

Marietta Kesting

# The National Metabolism: Furniture, Power, and Myth

## On the Works of Henrike Naumann

1 Katharina Eck, Kathrin Heinz, ... and Irene Nierhaus, "Seitenweise Wohnen: Mediale Einschreibungen," *FKW, Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur*, no. 64 (September 2018), pp. 5–17, here pp. 5–6 [translated].

2 Cf. Roland Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), pp. 43–44.

### Designing one's own four walls: enclosure, container, walls, skin, tattoos

You do not necessarily feel at home where you happen to live, but people furnish and arrange the places where they do feel at home. There, individually designed spaces emerge where furniture and objects are arranged in accordance with aesthetic rules that appear, at least, to be entirely personal in character. The self-portrait of the inhabitant becomes recognizable, not just through intentional design but also through the expressiveness of spatial relationships which go beyond the individual to reveal where the inhabitants are situated socially. "As a political, social, and cultural arrangement, accordingly, habitation furnishes attributions in relation to various genders, ethnicities, bodies, and nations. Habitation as show-room, a place of display and exhibition [...]."<sup>1</sup>

Regarded from an ideal-typical West, the new federal states in the East after 1989 were perceived primarily as deficient—in consumption, in things, in color, in automobiles, and in variety. In 1991, Sigmar Polke already supplied an ironic commentary on the post-communist era, crudely copying a highway sign from Thuringia on transparent polyester fabric and entitling it *Gemeinschaftswerk Aufschwung Ost* (*Joint Effort Revival in the East*). In her exhibition *Aufbau Ost* (*Building the East*), Henrike Naumann cites a news item which states under the caption *Sought-After Sofa Beds*, "There exists a great demand for furniture in the five new federal states. [...] Sought after in particular are space-saving sofa beds. Here is a model by Ikea." Which types of connections between the National Socialist and Communist pasts and the nationalism of the neoliberal present-day in Germany become legible through interior design, everyday objects, and advertisements? With the interest of an archaeologist, Naumann searches through the advertising catalogs of furniture stores from over the past two decades, and she exposes the ideological strata of interior architecture. How do we live together? And what is a politics of furniture?

Henrike Naumann curates her often used utilitarian objects in order to design painstakingly configured, model-like spaces and environments. She has no aversion to mass-produced commodities. Her concern is not with originals but, on the contrary, with prevalence and use. Not unlike Bert Neumann, whose work remains an important point of reference for Naumann. Just as he often used cheap yet characteristic materials for his set designs at the Volksbühne theatre, she frequently and quite deliberately uses discounted and mass-produced products from the Sconto budget furniture store in Zwickau or comparable sources. Not unlike large furniture department stores, she arranges mini living areas, and to some extent entire rooms, in which no one, however, would actually wish to live.

Through configuration, lighting, and presentation, the plain items of furniture make their special appearance. In the exhibition *Ostalgie* (*Eastalgia*, fig. 1; the term refers to nostalgia for life in the former East: i.e., communist East Germany or GDR), for example, where they were suspended sideways from the walls, as though the room had been rotated ninety degrees (2019, p. XX). A shift of perspective which causes irritation, engendering a sense of distance from that which seems all-too-familiar—the sense of the uncanny which is always present in one's own putatively self-designed home.

The act of making a home and furnishing it is also bound up with pedagogical processes of communication and delimitation which can be continually optimized, as the decorating magazine *Schöner Wohnen* has programmatically claimed since 1960. Calling on Roland Barthes, an interplay is detectable between the deictic and the didactic—the furnishings show something; they constitute a statement about a way of life and a worldview, which they at the same time elucidate and connect with possibilities of practical

use.<sup>4</sup> In the type of furnishings and the selection of intimate objects and materials that surround the inhabitant, Barthes's mythologies of the everyday become visible as well, displayed in the real and imaginary connotations of the objects. Consequently, popular culture forms the milieu within which, as Stuart Hall says, "collective social understandings are created—and thus the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilized."<sup>5</sup> The inhabited space is not so much a second nature as it is a second body. There is recourse to one's own physique, to its surface, texture, and touch, and to the way in which it wishes to be formed, that is to say simultaneously an individual body and a "Volkskörper" (racial body). Self-evidently, both are gender-coded, and this is observable in building supply stores and construction sites, as well as in claims of ownership and protected spaces.



