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**Florin Weber**

**Portfolio**

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**Das Volk, Das Wir**

„We are the people“ echoes in the squares, from the streets and against people seeking asylum. The protest call for more democracy and participation, which was once directed against the SED dictatorship during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989, has since been hijacked by the political right and given a nationalist meaning by self-proclaimed „concerned citizens“ and „patriots of the Occident (Abendland)“. Once a slogan for more inclusion, is now an exclamation for drawing and closing borders. For exclusion.

I embark on a journey through the federal state of Saxony at the height of the „Pegida“ demonstrations. The question of the structural conditions of this new right-wing movement was the reason for my photographic exploration. I came across a region that is marked by multiple political fractures and overlapping histories. Formerly socialist areas, places heavily marked by the collapse of capitalism and the subsequent structural change, historicist centers and neighbourhoods claimed by right-wing extremists collide in the immediate vicinity. What is the relationship between the state and the individual in this situation? Between nationality, belonging and community in a now post-Nazi, post-socialist and post-migrant society?



*Struggle and victory of the revolutionary German working class (Chemnitz)*



St.-Petri-Church (Chemnitz)



WBS70 (Delitzsch)



*New Kid (Hoyerswerda)*



*88 (Delitzsch)*



Soviet Pavilion (Leipzig)



Praise of the revolutionary (Chemnitz)



*Departure (Leipzig)*



*Saxon State Office for Taxes and Finance /  
Proletarians of all states, unite! (Chemnitz)*



*Dirt State (Görlitz)*



*Station (Freital)*



**Krayl**

Carl Krayl (1890 -1947) is one of the forgotten architects of modernism. Rejected by the National Socialists and ignored in the GDR, the city of Magdeburg only remembered its representative of „Neues Bauen“ after reunification.

Krayl's housing estates in particular had a lasting impact on the cityscape - their claim to social and quality housing stood in contrast to the usual tenements - and were a reaction to the blatant housing shortage after World War I. This core concern for socially just housing is still highly topical today.

The photographic work „Krayl“ searches for traces of its protagonist in Magdeburg and poses the question of how architectural modernism can still be encountered today after a hundred years.



