhof and the art it contains works like a flood of water rushing to fill a gap: contemporary collections came to fill the void left behind, literally and figuratively, by the Cold War, producing a new cultural identity for a new Germany along the old wounds of divided Berlin. Arguably there is no other museum in Germany that is so positioned to use geography as a tool of re-writing the conjoined histories of art and society. The institution's "first life" as a train station offers excellent justification for its successful functioning as a contemporary art museum in the present: just as this institution should allow us to enter into transit between multiple local frames at once, layering multiple modes of artistic production and histories to produce a truly global history of art, so too does this space act as a point of departure. History itself is a kind of train station: it is the invented public spaces in which the individual and the societal come into contact, where narratives arrive and depart in an attempt to justify, explain, or predict. It is deeply rooted in events that have already occurred— a train has already set off from somewhere and we wait for it to arrive—but looks also towards what is coming, the next departure, the future. Time itself transforms into the meaning-maker in this interconnection of spaces, dictating its logic. However, in the production of this new art history that takes place in this space, a significant gap is left behind: the fraught local history of the site within the frame of the Cold War has come to be replaced by a victorious image of the West, embodied by the museum's shape, and its collections which emphasize Western European and North American art and, indeed, makes no connections to the East German state to which the building belonged for almost 30 years. Has this act of forgetting occurred intentionally or unintentionally? What can the local frame of the institution tell us about the sublimation of trauma in and through this space? Here, the past, of the GDR and of Berlin asserts itself as something entirely unique within the borders of the former Eastern Bloc: it is a trauma rooted in the specific

spatio-temporal coordinates of Berlin, one that continues to be manifested and must be answered in terms that too belong to both frameworks, in short, through the lens of a museum that exists on these simultaneous boundaries. The Hamburger Bahnhof [a museum in spatial terms]: the National Gallery for the Present [and a museum in temporal ones]. Thus, the specific time and space of the museum, its exhibitions, and the city that contains it, become critical not only in understanding its relationship to the past but also—and perhaps more pressingly for the museum of contemporary art—its vision for the present, a moment where multiple spatial and temporal lenses are constructed, demolished, and re-oriented in a European site caught somewhere between the binaries of modernism in Eastern Europe and the intertwined, polyphonic, and dialogue-based Global Contemporary. At the same time, the state of exception that was produced in sites in Berlin like the Hamburger Bahnhof, a former no-man's land between East and West, offer a space in the present for history to be revised through exhibition, harkening back to the special potential of Berlin and Central Europe, as well as Europe and the global more broadly.

In a catalogue essay for the 1999 exhibition that Lutz Becker's work opened, *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe* (1999-2001, Stockholm/Budapest/Berlin), Piotrowski directly addressed the Europe in which the exhibition had taken shape:

> At present, when the Russian Parliament has been drafting a resolution about the expansion of the Union of Russia and Belarus with Serbia, another part of former Yugoslavia, Slovenia, is clearly steering itself towards western structures and harbors pro-western ambitions characteristic of Central Europe. **Under such circumstances, it is no longer possible to describe Europe using only the political categories of West and East**. The 'grey zone' of Europe that emerged from the Soviet world (and 'near-Soviet' as in the case of Yugoslavia), which 'already' does not belong to the East, but is not a part of the West 'yet,' or in other words the new Central Europe stretching from the Baltics to the Balkans, may not persist for a long time. It will, in the near future, build new borders, new walls running (like the Berlin Wall) across traditional Central Europe; the new borders of

> the newly divided Europe may run across the heart of historical Central Europe—between Slovenia and Croatia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, between Poland and Lithuania.[300]

Piotrowski's statement functions as both prediction and warning— on the one hand, he claims that the historical construct of Central Europe, a mode of identification that had disappeared from the map during the Cold War era, was (finally) beginning to (re)emerge a decade after the end of the Cold War; on the other, that its boundaries were unstable, its borders already in a state of (perhaps permanent) flux.[301] Thus, through this text, the moment Piotrowski describes—a decade after the events of 1989, the end of the millennium, the moment before Europe is once again divided into East and West, this time transformed through the European Union's expansion and subsumption of Central Europe—appears as a moment of unprecedented potential where the construction of a **shared time** in this newly re-defined space, what historian Ole Bouman calls "a synchronized experience in time"[302] which is finally possible.[303] While the former German Democratic Republic must be summarily excluded from the new potential of Central Europe due to its entry into the hegemonic structures of Western Europe following German reunification in 1990 and its subsequent and automatic ascension in the European Union, I want to argue here that the city of Berlin still maintained the special temporal potential characteristic of Central Europe up until the moment of 1999. Critically, the political and cultural institutions of the city play a significant role in this potentiality, above all the Reichstag building, where the German parliament (the Bundestag)

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[300] Piotr Piotrowski, "The Grey Zone of Europe" in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post- Communist Europe (Volumes I & II)* (eds. Bojana Pejic and David Elliott) Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999, 36.

[301] These comments are particularly salient (and difficult to read) from the Berlin of autumn 2022; the Cold War has in many ways been reignited (refrozen?) by the invasion of Ukraine by a Vladmir Putin led Russia and the moral division of East and West—along the very lines Piotrowski describes, particularly in the space of former Yugoslavia—has sharpened..

[302] Ole Bouman, "Synchronizing Europe," in *Who if not we should at least try to imagine the future of all this?* eds. Maria Hlavajova and Jill Winder (Amsterdam: Artimo/Gijs Stork, 2004), 155.

[303] I invoke Bouman's comment here because it was written in conjunction with the project "Who if not we should at least try to imagine the future of all of this?," a large-scale exhibitionary project from 2004 which celebrated both the Dutch presidency of the EU and the eastward expansion of the Union.

meets, and the Hamburger Bahnhof itself. Both of these institutions function by invoking and layering cultural and political meanings which take on special shape through architecture within an urban topography. By first examining the re-emergence of the Reichstag building after 1989, and then bringing its recent history into dialogue with the network of Nationalgalerie institutions, it will become possible to position museums too as critical sites of cultural-political meaning making in the specific frame of Berlin.

Initially, reunified Germany's Bundestag met in Bonn, the capital of West Germany; however since Berlin also reunified under the initial conditions of the Unification Treaty, it became the unofficial capital of Germany again, a microcosm of the state itself. In 1991, Berlin once again was voted as the official capital of the reunified German nation, albeit through a slim margin of 337-320 which was determined mostly along the geographic lines of East and West, although the move did not take on its full symbolic-political power until April 19, 1999, when the Bundestag met in the Reichstag building in Berlin, signaling the transfer of the capital of Germany from Bonn to Berlin.[304] Prior to 1999, the German parliament had not met in the Reichstag since the Reichstag Fire of 1933, a pivotal event which marked the beginning of the suspension of civil liberties in Germany and led to the Enabling Act of 1933 which formally began the transition between the democratic Weimar Republic and the totalitarian Third Reich. The 1999 move into the renovated historical building, which included a glass dome that symbolized the openness and transparency of the newly reunified government, [*Figure 75*] along with an integration of both the building's original architecture as well as bullet holes and graffiti left behind by soldiers of the Red Army during the Battle of Berlin in April and May 1945 [*Figure 76*], sought to epitomize the nation's

[304] "Hauptstadtbeschluss," Bundeszentral für politische Bildung. Accessed December 2022 https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutsche-einheit/20-jahre-hauptstadtbeschluss/

orientation towards both its past and future, and transmit a kind of parallel relationship towards trauma to the one that Piotrowski invokes: a desire to heal without forgetting, to move forward without repeating or forgetting the mistakes of the past. The integration of Berlin's historical trauma(s) into the building's interiors, as well as use of the space to display works of art from both East and West, placing the work of East German state artists like Bernhard Heisig and Wolfgang Mattheuer alongside western canonical artists like Gerhard Richter, Joseph Beuys, and Christian Boltanski, whose powerful work *Archive of the German Parliament* (1999) literalizes the act of refusing to forget even painful histories[305], creates a direct link between political and cultural power in the city of Berlin, a bridge between these different kinds of cultural institutions.

Alongside the Reichstag building, the recentering of Berlin as the German capital in the 1990s necessitated the emergence of a new kind of cultural topography as well. More than 150 national embassies had to be constructed or developed in order to serve as the foreign representation in the new capital city, constructing new links between the global and the local, solidified in architectural-bureaucratic terms.[306] Where this dearth necessitated an architectural solution, other aspects of the city were faced by the problems of abundance, for example in the form the Berlin State Museums which had developed as fraternal twins during the period of division. The majority of West Berlin's state holdings were located in Dahlem and Charlottenburg, which also housed the administration of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. Starting in the

[305] In this work some 5,000 metal boxes bear the names of all the democratically elected Members of Germany's parliaments from 1919: the National Assembly (the constitutional convention of 1919 – 1920), the Reichstag during the Weimar Republic, and the German Bundestag. The period covered in the installation ends with 1999, the year in which parliamentary business resumed in the Reichstag Building after its remodelling by British architect Norman Foster. A single black box recalls the years when the German people were not represented by a democratically elected assembly. They are, as it were, the 'black years' for German democracy (an oblique reference to 'les années noires', as the French call the years of German occupation). – "Christian Boltanski," Deuscher Bundestag. Accessed May 2022. https://www.bundestag.de/en/visittheBundestag/art/artists/boltanski_inhalt-369740

[306] Matt Rosenberg, *Germany's Capital Moves From Bonn to Berlin*. Accessed November 2022. https://www.thoughtco.com/germany-capital-from-bonn-to-berlin-1434930

1950s, the Foundation, which administered West Berlin's museums, began developing a small triangle of land which was located on the boundaries of the neighborhoods Tiergarten, Kreuzberg, and Schöneberg, brushing the edge of the Berlin Wall at Potsdamer Platz: the Kulturforum [Forum of Culture], "the living embodiment of the cultural rebirth of West Berlin after World War II, a place that was expressly created as a counterpoint to the many cultural institutions that suddenly found themselves in the Soviet-controlled half of the city and was, as such, built as a visible symbol in view of the border between East and West Berlin."[307] During the period of division, Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie (1968), the Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum of Decorative Arts, 1985), and Hans Scharoun's grand Berliner Philharmonie (1963) and Staatsbibliothek Potsdamer Straße (1978) were erected on this space. On the other side of the Berlin Wall, in the eastern sector of Berlin, the museums on Museum Island and the State Library in Unter den Linden resumed operations shortly after the end of the war. After the founding of the GDR, the museums in the eastern part of the city were combined to form the State Museums in Berlin. The houses, which were severely damaged in the war, were partially restored and put into operation, as discussed in Chapter 1. The German Unification Treaty of October 3, 1990 gave the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation the task of bringing together these collections from both parts of Berlin.[308] On January 1, 1992, the organizational merger of the museums and both state libraries took place, which meant that the holdings and documents on the collections preserved in Berlin could finally be recorded and categorized in their entirety. Today, both the museums of former East and West Berlins are

[307] "Kulturforum," Stattliche Museen zu Berlin, accessed November 2022. https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/kulturforum/museum-buildings-collections/overview/

[308] Today the Berlin State Museums (German: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) are a group of institutions in Berlin, Germany, comprising seventeen museums in five clusters, several research institutes, libraries, and supporting facilities. They are overseen by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and funded by the German federal government in collaboration with Germany's federal states. Ibid.

used, renovated, and visited, although as discussed in Chapter 2 there is a conscious desire to shift these institutions from the margins to the centers, as in the case of the Ethnological Museum that was first located in Dahlem but has recently been moved to into the Humboldt Forum at the center of Museum Island in an attempt to globalize the institutional network in symbolic and concrete terms. Thus, in the period between the reintegration of East and West Berlin's state museums and the attendant suturing of their institutional collections into a cohesive whole that spoke the language of unification from the spaces made necessary by division, which can be viewed in conjunction with the reopening of the Reichstag building, a laying bare of trauma in architectural terms, and a symbolic shift in power that had very real political ramifications, Berlin contained all of the potentialities inherent to Central Europe: an ability to integrate history into the present, to re-write identity through architecture, to decide what to maintain and what to forget (as made visible in the case of the Palast der Republik and other East German architecture surrounding the historical Museum Island). From the standpoint of Berlin, a new time "after the Wall" with the opportunity to maintain voices from both sides contained a utopic potentiality, one literalized in the futuristic reorientation of urban topographies in places that had previously been barren realms of division like the former no-man's land of Potsdamer Platz (narrativized in great detail and with many thematic similiarities to May Ayim's poem "Blues in Black and White" in the German artist Hito Steyerl's film *Die leere Mitte* [*The Empty Center*] (1998)) and above all the recently re-oriented and re-opened Hamburger Bahnhof, now positioned as spaces that spoke to and for the new Europe, not only towards the East or West but as a site of conscious layering of the two voices, a place for the production of a new kind of history.