fig. 1  
Henrike Naumann  
*Ostalgia (Eastalgia)*, 2019  
Installation view, KOW,  
Berlin, 2019



fig. 2  
Henrike Naumann  
*Untitled*, 2013  
Installation view,  
KOW, Berlin, 2013

- 3 Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in: *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch, et al., 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 1982/2005), pp. 52–86, here p. 65.
- 4 *Untitled* (installation, mixed media, 300 x 300 x 250 cm) 2013, fig. 2 from Henrike Naumann: *The Effects Can Last Forever* (Berlin: Projektraum Flutgraben, 2014), p. 5. These are the opening lines of Ernst Moritz Arndt's 1812 poem, "Vaterlandslied" (Song of the Fatherland), which was set to music by Albert Methfessel, and remained a popular patriotic song into the time of National Socialism.
- 5 Henrike Naumann: "Open Group: Germans, Aryans and Facebook," *FOG – Documentaries Dispersed*, issue 1, 2014, pp. 34–39.

Fantasies of a private apartment, of one's own four walls, of skin, cell, and unit, are also suggestive of the terror cell and the "Keimzelle des Staates" (nucleus of the state), as the nuclear family is often designated by conservatives. On the basis of external, objective elements, its beautifully designed living space is intended to present itself as a private life that is conceived as interiority. Furniture and decor are therefore consistently bound up with specific ideological semantics and the value of material ownership. If we pursue one of these notions and conceptualize one's own four walls as the second skin of the people who inhabit them, it seems only logical that recently walls too have been tattooed. And although such tattooing is not as permanent as tattoos on skin, it nonetheless manifests a desire to extend the individual design of one's own body onto the surrounding walls. Henrike Naumann's works move within this zone of contact between installation, social sculpture, stage design (her former field of study), as well as the film set, and the museum collection, while at the same time exploding all of these genres and frameworks.

Naumann's early work *Untitled* (2013, fig. 2) displays a wall tattoo together with a torchere floor lamp, which seems to function as the basin for an eternal flame, and consists of the following lines in Gothic script: "Der Gott der Eisen wachsen ließ, der wollte keine Knechte!" (The God who made the iron grow, he wanted no slaves!).<sup>4</sup> Formally, the arrangement is reminiscent of a reductive stage set, a format somewhere between image and text, one that has a narrative or at least a significant and signifying form; nothing about it is accidental. The negation ("no slaves") expressed by the lines of text are suggestive of a certain discontent: The New Right sees itself and Germany as "enslaved"—a condition they would like to alter as soon as possible. Its members want to build a different society, and they begin by modifying their own bodies along with the inhabited and built spaces found in their personal milieus. Growing up in Zwickau, Naumann observed these phenomena in her immediate environment and, after moving away, via Facebook: "I saw them for the last time in the '90s, they were all wearing bomber jackets."<sup>5</sup> Naumann became a witness to the neo-Nazi personal exposés of her former schoolmates. In *Open Group*, she processes this image politics, albeit without revealing the faces of the protagonists. The appropriated social media postings of the New Right display martial tattoos with right-wing symbols alongside beer bellies, babies wearing romper suits with "Germania" in Gothic letters, and cheap neoclassical garden sculptures. Within this series, Barthes's punctum is visible next to a cup of coffee: a sweet swastika-shaped pastry that does not appear to be homemade but rather came from the local bakery (fig. 3). Who's afraid of right-wing puff pastry? No one. But it indicates a specific everyday conception of the self. Irritating in this self-portrayal is a conspicuous "buoyancy," an enjoyment of the self. These individuals present themselves as neo-Nazis not because they do not know any better, but instead because they want to display precisely this self-image because it is fun. The analysis presented in the song "Schrei nach Liebe"



fig. 3  
Henrike Naumann  
*Open Group*, 2013

(Cry for Love; 1993) by the punk group Die Ärzte, which sympathizes with neo-Nazis as dull-witted, unloved children, has long since become irrelevant. In 2012, based on this research, and incited by a snapshot from 1992 which shows the young Beate Zschäpe, the ring-wing extremist, with sunglasses and a red-and-white cigarette packet, Naumann filmed the work *Triangular Stories*, in which she takes up this aesthetic and comments on it.