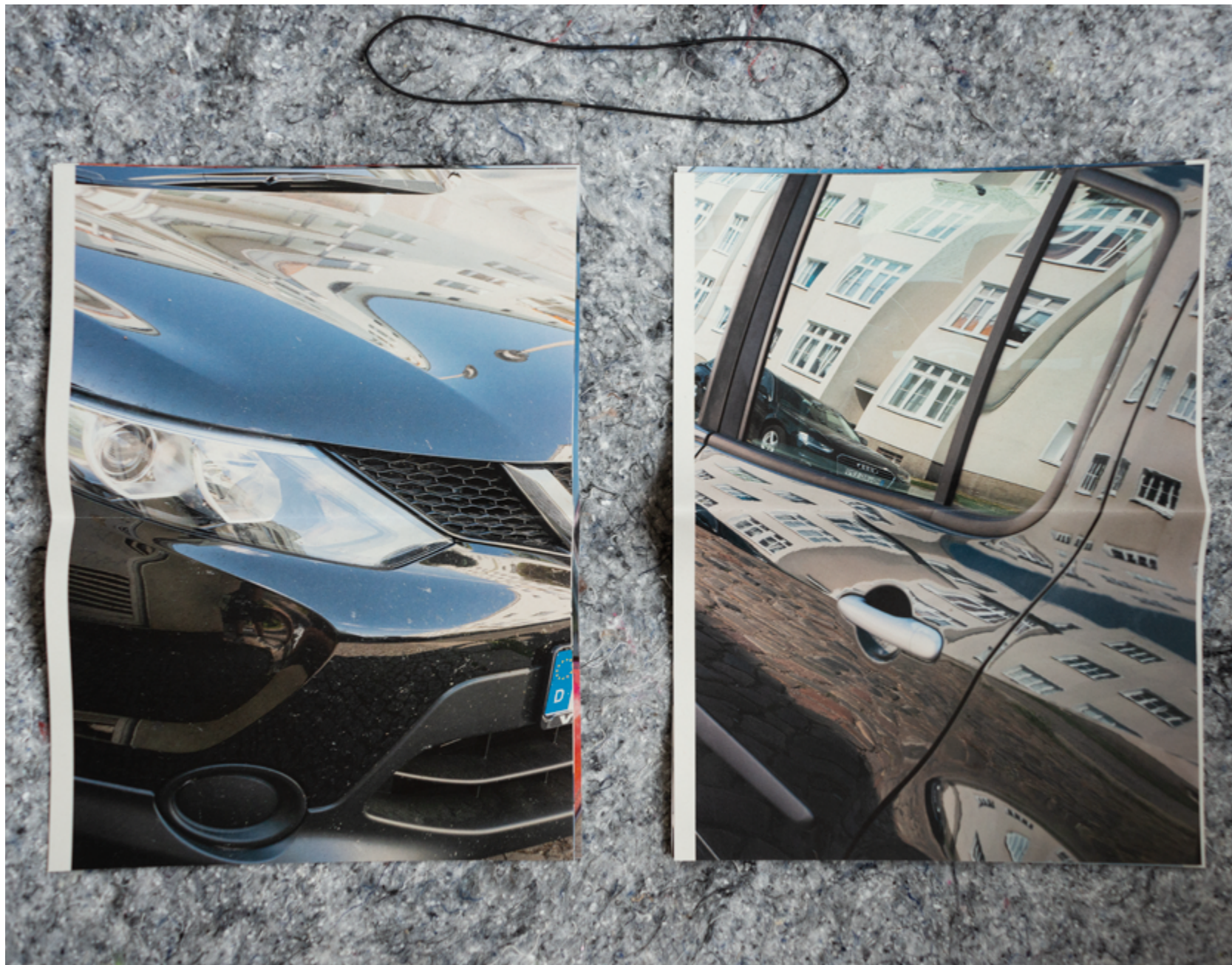














**Das Gelände**

## **Das Gelände** *(The Grounds)*

*Group of Works*

„Das Gelände“ (The Grounds) is the title of my ongoing, multi-part artistic exploration of the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg.

Since the post-war period, the architectural relics of National Socialism have symbolized Germany's relationship to its own fascist past, as they clearly represent the question how to deal with the material Nazi legacy in an appropriate way.

Oscillating between repression, commercial exploitation and reappraisal, Nuremberg's contradictory handling of that difficult heritage also reflects the struggle with its own historical responsibility. This ambivalence can be seen, for example, in two debates: while the Zeppelin Grandstand – designed by Albert Speer – is now so dilapidated that its continued existence must be negotiated despite its listed status, the city is planning to expand the Congress Hall, which was never completed by the Nazis, into a profit-oriented cultural and event area including an opera house.

Especially with the passing of the contemporary witnesses, the architectural legacies on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds are gaining new relevance as places of learning - accordingly, the current, far-reaching transformations on site have an influence on our future commemoration and the culture of remembrance of tomorrow that should not be underestimated.

My interest with the area is biographically motivated: In the early 1990s, my family, like many Aussiedler (repatriates) and Spätaussiedler (late repatriates) from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, were accommodated in the reception camp of Nuremberg-Langwasser. The camp is located on the historical site of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. This is no coincidence. In fact, the categorization and barracking of





„the foreign“ on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds has a long tradition, but this „second history“ remains largely unconsidered, unprocessed and therefore invisible in the collective memory. That is why I am interested in developing a post-migrant perspective on the site in my artistic work. I take photographs on site and research what remains missing because it was not considered worth preserving, i.e. worth remembering, by the German majority society (Mehrheitsgesellschaft) - and in the spirit of Michael Rothberg's „multidirectional memory“ (2009), I try to expand the memory discourse surrounding the Nazi Party Rally Grounds for a post-migrant society (postmigrantisches Gesellschaft).