The question of standpoint, of perspective, is a critical piece in this puzzle of Berlin "after the Wall", as I have already gestured to in my discussion of the experiences of East Germans,

minorities, and immigrants in the immediate post-Wende moment. This question takes on a new valence in the art historical frame of Piotrowski's project of "horizontal" art history, the intentional separation of the frequently conflated concepts of Western modern art and "universal" art through an intentional revealing of the speaking subject by posing the questions of who is speaking, on whose behalf, and for which audience. Piotrowski writes that the making explicit of standpoint and laying bare of the speakers position vis-à-vis the center and margins of the world allows history to be perceived differently: "For starters, the marginal observer sees that the center is cracked. If the center perceives itself as homogeneous [and universal], then the periphery, in the process of its reception and transformation of the center for its own use, will spot inner tensions which are, as it were, essential."[309] In the late 1990s, the city of Berlin embodied this notion of the "cracked center," a space where perspectives from the center (West) and the margins (East) produced under modernism finally could come into close contact and yet maintain their speaking voice: this was visible above all in the realm of culture, where exhibitions like *After the Wall* or *Deutschlandsbilder*[310] (Martin-Gropius-Bau, 1997-98) enabled art from Eastern Europe and East Germany respectively, to work in dialogue with other coeval voices to imagine a better Europe.

In a recent essay for the project "Horizontal Art History and Beyond: Revising Peripheral Critical Practices", Terry Smith gestures towards the criticality of the 1990s as a time when the

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[309] Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde" in *European Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies*, Vol One, eds Sascha Bru and Peter Nicholls. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 55. https://monoskop.org/images/9/93/Piotrowski_Piotr_2009_Toward_a_Horizontal_History_of_the_European_Avant-Garde.pdf

[310] One review of this exhibition describes the work that opens it—Max Beckmann's maquette *Man in the Dark* (1934)-- as indicating the intentions of displaying together works from both Germanys: these works show neither dissident nor state art, neither identification with one part of German history nor indictment of another, but individual images and thoughts in between, which must find support in themselves, like the man in the dark. (original: "*weder Dissidenten- noch Staatskunst, weder Identifikation mit einem Teil deutscher Geschichte noch Anklage eines anderen, sondern individuelle Bilder und Gedanken dazwischen, die an sich selber Halt finden müssen, wie der Mann im Dunkeln.")*. This description expresses the kind of nuanced handling of these works that would disappear from the map almost altogether until around 2017, when the series of exhibitions that this project centers around started.

utopic potential of Central Europe allowed for the burgeoning emergence of plural thinking, and thus a new and horizontal shape of art history:

> "It is no coincidence that [Piotrowski] developed his idea [of horizontal art history] during the 1990s, as the USSR imploded, during the subsequent spread of US-led economic and political globalization, and the contested but steady forging of a European Union. For a moment the possibility of a 'clean slate' arose in Central and Eastern Europe… in the moment before the worst elements of Western neoliberalism and local ethnic nationalism rushed in to fill the 'post-socialist' void, pushing aside (for a time) dreams for a genuine communism, while leaving alive some slender hopes for viable social democracy."[311]

This moment of unique utopian potential, a quasi-*tabula rasa* within the frames of Central and Eastern Europe, was quickly followed by a swallowing up by the forces of neoliberal capitalism.

When the Rubicon of the millennium had been crossed, Berlin had transformed into a space where this radical potential of Central Europe was no longer possible: the selling off of the city's previously public land to private investors, increasing connections to the financial and political structures of the West, the German-German Bilderstreit and attendant shift in exhibitionary cultures which problematized East German art and forced it further into the margins, and the enmeshing of the city into national narratives by placing it at the political center of Germany all shifted its position. But for a decade, a decade whose end was marked by the exhibition *After the Wall* as Piotrowski suggests, in a space critical for the utopian potential of the city, the Hamburger Bahnhof, a former no-man's land between East and West, horizontal art histories could be written here through exhibition, expressing not only the new potential of Berlin and Central Europe but also Europe and the world more broadly.

This moment is clearly tied to the changing spatial shape of Europe—the breakdown of the East/West binary, the re-writing of borders, the eastward expansion of the EU—and even the name

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[311] Terry Smith, "Allegories of Orientation" in *Horizontal Art History and Beyond Revising Peripheral Critical Practice*s Edited By Agata Jakubowska, Magdalena Radomska (London: Routledge, 2022), 172.

of Piotrowski's new vision of an art history embedded with horizontality works through a spatial metaphor, a necessary localization:

> What I am claiming is that we have an opportunity to revise both the history of art produced within the center and the world history of modern art written from that perspective by drawing on the studies of the art margins by construction of horizontal art histories. Any effort to relativize the history of Western art, by deconstructing, among others, analytic and geographical categories as well as 'locating' the centre, must include analogous efforts aimed at 'other' art histories. In other words, **the Other must look at himself, define his own position and location from which he speaks**.[312]

While on the surface horizontal art history offers itself up as a spatial phenomenon, a marginalization of centers, a relativization of all spaces, I want to suggest that through its application in art museums, it must necessarily become a temporal phenomenon. Horizontal art history as a curatorial strategy insists on the notion of temporality: re-writing histories to be inclusive, democratic, even utopic, creating a present in which all viewers, regardless of point of origin, share the same space and time in the frame of the museum, and working towards the production of a future with no time lag between East and West, North and South, center and margin. The museum as a concept is the collapse of all of the temporal frames: it is the space where everyday time can come into contact with the historical, where the mythical works in tandem with the mundane to produce narratives of belonging and identity. The parallels between the notion of Central Europe, a synchronized experience in time, and the museum, a space where collective experiences link the individual to their society, are numerous; these twinned notions gesture towards the critical function of museums of art in Central Europe as producers of a new and shared public time in the aftermath of 1989. In the moment "after the Wall," Central European museums literalize the position of speaking from the margins and act as the physical spaces for the construction of horizontal art histories. Nowhere is this made more explicit than the Hamburger

[312] Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 35.

Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, where even the name of the institution orients itself towards the world in temporal terms.

The reason that the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin functions as such a critical lens through which to view the aftermath of the events of 1989 is because of its metaphorical function as a stand-in for East Germany as a whole: both spaces once existent as a no-man's land between East and West, both moving via bureaucracy and politics from the administration of one to the other at an accelerated pace seen nowhere else. Ultimately, it is the museum's relationship to the public space of post-socialist Berlin that makes it so relevant. Here, I want to briefly return to the artwork *After the Wall*, which opened this chapter, and its relationship to the public spaces of Berlin. As I center in my initial reading of the work, it gains its power from its awareness and embeddedness into public spaces: it is the first work that visitors to the exhibition *After the Wall* encountered, and it was audible even before the physical space of the museum was entered due to its echoing, aural quality. However, the public location of the work was unique to Berlin; this becomes clear through a description by Sunil Manghani in his book *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall*:

> What would seem to be important about this work [*After the Wall*] is not simply its 'eerie' quality, nor the idea of it giving voice to the disappearance of the Wall… instead, what is perhaps most revealing about this work is the way in which it enabled visitors to the exhibition to view all the other *visual* artworks in the gallery. As its description notes, this installation was invisible yet, nonetheless, intensely present. As you are invited to wander the gallery and see all the other pieces of work, a specific context is constantly being reiterated through the ambient noise of the Wall as it was brought down… Thus, whilst galleries are usually subdued, even silent spaces, Becker's montage of sound made the whole gallery—like the hammered down Wall—one 'gigantic resonating body,' like a complex thought-space to reflect upon the multiple meanings of and responses to the fall of the Wall.[313]

[313] Sunil Manghani, *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 88.

As Manghani states in his next paragraph, his encounter with this work and the exhibition that framed it occurred in its first iteration, at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. So, in previous iterations of this exhibition, Becker's work was contained *inside* the museum; it is only in Berlin, the subject of the work, that it moves to a position external to the museum, creating a direct relationship between the museum and the urban space that surrounds it and thus posing new questions about the potential connections between *this museum* and Central Europe that are only possible to ask in this specific space and time. The relationship between the museum and the public space that surrounds it, transforming both together into a kind of agora, is a critical part of the puzzle of locating Berlin and its Hamburger Bahnhof between East-Central Europe and the Global Contemporary, in both temporal and spatial terms.

4.3 Hello World

With the exhibition "Hello World: Revising a Collection" (held from March 28 – August 26, 2018), the Hamburger Bahnhof presented a revision of the holdings of the Nationalgalerie.[314] The introductory wall text offered the following stakes:

> How can a collection predominantly committed to the art of Western Europe and North America broaden its scope through non-Western artistic tendencies and a transcultural approach? What would the collection look like today, had a more open and inclusive understanding of art informed its genesis? Against the backdrop of an increasingly

[314] The Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin encompasses five museums: the Alte Nationalgalerie (19th century sculptures and paintings), the Neue Nationalgalerie (visual arts of the 20th century), the Museum Berggruen (also modern art, gifted to the city by collector Heinz Berggruen), the Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg (French Romanticism to Surrealism from the collection of Otto Gerstenberg whose collections were confiscated by the Red Army and his grandson Dieter Scharf) and the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart.

> globalized present and its attendant opportunities and fault lines, as well as current political crises and cultural conflicts, such a revision is especially urgent.[315]

This exhibition sought to radically re-orient the German museum of contemporary art in the face of new global conditions, political and cultural conflicts, and identity crises facing Europe at that moment, both from within and outside of its borders, by attempting to produce an inhabitable image of the new shape of art history after the world-spanning events of 1989.[316] Critically, this re-writing project was not only oriented towards the contemporary but also adopted a retrospective outlook, taking part in the project of complicating and displacing Eurocentric ("universal") narratives of modern art by emphasizing transnational exchange, intercultural reception, and a pluralization of history, which together can be viewed through the notion of the "postcolonial constellation", an exhibitionary understanding of globalization after imperialism developed and theorized by Okwui Enwezor.[317] Enwezor (1963-2019) had exemplified this approach in his last major exhibition *Post-War: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965* (Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2016–17), a revisionist history of the period between World War II and the emergence of

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[315] Udo Kittelman and Gabriele Knaptein, eds. *Hello World: Revising a Collection*. (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2018), 11.

[316] As Piotr Piotrowski has argued in the essay "Writing on Art after 1989", the fall of communism in 1989 was only one factor that supported rethinking art history/writing on art for contemporary; this also collided with collapse of apartheid in South Africa and emergence of post-colonial studies. According to Piotrowski, "…what matters is that in both instances, in South Africa and in Eastern Europe before 1989, artistic cultures functioned under conditions of confinement that limited their development, but also provided a challenge. Moreover, **the fact that societies of South Africa and Eastern Europe defeated totalitarian regimes at virtually the same time creates a possibility for a comparative perspective encompassing not only artistic production but also and primarily culture released from the authoritarian straitjacket.**.." (205). Piotrowski argues that what connects contemporary art produced in the regions emerging from the totalitarian systems in Eastern Europe with the postcolonial countries, such as India and Pakistan, is their marginalization vis-a-vis mainstream art culture and their neglect within and omission from the Western art discourse in art historical narratives produced from the perspective of the center or the position of symbolic power. (paraphrased from "Writing Art History after 1989" in *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*. eds. Hans Belting, Andrew Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013) Thus, "universal" art history itself has actually produced the conditions for these two separate worlds to converge under the umbrella of horizontal art history.

[317] Okwui Enwezor, The Post-Colonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*. eds. Nancy Condee, Terry Smith and Okwui Enwezor (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)

new artistic networks in the 1960s, which can be clearly understood as a predecessor to *Hello World*.[318] The large-scale research and exhibition project in Berlin was funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation as part of the "Global Museum" initiative, and drew together more than 200 works from the holdings of the Nationalgalerie collection, 150 works on loan from other collections of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz,[319] as well as 400 artworks, magazines, and documents from other national and international collections.[320] The exhibition featured the work of more than 250 artists, which together produced thirteen multifaceted narratives which unfolded throughout the exhibition, developed by a polyphonic curatorial team made up of Udo Kittelmann, Sven Beckstette, Daniela Bystron, Jenny Dirksen, Anna-Catharina Gebbers, Gabriele Knapstein, Melanie Roumiguière and Nina Schallenberg from the Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, as well as contributing guest curators Zdenka Badovinac (at that time the director of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana), Eugen Blume (an East German curator who had been the head of the Hamburger Bahnhof from 2001-2016), Clémentine Deliss (briefly the director of the Museum der Weltkulturen in Frankfurt/Main, from and for which she developed the notion of the "Metabolic Museum"), Natasha Ginwala (a curator, writer and editor based in Sri Lanka and Berlin, Associate Curator at Large at Gropius Bau and co-artistic director of the 13th Gwangju Biennale) and Azu Nwagbogu (the Founder and Director of African Artists' Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Lagos,

[318] An early draft of this dissertation sought to include an extended analysis and comparison of these two exhibitions—especially interesting in the frame of the institutions that contained them considering that the Haus der Kunst in Munich had been built as Haus der *Deutschen* Kunst in 1937 as a space of display for the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung (curated in contrast to the Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1937). Unfortunately, I won't be able to address *Post-War* or the Haus der Kunst in this dissertation but will keep it in mind for whatever future shape this dissertation takes as I continue my career in the frame of German museums.
[319] Including the Ethnologishes Museum, the Kunstbibliothek, the Kupferstrichkabinett, the Museum für Asiatische Kunst and the Zentralarchiv, as well as the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.
[320] *Hello World* – Exhibitionary Supplement (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 2018), 7.