### Memory experiments and party politics, youth culture and the Right: Where were you in 1992? And where are you now?

In the form of a scenographic installation, *Triangular Stories* (fig. 4–6) narrates a fictive parallel history that revolves around the genesis of the NSU (National Socialist Underground). Two fifteen-minute-long video loops entitled *Terror* and *Amnesia* reenact the story of a youth who was radicalized in the right-wing fringe (*Terror*) and another who experiments with the hedonism of partying on Ibiza (*Amnesia*). The second loop is a game of “what-if”: What would have happened if, in the year 1992, the trio around Beate Zschäpe had traveled to Ibiza to party and had spent a hedonistic “summer of innocence” (Naumann) there? The club as a place of forgetting—of transgression, as Foucault’s heterotopia, where an unbounded practice of partying (the rave) results in temporary freedom and the partial suspension of social norms and class structures—is an experimental sequence of memory to which the artist continually returns. The point of reference for the project *Museum of Trance*, undertaken together with Bastian Hagedorn, which deliberately exoticized the German electronic music genre Trance at the Ghetto Biennale on Haiti in 2015, was the former techno club Omen in Frankfurt am Main. Partisan politics and club spaces, music and its associated effects, therefore, represent a constant within Naumann’s diverse works. Staged memories are set against the desired loss of memory of a hedonistic party scene that propagates the model of the *tabula rasa*.

In *Triangular Stories*, both in medial terms as well as at the level of content, Naumann already offered an acute analysis of youth culture and the, to some extent, almost indistinguishably empty gestures of transgression—even before these were politically classifiable. With good reason, this work earned considerable attention, receiving numerous prizes, and was exhibited multiple times. Since being purchased by the Kulturstiftung (cultural foundation) of the Free State of Saxony, it has been part of the state collection.

The concrete reference in Naumann’s latest work, entitled *Ruinenwert* (*Value of the Ruins*; 2019, p. XX), on view in Munich at the Haus der Kunst (HdK), is the Pr, still open today. The name of the celebrated club goes back to the American military commander who, in 1949, converted the unpronounceable address “Prinzregentenstrasse 1” into the abbreviation



fig. 4-6  
Henrike Naumann  
*Triangular Stories*, 2012  
(film still)



- 6 P1 is an abbreviation of the address Prinzregentenstrasse. 1, located in the basement of the Haus der Kunst in Munich.
- 7 Naumann’s work from Tokyo in 2019—*Comme des Kinois* (Like the Kinshasa), as well as *Intercouture* (Musée d’art contemporain et multimédias de l’Échangeur, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo).
- 8 <https://kow-berlin.com/artists/henrike-naumann> (accessed September 10, 2019).

“P-One,”<sup>6</sup> where, at the time, an officers’ club was opened. After 1950, under various names, the Pr was finally rebuilt as a nightclub, and is today still the most famous club in Munich. It is known locally as the “Einser” or the “Stüberl” (words for “one” and “little room” in Upper German dialects). In the “Bierstüberl” (beer parlor), decorated rustically with folk wooden chairs and tile-topped tables, beer was already served there under the National Socialists. And although this establishment was not always located in the same place, there exists a certain continuity in the presence of a “bar” in the lower level of today’s Haus der Kunst.

Also located there is the material long-term memory of an institution. Naumann combed through the items of furniture stored there, in the process stumbling upon astonishing finds, among them seating and display cases from the time of the Nazis which no one cared to use after the war. Now, in the work *Ruinenwert*, these items of furniture and equipment from Pr resurface again two stories higher in the North Gallery of the HdK, where they are set in relation with one another. Here, one quality of Naumann’s archaeological approach becomes particularly clear: (almost) always, everything is already present—you only have to look and take an interest in things. Parallel historical cross-cuts emerge, bursting into our own present and future via material and medial objects.

### Mute witnesses, eloquent objects, the soundtrack of life

Increasingly, from the agency of objects in Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory all the way to the new materialism of Karen Barad, our attention is drawn to the objects that surround us, while the human being is decentered. So do Naumann’s works also fit into the contemporary discourse of the Anthropocene? Yes and no. Actually, human inhabitants are absent. The objects narrate stories, provided you look at them long enough, and listen long enough. All the same, it is a question of historico-political events that are acted out by protagonists and their interdependencies with the designed environment, more in the spirit of a critical design theory as advocated by Gert Selle, for example, and not of an ecological meta-history of the materials used. And although the items of furniture themselves do not sing, music is played around and on them, there is speech, the sounds of radios are audible or televisions are visible. Film or sound loops often feature in Naumann’s installations, which serve to deepen the analyses, rendering further connections recognizable.

