

Exhibition Text: Between Walls and Windows

Between Walls and Windows Architektur und Ideologie

Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin

September 1 – 30, 2012

Curated by Valerie Smith

Between Walls and Windows: Architektur und Ideologie examines the Kongresshalle as the necessary point of departure for an exhibition on architecture . It does this by attempting to recover a semblance of the Kongresshalle's ideology through the stripping down or purification of all post-1957 elements in the building's interior. By doing so the exhibition lays bare the Kongresshalle's history as a building that used modernism to achieve its political agenda, whereas today it uses culture to this same end . Thirteen newly commissioned works comment on ideology by engaging with the mission of Haus der Kulturen der Welt and making parallels with the socio-political situation from the artists' and architects' own culture. Individually they advocate the importance of understanding architecture as an expanded field of knowledge where language, politics, and more importantly economics are the determining factors in our built environment.

Historically the concept of ideology has been the reserve of the state. This exhibition makes the case for ideology as a positive attribute in architecture by believing in the power of people to usurp it from the state and reclaim it as a social project. It is appropriate and even propitious at a time when ideological allegiances are being questioned, shifting, and destroyed that people strengthen convictions and give meaning to the urban fabric. While technological advances may change the face of history, architecture with philosophy is a more effective catalyser.

For Between Walls and Windows. Architektur und Ideologie, the main spaces of the building of the former Kongresshalle will be emptied of all signage, printed matter, and furniture not original to its 1957 construction. The thirteen individual architectural-artistic positions will occupy interior and peripheral spaces of the building. The doors of the building will be open to the public every day during the month of September 2012 from 10 am to 7 pm and no entrance fee will be charged. You

will be able to access the building from the various entrances on all sides (e.g., roof access to auditorium, west garden access to the exhibition hall etc.) From an institutional perspective this is a radical decision and has potential consequences vis á vis the usual operational movements of the staff. If you enter the building of the former Kongresshalle through the open front door you should immediately sense that

you have entered a different building than the one you knew before. The Kassenhaus (cashier), which looks like a bank counter with its bullet proof glass windows and orange marble counter, is the first fixed structure one sees when one usually walks into the Haus. It will be gone. The lights, which normally illuminate the already well fenestrated Foyer will be off, and all the directional signage, designed to guide you and not original to the 1957 building, will be removed. You will enter inside the building without opening a door and, without the cashier counter to consult. This will instantly produce disorientation. Berliners familiar with the Haus will know something has changed.

In place of the cashier normally found to the left of the entrance on the ground floor will be a reception of orchids. This intervention by the architect Arno Brandhuber is the first project one encounters. The presence of orchids on this spot and their history will be interpreted in a little chapbook available to visitors. The project, *This is me - this is my country* (working title) is realized for the Haus as the result of a research trip to North Korea, where Brandhuber noticed the ubiquitous presence of the flower on every public surface in the capital of Pyongyang. Seeking a reason for this, Brandhuber discovered that during a meeting between President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Kim Il Sung in 1965, Sukarno offered an orchid to Kim as a present, proposing he name it, Kimilsungia. This gesture seized the national imagination to the extent that currently in North Korea one can see images of Kimilsungia alone or surrounding Il Jong Kim, his son anthropomorphized as a begonia, represented on every billboard and public broadside throughout the country. Currently orchids, through the precise sciences of hybridization and nomenclature, have become the fungible symbol for political power not only in North Korea, but also all over the world.

After having observed the architectures of orchids in the orchid show, you will seek further information, compelling you to go up the stairs and gravitate towards the center of the Foyer where you will find your bearings. From this central point you will have a perspective through the open glass door of the Ausstellungshalle (exhibition hall), across its gallery, and through its long glazed

wall, out onto the Westgarten and beyond up to the lawn. In a sense, the building will be porous like a sponge whereby every corner and door will be open for exploration, allowing the building to embody anew its first ideological principle of democracy in architectural form, in order that this principle be exposed for scrutiny.