Nigeria). As with the exhibition *After the Wall*, it is possible to understand this exhibition as one link in a chain of exhibitions taking place world-wide that grapple with the place of a global contemporary or "global modernism" (Enwezor) in the failing frame of art historical inquiry and methodology, attempting to speak to and with an increasingly global art world from the standpoint of Berlin: but not only from Berlin, which once contained the fracture that divided the world between East and West, but from the specific institutional context of the Hamburger Bahnhof: Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart. By thinking through the dynamics of the relationship between this Museological frame and the exhibitionary content and ideas it contained, can we begin to piece together the function of the museum itself in the scope of this exhibition, and in the moment of the global contemporary.

Unlike previous or subsequent exhibitions at the Hamburger Bahnhof, *Hello World* spread over the entire space of the museum, subsuming both the spaces of the Rieckhallen and the Historic Hall into its dialogue. All elements of the museum's permanent collection were transmuted into part of the exhibition, using the push and pull between continuity and rupture to transform the museum's recent past itself into a speaking voice: the space in the museum's eastern wing where Joseph Beuys's woolen suit, yellowing slabs of animal fat, and scribbled-upon chalkboards can be found under normal circumstances was transformed into an "interlude" which still focused on Beuys, but this time through the frame of his work *End of the Twentieth Century* (1982-83), which relates to his tree planting action that started at the 1982 doumenta 7 in Kassel. This shift signaled that the focus of the museum had moved from the histories of the Western European avant-garde art that Beuys' work is foundational for, and towards transnational, collaborative projects that

continue to reverberate in the present.[321] Likewise, other artists who are mainstays of the collections remained, though changed, in the spaces they usually occupied: Bruce Nauman's *Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care* maintained its dark and weighty presence at the far end of the Rieckhallen, not changed in terms of materials or themes, but rather by the associations produced through its links to the preceding exhibitionary chapter "Red, Yellow and Blue Around the World," which centered around the Euro-American networks produced through the Nationalgalerie's controversial acquisition of Barnett Newman's large-scale abstract painting *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue IV* (1969-70),[322] transforming Nauman's work from a void into a bridge; Qin Yufen's "Making Paradise," an airy cloud of barbed wire steaming up from thick bamboo stalks and a yellow silk veil dyed with Chinese herbs which cast a medicinal smell throughout the gallery, drew a new ecological meaning through its closeness to Beuys' *End of the Twentieth Century* and the chapter "Communication as Global Happening;" finally, several works by the Japanese artists On Kawara and Keiichi Tanaami which dealt with the traumatic aftermath of the Second World War, and Ilya Kabakov's *Ripped-Off Landscape* (1977/91) served to complement, challenge, or disrupt the construction of national art histories in the space. These works, collectively entitled "Interludes," were all drawn from the preexisting collection of the Nationalgalerie and can be understood as one of the three major threads of the exhibition: the two are the exhibitionary "chapters" which sought to carry out the main task of the exhibition by posing questions about what the collection could look like had a broader understanding of art informed its genesis, and the "Agora," a transformation of the historic hall of the museum-nee-train station into a space for large-format exhibitions that facilitated the formation of an urban community. In

[321] For *7000 Oaks*, the artwork in Kassel, Beuys had collaborated with, among others, the Argentinian artist Nicolas Garcia Uriburu, who had already made a name for himself in his home country through similar projects.
[322] *Hello World* – Exhibitionary Supplement, 35.

what follows of this section, I will discuss the two distinct strategies that emerge in these two separately conceived and curated areas of the exhibition, creating a division between the "Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart," which takes the shape of the exhibitionary chapters that are rooted in the globalizing modernist project that seeks to create a new foundation for contemporaneity, and thus reshape the present moment and the "Hamburger Bahnhof," here shaped into the form of an Agora which desires a public and a public space, which still maintains the architectonic shape of the train station and thus links to local histories.

The thirteen exhibitionary chapters of the exhibition were located in the Rieckhallen as well as the eastern and western wings of the museums. These chapters traced the trajectory of various national modes of production and the temporal networks that facilitate mobility and exchange between them, drawing on a model of ever-expanding geography to create a global network of artistic modernity. The nomenclature of "chapters" given to these interconnected exhibitions is a clear gesture towards the act of re-writing the canon and changing the shape of art history. Each chapter was produced by a guest curator who specialized in cultural production of their specific region, frequently working in dialogue with a local curator, thus bringing together works from origins as varied as Indonesia, Armenia, Japan, Brazil, former Yugoslavia, Mexico, indigenous cultures of North America, and India, always setting them in a conversation with the collections of the Nationalgalerie and thus linking the global and local on multiple levels. Operating as both a complexly interwoven dialogue and simultaneously as independent planets orbiting the broader solar system of the museum, each chapter operated along its own logic, allowing for the viewer to use their own experience of the space to draw constellations between spaces, themes, and artworks. A number of intertwined themes had the potential to emerge as visitors moved through the space, including cultural exchange between Germany and the Other,

the history of the Nationalgalerie's collecting practices, colonialism, art history, moments of transition between multiple modernities and a "global" contemporaneity, international communications, societal geographies, primitivism, and displacement, historic and contemporary. These connections were diffuse, broadly defined, and depended entirely on the viewer to make sense of them, intentionally invoking a kind of subjective reception in order to question to supposed logic of art history as bolstered and produced by the museum. Each of these exhibitions had the potential to function autonomously, with its own internal logic, texts, and curatorial structure, although the space of the Rieckhallen itself was instrumental in the creation of a broader dialogue, fostering an entanglement between the body of the viewer and the body of the museum.

For the purposes of my discussion, which focuses on the links that the museum sought to construct between East-Central Europe and the Global Contemporary, one particular chapter emerges as most critical to unpack: "Sites of Sustainability: Pavillions, Manifestos and Crypts," curated by Zdenka Badovinac. [*Figure 77*] In this chapter, works from the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana and other East European collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, were brought together with the holdings of the German Nationalgalerie to explore alternative models of artistic production as developed in Eastern Europe during socialist times, in particular in the territory of former Yugoslavia. As the curator notes in an accompanying essay: "Between the 1950s and the 1990s, artists in Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland, and GDR devised various alternative models of artistic production, in particular as a performative aspect of their art. Rather than critically describing the existing conditions, they used their art to actually shape their conditions of work. Thus sites of sustainability can be understood as a kind of parallel infrastructure... this was art that built and maintained social relations and a critical understanding

of the world."[323] The post-war, avant-garde works of art on display foregrounded works by canonical artists of the so-called retro avant-garde, including Group OHO, EXAT 51, Gorgona, New Tendencies, Kazimir Malevich, as well as a series of interconnected ex-Yugoslav contemporary artist groups including NSK, IRWIN and Laibach, setting them in direct dialogue with artists from the elsewhere in the East and West. The dialogue produced by these varied artists was predicated not on similarities in form or theme, but on the histories of exhibitions in the framework of self-organized, international projects and artistic networks produced in East-Central Europe during the Cold War through curatorial strategies that heavily emphasized shaping an art history that exceeded the space and power of the museum or the state apparatus. That the vast majority of the chapter's holdings were drawn from the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana is certainly significant in the frame of the broader exhibition's aims. The Moderna galerija was founded in 1947 as a museum of modern art, with the explicit aim of systematically collecting works by Slovenian artists and thus constructing a truly local canon, even within the frame of Yugoslavia. However, as noted by the museum, in Socialist times the institution did not quite fit the dominant, i.e. Western, paradigm of a museum of modern art: although it followed the canons of Modernism in terms of architecture and the strategies of art presentation, it used them as a means for evading ideological pressure put in place by the state; in a sense navigating between these binaries and finding a third way of existence for itself.[324] With Slovenia's independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the Moderna galerija became the principal national institution of modern and contemporary art and an increasingly active link between local and international currents of artistic production, with the aim of establishing a dialogue between the East and the West and constructing a global

[323] *Hello World* – Exhibitionary Supplement, 29.
[324] "History," MG+MSUM. Accessed April 2022. https://www.mg-lj.si/en/about-us/682/history/

view of art history.[325] One of the key results of this new orientation is the international collection Arteast 2000+ established in 2000, which became the core of the newly founded Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (+MSUM), part of a former military barracks complex, located in an autonomous social and cultural centre in Ljubljana, which was renovated and opened in late 2011. As noted by its founding director Badovinac in her prologue to the exhibition, "the title of the collection itself reveals that this project takes place in a specific time and bound to a specific space."[326] The issue of specificity is key here: located on the temporal border between two centuries and at the geopolitical boundary point of East and West Europes, the unique orientation of the Slovenian museum enabled this radical re-writing of art history.[327] In "Sites of Sustainability" in Berlin, Badovinac made tangible connections between the Moderna galerija and the space to which its collection has been displaced and altered, the Hamburger Bahnhof, which also took shape on a boundary point between the two Europes. The tri-part name of the chapter—pavilions, manifestos, crypts—all point to different shapes that the concept of the museum has historically taken, centering the museum, as well as the time and space that it produces, and that it is produced in, at the center of her exhibition. This kind of institutional exchange seems to be possible only in the marginal spaces that appeared and disappeared between Cold War modernist currents, creating a direct link between Ljubljana and Berlin.

[325] Slovenia, and more broadly Yugoslavia, offer fascinating parallels to the space of the former GDR, particularly as they escape the modernist binaries of the Cold War and with the revolutionary posture taken up in the aftermath of 1989. These connections are at the center of the work I will be doing with the project "Understanding 1989" with the Getty Foundation and the Piotr Piotrowski Institute from March 2023 – May 2024.
[326] Prologue to the Ljubljana Exhibition – Zdenka Badovinac 2000+ ArtEast Collection [from *The Art of Eastern Europe:* A Selection of Works for the International and National Collections of Moderna galerija Ljubljana @ Orangerie Congress – Innsbruck, 14-21 November 2001]
[327] Ultimately, the aim of the Arteast 2000+ collection was to ameliorate the notion of Eastern Europe as a "blind spot of history" to finally become visible on the map of Europe.

In the essay "The Plurality of Art Worlds and the New Museum" by Hans Belting, the author suggests that in the global era, western museums may suddenly look "local" if they continue to exclude what remains outside their collections.[328] This is an idea heavily resonates with the work of Badovinac. In her recent book *Comradeship: Curating, Art, and Politics in Post-Socialist Europe*, Badovinac writes about the transformation of the Moderna Galerija into a contemporary art museum: "I will venture that when, in 2000, we created the international, largely Eastern European ArtEast 2000+ collection, to supplement Moderna Galerija's existing collection of mostly national art, we initiated a pioneering self-definition of the art of the former socialist countries. Thus it was that when we involved ourselves in the production not only of our own local context but also of the corresponding international context, it was then that we became a museum of contemporary art."[329] A museum requires not only both local and global works to be contemporary; rather it needs to operate simultaneously in both contexts. In some cases, however, bringing the global and the local together in museums is a less than ideal strategy. It is possible to make the argument for resisting globalization through localization, and at the same time understanding globalization as only one part of what makes art contemporary. Badovinac's previous claims related to the transformation of the Moderna Galerija into a museum of contemporary art; but what happens after the moment of transformation? In a later essay, Badovinac writes that "the museum of contemporary art must serve the needs to local art spaces, so they can enter as equals into dialogue with spaces in other countries and regions… A museum of this kind can no longer be merely a museum of art. It must also be a museum of history, of social and political science, a museum of diverse narratives and their presentation. For such a

[328] Hans Belting, "The Plurality of Art Worlds and the New Museum," 251.
[329] Badovinac, *Comradeship*, 114

museum, the white cube is just one form of display among many possibilities. But more important are the points that connect this 'cube' to others worldwide."[330] In Badovinac's thinking, the contemporary art museum must be a space that is first local before it is global. While the aims of the exhibition *Hello World* sought to supplement the permanent (local, western) collection of art with temporary (globalized) collections borrowed from the peripheries and brought to the center, a strange void becomes visible through a consideration of institutional histories and orientations: the Hamburger Bahnhof's past as a train station, a literal site of departure between the local and the global, does not maintain its metaphorical operations when returning home. There is no art from the spatio-temporal coordinates of East Germany in the exhibition *Hello World* and thus, the local of this museum cannot be replaced by another museum's local or another nation's history, as these chapters suggest. Like the exhibition "After the Wall" at the end of the millennium, it is through the special frame of the museum, one with links to both urban space and history, that the exhibition accrues a new and site-specific meaning. So, rather than in the exhibitionary chapters, it is in the agora, set in the historic hall of the space, that a local emerges in response to the global, allowing the production of a shared time, a post-socialist, global time, to become inhabitable, and here that the museum's future potential, is tangible.