Naumann is interested as well in the inscriptions and connotations that are expressed through fashion and accessories—the enveloping relationship between walls and garments. An example is the video loop for the solo exhibition *Ostalgie* (*Eastalgia*), where rave girls from former East Germany and young women wearing gasmasks dance to post-reunification techno: *Apocalypse Now*. Another is in Japan, where the world was presented as a bubble in need of protection in the form of a kitschy living room clock, which appears as the full-grown version of a snow globe toy for adults (fig. 7). The notion of a world under glass, which seems psychologically meaningful after Hiroshima, and continues after Fukushima.<sup>7</sup>

When Henrike Naumann begins a new project in a new city, whether in Tokyo or Hannover, she begins by going to the flea markets. There, before implementing her material and objects studies, she procures an overview of the kinds of objects local residents no longer wish to own. In the new works *New Beat* and *Intercouture*, realized in the Congo in 2017,<sup>8</sup> just as in her *Museum of Trance* (fig. 8), Naumann focuses not on the “exotic” aspect of a different culture, but instead engages in on-site research, exhibiting little-recognized links in the

realm of fashion and design between the dandy Congolese *sapeurs* and styles from Tokyo.<sup>9</sup> Her aim was to present Kinshasa as a city of fashion rather than as an arena of war—although in Tokyo, in contrast, the war, the aftereffects of Hiroshima, and of the economic crash remain legible in Japanese streetwear designs, as Naumann points out in a retrospect of the project *Comme des Kinois* (*Like the Kinshasans*).

### World under glass, life as a simulation of catastrophe, Imagine there is no place, where you feel safe

Over the past five years, the works of Henrike Naumann have developed great intensity and prominence. She is not running out of themes. At the same time, she is often astonishingly on the mark or seismographically detects social trends before they are picked up by the mainstream media. In Germany, one catastrophe has just materialized when one finds oneself already preparing for the next.

The term “prepper” refers to people who seek to prepare themselves optimally for imminent disaster, whether imaginary or real, for example, by stockpiling supplies or learning self-defense, purchasing radios or establishing alternative sources of energy.<sup>10</sup> In their obsession to become autarkic in relation to state and society, “preppers” overlap with “Reich citizens” who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Federal Republic of Germany and with neo-Nazis who would like to overthrow the modern German state. Sebastian Frenzel comments on Naumann’s installation *Tag X (D-Day)*: “Naumann’s design shop is a prepper shop. [...] and incidentally, raises the question, well-placed in the art context, about the resources with which each of us builds our own safe house in this affluent society. Aesthetics can be a weapon.”<sup>11</sup> *Tag X* was conceived for the Ruhr Ding 2019, which took place during the Bauhaus Centenary. For Nauman, it is never a question of a purely formalist design history, but instead always a question of the deployment and arrangement of objects. Here, she betrays a thoroughly mischievous humor, with the popular Breuer cantilever chair, a preeminent Bauhaus design, being converted into a home-made weapon and equipped with a designer lemon juicer. This allows middle-class people to prepare themselves for D-Day. An exaggeration? Not if you study the handbook *Selbstverteidigung mit Alltagsgegenständen* (*Self-Defense with Everyday Objects*), published in several volumes by New Right publishing house Kopp, which also offers an upscale “escape knapsack with rain poncho” for purchase for 1,500 euros.<sup>12</sup>



fig. 7  
Henrike Naumann  
*Comme des Kinois*  
(*Like the Kinshasans*), 2019  
Installation view,  
Kunstverein Leipzig, 2019

fig. 8  
Henrike Naumann /  
Bastian Hagedorn  
*The Museum of Trance*, 2015  
Installation view, 4th Ghetto  
Biennale, Port-au-Prince, 2015



- 9 This work was presented in Tokyo in late May and early June 2019.
- 10 Derived from the verb to prepare. See, among others “SEK-Beamte sollen Munition der ‘Prepper’-Szene überlassen haben,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, updated on June 12, 2019, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/vier-sek-beamte-sollen-sek-munition-der-prepper-szene-ueberlassen-haben-16232874.html> (accessed September 9, 2019). Maik Baumgärtner, Sven Röbel, and Wolf Wiedmann-Schmidt, “Wenn alles zusammenbricht, sind die ‘Prepper’ bereit,” *Spiegel*, September 29, 2018.
- 11 Sebastian Frenzel, “Portfolio. Henrike Naumann. Designerwaffen,” *Monopol*, June 2019, p. 88.
- 12 <https://www.kopp-verlag.de/Fluchtrucksack-mit-Regenponcho-Groesse-XL> (accessed September 2, 2019).
- 13 Lena Kampf et al. “Terror-Anklage gegen Chemnitzer Rechtsextreme,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 25, 2019.
- 14 Performance by Technosekte and Henrike Naumann on December 16, 2018, see: <http://www.district-berlin.com/de/ueber-das-nein-hinaus-bronxx/> (accessed July 24, 2019).
- 15 Suse Weber, “Gleitmittel: Ost-Gleitmittel,” *Texte zur Kunst*, March 27, 2019, <https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/ost-gleitmittel/> (online only; accessed on July 7, 2019).