*In the foreground: „site inspection“, printed construction fence tarpaulin, 340 x 173 cm.  
In the background: „light incidence (Grundig towers)“, framed inkjet print, 18 x 24 cm.  
Installation view, Vogelschiss enters the chat... yet again (2022), Plast Space, Leipzig.*



# *Zeppelintribüne* (Zeppelin Grandstand)

2021-2022

In dealing with the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds, the question arises for me: how do you approach fascist architecture visually without affirming it? Without any self-questioning, classic documentary photography is in danger of playing into the hands of the atmospheric buildings - because they direct the body and the gaze.

Propaganda such as that of Leni Riefenstahl and Heinrich Hoffmann, as supposedly authentic “documents”, also shape how we remember the Nazi state and its Party Rallies in our collective memory to this day. In the production of images, we are therefore preconditioned by the previous, glorifying photographs of that place, which must be actively contradicted. Accordingly, I understand photographing on site not as pure depiction, but as unlearning the traditional gaze and as a deconstructive intervention with the camera that consciously takes action against megalomania.

For the Zeppelin grandstand, I developed a visual language that uses tumbling lines, perspective distortions and slight tilting moments to cause the architecture to stumble and lose its balance. The monumentality is not exaggerated by these photographic “amateur mistakes”, but turns out to be a façade for propaganda purposes. In the use of black and white and color, as well as in the depiction of a motif from several angles, the perception of the architecture is repeatedly questioned or supplemented.

In terms of presentation, I refuse to hang these structures in a white cube thus giving them a certain value. (The white cube as an exhibition space is - according to art historian Charlotte Klonk - a Nazi invention anyway). Instead, I lean the picture frames seemingly casually on the floor against the wall, partly overlapping them, and counter the overwhelming nature of Nazi architecture with a simple gesture.

*Installation view, Zeppelin Grandstand, Diplomrundgang (2022), HGB Leipzig.*

*70x90cm*



*Fine Art Print*







In the Lorenzer Reichswald forest on the outskirts of Nuremberg, there is a 15-hectare clearing called "Russenwiese" (Russians' Meadow). It is a popular destination for local residents to go jogging, for a walk or to walk the dog. Very few people are aware of the human rights crimes that took place in this place; yet the violence is already present in the name: During the First World War, the area served as a prison camp for Russian soldiers. Even then, the name became established among the population of Nuremberg. Anti-Slavism also remained. In its continuity, the Gestapo set up a labor education camp on the so-called „Russenwiese" to discipline - i.e. torture - forced laborers, mainly from Poland and the Soviet Union.

Reasons for being sent to the labor education camp included escape, refusal to work, unauthorized contact with Germans, sabotage or theft. The use of systematic abuse and violence - up to and including public execution - was intended to have an "educational" effect on the inmates as a deterrent measure to encourage work discipline and enforce compliance with the rules.

While concentration camps were coordinated by the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office, the labor education camps were under the control of the local state police - and were responsible only to themselves. They established a regime of terror in Nuremberg under catastrophic living conditions. In fact, the death rate at "Russenwiese" was higher than that of the two satellite camps of the Flossenbürg concentration camp stationed in Nuremberg. Nevertheless, there is no information on site to remind us of the suffering and injustice at the former labor education camp.









The Grundig Towers are located in the immediate vicinity of Albert Speer's Zeppelin Grandstand. Built at the end of the 1960s by the eponymous consumer electronics company to house Gastarbeiter („guest workers“ from Turkey and Europe's south and southeast), the buildings not only symbolize the German „Wirtschaftswunder“ of the post-war period, but also represent the continuity of barracking, categorization and disciplining of migrants and foreigners on the former Nazi Party Rally Grounds to this present day. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Free State of Bavaria used the buildings as an initial reception camp for repatriates (Aussiedler) and late repatriates (Spätaussiedler) from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union - this was also the context in which my family and I arrived to Germany at the historic site of perpetrators. Today, the towers serve as so called anchor centers (Ankerzentren) for refugees and asylum seekers who, isolated from mainstream society, have to wait for their admission permit or their deportation under precarious circumstances.