The exhibition's framing of the agora begins with a text that reaches back to the temporal and spatial foundations of the West: "In ancient Greece, the agora was the main assembly place in a city. It provided the stage for the market, festivals were celebrated here and court hearings also took place. The agora enabled the urban community to both develop its identity and preserve order."[331] The layering of all of these societal values onto a single site of course reminds the viewer

[330] Ibid, 131/32
[331] *Hello World* – Exhibitionary Supplement, 11.

instantly of the space of the museum itself: a space for the production of identity, the preservation of history, the making of meaning. However, as we have learned from the earliest iteration of museums, the creation of any center produces margins; the agora, a space for exchange, for commodification, produces exclusions for those who do not belong. Thus, we are able to see in the agora not only the shape of the museum, but also the parallels between the theoretical notion of the agora and the very real space of the European Union. The triangulation of these three spaces of authority—the agora, the museum, the EU—on this particular site, once caught between the powers of East and West, out of time with both, multiple times converge, again presenting the kind of potential that the notion of "Central Europe" and Berlin were imbued with, but this time in the space of the museum itself as an agent of history.

The works contained within the agora of the Hamburger Bahnhof stem from a variety of temporal and spatial origins; artists as varied as Taryn Simon (*A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters I-XVIII, Chapter X*, 2008-11), Siah Armajani (*Glass Front Porch for Walter Benjamin*, 2001), Antonio Ole (*Township Wall*, 2001/18), and Duane Hanson (*Policeman and Rioter*, 1967) fill the vast space, producing multiple constellations and dialogue between artistic traditions from across the globe. [Figure 78] Bruce Nauman's work, *Indoor Outdoor Seating Arrangement* (1999) [*Figure 79*] in particular highlights the human aspect of the agora; this work, consisting of four sets of bleachers, facing each other in pairs, that visitors may sit on, creates a real, rather than abstract, space for interaction and dialogue. Surrounding this work are a number of large-scale installations made in response to the questions produced by the disappearance of Central Europe and the eastward expansion of the EU, a new kind of agora for a new Europe, all of which converge on Nauman's work: Mladen Stilinović's (Croatia) iconic pink flag, which claims that *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English is No Artist* (1992), Marjetica Potrč's (Slovenia)

massive assemblage *Caracaras: Growing Houses* (2012), and Goshka Macuga's (Poland/UK) *Pavilion for International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation* (2016). These works all use the language of space-making to rethink the public spaces and times of post-socialist Europe. Stilinović's work [*Figure 80*], produced in the early years of Europe's reunification, embodies the political, geographical, and cultural difference produced at the end of the confrontation between East and West. Stilinović draws on the language of the West in order to critique its structures, implicating himself in the process.[332] The work "combines the authoritative tone of socialist sloganeering with the DIY strategy of handmade protest banners to present a cynical indictment of the Anglo-Western dominance of a purportedly global art world."[333] Stilinović's work attempts, on a surface level, to critique the structures of the West/Global[334] through its own means, but upon deeper inspection, produces its own difference through materiality. Rather than the traditional cotton or silk, Stilinović's flag is made from cheap, synthetic material, mimicking the forms of the West through the material existence of the East. Here, Stilinović creates a flag for a people on the margins, those excluded from EUropeanization, uniting Eastern Europe as a site of exclusion under a single banner once again. Speaking directly to the West, repeating its own invocations back to it through the material means of the East highlights both the economic disparity between the two spaces in 1992 and questions about what the idea of the nation can mean in the immediate moment after the fall of the Wall. Marjetica Potrč's work, *Caracas: Growing Houses* from 2012 [*Figure 81*], is a work that is deeply invested in the idea of concrete space. Made up from a collection of disparate materials—from tree trunks to plastic siding, from columns to empty cases of beer—the

[332] As noted in an interview in Spring of 2018, Dan Byers, curator of the 2013 Carnegie International and close friend of the artist informed me that Stilinović's English was quite poor.
[333] "Mladen Stilinović." The Carnegie Museum of Art, 2013, Accessed 2018, ci13.cmoa.org/artwork/3415.
[334] Conflated here as suggested in Piotr Piotrowski's text "Towards a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde," 49-58.

work speaks directly to the process of self-organization in the face of the failure of the state. In the author's statement, she comments that "We are not liberated from space. Even in an age when we inhabit digital space and speak in abstractions about private and public space, we are nevertheless dependent on physical space. As sociologists have pointed out, any group that strives for recognition requires a physical space. Placemaking is the creation of such a space. This is where the social reality is constructed—in a place."[335] The work functions as a node of privacy within the agora, creating a site of community, a site oriented towards sustaining life. This work, produced in the space of Central Europe but within the time of the EU, which Slovenia joined in 2004, attempts to engage in the process of speaking across these new borders from the position of the West to the world at large. Finally, Goshka Macuga's work, *Pavilion for International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation* from 2016 [*Figure 82*], is a concrete installation which takes the impossible form of an open, brutalist structure, in which six vases or containers, taking the forms of heads of critical thinkers across history—from Rabindranath Tagore to Pussy Riot—are displayed.[336] As the catalogue states, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation was an advisory organization for the League of Nations which sought to diffuse the idea of permanent international collaboration between scholars, artists, writers, teachers, students and school children in all countries.[337] Despite the apparently utopic, global thrust of the work, it is the identification of the structure as a "pavilion" that introduces tension here; as Zdenka Badovinac writes in her essay "Sites of Sustainability,"

> "Pavilions have a specific resonance in the history of exhibitions: they have been used by individual nations for expositions, to present work that testifies to the nation's sovereignty. The most famous example is the Venice Biennale, where such national displays continue,

[335] Kittelmann, *Hello World*, 376.
[336] It is worth noting that lining the walls of the exhibition are selections from the texts of many of these thinkers, creating a free associative dialogue between the many works in the agora.
[337] Kittelmann, 372

> despite the recent erosion of belief in the sovereignty of individual states, or the purity of national art, and notwithstanding the increased homogenization of the world (and its cynical ideologies of difference). Our use of the form therefore called up further questions. From what position, national or otherwise, do we speak? What, exactly, are we safeguarding when we sustain the specificity of geographic spaces? Is cultural belonging an absolute value, or just another consumer slogan?"[338]

Badovinac notes that pavilions are, by nature, temporary, with no real allegiance to any time, place, or nation. To create a pavilion—an inherently national construct—within the international, globally oriented space of the agora is itself a contradiction; to produce a temporary structure of concrete only furthers this. Perhaps this work can be understood as taking on the contradictory and often unstable identity of the museum itself; a place where historical thought (Tagore) and contemporary action (Pussy Riot) come together to produce meaning, one which, like the parallel meaning produced through the form of the pavilion, is malleable and temporary.

The different modes of thinking represented by these three works are not connected through lived time or geographical space, but rather are institutionalized together in the timeless space of the museum. At first, these works appear to function as individual planets orbiting the sun of Nauman's space of collection; but another work inserts itself, interrupting the line of vision between Macuga's work and Potrč's: Alfredo Jaar's *(Kindness) of (Strangers)* (2015) [*Figure 83*] [*Figure 84*], a work that uses neon vectors to present an abstracted map of the movements of migrants across Europe. Not only abstracted in space (for the map is black, abstracted, negated), but also in time; this is not only a map of the current migratory routes across Europe, activated by the "refugee crisis" from the Balkans to the Schengen Zone, but also of historical modes of migration, trade routes, tracking the pathways of ideas, intellectual and societal exchange that occurred before the division of Europe into two separate spheres in 1945. Bisected by Jaar's piece,

[338] Badovinac, *Comradeship*, 290.

these three works from the (now former) East understand Europe not as the project of the EU, a union of nations, and not as a region pierced through by borders, but as a whole continent, a space of mobility, production, meeting: an agora. Together these works are able to liberate the viewer from their specific space and time, nationality and belonging, constructing a new mode of being. As we meet in the agora, beneath Stilinović's pink flag, next to Potrč's house, beside Macuga's pavilion, we enter into a space where we as individuals, not representatives of nations or histories, experience true synchronicity—a being together in time in the space of post-socialist Europe.

Despite the utopic public space that *Hello World* successfully constructs through its agora, the complete absence of East Germany within its narrative frame illustrates the troubled position of the museum as a site seeking to bridge the global and the local; in the attempt to re-orient the museum's past in this frame, local histories disappear, seeping away from the surface and into the groundwater of a city built on a swamp. While the exhibition's ultimate shortcoming in grappling with its own past through the exhibition appears in the lens of the missing East Germany, it is in the shape of the museum itself—as frame, as anchor, as agora—and its relationship to the city where the empty spot created by the amnesia towards East German art and history can be filled by a broader understanding of Berlin 30 years after 1989. Speaking directly to the condition of his Europe in 2004, Ole Bouman describes the possibility of using culture to produce a new synchronicity:

> "Such a culture will certainly not be about aesthetically pleasing, meticulously styled object buildings on superb locations, or about untouched masterpieces of art. Not even about spatial interventions on troublesome spots, aka site-specific art. Something different is called for and the proposition advanced here is that it should no longer be sought in space or matter, but in time. *Culture in Europe's public space becomes culture in Europe's public time.* In other words, in the time that we share, the time in which we acknowledge the other and the other can get to know us."[339]

[339] Bouman, "Synchronizing Europe," 161.

The production of a culture of shared public time is the aim of the exhibition in the Historic Hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof; this agora, this center of cultural life, is not spatial but instead temporal. Rather than reproducing the binary logic of the spatio-agora, which functions through centers and margins, exclusion and inclusion, the exhibition *Hello World* produces a temporal agora, where synchronicity is once again possible: public space is transformed into public time. As the borders of Europe continue to expand to the East, it will perhaps be possible to understand cultural production in such spaces not as projects located on or between borders, producing difference, but as temporal ones, producing synchronicity. In the context of this exhibition, the meaning made by the holdings of the museum becomes inextricable from its frame—the former train station, the former no-man's land, the museum that now takes root on this location—and when folded together, a space and time of potential, at once utopic and traumaphobic, rife with contradictions, begins to appear. This new agora, the museum itself, is shaped by currents of East and West, a layering and folding necessitated by the confluence of these currents on this site: this agora is Berlin 30 years after reunification.

4.4 Agoraphobia

The two exhibitions at the center of this chapter—*After the Wall* (1999-2001) and *Hello World* (2018)— together produce a significant dialogue with the museum through which it becomes possible to understand the institution of the Hamburger Bahnhof in relation to the public space or, in Ole Bouman's terms, public time that surrounds it. While *After the Wall* constructs a new canon in time, drawing on 1989 as a moment of rupture that relates to the re-orientation of a

space, both in the geographical space of Europe and in the constructed space of the museum, *Hello World* expands the canon in spatial terms, transforming the museum into a site of temporal potential, a time machine of sorts, where the foundational flaw of western cultural institutions—an attention only to the spaces and values that uphold the rigid hegemonic structures that have constructed the museum—can finally be questioned, if not undone entirely. In the case of both exhibitions, it is the framing of the museum itself, as both extension of and rupture with the local space and time that surrounds it, that allows for this meaning to be made. The convergence of temporal and spatial currents in the particular space of the Hamburger Bahnhof, formerly a train station that engendered real travel in time and space, and today an institution that allows this journey to continue metaphorically, without leaving the time and space of Berlin, casts light on the function of the museum of contemporary art in this particular cultural context: to integrate the global into the local (both in spatial and temporal terms), and thus to foment a new kind of relationship between the spectator and the world they occupy. What the two exhibitions that drive this chapter share is the drive to bleed beyond the boundaries of the museum and into the society that surrounds it; they, like the Hamburger Bahnhof itself, are *agoraphilic*, embracing and seeking connection with the urban topography of Berlin.[340]

Despite the deeply entrenched connections between the museum and the city that frames it, the relationship between Berlin and the Hamburger Bahnhof remains fraught, complicated through the very action that allowed for the shaping of the museum's contemporary existence, the

[340] "Although the term agoraphilia most commonly refers to the pursuit of sexual satisfaction in public places, the concept's Greek etymology suggests a much broader meaning, one that is only minimally suggested by sexology. In this broader context, agoraphilia describes the drive to enter the public space, the desire to participate in that space, to shape public life, to perform critical and design functions for the sake of and within the social space." -- Piotr Piotrowski, "Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe," 7. I use this term here intentionally as a juxtaposition with the traumaphobia/philia binary Piotrowski employs to describe the situation of museums in the decades following the end of communism.

fall of the Berlin Wall and the victory of capitalism over communism. The interceding 30-year span between that moment and the present one has seen the transformation of Berlin, once a mecca for draft dodgers, punks, artists, and the alternative scene of both East and West Germany, into a hub of European and global capitalism. The transformation of the former no-man's land that surrounded the Hamburger Bahnhof into the highly developed and privately owned "EuropaCity" has had major consequences for the museum: in the late 2010s, the Austrian real estate company CA Immo AG, which owns 20 hectares of EuropaCity[341], refused to extend the lapsed lease of the Rieckhallen to the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, wanting instead to demolish the industrial building and transform the well-situated area into profitable apartments for a city in the grips of a housing crisis. Following significant protest by both the denizens of Berlin and cultural actors in the city, which led to the production of a well-researched brochure entitled *Rettet die Rieckhallen!* [*Save the Rieckhallen*!][342], as well as the offer of a land swap of equal value by the state of Berlin (an interesting parallel to the history of the museum in the 1980s when it moved from the administration of East Berlin to West Berlin), in late 2022 it was announced that the Rieckhallen should be able to continue on as part of the cultural institution. However, this moment of uncertainty led to both the withdrawal of the Flick collections and a broader perspectival shift in the relationship between private and public spaces in the city. Returning to an earlier-cited comment made by Piotr Piotrowski, in which he claims that "there is no doubt that the historico-geographical coordinates of Central Europe are in a state of flux…that we are between two different **times**, between two different **spatial shapes**," it is clear that the city of Berlin has moved

[341] In contrast to the approximately six hectares owned by the state of Berlin -- https://www.caimmo.com/en/portfolio/project/europacity-1/
[342] Raue, Schuster, Kahlfeldt, Düwel, Blume, *Rettet die Rieckhallen* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2021)

beyond this moment of transition, this moment of potential, and into a present shaped by the dominant structures of capitalism. The Agora is threatened not only by the constraints of communism, but also by the avarice of capitalism.