### Back to the future, the former GDR, the post-reunification era

In Germany, right-wing radicalism has again become an everyday phenomenon and is inscribed in urban spaces and the world of commodities—and not just in depressed rural regions. In downtown Chemnitz, a hotel was incorporated into the Thor Steinar Outlet, a clothing brand associated with the neo-Nazi scene. In the most recent European election, the results showed significant gains by the AfD (Alternative for Germany). Naumann’s work is never a historical retrospect of a closed past. On the contrary, it is an investigation of constellations in the present and of the historical events that are embedded in them, which also shape the future.

In the run-up to the regional elections in the Federal State of Saxony, held in 2019, the AfD, confident of success, already announced a program which propagated their intentions as a future governing party. It was against this backdrop that in June of 2019, Naumann showed the work *Urgesellschaft* (*Primitive Society*) at Open Space in Chemnitz, situated behind the Karl Marx Monument. At the same time, the press published reports concerning allegations against the group Revolution Chemnitz, which had sought already in 2018 to bring about civil-war-like conditions in Berlin through actions that were to have been disguised as left-wing violence.<sup>13</sup>

Naumann places her hands and her ears on the scar tissue that constitutes home and homeland. She recalls unpleasant events, both historical and current, that are located beyond the slick “success story” of reunification, so often written from the West German perspective. But she also refers to the repression of the Stasi past, of East Germany’s Ministry of State Security—even within her own family. Among other things, this occurs in the formation of the band Technosekte (Techno Cult) with Bastian Hagedorn (other members include Ruth Adams and Hendrick Fraise), with whom she has collaborated for many years. In 2018, these activities resulted in the performance *BRONXX*, a contribution to the project *wildes wiederholen. material von unten. Künstlerische Forschung im Archiv der DDR-Opposition* (*wild repetition. materials from below. Artistic Research in the Archive of the GDR-Opposition*). In it, they attempted to process this material musically through the performative and nonverbal alternatives of rhythm, movement, and vocalization—a mixture of séance and exorcism. Through the use of drumming robots, together with human musicians, Technosekte creates punk-influenced rituals of experimental music and process found materials, improvising temporary new communalities while bringing a psychogram of the archive to a state of resonance.<sup>14</sup>

While a specific West-German-influenced conception of history continues to operate as though continuity and stability actually existed, many inhabitants of the territory known since 1989 as the “reunified” Germany have experienced a change of system. In the contemporary art magazine *Texte zur Kunst*, the artist Suse Weber comments briefly on this comprehensive process: “While at first, machines and tools were regarded as outdated, it was not long before training certificates and the new citizens themselves were regarded as out-of-date, backward, inadequately educated, one consequence of this being incipient wage dumping, long-term reductions in pension entitlements, and the loss of gender equality (since, to begin with, the employment agencies provided no jobs for women).”<sup>15</sup>

In the official state politics of memory and commemoration, and in private biographies, these transformations are evaluated in contrasting and even contrary ways. Naumann’s works display traces of non-hegemonial historical narratives, societal fault lines, and activities that undermine the state. She calls attention to post-reunification developments: “This doesn’t explain everything, but when access to democracy is linked to the West German mark and cheap

items from the discount bin, it becomes clear that all of this stands on unsound footing.”<sup>16</sup> Her works never display formulas or results, but instead openings and excavations, new combinations and new interpretations, as shown by the titles of her projects, among them *DDR-Noir (GDR Noir)*, *Anschluss '90 (Annexation '90)*, *Acid Einheit (Acid Unity)*, *Aufbau West (Building the West)*, *Aufbau Ost (Building the East)*, and *2000 – Mensch. Natur. Twipsy (2000 – Human. Nature. Twipsy)*.