From the center of the Foyer, the visitor can pick up a map that locates the individual interventions. Based on proximity, one might choose to go into the Ausstellungshalle to see Ângela Ferreira's installation. There you will find a large construction that appears to be part unfolding staircase and part podium. This wooden sculpture is seemingly attached to the enormous load-bearing buttress that is also one of the two architectural points supporting the hyper-parabolic roof of the Haus. The actual shape of the podium echoes the formal design of the cladding of the staircase into the auditorium, as seen from the Foyer. And the way the steps decline into the space and hover just above the floor, references the grand staircase that divides the basin just outside the building. Inside the podium is a back projection that screens both footage shot during the rebuilding of the Kongresshalle's roof after its collapse and footage of the implosion of Hotel 4 Estações in Maputo, Mozambique. The former relates to a failure in international communication over statics, and the latter, the end of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. The hotel was in the final stages of completion when the Portuguese revolution in 1974 put an end to the colonial project with an exodus of settlers from the country. Their departure was traumatic and vengeful. Before leaving they clogged the hotel pipes with cement making its completion impossible. The skeleton of the hotel stood for 33 years until the end of Civil War when the building could afford to be torn down to make way for the American Embassy. The hotel remained a symbol of the shameful behavior of colonial power till its demise in 2007. Conceptually Ferreira's podium takes up the uncertain legacy of the Kongresshalle as a forum for diplomatic dialogue by investigating the absence of the greater African voice in the early history of the building, and by giving it a platform today.

Through a door in the glass wall that runs the length of the Ausstellungshalle, you can access Paola Yacoub's fountain in the Westgarten. It is a glass cubic fountain approximately 1 meter by 1 meter by 2 meters, containing water, a pump, and several large pencils. The pump keeps the pencils randomly moving, while the water gently spills over the edge. The fountain's deluge—the result of the artist's extensive research into the behavioral physics of materials in water—serves as a metaphor for political cataclysm with a nod to their use in recent Middle Eastern up-raisings. The fountain is connected to ancient origins around educational institutions and concepts of the agora i.e., congresses and assemblies. In addition to providing hydration for people and plants, they are at the center of innumerable myths. The fountain's polysemic reading draws attention to the idea that it is “a rhetorical spatial form not a determined object” whereby its romanticism puts to the test the tribulations of the modernist paradigm.

Reentering the Ausstellungshalle and then exiting through the side door, you can walk down the corridor toward the small theater on the left and the restaurant on the right. At the very end of the hall way is a work by the Zagreb based architect Marko Sanžanin, founding member of the group Platforma 9,81. Platforma 9,81 will work with ideas around construction and ideology. They will use as their point of departure the secret "drawing" of the reinforced concrete and steel construction that currently lies hidden behind a projection wall at the very end of the hall way. They will incorporate the technical data and carrying construction calculations that were part of the renovation project used by architects and engineers who repaired the building into an expose of the statics or mechanical qualities drawn up by the Berlin city authorities. In so doing, Platforma 9,81 will make the connection between the language of builders and the language of culture, measuring the gap between the architect of yesterday and the developer of today. Of the project Sanžanin has written, "the central topic became clear when switching architecture with construction. The turning point in crisis of architecture at the beginning of the 1960s (just after the Berlin Kongresshalle was built) started when construction stopped playing an important role in architectural ideology and became a matter of technology. From that moment technology was devoid of any discursive value production material values became paramount. Construction was money oriented." All three doors of the Theatersalle located to the left or west of the corridor will be open. You can walk into the theater and onto the stage where most of the technical equipment has been removed. Instead of artificial lighting from above, the theater is flooded with daylight made possible through windows that are exposed by opening vertical wooden panels which act like shades to screen out light, when the theater is being used.

Retracing your footsteps and walking across toward the east side of the building, you will eventually arrive at the Café Global area of the Haus. Nestled seamlessly among the period furniture is Canadian artist, Terence Gower's installation, Baghdad Case Study. A practice that intersects between architectural history and sculpture, Gower's installation for this setting in the Haus is an investigation of the former United States Embassy in Baghdad designed by Josep Lluís Sert in 1957, the same date as Stubbins' Kongresshalle. Sert was a colleague of Stubbins at Harvard and took over as its Dean when Stubbins left. The installation consists of a large wooden screen sculpture that is based on the undulating roof form of Sert's Baghdad

Embassy and a series of vitrines with research material, found footage, and models. For Gower, Sert's roof structure attests to his aspirations to endow the embassy complex with indigenous Islamic forms, such as the compound dome thereby using design and culture to bridge the diplomatic gap. This echoing of Islamic patterns in Sert's design is well documented in the material displayed in the vitrines.

In addition there will be several texts tracing the US Department of State's postwar embassy-building program, employing a new architectural vocabulary to project a progressive national image; a brief history of US-Iraq relations from the discovery of oil in 1927 to the US invasion and occupation of Iraq ending in 2011. In addition Gower will touch on US postwar global interventionism and subsequent attacks on US foreign interests triggering an architectural reaction from open to closed construction of which the Baghdad embassies of 1957 and 2007 are emblematic. The installation is built around the formal design principles of the 1960s embassy building and proposes an optimistic reading of the design policy of the US State Department in the postwar period.