In an interview with former director of the Hamburger Bahnhof Gabriele Knapstein, who led the institution from 2016-2021, the critical importance of this institution for the local frame is foregrounded: according to Knapstein, "[m]y task all along has been to make clear that if the State of Berlin didn't come forward and save this part of the building, it would jeopardize the Hamburger Bahnhof's position as a major art museum for the 21st century. It was critical, as where would we show new acquisitions and donations if we lost the Rieckhallen?"[343] Knapstein curated the exhibition "Church for Sale" (2021-22) in response to the instability of the museum's future, addressing within the frame of the threatened museum other crises of the present, including the climate crisis, migration, and the fragility of financial constructs. The exhibition, which was named after a work by Edgar Arceneaux who made a series of drawings of real estate signs he came across in Detroit when the city became bankrupt after the financial crisis, presented a pessimistic vision of the future for Berlin at a moment that its most visible contemporary art museum was under threat. Critically, the destruction of the Rieckhallen would have also led to the demolition of Bruce Nauman's site-specific architectural work *Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care* which is located in the furthest-flung corner of the Rieckhallen. In her interview, Knapstein highlighted the importance of the maintenance of this work for Berlin, suggesting that it "address[es] the vulnerabilities of human existence in its urban, societal and cultural surroundings."[344] As previously discussed in this chapter, Nauman's work offers not only a void

[343] „Gabriele Knapstein on saving the Rieckhallen," Ex-Berliner. November 25, 2021. Accessed November 2022. https://www.exberliner.com/art/gabriele-knapstein-interview/
[344] Ibid.

at the end of the museum, but a metaphor for the museum itself and the viewer's relationship to it. The loss of this site-specific work would have gestured to the impermanence of cultural institutions in a city that needs them for the construction of an identity that evades a purely capitalist existence.

Despite the maintenance of the Rieckhallen and thus the continued integrity and coherence of the Hamburger Bahnhof, the urban coordinates contained within and outside of it continue to shift: across the banks of the Berlin-Spandauer Schifffahrtskanal, a new science museum named the "Futurium" opened in late 2019, emphasizing interactive exhibits on vital issues for the future, especially concerning the climate, housing, food and technology. EuropaCity continues to expand, gentrifying the neighborhood of Moabit, which has historically been home to a large number of people who are either immigrants or have a "Migrationshintergrund" ("migrant background" – the German term for a person who is themselves a, or is the child of at least one, person who was not born in Germany).[345] In the final weeks of 2022, the decision was made to rename the Hamburger Bahnhof, formerly the "Museum für Gegenwart," into the "Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart," signaling an increasingly interconnected National Gallery system in the city of Berlin. At the same time, 2022 saw the first iteration of the Berlin Biennale hosted (in part) in the Hamburger Bahnhof. According to the new directors of the institution, Till Fellrath and Sam Bardaouil, this was the first major step in developing the museum into "an archive of the future with new priorities" within the scope of the National Gallery's collection.[346] In the frame of Berlin, a city which previously embodied the hope for utopic potentialities but today seems to slip further into the unyielding grip

[345] 52.9% of Moabit's residents have a migration background (Berlin: 36.6%, as of 2021). The share of the foreign population is 33.0%, the Berlin average is 21.5%. Statistischer Bericht A I 5-hj 2/21. Einwohnerinnen und Einwohner im Land Berlin am 31. Dezember 2021. Grunddaten. S. 27, 30.
[346] "Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath on Starting Work as Directors of Hamburger Bahnhof," Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Published January 2022, accessed January 2023. https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/en/newsroom/dossiers-and-news/all-dossiers/dossier-quo-vadis-spk/translate-to-english-bilder-des-anfangs-sam-bardaouil-und-till-fellrath.html

of capitalism, the Hamburger Bahnhof is seeking to re-position itself in both spatial and temporal terms: turning from the present to the future, and from an agoraphobic and antagonistic relationship to the public space that surrounds it to an *agoraphilic* one.

The term "agoraphilia"—which Piotr Piotrowski defined as "the drive to enter the public space, the desire to participate in that space, and to shape public life"[347]—resonates on many levels in the frame of Berlin, and particularly for the space of the Hamburger Bahnhof, which had a literal agora constructed inside of its Historic Hall for the exhibition "Hello World," equating the space of the museum directly with the space of the European Union in another moment of folding together the museum's interior and exterior worlds. In a sense, the task of entering into public life, space, and time, is the essential aim of the global contemporary: no longer speaking in the esoteric language that widens the rift between centers and margins, this art seeks to liberate cultural production from the national frames in which it is made and set it into a dialogue of equals that stretches across the globe, South to North, West to East. The task of entering public life is also a major aim of the museum of art, broadly construed, in its intention of producing an interconnected world where images, rather than language, become the primary mode of communication, thus transcending national, culturally specific, and linguistic boundaries. But in Berlin, this push into the agora takes on a new urgency: Berlin was the city divided, denied the freedom and coherence of public spaces for 28 years, two months and 28 days; Berlin was the place where the action of the public shattering the Berlin Wall again produced free public space; Berlin was also the space where a new time, one with parallels to the new temporality of Central Europe after 1989, could be produced in the moments that immediately followed, containing all of the utopic potential of modernism. The Hamburger Bahnhof, once located on the no-man's land produced by modernism,

[347] Piotr Piotrowski in a lecture entitled "Global Agoraphilia" from 2013 about the 7th Berlin Biennial (2012)

now attempts to produce an every-man's land that mirrors the contours of the globe, particularly through exhibitions like *Hello World*. However, as previously illustrated in this chapter, the space of Berlin and the institutions housed in this once-divided city actively resist binary impulses, whether that means a purely spatial or temporal existence, or existing in a purely traumaphilic or traumaphobic posture towards their own past. Therefore, in order to better understand the space of Berlin in reference to its public spaces, the notion of "agoraphilia," must be tempered with its equal and opposite, "agoraphobia," or a fear of public life. Producing a dialogue between these two currents allows an understanding of Berlin in the present as existing on the threshold between these two impulses and helps us better to understand the unique position of the city-state.

In the opening sentences of "Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe," Piotr Piotrowski's survey of contemporary art and the cultural institutions that maintain, frame, and contextualize it in East-Central Europe, the author draws a careful connection between agoraphilia and agoraphobia in Central and Eastern Europe before and after 1989.[348] "When applied to the analysis of art produced in the countries of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, this word provides a key to the description of at least a portion of the region's artistic culture, a part that responded to the call emanating on the one hand from the new map of Europe taking shape in the wake of the Cold War and, on the other, from the earlier geopolitical division of the continent."[349] In contrast to the agoraphilia that Piotrowski describes as the driving force of post-socialist art in Eastern Europe is the historicizing and contextualizing negative point of reference: an agoraphobia rooted in the suppression of public life during the era of European division; Piotrowski argues that the restriction and subjugation of public life and culture, like the political

[348] Actually "Agorafilia" (the Polish translation of the term) was the original name of "Art and Democracy" when it was first published in Piotrowski's native language.
[349] Piotrowski, "Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe," 7.

and social systems that emerged across the Eastern Bloc, took on different forms and worked through different apparatuses throughout the communist history of the region, but that, in every case, the restriction of culture and cultural production constituted "an important part of communist rule and served as an instrument of the cultural policies carried out by the state apparatus."[350] In the post-communist moment, the drive to enter public spaces has outweighed the fear of censorship, as exemplified through the traveling exhibition "After the Wall," which used works like Lutz Becker's *After the Wall* to forge a wholly new relationship to the museum and the public space that surrounded it. However, despite the seismic shift that took place with the crossing of a threshold into the era of the global contemporary (which I define as the moment following 1989, following the work of Piotrowski, Okwui Enwezor, Hans Belting, and others), East German cultural production was excluded from the public spaces of post-socialist Germany. Works made in the time and space of the German Democratic Republic were removed from public view and relegated to unreachable rural depots, written out of "German" art histories, and (intentionally) forgotten. First rendered agoraphobic through the Bilderstreit, and further excluded from the project of the Global Contemporary, as epitomized in projects like "Hello World," which seek to re-write the past from the position of the present but includes no artworks that stand in reference to the local frame of East Berlin, this work is denied entry into public space and thus refused the ability to work in dialogue with it. The agoraphilic drive of museums in the condition of the global contemporary—museums which seek to use their local frame to produce a more nuanced or greater meaning—bypasses (former) East Germany in its entirety, limiting its cultural production to the spaces that formerly constituted the socialist nation. This reading offers up a new way to understand the position of the former GDR from the vantage point of the present: it no longer

[350] Ibid.

belongs purely to the time or space of East and West, but instead continues to constitute a border, a boundary, a *threshold* between them.

In many ways, the relationship of the Hamburger Bahnhof, a museum critical to understanding how these tensions continue to play out in the moment of the global contemporary, to the space that frames it can be best understood through the work *After the Wall* which opened this chapter. Becker's work, a sonic memorial, allows the contents of the museum to bleed past the institution as a frame that desires to contain it. The symphony of the falling Berlin Wall transgresses beyond their time and space, drawing on medium, memory, and site, to speak beyond their present. This work, which far exceeds the power of a singular masterpiece, a work in a sculpture garden that is locked after the museum closes, or even a single historical moment allows us to picture the relationship of German art after the Wende. This art doesn't come from East or West, but somewhere, sometime, in between. The frame of this work is no longer the museum, but the city, the society, it is constructed from, in and for: the post-socialist European Agora, a crossroads in time and space.

4.5 Coda: Agoraphilia

Time and space are the major axes around which this dissertation orients itself. These threads emerge and re-emerge throughout this project: carefully interwoven in the exhibitions of museums which critically reflect on their point of origin and future destination, untwisted and frayed in public spaces where dominant narratives of history camouflage the complexities of the past. This methodological framework is employed chiefly to allow the reader to exceed the confines of their own position in geographical and historical networks of belonging, continuing

the intentions of horizontal art history, which insists that in order to understand the world we must first position ourselves within it. Here, at the conclusion of the dissertation's final chapter, it is necessary to position this project too within the spatial and temporal coordinates that produced it.

While the geographic coordinates of this dissertation project are clearly delineated— despite shifting ideologies, alignments, and naming practices, the physical space of the former German Democratic Republic continues to occupy the same place on the globe before, during, and after socialism— the temporal bookends of this project are less immediately discernable. This project draws on the pasts of East Germany, of the "new states" of Germany, and of the once-divided city of Berlin in the era of the "Berliner Republik"[351] and afterwards in order to investigate the present. While this project is at its core an art historical one, it is deeply anchored in the broader processes of society: in the political, the economic, the deeper currents of the societies which build and maintained the cultural institutions explored through these three chapters. In many ways too, the periodization of this project is bound up with these currents: the years between 2017 and 2020 themselves functioned as the convergence point of several thresholds, ones that we could not recognize before they had been crossed.

This project begins its periodization in 2017: the year that the Museum Barberini opened with the exhibition "Hinter der Maske" and a series of museums across the former GDR, in Leipzig, Dresden, and Halle began re-orienting their institutions in a moment of crisis. With the popularity of the neo-fascist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party in former East Germany as well as the right-wing populism that swept the (former) West, most visible in Brexit and the

[351] The "Berliner Republik" (Berlin Republic) is a name given to the historical period after the reunification of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany, and before the official move of the government from Bonn to Berlin, between 1990-1999. The nomenclature follows the tradition of the terms Weimar Republic and Bonn Republic.

election of Donald Trump as president of the United States in 2016, a new urgency forced these works and the museums that framed them into a new kind of posture vis-à-vis public space. This moment of societal transformation produced the spaces that allowed for the relevance, the re-emergence of East German art on its own terms and in its own spaces in order to better understand the present.