## Things you want to get rid of and their stubborn reappearance

Henrike Naumann embraces objects which no one wants any longer and which she discovers at real or virtual flea markets, online on eBay, either purchased at auction or listed under “giveaway.” Their occupants or users are absent, having abandoned, discarded, donated, or sold these artifacts. Items of furniture turn out to be relatively long-lived objects, often lasting longer than the brief duration in which they were in style, were regarded as must-haves by a given generation—and this is even true for Ikea furnishings. Arriving to visibility, as a result, are certain dis/continuities and aesthetic legacies.

The Berlin Republic wished to rid itself of the history of the GDR and demolished the Palace of the Republic for the sake of a reconstructed Berlin City Palace and the Humboldt Forum. It seems, the political party known as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) would prefer to rid itself of German history from the National Socialist Era. Party Chairman Alexander Gauland referred to the Nazi era as “a bit of bird shit in history.”<sup>17</sup> Björn Höcke, who was suspended as a secondary school teacher for his political activities, having been responsible for the subjects of history and physical education, and who now serves as the chairman of the AfD fraction in Thuringia, demands, “We need nothing less than a 180-degree turn when it comes to the politics of remembrance.”<sup>18</sup> The past is to be either forgotten or reinterpreted, to some extent through concrete interventions in government funding policies: i.e., through an attempt to withhold subsidies from certain critical artistic and cultural institutions, something that has been occurring to an increasing degree since 2017.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Björn Höcke stage-managed himself as the leader of the right-wing, nationalist Der Flügel (The Wing) arm of his party at this year’s meeting at the Kyffhäuser, with brass band music, German flags, and parading nationalist youth.<sup>20</sup> The even more extreme right-wing radical party known as Der III. Weg (The Third Path), whose website honors deceased members of the Waffen-SS, is represented, among other places, in Plauen (near Zwickau) where they have been on the city council since May 26, 2019 (3.84%).

Almost incidentally, Henrike Naumann brings these three policies of history and memory onto the art stage via everyday objects, generating a certain irritation in the process as her installations are not readily legible or consumable. With reference to Naumann’s work, Kolja Reichert asks polemically, “Does bad furniture make you a radical right-winger?”<sup>21</sup> It is a conceptual short-circuit, the emergence of which, on the part of the recipient, Naumann avoids precisely through her painstakingly researched installations. At the same time, she demonstrates that radicalization and anxiety are not exclusively east-German phenomena and investigates forms of negotiation and subjectification not just on the right-wing margins but also in the middle of German society and in the post-migrant subculture: e.g., with reference to the rap artist Deso Dogg from Berlin-Kreuzberg, who joined the Islamic State.<sup>22</sup> Her exhibitions often incorporate workshops, lectures, and other discursive formats, for example the “Eastern Girls and Western Boys” conference, which took place in March of 2019, and which thematized such diverse topics as right-wing extremist women and the Treuhand (trust agency) as the “bad bank” of German reunification.<sup>23</sup>

16 Cited from Henrike Naumann in Kolja Reichert, “Wir sind das Wohnzimmer,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, updated on September 20, 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunst/kunst-und-rechtsradikalismus-15790012.html> (accessed May 13, 2019).

17 Deutsche Presse-Agentur (Seebach), “Gauland: NS-Zeit nur ein ‘Vogelschiss in der Geschichte,’” *Die Zeit*, updated on June 2, 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/news/2018-06/02/gauland-ns-zeit-nur-ein-vogelschiss-in-der-geschichte-180601-99-549766> (accessed September 8, 2019).

18 Björn Höcke in his speech at the Ballhaus Watzke, Dresden, on January 17, 2017. A complete transcript of the speech is found at: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/hoecke-rede-im-wortlaut-gemuetszustand-eines-total-besiegten-volkes/19273518-all.html> (accessed September 8, 2019). Volker Weiß also cites Björn Höcke’s speech in his afterword to Theodor W. Adorno’s *Aspekte des neuen Rechtsradikalismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), pp. 59–87, here p. 79.

19 Peter Laudenbach and John Goetz, “Druck von rechts,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 27, 2019, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/afd-kulturpolitik-rechtsextremismus-gewalt-1.4578106> (accessed September 23, 2019).

20 Cf. Katja Thorwart, “Kyffhäuser-Treffen: Graubrot AfD oder rechtsextremer Führerkult um Björn Höcke,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, updated on July 8, 2019, <https://www.fr.de/meinung/kyffhaeuser-treffen-graubrot-oder-rechtsextremer-fuehrerkult-bjoern-hoecke-12772274.html> (accessed July 24, 2019); as well as Jens Schneider, “Nach dem Triumph ist vor dem Streit,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 1, 2019, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/afd-sachsen-brandenburg-1.4582997> (accessed September 10, 2019).

