

UPPER ARM (LEFT)—LEFT: "All new façade and window elements will be equipped with photovoltaics. Less energy will be consumed here than produced. Where there used to be underground petrol tanks, there will be rainwater retention basins. The roofs are to be kept almost free of technology and intensively greened. There will be not one, but two Kitas. Corporate security begins in the community. Nature on all levels."

UPPER ARM (LEFT)—RIGHT, MOVES UP: "The private shareholder company offers real estate asset management services. It develops real estate for sale to institutional investors. In doing so, it places an emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) at all stages, from acquisition, to sourcing investment, risk management, optimising running costs, increasing rent income, and negotiating sales."

LOWER ARM (LEFT)—CENTRE: So it was that I could slip through a yawning gap, leaving the bright sunlight and sparkling river behind me for the interior of Chemikalienlager Halle 6. Here, pillars stretch up into the darkness and the air is damp and cool.

LOWER ARM (LEFT)—CENTRE: This space has already been emptied out, but on the walls, there are laminated signs detailing past storage for hundreds of litres or kilograms of the following items: TELLUS/RENOLIN, SILIKONÖL, BUTYLAZETAT, N-METHYLPYRROLANON, METHANOL, KALIWASSERGLAS, SPRÜHLACK, LOTGLASBINDER, ANODENSCHUTZ, TESTBENZIN, ETHYLENGLYCOL, ACETON.

WRIST (LEFT)—STARTS LEFT, MOVES UP SIDE OF ARM: "The first to be laid off here were contract workers from Mozambique, who still to this day have not been properly paid. The proportion of women working here shrunk from 40% to 10% in less than two years. As more and more became unemployed, anyone considered to be "non-German" was actively made very unwelcome on all levels. And as the state/VEB's role as care-giver was withdrawn through neoliberalisation and deindustrialisation, precarised women picked up the slack by working more in the home and/or in burgeoning service/care industries, which meant taking on more unpaid or underpaid reproductive tasks."

ABOVE WRIST (LEFT)—FROM CENTRE: Birds fly in and out of smashed windows. They have made their homes in exposed ceiling ventilation. Wild growth flourishes between buildings and cracks in concrete; uncovered outdoor pools containing enough chemicals to wrinkle fibreglass are carpeted with fluorescent green cress. A riverside trellis, once the place for workers' lunchbreaks, is now so overgrown with vines as to be almost unrecognisable.

LOWER ARM (LEFT)—FROM CENTRE: "The Spree has already been earmarked as a traffic route for the removal of the demolished material. The copper-metallized glass panes from Halle L have to be disposed of separately as hazardous waste."

THUMB (LEFT): Lining the Spreeknie at the eastern outskirts of the city is a cluster of grey buildings harbouring vast, dark halls. Below these halls are cellars gathering pools of water. These spaces have been left more or less unused, at least by humans, since the last company left in 2005.

INDEX-FINGER (LEFT): "After over 100 years of industrial use, despite limited state-funded clean-up attempts, the land remains contaminated with substances occurring in concentrations 1,000 times higher than is recommended, including arsenic, lead, sulfur, copper, zinc, and various industrial solvents."

MIDDLE FINGER TO WRIST (LEFT): Only recently has work here begun once more. But this is work of a different kind. Tables stations are cleared, cupboards emptied, tools scraped from storage and shaken out into waiting container bins. Separator walls are torn down and broken into chunks of plaster, electric cabling is stripped from walls and ceilings, insulation is shredded and the remains stuffed into giant plastic bags, which sit packed side-by-side in the darkness, waiting.

WRIST TO RING FINGER (LEFT): "Palaces must be erected to labour which will not only give the factory worker, the slave of modern industrial labour, light, air and cleanliness, but will still make him feel something of the dignity of the common great idea which drives the whole."

LITTLE FINGER (LEFT): Massive CNC machines are hulled in plastic and decade-long silence, protected in a windowless space, awaiting transportation. Most doors are locked and drilled firmly shut with deep screws.