Over the following three years, museums across the region marked the 30th anniversary of German reunification, reckoned with questions about restitution and return in the frame of the colonial past, and sought deeper and broader connections with a world that seemed limitless in scope. In 2020, the moment where this dissertation ends its periodization, the COVID-19 pandemic had produced a new and increasingly agoraphobic world in which East German art itself was not under threat, but rather where the second major voice in this project, the museum itself, was limited, closed, threatened. Society's relationship with the public spaces it occupied was inextricably shifted in this moment, a parallel kind of paradigm shift to the moment of 1989, but this time encapsulating the whole world. As we move towards a future where capitalism, pandemics, war, and the climate crisis sharpen the challenge to our belonging to the public spaces we occupy, the relationship between the individual and the public spaces that surrounds them—including museums—will become increasingly challenging and critical. Perhaps by learning from the complex Museological history of a region that has long been marginalized, flattened, and overlooked, and forced from the public spaces it once built and occupied, a better future can be reached for.

The kind of triangular relationship which develops between the individual, the (cultural) institution and the public space that they both occupy (albeit in very different ways) was a major starting point for the research and writing of this project. I came to Germany in early March of

2020 for what should have been a two-week visit but turned into a much longer trip after the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic and international borders began to shutter in a way that was unprecedented and would have been unimaginable only a few months prior. Suddenly, the content of archives, institutions, museums, libraries were rendered inaccessible to me because of the closures of these public spaces; my only contact with the subject of my work was the exterior, the façade, the embeddedness into the urban space of a city I had known for ten years but was now experiencing in an entirely new way—something that likely hadn't happened since the aftermath of World War II. The agoraphobic posture forced onto me and the society I lived in in many ways reproduced the conditions of the moment surrounding 1989. The act of exploring a city which was familiar and foreign at the same time became my research method: the first chapter I conceptualized, the second chapter of this project, was written about the only thing I could access in the autumn months of 2020: the façade of the newly built Humboldt Forum and Berliner Schloss. I spent hours traversing the Schlossplatz on foot, watching construction move forward glacially as workers adjusted to new rules about distance. In many ways, my own posture began to mirror that of Mattheuer's sculpture *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, my mouth covered by a mask as my eyes continued to consume the history that I was witnessing but couldn't touch.

As the world started to reopen with the development of the coronavirus vaccine, so, too, did Germany's museums. Almost a year after my initial arrival in Germany and after 5 months of complete lockdown, the State Museums of Berlin allowed visitors to traverse their collections once again. I spent a whole day in the Neues Museum on Museum Island with a colleague, interested less in the antique works on display and more in the physical act of occupying the museum space again. My spatial trajectories expanded, first to Leipzig and Halle for day trips to the museums I

wanted to write about, later to Dresden and Weimar for conferences and festivals. Despite the precarious shape of the new world that we all suddenly occupied, the methodology I developed in the first, quiet months of the pandemic when everything was uncertain, remained: the tension that emerged between inside and outside, a fear of or longing for public space, the new relationship that developed between my (tested, masked, vaccinated) body and the institutions I sought to enter.

The shape of world has altered in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccine skepticism, misinformation, conspiracy theories, and distrust dominate headlines, above all in places plagued by populist politics like the USA and the former GDR. War has returned to Europe in the shape of Vladimir Putin's attempted invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, challenging the structures of democracy, and the future seems increasingly precarious in the face of the mounting climate catastrophe. In the frame of all of this, humanity's relationship to the public spaces of the globe continuously shifts with the push and pull of agoraphobia and agoraphilia, fears and desires with roots in the parallel moments of 1945 and 1989. History, it seems, is cyclical, inescapable. 2020, the final moment of this project, is another threshold, one that we have already stepped across and into a future that looks more uncertain than ever. Perhaps answers to these new and looming crises can be located in models which have taken shape on and in the boundaries of the border between the (former) East and (former) West. The critical institutions located there have been revealed as the authors of our memories, our belongings, our identities; entering into them and taking part in the spaces and times they have and continue to produce in spite of a rapidly changing world allows us to understand the dynamic potential and urgent need for museums to mediate our relationship to the local and the global in our time and beyond.

5.0 Conclusion: Beyond the Mask

"I seek the contemporary, the problematic, the essential."[352] – Wolfgang Mattheuer (1927-2004)

"Der Ort der Bilder: Nicht das Museum, sondern der Mensch."[353] – Hans Belting (1935-2023)

In September 2022, a new museum opened in the city of Potsdam. Set on the slope of the Brauhausberg, a hill overlooking the city center, the Kunsthaus DAS MINSK is located on the site and in the reconstructed architectural frame of the former terrace restaurant that it takes its name from, the "Minsk," a popular *Nationalitätenrestaurant* in the GDR.[354] [*Figure 85*][*Figure 86*] The Kunsthaus is another project of Hasso Plattner, the f(o)under of the Museum Barberini, which is located only one kilometer away from DAS MINSK but displaced much farther in symbolic terms: whereas the architecture and exhibitionary focus[355] of the Museum Barberini ties seamlessly into the historical narrative of Potsdam's Alter Markt, DAS MINSK enacts a parallel kind of impulse

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[352] Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Äusserungen: Texte, Graphik* (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1990), 39.
[353] "The location of images: not the museum, but the human." As quoted on the sign for the Neue Nationalgalerie in the project *Die Berliner Botschaft* (Silvia Klara Breitwieser, 1996/7).
[354] "Nationalitätenrestaurant" is a specifically East German term for a restaurant that served exclusively foreign dishes. The Minsk was one of seven dining rooms run by the state-administered Handelsorganisation (trading organization) of the GDR. "In the restaurants, the guests should be offered an insight into the culinary and cultural customs of the respective countries through a country-specific cuisine and various events. The nationality restaurants were very popular and, with their unusual range of dishes and high prices, were among the best gastronomic addresses in the GDR." In the case of the Minsk, the culinary and cultural focus was Belarus (at that time a constituent republic of the USSR). Thomas Koschel, "DDR Spezialitäten Restaurants," HO Gaststätte, Accessed February 6 2023. https://www.xn--ho-gaststtte-ocb.de/ddr-spezialitaeten-restaurants.html.
[355] In the present the exhibitionary focus of the Museum Barberini has shifted to be almost entirely related to impressionism: parallel to temporary exhibitions, the Museum Barberini permanently presents more than 100 Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings from the collection of museum founder Hasso Plattner, including works by Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Gustave Caillebotte and Paul Signac. "Uber das Museum," Museum Barberini. Accessed February 6, 2023. https://www.museum-barberini.de/de/museum/695/ueber-das-museum

towards the times and spaces of the GDR, seeking to set these into explicit dialogue with the present. Plattner himself has centered the maintenance of the East German architecture as central to the mission of the new institution: "The building is a site of happy memory for many residents of Potsdam. The DDR style is part of the history of Potsdam, and I want to give it back it to the city's inhabitants."[356] Originally opened in 1977 on the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution, the restaurant offered citizens of the GDR, usually limited in their ability to travel, the chance to take an internationally culinary excursion to the East.[357] Following the Wende and the subsequent closure of the restaurant in the mid-1990s, the building fell into disrepair and its future, like that of many new buildings from East Germany, was called into question. Debate surrounding the potential demolition of the shell of the restaurant was incited less around questions of ideology, as in the case of the Palast der Republik, and more so in reference to the future of Potsdam as a livable city, mirroring the debate surrounding the uncertain fate of the Hamburger Bahnhof's Rieckhallen in Berlin, which took place coevally.[358] The Hasso Plattner Foundation purchased the site before the original structure could be demolished, and work began to restore the building in January 2020. However, it was not only in the architectural context of the institution that the East German past

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[356] „Das Minsk Kunsthaus in Potsdam" Hasso Plattner Foundation. Accessed February 6, 2023. https://plattnerfoundation.org/das-minsk/?lang=de "Das Gebäude ist für viele Potsdamer ein Ort der glücklichen Erinnerungen. Der Stil der DDR ist Teil der Geschichte von Potsdam und ich möchte ihn den Potsdamern zurückgeben." Elsewhere, Plattner has stated "I didn't like the constant tearing down [of GDR architecture]. Perhaps there would not have been anyone else to take over this ruin. It would in all likelihood have been flattened. And that would not have been good." "Minsk-Kunsthaus: Plattner von DDR-Architektur angetan," Sueddeutsche Zeitung. September 22, 2022. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/kunst-potsdam-minsk-kunsthaus-plattner-von-ddr-architektur-angetan-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-220922-99-859296

[357] Elke Schlinsog, „Das "Minsk" in Potsdam: Kulturkampf um das architektonische Erbe der DDR," *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*. September 21, 2022. Accessed February 7, 2023. https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/minsk-potsdam-plattner-ddr-architektur-100.html

[358] "Unikat der Ostmoderne – Café Minsk in Potsdam könnte erhalten werden," Christoph Kohl (Stadtplaner Architekten). Accessed February 6, 2023. http://cksa.de/cafe-minsk-in-potsdam-koennte-erhalten-werden/ -- this desire to make Potsdam, a city that borders Berlin, which is facing a massive housing crisis, more livable is reflected in the surroundings of the institution: The museum is located in the shadows of the hulking "Altes Landtagsgebäude Brandenburg" (Brandenburg State Parliament), a derelict and empty Prussian building which had been given the nickname "the Kremlin" during the GDR era and was in the process of being transformed into luxury apartments.

returned to Potsdam, modernized and updated, but also in terms of the new museum's exhibitionary programming and content.

DAS MINSK opened with two exhibitions: *Potsdamer Schrebergärten* [*Potsdam Allotments*] by the Canadian film and video artist Stan Douglas and *Der Nachbar, der will fliegen* [*The Neighbor Who Wants to Fly*], a monographic exhibition which featured a collection of paintings by the East German artist Wolfgang Mattheuer that ruminated on landscapes, gardens, environmental issues, and the mythical figure of Icarus. These paired exhibitions—which shared themes about the natural world that surrounds us, which we try to regulate, and that ultimately exceeds our control— helps to clarify the intentions of the new museological institution as a whole: to use thematic connections and shared motifs to link past and present, making the work of East German artists like Mattheuer relevant in Potsdam of 2022 and into the future. Throughout the physical space of DAS MINSK, a deep commitment to drawing on the past, here largely embodied through architecture, to speak in and for the present, represented through the institution's content, which even retrospectively situates Mattheuer's work in the frame of contemporary crises such as the climate catastrophe, is visible. This temporal interdependence is further reflected in the preservation and renewal of auxiliary design elements in the building's interior, including the spiral staircase and the bar of the former restaurant, which are now decked with the "daily drawings" of Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi; these cynical sketches gesture to the absurdities of the contemporary condition and the museum's position in it while remaining literally anchored into the architectural structures of the institutions they satirize.[359] [*Figure 87*]

[359] On one the pillar in the café, stark black letters proclaim the room as "the restaurants in the museum who was a restaurant;" a speech bubble pops out of these words, inserting "actually I'm more like a coffee bar" in the artist's scrawling hand. Perjovschi is an artist who uses language as a weapon, particularly against the EU and western structures inside and outside of Europe—this is visible in his intentional grammatical mistakes, which locate him, like Mladen Stilinovic, as an artist from outside of the (western) system. His work is frequently located in

As this dissertation has illustrated, the dialogue that emerges through the currents of content and context—a reading drawn directly from the work of Dr. Piotr Piotrowski—offers a meaningful way to understand the layering of intentional and inadvertent narratives produced through a museum: while the content of a museum manifests the practiced voice of the institution, its context often reveals narratives that are situated just below the surface, that have been attempted to be suppressed but refuse to disappear due to the way they maintain a framing agency in architecture, urban space, or history. An awareness of and a grappling with the polyphony produced via this vast spectrum allows a museum to position itself as a *critical institution*, a key actor in constructing the society around it; on the other hand, the desire to displace or forget results in fractures in the seamless cloaking device of the institution's internal logic, points of weakness where the repressed cannot help but bleed through. These questions are particularly urgent when posed in the conditions of East-Central Europe's museums after 1989: the rapid reframing that took place in this moment, shifting the region's cultural institutions from the producers of its autonomous identities to marginalized and out-of-time sites on the periphery of the global, necessitated a complete reevaluation of their role vis-à-vis the new world they were suddenly embedded in. In the particular case of the cultural institutions of the unique frame of the former GDR, which continue to exist on a threshold between the spaces and times of East and West, on the boundaries of and out of time with both, it is in the places where the confluence of these forces occurs that meaning emerges most legibly: it is at the entrance to the cultural institution, where the interior logic of the museum and exterior logic of the public space that frames it converge, that the many layers of meaning become tangible. In many cases, this quality of the threshold takes on a

institutions that take up a critical, eastern perspective; in the past year, I have seen it featured on the architecture at the Moderna galerija in Ljubljana and at the Ludwig Forum in Aachen as well as at DAS MINSK.

physical manifestation in these spaces: the three chapters of this dissertation have each opened with an image that sought to literalize the encounter between these two worlds, whether in spatial (Chapter 1, *Der Jahrhundertschritt*), temporal (Chapter 2, *Die DDR hat's nie gegeben*) or spatio-temporal (Chapter 3, *After the Wall*) terms. DAS MINSK in Potsdam also literalizes this convergence of currents, again through a sculpture by Wolfgang Mattheuer: *Mann mit Maske (Gesichtzeigen)* [*Man with Mask (Show Your Face)*]. [*Figure 88*] This work, which portrays a man who bears significant likeness to the artist himself wearing a suit and holding a sheep's head half in front of his face, is located on the literal threshold of the institution, on the portico of the building, producing a first moment of confrontation with any viewer who seeks to enter the institution.