21 Kolja Reichert, “Wir sind das Wohnzimmer?,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, updated on September 20, 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kunst/kunst-und-rechtsradikalismus-15790012.html> (accessed May 13, 2019).

22 The work on Deso Dogg bears the title *Desolation* (2013).

23 The conference took place at KOW in Berlin on March 30, 2019, at the conclusion of Naumann’s *Ostalgie (Eastalgia)* exhibition. Speakers included Henrike Voigtländer (Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam) and Marcus Böick (Ruhr-Universität Bochum); the moderator was Clemens Villingier of the Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam.

24 Christian Welzbacher, “‘Ruinenwert’ und ‘Reichsehrenmal’,” Albert Speer, Wilhelm Kreis und der Kunsthistoriker Felix Alexander Dargel,” *Kritische Berichte, Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften* 33, no. 2 (2005): pp. 69–72, here p. 69.

## Value of the Ruins: Hitler, home, and homeland, mountains and dollhouses

From the very beginning, Naumann’s work has integrated the coordinates of identity, German history, and right-wing radicalism. With the work *Ruinenwert (Value of the Ruins)*, she familiarized herself with and incorporated a number of historical locales—the most prominent among them being Hitler’s Berghof and the Haus der Kunst. It is well-known that the Haus der Kunst was designed by the architect Paul Ludwig Troost and was inaugurated personally by Hitler on July 18, 1937, as the Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art, HdDK)—with the first *Großen Deutschen Kunstausstellung (Great German Art Exhibition)*, which took place annually until 1944. On July 19, 1937, the exhibition *Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art)* opened in the Hofgarten (Court Garden) opposite. What has remained of all of this, whether architecturally or materially? Is the Haus der Kunst—to exaggerate somewhat—first and foremost the well-preserved ruin of a specific political statement? *Ruinenwert*, the title of Naumann’s work, is an oxymoron: The ruin, the defunct, the left-over, the material remains of a former work of architecture is actually regarded as worthless. As early as the 1930s, Albert Speer, Hitler’s favorite architect, formulated his notion of “ruin value” in a speech which Christian Welzbacher summarizes as follows: “Even after their destruction, according to this theory, the representative buildings of Fascist Germany can be expected to preserve their political-narrative exemplary character.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the construction of artificial decorative ruins had already been widespread in eighteenth-century park and garden architecture. In Naumann’s work, this historical debris and the remnants are shifted into a new, contemporary context; the old and the new right-wing movements are superimposed via their respective artifacts and their forms of public display. For the neo-Nazis in particular, fortresses and ruins are significant contemporary sites and form the dramaturgical backgrounds for their gatherings.

Troost’s architectural designs for the HdDK are characterized by their strict grid configuration and monumental neoclassicism. After her husband’s early death, Troost’s wife, the interior designer Gerdy Troost, assumed responsibility for the design of the interiors as well as for the renovation and refurbishment of Hitler’s apartment in Munich and of the Berghof on Obersalzberg, which served as the second seat of government for the National Socialists. Using Barthes’s description for the *Nautilus* submarine, the Berghof could be characterized as the “most desirable of all caves.” From the monumental, retractable window, visitors enjoyed views of the sublime mountain panorama, feeling small and awestruck. While through the remarkable dimensions of the expansive hall, everything was too large for an adult person so that the visitor surrendered to effects of sublimity or felt degraded to the level of a game piece. The “idyllic” world of the mountains was the optimal backdrop for the Nazis to exploit ideologically. Pointedly, it could be said that on Obersalzberg, Hitler invented the self-representation politics of at-home celebrity features, which is perpetuated today in the narcissistic-autobiographical forms of self-presentation found on social media. Assisted by his house photographer Heinrich Hoffmann, he practiced Instagram *avant la lettre*. Hoffmann was a constant presence, supplying ostensibly private, candid images of the Führer: thoughtful, dining, smiling, holding children in his arms, with a box of Bahlsen cookies on a table in front of the Berghof (fig. 9)—the photo opportunities were everywhere. Hundreds of Guido Knopp and ORF films follow this schema, again and again accommodating the seductive self-presentation of the Nazis.