The Congress Hall designed by Ludwig Ruff is - alongside the Kdf-Seebad Rügen - the largest surviving building of National Socialism: at 275 meters long, 265 meters deep and 40 meters high, the relic represents the megalomania of German fascism. As the largest hall in the world with a cantilevered roof, the Congress Hall was supposed to offer space for 50,000 participants. However, the plans remained unfinished: although construction work was able to continue during the Second World War with the use of prisoners of war and forced laborers, the building project came to a complete standstill 1945.

Since then, Nuremberg has struggled with this material legacy of National Socialism and how to deal with it appropriately: always wavering between pragmatism, historical responsibility and interest-driven utilization. While previous projects, such as the conversion into a soccer stadium or the design of a shopping mall, failed, the current conversion and „upgrading“ into a so-called cultural area could be crowned with success.

The Documentation Center Nazi Party Rally Grounds opened in 2001 in the interventional building designed by Günther Domenig, and until Quelle's insolvency in 2009, the mail order company used the premises of the Congress Hall as a warehouse. Founder Gustav Schickedanz profited enormously under National Socialism through the "Aryanization" of Jewish businesses - his company Quelle is an example of how closely the German economic miracle was intertwined with the Holocaust.

In order to counteract the overwhelming nature of the architecture, I focus on details, on moments of profanation, the current use of the area and the transformation processes on site. As a table display, the power relations of the perspectives are reversed - instead of looking up and being overwhelmed by the dimensions, viewers have the opportunity to distance themselves through the view and perceive the Congress

Hall as a backdrop. The multitude of images complement and contradict each other - you can never get a conclusive picture of the building, which is also expressed by the cropped photographs at the edge of the table. The socially negotiation with it must always continue.



*Installation view, Congress Hall, Diplomrundgang (2022), HGB Leipzig.*





#### **Oktober 2018**

Der Freistaat Bayern erwirbt für den doppelten Immobilienpreis 37,5 Hektar Fläche des ehemaligen Südbahnhofgeländes zur Ansiedlung der Technischen Universität Nürnberg. Rund weitere 1,2 Milliarden Euro will der Freistaat Bayern in die neue Technische Universität Nürnberg investieren. \* 5

#### **14. Januar 2019**

Gründung der „Stabstelle ehemaliges Reichsparteitagsgelände / Zeppelintribüne und Zeppelifeld“ im Kulturreferat. Leitung: Annetrin Fries. \* 6

#### **2008**

Bis 2010 dienen die Räume der Nürnberger Symphoniker als Ausweichspielstätte des Schauspielhaus Nürnberg.

#### **2006**

Errichtung eines Geländeinformationssystems auf dem ehemaligen Reichsparteitagsgelände zur Fußballweltmeisterschaft.

#### **9. Mai 2004**

Der Stadtrat beschließt Leitlinien zum Erhalt der Bauten auf dem ehemaligen Reichsparteitagsgelände für künftige Generationen. Angestrebt wird weder ein bewusster Verfall, noch eine Rekonstruktion von Nicht-Mehr-Vorhandenem. Künstlerische Auseinandersetzungen sollten als temporäre Lösungen nicht für die Ewigkeit geschaffen

#### **2027**

Angestrebte Fertigstellung des Kulturareals Kongresshalle

#### **2025**

Betriebsgenehmigung für das marode Opernhaus am Richard-Wagner-Platz liefe aus.

Baubeginn für den Ergänzungsbau.

#### **Winter 2023 / 2024**

Die Vergabeentscheidung für den Ergänzungsbauentwurf des ausgeschriebenen, europaweiten Architekturwettbewerbs soll im Winter 2023 / 2024 stattfinden.

#### **4. Quartal 2023**

„Abschluss partizipativer Prozess zur inhaltlichen Ausgestaltung der Ermöglichungsräume“ laut Geschäftsbereich Kultur.