UPPER ARM (RIGHT)—
RIGHTHAND SIDE: At the end of Chemikalienlager Halle 6 I find a door, closed. I open it: a windowless cavern, the ceiling higher than the floor is wide. In the darkness, left behind on a ledge, I find a pair of arm-length latex gloves. I pry the first one loose. It is encrusted with some sort of dried substance and retains its L-form, holding the memory of two decades of rest.

UPPER ARM (RIGHT)—BEGINS
LEFTHAND SIDE: “The property already increased in value eight-fold since its privatisation in ’93 to a multinational electronics company for a rumoured 20 million. They sold in 2010—after sacking the last 900 employees and closing operations—to a Luxemburg-registered GmbH owned by two Irish billionaires, who did nothing to look after the property except to lease a small part of it to keep things ticking over. Most of the vast halls remained empty. After the majority of the 84 small businesses subletting there were evicted, we bought it, of course. In 2019. To the tune of over 150 million. The exact figure remains confidential of course. No, we do not disclose our institutional funding. But the diverse cultural and gastronomical offers will of course further increase the attractiveness of the location for guests, tourists and neighbours.”

LOWER ARM (RIGHT)—LEFTHAND
SIDE: “The state-run company brokers sales of industrial spaces to private companies, develops infrastructures to promote economic development, offers exchange platforms between science and business, and advocates for the preservation of studio space.”

RIGHTHAND SIDE OF
WRIST (RIGHT) “In the background of the digital rendering, a young man and woman—both white, both wearing suits—hold hands on the patio of a cafe. In the foreground, a coffee mug bearing the word TENANT and a perfect, uneaten cheesecake.”

“New borders have been drawn between cleanliness and dirtiness in an age in which concerns are growing for clean air, clean water, clean houses, clean bodies, clean minds, and green spaces.”—
Françoise Vergès.

UPPER ARM (RIGHT)—LEFTHAND
SIDE: Later, in Chemikalienlager Halle 7 (larger, windows) I find an office lined with cupboards. All shelves have been emptied save one drawer containing around twenty forgotten bottles of violet “alpha stempelfarbe”.

UPPER ARM (RIGHT)—
CENTRE. MOVES
UP, THEN DOWN
RIGHTHAND SIDE:
I leave the space because I hear voices. Outside, a man in a suit, white shirt, no tie, is showing four or five well-dressed people around. They all watch as I clamber out of the building and leave on my bike. (Brief moment of eye contact with suit guy). I catch some words as he continues to speak:—Hier wurde...auf dem Gelände...oben kommen Ateliers hin...wir haben vor kurzem ermöglicht, dass ein renommierte Berliner Klub hier aus-toben konnte—

ABOVE RING
FINGER (RIGHT)
“Future will be good! Because we’re shaping it.”

RING FINGER
(RIGHT): AH.
Sind Sie der Eigentümer...?—I wonder whether he knows that not everyone survived. That not everyone left this place. I wonder at the bold extent of waste and work, and how hidden both are.

INDEX FINGER
(RIGHT)—TO
WRIST: Later I cannot avoid the man and his entourage. They meet me or I meet them in a stairwell in the Behrensbau (one of the few buildings that cannot be demolished, because ‘representative’). I am trespassing, they are not. They are in suits, I am not.—Sie sind ja neugierig.—Ich bin Künstlerin.— This met by a politely interested gaze. Sizing up. Flirtatious, maybe. A gaze reserved the trespasser-artist, an opportunity, maybe.—Falls Sie das Gelände nochmals besuchen wollen, schreiben Sie mir, ich gebe Ihnen gerne eine Führung – persönlich.—

WRIST (RIGHT)—
TO THUMB: “This development involves an investment totalling 1,1 billion, with a projected 280,000 square metres of rentable floor-space. So long as the city lets us co-fund a new bridge across the Spree and allows the new Autobahn to run through the Kleingärten in Treptow as planned, well, then 10,000 people will be employed here. That’s 500 people more than the 9,500 who worked here in the Socialist period! This is currently the biggest privately funded commercial real estate development in the city.”