Mattheuer's masked man was a frequent interlocutor of mine while I traveled across Germany to research and write this dissertation over the last three years. As with work *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, Mattheuer made several nearly identical casts of this sculpture, and I found myself often stumbling upon them by coincidence in the strangest of times and spaces: in August 2021 on the re-opening day of the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, the half-masked figure peered at me from a corner of the museum's sunken sculpture garden; in late February of 2022, the day the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, I encountered the bronze figure on its own in an empty gallery of the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig, abandoned and unwatched, like the lone survivor of an atomic blast. My final encounter with *Mann mit Maske* took place on December 19, 2022, my 31st birthday, when I climbed the iced-over steps of DAS MINSK with my husband to visit the museum for the first time. The statue is a little taller than a human, which forced me to incline my head to meet his doubled gaze. Standing outside of the museum, both of our figures

were reflected in the windows of the building, bringing our bodies and the time we occupied into direct contact.

Mattheuer's *Mann mit Maske* was first developed in the context of the Montagsdemonstrationen, a series of peaceful protests originating in Leipzig that eventually led to the Peaceful Revolution later that same year and subsequent the end of East Germany. For the artist, this figure represented the complexities of subjecthood in the final years of the GDR: the tension between the mask and what lay beneath.[360] For me, at the end of 2022, the notion of a masked figure had taken on a new sort of contemporary meaning in light of the last three years and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In the Neue Bundesländer, formerly East Germany, vaccination rates had been markedly lower than in the former West, and infection rates higher.[361] At the same time, resistance against mask mandates and the fear of forced vaccinations were developing into culture of protest across Germany; the term "Montagsdemonstration" accrued a new meaning, now describing the unofficial "walks" that groups of concerned citizens took on Mondays in protest against governmental measures.[362] At the threshold of DAS MINSK, all of these tensions, from my time and from the artist's, converged, gesturing to the wider network that we entered into through our momentary encounter, somewhere beyond the mask.

The notion of the network has been literalized in many ways throughout this project to draw a meaningful picture of the interconnection that takes place in and through the cultural institutions of post-socialist eastern Germany in the present: it is apparent in the nation-spanning

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[360] Wolfgang Mattheuer. *Werkverzeichnis der Plastiken und Objekte*. (Frankfurt: Galerie Schwind, 2005)
[361] Jens Thurau, "COVID highlights a geographic split in Germany," Deutsche Welle. November 21, 2021. https://www.dw.com/en/covid-highlights-a-geographic-split-in-germany/a-59884113
[362] Fatina Keilani, "Immer mehr Deutsche gehen gegen die Corona-Beschränkungen auf die Strasse," Neue Zuercher Zeitung. January 3, 2022. https://www.nzz.ch/international/immer-mehr-deutsche-demonstrieren-gegen-die-corona-beschraenkungen-ld.1662922?_x_tr_sl=de&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=wapp

web that emerges between the different iterations of the same sculptural figure (whether a century stepper or a masked man); it appears in the ever-shifting tessellation of the remains of East Germany's public art, now dispersed across the archives, depots, and institutions of a reunified nation; it is the constellation that emerges when multiple times converge in the space of the contemporary museum, allowing us to move beyond the center/margin model produced by the structures of modernism. The institution of DAS MINSK itself can be positioned as the part of broader systems, a single hinge that connects and allows meaning to be made through the convergence of many frames. It is part of the East-West running network that connected the cities of Potsdam and Minsk through the construction of the Potsdam Restaurant in Minsk and the subsequent Minsk Café in Potsdam;[363]it is the end result of a deep-seated desire to construct a space for contemporary art in Potsdam, manifested in the work *Die Potsdamer Botschaft – Kunsthalle Potsdam* by Silvia Klara Breitwieser (1996);[364] finally, and perhaps most critically for the purposes of this discussion, DAS MINSK produces a critical dialogue with the Museum Barberini, which opened this dissertation. This dialogue is fomented not only through the shared support of the Hasso Plattner Foundation, but more importantly through the two distinctive sculptures by Mattheuer that mark the thresholds of both institutions. Separated by one kilometer,

[363] The story of the café Minsk begins in June of 1970, when a group of architects from Potsdam were sent to the capital of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (a constituent republic of the USSR) to get acquainted with the experience of housing construction in Minsk, which at that time was the fastest growing city in the USSR. Following their visit, a restaurant with the name of Potsdam was built in the center of Minsk; according to one source, "laconic lines of brass masterfully traced the orchards of Werder and the parks of Sanssouci; the site of the Potsdam Conference "Cecilienhof" and the modernist hotel "Interhotel"; a chemical factory in Premnitz and a nuclear power plant in Rheinsberg." Seven years later, a parallel restaurant opened in Potsdam: the Minsk café, today Kunsthaus DAS MINSK. "Restaurant 'Minsk' in Potsdam - and vice versa. 50 years of a cult project that you hardly know about," Goethe Institute. Accessed February 6, 20-23. https://citydog.io/long/minsk-potsdam-about/

[364] This work proceeded *Die Berliner Botschaft* (1997) which closed Chapter 1 and sought to create a "new kind of a museum of contemporary art." Located "on the field in front of the old city hall, in front of the Nicolaikirche… and in the middle of the footprint of the foremer city castle," Breitwieser's work took up the position that would later be occupied by the Museum Barberini. Künstler*innen Archive der Berlinische Galerie Buch der Herstellung: I. Die Potsdamer Botschaft – „Kunsthalle Potsdam" 1996

these two works actually face each other: *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, located in the courtyard of the Museum Barberini to the north of the city's central train station, looks south, while the *Mann mit Maske*, located in an institution due south of the train station, faces north. [*Figure 89*] While the mouth of the bifurcated figure at the center of *Der Jahrhundertschritt* has been swallowed into his torso, his eyes remain visible, conspicuous. [*Figure 90]* Somewhere in the air, floating above the city of Potsdam, they meet the gaze of the *Mann mit Maske*, who, caught in the act of taking off (or putting on) his mask, uncovers one single, staring eye. Both of these works exceed the boundaries of the space that contains them through this convergence of their gazes, bracketing the city of Potsdam somewhere between the socialist East Germany that these works were made in and the post-socialist Germany that they exist in now, finally able to speak across constructed borders in space and time.

In many ways, the institution of DAS MINSK represents the future potential of museums in this region. Conceived of in 2020, its doors opened in late 2022, in a new moment in which our relationship to the public space that surrounds us was unequivocally altered by the events of the recent past. In a recent interview with the founding director of DAS MINSK, Paola Malavassi directly addresses the relationship between the new institution and the public space that surrounds it: "There is no boundary between the Minsk and the public square where we are standing [that surrounds it], it merges, you cross the street and you are already in the museum, in the café, in the foyer. Everything becomes public, a meeting point for everyone."[365] In many ways, this is reflective of the work that cultural institutions did in East Germany, offering a space of contact and encounter for people from all levels of society. And is the work that must necessarily be taken up in the moments after 2020, as we forge new connections between ourselves and the times and

[365] Schlinsog, Das "Minsk" in Potsdam: Kulturkampf um das architektonische Erbe der DDR."

spaces we occupy. In this world, the museum becomes an agora, one where the individual, rather than the institution, mirroring the posture of Mattheuer's sculptural figures, is transformed into the bearer of images.

Appendix A Figure Captions

Images used in this dissertation have been redacted for copyright purposes.

Appendix A.1 Introduction: Behind the Mask

Figure 1: Museum Barberini, Potsdam

Figure 2: Alter Markt, Potsdam. Museum Barberini in foreground

Figure 3: Gert Koshofer, *Galerie im Palast,* 1985

Figure 4: Installation shot of a photograph of the "Galerie im Palast der Republik," (Gert Koshofer, 1985), as displayed in the exhibition "Hinter der Maske" (Museum Barberini, Potsdam, 2017/18).

Appendix A.2 Chapter 1: The Step of the Century: Orienting Critical Museums in the "New" Germany

Figure 5: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, 1984. Bronze. Installed in front of the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum, Leipzig.

Figure 6: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Freundlicher Besuch im Braunkohlenrevier*, 1974. Öl auf Hartfaser, 100 x 125 cm.

Figure 7*:* Wilhelm Lachnit, *Der Tod von Dresden*, 1945. Mixed media on canvas. 200,5 x 113,5 cm.

Figure 8*:* Hans Grundig, *Opfer des Faschismus*, 1946

Figure 9: Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale)

Figure 10: Layout of permanent exhibition, Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale)

Figure 11*:* Exterior of Kunstmuseum Mortizburg, Halle (Saale)

Figure 12: Two windows into/ruptures in the exhibitionary space of Kunstmuseum Moritzburg

Figure 13: Karl Hofer, *Cassandra*, 1936

Figure 14*:* Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, 1984. On display at the Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle (Saale)

Figure 15: Wege der Moderne -- Art in the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR 1945–1990

Figure 16: Wege der Moderne -- Art in the Soviet Occupation Zone/GDR 1945–1990, viewed from above

Figure 17: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Kain*, 1965

Figure 18: Werner Tuebke, *Lebenserinnerungen des Dr. jur. Schulze II*, 1965

Figure 19: Albertinum, Dresden

Figure 20: Otto Dix, *Der Krieg (Triptychon)*, 1929/32, mixed media on wood. (4-teilig) Mitteltafel 204 x 204 cm; linker und rechter Flügel je: 204 x 102 cm; Predella: 60 x 204 cm.

Figure 21: Hans Grundig, *Das Tausendjaehrige Reich (Tyiptchon)*, 1935-38. Oil on wood, oil on linen. 150 x 178 cm (linke Tafel), 130 x 152 cm (Mitteltafel), 152 x 170 cm (rechte Tafel); Predella: 67 x 146 cm.

Figure 22: Hermann Nitsch, *Station Of The Cross - Kreuzwegstation*, 1994. Oil and blood on jute. As displayed at the Albertinum, Dresden

Figure 23: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Hallo! Ich fliege (Hello! I'm flying)*, 1985. Oil on hardboard. As displayed at the Albertinum, Dresden

Figure 24: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Die Flucht der Sisyphus* (*The Flight of Sisyphus*), 1972

Figure 25: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Sisyphos behaut dem Stein (Sisyphus Hews the Stone)*, 1974

Figure 26: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Der uebermuetige Sisphyos and die Seinen* (*The Coltish Sisyphos and his People*), 1976

Figure 27: Katharina Sieverding, *Deutschland wird deutscher* (*Germany is becoming more German*), 1992

Figure 28: Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig

Figure 29: Via Lewandowsky, *Berliner Zimmer (Geteiltes Leid ist halbes Elend)*, 2002. As displayed in *Point of No* Return (MdbK 2019)

Figure 30: Peggy Meinfelder, *Rieth/Zimmerau 1989*, 2010

Figure 31: Peggy Meinfelder, *Westpaket*, 2006. Table, lamp, sweets and baking ingredients.

Figure 32: Wolfgang Petrovsky, *Eingekochte Zeit*, 1990-1994

Figure 33: Willi Sitte, *Erdgeister*, 1990

Figure 34: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Panik II (Ausbruch)*, 1989

Figure 35: Silvia Breitwieser, *Botschaft – Die Berliner Botschaft – Ein Trajekt*, 1996/97. 32 sign-objects, iron, hot-dip galvanized aluminum, plastic. Installed in Berlin-Kreuzberg.