Continuing in the direction of the Konferenzräume you will come upon the headquarters of the Weltkulturerbe Doppeltes Berlin, located in the Konferenzraum 3. There the public will be greeted by a representative of the WDB movement, who will explain, through printed matter and visual materials posted throughout the room, the objectives of the WDB campaign. In addition to reading and watching images in the information center, there will be a discursive program, a series of talks organized by HKW and WDB, who collectively wish to put the two architectures of the once divided city of Berlin on UNESCO's list of world heritage. They will make an official public request and create a listing of parallel architectures such as Kongresshalle West/Kongresshalle Ost to apply for heritage status in the large auditorium at HKW at the end of September. Such a controversial topic in Berlin should stir a national debate.

Across the hall from the Weltkulturerbe Doppeltes Berlin headquarters are a set of stairs that lead to the Dolmetscherkabinen (Interpreters Cabins). Inside the interpreters' cabins the visitor will find access to the work of the Berlin-based artist Eran Schaerf. An on-going performance, which can be seen from the window of the booths, is taking place in the Konferenzraum Eins below. The performance, which can only be seen from these windows, because the door of the Konferenzraum is locked, resembles busy preparations for a press conference. While looking at the scene of three protagonists (2 performers, one camera man) getting ready to give a press conference, the visitor can also watch the action, which is continuously filmed downstairs, on a video monitor installed in each booth. Although it appears that the monitor is projecting live stream action, upon closer observation and comparison between the action through the window and monitor the visitor will see that a temporal disjunction has been created and that the actions below are out of synch with those depicted in the monitor. Auditory stimulation is added to the mix when a montage of narrative fragments, previously reconfigured into a program, are broadcasted into the booth and occasionally interrupted by periods of live radio segments triggered by visitors entering the Haus. Following the concept of expanded architectures, Schaerf has choreographed an elaborate visual and linguistic construct that attempts to both breakdown and open up how media is received and disseminated.

Walking back down the stairs and into the Café Global, you will take another set of stairs on the left that leads past the Foyer and onto the mezzanine in front of the wardrobe transformed into an intervention by the global architecture group, Supersudaca. You are greeted by an economist-guide, who will demonstrate, from multiple computer monitors stationed on the wardrobe counter, how rating systems function to change opinions on the global market. Based on the latest news on a country's rating status, individuals and institutions can invest or divest in countries thereby holding the power to develop or destroy national prosperity. Using the Haus' wardrobe as the stage, Supersudaca's project Pobres Y Estandares (working title) is best described as a frozen play where the previous protagonist of the Cold War period (all the world's countries) play a submissive role to the new protagonists of our era, the rating agencies. Each number of the wardrobe will represent a country (by way of a flag in the form of a poncho) and a position (by way of a wardrobe number), which identifies where the country stands on the global market. Supersudaca believes that economies supersede politics and architecture.

Taking the door to the right of the wardrobe that leads outside of the building, you must walk down the service ramp to a garbage collection area on the left. A bit further beyond the trash and recycling bins of the Haus, you will find a colossal stone statue of a worker carved in a Social Realist style lying askew among utilities of the building, as if it had fallen like a meteorite from the sky. You will also hear the faint sounds of a marching song about building Warsaw emanating from a derelict loud speaker. Following the boxwood hedge that hides the statue and the unsightly functions of the Haus, you will come across a signpost clarifying the

story behind the statue, now center piece of The Monument (working title). As it turns out, the worker was one of several stone figures abandoned behind the junkyard of an old metal factory in Warsaw where the artist Monika Sosnowska works. The worker was meant to adorn the Palace of Science and Culture, built as a "gift" for the "new" Poland to the Polish people by the Soviet Union in 1955. In preparation for prototypes of the subject of the worker, Soviet architects were asked to copy American WPA (Work Progress Administration) models, 'but make them better'. Of course, the Americans were looking at Socialist models. The irony here is in the circular gaze of ideological models for progress and technological advance on both the Western and Eastern fronts, as well as the connection with gift giving - since the Kongresshalle was a "gift" to the German people by the Americans in 1957.