# Zentrale für kritische Bürger\*innenanliegen

collective

## in Sachen Kulturareal Kongresshalle (Center for critical citizens' concerns regarding the cultural area Kongresshalle)

The collective “Zentrale für kritische Bürgerinnenanliegen in Sachen Kulturareal Kongresshalle“ has been working on the Congress Hall Nuremberg since mid-2023. Its focal point of examination is the gentrification of this difficult heritage through art washing and its effect on collective memory: constructions to built an opera house and studio spaces have already started at the expense of history work and education – this is no small feat in the face of the shift to right wing politics in Western democracies.

Our collective artistic research in the field of remembrance culture (Erinnerungskultur) stands under the concept of “Eingedenken“, with which the philosopher Walter Benjamin understands the past not as closed, but rather emphasizes its continued effect on the present and future. Networking with other initiatives and experts has become an important method for the Zentrale.

The collective currently consists of the following people:

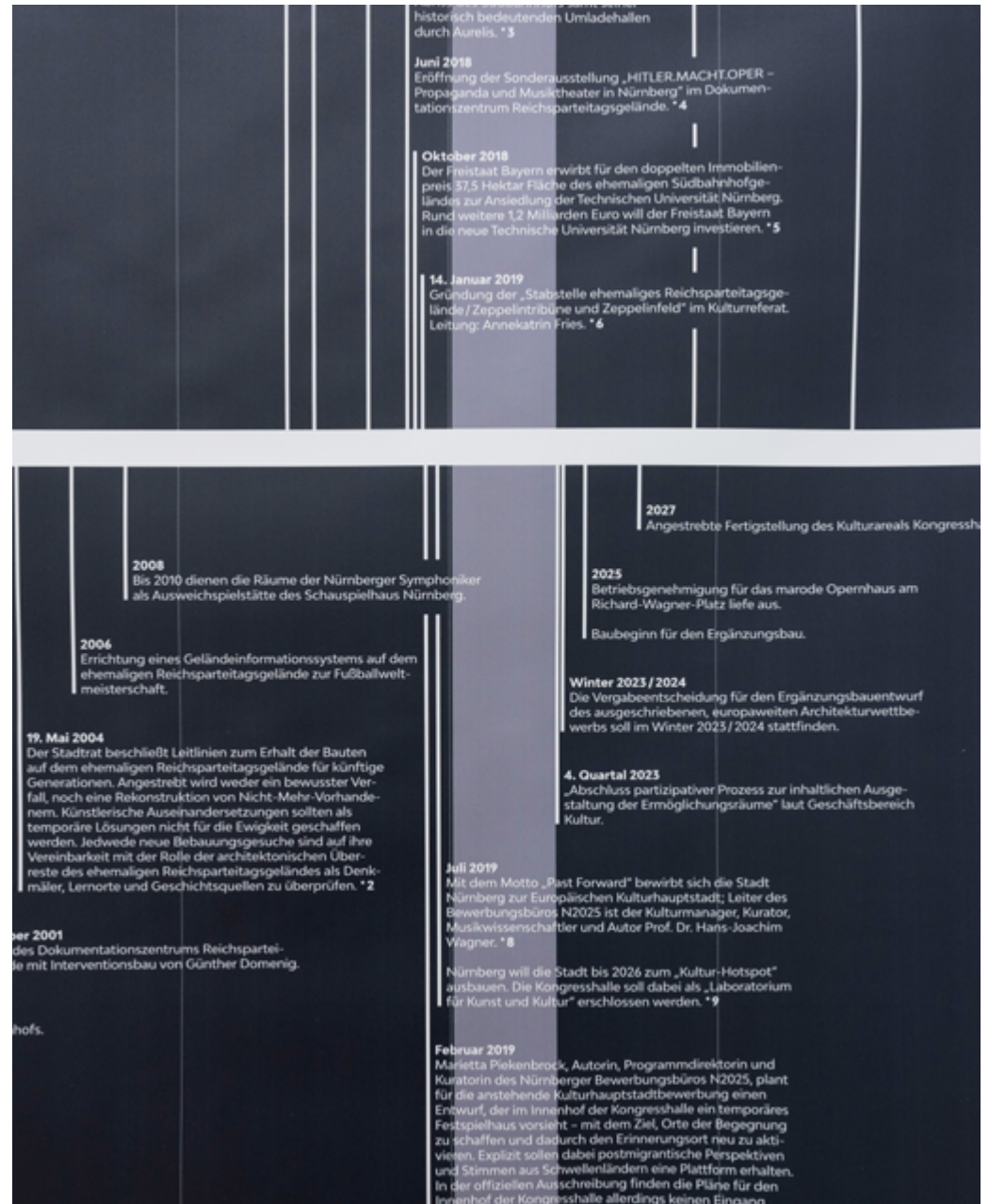
Ulf Herold, Jason Hess, Laura Michèle Kniesel, Kira Krüger, Mily Meyer, Max Pospiech, Rebecca Schwarzmeier and Florin Weber