Appendix A.3 Chapter 2: The GDR Never Existed: De- and Re-Constructing Socialist Narratives on Berlin's Schloßplatz

Figure 36: Arwed Messmer, *Die DDR hat's nie gegeben*, 2008

Figure 37: View of the Palast der Republik, 1980s, with Fernsehturm in the background

Figure 38: Schlossplatz, Berlin

Figure 39: Arwed Messmer, *Rueckbau: Das Verschwinden der Geschiche. Berlin 1949/2008*, 2008

Figure 40: Arwed Messmer, *Rueckbau: Das Verschwinden der Geschiche. Berlin 1949/2008*, 2008

Figure 41: Baroque Stadtschloss. (Pre-1945)

Figure 42: Kupferstich, Idealisierte Ansicht des Münz- und Antikenkabinetts im Berliner Schloss um 1695, Samuel Blesendorf, aus: Thesaurus Brandenburgicus selectus, Band 1, Berlin 1696

Figure 43: Gert Koshofer, *Galerie im Palast der Republik*, 1985.

Figure 44: The Re-Constructed Berliner Schloss, constructed 2013-2020, opened 2021. Prof. Franco Stella in Projektgemeinschaft mit den Architekturbüros Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht sowie von Gerkan, Marg und Partner

Figure 45: Details of Humboldt Forum

Figure 46: Humboldt Forum, eastern façade of Berliner Schloss. Prof. Franco Stella in Projektgemeinschaft mit den Architekturbüros Hilmer & Sattler und Albrecht sowie von Gerkan, Marg und Partner

Figure 47: Mock-up of Freiheits- und Einheitsdenkmal with reconstructed Berliner Schloss in background, Milla and Partner (Stuttgart)

Figure 48: Para, The Vault, 2021. Part of the exhibition *Berge Versetzen* [*Move Mountains*], Grassi Museum, Leipzig, 2022

Figure 49: Ludwig Engelhardt, *Marx-Engels-Denkmal,* 1985/6, Bronze. Marx-Engels-Forum, Berlin

Figure 50: Tacita Dean, *Palast*, 2004. Film still

Figure 51: Berlin Fernsehturm reflected in the windows of the Humboldt Forum, Berlin

Figure 52*: Berlin Global* Map, Humboldt Forum, Berlin.

Figure 53: Printout, *Berlin Global* exhibition, Humboldt Forum

Figure 54: Binoculars within *Berlin Global* exhibition, Humboldt Forum

Figure 55: Four object display in Boundaries nexus, *Berlin Global* exhibition, Humboldt Forum

Figure 56: Stefan Sous, *Time Machine*, 2020, 66 clocks. Located in Humboldt Forum, Berlin

Figure 57*: Geschichte des Ortes*, Humboldt Forum

Figure 58: Sign posting system from the Palast der Republik, designed by Klaus Wittkugel, 1970s

Figure 59: Lothar Zitzmann, *Weltjugendlied*, 1975. Öl auf Hartfaser, 280 x 552 cm.

Figure 60: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Guten Tag*, 1976. Öl auf Hartfaser, 280 x 281 cm.

Figure 61: Entertainment nexus of *Berlin Global* exhibition, Humboldt Forum

Figure 62: Relief from the Volkskammer in the Palast der Republik, Jo Jastram; VEB Lauchahmmerwerk 1974-6

Figure 63: Surveillance Monitor from the Palast der Republik, VEB Studiotechnik Berlin 1989

Appendix A.4 Chapter 3: After the Wall: Locating Berlin Between East European Modernism and the Global Contemporary

Figure 64: Lutz Becker, *After the Wall*, 1999/2014. Sound sculpture on a loop, 37 minutes 18 seconds, composed of five parts: Potsdamer Platz, Invalidenstrasse, Checkpoint Charlie, Brandenburger Tor, Night.

Figure 65: Christophe Girot, *Sinking Wall*, 1996-98

Figure 66: Hamburger Bahnhof around 1850

Figure 67: Hamburger Bahnhof: Museum der Gegenwart

Figure 68: Façade of Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

Figure 69: Elmgreen & Dragset, *Statue of Liberty*, 2018

Figure 70: Georg Baselitz, *Volk Ding Zero [Folk Thing Zero]*, 2009

Figure 71: View of interior of Hamburger Bahnhof

Figure 72: Pathway between Historic Hall of Hamburger Bahnhof and Rieckhallen

Figure 73: Bruce Nauman, *Room with My Soul Left Out, Room That Does Not Care*, 1984

Figure 74: Richard Artschwager, *No Exit*, 2009. As installed in the Rieckhallen of the Hamburger Bahnhof

Figure 75: Reichstagsgebäude exterior

Figure 76: Reichstagsgebäude interior featuring maintained graffiti from occupation by the Red Army in 1945 and bullet holes

Figure 77: Sites of Sustainability: Pavilions, Manifestos and Crypts Curator: Zdenka Badovinac In the context of Hello World. Revising a Collection

Figure 78: Agora of *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof

Figure 79: Bruce Naumann, *Indoor Outdoor Seating Arrangement*, 1999. *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

Figure 80: Mladen Stilinovic, *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English is No Artist*, 1992 *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

Figure 81: Marjetica Potrc, *Cararas: Growing Houses*, 2012. *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

Figure 82: Goshka Macuga, *Pavillion for International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation*, 2016. *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

Figure 83: Alfredo Jaar, *(Kindness) of (Strangers),* 2015

Figure 84: Alfredo Jaar, *(Kindness) of (Strangers),* 2015 in context in *Hello World*, Hamburger Bahnhof

Appendix A.5 Conclusion: Beyond the Mask

Figure 85: Kunsthaus DAS MINSK, Potsdam, 2022

Figure 86: Nationalitätenrestaurant "Minsk," Potsdam, 1980s

Figure 87: Dan Perjovschi, Some Columns. *In Situ Drawings*, 2022. Installed in Café Hedwig, DAS MINSK

Figure 88: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Mann mit Maske (Gesichtzeigen)*, 1981. Bronze. Installed outside of the Kunsthaus Minsk, Potsdam

Figure 89: Map of Potsdam showing the parallel locations of the Museum Barberini and DAS Minsk, bracketing the city's central train station

Figure 90: Wolfgang Mattheuer, *Der Jahrhundertschritt*, 1984. Bronze. Installed outside of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam

Appendix B German Source Text

All translations are my own. Original German language source text of longer quotes, or quotes containing critical language are collected here.

Appendix B.1 Chapter 1

"Sorgen Sie dafür, dass die Türen und Tore unserer Ausstellungen und Museen weit geöffnet werden. Die Kulturgüter in einem Staat, der zum Sozialismus schreitet, sind nicht nur Vorbehaltsgut der Studierenden und Kulturprofessoren, sondern sie gehören dem ganzen Volk. Kulturschaffende sollen ehrlich und begeisterte Mittler zwischen Kunstwerk und Mensch sein. **Museen, in denen Motten und der Rost fressen, gibt es bei uns nicht mehr.** Freudig und mit innerer Anreicherung sollen unsere Menschen und besonders unsere Jugend sich in unseren Kultur- und Kunststätten wie zu Hause fühlen. Öffnen Sie ihnen diese Wege." (36)

“Eine bemerkenswerte Haltung konnte sich Mattheuer auch gegenüber ‘seinem’ Staat, der DDR, bewahren. So legt er 1974 sein Amt als Professor nieder, um wieder freischaffend zu arbeiten. Zwei Jahre später protestiert er gegen die Ausbürgerung Wolf Biermanns. 1988 tritt er aus der SED aus, und im Herbst 1989 wendet er sich gegen die Intellektuellen, die einen humanen Sozialismus als Alternative zur kapitalistischen BRD postulieren.” (41)

“Zwolf Gemaelde C.D. Friedrichs… Neben Friedrichs Werken verdienen 14 Gemaelde von C. G. Carus, sechs von E. F. Oehme und zehn des Norwegers J. Ch. C. Dahl besondere Hervorhebung… Die Kunst der deutschen Spaetromatik ist mit elf Arbeiten Einen weiten Raum nehmen die Gemälde der Neuen Sachlichkeit und vor allem die der veristischen Richtung ein. Neun Gemälde von O. Dix, von denen das Kriegstriptychon Weltberühmtheit erlangte, und elf Werke von H. Grundig mit dem Triptychon „Das Tausendjährige Reich“ bilden die Gipfelleistungen dieser Abteilung, zu der weiter Gemaelde von C. Felixmueller, C. Hofer, A. Kanoldt und frühe Arbeiten von B/Kretzschmar, O. Nagel, C. Querner, W. Rudolf und das 1945 von den Faschisten ermordeten A. Frank gehörten. Mit dem erschütternden Gemälde W. Lachnits „Der Tod von Dresden“ beginnt die Abteilung der Kunst der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Bilder wie „Das vogtländische Liebespaar“ von W. Mattheuer, W. Tübkes „Sizilianischer Großgrundbesitzer mit Marionetten,“ W. Sittes „Die Überlebende“ und B. Heisigs „Preußischer Soldatzentanz“, weiter Arbeiten von R. Bergander, E. Hassebrauk. J. Hegenbarth, B. Heller, P. Michaelis, O. Niemeyer-Holstein, Th. Rosenhauer zeugen von der Vielfalt und Weite der Kunst des sozialistischen Realismus…“ (84-85)

Appendix B.2 Chapter 2

„Dieser Palast soll ein Haus des Volkes werden, die Stätte verantwortungsbewusster Beratungen, der höchsten Volksvertretung unseres Arbeiter- und Bauernstaates, ein Ort wichtiger Kongresse und internationaler Begegnungen. Unsere sozialistische Kultur wird hier ebenso eine Heimstadt finden wie Frohsinn und Geselligkeit der werktätigen Menschen.“ – Erich Honecker, die Eröffnung des Palasts der Republik am 23. April 1976 (106)

„Als Museum neuen Typs muss das Humboldt-Forum viele Funktionen erfüllen. Es soll ein Begegnungsort für die Berliner und die Gäste aus aller Welt sein. Es muss zum intellektuellen Vorreiter in den internationalen gesellschaftlichen Debatten werden. Dazu zählt ein sensibler Umgang mit der kolonialen Vergangenheit Deutschlands und Europas. Andererseits gilt es, mit den Ausstellungen und Veranstaltungen breite Bevölkerungsschichten anzuziehen... Außerdem bereichert es in den wiederaufgebauten Fassaden des Berliner Stadtschlosses die architektonische Mitte Berlins.“ -- Elisabeth Motschmann, CDU/CSU Pressemitteilungen 19.07.2021 "Deutschland öffnet seinen Hauptplatz für die Kultur" (106)

„Das Schloss wird das vertraute Bild Berlins wiederherstellen, die historische Mitte vervollständigen, das Stadtbild heilen. Sein Wiederaufbau macht Berlin wieder zum geliebten Spree-Athen. So entsteht ein Kontrapunkt zu den massenhaft entstandenen, modernen Quartieren der Mitte der Stadt.“ – Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V. 1992 (106)

~~„Das Schloss~~ Der Palast wird das vertraute Bild Berlins wiederherstellen, die historische Mitte Berlins ~~heilen~~ komplexer, aber auch lebenswerter machen, das Stadtbild heilen. Sein Wiederaufbau macht Berlin wieder zur geliebten Spree-~~Athen~~ Kultur-Metropole. So entsteht ein zukunftsgewandter Kontrapunkt zu den massenhaft ~~entstandenen, modernen Quartierenentstehenden~~ historisierenden Neubauten der Mitte der Stadt.“ -- Förderverein Palast der Republik e.V. 2021 (106)

“Denn diesem einzigen Museumsneubau der DDR, 1969 eröffnet, stand in seiner jüngeren Geschichte mindestens einmal ein ähnliches Schicksal unmittelbar bevor. Bevor unser Verein im Jahr 2009 die künstlerische Leitung des Hauses übernahm, debattierte das Rostocker Stadtparlament allen Ernstes darüber, die Kunsthalle zu schließen. Trotz anspruchsvoller Ausstellungen und immer wieder neuer Konzepte hatte das Museum seit 1989 immer mehr an Bedeutung verloren, was sich in sinkenden Besucherzahlen äußert.“ (116)

“Inhaltlich werden in ihnen grundsätzliche Lebensfragen aufgegriffen. Es geht um das große historisch bedeutsame Thema des Vorwärtsstrebens und -Träumens von Kommunisten, um das Aufnehmen aller progressiven Traditionen der Menschheitsgeschichte und um die Bereitschaft, sich den Forderungen der Zeit uneingeschränkt zu stellen.” (125)

„Stattdessen ist der 9. November zum Datum einer fröhlichen Achterbahnfahrt der Gefühle im 20. Jahrhundert geworden—die Pogromnacht 1938 und der Mauerfall 1989 markieren den Tief- und Höhepunkt der Stahlkonstruktion einer Geschichterzählung, an deren Ende jede*r einen

Fotostreifen bekommt, auf dem man das Gesicht der eigenen Familie im freien Fall betrachten kann.“ (170)

Appendix B.3 Conclusion

„Es gibt keine Grenze, vom Minsk und dem öffentlichen Platz, wo wir stehen, es geht ineinander über, man überquert die Straße und ist schon im Museum, im Café, im Foyer, das wird alles öffentlich, ein Treffpunkt für alle.“ (239)

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