The production and manufacture of the image and the pathos of the Führer was carried out on a small scale (for children) as well as on a large one with the Berghof as a mini model piggy bank for playtime, for example,



The Nazi propagandists gave the kitschy figurines as gifts to deserving SS members as well as to foreign guests of state. On the birth of a fourth child, families received the so-called *Geburtsleuchter* (birth candlestick; model number 89). The intention here was to reward the (re)production of new soldiers while reinforcing a personal connectedness to Hitler and his Führer cult. The Allach porcelain manufactory was a favorite project of Himmler's, although it never turned a profit—despite the use of the forced labor of concentration camp inmates.

### Consumer culture is always a component of national militarism

Volkswagen produced bazookas and airplane parts, but also commodities for civilian mass consumption such as the VW Beetle, just as Hugo Boss produced uniforms for the Hitler Youth, the SS, and the Wehrmacht, alongside three-piece suits.<sup>28</sup> Consumer culture and its commodities are always integral components of national economic strategies and of policies oriented toward export and expansion. In 2013, to all appearances, the AfD received donations from, among others, the German-Swiss billionaire August von Finck, who owned Mövenpick until 2003.<sup>29</sup>

Photo collages by John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld) from the 1920s and 1930s—which established the tradition from which image series by Martha Rosler and other feminist artists from the 1960s descended—attempted again and again to visualize these unspoken, often concealed connections between consumption, the family home, and politics, employing strategies of unmasking in order to insist upon their simultaneity and reciprocal conditioning. In *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967–1972), Rosler deploys sharp contrasts and breaks in order to render the war visible. Suddenly, Vietnamese civilians with a dead infant are found in the midst of the suburban, US middle-class domestic lifestyle modeled after advertising.

In contrast, Henrike Naumann appropriates domestic scenarios without incorporating dramatic breaks; her work functions more subtly. To some extent, her art recalls the work of the American conceptual artists Ed Kienholz and Nancy Reddin-Kienholz, whose *Portable War Memorial* dates from 1968 (Museum Ludwig, Cologne). They re-created the iconic group of soldiers from the War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, which now storm the semipublic space of a fast food restaurant while the unofficial national hymn, *God Bless America*, resounds from a garbage can.

While Naumann also often employs songs and audio tracks, she nonetheless (unlike the Kienholzes) consummately reenacts the self-contained arrangements of specific living environments from which human beings are wholly absent. Only the video and sound loops introduce human traces. Through her isolated representations, Naumann generates focused, thought-image spaces that get right to the heart of things. This exposure of politics in seemingly apolitical interior spaces, acknowledged during the 1970s, and even earlier, through the feminist motto “the private is political,” permeates Naumann's œuvre as a whole. This slogan, by now somewhat long in the tooth, nonetheless serves as an umbrella concept for manifold, differentiated forms of interpretation and artistic praxis—with Naumann, these take the form in particular of an insistence on the political and psychological dimensions of interior design, which she showcases without dulling them.

In the Haus der Kunst, the architecture itself encounters the work *Ruinenwert*. The dark Saalburger marble, which is obscured in the central hall through which visitors enter the exhibition, is juxtaposed by Naumann with sculpture, porcelain, and wood in the North Gallery. High meets low; the “Nazi marble,” as the architect Albert Speer Jr. called it, chosen for the “eternal Reich,”

30 “Die Geschichtslosigkeit ist schuld an der Baumisere,” interview with Albert Speer Jr., *Spiegel*, May 18, 2010. <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/architekt-albert-speer-die-geschichtslosigkeit-ist-schuld-an-der-baumisere-a-695219.html> (accessed September 2, 2019).

encounters mass-produced toys and furniture.<sup>30</sup> The question of scale, large versus small, forest hideaway or world stage, simulated residence or dollhouse, is posed with urgency—evidently, the Berghof was all of these simultaneously. It exists today only through visual documentation, having been demolished by the Allies, while in contrast, in Haus der Kunst, the historical remnants from the National Socialist era remain present as material evidence. They become integral components in an analysis of the design, myth, and legacy of East-West German institutions and conditions. The walls of the building themselves step out onto the stage, becoming elements of Henrike Naumann's installation and vice versa. Characteristic of the work *Ruinenwert* is an investigation of the literally inextricable entanglement of politics and aesthetics and both the self and external design of government seats, and hence of representations of power and community. She traces the trajectories that link the past to current political debates around the AfD and other right-wing populist parties and right-wing radical groupings.