Former member: Anna Boldt (2023)

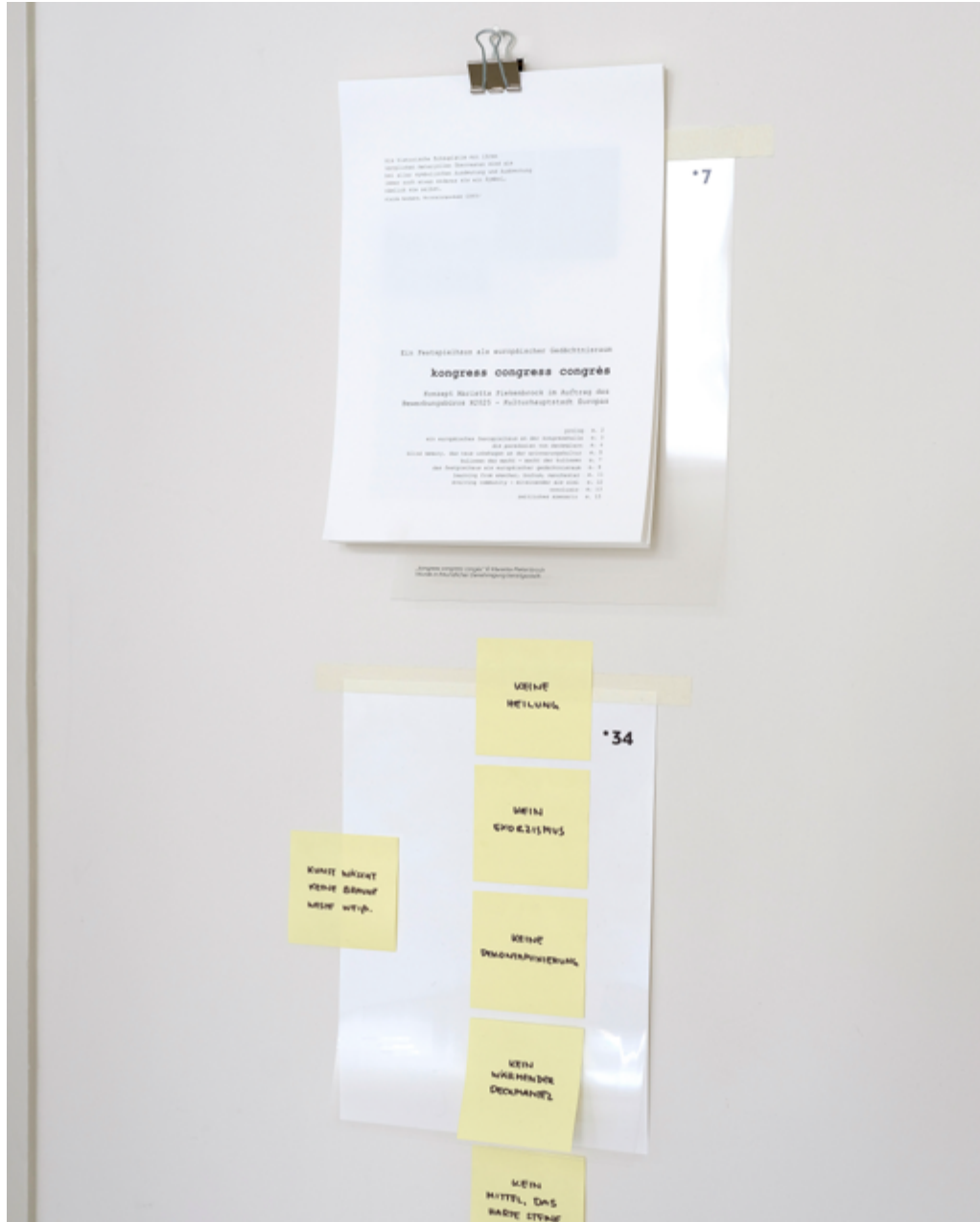
More information at:

<https://kulturarealkongresshalle.de/>

Detail, always complain, always explain (2023), Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft







The collective, research-based and participatory exhibition project „always complain, always explain“ critically analyzes the city of Nuremberg’s plans to transform the Congress Hall on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds into a lucrative area for art and culture.

The exhibition attempts to create a counter-public and uncover the non-transparent decision-making processes behind the plans for the so-called cultural area (Kultur-areal). The role of art in this context is questioned and analysed and urban development (gentrification) is highlighted as a driving factor of the city’s project. With the newly emerging „Lichtenreuth“ district and the founding of the Technical University of Nuremberg in the immediate vicinity of the Congress Hall, the city has an economic interest in upgrading the area to attract investors. It is therefore no coincidence that the new extension to the Nuremberg Opera House is to be located in the inner courtyard of the

Congress Hall - despite numerous criticisms from art historians and historians. But instead of engaging in the public debate that such an undertaking would require, the city’s cultural affairs officer is presenting a fait accompli.

In the first room of the exhibition at the Kunstverein Nürnberg, we are therefore presenting our extensive research on two timelines that describe the development of the Congress Hall up to the present day.

Sources, documents, reports and commentaries on the wall provide deeper insights and contextualize the content. A brochure summarizes the critical points thematically and comprehensibly as an FAQ. All this information is also available free of charge on our website.

*Detail, always complain, always explain (2023), Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft*



In the second room, we offer a questionnaire on the topic to provide space for criticism, ideas and wishes for the future use of the Congress Hall and to position yourself on the project. We will bury these thoughts in a time capsule on the site before the foundation stone for the new opera is laid, so that critical voices can be inscribed in the area, at least on a symbolic level.

*Installation view, always complain, always explain (2023), Kunstverein Nürnberg – Albrecht Dürer Gesellschaft*











“still complaining“ is an artistic intervention by the *Zentrale für kritische Bürger\*innenanliegen in Sachen Kulturareal Kongresshalle* as part of the 2024 annual exhibition on the campus of the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg.

The lettering is a borrowed quote from Bertold Brecht (“What do you think changes more easily // a stone or your view of it?”) from the poetry collection „Lesebuch für Städtebewohner“ and aims at the ongoing transformation of the Congress Hall Nuremberg into a so-called cultural area. As a slogan on the wall, it asks for an appropriate handling of the material legacy of National Socialism and implies the challenges of the German culture of remembrance (Erinnerungskultur). It addresses the viewer directly - and is thus a criticism of the city of Nuremberg, which does not seek the necessary public discourse around the historical site of the perpetrators.

On the campus of the AdBK Nuremberg, the lettering refers also to the art academy’s connection to the Nazi Party Rally Grounds: While architecture professor Ludwig Ruff designed the building, professors such as Irma Goecke, Ernst Andreas Rauch, Otto Michael Schmitt and Blasius Spreng received lucrative commissions to decorate the building. The Congress Hall is now a proclaimed „large-scale cultural building project“ - that idea had already existed once before.

Detail, still complaining (2024), Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg



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**All photographs S. 38 - 48 © Zentrale für kritische**

**Bürger\*innenanliegen in Sachen Kulturareal**

**Kongresshalle, 2025**

**All texts with the exception on S. 39 © Florin Weber, 2025**

**Text S. 39 © Zentrale für kritische Bürger\*innenanliegen**

**in Sachen Kulturareal Kongresshalle, 2025**