Returning up the ramp towards the Haus and up the stairs to access the roof, you will be attracted to an outdoor kiosk on the right, designed to service visitors with drinks and food outdoors. The Berlin based architect, Markus Miessen, of Studio Miessen has built an extension from the kiosk as

a site for public engagement through production and dialogue. With this extension the line of sight out of the Kiosk is towards the West and the East. The interior of the Kiosk will be retrofitted and function as a library and reading room, whereas it's newly built extension will function as a writing room, a kind of poet's or thinker's hut. Miessen has invited 13 writers, philosophers, and artists to live and activate the Kiosk for a day each by generating texts and talks in a marathon-like style. The reading room installation and the "writing residency" (working title) are planned in collaboration with the Berlin bookstore Archive Kabinett. The architecture of the Kiosk and the content of the knowledge produced from the structure, will address the locality of the building in relation to the adjacent architectural icons, specifically the Bundeskanzleramt built by Axel Schultes in 2001, seat of the German state power and ideology, as well as the Reichstag and Fernsehturm. Looking out from the reading room of the Kiosk towards the west one sees three large flagpoles flying flags representing the symbols of the Weltkulturerbe Doppeltes Berlin movement.

Walking from here to the front side of the Kongresshalle facing south, you will see a series of structures designed by the architects, Wang Shu with Lu Wenyu of Amateur Architecture Studio. Making use of 60,000 traditional Chinese roof tiles that reference the illustrious history of craft materials in China, the architects will build a "natural, light, discrete, free, temporary, and mobile construction to dialogue and critique the modernity of the Haus' artificial, heavy, concentrated, and centralist power structure—a structure whose permanent modern architecture is represented by huge buildings'. Wang Shu thinks of his structures as an empty stage for unregulated activities, where people can think, meditate, read poetry, dance, or have a small music party. His structures reflect a seemingly spontaneous and fluid way to respond to politics and this memorial area surrounded by government buildings, in deference to what he identifies as Stubbins' serious and weighty modernist methods. He writes that he "only wants to give some hint on the atmosphere of the site. I look forward to the unexpected event." It is important for Wang Shu that the construction is technologically uncomplicated to the extent that any citizen is able to participate in its construction. Wang Shu's practice is in radical opposition to the systematic erasure of Asian history by globalization and the encroachment of neo-internationalist architecture.

Once the structures on the roof have been explored, you can walk up the steps and enter either the side doors of the building that lead directly into the auditorium, or access the building through the entrance under the buttress that also immediately guides you to the large auditorium. If you take the regular entrance to the auditorium, you will be standing at the top of the stairs looking down onto the stage. There you can see an installation, which references the principles of an anechoic chamber. Sound proof foam cylinders and panels on tripods surround a microphone that records-only. This is the work of the Chicago-based artist, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle. Inspired by the universal need to be heard, the recent revolutions in the Middle East, and the occupy movements in North America and Europe, the piece, titled, You can say anything you want for as long as you want

functions exactly like that. The record of what is said into the microphone will be automatically uploaded as unedited audiomaterial onto a website.

Throughout the whole Haus there will be a number of discrete interventions by the one-time collaborators artist Damián Ortega, architect Mauricio Rocha and philosopher Arturo Romero Contreras. Their work does not create isolated art objects, but intervenes politically in the architectonic language of the Kongresshalle. Their aim is to comment on the building at the precise points in which it speaks out its ideology, whereby the locations of the points are largely unexpected – a crack in a column or a missing handle on a backdoor. Their contribution adopts the idea that ideology is in the eye of the beholder, or in other words, that ideology is a matter of perspective and of training the eyes to this privilege. Their contribution takes you on a “tour” through the building by way of touching and reading these “non-sites” (Unorte), which can be understood as a subtle critique of ideology. Next to each chosen location there will be a plexiglas screen installed with excerpts from philosophical, political, and lyrical texts printed onto it. The selection of texts offers radically different readings of a given location and brings to the fore the relationship between these “non-sites” and the whole building. The specific locations are marked on your guide/map so that the interventions function like a museum tour.

There will also be a publication published by Hatje Cantz (Released as a museum edition on the 1st of September; as a trade edition with installation shots on the 29th of September) for which artists, architects, photographers and fiction writers were invited. It will be a selection of poetic musings on the concept of ideology in relation to architecture. The book argues for an expanded notion of architecture as a catalyst for thinking about our built environment. The book builds a case against a global architectural style for one that derives its inspiration from the regional, the critical, and the political. It assembles unusual contributions from wide- ranging perspectives that give a more constructive turn to the art and architecture debate. Following these ideas one begins to understand the importance of the structures we inhabit, desire, and love and the impact they have on our existence. Essentially there will be three bodies of content: essays and short prose by fiction writers, pages by artists and architects not in the exhibition, and pages from the participants as well architectural images interspersed throughout the book.